

# When is an Almost Monochromatic $K_4$ Guaranteed?

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Suppose that  $n > (\log k)^{c^k}$ , where  $c$  is a fixed positive constant. We prove that, no matter how the edges of  $K_n$  are coloured with  $k$  colours, there is a copy of  $K_4$  whose edges receive at most two colours. This improves the previous best bound of  $k^{c^k}$ , where  $c'$  is a fixed positive constant, which follows from results on classical Ramsey numbers.

## 1. Introduction

Let  $p, q$  be positive integers with  $2 \leq q \leq \binom{p}{2}$ . A  $(p, q)$ -colouring of  $K_n$  is an edge-colouring such that every copy of  $K_p$  receives at least  $q$  distinct colours on its edges. Let  $f(n, p, q)$  denote the minimum number of colours in a  $(p, q)$ -colouring of  $K_n$ . This parameter, introduced in [2] and subsequently investigated by Erdős and Gyárfás [3], is a generalization of the classical Ramsey numbers. Indeed, if  $R_k(p)$  denotes the minimum  $n$  such that every  $k$ -edge-colouring of  $K_n$  results in a monochromatic  $K_p$ , then determining all  $R_k(p)$  is equivalent to determining all  $f(n, p, 2)$ . Many special cases of  $f(n, p, q)$  lead to non-trivial problems (see, e.g., [1, 6, 7, 8]). One particularly interesting case is  $f(n, 4, 3)$ . In [2] it was observed that an easy application of the probabilistic method yields  $f(n, 4, 3) = o(n)$ . This was subsequently improved in [3] to  $f(n, 4, 3) = O(\sqrt{n})$  via the Local Lemma. The second author [5] then improved the upper bound further to  $e^{O(\sqrt{\log n})} = n^{o(1)}$ , and this is the current best-known upper bound. The lower

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bound follows from the well-known fact  $R_k(4) < k^{O(k)}$ , which implies that there is a constant  $c$  such that

$$f(n, 4, 3) \geq f(n, 4, 2) > \frac{c \log n}{\log \log n}.$$

Here we give the first improvement of this lower bound.

**Theorem 1.1.** *Let  $a \geq 1$  be fixed. There is a constant  $c$  depending on  $a$  such that, for all  $n \geq 2a$ ,*

$$f(n, 2a, a + 1) > \frac{c \log n}{\log \log \log n}.$$

Let  $R_k(p, q)$  be the minimum  $n$  such that every  $k$ -edge-colouring of  $K_n$  yields a copy of  $K_p$  with at most  $q - 1$  colours. Then  $R_k(p, q) \leq n$  implies that every  $k$ -edge-colouring of  $K_n$  yields a copy of  $K_p$  with at most  $q - 1$  colours. Therefore, in order to edge-colour  $K_n$  with every copy of  $K_p$  receiving at least  $q$  colours, we need at least  $k + 1$  colours. This means that  $f(n, p, q) > k$ . Our main result is

$$R_k(2a, a + 1) \leq c'(\log k)^{c'k}, \tag{1.1}$$

where  $c'$  is a positive constant depending only on  $a$ .

Let us argue that Theorem 1.1 follows from (1.1). First observe that (1.1) implies that

$$f(\lfloor c'(\log k)^{c'k} \rfloor, 2a, a + 1) > k.$$

Now suppose that  $a \geq 1$  is fixed and  $n$  is sufficiently large. Let  $k$  be the largest integer such that  $n \geq \lfloor c'(\log k)^{c'k} \rfloor$ . Then

$$f(n, 2a, a + 1) \geq f(\lfloor c'(\log k)^{c'k} \rfloor, 2a, a + 1) > k.$$

Note that as  $n \rightarrow \infty$ , we also have  $k \rightarrow \infty$ . All asymptotic notation below is taken as both of these parameters approach infinity. It suffices to solve for  $k$  in terms of  $n$ . By definition of  $k$ , we clearly have  $n = c'(\log k)^{c'k+O(1)}$ . Taking logs, this yields  $\log n = \Theta(k \log \log k)$  or

$$k = \Theta\left(\frac{\log n}{\log \log k}\right). \tag{1.2}$$

Taking logs of the previous expression yields  $\log \log n = \Theta(\log k + \log \log \log k) = \Theta(\log k)$ , and taking logs once again gives  $\log \log \log n = \Theta(\log \log k)$  or

$$\log \log k = \Theta(\log \log \log n).$$

Plugging this into (1.2) gives us a constant  $c$  such that  $k > c \log n / \log \log \log n$ , and this proves Theorem 1.1.

## 2. The set-up of the proof

Let  $a \geq 1$  be a positive integer throughout the rest of the paper.

Clearly,  $f(n, 2, 2) = 0$  for  $n \geq 2$ . The idea of our proof is to run induction on something related to  $a$ , but not on  $a$  itself, since in this case the scale would be too rough. To facilitate the induction, we introduce some definitions.

**Definition.** A  $k$ -edge-colouring  $\chi$  of  $K_n$  is a  $(\gamma_1, \dots, \gamma_k)$ -colouring if, for each  $i \in [k]$ , colour  $i$  does not appear in any subgraph  $K_{2\gamma_i+2}$  whose edges are coloured with at most  $\gamma_i + 1$  colours. In particular, if  $\gamma_i = 0$ , then colour  $i$  does not appear in any subgraph  $K_2$  whose edges are coloured with 1 colour, that is, does not appear at all.

Note that a  $k$ -edge-colouring of  $K_N$  is a  $(2a, a + 1)$ -colouring if and only if it is an  $(a - 1, \dots, a - 1)$ -colouring. Consequently, (1.1) states that if  $K_N$  admits an  $(a - 1, \dots, a - 1)$ -colouring with  $k$  colours, then  $N \leq c'(\log k)^{c'k}$ , where  $c'$  depends only on  $a$ .

**Definition.** For an edge-colouring  $\chi$  of  $K_n$  and a colour  $i$ , the *weakness*  $\gamma_i(\chi)$  of  $i$  is the minimum  $p$  such that colour  $i$  does not appear in a  $K_{2p+2}$  with at most  $p + 1$  colours. In particular,  $\gamma_i(\chi) = 0$  if and only if colour  $i$  is not present in  $\chi$  at all. Then  $\gamma(\chi) = \sum_{i=1}^k \gamma_i(\chi)$  is called the *weakness of  $\chi$* .

Note that by definition, each edge-colouring  $\chi$  of  $K_n$  is a  $(\gamma_1(\chi), \dots, \gamma_k(\chi))$ -colouring. Also by definition, the weakness of any  $(a - 1, \dots, a - 1)$ -colouring with  $k$  colours is at most  $(a - 1)k$ . Then (1.1) will follow from the following fact.

**Theorem 2.1.** *There is a positive constant  $c_1$  such that if  $\chi$  is an edge-colouring of  $K_N$ , then*

$$N \leq c_1(\log \gamma(\chi))^{c_1\gamma(\chi)}.$$

In all that follows, let  $\gamma_0$  be sufficiently large such that for  $\gamma \geq \gamma_0$ , we have  $\log \log \gamma > 1$ ,

$$\left(\frac{\log \gamma}{1000 \log \log \gamma}\right)^{15} > \frac{\log \gamma}{4500 \log \log \gamma}, \quad \text{and} \quad 10^4 \left(\frac{\log \gamma}{1000 \log \log \gamma}\right)^5 \log \log \gamma > \log 2\gamma.$$

Let

$$\epsilon = \epsilon_\gamma = \frac{1000 \log \log \gamma}{\log \gamma} < \frac{1}{100}, \quad t = t_\gamma = \lceil \epsilon^{-10} \rceil, \quad s = s_\gamma = \left\lceil \frac{(t-1)^{1/4}}{\sqrt{20}} \right\rceil > \frac{40}{\epsilon}. \quad (2.1)$$

Let  $c = R_{\gamma_0}(2\gamma_0)$  and define  $g(\gamma) = c(\log \gamma)^{1000\gamma} = c\gamma^{\epsilon\gamma}$ .

We will prove Theorem 2.1 by showing the following:

Suppose that  $\chi$  is a  $(\gamma_1, \dots, \gamma_k)$ -colouring of  $K_N$  and  $\gamma = \sum_i \gamma_i$ . Then  $N < g(\gamma)$ . (\*)

We will prove (\*) by induction on  $\gamma$  and  $k$ . If  $0 \leq \gamma \leq \gamma_0$ , then certainly  $N < c \leq g(\gamma)$ , so we may assume that  $\gamma > \gamma_0$ . If some  $\gamma_i = 0$ , then colour  $i$  cannot appear at all, so we apply induction on  $k$  since the bound does not depend on  $k$ . Thus, we may assume that each  $\gamma_i$  is positive; in particular,  $k \leq \gamma$ . We will also assume that  $N \geq g(\gamma) = c(\log \gamma)^{1000\gamma} = c\gamma^{\epsilon\gamma}$  and proceed to get a contradiction.

For a vertex  $x$  in a coloured  $K_n$  and a colour  $i$ , let  $d_i(x)$  denote the number of edges of colour  $i$  incident to  $x$ .

**Claim 2.2.** *For  $\gamma > \gamma_0$  and  $\epsilon, t, s$  defined as above, we have  $2t^{2s} < \gamma^{0.1s\epsilon-2}$ .*

**Proof.** Since  $2 < t^s$  and  $s > 400/\epsilon$ , the result follows from  $t^{3s} < \gamma^{s\epsilon/20}$ , which is equivalent to  $60 \log t < \epsilon \log \gamma$ . Since  $t < \epsilon^{-11}$ , we have

$$\frac{60 \log t}{\epsilon} < \frac{660 \log \epsilon^{-11}}{\epsilon} < \frac{660 \log \gamma}{1000 \log \log \gamma} \log \left[ \frac{\log \gamma}{1000 \log \log \gamma} \right] < \frac{\log \gamma}{\log \log \gamma} \log \log \gamma = \log \gamma. \quad \square$$

In the next section we prove that every dense bipartite graph  $F(V_1, V_2; E)$  contains a ‘large’ subset  $M$  of  $V_1$  in which every  $t$ -element subset has ‘many’ common neighbours in  $V_2$ . In Section 4 we prove the main result.

### 3. A probabilistic lemma

One of our main tools is the following lemma, essentially Lemma 1 in [4]. The proof uses ideas of Sudakov [9]. By  $N(A)$  we denote the set of common neighbours of all vertices in  $A$ .

**Lemma 3.1.** *Let positive integers  $m, n, h, d$  and reals  $\alpha, \beta$  be such that*

$$m^{d/h} < \beta. \tag{3.1}$$

*Let  $F = (V_1, V_2; E)$  be a bipartite graph with  $|V_1| = m, |V_2| = n$  such that*

$$\deg_F(v) \geq n/\alpha \quad \text{for each } v \in V_1.$$

*Then there is a subset  $V_1''$  of  $V_1$  with  $|V_1''| > m/\alpha^h - 1$  such that every  $d$ -tuple  $D$  of vertices in  $V_1''$  has at least  $n/\beta$  common neighbours.*

**Proof.** Let  $x_1, \dots, x_h$  be a sequence of  $h$  not necessarily distinct vertices of  $V_2$ , which we choose uniformly and independently at random and denote  $S = \{x_1, \dots, x_h\}$ . Denote by  $V_1'$  the set  $N(S)$  of common neighbours of vertices in  $S$ . Note that the size of  $V_1'$  is a random variable and that  $S \subseteq N(v)$  for every  $v \in V_1'$ . Then, using (3.1), we can estimate the expected size of  $V_1'$  as follows:

$$\mathbf{E}(|V_1'|) = \sum_{v \in V_1} \Pr(v \in V_1') = \sum_{v \in V_1} \left( \frac{|N(v)|}{n} \right)^h \geq m \alpha^{-h}. \tag{3.2}$$

On the other hand, by definition, the probability that a given set of vertices  $W \subset V_1$  is contained in  $V_1'$  equals  $(|N(W)|/n)^h$ . Denote by  $Z$  the number of subsets  $W$  of  $V_1'$  of size  $d$  with  $|N(W)| < n/\beta$ . Then by (3.1) the expected value of  $Z$  is at most

$$\mathbf{E}(Z) = \sum_{W \subseteq V_1 : |W|=d, |N(W)| < n/\beta} \Pr(W \subset V_1') \leq \binom{m}{d} \left( \frac{1}{\beta} \right)^h \leq m^d \left( \frac{1}{\beta} \right)^h < 1. \tag{3.3}$$

Hence, the expectation of  $|V_1'| - Z$  is greater than  $m \alpha^{-h} - 1$ , and thus there is a choice  $S_0$  of  $S$  such that the corresponding value of  $|V_1'(S_0)| - Z(S_0)$  is greater than  $m \alpha^{-h} - 1$ . For every  $d$ -tuple  $D$  of vertices of  $V_1'(S_0)$ , delete a vertex  $v_D \in D$  from  $V_1'(S_0)$ . The resulting set  $V_1''$  satisfies the lemma. □

### 4. Proof of the theorem

Call a  $t$ -set of vertices *rainbow* if its edges are coloured with at least  $10t^{3/2}$  colours.

**Claim 4.1.** *Suppose that  $n \geq \gamma > \gamma_0$ , the edges of  $K_n$  are coloured (with any number of colours) and  $d_i(x) \leq 2n\gamma^{-\epsilon/10}$  for each  $x \in V(K_n)$  and each colour  $i$ . Then the number of  $t$ -sets that are not rainbow is at most  $\binom{n}{t}/\gamma$ .*

**Proof.** First, let us estimate  $v(i, t, n)$ , the number of  $t$ -sets in  $K_n$  in which there is a vertex incident with at least  $s$  edges of colour  $i$  in this  $t$ -set. We can first choose the vertex, then choose  $s$  incident edges of colour  $i$  and include the other ends of these edges, and then add  $n - s - 1$  other vertices. This gives

$$v(i, t, n) \leq \sum_{x \in V(K_n)} \binom{d_i(x)}{s} \binom{n-1-s}{t-1-s} \leq n \binom{\frac{2n}{\gamma^{\epsilon/10}}}{s} \binom{n-1-s}{t-1-s} \leq \binom{n}{t} \gamma^{-s\epsilon/10} t^{2s}.$$

Similarly, let  $\psi(i, t, n)$  be the number of  $t$ -sets in  $K_n$  in which there is a matching of colour  $i$  of size at least  $s$ . Let  $e_i$  be the number of edges of colour  $i$ . Since

$$e_i \leq \frac{n}{2} \max_{x \in V(K_n)} d_i(x) \leq n^2 \gamma^{-\epsilon/10},$$

we have

$$\psi(i, t, n) \leq \binom{e_i}{s} \binom{n-2s}{t-2s} \leq \left(\frac{n^2}{\gamma^{\epsilon/10}}\right) \binom{n-2s}{t-2s} \leq \binom{n}{t} t^{2s} \gamma^{-s\epsilon/10}.$$

Now Claim 2.2 implies that

$$v(i, t, n) + \psi(i, t, n) \leq 2 \binom{n}{t} t^{2s} \gamma^{-s\epsilon/10} < \frac{1}{\gamma^2} \binom{n}{t}.$$

Suppose that a  $t$ -set  $T$  contains more than  $s^2$  edges of colour  $i$ , and let  $G_i$  be the graph of these edges. Either  $G_i$  has a vertex incident with at least  $s$  edges, or Vizing's theorem implies that  $G_i$  has a proper edge-colouring with at most  $s$  colours. In the latter case,  $G_i$  has a matching of size at least  $s^2/s = s$ . We have already shown that the number of  $t$ -sets that contain a monochromatic matching of size  $s$  or a vertex with  $s$  edges of the same colour is at most  $\binom{n}{t}/\gamma^2$ . Consequently, the number of  $t$ -sets that contain more than  $s^2$  edges of some colour is at most

$$k \binom{n}{t} / \gamma^2 \leq \binom{n}{t} / \gamma.$$

Each  $t$ -set not included above has at most  $s^2$  edges in each colour and therefore at least  $\binom{t}{2}/s^2$  colours. By the choice of  $s$ , this is at least  $10t^{3/2}$ . Hence the number of rainbow  $t$ -sets is at least  $(1 - 1/\gamma) \binom{n}{t}$ . □

**Claim 4.2.** *Let  $u \in V(K_N)$  and  $S = S(u) = \{j \in [k] : d_j(u) \leq N/\gamma^{1+\epsilon/2}\}$ . Then, for every  $i \in [k] - S$  and  $j \in [k]$ , the number of vertices  $x \in N_i(u)$  for which*

$$|N_j(x) \cap N_i(u)| \geq 2d_i(u)/\gamma^{\epsilon/10} \tag{4.1}$$

*is at most  $\gamma^{\epsilon\gamma-3}$ .*

**Proof.** Suppose the contrary. Then there are colours  $i \in [k] - S(u)$  and  $j \in [k]$  such that  $N_i(u)$  contains a set  $M$  of  $\lceil \gamma^{\epsilon\gamma-3} \rceil$  vertices  $x$  such that (4.1) holds. Consider the bipartite graph  $F(V_1, V_2; E)$  with partite sets  $V_1 = M$  and  $V_2 = N_i(u) - M$  whose edges are all edges of colour  $j$  in our  $K_N$  connecting  $V_1$  with  $V_2$ . By (4.1) and since  $|M| = \lceil \gamma^{\epsilon\gamma-3} \rceil < \lceil N/\gamma^3 \rceil < d_i(u)/\gamma^{\epsilon/10}$ , we have, for every  $v \in V_1$ ,

$$\deg_F(v) > \frac{2d_i(u)}{\gamma^{\epsilon/10}} - |M| > \frac{d_i(u)}{\gamma^{\epsilon/10}} > \frac{|V_2|}{\gamma^{\epsilon/10}}.$$

Observe that graph  $F$  satisfies the conditions of Lemma 3.1 with

$$m = |M|, \quad n = |V_2|, \quad h = \gamma/\sqrt{t}, \quad d = t, \quad \alpha = \gamma^{\epsilon/10}, \quad \beta = 2m^{t/h}.$$

Hence, there is a subset  $M'$  of  $V_1$  with

$$|M'| > m/\alpha^h - 1 \geq \gamma^{\epsilon\gamma-3}\alpha^{-h} - 1 > \gamma^{\epsilon\gamma-3}\gamma^{-(\gamma/\sqrt{t})\epsilon/10} - 1 > \gamma^{0.9\epsilon\gamma} \tag{4.2}$$

such that every  $d$ -tuple  $D$  of vertices in  $M'$  has at least  $n/\beta$  common neighbours.

We will construct a sequence  $M_0 \subset M_1 \subset \dots$  of subsets of  $M'$  as follows. Let  $M_0 = M'$ . Suppose that  $M_0, M_1, \dots, M_l$  are constructed. If there is a vertex  $x_{l+1} \in M_l$  and a colour  $j_{l+1}$  such that  $|N_{j_{l+1}}(x_{l+1}) \cap M_l| \geq |M_l|\gamma^{-\epsilon/10}$ , then we let  $M_{l+1} = N_{j_{l+1}}(x_{l+1}) \cap M_l$ ; otherwise we stop. Suppose that we stop at step  $q$ . Each colour  $i$  appears at most  $2\gamma_i + 1$  times in  $\{j_1, \dots, j_q\}$ , since otherwise we have a monochromatic  $K_{2\gamma_i+2}$ , which is forbidden. Consequently,  $q \leq \sum_i (2\gamma_i + 1) = 2\gamma + k \leq 3\gamma$ . From this and (4.2),

$$|M_q| > |M_0|(\gamma^{-\epsilon/10})^{3\gamma} = |M_0|\gamma^{-3\gamma\epsilon/10} > \gamma^{0.9\epsilon\gamma}\gamma^{-3\gamma\epsilon/10} = \gamma^{0.6\gamma\epsilon} > \gamma.$$

Hence, by Claim 4.1,  $M_q$  contains a rainbow  $t$ -tuple  $D$  (in fact it contains many). Let  $N_F(D) = U$ . By Lemma 3.1,  $|U| \geq n/\beta$ . Now suppose  $\ell$  is a colour that appears in  $D$ . Then the weakness of  $\ell$  within  $U$  is strictly smaller than  $\gamma_\ell$ , since if  $\ell$  appears in a  $K_{2p}$  within  $U$  that receives at most  $p$  colours, then this copy together with an edge of colour  $\ell$  from  $D$  yields a  $K_{2(p+1)}$  with at most  $p + 1$  colours (the only new colour is possibly  $j$ ). Therefore, the weakness of  $\chi$  when restricted to  $U$  is at most  $\gamma' = \gamma - 10t^{3/2}$ . Hence, by the induction hypothesis,  $|U| < g(\gamma') = c(\log \gamma')^{1000\gamma'}$ . Since  $|U| \geq n/\beta$ ,

$$n \leq \beta c(\log \gamma')^{1000\gamma'}.$$

On the other hand, since  $|M| < d_i(u)/2$ ,

$$n = |V_2| = d_i(u) - |M| > \frac{d_i(u)}{2} > \frac{N}{2\gamma^{1+\epsilon/2}}.$$

This gives

$$N < 2\gamma^{1+\epsilon/2}(2m^{t/h})c(\log \gamma')^{1000\gamma'} = 4\gamma^{1+\epsilon/2}m^{t\sqrt{t}/\gamma}c(\log \gamma')^{1000\gamma'} < \gamma^{2+\epsilon t^{3/2}}c(\log \gamma')^{1000\gamma'},$$

where the last inequality holds because  $m = |M| < \gamma^{\epsilon\gamma}$ . As  $N \geq g(\gamma) = c(\log \gamma)^{1000\gamma}$ , we get

$$(\log \gamma)^{1000\gamma} < \gamma^{2+\epsilon t^{3/2}}(\log \gamma')^{1000\gamma'} < \gamma^{2+\epsilon t^{3/2}}(\log \gamma)^{1000\gamma'}.$$

Taking logs, this reduces to

$$1000\gamma \log \log \gamma < (2 + \epsilon t^{3/2}) \log \gamma + 1000\gamma' \log \log \gamma.$$

Consequently,

$$(1000 \log \log \gamma) 10t^{3/2} < (2 + \epsilon t^{3/2}) \log \gamma = 2 \log \gamma + 1000t^{3/2} \log \log \gamma.$$

Simplifying, we obtain  $9000t^{3/2} \log \log \gamma < 2 \log \gamma$ . Finally, this yields

$$\left( \frac{\log \gamma}{1000 \log \log \gamma} \right)^{15} = \epsilon^{-15} \leq t^{3/2} < \frac{\log \gamma}{4500 \log \log \gamma},$$

which contradicts our choice of  $\gamma$ . □

**Claim 4.3.** *For every  $u \in V(K_N)$ , the number of rainbow  $t$ -sets on  $V(K_N) - \{u\}$  all of whose vertices are connected with  $u$  by edges of the same colour is at least  $0.3 \sum_{i=1}^k \binom{d_i(u)}{t}$ .*

**Proof.** Fix some  $u \in V(K_N)$ . Let  $S = \{i \in [k] : d_i(u) \leq N/\gamma^{1+\epsilon/2}\}$ . Then

$$\sum_{i \in S} \binom{d_i(u)}{t} \leq k \binom{\lfloor \frac{N}{\gamma^{1+\epsilon/2}} \rfloor}{t} \leq k \binom{\lfloor \frac{N}{k} \rfloor}{t} \gamma^{-\epsilon t/2} \leq 2\gamma^{-\epsilon t/2} \sum_{i=1}^k \binom{d_i(u)}{t}.$$

We added the factor 2 since  $d_1(u) + \dots + d_k(u) = N - 1$  and not  $N$ . Since  $t = \lceil \epsilon^{-10} \rceil$ , we have  $t\epsilon > 20$  and hence

$$\sum_{i \in S} \binom{d_i(u)}{t} \leq \gamma^{-10} \sum_{i=1}^k \binom{d_i(u)}{t}. \tag{4.3}$$

Now, let  $i \notin S$ . Let  $M$  be the set of vertices  $x \in N_i(u)$  such that, for some colour  $j$ , (4.1) holds. Let  $\bar{M} = N_i(u) - M$ . By Claim 4.2,

$$|M| < \gamma^{\epsilon\gamma-2} < \frac{N}{\gamma^2} < \frac{|N_i(u)|}{t}.$$

Hence, for the subgraph  $F$  of our  $K_N$  on  $\bar{M}$ , the conditions of Claim 4.1 are satisfied since  $|\bar{M}| > (1 - 1/t)d_i(u) > 0.9d_i(u) > \gamma$ . Thus, by Claim 4.1, at least  $(1 - 1/\gamma) \binom{|\bar{M}|}{t}$   $t$ -sets in  $\bar{M}$  are rainbow. Now

$$\frac{\gamma - 1}{\gamma} \binom{|\bar{M}|}{t} \geq \frac{\gamma - 1}{\gamma} \binom{d_i(u)(1 - 1/t)}{t}.$$

For large  $\gamma$ , the last expression is at least

$$0.9 \left( \frac{t-1}{t} \right)^t \binom{d_i(u)}{t} \geq \frac{1}{3} \binom{d_i(u)}{t}.$$

Combining this with (4.3), we finish the proof. □

By Claim 4.3, the total number of  $(t + 1)$ -sets  $\{u_0, u_1, \dots, u_t\}$  of vertices of  $V(K_N)$  such that the  $t$ -set  $\{u_1, \dots, u_t\}$  is rainbow and all edges from  $u_0$  to  $u_1, \dots, u_t$  are of the same colour is at least

$$0.3 \sum_{u \in V(K_N)} \sum_{i=1}^k \binom{d_i(u)}{t} \geq 0.3N \cdot k \binom{(N-1)/k}{t} \geq N \cdot (2k)^{1-t} \binom{N}{t}.$$

It follows that some rainbow  $t$ -set  $\{u_1, \dots, u_t\}$  is contained in at least  $N \cdot (2k)^{1-t}$  such  $(t+1)$ -sets. Let  $U$  be the set of all vertices  $u_0$  in these  $(t+1)$ -sets containing our chosen  $\{u_1, \dots, u_t\}$ . Then, for some  $1 \leq i \leq k$ , the size of the subset  $U_i$  of  $U$  that is connected with each of  $u_1, \dots, u_t$  by an edge of colour  $i$  is at least  $2N \cdot (2k)^{-t}$ . Since  $\{u_1, \dots, u_t\}$  is rainbow, it contains edges of at least  $10t^{3/2}$  colours. For every colour  $\ell$  that appears within  $\{u_1, \dots, u_t\}$ , the weakness of  $\ell$  when restricted to  $U_i$  is at most  $\gamma_\ell - 1$ . Hence, by the induction hypothesis,  $|U_i| \leq g(\gamma') = c(\log \gamma')^{1000\gamma'}$ , where  $\gamma' = \gamma - 10t^{3/2}$ . Since  $|U_i| \geq 2N/(2k)^t$  and  $N \geq g(\gamma)$ , we obtain

$$c(\log \gamma)^{1000\gamma} \leq N < (2k)^t c(\log \gamma')^{1000\gamma'} < (2k)^t c(\log \gamma)^{1000\gamma'}.$$

Dividing by  $c$  and taking logs,

$$1000\gamma \log \log \gamma < t \log 2\gamma + 1000\gamma' \log \log \gamma.$$

Consequently,

$$(1000 \log \log \gamma) 10t^{3/2} < t \log 2\gamma.$$

Plugging in the values of  $t$  and  $\epsilon$ , we obtain

$$10^4 \left( \frac{\log \gamma}{1000 \log \log \gamma} \right)^5 \log \log \gamma = 10^4 \epsilon^{-5} \log \log \gamma < 10^4 \sqrt{t} \log \log \gamma < \log 2\gamma.$$

This contradicts our choice of  $\gamma$  and completes the proof.  $\square$

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