#### Summing the largest prime factor over integer sequences

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#### Abstract

Given an integer  $n \ge 2$ , let P(n) stand for its largest prime factor. We examine the behaviour of  $\sum_{\substack{n \le x \\ n \in A}} P(n)$  in the case of two sets A, namely the set of r-free numbers and the set of h-full numbers.

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### 1 Introduction

Given an integer  $n \ge 2$ , let P(n) stand for its largest prime factor, with P(1) = 1. Even though this function is very chaotic as the values of P(n) alternate between small and large values as n varies, its average value over large intervals is more smooth and can be estimated.

The first published estimate regarding the sum  $\sum_{n \leq x} P(n)$  is due to Alladi and Erdős [1] as they proved that

(1.1) 
$$\sum_{n \le x} P(n) = \frac{\pi^2}{12} \frac{x^2}{\log x} + O\left(\frac{x^2}{\log^2 x}\right).$$

This result was later improved by De Koninck and Ivić [2] when they showed that, given any positive integer k, there exist computable constants  $c_2, \ldots, c_k$  such that

(1.2) 
$$\sum_{n \le x} P(n) = \frac{\pi^2}{12} \frac{x^2}{\log x} + c_2 \frac{x^2}{\log^2 x} + \dots + c_k \frac{x^2}{\log^k x} + O\left(\frac{x^2}{\log^{k+1} x}\right).$$

A natural question to ask is how the above formula changes if instead of summing P(n) over all natural numbers  $n \leq x$ , we restrict these numbers n to a particular subset A of  $\mathbb{N}$ . For this purpose, we will consider here two large families of integers, namely the set of r-free numbers and the set of h-full numbers.

Given an integer  $n \geq 2$ , write its prime factorisation as  $n = q_1^{\alpha_1} q_2^{\alpha_2} \cdots q_s^{\alpha_s}$ , where  $q_1 < q_2 < \cdots < q_s$  are primes and  $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \ldots, \alpha_s \in \mathbb{N}$ . Given fixed integers  $r \geq 2$  and  $h \geq 2$ , we say that n is a *r*-free number if  $\max(\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \ldots, \alpha_s) \leq r - 1$ , whereas we say that n is a *h*-full number if  $\min(\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \ldots, \alpha_s) \geq h$ . We will denote by  $\mathbb{F}_r$  the set of *r*-free numbers; amongst these sets, the sets  $\mathbb{F}_2$  of square-free numbers and the set  $\mathbb{F}_3$  of cube-free numbers are often mentioned in the literature. On the other hand, we will denote by  $\mathbb{P}_h$  the set of *h*-full numbers. Particular cases are the set  $\mathbb{P}_2$ , known as the set of powerful numbers or square-full numbers, and the set  $\mathbb{P}_3$ , the set of cube-full numbers.

In what follows we will make frequent use of the Riemann zeta function  $\zeta(s)$  defined by

$$\zeta(s) := \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^s} = \prod_p \left(1 - \frac{1}{p^s}\right)^{-1} \qquad (s > 1).$$

Let  $\mu_r(n)$  be the characteristic function of the *r*-free numbers, that is,

$$\mu_r(n) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n \text{ is } r\text{-free,} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise,} \end{cases}$$

implying in particular that its generating function is

(1.3)  
$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\mu_r(n)}{n^s} = \prod_p \left( 1 + \frac{1}{p^s} + \dots + \frac{1}{p^{(r-1)s}} \right)$$
$$= \frac{\prod_p \left( 1 - \frac{1}{p^{rs}} \right)}{\prod_p \left( 1 - \frac{1}{p^s} \right)} = \frac{\zeta(s)}{\zeta(rs)} \quad (s > 1).$$

Let  $\chi_h(n)$  be the characteristic function of the *h*-full numbers, that is,

$$\chi_h(n) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n \text{ is } h\text{-full,} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise,} \end{cases}$$

implying in particular that its generating function is

(1.4)  

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\chi_h(n)}{n^s} = \prod_p \left( 1 + \frac{1}{p^{hs}} + \frac{1}{p^{(h+1)s}} + \cdots \right)$$

$$= \zeta(hs) \prod_p \left( 1 - \frac{1}{p^{hs}} \right) \prod_p \left( 1 + \frac{1}{p^{hs}} + \frac{1}{p^{(h+1)s}} + \cdots \right)$$

$$= \zeta(hs) \prod_p \left( 1 + \frac{1}{p^{(h+1)s}} + \frac{1}{p^{(h+2)s}} + \cdots + \frac{1}{p^{(2h-1)s}} \right) \quad (s > 1).$$

Finally, let us mention that the counting functions  $\mathbb{F}_r(x)$  and  $\mathbb{P}_h(x)$  of these two families of numbers are well-known. These are, for fixed integers  $r \ge 2$  and  $h \ge 2$ ,

(1.5) 
$$\mathbb{F}_r(x) = \frac{1}{\zeta(r)} x + O\left(x^{1/r}\right),$$

(1.6) 
$$\mathbb{P}_{r}(x) = \gamma_{h} x^{1/h} + O\left(x^{1/(h+1)}\right)$$

for some positive constant  $\gamma_h$ . For a proof of (1.5) in the simplest case, that is for r = 2, see Theorem 8.25 in the book of Niven, Zuckerman and Montgomery [4]; for a proof of the general case, that is for any  $r \ge 2$ , see the survey paper of Pappalardi [5]. For a proof of (1.6), see the paper of Ivíc and Shiu [3], where in fact a much more accurate formula is proved.

# 2 Main results

For our first set A, we choose the set of r-free numbers  $\mathbb{F}_r$ . In this case we can prove the following.

**Theorem 1.** Let  $r \ge 2$  be a fixed integer. Then, given any positive integer k, there exist computable constants  $d_1, d_2, \ldots, d_k$  such that

(2.1) 
$$\sum_{\substack{n \le x \\ n \in \mathbb{F}_r}} P(n) = \sum_{n \le x} \mu_r(n) P(n) = d_1 \frac{x^2}{\log x} + d_2 \frac{x^2}{\log^2 x} + \dots + d_k \frac{x^2}{\log^k x} + O\left(\frac{x^2}{\log^{k+1} x}\right),$$

where in particular, in light of (1.5),

$$d_1 = d_1^{(r)} = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\mu_r(n)}{n^2} = \frac{\zeta(2)}{2\zeta(2r)}$$

**Remark 2.1.** In the case r = 2, that is, the case of square-free numbers, we have

$$d_1^{(2)} = \frac{\zeta(2)}{2\zeta(4)} = \frac{15}{2\pi^2} = 0.759909\dots$$

In the case r = 3, that is, the case of cube-free numbers, we have

$$d_1^{(3)} = \frac{\zeta(2)}{2\zeta(6)} = \frac{315}{4\pi^4} = 0.808446\dots$$

When choosing  $A = \mathbb{P}_h$ , we can prove the following general result.

**Theorem 2.** Let  $h \ge 2$  be a fixed integer. Then, given any positive integer k, there exist computable constants  $e_1, e_2, \ldots, e_k$  such that

(2.2) 
$$\sum_{\substack{n \le x \\ n \in \mathbb{P}_h}} P(n) = e_1 \frac{x^{2/h}}{\log x} + e_2 \frac{x^{2/h}}{\log^2 x} + \dots + e_k \frac{x^{2/h}}{\log^k x} + O\left(\frac{x^{2/h}}{\log^{k+1} x}\right),$$

where

$$e_1 = \frac{h}{2} \sum_{n \in \mathbb{P}_h} \frac{1}{n^{2/h}} = \frac{h}{2} \prod_p \left( 1 + \frac{1}{(p^h)^{2/h}} + \frac{1}{(p^{h+1})^{2/h}} + \cdots \right).$$

**Remark 2.2.** In the particular case of square-full numbers, we have, in light of (1.4) with h = 2 and s = 1,

$$e_1 = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{P}_2} \frac{1}{n} = \prod_p \left( 1 + \frac{1}{p^2} + \frac{1}{p^3} + \dots \right) = \frac{\zeta(2)\zeta(3)}{\zeta(6)} = 1.9436\dots$$

In the case of cube-full numbers, we find

$$e_1 = \frac{3}{2} \sum_{n \in \mathbb{P}_3} \frac{1}{n^{2/3}} = \frac{3}{2} \prod_p \left( 1 + \frac{1}{p^2} + \frac{1}{p^{8/3}} + \frac{1}{p^{10/3}} + \cdots \right) = 3.44967 \dots$$

## **3** Preliminary results

Let  $\pi(x)$  stand for the number of primes not exceeding x. Using the prime number theorem in the form

$$\pi(x) = \frac{x}{\log x} + \frac{1!x}{\log^2 x} + \frac{2!x}{\log^3 x} + \dots + \frac{(k-1)!x}{\log^k x} + O\left(\frac{x}{\log^{k+1} x}\right),$$

one can easily prove the following.

**Lemma 1.** Given any positive integer k, there exist computable constants  $a_2, \ldots, a_k$  such that

(3.1) 
$$\sum_{p \le X} p = \frac{1}{2} \frac{X^2}{\log X} + a_2 \frac{X^2}{\log^2 X} + \dots + a_k \frac{X^2}{\log^k X} + O\left(\frac{X^2}{\log^{k+1} X}\right).$$

We also have the following.

**Lemma 2.** Given fixed positive integers s and k, there exist computable constants  $c_{0,s}, c_{1,s}, \ldots, c_{k,s}$  such that

(3.2) 
$$\sum_{n \le \exp\{\sqrt{\log x}\}} \frac{1}{n^2 \log^s(x/n)} = \frac{c_{0,s}}{\log^s x} + \frac{c_{1,s}}{\log^{s+1} x} + \dots + \frac{c_{k,s}}{\log^{s+k} x} + O\left(\frac{1}{\log^{s+k+1} x}\right).$$

On the other hand, given a fixed integer  $r \geq 2$ , as well as fixed integers  $s, k \in \mathbb{N}$ , there exist computable constants  $d_{0,s}, d_{1,s}, \ldots, d_{k,s}$  such that

(3.3) 
$$\sum_{n \le \sqrt{x}} \frac{\mu_r(n)}{n^2 \log^s(x/n)} = \frac{d_{0,s}}{\log^s x} + \frac{d_{1,s}}{\log^{s+1} x} + \dots + \frac{d_{k,s}}{\log^{s+k} x} + O\left(\frac{1}{\log^{s+k+1} x}\right).$$

*Proof.* We only provide the proof of (3.3) since the proof of (3.2) is similar. Since we assumed that  $n \leq \sqrt{x}$ , we have that  $\frac{\log n}{\log x} \leq \frac{1}{2}$ . Therefore, for a fixed integer  $k \geq 1$  and all  $y \leq \frac{1}{2}$ , we may use the expansion

$$\frac{1}{1-y} = 1 + y + y^2 + \dots + y^k + O(y^{k+1})$$

to write that, in the case s = 1,

$$\frac{\mu_r(n)}{n^2 \log(x/n)} = \frac{\mu_r(n)}{n^2 \log x \left(1 - \frac{\log n}{\log x}\right)} = \frac{\mu_r(n)}{n^2 \log x} \left(1 + \frac{\log n}{\log x} + \dots + \frac{\log^{k-1} n}{\log^{k-1} x} + O\left(\frac{\log^k n}{\log^k x}\right)\right)$$
$$= \frac{\mu_r(n)}{n^2} \frac{1}{\log x} + \frac{\mu_r(n) \log n}{n^2} \frac{1}{\log^2 x} + \dots + \frac{\mu_r(n) \log^{k-1} n}{n^2} \frac{1}{\log^k x} + O\left(\frac{1}{\log^{k+1} x}\right).$$

Then, observing that for each integer  $j \ge 1$ , the corresponding series  $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\mu_r(n) \log^j n}{n^2}$  converges, estimate (3.3) in the case s = 1 easily follows. The case of an arbitrary  $s \in \mathbb{N}$  can be handled similarly.

**Lemma 3.** For each integer  $h \ge 2$ ,

(3.4) 
$$\sum_{\substack{m \le x \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_h}} \frac{1}{m^{2/h}} = \sum_{m \in \mathbb{P}_h} \frac{1}{m^{2/h}} + O\left(\frac{1}{x^{1/h}}\right)$$

and, for each fixed  $j \in \mathbb{N}$ ,

(3.5) 
$$\sum_{\substack{m \le x \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_h}} \frac{\log^j m}{m^{2/h}} = O(1).$$

*Proof.* First observe that, replacing the sum  $\sum_{\substack{m>x\\m\in\mathbb{P}_h}} \frac{1}{m^{2/h}}$  by a Stieltjes integral, using integra-

tion by parts and thereafter using the bound  $\mathbb{P}_{h}(t) = O(t^{1/h})$  provided by (1.6), we obtain that

(3.6) 
$$\sum_{\substack{m>x\\m\in\mathbb{P}_h}} \frac{1}{m^{2/h}} = \int_x^\infty \frac{1}{t^{2/h}} d\mathbb{P}_h(t) = \frac{\mathbb{P}_h(t)}{t^{2/h}} \Big|_x^\infty + \frac{2}{h} \int_x^\infty t^{-\frac{2}{h}-1} \mathbb{P}_h(t) dt$$
$$\ll \frac{1}{x^{2/h-1/h}} + \frac{2}{h} \int_x^\infty t^{1/h-1} dt \ll \frac{1}{x^{1/h}}.$$

Using (3.6), it follows that

$$\sum_{\substack{m \leq x \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_h}} \frac{1}{m^{2/h}} = \sum_{m \in \mathbb{P}_h} \frac{1}{m^{2/h}} - \sum_{\substack{m > x \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_h}} \frac{1}{m^{2/h}} = \sum_{m \in \mathbb{P}_h} \frac{1}{m^{2/h}} + O\left(\frac{1}{x^{1/h}}\right),$$

thus completing the proof of (3.4).

The proof of (3.5) can easily be established using the same technique as that employed to prove (3.4).

# 4 Proof of Theorem 1

First observe that

$$M(x) := \sum_{n \le x} \mu_r(n) P(n) = \sum_{p \le x} p \sum_{\substack{mp \le x \\ P(m) < p}} \mu_r(m)$$
$$= \sum_{p \le \sqrt{x}} p \sum_{\substack{m \le x/p \\ P(m) < p}} \mu_r(m) + \sum_{\sqrt{x} < p \le x} p \sum_{\substack{m \le x/p \\ P(m) < p}} \mu_r(m)$$
$$= M_1(x) + M_2(x).$$

It is trivial that

(4.1)

(4.2) 
$$M_1(x) \le \sum_{p \le \sqrt{x}} p \cdot \frac{x}{p} = x \, \pi(\sqrt{x}) \ll \frac{x^{3/2}}{\log x}.$$

To estimate  $M_2(x)$ , first observe that if  $p > \sqrt{x}$ , we have that x/p < p, in which case the condition P(m) < p appearing in the definition of  $M_2(x)$  can be dropped. Hence, inverting the sum over p with the sum over m, and then using Lemma 1 with  $X = \sqrt{x}$ , we obtain that

$$M_{2}(x) = \sum_{\sqrt{x} 
$$= \sum_{m \le \sqrt{x}} \mu_{r}(m) \sum_{p \le x/m} p - \sum_{m \le \sqrt{x}} \mu_{r}(m) \sum_{p \le \sqrt{x}} p$$
$$= \sum_{m \le \sqrt{x}} \mu_{r}(m) \sum_{p \le x/m} p + O\left(\frac{x^{3/2}}{\log x}\right)$$
$$= M_{3}(x) + O\left(\frac{x^{3/2}}{\log x}\right).$$$$

Gain using Lemma 1 but this time with X = x/m and thereafter formula (3.3) of Lemma 2, we obtain

$$M_{3}(x) = \sum_{m \leq \sqrt{x}} \mu_{r}(m) \left\{ \frac{1}{2} \frac{(x/m)^{2}}{\log(x/m)} + a_{2} \frac{(x/m)^{2}}{\log^{2}(x/m)} + \cdots + a_{k} \frac{(x/m)^{2}}{\log^{k}(x/m)} + O\left(\frac{(x/m)^{2}}{\log^{k+1}(x/m)}\right) \right\}$$

$$(4.4) = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{m=1}^{\infty} \frac{\mu_{r}(m)}{m^{2}} \frac{x^{2}}{\log x} + d_{2} \frac{x^{2}}{\log^{2} x} + \cdots + d_{k} \frac{x^{2}}{\log^{k} x} + O\left(\frac{x^{2}}{\log^{k+1} x}\right),$$

where we took the liberty to replace  $\sum_{m \le \sqrt{x}} \frac{\mu_r(m)}{m^2}$  by  $\sum_{m=1}^{\infty} \frac{\mu_r(m)}{m^2}$ , a justified move since

$$\sum_{m \le \sqrt{x}} \frac{\mu_r(m)}{m^2} = \sum_{m=1}^{\infty} \frac{\mu_r(m)}{m^2} - \sum_{m > \sqrt{x}} \frac{\mu_r(m)}{m^2}$$
$$= \sum_{m=1}^{\infty} \frac{\mu_r(m)}{m^2} + O\left(\int_{\sqrt{x}}^{\infty} \frac{dt}{t^2}\right)$$
$$= \sum_{m=1}^{\infty} \frac{\mu_r(m)}{m^2} + O\left(\frac{1}{\sqrt{x}}\right).$$

Finally, gathering (4.2), (4.3) and (4.4) in (4.1) completes the proof of Theorem 1.

# 5 Proof of Theorem 2

First, we write

(4.3)

$$U(x) := \sum_{\substack{n \le x \\ n \in \mathbb{P}_h}} P(n) = \sum_{\substack{p \le x^{1/h}}} p \sum_{\substack{mph \le x \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_h \\ P(m) \le p}} 1 = \sum_{\substack{p \le x^{1/h}}} p \sum_{\substack{m \le x/p^h \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_h \\ P(m) \le p}} 1$$

(5.1) 
$$= \sum_{\substack{p \le x^{1/(h+1)}}} p \sum_{\substack{m \le x/p^h \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_h \\ P(m) \le p}} 1 + \sum_{\substack{x^{1/(h+1)} 
$$= U_1(x) + U_2(x).$$$$

It follows from estimate (1.6) that

(5.4)

(5.2) 
$$U_{1}(x) \leq \sum_{p \leq x^{1/(h+1)}} p \sum_{\substack{m \leq x/p^{h} \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_{h}}} 1 = \sum_{p \leq x^{1/(h+1)}} p \mathbb{P}_{h}\left(\frac{x}{p^{h}}\right)$$
$$\ll \sum_{p \leq x^{1/(h+1)}} p \frac{x^{1/h}}{p} = x^{1/h} \pi(x^{1/(h+1)}) \ll \frac{x^{\frac{2h+1}{h(h+1)}}}{\log x}.$$

To evaluate  $U_2(x)$ , first observe that for  $p > x^{1/(h+1)}$ , we have that  $\frac{x}{p^h} < p$ , implying that in this case the condition  $P(m) \le p$  appearing in the second sum defining  $U_2(x)$  can be dropped and therefore that

$$U_{2}(x) = \sum_{x^{1/(h+1)} 
$$= \sum_{p \le x^{1/h}} p \sum_{\substack{mph \le x \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_{h}}} 1 + O\left(\frac{x^{\frac{2h+1}{h(h+1)}}}{\log x}\right)$$
$$= T(x) + O\left(\frac{x^{2/h}}{\log x}\right) = T(x) + O\left(\frac{x^{2/h}}{\log^{k+1} x}\right),$$
(5.3)$$

where we made use of (5.2) and the fact that  $\frac{2h+1}{h(h+1)} < \frac{2}{h}$ .

Inverting the two sums appearing in the definition of T(x), we can rewrite T(x) as follows.

$$T(x) = \sum_{\substack{m \le x \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_h}} \sum_{\substack{p^h \le x/m \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_h}} p = \sum_{\substack{m \le x \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_h}} \sum_{\substack{p \le (x/m)^{1/h}}} p \sum_{\substack{p \le (x/m)^{1/h}}} p + \sum_{\substack{\exp\{\sqrt{\log x}\} < m \le p^{1/h} \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_h}} \sum_{\substack{p \le (x/m)^{1/h}}} p + \prod_{\substack{\exp\{\sqrt{\log x}\} < m \le p^{1/h} \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_h}} \sum_{\substack{p \le (x/m)^{1/h}}} p$$
$$= T_1(x) + T_2(x).$$

Again, using the bound  $\mathbb{P}_h(t) \ll t^{1/h}$  ensured by estimate (1.6), we have, arguing as we did in Lemma 3,

$$T_{2}(x) \leq \sum_{\substack{\exp\{\sqrt{\log x}\} < m \le p^{1/h} \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_{h}}} \left(\frac{x}{m}\right)^{2/h} = x^{2/h} \sum_{\substack{\exp\{\sqrt{\log x}\} < m \le p^{1/h} \\ m \in \mathbb{P}_{h}}} \frac{1}{m^{2/h}}$$
$$= x^{2/h} \int_{\exp\{\sqrt{\log x}\}}^{x} t^{-2/h} d\mathbb{P}_{h}(t)$$

(5.5) 
$$\ll x^{2/h} \left( t^{-2/h} t^{1/h} \Big|_{\exp\{\sqrt{\log x}\}}^{x} + \int_{\exp\{\sqrt{\log x}\}}^{x} t^{-\frac{2}{h}-1} t^{1/h} dt \right) \\ \ll x^{2/h} \cdot \frac{1}{t^{1/h}} \Big|_{\exp\{\sqrt{\log x}\}}^{x} \ll \frac{x^{2/h}}{\exp\{\frac{1}{h}\sqrt{\log x}\}} \ll \frac{x^{2/h}}{\log^{k+1} x}.$$

Making use of Lemma 1 with  $X = (x/m)^{1/h}$  and thereafter of formula (3.2) of Lemma 2, we obtain

(5.6) 
$$T_{1}(x) = \sum_{\substack{m \leq \exp\{\sqrt{\log x}\}\\m \in \mathbb{P}_{h}}} \left\{ \frac{1}{2} \frac{(x/m)^{2/h}}{\frac{1}{h} \log(x/m)} + a_{2} \frac{(x/m)^{2/h}}{\frac{1}{h^{2}} \log^{2}(x/m)} + \cdots + a_{k} \frac{(x/m)^{2/h}}{\frac{1}{h^{k}} \log^{k}(x/m)} + O\left(\frac{(x/m)^{2/h}}{\log^{k+1}(x/m)}\right) \right\}$$
$$= e_{1} \frac{x^{2/h}}{\log x} + e_{2} \frac{x^{2/h}}{\log^{2} x} + \cdots + e_{k} \frac{x^{2/h}}{\log^{k} x} + O\left(\frac{x^{2/h}}{\log^{k+1} x}\right),$$

where we used the fact that, in light of estimate (3.4) of Lemma 3,

$$\frac{h}{2} \frac{x^{2/h}}{\log x} \sum_{\substack{m \le \exp\{\sqrt{\log x}\}\\m \in \mathbb{P}_h}} \frac{1}{m^{2/h}} = \frac{h}{2} \frac{x^{2/h}}{\log x} \left( \sum_{\substack{m=1\\m \in \mathbb{P}_h}}^{\infty} \frac{1}{m^{2/h}} - \sum_{\substack{m > \exp\{\sqrt{\log x}\}\\m \in \mathbb{P}_h}} \frac{1}{m^{2/h}} \right)$$
$$= \frac{x^{2/h}}{\log x} \frac{h}{2} \sum_{\substack{m=1\\m \in \mathbb{P}_h}}^{\infty} \frac{1}{m^{2/h}} \left( 1 + O\left(\frac{1}{x^{1/h}}\right) \right)$$

and where we used estimate (3.5) of Lemma 3 to estimate the other coefficients  $e_i$  appearing in (5.6).

Finally, gathering estimates (5.2), (5.3), (5.4), (5.5) and (5.6) in (5.1) completes the proof of Theorem 2.

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