

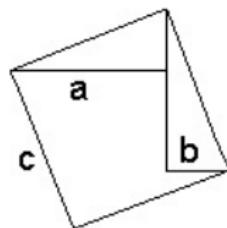
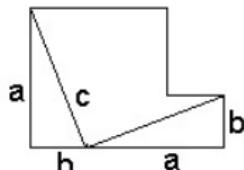
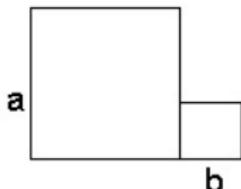
Beyond Fermat's Last Theorem

David Zureick-Brown

Slides available at <http://www.math.emory.edu/~dzb/slides/>

Amherst College
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$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$



Basic Problem (Solving Diophantine Equations)

Setup

Let f_1, \dots, f_m be polynomials with integer coefficients

E.g., $y^2 + 3x^3 - 7$,

or $x^2 + y^2 + 1$

Basic problem: solve them

Describe the set

$$V(f_1, \dots, f_m) = \{(a_1, \dots, a_n) \in \mathbb{Z}^n : \forall i, f_i(a_1, \dots, a_n) = 0\}.$$

Fact

Solving Diophantine equations is hard.

Hilbert's Tenth Problem

Theorem (Davis–Putnam–Robinson 1961, Matijasevič 1970)

There does not exist an algorithm solving the following problem:

input: integer polynomials f_1, \dots, f_m in variables x_1, \dots, x_n ;

output: YES / NO according to whether the set of solutions

$$\{(a_1, \dots, a_n) \in \mathbb{Z}^n : \forall i, f_i(a_1, \dots, a_n) = 0\}$$

is non-empty.

This is *known* to be true for many other cases (e.g., $\mathbb{C}, \mathbb{R}, \mathbb{F}_q, \mathbb{Q}_p, \mathbb{C}(t)$).

This is *still unknown* in many other cases (e.g., \mathbb{Q}).

Fermat's Last Theorem

Theorem (Wiles; Taylor)

For primes $p \geq 3$ the only integer solutions to the equation

$$x^p + y^p = z^p$$

are integer multiples of the triples

$$(0, 0, 0), \quad (\pm 1, \mp 1, 0), \quad \pm(1, 0, 1), \quad \pm(0, 1, 1).$$



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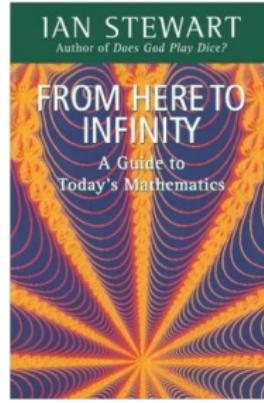
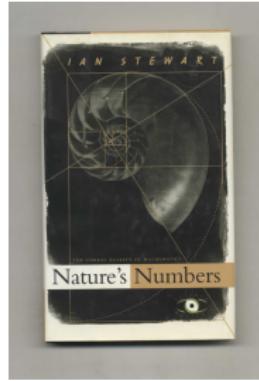
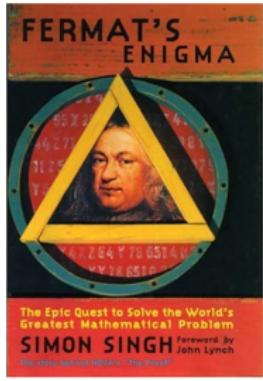
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Books



Basic Problem: $f_1(x_1, \dots, x_n), \dots, f_m(x_1, \dots, x_n)$

Qualitative:

- Does there **exist** a solution?
- Do there exist **infinitely many** solutions?
- Does the set of solutions have some **extra structure** (e.g., geometric structure, group structure).

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Quantitative

- How **many** solutions are there?
- How **large** is the **smallest** solution?
- How can we explicitly **find** all solutions? (With proof?)

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Implicit question

- Why do equations **have** (or fail to have) solutions?
- Why do some have **many** and some have **none**?
- What **underlying mathematical structures** control this?

Example: Pythagorean triples

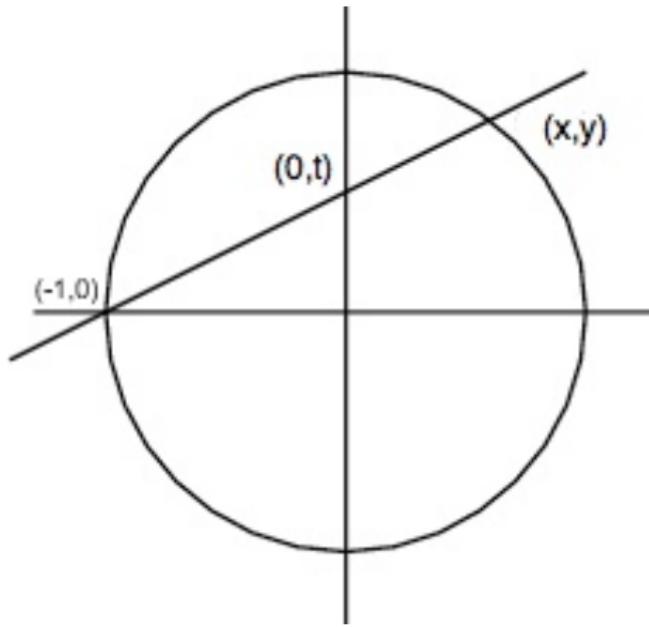
Lemma

The equation

$$x^2 + y^2 = z^2$$

has infinitely many non-zero coprime solutions.

Pythagorean triples



$$\text{Slope} = t = \frac{y}{x+1}$$

$$x = \frac{1-t^2}{1+t^2}$$

$$y = \frac{2t}{1+t^2}$$

Pythagorean triples

Lemma

The solutions to

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$

(with $c \neq 0$) are all multiples of the triples

$$a = 1 - t^2$$

$$b = 2t$$

$$c = 1 + t^2$$

The Mordell Conjecture

Example

The equation $y^2 + x^2 = 1$ has infinitely many solutions.

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Theorem (Faltings)

For $n \geq 5$, the equation

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Theorem (Faltings)

For $n \geq 5$, the equation

$$y^2 = f(x)$$

has only finitely many solutions if $f(x)$ is squarefree, with degree > 4 .

Fermat Curves

Question

Why is Fermat's last theorem believable?

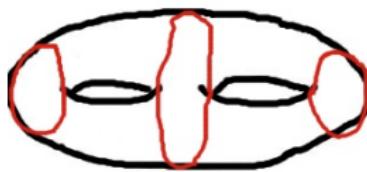
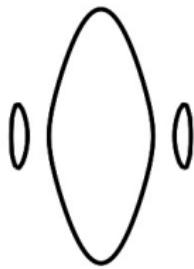
- ① $x^n + y^n - z^n = 0$ looks like a surface (3 variables)
- ② $x^n + y^n - 1 = 0$ looks like a curve (2 variables)

Mordell Conjecture

Example

$$y^2 = -(x^2 - 1)(x^2 - 2)(x^2 - 3)$$

This is a cross section of a two holed torus.



The **genus** is the number of holes.

Conjecture (Mordell, 1922)

A curve of genus $g \geq 2$ has only finitely many rational solutions.

Fermat Curves

Question

Why is Fermat's last theorem believable?

- ① $x^n + y^n - z^n = 0$ looks like a surface (3 variables)
- ② $x^n + y^n - 1 = 0$ looks like a curve (2 variables)
- ③ and has genus

$$(n - 1)(n - 2)/2$$

which is ≥ 2 iff $n \geq 4$.

Fermat Curves

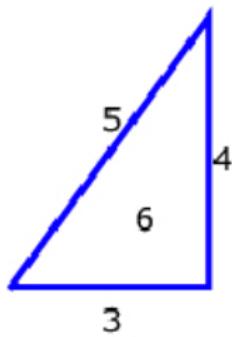
Question

What if $n = 3$?

- ① $x^3 + y^3 - 1 = 0$ is a curve of genus $(3 - 1)(3 - 2)/2 = 1$.
- ② We were lucky; $Ax^3 + By^3 = Cz^3$ can have infinitely many solutions.

Congruent number problem

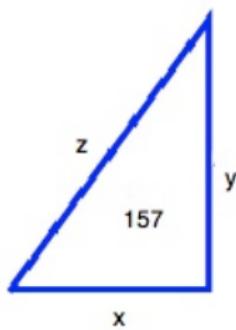
$$x^2 + y^2 = z^2, xy = 2 \cdot 6$$



$$3^2 + 4^2 = 5^2, \quad 3 \cdot 4 = 2 \cdot 6$$

Congruent number problem

$$x^2 + y^2 = z^2, xy = 2 \cdot 157$$



Congruent number problem

The pair of equations

$$x^2 + y^2 = z^2, \ xy = 2 \cdot 157$$

has **infinitely many** solutions. **How large** is the smallest solution? How many **digits** does the smallest solution have?

Assume the Birch–Swinnerton-Dyer conjecture

If you assume \$1,000,000 worth of conjectures, then the equations

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$$x = \frac{157841 \cdot 4947203 \cdot 52677109576}{2 \cdot 3^2 \cdot 5 \cdot 13 \cdot 17 \cdot 37 \cdot 101 \cdot 17401 \cdot 46997 \cdot 356441}$$

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The denominator of z has **44 digits!**

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“Next” solution has **176 digits!**

Back of the envelope calculation (as of 2011)

$$x^2 + y^2 = z^2, xy = 2 \cdot 157$$

- Num, den(x, y, z) $\leq 10 \sim 10^6$ many, **1 min** on Emory's computers.

Back of the envelope calculation (as of 2011)

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- Num, $\text{den}(x, y, z) \leq 10 \sim 10^6$ many, **1 min** on Emory's computers.
- Num, $\text{den}(x, y, z) \leq 10^{44} \sim 10^{264}$ many, **10^{258} mins = 10^{252} years**.

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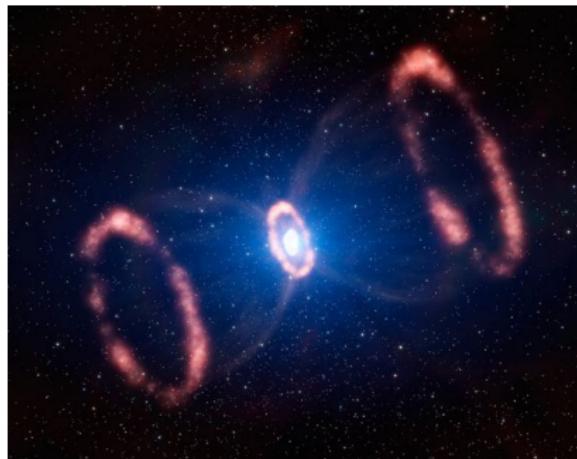
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- 10^9 many computers in the world – so **10^{243} years**
- Expected time until ‘heat death’ of universe – **10^{100} years.**



Fermat Surfaces

Conjecture

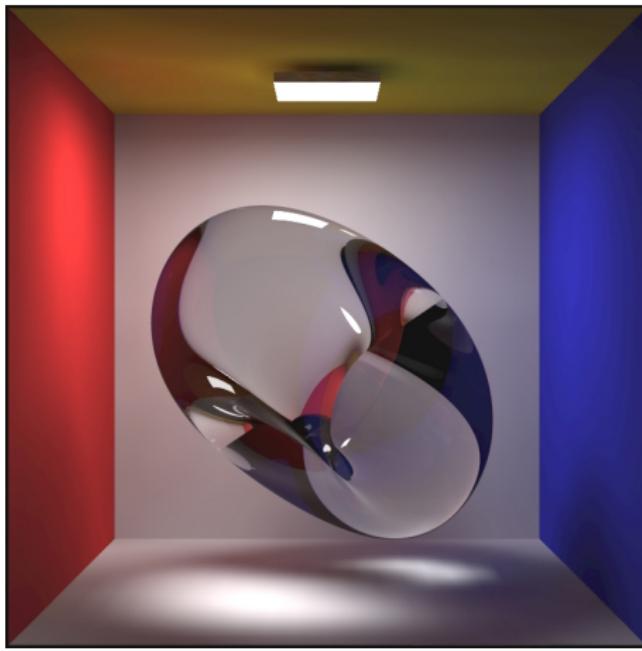
The only solutions to the equation

$$x^n + y^n = z^n + w^n, n \geq 5$$

satisfy $xyzw = 0$ or lie on the lines ‘lines’ $x = z$, $y = w$ (and permutations).

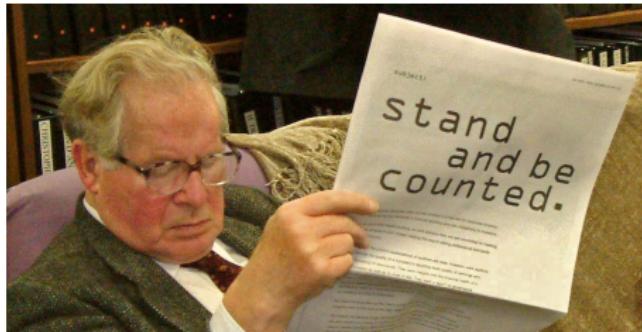
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- Two ‘obvious’ solutions – $(\pm 1 : 0 : 0)$.
- The next smallest solutions are $(\pm \frac{1484801}{1169407}, \pm \frac{1203120}{1169407}, \pm \frac{1157520}{1169407})$.

Problem

Find another solution. (Probably impossible.)

Back of envelope calculation

- ① **10^{16} years** to find via brute force.
- ② Age of the universe – **$13.75 \pm .11$ billion years** (roughly **10^{10}**).

“Generalized” Fermat equations

Theorem (Poonen, Schaefer, Stoll)

The coprime integer solutions to $x^2 + y^3 = z^7$ are the 16 triples

$$(\pm 1, -1, 0), \quad (\pm 1, 0, 1), \quad \pm(0, 1, 1),$$

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Generalized Fermat Equations

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What are the solutions to the equation $x^a + y^b = z^c$?

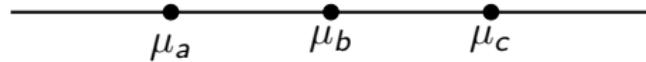
Generalized Fermat Equations

Problem

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Theorem (Darmon and Granville)

Fix $a, b, c \geq 2$. Then the equation $x^a + y^b = z^c$ has only finitely many coprime integer solutions iff $\chi = \frac{1}{a} + \frac{1}{b} + \frac{1}{c} - 1 \leq 0$.



Known Solutions to $x^a + y^b = z^c$ with $\frac{1}{a} + \frac{1}{b} + \frac{1}{c} < 1$

$$1^p + 2^3 = 3^2, \quad 2^5 + 7^2 = 3^4$$

$$7^3 + 13^2 = 2^9, \quad 2^7 + 17^3 = 71^2$$

$$3^5 + 11^4 = 122^2$$

$$17^7 + 76271^3 = 21063928^2$$

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Problem (Beal's conjecture)

These are all solutions with $\frac{1}{a} + \frac{1}{b} + \frac{1}{c} - 1 < 0$.

Generalized Fermat Equations – Known Solutions

Conjecture (Beal, Granville, Tijdeman–Zagier)

This is a complete list of coprime non-zero solutions such that
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Examples of Generalized Fermat Equations

Theorem (Poonen, Schaefer, Stoll)

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$$\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{7} - 1 = -\frac{1}{42} < 0$$

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$$\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{7} - 1 = -\frac{1}{42} < 0$$

$$\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{6} - 1 = 0$$

Examples of Generalized Fermat Equations

Theorem (Darmon, Merel)

Any pairwise coprime solution to the equation

$$x^n + y^n = z^2, n > 4$$

satisfies $xyz = 0$.

$$\frac{1}{n} + \frac{1}{n} + \frac{1}{2} - 1 = \frac{2}{n} - \frac{1}{2} < \frac{2}{4} - \frac{1}{2} = 0$$

Other applications of the modular method

Ideas behind the proof of FLT permeate the study of diophantine problems.

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Theorem (Bugeaud, Mignotte, Siksek; 2006)

The only Fibonacci numbers that are perfect powers are

$$F_1 = F_2 = 1, F_6 = 8, F_{12} = 144.$$

1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144, ...

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Theorem (Silliman–Vogt; 2013 REU)

0 and 1 are the only perfect powers in the Lucas sequence

$$L_1 = 0, L_2 = 1, \quad L_n = 3L_{n-1} - 2L_{n-2}.$$

0, 1, 3, 7, 15, 31, 63, 127, 255, 511, 1023, 2047, 4095, 8191, ..., $2^n - 1$, ...

Examples of Generalized Fermat Equations

Theorem (Klein, Zagier, Beukers, Edwards, others)

The equation

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$$(T/2)^2 + H^3 + (f/12^3)^5$$

- ① $f = st(t^{10} - 11t^5s^5 - s^{10})$,
- ② $H = \text{Hessian of } f$,
- ③ $T = \text{a degree 3 covariant of the dodecahedron}$.

(a, b, c) such that $\chi < 0$ and the solutions to $x^a + y^b = z^c$ have been determined.

$\{n, n, n\}$	Wiles, Taylor–Wiles, building on work of many others
$\{2, n, n\}$	Darmon–Merel, others for small n
$\{3, n, n\}$	Darmon–Merel, others for small n
$\{5, 2n, 2n\}$	Bennett
$(2, 4, n)$	Ellenberg, Bruin, Ghioca $n \geq 4$
$(2, n, 4)$	Bennett–Skinner; $n \geq 4$
$\{2, 3, n\}$	Poonen–Shaefer–Stoll, Bruin. $6 \leq n \leq 9$
$\{2, 2\ell, 3\}$	Chen, Dahmen, Siksek; primes $7 < \ell < 1000$ with $\ell \neq 31$
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$(2, 2n, 5)$	Chen $n \geq 3^*$
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$(2, 3, 10)$	ZB

Faltings' theorem / Mordell's conjecture

Theorem (Faltings, Vojta, Bombieri)

Let X be a smooth curve with genus at least 2. Then $\#X(\mathbb{Q}) < \infty$.

Example

For $g \geq 2$, $y^2 = x^{2g+1} + 1$ has only finitely many solutions with $x, y \in \mathbb{Q}$.

Conjecture (Lang, Vojta)

Let X be a variety of general type. Then $X(\mathbb{Q})$ is not (Zariski) dense.

Uniformity

Problem

- ① Given X , compute $X(\mathbb{Q})$ exactly.
- ② Compute bounds on $\#X(\mathbb{Q})$.

Conjecture (Uniformity)

There exists a constant $N(g)$ such that every smooth curve of genus g over \mathbb{Q} has at most $N(g)$ rational points.

Theorem (Caporaso, Harris, Mazur)

Lang's conjecture \Rightarrow uniformity.

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$B_g(\mathbb{Q})$	642	112	126	132	192	781	$16(g + 1)$

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Remark

Elkies studied K3 surfaces of the form

$$y^2 = S(t, u, v)$$

with lots of rational lines, such that S restricted to such a line is a square.

Main Theorem (uniformity for curves of small rank)

Theorem (Katz–Rabinoff–ZB)

Let X be *any* curve of genus g and let $r = \text{rank}_{\mathbb{Z}} \text{Jac}_X(\mathbb{Q})$. Suppose $r < g - 2$. Then

$$\#X(\mathbb{Q}) \leq 84g^2 - 98g + 28$$

Main tool

(p -adic) “analysis on fractals”.

Berkovich picture

