

# “Sporadic” torsion on elliptic curves

David Zureick-Brown

Amherst College

arXiv:2007.13929

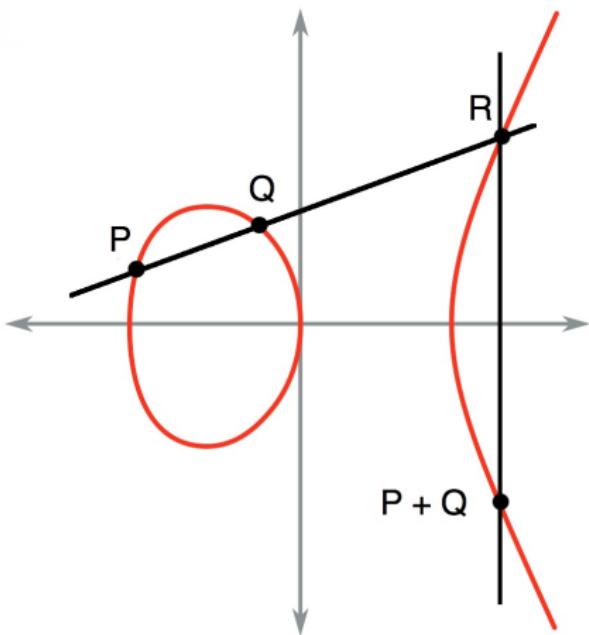
with Maarten Derickx,  
Anastassia Etropolski,  
Jackson S. Morrow,  
and Mark van Hoeij

Connecticut Summer School in Number Theory

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Slides available at <https://dmzb.github.io/>

# Elliptic Curves – addition



$$E: y^2 = x^3 + ax + b$$

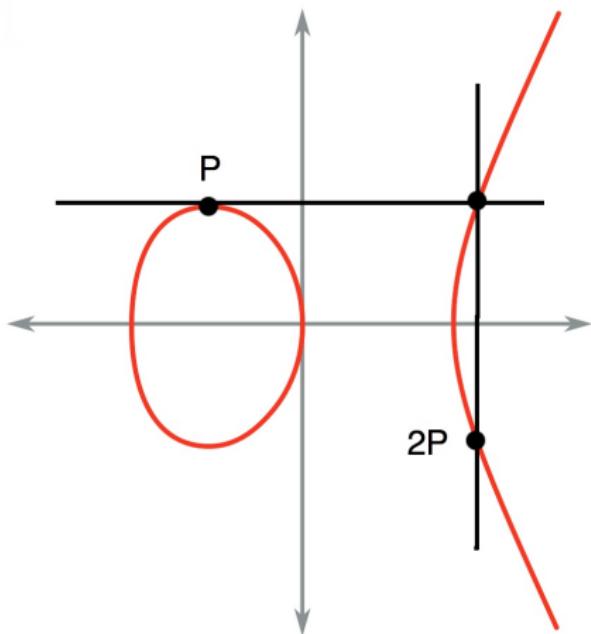
$$P = (x_0, y_0)$$

$$Q = (x_1, y_1)$$

$$R = (x_2, y_2)$$

$$P + Q = (x_2, -y_2)$$

# Elliptic Curves - duplication

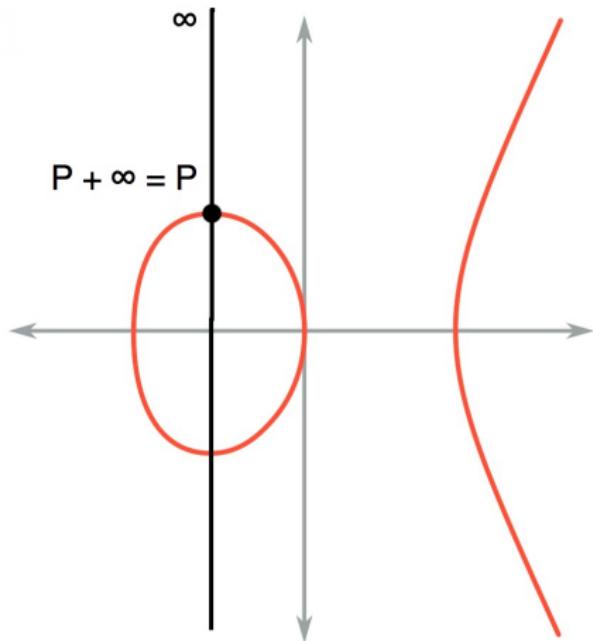


$$E: y^2 = x^3 + ax + b$$

$$P = (x_0, y_0)$$

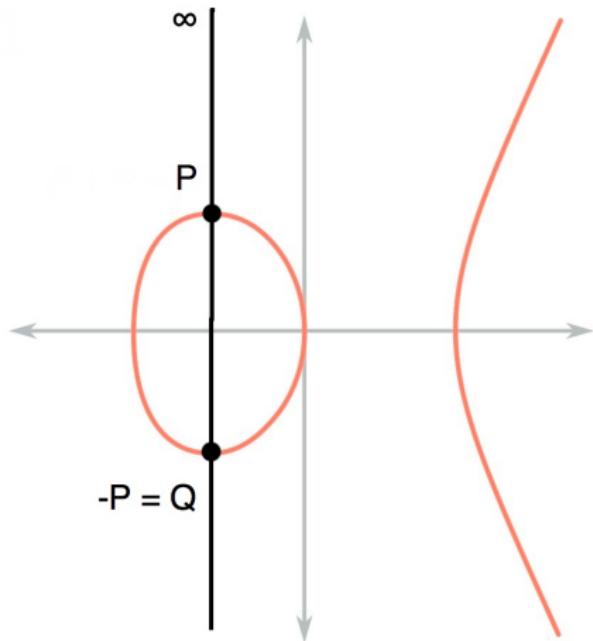
$$2P = (x_3, y_3)$$

# Elliptic Curves – identity



$$E: y^2 = x^3 + ax + b$$

# Elliptic Curves – inverses



$$E: y^2 = x^3 + ax + b$$

## Guiding question

What are the possibilities for the abelian group  $E(K)$ ?

## $E(K)$ as $K$ varies

### Complete fields

- $E(\mathbb{C}) \cong S^1 \times S^1 \cong \mathbb{C}/\Lambda$  (a torus).
- $E(\mathbb{R}) \cong S^1$  or  $S^1 \times \mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}$ .
- $E(\mathbb{Q}_p) \cong \mathbb{Z}_p \oplus T$

### Mordell–Weil theorem

$E(\mathbb{Q})$  is finitely generated, thus isomorphic to  $\mathbb{Z}^r \oplus T$

- $r$  is the **rank** of  $E(\mathbb{Q})$
- $T$  is the **torsion subgroup** of  $E(\mathbb{Q})$
- $T$  is a finite abelian group (thus a product of cyclic groups)

### Finite Fields

$E(\mathbb{F}_q)$  is finite, and  $\#E(\mathbb{F}_q) \leq q + 1 + 2\sqrt{q}$ .

## $E(K)$ as $K$ varies

If  $K \subset L$ , then  $E(K) \subset E(L)$  is a subgroup.

If  $K$  is a number field (e.g.,  $\mathbb{Q}(i)$ ), then

### Mordell–Weil theorem

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# Elliptic Curves – torsion subgroup

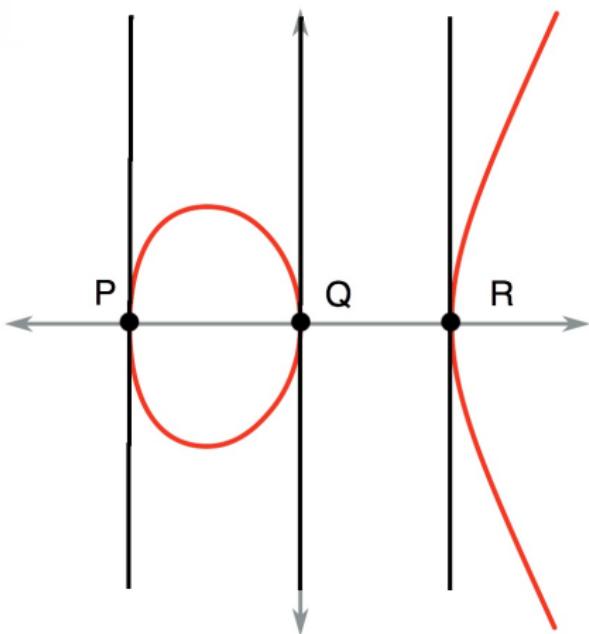
Let  $n \in \mathbb{Z}$  be an integer.

## Definition

The  $n$ -torsion subgroup  $E[n]$  of  $E$  is defined to be

$$\ker \left( E \xrightarrow{[n]} E \right) := \{P \in E : nP := P + \dots + P = \infty\}.$$

## Elliptic Curves – two torsion



$$E: y^2 = x^3 + ax + b$$

$$2P = 2Q = 2R = \infty$$

## Elliptic Curves – structure of torsion

Let  $E$  be given by the equation  $y^2 = f(x) = x^3 + ax + b$ .

- $E[n](\mathbb{C}) = E[n](\overline{\mathbb{Q}}) \cong (\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z})^2$ .

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- $E[n](\mathbb{Q})$  may be smaller,

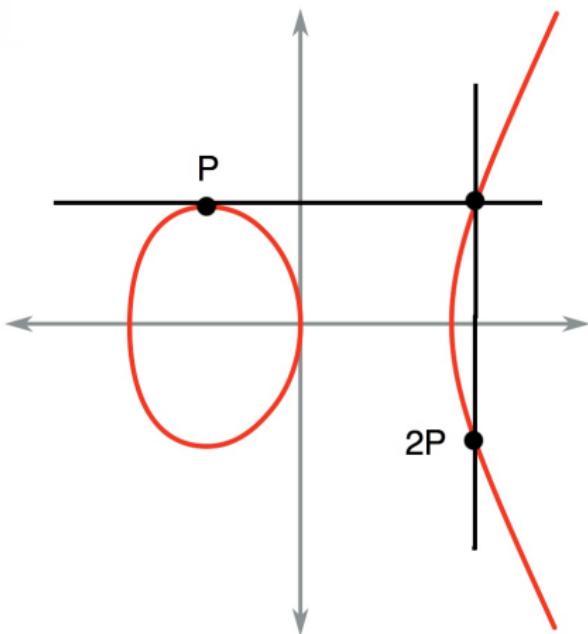
## Elliptic Curves – structure of torsion

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- $E[n](\mathbb{C}) = E[n](\overline{\mathbb{Q}}) \cong (\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z})^2$ .
- $E[n](\mathbb{Q})$  may be smaller, e.g.,

$$E[2](\mathbb{Q}) \cong \begin{cases} \{\infty\} & \text{if } f(x) \text{ has 0 rational roots} \\ \mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z} & \text{if } f(x) \text{ has 1 rational root} \\ (\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z})^2 & \text{if } f(x) \text{ has 3 rational roots} \end{cases}$$

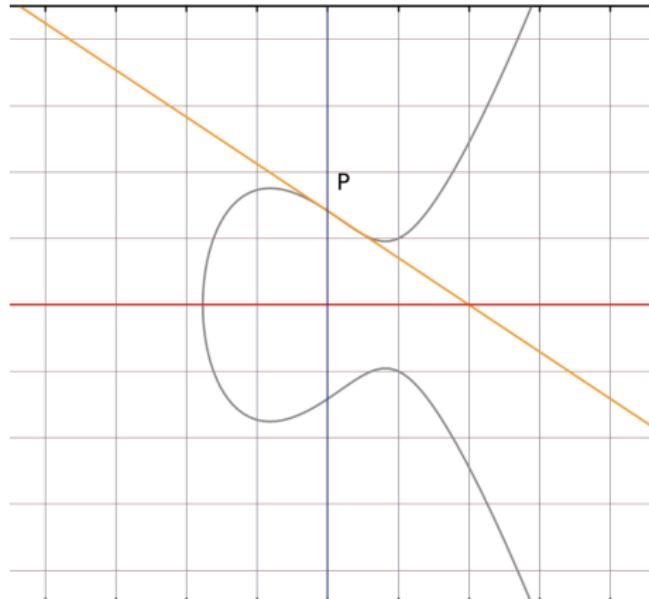
## 3-torsion and flexes



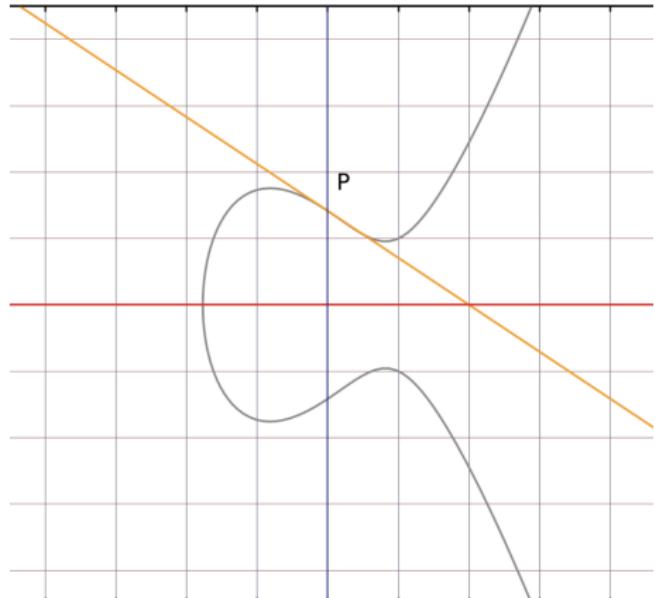
$$3P = 0$$

$$2P = -P$$

## 3-torsion and flexes



# 3-torsion and flexes

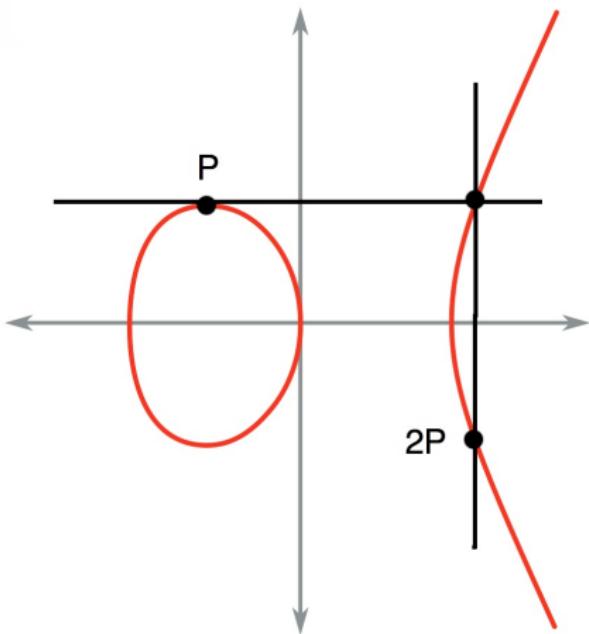


# How many flexes?

# How many flexes?



## 4 torsion



$$4P = 0$$

$$2P = -2P$$

# Mazur's Theorem

Let  $E/\mathbb{Q}$  be an elliptic curve.

## Theorem (Mazur, 1978)

$E(\mathbb{Q})_{tors}$  is isomorphic to one of the following groups.

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{Z}/N\mathbb{Z}, & \quad \text{for } 1 \leq N \leq 10 \text{ or } N = 12, \\ \mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z} \oplus \mathbb{Z}/2N\mathbb{Z}, & \quad \text{for } 1 \leq N \leq 4. \end{aligned}$$

# Quadratic Torsion

Theorem (Kamienny–Kenku–Momose, 1980's)

Let  $E$  be an elliptic curve over a quadratic number field  $K$ .  
Then  $E(K)_{\text{tors}}$  is one of the following groups.

- $\mathbb{Z}/N\mathbb{Z}$ , for  $1 \leq N \leq 16$  or  $N = 18$ ,
- $\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z} \oplus \mathbb{Z}/2N\mathbb{Z}$ , for  $1 \leq N \leq 6$ ,
- $\mathbb{Z}/3\mathbb{Z} \oplus \mathbb{Z}/3N\mathbb{Z}$ , for  $1 \leq N \leq 2$ , or
- $\mathbb{Z}/4\mathbb{Z} \oplus \mathbb{Z}/4\mathbb{Z}$ .

# Higher Degree Torsion

Let  $K/\mathbb{Q}$  have degree  $d$ .

## Theorem

If  $p \mid \#E(K)_{\text{tors}}$ , then:

$$(\text{Merel, 1996}) \quad p \leq d^{3d^2}$$

$$(\text{Oesterlé}) \quad p \leq (3^{d/2} + 1)^2 \quad (\text{if } p > 3)$$

**Problem:** Classify possibilities for  $E(K)_{\text{tors}}$  for  $K/\mathbb{Q}$  of degree  $d$ .

## Modular curves

The curve  $Y_1(N)$  parameterizes pairs  $(E, P)$ , where  $P$  is a point of exact order  $N$  on  $E$ .

Let  $M \mid N$ .

The curve  $Y_1(M, N)$  parameterizes  $E/K$  such that  $E(K)_{\text{tors}}$  contains  $\mathbb{Z}/M\mathbb{Z} \oplus \mathbb{Z}/N\mathbb{Z}$ .

## Modular curves via Tate normal form

Move a given point  $P$  to  $(0, 0)$  and change coordinates to put  $E$  in the form

$$y^2 + \textcolor{red}{a}xy + \textcolor{blue}{b}y = x^3 + \textcolor{blue}{b}x^2$$

The point  $P = (0, 0)$  may or may not be a torsion point.

The condition that  $nP = 0$  is an algebraic condition on  $a$  and  $b$ , and this gives you a curve.

## Modular curves via Tate normal form

### Example ( $N = 9$ )

$E(K) \supset \mathbb{Z}/9\mathbb{Z}$  if and only if there exists  $t \in K$  such that  $E$  is isomorphic to

$$y^2 + (\textcolor{red}{t - rt + 1})xy + (\textcolor{blue}{rt - r^2t})y = x^3 + (\textcolor{blue}{rt - r^2t})x^2$$

where  $r$  is  $t^2 - t + 1$ . The torsion point is  $(0, 0)$ .

### Example ( $N = 11$ )

$E(K) \supset \mathbb{Z}/11\mathbb{Z}$  if and only if there exist  $a, b \in K$  such that

$$a^2 + (\textcolor{blue}{b^2 + 1})a + b;$$

in which case  $E$  is isomorphic to

$$y^2 + (\textcolor{red}{s - rs + 1})xy + (\textcolor{blue}{rs - r^2s})y = x^3 + (\textcolor{blue}{rs - r^2s})x^2$$

where  $r$  is  $ba + 1$  and  $s$  is  $-b + 1$ .

# Mazur's Theorem

Let  $E/\mathbb{Q}$  be an elliptic curve.

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$E(\mathbb{Q})_{\text{tors}}$  is isomorphic to one of the following groups.

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## Modular curves:

- $Y_1(N)$  parameterizes  $(E, P)$  with  $P \in E[N]$  (of exact order  $N$ );
- $Y_1(M, N)$  parameterizes containments  $\mathbb{Z}/M\mathbb{Z} \oplus \mathbb{Z}/N\mathbb{Z} \subset E(K)_{\text{tors}}$ .

## Mazur:

$Y_1(N)(\mathbb{Q}) \neq \emptyset$  and  $Y_1(2, 2N)(\mathbb{Q}) \neq \emptyset$  iff  $N$  are as above.

# Rational Points on $X_1(N)$ and $X_1(2, 2N)$

Let  $X_1(N)$  and  $X_1(M, N)$  be smooth compactifications of  $Y_1(N)$  and  $Y_1(M, N)$ .

We can restate Mazur's Theorem as follows.

## Theorem (Mazur, 1978)

- $X_1(N)$  and  $X_1(2, 2N)$  have **genus 0** for **exactly** the  $N$  in Mazur's Theorem.
- In particular, there are **infinitely many**  $E/\mathbb{Q}$  with such torsion structures.
- If  $g(X)$  is **greater than 0**, then  $X(\mathbb{Q})$  consists **only of cusps**.

## Minimalism

The *simplest* thing that could happen does for these modular curves.

# Higher Degree Torsion

Let  $K/\mathbb{Q}$  have degree  $d$ .

## Theorem

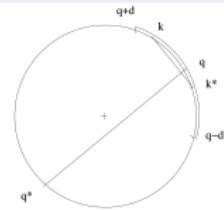
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$$(\text{Oesterlé}) \quad p \leq (3^{d/2} + 1)^2 \ (\text{if } p > 3)$$

Proof: **formal immersions** on  $\text{Sym}^{(d)} X_1(p)$ .

Expository reference: Darmon, Rebellodo (Clay 2006)



**Problem:** Classify possibilities for  $E(K)_{tors}$  for  $K/\mathbb{Q}$  of degree  $d$ .

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- The corresponding modular curves all have  $g(X) \leq 2$ .
- Each admits a **degree 2 map**  $X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ .
- This guarantees that  $\text{Sym}^{(2)} X(\mathbb{Q})$  is infinite.
- i.e., each has infinitely many quadratic points.

## Sporadic Points

Let  $X/\mathbb{Q}$  be a curve and let  $P \in \overline{\mathbb{Q}}$ . The **degree** of  $P$  is  $[\mathbb{Q}(P) : \mathbb{Q}]$ .

The set of degree  $d$  points of  $X$  is infinite if (and only if)

- $X$  admits a degree  $d$  map  $X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ ;
- $X$  admits a degree  $d$  map  $X \rightarrow E$ , where  $\text{rank } E(\mathbb{Q}) > 0$ ; or
- $\text{Jac}_X$  contains a positive rank abelian subvariety such that ...

Most  $\overline{\mathbb{Q}}$  points on curves arise in this fashion (by Riemann–Roch).

- We call outliers **isolated**.
- **Cusps and CM** points are often isolated on modular curves.
- An isolated point  $P$  on  $X$  is **sporadic** if there are only finitely points of  $X$  with the same degree as  $P$ .
- A sporadic point is **exceptional** if it is not cuspidal or CM.

See Bianca Viray's CNTA talk, linked [here](#).

# Cubic Torsion

## Theorem (Jeon–Kim–Schweizer, 2004)

*Let  $E$  be an elliptic curve over a cubic number field  $K$ . Then the subgroups which arise as  $E(K)_{tors}$  infinitely often are exactly the following.*

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{Z}/N\mathbb{Z}, & \quad \text{for } 1 \leq N \leq 20, N \neq 17, 19, \text{ or} \\ \mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z} \oplus \mathbb{Z}/2N\mathbb{Z}, & \quad \text{for } 1 \leq N \leq 7. \end{aligned}$$

## Minimalist conjecture

### Conjecture

*A modular curve  $X$  admits a non cuspidal, non CM point of degree  $d$  if and only if*

- $X$  admits a degree  $d$  map  $X \rightarrow \mathbb{P}^1$ ; or
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## Cubic Torsion

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### Theorem (Najman, 2014)

The elliptic curve  $162b1$  has a 21-torsion point over  $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta_9)^+$ .

### Theorem (Parent)

The largest prime that can divide  $E(K)_{\text{tors}}$  in the cubic case is  $p = 13$ .

# Classification of Cubic Torsion

## Theorem (Etropolski–Morrow–ZB–Derickx–van Hoeij)

*The only torsion subgroups which appear for an elliptic curve over a cubic field are*

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{Z}/N\mathbb{Z}, & \quad \text{for } 1 \leq N \leq 21, N \neq 17, 19, \text{ and} \\ \mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z} \oplus \mathbb{Z}/2N\mathbb{Z}, & \quad \text{for } 1 \leq N \leq 7. \end{aligned}$$

*The only sporadic point is the elliptic curve 162b1 over  $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta_9)^+$ .*

## Najman's example

# explained

Theorem (Najman, 2014)

The elliptic curve [162b1](#) has a 21-torsion point over  $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta_9)^+$ .

- Let  $H := \rho_{E,21}(G_{\mathbb{Q}})$ .
- Then  $H$  contains an index 3 subgroup  $H'$  such that  $H' \subset \left\langle \begin{pmatrix} 1 & * \\ 0 & * \end{pmatrix} \right\rangle$
- Thus there is a degree 3 map

$$X_{H'} \rightarrow X_H$$

and an induced map

$$X_H \rightarrow \text{Sym}^{(3)} X_{H'} \rightarrow \text{Sym}^3 X_1(21)$$

## Sporadic points on $X_1(N)$ with rational $j$ -invariant

Bourdon–Gill–Rouse–Watson (2020)

The odd degree isolated points on  $X_1(N)$  with rational  $j$ -invariant are

$$j = -3^2 \cdot 5^6 / 2^3, \text{ or } 3^3 \cdot 13 / 2^2$$

The first is the Najman cubic example, and the second corresponds to a degree 8 point on  $X_1(28)$ , found by Najman and González-Jiménez.

Bourdon–Hashimoto–Keller–Klagsbrun–Lowry-Duda–Morrison–Najman–Shukla, with Derickx–Van Hoeij (2023)

Strong evidence that the other other isolated  $j \in \mathbb{Q}$  are

$$j = -7 \cdot 11^3 \text{ or } 7 \cdot 137^3 \cdot 2083^3 \quad (\text{from } X_0(37)(\mathbb{Q})).$$

Rouse–Sutherland–Zureick-Brown–Voight

Conjectural classification of  $X_H(\mathbb{Q})$  for prime power level.

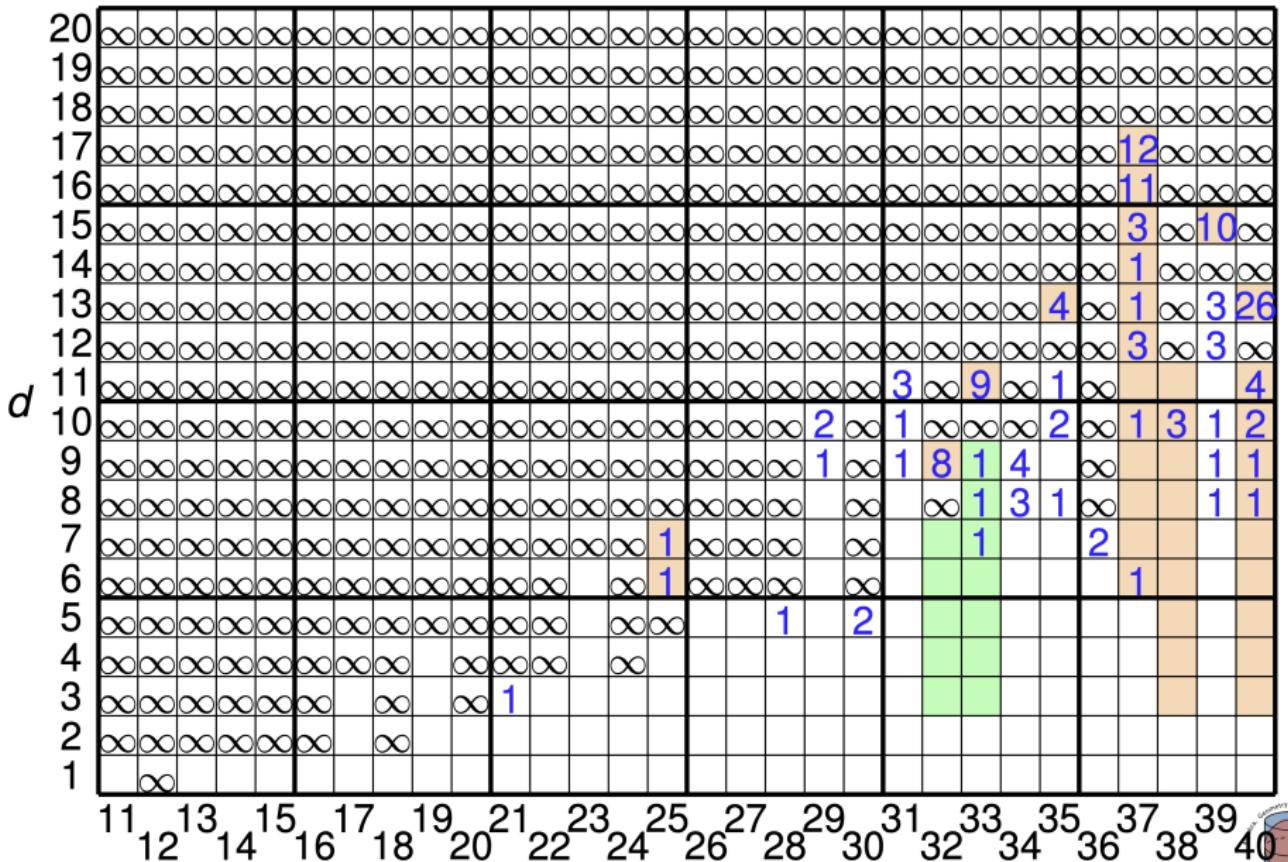
See Jeremy Rouse's CNTA talk, linked [here](#)

# Mazur - Rational Isogenies of Prime Degree (1978)

Let  $N$  be a positive integer. Examples of elliptic curves over  $\mathbb{Q}$  possessing rational cyclic  $N$ -isogenies are known for the following values of  $N$ :

$N$	$g$	$v$	$N$	$g$	$v$	$N$	$g$	$v$
$\leq 10$	0	$\infty$	11	1	3	27	1	1
12	0	$\infty$	14	1	2	37	2	2
13	0	$\infty$	15	1	4	43	3	1
16	0	$\infty$	17	1	2	67	5	1
18	0	$\infty$	19	1	1	163	13	1
25	0	$\infty$	21	1	4			

# More Sporadic Points on $X_1(N)$ , via Derickx–van Hoeij



# Classification of Cubic Torsion

## Theorem (Etropolski–Morrow–ZB–Derickx–van Hoeij)

*The only torsion subgroups which appear for an elliptic curve over a cubic field are*

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*The only sporadic point is the elliptic curve 162b1 over  $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta_9)^+$ .*

## Good fortune – many small level ranks are zero

Let

$$S_0 = \{1, \dots, 36, 38, \dots, 42, 44, \dots, 52, 54, 55, 56, 59, 60, 62, 63, 64, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 75, 76, 78, 80, 81, 84, 87, 90, 94, 95, 96, 98, 100, 104, 105, 108, 110, 119, 120, 126, 132, 140, 144, 150, 168, 180\},$$

$$S_1 = \{1, \dots, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 33, 35, 36, 42, 45\}.$$

### Theorem (Etropolski–Morrow–ZB–Derickx–van Hoeij)

- ①  $\text{rank } J_0(N)(\mathbb{Q}) = 0$  if and only if  $N \in S_0$ .
- ②  $\text{rank } J_1(N)(\mathbb{Q}) = 0$  if and only if  $N \in S_0 - \{63, 80, 95, 104, 105, 126, 144\}$ .
- ③  $\text{rank } J_1(2, 2N)(\mathbb{Q}) = 0$  if and only if  $N \in S_1$ .

# Strategy

## Previous work

- (Parent) handles  $p > 13$  (via formal immersions).
- (Momose)  $N = 27, 64$ .
- (Wang)  $N = 77, 91, 143, 169$
- (Bruin–Najman)  $N = 40, 49, 55$

## This leaves

- (rank 0)  $N = 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 39, 45$
- (rank 1)  $N = 65, 121$

## Rank 0

**“Direct” analysis:**  $J(\mathbb{Q})$  is finite, and in principle it is a straightforward Riemann–Roch computation to compute the preimages of the Abel–Jacobi map:

$$X^{(d)}(\mathbb{Q}) \xrightarrow{\iota} J(\mathbb{Q})$$

**Mordell–Weil Sieve:** For a finite set  $S$  of primes of good reduction, we compare the images of  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ :

$$\begin{array}{ccc} X^{(d)}(\mathbb{Q}) & \xrightarrow{\iota} & J(\mathbb{Q}) \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \alpha \\ \prod_{p \in S} X^{(d)}(\mathbb{F}_q) & \xrightarrow{\beta} & \prod_{p \in S} J(\mathbb{F}_p) \end{array}$$

**Big obstacle:** we need to know  $J(\mathbb{Q})$ !

# Minutiae

Level	Genus	Method of proof	Genus of quotient
32	17	Maps to another curve in this table	$g(X_1(2, 16)) = 5$
36	17	Maps to another curve in this table	$g(X_1(2, 18)) = 7$
22	6	Local methods at $p = 3$ (§6.1)	N/A
25	12	Local methods at $p = 3$	N/A
21	5	Direct analysis over $\mathbb{Q}$ (§6.2)	N/A
26	10	Direct analysis over $\mathbb{F}_3$	N/A
30	9	Direct analysis over $\mathbb{Q}$ on $X_0(30)$ (§6.4)	$g(X_0(30)) = 3$
33	21	Direct analysis over $\mathbb{Q}$ on $X_0(33)$	$g(X_0(33)) = 3$
35	25	Direct analysis over $\mathbb{Q}$ on $X_0(35)$	$g(X_0(35)) = 3$
39	33	Direct analysis over $\mathbb{Q}$ on $X_0(39)$	$g(X_0(39)) = 3$
(2,16)	5	Hecke bound + direct analysis over $\mathbb{F}_3$ (§6.5)	N/A
(2,18)	7	Hecke bound + direct analysis over $\mathbb{F}_5$	N/A
28	10	Hecke bound + direct analysis over $\mathbb{F}_3$ (§6.6)	N/A
24	5	Hecke bound + additional argument (§4.13) + direct analysis over $\mathbb{F}_5$	N/A
45	41	Hecke bound + direct analysis over $\mathbb{Q}$ on $X_H(45)$ (§6.7)	$g(X_H(45)) = 5$
65	121	Formal immersion criteria (§7.3)	$g(X_0(65)) = 5$
121	526	Formal immersion criteria (§7.1)	$g(X_0(121)) = 6$

# Formal Immersions

# Formal Immersions



## Formal immersions

- Classically, one takes  $p$  so large that any points of  $X_1(p)^{(d)}(\mathbb{Q})$  reduces to a cusp mod 3
- (possible by the Hasse bound).
- *formal immersion criterion*  $\Rightarrow$  the diagonal map is injective

$$\begin{array}{ccc} X^{(d)}(\mathbb{Q}) & \xrightarrow{\iota} & J(\mathbb{Q}) \\ \uparrow & & \nearrow ]\infty[ \\ & & A(\mathbb{Q}) \end{array}$$

## An insight popularized by Maarten Derickx

- This doesn't really have anything to do with modular forms
- (just differentials).
- For small  $N$ , if you understand what is going on well enough, you can modify the “criterion” to any individual case you need.

Thank you!

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$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{Z}/N\mathbb{Z}, & \quad \text{for } 1 \leq N \leq 21, N \neq 17, 19, \text{ and} \\ \mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z} \oplus \mathbb{Z}/2N\mathbb{Z}, & \quad \text{for } 1 \leq N \leq 7. \end{aligned}$$

The only sporadic point is the elliptic curve 162b1 over  $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta_9)^+$ .

Good fortune – many small level ranks are zero

Let

$$S_0 = \{1, \dots, 36, 38, \dots, 42, 44, \dots, 52, 54, 55, 56, 59, 60, 62, 63, 64, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 75, 76, 78, 80, 81, 84, 87, 90, 94, 95, 96, 98, 100, 104, 105, 108, 110, 119, 120, 126, 132, 140, 144, 150, 168, 180\},$$

$$S_1 = \{1, \dots, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 33, 35, 36, 42, 45\}.$$

Theorem (Etropolski–Morrow–ZB–Derickx–van Hoeij)

- ④  $\text{rank } J_0(N)(\mathbb{Q}) = 0$  if and only if  $N \in S_0$ .
  - ⑤  $\text{rank } J_1(N)(\mathbb{Q}) = 0$  if and only if  $N \in S_0 - \{63, 80, 95, 104, 105, 126, 144\}$ .
  - ⑥  $\text{rank } J_1(2, 2N)(\mathbb{Q}) = 0$  if and only if  $N \in S_1$ .

## Rank 0

Well,  $J(\mathbb{Q})$  is finite, and in principle it is a straightforward Riemann–Roch computation to compute the preimages of the Abel–Jacobi map:

$$X^{(d)}(\mathbb{Q}) \xrightarrow{\quad b \quad} J(\mathbb{Q})$$

**Mordell–Weil Sieve:** For a finite set  $S$  of primes of good reduction, we compare the images of  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ :

$$\begin{array}{ccc} X^{(d)}(\mathbb{Q}) & \xrightarrow{\iota} & J(\mathbb{Q}) \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \alpha \\ \prod_{p \in S} X^{(d)}(\mathbb{F}_q) & \xrightarrow{\beta} & \prod_{p \in S} J(\mathbb{F}_p) \end{array}$$

**Big obstacle:** we need to know  $J(\mathbb{Q})$ !

## More Sporadic Points on $X_1(N)$ , via Derickx–van Hoeij

