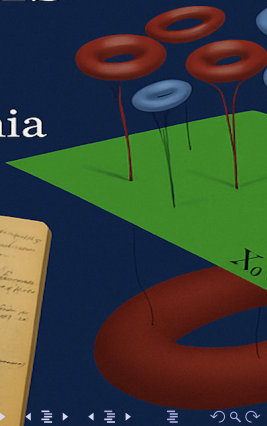
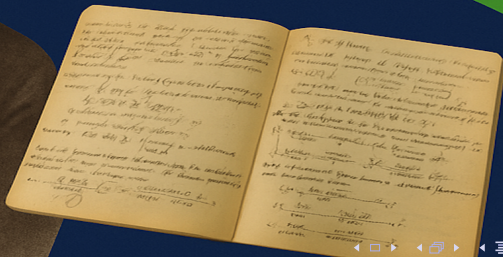
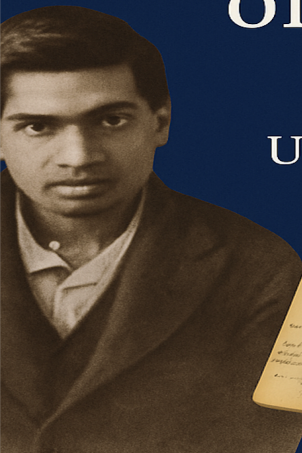




The secret Life of partitions

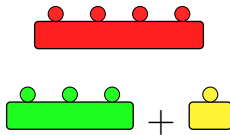
Ken Ono
University of Virginia



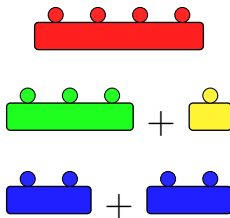
A UNIVERSE BASED ON CHILD'S PLAY



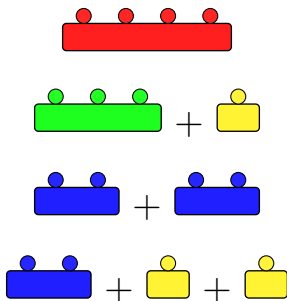
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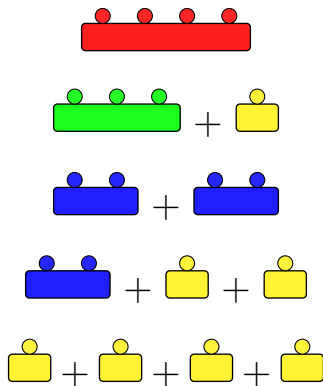
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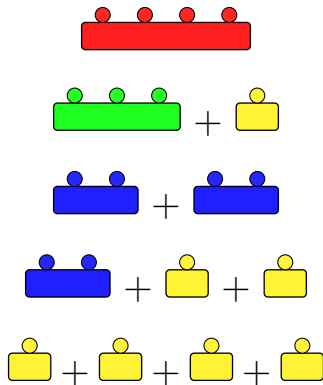
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A UNIVERSE BASED ON CHILD'S PLAY



We say that $p(4) = 5$.

A UNIVERSE BASED ON **child's play**

One easily sees that

$$5 = 4+1 = 3+2 = 3+1+1 = 2+2+1 = 2+1+1+1 = 1+1+1+1+1,$$

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and so we say that

$$p(5) = 7.$$

CAN WE COUNT THE “UNCOUNTABLE”?

- $p(2) = 2$
- $p(4) = 5$
- $p(8) = 22$
- $p(16) = 231$
- $p(32) = 8349$
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I dare you to count $p(200)$!



WHY DO PARTITIONS MATTER?

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- **Modular & automorphic forms** - generating functions, congruences, Galois representations and the “circle method”.
- **Symmetric functions & representation theory** - Young diagrams, Schur/Hall-Littlewood bases, hook-length formula, Frobenius characteristic, S_n characters,...
- **q -series & identities** - Rogers-Ramanujan, Andrews-Gordon, Bailey chains, product-sum transformations,...
- **Geometry & physics** - Hilbert schemes of points, Donaldson/Gromov-Witten/BPS state counts, VOA/partition functions in topological strings.
- **Probability & statistical mechanics** - Plancherel measure and limit shapes, plane partitions, Bose-Einstein combinatorics.

LEONHARD EULER'S "RECURRENCE"

THEOREM (EULER (1700s))

We have that

$$p(n) = p(n-1) + p(n-2) - p(n-5) - p(n-7) + p(n-12) + p(n-15) - \dots$$

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REMARK

The first 200 values were famously computed this way in 1915.

$$1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 15, 22, 30, 42, 56, 77, 101, 135, 176, \\ 231, 297, \dots, p(200) = 3972999029388.$$

HARDY-RAMANUJAN THEOREM (1918)

For large n , we have

$$p(n) \sim \frac{1}{4n\sqrt{3}} e^{\pi\sqrt{2n/3}}.$$

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Based on Cauchy's Integral Formula.

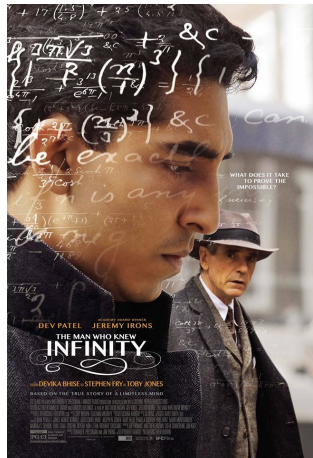
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n	$p(n)$	$\text{Approx}(n)$	$\frac{\text{Approx}(n)}{p(n)}$
10	42	48.104...	1.145...
20	627	692.384...	1.104...
30	5604	6080.435...	1.085...
40	37338	40080.080...	1.073...
50	204226	217590.501...	1.065...
\vdots	\vdots	\vdots	\vdots
∞	∞	∞	1

RADEMACHER'S "EPIPHANY"

THEOREM (RADEMACHER (1943))

If n is a positive integer, then

$$p(n) = 2\pi(24n - 1)^{-\frac{3}{4}} \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{A_k(n)}{k} \cdot I_{\frac{3}{2}} \left(\frac{\pi\sqrt{24n-1}}{6k} \right).$$

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REMARK

Perfectly good integers expressed as infinite convergent sums.

EXAMPLE (FIRST 10 APPROXIMATIONS FOR $p(1) = 1$.)

N	$P_N(1)$
1	1.13355...
2	1.00296...
3	0.97318...
\vdots	\vdots
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QUESTION

But can we actually use this formula to prove new theorems?

A finite algebraic FORMULA

THEOREM (BRUINIER-O (2011))

There is an explicit **Maass function** $P(\tau)$ on $X_0(6)$ for which

$$p(n) = \frac{1}{24n-1} \cdot (P(\alpha_{n,1}) + P(\alpha_{n,2}) + \cdots + P(\alpha_{n,h_n})).$$

The numbers $P(\alpha_{n,m})$ are **algebraic**.

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- (3) Proved using the method of “theta lifts”.

THE $p(1) = 1$ EXAMPLE.

If $\beta := 161529092 + 18648492\sqrt{69}$, then

$$\frac{1}{23} \cdot P\left(\frac{-1 + \sqrt{-23}}{12}\right) = \frac{1}{3} + \frac{\beta^{2/3} + 127972}{6\beta^{1/3}},$$

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and we find that

$$p(1) = 1 = \frac{1}{23} (P(\alpha_1) + P(\alpha_2) + P(\alpha_3)).$$

THE MAASS FUNCTION $P(\tau)$

DEFINITION

In terms of Eisenstein series and Dedekind's eta-function, we let

$$F(\tau) = \frac{E_2(\tau) - 2E_2(2\tau) - 3E_2(3\tau) + 6E_2(6\tau)}{2\eta(\tau)^2\eta(2\tau)^2\eta(3\tau)^2\eta(6\tau)^2}.$$

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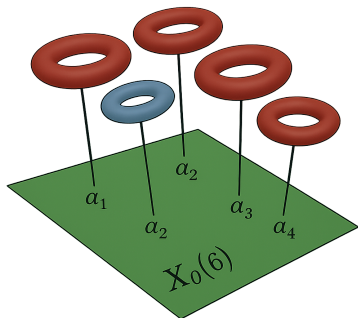
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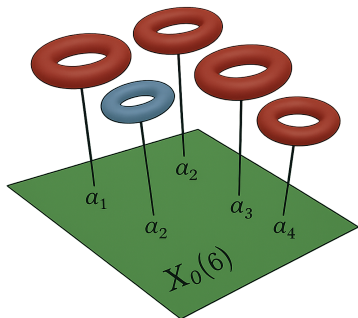
ANSWER

Elliptic curve moduli.

A CARTOON



A CARTOON



$$\mathbb{T}^2 \cong E(\mathbb{C})$$

$$\{\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \alpha_3, \alpha_4, \dots\} \subset X_0(6)$$

What are $P(\alpha_{n,1}), P(\alpha_{n,2}), \dots$?

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- **Forgetting the level:** Forgetting C , we have the map

$$j : X_0(6) \longrightarrow X(1) \quad (E, C) \longmapsto j(E).$$

WHAT DO THE CM POINTS α REPRESENT?

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THEOREM (O, 2025)

*For each n , there is a **modular function** $F_n(\tau)$ on $X_0(6)$ such that, for the CM points $\{\alpha_{n,1}, \dots, \alpha_{n,h_n}\}$, we have*

$$F_n(\alpha_{n,j}) = P(\alpha_{n,j}) \quad \text{for all } j.$$

SKETCH OF THE PROOF.

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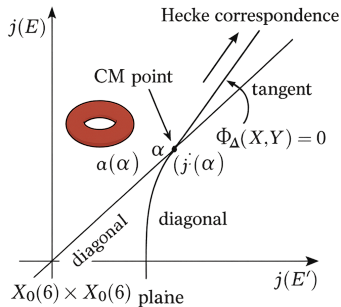
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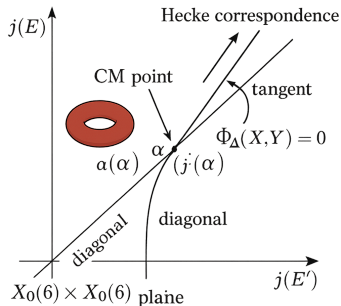
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- ⑤ This gives F_n . □

CM VALUES AS TANGENTS



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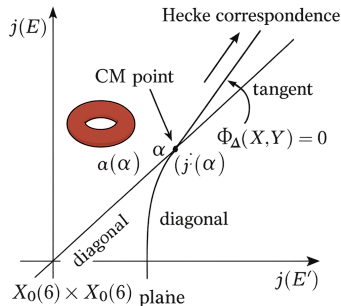


THEOREM (CM TANGENT (O))

If $J = j(\alpha_Q)$ and $\Phi_{\Delta_n}(X, Y)$ is the modular polynomial, then

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REMARK

The Maass value $P(\alpha_Q)$ is essentially the tangent of the Hecke correspondence along the diagonal at (J, J) in $X_0(1) \times X_0(1)$.

NEW ARITHMETIC FORMULA FOR $p(n)$

THEOREM (O (2025))

If $\Delta = 1 - 24n < 0$ and \mathcal{A}_Δ is the CM packet on $X_0(6)$, then

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REMARK

We can and will use this formula to prove new theorems!

YIN AND YANG



That was the “Yin” part of the story of $p(n)$.

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Turning to the “Yang”...

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Let $\text{Prop}_2(N) :=$ proportion of the first N values that are even.

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CONJECTURE

Half of the partition numbers are even.

HOW OFTEN IS $p(n)$ A MULTIPLE OF 3?

N	$\text{Prop}_3(N)$
800	0.334...
1,600	0.314...
2,400	0.319...
3,200	0.331...
\vdots	\vdots

HOW OFTEN IS $p(n)$ A MULTIPLE OF 3?

N	$\text{Prop}_3(N)$
800	0.334...
1,600	0.314...
2,400	0.319...
3,200	0.331...
\vdots	\vdots

CONJECTURE

One third of the partition numbers are multiples of 3.

HOW OFTEN IS $p(n)$ A MULTIPLE OF 5?

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N	$\text{Prop}_5(N)$
500	0.336...
1,000	0.342...
1,500	0.348...
2,000	0.346...
\vdots	\vdots

HOW OFTEN IS $p(n)$ A MULTIPLE OF 5?

N	$\text{Prop}_5(N)$
500	0.336...
1,000	0.342...
1,500	0.348...
2,000	0.346...
\vdots	\vdots

QUESTION

What the heck?

RAMANUJAN'S THEOREM

THEOREM (RAMANUJAN (1915))

For every n we have

$p(5n + 4)$ is a multiple of 5,

$p(7n + 5)$ is a multiple of 7,

$p(11n + 6)$ is a multiple of 11.

A TANTALYZING AND ENIGMATIC QUOTE

"I have proved... that

$$\begin{aligned}p(5n + 4) &\equiv 0 \pmod{5}, \\p(7n + 5) &\equiv 0 \pmod{7}, \\p(11n + 6) &\equiv 0 \pmod{11}.\end{aligned}$$

*There appear to be **corresponding properties** in which the moduli are powers of 5, 7, or 11..., and **no simple properties** for any moduli involving primes other than these three."*

Ramanujan (1919)

“CORRESPONDING PROPERTIES”

Ramanujan, Watson (1938), and Atkin (1967) proved:

THEOREM (RAMANUJAN'S CONGRUENCES)

If $1 \leq \delta_\ell(m) < \ell^m$ satisfies $24\delta_\ell(m) \equiv 1 \pmod{\ell^m}$, then

$$p(5^m n + \delta_5(m)) \equiv 0 \pmod{5^m},$$

$$p(7^m n + \delta_7(m)) \equiv 0 \pmod{7^{\lfloor \frac{m+2}{2} \rfloor}},$$

$$p(11^m n + \delta_{11}(m)) \equiv 0 \pmod{11^m}.$$

MYSTERY

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*What did Ramanujan mean when he said
“...and **no simple** properties for any moduli involving primes
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THEOREM (RADU, 2011)

There are no arithmetic progressions $An + B$ for which

$$p(An + B) \equiv 0 \pmod{2} \quad \text{or} \quad p(An + B) \equiv 0 \pmod{3}.$$

MORE ON THE MYSTERY

THEOREM (AHLGREN AND BOYLAN, 2005)

The only (ℓ, a) for which

$$p(\ell n + a) \equiv 0 \pmod{\ell},$$

are $(5, 4)$, $(7, 5)$, and $(11, 6)$.

NOT SO **simple** PROPERTIES

THEOREM (O, 2000)

*For primes $Q \geq 5$, there are **infinitely many** progressions $An + B$ for which*

$$p(An + B) \equiv 0 \pmod{Q}.$$

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Examples. For example, we have:

$$p(48037937n + 1122838) \equiv 0 \pmod{17},$$

$$p(1977147619n + 815655) \equiv 0 \pmod{19},$$

$$p(14375n + 3474) \equiv 0 \pmod{23},$$

$$p(348104768909n + 43819835) \equiv 0 \pmod{29},$$

$$p(4063467631n + 30064597) \equiv 0 \pmod{31}.$$

SUPERSINGULAR (E, C)

DEFINITION (SUPERSINGULARITY)

Let k be a field of char $p > 0$. An elliptic curve E/k is *supersingular* if $E[p](\bar{k}) = \{0\}$.

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If E/\mathbb{C} have CM by a \mathcal{O}_{-D} and $(\frac{-D}{p}) \in \{0, -1\}$, then \bar{E} is supersingular.

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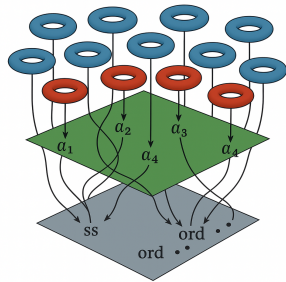


Illustration of CM points
descending to the
ordinary/supersingular layers.

UNIVERSAL MOD ℓ CONGRUENCE ($\ell \geq 5$)

THEOREM (O (2025))

If $\ell \geq 5$ is prime and $\left(\frac{\Delta_n}{\ell}\right) = -1$, then

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CONGRUENCES VIA CM TANGENTS

THEOREM (RAMANJAN'S CONGRUENCES)

For each integer $j \geq 1$ there exist residue classes $\beta_m(j)$ such that

$$p(5^j n + \beta_5(j)) \equiv 0 \pmod{5^j},$$

$$p(7^j n + \beta_7(j)) \equiv 0 \pmod{7^{\lfloor j/2 \rfloor + 1}},$$

$$p(11^j n + \beta_{11}(j)) \equiv 0 \pmod{11^j}.$$

Here each $\beta_m(j)$ is characterized by $24\beta_m(j) \equiv 1 \pmod{m^j}$.

SKETCH OF PROOF RAMANUJAN'S CONGRUENCES

- 1 **Replace P by a modular function.** For each n , there is a modular function F_n on $X_0(6)$ with $F_n(\alpha) = P(\alpha)$ for every CM point α in the packet.

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- ➍ **Consequence.** We study F_n (hence P) modulo ℓ *entirely on the supersingular locus* of $X_0(6)$ without pathologies.

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- 5 Ramanujan's congruences have $\ell \mid \Delta_n$ which is ramification.

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$$-\Delta_n p(n) = \sum_i \underbrace{h_{\Delta_n}(E_i, C_i)}_{\# \text{ optimal embeddings}} \cdot \underbrace{P^{(\ell)}(E_i, C_i)}_{\text{reduced CM invariant}}$$

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- ⑧ **U_ℓ -contraction + growth of counts.** Raising the conductor multiplies the **counts** by ℓ , while the Hecke operator U_ℓ contracts the invariant side modulo ℓ .
- ⑨ **Prime powers.** Combining the ℓ -fold growth of the **counts** with the U_ℓ -contraction yields the congruences.

□

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CONJECTURE (O)

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REMARKS

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REMARKS

- ❶ $(O \oplus \text{Radu})$ *True for $\deg(f) = 1$.*
- ❷ *If $\deg(f) \geq 3$, then we have no ideas.*

SPECIAL QUADRATIC POLYNOMIALS

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if there is at least one such m . Furthermore, the smallest m (if any) satisfies $m \leq 12h(-D) + 2$.



Class Number

NEW THEOREM ON PARITY

THEOREM (O (2025))

If $D \equiv 23 \pmod{24}$ is square-free and *every prime $\ell \mid D$ satisfies $\ell \equiv 1, 7 \pmod{8}$* , then along the progression

$$n = \frac{Dm^2 + 1}{24} \quad \text{with } (m, 6) = 1,$$

the partition numbers $p(n)$ take *both parities infinitely often*.

RAMANUJAN'S MOCK THETA FUNCTIONS

- 1 We start with Ramanujan's mock theta functions:

$$f(q) := 1 + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{q^{n^2}}{(1+q)^2(1+q^2)^2 \cdots (1+q^n)^2},$$

$$\omega(q) := \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{q^{2n^2+2n}}{(q; q^2)_{n+1}^2}.$$

SKETCH OF THE PROOF

- ② By the work of Zwegers, $f(q)$ and $\omega(q)$ are the “holomorphic parts” of a weight $1/2$ vector-valued harmonic Maass form.

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- ② By the work of Zagier, $f(q)$ and $\omega(q)$ are the “holomorphic parts” of a weight $1/2$ vector-valued harmonic Maass form.
- ③ Work with Bruinier gives *Generalized Borcherds Products* using weight $1/2$ harmonic Maass forms.
- ④ This theory applies for $f(q)$ and $\omega(q)$.

SKETCH OF THE PROOF

5 More precisely, for $0 \leq j \leq 11$ we let

$$H_j(z) = \sum C(j; n)q^n := \begin{cases} \pm q^{-1}f(q^{24}) & \text{if } j = 1, 5, 7, 11, \\ 2(\pm\omega(q^{12}) \pm \omega(-q^{12})) & \text{if } j = 2, 4, 8, 10, \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

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- 6 Note that $H_j(z) \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$ for $j \notin \{1, 5, 7, 11\}$.

SKETCH OF THE PROOF

Letting $P_D(X) := \prod_{b \pmod D} (1 - e(-b/D)X)^{\left(\frac{-D}{b}\right)}$, we then let

$$\Psi_D(z) := \prod_{m=1}^{\infty} P_D(q^m)^{C(\overline{m}; Dm^2)}.$$

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- 8 *Generalized Borcherds Products* $\implies \Psi_D(z)$ is a modular function on $\Gamma_0(6)$ with a discriminant $-D$ Heegner divisor.

SKETCH OF THE PROOF

- ⑨ \implies Log derivative of $\Psi_D(z)$ is a weight 2 modular form with simple poles at disc. $-D$ CM points.

SKETCH OF THE PROOF

- 9 \implies Log derivative of $\Psi_D(z)$ is a weight 2 modular form with simple poles at disc. $-D$ CM points.
- 10 Using the combinatorial properties of $f(q)$, we have that

$$P(D; z) := \sum_{\substack{m \geq 1 \\ \gcd(m, 6) = 1}} p\left(\frac{Dm^2 + 1}{24}\right) \sum_{\substack{n \geq 1 \\ \gcd(n, D) = 1}} q^{mn} \pmod{2}$$

is the mod 2 reduction of a wgt 2 meromorphic modular form.

SKETCH OF THE PROOF

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If every $\ell \mid D$ satisfies $\ell \equiv 1, 7 \pmod{8}$, then some ordinary point has an *odd* residue for $d \log \Psi_D$.
- ❹ These D have a first $p(n) \implies$ infinitely many by earlier work.
 \square

BRUINIER–O FORMULA REVISITED

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REMARK

Recasts $p(n)$ as a sum of tangents at CM points on $X_0(6)$.

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- (1) Conceptual proof of the congruences mod powers of 5, 7 and 11.
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REMARKS

- (1) Conceptual proof of the congruences mod powers of 5, 7 and 11.
- (2) The primes 5, 7, and 11 are “lucky” in that these are the only primes for which $j = 0, 1728$ cover all supersingular curves. Index formula contributes “half prime powers.”

SUMMARY: NEW THEOREM ON PARITY

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