Orientably-regular maps with given exponent group

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Abstract

We prove that for every integer \( d \geq 3 \) and every group \( U \) of units mod \( d \), there exists an orientably regular map of valency \( d \) with exponent group \( U \).

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1 Introduction

An orientably-regular map \( M \) is a 2-cell embedding of a connected graph in an orientable surface, such that the group of all orientation-preserving automorphisms \( \text{Aut}^+ M \) of the embedding acts as regularly (sharply transitively) on the set of arcs of the graph. It follows that every vertex of \( M \) has the same valency, say \( d \), and every face of \( M \) is bounded by a closed walk of the same length, say \( m \).

If \( e \) is an arc at any vertex \( v \) of \( M \), then regularity implies that \( \text{Aut}^+ M \) contains an involution \( x \) acting like a 180-degree rotation of \( M \) about the centre of \( e \), and an element \( y \) of order \( d \) acting like a \( d \)-fold rotation of \( M \) about \( v \). Then by connectivity, the group \( \text{Aut}^+ M \) is generated by \( x \) and \( y \), and admits a presentation of the form \( \langle x, y \mid x^2 = y^d = (xy)^m = \ldots = 1 \rangle \). The pair \((d,m)\) is called the type of the map. Conversely, given any generating pair \((x,y)\) for a group \( G \) with the above form, one may construct an orientably-regular map \( M \) with \( \text{Aut}^+ M = G \) by taking edges, vertices and faces of \( M \) as the (right) cosets in \( G \) of the subgroups \( \langle x \rangle \), \( \langle y \rangle \) and \( \langle xy \rangle \), respectively, and with incidence given by non-empty intersection of cosets. (Also the arcs may be taken as the elements of \( G \).) Thus orientably-regular maps of valency \( d \) and face length \( m \) may be identified with 2-generator group presentations of the form \( \langle x, y \mid x^2 = y^d = (xy)^m = \ldots = 1 \rangle \).
Fundamentals of the theory of maps and orientably-regular maps are explained in [8], some deep connections between such maps, Riemann surfaces and Galois groups are described in in detail in [9], and a recent survey containing a large number of facts about regular maps is given in [11].

Next, let $M$ and $G = \text{Aut}^+ M = \langle x, y \rangle$ be as above. An integer $j$ relatively prime to $d$ is said to be an exponent of $M$ if the assignment $(x, y) \mapsto (x, y^j)$ extends to an automorphism of $G$. Algebraically, this means that $(x, y)$ and $(x, y^j)$ satisfy the relations as each other, while from the point of view of maps, it means that if a new map $M^j$ is constructed from $M$ by replacing the clockwise local cyclic order $\pi_v$ of arcs at each vertex $v$ by $\pi_v^j$, then then resulting map $M^j$ is isomorphic to $M$. Orientably-regular maps admitting the exponent $-1$ are isomorphic to their mirror image, and are therefore called reflexible.

The collection of all exponents of $M$ forms a subgroup of the group of units $\mathbb{Z}_d^*$, and is called the exponent group of $M$. The notion of an exponent was introduced in [10], with applications in the classification of orientably-regular maps with a given underlying graph. Previously, the mapping $M \rightarrow M^j$ (even in the case when the two maps may not be isomorphic) was known as a hole operator, and studied by Wilson [14], but this mapping has also been attributed to Coxeter.

For the exponents of an orientably-regular map of given valency $d$, there are two ‘extremes’: one where the exponent group is trivial, or consists only of 1 and $-1$, and the other where the map admits the ‘full’ exponent group $\mathbb{Z}_d^*$. In [2] it was shown that for every $d \geq 3$ there are infinitely many finite orientably-regular maps of valency $d$ with trivial exponent group. This was done with the help of a method that allows one to forbid the creation of new automorphisms in lifted maps, but unfortunately the method offers no control over the face length. Also it was proved in [12] using residual finiteness of triangle groups that for every pair of positive integers $d$ and $m$ with $1/d + 1/m \leq 1/2$, there exist infinitely many finite orientably-regular and reflexible maps of type $(d, m)$ that admit no exponents other than 1 and $-1$.

At the other end of the spectrum, it was shown in [13] that for every integer $d \geq 3$ there exist infinitely many finite orientably-regular maps with exponent group $\mathbb{Z}_d^*$. Again this was achieved using residual finiteness of triangle groups, but this time losing control over the face length of resulting maps. Such maps were called ‘kaleidoscopic’ in [1], where a covering construction was given for a kaleidoscopic $d$-valent regular map invariant also under duality and Petrie duality, for every even $d$. A different construction for such ‘super-symmetric’ $d$-valent maps was given for an infinite set of odd values of $d$ in [6].

In this paper we deal with the ‘intermediate’ cases, by considering arbitrary subgroups of the group of units modulo the valency $d$. We prove that for every $d \geq 3$ and every given subgroup $U$ of $\mathbb{Z}_d^*$, there exist infinitely many finite orientably-regular maps of valency $d$ with exponent group equal to (and not just isomorphic to) $U$. 

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2 The main result

Theorem 1 For every $d \geq 3$ and every subgroup $U$ of $Z_d^*$, there are infinitely many finite orientably-regular maps of degree $d$ with exponent group equal to $U$.

Proof. Let $G$ be the free product $Z_2 \ast Z_d$ of the cyclic groups of order 2 and $d \geq 3$, with presentation $\langle X, Y \mid X^2 = Y^d = 1 \rangle$, and let $D = G'$ be the derived subgroup of $G$, of index $2d$ in $G$, with quotient $G/D \cong Z_2 \times Z_d$. By Reidemeister-Schreier theory [5], the group $D$ is free of rank $d-1$, generated by the commutators $W_j = [X, Y^j]$ for $j \in \{1, 2, ..., d-1\}$.

We will construct for any given subgroup $U$ of $Z_d^*$ an infinite family of quotients of $G$ that give rise to orientably-regular maps of degree $d$ with exponent group $U$.

For any prime $p$, let $N_p = D'/(D')^p$ be the subgroup of $D$ generated by the commutators and $p$th powers of all elements of $D$. This subgroup is characteristic in $D$ and hence normal in $G$, and the quotient $D/N_p$ is isomorphic to the direct product $Z_p^{d-1}$ of $d-1$ copies of $Z_p$. Also $G/N_p$ is an extension of $D/N_p \cong Z_p^{d-1}$ by $(G/N_p)/(D/N_p) \cong G/D \cong Z_2 \times Z_d$, and hence $G/N_p$ has order $2dp^{d-1}$.

Next, for any $a \in Z_d^*$, let $k_a$ be the automorphism of $G$ that takes the generating pair $(X, Y)$ to the generating pair $(X, Y^a)$. Note that this permutes the generators $W_j = [X, Y^j]$ of $D$ among themselves, and therefore preserves $D$, and its characteristic subgroup $N_p$, and so induces an automorphism $h_a$ of $G_p = G/N_p$, with $(Ng)^{k_a} = N(g^{k_a})$ for all $g \in G$.

Now let $U$ be any subgroup of $Z_d^*$. Then $K_U = \{k_u : u \in U\}$ and $H_U = \{h_u : u \in U\}$ are groups of automorphisms of $G$ and $G_p$ (respectively), both isomorphic to $U$.

We will show that if the prime $p$ is congruent to 1 mod $d$, then there exists a normal subgroup $L_U$ of $G_p = G/N_p$ contained in $D/N_p$ such that $L_U$ is preserved by $H_U$, and further, that $L_U$ can be chosen so that it is not preserved by $h_r$ for any $r \in Z_d^* \setminus U$. Under these circumstances, the quotient $G_p/L_U$ determines a finite orientably-regular map $M$ of valency $d$ with exponent group containing $U$, and then finally, we will show that the exponent group of $M$ is equal to $U$. We break this up into three steps below.

Step 1. Let $x$ and $y$ be the images of $X$ and $Y$ under the natural quotient homomorphism from $G$ to $G/N_p = G_p$, and let $w_j = [x, y^j] = xy^{-j}xy^j$, which is the image of $W_j = [X, Y^j]$, for $j \in \{1, 2, ..., d-1\}$. Then these $w_j$ are elements of the elementary abelian $p$-group $V_p = D/N_p \cong Z_p^{d-1}$, and so commute with each other. Moreover, it is easy to see that $xw_jx = y^{-j}xy^jx = w_j^{-1}$ and $y^{-1}w_jy = y^{-1}xy^{-j}xy^{j+1} = y^{-1}xyxy^{-(j+1)}xy^{j+1} = w_1w_{j+1}$, for all $j \in \{1, 2, ..., d-1\}$, if we define also $w_d = [x, y^d] = 1$.

Next, suppose $p \equiv 1 \pmod{d}$, and let $t$ be any non-trivial $d$th root of 1 mod $p$, so that $1 + t + t^2 + \ldots + t^{d-1} \equiv 0 \pmod{p}$. Define

$$v_t = w_1^t w_2^{t^2} \ldots w_d^{t^{d-2}} w_{d-1}^{t^{d-1}}.$$
which is an element of the abelian $p$-group $V_p = D/N$. Conjugation by $x$ inverts $v_t$, while
\[
y^{-1}v_1y = (y^{-1}w_1y)(y^{-1}w_2y)^2 \cdots (y^{-1}w_{d-2}y)^{d-2}(y^{-1}w_{d-1}y)^{d-1}
\]
\[
= (w_1^{-1}w_2)(w_1^{-1}w_3)^2 \cdots (w_1^{-1}w_{d-1})^{d-2}(w_1^{-1})^{d-1}
\]
\[
= w_1^{-1}(t+t^2+\ldots+t^{d-2}+t^{d-1}) w_2 w_3^2 \cdots w_d^{d-2} w_{d-1}^{d-1}
\]
\[
= w_1 w_2^t w_3^{t^2} \cdots w_d^{t^{d-2}} w_{d-1}^{t^{d-1}}
\]
\[
= (v_t)^{t^{-1}}.
\]
It follows that the cyclic subgroup $L_t$ of the vectors corresponding to the elements $v_t$ can be written as the $(d-1)$-tuple $(a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_{d-1})$, then by its definition above, $v_t^{(j)}$ can be written as the $(d-1)$-tuple $(t^j, t^{2j}, \ldots, t^{(d-1)j})$.

Step 2. Suppose further that $t$ is a primitive $d$th root of 1 mod $p$, and for each $j \in Z_d^*$, define the element $v_t^{(j)}$ of $V_p$ by
\[
v_t^{(j)} = h_{j^{-1}}(v_t) = \prod_{i \in Z_d^*} h_{j^{-1}}(w_i^{t^i}) = \prod_{i \in Z_d^*} (w_{j^{-1}i})^{t^i} = \prod_{i \in Z_d^*} w_i^{(i)j}.
\]

We claim that these $\phi(d) = |Z_d^*|$ elements $v_t^{(j)}$ generate a subgroup of order $p^\phi(d)$ in $V_p$, or equivalently, that they are linearly independent over $Z_p$ when $V_p$ is considered as a vector space over $Z_p$ of dimension $d-1$. To see this, if we take the set $\{w_1, w_2, \ldots, w_{d-1}\}$ as a basis for $V_p$, and write any element $w_1^{a_1}w_2^{a_2} \cdots w_{d-1}^{a_{d-1}}$ of $V_p$ as a $(d-1)$-tuple $(a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_{d-1})$, then by its definition above, $v_t^{(j)}$ can be written as the $(d-1)$-tuple $(t^j, t^{2j}, \ldots, t^{(d-1)j})$.

Hence the set $\{v_t^{(j)} : j \in Z_d^*\}$ can be represented by a $\phi(d) \times (d-1)$ sub-matrix of the Vandermonde matrix
\[
\begin{pmatrix}
t & t^2 & t^3 & \cdots & t^{d-1} \\
t^2 & t^4 & t^6 & \cdots & t^{2(d-1)} \\
t^3 & t^6 & t^9 & \cdots & t^{3(d-1)} \\
\vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\
t^{d-1} & t^{2(d-1)} & t^{3(d-1)} & \cdots & t^{(d-1)(d-1)}
\end{pmatrix}.
\]

This matrix has determinant $\prod_{1 \leq i < j \leq d-1}(t^j - t^i)$, which is non-zero in $Z_p$ since $t$ is a primitive $d$th root of 1 mod $p$, and it follows that for any subset $S$ of $Z_d^*$, the rows with first entry $t^j$ with $j \in S$ are linearly independent over $Z_p$. In particular, taking $S = Z_d^*$, we see the above claim is true.

But also this shows that $h_r(L_U) \neq L_U$ for any $r \in Z_d^* \setminus U$, because if $h_r(L_U) = L_U$ then $L_U = h_r^{-1}(L_U)$ and so the vector corresponding to $v_t^{(r)} = h_r^{-1}(v_t)$ is a linear combination of the vectors corresponding to the elements $v_t^{(u)}$ for $u \in U$, which is impossible.
**Step 3.** It remains to show that the exponent group of the orientable-regular map $M$ arising from the quotient $G_p/L_U$ of $G$ is equal to $U$. By Step 1, we know that this exponent group contains $U$. To prove the reverse inclusion, suppose that $j$ is any exponent of this map $M$. Then also $j^{-1}$ is an exponent of $M$, and hence there exists an automorphism $\theta$ of $G_p/L_U$ that fixes the element $xL_U$ and takes $yL_U$ to $y^{j^{-1}} L_U$. But now $v_t \in L_t \subseteq L_U$, so the coset $v_t L_U$ is trivial in $G_p/L_U$, and it follows that the coset containing $v_t^{(j)} = h_{j^{-1}}(v_t)$ is trivial as well. Thus $v_t^{(j)}$ lies in $L_U$, and by Step 2, we deduce that $j \in U$.

This completes the proof. $\square$

### 3 Concluding remarks

The method we have used does not enable control over the face length of the resulting maps. This is no accident, as it is not true that there exist orientably-regular maps of given type $(d, m)$ with $1/d + 1/m \leq 1/2$ and having a given exponent group. For example, in the case of triangulations (with $m = 3$), it was shown in [13] that an orientably-regular map of type $(d, 3)$ with valency $d \equiv \pm 1 \mod 6$ cannot have more than $\phi(d)/2$ exponents, and that if $d$ is a prime such that $d \equiv -1 \mod 8$ and $(d-1)/2$ is also prime, then such a triangulation cannot have exponents other than $\pm 1$.

Finally, for completeness, we mention some interesting connections with the case where the exponent group $U$ does not contain $-1$. Orientably-regular maps with this property are known as chiral. In [4] it was shown by a direct permutation construction that for every pair $(d, m)$ such that $1/d + 1/m \leq 1/2$, there exists infinitely many finite orientably-regular but chiral maps of type $(d, m)$. The same thing was was proved in [7] by a different method, with the help of holomorphic differentials.

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