

# STRONG EULERIAN TRIPLES

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ABSTRACT. We prove that there exist infinitely many rationals  $a$ ,  $b$  and  $c$  with the property that  $a^2 - 1$ ,  $b^2 - 1$ ,  $c^2 - 1$ ,  $ab - 1$ ,  $ac - 1$  and  $bc - 1$  are all perfect squares. This provides a solution to a variant of the problem studied by Diophantus and Euler.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Let  $q$  be a non-zero rational. A set  $\{a_1, a_2, \dots, a_m\}$  of  $m$  non-zero rationals is called a rational  $D(q)$ - $m$ -tuple if  $a_i \cdot a_j + q$  is a perfect square for all  $1 \leq i < j \leq m$ . Diophantus found the first rational  $D(1)$ -quadruple  $\{1/16, 33/16, 17/4, 105/16\}$ , while Euler found a rational  $D(1)$ -quintuple by extending the integer  $D(1)$ -quadruple  $\{1, 3, 8, 120\}$ , found by Fermat, with fifth rational number  $777480/8288641$  (see [3, 22]). Recently, Stoll [26] proved that extension of Fermat's set to a rational  $D(1)$ -quintuple is unique. The first example of a rational  $D(1)$ -sextuple, the set  $\{11/192, 35/192, 155/27, 512/27, 1235/48, 180873/16\}$ , was found by Gibbs [18], while Dujella, Kazalicki, Mikić and Szikszai [14] recently proved that there are infinitely many rational  $D(1)$ -sextuples (see also [13]). It is not known whether there exist any rational  $D(1)$ -septuple. However, Gibbs [19] found examples of "almost" septuples, namely, rational  $D(1)$ -quintuples which can be extended to rational  $D(1)$ -sextuples on two different ways, so that only one condition is missing that these seven numbers form a rational  $D(1)$ -septuple (they form  $D(1)$ -septuples over corresponding quadratic fields). One such quintuple is  $\{243/560, 1147/5040, 1100/63, 7820/567, 95/112\}$  which can be extended to the sextuple with  $38269/6480$  or  $196/45$ . For an overview of results on  $D(1)$ - $m$ -tuples and its generalizations see [8].

It is known that for every rational  $q$  there exist infinitely many rational  $D(q)$ -quadruples (see [5]). In 2012, Dujella and Fuchs [11] proved that for infinitely many square-free integers  $q$  there are infinitely many rational  $D(q)$ -quintuples, by considering twists of the elliptic curve  $y^2 = x^3 + 86x^2 + 825x$  with positive rank.

Apart of the case  $q = 1$ , the most studied case in the literature is  $q = -1$ . The case  $q = -1$  is closely related to another old problem investigated by Diophantus and Euler, concerning the sets of integers or rationals with the property that the product of any two of its distinct elements plus their sum is a perfect square. We call a set  $\{x_1, x_2, \dots, x_m\}$  an Eulerian  $m$ -tuple if  $x_i x_j + x_i + x_j$  is a perfect square for all  $1 \leq i < j \leq m$ . The equality  $x_i x_j + x_i + x_j = (x_i + 1)(x_j + 1) - 1$  gives explicit connection between Eulerian  $m$ -tuples and  $D(-1)$ - $m$ -tuples. It is known that there does not exist a  $D(-1)$ -quintuple in integers and that there are only finitely many such quadruples, and all of them have to contain the element 1 (see [9, 10]). In particular, there does not exist an Eulerian quadruple in positive integers. On the other hand, there exist infinitely many rational  $D(-1)$ -quintuples, and hence infinitely many Eulerian quintuples in rationals (see [4, 6]).

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Note that in the definition of rational  $D(q)$ - $m$ -tuples we excluded the requirement that the product of an element with itself plus  $q$  is a square. It is obvious that for  $q = 1$  such condition cannot be satisfied in integers. But for rationals there is no obvious reason why the sets (called strong  $D(1)$ - $m$ -tuples) which satisfy these stronger conditions would not exist. Dujella and Petričević [17] proved in 2008 that there exist infinitely many strong  $D(1)$ -triples, while no example of a strong  $D(1)$ -quadruple is known.

In this paper, we study the existence of strong Eulerian triples, i.e. sets of three rationals  $\{x_1, x_2, x_3\}$  such that  $x_1x_2 + x_1 + x_2$ ,  $x_1x_3 + x_1 + x_3$ ,  $x_2x_3 + x_2 + x_3$ ,  $x_1^2 + 2x_1$ ,  $x_2^2 + 2x_2$  and  $x_3^2 + 2x_3$  are all perfect squares. Equivalently, by taking  $a_i = x_i + 1$ , we may consider strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples, i.e. sets of three rationals  $\{a_1, a_2, a_3\}$  such that  $a_1a_2 - 1$ ,  $a_1a_3 - 1$ ,  $a_2a_3 - 1$ ,  $a_1^2 - 1$ ,  $a_2^2 - 1$  and  $a_3^2 - 1$  are all perfect squares. It is clear that all elements of a strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triple has to have the same sign, and that  $\{a_1, a_2, a_3\}$  is a strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triple if and only if  $\{-a_1, -a_2, -a_3\}$  has the same property. Thus, there is no loss of generality in assuming that all elements of a strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triple are positive. By connecting the problem with certain families of elliptic curves, we will show that there exist infinitely many strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples. We find only eight strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples that do not contain the number 1 (see Example 1 and Remark 3). Accordingly, our construction gives several infinite families of strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples which all contain the number 1. This means that the corresponding strong Eulerian triples contain the number 0, and all other elements are squares. MacLeod [23] found examples of rational Eulerian triples and quadruples which all elements are squares. However, in our situation there is an additional requirement that each element increased by 2 is also a square.

The main result of this paper, which will be proved in Section 2, is the following theorem.

**Theorem 1.** *There exist infinitely many strong Eulerian triples.*

This is a more precise formulation of our result.

**Proposition 2.** *Let  $\{1, b\}$  be a strong rational  $D(-1)$ -pair. Then there exist infinitely many strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples of the form  $\{1, b, c\}$ .*

## 2. CONSTRUCTIONS OF INFINITE FAMILIES OF TRIPLES

**Example 1.** We start by searching experimentally for strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples with elements with relatively small numerators and denominators (smaller than  $2.5 \cdot 10^7$ ). We found seven examples with all elements different from 1:

$$\begin{aligned} &\{493/468, 1313/1088, 33137/32912\}, \\ &\{1517/1508, 42601/11849, 909745/757393\}, \\ &\{125/117, 689/400, 14353373/13130325\}, \\ &\{354005/22707, 193397/183315, 2084693/2074035\}, \\ &\{2833349/218660, 3484973/2619045, 3056365/3047653\}, \\ &\{2257/1105, 2873/2745, 3859145/862784\}, \\ &\{2257/1105, 115825/8177, 14307761/10303760\}, \end{aligned}$$

and 23 examples containing the number 1:

$$\begin{aligned}
& \{1, 5/4, 14645/484\}, \quad \{1, 689/400, 1025/64\}, \\
& \{1, 689/400, 969425/861184\}, \quad \{1, 689/400, 9047825/4857616\}, \\
& \{1, 2501/100, 59189/12100\}, \quad \{1, 2501/100, 3219749/2102500\}, \\
& \{1, 6625/1296, 3254641/435600\}, \quad \{1, 19825/17424, 46561/32400\}, \\
& \{1, 19825/17424, 50689/3600\}, \quad \{1, 17009/6400, 8530481/4494400\}, \\
& \{1, 26245/324, 26361205/18301284\}, \quad \{1, 28625/2704, 27060449/25603600\}, \\
& \{1, 60229/44100, 65125/39204\}, \quad \{1, 65125/39204, 2829205/30276\}, \\
& \{1, 168305/94864, 262145/1024\}, \quad \{1, 926021/96100, 13236725/7365796\}, \\
& \{1, 1692821/902500, 1932725/662596\}, \quad \{1, 2993525/2896804, 6519845/6461764\}, \\
& \{1, 3603685/2965284, 5791045/777924\}, \quad \{1, 4324625/1478656, 4919681/883600\}, \\
& \{1, 12376325/12096484, 12844709/11628100\}, \\
& \{1, 19193525/18887716, 22980245/15100996\}, \\
& \{1, 12231605/2353156, 13689845/894916\}.
\end{aligned}$$

Example 1 suggests that there might exist infinitely many strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples containing the number 1. We will show that this is indeed true.

**Example 2.** Let us take a closer look at strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples of the form  $\{1, 689/400, c\}$ . We get the following values for  $c$  with numerators and denominators less than  $10^{21}$ :

$$\begin{aligned}
& 1025/64, 969425/861184, 9047825/4857616, 352915361/30030400, \\
& 109066004561/106119577600, 284429759489/271837104400, \\
& 1322025501425/1301315125504, 2253725966225/876912382096, \\
& 9055090973825/809791213456, 30776081662625/29873264334736, \\
& 41085820444721/37500436537600, 38029186636625/23706420917776, \\
& 710390547822449/245964644227600, 206973503563719329/2738904077011600, \\
& 180130335826717601/7772841524238400, 1383595259111988401/1191448219611040000, \\
& 349568886374130209/40505499045648400, 842490595967154166625/184668498086700979264.
\end{aligned}$$

Example 2 clearly indicates that we may expect that there exist infinitely many strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples of the form  $\{1, 689/400, c\}$ . It is not so clear what to expect for triples of the form  $\{1, 5/4, c\}$  or  $\{1, 65/16, c\}$ . However, as stated in Proposition 2, we will show that there exist infinitely many strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples of each of these forms.

So, let  $\{a, b, c\}$  be a strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples with  $a = 1$ . Thus  $b - 1$ ,  $c - 1$ ,  $b^2 - 1$ ,  $c^2 - 1$  and  $bc - 1$  are perfect squares. From the first and third condition we get  $b - 1 = \alpha^2$ ,  $b + 1 = \beta^2$  for rationals  $\alpha, \beta$ . By taking  $\beta^2 - 2 = \alpha^2 = (\beta - 2u)^2$ , we get  $\beta = \frac{2u^2+1}{2u}$  and

$$(1) \quad b = \frac{4u^4 + 1}{4u^2}$$

for a non-zero rational  $u$ . (If  $a \neq 1$ , instead of genus 0 curve  $\alpha^2 + 2 = \beta^2$ , we would have a genus 1 curve  $\alpha^4 + 2\alpha^2 + 1 - a^2 = \gamma^2$ .) Analogously we get

$$(2) \quad c = \frac{4v^4 + 1}{4v^2}$$

for a non-zero rational  $v$ .

The only remaining condition is that  $bc - 1$  should be a perfect square. By inserting (1) and (2) in  $bc - 1 = \square$ , we get

$$(3) \quad (16u^4 + 4)v^4 - 16u^2v^2 + 4u^4 + 1 = z^2.$$

This curve is a quartic in  $v$  with a rational point  $[u, 4u^4 - 1]$ . Thus it can be in the standard way transformed into an elliptic curve:

$$(4) \quad Y^2 = X(X + 32u^4 + 8)(X + 16u^4 - 16u^2 + 4).$$

There is a point

$$P = [-4(4u^4 + 1), 16u(4u^4 + 1)]$$

on (4), which comes from the point  $[u, -4u^4 + 1]$  on (3). For all non-zero rationals  $u$ , the point  $P$  is of infinite order on the specialized curve (4) over  $\mathbb{Q}$  (by Mazur's theorem [24], it suffices to check that  $mP \neq \mathcal{O}$  for  $m \leq 12$ ). Now we consider multiples  $mP$ ,  $m \geq 2$ , of  $P$  on (4), transfer them back to the quartic (3), and compute the components  $b, c$  of the corresponding strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triple. Since the point  $P$  is of infinite order, for fixed  $u$ , i.e. fixed  $b$ , in that way we get infinitely many strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples of the form  $\{1, b, c\}$ , thus proving Proposition 2 and Theorem 1.

The point  $P$  gives  $[u, -4u^4 + 1]$ , and thus does not provide a triple, since in this case we get  $v = u$  and  $b = c$ . The point  $2P$  gives  $[-u(4u^4 - 3)/(12u^4 - 1), (64u^{12} + 272u^8 - 68u^4 - 1)/(12u^4 - 1)^2]$  and the strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triple

$$\{1, (4u^4 + 1)/(4u^2),$$

$$(4u^4 + 1)(256u^{16} + 4352u^{12} - 1952u^8 + 272u^4 + 1)/(4u^2(4u^4 - 3)^2(12u^4 - 1)^2)\},$$

while  $3P$  gives  $[u(64u^{12} - 656u^8 + 108u^4 + 5)/(320u^{12} + 432u^8 - 164u^4 + 1), -(16384u^{28} + 741376u^{24} - 760832u^{20} + 812288u^{16} - 203072u^{12} + 11888u^8 - 724u^4 - 1)/(320u^{12} + 432u^8 - 164u^4 + 1)^2]$  and the strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triple

$$\{1, (4u^4 + 1)/(4u^2),$$

$$(4u^4 + 1)(256u^{16} + 4352u^{12} - 195u^8 + 272u^4 + 1) \times \\ (65536u^{32} + 6422528u^{28} - 13516800u^{24} + 49995776u^{20} - 23443968u^{16} \\ + 3124736u^{12} - 52800u^8 + 1568u^4 + 1) \\ / (4u^2(64u^{12} - 656u^8 + 108u^4 + 5)^2(320u^{12} + 432u^8 - 164u^4 + 1)^2)\}.$$

By inserting  $u = 1$ , we get the triples

$$\{1, 5/4, 14645/484\} \quad \text{and} \quad \{1, 5/4, 330926870165/318391604644\}$$

(the first triple already appeared in Example 1, while the second triple is outside of the range covered by Example 1).

It is clear that further multiples  $4P, 5P, \dots$  would provide more complicated formulas for triples. To get new relatively simple formulas for triples, we may try to find subfamilies of the elliptic curve (4) with rank  $\geq 2$ . For that purpose, we may use the method explained e.g. in [15].

We search for an additional point on the 2-isogenous curve

$$(5) \quad y^2 = x(x^2 - 24x + 32xu^2 - 96xu^4 + 16 + 128u^2 + 384u^4 + 512u^6 + 256u^8)$$

by considering divisors of  $16 + 128u^2 + 384u^4 + 512u^6 + 256u^8 = 16(2u^2 + 1)^4$ . Imposing  $x = 8(2u^2 + 1)$  to be the  $x$ -coordinate of a point on (5) leads to the condition that  $4u^2 - 14$  is a square, which gives  $u = (14 + w^2)/(4w)$  for a rational  $w$ . Thus

$$b = (w^8 + 56w^6 + 1240w^4 + 10976w^2 + 38416)/(16w^2(14 + w^2)^2).$$

By transferring the additional point of infinite order of the original quartic (3), we get

$$v = (w^6 + 18w^4 - 100w^2 - 392)/(4w(3w^4 + 28w^2 + 140))$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} c = & (w^8 + 40w^6 + 4888w^4 + 7840w^2 + 38416) \times \\ & (w^8 - 4w^7 + 24w^6 - 40w^5 + 152w^4 + 16w^3 + 608w^2 + 672w + 784) \times \\ & (w^8 + 4w^7 + 24w^6 + 40w^5 + 152w^4 - 16w^3 + 608w^2 - 672w + 784) \\ & / (16w^2(w^6 + 18w^4 - 100w^2 - 392)^2(3w^4 + 28w^2 + 140)^2). \end{aligned}$$

By inserting  $w = 1$ , we get the triple  $\{1, 50689/3600, 104776974625/104672955024\}$  (this triple is outside of the range covered by Example 1).

### 3. THE GENERIC RANK AND GENERATORS OF THE FAMILIES OF ELLIPTIC CURVES

In Section 2 we used families of elliptic curves with rank  $\geq 1$  over  $\mathbb{Q}(u)$ , resp. rank  $\geq 2$  over  $\mathbb{Q}(w)$ , and known independent points of infinite order to construct families of strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples. It is natural to ask what is the exact generic rank of these two families and whether the known points are in fact generators of the corresponding Mordell-Weil groups. The recent algorithm of Gusić and Tadić from [21] (see also [20, 26] for other variants of the algorithm, and [16, 12] for several applications of the algorithm) allows us to answer these questions.

First we prove that the elliptic curve given in (4) has rank one over  $\mathbb{Q}(u)$  and the free generator is the point  $P = [-4(4u^4 + 1), 16u(4u^4 + 1)]$ . By the algorithm from [21] we have:

- The specialization at  $u_0 = 6$  is injective by [21, Theorem 1.1].
- The coefficients of the specialized curve are  $[0, 61644, 0, 836402720, 0]$ .
- By `mwrnk` [2], the specialized curve has rank equal to 1 and its free generator is the point  $G_1 = [-20740, 497760]$
- We have that the specialization of the point  $P$  at  $u_0 = 6$  satisfies  $P(6) = G_1$ .

Now it is obvious that the elliptic curve has rank 1 and the point  $P$  is the free generator of the elliptic curve (4) over  $\mathbb{Q}(u)$ .

Now we consider the elliptic curve obtained from (4) by the substitution  $u = (14 + w^2)/(4w)$ . After removing the denominators, we get the elliptic curve  $C$  over  $\mathbb{Q}(w)$  given by the equation

$$\begin{aligned} Y^2 = & X^3 + (3w^8 + 152w^6 + 3272w^4 + 29792w^2 + 115248)X^2 \\ & + 2(w^8 + 56w^6 + 1240w^4 + 10976w^2 + 38416)(w^4 + 20w^2 + 196)^2X. \end{aligned}$$

We claim that  $C$  has rank equal to 2 over  $\mathbb{Q}(w)$  and that the points with first coordinates

$$\begin{aligned} x(P) &= -(w^8 + 56w^6 + 1240w^4 + 10976w^2 + 38416), \\ x(Q) &= (w^2 - 14)^2(w^4 + 20w^2 + 196)^2/(64w^2) \end{aligned}$$

are its free generators. We again apply the algorithm from [21]:

- We use the specialization at  $w_0 = 6$  which is injective by [21, Theorem 1.1].
- The specialized curve over  $\mathbb{Q}$  is  $[0, 17558832, 0, 61973480694272, 0]$ .
- By `mwrnk` [2], the rank of this specialized curve over  $\mathbb{Q}$  is equal to 2 and its free generators are

$$G_1 = [2880000, 18655065600], \quad G_2 = [37002889/36, 1971840224123/216].$$

- We have that for the specialization of the points  $P, Q$  at  $w_0 = 6$  it holds  $P(6) = G_1 + T$ ,  $Q(6) = G_2$ , where  $T$  is a torsion point on the specialized curve.

Thus we get that the elliptic curve  $C$  has rank 2 and that the points  $P$  and  $Q$  are free generators of  $C$  over  $\mathbb{Q}(w)$ .

#### 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

**Remark 1.** We may ask how large can the rank be over  $\mathbb{Q}$  of a specialization for  $u \in \mathbb{Q}$  of the elliptic curve (4). Since for  $u = (14 + w^2)/(4w)$  the rank over  $\mathbb{Q}(w)$  is equal to 2, by Silverman's specialization theorem [25, Theorem 11.4], we conclude that there are infinitely many rationals  $u$  for which the rank of (4) is  $\geq 2$ . By using standard methods for searching for curves of relatively large rank in parametric families of elliptic curves (see e.g. [7]), we are able to find curves with rank equal to 3 (e.g. for  $u = 2/5$ ,  $u = 4$ ), 4 (e.g. for  $u = 50/11$ ,  $u = 12/65$ ), 5 (e.g. for  $u = 12/65$ ,  $u = 16/83$ ) and 6 (for  $u = 86/743$ ,  $u = 3570/1051$ ,  $u = 1642/3539$ ). Note that  $u = 2/5$  gives  $b = 689/400$ . The fact that for this specialization the specialized curve has rank 3, with generators with relatively small height, explains the observation from Example 2 that there are unusually many strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples of the form  $\{1, 689/400, c\}$  for  $c$ 's with small numerators and denominators (see the arguments given in [1, Section 4]).

**Remark 2.** The results of this paper motivate following open questions:

- 1) Are there infinitely many strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples that do not contain the number 1?
- 2) Is there any strong rational  $D(-1)$ -quadruple?

Note that the triple  $(a, b, c) = (125/117, 689/400, 14353373/13130325)$  from Example 1 has an additional property that  $b - 1$  is also a square. Furthermore,  $26(a - 1)$  and  $26(c - 1)$  are also squares. Hence, although we do not know any strong  $D(-1)$ -quadruple over  $\mathbb{Q}$ , we get the set  $\{1, 125/117, 689/400, 14353373/13130325\}$  which is a strong  $D(-1)$ -quadruple over the quadratic field  $\mathbb{Q}(\sqrt{26})$ .

**Remark 3.** Let  $a \neq \pm 1$  be a rational such that  $a^2 - 1$  is a square, i.e.  $a = (t^2 + 1)/(2t)$  for a rational  $t \neq 0, \pm 1$ . It can be extended to infinitely many strong rational  $D(-1)$ -pairs. Indeed, as we have already mentioned, by following the construction in the case  $a = 1$ , we now get the condition  $\alpha^4 + 2\alpha^2 + 1 - a^2 = \gamma^2$ . This quartic is birationally equivalent to the elliptic curve

$$(6) \quad Y^2 = (X + 2t^2)(X^2 + t^6 - 2t^4 + t^2),$$

for which we can show, by taking the specialization  $t_0 = 11$  in [21, Theorem 1.3], that it has the rank over  $\mathbb{Q}(t)$  equal to 1, with the free generator  $R = [-t^2 + 1, t^4 - 1]$  (and by Mazur's theorem [24], we find that  $R$  is of infinite order for all rationals  $t \neq 0, \pm 1$ ). One explicit extension  $\{a, b\}$  is by  $b = (t^4 + 18t^2 + 1)/(8t(t^2 + 1))$ . We have noted that the elements of the known examples of strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples that do not contain the number 1 induce the elliptic curves with relatively large rank. In particular, for  $a = 42601/11849$  and  $a = 14353373/13130325$  the rank is equal to 5. We have performed an additional search for strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triples that do not contain the number 1 by considering elliptic curves in the family (6) with the rank  $\geq 3$ , and checking small linear combinations of their generators. In that way, we found one new example of the strong rational  $D(-1)$ -triple (corresponding to  $t = 17/481$ ):

$$\{115825/8177, 408988121/327645760, 752442457/720825305\},$$

which is outside of the range covered by Example 1.

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