The statistical behavior of modular symbols and arithmetic conjectures

Barry Mazur, Harvard University; Karl Rubin, UC Irvine

Toronto, November 2016

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Congratulations Manjul!

The geometry of numbers was initially developed by Hermann Minkowski.



∢ *⊡*) 2 / 1 Thanks to Manjul's extraordinary work, and his vision of what one might call a two-tiered geometry of numbers,



we have recently seen so many important breakthroughs in what one might call, broadly, arithmetic statistics.

In an appreciation of Manjul's results on ranks of Mordell-Weil groups of elliptic curves over \mathbb{Q} this lecture will be an account of an experimental study

-work in progress with Karl Rubin-

that leads us to make conjectures about ranks of Mordell-Weil groups over a range of 'large' (number) fields.

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Question

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- it is enough to consider the case where L/K is cyclic,
- if (for example) L/K is cyclic of prime degree p then

 $\mathrm{rank}(A(L)) > \mathrm{rank}(A(K)) \Longrightarrow \mathrm{rank}(A(L)) \geq \mathrm{rank}(A(K)) + (p-1).$

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Birch-Swinnerton-Dyer Conjecturally equivalent: the vanishing of a special value of an *L*-function

If L/K is cyclic of prime degree p and if $\chi : Gal(L/K) \hookrightarrow \mathbb{C}^*$ is any faithful character of its Galois group, then

$$\operatorname{rank}(A(L)) > \operatorname{rank}(A(K)) \quad \stackrel{?}{\Leftrightarrow} \quad L(A_{/K}, \chi; 1) = 0.$$

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Growth of ranks in abelian extensions: a recent 'vertical' theorem

Theorem

(Kato, Rohrlich) Let M be any abelian extension of \mathbb{Q} unramified outside a finite set of primes S. If E is an elliptic curve over \mathbb{Q} , the Mordell-Weil group E(M) is finitely generated.

A 'weak' horizontal theorem for abelian varieties of general dimension:

Theorem (M-R)

Let *A* be a simple abelian variety over *K*, a number field. Suppose that all endomorphisms of *A* are defined over *K*.

Then there is a set \mathcal{P} of primes of positive density, such that for all integers $n \ge 1$ and $p \in \mathcal{P}$, there are infinitely many cyclic extensions L/K of degree p^n such that A(L) = A(K).

Might this also be true for all prime numbers $p \gg_{K,\dim(A)} 0$ and—for each *n*, for a density 1 collection of cyclic degree p^n extensions L/K?

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Growth of ranks in cyclic (Galois) extensions; 'horizontal' conjectures

Let L/\mathbb{Q} be a finite cyclic extension of degree p, and m the absolute value of its conductor. Put:

$$M_p(X) := #\{L/\mathbb{Q} \text{ cyclic of degree } p; m < X\},$$

(Note: $\log M_p(X) \sim \log(X)$.)

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 $N_{E,p}(X) = N_p(X) := \#\{L/\mathbb{Q} ext{ cyclic of degree } p; \ m < X,$ and

 $E(L) \neq E(\mathbb{Q})\}.$

< (F) >

Growth of ranks in cyclic extensions; 'horizontal' conjectures

Conjecture (David-Fearnley-Kisilevsky)

log N₂(X) ~ log(X) (follows from standard conjectures),
 log N₃(X) ~ ½ log(X),

Growth of ranks in cyclic extensions; 'horizontal' conjectures

Conjecture (David-Fearnley-Kisilevsky)

- $\log N_2(X) \sim \log(X)$ (follows from standard conjectures),
- $log N_3(X) \sim \frac{1}{2} \log(X),$

(See the beautiful paper: Vanishing and non-vanishing Dirichlet twists of *L*-functions of elliptic curves by Fearnley, Kisilevsky and Kuwata)

Growth of ranks in cyclic extensions; 'horizontal' conjectures

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 $oldsymbol{0}$ $\log N_5(X) = o(\log(X))$ but $N_5(X)$ is unbounded,

• $N_p(X)$ is bounded if p is a prime, $p \ge 7$.

Mention motivation: random matrix heuristics

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The statistical behavior of modular symbols Toronto, November 2016

Growth of ranks for elliptic curves: the analytic approach

Question

As L runs through cyclic extensions of K, how often is rank(E(L)) > rank(E(K))?

Using the Birch & Swinnerton-Dyer conjecture, this is equivalent to the following:

Question

As χ runs through characters of $\text{Gal}(\bar{K}/K)$, how often is $L(E, \chi, 1) = 0$?

When $K = \mathbb{Q}$ (which we assume until further notice), this leads to a study of modular symbols.

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Vertical line integrals

Let E be an elliptic curve over \mathbb{Q} and

$$f_E(z)dz = \sum_{\nu=1}^{\infty} a_{\nu} e^{2\pi i\nu z} dz$$

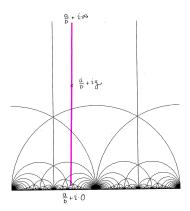
the modular form attached to E, viewed as differential form on the upper-half plane.

For any rational number r = a/b, form the integral

$$2\pi i \int_{r+i\cdot 0}^{r+i\cdot \infty} f_E(z) dz.$$

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Integrating over vertical lines in the upper half-plane



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Raw modular symbols

Symmetrize or anti-symmetrize to define raw (\pm) modular symbol attached to the rational number *r*:

$$\langle r \rangle_E^{\pm} := \pi i \left(\int_{i\infty}^r f_E(z) dz \pm \int_{i\infty}^{-r} f_E(z) dz \right)$$

Symmetrize or anti-symmetrize to define **raw** (\pm) **modular symbol** attached to the rational number *r*:

$$\langle r \rangle_E^{\pm} := \pi i \left(\int_{i\infty}^r f_E(z) dz \pm \int_{i\infty}^{-r} f_E(z) dz \right)$$

The raw modular symbols $\langle r \rangle_E^{\pm}$ take values in the discrete subgroup of \mathbb{R} generated by $\frac{1}{D}\Omega_E^{\pm}$ for some positive *D*.

L-functions and modular symbols

Theorem

For every primitive even Dirichlet character χ of conductor m,

$$\sum_{a \in (\mathbb{Z}/m\mathbb{Z})^{\times}} \chi(a) \langle a/m \rangle_E^{\pm} = \tau(\chi) L(E, \bar{\chi}, 1).$$

Here $\tau(\chi)$ is the Gauss sum, and the sign in $\langle a/m \rangle_E^{\pm}$ is the sign of the character χ .

For a cyclic extension L/\mathbb{Q} of conductor m we have a canonical surjection

$$(\mathbb{Z}/m\mathbb{Z})^{\times} \longrightarrow \operatorname{Gal}(\mathbb{Q}(\boldsymbol{\mu}_m)/\mathbb{Q}) \longrightarrow \operatorname{Gal}(L/\mathbb{Q})$$

$$a \mapsto \sigma_a.$$

which allows us to think of Dirichlet characters as Galois characters.

Theta-elements

For $g \in \operatorname{Gal}(L/\mathbb{Q})$ define the **Theta-coefficient**

$$c_{E,g}^{\pm} = c_g^{\pm} := \sum_{a: \sigma_a = g} \langle a/m \rangle_E^{\pm},$$

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$$c_{E,g}^{\pm} = c_g^{\pm} := \sum_{a : \sigma_a = g} \langle a/m \rangle_E^{\pm},$$

and the Theta-element

$$heta_L^\pm := \sum_{g\in \operatorname{Gal}(L/\mathbb{Q})} c_g^\pm[g] \in \mathbb{R}[\operatorname{Gal}(L/\mathbb{Q})].$$

Vanishing of the special value of *L*-functions and 'Theta-elements'

One has:

$$L(E,\chi,1) = 0 \iff \sum_{a \in (\mathbb{Z}/m\mathbb{Z})^{\times}} \chi(a) \langle a/m \rangle^{\operatorname{sign}(\chi)} = 0$$

$$\iff \sum_{g\in \mathrm{Gal}(L/\mathbb{Q})}\chi(g)c_g^{\mathrm{sign}(\chi)}=0$$

 $\iff \chi\left(\theta_L^{\operatorname{sign}(\chi)}\right) = 0$

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We are interested in the values of

- the raw modular symbols $\langle a/m \rangle_E^{\pm}$,
- the Theta-coefficients $c_g^{\text{sign}(\chi)}$, and use our computational exploration to conjecture how often

 $L(E,\chi,1)=0.$

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Statistics for raw modular symbols, Theta-coefficients, and the vanishing of $L(E, \chi, 1)$

The fundamental theorem is by Yiannis Petridis and Morten Risager:

Modular symbols have a normal distribution, Geometric and Functional Analysis (2004) no. 5 1013-1043

which makes use of Eisenstein series twisted by modular symbols, introduced by Dorian Goldfeld.

Our discussion about modular symbol statistics will be a computational addendum to this work.

Let *N* be the conductor of *E*. For every $r \in \mathbb{Q}$, modular symbols satisfy the relations:

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- $\langle r \rangle_E^{\pm} = \pm \langle -r \rangle_E^{\pm}$ by definition
- Atkin-Lehner relation: if w_E is the global root number of E, and $aa'N \equiv 1 \pmod{m}$, then $\boxed{\langle a'/m \rangle_E^{\pm} = w_E \cdot \langle a/m \rangle_E^{\pm}}$

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- Hecke relation: if a prime $\ell \nmid N$ and a_{ℓ} is the ℓ -th Fourier coefficient of f_E , then $a_{\ell} \cdot \langle r \rangle_E^{\pm} = \langle \ell r \rangle_E^{\pm} + \sum_{i=0}^{\ell-1} \langle (r+i)/\ell \rangle_E^{\pm}$

Conjectural *regularities* in the modular symbols data

To start, it is worth noting some significant *regularities* in the values of modular symbols.

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For example, consider the behavior of contiguous sums of the modular symbol:

For $0 \le x \le 1$, let

$$G^{\pm}_{E,m}(x) := rac{1}{m} \sum_{a=0}^{\lfloor mx
floor} \langle rac{a}{m}
angle_{E}^{\pm}$$

Conjectural *regularities* in the modular symbols data

And consider these continuous functions for $0 \le x \le 1$,

$$g_E^+(x) := \frac{1}{2\pi i} \sum_{\nu=1}^{\infty} \frac{a_{\nu}}{\nu^2} \sin(\pi \nu x),$$

$$g_E^-(x) := rac{1}{2\pi i} \sum_{\nu=1}^\infty rac{a_
u}{
u^2} \cos(\pi
u x).$$

Conjectural *regularities* in the modular symbols data

Conjecture

(Karl Rubin, William Stein, me)

$$G_E^{\pm}(x) := \lim_{m \to \infty} G_{E,m}^{\pm}(x) \stackrel{??}{=} g_E^{\pm}(x).$$

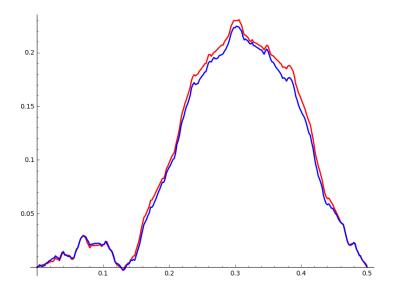
For example, for the elliptic curve E = 11a, the following three pictures are the graphs of

- $G_{E,m}$, in blue, with m = 1009, 10007, and 100003 respectively,
- superimposed on the graph of $g_E(x)$, in red.

For the last picture the superposition is so accurate, we don't see the red at all, in the pictures.

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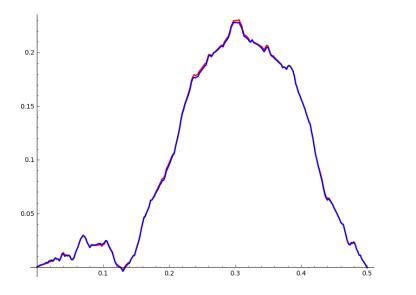
 $G_{E,m}$ with m = 1009



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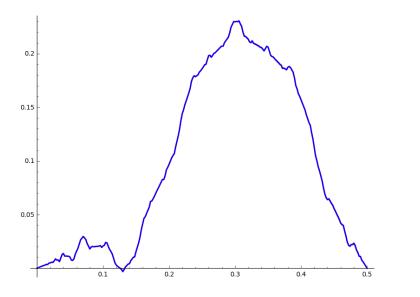
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 $G_{E,m}$ with m = 10007



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 $G_{E,m}$ with m = 100003



The motivation for this conjecture: a conjectural commutation of two limits

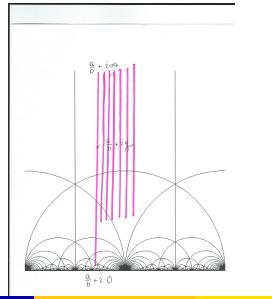
For $\delta > 0$ and any real number *r*, define the raw δ -modular symbol

$$\langle r; \delta \rangle^{\pm} := 2\pi \left(\int_{r+i\delta}^{r+i\infty} f_E(z) dz \pm \int_{-r+i\delta}^{-r+i\infty} f_E(z) dz
ight) \in \mathbb{R},$$

and define

$$G_{E,m,\delta}^{\pm}(x) := rac{1}{m} \sum_{m=0}^{mx} \langle rac{a}{m}, \delta \rangle_E^{\pm}.$$

$G^{\pm}_{E,m,\delta}(x)$ as a Riemann sum



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The motivation for this conjecture: a conjectural commutation of two limits

Then:

$$G_E^{\pm}(x) = \lim_{m \to \infty} \lim_{\delta \to 0} G_{E,m,\delta}^{\pm}(x),$$

while

$$g_E^{\pm}(x) = \lim_{\delta \to 0} \lim_{m \to \infty} G_{E,m,\delta}^{\pm}(x).$$

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But discuss the issue of the " δ -tails."

(Also: similar phenomena, more generally, in cases where one has the analogues of modular symbols related to higher rank groups?)

Distribution of modular symbols for fixed denominator *m*

Fix the denominator *m* and consider the data of $\phi(m)$ real values

$$\{a \mapsto \langle \frac{a}{m} \rangle_E^{\pm}; \text{ for } a = 1, 2, 3, \dots, m; (a, m) = 1\}.$$

How are these values distributed?

Let $\Sigma_{E,m}^{\pm}(t)$ denote the distribution determined by these $\phi(m)$ values.

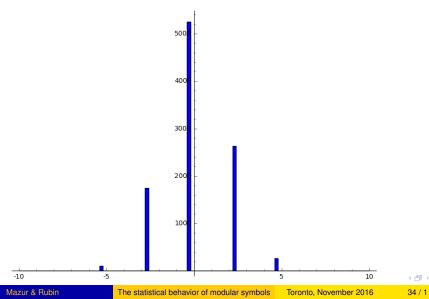
I.e., for open subsets $U \subset \mathbb{R}$, the integral $\int_U \Sigma_{E,m}^{\pm}(t) dt$ is $1/\phi(m)$ times the number of values of *a* (for a = 1, 2, 3, ..., m; (a, m) = 1) such that $\langle \frac{a}{m} \rangle_E^{\pm} \in U$.

The mean of $\Sigma_{E,m}^{\pm}(t)$ goes to zero rapidly as *m* increases:

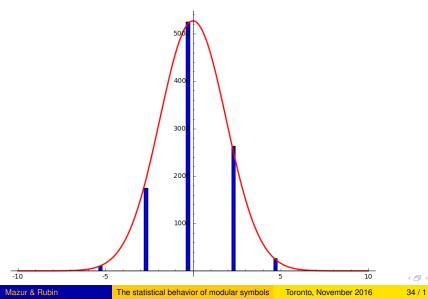
$Mean(\Sigma_{E,m}^{\pm}) \ll \log m/\sqrt{m}.$

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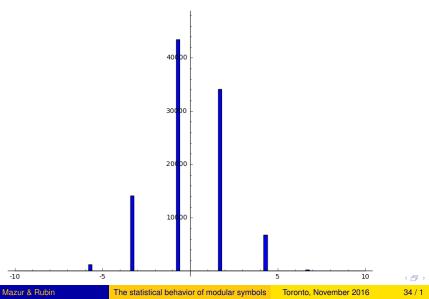
Histogram of $\{[a/m]_E^+ : E = 11A1, m = 10, 007, a \in (\mathbb{Z}/m\mathbb{Z})^{\times}\}$



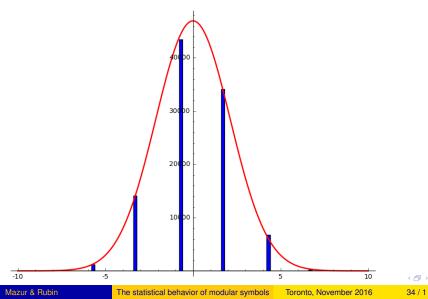
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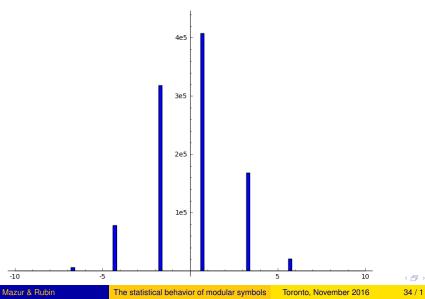
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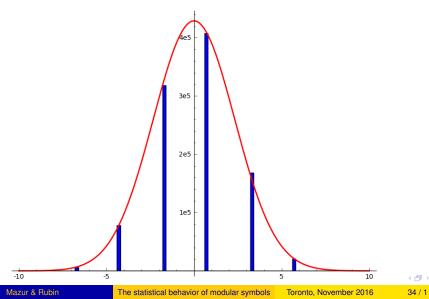
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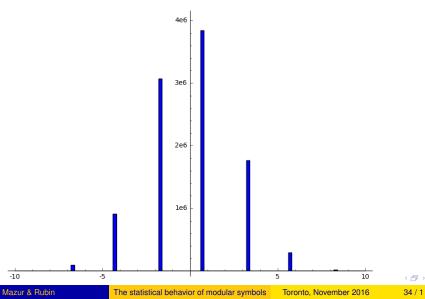
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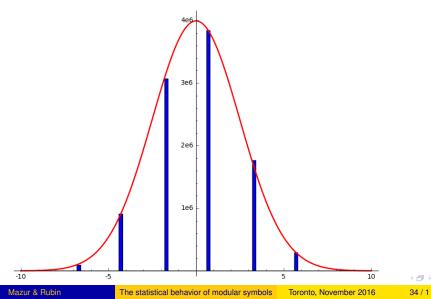
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Histogram of $\{[a/m]_E^+ : E = 11A1, m = 10, 000, 019, a \in (\mathbb{Z}/m\mathbb{Z})^{\times}\}$



Histogram of $\{[a/m]_E^+ : E = 11A1, m = 10, 000, 019, a \in (\mathbb{Z}/m\mathbb{Z})^{\times}\}$



Distribution of modular symbols

How does the variance depend on *m*?

Petridis and Risager have a beautiful formula for this, and what follows is a guess at a slight refinement of it.

Definition

Let $\mu_k(E, m)^{\pm}$ denote the *k*-th moment of $\Sigma_{E,m}^{\pm}$ centered at the mean.

So,

$$\mu_2(E,m)^{\pm} = Var(E,m)^{\pm}$$

is the variance of $\Sigma_{E,m}^{\pm}$.

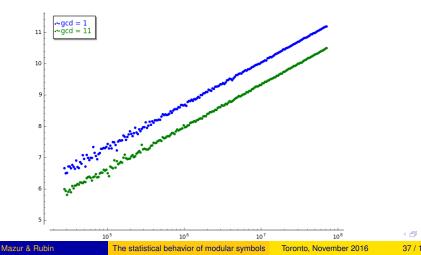
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Let *E* be an elliptic curve of conductor *N*. Let κ be a divisor of *N*.

What follows are graphs of the variances $Var(E, m)^{\pm}$ for *m* growing subject to the condition: $gcd(N, m) = \kappa$.

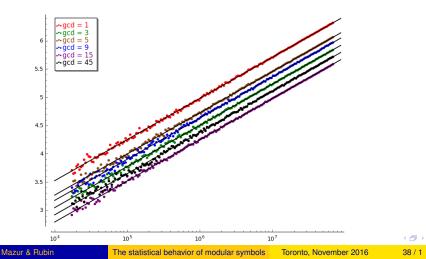
The variance

Here is a picture for the elliptic curve of conductor 11, the horizontal axis being on a log-scale. The dots give the data for $\kappa = 1$ and $\kappa = 11$ (in descending order).



The variance

Here is a picture for the elliptic curve of conductor 45. The six parallel lines correspond to the six positive numbers κ that divide 45.



The 'Variance slope' and 'Variance shift'

Conjecture

There exist real-valued constants $C_E, D_{E,\kappa}$ such that

$$\lim_{m\to\infty \ |\ gcd(m,N)=\kappa} Var(E,m)^{\pm} - C_E \cdot \log m = D_{E,N}$$

The 'Variance slope' and 'Variance shift'

Conjecture

There exist real-valued constants $C_E, D_{E,\kappa}$ such that

$$\lim_{m\to\infty} \lim_{gcd(m,N)=\kappa} Var(E,m)^{\pm} - C_E \cdot \log m = D_{E,\kappa}$$

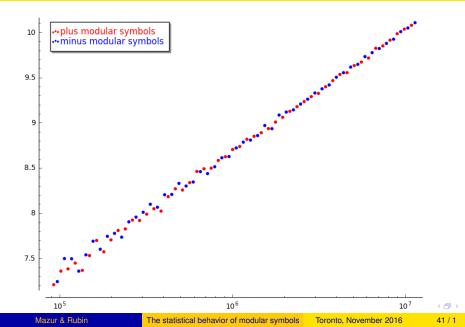
Call the conjectured C_E the **variance-slope** of *E* and the conjectured $D_{E,\kappa}$ the **variance-shift** of *E*.

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The above conjecture implies, for example, that

$\lim_{m\to\infty} Var(E,m)^+ - Var(E,m)^- = 0.$

Plus versus minus variances



Fix *E* a semistable elliptic curve over \mathbb{Q} of conductor *N* uniformized by the modular newform

$$\omega_E = \sum_{
u=0}^\infty a_
u q^
u dq/q.$$

Let $L(sym^2(\omega_E), s)$ denote the *L*-function of the symmetric square of the automorphic form ω_E .

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Conjecture

The variance slope C_E (exists, and)—following Petridis and Risager—is equal to

$$\mathcal{C}_E := \frac{6}{\pi^2} \cdot \prod_{p \mid N} \frac{p}{p+1} \cdot L(sym^2(\omega_E), 2).$$

Some Data

| E | \mathcal{C}_E | $D_{E,1}$ |
|------|-------------------|-----------|
| 11a1 | 0.589364640046590 | 0.5246 |
| 14a1 | 0.417980893000416 | 0.3763 |
| 15a1 | 0.355822978842096 | 0.4879 |
| 17a1 | 0.450713790373816 | 0.3872 |
| 19a1 | 0.535892587242072 | 0.4429 |
| 20a1 | 0.340755807914852 | 0.4900 |
| 21a1 | 0.411611414031698 | 0.6450 |
| 24a1 | 0.289291723879085 | 0.4562 |

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Distribution of modular symbols

Theorem

(Petridis-Risager)The distribution determined by the data

$$a/m \mapsto rac{\langle a/m \rangle_E^{\pm}}{\sqrt{\mathcal{C}_E \log(m) + D_{E,\kappa}}}$$

(for all a, m = 0, 1, 2, ..., and (a, m) = 1)

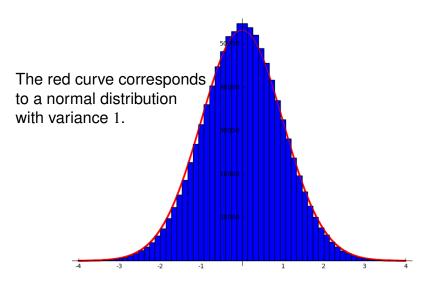
is normal with variance 1.

Consider the histogram of

$$rac{\langle a/m
angle_E^+}{\sqrt{\mathcal{C}_E\log(m)+D_{E,\kappa}}}$$

for the elliptic curve E = 11a1 and $\kappa = 1$; taken for 10^6 random values of a/m with *m* prime to 11 and $0 < m < 10^{16}$:

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Recall θ -coefficients and θ -elements

Suppose L/\mathbb{Q} has conductor *m*.

$$egin{aligned} c_g &:= \sum_{a\,:\,\sigma_a=g} \langle a/m
angle & ext{for } g \in \operatorname{Gal}(L/\mathbb{Q}), \ heta_L &:= \sum_{g\in \operatorname{Gal}(L/\mathbb{Q})} c_g[g] \in \mathbb{R}[\operatorname{Gal}(L/\mathbb{Q})]. \end{aligned}$$

Then for all faithful $\chi : \operatorname{Gal}(L/\mathbb{Q}) \hookrightarrow \mathbb{C}^{\times}$,

$$\chi(\theta_L) = \tau(\chi) L(E, \bar{\chi}, 1).$$

We want to know how often this vanishes.

Distribution of θ -coefficients

Let *E* be an elliptic curve with conductor *N*. Let $[L : \mathbb{Q}]$ be cyclic of (say, odd) degree *d* and conductor *m* prime to *N*. Then each θ -coefficient $c_{E,g} = c_g$ is a sum of $\varphi(m)/d$ modular symbols.

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The Atkin-Lehner duality induces an 'involution' $g \rightarrow g'$ such that

 $c_{g'} = w_E \cdot c_g.$

The θ -coefficient $c_{g_{\theta}}$ attached to the fixed point of this involution we'll call the **sensitive** θ -coefficient.

Since we have an idea how the modular symbols behave, we conjecture:

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The curious distribution of θ -coefficients for fixed d

Fix *d*. Let $\Lambda_{E,d}(t)$ be the distribution determined by the data

$$(g,m)\mapsto rac{c_{E,g}}{\sqrt{\mathcal{C}_E \log(m)\cdot \varphi(m)/d}}$$

where (g, m) runs through all triples such that:

The curious distribution of θ -coefficients for fixed *d*

- $\varphi(m)$ is a multiple of d,
- *g* is an element of Gal(*L*/ℚ) for *L*/ℚ a cyclic extension of ℚ in ℂ of degree *d* and conductor *m*. But *g* is not the *sensitive element*.

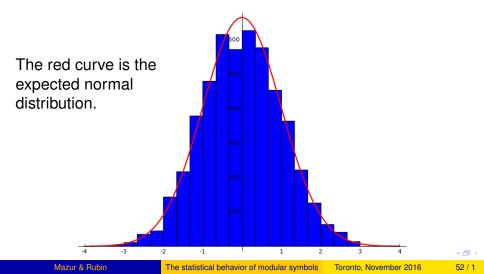
Conjecture

- If d > 2 the distribution $\Lambda_{E,d}(t)$ is a bounded function.
- The limiting distribution as d → ∞ is the normal distribution of variance 1.

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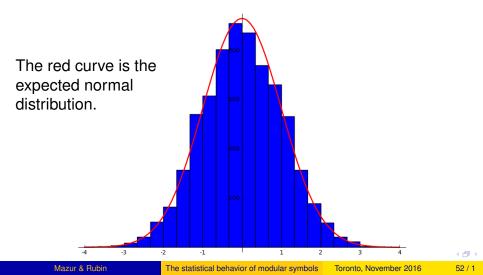
$\Lambda_{E,d}(t)$, large d

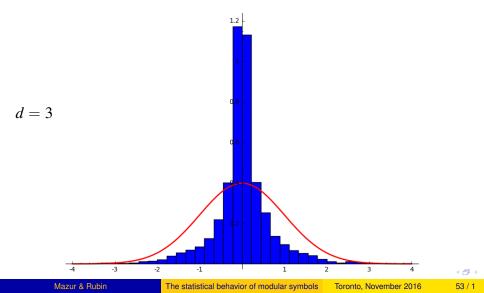
E = 11A1, m = 25035013, L is the field of degree d = 5003 in $\mathbb{Q}(\mu_m)$:

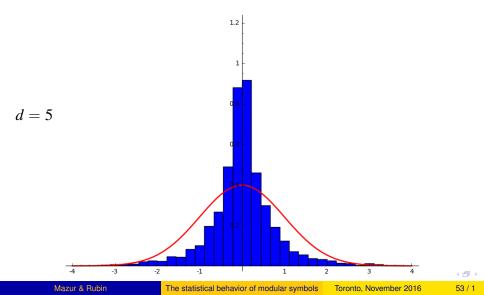


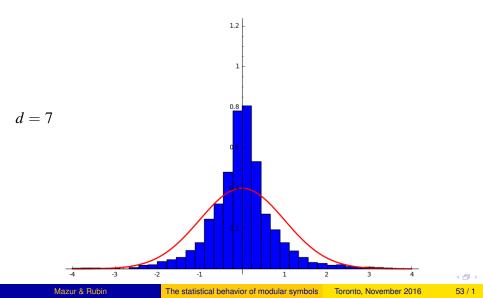
$\Lambda_{E,d}(t)$, large d

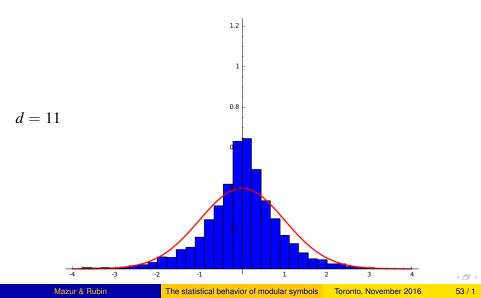
E = 11A1, m = 49063009, L is the field of degree d = 7001 in $\mathbb{Q}(\mu_m)$:

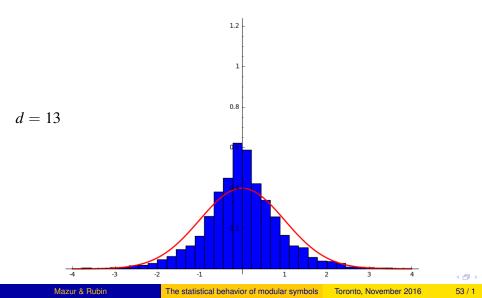


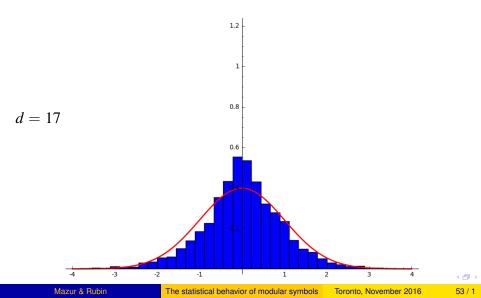


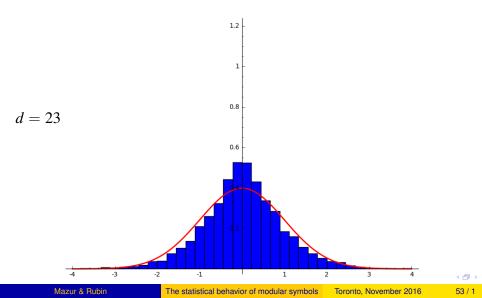


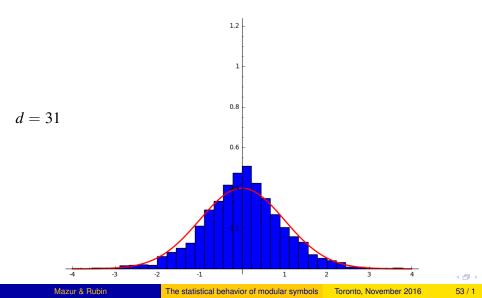


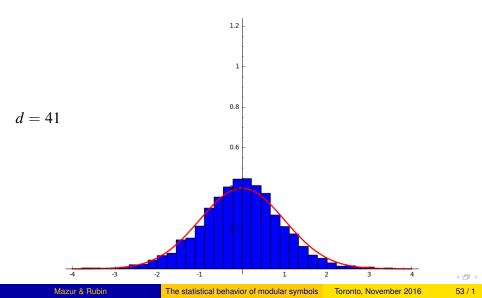


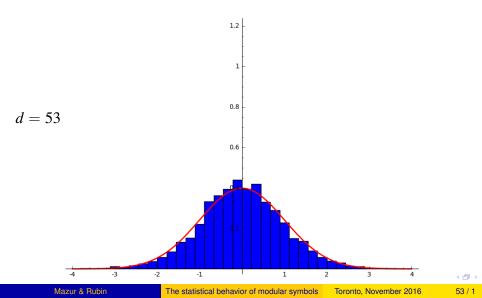


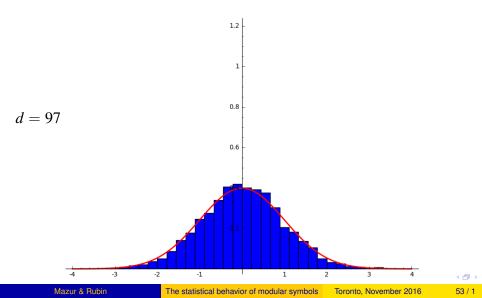


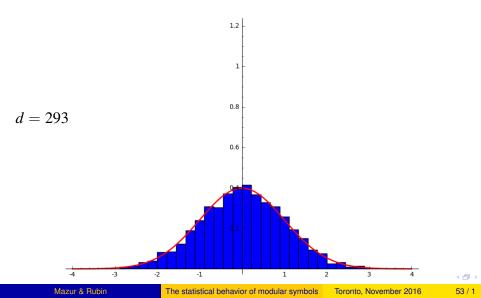












"Expectation" of *L*-function vanishing

Heuristic

There is a constant γ_E , depending only on *E*, such that

$$\operatorname{``Exp}[L(E,\chi,1)=0]'' \leq \left(\frac{d}{\varphi(m)} \cdot \frac{\gamma_E}{\log(m)}\right)^{\varphi(d)/4}$$

where *d* is the order of χ and *m* its conductor.

This should hold for all χ of order greater than 2.

Consequences of the heuristic; d = 3

Heuristic

$$\text{``Exp}[L(E,\chi,1)=0]\text{''} \leq \left(\frac{d}{\varphi(m)} \cdot \frac{\gamma_E}{\log(m)}\right)^{\varphi(d)/4}.$$

Example (d = 3)

$$\sum_{\chi \text{ order 3, conductor < X}} \operatorname{"Exp}[L(E, \chi, 1) = 0]" \ll \sum_{m=2}^{X} \frac{1}{(\log(m)\varphi(m))^{1/2}} \ll \sqrt{X}.$$

Consequences of the heuristic; d = 5

Example (d = 5)

$$\sum_{\chi \text{ order 5, conductor < } X} \operatorname{"Exp}[L(E,\chi,1)=0]" \ll \sum_{m=2}^{X} \frac{1}{\log(m)\varphi(m)} \ll \log X.$$

These are consistent with the prediction of David-Fearnley-Kisilevsky.

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Consequences of the heuristic: d = 7

Example (d = 7)

$$\sum_{\chi \text{ of order 7}} \operatorname{``Exp}[L(E,\chi,1)=0]" \ll \sum_{m=2}^\infty \frac{1}{(\log(m)\varphi(m))^{3/2}} < \infty.$$

This is consistent with the prediction of David-Fearnley-Kisilevsky.

Consequences of the heuristic: all large d

Heuristic

"Exp
$$[L(E, \chi, 1) = 0]$$
" $\leq \left(\frac{d}{\varphi(m)} \cdot \frac{\gamma_E}{\log(m)}\right)^{\varphi(d)/4}$.

Let f(d, m) denote the number of characters of order d of conductor m

Proposition

Suppose $t : \mathbb{Z}_{>0} \to \mathbb{R}_{\geq 0}$ is a function, and $t(d) \gg \log(d)$. Then

$$\sum_{d: t(d)>1, m>d} f(d, m) \left(\frac{d}{\varphi(m)} \cdot \frac{\gamma_E}{\log(m)}\right)^{t(d)} \quad \textit{converges}.$$

When $\varphi(d) > 4$

Applying this with $t(d) = \varphi(d)/4$ shows

Heuristic

$$\sum$$
 "Exp $[L(E,\chi,1)=0]$ " converges.

 $d: \varphi(d) {>} 4 \ \chi \text{ order } d$

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Consequences of the heuristic

This leads to:

Conjecture

Suppose L/\mathbb{Q} is an abelian extension with only finitely many subfields of degree 2, 3, or 5 over \mathbb{Q} .

Then for every elliptic curve E/\mathbb{Q} , we expect that E(L) is finitely generated.

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Suppose L/\mathbb{Q} is an abelian extension with only finitely many subfields of degree 2, 3, or 5 over \mathbb{Q} .

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For example, these conditions hold when L is:

- the $\hat{\mathbb{Z}}$ -extension of \mathbb{Q} ,
- the maximal abelian ℓ -extension of \mathbb{Q} , for $\ell \geq 7$,
- the compositum of all of the above.