BULLETIN OF THE
AMERICAN MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY
Volume 83, Number 5, September 1977

THE EXISTENCE AND UNIQUENESS OF A SIMPLE GROUP GENERATED BY {3, 4}-TRANSPOSITIONS

BY JEFFREY S. LEON AND CHARLES C. SIMS[1]

Communicated by Barbara Osofsky, February 28, 1977

Recently Fischer [1] discovered three finite simple groups each of which contains a conjugacy class D of involutions such that for all x and y in D the order of the product xy is 1, 2, or 3. Such a class is called a class of 3-transpositions. More generally, if π is a set of positive integers and D is a conjugacy class of involutions in the finite group G, then D is said to be a class of π-transpositions in G if D generates G and for all noncommuting elements x and y of D the order of xy is in π. Fischer has produced evidence suggesting the existence of a new simple group containing a class of {3, 4}-transpositions. Fischer determined a number of properties of the group, including its order, which is $2^{41}3^{13}5^6 7^2 11 \cdot 13 \cdot 17 \cdot 19 \cdot 23 \cdot 31 \cdot 47$ or approximately 4.15×10^{33}. However, the questions of the existence of such a group and the uniqueness of its isomorphism type remained unanswered.

We have now constructed a simple group G having the properties specified by Fischer and in addition we have shown that G is determined, up to isomorphism, by certain of these properties. A description of the 13,571,955,000 {3, 4}-transpositions in G has been obtained and the action of a set of generators for G on these transpositions has been determined. The details of the construction and the proof of uniqueness, which involve extensive use of a computer, will appear elsewhere.

If H is any group, then $Z(H)$ will denote the center of H, H' the commutator subgroup of H, and $O_2(H)$ the largest normal 2-subgroup of H. If h is an element of H and K is a subgroup of H, then $C_K(h)$ is the centralizer in K of h and h^K is the set of K-conjugates of h.

Let L be a perfect 2-fold covering group of the simple group ${}^2E_6(2)$. That is, $L' = L$, $|Z(L)| = 2$, and $L/Z(L)$ is isomorphic to ${}^2E_6(2)$. These conditions determine L up to isomorphism. In Aut(L) there is a unique conjugacy class of involutions σ centralizing a subgroup of L isomorphic to $Z_2 \times F_4(2)$. Let E denote the split extension of L by $\langle \sigma \rangle$ and let d generate $Z(E)$.

The smallest of the Fischer simple groups generated by 3-transpositions has order $2^{17}3^9 5^2 7 \cdot 11 \cdot 13$ and is usually denoted F_{22}. It is known that

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AMS (MOS) subject classifications (1970). Primary 20D05; Secondary 20-04, 20F05.
[1] Research partially supported by NSF grant MPS 75-07512.