Isogenies of elliptic curves and the Morava stabilizer group

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Abstract

Let $S_2$ be the $p$-primary second Morava stabilizer group, $C$ a supersingular elliptic curve over $\mathbb{F}_p$, $\mathcal{O}$ the ring of endomorphisms of $C$, and $\ell$ a topological generator of $\mathbb{Z}_p^\times$ (respectively $\mathbb{Z}_2^\times/\{\pm 1\}$ if $p = 2$). We show that for $p > 2$ the group $\Gamma \subseteq \mathcal{O}[1/\ell]^\times$ of quasi-endomorphisms of degree a power of $\ell$ is dense in $S_2$. For $p = 2$, we show that $\Gamma$ is dense in an index 2 subgroup of $S_2$.

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Introduction

Fix a prime $p$. Let $F_n$ be the Honda height $n$ formal group over $\mathbb{F}_p$. The endomorphism ring $\mathcal{O}_p = \text{End}(F_n)$ is the unique maximal order of the $\mathbb{Q}_p$-division algebra $D_p$ of Hasse invariant $1/n$ [18], and the Morava stabilizer group $S_n$ is the automorphism group $\text{Aut}(F_n) = \mathcal{O}_p^\times$. This group is a $p$-adic analytic group of dimension $n^2$, and is of interest to topologists because it is intimately related to the $n$th layer of the chromatic filtration on the stable homotopy groups of spheres. We wish to understand the group $S_n$ for $n = 2$ from the point of view of elliptic curves.

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Throughout this paper we let $C$ be a fixed supersingular elliptic curve defined over $\mathbb{F}_p$. Let $\mathcal{O} = \text{End}(C)$ be the ring of endomorphisms of the curve $C$ defined over $\mathbb{F}_p$, and let $D = \mathcal{O} \otimes \mathbb{Q}$ be the ring of quasi-endomorphisms. Because $C$ is supersingular, it is known that $D$ is the quaternion algebra over $\mathbb{Q}$ ramified at $p$ and $\infty$ [12], and that $\mathcal{O}$ is a maximal order of $D$ [23, 3.1], [4]. The reduced norm
\[ N : D \to \mathbb{Q}_p^\times \]
gives the degree of the quasi-endomorphism. Let $\hat{C}$ be the formal completion of $C$ at the identity. Because $C$ is supersingular, the formal group $\hat{C}$ is isomorphic to the Honda formal group $F_2$ over $\mathbb{F}_p$. In fact, Tate proved that the natural map
\[ \rho : \text{End}(C) \otimes \mathbb{Z}_p \to \text{End}(\hat{C}) \]
is an isomorphism [25]. The isomorphism $\rho$ extends to an isomorphism
\[ \rho' : D \otimes \mathbb{Q}_p \xrightarrow{\cong} D_p, \]
making explicit the fact that $D$ is ramified at $p$. The map $\rho'$ is compatible with the reduced norm map on the division algebras $D$ and $D_p$.

Fix $\ell \geq 2$ to be coprime to $p$. As the notation suggests, we intend for $\ell$ to be another prime, but this is unnecessary for the results of this paper. Define a monoid
\[ \Gamma = \{ x \in \mathcal{O}[1/\ell] : N(x) \in \ell^\mathbb{Z} \} \subseteq \mathcal{O}[1/\ell]^\times. \]
Then $\Gamma$ is actually a group; given an endomorphism $\phi$ of degree $\ell^k$, the quasi-endomorphism $\ell^{-k}\hat{\phi}$ is its inverse, where $\hat{\phi}$ is the dual isogeny. Note that if $\ell$ is prime, then $\Gamma = \mathcal{O}[1/\ell]^\times$. The group $\Gamma$ may be regarded as being contained in the group $S_2$ using the map $\rho$. The purpose of this note is to prove the following theorem.

**Theorem 0.1** Suppose that $\ell$ is a topological generator of the group $\mathbb{Z}_p^\times$ (respectively the group $\mathbb{Z}_2^\times/\{\pm 1\}$ for $p = 2$). For $p > 2$, the group $\Gamma$ is dense in $S_2$. For $p = 2$, the group $\Gamma$ is dense in the index 2 subgroup $\tilde{S}_2$, which is the kernel of the composite
\[ S_2 \xrightarrow{N} \mathbb{Z}_2^\times \to (\mathbb{Z}/8)^\times/\{1, \ell\}. \]
Let $\text{Sl}_2$ be the kernel of the reduced norm, so that there is an exact sequence
\[ 1 \to \text{Sl}_2 \to S_2 \xrightarrow{N} \mathbb{Z}_p^\times \to 1. \]
Thus, similarly, let $\Gamma^1$ be the corresponding subgroup of $\Gamma$, so that there is an exact sequence
\[ 1 \to \Gamma^1 \to \Gamma \xrightarrow{N} \ell^\mathbb{Z} \to 1. \]
We will see in the proof of Theorem 0.1 that \( N \) is indeed surjective. We denote by \( S^0_2 \) the \( p \)-Sylow subgroup of \( S_2 \), so that there is a short exact sequence

\[
1 \to S^0_2 \to S_2 \to \mathbb{F}_{p^{n-1}}^\times \to 1.
\]

Similarly, we let \( SL^0_2 \) be the subgroup of \( S^0_2 \) of elements of norm 1. Define \( \Lambda \) to be the subgroup \( \Gamma^1 \cap SL^0_2 \). Theorem 0.1 will follow from the following norm 1 versions. Note that in the following theorem and corollary, \( \ell \) is only assumed to be relatively prime to \( p \).

**Theorem 0.2** The group \( \Lambda \) is dense in \( SL^0_2 \).

**Corollary 0.3** The group \( \Gamma^1 \) is dense in \( SL_2 \).

We pause to explain the reason why these theorems are interesting from the point of view of homotopy theory. The \( p \)-component of the stable homotopy groups of spheres admits an especially rich filtration known as the chromatic filtration [19]. Work of Morava, Hopkins, Miller, Goerss, and Devinatz [14], [20], [8], [5] shows that the group \( S_n \) acts on the Morava E-theory spectrum \( E_n \), and the \( n \)th layer of the chromatic filtration is described by the homotopy fixed points \( E_n^{hS_n} \) of this action. The first chromatic layer is completely understood. The second chromatic layer is currently the subject of intense study. Goerss, Henn, Mahowald, and Rezk [7] produced a decomposition of \( E_2^{hS_2} \) at the prime 3 in terms of finite homotopy fixed point spectra. The first author gave an interpretation of their work in terms of the moduli space of elliptic curves in [2]. In that paper, a spectrum \( Q(\ell) \) was introduced which was shown to be a good approximation for \( E_2^{hS_2} \) for \( p = 3 \) and \( \ell = 2 \). In future work [3], we will show that the spectrum \( Q(\ell) \) is the homotopy fixed point spectrum \( E_n^{h\Gamma} \).

In particular, Theorem 0.1 shows that, in some sense, the spectrum \( Q(\ell) \) is a good approximation for \( E_2^{hS_2} \) for all \( p \) and suitable \( \ell \).

Gorbounov, Mahowald, and Symonds [9] studied dense subgroups of \( SL^0_n \) (\( SL \) in their notation), and we prove Theorem 0.2 using their methods. In particular, it is shown in [9] that if \( p = 3 \), then there is a dense subgroup \( \mathbb{Z}/3 \times \mathbb{Z}/3 \) contained in \( SL^0_2 \). In [3], it will be shown that for \( \ell = 2 \), the group \( \Lambda \) is \( \mathbb{Z}/3 \times \mathbb{Z}/3 \). More generally, the groups \( \Lambda \) and \( \Gamma^1 \) admit explicit presentations as finite amalgamations for any \( p \) and \( \ell \).

The authors were alerted by the referee to the related work of Baker [1]. Baker studies, for primes \( p \geq 5 \), the category whose objects are supersingular elliptic curves over \( \mathbb{F}_p \), and whose morphisms are the morphisms of the associated formal groups. He then proves an analog of Morava’s change of rings theorem: roughly speaking, he shows that the continuous cohomology of this category of supersingular curves computes the \( E_2 \)-term of the \( K(2) \)-local Adams-Novikov spectral sequence converging to \( \pi_* (S_{K(2)}) \). The chief difference between this paper and the work of Baker is that we insist on working only with the actual
rings of isogenies, and not their $p$-completions.

In Section 1, we recall the relationship between maximal orders of $D$ and the endomorphism rings of supersingular curves at $p$. In Section 2, we recall the homological criterion that is employed in [9] to detect dense subgroups of $\mathbb{S}^0_2$ for $p > 2$. We then extend these methods to give an explicit criterion for density at the prime 2. We use these criteria in Section 3 to prove Theorem 0.1, Theorem 0.2, and Corollary 0.3.

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1 Supersingular curves and endomorphism rings

In this section we recall the correspondence between endomorphism rings of supersingular curves and maximal orders of $D$. Any two supersingular elliptic curves $C_1$ and $C_2$ over $\mathbb{F}_p$ are isogenous. In fact, Kohel proves the following proposition.

**Proposition 1.1 (Kohel [11, Cor. 77])** Let $C_1$ and $C_2$ be supersingular elliptic curves over $\mathbb{F}_p$. Then for all $k \gg 0$, there exists an isogeny $\phi : C_1 \to C_2$ of degree $\ell^k$.

Let $X^{ss}$ be the collection of isomorphism classes of supersingular curves $C'$ over $\mathbb{F}_p$. Given an isogeny $\phi : C \to C'$ of degree $N$, we define a map

$$\iota_\phi : \text{End}(C') \to \text{End}(C) \otimes \mathbb{Z}[1/N] \subset D$$

by

$$\iota_\phi(\alpha) = \frac{1}{N} \cdot \hat{\phi} \circ \alpha \circ \phi.$$  

The map $\iota_\phi$ is a ring homomorphism and its image is a maximal order in $D$. If $\phi' : C \to C'$ is another choice of isogeny then it is easily seen that the maximal order $\iota_{\phi'}(\text{End}(C'))$ is conjugate to $\iota_\phi(\text{End}(C'))$. Let $\mathcal{M}_D$ be the collection of conjugacy classes of maximal orders of $D$. Consider the map

$$\xi : X^{ss} \to \mathcal{M}_D$$

given by $\xi([C']) = [\iota_\phi(\text{End}(C'))]$.

**Theorem 1.2 (Deuring [4], Kohel [12])** The map $\xi$ is a surjection and the preimage of a conjugacy class $[O']$ of maximal orders consists of either
a single class represented by a curve with \( j \)-invariant in \( \mathbb{F}_p \), or two classes represented by curves with distinct Galois-conjugate \( j \)-invariants in \( \mathbb{F}_{p^2} \).

In the former case, the elliptic curve can be defined over \( \mathbb{F}_p \), and in the latter case it can only be defined over \( \mathbb{F}_{p^2} \).

We choose a preferred set of representatives of conjugacy classes in \( \mathcal{M}_D \) for the remainder of this note. Fix a choice of representative \( C' \) of each isomorphism class \([C'] \in X^{ss}\). Using Proposition 1.1, choose for each \( C' \) an isogeny

\[
\phi_{C'} : C \to C'
\]

of degree \( \ell^{e(C')} \). Define \( \mathcal{O}_{C'} \) to be the maximal order \( \iota_{\phi_{C'}}(\text{End}(C')) \). By letting \( C \) be the representative of its isomorphism class, and fixing \( \phi_C = \text{Id}_C \), we can arrange that \( \mathcal{O}_C = \text{End}(C) \). The following is immediate from Theorem 1.2.

**Corollary 1.3** Every maximal order \( \mathcal{O}' \) of \( D \) is conjugate to one of the form \( \mathcal{O}_{C'} \) for some \( C' \in X^{ss} \).

Let \( \mathcal{O}' \) be a maximal order of \( D \). Then by Corollary 1.3, \( c_y(\mathcal{O}') = y^{-1}\mathcal{O}'y \) is equal to \( \mathcal{O}_{C'} \) for some \( y \in D \) and some supersingular elliptic curve \( C' \). The map \( \iota_{\phi} \circ c_y : \mathcal{O}' \to \text{End}(C) \otimes \mathbb{Z}[1/\ell] \) extends to a norm-preserving ring isomorphism

\[
\iota_{\phi} \circ c_y : \mathcal{O}' \otimes \mathbb{Z}[1/\ell] \to \mathcal{O} \otimes \mathbb{Z}[1/\ell]
\]

with inverse \( c_{y^{-1}} \circ \iota_{\phi} \). In particular, we have the following.

**Corollary 1.4** Suppose that \( x' \) is contained in a maximal \( \mathbb{Z}[1/\ell] \)-order \( \mathcal{O}'[1/\ell] \) of \( D \). Then there exists an element \( x \in \mathcal{O}[1/\ell] \) with the same minimal polynomial as \( x' \).

## 2 A cohomological criterion for density

In this section we recall some material from [9], but we give this material a slightly different treatment. Our reason is that the authors of [9] use results of Riehm [21] on the structure of the commutator subgroups of \( \text{SL}_n \). Riehm’s analysis, however, excludes the case of \( n = 2 \) and \( p = 2 \), and it turns out that this case has different behavior.

The maximal order \( \mathcal{O}_p \) of \( D_p \) admits a presentation [18, Appendix 2]

\[
\mathcal{O}_p = \mathbb{W}(S)/(S^2 = p, Sa = \pi S).
\]  

(2.1)

Here \( \mathbb{W} = \mathbb{W}(\mathbb{F}_{p^2}) \) is the Witt ring with residue field \( \mathbb{F}_{p^2} \), and \( \pi \) denotes the Galois conjugate (lift of the Frobenius on \( \mathbb{F}_{p^2} \)) of an element \( a \in \mathbb{W} \). Every
element of $O_p$ can then be written uniquely in the form

$$a + bS$$

for $a, b \in \mathbb{W}$. The group $S_2 = O_p^\times$ consists of all such elements where $a \not\equiv 0 \pmod{p}$.

Let $S_0^2$ be the $p$-Sylow subgroup of $S_2$. The group $S_0^2$ consists of all elements $a + bS$ where $a \equiv 1 \pmod{p}$. The subgroup $Sl_2^0$ of elements of $S_2^0$ of norm 1 is the $p$-Sylow subgroup of $Sl_2$.

Suppose that $G$ is a pro-$p$-group. Let $G^*$ be the Frattini subgroup of $G$, which is the minimal closed normal subgroup that contains $G^p$ and $[G, G]$. Then we have the following theorem.

**Theorem 2.1 (Koch [10], Serre [22])** Suppose that $H$ is a subgroup of a pro-$p$-group $G$. Then $H$ is dense in $G$ if and only if the composite

$$H \hookrightarrow G \to G/ G^* = H^c_1(G; \mathbb{F}_p)$$

is surjective.

**Corollary 2.2** Let $\{\alpha_i\}$ form an $\mathbb{F}_p$-basis of the continuous group homomorphisms $\text{Hom}^c(G, \mathbb{F}_p) = H^c_1(G; \mathbb{F}_p)$. Then $H$ is a dense subgroup of $G$ if and only if the composite

$$H \to G \xrightarrow{\bigoplus_i \alpha_i} \bigoplus_i \mathbb{F}_p$$

is surjective.

Every element $x \in S_2^0$ may be written uniquely in the form

$$x = (1 + pt_2 + p^2t_4 + \cdots) + (t_1 + pt_3 + p^2t_5 + \cdots)S,$$  \hspace{1cm} (2.2)

where $t_i = t_i(x)$ are Teichmüller lifts of elements of $\mathbb{F}_{p^2}$ in $\mathbb{W}$. This is equivalent to saying that the elements $t_i$ satisfy $t_i^{p^2} = t_i$. The coefficients $t_i$ give rise to continuous functions

$$t_i : S_2^0 \to \mathbb{F}_{p^2}.$$

Ravenel [16] uses this presentation to express $S_2^0$ as the $\mathbb{F}_{p^2}$-points of a pro-affine group scheme $\text{Spec} S(2)$, where $S(2)$ is the Morava stabilizer algebra

$$S(2) = \mathbb{F}_p[t_1, t_2, t_3, \ldots]/(t_i^{p^2} = t_i).$$

The algebra $S(2)$ is a Hopf algebra. Equation (2.2) gives an isomorphism of groups

$$S_2^0 \cong \text{Spec} S(2)(\mathbb{F}_{p^2}).$$
Ravenel shows that this isomorphism gives an isomorphism in cohomology:

\[
\begin{align*}
H^*_c(S^0_2; \mathbb{F}_{p^2}) &= H^*(S(2)) \otimes_{\mathbb{F}_p} \mathbb{F}_{p^2} \\
&= \text{Ext}_{S(2)}(\mathbb{F}_p, \mathbb{F}_p) \otimes_{\mathbb{F}_p} \mathbb{F}_{p^2}.
\end{align*}
\]

The Ext group is taken in the category of $S(2)$-comodules.

For an arbitrary element $x \in S^0_2$ expressed as in equation (2.2), express the norm $N(x) \in \mathbb{Z}_p^\times$ by

\[
N(x) = 1 + ps_1 + p^2s_2 + \cdots,
\]

where the elements $s_i = s_i(t_1, t_2, \ldots)$ are polynomial functions of the $t_i$, and $s_i^p = s_i$ are Teichmüller lifts of elements of $\mathbb{F}_p$ (compare with the discussion preceding Theorem 6.3.12 of [18]). Then we may define a quotient Hopf algebra

\[
Sl(2) = S(2)/(s_i(t_1, t_2, \ldots)),
\]

whose $\mathbb{F}_{p^2}$ points give the subgroups $Sl^0_2$ and for which

\[
H^*_c(Sl^0_2; \mathbb{F}_{p^2}) = H^*(Sl(2)) \otimes_{\mathbb{F}_p} \mathbb{F}_{p^2}.
\]

The following computation is obtained from combining Theorems 6.2.7 and 6.3.12 of [18].

**Lemma 2.3** For $p > 2$, we have

\[
H^1(Sl(2)) = \mathbb{F}_p\{h_{1,0}, h_{1,1}\},
\]

where $h_{1,i}$ is represented by the element $[t_1^p]$ in the cobar complex for $Sl(2)$.

**Corollary 2.4** For $p > 2$, the group

\[
H^1_c(Sl^0_2; \mathbb{F}_{p^2}) \cong \text{Hom}^c(Sl^0_2, \mathbb{F}_{p^2})
\]

has an $\mathbb{F}_{p^2}$-basis consisting of the continuous homomorphisms

\[
t_1, t_1^p : S^0_2 \to \mathbb{F}_{p^2}.
\]

**Corollary 2.5** (Gorbounov-Mahowald-Symonds [9]) For $p > 2$, a subgroup $H$ of $Sl^0_2$ is dense if and only if the composite

\[
H \hookrightarrow S^0_2 \xrightarrow{t_1} \mathbb{F}_{p^2}
\]

is surjective.
Proof. Let \( \omega \in \mathbb{F}_{p^2} \) be a primitive \( p^2 - 1 \) root of unity. We may compute the cohomology with \( \mathbb{F}_p \) coefficients by taking \( \text{Gal} = \text{Gal}(\mathbb{F}_{p^2}/\mathbb{F}_p) \) fixed points, and obtain

\[
\text{Hom}^c(S_0^2, \mathbb{F}_p) = \text{Hom}^c(S_0^2, \mathbb{F}_{p^2})^{\text{Gal}}.
\]

(The Galois group only acts on the coefficient group and not on \( S_0^2 \).) Here the Frobenius \( \sigma \in \text{Gal} \) acts by \( \sigma(t^p_i) = t^{p^i+1}_i \) for \( i \in \mathbb{Z}/2 \). An \( \mathbb{F}_p \)-basis for this fixed-point module is given by the pair of homomorphisms

\[
t_1 + t^p_1, \omega t_1 + \omega^p t^p_1 : S_0^2 \to \mathbb{F}_{p^2}.
\]

The result now follows from Corollary 2.2. \( \square \)

We now address the case where \( p = 2 \).

Lemma 2.6 Let \( p = 2 \). Then we have

\[
H^1(Sl(2)) = \mathbb{F}_2 \{ h_{1,0}, h_{1,1}, h_{3,0}, h_{3,1} \},
\]

where the generators are represented in the cobar complex for \( Sl(2) \) by

\[
h_{1,i} = [t^2_1],
\]

\[
h_{3,i} = [(t_3 + t_1 t_2)^2].
\]

Proof. We follow the same approach of [18, 6.3] using the May spectral sequence. (It is important to refer to the second edition of [18]; the previous version, as well as [17], had an error in the restriction formula in the restricted Lie algebras \( \tilde{L}(n) \).) The May spectral sequence for \( Sl(2) \) takes the form

\[
E_2^{s,*} = H^s(E^0 Sl(2)) \Rightarrow H^s(Sl(2)).
\]

The \( E_1 \)-term may be regarded as the Koszul complex for \((E^0 Sl(2))^*\)

\[
E_1^{*,*} = \mathbb{F}_2[h_{i,j} : i \geq 1, j \in \mathbb{Z}/2]/(h_{2k,j} + h_{2k,j+1}),
\]

with differential

\[
d_1(h_{i,j}) = \begin{cases} 
\sum_{i_1 + i_2 = i} h_{i_1,j} h_{i_2,j+i_1} & i \leq 4, \\
\sum_{i > 4} h_{i-2,j+1} & i > 4. 
\end{cases}
\]

We see that the only elements of \( E_1^{*,*} \) that persist to \( E_2^{1,*} \) are \( h_{1,0}, h_{1,1}, h_{3,0}, \) and \( h_{3,1} \).

We will show that these elements are permanent cycles in the May spectral sequence by explicitly producing cocycles in the cobar complex that they detect. By taking the images of the formulas for the coproduct on \( BP_*BP \) in
Using the relation
\[ s_1 = t_2 + t_2^2 + t_1^3 = 0, \]
these formulas may be used to verify that the cobar expressions in the statement of the lemma are permanent cycles. \( \square \)

**Corollary 2.7** For \( p = 2 \), the group
\[ H^1_c(\mathbb{S}_2^0; \mathbb{F}_4) \cong \text{Hom}^c(\mathbb{S}_2^0, \mathbb{F}_4) \]
has an \( \mathbb{F}_4 \)-basis given by the continuous homomorphisms
\[ t_1, t_1^2, t_3 + t_1 t_2, (t_3 + t_1 t_2)^2 : \mathbb{S}_2^0 \to \mathbb{F}_4. \]

**Corollary 2.8** For \( p = 2 \), a subgroup \( H \) of \( \mathbb{S}_2^0 \) is dense if and only if the composite
\[ H \hookrightarrow \mathbb{S}_2^0 \xrightarrow{\text{t_1(t3+t1t2)}} \mathbb{F}_4 \oplus \mathbb{F}_4 \]
is surjective.

**Proof.** Let \( \omega \in \mathbb{F}_4 \) be a primitive 3rd root of unity. Just as in Corollary 2.5, we compute the cohomology with \( \mathbb{F}_2 \) coefficients by taking \( Gal = Gal(\mathbb{F}_4/\mathbb{F}_2) \) fixed points, and obtain
\[ \text{Hom}^c(\mathbb{S}_2^0, \mathbb{F}_2) = \text{Hom}^c(\mathbb{S}_2^0, \mathbb{F}_4)^{Gal}. \]
(As before, the Galois group only acts on the coefficient group.) An \( \mathbb{F}_2 \)-basis for this fixed-point module is given by the homomorphisms \( t_1 + t_1^2, \omega t_1 + \omega^2 t_1^2, t_3 + t_1 t_2 + (t_3 + t_1 t_2)^2, \) and \( \omega(t_3 + t_1 t_2) + \omega^2(t_3 + t_1 t_2)^2. \) \( \square \)

3 Proof of Theorem 0.1, Theorem 0.2, and Corollary 0.3

We will make use of the following proposition, which is a special case of Proposition 9.19 of [24].

**Proposition 3.1** Suppose that \( f(x) = x^2 + a_1 x + a_2 \) is a monic polynomial over \( \mathbb{Q} \) that is irreducible over \( \mathbb{Q}_p \) and \( \mathbb{R} \). Then there exists an \( \alpha \) in \( D \) with \( f(\alpha) = 0 \). If the elements \( a_i \) are integral over \( R \subset \mathbb{Q} \), then \( \alpha \) lies in a maximal \( R \)-order of \( D \).
Proof of Theorem 0.2 for $p > 2$. We will use Proposition 3.1 to produce elements $x_1, x_2$ in $\Lambda$ so that $t_1(x_1), t_1(x_2)$ form an $\mathbb{F}_p$ basis of $\mathbb{F}_p^2$. Corollary 2.5 then yields the result.

Choose integers $r_1$ and $r_2$ such that $r_i \not\equiv 0 \pmod{p}$, and so that $r_1$ is a square and $r_2$ is not a square in $\mathbb{F}_p$. Let
\[ \alpha_i = \frac{-pr_i - 2}{\ell^{m_i(p-1)}}, \]
where the integers $m_i$ are chosen sufficiently large so that
\[ \alpha_i^2 < 4. \] (3.1)

We claim that the polynomials
\[ f_i(x) = x^2 + \alpha_i x + 1 \]
are irreducible over $\mathbb{R}$ and $\mathbb{Q}_p$. It suffices to check that the discriminants $\Delta_i = \alpha_i^2 - 4$ are not squares in each of these fields. Condition (3.1) guarantees that $\Delta_i$ is not a square in $\mathbb{R}$. Over $\mathbb{Q}_p$, we note that $\Delta_i$ lies in $\mathbb{Z}_p$, so it suffices to check that $\Delta_i$ is not a square in $\mathbb{Z}/p^2$. Because $\ell^{p(p-1)}$ is congruent to 1 in $\mathbb{Z}/p^2$, we have
\[ \Delta_i \equiv 4pr_i \pmod{p^2}. \]
As $r_i$ is not congruent to 0 (mod $p$), $\Delta_i$ is not a square in $\mathbb{Z}/p^2$.

Applying Proposition 3.1, we see that there exist $\bar{x}_i$ in $D$ so that $f_i(\bar{x}_i) = 0$. The elements $\bar{x}_i$ satisfy monic quadratics over $\mathbb{Z}[1/\ell]$, and so these elements are contained in maximal $\mathbb{Z}[1/\ell]$ orders $\mathcal{O}_i[1/\ell]$ of $D$. Applying Corollary 1.4, there exist elements $x_i \in \mathcal{O}[1/\ell]$ such that
\[ f_i(x_i) = x_i^2 + \alpha_i x_i + 1 = 0. \] (3.2)

The $x_i$ satisfy $N(x_i) = 1$. Therefore, we conclude that the elements $x_i$ are contained in the group $\Gamma^1$.

The images of the $\alpha_i$ in $\mathbb{Q}_p$ lie in $\mathbb{Z}_p$, so the images of the $x_i$ in $D_p$ lie in $\mathcal{O}_p$. Write $x_i$ in the form
\[ x_i = a_i + b_i S \]
for $a_i, b_i \in \mathbb{W}$. Reducing equation (3.2) modulo the ideal $(S)$, we see that
\[ x_i^2 - 2x_i + 1 \equiv a_i^2 - 2a_i + 1 \equiv 0 \pmod{S}. \]

We conclude that $a_i \equiv 1 \pmod{p}$. This implies that the elements $x_i$ actually lie in $\Lambda$, and their images in $\mathcal{O}_p$ are of the form
\[ x_i = (1 + pa_i' + b_i S) \]
for \( a'_i \in \mathbb{W} \).

Equation (3.2) implies that the reduced trace of \( x_i \) is given by
\[
Tr(x_i) = 2 + pTr(a'_i) = -\alpha_i,
\] (3.3)
whereas the reduced norm is given by
\[
N(x_i) = 1 + pTr(a'_i) + p^2N(a'_i) - pN(b_i) = 1.
\] (3.4)
Substituting the expression for \( Tr(a'_i) \) given by equation (3.3) gives
\[
N(b_i) = pN(a'_i) - \frac{\alpha_i + 2}{p}.
\] (3.5)
Note that \( \alpha_i \equiv -2 \pmod{p} \). Reducing equation (3.5) modulo \( p \) yields
\[
N(t_1(x_i)) \equiv N(b_i) \equiv r_i \in \mathbb{F}_p.
\]
If \( t_1(x_1) \) and \( t_1(x_2) \) were \( \mathbb{F}_p \) linearly dependent in \( \mathbb{F}_{p^2} \), their norms would lie in the same quadratic residue class. The \( r_i \) were chosen so that this does not happen, so we conclude that \( \{t_1(x_1), t_1(x_2)\} \) forms a basis of \( \mathbb{F}_{p^2} \). Therefore, by Corollary 2.5, the subgroup \( \Lambda \) is dense in \( SL_2 \). \( \square \)

**Proof of Theorem 0.2 for \( p = 2 \).** The proof is similar to the proof for \( p > 2 \), but more involved. There is precisely one isomorphism class of supersingular elliptic curve \( C \) at \( p = 2 \). It follows that \( D \) has one conjugacy class of maximal order. By checking the invariants of the division algebra \( D \), it can be shown [15] that \( D \) is of the form of the rational quaternions
\[
\mathbb{Q}(i,j)/(i^2 = j^2 = -1, ij = -ji).
\]
We may therefore assume that \( \text{End}(C) \subset D \) is the maximal order \( \mathcal{O} \) generated by
\[
\{\omega, i, j, k\},
\] where \( k = ij \) and \( \omega = \frac{1+i+j+k}{2} \). Note that \( \omega^3 = 1 \). The automorphism group \( \text{Aut} C = \text{End}(C)^\times \) is the binary tetrahedral group \( \tilde{A}_4 \) of order 24 given by the semidirect product \( Q_8 \rtimes C_3 \). The cyclic group \( C_3 \) is generated by \( \omega \) and the quaternion group \( Q_8 \) is generated by \( i \) and \( j \). We have \( \omega i \omega^2 = j \) and \( \omega j \omega^2 = k \).

Let \( T \) be the element \( i - j \in \mathcal{O} \). Then we have \( T^2 = -2 \) and \( T\omega = \omega^2T \). The Witt ring \( \mathbb{W} = \mathbb{W}(\mathbb{F}_4) \) will be identified with the subring
\[
\mathbb{Z}_2[\omega] \subset \mathcal{O} \otimes \mathbb{Z}_2 = \mathcal{O}_2.
\]
Let \( z \in \mathbb{W} \) be an element of norm \(-1\). Then the element \( S = zT \) in \( \mathcal{O}_2 \) has the property \( S^2 = 2 \) and \( Sa = \pi S \) for \( a \in \mathbb{W} \). This makes explicit the presentation of \( \mathcal{O}_2 \) in terms of \( S \) and \( \mathbb{W} \) given in equation (2.1).
Claim 1: Let $a, b, \in \mathbb{W}$ be such that $x = (1 + a) + bS \in \mathcal{O}_2$ has minimal polynomial $x^2 + 1$. Then we must have $a \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$ and $\nu_2(b) = 0$.

Proof of Claim 1: In order for $x$ to have this minimal polynomial, we must have the following:

\begin{align*}
Tr(x) &= 2 + Tr(a) = 0, \quad (3.6) \\
N(x) &= 1 + Tr(a) + N(a) - 2N(b) = 1. \quad (3.7)
\end{align*}

Reducing equation (3.6) mod 4, we see that

$$Tr(a) \equiv 2 \pmod{4}.$$ 

Substituting this into equation (3.7) and reducing mod 2, we see that $N(a) \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$. Write $a = 2a'$. Then we have $N(a) = 4N(a')$. Therefore, when we reduce equation (3.7) modulo 4, we get $N(b) \equiv 1 \pmod{2}$, and we conclude that $\nu_2(b) = 0$.

Claim 2: Suppose $a, b \in \mathbb{W}$ and $\alpha \in \mathbb{Z}_2$ are such that $x = (1 + a) + bS \in \mathcal{O}_2$ has minimal polynomial $x^2 + \alpha x + 1$. Then if $\alpha$ satisfies $\alpha \equiv 6 \pmod{16}$, we must have $a \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$ and $\nu_2(b) = 1$.

Proof of Claim 2: Because $\alpha \equiv 6 \pmod{16}$, we can write $2 + \alpha = 4\gamma$, where $\gamma \equiv 2 \pmod{4}$.

In order for $x$ to have this minimal polynomial, we must have $Tr(x) = -\alpha$ and $N(x) = 1$. As a result, we have the following:

\begin{align*}
Tr(a) &= -4\gamma, \quad (3.8) \\
N(a) &= 2N(b) + 4\gamma. \quad (3.9)
\end{align*}

Reducing equation (3.9), we find that

$$N(a) \equiv 2N(b) \pmod{4}. \quad (3.10)$$

This shows that $N(a) \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$. Writing $a = 2a'$ and substituting back into equation (3.10), we find that $N(b) \equiv 0 \pmod{2}$, so $b = 2b'$.

Re-expanding equations (3.8) and (3.9) gives the following:
\[ \begin{align*}
Tr(a') &= -2\gamma, \\
N(a') &= 2N(b') + \gamma.
\end{align*} \tag{3.11} \]

From equation (3.11), we find \( Tr(a') \equiv 0 \pmod{2} \). Write \( a' = a_1 + a_2\omega \in \mathbb{W} \). Because \( Tr(a') = 2a_1 - a_2 \equiv 0 \pmod{2} \), we find \( a_2 \equiv 0 \pmod{2} \). As a result we can write \( a' = u + vd \) for \( u, v \in \mathbb{Z}_2 \) and \( d = \sqrt{-3} = 2\omega + 1 \). We then have \( N(a') = u^2 + 3v^2 \). Therefore, equation (3.12) can be reduced as follows:

\[ u^2 - v^2 \equiv 2N(b') + 2 \pmod{4}. \tag{3.13} \]

However, the equation \( u^2 - v^2 \equiv 2 \pmod{4} \) has no integer solutions. In order for equation (3.13) to hold, we must have \( N(b') \equiv 1 \pmod{2} \), or equivalently \( \nu_2(b) = 1 + \nu_2(b') = 1 \).

**Claim 3:** Given \( x \in \mathfrak{S}_0^2 \), let \( x' = \omega^2 x\omega \). Then \( x' \) is in \( \mathfrak{S}_0^2 \) and we have

\[ t_i(x') = \begin{cases} 
  t_i(x) & \text{if } i \text{ even}, \\
  \omega t_i(x) & \text{if } i \text{ odd}.
\end{cases} \]

This claim is immediate from the definition of the functions \( t_i \) given in Section 2.

We now complete the proof of Theorem 0.2 for the case \( p = 2 \). Consider the polynomial

\[ f(x) = x^2 + \frac{6}{\ell^4}x + 1 \]

with discriminant \( \Delta = 4(9/\ell^8 - 1) \). We have that \( \Delta < 0 \), so the polynomial \( f \) is irreducible over \( \mathbb{R} \), and \( f \) is irreducible over \( \mathbb{Z}_2 \) because \( \nu_2(\Delta) \) is odd. By Proposition 3.1 and Corollary 1.4 there exists an element \( y \) of \( \mathcal{O}[1/\ell] \) so that \( f(y) = 0 \). Because \( N(y) = 1 \), the element \( y \) lies in \( \Gamma^1 \).

In order to show that \( \Lambda \) satisfies the hypotheses of Corollary 2.8, we claim that the elements

\[ i, k, y, y' = \omega^2 y\omega \]

lie in \( \Lambda \), and their images under the homomorphism

\[ t_1 \oplus (t_3 + t_1t_2) : \mathfrak{S}_0^2 \to \mathbb{F}_4 \oplus \mathbb{F}_4 \]

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form an \( \mathbb{F}_2 \)-basis of \( \mathbb{F}_4 \oplus \mathbb{F}_4 \). Claims 1, 2, and 3 imply that these elements do lie in \( \Lambda \), and the functions \( t_i \) evaluated on them satisfy

\[
\begin{align*}
t_1(i) & \neq 0, \\
t_1(k) & = \omega t_1(i), \\
t_1(y) & = 0, \\
t_1(y') & = 0, \\
t_3(y) & \neq 0, \\
t_3(y') & = \omega t_3(y).
\end{align*}
\]

These conditions are sufficient to conclude that their images give a basis. Corollary 2.8 now implies that \( \Lambda \) is dense in \( \mathbb{S}_l^0 \). \( \square \)

**Proof of Corollary 0.3.** There is a short exact sequence

\[1 \to \mathbb{S}_l^0 \to \mathbb{S}_l \to C_{p+1} \to 1,\]

where the cyclic group \( C_{p+1} \) is the group of elements of \( \mathbb{F}_p^\times = (\mathcal{O}_p/(S))^\times \) of \( \mathbb{F}_p \)-norm 1. It therefore suffices to show that we can lift the generator of \( C_{p+1} \) to an element of \( \Gamma^1 \). Let \( \overline{y} \in \mathbb{F}_p^\times \) be a generator of the norm 1 subgroup, with minimal polynomial

\[\overline{f}(x) = x^2 + ax + 1\]

over \( \mathbb{F}_p \). Let \( \overline{a} \) be an integer that reduces to \( a \) modulo \( p \), and define \( \alpha = \overline{a}/\ell^{m(p-1)} \) where \( m \) is chosen sufficiently large so that \( \alpha^2 < 4 \). Then the polynomial

\[f(x) = x^2 + \alpha x + 1\]

is irreducible over \( \mathbb{Q}_p \) and \( \mathbb{R} \). Just as in the proof of Theorem 0.2, Proposition 3.1 and Corollary 1.4 may be used to show that there exists an element \( y \in \mathcal{O}[1/\ell] \) so that \( y \) reduces to a generator of \( C_{p+1} \). Because \( y \) has norm 1, it lies in \( \Gamma^1 \). \( \square \)

**Proof of Theorem 0.1.** Assume that \( p > 2 \). In light of Corollary 0.3 and the short exact sequence

\[1 \to \mathbb{S}_l \to \mathbb{S}_l \to C_{p+1} \to 1,\]

we must show that there exists an element \( x \) of \( \Gamma \) so that \( N(x) \) is a topological generator of \( \mathbb{Z}_p^\times \). Because \( \ell \) was assumed to be a topological generator, it suffices to show there exists an \( x \) so that \( N(x) = \ell \). By Proposition 1.1, for \( m \) sufficiently large there exists an endomorphism \( \alpha \in \text{End}(\mathcal{C}) \) of degree \( \ell^{2m+1} \). Then the element \( x = \ell^{-m} \alpha \in \Gamma \) has norm \( \ell \). The argument for \( p = 2 \) is identical, except that we use the short exact sequence

\[1 \to \mathbb{S}_l \to \mathbb{S}_l \to \mathbb{Z}_2^\times /\{\pm 1\} \to 1. \quad \square\]
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