Polychromatic Colorings on the Integers

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Abstract

We show that for any set \(S \subseteq \mathbb{Z}, |S| = 4\) there exists a 3-coloring of \(\mathbb{Z}\) in which every translate of \(S\) receives all three colors. This implies that \(S\) has a codensity of at most 1/3, proving a conjecture of Newman [D. J. Newman, Complements of finite sets of integers, Michigan Math. J. 14 (1967) 481–486]. We also consider related questions in \(\mathbb{Z}^d, d \geq 2\).

1 Introduction

Throughout the paper, let \(G\) denote an arbitrary abelian group. Given \(S, T \subseteq G, n \in G\), define \(S + T = \{s + t : s \in S, t \in T\}\) and \(n + S = \{n\} + S\). Any set of the form \(n + S\) is called a translate of \(S\). Given a subset \(S\) of \(G\), a coloring of the elements of \(G\) is \(S\)-polychromatic if every translate of \(S\) contains an element of each color. Define the polychromatic number of \(S\), denoted \(p_G(S)\), to be the largest number of colors allowing an \(S\)-polychromatic coloring of the elements of \(G\). We just write \(p(S)\) when the choice of \(G\) is clear from context.

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We are primarily concerned with the setting where \( G = \mathbb{Z} \) and \( S \) is finite. If \( S \) has cardinality 1 or 2, \( p(S) = |S| \). For \( |S| = 3 \), \( p(S) \) can be 2 or 3. For example, if \( S = \{0, 1, 5\} \) then every translate of \( S \) contains three elements which are each in different congruence classes \((\text{mod } 3)\). Thus a 3-coloring of the integers where each congruence class \((\text{mod } 3)\) is colored a different color is \( S \)-polychromatic, and \( p(\{0, 1, 5\}) = 3 \). However \( p(\{0, 1, 3\}) = 2 \). To see that \( p(\{0, 1, 3\}) \neq 3 \), let \( \chi \) be a 3-coloring of \( \mathbb{Z} \) with \( \chi(0), \chi(1), \) and \( \chi(3) \) all different. Some element \( s \in \{0, 1, 3\} \) has \( \chi(s) = \chi(2) \), and there is a translate of \( \{0, 1, 3\} \) that contains both \( s \) and 2, so the coloring is not polychromatic. Our main result concerns the polychromatic numbers of sets with cardinality 4.

**Theorem 1** If \( S \subseteq \mathbb{Z} \) and \( |S| = 4 \), then \( p(S) \geq 3 \).

The proof of Theorem 1 is given in Section 2. For larger sets \( S \), Alon, Kríž, and Nešetřil [2] proved that \( p(S) \geq \frac{(1+o(1))|S|}{3 \ln |S|} \), while there exists some set \( S \) where \( p(S) \leq \frac{(1+o(1))|S|}{\ln |S|} \). Subsequently, Harris and Srinivasan [6] established a tight asymptotic lower bound on polychromatic numbers.

**Theorem 2** ([2], [6]) For a finite set \( S \subseteq \mathbb{Z} \), \( p(S) \geq \frac{(1+o(1))|S|}{3 \ln |S|} \). Moreover, there exists some set \( S \) where \( p(S) \leq \frac{(1+o(1))|S|}{\ln |S|} \).

One motivation for studying polychromatic numbers is that they provide bounds for Turán type problems (see for example [1], [10], [11]). Call \( T \subseteq G \) a blocking set if \( G \setminus T \) contains no translate of \( S \), i.e. if for all \( n \in G \), \( n + S \not\in G \setminus T \). A Turán type problem asks for the smallest blocking set for a given set \( S \). In the case where \( S \) is finite and \( G = \mathbb{Z} \), any blocking set is countably infinite, so we ask how small the density of a blocking set can be. Following the notation of Newman [8], (he worked in the setting of the natural numbers, but the definitions are equivalent), define for any set \( T \subseteq \mathbb{Z} \) its upper density \( \overline{d}(T) \) and lower density \( \underline{d}(T) \) as

\[
\overline{d}(T) = \limsup_{n \to \infty} \frac{|T \cap [-n,n]|}{2n+1} \quad \text{and} \quad \underline{d}(T) = \liminf_{n \to \infty} \frac{|T \cap [-n,n]|}{2n+1}.
\]

If \( \overline{d}(T) = \underline{d}(T) \), we call this quantity the density of \( T \) and denote it by \( d(T) \). Define \( \alpha(S) \) to be a measure of how small the density of a blocking set for \( S \) can be. Let

\[
\alpha(S) = \inf \{ d(T) : T \text{ is a blocking set for } S \text{ and } d(T) \text{ exists} \}.
\]

In Section 3 we describe the relationship between polychromatic colorings and blocking sets, and prove Lemma 3.

**Lemma 3** For any finite set \( S \subseteq \mathbb{Z} \), \( \alpha(S) \leq 1/p(S) \).

One of the main consequences of Theorem 1 concerns covering densities of sets of integers. Given a set \( S \subseteq G \), we say \( T \subseteq G \) is a complement set for \( S \) if \( S + T = G \). We say \( S \) tiles \( G \) by translation if it has a complement set \( T \) such that if \( s_1, s_2 \in S \),
If \( t_1, t_2 \in T \), then \( s_1 + t_1 = s_2 + t_2 \) implies \( s_1 = s_2 \) and \( t_1 = t_2 \). In this paper we only consider tilings by translation, so if \( S \) tiles \( G \) by translation with complement set \( T \), we will simply say \( S \) tiles \( G \) and write \( G = S \oplus T \).

Again, our primary interest will be the case where \( G = \mathbb{Z} \) and \( S \) is finite. For example, if \( S = \{0, 1, 5\} \), then \( S \) tiles \( \mathbb{Z} \) with complement set \( T = \{3n : n \in \mathbb{Z}\} \). However \( S = \{0, 1, 3\} \) does not tile \( \mathbb{Z} \). Newman \[9\] proved necessary and sufficient conditions for a finite set \( S \) to tile \( \mathbb{Z} \) if \( |S| \) is a power of a prime.

Theorem 4 (Newman \[9\]) Let \( S = \{s_1, \ldots, s_k\} \) be distinct integers with \( |S| = p^\alpha \) where \( p \) is prime and \( \alpha \) is a positive integer. For \( 1 \leq i < j \leq k \) let \( p^{e_{ij}} \) be the highest power of \( p \) that divides \( s_i - s_j \). Then \( S \) tiles \( \mathbb{Z} \) if and only if \( |\{e_{ij} : 1 \leq i < j \leq k\}| \leq \alpha \).

Later Coven and Meyerowitz \[5\] gave necessary and sufficient conditions for \( S \) to tile \( \mathbb{Z} \) when \( |S| = p_1^{\alpha_1} p_2^{\alpha_2} \), where \( p_1 \) and \( p_2 \) are primes. The general question is still open. Kolountzakis and Matolcsi \[7\] and Amiot \[3\] have published recent work motivated by what are called rhythmic tilings in music.

If a finite set \( S \) tiles \( \mathbb{Z} \), it has a complement set of density \( 1/|S| \). Following Newman \[8\], we define the codensity of a set \( S \), denoted \( c(S) \), as a measure of the how small the density of a complement set can be. Let

\[
c(S) = \inf\{d(T) : S + T = \mathbb{Z} \text{ and } d(T) \text{ exists}\}.
\]

We are interested in the largest codensities for sets of a given cardinality. Define

\[
c_k = \sup_{\{S : |S| = k\}} c(S).
\]

An example of a complement set for \( \{0, 1, 3\} \) is \( \{t \in \mathbb{Z} : t \equiv 0 \text{ or } 1 \pmod{5}\} \), so \( c(\{0, 1, 3\}) \leq 2/5 \). The following theorem and conjecture on \( c_4 \) are due to Newman.

Theorem 5 (Newman \[8\])

- \( c(\{0, 1, 3\}) = 2/5 \).
- \( c_3 = 2/5 \).
- \( c(\{0, 1, 2, 4\}) = 1/3 \).

Conjecture 6 (Newman \[8\]) \( c_4 = 1/3 \).

Weinstein \[16\] showed that \( c_4 < .339934 \). Based on a computer search, Bollobás, Janson, and Riordan \[4\] confirmed Newman’s conjecture for sets with diameter at most 22, where the diameter of a nonempty finite set of integers is defined to be the difference between the largest and smallest elements in the set. They also conjectured that \( c_5 = 3/11 \) and \( c_6 = 1/4 \) (See Remark 5.6 and Question 5.7 in \[4\]. Note they use different notation).
In Section 3 we prove the following lemma relating blocking sets and complement sets.

**Lemma 7** For any finite set $S \subseteq \mathbb{Z}$, $c(S) = \alpha(S)$.

Theorem 1 along with Lemmas 3 and 7 suffice to resolve Conjecture 6.

**Theorem 8** $c_4 = 1/3$.

**Proof:** Theorem 3 implies $c(\{0, 1, 2, 4\}) = 1/3$, so it remains to show that for any other set $S$ with cardinality four, $c(S) \leq 1/3$. Let $S \subseteq \mathbb{Z}$ have four elements. Then Theorem 1 implies that $p(S) \geq 3$, and by Lemmas 3 and 7

$$c(S) = \alpha(S) \leq 1/p(S) \leq 1/3.$$

In Subsection 3.1, we consider the relationship between polychromatic colorings and tilings. The main result is Theorem 11 which states that a set $S$ tiles an abelian group $G$ by translation if and only if $p(S) = |S|$.

Finally, in Section 4 we turn our attention to polychromatic numbers and tilings for finite sets in $\mathbb{Z}^d$. We begin by proving in Theorem 17 that the bound of Theorem 2 applies to subsets of $\mathbb{Z}^d$. We then show that if a set of points in $\mathbb{Z}^d$ is collinear, determining its polychromatic number is equivalent to determining the polychromatic number of a specific projection of this set into $\mathbb{Z}$. Theorem 11 implies that a set $S$ tiles $\mathbb{Z}^d$ if and only if $p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S) = |S|$, so we use this to restate some well-known results on tilings of $\mathbb{Z}^d$ by finite sets in the language of polychromatic colorings. We conclude by applying these results to determine polychromatic numbers of sets with cardinality 3 and 4 in $\mathbb{Z}^d$.

## 2 Sets of Cardinality Four

In this section we prove that every set of four integers has polychromatic number at least 3. We begin by stating a lemma that reduces the problem of finding a polychromatic coloring of $\mathbb{Z}$ to finding a polychromatic coloring of $\mathbb{Z}_m = \{0, 1, \ldots, m-1\}$ for a specific choice of $m$.

**Lemma 9** Let $a, b, c, k, q \in \mathbb{Z}$ with $0 < a < b < c$, $\gcd(a, b, c) = 1$, $k, q \geq 1$, and $m = c - a + b$. Let $S = \{0, ka, kb, kc\}$, $S_1 = \{0, a, b, c\}$, $S_2 = \{0, b - a, b, 2b - a\}$.

Then

(i) $p_{\mathbb{Z}}(S) = p_{\mathbb{Z}}(S_1)$.

(ii) $p_{\mathbb{Z}}(S_1) \geq p_{\mathbb{Z}_m}(S_1)$.

(iii) $p_{\mathbb{Z}_m}(S_1) = p_{\mathbb{Z}_m}(S_2)$. 


(iv) If \( \gcd(k, q) = 1 \), then \( p_{\mathbb{Z}_q}(S) = p_{\mathbb{Z}_q}(S_1) \).

**Proof:**

(i) Suppose \( \chi \) is an \( S \)-polychromatic coloring. If \( \chi_1 \) is the coloring defined by \( \chi_1(n) = \chi(kn) \), then \( \chi_1 \) is \( S_1 \)-polychromatic. Conversely, if \( \chi_1 \) is an \( S_1 \)-polychromatic coloring, then the coloring \( \chi \) defined by \( \chi(n) = \chi_1([n/k]) \) is \( S \)-polychromatic.

(ii) Suppose \( \chi_m \) is an \( S_1 \)-polychromatic coloring on \( \mathbb{Z}_m \). Then the coloring \( \chi_1 \) defined by \( \chi_1(n) = \chi_m(r) \) where \( 0 \leq r < m \) is the remainder when \( n \) is divided by \( m \) is an \( S_1 \)-polychromatic coloring on \( \mathbb{Z} \).

(iii) In \( \mathbb{Z}_m \), with addition \( \mod m \), \( S_2 = S_1 + (b - a) \). Thus in \( \mathbb{Z}_m \), \( S_1 \) and \( S_2 \) are translates of each other.

(iv) Since \( \gcd(k, q) = 1 \), we can write \( \mathbb{Z}_q = \{ik \mod m : 0 \leq i \leq m - 1\} \). Let \( \chi \) and \( \chi_1 \) be colorings of \( \mathbb{Z}_q \) such that \( \chi(i) = \chi_1(ik \mod m) \). Then \( \chi \) is \( S \)-polychromatic if and only if \( \chi_1 \) is \( S_1 \)-polychromatic.

**Proof of Theorem [1]** Using a computer search, we verified that that for every \( S \) with diameter at most 288 there exists an \( S \)-polychromatic 3-coloring of \( \mathbb{Z}_m \) for some \( m \) depending on \( S \). The code for this search has been included as an ancillary file with the preprint of this paper on arXiv.org. By Lemma [2], Part (ii), this gives a periodic \( S \)-polychromatic 3-coloring of \( \mathbb{Z} \). Hence we suppose that \( c \geq 289 \).

By Lemma [3], Part (i), it suffices to prove the theorem in the case that \( S = \{0, a, b, c\} \) with \( 0 < a < b < c \) and \( \gcd(a, b, c) = 1 \). For the remainder of the proof, let \( m = c - a + b \). By Lemma [3], Parts (ii) and (iii), it suffices to show that we can 3-color \( \mathbb{Z}_m = \{0, 1, \ldots, m - 1\} \) so that the translates of \( \{0, b - a, b, 2b - a\} \) are polychromatic. So for the remainder of the proof we assume \( S = \{0, b - a, b, 2b - a\} \) and seek an \( S \)-polychromatic 3-coloring of \( \mathbb{Z}_m \). The key observation regarding \( S \) is that it contains two repeated differences: \( b - a \) and \( b \).

Define \( d_1 = \gcd(b, m) \) and \( d_2 = \gcd(b - a, m) \). Since \( 1 = \gcd(a, b, c) = \gcd(b - a, b, c - a + b) = \gcd(b - a, b, m) \), we know \( \gcd(d_1, d_2) = 1 \). We distinguish two main cases. In the first case, which we call “single cycle,” we assume \( \min\{d_1, d_2\} = 1 \) and give a coloring of \( \mathbb{Z}_m \). In the second case, which we call “multiple cycle,” we assume \( \min\{d_1, d_2\} > 1 \) and partition \( \mathbb{Z}_m \) into multiple cycles of length \( m/d_i \) for one of the choices of \( i \). We then give a rule for coloring each cycle.

**Main case 1 (Single cycle):** Suppose \( \min\{d_1, d_2\} = 1 \). Without loss of generality, assume \( d_1 = 1 \) (if not, then simply switch all occurrences of \( b \) and \( b - a \) in the argument below). Let \( 2 \leq g \leq m - 2 \) satisfy \( gb \equiv b - a \mod m \), so that \( S = \{0, bg, b, b(g + 1)\} \).
Applying Lemma 9 Part (iv), with \( q = m \) and \( k = b \), we can instead work with \( S = \{0, g, 1, g + 1\} = \{0, 1, g, g + 1\} \).

We may assume that \( g \leq m/2 \), as otherwise we could work with the equivalent set \( \{0, 1, m - g, m - g + 1\} \). Let \( s \) be the smallest multiple of 3 such that \( g > [m/s] \). We consider four subcases: The first two are (1a) \( g = 2 \), 3, or 4 and (1b) \( 5 \leq g < 2 [m/s] \).

In the remaining subcases (1c) and (1d), \( 2 [m/s] \leq g \leq [m/(s - 3)] \). For \( m > 8 \), if \( 2 [m/s] \leq g \leq m/2 \) then \( s > 3 \), and for \( m > 44 \), if \( 2 [m/s] \leq g \leq [m/(s - 3)] \) then \( s < 9 \). Since \( m > c \geq 289 > 44 \), we can assume \( s = 6 \), so \( 2 [m/6] \leq g \leq [m/3] \). This implies \( m = 3g + k \) where \(-2 \leq k \leq 5 \) and there are two further subcases to consider, depending on the residue class of \( m \) modulo 6: (1c) \( m = 3g - 2, 3g - 1, 3g + 1, 3g + 2, 3g + 4 \), or \( 3g + 5 \), and (1d) \( m = 3g \) or \( 3g + 3 \).

**Subcase (1a):** Suppose \( g = 2, 3 \), or 4. Then \( S = \{0, 1, 2, 3\}, \{0, 1, 3, 4\}, \) or \( \{0, 1, 4, 5\} \), respectively. In Subcase (1c) we will construct \( S \)-polychromatic 3-colorings of \( \mathbb{Z}_m \) for each of these sets.

**Subcase (1b):** Suppose \( 5 \leq g < 2 [m/s] \). Then split \( \mathbb{Z}_m \) into \( s \) intervals as equally as possible (i.e. of lengths \([m/s]\) and \([m/s]\)) and color these intervals 010101..., followed by 121212..., then 202020..., repeating \( s/3 \) times. Since \([m/s] < g < 2 [m/s]\), any translate of \( S' \) where the pairs \( \{0, 1\} \) and \( \{g, g + 1\} \) lie in different intervals gets all three colors. If one of the pairs \( \{0, 1\} \) or \( \{g, g + 1\} \) straddles two consecutive intervals, this pair may get only the single color common to these two intervals, but then the other pair lies fully inside a third interval which is colored with the remaining two colors.

**Subcase (1c):** Suppose \( m = 3g - 2, 3g - 1, 3g + 1, 3g + 2, 3g + 4 \), or \( 3g + 5 \). In this case we know that \( m \not\equiv 0 \pmod{3} \) so we can apply Lemma 9 Part (iv), with \( q = m \) and \( k = 3 \), and instead work with one of the sets in \( S = \{0, 2, 3, 5\}, \{0, 1, 3, 4\}, \{0, 1, 2, 3\}, \{0, 3, 4, 7\}, \{0, 3, 5, 8\} \). For example, if \( m = 3g - 2 \), then multiplying by 3, \( S \) is transformed into \( \{0, 3, 3g, 3g + 3\} \equiv \{0, 2, 3, 5\} \), while if \( m = 3g + 4 \), then multiplying by 3, \( S \) is transformed into \( \{0, 3, 3g, 3g + 3\} \equiv \{0, 3, -4, -1\} \), which is a translate of \( \{0, 3, 4, 7\} \).

Thus we have reduced the problem to finding an \( S \)-polychromatic 3-coloring of \( \mathbb{Z}_m \) for each of the sets \( S \in S \). For each \( S \in S \) we write one interval of a periodic \( S \)-polychromatic 3-coloring on \( \mathbb{Z} \) in Table 1 and also include one for \( \{0, 1, 4, 5\} \) to cover Subcase (1a). Each of these periodic colorings also has the following property: If the coloring has period \( r \), then the periodic 3-coloring with period \( r + 1 \) obtained by adding a prefix of 0 to each interval is also \( S \)-polychromatic. In each case this means that for any \( h, k \geq 0 \) we can create a period \( hr + k(r + 1) \) \( S \)-polychromatic 3-coloring by concatenating a suitable number of the two blocks.

To obtain a coloring of \( \mathbb{Z}_m \), we simply need to check that for \( r = 3, 6, 7, 9 \) we can always express \( m \) as a positive integer combination of \( r \) and \( r + 1 \). This is the (2 coin) Frobenius problem and can always be done for any integer greater than
\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
\(S\) & \(r\) & period \(r\) & period \(r + 1\) \\
\hline
\{0, 2, 3, 5\} & 6 & 001122 & 0001122 \\
\{0, 1, 3, 4\} & 6 & 001212 & 0001212 \\
\{0, 1, 2, 3\} & 3 & 012 & 0012 \\
\{0, 3, 4, 7\} & 9 & 000111222 & 0000111222 \\
\{0, 3, 5, 8\} & 9 & 000111222 & 0000111222 \\
\{0, 1, 4, 5\} & 7 & 0001212 & 00001212 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{One interval of a periodic coloring for sets in Subcases (1a) and (1c).}
\end{table}

\(r^2 - r - 1 \leq 71 < 289.\)

**Subcase (1d):** Suppose \(m = 3g\) or \(3g + 3\). If \(g \neq 0 \pmod{3}\) then simply color \(\mathbb{Z}_m\) with the pattern 012012 . . . 012. If \(g \equiv 0 \pmod{3}\) and \(m = 3g\), color \(\mathbb{Z}_m\) in 3 equal intervals, each of length \(g\): 012012 . . . 012 followed by 12012 . . . 120 followed by 20120 . . . 201. Finally, if \(g \equiv 0 \pmod{3}\) and \(m = 3g + 3\) we color \(\mathbb{Z}_m\) in 3 equal intervals, each of length \(g + 1\): 012012 . . . 012 followed by 201201 . . . 2012 followed by 120120 . . . 1201.

**Main case 2 (Multiple cycles):** Suppose \(\min\{d_1, d_2\} > 1\). Since \(d_1\) and \(d_2\) are relatively prime, at most one of them can be a multiple of 3. Choose the smallest of these numbers that is not a multiple of 3, and as in the single cycle case, without loss of generality assume it is \(d_1\).

Let \(e_1 = m/d_1\) and \(e_2 = m/d_2\). For \(0 \leq i < d_1\), let

\[ C_i = \{(b-a)i + bj \pmod{m} : 0 \leq j < e_1\}. \]

Since

\[ \mathbb{Z}_m = \{(b-a)i + bj \pmod{m} : 0 \leq i < d_1, 0 \leq j < e_1\}, \]

the \(C_i\)'s form a partition of \(\mathbb{Z}_m\) into \(d_1\) cycles, each with \(e_1\) elements.

Let \(c_{i,j}\) denote the \(j\)th element of \(C_i\), i.e. \(c_{i,j} = i(b-a) + jb \pmod{m}\). Note that any translate of \(S\) contains two consecutive elements of two consecutive cycles, i.e. any translate of \(S\) has the form \(\{c_{i,j}, c_{i,j+1}, c_{i+1,j}, c_{i+1,j+1}\}\), where the first entry in the subscript is taken \(\mod d_1\) and the second entry is taken \(\mod e_1\). We describe an \(S\)-polychromatic 3-coloring for each of four subcases: (2a) \(e_1\) is even, (2b) \(d_1\) is even and \(e_1\) is odd, (2c) \(d_1\) and \(e_1\) are both odd, with \(e_1 \leq 17\), and (2d) \(d_1\) and \(e_1\) are both odd, with \(e_1 \geq 19\).

**Subcase (2a):** Suppose \(e_1\) is even. For \(i = 0, \ldots, [d_1/2] - 1\), color each \(C_{2i}\) by 01010 . . . 01 and each \(C_{2i+1}\) by 02020 . . . 02. Finally, if \(d_1\) is odd, color \(C_{d_1-1}\) by 1212 . . . 12.

**Subcase (2b):** Suppose \(d_1\) is even and \(e_1\) is odd. For \(i = 0, \ldots, d_1/2 - 1\), color each \(C_{2i}\) by 01010 . . . 011 and each \(C_{2i+1}\) by 22020 . . . 02.
Subcase (2c): Suppose \(d_1\) and \(e_1\) are both odd, with \(e_1 \leq 17\). Since \(e_1 e_2 \geq m > c \geq 289\), one of \(e_1\) and \(e_2\) is larger than 17, so \(e_2 > e_1\) and hence \(d_1 > d_2\). Since \(d_1\) is the smaller of \(d_1\) and \(d_2\) that is not a multiple of 3, \(d_2\) must be a multiple of 3, and thus so is \(e_1\).

We color each \(C_i\) with one of three patterns: 012012...1201, 012012...1202, or 012012...201. Such a coloring is \(S\)-polychromatic so long as for all \(i\), \(C_i\) and \(C_{i+1}\) are colored with different patterns. For \(0 \leq i \leq (d_1 - 3)/2\), color \(C_{2i}\) with the first pattern and color \(C_{2i+1}\) with the second pattern. Finally, color \(C_{d_1-1}\) with the third pattern.

Subcase (2d): Suppose \(d_1\) and \(e_1\) are both odd, with \(e_1 \geq 19\). Since \(d_1\) is not divisible by 3 and \(\min\{d_1, d_2\} > 1\), \(d_1 \geq 5\). Let \(e_1 = u + v + w\) be a sum of odd integers \(u, v, w\) with \(u \geq v \geq w \geq u - 2\). Color \(C_0\) in intervals of size \(u, v, w\), using the patterns 0101...010 then 1212...121 and then 2020...202. For each \(i \geq 1\), color \(C_i\) by taking a “counterclockwise rotation” of length \(r_i\) of the coloring of \(C_{i-1}\), so that the color of \(c_i, j + r\) is the same as the color of \(c_{i-1}, j\). For \(1 \leq i \leq d_1 - 1\), if \(u \leq r_i \leq v + w = e_1 - u\), then each translate of \(S\) meeting \(C_{i-1}\) and \(C_i\) receives all 3 colors.

It remains to show that there are choices of \(r_1, \ldots, r_{d_1-1}\) with \(u \leq r_i \leq v + w = e_1 - u\) so that of the translates of \(S\) meeting \(C_{d_1-1}\) and \(C_0\) receive all three colors. The coloring of \(C_0\) is a “clockwise rotation” of length \(R = -r_1 - r_2 - \cdots - r_{d_1-1}\) of the coloring of \(C_{d_1-1}\), i.e. the color of \(c_{0,j}\) is the same as the color of \(c_{d_1-1, j}\). Since for each \(i\), \(u \leq r_i \leq v + w = e_1 - u\), it suffices to show that there is a multiple of \(e_1\) in the interval \([d_1 u, d_1 (e_1 - u)]\), ensuring there are choices for the \(r_i\)'s such that \(R\) is congruent to a number between \(u\) and \(e_1 - u \pmod{e_1}\). This certainly holds if \(d_1 (e_1 - 2u) \geq e_1 - 1\) which, since \(d_1 \geq 5\), holds if \(4e_1 \geq 10u - 1\). This inequality is true for \(e_1 \geq 19\).

This completes the multiple cycles case and the proof.

3 Colorings, Blocking Sets, Coverings, and Tilings

In this section we prove the results necessary to resolve Newman’s conjecture. The key insight in proving Lemma 3 is that the elements of a given color in an \(S\)-polychromatic coloring form a blocking set for \(S\). While it is possible for \(\alpha(S)\) to be equal to \(1/p(S)\) (e.g. if \(|S| = 2\) then \(\alpha(S) = 1/2 = 1/p(S)\)), in general these two quantities are not equal. For example, \(p(\{0, 1, 3\}) = 2\), but by Lemma 7 and Theorem 5, \(\alpha(\{0, 1, 3\}) = 2/5 < 1/2\).

Proof of Lemma 3 Let \(\chi\) be an \(S\)-polychromatic coloring of \(\mathbb{Z}\) with \(p(S)\) colors. Suppose \(d \in \mathbb{Z}\) is greater than the diameter of \(S\) and let \(I_j = \{n \in \mathbb{Z} : j d \leq n < (j + 1) d\}\). By the pigeonhole principle, for some \(0 \leq j_1 < j_2 \leq (p(S))^d\) the coloring of the intervals \(I_{j_1}\) and \(I_{j_2}\) are identical, i.e. for \(0 \leq k < d\), \(\chi(j_1 d + k) = \chi(j_2 d + k)\).
Let \( m = (j_2 - j_1)d \). For any \( n \in \mathbb{Z} \), denote by \( r \) the remainder when \( n \) is divided by \( m \), so \( 0 \leq r < m \). Let \( \chi' \) be the coloring of \( \mathbb{Z} \) where \( \chi'(n) = \chi(j_1d + r) \). Note that \( \chi' \) uses \( p(S) \) colors and is periodic with period \( m \), i.e., for all \( n \in \mathbb{Z} \), \( \chi(n) = \chi(n + m) \).

Furthermore, the coloring under \( \chi' \) of any \( d \) consecutive integers is identical to the coloring under \( \chi \) of some \( d \) consecutive integers, so \( \chi' \) is \( S \)-polychromatic. Let \( T_i = \{ n \in \mathbb{Z} : \chi'(n) = i \} \). Since any periodic set has a defined density, \( d(T_i) \) is defined for each \( i \), and \( \sum_{i=1}^{p(S)} d(T_i) = 1 \). Since \( \chi' \) is \( S \)-polychromatic, for each \( i \), each translate of \( S \) contains an element of \( T_i \), i.e., \( T_i \) is also a blocking set for \( S \). Thus for some \( i \), \( T_i \) a blocking set for \( S \) with density at most \( 1/p(S) \), which implies that \( \alpha(S) \leq 1/p(S) \). ■

For any subset \( T \) of an abelian group \( G \), let \(-T\) denote the set \( \{ -t : t \in T \} \). Lemma 10 is well-known (see e.g. [14]) but for completeness we present a proof.

**Lemma 10** Let \( G \) be an abelian group, and \( S \subseteq G \). Then \( T \subseteq G \) is a complement set for \( S \) if and only if \(-T \) is a blocking set for \( S \).

**Proof:** Suppose \( T \) is a complement set for \( S \). For any \( n \in G \), \(-n \in S + T \), so there must be some \( t \in T \), \( s \in S \) such that \( t + s = -n \). This implies \( t = -n - s \), so \( -n - s \in T \), and \( n + s \in -T \). Thus for every \( n \), some element of \( n + S \) is in \(-T \), and \(-T \) is a blocking set for \( S \).

Conversely, suppose \(-T \) is a blocking set for \( S \). For the sake of contradiction, assume \( T \) is not a complement set for \( S \), i.e. there is some \(-n \in G \) such that \(-n \notin S + T \). This implies that for all \( s \in S \), \(-n - s \notin T \), which means for all \( s \in S \), \( n + s \notin -T \). Thus \( n + S \subseteq G \setminus -T \), and so \(-T \) is not a blocking set for \( S \), a contradiction. ■

**Proof of Lemma 7** Lemma 10 implies that \( T \) is a complement set for \( S \) if and only if \(-T \) is a blocking set for \( S \). If they exist, the densities of \( T \) and \(-T \) are the same. ■

### 3.1 Polychromatic Colorings and Tilings

We now describe some relationships between polychromatic colorings and tilings.

**Theorem 11** Let \( G \) be any abelian group. A finite set \( S \subseteq G \) tiles \( G \) by translation if and only if \( p(S) = |S| \). Moreover, if \( \chi \) is an \( S \)-polychromatic coloring of \( G \) with \( |S| \) colors and \( T \) is the set of elements of \( G \) colored by \( \chi \) with any given color, then \( S \oplus T = G \).

**Proof:** (\( \Rightarrow \)) Let \( S = \{ s_1, s_2, \ldots, s_k \} \), and suppose \( S \) tiles \( G \) with complement set \( T \subseteq G \). For each \( n \in G \), define a coloring \( \chi \) on \( G \) so that \( \chi(n) = i \) if \( n = s_i + t \) for some \( t \in T \). By the definition of tiling, this coloring is well-defined. For the sake of contradiction, assume \( \chi \) is not \( S \)-polychromatic. Then for some \( l \) where \( 1 \leq l \leq k \), there exists \( n \in G \) and \( s_i, s_j \in S \) with \( i \neq j \) such that \( \chi(n + s_i) = \chi(n + s_j) = l \).

Then there exist \( t_1, t_2 \in T \), \( t_1 \neq t_2 \), such that \( n + s_i = t_1 + s_i \) and \( n + s_j = t_2 + s_i \). Subtracting these equations, we find that \( s_i - s_j = t_1 - t_2 \). Thus \( t_2 + s_i = t_1 + s_j \).
which is a contradiction.

(\(\Leftarrow\)) : Let \(S = \{s_1, s_2, \ldots, s_k\}\), suppose \(p(S) = |S|\), and let \(\chi\) be an \(S\)-polychromatic coloring of \(G\) with \(|S|\) colors. Then for all \(n \in G\), if \(i \neq j\) then \(\chi(n + s_i) \neq \chi(n + s_j)\).

Let \(T \subseteq G\) be the set of elements colored with a given color. We show that \(S \oplus T = G\).

First assume for the sake of contradiction that two translates of \(S\) share an element, i.e. there exist \(s_i, s_j \in S\), \(i \neq j\), \(t_1, t_2 \in T\), \(t_1 \neq t_2\), such that \(s_i + t_1 = s_j + t_2\). Let \(n = t_1 - s_j = t_2 - s_i\), so \(t_1 = n + s_j\) and \(t_2 = n + s_i\). Since \(\chi(t_1) = \chi(t_2)\) we get \(\chi(n + s_j) = \chi(n + s_i)\), so two elements of \(n + S\) are colored identically, which is a contradiction.

It remains to show that \(S + T = G\). Suppose there is some \(n \in G\) such that \(n \notin S + T\). Then for all \(i\), \(n - s_i \notin T\), which implies that the \(|S|\) elements of \(n - S\) are colored with at most \(|S| - 1\) colors, i.e. two are colored identically. Suppose \(\chi(n - s_i) = \chi(n - s_j)\), where \(i \neq j\). Let \(m = n - s_j - s_i\). Then \(m + S\) contains both \(m + s_i = n - s_j\) and \(m + s_j = n - s_i\). Since these integers are colored identically, \(m + S\) is a translate of \(S\) that does not contain all colors, which is a contradiction.

Sets of integers with cardinality \(n = 3\) or \(4\) always have polychromatic number \(n\) or \(n - 1\), and a corollary of Theorem 11 is that they have polychromatic number \(n - 1\) if and only if they do not tile \(\mathbb{Z}\). According to Remark 5.6 in [4], \(c(\{0, 1, 3, 4, 8\}) = 3/11 > 1/4\). Thus by Lemma 3 \(\{0, 1, 3, 4, 8\}\) is an example of a set with cardinality 5 and polychromatic number 3. The results of [2] and [4] imply that for sets \(S\) with large cardinality \(n\) the cardinality and polychromatic number of \(S\) can differ by a factor of \(1/\ln n\).

We now state some other corollaries of Theorem 11.

**Corollary 12** If a finite set \(S\) tiles an abelian group \(G\) by translation, then any \(S\)-polychromatic coloring of \(G\) with \(|S|\) colors is also a \((-S)\)-polychromatic coloring.

**Proof:** Suppose \(S\) tiles \(G\). By Theorem 11 there exists an \(S\)-polychromatic coloring \(\chi\) of \(G\) with \(|S|\) colors. Let \(T \subseteq G\) be the set of all elements of a given color. Again by Theorem 11 \(S + T = G\). Therefore by Lemma 10 \(-T\) is a blocking set for \(S\), i.e. for all \(n \in G\), \(n + S \not\subseteq G \setminus (-T)\). This implies that for all \(n \in G\), \(-n - S \not\subseteq G \setminus T\), i.e. \(T\) is a blocking set for \(-S\). Since \(T\) is a blocking set for \(-S\) for every color choice, every translate of \(-S\) contains every color, i.e. the coloring \(\chi\) is \((-S)\)-polychromatic.

Define \(t(S)\) to be the cardinality of the largest subset of \(S\) that tiles \(G\).

**Corollary 13** For any finite subset \(S\) of an abelian group \(G\), \(p(S) \geq t(S)\).

If \(S \subseteq \mathbb{Z}\), \(|S| \leq 3\), then \(p(S) = t(S)\). But these parameters can be different for sets of integers with at least four elements. For example, \(S = \{0, 1, 3, 7\}\) is an example of a set where \(t(S) = 2\), but \(p(S) = 3\).

**Question 14** For sets \(S\) of a given cardinality, how large can the gap between \(t(S)\) and \(p(S)\) be?
4 Polychromatic Colorings in \( \mathbb{Z}^d \)

In this section we consider polychromatic numbers in the case where \( G = \mathbb{Z}^d, d \geq 2 \).

We will frequently “project” a set \( S \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^d \) to another set \( S' \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^{d-1} \) as follows.

Let \( d \geq 2 \), and \( w = (w_1, \ldots, w_{d-1}, 1) \in \mathbb{Z}^d \). Define \( f_w : \mathbb{Z}^d \to \mathbb{Z}^{d-1} \) so that if \( s = (v_1, \ldots, v_d) \in \mathbb{Z}^d \),

\[
f_w(s) = (v_1, \ldots, v_{d-1}) - v_d(w_1, \ldots, w_{d-1}).
\]

We call \( f_w(s) \) a projection of \( s \) along \( w \). Given a set \( S = \{s_1, \ldots, s_k\} \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^d \), we call a set \( S' = \{s'_1, \ldots, s'_k\} \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^{d-1} \) a projection of \( S \) along \( w \) if for \( 1 \leq i \leq k \), \( s'_i \) is a projection of \( s_i \) along \( w \).

For example, if \( s = (2, 7, 4) \) and \( w = (3, 1, 1) \), the projection of \( s \) along \( w \) is \( f_w(s) = (2, 7) - 4(3, 1) = (-10, 3) \). As another example, note that if \( s = (v_1, \ldots, v_d) \in \mathbb{Z}^d \), the vector \( s' = (v_1, \ldots, v_{d-1}) \in \mathbb{Z}^{d-1} \) is a projection of \( s \) along \( w = (0, \ldots, 0, 1) \).

**Lemma 15** Let \( d \geq 2 \), and \( w = (w_1, \ldots, w_{d-1}, 1) \in \mathbb{Z}^d \). Let \( S = \{s_1, \ldots, s_k\} \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^d \), and suppose \( S' = \{s'_1, \ldots, s'_k\} \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^{d-1} \) is a projection of \( S \) along \( w \). Then \( p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S) \geq p_{\mathbb{Z}^{d-1}}(S') \).

**Proof:** We show that if \( \chi_1 \) is an \( S' \)-polychromatic \( r \)-coloring of \( \mathbb{Z}^{d-1} \), we can define an \( S \)-polychromatic \( r \)-coloring \( \chi_2 \) on \( \mathbb{Z}^d \). For all \( n \in \mathbb{Z}^d \), let \( \chi_2(n) = \chi_1(f_w(n)) \). If \( n \in \mathbb{Z}^d \) and \( n' = f_w(n) \in \mathbb{Z}^{d-1} \), then for all \( i \), \( \chi_2(n + s_i) = \chi_1(f_w(n + s_i)) = \chi_1(n' + s'_i) \). Since \( n' + S' \) is polychromatic under \( \chi_1 \), \( n + S \) is polychromatic under \( \chi_2 \), and \( p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S) \geq p_{\mathbb{Z}^{d-1}}(S') \).

**Proposition 16** Let \( d \geq 2 \). For any \( S \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^d \), there is a projection \( S' \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^{d-1} \) where \( |S| = |S'| \).

**Proof:** Let \( S = \{s_1, \ldots, s_k\} \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^d \) and suppose \( w = (w_1, \ldots, w_{d-1}, 1) \in \mathbb{Z}^d \). For \( 1 \leq i \leq k \) let \( s'_i = f_w(s_i) \). For \( 1 \leq i \leq k \), let \( s_{id} \) denote the last coordinate of \( s_i \) and note that if \( i \neq j \), \( s'_i = s'_j \) if and only if

\[
w = \frac{1}{s_{id} - s_{jd}}(s_i - s_j).
\]

In other words \( s'_i = s'_j \) if and only if \( w \) is parallel to \( s_i - s_j \). Since the number of differences \( s_i - s_j \) is finite, we can choose \( w \) so that it is not parallel to any of these.

For this choice of \( w \), for all \( 1 \leq i \neq j \leq k \), \( s'_i \neq s'_j \). Then \( S' = \{s'_1, \ldots, s'_k\} \), is a projection \( S \) with \( |S'| = |S| \).

**Theorem 17** Fix \( d \geq 2 \). For a finite set \( S \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^d \), \( p(S) \geq \frac{(1+o(1))|S|}{\ln |S|} \).

**Proof:** Given \( S \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^d \), Proposition 16 implies we can project \( d-1 \) times to ultimately obtain a set \( S' \subseteq \mathbb{Z} \), with \( |S'| = |S| \). Theorem 2 along with repeated application of Lemma 15 implies \( p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S) \geq p_{\mathbb{Z}^{d-1}}(S') \geq \frac{(1+o(1))|S'|}{\ln |S'|} = \frac{(1+o(1))|S|}{\ln |S|} \).
Theorem 18  Let \( d \geq 2 \). Let \( S = \{ s_0, s_1, s_2, \ldots, s_k \} \) be a set of \( k + 1 \) collinear points in \( \mathbb{Z}^d \) where for each \( i \), \( s_i = (l_0 a_1, l_1 a_2, \ldots, l_i a_d) \), where \( 0 = l_0 < l_1 < l_2 < \cdots < l_k \), \( a_i \in \mathbb{Z} \), \( a_1 > 0 \), and \( \gcd(a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_d) = 1 \). Let \( S' = \{ 0, l_1, l_2, \ldots, l_k \} \subseteq \mathbb{Z} \). Then 
\[ p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S) = p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S'). \]

Proof:  Let \( S'' = \{ 0, l_1 a_1, l_2 a_1, \ldots, l_k a_1 \} \subseteq \mathbb{Z} \). By an argument identical to Lemma 9, Part (i), since \( S'' \) is a dilation of \( S' \), \( p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S') = p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S'') \). Since \( S'' \) can be obtained from \( S \) by a sequence of \( d - 1 \) projections, Lemma 15 implies \( p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S) \geq p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S'') = p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S') \).

For the other direction, suppose \( \chi_2 \) is an \( S \)-polychromatic \( r \)-coloring of \( \mathbb{Z}^d \). Let \( \chi_1 \) be the \( r \)-coloring of \( \mathbb{Z} \) where for all \( n \in \mathbb{Z} \), \( \chi_1(n) = \chi_2(n(a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_d)) \). Let \( n \in \mathbb{Z} \) and \( n' = n(a_1, \ldots, a_d) \in \mathbb{Z}^d \). Then for all \( i \), \( \chi_1(n + l_i) = \chi_2(n' + s_i) \), and since \( \chi_2 \) is \( S \)-polychromatic, \( \chi_1 \) is \( S' \)-polychromatic and \( p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S) \leq p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S') \). \( \blacksquare \)

Now we return to the subject to tilings. Lemma 19 and Theorems 20, 21, and 22 are well-known in the field of discrete geometry (see e.g. Section III of [14]) as simple examples of “splitting” groups. We restate them here using the language of polychromatic colorings.

Lemma 19  If a set \( S \subseteq G \) tiles a nontrivial subgroup \( H \) of \( G \), then \( S \) tiles \( G \).

Proof:  Suppose \( S \oplus T = H \). Let \( V \) be a set containing of one element from each coset of \( H \). Then by properties of cosets, \( H \oplus V = G \). In other words, for any \( n \in G \), there is a unique \( h \in H \), \( v \in V \) such that \( n = h + v \). Further, there is a unique \( s \in S \), \( t \in T \) such that \( h = s + t \). Thus \( n = (s + t) + v = s + (t + v) \) and \( S + (T + V) = G \). To show uniqueness, suppose \( n = s + t' + v' \) where \( s \neq s' \). Then \( (s + t) + v = (s + t') + v' \) which implies \( h + v = h' + v' \) for some \( h, h' \in H \). Since \( H \oplus V = G \), this implies \( v = v' \), and so \( s + t = s' + t' \). Since \( S \oplus T = H \), \( s = s' \) and \( t = t' \). Thus \( S \oplus (T + V) = G \). \( \blacksquare \)

For any \( d \geq 1 \), let \( 0 \) denote the element \((0, 0, \ldots, 0) \in \mathbb{Z}^d \) and let \( e_i \) denote the element \((0, \ldots, 0, 1, 0, \ldots, 0) \in \mathbb{Z}^d \) with all 0’s except for a 1 in the \( i \)th position. For \( s = (v_1, \ldots, v_d) \in \mathbb{Z}^d \), let \( -s = (-v_1, \ldots, -v_d) \). Define the \( d \)-semicross \( SC_d = \{ 0, e_1, \ldots, e_d \} \) and the \( d \)-cross \( C_d = \{ 0, e_1, -e_1, e_2, -e_2, \ldots, e_d, -e_d \} \). Theorem 11 implies that any finite set \( S \subseteq G \) with \( p(S) = |S| \) tiles \( G \), and we use this insight to show that these sets tile \( \mathbb{Z}^d \).

Theorem 20  For all \( d \geq 1 \), the \( d \)-semicross \( SC_d = \{ 0, e_1, \ldots, e_d \} \) tiles \( \mathbb{Z}^d \).

Proof:  Consider the coloring \( \chi : \mathbb{Z}^d \to [d + 1] \) where \( \chi(v_1, \ldots, v_d) = v_1 + 2v_2 + 3v_3 + \cdots + dv_d \) \((\text{mod } d + 1)\). On any translate \( n + SC_d \in \mathbb{Z}^d \), the colors \( \chi(n + 0), \chi(n + e_1), \chi(n + e_2), \ldots, \chi(n + e_d) \) are \( \chi(n), \chi(n) + 1, \chi(n) + 2, \ldots, \chi(n) + d \) \((\text{mod } d + 1)\). They are all different, so \( \chi \) is \( SC_d \)-polychromatic with \( |SC_d| = d + 1 \) colors. By Theorem 11, \( SC_d \) tiles \( \mathbb{Z}^d \). \( \blacksquare \)

Theorem 21  For all \( d \geq 1 \), the \( d \)-cross \( C_d = \{ 0, e_1, -e_1, e_2, -e_2, \ldots, e_d, -e_d \} \) tiles \( \mathbb{Z}^d \).

Proof:  The \((2d + 1)\)-coloring \( \chi : \mathbb{Z}^d \to [2d + 1] \) where \( \chi(v_1, \ldots, v_d) = v_1 + 2v_2 + 3v_3 + \cdots + dv_d \) \((\text{mod } 2d + 1)\) is \( C_d \)-polychromatic: On any translate \( n + C_d \in \mathbb{Z}^d \), the
colors \(\chi(n + 0), \chi(n + e_1), \chi(n - e_1), \chi(n + e_2), \chi(n - e_2), \ldots, \chi(n + e_d), \chi(n - e_d)\) are \(\chi(n), \chi(n) + 1, \chi(n) - 1, \chi(n) - 2, \ldots, \chi(n) + d, \chi(n) - d \pmod{2d + 1}\).

**Theorem 22** Let \(d \geq 2\). Let \(S \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^d\) be a set that contains 0 and \(j \leq d\) other elements \(s_1, \ldots, s_j\), where no nontrivial integer linear combination of \(\{s_1, \ldots, s_j\}\) is 0. Then \(S\) tiles \(\mathbb{Z}^d\).

**Proof:** Let \(H \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^d\) be the set of all integer linear combinations of \(\{s_1, \ldots, s_j\}\). By Theorem 20, there is a set \(T \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^j\) such that \(\{0, e_1, \ldots, e_j\} \oplus T = \mathbb{Z}^j\). Let \(M : \mathbb{Z}^j \to \mathbb{Z}^d\) be the unique linear transformation which maps \(e_i\) to \(s_i\) for each \(i \leq j\). Then \(\{0, s_1, \ldots, s_j\}\) tiles \(H\) with complement set \(\{M(t) : t \in T\}\). Since \(H\) is a subgroup of \(\mathbb{Z}^d\), by Proposition 19, \(S\) tiles \(\mathbb{Z}^d\).

We can now determine the polychromatic number of any set of cardinality 3 or 4 in \(\mathbb{Z}^d, d \geq 2\).

**Theorem 23** Let \(d \geq 2\) and suppose \(S \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^d\) has cardinality 3. Then \(p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S) = 3\) if the three points are in general position or if they are collinear and some projection \(S' \subseteq \mathbb{Z}\) of \(S\) has \(p_{\mathbb{Z}}(S') = 3\). Otherwise \(p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S) = 2\).

**Proof:** Theorem 22 implies that if \(d \geq 2\) and \(S \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^d\) consists of three points in general position, then \(S\) tiles \(\mathbb{Z}^d\), and thus \(p(S) = 3\). If \(S \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^d\) has three collinear points, then Theorem 18 implies the problem is equivalent to finding the polychromatic number of a set of three integers, which is either 2 or 3 and can be determined using Theorem 4.

**Theorem 24** Let \(d \geq 2\) and suppose \(S \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^d\) has cardinality 4. Then

- If all points of \(S\) are collinear, \(p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S) = 3\) or 4.
- If exactly three points of \(S\) are collinear, \(p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S) = 4\).
- If \(d \geq 3\) and \(S\) has four points in general position, \(p_{\mathbb{Z}^d}(S) = 4\).
- If \(d = 2\) and \(S\) has four points in general position, \(p_{\mathbb{Z}^2}(S) = 3\) or 4.

**Proof:** For \(d \geq 2\) and a set \(S \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^d\) with \(|S| = 4\), Proposition 16 implies that there is a set \(S' \subseteq \mathbb{Z}\) where \(|S'| = 4\) and \(S'\) is a projection of \(S\). Thus Theorem 1 and Lemma 15 imply that \(p(S) \geq 3\). Determining whether \(p(S) = 3\) or 4 is equivalent to determining whether \(S\) tiles \(\mathbb{Z}^d\). As with the \(|S| = 3\) case, we can examine cases depending on how many points of \(S\) are collinear.

If the four points of \(S\) are in general position, then if none is a nontrivial integer linear combination of the others, \(p(S) = 4\) by Theorem 22. Otherwise, we can assume \(S \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^2\). In this case, \(p(S)\) can be 3, for example if \(S = \{(0,0), (1,0), (0,1), (1,2)\} \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^2\). It can also be 4, for example if \(S = \{(0,0), (1,0), (0,1), (1,1)\} \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^2\). Szegedy 15 gave an algorithm to determine if a set of cardinality 4 tiles \(\mathbb{Z}^2\).
If the four points of \( S \) are all collinear, then \( p(S) \) is determined by applying Theorems 18 and 4.

If exactly three of the four points are collinear, then without loss of generality, assume that the three collinear points are \( \{0, (a,0,\ldots,0),(b,0,\ldots,0)\} \), where \( a \) and \( b \) do not have the same parity. Since the fourth point \( s \) can be projected anywhere onto the line, by Proposition 15 it suffices to show that there exists \( c \in \mathbb{Z} \) such that \( p_{\mathbb{Z}}(\{0,a,b,c\}) = 4 \). By Theorem 4, the value \( c = a + b \) has this property.

The fact that \( p_{\mathbb{Z}}(S) = 4 \) if \( S \) contains exactly three collinear points implies that for any set \( S \) of three integers, there is a 4-coloring of \( \mathbb{Z} \) so that every translate of \( S \) gets three different colors. Here is an explicit example of one such coloring. Without loss of generality we need only consider sets of the following form: Let \( S = \{0,a,b\} \subseteq \mathbb{Z} \) where \( a \) and \( b \) are positive with \( a \) even and \( b \) odd (note that we do not specify which is larger). Define the alternating block 4-coloring relative to \( S \) as follows: Given any \( m \in \mathbb{Z} \), let \( q_m \) and \( r_m \) be the unique integers such that \( m = 2aq_m + r_m \), where \( -a \leq r_m < a \). Let \( X(m) = 0 \) if \( r_m \geq 0 \), \( X(m) = 1 \) otherwise. Let \( Y(m) = 0 \) if \( m \) is even, \( Y(m) = 1 \) otherwise. Define \( \chi \), the alternating block 4-coloring relative to \( S \), so that \( \chi(m) = (X(m),Y(m)) \).

**Theorem 25** Let \( S = \{0,a,b\} \subseteq \mathbb{Z} \) with \( a,b > 0 \), \( a \) even, and \( b \) odd. If the integers are colored with the alternating block 4-coloring relative to \( S \) then every translate of \( S \) has elements of three different colors.

**Proof:** For any translate \( n + S = \{n,n+a,n+b\} \) of \( S \), \( X(n) \neq X(n+a) \), while \( Y(n) = Y(n+a) \neq Y(n+b) \). Thus \( \chi \) has the property that any translate of \( S \) contains elements with three different colors. \( \square \)

Given a set of three integers, the alternating block 4-coloring shows that there is a 4-coloring of the integers so that every translate gets three different colors. If \( S \subseteq \mathbb{Z} \), \( |S| = 4 \), is there a 5-coloring of \( \mathbb{Z} \) so that every translate of \( S \) has 4 colors? More generally, we ask the following question.

**Question 26** Let \( d \geq 1 \). Given \( k,n \in \mathbb{Z} \) with \( k \leq n \), let \( p(n,k) \) denote the minimum \( r \) so that any \( S \subseteq \mathbb{Z} \) with \( |S| = n \) has an \( r \)-coloring where every translate of \( S \) gets at least \( k \) colors. What is an asymptotic upper bound on \( p(n,k(n)) \) for natural choices of \( k(n) \)?

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References


