FINITE EXPONENTIAL SERIES AND NEWMAN POLYNOMIALS

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(Communicated by Clifford J. Earle, Jr.)

ABSTRACT. A Newman polynomial is a sum of powers of z , with constant term 1. The Newman polynomial of four terms whose minimum modulus on the unit circle is as large as possible is found by examining the expression

$$f(4) = \sup_{x_1 < \dots < x_4} \inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} \left| \sum_{j=1}^4 e^{ix_j \alpha} \right|$$

and determining an extremal system $(x_1, \dots, x_4)$ using a technique that reduces the problem to a finite search.

1. INTRODUCTION

Let $P(z) = \sum_{j=1}^n a_j z^{r_j}$ be a complex polynomial. Erdős [1] and Littlewood [2] asked several questions concerning the minimum modulus of $P(z)$ on the unit circle, under various restrictions of the coefficients a_j , e.g., $|a_j| = 1$ for $j = 1, 2, \dots, n$. If we insist that $a_j = 1$ for $j = 2, \dots, n$ and $r_1 = 0$, then $P(z)$ is a Newman polynomial, as defined by Campbell, Ferguson, and Forcade [3]. Many other authors have investigated the minimum modulus of Newman polynomials, most notably Smyth [4] and Boyd [5].

Rudolfer and Hayman [7] ask for information about

$$f(n) = \sup_{x_1 < x_2 < \dots < x_n} \inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} \left| \sum_{j=1}^n e^{i\alpha x_j} \right|.$$

If $x_1 = r_1, x_2 = r_2, \dots, x_n = r_n$ are natural numbers, we have

$$f(n) = \sup_{r_1 < r_2 < \dots < r_n} \min_{|z|=1} |P(z)|.$$

The purpose of this paper is to calculate $f(4)$ explicitly and, in the process, discover some examples of Newman polynomials with few terms, but large minimum modulus. $f(2)$ is trivially 0, and $f(3)$ is calculated in [3], being

Received by the editors December 11, 1990 and, in revised form, March 14, 1991.

1991 *Mathematics Subject Classification.* Primary 11L03; Secondary 30C10.

Key words and phrases. Newman polynomials, exponential sums.

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0002-9939/92 \$1.00 + \$.25 per page

attained for the Newman polynomial $1 + z^2 + z^3$. We shall prove here that $f(4)$ is attained for $1 + z^2 + z^3 + z^4$.

2. PRELIMINARIES

For n a natural number, we define $F_n: \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ via

$$(1) \quad F_n(x_1, \dots, x_n) = \left| \sum_{j=1}^n e^{ix_j} \right|^2.$$

Then we have $f(n) = \sup_{x_1 < \dots < x_n} \inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} F_n(x_1\alpha, \dots, x_n\alpha)^{1/2}$. It is easy to show that

$$(2) \quad F_n(x_1, \dots, x_n) = n + 2 \sum_{j < k} \cos(x_k - x_j),$$

and from this, that

$$(3) \quad F_n(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) = F_n(x_1, x_n + x_1 - x_{n-1}, \dots, x_n + x_1 - x_2, x_n).$$

The simplification

$$f(n) = \sup_{0=A_1 < A_2 < \dots < A_n} \inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} F_n(0, A_2\alpha, \dots, A_n\alpha)^{1/2}$$

where $0=A_1 < A_2 < \dots < A_n$ are nonnegative integers and $\gcd(A_2, A_3, \dots, A_n) = 1$, is given as Theorem 1 of [3], or we may proceed as follows: It suffices to show that for every n -tuple $(x_1, \dots, x_n) \in \mathbb{R}^n$ and $\varepsilon > 0$ there is an n -tuple $(r_1, \dots, r_n) \in \mathbb{Q}^n$ such that

$$\inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} \left| \sum_{j=1}^n e^{i\alpha x_j} \right| \leq \inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} \left| \sum_{j=1}^n e^{i\alpha r_j} \right| + \varepsilon.$$

If each $x_j \in \mathbb{Q}$, we are done. Otherwise, by the simultaneous rational approximation theorem (Hardy and Wright [8, p. 170]) there are infinitely many solutions to the system of inequalities

$$\left| x_j - \frac{p_j}{q} \right| < \frac{1}{q^{(1+1/n)}}, \quad j = 1, 2, \dots, n.$$

Further, the function $h(x) = e^{ix}$ is continuous and periodic, hence uniformly continuous over $\mathbb{R}$, so there exists a $\delta > 0$ such that $|e^{ix} - e^{iy}| < \varepsilon/n$ whenever $|x - y| < \delta$. Let $[p_1/q, \dots, p_n/q]$ be a solution to the inequalities with $q > [2\pi/\delta]^n$. Then $q^{1/n} > 2\pi/\delta$, and hence $\delta > 2\pi/q^{1/n}$. Then the function of α , $g(\alpha) = |\sum_{j=1}^n e^{i\alpha p_j/q}|$ has period $2\pi q$. Now for $0 \leq \alpha \leq 2\pi q$ we have

$$\left| \sum_{j=1}^n e^{i\alpha x_j} - \sum_{j=1}^n e^{i\alpha p_j/q} \right| \leq \sum_{j=1}^n |e^{i\alpha x_j} - e^{i\alpha p_j/q}| \leq \sum_{j=1}^n \frac{\varepsilon}{n} = \varepsilon$$

since $|\alpha x_j - \alpha p_j/q| = \alpha |x_j - p_j/q| < 2\pi q/q^{(1+1/n)} = 2\pi/q^{1/n} < \delta$.

So,

$$\inf_{\alpha \in [0, 2\pi q]} \left| \sum_{j=1}^n e^{i\alpha x_j} \right| \leq \inf_{a \in [0, 2\pi q]} \left| \sum_{j=1}^n e^{i\alpha p_j/q} \right| + \varepsilon.$$

Then, since we are taking the infimum over a smaller set, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} \left| \sum_{j=1}^n e^{i\alpha x_j} \right| &\leq \inf_{a \in [0, 2\pi q]} \left| \sum_{j=1}^n e^{iax_j} \right| \\ &\leq \inf_{a \in [0, 2\pi q]} \left| \sum_{j=1}^n e^{iap_j/q} \right| + \varepsilon = \inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} \left| \sum_{j=1}^n e^{i\alpha p_j/q} \right| + \varepsilon \end{aligned}$$

since $g(\alpha)$ has period $2\pi q$. Consequently, the following variation of (3) is considered:

$$(4) \quad F_n(0, A_2, A_3, \dots, A_n) = F_n(0, A_n - A_{n-1}, A_n - A_{n-2}, \dots, A_n - A_2, A_n).$$

3. LEMMAS

We will need the following lemmas. Recall from (1) and (2) that

$$F_4(x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4) = \left| \sum_{j=1}^4 e^{ix_j} \right|^2 = 4 + 2 \sum_{j < k} \cos(x_k - x_j).$$

Lemma 1. *Given distinct integers (x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4) , there is a zero (z_1, z_2, z_3, z_4) of F_4 and a $t_0 \in \mathbb{R}$ such that*

- (i) $x_2 t_0 = z_2$; $x_3 t_0 = z_3$; $x_4 t_0 = z_4$;
- (ii) $|z_1 - x_1 t_0| \leq \pi \gcd(x_4 - x_3, x_2 - x_1) / (|x_4 - x_3|)$; and
- (iii) $(z_4 - z_3)$ and $(z_2 - z_1)$ are odd multiples of π .

Proof. Let $d = \gcd(x_4 - x_3, x_2 - x_1)$. Consider the linear Diophantine equation in l and k ,

$$(5) \quad 2l(x_2 - x_1) + 2k(x_4 - x_3) = (x_1 - x_2) + (x_3 - x_4) + \beta d$$

where $\beta = 0$ or 1 is chosen so that the right-hand side is an even multiple of d . With β so chosen, (5) is solvable. Let $l = l_0$ and $k = k_0$ be a solution. Let $t_0 = (2l_0 + 1)\pi / (x_4 - x_3)$, $z_1 = t_0 x_2 + (2k_0 + 1)\pi$, $z_2 = x_2 t_0$, $z_3 = x_3 t_0$, and $z_4 = x_4 t_0$. Then it is easy to check that $(z_4 - z_3) = (2l_0 + 1)\pi$ and $(z_2 - z_1) = -(2k_0 + 1)\pi$. It remains to show (ii) is satisfied:

$$\begin{aligned} |z_1 - x_1 t_0| &= |t_0 x_2 + (2k_0 + 1)\pi - x_1 t_0| \\ &= |t_0(x_2 - x_1) + (2k_0 + 1)\pi| \\ &= \left| \frac{(2l_0 + 1)\pi}{x_4 - x_3} (x_2 - x_1) + (2k_0 + 1)\pi \right| \\ &= \frac{\pi}{|x_4 - x_3|} |(2l_0 + 1)(x_2 - x_1) + (2k_0 + 1)(x_4 - x_3)| \\ &= \frac{\pi}{|x_4 - x_3|} |\beta d| \leq \frac{\pi d}{|x_4 - x_3|}, \end{aligned}$$

which completes the proof.

Lemma 2. *Let w be a positive real number. Let A_1, A_2, A_3 be distinct natural numbers such that $\gcd(A_1, A_2, A_3) = 1$ and $w(\gcd(A_1, A_2 - A_3)) \leq A_1$. Then*

$$\inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} F_4(0, A_1 \alpha, A_2 \alpha, A_3 \alpha) < (\pi/w)^2.$$

Proof. Let $d = (A_1, A_2 - A_3)$. Then we have $d/A_1 \leq 1/w$. For the point $(0, A_1, A_2, A_3)$ in $\mathbb{R}^4$, Lemma 1 gives a zero $(z_1, z_2, z_3, z_4) \in \mathbb{R}^4$ and an $\alpha_0 \in \mathbb{R}$ such that $0\alpha_0 = z_1$, $A_1\alpha_0 = z_2$, $A_2\alpha_0 = z_3$, and

$$|A_3\alpha_0 - z_4| < \frac{\pi \cdot \gcd(A_1, A_3 - A_2)}{A_1} = \frac{\pi d}{A_1} \leq \frac{\pi}{w}.$$

Further, $z_2 = (z_2 - z_1)$ and $(z_4 - z_3)$ are odd multiples of π , say $z_2 = (z_2 - z_1) = (2k + 1)\pi$ and $(z_4 - z_3) = (2l + 1)\pi$. Let $\gamma = A_3\alpha_0 - z_4$. Now we compute

$$\begin{aligned} \inf_{a \in \mathfrak{R}} F_4(0, A_1\alpha, A_2\alpha, A_3\alpha) &\leq F_4(0, A_1\alpha_0, A_2\alpha_0, A_3\alpha_0) \\ &= |1 + e^{iz_2} + e^{iz_3} + e^{iA_3\alpha_0}|^2 \\ &= |1 + e^{i(2k+1)\pi} + e^{iz_4}(e^{i(z_3-z_4)} + e^{i(A_3\alpha-z_4)})|^2 \\ &= |1 - 1 + e^{iz_4}(e^{-i(2l+1)\pi} + e^{i\gamma})|^2 \\ &= |e^{iz_4}|^2 |1 + e^{i\gamma}|^2 = 1 \cdot |e^{i\gamma/2} - e^{-i\gamma/2}|^2 \\ &= 4 \sin^2\left(\frac{\gamma}{2}\right) \leq 4 \left(\frac{\gamma}{2}\right)^2 = \gamma^2 < \left(\frac{\pi}{w}\right)^2, \quad \text{as desired.} \end{aligned}$$

Lemma 3. Let (a, b, c) be a triple of natural numbers such that

- (i) $a < b < c$,
- (ii) $\gcd(a, b, c) = 1$,
- (iii) $c - a < b$,
- (iv) $\gcd(a, c - b) > a/4.18$,
- (v) $\gcd(b, c - a) > b/4.18$,
- (vi) $\gcd(c, b - a) > c/4.18$.

Then $(a, b, c) = (2, 3, 4)$ or $(4, 9, 10)$.

Proof. Since $\gcd(c, b - a)$ is a divisor of c , $\gcd(c, b - a)/c$ is a rational number of the form $1/m$ where m is a natural number. Then $1/m > 1/4.18$ from (vi). Whence $m < 4.18$. Since $b - a < c$, $\gcd(c, b - a) < c$, so $m \neq 1$. Therefore, the possible values of m are 2, 3, and 4.

If $m = 2$ then $b - a = c/2$, hence $2b - 2a = c$.

If $m = 3$ then $b - a = c/3$ or $2c/3$, so $3b - 3a = c$ or $3b - 3a = 2c$.

If $m = 4$ then $b - a = c/4$ or $3c/4$, so $4b - 4a = c$ or $4b - 4a = 3c$.

So (a, b, c) must satisfy one of the five Diophantine equations:

$$\begin{aligned} 2b - 2a &= c, & 3b - 3a &= c, & 3b - 3a &= 2c, \\ 4b - 4a &= c, & 4b - 4a &= 3c. \end{aligned}$$

Similarly, using inequalities (v) and (iii), we have that (a, b, c) must satisfy one of the five Diophantine equations:

$$\begin{aligned} 2c - 2a &= b, & 3c - 3a &= b, & 3c - 3a &= 2b, \\ 4c - 4a &= b, & 4c - 4a &= 3b. \end{aligned}$$

First suppose $k(b - a) = lc$ and $j(c - a) = ib$ for integers k, l, j , and i ; that is, (a, b, c) satisfy one of the first five and one of the second five equations

above. Then solving for b and c in terms of a yields

$$(6) \quad c = \left[\frac{kj + ki}{kj - li} \right] a,$$

$$(7) \quad b = \left[\frac{kj + li}{kj - li} \right] a.$$

Define t by $a = (kj - li)t$. Then from (6) and (7)

$$b = \frac{(kj + li)}{(kj - li)}(kj - li)t = (kj + li)t \quad \text{and} \quad c = \frac{(kj + ki)}{(kj - li)}(kj - li)t = (kj + ki)t.$$

Then t is rational, say $t = p/q$ with p, q relatively prime integers. Then $p|a, b$, and c , whence $p = 1$. So $t = 1/q$ for some natural number q . Then $q|(kj - li), (kj + li)$, and $(kj + ki)$. Since $\gcd(a, b, c) = 1$, we must have $q = \gcd((kj - li), (kj + li), (kj + ki))$. Thus there is only one solution to the Diophantine system

$$\begin{cases} k(b - a) = lc, \\ j(c - a) = ib, \end{cases}$$

with $(a, b, c) = 1$. Also, since $b < c$, we have $(kj + li)t < (kj + ki)t$. So $lj < ki$. There are 25 possibilities for the tuple (k, l, j, i) , corresponding to the 25 possible Diophantine systems. The following table lists those tuples with $lj < ki$, along with the value of q and the corresponding solution (a, b, c) .

Table I

k, l, j, i	$kj - li$	$kj + lj$	$kj + ki$	q	(a, b, c)
2, 1, 3, 2	4	9	10	1	(4, 9, 10)
2, 1, 4, 3	5	12	14	1	(5, 12, 14)
3, 1, 2, 1	5	8	9	1	(5, 8, 9)
3, 1, 3, 2	7	12	15	1	(7, 12, 15)
3, 1, 4, 3	9	16	21	1	(9, 16, 21)
3, 2, 4, 3	6	20	21	1	(6, 20, 21)
4, 1, 2, 1	7	10	12	1	(7, 10, 12)
4, 1, 3, 1	11	15	16	1	(11, 15, 16)
4, 1, 3, 2	10	15	20	5	(2, 3, 4)
4, 1, 4, 3	13	20	28	1	(13, 20, 28)

Now it remains to eliminate most of the triples (a, b, c) in Table I, by showing that they violate one of the inequalities (iv)–(vi). Now $c - a < b$, so $c - b < a$; whence $a \nmid (c - b)$, so if a is a prime bigger than 4, we have

$$\frac{\gcd(a, c - b)}{a} = \frac{1}{a} \leq \frac{1}{5} < \frac{1}{4.18},$$

so the triples $(5, 12, 14)$, $(5, 8, 9)$, $(7, 12, 15)$, $(7, 10, 12)$, $(11, 15, 16)$, and $(13, 20, 28)$ violate inequality (iv). This leaves only $(4, 9, 10)$, $(9, 16, 21)$, $(6, 20, 21)$, and $(2, 3, 4)$. But

$$\frac{\gcd(9, 21 - 16)}{9} = \frac{\gcd(9, 5)}{9} = \frac{1}{9} < \frac{1}{4.18}$$

and

$$\frac{\gcd(6, 21 - 20)}{6} = \frac{1}{6} < \frac{1}{4.18},$$

which violate (iv). This leaves $(4, 9, 10)$ and $(2, 3, 4)$ as claimed.

Lemma 4. $\inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} F_4(0, 2\alpha, 3\alpha, 4\alpha) = 0.566 \dots$

Proof. From (3) and the Chebyshev polynomials,

$$\begin{aligned} F_4(0, 2\alpha, 3\alpha, 4\alpha) &= 4 + 2(\cos 2\alpha + \cos 3\alpha + \cos 4\alpha + \cos \alpha + \cos 2\alpha + \cos \alpha) \\ &= 16 \cos^4 \alpha + 8 \cos^3 \alpha - 8 \cos^2 \alpha - 2 \cos \alpha + 2. \end{aligned}$$

Then

$$\inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} F_4(0, 2\alpha, 3\alpha, 4\alpha) = \min_{-1 \leq x \leq 1} (16x^4 + 8x^3 - 8x^2 - 2x + 2).$$

It is a simple calculus exercise to show this last expression is equal to $0.566 \dots$ as desired.

Note that this is equivalent to saying

$$\min_{|z|=1} |1 + z^2 + z^3 + z^4| = (0.566 \dots)^{1/2} = 0.7524 \dots,$$

which appears in Table 1 of [5]. Thus we have a Newman polynomial of only four terms, with relatively large minimum modulus on the unit circle. The next theorem shows this result is best possible.

4. MAIN RESULT

Theorem 1. $f(4) = 0.7524 \dots$

Proof. Let $A_1 < A_2 < A_3$ be distinct positive integers with $(A_1, A_2, A_3) = 1$. From the functional relationship (3), we have

$$F_4(0, A_1\alpha, A_2\alpha, A_3\alpha) = F_4(0, (A_3 - A_2)\alpha, (A_3 - A_1)\alpha, A_3\alpha),$$

so if $A_3 - A_1 > A_2$ let $A'_1 = A_3 - A_2$, $A'_2 = A_3 - A_1$, and $A'_3 = A_3$. Then $A'_3 - A'_1 = A_3 - (A_3 - A_2) = A_2 < A_3 - A_1 = A'_2$. So we may assume without loss of generality that $A_3 - A_1 \leq A_2$.

If $A_3 - A_1 = A_2$, then exactly two of $\{A_1, A_2, A_3\}$ are odd, so exactly two of $\{e^{iA_1\pi}, e^{iA_2\pi}, e^{iA_3\pi}\}$ are equal to -1 and the other is equal to 1 . Therefore,

$$\begin{aligned} \inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} F_4(0, A_1\alpha, A_2\alpha, A_3\alpha) &\leq F_4(0, A_1\pi, A_2\pi, A_3\pi) \\ &= |1 + e^{iA_1\pi} + e^{iA_2\pi} + e^{iA_3\pi}| = |1 + 1 - 1 - 1|^2 = 0 < 0.566 \dots \end{aligned}$$

So we may assume $A_3 - A_1 < A_2$. Now if A_1, A_2, A_3 violate one of the inequalities (iv)–(vi) in Lemma 3, we have, by Lemma 2, with $w = 4.18$, that

$$\inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} F_4(0, A_1\alpha, A_2\alpha, A_3\alpha) < \left[\frac{\pi}{4.18} \right]^2 < 0.566 \dots = \inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} F_4(0, 2\alpha, 3\alpha, 4\alpha).$$

Therefore, to find $\sup_{0 < A_1 < A_2 < A_3} \inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} |F_4(0, A_1\alpha, A_2\alpha, A_3\alpha)|$, it suffices to look only at triples (A_1, A_2, A_3) that satisfy the hypotheses of Lemma 3. But this means we need only check $(2, 3, 4)$ and $(4, 9, 10)$. Now

$$\begin{aligned} \inf_{\alpha} |F_4(0, 4\alpha, 9\alpha, 10\alpha)| &\leq F_4(0, 4(\frac{4}{10}), 9(\frac{4}{10}), 10(\frac{4}{10})) \\ &= 0.3758\dots < 0.566\dots \end{aligned}$$

Therefore

$$\begin{aligned} f(A) &= \sup_{\substack{0 < A_1 < A_2 < A_3 \\ \gcd(A_1, A_2, A_3) = 1}} \inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} (F_4(0, A_1\alpha, A_2\alpha, A_3\alpha))^{1/2} \\ &= \inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} (F_4(0, 2\alpha, 3\alpha, 4\alpha))^{1/2} = (0.5661\dots)^{1/2} = 0.7524\dots \end{aligned}$$

5. FURTHER RESULTS

In an effort to see how fast $f(n)$ grows (or see if it is, in fact, monotonic), we explicitly computed several examples to estimate the size of $f(5)$ and $f(6)$.

First, we generated all quadruples (A_1, A_2, A_3, A_4) of natural numbers with $\gcd(A_1, A_2, A_3, A_4) = 1$ and $0 < A_1 < A_2 < A_3 < A_4 \leq 30$. For each quadruple, we computed the values of

$$F_5(0, A_1\alpha, A_2\alpha, A_3\alpha, A_4\alpha) \quad \text{for } \alpha = 0, 0.01, 0.02, \dots, 3.15$$

and saved the smallest value. The largest of these came from the quadruple $(1, 2, 6, 9)$. The minimum value of $F_5(0, \alpha, 2\alpha, 6\alpha, 9\alpha)$ apparently occurs when $\alpha = \pi$ and gives the surprising value

$$\begin{aligned} F_5(0, \pi, 2\pi, 6\pi, 9\pi) &= |1 + e^{i\pi} + e^{i2\pi} + e^{i6\pi} + e^{i9\pi}|^2 \\ &= |1 - 1 + 1 + 1 - 1|^2 = 1, \end{aligned}$$

which also appears in Table 1 of [5]. Thus $f(5) \geq 1$. We did the same for $f(6)$. We checked all tuples $0 < A_1 < A_2 < A_3 < A_4 < A_5 \leq 30$ and all values of α from 0 to π in increments of 0.001 and found that

$$\begin{aligned} f(6) &= \sup_{0 < A_1 < \dots < A_5} \inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} \left| 1 + \sum_{j=1}^5 e^{iA_j\alpha} \right| \\ &\geq \inf_{\alpha \in \mathfrak{R}} |1 + e^{i6\alpha} + e^{i9\alpha} + e^{i10\alpha} + e^{i17\alpha} + e^{i24\alpha}| \approx 1.1348\dots, \end{aligned}$$

which is achieved when $\alpha \approx 2.45$.

Thus the Newman polynomials $1 + z + z^2 + z^6 + z^9$ and $1 + z^6 + z^9 + z^{10} + z^{17} + z^{24}$ have only five and six terms, but yet have minimum modulus on the unit circle larger than or equal to 1. In [5] Boyd shows that $f(n) > 1$ for $6 \leq n \leq 16$ and conjectures that $\log f(n)/\log n \rightarrow \alpha > 0$. It seems quite likely that $f(n)$ is at least monotonic.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The referee is to be commended for his insightful comments and thoughtful work.

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