Recognition of Some Symmetric Groups by the Set of the Order of Their Elements

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Abstract

For a finite group G, let $\pi_e(G)$ be the set of order of elements in G and denote S_n the symmetric group on n letters. We will show that if $\pi_e(G) = \pi_e(H)$, where H is S_p or S_{p+1} and p is a prime with $50 < p < 100$, then $G \cong H$.

Keywords: Order of elements, Prime graph, Symmetric group.

2000 Mathematics Subject Classification: Primary 20D05; Secondary 20D06.

1 Introduction

For a finite group G, we denote by $\pi_e(G)$ the set of order of elements of G. If for a given finite group H, $\pi_e(G) = \pi_e(H)$ implies that $G \cong H$, then we say H is a *characterizable* group. There are scattered results in the literature showing that certain groups are characterizable. It is known that the symmetric groups S_n, $n = 2$, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 are not characterizable, but the symmetric groups S_n, $n = 7$, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 are characterizable (see [1], [3], [6] and [8]). In [4], the authors showed that the symmetric groups S_p and S_{p+1}, where $p \in \{23, 29, 31, 41, 43, 47\}$, are characterizable. In connection with these results, the following has been conjectured in [4]:

Conjecture *For all primes $p \geq 7$, the symmetric groups S_p and S_{p+1} (with the exception of S_8) are characterizable.*

In this paper we consider some symmetric groups and prove that they are characterizable. More precisely, the symmetric groups S_p and S_{p+1}, where $50 < p < 100$ is a prime, will be added to the list of groups with the above property.

Main Theorem *The symmetric groups S_p and S_{p+1}, where p is a prime and $50 < p < 100$, are characterizable.*

Throughout this paper, all groups are assumed to be finite and all simple groups are non-abelian. We denote by $\pi(G)$ the set of all prime divisors of the order of G. We use A_m and S_m to refer to the alternating and symmetric group of degree m,

*This research was in part supported by a grant from IPM.

respectively. Further notations are standard and can be found, for example, in [2]. We will freely use the classification of all finite simple groups.

2 Preliminary Lemmas

The prime graph $\Gamma(G)$ of a group G is the graph whose vertex set is $\pi(G)$ and two vertices $p,\ q \in \pi(G)$ are adjacent if and only if G contains an element of order pq. Denote by $t(G)$ the number of connected components of $\Gamma(G)$, and by $\pi_i = \pi_i(G)$; $i = 1,\ 2,\ \ldots,\ t(G)$; the connected components of $\Gamma(G)$. If $|G|$ is even, we will always assume that 2 is a vertex of π_1. We will use the following unpublished result of K. W. Gruenberg and O. H. Kegel (see [9, Theorem A]).

Lemma 2.1 *If G is a group whose prime graph has more than one component, then G has one of the following structures:*
(a) *Frobenius or* 2*-Frobenius,*

(b) *simple,*

(c) *an extension of a π_1-group by a simple group,*

(d) *simple by π_1,*

(e) *π_1 by simple by π_1.*

Note that in the above lemma, the group G is called 2-*Frobenius* if there exists a normal series $1 \trianglelefteq H \trianglelefteq K \trianglelefteq G$ of G such that H is the Frobenius kernel of K and K/H is the Frobenius kernel of G/H.

Remark The Lemma 2.1 implies that, G has a normal series $1 \trianglelefteq N \triangleleft G_1 \trianglelefteq G$ such that N is a nilpotent π_1-group, G_1/N is a simple group, and G/G_1 is a solvable π_1-group.

Lemma 2.2 *Let G be a non-solvable group and $15 \in \pi_e(G)$. Then G is neither Frobenius nor* 2*-Frobenius.*

Proof. Since G is non-solvable, G cannot be 2-Frobenius. If G is a Frobenius group with kernel K and complement H, then H is non-solvable. Now by the structure theorem of non-solvable Frobenius complements (see [7, Theorem 18.6]), we know that H has a normal subgroup H_0 of index ≤ 2 such that $H_0 \cong SL(2,5) \times Z$, where every Sylow subgroup of Z is cyclic and $\pi(Z) \cap \{2,\ 3,\ 5\} = \emptyset$. Since $\pi_e\big(SL(2,5)\big) = \{1,\ 2,\ 3,\ 4,\ 5,\ 6,\ 10\}$ and $15 \in \pi_e(G)$, we have $15 \in \pi_e(H) \setminus \pi_e(H_0)$. Therefore, there exists $1 \neq x \in H \setminus H_0$ such that $o(x) = 15$. Since $|H : H_0| = 2$, it follows that $x^2 \in H_0$ which implies that $o(x^2) = 15 \in \pi_e(H_0)$. This is a contradiction and the proof is complete. $\square$

We will utilize the following result concerning the set of order of elements of the symmetric groups (see [10]).

Lemma 2.3 *The group S_n (resp. A_n) has an element of order $m = p_1^{\alpha_1} p_2^{\alpha_2} \ldots p_s^{\alpha_s}$, where $p_1,\ p_2, ...,\ p_s$ are distinct primes and $\alpha_1,\ \alpha_2, ...,\ \alpha_s$ are natural numbers, if and only if $p_1^{\alpha_1} + p_2^{\alpha_2} + \ldots + p_s^{\alpha_s} \le n$ (resp. $p_1^{\alpha_1} + p_2^{\alpha_2} + \ldots + p_s^{\alpha_s} \le n$ for m odd, and $p_1^{\alpha_1} + p_2^{\alpha_2} + \ldots + p_s^{\alpha_s} \le n-2$ for m even).*

The following result of G. Higman will be used (see [5]):

Lemma 2.4 *Let G be a solvable group all of whose elements are of prime power order. Then $|\pi(G)| \le 2$.*

We can now prove the following lemma which will be useful.

Lemma 2.5 *Let G be a group and $\pi_e(G) = \pi_e(S_p)$, where p is a prime number such that $p > 50$. Then G is non-solvable. Moreover, G is neither Frobenius nor 2-Frobenius.*

Proof. We know that $|S_p| = p! = p_1^{\alpha_1} p_2^{\alpha_2} \ldots p_k^{\alpha_k}$ where p_i is the i-th prime, $p_k = p$ and for all i such that $p_i > (p-1)/2$, $\alpha_i = 1$. If G were solvable, there would exist more than 6 primes between $(p-1)/2$ and p (see [1]). So we can choose a $\{p_k,\ p_{k-1},\ p_{k-2}\}$-Hall subgroup H of G. Now by Lemma 2.3, S_p does not contain any element of order $p_k p_{k-1}$, $p_k p_{k-2}$ and $p_{k-1} p_{k-2}$. Thus all elements of H will be of prime power order. This contradicts Lemma 2.4 and so G must be non-solvable. The rest follows from Lemma 2.2. $\square$

Now the following result is in order.

Lemma 2.6 *Let G be a simple group. If $\{p\} \subset \pi(G) \subseteq \pi(p!)$, where p is a prime such that $50 < p < 100$, then G is isomorphic to one of the following groups:*

(*a*) *if* $p = 53:$ $A_n,\ n = 53,\ 54,\ 55,\ 56,\ 57,\ 58;\ A_1(23^2),\ B_2(23),\ {}^2A_3(23);\ A_1(53),$

(*b*) *if* $p = 59:$ $A_n,\ n = 59,\ 60;\ A_1(59),$

(*c*) *if* $p = 61:$ $A_n,\ n = 61,\ 62,\ 63,\ 64,\ 65,\ 66;\ \ A_4(3^2),\ A_1(3^5),\ B_5(3),\ C_5(3);$ $A_3(11),\ A_1(11^2),\ A_2(11^2),\ B_2(11),\ B_3(11),\ C_3(11),\ D_4(11),$ ${}^2A_3(11);\ A_2(13),\ A_3(13);\ A_2(47),\ A_3(47);\ A_1(61),$

(*d*) *if* $p = 67$: $A_n,\ n = 67,\ 68,\ 69,\ 70;\ Ly;\ A_2(29);\ A_2(37),\ A_1(37^3),\ G_2(37);$ $A_1(67),$

(*e*) *if* $p = 71$: $A_n,\ n = 71,\ 72;\ F_1;\ A_4(5),\ A_5(5);\ A_1(71),$

(*f*) *if* $p = 73$: $A_n,\ n = 73,\ 74,\ 75,\ 76,\ 77,\ 78;\ A_2(2^3),\ A_1(2^9),\ G_2(2^3),\ C_4(2^3),$ $E_6(2),\ B_3(2^2),\ C_3(2^3);\ A_1(3^6),\ A_5(3^2),\ B_6(3),\ B_2(3^3),\ C_6(3),$ $D_4(3^2),\ G_2(3^2),\ F_4(3),\ {}^2A_2(3^2),\ {}^2A_3(3^3),\ {}^2D_6(3),\ {}^2E_6(3);$ $A_1(73),\ A_1(73^2),\ B_2(73),$

(*g*) *if* $p = 79$: $A_n,\ n = 79,\ 80,\ 81,\ 82;\ A_2(23),\ A_3(23),\ A_2(23^2),\ A_1(23^3),$ $B_3(23),\ C_3(23),\ D_4(23),\ G_2(23);\ A_1(79),\ A_2(79),$

(*h*) *if* $p = 83$: $A_n,\ n = 83,\ 84,\ 85,\ 86,\ 87,\ 88;\ A_1(83),\ A_1(83^2),$

(*i*) *if* $p = 89$: $A_n,\ n = 89,\ 90,\ 91,\ 92,\ 93,\ 94,\ 95,\ 96;\ A_1(89),$

(*j*) *if* $p = 97$: $A_n,\ n = 97,\ 98,\ 99,\ 100;\ A_2(61);\ A_1(97).$

Proof. Let $p = 53$. Then $\{53\} \subset \pi(G) \subseteq \pi(53!)$. First, suppose G is an alternating group A_n. We know that $\frac{1}{2}(n!)$ is divisible by 53 if and only if $n \geq 53$. This implies that the only possibilities for n are $53,\ 54,\ 55,\ 56,\ 57$ or 58. Next, suppose G is a sporadic simple group. The orders of sporadic simple groups are listed in [2]. From this, it is easy to see that G cannot be isomorphic to a sporadic simple group. Finally, we suppose that G is a group of Lie type over a finite field of order $q = r^s$ (r prime). Since r divides $|G|$, r must be equal to $2,\ 3,\ 5, \ldots,\ 51$ or 53. Now suppose $r = 2$. Since the order of 2 modulo 53 is 52, and $53|2^k - 1$ and $2^k - 1 \mid |G|$ it follows that k is a multiple of 52. From [2, Table 6], we see that no candidate for G exists in this case. Similarly for $r \in \pi(53!)\backslash\{23,\ 53\}$ we do not get a group. Suppose $r = 23$. Since the order of 23 modulo 53 is 4, from [2, Table 6], the only candidates from G are $A_1(23^2)$, $B_2(23)$ and ${}^2A_3(23)$. Finally we assume that $r = 53$. Similarly, in this case the only possible group is $A_1(53)$.

The rest of the proof is repetition of similar processes. $\square$

We will need the following results (see [10]).

Lemma 2.7 *If S_m contains a Frobenius subgroup $N\langle\gamma\rangle$ with kernel N of order n and cyclic complement $\langle\gamma\rangle$ of order p^k, where p is a prime, then for every natural power $t = p^r$ of p there is a Frobenius subgroup in S_{mt} with kernel of order n^t and cyclic complement of order $tp^k = p^{k+r}$.*

Remark If p is odd prime, the Frobenius group stated in Lemma 2.7 lies in A_{mt}. This is also true for $p = 2$ provided that $r \geq 1$ and, the number m together with the permutation γ are both even or odd.

Lemma 2.8 *Let N be a normal elementary abelian p-subgroup of G, $K \cong G/N$ and let $G_1 = NK$ be the natural semidirect product. Then $\pi_e(G_1) \subseteq \pi_e(G)$.*

According to the discussion of A. V. Zavarnitsin and V. D. Mazurov concerning the action of an alternating and symmetric group on an elementary abelian p-group in [10, Propositions 2 and 3] we have the following result:

Lemma 2.9 *Let p be an odd prime and V be an elementary abelian p-group, on which the group A_m $(m \geq 3)$ acts. Then $\pi_e(VA_m) \not\subseteq \pi_e(S_m)$, where VA_m is the natural semidirect product.*

We will need the following.

Lemma 2.10 (see [6]) *Let G be a group, N a normal subgroup of G and G/N a Frobenius group with Frobenius kernel F and cyclic complement C. If $(|F|,\ |N|) = 1$ and F is not contained in $NC_G(N)/N$, then $p|C| \in \pi_e(G)$ for some prime p of $|N|$.*

Lemma 2.11 (see [10]) *Let G be a semidirect product of an elementary abelian p-group V with A_m. Suppose that A_m contains Frobenius subgroups $F_1,\ F_2, \ldots,\ F_t$ with cyclic complements $\langle d_i \rangle$ of orders $p_i^{s_i}$, where p_i's are pairwise distinct primes, such that the supports*, supp *F_i, are pairwise disjoint. Moreover, suppose that the order of the kernel of each F_i is prime p, and, all $a_i = |$supp $F_i|$ are distinct. Then $p\ o(d_1) \ldots o(d_t) \in \pi_e(G)$.*

We now give the following.

Lemma 2.12 *Let G be a group and $\pi_e(G) \subseteq \pi_e(S_p)$ (resp. $\pi_e(S_{p+1})$) where p is a prime such that $50 < p < 100$. Moreover, assume that G possesses a normal elementary abelian r-subgroup N such that $G/N \cong A_p$ (resp. A_{p+1}). Then $N = 1$.*

Proof. Assume that $N \neq 1$. It is clear that from Lemma 2.8 that $\pi_e(NA_p) \subseteq \pi_e(G) \subseteq \pi_e(S_p)$. On the other hand, Lemma 2.9 forces $r = 2$. Now, we deal with each prime number separately.

(*i*) $p \in \{53,\ 59,\ 61\}$: Since S_9 contains a Frobenius subgroup of order 8×9 with cyclic complement of order 8, by Lemma 2.7, it follows that S_{36} has a Frobenius subgroup with cyclic complement of order 32. Clearly $S_{36} < A_p$. By Lemma 2.10, we conclude that $64 \in \pi_e(G)$, a contradiction.

(*ii*) $p \in \{71,\ 73,\ 79,\ 83,\ 89,\ 97\}$: Since S_{17} contains a Frobenius subgroup of order 16×17 with cyclic complement of order 16, by Lemma 2.7, S_{68} contains a Frobenius subgroup with cyclic complement of order 64. On the other hand, $S_{68} < A_p$ and so by Lemma 2.10 we obtain $128 \in \pi_e(G)$, again a contradiction.

(*iii*) p=67: As discussed before, S_{36} contains a Frobenius subgroup of order 32×9^4 with cyclic complement of order 32. Moreover, $S_{36} < A_p$. On the other hand, A_{11} contains a Frobenius subgroup of order 5×11, and $A_{11} < A_p$. Therefore, A_p has a pair of Frobenius subgroups of orders 32×9^4 and 5×11 satisfying the hypothesis of Lemma 2.11, and hence $5 \times 64 \in \pi_e(G)$. This contradiction completes the proof of the lemma. $\square$

3 Proof of the Main Theorem

Suppose G is a group such that $\pi_e(G) = \pi_e(S_p)$, where p is a prime with $50 < p < 100$. The components of the prime graph of G are

$$\pi_1(G) = \{2,\ 3,\ 5, \ldots,\ r_{p-1}\} \quad \text{and} \quad \pi_2(G) = \{p\},$$

where r_{p-1} denotes the largest prime not exceeding $p-1$. We must prove that G is isomorphic to S_p. By Lemma 2.5, G is neither Frobenius nor 2-Frobenius. Next, from Lemma 2.1, G has a normal series $1 \trianglelefteq N \triangleleft G_1 \trianglelefteq G$ such that N is a nilpotent π_1-group, $\overline{G}_1 := G_1/N$ is simple, and G/G_1 is a solvable π_1-group. Furthermore, we have

$$\frac{G}{N} \cong \frac{N_{G/N}(\overline{G}_1)}{C_{G/N}(\overline{G}_1)} \hookrightarrow \mathrm{Aut}(\overline{G}_1).$$

Thus we may assume that $G/N \leq \mathrm{Aut}(\overline{G}_1)$. Note that $\{2,\ p\} \subseteq \pi(\overline{G}_1) \subseteq \pi(G) = \pi(p!)$, $\pi_1(\overline{G}_1) \subseteq \pi_1(G) = \{2,\ 3, \ldots,\ r_{p-1}\}$ and $\pi_2(\overline{G}_1) = \pi_2(G) = \{p\}$. Hence $\overline{G}_1$ is a simple group such that $p \mid |\overline{G}_1|$. Now we claim that $\overline{G}_1 \cong A_p$.

According to the classification of finite simple groups, we know that the possibilities for $\overline{G}_1$ are the alternating groups A_n, with $n \geq 5$, sporadic simple groups, and finite groups of Lie type. We deal with the above cases separately.

First, suppose $\overline{G}_1$ is a simple group of Lie type or sporadic. By Lemma 2.6, $\overline{G}_1$ can only be isomorphic to one of the listed simple groups of Lie type or sporadic. For each prime p appearing in (a) – (j) of Lemma 2.6, there are two other primes $r_1,\ r_2 \in \pi(G) \backslash \pi\big(\mathrm{Aut}(\overline{G}_1)\big)$ with $r_1 + r_2 > p$, where $\overline{G}_1$ is any simple group on the appropriate list:

p	53	59	61	67	71	73	79	83	89	97
r_1	43	47	53	59	61	67	71	73	79	83
r_2	47	53	59	61	67	71	73	79	83	89

Moreover, from $G/N \leq \mathrm{Aut}(\overline{G}_1)$, it follows that $r_1,\ r_2 \in \pi(N)$, and the nilpotency of N forces $r_1r_2 \in \pi_e(N) \subset \pi_e(G) = \pi_e(S_p)$, which is a contradiction, because $r_1 + r_2 > p$.

Next, suppose $\overline{G}_1$ is a simple group of alternating type listed in Lemma 2.6. Then in all cases, there exist primes q_1 and q_2 such that $q_1 + q_2 = p + 1$:

p	53	59	61	67	71	73	79	83	89	97
q_1	7	7	3	7	5	3	7	5	7	19
q_2	47	53	59	61	67	71	73	79	83	79

But then $q_1q_2 \in \pi_e(A_n) \setminus \pi_e(G)$ for $n > p$, by Lemma 2.3. Therefore, $\overline{G}_1 \ncong A_n$ for $n > p$. Hence $\overline{G}_1 \cong A_p$ and the claim has been proved.

Finally, we show that $G \cong S_p$. By Lemma 2.12, $N = 1$. On the other hand, since $G_1 \leq G \leq \mathrm{Aut}(G_1)$ and $|\mathrm{Out}(G_1)| = 2$, it follows that $G \cong A_p$ or $G \cong S_p$. But since $\pi_e(A_p) \neq \pi_e(S_p)$, we have $G \cong S_p$.

Next, suppose G is a group such that $\pi_e(G) = \pi_e(S_{p+1})$, where p is a prime with $50 < p < 100$. By using similar arguments to those in the proof of the previous case, G has a normal series $1 \trianglelefteq N \vartriangleleft G_1 \trianglelefteq G$ such that N is a nilpotent π_1-group, $\overline{G}_1 := G_1/N$ is simple, and G/G_1 is a solvable π_1-group. We may assume that $G/N \leq \mathrm{Aut}(\overline{G}_1)$. Now we claim that $\overline{G}_1 \cong A_{p+1}$.

The proof of this claim is similar to those in the proof of the previous case. For example, we proceed for $p = 53$. Using similar arguments to those in the proof of the previous case, we see that $\overline{G}_1 \cong A_{53}$ or A_{54}. If $\overline{G}_1$ is isomorphic to A_{53}, then since $|\mathrm{Out}(A_{53})| = 2$ and $7 \times 47 \in \pi_e(G)\backslash\pi_e(A_{53})$, it follows that $N \neq 1$ and $7 \in \pi(N)$ or $47 \in \pi(N)$. Let N be a 7-group. Then $\overline{G}_1$ has a pair of Frobenius subgroups of orders 32×9^2 and 7×8 satisfying the hypothesis of Lemma 2.11, and hence $32 \times 49 \in \pi_e(G)$. This is a contradiction. Thus N is a 47-group. Yet, in this case, $\overline{G}_1$ contains a Frobenius subgroup of order 8×9 with cyclic complement of order 8, and by Lemma 2.10 we get $8 \times 47 \in \pi_e(G)$, which contradicts the assumption. Therefore, $\overline{G}_1 \cong A_{54}$.

The rest of the proof is similar to the proof in the previous case and we have $G \cong S_{p+1}$. $\square$

Acknowledgment: This work was done while the second author was a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the School of Mathematics, Institute for Studies in Theoretical Physics and Mathematics (IPM). He would like to thank the IPM for the financial support. The authors would also like to thank the referee for very helpful suggestions and comments.

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