

This is a preprint of an article accepted for publication in *Utilitas Mathematica* © 1999 (copyright owner as specified in the journal).

Switching cycles in Steiner triple systems

M. J. Grannell, T. S. Griggs,
Department of Pure Mathematics,

The Open University,
Walton Hall,
Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA,
UNITED KINGDOM,

J. P. Murphy,
International Computer Engineering,
Styal Road, Wythenshawe,
Manchester, M22 5WB,
UNITED KINGDOM.

Running head:
Switching cycles in STS

Corresponding author:

M. J. Grannell, 17 Royal Avenue, Leyland, Lancashire, PR5 1BQ, England.

Tel: 01772-433430 email: m.j.grannell@uclan.ac.uk

AMS classification:
05B07.

Abstract

We investigate equivalence classes under the operation of n -cycle switching on isomorphism classes of STS(v)s for $v \in \{7, 9, 13, 15\}$ and $n \in \{4, 6, 8, 10, 12\}$. We also investigate equivalence classes under the operation of n -cycle switching on realizations of STS(v)s on a fixed base set V for $v \in \{7, 9, 13\}$ and $n \in \{4, 6, 10\}$, and for $(v, n) = (15, 12)$.

1 Introduction

A *Steiner triple system* of order v , briefly $\text{STS}(v)$, is a pair (V, \mathcal{B}) where V is a set of v elements and \mathcal{B} is a collection of 3-element subsets of V , with the property that every 2-element subset of V appears in exactly one member of \mathcal{B} . The members of \mathcal{B} are called *blocks*. For each pair $\{a, b\} \subset V$, a graph G_{ab} can be defined as follows. The vertices of G_{ab} are $V \setminus \{a, b, c\}$ where $\{a, b, c\}$ is a block; $\{x, y\}$ is an edge if either $\{a, x, y\}$ or $\{b, x, y\} \in \mathcal{B}$. Clearly G_{ab} is a union of disjoint cycles; it is called the *cycle graph* through $\{a, b\}$. We can associate with this a *cycle list* $(c_1, c_2, c_3, \dots, c_n)$ where the c_i s are the lengths of the individual cycles in G_{ab} and $c_i \geq c_{i+1}$, $i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, n-1$. Clearly $\sum_{i=1}^n c_i = v-3$. The *cycle structure* of an $\text{STS}(v)$ is the collection of all $\binom{v}{2}$ cycle lists for that $\text{STS}(v)$. An $\text{STS}(v)$ is said to be *uniform* if all its cycle lists are identical. A uniform $\text{STS}(v)$ is said to be *perfect* when all of the cycles are of length $v-3$. In this case each cycle list is just $(v-3)$.

An operation which can be carried out on an $\text{STS}(v)$ is that of cycle switching. For a pair $\{a, b\} \subset V$, select one of the components of the cycle graph G_{ab} . For each edge $\{x, y\}$ of this component resulting from a block $\{a, x, y\}$ replace this block by $\{b, x, y\}$ and conversely. If the component is a cycle of length n , this operation is called an *n-cycle switch*. Applying an *n-cycle switch* to an $\text{STS}(v)$ will result in another $\text{STS}(v)$. $\text{STS}(v)$ s for $v = 7$ and $v = 9$ are unique and perfect. It is well-known that the two non-isomorphic $\text{STS}(13)$ s can be obtained from one another by switching appropriate 4-cycles. Theorem 2 below shows that this result continues to hold by switching appropriate 6-cycles.

There exist 80 pairwise non-isomorphic $\text{STS}(15)$ s, all but one of which give rise to 4-cycles [5] (page 10). Gibbons [1] analysed the 79 $\text{STS}(15)$ s containing 4-cycles and showed that all of them can be obtained from one another by successive operations of 4-cycle switching. This can be described in general graph-theoretic terms which is more appropriate for our purposes. For every $v \equiv 1$ or $3 \pmod{6}$ and every even n such that $4 \leq n \leq v-3$ (except for $n = v-5$ which can not occur) define a graph $M(v, n)$, which we will call the *isomorphism classes graph*, as follows.

The vertices of $M(v, n)$ are the set of pairwise non-isomorphic $\text{STS}(v)$. Two vertices are joined by an edge if and only if there is an *n-cycle switch* which will transform either system into the other. (Note that it is possible and permissible for a graph $M(v, n)$ to contain loops). Gibbons' result is that the graph $M(15, 4)$ consists of a connected component having 79 vertices together with an isolated point. Isolated points correspond to those systems whose cycle structure contains no *n*-cycles. Apart from such points, a fundamental question is whether the graphs $M(v, n)$ are connected. In [2], the present authors showed that for $v = 19, 21, 25, 27$ and 31 the graphs

$M(v, 4)$ are not connected. In this paper we consider the switching of cycles of length greater than 4 paying particular attention to the 80 STS(15)s. However we first note some elementary results about switching cycles.

2 General Results

Theorem 1 Suppose S is an STS(v) with a cycle graph G_{ab} consisting of a single cycle. Let T be the STS(v) obtained by performing the $(v-3)$ -cycle switch on this cycle. Then S and T are isomorphic.

Proof The permutation $(a\ b)$ is the required isomorphism. \square

Corollary 1 Any perfect STS(v) under the operation of $(v-3)$ -cycle switching transforms to an isomorphic copy of itself. \square

Theorem 2 Suppose S is an STS(v) with a cycle graph G_{ab} consisting of an x -cycle and a y -cycle with $x + y = v - 3$. Let T_x be the STS(v) obtained by performing the x -cycle switch and T_y the STS(v) obtained by performing the y -cycle switch. Then T_x and T_y are isomorphic.

Proof Again the permutation $(a\ b)$ is the required isomorphism. \square

Theorem 3

- (i) For $v \equiv 1$ or $3 \pmod{6}$, $v \geq 13$, the graph $M(v, v-7)$ is a subgraph of the graph $M(v, 4)$.
- (ii) For $v \equiv 1$ or $3 \pmod{6}$, $v \geq 13$, the graph $M(v, v-9)$ is a subgraph of the graph $M(v, 6)$.

Proof Observe that if a cycle graph G_{ab} contains a $v-7$ -cycle (respectively a $v-9$ -cycle) then it must also contain a 4-cycle (respectively a 6-cycle). \square

It is almost trivial now to describe the graphs $M(v, n)$ for $v \leq 13$ and we do so only for completeness. $M(7, 4)$ and $M(9, 6)$ each consist of a single vertex together with a loop. $M(13, 4)$ has two vertices, corresponding to the cyclic and non-cyclic STS(13)s respectively, which are joined by an edge. In addition the vertex corresponding to the non-cyclic STS(13) has a loop. By Theorem 2, $M(13, 6)$ is isomorphic to $M(13, 4)$. By Theorem 1, $M(13, 10)$ comprises two disconnected vertices with a loop on each.

3 Analysis of the STS(15)s

This section is concerned with the operation of cycle switching on the 80 STS(15)s. Throughout this paper we follow the system of identification as given in [4], from which the cycle structure and all other relevant information concerning these systems may be obtained. Full details of the cycle switching is given in the Appendix.

There is only one STS(15) which is 4-cycle (quadrilateral) free, this being system #80. We have verified Gibbons' result that the remaining 79 STS(15)s form a connected graph under 4-cycle switching. However, we find that, in addition to the switching recorded in [1], the systems #15 and #58 each switch to themselves.

There are 16 STS(15)s which are 6-cycle free, these being systems #1 to #10 and #13 to #18 inclusive. These form isolated points in the graph $M(15,6)$. In addition we find that there are two disconnected components. Systems #11, #12, #19, #20, #21, #22 and #61 form the vertices of one component and the other 57 STS(15)s which contain 6-cycles form the vertices of the other.

From Theorem 3, the graph $M(15,8)$ is a subgraph of the graph $M(15,4)$. $M(15,8)$ consists of a single connected component together with three isolated vertices which correspond to the three systems #1, #16 and #80 which are 8-cycle free.

For 12-cycle switching it has been shown in Theorem 1 that any STS(15) will switch to an isomorphic copy of itself. Of the 80 STS(15)s only #1 and #2 are 12-cycle free. Thus the graph $M(15,12)$ consists of 80 disconnected vertices of which 78 have a loop and 2 do not.

4 Realizations of STS(v)s

We now consider the operation of cycle switching applied to realizations, rather than isomorphism classes, of Steiner triple systems. For every $v \equiv 1$ or $3 \pmod{6}$ and every even n such that $4 \leq n \leq v-3, n \neq v-5$, a further graph, the realizations graph $R(v, n)$, can be defined whose vertices are the realizations of STS(v) on a fixed base set V ; two vertices are joined by an edge if and only if there is an n -cycle switch which will transform either system into the other. Again our focus is on the connectedness of these graphs. Note that unlike the graphs $M(v, n)$, the graphs $R(v, n)$ cannot contain loops. The situations where $v = 7$ and $v = 9$ are straightforward and are given in the following theorem, again mainly for completeness.

Theorem 4 *The graphs $R(7, 4)$ and $R(9, 6)$ are connected.*

Proof We first present the proof for $R(7, 4)$. It is well known that STS(7) is unique to within isomorphism and perfect. By Theorem 1, any 4-cycle

switch is equivalent to a transposition. Conversely any transposition and hence any sequence of transpositions can be represented by a corresponding sequence of 4-cycle switches. Since the set of all transpositions generates the symmetric group, the result follows. The proof for $R(9,6)$ is analogous.

□

We observe that both of these graphs have undoubtedly been studied further and possess many other interesting properties. Indeed the recent paper by Lloyd [3], together with the references therein, present more information on $R(7,4)$. We note here that the number of vertices in the graph $R(7,4)$ is $|S_7|/|Aut(STS(7))| = 7!/168 = 30$ and in the graph $R(9,6)$ the number of vertices is $|S_9|/|Aut(STS(9))| = 9!/432 = 840$.

We next consider the graph $R(13,4)$ and show that it too is connected. Denote the cyclic STS(13) by $C(13)$ and the non-cyclic STS(13) by $N(13)$. There are $|S_{13}|/|Aut(C(13))| = 13!/39$ realizations of $C(13)$ and $|S_{13}|/|Aut(N(13))| = 13!/6$ realizations of $N(13)$. There are thirteen 4-cycles in a $C(13)$ and switching any one of these gives an $N(13)$. There are eight 4-cycles in an $N(13)$, two of which switch the system to $C(13)$ s and the remaining six switch the system to other $N(13)$ s. Thus, starting with a given $C(13)$, we may switch firstly to an $N(13)$ and then to a *different* $C(13)$. There will be 39 permutations that map the given $C(13)$ to the new $C(13)$. Therefore a consecutive pair of 4-cycle switches of the form described may be represented by any one of these permutations. To prove that all the vertices of $R(13,4)$ which correspond to $C(13)$ s are in fact connected, it suffices to prove that suitable combinations of these permutations generate the symmetric group S_{13} . Since every vertex corresponding to an $N(13)$ is connected to a vertex corresponding to a $C(13)$, this will establish that $R(13,4)$ is connected.

In order to investigate the permutations we choose as the given $C(13)$ the system with the following blocks: $\{i, i + 1, i + 4\}$, $\{i, i + 2, i + 7\}$, $i = 0, 1, \dots, 12$ with addition modulo 13. This has a 4-cycle with blocks $\{0, 1, 4\}$, $\{0, 2, 7\}$, $\{2, 4, 9\}$ and $\{7, 9, 1\}$. If we switch this 4-cycle we obtain blocks $\{0, 2, 4\}$, $\{0, 1, 7\}$, $\{1, 4, 9\}$ and $\{7, 9, 2\}$, and thereby create an $N(13)$. This contains a 4-cycle with blocks $\{7, 8, 11\}$, $\{8, 9, 12\}$, $\{10, 12, 2\}$ and $\{7, 9, 2\}$. Switching this 4-cycle results in a new $C(13)$ containing the blocks of the given $C(13)$ apart from $\{0, 1, 4\}$, $\{0, 2, 7\}$, $\{2, 4, 9\}$, $\{7, 9, 1\}$, $\{7, 8, 11\}$, $\{8, 9, 12\}$ and $\{11, 12, 2\}$ which are replaced by $\{0, 2, 4\}$, $\{0, 1, 7\}$, $\{1, 4, 9\}$, $\{7, 9, 8\}$, $\{7, 2, 11\}$, $\{2, 9, 12\}$ and $\{11, 12, 8\}$.

Amongst the permutations mapping the given $C(13)$ to the new $C(13)$ are the following:

$$\begin{aligned} A: & (12)(4 \ 10)(5 \ 6 \ 9)(0 \ 8 \ 7 \ 1 \ 2 \ 3 \ 11) \\ B: & (10)(0 \ 1 \ 7 \ 2 \ 5 \ 12 \ 9 \ 11 \ 6 \ 8 \ 3 \ 4) \end{aligned}$$

We will show that suitable combinations of these permutations generate the symmetric group S_{13} by obtaining all transpositions through a single element. It is well-known that these generate the symmetric group.

There is a subtle but important point concerning the combination of these permutations. The two permutations given above represent mappings from a *single* $C(13)$, namely the *given* one. In applying one of these permutations to a derived realization, the expression of this permutation in terms of the elements of this derived realization will be different from the original expression of the permutation in terms of the given system. The difficulty may be overcome by regarding the given system as a template and interpreting the permutations as mappings of the positions of the template. Thus, if P is a permutation containing $(\dots a b \dots)$, then P maps the element in template position a to the element in template position b . If X denotes a derived realization of $C(13)$ (including the given system S) then we will use the notation $P[X]$ to denote the result of applying P to X in the sense just described. As an example, using the mappings A and B given above, and denoting the given system by S we may obtain the following table.

Template	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
S	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
$A[S]$	8	2	3	11	10	6	9	1	7	5	4	0	12
$B[A[S]]$	2	1	6	10	8	12	7	3	11	0	4	9	5

Table 1. Composition of Mappings.

The result of applying firstly the mapping A followed by B to the given system S may be obtained by reading lines two and four of the Table. Using this method of combining A and B , we have $B[A[S]] = (AB)(S)$ where the expression AB is interpreted in the usual sense of composition of permutations. In general, if $\{P_i : i = 1, 2, \dots, n\}$ is a set of such permutations then $P_n[P_{n-1}[\dots[P_1[S]]\dots]] = (P_1 P_2 \dots P_n)(S)$. It will therefore suffice to prove that suitable compositions, in the usual sense, of the permutations A and B generate all transpositions through a single element. To do this, firstly observe that $A^{21} = (4 10)$. Then note that $\{B^n A^{21} B^{12-n} : n = 1, 2, \dots, 11\}$ gives all the remaining transpositions through the element 10.

The argument concerning the graph $R(13, 6)$ is similar. We take the same given $C(13)$. This has a 6-cycle with blocks $\{1, 3, 8\}$, $\{1, 10, 11\}$, $\{1, 6, 12\}$, $\{2, 8, 10\}$, $\{2, 11, 12\}$ and $\{2, 3, 6\}$. If we switch this 6-cycle we obtain blocks $\{2, 3, 8\}$, $\{2, 10, 11\}$, $\{2, 6, 12\}$, $\{1, 8, 10\}$, $\{1, 11, 12\}$ and $\{1, 3, 6\}$, and thereby create an $N(13)$. This contains a 6-cycle with blocks $\{1, 0, 4\}$, $\{1, 2, 5\}$, $\{1, 3, 6\}$, $\{8, 4, 5\}$, $\{8, 2, 3\}$ and $\{8, 0, 6\}$. Switching this 6-cycle results in a new $C(13)$ containing the blocks of the given $C(13)$ apart from $\{0, 1, 4\}$, $\{1, 2, 5\}$, $\{2, 3, 6\}$, $\{4, 5, 8\}$, $\{10, 11, 1\}$, $\{11, 12, 2\}$, $\{1, 3, 8\}$, $\{6, 8, 0\}$,

$\{8, 10, 2\}$ and $\{12, 1, 6\}$ which are replaced by $\{0, 8, 4\}$, $\{8, 2, 5\}$, $\{8, 3, 6\}$, $\{4, 5, 1\}$, $\{10, 11, 2\}$, $\{11, 12, 1\}$, $\{2, 3, 1\}$, $\{6, 1, 0\}$, $\{8, 10, 1\}$ and $\{12, 2, 6\}$. Amongst the permutations mapping the given $C(13)$ to the new $C(13)$ are the following:

$$C: (12)(4 10)(5 6 9)(0 1 8 7 2 3 11)$$

$$D: (10)(0 6 2 4 3 9 7 11 1 8 12 5)$$

We observe that $C^{21} = (4 10)$ and that $\{D^n C^{21} D^{12-n} : n = 1, 2, \dots, 11\}$ gives all the remaining transpositions through the element 10.

Finally in this section we consider the graph $R(13, 10)$. By Theorem 1, this must comprise at least two disconnected components corresponding to the cyclic and the non-cyclic STS(13)s respectively. We show that each of these components is connected using an argument similar to that given above for $R(13, 4)$ and $R(13, 6)$. Each 10-cycle switch is equivalent to the transposition of two elements and we show that there are enough of these to generate the symmetric group S_{13} .

Consider the cyclic STS(13) given previously. This has 10-cycle switches giving rise to the following transpositions: $(n n + 2)$, $(n n + 5)$, $(n n + 6)$, $(n n + 7)$, $(n n + 8)$ and $(n n + 11)$, $n = 0, 1, \dots, 12$, with addition modulo 13. The remaining transpositions through the element 0 may be obtained as follows: $(0 1) = (1 6)(0 6)(1 6)$, $(0 3) = (3 8)(0 8)(3 8)$, $(0 4) = (4 6)(0 6)(4 6)$, $(0 9) = (9 11)(0 11)(9 11)$, $(0 10) = (10 5)(0 5)(10 5)$ and $(0 12) = (12 5)(0 5)(12 5)$.

Take the non-cyclic STS(13) to be the one obtained from the cyclic STS(13) given previously by switching the 4-cycle with blocks $\{0, 1, 4\}$, $\{0, 2, 7\}$, $\{2, 4, 9\}$ and $\{7, 9, 1\}$. These blocks are replaced by $\{0, 2, 4\}$, $\{0, 1, 7\}$, $\{1, 4, 9\}$ and $\{7, 9, 2\}$. Amongst others, this has 10-cycle switches giving rise to the following transpositions: $(0 2)$, $(0 5)$, $(0 6)$, $(0 7)$, $(0 8)$, $(0 10)$, $(0 11)$, $(0 12)$, $(1 5)$, $(3 5)$, $(4 6)$ and $(6 9)$. Now, $(0 1) = (1 5)(0 5)(1 5)$, $(0 3) = (3 5)(0 5)(3 5)$, $(0 4) = (4 6)(0 6)(4 6)$ and $(0 9) = (9 6)(0 6)(9 6)$, thus giving all transpositions through the element 0.

We summarize the results of this Section concerning realizations of the STS(13)s in the following Theorem.

Theorem 5

- (i) The graphs $R(13, 4)$ and $R(13, 6)$ are connected.
- (ii) The graph $R(13, 10)$ comprises precisely two disconnected components corresponding to the cyclic and to the non-cyclic STS(13)s. \square

5 The graph $R(15, 12)$

The only graph $R(15, n)$ which it appears tractable to study is that for $n = 12$. By Theorem 1, if S is an STS(15) every 12-cycle switch will give an STS(15) isomorphic to S . Thus the graph $R(15, 12)$ must comprise at least 80 mutually disconnected components, each of these being a subgraph obtained by consideration of one of the 80 pairwise non-isomorphic STS(15)s. Denote by $R(i, 15, 12)$, $1 \leq i \leq 80$, the component corresponding to STS(15) $\#i$ as in [4]. We explore the connectedness of each of the components $R(i, 15, 12)$.

Firstly, as observed earlier, systems $\#1$ and $\#2$ are 12-cycle free. It follows therefore that the graphs $R(i, 15, 12)$, $i = 1, 2$, consist of $|S_{15}|/|Aut(\#i)|$ isolated vertices. The actual numbers are $15!/20160$ for $R(1, 15, 12)$ and $15!/192$ for $R(2, 15, 12)$.

We then find that precisely 72 of the remaining 78 graphs $R(i, 15, 12)$ are connected, namely those for $i \notin \{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13\}$. To prove this, recall from Theorem 1 that a 12-cycle switch is equivalent to a transposition of a pair of elements. As before, it then suffices to show that for a given value of i , compositions of these transpositions generate all transpositions through a single element, and hence that they generate the symmetric group S_{15} . Having established this, it follows that each graph $R(i, 15, 12)$, for $i \geq 8$ and $i \neq 13$, forms a connected graph on $15!/|Aut(\#i)|$ vertices. For reasons of space we do not give the details for all 72 cases but, as an example, take the case $i = 51$. Here there are 12-cycles giving rise to transpositions $(1\ b)$ for $b \in \{3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15\}$, as well as $(2\ 6)$, $(3\ 7)$, $(3\ 10)$ and $(3\ 11)$. We obtain all remaining transpositions through the element 1 as follows: $(1\ 2) = (1\ 6)(2\ 6)(1\ 6)$, $(1\ 7) = (1\ 3)(3\ 7)(1\ 3)$, $(1\ 10) = (1\ 3)(3\ 10)(1\ 3)$ and $(1\ 11) = (1\ 3)(3\ 11)(1\ 3)$.

Each of the remaining six cases is now discussed individually using the representation of the system and its automorphism group given in [4].

#3 There exist 12-cycles corresponding to the transpositions $(a\ b)$ for $a \in \{4, 5, 6, 7\}$ and $b \in \{8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15\}$. These generate the symmetric group S_{12} on $\{4, 5, \dots, 15\}$. There are no 12-cycles giving rise to transpositions involving the elements 1, 2 or 3, and the automorphism group of #3 partitions $\{1, 2, 3\}$ from the remaining elements. The restriction of $Aut(\#3)$ to the set $\{1, 2, 3\}$ is the cyclic group C_3 . It follows that the $15!$ permutations of $\{1, 2, \dots, 15\}$ partition into sets, each of cardinality $3 \times 12!$, such that the permutations in each set give rise either to identical realizations of #3 or to realizations which are equivalent under a sequence of 12-cycle switches. Therefore the graph $R(3, 15, 12)$ has $15!/3.12! = 910$ components, each of which is a connected graph on $3.12!/|Aut(\#3)| = 3.12!/96$

vertices.

- #4 There exist 12-cycles corresponding to the transpositions $(a b)$ for $a \in \{4, 6\}$ and $b \in \{8, 11, 13, 14\}$. These generate the symmetric group S_6 on $\{4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 14\}$. There also exist 12-cycles corresponding to the transpositions $(a b)$ for $a \in \{5, 7\}$ and $b \in \{9, 10, 12, 15\}$. These generate the symmetric group S_6 on $\{5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 15\}$. There are no 12-cycles giving rise to transpositions involving the elements 1, 2 or 3, or to transpositions $(a b)$ with $a \in \{4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 14\}$ and $b \in \{5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 15\}$. The automorphism partition of #4 is $\{1\}, \{2\}, \{3\}, \{4, 6\}, \{5, 7\}, \{8, 11, 13, 14\}, \{9, 10, 12, 15\}$ and the restriction of $Aut(\#4)$ to $\{1, 2, 3\}$ is the identity group. It follows that the $15!$ permutations of $\{1, 2, \dots, 15\}$ partition into sets, each of cardinality $(6!)^2$ within which the corresponding realizations of #4 are equivalent under a sequence of 12-cycle switches. Therefore the graph $R(4, 15, 12)$ has $15!/(6!)^2$ components, each of which is a connected graph on $(6!)^2/|Aut(\#4)| = (6!)^2/8$ vertices.
- #5 There exist 12-cycles corresponding to the transpositions $(a b)$ for $a \in \{4, 5, 6, 7\}$ and $b \in \{8, 9, 10, 11\}$. These generate the symmetric group S_8 on $\{4, 5, \dots, 11\}$. There are no 12-cycles giving rise to transpositions involving the elements 1, 2, 3, 12, 13, 14 or 15, and the automorphism partition of #5 is $\{1, 3\}, \{2\}, \{4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11\}, \{12, 13, 14, 15\}$. The restriction of $Aut(\#5)$ to the set $\{1, 2, 3, 12, 13, 14, 15\}$ is the dihedral group D_4 of order 8. It follows that the $15!$ permutations of $\{1, 2, \dots, 15\}$ partition into sets, each of cardinality $8 \times 8!$, such that the permutations in each set give rise either to identical realizations of #5 or to realizations which are equivalent under a sequence of 12-cycle switches. Therefore the graph $R(5, 15, 12)$ has $15!/8.8!$ components, each of which is a connected graph on $8.8!/|Aut(\#5)| = 8.8!/32$ vertices.
- #6 There exist 12-cycles corresponding to the transpositions $(a b)$ for $a \in \{4, 5\}$ and $b \in \{8, 11, 12, 14\}$. These generate the symmetric group S_6 on $\{4, 5, 8, 11, 12, 14\}$. There also exist 12-cycles corresponding to the transpositions $(a b)$ for $a \in \{6, 7\}$ and $b \in \{9, 10, 13, 15\}$. These generate the symmetric group S_6 on $\{6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 15\}$. There are no 12-cycles giving rise to transpositions involving the elements 1, 2 or 3, or to transpositions $(a b)$ with $a \in \{4, 5, 8, 11, 12, 14\}$ and $b \in \{6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 15\}$. The automorphism partition of #6 is $\{1, 2, 3\}, \{4, 5, 8, 11, 12, 14\}, \{6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 15\}$ and the restriction of $Aut(\#6)$ to $\{1, 2, 3\}$ is the symmetric group S_3 . It follows that the $15!$ permutations of $\{1, 2, \dots, 15\}$ partition into sets, each of cardinality $3!(6!)^2$, such that the permutations in each set give rise either to

identical realizations of $\#6$ or to realizations which are equivalent under a sequence of 12-cycle switches. Therefore the graph $R(6, 15, 12)$ has $15!/3!(6!)^2$ components, each of which is a connected graph on $3!(6!)^2/|Aut(\#6)| = 3!(6!)^2/24$ vertices.

- #7 There exist 12-cycles corresponding to the transpositions $(a b)$ for $a \in \{4, 5, 6, 7\}$ and $b \in \{8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15\}$. These generate the symmetric group S_{12} on $\{4, 5, \dots, 15\}$. There are no 12-cycles giving rise to transpositions involving the elements 1, 2 or 3, and the automorphism group of $\#7$ partitions $\{1, 2, 3\}$ from the remaining elements. The restriction of $Aut(\#7)$ to the set $\{1, 2, 3\}$ is the symmetric group S_3 . It follows that the $15!$ permutations of $\{1, 2, \dots, 15\}$ partition into sets, each of cardinality $3!12!$, such that the permutations in each set give rise either to identical realizations of $\#7$ or to realizations which are equivalent under a sequence of 12-cycle switches. Therefore the graph $R(7, 15, 12)$ has $15!/3!12! = 455$ components, each of which is a connected graph on $3!12!/|Aut(\#7)| = 3!12!/288$ vertices.
- #13 There exist 12-cycles corresponding to the transpositions $(a b)$ for $a \in \{6, 7\}$ and $b \in \{8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15\}$, as well as $(2 9)$, $(3 8)$, $(4 9)$ and $(5 8)$. These generate the symmetric group S_{14} on $\{2, 3, \dots, 15\}$. There are no 12-cycles giving rise to transpositions involving the element 1, and the automorphism group of $\#13$ partitions $\{1\}$ from the remaining elements. It follows that the $15!$ permutations of $\{1, 2, \dots, 15\}$ partition into sets, each of cardinality $14!$ within which the corresponding realizations of $\#13$ are equivalent under a sequence of 12-cycle switches. Therefore the graph $R(13, 15, 12)$ has $15!/14! = 15$ components, each of which is a connected graph on $14!/|Aut(\#13)| = 14!/8$ vertices.

We summarize the results of this Section concerning realizations of the STS(15)s in the following Theorem.

Theorem 6 *The graph $R(15, 12)$ comprises 80 mutually disconnected components, $R(i, 15, 12)$, $1 \leq i \leq 80$, corresponding to the 80 pairwise non-isomorphic STS(15)s. Of these components, eight are themselves disconnected and these are described in Table 2 below. The remaining 72 form connected graphs with $R(i, 15, 12)$ having $15!/|Aut(\#i)|$ vertices.*

i	<i>Number of mutually disconnected components in $R(i, 15, 12)$</i>	<i>Number of vertices in each connected component of $R(i, 15, 12)$</i>
1	$15!/20160$	1
2	$15!/192$	1
3	$15!/3.12! = 910$	$3.12!/96$
4	$15!/(6!)^2$	$(6!)^2/8$
5	$15!/8.8!$	$8.8!/32$
6	$15!/3!(6!)^2$	$3!(6!)^2/24$
7	$15!/3!12! = 455$	$3!12!/288$
13	$15!/14! = 15$	$14!/8$

Table 2. *The Disconnected Components of $R(15, 12)$.*

□

References

- [1] P.B. Gibbons, *Computing techniques for the construction and analysis of block designs*, Department of Computer Science, University of Toronto, Technical Report **92/76** (1976).
- [2] M.J. Grannell, T.S. Griggs and J.P. Murphy, *Equivalence classes of Steiner triple systems*, Congressus Numerantium **86** (1992), 19-25.
- [3] E.K. Lloyd, *The reaction graph of the Fano plane*, in: “Combinatorics and Graph Theory ’95”, (Proc. Summer School and Internat. Conf. on Combinatorics, Hefei, China, 1995, ed. Ku Tung-Hsin), World Scientific, Singapore, (1995), 260-274.
- [4] R.A. Mathon, K.T. Phelps and A. Rosa, *Small Steiner triple systems and their properties*, Ars Combinatoria **15** (1983), 3-110.
- [5] R.A. Mathon and A. Rosa, *2- (v, k, λ) designs of small order* in: “The CRC Handbook of Combinatorial Designs”, (ed. C.J. Colbourn and J.H. Dinitz), CRC Press (1996), 3-41.

Appendix

Below are given the tables for switching 4-cycles, 6-cycles and 8-cycles in the 80 STS(15)s. The systems are identified numerically in the first column, following the enumeration given in [4]. Within each table the second column gives the number of n -cycles contained in that STS(15). The subsequent entries in each row indicate which STS(15)s are obtained by switching each *particular* n -cycle. Thus the Table for switching 4-cycles gives more information than that given by Gibbons [1] (Table 7.5, page 153). The n -cycles are ordered as described in the next paragraph. We use the realization of each isomorphism class on the base set $\{1, 2, \dots, 15\}$ as given in [4].

The blocks forming each n -cycle span $n + 2$ distinct elements. We will identify an ordered triple $\langle \alpha, \beta, \gamma \rangle$ of these elements by the process described below. These ordered triples are then used to order the n -cycles. If the n -cycles C_i and C_j correspond to the ordered triples $\langle \alpha_i, \beta_i, \gamma_i \rangle$ and $\langle \alpha_j, \beta_j, \gamma_j \rangle$ respectively, then we place C_i before C_j if either

- (i) $\alpha_i < \alpha_j$, or
- (ii) $\alpha_i = \alpha_j$ and $\beta_i < \beta_j$, or
- (iii) $\alpha_i = \alpha_j$, $\beta_i = \beta_j$ and $\gamma_i < \gamma_j$.

It will be easily seen that ordered triples corresponding to distinct n -cycles of a particular STS(15) are themselves distinct.

For a 4-cycle $\{x, a, b\}$, $\{x, c, d\}$, $\{y, b, c\}$, $\{y, d, a\}$, put $\alpha = \min\{x, y, a, b, c, d\}$. Take β to be the unique element of $\{x, y, a, b, c, d\}$ such that the pair $\{\alpha, \beta\}$ is not contained in a block of the 4-cycle, and then put $\gamma = \min(\{x, y, a, b, c, d\} \setminus \{\alpha, \beta\})$.

For a 6-cycle $\{x, a, b\}$, $\{x, c, d\}$, $\{x, e, f\}$, $\{y, b, c\}$, $\{y, d, e\}$, $\{y, f, a\}$, put $\alpha = \min\{x, y\}$, $\beta = \max\{x, y\}$ and $\gamma = \min\{a, b, c, d, e, f\}$.

For an 8-cycle $\{x, a, b\}$, $\{x, c, d\}$, $\{x, e, f\}$, $\{x, g, h\}$, $\{y, b, c\}$, $\{y, d, e\}$, $\{y, f, g\}$, $\{y, h, a\}$, put $\alpha = \min\{x, y\}$, $\beta = \max\{x, y\}$ and $\gamma = \min\{a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h\}$.

4 - Cycle Switching.

6 - Cycle Switching.

8 - Cycle Switching.

1	0
2	48
3	4
4	14
5	60
6	8
7	66
8	18
9	36
10	4
11	9
12	57
13	36
14	14
15	42
16	0
17	12
18	42
19	42
20	48
21	42
22	42
23	42
24	42
25	42
26	42
27	42
28	36
29	36
30	36
31	36
32	36
33	36
34	36
35	36
36	36
37	36
38	36
39	36
40	36
41	36
42	36
43	36
44	36
45	36
46	36
47	36
48	36
49	36
50	36
51	36
52	36
53	36
54	36
55	36
56	36
57	36
58	36
59	36
60	36
61	36
62	36
63	36
64	36
65	36
66	36
67	36
68	36
69	36
70	36
71	36
72	36
73	36
74	36
75	36
76	36
77	36
78	36
79	36
80	36
81	36
82	36
83	36
84	36
85	36
86	36
87	36
88	36
89	36
90	36
91	36
92	36
93	36
94	36
95	36
96	36
97	36
98	36
99	36
100	36
101	36
102	36
103	36
104	36
105	36
106	36
107	36
108	36
109	36
110	36
111	36
112	36
113	36
114	36
115	36
116	36
117	36
118	36
119	36
120	36
121	36
122	36
123	36
124	36
125	36
126	36
127	36
128	36
129	36
130	36
131	36
132	36
133	36
134	36
135	36
136	36
137	36
138	36
139	36
140	36
141	36
142	36
143	36
144	36
145	36
146	36
147	36
148	36
149	36
150	36
151	36
152	36
153	36
154	36
155	36
156	36
157	36
158	36
159	36
160	36
161	36
162	36
163	36
164	36
165	36
166	36
167	36
168	36
169	36
170	36
171	36
172	36
173	36
174	36
175	36
176	36
177	36
178	36
179	36
180	36
181	36
182	36
183	36
184	36
185	36
186	36
187	36
188	36
189	36
190	36
191	36
192	36
193	36
194	36
195	36
196	36
197	36
198	36
199	36
200	36
201	36
202	36
203	36
204	36
205	36
206	36
207	36
208	36
209	36
210	36
211	36
212	36
213	36
214	36
215	36
216	36
217	36
218	36
219	36
220	36
221	36
222	36
223	36
224	36
225	36
226	36
227	36
228	36
229	36
230	36
231	36
232	36
233	36
234	36
235	36
236	36
237	36
238	36
239	36
240	36
241	36
242	36
243	36
244	36
245	36
246	36
247	36
248	36
249	36
250	36
251	36
252	36
253	36
254	36
255	36
256	36
257	36
258	36
259	36
260	36
261	36
262	36
263	36
264	36
265	36
266	36
267	36
268	36
269	36
270	36
271	36
272	36
273	36
274	36
275	36
276	36
277	36
278	36
279	36
280	36
281	36
282	36
283	36
284	36
285	36
286	36
287	36
288	36
289	36
290	36
291	36
292	36
293	36
294	36
295	36
296	36
297	36
298	36
299	36
300	36
301	36
302	36
303	36
304	36
305	36
306	36
307	36
308	36
309	36
310	36
311	36
312	36
313	36
314	36
315	36
316	36
317	36
318	36
319	36
320	36
321	36
322	36
323	36
324	36
325	36
326	36
327	36
328	36
329	36
330	36
331	36
332	36
333	36
334	36
335	36
336	36
337	36
338	36
339	36
340	36
341	36
342	36
343	36
344	36
345	36
346	36
347	36
348	36
349	36
350	36
351	36
352	36
353	36
354	36
355	36
356	36
357	36
358	36
359	36
360	36
361	36
362	36
363	36
364	36
365	36
366	36
367	36
368	36
369	36
370	36
371	36
372	36
373	36
374	36
375	36
376	36
377	36
378	36
379	36
380	36
381	36
382	36
383	36
384	36
385	36
386	36
387	36
388	36
389	36
390	36
391	36
392	36
393	36
394	36
395	36
396	36
397	36
398	36
399	36
400	36
401	36
402	36
403	36
404	36
405	36
406	36
407	36
408	36
409	36
410	36
411	36
412	36
413	36
414	36
415	36
416	36
417	36
418	36
419	36
420	36
421	36
422	36
423	36
424	36
425	36
426	36
427	36
428	36
429	36
430	36
431	36
432	36
433	36
434	36
435	36
436	36
437	36
438	36
439	36
440	36
441	36
442	36
443	36
444	36
445	36
446	36
447	36
448	36
449	36
450	36
451	36
452	36
453	36
454	36
455	36
456	36
457	36
458	36
459	36
460	36
461	36
462	36
463	36
464	36
465	36
466	36
467	36
468	36
469	36
470	36
471	36
472	36
473	36
474	36
475	36
476	36
477	36
478	36
479	36
480	36
481	36
482	36
483	36
484	36
485	36
486	36
487	36
488	36
489	36
490	36
491	36
492	36
493	36
494	36
495	36
496	36
497	36
498	36
499	36
500	36