

Abstract

A systematic search for cycles in the generalized $3x+r$ - problem exhibits some nice heuristical pattern, which I try to formalize here. The reader can find more formal and extensive consideration of this in Crandall's 1978 [Cra78], Lagarias' 1990 [Lag90] and Belaga's 2007 [Bel07] articles.

Preliminaries and notation**General transformation of one and of N steps**

Let's denote one step of transformation from odd a_k to odd a_{k+1} in the Syracuse-style by

$$1.1) \quad a_{k+1} = (3a_k + r)/2^{A_k},$$

When iterated to N steps (writing S for the sum of all A_k) then the complete transformation can algebraically be expanded as

$$1.2) \quad a_{N+1} = a_1 \cdot 3^N / 2^S + r \cdot (3^{N-1} + 3^{N-2} 2^{A_1} + 3^{N-3} 2^{A_1+A_2} + \dots + 2^{A_1+\dots+A_{N-1}}) / 2^S$$

Much interestingly, the parameter r can be brought outside of the parentheses. The parentheses itself should thus be seen as some "canonical" or "basic" composition over all the following discussion. Thus we introduce a short form $Q()$ for writing the parentheses expression by the vector of exponents only:

$$1.3) \quad Q([A_1, A_2, \dots, A_N]) = (3^{N-1} + 3^{N-2} 2^{A_1} + 3^{N-3} 2^{A_1+A_2} + \dots + 2^{A_1+\dots+A_{N-1}})$$

such that 1.2) assumes the shorter form

$$1.4) \quad a_{N+1} = a_1 \cdot 3^N / 2^S + r \cdot Q([A_1, A_2, \dots, A_N]) / 2^S$$

Let's give such vector an even shorter reference (although that shorter reference is formally underdetermined)

$$1.5) \quad E_{N,S} = [A_1, A_2, \dots, A_N]$$

such that in general we can write

$$1.6) \quad a_{N+1} = a_1 \cdot 3^N / 2^S + r \cdot Q(E_{N,S}) / 2^S \quad \text{for the general } N\text{-fold iterated transformation}$$

Let's give such transformation a symbolic name using letter T with suffix for the parameter r :

$$1.7) \quad a_{N+1} = T_r(a_1; [A_1, A_2, \dots, A_N]) \\ = T_r(a_1; E_{N,S})$$

Cycling

If we assume that this transformation defines a cycle for some a_1 , meaning that $a_{N+1} = a_1$, then we can reformulate

$$1.8) \quad a_1 = T_r(a_1; E_{N,S}) \\ a_1 = a_1 \cdot 3^N / 2^S + r \cdot Q(E_{N,S}) / 2^S \quad \text{for the definition of a cycle by } E_{N,S} \text{ which occurs if } a_1 \text{ is positive integer} \\ a_1 \cdot 2^S = a_1 \cdot 3^N + r \cdot Q(E_{N,S}) \\ a_1 (2^S - 3^N) = r \cdot Q(E_{N,S})$$

$$1.8.a) \quad a_1 = r \cdot Q(E_{N,S}) / (2^S - 3^N) \quad \text{for the computation of the first element } a_1 \text{ of a cycle given the exponents } A_k$$

For the classic Collatz-problem the parameter is $r=1$ and we know, that all $a_1 < 2^{60}$ converge to 1 so the cycle at $a_1=1$ is **likely** the only one.

The Collatz-conjecture for the case $r=1$ assumes that **all** positive integers a_1 fall down to the "trivial cycle" $1 \rightarrow 1 \rightarrow \dots$ when iteratively transformed by $T_1()$. That conjecture can be separated into two partial conjectures:

the *no-divergence-conjecture* meaning that there exist no divergent trajectories.

the (*no-nontrivial-*) *cycle-conjecture* meaning that there are no cycles besides the trivial one (sometimes called "weak Collatz conjecture")

In the following we **assume the truth** of the Collatz-cycle-conjecture - such that the **trivial cycle** at $a_1=1$ and $A_1=2$ is **the only one**.

A formula for the "trivial cycle" is from definition (1.1)

$$1.9) \quad a_1 = (3a_1+1)/2^A$$

solving

$$a_1 2^A - 3a_1 = 1$$

$$a_1 = (1)/(2^A - 3)$$

allows the only possible solution having $A=2$ to get the positive integer $a_1=1$ ($A=1$ would lead to $a_1=-1$ instead)

$$1 = (1)/(2^2 - 3)$$

or, including explicetly the term for $r=1$ and the $Q()$ -notation with $N=1$ and $S=A=2$,

$$1 = 1 \cdot Q([2]) / (2^2 - 3^1) = 1 \cdot Q([2,2]) / (2^4 - 3^2) = 1 \cdot Q([2,2,2]) / (2^6 - 3^3) = \dots \\ = 1 \cdot (3^0) / (2^2 - 3^1) \\ = 1/1$$

The assumption of the truth of the Collatz-cycle-conjecture can be reformulated such that in (1.8a) with $r=1$ no other positive integer solution for a_1 can be found, irrespectively of the number N and of the values of the exponents A_k :

Collatz-cycles conjecture: in (8.d) the only solution for $a_1 > 0$ and $r=1$ and any N for

$$1.10) \quad a_1 = 1 \cdot Q([A_1, A_2, A_3, \dots, A_N]) / (2^S - 3^N)$$

is

$$a_1=1 \text{ and } A_1=A_2=\dots=A_N=2 \text{ (and thus } S=2 \cdot N)$$

Insight in the generalized transformation $3x+r$ concerning cycles**The generalized trivial cycles**

The first insight into the generalization with arbitrary odd parameter r is that from eq (1.8a) with $N=1$ and $S=2$

$$a_1 = r \cdot (3^0)/(2^2-3^1) \quad [= r \cdot 1]$$

it follows immediately that we have a trivial-cycle-solution at $a_1=r$:

$$2.1) \quad r \cdot 1 = r \cdot (3^0)/(2^2-3^1)$$

$\implies a_1=r$ allows the generalized "trivial" cycle for any r

The generalized non-trivial cycles

The next insight: for the non-trivial case we start at our form (1.8a)

$$2.2) \quad a_1 = r \cdot Q(E_{N,S})/(2^S - 3^N) \\ = r \cdot Q([A_1, A_2, \dots, A_N])/(2^S - 3^N)$$

We denote the cancelled form of $Q(E_{N,S})/(2^S - 3^N)$ by the rational number " p/q " writing:

$$2.2a) \quad a_1 = r \cdot (p/q)$$

Although (we assume that) in the Collatz-cycle-problem with $r=1$ there is no nontrivial solution for this, it is obvious that we need only that r is some multiple of q to have a solution for this cycle equation in integer a_1 . Let r be any multiple of q , say $r=tq$, then

$$2.2b) \quad a_1 = tq \cdot (p/q) \\ a_1 = tp \quad \implies a_1=tp \text{ is a member of a cycle in } T_r(E_{N,S}) \text{ with parameter } r=tq$$

So for instance for $2^5-3^3=5$ we'll have a generalized nontrivial trivial cycle for $r=5$. For $2^8-3^5=13$ we'll have one with $r=13$, and so on.

Example: a short list for some small parameters r .

We begin with one more detailed description for $r=5$.

Heuristically (testing a_1 up to 1 000 000) a table of results shows 6 cycles.

$r=5$

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector	// comments
5	20.000000	1	2	[2]	// $r \cdot (2^S - 3^N) = r \cdot 1$ generalized "trivial" cycle
1	14.154000	1	3	[3]	// $2^S - 3^N = 2^3 - 3^1 = 5 = r$
19	49.522000	3	5	[1, 1, 3]	// $2^S - 3^N = 2^5 - 3^3 = 5 = r$
23	9.298000	3	5	[1, 2, 2]	
187	3.254000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1, 5]	
347	3.772000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 2, 2]	

Legend: the first column indicates the minimal element of the described cycle; for instance, in the same way as in the $3x+1$ -problem we have the trivial cycle at $a_{\min}=1$, we have in the $3x+5$ -problem the trivial cycle at $a_{\min}=5$. That cycle has of course the length $N=1$ and vector of exponents is [2], so also the sum S of exponents is $S=2$. (Even more, in general, having a cycle at a_1 , N can of course be any number, then $E_{N,S}=[2,2,2,\dots,2]$ with N elements of value 2 and $S=2N$ - this all defines the same trivial cycle)

The second column gives a statistic "rel freq%" in percent: for how many a_1 in that tested range occurs that specific cycle (relatively to size of range, in percent).

The other columns have obvious descriptions in their title.

First we find the generalized "trivial cycle" at $a_1=5$.

A second cycle of length $N=1$ occurs at $a_{\min}=a_1=1$ because we have $(1 \cdot 3 + 5)/2^3 = 1$ and the vector of exponents is simply [3] and also $S=3$.

A third cycle occurs with length $N=3$; using the exponents [1,1,3] (and thus $S=5$ - we want that $2^S > 3^N$) it can be determined by

$$Q([1,1,3])=3^2 + 3 \cdot 2^1 + 2^{1+1} = 19 \\ 2^S - 3^N = 5 \\ a_1 = r \cdot Q([1,1,3])/(2^S-3^N) = 5 \cdot 19/5 = 19$$

and a fourth one by

$$Q([1,2,2])=3^2 + 3 \cdot 2^1 + 2^{1+2} = 23 \\ 2^S - 3^N = 5 \\ a_1 = r \cdot Q([1,2,2])/(2^S-3^N) = 5 \cdot 23/5 = 23$$

We have even two longer cycles with $N=17$, $S=27$, and $a_1=187$ and $a_1=347$. Here the expression 2^S-3^N has the following factorization:

$$\text{factors}(2^{27} - 3^{17}) = 5 \cdot 71 \cdot 14303$$

The p/q -notation says

$$a_1 = r \cdot Q(E_{17,27}) / 5 \cdot 71 \cdot 14303 = r \cdot p/q$$

and obviously the two expressions for $Q(E_{17,27})$ cancel the factors $71 \cdot 14303$ and we need $r=5$ to find an integer value for a_1 and establish a nontrivial cycle for this parameter $r=5$.

Here is a compacted table for some small problem parameters r : in parentheses (N,S) and the number(s) after the parentheses is/are a_1 . If there are more numbers here, then this shows occurrence of more cycles with the same (N,S) (true new cycle, no rotations!)

Table 2:

r	"trivial"	non-trivial	cycles				comments
1	(1,2):1						
3	(1,2):3						
5	(1,2):5	(1,3):1	(3,5):19,23	(17,27):187,347			
7	(1,2):7				(2,4):5		
9	(1,2):9						
11	(1,2):11	(2,6):1	(8,14):13				
13	(1,2):13	(1,4):1	(5,8):211,259, 227, 287,251, 283,319	(15,24):131			
15	(1,2):15	(1,3):3	(3,5):57,69	(17,27):561,1041			The yellow marked cycles are inherited from that of $r=5$ because of the factorization of $r=5 \cdot 3$
17	(1,2):17	(2,7):1		(18,31):23			
19	(1,2):19		(5,11):5				
21	(1,2):21				(2,4):15		
23	(1,2):23		(2,5):5,7	(26,43):41			
25	(1,2):25	(1,3):5	(3,5):95,115	(17,27):935, 1735	(8,16):7	(4,8):17	The yellow marked cycles are inherited from that of $r=5$ because of the factorization of $r=5 \cdot 5$
27	(1,2):27						
29	(1,2):29	(1,5):1	(9,17):11	(41,65):3811,7055			
31	(1,2):31		(12,23):13				
33	(1,2):33	(2,6):3	(8,14):39				
35	(1,2):35	(1,3):7	(3,5):133,161	(17,27):1309,2429	(2,4):25	(4,8):13,17	The yellow marked cycles are inherited from that of $r=5$ because of the factorization of $r=5 \cdot 7$ and the green marked cycle is inherited from that of $r=7$. The new cycle (4,8) is specific for r
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See a longer table in Belaga/Mignotte: Cyclic structure of Dynamical Systems (2000) (<http://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/IRMA-ACF>, file hal-00129656 according to Lagarias (2011))

Parameter $r=(2^S-3^N)$ with given N and S

In an equation with given N and S where also $r=(2^S-3^N)$ and thus

$$2.3) \quad a_1 = r \cdot Q(E_{N,S}) / (2^S - 3^N)$$

$$a_1 = Q(E_{N,S})$$

we have obviously that any vector $E_{N,S}$ gives one valid solution for a cycle containing a_1 . So any vector

$$E_{N,S} = [A_1, A_2, A_3, \dots, A_N] \quad \text{restricted to} \quad \sum_{k=1}^N A_k = S$$

we have a combinatorial number C^* of members $a_{c,k}$ of cycles, and since N members define one cycle we have $C=C^*/N$ cycles for this parameter r .

Example 1: let $N=3, S=5$. Then let $r=2^5-3^3=32-27=5$. Then the list of possible vectors $E_{N,S}$ is

$$[1,1,3], [1,2,2], [2,1,2], [1,3,1], [2,2,1], [3,1,1]$$

Thus $C^*=6, C=6/3=2$ and we shall have 2 different cycles with this $r=5$. Note that the vectors above can be seen as rotations, such that we get the two groups

$$\begin{array}{lll} [3,1,1], [1,3,1], [1,1,3] & \text{cycle 1} & (49 \rightarrow 31 \rightarrow 19 \rightarrow \dots) \\ [2,2,1], [2,1,2], [1,2,2] & \text{cycle 2} & (37 \rightarrow 29 \rightarrow 23 \rightarrow \dots) \end{array}$$

which define "rotationally" the according members a_1, a_2, a_3 for each cycle when formula 2.3) is applied accordingly.

Example 2: let $N=5, S=8$. Then let $r=2^8-3^5=256-243=13$. Then the list of possible vectors $E_{N,S}$ is

$$\begin{aligned} & [4, 1, 1, 1, 1] [3, 2, 1, 1, 1] [2, 3, 1, 1, 1] [1, 4, 1, 1, 1] [3, 1, 2, 1, 1] \\ & [2, 2, 2, 1, 1] [1, 3, 2, 1, 1] [2, 1, 3, 1, 1] [1, 2, 3, 1, 1] [1, 1, 4, 1, 1] \\ & [3, 1, 1, 2, 1] [2, 2, 1, 2, 1] [1, 3, 1, 2, 1] [2, 1, 2, 2, 1] [1, 2, 2, 2, 1] \\ & [1, 1, 3, 2, 1] [2, 1, 1, 3, 1] [1, 2, 1, 3, 1] [1, 1, 2, 3, 1] [1, 1, 1, 4, 1] \\ & [3, 1, 1, 1, 2] [2, 2, 1, 1, 2] [1, 3, 1, 1, 2] [2, 1, 2, 1, 2] [1, 2, 2, 1, 2] \\ & [1, 1, 3, 1, 2] [2, 1, 1, 2, 2] [1, 2, 1, 2, 2] [1, 1, 2, 2, 2] [1, 1, 1, 3, 2] \\ & [2, 1, 1, 1, 3] [1, 2, 1, 1, 3] [1, 1, 2, 1, 3] [1, 1, 1, 2, 3] [1, 1, 1, 1, 4] \end{aligned}$$

Thus $C^*=35, C=35/5=7$ and we shall have 7 different cycles with this $r=13$.

Again the vectors above can be separated into groups of rotations, such that we get the 7 groups

$$\begin{array}{lll} [4, 1, 1, 1, 1] [1, 4, 1, 1, 1] [1, 1, 4, 1, 1] [1, 1, 1, 4, 1] [1, 1, 1, 1, 4] & \text{cycle 1} & 211 \rightarrow 323 \rightarrow 491 \rightarrow 743 \rightarrow 1121 \rightarrow 211 \\ [3, 2, 1, 1, 1] [1, 3, 2, 1, 1] [1, 1, 3, 2, 1] [1, 1, 1, 3, 2] [2, 1, 1, 1, 3] & \text{cycle 2} & 259 \rightarrow 395 \rightarrow 599 \rightarrow 905 \rightarrow 341 \rightarrow 259 \\ [2, 3, 1, 1, 1] [1, 2, 3, 1, 1] [1, 1, 2, 3, 1] [1, 1, 1, 2, 3] [3, 1, 1, 1, 2] & \text{cycle 3} & 227 \rightarrow 347 \rightarrow 527 \rightarrow 797 \rightarrow 601 \rightarrow 227 \\ [3, 1, 2, 1, 1] [1, 3, 1, 2, 1] [1, 1, 3, 1, 2] [2, 1, 1, 3, 1] [1, 2, 1, 1, 3] & \text{cycle 4} & 287 \rightarrow 437 \rightarrow 331 \rightarrow 503 \rightarrow 761 \rightarrow 287 \\ [2, 1, 3, 1, 1] [1, 2, 1, 3, 1] [1, 1, 2, 1, 3] [3, 1, 1, 2, 1] [1, 3, 1, 1, 2] & \text{cycle 5} & 251 \rightarrow 383 \rightarrow 581 \rightarrow 439 \rightarrow 665 \rightarrow 251 \\ [2, 2, 2, 1, 1] [1, 2, 2, 2, 1] [1, 1, 2, 2, 2] [2, 1, 1, 2, 2] [2, 2, 1, 1, 2] & \text{cycle 6} & 283 \rightarrow 431 \rightarrow 653 \rightarrow 493 \rightarrow 373 \rightarrow 283 \\ [2, 2, 1, 2, 1] [1, 2, 2, 1, 2] [2, 1, 2, 2, 1] [1, 2, 1, 2, 2] [2, 1, 2, 1, 2] & \text{cycle 7} & 319 \rightarrow 485 \rightarrow 367 \rightarrow 557 \rightarrow 421 \rightarrow 319 \end{array}$$

It comes out, that the number C^* is simply determined by $C^*=\text{binomial}(S-1, N-1)$.

Unfortunately, this is not always divisible by N so the $C=C^*/N$ rule cannot always be applied.

Parameter r with $(2^S-3^N)=t \cdot s$ and $Q(E_{N,S})=t \cdot u$ (with given N and S)

If we have $(2^S-3^N)=t \cdot s$ and $Q(E_{N,S})=t \cdot u$ (with given N and S), then r needs to cancel the factor s in the denominator. If $r=s$ then we have a cycle with $a_1=u$ and if r is a j 'th multiple of s we have a cycle with $a_1=j \cdot u$

Example: $N=3, S=21$ then $(2^S-3^N)=t \cdot s=19 \cdot (125-883)$ and $Q([1,1,19])=t \cdot u=19 \cdot 1$. Let $r=125-883=110375$.

This gives $C^*=(21-1:5-1)=190$ including one 1-step cycle, so the number $C=(C^*-1)/N=63$ gives the cycle candidates. But only some have the denominator's factor $t=19$ in the primefactorization of the numerator $Q(E_{N,S})$ namely

	E_1	E_2	E_3	$Q(E_1)$	$Q(E_2)$	$Q(E_3)$	a_1	->	a_2	->	a_3	->	comment	
cycle 1	[7,7,7]			19·883					883		883		883	1-step-cycle
cycle 2	[1,1,19]	[1,19,1]	[19,1,1]	19	19·229·241	19·281·491			1	55189	137971			
cycle 3	[2,8,11]	[8,11,2]	[11,2,8]	19·5·11	19·5·5527	19·5·151			55	27635	755			
cycle 4	[3,13,5]	[13,5,3]	[5,3,13]	19·7·17·29	19·15091	19·19			3451	15091	19			

Of course, if it happens, that $r=110375$ can also expressed by a formula $2^S \cdot 3^N$ with some N and S then we have a further number $C^* = \text{binomial}(S-1, N-1)$ and an according set of cycles with cardinality $C = C^*/N$.

Composite parameter r vs. prime r

If we compare composite and prime r then we find one more interesting aspect (which was indicated already in the above table).

It appears that if r is composite with primefactors s and t , such that $r = s \cdot t$ then $T_r()$ has the cycles of both $T_s()$ and $T_t()$ (only that the members a_k are rescaled by the according factor: $T_{st}()$ has the same cycles as $T_s()$ but the members are scaled by $r/s = t$ and as well the same as $T_t()$ but those are scaled by $r/t = s$) - but moreover it seems, that generally $T_{st}()$ has some additional "primitive" cycles (except for additional powers of 3 in s or t).

So for instance, let $s=5, t=7, r=st=35$.

$T_5()$ has the nontrivial cycles

$$(N,S)=(1,3) \ a_1=1, \quad (N,S)=(3,5) \ a_1=19 \ \text{and} \ 23, \quad (N,S)=(17,27) \ a_1=187 \ \text{and} \ 347$$

Then $T_{35}()$ has (at least) the same cycles, but the members a_k are multiplied by $35/5=7$:

$$(N,S)=(1,3) \ a_1=7, \quad (N,S)=(3,5) \ a_1=133 \ \text{and} \ 161, \quad (N,S)=(17,27) \ a_1=1309 \ \text{and} \ 2429$$

$T_7()$ has the nontrivial cycles

$$(N,S)=(2,4) \ a_1=5$$

Then $T_{35}()$ has (at least) the same cycles, but the members a_k are multiplied by $35/7=5$:

$$(N,S)=(2,4) \ a_1=25$$

But additionally, each composite r may provide cycles which are "unexplained" by its primefactors.

(In Lagarias [Lag90] and later Belaga [Bel07] this is called "primitive cycle" which I'll adapt here)

So $T_{35}()$ can have some additional, primitive cycles - when in the expression $a_1 = r \cdot Q(E_{N,S}) / (2^S - 3^N) = p/q$ the reduced denominator q carries both factors $s \cdot t$. In the current case we find

$$(N,S)=(4,8) \ a_1=13 \quad (E_{4,8}=[1,1,1,5])$$

$$\text{and} \ a_1=17 \quad (E_{4,8}=[1,2,1,4])$$

This feature of additional primitive cycles is illustrated in the following table (in a hopefully more enlightening way). The leading column shows the problem parameters r . The heading lines give the arguments (N,S) and in the cells are the list of a_i , each defining a cycle. The cycles with $(1,2)$ are the trivial ones, the rescaled trivial cycle from the $3x+1$ -problem.

Table 2 illustrating the occurrences of cycles for $T_r()$ with composite $r=stu=385=5 \cdot 7 \cdot 11$ compared with that for $T_r()$ of prime $r=s \cdot t$ $r=u \ r=st \ r=tu \ r=su$. Entries are the minimal members a_i ; if more than one cycle/minimal member a_i exist they are separated by ";

(N,S) r	(1,2)	(1,3)	(3,5)	(17,27)	(2,4)	(4,8)	(2,6)	(8,14)	(4,12)	(16,28)	(16,38)	(6,18)	(20,40)	(48,84)
5	5	1	19;23	187;347										
35	35	7	133;161	1309;2429	25	13;17								
		$7=1 \cdot 7$	$133=19 \cdot 7$ $161=23 \cdot 7$	$1309=187 \cdot 7$ $2429=347 \cdot 7$	$25=5 \cdot 5$	-primitive-								
7	7				5									
	77	77			55		7	91				1		
					$55=5 \cdot 11$		$7=1 \cdot 7$	$91=13 \cdot 7$				-primitive-		
11	11						1	13						
	55	55	11	209;253	2057;3817		5;7	65	1	41				
			$11=1 \cdot 11$	$209=19 \cdot 11$ $253=23 \cdot 11$	$2057=187 \cdot 11$ $3817=347 \cdot 11$		$5=1 \cdot 5$ $7=1 \cdot 7$	$65=13 \cdot 5$	-primitive-	-primitive-				
385	385	77	1463;1771	14399;26719	275	143;187	35;49	455	7	287	5	17	23	107
		$77=7 \cdot 11$	$1463=19 \cdot 11 \cdot 7$ $1771=23 \cdot 11 \cdot 7$	$14399=187 \cdot 11 \cdot 7$ $26719=347 \cdot 11 \cdot 7$	$275=5 \cdot 11 \cdot 5$	$143=13 \cdot 11$ $187=17 \cdot 11$	$35=5 \cdot 7$ $49=7 \cdot 7$	$455=13 \cdot 7 \cdot 5$	$7=1 \cdot 7$	$287=41 \cdot 7$	$5=1 \cdot 5$	-primitive-	-primitive-	-primitive-

Additional remark: if we expand this table to contain also $T_{3 \cdot 385}()$ then this does not add new cycles, because any factor of 3 in r (such that $r=3r'$) does not compensate for more factors in the denominator of p/q : in this type of problems (using $3a_1+r$) the denominator q cannot contain the factor 3 because q is a factor of $2^S - 3^N$ which itself cannot contain that factor 3 except if $N=0$

Further discussion / draft material.

a) Discussing transformations and cycles in terms of exponents-vectors $E_{N,S} = [A_1, A_2, \dots, A_N]$ and stating equations 6) give some interesting consideration:

- of course, **any** combination of values $A_k > 0$ in $E_{N,S}$ lead to a rational number

$$p/q = Q([A_1, A_2, \dots, A_N]) / (2^S - 3^N)$$
 (where p/q means the fraction in most cancelled form)
- thus **every** expression for the existence of a cycle $a_1 = r \cdot p/q$ can obviously be solved in a pair of integers $a_1=p, r=q$ which immediately means that
- **for any exponents-vector** $E_{N,S}=[A_1, A_2, \dots, A_N]$ a solution for **a cycle exists** with an appropriate parameter r .
 Moreover, **multiple** solutions exists by scaling of a_1 and r by some common cofactor.
- The truth of the Collatz-conjecture is then equivalent to the statement, that no exponents-vector $E_{N,S} = [A_1, A_2, \dots, A_N]$ exists such that $2^S > 3^N$ and $Q(E_{N,S})$ is divisible by $2^S - 3^N$ except if all $A_k=2$ and thus $S=2N$. (For $2^S < 3^N$ and thus negative a_1 we know three more cycles)

b) and c) not yet worked out, see file Collatz_3x_r_material.doc.

A side remark: Analogy to the Zsigmondy-theorem on Mersenne-numbers:
 This seems to occur in a similar manner as it occurs with the prime factorization of the **Mersenne numbers** M_n : the M_n of composite indexes $n=pq$ have all primefactors as M_p and M_q alone, but always some additional primefactors (except for $M_{2,3}=M_6=3^2 \cdot 7$), which are called "**primitive primefactors**" in that context. This is a theorem known by a proof of **Zsigmondy** ([wikipedia](#)). I did not yet see the possibility to translate this to the problem here, however, and to do something like a proof. The striking similarity is on the exceptional cases: if r is composed with primefactor 3 then r has not those "**unexplained**" additional cycles (like M_6 has no "**unexplained**" / "primitive" primefactors)!

Appendix: List of cycles in $3x+r$ -problem with odd parameters r with $5 \leq r \leq 63$ and some more small specific cases

For cycle-searching I used odd numbers $a_k = 1 \dots 999\,999$.

The column "relfreq" gives the relative frequency (in percents) of the occurrence of the cycle as the tail of the trajectories for the odd a_k in the interval $1 \leq a_k \leq 999\,999$. Occasionally I used some shorter computations $a_k = 1 \dots 19\,999$ only, because the relative frequencies appeared to be very stable and computation is time-consuming

$r=1$ (The original Collatz-problem; $1=2^2 - 3 \cdot 1$: this leads systematically to a $N=1, S=2$ cycle at $a_1=1$).

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector	
1	100.000	1	2	[2]	The basic "trivial cycle" in the Collatzproblem
-1		1	1	[1]	There are cycles in the negative numbers but they are not considered furtherly here
-5		2	3	[1, 2]	
-17		7	11	[1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 4]	

$r=3$

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
3	100.000	1	2	[2]

$r=5$ ($5=2^3 - 3 \cdot 1$: this leads systematically to a $N=1, S=3$ cycle at $a_1=1$)

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector	// comments
5	20.000000	1	2	[2]	// $r \cdot (2^S - 3^N) = r \cdot 1$
1	14.154000	1	3	[3]	// $2^S - 3^N = 5 = r$
19	49.522000	3	5	[1, 1, 3]	// $2^S - 3^N = 5 = r$
23	9.298000	3	5	[1, 2, 2]	
187	3.254000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1, 5]	
347	3.772000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 2, 2]	

$r=7$

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector	
7	14.280000	1	2	[2]	// $r \cdot (2^S - 3^N) = r \cdot 1$
5	85.720000	2	4	[1, 3]	// $2^4 - 3^2 = 7 = r$

$r=9$

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
9	100.000	1	2	[2]

$r=11$

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector	
11	9.080000	1	2	[2]	
1	20.100000	2	6	[1, 5]	// $2^6 - 3^2 = 5 \cdot r$
13	70.820000	8	14	[1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 3, 3]	
-19		3	4	[1, 1, 2]	

$r=13$ ($13=2^4 - 3 \cdot 1$ this leads systematically to a $N=1, S=4$ cycle at $a_1=1$)

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector	
13	7.692000	1	2	[2]	
1	47.550000	1	4	[4]	// $2^4 - 3^1 = 13 = r$
211	3.334000	5	8	[1, 1, 1, 1, 4]	// $2^8 - 3^5 = 13 = r$
227	1.880000	5	8	[1, 1, 1, 2, 3]	
251	1.958000	5	8	[1, 1, 2, 1, 3]	
259	3.934000	5	8	[1, 1, 1, 3, 2]	
283	2.506000	5	8	[1, 1, 2, 2, 2]	
287	4.380000	5	8	[1, 2, 1, 1, 3]	
319	1.424000	5	8	[1, 2, 1, 2, 2]	
131	25.342000	15	24	[1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 5]	// $Q(E_{N,S})=131 \cdot 186793$ $2^{24} - 3^{15} = 13 \cdot 186793$

$r=15$

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
15	20.000000	1	2	[2]
3	14.168000	1	3	[3]
57	49.642000	3	5	[1, 1, 3]
69	9.336000	3	5	[1, 2, 2]
561	3.176000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1, 5]
1041	3.678000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 2, 2]

r=17

a_{min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
17	5.880000	1	2	[2]
1	33.300000	2	7	[2, 5]
23	60.820000	18	31	[1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 4, 1, 3, 2]
-65		4	6	[1, 1, 1, 3] -65=13*-5

r=19

a_{min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
19	5.260000	1	2	[2]
5	94.740000	5	11	[1, 1, 2, 4, 3]

r=21

a_{min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
21	14.2800	1	2	[2]
15	85.7200	2	4	[1, 3]

r=23

a_{min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
23	4.348000	1	2	[2]
5	6.298000	2	5	[1, 4] // $2^5 - 3^2 = r$
7	41.528000	2	5	[2, 3]
41	47.826000	26	43	[1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 4, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 2, 5, 1, 1, 3, 2, 2]

r=25

a_{min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
25	4.0000	1	2	[2]
5	2.8800	1	3	[3]
95	9.5600	3	5	[1, 1, 3]
115	1.9400	3	5	[1, 2, 2]
17	37.4200	4	8	[2, 1, 2, 3]
7	42.5800	8	16	[1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 5, 1, 4]
935	0.7900	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1, 5]
1735	0.8300	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 2, 2]

r=27

a_{min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
27	100.000	1	2	[2]

r=29 ($=2^5 - 3 \cdot 1$ this leads systematically to a $N=1, S=5$ cycle at $a_1=1$)

a_{min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
29	3.448000	1	2	[2]
1	7.922000	1	5	[5] // $2^5 - 3^1 = r$
11	87.984000	9	17	[1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 2, 1, 3, 4]
3811	0.354000	41	65	[1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 3, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 5, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 6, 2, 3, 3]
7055	0.292000	41	65	[1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 5, 3, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 2, 1, 2, 2, 3, 2]

Note that (41,65) are convergents of the continued fraction

r=31

a_{min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
31	3.226000	1	2	[2]
13	96.774000	12	23	[1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 2, 2, 3, 1, 4]

r=33

a_{min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
33	9.09000	1	2	[2]
3	19.5600	2	6	[1, 5]
39	71.3500	8	14	[1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 3, 3]

r=35

a_{min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
35	2.85000	1	2	[2]
7	1.98000	1	3	[3]

25	17.1500	2	4	[1, 3]
133	6.91000	3	5	[1, 1, 3]
161	1.42000	3	5	[1, 2, 2]
13	17.2200	4	8	[1, 1, 1, 5]
17	51.3500	4	8	[1, 2, 1, 4]
1309	0.490000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1, 5]
2429	0.630000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 2, 2]

r=37

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
37	2.71000	1	2	[2]
19	48.3500	3	6	[1, 1, 4]
23	23.0900	3	6	[1, 2, 3]
29	25.8500	3	6	[2, 1, 3]

r=39

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
39	7.69000	1	2	[2]
3	47.5100	1	4	[4]
633	3.12000	5	8	[1, 1, 1, 1, 4]
777	3.92000	5	8	[1, 1, 1, 3, 2]
681	1.79000	5	8	[1, 1, 1, 2, 3]
861	4.57000	5	8	[1, 2, 1, 1, 3]
753	2.05000	5	8	[1, 1, 2, 1, 3]
849	2.66000	5	8	[1, 1, 2, 2, 2]
957	1.36000	5	8	[1, 2, 1, 2, 2]
393	25.3300	15	24	[1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 5]

r=41

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
41	2.44000	1	2	[2]
1	97.5600	8	20	[2, 1, 3, 1, 2, 1, 1, 9]

r=43

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
43	2.32000	1	2	[2]
1	97.6800	3	11	[1, 4, 6]

r=45

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
45	20.0000	1	2	[2]
9	14.4500	1	3	[3]
171	48.4900	3	5	[1, 1, 3]
207	9.57000	3	5	[1, 2, 2]
1683	3.82000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1, 5]
3123	3.67000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 2, 2]

r=47 ($=2^7 \cdot 3^4$)

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
47	2.13000	1	2	[2]
65	13.5300	4	7	[1, 1, 1, 4]
89	5.94000	4	7	[1, 1, 3, 2]
73	5.76000	4	7	[1, 1, 2, 3]
85	3.91000	4	7	[1, 2, 1, 3]
101	3.28000	4	7	[1, 2, 2, 2]
5	39.2900	7	18	[1, 2, 3, 3, 1, 4, 4]
25	26.1600	16	28	[1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1, 2, 5]

r=49

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
49	2.04000	1	2	[2]
35	12.2400	2	4	[1, 3]
25	85.7200	22	38	[2, 1, 1, 1, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 3, 1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 2, 2, 6]
-65		4	5	[1, 1, 1, 2]

r=51

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
51	5.88000	1	2	[2]
3	32.5200	2	7	[2, 5]
69	61.6000	18	31	[1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 1, 1, 4, 1, 3, 2]

$r=53$

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
53	1.89000	1	2	[2]
103	98.1100	17	29	[1, 2, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 1, 3, 1, 1, 2, 3]

 $r=55$

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
55	1.82000	1	2	[2]
11	1.29000	1	3	[3]
5	3.88000	2	6	[1, 5]
7	38.9300	2	6	[2, 4]
209	4.30000	3	5	[1, 1, 3]
253	0.88000	3	5	[1, 2, 2]
1	16.3000	4	12	[1, 1, 2, 8]
65	14.3000	8	14	[1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 3, 3]
41	17.5000	16	28	[1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 3, 1, 2, 2, 4, 1, 2, 2, 3]
2057	0.38000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 1, 5]
3817	0.42000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 2, 2]

 $r=57$

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
57	5.26000	1	2	[2]
15	94.7400	5	11	[1, 1, 2, 4, 3]

 $r=59$

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
59	1.69000	1	2	[2]
1	23.3300	11	28	[1, 3, 2, 1, 1, 2, 5, 1, 1, 4, 7]
133	53.9600	6	10	[1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 5]
181	10.4700	6	10	[1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 3]
185	3.44000	6	10	[1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 4]
217	2.42000	6	10	[1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 3]
149	2.37000	6	10	[1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 4]
221	2.32000	6	10	[1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 2]

 $r=61$ ($=2^6 \cdot 3 \cdot 1$ this leads systematically to a $N=1, S=6$ cycle at $a_1=1$)

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
61	1.64000	1	2	[2]
1	93.3500	1	6	[6]
235	5.01000	41	66	[1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 2, 2, 2, 3, 1, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 3, 2]

 $r=63$

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
63	14.2800	1	2	[2]
45	85.7200	2	4	[1, 3]

 $r=73$

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
73	1.373333	1	2	[2]
5	9.500000	4	12	[3, 1, 3, 5]
47	39.800000	8	15	[1, 1, 3, 1, 2, 1, 3, 3]
19	49.326667	32	60	[1, 2, 1, 2, 2, 4, 2, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 5, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 3, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 8]

 $r=77$

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
77	1.30000	1	2	[2]
55	7.79000	2	4	[1, 3]
7	2.78000	2	6	[1, 5]
91	10.2000	8	14	[1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 3, 3]
1	77.9300	16	38	[4, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1, 2, 2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 4, 1, 9]

 $r=125$ ($=2^7 \cdot 3 \cdot 1$ this leads systematically to a $N=1, S=7$ cycle at $a_1=1$)

a_{\min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector
125	0.800000	1	2	[2]
25	0.586666	1	3	[3]
1	0.546666	1	7	[7]

475	1.953333	3	5	[1, 1, 3]
575	0.353333	3	5	[1, 2, 2]
85	7.526666	4	8	[2, 1, 2, 3]
35	8.473333	8	16	[1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 5, 1, 4]
4675	0.160000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1, 5]
8675	0.146666	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 2, 2]
47	65.320000	19	33	[1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 3, 1, 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 1, 6]
143	8.140000	19	33	[1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 3, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 4, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 4]
899	5.993333	74	118	[1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 5, 4, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 5, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 4, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 4, 4, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 4, 2, 1, 1, 3, 2, 2]

r=105

a_{min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector	
105	2.85000	1	2	[2]	
21	2.11000	1	3	[3]	$3 \cdot 7 \cdot T_5(1)$ $3 \cdot T_{35}(7)$
399	6.94000	3	5	[1, 1, 3]	$3 \cdot 7 \cdot T_5(19)$ $3 \cdot T_{35}(133)$
483	1.30000	3	5	[1, 2, 2]	$3 \cdot 7 \cdot T_5(23)$ $3 \cdot T_{35}(161)$
3927	0.570000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1, 5]	$3 \cdot 7 \cdot T_5(187)$ $3 \cdot T_{35}(1309)$
7287	0.510000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 2, 2]	$3 \cdot 7 \cdot T_5(347)$ $3 \cdot T_{35}(2429)$
75	17.1500	2	4	[1, 3]	$3 \cdot 5 \cdot T_7(5)$ $3 \cdot T_{35}(25)$
39	18.4900	4	8	[1, 1, 1, 5]	$3 \cdot T_{35}(13)$
51	50.0800	4	8	[1, 2, 1, 4]	$3 \cdot T_{35}(17)$

Note: "Zsigmondy-effect": there are no new cycles compared to $T_{35}()$ which were expected after $r=105$ is composite by 3·35

r=139

a_{min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector	
139	0.720	1	2	[2]	
11	99.3	74	136	[2, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 3, 1, 4, 1, 2, 3, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 4, 1, 1, 1, 3, 3, 2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 3, 2, 1, 2, 2, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 2, 4, 1, 2, 2, 2, 4, 4, 2, 1, 3, 5]	

r=385 (=5·7·11 displays collection of all cycles of all $T_t()$ where t is a divisor of r , plus some "non-explained" cycles)

a_{min}	relfreq%	N	S	vector	a multiple of $T_{xxx}()$
385	0.26000	1	2	[2]	$5 \cdot 7 \cdot 11 \cdot T_1(1)$
77	0.17000	1	3	[3]	$7 \cdot 11 \cdot T_5(1)$
1463	0.69000	3	5	[1, 1, 3]	$7 \cdot 11 \cdot T_5(19)$
1771	0.14000	3	5	[1, 2, 2]	$7 \cdot 11 \cdot T_5(23)$
14399	0.02000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 1, 1, 5]	$7 \cdot 11 \cdot T_5(187)$
26719	0.02000	17	27	[1, 1, 1, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 4, 1, 2, 1, 2, 2]	$7 \cdot 11 \cdot T_5(347)$
275	1.56000	2	4	[1, 3]	$5 \cdot 11 \cdot T_7(5)$
35	0.54000	2	6	[1, 5]	$5 \cdot 7 \cdot T_{11}(1)$
455	2.05000	8	14	[1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 3, 3]	$5 \cdot 7 \cdot T_{11}(13)$
143	1.77000	4	8	[1, 1, 1, 5]	$11 \cdot T_{35}(13)$
187	4.46000	4	8	[1, 2, 1, 4]	$11 \cdot T_{35}(17)$
7	2.16000	4	12	[1, 1, 2, 8]	$7 \cdot T_{55}(1)$
49	5.65000	2	6	[2, 4]	$7 \cdot T_{55}(7)$
287	2.58000	16	28	[1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 3, 1, 2, 2, 4, 1, 2, 2, 3]	$7 \cdot T_{55}(41)$
5	15.5900	16	38	[4, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1, 2, 2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 4, 1, 9]	$5 \cdot T_{77}(1)$
17	13.7200	6	18	[2, 3, 2, 1, 5, 5]	"unexplained" (= "primitive") cycles $T_{385}(17)$
23	17.4500	20	40	[1, 1, 6, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 3, 1, 1, 4, 7]	$T_{385}(23)$
107	31.1700	48	84	[1, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 3, 1, 4, 1, 1, 1, 3, 3, 1, 2, 3, 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 4, 1, 1, 3, 2, 2, 2, 4, 3]	$T_{385}(107)$



Gottfried Helms, 3.9.2017 (prev:25.8.2017; first version 8.8.2017)