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# Modular Representations of Finite Groups of Lie Type

JAMES E. HUMPHREYS

*University of Massachusetts, Amherst*



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## Contents

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<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> xiii
<b>1 Finite Groups of Lie Type</b>	1
1.1 Algebraic Groups over Finite Fields	1
1.2 Classification Over Finite Fields	2
1.3 Frobenius Maps	3
1.4 Lang Maps	4
1.5 Chevalley Groups and Twisted Groups	5
1.6 Example: $SL(3, q)$ and $SU(3, q)$	5
1.7 Groups With a $BN$ -Pair	7
1.8 Notational Conventions	8
<b>2 Simple Modules</b>	9
2.1 Representations and Formal Characters	9
2.2 Simple Modules for Algebraic Groups	10
2.3 Construction of Modules	11
2.4 Contravariant Forms	12
2.5 Representations of Frobenius Kernels	13
2.6 Invariants in the Function Algebra	14
2.7 Steinberg's Tensor Product Theorem	15
2.8 Example: $SL(2, K)$	16
2.9 Brauer Theory	16
2.10 Counting Semisimple Classes	16
2.11 Restriction to Finite Subgroups	17
2.12 Proof of Irreducibility	17
2.13 Proof of Distinctness: Chevalley Groups	18
2.14 Proof of Distinctness: Twisted Groups	19
2.15 Action of a Sylow $p$ -Subgroup	20

Cambridge University Press

0521674549 - Modular Representations of Finite Groups of Lie Type

James E. Humphreys

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi

*Contents*

<b>3</b>	<b>Weyl Modules and Lusztig's Conjecture</b>	21
3.1	Weyl Modules	21
3.2	Restricted Highest Weights	22
3.3	Cohomology of Line Bundles	23
3.4	The Affine Weyl Group	24
3.5	Alcoves	25
3.6	Linkage and Translation	26
3.7	Steinberg Modules	26
3.8	Contravariant Form on a Weyl Module	27
3.9	Jantzen Filtration and Sum Formula	28
3.10	Generic Behavior of Weyl Modules	29
3.11	Lusztig's Conjecture	30
3.12	Evidence for the Conjecture	31
<b>4</b>	<b>Computation of Weight Multiplicities</b>	33
4.1	Weight Spaces in Verma Modules	33
4.2	Weight Spaces in Characteristic $p$	34
4.3	An Easy Example: $SL(2, K)$	35
4.4	Computational Algorithms	35
4.5	Fundamental Modules for Symplectic Groups	37
4.6	Small Weights and Small Characteristics	38
4.7	Small Representations	38
<b>5</b>	<b>Other Aspects of Simple Modules</b>	41
5.1	Restriction of Frobenius Maps	41
5.2	Splitting Fields	42
5.3	Special Isogenies	43
5.4	Steinberg's Refined Factorization	44
5.5	Brauer Characters and Grothendieck Rings	45
5.6	Formal Characters and Brauer Characters	46
5.7	Rewriting Formal Sums	48
5.8	Restricting Highest Weight Modules to Finite Subgroups	48
5.9	Restriction of Weyl Modules	49
5.10	Restriction of Simple Modules to Levi Subgroups	50
5.11	Restriction to Elementary Abelian $p$ -Subgroups	51
<b>6</b>	<b>Tensor Products</b>	53
6.1	Tensor Products of Simple Modules	53
6.2	Multiplicities	54

*Contents* vii

6.3	Simple Tensor Products	55
6.4	Semisimple Tensor Products	56
6.5	Dimensions Divisible by $p$	56
6.6	Formal Characters and Multiplicities	57
6.7	Twisting by the Frobenius	57
6.8	Rewriting Multiplicities	58
6.9	Multiplicity of the Steinberg Module	59
<b>7</b>	<b><i>BN</i>-Pairs and Induced Modules</b>	61
7.1	Weights for Groups with a Split <i>BN</i> -Pair	61
7.2	Principal Series and Intertwining Operators	63
7.3	Examples	64
7.4	Summands of Principal Series Modules	64
7.5	Homology Representations	65
7.6	Comparison with Principal Series	66
<b>8</b>	<b>Blocks</b>	67
8.1	Blocks of a Group Algebra	67
8.2	The Defect of a Block	68
8.3	Groups of Lie Type	68
8.4	Defect Groups	69
8.5	Defect Groups for Groups of Lie Type	70
8.6	Steps in the Proof	70
8.7	The <i>BN</i> -Pair Setting	72
8.8	Vertices of Simple Modules	72
8.9	Representation Type of a Block	73
<b>9</b>	<b>Projective Modules</b>	75
9.1	Projective Modules for Finite Groups	75
9.2	Groups of Lie Type	76
9.3	The Steinberg Module	77
9.4	Tensoring with the Steinberg Module	78
9.5	Brauer Characters and Orthogonality Relations	79
9.6	Brauer Characters of PIMs	79
9.7	A Lower Bound for Dimensions of PIMs	80
9.8	Projective Modules for $SL(2, p)$	81
9.9	Brauer Trees for $SL(2, p)$	83
9.10	Indecomposable Modules for $SL(2, p)$	83
9.11	Dimensions of PIMs in Low Ranks	84

Cambridge University Press

0521674549 - Modular Representations of Finite Groups of Lie Type

James E. Humphreys

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii

*Contents*

<b>10</b>	<b>Comparison with Frobenius Kernels</b>	87
10.1	Injective Modules for Frobenius Kernels	87
10.2	Torus Action on $\mathbf{G}_r$ -Modules	89
10.3	Formal Character of $\hat{Q}_r(\lambda)$	90
10.4	Lifting PIMs to the Algebraic Group	91
10.5	Some Consequences	92
10.6	Tensoring with the Steinberg Module	93
10.7	Small PIMs	94
10.8	The Category of $\mathbf{G}_r\mathbf{T}$ -Modules	94
10.9	Rewriting Multiplicities	95
10.10	Brauer Characters	96
10.11	Statement of the Main Theorem	96
10.12	Proof of the Main Theorem	97
10.13	Letting $r$ Grow	97
10.14	Some Comparisons in Low Ranks	99
<b>11</b>	<b>Cartan Invariants</b>	101
11.1	Cartan Invariants for Finite Groups	101
11.2	Brauer Characters and Cartan Invariants	102
11.3	Decomposition Numbers	102
11.4	Groups of Lie Type	103
11.5	Example: $\mathrm{SL}(2, p)$	103
11.6	Example: $\mathrm{SL}(2, q)$	104
11.7	Using Standard Character Data to Compute Cartan Invariants	105
11.8	Conditions for Genericity	105
11.9	Generic Cartan Invariants	106
11.10	Growth of Cartan Invariants	107
11.11	The First Cartan Invariant	108
11.12	Special Cases	108
11.13	Computations of Cartan Matrices	109
11.14	Example: $\mathrm{SL}(3, 3)$	110
11.15	Example: $\mathrm{Sp}(4, 3)$ and Related Groups	111
11.16	Example: $\mathrm{SL}(5, 2)$	111
11.17	Conjectures on Block Invariants	112
<b>12</b>	<b>Extensions of Simple Modules</b>	115
12.1	The Extension Problem	115
12.2	Example: $\mathrm{SL}(2, p)$	116
12.3	The Optimal Situation	117
12.4	Extensions for Algebraic Groups	118

Cambridge University Press

0521674549 - Modular Representations of Finite Groups of Lie Type

James E. Humphreys

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

ix

12.5	Injectivity Theorem	119
12.6	Dimensions of Ext Groups	120
12.7	The Generic Case	121
12.8	Truncated Module Categories and Cohomology	121
12.9	Comparison Theorems	122
12.10	Self-Extensions	123
12.11	Special Cases	124
12.12	Semisimplicity Criteria	127
<b>13</b>	<b>Loewy Series</b>	129
13.1	Loewy Series	129
13.2	Loewy Series for Finite Groups	130
13.3	Example: $SL(2, p)$	130
13.4	Minimal Projective Resolutions	131
13.5	Example: $SL(2, q)$	132
13.6	The Category $\mathcal{O}$	132
13.7	Analogies in Characteristic $p$	134
13.8	Frobenius Kernels and Algebraic Groups	134
13.9	Example: $SL(3, K)$	135
13.10	Principal Series Modules	136
13.11	Loewy Series for Chevalley Groups	137
13.12	Example: $SL(3, 2)$	137
13.13	Example: $SL(3, 3)$	138
13.14	Example: $SL(4, 2)$	139
13.15	Example: $SO(5, 3)$	140
<b>14</b>	<b>Cohomology</b>	143
14.1	Cohomology of Finite Groups	143
14.2	Finite Groups of Lie Type	144
14.3	Cohomology of Algebraic Groups	145
14.4	Twisting by Frobenius Maps	146
14.5	Rational and Generic Cohomology	146
14.6	Discussion of the Proof	147
14.7	Example: $SL(2, q)$	148
14.8	Explicit Computations	149
14.9	Recent Developments	150
<b>15</b>	<b>Complexity and Support Varieties</b>	151
15.1	Complexity of a Module	151
15.2	Support Varieties	152



Cambridge University Press

0521674549 - Modular Representations of Finite Groups of Lie Type

James E. Humphreys

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

x

*Contents*

15.3	Support Varieties for Restricted Lie Algebras	153
15.4	Support Varieties for Groups of Lie Type	154
15.5	Further Refinements	155
15.6	Resolutions and Periodicity	156
15.7	Periodic Modules for Groups of Lie Type	156
<b>16</b>	<b>Ordinary and Modular Representations</b>	<b>159</b>
16.1	The Decomposition Matrix	159
16.2	Brauer Characters	160
16.3	Blocks	161
16.4	The Cartan–Brauer Triangle	161
16.5	Groups of Lie Type	162
16.6	Blocks of Defect Zero: the Steinberg Character	162
16.7	Cyclic Blocks and Brauer Trees	163
16.8	Characters of $SL(2, q)$	164
16.9	The Brauer Tree of $SL(2, p)$	165
16.10	Decomposition Numbers of $SL(2, q)$	165
16.11	Character Computations for Lie Families	167
16.12	Some Explicit Decomposition Matrices	168
16.13	Special Characters of $Sp(2n, q)$	168
16.14	Irreducibility Modulo $p$	169
<b>17</b>	<b>Deligne–Lusztig Characters</b>	<b>171</b>
17.1	Reductive Groups and Frobenius Maps	171
17.2	$F$ -Stable Maximal Tori	172
17.3	DL Characters	173
17.4	Basic Properties of DL Characters	174
17.5	The Decomposition Problem	175
17.6	PIMs and DL Characters	176
17.7	DL Characters and Weyl Characters	176
17.8	Generic Decomposition Patterns	177
17.9	Twisted groups	178
17.10	Unipotent Characters	178
17.11	Semisimple and Regular Characters	179
17.12	Geometric Conjugacy Classes of Cardinality 2	181
17.13	Jantzen Filtration of a Principal Series Module	181
17.14	Extremal Composition Factors	182
17.15	Another Look at the Brauer Tree of $SL(2, p)$	182
17.16	The Brauer Complex	183
17.17	Dual Formulation	184

Cambridge University Press

0521674549 - Modular Representations of Finite Groups of Lie Type

James E. Humphreys

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

xi

<b>18</b>	<b>The Groups <math>G_2(q)</math></b>	185
18.1	The Groups	185
18.2	The Affine Weyl Group	185
18.3	Weyl Modules and Simple Modules	186
18.4	Projective Modules for $p = 2, 3, 5$	187
18.5	Projective Modules for $p \geq 7$	191
18.6	Characters of $G_2(q)$	191
18.7	Reduction Modulo $p$	194
18.8	Brauer Complex of $G_2(5)$	195
<b>19</b>	<b>General and Special Linear Groups</b>	197
19.1	Representations of $GL(n, K)$ and $GL(n, q)$	197
19.2	Action on Symmetric Powers	198
19.3	Dickson Invariants	198
19.4	Complements	199
19.5	Multiplicity of $St$ in Symmetric Powers	200
19.6	Other Simple Modules	200
19.7	Example: $SL(2, p)$	201
19.8	Periodicity for $SL(2, q)$	201
19.9	Key Lemma	202
19.10	Proof of Periodicity Theorem	202
19.11	Brauer Lifting	204
<b>20</b>	<b>Suzuki and Ree Groups</b>	205
20.1	Description of the Groups	205
20.2	Simple Modules	206
20.3	Projective Modules and Blocks	208
20.4	Cartan Invariants of Suzuki Groups	208
20.5	Cartan Invariants of the Tits Group	209
20.6	Extensions and Cohomology	210
20.7	Ordinary Characters	210
20.8	Decomposition Numbers of Suzuki Groups	211
	<i>Bibliography</i>	213
	<i>Frequently Used Symbols</i>	229
	<i>Index</i>	231

## Preface

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“I confess I like to take account of possibilities. Don’t you know mathematics are my hobby? Did you ever study algebra? I always have an eye on the unknown quantity.”

Henry James, *The Story of a Year*

Ich predige die Mathematik . . . . . Die Beschäftigung mit der Mathematik, sage ich, ist das beste Mittel gegen die Kupidität. Staatsanwalt Paravant, der stark angefochten war, hat sich drauf geworfen, er hat es jetzt mit der Quadratur des Kreises und spürt große Erleichterung.

Thomas Mann, *Der Zauberberg*

- Ah! c’etait impossible, les cours duraient parfois fort tard.
- Même après 2 heures du matin? demandait le baron.
- Des fois.
- Mais l’algèbre s’apprend aussi facilement dans un livre.
- Même plus facilement, car je ne comprends pas grand’chose aux cours.
- Alors? D’ailleurs l’algèbre ne peut te servir à rien.
- J’aime bien cela. Ca dissipe ma neurasthénie.

Marcel Proust, *Sodome et Gomorrhe*

Whatever its therapeutic value may be, group theory offers plenty of diversions and challenges. In particular, the study of finite groups of Lie type and their representations (ordinary or modular) leads to deep questions, many of which are still unsolved.

A more accurate but cumbersome title for this book would be: “A guide to the modular representation theory of finite groups of Lie type in the defining characteristic  $p$ ”. As a subtheme, the relationship between ordinary and modular representations is explored, in the context of Deligne–Lusztig characters. However, I have stopped short of treating the “cross-characteristic” case,

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James E. Humphreys

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

where representations are studied over fields of prime characteristic  $\ell$  different from  $p$  (see the recent monograph by Cabanes and Enguehard [78]). In that case the questions and methods are quite different, being less connected with algebraic group representations and more intertwined with Deligne–Lusztig theory.

The approach here emphasizes the remarkably close parallels with the representation theories of the ambient simple algebraic group and its Frobenius kernels. Roughly speaking, the key representations of our finite group over a field of  $p^r$  elements closely resemble those of the  $r$ th Frobenius kernel (the case  $r = 1$  corresponding to the Lie algebra of the algebraic group).

The treatment here is necessarily far from self-contained. It relies heavily on the theory exposed in Jantzen’s book *Representations of Algebraic Groups*, whose second edition is referred to here as [RAGS]. However, the main prerequisites for study of the finite groups are concentrated in just the core chapters of Jantzen’s Part II. (These remain largely unchanged from the first edition, though the coverage of Lusztig’s Conjecture is significantly expanded in the new edition.)

One of my goals has been to make the subject more accessible to those working in neighboring parts of group theory, number theory, and topology. With this in mind, I have adopted some basic notational conventions at the outset in 1.8 and then tried to keep the chapters relatively independent. When it seems most useful I have given proofs in detail, but in the later chapters I have opted for informal exposition accompanied by examples and precise references.

The literature of this subject extends in many directions and often deals with special cases not yet possible to treat in a general framework. Even the large reference list I have assembled here is incomplete, though I have tried to include the primary sources and to attribute results correctly.

It is common in the theory of groups of Lie type to find “generic” patterns that are independent of  $p$  when  $p$  is sufficiently large. Partly for this reason, I have confined the treatment at first to Chevalley groups and their twisted analogues in types A, D,  $E_6$ . A concluding chapter summarizes what can be said about the groups of Suzuki and Ree, which are defined only in characteristic 2 or 3.

Here is a quick overview of the main topics discussed:

- Standard characterizations of the finite groups of Lie type
- Simple modules, from the classical results of Curtis and Steinberg to Lusztig’s Conjecture
- Blocks, projective modules, and Cartan invariants
- Extensions of simple modules, or more generally Loewy series of projectives

- Cohomology of the finite groups relative to algebraic group cohomology, leading to the study of support varieties
- Decomposition behavior of ordinary characters (and Deligne–Lusztig characters) modulo  $p$
- Special features of groups of type  $G_2$ , finite general linear groups, and the groups of Suzuki and Ree

Notation requires special attention, since there are parallel developments involving algebraic groups and finite groups. Various compromises are made in the literature, none entirely satisfactory. My own compromise is to use boldface letters such as  $\mathbf{G}$  for algebraic groups (whereas on a chalkboard one might underline or use script letters) and roman letters such as  $G$  for their finite counterparts. Typically  $G = \mathbf{G}^F$ , the fixed points under a Frobenius map  $F$ .

I am grateful to many colleagues who have provided valuable feedback on earlier drafts of the book. Among these must be singled out Jens Carsten Jantzen, whose contributions to the subject have been of fundamental importance.