

20 Clifford Theory

Clifford theory is a generic term for a series of results relating the representation / character theory of a given group G to that of a normal subgroup $N \trianglelefteq G$ through induction and restriction.

Definition 20.1 (Conjugate class function / inertia group)

Let $H \leq G$, let $\varphi \in \text{Cl}(H)$ and let $g \in G$.

(a) We define ${}^g\varphi \in \text{Cl}(gHg^{-1})$ to be the class function on gHg^{-1} defined by

$${}^g\varphi : gHg^{-1} \longrightarrow \mathbb{C}, x \mapsto \varphi(g^{-1}xg).$$

(b) The subgroup $\mathcal{I}_G(\varphi) := \{g \in G \mid {}^g\varphi = \varphi\} \leq G$ is called the **inertia group** of φ in G .

Exercise 20.2 (Exercise 26, Sheet 7)

With the notation of Definition 20.1, prove that:

(a) ${}^g\varphi$ is indeed a class function on gHg^{-1} ;

(b) $\mathcal{I}_G(\varphi) \leq G$ and $H \leq \mathcal{I}_G(\varphi) \leq N_G(H)$;

(c) for $g, h \in G$ we have ${}^g\varphi = {}^h\varphi \Leftrightarrow h^{-1}g \in \mathcal{I}_G(\varphi) \Leftrightarrow g\mathcal{I}_G(\varphi) = h\mathcal{I}_G(\varphi)$;

(d) if $\rho : H \longrightarrow \text{GL}(V)$ is a \mathbb{C} -representation of H with character χ , then

$${}^g\rho : gHg^{-1} \longrightarrow \text{GL}(V), x \mapsto \rho(g^{-1}xg)$$

is \mathbb{C} -representation of gHg^{-1} with character ${}^g\chi$ and ${}^g\chi(1) = \chi(1)$;

(e) if $J \leq H$ then ${}^g(\varphi \downarrow_J^H) = ({}^g\varphi) \downarrow_{gJg^{-1}}^{gHg^{-1}}$.

Lemma 20.3

(a) If $H \leq G$, $\varphi, \psi \in \text{Cl}(H)$ and $g \in G$, then $\langle {}^g\varphi, {}^g\psi \rangle_{gHg^{-1}} = \langle \varphi, \psi \rangle_H$.

(b) If $N \trianglelefteq G$ and $g \in G$, then we have $\psi \in \text{Irr}(N) \Leftrightarrow {}^g\psi \in \text{Irr}(N)$.

(c) If $N \trianglelefteq G$ and ψ is a character of N , then $(\psi \uparrow_N^G) \downarrow_N^G = |\mathcal{I}_G(\psi) : N| \sum_{g \in [G/\mathcal{I}_G(\psi)]} {}^g\psi$.

Proof: (a) Clearly

$$\begin{aligned} \langle {}^g\varphi, {}^g\psi \rangle_{gHg^{-1}} &= \frac{1}{|gHg^{-1}|} \sum_{x \in gHg^{-1}} {}^g\varphi(x) \overline{{}^g\psi(x)} \\ &= \frac{1}{|H|} \sum_{x \in gHg^{-1}} \varphi(g^{-1}xg) \overline{\psi(g^{-1}xg)} \\ &\stackrel{y := g^{-1}xg}{=} \frac{1}{|H|} \sum_{y \in H} \varphi(y) \overline{\psi(y)} = \langle \varphi, \psi \rangle_H. \end{aligned}$$

- (b) As $N \trianglelefteq G$, $gNg^{-1} = N$. Thus, if $\psi \in \text{Irr}(N)$, then on the one hand ${}^g\psi$ is also a character of N by Exercise 20.2(d), and on the other hand it follows from (a) that $\langle {}^g\psi, {}^g\psi \rangle_N = \langle \psi, \psi \rangle_N = 1$. Hence ${}^g\psi$ is an irreducible character of N . Therefore, if ${}^g\psi \in \text{Irr}(N)$, then $\psi = g^{-1}({}^g\psi) \in \text{Irr}(N)$, as required.
- (c) If $n \in N$ then so does $g^{-1}ng \forall g \in G$, hence

$$\psi \uparrow_N^G \downarrow_N^G(n) = \psi \uparrow_N^G(n) = \frac{1}{|N|} \sum_{g \in G} \psi(g^{-1}ng) = \frac{1}{|N|} \sum_{g \in G} {}^g\psi(n) = \frac{|\mathcal{I}_G(\psi)|}{|N|} \sum_{g \in [G/\mathcal{I}_G(\psi)]} {}^g\psi(n). \quad \blacksquare$$

Notation 20.4

Given $N \trianglelefteq G$ and $\psi \in \text{Irr}(N)$, we set $\text{Irr}(G | \psi) := \{\chi \in \text{Irr}(G) \mid \langle \chi \downarrow_N^G, \psi \rangle_N \neq 0\}$.

Theorem 20.5 (CLIFFORD THEORY)

Let $N \trianglelefteq G$. Let $\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)$, $\psi \in \text{Irr}(N)$ and set $\mathcal{I} := \mathcal{I}_G(\psi)$. Then the following assertions hold.

- (a) If ψ is a constituent of $\chi \downarrow_N^G$, then

$$\chi \downarrow_N^G = e \sum_{g \in [G/\mathcal{I}_G(\psi)]} {}^g\psi,$$

where $e = \langle \chi \downarrow_N^G, \psi \rangle_N = \langle \chi, \psi \uparrow_N^G \rangle_G \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$ is called the **ramification index** of χ in N (or of ψ in G). In particular, all the constituents of $\chi \downarrow_N^G$ have the same degree.

- (b) Induction from $\mathcal{I} = \mathcal{I}_G(\psi)$ to G induces a bijection

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Ind}_{\mathcal{I}}^G: \text{Irr}(\mathcal{I} | \psi) &\longrightarrow \text{Irr}(G | \psi) \\ \eta &\longmapsto \eta \uparrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G \end{aligned}$$

preserving ramification indices, i.e. $\langle \eta \downarrow_N^{\mathcal{I}}, \psi \rangle_N = \langle \eta \uparrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G \downarrow_N^G, \psi \rangle_N = e$.

Proof:

- (a) By Frobenius reciprocity, $\langle \chi, \psi \uparrow_N^G \rangle_G = \langle \chi \downarrow_N^G, \psi \rangle_N \neq 0$. Thus χ is a constituent of $\psi \uparrow_N^G$ and therefore $\chi \downarrow_N^G$ is a constituent of $\psi \uparrow_N^G \downarrow_N^G$.
Now, if $\eta \in \text{Irr}(N)$ is an arbitrary constituent of $\chi \downarrow_N^G$ (i.e. $\langle \chi \downarrow_N^G, \eta \rangle_N \neq 0$) then by the above, we have

$$\langle \psi \uparrow_N^G \downarrow_N^G, \eta \rangle_N \geq \langle \chi \downarrow_N^G, \eta \rangle_N > 0.$$

Moreover, by Lemma 20.3(c) the constituents of $\psi \uparrow_N^G \downarrow_N^G$ are precisely $\{{}^g\psi \mid g \in [G/\mathcal{I}_G(\psi)]\}$. Hence η is G -conjugate to ψ . Furthermore, for every $g \in G$ we have

$$\begin{aligned} \langle \chi \downarrow_N^G, {}^g\psi \rangle_N &= \frac{1}{|N|} \sum_{h \in N} \chi(h) {}^g\psi(h^{-1}) &= \frac{1}{|N|} \sum_{h \in N} \chi(h) \psi(g^{-1}h^{-1}g) \\ &\stackrel{\chi \in \text{Cl}(G)}{=} \frac{1}{|N|} \sum_{h \in N} \chi(g^{-1}hg) \psi(g^{-1}h^{-1}g) \\ &\stackrel{s:=g^{-1}hg \in N}{=} \frac{1}{|N|} \sum_{s \in N} \chi(s) \psi(s^{-1}) = \langle \chi \downarrow_N^G, \psi \rangle_N = e. \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, every G -conjugate ${}^g\psi$ ($g \in [G/\mathcal{I}_G(\psi)]$) of ψ occurs as a constituent of $\chi \downarrow_N^G$ with the same multiplicity e . The claim about the degrees is then clear as ${}^g\psi(1) = \psi(1) \forall g \in G$.

(b) **Claim 1:** $\eta \in \text{Irr}(\mathcal{I} \mid \psi) \Rightarrow \eta \uparrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G \in \text{Irr}(G \mid \psi)$.

Since $\mathcal{I} = \mathcal{I}_{\mathcal{I}}(\psi)$, (a) implies that $\eta \downarrow_N^{\mathcal{I}} = e' \psi$ with $e' = \langle \eta \downarrow_N^{\mathcal{I}}, \psi \rangle_N = \frac{\eta(1)}{\psi(1)} > 0$. Now, let $\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)$ be a constituent of $\eta \uparrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G$. By Frobenius Reciprocity we have

$$0 \neq \langle \chi, \eta \uparrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G \rangle_G = \langle \chi \downarrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G, \eta \rangle_{\mathcal{I}}.$$

It follows that $\eta \downarrow_N^{\mathcal{I}}$ is a constituent of $\chi \downarrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G \downarrow_N^{\mathcal{I}}$ and

$$e := \langle \chi \downarrow_N^G, \psi \rangle_N = \langle \chi \downarrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G \downarrow_N^{\mathcal{I}}, \psi \rangle_N \geq \langle \eta \downarrow_N^{\mathcal{I}}, \psi \rangle_N = e' > 0,$$

hence $\chi \in \text{Irr}(G \mid \psi)$. Moreover, by (a) we have $e = \langle \chi \downarrow_N^G, {}^g \psi \rangle_N \geq e'$ for each $g \in G$. Therefore,

$$\chi(1) = e \sum_{g \in [G/\mathcal{I}]} {}^g \psi(1) \stackrel{(a)}{=} e |G : \mathcal{I}| \psi(1) \geq e' |G : \mathcal{I}| \psi(1) = |G : \mathcal{I}| \eta(1) = \eta \uparrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G(1) \geq \chi(1).$$

Thus $e = e'$, $\eta \uparrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G = \chi \in \text{Irr}(G)$, and therefore $\eta \uparrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G \in \text{Irr}(G \mid \psi)$.

Claim 2: $\chi \in \text{Irr}(G \mid \psi) \Rightarrow \exists! \eta \in \text{Irr}(\mathcal{I} \mid \psi)$ such that $\langle \chi \downarrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G, \eta \rangle_{\mathcal{I}} \neq 0$.

Again by (a), as $\chi \in \text{Irr}(G \mid \psi)$, we have $\chi \downarrow_N^G = e \sum_{g \in [G/\mathcal{I}]} {}^g \psi$, where $e = \langle \chi \downarrow_N^G, \psi \rangle_N \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$. Therefore, there exists $\eta \in \text{Irr}(\mathcal{I})$ such that

$$\langle \chi \downarrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G, \eta \rangle_{\mathcal{I}} \neq 0 \neq \langle \eta \downarrow_N^{\mathcal{I}}, \psi \rangle_N$$

because $\chi \downarrow_N^G = \chi \downarrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G \downarrow_N^{\mathcal{I}}$, so in particular $\eta \in \text{Irr}(\mathcal{I} \mid \psi)$. Hence existence holds and it remains to see that uniqueness holds. Again by Frobenius reciprocity we have $0 \neq \langle \chi, \eta \uparrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G \rangle_G$. By Claim 1 this forces $\chi = \eta \uparrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G$ and $\eta \downarrow_N^{\mathcal{I}} = e \psi$, so e is also the ramification index of ψ in \mathcal{I} .

Now, write $\chi \downarrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G = \sum_{\lambda \in \text{Irr}(\mathcal{I})} a_{\lambda} \lambda = \sum_{\lambda \neq \eta} a_{\lambda} \lambda + a_{\eta} \eta$ with $a_{\lambda} \geq 0$ for each $\lambda \in \text{Irr}(\mathcal{I})$ and $a_{\eta} > 0$. It follows that

$$(a_{\eta} - 1) \eta \downarrow_N^{\mathcal{I}} + \sum_{\lambda \neq \eta} a_{\lambda} \lambda \downarrow_N^{\mathcal{I}} = \underbrace{\chi \downarrow_N^G}_{= e \sum_{g \in [G/\mathcal{I}]} {}^g \psi} - \underbrace{\eta \downarrow_N^{\mathcal{I}}}_{= e \psi} = e \sum_{g \in [G/\mathcal{I}] \setminus [1]} {}^g \psi.$$

Since ψ does not occur in this sum, but occurs in $\eta \downarrow_N^{\mathcal{I}}$, the only possibility is $a_{\eta} = 1$ and $\lambda \notin \text{Irr}(\mathcal{I} \mid \psi)$ for $\lambda \neq \eta$. Thus η is uniquely determined as the only constituent of $\chi \downarrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G$ in $\text{Irr}(\mathcal{I} \mid \psi)$.

Finally, Claims 1 and 2 prove that $\text{Ind}_{\mathcal{I}}^G : \text{Irr}(\mathcal{I} \mid \psi) \rightarrow \text{Irr}(G \mid \psi)$, $\eta \mapsto \eta \uparrow_{\mathcal{I}}^G$ is well-defined and bijective, and the proof of Claim 2 shows that the ramification indices are preserved. ■

Example 13 (Normal subgroups of index 2)

Let $N < G$ be a subgroup of index $|G : N| = 2$ ($\Rightarrow N \triangleleft G$) and let $\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)$, then either

- (1) $\chi \downarrow_N^G \in \text{Irr}(N)$, or
- (2) $\chi \downarrow_N^G = \psi + {}^g \psi$ for a $\psi \in \text{Irr}(N)$ and a $g \in G \setminus N$.

Indeed, let $\psi \in \text{Irr}(N)$ be a constituent of $\chi \downarrow_N^G$. Since $|G : N| = 2$, we have $\mathcal{I}_G(\psi) \in \{N, G\}$. Theorem 20.5 yields the following:

- If $\mathcal{I}_G(\psi) = N$ then $\text{Irr}(\mathcal{I}_G(\psi) \mid \psi) = \{\psi\}$ and $\psi \uparrow_N^G = \chi$, so that $e = 1$ and we get $\chi \downarrow_N^G = \psi + {}^g \psi$ for any $g \in G \setminus N$.
- If $\mathcal{I}_G(\psi) = G$ then $G/\mathcal{I}_G(\psi) = \{1\}$, so that

$$\chi \downarrow_N^G = e \psi \quad \text{with } e = \langle \chi \downarrow_N^G, \psi \rangle_N = \langle \chi, \psi \uparrow_N^G \rangle_G.$$

Moreover, by Lemma 20.3(c),

$$\psi \uparrow_N^G \downarrow_N^G = |\mathcal{I}_G(\psi) : N| \sum_{g \in G/\mathcal{I}_G(\psi)} {}^g\psi = 2\psi.$$

Hence

$$2\psi(1) = \psi \uparrow_N^G \downarrow_N^G(1) \geq \chi \downarrow_N^G(1) = \chi(1) = e\psi(1) \Rightarrow e \leq 2.$$

Were $e = 2$ then we would have $2\psi(1) = \psi \uparrow_N^G(1)$, hence $\chi = \psi \uparrow_N^G$ and thus

$$1 = \langle \chi, \psi \uparrow_N^G \rangle_G = \langle \chi \downarrow_N^G, \psi \rangle_N = e = 2$$

a contradiction. Whence $e = 1$, which implies that $\chi \downarrow_N^G \in \text{Irr}(N)$. Moreover, $\psi \uparrow_N^G = \chi + \chi'$ for some $\chi' \in \text{Irr}(G)$ such that $\chi' \neq \chi$.

The following consequence of Clifford's theorem due to N. Itô provides us with a generalisation of the fact that the degrees of the irreducible characters divide the order of the group.

Theorem 20.6 (Itô)

Let $A \leq G$ be an abelian subgroup of G and let $\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)$. Then the following assertions hold:

- (a) $\chi(1) \leq |G : A|$; and
- (b) if $A \trianglelefteq G$, then $\chi(1) \mid |G : A|$.

Proof:

- (a) Exercise 27, Sheet 7.
- (b) Let $\psi \in \text{Irr}(A)$ be a constituent of $\chi \downarrow_A^G$, so that in other words $\chi \in \text{Irr}(G \mid \psi)$. By Theorem 20.5(b) there exists $\eta \in \text{Irr}(\mathcal{I}_G(\psi) \mid \psi)$ such that $\chi = \eta \uparrow_{\mathcal{I}_G(\psi)}^G$ and $\eta \downarrow_A^{\mathcal{I}_G(\psi)} = e\psi$ (proof of Claim 2). Now, as A is abelian, all the irreducible characters of A have degree 1 and for each $x \in A$, $\psi(x)$ is an $o(x)$ -th root of unity. Hence $\forall x \in A$ we have

$$|\eta(x)| = |\eta \downarrow_A^{\mathcal{I}_G(\psi)}(x)| = |e\psi(x)| = e|\psi(x)| = e \cdot 1 = e = \eta(1) \Rightarrow A \subseteq Z(\eta).$$

Therefore, by Remark 17.5, we have

$$\eta(1) \mid |\mathcal{I}_G(\psi) : Z(\eta)| \mid |\mathcal{I}_G(\psi) : A|$$

and since $\chi = \eta \uparrow_{\mathcal{I}_G(\psi)}^G$ it follows that

$$\chi(1) = |G : \mathcal{I}_G(\psi)|\eta(1) \mid |G : \mathcal{I}_G(\psi)| \cdot |\mathcal{I}_G(\psi) : A| = |G : A|.$$



21 The Theorem of Gallagher

In the context of Clifford theory (Theorem 20.5) we understand that irreducibility of characters is preserved by induction from $\mathcal{I}_G(\psi)$ to G . Thus we need to understand induction of characters from N to $\mathcal{I}_G(\psi)$, in particular what if $G = \mathcal{I}_G(\psi)$. What can be said about $\text{Irr}(G \mid \psi)$?

Lemma 21.1

Let $N \trianglelefteq G$ and let $\psi \in \text{Irr}(N)$ such that $\mathcal{I}_G(\psi) = G$. Then

$$\psi \uparrow_N^G = \sum_{\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)} e_\chi \chi$$

where $e_\chi := \langle \chi \downarrow_N^G, \psi \rangle_N$ is the ramification index of χ in N ; in particular

$$\sum_{\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)} e_\chi^2 = |G : N|.$$

Proof: Write $\psi \uparrow_N^G = \sum_{\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)} a_\chi \chi$ with suitable $a_\chi = \langle \chi, \psi \uparrow_N^G \rangle_G$. By Frobenius reciprocity, $a_\chi \neq 0$ if and only if $\chi \in \text{Irr}(G | \psi)$. But by Theorem 20.5: if $\chi \in \text{Irr}(G | \psi)$, then $\chi \downarrow_N^G = e_\chi \psi$, so that

$$e_\chi = \langle \chi \downarrow_N^G, \psi \rangle_N = \langle \chi, \psi \uparrow_N^G \rangle_G = a_\chi.$$

Therefore,

$$|G : N| \psi(1) = \psi \uparrow_N^G(1) = \sum_{\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)} a_\chi \chi(1) = \sum_{\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)} e_\chi \chi(1) = \sum_{\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)} e_\chi^2 \psi(1) = \psi(1) \sum_{\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)} e_\chi^2$$

and it follows that $|G : N| = \sum_{\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)} e_\chi^2$. ■

Therefore the multiplicities $\{e_\chi\}_{\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)}$ behave like the irreducible character degrees of the factor group G/N . This is not a coincidence in many cases.

Definition 21.2 (Extension of a character)

Let $N \trianglelefteq G$ and $\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)$ such that $\psi := \chi \downarrow_N^G$ is irreducible. Then we say that ψ extends to G , and χ is an extension of ψ .

Exercise 21.3 (Exercise 28, Sheet 7)

Let $N \trianglelefteq G$ and $\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)$. Prove that

$$\chi \downarrow_N^G \uparrow_N^G = \text{Inf}_{G/N}^G(\chi_{\text{reg}}) \cdot \chi,$$

where χ_{reg} is the regular character of G/N .

Theorem 21.4 (GALLAGHER)

Let $N \trianglelefteq G$ and let $\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)$ such that $\psi := \chi \downarrow_N^G \in \text{Irr}(N)$. Then

$$\psi \uparrow_N^G = \sum_{\lambda \in \text{Irr}(G/N)} \lambda(1) \text{Inf}_{G/N}^G(\lambda) \cdot \chi,$$

where the characters $\{\text{Inf}_{G/N}^G(\lambda) \cdot \chi \mid \lambda \in \text{Irr}(G/N)\}$ of G are pairwise distinct and irreducible.

Proof: By Exercise 21.3 we have $\psi \uparrow_N^G = \text{Inf}_{G/N}^G(\chi_{\text{reg}}) \cdot \chi$, where χ_{reg} denotes the regular character of G/N . Recall that by Theorem 10.3, $\chi_{\text{reg}} = \sum_{\lambda \in \text{Irr}(G/N)} \lambda(1) \lambda$, so that we have

$$\psi \uparrow_N^G = \sum_{\lambda \in \text{Irr}(G/N)} \lambda(1) \text{Inf}_{G/N}^G(\lambda) \cdot \chi.$$

Now, by Lemma 21.1, we have

$$\begin{aligned} |G : N| &= \sum_{\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)} e_{\chi}^2 = \langle \psi \uparrow_N^G, \psi \uparrow_N^G \rangle_G = \sum_{\lambda, \mu \in \text{Irr}(G/N)} \lambda(1)\mu(1) \langle \text{Inf}_{G/N}^G(\lambda) \cdot \chi, \text{Inf}_{G/N}^G(\mu) \cdot \chi \rangle_G \\ &\geq \sum_{\lambda \in \text{Irr}(G/N)} \lambda(1)^2 = |G : N|. \end{aligned}$$

Hence equality holds throughout. This proves that

$$\langle \text{Inf}_{G/N}^G(\lambda) \cdot \chi, \text{Inf}_{G/N}^G(\mu) \cdot \chi \rangle = \delta_{\lambda\mu}.$$

By Exercise 13.4, $\text{Inf}_{G/N}^G(\lambda) \cdot \chi$ are characters of G and hence the characters $\{\text{Inf}_{G/N}^G(\lambda) \cdot \chi \mid \lambda \in \text{Irr}(G/N)\}$ are irreducible and pairwise distinct, as claimed. ■

Therefore, given $\psi \in \text{Irr}(N)$ which extends to $\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)$, we get $\text{Inf}_{G/N}^G(\lambda) \cdot \chi$ ($\lambda \in \text{Irr}(G/N)$) as further irreducible characters.

Example 14

Let $N < G$ with $|G : N| = 2$ ($\Rightarrow N \trianglelefteq G$) and let $\psi \in \text{Irr}(N)$. We saw:

- if $\mathcal{I}_G(\psi) = N$ then $\psi \uparrow_N^G \in \text{Irr}(G)$;
- if $\mathcal{I}_G(\psi) = G$ then ψ extends to some $\chi \in \text{Irr}(G)$ and $\psi^G = \chi + \chi'$ with $\chi' \in \text{Irr}(G) \setminus \{\chi\}$. It follows that $\chi' = \chi \cdot \text{sign}$, where sign is the inflation of the sign character of $G/N \cong \mathfrak{S}_2$ to G .