

Characters, Derangements and Descents for the Hyperoctahedral Group

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Outline

- ① Motivation
- ② Character formulas and descents for the symmetric group
- ③ Character formulas and descents for the hyperoctahedral group
- ④ Examples and open problems

Much of the motivation comes from certain equidistribution results in enumerative combinatorics. We let

- \mathfrak{S}_n be the group of permutations of $[n] := \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$,
- \mathcal{D}_n be the set of derangements in \mathfrak{S}_n

and for $w \in \mathfrak{S}_n$

- $\text{inv}(w) := \#\{1 \leq i < j \leq n : w(i) > w(j)\}$ be the number of **inversions** of w ,
- $\text{maj}(w) := \sum_{j \in \text{Des}(w)} j$ be the **major index** of w ,
- $\text{Des}(w) := \{j \in [n-1] : w(j) > w(j+1)\}$ be the **descent set** of w .

Motivation

Theorem (Foata–Schützenberger, 1978)

For every $J \subseteq [n - 1]$ and $k \in \mathbb{N}$, the number

$$\# \{w \in \mathfrak{S}_n : \text{Des}(w^{-1}) = J, \text{inv}(w) = k\}$$

is equal to

$$\# \{w \in \mathfrak{S}_n : \text{Des}(w^{-1}) = J, \text{maj}(w) = k\}.$$

Motivation

Let \mathcal{E}_n be the set of permutations (**desarrangements**) $w \in \mathfrak{S}_n$ for which the minimum element of $[n] \setminus \text{Des}(w)$ is even.

Theorem (Désarménien–Wachs, 1988)

For every $J \subseteq [n - 1]$,

$$\#\{w \in \mathcal{D}_n : \text{Des}(w) = J\} = \#\{w \in \mathcal{E}_n : \text{Des}(w^{-1}) = J\}.$$

Note: A B_n -analogue of the theorem of Foata–Schützenberger was given by **Adin–Brenti–Roichman (2006)** and another by **Foata–Han (2007)**.

Problem: Find a B_n -analogue of the theorem of Désarménien–Wachs.

Motivation

These two theorems are related to the representation theory of \mathfrak{S}_n . For instance, the original proof of Désarménien–Wachs showed that

$$\sum_{w \in \mathcal{D}_n} F_{n, \text{Des}(w)}(x) = \sum_{w \in \mathcal{E}_n} F_{n, \text{Des}(w^{-1})}(x)$$

and that the two handsides are in fact symmetric functions in x , where for $S \subseteq [n-1]$

$$F_{n,S}(x) = \sum_{\substack{i_1 \leq i_2 \leq \dots \leq i_n \\ j \in S \Rightarrow i_j < i_{j+1}}} x_{i_1} x_{i_2} \cdots x_{i_n}$$

is Gessel's **fundamental quasisymmetric function**.

Motivation

Moreover, [Reiner–Webb \(2004\)](#) found a natural \mathfrak{S}_n -representation whose Frobenius characteristic is the Désarménien–Wachs symmetric function. More precisely, they showed that

$$\text{ch}(\varepsilon_n \otimes \chi_n) = \sum_{w \in \mathcal{D}_n} F_{n, \text{Des}(w)}(x) = \sum_{w \in \mathcal{E}_n} F_{n, \text{Des}(w^{-1})}(x)$$

where ε_n is the sign character and

$$\chi_n = \sum_{k=0}^n (-1)^{n-k} 1 \uparrow_{(\mathfrak{S}_1)^k \times \mathfrak{S}_{n-k}}^{\mathfrak{S}_n}$$

is the character of the natural \mathfrak{S}_n -representation on the top homology of the complex of injective words.

Motivation

The Foata–Schützenberger theorem has a representation-theoretic proof via the theory of character formulas of [Adin–Roichman \(2015\)](#), which we now explain.

Roichman's formula

Recall that the irreducible characters of the symmetric group \mathfrak{S}_n over \mathbb{C} can be indexed by partitions of n . Let

- χ^λ be the irreducible \mathfrak{S}_n -character associated to $\lambda \vdash n$,
- $\text{SYT}(\lambda)$ be the set of SYT of shape λ

and for $\lambda \vdash n$ and $Q \in \text{SYT}(\lambda)$ let

- $\text{Des}(Q)$ be the set of entries $j \in [n - 1]$ of Q for which $j + 1$ appears in a lower row than j .

Example: $\text{Des} \left(\begin{array}{|c|c|c|} \hline 1 & 2 & 5 \\ \hline 3 & 4 & \\ \hline 6 & & \\ \hline \end{array} \right) = \{2, 5\}$.

Roichman's formula

The concept of unimodality of a set with respect to a composition will be useful. Let

- $\alpha = (\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \dots, \alpha_k)$ be a composition of n ,
- $S(\alpha) = \{r_1, r_2, \dots, r_k\}$, where $r_i = \alpha_1 + \alpha_2 + \dots + \alpha_i$ and $r_0 = 0$,
- $J \subseteq [n - 1]$.

Consider the segments

$$\{r_{i-1} + 1, r_{i-1} + 2, \dots, r_i - 1\}, \quad 1 \leq i \leq k.$$

We call J **α -unimodal** if its intersection with each segment is a prefix, possibly empty, of that segment for all $1 \leq i \leq k$.

Roichman's formula

Example

Let $\alpha = (3, 1, 4, 2)$. Then $S(\alpha) = \{3, 4, 8, 10\}$, the segments are

$$\{1, 2\}, \emptyset, \{5, 6, 7\}, \{9\}$$

and hence $\{1, 3, 5, 6\}$ is α -unimodal but $\{1, 3, 5, 7\}$ is not.

Roichman's formula

Theorem (Roichman 1997, Fomin–Greene 1998)

For all partitions $\lambda \vdash n$ and compositions $\alpha \models n$,

$$\chi^\lambda(\alpha) = \sum_{Q \in \text{SYT}(\lambda)} \text{wt}_\alpha(\text{Des}(Q)),$$

where

$$\text{wt}_\alpha(J) := \begin{cases} 0, & \text{if } J \text{ is not } \alpha\text{-unimodal;} \\ (-1)^{|J \setminus S(\alpha)|}, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

for $J \subseteq [n - 1]$.

Fine sets for \mathfrak{S}_n

Definition (Adin–Roichman, 2015)

Let χ be an \mathfrak{S}_n -character. A *fine set* for χ is a set \mathcal{B} , endowed with a map $\text{Des} : \mathcal{B} \rightarrow 2^{[n-1]}$, such that

$$\chi(\alpha) = \sum_{b \in \mathcal{B}} \text{wt}_\alpha(\text{Des}(b))$$

for every composition α of n , where

$$\text{wt}_\alpha(J) = \begin{cases} 0, & \text{if } J \text{ is not } \alpha\text{-unimodal;} \\ (-1)^{|J \setminus S(\alpha)|}, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

for $J \subseteq [n-1]$.

Example

The set $\text{SYT}(\lambda)$, endowed with the standard descent map

$$\text{Des} : \text{SYT}(\lambda) \rightarrow 2^{[n-1]},$$

is a fine set for χ^λ for every $\lambda \vdash n$.

Fine sets for \mathfrak{S}_n

Other examples of \mathfrak{S}_n -characters and corresponding combinatorial objects giving rise to fine sets include:

- **Gelfand models** and involutions in \mathfrak{S}_n ,
- coinvariant algebra characters and permutations of given inversion number,
- **Lie** characters and conjugacy classes (**Gessel-Reutenauer, 1993**),
- characters of **Specht modules** of zigzag shapes and inverse descent classes,
- certain induced characters and k -roots of the identity,
- characters induced from exterior algebras and arc permutations (**Elizalde-Roichman, 2014**).

Fine sets for \mathfrak{S}_n

Theorem (Adin–Roichman, 2015)

Given a fine set \mathcal{B} for an \mathfrak{S}_n -character χ , the distribution of Des over \mathcal{B} is uniquely determined by χ .

Corollary (Adin–Roichman, 2015)

*The theorem of Foata–Schützenberger can be derived from (and is in fact equivalent to) one of **Lusztig** and **Stanley** on the representation of \mathfrak{S}_n on its coinvariant algebra.*

Fine sets for \mathfrak{S}_n

Recall that the Frobenius characteristic of a class function $\chi : \mathfrak{S}_n \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ is defined by setting

$$\text{ch}(\chi^\lambda) = s_\lambda(x)$$

and extending by linearity.

Theorem (Adin–A–Elizalde–Roichman)

A set \mathcal{B} , endowed with a map $\text{Des} : \mathcal{B} \rightarrow 2^{[n-1]}$, is fine for a character χ of \mathfrak{S}_n if and only if

$$\text{ch}(\chi) = \sum_{b \in \mathcal{B}} F_{n, \text{Des}(b)}(x).$$

In particular, the distribution of Des over \mathcal{B} is uniquely determined by χ .

Fine sets for \mathfrak{S}_n

For instance, from the formula

$$\text{ch}(\varepsilon_n \otimes \chi_n) = \sum_{w \in \mathcal{D}_n} F_{n, \text{Des}(w)}(x) = \sum_{w \in \mathcal{E}_n} F_{n, \text{Des}(w^{-1})}(x)$$

of Désarménien–Wachs and Reiner–Webb we deduce:

Corollary

The sets \mathcal{D}_n and $\{w^{-1} : w \in \mathcal{E}_n\}$ are both fine for the sign twist of the Reiner–Webb character χ_n . In particular,

$$\chi_n(\alpha) = \varepsilon_\alpha \sum_{w \in \mathcal{D}_n} \text{wt}_\alpha(w)$$

for every composition α of n .

B_n -analogue of Roichman's formula

Our goal is to extend this theory to the **group of signed permutations**

$$B_n = \{w = (w(1), w(2), \dots, w(n)) : |w| \in \mathfrak{S}_n\}.$$

Note: To find the right B_n -analogue of the concept of fine set, we need to find the right B_n -analogue of Roichman's formula for the irreducible characters of \mathfrak{S}_n .

B_n -analogue of Roichman's formula

Recall that the irreducible characters of the hyperoctahedral group B_n over \mathbb{C} can be indexed by **bipartitions** of n , meaning pairs (λ, μ) of partitions of total sum n . We need to replace:

- partitions $\lambda \vdash n$ by bipartitions $(\lambda, \mu) \vdash n$,
- SYT of shape λ by SY bitableaux (Q^+, Q^-) of shape (λ, μ) ,

$$\left(\begin{array}{|c|c|c|} \hline 2 & 3 & 5 \\ \hline 4 & 9 & \\ \hline \end{array}, \begin{array}{|c|c|} \hline 1 & 6 \\ \hline 7 & 8 \\ \hline \end{array} \right)$$

- compositions of n and subsets of $[n - 1]$ by signed compositions of n and signed subsets of $[n]$,
- descent sets of SYT by signed descent sets of SY bitableaux,
- the weight of a set with respect to a composition by that of a signed set with respect to a signed composition.

B_n -analogue of Roichman's formula

A **signed subset** of $[n]$ is a pair (J, ε) where

- $J \subseteq [n]$ contains n and
- $\varepsilon : J \rightarrow \{-, +\}$ is a map.

Note: Suppose $J = \{s_1 < s_2 < \dots < s_k\}$, where $s_k = n$, and set $s_0 := 0$. The map ε can be extended to a sign vector $\varepsilon : [n] \rightarrow \{-, +\}^n$ by setting

$$\varepsilon(j) = \varepsilon(s_i)$$

for $s_{i-1} < j \leq s_i$ and $1 \leq i \leq k$.

Note: The signed subsets of $[n]$ are in one-to-one correspondence with the **signed compositions** of n , meaning compositions of n for which each part has been assigned the positive or the negative sign.

B_n -analogue of Roichman's formula

Example

Let $n = 9$ and $J = \{3, 5, 6, 8, 9\}$ with

$$\varepsilon(3) = -, \varepsilon(5) = \varepsilon(6) = +, \varepsilon(8) = -, \varepsilon(9) = +.$$

Then (J, ε) is a signed set with corresponding signed composition

$$(3^-, 2^+, 1^+, 2^-, 1^+)$$

and sign vector

$$(-, -, -, +, +, +, -, -, +).$$

B_n -analogue of Roichman's formula

The **signed** (or **colored**) **descent set** of $w = (w(1), w(2), \dots, w(n)) \in B_n$ is the pair (J, ε) defined by letting

$$\varepsilon_i = \begin{cases} +, & \text{if } w(i) > 0; \\ -, & \text{if } w(i) < 0 \end{cases}$$

and $J \subseteq [n]$ consist of n along with all $j \in [n-1]$ for which

- $w(j)$ and $w(j+1)$ have different signs, or
- $w(j) > w(j+1) > 0$, or
- $-w(j) > -w(j+1) > 0$.

B_n -analogue of Roichman's formula

Example

Let $n = 9$, $w = (-2, -5, -7, 3, 8, 1, -4, -9, 6)$. Then

$$\varepsilon = (-, -, -, +, +, +, -, -, +), \quad J = \{3, 5, 6, 8, 9\}$$

with corresponding signed composition

$$(3^-, 2^+, 1^+, 2^-, 1^+).$$

B_n -analogue of Roichman's formula

The **signed** (or **colored**) **descent set** (J, ε) of a SY bitableau (Q^+, Q^-) of shape $(\lambda, \mu) \vdash n$ is defined by letting

$$\varepsilon_i = \begin{cases} +, & \text{if } i \text{ appears in } Q^+; \\ -, & \text{if } i \text{ appears in } Q^- \end{cases}$$

and letting $J \subseteq [n]$ consist of n along with all $j \in [n-1]$ for which

- j appears in Q^+ and $j+1$ in Q^- , or
- j appears in Q^- and $j+1$ in Q^+ , or
- j and $j+1$ appear in the same tableau and $j+1$ appears in a lower row than j .

B_n -analogue of Roichman's formula

Example

Let $n = 9$ and $Q = (Q^+, Q^-)$, where

$$Q^+ = \begin{array}{|c|c|c|} \hline 2 & 3 & 5 \\ \hline 4 & 9 & \\ \hline \end{array}, \quad Q^- = \begin{array}{|c|c|} \hline 1 & 6 \\ \hline 7 & 8 \\ \hline \end{array}.$$

Then

$$\varepsilon = (-, +, +, +, +, -, -, -, +), \quad J = \{1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9\}$$

with corresponding signed composition

$$(1^-, 2^+, 2^+, 1^-, 2^-, 1^+).$$

B_n -analogue of Roichman's formula

We let

- $\Sigma^B(n)$ be the set of signed subsets of $[n]$,
- $\chi^{\lambda, \mu}$ be the irreducible B_n -character associated to $(\lambda, \mu) \vdash n$,
- $\text{SYT}(\lambda, \mu)$ be the set of SY bitableaux of shape $(\lambda, \mu) \vdash n$,
- $\text{cDes}(w)$ be the signed descent set of $w \in B_n$,
- $\text{cDes}(Q)$ be the signed descent set of $Q \in \text{SYT}(\lambda, \mu)$,

so that $\text{cDes}(w), \text{cDes}(Q) \in \Sigma^B(n)$.

B_n -analogue of Roichman's formula

Theorem (Adin–A–Elizalde–Roichman)

For all bipartitions $(\lambda, \mu) \vdash n$ and signed compositions γ of n ,

$$\chi^{\lambda, \mu}(\gamma) = \sum_{Q \in \text{SYT}(\lambda, \mu)} \text{wt}_{\gamma}(\text{cDes}(Q)),$$

where $\text{wt}_{\gamma}(\sigma)$ is defined in the sequel.

B_n -analogue of Roichman's formula

To define the weight function wt_γ let

- γ be a signed composition of n ,
- $S(\gamma) = S(|\gamma|) = \{r_1, r_2, \dots, r_k\}$ and set $r_0 = 0$,
- $\sigma = (J, \varepsilon) \in \Sigma^B(n)$

and consider again the segments $\{r_{i-1} + 1, r_{i-1} + 2, \dots, r_i - 1\}$ for $1 \leq i \leq k$. Then

$$\text{wt}_\gamma(\sigma) := \begin{cases} 0, & \text{if } J \text{ is not } |\gamma|\text{-unimodal;} \\ 0, & \text{if } \sigma \text{ assigns different signs to two} \\ & \text{elements of the same segment;} \\ (-1)^{|J \setminus S(\gamma)| + n_\gamma(\sigma)}, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

where $n_\gamma(\sigma)$ is the number of segments which are assigned the negative sign by both σ and γ .

Fine sets for B_n

Definition

Let χ be a B_n -character. A **fine set** for χ is a set \mathcal{B} , endowed with a map $\text{cDes} : \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \Sigma^{\mathcal{B}}(n)$, such that

$$\chi(\gamma) = \sum_{b \in \mathcal{B}} \text{wt}_{\gamma}(\text{cDes}(b))$$

for every signed composition γ of n .

Example

The set $\text{SYT}(\lambda, \mu)$, endowed with the standard signed descent map

$$\text{cDes} : \text{SYT}(\lambda, \mu) \rightarrow \Sigma^B(n),$$

is a fine set for $\chi^{\lambda, \mu}$ for every bipartition $(\lambda, \mu) \vdash n$.

Fine sets for B_n

The following signed analogues of the functions $F_{n,S}(x)$ were introduced and studied by [Poirier \(1998\)](#). For $\sigma = (J, \varepsilon) \in \Sigma^B(n)$ define

$$F_\sigma(x, y) = \sum_{\substack{1 \leq i_1 \leq i_2 \leq \dots \leq i_n \\ j \in \text{Des}(\sigma) \Rightarrow i_j < i_{j+1}}} z_{i_1} z_{i_2} \cdots z_{i_n}$$

where

$$z_i = \begin{cases} x_i, & \text{if } \varepsilon_i = +; \\ y_i, & \text{if } \varepsilon_i = - \end{cases}$$

and $\text{Des}(\sigma)$ stands for the set of elements of $J \cap [n-1]$ except for those of negative sign immediately followed by one of positive sign.

Fine sets for B_n

Example

For $n = 6$ and $J = \{2, 3, 5, 6\}$ with sign vector $\varepsilon = (+, +, -, -, -, +)$,

$$F_\sigma(x, y) = \sum_{1 \leq i_1 \leq i_2 < i_3 < i_4 \leq i_5 \leq i_6} x_{i_1} x_{i_2} y_{i_3} y_{i_4} y_{i_5} x_{i_6}.$$

Fine sets for B_n

Recall that the Frobenius characteristic of a class function $\chi : B_n \rightarrow \mathbb{C}$ is defined by setting

$$\text{ch}(\chi^{\lambda, \mu}) = s_\lambda(x)s_\mu(y)$$

and extending by linearity.

Theorem (Adin–A–Elizalde–Roichman)

A set \mathcal{B} , endowed with a map $\text{cDes} : \mathcal{B} \rightarrow \Sigma^{\mathcal{B}}(n)$, is fine for a character χ of B_n if and only if

$$\text{ch}(\chi) = \sum_{b \in \mathcal{B}} F_{\text{cDes}(b)}(x, y).$$

In particular, the distribution of cDes over \mathcal{B} is uniquely determined by χ .

Examples

Other examples of B_n -characters and corresponding combinatorial objects giving rise to fine sets include:

- **Gelfand models** and involutions in B_n ,
- coinvariant algebra characters and signed permutations of given flag inversion number,
- **Lie** characters and conjugacy classes (**Poirier, 1998**),
- signed **Reiner–Webb** characters and derangements in B_n ,
- certain induced characters and k -roots of the identity,
- characters induced from exterior algebras and signed arc permutations.

Coinvariant algebra and flag statistics

Let F be a field of characteristic zero. The group B_n acts on the polynomial ring $F[x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n]$ by permuting the variables and switching their signs. Let

- $P_n = F[x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n]$,
- I_n^B be the ideal of P_n generated by the B_n -invariant polynomials of zero constant term,
- P_n/I_n^B be the **coinvariant algebra** of B_n .

The algebra P_n/I_n^B is graded by degree and B_n acts on each homogeneous component. Let

- $\chi_{n,k}^B$ be the character of the B_n -action on the k th homogeneous component of P_n/I_n^B .

Coinvariant algebra and flag statistics

The **flag-major index** of $w \in B_n$ is defined as

$$\text{fmaj}(w) = 2 \sum_{i \in \text{Des}(w)} i + \text{neg}(w),$$

where $\text{neg}(w)$ is the number of $i \in [n]$ with $w(i) < 0$. The **flag-inversion number** of $w \in B_n$ is defined as

$$\text{finv}(w) = 2 \cdot \text{inv}(w) + \text{neg}(w),$$

where $\text{inv}(w)$ is the number of inversions of $w = (w(1), w(2), \dots, w(n))$ with respect to the total order

$$-1 < -2 < \dots < -n < 1 < 2 < \dots < n.$$

Coinvariant algebra and flag statistics

Theorem (Adin–A–Elizalde–Roichman)

The following subsets of B_n are both fine sets for the B_n -character $\chi_{n,k}^B$:

- $\{w \in B_n : \text{finv}(w) = k\}$,
- $\{w \in B_n : \text{fmaj}(w^{-1}) = k\}$.

Corollary (Foata–Han, 2007)

For every $\sigma \in \Sigma^B(n)$ and every $k \in \mathbb{N}$, the number

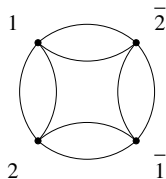
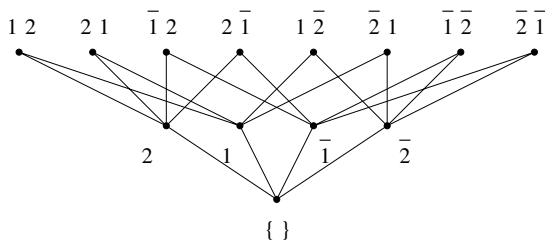
$$\#\{w \in B_n : \text{cDes}(w) = \sigma, \text{finv}(w) = k\}$$

is equal to

$$\#\{w \in B_n : \text{cDes}(w) = \sigma, \text{fmaj}(w^{-1}) = k\}.$$

Derangements and desarrangements

Let ψ_n the character of the natural B_n -action on the top homology of the complex of injective words of type B_n .



Equivalently,

$$\psi_n = \sum_{k=0}^n (-1)^{n-k} 1 \uparrow_{(\mathfrak{S}_1)^k \times B_{n-k}}^{B_n} .$$

Derangements and desarrangements

Let

- \mathcal{D}_n^B be the set of derangements in B_n ,
- \mathcal{E}_n^B be the set of $w \in B_n$ for which the maximum k with

$$w(1) > w(2) > \cdots > w(k) > 0$$

is even (possibly zero).

For instance,

- $\mathcal{D}_2^B = \{(-1, -2), (2, 1), (-2, 1), (2, -1), (-2, -1)\}$,
- $\mathcal{E}_2^B = \{(2, 1), (-1, 2), (-1, -2), (-2, 1), (-2, -1)\}$.

Derangements and desarrangements

Theorem (Adin–A–Elizalde–Roichman)

For every positive integer n ,

$$\omega_x \text{ch}(\psi_n) = \sum_{w \in \mathcal{D}_n^B} F_{\text{cDes}(w)}(x, y) = \sum_{w \in \mathcal{E}_n^B} F_{\text{cDes}(w^{-1})}(x, y).$$

In particular,

$$\# \{w \in \mathcal{D}_n^B : \text{cDes}(w) = \sigma\} = \# \{w \in \mathcal{E}_n^B : \text{cDes}(w^{-1}) = \sigma\}$$

for every $\sigma \in \Sigma^B(n)$.

Open problems

- Characterize fine subsets of \mathfrak{S}_n and B_n or, equivalently, subsets \mathcal{B} for which

$$\sum_{b \in \mathcal{B}} F_{n, \text{Des}(b)}(x) \quad \text{or} \quad \sum_{b \in \mathcal{B}} F_{c\text{Des}(b)}(x, y),$$

respectively, is a symmetric and Schur-nonnegative symmetric function.

- Find conceptual proofs of the two main results.
- Extend to other Coxeter groups and complex reflection groups.
- Extend to the Hecke algebras of \mathfrak{S}_n and B_n .
- Give a bijective proof of the last statement on the previous page.