group theory - week 16

Wigner 3- and 6-j coefficients

Georgia Tech PHYS-7143

Homework HW16 due Tuesday 2019-04-23 - optional, not graded

== show all your work for maximum credit,
== put labels, title, legends on any graphs
== acknowledge study group member, if collective effort
== if you are LaTeXing, here is the source code

Exercise 16.1 *Gravity tensors*, part (a)	2 points
Exercise 16.1 *Gravity tensors*, part (b)	4 points
Exercise 16.1 *Gravity tensors*, part (c)	1 point
Exercise 16.1 *Gravity tensors*, part (d)	2 points
Exercise 16.1 *Gravity tensors*, part (e)	3 points
Exercise 16.1 *Gravity tensors*, part (f)	4 points
Exercise 16.1 *Gravity tensors*, part (g)	3 points
Exercise 16.1 *Gravity tensors*, part (h)	6 points

Bonus points

Exercise 16.1 *Gravity tensors*, part (i)	4 points
Exercise 16.1 *Gravity tensors*, part (j)	10 points

Total of 20 points = 100 % score.

2019-04-23 Predrag Bonus lecture 31 Wigner 3- and 6-j coefficients

Excerpts from Predrag's monograph [4], fetch them here:

Background reading on groups, vector spaces, tensors, invariant tensors, invariance groups (my advice is to start with Sect. 5.1 *Couplings and recouplings*, then backtrack to these introductory sections as needed):
Sect. 3.2 *Defining space, tensors, reps*,
Sect. 3.3 *Invariants*,
Sect. 4.1 *Birdtracks*,
Sect. 4.2 *Clebsch-Gordan coefficients*, and
Sect. 4.3 *Zero- and one-dimensional subspaces*.

The final result, discussed in the day's whiteboard-side chat, is invariant and highly elegant: any group-theoretical invariant quantity can be expressed in terms of Wigner 3- and 6-j coefficients:
Sect. 5.1 *Couplings and recouplings*,
Sect. 5.2 *Wigner $3n$-j coefficients*, and
Sect. 5.3 *Wigner-Eckart theorem*.

The rest is just bedside reading, nothing technical:
Sect. 4.8 *Irrelevancy of clebsches* and
Sect. 4.9 *A brief history of birdtracks*.

Course finale: *Indiana Jones* video (click here).

16.1 Literature

We noted in sect. 2.1 that a practically-minded physicist always has been, and continues to be resistant to gruppenpest. Apparently already in 1910 James Jeans wrote, while discussing what should a physics syllabus contain: "We may as well cut out the group theory. That is a subject that will never be of any use in physics."

Voit writes here about the "The Stormy Onset of Group Theory in the New Quantum Mechanics," citing Bonolis [2] *From the rise of the group concept to the stormy onset of group theory in the New Quantum Mechanics. A saga of the invariant characterization of physical objects, events and theories*.

Chayut [3] *From the periphery: the genesis of Eugene P. Wigner's application of group theory to quantum mechanics* traces the origins of Wigner's application of group theory to quantum physics to his early work as a chemical engineer, in chemistry and crystallography. "In the early 1920s, crystallography was the only discipline in which symmetry groups were routinely used. Wigner's early training in chemistry exposed him to conceptual tools which were absent from the pedagogy available to physicists for many years to come. This both enabled and pushed him to apply the group theoretic approach to quantum physics. It took many years for the approach first introduced by Wigner in the 1920s – and whose reception by the physicists was initially problematical

– to assume the pivotal place it now holds." Another historical exposition is given by Scholz [6] *Introducing groups into quantum theory (1926–1930)*.

So what is group theory good for? By identifying the symmetries, one can apply group theory to determine good quantum numbers which describe a physical state (i.e., the irreps). Group theory then says that many matrix elements vanish, or shows how are they related to others. While group theory does not determine the actual value of a matrix element of interest, it vastly simplifies its calculation.

The old fashioned atomic physics, fixated on $\mathrm{SO}(3)$ / $\mathrm{SU}(2)$, is too explicit, with too many bras and kets, too many square roots, too many deliriously complicated Clebsch-Gordan coefficients that you do not need, and way too many labels, way too explicit for you to notice that all of these are eventually summed over, resulting in a final answer much simpler than any of the intermediate steps.

I wrote my book [4] *Group Theory - Birdtracks, Lie's, and Exceptional Groups* to teach you how to compute everything you need to compute, without ever writing down a single explicit matrix element, or a single Clebsch-Gordan coefficient. There are two versions. There is a particle-physics / Feynman diagrams version that is index free, graphical and easy to use (at least for the low-dimensional irreps). The key insights are already in Wigner's book [8]: the content of symmetry is a set of invariant numbers that he calls $3n$-j's. Then there are various mathematical flavors (Weyl group on Cartan lattice, etc.), elegant, but perhaps too elegant to be computationally practical.

But it is nearly impossible to deprogram people from years of indoctrination in QM and EM classes. The professors have no time to learn new stuff, and students love manipulating their mu's and nu's.

References

[1] S. L. Adler, J. Lieberman, and Y. J. Ng, "Regularization of the stress-energy tensor for vector and scalar particles propagating in a general background metric", Ann. Phys. **106**, 279–321 (1977).

[2] L. Bonolis, "From the Rise of the Group Concept to the Stormy Onset of Group Theory in the New Quantum Mechanics. A saga of the invariant characterization of physical objects, events and theories", Rivista Nuovo Cim. **27**, 1–110 (2005).

[3] M. Chayut, "From the periphery: the genesis of Eugene P. Wigner's application of group theory to quantum mechanics", Found. Chem. **3**, 55–78 (2001).

[4] P. Cvitanović, *Group Theory: Birdtracks, Lie's and Exceptional Groups* (Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton NJ, 2004).

[5] R. Penrose, "Applications of negative dimensional tensors", in *Combinatorial mathematics and its applications*, edited by D. J. J.A. Welsh (Academic, New York, 1971), pp. 221–244.

[6] E. Scholz, "Introducing groups into quantum theory (1926–1930)", Hist. Math. **33**, 440–490 (2006).

[7] S. Weinberg, *Gravitation and Cosmology: Principles and Applications of the General Theory of Relativity* (Wiley, New York, 1972).

[8] E. P. Wigner, *Group Theory and Its Application to the Quantum Mechanics of Atomic Spectra* (Academic, New York, 1931).

Exercises

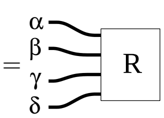
16.1. **Gravity tensors.** In this problem we will apply diagrammatic methods ("birdtracks") to construct and count the numbers of independent components of the "irreducible rank-four gravity curvature tensors." However, any notation that works for you is OK, as long as you obtain the same irreps and their dimensions. The goal of this exercise (longish, as much of it is the recapitulation of the material covered in the book) is to give you basic understanding for how Young tableaux work for groups other than $\mathrm{U}(n)$. We start with

Part 1 : **$\mathbf{U}(n)$ Young tableaux decomposition.**

(a) The Riemann-Christoffel curvature tensor of general relativity has the following symmetries (see, for example, Weinberg [7] or the Riemann curvature tensor wiki):

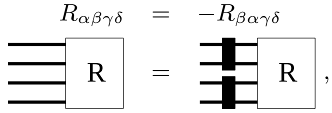
$$R_{\alpha\beta\gamma\delta} = -R_{\beta\alpha\gamma\delta} \qquad (16.1)$$
$$R_{\alpha\beta\gamma\delta} = R_{\gamma\delta\alpha\beta} \qquad (16.2)$$
$$R_{\alpha\beta\gamma\delta} + R_{\beta\gamma\alpha\delta} + R_{\gamma\alpha\beta\delta} = 0\,. \qquad (16.3)$$

Introducing a birdtrack notation for the Riemann tensor

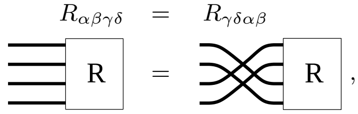
$R_{\alpha\beta\gamma\delta} =$  , (16.4)

check that we can state the above symmetries as

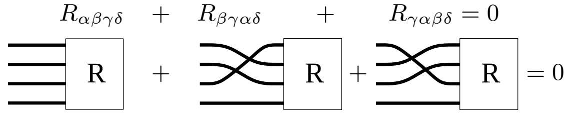
$R_{\alpha\beta\gamma\delta} = -R_{\beta\alpha\gamma\delta}$

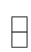
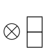
 (16.5)

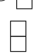
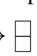
$R_{\alpha\beta\gamma\delta} = R_{\gamma\delta\alpha\beta}$

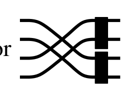
 (16.6)

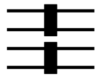
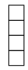
$R_{\alpha\beta\gamma\delta} + R_{\beta\gamma\alpha\delta} + R_{\gamma\alpha\beta\delta} = 0$

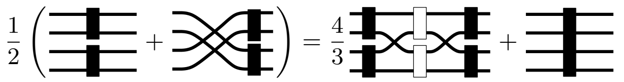
 (16.7)

The first condition says that R lies in the  $\otimes$  subspace.

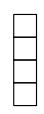
(b) The second condition says that R lies in the  $\leftrightarrow$  interchange-symmetric subspace.

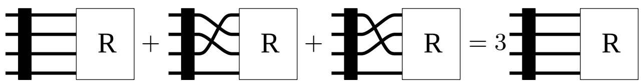
Use the characteristic equation for 

to split  into the  and  irreps:



(16.8)

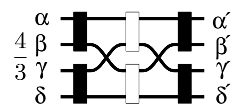
(c) Show that the third condition (16.7) says that R has no components in the  irrep:



$= 0\,.$ (16.9)

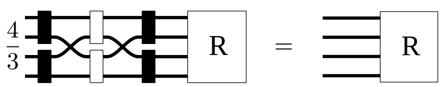
Hence, the symmetries of the Riemann tensor are summarized by the  irrep projection operator [5]:

$$(P_R)_{\alpha\beta\gamma\delta,}{}^{\delta'\gamma'\beta'\alpha'} \quad = \quad \tag{16.10}$$

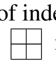


(d) Verify that the Riemann tensor is in the  subspace

$$(P_R R)_{\alpha\beta\gamma\delta} \quad = \quad (P_R)_{\alpha\beta\gamma\delta,}{}^{\delta'\gamma'\beta'\alpha'} R_{\alpha'\beta'\gamma'\delta'} = R_{\alpha\beta\gamma\delta}$$



(16.11)

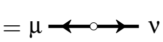
(e) Compute the number of independent components of the Riemann tensor $\mathbf{R}_{\alpha\beta\gamma\delta}$ by taking the trace of the  irrep projection operator:

$$d_R = \mathrm{tr}\,\mathbf{P}_R = \frac{n^2(n^2-1)}{12}\,. \tag{16.12}$$

Part 2 : **SO(n) Young tableaux decomposition**

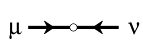
The Riemann tensor has the symmetries of the  irrep of U(n). However, gravity is also characterized by the symmetric tensor $g_{\alpha\beta}$, that reduces the symmetry to a local SO(n) invariance (more precisely SO($1, n-1$), but compactness is not important here). The extra invariants built from $g_{\alpha\beta}$'s decompose U(n) reps into sums of SO(n) reps. Orthogonal group SO(n) is the group of transformations that leaves invariant a symmetric quadratic form $(q, q) = g_{\mu\nu}q^\mu q^\nu$, with a primitive invariant rank-2 tensor:

$$g_{\mu\nu} = g_{\nu\mu} = \qquad\qquad \mu,\nu = 1, 2, \ldots, n\,. \tag{16.13}$$



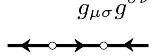
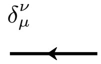
If (q, q) is an invariant, so is its complex conjugate $(q, q)^* = g^{\mu\nu}q_\mu q_\nu$, and

$$g^{\mu\nu} = g^{\nu\mu} = \tag{16.14}$$



is also an invariant tensor. The matrix $A_\mu^\nu = g_{\mu\sigma}g^{\sigma\nu}$ must be proportional to unity, as otherwise its characteristic equation would decompose the defining n-dimensional rep. A convenient normalization is

$$g_{\mu\sigma}g^{\sigma\nu} \quad = \quad \delta_\mu^\nu$$

 =  . (16.15)

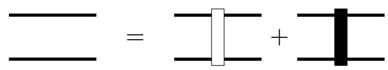
As the indices can be raised and lowered at will, nothing is gained by keeping the arrows. Our convention will be to perform all contractions with metric tensors with upper indices and omit the arrows and the open dots:

$$g^{\mu\nu} \equiv \mu \text{———} \nu \,. \tag{16.16}$$

The U(n) 2-index tensors can be decomposed into a sum of their symmetric and antisymmetric parts. Specializing to the subgroup SO(n), the rule is to lower all indices on all tensors, and the symmetrization projection operator is written as

$$\begin{aligned} S_{\mu\nu,\rho\sigma} &= g_{\rho\rho'} g_{\sigma\sigma'} S_{\mu\nu,}{}^{\rho'\sigma'} \\ &= \frac{1}{2}\left(g_{\mu\sigma} g_{\nu\rho} + g_{\mu\rho} g_{\nu\sigma}\right) \end{aligned}$$

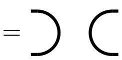
From now on, we drop all arrows and $g^{\mu\nu}$'s and write the decomposition into symmetric and antisymmetric parts as



$$g_{\mu\sigma} g_{\nu\rho} = \frac{1}{2}(g_{\mu\sigma} g_{\nu\rho} + g_{\mu\rho} g_{\nu\sigma}) + \frac{1}{2}(g_{\mu\sigma} g_{\nu\rho} - g_{\mu\rho} g_{\nu\sigma}) \,. \tag{16.17}$$

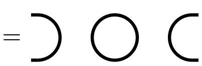
The new invariant tensor, specific to SO(n), is the index contraction:

$$\mathbf{T}_{\mu\nu,\rho\sigma} = g_{\mu\nu} g_{\rho\sigma} \,, \qquad \mathbf{T} = \tag{16.18}$$



Its characteristic equation

$$\mathbf{T}^2 = \qquad = n\mathbf{T} \tag{16.19}$$

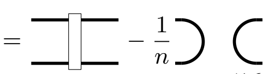


yields the trace and the traceless part projection operators. As $\mathbf{T}$ is symmetric, $S\mathbf{T} = \mathbf{T}$, only the symmetric subspace is reduced by this invariant.

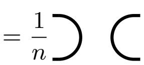
(f) Show that SO(n) 2-index tensors decompose into three irreps:

traceless symmetric:

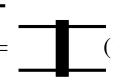
$$(P_2)_{\mu\nu,\rho\sigma} = \frac{1}{2}\left(g_{\mu\sigma} g_{\nu\rho} + g_{\mu\rho} g_{\nu\sigma}\right) - \frac{1}{n} g_{\mu\nu} g_{\rho\sigma} = \tag{16.20}$$



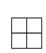
singlet: $$(P_1)_{\mu\nu,\rho\sigma} = \frac{1}{n} g_{\mu\nu} g_{\rho\sigma} = \tag{16.21}$$



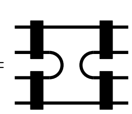
antisymmetric: $$(P_3)_{\mu\nu,\rho\sigma} = \frac{1}{2}\left(g_{\mu\sigma} g_{\nu\rho} - g_{\mu\rho} g_{\nu\sigma}\right) = \tag{16.22}$$



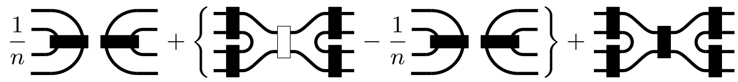
What are the dimensions of the three irreps?

(g) In the same spirit, the U(n) irrep  is decomposed by the SO(n) intermediate 2-index state invariant matrix

$$\mathbf{Q} = \tag{16.23}$$



Show that the intermediate 2-index subspace splits into three irreducible reps by (16.20) – (16.22):

$\mathbf{Q} \;=$ 

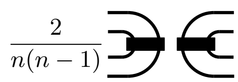
$$= \mathbf{Q}_0 + \mathbf{Q}_S + \mathbf{Q}_A\ . \qquad (16.24)$$

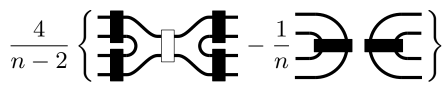
Show that the antisymmetric 2-index state does not contribute

$$\mathbf{P_R Q}_A = 0\ . \qquad (16.25)$$

(Hint: The Riemann tensor is symmetric under the interchange of index pairs.)

(h) Fix the normalization of the remaining two projection operators by computing $\mathbf{Q}_S^2, \mathbf{Q}_0^2$:

$\mathbf{P}_0 \;=$  (16.26)

$\mathbf{P}_S \;=$  (16.27)

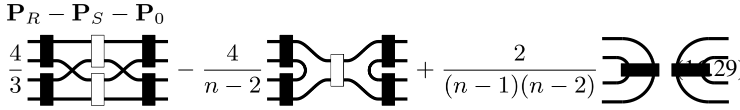
and compute their dimensions.
This completes the SO(n) reduction of the  U(n) irrep (16.11):

U(n)	$\to$	SO(n)				
	$\to$		+		+	$\circ$
$\mathbf{P}_R$	=	$\mathbf{P}_W$	+	$\mathbf{P}_S$	+	$\mathbf{P}_0$
$\frac{n^2(n^2-1)}{12}$	=	$\frac{(n+2)(n+1)n(n-3)}{12}$	+	$\frac{(n+2)(n-1)}{2}$	+	1

(16.28)

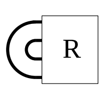
The projection operator for the SO(n) traceless  irrep is:

$$\mathbf{P}_W = \mathbf{P}_R - \mathbf{P}_S - \mathbf{P}_0$$

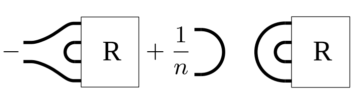
$\mathbf{P}_W \;=$  (16.29)

(i) The above three projection operators project out the standard, SO(n)-irreducible general relativity tensors:

Curvature scalar:

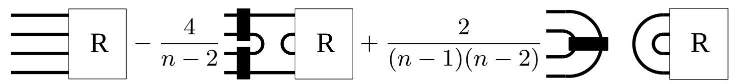
$R = -$  $= R^{\mu}{}_{\nu\mu}{}^{\nu}$ (16.30)

Traceless Ricci tensor:

$R_{\mu\nu} - \frac{1}{n} g_{\mu\nu} R = -$  (16.31)

Weyl tensor:

$$C_{\lambda\mu\nu\kappa} = (\mathbf{P}_W R)_{\lambda\mu\nu\kappa}$$



$$= R_{\lambda\mu\nu\kappa} + \frac{1}{n-2}\left(g_{\mu\nu}R_{\lambda\kappa} - g_{\lambda\nu}R_{\mu\kappa} - g_{\mu\kappa}R_{\lambda\nu} + g_{\lambda\kappa}R_{\mu\nu}\right) - \frac{1}{(n-1)(n-2)}(g_{\lambda\kappa}g_{\mu\nu} - g_{\lambda\nu}g_{\mu\kappa})R \, . \quad (16.32)$$

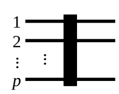
The numbers of independent components of these tensors are given by the dimensions of corresponding irreducible subspaces in (16.28).

What is the lowest dimension in which the Ricci tensor contributes? the Weyl tensor contributes? Show that in 2, respectively 3 dimensions, we have

$$\begin{aligned} n=2: \quad R_{\lambda\mu\nu\kappa} &= (P_0 R)_{\lambda\mu\nu\kappa} = \tfrac{1}{2}(g_{\lambda\nu}g_{\mu\kappa} - g_{\lambda\kappa}g_{\mu\nu})R \\ n=3: \quad &= g_{\lambda\nu}R_{\mu\kappa} - g_{\mu\nu}R_{\lambda\kappa} + g_{\mu\kappa}R_{\lambda\nu} - g_{\lambda\kappa}R_{\mu\nu} \\ &\quad -\tfrac{1}{2}(g_{\lambda\nu}g_{\mu\kappa} - g_{\lambda\kappa}g_{\mu\nu})R \quad . \end{aligned} \quad (16.33)$$

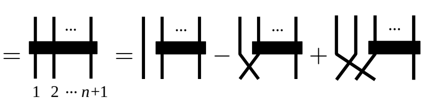
(j) The last example of this exercise is an application of birdtracks to general relativity index manipulations. The object is to find the characteristic equation for the Riemann tensor in *four dimensions*.

The antisymmetrization tensor $A_{a_1 a_2 \ldots,}{}^{b_p \ldots b_2 b_1}$ has nonvanishing components, only if all lower (or upper) indices differ from each other. If the defining dimension is smaller than the number of indices, the tensor A has no nonvanishing components:



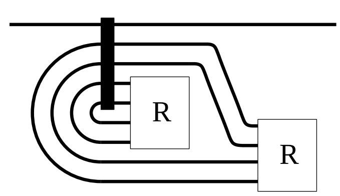
$$= 0 \qquad \text{if } p > n \, . \quad (16.34)$$

This identity implies that for $p > n$, not all combinations of p Kronecker deltas are linearly independent. A typical relation is the $p = n+1$ case

$0 =$ 

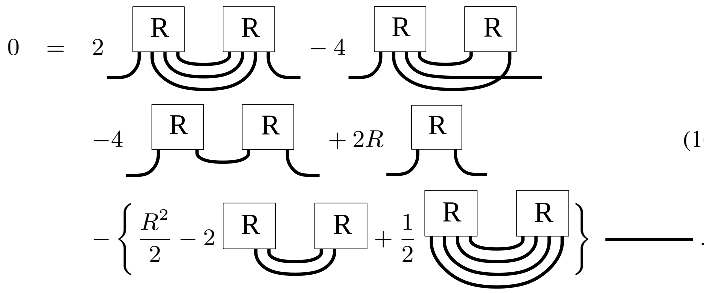
$- \ldots \, . \quad (16.35)$

Contract (16.34) with two Riemann tensors:

$0 =$ 

$, \quad (16.36)$

and obtain the characteristic equation by expanding with (16.35):



(16.37)

This identity has been used by Adler *et al.*, eq. (E2) in ref. [1].