

# LOGARITHMIC CONCAVITY OF SCHUR AND RELATED POLYNOMIALS

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ABSTRACT. We show that normalized Schur polynomials are strongly log-concave. As a consequence, we obtain Okounkov’s log-concavity conjecture for Littlewood–Richardson coefficients in the special case of Kostka numbers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Schur polynomials are the characters of finite-dimensional irreducible polynomial representations of the general linear group  $GL_m(\mathbb{C})$ . Combinatorially, the *Schur polynomial* of a partition  $\lambda$  in  $m$  variables is the generating function

$$s_\lambda(x_1, \dots, x_m) = \sum_{\mathbb{T}} x^{\mu(\mathbb{T})}, \quad x^{\mu(\mathbb{T})} = x_1^{\mu_1(\mathbb{T})} \dots x_m^{\mu_m(\mathbb{T})},$$

where the sum is over all Young tableaux  $\mathbb{T}$  of shape  $\lambda$  with entries from  $[m]$ , and

$$\mu_i(\mathbb{T}) = \text{the number of } i\text{'s among the entries of } \mathbb{T}, \text{ for } i = 1, \dots, m.$$

Collecting Young tableaux of the same weight together, we get

$$s_\lambda(x_1, \dots, x_m) = \sum_{\mu} K_{\lambda\mu} x^\mu,$$

where  $K_{\lambda\mu}$  is the *Kostka number* counting Young tableaux of given shape  $\lambda$  and weight  $\mu$  [Kos82]. Correspondingly, the *Schur module*  $V(\lambda)$ , an irreducible representation of the general linear group with highest weight  $\lambda$ , has the weight space decomposition

$$V(\lambda) = \bigoplus_{\mu} V(\lambda)_{\mu} \text{ with } \dim V(\lambda)_{\mu} = K_{\lambda\mu}.$$

Schur polynomials were first studied by Cauchy [Cau15], who defined them as ratios of alternants. The connection to the representation theory of  $GL_m(\mathbb{C})$  was found by Schur [Sch01]. For a gentle introduction to these remarkable polynomials, and for all undefined terms, we refer to [Ful97].

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We prove several log-concavity properties of Schur polynomials. An operator that turns generating functions into exponential generating functions will play an important role. This linear operator, denoted  $N$ , is defined by the condition

$$N(x^\mu) = \frac{x^\mu}{\mu!} = \frac{x_1^{\mu_1}}{\mu_1!} \cdots \frac{x_m^{\mu_m}}{\mu_m!} \text{ for all } \mu \in \mathbb{N}^m.$$

Recall that a *partition* is a weakly decreasing sequence of nonnegative integers.

**Theorem 1** (Continuous). For any partition  $\lambda$ , the normalized Schur polynomial

$$N(s_\lambda(x_1, \dots, x_m)) = \sum_{\mu} K_{\lambda\mu} \frac{x^\mu}{\mu!}$$

is either identically zero or its logarithm is concave on the positive orthant  $\mathbb{R}_{>0}^m$ .

Let  $e_i$  be the  $i$ -th standard unit vector in  $\mathbb{N}^m$ . For  $\mu \in \mathbb{Z}^m$  and distinct  $i, j \in [m]$ , we set

$$\mu(i, j) = \mu + e_i - e_j.$$

We show that the sequence of weight multiplicities of  $V(\lambda)$  we encounter is always log-concave if we walk in the weight diagram along any root direction  $e_i - e_j$ .

**Theorem 2** (Discrete). For any partition  $\lambda$  and any  $\mu \in \mathbb{N}^m$ , we have

$$K_{\lambda\mu}^2 \geq K_{\lambda\mu(i,j)} K_{\lambda\mu(j,i)} \text{ for any } i, j \in [m].$$

For partitions  $\nu, \kappa, \lambda$ , the *Littlewood–Richardson coefficient*  $c_{\kappa\lambda}^\nu$  is given by the decomposition

$$V(\kappa) \otimes V(\lambda) \simeq \bigoplus_{\nu} V(\nu)^{\oplus c_{\kappa\lambda}^\nu}.$$

When the skew shape  $\nu/\kappa$  has at most one box in each column,  $c_{\kappa\lambda}^\nu$  is the Kostka number  $K_{\lambda\mu}$  where  $\mu = \nu - \kappa$ .<sup>1</sup> Conversely, for any partition  $\lambda$  and any  $\mu$ , we have

$$K_{\lambda\mu} = c_{\kappa\lambda}^\nu,$$

where  $\nu$  and  $\kappa$  are the partitions given by  $\nu_i = \sum_{j=i}^m \mu_j$  and  $\kappa_i = \sum_{j=i+1}^m \mu_j$ . Thus Theorem 2 verifies a special case of Okounkov's conjecture that the discrete function

$$(\nu, \kappa, \lambda) \longmapsto \log c_{\kappa\lambda}^\nu$$

<sup>1</sup>The equality between the Littlewood–Richardson coefficient and the Kostka number follows from Pieri's formula

$$h_{\mu_1}(x_1, \dots, x_m) \cdots h_{\mu_m}(x_1, \dots, x_m) = \sum_{\lambda} K_{\lambda\mu} s_{\lambda}(x_1, \dots, x_m),$$

where  $h_{\mu_i}$  is the  $\mu_i$ -th complete symmetric function [Ful97, Section 6.1]. When  $\nu/\kappa$  has at most one box in each column, the left-hand side is the skew Schur function  $s_{\nu/\kappa}$  given by the Littlewood–Richardson rule

$$s_{\nu/\kappa}(x_1, \dots, x_m) = \sum_{\lambda} c_{\kappa\lambda}^\nu s_{\lambda}(x_1, \dots, x_m).$$

is concave [Oko03, Conjecture 1].<sup>2</sup>

We point out that, for any fixed  $\lambda$ , the log-concavity of  $K_{\lambda\mu}$  along *any* direction is known to hold *asymptotically*. By [Hec82], the *Duistermaat–Heckman measure* obtained from the orbit of  $\lambda$  under  $SU_m$  is a translate of the weak limit

$$\lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} \frac{\sum_{\mu} K_{k\lambda\mu} \delta_{\frac{1}{k}\mu}}{\sum_{\mu} K_{k\lambda\mu}},$$

where  $\delta_{\frac{1}{k}\mu}$  is the point mass at  $\frac{1}{k}\mu$ . It follows from [Gra96] that, in this case, the density function of the Duistermaat–Heckman measure is log-concave.<sup>3</sup> We refer to [BGR04, Section 3] for an exposition.

In [BH19], the authors introduce Lorentzian polynomials as a generalization of volume polynomials in algebraic geometry and stable polynomials in optimization theory. See Section 2 for a brief introduction. We show that normalized Schur polynomials are Lorentzian in the sense of [BH19], and deduce Theorems 1 and 2 from the Lorentzian property.

**Theorem 3.** The normalized Schur polynomial  $N(s_{\lambda}(x_1, \dots, x_m))$  is Lorentzian for any  $\lambda$ .

Using general properties of Lorentzian polynomials [BH19, Section 6], Theorem 3 can be strengthened as follows.

**Corollary 4.** For any sequence of partitions  $\lambda^1, \dots, \lambda^{\ell}$  and any positive integers  $m_1, \dots, m_{\ell}$ ,

- (1) the normalized product of Schur polynomials  $N(\prod_{k=1}^{\ell} s_{\lambda^k}(x_1, \dots, x_{m_k}))$  is Lorentzian, and
- (2) the product of normalized Schur polynomials  $\prod_{k=1}^{\ell} N(s_{\lambda^k}(x_1, \dots, x_{m_k}))$  is Lorentzian.

We prove Theorem 3 in Section 2 in a more general context of Schubert polynomials, but the main idea is simple enough to be outlined here. The *volume polynomial* of an irreducible complex projective variety  $Y$ , with respect to a sequence of nef divisor classes<sup>4</sup>  $H = (H_1, \dots, H_m)$ , is the homogeneous polynomial

$$\text{vol}_{Y,H}(x_1, \dots, x_m) = \frac{1}{\dim Y!} \int_Y (x_1 H_1 + \dots + x_m H_m)^{\dim Y},$$

where the intersection product of  $Y$  is used to expand the integrand. Volume polynomials are prototypical examples of Lorentzian polynomials [BH19, Section 10]. To show that the normalized Schur polynomial of  $\lambda$  is a volume polynomial, we suppose that the partition  $\lambda$  has  $m$  parts,

<sup>2</sup> The conjecture holds in the “classical limit” [Oko03, Section 3], but the general case is refuted in [CDW07]:

$$c_{(3^n, 2^n, 1^n)(2^n, 1^n, 1^n)}^{(4^n, 3^n, 2^n, 1^n)} = \binom{n+2}{2} \text{ and } c_{(6^n, 4^n, 2^n)(4^n, 2^n, 2^n)}^{(8^n, 6^n, 4^n, 2^n)} = \binom{n+5}{5} \text{ for all } n.$$

The same example shows that the log-concavity conjecture for *parabolic Kostka numbers* [Kir04, Conjecture 6.17] also fails.

<sup>3</sup> Let  $(M, \omega)$  be symplectic manifold of dimension  $2n$  with an action of a torus  $T$  and a moment map  $M \rightarrow \mathfrak{t}^*$ . The Duistermaat–Heckman measure is the push-forward of the Liouville measure  $\int \omega^n$  via the moment map. In this generality, Karshon shows that the density function need not be log-concave [Kar96].

<sup>4</sup> A Cartier divisor on a complete variety  $Y$  is *nef* if it intersects every curve in  $Y$  nonnegatively. We refer to [Laz04] for a comprehensive introduction.

and choose a large integer  $\ell$  to get a complementary pair of partitions

$$\lambda = (\lambda_1, \lambda_2, \dots, \lambda_m) \text{ and } \kappa = (\ell, \ell, \dots, \ell) - (\lambda_m, \lambda_{m-1}, \dots, \lambda_1).$$

The Schur polynomials of the partitions  $\lambda$  and  $\kappa$  are related by the identity<sup>5</sup>

$$s_\kappa(x_1, \dots, x_m) = x_1^\ell \cdots x_m^\ell s_\lambda(x_1^{-1}, \dots, x_m^{-1}).$$

Let  $X$  be the product of projective spaces  $(\mathbb{P}^\ell)^m$ , and let  $Y$  be a subvariety of  $X$  whose fundamental class satisfies

$$[Y] = s_\kappa(H_1, \dots, H_m) \cap [X], \quad H_i = c_1(\pi_i^* \mathcal{O}(1)),$$

where  $\pi_i$  is the  $i$ -th projection. The volume polynomial of  $Y$  with respect to  $H$  is

$$\begin{aligned} \text{vol}_{Y,H}(x_1, \dots, x_m) &= \frac{1}{\dim Y!} \int_Y (x_1 H_1 + \cdots + x_m H_m)^{\dim Y} \\ &= \frac{1}{\dim Y!} \int_X s_\kappa(H_1, \dots, H_m) (x_1 H_1 + \cdots + x_m H_m)^{\dim Y} = N(s_\lambda(x_1, \dots, x_m)). \end{aligned}$$

Such  $Y$  can be constructed from a sequence of generic global sections  $\bigoplus_{i=1}^m \pi_i^* \mathcal{O}(1)$  as a degeneracy locus [Ful98, Example 14.3.2], completing the argument.

In Section 2, we introduce Lorentzian polynomials and prove the main results. In Section 3, we present evidence for the ubiquity of Lorentzian polynomials through a series of results and conjectures.

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## 2. NORMALIZED SCHUR POLYNOMIALS ARE LORENTZIAN

A subset  $J \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^n$  is *M-convex*<sup>6</sup> if, for any index  $i \in [n]$  and any  $\alpha \in J$  and  $\beta \in J$  whose  $i$ -th coordinates satisfy  $\alpha_i > \beta_i$ , there is an index  $j \in [n]$  satisfying

$$\alpha_j < \beta_j \text{ and } \alpha - e_i + e_j \in J \text{ and } \beta - e_j + e_i \in J.$$

The notion of M-convexity forms the foundation of discrete convex analysis [Mur03]. The convex hull of an M-convex set is a *generalized permutohedron* in the sense of [Pos09], and conversely, the set of integral points in an integral generalized permutohedron is an M-convex set [Mur03, Theorem 1.9].

Lorentzian polynomials connect discrete convex analysis with many log-concavity phenomena in combinatorics. See [AOGV18, ALOGV18a, ALOGV18b, BES19, BH18, BH19, EH19] for

<sup>5</sup>The dual of the Schur module  $V(\lambda)$  has highest weight  $(-\lambda_m, \dots, -\lambda_1)$ , see [FH91, Exercise 15.50].

<sup>6</sup>The letter M stands for *matroids*. When  $J \subseteq \mathbb{N}^n$  consists of zero-one vectors, the M-convexity of  $J$  is the symmetric basis exchange property of matroids [Whi86, Chapter 4].

recent applications. Here we briefly summarize the relevant results, and refer to [BH19] for details. We fix integers  $d$  and  $e = d - 2$ .

**Definition 5.** Let  $h(x_1, \dots, x_n)$  be a degree  $d$  homogeneous polynomial. We say that  $h$  is *strictly Lorentzian* if all the coefficients of  $h$  are positive and

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial x_{i_1}} \cdots \frac{\partial}{\partial x_{i_e}} h \text{ has the signature } (+, -, \dots, -) \text{ for any } i_1, \dots, i_e \in [n].$$

We say that  $h$  is *Lorentzian* if it satisfies any one of the following equivalent conditions.

(1) All the coefficients of  $h$  are nonnegative, the support of  $h$  is M-convex,<sup>7</sup> and

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial x_{i_1}} \cdots \frac{\partial}{\partial x_{i_e}} h \text{ has at most one positive eigenvalue for any } i_1, \dots, i_e \in [n].$$

(2) All the coefficients of  $h$  are nonnegative and, for any  $i_1, i_2, \dots \in [n]$  and any positive  $k$ ,

$$\text{the functions } h \text{ and } \frac{\partial}{\partial x_{i_1}} \cdots \frac{\partial}{\partial x_{i_k}} h \text{ are either identically zero or log-concave on } \mathbb{R}_{>0}^n.$$

(3) The polynomial  $h$  is a limit of strictly Lorentzian polynomials.

For example, a bivariate polynomial  $\sum_{k=0}^d a_k x_1^k x_2^{d-k}$  with nonnegative coefficients is Lorentzian if and only if the sequence  $a_0, \dots, a_d$  has no internal zeros<sup>8</sup> and

$$\frac{a_k^2}{\binom{d}{k}^2} \geq \frac{a_{k-1}}{\binom{d}{k-1}} \frac{a_{k+1}}{\binom{d}{k+1}} \text{ for all } 0 < k < d.$$

Polynomials satisfying the second condition of Definition 5, introduced by Gurvits in [Gur09], are called *strongly log-concave*. See [BH19, Section 5] for a proof of the equivalence of the three conditions in Definition 5.

We write  $\mathcal{S}_n$  for the group of permutations of  $[n]$ . The *Schubert polynomial*  $\mathfrak{S}_w(x_1, \dots, x_n)$  for  $w \in \mathcal{S}_n$  can be defined recursively as follows.

(1) If  $w = w_o$  is the longest permutation  $n \ n - 1 \ \cdots \ 2 \ 1$ , then

$$\mathfrak{S}_w(x_1, \dots, x_n) = x_1^{n-1} x_2^{n-2} \cdots x_{n-1}^1.$$

(2) If  $w(i) > w(i + 1)$  for some  $i$  and  $s_i$  is the adjacent transposition  $(i \ i + 1)$ , then

$$\mathfrak{S}_{ws_i}(x_1, \dots, x_n) = \partial_i \mathfrak{S}_w(x_1, \dots, x_n).$$

The symbol  $\partial_i$  stands for the  *$i$ -th divided difference operator* defined by the formula

$$\partial_i \mathfrak{S}_w = \frac{\mathfrak{S}_w - s_i \mathfrak{S}_w}{x_i - x_{i+1}},$$

<sup>7</sup>The *support* of a polynomial  $h(x_1, \dots, x_n)$  is the set of monomials appearing in  $h$ , viewed as a subset of  $\mathbb{N}^n$ .

<sup>8</sup>The sequence  $a_0, \dots, a_d$  has *no internal zeros* if  $a_{k_1} a_{k_3} \neq 0 \implies a_{k_2} \neq 0$  for all  $0 \leq k_1 < k_2 < k_3 \leq d$ .

where  $s_i \mathfrak{S}_w$  is the polynomial obtained from  $\mathfrak{S}_w$  by interchanging  $x_i$  and  $x_{i+1}$ . The divided difference operators satisfy the *braid relations*, and it follows that the Schubert polynomials are well-defined [MS05, Exercise 15.3]. For any  $w \in \mathcal{S}_n$ , we define

$$\mathfrak{S}_w^\vee = \mathbf{N}(x_1^{n-1} \cdots x_n^{n-1} \mathfrak{S}_w(x_1^{-1}, \dots, x_n^{-1})).$$

**Theorem 6.** The polynomial  $\mathfrak{S}_w^\vee(x_1, \dots, x_n)$  is Lorentzian for any  $w \in \mathcal{S}_n$ .

We conjecture that  $\mathbf{N}(\mathfrak{S}_w(x_1, \dots, x_n))$  is Lorentzian for any  $w \in \mathcal{S}_n$ , see Section 3.2.

*Proof.* Recall that the volume polynomial of a projective variety  $Y$ , with respect to a sequence of Cartier divisor classes  $\mathbf{H} = (H_1, \dots, H_n)$ , is the homogeneous polynomial

$$\text{vol}_{Y, \mathbf{H}}(x_1, \dots, x_n) = \frac{1}{\dim Y!} \int_Y (x_1 H_1 + \cdots + x_n H_n)^{\dim Y}.$$

By [BH19, Theorem 10.1], the volume polynomial is Lorentzian whenever  $Y$  is irreducible and  $H_1, \dots, H_n$  are nef. We show that  $\mathfrak{S}_w^\vee$  is a volume polynomial for suitable  $Y = Y_w$  and  $\mathbf{H}$ .

Let  $X$  be the product of projective spaces  $(\mathbb{P}^{n-1})^n$ . We write  $x_{i1}, x_{i2}, \dots, x_{in}$  for the homogeneous coordinates of the  $i$ -th projective space, and write  $\pi_i$  for the  $i$ -th projection. We consider the map between the rank  $n$  vector bundles

$$\Psi : \bigoplus_{i=1}^n \mathcal{O}_X \longrightarrow \bigoplus_{j=1}^n \pi_j^* \mathcal{O}(1), \quad \Psi(x) = (x_{ij})_{1 \leq i \leq n, 1 \leq j \leq n}.$$

For  $p, q \in [n]$ , the induced map  $\bigoplus_{i=1}^p \mathcal{O}_X \rightarrow \bigoplus_{j=1}^q \pi_j^* \mathcal{O}(1)$  will be denoted  $\Psi_{p \times q}$ . We set

$$Y = Y_w := \left\{ x \in X \mid \text{rank } \Psi_{p \times q}(x) \leq \text{rank } w_{p \times q} \text{ for all } p \text{ and } q \right\},$$

where  $w_{p \times q}$  is the  $p \times q$  partial permutation matrix with  $ij$ -entry 1 for  $w(i) = j$ . The locus  $Y$  is defined by all minors of  $(x_{ij})_{1 \leq i \leq p, 1 \leq j \leq q}$  of size one more than the rank of  $w_{p \times q}$  for all  $p$  and  $q$ .

By [Ful92, Theorem 8.2], the fundamental class of  $Y$  in the Chow group of  $X$  is given by

$$[Y] = \mathfrak{S}_w(H_1, \dots, H_n) \cap [X], \quad H_i = c_1(\pi_i^* \mathcal{O}(1)).$$

An alternative proof of the displayed formula, in a more refined setting, was obtained in [KM05] through an explicit degeneration of  $Y$ . An important point for us is that  $Y$  is irreducible of expected codimension  $\deg \mathfrak{S}_w$  [Ful92]. For an elementary proof that the multi-homogeneous ideal defining  $Y$  is prime, see [MS05, Section 16.4]. The volume polynomial of  $Y$  with respect to  $\mathbf{H} = (H_1, \dots, H_n)$  is

$$\begin{aligned} \text{vol}_{Y, \mathbf{H}}(x_1, \dots, x_n) &= \frac{1}{\dim Y!} \int_Y (x_1 H_1 + \cdots + x_n H_n)^{\dim Y} \\ &= \frac{1}{\dim Y!} \int_X \mathfrak{S}_w(H_1, \dots, H_n) (x_1 H_1 + \cdots + x_n H_n)^{\dim Y} = \mathfrak{S}_w^\vee(x_1, \dots, x_n). \end{aligned}$$

The second equality is the projection formula, and the third equality follows from

$$\int_X H^\mu = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } \mu = (n-1, \dots, n-1), \\ 0 & \text{if } \mu \neq (n-1, \dots, n-1). \end{cases}$$

Now the Lorentzian property of  $\mathfrak{S}_w^\vee$  can be deduced from [BH19, Theorem 10.1].  $\square$

**Lemma 7.** For any  $\mu \in \mathbb{N}^n$  and any polynomial  $f = f(x_1, \dots, x_n)$ ,

$N(f)$  is Lorentzian if and only if  $N(x^\mu f)$  is Lorentzian.

*Proof.* It is straightforward to check the equivalence using the first characterization of Lorentzian polynomials in Definition 5.  $\square$

*Proof of Theorem 3.* As in the introduction, given a partition  $\lambda$  with  $m$  parts, we choose a large integer  $\ell$  and write  $\kappa$  for the partition complementary to  $\lambda$  in the  $m \times \ell$  rectangle. Choose another large integer  $n$ , and let  $w$  be the unique element of  $\mathcal{S}_n$  satisfying

$$\kappa = (w(m) - m, \dots, w(1) - 1) \text{ and } w(m) > w(m+1) < w(m+2) < \dots < w(n).$$

The element  $w$  is the *Grassmannian permutation* in  $\mathcal{S}_n$  with the *Lehmer code*

$$L(w) = (w(1) - 1, \dots, w(m) - m, 0, \dots, 0) = (\kappa_m, \dots, \kappa_1, 0, \dots, 0).$$

The Schubert polynomial of  $w$  satisfies

$$\mathfrak{S}_w(x_1, \dots, x_n) = s_\kappa(x_1, \dots, x_m) = x_1^\ell \cdots x_m^\ell s_\lambda(x_1^{-1}, \dots, x_m^{-1}),$$

where the first equality is [Man01, Proposition 2.6.8] and the second equality is [FH91, Exercise 15.50]. By Theorem 6, we know that the polynomial  $\mathfrak{S}_w^\vee$  is Lorentzian, which is equal to

$$N(x_1^{n-1} \cdots x_n^{n-1} s_\kappa(x_1^{-1}, \dots, x_m^{-1})) = N(x^\mu s_\lambda(x_1, \dots, x_m)) \text{ for some } \mu \in \mathbb{N}^n.$$

Therefore, by Lemma 7, the Lorentzian property of  $\mathfrak{S}_w^\vee$  implies that of  $N(s_\lambda(x_1, \dots, x_m))$ .  $\square$

*Proofs of Theorems 1 and 2.* Since any nonzero Lorentzian polynomial is log-concave on the positive orthant, Theorem 1 follows from Theorem 3. For Theorem 2, we may suppose that

$$\mu_1 + \dots + \mu_m = \lambda_1 + \dots + \lambda_m \geq 2 \text{ and } \kappa := \mu - e_i - e_j \in \mathbb{N}^m.$$

We consider the quadratic form with at most one positive eigenvalue

$$\frac{\partial^{\kappa_1}}{\partial x_1^{\kappa_1}} \cdots \frac{\partial^{\kappa_m}}{\partial x_m^{\kappa_m}} N(s_\lambda(x_1, \dots, x_m)),$$

viewed as an  $m \times m$  symmetric matrix. Its  $2 \times 2$  principal submatrix corresponding to  $i$  and  $j$  is either identically zero or has exactly one positive eigenvalue, by Cauchy's interlacing theorem. The nonpositivity of the  $2 \times 2$  principal minor gives the conclusion

$$K_{\lambda\mu}^2 \geq K_{\lambda\mu(i,j)} K_{\lambda\mu(j,i)}. \quad \square$$

In general, if  $h$  is a Lorentzian polynomial, then its normalization  $N(h)$  is a Lorentzian polynomial [BH19, Section 6]. We record here that Schur polynomials, before the normalization, need not be Lorentzian.

*Example 8.* The Schur polynomial of the partition  $\lambda = (2, 0)$  in two variables is

$$s_\lambda(x_1, x_2) = x_1^2 + x_1x_2 + x_2^2.$$

The quadratic form has eigenvalues  $\frac{3}{2}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$ , and hence  $s_\lambda$  is not Lorentzian.

A polynomial  $f(x_1, \dots, x_m)$  is *stable* if  $f$  has no zeros in the product of  $m$  open upper half planes [Wag11]. Homogeneous stable polynomials with nonnegative coefficients are motivating examples of Lorentzian polynomials [BH19, Proposition 2.2]. We record here that normalized Schur polynomials, although Lorentzian, need not be stable.

*Example 9.* The normalized Schur polynomial of  $\lambda = (3, 1, 1, 1, 1)$  in five variables is

$$N(s_\lambda(x_1, \dots, x_5)) = \frac{1}{12} x_1 x_2 x_3 x_4 x_5 \left( \sum_{1 \leq i < j \leq 5} 3x_i x_j + \sum_{1 \leq i \leq 5} 2x_i^2 \right).$$

By [Wag11, Lemma 2.4], if  $N(s_\lambda)$  is stable, then so is its univariate specialization

$$N(s_\lambda)|_{x_2=x_3=x_4=x_5=1} = \frac{1}{6} x_1 (x_1^2 + 6x_1 + 13).$$

However, the displayed cubic has a pair of nonreal zeros, and hence  $N(s_\lambda)$  is not stable.

### 3. UBIQUITY OF LORENTZIAN POLYNOMIALS

**3.1. Multiplicities of highest weight modules.** We point to [Hum08] for background on representation theory of semisimple Lie algebras. Let  $\Lambda$  be the integral weight lattice of the Lie algebra  $\mathfrak{sl}_m(\mathbb{C})$ , let  $\varpi_1, \dots, \varpi_{m-1}$  be the fundamental weights, and let  $\rho$  be the sum of the fundamental weights. For  $\lambda \in \Lambda$ , we write  $V(\lambda)$  for the irreducible  $\mathfrak{sl}_m(\mathbb{C})$ -module with highest weight  $\lambda$ , and consider its decomposition into finite-dimensional weight spaces

$$V(\lambda) = \bigoplus_{\mu} V(\lambda)_\mu.$$

For  $\mu \in \Lambda$  and distinct  $i, j \in [m]$ , we write  $\mu(i, j)$  for the element  $\mu + e_i - e_j \in \Lambda$ .

**Conjecture 10.** For any  $\lambda \in \Lambda$  and any  $\mu \in \Lambda$ , we have

$$(\dim V(\lambda)_\mu)^2 \geq \dim V(\lambda)_{\mu(i,j)} \dim V(\lambda)_{\mu(j,i)} \text{ for any } i, j \in [m].$$

When  $\lambda$  is dominant, the dimension of the weight space  $V(\lambda)_\mu$  is the Kostka number  $K_{\lambda\mu}$ , and Theorem 2 shows that Conjecture 10 holds in this case. When  $\lambda$  is antidominant [Hum08, Section 4.4],  $V(\lambda)$  is the *Verma module*  $M(\lambda)$ , the universal highest weight module of highest weight  $\lambda$ . We note that Conjecture 10 holds in this case as well.

**Proposition 11.** For any  $\lambda \in \Lambda$  and any  $\mu \in \Lambda$ , we have

$$(\dim M(\lambda)_\mu)^2 \geq \dim M(\lambda)_{\mu(i,j)} \dim M(\lambda)_{\mu(j,i)} \text{ for any } i, j \in [m].$$

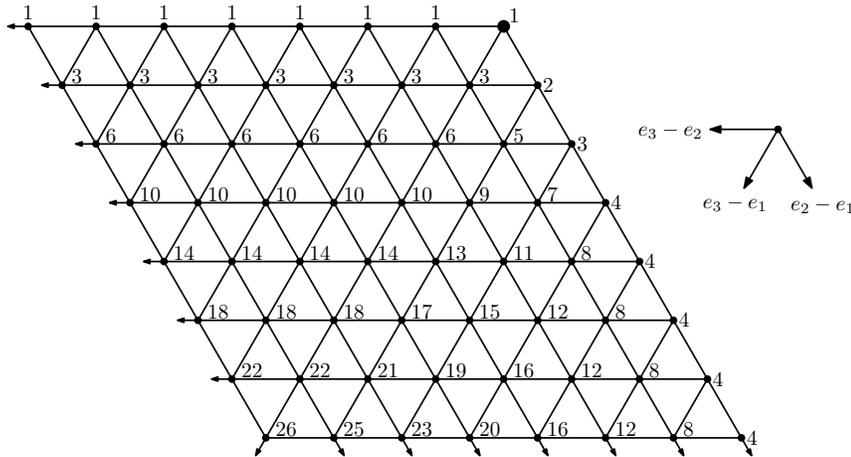
One may deduce Proposition 11 from its stronger variant Proposition 13 below.

*Alternative proof.* The Poincaré–Birkhoff–Witt theorem shows that the dimensions of the weight spaces are given by the Kostant partition function  $p$ :

$$\dim M(\lambda)_\mu = p(\mu - \lambda) = \text{number of ways to write } \mu - \lambda \text{ as a sum of negative roots.}$$

Lidskij’s volume formula for flow polytopes shows that all Kostant partition function evaluations are mixed volumes of Minkowski sums of polytopes [BV08]. The Alexandrov–Fenchel inequality for mixed volumes [Sch14, Section 7.3] yields the desired log-concavity property.  $\square$

The diagram below shows some of the weight multiplicities of the irreducible  $\mathfrak{sl}_4(\mathbb{C})$ -module with highest weight  $-2\varpi_1 - 3\varpi_2$ . We start from the highlighted vertex  $\varpi_1 - 6\varpi_2 - 3\varpi_3$  and walk along negative root directions in the hyperplane spanned by  $e_2 - e_1$  and  $e_3 - e_2$ . In the shown region, the sequence of weight multiplicities along any line is log-concave, as predicted by Conjecture 10.



We note, however, that a naive analog of Conjecture 10 does not hold for symplectic Lie algebras. In the weight diagram of the irreducible representation of  $\mathfrak{sp}_4(\mathbb{C})$  with highest weight  $2\varpi_2$  shown below, the weight multiplicities along the two diagonals of the square do not form log-concave sequences.<sup>9</sup>

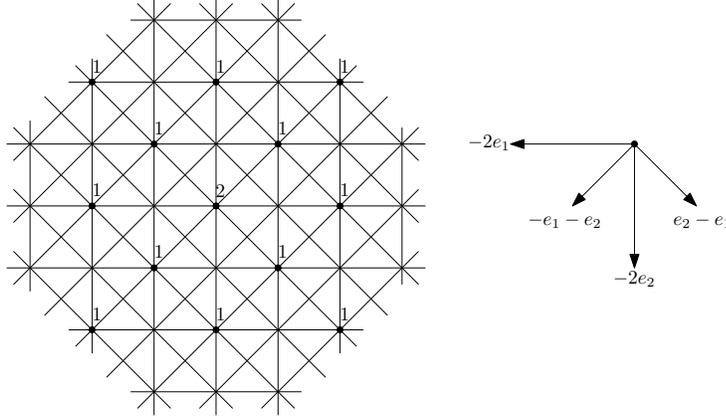
To strengthen Conjecture 10, we extend the normalization operator  $N$  to the space of Laurent generating functions by the formula

$$N\left(\sum_{\alpha \in \mathbb{Z}^n} c_\alpha x^\alpha\right) = \sum_{\alpha \in \mathbb{N}^n} c_\alpha \frac{x^\alpha}{\alpha!}.$$

For  $\lambda \in \Lambda$ , we introduce the Laurent generating functions

$$\text{ch}_\lambda(x_1, \dots, x_m) = \sum_{\mu \in \Lambda} \dim V(\lambda)_\mu x^{\mu - \lambda} \quad \text{and} \quad \underline{\text{ch}}_\lambda(x_1, \dots, x_m) = \sum_{\mu \in \Lambda} \dim M(\lambda)_\mu x^{\mu - \lambda}.$$

<sup>9</sup> Note that the Newton polytope of any homogeneous strongly log-concave polynomial is necessarily a generalized permutohedron of type  $A$ : Any edge of the Newton polytope should be parallel to  $e_i - e_j$  for some  $i$  and  $j$ .



Note that every monomial appearing in the shifted characters  $\text{ch}_\lambda$  and  $\underline{\text{ch}}_\lambda$  is a product of degree zero monomials of the form  $x_i x_j^{-1}$  with  $i > j$ .

We tested the following statement for  $\lambda = -w\rho - \rho$  and  $\delta = (1, \dots, 1)$ , for all permutations  $w$  in  $\mathcal{S}_m$  for  $m \leq 6$ .<sup>10</sup>

**Conjecture 12.** The polynomial  $N(x^\delta \text{ch}_\lambda(x_1, \dots, x_m))$  is Lorentzian for any  $\lambda \in \Lambda$  and  $\delta \in \mathbb{N}^m$ .

For example, when  $m = 4$  and  $\lambda = -w\rho - \rho$  for the transposition  $w = (1, 2)$ , we have

$$\begin{aligned} N(x_1 x_2 x_3 x_4 \text{ch}_\lambda(x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4)) &= \frac{4}{24} x_4^4 + \frac{2}{6} x_1 x_4^3 + \frac{2}{6} x_2 x_4^3 + \frac{4}{6} x_3 x_4^3 + \frac{3}{4} x_3^2 x_4^2 \\ &\quad + \frac{1}{2} x_1 x_2 x_4^2 + \frac{2}{2} x_1 x_3 x_4^2 + \frac{2}{2} x_2 x_3 x_4^2 + \frac{1}{6} x_3^3 x_4 + \frac{1}{2} x_1 x_3^2 x_4 + \frac{1}{2} x_2 x_3^2 x_4 + \frac{1}{1} x_1 x_2 x_3 x_4, \end{aligned}$$

which is a Lorentzian polynomial. In general, the homogeneous polynomial  $N(x^\delta \text{ch}_\lambda)$  can be computed using the Kazhdan–Lusztig theory [Hum08, Chapter 8].

Theorem 3 and Lemma 7 show that Conjecture 12 holds for any  $\delta$  when  $\lambda$  is dominant. We show that Conjecture 12 holds for any  $\delta$  when  $\lambda$  is antidominant.

**Proposition 13.** The polynomial  $N(x^\delta \underline{\text{ch}}_\lambda(x_1, \dots, x_m))$  is Lorentzian for any  $\lambda \in \Lambda$  and  $\delta \in \mathbb{N}^m$ .

*Proof.* Recall that the dimensions of the weight spaces of  $M(\lambda)$  are given by the Kostant partition function  $p$ . In other words, we have

$$\underline{\text{ch}}_\lambda(x_1, \dots, x_m) = \prod_{i>j} (1 + x_i x_j^{-1} + x_i^2 x_j^{-2} + \dots).$$

Note that, in the expansion of the above product,<sup>11</sup> only the terms of degree at least  $-\delta$  contributes to  $N(x^\delta \underline{\text{ch}}_\lambda)$ . Therefore, we may choose a suitably large  $\alpha \in \mathbb{N}^m$  depending on  $\delta \in \mathbb{N}^m$

<sup>10</sup>We point to <https://github.com/avstdi/Lorentzian-Polynomials> for codes supporting the computations in Section 3.

<sup>11</sup>It is clear that the product is well-defined. Officially, the product occurs in the ring of formal characters of the category  $\mathcal{O}$  of  $\mathfrak{sl}_m(\mathbb{C})$ -modules, denoted  $\mathcal{X}$  in [Hum08, Section 1.15].

so that

$$N(x^\delta \underline{\text{ch}}_\lambda) = N(x^\delta x^{-\beta} \prod_{i>j} (x_j^{\alpha_j} + x_i x_j^{\alpha_j-1} + \cdots + x_i^{\alpha_j})), \text{ where } \beta_i = (m-i)\alpha_i \text{ for all } i.$$

Observe that the right-hand side is the  $\beta$ -th partial derivative of the normalized product of  $x^\delta$  and  $\sum_k x_i^{\alpha_j-k} x_j^k$ , whose normalization is the Lorentzian polynomial

$$N(x_j^{\alpha_j} + x_i x_j^{\alpha_j-1} + \cdots + x_i^{\alpha_j}) = \frac{1}{\alpha_j!} (x_i + x_j)^{\alpha_j}.$$

The conclusion now follows from the general fact that  $N(fg)$  is a Lorentzian polynomial when  $N(f)$  and  $N(g)$  are Lorentzian polynomials [BH19, Section 6].  $\square$

Conjecture 10 for  $\lambda$  and  $\mu$  follows from Conjecture 12 for  $\lambda$  and a sufficiently large  $\delta$ . Conjecture 12 for  $\lambda$  and  $\delta$  follows from Conjecture 12 for  $\lambda$  and any  $\delta'$  larger than  $\delta$  componentwise.

**3.2. Schubert polynomials.** For  $w \in \mathcal{S}_n$  and  $\mu \in \mathbb{Z}^n$ , we define the number  $K_{w\mu}$  by

$$\mathfrak{S}_w(x_1, \dots, x_n) = \sum_{\mu} K_{w\mu} x^\mu.$$

As before, for  $\mu \in \mathbb{Z}^n$  and distinct  $i, j \in [m]$ , we set

$$\mu(i, j) = \mu + e_i - e_j.$$

We note that Theorem 2 can be strengthened as follows.

**Proposition 14.** For any  $w \in \mathcal{S}_n$  and any  $\mu \in \mathbb{N}^n$ , we have

$$K_{w\mu}^2 \geq K_{w\mu(i,j)} K_{w\mu(j,i)} \text{ for any } i, j \in [n].$$

*Proof.* By Theorem 6, the polynomial  $\mathfrak{S}_w^\vee$  is Lorentzian. The inequality follows from [BH19, Proposition 9.4] applied to the Lorentzian polynomial  $\mathfrak{S}_w^\vee$ .  $\square$

Are normalized Schubert polynomials Lorentzian? We tested the following statement for all permutations in  $\mathcal{S}_n$  for  $n \leq 8$ .

**Conjecture 15.** The polynomial  $N(\mathfrak{S}_w(x_1, \dots, x_n))$  is Lorentzian for any  $w \in \mathcal{S}_n$ .

More generally, we conjecture that, for double Schubert polynomials [MS05, Section 15.5],

$$N(\mathfrak{S}_w(x_1, \dots, x_n, -y_1, \dots, -y_n)) \text{ is Lorentzian for any } w \in \mathcal{S}_n.$$

This would imply that the support of any double Schubert polynomial is M-convex, and hence “saturated” [MTY17, Conjecture 5.2].

**Proposition 16.** The support of  $\mathfrak{S}_w(x_1, \dots, x_n)$  is M-convex for any  $w \in \mathcal{S}_n$ .

Proposition 16 was conjectured in [MTY17, Conjecture 5.1] and proved in [FMS18] using an explicit description of flagged Schur modules. Here we give an alternative proof based on Theorem 6.

*Proof.* By Theorem 6, the support of  $\mathfrak{S}_w^\vee$  is M-convex. It is straightforward to check using the definition of M-convexity the general fact that, if the support of  $h(x_1, \dots, x_n)$  is M-convex, then the support of  $x^\mu h(x_1^{-1}, \dots, x_n^{-1})$  is M-convex for any monomial  $x^\mu$  divisible by all monomials in the support of  $h$ .<sup>12</sup>  $\square$

A similar argument can be used more generally to show that the supports of single quiver polynomials appearing in [MS05, Section 17.4] are M-convex.

**3.3. Degree polynomials.** Let  $w < w(i, j)$  be a covering relation in the Bruhat order of  $\mathcal{S}_n$  labelled by the transposition of  $i < j$  in  $[n]$ . The *Chevalley multiplicity* is the assignment

$$w < w(i, j) \mapsto \sum_{i \leq k < j} x_k,$$

where  $x_k$  are independent variables. The *degree polynomial* of  $w \in \mathcal{S}_n$  is the generating function

$$\mathfrak{D}_w(x_1, \dots, x_{n-1}) = \sum_{\mathbf{C}} m_{\mathbf{C}}(x_1, \dots, x_{n-1}),$$

where the sum is over all saturated chains  $\mathbf{C}$  from the identity permutation to  $w$ , and  $m_{\mathbf{C}}$  is the product of Chevalley multiplicities of the covering relations in  $\mathbf{C}$ . The degree polynomials were introduced by Bernstein, Gelfand, and Gelfand [BG73] and studied from a combinatorial perspective by Postnikov and Stanley [PS09].

**Proposition 17.** The degree polynomial  $\mathfrak{D}_w(x_1, \dots, x_{n-1})$  is Lorentzian for any  $w \in \mathcal{S}_n$ .

*Proof.* Let  $B$  be the group of upper triangular matrices in  $\mathrm{GL}_n(\mathbb{C})$ , and let  $X_w$  be the closure of the  $B$ -orbit of the permutation matrix corresponding to  $w$  in the flag variety  $\mathrm{GL}_n(\mathbb{C})/B$ . By [PS09, Proposition 4.2], the degree polynomial of  $w$  is, up to a normalizing constant, the volume polynomial of  $X_w$  with respect to the line bundles associated to the fundamental weights  $\varpi_1, \dots, \varpi_{n-1}$ . The conclusion follows from [BH19, Theorem 10.1].  $\square$

The same argument shows that the analogous statement holds for Weyl groups in other types.

**3.4. Skew Schur polynomials.** Let  $\lambda/\nu$  be a skew Young diagram. The *skew Schur polynomial* of  $\lambda/\nu$  in  $m$  variables is the generating function

$$s_{\lambda/\nu}(x_1, \dots, x_m) = \sum_{\mathbf{T}} x^{\mu(\mathbf{T})}, \quad x^{\mu(\mathbf{T})} = x_1^{\mu_1(\mathbf{T})} \dots x_m^{\mu_m(\mathbf{T})},$$

where the sum is over all Young tableaux  $\mathbf{T}$  of skew shape  $\lambda/\nu$  with entries from  $[m]$ , and

$$\mu_i(\mathbf{T}) = \text{the number of } i\text{'s among the entries of } \mathbf{T}, \text{ for } i = 1, \dots, m.$$

Are normalized skew Schur polynomials Lorentzian? We tested the following statement for all partitions  $\lambda$  with at most 12 boxes and at most 6 parts.

**Conjecture 18.** The polynomial  $N(s_{\lambda/\nu}(x_1, \dots, x_m))$  is Lorentzian for any  $\lambda/\nu$ .

<sup>12</sup>The general fact extends matroid duality [Ox11, Chapter 2], which is the special case  $\mu = (1, \dots, 1)$ .

Theorem 3 shows that Conjecture 18 holds when  $\nu$  is zero, and Corollary 4 provides some further evidence. We remark that the M-convexity of the support of any skew Schur polynomial can be deduced from [MTY17, Proposition 2.9].

**3.5. Schur  $P$ -polynomials.** Let  $\lambda$  be a *strict partition*, that is, a decreasing sequence of positive integers. The *Schur  $P$ -polynomial* of  $\lambda$  in  $m$  variables is the generating function

$$P_\lambda(x_1, \dots, x_m) = \sum_{\mathbb{T}} x^{\mu(\mathbb{T})}, \quad x^{\mu(\mathbb{T})} = x_1^{\mu_1(\mathbb{T})} \cdots x_m^{\mu_m(\mathbb{T})},$$

where the sum is over all marked shifted Young tableaux of shape  $\lambda$  with entries from  $[m]$ . See [Mac15, Chapter III] for this and other equivalent definitions of the polynomial  $P_\lambda$ .

Are normalized Schur  $P$ -polynomials Lorentzian? We tested the following statement for all strict partitions  $\lambda$  with  $\lambda_1 \leq 12$  and at most 4 parts.

**Conjecture 19.** The polynomial  $N(P_\lambda(x_1, \dots, x_m))$  is Lorentzian for any strict partition  $\lambda$ .

The M-convexity of the support of  $P_\lambda$  was observed in [MTY17, Proposition 3.5].

**3.6. Grothendieck polynomials.** *Grothendieck polynomials* are polynomial representatives of the Schubert classes in the Grothendieck ring introduced by Lascoux and Schützenberger [LS83]. If  $w$  is the longest permutation  $w_\circ \in \mathcal{S}_n$ , then the Grothendieck polynomial of  $w$  is the monomial

$$\mathfrak{G}_{w_\circ}(x_1, \dots, x_n) = x_1^{n-1} x_2^{n-2} \cdots x_{n-1}^1.$$

In general, if  $w(i) > w(i+1)$  for some  $i$  and  $s_i$  is the adjacent transposition  $(i \ i+1)$ , then

$$\mathfrak{G}_{ws_i}(x_1, \dots, x_n) = \pi_i \mathfrak{G}_w(x_1, \dots, x_n), \quad \text{where } \pi_i = \partial_i - \partial_i x_{i+1}.$$

Let  $\ell(w)$  be the degree of the Schubert polynomial of  $w$ , let  $d(w)$  be the degree of the Grothendieck polynomial of  $w$ , and let  $\mathfrak{G}_w^k$  be the degree  $\ell(w)+k$  homogeneous component of the Grothendieck polynomial.

**Conjecture 20.** The polynomial  $(-1)^k N(\mathfrak{G}_w^k(x_1, \dots, x_n))$  is Lorentzian for any  $w \in \mathcal{S}_n$  and  $k \in \mathbb{N}$ .

The M-convexity of the support of  $\mathfrak{G}_w^k$  was conjectured in [MS17, Conjecture 5.1] and proved in [EY17] when  $w$  is a Grassmannian permutation. Conjecture 20 implies Conjecture 15 because the degree  $\ell(w)$  homogeneous component of  $\mathfrak{G}_w$  is the Schubert polynomial  $\mathfrak{S}_w$ .

We may strengthen Conjecture 20 in terms of the *homogeneous Grothendieck polynomial*

$$\tilde{\mathfrak{G}}_w(x_1, \dots, x_n, z) := \sum_{k=0}^{d(w)-\ell(w)} (-1)^k \mathfrak{G}_w^k(x_1, \dots, x_n) z^{d(w)-\ell(w)-k},$$

where  $z$  is a new variable. Are normalized homogeneous Grothendieck polynomials Lorentzian? We tested the following statement for all permutations in  $\mathcal{S}_n$  for  $n \leq 7$ .

**Conjecture 21.** The polynomial  $N(\tilde{\mathfrak{G}}_w(x_1, \dots, x_n, z))$  is Lorentzian for any  $w \in \mathcal{S}_n$ .

Conjecture 21 implies Conjecture 20, because taking partial derivatives and setting a variable equal to zero preserve the Lorentzian property. We expect an analogous Lorentzian property for double Grothendieck polynomials.

**3.7. Key polynomials.** *Key polynomials* were introduced by Demazure for Weyl groups [Dem74] and studied by Lascoux and Schützenberger for symmetric groups [LS90]. When  $\mu \in \mathbb{N}^n$  is a partition, the key polynomial of  $\mu$  is the monomial

$$\kappa_\mu(x_1, \dots, x_n) = x^\mu = x_1^{\mu_1} \cdots x_n^{\mu_n}.$$

If  $\mu_i < \mu_{i+1}$  for some  $i$  and  $s_i$  is the adjacent transposition  $(i \ i + 1)$ , then

$$\kappa_\mu(x_1, \dots, x_n) = \partial_i x_i \kappa_\nu, \quad \text{where } \nu = \mu s_i = (\mu_1, \dots, \mu_{i+1}, \mu_i, \dots, \mu_n).$$

We refer to [RS95] for more information about key polynomials.

Are normalized key polynomials Lorentzian? We tested the following statement for all compositions  $\mu$  with at most 12 boxes and at most 6 parts.

**Conjecture 22.** The polynomial  $N(\kappa_\mu(x_1, \dots, x_n))$  is Lorentzian for any  $\mu \in \mathbb{N}^n$ .

Theorem 3 shows that Conjecture 22 holds when  $\mu$  is a weakly increasing sequence of non-negative integers, because in this case the key polynomial of  $\mu$  is a Schur polynomial. The M-convexity of the supports of key polynomials was conjectured in [MTY17, Conjecture 3.13] and proved in [FMS18].

We remark that key polynomials [Dem74] and Schubert polynomials [KP87] are both characters of *flagged Schur modules*.<sup>13</sup> It is shown in [FMS18, Theorem 11] that the character of any flagged Schur module has M-convex support. Are normalized characters of flagged Schur modules Lorentzian?

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<sup>13</sup>Flagged Schur modules are representations of the group of upper triangular matrices in  $GL_n(\mathbb{C})$  labelled by *diagrams*. They are also called flagged dual Weyl modules, and, in special cases, key modules. We refer to [RS95, Section 5] and [Magy98, Section 4] for expositions.

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