Cartan matrices and Brauer’s $k(B)$-conjecture IV

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Abstract. In this note we give applications of recent results coming mostly from the third paper of this series. It is shown that the number of irreducible characters in a $p$-block of a finite group with abelian defect group $D$ is bounded by $|D|$ (Brauer’s $k(B)$-conjecture) provided $D$ has no large elementary abelian direct summands. Moreover, we verify Brauer’s $k(B)$-conjecture for all blocks with minimal non-abelian defect groups. This extends previous results by various authors.

1. Introduction.

Let $p$ be a prime and let $G$ be a finite group. We consider $p$-blocks $B$ of $G$ with respect to a $p$-modular system which is “large enough” in the usual sense. In two recent articles [32], [43] properties of the Cartan matrix $C$ of $B$ have been expressed in terms of the defect group $D$ of $B$. In the present paper we apply these results in order to prove the inequality $k(B) \leq |D|$ (Brauer’s $k(B)$-conjecture) in certain cases where $k(B)$ denotes the number of irreducible characters in $B$. Continuing former work by several authors [3], [6], [10], [11], [28], [44], we verify Brauer’s $k(B)$-conjecture for all blocks with minimal non-abelian defect groups. Here a group is called minimal non-abelian if all its proper subgroups are abelian, but the group itself is non-abelian. This leads also to a proof of Brauer’s conjecture for the 5-blocks of defect 3.

In the last part of the paper we revisit a theorem of Watanabe [40], [39] about blocks with abelian defect groups. Watanabe has studied a certain correspondence of blocks whenever the inertial group has non-trivial fixed points on $D$ (similar to the $Z^*$-Theorem). We will show that this correspondence often preserves Cartan matrices up to basic sets (this means up to a transformation of the form $C \mapsto SCS^T$ for some $S \in GL(l, \mathbb{Z})$ where $S^T$ denotes the transpose of $S$). As another tool we show that a coprime action on an abelian $p$-group without elementary abelian direct summands always has a regular orbit. This is used to give a proof of Brauer’s $k(B)$-conjecture for abelian defect groups $D$ such that $D$ has no elementary abelian direct summand of order $p^3$. Improvements of this result for small primes are also presented. In particular, we verify Brauer’s conjecture for 2-blocks with abelian defect groups of rank at most 7. This greatly generalizes some results in [31]. Some of the proofs rely implicitly on the classification of the finite simple groups.

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Most of our notation is standard and can be found in [4], [22], [30] for example. The number of irreducible Brauer characters of \( B \) is denoted by \( l(B) \). Moreover, we denote the inertial quotient of \( B \) by \( I(B) \). Its order \( e(B) := |I(B)| \) is the inertial index of \( B \).

A cyclic group of order \( n \) is denoted by \( Z_n \), and for convenience, \( Z_n^m := Z_n \times \cdots \times Z_n \) (\( m \) copies). Commutators are defined as \([x, y] := xyx^{-1}y^{-1}\) and \( H' := [H, H] \) is the commutator subgroup of \( H \leq G \). Moreover, groups act from the left as \( a \cdot x \). We say that a finite group \( A \) acts freely on a finite group \( H \) if \( C_A(x) = 1 \) for all \( 1 \neq x \in H \).

For an abelian \( p \)-group \( P \) we set \( \Omega_1(P) := \{ x \in P : x^{p^i} = 1 \} \) and \( \Omega(P) := \Omega_1(P) \).

2. Fusion systems.

We start by recalling some notation from the theory of fusion systems. Details can be found in [1]. Our fusion systems will always be saturated.

**Definition 1.** Let \( \mathcal{F} \) be a fusion system on a finite \( p \)-group \( P \).

(i) A subgroup \( Q \leq P \) is called fully \( \mathcal{F} \)-centralized if \( |C_P(\varphi(Q))| \leq |C_P(Q)| \) for all morphisms \( \varphi : Q \to P \) in \( \mathcal{F} \).

(ii) If \( Q \) is fully \( \mathcal{F} \)-centralized, then there is a fusion system \( C_\mathcal{F}(Q) \) on \( C_P(Q) \) defined as follows: a group homomorphism \( \varphi : R \to S \) (\( R, S \leq C_P(Q) \)) belongs to \( C_\mathcal{F}(Q) \) if there exists a morphism \( \psi : QR \to QS \) in \( \mathcal{F} \) such that \( \psi|_Q = \text{id}_Q \) and \( \psi|_R = \varphi \).

(iii) If \( Q \) is abelian and fully \( \mathcal{F} \)-centralized, then there is a fusion system \( C_\mathcal{F}(Q)/Q \) on \( C_P(Q)/Q \) defined as follows: a group homomorphism \( \varphi : R/Q \to S/Q \) (\( Q \leq R, S \leq C_P(Q) \)) belongs to \( C_\mathcal{F}(Q)/Q \) if there exists a morphism \( \psi : R \to S \) in \( C_\mathcal{F}(Q) \) such that \( \psi(u)Q = \varphi(u)Q \) for all \( u \in R \).

If in the situation of Definition 1 the group \( Q \) is cyclic, say \( Q = \langle u \rangle \), then we write \( C_\mathcal{F}(u) \) instead of \( C_\mathcal{F}(\langle u \rangle) \).

Let \( B \) be a block of a finite group \( G \) with defect group \( D \). Recall that a \((B-)\)subsection is a pair \((u, b_u)\) such that \( u \in D \) and \( b_u \) is a Brauer correspondent of \( B \) in \( C_G(u) \). If \( b_u \) and \( B \) have the same defect, the subsection is called major. This holds for example for the trivial subsection \((1, B)\). More generally, a \((B-)\)subpair is a pair \((Q, b_Q)\) such that \( Q \leq D \) and \( b_Q \) is a Brauer correspondent of \( B \) in \( C_G(Q) \). In case \( Q = D \), we say \((D, b_D)\) is a Sylow \( B \)-subpair. It is well-known that every block \( B \) of a finite group with defect group \( D \) determines a fusion system \( \mathcal{F} \) on \( D \) which describes the conjugation of subpairs. In this setting, \( I(B) \cong \text{Out}_\mathcal{F}(D) \). By the Schur–Zassenhaus Theorem we can consider \( I(B) \) as a subgroup of \( \text{Aut}(D) \).

The next lemma might be already known, but we were unable to find a reference (cf. [24, Theorem 1.5]). Therefore a proof is given.

**Lemma 2.** Let \( B \) be a \( p \)-block of a finite group \( G \) with defect group \( D \) and fusion system \( \mathcal{F} \). Let \( Z \leq Z(G) \) be a \( p \)-subgroup. Then \( B \) dominates a unique block \( \overline{B} \) of \( G/Z \) with defect group \( D/Z \) and fusion system \( \mathcal{F}/Z \).

**Proof.** Since \( Z \leq G \), we have \( Z \leq D \). Moreover, it is easy to see that \( \mathcal{F} = C_\mathcal{F}(Z) \). Hence, \( \mathcal{F}/Z \) is well defined. The uniqueness of \( \overline{B} \) and its defect group can be found in
[22, Theorem 5.8.11]. It remains to determine the fusion system of $\overline{B}$. For $H \leq G$ we write $\overline{H} := HZ/Z$. We fix a Sylow $B$-subpair $(D, b_D)$. For every subgroup $Z \leq Q \leq D$ there exists a unique $B$-subpair $(Q, b_Q)$ such that $(Q, b_Q) \leq (D, b_D)$. Let $C_{\overline{G}}(Q) = \overline{C_Q}$ with $C_G(Q) \leq C_Q \leq \mathcal{N}_G(Q)$. By the definition of the Brauer correspondence (see [22, Section 5.3]), $\beta_Q := b_Q^{C_Q}$ is well defined. Let $\overline{\beta_Q}$ be the unique block of $C_{\overline{G}}(Q)$ dominated by $\beta_Q$. We claim that $(\overline{Q}, \overline{\beta_Q})$ is a $\overline{B}$-subpair. To prove this, we need to show that $\overline{\beta_Q} = \overline{\beta}$. Let $e_B$ be the block idempotent of $B$ with respect to an algebraically closed field $F$ of characteristic $p$. Let $\theta : FG \to F\overline{G}$ be the canonical epimorphism. Then $\theta(e_B) = e_{\overline{B}}$ by [22, Theorem 5.8.11]. Let $\omega_{\beta_Q}$ be the central character of $\beta_Q$. Then, by [22, Lemma 5.8.5], the central character $\omega_{\overline{\beta_Q}}$ satisfies $\omega_{\overline{\beta_Q}} = \omega_{\beta_Q} \circ \theta$ where $\theta$ is identified with its restriction to $Z(FC_Q)$. Let

$$\eta : Z(FG) \to Z(FC_Q), \quad \sum_{g \in G} \alpha_g g \mapsto \sum_{g \in C_Q} \alpha_g g \quad (\alpha_g \in F).$$

Then the analogous map $\overline{\eta} : Z(F\overline{G}) \to Z(FC_{\overline{G}}($) is the Brauer homomorphism. Moreover,

$$\omega_{\overline{\beta_Q}}(\overline{\eta}(e_{\overline{B}})) = \omega_{\overline{\beta_Q}}(\eta(\theta(e_B))) = \omega_{\beta_Q}(\theta(\eta(e_B))) = \omega_{\beta_Q}(\eta(e_B)) = \omega_B(e_B) = 1.$$

This shows that $\overline{\beta_Q} = \overline{B}$ and $(\overline{Q}, \overline{\beta_Q})$ is a $\overline{B}$-subpair. In particular, $(\overline{D}, \overline{\beta_D})$ is a Sylow $\overline{B}$-subpair. Suppose that $(R, b_R) \leq (S, b_S)$ for some subgroups $Z \leq R \leq S \leq D$. Then $b_R^{C_{\overline{R}}S} = b_S^{C_{\overline{S}}S}$. As we have seen above,

$$b_R^{C_{\overline{R}}S} = b_R^{C_{\overline{R}}S} = b_R^{C_{\overline{R}}S} = b_S^{C_{\overline{S}}S} = b_S^{C_{\overline{S}}S} = b_S^{C_{\overline{S}}S} = b_S^{C_{\overline{S}}S} = b_S^{C_{\overline{S}}S}$$

(observe that $C_{\overline{R}}(S) \leq C_{\overline{R}} S \leq G$). This implies $(\overline{R}, \overline{b_R}) \leq (\overline{S}, \overline{b_S})$. Therefore the poset of $B$-subpairs $(Q, b_Q) \leq (D, b_D)$ such that $Z \leq Q$ is in one-to-one correspondence with the poset of $\overline{B}$-subpairs via Brauer correspondence and $\theta$. Let $F'$ be the fusion system of $\overline{B}$. Suppose that $\overline{\varphi} : \overline{R} \to \overline{S}$ is a morphism in $F'$ for $Z \leq R \leq S \leq D$. Then there exists a $g \in G$ such that $\overline{\varphi}(\overline{R}, \overline{b_R}) \overline{g}^{-1} = (\overline{S}, \overline{b_S})$ and $\overline{\varphi}(\overline{x}) = \overline{gxg^{-1}}$ for all $\overline{x} \in \overline{R}$. Obviously, we have $gRg^{-1} \leq S$. Moreover, $g\beta_Rg^{-1} = \overline{\varphi}(\overline{R})\overline{g}^{-1} = \overline{g\beta_Rg^{-1}} = \overline{\beta}_{gRg^{-1}}$ and

$$(g\beta_Rg^{-1})^{C_{gRg^{-1}}} = g(b_R^{C_R})g^{-1} = g\beta_Rg^{-1} = \beta_{gRg^{-1}} = b_{gRg^{-1}}^{C_{gRg^{-1}}}.$$}

It follows that there exists an element $h \in C_{gRg^{-1}} \leq \mathcal{N}_G(gRg^{-1})$ such that $g\beta_Rg^{-1}h^{-1} = b_{gRg^{-1}}$ and $\overline{\varphi}(\overline{x}) = \overline{hxg^{-1}h^{-1}}$ for $\overline{x} \in \overline{R}$. Therefore, $h\beta_Rg^{-1}h^{-1} \leq (S, b_S)$ and the map $\varphi : R \to S$ such that $\varphi(x) := hxg^{-1}h^{-1}$ for $x \in R$ is a morphism in $F'$. Conversely, if $\varphi : R \to S$ is given in $F$, then it is easy to see that the corresponding map $\overline{\varphi}$ lies in $F'$. Consequently, $F' = F/Z$.

**Lemma 3.** Let $B$ be a block of a finite group $G$ with defect group $D$ and fusion system $\mathcal{F}$. Let $(u, b)$ be a $B$-subsection such that $\langle u \rangle$ is fully $\mathcal{F}$-centralized. Then $b$ has defect group $C_D(u)$ and fusion system $C_{\mathcal{F}}(u)$. Moreover, $b$ dominates a unique block $\overline{b}$ of $C_G(u)/\langle u \rangle$ with defect group $C_D(u)/\langle u \rangle$ and fusion system $C_{\mathcal{F}}(u)/\langle u \rangle$. In particular,
we have canonical isomorphisms

\[ I(\tilde{b}) \cong I(b) \cong C_{\operatorname{Out}_F(C_D(u))}(u). \]

If \( \tilde{b} \) has Cartan matrix \( \overline{C} \), then \( b \) has Cartan matrix \( \langle \langle u \rangle \rangle \overline{C} \). In particular, \( l(b) = l(\tilde{b}) \).

**Proof.** The first claim follows from [1, Theorem IV.3.19]. The uniqueness of \( \tilde{b} \) and the claim about the Cartan matrices can be found in [22, Theorem 5.8.11]. The fusion system of \( \tilde{b} \) was determined in Lemma 2. It is well-known that the inertial quotient \( I(b) \cong \operatorname{Out}_{C_F(u)}(C_D(u)) \) is a \( p' \)-group. Thus, [20, Theorem 6.3(i)] implies \( \operatorname{Out}_{C_F(u)(C_D(u))}(C_D(u)/\langle \langle u \rangle \rangle) \cong I(\tilde{b}) \). Finally, the isomorphism \( I(b) \cong C_{\operatorname{Out}_F(C_D(u))}(u) \) follows from the definition of \( C_F(u) \). \( \square \)

We also recall two important subgroups related to fusion systems.

**Definition 4.** Let \( F \) be a fusion system on a finite \( p \)-group \( P \).

(i) \( \text{foc}(F) := \langle f(x)x^{-1} : x \in Q \leq P, \ f \in \operatorname{Aut}_F(Q) \rangle \) is called the focal subgroup of \( F \).

(ii) \( Z(F) := \{ x \in P : x \text{ is fixed by every morphism in } F \} \) is called the center of \( F \).

If \( B \) is a block with fusion system \( F \) and defect group \( D \), then we set \( \text{foc}(B) := \text{foc}(F) \) (but \( Z(B) \) is usually used for the center of the block algebra). We say that \( B \) is controlled if all morphisms of \( F \) are generated by restrictions from \( \operatorname{Aut}_F(D) \). In this case, \( \text{foc}(B) = [D, I(B)] \) and \( Z(F) = C_D(I(B)) \). If \( D \) is abelian, then \( B \) is controlled and \( D = [D, I(B)] \oplus C_D(I(B)) \) (see [8, Theorem 2.3]).

3. Non-abelian defect groups.

**Theorem 5.** Let \( B \) be a \( p \)-block of a finite group with non-abelian defect group \( D \). Suppose that \( D/\langle \langle z \rangle \rangle \) is abelian of rank 2 for some \( z \in Z(D) \). Then \( k(B) \leq |D| \).

**Proof.** Let \( x, y \in D \) such that \( D = \langle x, y, z \rangle \). Since \( D \) is non-abelian, \( 1 \neq [x, y] \in D' \subseteq \langle z \rangle \). Let \( \alpha \in C_{\operatorname{Aut}(D)}(z) \) be a \( p' \)-automorphism. We write \( \alpha(x) = x^iy^j \) (mod \( \langle \langle z \rangle \rangle \)) and \( \alpha(y) \equiv x^ky^l \) (mod \( \langle \langle z \rangle \rangle \)) with \( i, j, k, l \in \mathbb{Z} \). By [12, III.1.2, III.1.3],

\[ [x, y] = \alpha([x, y]) = [x^iy^j, x^ky^l] = [x, y]^{il-jk} \]

and therefore \( il - jk \equiv 1 \) (mod \( p \)). Hence, \( \alpha \) corresponds to a matrix with determinant 1 under the isomorphism \( \operatorname{Aut}(D/\langle \langle z \rangle \rangle) \cong \operatorname{Aut}(Z_p^2) \cong \text{GL}(2, p) \). If \( x \) and \( y \) have the same order modulo \( \langle z \rangle \), then \( \alpha \) also corresponds to a matrix with determinant 1 under the isomorphism \( \operatorname{Aut}(\Omega(D/\langle z \rangle)) \cong \text{GL}(2, p) \). Now assume, without loss of generality, that \( x \) has larger order than \( y \) modulo \( \langle z \rangle \). Then \( p \mid k \), since \( \alpha(y) \) and \( y \) have the same order.

In particular \( il \equiv 1 \) (mod \( p \)). Let \( p^n \) be the order of \( x \) modulo \( \langle z \rangle \). Then obviously, \( \alpha(x^{p^{n-1}}) \equiv x^{p^{n-1}} \) (mod \( \langle z \rangle \)). This shows that \( \alpha \) induces an upper triangular matrix with determinant 1 in \( \operatorname{Aut}(\Omega(D/\langle z \rangle)) \). Hence, in any case \( \alpha \) corresponds to an element of \( \text{SL}(\Omega(D/\langle z \rangle)) \).
Now suppose that $\alpha$ has a non-trivial fixed point in $D/(z)$. Then there is also a non-trivial fixed point in $\Omega(D/(z))$. It follows that $\alpha$ is conjugate to a unitriangular matrix under $\text{Aut}(\Omega(D/(z))) \cong GL(2, p)$. However, then $\alpha$ acts trivially on $\Omega(D/(z))$, since $\alpha$ is a $p'$-element. By [8, Theorem 5.2.4], $\alpha$ also acts trivially on $D/(z)$. This forces $\alpha = 1$ by [8, Theorem 5.3.2]. Therefore we have shown that every $p'$-automorphism of $C_{\text{Aut}(D)}(z)$ acts freely on $D/(z)$.

Now let $F$ be the fusion system of $B$. Let $(z, b_z)$ be a (major) subsection of $B$. Since $z \in Z(D)$, the subgroup $(z)$ is fully $F$-centralized. By Lemma 3, $b_z$ dominates a block $\overline{b_z}$ of $C_G(z)/(z)$ with abelian defect group $\overline{D} := D/(z)$ and inertial quotient $I(\overline{b_z}) \cong C_{I(B)}(z)$. As we have seen above, $I(\overline{b_z})$ acts freely on $\overline{D}$. In particular, all non-trivial $\overline{b_z}$-subsections $(u, \beta_u)$ have inertial index 1. This implies $l(\beta_u) = 1$, since $\overline{D}$ is abelian (see [4, Theorem V.9.13]). Let $\overline{C}$ be the Cartan matrix of $\overline{b_z}$. Then we deduce from a result of Fujii [5, Corollary 1] that $\det \overline{C} = |\overline{D}|$. Since $|\langle z \rangle| \overline{C}$ is the Cartan matrix of $b_z$, the claim follows from [32, Theorem 11].

**Corollary 6.** Brauer’s $k(B)$-conjecture holds for all blocks with minimal non-abelian defect groups.

**Proof.** The minimal non-abelian $p$-groups were classified by Rédei (see [12, Aufgabe III.7.22]), but the present proof can go without detailed structure knowledge. Let $D$ be a minimal non-abelian defect group of a block $B$. Then there are non-commuting elements $x, y \in D$. Since $\langle x, y \rangle$ is non-abelian, we have $D = \langle x, y \rangle$. Now let $u \in \Phi(D)$ and $v \in D$ be arbitrary. Then $v$ lies in a maximal subgroup $M < D$ and so does $u$. Since $M$ is abelian, it follows that $\langle u, v \rangle = 1$. This shows that $\Phi(D) \subseteq Z(D)$. In particular $z := [x, y] \in D' \subseteq \Phi(D) \subseteq Z(D)$. Since $D/(z)$ is abelian of rank 2, the claim follows from Theorem 5.

Corollary 6 includes the non-abelian defect groups of order $p^3$. In particular, this extends results by Hendren [11, Theorem 4.10]. Apart from minimal non-abelian groups, Theorem 5 also applies to other groups like the central product $D_8 \ast Z_{2^n}$ for some $n \geq 2$ where $D_8$ is the dihedral group of order 8.

In [29, Corollary 1] we have proved that Brauer’s $k(B)$-conjecture holds for the 3-blocks of defect 3. Now we can do the same for $p = 5$.

**Corollary 7.** Brauer’s $k(B)$-conjecture holds for the 5-blocks of defect at most 3.

**Proof.** The abelian defect groups of order at most $5^3$ have been handled in [30, Theorem 14.17] (see also Proposition 22 below). In the non-abelian case, Corollary 6 applies.

Out next results concern a larger class of $p$-groups, but introduces restrictions on $p$. The proof makes use of a recent result by Watanabe [43].

**Theorem 8.** Let $p \leq 5$, and let $B$ be a $p$-block of a finite group with defect group $D$. Suppose that $D/(z)$ is metacyclic for some $z \in Z(D)$. Then $k(B) \leq |D|$.

**Proof.** The case $p = 2$ is already known (see [30, Theorem 13.8]). Thus, let
$p \in \{3, 5\}$. If $D$ is abelian, then the rank of $D$ is at most 3 and the result follows from [30, Theorems 14.16 and 14.17]. Now assume that $D$ is non-abelian. If $D/\langle z \rangle$ is abelian, then Theorem 5 applies. Thus, we may assume that $D/\langle z \rangle$ is non-abelian. If $p = 3$, then the claim follows from [30, Proposition 8.16]. Therefore, let $p = 5$. Let $(z, b_z)$ be a $B$-subsection. As before, $b_z$ dominates a block $\overline{b_z}$ with non-abelian, metacyclic defect group $D/\langle z \rangle$. By a result of Stancu [35] the fusion system $\overline{F}_z$ of $\overline{b_z}$ is controlled. Moreover, the possible automorphism groups $I(\overline{b_z})$ are described in a paper by Sasaki [33]. It follows that $\text{foc}(\overline{b_z}) = \langle D/\langle z \rangle, I(\overline{b_z}) \rangle$ is cyclic (for details see [30, proof of Theorem 8.8]). Hence, by the main result of [43], $l(b_z) = l(\overline{b_z}) \mid 4$. In case $l(b_z) \leq 2$, the claim follows from [30, Theorem 4.9]. Finally, let $l(b_z) = 4$. Let $\langle z \rangle = 5^n$, and let $C$ be the Cartan matrix of $b_z$. By [43, Corollary on p. 181], $C$ has elementary divisors $5^n$ and $|D|$ where $|D|$ occurs with multiplicity 1 and $a \geq n$. Choose a basic set such that $C$ has block form

$$C = \begin{pmatrix} C_1 & 0 \\ 0 & C_2 \end{pmatrix}$$

where $C_1 \in \mathbb{Z}^{r \times r}$ does not split further (for any basic set) and $r \leq 4$ (possibly $r = 4$). Without loss of generality, $|D|$ is an elementary divisor of $C_1$. By way of contradiction, we may assume that there is a vector $0 \neq x \in \mathbb{Z}^4$ such that $x|D|C^{-1}x^T < 4$ (see [4, Theorem V.9.17]). Looking into the proof of [4, Theorem V.9.17] more closely, reveals that there is a character $\chi \in \text{Irr}(B)$ such that the row of generalized decomposition numbers $d_\chi := (d_{\chi \varphi} : \varphi \in \text{IBr}(b_z))$ satisfies

$$\text{tr}(d_\chi |D|C^{-1}\overline{d_\chi}^T) < 4[\mathbb{Q}(\zeta) : \mathbb{Q}] = 16 \cdot 5^{n-1}$$

where $\zeta$ is a primitive $5^n$-th root of unity and $\text{tr}$ is the trace of the Galois extension $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta)/\mathbb{Q}$. We may write $d_\chi = (d_1, d_2)$ where $d_1 \in \mathbb{C}^r$ and $d_2 \in \mathbb{C}^{4-r}$. Then

$$\text{tr}(d_\chi |D|C^{-1}\overline{d_\chi}^T) = \text{tr}(d_1 |D|C_1^{-1}\overline{d_1}^T) + \text{tr}(d_2 |D|C_2^{-1}\overline{d_2}^T).$$

Since all entries of $|D|C_2^{-1}$ are divisible by 5, it follows that $\text{tr}(d_1 |D|C_1^{-1}\overline{d_1}^T) \geq 5\varphi(5^n) = 20 \cdot 5^{n-1}$ or $\text{tr}(d_2 |D|C_2^{-1}\overline{d_2}^T) = 0$. The first case is impossible. Hence, $d_2 = 0 \in \mathbb{Z}^{4-r}$. Since $d_\chi$ consists of algebraic integers, we may write

$$d_\chi = \sum_{i=0}^{\varphi(5^n)-1} a_i \zeta^i$$

for some $a_i \in \mathbb{Z}^4$. Let us write $Q(x, y) := x|D|C^{-1}\overline{y}^T$ for $x, y \in \mathbb{C}^4$. Then $Q$ is a positive definite Hermitian form. Moreover,

$$\alpha := Q(d_\chi, d_\chi) = a_0^* + \sum_{i=1}^{2 \cdot 5^{n-1}-1} a_i^*(\zeta^i + \zeta^{-i})$$

for some $a_i^* \in \mathbb{Z}$. Since $\zeta^{2 \cdot 5^{n-1}} + \zeta^{-2 \cdot 5^{n-1}} = -1 - \zeta^{5^{n-1}} - \zeta^{-5^{n-1}}$, we get
\[
a_0^* = \sum_{i=0}^{\varphi(5^n)-1} Q(a_i, a_i) - \sum_{0 \leq s < t < \varphi(5^n), \ t-s \equiv \pm 2 \cdot 5^{n-1} \pmod{5^n}} Q(a_s, a_t) > 0
\]

and
\[
a_{5n-1}^* = \sum_{0 \leq s < t < \varphi(5^n), \ t-s \equiv 5^{n-1} \pmod{5^n}} Q(a_s, a_t) - \sum_{0 \leq s < t < \varphi(5^n), \ t-s \equiv \pm 2 \cdot 5^{n-1} \pmod{5^n}} Q(a_s, a_t).
\]

Suppose for the moment that \( \chi \) has positive height. Then the 5-adic valuation of \( \alpha \) is strictly larger than 1 (see [30, Proposition 1.36]). In particular, \( \alpha/5 \) is an algebraic integer (this can be seen by going over to the cyclotomic field over the 5-adic numbers, see [23, Proposition II.7.13]). Since \( 1, \zeta + \zeta^{-1}, \ldots, \zeta^{2 \cdot 5^{n-1}-1} + \zeta^{-2 \cdot 5^{n-1}+1} \) is a basis for the ring of real algebraic integers, we have \( 5 \mid a_i^* \) for all \( i \). Moreover,
\[
\text{tr}(\alpha) = a_0^* \varphi(5^n) + \sum_{i=1}^{2 \cdot 5^{n-1}-1} a_i^* \text{tr}(\zeta^i + \zeta^{-i}) = a_0^* \varphi(5^n) - 2 \cdot 5^{n-1} a_{5n-1}^*.
\]

If \( a_{5n-1}^* \leq 0 \), then we obtain the contradiction \( \text{tr}(\alpha) \geq a_0^* \varphi(5^n) \geq 20 \cdot 5^{n-1} \). Thus, \( a_{5n-1}^* > 0 \). Observe that
\[
a_{5n-1}^* \leq \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=0}^{5^{n-1}-1} Q(a_i, a_i) + \sum_{i=5^{n-1}}^{3 \cdot 5^{n-1}-1} Q(a_i, a_i)
\]
\[
+ \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=3 \cdot 5^{n-1}}^{4 \cdot 5^{n-1}-1} Q(a_i, a_i) - \sum_{0 \leq s < t < \varphi(5^n), \ t-s \equiv \pm 2 \cdot 5^{n-1} \pmod{5^n}} Q(a_s, a_t)
\]
\[
= a_0^* - \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=0}^{5^{n-1}-1} Q(a_i, a_i) - \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=3 \cdot 5^{n-1}}^{4 \cdot 5^{n-1}-1} Q(a_i, a_i).
\]

Now it is easy to see that \( a_0^* > a_{5n-1}^* \) and thus \( a_0^* \geq a_{5n-1}^* + 5 \). This gives the contradiction \( \text{tr}(\alpha) \geq 20 \cdot 5^{n-1} + 2 \cdot 5^{n-1} a_{5n-1}^* \geq 20 \cdot 5^{n-1} \). Therefore, we have shown that \( \chi \) has height 0.

In particular, \( d_\chi | D | C^{-1} d_\psi^T \neq 0 \) for all \( \psi \in \text{Irr}(B) \) (see [30, Proposition 1.36]). Since \( d_2 = 0 \), it follows that the first \( r \) components of \( d_\psi \) cannot all be zero. Hence, in order to bound \( k(B) \) by the number of rows \( d_\psi \), we may work with the matrix \( C_1 \) instead of \( C \). This means it suffices to show
\[
\min \{ x | D | C_1^{-1} x^T : 0 \neq x \in \mathbb{Z}^r \} \geq r
\]
(cf. [25, Proposition 2.2]).

The integral matrix \( C_1 := 5^{-a} C_1 \) has elementary divisors 1 and \( 5^{-a} | D | \) where \( 5^{-a} | D | \) occurs with multiplicity 1. In particular, \( \det C_1 = 5^{-a} | D | \). Since \( r \leq 4 \), it is known that \( C_1 \) can be factorized in the form
\( \overline{C_1} = Q_1^T Q_1 \)

where \( Q_1 \in \mathbb{Z}^{k \times r} \) for some \( k \in \mathbb{N} \) (see [21]). We may assume that \( Q_1 \) has no vanishing rows. By the choice of \( C_1 \), the matrix \( Q_1 \) is indecomposable with the notation of [32, Definition 1]. Now [32, Lemma 4] implies

\[
\min \{ x | D | C_1^{-1} x^T : 0 \neq x \in \mathbb{Z}^r \} = \min \{ \det(\overline{C_1}) x \overline{C_1}^{-1} x^T : 0 \neq x \in \mathbb{Z}^r \} \geq r.
\]

This completes the proof. \( \square \)

Most parts of the proof above also work for any odd prime \( p \). However, the splitting theorem by Mordell [21] is no longer true for matrices of larger dimension. Consider for example the following situation: \( p = 7, z = 1, l(B) = 6 \) and

\[
C = C_1 = 7^2 \begin{pmatrix}
3 & 1 & \ldots \\
. & 2 & 1 \\
. & . & . \\
1 & .2 & 1 \\
. & 1 & 1 \\
. & 2 & 1 \\
. & . & . \\
. & 1 & 2 \\
. & . & .
\end{pmatrix}
\]

(the matrix is a modified version of the \( E_6 \) lattice). Then \( \det(7^{-2} C) = 7 \) and there is no factorization of the form \( 7^{-2} C = Q^T Q \) for some integral matrix \( Q \). In fact

\[
\min \{ x \overline{7}^2 C^{-1} x^T : 0 \neq x \in \mathbb{Z}^6 \} = 4 < 6.
\]

However, we do not know if \( C \) can actually occur as a Cartan matrix of a block.

4. Abelian defect groups.

We begin with a remark about a theorem of Watanabe [40].

LEMMA 9. Let \( B \) be a \( p \)-block of a finite group \( G \) with abelian defect group, and let \( Z \) be a central \( p \)-subgroup of \( G \). Then \( k(B) = |Z| k(\overline{B}) \) where \( \overline{B} \) is the unique block of \( G/Z \) dominated by \( B \).

PROOF. Let \( D \) be a defect group of \( B \). Obviously, \( Z \subseteq C_D(\overline{B}) \). Let \( \mathcal{R} \) be a set of representatives for the \( I(B) \)-conjugacy classes of \( [D, I(B)] \). Then \( \{(uz, b_{uz}) : u \in \mathcal{R}, z \in C_D(\overline{B})\} \) is a set of representatives of the \( G \)-conjugacy classes of \( B \)-subsections. By [40, Corollary 1], we have \( l(b_{uz}) = l(b_u) \) for all \( z \in C_D(\overline{B}) \). This shows

\[
k(B) = \sum_{u \in \mathcal{R}} \sum_{z \in C_D(\overline{B})} l(b_{uz}) = |C_D(\overline{B})| \sum_{u \in \mathcal{R}} l(b_u).
\]

Now we consider the block \( \overline{B} \). For \( H \leq G \) and \( x \in D \) we write \( \overline{H} := HZ/Z \) and \( \overline{x} := xZ \).

Let \( C_G(\overline{x}) = \overline{C_x} \) with \( C_G(\langle x \rangle Z) = C_G(x) \leq C_x \leq N_G(\langle x \rangle Z) \). Moreover, let \( b_{\overline{x}}^C \) be the
unique block of $C_G(\pi)$ dominated by $b^C_{u\pi}$. Choose a transversal $S \subseteq G$ for the cosets $C_D(I(B))$. Since $I(B) \cong I(B)$, the set 
$$\{(u\pi, b^C_{u\pi}z) : u \in R, z \in S\}$$
represents the $B$-subsections up to $G$-conjugacy (cf. proof of Lemma 2). By [22, Theorem 5.8.11], $l(b^C_{u\pi}z) = l(b^C_{uz})$. Since $C_{uz}$ acts trivially on $\langle u \pi \rangle$ and on $Z$, it follows that $C_{uz}/C_G(uz)$ is a $p$-group. From the properties of fusion systems it is clear that $N_G(\langle uz \rangle Z, b_{uz})$ is a $p'$-group. Hence, $N_G(\langle uz \rangle Z, b_{uz}) \cap C_{uz} = C_G(uz)$ and the Fong–Reynolds Theorem implies 
$$l(b^C_{uz}) = l(b_{uz}) = l(u).$$
Consequently, 
$$k(B) = \sum_{u \in R} \sum_{z \in S} l(b^C_{uz}) = |C_D(I(B))| \sum_{u \in R} l(u).$$
This proves the claim. $\square$

The statement of Lemma 9 is not true for non-abelian defect groups, as it can be seen from the principal 2-block of $SL(2, 3)$ with $Z := Z(SL(2, 3))$.

Next, we need a result about the so-called $*$-construction introduced in [2].

**Lemma 10.** Let $B$ be a $p$-block of a finite group with defect group $D$. Let $u \in D$ and let $(u, b)$ be a $B$-subsection. Let $\chi \in \text{Irr}(B)$, $\varphi \in \text{IBr}(b)$, and let $\lambda \in \text{Irr}(D/\text{soc}(B)) \subseteq \text{Irr}(D)$. Then $\lambda * \chi \in \text{Irr}(B)$ and 
$$d^u_{\lambda * \chi, \varphi} = \lambda(u)d^u_{\chi \varphi}.$$ 

**Proof.** We use the approach from [27, Section 1]. Our first claim is already proved there. Let $R$ be a set of representatives for the $G$-conjugacy classes of $B$-subsections such that $(u, b) \in R$. For $(v, b_v) \in R$, $\psi \in \text{IBr}(b_v)$ and $x \in C_G(v)$ let 
$$\tilde{\psi}(x) := \begin{cases} 
\psi(s) & \text{if } x = vs \text{ where } s \in C_G(v)_{p'}, \\
0 & \text{otherwise}
\end{cases}$$
where $C_G(v)_{p'}$ denotes the set of $p$-regular elements of $C_G(v)$. Then $\tilde{\psi}$ is a class function on $C_G(v)$, and it is well-known (as a consequence of Brauer’s second main theorem) that 
$$\chi = \sum_{(v, b_v) \in R} \sum_{\psi \in \text{IBr}(b_v)} d^v_{\psi \chi} \tilde{\psi}^G.$$ 

By [27] we have 
$$\lambda * \chi = \sum_{(v, b_v) \in R} \sum_{\psi \in \text{IBr}(b_v)} \lambda(v)d^v_{\psi \chi} \tilde{\psi}^G.$$ 

Therefore, it suffices to show that the functions $\{\tilde{\psi}^G : (v, b_v) \in R, \psi \in \text{IBr}(b_v)\}$ are linearly independent over $\mathbb{C}$. Thus, assume that
Hence, a result by Fujii [5] and Z

Let a matrix

\( C \) be an indecomposable matrix with rank 1 and \( \lambda \neq \chi \) for \( \chi \in \text{Irr}(b) \) and \( \lambda \neq \chi \). This is related to the fact that decomposition numbers corresponding to major subsections do not vanish. Therefore, by Lemma 10, every row of \( Q_u \) appears \( |Z| \) times. Taking only every \( |Z| \)-th row of \( Q_u \), we obtain an indecomposable matrix \( Q_u \in \mathbb{Z}^{k \times l(b)} \) of rank \( l(b) \) without vanishing rows such that
\[ \tilde{C}_u = \tilde{Q}_u^T \tilde{Q}_u \text{ and } k := k(b)/|Z| \] (see [32, Definition 1 and Proposition 2]). Lemma 4 in [32] gives
\[ \min\{|D|x \tilde{C}_u^{-1} x^T : 0 \neq x \in \mathbb{Z}^{l(b)}\} = \min\{\det(\tilde{C}_u)x \tilde{C}_u^{-1} x^T : 0 \neq x \in \mathbb{Z}^{l(b)}\} \geq l(b). \]

Hence, a result by Brauer (see [30, Theorem 4.4]) implies the first claim. The second claim is trivial. \(\square\)

Since every abelian coprime linear group has a regular orbit, we obtain the following (cf. [30, Lemma 14.6]).

**Corollary 12.** Let \( B \) be a block of a finite group with abelian defect group \( D \). Suppose that \( I(B) \) contains an abelian subgroup of prime index or of index 4. Then \( k(B) \leq |D| \).

A recent paper by Keller–Yang [13] provides a dual version.

**Corollary 13.** Let \( B \) be a block of a finite group with abelian defect group \( D \). Suppose that the commutator subgroup \( I(B)' \) of \( I(B) \) has prime order or order 4. Then \( k(B) \leq |D| \).

Now we prove a result about the number of irreducible Brauer characters.

**Proposition 14.** Let \( B \) be a block of a finite group with abelian defect group \( D \) such that \( e(B) \) is a prime. Then \( l(B) \leq e(B) \).

**Proof.** By [40] we may assume that \( C_D(I(B)) = 1 \). Then for every non-trivial \( B \)-subsection \( (u,b) \) we have \( l(b) = 1 \). Since \( I(B) \) acts freely on \( D \), the number of conjugacy classes of these subsections is \((|D| - 1)/e(B)\). In particular,
\[ k(B) = \frac{|D| - 1}{e(B)} + l(B). \]

Let \( C \) be the Cartan matrix of \( B \). By [5], \( \det(C) = |D| \). Hence, [32, Theorem 5] implies
\[ k(B) \leq \frac{|D| - 1}{l(B)} + l(B). \]

The claim follows. \(\square\)

Observe that Alperin’s weight conjecture predicts that \( l(B) = e(B) \) in the situation of Proposition 14. This has been shown for principal blocks in [34]. Our next result covers a special case of Usami [38]. This is of interest, since the proof in case \((p,e(B)) = (2,3)\) was announced in [26, Introduction], but never appeared in print (to the author’s knowledge).

**Theorem 15.** Let \( B \) be a 2-block of a finite group with abelian defect group \( D \) such that \( e(B) \leq 7 \). Then \( B \) is perfectly isometric (even isotypic) to the principal 2-block of \( D \rtimes I(B) \).
Proof. In order to determine \( l(B) \), we may assume that \( C_D(I(B)) = 1 \). In case \( e(B) = 1 \) the block is nilpotent and the claim is well-known. Thus, let \( e(B) > 1 \). Since \( e(B) \) is odd, we must have \( e(B) \in \{3, 5, 7\} \). In particular, Proposition 14 implies \( l(B) \leq e(B) \). Let \((u, b)\) be a \( B\)-subsection such that \( u \) has order 2. Since \( l(b) = 1 \), the generalized decomposition numbers \( d_{x^u}^{b} \) (\( x \in \text{Irr}(B), \text{IBr}(b) = \{ \varphi \} \)) form a column of \( k(B) \) non-zero integers whose sum of squares equals \( |D| \). By the Kessar–Malle Theorem [15] about Brauer’s height zero conjecture, we know that all irreducible characters in \( D \) have height 0. It follows that the numbers \( d_{x^u}^{b} \) are odd (see for example [30, Lemma 1.38]). Hence, \( k(B) \equiv |D| \pmod{8} \). Since \( 1 \leq l(B) \leq e(B) \leq 7 \) and

\[
\frac{|D| - 1}{e(B)} + l(B) = k(B) \equiv |D| \equiv \frac{|D| - 1}{e(B)} + e(B) \pmod{8},
\]

we get \( l(B) = e(B) \). Now the claim follows from the main theorem of [41].

We remark that the Cartan matrix of \( B \) in the situation of Theorem 15 is given by

\[
|C_D(I(B))| \left( \frac{|D, I(B)| - 1}{e(B)} + \delta_{ij} \right)_{i,j=1}^{e(B)}
\]

up to basic sets where \( \delta_{ij} \) is the Kronecker delta (see [32, Proposition 6]).

Now we present an extended version of [30, Theorem 13.2] in the spirit of [40].

Proposition 16. Let \( B \) be a 2-block of a finite group with abelian defect group \( D \) such that \( |D, I(B)| \leq 16 \). Then one of the following holds:

(i) \( B \) is nilpotent. Then \( e(B) = l(B) = 1 \) and \( k(B) = |D| \).

(ii) \( e(B) = l(B) = 3 \), \( |D, I(B)| = 4 \), \( k(B) = |D| \) and the Cartan matrix of \( B \) is \((1/4)|D|(1 + \delta_{ij})\) up to basic sets.

(iii) \( e(B) = l(B) = 3 \), \( |D, I(B)| = 16 \), \( k(B) = (1/2)|D| \) and the Cartan matrix of \( B \) is \((1/16)|D|(5 + \delta_{ij})\) up to basic sets.

(iv) \( e(B) = l(B) = 5 \), \( k(B) = (1/2)|D| \) and the Cartan matrix of \( B \) is \((1/16)|D|(3 + \delta_{ij})\) up to basic sets.

(v) \( e(B) = l(B) = 7 \), \( k(B) = |D| \) and the Cartan matrix of \( B \) is \((1/8)|D|(1 + \delta_{ij})\) up to basic sets.

(vi) \( e(B) = l(B) = 9 \), \( k(B) = |D| \) and the Cartan matrix of \( B \) is \((1/16)|D|(1 + \delta_{ij})^{3} \otimes (1 + \delta_{ij})_{i,j=1}^{3} \) up to basic sets where \( \otimes \) denotes the Kronecker product.

(vii) \( e(B) = 9 \), \( l(B) = 1 \) and \( k(B) = (1/2)|D| \).

(viii) \( e(B) = l(B) = 15 \), \( k(B) = |D| \) and the Cartan matrix of \( B \) is \((1/16)|D|(1 + \delta_{ij})\) up to basic sets.
(ix) $e(B) = 21$, $l(B) = 5$, $k(B) = |D|$ and the Cartan matrix of $B$ is

$$
\begin{pmatrix}
|D| \\
8
\end{pmatrix}
\begin{pmatrix}
2 \ldots 1 \\
.2 \ldots 1 \\
.2 \ldots 1 \\
\ldots 21 \\
1 1 1 1 4
\end{pmatrix}
$$

up to basic sets.

**Proof.** In case $[D, I(B)] = 1$, the block $B$ is nilpotent and the first case applies. Thus, we may assume that $B$ is non-nilpotent for the rest of the proof. Since the action of $I(B)$ on $[D, I(B)]$ is coprime, we need to discuss the following cases $[D, I(B)] \in \{ Z_2^2, Z_3^2, Z_4^2, Z_7^2 \}$. The different actions on these groups can be determined easily. As usual $D = C_D(I(B)) \times [D, I(B)]$. Let $Z := C_D(I(B))$, and let $b_Z$ be a Brauer correspondent of $B$ in $C_G(Z)$. Then by [40] (applied repeatedly), $l(B) = l(b_Z)$ and $k(B) = k(b_Z)$. Moreover, $b_Z$ dominates a block $\bar{b}_Z$ of $C_G(Z)/Z$ with defect group $D/Z \cong [D, I(B)]$ and $l(\bar{b}_Z) = l(b_Z)$. Using [30, Theorems 8.1, 13.1 and 13.2] and Lemma 9 it is easy to determine $l(B) = l(\bar{b}_Z)$ and $k(B) = |Z|k(\bar{b}_Z)$. Therefore, it remains to compute the Cartan matrix of $B$.

The case $e(B) \leq 7$ is covered by Theorem 15 and the subsequent remark. The same argument also works for $e(B) = 15$, since here $I(B)$ acts freely on $[D, I(B)]$. Therefore, we may assume that $[D, I(B)] \in \{ Z_2^3, Z_3^2 \}$. We explain our general method for these cases. Let $\mathcal{R}$ be a set of representatives for the $I(B)$-conjugacy classes of $[D, I(B)]$. For $x \in \mathcal{R}$ let $Q_x$ be the part of the generalized decomposition matrix of $B$ corresponding to the subsection $(x, b_x)$. Then by Lemma 10 (together with [27, Theorem 2]), every row of $Q_x$ appears $|Z|$ times. This holds in particular for the ordinary decomposition matrix $Q_1$. Hence, in order to compute $Q_1$, we may divide the Cartan matrices $C_x$ of $b_x$ by $|Z|$. So, let $\bar{C}_x := (1/|Z|)C_x$ for $1 \neq x \in \mathcal{R}$. Since $x$ has order at most 2, the matrices $Q_x$ are all integral. Assume that we have found matrices $\bar{Q}_x \in \mathbb{Z}^{k(\bar{b}_Z) \times l(b_x)}$ $(1 \neq x \in \mathcal{R})$ such that

$$
\bar{Q}_x^T \bar{Q}_y = \begin{cases} 
\bar{C}_x & \text{if } x = y, \\
0 & \text{if } x \neq y
\end{cases}
$$

for $x, y \in \mathcal{R} \setminus \{1\}$. This means we are actually constructing the generalized decomposition matrix of $b_Z$. Let

$$
\Gamma := \{ v \in \mathbb{Z}^{k(\bar{b}_Z)} : v\bar{Q}_x = 0 \in \mathbb{Z}^{l(b_x)} \forall x \in \mathcal{R} \setminus \{1\} \}.
$$

We choose a basis for the $\mathbb{Z}$-module $\Gamma$ and we write the basis vectors as columns of a matrix $\bar{Q}_1 \in \mathbb{Z}^{k(\bar{b}_Z) \times l(B)}$ (cf. [30, Section 4.2]). Finally, set
\[
Q_1 := \begin{pmatrix}
\tilde{Q}_1 \\
\vdots \\
\tilde{Q}_1
\end{pmatrix} \in \mathbb{Z}^{k(B) \times l(B)}.
\]

Then the orthogonality relations for the group \([D, I(B)]\) guarantee that \(Q_1\) is orthogonal to any column of generalized decomposition numbers corresponding to a non-trivial subsection (provided a suitable ordering of \(\text{Irr}(B)\)). Since the elementary divisors of \(Q_1\) are equal 1, the Cartan matrix of \(B\) is given by \(Q_1^T Q_1\) up to basic sets.

Now we have to deal with the various cases according to the action of \(I(B)\) on \([D, I(B)]\). As mentioned above, we may assume that \(e(B) \in \{9, 21\}\). If \([D, I(B)] \cong Z_2^3\), it follows that \(e(B) = 21\) and \(I(B) \cong Z_7 \times Z_3\). Here there is only one matrix \(\tilde{C}_x\) for \(x \in \mathcal{R} \setminus \{1\}\) given by \(\tilde{C}_x = 2(1 + \delta_{ij})_{i,j=1}^3\) (see Theorem 15 and the subsequent remark).

Since \(k(b_Z) = 8\) (see [30, Theorem 13.1]), there is essentially only one choice for \(\tilde{Q}_x\), namely
\[
\tilde{Q}_x = \begin{pmatrix}
1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & \ldots & . \\
1 & 1 & \ldots & . & . & . \\
1 & 1 & \ldots & . & . & . \\
\end{pmatrix}^T.
\]

This makes it easy to compute \(\tilde{Q}_1\) and \(Q_1^T Q_1\). Now let \([D, I(B)] \cong Z_4^2\) and \(e(B) = 9\). Then \(I(B)\) is elementary abelian. In the proof of [30, Theorem 13.7] we used extensive computer calculations to enumerate the matrices \(\tilde{Q}_x\) for \(1 \neq x \in \mathcal{R}\). Here we use the opportunity to give a computer-free argument. Let \(\mathcal{R} = \{1, x, y, xy\}\) such that \(l(b_x) = l(b_y) = 3\) and \(l(b_{xy}) = 1\). As usual one has \(\tilde{C}_x = \tilde{C}_y = 4(1 + \delta_{ij})_{i,j=1}^3\). We may choose a basic set for \(b_x\) such that
\[
\tilde{Q}_x = \begin{pmatrix}
1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & . & . & . & . \\
1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & . & . & . & . & . & . & . & . \\
1 & 1 & 1 & . & . & . & . & . & . & . & . & . \\
\end{pmatrix}.
\]

Let \(M_x := 16\tilde{Q}_x \tilde{C}_x^{-1} \tilde{Q}_x^T = |D|\tilde{Q}_x C_x^{-1} \tilde{Q}_x^T\) be a part of the contribution matrix of \(B\) with respect to \((x, b_x)\). Then
\[
M_x = \begin{pmatrix}
3J & J & J & J \\
J & 3J & -J & -J \\
J & -J & 3J & -J \\
J & -J & -J & 3J
\end{pmatrix}
\]

where \(J\) is the \(4 \times 4\) matrix whose entries are all 1. Up to permutations and signs, the (part of the) contribution matrix \(M_x\) has the same shape. There exists an \(I(B)\)-stable generalized character \(\lambda\) of \([D, I(B)]\) (and of \(D\)) such that \(\lambda(1) = \lambda(xy) = 0\) and \(\lambda(x) = -\lambda(y) = 4\). Hence, for \(\chi \in \text{Irr}(B)\), \(\chi \ast \lambda\) is a generalized character of \(B\). This implies \((1/4)M_x - (1/4)M_y \in \mathbb{Z}^{16 \times 16}\). Thus, \(M_x \equiv M_y \pmod{4}\). Moreover, by the
orthogonality relations we have $M_x M_y = 0$. Since we can still permute the first four characters and the next four and so on, we may assume that the first row of $M_y$ has the form $(3, -1, -1, -1, -3, 1, 1, 1, -3, 1, 1, -3, 1, 1, 1)$. After changing the basic set of $b_y$ if necessary, we may assume that the first row of $Q_y$ is $(1, 1, 1, 1)$. By symmetry reason, it is easy to see that we may assume

$$\tilde{Q}_y = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -1 & \ldots & -1 & 1 & \ldots & -1 & 1 \\ 1 & \ddots & \ddots & \ddots & \ddots & \ddots & \ddots & \ddots \\ \vdots & \ddots & \ddots & \ddots & \ddots & \ddots & \ddots & \ddots \\ 1 & \ldots & -1 & 1 & \ldots & -1 & 1 & \ldots \\ 1 & \ldots & -1 & 1 & \ldots & -1 & 1 & \ldots \end{pmatrix}^T.$$

Again by the *-construction, $M_x \equiv -M_{xy} \pmod{4}$. It follows that $\tilde{Q}_{xy} = (1, 1, 1, 1, -1, \ldots, -1)^T$. This gives $\tilde{Q}_1$ and finally $C_1$. We have given the Cartan matrix of the principal block of the group $D \times I(B) \cong C_D(I(B)) \times A_4^2$ where $A_4$ is the alternating group of degree 4. $\Box$

We note that part (viii) of Proposition 16 relies on the classification of the finite simple groups.

The argument of Proposition 16 also works for other situations. However, it is not clear if in general $B$ and $b_z$ for $z \in C_D(I(B))$ have the same Cartan matrix up to basic sets. This depends on the question whether the knowledge of the number $l(B)$ and the Cartan matrices of $b_z$ for $1 \neq x \in [D, I(B)]$ determine the Cartan matrix of $B$. It is conjectured in general that the blocks $B$ and $b_z$ are perfectly isometric or even Morita equivalent (see for example [14], [19]).

**Corollary 17.** Let $B$ be a 2-block of a finite group with abelian defect group $D$. Suppose that there is an element $u \in D$ such that $|\{D, C_{I(B)}(u)\}| \leq 16$. Then $k(B) \leq |D|$.

**Proof.** Let $(u, b)$ be a $B$-subsection. Then Proposition 16 applies for $b$. If $9 \neq e(b) \neq 21$, then the action of $I(b)$ on $[D, I(b)]$ is free, and the claim follows from Proposition 11. Now let $e(b) = 21$. Here one can apply [30, Theorem 4.2] with the quadratic form corresponding to the positive definite matrix

$$Q_b = \begin{pmatrix} 2 & 1 & \ldots & -1 \\ 1 & 2 & \ldots & -1 \\ \vdots & \ddots & \ddots & \ddots \\ -1 & \ldots & 2 & -1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

Finally, let $e(b) = 9$. Let $C_b$ be the Cartan matrix of $b$ given by Proposition 16. In order to apply [30, Theorem 4.4] we consider the quadratic form corresponding to the matrix $|D|C_b^{-3}$. For this let $M := (1 + \delta_{ij})^{-1}_{i,j=1}$. Then $4M^{-1} = (-1 + 4\delta_{ij})$. For $0 \neq x = (x_1, x_2, x_3) \in \mathbb{Z}^3$ we have

$$4xM^{-1}x^T = x_1^2 + x_2^2 + x_3^2 + (x_1 - x_2)^2 + (x_1 - x_3)^2 + (x_2 - x_3)^2 \geq 3.$$
This shows that \( \min\{4xM^{-1}x^T : 0 \neq x \in \mathbb{Z}^3\} = 3 \). In general the minimum of a tensor product of quadratic forms does not need to coincide with the product of the minima of its factors. However, in this case it is true by \([16, \text{Theorem 7.1.1}]\). For the convenience of the reader, we give an elementary argument. First observe that \( |D|C_b^{-1} = 16(M \otimes M)^{-1} = 4M^{-1} \otimes 4M^{-1} \). Now let \( 0 \neq x = (x_1, x_2, x_3) \in \mathbb{Z}^9 \) with \( x_i \in \mathbb{Z}^3 \). Then

\[
16x(M \otimes M)^{-1}x^T = \sum_{i=1}^{3} 4x_iM^{-1}x_i^T + \sum_{i<j} 4(x_i - x_j)M^{-1}(x_i - x_j)^T \\
\geq 3 \min\{4yM^{-1}y^T : 0 \neq y \in \mathbb{Z}^3\} \geq 9.
\]

Hence, \( \min\{x|D|C_b^{-1}x^T : 0 \neq x \in \mathbb{Z}^9\} = 9 \), and the claim follows from \([30, \text{Theorem 4.4}]\). \( \square \)

**Proposition 18.** Let \( B \) be a 3-block of a finite group with abelian defect group \( D \). Suppose that there is an element \( u \in D \) such that \( ||[D, C_{I(B)}(u)]|| \leq 9 \). Then \( k(B) \leq |D| \).

**Proof.** By Proposition 11 we may assume that \([D, C_{I(B)}(u)]\) is elementary abelian of order 9. Let \((u, b)\) be a \( B \)-subsection. Then \([b] \cong C_{I(B)}(u) \leq \text{Aut}([D, C_{I(B)}(u)]) \cong GL(2,3)\). Therefore, \([b]\) lies in a Sylow 2-subgroup of \( GL(2,3) \) which is isomorphic to the semidihedral group \( SD_{16} \) of order 16. By \([30, \text{Lemma 14.5}]\), we may assume that \( e(b) \geq 8 \). If \( b \in \{Z_8, Q_8\} \) where \( Q_8 \) is the quaternion group of order 8, then the action of \([b]\) on \([D, I(b)]\) is free (even regular). Hence, these cases are handled by Proposition 11. It remains to deal with the cases \( b \in \{D_8, SD_{16}\} \). In order to do so, we may consider a block \( \overline{b} \) with defect group \( Z_2^3 \) and inertial quotient \( I(b) \). The numbers \( k(b) \) and \( l(b) \) were determined in \([17], [42]\). The case \( l(b) = l(\overline{b}) = 2 \) can be ignored by \([30, \text{Theorem 4.9}]\). Hence, we have \( k(b) = 9 \) and \( l(\overline{b}) \in \{5,7\} \) according to the two possibilities for \( I(b) \). In the proof of \([30, \text{Theorem 13.7}]\) we have computed the possible Cartan matrices for \( b \):

\[
\begin{pmatrix}
3 & . & 1 & . & 1 \\
. & 31 & . & 1 \\
11 & 31 & . & 1 \\
. & . & 131 & . \\
11 & 13 & . & .
\end{pmatrix}
\quad \text{or} \quad
\begin{pmatrix}
21 & . & . & . & . & 1 \\
. & 12 & . & . & . & 1 \\
. & . & 21 & . & . & 1 \\
. & . & . & 211 & . & . \\
. & . & . & . & 121 & . \\
111 & 111 & 1 & . & . & 1
\end{pmatrix}
\]

Since the construction of these matrices was carried out by enumerating the generalized decomposition numbers as in the proof of Proposition 16, the Cartan matrix of \( b \) is just a scalar multiple of one of these matrices. Now we can apply \([30, \text{Theorem 4.2}]\) with the quadratic form corresponding to the positive definite matrix.
that $D$ summands $D$ of isomorphic cyclic groups. If $\phi$ it is easy to see that $C$ transversal $R$ a defined, since $a, b \in A$ respectively. This completes the proof.

The following result about regular orbits under coprime actions might be of general interest.

**Proposition 19.** Let $P$ be an abelian $p$-group such that $\Omega(P) \subseteq \Phi(P)$. Then every $p'$-automorphism group of $P$ has a regular orbit on $P$.

**Proof.** Let $A \leq \text{Aut}(P)$ be a $p'$-group. By [8, Theorem 5.2.4], we may assume that $P$ has exponent $p^2$. Following [37, Lemma 1.7], we will show that the action of $A$ on $P$ is isomorphic to the componentwise action of $A$ on $\Omega(P) \times \Omega(P)$. Let $x\Omega(P) \in P/\Omega(P)$. Since $A$ acts on $P/\Omega(P)$, we can define a subgroup $A_1 := C_A(x\Omega(P)) \leq A$ which fixes $x\Omega(P)$ as a set. By [18, 8.2.1], there exists a representative $r(x\Omega(P))$ of $x\Omega(P)$ such that $r(x\Omega(P)) \in C_P(A_1)$. Now for any $a \in A$ we set $r(a x \Omega(P)) := a r(x \Omega(P))$. This is well defined, since $a x \equiv b x \pmod{\Omega(P)}$ implies $b^{-1} a \in A_1$ and $a r(x \Omega(P)) = b r(x \Omega(P))$ for $a, b \in A$. Repeating this with the other orbits of cosets we end up with an $A$-invariant transversal $\mathcal{R}$ for $P/\Omega(P)$. Now let

$$
\varphi : P \rightarrow \Omega(P) \times \Omega(P),
$$

$$
\bar{x} y \mapsto (\bar{x}^p, y) \quad (\bar{x} \in \mathcal{R}, \ y \in \Omega(P)).
$$

It is easy to see that $\varphi$ is a bijection and

$$
a \varphi(\bar{x} y) = (a \bar{x}^p, a y) = \varphi(a \bar{x}^a y) = \varphi(a(\bar{x} y))
$$

for $a \in A, \bar{x} \in \mathcal{R}$ and $y \in \Omega(P)$. Hence, $P$ is $A$-isomorphic to $\Omega(P) \times \Omega(P)$.

By [9], there exist $x, y \in \Omega(P)$ such that $C_A(x) \cap C_A(y) = 1$. Hence, the $A$-orbit of $(x, y) \in \Omega(P) \times \Omega(P)$ is regular. The claim follows.

We are now in a position to generalize other theorems from [30, Chapter 14].

**Theorem 20.** Let $B$ be a block of a finite group with abelian defect group $D$ such that $D$ has no elementary abelian direct summand of order $p^3$. Then $k(B) \leq |D|$.

**Proof.** We can decompose $D = \prod_{i=1}^n D_i$ into indecomposable $I(B)$-invariant summands $D_i$. By [8, Theorem 5.2.2], each $D_i$ is homocyclic, i.e. a direct product of isomorphic cyclic groups. If $D_i$ is not elementary abelian, then we choose $x_i \in D_i$ such that $C_{I(B)}(x_i) = C_{I(B)}(D_i)$ by Proposition 19. Now assume that $D_i$ is elementary
abelian. Then by hypothesis, \(|D_i| \leq p^2\). Here we choose any \(1 \neq x_i \in D_i\). If all elementary abelian components \(D_i\) have order \(p\), then it is easy to see that \(C_{I(B)}(x) = 1\) for \(x := x_1 \cdots x_n\). In this case the claim has already been known to Brauer (see [30, Proposition 4.7] for example). Now suppose that only \(D_1\) is elementary abelian and of order \(p^2\). Then \([D, C_{I(B)}(x)]\) is cyclic, and the claim follows from Proposition 11. \(\square\)

As usual, we can say slightly more if \(p\) is small.

**Proposition 21.** Let \(B\) be a 2-block of a finite group with abelian defect group \(D\) such that \(D\) has no elementary abelian direct summand of order \(2^8\). Then \(k(B) \leq |D|\).

**Proof.** Using the arguments in the proof of Theorem 20, we may assume that \(D\) is elementary abelian of order at most \(2^7\). We will choose an element \(x \in D\) such that \(|[D, C_{I(B)}(x)]|\) is small. By Corollary 17, we may assume that \(32 \leq |[D, C_{I(B)}(x)]| < |D|\). Let \(|D| = 64\). If \(D\) decomposes as \(D = D_1 \oplus D_2\) with \(I(B)\)-invariant subgroups \(D_i\), then we can take \(1 \neq x_i \in D_i\) and \(x := x_1 x_2\). It follows that \(|[D, C_{I(B)}(x)]| \leq 16\). Hence, we may assume that \(I(B)\) acts irreducibly on \(D\). By the Feit–Thompson Theorem, \(I(B)\) is solvable. Thus, we can use the GAP package IRREDsol [7] to find all possibilities for \(I(B)\). It turns out that in all cases we find elements \(x \in D\) such that \(|[D, C_{I(B)}(x)]| \leq 16\). Finally, let \(|D| = 2^7\). Here, it can happen that \(D = D_1 \oplus D_2\) with irreducible \(I(B)\)-invariant subgroups of order \(2^4\) and \(2^3\) respectively. However, there is always an element \(x_1 \in D_1\) such that \(C_{I(B)}(x_1) = C_{I(B)}(D_1)\). Therefore, it remains to handle the case where \(I(B)\) acts irreducibly on \(D\). It turns out that we only need to deal with the case \(I(B) \cong Z_{127} \times Z_7\) (cf. [36, Remark 4 on p. 168]). For this case, Proposition 11 applies. \(\square\)

Apart from the elementary abelian defect group of order 64, the proof of Proposition 21 also works for some non-abelian defect groups of order 64. Thus, referring to the list in [30, p. 200], Brauer’s \(k(B)\)-conjecture is still open for the defect groups SmallGroup(64, q) where

\[
q \in \{134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 202, 224, 229, 230, 231, 238, 239, 242, 254, 255, 257, 258, 259, 262\}.
\]

Speaking of abelian defect groups for \(p = 2\), the next challenge is \(D \cong Z_8^6\) with \(I(B) \cong (Z_{21} \times Z_5) \times (Z_7 \times Z_3)\) acting reducibly.

**Proposition 22.** Let \(p \in \{3, 5\}\), and let \(B\) be a \(p\)-block of a finite group with abelian defect group \(D\) such that \(D\) has no elementary abelian direct summand of order \(p^4\). Then \(k(B) \leq |D|\).

**Proof.** The case \(p = 3\) follows easily from Proposition 18. Now let \(p = 5\). As before, let \(D = D_1 \oplus D_2\) be an \(I(B)\)-invariant decomposition such that \(D_1\) is elementary abelian and \(C_{I(B)}(x_2) = C_{I(B)}(D_2)\) for some \(x_2 \in D_2\). By Theorem 20, we may assume that \(|D_1| = p^3\). Since \(I(B)/C_{I(B)}(D_1) \leq \text{Aut}(D_1) \cong GL(3, 5)\), one can show that there is an element \(x_1 \in D_1\) such that \(|C_{I(B)}(x_1)/C_{I(B)}(D_1)| \leq 4\) or \(C_{I(B)}(x_1)/C_{I(B)}(D_1) \cong S_3\) where \(S_3\) is the symmetric group of degree 3 (cf. [30, proofs of 14.16 and 14.17]). Let
\( x := x_1 x_2 \). Then
\[
C_I(B)(x) = C_I(B)(x_1) \cap C_I(B)(x_2) = C_I(B)(x_1) \cap C_I(B)(D_2) \hookrightarrow C_I(B)(x_1)/C_I(B)(D_1)
\]
where the inclusion comes from the canonical map \( g \mapsto g C_I(B)(D_1) \). The claim follows from [30, Lemma 14.5].

The new method does not suffice to overcome the next problems for \( p \in \{3, 5, 7\} \) already described in [30, Chapter 14].

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