VARIETIES IN FINITE TRANSFORMATION GROUPS

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ABSTRACT. The equivariant cohomology ring of a G-space X defines a homogeneous affine variety. Quillen [Q] and W. Y. Hsiang [Hs] have determined the relation between such varieties and the family of isotropy subgroups as well as their fixed point sets when \( \dim X < \infty \). In modular representation theory, J. Carlson [Cj] introduced cohomological support varieties and rank varieties (the latter depending on the group algebra) and explored their relationship. We define rank and support varieties for G-spaces and G-chain complexes and apply them to cohomological problems in transformation groups. As a corollary, a useful criterion for ZG-projectivity of the reduced total homology of certain G-spaces is obtained, which improves the projectivity criteria of Rim [R], Chouinard [Ch], and Dade [D].

1. Introduction. Let G be a finite group. Assume in the sequel that all modules, including total homologies of G-spaces and G-chain complexes, are finitely generated. In a fundamental paper [R], D. S. Rim proved that a ZG-module M is ZG-projective if and only if \( M|ZG_P \) is ZG_P-projective for all Sylow subgroups \( G_P \subseteq G \). This theorem has had many applications to local-global questions in topology, algebra, and number theory. In his thesis [CH] Chouinard greatly improved Rim's theorem by proving that the ZG-projectivity of \( M \) is detected by restriction to p-elementary abelian subgroups \( E \subseteq G \), i.e. \( E \cong (\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z})^n \). If \( M \) is Z-free (a necessary condition for projectivity), it suffices to consider \( k \otimes M \), where \( k = \mathbb{F}_p \) when restricting to \( E \). In a deep and difficult paper [D], Dade provided the ultimate criterion: A kE-module M is kE-free if and only if for all \( \alpha = (\alpha_1, \ldots, \alpha_n) \in k^n \), the units \( u_\alpha = 1 + \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_i(x_i - 1) \) of kE act freely on M. Thus the projectivity question reduces to the restrictions to all p-order cyclic subgroups \( (u_\alpha) \subseteq kG \). Since \( k = \mathbb{F}_p \), all but finitely many are not subgroups of G. When the ZG-module M arises as the homology of a G-space, we have a much simpler criterion which is a natural sequel to Dade's theorem.

THEOREM 1. Let X be a connected paracompact G-space (possibly \( \dim X = \infty \)), and let \( M = \bigoplus \check{H}_i(X) \) with induced G-action. Assume that for each maximal A \( \cong (\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z})^n \subseteq G \), the Serre spectral sequence of the Borel construction

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459

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$E_A \times_A X \to BA$ collapses. Then $M$ is $ZG$-projective if and only if $M|ZC$ is $ZC$-projective for all $C \subseteq G$ of prime order.

In applications, e.g. to $G$-surgery or equivariant homotopy theory, $X$ arises as the cofiber of a highly connected $G$-map, and as such, the hypotheses are often verified.

**COROLLARY.** Let $f : X \to Y$ be a $G$-map such that $H_i(f) = 0$ for $i \neq n$. Then $H_n(f)$ is $ZG$-projective if and only if $H_n(f)|ZC$ is $ZC$-projective for all $C \subseteq G$ with $|C| = \text{prime}$. ($H_*(f)$ is the homology of the cofiber.)

**COROLLARY.** Let $X$ be a $G$-space such that nonequivariantly $X$ is homotopy equivalent to a finite complex. Then $X$ is $G$-equivariantly finitely dominated if and only if $X$ is $C$-equivariantly finitely dominated for each $C \subseteq G$, $|C| = \text{prime}$.

The above theorem and its corollaries have local and modular versions also. E.g. $F_pG$-projectivity is detected by restriction to cyclic subgroups of order $p$. In the sequel, $\mathcal{E}$ denotes the category of $p$-elementary abelian subgroups of $G$ for a fixed prime $p$, where the morphisms are induced by inclusions and conjugations in $G$.

For a $G$-space $X$, Quillen defined the affine homogeneous variety $H_G(X)(k)$ to be the set of ring homomorphisms $H_G(X; F_p) \to k$ with the Zariski topology $[Q]$. He showed that $H_G(X)(k)$ is completely determined by $\mathcal{E}$ whenever $\dim X < \infty$, and that $H_G(X)(k) \cong \lim \text{ind}_{E \in \mathcal{E}} H_E(X)(k)$. W. Y. Hsiang [Hs] showed that algebro-geometric considerations of $H_G(X; F_p)$ lead to powerful fixed point theorems and the theory of topological weight systems. In a different direction, J. Carlson defined two varieties for a $kE$-module $M$, $E = (Z/pZ)^n = \langle x_1, \ldots, x_n \rangle$. Namely, $V_E^R(M)$ (called the rank variety, inspired by Dade's theorem [D]) and $V_E(M)$ (called the cohomological support variety, inspired by Quillen's work [Q]).

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For any $E \in \mathcal{E}$, let $u_\alpha = 1 + \sum \alpha_i(x_i - 1)$ and define $V_E^R(M) = \{\alpha \in k^n : M|k(u_\alpha) \text{ is not free}\} \cup \{0\}$. Then $V_E^R(M)$ is an affine homogeneous subvariety of $k^n$, and Dade's theorem translates into: $M$ is $kE$-projective if and only if $V_E^R(M) = 0$. On the cohomological side, consider the commutative graded ring $H_G = \bigoplus_{i \geq 0} \text{Ext}_G^i(k, k)$ and let $V_G(k)$ be the homogeneous affine variety of all ring homomorphisms $H_G \to k$ with the Zariski topology. The annihilating ideal $J(M) \subset H_G$ of the $H_G$-module $\text{Ext}_G^*(M, M)$ defines the homogeneous subvariety $V_G(M)$. For $E = (Z/pZ)^n$, there is a natural isomorphism $V_E^R(k) \cong V_E^R(k) = k^n$. Carlson showed that $V_E^R(M) \subseteq V_E(M)$, and Avrunin-Scott proved $V_E(M) = V_E^R(M)$ (proving a conjecture of Carlson) and $V_G(M) \cong \lim E \in \mathcal{E} V_E^R(M)$ in analogy with Quillen's stratification theorem [Cj, AS, Q].

For a $G$-space $X$ (similarly for a $kG$-complex) we define a cohomological support variety $V_G(X)$, and a rank variety $V^R_G(X)$ following Carlson's method. Since we will consider also $V_G(X, Y)$ for a pair $(X, Y)$ of $G$-spaces, Quillen's definition is not used. Let $R = kG$. Two $R$-modules $M_1$ and $M_2$ are called (projectively) stably isomorphic if for some $R$-projective modules $P$ and $Q$, $M_1 \oplus P \cong M_2 \oplus Q$. Let $\mathcal{P}(R)$ be the set of stable isomorphism classes. For
n ∈ ℤ, define ω^n : ℳ(R) → ℳ(R) by 0 → ω(M) → P → M → 0 and 0 → M → Q → ω^{-1}(M) → 0, where P is R-projective, Q is R-injective, and ω^n is defined by iteration. In ℳ(R), the relation (M_1 ~ M_2 ⇔ ω^n(M_1) ≃ ω^n(M_2) for some n, m ∈ ℤ) is an equivalence relation, called ω-stable equivalence. Let ℳ_ω(R) ≡ ℳ(R)/~. These concepts have natural extensions to connected R-chain complexes with finitely many nonzero homology groups. The ω-stable equivalence classes of connected R-chain complexes form a set ℳ_ω(R). We define invariants for elements of ℳ_ω(R) to describe the asymptotic behavior of the hypercohomology (equivariant cohomology in the case of G-spaces) of the representative complexes. Let H^* denote the Tate hypercohomology [B]. For E ∈ ℬ and a kE-complex C_*, let V^E_E(C_*) = {α ∈ k^n : H((u_α); C_*) ≠ 0} ∪ {0}, and V^E_E(C_*) be the variety defined by the annihilating ideal of H^*(E; C_*) in the maximum spectrum of H_E ≡ ∐_{ι ≥ 0} H^{2ι}(E; k). Let V^G_G(C_*) = lim_{E ∈ ℬ} V^E_E(C_*) and V^G_G(C_*) = lim_{E ∈ ℬ} V^E_E(C_*) Then V^G_G and V^G_G are well defined on ℳ_ω(R), and V^G_G(C_*) = V^G_G(C_*)). For a pair of G-spaces (X, Y), define V^G_G(X, Y) and V^G_G(X, Y) by taking an appropriate kG-chain complex C_*(X, Y). The numerical invariants dim V^G_G(X, Y) (or dim V^G_G(C_*)) are called the complexity of (X, Y) (respectively C_*) and

\[ \dim V^G_G(X, Y) = \min \left\{ n : \lim_{s \to -∞} \frac{\dim H^n_G(X, Y)}{s^n} = 0 \right\} \]

(and similarly for dim V^G_G(C_*) using hypercohomology). This generalizes J. Alperin’s notion of complexity of a kG-module [A] and J. Carlson’s interpretation of dim V^G_G(M) in terms of its complexity.

**SKETCH OF PROOF OF THEOREM 1.** The hypotheses on X and the ω-stability of the varieties lead to the equalities

V^G_G(\tilde{C}_*) = V^G_G(\tilde{C}_*) = V^G_G \left( \bigoplus_i \tilde{H}_i(X; k) \right)

for each prime p|\|G|. A reinterpretation of geometric points of V^G_G(\tilde{C}_*(X)) using a theorem of Serre [S] (in the spirit of Quillen’s description of subvarieties of H^*_G(X)(k) in terms of prime ideals associated to ℬ(X)) leads to the desired projectivity criterion.

**REMARKS.** (1) The theorem is not true if the Serre spectral sequence does not collapse. The nonzero differentials give other interesting geometric invariants, in particular for infinite dimensional G-spaces.

(2) If g ∈ G acts on X by self-homotopy equivalences (i.e. a homotopy G-action), then H_*(X) becomes a ZG-module again. One defines rank varieties for homotopy G-actions similarly, where they are considered as a natural algebraic substitute for the notion of isotropy subgroups [Aa].

(3) It is easy to construct nonprojective ZG-modules whose restrictions to prime order subgroups are projective. Using Theorem 1, one provides counterexamples to Steenrod’s problem for G ⊃ (Z/pZ)^2 or G ⊃ Q_8, thus giving another proof of theorems of G. Carlsson [Cg] and P. Vogel [V].

**2. Further applications.** Besides the applications in [A and Aa], we mention two generalizations of the classical Borsuk-Ulam theorem: If S^n and
$S^m$ have $\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}$-actions and $m \geq n$, then there exists an equivariant map $f: S^m \to S^n$ if and only if $(S^n)^{\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}} \neq \emptyset$.

**Theorem.** Suppose $X$ and $Y$ are connected $G$-spaces such that $\dim Y < \infty$ and $H_j(Y; \mathbb{F}_p) = 0$ for $j > n$ and $H_j(X; \mathbb{F}_p) = 0$ for $j \leq n$. Assume that $G$ is $p$-elementary abelian. Then there exists an equivariant map $f: X \to Y$ if and only if $Y^G \neq \emptyset$.

There is an infinite dimensional generalization also where $V_G^p$ plays the role of isotropy subgroups.

**Theorem.** Suppose $f: X \to Y$ is a $G$-map between connected $G$-spaces such that $\bar{H}_i(X; \mathbb{Z}/|G|\mathbb{Z}) = 0$ for $i \leq n$ and $H_j(Y; \mathbb{Z}/|G|\mathbb{Z}) = 0$ for $j > n$. Then for any $p|G|$ and the corresponding $kG$-varieties, we have $V^p_G(Y) = V^p_G(k)$. (Similarly for $kG$-complexes.)

There is also a localization theorem. For a $p$-elementary abelian group $\pi \cong (\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z})^n$, let $\gamma(\pi)$ be the product of polynomial generators in $H^*(\pi; k)$, and $\text{rk}_p(G) = \max\{n: (\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z})^n \subseteq G\}$.

**Theorem.** Let $C_* \subseteq D_*$ be a pair of $kG$-complexes such that $G$-complexity of $D_*/C_*$ is $\text{rk}_p(G) - s$. Then there exists a subgroup $\pi \subseteq kG$, $\pi \cong (\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z})^s$, such that (localized hypercohomologies)

$$H^*(\pi, C^*) \cdot 1 \gamma(\pi) \cong H^*(\pi, D^*) \cdot 1 \gamma(\pi).$$

There is a similar theorem for $G$-spaces (possibly infinite dimensional).

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