

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0022-314X(17)30306-2
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jnt.2017.08.006>
Reference: YJNTH 5835

To appear in: *Journal of Number Theory*

Received date: 6 July 2016
Revised date: 11 August 2017
Accepted date: 18 August 2017

Please cite this article in press as: M.B. Nathanson, Comparison estimates for linear forms in additive number theory, *J. Number Theory* (2018), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jnt.2017.08.006>

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**COMPARISON ESTIMATES FOR LINEAR FORMS IN
ADDITIVE NUMBER THEORY**

MELVYN B. NATHANSON

ABSTRACT. Let R be a commutative ring with 1_R and with group of units R^\times . Let $\Phi = \Phi(t_1, \dots, t_h) = \sum_{i=1}^h \varphi_i t_i$ be an h -ary linear form with nonzero coefficients $\varphi_1, \dots, \varphi_h \in R$. Let M be an R -module. For every subset A of M , the image of A under Φ is

$$\Phi(A) = \{\Phi(a_1, \dots, a_h) : (a_1, \dots, a_h) \in A^h\}.$$

For every subset I of $\{1, 2, \dots, h\}$, there is the subset sum $s_I = \sum_{i \in I} \varphi_i$. Let $\mathcal{S}(\Phi) = \{s_I : \emptyset \neq I \subseteq \{1, 2, \dots, h\}\}$.

Theorem. Let $\Upsilon(t_1, \dots, t_g) = \sum_{i=1}^g v_i t_i$ and $\Phi(t_1, \dots, t_h) = \sum_{i=1}^h \varphi_i t_i$ be linear forms with nonzero coefficients in the ring R . If $\{0, 1\} \subseteq \mathcal{S}(\Upsilon)$ and $\mathcal{S}(\Phi) \subseteq R^\times$, then for every $\varepsilon > 0$ and $c > 1$ there exist a finite R -module M with $|M| > c$ and a subset A of M such that $\Upsilon(A \cup \{0\}) = M$ and $|\Phi(A)| < \varepsilon|M|$.

1. THE PROBLEM

In 1973, Haight [2] proved that for all positive integers h and ℓ there exist a positive integer m and a subset A of $\mathbf{Z}/m\mathbf{Z}$ such that

$$A - A = \mathbf{Z}/m\mathbf{Z}$$

but the h -fold sumset hA omits ℓ consecutive congruence classes. Ruzsa [5], refining Haight's method, recently proved that, for every positive integer h and every $\varepsilon > 0$, there exist a positive integer m and a subset A of $\mathbf{Z}/m\mathbf{Z}$ such that

$$A - A = \mathbf{Z}/m\mathbf{Z} \quad \text{and} \quad |hA| < \varepsilon m.$$

The difference set $A - A$ is the image of A under the linear form $\Upsilon(t_1, t_2) = t_1 - t_2$ and the h -fold sumset hA is the image of A under the linear form $\Phi(t_1, t_2, \dots, t_h) = t_1 + t_2 + \dots + t_h$. Equivalently, Ruzsa constructed a subset A of the \mathbf{Z} -module $M = \mathbf{Z}/m\mathbf{Z}$ such that

$$\Upsilon(A) = M \quad \text{and} \quad |\Phi(A)| < \varepsilon|M|.$$

This is a significant result in additive number theory. In this paper, we extend Ruzsa's theorem to a large class of pairs of linear forms Υ and Φ .

Let R be a commutative ring with multiplicative identity $1_R \neq 0$. We denote the group of units in R by R^\times . Associated to every sequence $(\varphi_1, \dots, \varphi_h)$ of nonzero

Date: September 18, 2017.

2010 Mathematics Subject Classification. 05A17, 11B13, 11B30, 11B75, 11P99.

Key words and phrases. Sumsets, difference sets, linear forms, additive number theory.

Supported in part by a grant from the PSC-CUNY Research Award Program.

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