

Title: Twistor Methods in N=4 SYM

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URL: <http://pirsa.org/11080052>

Abstract: I review how N=4 SYM can be reformulated as a theory on twistor space, and explain various calculations that have been performed there. In particular, twistors turn out to be a powerful tool for investigating the duality between scattering amplitudes and null polygonal Wilson Loops in the planar limit. The BCFW recursion relations are interpreted as the loop equations for a supersymmetric generalization of the Wilson Loop.



- (θ, x) WL \Leftrightarrow Loop integrand
- $(\epsilon, \tilde{\theta}, x)$ WL \Leftrightarrow Integrated laps.

$$\langle WL \rangle_{\text{loop}} \sim \pi \left(\frac{(x_i - x_j)^2}{(x_i - x_j)^2 + m^2} \right)$$



- $(0, x)$ WL \Leftrightarrow Loop integrand

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Introduction

Twistor methods have proved useful in a variety of calculations in 4d gauge theories.

There are two main reasons for this:

- **Twistor space carries a natural action of the space-time conformal group**
- **The twistor data for scattering processes / null polygonal Wilson Loops is unconstrained**

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In this talk, I will review how we can take advantage of these features by reformulating $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM in twistor space, particularly in the context of the duality between scattering amplitudes and null polygonal Wilson Loops.

- **Working in twistor space immediately allows us to generalize this duality beyond MHV amplitudes**
- **It also provides insight into why the duality holds at all**

Basic twistor geometry

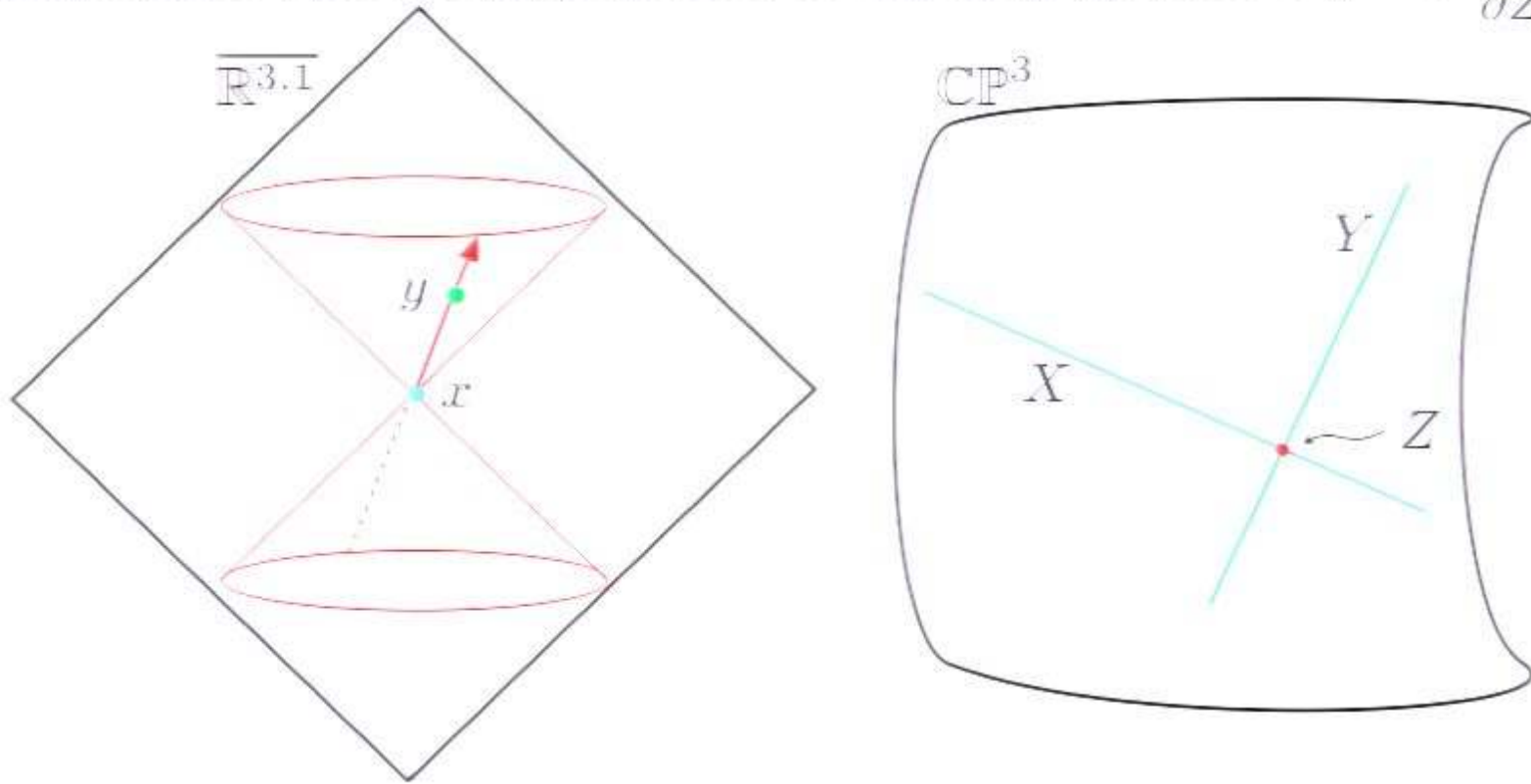
Twistor space is a copy of \mathbb{CP}^3 with homogeneous coordinates $Z^a = (\lambda_\alpha, \mu^{\dot{\alpha}})$.

The (complexified) space-time conformal group $SL(4, \mathbb{C})$ acts via the generators $J^a_b = Z^a \frac{\partial}{\partial Z^b}$.

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As Z varies over the Riemann sphere X in twistor space, the rays sweep out the null cone centered on x in space-time

- Pirs: 11080052
- If two twistor lines intersect, their corresponding space-time points are null-separated

The Penrose transform

Massless free fields of all helicities have a beautiful description on twistor space:

$$H^1(\mathbb{CP}^{3'}, \mathcal{O}(2h-2)) \cong \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Analytic sol's of wave eqn for} \\ \text{massless free field, helicity } h \end{array} \right\}$$



described locally by **arbitrary** holomorphic function of homogeneity $2h-2$

of twistor momenta space

$$o(x) = \oint \langle \lambda d\lambda \rangle \Phi_{-2}(Z)|_{\mu=i x \lambda} \quad \Phi \in H^1(\mathbb{CP}^{3'}, \mathcal{O}(-2))$$

$$\square o(x) = \oint \langle \lambda d\lambda \rangle \square \Phi_{-2}(Z)|_{\mu=i x \lambda} = \oint \langle \lambda d\lambda \rangle \lambda^\alpha \lambda_\alpha \frac{\partial^2 \Phi_{-2}}{\partial \mu^{\dot{\alpha}} \partial \mu_{\dot{\alpha}}} = 0$$

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In a Dolbeault representation, this cohomology group arises as the field equation of twistor action

$$S = \int D^3Z \wedge \Phi \bar{\partial} \Phi \quad \text{where } \Phi \in \Omega^{0,1}(\mathbb{CP}^3, \mathcal{O}(-2)) \text{ off-shell.}$$

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of positive or negative degree

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Non-linear extensions: Penrose-Ward construction considers **holomorphic bundles** rather than just

fields leading to **self-dual Yang-Mills**. This is the basis of the ADHM construction of instantons. Page 12/58

$\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on twistor space

$\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM can be described by the twistor space action

$$S = \int D^{3|4}Z \wedge \text{Tr} \left(\mathcal{A} \bar{\partial} \mathcal{A} + \frac{2}{3} \mathcal{A}^3 \right) + g^2 \int d^{4|8}x \log \det (\bar{\partial} + \mathcal{A})_X$$

where $\mathcal{A} \in \Omega^{(0,1)}(\mathbb{CP}^{3|4}, \text{End}E)$ is a connection (0,1)-form superfield

$$\mathcal{A}(Z, v) = a(Z) + v^A \Gamma_A(Z) + \frac{1}{2} v^A v^B \phi_{AB}(Z) + \frac{\epsilon_{ABCD}}{3!} v^A v^B v^C \tilde{\Gamma}^D(Z) + \frac{\epsilon_{ABCD}}{4!} v^A v^B v^C v^D g(Z)$$

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• Expanding in powers of the field, the terms proportional to the coupling are

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giving an infinite sum of MHV vertices.

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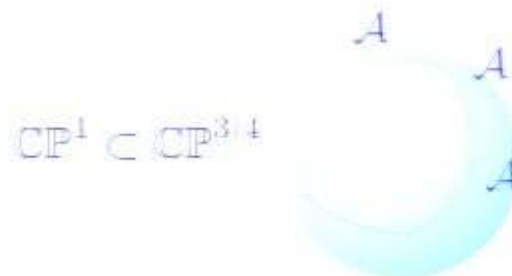
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giving an infinite sum of MHV vertices.

• By choosing the gauge $(\bar{\partial}^{\dagger} \mathcal{A})_X = 0$, we can reduce the twistor action to the space-time SYM action

$$S = \int \text{Tr} (G^- \wedge F_A + \text{susy}) + 2g^2 \int \text{Tr} (G^- \wedge G^- + \text{susy})$$

$$= \frac{1}{4g^2} \int \text{Tr} (F_A \wedge *F_A) + \text{susy} \quad (\text{after integrating out } G^- \text{ using its algebraic eom}).$$

Scattering Amplitudes

Projective delta-functions & the twistor propagator

To use this action, we first need the propagator. This is one of a family of projective delta-functions:

$$\bar{\delta}^{3|4}(Z_1, Z_2) \equiv \int \frac{ds}{s} \bar{\delta}^{4|4}(Z_1 + sZ_2) \quad \text{imposing coincidence of } Z_1, Z_2 \in \mathbb{CP}^{3|4}$$

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for any $z \in \mathbb{C}$ we have

$$\bar{\delta}(z) = \frac{1}{2\pi i} \bar{\partial} \left(\frac{1}{z} \right) = d\bar{z} \delta(\operatorname{Re} z) \delta(\operatorname{Im} z)$$

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⋮

$$\bar{\delta}^{0|4}(Z_1, Z_2, Z_3, Z_4, Z_5) \equiv \int \prod_{i=1}^4 \frac{ds_i}{s_i} \bar{\delta}^{4|4}(Z_1 + s_1Z_2 + s_2Z_3 + s_3Z_4 + s_4Z_5)$$

$$= \frac{\bar{\delta}^{0|4}(\chi_1(2345) + \text{cyclic})}{(1234)(2345)(3451)(4512)(5123)}$$

$$\equiv [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] (= R_{5;13}) \quad \text{(the basic superconformal invariant)}$$

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For $r \leq 3$ these obey $\bar{\partial} \left(\bar{\delta}^{r|4}(Z_1, \dots, Z_{5-r}) \right) = 2\pi i \sum_i (-1)^{i+1} \bar{\delta}^{r+1|4}(Z_1, \dots, Z_i, \dots, Z_{5-r})$

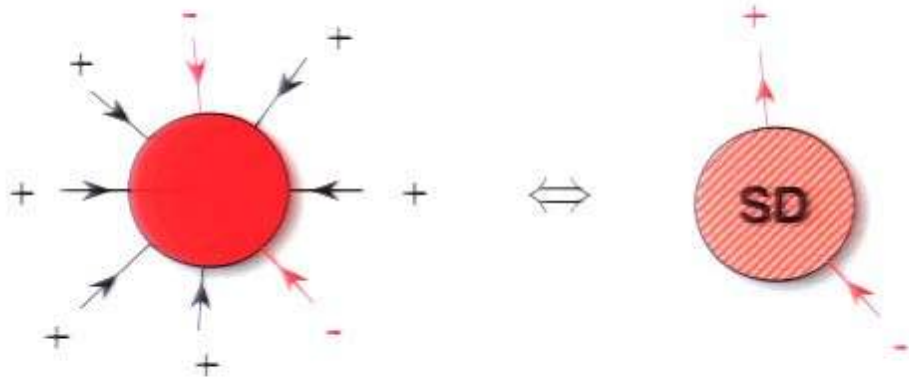
so in the axial gauge $\bar{Z}_*^{\bar{a}} \mathcal{A}_{\bar{a}} = 0$, the holomorphic Chern-Simons propagator is

$$\langle \mathcal{A}(Z) \mathcal{A}(Z') \rangle = \bar{\delta}^{2|4}(Z, Z_*, Z')$$

since $\bar{\partial} \left(\bar{\delta}^{2|4}(Z, Z_*, Z') \right) = \bar{\delta}^{3|4}(Z, Z') - \text{spurious}$

CSW diagrams are Feynman diagrams

MHV tree amplitudes can be interpreted as the scattering of a particle traveling on a self-dual background



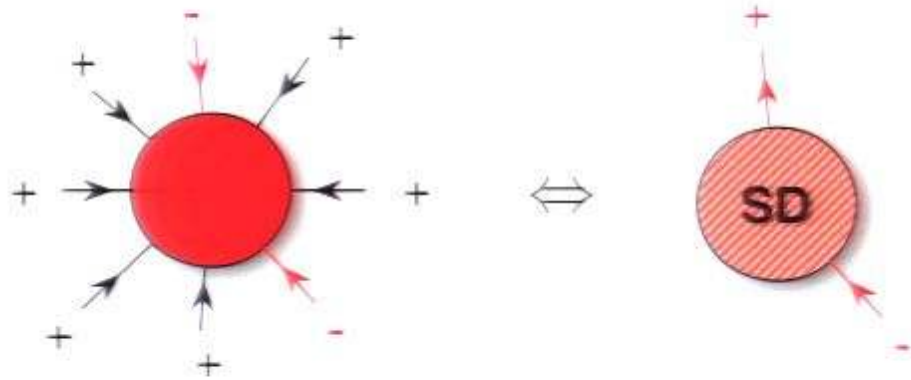
In twistor space they are just the statement that the amplitude is supported on a line $[\infty]$

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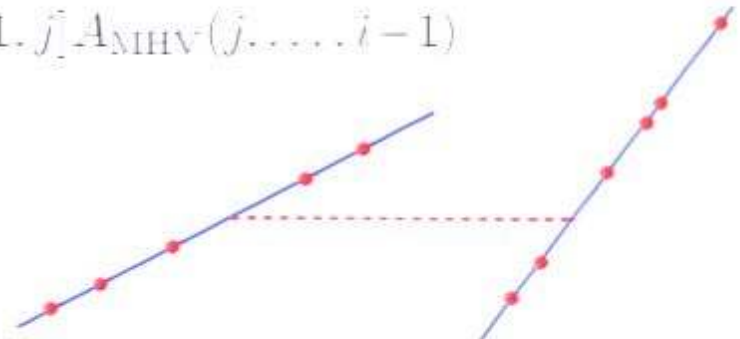
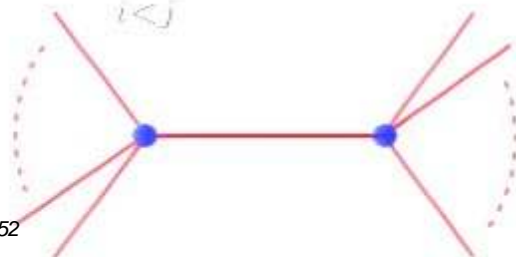
In twistor space they are just the statement that the amplitude is supported on a line $l^{[2]}$

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Beyond MHV we join vertices with propagators as usual. For example

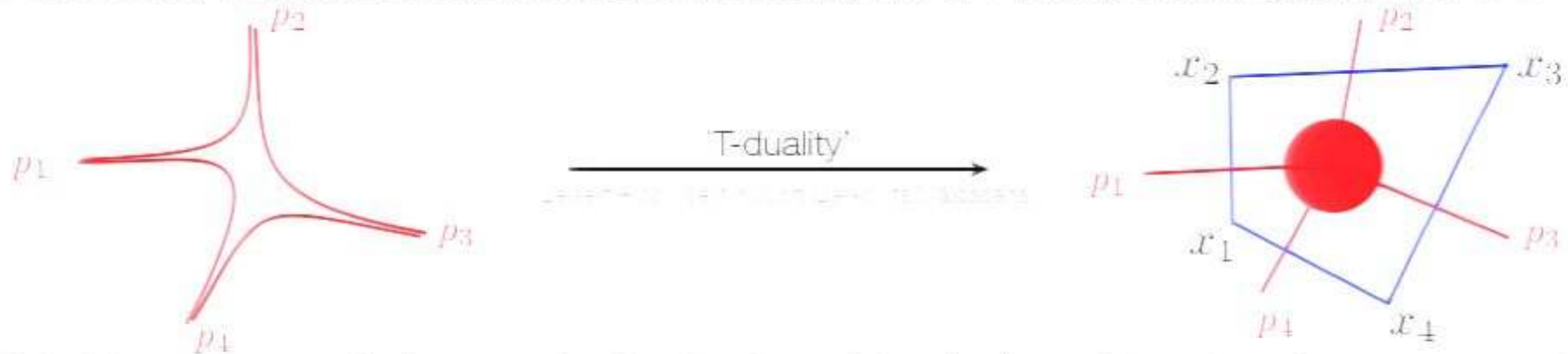
$$\begin{aligned} A_{\text{NMHV}} &= \sum_{i < j} \int D^{3|4}Z D^{3|4}Z' A_{\text{MHV}}(i, \dots, j-1, Z) \delta^{2|4}(Z, Z_*, Z') A_{\text{MHV}}(Z', j, \dots, i-1) \\ &= \sum_{i < j} A_{\text{MHV}}(i, \dots, j-1) [* , i-1, i, j-1, j] A_{\text{MHV}}(j, \dots, i-1) \end{aligned}$$



Null Polygonal Wilson Loops

Null polygonal Wilson Loops in space-time

In 2007, Alday & Maldacena studied the strong-coupling limit of 4-particle scattering using AdS/CFT.

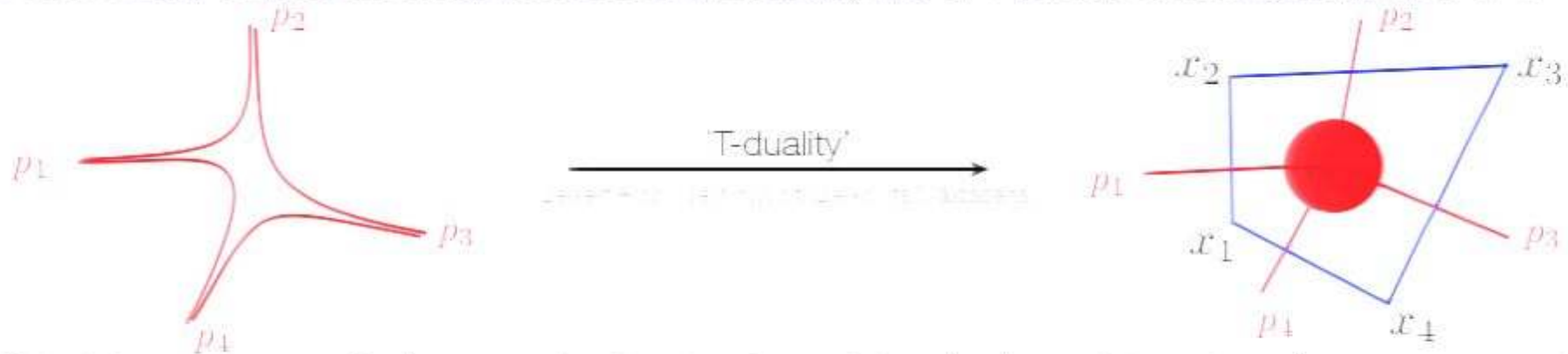


Calculation reduces to finding area of minimal surface with null polygonal boundary. Answer agrees with expectation from Bern-Dixon-Smirnov ansatz for all-orders scattering amplitude.

Inspired by this, Drummond, Henn, Korchemsky & Sokatchev studied NPWLs at weak coupling, again finding agreement with the MHV scattering amplitude at 1-loop. Results subsequently extended to all 1-loop MHV amplitudes [\[1\]](#), and 2-loop MHV amplitudes by many authors [\[2\]](#), and to n particles at strong coupling [\[3\]](#).

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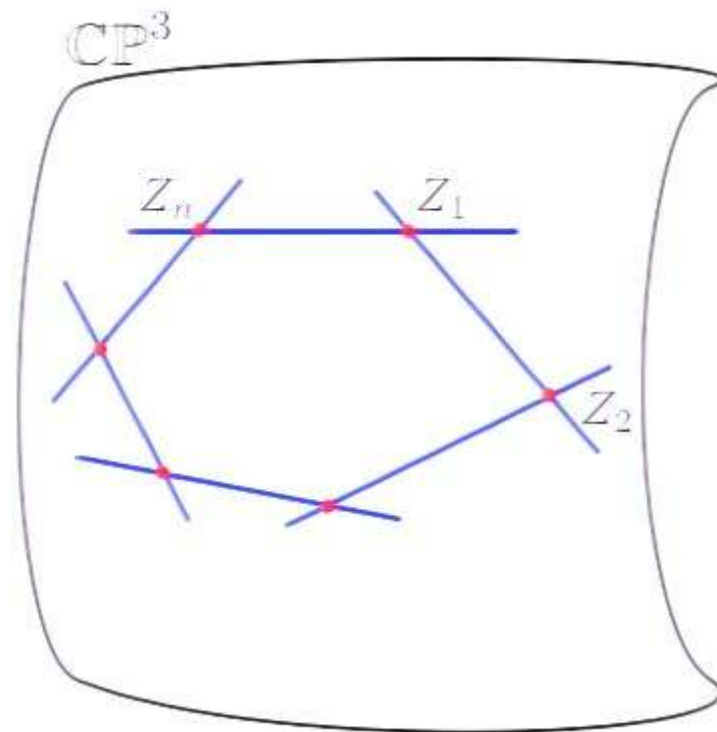
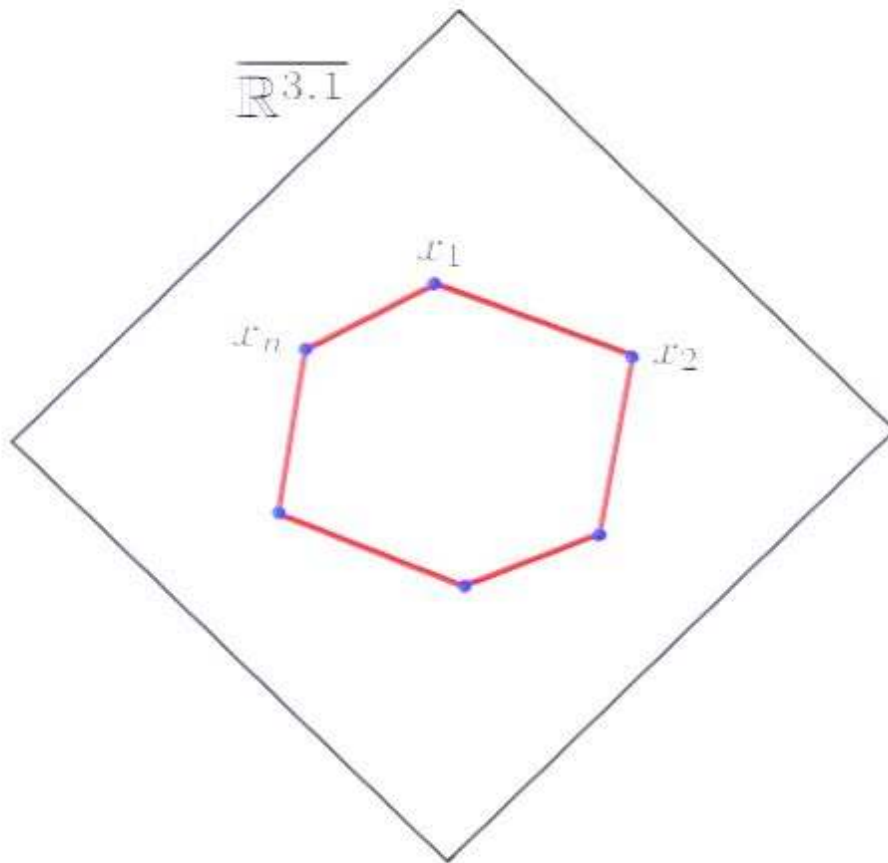
These case-by-case calculations raise two important questions:

1) Can one extend the duality beyond the MHV sector?

2. Why does the duality work at all / Does it continue to hold to all orders?

Null polygonal Wilson Loops in twistor space

- The null edges of the polygon correspond to points Z_i in twistor space, while the vertices $\{x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n\}$ of the space-time polygon correspond to the lines $\{Z_n Z_1, Z_1 Z_2, \dots, Z_{n-1} Z_n\}$ in twistor space.



- If the twistor data is **unconstrained**: given arbitrary Z_i , the twistor lines intersect by construction, so the corresponding space-time vertices are inevitably null separated. Page 29/58

Holomorphic frames

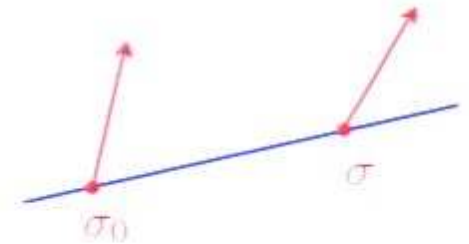
Just like a real parallel propagator, there is a unique **holomorphic frame** $U(\sigma, \sigma_0)$ that obeys

$$(\bar{\partial} + \mathcal{A})_X U(\sigma, \sigma_0) = 0 \quad \text{with boundary condition} \quad U(\sigma_0, \sigma_0) = 1$$

$$U(\sigma_1, \sigma_2)U(\sigma_2, \sigma_3) = U(\sigma_1, \sigma_3) \quad \text{concatenation}$$

$$U(\sigma_2, \sigma_1) = U(\sigma_1, \sigma_2)^{-1} \quad \text{inverse}$$

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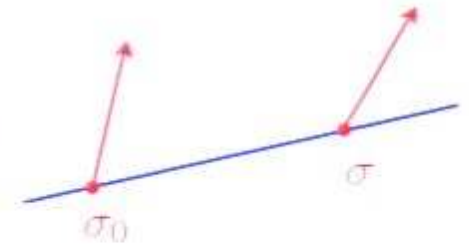
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We can (formally) solve for $U(\sigma, \sigma_0)$ as

$$U(\sigma, \sigma_0) = \text{P exp} \left(- \int \omega \wedge \mathcal{A} \right)$$

where ω is the Green's function for the $\bar{\partial}$ -operator on X .

Holomorphic frames

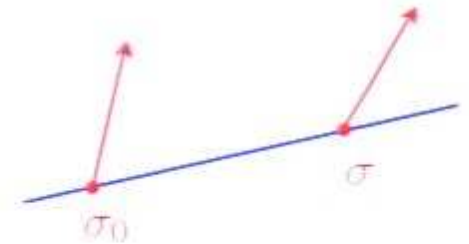
Just like a real parallel propagator, there is a unique **holomorphic frame** $U(\sigma, \sigma_0)$ that obeys

$$(\bar{\partial} + \mathcal{A})_X U(\sigma, \sigma_0) = 0 \quad \text{with boundary condition} \quad U(\sigma_0, \sigma_0) = 1$$

$$U(\sigma_1, \sigma_2)U(\sigma_2, \sigma_3) = U(\sigma_1, \sigma_3) \quad \text{concatenation}$$

$$U(\sigma_2, \sigma_1) = U(\sigma_1, \sigma_2)^{-1} \quad \text{inverse}$$

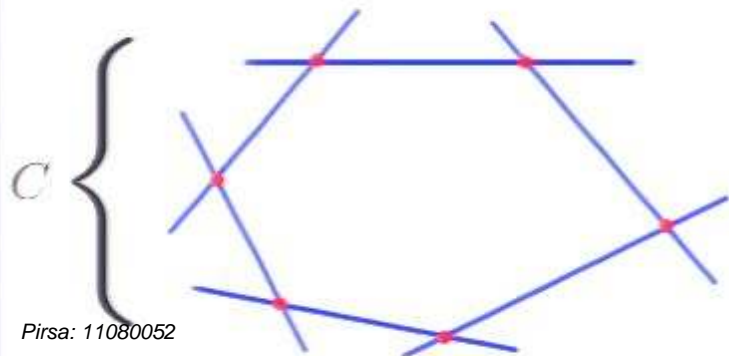
$$U(\sigma_1, \sigma_2) \rightarrow g^{-1}(\sigma_1)U(\sigma_1, \sigma_0)g(\sigma_0) \quad \text{gauge transformation}$$



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Pirsa: 11080052

$$\langle W[C] \rangle = \frac{1}{N} \left\langle \text{Tr P exp} \left(- \int_C \omega \wedge \mathcal{A} \right) \right\rangle_{\mathcal{N}=4 \text{ SYM}}$$

- Computes trace of holonomy of (super-)connection around C .
- Is the twistor field expression for space-time Wilson loop.
- Expectation value gives all **complete planar S-matrix**.

- Trees and Loops.

- $(H_{\text{loops}})_{\text{mp}} = (H_{\text{trees}} + k) W_L$

- $A_n(p, \pi) = \frac{\delta^4(\epsilon p) \delta^{\sigma_1 \dots \sigma_n}(\epsilon \lambda n)}{s_{12} s_{23} \dots s_{n-1 n}} W_n(x, \frac{Q}{\Lambda}) ; \epsilon = \frac{2\pi k}{4\pi}$

- $\left[q_{\mu\nu} + \alpha' \frac{\partial}{\partial \sigma_{\mu\nu}} \right] W_n(x, \frac{Q}{\Lambda}) = 0$

$\omega(\sigma) = \frac{d\sigma(\sigma_2 - \sigma_1)}{(\sigma_2 - \sigma)(\sigma - \sigma_1)}$

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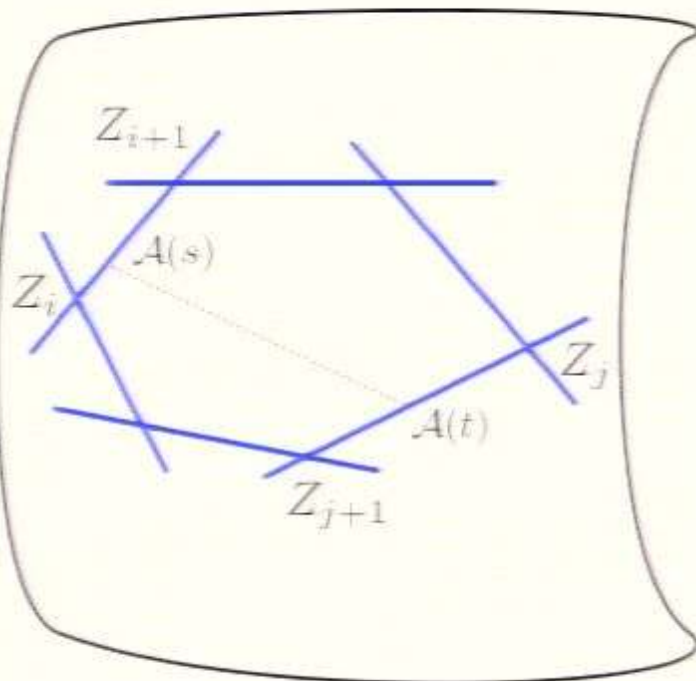
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Explicit examples - tree amplitudes

The coupling constant appears only in front of the MHV vertices, so to lowest order (g^0) the Wilson Loop correlator is computed purely using holomorphic Chern-Simons theory.



• At lowest order in the field, the Wilson Loop correlator becomes

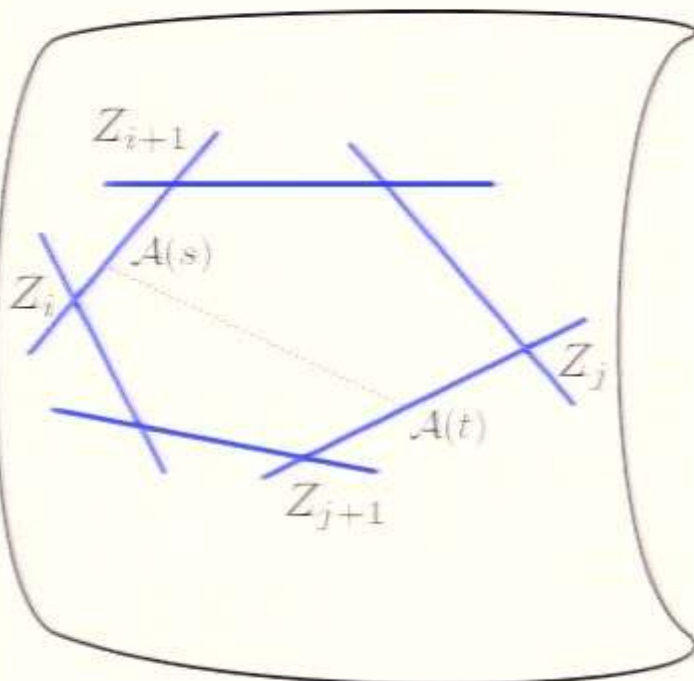
$$\begin{aligned} \langle W[C] \rangle &= 1 + \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i,j} \int \frac{ds}{s} \frac{dt}{t} \langle \mathcal{A}(s) \mathcal{A}(t) \rangle + \dots \\ &= 1 + \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i,j} [* , i, i+1, j, j+1] + \dots \end{aligned}$$

giving the NMHV tree amplitude (divided by an overall factor of the MHV tree).

• Diagrams between adjacent edges require care Beilitsky, Korchemsky, Sokatchev
They may be handled by *framing* the Wilson Loop, whereupon they vanish in limit the framing is taken to zero.

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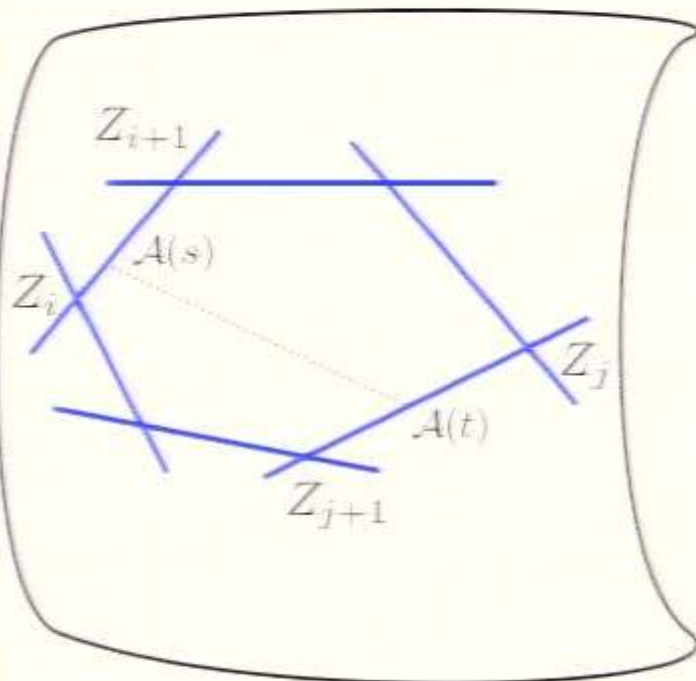
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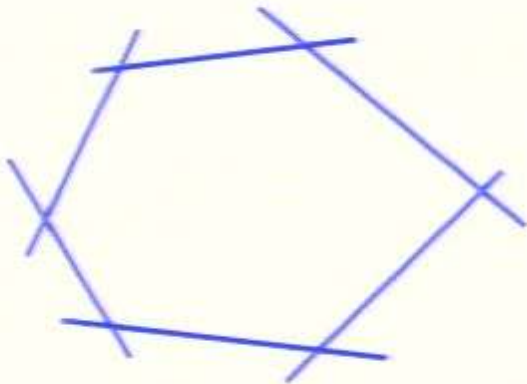
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In axial gauge, Wilson Loop Feynman diagrams are the planar duals of MHV diagrams for the amplitude.

$$\langle WL \rangle = 1 + \sum_{i < j-1} \text{Diagram 1} + \sum_{i < j-1 < k < l-1} \text{Diagram 2} + \sum_{i < j-1 < l-2} \text{Diagram 3} + \dots + \mathcal{O}(g^2)$$

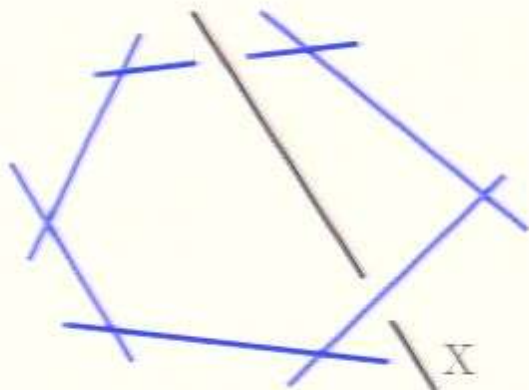
Explicit examples - the loop integrand

All dependence on the coupling constant comes from insertions of $g^2 \int d^4x \log \det (\bar{\partial} + \mathcal{A})_X$ from the action, representing an infinite series of MHV vertices



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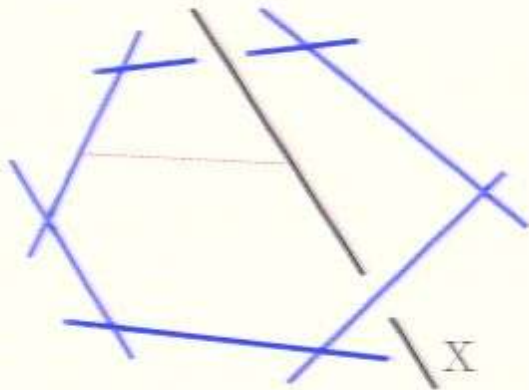
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- Each such insertion introduces a new line X into the twistor picture. The location of X is to be integrated over - this is the loop integral.

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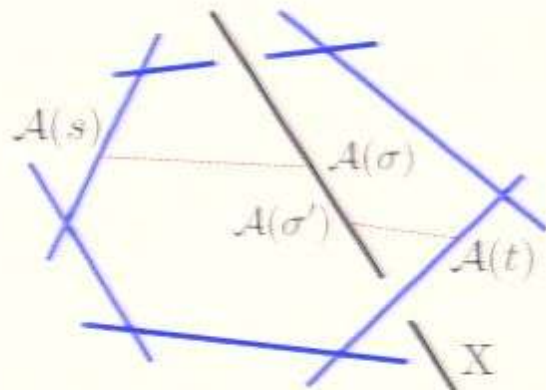
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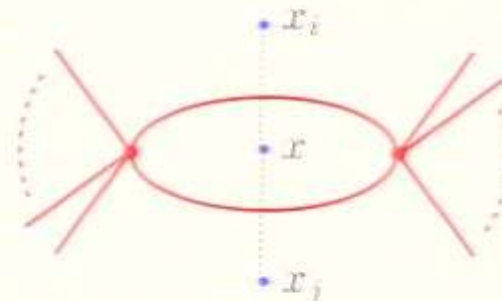
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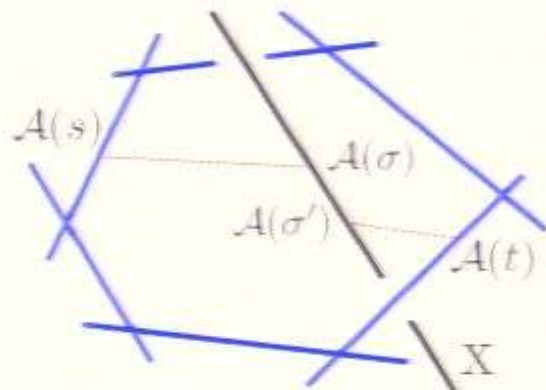
$$\begin{aligned} \langle W[C] \rangle_{\mathcal{O}(g^2)} &= \frac{1}{2} \int d^{4|8}x \int \frac{ds dt}{s t} \frac{d\sigma d\sigma'}{(\sigma - \sigma')^2} \langle \mathcal{A}(s)\mathcal{A}(\sigma) \rangle \langle \mathcal{A}(\sigma')\mathcal{A}(t) \rangle + \dots \\ &= \frac{1}{2} \int d^{4|8}x \sum_{i,j} [*, i, i+1, A, B'] [*, j, j+1, A, B''] + \dots \quad \text{where } X = (AB) \end{aligned}$$

- Once again, the diagram for this correlation function is the planar dual of the MHV diagram for the same expression from the scattering amplitude.
- Calling on the “log det” vertex L times gives a contribution to the L loop amplitude.



Explicit examples - the loop integrand

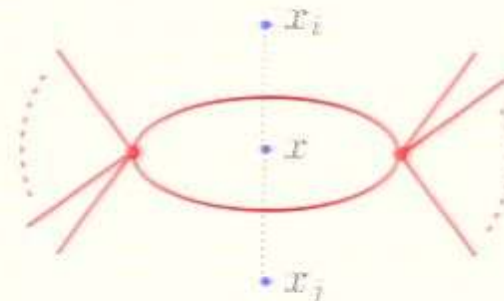
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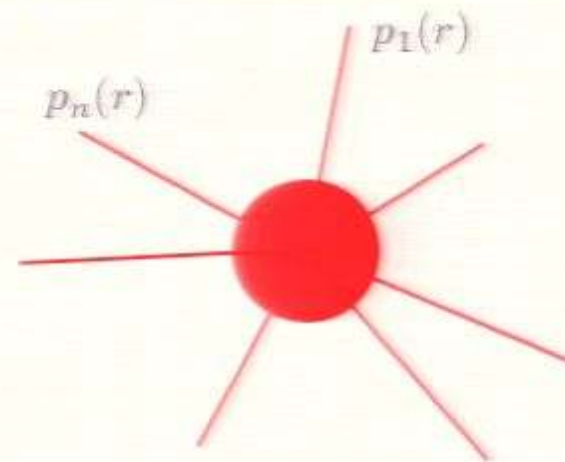
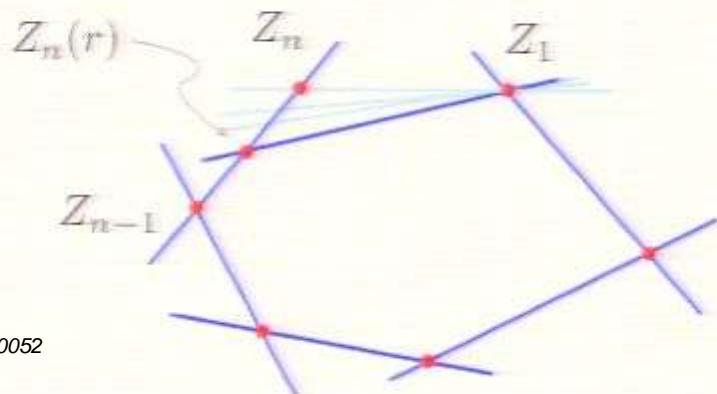
BCFW recursion and Wilson Loops

These examples provide some evidence that the duality between **Scattering Amplitudes and Wilson Loops** continues to hold for **the full superamplitude** and to **all orders in the loop expansion**.

To understand *why* it holds, we Britzmore 03 showed that the twistor Wilson Loop obeys the extension of the BCFW recursion relation Arkani-Hamed, Bourjaily, Cachazo, Caporin, Cheung, Trnka for the all-loop integrand.

- In scattering amplitudes, BCFW recursion starts by deforming the external momenta $p_i \rightarrow p_i(r)$ subject to the **constraints**

$$\sum_i p_i(r) = 0 \quad p_i^2(r) = 0$$



- These constraints mean that the deformed space-time Wilson Loop remains a closed polygon with null (but generically complex) edges.
- In twistor space, **there are no constraints!** We just vary the locations of the vertices Z_i arbitrarily. Page 45/58

Varying the Wilson Loop

Recall that under a smooth change in the curve, a real Wilson Loop obeys

$$\delta W[\gamma] = - \int_{\gamma} dx^{\mu} \wedge \delta x^{\nu} \operatorname{Tr} \left[F_{\mu\nu}(x) \operatorname{P exp} \left(- \int_x^x A \right) \right]$$

saying (e.g.) that the Wilson Loop is unchanged if γ varies only in a region where the field-strength vanishes.

$$\bar{\delta} W[C] = - \int_C \omega \wedge d\bar{Z}^{\bar{a}} \wedge \bar{\delta} \bar{Z}^{\bar{b}} \operatorname{Tr} \left[\mathcal{F}_{\bar{a}\bar{b}}(Z) \operatorname{P exp} \left(- \int \omega \wedge \mathcal{A} \right) \right]$$

$\mathcal{F}^{0,2} = 0$ $W[C]$

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under a holomorphic change in the curve. This says that, if $\mathcal{F}^{0,2} = 0$, then $W[C]$ varies *holomorphically* over this holomorphic family of curves.

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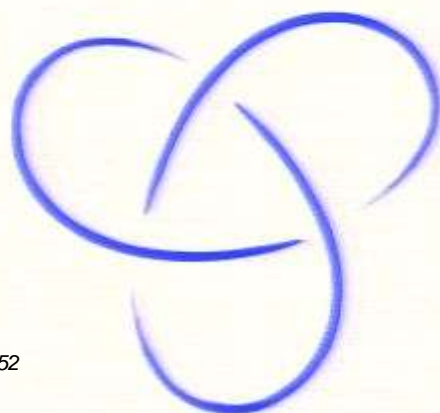
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The Migdal-Makeenko loop equations tell us how the correlation function, rather than the operator, behaves.

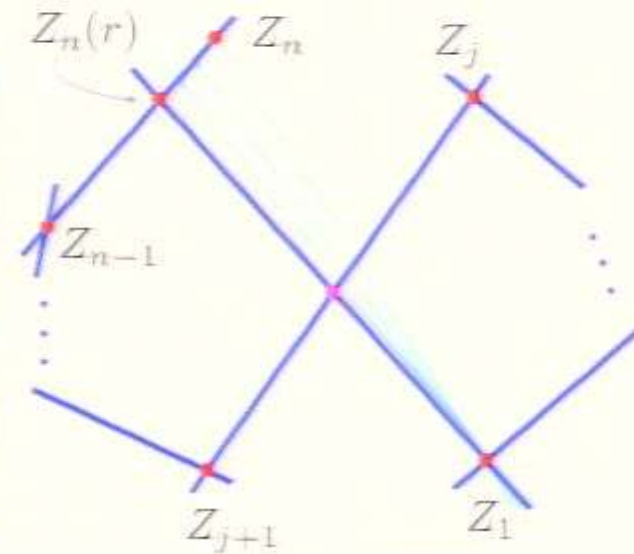


- In real Chern-Simons, $\langle W[\gamma] \rangle$ computes knot invariants such as the HOMFLY polynomial^[Witten].
- Migdal-Makeenko equations give (poor man's) derivation of the **skein relations** - i.e. recursion relations for the knot polynomial^[Coita-Rasmusino, Guadagnini, Martellini, Mintchev].
- From the point of view of Wilson Loops, tree-level BCFW recursion is a holomorphic analogue of these skein relations, while the amplitude itself is a **holomorphic linking invariant** of the twistor curve.

BCFW recursion as the loop equations

Beginning in the pure holomorphic Chern-Simons theory, integration by parts in the path integral gives

$$\begin{aligned}
 \langle \bar{\delta} W[C(r)] \rangle &= - \int_{\mathcal{C}} \omega \wedge \left\langle \text{Tr} \mathcal{F}^{(0,2)}(Z) \text{P exp} \left(- \int \omega \wedge \mathcal{A} \right) \right\rangle_{\text{hCS}} \\
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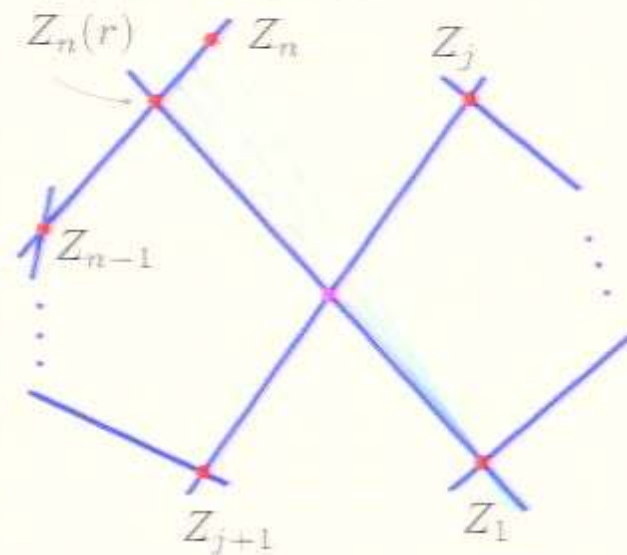
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for $U(N)$ theory

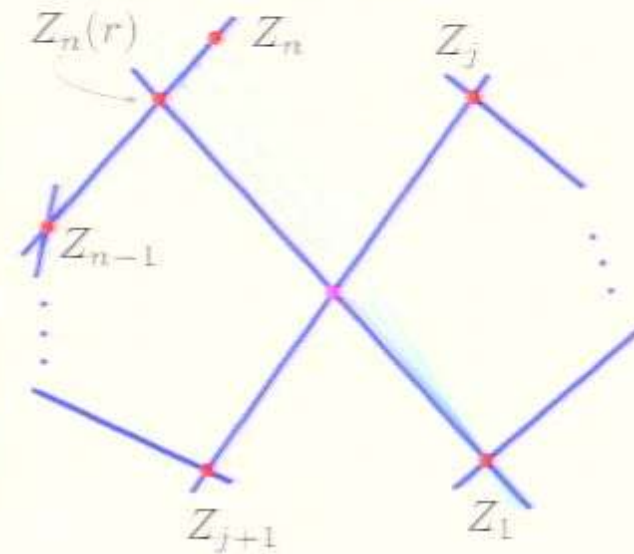
ensures only get contribution if $C(r)$ self-intersects as we deform



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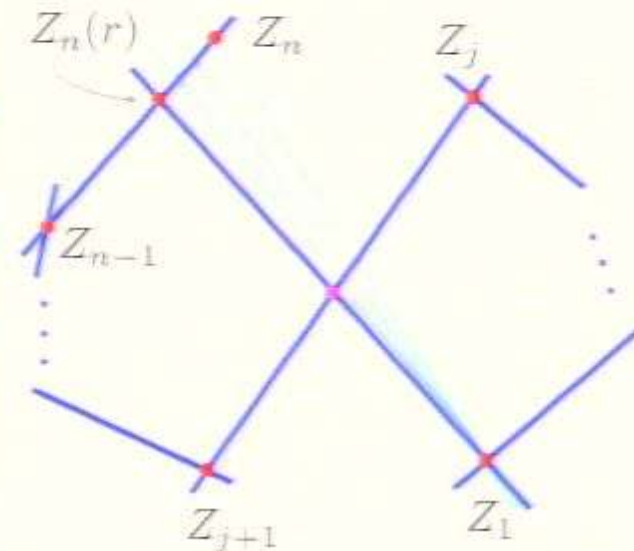
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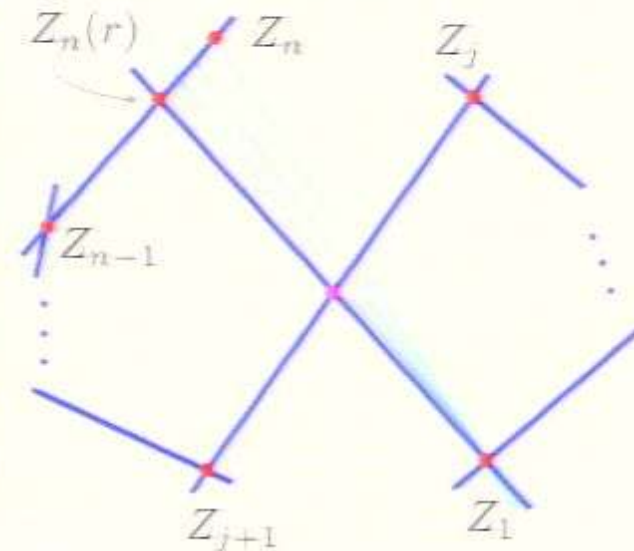


When the line $(n, 1)$ intersects $(j, j+1)$ we have $(x_1(r) - x_j)^2 = 0$, corresponding to a factorization channel of the amplitude.

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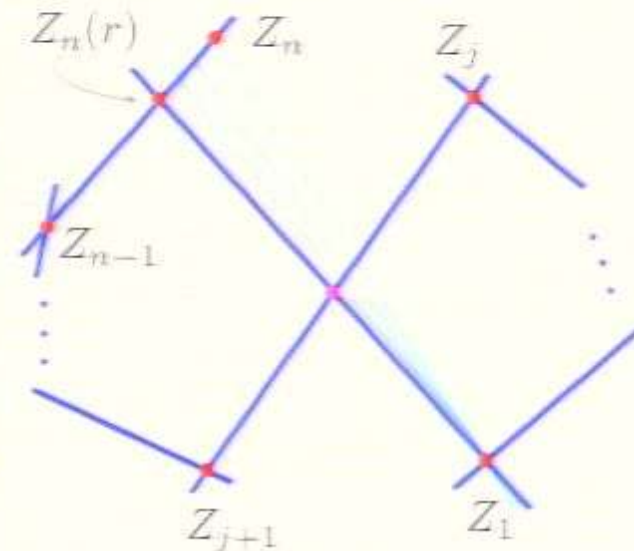
$$\langle \mathbf{W}[1, \dots, n] \rangle = \langle \mathbf{W}[1, \dots, n-1] \rangle + \sum_{j=2}^{n-2} [n-1, n, 1, j, j+1] \langle \mathbf{W}[1, \dots, j, Z_l] \rangle \langle \mathbf{W}[Z_l, j+1, \dots, n_r] \rangle$$

i.e., the **tree-level** BCFW recursion relation in momentum twistor space, summed over MHV degree.

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$$\langle W[1, \dots, n] \rangle = \langle W[1, \dots, n-1] \rangle + \sum_{j=2}^{n-2} [n-1, n, 1, j, j+1] \langle W[1, \dots, j, Z_l] \rangle \langle W[Z_l, j+1, \dots, n_r] \rangle$$

i.e., the **tree-level** BCFW recursion relation in momentum twistor space, summed over MHV degree.

Repeating this derivation for the full action (including the "log det" term) gives a new contribution to the loop equations that leads to the **all-loop extension** of BCFW.

Correlation functions of local operators

Local operators in twistor space

Local operators on space-time are non-local on twistor space:

$$\text{e.g. } \text{Tr } \phi^2(x) = \int_{X \times X} d\sigma d\sigma' \text{Tr} (\Phi(\sigma) U(\sigma, \sigma') \Phi(\sigma') U(\sigma', \sigma))$$



Once again, using the twistor superfield immediately yields the (chiral part) of the corresponding supermultiplet

$$\text{e.g. } \mathcal{O}_K(x, \theta, \bar{\theta} = 0) = \int_{X \times X} d\sigma d\sigma' \text{Tr} \left(\frac{\partial^2 \mathcal{A}}{\partial \psi^a \partial \psi^b} U(\sigma, \sigma') \frac{\partial^2 \mathcal{A}}{\partial \psi^c \partial \psi^d} U(\sigma', \sigma) \right) \epsilon^{abcd}$$

There is also [Adzak, Eden, Heslop, Korchemsky, Maldacena, Sokatchev] a correspondence between scattering amplitudes and correlation functions of local operators in the null-separated limit.

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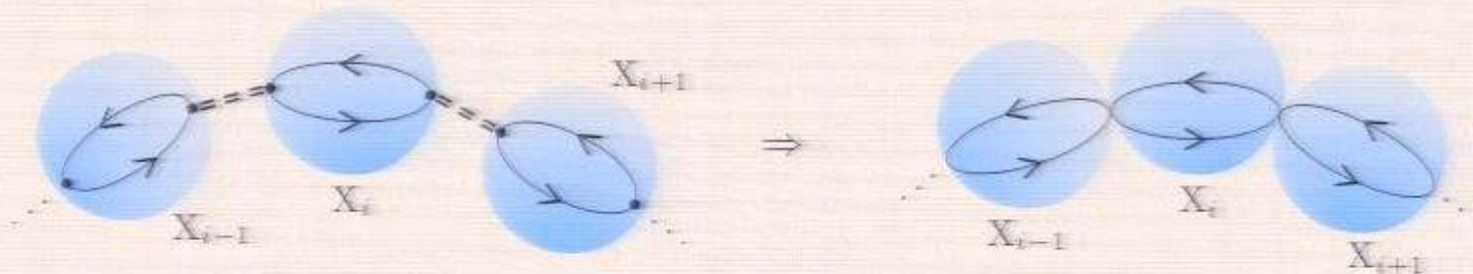


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There is also (Alcalay, Eden, Heslop, Korchemsky, Maldacena, Sokatchev) a correspondence between scattering amplitudes and correlation functions of local operators in the null-separated limit.

Correlators on the null cone and null Wilson Lines are closely related in any QFT. In twistor space, in the limit that the twistor lines intersect, factoring out a singular piece from the integrand leaves us with a Wilson Loop in the **adjoint**. In the planar limit this becomes the **square** of the scattering amplitude.



Conclusions

We constructed a natural holomorphic & supersymmetric Wilson Loop in twistor space and saw that its correlator using the twistor action for $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM computes the ratio of the all-loop S-matrix to the MHV tree.

- › **Perturbative computation in axial gauge \Leftrightarrow MHV / CSW diagrams.**
- › **Migdal-Makeenko Loop equations \Leftrightarrow BCFW recursion for the all-loop integrand.**

Despite much progress over the past few years, understanding QFT from the point of view of twistors is still very much in its infancy.

Nonetheless, I hope I've convinced you that twistors provide both insightful perspectives and useful tools for studying some interesting problems in QFT.