Physics and Geometry of the Knots-Quivers Correspondence

Pietro Longhi
ETH Zürich

joint with T. Ekholm and P. Kucharski

Geometric Correspondences of Gauge Theories
Trieste, June 17-21 2019

The main goal of our work is to understand the origins of a surprising conjecture connecting two very different subjects: knot theory and quiver representation theory.

The main goal of our work is to understand the origins of a surprising conjecture connecting two very different subjects: knot theory and quiver representation theory.

The conjecture relates colored HOMFLY-PT polynomials of K to motivic Donaldson-Thomas invariants of Q[♠]

$$\sum_{r\geqslant 1} H_r(a,q)\; x^r \;=\; P^Q(\vec{x},q)$$

[♠] [Kucharski-Reineke-Stosic-Sulkowski '17]

Knot theory distinguishes inequivalent embeddings $K : S^1 \hookrightarrow S^3$ by an assignment of topological invariants.

The HOMFLY-PT polynomial is defined recursively by

$$a\ H_1(L_+) - a^{-1}\ H_1(L_-) = (q - q^{-1}) H_1(L_0),$$

$$H_1(\bigcirc) = \frac{a - a^{-1}}{q - q^{-1}}\,.$$

Knot theory distinguishes inequivalent embeddings $K : S^1 \hookrightarrow S^3$ by an assignment of topological invariants.

The HOMFLY-PT polynomial is defined recursively by

$a\ H_1($  $) - a^{-1}\ H_1($  $) = (q - q^{-1}) H_1($  $),$

$H_1($  $) = \dfrac{a - a^{-1}}{q - q^{-1}}\ .$

For example

$H_1\left(\right.$  $\left.\right) = \dfrac{a - a^{-1}}{q - q^{-1}} \left(a^{-2}q^2 - a^{-4} + a^{-2}q^{-2}\right)\ .$

A quiver Q is an oriented graph, with nodes Q_0 connected by arrows. Let C_{ij} be the number of arrows $i \to j$.

A representation $M_{\vec{d}}$ of dimension $\vec{d} \in Q_0\mathbb{N}$ is the assignment

- vector spaces $\mathbb{C}^{d_i}$, $i = 1 \ldots |Q_0|$
- linear maps $f_\alpha : \mathbb{C}^{d_i} \to \mathbb{C}^{d_j}$, $\alpha = 1 \ldots C_{ij}$

A quiver Q is an oriented graph, with nodes Q_0 connected by arrows. Let C_{ij} be the number of arrows $i \to j$.

A representation $M_{\vec{d}}$ of dimension $\vec{d} \in Q_0\mathbb{N}$ is the assignment

- vector spaces $\mathbb{C}^{d_i}$, $i = 1 \ldots |Q_0|$
- linear maps $f_\alpha : \mathbb{C}^{d_i} \to \mathbb{C}^{d_j}$, $\alpha = 1 \ldots C_{ij}$

A representation $M_{\vec{d}}$ is semi-stable with respect to $\vec{\theta} \in Q_0\mathbb{R}$ if $\vec{d} \cdot \vec{\theta} = 0$, and $\vec{d'} \cdot \vec{\theta} \geqslant 0$ for every sub-representation $\vec{d'} \leqslant \vec{d}$. It is stable if $\vec{d'} \cdot \vec{\theta} = 0$ only for $\vec{d'} = \vec{d}, \vec{0}$.

Motivic DT invariants $\Omega_{\vec{d},j}$ are Betti numbers of moduli spaces of stable representations with fixed dimension.

Motivic DT invariants $\Omega_{\vec{d},j}$ are Betti numbers of moduli spaces of stable representations with fixed dimension.

We will focus on symmetric quivers: $C_{ij} = C_{ji}$.
Their representation theory is completely understood♠

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q) = \sum_{\vec{d}} (-q)^{\vec{d} \cdot C \cdot \vec{d}} \prod_{i=1}^{|Q_0|} \frac{x_i^{d_i}}{(q^2; q^2)_{d_i}}$$

♠[Efimov '11]

Motivic DT invariants $\Omega_{\vec{d},j}$ are Betti numbers of moduli spaces of stable representations with fixed dimension.

We will focus on symmetric quivers: $C_{ij} = C_{ji}$.
Their representation theory is completely understood[♠]

$$P^Q(\vec{x},q) = \sum_{\vec{d}} (-q)^{\vec{d}\cdot C\cdot\vec{d}} \prod_{i=1}^{|Q_0|} \frac{x_i^{d_i}}{(q^2;q^2)_{d_i}}$$
$$= \prod_{\vec{d}} \prod_{j\in\mathbb{Z}} (q^j \vec{x}^{\vec{d}}; q^2)_\infty^{(-1)^j \Omega_{\vec{d},j}}$$

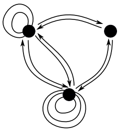
$\Omega_{\vec{d},j}$ are positive integers.

[♠][Efimov '11]

The Knots-Quivers correspondence♠ conjectures that for each K there is a quiver Q, and integers a_i, q_i, such that

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q)\Big|_{x_i = x\, a^{a_i}\, q^{q_i}} = \sum_{r \geqslant 0} H_r(a,q)\ x^r$$

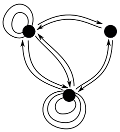
Example:



♠[Kucharski-Reineke-Stosic-Sulkowski '17];

The Knots-Quivers correspondence♠ conjectures that for each K there is a quiver Q, and integers a_i, q_i, such that

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q)\Big|_{x_i = x\, a^{a_i}\, q^{q_i}} = \sum_{r \geqslant 0} H_r(a,q)\; x^r$$

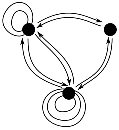
Example:  

More sophisticated versions involve superpolynomials and knot homologies.

♠[Kucharski-Reineke-Stosic-Sulkowski '17];

The Knots-Quivers correspondence[♠] conjectures that for each K there is a quiver Q, and integers a_i, q_i, such that

$$P^{Q}(\vec{x}, q)\Big|_{x_i = x\, a^{a_i}\, q^{q_i}} = \sum_{r \geqslant 0} H_r(a,q)\; x^r$$

Example:  

More sophisticated versions involve superpolynomials and knot homologies.

Evidence: (2,p), (3,p) torus knots; $TK_{2|p|+2}$, TK_{2p+1} twist knots. Proved for rational links.[♣]

[♠][Kucharski-Reineke-Stosic-Sulkowski '17]; [♣][Stosic-Wedrich '17]

Today we focus on the most basic statement

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q)\Big|_{x_i = x\, a^{a_i}\, q^{q_i}} = \sum_{r \geqslant 0} H_r(a, q)\ x^r$$

Today we focus on the most basic statement

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q)\Big|_{x_i = x\, a^{a_i}\, q^{q_i}} = \sum_{r \geqslant 0} H_r(a, q)\ x^r$$

Why do knot invariants admit a quiver description?

Today we focus on the most basic statement

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q)\Big|_{x_i = x\, a^{a_i}\, q^{q_i}} = \sum_{r \geqslant 0} H_r(a, q)\; x^r$$

Why do knot invariants admit a quiver description?

∘ Given a knot K, how to get the dual quiver Q?

∘ What is the meaning of nodes and arrows of Q?

∘ What is the meaning of parameters a_i, q_i?

∘ Is there a unique quiver Q for a given knot K?

...

Today we focus on the most basic statement

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q)\Big|_{x_i = x\, a^{a_i}\, q^{q_i}} = \sum_{r \geqslant 0} H_r(a, q)\, x^r$$

Why do knot invariants admit a quiver description?

◦ Given a knot K, how to get the dual quiver Q?

◦ What is the meaning of nodes and arrows of Q?

◦ What is the meaning of parameters a_i, q_i?

◦ Is there a unique quiver Q for a given knot K?

...

Strategy: understand connection via String Theory.

Knots in physics

$H_R(a = q^N, q^2 = e^{\frac{2\pi i}{N+k}}) = \langle W_R[K] \rangle_{S^3}$ in $U(N)_k$ Chern-Simons.♠

♠[Witten '89];

Knots in physics

$H_R(a = q^N, q^2 = e^{\frac{2\pi i}{N+k}}) = \langle W_R[K] \rangle_{S^3}$ in $U(N)_k$ Chern-Simons.♠

Without loops, Chern-Simons theory on S^3 is equivalent to open topological strings with $e^{g_s} = q^2$ on $T^\star S^3$ with N A-branes.♣

The 't Hooft limit corresponds to a geometric transition, leading to closed topological strings on the resolved conifold with $t = N g_s$.♢

♠[Witten '89]; ♣ [Witten '95]; ♢ [Gopakumar-Vafa '98];

Knots in physics

$H_R(a = q^N, q^2 = e^{\frac{2\pi i}{N+k}}) = \langle W_R[K] \rangle_{S^3}$ in $U(N)_k$ Chern-Simons.♠

Without loops, Chern-Simons theory on S^3 is equivalent to open topological strings with $e^{g_s} = q^2$ on $T^\star S^3$ with N A-branes.♣

The 't Hooft limit corresponds to a geometric transition, leading to closed topological strings on the resolved conifold with $t = N g_s$.♢

Knots can be reintroduced by insertion of a "knot conormal" brane on $L_K \subset T^* S^3$, which transitions to a brane in the conifold Y.♡

$$Z_{top}^{open}(Y, L_K) = \sum_{r \geqslant 0} H_r(a, q)\, x^r$$

♠[Witten '89]; ♣ [Witten '95]; ♢ [Gopakumar-Vafa '98]; ♡ [Ooguri-Vafa '99]

x is a brane modulus for $L_K \simeq \mathbb{R}^2 \times S^1$: one real deformation[♠] complexified by $U(1)$ holonomy

$$x = e^{i\,X} = e^{r + i \oint_{S^1} A} \qquad \text{(longitude)}$$

[♠] [McLean '98];

x is a brane modulus for $L_K \simeq \mathbb{R}^2 \times S^1$: one real deformation♠ complexified by $U(1)$ holonomy

$$x = e^{i\,X} = e^{r + i \oint_{S^1} A} \qquad \text{(longitude)}$$

Classical phase space of flat $U(1)$ connections on $\partial L_K \simeq T^2$ is also T^2. Canonical quantization yields plane waves♣

$$\psi_n(x) = e^{\frac{i}{\hbar}\,X \cdot P_n}\,, \qquad P_n = n\,\frac{2\pi i}{k} = n\,\hbar\,.$$

♠[McLean '98];♣[Elitzur-Moore-Schwimmer-Seiberg '88]

x is a brane modulus for $L_K \simeq \mathbb{R}^2 \times S^1$: one real deformation♠ complexified by $U(1)$ holonomy

$$x = e^{i\,X} = e^{r + i \oint_{S^1} A} \qquad \text{(longitude)}$$

Classical phase space of flat $U(1)$ connections on $\partial L_K \simeq T^2$ is also T^2. Canonical quantization yields plane waves♣

$$\psi_n(x) = e^{\frac{i}{\hbar}\,X \cdot P_n}\,, \qquad P_n = n\,\frac{2\pi i}{k} = n\,\hbar\,.$$

Therefore $x^n = \psi_n(x)$ is a wavefunction, and so is

$$Z_{top}^{open}(Y, L_K) = \sum_{r \geqslant 0} H_r(a,q)\,\psi_r(x) \quad \in \; \mathscr{H}[\partial L_K]$$

♠[McLean '98];♣[Elitzur-Moore-Schwimmer-Seiberg '88]

Let's consider the semiclassical limit ($q^2 = e^{g_s} \to 1$) of both sides:

$$Z^{open}_{top}(Y, L_K) \sim e^{\frac{1}{g_s} W_{disk}(a,x) + \dots}$$

Let's consider the semiclassical limit $(q^2 = e^{g_s} \to 1)$ of both sides:

$$Z_{top}^{open}(Y, L_K) \sim e^{\frac{1}{g_s} W_{disk}(a,x) + \ldots}$$

while discretized momenta $n = \frac{P_n}{\hbar} \sim \frac{1}{g_s} \log y$ become continuous

$$\sum_{n \geqslant 0} H_n(a,q)\, x^n \;\; \sim \;\; \int \frac{dy}{y}\, e^{\,\frac{1}{g_s}[\underbrace{-\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_{L_K}(a,y)}_{\text{sources}} + \underbrace{\log x \cdot \log y}_{S_{\text{CS}}}] + \ldots}$$

Let's consider the semiclassical limit ($q^2 = e^{g_s} \to 1$) of both sides:

$$Z_{top}^{open}(Y, L_K) \sim e^{\frac{1}{g_s} W_{disk}(a,x) + \dots}$$

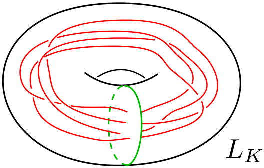
while discretized momenta $n = \frac{P_n}{\hbar} \sim \frac{1}{g_s} \log y$ become continuous

$$\sum_{n \geqslant 0} H_n(a,q)\, x^n \;\sim\; \int \frac{dy}{y}\, e^{\,\frac{1}{g_s}[\underbrace{-\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_{L_K}(a,y)}_{\text{sources}} + \underbrace{\log x \cdot \log y}_{S_{\text{CS}}}] + \dots}$$

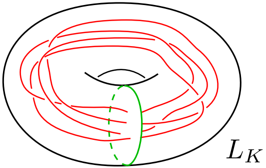
$$\begin{array}{ccc} Z_{top}^{open}(a,q,x) & \leftarrow \text{[Fourier]} \rightarrow & H_n(a,q) \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ W_{disk}(a,x) & \leftarrow \text{[Legendre]} \rightarrow & \widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_L(a,y) \end{array}$$

The Legendre transform of the Gromov-Witten disk potential is a source term for the (effective) $U(1)$ Chern-Simons theory on L_K

Sources in CS on L_K are Wilson lines for the $U(1)$ connection, arising as boundaries of holomorphic disks that wrap around S^1.



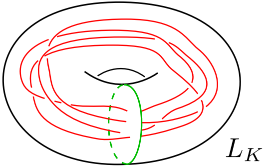
Sources in CS on L_K are Wilson lines for the $U(1)$ connection, arising as boundaries of holomorphic disks that wrap around S^1.



Without disks, the $U(1)$ connection is described by $y = 1$.
The disk corrections are encoded by the Legendrian constraints

$$\exp\left(\frac{\partial \widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_{L_K}}{\partial \log y} - \log x\right) = 1 \quad \leftrightarrow \quad \exp\left(\frac{\partial W_{disk}}{\partial \log x} - \log y\right) = 1$$

Sources in CS on L_K are Wilson lines for the $U(1)$ connection, arising as boundaries of holomorphic disks that wrap around S^1.



Without disks, the $U(1)$ connection is described by $y = 1$.
The disk corrections are encoded by the Legendrian constraints

$$\exp\left(\frac{\partial \widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_{L_K}}{\partial \log y} - \log x\right) = 1 \quad \leftrightarrow \quad \exp\left(\frac{\partial W_{disk}}{\partial \log x} - \log y\right) = 1$$

$$\leftrightarrow \quad A(x, y, a) = 0 \quad \subset \quad \mathbb{C}^*_x \times \mathbb{C}^*_y$$

These recover the augmentation polynomial.♠

♠[Ng'10]; [Ekholm-Etnyre-Ng-Sullivan'10]; [Aganagic-Vafa'12];

Is there a notion of semiclassical limit for quivers?

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q) = \sum_{d_1 \dots d_m \geqslant 0} (-q)^{\vec{d} \cdot C \cdot \vec{d}} \prod_{i=1}^{m} \frac{x_i^{d_i}}{(q^2; q^2)_{d_i}}$$

Is there a notion of semiclassical limit for quivers?

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q) = \sum_{d_1 \ldots d_m \geqslant 0} (-q)^{\vec{d} \cdot C \cdot \vec{d}} \prod_{i=1}^{m} \frac{x_i^{d_i}}{(q^2; q^2)_{d_i}}$$

We define its semiclassical limit by setting $y_i = \lim_{g_s \to 0} q^{d_i}$

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q) \sim \int \prod_i \frac{dy_i}{y_i} \; e^{\frac{1}{g_s}\left(-\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_Q + C_{ij} \log y_i \log y_j + \log x_i \cdot \log y_i\right) + \ldots}$$

where $\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_Q = \sum_{i=1}^{|Q_0|} \mathrm{Li}_2(y_i)$ is a <u>finite set of sources</u>: one per node.

Is there a notion of semiclassical limit for quivers?

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q) = \sum_{d_1 \ldots d_m \geqslant 0} (-q)^{\vec{d} \cdot C \cdot \vec{d}} \prod_{i=1}^{m} \frac{x_i^{d_i}}{(q^2; q^2)_{d_i}}$$

We define its semiclassical limit by setting $y_i = \lim_{g_s \to 0} q^{d_i}$

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q) \sim \int \prod_i \frac{dy_i}{y_i} \; e^{\frac{1}{g_s}\left(-\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_Q + C_{ij} \log y_i \log y_j + \log x_i \cdot \log y_i\right) + \ldots}$$

where $\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_Q = \sum_{i=1}^{|Q_0|} \mathrm{Li}_2(y_i)$ is a <u>finite set of sources</u>: one per node.

In sharp contrast with $\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_{L_K}$, which is (almost) always infinite.

To interpret this, we consider Legendrian constraints (saddles)

$$A_i(x_i, y_i) := 1 - y_i - x_i \prod_j y_j^{C_{ij}} = 0$$

which we call "quiver A-polynomials".

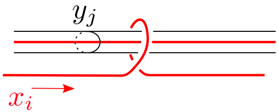
To interpret this, we consider Legendrian constraints (saddles)

$$A_i(x_i, y_i) := 1 - y_i - x_i \prod_j y_j^{C_{ij}} = 0$$

which we call "quiver A-polynomials".

Since $x_i \sim x$ it follows that $\prod y_i = y$. This suggests that

- each source winds once around S^1
- y_i is the contribution of a source to the meridian on ∂L_K
- C_{ij} are <u>linking numbers</u>: meridians shift longitudes



x_i, y_i are holonomies on tubular neighbourhoods around the i-th source. This enlarges the phase space to

$$\mathcal{M}_Q = (\mathbb{C}^* \times \mathbb{C}^*)^{|Q_0|}$$

and therefore $P^Q(\vec{x}, q)$ is a wavefunction too ($\vec{x}^{\vec{d}} = \psi_{\vec{d}}(\vec{x})$).

x_i, y_i are holonomies on tubular neighbourhoods around the i-th source. This enlarges the phase space to

$$\mathcal{M}_Q = (\mathbb{C}^* \times \mathbb{C}^*)^{|Q_0|}$$

and therefore $P^Q(\vec{x}, q)$ is a wavefunction too ($\vec{x}^{\vec{d}} = \psi_{\vec{d}}(\vec{x})$).

Legendrian constraints $A_i(x_i, \vec{y}) = 0$ define a Lagrangian $\mathcal{L}_Q \subset \mathcal{M}_Q$ of complex dimension $|Q_0|$.

x_i, y_i are holonomies on tubular neighbourhoods around the i-th source. This enlarges the phase space to

$$\mathcal{M}_Q = (\mathbb{C}^* \times \mathbb{C}^*)^{|Q_0|}$$

and therefore $P^Q(\vec{x}, q)$ is a wavefunction too ($\vec{x}^{\vec{d}} = \psi_{\vec{d}}(\vec{x})$).

Legendrian constraints $A_i(x_i, \vec{y}) = 0$ define a Lagrangian $\mathcal{L}_Q \subset \mathcal{M}_Q$ of complex dimension $|Q_0|$.

The role of the KQ change of variables $x_i = x\, a^{a_i}\, q^{q_i}$ is to carve out a 1-dimensional sub-variety: $A(x, y, a) = 0\,.$

It is determined by the embedding of $L_K \hookrightarrow Y$, since a_i encode wrappings of basic disks around the $\mathbb{P}^1$ in Y.

The Legendre transform relates a gauge theory to effective dynamics of sources (holomorphic disks):

$$\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_{L_K}(a,y) \quad \longleftarrow \text{[Legendre]} \longrightarrow \quad W_{Disk}(a,x)$$

$$\uparrow$$

(dual)

$$\downarrow$$

(finite!) $\rightsquigarrow$ $\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_Q(y_i)$

The Legendre transform relates a gauge theory to effective dynamics of sources (holomorphic disks):

$$\begin{array}{ccccc}
 & \widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_{L_K}(a,y) & \longleftarrow \text{[Legendre]} \longrightarrow & W_{Disk}(a,x) \\
 & \uparrow & & \uparrow \\
 & \text{(dual)} & & (x_i = x a^{a_i} q^{q_i}) \\
 & \downarrow & & \downarrow \\
\text{(finite!)} \rightsquigarrow & \widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_Q(y_i) & \longleftarrow \text{[Legendre]} \longrightarrow & W_Q(x_i)
\end{array}$$

The Legendre transform relates a gauge theory to effective dynamics of sources (holomorphic disks):

$$
\begin{array}{ccccc}
 & \widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_{L_K}(a,y) & \longleftarrow \text{[Legendre]} \longrightarrow & W_{Disk}(a,x) \\
 & \uparrow & & \uparrow \\
 & \text{(dual)} & & (x_i = x a^{a_i} q^{q_i}) \\
 & \downarrow & & \downarrow \\
\text{(finite!)} \rightsquigarrow & \widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_Q(y_i) & \longleftarrow \text{[Legendre]} \longrightarrow & W_Q(x_i)
\end{array}
$$

The quiver disk potential W_Q refines W_{Disk} by $\vec{d}$-grading

$$W_{Disk} = \sum_{r,i,j} (-N^K_{r,i,j})\, \mathrm{Li}_2(x^r a^i) \qquad \text{LMOV}$$

$$W_Q = \sum_{\vec{d},j} (-1)^{|\vec{d}|+j} \Omega_{\vec{d},j}\, \mathrm{Li}_2(\vec{x}^{\vec{d}}) \qquad \text{DT}$$

Quiver description of the spectrum of holomorphic curves

Basic disks

- one for each node
- $x_i \sim x a^{a_i}$: wrap once around K and a_i times around $\mathbb{P}^1$

Boundstate disks

- stable Q-rep. contains $\vec{d} = (\dots d_i \dots)$ copies of basic disks
- counted by $\Omega_{\vec{d},j}$
- completely fixed by linking numbers C_{ij}

Quiver description of the spectrum of holomorphic curves

Basic disks

- one for each node
- $x_i \sim x a^{a_i}$: wrap once around K and a_i times around $\mathbb{P}^1$

Boundstate disks

- stable Q-rep. contains $\vec{d} = (\dots d_i \dots)$ copies of basic disks
- counted by $\Omega_{\vec{d},j}$
- completely fixed by linking numbers C_{ij}

Higher genus curves

- are counted by P^Q
- are generated from basic disks too, by quiver dynamics!

...but why?

Embedding open topological strings into M theory

open topological string		M theory	
	Y		$Y \times S^1 \times \mathbb{R}^4$
A-brane on	L_K	M5 on	$L_K \times S^1 \times \mathbb{R}^2$
instanton	$[\beta] \in H_2^{rel}(Y, L_K)$	M2 on	$\beta \times S^1$

Embedding open topological strings into M theory

open topological string		M theory	
	Y		$Y \times S^1 \times \mathbb{R}^4$
A-brane on	L_K	M5 on	$L_K \times S^1 \times \mathbb{R}^2$
instanton	$[\beta] \in H_2^{rel}(Y, L_K)$	M2 on	$\beta \times S^1$

M5 engineers a 3d $\mathcal{N} = 2$ theory $T[L_K]$ on $S^1 \times \mathbb{R}^2$.
Its (K-theoretic) vortex partition function counts M2 branes.♠

$$Z_{top}^{open}(Y, L_K) = Z_{vortex}(T[L_K])$$

♠[Dimofte-Gukov-Hollands '10]

Embedding open topological strings into M theory

open topological string		M theory	
	Y		$Y \times S^1 \times \mathbb{R}^4$
A-brane on	L_K	M5 on	$L_K \times S^1 \times \mathbb{R}^2$
instanton	$[\beta] \in H_2^{rel}(Y, L_K)$	M2 on	$\beta \times S^1$

M5 engineers a 3d $\mathcal{N} = 2$ theory $T[L_K]$ on $S^1 \times \mathbb{R}^2$.
Its (K-theoretic) vortex partition function counts M2 branes.♠

$$Z_{top}^{open}(Y, L_K) = Z_{vortex}(T[L_K])$$

Think of the quiver as describing the dynamics of either:

- M2 branes with linking boundaries
- BPS vortices of $T[L_K]$

♠[Dimofte-Gukov-Hollands '10]

To study vortex dynamics, we need to understand $T[L_K]$:

$$Z_{vortex}(T[L_K]) \sim \int \frac{dy}{y}\, e^{\frac{1}{g_s}[-\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_{L_K}(a,y) + \log x \cdot \log y] + \ldots}$$

An IR description can be obtained via a 3d-3d dictionary♠

- $\int \frac{dy}{y}$: $U(1)$ gauge symmetry
- $\mathrm{Li}_2(e^{\mu} y^{Q}) \subset \widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_{L_K}$: 1-loop of a chiral with charge Q, mass μ
- $\log x \cdot \log y$: Fayet-Iliopoulos term

♠[Terashima-Yamazaki'09; Dimofte-Gaiotto-Gukov'09; Fuji-Gukov-Sulkowski'13]

To study vortex dynamics, we need to understand $T[L_K]$:

$$Z_{vortex}(T[L_K]) \sim \int \frac{dy}{y}\, e^{\frac{1}{g_s}[-\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_{L_K}(a,y) + \log x \cdot \log y] + \ldots}$$

An IR description can be obtained via a 3d-3d dictionary♠

- $\int \frac{dy}{y}$: $U(1)$ gauge symmetry
- $\mathrm{Li}_2(e^{\mu} y^{Q}) \subset \widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_{L_K}$: 1-loop of a chiral with charge Q, mass μ
- $\log x \cdot \log y$: Fayet-Iliopoulos term

But this description is not very useful: a $U(1)$ gauge theory with complicated matter spectrum ($\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_{L_K}$ is infinite).

♠[Terashima-Yamazaki'09; Dimofte-Gaiotto-Gukov'09; Fuji-Gukov-Sulkowski'13]

However we have a dual description of $Z_{vortex}(T[L_K])$

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q) \sim \int \prod_i \frac{dy_i}{y_i} \; e^{\frac{1}{g_s}\left(-\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_Q + C_{ij} \log y_i \log y_j + \log x_i \cdot \log y_i\right) + \ldots}$$

specialized to $x_i = x\, a^{a_i}$, with $\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_Q = \sum_i \mathrm{Li}_2(y_i)$.

However we have a dual description of $Z_{vortex}(T[L_K])$

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q) \sim \int \prod_i \frac{dy_i}{y_i} \; e^{\frac{1}{g_s}\left(-\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_Q + C_{ij} \log y_i \log y_j + \log x_i \cdot \log y_i\right) + \ldots}$$

specialized to $x_i = x\, a^{a_i}$, with $\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_Q = \sum_i \mathrm{Li}_2(y_i)$.

This defines a dual theory $T[Q]$

- gauge group $U(1)_1 \times \cdots \times U(1)_{|Q_0|}$
- matter: one chiral for each node, with charge δ_{ij} under $U(1)_j$
- mixed Chern-Simons couplings C_{ij}
- Fayet-Iliopoulos couplings $x_i = x\, a^{a_i}$

However we have a dual description of $Z_{vortex}(T[L_K])$

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q) \sim \int \prod_i \frac{dy_i}{y_i}\ e^{\frac{1}{g_s}\left(-\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_Q + C_{ij}\log y_i \log y_j + \log x_i \cdot \log y_i\right) + \dots}$$

specialized to $x_i = x\, a^{a_i}$, with $\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_Q = \sum_i \mathrm{Li}_2(y_i)$.

This defines a dual theory $T[Q]$

- gauge group $U(1)_1 \times \cdots \times U(1)_{|Q_0|}$
- matter: one chiral for each node, with charge δ_{ij} under $U(1)_j$
- mixed Chern-Simons couplings C_{ij}
- Fayet-Iliopoulos couplings $x_i = x\, a^{a_i}$

We also check that $Z^{K-theory}_{vortex}(T[Q]) = P^Q$, at finite g_s.

However we have a dual description of $Z_{vortex}(T[L_K])$

$$P^Q(\vec{x}, q) \sim \int \prod_i \frac{dy_i}{y_i} \; e^{\frac{1}{g_s}\left(-\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_Q + C_{ij} \log y_i \log y_j + \log x_i \cdot \log y_i\right) + \ldots}$$

specialized to $x_i = x\, a^{a_i}$, with $\widetilde{\mathcal{W}}_Q = \sum_i \mathrm{Li}_2(y_i)$.

This defines a dual theory $T[Q]$

- gauge group $U(1)_1 \times \cdots \times U(1)_{|Q_0|}$
- matter: one chiral for each node, with charge δ_{ij} under $U(1)_j$
- mixed Chern-Simons couplings C_{ij}
- Fayet-Iliopoulos couplings $x_i = x\, a^{a_i}$

We also check that $Z_{vortex}^{K-theory}(T[Q]) = P^Q$, at finite g_s.

The origins of the Knots-Quivers correspondence can be traced to a quantum mechanics of BPS vortices in $T[Q]$.♠

♠Admitting a quiver description [Hwang-Yi-Yoshida '17].

Quiver quantum mechanics from the viewpoint of M2 branes

- nodes: M2 wrapping basic holomorphic disks
- links: bifundamental light modes at M2-M2 intersections

Quiver quantum mechanics from the viewpoint of M2 branes

- ◦ nodes: M2 wrapping basic holomorphic disks
- ◦ links: bifundamental light modes at M2-M2 intersections

Raises the question: how to make sense of disk intersections in 6d?

Quiver quantum mechanics from the viewpoint of M2 branes

- nodes: M2 wrapping basic holomorphic disks
- links: bifundamental light modes at M2-M2 intersections

Raises the question: how to make sense of disk intersections in 6d?

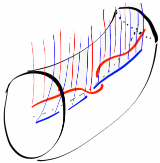
Answer from Knot Contact Homology: "standardize" discs, by stretching along certain submanifolds♠

- Morse function $f : L_K \to \mathbb{R}$ with absolute minimum on the zero-section of $\mathbb{R}^2 \to L_K \to S^1$; let D_0 be its disc fiber
- Given β_i with $\partial\beta_i \subset L_K$ define $\sigma_i' = \bigcup\{\text{flow lines of } \nabla f\}$
- At infinity $\sigma_i' \to m\lambda + n\mu \in H_1(\partial L_K, \mathbb{Z})$
- Standardize by defining $\sigma_i = \sigma_i' - nD_0$

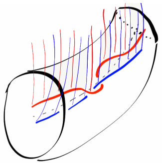
♠[Ekholm-Ng'18]

Linking number (M2-M2 intersections)

$$C_{ij} = \mathrm{lk}(\partial\beta_i, \partial\beta_j) = \partial\beta_i \cdot \sigma_j = \sigma_i \cdot \partial\beta_j$$



Linking number (M2-M2 intersections)



$$C_{ij} = \mathrm{lk}(\partial\beta_i, \partial\beta_j) = \partial\beta_i \cdot \sigma_j = \sigma_i \cdot \partial\beta_j$$

We can also define a notion of self-linking:

- introduce the 4-chain $C = \bigcup\{\text{flow lines of } J\nabla f\}$ in Y
- choose a "pushoff" vector field ν along $\partial\beta$

$$\mathrm{slk}(\beta) = \underbrace{\partial\beta_\nu \cdot \sigma_\beta}_{m\cdot n \equiv C_{ii}} - \beta_{J\nu} \cdot C$$

Framing

Both $\sum_r H_r(a,q)x^r$ and Z_{top}^{open} depend on a choice of $f \in \mathbb{Z}$.

- In knot theory, it's an ambiguity arising in point-splitting regularization of Chern-Simons.
- In open topological strings, it's a semiclassical ambiguity of which cycle on ∂L_K is the "real longitude".

Framing

Both $\sum_r H_r(a,q)x^r$ and Z_{top}^{open} depend on a choice of $f \in \mathbb{Z}$.

- In knot theory, it's an ambiguity arising in point-splitting regularization of Chern-Simons.
- In open topological strings, it's a semiclassical ambiguity of which cycle on ∂L_K is the "real longitude".

But its effects are well understood: e.g.

$$A(x,y;a)=0 \quad \rightarrow \quad A(x\cdot y^f, y;a)=0$$

leads to highly nontrivial changes in the disk potential

$$W_{Disk}(a,x)=\int \log y_\star \, d\log x = \sum (-N_{r,i,j}^K)\,\mathrm{Li}_2(x^r a^i)$$

Framing

Both $\sum_r H_r(a,q)x^r$ and Z_{top}^{open} depend on a choice of $f \in \mathbb{Z}$.

- In knot theory, it's an ambiguity arising in point-splitting regularization of Chern-Simons.
- In open topological strings, it's a semiclassical ambiguity of which cycle on ∂L_K is the "real longitude".

But its effects are well understood: e.g.

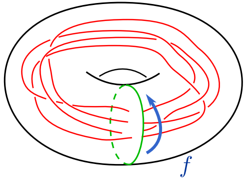
$$A(x,y;a) = 0 \quad \rightarrow \quad A(x \cdot y^f, y; a) = 0$$

leads to highly nontrivial changes in the disk potential

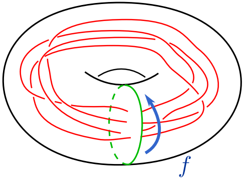
$$W_{Disk}(a,x) = \int \log y_\star \, d \log x = \sum (-N^K_{r,i,j}) \, \mathrm{Li}_2(x^r a^i)$$

What happens on the quiver side?

Since x, y are meridian and longitude on ∂L_K, geometrically $x \to x \cdot y^f$ corresponds to performing f Dehn twists



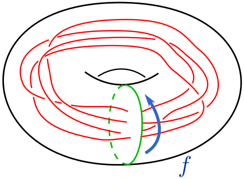
Since x, y are meridian and longitude on ∂L_K, geometrically $x \to x \cdot y^f$ corresponds to performing f Dehn twists



Therefore we expect

- an overall shift of linking numbers $C_{ij} \to C_{ij} + f$
- no change in $x_i = x\, a^{a_i}$

Since x, y are meridian and longitude on ∂L_K, geometrically $x \to x \cdot y^f$ corresponds to performing f Dehn twists



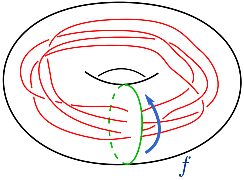
Therefore we expect

- an overall shift of linking numbers $C_{ij} \to C_{ij} + f$
- no change in $x_i = x\, a^{a_i}$

This perfectly matches, and explains, empirical observations.♠
It also implies that Q is not unique, in a way that is under control.

♠[Kucharski-Reineke-Stosic-Sulkowski '17]

Since x, y are meridian and longitude on ∂L_K, geometrically $x \to x \cdot y^f$ corresponds to performing f Dehn twists



Therefore we expect

- an overall shift of linking numbers $C_{ij} \to C_{ij} + f$
- no change in $x_i = x\, a^{a_i}$

This perfectly matches, and explains, empirical observations.♠
It also implies that Q is not unique, in a way that is under control.

On $T[Q]$, framing acts by overall shifts of Chern-Simons couplings.
Reproduces $T^f \in SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$ action on 3d abelian gauge theories.♣

♠[Kucharski-Reineke-Stosic-Sulkowski '17]; ♣[Witten '03]

Conclusions

- The quiver description of knot invariants originates from the dynamics of BPS vortices of a 3d $\mathcal{N} = 2$ theory $T[Q]$.
- The structure of $T[Q]$ is encoded by the quiver
  - gauge group $U(1)_1 \times \cdots \times U(1)_{|Q_0|}$
  - one charged chiral for each $U(1)$
  - mixed Chern-Simons couplings C_{ij}
  - Fayet-Iliopoulos terms $\log x_i = \log x \, a^{a_i}$.

- Quivers also encode counts of holomorphic curves in open Gromov-Witten theory
  - a basic holomorphic disk on each node
  - interactions encoded by linking of disk boundaries
  - through quiver QM, disks generate all higher-genus curves too!

Quiver	Geometry	Physics
node i	basic holomorphic disk β_i	M2 brane / BPS vortex
edges C_{ij}	$\mathrm{lk}(\partial\beta_i, \partial\beta_j)$	M2-M2 intersection / CS cplg.
x, y	holonomies on $\partial L_K \simeq T^2$	moduli for $T[L_K]$
x_i, y_i	holonomies on $(T^2)_i \subset \partial(L_K \backslash \{\partial\beta_j\})$	moduli for $T[Q]$
a_i	wrappings of $\mathbb{P}^1$	flavor charge of $U(1)_a$
q_i	self-linking $\mathrm{slk}(\beta_i)$	spin $SO(2) \circlearrowright \mathbb{R}^2$
$C_{ij} \to C_{ij} + f$	(Dehn twist)^f	overall shift of CS couplings