## Maximal Unitarity at Two Loops



Durham, LMS Symposium
Polylogarithms as a Bridge between Number Theory and Particle Physics

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## Part 1: Introduction

- motivations for studying amplitudes
- modern methods for computation at one loop


## Obvious motivation: Large Hadron Collider

The searches at LHC for physics beyond the Standard Model require a detailed understanding of background, especially QCD, processes.


## Examples of signals and QCD backgrounds

Signal: An example of a Higgs boson process:


Background: An example of a QCD background process:


## Two motivations, actually

In fact, there are two important motivations:

- LHC phenomenology

Quantitative estimates of QCD background: needed for precision measurements, uncertainty estimates of NLO calculations, and reducing renormalization scale dependence.

- Reveal fascinating structure in QFT

For $\mathcal{N}=4$ SYM: hidden symmetries (integrability $\longrightarrow$ non-perturbative solution) and new dualities (to Wilson loops and correlators).

For $\mathcal{N} \leq 4$ : connection to multivariate complex analysis and algebraic geometry.

## The Feynman diagram prescription



> In practice, the Feynman diagram prescription produces a very large number of terms: e.g. for the five-gluon tree-level amplitude


## Feynman diagrams hide simplicity

Yet, the final result for five-gluon tree-level amplitude is simple,

$$
\begin{aligned}
& A_{5}^{\text {tree }}\left(1^{ \pm}, 2^{+}, 3^{+}, 4^{+}, 5^{+}\right)=0 \\
& A_{5}^{\text {tree }}\left(1^{-}, 2^{-}, 3^{+}, 4^{+}, 5^{+}\right)=\frac{i\langle 12\rangle^{4}}{\langle 12\rangle\langle 23\rangle\langle 34\rangle\langle 45\rangle\langle 51\rangle} .
\end{aligned}
$$

This strongly suggests there should exist better methods for computing amplitudes.

At one-loop level, unitarity has proven very successful, allowing e.g. the calculation of $q g \rightarrow W+$ multi-jets.

This talk is about extending generalized unitarity (systematically) to two loops.

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Feynman rules $\longrightarrow$ numerator powers in integrals
At one loop, all such integrals can be expanded in a basis.
For example, consider the box insertion


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By using the identity $\ell \cdot k_{4}=\frac{1}{2}\left(\left(\ell+k_{4}\right)^{2}-\ell^{2}\right)$, this can be reduced to


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Use integral reductions to write the one-loop amplitude as a linear combination of basis integrals


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$$
\Longrightarrow \quad c_{1}=\frac{1}{2} \sum_{\text {kin sols }} \prod_{j=1}^{4} A_{j}^{\text {tree }}
$$

## The modern unitarity approach (2/2)

A triple cut will leave 4-3=1 free complex parameter $z$.
Parametrizing the loop momentum,

$$
\ell^{\mu}=\alpha_{1} K_{1}^{b \mu}+\alpha_{2} K_{2}^{b \mu}+\frac{z}{2}\left\langle K_{1}^{b-}\right| \gamma^{\mu}\left|K_{2}^{b-}\right\rangle+\frac{\alpha_{4}(z)}{2}\left\langle K_{2}^{b-}\right| \gamma^{\mu}\left|K_{1}^{b-}\right\rangle
$$

one obtains an explicit formula for the triangle coefficient [Forde]

$$
\begin{equation*}
c_{\triangle}=\oint_{C(\infty)} \frac{d z}{z} \tag{z}
\end{equation*}
$$

## Part 2: From trees to two loops

- maximal cuts at two loops
- constructing two-loop amplitudes out of tree-level data
- elliptic integrals in $\mathcal{N}=4$ SYM amplitudes


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The machinery: contour integrals $\oint_{\Gamma_{j}}(\cdots)$
The philosophy: basis integral $I_{j} \longleftrightarrow$ unique $\Gamma_{j}$ producing $c_{j}$

The anatomy of two-loop maximal cuts
Cutting all seven visible propagators in the double-box integral,

produces (cf. [Buchbinder, Cachazo]), setting $\chi \equiv \frac{t}{s}$,

$$
\int d^{4} p d^{4} q \prod_{i=1}^{7} \frac{1}{\ell_{i}^{2}} \quad \longrightarrow \int d^{4} p d^{4} q \prod_{i=1}^{7} \delta^{\mathbb{C}}\left(\ell_{i}^{2}\right)=\oint_{\Gamma} \frac{d z}{z(z+\chi)}
$$

a contour integral in the complex plane.

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a contour integral in the complex plane.
Jacobian poles $z=0$ and $z=-\chi$ : composite leading singularities
encircle $z=0$ and $z=-\chi$ with $\Gamma=\omega_{1} C_{\epsilon}(0)+\omega_{2} C_{\epsilon}(-\chi)$
$\longrightarrow$ freeze $z$ (" $8^{\text {th }}$ cut")

## Choosing contours: die Qual der Wahl

Six inequivalent classes of solutions to on-shell constraints


4 massless external states $\longrightarrow 8$ independent leading singularities

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Six inequivalent classes of solutions to on-shell constraints


4 massless external states $\longrightarrow 8$ independent leading singularities

How do we select contours within this variety of possibilities?

## Principle for selecting contours

To fix the contours, insist that
vanishing Feynman integrals must have vanishing heptacuts.
This ensures that

$$
\mathrm{I}_{1}=\mathrm{I}_{2} \quad \Longrightarrow \quad \operatorname{cut}\left(\mathrm{I}_{1}\right)=\operatorname{cut}\left(\mathrm{I}_{2}\right) .
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Origin of terms with vanishing $\mathbb{R}^{D} \times \mathbb{R}^{D}$ integration: reduction of Feynman diagram expansion to a basis of integrals (including use of integration-by-parts identities).

Remarkable simplification:

- 4 massless external states: $22 \longrightarrow 2$ double-box integrals
- 5 massless external states: $160 \longrightarrow 2$ "turtle-box" integrals
- 5 massless external states: $76 \longrightarrow 1$ pentagon-box integral


## Contour constraints, part $1 / 2$

There are two classes of constraints on 「's:

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2) integration by parts (IBP) identities must be preserved. For example,


## Contour constraints, part $2 / 2$

The constraints in the case of four massless external momenta:


$$
\begin{array}{r}
\omega_{1}-\omega_{2}=0 \\
\omega_{3}-\omega_{4}=0 \\
\omega_{5}-\omega_{6}=0 \\
\omega_{7}-\omega_{8}=0 \\
\omega_{3}+\omega_{4}-\omega_{5}-\omega_{6}=0 \\
\omega_{1}+\omega_{2}-\omega_{5}-\omega_{6}+\omega_{7}+\omega_{8}=0
\end{array}
$$

leaving $8-4-2=2$ free winding numbers.

## Master contours: the concept

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Exploit free parameters $\longrightarrow \exists$ contours with

$$
\begin{aligned}
& P_{1}:\left(\operatorname{cut}\left(\mathrm{I}_{1}\right), \operatorname{cut}\left(\mathrm{I}_{2}\right)\right)=(1,0) \\
& P_{2}:\left(\operatorname{cut}\left(\mathrm{I}_{1}\right), \operatorname{cut}\left(\mathrm{I}_{2}\right)\right)=(0,1) .
\end{aligned}
$$

We call such $P_{i}$ master contours.

## Master contours: results

With four massless external states,

$$
c_{1}=\frac{i \chi}{8} \oint_{P_{1}} \frac{d z}{z(z+\chi)} \prod_{j=1}^{6} A_{j}^{\text {tree }}(z)
$$

$$
c_{2}=-\frac{i}{4 s_{12}} \oint_{P_{2}} \frac{d z}{z(z+\chi)} \prod_{j=1}^{6} A_{j}^{\text {tree }}(z)
$$

With our choice of basis integrals, the $P_{i}$ are

$n=$ winding number

## Characterizing the on-shell solutions

There are six solutions for the heptacut loop momenta


Set $k_{i}^{\mu}=\lambda_{i} \sigma^{\mu} \widetilde{\lambda}_{i}$ and classify each vertex according to
$\lambda_{a} \propto \lambda_{b} \propto \lambda_{c}(\overline{\mathrm{MHV}})$
$\widetilde{\lambda}_{a} \propto \widetilde{\lambda}_{b} \propto \widetilde{\lambda}_{c}(\mathrm{MHV})$


Two-loop leading singularities
heptacut solutions $\longrightarrow$ Riemann spheres

$$
\text { (e.g., } \left.c_{\triangle}=\oint_{C_{\epsilon}(\infty)} \frac{d z}{z} \prod_{j=1}^{3} A_{j}^{\text {tree }}(z)\right)
$$


points $\in \mathcal{S}_{i} \cap \mathcal{S}_{j} \longrightarrow$ no notion of $\boldsymbol{O}$ or $\bigcirc \longrightarrow$ resp. prop. is soft also: $\quad \mathcal{S}_{i} \cap \mathcal{S}_{j} \subset\{$ leading singularities $\}$ !
two-loop leading singularities $\longrightarrow I R$ singularities of integral

Observation: leading-singularity residues cancel between virtual (a) and real (b) contributions to cross section

(a)


(b)
in complete analogy with the KLN theorem on IR cancelations.

## Classification of heptacut solutions

Arbitrary \# of external states. Define
$\mu_{i} \equiv \begin{cases}\mathrm{~m} & \text { if } i^{\text {th }} \text { vertical prop. } \in 3 \text {-pt. vertex } \\ \mathrm{M} & \text { if } i^{\text {th }} \text { vertical prop. } \notin 3 \text {-pt. vertex }\end{cases}$


$$
\text { is } \quad(m, m, M)
$$

The solution to $\ell_{i}^{2}=0, i=1, \ldots, 7$ is

- case $1(M, M, M)$ : 1 torus
- case $2(M, M, m)$ etc.: $2 \mathbb{C P}^{1}$ with $\mathcal{S}_{i} \longleftrightarrow$ distrib. of $\bullet$, O
- case $3(\mathrm{M}, \mathrm{m}, \mathrm{m})$ etc.: $4 \mathbb{C P}^{1}$ with $\mathcal{S}_{i} \longleftrightarrow$ distrib. of $\bullet$, $\bigcirc$
- case $4(\mathrm{~m}, \mathrm{~m}, \mathrm{~m})$ : $6 \mathbb{C P}^{1}$ with $\mathcal{S}_{i} \longleftrightarrow$ distrib. of $\bullet$, $\bigcirc$


## Uniqueness of master contours

Limits $\mu_{i} \rightarrow \mathrm{~m} \Longrightarrow$ chiral branchings: torus $\xrightarrow{\mu_{3} \rightarrow \mathrm{~m}}$


Each torus-pinching: new IR-pole + new residue thm $\Longrightarrow \quad \#$ of lead. sing. same in all cases

In all cases: \# of master Г's = \# of basis integrals
$\Longrightarrow$ all linear relations are preserved
$\Longrightarrow$ perfect analogy with one-loop generalized unitarity

## Symmetries and systematics of IBP constraints



The IBP constraints are invariant under flips.


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Reverse logic $\longrightarrow$ demand constraints to be invariant under flips and $\pi$-rotations.
$\{M, m, m\}$ case: choose basis, e.g. $\omega_{1,2,5,6}=0$
$r_{1}^{(\mathrm{b})}\left(\omega_{3}+\omega_{4}+\omega_{7}+\omega_{8}\right)+r_{2}^{(\mathrm{b})}\left(\omega_{9}+\omega_{10}-\omega_{11}-\omega_{12}\right)=0$
where, in fact, $r_{1}^{(\mathrm{b})}=r_{2}^{(\mathrm{b})} \neq 0$.


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$r_{1}^{(\mathrm{b})}\left(\omega_{3}+\omega_{4}+\omega_{7}+\omega_{8}\right)+r_{2}^{(\mathrm{b})}\left(\omega_{9}+\omega_{10}-\omega_{11}-\omega_{12}\right)=0$
where, in fact, $r_{1}^{(\mathrm{b})}=r_{2}^{(\mathrm{b})} \neq 0$.

( $m, m, m$ ) case:

1) constraint from $\{M, m, m\}$ case inherited.
2) new flip symmetry $\longrightarrow$ new constraint:
$r_{1}^{(c)}\left(\omega_{3}+\omega_{4}\right)+r_{2}^{(c)}\left(\omega_{11}+\omega_{12}-\omega_{13}-\omega_{14}\right)=0$ as expressed in the basis $\omega_{1,2,5,6,7,8}=0$. In fact, $r_{1}^{(\mathrm{c})}=-r_{2}^{(\mathrm{c})} \neq 0$.

## Integrals with fewer propagators

Solution to slashed-box on-shell constraints:


On-shell constraints leave $8-5=3$ free complex parameters.
Multivariate residues depend on the order of integration.
Example: $f\left(z_{i}\right)=\frac{z_{1}}{z_{2}\left(a_{1} z_{1}+a_{2} z_{2}\right)\left(b_{1} z_{1}+b_{2} z_{2}\right)}$. Residues at $\left(z_{1}, z_{2}\right)=(0,0)$ :

$$
\begin{aligned}
\frac{1}{(2 \pi i)^{2}} \int_{C_{\epsilon}(0) \times C_{\epsilon^{2}}(0)} d z_{1} d z_{2} f\left(z_{i}\right) & =\frac{1}{a_{1} b_{1}} \\
\frac{1}{(2 \pi i)^{2}} \int_{C_{\epsilon}(0) \times C_{\epsilon^{2}}\left(-\frac{a_{1}}{a_{2}} z_{1}\right)} d z_{1} d z_{2} f\left(z_{i}\right) & =\frac{a_{2}}{a_{1}\left(a_{1} b_{2}-a_{2} b_{1}\right)}
\end{aligned}
$$

## Elliptic curves vs. polylogs



$$
=\int_{u}^{\infty} \frac{d u^{\prime}}{\sqrt{\tilde{Q}\left(u^{\prime}\right)}} \times\left(\operatorname{Li}_{3}(\cdots)+\cdots\right)
$$

sunrise integral not expressible through polylogs
$\longrightarrow$ neither should 10-point integral be
Analytic expression $\longleftrightarrow$ maximal cut?
Wilson-loop amplitude correspondence $\Longrightarrow$

$$
\mathcal{N}=4 \text { SYM: } \quad A^{(2)}\left(10-\text { scalar } \mathrm{N}^{3} \mathrm{MHV}\right) \quad \propto
$$



## Conclusions and outlook

- First steps towards fully automatized two-loop amplitudes
- Integration-by-parts identities $\longrightarrow$ reduce \# of Feynman integrals by factor of 10-100
- Two-loop master contours are unique
$\longrightarrow$ perfect analogy with one-loop unitarity
- Classification of maximal-cut solutions
- Maximal cuts contain vital information:
pinches/punctures $\longrightarrow I R / U V$ divergences branch cuts $\longrightarrow$ non-polylogs in uncut integral
- Underlying algebraic geometry $\longrightarrow$ deeper understanding of maximal cuts (i.e., contour constraints)


## Backup slides

## Integrals and integral bases

- ideal two-loop basis: chiral integrals
- evaluate 4-point chiral integrals analytically


## Maximally IR-finite basis

The two-loop integral coefficients $c_{i}$ have $\mathcal{O}(\epsilon)$ corrections. Important to know, as the integrals have poles in $\epsilon$.

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IR-finite integrals $\longrightarrow \mathcal{O}(\epsilon)$ corrections not needed for amplitude
Candidates: num. insertions $\rightarrow 0$ in collinear int. regions, e.g.

$$
\begin{aligned}
I_{++} & \left.\equiv I\left[\left[1\left|\ell_{1}\right| 2\right\rangle\langle 3| \ell_{2} \mid 4\right]\right] \times[23]\langle 14\rangle \\
I_{+-} & \left.\equiv I\left[\left[1\left|\ell_{1}\right| 2\right\rangle\langle 4| \ell_{2} \mid 3\right]\right] \times[24]\langle 13\rangle
\end{aligned}
$$

Essentially the chiral integrals of [Arkani-Hamed et al.]
$I_{++}$and $I_{+-}$lin. independent $\longrightarrow$ use in any gauge theory
Philosophy: maximally IR-finite basis
$\longrightarrow$ minimize need for cuts in $D=4-2 \epsilon$

## Evaluation of chiral integrals (1/3)

$I_{+ \pm}$are finite $\longrightarrow$ can be computed in $D=4$

1) Feynman parametrize

$$
I_{++}=-\chi^{2}\left(1+(1+\chi) \frac{\partial}{\partial \chi}\right) I_{1}(\chi) \text { and } I_{+-}=-(1+\chi)^{2}\left(1+\chi \frac{\partial}{\partial \chi}\right) I_{1}(\chi)
$$

where

$$
I_{1}(\chi)=\int \frac{d^{3} a d^{3} b d c c \delta\left(1-c-\sum_{i} a_{i}-\sum_{i} b_{i}\right)\left(\sum_{i} a_{i} \sum_{i} b_{i}+c\left(\sum_{i} a_{i}+\sum_{i} b_{i}\right)\right)^{-1}}{\left(a_{1} a_{3}\left(c+\sum_{i} b_{i}\right)+\left(a_{1} b_{4}+a_{3} b_{6}+a_{2} b_{5} \chi\right) c+b_{4} b_{6}\left(c+\sum_{i} a_{i}\right)\right)^{2}}
$$

2) "Projectivize"

$$
I_{1}(\chi)=6 \int_{1}^{\infty} d c \int_{0}^{\infty} \frac{d^{7}\left(a_{1} a_{2} a_{3} a_{\mathcal{I}} b_{1} b_{2} b_{3} b_{\mathcal{I}}\right)}{\operatorname{vol}(G L(1))} \frac{1}{\left(c A^{2}+A \cdot B+B^{2}\right)^{4}}
$$

## Evaluation of chiral integrals (2/3)

3) Obtain symbol

Integrate projective form one variable at the time, at the level of the symbol.

$$
\mathcal{S}\left[I_{1}(\chi)\right]=\frac{2}{\chi}[\chi \otimes \chi \otimes(1+\chi) \otimes(1+\chi)]-\frac{2}{1+\chi}[\chi \otimes \chi \otimes(1+\chi) \otimes \chi]
$$

4) "Integrate" symbol, using
a) $I_{1}$ has transcendentality 4 (fact, not a conjecture)
b) $I_{1}$ has no $u$-channel discontinuity
c) Regge limits:

$$
\begin{aligned}
& I_{1}(\chi) \rightarrow \frac{\pi^{2}}{6} \log ^{2} \chi+\left(4 \zeta(3)-\frac{\pi^{2}}{3}\right) \log \chi+\mathcal{O}(1) \text { as } \chi \rightarrow 0 \\
& I_{1}(\chi) \rightarrow 6 \zeta(3) \frac{\log \chi}{\chi}+\mathcal{O}\left(\chi^{-1}\right) \text { as } \chi \rightarrow \infty
\end{aligned}
$$

## Evaluation of chiral integrals (3/3)

In conclusion, for the "chiral" integrals

$$
\begin{aligned}
I_{++} & \left.\equiv I\left[\left[1\left|\ell_{1}\right| 2\right\rangle\langle 3| \ell_{2} \mid 4\right]\right] \times\left[\begin{array}{ll}
2 & 3
\end{array}\langle 14\rangle\right. \\
I_{+-} & \left.\equiv I\left[\left[1\left|\ell_{1}\right| 2\right\rangle\langle 4| \ell_{2} \mid 3\right]\right] \times[24]\langle 13\rangle
\end{aligned}
$$

we find the results

$$
\begin{aligned}
I_{++}(\chi)= & 2 H_{-1,-1,0,0}(\chi)-\frac{\pi^{2}}{3} \operatorname{Li}_{2}(-\chi) \\
& +\left(\frac{\pi^{2}}{2} \log (1+\chi)-\frac{\pi^{2}}{3} \log \chi+2 \zeta(3)\right) \log (1+\chi)-6 \chi \zeta(3) \\
I_{+-}(\chi)= & 2 H_{0,-1,0,0}(\chi)-\pi^{2} \operatorname{Li}_{2}(-\chi)-\frac{\pi^{2}}{6} \log ^{2} \chi-4 \zeta(3) \log \chi-\frac{\pi^{4}}{10}-6(1+\chi) \zeta(3)
\end{aligned}
$$

Actual chiral integrals: transcendentality-breaking terms cancel.

