



Conformal symmetry of the Lange–Neubert evolution equation



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ABSTRACT

The Lange–Neubert evolution equation describes the scale dependence of the wave function of a meson built of an infinitely heavy quark and light antiquark at light-like separations, which is the hydrogen atom problem of QCD. It has numerous applications to the studies of B -meson decays. We show that the kernel of this equation can be written in a remarkably compact form, as a logarithm of the generator of special conformal transformation in the light-ray direction. This representation allows one to study solutions of this equation in a very simple and mathematically consistent manner. Generalizing this result, we show that all heavy–light evolution kernels that appear in the renormalization of higher-twist B -meson distribution amplitudes can be written in the same form.

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1. Studies of heavy meson weak decays have been instrumental to uncover the flavor sector of the Standard Model and can be a gate to new physics at TeV scales, if it exists. Considerable effort has been invested to understand the QCD dynamics of heavy meson decays in the heavy quark limit. The B -meson distribution amplitude (DA), first introduced in [1], provides the key nonperturbative input in the QCD factorization approach [2] for weak decays involving light hadrons in the final state.

Following an established convention, we define the B -meson DA as the renormalized matrix element of the bilocal operator built of an effective heavy quark field $h_v(0)$ and a light antiquark $\bar{q}(zn)$ at a light-like separation:

$$\begin{aligned} \langle 0 | \bar{q}(zn) \not{n} [zn, 0] \Gamma h_v(0) | \bar{B}(v) \rangle \\ = -\frac{i}{2} F(\mu) \text{Tr}[\gamma_5 \not{n} \Gamma P_+] \Phi_+(z, \mu) \end{aligned} \quad (1)$$

with

$$[zn, 0] \equiv \text{P exp} \left[ig \int_0^1 d\alpha n_\mu A^\mu(\alpha zn) \right]. \quad (2)$$

Here v_μ is the heavy quark velocity, n_μ is the light-like vector, $n^2 = 0$, such that $n \cdot v = 1$, $P_+ = \frac{1}{2}(1 + \not{v})$ is the projector on upper components of the heavy quark spinor, Γ stands for an arbitrary Dirac structure, $|\bar{B}(v)\rangle$ is the \bar{B} -meson state in the heavy quark effective theory (HQET) and $F(\mu)$ is the decay constant in HQET,

which is used for normalization. The effective heavy quark can be related to the Wilson line through the following equation [3]:

$$\langle 0 | h_v(0) | h, v \rangle = [0, -v\infty] = \text{P exp} \left[ig \int_{-\infty}^0 d\alpha v_\mu A^\mu(\alpha v) \right], \quad (3)$$

so that the operator in Eq. (1) can be viewed as a single light antiquark attached to the Wilson line with a cusp containing one lightlike and one timelike segment.

The invariant function $\Phi_+(z, \mu)$ where z is a real number defines what is usually called the leading twist B -meson DA in position space. Its Fourier transform is

$$\begin{aligned} \phi_+(k, \mu) &= \frac{1}{2\pi} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} dz e^{ikz} \Phi_+(z - i0, \mu), \\ \Phi_+(z, \mu) &= \int_0^{\infty} dk e^{-ikz} \phi_+(k, \mu), \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

where in the first equation the integration contour goes below the singularities of $\Phi_+(z, \mu)$ that are located in the upper half-plane. The parameter μ is the renormalization (factorization) scale. We tacitly imply using dimensional regularization with modified minimum subtraction.

The scale dependence of the DA is driven by the renormalization of the corresponding nonlocal operator

$$O_+(z) = \bar{q}(zn) \not{n} [zn, 0] \Gamma h_v(0).$$

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The corresponding one-loop Z -factor was computed by Lange and Neubert (LN) [4], giving rise to an evolution equation which is convenient to write, for our purposes, as a renormalization group equation for the operator $O_+(z)$ [5,6]:

$$\left(\mu \frac{\partial}{\partial \mu} + \beta(g) \frac{\partial}{\partial g} + \frac{\alpha_s C_F}{\pi} \mathcal{H}\right) O_+(z, \mu) = 0, \quad (5)$$

where

$$[\mathcal{H}f](z) = \int_0^1 \frac{d\alpha}{\alpha} (f(z) - \bar{\alpha} f(\bar{\alpha}z)) + \ln(i\mu z) f(z) - \frac{5}{4} f(z),$$

$$\bar{\alpha} \equiv 1 - \alpha. \quad (6)$$

This equation thus governs the scale dependence of the B -meson DA in position space, $\Phi_+(z, \mu)$. It is fully equivalent to the original LN equation for the DA in momentum space, $\phi_+(k, \mu)$, as it is easy to show by Fourier transformation.

2. We will demonstrate that the LN kernel (6) can be written in terms of the generators of collinear conformal transformations

$$S_+ = z^2 \partial_z + 2jz, \quad S_0 = z \partial_z + j, \quad S_- = -\partial_z, \quad (7)$$

where $j = 1$ is the conformal spin of the light quark. They satisfy the standard $SL(2)$ commutation relations

$$[S_+, S_-] = 2S_0, \quad [S_0, S_{\pm}] = \pm S_{\pm}. \quad (8)$$

The starting observation is that the integral operator \mathcal{H} (LN kernel) can be written in a somewhat different form by studying its action on the test functions $f(z) = z^p$, $z \partial_z f(z) = p f(z)$. Here and below $\partial_z = \partial/\partial z$. In this way one obtains

$$[\mathcal{H}f](z) = \left[\psi(z \partial_z + 2) - \psi(1) + \ln(i\mu z) - \frac{5}{4} \right] f(z). \quad (9)$$

Next, we use the identity for a fractional derivative $(i\partial_z)^a$ defined as the multiplication operator k^a in momentum representation [7]:

$$(i\partial_z)^a = (iz)^{-a} \frac{\Gamma(a - z \partial_z)}{\Gamma(-z \partial_z)}. \quad (10)$$

It holds for the functions $f(z)$ that are holomorphic in the lower complex half-plane $\Im m z < 0$, $z \in \mathbb{C}_-$, and vanish at infinity. Fourier transform for such functions goes over positive momenta $f(z) = \int_0^\infty dk e^{-ikz} \tilde{f}(k)$, $(i\partial_z)^a f(z) = \int_0^\infty dk e^{-ikz} k^a \tilde{f}(k)$, corresponding in our case to positive values of the light-quark energy $\omega = k/2$ in the B -meson rest frame, cf. Eq. (4). Expanding this identity around $a = 0$ one gets

$$\ln(i\partial_z) = \psi(-z \partial_z) - \ln(iz) \quad (11)$$

and making an inversion $z \rightarrow -1/z$

$$\ln(iz^2 \partial_z) = \psi(z \partial_z) + \ln(iz). \quad (12)$$

Finally, since for any function $f(z \partial_z)z = zf(z \partial_z + 1)$, we can write this identity as

$$z^{-2} \ln(iz^2 \partial_z) z^2 = \ln[i(z^2 \partial_z + 2z)] = \ln(iS^+) = \psi(z \partial_z + 2) + \ln(iz). \quad (13)$$

Comparing with Eq. (6) we see that

$$\mathcal{H} = \ln(i\mu S^+) - \psi(1) - \frac{5}{4} \quad (14)$$

which is our main result. Note that the scale μ under the logarithm is necessary simply because S_+ has dimension $[\text{mass}]^{-1}$.

Alternatively, the same expression can be derived starting from the commutation relations for the LN kernel obtained in Ref. [6]:

$$[S_+, \mathcal{H}] = 0, \quad [S_0, \mathcal{H}] = 1. \quad (15)$$

Since the problem has one degree of freedom – the light-cone coordinate of the light quark – it follows from $[S_+, \mathcal{H}] = 0$ that the operator \mathcal{H} must be a function of S_+ , $\mathcal{H} = h(S_+)$. This function can be found using the second commutation relation. Let $S = S_0 + 1$. Then $S_+ = zS$ and the relation $[S_0, h(S_+)] = 1$ can be written equivalently as $[S, h(zS)] = 1$. Taking into account that $[S, zS] = zS$ one obtains an equation on the function $h(s)$

$$s h'(s) = 1 \implies h(s) = \ln s + \text{constant}, \quad (16)$$

reproducing the result in Eq. (14) up to a (scheme-dependent) constant.

3. The main advantage of Eq. (14) is that diagonalization of the kernel \mathcal{H} can be traded for a much simpler task of diagonalization of the first-order differential operator S_+ (7). Eigenfunctions of S_+ take a simple form¹

$$Q_s(z) = -\frac{1}{z^2} e^{is/z}, \quad iS_+ Q_s(z) = s Q_s(z), \quad (17)$$

so that

$$\mathcal{H} Q_s(z) = \left[\ln(\mu s) - \psi(1) - \frac{5}{4} \right] Q_s(z). \quad (18)$$

A further advantage is that one can use $SL(2)$ representation theory methods to work with these solutions, see e.g. Ref. [11] for a short discussion of this technique. In particular one can make use of the standard $SL(2)$ invariant scalar product [12] (for spin $j = 1$)

$$\langle \Phi | \Psi \rangle = \frac{1}{\pi} \int_{\mathbb{C}_-} d^2 z \overline{\Phi(z)} \Psi(z), \quad (19)$$

where the (two-dimensional) integration goes over the lower half-plane \mathbb{C}_- , $\Im m z < 0$. The generator iS^+ is self-adjoint w.r.t. this scalar product. The eigenfunctions (17) are orthogonal to each other and form a complete set

$$\langle Q_{s'} | Q_s \rangle = \frac{1}{s} \delta(s - s'), \quad \int_0^\infty ds s Q_s(z) \overline{Q_s(z')} = \frac{e^{-i\pi}}{(z - \bar{z}')^2}. \quad (20)$$

The function on the r.h.s. of the completeness relation is called reproducing kernel [13]. It acts as a unit operator so that for any function holomorphic in the lower half-plane

$$\Psi(z) = \frac{1}{\pi} \int_{\mathbb{C}_-} d^2 z' \frac{e^{-i\pi}}{(z - \bar{z}')^2} \Psi(z'). \quad (21)$$

Hence the B -meson DA (1) can be expanded as

$$\begin{aligned} \Phi_+(z, \mu) &= \int_0^\infty ds s \eta(s, \mu) Q_s(z) \\ &= -\frac{1}{z^2} \int_0^\infty ds s e^{is/z} \eta(s, \mu), \quad \eta(s, \mu) = \langle Q_s | \Phi \rangle. \end{aligned} \quad (22)$$

¹ The sign is chosen such that $Q_s(z)$ are real and positive for $z = -i\tau$, $\tau > 0$.

The integration goes over all possible eigenvalues of the step-up generator S_+ that corresponds to special conformal transformations along the light-ray n^μ . This representation is very similar to the one suggested in Ref. [8].

The scale-dependence of the coefficients $\eta(s, \mu)$ is governed by the renormalization-group equation

$$\left(\mu \frac{\partial}{\partial \mu} + \beta(\alpha_s) \frac{\partial}{\partial \alpha_s} + \Gamma_{\text{cusp}}(\alpha_s) \ln \left(\mu \frac{s}{s_0} \right) \right) \times F(\mu) \eta(s, \mu) = 0, \quad (23)$$

where $s_0 = e^{5/4 - \gamma_E}$ and $\Gamma_{\text{cusp}}(\alpha_s) = \frac{\alpha_s}{\pi} C_F + \dots$ is the cusp anomalous dimension [9,10].

The solution of this equation takes the form

$$\begin{aligned} F(\mu) \eta(s, \mu) &= F(\mu_0) \eta(\xi, \mu_0) \times \exp \left\{ - \int_{\mu_0}^{\mu} \frac{d\tau}{\tau} \Gamma_{\text{cusp}}(\alpha_s(\tau)) \ln \left(\tau \frac{s}{s_0} \right) \right\} \\ &= F(\mu_0) \eta(\xi, \mu_0) \left(\mu_0 \frac{s}{s_0} \right)^{r(\mu)} B(\mu), \end{aligned} \quad (24)$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} r(\mu) &= - \int_{\alpha(\mu_0)}^{\alpha(\mu)} \frac{d\alpha}{\beta(\alpha)} \Gamma_{\text{cusp}}(\alpha_s) = 2 \frac{C_F}{\beta_0} \ln \left(\frac{\alpha(\mu)}{\alpha(\mu_0)} \right) + \dots, \\ B(\mu) &= \exp \left\{ - \int_{\alpha(\mu_0)}^{\alpha(\mu)} \frac{d\alpha}{\beta(\alpha)} \Gamma_{\text{cusp}}(\alpha) \int_{\alpha(\mu_0)}^{\alpha} \frac{d\alpha'}{\beta(\alpha')} \right\}. \end{aligned} \quad (25)$$

In practical applications the momentum (energy) representation for the B -meson DA $\phi_+(k, \mu)$ as defined in (4) is more convenient. This can be derived easily by observing that exponential functions e^{-ipz} , $p > 0$ are mutually orthogonal and form a complete set w.r.t. the same scalar product

$$\langle e^{-ipz} | e^{-ip'z} \rangle = \frac{1}{p} \delta(p - p'). \quad (26)$$

Hence

$$\begin{aligned} \Phi_+(z, \mu) &= \int_0^\infty dp p e^{-ipz} \langle e^{-ipz'} | \Phi_+(z', \mu) \rangle \\ &= \int_0^\infty dp p e^{-ipz} \int_0^\infty ds s \eta(s, \mu) \langle e^{-ipz'} | Q_s(z') \rangle \end{aligned} \quad (27)$$

and therefore

$$\begin{aligned} \phi_+(k, \mu) &= \frac{1}{2\pi} \int_{-\infty}^\infty dz e^{ikz} \Phi_+(z - i0, \mu) \\ &= k \int_0^\infty ds s \eta(s, \mu) \langle e^{-ikz} | Q_s(z) \rangle. \end{aligned} \quad (28)$$

Using

$$\langle e^{-ikz} | Q_s(z) \rangle = \frac{1}{\sqrt{ks}} J_1(2\sqrt{ks}) \quad (29)$$

we finally obtain

$$\phi_+(k, \mu) = \int_0^\infty ds \sqrt{ks} J_1(2\sqrt{ks}) \eta(s, \mu), \quad (30)$$

where $J_1(x)$ is the Bessel function. The representation in Eq. (30) is equivalent to the one suggested by Bell, Feldmann, Wang and Yip in Ref. [8], who noticed that the evolution equation is significantly simplified in this manner. In their notation, cf. second line in Eq. (2.17), $s \eta(s, \mu) \equiv \rho_+(1/s, \mu)$.

The orthogonality relation (26) combined with the projection (29) leads to a familiar relation for the Bessel functions

$$\int_0^\infty ds J_1(2\sqrt{ps}) J_1(2\sqrt{p's}) = \delta(p - p'), \quad (31)$$

which can be used to invert Eq. (30) and express $\eta(s, \mu)$ in terms of $\phi_+(k, \mu)$.

Note that the representation in (14) is valid for the evolution kernel in momentum space as well, but the generator S_+ has to be taken in the adjoint representation

$$S_+ = i[k\partial_k^2 + 2j\partial_k], \quad j = 1. \quad (32)$$

The Bessel functions appearing in (29), (30) are eigenfunctions of S_+ , indeed:

$$\begin{aligned} s \langle e^{-ikz} | Q_s(z) \rangle &= \langle e^{-ikz} | iS_+ Q_s(z) \rangle = \langle iS_+ e^{-ikz} | Q_s(z) \rangle \\ &= iS_+ \langle e^{-ikz} | Q_s(z) \rangle. \end{aligned} \quad (33)$$

Of particular interest for the QCD description of B -decays is the value of the first negative moment

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda_B^{-1}(\mu) &= \int_0^\infty \frac{dk}{k} \phi_+(k, \mu) = \int_0^\infty d\tau \Phi_+(-i\tau, \mu) \\ &= \int_0^\infty ds \eta(s, \mu). \end{aligned} \quad (34)$$

As demonstrated in [8], QCD factorization expressions for B decay amplitudes can conveniently be written in terms of $\eta(s, \mu)$ as well, so that we do not dwell on this topic here.

4. The same representation can be derived for arbitrary two-particle heavy-light one-loop kernels that contribute to the evolution equations for higher-twist B -meson DAs [6]. The difference to the leading twist is that the two-particle evolution equations are not closed: The two-particle, $2 \rightarrow 2$, kernels appear as parts of larger mixing matrices involving $2 \rightarrow 3$ parton transitions, however, $3 \rightarrow 2$ transitions do not occur at the one-loop level.

Explicit expressions for all $2 \rightarrow 2$ heavy-light kernels have been derived in Ref. [6], see Section 3.2. They can be written in terms of an integral operator

$$\begin{aligned} [\mathcal{H}_j f](z) &= \int_0^1 \frac{d\alpha}{\alpha} [f(z) - \bar{\alpha}^{2j-1} f(\bar{\alpha}z)] + \ln(i\mu z) f(z) \\ &\quad - [\sigma_h + \sigma_\ell] f(z), \end{aligned} \quad (35)$$

where j is the conformal spin of the light parton ℓ (quark or gluon) and the constants $\sigma_h = 1/2$, $\sigma_{\text{quark}} = 3/4$, $\sigma_{\text{gluon}} = \beta_0/4N_c$ ($\beta_0 = 11/3N_c - 2/3n_f$) are related to the anomalous dimensions of the fields. Conformal spin of a parton is defined as $j = (d + s)/2$ where d is canonical dimension and s is spin projection on the light cone, see [14]. For a quark $j = 1$ for the ‘‘plus’’ projection

that contributes to the leading-twist B -meson DA (1), in which case (35) reproduces (6), and $j = 1/2$ for the “minus” projection that is relevant for the DA $\Phi_-(z, \mu)$, cf. [2]. In turn, for a gluon $j = 3/2$ for the leading-twist projection and $j = 1$ for the higher-twist.

Following the above derivation for $j = 1$ we obtain the following representation for the kernel in the general case:

$$\mathcal{H}_j = \ln(i\mu S_+^{(j)}) - \psi(1) - \sigma_h - \sigma_\ell, \quad (36)$$

where the generator of special conformal transformations $S_+^{(j)}$ for spin j is defined in Eq. (7). The eigenfunctions of $S_+^{(j)}$ have the form

$$Q_s^{(j)}(z) = \frac{e^{-i\pi j}}{z^{2j}} e^{is/z}, \quad iS_+^{(j)} Q_s^{(j)}(z) = s Q_s^{(j)}(z). \quad (37)$$

They are orthogonal and form a complete set with respect to the $SL(2)$ scalar product [13]

$$\langle \Phi | \Psi \rangle_j = \frac{2j-1}{\pi} \int_{\mathbb{C}_-} \mathcal{D}_j z \overline{\Phi(z)} \Psi(z), \quad (38)$$

where $\mathcal{D}_j z = d^2 z [i(z - \bar{z})]^{2j-2}$. One obtains

$$\begin{aligned} \langle Q_s^{(j)} | Q_{s'}^{(j)} \rangle_j &= \frac{\Gamma(2j)}{s^{2j-1}} \delta(s - s'), \\ \frac{1}{\Gamma(2j)} \int_0^\infty ds s^{2j-1} Q_s^{(j)}(z) \overline{Q_{s'}^{(j)}(z')} &= \frac{e^{-i\pi j}}{(z - \bar{z}')^{2j}}. \end{aligned} \quad (39)$$

The expression on the r.h.s. of the second integral defines the reproducing kernel for arbitrary spin j [13], i.e. for arbitrary function (holomorphic in the lower plane)

$$\Psi(z) = \frac{2j-1}{\pi} \int_{\mathbb{C}_-} \mathcal{D}_j z' \frac{e^{-i\pi j}}{(z - \bar{z}')^{2j}} \Psi(z'). \quad (40)$$

The functions $Q_s^j(z)$ diagonalize the renormalization group kernel

$$\mathcal{H}_j Q_s^j(z) = [\ln(\mu s) - \psi(1) - \sigma_h - \sigma_\ell] Q_s^j(z) \quad (41)$$

so that it is natural to write matrix elements of generic heavy–light operators as an expansion

$$\Phi_j(z, \mu) = \int_0^\infty ds s^{2j-1} \eta_j(s, \mu) Q_s^{(j)}(z), \quad (42)$$

where $\Phi_j(z, \mu)$ is analogue of $\Phi_+(z, \mu)$ (1).

The expansion coefficients $\phi_j(k, \mu)$ appearing in the Fourier transform

$$\Phi_j(z, \mu) = \int_0^\infty dk e^{-ikz} \phi_j(k, \mu) \quad (43)$$

can be found making use of the following relations:

$$\begin{aligned} \langle e^{-ikz} | e^{-ik'z} \rangle_j &= \Gamma(2j) k^{1-2j} \delta(k - k'), \\ \langle e^{-ikz} | Q_s^{(j)} \rangle_j &= \Gamma(2j) (ks)^{1/2-j} J_{2j-1}(2\sqrt{ks}). \end{aligned} \quad (44)$$

In this way one obtains

$$\phi_j(p, \mu) = \int_0^\infty ds \eta_j(s, \mu) (sp)^{j-1/2} J_{2j-1}(2\sqrt{ps}). \quad (45)$$

In particular for $j = 1/2$ corresponding to the B -meson DA $\phi_-(k, \mu)$ [2] the conformal expansion goes over Bessel functions $J_0(2\sqrt{ks})$ as compared to $J_1(2\sqrt{ks})$ for the leading twist, cf. [8].

5. To summarize, we have constructed a conformal expansion of the distribution amplitudes of heavy–light mesons in terms of eigenfunctions of the generator of special conformal transformations. This construction is similar in spirit to the well-known expansion of DAs of light mesons in Gegenbauer polynomials which are eigenfunctions of two-particle $SL(2)$ Casimir operators, see e.g. [14]. Similar to the latter case, this expansion can serve as a basis for the construction of approximations of phenomenological relevance.

As we have shown, this structure is a consequence of the commutation relations (15) and it would be very interesting to find out whether these relations hold true to all orders in perturbation theory for a conformal theory like $N = 4$ SYM. The consequences of our results for the DAs of baryons made of one heavy and two light quarks should be studied as well.

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