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Charge screening and mass spectrum

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A general connection between the existence of charge sectors and the mass spectrum is established in Abelian gauge theories in a space-time of dimension larger than two. The exceptional role of two-dimensional space-time is related to Coleman's "quantum soliton."

Currently a great deal of interest is being devoted to solutions of nonlinear field theories in their classical,[1,7] semiclassical[2,3] and fully quantized[4-6] aspects. A typical feature of those solutions is the appearance of sectors associated with identically conserved currents, i.e., of charges that are not zero only because of the existence of long-range states. In this paper we show that in a space-time of dimension larger than two identically conserved currents lead to zero charge (no charge sectors) unless there are zero-mass states in the theory. This result generalizes what has been known as the charge-screening effect[8] in connection with the Higgs[9] and the Schwinger[10] models.

The failure of the general proof in two dimensions allows for the existence of sectors associated with identically conserved currents in theories without zero-mass states as in the Goldstone-Jackiw[3] and Coleman[4] recent proposals. The peculiar feature of two-dimensional space-time arises from the fact that in this case any conserved current can be derived from a local potential, as long as there is a mass gap, being in this way identically conserved.

Consider an identically conserved current

$$j^{\mu}=\partial_{\nu}F^{\mu\nu}\ , \tag{1}$$

where in two dimensions we have

$$F^{\mu\nu}=\epsilon^{\mu\nu}\phi\ . \tag{2}$$

We wish to know under which conditions will there be sectors corresponding to nonzero values of the charge formally given by

$$Q=\int j^{0}d\underline{x}. \tag{3}$$

From Gauss's law we know[11] that the charge sectors, if they exist, will correspond to long-range states, i.e., states that cannot be obtained by applying local charge-raising operators to the vacuum. What we can show is that the existence of charge sectors is incompatible with the assumption of a mass gap in the theory. In other words, a long-range charged states imply the existence of massless photons. Conversely, whenever the "photons" acquire a mass (via a Higgs mechanism or any other) the charge is screened.

The proof goes as follows: Suppose there were charged states in a theory with a mass gap and which is asymptotically complete where (1) holds. Consider a charged one-particle state $|p\rangle$. For simplicity we take spin-0 states, the generalization to higher spin being straightforward. With

$$\langle p|j^{\mu}(0)|p'\rangle=(p+p')^{\mu}G(t)\ ,\quad t=(p-p')^{2} \tag{4}$$

$$\langle p|F^{\mu\nu}(0)|p'\rangle=[(p-p')^{\mu}(p+p')^{\nu}-(p+p')^{\mu}(p-p')^{\nu}]F(t)\ , \tag{5}$$

we get from (1)

$$F(t)=i\,\frac{G(t)}{t}\,. \tag{6}$$

The existence of a nonzero charge implies therefore that the form factor of $F^{\mu\nu}$ develops a pole at the origin. Although this could be taken as an indication for the presence of zero-mass particles in the theory, we should remember that the usual analyticity structure of the form factors depends on the locality of the interpolating charge field (with respect to $F_{\mu\nu}$), an assumption one cannot make here.

A more detailed investigation of the connection between the pole in (6) and the mass spectrum of the theory is required: We show that in space-time of dimension larger than two the pole violates the locality of the $F^{\mu\nu}$ field if there is a mass gap.

To see that let us take the commutator

$$\langle\underline{p}=0|[F^{0i}(\underline{x},0),j^{i}(g)]|\underline{p}=0\rangle=C(\underline{x})\,, \tag{7}$$

where there is *no* summation over i, and in a more rigorous treatment we would have taken normalized states with momentum centered around zero instead of the improper states $|\underline{p}=0\rangle$. In an asymptotically complete theory without zero-mass particles there is necessarily a mass gap between the one-particle hyperboloid and the continuum of states in the charge-one sector. We choose our test function g to be of the Schwartz class with its Fourier transform having the following properties:

$$\tilde{g}(p)=0, \quad |p_0|>\delta, \quad \delta<\text{mass gap}, \tag{8a}$$

$$\tilde{g}(p)=\tilde{g}(-p), \tag{8b}$$

$$\tilde{g}(0)=1. \tag{8c}$$

Locality of the $F^{\mu\nu}$ implies that $C(\underline{x})$ goes to zero faster than any inverse power of $|\underline{x}|$, since g is of the Schwartz class

$$|C(\underline{x})|<\frac{A_k}{|\underline{x}|^k} \text{ for any } k. \tag{9}$$

Because of support property (8a) of $\tilde{g}$ only the one-particle intermediate states contribute to the commutator (7) so that

$$C(\underline{x})=i\,4m\int d\underline{p}\,\frac{e^{i\underline{p}\cdot\underline{x}}}{(\underline{p}^2+m^2)^{1/2}}\frac{G^2(t)}{t}\times\tilde{g}(\underline{p},(\underline{p}^2+m^2)^{1/2}-m)p^{i2}, \tag{10}$$

where m is the mass of the charged particle.

The asymptotic behavior of (10) for large $|\underline{x}|$ is given by

$$C(\underline{x})\sim iG^2(0)\int d\underline{p}\,e^{i\underline{p}\cdot\underline{x}}\frac{p^{i2}}{\underline{p}^2} = -iG^2(0)\frac{2^n\pi^{n/2}\Gamma(n/2)}{|\underline{x}|^{n+2}}(nx^{i2}-|\underline{x}|^2), \tag{11}$$

where $n+1$ is the space-time dimension. It is clear that for any space-time dimension larger than two (11) is only compatible with (9) if $G(0)=0$, that is, if there are no charge sectors.

A few remarks are now in order. Our proof is geared to Abelian gauge theories where $F^{\mu\nu}$ can be safely taken as a local field. In the non-Abelian case the $F_a^{\mu\nu}$ carry charge (color) themselves and will in general be nonlocal in the physical Hilbert space. However, even in a non-Abelian gauge theory some conclusions can be drawn: A quantum analog of 't Hooft's magnetic monopole solution[1] will lead to sectors labeled by a magnetic charge associated to the current

$$k^\mu=\partial_\nu\epsilon^{\mu\nu\sigma\rho}F_a^{\sigma\rho}\phi^a,$$

where a is the color label and ϕ the Higgs field. Since it is color neutral $\epsilon^{\mu\nu\sigma\rho}F_a^{\sigma\rho}\phi^a$ should be a local field, and therefore the existence of magnetic sectors implies necessarily the presence of massless "photons."

We believe that by exploiting the locality of color-neutral composite fields a more general connection between the existence of color sectors and the mass spectrum of theory should follow. This would be of some relevance for gauge theories of "quark confinement."[12]

The reason we could not obtain any result in two dimensions is clear: In this case in any massive theory with a conserved current we can always introduce a local (with respect to itself) field

$$-\phi(x)=\frac{2\pi}{\beta}\int_{x_1}^{\infty}j^0(x_0,x_1')dx_1', \tag{12}$$

which acts as a potential for the current,[13] i.e., with (2), Eq. (1) is satisfied. The existence of (12) as an operator-valued distribution follows by using arguments parallel to those which establish the existence of charges in local theories with a mass gap.[14] The crucial point is that $\langle 0|\phi(f)\phi(f)|0\rangle$ is finite, what follows immediately from the current-current two-point function.

If the massive theory has a scale-invariant high-energy asymptote the Schwinger term will be finite (as in the Thirring model), and therefore by an appropriate choice of β in (12), $\phi(x)$ will satisfy canonical equal-time commutation relations. In this case, assuming the charge is the only internal degree of freedom in the theory (the current is irreducible in every charge sector), we expect

$$\Box\phi=F(\phi), \tag{13}$$

with $F(\phi)$ defining a superrenormalizable interaction. If, furthermore, there exists a charge-raising field in the theory, local with respect to j^μ (although of course not with respect to ϕ) implying a conventional additive charge sector structure,[15] the validity of (13) in any charge sector leads to

$$F\left(\phi+\frac{2\pi}{\beta}\right)=F(\phi). \tag{14}$$

In this way we are heuristically led to Coleman's relation between the sine-Gordon and massive Thirring models[4] and its trivial generalizations: For the superrenormalizability of the theory requiring the highest Fourier component of (14) to have an angular frequency less than $\sqrt{8\pi}$ we may for $\beta<\sqrt{8\pi}/n$ introduce besides the basic $\sin\beta\phi$ interaction some higher harmonics corresponding to the existence of asymptotically vanishing perturbations other than the mass term, such as, for instance,

$$\lim_{\epsilon\to 0}\epsilon^{-\beta^2/4\pi}[:\bar{\psi}(x+\epsilon)\psi(x+\epsilon)::\bar{\psi}(x)\psi(x): -\langle:\bar{\psi}(x+\epsilon)\psi(x+\epsilon)::\bar{\psi}(x)\psi(x):\rangle]. \tag{15}$$

It should be clear from the preceding remarks the exceptional role played by two-dimensional field theories in the construction of charge sectors associated with identically conserved currents in theories with a mass gap. One also realizes that in the Schwinger model[10] the screening occurs not because of Gauss's law [Eq. (1)], which is always trivial in two dimensions, but through the coupling of the electric potential to the "electron" field. The absence of such a nonlocal coupling in the massive Thirring model allows for the locality of the Thirring field with respect to itself as well as for the existence of charge sectors.

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