The Gluon Propagator without lattice Gribov copies on a finer lattice

C. Alexandrou

Department of Physics, University of Cyprus, P.O. Box 20537, CY-1678 Nicosia, Cyprus

Ph. de Forcrand

Institut für Theoretische Physik, ETH Hönggerberg, CH-8093 Zürich, Switzerland, and
CERN, Theory Division, CH-1211 Geneva 23, Switzerland

E. Follana

Department of Physics, University of Cyprus, P.O. Box 20537, CY-1678 Nicosia, Cyprus

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We extend our study of the gluon propagator in quenched lattice QCD using the Laplacian gauge to a finer lattice. We verify the existence of a pole mass as we take the continuum limit and deduce a value of $\sim 600^{+150}_{-30}$ MeV for this pole mass. We find a finite value of $(454(5)$ MeV$)^{-2}$ for the renormalized zero-momentum propagator, in agreement with results on coarser lattices.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The gluon propagator, although not an observable quantity, plays an important role in phenomenological non perturbative studies. A framework for such studies is provided, for instance, by the Dyson Schwinger equations (DSE) which recently have been applied, among other topics, to the study of the quark gluon-plasma \[1\]. This application is particularly important because it complements experimental activity at RHIC and also because of the difficulties of applying lattice QCD to the case of non-zero chemical potential, although some progress is being achieved in this direction \[2\]. However, in the Dyson-Schwinger approach the study of the gluon propagator is still inconclusive because of the various truncations needed to solve the coupled set of equations \[3\]. For instance, in the ghost-free axial gauge, many studies which used a simplified version of the three-gluon vertex supported an infrared enhanced gluon propagator of the form $1/q^4$. Such a behaviour, driven by the vacuum polarisation diagram, was disputed by other DSE studies \[4\] as being due to a flaw in setting to zero the second scalar function that enters in the definition of the gluon propagator. Similar disputes also occur in the case of the Landau gauge where some studies, which assume dominance of the gluon-vacuum polarisation, find infrared enhancement \[5\] whereas others \[6\], which use a rational polynomial Ansatz for the self energies and vertices, find an infrared vanishing propagator. After including the ghost propagator, recent studies in the Landau gauge favour an infrared-vanishing gluon propagator \[7\].

Lattice QCD provides a well defined theoretical framework for non perturbative physics and it is well suited for the study of the gluon propagator. A series of papers \[8\], appeared over the past couple of years, provide a detailed study of the behaviour of the gluon propagator in quenched lattice QCD in the Landau gauge. However, fixing to Landau gauge on the lattice is an iterative procedure which stops upon reaching any of a large number of local minima, called “Gribov copies”. Since the global minimum itself cannot be reached, the effect of trading it for a local minimum is largely unknown. This uniqueness of the gauge condition puts us in a good position to obtain physical results on quantities like the pole mass which one may expect to be gauge invariant, and compare to the corresponding values used in phenomenology. The issue of gauge invariance of the gluon pole mass was addressed in ref. \[9\]. For a certain class of covariant gauges, the Ward identities that determine the gauge dependence of QCD dispersion relations were derived. Using these relations one can examine the gauge independence of the poles of the gluon propagator. It was argued that if the loop expansion holds, then a non-zero pole of the transverse gluon propagator is gauge invariant.

In ref. \[8\], we showed that a good description of the gluon propagator was provided by an Ansatz which admits a dynamically generated gluon mass \[10\] and thus points to an infrared regularised gluon propagator. By analytic continuation to negative values of $q^2$ we obtained an estimate of the pole mass. The existence of a gluon mass has important phenomenological implications \[11\]. Total cross sections in hadron-hadron collisions, proton-proton elastic scattering and diffractive phenomena can be well understood if there is a finite correlation length for the gluon field \[12\]. For instance in the Pomeron exchange model of Landshoff and Nachtmann \[13\] a gluon propagator which is infrared finite is shown to eliminate the troublesome singularity in the Pomeron calculation of hadron-hadron scattering. Whereas a bare gluon mass would lead to problems with unitarity, a dynamically generated mass vanishing in the ultraviolet reproduces the
correct perturbative result for the gluon propagator and is consistent with unitarity.

It is the purpose of the present work to check the robustness of our earlier results on the gluon propagator as we take the continuum limit. We thus extend our previous calculation on coarser lattices \( \beta = 6.2 \). In ref. \[8\] we included a comparison of results in different physical volumes demonstrating that, for the quantities of interest here, such as the pole mass and the zero momentum limit of the gluon propagator, a lattice size of about 1.5 fm suffices. Therefore for this study we use a lattice of spatial size \( 24^3 \times 32 \) for \( \beta = 6.0 \) and \( \beta = 6.2 \), consistent with our previous value of \( \sqrt{\sigma} = 440 \text{ MeV} \) of Ref. \[15\], corresponding to a string tension \( \sqrt{\sigma} = 440 \text{ MeV} \).

The results at \( \beta = 6.2 \) were obtained from 220 configurations generated by the UKQCD collaboration on a lattice of size \( 24^3 \times 48 \). At \( \beta = 6.0 \) we used 200 configurations of size \( 16^3 \times 32 \) from the NERSC archive \[14\]. Our notation is the same as that of ref. \[8\] and we refer the reader to \[8\] for the details of our approach.

### II. SCALING

Reasonable scaling was already observed in \[8\] where we compared data at \( \beta = 5.8 \) and 6.0 on a lattice of size \( 16^3 \times 32 \). Here we compare \( \beta = 6.0 \) and \( \beta = 6.2 \).

![Graph](image)

**Fig. 1.** Data at \( \beta = 6.0 \) (16\(^3\) × 32 lattice; crosses) and at \( \beta = 6.2 \) (24\(^3\) × 48 lattice; triangles) fall on a universal curve.

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\[
\ln(D_{\beta=6.0}(\ln q^2)) = \ln(D_{\beta=6.2}(\ln (q^2))) + c.
\]

The two fitted parameters take values \( b = 0.277 \pm 0.022 \) and \( c = -0.574 \pm 0.053 \), which yields the scaling ratios

\[
\frac{Z_{\beta=6.2}}{Z_{\beta=6.0}} = 1.02 \pm 0.14, \quad \frac{a_{\beta=6.2}}{a_{\beta=6.0}} = 0.758 \pm 0.017. \quad (1)
\]

This ratio of lattice spacings is consistent with that obtained from measurements of the string tension \[15\], and very close to the value 0.729 obtained from the interpolation formula of the Alpha-collaboration \[16\] for \( r_0/a \). Therefore, we use for the lattice spacing the value \( a^{-1}(\beta = 6.2) = 2.718 \text{ GeV} \) of Ref. \[17\], corresponding to a string tension \( \sqrt{\sigma} = 440 \text{ MeV} \).

The renormalised zero momentum propagator also exhibits good scaling. We obtain a value of \((454(5)\text{MeV})^2\) in agreement with our previous value of \( (445\text{MeV})^2 \), both for a renormalization point of 1.943 GeV.

Our new transverse propagator data at \( \beta = 6.2 \) are shown in Fig. 2 together with our previous results. Since the \( \beta = 6.0 \) and 6.2 data agree so well over the whole momentum range, we can compare them to a variety of continuum models. We find that infrared enhancement like \((q^2)^{-2}\) \[4\], as well as Gribov-type infrared suppression of the form \( D(q^2) = Z q^2/(q^4 + M^4) L(q^2, M^2) \) \[17\] or \( Z q^2/(q^4 + 2a q^2 + M^4) L(q^2, M^2) \) \[18\], are both excluded by our data. Here, the function \( L(q^2, M^2) \) enforces the perturbative ultraviolet behaviour of the propagator:

![Graph](image)

**Fig. 2.** The transverse gluon propagator multiplied by \( \hat{q}^2 \) at \( \beta = 5.8, 6.0 \) and 6.2 in physical units. The fits to three models are shown: Marenzoni (dashed dotted line) \[17\], Cornwall (solid line) \[10\], and model A (dashed line) of ref. \[7\].
\[ L(q^2, M^2) = \left\{ \frac{1}{2} \ln \left( (q^2 + M^2)(q^2 + M^{-2}) \right) \right\}^{-\frac{3}{4}}. \]  

The ansatz of Marenzoni et al. [8],
\[ D(q^2) = Z \frac{M^{2\alpha}}{(q^2 + M^2)^{1+\alpha}} + \frac{1}{q^2 + M^2} L(q^2, M^2) \]

with a non-perturbative anomalous dimension \( \alpha \), gives a better description of the lattice data \( (\chi^2/\text{d.o.f} = 18) \) but clearly underestimates the peak in Fig. 2. A much better description is provided by model A of ref. [7],
\[ D(q^2) = Z \left[ \frac{AM^{2\alpha}}{(q^2 + M^2)^{1+\alpha}} + \frac{1}{q^2 + M^2} L(q^2, M^2) \right] \]

with \( L(q^2, M^2) \) defined in (2). Although this model gives the best fit to our data \( (\chi^2/\text{d.o.f} \sim 2) \), it requires one more parameter, and lacks a theoretical motivation. Worse for us here, it cannot be analytically continued.

Taking a different approach, Cornwall [10] allows for a dynamically generated gluon mass which vanishes at large momentum in accord with perturbation theory:
\[ D(q^2) = Z \left[ (q^2 + M^2(q^2)) \ln \frac{q^2 + 4M^2(q^2)}{\Lambda^2} \right]^{-1} \]

with
\[ M(q^2) = M \left\{ \ln \left( \frac{q^2 + 4M^2(q^2)/\Lambda^2} {\ln [4M^2/\Lambda^2]} \right) \right\}^{-6/11}. \]

As we already observed on coarser lattices, we find that also at \( \beta = 6.2 \) Cornwall’s Ansatz provides a reasonable fit to the data over the whole momentum range \( (\chi^2/\text{d.o.f} = 7) \). We will thus keep it as one possible way to extrapolate to negative values of \( q^2 \) for the determination of the pole mass.

### III. POLE MASS

As explained in the Introduction, a phenomenologically important question is whether the gluon propagator has a pole mass. The pole is a zero of the inverse propagator \( D^{-1}(q^2) \). We show this quantity in physical units on Fig. 3 combining our data at \( \beta = 6.2 \) and \( \beta = 6.0 \). To determine the pole mass from \( D^{-1}(q^2) = 0 \), an analytic continuation to negative \( q^2 \) is needed. Given our finite amount of data, this extrapolation procedure is ambiguous. It is essential to test the robustness of a possible pole by comparing a variety of plausible extrapolations. Fortunately, the deviation of \( D^{-1}(q^2) \) from a linear function of \( q^2 \) in the infrared is small (much smaller than in Landau gauge [8]), which increases confidence in the extrapolation. We consider here linear, quadratic and cubic polynomials in \( q^2 \), as well as Cornwall’s ansatz [8]. All four choices indicate the presence of a pole. The variation in its location gives us crude systematic error estimates.

Given the curvature of the data, a linear fit provides a lower bound for the pole mass, with a value of 505 MeV. This mass increases to 693(20) MeV with a quadratic fit, and reaches 800 MeV for a cubic fit. Note that the fitted coefficients of the higher powers of \( q^2 \) keep decreasing, which indicates the soundness of an extrapolation based on a Taylor expansion. However our data are not sufficient to reliably fit higher-degree polynomials: in particular, the results depend on the fitted momentum interval and on the presence or absence of data removed by the “cylindrical cut” of ref. [7], whose purpose is to eliminate momenta most affected by lattice artifacts. In comparison with these simple polynomial fits, Cornwall’s ansatz gives a pole mass of 669(6) MeV, consistent with that of the quadratic polynomial. The various extrapolations are shown together in Fig. 3.

By performing the same analysis at the three values of the lattice spacing \( a(\beta), \beta = 5.8, 6.0 \) and 6.2 we have studied, we can extrapolate the pole mass to the continuum limit. In Fig. 3, we compare such an extrapolation in \( a^2 \), for pole masses obtained by fitting a quadratic polynomial or Cornwall’s ansatz. It can be seen that both give consistent results, at fixed lattice spacing as well as in the continuum. The continuum values are 632(38) MeV and 592(14) MeV using the quadratic polynomial and Cornwall’s Ansatz respectively.
The reasonable robustness of our analysis, with respect to a change in the lattice spacing as well as in the analytic continuation procedure, leads us to conclude that there is strong evidence that a pole exists in the gluon propagator, with a mass of about 600 MeV. Because of the curvature of the inverse propagator, the systematic error in the extrapolation to negative $q^2$ is asymmetric. From the variation observed above with the choice of analytic continuation, we estimate it at $\sim -30, +150$ MeV.

Based on our study of finite volume effects [8], and given our present lattice size, we expect negligible finite size corrections to this pole mass. Comparing it to the glueball mass of $1.17(0.05)(0.08)$ GeV [19], it appears close to one third of the glueball mass (rather than one half as sometimes speculated). A pole mass of $500-800$ MeV is also within the range needed to fit experimental data in various phenomenological studies [11,12].

As a further, model-independent check on the value of the pole mass, we measured the correlator of the gluon field averaged over a time-slice, namely [8]

$$C(t) = \frac{1}{L_s^3} \frac{1}{8} \sum_{a=1}^{8} \frac{1}{3} \sum_{\mu=1}^{3} \left( \sum_{\vec{x}} A_{\mu}^{a}(\vec{x}, 0) \right) \left( \sum_{x} A_{\mu}^{a}(\vec{x}, t) \right)$$

(6)

The exponential decay, if at all, of this correlator at large time is governed by the pole mass. Therefore, one can in principle measure the pole mass in a model-independent way. However, statistical noise limits the usefulness of this approach. We display the correlator in Fig. 5. The data is of insufficient quality to measure an exponential fall-off, and a fitting procedure is needed. Although this correlator is measured on the same configurations as $D(q^2)$, the various momenta are given a different weight, so that a fit to $C(t)$ will give different results than a fit to $D^{-1}(q^2)$, especially after the cylindrical momentum cut in the latter. Since all momenta enter in $C(t)$, we fit the only ansatz which describes the gluon propagator reasonably well over the whole momentum range, namely Cornwall’s model, directly to $C(t)$ instead of $D^{-1}(q^2)$ as before. The dashed line in Fig. 5 shows the original fit of Cornwall’s ansatz to $D^{-1}(q^2)$, which already provides a fair description of the data. The solid line represents a direct fit of the same 3-parameter ansatz to $C(t)$, excluding the first few time-slices which are contaminated by contributions from excited states. A simultaneous fit of the time-slice correlator data at $\beta = 6.2$ and 6.0 yields a pole mass of 739(81) MeV, in agreement with the value 669(6) MeV extracted from $D^{-1}(q^2)$, but with much larger statistical errors.

If one attempts a model-independent determination of the pole mass from the effective mass $m_{\text{eff}}(t) = -\text{Ln}(C(t)/C(t+1))$, one obtains a value of 702(163) MeV, poorly determined but consistent with the direct fit. Therefore, our different analyses give pole masses ranging from 592 MeV (continuum extrapolation of pole of propagator fitted by Cornwall’s Ansatz) to 739 MeV (fit of time-slice correlator). Taking into account the asymmetry of potential systematic errors, we estimate the gluon pole mass to be $\sim 600_{-30}^{+150}$ MeV.
IV. CONCLUSIONS

We have extended a previous lattice study of the gluon propagator in the Laplacian gauge to a finer lattice and found good scaling behaviour. We confirm the existence of a pole as we approach the continuum limit. Applying a variety of different fits we extract a pole mass in the range of $600^{−30+150}$ MeV in accord with the value found in phenomenological studies for the description of hadron-hadron scattering.

It would be very interesting to substantiate the gauge-invariance of the gluon propagator pole mass by similar studies in other gauges. Ref. [20] proposes a non-local, gauge-invariant gluon propagator based on the (Coulomb-like) Laplacian gauge in three dimensions. It is argued there that the pole mass of this propagator determines the vector-pseudoscalar-mass splitting $M_V - M_S$ in heavy quarkonia. This relation is consistent with the $SU(2)$ numerical results presented. For QCD, using the experimental values for the splitting in $c\bar{c}$ and $b\bar{b}$ systems, the implication is that the pole mass is $\sim 420$ MeV. This is somewhat low compared to our estimate. In Landau gauge, our first attempt [8] showed no indication for a gluon propagator pole. However, lattice Gribov copies might play a crucial role there. Moreover, Landau gauge appears more sensitive than Laplacian gauge to finite-size effects. Thus this question requires larger lattices as studied in [8].

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