Relating neutrino mass and dark matter with discrete flavor symmetry

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Abstract.

We propose a new motivation for the stability of dark matter (DM). We suggest that the same non-abelian discrete flavor symmetry which accounts for the observed pattern of neutrino oscillations, spontaneously breaks to a $Z_2$ subgroup which renders DM stable. The simplest scheme leads to a scalar doublet DM potentially detectable in nuclear recoil experiments, inverse neutrino mass hierarchy, hence a neutrinoless double beta decay rate accessible to upcoming searches, while $\theta_{13} = 0$ gives no CP violation in neutrino oscillations.

1. Introduction

The existence of dark matter (DM) plays a central role in the modeling of structure formation and galaxy evolution, affecting also the cosmic microwave background. Despite the strong evidence in favor of DM, its detailed nature remains rather elusive. Viable particle physics candidates for dark matter must be electrically neutral, and provide the correct relic abundance. Therefore they must be stable over cosmological time scales. A simple way to justify the stability of the DM is by assuming some parity symmetry $Z_2$, which might arise from the spontaneous breaking of an abelian U(1) gauge symmetry [1, 2, 3], or from a non-abelian discrete symmetry, as might be the case in some string models.

Non abelian discrete symmetries are motivated by neutrino oscillation data. Here we propose that the same symmetry explaining neutrino mixing angles is also responsible for the dark matter stability. In our simplest type-I seesaw [4] realization the flavor symmetry $A_4$ spontaneously breaks to $Z_2$ providing a stable DM candidate. We extend the scalar sector of the standard model by adding three Higgs doublets transforming as a triplet of $A_4$ we show that there is a consistent pattern of vacuum expectation values (vevs) for which only one of the three extra Higgs doublets takes a vev, while the other two give rise to the dark matter candidate. The model accounts for the observed pattern of mixing angles [5] indicated by current neutrino oscillation data, predicting $\theta_{13} = 0$ and inverted spectrum of neutrino masses. It will therefore be tested in upcoming double beta and neutrino oscillation searches [6], while the dark matter has potentially detectable rates within reach of nuclear recoil experiments.

1 In supersymmetry a viable DM particle is the neutralino, whose stability stems from the imposition of the so-called R-parity.
2. Model

We assign matter fields to irreducible representations of $A_4$, see [7, 8], as in table in table 1. The

\begin{table}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & $L_e$ & $L_\mu$ & $L_\tau$ & $l'_e$ & $l'_\mu$ & $l'_\tau$ & $N_T$ & $N_4$ & $H$ & $\eta$ \\
\hline
$SU(2)$ & 2 & 2 & 2 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 2 & 2 \\
$A_4$ & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 3 & 1 & 1 & 3 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Summary of relevant model quantum numbers}
\end{table}

resulting Yukawa Lagrangian is

\[ L = y_e L_e l_e^c H + y_\mu L_\mu l_\mu^c H + y_\tau L_\tau l_\tau^c H + y'_1 L_e (N_T \eta) + y'_2 L_\mu (N_T \eta) + + y'_3 L_\tau (N_T \eta) + y'_4 L_\tau N_4 H + M_1 N_T N_T + M_2 N_3 N_4 + h.c. \]

This way $H$ is responsible for quark and charged lepton masses, the latter automatically diagonal. Note that we do not discuss the quark sector, assumed to be blind to $A_4$, namely all left and right-handed up and down-type quarks transform trivially under $A_4$, their mass and mixing hierarchies might arise from an extra family symmetry, for example, Frogatt-Nielsen-like. Neutrino masses arise from $H$ and $\eta$, see below. The scalar potential is of the form

\[ V = \mu^2 \eta^4 + \mu^2 H^\dagger H + \lambda_1 |H^\dagger H|^2 + \lambda_2 |\eta^4|^2 + + \lambda_3 (\eta^4 |\eta^4|^4 + \lambda_4 (|\eta^4|^4 + \eta^4 h.c.) + + \lambda_5 \sum_i |\eta^4|^3 |\eta^4|_{3j} + \lambda_6 (|\eta^4|^3 |\eta^4|_{3j} + h.c.) + + \lambda_7 |\eta^4|^3 |\eta^4|^3 + h.c.) + + \lambda_8 (|\eta^4|^3 |\eta^4|^3 + h.c.) + + \lambda_9 (|\eta^4|^3 |\eta^4|^3 + h.c.) + + \lambda_{10} (|\eta^4|^3 |\eta^4|^3 + h.c.) \] (1)

where $i, j = 1, 2$, and $[...]_3, [...]_1$ means the product of two triplets contracted into a triplet of $A_4$, $[...]_1$ means the product of two triplets contracted into a singlet of $A_4$ and so on. Note that $|\eta^4|_{1,1';1} = |\eta^4|_{1,1';1}, |\eta^4|_{3j} = |\eta^4|_{3j}$, and so on.

We have studied the minimization of the potential for the scalar fields $H, \eta_1, \eta_2$ and $\eta_3$ and we have checked that for suitable parameter choices an allowed minimum is, see [9]

\[ \langle H^0 \rangle = v_\eta \neq 0, \quad \langle \eta^0_1 \rangle = v_\eta \neq 0, \quad \langle \eta^0_{2,3} \rangle = 0. \] (2)

Note that the alignment $\langle \eta \rangle \sim (1, 0, 0)$ breaks spontaneously $A_4$ to $Z_2$ since $(1, 0, 0)$ is invariant under the $S$ generator. The $Z_2$ is defined as

\[ N_2 \rightarrow -N_2, \quad h_2 \rightarrow -h_2, \quad A_2 \rightarrow -A_2, \]
\[ N_3 \rightarrow -N_3, \quad h_3 \rightarrow -h_3, \quad A_3 \rightarrow -A_3. \] (3)

This residual symmetry is responsible for the stability of our DM candidate. This attractive feature reminds of the inert doublet model [?], with the difference that here it follows naturally from the underlying flavor symmetry which accounts for neutrino oscillations. We have four Higgs doublets giving three physical charged scalar bosons, four neutral scalars, and three

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\footnote{Lepton flavor violating processes are suppressed by the large right-handed neutrino scale.}
pseudoscalars. After electroweak symmetry breaking we can write
\[ H = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & v_h + h \\ v_h + h & i A_1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad \eta_1 = \begin{pmatrix} \eta_1^+ \\ v_\eta + h_1 + i A_1 \end{pmatrix}, \]
\[ \eta_2 = \begin{pmatrix} \eta_2^+ \\ h_2 + i A_2 \end{pmatrix}, \quad \eta_3 = \begin{pmatrix} \eta_3^+ \\ h_3 + i A_3 \end{pmatrix}. \]

The mass of the neutral scalar fields is block diagonal with the standard model Higgs \( h \) mixed with \( \eta_1 \), but not with the scalar fields with zero vev’s \( h_2, h_3 \).

### 3. Dark matter

The lightest combination of the stable scalar fields \( h_2, h_3 \) plays the role of our dark matter particle, which we will denote generically by \( \eta_{DM} \). We list below all interactions of \( \eta_{DM} \):

(i) Yukawa interactions
\[ \eta_{DM} \nu_1 N_{2,3}, \]
where \( i = e, \mu, \tau \).

(ii) Higgs-Vector boson couplings
\[ \eta_{DM} \eta_{DM} Z Z, \quad \eta_{DM} \eta_{DM} W W, \]
\[ \eta_{DM} \eta_{DM} h_2 Z, \quad \eta_{DM} \eta_{DM} h_3 Z, \]
\[ \eta_{DM} \eta_{DM} h_1 h_1. \]

(iii) Scalar interactions from the Higgs potential:
\[ \eta_{DM} A_1 A_2 h, \quad \eta_{DM} A_1 A_3 h, \]
\[ \eta_{DM} A_1 A_2 h_1, \quad \eta_{DM} A_1 A_3 h_1, \]
\[ \eta_{DM} A_2 A_3 h_3, \quad \eta_{DM} h_1 h_3 h, \]
\[ \eta_{DM} \eta_{DM} h_1 h_1. \]

After electroweak symmetry breaking, the vevs \( v_h \) and \( v_\eta \) are generated, so that additional terms are obtained from those in Eq. (7) by replacing \( h \rightarrow v_h \) and \( h_1 \rightarrow v_\eta \). The flavor symmetry \( A_4 \) is broken down to the residual \( Z_2 \) symmetry in Eq. (3), implying the stability of our dark matter candidate.

**Relic Density** Assuming that our DM candidate arises as thermal relic in the early universe, one of the most important requirements one must check is its relic abundance. For definiteness we require that \( \eta_{DM} \) makes up all the observed DM. For \( M_\eta \gg M_z \) the most important annihilation and coannihilation processes are those with vector bosons, though for large \( \lambda > g_2 \), where \( \lambda = \lambda_7 + 2 \lambda_8 \), annihilation into Higgs bosons plays an important role, see Eq. (9). The DM abundance can be approximated as [10]
\[ \frac{n_{\eta_{DM}}(T)}{s(T)} \approx \frac{180}{\sqrt{\pi}} \frac{g_*}{g^*} \frac{M_{Pl}^2}{T_f} \frac{1}{\sqrt{\frac{\langle \sigma_A V \rangle}{M_{Pl}}}}, \]
\[ M_{\eta_{DM}} \approx 26, \]
where \( g_* = 106.75 + n \) is the number of SM degrees of freedom plus \( 1 \leq n \leq 12 \) degrees of freedom arising from the extra scalars, and \( M_{Pl} = 1.22 \times 10^{19} \text{GeV} \) is the Planck scale. The cross section for \( \eta_{DM} \eta_{DM} \rightarrow V V \) where \( V \) are vector bosons is given by [10]
\[ \langle \sigma_{AV} \rangle \approx \frac{3g_2^4 + g_Y^4 + 6g_2^2 g_Y^2 Y^2 + 4\lambda^2}{256 \pi M_\eta^2}, \]

where $Y = 1/2$ is the weak hypercharge, $g_2 = \sqrt{4\pi/\alpha/(1 - M_W^2/M_Z^2)}$ and $g_Y = \sqrt{4\pi/\alpha M_Z/M_W}$. From these equations it follows that, in order to provide the correct relic abundance $\Omega_{\text{DM}} h^2 = 0.110 \pm 0.006$ i.e. $n_{\text{DM}}/s = (0.40 \pm 0.02)\text{eV}/M_{\eta}$, a correlation between the mass of the dark matter $M_\eta$ and the quartic coupling constant $\lambda$ is required. For simplicity if we take the limit of small $\lambda$ we obtain a mass for the DM candidate of $M_{\eta} \approx 0.51$ TeV. For large $\lambda$ values we have that the DM mass $M_{\eta}$ scales as $\lambda$.

**Direct detection** The quartic couplings $\eta^\dagger \eta H^\dagger H$ and $\eta^\dagger \eta H H$ give an interaction of the DM candidate with the nucleon through the interchange of the SM Higgs boson. Hence our DM candidate can be detected through the elastic scattering with a nucleus $\eta_{\text{DM}} N \rightarrow \eta_{\text{DM}} N$ via the exchange of a Higgs, or through inelastic scattering with a nucleus $\eta_{\text{DM}} N \rightarrow AN$ with the exchange of a $Z$ boson, see Fig. 1, where $A$ is the lightest pseudoscalar, in general a mixture of $A_2$ and $A_3$.

Barring fine-tuned choices of parameters for which the threshold for inelastic scattering opens up, the detection will be dominated by the elastic process, whose cross section is given by [12]

$$\sigma_{\text{el}}(\text{nucleon}) \approx \lambda^2 \frac{1}{1 + (\tan \beta)^2} \left( \frac{100 \text{ GeV}}{M_h} \right)^4 \times \left( \frac{50 \text{ GeV}}{M_\eta} \right)^2 \left( 5 \times 10^{-42} \text{ cm}^2 \right),$$

(10)

where $\tan \beta = v_h/v_\eta$. Note that all uncertainties associated with the nuclear form factor in Eq. (10), have been neglected. From the requirement of correctly reproducing the relic density, Eqs. (8) and (9), one can find an expression for $\lambda$ as function of the DM mass, $M_\eta$. Using this relation and eq. (10) one can plot the estimated cross section for the direct detection for each value of $\tan \beta$ and mass of the Higgs, $M_h$, as illustrated in Fig. 2. The figure compares the experimental sensitivities with our model expectations, fixing $m_H = 120$ GeV and three $\tan \beta$ values. This choice of Higgs mass is motivated by the LEP bounds $m_H > 114$ GeV, which however is not strictly valid in our model due to the additional Higgs doublets.

**4. Neutrino phenomenology**

Our model has four heavy right-handed neutrinos, and is a special case, called (3,4), of the general type-I seesaw mechanism [13, 14]. After electroweak symmetry breaking, it is characterized by

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*Figure 1.* Feynman diagrams relevant for direct DM detection. Elastic scattering (left) is generically more important than inelastic (right).
so that the light neutrinos get Majorana mass by means of the type-I seesaw relation
\[ m_D = \begin{pmatrix} x_1 & 0 & 0 & y_1 \\ x_2 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ x_3 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}, M_R = \text{diag}(M_1, M_1, M_1, M_2), \]
(11)

so that the light neutrinos get Majorana mass by means of the type-I seesaw relation \( m_{\nu} = -m_{D_{3\times3}}M_{R_{4\times4}}^{-1}M_{D_{3\times3}}^T \) the light-neutrinos mass matrix \( M_{\nu} \) being given as

\[
\left( \begin{array}{ccc} \frac{x_1^2}{M_1} + \frac{y_1^2}{M_2} & \frac{x_1 x_2}{M_1} & \frac{x_1 x_3}{M_1} \\ \frac{x_2 x_1}{M_1} & \frac{x_2^2}{M_1} & \frac{x_2 x_3}{M_1} \\ \frac{x_3 x_1}{M_1} & \frac{x_3 x_2}{M_1} & \frac{x_3^2}{M_1} \end{array} \right) = \left( \begin{array}{ccc} y_1^2 & ab & ac \\ ab & b^2 & bc \\ ac & bc & c^2 \end{array} \right). \]
(12)

It falls in the class of scaling matrix introduced in Ref.[15]. This form of the light neutrino mass matrix has an inverse hierarchical neutrino mass spectrum and a zero eigenvalue with \( m_3 = 0 \) and corresponding eigenvector \((0, -b/c, 1)^T\) implying a vanishing reactor mixing angle \( \theta_{13} = 0 \). One can see explicitly that the solar and atmospheric square mass differences and mixing angles indicated by neutrino oscillation data [5] can indeed be fitted by taking, as an example, the tri-bimaximal (TBM) ansatz. When \( b = c \) and \( y^2 = 2c^2 - ac \) the neutrino mass matrix Eq. (12) is \( \mu - \tau \) invariant yielding maximal atmospheric mixing, \( \sin^2 \theta_{23} = 1/2 \) and \( M_{\nu,11} + M_{\nu,13} = M_{\nu,22} + M_{\nu,23} \), which gives the TBM value of the solar angle, \( \sin^2 \theta_{12} = 1/3 \), in good agreement with experimental data within one \( \sigma \). The eigenvalues are \( \{m_1, m_2, m_3\} = \{2ac + 2c^2, 2c^2 - ac, 0\} \), which can fit the two mass-squared differences required to account for the observed pattern of neutrino oscillations. By relaxing the condition \( b = c \) and \( y^2 = 2c^2 - ac \) one generates deviations from the TBM limit, while keeping \( \theta_{13} = 0 \). Note the above implies a neutrinoless double beta decay effective mass parameter in the range 0.03 to 0.05 eV at 3 \( \sigma \), within reach of upcoming experiments.

5. Conclusions
In summary we have suggested that DM stability follows from the same non-abelian discrete flavor symmetry which accounts for the observed pattern of neutrino oscillations. In our example we have an \( A_4 \) symmetry which spontaneously breaks to a \( Z_2 \) parity that stabilizes a scalar
doublet dark matter, potentially detectable in nuclear recoil experiments, as well as accelerators. Our simple example gives rates accessible to upcoming experiments and no CP violation in neutrino oscillations. One may construct alternative models, based on different $A_4$ realizations or different discrete flavor symmetry groups.

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