Inverse magnetic catalysis in holographic models of QCD

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Abstract: We study the effect of magnetic field $B$ on the critical temperature $T_c$ of the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in hard-wall AdS/QCD, and holographic duals of flavored and unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ super-Yang Mills theories on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$. For all of the holographic models, we find that $T_c(B)$ decreases with increasing magnetic field $B \ll T^2$, consistent with the inverse magnetic catalysis recently observed in lattice QCD for $B \lesssim 1$ GeV$^2$. We also predict that, for large magnetic field $B \gg T^2$, the critical temperature $T_c(B)$, eventually, starts to increase with increasing magnetic field $B \gg T^2$ and asymptotes to a constant value.
Introduction

Recently, the study of the QCD phase diagram for magnetic field $B$ has attracted considerable attention [1–19], see [20] for a review. The main motivation for studying the QCD phase diagram under external magnetic field $B$ stems from the fact that strong magnetic field $B$ is produced in heavy ion collisions experiments at RHIC $eB \sim 0.01 GeV^2$ and LHC $eB \sim 0.25 GeV^2$ [21], due to the charged spectator particles, which has interesting effects on the quark-gluon plasma created during these heavy ion collision experiments [22–27], see [20] for a review. A strong magnetic field $eB \sim 4 GeV^2$ is also produced during the electroweak phase transition of the early Universe [28], and relatively weaker magnetic field $eB \sim 1 MeV^2$ is produced in the interior of dense neutron stars [29].

Another motivation comes from the fact that the study of the QCD phase diagram with magnetic field $B$ is amenable to numerical simulations of QCD on the lattice, without
facing the sign problem of lattice QCD that exist in the case of non-zero baryon chemical potential $\mu_B$, creating an opportunity to compare the holographic and low energy effective models of QCD directly with QCD itself.

Regarding the study of the QCD phase diagram for magnetic field $B$, most models for QCD [1–10], including the holographic ones [11–16], has predicted that the critical temperature $T_c$ increases with increasing magnetic field $B$ at zero chemical potential $\mu = 0$. This enhancing effect of the magnetic field $B$ on the critical temperature $T_c$ has been termed magnetic catalysis. However, recent lattice QCD result [19] has indicated the opposite effect, that is, the critical temperature $T_c$ decreases with increasing magnetic field $B$, for $B \lesssim 1$ GeV$^2$ and zero chemical potential $\mu = 0$. This inhibiting effect of the magnetic field $B$ on the critical temperature $T_c$ has been termed inverse magnetic catalysis.

Even though, the recent lattice QCD result [19] has also indicated that the confinement-deconfinement and chiral symmetry breaking phase transitions occur at the same critical temperature $T_c(B)$ at least for $B \lesssim 1$ GeV$^2$, most holographic calculations so far [11–17] have been concerned only with $T_c(B)$ of the chiral symmetry breaking phase transition.

However, recently, reference [18], inspired by the recent lattice QCD result [19], has a priori assumed confinement and chiral symmetry breaking transitions to occur at the same critical temperature $T_c$ in Sakai-Sugimoto model, and has argued that, in this case, $T_c(B)$ must be a decreasing function of $B$, consistent with the recent lattice QCD result [19], but has not provided a direct computation of $T_c(B)$.

In this paper, we give a direct computation of the critical temperature $T_c(B)$ of the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in hard-wall AdS/QCD, and holographic duals of flavored and unflavored $N = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$ where $S^1$ is a circle of length $l$ in one of the spatial directions. (Note that, at finite temperature $T$, $\mathbb{R}^3$ is really $S^1_T \times \mathbb{R}^2$ where $S^1_T$ is the thermal circle with length $\frac{1}{T}$.) Also, note that, since the fermions of both the flavored and unflavored $N = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$ obey antiperiodic boundary conditions around the circle $S^1$, they acquire a tree-level mass $m \sim \frac{1}{l}$. The scalars are periodic around the circle, hence they acquire masses only at the quantum level through their couplings to the fermions [34]. The gluons, however, do not acquire masses, therefore, at low-energy, both flavored and unflavored $N = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$ reduce to pure 3D Yang-Mills theory.

It is well known that both flavored and unflavored $N = 4$ super-Yang Mills theories (SYM) on flat spacetime $\mathbb{R}^4$ are not confining gauge theories. However, they can be made confining in the large-$N_c$ limit by placing them on a compact space with length $l$, and the confinement-deconfinement phase transition occurs at critical temperature $T_c = \frac{1}{l}$ [30, 31, 33], see [34, 35] for a review. In our case, the compact space is $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$, that is, we compactify one of the spatial dimensions into a circle of length $l$.

The confinement-deconfinement phase transition both in flavored and unflavored $N = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$ is holographically modeled by a phase transition between a black hole solution with radius of horizon $r = r_h$, and $AdS_5$-soliton solution which smoothly ends at $r = r_0$. However, to study the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in QCD on $\mathbb{R}^4$ at strong coupling, we use the hard-wall AdS/QCD model where the confinement-deconfinement phase transition, of QCD on $\mathbb{R}^4$, is holographically modeled by a phase transition between a black hole solution with radius of horizon $r = r_h$, and thermal-$AdS_5$
solution with hard-wall IR cut-off $r = r_0$.

We derive the corresponding thermal-$AdS_5$ solution which is the holographic dual to the confined phase of QCD on $\mathbb{R}^4$ by starting from a black hole solution, which corresponds to the deconfined phase of strongly coupled QCD on $\mathbb{R}^4$, by setting the mass of the black hole to zero [46]. And, we derive the corresponding $AdS_5$-soliton solution, which is the holographic dual to the confined phase of flavored and unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$, by ”double Wick rotating” a black hole solution [34, 35].

In this paper, we use two black hole solutions in the presence of constant magnetic field $B$. First, we use the black hole solution in the presence of constant magnetic field $B \ll T^2$ found in [36] to study the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in strongly coupled QCD on $\mathbb{R}^4$ and unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$. Then, we use the black hole solution in the presence of constant magnetic field $B$, including the backreaction of $N_f$ flavor or D7-branes for $N_f \ll N_c$, found in [37] to study the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in flavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$.

The effect of magnetic field $B$ on different observables has also been studied in [38–42] using the backreacted black hole solution of [36] without flavor D7-branes.

The outline of this paper is as follows: In section 2, we write down the 5-dimensional Einstein-Maxwell action (which will be used to study confinement-deconfinement phase transition in hard-wall AdS/QCD and holographic dual of unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$) including the Gibbons-Hawking surface term and the appropriate counter terms. We then review the black hole solution in the presence of constant magnetic field $B \ll T^2$ found in [36]. Then, starting from the black hole solution, which corresponds to the deconfined phase of strongly coupled QCD on flat spacetime and unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$, we derive the corresponding thermal-$AdS_5$ and $AdS_5$-soliton solutions, which correspond to the confined phases of strongly coupled QCD on flat spacetime and unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$, respectively. We also determine the on-shell Euclidean actions (free energies) for the black hole, thermal-$AdS_5$, and $AdS_5$-soliton solutions.

In section 3, we compute the critical temperature $T_c$ of the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in hard-wall AdS/QCD, and holographic duals of flavored and unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$. We first compute the critical temperature $T_c$ of the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in hard-wall AdS/QCD by requiring the difference between the black hole and thermal-$AdS_5$ on-shell Euclidean actions vanish at $T = T_c$. Then, we compute the critical temperature $T_c$ of the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in holographic dual of unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$ by requiring the difference between the black hole and $AdS_5$-soliton on-shell Euclidean actions vanish at $T = T_c$. Finally, using the insight we gained, in computing the critical temperature $T_c$ of the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in holographic dual of unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$, we compute the critical temperature $T_c$ of the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in holographic dual of flavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$ by constructing the backreacted $AdS_5$-soliton solution from the backreacted black hole metric of D3/D7 model, with magnetic field $B$, found in [37].

In Appendix A, we compute the critical temperature $T_c(B)$ of the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in hard-wall AdS/QCD for large magnetic field $B \gg T^2$. 

– 3 –
2 Einstein-Maxwell theory in 5D

In this section, we review elements of Einstein-Maxwell theory in 5D which will, subsequently, be used to study confinement-deconfinement phase transitions in hard-wall AdS/QCD and holographic dual of unflavored $N = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$.

The action of five-dimensional Einstein-Maxwell theory with a negative cosmological constant is

\[ S = S_{\text{bulk}} + S_{\text{bndy}}, \]  

(2.1)

where the bulk action $S_{\text{bulk}}$ is

\[ S_{\text{bulk}} = \frac{1}{16\pi G_5} \int d^5 x \sqrt{-g} \left( R - F^{MN} F_{MN} + \frac{12}{L^2} \right), \]  

(2.2)

and the boundary action $S_{\text{bndy}}$ is

\[ S_{\text{bndy}} = \frac{1}{8\pi G_5} \int d^4 x \sqrt{-\gamma} \left( K - \frac{3}{L} + \frac{L}{2} \left( \ln \frac{r}{L} \right) F^{\mu \nu} F_{\mu \nu} \right) \bigg|_{r=r_\Lambda}. \]  

(2.3)

In the boundary action $S_{\text{bndy}}$ (2.3), the first term is the Gibbons-Hawking surface term, and the other terms are the counter terms needed to cancel the UV ($r_\Lambda \to \infty$) divergences in the bulk action in accordance with the holographic renormalization procedure [45]. Note that the counter terms are entirely constructed from the induced metric $\gamma_{\mu \nu}$ on the boundary surface at $r = r_\Lambda$, that is,

\[ \gamma_{\mu \nu}(r_\Lambda) = \text{diag} \left( g_{tt}(r_\Lambda), g_{xx}(r_\Lambda), g_{yy}(r_\Lambda), g_{zz}(r_\Lambda) \right). \]  

(2.4)

And, $K$ is the trace, with respect to $\gamma_{\mu \nu}$, of the extrinsic curvature of the boundary given by $K_{\mu \nu} = (\partial_r \gamma_{\mu \nu})/(2\sqrt{g_{rr}})$. Using the matrix formula $\partial_\mu (\det M) = \det M \text{tr}(M^{-1} \partial_\mu M)$ [35], we can write $K = \gamma^{\mu \nu} K_{\mu \nu} = \frac{\sqrt{g}}{\sqrt{\gamma}} \text{tr} \partial_\mu M \sqrt{\gamma} [35, 36]$.

In addition to the Bianchi identity, the field equations are [36]

\[ R_{MN} = -\frac{4}{L^2} g_{MN} - \frac{1}{3} F^{PQ} F_{PQ} g_{MN} + 2 F_{MP} F^P_N, \]  

(2.5)

\[ \nabla^M F_{MN} = 0. \]  

(2.6)

From now on we set the AdS radius to unity, that is, $L = 1$.

Turning on a constant magnetic field $B = F_{xy}$ which solves Maxwell’s equation (2.6) and contracting Einstein’s field equation (2.5), one can find the Ricci scalar $R = g^{MN} R_{MN}$ to be

\[ R = -20 + \frac{2}{3} B^2 g^{xx} g^{yy}. \]  

(2.7)

So, the on-shell Euclidean action $S_E$ (which can be found from the Lorentzian action (2.1) by analytic continuation in the imaginary time direction, i.e., $t_E = it$) takes the form

\[ S_E = S_{E\text{bulk}} + S_{E\text{bndy}}, \]  

(2.8)

*Our conventions here are such that the Ricci scalar here $R_{\text{here}}$ is related to the Ricci scalar there $R_{\text{there}}$ (given in [36]) by $R_{\text{here}} = -R_{\text{there}}$. 
where the on-shell Euclidean bulk action $S_{\text{bulk}}$ is

$$S_{\text{bulk}} = \frac{V_3}{8\pi G_5} \int_0^\beta d\tau E \int_{r_0}^{r_h} dr \sqrt{g} \left( 4 + \frac{2}{3} B^2 g^{xx} g^{yy} \right),$$  \hspace{1cm} (2.9)

and, the on-shell Euclidean boundary action $S_{\text{bndy}}$ is

$$S_{\text{bndy}} = -\frac{V_3}{8\pi G_5} \int_0^\beta d\tau E \sqrt{\gamma} \left( K - 3 + B^2 g^{xx} g^{yy} \ln r_h \right),$$  \hspace{1cm} (2.10)

and, $r_\Lambda$ is the UV cut-off while $r'$ is the radius of the horizon $r' = r_h$ for a black hole solution, and IR cut-off $r' = r_0$ for a thermal-$AdS_5$ or $AdS_5$-soliton solutions. From now on we set $V_3 = 8\pi G_5 = 1$. Also, note that the on-shell Euclidean action $S_E$ is related to the free energy $F$ by $S_E = \beta F$.

### 2.1 Background solutions with $B \ll T^2$

In this subsection, we review the black hole solution in the presence of constant magnetic field $B \ll T^2$ found in [36] which corresponds to the deconfined phase of strongly coupled QCD on $\mathbb{R}^4$ (flat spacetime) and unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$. Then, starting from the black hole solution, by setting the mass of the black hole to zero [46], we derive the corresponding thermal-$AdS_5$ solution which is the holographic dual to the confined phase of strongly coupled QCD on flat spacetime $\mathbb{R}^4$. And, by ”double Wick rotating” the black hole solution [34, 35], we derive the corresponding $AdS_5$-soliton solution which is the holographic dual to the confined phase of unflavored and strongly coupled $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$.

#### 2.1.1 Black hole

For $B \ll T^2$ and electric charge density $\rho$, the perturbative black hole solution in powers of $B$, up to an integration constant $a_3$ is given in Eq. 6.1 and 6.16 of Ref. [36]. Here, we set the electric charge density $\rho = 0$ and fix the integration constant $a_3 = -\frac{2}{3}$ so that the perturbative solution in powers of $B$ matches the near boundary solution which is also given in Eq. 4.4, 4.5 and 6.16 of [36]. Therefore, the black hole solution in Eq. 6.1 and 6.16 of Ref. [36], for vanishing electric charge density $\rho = 0$ and $a_3 = -\frac{2}{3}$, takes the form

$$ds^2_{bh} = r^2 \left( -f(r) dt^2 + q(r) dz^2 + h(r) \left( dx^2 + dy^2 \right) \right) + \frac{dr^2}{f(r) r^2},$$  \hspace{1cm} (2.11)

$$f(r) = 1 - \frac{M}{r^4} - \frac{2}{3} B^2 \frac{\ln r}{r^4} + O(B^4),$$

$$q(r) = 1 - \frac{2}{3} B^2 \frac{\ln r}{r^4} + O(B^4),$$

$$h(r) = 1 + \frac{1}{3} B^2 \frac{\ln r}{r^4} + O(B^4),$$

and, the Hawking temperature $T$ becomes

$$T = \frac{1}{\beta} = U'(r_h) = \frac{r_h}{2\pi} \left( 1 + \frac{M}{r_h^4} - \frac{2}{3} B^2 \left( \frac{1}{2r_h^4} - \frac{\ln r_h}{r_h^4} \right) \right) + O(B^4),$$  \hspace{1cm} (2.12)
where $M$ is the mass of the black hole, $U(r) = r^2 f(r)$, the radius of the horizon $r_h$ is defined by requiring $f(r = r_h) = 0$, $T$ is the Hawking temperature of the black hole, and $\beta$ is the length of the thermal circle which acquired a fixed value as a function of $r_h$ in order to avoid the canonical singularity at the horizon $r = r_h$. One can also check that (2.11) indeed satisfies the Einstein field equation (2.5) or its contracted version (2.7).

### 2.1.2 Thermal-AdS$_5$

The thermal-AdS$_5$ solution can be found from a black hole solution by setting the mass of the black hole $M$ to zero, see [46] for the electrically charged black hole case. Therefore, from the black hole solution for $B \ll T^2$ (2.11), we can determine the thermal-AdS solution for $B \ll \Lambda^2_{\text{IR}} \sim r_0^2$ by setting the mass of the black hole $M = 0$,

$$ds^2_{\text{thermal}} = r^2 \left( -f_0(r) dt^2 + q(r) dz^2 + h(r) \left( dx^2 + dy^2 \right) \right) + \frac{dr^2}{f_0(r) r^2}, \quad (2.13)$$

$$f_0(r) = 1 - \frac{2}{3} B^2 \frac{\ln r}{r^4} + \mathcal{O}(B^4),$$

$$q(r) = 1 - \frac{2}{3} B^2 \frac{\ln r}{r^4} + \mathcal{O}(B^4),$$

$$h(r) = 1 + \frac{1}{3} B^2 \frac{\ln r}{r^4} + \mathcal{O}(B^4).$$

### 2.1.3 AdS$_5$-soliton

The AdS$_5$-soliton solution [32, 33] can be determined from the black hole solution (2.11) by "double Wick rotation" $t = iz'$ and $z = it'$ [34, 35]. Therefore, for $B \ll \Lambda^2_{\text{IR}} \sim r_0^2$ the AdS$_5$-soliton solution is,

$$ds^2_{\text{soliton}} = r^2 \left( f_s(r) dz'^2 - q(r) dt'^2 + h(r) \left( dx^2 + dy^2 \right) \right) + \frac{dr^2}{f_s(r) r^2}, \quad (2.14)$$

$$f_s(r) = 1 - \frac{M}{r^4} - \frac{2}{3} B^2 \frac{\ln r}{r^4} + \mathcal{O}(B^4),$$

$$q(r) = 1 - \frac{2}{3} B^2 \frac{\ln r}{r^4} + \mathcal{O}(B^4),$$

$$h(r) = 1 + \frac{1}{3} B^2 \frac{\ln r}{r^4} + \mathcal{O}(B^4),$$

$$\frac{1}{l} = \frac{U'(r_0)}{4\pi} = \frac{r_0}{2\pi} \left( 1 + \frac{M}{r_0^4} + \frac{2}{3} B^2 \left( \frac{\ln r_0}{r_0^4} - \frac{1}{2r_0^4} \right) \right) + \mathcal{O}(B^4).$$

where $l$ is the length of the circle in the compactified $z'$ direction which is arbitrary for the black hole solution but in order to avoid the canonical singularity at $r = r_0$ (where $r_0$ is defined by requiring $f_s(r = r_0) = 0$), it acquires a finite value which is given in terms of $r_0$ for the AdS$_5$-soliton solution (2.14).

### 2.2 On-shell Euclidean actions with $B \ll T^2$

In this subsection, we determine the on-shell Euclidean actions (free energies) for the black hole, thermal-AdS$_5$, and AdS$_5$-soliton solutions. And, we compute the difference between
the on-shell Euclidean actions of the deconfining geometry (which is the black hole geometry for both hard-wall \( \text{AdS}/\text{QCD} \) and holographic dual of unflavored \( \mathcal{N} = 4 \) SYM on \( \mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1 \)) and the confining geometry (which is the thermal-\( \text{AdS}_5 \) geometry for hard-wall \( \text{AdS}/\text{QCD} \), and the \( \text{AdS}_5 \)-soliton geometry for holographic dual of unflavored \( \mathcal{N} = 4 \) SYM on \( \mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1 \)).

### 2.2.1 Black hole

The on-shell Euclidean action \( S_E = S_{\text{bh}} \) (2.8) for the black hole solution with \( B \ll T^2 \) (2.11) is

\[
S_{\text{bh}} = S_{\text{bulk}} + S_{\text{bndy}},
\]

where the on-shell Euclidean bulk action of the black hole \( S_{\text{bulk}} \) for \( B \ll T^2 \) is

\[
S_{\text{bulk}} = \int_0^\beta dt E \int_{r_h}^{r_A} dr \sqrt{g} \left( 4 + \frac{2}{3} B^2 g^{xx} g^{yy} \right),
\]

and the on-shell Euclidean boundary action of the black hole \( S_{\text{bndy}} \) for \( B \ll T^2 \) is

\[
S_{\text{bndy}} = -\int_0^\beta dt E \sqrt{\gamma} \left( \frac{\sqrt{\gamma} \partial_r \sqrt{\gamma}}{\sqrt{\gamma}} - 3 + B^2 g^{xx} g^{yy} \ln r_A \right).
\]

The bulk action \( S_{\text{bulk}} \) (2.16) (after using the black hole metric for \( B \ll T^2 \) (2.11), using the fact that \( h(r) \sqrt{q(r)} = 1 + \mathcal{O}(B^4) \), evaluating the integrals, and simplifying) become

\[
S_{\text{bulk}} = -\beta \left( r_h^4 - \frac{4}{3} B^2 \ln r_A + \frac{2}{3} B^2 \ln r_h \right) + \mathcal{O}(B^4),
\]

which diverges when \( r_A \to \infty \), and the boundary action \( S_{\text{bndy}} \) (2.17) becomes

\[
S_{\text{bndy}} = -\beta \left( r_A^4 - \frac{2}{3} B^2 \ln r_A - \frac{1}{2} M - \frac{1}{3} B^2 \right) + \mathcal{O}(B^4),
\]

where we ignored terms which goes to zero in the \( r_A \to \infty \) limit. Also note that (2.19) diverges when \( r_A \to \infty \), but the sum of \( S_{\text{bulk}} \) (2.18) and \( S_{\text{bndy}} \) (2.19) is finite. Hence, the black hole on-shell Euclidean action \( S_{\text{bh}} \) (2.15) is

\[
S_{\text{bh}} = S_{\text{bulk}} + S_{\text{bndy}} = -\beta \left( r_h^4 - \frac{1}{2} M + \frac{2}{3} B^2 \ln r_h - \frac{1}{3} B^2 \right) + \mathcal{O}(B^4) .
\]

### 2.2.2 Thermal-\( \text{AdS}_5 \)

The on-shell Euclidean action \( S_E = S_{\text{thermal}} \) (2.8) for the thermal-\( \text{AdS}_5 \) solution with \( B \ll \Lambda_{IR}^2 \sim r_0^2 \) (2.13) is

\[
S_{\text{thermal}} = S_{\text{tbulk}} + S_{\text{tbdy}},
\]

where the on-shell Euclidean bulk action \( S_{\text{tbulk}} \) of the thermal-\( \text{AdS}_5 \) for \( B \ll \Lambda_{IR}^2 \sim r_0^2 \) is

\[
S_{\text{tbulk}} = \int_0^\beta dt E \int_{r_0}^{r_A} dr \sqrt{g} \left( 4 + \frac{2}{3} B^2 g^{xx} g^{yy} \right),
\]
and the on-shell Euclidean boundary action $S_{\text{tbndy}}$ of the thermal-$AdS_5$ for $B \ll T^2$ is

$$S_{\text{tbndy}} = - \int_0^{\beta'} dt E \gamma \left( \sqrt{g^{rr}} \partial_r \sqrt{\gamma} - 3 + B^2 g^{xx} g^{yy} \ln r_A \right).$$

(2.23)

The thermal-$AdS_5$ bulk action $S_{\text{tbulk}}$ (2.22) (after using the thermal-$AdS_5$ metric for $B \ll T^2$ (2.13), using the fact that $h(r) \sqrt{q(r)} = 1 + O(B^4)$, evaluating the integrals, and simplifying) becomes

$$S_{\text{tbulk}} = -\beta' \left( r_0^4 - r_A^4 - \frac{2}{3} B^2 \ln r_A + \frac{2}{3} B^2 \ln r_0 \right) + O(B^4),$$

(2.24)

which diverges when $r_A \to \infty$, and the thermal-$AdS_5$ boundary action $S_{\text{tbndy}}$ (2.23) becomes

$$S_{\text{tbndy}} = -\beta' \left( r_0^4 + \frac{2}{3} B^2 \ln r_0 - \frac{1}{3} B^2 \right) + O(B^4),$$

(2.25)

which diverges as well when $r_A \to \infty$. But, the sum of $S_{\text{tbulk}}$ (2.24) and $S_{\text{tbndy}}$ (2.25) is finite. Hence, the thermal on-shell Euclidean action $S_{\text{thermal}}$ (2.21) becomes

$$S_{\text{thermal}} = -\beta \left( r_0^4 + \frac{2}{3} B^2 \ln r_0 - \frac{1}{3} B^2 \right) + O(B^4).$$

(2.26)

where we used $\beta' = \beta \sqrt{f} = \beta$ at the boundary $r_A \to \infty$.

Therefore, $\Delta S_E$ (which is the difference between the $AdS_5$ black hole (A.8) and thermal-$AdS_5$ (2.26) on-shell Euclidean actions) becomes

$$\Delta S_E = S_{\text{bh}} - S_{\text{thermal}} = -\beta \left( r_0^4 - r_A^4 - \frac{1}{2} M + \frac{2}{3} B^2 \ln \left( \frac{r_A}{r_h} \right) \right) + O(B^4).$$

(2.27)

2.2.3 $AdS_5$-soliton

Since, black hole (2.11) and $AdS_5$-soliton (2.14) are equivalent Euclidean geometries, their on-shell Euclidean actions take similar form. In fact, the on-shell Euclidean action of $AdS_5$-soliton can be found by merely replacing $r_0$ by $r_h$ in the on-shell Euclidean action for the black hole [35]. Therefore, the difference between the on-shell actions $S_{\text{bh}}$ of the black hole (A.8) and $S_{\text{soliton}}$ of $AdS_5$-soliton geometries is simply

$$\Delta S_E = S_{\text{bh}} - S_{\text{soliton}} = -\beta \left( r_h^4 - r_0^4 + \frac{2}{3} B^2 \ln \left( \frac{r_h}{r_0} \right) \right) + O(B^4).$$

(2.28)

3 Confinement-deconfinement phase transition in holographic models of QCD for $B \ll T^2$

In this section, we compute the critical temperature $T_c$ of the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in hard-wall AdS/QCD, and holographic duals of flavored and unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$. 

- 8 -
Figure 1. Critical temperature $T_c(B)$ of the hard-wall AdS/QCD with $r_0 = \frac{m_{\rho} c^2}{\sqrt{3} \Lambda}$ = 0.323 GeV [47]. Note: $B = \sqrt{3} B$ is the physical magnetic field at the boundary [49].

3.1 Confinement-deconfinement phase transition in hard-wall AdS/QCD

For hard-wall AdS/QCD, we determine the critical temperature $T_c(B)$ of the confinement-deconfinement phase transition by first determining the critical radius of the horizon $r_h = r_{hc}$ from the condition that the difference between the Euclidean actions for the black hole and thermal-$AdS_5$ solutions vanish at $r_h = r_{hc}$, i.e., $\Delta S_E(r_h = r_{hc}) = 0$. For $B \ll T^2$, requiring $\Delta S_E(r_{hc}) = 0$ in (2.27), we find the constraint equation for the critical radius of the horizon $r_{hc}$ to be

$$r_{hc}^4 + \frac{2}{3} B^2 \ln\left(\frac{r_{hc}}{r_0}\right) - 2r_0^4 + O(B^4) = 0,$$

(3.1)

which can be solved numerically for $r_{hc}(B, r_0)$. Note that, we have fixed $M = 2r_0^4$ in (2.27), so that (3.1) reduces to the constraint equation found in [47, 48] at $B = 0$, which is $r_{hc}^4 = 2r_0^4$. Once we find the solution for $r_{hc}$ from the constraint equation (3.1), we can use (2.12) to find $T_c = T(r_h = r_{hc}, M = 2r_0^4)$. The plot of the numerical solution for $T_c(B, r_0)$ for $B \ll T^2$ is given in Fig. 1, and the numerical plot clearly shows that $T_c(B)$ decreases with increasing $B \ll T^2$ in agreement with the inverse magnetic catalysis recently found in lattice QCD for $B \lesssim 1$ GeV$^2$ [19].

3.2 Confinement-deconfinement phase transition in holographic dual of unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$

For the holographic dual of unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$, we study the confinement-deconfinement phase transition by using the same Einstein-Maxwell action in 5D as we used for the hard-wall AdS/QCD, and the analysis will be similar to the hard-wall AdS/QCD case but, for the unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$ case, we compactify the black hole solution in the $z$ direction into a circle of length $l$, and compare its free energy with the free energy of $AdS_5$-soliton solution (2.14) instead of the thermal-$AdS_5$ solution (2.13) that we used for the hard-wall AdS/QCD.

It is easy to see from (2.28) that the critical radius of the horizon $r_h = r_{hc}$ at which $\Delta S_E(r_h = r_{hc}) = 0$ is given by $r_h = r_{hc} = r_0$. Therefore, using (2.12), the critical
temperature $T_c = T(r_h = r_{hc} = r_0)$ becomes,

$$T_c = \frac{r_0}{2\pi} \left( 1 + \frac{M}{r_0^3} - \frac{2}{3} B^2 \left( \frac{1}{2r_0^4} - \frac{\ln r_0}{r_0^4} \right) \right) + \mathcal{O}(B^4) = \frac{1}{\ell}. \quad (3.2)$$

Fixing $M = r_0^4$ so that we reproduce the correct $B = 0$ result $T_c(B = 0) = \frac{r_0}{\pi}$, and fixing $r_0$ from the value of $T_c$ at $B = 0$, which we denote as $T_c^0$, we can write (3.2) in terms of $T_c^0 = \frac{r_0}{\pi}$ as

$$T_c = T_c^0 \left( 1 - \left( \frac{B}{B_c} \right)^2 \right) + \mathcal{O}(B^4) \quad (3.3)$$

where we defined the critical magnetic field $B_c = \frac{\sqrt{6}\pi^2 T_c^0}{1 - 2\ln(\pi LT)}$ and $L$ is the radius of the AdS spacetime. From (3.3), it is easy to see that $T_c$ is a decreasing function with increasing $B \ll T^2$ in qualitative agreement with the recent lattice QCD result [19].

### 3.3 Confinement-deconfinement phase transition in holographic dual of flavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$

In the previous subsection, we have studied the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in the holographic dual of unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$ using the backreacted black hole and $AdS_5$-soliton geometries, from which, we can infer a simple prescription of finding $T_c$ in any backreacted black hole and $AdS_5$-soliton based models.

The prescription is, first find the backreacted metric and the Hawking temperature $T(r_h)$ of the black hole, then the critical temperature $T_c$ is simply given by $T_c = T(r_h = r_0)$ where $r_0$ can be fixed by the value of $T_c^0 = T_c(B = 0)$.

Therefore, using this prescription, we can determine $T_c(N_f, B)$ of the holographic dual of flavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$. To this end we will use the backreacted metric of D3/D7 model given in [37] where the authors have also found the Hawking temperature $T(N_f, B)$ including the backreaction of $N_f$ D7-branes and magnetic field $B$ to be, see Eq. 3.1 of [37],

$$T = \frac{r_h}{\pi} \left( 1 + \frac{\lambda_h}{64\pi^2} \frac{N_f}{N_c} \left( 1 - 2 \sqrt{1 + \frac{B^2}{r_h^4}} \right) \right) + \mathcal{O}((N_f/N_c)^2). \quad (3.4)$$

Since the on-shell Euclidean action of the black hole solution (including the backreaction of $N_f$ D7-branes and magnetic field $B$) has also been given in Eq. 3.14 of [37], in order to find the corresponding Euclidean action of the $AdS_5$-soliton, all we need to do is replace $r_h$ by $r_0$ in Eq. 3.14 of [37]. Hence, the difference between the two on-shell Euclidean actions vanishes at the critical radius of the horizon $r_h = r_{hc} = r_0$. And, using $r_h = r_{hc} = r_0$ in (3.4), the critical temperature $T_c = T(r_h = r_{hc} = r_0)$ of the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in flavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$ becomes

$$T_c = \frac{r_0}{\pi} \left( 1 + \frac{\lambda_h}{64\pi^2} \frac{N_f}{N_c} \left( 1 - 2 \sqrt{1 + \frac{B^2}{r_0^4}} \right) \right) + \mathcal{O}((N_f/N_c)^2), \quad (3.5)$$

\[1\] In Eq. 3.1 of [37] $T$ is written in terms of $r_m^4$ and $\epsilon_h$. Here, we have used Eq. 2.35 and 3.4 of [37] (which relates $\epsilon_h = \frac{\lambda_h}{64\pi^2} \frac{N_f}{N_c}$ and $r_m^2 = B$, respectively) in order to write $T$ explicitly in terms of $\lambda_h$, $\frac{N_f}{N_c}$, and $B$.  

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- 10 -
Figure 2. Critical temperature $T_c(B)$ of flavored $\mathcal{N}=4$ SYM on $R^3 \times S^1$ (3.6) using $T_c^0 = 0.175\ \text{GeV}$ and $\lambda_h = 23 \frac{N_f}{N_c}$.

which can be written in terms of $T_c^0 = T_c(N_f=0, B=0) = \frac{r_h}{\pi}$ as

$$T_c = T_c^0 \left( 1 + \frac{\lambda_h}{64\pi^2} \frac{N_f}{N_c} \left( 1 - 2\sqrt{1 + \frac{1}{\pi^4} \frac{B^2}{(T_c^0)^4}} \right) \right) + \mathcal{O}((N_f/N_c)^2),$$

(3.6)

where $\lambda_h$ is the value of the ’t Hooft coupling fixed at the horizon $r_h$, that is, $\lambda_h = 4\pi g_s e^{\phi_h} N_c$ where $g_s$ is the string coupling constant and $\phi(r)$ is the dilaton scalar field.

Note that, for $B = 0$, (3.6) reduces to

$$T_c = T_c^0 \left( 1 - \frac{\lambda_h}{64\pi^2} \frac{N_f}{N_c} \right) + \mathcal{O}((N_f/N_c)^2),$$

(3.7)

which is in a qualitative agreement with the hard-wall AdS/QCD [50], functional renormalization group study of QCD [51], and lattice QCD [52] results which show that $T_c$ decreases with increasing number of flavors $N_f$ at zero magnetic field $B = 0$ and chemical potential $\mu = 0$.

We have plotted (3.6) in Fig. 2 which clearly shows that $T_c(B)$ decreases with increasing $B \ll T^2$ in agreement with the inverse magnetic catalysis recently found in lattice QCD for $B \lesssim 1\ \text{GeV}^2$ [19].

4 Conclusion

The observation of inverse magnetic catalysis, for $B \lesssim 1\ \text{GeV}^2$, in the recent study of QCD on the lattice [19], instead of magnetic catalysis as predicted by most models of QCD [1–16], has posed a serious challenge both for the holographic and non-holographic models of QCD. Therefore, motivated by gaining new insight into this problem, we have studied the $T-B$ phase diagrams of hard-wall AdS/QCD, and holographic duals of flavored and unflavored $\mathcal{N}=4$ SYM on $R^3 \times S^1$ for $B \ll T^2$.

We have found that the $T-B$ phase diagrams of hard-wall AdS/QCD, and holographic duals of flavored and unflavored $\mathcal{N}=4$ SYM on $R^3 \times S^1$ (which are based on the study of the confinement-deconfinement phase transition) are consistent with the recent lattice
QCD result [19] but opposite to the results of the other holographic models of QCD (which are based on the study of the chiral-symmetry breaking phase transition) [11–16]. As it can be seen in Fig. 1, Fig. 2, and Eq.(3.3), we have found that the critical temperature $T_c(B)$ decreases with increasing $B \ll T^2$ in agreement with the inverse magnetic catalysis observed in the recent lattice QCD result for $B \lesssim 1 \text{GeV}^2$[19].

However, we would like to emphasize the fact that the vanishing of $T_c(B)$, at some critical magnetic field $B_c$, as it can be seen in Fig. 1, Fig. 2, and Eq.(3.3), might be the artifact of our usage of the backreacted black hole solution only for small magnetic field $B \ll T^2$, and $N_f \ll N_c$ limits. Had we used the exact solution for the backreacted black hole solution, for any value of $B$ and $N_f$, the critical temperature $T_c(B)$ might not necessarily vanish at some critical magnetic field $B_c$.

For example, in the large magnetic field $B \gg T^2$ limit, the Hawking temperature of the black hole geometry of [49] is given by $T(B \gg T^2) = \frac{3}{2} \frac{r_0}{\pi}$ (A.3), which according to the prescription of finding the critical temperature $T_c$ given in subsection 3.3, the critical temperature $T_c$ of the unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$ for large magnetic field $B \gg T^2$ will be $T_c(B \gg T^2) = \frac{3}{2} \frac{r_0}{\pi} = \frac{3}{2} T_c(B = 0)$, which means that $T_c(B \gg T^2) > T_c(B = 0)$. Therefore, $T_c(B)$, of unflavored $\mathcal{N} = 4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$, is not a monotonically decreasing function of $B$, and it will eventually start to increase for large magnetic field $B$ and asymptotes to the constant value $T_c(B \gg T^2) = \frac{3}{2} T_c(B = 0)$.

Similarly, for hard-wall AdS/QCD, the critical temperature $T_c(B \gg T^2) = \frac{3}{\sqrt{2}} \frac{r_0}{\pi}$ (A.16), but from (3.1), one can see that $T_c(B = 0) = 2^{1/4} \frac{r_0}{\pi}$, see also [47, 48], which means that $T_c(B \gg T^2) > T_c(B = 0)$. Therefore, $T_c(B)$ of hard-wall AdS/QCD, is not a monotonically decreasing function of $B$, and it will eventually start to increase for large magnetic field $B$ and asymptotes to the constant value $T_c(B \gg T^2) = \frac{3}{\sqrt{2}} \frac{r_0}{\pi}$. We leave the holographic computation of $T_c(B)$ for arbitrary value of $B$ for future investigations.

This eventual increasing (after initially decreasing for small $B$) of $T_c(B)$ for large $B$ has also been predicted in some very recent non-holographic studies of the chiral-symmetry breaking phase transition in QCD [53, 54], and it has been related to the asymptotic freedom and dimensional reduction of QCD at large magnetic field $B$.

The inverse magnetic catalysis we found in this paper, from our study of the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in the holographic models of QCD (hard-wall AdS/QCD, and holographic duals of flavored and unflavored $\mathcal{N}=4$ SYM on $\mathbb{R}^3 \times S^1$), is also qualitatively similar to the inverse magnetic catalysis observed in the non-holographic studies of the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in QCD, such as, MIT bag model [55], chiral perturbation theory with two quark flavors [56], and QCD at large-$N_c$ [57].

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In this appendix, we compute the critical temperature $T_c(B)$ of the confinement-deconfinement phase transition in hard-wall AdS/QCD for large magnetic field $B \gg T^2$.

For $B \gg T^2$, the black hole solution is [49]

$$ds^2_{bh} = 3r^2 \left(-f(r)dt^2 + dz^2\right) + \frac{B}{\sqrt{3}} \left(dx^2 + dy^2\right) + \frac{dr^2}{3f(r)r^2}, \quad (A.1)$$

and, the Hawking temperature $T$ becomes

$$T = \frac{1}{\beta} = U'(r_h) = \frac{3}{2} \frac{r_h}{\pi}, \quad (A.3)$$

where $M = r_h^2$ is the mass of the black hole, $U(r) = r^2 f(r)$, the radius of the horizon $r_h$ is defined by requiring $f(r = r_h) = 0$, and $\beta$ is the length of the thermal circle.

For $B \gg \Lambda_{IR}^2 \sim r_0^2$, the thermal-AdS solution can be found from the black hole solution by setting the mass of the black hole $M$ to zero, that is,

$$ds^2_{\text{thermal}} = 3r^2 \left(-dt^2 + dz^2\right) + \frac{B}{\sqrt{3}} \left(dx^2 + dy^2\right) + \frac{dr^2}{3r^2}. \quad (A.4)$$

The on-shell Euclidean action $S_E = S_{bh}$ (2.8) for the black hole solution with $B \gg T^2$ (A.1) is

$$S_{bh} = S_{\text{bulk}} + S_{\text{bndy}}, \quad (A.5)$$

where the on-shell Euclidean bulk action $S_{\text{bulk}}$ of the black hole solution for $B \gg T^2$ is

$$S_{\text{bulk}} = \int_0^\beta dt_E \int_{r_h}^{r_\Lambda} dr \sqrt{g} \left(4 + \frac{2}{3}B^2 g^{xx} g^{yy}\right), \quad (A.6)$$

$$= 6 \int_0^\beta dt_E \int_{r_h}^{r_\Lambda} dr \sqrt{g}, \quad (A.7)$$

and, it turned out, we will not need the on-shell Euclidean boundary action of the black hole to remove the UV divergences, so we set $S_{\text{bndy}} = 0$ for $B \gg T^2$. Hence, the on-shell Euclidean action of the black hole $S_{bh}$ (A.5) becomes

$$S_{bh} = S_{\text{bulk}} + S_{\text{bndy}} = 6 \int_0^\beta dt_E \int_{r_h}^{r_\Lambda} dr \sqrt{g}, \quad (A.8)$$

which (after using the black hole metric for $B \gg T^2$ (A.1), evaluating the integrals, and simplifying) gives

$$S_{bh} = 3\beta B \left(r_\Lambda^2 - r_h^2\right). \quad (A.9)$$
The on-shell Euclidean action \( S_E = S_{\text{thermal}} \) (2.8) for the thermal-AdS solution with \( B \gg \Lambda_{IR}^2 \sim r_0^2 \) (A.4) is

\[
S_{\text{thermal}} = S_{\text{tbulk}} + S_{\text{thbdy}},
\]

where the on-shell Euclidean bulk action \( S_{\text{tbulk}} \) of the thermal-AdS for \( B \gg \Lambda_{IR}^2 \sim r_0^2 \) is

\[
S_{\text{tbulk}} = \int_0^{\beta'} dE \int_{r_0}^{\Lambda} dr \sqrt{g} \left( 4 + \frac{2}{3} B^2 g^{xx} g^{yy} \right),
\]

and, it turned out, we will not need the on-shell Euclidean boundary action \( S_{\text{thbdy}} \) of the thermal-AdS for \( B \gg \Lambda_{IR}^2 \sim r_0^2 \) to remove the UV divergences, so we set \( S_{\text{thbdy}} = 0 \) for \( B \gg \Lambda_{IR}^2 \sim r_0^2 \).

The thermal-AdS bulk action \( S_{\text{tbulk}} \) (after using the thermal-AdS metric for \( B \gg \Lambda_{IR}^2 \sim r_0^2 \), evaluating the integrals, simplifying, and using \( \beta ' = \beta \sqrt{f} = \beta (1 - \frac{1}{2} \frac{r_0^2}{\Lambda^2}) \) near the boundary) becomes

\[
S_{\text{tbulk}} = 3\beta \sqrt{f} B (r_A^2 - r_0^2) = 3\beta B (r_A^2 - \frac{1}{2} r_h^2 - r_0^2).
\]

Hence,

\[
S_{\text{thermal}} = S_{\text{tbulk}} = 3\beta B (r_A^2 - \frac{1}{2} r_h^2 - r_0^2).
\]

Therefore, \( \Delta S_E \) (which is the difference between the black hole (A.9) and thermal-AdS \( (A.13) \) on-shell Euclidean actions) becomes

\[
\Delta S_E = S_{bh} - S_{\text{thermal}}
\]

\[
= 3\beta B \left( r_0^2 - \frac{r_h^2}{2} \right)
\]

\[
= 3\beta B \left( r_0^2 - \frac{2}{9} \pi^2 T_c^2 \right),
\]

for \( B \gg T^2 \).

For \( B \gg T^2 \), requiring \( \Delta S_E(T_c) = 0 \) \( (A.14) \), we find the constraint equation for the critical temperature \( T_c \) to be

\[
r_0^2 - \frac{2}{9} \pi^2 T_c^2 = 0,
\]

which can be solved for \( T_c \) to give

\[
T_c(B, r_0) = \frac{3 \ r_0}{\sqrt{2} \ \pi}.
\]
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