

# Representation Theory Connections to $(q, t)$ -Combinatorics

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In 2007, a workshop was held at the Banff research station entitled *Applications of Macdonald polynomials*<sup>1</sup>. The focus of that meeting was related to a number of mathematical problems that arose in the roughly 20 years prior.

That workshop served to highlight some of the directions of research related to the following discoveries.

- In 1988, Macdonald [Mac88] introduced a family of symmetric functions  $P_\lambda(X; q, t)$  that depended on parameters  $q$  and  $t$  and a family of non-symmetric polynomials  $E_\alpha(X; q, t)$  which are a basis for the polynomial ring. An open problem remains to find a combinatorial interpretation for the transition coefficients  $K_{\lambda\mu}(q, t)$  from the Macdonald symmetric functions to a Schur basis.
- In 1994, Garsia, Haiman [Hai94, GarHai96] stated a series of conjectures related to a symmetric group representation known as the diagonal harmonics which is the quotient ring of polynomials in two sets of variables of size  $n$  by the ideal generated by the ideal generated by the symmetric group invariants.
- One of the conjectures stated that this space was of dimension  $(n + 1)^{n-1}$  (and this was resolved in 2001 by Haiman [Hai99, Hai01, Hai02, Hai02b]), but further investigation into the combinatorics of parking functions by Haglund, Haiman, Loehr, Remmel and Ulyanov [HHLRU05] lead them to ‘the shuffle conjecture’ in 2004, a  $q, t$ -combinatorial formula for the graded Frobenius character of the module.

In the last eleven and a half years since that conference, there have been a number of remarkable breakthroughs related to these and the other research problems highlighted at that conference. A number of exciting connections have arisen over the last few years between Macdonald polynomials and invariants of torus knots and torus links [Gor13, GN15, GORS14, Hag16].

These new connections lead to the development of extensions of the shuffle conjecture to labeled paths that lie above the diagonal of an  $m \times n$  rectangle [ALW14, GORS14, GMV16, GM16, BGLX16, GLXW15].

In addition, many new questions in this area arose out of the operator realization of the elliptic Hall algebra of Burban, Schiffman and Vasserot [BS, SV13] that left many open questions and connections to the representation theory and knot invariants left to be explored [MS, Ber16].

In 2015, Carlsson and Mellit [CM15] proved the shuffle conjecture and shortly after Mellit [Mel16] proved the rational shuffle conjecture. This progress resolved a major open problem in the area and caused a shift of research in this area.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.math.upenn.edu/~jaglund/conf/finalreportbirs07.pdf>

In 2016, Haglund, Remmel and Wilson [HRW15] discovered a conjecture which proposed a combinatorial model for the symmetric function expression  $\Delta_{e_k}(e_n)$  and called this ‘the Delta conjecture.’ In the case that  $k = n$ , the Delta conjecture reduces to the shuffle conjecture, but it currently remains unresolved.

We saw the workshop “Representation Theory Connections to  $(q, t)$ -Combinatorics” at BIRS as an opportunity to re-visit some of the remaining open problems and re-assess what are the most interesting open questions in this area. The focus of research in the field has shifted in the last decade given that the research leading up to the proof of the shuffle conjecture uncovered many new connections between representation theory, the elliptic Hall algebra and knot invariants.

Three of the objectives that were listed in the proposal of this workshop are summarized in the following bullet points:

1. to connect some of the combinatorial and algebraic methods recently developed with quasi-symmetric functions. [ELW10, HLMvW11a, BBSSZ14, As15, AsSer16, Rob14]
2. consider positivity of symmetric function expressions arising in this context from the perspective of representation theoretical constructions [HRW15, GORS14, HRS1, HRS2, Rho16, GHRY]
3. make connections between symmetric functions, combinatorial formulae, the elliptic Hall algebra and torus knot invariants. [Ber16, BS, Gor13, GN15, Hik14, LW08, MS, MMR14, Mel16, Neg13, Neg14, Sch12, SV13]

We chose to have a small number of presentations and give participants ample time to discuss ideas. The following is a list of the presentations that we will discuss in summary below.

1. Speaker: **François Bergeron**  
Title : *Multivariate modules for  $(m, n)$ -rectangular combinatorics I and II*
2. Speaker: **Adriano Garsia**  
Title: *Some Conjectures with Surprising Consequences*
3. Speaker: **Matthew Hogancamp**  
Title: *How to compute superpolynomials*
4. Speaker: **Lauren Williams**  
Title: *From multiline queues to Macdonald polynomials via the exclusion process*
5. Speaker: **Sami Assaf**  
Title: *Nonsymmetric Macdonald polynomials and Demazure characters*
6. Speaker: **Brendon Rhoades**  
Title: *Spanning configurations*
7. Speaker: **Gabriel Frieden**  
Title: *Kostka–Foulkes polynomials at  $q = -1$*
8. Speaker: **Luc Lapointe**  
Title:  *$m$ -symmetric Macdonald polynomials*
9. Speaker: **Hugh Morton**  
Title: *A skein-theoretic model for the double affine Hecke algebras*

We mentioned that the Macdonald polynomials was one of the discoveries that motivated this area of research and was one of the topics highlighted in in the workshop in 2007. They reappeared in several of the talks in this workshop. The talk by Sami Assaf was on non-symmetric Macdonald polynomials and their expansion into Demazure characters using a crystal structure. The talk by Luc Lapointe showed a new approach to the problem of finding a combinatorial interpretation for the Macdonald  $q, t$ -Kostka coefficients using larger algebras to lift their structure. The talk by Lauren Williams showed how Macdonald polynomials arise in two combinatorial models, one called multi-line queues and another was the multispecies asymmetric simple exclusion process.

The talks by Matthew Hogencamp and Hugh Morton explained connections between knot invariants and  $q, t$ -combinatorics and connections with representation theory. In particular, the talk on “how to compute super-polynomials” discussed a combinatorial technique for Khovanov-Rozansky homology which has led to the computation of the rational  $q, t$ -Catalan.

A number of the other talks focused on the connections of representation theory and their connections to  $q, t$ -combinatorics. The extension of the shuffle conjecture known as the Delta conjecture appeared tangentially in a number of the talks. We mention that one of the basic open problems related to the Delta conjecture was to find a plausible candidate for a module of the symmetric group  $S_n$  whose bigraded Frobenius characteristic is given by the symmetric function side of the Delta conjecture. As luck would have it, organizer M. Zabrocki found such a candidate (see (1) and [Zab19]) the day before the conference, and shared it with the conference attendees, which led to a lot of interesting discussions and further conjectures. The presentation of Adriano Garsia discussed the phenomenon (outlined in [Ber16]) of replacing  $q$  with  $q + 1$  in a Schur positive symmetric function arising from  $q, t$ -combinatorics and the expression is very often positive when expanded in the  $e$ -basis. He presented a growing list of expressions where this phenomenon can be proven. François Bergeron presented a number of results and broad conjectures about symmetric functions which encode the  $Gl_k \times S_n$  character of multidagonal harmonics. In particular he proposed explicit modules for which the aforementioned symmetric functions appear as characters. This gives an entirely new representation theoretic foundation for the result established by Mellit and Carlsson which ties together the  $m \times n$ -rectangular path combinatorics and the elliptic Hall algebra based formulas appearing in the rectangular compositional shuffle formula (see [BGLX16, HMZ12, Hic14]). Not only do these new symmetric functions open the way to a broad program of research, but they tie together most of the previous areas of research in the domain, including the Delta conjecture, and suggest many natural generalizations. In the final discussion, it was realized that they also merge nicely with the candidate proposed for the Delta conjecture by Mike Zabrocki, as well as suggesting generalizations to both the multivariate case and the  $m \times n$ -rectangular one.

In addition, on the Thursday of the workshop meeting, the afternoon session was devoted to asking participants to submit a summary of the major open problems in this area. The participants also submitted a written summary after the meeting which was published on the webpage. While a longer more detailed version of these problems appears in the summary on the web page, we provide a summary below that gives a flavor of the mathematics discussed at this conference.

Presenter: **François Bergeron**

Outline: The probability that a monomial positive symmetric function is actually Schur positive is

$$\frac{1}{\prod_{\mu \vdash n} \sum_{\lambda \vdash n} K_{\lambda\mu}}.$$

“Consider the  $q$ -analogue of these formulae obtained by replacing the Kostka numbers by the  $q$ -Kostka polynomials (or even  $(q, t)$ ), can we give a natural interpretation of this as a probability of some sort?”

Presenter: **Lauren Williams**

Outline: Given a matrix  $M = (m_{ij})$  with entries are symmetric polynomials.  $M$  is totally Schur positive if each square sub-matrix has Schur positive determinant. An example of this are the Jacobi-Trudi matrices, but are there others?

Presenter: **Hugh Morton**

Outline: Is it possible to create a non-degenerate bilinear form on braids in the torus that can be used to determine linear independence? What is the HOMFLY skein in this case?

Presenter: **Brendan Pawlowski**

Define Stanley symmetric functions, affine Stanley symmetric functions, involutive Stanley symmetric functions and (finally) affine involutive Stanley symmetric functions. It can be shown that the affine involutive

Stanley symmetric functions have positive coefficients when expanded in the affine Stanley Schur functions, but what other properties do they have?

Presenter: **Peter Samuelson**

Outline: The elliptic Hall algebra  $E_{q,t}$  is an algebra over  $C(q,t)$  which was defined by Burban and Schiffmann as a “universal Hall algebra of elliptic curves over finite fields.” There is an action of  $E_{q,t=q}^+$  action on  $Sym$ . Question: Does the action of  $E_{q,t=q}$  on  $Sym \otimes Sym$  extend to generic  $t$ ?. The “vertical subalgebra” (generated by the  $u_{0,n}$ ) acts on  $Sym$  (essentially) by Macdonald operators, which are diagonalized by Macdonald polynomials. The module  $Sym \otimes Sym$  has a basis  $s_{\lambda,\mu}$  of “double Schur functions,” and this diagonalizes the “vertical subalgebra” of the skein algebra. A positive answer to this question would (presumably) lead to “double” Macdonald polynomials, which would be indexed by pairs of Young diagrams, so a followup question is “how much of Macdonald theory carries through to double Macdonald polynomials”?

Presenter: **Marino Romero**

Outline: In the 1990’s Bergeron and Garsia presented a sequence of conjectures that they labelled Science Fiction [BG99]. For  $\alpha$  a partition, let  $M_\alpha$  be the Garsia-Haiman module. One approach to proving the  $n!$  conjecture is to understand why for partitions  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  each found by removing a single cell from a larger partition  $\mu$ , then

$$\dim(M_\alpha \wedge M_\beta) = n!/2.$$

More generally, the Frobenius image is given by

$$Frob_{qt} (M_\alpha \wedge M_\beta) = \frac{T_\beta \tilde{H}_\alpha - T_\alpha \tilde{H}_\beta}{T_\beta - T_\alpha} = \left( \frac{1}{1 - T_\alpha/T_\beta} \right) \tilde{H}_\alpha + \left( \frac{1}{1 - T_\beta/T_\alpha} \right) \tilde{H}_\beta$$

where  $\tilde{H}_\beta$  is the Macdonald symmetric function where  $T_\mu = \prod_{(i,j) \in \mu} q^i t^j$ . These conjectures extend to larger collections of partitions.

Presenter: **Mikhail Mazin**

Outline: Take  $m$  and  $n$  relatively prime. There is a bijection between lattice paths which lie below the diagonal in an  $n \times m$  rectangle and partitions which are simultaneously  $m$  and  $n$  cores. There are  $q, t$ -countings of both sides which agree. That is, on the left hand side you have a  $q, t$  counting of paths below the diagonal in an  $m \times n$  rectangle and this is equal to a right hand side of a  $q, t$  counting of the partitions which are simultaneously  $m$  and  $n$  cores.

Consider again the  $m$  and  $n$  relatively prime and let  $(M, N) = (dm, dn)$ . The  $q, t$ -counting can be naturally generalized both for lattice paths that stay below the diagonal in an  $M \times N$  rectangle and for the simultaneous  $M, N$ -core partitions. However, they are not equal anymore. In fact, the set of simultaneous  $M, N$ -core partitions is infinite in the non relatively prime case, and the resulting generating function is not a polynomial, but rather a power series (a rational function with denominator  $(1 - q)^{d-1}$ ). Both counts are related to some deep and interesting mathematics. The paths under the diagonal appear in the compositional Shuffle theorem by Erik Carlsson and Anton Mellit [CM15], and simultaneous cores correspond to invariants of torus links.

The open question is what is the precise relation between these two  $q, t$ -countings in the non relatively prime case.

Presenter: **Gabriel Frieden**

Outline: Haglund, Haiman, and Loehr gave a combinatorial formula for the monomial expansion [HHL05] One appealing approach to finding the Schur expansion would be to define a crystal structure on the set of fillings of  $\mu$  that preserves the statistics *maj* and *inv*; the Schur expansion would then be given by the weights of the highest elements in the crystal structure. In the case where  $\mu$  has two columns, Haglund-Haiman-Loehr defined a suitable crystal structure on the fillings [HHL05].

In the case where  $\mu$  has three columns, Blasiak [BL] recently proved a conjectured rule of Haglund [Hag04] for the Schur expansion. We propose the problem of finding a *maj*- and *inv*-preserving crystal structure on fillings of partitions with three columns.

Presenter: **François Bergeron**

Outline: For any operator  $F_{m,n}$ , on symmetric functions coming from the elliptic Hall algebra. Define the operation  $\hat{F}_{m,n} := F_{m,n}|_{t=1}$ . There is an identity that is simple to state, but begs for a proof:

$$\hat{F}_{m,n} \cdot f = f \cdot (\hat{F}_{m,n} \cdot 1).$$

In other words,  $\hat{F}_{m,n}$  is simply a multiplication operator. This is certainly not the case (in general) for  $F_{m,n}$ .

Presenter: **Mike Zabrocki**

Outline: Let

$$Q[X_n, Y_n; \Theta_n] := Q[x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n, y_1, y_2, \dots, y_n; \theta_1, \theta_2, \dots, \theta_n]$$

be the polynomial ring in three sets of variables, the first two are commuting and the third one is anti-commuting (and the variables of different flavors commute). The invariants of this polynomial ring (here denoted by  $\text{Sym}$ , with  $\text{Sym}^+$  standing for those that are constant term free) are generated by analogues of the power sums

$$p_{r,s} = \sum_{i=1}^n x_i^r y_i^s \text{ and } \tilde{p}_{r',s'} = \sum_{i=1}^n \theta_i x_i^{r'} y_i^{s'}$$

for  $0 < r + s \leq n$  and  $0 \leq r' + s' < n$ . Define the analogue of the diagonal harmonics as

$$\text{SDCoinv}_n := Q[X_n, Y_n; \Theta_n] / \langle p_{r,s}, \tilde{p}_{r',s'} \mid 0 < r + s \leq n, 0 \leq r' + s' < n \rangle .$$

Based on computational evidence of the Frobenius series,  $n \geq 1$ ,

$$\text{Frob}_{qtz}(\text{SDCoinv}_n) = \Delta'_{e_{n-1}[X-\epsilon z]}(e_n), \quad (1)$$

where  $e_{n-1}[X-\epsilon z] = e_{n-1} + z e_{n-2} + z^2 e_{n-3} + \dots + z^{n-1}$  and  $\Delta'_f(\tilde{H}_\mu[X; q, t]) = f[B_\mu - 1] \tilde{H}_\mu[X; q, t]$ .

We can make the following interesting further conjecture. Let  $\mathcal{E}_n[Q; Z] = \sum_\mu a_\mu[Q] s_\mu[Z]$  be the symmetric functions described in François Bergeron's talk on Monday and Tuesday as a symmetric function expression for the multivariate analogue of the diagonal harmonics, then let

$$\text{Coinv}_n^{k,k'} := Q[X_n^{(1)}, \dots, X_n^{(k)}; \Theta_n^{(1)}, \dots, \Theta_n^{(k')}] / \langle \text{Sym}^+ \rangle$$

be the coinvariant space in  $k$  sets of commuting variables and  $k'$  sets of anti-commuting variables (such that the anticommuting variables also anticommute among themselves).

Let  $Q_k$  represent the alphabet  $q_1, q_2, \dots, q_k$  to keep track of the degrees in the  $X_n^{(i)}$  variables and  $T_{k'}$  represent the alphabet  $t_1, t_2, \dots, t_{k'}$  as variables which keep track of the degrees in the  $\Theta_n^{(i)}$  variables, then we conjecture that

$$\text{Frob}_{Q_k, T_{k'}}(\text{Coinv}_n^{k,k'}) = \mathcal{E}_n[Q_k - \epsilon T_{k'}; Z]$$

for  $k + k' > 0$ .

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