An Operator–Algebraic Perspective on Entropy Flow in Spin Networks

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August 2, 2025

1 Introduction

The combinatorial "bridge-monotonicity" and "entropy-monotonicity" theorems established in [1, 2] show that inserting a spin–j_b bridge across a cut γ increases the boundary entropy by

$$\Delta S = \ln(2j_b + 1).$$

We recast those results in the language of finite von Neumann algebras. The reformulation exposes links to Jones index theory and modular flows, hinting at a uniqueness theorem for the emergent large-scale operator algebra of the universe.

Relation to earlier subfactor constructions. Temperley–Lieb subfactors first appeared in Jones' original index paper [3] and later in statistical–mechanics models [4], planar algebras [5], and conformal nets [6]. Our construction provides a *spin-network* realisation of the same standard invariant, motivated by loop-quantum-gravity entropy flow. This physics-driven perspective yields a concrete operator-algebraic interpretation of the entropy jump (4.1) and suggests new applications of subfactor theory to quantum information.

2 Boundary von Neumann Algebras

Definition 2.1 (Edge algebra)**.** *For a cut γ whose intersected edges carry spins $\{j_e\}_{e\in\gamma}$, define the* edge algebra

$$\mathcal{A}_\gamma := \bigotimes_{e\in\gamma} \mathrm{End}(V_{j_e}).$$

It is a finite-dimensional C^**-algebra with the normalised trace* tr*.*

Definition 2.2 (Gauge-invariant algebra)**.** *The diagonal* $\mathrm{SU}(2)$ *action* $u^{\otimes}$ *on* $\mathcal{A}_\gamma$ *yields the* boundary algebra

$$\mathcal{N}_\gamma := \mathcal{A}_\gamma^{\mathrm{SU}(2)} = \{X \in \mathcal{A}_\gamma \mid u^{\otimes} X u^{\otimes *} = X \ \forall u \in \mathrm{SU}(2)\}.$$

3 Relational Entropy and Modular Hamiltonian

Definition 3.1 (Relational state and modular generator)**.** *Let $P_\gamma \in \mathcal{N}_\gamma$ project onto the singlet subspace and set*

$$\rho_\gamma := \frac{P_\gamma}{\mathrm{tr} P_\gamma}, \qquad K_\gamma := -\ln \rho_\gamma.$$

Then $S_\gamma = \ln \mathrm{tr} P_\gamma$ reproduces the combinatorial count, and K_γ generates the Tomita–Takesaki flow on $(\mathcal{N}_\gamma, \rho_\gamma)$.

Remark 3.1 (Parity obstruction)**.** *If the cut has* odd *total spin, $\mathrm{tr} P_\gamma = 0$ and ρ_γ is undefined. The operator–algebraic framework below therefore assumes $d_0 := \mathrm{tr} P_\gamma > 0$. Odd–parity cuts can be handled by first performing a Type III parity-flipping move (see Definition 6.1) and then applying the analysis of Sections 6.1–A.*

4 Bridge Insertion as an Algebra Inclusion

Proposition 4.1 (Jones index of a bridge)**.** *Inserting a vertex-disjoint bridge of spin j_b yields*

$$\iota_{j_b} : \mathcal{N}_\gamma \hookrightarrow \mathcal{N}_{\gamma'} \quad \textit{with} \quad [\mathcal{N}_{\gamma'} : \mathcal{N}_\gamma] = 2j_b + 1.$$

Sketch. Write $V_{j_b} : V_{j_b} \otimes V_{j_b} \to \bigoplus_{\ell=0}^{2j_b} V_\ell$ and define

$$P_{\gamma'} = (P_\gamma \otimes \mathbf{1}_{j_b}^{\otimes 2}) V_{j_b}^* \, \Pi \, V_{j_b},$$

where Π projects onto the $\ell = 0$ *singlet component* of $\bigoplus_{\ell=0}^{2j_b} V_\ell$. Tracing gives $\mathrm{tr} P_{\gamma'} = (2j_b + 1)\, \mathrm{tr} P_\gamma$, so $\Delta S = \ln(2j_b + 1)$, which equals the Jones index of the inclusion. □

Theorem 4.1 (Bridge-monotonicity ⇔ index additivity)**.** *For any sequence $\{j_b^{(i)}\}_{i=1}^n$ of disjoint bridges,*

$$S_{\gamma_n} - S_{\gamma_0} = \sum_{i=1}^n \ln(2j_b^{(i)} + 1) = \sum_{i=1}^n \ln[\mathcal{N}_i : \mathcal{N}_{i-1}] \tag{4.1}$$

Remark 4.1 (Entropy *vs.* index additivity)**.** *Equation* (4.1) *does more than tally logarithms: it unifies an* information-theoretic *quantity (boundary entropy) with a* subfactor-theoretic *invariant (Jones index), inviting cross-fertilisation between the two fields.*

5 Quantum-Group Extension

Replacing $\mathrm{Rep}\,\mathrm{SU}(2)$ by $\mathrm{Rep}\,\mathrm{SU}(2)_k$ truncates the index to

$$[\mathcal{N}_{\gamma'} : \mathcal{N}_\gamma]_k = \min(2j_b + 1,\, k - 2j_b + 1),$$

saturating at $S_{\max} = \ln(k + 2)$, as in [2].

6 Admissible Local Moves

Definition 6.1 (Admissible moves)**.** *The rewrite system consists of the four local moves of [2]:*

I. Bridge insertion *— add a vertex-disjoint edge of spin j_b across the cut.*

II. Bridge removal *— inverse of I.*

III. Parity-flipping contraction *— contract an odd-spin boundary edge, flipping total parity.*

IV. Parity-flipping expansion *— inverse of III.*

Proposition 6.1 (Finite depth under bounded spin). *Fix a constant $\delta_{\max} > 1$. Suppose every bridge inserted by moves I–II satisfies $[\mathcal{N}_{\gamma'} : \mathcal{N}_\gamma] \le \delta_{\max}$. Then the Jones tower generated from any seed cut is of finite depth; equivalently, the relative commutants $N_k' \cap N_{k+n}$ stabilise for $n \ge 2$.*

Proof. Because each inclusion is obtained via the basic construction with index $\le \delta_{\max}$, the sequence of higher relative commutants forms a Temperley–Lieb planar algebra $\mathrm{TL}_{\delta_{\max}}$ (cf. Appendix A). Temperley–Lieb algebras are known to be finite depth for $\delta_{\max} < \infty$ [7, Prop. 2.2]. Hence the tower has finite depth. □

Theorem 6.1 (Uniqueness under bounded index). *Assume the bounded-index condition of Proposition 6.1. Then the inductive-limit algebra $\mathcal{N}_\infty$ is $*$-isomorphic to the hyperfinite type* II_1 *factor $\mathcal{R}$.*

Proof. Proposition 6.1 shows the tower has finite depth with standard invariant $\mathrm{TL}_{\delta_{\max}}$. By Popa's uniqueness theorem for finite-depth Temperley–Lieb subfactors [8] any two such towers are conjugate inside $\mathcal{R}$, hence $\mathcal{N}_\infty \cong \mathcal{R}$. □

7 Uniqueness Conjecture

Conjecture 7.1 (Uniqueness of the inductive-limit factor). *Let $\{\mathcal{N}_\gamma\}$ be the directed system generated from a finite seed cut by all moves in Definition 6.1. Assume (i) the move graph is acyclic and (ii) indices of successive inclusions stay bounded. Then the inductive-limit algebra*

$$\mathcal{N}_\infty := \varinjlim \mathcal{N}_\gamma$$

is $*$-isomorphic to the hyperfinite type II_1 *factor $\mathcal{R}$.*

8 Outlook

The operator-algebraic frame opens the door to modular theory, planar algebras and quantum-information monotones. A key next step is to recast the Type III/IV moves as *Morita equivalences*—bimodules between boundary algebras—so that parity changes integrate seamlessly into subfactor bimodule formalism. Other directions: (i) a full $9j$ analysis of linked bridges; (ii) categorical extensions to arbitrary fusion categories; (iii) numerical tests of modular-flow locality.

A Temperley–Lieb relations for bridge idempotents

Let $e_i \in \mathcal{N}_{\gamma_{i+1}}$ denote the Jones projection implementing the i-th bridge inclusion $\mathcal{N}_{\gamma_i} \subset \mathcal{N}_{\gamma_{i+1}}$.

Lemma A.1. *For fixed loop parameter $\delta := 2j_b + 1$ the projections $\{e_i\}$ satisfy the Temperley–Lieb relations*

$$e_i^2 = \delta^{-1} e_i, \qquad e_i e_{i\pm1} e_i = e_i, \qquad e_i e_j = e_j e_i \ (|i-j| \ge 2).$$

Proof. Diagrammatically, e_i is the partial trace $P_\gamma \cup V_{j_b}^* \Pi V_{j_b} \cap P_\gamma$ with Π the $\ell = 0$ projector.

Idempotency. Stacking two copies of e_i merges the middle cups; evaluating the resulting $\ell = 0$ cap yields the scalar δ^{-1}, so $e_i^2 = \delta^{-1} e_i$.

Reidemeister III. For $e_i e_{i+1} e_i$, isotopy slides the middle bridge over the right-hand one and back, giving e_i; the same move works for $e_{i+1} e_i e_{i+1}$.

Commutation. If $|i-j| \geq 2$ the corresponding bridges live on disjoint strands, so their projections commute.

Algebraic versions of these calculations follow from the Wigner–Eckart theorem and the recoupling identity $V_{j_b}^{*}\Pi V_{j_b}\, V_{j_b}^{*}\Pi V_{j_b} = \delta^{-1} V_{j_b}^{*}\Pi V_{j_b}$. $\square$

Hence the standard invariant of the tower is the Temperley–Lieb planar algebra TL_{δ}.

References

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