

# Conformal structures with linear Fefferman-Graham equations

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Joint work with I. Anderson, Th. Leistner, A. Lischewski

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in honor of  
**ANDREAS JUHL**

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# Plan

- 1 Ambient metrics and distributions
  - Fefferman-Graham construction
  - Ambient metrics for special conformal structures
- 2 Fefferman-Graham equations in terms of a perturbation  $h$ 
  - Passing from  $g_\rho$  to  $g + h_\rho$
- 3 Results
  - Theorems
  - New examples

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# Ambient metric

- Let  $(M^n, [g])$  be a conformal structure with metrics  $g$  of signature  $(n_+, n_-)$ .
- An ambient space  $\tilde{M}$  for  $(M^n, [g])$  is locally a product

$$\tilde{M} = ]0, +\infty[ \times M^n \times ]-\epsilon, \epsilon[, \quad \epsilon > 0,$$

with respective coordinates  $(t, x^i, \rho)$ . Choose  $g$  from the conformal class of  $[g]$ . Then the ambient metric  $\tilde{g}$  associated with  $(M^n, g)$  is an  $(n_+ + 1, n_- + 1)$ -signature metric on  $\tilde{M}$  given by:

$$\tilde{g} = 2dt d(\rho t) + t^2 g(x^i, \rho)$$

such that

$$g(x^i, \rho)|_{\rho=0} = g(x^i),$$

and

$$\text{Ric}(\tilde{g}) = 0.$$

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# Explicit ambient metrics?

- If  $[g]$  contains an *Einstein* metric  $g_0$ ,  $Ric(g_0) = \Lambda g_0$ , then

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$$\rho \ddot{g}_{ij} - \left(\frac{n}{2} - 1\right) \dot{g}_{ij} - \rho g^{kl} \dot{g}_{ik} \dot{g}_{jl} + \frac{1}{2} \rho g^{kl} \dot{g}_{kl} \dot{g}_{ij} - \frac{1}{2} g^{kl} \dot{g}_{kl} g_{ij} + R_{ij} = 0,$$

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- Here 'dot' denotes differentiation w. r. t.  $\rho$ ,  $\nabla$  is Levi-Civita connection for  $g_\rho = g(x^k, \rho)$ , and  $R_{ij}$  is the Ricci tensor for  $g_\rho$ .

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# Ambient metrics for my favorite conformal structure

- A distribution  $\mathcal{D}$  on a 5-manifold  $M^5$  is called  $(2, 3, 5)$  if
  - $\mathcal{D}$  has rank 2,
  - $\mathcal{D} + [\mathcal{D}, \mathcal{D}]$  has rank 3, and
  - $\mathcal{D} + [\mathcal{D}, \mathcal{D}] + [\mathcal{D}, [\mathcal{D}, \mathcal{D}]]$  has rank 5.
- Every  $(2, 3, 5)$  distribution  $\mathcal{D}$  canonically defines a  $(3, 2)$  signature conformal structure  $[g_{\mathcal{D}}]$  on  $M^5$ , which encodes the geometry of the distribution.

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# Ambient metrics for my favorite conformal structure

- For example a distribution

$$\mathcal{D} = (\partial_q, \partial_x + p\partial_y + q\partial_p + F\partial_z)$$

is  $(2, 3, 5)$  iff the function  $F = F(x, y, p, q, z)$  satisfies  $F_{qq} \neq 0$ .

- Taking  $F = q^2 + f(x, p) + bz$  with  $b = \text{const}$ , the conformal class  $[g_{\mathcal{D}}]$  may be represented by a metric  $g_{\mathcal{D}}$  in a relatively simple form:

$$g_{\mathcal{D}} = 8(dp - qdx)^2 - 6(dz - 2qdp + (q^2 - f - bz)dx)dx - \\ 2(dy - pdx) \left( 6dq - 2bdp - \left( \frac{2}{5}b^2 + \frac{9}{10}f_{pp} \right) (dy - pdx) - (4bq + 3f_p)dx \right).$$

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- Denoting by  $\omega^1 = dy - p dx$  and by  $\omega^4 = 3dx$  I make an ansatz for the metric  $g(x^i, \rho)$  which stays in the definition of  $\tilde{g}$  by putting  $g_\rho = (g_D + A \cdot (\omega^1)^2 + 2B \cdot \omega^1 \omega^4 + C \cdot (\omega^4)^2)$ .
- That is to say that I look for an ambient metric in the form

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# Theorem

The metric  $\tilde{g}_D$ , as above, is an ambient metric for the conformal class  $(M^5, [g_{D_f}])$ , if and only if the unknown functions  $A = A(x, \rho, \rho)$ ,  $B = B(x, \rho, \rho)$  and  $C = C(x, \rho, \rho)$ , satisfy the initial conditions  $A|_{\rho=0} \equiv 0$ ,  $B|_{\rho=0} \equiv 0$ ,  $C|_{\rho=0} \equiv 0$  and the following system of PDEs:

$$LA = \frac{9}{40} f_{pppp}$$

$$LB = -\frac{1}{36} A_\rho + \frac{3}{40} f_{ppp}$$

$$LC = -\frac{1}{18} B_\rho + \frac{1}{324} A + \frac{1}{30} f_{pp} - \frac{2}{15} b^2,$$

with the *linear* operator  $L$  given by

$$L = 2\rho \frac{\partial^2}{\partial \rho^2} - 3 \frac{\partial}{\partial \rho} - \frac{1}{8} \frac{\partial^2}{\partial p^2}.$$



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# Ambient metric for $pp$ -waves

- A conformal manifold  $(M^n, [g])$  contains a  $pp$ -wave metric  $g$  iff it admits coordinates  $(u, r, x^i)$ ,  $i = 1, 2, \dots, n-2$  in which  $g$  is given by  $g = 2du(dr + fdu) + \sum_{i=1}^{n-2} (dx^i)^2$ . Here  $f = f(x^i, u)$  is a differentiable function.
- Similar theorem: making an ansatz for the ambient metric in the form  $\tilde{g} = dt d(\rho t) + t^2(g + hdu^2)$  with a differentiable function  $h = h(x^i, u, \rho)$ , one shows that the equations  $Ric(\tilde{g}) = 0$  are equivalent to

$$Lh = \Delta f, \quad \text{with} \quad \Delta = \sum_{i=1}^{n-2} \frac{\partial^2}{(\partial x^i)^2},$$

and with the linear operator given by

$$L = 2\rho \frac{\partial^2}{\partial \rho^2} - (n-2) \frac{\partial}{\partial \rho} - \Delta.$$

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# But there are nonanalytic ones

## Theorem

When  $n = 2m$  the most general solutions  $h$  with  $h(\rho) \rightarrow 0$  when  $\rho \downarrow 0$  are:

$$h = \rho^m \left( \alpha + \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{\Delta^k \alpha}{k! \prod_{i=1}^k (2i+n)} \rho^k \right) + \sum_{k=1}^{m-1} \frac{\Delta^k h}{k! \prod_{i=1}^k (2i-n)} \rho^k \\ + c_n \rho^m \left( \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} (\log(\rho) - q_k) \frac{\Delta^{m+k} h}{k! \prod_{i=1}^k (2i+n)} \rho^k \right) + c_n \rho^m Q * \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \frac{\Delta^{m+k} h}{k! \prod_{i=1}^k (2i+n)} \rho^k,$$

where  $\alpha = \alpha(x^i, u)$  and  $Q = Q(x^i, u)$  are arbitrary functions of their variables,  $*$  denotes the convolution of two functions with respect to the  $x^i$ -variables, and the constants are given as follows

$$c_n := -\frac{1}{(m-1)! \prod_{i=0}^{m-1} (2i-n)}, \quad q_0 := 0, \quad q_k := \sum_{i=1}^k \frac{n+4i}{i(n+2i)},$$

for  $k = 1, 2, \dots$

In particular, only when  $\Delta^m h \equiv 0$  there are solutions that are analytic in  $\rho$  in a neighbourhood of  $\rho = 0$  and with  $h(0) = 0$ .

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# More examples

There are known more examples of conformal structures for which the Fefferman-Graham equations reduce to systems of linear PDEs. These include

- conformal classes of signature  $(3, 3)$  corresponding to special types of  $(3, 6)$  distributions,
- conformal Patterson-Walker metrics.

PROBLEM: explain what is the reason for such a phenomenon; or characterize those  $[g]$  for which Fefferman-Graham equations reduce to linear PDEs.

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# Plan

- 1 Ambient metrics and distributions
  - Fefferman-Graham construction
  - Ambient metrics for special conformal structures
- 2 Fefferman-Graham equations in terms of a perturbation  $h$ 
  - Passing from  $g_\rho$  to  $g + h_\rho$
- 3 Results
  - Theorems
  - New examples

# Perturbation $h$ and a crucial observation

- We take  $g$  from  $[g]$ , where  $(M^n, [g])$  is any conformal structure, and write the Fefferman-Graham metric as:

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where  $h = h(x^i, \rho)$  and  $h(x^i, 0) = 0$ .

- The goal is to rewrite the Fefferman-Graham equations in terms of  $h = h_{ij} dx^i dx^j$  rather than in terms of  $g(x^k, \rho)_{ij}$ .
- This would be a pain for general  $h$  but we additionally assume that  $h^i_j = g^{ik} h_{kj}$  is *2-step nilpotent*,  $h^i_j h^j_k = 0$ . This is equivalent to the assumption that

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with  $\mathcal{N}$  being *totally null* with respect to  $g$ .

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# Perturbation $h$ and a crucial observation

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# Plan

- 1 Ambient metrics and distributions
  - Fefferman-Graham construction
  - Ambient metrics for special conformal structures
- 2 Fefferman-Graham equations in terms of a perturbation  $h$ 
  - Passing from  $g_\rho$  to  $g + h_\rho$
- 3 Results
  - Theorems
  - New examples

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# The best theorem we have

## Theorem

Let  $g$  be a representative of a conformal class  $[g]$  on a manifold  $M^n$ , let  $\mathcal{N}$  be a totally null distribution on  $M^n$ , and  $h = h(x^i, \rho)$  be a 1-parameter family of bilinear forms on  $M^n$  such that:

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Then all the Fefferman-Graham equations  $Ric(\tilde{g}) = 0$  for  $\tilde{g} = dt d(\rho t) + t^2(g + h)$  are *linear* in  $h$ . Explicitly:

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# Null Ricci Walker metrics

Let  $\mathbf{P}$  be a Schouten tensor for a metric  $g$  on  $M^n$  and let  $\mathcal{N}$  be a totally null distribution on  $M^n$ . Consider two conditions

(A)  $\text{Im}(\mathbf{P}) \subset \mathcal{N}$ ,

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If  $g$  satisfies condition (A) it is called *null Ricci*. If  $g$  satisfies condition (B) it is called *Walker*. Metrics  $g$  satisfying both conditions (A) and (B) are called *null Ricci Walker*.

Fact

Every Walker metric (hence every null Ricci Walker metric) with its defining totally null plane  $\mathcal{N}$  has *integrable*  $\mathcal{N}^\perp$ .

QUESTION: What if I restrict to null Ricci Walker metrics and take  $h$  such that its image is in the same  $\mathcal{N}$  as image of  $\mathbf{P}$ ?

IMMEDIATE ANSWER: Fefferman-Graham equations will be at most *quadratic* in  $h$ . But...maybe more...

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IMMEDIATE ANSWER: Fefferman-Graham equations will be at most *quadratic* in  $h$ . But...maybe more...

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- It turns out that all known examples of not conformally Einstein metrics with explicit Fefferman-Graham metrics correspond to null Ricci Walker metrics, EXCEPT the examples associated to  $(2, 3, 5)$  distributions.
- The metrics  $g$  of these examples are null Ricci (satisfy condition (A), i.e.  $Im(\mathbf{P}) \subset \mathcal{N}$ ), but they are NOT Walker (condition (B) is NOT satisfied, i.e.  $\mathcal{N}$  is not parallel).
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# Plan

- 1 Ambient metrics and distributions
  - Fefferman-Graham construction
  - Ambient metrics for special conformal structures
- 2 Fefferman-Graham equations in terms of a perturbation  $h$ 
  - Passing from  $g_\rho$  to  $g + h_\rho$
- 3 Results
  - Theorems
  - **New examples**

# Explicit FG metrics for conformal classes on groups

Interpreting conditions from our ‘the best theorem we have’ in terms of commutators of bases of  $\mathcal{N}$ ,  $\mathcal{N}^\perp$  and its complement to  $TM$ , we construct certain left invariant metrics on certain groups. The structure of these groups were deduced from these commutators.

- Take  $\mathfrak{n}$  to be a 2-step nilpotent Lie algebra. This means that  $\mathfrak{n} = \mathfrak{m} \oplus \mathfrak{z}$  with  $[\mathfrak{m}, \mathfrak{m}] \subset \mathfrak{z}$ , and  $\mathfrak{z}$  is the center of  $\mathfrak{n}$ . We set  $\dim \mathfrak{z} = p < q = \dim \mathfrak{z}$ .
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