The dying gasps of merging supermassive black hole binaries

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Case for circumbinary gas disks driving BH mergers

Consequences of gas driven BH mergers

(a) For gravitational wave signatures - finite eccentricity at merger

(b) For the existence of electromagnetic counter-parts to supermassive BH mergers

Can we distinguish gas driven mergers from stellar dynamics effected ones?

Gas or stellar dynamics?

The case for gas:

1. Stellar dynamics (may) be inefficient
   - Rate limiting step in binary mergers likely to occur at a \( \sim 0.1 \) pc
     (Begelman, Blandford & Rees, 1980)
   - Merger timescale may exceed \( t_H \), probably exceeds typical merger interval at \( z \sim \) few
   - Gas is likely to co-exist with binary in the nucleus
   - Observationally, know that AGN can host disks of a few \( \times 0.1 \) pc in extent

Yu & Tremaine, MM & Merritt
The case for gas:

2. There's plenty of gas present
   - Waves excited in a circumbinary disk allow binary to lose angular momentum to the gas
   - Significant orbital decay requires gas mass comparable to the mass of the smaller black hole
   - Typical mass ratio $q \sim 0.1$
     (e.g. Volonteri, Haardt & Madau 2002)

Observationally: local BH mass density $\sim$ consistent with growth via accretion as optically bright QSOs
     (e.g. Barger et al. 2001; Yu & Tremaine, 2002)

Implies more than enough gas present – important for mergers unless stellar dynamics merges the holes before gas arrives
Expectations for gas driven mergers

(1) **Definite predictions**

Transition between:
- gas driven merger at large radius
- gravitational radiation inspiral at small radius

\[
ad_{\text{crit}} = \left(\frac{128}{5}\right)^{2/5} \left(\frac{h}{r}\right)^{-4/5} \alpha^{-2/5} q^{2/5} \left(\frac{GM_1}{c^2}\right)
\]

...transition radius depends on disk parameters and mass ratio

(2) **Probable consequences**

Disk interaction $\rightarrow$ significant eccentricity of the binary
- probably for $q > 0.05$  \textit{(Papaloizou, Nelson & Masset 2001)}
- possibly for lower $q$  \textit{(Goldreich & Sari 2002)}

Spin of the primary $\rightarrow$ warped disk interior to the binary orbit
- timescale for realignment uncertain \textit{(Natarajan & Pringle 1998)}
Disk response to a perturber
grows slowly, so that the disk is in almost a steady state from $q=10^{-5}$ to $10^{-2}$
2D, hydro only viscosity included such that $\alpha \sim 0.01$
in the vicinity of the secondary.

In movie: inset shows azimuthally averaged surface density profile.
Disk-driven migration

Gravitational radiation inspiral
Consequences for electromagnetic counterparts

LISA will fail to identify host galaxies of supermassive black hole mergers unless there are identifiable electromagnetic counterparts.

- Disk-driven migration
- Forced disk inflow
- Breakdown of thin disk approximation during final inspiral:
  - $\rightarrow$ extremely high accretion rates
  - $\rightarrow$ final ‘common envelope’ type merger + strong outflows

If a thin disk is involved, predict electromagnetic counterpart closely resembling a highly obscured, luminous quasar.
Counter-parts signaling BBH mergers

- Electromagnetic counterparts: precursors and afterglows
- On longer timescales impulsive changes to the final BH spin following merger (Hughes & Blandford)
- Changes in directions of jets launched (Merritt & Ekers)
- Final eccentricity before merger (Armitage & PN) if disks catalyze low mass ratio binary mergers
Consequences for gravitational radiation

Disk torques are negligible during final inspiral for all interesting mass ratios.

Eccentricity – if excited during disk interactions at low q, may not have time to damp to negligible values.

Simple model:

- assume eccentricity driven to e=0.25 for a > a_{crit}
- for a < a_{crit}, eccentricity is damped by gravitational radiation
- plot eccentricity at 1 week prior to final merger
- small but non-zero e ~ 0.01, rising to more extreme mass ratios, seems possible
Disk driven stage

Cool disk ($h/r \sim 0.05$): red, Warm disk ($h/r \sim 0.1$): green, Hot disk ($h/r \sim 0.1$): blue
Note hottest disk is the most viscous disk
Highest initial $e$ growth for coolest, thinnest disk (Artymowicz et al. 1991)
alpha = 0.01, e_init = 0.25 (gas driven stage), M_1+M_2= 10^6
Starting with a modestly eccentric orbit

same general behavior as before..