This is an electronic reprint of the original article.
This reprint may differ from the original in pagination and typographic detail.

Volovik, G.E.; Kopnin, N.B.

Comment on "Scaling of the quasiparticle spectrum for d-wave superconductors"

Published in:
Physical Review Letters

DOI:
[10.1103/PhysRevLett.78.5028](https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevLett.78.5028)

Published: 01/01/1997

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Please cite the original version:
Volovik, G. E., & Kopnin, N. B. (1997). Comment on "Scaling of the quasiparticle spectrum for d-wave superconductors". *Physical Review Letters*, 78(26), 5028. <https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevLett.78.5028>

Comment on “Scaling of the Quasiparticle Spectrum for d -wave Superconductors”

In a recent Letter, Simon and Lee (SL) [1] suggested a scaling law for thermodynamic and kinetic properties of superconductors with lines of gap nodes. For example, the heat capacity as a function of temperature and magnetic field for $T \ll T_c$ and $H \ll H_{c2}$ is

$$C(T, H) = aT^2 G(x), \quad x = \alpha T/H^{1/2}, \quad (1)$$

where $G(x)$ is a dimensionless function of the dimensionless parameter x . Equation (1) is in agreement with our calculations [2–4] if the scaling parameter is $x_{KV} = (H_{c2}/H)^{1/2}(T/T_c)$ (apart from a logarithmic factor). Indeed, according to [2], the function $G(x) \sim 1 + (1/x^2)$ for large values of x ; the first term is the bulk heat capacity $C(T, H) \propto T^2$, while the second term results in a temperature-independent vortex contribution $C(T, H) \propto H$. For small x , the function $G(x) \sim 1/x$ which gives [3,4] $C(T, H) \propto T\sqrt{H}$. The crossover value between these two regimes is $x_{KV} \sim 1$. However, SL have obtained the crossover parameter $x_{SL} \sim (H_{c2}/H)^{1/2}(T/T_c)\sqrt{E_F/T_c}$. The difference between our x and that obtained by SL is thus by the large factor $\sqrt{E_F/T_c}$. We discuss the origin of this disagreement.

Let us introduce the anisotropic Fermi momentum $p_F(\theta)$ which depends on the angle θ in the a - b plane. If $T \ll T_c$ the quasiparticles which are close to the gap node $\theta \ll 1$ are important. Their spectrum is

$$E(\mathbf{p}) = \sqrt{v_F^2[p - p_F(\theta)]^2 + (\Delta')^2\theta^2}, \quad (2)$$

where v_F is the Fermi velocity and Δ' is the angular derivative of the gap, $\Delta'(\theta) \approx \theta\Delta'$; both are in a vicinity of the node. Equation (2) was the starting point in [2,4].

In contrast, SL used the linearized spectrum

$$E(\mathbf{p}) = \sqrt{c_{\parallel}^2(\delta p_x)^2 + c_{\perp}^2 p_y^2}, \quad (3)$$

where $\mathbf{p} = p_y\hat{y} + (p_F + \delta p_x)\hat{x}$, $c_{\parallel} = v_F$, and $c_{\perp} = \Delta'/p_F$. This is justified when the nonlinear contributions to

$$\begin{aligned} \epsilon(\mathbf{p}) - E_F &= p_x^2/2m_x + p_y^2/2m_y - E_F \\ &\approx v_F \delta p_x + p_y^2/2m_y \end{aligned}$$

can be neglected, i.e., when $p_y^2/2m_y \ll c_{\perp} p_y$ where $p_y = p_F\theta$. This requires much stronger restrictions both on the angle $\theta \ll T_c/E_F$ and on the energy and temperature $T \ll T_c^2/E_F$.

At first glance, one might expect that the temperature of the order of T_c^2/E_F marks the boundary between our scaling and that by SL. However, this is not the case. Our quasiclassical approach is valid down to the temperature

at which a discreteness of fermion bound states in the vortex background becomes important. For s -wave superconductors, the interlevel spacing of core fermions is of the order of T_c^2/E_F [5]; thus the quantum limit is reached at $T \sim T_c^2/E_F$. In d -wave superconductors, in a vicinity of the gap nodes, the interlevel distance is smaller; it is determined by a large dimension of the wave function which, for low energies, is limited by the intervortex distance R [2,3]. Thus the discreteness of the levels becomes important at lower temperatures $T \sim (T_c^2/E_F)(\xi/R) \sim (T_c^2/E_F)\sqrt{B/B_{c2}}$.

Therefore, one expects two changes of the regime with the crossover parameters as follows: (1) At $x_{KV} \sim 1$ [i.e., at $(H_{c2}/H)^{1/2}(T/T_c) \sim 1$] the single-vortex contribution to the thermodynamic quantity is comparable with the bulk contribution per one vortex. (2) At $x_{KV} \sim T_c/E_F$ [i.e., at $(H_{c2}/H)^{1/2}(T/T_c)(E_F/T_c) \sim 1$] the quasiclassical regime changes to the quantum one. However, there is no change in the regime at the SL scale, $x_{SL} \sim 1$ [i.e., at $(H_{c2}/H)^{1/2}(T/T_c)\sqrt{E_F/T_c} \sim 1$]. This is because the high anisotropy of the conical spectrum in Eq. (3) was not taken properly into account in [1]: The rescaling of coordinates to get an isotropic spectrum of fermions with the average “speed of light” $c = \sqrt{c_{\parallel}c_{\perp}}$ [1] leads to a high deformation of the potential well produced by vortices.

G.E. Volovik^{1,2} and N.B. Kopnin^{2,3}

¹Low Temperature Laboratory
Helsinki University of Technology
P.O. Box 2200
FIN-02015 HUT
Espoo, Finland

²Landau Institute for Theoretical Physics
117334 Moscow, Russia

³Laboratoire de Physique des Solides
Université Paris-Sud
Bât 510
91405 Orsay, France

Received 11 March 1997 [S0031-9007(97)03414-5]
PACS numbers: 74.25.Fy, 74.25.Jb, 74.72.-h

- [1] S.H. Simon and P.A. Lee, Phys. Rev. Lett. **78**, 1548 (1997).
- [2] N.B. Kopnin and G.E. Volovik, Pis'ma Zh. Eksp. Teor. Fiz. **64**, 641 (1996) [JETP Lett. **64**, 690 (1996)].
- [3] G.E. Volovik, Pis'ma Zh. Eksp. Teor. Fiz. **58**, 457 (1993) [JETP Lett. **58**, 469 (1993)].
- [4] G.E. Volovik, Pis'ma Zh. Eksp. Teor. Fiz. **65**, 465 (1997); Report No. cond-mat/9702093.
- [5] C. Caroli, P.G. de Gennes, and J. Matricon, Phys. Lett. **9**, 307 (1964).