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A HYBRID ROD-CATENARY MODEL TO SIMULATE NONLINEAR DYNAMICS OF CABLES WITH LOW AND HIGH TENSION ZONES

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ABSTRACT

Cables under very low tension may become highly contorted and form loops, tangles, knots and kinks. These nonlinear deformations, which are dominated by flexure and torsion, pose serious concerns for cable deployment. Simulation of the three-dimensional nonlinear dynamics of loop and tangle formation requires a 12th order rod model and the computational effort increases rapidly with increasing cable length and integration time. However, marine cable applications which result in local zones of low-tension very frequently involve large zones of high-tension where the effects of flexure and torsion are insignificant. Simulation of the threedimensional dynamics of high-tension cables requires only a 6th which model significantly order catenary reduces computational effort relative to a rod model. We propose herein computational cable model that employs а hybrid computationally efficient catenary elements in high-tension zones and rod elements in localized low-tension zones to capture flexure and torsion precisely where needed.

Keywords: rod, catenary, cable, dynamics

1. INTRODUCTION

Marine cables tend to form loops and tangles in low tension zones due to combined effects of residual torsion and flexure. This loading scenario is often realized on the seabed as illustrated in Fig. 1. In this context, loops are often termed "hockles" and these can hinder cable laying and recovery operations, attenuate signal transmission in fiber-optic cables, and can even lead to the formation of knots and kinks that damage cables.

The large nonlinear deformations associated with loop formation are dominated by flexure and torsion, effects that are not captured in models that treat the cable as perfectly flexible. To capture these effects, one must treat the cable as a rod-like element following, for example, the classical rod theory of Kirchhoff/Clebsch [1]. Modern treatments and advancements in **N. C. Perkins** Fellow, ASME University of Michigan, Mechanical Engineering 2350 Hayward, Ann Arbor, Michigan-48109-2125, U.S. Email. ncp@umich.edu



Fig. 1: Cable forming loops and tangles on the sea floor.

rod theories are comprehensively summarized by Antman [2]. Loop formation in elastic rods may be initiated by elastic instabilities under compression and/ or torsion; refer, for example, to the buckling conditions developed by Greenhill [3] or Zachman [4].

Rod theories have been used to model the mechanics of cables starting with the work of Zajac [5] who studied the onset of "pop-out" instabilities in planar loops using equilibrium rod theory. His work on the nonlinear equilibria of rods has been extended [6-9] to further investigate loop formation and "pop-out" instabilities under a variety of loading scenarios. These instabilities initiate large *dynamic* responses which may also produce nonlinear transitions to more energetically favorable equilibria. Very few studies [10-15] have developed dynamic rod models sufficient for describing the dynamic evolution of loops. The dynamic model in [15] is artificially damped to study the quasi-static evolution of self-contact and intertwining in biological filaments, while those in [10-14] capture dynamic responses of underwater cables with hydrodynamic forces [16] but without self-contact.

All of the above formulations assume the rod to be isotropic and homogeneous. These assumptions fall short when considering the mechanics of synthetic and wire rope cables where anisotropy arises due to their helical construction [17]. The helical construction couples tensile (or compressive) and torsional stresses [18]. Many underwater cables are also intentionally non-homogeneous. For example, S-tethers (see Fig. 2) are designed with segments of different materials (with different buoyancy) to create considerable slack [19]. The first generic dynamic cable model that captures all the above features was developed by Goyal et al. [20-22].



Fig. 2: Loop formation in slack zone of S-tether.

The computational model [20] captures the mechanics of low-tension cables by using a rod theory in the form of a 12^{th} order system of partial differential equations. In many underwater cable applications such as depicted in Figs. 1 and 2, however, the low tension zone is confined to a very small fraction of the computational domain rendering the use of a rod model for the entire cable both computationally inefficient and unnecessary. The dynamics of high-tension zones can be efficiently described using a 6th order flexible "catenary". An example of 6th order catenary element was employed by Howell [23] to investigate the dynamics of hanging chains.

In this paper, we contribute an efficient computational cable model that exploits distinct formulations in low- versus high-tension zones. While it is necessary to use a (12th order) rod model to resolve the low tension regions and the possible formation loops and tangles, we then employ a (6th order) catenary model for the remainder of the computational domain where tension effects dominate the effects of flexure and torsion. The resulting hybrid cable model adaptively transitions between rod and catenary elements contingent on the relative importance of tension versus bending and/or torsion in any subdomain. An example of this approach appears in the analytical formulation of Kevorkian and Cole [24] who employ singular perturbation to blend linear beam and string formulations to understand the local effects of bending in an otherwise long and taut string. Another example appears in Sun and Leonard [10] who proposed a hybrid computational model of fluid-loaded cables that blends rod and catenary formulations through a point discontinuity. Herein, we use a similar strategy to blend the computationally efficient rod model described in [20] with the catenary model employed in [23].

We open in Section 2 by reviewing the governing equations of the dynamical rod theory from Goyal et al. [20] and the catenary theory from Howell [23]. We join the two models by means of a spherical joint. In Section 3, we extend the efficient finite difference method used in [20] (that employs the generalized- α method [12, 14, 25] in both space and time) to this hybrid rod-catenary model. In Section 4, we test the hybrid model for a simple cable suspension that involves low and high tension zones. We validate the hybrid model by benchmarking results with those obtained from a pure (computationally expensive) rod model. We close with conclusions in Section 5.

2. THE CATENARY AND ROD MODELS

The three-dimensional curve formed by the cable centerline is parameterized by the arc-length coordinate s and time t. The centerline is divided into sub-domains of rod and catenary elements. We adopt the rod model from Goyal et al. [20] and the catenary model from Howell [23]. The governing equations for each model are summarized below.

2.1 Governing Equations for a Catenary



Fig. 3: Free body diagram of an infinitesimal element of a catenary.

The deformation of catenary (see Fig. 3) is determined solely by the orientation of centerline tangent $\hat{t}(s,t)$ and the extensional strain $\mathcal{E}(s,t)^{1}$. The strain is related to the tension T(s,t) in the catenary through the compliance $c_k(s)$,

$$\mathcal{E}(s,t) = c_k(s)T(s,t). \tag{1}$$

The field equations² for the catenary are:

$$\frac{\partial v}{\partial s} = \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \left\{ (1 + \varepsilon) \hat{t} \right\},\tag{2}$$

¹ The arc-length co-ordinate S is assumed to correspond to that for the unstretched state.

Equation (2) results from the continuity of the (extensible) centerline and Eq. (3) results from balance of linear momentum.

$$\hat{t}\frac{\partial T}{\partial s} + T\frac{\partial \hat{t}}{\partial s} + F = m\frac{\partial v}{\partial t},$$
(3)

where m(s) denotes the mass per unit arc length, F(s,t)denotes the distributed force³ per unit arc length, and v(s,t)denotes the velocity of the centerline. All derivatives are relative to the inertial frame $\{e_i\}$. The unit vector \hat{t} can be parameterized by its two spherical co-ordinates (see Fig. 3) $\mathcal{G}(s,t)$ and $\varphi(s,t)$ such that its components along $\{e_i\}$ become

$$\hat{t} = \begin{bmatrix} \sin \vartheta \cos \varphi & \sin \vartheta \sin \varphi & \cos \varphi \end{bmatrix}.$$
(4)

Substituting Eq. (1) and Eq. (4) in Eqs. (2-3), yields a 6th order system of partial differential equations in the field variables $Y_c = \begin{bmatrix} v & T & \mathcal{G} & \phi \end{bmatrix}$,

$$M_{c}(Y_{c},s,t)\frac{\partial Y_{c}}{\partial t} + K_{c}(Y_{c},s,t)\frac{\partial Y_{c}}{\partial s} + \mathbb{F}_{c}(Y_{c},s,t) = 0, \quad (5)$$

where matrices M_c , K_c and F_c are as defined in Appendix 2.

2.2 Governing Equations for a Rod





The rod element (see Fig. 4) employs a body-fixed frame $\{a_i\}$ at each cross-section to describe its orientation with respect to the inertial frame $\{e_i\}$. The deformation field is represented by the curvature and twist vector $\kappa(s,t)$ that is defined by the rotation per unit arc length of the body-fixed frame. The curvature and twist $\kappa(s,t)$ results in the internal moment q(s,t) in rod element that obeys an (assumed) linear elastic constitutive law:

$$q(s,t) = B(s)\kappa(s,t) \tag{6}$$

where the tensor B(s) captures the stiffness of the rod in bending and torsion. The rod is assumed to be unshearable and inextensible, but can sustain shear and tensile stresses resulting in the internal force f(s,t).

The field equations⁴ for the rod are:

$$\frac{\partial v}{\partial s} + \kappa \times v = \omega \times \hat{t} , \qquad (7)$$

$$\frac{\partial \omega}{\partial s} + \kappa \times \omega = \frac{\partial \kappa}{\partial t},\tag{8}$$

$$\frac{\partial q}{\partial s} + \kappa \times q = I \frac{\partial \omega}{\partial t} + \omega \times I \omega + f \times \hat{t} - Q, \qquad (9)$$

$$\frac{\partial f}{\partial s} + \kappa \times f = m \left(\frac{\partial v}{\partial t} + \omega \times v \right) - F, \qquad (10)$$

where $\omega(s,t)$ denotes the cross-section angular velocity, I(s) denotes the tensor of principal mass moments of inertia per unit arc length, Q(s,t) denotes the distributed moment per unit arclength and the remaining variables/ parameters are as in the catenary model. The partial derivatives are all relative to the body-fixed frame $\{a_i\}$.

Equations (7-10) result⁵ in a 12th order system of partial differential equations in the field variables $Y_r = \begin{bmatrix} v & \omega & \kappa & f \end{bmatrix}$,

$$M_{r}(Y_{r},s,t)\frac{\partial Y_{r}}{\partial t} + K_{r}(Y_{r},s,t)\frac{\partial Y_{r}}{\partial s} + F_{r}(Y_{r},s,t) = 0, \quad (11)$$

where matrices M_r , K_r and \mathbb{F}_r are as defined in Appendix 2.

2.3 Constraints at a Rod-Catenary Interface

The rod and catenary elements must now be joined in such a manner that preserves continuity of the displacement (velocity) field and also force and moment equilibrium. These requirements are achieved by introducing a spherical joint at rod-catenary interface. In the formulation above, the catenary variables are represented with components in the inertial frame $\{e_i\}$, while the rod variables are represented with components in the tensor that transforms a vector from the inertial frame to the body-

³ The distributed force is used to capture buoyant weight and hydrodynamic drag as detailed in Appendix 1.

⁴ Equation (7) is the inextensibility constraint, Eq. (8) is a compatibility condition, and Eqs. (9-10) are the Newton-Euler equations for an infinitesimal rod element.

⁵ Substitute Eq. (6) into Eq. (9). Also recognize that the tangent vector \hat{t} is constant in the body-fixed frame $\{a_i\}$ for an unshearable rod and points along the principal axis for torsion.

fixed frame. If the joint is located at $s = s_j$ along the cable centerline, then the above interface conditions become

$$q_r(s_i, t) = 0 \Longrightarrow \kappa_r(s_i, t) = 0, \qquad (12)$$

$$v_r(s_j, t) = L_r(s_j, t)v_c(s_j, t),$$
 (13)

$$f_r(s_j, t) = L_r(s_j, t)\hat{t}_c(s_j, t)T_c(s_j, t), \qquad (14)$$

where the subscripts r and c identify rod and catenary variables, respectively.

Note that the tangent to the catenary $\hat{t}_c(s_i, t)$ need not

align with the tangent to the rod $\hat{t}_r(s_j,t)$ at the spherical joint interface. A seemingly better choice may appear from imposing continuity of curvature and geometric torsion in lieu of the "moment-free" condition above. However, recall that the catenary cannot sustain any internal moment. Thus, the catenary simply cannot be used in subdomains where appreciable curvature and/or torsion are likely to arise, as in the low tension regions. The above transition from catenary to rod must occur at (or before) the earliest appearance of curvature and torsion as determined by an acceptably small threshold, and the simple moment-free spherical joint remains appropriate for this transition.

3. NUMERICAL ALGORITHM

Equation (5) is a 6^{th} order initial-boundary value problem that requires 3 boundary conditions at the two boundary points of the catenary. Similarly Eq. (12) is a 12^{th} order initialboundary value problem that requires 6 boundary conditions at the two boundary points of the rod. At the rod-catenary interface, the 9 constraints of the spherical joint given by Eqs. (12-14) substitute for the (6+3) boundary conditions required by each rod and catenary models.

For integration of the initial-boundary value problem, we employ the generalized- α method [12, 14, 25] in both space and time. The resulting implicit algorithm is 2nd order accurate, unconditionally stable, and incorporates a (controllable) numerical dissipation parameter. Starting with the initial value Y(s,0), the discretized equations are integrated over space at each successive time step. The boundary conditions are satisfied during spatial integration using a shooting method for boundary-value problems as detailed in [13].

The boundary conditions and distributed forces/moments are often most readily decomposed into components in the inertial frame. During integration, these components must be transformed to those in the body fixed frame for rod through the transformation matrix L(s,t). Standard formulations employ three Euler angles or four Euler parameters to construct the nine components of L(s,t). Here, we employ incremental rotations [26]. Accordingly, we compute the small change in L(s,t) through the time step Δt using the small incremental rotation $\Phi(s,t,t-\Delta t)$

$$L(s,t) = \Phi(s,t,t-\Delta t)L(s,t-\Delta t).$$
(15)

The incremental rotation can be accomplished through a single rotation (about one axis) as per Euler rotation theorem [27]. Let the vector $\theta(s,t)$ represent the (axis and amount of) the single infinitesimal rotation for $\Phi(s,t,t-\Delta t)$. Then

$$\omega(s,t) = \lim_{\Delta t \to 0} \frac{\theta(s,t)}{\Delta t} \quad \text{and} \quad \Phi = \exp(-\tilde{\theta}), \quad (16)$$

where $\tilde{\theta}$ is the skew-symmetric form of θ defined as follows. The cross product of two vectors *x* and *y* can be written as $x \times y = \tilde{x}y$, where

$$x = \begin{cases} x_1 \\ x_2 \\ x_3 \end{cases}, y = \begin{cases} y_1 \\ y_2 \\ y_3 \end{cases}, \tilde{x} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & -x_3 & x_2 \\ x_3 & 0 & -x_1 \\ -x_2 & x_1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}.$$
 (17)

The exponential of skew-symmetric matrix \tilde{x} is expanded as

$$\exp(\widetilde{x}) = \mathbf{I} + \widetilde{u}\sin(|x|) + \widetilde{u}^{2}(1 - \cos(|x|)), \qquad (18)$$

where |x| is the magnitude of x, u is the unit vector along x and I is the identity matrix. Note that this computation employs only a scalar power series and it therefore avoids the known numerical difficulties of matrix exponentiation [28].

In short, we use (16) to compute $\theta(s,t)$ and $\Phi(s,t,t-\Delta t)$ and then use (15) to update L(s,t). From the transformation matrix L(s,t) and the centerline velocity v(s,t), we then compute the position and orientation of each cross section of the rod at any time by subsequent integration. For the catenary, we need to integrate only v(s,t) to compute the evolution of its shape in time.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The principal contribution of this paper lies in the formulation of the hybrid rod-catenary formulation described in Sections 2 and 3. In this section, we evaluate the performance of the hybrid rod-catenary model using a relatively simple example featuring a cable suspension with both low and high tension zones. We validate the hybrid model by benchmarking results with those obtained from a pure rod model.

The example is illustrated in Fig. 5 and corresponding parameters are listed in Table 1. The figure shows a cable of length L sagging under its own weight. The left end is pinned. At the right end, the cable centerline is given a prescribed orientation of 30 degrees from the horizontal, is tension-free, but subject to an applied force in the normal (shear) direction. A reaction moment also develops at the right end in response to prescribing the rotation of this end and leads to a region where significant curvature develops.

Table 1: Simulation parameters.			
Quantity	Symbol	Units (SI)	Value
I. CABLE			
Diameter	D	m	1.0×10 ⁻³
Length	L	m	2.0×10^{0}
Mass/ length	т	Kg/m	$\pi/4 \times 10^{-3}$
Bending Moment of Inertia/ length	Tensor I	Kg-m	π/64×10 ⁻⁹
Torsional Moment of Inertia/ length		Kg-m	$\pi/32 \times 10^{-9}$
Bending Stiffness	Tensor B	N-m ²	$5\pi/64 \times 10^{-3}$
Torsional Stiffness		N-m ²	π/16×10 ⁻³
Compliance	c_k	N^{-1}	0.0×10^{0}
II. FLUID ENVIRONMENT (See Appendix 1)			
Acceleration due to gravity	g	m/s ²	9.8×10^{0}
Fluid Density	$ ho_{_f}$	Kg/m ³	1.0×10 ⁰
Normal Drag Coefficient	C_n	-	1.0×10^{0}
Tangential Drag Coefficient	C_t	-	1.0×10 ⁻¹
Added Fluid Mass	m_a	Kg	0.0×10^{0}
Far-field flow	v_f	m/s	0.0×10^{0}
Applied Boundary Force (Fig. 5)	$f_{applied}$	N	1.0×10 ⁻²
III. NUMERICAL DISCRETIZATION			
Temporal Step	-	S	1.0×10^{0}
Spatial Step	-	m	5.0×10 ⁻³
Joint Location	S _j	m	1.5×10^{0}

Table 1: Simulation parameters

Two computational models are used to predict the dynamic relaxation to equilibrium from an initially straight cable. The first is the pure rod model (dashed curve) while the second is the hybrid rod-catenary model (solid curve) composed of 25% rod-domain (black) and 75% catenary sub-domain (red). The rod sub-domain is joined to the catenary sub-domain at point s_j with a spherical joint. While the two models predict similar displacements, the modest differences arise from the added flexibility of the hybrid model as seen, for instance by

flexibility of the hybrid model as seen, for instance by comparing the maximum sag. More importantly, there is a significant increase in the calculation speed for the hybrid model in proportion to the ratio of the catenary/rod subdomains. For example, under equal conditions, the computational speed is increased by approximately a factor of 1.5 to 2 for this very simple example when using the hybrid model. In addition, the hybrid model successfully captures the mechanics of bending at the right end that would otherwise be missed in a pure catenary model as described further below.



Fig. 5: A simple benchmark example: a cable suspension with low (black) and high (red) tension zones.

The force and moment distributions along the cable obtained from the two computational models are compared in Figs. 6-8. The tension distribution shown in Fig. 6 demonstrates that the steady-state tension predicted by the hybrid model closely matches that of the rod model. This is certainly expected as the catenary successfully captures the tensiondominated mechanics of a cable. The tension is continuous across the rod/catenary interface and there remains only a very minute tension gradient in the rod subdomain to the right of this interface. Moreover, the tension in the rod subdomain eventually decreases to zero at the right end as required by the boundary condition. The resulting low-tension (rod) subdomain develops appreciate bending.



Fig. 6: Final tension distribution.



Fig. 7: Final shear force distribution.

The shear force and bending moment in hybrid model in Figs. 7 and 8 are reported only in the rod sub-domain as these quantities vanish in the catenary sub-domain. Note also that the shear force and bending moments for the pure rod model remain relatively small values in the corresponding domain $(s < s_j)$ where the catenary was employed in the hybrid model. In addition, the hybrid model accurately reproduces the shear and bending moment in the rod subdomain as benchmarked against the pure rod solution.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The main contribution of this paper is the formulation of a hybrid rod-catenary model to efficiently compute the dynamics of long cables that possess both low and high tension subdomains. Such tension changes arise in ocean engineering cables, as seen for example, in S-tether moorings and in cases of cable/seabed contact. Pure rod models ultimately lead to illconditioned computations for the very flexible, long cables often used in ocean engineering applications. Pure catenary models are well-known to be ill-conditioned for low tension cables. Thus, it is natural to employ these models in opposite tension regimes; that is, employ the rod model in low tension subdomains, and employ the catenary model in high tension subdomains. The hybrid model herein inherits the computational benefits of each model and offers tremendous computational advantages. For the simple cable suspension chosen as an example herein, the hybrid model increases computational speed by a factor of 1.5-2 relative to the pure rod model. In addition, the hybrid model successfully captures the dominant effects of bending in the low tension region that would otherwise be lost in using a pure catenary model.

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Fig. 8: Final internal moment distribution.

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APPENDIX 1: HYDRODYNAMICS

The hydrodynamics of underwater cables is dominated by fluid inertia (high Reynolds number) and is effectively modeled with standard Morison drag and added mass effects [16] for a cylinder in the far-field flow v_f :

$$F_{drag} = \frac{1}{2} \rho_f D\{C_n | v_r \times \hat{t} | \hat{t} \times (v_r \times \hat{t}) + \pi C_t (v_r \cdot \hat{t}) | v_r \cdot \hat{t} | \hat{t}\},$$
⁽¹⁹⁾

$$F_{added_mass} = -m_a \frac{\partial v}{\partial t}.$$
 (20)

Here $v_r = v_f - v$ is the flow relative to the cable, ρ_f is the fluid density, D is the cable diameter, C_n and C_t are the normal (form) drag and tangential (skin friction) drag coefficients respectively and m_a is the added fluid mass. The partial differentiation is relative to the inertial frame $\{e_i\}$. The cable buoyant weight per unit length is

$$F_{buoyant_weight} = \left(m - \rho_f \frac{\pi D^2}{4}\right)g, \qquad (21)$$

where *m* is the cable mass per unit length and the vector *g* is the acceleration due to gravity. The forces (per unit length) F_{drag} , F_{added_mass} and $F_{buoyant_weight}$ are included in the hybrid rod-catenary model through the distributed force term *F* in the linear momentum equation, Eq. (3) for the catenary sub-domain, and Eq. (10) for the rod sub-domain. For an extensible catenary, assuming *D* does not change appreciably, the net external force/length becomes

$$F = (F_{drag} + F_{added_mass})(1+\varepsilon) + F_{buoyant_weight}, \quad (22)$$

Here, ε follows from Eq. (1), the hydrodynamic forces F_{drag} and F_{added_mass} from Eq. (15) and Eq. (16), and the buoyant weight from

$$F_{buoyant_weight} = \left(m - \rho_f \frac{\pi D^2}{4} (1 + \varepsilon)\right)g, \qquad (23)$$

APPENDIX 2: COEFFICIENT MATRICES

Let Θ be the 3×3 null matrix and I be the 3×3 identity matrix. The coefficient matrices used in Eq. (5) and Eq. (11) are:

$$M_{c} = \begin{bmatrix} \Theta & \tilde{M} \\ mI & \Theta \end{bmatrix},$$

$$\tilde{M} = \begin{bmatrix} c_{k}\hat{t} & (1+c_{k}T)\frac{\partial \hat{t}}{\partial \vartheta} & (1+c_{k}T)\frac{\partial \hat{t}}{\partial \varphi} \end{bmatrix}_{3\times 3}$$
(24)

The partial derivatives in Eq. (24) and Eq. (25) are relative to the inertial frame $\{e_i\}$.

$$M_{r} = \begin{bmatrix} \Theta & \Theta & \Theta & \Theta \\ \Theta & \Theta & \mathbf{I} & \Theta \\ \Theta & \mathbf{I} & \Theta & \Theta \\ m\mathbf{I} & \Theta & \Theta & \Theta \end{bmatrix}$$
(27)

$$K_{r} = -\begin{bmatrix} I & \Theta & \Theta & \Theta \\ \Theta & I & \Theta & \Theta \\ \Theta & \Theta & B & \Theta \\ \Theta & \Theta & \Theta & I \end{bmatrix}$$
(28)

$$\mathbf{F}_{r} = \begin{cases}
\omega \times \hat{t} - \kappa \times v \\
-\kappa \times \omega \\
-\frac{\partial B}{\partial s} \kappa + \omega \times I\omega + f \times \hat{t} - \kappa \times B\kappa - Q \\
m(\omega \times v) - \kappa \times f - F
\end{cases} \left. (29)$$

The partial derivative $\frac{\partial B}{\partial s}$ in Eq. (29) is relative to the body-fixed frame $\{a_i\}$.