THEORETICAL STUDIES OF RYDBERG ATOM COLLISIONS (U)

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UNCLASSIFIED SRI-MP-81-60
THEORETICAL STUDIES OF RYDBERG ATOM COLLISIONS

By:
R. E. Olson

SRI Project 8467
MP 81-80

OFFICE OF NAVAL RESEARCH
800 North Quincy Street
Arlington, Virginia 22217

ATTN: Dr. B. R. Junker
Physics Division, Code 421

Approved by:
D. C. Lorents, Director
Molecular Physics Laboratory
g. R. Abrahamson, Vice President
Physical Sciences Division
Theoretical studies were performed on a variety of topics related to collisions involving Rydberg atoms. Progress was made towards the understanding of ion-Rydberg atom, Rydberg atom-Rydberg atom, and ground state atom-Rydberg atom collisions. A strong dc electric field was also incorporated in calculations of electron capture and ionization cross sections for ion-Rydberg atom collisions.
ABSTRACT

During the last two years, theoretical studies were performed on a variety of topics related to collisions involving Rydberg atoms. Progress was made towards the understanding of ion-Rydberg atom, Rydberg atom-Rydberg atom, and ground state atom-Rydberg atom collisions. Cross sections were calculated for electron capture, ionization, and excitation processes and parametrized in terms of atomic parameters. A strong dc electric field was also incorporated in calculations of electron capture and ionization cross sections for ion-Rydberg atom collisions. The results of this latter investigation indicate the design of a far ir photon detector which is based on the field ionization of Rydberg atoms may be limited by the collision processes.
At present, it is possible to detect single photons having wavelengths < 1 μm with single quantum detectors. Conventional methods fail at longer wavelengths, because the reduced quantum efficiency leads to signal-to-noise problems. However, because Rydberg atoms have large absorption cross sections for long-wavelength radiation (> 10 μm), these atoms can be used to convert infrared and microwave photons into either visible photons or ions that can be detected by conventional techniques. The basic idea of a Rydberg atom infrared or microwave detector is to make a target of these atoms that is optically thick to the radiation to be detected at wavelength $\lambda_0$. The photons with wavelength $\lambda_0$ will be absorbed in the target of Rydberg atoms in a single $n,l$ quantum state. The atoms that absorb the photons undergo a transition to a state of different parity and energy. This state can then easily be detected by taking advantage of either the different wavelength of the optical radiation, which is subsequently emitted by the atom, or the difference in the field ionization of the two states.

The first question that must be asked is: Is it possible to make an optically thick target of Rydberg atoms for long-wavelength radiation? Recent work 1-3 has demonstrated that the use of Rydberg atoms for detection of infrared and microwave radiation is, in principle, quite feasible. Moreover, it can be orders of magnitude more sensitive than other available detectors, a condition that can lead to a variety of possible applications. It has been shown that it is necessary to produce a $10^8$ cm$^{-3}$ density of Rydberg atoms in a parent gas density of $\sim 10^{11}$ cm$^{-3}$ in order to obtain a 1-cm-long optically thick target of Rydberg atoms. This density of Rydberg atoms is now being produced with dye laser technology in several laboratories.

Because it is apparent that the detector will work in principle, it is necessary to determine its limitations. Obvious problems are collisional processes that either destroy the population of the Rydberg atom in a specific $(n,l)$ electronic level, thereby reducing the steady-state population density, or induce the same transition that is used to observe the long-wavelength radiation, thereby producing spurious signals. For either case,
the collision mean free time must be comparable to the radiative lifetime of
the Rydberg atom that has been observed to be empirically given by
\[ \tau = \frac{n}{2.4 \times 10^{-8}} \text{ s} \]  
(1)

As an example of the magnitudes of the collisional deactivation cross
sections that are necessary to compete with the radiative lifetime, one can
use a system in which the Rydberg atom is in the \( n = 20 \) level. From Eq. (1),
one finds that the Rydberg atom has a radiative lifetime of \( 3.3 \times 10^{-5} \) s. If
a Rydberg atom density of \( 10^8 \text{ cm}^{-3} \) in a ground state density of \( 10^{11} \text{ cm}^{-3} \) is
realistically assumed, it is easy to show that collisional deactivation would
be comparable to the radiative process if the Rydberg atom-ground state atom
deactivation cross section were on the order of \( 10^{-11} \text{ cm}^2 \). Because the
geometric cross section for a Rydberg atom is \( \pi n^4 a_o^2 \) for a Rydberg atom
that is in the \( n = 20 \) level, the deactivation cross section conceivably could
be comparable to the geometric cross section, or \( \sim 1 \times 10^{-11} \text{ cm}^2 \). Such a
cross section is extremely plausible, especially for alkali atoms, which have
large electron scattering lengths and high dipole polarizabilities and can
thus easily induce the Rydberg electron to other close-lying electronic
levels. It appears, therefore, the collisional processes must be seriously
considered in the design of any Rydberg atom long-wavelength photon detector.

During the last two years, we have begun a series of theoretical studies
directed towards Rydberg atom collisional processes. This work includes ion-
Rydberg atom, Rydberg atom-Rydberg atom, and ground state atom-Rydberg atom
scattering along with collisions in strong electric fields. The results of
the work are briefly described in the next section.
RESEARCH PROGRESS

In the last two years, we have focused our attention on several Rydberg atom collision problems. Originally, our theoretical techniques were directed toward ionization collisions involving two Rydberg atoms in the same principal quantum numbers $n$:

$$A^{***}(n) + A^{**}(n) + A^+ + ... . \quad (2)$$

A four-body classical-trajectory Monte Carlo (CTMC) code was written and applied to Reaction (2) for collision velocities, $v/v_e$, from $10^{-2}$ to $10^1$ (note: $v_e = 1/n$ a.u. = $2.2 \times 10^8/n$ cm/s). It is of particular interest that the ionization cross sections for (2) were approximately an order of magnitude larger than the geometric value $\pi n^2 a_o^2$ at thermal energies. Also, the CTMC code inherently predicted the importance of the dipole-induced dipole forces at low velocities and showed that the cross section increases as the velocity decreased, as $v^{-2/3}$. The work was published under the title "Ionization Cross Sections by Rydberg-Atom-Rydberg-Atom Collisions" in Phys. Rev. Lett., 43, 126 (1979).

The CTMC code was also applied to collisions of ions with Rydberg atoms in the $v/v_e$ range of 1 to 10. Both electron capture,

$$A^{+q} + B(n) + A^{+q}(n') + B^+ , \quad (3)$$

and ionization,

$$A^{+q} + B(n) + A^{+q} + B^+ + e^- , \quad (4)$$

cross sections were calculated. The cross sections were conveniently presented in terms of simple analytical expressions containing the collision velocity, incident ion charge state, and electronic level of the Rydberg atom. The most interesting aspect of the calculations was the determination of the $A^{+q-1}(n')$ product ion distributions after the electron capture.
reaction (3). The net result was that the Rydberg atom's electron after capture tries to preserve its original dimensions and orbital energy. Consequently, the most probable final state can be expressed by

$$n' = n^{3/4}.$$  \hspace{1cm} (5)

The work was published under the title "Ion-Rydberg Atom Collision Cross Sections" in J. Phys. B, 13, 483 (1980).

In the area of ion-Rydberg atom excitation transfer collisions,

$$A^{+q} + B(n) + A^{+q} + B(n')$$, \hspace{1cm} (6)

we recently completed benchmark calculations on the $N^3 + H^{**}(n)$ system in the range of $n = 9$ to 24. These calculations were motivated by the work of Kim and Meyer\(^3\) who ignored the excitation transfer process in the analysis of their data and incorrectly thought that their observed cross sections were due to the ionization process. A paper that is concerned with the excitation transfer process, "Excitation Transfer in Ion-Rydberg Atom Collisions," has been accepted for publication in The Physical Review.

A major portion of our time during 1980 has been spent in writing a review on theoretical methods and results as applied to Rydberg atom collisions. The review covers "l-changing" collisions between Rydberg atoms and ground state neutral atoms, associative ionization processes between Rydberg and ground state atoms, ion-Rydberg atom collisions, and Rydberg atom-Rydberg atom processes. It will be included as a chapter in a book, entitled Rydberg Atoms, which is to be edited by R. Stebbings and published by Cambridge University Press. Our chapter will be entitled: "Theoretical Approaches to Low Energy Collisions of Rydberg Atoms with Atoms and Ions" and will be co-authored with A. P. Hickman and J. Pascale.

An interesting research topic for which we have completed preliminary calculations is the effect of strong dc electric fields on ion-Rydberg atom ionization and electron capture cross sections. This is a problem that is extremely pertinent to a far infrared photon detector that is based on Rydberg atoms, with the use of field ionization to determine the product state. In fact, because the cross sections are so highly dependent on the magnitude of
the electric field, these cross sections may determine the efficiency of the field ionization in the detector.

The electric field calculations were accomplished by the CTKC method. Model problems on Rydberg atoms in the $n = 10$ and $n = 20$ states were solved, and the calculated cross sections were parameterized in terms of the quantum levels of the Rydberg atom, the electric field strength, and the collision velocity. Interestingly, the electric field caused the cross sections for electron capture to decrease by up to fourfold, while the ionization values increased by up to two orders of magnitude. A paper entitled "Ion Collisions with Rydberg Atoms in Strong Electric Fields," which is co-authored with A. D. Mackellar, has been accepted for publication in *Physical Review Letters*.

A paper describing work that was partially supported by ONR has been submitted for publication in the *Journal of Physics B* (author: A. P. Hickman). It describes quantum close-coupling calculations that investigate the importance of Rydberg atom core interactions in "$I$-mixing" collisions with rare gases.
PUBLISHED WORK

The titles and authors of the papers attributed to this contract over the last two years are listed below. The covering pages to the papers follow.


ABSTRACTS FROM PUBLICATIONS
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a.

Volume 43, Number 2

PHYSICAL REVIEW LETTERS 9 JULY 1979

Ionization Cross Sections for Rydberg-Atom–Rydberg-Atom Collisions

R. E. Olson
Molecular Physics Laboratory, SRI International, Menlo Park, California 94025
(Received 23 April 1979)

A classical-trajectory Monte Carlo method has been applied to collisions of two Rydberg atoms. Numerical calculations were made for velocities \( v = 0.01v_a \) to \( 10v_a \), where the Rydberg electron's velocity \( v_a \) (a.u.) \( = 1/n \) and \( n \) is the principal quantum number of the Rydberg atom. The total ionization cross sections scale as \( n^4 \) and show a \( v^{-0.4} \) dependence at low \( v \), a slight maximum around \( v_a \), and a rapid decrease at high \( v \). The cross sections are almost an order of magnitude larger than \( 1.4^{4.2} \) at thermal energies.

b.


Ion–Rydberg atom collision cross sections

R E Olson
Molecular Physics Laboratory, SRI International, Menlo Park, CA 94025, USA

Received 19 June 1979, in final form 29 August 1979

Abstract. Classical-trajectory Monte Carlo calculations have been performed for collisions of ions in charge states \( q = +1, +2, +5 \) and +10 with hydrogenic atoms in principal quantum levels \( n = 1, 2, 5, 10 \) and 20. The collision velocity range investigated was \( 1 \leq v/v_a \leq 10 \) where \( v_a \) is the orbital velocity of the Rydberg electron (1/n in atomic units). Both charge-exchange and impact ionization cross sections were calculated with impact ionization found to be the dominant channel for \( v/v_a \geq 2 \). For \( v/v_a \geq 5 \), the sum of the charge-exchange (CEX) and impact ionization (ION) cross sections may be represented by \( \sigma_{\text{CEX+ION}}(v) = 6 \pi n^2 q^2 / v^4 \), where \( v \) is in atomic units. Analysis of the electronic levels produced after charge exchange by the ion indicates the capture proceeds into excited levels which tend to preserve the energy and orbital size of the initial Rydberg atom.
THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO LOW ENERGY COLLISIONS
OF RYDBERG ATOMS WITH ATOMS AND IONS

A. P. Hickman, R. E. Olson, and J. Pascale*
Molecular Physics Laboratory
SRI International
Menlo Park, CA 94025

and

*Service de Physique Atomique
C.E.N. Saclay
91191 Gif-sur-Yvette Cedex, France

MP 80-107R
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IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

V. REFERENCES
Excitation transfer in ion–Rydberg-atom collisions

R. E. Olson

Molecular Physics Laboratory, SRI International, Menlo Park, California 94025
(Received 11 September 1980)

Recently, electron-loss cross sections were presented by Kim and Meyer (Phys. Rev. Lett. 44, 1047 (1980)) for 40 keV/amu N⁺⁺ + H⁺(n) collisions which scaled as n⁻⁷, where n is the principal quantum number of the excited H⁺. Such results are in contrast to an n⁻² scaling predicted by classical and first Born theoretical methods. Our calculations indicate that a major component of the experimentally observed ion signal was due to Stark ionization by deflector grids of highly excited H⁺ produced in excitation-transfer collisions. Inclusion of the excitation process in a theoretical interpretation reveals qualitative agreement between theory and experiment and stresses the importance of excitation transfer in ion–Rydberg-atom collisions.

ION COLLISIONS WITH RYDBERG ATOMS IN STRONG ELECTRIC FIELDS

R. E. Olson

Molecular Physics Laboratory
SRI International
Menlo Park, California 94025

A. D. MacKellar

Department of Physics and Astronomy
University of Kentucky
Lexington, Kentucky 40506

ABSTRACT

The classical-trajectory Monte Carlo method has been used to investigate collisions of ions and Rydberg atoms in strong dc electric fields. Cross sections are presented for n = 10 and n = 20 Rydberg atoms at velocities

\[ 1 < \frac{v}{v_e} < 10 \text{ where } v_e = n^{-1} \text{ a.u.} \]

Electric fields which ionize product Rydberg atoms in states n' = n + \Delta n with \Delta n = 1, 2 and 4 were used. The electric field caused the cross sections for electron capture to decrease by up to fourfold while the ionization values increased by up to two orders-of-magnitude.
THE EFFECT OF CORE INTERACTIONS ON I-MIXING COLLISIONS OF RYDBERG ATOMS WITH RARE GASES

A. P. Hickman

Service de Physique Atomique
CEN-Saclay
91191 Gif-sur-Yvette Cedex France

Coupled channel calculations for collisions of Na Rydberg atoms with He and Ar have been performed to investigate the effect of the interaction between the Na\(^+\) core and the rare gas. For \(n = 10\), channels corresponding to the levels nd and nf are included, and calculations are reported both with and without terms arising from the core. It is found that the inelastic cross sections (1Od + 10f) are insensitive to the core interactions, whereas the elastic cross sections (10d + 10d) may change significantly. This result is consistent with the prediction of the first order Born approximation.

Permanent address: Molecular Physics Laboratory, SRI International, Menlo Park, California 94025, U.S.A.
REFERENCES


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