Spin Ratios in Comets:
Complexity of Measurements,
Post-2014 Updates, and Prospects

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Nuclear Spin Effects in Astrochemistry 2017
Université Grenoble Alpes

Comet Hale-Bopp Image Credit: Terry Acomb
Outline

• An often underappreciated point: **Complexity of measurements** and **uncertainties** beyond stochastic noise.

• **Improved methodology** for ground-based retrievals.

• The database of **H$_2$O OPRs**.

• Recent measurements of **H$_2$CO OPRs** (in progress)

• Prospects: new spectrographs to measure spin ratios.

• **Open questions and the need for continuing synergy with laboratory and theoretical work** ...

**Related TALK:** G. Villanueva – comparing spin temperatures of H$_2$O and H$_2$CO with those of other molecules.
Example of OPR Retrieval (Near-IR, ground-based)
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Example of OPR Retrieval (Near-IR, ground-based)

Bonev et al. 2013, Icarus
Fluorescence Models Include Separately the Effects of Gas Rotational Temperature ($T_{\text{rot}}$) and Spin Ratio

- $T_{\text{rot}}$ – easier to retrieve
- Spin ratio – more challenging measurement
The Importance of Accurate OPR Uncertainties Near the High-$T_{\text{spin}}$ Limit

The strongly non-linear relationship enhances the need for careful and accurate assessment of uncertainties in measured OPR ...
The Importance of Accurate OPR Uncertainties Near the High-$T_{\text{spin}}$ Limit (2)

- OPR as a free parameter is not restricted to $\leq 3.0$ [the statistical equilibrium value] to avoid a measurement bias - see also G. Villanueva’s talk tomorrow.
The Importance of Accurate OPR Uncertainties Near the High-$T_{\text{spin}}$ Limit (2)

- Modeled line intensities are very sensitive to OPR in the low $T_{\text{spin}}$ limit …

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A Measure of the Model - Data Discrepancy

(“low is good”)

- Modeled line intensities are very sensitive to OPR in the low $T_{\text{spin}}$ limit …

- Varying the OPR parameter produces smaller changes in the quality of the model-data fit at the high $T_{\text{spin}}$ limit.

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Spin Ratios from Ground-Based Observations

2004 - basic methodology for H₂O completed and applied to several comets (Dello Russo et al. 2004, 2005; Bonev 2005)

GOALS:
- improve not only precision, but also the accuracy of measurements;
- understand and evaluate multiple sources of uncertainty;
- build a coherent database of spin ratios

Gradual implementation of improved methodology:

(1) Emphasis of uncertainties beyond stochastic noise (Dello Russo et al. 2005, Bonev 2005, Bonev et al. 2007, 2008) ...
Each plot will show \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) abundance measured independently from each individual spectral line:

- OPR is varied as a **free parameter**, not restricted to \( \leq 3.0 \)

\[
\text{OPR} = 0.5 \\
\sigma \ (\text{stoch}) = 2 \% \\
\sigma \ (\text{line-by-line variance}) = 19 \%
\]

\[
\text{OPR} = 2.6 \\
\sigma \ (\text{stoch}) = 2 \% \\
\sigma \ (\text{line-by-line variance}) = 2 \%
\]

\[
\text{OPR} = 3.4 \\
\sigma \ (\text{stoch}) = 2 \% \\
\sigma \ (\text{line-by-line variance}) = 3 \%
\]

→ Uncertainties are in % of the mean …

- Stochastic errors depend on SNR (which is important!) and do not change, regardless quality of the modeling.
- Line-by-line spread is important for evaluating accurate OPRs.
How to reduce the scatter in line-by-line measurements?
2004 - basic methodology for H$_2$O completed and applied to several comets (Mumma et al. 2003; Dello Russo et al. 2005; Bonev 2005)

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Gradual implementation of improved methodology:

(1) Emphasis of *uncertainties beyond stochastic noise* (Dello Russo et al. 2005, Bonev 2005, Bonev et al. 2007, 2008) ...

(2) Advanced *telluric transmittance models* (Villanueva et al. 2008, 2012) and advanced *cometary fluorescence models* (Villanueva’s talk) → *greatly reduced uncertainties.*
Water in planetary and cometary atmospheres: H$_2$O/HDO transmittance and fluorescence models

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(2) Advanced telluric transmittance models (Villanueva et al. 2008, 2012) and advanced cometary fluorescence models (Villanueva’s talk) → greatly reduced uncertainties.

(3) Complimentary methods to retrieve $T_{rot}$ and OPR using global fits to spectra and line-by-line analysis (reviewed in Bonev et al. 2014).
• Employing several methods to retrieve $T_{\text{rot}}$ and OPR is not redundant:

1. Levenberg–Marquardt $\chi^2$ minimization (Villanueva et al. 2008).
4. $F/g(T_{\text{rot}})$ variance minimization (Bonev et al. 2008, 2013);

$\rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \quad F$ is the flux of an individual line and $g(T_{\text{rot}})$ is its fluorescence $g$-factor.

➢ The sources of uncertainty (beyond photon noise) often propagate differently for each method.

➢ Thus divergent results among methods reveal that one or more systematic errors are skewing the measurement.
Spin Ratios from Ground-Based Observations

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(1) Emphasis of **uncertainties beyond stochastic noise** (Dello Russo et al. 2005, Bonev 2005, Bonev et al. 2007, 2008) ...
(2) Advanced **telluric transmittance models** (Villanueva et al. 2008, 2012) and advanced **cometary fluorescence models** (Villanueva’s talk) $\to$ **greatly reduced uncertainties**.
(3) Complimentary methods to retrieve $T_{\text{rot}}$ and OPR using **global fits** to spectra and **line-by-line analysis** (reviewed in Bonev et al. 2014).
(4) **Spatially-resolved** spin ratios ...
(1) Improved accuracy of retrieval – correlated line-by-line diagrams reveal systematic uncertainties …

(2) No evidence for nuclear spin conversion in the coma on the spatial scales of ~1000 km (C/2004 Q2), ~100 km (103P), and ~30 km (73P/SW3 B).

Bonev et al. 2007, 2008, 2013; see also Woodward et al. 2007
The database of H$_2$O Spin Ratios in Comets

- 19 comets (some comets have measurements on multiple dates)
- Non-"coherent" – various techniques, methods, and uncertainty evaluations.

Preliminary analysis of the database
OPR of Formaldehyde

![Graph showing OPR of Formaldehyde with curves for H₂O and H₂CO in the gas phase, with a note on statistical equilibrium.](image)
Radio Techniques
(JCMT)

OPR \approx 2.12 \pm 0.59 \ (1\sigma) ,
corresponding to \ T_{\text{spin}} > 8 \ K \ (2\sigma)
Spin Ratio of H$_2$CO through IR observations requires moderately bright comet AND high H$_2$CO / H$_2$O relative abundance:

Compilation by Mike DiSanti (see also DiSanti et al. 2016, 2005).
Bonev, DiSanti, Villanueva – preliminary results
Prospects ...
NASA Infrared Telescope Facility (NASA IRTF) and beyond …
The Need for Continued Theoretical and Laboratory Work in Synergy with Cometary Observations

- Can spin ratios measured in comets test predictions for nuclear spin conversion (or lack thereof)?

☑ upon phase transition?
  • direct sublimation from the cometary nucleus

• in the gas phase in cometary environments?
  - Gas + dust …
  - Implication for species (e.g. H$_2$CO) that might be products of more complex precursors in the inner-most atmosphere of the comet?
Discussion after the talk (incomplete)

We have invested a significant effort to improve the accuracy of the measurements, as detailed in this talk. With improved measurements, we can then use the comet as a natural laboratory to help better understand nuclear spin conversion. Experimental work presented in this workshop suggests that stat. equilibrium spin ratios (OPR ~ 3.0, etc.) should be measured for molecules after sublimation from the cometary nucleus. Our goal is to test this through measuring spin ratios of multiple species (see also G. Villanueva and H. Kawakita’s talks) and on as many comets as we can.
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