MOT-based Lifetime Measurements of Potassium-39 $5p_{1/2}$ and $5p_{3/2}$ states

Huan Q. Bui

Advisor: Professor Charles Conover

CLAS, April 28, 2021

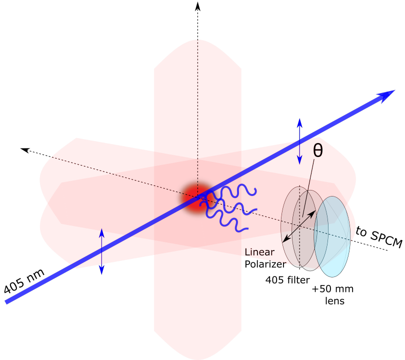
Why lifetime measurements?

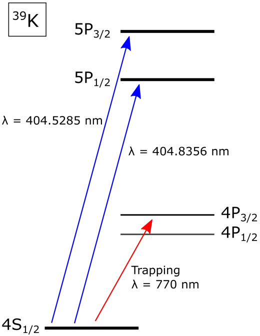
$$\frac{1}{\tau_{fi}} = \frac{4\alpha\omega_0^3}{3c^2} \left| \langle f | \, e\mathbf{r} \, | i \rangle \right|^2$$

- Provide empirical data/constants
- Confidence in matrix element calculations for understanding fundamental physics (e.g. parity violation)

Idea

Excite the **MOT** by a (short) 405 nm pulse, and observe fluorescence.



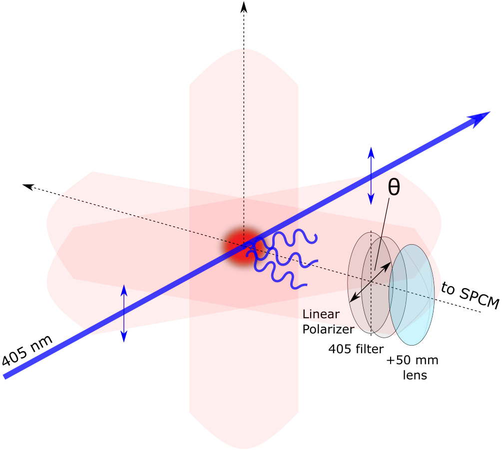


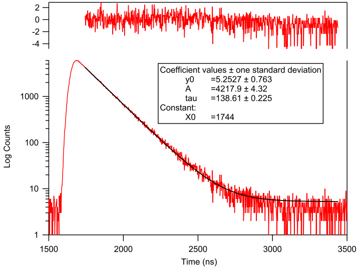
Pulse 405 nm source at 250 kHz.

Cloud diameter $\sim$ 1 mm. T $\sim$ 1 mK. N $\sim$ 10^6 atoms.

Idea

Fluorescence should be an exponential decay.

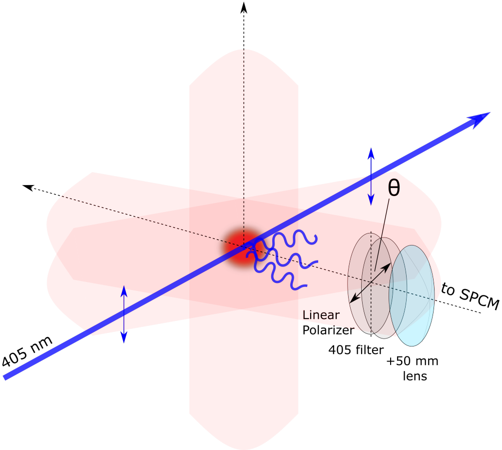


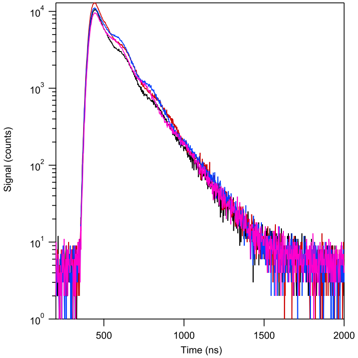


Data fitted with $N = Bkg + A\exp[-(t - t_0)/\tau]$. Residual is normalized.

Idea

Fluorescence should be an exponential decay. **Or should it?**





$\implies$ **Need some understanding of the fluorescence from 5p in K-39**

Theory: Hyperfine Structure

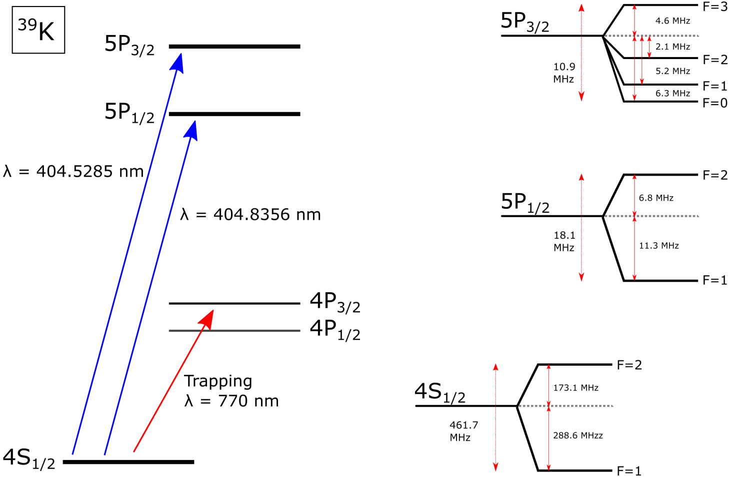
- Fine structure $\sim$ Special relativity $+$ $\mathbf{S}, \mathbf{L}$ coupling ($+$ Darwin)

$$\implies \quad \text{New quantum number: } \mathbf{J} = \mathbf{S} + \mathbf{L}$$

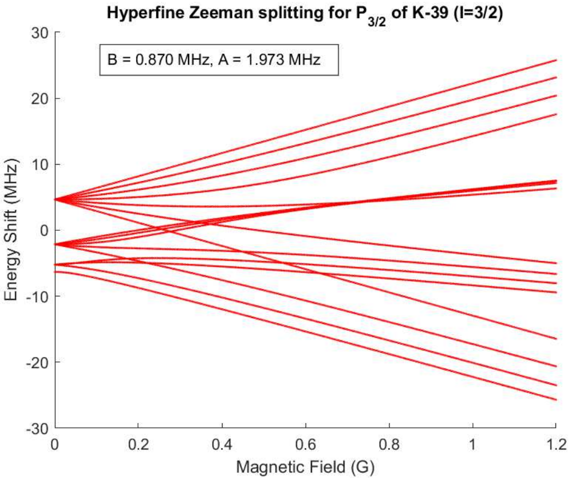
- Hyperfine structure $\sim$ Fine structure $+$ Nuclear spin

$$\implies \quad \text{New quantum number: } \mathbf{F} = \mathbf{J} + \mathbf{I}$$

Theory: Hyperfine Structure



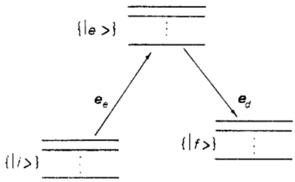
Theory: Zeeman effect

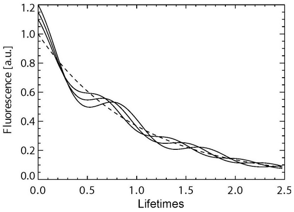


Theory: Quantum beats

"Interference" in fluorescence due to hyperfine sublevels

$$|\psi(t)\rangle = c_i\,|i\rangle\, e^{-i\omega_i t} + c_f\,|f\rangle\, e^{-i\omega_f t} + c_e\,|e\rangle\, e^{-i\omega_e t}$$





The detector sees

$$|E|^2 = (A + B\exp\left[i(\omega_e - \omega_f)t\right] + c.c)e^{-t/\tau}.$$

$\Longrightarrow$ **Difficult to extract lifetimes when quantum beats are present**

Theory: Quantum beats

Quantum beats don't always occur.

From angular momentum algebra:

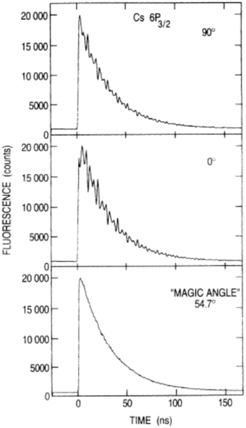
- Quantum beats in the $P_{1/2}$ decay: **NO**
  $\implies$ $\tau_{5p_{1/2}}$ is easier to measure

- Quantum beats in the $P_{3/2}$ decay: **YES**
  $\implies$ $\tau_{5p_{3/2}}$ is difficult to measure

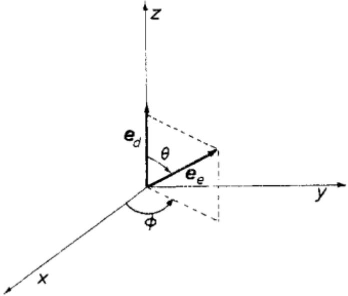
Theory: Quantum beats

In some cases, quantum beats can be eliminated.

$\implies$ The **magic angle** solution: $\theta_m = \arccos\left(1/\sqrt{3}\right) \approx 54.7^\circ$

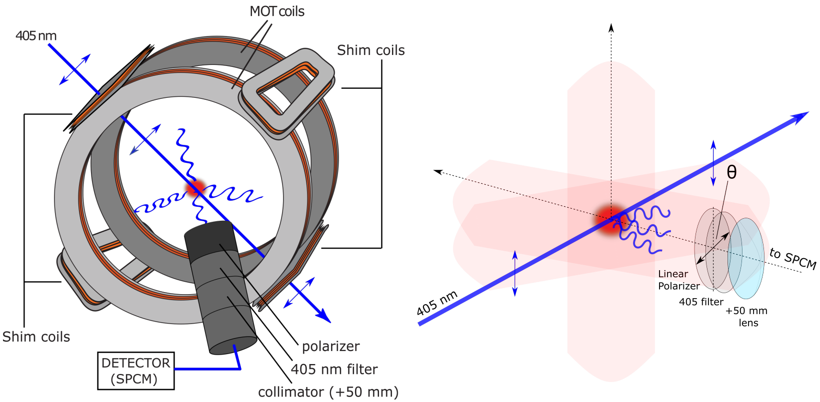


(a) Young et al. PRA 1994



(b) $\mathbf{e}_d$: detector polarization
$\mathbf{e}_e$: excitation polarization

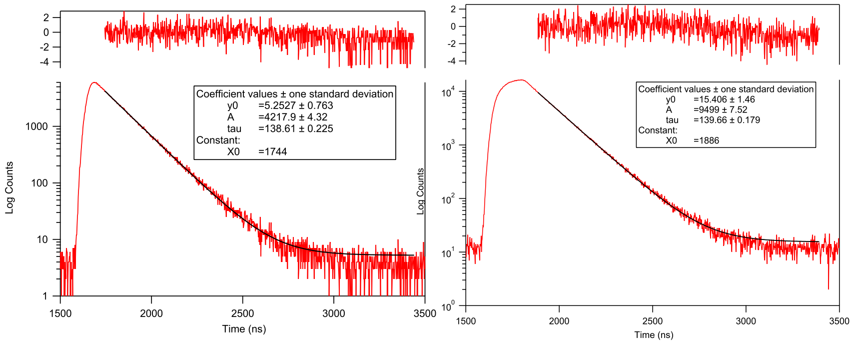
Experiment



The cloud is imaged onto an optical fiber tip.
The detector has QE $\sim 30\%$ at 405 nm.

Data: $5P_{1/2}$

Nice, beatless, exponential decay since $J = 1/2$



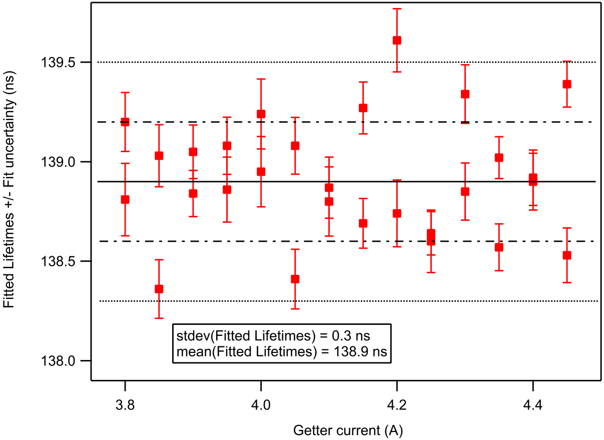
Data: $5P_{1/2}$: Error budget

Source of error	Value (ns)
Timing uncertainty & Nonlinearity	$\pm$ 0.1%
Truncation uncertainty + pulse pile-up	$\pm$ 0.4%
Radiation trapping/rescattering	$\pm$ 0.2%
Other statistical errors	$\pm$ 0.2%
Result	**138.9 $\pm$ 1.6**
Prior result (Mills et al. (2005))	**137.6 $\pm$ 1.3**

$\implies$ Agreement to within $\pm\sigma$.

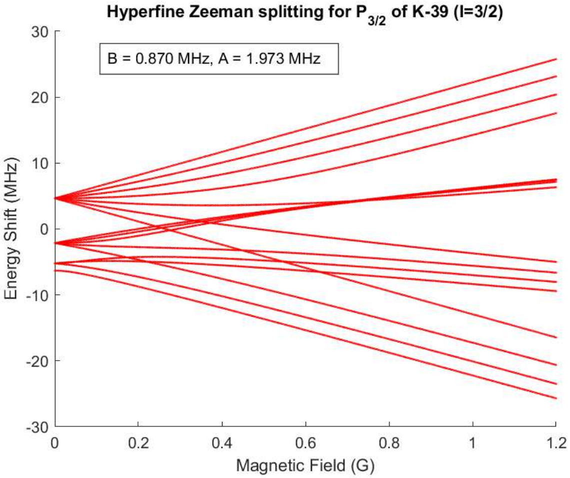
Data: $5P_{1/2}$: Radiation trapping test

Changing the getter current changes the density of the MOT.



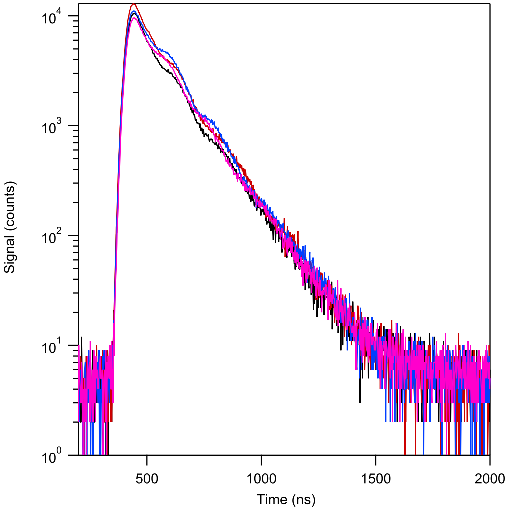
Data: $5P_{3/2}$

The MOT requires a magnetic field gradient ($dB/dr \approx 1$ G/mm)
$\implies$ Zeeman effects present & vary across the cloud



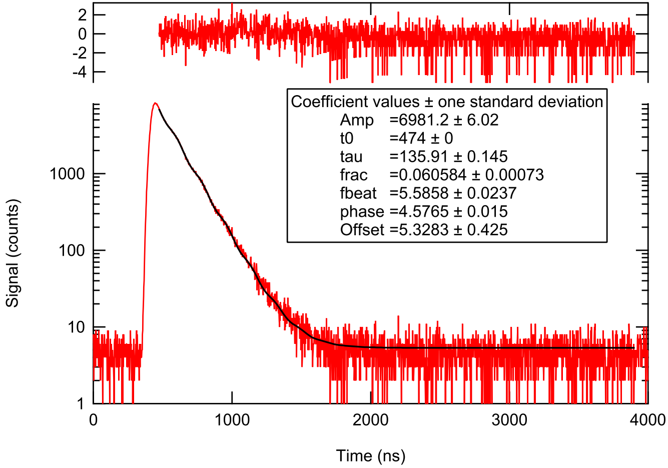
Data: $5P_{3/2}$

Quantum beats observed.



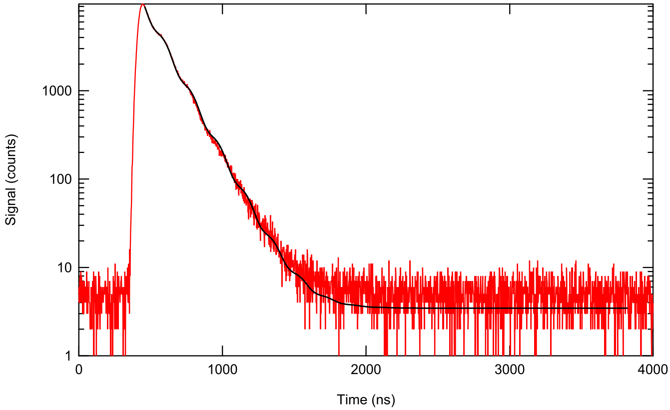
Data: $5P_{3/2}$

The **magic angle** trick does not eliminate beats due to Zeeman effects $\Longrightarrow$ must null magnetic fields. This is easier said than done!



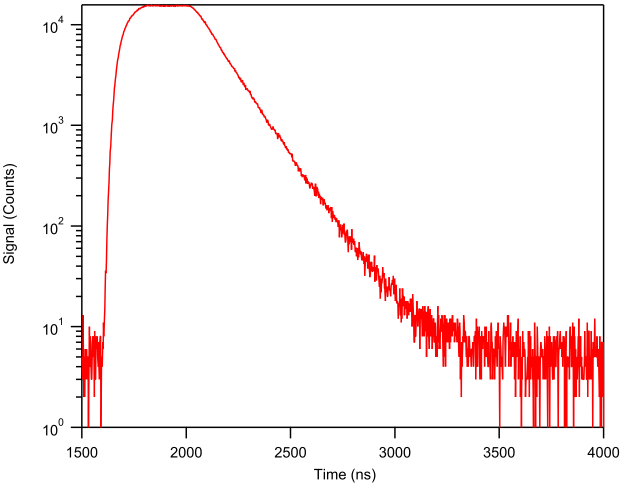
Data: $5P_{3/2}$

Exciting different parts of the MOT cloud gives different beat amplitudes.



$5P_{3/2}$: Alternative approaches

Using a long pulse $\implies$ removes coherence.



$5P_{3/2}$: Alternative approaches

- Hanle effect (fairly involved)
- Level-crossing (sweeping the magnetic field)
- Work with a vapor cell (many pros and cons)
  - Pros: no B gradient & nulling B is possible
  - Cons: large Doppler width, atomic motion, large radiation trapping