Static dielectric response of icosahedral fullerenes from $C_{60}$ to $C_{2160}$ by an all electron density functional theory

Rajendra R. Zope$^1$, Tunna Baruah$^1$, Mark R. Pederson$^2$, and B. I. Dunlap$^3$
$^1$Department of Physics, The University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, TX 79958, USA
$^2$Center for Computational Materials Science, Code 6392, US Naval Research Laboratory, Washington, DC 20375, USA and
$^3$Theoretical Chemistry Section, Code 6189, US Naval Research Laboratory, Washington, DC 20375, USA

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The static dielectric response of $C_{60}$, $C_{180}$, $C_{240}$, $C_{540}$, $C_{960}$, $C_{1500}$, and $C_{2160}$ fullerenes is characterized by an all-electron density-functional method. First, the screened polarizabilities of $C_{60}$, $C_{180}$, $C_{240}$, and $C_{540}$ are determined by the finite-field method using Gaussian basis set containing 35 basis functions per atom. In the second set of calculations, the unscreened polarizabilities are calculated for fullerenes $C_{60}$ through $C_{2160}$ from the self-consistent Kohn-Sham orbitals and eigenvalues using the sum-over-states method. The approximate screened polarizabilities, obtained by applying a correction determined within linear response theory show excellent agreement with the finite-field polarizabilities. The static dipole polarizability per atom in $C_{2160}$ is $(4 \text{ Å}^3)$ three times larger than that in $C_{60}$ ($1.344 \text{ Å}^3$). Our results reduce the uncertainty in various theoretical models used previously to describe the dielectric response of fullerenes and show that quantum size effects in polarizability are significantly smaller than previously thought.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Reduction in the spatial dimensions in nanoparticles results in a number of interesting properties such as, for example, the widening of the band gap, reduction in melting temperature, increased magnetic moments etc. The fundamental understanding of the size dependence of properties of nanoparticles, i.e. at what size the quantum size effects set in, is important for tailoring these systems for possible nanotechnological applications. Studies along these lines continue to be frontline research in nanoscience$^1$-$^9$.

Fullerenes are hollow cages formed by sp$^2$ bonded carbon atoms. They are finite analogues of graphene with 12 pentagonal defects that introduce curvature and make them closed structures. Unlike the most nanoparticles however, fullerenes are distinctly different in that they have all the atoms on the surface whereas solid spherical nanoparticles have roughly $N^{1/3}$ atoms on the surface. This feature results in rapid increase in their volume as the number of atoms (i.e. its size) increases. As dipole polarizability is proportional to volume, fullerenes are most suitable for investigating quantum size effects manifested in polarizability. The large dipole polarizability of carbon fullerenes compared to that of metallic or dielectric spheres of same size have been previously interpreted as quantum size effect$^{10}$. A number of studies on the polarizability of fullerenes have been devoted to understanding its size dependence$^{10}$-$^{12}$. These studies have been mainly based on classical models or have employed drastic approximations to simplify the polarizability calculations. Unfortunately, the predictions of these models are not consistent with each other and show rather large variance. For example, the various predictions of the polarizability of the $C_{2160}$ (See Table I) are: 7100 Å$^3$(Pariser-Parr-Pople model$^{11}$), 2726 Å$^3$(bond-order-bond polarizability$^{12}$), 9548 Å$^3$(Penn model-linear response theory$^{10}$), 17817 Å$^3$(tight binding$^{10}$). The predictions from different models of fullerene polarizabilities and associated quantum size effects differ by almost an...
order of magnitude. The most reliable methods to determine electronic structure are the first-principles-based quantum-chemical methods. In the present work, we use the first-principles density-functional methods to accurately determine the first order electric response of carbon fullerenes of sizes from \( \text{C}_{60} \) to \( \text{C}_{2160} \) by computing their static dipole polarizabilities. These calculations provide the most accurate prediction of the dielectric response of fullerenes in the size range \( \text{C}_{60}-\text{C}_{2160} \) and show substantial quenching of quantum size effects by \( \text{C}_{60} \) in contrast to current understanding. Moreover, the fullerene polarizabilities computed herein also provide an accurate input to the models used in determination of the ultraviolet (UV) spectrum for possible detection of of hyper-fullerene particles in space\(^{13}\).

II. THEORY, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first essential step in obtaining an accurate estimate of polarizability of fullerene involves accurate determination of the fullerene structure. We optimized the geometry of carbon fullerenes using recent fully analytic and variational formulation of density functional (ADFT) theory\(^{14-19}\). Being free of numerical grids, the ADFT implementation is computationally very efficient and allows calculations of matrix elements and energies accurate to machine precision. Its functional form is restricted but its space of atomic parameters is rich. It has been successfully used to study electronic properties of boron nitrides, aluminum nitride tubes\(^{20-22}\), and provides dipole moments, total and atomization energies accurate to various field strengths. The polarizabilities obtained using these two approaches agree within 1%. The finite-field \( \alpha \) values are given in the third-to-last column of Table I. Although the finite-field method is perhaps the best approach to calculate polarizabilities, the computational cost becomes prohibitive for larger fullerenes. The cost rises principally due to the very large number of self-consistent cycles required to obtain tightly converged energies (10\(^{-9}\) a.u.) in presence of the external electric fields. It is necessary to keep the convergence criteria tight to extract meaningful estimates of polarizability by the finite-field method. Therefore, we resort to an approximate technique that uses the unscreened polarizability obtained by the sum-over-states (SOS) method and the linear response theory and random phase approximation to estimate the screened polarizabilities from the \( \alpha_{\text{SOS}} \).

In the independent electron model, the working expression for the \( xy \) component of polarizability tensor can be written as,

\[
\alpha_{xy} = 2 \sum_{m} \sum_{n} \frac{<\psi_{m}|\hat{x}|\psi_{n}> <\psi_{n}|\hat{y}|\psi_{m}>}{\epsilon_{m} - \epsilon_{n}}.
\]

Here, the \( \{\psi_{i}\} \) are single particle orbitals and the \( \epsilon_{i} \) is the single particle energy of the \( i^{\text{th}} \) orbital. The \( \alpha_{\text{SOS}} = \frac{1}{3}(\alpha_{xx} + \alpha_{yy} + 2\alpha_{zz}) \), is calculated according to Eq. (1) once the self-consistent solution of the Kohn-Sham equations for each fullerene is obtained using the ADFT code. The computational efforts involved in determining the large number of transition dipole moments are reduced by making use of group theoretical techniques. The calculated \( \alpha_{\text{SOS}} \) for fullerenes \( \text{C}_{60} \) through \( \text{C}_{2160} \) are given in the correspondingly labeled column of Table I. The unscreened \( \alpha_{\text{SOS}} \) for \( \text{C}_{60} \) is 292 Å\(^3\), which
TABLE I: The average ionic radius $\bar{\pi}$ (in Å) and polarizabilities (in Å$^3$) obtained in various models: bond-order bond polarizability (BOOP)$^{12} \alpha_{PPP}$: Pariser-Parr-Pople approach$^{11}$, $\alpha_{Penna}$: Classical electrostatic within linear response theory (Penna model)$^{10}$, TB: tight-binding$^{10}$, $\alpha_{SOS}$: Sum-over-states-ADFT (present), $\alpha_{RPA}$: Sum-over-states-ADFT-RPA (present), $\alpha_{FF}$: finite-field PBE-GGA (DFT) (present), $\epsilon$: estimates of static dielectric constant for fcc structures.

| Fullerene | $\bar{\pi}$ (Å) | BOOP | $\alpha_{PPP}$ | $\alpha_{Penna}$ | $\alpha_{SOS}$ | $\alpha_{RPA}$ | $\alpha_{FF}$ | $\epsilon$ |
|------------|-----------------|-------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------|
| $C_{60}$   | 3.55            | 76    | 80            | 64            | 81            | 292           | 79            | 82.45    |
| $C_{180}$  | 6.13            | 227   | 209           | -             | -             | 1202          | 300           | 295.47   |
| $C_{240}$  | 7.07            | 303   | 306           | 343           | 581           | 1754          | 432           | 441.79   |
| $C_{340}$  | 10.27           | 681   | 866           | 1026          | 1869          | 4823          | 1155          | 1193.47  |
| $C_{720}$  | 12.17           | 909   | 1390          | -             | -             | 8000          | 1848          | -4.96    |
| $C_{900}$  | 14.03           | 1212  | 2150          | 2185          | 4290          | 12023         | 2745          | -5.00    |
| $C_{1500}$ | 17.94           | 1893  | 4415          | -             | -             | 29706         | 5690          | -5.61    |
| $C_{2160}$ | 21.01           | 2726  | 7100          | 9548          | 17817         | 38288         | 8548          | -5.01    |

The electronic structure of these fullerenes show that the highest occupied molecular orbital (HOMO) and the lowest unoccupied orbital (LUMO) belong to the $h_u$ and $t_{1u}$ irreducible representations of the icosahedral point group. The lowest HOMO-LUMO ($h_u \rightarrow t_{1u}$) excitation is forbidden by dipole selection rule and does not contribute to the polarizability. The inspection of the response of smaller fullerenes indicate that the low energy excitations are strongly screened by application of Eq. 2. A detailed study of optical spectra will be published elsewhere.

In Table I, the prediction of various models for polarizability are compared. The $\alpha_{Penna}$ is the polarizability determined using a semiclassical model that uses classical electrostatics and linear response theory. The fullerene polarizabilities larger than the $\alpha_{Penna}$ value have been interpreted as quantum size effects$^{10}$. The currently existing understanding, based on the tight-binding study$^{10}$, is that quantum size effects play very important role in electronic response of fullerenes up to $C_{340}$. In contrast, our first principle calculations (and $\alpha_{SOS}$ and $\alpha_{FF}$) show that by $C_{2160}$ the semiclassical $\alpha_{Penna}$ is already larger than the first-principle value. For the smaller fullerenes these effects are also much less pronounced than predicted by tight-binding model. For $C_{240}$, the tight binding value of polarizability exceeds finite-field DFT value by 32%. Also evident from Table I is that, while all models well predict known $C_{60}$ polarizability, they are inadequate to provide proper description of response of larger fullerenes. The tight binding approximation in particular greatly exaggerates the response leading to large $\alpha$ values. As same Eq. (2) has been used in tight-binding study$^{10}$, it is clear that proper description of dielectric response require accurate self-consistent density functional solution. The table also indicates dramatic increase in polarizability per atom with fullerene size.

The polarizability per atom systematically increases from $1.34$ Å$^3$ in $C_{60}$ to $4$ Å$^3$ in $C_{2160}$. There is no obvious reason why the polarizability per atom will not increase indefinitely as the rigid structure of fullerenes will not allow collapse. Furthermore, the fullerenes become energetically more stable with increasing size. The only problem is physically making them.

compares well (282Å$^{340}$ and 311Å$^{41}$) with previous predictions with different basis sets and exchange-correlation functionals.

The $\alpha_{SOS}$ determined using Eq. (1) gives unscreened polarizability since the field-induced polarization effects (local field effects) are missed in the calculations. Consequently, the $\alpha_{SOS}$ overestimates the experimentally accessible screened polarizability$^{42}$. For the smallest fullerene ($C_{60}$), $\alpha_{SOS}$ is roughly 3.6 times larger than the screened polarizability in agreement with previous reports$^{10,41}$. This overestimation slightly increases (to a factor ~ 4) for $C_{180}$, $C_{240}$, and $C_{340}$ as can be seen from comparison of $\alpha_{SOS}$ and $\alpha_{FF}$ from Table I. The screened polarizability can be deduced from $\alpha_{SOS}$ using the linear response theory$^{43}$ and the random phase approximation (RPA) by means of the following expression:

$$\alpha_{RPA} = \left[1 + \frac{\alpha_{SOS}}{R^3}\right]^{-1} \alpha_{SOS}. \tag{2}$$

Here, $R$ is the fullerene radius$^{43}$. For fullerenes (larger than $C_{60}$) that are polyhedral in structure, the average ionic radius can be used. The average ionic radii $\bar{\pi}$ are also given in Table I. Instead of using the ionic radii of fullerenes in Eq. (2) which tend to overcorrect the screening, it is more appropriate to use an effective radius $\bar{\pi} + \delta$. The factor $\delta$, accounts for the $\pi$ electron cloud around the bare nuclear skeleton. Its typical values are 1.2-1.3 Å$^{43}$. Similar methods of determining the screened electronic response has been used in past for carbon fullerenes$^{10,44}$, multishell carbon fullerenes- carbon onions$^{45}$, and (cylindrical) carbon nanotubes$^{45}$. However, as we shall see, an accurate initial self-consistent treatment is necessary to get a meaningful estimate of the screened polarizability from Eq. (2). The $\alpha_{RPA}$ determined using Eq. 2 (with $\delta = 1.23\AA$) are listed in Table I. It is apparent that $\alpha_{RPA}$ obtained within the ADFT are quite accurate as can be gleaned from comparison of $\alpha_{FF}$ and $\alpha_{RPA}$ for $C_{180}$, $C_{240}$ and $C_{340}$. The $\alpha_{RPA}$ is within 3% of $\alpha_{FF}$ for these fullerenes. This excellent agreement provides confidence in the $\alpha_{RPA}$ values of the larger fullerenes for which a direct calculation of the self-consistent response by means of the finite-field method is impractical.
The $\alpha_{RPA}$ values given in Table I are the most accurate predictions of fullerene polarizabilities. The quantitative agreement with experimental values of polarizabilities require a careful treatment of all possible contributions to polarizability. The vibrational contributions as noted earlier are insignificant. The excellent agreement between the predicted polarizability and experimental measurements for $C_{60}$ and $C_{70}$ rule out the role of temperature effects. Previous studies on carbon nanostructures have indicated negative thermal (volume) expansion at low temperature. We estimate the effect of volume expansion by calculating $\alpha_{RPA}$ for all fullerenes within 15% of their equilibrium volume. The $\alpha$ increases practically linearly with increase in fullerene volume within the chosen range of volume expansion (Cf. Fig. 3). This, as expected, highlights the importance of accurate geometries for accurate prediction of fullerene polarizability.

Finally, using the Clausius-Mossoti relation, we provide estimates of the dielectric constant of crystalline solids of these fullerenes. Assuming that like $C_{60}$, all larger fullerenes form an FCC crystal, the number density of fullerene is then $4/V$, where $V=\frac{4}{3}\pi r^3$. The fullerene radius used here is the effective radius as used above (to include the $\pi$-electron spill-out effect). Using a value of $\delta = 1.23\text{Å}$ results in a smaller lattice constant than the experimental value $(14.17\text{Å})$ but gives a dielectric constant of 4.50, which is in good agreement with experimental values $(4.0 - 4.5)$. The dielectric constants calculated for the larger fullerenes using the same $\delta$ value are in the range 4.7-5.6 (See last column in Table I). These values may vary slightly with the $\delta$ but the trend should be the same.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

In summary, static electric response of the icosahedral $C_{60}$, $C_{180}$, $C_{240}$, $C_{540}$, $C_{720}$, $C_{960}$, $C_{1500}$, and $C_{2160}$ fullerenes is studied in detail by an all-electron first principles density-functional methods. Quantitative estimates of the dipole polarizability determined herein provide better understanding of electronic response of fullerenes amongst earlier inconsistent predictions from various models. This work shows that quantum size effects in polarizability are substantially quenched by $C_{2160}$ in sharp contrast to previous tight-binding predictions. These calculations also signals the beginning of an era where tens of thousands of basis functions will be used for accurate electronic structure calculations.

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FIG. 3: (Color online) The percent increase in polarizability, $\alpha_{\text{RPA}}$, as a function of percent increase in volume, $\%$, for C$_{60}$ fullerene.

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