Multibounce and Subsurface Scattering of H Atoms Colliding with a van der Waals Solid

Published as part of The Journal of Physical Chemistry virtual special issue “Daniel Neumark Festschrift”.

Nils Hertl, Alexander Kandratsenka, Oliver Bünermann, and Alec M. Wodtke*

Cite This: J. Phys. Chem. A 2021, 125, 5745−5752

1. INTRODUCTION

Collisions of atoms and molecules with surfaces typically lead to two experimentally identifiable outcomes: direct inelastic scattering (DIS) and trapping followed by thermal desorption (TD).1 DIS may exhibit maximum flux near the specular scattering angle similar to reflection of light from a flat-mirrored surface. Such behavior is often described as “single-bounce” scattering2−5 since measured translational inelasticity is typically consistent with simple models where momentum is exchanged between the projectile and a single surface atom.4,5 Furthermore, the measured translational6 and internal7 energy distributions of scattered particles are nonthermal.8 By contrast, TD occurs when the energy lost in the initial collision is sufficient to prevent the projectile’s escape from the surface.9 Here, a sequence of many collisions brings the projectile to thermal equilibrium with the surface.10 This may also involve surface penetration followed by resurfacing.11−12

Scattering of Ne, Ar, and Xe from liquid molecular surfaces13 as well as Ne14−16 scattering from n-hexylthiolate self-assembled monolayer (SAM) on Au(111) and water ice17 also show DIS as well as TD scattering. However, here the thermal component may hide more complex dynamics.14−18 Classical trajectories showed that a Boltzmann component could arise even when the interaction times are on the picosecond time scale and where trajectories involve only a single inner turning point during the Ne-SAM collision.15 This has been attributed to the excitation of the polyatomic surface to high-energy conformers and rapid intramolecular vibrational redistribution through anharmonic intramolecular coupling, allowing many degrees of freedom of the surface to be coupled to the rare gas atom’s motion.16 Hyperthermal Xe scattering experiments from SAM even showed three velocity components: DIS, TD, and a direct scattering process, dubbed “channel-directed ejection”, where hyperthermal Xe penetrates the channels in the SAM before experiencing a repulsive interaction resulting in nonthermalized ejection.18

There have been no such observations of complex scattering dynamics involving multiple bounces or subsurface penetration from simple (atomic) surfaces. Molecular dynamics (MD) simulations of Ar colliding with Pt(111) provide evidence
suggestions that DIS may be unlikely if more than one bounce occurs.\textsuperscript{19} Electronically nonadiabatic MD simulations of H scattering from fcc metal(111) surfaces\textsuperscript{20} suggest that penetration to the subsurface leads exclusively to trapping, as electronic friction experienced by the H atom is quite strong in the subsurface.\textsuperscript{11,12} These trajectory simulations involved multibounce trajectories, but because there is no definitive theory for nonadiabatic dynamics, we cannot be certain that multibounce dynamics are accurately represented.\textsuperscript{21} Despite this, there appears to us no reason why multibounce or subsurface DIS should not be demonstrably observable.

Experimental detection of multibounce and subsurface scattering is difficult. Distinguishing DIS from TD exploits the fact that the measured speed distributions of scattered and desorbing particles often produce two peaks,\textsuperscript{22} one with high speeds of particles that have reached thermal equilibrium with the surface (TD). By using hyperthermal beams and low surface temperatures, the measured speeds of particles undergoing DIS can be resolved from those undergoing TD. It appears likely that the energy losses associated with multibounce, subsurface, and single-bounce DIS overlap with one another and therefore may require special conditions and methods to be detected.

In this work, we present results from inelastic scattering experiments involving H atom collisions with surfaces of solid xenon. We employ a nearly monoenergetic beam of H atoms with incidence translational energy $E_i = 2.76$ eV. The H atom beam is incident at an angle $\theta_i = 45^\circ$ from the surface normal, and scattered H atoms are detected at an angle $\theta_f = 45^\circ$ from the surface normal. These conditions strongly favor observation of DIS. The energy-loss distribution exhibits a maximum at the energy predicted by a binary line-of-centers (LOC) collision model, suggesting the importance of single-bounce dynamics. In addition to this feature, a second feature exhibiting much larger energy-loss is seen. We simulate the scattering using classical MD simulations with a full dimensional potential energy surface (PES)\textsuperscript{12,23} fitted to density function theory (DFT) data; the simulation is in excellent agreement with the DFT data; the simulation is in excellent agreement with the DFT data.\textsuperscript{12} We also constructed a Lennard-Jones (LJ) pair potential PES in full dimensions. The parameters used in that potential are shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Parameters Needed to Construct the H on Solid Xe Full-Dimensional Effective Medium Theory Potential

| Parameter | Value |
|-----------|-------|
| $\sigma$ (Å) | 3.935 |
| $\epsilon$ (eV) | 0.020 |

We performed classical MD trajectory calculations using a full-dimensional potential energy surface (PES) obtained by fitting an effective medium theory (EMT) function to DFT data. This procedure followed our previous work using PESs for H interacting with metals.\textsuperscript{12,20,23} The DFT input data was generated using VASP 5.3\textsuperscript{26–29} with the PBE functional\textsuperscript{30} and D2 van der Waals corrections using Grimme’s method.\textsuperscript{31} Xe was modeled as a 2 x 2 fcc (111) slab with 4 layers. The Brillouin zone was sampled with a 4 x 4 x 1 gamma-centered k-point mesh, using the sampling scheme of Monkhorst and Pack.\textsuperscript{32} The plane wave cutoff energy was set to 250 eV. The interaction between the valence and core electrons have been described by the projector augmented wave approach.\textsuperscript{33} The optimum lattice constant of an ideal Xe crystal has been found to be 6.065 Å. To avoid interactions between the Xe slab and its periodic images in the z-direction, a vertical distance between unit cells of 13 Å has been applied in the z-direction. For the MD simulations with our EMT-PES, we modeled Xe as a (6 x 6) 6-layered slab with periodic boundary conditions. The EMT parameters resulting from the fit to the DFT data are presented in Table 1.

Table 2. Parameters Needed to Construct the H on Solid Xe Full-Dimensional LJ Potential

| Parameter | Value |
|-----------|-------|
| $\sigma$ (Å) | 3.935 |
| $\epsilon$ (eV) | 0.020 |

The thermal motion of the Xe atoms was explicitly treated in the MD simulations; the Xe atom’s initial positions and velocities were sampled from equilibrium simulations at 45 K with the deepest layer held fixed. In each trajectory, the H atom was placed 6 Å above the surface with random lateral positions. The initial conditions were chosen so that they agree with the experiment. We launched $10^6$ trajectories to get a reasonable amount of scattering events that meet the experimental scattering conditions. The H atom is considered to be scattered, when its final vertical position is again 6.05 Å above the surface. The MD simulations were performed in an NVE ensemble with an integration time step of 0.1 fs. The PESs and propagation algorithms used in this work are implemented into the md_tian 2 package, written in Fortran and publicly available.\textsuperscript{34}
expected energy loss for a binary collision parallel to the surface is una...£Q

The EMT function reproduces the DFT data for H on Xe with a RMSE of 0.024 eV; see Figure 1. This is the total energy deviation for our 17-atom system. The minimum energy structure represented by the PES corresponds to H atoms adsorbed at an fcc hollow where the H atom is 2.8 Å displaced toward the vacuum from the plane defined by the equilibrium positions of the first layer of Xe atoms. The binding energy is 0.03 eV. Subsurface interactions are also accurately described by the EMT-PES. Although not strictly comparable, a PES for a 0.03 eV. Subsurface interactions are also accurately described by the EMT-PES. Although not strictly comparable, a PES for H−Xe derived from molecular beam scattering experiments gives a similar H−Xe equilibrium distance and well depth. Figure 1c shows the deviation between DFT and EMT for a trajectory involving Xe atom motion. The excellent agreement is convincing evidence that the EMT PES accurately described the Xe−Xe interactions predicted by DFT.

Figure 2 shows the energy-loss spectrum for H atoms scattering from solid Xe obtained with Rydberg atom tagging TOF (circles) and MD trajectory calculations (line). For both experiment and simulation, the H atom beam is incident 45° from the surface normal, and atoms are scattered at the specular angle. The spectrum comprises a dominant peak with an energy loss of 0.04 eV and a fwhm of 0.054 eV as well as a second feature with energy losses between 0.1 and 0.5 eV. The figure also shows the position of the energy loss predicted by a line-of-centers (LOC) model \( \Delta \varepsilon_{\text{LOC}} = E_i \cos^2 \delta [1 - (m_{\text{Xe}} - m_{\text{H}})^2/(m_{\text{Xe}} + m_{\text{H}})^2] \), which is the fraction of the normal component of incidence energy lost to the surface while conserving momentum and assuming that H atom momentum parallel to the surface is unaffected by the collision. The expected energy loss for a binary collision \( \Delta \varepsilon_{\text{BCM}} = E_i [1 - (m_{\text{Xe}} - m_{\text{H}})^2/(m_{\text{Xe}} + m_{\text{H}})^2] \) is also shown.

The fact that the main peak in the energy-loss distribution is consistent with \( \Delta \varepsilon_{\text{LOC}} \) is often taken as evidence for “single-bounce” dynamics. However, the LOC model obviously cannot explain the width of the observed energy-loss feature, nor can it explain energy losses greater than 0.04 eV. Furthermore, since \( \Delta \varepsilon_{\text{BCM}} \) is the maximum amount of energy loss possible in a signal-bounce collision, multibounce collisions must play a role.

Because the MD simulations agree well with experiment, we have used them to investigate the scattering dynamics in this system in detail. This analysis reveals that both multibounce and subsurface direct inelastic scattering are important in H atom collisions at solid Xe under the experimental conditions of this work.

We first consider subsurface scattering. Figure 3a shows a histogram of the minimum values of the z-coordinate \( z_{\text{min}} \) found in the trajectories contributing to the energy-loss distribution of Figure 2. (In our coordinate system, z is the distance from the plane defined by the equilibrium positions of the surface Xe atoms.) The largest feature in this distribution peaks at 1 Å, corresponding to surface scattering without penetration, but a substantial fraction of the scattering events exhibit negative values of \( z_{\text{min}} \) with a peak at −3 and −6 Å. These trajectories travel deep within the Xe solid before re-entering the gas phase. Figure 3b shows how energy loss increases with depth of penetration, exhibiting energy losses that span the high energy-loss feature of the experimentally obtained distribution shown in Figure 2. Two representative trajectories traversing the first and second subsurface sites are shown as Movies S1 and S2, respectively. Inspection of the trajectories reveals that subsurface scattering involves many H−Xe collisions.

Figure 1. DFT data compared to the EMT function H interacting with solid Xe. (a) 1D cuts through the high-dimensional PES for an H atom moving along the surface normal at four different surface sites: top bridge, hcp hollow and fcc hollow. The DFT data is shown as “x” points, and the EMT fit is shown as solid lines. (b) Potential energy of the system for a scattering trajectory involving moving Xe atoms; here, DFT data (circles) are compared to EMT energies (solid line). (c) Energy differences between DFT and EMT are shown. (d) H atom distance to the surface during the trajectory. A coordinate system for H atom is employed, where x and y are parallel to the surface and z is along the surface normal. For a pictorial representation of the sites, see Figure 1 of ref 37.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The EMT function reproduces the DFT data for H on Xe with a RMSE of 0.024 eV; see Figure 1. This is the total energy deviation for our 17-atom system. The minimum energy structure represented by the PES corresponds to H atoms adsorbed at an fcc hollow where the H atom is 2.8 Å displaced toward the vacuum from the plane defined by the equilibrium positions of the first layer of Xe atoms. The binding energy is 0.03 eV. Subsurface interactions are also accurately described by the EMT-PES. Although not strictly comparable, a PES for H−Xe derived from molecular beam scattering experiments gives a similar H−Xe equilibrium distance and well depth. Figure 1c shows the deviation between DFT and EMT for a trajectory involving Xe atom motion. The excellent agreement is convincing evidence that the EMT PES accurately described the Xe−Xe interactions predicted by DFT.

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the total (1 million). This represents about 4000 trajectories of collisions (bounces) associated with each trajectory. To do this, we must first understand that the definition of a bounce is fundamentally ambiguous. Hence, the bounce number is only meaningful with knowledge of the definition. To appreciate this ambiguity, consider a collision between a high-energy gas-phase H atom and a stationary Xe atom. Technically, any interaction that results in a change in the H atom’s direction of travel, no matter how small, qualifies as a collision (bounce), despite the fact that collisions producing large deflection angles transfer much more energy than collisions with low deflection angles. In short, we need a way to classify collisions according to their ability to transfer energy between the H and Xe atoms. To make progress, consider Figure 4, which shows the scattering-angle-integrated histogram of H–Xe distances of closest approach \( d_{\text{min}} \) for all the trajectories run in our MD simulation. All trajectories exhibit \( d_{\text{min}} \) values between about 1.5 and 2 Å. The figure shows a correlation of energy loss with \( d_{\text{min}} \). Obviously, collisions that approach more closely collide with smaller impact parameters and transfer more energy. It is therefore convenient to divide this distribution into four categories: hard (h), medium (m), soft (s), and very soft (v). We next consider how one can count the number of H–Xe collisions (bounces) associated with each trajectory. To do so, we first define a bounce as a collision ( \( \delta E \leq 0.015 \text{ eV} \), consistent with the experimental baseline level of the experiment. The horizontal line shows the result of single-bounce events. Figure 5b also shows that it is impossible to account for the full width of the main energy-loss feature out to about 0.25 eV. A typical ms double-bounce trajectory is shown in Movie S4. Without weak double-bounce trajectories, it is impossible to account for the full width of the main energy-loss feature seen in experiment. In fact, only a minority (47%) of all the trajectories scattered into all final angles are the result of single-bounce events. Figure 5b also shows that strong double-bounce (mm + ms + ss) trajectories account for most of the high energy-loss feature out to about 0.25 eV. A typical ms double-bounce trajectory is shown in Movie S5.

Hard single-bounce trajectories do not contribute to the experimental energy-loss distribution seen in Figure 2 as such.
collisions do not produce scattered H atoms in the plane of detection. Figure 6 shows the out-of-plane angle dependence of the scattered H atom flux integrated over all in-plane scattering angles. Single-bounce trajectories (Figure 6a) show a clear correlation between energy loss and out-of-plane scattering angle: The harder the collision, the larger the out-of-plane scattering angle. In fact, the hardest possible collisions at \( \Delta \varepsilon_{BCM} \) (vertical dashed line in Figure 6a) only occur for out-of-plane scattering angles approaching \( \pi \), which reflects backscattered H atoms traveling in the opposite direction of the incident beam.

Interestingly, single-bounce trajectories have a diminished probability at any energy loss to be scattered in the detection plane. In contrast, weak double-bounce trajectories (energy-loss \( \sim 0.04 \text{ eV} \)) peak within the detection plane; see Figure 6b. This surprising observation reflects the fact that pairs of out-of-plane scattering events can cancel the out-of-plane momentum; effectively, they are guided by collisions with Xe atoms on opposite sides of the detection plane (see Movies S4 and S5). Strong multibounce trajectories behave more as expected; they are scattered to all out-of-plane angles.

This analysis shows that without high-resolution angle-resolved inelastic scattering capability like that offered by H atom Rydberg tagging, observation of multibounce and subsurface scattering would be difficult if not impossible. The differential scattering experiments presented here are, however, able to resolve specific dynamical events in surface scattering. These diagrams also point out that the energy losses that will be seen in different laboratories will depend on the precise geometry of the experiment. For example, some scattering experiments relying on ion imaging collect a larger fraction of out-of-plane scattering than the present experiments. Indeed, many are done exclusively with \( \theta_i \sim 0^\circ \), meaning that the back-scattered BCM limit is more easily observed.

Before closing, we would like to mention a few observations relating to MD simulations carried out on a Lennard-Jones (LJ) pair potential. The LJ pair PES is often the method of first resort for constructing a PES, but we show here that such a simple approach can lead to serious qualitative problems in describing the interatomic interactions. In our case, the LJ-PES is extremely simple to construct, as parameters for LJ pair potentials for H/Xe and Xe/Xe are easily obtained \(^{34,35}\); see Table 2. Using these parameters, we easily produced a full-dimensional PES and repeated some of the calculations we had carried out on our more expensive EMT-PES.

Figure 7a shows the energy-loss distribution calculated with the LJ-PES compared to the results obtained with the EMT-PES and to experiment. With EMT-PES, the MD simulations are able to capture the experimental results extremely well. The
results obtained with the LJ-PES are markedly worse. Nonetheless, the LJ-PES MD simulations also reproduce the main feature seen in experiment at 0.04 eV. In fact, one might consider the deviations acceptable for many applications, but such a conclusion could be dangerous.

The high energy losses between 0.1 and 0.5 eV, shown above to be due to multibounce and penetrating trajectories, are completely absent in the MD simulations resulting from the LJ-PES. We also computed the sticking probability using the LJ-PES to be about $5 \times 10^{-6}$. Comparing this to 0.15 found when using the EMT-PES, one begins to have greater dissatisfaction with the performance of the LJ-PES.

Both of these deficiencies are a result of errors in the repulsive H–Xe interaction given by the LJ approximation.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The scattering of H from solid Xe provides a special opportunity to delve into the dynamical details of atomic collisions at simple solid surfaces. The combination of high-resolution differential scattering experiments combined with high-dimensional dynamical simulations allows for this. In the course of this study, we find evidence that while conventional single-bounce dynamics reported frequently in the literature of surface scattering is clearly important, other dynamical scattering processes can also be identified that are just as or even more likely. Within the context of a definition of weak and strong collisions based on the distance of closest approach during the trajectory, we find that single-bounce trajectories...
cannot account for the full energy-loss distribution seen in experiment. In fact, only 47% of all trajectories are the result of single-bounce events. Double-bounce trajectories are more important even for specular scattering where one might think single-bounce events would be favored. The tendency of each bounce to direct H atoms out of the plane of detection allows two bounces to compensate out of plane momentum and more easily remain in the detection plane. These weak double-bounce events exhibit nearly the same energy loss as that predicted by single-bounce line of centers model. This may easily remain in the detection plane. These weak double-bounce to direct H atoms out of the plane of detection allows single-bounce events would be favored. The tendency of each important even for specular scattering where one might think experiment. In fact, only 47% of all trajectories are the result of cannot account for the full energy-loss distribution seen in experiment.

**ASSOCIATED CONTENT**

**Supporting Information**

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.jpca.1c03433.

Five movies showing example trajectories that illustrate the dynamics of H scattering from solid xenon: Movies S1 and S2: multibounce traversing the first and second subsurface sites (MP4 and MP4); Movie S3: medium single-bounce trajectory (MOV); Movie S4: soft/very soft double-bounce trajectory (MP4); Movie S5: medium/soft double-bounce trajectory (MP4).

**AUTHOR INFORMATION**

**Corresponding Author**

Alec M. Wodtke — Institut für physikalische Chemie, Universität Göttingen, 37077 Göttingen, Germany; Department of Dynamics at Surfaces, Max-Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry, 37077 Göttingen, Germany; International Center for Advanced Studies of Energy Conversion, Georg-August University of Göttingen, 37077 Göttingen, Germany; orcid.org/0000-0002-6509-2183; Email: alec.wodtke@mpibpc.mpg.de

**Authors**

Nils Hertl — Institut für physikalische Chemie, Universität Göttingen, 37077 Göttingen, Germany; Department of Dynamics at Surfaces, Max-Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry, 37077 Göttingen, Germany; Alexander Kandratsenka — Department of Dynamics at Surfaces, Max-Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry, 37077 Göttingen, Germany; orcid.org/0000-0003-2132-1957

Oliver Bünermann — Institut für physikalische Chemie, Universität Göttingen, 37077 Göttingen, Germany; Department of Dynamics at Surfaces, Max-Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry, 37077 Göttingen, Germany; orcid.org/0000-0001-9837-6548

**International Center for Advanced Studies of Energy Conversion, Georg-August University of Göttingen, 37077 Göttingen, Germany; orcid.org/0000-0001-9837-6548**

Complete contact information is available at: https://pubs.acs.org/10.1021/acs.jpca.1c03433

**Notes**

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

We acknowledge support from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft under Grant number 217133147, which is part of the Collaborative research Center 1073 operating Project A04.

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