Further evidence for linearly-dispersive Cooper pairs

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Abstract

A recent Bose-Einstein condensation (BEC) model of several cuprate superconductors is based on bosonic Cooper pairs (CPs) moving in 3D with a quadratic energy-momentum (dispersion) relation. The 3D BEC condensate-fraction vs. temperature formula poorly fits penetration-depth data for two cuprates in the range $1/2 < T/T_c \leq 1$ where $T_c$ is the BEC transition temperature. We show how these fits are dramatically improved assuming cuprates to be quasi-2D, and how equally good fits obtain for conventional 3D and quasi-1D nanotube superconducting data, provided the correct linear CP dispersion is assumed in BEC at their assumed corresponding dimensionalities. This is offered as additional concrete empirical evidence for linearly-dispersive pairs in another recent BEC scenario of superconductors within which a BCS condensate turns out to be a very special case.

PACS numbers: 73.22.-f; 74.20.Mn; 74.72.-h; 74.78.-w

Introduction

A Bose-Einstein condensation (BEC) model was applied by Rosencwaig in Ref. \cite{1} to address seven cuprate superconductors (SCs) with transition temperatures $T_c$ at optimal doping ranging from 22 K to 133 K. These are: La$_{2-x}$Sr$_x$CuO$_4$ (LSCO), Nd$_{2-x}$Ce$_x$CuO$_4$ (NCCO), YBa$_2$Cu$_3$O$_{7-y}$ Y123, Bi$_2$Sr$_2$CaCu$_2$O$_{8-y}$ Bi2212, Bi$_2$Sr$_2$Ca$_2$Cu$_3$O$_{10-y}$ (Bi2223), HgBa$_2$CaCu$_2$O$_{7-y}$ (Hg1212) and HgBa$_2$Ca$_2$Cu$_3$O$_{9-y}$ (Hg1223). His starting point is the well-known fact that BEC in an ideal Bose gas occurs below temperatures $T$ such that the thermal wavelength $\lambda \equiv h/\sqrt{2\pi m_B k_B T}$ becomes larger than the average interbosonic separation, with $m_B$ the boson mass, and $h$, $k_B$ the Planck and Boltzmann constants, respectively. More exactly, BEC sets in whenever

$$ n_B \lambda^3 > 2.612 $$

where $n_B$ is the boson number density, and $\lambda$ is taken as the bosonic quasiparticle diameter. This leads to a critical temperature $T_c$ given by the familiar formula

$$ T_c = \frac{2\pi h^2 n_B^{2/3}}{(2.612)^2 m_B k_B} \approx \frac{3.31 h^2 n_B^{2/3}}{m_B k_B} n_B^{2/3} $$

of conventional BEC theory. He identifies an interaction distance with $\lambda$, which thus becomes $T$-independent, while the number-density $n_B$ of weakly-interacting “preformed” electron or hole pairs acquires a $T$-dependence. Associated with (2) is the BE condensate fraction

$$ N_0(T)/N_0(0) = \begin{cases} 
1 - (T/T_c)^{3/2} & \text{for } T \leq T_c \\
0 & \text{otherwise}
\end{cases} $$

where $N_0(T)$ is the number of bosonic pairs at temperature $T$ in the lowest-energy state with (total, or) center-of-mass momentum wavenumber $K = 0$, and $N_0(0)$ is that same number at $T = 0$.  

1
Cooper pair dispersion

All of this assumes three dimensions (3D) and that boson excitation energies are given by

$$\varepsilon_K = \frac{\hbar^2 K^2}{2m_B}$$  \hspace{1cm} (4)

with as would hold if the composite bosons moved in vacuo such as, say, a deuteron of mass $m_B = m_p + m_n$ in empty space with $m_p$ and $m_n$ being the proton and neutron masses. However, in the presence of the Fermi sea of the other single charge carriers the bosonic “dispersion relation” becomes linear \[2\] \[4\] in leading order rather than quadratic as in \[3\]. Ref. \[2\] first mentioned, and Refs. \[3\] \[7\] later discussed this linearity in detail. It is associated with the original Cooper pair (CP) problem \[8\] of two electrons (or holes) above (or below) the Fermi surface of the remaining system electrons. It was also found in a more general view of CPs in Refs. \[9\] \[10\] within a many-body Green’s function formalism treating both electron- and hole-pairs on an equal footing. For either ordinary or generalized CPs, the leading term in the $K$-expansion is linear. This linearly-dispersive “moving CP” object is often confused in the literature with the more common Anderson-Bogoliubov-Higgs (ABH) \[11\] (Ref. \[12\] p. 44) \[13\] collective excitation which is also linear in leading order, but which is just the sound mode of the many-fermion system. By contrast, in a many-boson system these two modes, the “particle” and “sound” modes, are apparently identical \[14\] \[15\].

A particularly clear example comparing linear and quadratic dispersion is perhaps the analytical result of Ref. \[6\] in 2D for an attractive delta potential assumed between electrons. This interfermion interaction mimics the net effect of Coulomb repulsion plus attractive, say, electron-phonon interactions. The 2D delta potential well, which otherwise supports an infinite number of bound levels, is imagined “regularized” \[16\] to support a single bound level of energy $-B_2$ as occurs \[17\], e.g., with the two-parameter Cooper/BCS \[8\] \[19\] model interelectronic interaction. Miyake used this interaction to obtain \[18\] both the zero-temperature BCS gap $\Delta$ and the chemical potential $\mu$ analytically in terms of $B_2$. Since the regularized delta well turns out to be infinitesimally weak, its $0^+$ strength can be eliminated \[6\] in favor of $B_2$ which then plays the role of coupling constant, with $0 \leq B_2 < \infty$ spanning weak to strong coupling. Instead of \(4\), a more general analytical expression found in Ref. \[6\] that includes the Fermi sea is

$$\varepsilon_K = \frac{2\hbar v_F K}{\pi} + \left[1 - 2 - \left(\frac{4}{\pi}\right)^2\right] \frac{E_F}{B_2} \frac{\hbar^2 K^2}{2(2m_e)} + O(K^3)$$  \hspace{1cm} (5)

where $v_F$ is the Fermi velocity defined through the Fermi surface energy $E_F \equiv m_e v_F^2/2$ and $m_e$ is the effective electron mass. The leading term is linear, and only in the vacuum limit ($v_F \to 0$, implying $E_F \to 0$) does it precisely become the quadratic \[3\] with $m_B = 2m_e$ expected physically for any fixed coupling $B_2$. Fig. 1 of Ref. \[6\] exhibits the smooth crossover in 2D from a purely linear to a purely quadratic form, as one increases coupling and/or as one “switches off” the Fermi sea medium (nonzero $E_F$) in which the pair propagates down to the pure vacuum (zero $E_F$) medium. A very similar behavior was also observed in 3D \[14\], but only numerically.

Bose-Einstein condensation

Expressions more general than \[2\] and \[3\] but reducing to them, are known \[20\] in any dimensionality $d > 0$ (integer or not) and for any dispersion relation

$$\varepsilon_K = C_s K^s, \hspace{1cm} \text{with} \hspace{1cm} s > 0.$$  \hspace{1cm} (6)

They are

$$T_c = \frac{C_s}{k_B} \left[\frac{s\Gamma(d/2)(2\pi)^d m_B}{2\pi^{d/2}\Gamma(d/s)\Gamma(1/s)}\right]^{s/d} \propto n_B^{s/d}$$  \hspace{1cm} (7)
\[ N_0(T)/N_0(0) = \begin{cases} 1 - (T/T_c)^{d/s} & \text{for } T \leq T_c \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases} \]

Here \( g_\sigma(1) \) are the Bose integrals which for \( \sigma > 1 \) coincide with the Riemann Zeta-function \( \zeta(\sigma) \) and diverge for \( \sigma \leq 1 \), \( \Gamma(\sigma) \) is the gamma function, and \( n_B \equiv N/L^d \) is the \( d \)-dimensional boson number density. The divergence of \( g_\sigma(1) \) for \( \sigma \leq 1 \) ensures from \( (7) \) that \( T_c = 0 \) for all \( d \leq s \), but that otherwise \( T_c \) is nonvanishing. In \( d = 3 \) and quadratic dispersion \( s = 2 \) and, if \( C_2 = \hbar^2/2m_B \), \( (7) \) and \( (8) \) respectively become \( (2) \) and \( (3) \), as \( g_{3/2}(1) = \zeta(3/2) \approx 2.612 \). However, for \( s = 1 \) BEC can occur for all \( d > 1 \). This coincides, fortuitously, with all dimensions where actual superconductors have been found to exist, down to the quasi-one-dimensional organics \( 21, 23 \) consisting of parallel chains of molecules. As regards dimensionality, therefore, the BEC picture contrasts sharply with the BCS scheme where \( T_c \) is nonvanishing for all \( d > 0 \) even though no exactly 1D superconductors have been found to date. In fact, beautiful experiments \( 24, 25 \) with nanowires of different thicknesses sputter-coated with an amorphous superconductor \( (T_c \approx 5.5K) \) have shown how superconductivity is extinguished for the smallest nanowire diameters interpreted as approaching precisely 1D.

Although the creation/annihilation operators of BCS pairs do not obey the usual Bose commutation rules [see Eqs. (2.11) to (2.13) of Ref. \( 19 \); see also p. 38 of Ref. \( 2 \)], CPs in fact satisfy BE statistics. Indeed, BCS pairs and CPs are distinct. A BCS pair is defined with fixed total (or center-of-mass) momentum wavevector \( \mathbf{K} = k_1 + k_2 \) and fixed relative-momentum wavevector \( \mathbf{k} = (k_1 - k_2)/2 \), whereas a CP is defined with fixed \( \mathbf{K} \) only, since a sum over \( \mathbf{k} \) is implied in any conceivable formulation of CPs. This is because in the thermodynamic limit an indefinitely large number of BCS pairs, each with fixed momenta \( \hbar \mathbf{k}_1 \) and \( \hbar \mathbf{k}_2 \), correspond to different relative momenta \( \hbar \mathbf{k} \) but whose \( \mathbf{k}_1 \) and \( \mathbf{k}_2 \) add vectorially to the same total \( \mathbf{K} \). These remarks apply even when only \( \mathbf{K} = 0 \) pairs were considered in Ref. \( 19 \).

### Results

Empirical evidence for the linearly-dispersive nature of CPs in BSCCO has been argued by Wilson \( 26 \) as being suggested by the scanning tunneling microscope conductance scattering data obtained by Davis and coworkers \( 27, 28 \) in this cuprate. In Figure 1 we present additional evidence, based on experimental data from penetration-depth measurements in two 3D SCs \( 29, 30 \) and two quasi-2D cuprates \( 31, 33 \), as well as from gap measurements in a quasi-1D nanotube SC \( 34 \). When plotted as a presumably universal “normalized order parameter” the data depart substantially (at least in 3D and 2D) from the BCS normalized gap order parameter, but are seen to agree quite well, at least for \( T > 0.5T_c \), with the pure-phase (only 2e- or 2h-CP) BEC condensate-fraction formula \( (3) \) for \( d = 3, 2 \) and 1, provided one assumes \( s = 1 \). For lower \( T \)'s, one can argue \( 35 \) that a mixed BEC phase containing both 2e- and 2h-CPs becomes more stable (i.e., has lower Helmholtz free energy) so that the simple pure-phase formula \( (3) \) is no longer strictly valid. Indeed, \( (3) \) applies at all to the CPs because in the binary boson-fermion gas mixture—for, say, a Cooper/BCS model interaction forming the bosonic CPs with a maximum allowed \( \lambda = 1/2 \)—only a miniscule fraction (< 0.1%) \( 41 \) of the individual fermion charge carriers are paired up into CPs, ensuring that a substantial Fermi sea is still present. Such tiny fractions are consistent with some very recent far-infrared charge-dynamics measurements \( 42, 43 \) in LSCO.

### Conclusions

To conclude, we have presented normalized order-parameter data based on penetration-depth and gap measurements that strongly suggest a linear energy vs. center-of-mass-momentum (dispersion) relation for Cooper pairs in various materials that can be viewed as 3D, quasi-2D and quasi-1D superconductors (SCs). The linearity is a manifestation of the Fermi sea background in which the pairs propagate, as opposed to the
quadratic relation of composite bosons moving *in vacuo*. It ensures that a BEC picture of SCs is applicable over all dimensionalities in which SCs occur.

In Figure 1 we show BE condensate-fraction curves (in thick) \(1 - (T/T_c)^{d/s}\) for bosons in \(d = 3, 2,\) or \(1\) assuming dispersion relation (6) for \(s = 2\) and \(1\), for a pure phase of either 2e- or 2h-CPs, compared to empirical data for 3D SCs (Nb/Cu and Sn); for two quasi-2D SCs (Y123 and Bi2212 with \(T_c \approx 93\) K and \(91\) K, respectively); and a quasi-1D SC (4-Å-wide nanotubes with \(T_c \approx 15\) K). The dashed curve labeled \(d/s = 3/2\) appears in Fig. 6 of Ref. [1] and seems to provide the only adjustable-parameter-free comparison with experimental data in that paper. The ordinate axis refers to a universal “normalized order parameter.” Data for the 3D and 2D SCs refer to penetration depth measurements. Nanotube data are gap \(\Delta(T)\) measurements giving \(\Delta(T)/\Delta(0)\) but are plotted as \([\Delta(T)/\Delta(0)]^2\) so as to coincide with the 2h-CP condensate fraction \(m_0(T)/m_0(0)\) according to the relation \(\Delta(T) = f \sqrt{m_0(T)}\), with \(f\) a boson-fermion coupling constant (which drops out from the normalized order parameter), that follows for 2h-CP condensates from the generalized BEC theory of Ref. [36]. The dotted straight line marked \(d/s = 1/1\) strictly corresponds from (7) to \(T_c = 0\); however, it serves as a lower bound to all curves with \(d/s = (1 + \epsilon)/1 > 1\) for small but nonzero \(\epsilon\), implying quasi-1D geometries for which \(T_c > 0\). Also shown for reference are the two-fluid model [37] curve \(1 - (T/T_c)^4\) and the BCS normalized gap \(\Delta(T)/\Delta(0)\) order-parameter curve [38].

Acknowledgments

MdeLl thanks UNAM-DGAPA-PAPIIT (Mexico) for grant # IN106401 as well as CONACyT (Mexico) for grant # 41302F in partial support. He is also grateful for the hospitality shown him at the Texas Center for Superconductivity, University of Houston during a sabbatical leave.
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