THE RISE AND FALL OF DEBRIS DISKS: MIPS OBSERVATIONS OF \( h \) AND \( \chi \) PERSEI AND THE EVOLUTION OF MID-IR EMISSION FROM PLANET FORMATION

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ABSTRACT

We describe Spitzer MIPS observations of the double cluster, \( h \) and \( \chi \) Persei, covering a \( \sim 0.6 \) deg\(^2\) area surrounding the cores of both clusters. The data are combined with IRAC and 2MASS data to investigate \( \sim 616 \) sources from 1.25–24 \( \mu \)m. We use the long-baseline \( K_s - [24] \) color to identify two populations with IR excess indicative of circumstellar material: Be stars with 24 \( \mu \)m excess from optically thin free-free emission, and 17 fainter sources \( (J \sim 14-15) \) with [24] excess consistent with a circumstellar disk. The frequency of IR excess for the fainter sources increases from 4.5 to 24 \( \mu \)m. The IR excess is likely due to debris from the planet formation process. The wavelength-dependent behavior is consistent with an inside-out clearing of circumstellar disks. A comparison of the 24 \( \mu \)m excess population in \( h \) and \( \chi \) Per results with sources for other clusters shows that 24 \( \mu \)m emission from debris disks “rises” from 5 to 10 Myr, peaks at \( \sim 10-15 \) Myr, and then “falls” from \( \sim 15-20 \) Myr to 1 Gyr.

Subject headings: circumstellar matter — infrared: stars — open clusters and associations: individual (NGC 869, NGC 884) — planetary systems: formation — planetary systems: protoplanetary disks

Online material: machine-readable table

1. INTRODUCTION

Most 1–2 Myr old stars are surrounded by massive \( (M_{\text{disk}} \sim 0.01–0.1 M_\odot) \) optically thick accretion disks of gas and dust. The disk produces near- to mid-infrared (IR) emission comparable to the brightness of the stellar photosphere \( (L_{\text{disk}} \sim L_\star) \) (e.g., Kenyon & Hartmann 1995; Hillenbrand 1998). The evolution of these “primordial” disks has been studied extensively (e.g., Haisch et al. 2001; Lada et al. 2006; Dahm & Hillenbrand 2007). By 5–10 Myr, primordial disks disappear and less massive \( (M_{\text{disk}} \lesssim 1 M_\odot) \) gas-poor, optically thin “debris disks” with weaker emission \( (L_{\text{disk}} \lesssim 10^{-3} L_\star) \) emerge (e.g., Hernandez et al. 2006). By \( \sim 10-20 \) Myr, primordial disks are extremely rare: almost all disks are debris disks (Currie et al. 2007a, hereafter C07a; Gorlova et al. 2007; Sicilia-Aguilar et al. 2006).

Debris disks older than \( \sim 20 \) Myr are well studied. Rieke et al. (2005, hereafter R05) showed that the 24 \( \mu \)m emission declines with time as \( t^{-1} \) (see also Kalas 1998; Habing et al. 2001; Decin et al. 2003). This decay agrees with expectations for the gradual depletion of the reservoir of small planetesimals. With fewer parent bodies to initiate the collisional cascades that yield the infrared-emitting dust, the infrared excesses drop systematically with time (Kenyon & Bromley 2002; Dominik & Decin 2003; R05; Wyatt et al. 2007b). R05 also found a large range in the amount of infrared excess emission at each age, even for very young systems.

Wyatt et al. (2007b) demonstrate that the first-order cause of this range is probably the large variation in protostellar disk masses and hence in the mass available to form planetesimals.

Because the R05 sample and other studies of individual stars (e.g., Chen et al. 2005a) include few stars younger than 20 Myr, they do not probe the 5–20 Myr transitional period from primordial to debris disks well. This transition marks an important phase for planet formation and other physical processes in disks. Gas accretion onto most young stars ceases by \( \approx 10 \) Myr (Sicilia-Aguilar et al. 2005). Planets acquire most of their mass by \( \approx 5-20 \) Myr (Kenyon & Bromley 2006; Chambers 2001; Wetherill & Stewart 1993).

With an age of 13 \( \pm 1 \) Myr and with over \( \sim 500 \) members (C07a), the double cluster, \( h \) and \( \chi \) Persei \( (d = 2.34 \) kpc, \( A_V \sim 1.62 \) Slesnick et al. 2002; Bragg & Kenyon 2005), provides an ideal laboratory to study disk evolution during this critical age. Recent observations of \( h \) and \( \chi \) Per with the Spitzer Space Telescope have demonstrated the utility of using the double cluster to investigate disk evolution after the primordial stage. C07a used 3.6–8 \( \mu \)m Spitzer data to show that disks last longer around less massive stars and at greater distances from the star. Currie et al. (2007b, hereafter C07b) analyzed a well-constrained subsample of \( h \) and \( \chi \) Per sources and showed that at least some of the disk emission in them comes from warm dust in the terrestrial zones of disks as a by-product of terrestrial planet formation.

In this paper we use data obtained with the Multiband Imaging Photometer for Spitzer (MIPS) to extend the study of \( h \) and \( \chi \) Per to 24 \( \mu \)m. This band allows us to search for high levels of mid-IR excess associated with cool dust that orbits in a disk at \( \sim 2-50 \) AU from the central star. Our survey covers a region containing \( \sim 600 \) intermediate- to high-mass cluster members. In \( 2 \) we describe the MIPS observations, data reduction, and sample selection. We analyze the 24 \( \mu \)m photometry in \( 3 \). The main results are (1) there are two IR-excess populations, Be stars with optically thin free-free emission and intermediate-mass stars likely harboring disks; (2) debris disk excesses are more common at 24 \( \mu \)m than at shorter wavelengths; and (3) there are several extreme disks similar to the nearby young debris disks around \( \beta \) Pic, HR 4796A, and 49 Cet. Finally, in \( 4 \) we place \( h \) and \( \chi \) Per in the context of
results for other open clusters/associations with optically thin debris disk candidates. The flux from debris disks rises from ~5 Myr (when they first emerge), peaks at ~10–15 Myr, and then falls as $r^{-3}$ as described by R05. We conclude with a summary of our findings and discuss future observations that may place even stronger constraints on debris disk evolution by accounting for wide range of IR excesses at 10–15 Myr.

2. OBSERVATIONS

2.1. MIPS and Ground-based Spectroscopic Data

We acquired MIPS 24 μm data using 80 s exposures in scan mode, covering two 0.3 deg$^2$ regions centered on the two clusters. The frames were processed using the MIPS Data Analysis Tool (Gordon et al. 2005). PSF fitting in the IRAF/DAOPHOT package was used to obtain photometry using a 7.3 Jy zero point配套 the 2MASS/IRAC + MIPS catalog. Optical UBV photometry from Slesnick et al. (2002) is included where available.

To $[24] = 10.5$, the probability of chance alignments between distant PAH-emission galaxies/AGNs and our sources is low. Using the galaxy number counts from Papovich et al. (2004), $N_C \sim 3.5 \times 10^6$ sr$^{-1}$, we derive a probability of ~24.8% that one of our 616 sources is contaminated $[\pi r_M^2 \times N_C \times N_{MIPS}/(3282.8 \times 3600^2)]$. The likelihood that many of our sources are contaminated is then much smaller.

To estimate the completeness of the MIPS sample, we compare the fraction of $J$-band sources detected with MIPS within either cluster. Figure 1 shows that ~90% of the 2MASS sources brighter than $J = 10.5$ are also detected in MIPS. The completeness falls to ~50% by $J = 11$ to ~10% by $J = 12$. The dip at $J \sim 8–9$ occurs because many sources in this range are near the cluster centers, where the high density of even brighter sources ($J \sim 6–8$) masks the presence of fainter objects.

Table 1 shows the 2MASS/IRAC + MIPS catalog. Optical UBV photometry from Slesnick et al. (2002) is included where available.

| $\alpha$  | $\delta$ | $V$ | $B-V$ | $U-B$ | $J$ | $H$ | $K_s$ | [3.6] | [4.5] | [5.8] | [8] | $[24]$ | $\sigma([3.6])$ | $\sigma([4.5])$ | $\sigma([5.8])$ | $\sigma([8])$ | $\sigma([24])$ |
|----------|---------|-----|-------|-------|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 35.4810... | 57.2429 | 6.480 | 0.502 | $-0.050$ | 5.08 | 4.86 | 4.77 | 8.39 | ... | ... | 4.73 | 4.52 | 4.14 | 0.01 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.03 |
| 34.8081... | 57.1693 | 6.700 | 0.503 | $-0.428$ | 5.53 | 5.37 | 5.31 | ... | ... | 5.30 | 5.07 | 4.64 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.03 |
| 34.7685... | 57.1355 | 6.567 | 0.452 | $-0.346$ | 5.56 | 5.43 | 5.29 | 8.18 | 7.05 | 5.25 | 5.17 | 4.68 | 0.01 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 35.7517... | 57.3870 | 6.977 | 0.707 | $-0.249$ | 5.59 | 5.38 | 5.26 | 8.31 | 5.16 | 5.04 | 4.73 | 0.04 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 34.2155... | 57.0552 | 0.707 | 0.707 | 5.78 | 5.71 | 5.61 | ... | ... | 5.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | ... | 0.00 | ... | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.03 |

Notes.—First five entries in our photometry catalog from MIPS, 2MASS and IRAC. We also include optical UBV photometry from Slesnick et al. (2002). Errors in the 2MASS/JHK filters are ±0.05 for sources except the ~21 fainter ($J \sim 14–15$) sources. Table 1 is also available in machine-readable form in the electronic edition of the Astrophysical Journal.
resolution. The data were processed using standard FAST and Hectospec reduction pipelines (e.g., Fabricant et al. 2005).

We acquired additional spectra of h and χ Per with the Hydra multifiber spectrograph (Barden et al. 1993) on the WIYN 3.5 m telescope at the Kitt Peak National Observatory. Hydra spectra were obtained during two observing runs in 2000 November and 2001 October and include stars brighter than \( V = 17.0 \). We used the 400 g mm\(^{-1}\) setting blazed at 42\(^\circ\), with a resolution of 7 Å and a coverage of 3600–6700 Å. The standard IRAF task dohydra was used to reduce the spectra. These spectra had high signal-to-noise ratios with \( \gtrsim 1000 \) counts over most of the wavelength coverage.

2.2. Spatial Distribution of MIPS Sources

To investigate the spatial distribution of the MIPS sources and the likelihood that they are cluster members, we compare the projected sky surface densities derived from MIPS and 2MASS. C07a showed that \( \sim 47\% \) of stars within 15\( ^\prime \) of the cluster centers are cluster members. Between 15\( ^\prime \) and 25\( ^\prime \), \( \sim 40\% \) of the 2MASS sources are in a halo population with roughly the same age as bona fide cluster stars. Because the MIPS coverage is complete only out to \( \sim 15\' \) away from each cluster center, we cannot identify MIPS sources with this halo population. We compare the spatial distribution of MIPS sources to those in 2MASS from C07a by calculating the number density of sources in 5\( ^\prime \) wide half-annuli facing away from the midpoint of the two clusters.

Through 15\( ^\prime \) away from either cluster center, the number counts of sources detected with both MIPS and 2MASS fall off about as steeply or slightly more steeply than the counts for 2MASS alone from C07a (Fig. 2). Near the center of the clusters the density of MIPS sources is \( \sim 0.4 \) arcmin\(^{-2}\), or about an order of magnitude lower than from 2MASS. For h Persei and χ Persei, respectively, this density falls off by 4\% and 25\% from 0’-5’ to 5’-10’ away from the cluster centers and 22\%–41\% from 0’-5’ to 10’-15’ away from the centers. The low counts through 5’ and more shallow drop in number density for χ Persei is due to crowding in the inner \( \sim 1’-2’ \) of the χ Persei core; the slope of the MIPS number density in χ Persei shown in Figure 2 is most likely a lower limit. In contrast, the number counts for the 2MASS data from C07a fall off by 10\% (20\%) and 30\% (32\%) for h (χ) Per over the same 5’ intervals (the values in Fig. 2 are slightly different due to the larger annuli used here). The MIPS source counts appear to be about as centrally concentrated as the 2MASS counts.

2.3. General Nature of the 24 \( \mu \)m Sources

Figure 3 shows the histogram of \( K_s - [24] \) colors for the MIPS detections with 2MASS counterparts. The histogram has a main peak at \( K_s - [24] \sim 0 - 1 \) and two groups with \( K_s - [24] \sim 1 - 2 \) and \( K_s - [24] \sim 2 - 6 \). The sources with very red \( K_s - [24] \) colors (\( \geq 2 \)) are in two main groups (Fig. 4). A bright group of very red sources has \( K_s \sim 9 - 11 \); a fainter population of red sources stretches from \( K_s \sim 13.5 - 15 \). A population of 13 Myr old stars in h and χ Per with spectral types later than B9 (\( M \lesssim 3.0 M_\odot \)) should have \( J, K_s \) magnitudes \( \gtrsim 13.3 \) (Siess et al. 2000). Thus, some of these fainter sources with red \( K_s - [24] \) colors are possibly pre–main-sequence stars.

Some of the sources are very faint in the near-infrared. To examine the nature of the MIPS sources without \( J \) counterparts, we first compared the MIPS mosaic and the 2MASS \( J \) mosaic by...
eye. Many sources appear scattered throughout the MIPS mosaic but do not appear in 2MASS, even at very high contrast. These sources are likely cluster stars with $J \gtrsim 16$–17 and very red $J - [24]$ colors or background galaxies with negligible near-IR emission. Using the number density of galaxies in the MIPS 24 μm filter from Papovich et al. (2004), we expect $\gtrsim 600$–700 galaxies in the 0.6 deg$^{-2}$ coverage area brighter than $[24] \sim 10.5$. Thus, many of the sources without 2MASS counterparts are likely not $h$ and $\chi$ Per members. From the C07a survey, there are $\sim 4700$ stars with $J \sim 10$–15.5 within either cluster or the surrounding halo population of comparable age. For a reasonable IMF (e.g., Miller & Scalo 1979), we expect $\sim 2800$ ($\sim 8900$) cluster/halo stars with $J \sim 16$–17 (17–18). If $\sim 10$–20% of these stars have large $24 \mu$m excesses, as predicted from an extrapolation of the C07a results to fainter $J$ magnitudes, we expect 1170–2340 cluster/halo stars with MIPS detections and no 2MASS counterparts. Together with the 600–700 background galaxies, this population yields the observed number of MIPS detections without 2MASS counterparts.

3. A [24] IR EXCESS POPULATION IN h AND $\chi$ PERSEI

3.1. Groups in the $J$, $J - H$ Color-Magnitude Diagram

To identify the nature of the $24 \mu$m emission in sources with red $K_s - [24]$ colors in Figure 2, we refer to previous MIPS observations of very "red" sources and consider possible contaminants. MIPS observations of the Pleiades (Gorlova et al. 2006) guide our analysis of $K_s - [24]$ colors for IR excess disk/envelope sources. While the stellar density in $h$ and $\chi$ Per is larger than in the Pleiades, other possible contaminants are less important. The level of galactic cirrus for $h$ and $\chi$ Per is much lower than for the Pleiades: 17–27 MJy sr$^{-1}$ versus 36–63 MJy sr$^{-1}$. Gorlova et al. found that disk-bearing candidate sources have dereddened $K_s - [24]$ colors $\gtrsim 0.25$. Because $h$ and $\chi$ Per has a low, uniform extinction of $A_V \sim 1.62$, $E(B-V) \sim 0.52$ (Bragg & Kenyon 2005), we convert the dereddened $K_s - [24]$ excess criterion into a reddened $K_s - [24]$ criterion using the reddening laws from Indebetouw et al. (2005) and Mathis (1990). For $A_V \sim 1.62$, $24 \mu$m excess sources should have $K_s - [24] \gtrsim 0.45$. Because the MIPS data have $\sigma \lesssim 0.2$, we round this limit up to $K_s - [24] \gtrsim 0.65$.

Figure 5 shows the distribution of sources with and without $K_s - [24]$ excess in $J/H$ color-magnitude space. The IR excess population is clustered into two main groups. Asterisks (diamonds) denote sources brighter (fainter) than $J = 13$. Larger asterisks/diamonds correspond to sources with $K_s - [24] \gtrsim 2$, while smaller asterisks/diamonds correspond to sources with $K_s - [24] \gtrsim 0.65$ and $J < 13$.

The excess sources with $J \lesssim 13$ typically have $J - H$ colors $\sim 0.2$ mag redder than a typical stellar photosphere. Many sources with weak excess lie well off the 14 Myr isochrone and may be consistent with foreground M stars or supergiants. About 17 out of 21 stars with $24 \mu$m excess fainter than $J = 13$ fall along the 14 Myr isochrone with $J \approx 14$–15. At 14 Myr and a distance of 2.4 kpc, this $J$ magnitude range corresponds to stars with masses $\sim 2.2$–$1.4 M_\odot$ (B9/A0–G2) stars (Siess et al. 2000). We inspected each faint excess source on the MIPS mosaic for extended emission (indicative of galaxies) or "excess" due to source confusion/crowding. We found no evidence issues such as large extended emission or source confusion that could compromise the photometry of any of the faint excess sources.

3.2. Two Populations of IR-Excess Sources: Be Stars with Circumstellar Envelopes and Faint Pre-Main-Sequence Stars with Disks

There are three main possibilities for the source of $24 \mu$m excess emission around $h$ and $\chi$ Per stars. Red giants or supergiants not associated with the clusters or the halo produce IR excesses in massive stellar winds, and should have $J - H \gtrsim 0.5$. Two such stars have large $24 \mu$m excesses and are not considered further. Be stars in the clusters/halo population have IR excesses from optically thin free-free emission and should have $J \lesssim 13$–13.5 and $J - H \lesssim 0.4$. Many potential Be stars have $K_s - [24] \sim 2$ (Fig. 5; large asterisks) and clearly are an important part of the cluster population. Aside from Be stars, circumstellar disks around lower mass cluster/halo stars can produce excess emission. Figure 5 shows a significant population of fainter stars (all with $J \gtrsim 13.5$) on the 14 Myr isochrone with large $K_s - [24]$ excesses. To identify the nature of the $24 \mu$m excess sources, we analyze the near-IR colors and selected spectra of the excess population. We begin with Be star candidates and then discuss the fainter population.

Be stars are massive and are evolving off the main sequence (McSwain & Gies 2005). The IR-excess emission from Be stars arises from an optically thin, flattened, circumstellar shell of ionized gas ejected from the star (Woolf et al. 1970; Dachs et al. 1988). We find 57 candidates—$J \lesssim 13.5$ and $J - H \leq 0.4$—with $24 \mu$m excess ($K_s - [24] \gtrsim 0.65$). Twenty of these stars have been previously identified as Be stars by Bragg & Kenyon (2002), all with Oosterhoff (1937) numbers, and have spectral types from Strom & Wolff (2005) and Bragg & Kenyon (2002). Table 2 lists the properties of these 57 candidates.

We can estimate the ratio of Be stars to B stars over a narrow range of spectral types (earlier than B4). In our MIPS survey, there are $\sim 175$ stars that are likely B-type stars ($J = 8$–13.5; $J - H \leq 0.2$) without excess. All of these stars are probably earlier than B4 based on their 2MASS $J$-band photometry ($J \lesssim 11.75$). There are 57 Be star candidates with $24 \mu$m excess ($K_s - [24] \gtrsim 0.65$): 51 of these stars probably have spectral types earlier than B4 based on their $J$-band photometry. The ratio of Be star candidates to main-sequence B-type stars earlier than B4 in the MIPS survey is then $\sim 0.29$. This estimate is larger than the ratio derived from optical and near-IR data ($\sim 0.14$; Bragg & Kenyon 2002). We explored this difference as follows.

First, we analyze the Be star candidate population in high-density regions close to the cluster centers where spectroscopic
The first twenty entries are confirmed Be stars from Bragg and Kenyon (2002) and have Oosterhoff numbers. Slesnick et al. (2002) identify an additional B-type cluster member from either Slesnick et al. (source 21) or archived spectroscopic data from FAST (the five other sources).
data on bright stars in h and χ Per is complete. Our candidates were cross correlated with spectroscopically identified Be stars from Bragg & Kenyon within S′ of the cluster centers. Ten known Be stars and two candidate stars from the MIPS survey are in this region. These two candidate stars with 24 μm excesses are not Be stars. One is a fifth-magnitude B3 supergiant cluster member identified by Slesnick et al. (2002), and the other is a G1 star, lying well off the isochrone with $J = 11.67$ and $J - H = 0.39$.

Because our spectroscopic sample of Be stars is spatially limited, we turn to near-IR colors from 2MASS to investigate the nature of the bright MIPS excess sources. Dougherty et al. (1991, 1994) showed that Be stars follow a distinct locus in $JHK_s$ colors. This locus is characteristic of free-free emission from optically thin ionized gas and is well separated from main-sequence colors and the near-IR colors produced by warm dust. Thus, the $J - H/H - K_s$ color-color diagram (Fig. 6) provides a clear way to distinguish Be stars from lower mass stars with circumstellar dust emission. From Figure 6, it is clear that the bright sources with $K_s - [24] \geq 2$ follow a locus (dotted line) in $J - H/H - K_s$ from (0, 0) to (0.3, 0.4), a range consistent with known Be star colors (Dougherty et al. 1991, 1994). The bright sources with weaker excess (small asterisks) also appear to lie along the Be star locus or are clumped close to the red giant locus at $J - H \approx 0.6$–0.8, $H - K_s \sim 0.2$–0.3. The observed distribution of IR colors suggests $\approx 15$ Be stars and $\approx 25$ giants/supergiants. If this ratio is confirmed by optical spectroscopy, then the fraction of Be stars among all B-type stars is similar to the 14% derived by Bragg & Kenyon (2002).

Finally, we search the FAST archive at the Telescope Data Center at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory and the Slesnick et al. catalog for additional spectra of the 35 Be star candidates in lower density regions. The FAST archive contains additional data for four candidates; we find one additional source from Slesnick et al. The Slesnick et al. source is a confirmed Be star (B1 Ie). The FAST sources contain an A2, F7, G2, and B4 star. The first three of these are bright and likely either foreground or giants associated with the halo population of h and χ Per. Thus, the spectra support our conclusion from the color-color diagram (Fig. 6) that many of the candidate Be stars are not true identifications. If none of the remaining candidate stars are true Be stars, then the ratio of Be stars to B stars is $\approx 0.12$, close to the Bragg & Kenyon value.

Interestingly, the B4 star identified by Bragg & Kenyon (2002), has $24 \mu m$ excess and has a J magnitude and $J - H$ colors marginally consistent with an early B star in h and χ Per. The $K_s - [24]$ excess for this source is $\approx 1.05$, although unlike Be stars it lacks clear IR excess at $JHK_s$ and in the IRAC bands. We show its spectrum compared with that of a known Be star (Oosterhoff number 517) in Figure 7. This star is the earliest, highest mass star+circumstellar disk source known so far in h and χ Per.

Based on their near-IR colors and optical spectra, the faint excess sources in our survey are clearly distinguishable from Be stars. The near-IR colors of the faint excess sources are even distributed between $J - H = 0.1$–0.6 and $H - K_s = 0$–0.2 (Fig. 6, diamonds). The lack of very red $H - K_s$ colors for a typical faint excess source is consistent with a lack of warm ($T \approx 1000$ K) circumstellar envelope emission. Nearly all (17/21) faint sources are photometrically consistent with h and χ Per membership, although high-quality spectroscopic data are currently limited to eight sources (two from Hydra, six from Hectospec). Figure 8 shows the spectra. Seven of the eight faint excess sources have

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**Fig. 6.** Distribution of 24 μm excess sources in observed $J - H/H - K_s$ color-color space. The symbols are the same as in the previous figure. The reddening band is overplotted as two straight dash-dotted lines. Only the faint sources lying along the 14 Myr isochrone are included. The bright sources with $K_s - [24] \geq 2$ follow a clear Be star locus (dotted line) from zero color to $J - H = 0.2$, $H - K_s = 0.3$; bright sources with weaker excess ($K_s - [24] \sim 0.65$–2) appear either along the Be star locus or close to the giant locus (curved dashed line). The faint excess sources appear to be evenly distributed across the photospheric track (solid line). The IR-excess population is probably comprised of two main groups: bright Be stars with optically thin free-free emission and fainter ($J \leq 13.5$) pre-main-sequence A–F stars that likely harbor protoplanetary disks.

**Fig. 7.** Sample spectra of bright ($J \leq 13$) 24 μm excess sources in the MIPS field. The source on the left was identified as a Be star from Bragg & Kenyon (2002) and has IR-excess emission from a circumstellar envelope. The source on the right has a spectral type of B4 and appears to be consistent with cluster membership.
spectra consistent with h and 31 Per membership. The one non-member source in Figure 8 is an F5 star with J = 15.9, beyond the 2MASS completeness limit and below the isochrone by ~1.0 mag, and thus is one of the four faint sources that is also photometrically inconsistent with cluster membership. The other stars are both photometrically and spectroscopically consistent with being ~13−14 Myr old at a distance of 2.34 kpc. Thus, 7 of the 17 faint MIPS-excess sources lying on the J/H isochrone for h and 31 Per are spectroscopically confirmed members.

Fig. 8.— Spectra for eight faint (J ≥ 13) stars with 24 μm excess observed with Hydra (top two panels) and Hectospec (bottom six panels). The coordinates and spectral types for each source are listed on the top of each plot. The A6 star observed with Hydra has some image artifacts (spikes in count level well above the continuum level) at ~0.44 and 0.56 Å due to bad sky subtraction, although this did not impact the spectral type determination as we use other spectral indices that were not contaminated. The F5 star lies about 1 mag fainter than the 14 Myr isochrone for h and 31 Persei (J ~ 15.9) and is thus both photometrically and spectroscopically inconsistent with cluster membership. The other stars are both photometrically and spectroscopically consistent with being ~13−14 Myr old at a distance of 2.34 kpc. Thus, 7 of the 17 faint MIPS-excess sources lying on the J/H isochrone for h and 31 Per are spectroscopically confirmed members.

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The 13 sources without known spectral types are either unobserved (12) or had a signal-to-noise ratio too low to derive spectral types (1; this source is well off the isochrone).

Many of the fainter 24 μm sources have high-quality IRAC photometry. Of the 17 MIPS excess sources fainter than $\text{J} = 13.5$ on the isochrone, 14 (12, 11) also have IRAC measurements at $[4.5]$ ([5.8], [8]). We summarize the observed properties of the faint MIPS excess sources in Table 3. In the following two sections, we focus on these sources, comparing the MIPS photometry to IRAC/2MASS photometry from C07a and modeling the sources’ emission from 2.2 to 24 μm.

### 3.3. Nature of the Disk Population in Faint Pre–Main-Sequence Stars

#### 3.3.1. Mid-IR Colors and the Wavelength-dependent Frequency of Disks

To constrain the nature of the 17 faint MIPS excess sources that are (photometrically) consistent with cluster membership, we compare the $K_s - [4.5]$, $K_s - [5.8]$, and $K_s - [8]$ in Figure 9 (diamonds). For reference, we also show the colors for bright MIPS sources without 24 μm excess (squares). Following C07a, we identify sources with $K_s - [\text{IRAC}]$ colors $\geq 0.4$ as IR excess sources; sources with $K_s - [24] \geq 0.65$ are 24 μm excess sources. A vertical line in Figure 9 shows the division between excess and non excess sources.

The frequency of IR excess varies with wavelength. Only 1/14 faint 24 μm excess sources also have excess at [4.5]. The fraction of sources with [5.8] excess is 3/12. The 8 μm excess population has a larger fraction of excess sources, 5/11. While some of the “photospheric” sources, $K_s - [4.5, 5.8, 8] \leq 0.4$, may have weak excesses, many sources have $K_s - [\text{IRAC}] \leq 0.2$ (observed) and $\leq 0.1$ (dereddened). These sources are unlikely to have any dust emission at [4.5], [5.8], or [8]. While the small sample of 24 μm excess sources precludes a strong statistical significance for any trend of IR excess emission, the wavelength-dependent frequency of excess emission is consistent with results from larger surveys (e.g., C07a; Su et al. 2006).

### 3.3.2. Temperature and Location of Circumstellar Dust

Analyzing the strength of IR excess emission at multiple bands places constraints on the temperature and location of the dust. Just over half of the faint 24 μm excess sources have no excess emission in the IRAC bands, so these sources lack circumstellar material with temperatures $\geq 400$ K. Because a blackbody that peaks at 24 μm has $T \approx 120$ – 125 K, the dust temperature in most of the faint 24 μm excess sources is probably $\leq 100$ – 200 K.

We can put more quantitative constraints on the dust temperature with a flux ratio diagram. Flux ratio diagrams have been an important tool in analyzing accretion disks in unresolved cataclysmic variable systems (e.g., Berriman et al. 1985; Mauche et al. 1997). In this method, the ratio of fluxes (in this case, $F_{[4.5]} / F_{[8]}$) at different wavelengths such as $A_4 / A_5$ or $A_4 / A_6$ and $A_5 / A_6 / A_8$ is computed. The ratios for blackbody emission follow a curve in flux ratio space. Because disk-bearing sources should be, to first order, the sum of two blackbodies (a hot stellar component and a cooler circumstellar component), their positions in flux ratio space should lie on a line between the circumstellar dust temperature and the stellar temperature.

Figure 10 shows the flux ratio diagram for our sample, and Table 4 lists the derived disk temperatures (labeled as $T_{\text{B}}$ FR). We restrict our sample to 10 sources with $5 \sigma$ detections from 4.5 through 24 μm.\(^8\) Five of these sources have [8] excess; one has [4.5] excess. For 13 – 14 Myr old sources, the range of spectral types with $J = 14 – 15.5$ is $\approx \text{A0–G8}$ (Siess et al. 2000). The flux ratios for blackbody emission from 10 to 10,000 K follow the solid line with the temperatures characteristic of disks ($\sim 1000$ K) on the vertical part of the line and those for stellar photospheres on the horizontal part. Loei showing the locations for a stellar photosphere + disk of a given temperature are shown ranging from $T_{\text{disk}} = 300$ to 100 K assuming a stellar temperature of $T_{\ast} \sim 7250$ K (about F0 spectral type). The sources without (with) IRAC excess emission, $K_s - [\text{IRAC}] \geq 0.4$, are shown as

\(^8\) The first source in Table 3, with $J = 13.84$, has a [8] flux that has a negative $K_s - [8]$ color and thus is unphysically faint. An unphysically large ratio of the [4.5] to [8] flux cannot be interpreted with a flux ratio diagram.
diamonds (thick diamonds). The further away from the origin point of the loci a given source is, the more the disk contributes to the total flux. The derived dust temperatures are only weakly sensitive to $T_{\text{e}}$ as flux ratios for 5250–10,000 K ($\sim$G9–B8) blackbodies occupy roughly the same place at $I_{4.5}/F_{4.5}/I_{8}/F_{8}$ ($\sim 5 \pm 0.15$) and $I_{24}/F_{24}/I_{8}/F_{8}$ ($\sim 0$). The line for the ice sublimation temperature is shown in bold. The source (diamond at $\sim 2, 0.5$) with a disk component of $\sim 300$ K has a strong [8] excess and was previously identified as having $\sim 300–350$ K dust (source 5 in C07b) using a single blackbody $\chi^2$ fit to the disk SED. Four other sources, also with 8 $\mu$m emission, have dust temperatures between 230 and 250 K. All the sources with 8 $\mu$m excess then have dust temperatures $\geq 230$ K. While these sources may have cooler dust components, some of the dust emission must come from warmer disk regions closer to their parent stars.

The dust temperatures of sources without 8 $\mu$m excess, characteristic of a slight majority in our sample, are significantly lower. Three sources have slightly cooler temperatures of $\sim 170–185$ K, comparable to the water ice sublimation temperature (Hayashi 1981). The remaining sources have much cooler dust temperatures ($\sim 100–150$ K). This diagram demonstrates that many sources must have cold dust with temperatures of $T_{\text{dust}} \leq 200$ K.

For sources with photospheric IRAC emission, using a single-temperature blackbody — calculated by matching the 24 $\mu$m excess while not producing significant excess in the IRAC bands — should match the observed disk emission well. However, many sources also have IRAC excess, and modeling the disk emission as coming from two sources (e.g., warm and cold dust) may yield a significantly better fit (e.g., Augereau et al. 1999). As an alternate way to constrain the disk temperature(s) and estimate the disk luminosity and location of the dust, we now consider blackbody fits to the dereddened SEDs. For sources with IRAC excess we add sources of hot and cold dust emission with temperatures of 50–250 and 250–700 K, respectively, to the stellar photosphere. Sources without IRAC excess are modeled by a stellar photosphere + single-temperature disk. For the stellar blackbody, we use the conversion from spectral type to effective temperature from Kenyon Fig. 9.—$K_s$ vs. $K_s - [4.5], K_s - [5.8], K_s - [8]$, and $K_s - [24]$ color-magnitude diagrams for bright, photospheric sources and 24 $\mu$m excess sources. Of the 24 $\mu$m excess sources, 1/14 have excess at [4.5], 3/12 have excess at [5.8], and 5/11 have excess at [8].
& Hartmann (1995). If the star has no spectral type, we use the dereddened J band flux as a proxy for spectral type as in C07a, assuming $A_J \sim 0.45$ and using the Kenyon & Hartmann (1995) conversion table, and add a question mark after the spectral type in Tables 3 and 4. We use the stellar luminosity, $L_\star$, for 13–14 Myr old stars of a given spectral type from Siess et al. (2000). A $\chi^2$ fit to the 3.6–24 $\mu$m fluxes is performed to find the best-fit one or two dust blackbody + stellar blackbody model following Augereau et al. (1999). Following Habing et al. (2001), we derive the disk luminosity from blackbody fits. The integrated fluxes for each dust population of a given temperature are added and then divided by the stellar flux to obtain the fractional disk luminosity, $L_d/L_\star$. Finally, we estimate the location of the dust populations from simple radiative equilibrium:

$$R(\text{AU}) \approx \frac{(T_{\text{disk}}/280)^{-2}(L_\star/L_\odot)^{0.5}}{\alpha}. \quad (1)$$

The sources without IRAC excess have nearly identical disk temperatures to those derived from the flux ratio diagram (Table 3), ranging from ~90 to 185 K, and are similar to equilibrium temperatures just beyond the terrestrial zone into the gas giant regions of the solar system. These sources have $\chi^2$ values slightly less than or comparable to the number of observations (~1–6). The fractional disk luminosities range from ~5.5 x 10^-4 to 3.5 x 10^-3, which is similar to dust luminosities for young stars surrounded by optically thin debris disks (e.g., Meyer et al. 2007). Dust in these systems is probably confined to disk regions of ~8–40 AU.

Sources with both IRAC and MIPS excess emission have disk temperatures substantially different from those inferred from the flux ratio diagram and show evidence of terrestrial zone dust emission and colder dust.

The two dust population fits for the IRAC+MIPS excess sources show evidence for a wide range of dust temperatures with warm terrestrial dust emission and cold dust emission similar to that from sources without IRAC excess. For instance, the SED of the A6 star with IRAC and MIPS excess is best fit ($\chi^2 \sim 7.6$) by a hot dust component of 375 K coming from 1.8 AU and a cold component of 85 K at ~37 AU. The faint F9 star, identified previously as “source 5,” is extremely well fit ($\chi^2 \sim 0.5$) by dust populations of 240 and 330 K at 1.8 and 3.4 AU, respectively. Because these sources have both warm and cold dust, it is not surprising that their fractional disk luminosities are typically higher.

The fractional luminosity of source 5 (~6 x 10^-3) is comparable to the most massive debris disks (e.g., HR 4796A), and in general the luminosity of the disk population is consistent with values for massive debris disks. The most luminous disk source ($L_d/L_\star \sim 1.5 \times 10^{-2}$) is the lone exception and has a luminosity halfway in between values expected for luminous debris disks (~several x 10^-3) and long-lived T Tauri disks with inner holes (e.g., TW Hya; Low et al. 2005). We analyze this system further in § 3.3.3.

In summary, the faint MIPS excess sources have dust with a range of temperatures and luminosities. Sources without IRAC excess are well fit by single-temperature blackbodies and have cold dust components with temperatures ~90–185 K. Sources with IRAC excess are better fit by two dust components, a hotter, terrestrial zone component and a cooler component. The disks in h and $\chi$ Persei then show evidence of having inner regions of varying sizes cleared of dust. All but one source has a fractional disk luminosity ~10^-2, consistent with optically thin debris disks.

In the next section, we investigate the evolutionary state of the faint MIPS excess population further by comparing their properties to other predicted properties for massive debris disks and T Tauri disks.

### 3.3.3. Evolutionary State of the MIPS Disk Candidates: A Population of Luminous ~13–14 Myr Old Debris Disks

We now consider the evolutionary state of the dust in the 24 $\mu$m excess sources. Although the relative luminosities ($L_d/L_\star \sim 10^{-3}$) and lack of accretion signatures suggest these h and $\chi$ Per sources are debris disks, some T Tauri stars (e.g., “transition” T Tauri stars; Kenyon & Hartmann 1995) may also have inner regions cleared of gas and dust. Thus, it is important to compare their disk properties to models of debris disks and T Tauri disks.

We first examine the nature of the h and $\chi$ Per disk population as a whole. Because our smallest disk luminosities, ~5 x 10^-4, are larger than more than half of known ~10 Myr old disks (e.g., Meyer et al. 2007), our MIPS sample probably misses lower luminosity sources with $L_d/L_\star \lesssim 10^{-4}$. Similarly, our lack of 70 $\mu$m detections limits our ability to detect and to evaluate disk emission from cooler dust—such as is observed in $\beta$ Pic and HR 4796A—with SEDs that peak at 40–100 $\mu$m. For example, the nearby, luminous disk around 49 Cet (spectral type A1 V, 8 Myr old; Wahhaj et al. 2007) has a 24 $\mu$m excess of ~2.5 mag. We detect
only one faint \((J \geq 13)\) MIPS excess sources with \(K_S - [24] \leq 2.5\). Therefore, it is possible that there are additional very luminous young disks in \(h\) and \(\chi\) Per just below our detection limit.

These limits and the rich nature of the Double Cluster allow us to estimate the prevalence of massive, luminous disks. The total number of \(A0\) to early \(F\) stars (\(F2\)) in \(h\) and \(\chi\) Per is \(\approx 1000\) (T. Currie et al. 2007, in preparation; cf. C07a). Assuming that the disk fraction is \(\approx 20\%\), we detect 17/200, or \(\approx 10\%\) of all disks with strong emission at 24 \(\mu\)m. Thus, this population is extreme and yields a better understanding of the evolutionary state of the most luminous disks in a populous star cluster.

To constrain the evolutionary state of the disks, we compare the near- to mid-infrared disk colors to those expected for two disk models: a flat, optically thick disk around a classical T Tauri star (\(T_{\text{disk}} \sim r^{-0.75}\); Kenyon & Hartmann 1987) and an optically thin disk model from Kenyon & Bromley (2004a) for debris emission produced by planet formation. Because only one of our sources has \([4.5]\) excess emission and less than half have \([8]\) excess emission, we match the data to models of planet formation not in the terrestrial zone (Kenyon & Bromley 2004a) at \(30-150\) AU from a 2.0 \(M_\odot\) primary star (Kenyon & Bromley 2004b). For a \(\sim 2.0\) \(M_\odot\), 20 \(L_\odot\) star, the temperature range from 30 to 150 AU is comparable to the outer gas/ice giant region in our solar system (\(\sim 6.7-34\) AU). We adopt a \(\Sigma \propto r^{-1.5}\) profile for the initial column density of planetesimals and an initial disk mass of 3 times a scaled minimum mass solar nebula (Hayashi 1981): \(3 \times 0.01 M_\odot/M_\odot\) (where \(M_\odot = 2 M_\odot\)). Emission from planetesimal collisions is tracked for \(\sim 10^8\) yr. Model predictions are reddened to values for \(h\) and \(\chi\) Persei (reddening laws in the IRAC/MIPS bands are described in C07b).

Figure 11 shows the \(K_S - [4.5]/K_S - [24]\) color-color diagrams for bright photospheric sources and the faint 24 \(\mu\)m excess sources. The debris disk locus is overplotted as a thin black line. Debris from planet formation produces a peak excess emission at \(K_S - [24] \sim 3.6\) at \(\sim 10^7\) yr; the \(K_S - [4.5]\) and \(K_S - [8]\) colors peak at \(\sim 0.4\) at earlier times (\(\sim 10^6\) yr). The debris disk locus tracks the colors for most of the sources in \(K_S - [4.5]/K_S - [24]\) space very well (Fig. 11a). While the locus underpredicts the \([8]\) excess for almost half of the sources (Fig. 11b), warmer regions of a debris disk not modeled here may produce this excess (e.g., Kenyon & Bromley 2004a). C07b showed that planet formation in the terrestrial zone can produce strong \([8]\) emission characteristic of some \(h\) and \(\chi\) Per sources at \(\sim 10-15\) Myr. Indeed, the source with \(K_S - [8] \sim 1.3, K_S - [24] \sim 4.4\) is source 5 from C07b, which was one of eight modeled as having terrestrial zone debris disk emission. The warm dust temperature (\(\sim 300\) K) derived for this source in \(\S\) 4.2 is consistent with terrestrial zone emission.

Disk models corresponding to earlier evolutionary states fare worse in matching the observed mid-IR colors. The optically thick flat disk model (triangle in both plots) predicts \(K_S - [5.8]/[8]\) \(\sim 1.5(2.9)\) and \(K_S - [24] \sim 6\), consistently 1-2 mag redder than the data. To match the observed [24] excess, any optically thick disk with an inner hole (cf. C07b) must be cleared of dust out to the distances probed by the MIPS bands: \(\sim 25\) AU for a 20 \(L_\odot\) primary star. While inner hole models may be constructed to fit the SEDs of sources with only 24 \(\mu\)m excess, these models predict nearly zero IRAC color even though about half of the sample has excess at [8]. Lack of gas accretion signatures, low fractional disk luminosities, and SED modeling then suggest that at least many faint \(h\) and \(\chi\) Per sources with 24 \(\mu\)m excess are stars surrounded by optically thin debris disks. More sensitive spec-

\footnote{Disk fractions quoted by Chen et al. (2005b) range from 9% to 46%}.

trosopic observations are needed to verify the lack of gas in these systems.

Despite the general success of the debris disk models, at least one \(h\) and \(\chi\) Per source may harbor a disk at an earlier evolutionary state. This source has a \(K_S - [24]\) color of \(\sim 6\), which is \(\sim 1\) mag redder than HR 4796A, the strongest 24 \(\mu\)m excess source in R05. This color is close to the optically thick disk predictions, is extremely difficult to produce with a debris disk model, and is more similar to the level of excesses in older T Tauri stars like HD 152404 and TW Hya (Chen et al. 2005b; Low et al. 2005).

To explore this possibility, we overplot the \(K_S - [4.5], K_S - [8],\) and \(K_S - [24]\) colors of TW Hya from Hartmann et al. (2005) and Low et al. (2005) in Figure 11 (reddened to \(h\) and \(\chi\) Per; large cross). The mid-IR colors of our brightest source are similar to the colors of TW Hya. While TW Hya’s disk has an optically thin inner region where the early stages of planet formation may be commencing (Eisner et al. 2006), the disk is probably optically thick at 24 \(\mu\)m (Low et al. 2005). TW Hya also has strong H\(\alpha\) emission which indicates accretion. On the other hand, the fractional
disk luminosity in h and χ Per sources is much lower than that of TW Hya (0.27; Low et al. 2005) and between the values for debris disks and transition disks. Thus, some lines of evidence suggest that this extreme h and χ Per source is at an evolutionary state earlier than the debris disk phase, while others are more ambiguous. Obtaining optical spectra of this source, to search for accretion signatures, may allow us to make a better comparison between it and older T Tauri stars like TW Hya.

The spectral energy distributions (SEDs) of the faint MIPS excess sources show evidence for a range of dust temperature distributions, which may be connected to a range of evolutionary states (Fig. 12). We select four sources, three with spectra and one without, that are representative of the range of mid-IR colors from our sample. The first three sources of Figure 12, dereddened to AV = 1.62 (E(B−V) = 0.52), have been spectroscopically confirmed as F9 (source 1), F9 (source 2), and A6 (source 3) stars, respectively; the second source was mentioned in the previous paragraph [with Ks ≈ 24.4]. The SEDs for the bottom left source was also dereddened to AV = 1.62, and a spectral type of A2 was chosen based on the conversion from absolute magnitude to spectral type for 14 Myr old sources (from Siess et al. 2000; Kenyon & Hartmann 1995 color conversions). The source with photospheric emission at λ < 24 μm (source 4) has IRAC colors representative of just over half of the faint MIPS-excess sources in Figure 11. The debris disk model accurately predicts the SEDs of the source with photospheric 8 μm emission and two sources with weak 8 μm excess emission. The remaining source is not fit well by the disk model and shows clear evidence for a large warm dust population (see C07b). The evolutionary states for the sources shown in Figure 12 and the nine sources with complete IRAC and MIPS photometry are listed Table 2.

Thus, we conclude that emission from at least half of the 24 μm excess sources around pre-main-sequence stars in h and χ Per is best explained by debris from planet formation at locations comparable to the gas/ice giant regions in the solar nebula. Some of the other pre-main-sequence stars with 24 μm excess may also have ongoing planet formation in the inner, terrestrial zone regions as indicated by their 8 μm excesses. One of our sources may be a T Tauri star at a slightly earlier evolutionary state than the debris disk sources in our sample.

If most of the disk population is then interpreted as an early debris disk population (not a Class II/III transition T Tauri disk population), the wavelength-dependent frequency of IRAC/MIPS disk excess identified in §3.3.1 implies a location-dependent evolution of debris disks, specifically a clearing of warm dust from inner disk regions. This behavior is consistent with standard models of planet formation (Kenyon & Bromley (2004a)), which predict that dust emission from the planet formation process disappears at shorter wavelengths (e.g., IRAC bands) faster than at longer wavelengths (e.g., MIPS bands). This result is expected if planet formation runs to completion in the innermost regions of protoplanetary disks before planets are formed in the outer disk.

4. EVIDENCE FOR A RISE AND FALL OF DEBRIS DISK EMISSION

To place our results in context, we now compare the excesses observed in h and χ Per sources with measurements of other stars with roughly similar masses. We follow R05 and consider the magnitude of the 24 μm excess, [24]_{obs} = [24]_{loc}, as a function of time. Using a sample of early (A) type stars with ages ≈ 5 Myr, R05 showed that stars have a wide range of excesses at all ages and that sources with the largest excesses define an envelope...
that decays slowly with time (Fig. 13). Although this envelope is consistent with a power-law decay, \( [24]_{\text{obs}} - [24]_s \propto t^{-1} \), the R05 sample has relatively few stars with ages \(~5\)–\(20\) Myr where debris disk models predict large excesses. The sources with the largest excesses, HR 4796A and \( \beta \) Pic, fall within this age range at \(8\) and \(12\) Myr,

Together with our results for \( h \) and \( \chi \) Per, several recent surveys in young clusters and associations identify debris disks with ages of \(~5\)–\(20\) Myr (Chen et al. 2005b; Hernandez et al. 2006; Sicilia-Aguilar et al. 2006). As in R05, these surveys show a large range of \( 24 \mu m \) excesses at each age. In the well-sampled Sco-Cen Association, for example, Chen et al. (2005b) identify many stars with photospheric emission (no excess) at \( 24 \mu m \) and several stars with excesses considerably larger than the typical excess observed in the R05 sample. Although our \( h \) and \( \chi \) Per data do not provide any measure of the number of stars with photospheric emission at \( 24 \mu m \), the survey yields a good sample of stars with excesses much larger than the typical R05 source.

We now combine our results with those from R05 and from more recent surveys of debris disks in young clusters. Specifically, we add data from Tr 37 (4 Myr) and NGC 7160 (11.8 Myr) (in Cepheus; Sicilia-Aguilar et al. 2006), Orion OB1a (10 Myr), and Orion OB1b (5 Myr; both from Hernandez et al. 2006), and Sco-Cen (~5, 16, and 17 Myr for Upper Sco, Lower Centaurus Crux, and Upper Centaurus Lupus, respectively; Chen et al. 2005b). For \( h \) and \( \chi \) Per and Cepheus sources, we include only the IR-excess sources. The sensitivity of the Sco-Cen observations allows more precise determinations of the photospheric flux levels farther down the initial mass function of the cluster, so we include data for all sources earlier than G0 with or without excess in this cluster. For sources with no published estimate of the photospheric flux, we assume that \( K_s - [24]_s \sim 0 \) (dereddened), which is valid for our sample of A and F stars.

4.1. Observed Mid-IR Emission versus Age

When data from \( h \) and \( \chi \) Persei and other young clusters are added to R05, the evolution of \( 24 \mu m \) excess with age shows an important new trend. From \(~5\)–\(10\) Myr, there is a clear rise in the magnitude of excess followed by a peak at \(~10\)–\(15\) Myr, and a slow \( t^{-3} \) decay after \(~15\)–\(20\) Myr (Fig. 14). All sources with very large (\( \gtrsim 3\) mag) excesses have ages between 8 and 16 Myr. The \( 24 \mu m \) excess emission peaks at \(~12\)–\(16\) Myr as indicated by strong excess sources in \( h \) and \( \chi \) Persei (diamonds), NGC 7160 (squares), and Sco-Cen (asterisks). Data from 5 Myr old Orion OB1b and Upper Sco to 10 Myr old Orion OB1a to 12–17 Myr old NGC 7160, \( h \) and \( \chi \) Per, and the two older Sco-Cen subgroups shows a sequential rise in the median \( 24 \mu m \) excess.\(^{11}\) A peak in the \( 24 \mu m \) excess emission at \(~10\) Myr is also visible in a plot from Hernandez et al. (2006), albeit at a lower statistical significance. The addition of several \( \lesssim 20\) Myr old clusters more strongly constrains the time when debris emission peaks and maps out its evolution from \(~5\)–\(20\) Myr in more detail.

Removing possible TW Hya–like sources from this diagram does not modify the trends. The “TW Hya–like” source in \( h \) and \( \chi \) Per ([24] excess \(~5.5\)) and the strongest excess source in Sco-Cen ([24] excess \(~5.75\)) have the largest \( 24 \mu m \) excesses and may be at an evolutionary state prior to the debris disk phase. However, many sources in the 10–15 Myr age range have \(~2–3\) mag excesses, including HR 4796A and many \( h \) and \( \chi \) Per sources, which have disk luminosities and mid-IR colors inconsistent with an optically thick disk. The second most luminous source in Sco-Cen, HD 113766A (F3 spectral type) with a \( 24 \mu m \) excess of \(~4.7\) mag, has a fractional disk luminosity characteristic of a massive debris disk (Chen et al. 2005b). Sources with \([24]_{\text{obs}} - [24]_s \gtrsim 2–3\) are more common at \(~10\)–\(15\) Myr than at much younger \(~5\) Myr) or older \( (\gtrsim 20\) Myr) ages.

4.2. Statistical Verification of a Peak in \( 24 \mu m \) Emission at \(~10\)–\(15\) Myr

The peak at \(~10\)–\(15\) Myr is statistically robust. To test it, we adopted the underlying approach that Wyatt et al. (2007b) demonstrate gives a good first-order description of debris disk behavior: debris disks all evolve in a similar fashion, with the variations among them arising primarily from differences in initial mass. This result has two important implications for us: (1) it validates deducing evolution with time from the upper envelope of the infrared excesses, since similar high-mass disks of different ages define this envelope; and (2) it allows us to estimate the distribution of excesses at any time by scaling the excesses at another time according to \( t^{-1} \) (by one over the ratio of the source ages), the general time dependence of disk decay (R05). We use the second of these results to predict the distribution of excesses at 5 Myr from measurements of the distribution at 10–30 Myr, where enough sources have been measured to define the distribution well. We use three samples (Sco-Cen, Orion OB1, and R05), each of which includes the complete range of \([24]_{\text{obs}} - [24]_s \), down to zero, i.e., photospheric colors. If the scaled colors for sources predict much larger excesses than the 5 Myr old Orion OB1b excesses, then we can conclude that the mid-IR colors of our samples from 5 to 15 Myr do not follow a \( t^{-1} \) decline.

Figure 15 shows the scaled Sco-Cen and Rieke et al. excesses compared to the observed 5 Myr excesses in Orion OB1b normalized to the total number of sources in each sample. Many scaled excess sources \(~20\%\) of the total population) are \( 2–3\) mags redder than any in Orion OB1b. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test shows that the scaled Sco-Cen (Rieke et al.) sources have a

\(^{11}\) The debris disk candidates in Tr 37 have larger excesses than those in Orion OB1a. However, the strong excess may be explained by differences in stellar properties: two-thirds of the debris disk systems in Tr 37 are B3/B5 and B7 stars, which are far more massive than 10 Myr old A/F stars \((3.5–6 \ M\); vs. 1.5–2.5 \( M\); cf. Siess et al. 2000). If typical disk masses scale with the stellar mass, then these much more massive stars should have more massive, more strongly emitting disks. The disk mass-dependent amplitude of excess is discussed in § 4.3.

\[^{10}\] While \( \beta \) Picotis was given an age of 20 Myr in R05, derived from Barrado y Navasceus et al. (1999), recent work suggests a slightly younger age of \(~12\) Myr (e.g., Zuckerman et al. 2001; Ortega et al. 2002).
probability of 0.07 (0.06) of being drawn from the same population as Orion Ob1b with a $k_{0.75}$ mag excess. If we instead compare the scaled sources to Orion Ob1b sources with a $k_{0.5}$ mag excess, where Orion and the other two populations begin to overlap in Figure 15, the probability is even lower: $2 \times 10^{-3}$ for the Sco-Cen (Rieke et al.) sample. Thus, the evolution of 24$\mu$m emission from Orion Ob1b, Sco-Cen, and Rieke et al. sources is not consistent with a $t^{-1}$ decay.

There are two main alternatives to the $t^{-1}$ decay of IR excess with time for the youngest debris disks. The IR excess could be constant for $\tau = 20$ Myr and then follow a $t^{-1}$ decay law. The IR excess could also increase with time to some peak value and then follow a $t^{-1}$ decay law. To test the constant emission possibility, we use the Wilcoxon rank sum test. The rank sum test allows us to evaluate whether or not the populations have the same mean value or have intrinsically larger/smaller excesses than another sample ($Z$ parameter). The test also measures the probability that two samples are drawn from the same parent population by the Prob(RS) parameter (as in the K-S test).

Table 5 summarizes our results. Statistical tests show that the $[24]_{\text{obs}} - [24]$ excesses cannot be constant with time and verify that emission rises from 5 to 10 Myr (Table 3). Sco-Cen has the largest mean excess ratio ($\sim 1.25$) and has the widest range of colors with a $[24] - [24]_{\text{obs}}$ standard deviation of $\sim 1.4$ compared to $\sim 0.6 - 0.8$ for the Orion subgroups. The Wilcoxon rank sum test reveals that Sco-Cen has $\lesssim 5\%$ probability of being drawn from the same population as Orion Ob1b and has a statistically significant larger peak ($Z \sim -1.65$). Orion Ob1a also has a significant larger peak than Orion Ob1b [$Z \sim -2.8$, $\text{Prob(RS)} = 0.02$].

![Figure 14](image1.png)

**Fig. 14.** Color-excess of sources from R05, as well as $\sim 13$ Myr old h Persei (diamonds); Sco-Cen subgroups at 5, 16, and 17 Myr old (asterisks; Chen et al. 2005b); 4 and 11.8 Myr old Cepheus subgroups Tr 37 and NGC 7160 (squares; Sicilia-Aguilar et al. 2006); and 5 and 10 Myr old Orion Ob1b and Ob1a (Hernandez et al. 2006). We include the B4 star in h and $\chi$ Per with MIPS excess. HR 4796A is again clearly visible while $\beta$ Pic is obscured by the Cepheus data. Upper Sco data (5 Myr old) is also obscured by Orion Ob1b and has 24 $\mu$m excesses $\sim 0 - 0.3$. Overplotted are debris disk evolution tracks from Kenyon & Bromley (2004b) for a 3 times and $\frac{1}{3}$ times the (scaled) MMSN disk, assuming that primordial disk grains grow to planetesimal sizes by 0 (dotted line) and 2 Myr (solid line). There is a clear trend of increasing color excess at 24 $\mu$m from $\sim 5 - 10$ Myr, a peak at $\sim 10 - 15$ Myr, and a steady decline afterward through 1 Gyr. The trend is clear even if the strongest excess sources in h and $\chi$ Per and Sco-Cen ($[24]_{\text{obs}} - [24] \approx 4 - 5$) were excluded due to their uncertain evolutionary states.

![Figure 15](image2.png)

**Fig. 15.** $[24]_{\text{obs}} - [24]$ excesses for Orion Ob1b (solid line) compared to the “scaled” 5 Myr Sco-Cen (dotted line) and Rieke et al. colors (dashed line), assuming that excess emission declines as $t^{-1}$ for $t \gtrsim 5$ Myr. We normalize the total number of sources in each bin by the total number of sources in all bins. The excesses from many Sco-Cen and Rieke et al. sources are far redder than any Orion sources ($\gtrsim 4$ mag). Thus, the evolution of 24 $\mu$m emission from disks is not consistent with a $t^{-1}$ power law. Further statistical tests, described in § 4.2, verify that the emission rises from 5 to 10 Myr.
the typical excesses decline with age as suggested by R05. The rise to maximum excess from 5 to 10 Myr is steep: typical excesses increase from \(\sim 1\) to \(\sim 10\) mag by 11.8 Myr. The peak in excess amplitude is \(\sim 10\) Myr broad because the excesses in NGC 7160, h and \(\chi\) Per, and Sco-Cen are all comparable. By \(\sim 25\) Myr the typical excesses decline with age as suggested by R05.

4.3. Comparison with Models of Emission from Planet Formation

To investigate how the “rise and fall” trend of debris emission may be connected with physical processes producing the emission, we overplot the debris disk evolution tracks (dotted lines) from §3.3.3 and debris disk tracks for a low-mass disk (\(1/4 \times \text{MMSN}_{\text{scaled}}\)). The Kenyon & Bromley (2004b) calculations start at \(t = 0\) with an ensemble of \(\sim\)kilometer-sized planetesimals. To bracket the likely timescale for kilometer-sized planetesimals to form at \(30\)–\(150\) AU (e.g., Dominik & Dullemond 2005; Weidenschilling 1997), we include a second locus shifted by 2 Myr (solid lines). The range in debris disk masses is about a factor of 10, comparable to the range of disk masses inferred from submillimeter observations of young stars (Andrews & Williams 2005).

The debris disk models from §3.3.3 show a steep increase in debris emission from 5–10 Myr, a plateau for the following \(\sim 20\) Myr, and then a shallow decline in debris emission. The massive disk locus (dotted line) yields a peak in emission at \(\sim 7\)–\(8\) Myr, or very close to the age of HR 4796A. The locus started at 2 Myr (solid line) peaks at \(\sim 9\)–\(10\) Myr, close to the ages of h and \(\chi\) Persei and NGC 7160, and yields substantial emission through 20 Myr before emission declines. The lower mass disk loci peak later at \(\sim 40\) Myr with excesses comparable to the majority of those in R05. Caution should be taken to avoid overinterpreting these similarities: the exact time of the debris disk emission peak as well as the amplitude of the peak depend on input parameters such as planetesimal disruption energy.

Nevertheless, the massive debris disk model yields the same general trend in the maximum 24 \(\mu\)m excess amplitude with time; the low-mass disk model reproduces the 24 \(\mu\)m excesses of many \(\geq 30\) Myr old sources. The observed behavior of 24 \(\mu\)m excess with time is then at least qualitatively consistent with our understanding of the processes associated with planet formation.

### 5. DISCUSSION

#### 5.1. Summary of Results

Our analysis of MIPS data for the 13–14 Myr old double cluster, h and \(\chi\) Persei, shows two significant 24 \(\mu\)m excess populations. Bright Be stars with \(J \leq 12\) have 1–2 mag excesses at 24 \(\mu\)m and follow a clear Be star locus in the \(J - H/H - K_s\) color-color diagram. Optical spectra confirm the Be star status for just under half of the candidates from the color-color diagram. We also detect a B4 star with a clear 24 \(\mu\)m excess but without H\textalpha{} emission or evidence for near-IR excess.

Fainter stars with \(J \sim 14\)–15 fall on the 14 Myr isochrone in a \(J/J - H\) color-magnitude diagram. Optical spectra confirm that many of these stars have late A-type or F-type spectra, consistent with cluster membership. The IRAC and MIPS colors of these sources suggest that the frequency of excess at wavelengths which probe IR excess emission increases with increasing wavelength. The wavelength-dependent frequency of excess is consistent with the presence of inner holes devoid of dust.

Our analysis of the dust temperatures in the fainter excess sources suggests two groups. A smaller group of stars has emission from warmer dust with \(T \sim 200\)–300 K. A larger group has emission from colder dust, \(T \leq 200\) K. In both groups, the dust luminosity is a small fraction of the stellar luminosity, \(L_d/L_* \sim 10^{-4}\) to \(10^{-3}\), typical of debris disks like HR 4796A (Low et al. 2005). The IR colors and spectral energy distributions of the latter group are consistent with predictions from cold debris disk models; sources with warmer dust may have terrestrial zone debris emission (see also C07b).

The MIPS data from h and \(\chi\) Persei and other recently surveyed clusters yield a large sample of disks at 5–20 Myr, an age range critically important for understanding debris disk evolution and planet formation. This sample shows that debris disk emission rises from 5 to \(\sim 10\) Myr, peaks at \(\sim 10\)–15 Myr, and then fades on a \(\sim 150\) Myr timescale as \(r^{-1}\) (R05). Numerical statistical tests verify the observed trend. Debris production from ongoing planet formation explains the general time evolution of this emission (e.g., Kenyon & Bromley 2004b).

#### 5.2. Future Modeling Work: Explaining the Range of MIPS Excesses

The debris disk models from Kenyon & Bromley (2004a) generally explain the peak excesses for sources in h and \(\chi\) Per and other \(\sim 10\)–15 Myr old clusters. However, at a given age stars have a wide spread of IR excesses above and below the debris disk model predictions. The IR excesses far weaker than the model
predictions have several tenable explanations. Low-mass disks modeled in § 4 have weaker excesses. Disks in systems with binary companions close to the disk radius are probably disrupted quickly, although binaries with wider separations should have little effect, and very close separations may actually enhance infrared excesses (Bouwman et al. 2006; Trilling et al. 2007). Gas giant planets may also remove IR-emitting dust.

Reproducing the larger IR excesses ($K_s \sim 24 \approx 4.5 - 5$) is more difficult. The debris disk model used in this paper yields a peak $K_s \sim 24 \sim 3.5$ (unreduced), but HR 4796A and several sources in h and χ Per and Sco-Cen have stronger excesses. More massive disks should yield stronger 24 μm excesses, but the disk mass cannot be increased indefinitely. A disk with mass $M_d \gtrsim 0.1 - 0.15 M_\odot$ would have been initially gravitationally unstable and would form a low-mass companion.

However, the debris disk status of one of these extreme cases, HR 4796A with $K_s \sim 24 \approx 5$, has been confirmed by extensive disk SED modeling (e.g., Augereau et al. 1999; Currie et al. 2003; Wahhaj et al. 2005) and strict gas mass upper limits of $\lesssim 1 M_{\text{Jup}}$ (Chen & Kamp 2004). There are several ways to account for these larger excesses.

For example, dynamical processes that allow small grains to be retained (which produce larger opacity) in rings like that observed for HR 4796A may explain the large-amplitude excesses in some debris disks (e.g., Klahr & Lin 2005; Takeuchi & Artymowicz 2001). Whether or not the strong excess sources in h and χ Per can be explained by such grain confinement mechanisms is the subject of future work.

5.3. Comparison with Previous Spitzer Observations and Analysis of h and χ Persei from and Currie et al. (2007a) and (2007b)

This paper completes the first study of the circumstellar disk population of pre-main-sequence stars in the massive double cluster, h and χ Persei. Together with C07a and (2007b), this work provides new constraints on the frequency, lifetimes, and evolutionary states of circumstellar disks in 10–15 Myr old stars. Here we summarize the main results and conclusion of these studies.

Spitzer data for h and χ Per provide clear evidence that the frequency of IR excess emission depends on wavelength and on the mass of the star (C07a; this paper, § 3). Stars in both clusters have a higher frequency of IR excess at longer wavelengths. Lower mass (1.4–2 $M_\odot$) stars have IR excesses more often than more massive ($\gtrsim 2 M_\odot$) stars. Su et al. (2006) and Golovla et al. (2007) derive similar results for other clusters. Taken together, these results are consistent with an inside-out clearing of dust from young circumstellar disks, as expected from theoretical models of planet formation (e.g., Kenyon & Bromley 2004b).

To compare the completeness level of the MIPS sample with the IRAC sample from C07a, we derive the fraction of IRAC sources with MIPS detections at each IRAC band. The IRAC survey has 90% completeness levels of $\sim 14.5$ at [4.5] and $\sim 13.75$ at [8]. The MIPS sample includes 87% (3%) of the IRAC sources with [3.6] $< 10$ ([3.6] $< 14.5$) and 88% (11%) of the IRAC sources with [8] $< 10$ ([8] $< 13.75$) within 25° of either cluster center. Because the MIPS survey detects such a small percentage of the IRAC sources in C07a, we cannot analyze a statistically significant population of IRAC IR excess sources with MIPS detections. However, the MIPS sources yield interesting constraints on the Be star population in h and χ Per (§ 3.2) and demonstrate a clear peak in the time evolution of the 24 μm excess of debris disks (§ 4.).

Detailed analyses of the IRAC/MIPS colors and the broadband SEDs demonstrate that warm dust ($T \sim 240$–400 K) is visible in 11 cluster stars (C07b; this paper, § 3). The dust luminosities of 10 of these sources ($\sim 10^{-4}$ to $6 \times 10^{-3} L_\odot$) suggest this emission arises from optically thin dust in a debris disk. The IR excesses of these sources—which comprise the majority of known warm debris disks (see Hines et al. 2006, Wyatt et al. 2007a, and Golovla et al. 2007 for others)—are consistent with detailed calculations of terrestrial planet formation around $\sim 2 M_\odot$ stars (Kenyon & Bromley 2004a).

Most of the IRAC/MIPS IR excess sources show evidence for cooler dust with $T \sim 100$–200 K (this paper, §§ 3 and 4). Although the lack of 70 μm detections prevents us from deriving precise limits on the dust temperatures and luminosities, the Spitzer data suggest that most (perhaps all) of these sources are debris disks with SEDs similar to those observed in Sco-Cen, the TW Hya Association and other young clusters. (Chen et al. 2005b; Low et al. 2005). When combined with data from the literature, these data provide clear evidence for a rise in the magnitude of the IR excesses from debris disks from $\sim 5$ Myr to $\sim 10$–15 Myr followed by a fall from $\sim 20$ Myr onward.

Although theory provides a reasonably good first-order explanation for the time evolution of the IR excesses in $\gtrsim 1.4 M_\odot$ stars, some aspects of the observations remain challenging. A large range of initial disk masses and binary companions can probably explain the large range in IR excesses at a given stellar age, but these explanations require further testing. Current theory does not explain the largest IR excesses observed in the 10–20 Myr old stars in h and χ Persei, Sco-Cen, and the TW Hya Association (specifically HR 4796A). Dynamical, radiative, and stochastic processes not included in the numerical calculations are possible solutions to this failure. Increasing the sample size of this extreme population would provide better constraints on these processes.

Finally, this survey has provided us with several interesting sources that warrant more detailed investigation. For instance, “source 5”—discussed here and in C07b—is probably an extremely massive debris disk. With a fractional disk luminosity of $\sim 6 \times 10^{-3}$, its emission rivals that of HR 4796A, β Pic, and other massive, nearby debris disks. However, this source differs from these other sources in at least two important ways. First, its spectral type is later (F9) than most stars with massive debris disks. Second, it harbors far warmer dust ($T_d \sim 240$–330 K) than most massive debris disks like HR 4796A ($T_d \sim 110$ K; Low et al. 2005). This feature may make it more similar to the warm debris disk of HD 113766A in Sco-Cen, the second most luminous source in Sco-Cen shown in Figure 14 (Chen et al. 2005b), than to HR 4796A and β Pic.

Longer wavelength observations of this h and χ Per source (e.g., 30–100 μm) will better constrain its SED and thus its dust population(s). Mid-IR spectroscopy of this source may also provide clues to the chemical composition of its circumstellar dust to compare with models of cometary and asteroidal material (Lisse et al. 2008).

5.4. Future Observations

Future observations of h and χ Persei will provide stronger constraints on debris disk evolution and the possibilities for producing the wide range of debris disk emission. A deeper MIPS survey (approved for Spitzer cycle 4) of the double cluster will identify $\gtrsim 1000$–2000 cluster sources with [24] $\lesssim 12.25$, the brightness of an 1.3 $M_\odot$ G9 (1.7 $M_\odot$ A8) star with a 3 (2) mag excess. This $\sim 2$ mag increase in sensitivity ($\sim 2260$ s pixel$^{-1}$ integration) should yield a larger sample of 24 μm excess sources, which will better
map out the distribution of mid-IR excesses during the primordial-to-debris disk transition. If the correlation of massive, high fractional luminosity disks with early A stars is purely a selection effect, then this deeper survey of h and χ Persei should reveal many massive debris disks around slightly later type stars like ‘Source 5’. This survey will be complemented by a deeper IRAC survey (also approved for cycle 4) of the double cluster, which will identify h and χ Per sources with $[5.8] / [8] \geq 15.9$ (15.2), the brightness of a $\sim 0.8 M_\odot$ M0 (1.0 M\odot K6) photosphere. The $1.5 - 2$ mag increase in sensitivity ($\sim 120$ spixel$^{-1}$ vs. 20.8 spixel$^{-1}$ from the C07a observations) will likely result in photometry for $\geq 10,000 - 15,000$ cluster stars through [8], assuming a typical cluster initial mass function (e.g., Miller & Scalo 1979). These two surveys will likely detect hundreds of debris disk (and perhaps transition disk) candidates and yield extremely strong constraints on evolution of dust in circumstellar disks from warm, inner regions (IRAC) to cooler regions (MIPS) at a critical age for planet formation.

Ground-based surveys of h and χ Persei may also provide important clues about the evolution of disks around young stars. For instance, the ability of binary companions to affect the mid-IR excesses from disks can also be tested. At $\sim 2.34$ kpc, a binary system with separation of $\sim 100$ AU (and thus able to truncate debris disks) has an angular separation of $\approx 0.04''$. Such systems can be resolved by long-baseline interferometers such as the Keck Interferometer. Comparing the IR excesses from single and binary systems can then determine if weaker IR excess sources are binaries. A large-scale spectroscopic survey of all sources in h & χ Per brighter than $V \sim 21 \ (\geq 10,000)$ is underway (T. Currie et al, in preparation). This survey will identify sources most likely to be h & χ Per members as well as those with strong H$\alpha$ emission indicative of gas accretion. Preliminary work indicates that the population of accreting h and χ Per sources is nonnegligible ($\geq 20 - 30$; Currie et al. 2007c). Comparing the IR excesses of accreting sources with those that are not accreting may examine the role of residual circumstellar gas in affecting the mid-IR excesses from disks.

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