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This is a preprint of a paper submitted for
publication in Physical Review Letters.

Work supported by
U.S. Department of Energy under
Contracts DE-AC03-99ER54463 and DE-AC05-96OR22464
and Grant DE-FG03-92ER54141

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GENERAL ATOMICS PROJECT 30033
AUGUST 1999
Dependence of Heat and Particle Transport on the Ratio of the Ion and Electron Temperatures

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Experiments in high confinement (H–mode) plasmas on the DIII–D tokamak show that the heat and particle transport are sensitive to the ratio of the ion and electron temperatures. Increasing the ion to electron temperature ratio decreases the electron and ion heat transport and the particle transport regardless of which temperature is being varied. A likely explanation of these results is the dependence of the ion temperature gradient instability on the ratio of the ion and electron temperatures.

Plasmas of interest to magnetic confinement fusion can be thought of as comprising separate ion and electron fluids, each fluid with its own density and temperature. The ion and electron densities \( n_i \) and \( n_e \) are related by the overriding tendency of the plasma to remain electrically neutral, but the ion and electron temperatures \( T_i \) and \( T_e \) can be quite different since the thermal equilibration time between the two fluids may be longer than the energy confinement time of the plasma. A large body of previous work has shown that cross-magnetic-field diffusion of heat and particles (referred to as transport) is significantly reduced in plasmas with \( T_i \gg T_e \). Nearly all of the best confinement modes on tokamaks occur in plasmas with \( T_i \) more than twice \( T_e \): the “hot ion” H–mode (high confinement) [1] and VH–mode (very high confinement) [2], the “supershrot” [3], and the negative magnetic shear regime [4,5]. However, \( T_i \) and \( T_e \) are expected to be nearly equal in future ignition devices owing to the longer confinement times and strong electron heating from the fusion products. Therefore, if transport has a strong dependence on the ratio of the ion and electron temperatures, then projecting the favorable transport results from hot ion mode plasmas to future ignition devices may lead to too optimistic predictions for confinement.

The experiments reported in this Letter are the first in which the ratio of the ion and electron temperatures is systematically varied to determine the effect on heat and particle transport. These experiments in ELMing (edge localized mode) H–mode plasmas are in a regime relevant to future ignition devices, with nearly equal ion and electron temperatures and \( T_i \) profiles close to marginal stability for the ion temperature gradient (ITG) mode. Three different \( T_i / T_e \) scans have been done, each of which addresses a specific question. First, a
$T_e$ scan at fixed $T_i$ is performed to examine whether the ion heat transport is influenced by the electrons. Second, the converse, a $T_i$ scan at fixed $T_e$ shows how the electron heat transport is affected by the ions. Third, the ratio of $T_i / T_e$ is varied at fixed $\beta$ (the ratio of the plasma and magnetic field pressures) to determine if heat transport is dependent upon how the plasma pressure is divided between the electron and ion fluids. The helium particle transport is also measured for several of the $T_i / T_e$ scans. For all of these experiments, the plasma density, current, and magnetic field strength are held fixed.

These experiments are done on the DIII–D tokamak [6], parameters for which are major radius $R = 1.68 \text{ m}$, minor radius $a = 0.61 \text{ m}$, elongation $\kappa = 1.8$, plasma current $I = 1.45 \text{ MA}$, and magnetic field strength $B = 2.05 \text{ T}$. A single-null divertor plasma configuration is used, and the plasma is fueled by deuterium gas puffing and deuterium neutral beam injection (NBI). Three different forms of auxiliary heating are used to control $T_i$ and $T_e$ in these experiments. The ions are heated by up to 4.9 MW of NBI; a small portion of this NBI power is also absorbed by the electrons. The electron temperature is increased further using up to 2.5 MW of combined electron cyclotron heating (ECH) and fast wave direct electron heating [7]. For these experiments, the electron density and temperature profiles are measured by Thomson scattering, CO2 laser interferometers, and electron cyclotron emission. The ion temperature and effective ion charge ($Z_{\text{eff}}$) profiles are determined from charge exchange recombination emission of carbon impurities. The radiated power ($P_{\text{rad}}$) profile is measured using an array of foil bolometers.

In the first experiment, the electron temperature is varied at fixed ion temperature, as seen in Fig. 1, and shows that confinement decreases with increasing $T_e$. The electron temperature is scanned by 26% in this experiment using ECH and fast wave heating while the NBI power is also increased to keep $T_i$ fixed. The heating powers absorbed by the ions and electrons ($P_i$ and $P_e$) are shown in column (a) of Table I along with the other global parameters. The data in Table I do not include fast particle contributions to the normalized beta [$\beta_N = \beta / (I / aB)$] and the energy confinement time ( $\tau_E$). Table I shows that the volume averaged $\langle n_e \rangle$ and $\langle Z_{\text{eff}} \rangle$ are held fixed to within 3% during the $T_e$ scan, with the thermal energy confinement time scaling like $\tau_E^{\text{th}} \propto \langle T_e \rangle^{-2.2\pm0.2}$.

The thermal diffusivities ($\chi$) for these discharges are determined from a radial power balance analysis, $1.5 \partial(nT) / \partial t + \nabla \cdot (q + 2.5 \Gamma T) = Q$, where $q$ is the heat flux, $\Gamma$ is the particle flux, and the heat sources and sinks are combined into $Q$. The transport calculations are carried out using the ONETWO code [8], which uses the measured $n_e$, $T_e$, $T_i$, $Z_{\text{eff}}$, and $P_{\text{rad}}$ profiles along with the magnetic geometry. The heat flux is assumed to be purely diffusive in this analysis, $q = -n_e \chi V T$. The helium particle transport is determined by analyzing the evolution of the helium density profile shortly after a helium gas puff [9].

The transport analysis shows that the ion thermal diffusivity increases with increasing $T_e$ at fixed $T_i$, demonstrating that the ion transport is not dependent solely upon the ion parameters but is also influenced by the electrons. Figure 2 shows the change in the electron and ion thermal diffusivities as a function of normalized radius ($r / a$) between the high–$T_e$
Fig. 1. Radial profiles of (a) electron temperature, and (b) ion temperature for the $T_e$ scan at fixed $T_i$ given in Column (a) of Table I.

Table I: Global parameters for three temperature scans at fixed $B$ and $I$: (a) $T_e$ scan at fixed $T_i$, (b) $T_i$ scan at fixed $T_e$, and (c) $T_i/T_e$ scan at fixed $\beta$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>(a)</th>
<th>(b)</th>
<th>(c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high $T_e$</td>
<td>low $T_e$</td>
<td>high $T_i$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\langle n_e \rangle$ ($10^{19}$ m$^{-3}$)</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>$\beta_N^{\text{th}}$ [%/(MA/mT)]</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$P_i$ (MW)</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$P_e$ (MW)</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\tau_{E}^{\text{th}}$ (s)</td>
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<td>0.148</td>
<td>0.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\tau_m$ (s)</td>
<td>0.076</td>
<td>0.129</td>
<td>0.118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and low–$T_e$ cases of Fig. 1. The internal disruption, or sawtooth instability, is suppressed in these plasmas using NBI during the current ramp to broaden the current profile and keep the central safety factor above unity; this simplifies the transport analysis near the plasma center where $T_i$ and $T_e$ differ the most. Figure 2 shows that the ion thermal diffusivity increases with increasing electron temperature like $\chi_i \propto T_e^4$ for these plasmas; this strong dependence indicates that the ion heat transport is sensitive to $T_e$ in this regime. This sensitivity is likely due to the destabilization of the ITG mode, as discussed later in this Letter. The electron thermal diffusivity also tends to increase for higher $T_e$ but in a more
complicated manner than the ions, perhaps indicating that $\chi_e$ depends upon both $T_e$ and $\nabla T_e$. Figure 2 also shows that the helium particle transport increases with increasing $T_e$ by an amount that is between the $\chi_i$ and $\chi_e$ dependences. The helium particle transport cannot be determined in the outer regions of the plasma because the evolution is too rapid.

In the second experiment, the ion temperature is varied at nearly constant electron temperature, as shown in Fig. 3, and it is found that confinement increases with increasing $T_i$. This is the opposite trend as found for the $T_e$ scan. The ion temperature is varied by 24% by increasing the NBI power and decreasing the ECH and fast wave power at fixed density, as shown in column (b) of Table I. Since the thermal energy confinement time in this case increases with increasing ion temperature like $t_{E}^{th} \propto \langle T_i \rangle^{2.0\pm0.2}$, a higher value of $\beta$ is achieved for the plasma with higher $T_i / T_e$ despite less total heating power. A local transport analysis confirms these results. In Fig. 4, the electron thermal diffusivity is seen to decrease with increasing ion temperature approximately like $\chi_e \propto T_i^{-4}$, demonstrating that the electron heat transport is sensitive to $T_i$ in this regime. The ion thermal diffusivity also decreases with increasing $T_i$ in Fig. 4, although this dependence is more complicated to interpret since both $T_i$ and $\nabla T_i$ are varying. The positive reinforcement between $\chi_i$ and $T_i$ likely contributes to forming the favorable hot ion mode of confinement [1–5].
Fig. 3. Radial profiles of (a) electron temperature, and (b) ion temperature for the $T_i$ scan at fixed $T_e$ given in column (b) of Table I.

Fig. 4. Ratio of electron and ion thermal diffusivities for the $T_i$ scan at fixed $T_e$ shown in Fig. 3.
In the third experiment, the ratio of the ion and electron temperatures is varied at fixed plasma pressure, as seen in Fig. 5, and shows that transport is dependent upon how the plasma stored energy is divided between the electron and ion fluids. This can be considered to be a non-dimensional transport experiment, where the dimensionless parameter $T_i / T_e$ is varied at fixed $\beta$, safety factor, $Z_{\text{eff}}$, etc. For a 20% scan in $T_i / T_e$, column (c) of Table I shows that the thermal energy confinement time increases with increasing ion to electron temperature ratio like $\tau_{E}^{th} \propto (\langle T_i \rangle/\langle T_e \rangle)^{2.1 \pm 0.2}$, which agrees with the results from the first two experiments in Table I. The local heat transport dependence on $T_i / T_e$, shown in Fig. 6, is also consistent with the transport dependences on $T_e$ and $T_i$ shown in Figs. 2 and 4, with both the electron and ion thermal diffusivities decreasing for higher $\langle T_i \rangle/\langle T_e \rangle$. (Since $T_e$, $\nabla T_e$, $T_i$, and $\nabla T_i$ are all varying in this case, only the scalings with the volume averaged temperatures are indicated in Fig. 6 for simplicity.) Figure 6 also shows that the helium particle diffusivity decreases with increasing $\langle T_i \rangle/\langle T_e \rangle$ by an amount that is similar to the electron thermal diffusivity.

![Fig. 5. Radial profiles of (a) ratio of ion and electron temperatures, and (b) thermal beta for the $T_i / T_e$ scan at fixed $\beta$ given in column (c) of Table I.](image)

The momentum confinement times ($\tau_m$) given in Table I also increase with increasing $T_i / T_e$, similar to the energy confinement results. A regression analysis of this dependence over all discharges shows that $\tau_m \propto (\langle T_i \rangle/\langle T_e \rangle)^3$. Thus, the plasma rotation slows down with the application of ECH and fast wave heating, which in turn causes the measured $E \times B$ shearing rate to vary by as much as 30% in the outer half of the plasma. (We note that the computed $E \times B$ shearing rate obtained from the experimental toroidal velocity profile and the calculated poloidal velocity profile from neoclassical theory differs from the measured $E \times B$ shearing rate by as much as a factor of 2 and exhibits the wrong radial shape.) Since $E \times B$
shear can reduce the heat and particle transport by connecting unstable modes to stable modes [10], the sensitivity of the transport results to variations in the $E \times B$ shear warrants examination. Simulations using the gyro-Landau-fluid GLF23 drift wave transport model [11] in the MLT code [12] show that while the $E \times B$ shear is acting to reduce the overall level of transport, the differences in the $E \times B$ shear within the $T_i / T_e$ scan has a negligible effect on the predicted temperature profiles.

The sensitivity of the heat and particle transport to the ratio of the ion and electron temperatures is likely due to the destabilization of the ITG mode (the electron temperature gradient mode is predicted to be stable). Modeling of these H–mode plasmas using the GLF23 transport model shows that the measured $T_i$ profile in this regime is close to marginal stability for the ITG mode. Since the critical ion temperature gradient for the onset of this mode increases linearly with increasing $T_i / T_e$, an increase in $T_e$ at fixed $T_i$ will increase the ITG driven heat and particle transport. Conversely, an increase in $T_i$ at fixed $T_e$ (and fixed $\nabla T_i$) will cause a reduction in the ITG driven transport. The sensitivity of the measured heat and particle transport to $T_i / T_e$ can be explained by the large incremental diffusivity of the ITG mode, which tends to pin the ion temperature gradient to the critical value. Figure 7(a) shows the scaling of the predicted thermal diffusivities for the $T_e$ scan at fixed $T_i$ (Figs. 1 and 2) using the GLF23 model. In the simulation, the measured density and rotation profiles are utilized and the $T_i$ and $T_e$ profiles are calculated using the radial heat.
fluxes obtained from a power balance analysis. The GLF23 model predicts a similar sensitivity of transport to \( T_i / T_e \) as is observed experimentally, with the theoretical thermal diffusivities in Fig. 7(a) increasing by nearly the same amount as found in the experiment; the particle diffusivity has a similar \( T_i / T_e \) dependence. The strong \( T_i / T_e \) dependence of transport in the GLF23 model for the \( T_e \) scan at fixed \( T_i \) is better seen in Fig. 7(b), which shows that \( \chi_i \propto (T_i / T_e)^{-3.0} \) and \( \chi_e \propto (T_i / T_e)^{-2.2} \) around the experimental point. Figure 7(b) also shows that the ITG driven transport becomes greatly suppressed for \( T_i / T_e > 2 \).

![Graph showing predicted ratio of electron and ion thermal diffusivities and dependence of \( \chi_i \) and \( \chi_e \) on the ion to electron temperature ratio at \( r/a = 0.2 \).](image)

**Fig. 7.** (a) Predicted ratio of electron and ion thermal diffusivities, and (b) predicted dependence of \( \chi_i \) and \( \chi_e \) on the ion to electron temperature ratio at \( r/a = 0.2 \) from the GLF23 model for the \( T_e \) scan at fixed \( T_i \) shown in Fig. 2. The location of the experimental point is also indicated in (b).

In conclusion, experiments in ELMing H–mode plasmas on the DIII–D tokamak have measured the dependence of cross-magnetic-field transport on the ratio of the ion and electron temperatures and show a strong temperature coupling effect between the ion and electron fluids. The electron and ion thermal diffusivities, the helium particle diffusivity, and the momentum transport all decrease with increasing \( T_i / T_e \), regardless of which temperature is being varied. The sensitivity of confinement to changes in the ion to electron temperature ratio, \( \tau_{\text{Eth}}^{\text{th}} \propto (T_i / T_e)^{2} \), is likely explained by the destabilization of the ITG mode near threshold given the linear \( T_i / T_e \) dependence of the critical ion temperature gradient. Since future ignition devices will also likely have \( T_i \) profiles close to marginal stability, these
results show that confinement can be significantly improved in such devices by operating in a slight hot ion mode ($T_i \approx 1.2 T_e$) [13].

The authors would like to thank J.S. deGrassie, E.A. Lazarus, J. Lohr, F.W. Baity, and R.I. Pinsker for operating the tokamak and radiofrequency heating systems for these experiments. This work is supported by the U.S. Department of Energy under Contracts DE-AC03-99ER54463 and DE-AC05-96OR22464 and Grant DE-FG03-92ER54141.

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