

The $^{12}\text{C}(\alpha, \gamma)^{16}\text{O}$ reaction

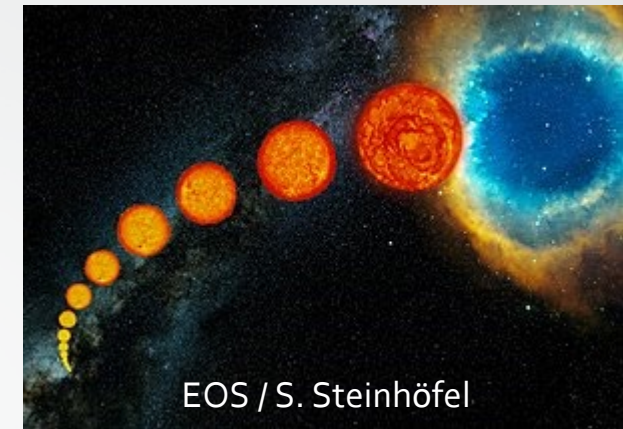
James deBoer (Notre Dame) and Marialuisa Aliotta (Edinburgh)

The Big-Three Reactions Workshop, May 29, 2024



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME

Motivation



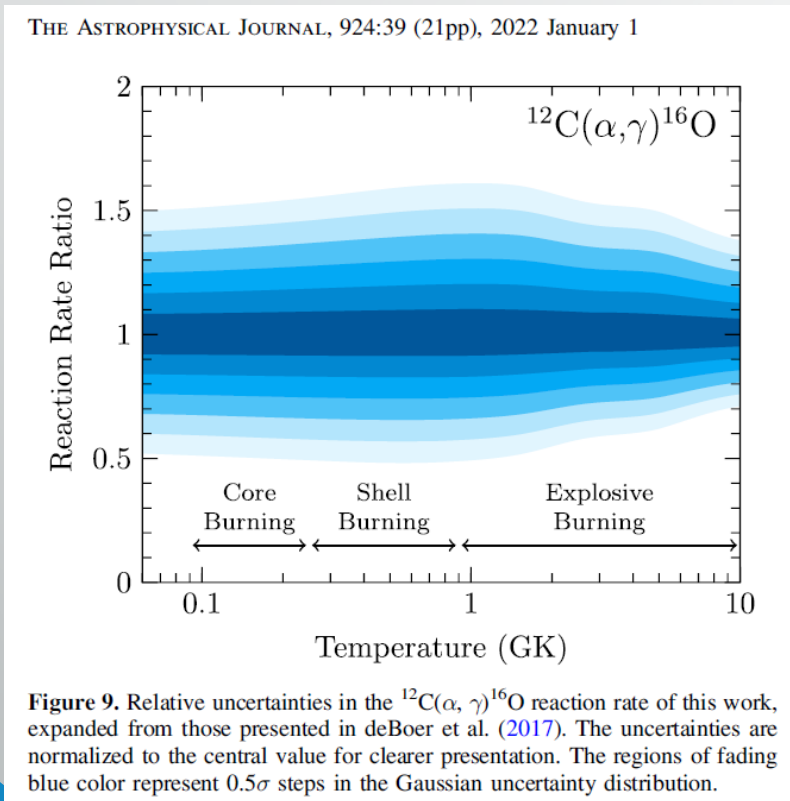
- Together with the 3α process, the $^{12}\text{C}(\alpha,\gamma)^{16}\text{O}$ reaction determines the $^{12}\text{C}/^{16}\text{O}$ ratio in the universe.
- For stellar evolution, the $^{12}\text{C}/^{16}\text{O}$ ratio determines the evolution of massive stars, which in turn effects all later stages of nucleosynthesis.

TABLE I. Astrophysical environments and burning stages where the $^{12}\text{C}(\alpha,\gamma)^{16}\text{O}$ reaction plays an important role. The temperatures of these environments dictate the energy ranges where the $^{12}\text{C}(\alpha,\gamma)^{16}\text{O}$ cross section must be well known for an accurate calculation of the reaction rate.

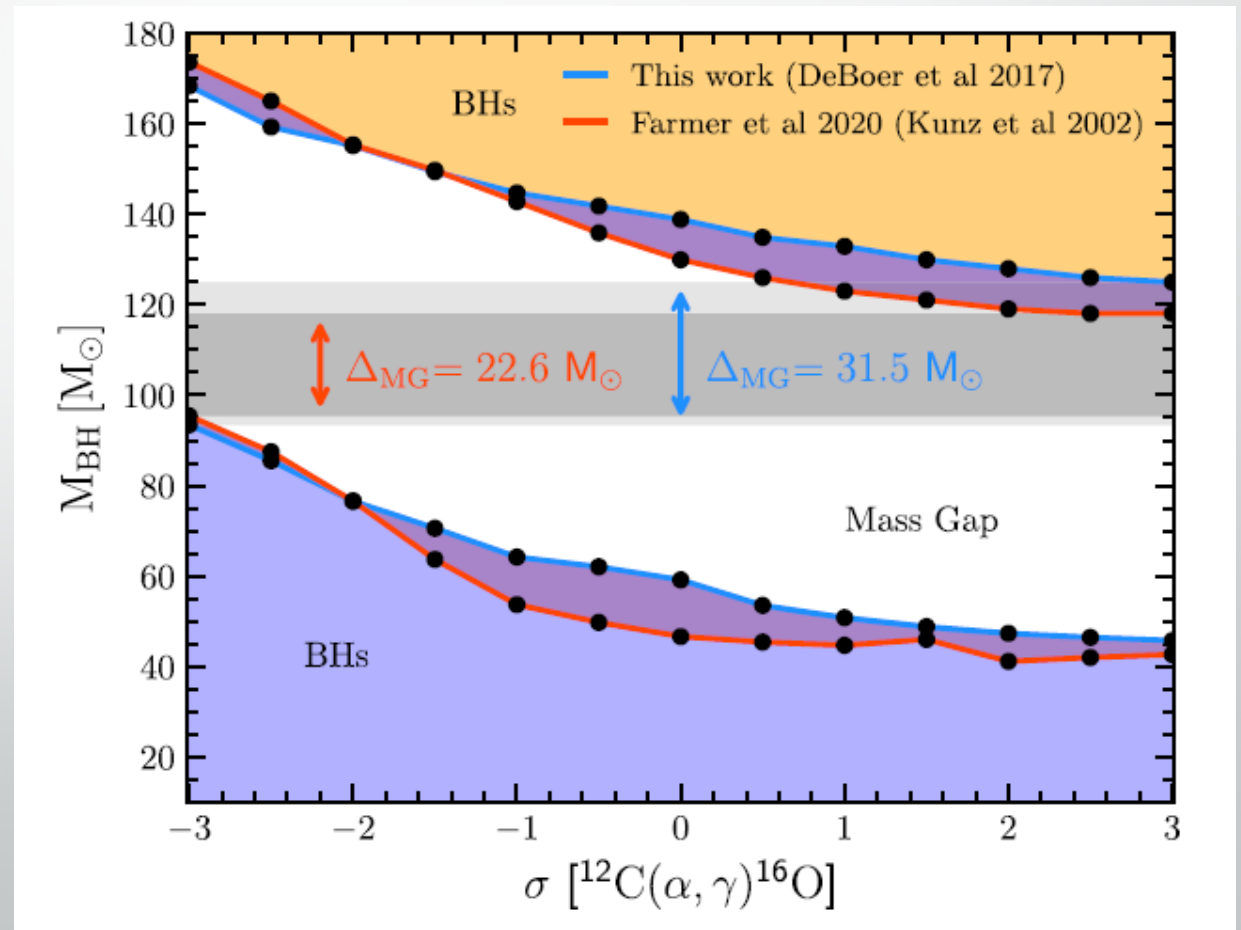
| Burning stages | Astrophysical sites | Temperature range (GK) | Gamow energy range (MeV) |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Core helium burning | AGB stars and massive stars | 0.1–0.4 | 0.15–0.65 |
| Core carbon and oxygen burning | Massive stars | 0.6–2.7 | 0.44–2.5 |
| Core silicon burning | Massive stars | 2.8–4.1 | 1.1–3.4 |
| Explosive helium burning | Supernovae and x-ray bursts | ≈ 1 | 0.6–1.25 |
| Explosive oxygen and silicon burning | Supernovae | > 5 | > 1.45 |

Motivation Highlight: Black Hole Mass Gap Link to LIGO

- **Farmer *et al.* (2020), Mehta *et al.* (2022)**



Following Gialanella *et al.* (2001)



Motivation Highlight: White Dwarf Seismology

- **Chidester *et al.* (2022,2023)**

THE ASTROPHYSICAL JOURNAL, 924:39 (21pp), 2022 January 1

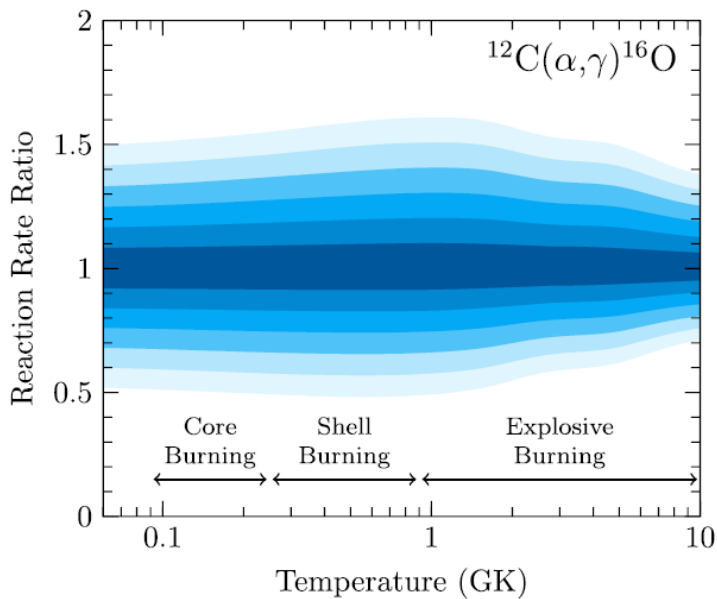
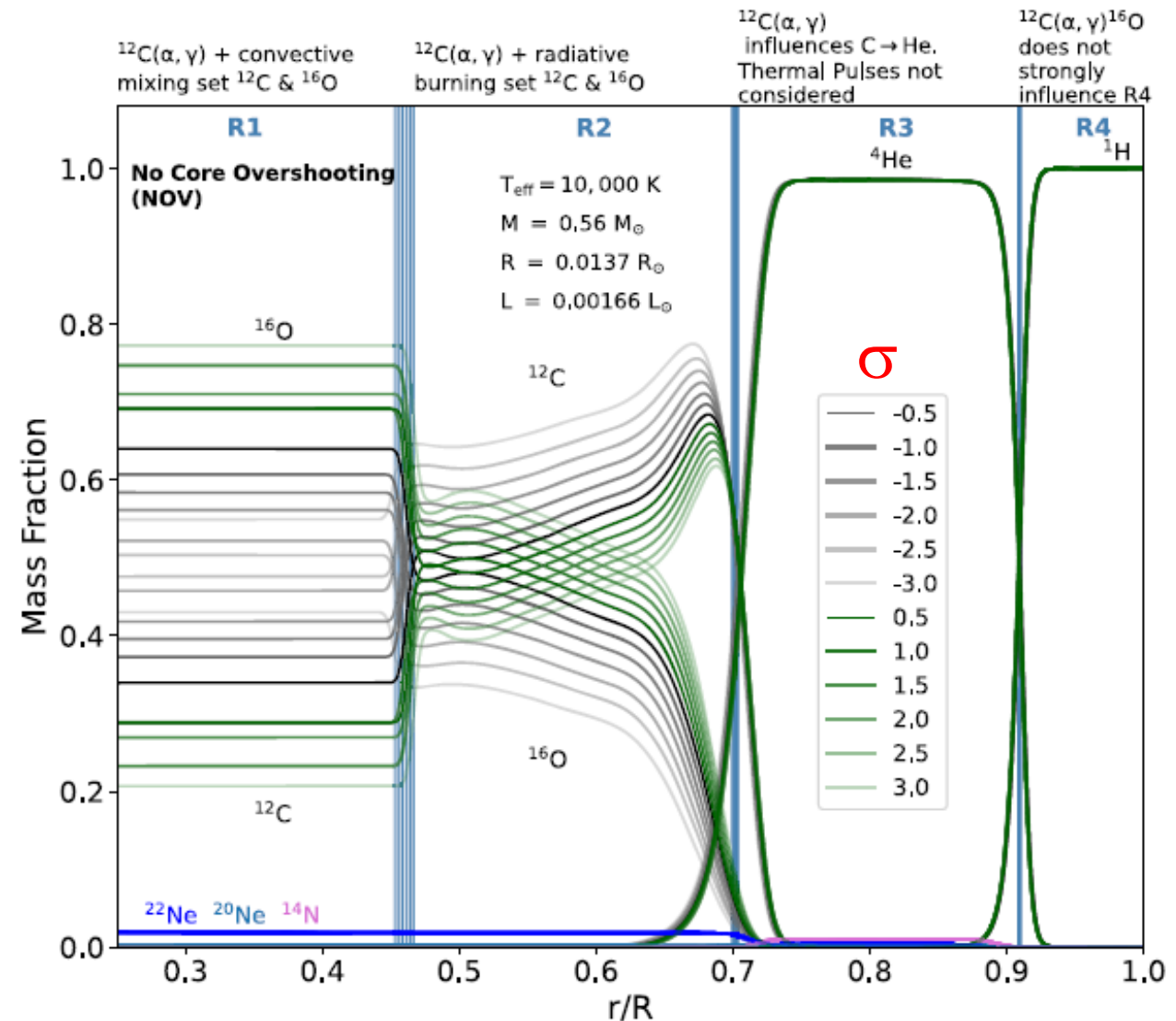
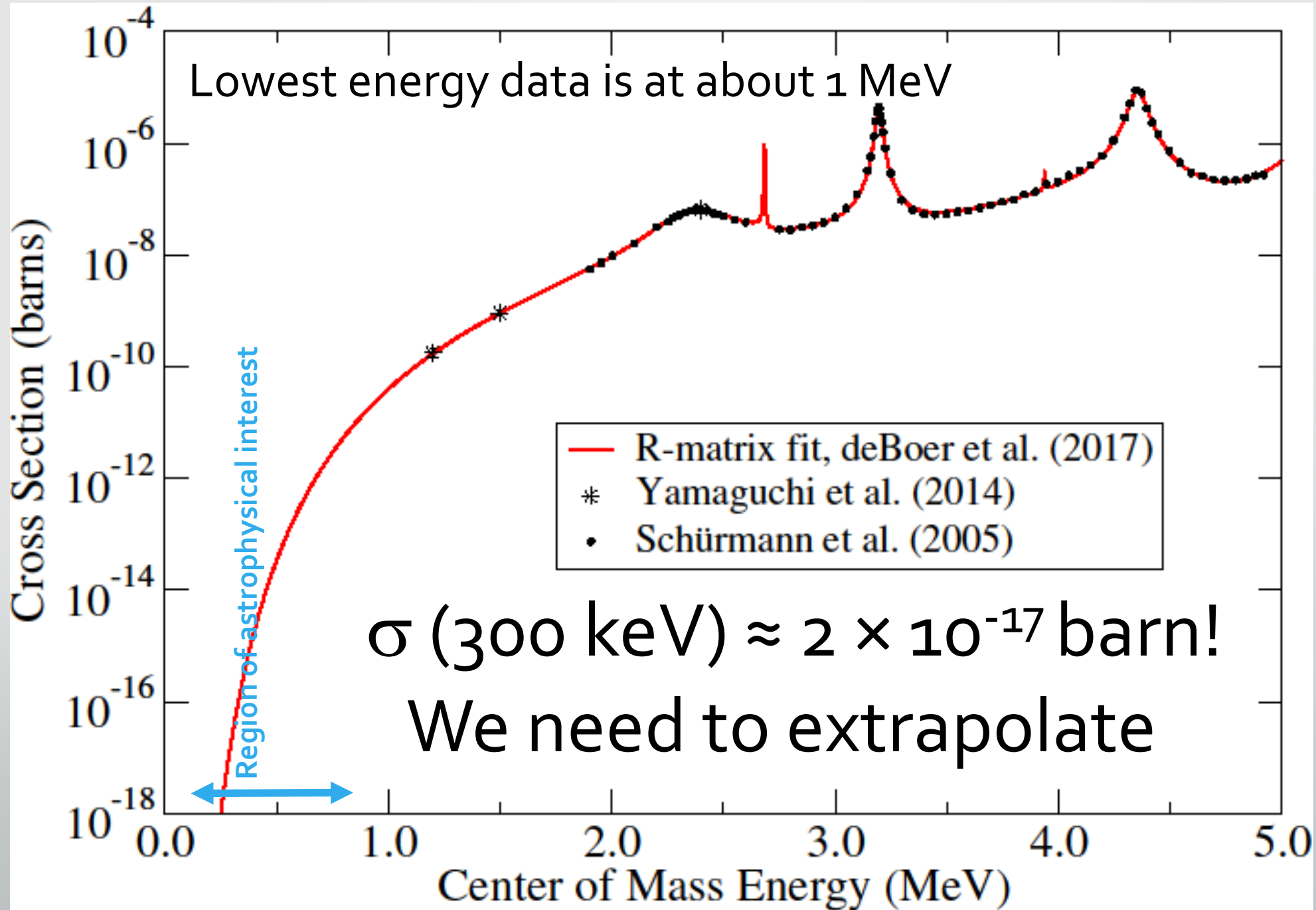


Figure 9. Relative uncertainties in the $^{12}\text{C}(\alpha, \gamma)^{16}\text{O}$ reaction rate of this work, expanded from those presented in deBoer *et al.* (2017). The uncertainties are normalized to the central value for clearer presentation. The regions of fading blue color represent 0.5σ steps in the Gaussian uncertainty distribution.

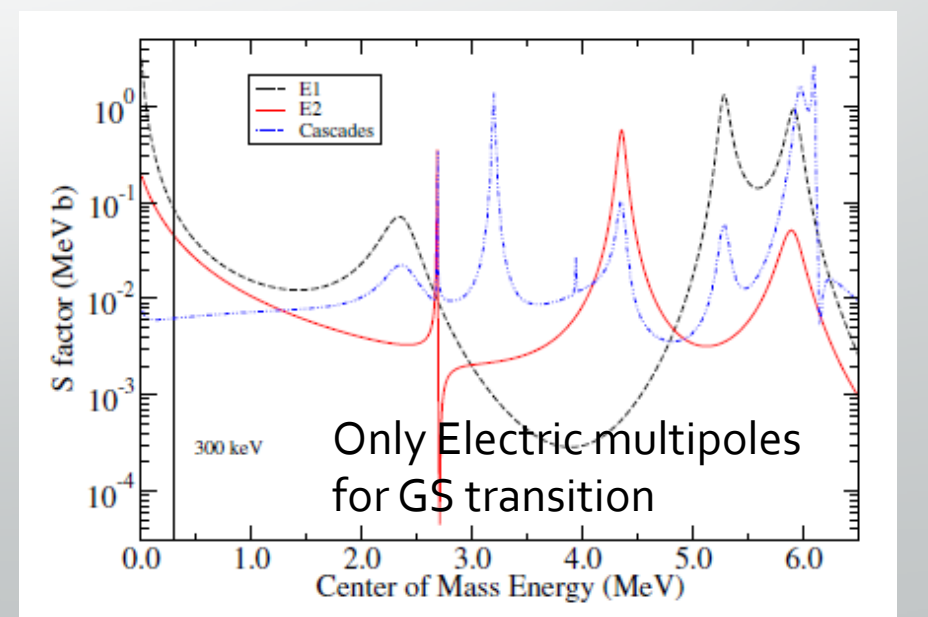
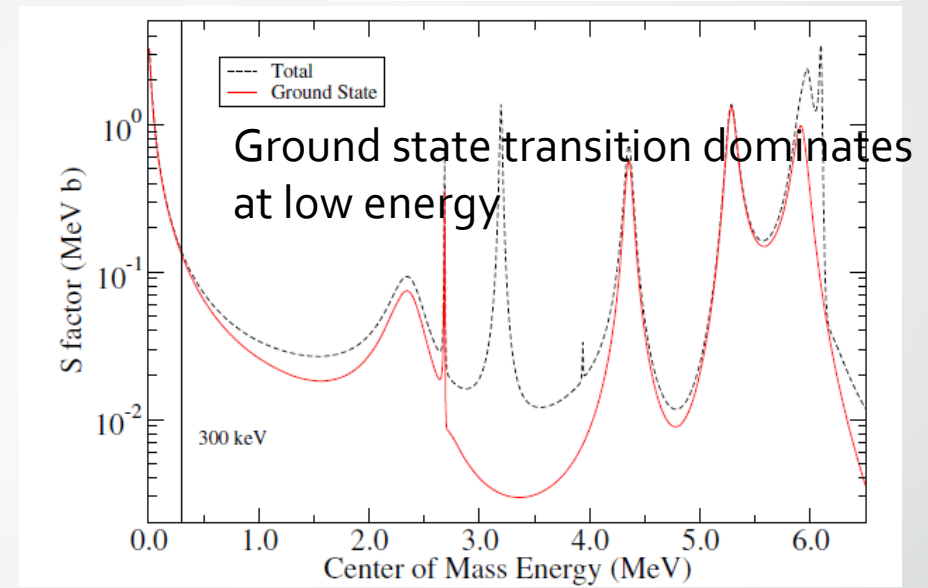
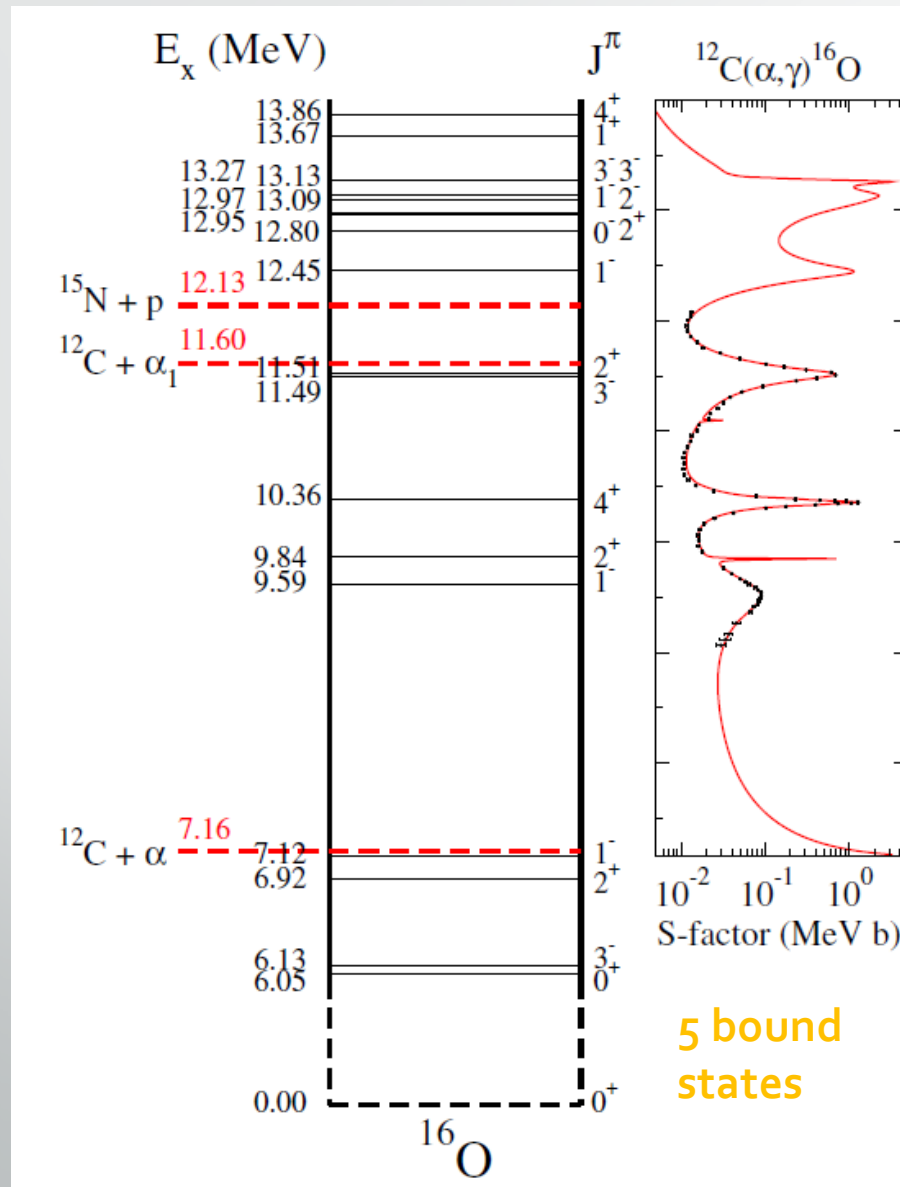
THE ASTROPHYSICAL JOURNAL, 954:51 (13pp), 2023 September 1





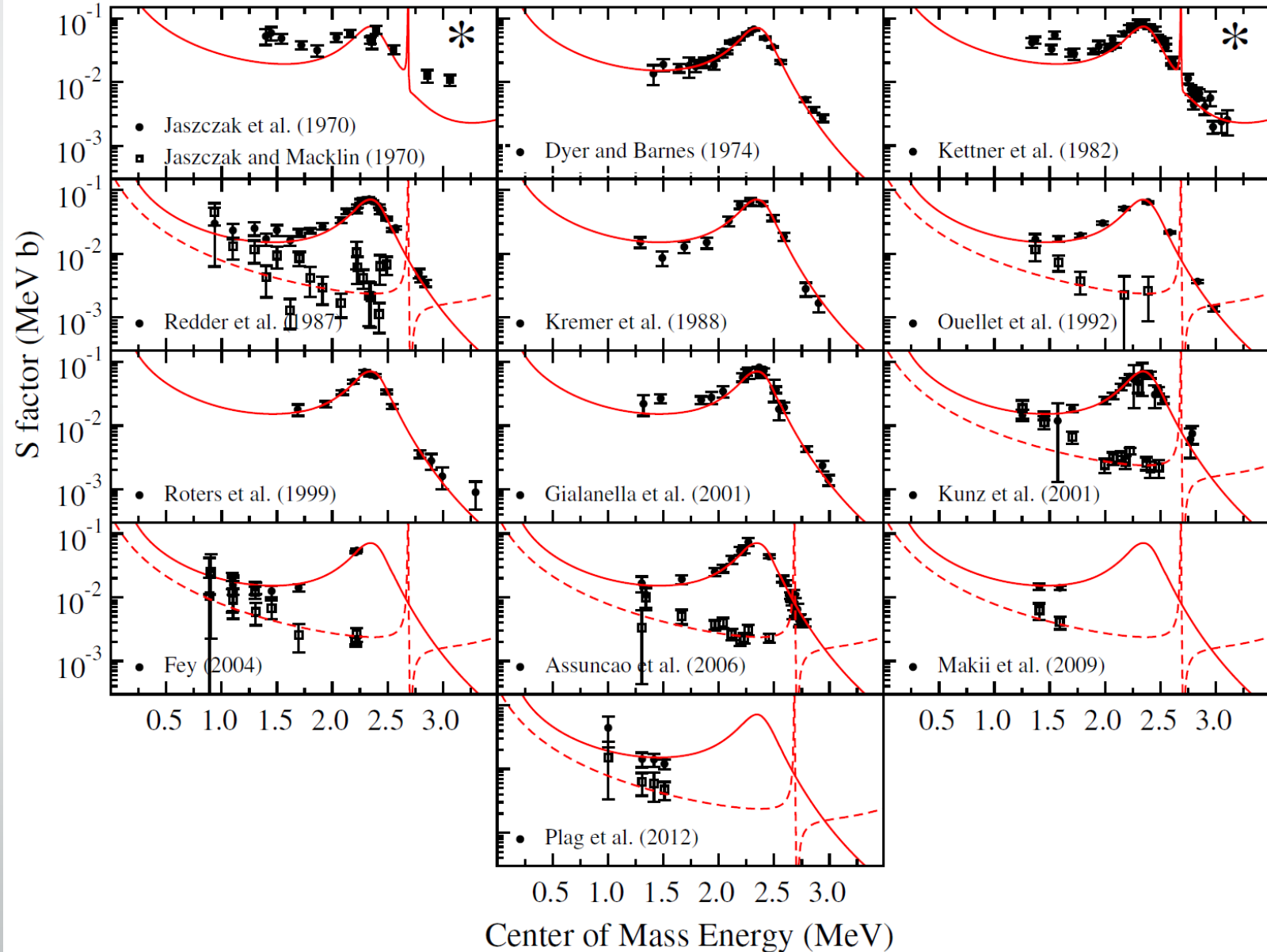
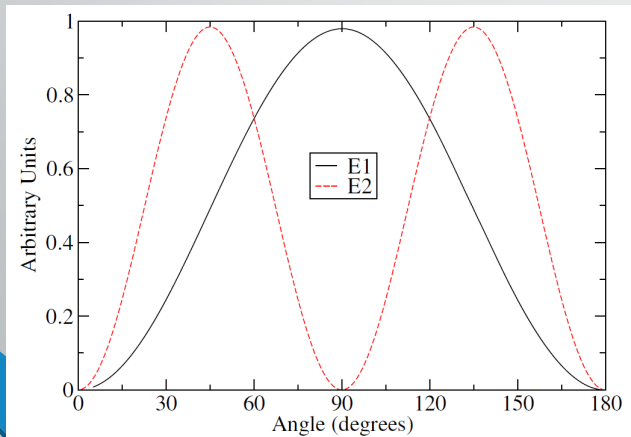
$^{12}\text{C}(\alpha, \gamma)^{16}\text{O}$ S-factor

$$S(E) = \sigma(E) E e^{2\pi\eta}$$



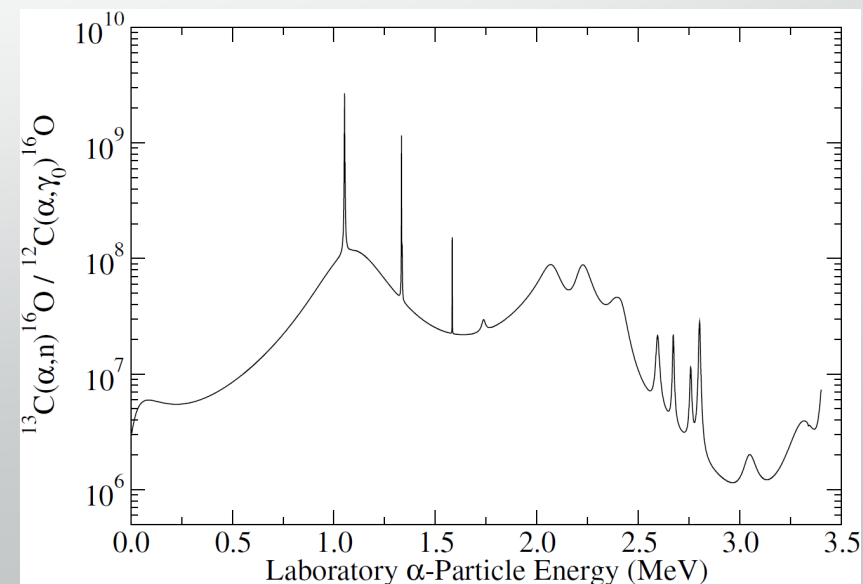
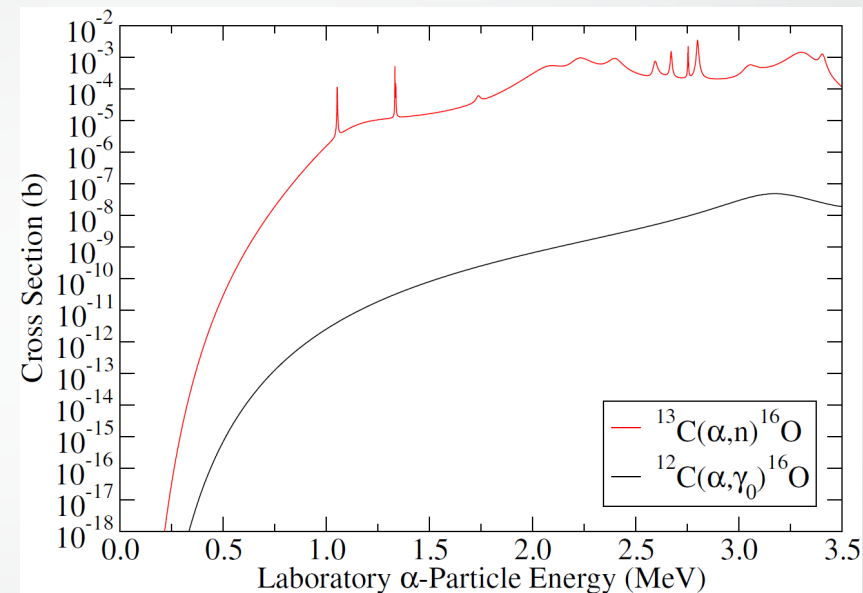
“World Data Set” for the ground state transition

- In hindsight, it was not the best idea to only report “E1 and E2” cross sections, since this makes it harder to understand discrepancies between the different measurements



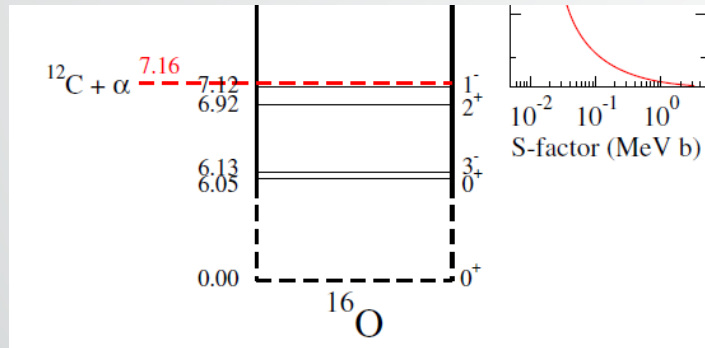
Major experimental challenges

- Very low cross section
- Background reactions
 - $^{13}\text{C}(\alpha, n)^{16}\text{O}$
 - High Q-value (n, γ) on nearby material
- Inverse kinematics has issues
- Solutions
 - Very clean target / beam lines
 - Time-of-flight method to separate prompt γ -ray signals from (n, γ) delayed ones
 - Recoil separators
 - More exotic solutions

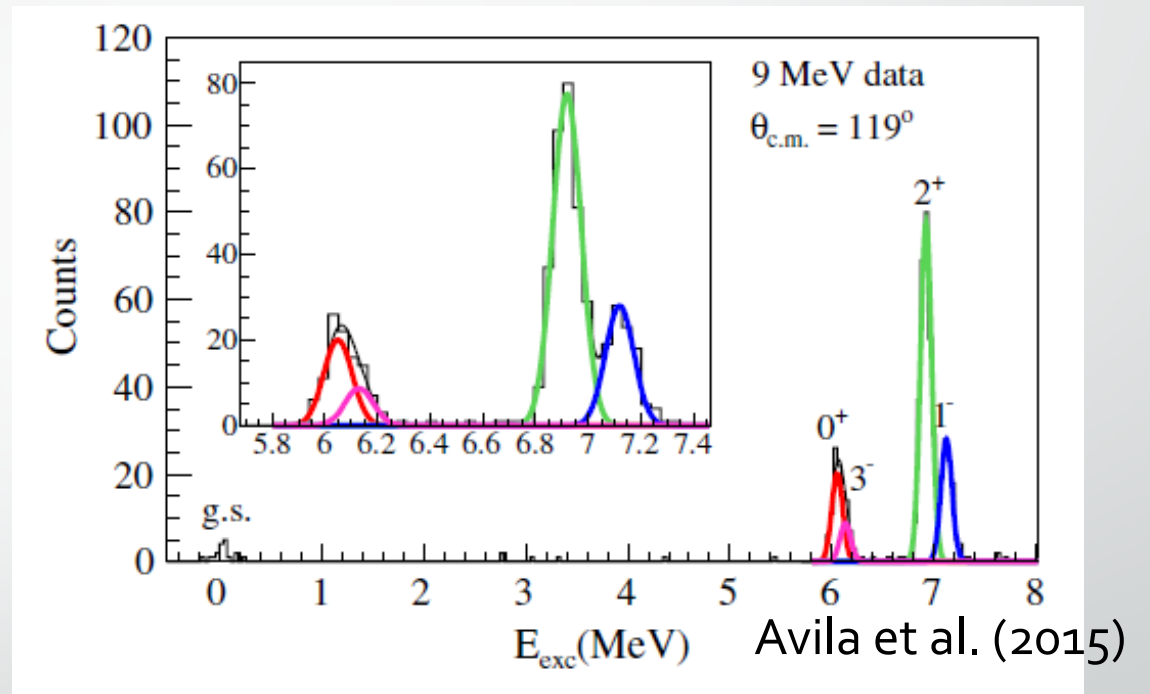
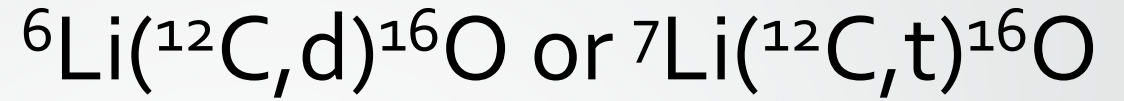


Transfer reaction studies

- SubCoulomb measurements of Asymptotic Normalization Coefficients ($C_{\lambda c}$)

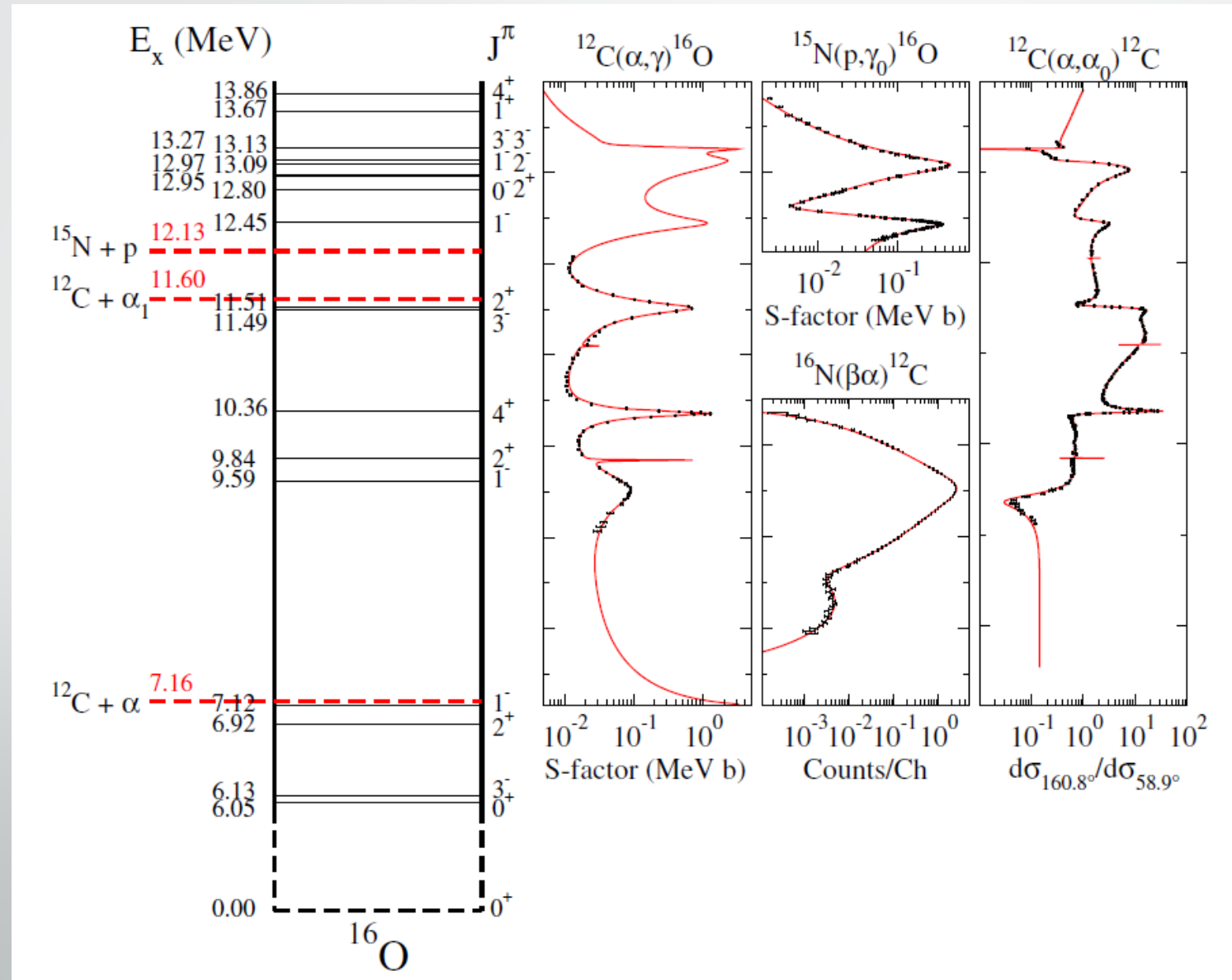


$$C_{\lambda c} = \frac{(2\mu_{\alpha}a_c)^{1/2}}{\hbar W_c(a_c)} \frac{\tilde{\gamma}_{\lambda c}}{[1 + \sum_{c'} \tilde{\gamma}_{\lambda c'}^2 (dS_{c'}/dE)(\tilde{E}_{\lambda})]^{1/2}},$$

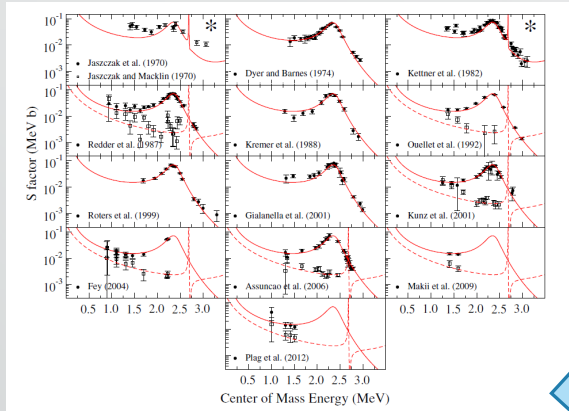


| Reference | ANC _α (fm ^{-1/2}) | |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| | 6.92 MeV, 2 ⁺ | 7.12 MeV, 1 ⁻ |
| <i>Transfer</i> | | |
| Brune <i>et al.</i> (1999) | 1.14(10) × 10 ⁵ | 2.08(20) × 10 ¹⁴ |
| Belhout <i>et al.</i> (2007) | 1.40(50) × 10 ^{5c} | 1.87(54) × 10 ¹⁴ |
| Oulebsir <i>et al.</i> (2012) | 1.44(28) × 10 ⁵ | 2.00(35) × 10 ¹⁴ |
| Avila <i>et al.</i> (2015) | 1.22(7) × 10 ⁵ | 2.09(14) × 10 ¹⁴ |

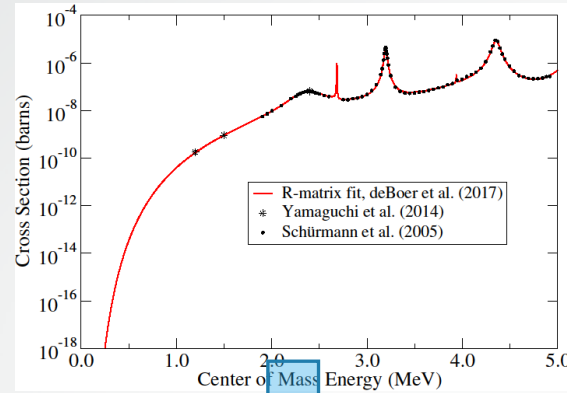
Other compound nucleus reactions



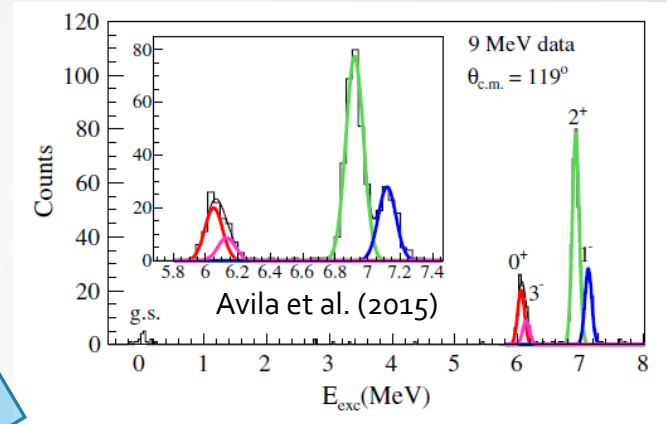
Phenomenological R-matrix



Low energy $^{12}\text{C}(\alpha, \gamma)^{16}\text{O}$ data



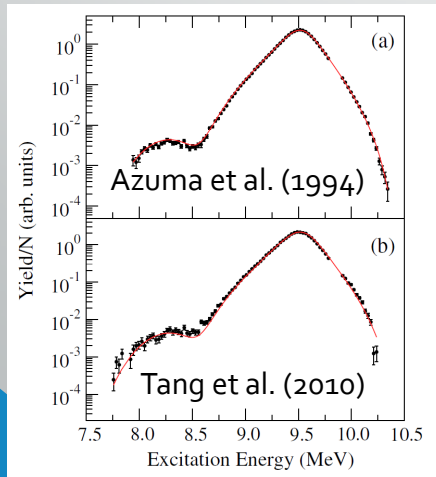
Total capture cross sections (recoils)



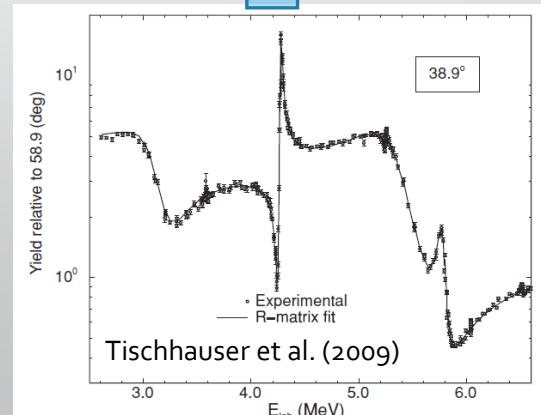
Bound state ANCs

$$R_{cc'} = \sum_{\lambda} \frac{\gamma_{\lambda c} \gamma_{\lambda c'}}{E_{\lambda} - E}$$

$^{16}\text{N}(\beta\alpha)^{12}\text{C}$ spectrum



$^{12}\text{C}(\alpha, \alpha)^{12}\text{C}$ data



Multichannel R-matrix

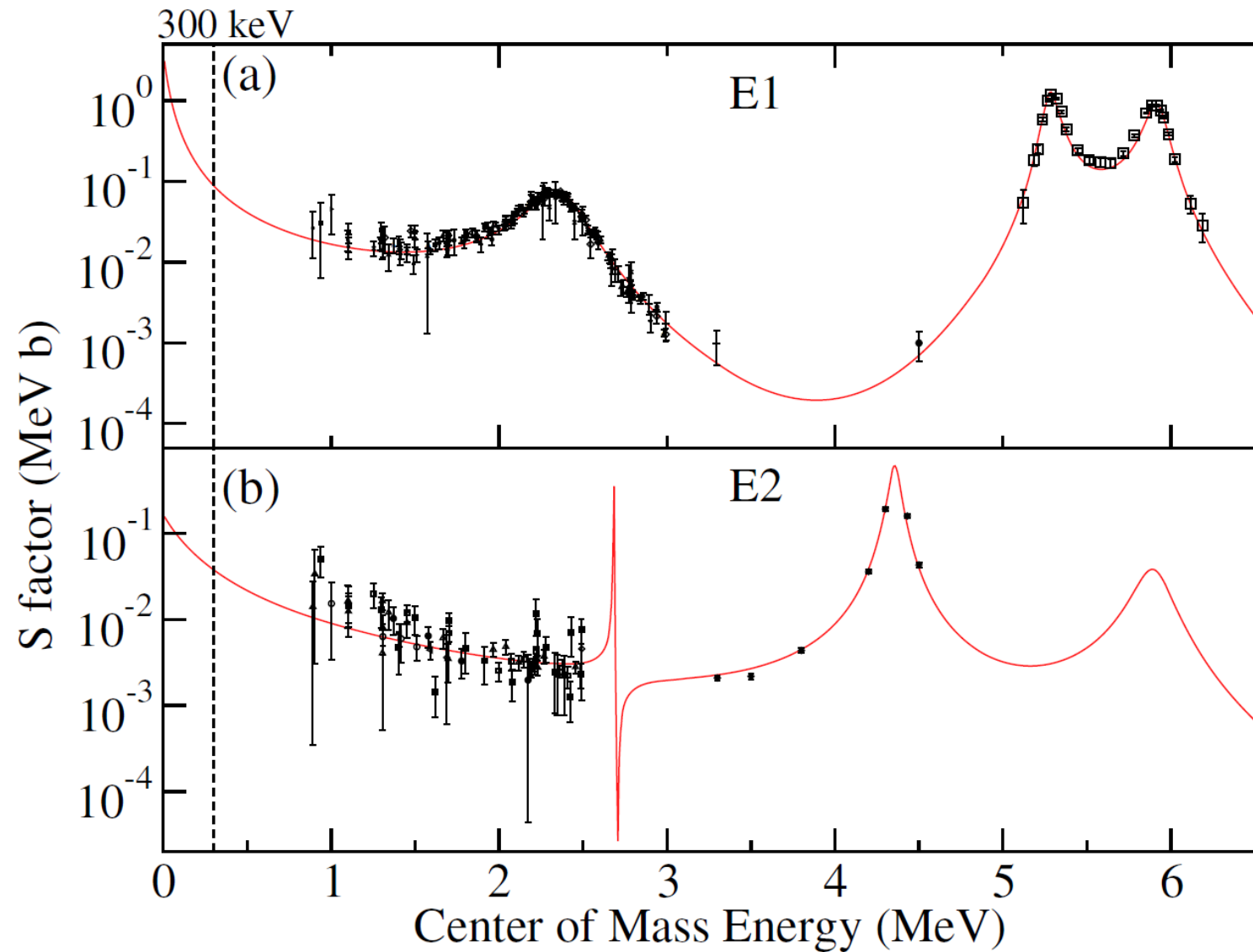
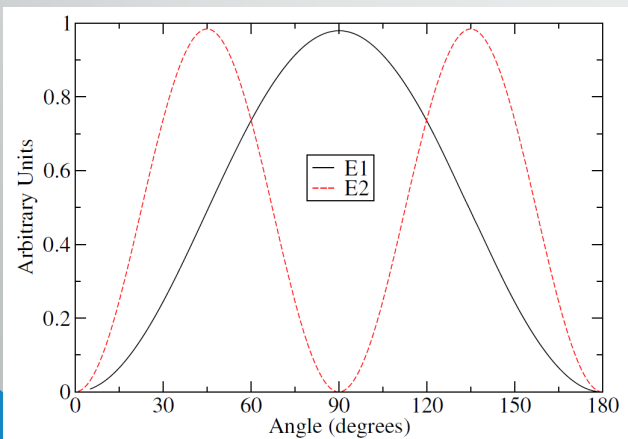
$$U = \rho^{\frac{1}{2}} O^{-1} (1 - \mathbf{R}L_0)^{-1} (1 - \mathbf{R}L_0^*) \mathbf{I} \rho^{-\frac{1}{2}}$$

$$T_{cc'} = e^{2i\omega_c} \delta_{cc'} - U_{cc'}$$

$$\sigma_{\alpha\alpha'} = \frac{\pi}{k_{\alpha}^2} \sum_{Jl'l's's'} g_J |T_{cc'}^J|^2$$

Data inconsistencies

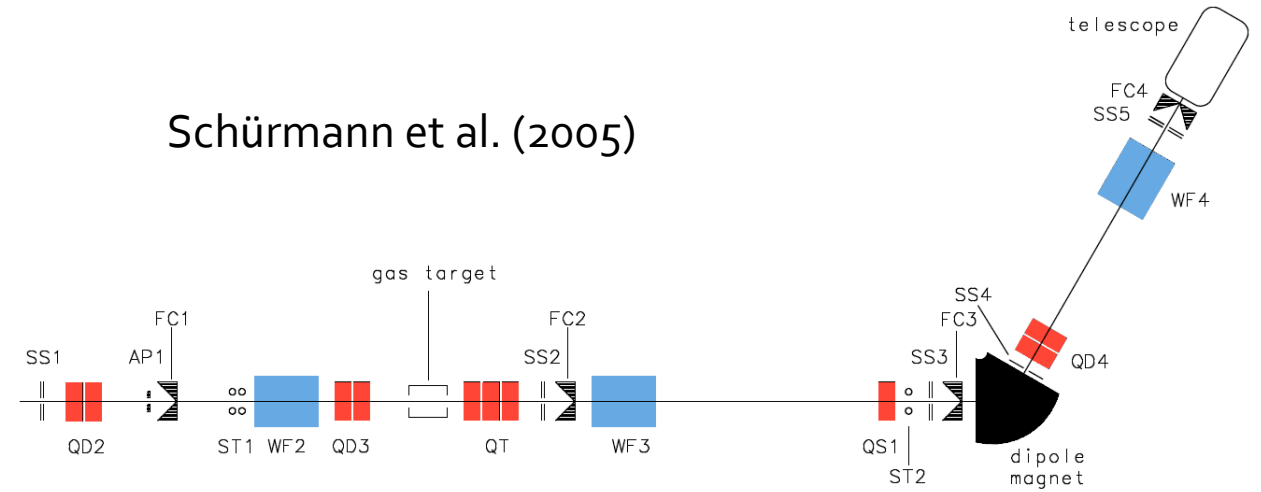
- “World data sets”
- Normalized here, but still show a lot of scatter
- Larger discrepancies in ground state E2 data
- However, more modern measurements have, usually, produced more consistent data



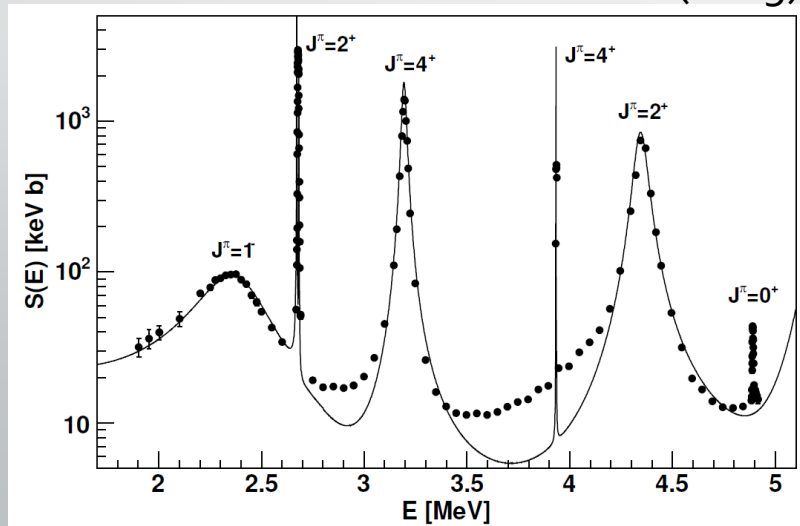
Measurement Highlights: ERNA

- Schürmann *et al.* (2005, 2011)
- High precision total cross section measurement over a wide energy range
- Cascade transition measurements over a difficult range to access using standard methods
- Is extremely helpful in constraining background contributions in the R-matrix fit
- **New measurements under development at Caserta.**

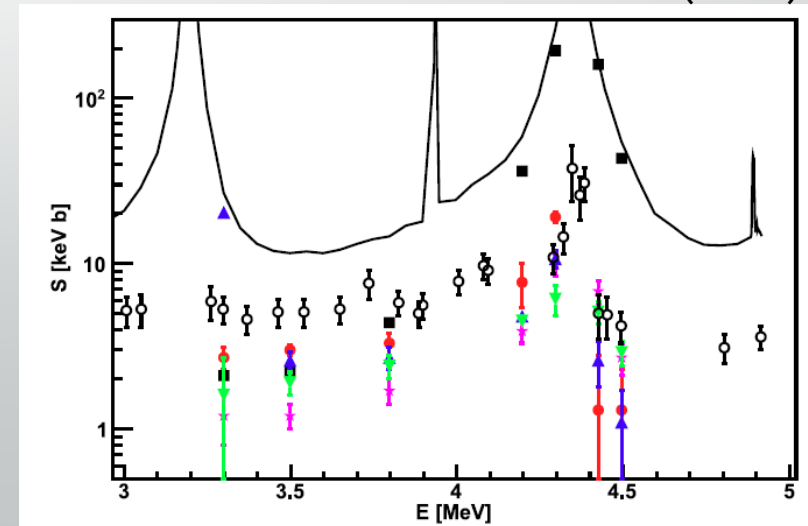
Schürmann *et al.* (2005)



Schürmann *et al.* (2005)

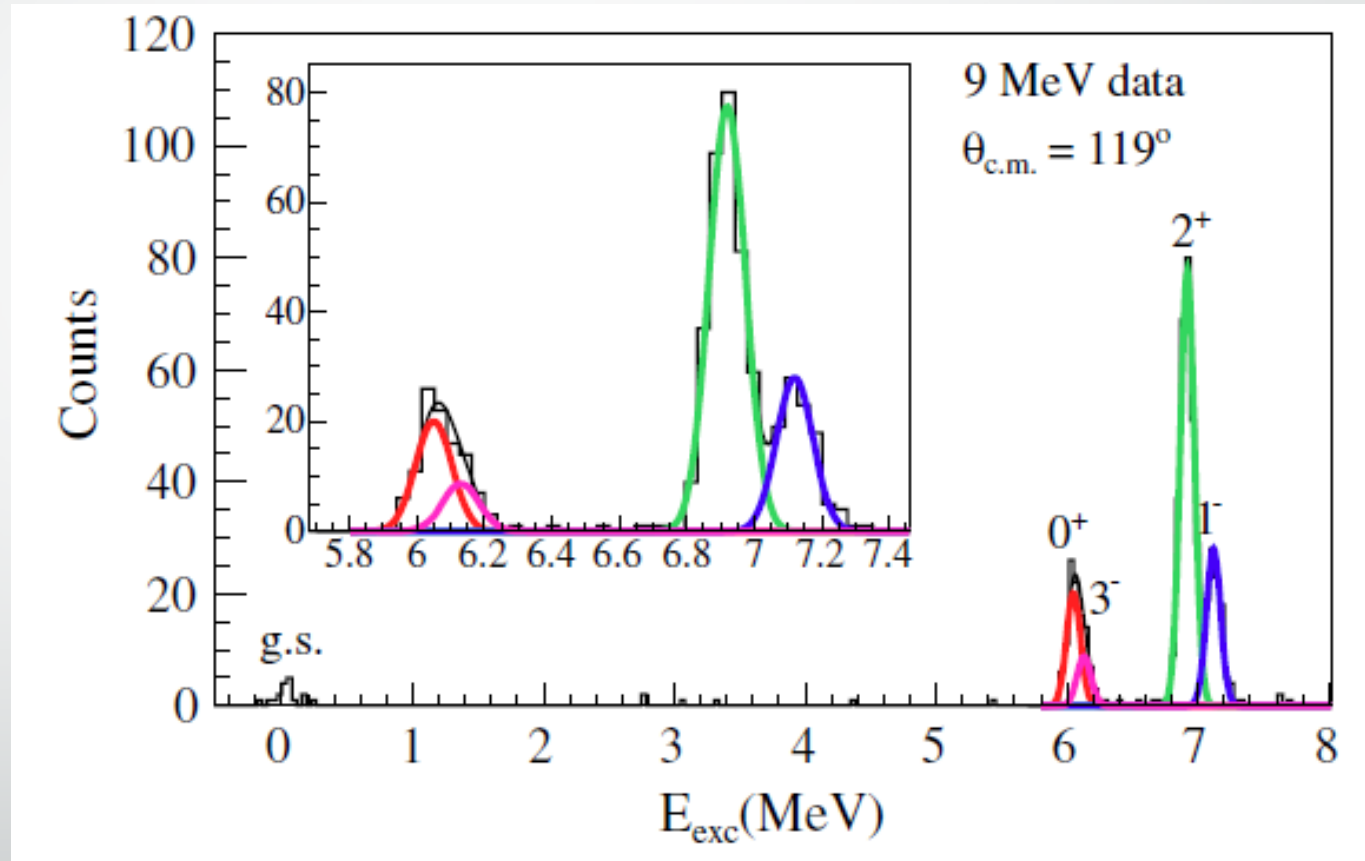


Schürmann *et al.* (2011)



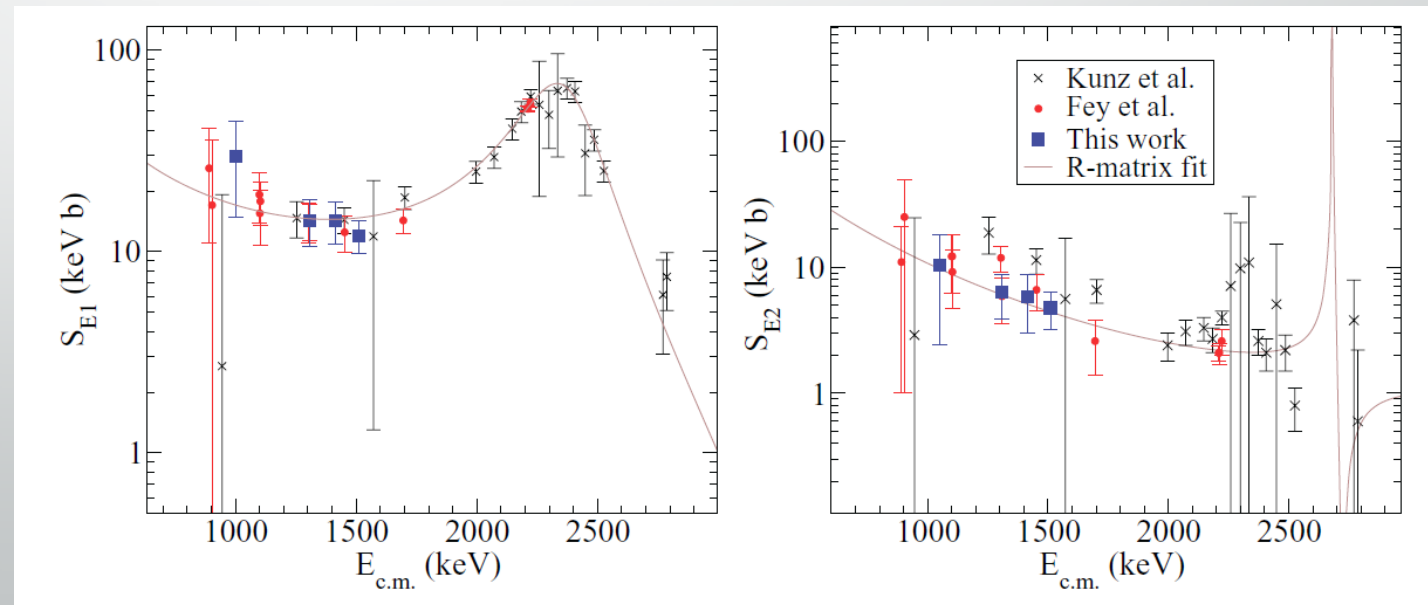
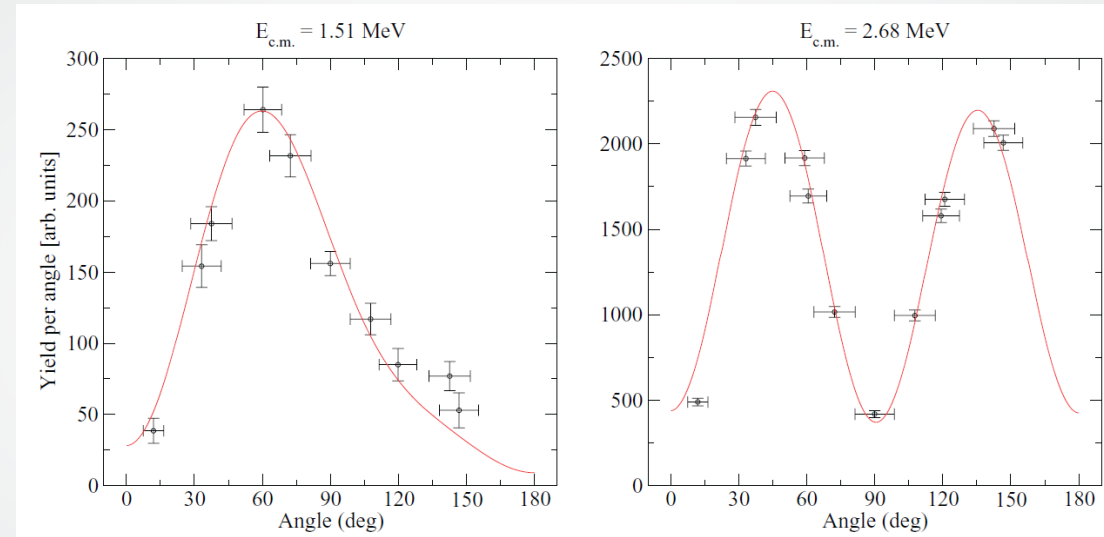
Measurement Highlights: TAMU ANCs

- Avila et al. (2015)
- Built on the ground breaking **sub-Coulomb** transfer measurements by Brune et al. (1999)
- $^{12}\text{C}(^6\text{Li},d)^{16}\text{O}$
- Improved measurements of the 2^+ and 1^- ANCs, **first measurements of the 0^+ and 3^- ANCs**
- Around 10% uncertainties achieved



Measurement Highlight: High Precision $^{12}\text{C}(\alpha, \gamma)^{16}\text{O}$ low energy measurements

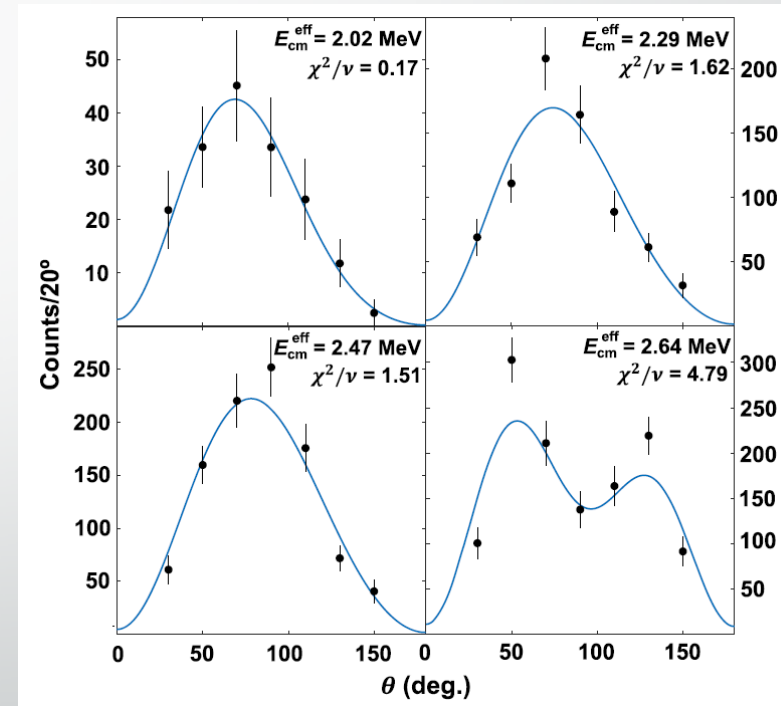
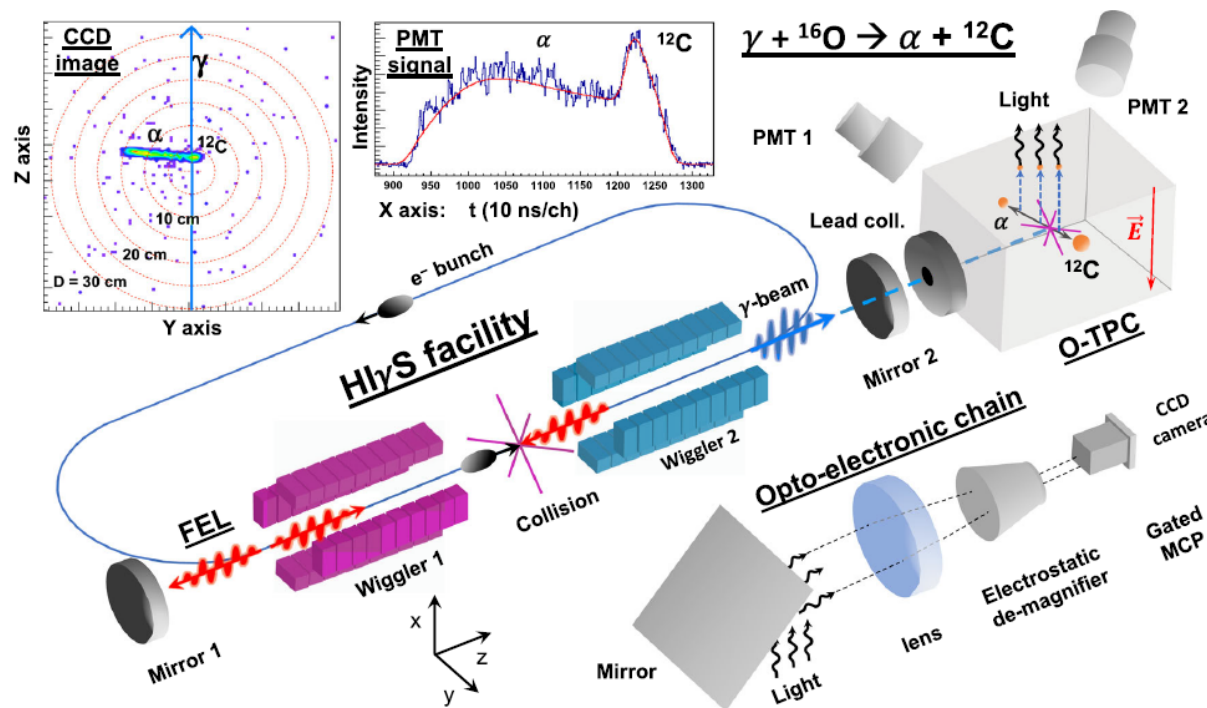
- Plag et al. (2012)
- Used **time-of-flight** to separate out background from (n, γ) reactions produced by neutrons from the $^{13}\text{C}(\alpha, n)^{16}\text{O}$ reaction
- BaF_2 array for **detailed angular distribution measurements**
- All angular distribution data is given, not just E1 and E2 data



Measurement Highlight : $^{16}\text{O}(\gamma, \alpha)^{12}\text{C}$

NATURE COMMUNICATIONS | <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-021-26179-x>

ARTICLE



Smith *et al.* (2021)

Long campaign (hundreds of hours) led by Moshe Gai

Measurement Highlight : Alternative transfer reactions

- Shen et al. (2019, 2020)
- $^{12}\text{C}(^{11}\text{B}, ^7\text{Li})^{16}\text{O}$
- Probing the model and reaction sensitivity of ANC determination
- 2^+ ANC is re-measured in (2019)
- GS ANC is measured in (2020)

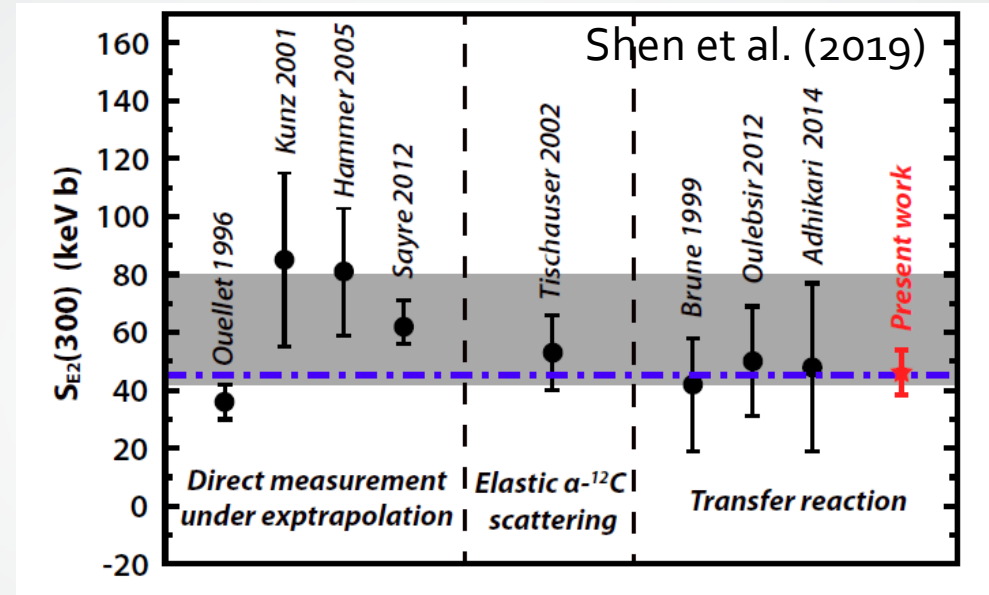
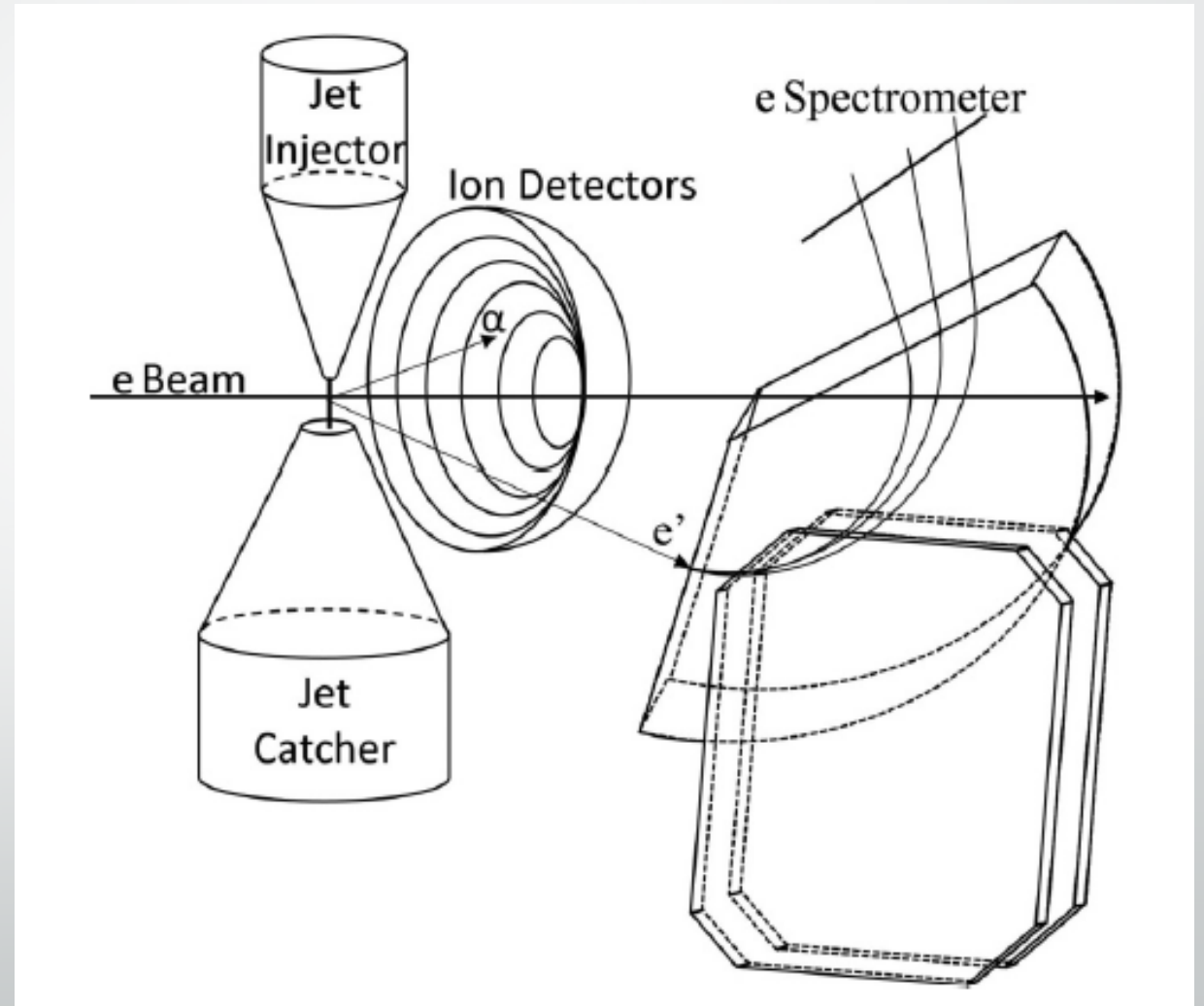
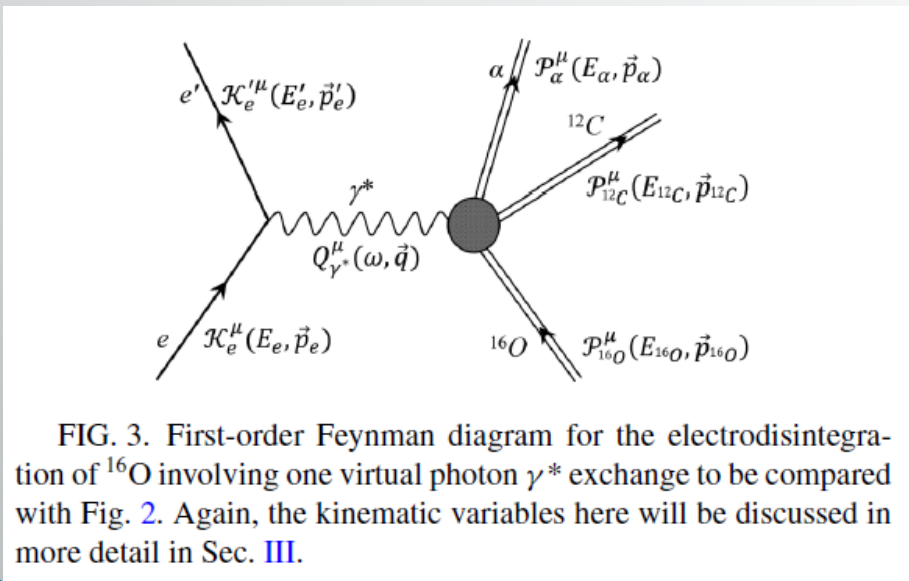


TABLE I. Present ANC of the ^{16}O GS and other available results in the literature. Shen et al. (2020)

| Reference | ANC (fm ^{-1/2}) | Method |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Adhikari (2009) [14] | 13.9 ± 2.4 | ^{16}O + Pb breakup |
| Morais (2011) [16] | 3390 (WS1) 1230 (WS2) 750 (FP) | $^{12}\text{C}(^{16}\text{O}, ^{12}\text{C})^{16}\text{O}$ |
| Sayre (2012) [11] | 709 | R matrix |
| Adhikari (2017) [15] | 637 ± 86 | $^{12}\text{C}(^7\text{Li}, t)^{16}\text{O}$ |
| Present | 337 ± 45 | $^{12}\text{C}(^{11}\text{B}, ^7\text{Li})^{16}\text{O}$ |

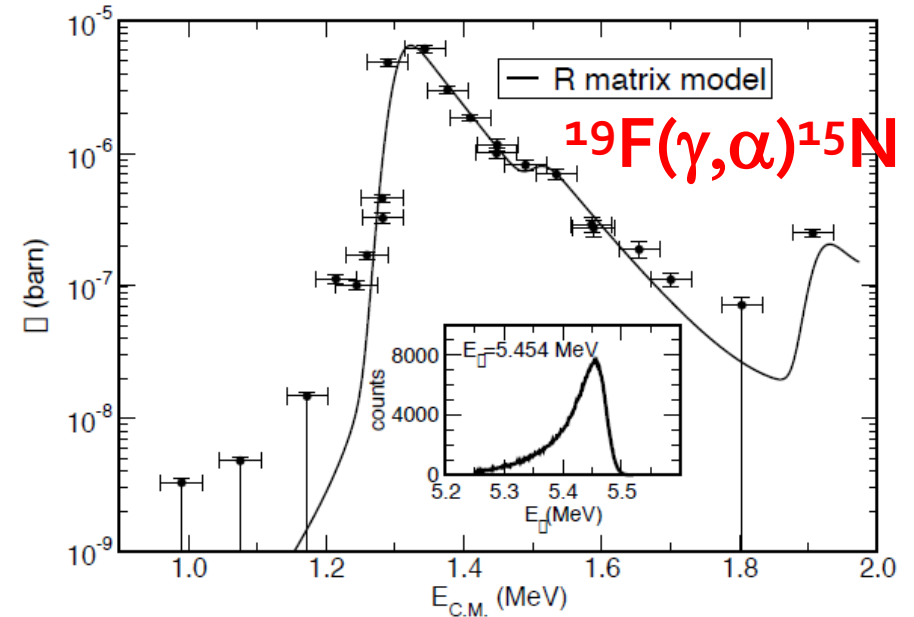
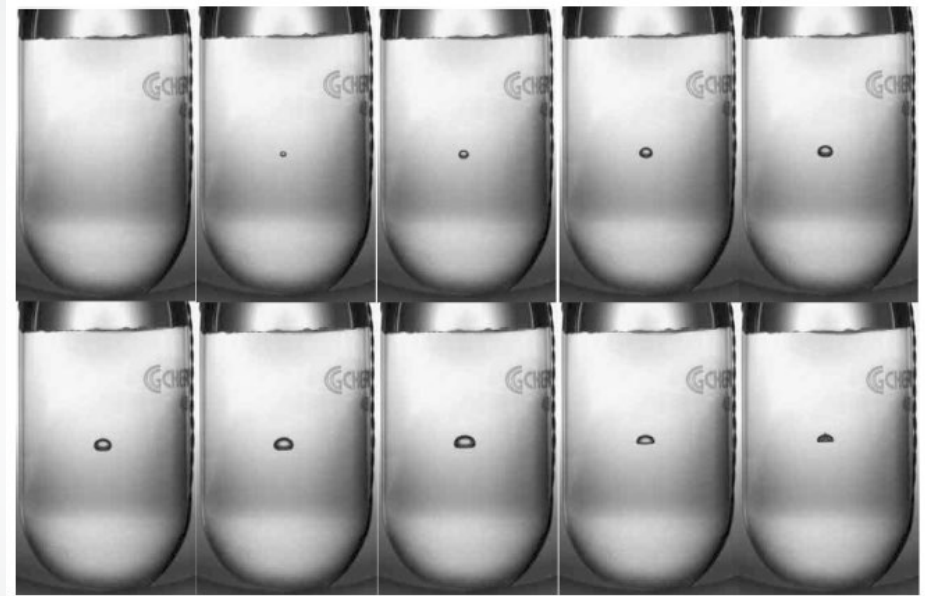
On the horizon: $^{16}\text{O}(e, e'\alpha)^{12}\text{C}$

- MIT group
 - See Friščić et al. (2019)



On the horizon: $^{16}\text{O}(\gamma,\alpha)^{12}\text{C}$

- Jefferson Laboratory
- Ernst Rehm and Claudio Ugalde
- Bubble Chamber + Bremsstrahlung beam
- Previous tests at HI γ S
- Not sure on current status?



On the horizon: Coulomb dissociation of ^{16}O on lead

- FAIR at GSI

- Aims to get 10% uncertainty at 1 MeV
- Will cover a wide energy range
- Some measurements made, but still under analysis

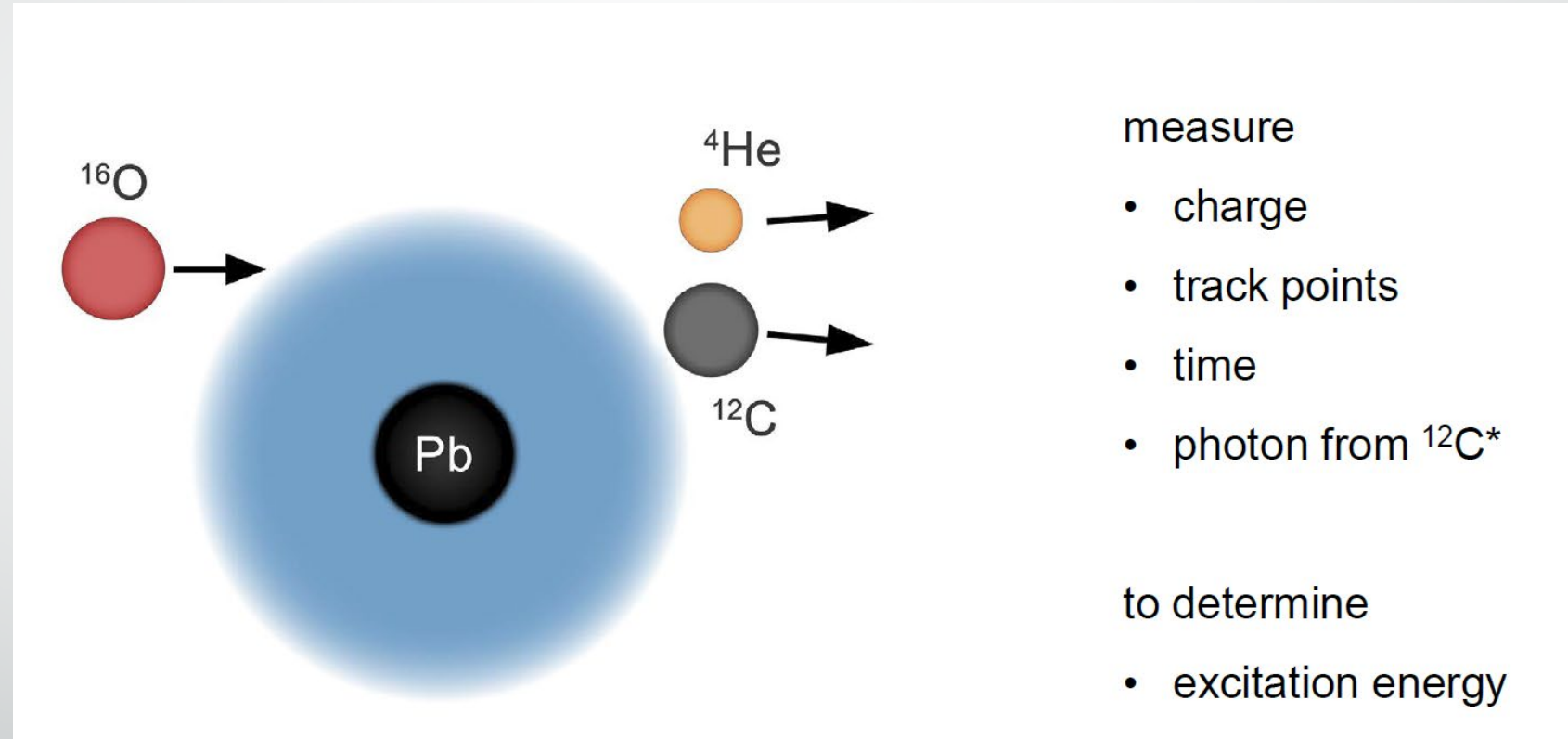
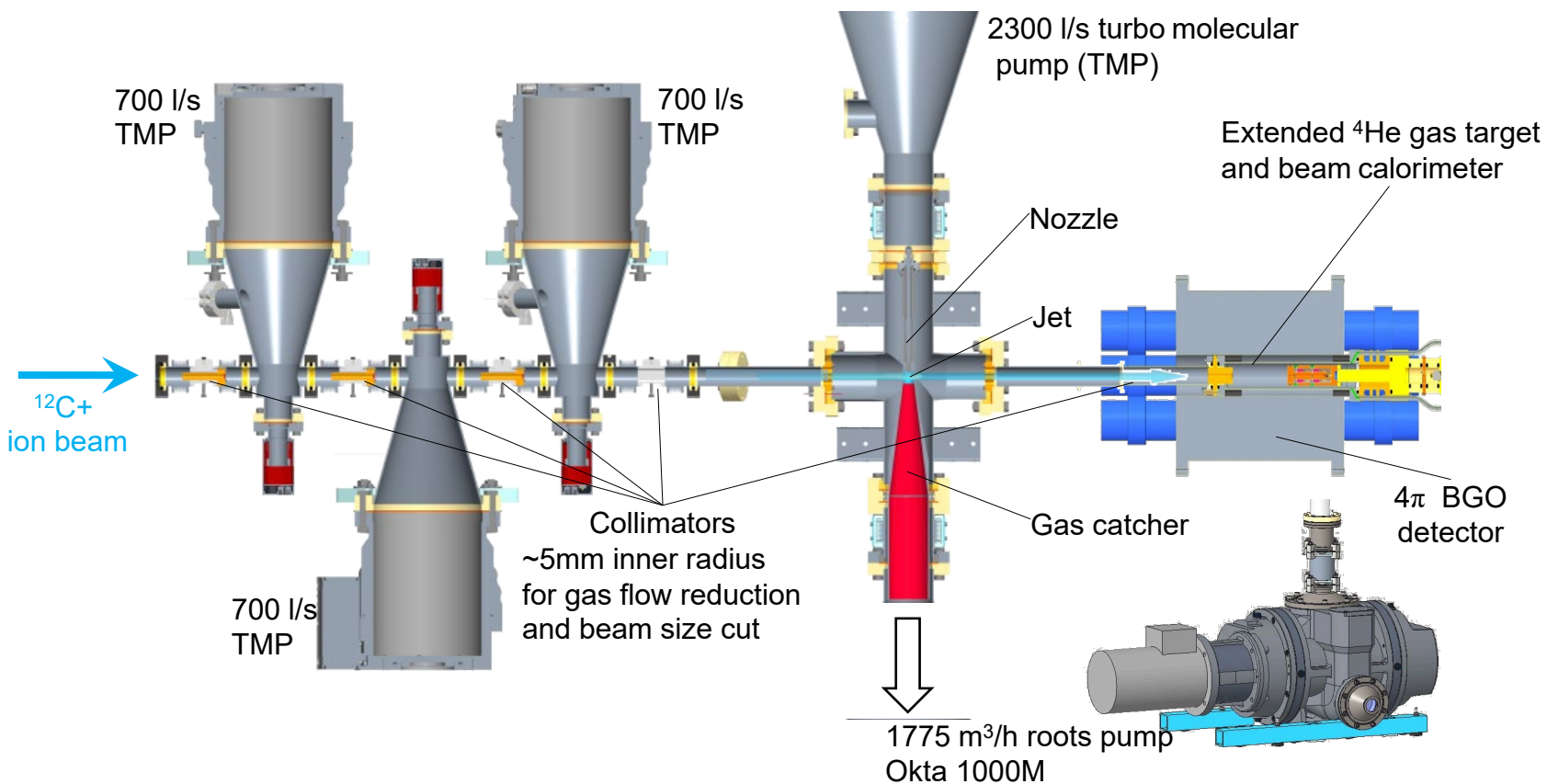
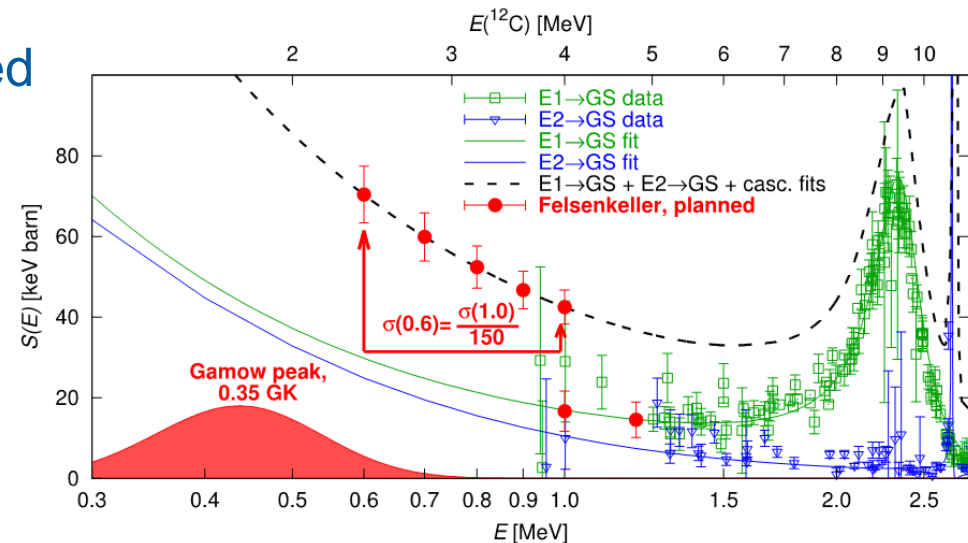


Figure courtesy of Rene Reifarth

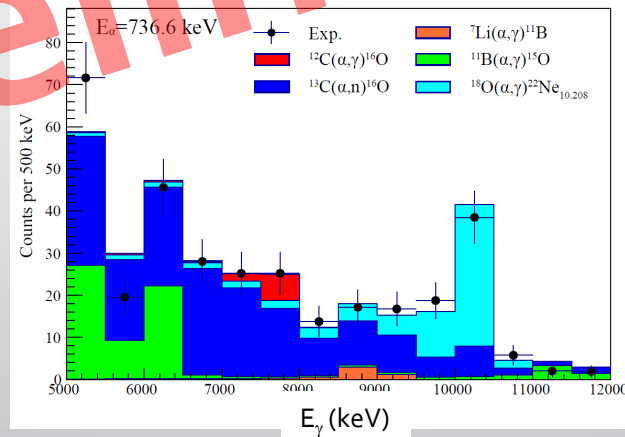
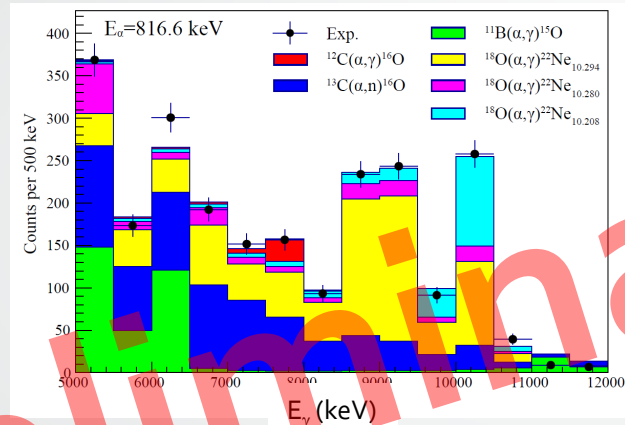
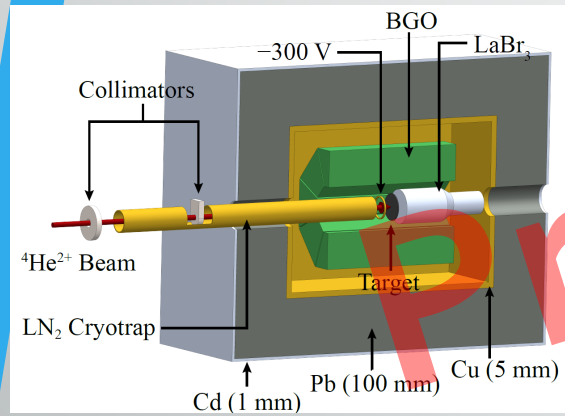
On the Horizon: Felsenkeller planned Gas Jet Target based study of $^{12}\text{C}(\alpha,\gamma)^{16}\text{O}$

- ◆ $^{12}\text{C}(\alpha,\gamma)^{16}\text{O}$ potential for Felsenkeller with $^{12}\text{C}+$ beam, extended windowless ^4He gas target, γ -calorimeter, and 4π detector
- ◆ At Felsenkeller, planned to cover energy range from 0.6 – 2.0 MeV
- ◆ Gas target is complete, detector procurement is underway

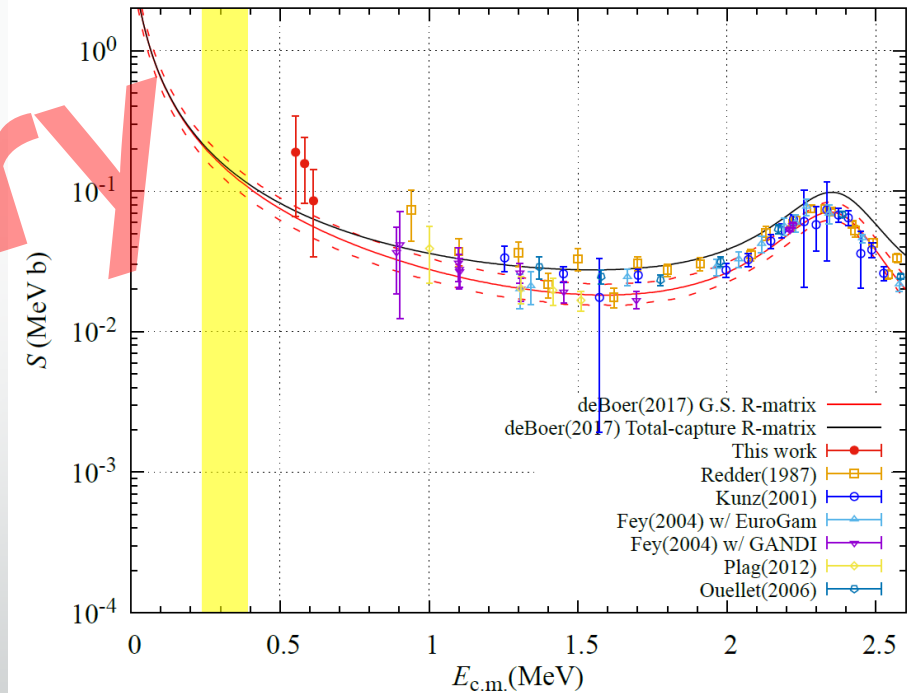


On the Horizon: **Preliminary** Measurements from JUNA

Milliamp beam
TiC target

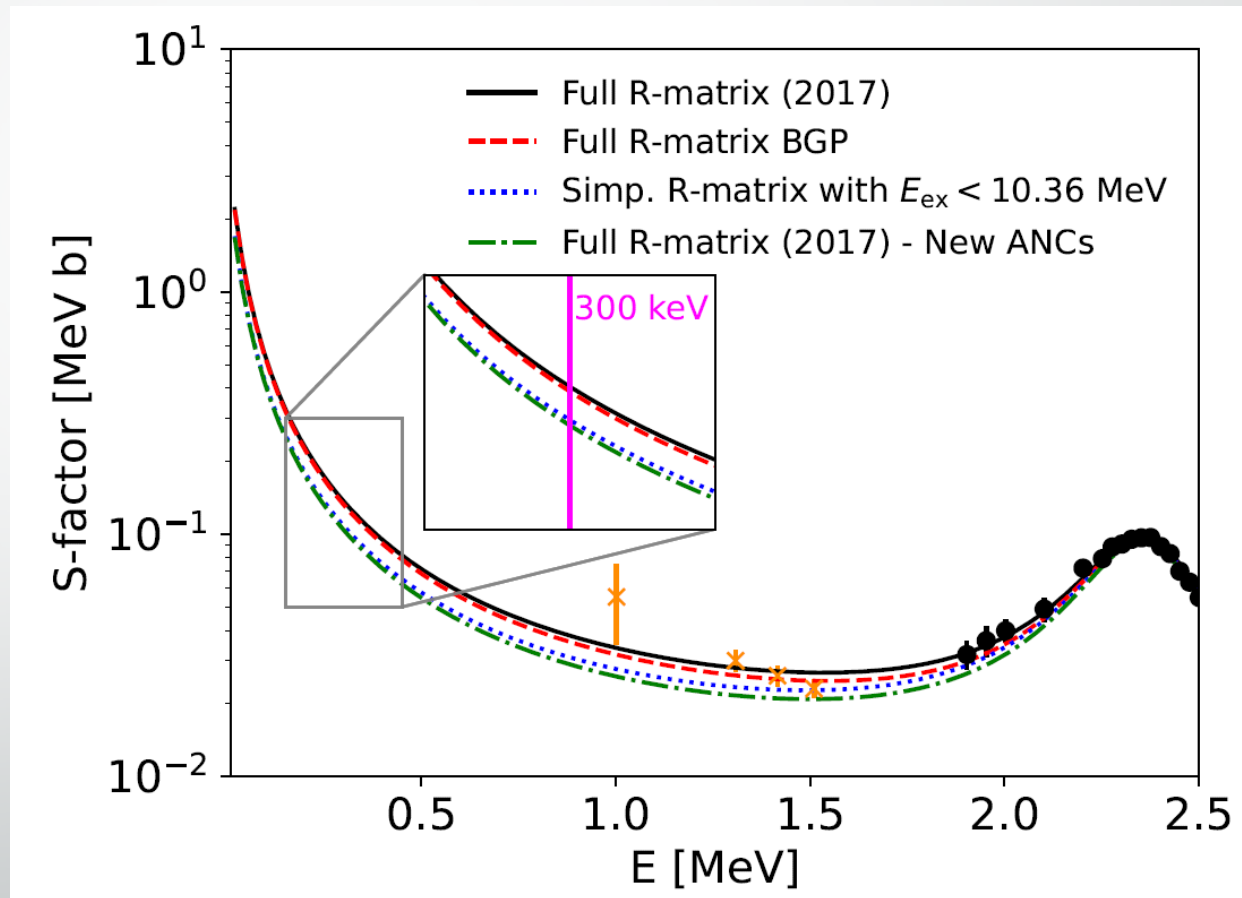


Submitted for publication, Y.P. Shen *et al.*



Recent questions about α particle ANCs

- Revised ${}^6\text{Li}$ ANC effects the ANCs of any (${}^6\text{Li},d$) type alpha transfer measurement
- In the case of ${}^{12}\text{C}(\alpha,\gamma){}^{16}\text{O}$, it would imply **smaller** ANCs and therefore a smaller cross section by about 30%

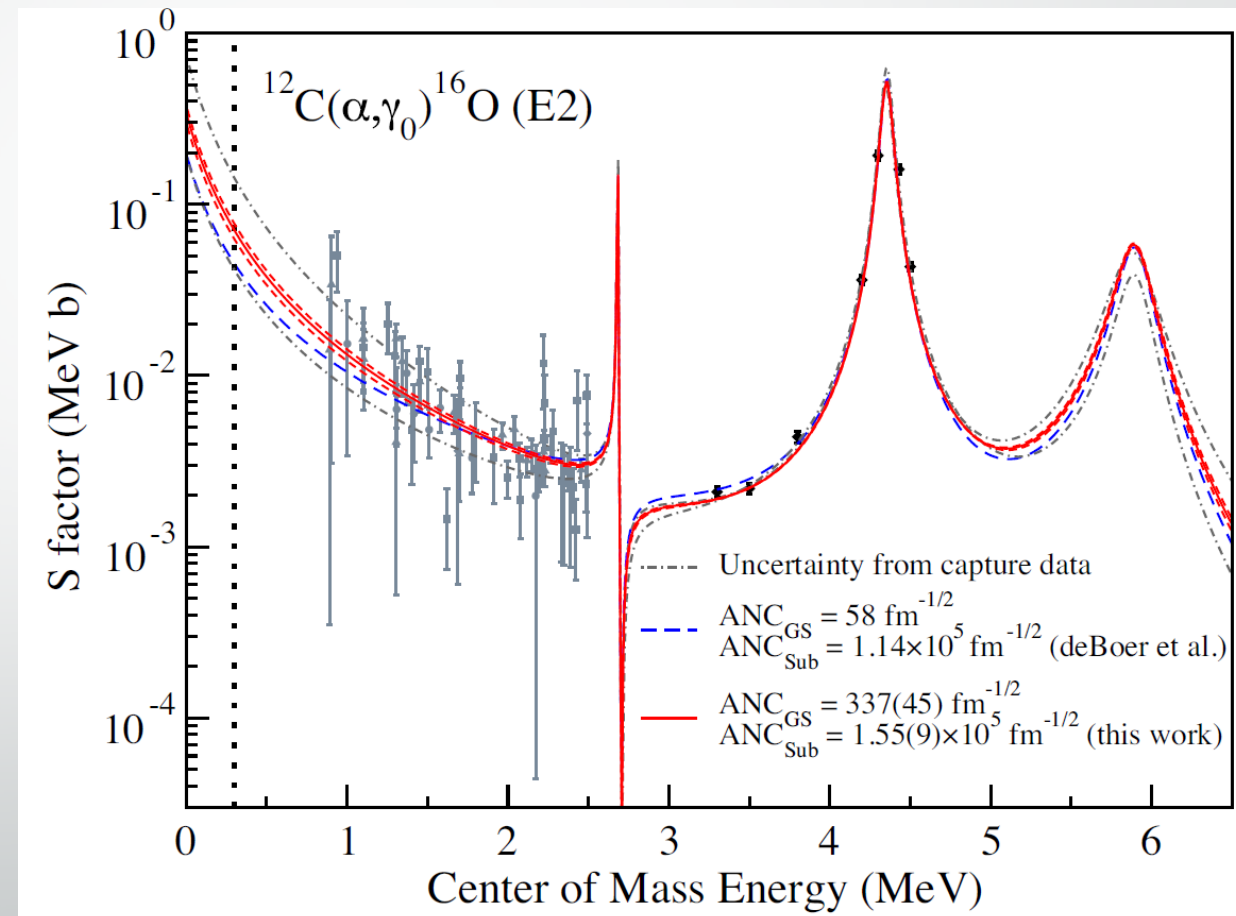


Hebborn *et al.* (arXiv, July 2023)

Multiple GS and 2^+ ANC solutions

Shen *et al.* (2020)

- $^{12}\text{C}(^{11}\text{B}, ^7\text{Li})^{16}\text{O}$ a transfer was used to measure the ground state ANC
- E2 external capture is small, but at very low energies its interference with the 2^+ subthreshold state is substantial
- However, effect is lower in energy than we can measure directly
- Implies a **larger** 2^+ ANC is needed



Revised method of extracting ANCs from scattering phase shifts

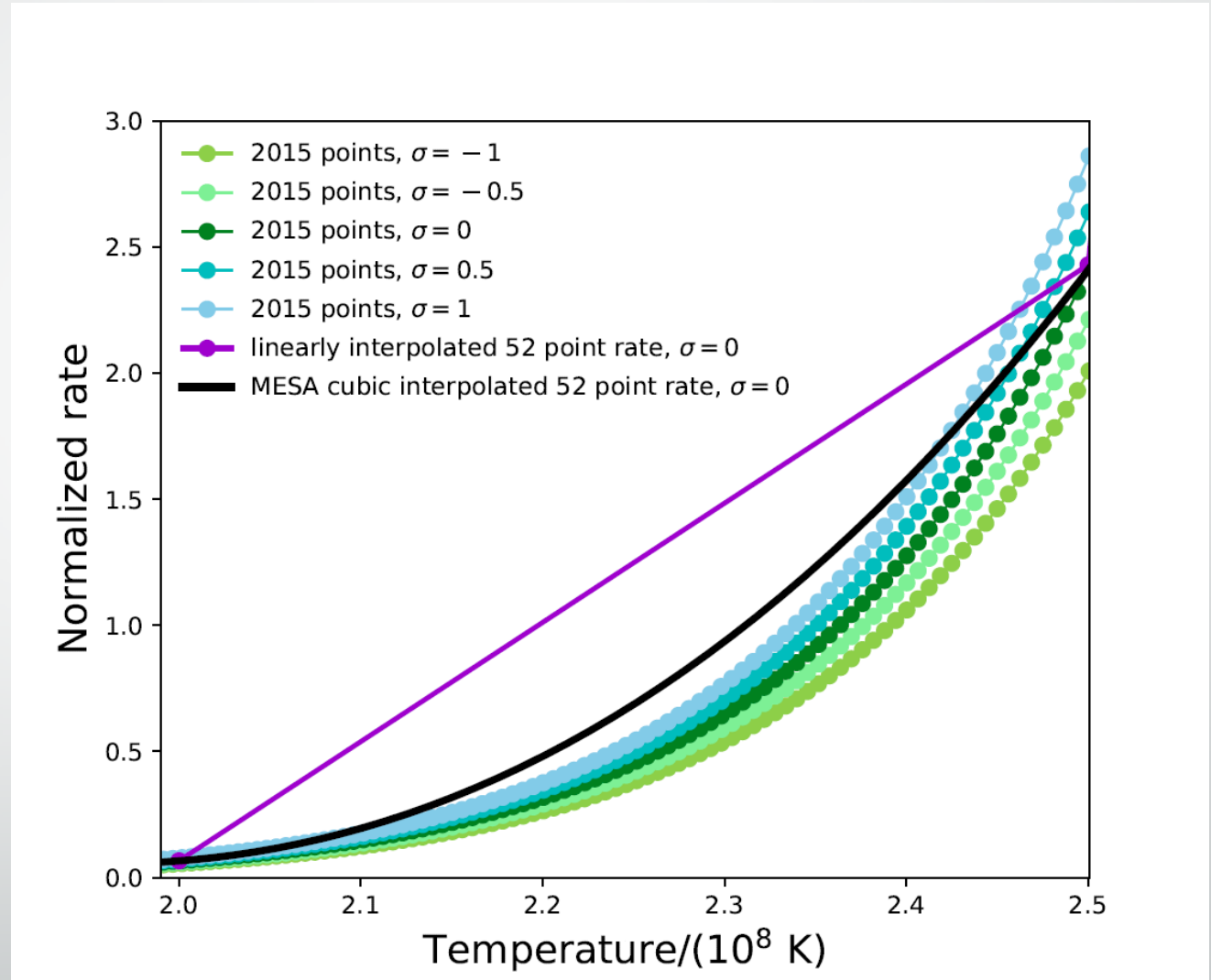
deBoer
et al. (2017)

- Blokhintsev *et al.* (2023), Mukhamedzhanov *et al.* (arXiv, 2024)
- Extraction of ANCs using Tisshauser *et al.* (2009) phase shifts
- Question about uncertainties
- **Larger** 2+ ANC ($1.14 \rightarrow 1.42$) 10^5 fm^{-1/2}

| Transition to the ground state via | $S(300 \text{ keV})$ | $S(300 \text{ keV})$ |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| resonance + direct capture | Present | Ref. [2] |
| $E1$ | 98 | 85 |
| $E2$ | 70 | 45 |
| $E1 + E2$ | 168 | 130 |
| cascade | Present | Ref. [2] |
| $0_2^+ + 3^- + 2^+ + 1^-$ | 6 | 7 |
| total | Present | Ref. [2] |
| $E1 + E2 + \text{cascade}$ | 174 | 137 |

Improvement in reaction rate tabulation!

- Reaction rates are tabulated over “standard” temperature grids.
- Astrophysics codes then interpolate the values given in tables
- Have to watch out for too few temperature steps!
- **Frank Timmes and Ebraheem Farag**



MESA interpolation is off by more than 1σ for deBoer et al. (2017) tabulated rates!!!

The R-matrix fit ends up being a big multidimensional fit problem

- Fit parameters
 - Level energies
 - Level widths (or reduced width amplitudes)
 - Asymptotic Normalization Coefficients (or reduced width amplitudes)
 - Data normalization factors
- For the case described in the deBoer *et al.* (2017), there were 64 level parameters and over 100 data normalization fit parameters
- >10,000 experimental data points
- **Computationally challenging**

$$R_{cc'} = \sum_{\lambda} \frac{\gamma_{\lambda c} \gamma_{\lambda c'}}{E_{\lambda} - E},$$

Summary

- Improvements in the uncertainty of the low energy S-factor are hampered by **inconsistent data**
 - **Newer data are much more consistent!** We're on the right track, but measurements are very challenging
 - **Ground state E2 data is in the worst shape**, because you usually need to measure a more complete angular distribution to obtain it
 - **ERNA recoil separator measurements provided a LOT more constraint for the R-matrix fit because they covered a wide energy range.** More of these type measurements would be very useful!
- Make new measurements using new techniques (reduce systematic uncertainties)
 - $^{16}\text{O}(\gamma,\alpha)^{12}\text{C}$ (HIγS, Jefferson Lab, ELI-NP)
 - $^{16}\text{O}(e,e'\alpha)^{12}\text{C}$
 - Additional types of transfer measurements
 - Improved traditional measurements, but in low background environments with very high beam intensities (reduce statistical / outlier uncertainties)
 - **JUNA, LUNA, Dresden**
- Include more detailed experimental uncertainties
 - Energy uncertainty, experimental resolution
 - **Bayesian** uncertainty estimation
 - Improved computational resources

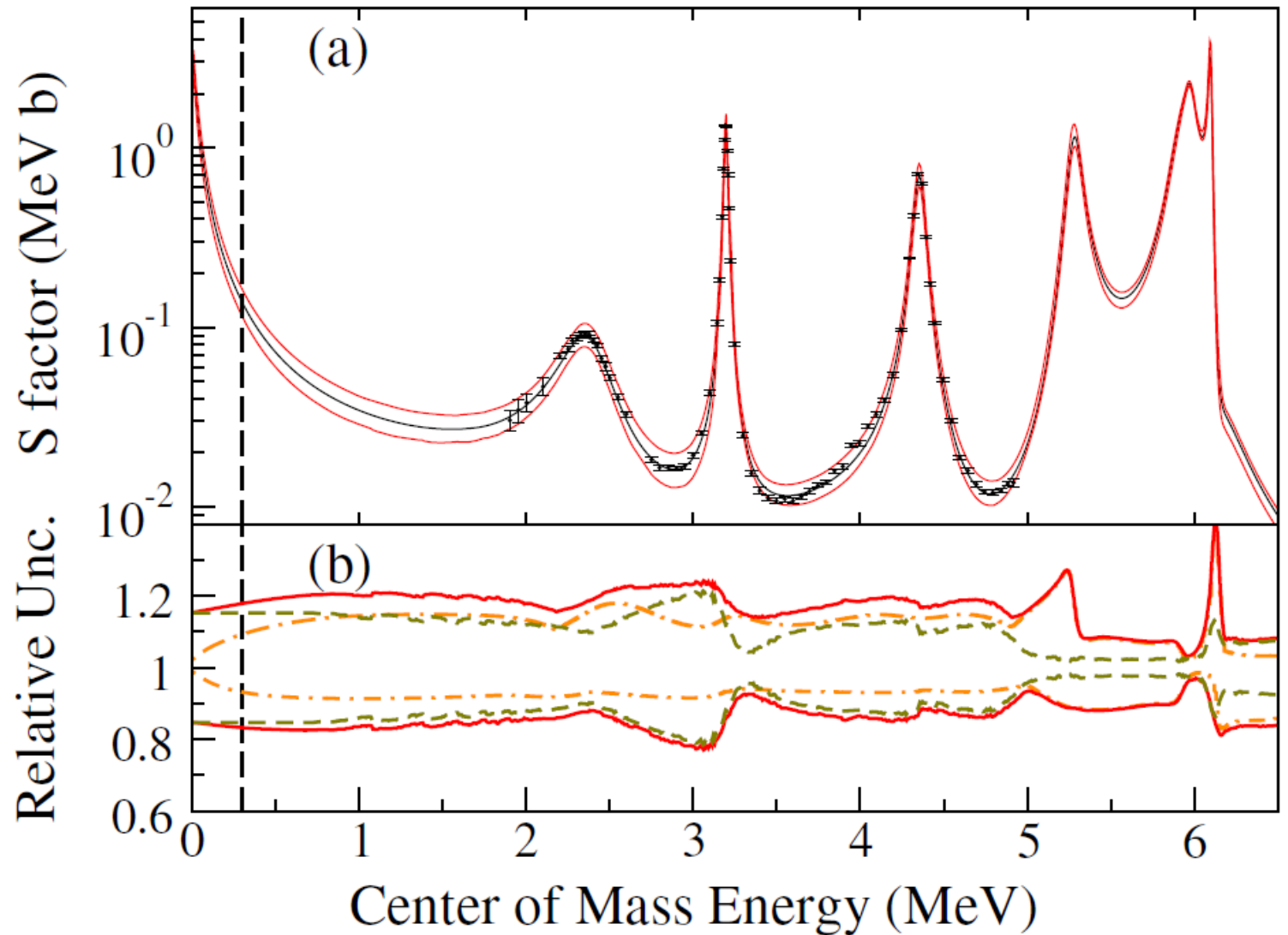
Questions?

My 2017 estimate of
 $S(300 \text{ keV})$:

$140 \pm 21 \text{ (MC)} +18/-11 \text{ (model)}$

But see Shen *et al.* (2020)

Assumes ANC uncertainties
are accurate



Strategy in 2017 (and earlier)

- Use χ^2 minimization to find a best description of the data within the R-matrix framework (used MINUIT2)

$$R_{ij} = \frac{f(x_{i,j}) - n_i y_{i,j}}{n_i \sigma_{i,j}}$$

$$\chi^2 = \sum_i \left(\frac{\sum_j R_{ij}^2}{N_i - \nu} \right) + \frac{(n_i - 1)^2}{n_i^2 \sigma_{\text{syst},i}^2}$$

Additional data normalization fit parameter, with common systematic uncertainty. Also fitting to *reduced* χ^2 .

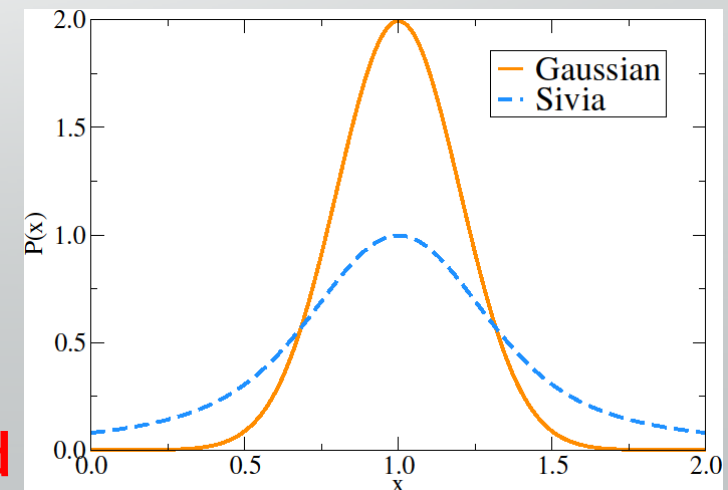
$$\chi^2 = \sum_i \left(\frac{\sum_j R_{ij}^2}{N_i} \right) + \frac{(n_i - 1)^2}{n_i^2 \sigma_{\text{syst},i}^2} + \sum_k \frac{(P_{\text{fit},k} - P_{\text{exp},k})^2}{\sigma_{\text{exp},k}^2}$$

Add additional terms for subthreshold ANC to include uncertainty constraints from transfer reactions.

$$L = \sum_j \log \left[\frac{1 - e^{-R_{ij}^2/2}}{R_{ij}^2} \right]$$

Used a broader distribution function for data point uncertainties (larger tails than a Gaussian)

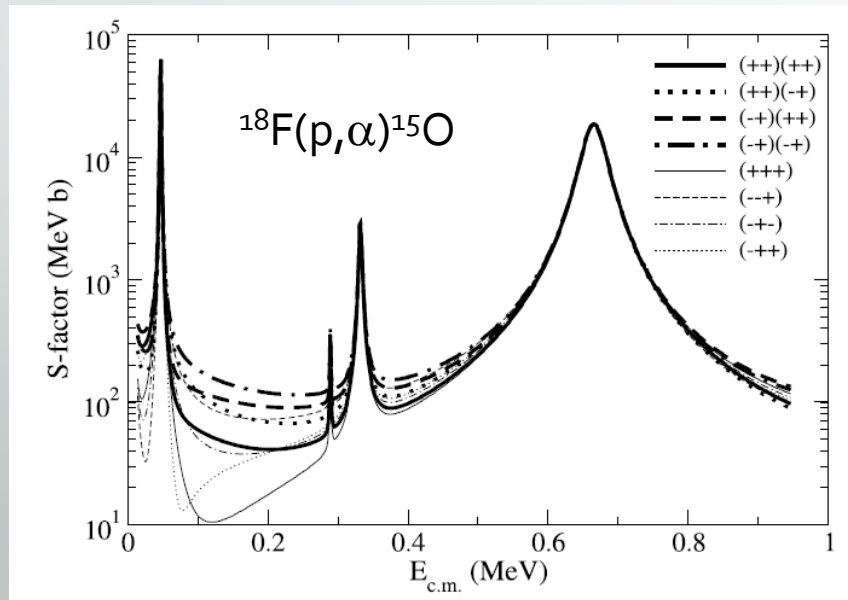
Sivia and Skilling (2006)



Kind of a Frequentist / Bayesian hybrid method

R-matrix framework

$$R_{cc'} = \sum_{\lambda} \frac{\gamma_{\lambda c} \gamma_{\lambda c'}}{E_{\lambda} - E},$$



Bardayan et al. (2015)

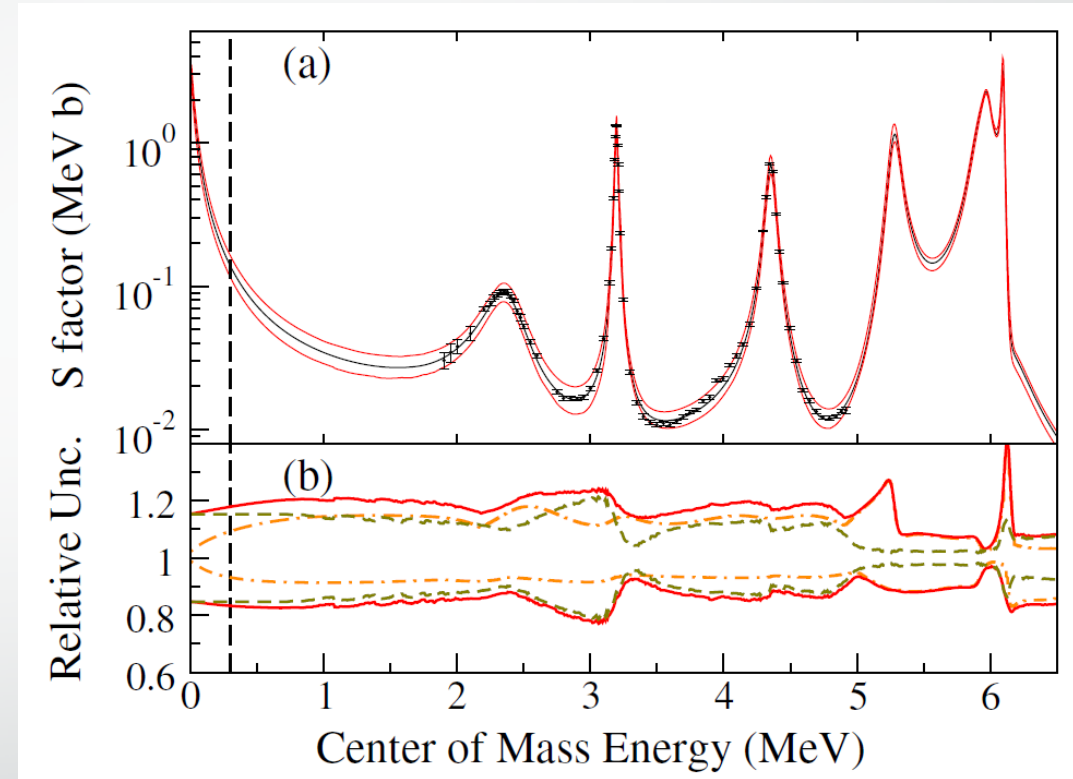
$$U = \rho^{\frac{1}{2}} \mathbf{O}^{-1} (1 - \mathbf{R}L_0)^{-1} (1 - \mathbf{R}L_0^*) \mathbf{I} \rho^{-\frac{1}{2}}$$

$$T_{cc'} = e^{2i\omega_c} \delta_{cc'} - U_{cc'},$$

$$\sigma_{\alpha\alpha'} = \frac{\pi}{k_{\alpha}^2} \sum_{Jl'l's's'} g_J |T_{cc'}^J|^2,$$

Simple Monte Carlo

- Created thousands of “synthetic” data sets by assuming that the error bars on the data represented an underlying Gaussian (probably should have used lognormal) Probability Density Function.
- Refit
- Histogrammed S-factor calculated at many energies to get uncertainty.
- Calculated many different variations on assumptions about the *R*-matrix fit and included those as well.
- Even more computationally expensive



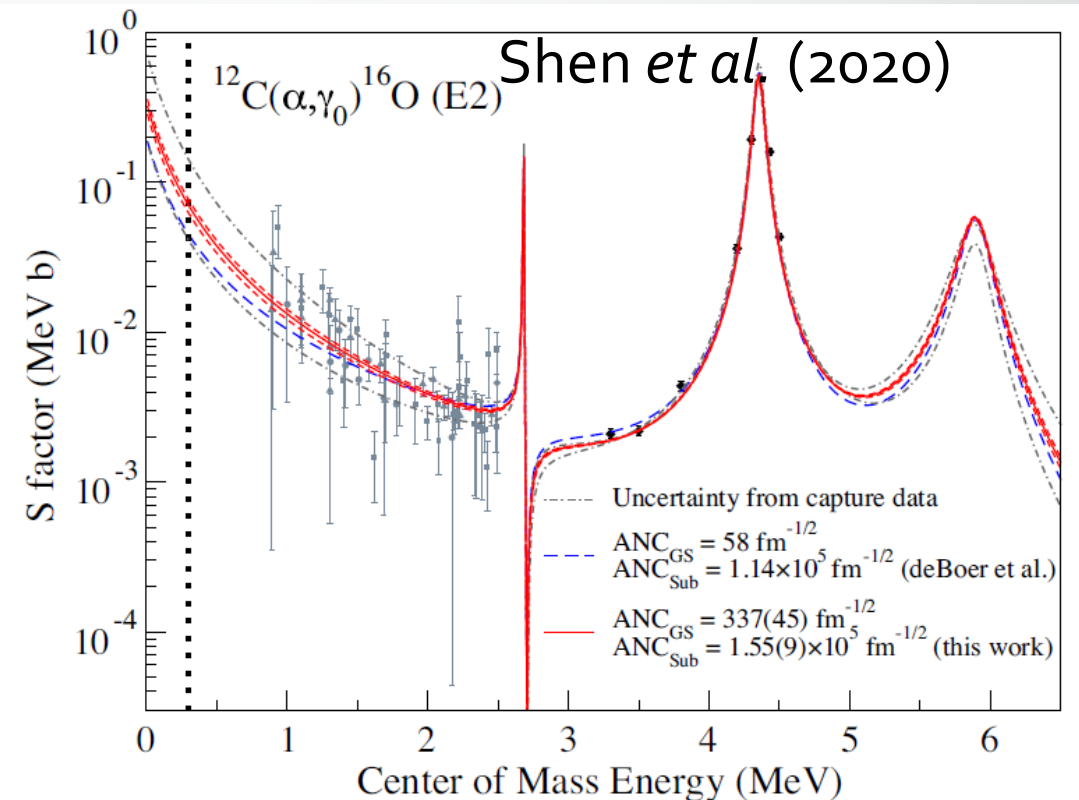
Monte Carlo of experimental data
Model uncertainties

Model assumptions

- External capture contribution for GS?
 - Often neglected completely
 - May play a significant role in the E2 cross section (given recent improvements in the uncertainty of this cross section)
- Inconsistent measurements of the ground state α -particle ANC in ^{16}O
- Additional measurements needed!

TABLE I. Present ANC of the ^{16}O GS and other available results in the literature.

| Reference | ANC ($\text{fm}^{-1/2}$) | Method |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Adhikari (2009) [14] | 13.9 ± 2.4 | $^{16}\text{O} + \text{Pb}$ breakup |
| Morais (2011) [16] | 3390 (WS1) 1230 (WS2) 750 (FP) | $^{12}\text{C}(^{16}\text{O}, ^{12}\text{C})^{16}\text{O}$ |
| Sayre (2012) [11] | 709 | R matrix |
| Adhikari (2017) [15] | 637 ± 86 | $^{12}\text{C}(^7\text{Li}, t)^{16}\text{O}$ |
| Present | 337 ± 45 | $^{12}\text{C}(^{11}\text{B}, ^7\text{Li})^{16}\text{O}$ |



Background contributions

- General issue in the R-matrix framework

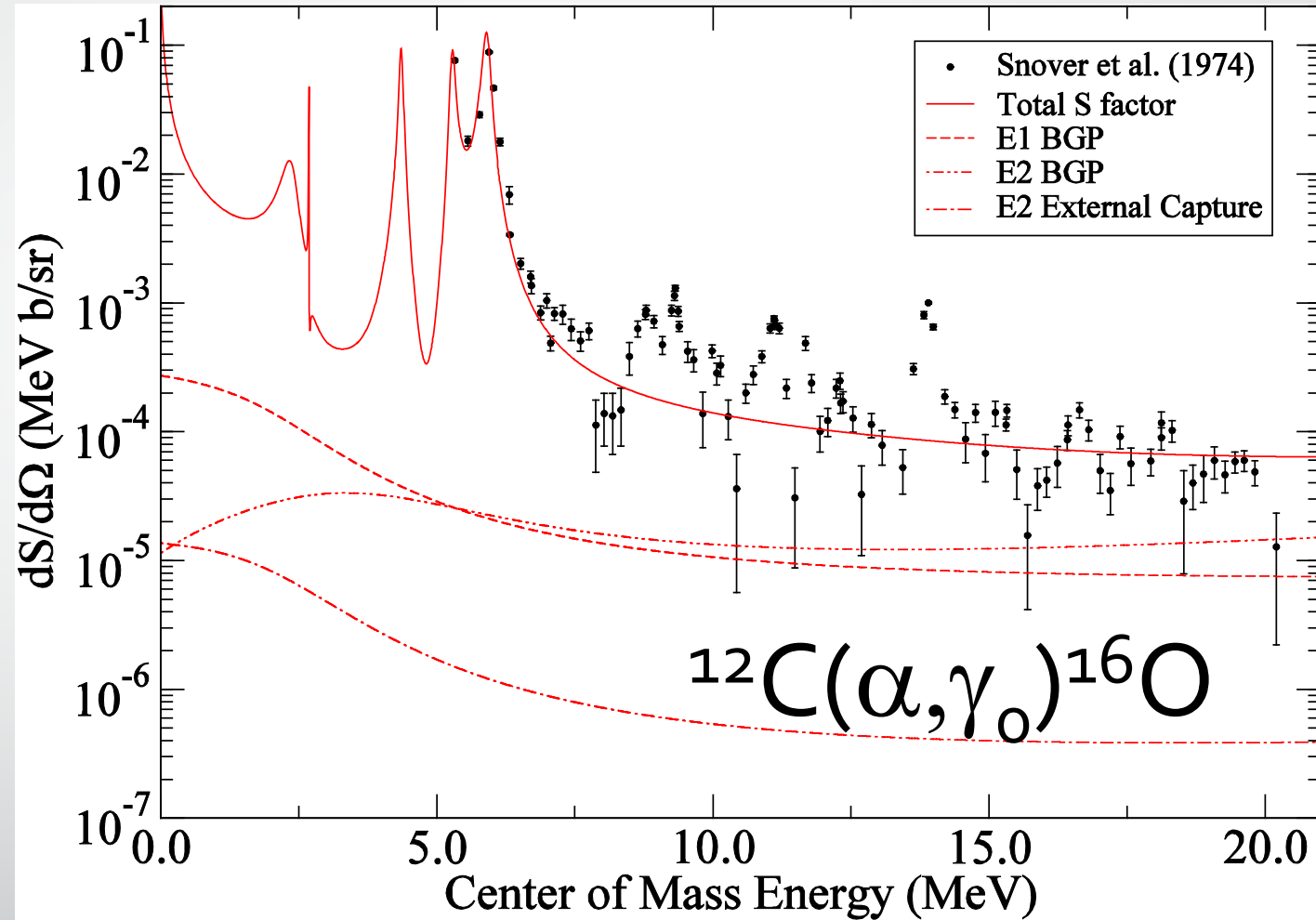
$$R_{cc'} = \sum_{\lambda} \frac{\gamma_{\lambda c} \gamma_{\lambda c'}}{E_{\lambda} - E} + R_{\text{background}}$$

Levels observed
in data

Infinite number
of higher lying
levels

$$R_{cc'} = \sum_{\lambda} \frac{\gamma_{\lambda c} \gamma_{\lambda c'}}{E_{\lambda} - E} + \left(\frac{\gamma_{\lambda c} \gamma_{\lambda c'}}{E_{\lambda} - E} \right)_{\text{background}}$$

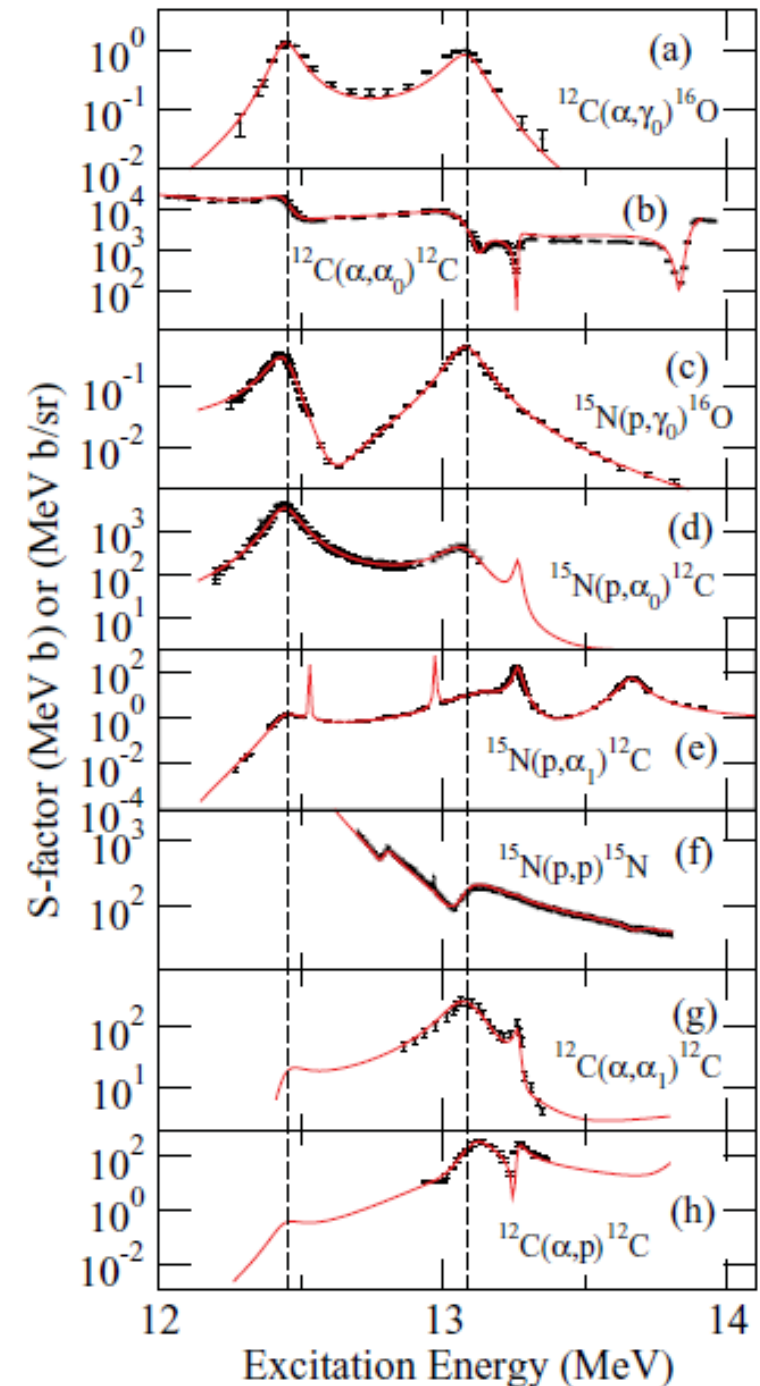
In practice, one often just uses one
“background level” (per J^{π})



Best solution: Fit experimental data up in energy until the cross section gets smaller or there is a natural gap in the level structure.

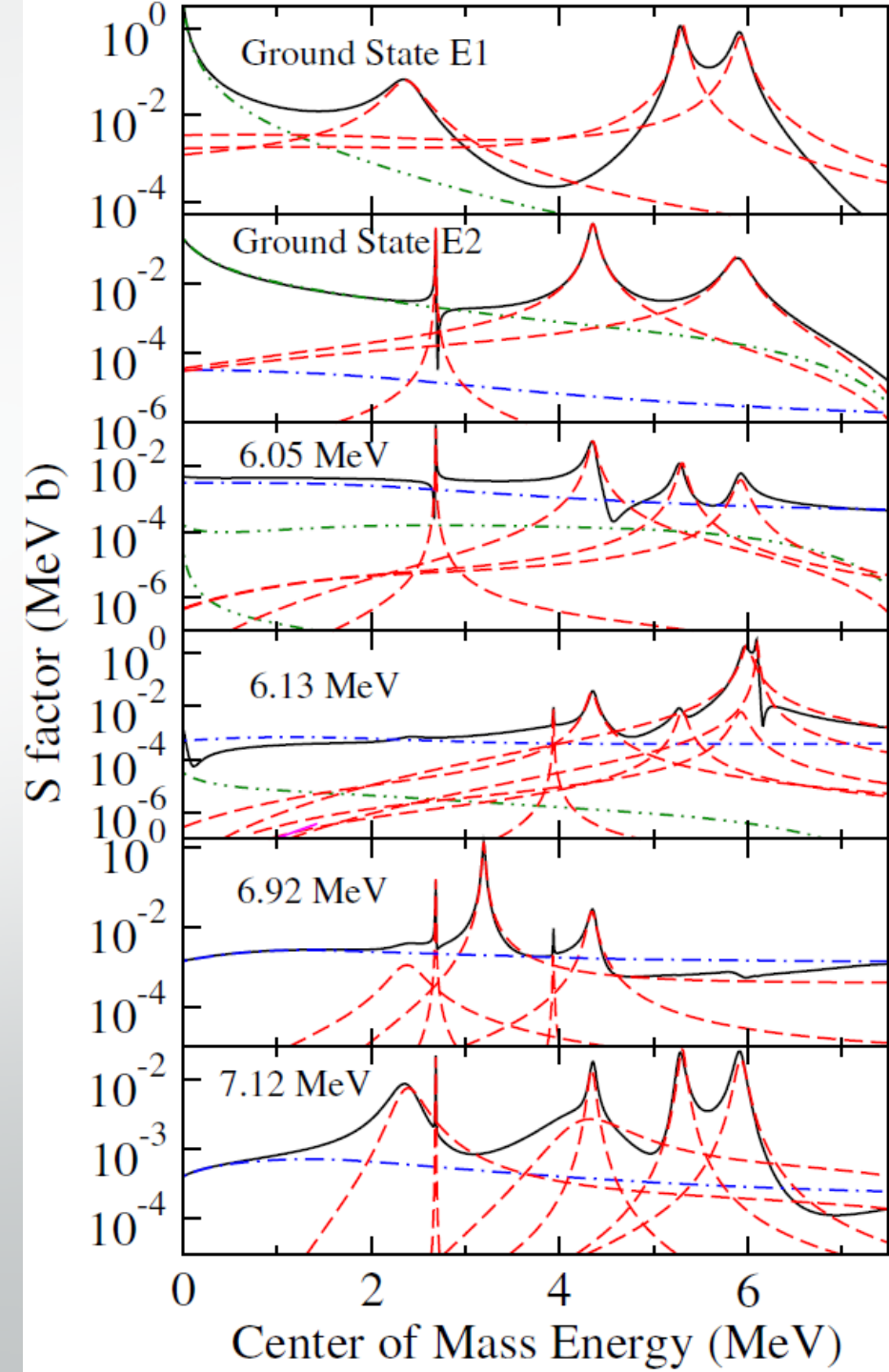
Fit to higher energy

- Challenges
 - Multiple particle decay channels
 - Multiple entrance channel data
- Additional advantages
 - Combine $^{12}\text{C}(\alpha,\gamma)$, $^{15}\text{N}(p,\gamma)$, and $^{15}\text{N}(p,\alpha)$ R-matrix analyses into single consistent analysis
 - Check on systematic uncertainties like effective energy determination and partial width consistency



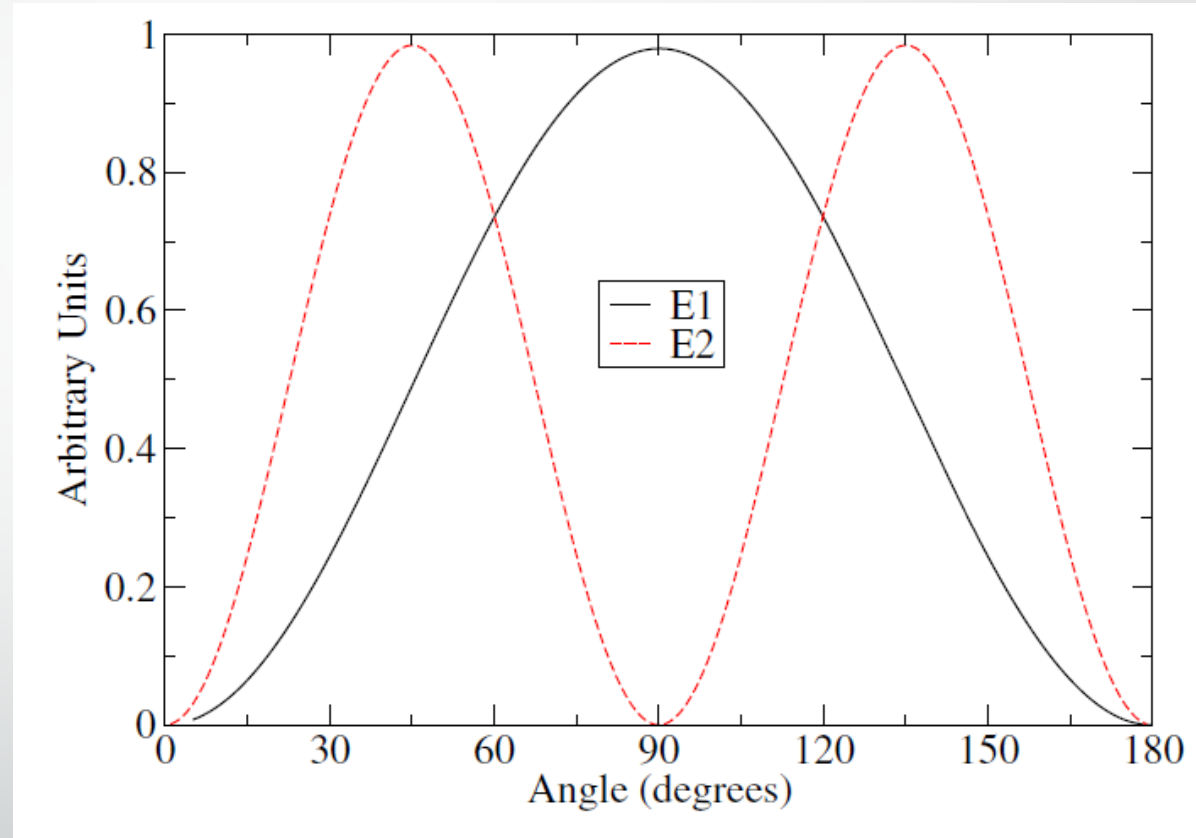
R-matrix LEGO blocks (reaction components)

- **Resonance**
- **Subthreshold state**
- **HS External Capture**



“E1 and E2” data

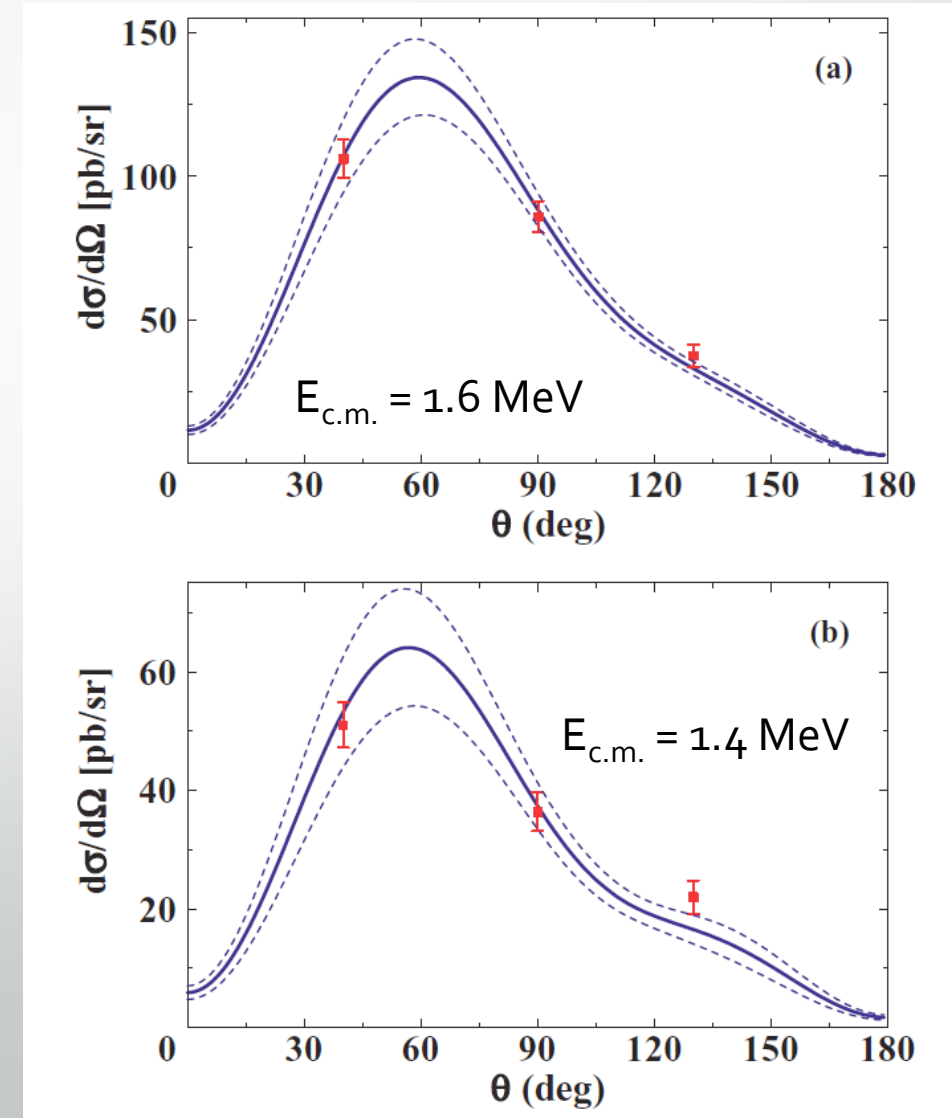
- Can in principle measure the “E1 cross section” by measuring the differential cross section at 90 degrees.
 - Problems when $E_2 \gg E_1$
- To get E2 one needs to measure the angular distribution.
- Main issue: often only the E1 and E2 derived cross sections have been reported in the literature, and the original angular distributions are omitted.
- Problems with extracting E2 data
 - Number of parameters to use for fit.
 - Systematic problems with data
 - Can often be corrected/understood if original angular distribution data are given
 - See Brune and Sayre (2013)



Measurement Highlights: High Precision

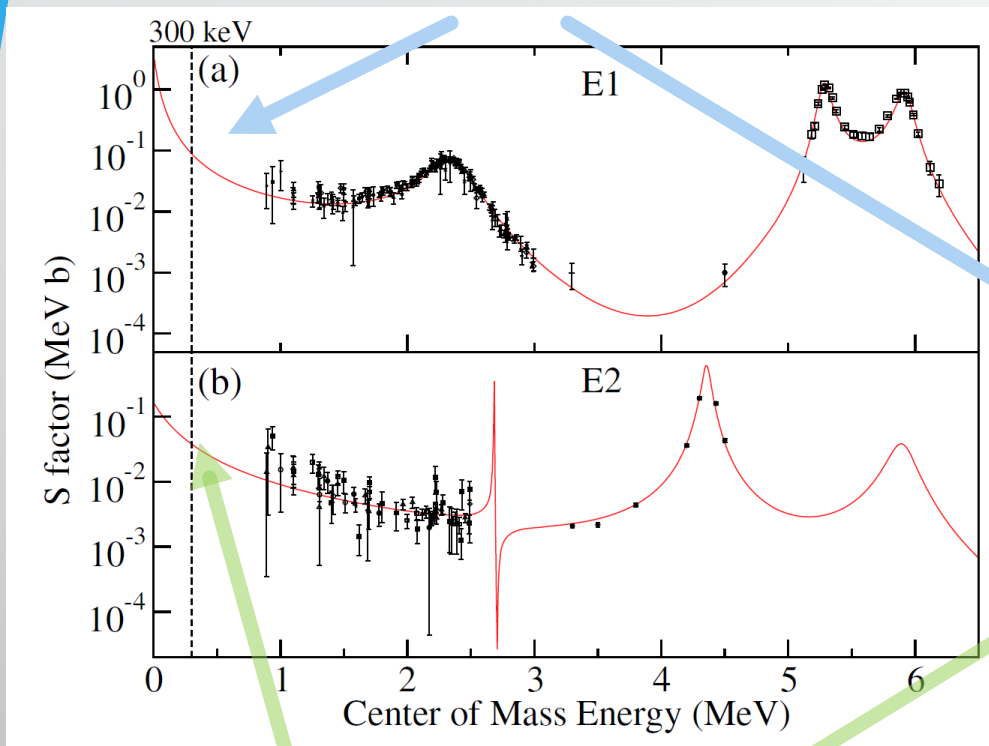
$^{12}\text{C}(\alpha, \gamma)^{16}\text{O}$ low energy measurements

- Makii et al. (2009)
- Used **time-of-flight** to separate out background from (n, γ) reactions produced by neutrons from the $^{13}\text{C}(\alpha, n)^{16}\text{O}$ reaction
- Only two energies, but **highly accurate and precise**
- Just wish they could have done more measurements



ANCs: Strength of subthreshold states and external capture

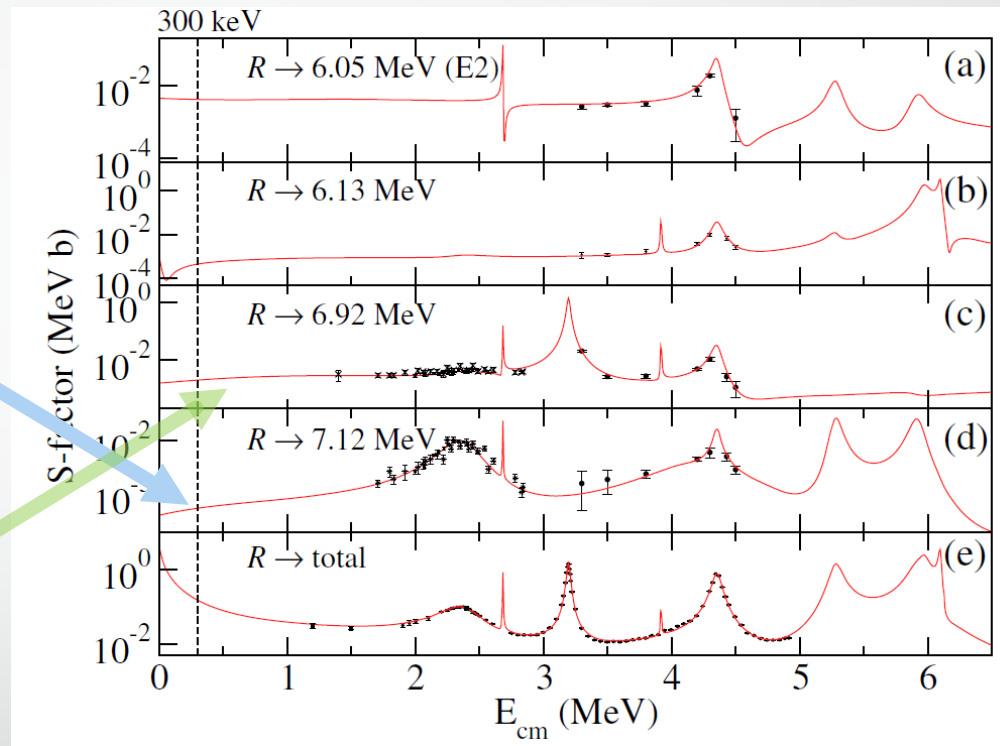
ANC of bound state 1⁻



ANC of 2⁺ bound state

Subthreshold states for the ground state transitions (1⁻ and 2⁺)

$$R_{cc'} = \sum_{\lambda} \frac{\gamma_{\lambda c} \gamma_{\lambda c'}}{E_{\lambda} - E}, \quad C_{\lambda c} = \frac{(2\mu_{\alpha} a_c)^{1/2}}{\hbar W_c(a_c)} \frac{\tilde{\gamma}_{\lambda c}}{[1 + \sum_{c'} \tilde{\gamma}_{\lambda c'}^2 (dS_{c'}/dE)(\tilde{E}_{\lambda})]^{1/2}},$$



External capture component of the "cascade transitions"

$$T_p^J(\text{ext}) = -2i\Omega P^{1/2} k_{\gamma}^{L+1/2} \times \{P^{-1}x + [I - R(L - B)]^{-1}R(y + ix)\} = -2i\Omega P^{1/2} k_{\gamma}^{L+1/2} [I - R(L - B)]^{-1} \times \{[I - R(L - B)]P^{-1}x + R(y + ix)\}.$$

$$x_c = \sum_{l_f} \frac{\tilde{e}_{\alpha}^{l_f}}{\hbar} (\mu_{\alpha} a_c)^{1/2} V(LL_f J_S; l_f) C_{as l_f} C_{cl_f L}, \quad y_c = \sum_{l_f} \frac{\tilde{e}_{\alpha}^{l_f}}{\hbar} (\mu_{\alpha} a_c)^{1/2} V(LL_f J_S; l_f) C_{as l_f} C_{cl_f L}''.$$