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An Empirical Correlation of Activation Energy with Molecular Polarizability for Atom Abstraction Reactions

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Abstract: Activation energies for a homologous series of exoergic atom transfer reactions of the type $A \cdot + BC \rightarrow AB + C \cdot$ are shown to correlate inversely with molecular polarizability of the reactant BC. A linear relationship between activation energy and reciprocal polarizability provides relatively good agreement with experiment for 13 reaction series comprised of 65 reactions. Activation energies are predicted for the reactions of $CH_3 \cdot$, $C_2H_5 \cdot$, and $CF_3 \cdot$ with F_2 using this correlation.

Activation energy is an important property of chemical reactions. For simple exoergic atom transfer reactions differences in activation energy are primarily responsible for the wide variation observed in reaction rates. Although accurate theoretical calculations of activation barriers are not possible in most cases, several empirical and semiempirical formulas for estimating activation energies have been developed. In one approach, activation energies for a series of similar reactions are correlated with molecular properties of the separated reactants and products. If one or two activation energies in the series of reactions are known, the others can be predicted using the correlation. In this paper we discuss three correlation schemes which have been proposed and offer a fourth which yields improved agreement with experiment.

For many series of exoergic reactions of the type $A \cdot + BC \rightarrow AB + C \cdot$, activation energy is observed to decrease with increasing exoergicity. Evans and Polanyi first discussed this correlation and analyzed it in terms of intersecting Morse curves.^{1,2} They proposed a linear dependence on exoergicity.

$$E_{\text{act}} = E_0 - \gamma q \quad (1)$$

Here E_0 and γ are empirical parameters and q , the heat of reaction, is positive for exoergic reactions. This relationship was substantiated with a large body of data by Semenov.³ The correlation with exoergicity has also been expressed in another formula which was derived as part of the bond energy-bond order (BEBO) method for obtaining potential energy parameters of activated complexes.⁴⁻⁷ This relationship is given by

$$E_{\text{act}} = (D_{\text{AB}}^0 - q) \left[1 - \left[1 + \left(1 - \frac{q}{D_{\text{AB}}^0} \right)^{1/p-1} \right]^{1-p} \right] \quad (2)$$

where p is an empirical parameter and D_{AB}^0 is the bond energy of the product molecule. Activation energies and exoergicities for numerous reactions are listed in Table I. Although the exoergicity rule is obeyed in many series of reactions, exceptions are also found in the table. In series A the $O + F_2$ reaction is the most exoergic but has the highest activation energy. In series B the predicted trend is completely reversed, and in series H the $Na + CHCl_3$ reaction is out of line with the predicted variation. Two other series not listed in the table, $CF_3 \cdot + CH_3X \rightarrow CF_3X + CH_3 \cdot$ ³³ and $H \cdot + CH_3X \rightarrow HX + CH_3 \cdot$ ²⁵ ($X =$ halogen atom), also show the reverse trend. These exceptions involve halogen atom abstraction reactions, and they were anticipated in the original analysis of the exoergicity rule.^{1,2,39}

Another empirical scheme due to Spirin⁸ establishes a relationship between activation energy and both the reaction exoergicity and the polarizabilities of the reacting species. Spirin proposed the expression which is given by

$$E_{\text{act}} = d(0.75D_{\text{AC}} - q) \left(\frac{1}{p_A} + \frac{1}{p_C} \right) \quad (3)$$

where D_{AC} is the bond energy of molecule AC, q is the exoergicity, and d is an empirical parameter. p_A and p_C are the polarizabilities of the reactant and product atoms (or radicals), respectively. The dependence on bond strengths is derived from the London formula for the energy of three atoms, and the formula includes a contribution from bonding between the two end atoms in the intermediate complex. The inverse dependence on the polarizability is based on the following reasoning. Attractive dispersion forces lower the interaction energy as reactants approach to distances characteristic of the onset of reaction. These forces are proportional to polarizability among other factors; thus the greater the polarizabilities of the reactants, the less repulsive the approach.¹¹ In many cases Spirin's

Table I. Summary of Reaction Data for Figure 1

Refers to Fig. 1		REACTION	q ^(a)	E _{act} ^(b)	α ^(c) x10 ⁻²⁵	α ⁻¹ x10 ²³	Reference for E _{act}	Refers to Fig. 1		REACTION	q ^(a)	E _{act} ^(b)	α ^(c) x10 ⁻²⁵	α ⁻¹ x10 ²³	Reference for E _{act}
Panel	Point							Panel	Point						
A	a	O + I ₂ → OI + I	10.5	0	124	0.805	9		e	Cl + n-C ₄ H ₁₀ → HCl + n-C ₄ H ₉	6	0.8	81.2	1.23	15
	b	O + Br ₂ → OBr + Br	9.9	0.9	69.9	1.43	9		f	Cl + n-C ₄ H ₁₀ → HCl + i-C ₄ H ₉	8	0.3	81.2	1.23	15
	c	O + Cl ₂ → OCl + Cl	6.5	3.3	46.1	2.17	9		g	Cl + i-C ₄ H ₁₀ → HCl + i-C ₄ H ₉	8	0.6	81.2	1.23	32
	d	O + F ₂ → OF + F	13	10.4	12.1	8.24	9		h	Cl + i-C ₄ H ₁₀ → HCl + t-Bu	11	0.3	81.2	1.23	32
B	a	H + I ₂ → HI + I	35	0	124	0.805	15	H	a	Na + CH ₃ Cl → NaCl + CH ₃	17	10	45.6	2.19	15
	b	H + Br ₂ → HBr + Br	41	1.2	69.9	1.43	22-23		b	Na + CH ₂ Cl ₂ → NaCl + CH ₂ Cl	23.6	7.4	64.8	1.54	15
	c	H + Cl ₂ → HCl + Cl	47	1.4	46.1	2.17	23-24		c	Na + CHCl ₃ → NaCl + CCl ₂ H	31	5.0	82.3	1.22	15
	d	H + F ₂ → HF + F	98	2.4	12.1	8.24	23,25		d	Na + CCl ₄ → NaCl + CCl ₃	24	3.5	105	0.952	15
C	a	H + HI → H ₂ + I	33	0.7	54.5	1.83	25	I	a	H + CH ₄ → H ₂ + CH ₃	0.2	11.9	26.0	3.85	25
	b	H + HBr → H ₂ + Br	17	2.2	36.1	2.77	26		b	H + CH ₃ Cl → Products	7.2	45.6	2.19	15,29	
	c	H + HCl → H ₂ + Cl	1.1	3.5	26.3	3.80	27		c	H + CH ₂ Cl ₂ → Products	5.8	64.8	1.54	15,29	
	d	H + HF → H ₂ + F	-31.7	15	24.6	4.07	15		d	H + CHCl ₃ → Products	4.3	82.3	1.22	15,29	
	e	H + H ₂ → H ₂ + H	0	7.7	7.9	12.7	25		e	H + CCl ₄ → HCl + CCl ₃	30	3.3	105	0.952	15,29
D	a	H + CH ₄ → H ₂ + CH ₃	0.2	11.9	26.0	3.85	25	J	a	CH ₃ + CH ₄ → CH ₄ + CH ₃	0	14.75	26.0	3.85	15
	b	H + C ₂ H ₆ → H ₂ + C ₂ H ₅	6	9.4	44.7	2.24	25		b	CH ₃ + CH ₃ Cl → CH ₄ + CH ₂ Cl	3	9.4	45.6	2.19	15
	c	H + C ₃ H ₈ → H ₂ + C ₃ H ₇	7.5	8	62.9	1.59	25		c	CH ₃ + CH ₂ Cl ₂ → CH ₄ + CHCl ₂	5	7.2	64.8	1.54	15
	d	H + n-C ₄ H ₁₀ → H ₂ + C ₄ H ₉	9	7.6	81.2	1.23	25		d	CH ₃ + CHCl ₃ → CH ₄ + CCl ₃	8	5.8	82.3	1.22	15
	e	H + i-C ₄ H ₁₀ → H ₂ + C ₄ H ₉	9	6.4	81.2	1.23	25								
E ^(d)	a	N + CH ₄ → Products	10.1	26.0	3.85	15	K	a	CF ₃ + CH ₄ → CF ₃ H + CH ₃	2	10.2	26.0	3.85	15,17	
	b	N + C ₂ H ₆ → Products	7	44.7	2.24	15		b	CF ₃ + C ₂ H ₆ → CF ₃ H + C ₂ H ₅	8	7	44.7	2.24	15,17	
	c	N + C ₃ H ₈ → Products	5.5	62.9	1.59	15		c	CF ₃ + C ₃ H ₈ → CF ₃ H + i-C ₃ H ₇	9.5	6.4	62.9	1.59	15	
	d	N + n-C ₄ H ₁₀ → Products	3.6	81.2	1.23	15		d	CF ₃ + n-C ₄ H ₁₀ → CF ₃ H + i-C ₄ H ₉	11	5.6	81.2	1.23	15	
	e	N + i-C ₄ H ₁₀ → Products	3.1	81.2	1.23	15		e	CF ₃ + i-C ₄ H ₁₀ → CF ₃ H + C(CH ₃) ₃	14	4.7	81.2	1.23	15	
F	a	O + CH ₄ → OH + CH ₃	-1.7	9.1	26.0	3.85	28-29	L ^(e)	a	CH ₂ + CH ₄ → CH ₄ + CH ₃	0	14.75	26.0	3.85	15
	b	O + C ₂ H ₆ → OH + C ₂ H ₅	4	6.4	44.7	2.24	28-29		b	CH ₃ + C ₂ H ₆ → CH ₄ + C ₂ H ₅	6	11	44.7	2.24	16,17,34
	c	O + C ₃ H ₈ → OH + C ₃ H ₇	5	5.0	62.9	1.59	15		c	CH ₃ + C ₃ H ₈ → CH ₄ + C ₃ H ₇	7	11.3	62.9	1.59	15
	d	O + n-C ₄ H ₁₀ → OH + C ₄ H ₉	7	4.8	81.2	1.23	15,29		d	CH ₃ + n-C ₄ H ₁₀ → CH ₄ + C ₄ H ₉	9	9.0	81.2	1.23	15
	e	O + C ₇ H ₁₆ → OH + C ₇ H ₁₅	3.3	136	0.735	15	e		CH ₃ + i-C ₄ H ₁₀ → CH ₄ + C ₄ H ₉	9	7.8	81.2	1.23	15	
	f	O + n-C ₈ H ₁₈ → Products	4.2	154	0.648	15	f		CH ₃ + C ₃ H ₁₂ → CH ₄ + C ₃ H ₁₁	8.1	99.5	1.01	15		
	g	O + i-C ₈ H ₁₈ → OH + C ₈ H ₁₇	2.9	154	0.648	15	g		CH ₃ + C ₆ H ₁₄ → CH ₄ + C ₆ H ₁₃	8.1	118	0.849	15		
									h	OH + CH ₄ → H ₂ O + CH ₃	15	3.6	26.0	3.85	28,36,37
									i	OH + C ₂ H ₆ → H ₂ O + C ₂ H ₅	21	3.4	44.7	2.24	37
G	a	Cl + CH ₄ → HCl + CH ₃	-1	2.9	26	3.85	28,30	j	OH + C ₃ H ₈ → H ₂ O + C ₃ H ₇	22.5	1.3	62.9	1.59	37	
	b	Cl + C ₂ H ₆ → HCl + C ₂ H ₅	5	0.4	44.7	2.24	31-32	k	OH + C ₄ H ₁₀ → H ₂ O + C ₄ H ₉	24	1	81.2	1.23	37,38	
	c	Cl + C ₃ H ₈ → HCl + n-C ₃ H ₇	6.5	0.8	62.9	1.59	32								
	d	Cl + C ₃ H ₈ → HCl + i-C ₃ H ₇	6.5	0.4	62.9	1.59	32								

(a) q, the reaction exothermicity, is given in kcal·mol⁻¹. Bond energies are taken from refs. 18 and 19.

(b) All activation energies are in kcal·mol⁻¹.

(c) α is the mean polarizability of the stable molecular reactant expressed in units of cm³. Values are taken from reference 10.

(d) These reactions of nitrogen with a series of alkanes are not simple atom abstraction reactions.

(e) Arrhenius plots show curvature for CH₃ reactions. Low temperature values of E_a were used.

Table II. Activation Energies Calculated from Equation 3 in Text

A + BC	D _{AC} , kcal mol ⁻¹	q, kcal mol ⁻¹	P _A , Å ³	P _C , Å ³	Calcd. ^a kcal mol ⁻¹	Obsd. kcal mol ⁻¹
O + I ₂	47	10.5	0.77	4.5	2.0	0
O + Br ₂	56.2	9.9	0.77	3.6	2.6	0.9
O + Cl ₂ *	64.3	6.3	0.77	2.61	3.3	3.3
O + F ₂	50.7	13.2	0.77	0.567	4.4	10.4
H + I ₂	71.4	35	0.667	4.5	0.8	0
H + Br ₂	87.4	41	0.667	3.6	1.0	1.2
H + Cl ₂ *	103.1	47	0.667	2.61	1.4	1.4
H + F ₂	136	98	0.667	0.567	0.3	2.4
H + HI	71.4	33	0.667	4.5	0.9	0.7
H + HBr	87.4	17	0.667	3.6	2.1	2.2
H + HCl*	103.1	1.1	0.667	2.61	3.5	3.5
H + HF ^b						
H + H ₂	104.2	0	0.667	0.667	5.7	7.7

^a In each series, d is obtained by fitting eq 3 to the data for the reaction denoted by an asterisk. ^b Endoergic reaction.

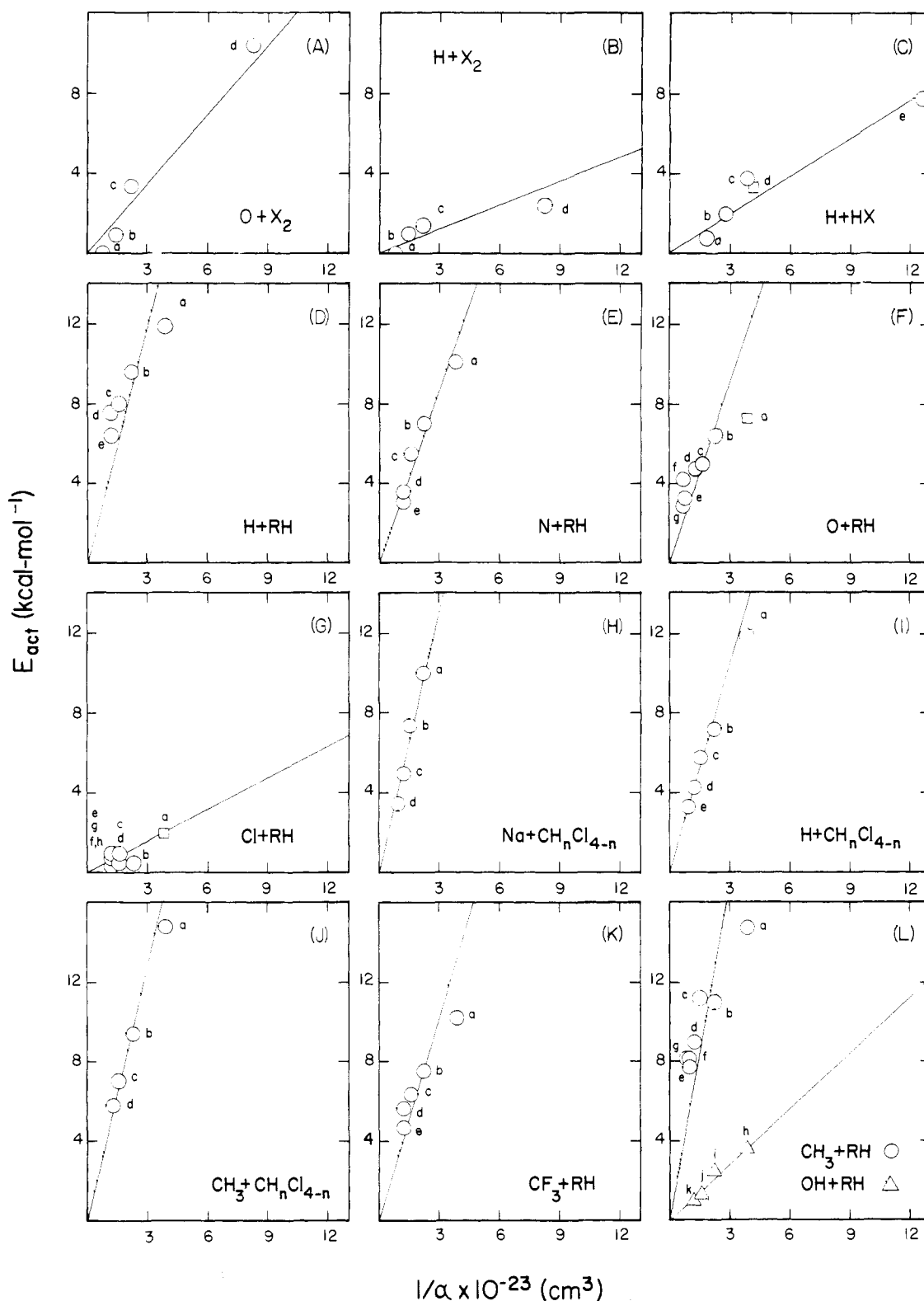


Figure 1. Plots of experimental activation energy vs. the reciprocal mean polarizability of the stable molecular reactant for the reactions listed in Table I. Endoergic reactions are denoted by square symbols. For these cases the activation energy which is plotted is the barrier in the exoergic direction.

formula gives better agreement with experiment than the exoergic rule. For example, Table II shows that eq 3 predicts the correct qualitative trend for series A, and yields improved results for series B, although the $H + F_2$ reaction is out of line. Since atomic polarizabilities have been calculated for most elements,¹² eq 3 is easily applied to reactions in which A· and C· are atoms. However, in cases where molecular free radicals are involved, the required polarizabilities are not available and must be estimated.¹³

We have observed a simple correlation, expressed by

$$E_{\text{act}} = \frac{C}{\alpha_{BC}} \quad (4)$$

between activation energy and the polarizability of the stable molecular reactant, BC. In eq 4 c is an empirical parameter and α_{BC} is the mean polarizability of BC. The results obtained by plotting the data of Table I according to eq 4 are shown in Figure 1. In all cases the required molecular polarizabilities

Table III. Activation Energies (kcal/mol) for R• + X₂ Reactions

R•	X ₂			
	I ₂	Br ₂	Cl ₂	F ₂
CH ₃	<1 ^a	<1 ^a	2.3 ^a	8 ^b
C ₂ H ₅	0.2 ^a		1 ^a	3.5 ^b
CF ₃	0 ^a	0.7 ^a	3.6 ^a	10 ^b

^a Values taken from ref 15. ^b Values predicted by polarizability relation using a least-squares fit of the experimental activation energies.

are available from refractive index measurements.¹⁰ Qualitative agreement is good for all reactions shown, although deviations from linearity are evident in some cases. For most series of reactions quantitative agreement is also good. While all the equations presented yield similar results for many series of reactions, eq 4 also gives good results in the case of halogen atom abstraction reactions. The available data suggest that eq 4 can be used with some reliability to estimate activation energies. Therefore, in Table III we present a few predictions which future experiments will have to test. Known activation energies for the reactions of CH₃•, C₂H₅•, and CF₃• with Cl₂, Br₂, and I₂ are given in the table along with the values determined from eq 4 for the fluorine reactions, which have not been studied. We note that an estimated activation energy of 2.9 kcal mol⁻¹ for the reaction CF₃ + F₂ → CF₄ + F differs substantially from the prediction based on polarizability.¹⁴ According to eq 4 all the reactions of molecular fluorine should proceed with relatively large activation energies by virtue of the low polarizability of F₂. Both the data shown in Figure 1 (panels A and B) and the small rate reported for the reaction Cl + F₂ → ClF + F, which is exoergic by 23 kcal mol⁻¹, are consistent with this prediction.^{20,21}

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