

Cross Sections for High-Energy Gamma
Transitions from MeV Neutron
Capture in ^{206}Pb

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AKTIEBOLAGET ATOMENERGI

STUDSVIK, NYKÖPING, SWEDEN 1970

CROSS SECTIONS FOR HIGH-ENERGY GAMMA TRANSITIONS
FROM MeV NEUTRON CAPTURE IN ^{206}Pb

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ABSTRACT

Gamma-ray spectra from neutron capture in ^{206}Pb (radiogenic lead) in the energy range 1.5 to 8.5 MeV were recorded using time-of-flight techniques. The spectrometer was a NaI (TI) crystal, 20.8 cm long and 22.6 cm in diameter. The spectra are dominated by gamma transitions to levels with large single-particle strength, in agreement with predictions of semi-direct capture theories. The theories predict enhancements of the direct capture cross section by a factor of 10 - 15 in the region of the giant dipole resonance. The observed enhancement is about 50.

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INTRODUCTION

A semi-direct reaction process was proposed some years ago by Brown¹⁾, Clement et al.²⁾ and Lushnikov and Zaretsky³⁾ to explain the results of nucleon capture experiments in the MeV region. The capture cross sections for heavy nuclei are much larger than can be accounted for by either the compound-nucleus or the direct reaction theories as discussed in connection with experiments by Daly et al.⁴⁾, Csikai et al.⁵⁾ and Menlove et al.⁶⁾.

The gamma-ray spectra following MeV neutron capture show strong intensity of high-energy gamma transitions to low-lying levels with large single-particle strength. Experiments have been carried out by Cvelbar et al.⁷⁻⁹⁾ and Dinter¹⁰⁾ using 14 MeV neutrons and by Bergqvist et al.¹¹⁻¹³⁾ with neutrons in the range 1.0 to 8.5 MeV. Similar proton capture experiments have recently been performed by Halpern and collaborators¹⁴⁾. The results show qualitatively the same features as the (n, γ) experiments, i. e. strong gamma transitions to low-lying single-particle levels.

In the semi-direct theory the nucleon capture is suggested to proceed via an intermediate stage involving the excitation of the giant electric dipole resonance. The cross section enhancement is due to the collective nature of this excitation. The intermediate excitation of the giant dipole resonance favours gamma deexcitation directly to low-lying levels, in qualitative agreement with experimental results.

In the present paper, cross sections for ^{206}Pb (n, γ) transitions to individual single-particle states in ^{207}Pb are given as functions of the incident neutron energy. The cross sections are compared with predictions from the direct and semi-direct capture theories. The shapes of the gamma-ray spectra are compared with those expected from the semi-direct reaction process.

EXPERIMENT

Since most of the experimental details have been described elsewhere^{12, 13)}, only a brief outline of the experiment will be given here. The measurements were carried out at the 5.5 MeV van de Graaff accelerator at Studsvik using time-of-flight techniques and a large NaI (TI) detector, 22.6 cm in diameter and 20.8 cm long, placed at 90° to the incident ion beam. A 4096-channel analyser was used in two-parameter mode with flight time recorded in 16 channels and gamma-ray pulse height in 256 channels. The ^{206}Pb sample consisted of radiogenic lead (0.085% ^{204}Pb , 88.38% ^{206}Pb , 8.57% ^{207}Pb and 2.97% ^{208}Pb).

Two series of measurements were performed. In the first series the sample-to-detector distance was 0.9 m and the gamma transition to the ground state in ^{207}Pb was studied. A bismuth sample of the same size as the ^{206}Pb sample was used to determine the background¹³⁾. The neutron binding energy in ^{207}Pb exceeds the ^{210}Bi value by more than 2 MeV (see Fig. 1) whereas the scattering properties of the two samples should be about the same. For other final levels this background could not be used since pulse pile-up effects become troublesome. In the second series of measurements the sample-to-detector distance was increased to 1.4 m and the background was obtained from time channels surrounding the (n, γ) peak in the time spectrum (see Fig. 1, insert figure). In this series gamma transitions to levels up to about 2.7 MeV in ^{207}Pb were investigated.

Neutrons in the energy range 4.5 to 8.5 MeV were produced by the $^2\text{H}(d, n)^3\text{He}$ reaction in a gas target and below 4.5 MeV by the $^3\text{H}(p, n)^3\text{He}$ reaction. A tritium gas target was used in the first series of measurements and an absorbed target in the second. The neutron yield from

the target was monitored by time-of-flight techniques using a plastic scintillation detector placed at 140° to the incident ion beam. This monitor was calibrated against a polythene counter of Los Alamos design¹⁵⁾. For neutron energies at which the time-of-flight monitor could not be used (i. e. for $E_n < 1$ MeV at 140° corresponding to $E_n < 4$ MeV at 0°) the product of integrated target current, target gas pressure and neutron production cross section was used to normalize to the neutron yield at higher energies.

The pulse-height spectra were unfolded by means of the detector response functions which were determined as described in ref.¹²⁾. In Fig. 2 the response function at 12.77 MeV is compared with the pulse-height distribution obtained from the $^{12}\text{C}(n, \gamma)^{13}\text{C}$ reaction at the neutron energy 8.50 MeV.

The high-energy parts of the gamma-ray spectra recorded at the neutron energies 5.38, 6.46, 7.46 and 8.43 MeV are plotted in Fig. 3. The results of unfolding the spectra are also shown. The unresolved structure of gamma-rays to levels below 2 MeV was difficult to unfold. However, the intensity to the ground state could be determined within an estimated uncertainty of 20 %. Similar difficulties were encountered in the unfolding of gamma rays to levels between 2 and 5 MeV. The intensity of gamma rays to $E_f = 2.7$ MeV was determined within a relative uncertainty of 20 % for $E_n > 6$ MeV. The structure between $E_f = 2$ and 5 MeV weakens with decreasing neutron energy and only an upper limit of the intensity to $E_f = 2.7$ MeV could be determined for $E_n < 6$ MeV.

Cross sections were evaluated for gamma transitions to the ground state ($p_{1/2}$), to the 0.57 MeV ($f_{5/2}^{-1}$) and 0.90 MeV ($p_{3/2}^{-1}$) levels and to the 2.74 MeV ($g_{9/2}$) level. The relative intensities to the 0.57 and 0.90 MeV levels are very uncertain and the cross section for the sum of the two transitions was calculated. The results are corrected for neutron and gamma-ray attenuation and for neutron multiple scattering. The method was applied to

determine the cross section for production of 4.43 MeV gamma-rays from the $^{12}\text{C}(n, n'\gamma)^{12}\text{C}$ reaction at 5.43, 6.50, 7.51 and 8.50 MeV. The cross sections were found to be in agreement with the results of Hall and Bonner¹⁶⁾ and Condé et al.¹⁷⁾.

RESULTS

Semi-direct capture¹⁻³⁾ through the dipole states of nuclei is important in the region of energies near the giant dipole resonance. For Pb the peak of the resonance is at 13.5 MeV and the width about 3.5 MeV. It was possible to produce monoenergetic neutrons of energies up to 8.5 MeV in the present work. The neutron binding energy in ^{207}Pb is 6.74 MeV, which implies excitation energies up to 15.2 MeV, i. e. well above the peak of the giant resonance built on the ground state ($p_{1/2}$). The $g_{9/2}$ state, which is the lowest neutron orbital in the next main shell, is bound by about 4 MeV and the energy available is sufficient to investigate the region up to 1 MeV below the resonance peak.

One way of studying the validity of the semi-direct capture models is to compare the shape of the expected spectrum with the experimental one. Such a comparison is shown in Fig. 4 at the neutron energy 7.46 MeV. The theoretical spectra were obtained from calculations of $^{206}\text{Pb}(n, \gamma)$ cross sections using the semi-direct models of Brown¹⁾ and Clement et al.²⁾. Details of these calculations are given in ref.¹²⁾. The scattering wave functions were determined using the optical model parameters of Rosen et al.¹⁸⁾. Cross sections were evaluated for the $p_{1/2}$, $g_{9/2}$, $i_{11/2}$, $j_{15/2}$ and $d_{5/2}$ single-particle states in ^{207}Pb . The $f_{5/2}^{-1}$ and $p_{3/2}^{-1}$ states at 0.57 and 0.90 MeV are also of importance, since the ground state of ^{206}Pb is not a pure $p_{1/2}^{-2}$ configuration. In the calculations the configuration¹⁹⁾

$$\Psi(^{206}\text{Pb}) = 0.65 p_{1/2}^{-2} + 0.25 f_{5/2}^{-2} + 0.20 p_{3/2}^{-2}$$

was adopted.

The semi-direct models give good descriptions of the observed shape of the high-energy part of the gamma-ray spectrum. The intensity to the neutron single-particle states is dominant, as predicted by the theory, and the proportions are roughly accounted for. No intensity is observed to the neutron-hole states, e. g. $i_{13/2}^{-1}$ at 1.63 MeV and $f_{7/2}^{-1}$ at 2.34 MeV, in agreement with theory. (The $\frac{5}{2}^{+}$, $\frac{7}{2}^{+}$ doublet, $p_{1/2}^{\times} (3^{-})$, at 2.6 MeV is also weakly populated by comparison with the $g_{9/2}$ state; this may be concluded from comparison with the $^{209}\text{Bi}(n, \gamma)$ spectrum, Fig. 1. The $g_{9/2}$ strength in ^{210}Bi , split among 10 levels, is close to the ground state.)

Gamma transitions to the neutron states $s_{1/2}$ at 4.6 MeV, $d_{3/2}$ at 5.1 MeV and $g_{7/2}$ at 5.2 MeV were not included in the semi-direct spectrum. The transition energies to these states are far below the peak of the giant resonance and the present calculations show that the direct capture cross sections are higher than the semi-direct cross sections.

The line structure of the gamma-ray spectrum weakens with decreasing neutron energy (see Fig. 3) at about the same rate as the expected semi-direct capture cross sections decrease. It seems likely that compound-nucleus processes give a significant contribution to the spectrum for $E_n \lesssim 6$ MeV.

While the semi-direct capture theory describes the shape of the spectrum well, the theoretical cross sections are much lower than those observed. Fig. 5 shows the cross section for neutron capture to the $p_{1/2}$, $(f_{5/2}^{-1} + p_{3/2}^{-1})$ and $g_{9/2}$ neutron states. In the theory of Brown¹⁾ both direct capture and interference between direct and semi-direct capture are included. The interference is constructive at the peak of the giant

resonance and destructive below it. This gives cross section curves which are steeper than those based on the theory of Clement et al.²⁾, in which neither direct capture nor interference is taken into account.

The theories predict peak cross sections about $\frac{1}{10}$ of the experimental value for $p_{1/2}$ and about $\frac{1}{4}$ for $g_{9/2}$. For $(f_{5/2}^{-1} + p_{3/2}^{-1})$ the theories differ by a factor of 4 at the peak of the cross sections; the theory of Brown¹⁾ gives a cross section $\frac{1}{5}$ of the experimental value and Clement et al.²⁾ $\frac{1}{20}$. The observed neutron energy dependence of the cross section to the $g_{9/2}$ state is in agreement with the theoretical predictions. The peak of this cross section curve is expected at $E_n = 9.7$ MeV, which is outside the range of the present experiment. The measured cross sections for $p_{1/2}$ and $(f_{5/2}^{-1} + p_{3/2}^{-1})$ decrease with increasing neutron energy. This dependence indicates a strong contribution of compound-nucleus processes. However, the shape of the gamma-ray spectrum (Figs. 3 and 4) shows that this contribution cannot be dominant for $E_n > 6$ MeV.

In conclusion, the shape of the gamma-ray spectra from $^{206}\text{Pb}(n, \gamma)$, $E_n \approx 8$ MeV, is found to be well described by the semi-direct capture theories. The theories give an enhancement of the direct capture cross section by a factor of 10-15 at the peak of the giant dipole resonance. The observed enhancement factor for $^{206}\text{Pb}(n, \gamma)$ is about 50.

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FIGURE CAPTIONS

- Fig. 1. Experimental gamma-ray spectra from $^{206}\text{Pb}(n, \gamma)$ and $^{209}\text{Bi}(n, \gamma)$ at 7.46 MeV, normalized to the same integrated neutron flux. The insert figure shows the time spectrum illustrating the sample (n, γ) peak and the background groups. Pulse heights corresponding to gamma transitions from the capturing state to levels below 3.0 MeV in ^{207}Pb and below 0.6 MeV in ^{210}Bi are indicated by vertical bars and the neutron single-particle configurations.
- Fig. 2. Gamma-ray spectrum from the $^{12}\text{C}(n, \gamma)^{13}\text{C}$ reaction at 8.50 MeV. The solid curve represents the response line of the NaI(Tl) scintillator at 12.77 MeV. Transitions to the first excited state at 3.09 MeV and higher excited levels in ^{13}C give contributions at $\epsilon_{\gamma} < 10$ MeV.
- Fig. 3. Experimental gamma-ray spectra from the $^{206}\text{Pb}(n, \gamma)^{207}\text{Pb}$ reaction at various neutron energies. The spectra are plotted as functions of the residual excitation energy in ^{207}Pb . The spectra are normalized to the same integrated neutron flux. The solid and dashed curves show the unfolding of the spectra.
- Fig. 4. Comparison between experimental and theoretical spectra at 7.46 MeV. The solid and dashed curves represent the spectra calculated from the semi-direct theories of Brown¹⁾ and Clement et al.²⁾, respectively. The positions of the neutron single-particle states considered in the calculations are indicated. The spectra are normalized to each other in the excitation energy interval 2.5 - 3.5 MeV.

Fig. 5. Cross sections for the $^{206}\text{Pb}(n, \gamma)^{207}\text{Pb}$ reaction. The results from the first series of measurements are denoted by open triangles and from the second series by full dots. The solid and dashed curves are based on the semi-direct capture theories of Brown¹⁾ and Clement et al.²⁾, respectively. The dot-dashed curve is the calculated direct capture cross section²⁰⁾. Only an upper limit of the cross section for $g_{9/2}$ at 5.38 MeV was determined as indicated by the arrow.

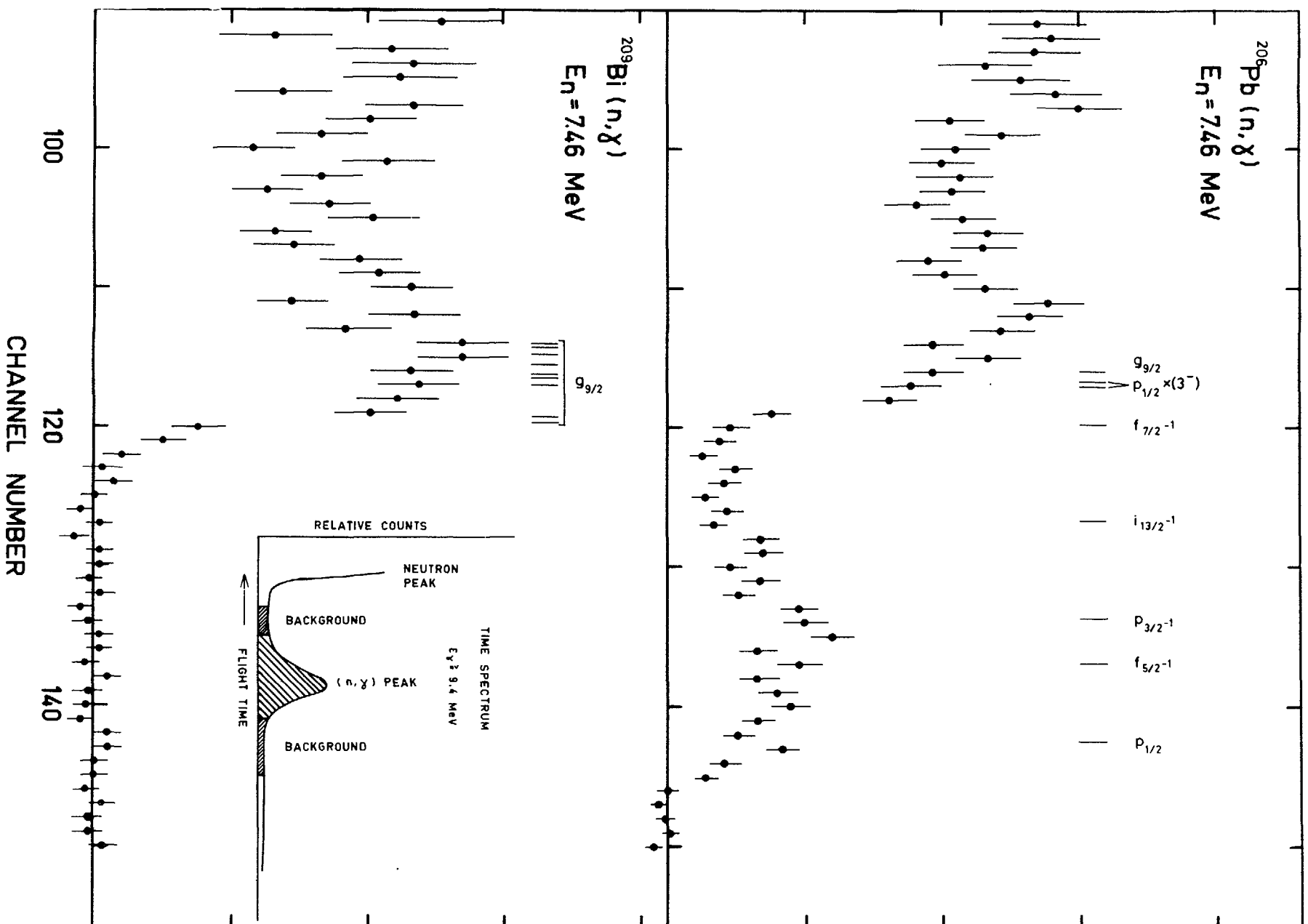
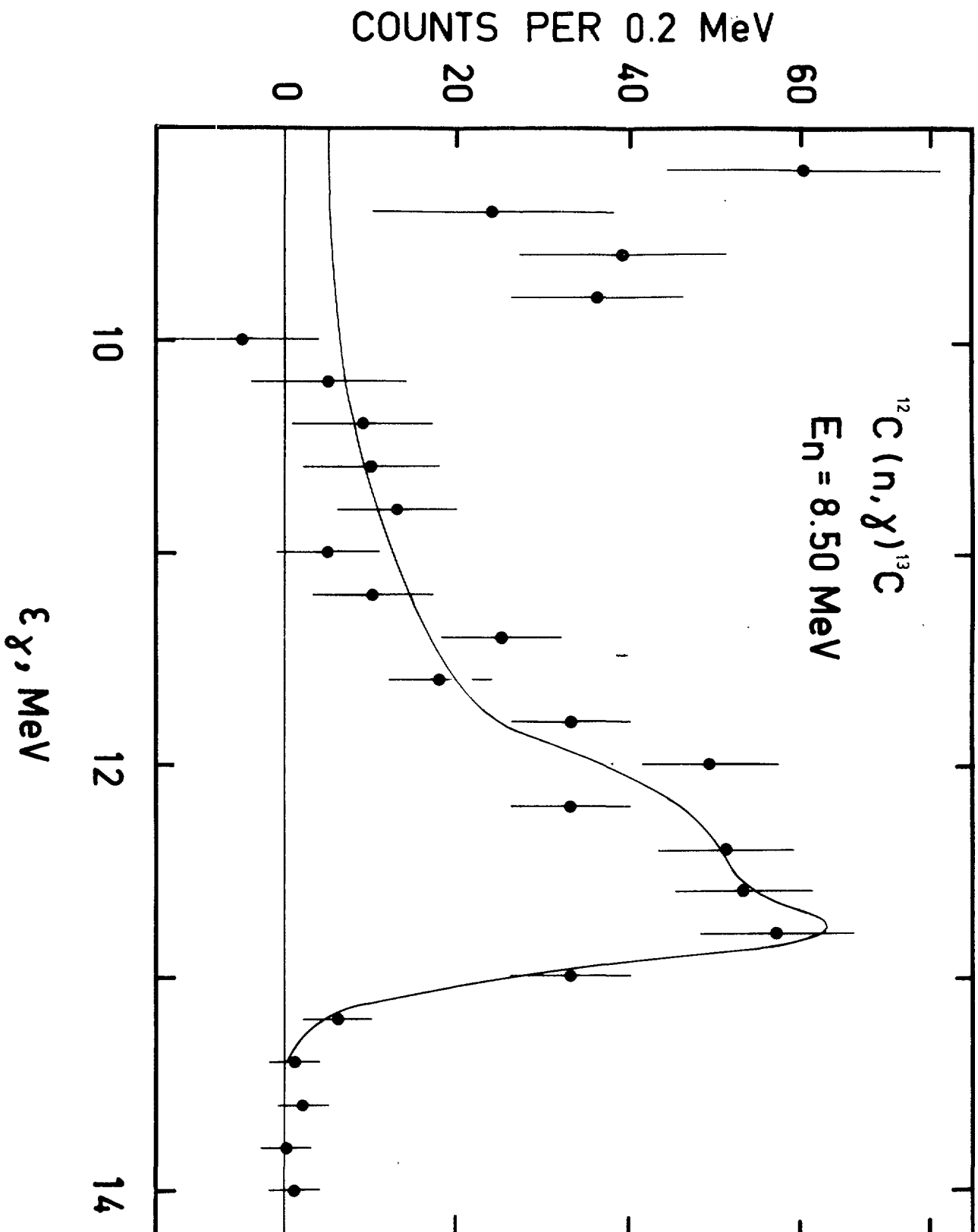


Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.



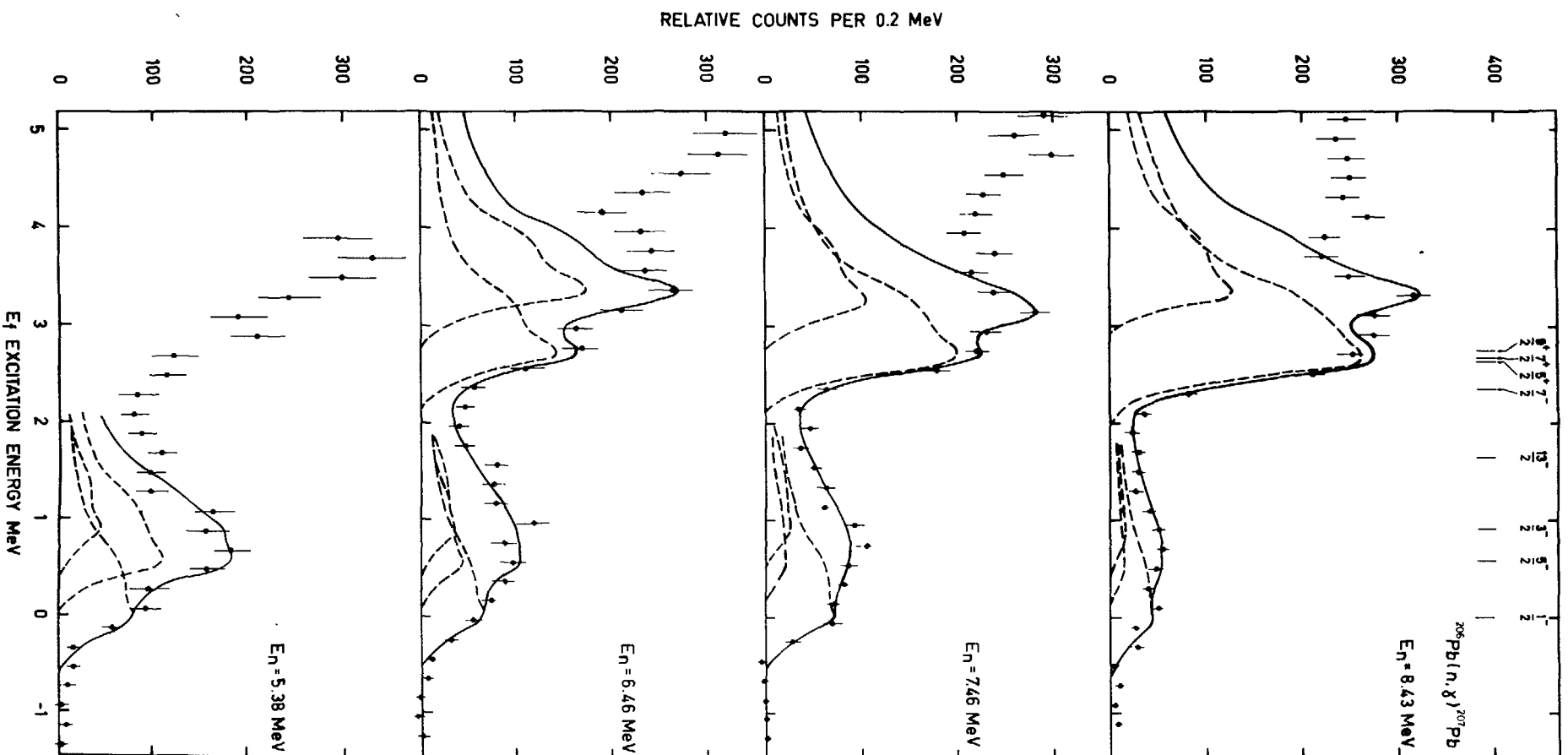


Fig. 3.

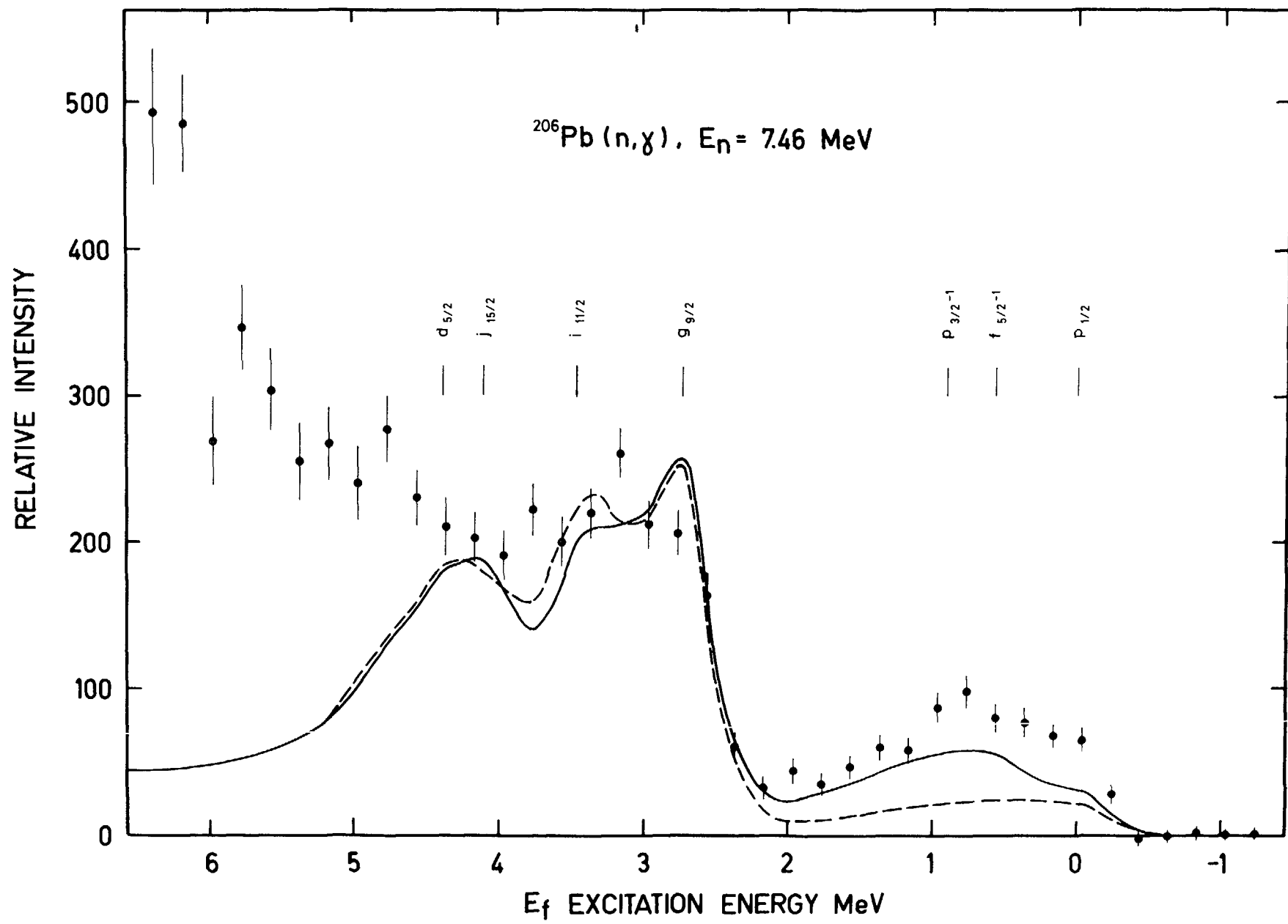
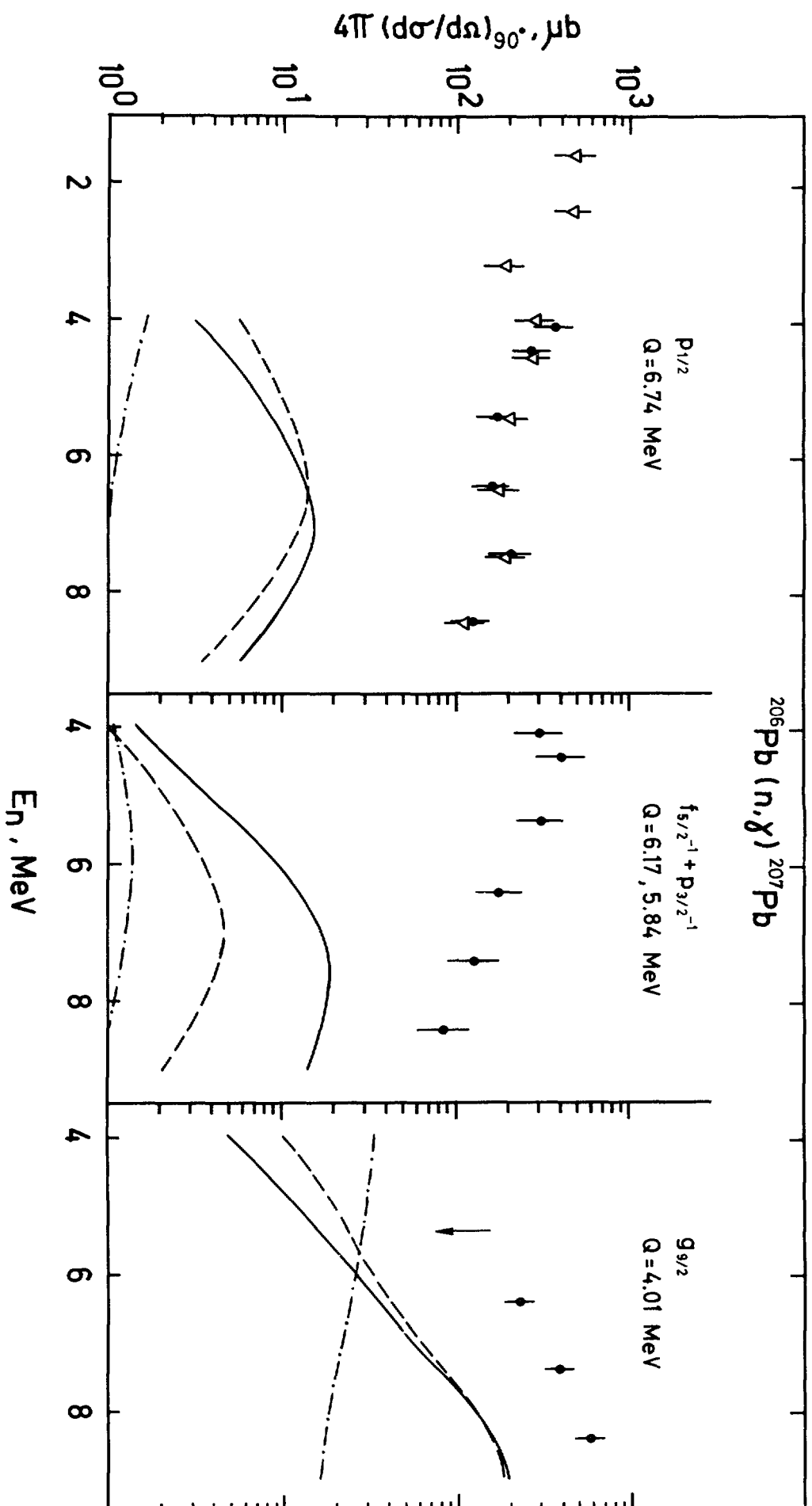


Fig. 4.

Fig. 5.



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