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To cite this article: Xu Ren-xin and Qiao Guo-jun 1999 *Chinese Phys. Lett.* **16** 778

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Electric Character of Strange Stars *

XU Ren-xin(徐仁新)^{1,2}, QIAO Guo-jun(乔国俊)²

¹National Astronomical Observatories, Beijing Astronomical Observatory, Chinese Academy of Science, Beijing 100012

²CAS-PKU Joint Beijing Astrophysical Center and Department of Astronomy, Peking University, Beijing 100871

(Received 15 March 1999)

Using the Thomas-Fermi model, we investigated the electric characteristics of a static non-magnetized strange star without crust. The exact solutions of electron number density and electric field above the quark surface are obtained. These results are useful if we are concerned about physical processes near the quark matter surfaces of strange stars.

PACS: 97.60.Gb, 97.60.Jd, 97.60.Sm

If strange quark matter in bulk is absolutely stable, there might be strange star¹ consisting almost completely of strange quark matter in the universe. Frustratingly, strange stars are very similar to neutron stars in their many properties, such as mass and radius. Thus, it is suggested that pulsars might be strange stars.¹⁻³ However, the interesting question about the nature of pulsars (neutron stars or strange stars) has not been answered with certainty even now yet.

Strange quark matter mainly consists of up, down, and strange quarks. As strange quark is a little more massive than that up and down quarks, there are a few electrons in the chemical equilibrium of strange quark matter in order to keep the matter neutral. Hence, electromagnetic interaction as well as strong interaction results in strange quark matter. The electromagnetic force participated in makes the structure of strange quark matter more interesting and attractive. In this paper, we are to investigate this electric peculiarity of strange stars. Previously, some numerical results^{1,4} have been given in literature, but no exact analytical result appears.

For a static and non-magnetized strange star, the properties of strange quark matter are determined by the thermodynamic potentials Ω_i ($i = u, d, s, e$) which are functions of chemical potential μ_i as well as the strange quark mass m_s and the strong interaction coupling constant α_c .^{1,5} We use units where $\hbar = c = 1$, physical quantities can be changed to be expressed in units of c.g.s. by using $\hbar c = 197.327 \text{ fm}\cdot\text{MeV}$ and $c = 2.9979 \times 10^{10} \text{ cm/s}$. Assuming weak interaction chemical equilibrium and overall charge neutrality, we come to

$$\begin{aligned} \mu_d &= \mu_s = \mu, \\ \mu_e + \mu_u &= \mu, \\ n_e &= \frac{1}{3}(2n_u - n_d - n_s), \\ n_i &= -\frac{\partial \Omega_i}{\partial \mu_i}, \end{aligned} \quad (1a)$$

and the total energy density ρ reads

$$\rho = \sum_{i=1}^4 (\Omega_i + \mu_i n_i) + B, \quad (1b)$$

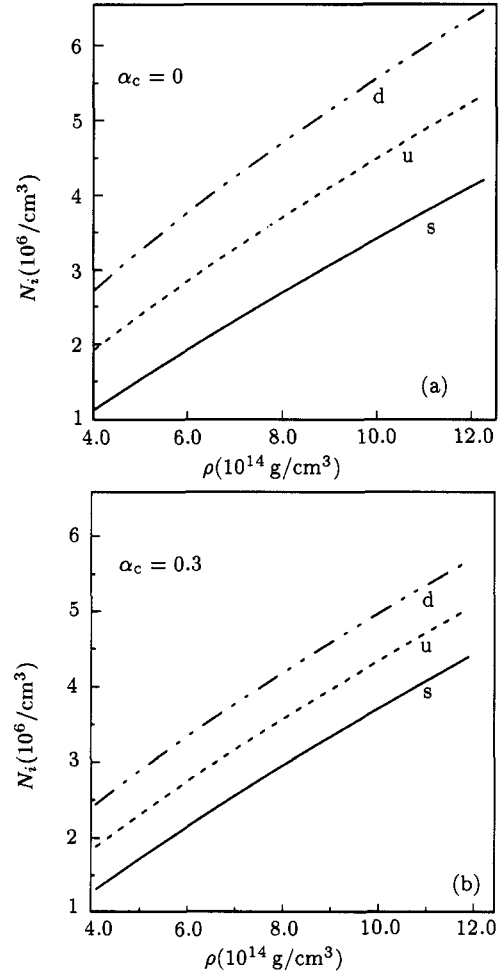


Fig. 1. Number densities of u, d, and s quarks. N_i ($i=u, d, s$) are functions of total energy density ρ . Coupling constant α_c is chosen to be 0 (a) and 0.3 (b), respectively.

where B is the bag constant, and Ω_i is referred to the appendix in the paper by Alcock *et al.*¹ The above equations (1a) and (1b) have only one free independent parameter μ and establish the relations among ρ, μ_i, n_i ($i = 1, 2, 3, 4$ for u, d, s, e, respectively). There are nine equations for these nine variables, therefore Eqs. (1a) and (1b) are self-contained.

The calculation results from Eqs. (1a) and (1b) are shown in Figs. 1 and 2, where the number densities of u, d, s quarks, and the quark charge density ρ_q

*Supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China under Grant No.19803001, the Climbing Program of State Committee of Science and Technology of China, and the Youth Science Foundation of Peking University.

(in units of Coulomb per cm^3) are varied as a function of total energy density ρ . In the computation, we choose $B = (145 \text{ MeV})^4$, $m_s = 200 \text{ MeV}$, and the renormalization point $\rho_R = 313 \text{ MeV}$, both for $\alpha_c = 0$ and $\alpha_c = 0.3$. As ρ has a mild rise variation from the outer part to the interior of a strange star,¹ the number densities of u, d, and s quarks increase almost in the same degree. However, the equilibrium quark charge density ρ_q changes significantly as ρ increases (Fig. 2), which means the number of equilibrium electrons becomes smaller when we go to a deeper region of a strange star. For a strange star with a typical pulsar mass $1.4 M_\odot$, the total energy ρ has a very modest variation with radial distance of strange star,¹ from $\sim 4 \times 10^{14} \text{ g/cm}^3$ (near surface) to $\sim 7 \times 10^{14} \text{ g/cm}^3$ (near center), therefore the quark charge density ρ_q would be of order of 10^{15} ($\alpha_c = 0.3$) to 10^{16} ($\alpha_c = 0$) C/cm^3 . Physically, as the Fermi energy of quarks becomes higher (for larger ρ), the effect due to $m_s \neq 0$ would be less important, hence, the charge density should be smaller. For a rotating magnetized strange star with typical parameters of pulsars, the Goldreich-Jullian separated space charge density is very small [in order of 10^{-7} C/cm^3 (Ref. 6)], so it is a very good approximation to neglect the space charge separation, i.e., the calculation results in Figs. 1 and 2 are valid for rotating magnetized strange stars.

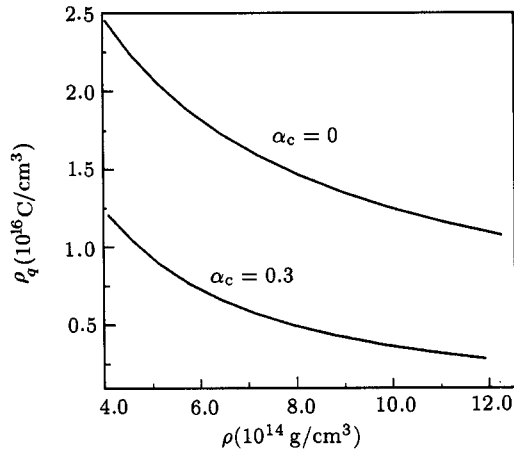


Fig. 2. Quark charge density ρ_q decreases as functions of the total energy density ρ . The coupling constant α_c is chosen to be 0 and 0.3, respectively.

Since the quark matters are bound through strong interaction (the thickness of the quark surface will be of order 1 fm), and the electrons are held by the quark matter electrically, hence the electronic distribution would extend beyond the quark matter surface. A simple Thomas-Fermi model has been employed to solve this distribution,¹ and the local charge distribution can be obtained by Poisson's equation:

$$\frac{d^2V}{dz^2} = \begin{cases} \frac{4\alpha}{3\pi}(V^3 - V_q^3) & z \leq 0, \\ \frac{4\alpha}{3\pi}V^3 & z > 0, \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

where z is a measured height above the quark surface, α the fine-structure constant, $V_q^3/(3\pi^2)$ the quark

charge density, V/e the electrostatic potential, and the number density of electrons is given by

$$n_e = \frac{V^3}{3\pi^2}. \quad (3)$$

Physically, the boundary conditions for Eq. (2) are

$$\begin{aligned} z \rightarrow -\infty: & \quad V \rightarrow V_q, \quad \frac{dV}{dz} \rightarrow 0; \\ z \rightarrow +\infty: & \quad V \rightarrow 0, \quad \frac{dV}{dz} \rightarrow 0. \end{aligned}$$

By a straightforward integration of Eq. (2), without considering the boundary conditions, we can get

$$\frac{dV}{dz} = \begin{cases} -\sqrt{\frac{8\alpha}{3\pi}(V^4/4 - V_q^3V) + C_1}, & (z < 0), \\ -\sqrt{\frac{2\alpha}{3\pi}V^4 + C_2}, & (z > 0), \end{cases}$$

where C_1 and C_2 are two constants determined by the boundary conditions. Using the first condition, we get $C_1 = (2\alpha/\pi)V_q^4$. Using the second one, we get $C_2 = 0$. Therefore, we come to

$$\frac{dV}{dz} = \begin{cases} -\sqrt{\frac{2\alpha}{3\pi}\sqrt{V^4 - 4V_q^3V + 3V_q^4}}, & (z < 0), \\ -\sqrt{\frac{2\alpha}{3\pi}V^2}, & (z > 0). \end{cases} \quad (4)$$

The continuity of Eq. (4) at $z = 0$ reduces the result $V(z = 0) = 3V_q/4$,¹ and we can consider the solution of Eq. (4) for $z > 0$ by

$$\frac{dV}{dz} = -\sqrt{\frac{2\alpha}{3\pi}V^2}, \quad V(z = 0) = \frac{3}{4}V_q, \quad (5)$$

hence,

$$V = \frac{3V_q}{\sqrt{6\alpha/\pi V_q z + 4}}, \quad \text{for } z > 0. \quad (6)$$

Therefore, from Eq. (3) the number density of electrons is

$$\begin{aligned} n_e &= \frac{9V_q^3}{\pi^2(\sqrt{6\alpha/\pi V_q z + 4})^3} \\ &\approx \frac{9.49 \times 10^{35}}{(1.2z_{11} + 4)^3} \text{ cm}^{-3}, \end{aligned} \quad (7)$$

and the electric field reads

$$\begin{aligned} E &= -\frac{dV}{dz} = \sqrt{\frac{2\alpha}{3\pi}} \frac{9V_q^2}{(\sqrt{6\alpha/\pi V_q z + 4})^2} \\ &\approx \frac{7.18 \times 10^{18}}{(1.2z_{11} + 4)^2} \text{ V/cm}, \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

where the direction of the electric field is outward, and V_q has been chosen to be 20 MeV (hence $\rho_q = 270.19 \text{ MeV}^3 = 5.63 \times 10^{15} \text{ C/cm}^3$), $z_{11} = z/(10^{-11} \text{ cm})$.

It is interesting that, from Eq. (8), although the electric field near the surface is about 10^{17} V/cm, the electric field decreases very quickly above the quark surface. The calculation of electric field shows that the electric field is about 10^{11} V/cm when $z \sim 10^{-8}$ cm, which means the induced electric field should be dominant when $z > 10^{-8}$ cm and bare strange stars (i.e., without crust) can have magnetospheres.³ Also the charge density calculated from Eq. (7) decreases from 2.4×10^{15} C/cm³ (where $V = 3V_q/4$) at the surface to 3.3×10^{-9} C/cm³ when $z = 3 \times 10^{-3}$ cm, while the Goldreich-Jullian separated space charge density is in order of 10^{-8} C/cm³ near strange stars surface.

Equations (7) and (8) are effective in discussing the properties of strange stars near the quark surface. Two examples are given here.

Example 1: As a strong outward-directed electric field exists near the quark surface, accreted matter will be repulsed just above the surface because of Coulomb force; hence a crust around the strange quark core might be formed. The properties of this crust have sufficiently been discussed in literature,^{1,4,7} but there is no simple relation to describe the crust mass and the electric gap width. Since Eq. (7) can be used to study the behavior of a test charged point, by introducing a coefficient $\eta \sim 1$ denoting the effective (positive) electric charge, we can get a simple relationship of crust mass M_{crust} and electric gap width z_G for typical crust and strange star values

$$M_{\text{crust}} \approx \frac{29 \times 10^{-5}}{(1.2z_G + 4)^2} \eta M_{\odot},$$

where z_G is in 10^{-11} cm. For $z_G \ll 1$ (the length scale of strong interaction is about $z_G = 10^{-2}$), we get the maximum values of crust mass $M_{\text{max}} \sim 1.8 \times 10^{-5} \eta M_{\odot}$, which are consistent with previous results.

Example 2: It is said that the Ruderman-Sutherland (RS) inner-gap model⁸ has a 'user friendly' nature for explaining the observed emission properties of radio pulsars. However, the RS model has a strange virtue: it cannot be applied to half of neutron stars. It is assumed in RS model that the magnetospheric charge density above the polar cap is positive, which means the rotational angle velocity Ω and the magnetic momentum μ are anti-parallel (i.e., $\Omega \cdot \mathbf{B} < 0$). For neutron stars at which Ω and μ are parallel, which are called 'anti-pulsars' (i.e., $\Omega \cdot \mathbf{B} > 0$), the inner-gap cannot be formed and the inner gap model does not work. If radio pulsars are bare strange stars,³ this strange virtue does not exist again. It is argued as follows that inner-gap sparking can also exist for anti-pulsars if radio pulsars are strange stars without crusts.

When $\Omega \cdot \mathbf{B} > 0$, the main reason that inner-gap does not exist is that neutron star can supply infinity of charged electrons, because electrons in neutron stars' crusts can move across the magnetic field lines. (Electrons can move across magnetic fields if their kinematic energy density is much greater than the magnetic energy density.) But for bare strange stars,

the charge electrons available to be pulled out from polar-cap are limited, and the times scale to pull out all these electrons is about 10^{-5} s. Therefore, polar-gap sparking can also be there for bare strange stars. The polar-cap area S_c reads

$$S_c = \frac{2\pi^2 R^3}{cP} \\ \approx 6.58 \times 10^8 R_6^3 \cdot P_1^{-1} \text{ cm}^2,$$

where R is the radius of pulsars, $R_6 = R/(10^6 \text{ cm})$, P the period, $P_1 = P/(1 \text{ s})$, and c the light speed. From Eq. (7), the number of total electrons available to be pulled out for a bare strange star is Q_{ss} ,

$$Q_{\text{ss}} = S_c e \int_{z_c}^{+\infty} n_e dz \\ \approx \frac{7.25 \times 10^{14}}{(1.2z_c + 4)^2} C,$$

where z_c is a critical height in 10^{-11} cm, and e the elementary charge. At the height of z_c , the electric field from quark matter is equal to the induced unipolar electric field (i.e, electrons are not forceful there). As $z_c \sim 6 \times 10^3$,³ $Q_{\text{ss}} \sim 4.2 \times 10^7$ C. Therefore, the time scale to pull out all these electrons is τ_{ss}

$$\tau_{\text{ss}} = \frac{Q_{\text{ss}}}{\rho_{\text{GJ}} S_c c} \\ \approx 2.1 \times 10^{-5} \text{ s},$$

where $\rho_{\text{GJ}} \sim 10^{-7}$ C/cm³ is the Goldreich-Jullian⁶ separated space charge density at polar-cap. Recently, by studying the clear features of drifting pulses from PSR B0943+10, Rankin *et al.*⁹ found that the regular patterns of pulses are consistent with RS model, but the pulsar might be an anti-pulsar which is contrary to the expectations of RS model. We argue that PSR B 0943+10 could be a bare strange star with $\Omega \cdot \mathbf{B} > 0$.

We would like to thank our pulsar group for helpful discussions.

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