Water in oil emulsion droplet size characterization using a pulsed field gradient with diffusion editing (PFG-DE) NMR technique

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Abstract

This paper describes a proton nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) technique, pulsed field gradient with diffusion editing (PFG-DE), to quantify drop size distributions of brine/crude oil emulsions. The drop size distributions obtained from this technique were compared to results from the traditional pulsed field gradient (PFG) technique. The PFG-DE technique provides both transverse relaxation ($T_2$) and drop size distributions simultaneously. In addition, the PFG-DE technique does not assume a form of the drop size distribution. An algorithm for the selection of the optimal parameters to use in a PFG-DE measurement is described in this paper. The PFG-DE technique is shown to have the ability to resolve drop size distributions when the $T_2$ distribution of the emulsified brine overlaps either the crude oil or the bulk brine $T_2$ distribution. Finally, the PFG-DE technique is shown to have the ability to resolve a bimodal drop size distribution.

Keywords: Petroleum; Emulsions; NMR; Drop size distribution

1. Introduction

Emulsions are dispersions of one liquid in another, immiscible liquid. In the petroleum industry, brine/crude oil emulsions can potentially form during crude oil production [1]. Typically, brine/crude oil emulsions are not preferred during crude oil production because of processing issues [2]. However, brine/crude oil emulsions can be beneficial in some cases, such as in the prevention of methane hydrate blockages [3–5]. Specifically, the drop size distributions of brine/crude oil emulsions can be used to understand and quantify emulsion formation and stability mechanisms. Therefore, knowledge of the drop size distribution of an emulsion aids in manipulating the emulsion to a desired condition. This paper addresses techniques used to measure drop size distributions of brine/crude oil emulsions using proton nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR). This work focuses on petroleum emulsions; however, this technique could also be used to investigate emulsions in the food and pharmaceutical industries.

Historically, researchers have attempted to measure drop size distributions of emulsions using techniques including microscopy, light scattering, Coulter counting, and nuclear magnetic resonance [6–8]. For brine/crude oil emulsions, nuclear magnetic resonance is a superior technique because it is not destructive to the emulsion, it considers the entire sample, and it is not restricted by the fact that brine/crude oil emulsions do not transmit an appreciable amount of light. Traditionally, NMR has been used to measure drop size distributions of emulsions according to the technique developed by Packer and Rees [9]. The Packer–Rees technique incorporates the idea of restricted diffusion established by Neuman [10] and refined by Murday and Cotts [11] for diffusion in spheres.

The method presented by Packer and Rees relies on the assumption that the drops in emulsions are distributed in size according to the lognormal distribution. This restriction often results in the loss of valuable information about the actual emulsion drop size distribution. Therefore, techniques have been developed and discussed in the literature that are designed to yield more general information about drop size distributions of emulsions, independent of the assumption that the drops are lognormally distributed [12].
This paper presents a new technique that provides both the $T_2$ and drop size distributions of brine/crude oil emulsions simultaneously. This paper also presents an algorithm that can be used to calculate parameters for both PFG-DE and PFG experiments for a variety of emulsion conditions. The PFG-DE technique involves a two-dimensional inversion with regularization much like that used for obtaining diffusivity and transverse relaxation information [13–15]. The drop size distributions obtained from the PFG-DE technique are compared to drop size distributions obtained from the stimulated echo pulsed field gradient (PFG) technique [6,16]. In this paper, the PFG-DE technique is shown to be useful for obtaining drop size distributions of brine/crude oil emulsions that are confined in the drops is given by measurement. The bulk transverse relaxation time of the fluid is maintained at 30 ± 0.1 °C. The following sections contain the pulse sequences and experimental methods that were used in this work.

2. Experimental methods

The proton NMR measurements discussed in this paper were performed on a 2 MHz Maran Ultra spectrometer that was maintained at 30 ± 0.1 °C. The following sections contain the pulse sequences and experimental methods that were used in this work.

2.1. Carr–Purcell–Meiboom–Gill (CPMG)

Fig. 1 illustrates the Carr–Purcell–Meiboom–Gill (CPMG) pulse sequence that can be used to obtain transverse relaxation information about an emulsion sample [17,18].

After obtaining the $T_2$ distribution, the resulting drop size distribution can be determined according to Eq. (1) [6]

$$d_i = 6\rho \left( \frac{1}{T_{2,i}} - \frac{1}{T_{2,\text{bulk}}} \right)^{-1}.$$  

The surface relaxivity, $\rho$, is determined either by combining a CPMG and PFG measurement [12] or by performing a PFG-DE measurement. The bulk transverse relaxation time of the fluid that is confined in the drops is given by $T_{2,\text{bulk}}$. The CPMG measurement is fast with duration usually equal to 10 min. Most importantly, the shape of the drop size distribution obtained from the CPMG technique is not assumed. For these reasons, Eq. (1) is useful for determining drop size distributions of emulsions when the transverse relaxation distribution of the emulsified brine is separated from both the crude oil distribution and the bulk brine distribution.

2.2. Pulsed field gradient (PFG)

The pulsed field gradient (PFG) stimulated echo technique has been shown to facilitate the characterization of emulsion drop size distributions [6,16].

Fig. 2 shows the pulsed field gradient pulse sequence with stimulated echoes and pre-gradient pulses. Three to nine pre-gradient pulses should be used to make the final two gradient pulses identically shaped. In the work discussed in this paper, the gradient strength values were manipulated in each experiment to facilitate attenuation of the emulsion signal. The amplitude of the first echo was obtained by linearly fitting the amplitudes of the first ten echoes, thereby increasing the signal/noise ratio (SNR) of the measurement.

The attenuation decay in a PFG measurement is coupled with the model developed by Murday and Cotts [11] for diffusion in spheres to obtain the drop size distribution of the emulsion. The model for attenuation of the signal of fluid confined in spheres is given by Eqs. (2)–(4) [10,11]:

$$R_{\text{DP}} = \exp \left\{ -\gamma g^2 \delta^2 \sum_{m=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{\alpha_m^2 (\alpha_m^2 D_{\text{DP}}^2 - 2)} \right\} \times \left[ \frac{2\delta}{\alpha_m^2 D_{\text{DP}}} \left( \frac{1}{\alpha_m^2 D_{\text{DP}}^2} - \frac{1}{\alpha_m^2 D_{\text{DP}}^2} \right) \right].$$

$$\Psi = 2 + \exp(-\alpha_m^2 D_{\text{DP}}^2(\Delta - \delta)) - 2\exp(-\alpha_m^2 D_{\text{DP}}^2\delta) - 2\exp(-\alpha_m^2 D_{\text{DP}}^2\Delta) + \exp(-\alpha_m^2 D_{\text{DP}}^2(\Delta + \delta)).$$

The gyromagnetic ratio is given by $\gamma_g$, the gradient strength is $g$, $D_{\text{DP}}$ is the diffusivity of the fluid in the dispersed phase, $r$ is the radius of the emulsion droplet, $\Delta$ is the time between gradient pulses, $\delta$ is the gradient pulse duration, and $\alpha_m$ is the $m$th positive root of

$$\frac{1}{\alpha_m^2} J_{3/2}(\alpha_m r) = J_{3/2}(\alpha_m r).$$

$J_k$ is the Bessel function of the first kind with order $k$. The overall attenuation of the emulsion has been shown to be a function of the attenuation of both the continuous and dispersed

![Fig. 1. Carr–Purcell–Meiboom–Gill (CPMG) pulse sequence.](image-url)
Fig. 2. Pulsed field gradient (PFG) pulse sequence with stimulated echoes and pre-gradient pulses. The amplitudes of the first 10 echoes are fit by linear regression to obtain the amplitude of the first echo.

Fig. 3. Pulsed field gradient with diffusion editing (PFG-DE) pulse sequence.

The volume weighted drop size distribution, \( p(r) \), is the log-normal probability density function [19]:

\[
p(r) = \frac{1}{2\sqrt{\pi} \sigma (2\pi)^{1/2}} \exp \left( -\frac{\left( \ln(2r) - \ln(d_v) \right)^2}{2\sigma^2} \right). \tag{9}
\]

The volume weighted mean is given by \( d_v \) and the width of the distribution is \( \sigma \).

The PFG technique involves obtaining attenuation of the signal as a function of gradient strength and subsequently fitting the experimental attenuation to the predicted attenuation according to the restricted diffusion model. For this work, a nonlinear least squares algorithm with optimization was used to perform the fitting (lsqcurvefit in MatLab 7.1, The MathWorks Inc.).

2.3. Pulsed field gradient with diffusion editing (PFG-DE)

Fig. 3 shows that the standard PFG pulse sequence that was previously discussed can be modified to include several thousand 180° pulses at the end of the gradient sequence to gather transverse relaxation information\[13,14]\.

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### Mathematical Formulas

**Restricted diffusion model**

**Fraction of the attenuation from the continuous phase**

\[
R_{\text{emul}} = (1 - \kappa) R_{\text{DP}} + \kappa R_{\text{CP}}, \quad 0 \leq \kappa \leq 1.0. \tag{5}
\]

**Fraction of the attenuation from the continuous phase**

\[
\kappa = \left[ 1 + \sum (f_i)_{\text{DP}} \exp \left[ \frac{-\left( \frac{\Delta + \tau}{T_2,i} \right)_{\text{CPP}}}{T_2,i} \right] \right]^{-1}. \tag{6}
\]

**Attenuation of the continuous phase**

\[
R_{\text{CP}} = \exp \left( -\frac{\gamma^2 g^2 D_{\text{CP}} \delta^2}{3} \left( \Delta - \frac{\delta}{3} \right) \right). \tag{7}
\]

**Attenuation of the dispersed phase**

\[
R_{\text{DP}} = \int_0^\infty p(r) R_{\text{sp}(r)} \, dr \quad \text{and} \quad \int_0^\infty p(r) \, dr. \tag{8}
\]
Similar to the standard PFG technique, the gradient values are manipulated to facilitate attenuation due to restricted diffusion. However, the PFG-DE technique acquires thousands of echoes, thus resulting in the attainment of both diffusion and transverse relaxation information.

Flaum derived the magnetization equation that is used to characterize restricted diffusion of spheres and transverse relaxation simultaneously [13]:

$$M(g, t) = \int \int f(r, T_2) \exp \left( -\frac{t}{T_2} \right) R_{sp}(\Delta, \delta, g, r) \times \exp \left( -\Delta + \delta \frac{T_2}{T_1} - 2\delta \left( \frac{1}{T_2} - \frac{1}{T_1} \right) \right) dr dT_2.$$  \hspace{1cm} (10)

The longitudinal relaxation time, $T_1$, was assumed to be equal to $T_2$ in this work, which is a valid assumption for liquids at 2 MHz [22]. The attenuation of the brine drops according to Eqs. (2)–(4) is given by $R_{sp}$. The distribution of both drop size and transverse relaxation, $f(r, T_2)$, is determined using a two-dimensional inversion with regularization [13–15].

### 2.4. Parameter selection

The parameters that are used in both the PFG and PFG-DE techniques are obtained by solving the series model for restricted diffusion in spheres given by Murday and Cotts [11,13]. Specifically, the primary parameters that affect both the PFG-DE and PFG measurements are the time between gradient pulses ($\Delta$), gradient duration ($\delta$), and gradient strength ($g$). Both physical and equipment constraints must be accounted for when determining the parameters for a given experiment. Selection of $\Delta$ must be made based on the range of sizes of the drops expected in the sample and the SNR of the system. To distinguish restricted diffusion from free diffusion, the dimensionless time between gradient pulses must be greater than or equal to 1.0 [13]:

$$\frac{2D_{DP} \Delta}{r^2} \geq 1.0.$$  \hspace{1cm} (11)

If $\Delta$ is too small, the measurement will not be sensitive to large drops. If $\Delta$ is too large, the SNR will be low because of $T_2$ relaxation of the drops:

$$\frac{r^2}{2D_{DP}} \leq \Delta \leq 0.3T_{2,DP}.$$  \hspace{1cm} (12)

Therefore, to investigate the largest possible sphere sizes, $\Delta$ must be as large as possible but less than a fraction of the dispersed phase transverse relaxation time. After $\Delta$ is established, the gradient duration, $\delta$, is calculated. The minimum value of the gradient duration is instrument specific, and the maximum value is based on an established rule of thumb [13]:

$$\delta_{\text{min}} \leq \delta \leq 0.2\Delta.$$  \hspace{1cm} (13)

With the gradient spacing and duration calculated, the gradient values that achieve the desired attenuation can be calculated using the previously described series model for restricted diffusion in spheres. Ideally, for a given sphere size, the attenuation should range from 0.99 to 0.01 [13].

Fig. 4 illustrates the relationship between the parameters in a given experiment. In the top figure, the solid curve shows the $T_2$ distribution of the dispersed fluid. The dashed curve is the time between the two gradient pulses in the pulse sequence, $\Delta$, and the dotted curve is the gradient duration, $\delta$. The minimum time between gradient pulses, $\Delta_{\text{min}}$, is shown as the dashed-dotted line in the top figure. When the calculated $\Delta$ falls below $\Delta_{\text{min}}$, the measurement is no longer sensitive to restricted diffusion, thus resulting in the maximum detectable drop size, $r_{\text{max}}$. The minimum detectable drop size, $r_{\text{min}}$, is calculated based on the maximum gradient duration and maximum gradient strength of

![Fig. 4. Example of parameters calculated for PFG-DE and PFG measurements. These parameters were calculated with: $\rho = 1.0 \mu m/s$, $D_{\text{brane}} = 2.6 \times 10^{-9} m^2/s$, $T_{2\text{,bulk}} = 2.5 s$, and $\Delta/T_{2,DP} = 0.3$.](image-url)
the instrument. Finally, the bottom figure contains the range of gradient values that should be used to facilitate the desired amount of attenuation ranging from 1% signal remaining, \( g_{01} \), to 99% signal remaining, \( g_{99} \). In this work, 20–25 logarithmically spaced gradient values were calculated for each parameter set. If the drop size range of the system is not known before the measurement, one PFG measurement can be performed which gives an estimate of the range of drop sizes in the system.

For all PFG-DE measurements discussed in this paper, 32 scans were applied, 15,360 echoes were collected with the echo spacing equal to 600 µs, and the relaxation delay was equal to 10 s. With these parameters, a typical measurement required 5–7 h for each parameter set. The PFG-DE technique is not affected by sedimentation of the drops in the emulsion; however, the technique is sensitive to coalescence. Therefore, the PFG-DE technique is applicable to emulsions that resist coalescence for many hours [1–3,20,21]. Though this work is focused on brine/crude oil emulsions, oil/water emulsions could also be investigated using the PFG-DE technique with the described parameter selection method. A possible problem that could occur with oil/water emulsions is that \( \Delta_1 \) might be required to be long to characterize larger drops, thus resulting in a significant loss of signal due to \( T_2 \) relaxation of the oil.

Using a technique developed by Flaum [13], multiple sets of parameters can be used to characterize a given drop size range. This technique, referred to as masking, incorporates multiple parameter sets with each set optimized for a particular radius and consisting of one \( \Delta_1 \) value, one \( \delta \) value, and a logarithmically spaced list of gradient strength values. For drop size masking, the masking technique weights the most sensitive drop size range of each parameter set based on the attenuation imparted by the parameter set and the SNR of the measurement. Fig. 5 shows the attenuation curves that were obtained with \( \Delta = 244 \text{ ms} \), \( \delta = 49 \text{ ms} \), and \( g = 2–47 \text{ G/cm} \).

Each curve in Fig. 5 represents the attenuation imparted by a given parameter set to fluids diffusing in a given sphere size. In this figure, the attenuation curves from 60 different radii logarithmically spaced between \( 1 \times 10^{-5} \) and 0.1 cm are displayed.

The attenuation for each parameter set can be used to determine the sensitivity of each parameter set. Fig. 6 illustrates the determination of the sensitive region of each parameter set by plotting the sums of the square differences of attenuation between each drop size and the two adjacent drop sizes for five parameter sets.

At each gradient value, the attenuation of one sphere size is compared to the attenuation of the two adjacent sphere sizes to ensure that the sphere sizes can be distinguished. The limit of each parameter set is dictated by the noise of the measurement:

\[
\text{cutoff} = 2(\sigma_{\text{noise}})^2 N_{\text{grad}}. \tag{14}
\]

In this equation, the standard deviation of the noise is given by \( \sigma_{\text{noise}} \) and the number of gradients is given by \( N_{\text{grad}} \). The intersections of the value obtained from Eq. (14) with the sensitivity curves in Fig. 6 designate the boundaries of the sensitivity of each parameter set. For this example, the cutoff was calculated to be 0.001, resulting in Fig. 7.
The masks have maximum amplitude at the radii for which the parameters are most sensitive, and the range extends to the boundaries of the sensitivity of each parameter set as determined by Eq. (14). The masked drop size distribution is a weighted sum of the drop size distribution obtained from each parameter set divided by the amplitude of the combined mask.

Similarly, the transverse relaxation distribution is masked according to $\Delta$. In this work, transverse relaxation times shorter than half of $\Delta$ were masked. The masking proceeds linearly in log $T_2$ until the value of $\Delta$ is reached as shown in Fig. 8 for five parameter sets.

Any component that has a relaxation time significantly faster than $\Delta$ will have relaxed substantially before the first echo is formed by combining 10 mL of brine with 40 mL of crude oil A. Shear was applied to the emulsion with $\gamma = 1.3 \times 10^3$ s$^{-1}$.

Table 1 contains the NMR parameters that were calculated using the CPMG, PFG-DE, and PFG techniques. The sample temperatures were not measured during the NMR measurements. However, all samples were placed into a temperature controlled spectrometer at $30 \pm 0.1$ °C during the NMR measurements. For all of the emulsions discussed, the dispersed phase was ASTM certified synthetic seawater. Two different crude oils were used for the continuous phase, denoted as either crude oil A or crude oil B. Table 2 contains density and viscosity information for the crude oils.

Each emulsion discussed in this paper contained 20 vol% brine and 80 vol% crude oil. After forming each emulsion, the glass sample vessel containing the emulsion was placed in the spectrometer. Table 3 summarizes the formation conditions and measurement durations for the three experiments presented in this work.

### 2.5. Emulsion preparation

The emulsions considered in this work were prepared using a Couette flow device. The rotating, inner cylinder was composed of Torlon with radius, $r_T = 19.1$ mm. The stationary, outer cylinder was composed of glass with radius, $r_g = 21.6$ mm. The rotational speed of the inner cylinder was adjusted depending on the desired experimental conditions, and the shear rate is given by

$$\gamma = \frac{2\pi \omega r_T}{(r_g - r_T)}.$$  \hspace{1cm} (15)

The rotational speed of the inner cylinder is given by $\omega$. Shear rates ranged from $1.3 \times 10^3$ to $3.2 \times 10^3$ s$^{-1}$, depending on the experiment. Each emulsion was sheared for 10 min.

The sample temperatures were not measured during the NMR measurements. However, all samples were placed into a temperature controlled spectrometer at $30 \pm 0.1$ °C during the NMR measurements. For all of the emulsions discussed, the dispersed phase was ASTM certified synthetic seawater. Two different crude oils were used for the continuous phase, denoted as either crude oil A or crude oil B. Table 2 contains density and viscosity information for the crude oils.

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### 3. Results

The following sections contain three different cases that show the usefulness of the PFG-DE technique. The first case illustrates a situation when the $T_2$ distribution of the emulsified brine overlaps the bulk brine $T_2$ distribution. The second case illustrates the situation when the $T_2$ distribution of the emulsified brine overlaps the $T_2$ distribution of the crude oil. Finally, the third case illustrates the ability of the PFG-DE technique to resolve a bimodal drop size distribution.

#### 3.1. Emulsified brine $T_2$ distribution overlaps the bulk brine $T_2$ distribution (Experiment 1, crude oil A)

Drop size distributions of brine/crude oil A emulsions were obtained using the CPMG, PFG-DE, and PFG techniques. Fig. 9 shows the $T_2$ distribution of an emulsion that was formed by combining 10 mL of brine with 40 mL of crude oil A. Shear was applied to the emulsion with $\gamma = 1.3 \times 10^3$ s$^{-1}$.
which was obtained from In addition, Eq. (1) requires the use of the surface relaxivity, a significant increase in the uncertainty of the drop size distribution.

brine can overlap the bulk brine distribution, thus causing a significant distribution. Fig. 10 shows the drop size distribution obtained from transverse relaxation data. Note the proximity of the emulsified brine \( T_2 \) distribution to the bulk brine \( T_2 \) distribution.

\[ P(d_i) = \sum_{j=1}^{j=i} f_j. \]  

The normalized frequency obtained from the PFG-DE technique is given by \( f_j \). Because the probability density function for the PFG technique is assumed to be lognormal with equal increments of the logarithm of the diameter, the cumulative distribution can further be written in terms of the normalized frequency from the PFG-DE technique:

\[ \Delta P_i = d_i p(d_i) \Delta (\log(d_i)) = f_i. \]

The probability density function for the PFG technique is denoted by \( p(d_i) \). Unlike the CPMG technique as shown in Fig. 10, the PFG-DE and PFG techniques have the ability to resolve the drop size distribution when the \( T_2 \) distribution of the emulsion overlaps the bulk brine \( T_2 \) distribution.

3.2. Emulsified brine \( T_2 \) distribution overlaps the bulk crude oil \( T_2 \) distribution (Experiment 2, crude oil B)

If the \( T_2 \) distribution of the emulsified brine overlaps the \( T_2 \) distribution of the crude oil in the emulsion, the transverse relaxation data cannot be used to obtain the drop size distribution of the emulsion. An emulsion was prepared by combining 5 mL
of brine with 20 mL of crude oil B. The emulsion was sheared for ten minutes with $\gamma = 3.2 \times 10^3$ s$^{-1}$. Fig. 13 shows the overlap of the emulsified brine and crude oil $T_2$ distributions.

The solid curve in Fig. 13 is the $T_2$ distribution of the layered crude oil B/brine sample, and the dashed curve is the $T_2$ distribution of the emulsion. Because the emulsified brine and crude oil B $T_2$ distributions are not separable, Eq. (1) cannot be used to calculate the drop size distribution.

The parameters for the PFG-DE technique were calculated based on ($T_2$$_{\text{bulk}} = 2.5$ s, $\rho = 0.3$ µm/s, and $\Delta/T_2 = 0.3$), and the values were: $\Delta = 552$ ms, $\delta = 28$ ms, and $g = 1–13$ G/cm, as shown in Table 1. The parameters were sensitive to drop diameters in the range, 5–60 µm. The two-dimensional map obtained from the PFG-DE technique after applying the masking technique is shown in Fig. 14.

Fig. 14 shows that the drop size distribution of the brine phase was extracted using the PFG-DE technique even though the $T_2$ distributions of the emulsified brine and crude oil B overlap. The lack of contribution of the crude oil B to the drop size distribution is evident when considering the attenuation of the emulsion as shown in Fig. 15.

Fig. 15 shows that the crude oil B does not significantly contribute to the attenuation of the signal of the emulsion based on Eq. (7). The signal of the crude oil B is negligible after the sec-
Fig. 14. Two-dimensional map of brine/crude oil B emulsion after masking. The emulsified brine and crude oil B $T_2$ distributions overlap, but the crude oil B does not contribute to the drop size distribution because the crude oil B signal attenuated significantly.

Fig. 15. Experimental and predicted attenuation for the Experiment 2 brine/crude oil B emulsion ($\Delta = 552$ ms, $\delta = 28$ ms, and $g = 1–13$ G/cm). Note that the crude oil B does not contribute to the attenuation of the signal of the emulsion, thereby facilitating the separation of the crude oil B and brine contributions.

ond gradient pulse; therefore, the emulsified brine and crude oil B contributions can be separated. As shown by Peña [6], if the signal from the continuous phase is diminished, only the brine signal contributes to the determination of the drop size distribution. Though the oil signal does not have to be eliminated to use Eq. (10), the effective diffusivities of the brine and crude oil must be separable to effectively characterize the emulsified brine drop size distribution.

The PFG measurement was performed using the same parameters as those used for the PFG-DE measurement, and the comparison of the drop size distributions is shown in Fig. 16.

Table 4 contains a summary of the results for the two previously described experiments.
Table 4
Summary of results for the unimodal brine/crude oil emulsions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiment</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>( \gamma ) (s(^{-1}))</th>
<th>( -\sigma ) (µm)</th>
<th>( d ) (µm)</th>
<th>( +\sigma ) (µm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>PFG-DE</td>
<td>( 1.3 \times 10^3 )</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>PFG</td>
<td>( 1.3 \times 10^3 )</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>PFG-DE</td>
<td>( 3.2 \times 10^3 )</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>PFG</td>
<td>( 3.2 \times 10^3 )</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3. Bimodal drop size distribution (Experiment 3, crude oil A)

The PFG-DE technique is particularly useful for determining the drop size distribution when the emulsion contains a bimodal drop size distribution. A bimodal drop size distribution was prepared by combining two independently formed emulsions. One emulsion was prepared by shearing 10 mL of brine with 40 mL of crude oil A. The shearing duration was 10 min with \( \gamma = 2.3 \times 10^3 \) s\(^{-1}\). An independent emulsion consisting of 10 mL of brine and 40 mL of crude oil A was formed with \( \gamma = 1.3 \times 10^3 \) s\(^{-1}\) and shearing duration equal to 10 min. The PFG-DE and PFG measurements were performed on both of the independent emulsions. From each independent emulsion, 25 mL was removed and combined into one glass sample vessel to form a bimodal drop size distribution. The PFG-DE measurement was performed on the combined emulsion.

By applying two different shear rates, it was expected that two different populations of drops would form. Therefore, two different parameter sets were constructed to characterize the two different drop size distributions. With \( \gamma = 2.3 \times 10^3 \) s\(^{-1}\), parameters were calculated with maximum sensitivity to drops with diameters equal to 10 µm in the range (5–70 µm). To characterize this range of diameters, the following parameters were calculated using the previously described algorithm based on \( T_2^\text{bulk} = 2.5 \) s, \( \rho = 0.5 \) µm/s, and \( \Delta/T_2 = 0.3; \Delta = 470 \) ms, \( \delta = 28 \) ms, \( g = 1–15 \) G/cm. The PFG technique was also used to measure the drop size distribution of the emulsion, and the comparison is shown in Fig. 17.

Fig. 17 shows the agreement that was achieved between the PFG-DE technique and the PFG technique with \( \gamma = 2.3 \times 10^3 \) s\(^{-1}\).

With \( \gamma = 1.3 \times 10^3 \) s\(^{-1}\), parameters were calculated with maximum sensitivity to drops with diameters equal to 20 µm in the range (10–140 µm). To characterize this range of diameters, the following parameters were calculated using the previously described algorithm based on \( T_2^\text{bulk} = 2.5 \) s, \( \rho = 0.5 \) µm/s, and \( \Delta/T_2 = 0.3; \Delta = 598 \) ms, \( \delta = 5.7 \) ms, \( g = 1–10 \) G/cm. The PFG technique was also used to measure the drop size distribution of the emulsion, and the comparison is shown in Fig. 18.

Fig. 18 shows the agreement that was achieved between the PFG-DE and PFG techniques with \( \gamma = 1.3 \times 10^3 \) s\(^{-1}\).

An emulsion with a bimodal drop size distribution was formed by combining 25 mL of the emulsion with \( \gamma = 2.3 \times 10^3 \) s\(^{-1}\), with 25 mL of the emulsion with \( \gamma = 1.3 \times 10^3 \) s\(^{-1}\). The PFG-DE measurement of the bimodal emulsion consisted of two complete parameter sets: \( [\Delta = 470 \) ms, \( \delta = 28 \) ms, \( g = 1–15 \) G/cm] and \( [\Delta = 598 \) ms, \( \delta = 5.7 \) ms, \( g = 1–10 \) G/cm].

The masking technique developed by Flaum [13] was used to investigate the range of sizes of the bimodal distribution as described in Section 2.4. The sensitivity for each parameter set is given in Fig. 19.

The drop size masks were determined based on the sensitivity of each parameter set and the noise cutoff of the measurement which was 0.02 for this experiment. The limits of each parameter set as a result of the noise are given in Fig. 20.

Fig. 21 shows the limits of the sensitivity of the first parameter set.

The solid line indicates the most sensitive drop size of the measurement, and the dashed lines indicate the limits of the sensitivity of the measurement. Similarly, the sensitivity of the second parameter set is shown in Fig. 22.

The second parameter set is sensitive to the larger population of drop sizes as shown in Fig. 22.
In addition to masking the measurement according to the drop size, the masking procedure also applies to the transverse relaxation distribution. As discussed in Section 2.4, all transverse relaxation times that are less than half of $\Delta$ are masked. Fig. 23 shows that transverse relaxation times less than 250 ms were masked for this example.

For this example, masking the transverse relaxation merely diminishes the transverse relaxation contribution of the crude oil while the emulsified brine contribution is unaffected. Fig. 24 shows the final result after masking both drop size and transverse relaxation.

The crude oil A and brine contributions were isolated according to the separation in terms of the $T_2$ distributions, and the resulting bimodal drop size distribution is given in Fig. 25.

Fig. 25 illustrates the ability of the PFG-DE technique to resolve the bimodal drop size distribution. The independently measured unimodal drop size distributions of each emulsion are plotted in conjunction with the bimodal drop size distribution. Fig. 25 shows that the first population of sizes in the bimodal distribution, $\{11, 14, 17\}$ $\mu$m, agrees with the PFG-DE measurement of the corresponding unimodal drop size distribution, $\{10, 15, 20\}$ $\mu$m. In addition, the second population of drop sizes in the bimodal distribution, $\{39, 52, 65\}$ $\mu$m, also agrees with the PFG-DE measurement of the corresponding unimodal distribution, $\{42, 60, 78\}$ $\mu$m. These results show that the PFG-DE technique has the ability to resolve a bimodal drop size distribution which is in agreement with the independent, unimodal drop size distributions.

4. Conclusion

Based on the work presented in this paper, the PFG-DE technique has the ability to resolve drop size distributions of emulsions in different physical situations. In addi-
tion, the parameter selection algorithm developed by Flaum [13] facilitates accurate measurements of drop size distributions of emulsions. The results from the PFG-DE technique have been shown to agree with the traditional PFG technique. The PFG-DE technique also has the ability to resolve more complicated drop size distributions such as bimodal drop size distributions. In general, the PFG-DE technique is useful because it provides both transverse relaxation and drop size distributions simultaneously, and it is not constrained by an assumed shape of the drop size distribution.

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Supplementary information

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References