Test of $\phi^4$ Model Predictions near the $^3$He Liquid-Gas Critical Point

M. Barmatz, Fang Zhong, and Inseob Hahn, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, 4800 Oak Grove Dr., Pasadena, CA 91109

NASA is supporting the development of an experiment called MISTE (Microgravity Scaling Theory Experiment) for a future International Space Station mission. The main objective of this flight experiment is to perform in-situ $PVT$, heat capacity at constant volume, $C_v$, and isothermal susceptibility, $\chi_T$, measurements in the asymptotic region near the $^3$He liquid-gas critical point. On the ground, gravity induces a measurable density gradient for reduced temperatures $|T/T_c-1|<10^{-4}$. An accurate test of theoretical predictions within the asymptotic region close to the critical point is limited because of this gravity effect. Precision ground-based measurements are now being performed in the crossover region away from the critical point in preparation for this flight experiment. The $\phi^4$ model, applied to the $O(1)$ universality class, was tested using recently obtained $C_v$ and $\chi_T$ data in the crossover region of $^3$He. The heat capacity and susceptibility measurements were performed in the same 0.05 cm high sample cell along the critical isochore over the range $10^{-5}<|T/T_c-1|<10^{-1}$. This RG-based $\phi^4$ model with a minimal set of three adjustable parameters provided an excellent fit to the $C_v$ and $\chi_T$ data both above and below the critical point in the gravity free crossover region. The temperature dependence of the correlation length, $\xi$, calculated from the best-fit parameters, will be compared with previous experimental measurements in the crossover region. The good agreement between the $\phi^4$ model calculations and the experimental $C_v$ and $\chi_T$ measurements unexpectedly extended beyond the theoretically predicted crossover range. [This work was supported by NASA.]