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TITLE ELECTRON SPECTROSCOPY STUDY OF THE HEAVY FERMION COMPOUND
 U_2Zn_{17}

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Electron spectroscopy study of the heavy fermion compound U_2Zn_{17}

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Abstract

We report x-ray photoemission, resonant photoemission and Bremsstrahlung Isochromat spectra of the 4f core levels, the valence band and the conduction band, respectively, of the heavy fermion compound U_2Zn_{17} and the reference compound $\text{Th}_2\text{Zn}_{17}$, and we assess current efforts to interpret such spectra.

The low temperature properties of cerium and uranium materials have much in common, including a diversity of ground states varying from magnetic to superconducting, and the occurrence in some materials of unusually large specific heats, the so-called 'heavy fermion' behavior [1]. It is generally agreed that the Ce and U 4f and 5f electrons, respectively, are responsible for these properties. The 3d x-ray photoemission (XPS) and 4f photoemission (PES) and Bremsstrahlung isochromat (BIS) spectra of cerium materials have been interpreted with considerable success using the impurity Anderson Hamiltonian, leading to a new unified picture [2-5] of those spectroscopic and low temperature properties that do not involve lattice coherence effects. In this picture the low temperature properties are determined by spin fluctuations with a characteristic energy scale set by the Kondo temperature T_K , and it is assumed that coherence effects set in at some temperature lower than T_K .

For uranium materials, no such unified picture exists. Hill [6] introduced the idea that the 5f electrons are localized or itinerant depending on the U-U separation, which one might model with the Hubbard Hamiltonian. But heavy Fermion materials typically have large U-U separations putting them in the localized regime of the Hill plot and yet can display low temperature itinerant properties. This and other results, such as the effect [7] of substitutions on Zn sites in U_2Zn_{17} , suggest that the important factor is hybridization with neighboring atoms, which could be modeled with the Anderson Hamiltonian. However, the 5f spectra do not resemble the cerium 4f spectra as measured or as calculated from the impurity Anderson Hamiltonian, particularly in having much more f-weight around the Fermi energy E_F . Also, as we have pointed out, the only manifestation of the Coulomb energy U, which must be present for either the Anderson or Hubbard Hamiltonians, is that the total measured 5f width greatly exceeds the one-electron 5f width obtained in density functional calculations [8].

There are two important differences between uranium and cerium. The U 5f wavefunction is more extended than the Ce 4f wavefunction so the hybridization may be larger and the screened Coulomb interaction smaller. In addition, the valence states for uranium are $5f^2$, $5f^3$ and $5f^4$, so multiplet effects will be much more important than for cerium with valence states $4f^0$, $4f^1$ and $4f^2$. Mechanisms have been suggested whereby these effects may lead to a negative effective Coulomb interaction [9], or to the greatly increased

5f weight around E_F [8]. A realistic treatment of the impurity Anderson Hamiltonian accurately including these effects for uranium has yet to be done so it is not known if the measured 5f spectra and low temperature properties can be accounted for as well as can be done for cerium. There has been some success in applying the impurity Anderson Hamiltonian treatment used for Ce 3d core level XPS spectra [5] to the 4f core level XPS spectra of Th [10,11] and U [12] materials.

In this paper we report combined BIS/PES 5f and XPS 4f spectra for the magnetic [13] heavy fermion material U_2Zn_{17} and for Th_2Zn_{17} where the 5f level is nearly empty. Resonant photoemission measurements were made at the Stanford Synchrotron Radiation Laboratory in the photon energy range 80 eV-140 eV to identify the U 5f valence band features by tuning the photon energy through the U 5d threshold at 90 eV. Polycrystalline samples were fractured and measured at 300K in a vacuum of 8×10^{-11} torr. The resolution, determined almost entirely by the cylindrical mirror analyzer used to measure electron kinetic energies, was 0.4 eV. BIS and XPS spectra were obtained for the same samples at a photon energy of 1486.6 eV using a Vacuum Generators ESCALAB, operated under conditions to yield resolutions of 0.5 and 0.8 eV, respectively. The samples were fractured, cooled to ~ 100 K and XPS spectra taken under a vacuum of 6×10^{-11} torr. During BIS data-taking the chamber pressure was always below 1×10^{-10} torr.

Fig.1 shows PES/BIS spectra for U_2Zn_{17} . The PES spectrum for photon energy $h\nu = 92$ eV is the Fano minimum where 5f emission is suppressed. The spectrum labeled 5f is the result of subtracting the $h\nu = 92$ eV spectrum from the $h\nu = 108$ eV Fano maximum spectrum. The intense feature 9.7 eV below E_F is the spin-orbit split Zn 3d emission, which anti-resonates weakly at the U 5d edge, implying hybridization with the U 5f states. This conclusion is substantiated by the similar photon energy dependences of the emission near E_F and the Zn 3d emission from $h\nu = 115$ eV to $h\nu = 140$ eV. We have no reliable information about the number n_f of f-electrons and have arbitrarily made a rough scaling of the BIS and U 5f PES spectra to give $n_f \sim 2.5$ as found in density functional calculations for other uranium intermetallics. The BIS spectrum somewhat resembles that of UPt_3 [8], showing a shoulder at 0.5 eV, two peaks at about 1.5 eV and 2.1 eV, and a total width extending at least 6 eV above E_F . In UAl_2 and UPt_3 we have previously associated the separation of

the shoulder and the lowest-energy peak with the 5f spin-orbit splitting, and the large width with the 5f Coulomb interaction [8]. Sarma *et al* [14] have recently explored the latter possibility in the framework of a Hubbard Hamiltonian for the f-electrons, arguing that if the hybridization is very large, a hybridized band structure is a better starting point than the impurity Anderson Hamiltonian. The particular model of Sarma *et al* neglects the fact that the Coulomb interaction occurs only for the 5f parts of the hybridized band structure, and for the parameters used, it probably can not achieve sufficient mass enhancement to explain heavy-fermion materials. But it does have the merit of placing much 5f weight around E_F and is an interesting effort to address the differences between U and Ce set forth above.

Fig. 2 shows PES/BIS data for $\text{Th}_2\text{Zn}_{17}$. As for U, the emission near E_F exhibits Fano resonance behavior at the 5d threshold, and we assume this indicates resonance of the Th 6d states, but cannot exclude the possibility that it arises from hybridized Th 5f states. The spectrum shown is for the Fano maximum at $h\nu = 101\text{eV}$, and the large Zn 3d peaks are not shown. The data were taken from the cleanest fracture but still oxygen contamination is detected at 6 eV below E_F . The Zn 3d emission has a weak photon energy dependence in this range and hence can be used to place the PES spectra of the two materials on a common intensity scale for values of $h\nu$ not too different. In the figure inset we show the emission near E_F at the Th and U Fano maxima, $h\nu = 101\text{ eV}$ and $h\nu = 108\text{eV}$, respectively, scaled so that the Zn 3d's in each spectrum have the same intensity. We believe this is the first direct comparison of the strength of the 6d and 5f resonances in actinides. Thorium 5f states cause the BIS structure between 5 and 7 eV above E_F while the 6d and 7s states give the flat and featureless background, showing that the large peak near E_F in the U_2Zn_{17} BIS spectrum is indeed due to 5f states.

Fig. 3 shows the U 4f and Zn 2p core level XPS spectra of U_2Zn_{17} . The Zn 2p peaks are narrow and rather symmetric while the U 4f lines are asymmetric and show weak and strong satellites at about 3 and 7 eV higher binding energy, respectively. Satellites at 7 eV have been observed in several uranium materials, e.g., UGa_2 [15], UBe_{13} [16], UO_2 [17] and UAl_2 [12,18], and 3 eV satellites also occur in other uranium compounds [12]. We also observe a satellite in the Th 4f spectra of $\text{Th}_2\text{Zn}_{17}$ at about 7 eV higher binding energy. This is surprising and possibly interesting, as 4f satellites in intermetallic Th

compounds typically occur at ~3 eV to 4 eV higher binding energy [10,11], but we cannot be sure that this is not due to some oxide in our sample, since ThO₂ has a 7 eV satellite [19]. There has been recent progress in modeling these satellites for Th [10,11] and U [12] compounds using the impurity Anderson Hamiltonian to describe the occurrence of final states $4f^{13}5f^n$ with varying numbers n of 5f electrons. Although conceptually like the treatment of Ce 3d spectra [5], different values of the various parameters cause the final states to be strong admixtures of the states of various n , and their intensities to depend strongly on the valence density of states, in contrast to the Ce case where these effects are much less important.

To summarize, there remains the hope that the impurity Anderson Hamiltonian treatment will provide a means of deducing Hamiltonian parameters from U 4f spectra, as was done for Ce 3d spectra, and that a realistic impurity theory of the 5f spectrum will account for at least the gross differences between the experimental spectra U and Ce.

Figure captions

- Fig. 1: The PES/BIS spectra of U_2Zn_{17} as described in the text.
- Fig. 2: The PES/BIS spectra of $\text{Th}_2\text{Zn}_{17}$ as described in the text.
- Fig. 3: XPS spectra of the U 4f and Zn 2p core levels excited with non-monochromatic Al $K\alpha$ radiation. The $K\alpha_{3,4}$ satellites and the inelastic background have been removed by standard algorithms. The 4f $5/2$ and 4f $7/2$ main lines are split by a spin orbit interaction of 9.4 eV. Note the sharp narrow Zn 2p lines (1.2 eV FWHM) compared to the drastic asymmetry and satellites of the U 4f lines.

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