Anomalous NMR Magnetic Shifts in CeCoIn$_5$

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We report $^{115}$In and $^{59}$Co Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) measurements in the heavy fermion superconductor CeCoIn$_5$ above and below $T_c$. The hyperfine couplings of the $^{115}$In and $^{59}$Co are anisotropic and exhibit dramatic changes below 50K due to changes in the crystal field level populations of the Ce ions. Below $T_c$, the spin susceptibility is suppressed, indicating singlet pairing.

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In heavy fermion systems the interplay of magnetism and superconductivity gives rise to a diverse range of ground states including an unconventional form of superconductivity. The recently discovered family of heavy fermion compounds CeMIn$_5$, where M = Co, Rh or Ir exemplifies these effects. Whereas the Rh compound undergoes a transition from antiferromagnetic to superconducting under pressure, the Ir and Co compounds superconduct at ambient pressure, with the Co system exhibiting the highest known transition temperature (2.3K) for any heavy fermion system. Evidence from heat capacity, thermal transport and μSR indicate that the pairing symmetry in the superconducting state is unconventional and that there are line nodes in the superconducting gap.

The bulk magnetic susceptibility, $\chi$, of tetragonal CeMIn$_5$ displays systematic trends consistent with the diversity of observed ground states. In all three cases $\chi$ is anisotropic, and is largest for field applied along the c direction. In the ab plane, $\chi_{ab}$ is essentially the same for all three materials. However, $\chi_c$ exhibits a maximum at ~ 10 K for CeRhIn$_5$ ($T_N = 3.8$ K), whereas for the superconductors CeIn$_5$ and CeCoIn$_5$ $\chi_c$ diverges at low temperatures until $T_c$ is reached. For both of these materials $\chi_c$ also exhibits a plateau-like feature around 50 K, which is less pronounced for the Ir system. The origin of this feature and the relationship between $\chi_c$ and $T_c$ have been sources of debate, however both the plateau and the divergence are intrinsic and independent of field.

Here we report a detailed study of site-specific magnetic shifts in CeCoIn$_5$ using nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR). Measurements in the normal state provide a microscopic measure of the local susceptibility and we find anomalous temperature dependencies. This behavior is likely due to the thermal depopulation of a crystal field (CEF) excitation of the Ce ions. We find remarkably strong departures from the expected proportionality between bulk susceptibility and the NMR Knight shift. We will argue that this effect is indicative of a high degree Ce moment localization, a feature that may play a role in the mechanism for superconductivity in this material. In the superconducting state the temperature dependencies of the shifts reveal a suppression of the spin susceptibility consistent with spin-singlet pairing.

Crystals of CeCoIn$_5$ were grown from an In flux as described in [3]. The tetragonal crystal structure of CeCoIn$_5$ consists of alternating layers of CeIn$_5$ and CoIn$_2$ and so has two inequivalent In sites per unit cell. The In(1) site has axial symmetry and is analogous to the single In site in cubic CeIn$_3$. There are four low symmetry In(2) sites per unit cell, two on each of the lateral faces of the unit cell, located a distance 0.306c above and below the Ce-In layer. The zero field $^{115}$In ($I = 9/2$) Nuclear Quadrupolar Resonance (NQR) spectrum reveals an axially symmetric site with $^{115}I_{Q}(1) = 8.173 \pm 0.005$ MHz, and $\eta(1) = 0.0$ at 4 K, whereas the electric field gradient (EFG) at the In(2) site is characterized by $^{115}I_{Q}(2) = 15.489 \pm 0.001$ MHz, and $\eta(2) = 0.386 \pm 0.001$, where $\nu_Q$ and $\eta$ are defined as in [3]. The NMR spectrum of the $^{59}$Co ($I = 7/2$) indicates a site with axial symmetry and $^{59}I_{Q} = 234 \pm 2$ kHz at 4 K. Both the In and the Co EFG’s are essentially temperature independent, varying less than 0.5% between 4 K and 100 K, indicating that significant structural changes are absent in this temperature range.

The magnetic shift measurements were made on a large single crystal of CeCoIn$_5$, which was mounted with the c axis either parallel or perpendicular to the external field, for fields between 3 and 5 T. Field-swept spectra were obtained by measuring the spin echo intensity as a function of applied field at fixed frequency. The shifts were determined by measuring several of the $^{115}$In transition fields $H_{\text{exp}}$ for each site at several different fixed frequencies. The nuclear spin Hamiltonian $\mathcal{H} = (h\nu_Q/6)[3I_z^2 - I^2 + \eta(I_x^2 - I_y^2)] + \gamma h I \cdot (1 + K) \cdot H_0$, where $K = (K_a, K_b, K_c)$ is the magnetic shift tensor, was diagonalized and the resonance fields $H_{\text{res}}$ for each transition and each In site were then calculated. The spectra were then fit by minimizing $\chi^2 = \sum_{i}(H_{\text{res}} - H_{\text{exp}})^2$ as a function of ($\theta, \phi, K_a, K_b, K_c$), where $\theta$ and $\phi$ are the polar angles relating $\mathbf{H}_0$ to the crystal axes ($a, b, c$). Note that such a procedure is necessary because the strong quadrupolar interaction gives rise to a significant angular dependence of $H_{\text{res}}$ so that even a misalignment of 1-2° can cause a significant error ($\sim 30\%$) in $K$. The Co shift and EFG were determined by measuring the positions of the central and satellite transitions at fixed field.

Given three nuclei and two possible field orientations for each there are seven distinct magnetic shifts. Note
that for In(1) and Co the magnetic shift is isotropic in the \(ab\) plane, whereas for In(2) the shift differs for \(H_0\) parallel or perpendicular to the unit cell face. The temperature dependencies of \(K\) for both In sites as well as the Co are shown in Fig. (1), together with \(\chi\) for both directions. \(K\) is a measure of the local electronic spin density at the nuclear site. In general, the shift is given by: 
\[ K(T) = K_0 + \sum_i A_i \chi_i(T), \]
where \(K_0\) is an orbital shift, independent of the local spin density at the nuclear site and the temperature, and \(A_i\) is the hyperfine coupling to \(\chi_i\), the \(i^{th}\) component of the susceptibility \(\chi = \sum_i \chi_i\). Both \(K_0\) and \(A_i\) can be anisotropic. All of the magnetic shifts except \(115K(2)_{\perp}\) are proportional to \(\chi\) for \(T > 40\) K for \(H_0||ab\) and \(T \gtrsim 60\) K for \(H_0||c\). Below these temperatures \(115K(2)_{||}, 59K_{ab}, 59K_c\) and \(115K(1)_{c}\) show dramatic departures from \(\chi\). Furthermore, \(115K(2)_{\perp}\) is not proportional to \(\chi\) in any temperature regime, and exhibits a dramatic downturn below 40 K [note that the axis for \(115K(2)_{\perp}\) is reversed in Fig. (1)]. Figure (2) shows \(K\) versus \(\chi\) for both field directions.

FIG. 1. The magnetic shift versus temperature. The solid lines show \(\chi_{ab}\) and \(\chi_{ab}\). The dashed line is a fit to \(\chi\) as described in the text; the dotted lines, which have been offset vertically to coincide with the shift scales, are calculations as described in the text. [Note the reversed axis for \(115K(2)_{\perp}\].

Note that \(K \propto \chi\) for high temperatures (\(T > 40\) K), and the intercept and slope give \(K_0\) and \(A\), whose values are listed in Table (1), where \(A_{HT}\) is determined for high temperatures, and \(A_{LT}\) for low temperatures. The Co shifts track those of the In(2) for both directions, where \(A_{LT}(Co)/A_{LT}(In(2)) = 0.26\) and \(A_{ab}(Co)/A_{ab}(In(2)) = 0.33\). Therefore, it seems likely that the Co is not directly coupled to the Ce, but couples to the Ce only via the In(2).

Anomalous departures from \(K \propto \chi\) have been known to exist in Ce compounds for several years, although the reason for the departure is still under debate. [11, 12] It is generally considered that the Ce 4f electron does not have a significant direct overlap with the orbitals of neighboring nuclei. Rather, it is the 6s and 5d orbitals of the Ce that are hybridized, and the Ce 4f moment can create a hyperfine field at a neighboring atom by polarizing the conduction electrons at the Ce site, which is then transferred to the neighbor via an RKKY interaction. The conduction electrons at the neighbor then create a hyperfine field at the nucleus via a contact interaction. Two different mechanisms have been proposed to explain the anomalous shift behavior in other heavy fermion systems. In CeSn\(_3\) \(K(Sn)\) and \(\chi\) differ below \(\sim 150\) K, and this effect has been ascribed to modifications of the effective hyperfine coupling at the Sn (via the RKKY interaction) by the onset of Kondo compensation below a temperature \(T_K\). [11, 13] In CeCu\(_2\)Si\(_2\) Ohama and coworkers observed that the Cu and Si magnetic shifts also exhibit departures from \(K \propto \chi\) below \(\sim 100\) K, and they attribute this behavior to the depopulation of an excited CEF level of the Ce ions ([J = 5/2]) and not Kondo coherence. [2] In this case, the overlap between the Ce 4f orbitals and the conduction electrons differs depending on the CEF level populations, resulting in temperature dependent hyperfine couplings to the Cu and Si.

In fact, the measured shifts in CeCoIn\(_5\) show behaviors similar to those observed in CeCu\(_2\)Si\(_2\). Namely, the \(K\) versus \(\chi\) plots exhibit positive slope at high temperatures; however, at low temperatures \(K \propto \chi\) is recovered, but with a negative slope. Ohama et al. attribute the negative hyperfine coupling to an orbital overlap be-
between the ligand s orbital and the Ce 4f orbital. They distinguish this direct transferred hyperfine mechanism from that in which the 4f moment polarizes the conduction band at the Ce site. According to Ohama et al., the direct contribution can become negative when only the lowest CEF doublet is occupied. Heat capacity data in CeCoIn$_5$ suggest the presence of an excited CEF doublet at ~ 50K above the ground state doublet, so it would be reasonable to ascribe the anomalous shift behavior in CeCoIn$_5$ to depopulation of an excited CEF doublet. The strong site dependence of the shift anisotropy in CeCoIn$_5$ also suggests a direct coupling between the In or Co and an anisotropic, localized Ce 4f orbital, as in CeCu$_2$Si$_2$. Recent deHaas van Alphen and photoemission data in CeCoIn$_5$ are consistent with LDA calculations, which assume the Ce 4f electron is itinerant.

In contrast, the strong directionality of the hyperfine couplings in these materials implies an electronic structure that is more tight binding rather than free electron like. In both systems the temperature scale for Kondo compensation is much lower than the CEF splitting, suggesting that more localized 4f character, which could be a source for spin fluctuations, is essential for the development of heavy fermion superconductivity.

In order to investigate the possible role of CEF effects we have fit $\chi$ to extract the CEF parameters. The dashed lines in Fig. (1) show a fit to the expression $\chi^{-1} = \chi_{CEF}^{-1} + \lambda$, where $\chi_{CEF}$ is the CEF susceptibility for the Ce ion, and $\lambda$ is a molecular field term. The Ce ion in CeCoIn$_5$ experiences a crystal field with tetragonal symmetry, so $\mathcal{H}_{CEF} = b_5^2O_5^2 + b_6^2O_6^2 + b_4^2O_4^2$, where the $O_m$ are the Steven’s operators. In this field the $J = 5/2$ manifold is split into three doublets ($\Gamma_6^{(1)}, \Gamma_7^{(2)}$), where the wavefunctions are given by: $|\pm \frac{5}{2}\rangle$, $|\mp \frac{3}{2}\rangle$, $|\mp \frac{1}{2}\rangle$, and $\chi_{CEF} = (\partial^2 \log Z) / \partial H^2|_{H=0}$. Here $Z$ is the partition function for the Hamiltonian $\mathcal{H}_C = \mathcal{H}_{CEF} + g_\mu_B H \cdot J$, where $g_J = 6/7$, $\mu_B$ is the Bohr magneton, and $J$ is the spin operator for $J = 5/2$. We find the best fit for the $\Gamma_6$ ground state ($J_z = \pm \frac{5}{2}$), with excited states at 34K and 102K above the ground state, $\lambda = 1.47$, and an anisotropic molecular field: $\lambda_c = 18.8$ mol/emu and $\lambda_{ab} = -113.2$ mol/emu. The anisotropy of $\lambda$ reflects Ce-Ce couplings which differ for neighbors in and out of the plane. The fit reproduces the plateau feature, and suggests that the anomalous behavior of the magnetic shifts below 50K may also be explained by changes in the hyperfine couplings as the excited CEF states are depopulated. Note, for example, that in Fig. (2) $^{115}K(1)c$ appears to be independent of $\chi_c$ at low temperatures. This behavior suggests that $^{115}K(1)c$ couples only to the excited CEF states. If we decompose $\chi_{CEF} = \chi_{CEF}^{ex} + \chi_{CEF}^{gs}$ into contributions from the ground state doublet and from the excited doublets, one might then expect $K = K_0 + A_{gs}\chi^{gs} + A_{ex}\chi^{ex}$, where $(\chi)\sim1 = (\chi_{CEF})^{-1} + \lambda$. We determine $\chi_{CEF}^{ex}$ ($\chi_{CEF}^{gs}$) by suppressing the field dependence of the excited (ground) state energy levels in the expression for $Z$. By adjusting $K_0$, $A_{gs}$ and $A_{ex}$ appropriately, we can qualitatively explain the temperature dependence of all the shifts in Fig. (1) (dotted lines). Note that $\chi_{CEF}^{ex} < 0$ in the $ab$ plane, so for this component the absolute value of $\lambda_{ab}$ was used.

The anomalous behavior of the shifts might also be explained by two components of $\chi$ with a different origin than crystal field states. However, there is only one Ce site in the unit cell, and susceptibility and heat capacity data indicate that the observed properties can be entirely attributed to the Ce (i.e., Co is nonmagnetic in CeCoIn$_5$). Therefore it seems likely that the two components can only be attributed to different CEF states on the Ce ions. It is interesting to note that measurements of the In(1) shift in the isostructural compound CeRhIn$_5$ reveal a positive hyperfine coupling for 4 K < $T$ < 50 K, with no signs of the dramatic departure from $K \propto \chi$ seen in CeCoIn$_5$. Clearly, if the hyperfine anomaly is the only mechanism at work in CeCoIn$_5$ then the CEF parameters in CeCoIn$_5$ must differ significantly from those in CeRhIn$_5$. In fact, recent work by Takeuchi and coworkers suggests that the ground state CEF level in CeRhIn$_5$ is $\Gamma_7$ rather than $\Gamma_6$. [13]

Below $T_c$ $\chi$ is dominated by the diamagnetic response, masking the intrinsic behavior of the spin susceptibility. $K$, however, couples only to the spin susceptibility and provides a direct measure of $\chi^{spin}$ in the superconducting state. The temperature dependencies of the shifts for both In sites as well as the Co in CeCoIn$_5$ are shown in Fig. (3) for $H||ab$ down to 1.4K. Because of the thin platelet morphology of CeCoIn$_5$, demagnetization fields in the superconducting state can be significant for $H||c$, precluding an accurate determination of the magnetic shift since the local field at the nucleus is poorly determined. We estimated that for our sample, the demagnetization factor for $H||c$ is $N_c/4\pi \approx 0.79$. There-

![Fig. 3](image-url)
fore, although we observe a decrease in the resonance frequencies for this direction one cannot resolve whether the decrease is due to a change in $K$ or to a change in $H_0$ internally. However, for $H_0 || ab$ the demagnetization factor is much smaller, so the internal field below $T_c$ is known to a greater degree of accuracy. Therefore, we only present data on the shifts for the field in the plane.

Thus, all of the shifts for $H \perp c$ are consistent with a decrease in $\chi_{spin}$, implying spin-singlet pairing of the Cooper pairs in the superconducting state. Given the recent heat capacity and thermal conductivity measurements revealing higher orbital symmetry, we can conclude that the order parameter in CeCoIn$_5$ has d-wave symmetry. During the course of this work, we became aware of similar work by the group of Kohara [20] who report magnetic shift results below $T_c$. Although our conclusions about singlet pairing are the same, the temperature dependencies of the shifts differ.

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### TABLE I. The hyperfine couplings and orbital shifts of the In(1), In(2) and Co.

| shift | $K_0(\%)$ | $A_{HT}$ (kOe/µB) | $A_L$ (kOe/µB) |
|-------|-----------|-------------------|---------------|
| In(1)$_c$ | 0.79(5) | 8.94(34) | -0.4(1) |
| In(1)$_{ab}$ | 0.13(4) | 12.08(40) | 12.08(40) |
| In(2)$_c$ | -2.10(3) | 32.4(3) | 22.8(3) |
| In(2)$_{||}$ | 0.76(2) | 10.26(17) | -12(1) |
| In(2)$_{\perp}$ | 1.10(1) | 0 | -34.7(9) |
| Co$_c$ | 1.00(1) | 8.4(5) | 6.20(5) |
| Co$_{ab}$ | 0.68(1) | 3.30(9) | -4.20(19) |

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