Bandwidth-disorder phase diagram of half doped layered manganites

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Phase diagrams in the plane of $r_A$ (the average ionic radius, related to one-electron bandwidth $W$), and $\sigma^2$ (the ionic radius variance, measuring the quenched disorder), or “bandwidth-disorder phase diagrams”, have been established for perovskite manganites, with three-dimensional (3D) Mn-O network. Here we establish the intrinsic bandwidth-disorder phase diagram of half-doped manganites with the two-dimensional (2D) Mn-O network, examining in detail the “mother state” of the colossal magnetoresistance (CMR) phenomenon in crystals without ferromagnetic instability. The consequences of the reduced dimensionality, from 3D to 2D, on the order-disorder phenomena in the charge-orbital sectors are also highlighted.

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Half-doped perovskite manganites with small bandwidth $W$ and small amount of disorder like Pr$_{0.5}$Ca$_{0.5}$MnO$_3$ (Pr$^{3+}$ and Ca$^{2+}$ being small and similar in size) exhibit a long-range charge and orbital order (CO-OO). This CO-OO, which is associated with the spin ordering (so-called CE-type structure), is schematically illustrated in the top-left panel of Fig. 1. As for the spin sector, the structure is essentially composed of ferromagnetic zig-zag chains antiferromagnetically coupled to one-another. A fragment of such a zig-zag chain is highlighted in the figure. If the disorder becomes larger due to the ion size mismatch of R$^{3+}$ and Sr$^{2+}$, as in Gd$_{0.5}$Sr$_{0.5}$MnO$_3$, or Eu$_{0.5}$Ba$_{0.5}$MnO$_3$, only the short-range CO-OO order is observed, producing a “CE-glass” state. Interestingly, the colossal magnetoresistance effect was found to arise from within this coarse-grained homogeneous CE-glass state. In the layered systems, the MnO$_2$ planes (ab-planes) are isolated by two blocking (R/x) layers, so that the CO-OO correlation is limited by the two-dimensional (2D) character of the Mn network. Yet, La$_{0.5}$Sr$_{1.5}$MnO$_4$ is a well-known half-doped single-layered manganite with concomitant charge and orbital ordering near 220K. The spin sector orders antiferromagnetically (AFM) at $T_N=110$K. Akin to the perovskite case, crystals with smaller bandwidth such as Pr$_{0.5}$Ca$_{1.5}$MnO$_4$ (PCMO) show CO-OO transitions above room temperature. However, no other half-doped RSMO system seems to exhibit a long-range CO-OO. A CE-glass state is observed in crystals with larger quenched disorder, such as Eu$_{0.5}$Sr$_{1.5}$MnO$_4$ (Eu$^{3+}$ is smaller than La$^{3+}$, which is already smaller than Sr$^{2+}$). In the present article, using high-quality single crystals of R$_{0.5}$A$_{1.5}$MnO$_4$ manganites, we investigate the CE-glass state and its location in the plane of quenched disorder vs. bandwidth. The quenched disorder associated with the solid solution of the A-site cations is quantified using the ionic radius variance $\sigma^2 = \sum_i x_i r_i^2 - r_A^2$, according to the scheme devised by Attfield. $x_i$ and $r_i$ are the fractional occupancies ($\sum_i x_i=1$) and electronic radii of the different cations on the A-site, respectively, and $r_A = \sum_i x_i r_i$ represents the average A-site ionic radius, related to the bandwidth.

High quality single crystals of the A-site disordered R$_{0.5}$Ca$_{1.5}$MnO$_4$ (RCMO), R$_{0.5}$Sr$_{1.5}$MnO$_4$ (RSMO), and R$_{0.5}$(Ca$_{1-y}$Sr$_y$)$_{1.5}$MnO$_4$ (RCSMO) manganites were grown by the floating zone method ($R = \text{La, La}_{1-y}\text{Pr}_y$, Pr, Nd, La$_{0.5}$Eu$_{0.5}$ (~Nd), Sm, or Eu, while A=Ca, Ca$_{1-y}$Sr$_y$). The phase-purity of the crystals was checked by x-ray diffraction and the cation concentrations of some of the crystals were confirmed by inductively coupled plasma (ICP) spectroscopy. The ac-susceptibility $\chi(\omega = 2\pi f)$ data was recorded as a function of the temperature $T$ and frequency $f$ on a PPMSXL SQUID magnetometer equipped with the ultra low-field option (low frequencies) and a PPMS6000 (higher frequencies) from Quantum Design, after carefully zeroing or compensating the background magnetic fields of the systems. The resistivity $\rho$ of the crystals was measured using a standard four-probe method on a PPMS6000, feeding the electrical current in the ab-plane. The single-crystal x-ray data was recorded at 370K on a Rigaku SPD curved imaging plate system at the beam line BL-1A of the Photon Factory, KEK, Japan. Thin specimens were prepared for observation with transmission electron microscopes (TEMs) by Ar$^+$ ion milling at low temperatures, to perform the electron diffraction (ED) measurements, and collect the selected-area electron diffraction patterns (EDPs) and...
dark-field (DF) images. The structural modulation wave vector \( q = a^* [\delta \delta 0] \) \((a\) is the lattice constant, \(aa^* = 1)\) was determined at different temperatures.

Eu\(_{0.5}\)(Ca\(_{1-y}\)Sr\(_y\))\(_{1.5}\)MnO\(_4\) (ECMO) is very similar to PCMO, albeit a larger variance \((\sigma^2 \sim 7 \times 10^{-4} \text{ Å}^2\) instead of \(\sim 2 \times 10^{-7} \text{ Å}^2\) for PCMO). The CO-OO remains long-ranged in all the RCMO crystals, even when a small amount of Ca is substituted with Sr. For example, in the insets of Fig. [1] we show the [001] zone-axis electron diffraction (ED) patterns of Eu\(_{0.5}\)(Ca\(_{1-y}\)Sr\(_y\))\(_{1.5}\)MnO\(_4\) (ECSMO) obtained at 80 K. In addition to the fundamental spots (associated with the K\(_2\)NiF\(_4\) structure), the EDPs include superlattice (SL) spots, associated with the CO-OO. The sharpness and the modulation wave vector however are dependent on the Sr concentration (see below). The different panels of Fig. [1] illustrate the changes in the microstructure related to the CO-OO with increasing Sr content. These dark-field (DF) images were recorded at 80K, using the SL reflection marked by the arrow in the electron diffraction patterns (EDPs). The bright regions in Fig. [1] correspond to regions where the CO-OO occurs. For \(y=0.1\) large CO-OO domains are observed. On increasing Sr content, the size of the CO-OO domains decreases \((y=0.25)\), until the CO-OO becomes short-ranged \((y=0.4)\).

The order-disorder in the charge-orbital sector also affects macroscopic properties such as the magnetization or ac-susceptibility, as well as the electrical resistivity. For example, the disappearance of the long-range CO-OO state is observed in the \(T\)-dependence of the electrical resistivity, as shown in the upper panel of Fig. [2] for Pr\(_{0.5}\)(Ca\(_{1-y}\)Sr\(_y\))\(_{1.5}\)MnO\(_4\) (PCSMO). The \(\rho(T)\) curves show a clear (and hysteretic in temperature) inflection near the CO-OO transition temperature \(T_{\text{CO-OO}}\) up to \(y=0.5\), for which no CO-OO phase transition occurs, as confirmed by the ED data. \(T_{\text{CO-OO}}\) is also clearly observed in the \(\chi(T)\) curves as the sharp peak arising from the quenching of the FM spin fluctuation. Figure [2] shows the temperature dependence of the in-phase component of the ac-susceptibility \(\chi'\) for some of the single crystals. \(T_N\) is however difficult to identify, as seen for example in the \(\chi(T)\) curves of the well known LSMO[12]. As seen in the left lower panel of Fig. [2] in the RCMO crystals with small disorder \((\sigma^2 < 1 \times 10^3 \text{ Å}^2)\) and relatively small average ionic radius \((r_A \sim 1.16-1.18 \text{ Å})\), a sharp peak marking \(T_{\text{CO-OO}}\) is observed above 320K. At lower temperatures, near 200K, a broader peak is observed. This broader peak does not correspond to \(T_N\) for long-range spin order, which is \(\sim 120-130\text{K}\) in these crystals[13]. An inflection (more clearly seen in the \(T\)-derivative of \(\chi'(T)\)) can be seen in the vicinity of these temperatures, which was found to coincide with the \(T_N\) determined by diffraction techniques[13]. The broad maximum near 200K may thus indicate the development of in-plane AFM correlation, rather than the long-ranged phase AFM transition. We refer in the following to this broad peak as \(T_{\text{CO-OO}}^{\ast}(ab)\). In the RSMO crystals, with larger \(r_A\) \((\sim 1.28 \text{ Å})\) and bandwidth, only the susceptibility of LSMO (the right lower panel of Fig. [2]) shows the \(T_{\text{CO-OO}}\) peak, as well as a bump near 150K which may reflect the above mentioned in-plane spin correlation. As the variance (quenched disorder) increases with substitution of the La ions with Pr, only a broad peak is observed at high temperatures, together with a broad frequency-dependent cusp at low temperatures[14]. We now compare these observations with the electron diffraction data. In the EDPs collected as a function of temperature, the superlattice spots associated with the CO-OO are observed for all the RSMO crystals (one such spot is marked with an arrow in the EDP of ECMO shown in the corner of the top-left panel of Fig. [1]). However, these SL spots are sharp only for LSMO, and diffuse, more or less, for the crystals with larger \(R\), confirming the short-ranged nature of the CO-OO correlation[15] as suggested by the absence of a sharp peak in \(\chi(T)\). Thus in the half-doped case, the orbital
sector, as the master, controls the spin sector, as the slave, determining the spatial extent of its correlation as well.

The distinction between long-range and short range CO-OO is investigated in more detail, as a function of the bandwidth ($r_A$, or the Sr concentration $y$) in Fig. 3. The top panel of Fig. 1 shows the variation of the lattice parameters of ECSMO, estimated at high temperatures ($T > T_{\text{CO-OO}}$) from the single-crystal x-ray diffraction. The $a$- and $c$-axis parameters decrease significantly with decreasing $y$, down to $y=0.25$. These crystals have a tetragonal $I4/mmm$ structure similar to those of the RSMO crystals. For $y < 0.25$, the structure is orthorhombically distorted. However, this structural transition does not coincide with the appearance of the long-range CO-OO order. The $\chi(T)$ and $\rho(T)$ curves suggest that the CO-OO order becomes short-ranged near $y=0.4$. This is confirmed by the ED data, as illustrated in the middle panel of Fig. 3. The half-width at half-maximum (HWHM) of the CO-OO superlattice spots in the EDPs is proportional to the inverse of the CO-OO correlation length $\xi_{\text{CO-OO}}$. In the case of $y=0.4$, the HWHM is relatively small, however dark-field imaging reveal the short-ranged nature of the CO-OO order (c.f. Fig. 1). As $y$ increases above 0.4, the HWHM gradually increases, i.e. $\xi_{\text{CO-OO}}$ gradually decreases, down to the nanometer-scale. The modulation wave vector $\delta$ and half-width at half-maximum HWHM of the superlattice reflection intensity profile obtained from electron diffraction (ED) at $T = 80K$. Bottom: the electronic phase diagram of Eu$_{0.5}$(Ca$_{1-y}$Sr$_y$)$_{1.5}$MnO$_4$ (see main text for the definitions of the different labels). The crosses mark features in $\rho(T)$ or $\chi(T)$ curves, which do not necessarily correspond to phase transitions.
The schematic phase diagram presented in Fig. 3 can be also plotted as a function of $\sigma^2$. The resulting diagram is very similar, as both $r_A$ and $\sigma^2$ vary significantly with $y$. It hence makes sense to draw a global phase diagram in the planes of $r_A$ and $\sigma^2$ to take into account the effects of the variation of both bandwidth and quenched disorder. Such a "bandwidth-disorder" phase diagram is drawn in Fig. 4, using the ac-susceptibility, resistivity, and electron diffraction data, which was found to complement each other in the above. This phase diagram is reminiscent of the diagram obtained for the 3D perovskite case\cite{1} in the small bandwidth area (for larger $W$, FM is observed in the perovskite case). In both cases, the long-range CO-OO order is replaced by a short-range "CE-glass" state (SG state) in the presence of large quenched disorder\cite{1, 4}. However, the first-order-like transition between the CO-OO and CE-glass phases observed in the perovskite case\cite{1} does not occur in the layered systems. As indicated by the ED results, the CO-OO correlation length continuously decreases as the quenched disorder increases. Since there is a clear co-variation between the CO-OO correlation length and size of the "superspins" involved in the SG state, the latter of which was determined by the dynamical scaling of the $\chi(T, f)$ data\cite{10, 11}, these groups of coherent spins may be viewed as broken pieces of the CO-OO FM zig-zag chains of the CE-type structure.

To summarize, we have established for the first time the intrinsic bandwidth-disorder phase diagram of the half-doped layered manganites using high-quality single-crystals. As in the perovskite case, the CE-glass state occupies a large area of the diagram. Many specimens were found to exhibit a long-range CO-OO, with a $T_{CO-OO}$ tunable around room-temperature and above by the bandwidth and/or disorder. The macroscopic phase separation, or ferromagnetic phases, sometimes reported in studies on polycrystals is not observed. Remarkably, the present diagram is very similar to that of the narrow-bandwidth perovskites, in spite of the dimensionality difference. However, in the present 2D layered case, the gradual decrease of the CO-OO correlation length as a function of bandwidth or disorder occurs, instead of the first-order-like collapse observed in the 3D case.

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[16] These crystals adopt the $Pnma$ structure, with nearly
identical $a$ and $b$ lattice parameters; the tilting of the MnO$_6$ octahedra yields smaller Mn-O-Mn bond angles.