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MAGNETORESISTANCE OF THORIATED UBe₁₃

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We have measured the magnetoresistance for the heavy-fermion system U₁₋ₓThₓBe₁₃ for x=0, 0.006, 0.015, and 0.033 at temperatures between 1.2 K and 6 K. The samples with x=0.006 and 0.015 develop a positive magnetoresistance as the temperature is increased above approximately 2 K. We observe the large negative magnetoresistance for the pure UBe₁₃ and the sample with x=0.033, in agreement with the results of previous studies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies of the magnetoresistance (MR) have been useful in describing the properties of heavy-fermion systems. For many of the Ce-based compounds, such as CeCu₂Si₂ and CeAl₂, the high-temperature (T > 1 K) negative MR characteristic of incoherent Kondo scattering of the conduction electrons gives way at lower temperatures to a low-field positive MR. This has been interpreted as the onset of coherent Kondo scattering from the magnetic lattice sites. This explanation agrees with measurements of the specific heat. The situation is much different for UBe₁₃, however, where the strong negative MR has been observed down to the lowest temperatures. Samples studied with 3.3% thorium substituted for uranium show similar behavior. This has been attributed to the fact that the coherent Kondo state is not fully formed at temperatures above Tₖ, an interpretation that has been supported by studies of MR above 1 K and at high pressures, and possibly by high-field, low-temperature specific heat measurements.

In this work we present measurements of the magnetoresistance of U₁₋ₓThₓBe₁₃ and find a positive MR for samples with x = 0.006 and 0.015 at temperatures above 2-3 K, while the results for x = 0 and 0.033 show the typical strong negative MR at all temperatures.

2. EXPERIMENT

2.1 Samples

The four samples studied are polycrystalline with thorium concentrations of 0, 0.006, 0.015, and 0.033. Magnetization measurements show that all four samples exhibit superconducting transitions at temperatures of 0.90 K, 0.71 K, 0.52 K, and 0.57 K, respectively. The superconducting transitions have also been observed in specific heat measurements on the pure UBe₁₃. The x=0.015 sample, and 2 transitions for the x=0.033 sample. Specific heat measurements have not yet been made on the x=0.006 sample.

2.2 Procedure

Transverse magnetoresistance measurements were made on the four samples in the temperature range of 1.2 - 0 K, and for fields up to 9 T. Four gold wires of 0.002" diameter provided electrical contact to the samples, which were mounted on a copper block. The block was thermally connected to a 4 He pumped pot by a 0.25" diameter brass rod. The temperature was determined by a calibrated carbon-glass resistor, and was measured using the standard 4-terminal ac technique, with frequencies between 15 and 20 Hz and rms current levels of less than 1 mA. The current dependence of the measured voltage across the samples was measured to ensure that no self-heating of the samples occurred. Magnetic fields were applied perpendicular to the current flow using a 9 T superconducting magnet, and were ramped at a rate of approximately 0.3 T/min. No hysteresis effects between up and down sweeps were observed. The temperature for each field sweep was determined by measuring the calibrated thermometer just before and after the sweep, and the observed temperature drift was always less than 1%.

3. RESULTS

The resistivities of the samples at 4.2 K are: ρ(x=0) = 130 μΩ·cm, ρ(x = 0.006) = 170 μΩ·cm, and ρ(x = 0.033) = 110 μΩ·cm. The estimated error is approximately 10%. We have measured the resistivities versus temperature between 1.2 K and 6 K and find the characteristic shoulder for pure UBe₁₃ at 2.5 K. This structure is suppressed to 2 K for the x=0.006 thoriated sample, and is not observed at all for the samples with higher thorium concentrations.

We now discuss the MR measurements. The results for x=0 and 0.033 agree well with previous measurements. For both samples we observe a large negative MR that becomes more pronounced at lower temperatures (a reduction of approximately 50% at
The fractional change in the resistance of UBe$_{13}$ and of U$_{0.985}$Th$_{0.015}$Be$_{13}$ vs. magnetic field at T = 4.58 K.

1.2 K for UBe$_{13}$, and of about 20% for x = 0.033 at 1.3 K. This MR is shown for UBe$_{13}$ at 4.58 K in Figure 1. The behavior for the samples with intermediate thorium concentrations is more complicated. At low temperatures we observe the typical large reductions (of about 25-30%), negative MR. As the temperature is raised, however, a low-field, positive MR becomes apparent, and results in a peak in the MR. This is also shown in Figure 1 for the sample with x = 0.015. In Figure 2 we show the temperature progression of the MR for the sample with x = 0.015, and the development of a positive MR as the temperature increases is evident. In Figure 3 we have plotted the peak location in field, $H_{\text{max}}$, versus temperature for the x = 0.006 and 0.015 samples. As the temperature increases, this crossover field increases. The effect is evident at lower temperatures for the sample with higher thorium concentration, indicating that the effect is probably intrinsic; however we note that the positive MR is not observed at any temperature studied here for the x = 0.033 sample.

4. DISCUSSION

The development of positive MR for samples with intermediate thorium impurities is difficult to understand. Clearly the nature of this effect is different than for CeAl$_3$, where the positive MR develops as the temperature is lowered, and is interpreted as signaling the onset of coherent Kondo scattering of electrons. One might conclude that the thorium impurities are simply weakening the Kondo scattering, and so at higher temperatures these samples are behaving more like normal metals. While the impurities could have an appreciable effect on coherent scattering by destroying the periodicity of magnetic scatterers, low levels of impurities should have little effect on incoherent Kondo scattering. Also, the large negative MR characteristic of incoherent Kondo scattering is observed once again for the sample with 3.3% thorium. It is interesting to note that of the three thoriated samples studied here, the two which show positive MR have concentrations which, at low temperatures, have one superconducting transition, while the sample which shows negative MR has a concentration corresponding to two transitions at low temperatures. Clearly more work is necessary to better understand this behavior.

5. CONCLUSION

We have measured the MR of U$_{1-x}$Th$_x$Be$_{13}$ for x = 0, 0.006, 0.015, and 0.033, and find that the samples with intermediate thorium concentrations have positive MR at temperatures above approximately 2 K. The pure and x = 0.033 samples have the expected large negative MR at all temperatures studied. We are presently extending these studies.

REFERENCES