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Publication Date

1981-06-01

Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Materials & Molecular Research Division

Submitted to Physical Review Letters

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June 1981

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Phason Anomalies in Alkali Metals

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Early data¹ on the heat capacity, C , of K (0.26 to 4K) and Rb (0.20 to 4K) were taken to be consistent with conventional assumptions about the temperature dependence of the phonon and electron contributions, but the identification of phason anomalies has recently been reported^{2,3} for both metals. Plots of new data for K and Cu are reproduced from Ref. 2 in Fig. 1(a) and (b). The identification of a phason anomaly in the K data depends on the sharp break near 0.85K in the deviation of C from a reference expression C_0 . However, the Cu data, which were intended to provide support for the temperature scale, show a feature that is similar in both magnitude and temperature dependence. Thus, the Cu data suggest a temperature scale error that is common to both measurements (probably arising from the adjustment² of the thermometer calibration at the two fixed points 0.52 and 0.84K) and responsible for the anomaly in K. Figure 1(c) demonstrates the possibility of representing the K data without a phason anomaly, but with the same temperature scale errors (to within the combined precision of the data) as evident in the Cu data. Independent support for this interpretation is provided by the other measurements^{1,4} on K, which are represented by curves in Fig. 1(a): all three sets of data agree to within 1.5% above 0.85K, and only the data of Ref. 2 show the sharp break at that temperature. At 0.26K the data from Ref. 1 are 12% high relative to the C_0 corresponding to the phason anomaly and used as a basis for Fig. 1(a), well outside the apparent^{1,5} accuracy of approximately 1% in C . The data¹ for Rb have been reinterpreted in terms of both a phason anomaly³ (2% at 0.5K) and phonon dispersion.⁶ The accuracy and temperature range of the data are marginal for the purpose of identifying a 2% effect, and certainly inadequate to distinguish between the two models. The question of a phason contribution to C is thus still open for both metals.

This work was supported by the Director, Office of Energy Research, Office of Basic Energy Sciences, Materials Sciences Division of the U.S. Department of Energy under Contract No. W-7405-ENG-48.

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PACS numbers: 65.40.-f

¹William H. Lien and Norman E. Phillips, Phys. Rev. 133, A1370 (1964).

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FIGURE CAPTIONS

Figure 1: The heat capacities of K and Cu. (XBL 8112 12919)

Figure 1

XBL 8112-12919

This report was done with support from the Department of Energy. Any conclusions or opinions expressed in this report represent solely those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of The Regents of the University of California, the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory or the Department of Energy.

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