Magnetic properties and magnetocaloric effect of NdMn$_{2-x}$Cu$_x$Si$_2$ compounds

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Abstract
Structural and magnetic properties of NdMn2−x Cu xSi2 compounds (x = 0-1.0) have been investigated by high intensity x-ray and resolution neutron diffraction (3-450 K), specific heat, dc magnetization, and differential scanning calorimetry measurements. Substitution of Cu for Mn leads to an increase in the lattice parameter a but a decrease in c at room temperature. Two magnetic phase transitions have been found for NdMn2−x Cu xSi2 compounds with TN for the antiferromagnetic ordering of Mn-sublattice and TC for the Nd-sublattice ferromagnetic ordering, respectively. TC increases significantly with increasing Cu content from 36 K at x = 0 to 100 K at x = 1.0. Moreover, it is found that the order of magnetic phase transition around TC also changes from first order at x < 0.6 to second order transition for x ≥ 0.6. The spontaneous magnetization found to decrease with the increase in Cu concentration which can be understood in the term of the dilution effect of Cu for Mn. The values of −ΔSM around TC decrease with increasing x from 27 J kg−1 K−1 for x = 0 to 0.5 J kg−1 K−1 for x = 1.0 under 0.5 T field. Refinement of neutron diffraction patterns for x = 0.2 confirms the magnetic states detected by magnetic study and also indicates that the lattice constants a and c show a distinct variation around TC.

Keywords
xcuxsi2, magnetic, ndmn2, properties, effect, magnetocaloric, compounds

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Magnetic properties and magnetocaloric effect of NdMn$_{2-x}$Cu$_x$Si$_2$ compounds

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Structural and magnetic properties of NdMn$_{2-x}$Cu$_x$Si$_2$ compounds ($x=0$–1.0) have been investigated by high intensity x-ray and resolution neutron diffraction (3–450 K), specific heat, dc magnetization, and differential scanning calorimetry measurements. Substitution of Cu for Mn leads to an increase in the lattice parameter $a$ but a decrease in $c$ at room temperature. Two magnetic phase transitions have been found for NdMn$_{2-x}$Cu$_x$Si$_2$ compounds with $T_N$ for the antiferromagnetic ordering of Mn-sublattice and $T_C$ for the Nd-sublattice ferromagnetic ordering, respectively. $T_C$ increases significantly with increasing Cu content from 36 K at $x=0$ to 100 K at $x=1.0$. Moreover, it is found that the order of magnetic phase transition around $T_C$ also changes from first order at $x<0.6$ to second order transition for $x \geq 0.6$. The spontaneous magnetization found to decrease with the increase in Cu concentration which can be understood in the term of the dilution effect of Cu for Mn. The values of $-\Delta S_M$ around $T_C$ decrease with increasing $x$ from 27 J kg$^{-1}$ K$^{-1}$ for $x=0$ to 0.5 J kg$^{-1}$ K$^{-1}$ for $x=1.0$ under 0–5 T field. Refinement of neutron diffraction patterns for $x=0.2$ confirms the magnetic states detected by magnetic study and also indicates that the lattice constants $a$ and $c$ show a distinct variation around $T_C$. © 2014 AIP Publishing LLC. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1063/1.4864249]

The research efforts to find magnetic materials with a large ambient magnetic entropy change which can be used in magnetic refrigerator for cooling technology have expedited in order to resolve the global warming and high energy consumption concern.

Magnetic materials with first order magnetic transition (FOMT) are found to exhibit large magnetocaloric effect (MCE) compared to second order magnetic transition (FOMT) among them, the tetragonal intermetallic compounds RMn$_2$X$_2$ (R=rare earth; T=transition metal; and X=Si or Ge) attract special attention mainly in interesting interplay between 3$d$ and 4$f$ magnetism and present wide range of magnetic behaviour.

For example, NdMn$_2$Si$_2$ compounds provide the promising prospect for enhanced magnetocaloric because of the crystal structure nature in layered allows to control of the intrinsic magnetism via inter and intra planar separations of the Mn atoms with Nd atoms performing the large magnetization due to ferromagnetic coupling between the Mn and Nd sublattices below the Nd ordering temperature. From the point on smaller atomic radius of Cu (1.28 Å) compared with Mn (1.35 Å), it is expected that the substitution of Mn with Cu in NdMn$_2$Si$_2$ leads to a significant decrease in $\delta_{\text{Mn-Mn}}$ and corresponding on modification of magnetic state. In this paper, we outline the influence of the replacement Cu for Mn in NdMn$_{2-x}$Cu$_x$Si$_2$ $(x=0$–1.0) on magnetic structure and magnetic phase transition.

The polycrystalline NdMn$_{2-x}$Cu$_x$Si$_2$ $(x=0$–1.0) samples were prepared by arc melting in an Ar atmosphere and annealed at 900 °C for 1 week in an evacuated quartz tube. The crystal structure of the samples were checked by high intensity x-ray powder diffraction ($\lambda=0.8265$ Å; 10–300 K) carried out at the Australian Synchrotron (AS). The magnetic properties were investigated over the temperature range 6–400 K using the vibrating sample magnetometer option of a Quantum Design 14T physical properties measurement system (PPMS). The crystallographic and magnetic structural behaviour of the sample was investigated by powder neutron diffraction using the Echidna ($\lambda=1.622$ Å) at the OPAL Reactor, Australia.

Confirmation that all of the NdMn$_{2-x}$Cu$_x$Si$_2$ $(x=0$–1.0) samples crystallize in the expected ThCr$_2$Si$_2$ type structure with space group I4/mmm was provided by analysis of the x-ray powder diffraction patterns. The x-ray diffraction patterns at variable temperatures for $x=0.2$ are shown in Fig. 1(a) as a typical example. The measured data from the diffraction patterns were analysed using the Rietveld refinement technique. Substitution of Cu for Mn does not change the symmetry of the crystal structure but leads to decrease of the unit cell. The lattice constants $a$ was found to slightly

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increase but $c$ decreases with increasing Cu concentration, and correspondingly the unit cell volumes, were found to decrease with the Cu content consistent with the smaller atomic radius of Cu compared to Mn. As shown in Fig. 1(b), lattice parameters $a$ increases from 4.00(5) Å for $x=0$ to 4.06(2) Å for $x=1.0$, however, $c$ is found to decrease from 10.52(4) Å for $x=0$ to 10.26(1) Å for $x=1.0$. The temperature dependence of the magnetization of NdMn$_{2-x}$Cu$_x$Si$_2$ ($x=0$–1.0) measured in a magnetic field of $B=0.01$ T is shown in Fig. 1(c) together with the differential scanning calorimetry (DSC). As using calculation in Ref. 11, the Néel temperature $T_N$ is found to decrease from $\sim380$ K to $\sim320$ K with increase in Cu concentration from $x=0$ to $x=1.0$, while Curie temperature $T_C$ increases from $\sim36$ K to $\sim100$ K. The reduction of unit-cell volume due to Cu substitution will lead to decrease the Mn-Mn intralayer exchange interaction. Moreover, the change in electronic environment on replacing Mn (3$d^5$4$s^2$) by Cu (3$d^{10}$4$s^1$) is also expected to influence the magnetic structures and states of the NdMn$_{2-x}$Cu$_x$Si$_2$ compounds.

The magnetization curves obtained for NdMn$_{1.8}$Cu$_{0.2}$Si and NdMn$_{1.8}$Cu$_{0.2}$Si around the ferromagnetic ordering temperatures are shown in Figs. 2(a) and 2(b). Comparison of the magnetisation curves around the ferromagnetic ordering temperatures for NdMn$_{1.8}$Cu$_{0.2}$Si and NdMn$_{1.4}$Cu$_{0.6}$Si reveal that pronounced hysteresis losses keep decreasing from $\sim12$ J kg$^{-1}$ to no hysteresis loss are observed for NdMn$_{1.4}$Cu$_{0.6}$Si (indicated values for $B=0$–5 T as suitable to comparison). It is demonstrated clearly that magnetic hysteresis losses decrease significantly on substitution of Cu for Mn as indicated that increasing Cu concentration contributes to a weakening of the characteristic field induced metamagnetic transition from the antiferromagnetic to the ferromagnetic state. Figures 2(c) and 2(d) show the corresponding Arrott plots of NdMn$_{2-x}$Cu$_x$Si$_2$ for the $x=0.2$ and 0.6 samples, respectively. The Arrott plots are found to exhibit features characteristic of a first order transition for $x<0.6$ to second order transition for $x \geq 0.6$. As been determined by particular the S-shaped nature of the Arrott plot near $T_C$ denotes a negative order of the sign of the coefficient $c_2(T)$ in the Landau expansion of the magnetic free energy, thereby denoting a first order magnetic transition for $x<0.6$ and been confirmed with nature of phase transitions method.

The magnetic entropy change, $-\Delta S_M$, has been determined for the set of NdMn$_{2-x}$Cu$_x$Si$_2$ compounds ($x=0$–1.0) from their magnetization curves for decreasing field values as functions of temperature and magnetic field ($\Delta B=0$–5 T). The magnetic entropy change has been derived by applying the standard Maxwell relation: $-\Delta S_M(T, B) = \int_0^B \left( \frac{\partial M}{\partial T} \right)_B dB$. As shown by the curves of Fig. 3(a), the $-\Delta S_M$ peak is found to consistently decrease with Cu concentration $x=0$, 0.2, 0.4, 0.6, 0.8, and 1.0 as: $-\Delta S_M \approx 27$ J kg$^{-1}$ K$^{-1}$ at $T_c=36$ K; $-\Delta S_M \approx 13.7$ J kg$^{-1}$ K$^{-1}$ at $T_c=44$ K; $-\Delta S_M \approx 6.5$ J kg$^{-1}$ K$^{-1}$ at $T_c=60$ K; $-\Delta S_M \approx 3.5$ J kg$^{-1}$ K$^{-1}$ at $T_c=70$ K; $-\Delta S_M \approx 1.5$ J kg$^{-1}$ K$^{-1}$ at $T_c=80$ K; and $-\Delta S_M \approx 0.5$ J kg$^{-1}$ K$^{-1}$ at $T_c=100$ K. The decrease in magnetization on substitution of the non-magnetic Cu for Mn correspondingly reduces the value of $-\Delta S_M$. The magnetic entropy change, $-\Delta S_M(T, B)$ has also been derived from heat calorimetric measurements of the field dependence of the heat capacity using the expression $-\Delta S_M(T, B) = \int_0^B \left( \frac{\partial M}{\partial T} \right)_B dB$, where $C(T, B)$ and $C(T, 0)$ are the values of the heat capacity measured in field $B$ and zero field, respectively. The corresponding adiabatic temperature change, $\Delta T_{ad}$ can be evaluated from $-\Delta S_M(T, B)$ and the heat capacity data: $\Delta T_{ad}(T, B) = \frac{\int_0^B \left( \frac{\partial M}{\partial T} \right)_B dB}{C(T, B)}$. Figure 3(b) shows the set of heat capacity measurements obtained for NdMn$_{1.8}$Cu$_{0.2}$Si$_2$ with
B = 0, 1, 2, and 5 T. The corresponding $-\Delta S_M(T, B)$ values for NdMn$_{1.8}$Cu$_{0.2}$Si$_2$ are shown in Fig. 3(a) with the $\Delta T^{\text{max}}_C = 3.44$ K for $\Delta B = 0$–5 T values in Fig. 3(c). The $-\Delta S^{\text{max}}_M$ for NdMn$_{1.8}$Cu$_{0.2}$Si$_2$ as determined from the heat capacity measurements with the Maxwell relation $\sim 11.5$ J kg$^{-1}$ K$^{-1}$ is comparable to the magnetic measurements using the neutron diffraction pattern for NdMn$_{1.8}$Cu$_{0.2}$Si$_2$ at 450 K, 100 K, and 40 K, respectively. Neutron diffraction studies demonstrate that the order of magnetic phase transition for $x$ 0–1.0 compounds has been carried out. Substitution of Cu for Mn leads to increase in the Curie temperature while decrease the Néel temperature from $T_C \sim 36$ K to 100 K and $T_N \sim 380$ K at $x = 0$ and $x = 1.0$. The variation in the value of $T_C$ with increasing Cu concentration can be understood in terms of changes in the Mn-Mn exchange interaction together with the effects of magnetic dilution. Analysis of the magnetisation data demonstrates that the order of magnetic phase transition around $T_C$ changes from first order at $x < 0.6$ to second order transition for $x \geq 0.6$ and leads to significant reduction in magnetic hysteresis losses. Substitution of Mn by Cu leads to a reduction of the magnetic entropy change from $-\Delta S_M \sim 27.1$ J kg$^{-1}$ K$^{-1}$ at $x = 0$ to $\sim 0.51$ J kg$^{-1}$ K$^{-1}$ at $x = 1.0$, respectively. Neutron diffraction studies demonstrate that NdMn$_{1.8}$Cu$_{0.2}$Si$_2$ has the AF/AF transition for $x$ 0–1.0 with magnetic entropy change $-\Delta S_M \sim 3.44$ K for $T = 44 K$ as determined from the heat capacity measurements with the Maxwell relation $\sim 11.5$ J kg$^{-1}$ K$^{-1}$.

The variation in the $a$ and $c$ lattice parameters with temperature are plotted in Fig. 4(c). Both the $a$ and $c$ values exhibit a monotonic decrease with temperature in the region of the antiferromagnetic transition between $T_N \sim 375$ K and $T_C \sim 44$ K, while below $T_C \sim 44$ K, the $a$ lattice parameter expands slightly from 4.003(5) Å to 4.005(3) Å, whereas the $c$ decreases from 10.464(3) Å to 10.451(3) Å at 60 K and at 3 K. The changes in lattice parameter at $T_C \sim 44$ K according to magnetic state changes from AFil to Fmc + F(Nd) structure indicates the presence of strong magnetostructural coupling contributing to the total entropy change around $T_C$.

A systematic investigation of the structural and magnetic characteristics of NdMn$_2$–Cu$_x$Si$_2$ ($x$ 0–1.0) compounds has been carried out. Substitution of Cu for Mn leads to increase in the Curie temperature while decrease the Néel temperature from $T_C \sim 36$ K to 100 K and $T_N \sim 380$ K at $x = 0$ and $x = 1.0$. The variation in the value of $T_C$ with increasing Cu concentration can be understood in terms of changes in the Mn-Mn exchange interaction together with the effects of magnetic dilution. Analysis of the magnetisation data demonstrates that the order of magnetic phase transition around $T_C$ changes from first order at $x < 0.6$ to second order transition for $x \geq 0.6$ and leads to significant reduction in magnetic hysteresis losses. Substitution of Mn by Cu leads to a reduction of the magnetic entropy change from $-\Delta S_M \sim 27.1$ J kg$^{-1}$ K$^{-1}$ at $x = 0$ to $\sim 0.51$ J kg$^{-1}$ K$^{-1}$ at $x = 1.0$, respectively. Neutron diffraction studies demonstrate that NdMn$_{1.8}$Cu$_{0.2}$Si$_2$ has the AFil antiferromagnetic structure in the temperature range $T_N \sim 375$ K $> T > T_C \sim 44$ K and the combined Fmc + F(Nd) ferromagnetic state below $T_C \sim 44$ K.