Large magnetoresistance in the type-II Weyl semimetal semimetal WP[subscript 2]

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Large magnetoresistance in the type-II Weyl semimetal WP2

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We report a magnetotransport study on type-II Weyl semimetal WP2 single crystals. Magnetoresistance exhibits a nonsaturating $H^2$ field dependence (14 300% at 2 K and 9 T), whereas systematic violation of Kohler’s rule was observed. Quantum oscillations reveal a complex multiband electronic structure. The cyclotron effective mass close to the mass of free electron $m_e$ was observed in quantum oscillations along the $b$ axis, while a reduced effective mass of about 0.5$m_e$ was observed in $a$-axis quantum oscillations, suggesting Fermi surface anisotropy. The temperature dependence of the resistivity shows a large upturn that cannot be explained by the multiband magnetoresistance of conventional metals. Even though the crystal structure of WP2 is not layered as in transition-metal dichalcogenides, quantum oscillations suggest partial two-dimensional character.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Weyl fermions originate from Dirac states by breaking either time-reversal symmetry or space-inversion symmetry [1–12]. In addition to type-I [3,6,10] Weyl points with a close pointlike Fermi surface, novel type-II [4,11] Weyl fermions appear at the boundaries between electron and hole pockets violating Lorentz invariance. This results in an open Fermi surface and anisotropic chiral anomaly. Most of the reported type-II Weyl semimetals exhibit characteristic extraordinary magnetoresistance (XMR), observed, for example, in materials that crystallize in the $C2/m$ space group of OsGe$_2$-type structure, such as NbSb$_2$, TaAs$_2$, and NbAs$_2$ [13,14].

WP$_2$ crystallizes the nonsymmorphic space group $Cmc2_1$(36), which favors new topological phases with Dirac states [15–18]. Indeed, WP$_2$ was recently predicted to be a type-II Weyl semimetal with four pairs of type-II Weyl points and long topological Fermi arcs [19]. In this work, we have successfully grown single crystals of WP$_2$, and have investigated its magnetotransport properties. Magnetoresistance ($MR = (\rho(B) - \rho(0))/\rho(0) \times 100\%$) exhibits a nonsaturating $\sim H^{1.8}$ field dependence up to 14 300% at 2 K and 9 T. WP$_2$ shows a systematic violation of Kohler’s rule and large magnetic-field-induced nonmetallic resistivity that cannot be explained by orbital magnetoresistance of multiband metals. Fermi surface studies of WP$_2$ by quantum oscillations reveal a complex electronic structure. The $T$-$H$ phase diagram is consistent with the universal phase diagram for XMR materials [20]. However, the Weyl points in WP$_2$ have little influence on the effective mass and mobility of the Fermi surfaces detected by quantum oscillations.

II. EXPERIMENTAL DETAILS

Single crystals of WP$_2$ were grown by chemical vapor transport method using I$_2$ as the transport agent. First, WP$_2$ polycrystals were obtained by annealing stoichiometric W and P powder at 500°C for 24 h, and then 750°C for 48 h. WP$_2$ polycrystals were mixed with I$_2$ (15 mg/ml), and then sealed in an evacuated quartz tube. Single crystals were grown in a temperature gradient 1180°C (source) to 1050°C (sink) for a month. Shiny needlelike single crystals with typical size $1.5\text{nm} \times 0.05\text{mm} \times 0.05\text{mm}$ were obtained. X-ray diffraction measurements were performed using a Rigaku Miniflex powder diffractometer. The element analysis (EDX) is W : P = 1:2. Figure 1(b) shows the temperature dependence of resistivity in WP$_2$ in different fields. The residual resistivity ratio (RRR) in the absence of magnetic field is $\rho(300\text{K})/\rho(2\text{K}) = 279$ with $\rho(2\text{K}) = 0.19\mu\Omega\text{cm}$, indicating small defect scattering in the crystal. The metallic resistivity in $H = 0$ can be described by the Bloch-Grüneisen (BG) model [21]:

$$\rho(T) = \rho_0 + C \left( \frac{T}{\Theta_D} \right)^5 \int_0^{\Theta_D/T} \frac{x^5}{(e^x - 1)(1 - e^{-x})} dx,$$
where $\rho_0$ is the residual resistivity and $\Theta_D$ is the Debye temperature, indicating phonon scattering in the whole temperature range. The fitting results in $\Theta_D = 546(5) \text{ K}$. As shown in Fig. 1(b), with the application of the magnetic field, the $\rho(T)$ shows a large upturn which saturates below $\sim 15 \text{ K}$. Similar resistivity behavior was observed recently in XMR materials such as WTe$_2$, TaAs, LaSb, PtSn$_4$, ZrSiSe, and Ta$_3$S$_2$, but also in graphite, bismuth, and MgB$_2$ [22–31]. The heat capacity of WP$_2$, shown in Fig. 1(c), is best described at low temperatures with $C(T) \propto T^\gamma$ where $\gamma = (1.50(5) \text{ mJ mol}^{-1} \text{ K}^{-1})$, $\beta = 0.0324(5) \text{ mJ mol}^{-1} \text{ K}^{-2}$, and $\delta = 3.0(2) \times 10^{-5} \text{ mJ mol}^{-1} \text{ K}^{-4}$ [Fig. 1(d)] [32]. The Debye temperature $\Theta_D = 564(\pm 11) \text{ K}$ is obtained from $\Theta_D = (12\pi^2 N R / 5\beta)^{1/3}$ where $N$ is the atomic number in the chemical formula and $R$ is the gas constant.

Based on the field dependence of $\partial\rho / \partial T$ [Fig. 1(e)] we plot the temperature-field ($T$-$H$) phase diagram in Fig. 1(f), where $T_m$ and $T_c$ are taken as the sign change point and minimum in $\partial\rho / \partial T$. The phase diagram is consistent with extreme magnetoresistance materials [20].

Figure 2(a) shows the field dependence of transverse magnetoresistance $\text{MR} = (\rho(B) - \rho(0))/\rho(0) \times 100\%$ at various temperatures with $B \parallel h$. $\text{MR}$ exhibits a nonsaturating $\sim H^{1.8}$ dependence and reaches 14 3000% at 2 K and 9 T. It decreases quickly with increasing temperature, and becomes negligibly small above 100 K. The MR of WP$_2$ is about one order of magnitude smaller than in WTe$_2$ and LaSb, but comparable even larger than those in LaBi, Ta$_3$S$_2$, and TaIrTe$_4$ [22–25,33]. The MR of solids only responds to the extremal cross section of the Fermi surface along the field direction. Thus, angular dependence of $\text{MR}$ in a material with a two-dimensional (2D) Fermi surface should be proportional to $|\cos(\theta)|$ [34]. As shown in Fig. 2(b), $\text{MR}$ in different magnetic fields shows twofold symmetry which can be fitted well with $|\cos(\theta)|$, indicating a 2D Fermi surface.

Field-induced nonmetallic resistivity and XMR in topological materials has been discussed lately in the literature; however, its origin was ascribed to different mechanisms. In WTe$_2$, it was suggested that the band structure of a compensated semimetal with perfect electron-hole symmetry is important, whereas in LaBi and LaSb the proposed mechanism involves a combination of compensated electron-hole pockets and particular orbital texture on the electron pocket [20,35–38]. There is also evidence for exotic and multiple surface Dirac states in other materials. MR in PtSn$_4$ has been considered within the model of orbital MR in the long mean-free-path metals with single dominant scattering time [28]. However, Dirac node arcs are also found in PtSn$_4$ and ZrSiSe(Te), suggesting that XMR could be connected with suppressed backscattering of Dirac states [39,40].

Semiclassical transport theory based on the Boltzmann equation predicts Kohler’s rule $\Delta\rho / \rho(0) = F(H / \rho(0)) \sim H^{1.8}$ [35] (c). MR versus temperature for WP$_2$ at 9 T (left) and temperature dependence of $A$ and $n$ ($\text{MR} = A \times H^n$) (right) (d).
field dependence of MR at different temperatures can be well fitted with MR = A × H^n; n is 1.8 at 2 K. The exponent n systematically decreases to 1.5 with increasing temperature, as shown in Fig. 2(d). The temperature evolutions of A and n are similar to the temperature dependence of MR(9 T).

A common violation of Kohler’s rule in metals is multiband electronic transport, i.e., the existence of multiple scattering times. WP2 was predicted to be a type-II Weyl semimetal; therefore there is a possibility that high mobility bands with Dirac states contribute to small residual resistivity in zero magnetic field and strong magnetoresistance. In the two-band model MR is [43]

\[ MR = \frac{n_e \mu_e \mu_h (\mu_e + \mu_h) H^2}{(\mu_e n_h + \mu_h n_e)^2 + (\mu_h n_h + \mu_e n_e)^2} \]

For the compensated semimetal, where \( n_e \approx n_h \), we obtain \( MR = \mu_e \mu_h (\mu_e \mu_h H)^2 \), since the MR = A × H^n (n = 1.5–1.8) [Fig. 2(c)] compensated two-band model cannot completely explain the MR. Next, we discuss electronic transport in WP2 from the perspective of the two-band model when \( n_e \neq n_h \).

Figure 3(a) shows the field dependence of Hall resistivity \( \rho_{xy} \) at different temperatures. Clear quantum oscillations were observed at low temperatures. The frequencies and effective mobilities \( \mu_e, \mu_h \) derived from the two-band model (scatter symbols).

The oscillatory components are plotted as a function of \( F = (\Phi_0/2\pi^2)A_F \), where \( \Phi_0 \) is the flux quantum and \( A_F \) is the orthogonal cross-sectional area of the Fermi surface, the Fermi surface is estimated to be 13, 17, 30, and 36 nm^-2, corresponding to 5%, 7%, 12%, and 14% of the total area of the Brillouin zone in the \( (a \times c) \) plane. Assuming the cross section of Fermi surface \( A_F = \pi k_F^2 \), the band splitting induced by spin-orbital coupling can be estimated to be \( k_F - k_0 = 0.03 \text{ Å}^{-1} \), which is larger than that in MoP, and about half of that in giant Rashba effect material BiTeI [49,50]. Strong spin-orbital coupling in WP2 indicates that spin texture, which could forbid backscattering, might play an important role in large magnetoresistance, similar to that in WTe2 [51]. For de Haas–van Alphen (dHvA) oscillation along the \( a \) axis, the Fermi surfaces from three frequencies 1217, 2949, and 3417 T are 12, 28, and 32, corresponding to 18%, 42%, and 48% of the Brillouin zone.

In order to obtain the cyclotron mass for the main frequencies, the FFT amplitudes \( A \) versus temperature was fitted using the Lifshitz-Kosevich formula [34], \( A \sim |m^*(T/B)| \sinh(m^*T/B) \) where \( m^* = m_e m_h/(m_e + m_h) \) is the cyclotron mass ratio (\( m_e \) is the mass of free electron). As shown in Figs. 4(e) and 4(f), the cyclotron mass along the \( b \) axis is close to the mass of free electron \( m_e \), while the cyclotron mass along the \( a \) axis is reduced to about 0.5\( m_e \), which can be attributed to anisotropy of the Fermi surface. We estimate the Dingle temperatures from the FFT frequency with highest FFT peaks to be 2.4 and 4.7 K for \( H\parallel b \) and \( H\parallel a \), respectively. The corresponding
scattering times are $5.0 \times 10^{-13}$ s and $2.6 \times 10^{-13}$ s. Then, the mobility estimated by $\mu_q = e \tau_q / m_c$ is 880 cm$^2$ V$^{-1}$ s$^{-1}$ and 458 cm$^2$ V$^{-1}$ s$^{-1}$, comparable to Fig. 3(c). The effective mass and mobility suggest that the Fermi surfaces detected by quantum oscillation are not under significant influence of the Weyl points which are located below the Fermi level [19].

The angle dependence of Shubnikov–de Haas (SdH) in the $bc$ plane, and dHvA in the $ac$ plane provides further insight into the shape of the Fermi surface. The FFT spectra of the SdH is presented in Fig. 5(a), and dHvA in Fig. 5(b). For the SdH measurement, four main peaks are observed; the FFT peaks increase with the angle tilt from zero, and disappear above 60°. The solid lines in Fig. 5(c) are fitted using the 2D Fermi surface $F(0)/\cos(\theta)$. Hence low angle quantum oscillations reveal quasi-2D character at low angles below 50°. When the field is rotated in the $ac$ plane, with the field titled from the $a$ axis, the frequency decreases with the angle, indicating the elongated Fermi surface in the $bc$ plane. The angle dependence of quantum oscillations agree well with the calculated Fermi surface [19,48]. The calculated Fermi surfaces of WP$_2$ consist of spaghetti-like hole Fermi surfaces and bow-tie-like electron Fermi surfaces, while the presence of strong spin-orbit coupling leads to splitting of Fermi surfaces [19,48]. The spaghetti-like hole Fermi surface extends along the $b$ axis, bends along the $a$ axis, while it is flat along the $c$ axis, consistent with the quasi-2D elongated $\alpha$ and $\beta$ bands in the $bc$ plane. When a magnetic field is applied in small angles around the $b$ axis, SdH oscillations of $\gamma$ and $\eta$ bands are from...
the orbits across whole electron pockets in the ac plane, and the quasi-2D behavior of γ and η bands can then be attributed to the relatively flat wall of electron pockets. Moreover, the appearance in pairs of both the hole and electron Fermi surfaces with almost the same angle dependence might be the result of the band splitting effect which is induced by strong spin-orbit coupling.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, magnetotransport studies of WP₂ confirm the presence of multiple bands [19]. The large increase of resistivity in magnetic field cannot be explained by the multiband orbital magnetoresistance but the effective mass and mobility detected by quantum oscillations are not under significant influence of Weyl points. A strong spin-orbit coupling effect was observed in quantum oscillations, whereas the temperature and angle dependence of quantum oscillation measurements reveal anisotropic multiband characteristics and are in agreement with calculations. Even though the crystal structure in WP₂ is not layered as in transition-metal dichalcogenides, Fermi surfaces do show partial quasi-2D character.

Note added. Recently, a related study on WP₂ was reported by Schönenmann et al. [52]; although the magnitude of magnetoresistance and RRR of the crystal is somewhat different, the Fermi surface and main conclusion are consistent with ours.

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