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Chang-woo Cho, Peipei Wang, Fangdong Tang, Sungkyun Park, Mingquan He, Rolf Lortz, Genda Gu, Qiang Li, and Liyuan Zhang Phys. Rev. B **105**, 085132 — Published 22 February 2022 DOI: 10.1103/PhysRevB.105.085132

1	Thermal transport properties and some hydrodynamic-like behavior
2	in 3D topological semimetal ZrTe <sub>5</sub>
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20	Abstract
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22	Hydrodynamic fluidity in condensed matter physics has been experimentally
23	demonstrated only in a limited number of compounds due to the stringent conditions that
24	must be met. Herein, we performed thermal and electrical transport experiments in three-
25	dimensional topological semimetal ZrTe5. By measuring the thermal properties in a wide
26	temperature range, two representative experimental evidences of the hydrodynamics are
27	observed in temperature window between the ballistic and diffusive regimes: a faster
28	evolution of the thermal conductivity than in the ballistic regime and the non-monotonic
29	thermal conductivity results indicate that charged quesinerticles as well as phonons, magneto-
3U 31	also play an important role in this hydrodynamic-like flow in ZrTe-
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#### Introduction

In insulators, heat is mainly carried by phonons. This phonon-dominant heat conduction is 38 described by Fourier's law, in which phonons scatter from other phonons, impurities, and 39 40 boundaries [1-3]. This process takes place through the momentum-relaxing process known as Umklapp scattering (U-scattering). During this process, heat fluxes are dissipated and the 41 crystal momentum is not conserved [1-3]. On the other hand, at a sufficiently low temperature 42 T, Fourier's law no longer holds, where the crystal momentum is conserved thanks to the 43 44 dominant Normal scattering (N-scattering) [4-6]. These two types of scattering mechanisms are 45 known for a diffusive and a ballistic regime, respectively, and have been widely studied in many solids [7-11]. 46

Meanwhile, Gurzhi proposed a viscous flow driven by the heat carriers when N-scattering is 47 abundant in the overlapping two regimes [12]. Since then, it has been called hydrodynamic 48 flow due to its analogy with macroscopic transport phenomena in water fluids [13]. When 49 50 phonons represent the primary heat carriers in solids, two significant characteristics are known 51 as the Poiseuille flow and the second-sound wave [6,14]. The former is characterized by a 52 steady-state phonon flow in which thermal resistance diffuses due to the boundary scattering combined with N-scattering [15,16]. In comparison, the latter involves wave-propagation of a 53 54 *T*-gradient without significant attenuation [6,17,18].

Despite the fascination of phonon-hydrodynamics (PH) in solid state systems, experimental 55 observation is rare. Moreover, it is found only in a narrow T-window at a remarkably low T, 56 where abundant N-scattering and a suitable sample size are additionally required. For instance, 57 the reported T-window of Poiseuille flow in suspended graphene was only 0.5 K at about 1 K. 58 [19]. One reason for this practical difficulty is that U-scattering overwhelms N-scattering in 59 almost every T-range except at significantly low T. For these reasons, PH behavior has been 60 experimentally confirmed in only a handful of compounds, such as solid He-3 [20] and He-4 61 62 [21], Bi [22], black P [16], SrTiO<sub>3</sub> [23], and graphite [24,25]. Therefore, the search for new materials in which hydrodynamics contributed through phonons or other collective excitations 63

64 is of great interest to the condensed matter community.

65 In this study, we performed thermal and electrical transport experiments for topological semimetal ZrTe<sub>5</sub> to investigate the hydrodynamic property. In fact, the ZrTe<sub>5</sub> study was initiated 66 decades ago due to its considerable thermoelectric performance and resistivity anomaly [26,27]. 67 68 Recently, it has gained renewed attention due to non-trivial topological phenomena such as a 3D quantum Hall effect [28], a quantum spin Hall effect on a monolayer [29], and a chiral 69 magnetic effect [30]. Moreover, it has been reported that bulk  $ZrTe_5$  sits at the boundary 70 between a weak- and a strong-topological phase, so that an external perturbation easily affects 71 72 its topology [31-33]. Herein, we present experimental evidence for PH by observing a faster 73 evolution of the thermal conductivity  $\kappa$  than in the ballistic regime. In contrast to the 74 conventional PH, we find an unexpected thermal transport behavior in a hydrodynamic regime, 75 which could be attributed to the charged quasiparticles. After reviewing several scenarios, we

suggest that hydrodynamic flow is mainly led by phonons, but presumably weak coupled to charged quasiparticles. Our findings have important implications for ongoing research on the various possible types of hydrodynamics, especially in a three-dimensional topological semimetal.

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#### Methods

In the experimental setup, we used ultrahigh quality ZrTe<sub>5</sub> single crystals, grown by the 82 83 tellurium flux method. Details of the sample growth and structural properties can be found 84 elsewhere [28,34,35]. Thanks to the relatively large size of the single acicular crystals (length, *l* x width, *w* x thickness, *t*; Sample #1: 3.0 x 0.4 x 0.3 mm<sup>3</sup>, Sample #2: 3.2 x 0.3 x 0.1 mm<sup>3</sup>, 85 Sample #3:  $2.9 \times 0.3 \times 0.2 \text{ mm}^3$ ), we were able to perform the electrical and thermal transport 86 experiments on the same bulk samples. In the main text, we defined the longest (shortest) 87 dimension as along the *a*-axis (*b*-axis), corresponding to the ZrTe<sub>3</sub> chain (stacking layer) 88 direction. 89

In the transport experiments, we performed the electrical resistivity measurements by the 90 91 standard Hall bar method, using an alternating current with an amplitude of 0.01-0.1 mA and a 92 frequency of 10-20 Hz. The magnetic field B was applied in the perpendicular direction to the 93 ac-plane. In order to measure the thermal transport of such a needle-shaped ZrTe<sub>5</sub> crystal, we used a well-known steady-state method with one-heater and three-thermometers as shown in 94 95 **Fig. 1a-c.** One end of a  $\sim$ 3.0 mm long sample was attached to a copper heat sink, while a small chip-like 100 Ohms resistor and three well-calibrated Cernox thermometers were suspended 96 97 from glass fibers. To minimize heat loss, thin Pt/W wires (25 um) were used between all electrical devices and electrodes on the holder, while thick Ag wires (100 um) were connected 98 to the sample for the best thermal equilibrium state during the measurement. To eliminate 99 100 spurious longitudinal (or transverse) components, we measured and averaged every transport 101 experiment in opposite B-field directions. For obtaining more accurate thermal transport 102 quantities, we also measured the thermal conductivity of high-purity brass under the identical experimental environment and calibrated it accordingly (see Supplemental Material Fig. S1 103 104 [36]). Since the sensitivity of the thermometers as a thermal detector becomes weaker towards higher T, we switched to the thermocouple method to record the thermal gradient in the high T105 regime (T > 20 K). In the overlapping range (about 10-20 K), we confirmed the consistent  $\kappa$ 106 107 results within the error bars; an example for Sample #3 is presented in Supplemental Material Fig. S2 [36]. 108

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#### Results

In the following, we will examine the first evidence of hydrodynamic flow. In a PH regime,  $\kappa$ should evolve faster than a  $T^3$ -dependence. To test this, we plot the *T*-dependent total thermal conductivity  $\kappa_{tot}$  in the ZrTe<sub>5</sub> single crystals, which are shown in **Fig. 2a**. The electronic contribution of thermal conductivity  $\kappa_{WF}$  (solid lines) is presented in **Fig. 2b**. Note that only

 $\kappa_{tot}$  is a directly measured value, whereas  $\kappa_{WF}$  is extracted from the Wiedemann-Franz (WF) 115 law ( $\kappa_{WF} = \frac{T}{2}L_0$ , Lorenz number  $L_0 = 2.44 \times 10^{-8} W\Omega K^{-2}$ ) based on our electrical 116 resistivity data. For clarity, it is plotted on a log-log scale here. In the high T-regime (~200 -117 300 K in Sample #1, and  $\sim$ 30 - 300 K in Sample #2 and #3), it follows nearly 1/T dependence 118 in all the samples, meaning that the U-scattering is the most prominent process in this range. 119 After passing through the  $\kappa_{tot}$  peak, it starts to decrease, indicating the N-scattering process 120 begins to dominate. In the case of the thickest sample (#1, t = 0.3 mm), no hydrodynamic 121 features are seen, whereas Sample #2 and #3 deviate from the line proportional to  $T^3$  (dashed 122 line in Fig. 2a) in a low T regime. For Sample #3 (t = 0.2 mm), it first shows a downward kink-123 124 like considered to phonon-drag anomaly just below the T where the maximum occurs. With further cooling, the slope of  $\kappa_{tot}$  gradually increases towards low T and exceeds a T<sup>3</sup>-125 dependence in a range of 0.8 to 2.0 K. This is clearer with a wide T-window in the thinnest 126 sample (#2, t = 0.1 mm). By comparison  $\kappa_{tot}$  and  $\kappa_{WF}$ , it should be mentioned that, if  $\kappa_{tot}$ 127 assumes the summation of phononic and electronic contribution, the phonon thermal 128 129 conductivity  $\kappa_{nh}$  dominates by more than one order of magnitude across the entire T-range (see Fig. 2a and b). Another thing is that the  $\kappa_{tot}$  must converge to  $\kappa_{WF}$  at sufficiently low 130 T because the thermal energy at low T is mainly transferred from the charge carriers. However, 131 we see no convergence up to the experimental low T-limit of 0.7 K. This is due to the 132 comparatively high-purity crystallinity and extremely low carrier density at low T (see Fig. S3b 133 and c), so that phonons still play a crucial role at low T. We thus deduce that such a 134 hydrodynamic feature is attributed to predominantly phonons. 135

Next, we examine the *B*-field dependence of thermal transport. In Fig. 3a, we present the 136 137 longitudinal thermal conductivity  $\kappa_{xx}$  as a function of *B*-field in Sample #3, which measured at T = 0.81 K. For comparison with the electronic contribution, we plot together with  $\kappa_{WF}$ 138 (solid red line in Fig. 3a) measured at T = 0.70 K. Two things are worth noting here. First, one 139 sees an apparent thermal quantum oscillation that is in complete agreement with the electronic 140 quantum oscillations. Although phonons still play a dominant role up to our experimental low-141 T limit of 0.7 K, it means that the contribution of charged particles among thermal carriers 142 increases when T is lower. Second, it hardly responds to  $\kappa_{xx}$  when the external B-fields are 143 144 sufficiently high. When the quantum oscillations terminate at ~1.5 T,  $\kappa_{xx}$  is nearly constant above this field. We also confirm this for Sample #2 that  $\kappa_{xx}$  is barely influenced by the B-145 146 fields regardless of base T (see Fig. S4).

147 An unexpected thing is seen in the *T*-dependent electronic thermal contribution. In general, it 148 is known that  $\kappa_{ph}$  does not seriously change by the external *B*-fields, thus we can extract the 149 thermal contribution of charged quasiparticles by subtracting the  $\kappa_{xx}(B)$  from the  $\kappa_{xx}(0T)$ . 150 To do this, we define  $\Delta \kappa = \kappa_{xx}(0T) - \kappa_{xx}(B)$  and plotted in **Fig. 3b**, where the magnitude 151 of *B*-field was chosen to be 2.4 T and 5.0 T for Sample #3 and #2, respectively. Surprisingly, 152 this quantity exhibits a distinct deviation in the hydrodynamic window we observed. 153 To gain a deeper understanding, we carry out the thermal Hall experiment, as this could be a direct probe to study quasiparticle dynamics. Figure 4a shows the B-field dependence of the 154 thermal Hall resistivity  $\omega_{xy} \ (= \frac{wt}{l} \left( \frac{\Delta T_{xy}}{P} \right)$ , where  $\Delta T_{xy}$  and P denote the T-gradient between 155 two points along the transverse direction and the heating power, respectively) in a narrow B-156 field range from -1 to 1 T. For a higher resolution, we recorded the data this time with a 157 continuous field sweep mode. In the main text, only the case of Sample #2 is shown (Sample 158 #3 data are included in Supplemental Material Fig. S5 [36]). The  $\omega_{xy}$  is negligibly small in 159 almost all *B*-fields except for in a very weak field region (|B| < 0.1 T). It is noted that purely 160 phononic thermal contribution cannot be detected by the thermal Hall signal due to its charge 161 162 neutrality. Thus, zero thermal Hall voltage is acceptable because phonons are the primary heat carriers in ZrTe<sub>5</sub> single crystals in this study. Then, the transverse thermal gradient should not 163 164 be generated under the *B*-fields. Interestingly, an asymmetric thermal Hall feature is found in a weak field region, it becomes stronger as T decreases. 165 The degree of heat deviation can be determined from the thermal Hall angle  $\tan \theta_{H}$ . In Fig. 4b, 166  $\tan \theta_H \ (=\frac{\kappa_{xy}}{\kappa_{xx}})$  is plotted as a function of *B*-field with various *T*. The trend is not different from 167  $\omega_{xy}$  versus B. It exhibits a significant deviation when the B-field is applied near zero-field and 168 is abruptly faded in the region of higher B-fields. In Fig. 4c, we represent the zero-field-limit 169  $(B \rightarrow 0)$  of  $\tan \theta_H / B$  (hereafter  $[\tan \theta_H / B]_0$ ), which is proportional to the effective mean-170 free-path of the quasiparticles  $l_{QP}$  [37]. The magnitude of  $l_{QP}$  can be estimated through the 171 equation  $l_{QP} = \frac{\hbar k_F}{e} \frac{\tan \theta_H}{B}$ , where  $\hbar$  is the Planck constant,  $k_F$  is the Fermi wave number, and 172 *e* is the electron charge [38]. Using the estimation of  $k_F \approx 4 \times 10^{-3} \text{\AA}^{-1}$  in the *ac*-plane [28], 173 we obtain that the  $l_{OP}$  is about 40 um at 1.0 K in both samples (#2 and #3), which is notably 174 longer than those previously reported [39-41]. This consequence also supports our extremely 175 176 clean ZrTe<sub>5</sub> samples, so that quasiparticles travel without significant momentum loss. In particular, the  $l_{QP}$  at about 0.7 K is by a factor of 5 longer than that of 1.0 K, where its length 177

scale is exceeding to our thinnest sample thickness (#2, t = 0.1 mm). Another striking feature of  $[\tan \theta_H / B]_0$  is the presence of a local minimum (vertical arrows in **Fig. 4c**) corresponding to *T* at ~1.8 K (Sample #2) and ~2.2 K (Sample #3), which can be an additional signature of hydrodynamic flow. These are also in good agreement with the phonon-dominant hydrodynamic regime we observed.

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#### Discussion

So far, we have shown the hydrodynamic-like features from the thermal transport experiments. The question that arises from our results is how phonon-dominant hydrodynamics could be realized in the semimetallic  $ZrTe_5$  and not in an insulator. In terms of the scattering time scale, the U-scattering time grows exponentially as decreasing *T*, while the N-scattering time is given 189 by a power law T-dependence. The boundary scattering time must lie between the two for the realization of hydrodynamic flow. Not only are these conditions hardly satisfied intrinsically, 190 but they are also easily affected by impurities. For this reason, the hydrodynamic regime is 191 192 extremely fragile and has been found in a limited number of compounds with very narrow Twindows, therefore it requires high-purity crystallinity. On the one hand, it is also pointing out 193 that instability of the crystal structure may increase the stability of PH by enhancing N-194 scattering [42,43]. The materials in which a PH was reported, such as Bi, black P, and SrTiO<sub>3</sub>, 195 196 are the supporting examples, because these were not ultra-pure systems like pure silicon. 197 Instead, these materials are in the crystal phase boundary, which makes it easier to be dominant N-scattering in the vicinity of the hydrodynamic window [42,43]. In these senses,  $ZrTe_5$  can be 198 a strong candidate for a realization of PH experimentally. Since  $ZrTe_5$  has been reported to have 199 an intrinsic unstable crystal structure and topology, its physical properties can be easily tuned 200 by changing the growth environment and other external parameters [28,32,33]. Combined ultra-201 pure crystallinity in this material, the significant N-scattering in the low T originated from the 202 203 structural instability makes ZrTe<sub>5</sub> a perfectly suitable material for observing phonon-dominant 204 hydrodynamics.

205 Then it is puzzling what kind of collective quasiparticles induces the hydrodynamic flow in our 206 case. Again, the thermal Hall signal is essentially coming from the electronic contribution, since the neutrally charged quasiparticles are not affected by a magnetic field. Indeed, it was first 207 208 reported the appearance of a sizable phonon thermal Hall effect in  $Tb_3Ga_3O_{12}$  [44]. Soon after, this observation stimulated extended follow-up theoretical and experimental studies to uncover 209 210 the origin, including phonon-magnon interaction [45], spin-phonon interaction [46,47], Berry curvature [48], skew scattering [49], etc. However, the reported phonon-induced thermal Hall 211 effect is in contradiction to ours. While the magneto-transverse temperature difference showed 212 213 nearly monotonic increment as *B*-fields increase [44], we find no sizable thermal Hall voltage 214 except for a narrow B-field range and low T-regimes. Furthermore, the performed studies in 215 recent were focused on mostly magnetic materials because they assumed that it is closely linked to magnetic excitation [37, 50, 51]. This is not the case in ZrTe<sub>5</sub>. Hence, it is reasonable to say 216 217 that the hydrodynamic flow in  $ZrTe_5$  is unlikely to be due to a purely phononic attribution. Although we demonstrate that the heat in ZrTe<sub>5</sub> is dominantly carried by the phonons, the 218 219 electron-electron hydrodynamic scenario is still valid. In the results of the zero-field-limit 220 electronic Hall-angle ( $[\tan \theta_e / B]_0$ , inset of Fig. 4c), we can test it. It increases steadily as T 221 drops to  $\sim 10$  K, and then nearly saturates at low T. This indicates that the electron-electron scattering process below 10 K is virtually unaffected by the entire scattering system. From this, 222 we rule out the pure electron-electron fluid scenario. 223

The next possibility is an electron-phonon fluid in which the electron-phonon scattering process is the fastest, so their momentum can be quasi-conserved. For electron-phonon cases studied previously, the results resembled ours to some extent, since there is a significant violation of  $L/L_0$  [52]. However, the sign of  $L/L_0$  is at odds with the present results as shown in **Fig. 5**, implying that our system is much closer to a PH-like fluid. Moreover, although we find the
signature looking like phonon-drag effect in all samples (vertical arrows in Fig. 2a), it is hard
to conclude at present if this phonon-drag effect is closely related to phonon-hydrodynamics or
not. It is because out of the hydrodynamic window. We propose a continued exploration of the
phonon-drag effect in this material.

- Dirac fluid may be another candidate. According to the previous work of Crossno et al., in 233 which they reported on a deviation of  $\kappa_{WF}$  with largely violated the  $L/L_0$  at a charge neutrality 234 235 point in graphene, and they argued that this is indicative of Dirac fluid [53]. Although seemingly 236 similar to the present results (significant violation of  $L/L_0$  and nearly charge-neutrality point), 237 our observations are different in principle. In the case of Crossno et al., the Dirac fluid hydrodynamics occurred in the non-degenerate regime [53], but our  $ZrTe_5$  is far away in the 238 degenerate regime. Furthermore, they observed a recovery of  $L/L_0$  as one moves away from the 239 neutral point [53], but we see no recovery over the entire T-window in Sample #2 and #3 240 existing the hydrodynamics. Given that none of the scenarios are likely to dominate the 241 hydrodynamics in the present results, therefore we cautiously suggest that predominant PH-like 242 flow that weakly coupled to charged quasiparticles in our three-dimensional topological 243 244 semimetal ZrTe<sub>5</sub> crystals.
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#### Summary

247 In summary, we have systematically investigated the thermal and electrical transport properties of bulk ZrTe<sub>5</sub> crystals. To date, the main effort of hydrodynamic studies is still needed to find 248 249 the significant features where either electrons or phonons provide the primary scattering. In addition, all transport regimes - ballistic, hydrodynamic, and diffusive - can coexist and be 250 coupled, making it difficult to distinguish purely quasiparticle hydrodynamic phenomena. 251 Using ultrahigh-purity single crystals of ZrTe<sub>5</sub>, we have found some PH-like Hallmarks as well 252 253 as the anomalous flow of charged quasiparticles, which is certainly unexpected. However, the underlying physics of the B-field induced oscillation of  $\kappa_{xx}$  and the origin of thermal Hall 254 effect remain unknown. These require extended theoretical and experimental work beyond the 255 256 scope of the present study.

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#### Acknowledgement

We thank Benjamin Piot and Kitinan Pongsangangan for their enlightening discussions. C.-w. 260 Cho is supported by BK4-program from NRF-Korea. M. He acknowledges the support by 261 262 National Natural Science Foundation of China (11904040), Chongqing Research Program of 263 Basic Research and Frontier Technology, China (Grant No. cstc2020jcyj-msxmX0263), Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities, China (2020CDJOY-A056, 264 2020CDJ-LHZZ-010, 2020CDJQY-Z006), Projects of President Foundation of Chongqing 265 University, China (2019CDXZWL002). The work at Brookhaven National Laboratory was 266 supported by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) the Office of Basic Energy Sciences, 267

Materials Sciences and Engineering Division under Contract No. DE-SC0012704. The work at
Southern University of Science and Technology acknowledges the support by National Natural
Science Foundation of China (118744193), China postdoctoral Science Foundation
(2020M672760), Shenzhen Distinguished Young Scholar (RCJC20200714114435105), and
Tecent Foundation Xplorer Prize.

#### **Figures caption**

**Figure 1. (a)** Photograph of the thermal conductivity setup used in this study. **(b)** To minimize thermal leakage during the heat flow (from the resistive heater to the thermal bath), we connected the sample to the heater and thermometers through 100  $\mu$ m thick Ag-wires. And, the connections for the electrical measurements are made by 25  $\mu$ m thin Pt/W-wires since it is a good electrical conductor but a relatively poor thermal conductor. **(c)** Schematic diagram of our thermal conductivity experimental setup.

**Figure 2. (a)** Thermal conductivity as a function of temperature in a log-log plot in three different ZrTe<sub>5</sub> samples. The squares (Sample #1), circles (Sample #2) and triangles (Sample #3) indicate the total thermal conductivity  $\kappa_{tot}$ , respectively. All the dash lines are proportional to  $T^3$ . In Sample #2 and #3, the shaded regions denote the area that exceeds  $T^3$ -dependence. The vertical arrows denote the temperature that is occurring phonon-drag effect of each sample. **(b)** Temperature-dependent charge carrier thermal conductivity  $\kappa_{WF}$ , which is calculated according to the Wiedemann-Franz law ( $\kappa_{WF} = \frac{T}{\rho}L_0$ , where the Lorenz number  $L_0 = 2.44 \times 10^{-8} W\Omega K^{-2}$ ). Compared to  $\kappa_{tot}$ , it is smaller by a factor of hundreds in almost all temperature ranges.

**Figure 3. (a)** Longitudinal total thermal conductivity  $\kappa_{xx}$  (closed square) and electronically contributed thermal conductivity  $\kappa_{WF}$  (red-solid line) as a function of magnetic fields. The data was taken at T = 0.81 K ( $\kappa_{xx}$ ) and T = 0.70 K ( $\kappa_{WF}$ ), respectively. (b) Extracted charged quasiparticles contribution to the thermal conductivity of Sample #3 (closed circle). Sample #2 result is added in the inset of (b). Both samples show the deviation of  $\Delta\kappa$  in a hydrodynamic regime as shaded. See main text for details.

**Figure 4. (a)** Magnetic field dependence of the thermal Hall resistivity  $\omega_{xy}$  at various temperatures on Sample #2. (b) Tangential Hall angle  $(\tan \theta_H = \frac{\kappa_{xy}}{\kappa_{xx}})$  in a magnetic field range of -0.5 to 0.5 T at different temperatures on Sample #2. (c) Temperature-dependent slope of  $\tan \theta_H/B$  in the zero-magnetic-field-limit for Sample #2 and #3. In principle, this quantity is proportional to the mean-free-path of the quasiparticles. The vertical arrows denote the local minima. The inset of (c) presents the initial slope of the electronic Hall angle.

**Figure 5.** Temperature dependence of Lorenz ratio  $(L/L_0)$  for ZrTe<sub>5</sub> single crystals used this study. Horizontal line (dotted) is a guideline when  $L=L_0$ .

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## Fiberglass

# Heater, 100 Ohm @RT

# Calibrated Thermometers

# Thermal Bath (material: Cu)

















