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## Anisotropic neutron spin resonance in underdoped superconducting $NaFe_{1-x}Co_xAs$

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We use polarized inelastic neutron scattering (INS) to study spin excitations in superconducting NaFe<sub>0.985</sub>Co<sub>0.015</sub>As (C15) with static antiferromagnetic (AF) order along the a-axis of the orthorhombic structure and NaFe<sub>0.935</sub>Co<sub>0.045</sub>As (C45) without AF order. In previous unpolarized INS work, spin excitations in C15 were found to have a dispersive sharp resonance near  $E_{r1} = 3.25$  meV and a broad dispersionless mode at  $E_{r2} = 6$  meV. Our neutron polarization analysis reveals that the dispersive resonance in C15 is highly anisotropic and polarized along the a- and c-axis, while the dispersionless mode is isotropic similar to that of C45. Since the a-axis polarized spin excitations of the anisotropic resonance appear below  $T_c$ , our data suggests that the itinerant electrons contributing to the magnetism are also coupled to the superconductivity.

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Superconductivity in iron pnictides occurs when the antiferromagnetic (AF) order in their parent compounds is suppressed via electron or hole-doping [1-7]. In the undoped state, iron prictides exhibit a tetragonal to orthorhombic lattice distortion at temperature  $T_s$ , followed by a paramagnetic to AF phase transition at  $T_N$  with a collinear AF structure and the ordered moments along the a-axis of the orthorhombic lattice [inset in Fig. 1(a)or  $M_a$  [1–7]. Upon doping to induce superconductivity, the most prominent feature in the spin excitations spectrum is a neutron spin resonance arising below  $T_c$  at the in-plane AF ordering wave vector  $\mathbf{Q_{AF}} = (1,0)$  [8–14]. For hole and electron-doped BaFe<sub>2</sub>As<sub>2</sub> family of materials [8–14], the resonance occurs at an energy E believed to be associated with the superconducting gap energies at the hole and electron Fermi surfaces near  $\Gamma$  and M points in the reciprocal space, respectively [15]. In the case of electron-doped superconducting  $NaFe_{1-x}Co_xAs$ [Fig. 1(a)] [16–18], unpolarized inelastic neutron scattering (INS) experiments reveal that superconductivity induces a dispersive sharp resonance near  $E_{r1} = 3.25$ meV and a broad dispersionless mode at  $E_{r2} = 6$  meV at  $\mathbf{Q_{AF}} = (1,0)$  in the underdoped NaFe<sub>0.985</sub>Co<sub>0.015</sub>As (C15) with static AF order ( $T_c = 15 \text{ K} \text{ and } T_N = 30 \text{ K}$ ) [19], while only a single resonance at  $E_r = 7$  meV in the overdoped NaFe<sub>0.935</sub>Co<sub>0.045</sub>As (C45,  $T_c = 18 \text{ K}$ ) [20].

The presence of double resonance in superconducting C15 coexisting with static AF order [19] has inspired much discussion on its microscopic origin. In one class of models, the double resonance arises from superconductivity coexisting with static AF order [21, 22]. In this picture, through an averaging effect in twinned samples, the double resonances observed at, say,  $\mathbf{Q} = (1,0)$ ,

are interpreted as reflecting one single resonance at the AF zone center  $\mathbf{Q_{AF}} = (1,0)$  and one at the wave vector  $\mathbf{Q'} = (0,1)$  [21, 22]. Alternatively, the double resonance in C15 may probe the superconducting gap anisotropy in the underdoped regime seen in the angle resolved photoemission experiments [19, 23, 24]. Here, the orbital-selective pairing gives rise to gap anisotropy along a Fermi surface with hybridized orbital characters, resulting a split of the neutron spin resonance [24]. Since the resonance is generally believed to result from a triplet excitation of the singlet electron Cooper pairs associated with isotropic paramagnetic spin excitations  $[M_a = M_b = M_c$  in the inset of Fig. 1(a)] [25], a determination of its spatial anisotropy is important for understanding the double resonance and its microscopic origin.

In this paper, we report polarized INS studies of undoped C15 and overdoped C45 [19, 20]. We find that the dispersive resonance in C15 is highly anisotropic and polarized along the a- and c-axis  $(M_a, M_c > 0)$  with no contribution from the b-axis  $(M_b = 0)$ . However, the dispersionless resonances in C15 and C45 are isotropic with  $(M_a = M_b = M_c)$ , consistent with the singlet-to-triplet excitations [25]. Since spin waves in the undoped NaFeAs are entirely c-axis polarized for energies below  $\sim 10 \text{ meV}$ [26], the appearance of a-axis (longitudinally) polarized resonance in the AF ordered C15 below  $T_c$  indicates that the dispersive resonance is unlikely to arise from coexisting AF order with superconductivity [21, 22]. Instead, the data is consistent with the orbit-selective superconducting gap anisotropy [24], suggesting that the itinerant electron contributions to the magnetism, revealed as longitudinal spin excitations in undoped parent compounds

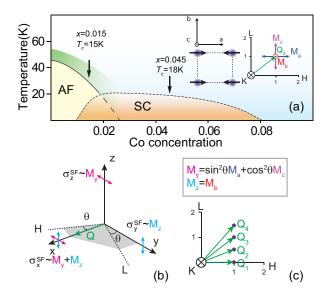


FIG. 1: (Color online) (a) The phase diagram of NaFe<sub>1-x</sub>Co<sub>x</sub>As with x=0.015,0.045 marked by vertical arrows [16]. The left inset shows the orthorhombic unit cell of NaFeAs with the arrows indicating directions of the ordered moments. The right inset shows reciprocal space in the [H,0,L] scattering plane. The blue, red, and purple arrows mark spin excitations along the  $M_a$ ,  $M_b$ , and  $M_c$  directions, respectively. (b) The relationship between the neutron polarization directions (x,y,z) and the probed reciprocal space. The angle between x-direction and the H-axis is denoted as  $\theta$ .  $\sigma_x^{\rm SF}$  contains both  $M_y$  and  $M_z$  magnetic components, whereas only  $M_y$  and  $M_z$  contribute to  $\sigma_z^{\rm SF}$  and  $\sigma_y^{\rm SF}$ , respectively. (c) The  $\mathbf{Q_1}=(1,0,0),\,\mathbf{Q_2}=(1,0,0.5),\,\mathbf{Q_3}=(1,0,1),\,\mathbf{Q_4}=(1,0,1.5)$  mark the probed reciprocal space.

[27], are also coupled to superconductivity.

The inset in Fig. 1(a) shows the AF structure of NaFeAs with orthorhombic lattice parameters a = 5.589, b = 5.569 and c = 6.991 Å [4]. We define momentum transfer  $\mathbf{Q}$  in three-dimensional reciprocal space in  $\mathbb{A}^{-1}$ as  $\mathbf{Q} = H\mathbf{a}^* + K\mathbf{b}^* + L\mathbf{c}^*$ , where H, K, and L are Miller indices and  $\mathbf{a}^* = \hat{\mathbf{a}} 2\pi/a$ ,  $\mathbf{b}^* = \hat{\mathbf{b}} 2\pi/b$ ,  $\mathbf{c}^* = \hat{\mathbf{c}} 2\pi/c$ . In this notation, the AF Bragg peaks and zone centers occur at [1,0,L] with  $L=0.5,1.5,\cdots$ , while the AF zone boundaries along the c-axis occur at  $L=0,1,2,\cdots$  [4]. The dynamic susceptibility along the a-, b-, and c-axis directions corrected for the Bose population factor are marked as  $M_a$ ,  $M_b$ , and  $M_c$ , respectively [inset in Fig. 1(a)] [28]. Our polarized INS experiments were carried out using the IN20 and IN22 triple-axis spectrometers at the Institut Laue-Langevin, Grenoble, France [26–31]. Single crystals of C14 and C45 used in previous unpolarized neutron scattering experiments are used in the present experiment [19, 20]. The quality of our single crystals of  $NaFe_{1-x}Co_xAs$  has been reported in previous heat capacity [18], angle resolved photoemission spectroscopy [23], and nuclear magnetic resonance [32, 33] experiments. We define the neutron polarization directions along  $\mathbf{Q}$  as x, perpendicular to  $\mathbf{Q}$  but in the scattering plane as y, and

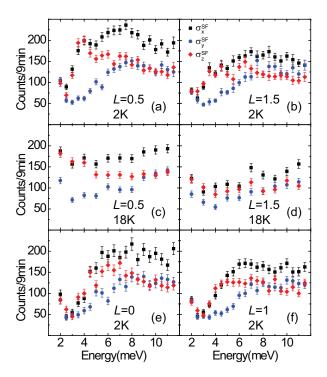


FIG. 2: (Color online) Neutron spin-flip scattering  $\sigma_x^{\rm SF}$ ,  $\sigma_y^{\rm SF}$ , and  $\sigma_z^{\rm SF}$  at (a)  $\mathbf{Q_2}$  (b)  $\mathbf{Q_4}$  in the superconducting state. (c,d) Identical scans in the normal state. (e,f)  $\sigma_x^{\rm SF}$ ,  $\sigma_y^{\rm SF}$ , and  $\sigma_z^{\rm SF}$  at  $\mathbf{Q_1}$  and  $\mathbf{Q_3}$ , respectively.

perpendicular to  $\mathbf{Q}$  and the scattering plane as z, respectively [Figs. 1(b)]. At wave vector  $\mathbf{Q}$ , one can probe magnetic responses within the y-z plane  $(M_y \text{ and } M_z)$ , giving  $M_y = M_a \sin^2 \theta + M_c \cos^2 \theta$  and  $M_z = M_b$ , where the angle between  $\mathbf{Q}$  and [H,0,0] is  $\theta$  [Fig. 1(b)] [28]. By probing two or more equivalent AF wave vectors with different angle  $\theta$ , we can conclusively determine  $M_a$ ,  $M_b$ , and  $M_c$  (Fig. 1c) [26].

To establish the spin excitation anisotropy in  $NaFe_{1-x}Co_xAs$ , we carried out polarized INS in C15 [19]. Figures 2(a) and 2(b) show neutron spin-flip (SF) scattering for neutron polarizations along the x ( $\sigma_x^{SF}$ ), y ( $\sigma_y^{\rm SF}$ ), and z ( $\sigma_z^{\rm SF}$ ) directions at the AF zone centers  $\mathbf{Q_2} = \mathbf{Q_{AF}} = (1, 0, 0.5)$  and  $\mathbf{Q_4} = (1, 0, 1.5)$ , respectively, in the superconducting state (T = 2 K). We find that  $\sigma_x^{\rm SF}$  has a narrow peak at  $E_{r1} \approx 4$  meV and a broad peak at  $E_{r2} = 7$  meV, consistent with the two resonances in previous unpolarized work [19]. However, the situation is rather different for  $\sigma_y^{SF} \sim M_z = M_b$  and  $\sigma_z^{SF} \sim M_y$ . While  $\sigma_z^{\rm SF}$  has clear peaks at  $E_{r1} \approx 4$  and  $E_{r2} = 7$  meV,  $\sigma_y^{\rm SF}$  has a broad peak at  $E_{r2}=7~{\rm meV}$  and is featureless at  $E_{r1} \approx 4$  meV. Identical scans in the normal state (T = 18 K) reveal magnetic anisotropy below 8 meV with  $\sigma_x^{\text{SF}} \geq \sigma_z^{\text{SF}} > \sigma_y^{\text{SF}}$  [Figs. 2(c) and 2(d)]. Figures 2(e) and 2(f) show similar data at the AF zone boundaries  $\mathbf{Q_1} = (1,0,0)$  and  $\mathbf{Q_3} = (1,0,1)$ , respectively, in the superconducting state.

Using data in Fig. 2, we determine the magnetic

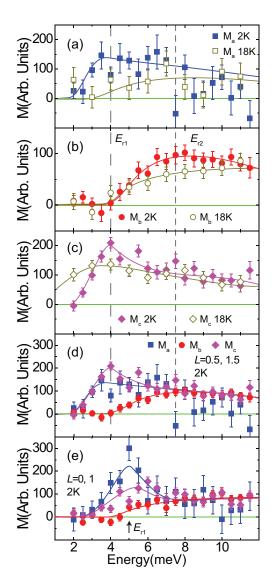


FIG. 3: (Color online) Energy dependence of the dynamic susceptibility (a)  $M_a$ , (b)  $M_b$ , and (c)  $M_c$  above and below  $T_c$ . Energy dependence of  $M_a$ ,  $M_b$ , and  $M_c$  in the superconducting state at (d) AF zone center and (e) zone boundary. The vertical dashed lines indicate energies of  $E_{r1}$  and  $E_{r2}$ , and the solid lines are guides to the eye.

anisotropy  $M_a$ ,  $M_b$ , and  $M_c$  in C15 [34]. Figures 3(a), 3(b), and 3(c) show energy dependence of the  $M_a$ ,  $M_b$ , and  $M_c$ , respectively, above and below  $T_c$ . While spin excitations along the  $M_a$  and  $M_c$  directions show clear peaks in the superconducting state above the normal state scattering near  $E_{r1} \approx 4$  meV [Figs. 3(a) and 3(c)], there are no detectable difference in  $M_b$  across  $T_c$  at  $E_{r1} \approx 4$  meV [Fig. 3(b)]. In contrast, spin excitations along the b-axis direction  $(M_b)$  show the most dramatic change below  $T_c$  near  $E_{r2} \approx 7$  meV. Figure 3(d) plots the energy dependence of the  $M_a$ ,  $M_b$ , and  $M_c$  in the superconducting state, showing a large spin gap below  $\sim 4$  meV and isotropic paramagnetic scattering above  $\sim 7$ 

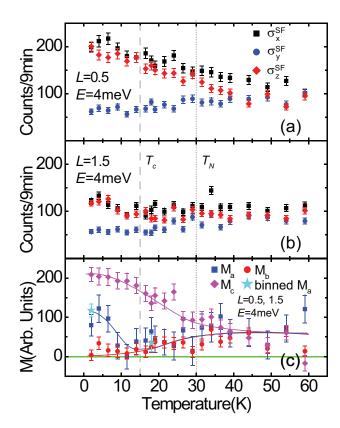


FIG. 4: (Color online) Temperature dependence of  $\sigma_x^{SF}$ ,  $\sigma_y^{SF}$ , and  $\sigma_z^{SF}$  at E=4 meV and (a)  $\mathbf{Q_{AF}}=\mathbf{Q_2}=(1,0,0.5)$ , (b)  $\mathbf{Q_{AF}}=\mathbf{Q_4}=(1,0,1.5)$ . (c) Temperature dependence of the estimated  $M_a$ ,  $M_b$ , and  $M_c$  at E=4 meV. The stars below and above  $T_c$  are from binned energy scan data near E=4 meV. The vertical dashed lines mark  $T_N$  and  $T_c$ . The solid lines are guides to the eye.

meV. Therefore, the resonance at  $E_{r1}\approx 4$  meV is composed of spin excitations polarized along the a  $(M_a)$  and c  $(M_c)$  axes, while the mode at  $E_{r2}=7$  meV is isotropic in space with  $M_a\approx M_b\approx M_c$ . Figure 3(e) shows the energy dependence of  $M_a$ ,  $M_b$ , and  $M_c$  in the superconducting state at the AF zone boundary  $\mathbf{Q_1}=(1,0,0)$ . Consistent with unpolarized INS work [19], we find that the resonance at  $E_{r1}\approx 4$  meV shifted up in energy to  $E_{r1}\approx 5$  meV while the broad resonance remains unchanged at  $E_{r2}\approx 7$  meV. Similar to the data at the AF zone center, the resonance at  $E_{r1}\approx 5$  meV has  $M_a$  and  $M_c$  components with  $M_b=0$  and spin excitations are isotropic for energies above 7 meV.

Since the resonance at the AF zone center shows clear magnetic anisotropy in the superconducting state, we carried out temperature dependent measurements of the spin-flip scattering at  $E_{r1} \approx 4$  meV. Figure 4(a) and 4(b) shows the  $\sigma_x^{\rm SF}$ ,  $\sigma_y^{\rm SF}$ , and  $\sigma_z^{\rm SF}$  scattering at the AF wave vectors  $\mathbf{Q_2} = (1,0,0.5)$  and  $\mathbf{Q_4} = (1,0,1.5)$ , respectively. In previous unpolarized measurements, temperature dependence of the scattering at  $E_{r1} = 3.25$  meV reveals a kink at  $T_N \approx 30$  K and a clear enhancement below

 $T_c=15~{\rm K}$  [19]. Figure 4(c) shows temperature dependence of the  $M_a$ ,  $M_b$  and  $M_c$  obtained by using data in Figs. 4(a) and 4(b). In the paramagnetic state, spin excitations are isotropic with  $M_a=M_b=M_c$ . On cooling to below  $T_N$ , spin excitations are dominated by c-axis polarized moment  $M_c$  with rapid suppression of  $M_a$  and  $M_b$ . These results are consistent with previous polarized INS work that show entirely c-axis polarized low-energy spin waves ( $M_c$ ) in the AF ordered state of NaFeAs [26]. While  $M_c$  continues to increase with decreasing temperature and shows no obvious anomaly across  $T_c$ ,  $M_a$  increases dramatically below  $T_c$  similar to the superconducting order parameter. In contrast, there are no b-axis polarized magnetic scattering below  $T_c$  ( $M_b=0$ ).

Having established the spin excitation anisotropy in electron underdoped C15 with static AF order and double resonances [19], it would be interesting to determine what happens in electron-overdoped C45, which has no static AF order and a sharp resonance at  $E_r = 7$  meV [20]. From polarized INS data presented in [34], we conclude that magnetic scattering in electron overdoped C45 is isotropic at all energies and temperatures with  $M_a = M_b = M_c$ .

In previous polarized INS work on the parent compound BaFe<sub>2</sub>As<sub>2</sub>, spin waves below  $\sim$ 12 meV are entirely c-axis polarized  $(M_c)$  [27, 35]. Upon electron-doping to BaFe<sub>2</sub>As<sub>2</sub> via Co substitution to induce optimal superconductivity, polarized INS found evidence for two neutron spin resonance-like excitations with one isotropic mode  $(M_a = M_b = M_c)$  at an energy of  $\sim 8$  meV and a purely c-axis polarized mode  $(M_c)$  at  $\sim 4$  meV [36]. These results suggest that the low-energy c-axis polarized mode arises from the c-axis polarized spin waves in the parent compound [36]. The discovery that the  $E_{r1} = 3.25$ meV sharp resonance in the underdoped Co15 is composed of a primarily longitudinally polarized mode coupled to superconductivity is clearly different from those of electron-doped BaFe<sub>2</sub>As<sub>2</sub> superconductors [31, 36]. Since the c-axis polarized excitations of the  $E_{r1} = 3.25 \text{ meV}$ resonance shows no anomaly across  $T_c$  in the C15  $[M_c$ in Fig. 4(c)] and its spin anisotropy features at the AF zone boundary along the c-axis [L = 0, 1, Fig. 3(e)] are rather similar to those at the zone center [L=0.5, 1.5,Fig. 3(d)], the mode is unlikely to arise from the caxis polarized spin waves coupling with superconductivity [21, 22]. By contrast, these observations are consistent with the scenario based on orbit-selectivity-induced superconducting gap anisotropy [24]. In this latter picture, the anisotropy of the spin resonance arises from a spin-orbit coupling, which operates when the resonance comes from the superconducting quasiparticle-quasihole excitations that are associated with both the 3d xy and xz/yz orbitals [24].

To summarize, our discovery of a primarily longitudinally polarized resonance at  $E_{r1} \approx 4$  meV implies that the longitudinal spin excitations typically associ-

ated with magnetism from itinerant electrons are also coupled to superconductivity. This suggests that itinerant electrons play an important role in the low-energy spin dynamics of the superconducting state. At the same time, our study provides further evidence for the role of electron-correlation-induced orbital selectivity in the superconducting state, underscoring the importance of the local correlations to the superconducting resonance excitations. Taken together, our results indicate that even the nominally itinerant-electron contributions to the low-energy spin excitations encode the effects of local electronic correlations. This is a new insight in the microscopic physics of the iron-pnictide superconductors.

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