OBSERVATION OF A RESISTANCE MINIMUM IN CADMIUM BY MAGNETO-ACOUSTIC MEASUREMENTS

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It has previously been shown that a detailed analysis of the high magnetic field attenuation of ultrasonic waves in a pure metal single crystal can give information concerning electron mean free path anisotropy [1]. In the course of measurements on two 99.999% pure cadmium crystals in which the electron mean free path is thermal phonon limited at 4.2°K, anomalous behaviour of the temperature variation of the mean free path has been observed. Upon further investigation it was found that the mean free path exhibited a clear maximum around 3°K. This maximum in the electronic mean free path is just what would be expected if the cadmium samples have a resistance minimum such as those reported widely in other materials over the past several years [2-6].

The present analysis is based on the free electron theory of metals and essentially involves finding the ultrasonic frequency at which the high field limiting attenuation is equal to the zero field attenuation. In zero field for compressional waves, it is found that the ultrasonic attenuation by the conduction electrons is [7]

$$\alpha_L(ql) = \frac{nm}{\rho v_s \tau}\left[\frac{q^2 l^2 \tan^{-1} ql}{3(ql - \tan^{-1} ql)} - 1\right], \qquad (1)$$

where n is the number of free electrons per unit volume, m is the electron mass, v_s the sound velocity, ρ the metal density, τ the electron relaxation time, q the magnitude of the sound wave vector ($q = 2\pi\nu/v_s$), ν is the sound frequency, and l the electron mean free path. In the limit $H \to \infty$, the compressional attenuation is given by [7]

$$\lim_{H\to\infty} \alpha_L(H) = \frac{nm\nu q^2 l}{15\rho v_s}. \qquad (2)$$

Experimentally, it is possible to determine the difference between eq. (1) and eq. (2) by comparing the attenuation in the high field limit with that in zero field. When the high field attenuation is equal to that in zero field, a numerical calculation shows that $ql = 6.8$. Thus, if the frequency at which $\alpha(H\to\infty) = \alpha(H=0)$ can be found, the electron mean free path can be determined. The mean free path measured is an average over that part of the Fermi surface being traversed. Different orbits on the Fermi surface can be selected by changing the configuration of sound and field directions.

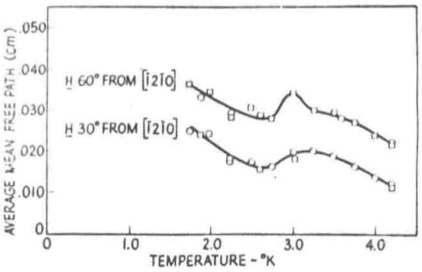

Fig. 1. The electronic mean free path in cadmium sample A as a function of temperature for two different magnetic field directions. The sound direction q is along [10$\bar{1}$0].

In the present study, the above analysis was carried out from 4.2°K to 1°K at magnetic fields up to 19 000 gauss. Fig. 1 shows results of the temperature variation of the mean free path obtained for sample A which is less pure than sample B. In the data of fig. 1, the propagation direction is along [10$\bar{1}$0] while the magnetic field directions correspond to H 30° from [$\bar{1}$2$\bar{1}$0] and H 60° from [$\bar{1}$2$\bar{1}$0]. A marked anisotropy of l is observed for different field directions and the temperature dependence clearly shows maxima and minima around 3°K. The position of the maximum is also found to be slightly different for different field and sound configurations.

For the particular sound and field configuration of fig. 1 the principal magneto-acoustic oscillations observed are those around the central ellipse in the third hole band of cadmium [8-10]. It is probable that orbits around this part of the Fermi surface are also responsible for the high field attenuation although other parts of the Fermi surface might well contribute. No thorough theoretical investigation of this problem has been carried out.

In order to further substantiate the occurrence