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Journal of Electron Spectroscopy and
Related Phenomenajournal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/elspec1 Comparison of the electronic structure of $\text{LnBaCo}_2\text{O}_{5+\delta}$ ($\text{Ln} = \text{Gd}; \text{Dy}; \text{Ln-112}$) and
2 $\text{LnBaCo}_4\text{O}_7$ ($\text{Ln} = \text{Yb}; \text{Ln-114}$) single-crystal surfaces using resonant
3 photoemission4 H.M. Rafique^a, W.R. Flavell^{a,*}, A.G. Thomas^a, K.L. Syres^a, S.N. Barilo^b, S.V. Shiryaev^b, G.L. Bychkov^b,
5 D.M.P. Holland^c, A.E.R. Malins^c, G. Miller^c, V.R. Dhanak^c6 ^a School of Physics & Astronomy and The Photon Science Institute, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, UK7 ^b The Institute of Solid State and Semiconductor Physics, Belarussian Academy of Science, 17 P. Brovka St., Minsk 220072, Belarus8 ^c STFC Daresbury Laboratory, Daresbury, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 4AD, UK

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19 Metal–insulator transition

ABSTRACT

20 A comparison of the electronic structure of $\text{LnBaCo}_2\text{O}_{5+\delta}$ ($\text{Ln} = \text{Gd}, \text{Dy}; \text{Ln-112}$) and $\text{LnBaCo}_4\text{O}_{7+\delta}$ ($\text{Ln} = \text{Yb};$
21 Ln-114) single-crystal surfaces has been made using synchrotron photoemission spectroscopy. Resonant
22 photoemission is used to identify the atomic parentage of the valence band states of Ln-114. The states
close to the Fermi energy are found to be of mixed Co 3d/O 2p character. Comparison of the photoemission
results for the two systems allows unambiguous identification of the spectral signal due to low spin
octahedral Co^{3+} in Ln-112. High resolution valence band spectra taken as a function of temperature
reveal the presence of the metal–insulator (MI) transition in Ln-112 in the 300–400 K temperature range.
The gradual changes in the spectral profile of the low energy states with temperature rule out a sudden
'high spin–low spin' switch as the mechanism of the MI transition. They are instead consistent with a
gradually shifting equilibrium between three states—low spin, intermediate spin and high spin.

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1. Introduction

23 $\text{LnBaCo}_2\text{O}_{5+\delta}$ ($\text{Ln} = \text{lanthanide element}, \text{Ln-112}$) and
24 $\text{LnBaCo}_4\text{O}_{7+\delta}$ (Ln-114) are highly correlated Co oxides that
25 show potentially useful magnetic and electronic properties. The
26 'double perovskites' of general formula $\text{LnBaCo}_2\text{O}_{5+\delta}$ ($0 < \delta < 1$)
27 show giant magnetoresistive behaviour in narrow composition
28 ranges around $\delta = 0.5$ corresponding to Co^{3+} , a range of poorly-
29 understood spin state transitions, and a temperature-dependent
30 metal–insulator (MI) transition [1–7]. Co^{3+} is present in two
31 environments, octahedral and pyramidal (with CoO_5 coordination)
32 [2]. The temperature-dependent metal–insulator transition is
33 thought to be associated with changes in the spin state of Co^{3+}
34 in the octahedral sites, analogous to the simple perovskite LaCoO_3
35 [8–10]. The latter undergoes Co spin state transitions from low
36 spin (LS, $t_{2g}^6 e_g^0$) to high spin (HS, $t_{2g}^4 e_g^2$) in the temperature
37 range 90–500 K [10,11], which are thought to proceed via an
38 intermediate spin (IS, $t_{2g}^5 e_g^1$) state. In the case of $\text{LnBaCo}_2\text{O}_{5+\delta}$,
39 however, the mechanism of the transition is a subject of debate,with several different mechanisms, including a sudden LS–HS spin
flip, having been proposed [6].The mixed-valence Kagomé antiferromagnet $\text{LnBaCo}_4\text{O}_{7+\delta}$,
unusually for a cobalt oxide, contains no Co in octahedral envi-
ronments for low values of δ —instead sheets of CoO_4 tetrahedra,
linked in the third dimension by triangular sheets of CoO_4 are
present [12–16]. In principle the oxygen content may vary in the
range $-0.5 < \delta < 1.58$ [13], and only when the stoichiometry is
forced to $\delta \geq 1$ by oxygen annealing, do Co ions begin to occupy
edge-sharing octahedral sites [17]. The transition metal ions in a
Kagomé geometry present one of the most highly frustrated two-
dimensional quantum spin systems with only nearest-neighbour
antiferromagnetic Heisenberg interactions. The system is therefore
of fundamental interest, as it presents a good candidate for a chiral-
glass-like state with ordered local chirality. It has so far not been
studied by photoemission.Here, we compare the valence band electronic structure of Ln-
112 and Ln-114 phases. The absence of octahedral Co^{3+} sites in
the latter means that no Co^{3+} LS sites are present. A comparison of
the electronic structure of the two phases thus allows us to con-
firm the assignment of a valence band feature of Ln-112 that has
previously been tentatively associated with LS Co^{3+} [1]. We probe
the atomic character of the valence band states of Ln-114 using* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44 161 306 4466; fax: +44 161 275 1001.
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resonant photoemission, and the metal–insulator transition in Ln-112.

2. Experimental

Single crystals of $\text{LnBaCo}_2\text{O}_{5+\delta}$ (Ln=Gd, Dy; Ln-112, $\delta \approx 0.5$) and $\text{LnBaCo}_4\text{O}_{7+\delta}$ (Ln=Yb; Ln-114, $\delta \approx 0.2$) of typical dimension $2 \text{ mm} \times 3 \text{ mm} \times 2 \text{ mm}$ were grown from an overstoichiometric melt [7,18,19]. Oxygen content was controlled by post-growth annealing in O_2 or N_2 and measured in typical cases using iodometric titration. The samples were characterised by X-ray and neutron diffraction, and magnetisation measurements [7,19,20].

Resonant photoemission measurements were carried out at the Synchrotron Radiation Source (SRS), STFC Daresbury Laboratory. The beamlines used were the multipole wiggler beamline MPW6.1 (PHOENIX, photon energy range $40 \text{ eV} \leq h\nu \leq 350 \text{ eV}$ [21]), with a VG CLAM4 electron energy analyser, and the McPherson 5 m normal incidence high resolution monochromator ($5 \text{ eV} \leq h\nu \leq 35 \text{ eV}$) on station 3.2, with a VSW HA100 electron energy analyser. Station 3.2 was used in high resolution mode to detect the small changes occurring near the Fermi energy as a function of temperature. The combined instrumental (monochromator + analyser) resolution in these experiments was 115 meV. Stations 6.1 and 3.2 were also used for valence band photoemission and resonance photoemission at a lower resolution of around 200 meV. All spectra are referenced to a Fermi edge spectrum recorded from the cleaned metal sample plate and, where appropriate, normalized to the I_0 (flux) monitor of the beamline. The samples were mounted on a copper and tantalum sample plate on a He-cooled manipulator using Ag-loaded epoxy resin. The lowest attainable sample temperature was 13 K; resistive heating was used to explore temperatures up to 450 K. The surfaces of the crystals to be studied were cleaned for UHV measurements by fracturing the crystals parallel to their large (001) faces [1,20] using a diamond file in vacua of 10^{-10} mbar or lower. We regard the information obtained from these surfaces as effectively angle integrated. The surfaces of lanthanide cobaltites are generally unstable to surface degradation in UHV. We have studied the surface degradation reaction previously, and have found (through dosing experiments) that it is usually associated with the formation of surface hydroxide by adsorption of water or OH^- from the residual vacuum [11]. This is characterised by a progressive growth of peaks at around 9 eV and 5 eV binding energy (BE) (arising from the 1π and 3σ molecular orbitals of OH). Here, these signals were monitored as a function of time after fracturing, and the sample was re-cleaned (recovering the initial spectrum) when significant changes were noted (typically after several hours in UHV).

3. Results and discussion

3.1. General features of the valence band spectra

Fig. 1 shows valence band EDC spectra of Ln-112 (Ln=Gd) and Ln-114 (Ln=Yb) recorded at room temperature and a photon energy of 21 eV.

The spectra are normalized to the incident photon flux. Both oxides show a valence band around 9 eV wide, with two main features at around 4–5 eV and 9 eV BE. In the case of the double perovskite cobaltite Gd-112, shoulders appear near the valence band maximum (VBM) at around 0.75 eV and 2.5 eV BE. It has been shown previously that in the case of Gd-112, the peaks A_1 , B_1 and C_1 contain contributions from O 2p and Co 3d states whereas D_1 shows mainly rare-earth 4f character [1]. We may anticipate similar origins for the valence band states in Yb-114 (discussed further in Section 3.2). Features labelled A (1 eV BE), B (5 eV BE) and C (9 eV BE) of Yb-114 lie at similar binding energy positions to A_1 , C_1 and

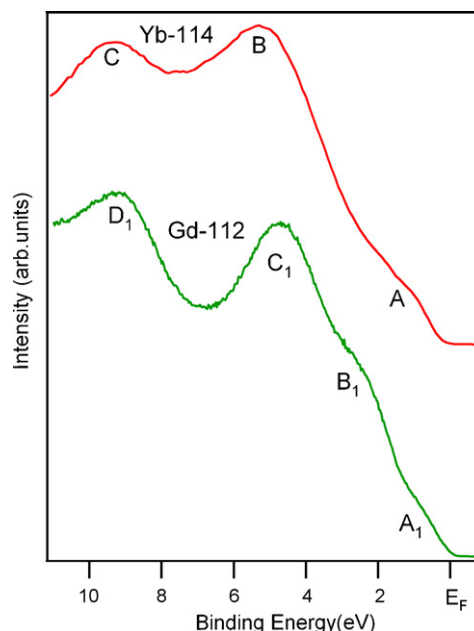


Fig. 1. Valence band spectra of Gd-112 ($\delta \approx 0.5$) and Yb-114 ($\delta \approx 0.2$) cobaltites. The spectra are recorded at room temperature and a photon energy of 21 eV.

D_1 of Gd-112 respectively. Feature B_1 of Gd-112 is missing in the valence band of Yb-114. The missing feature corresponds to one that has been previously tentatively assigned to the Co^{3+} LS state in an octahedral environment [1], on the basis of its similarity to the valence band photoemission spectrum of LaCoO_3 [11]. As no octahedral LS Co^{3+} states exist in Ln-114 for $\delta \approx 0.2$, the absence of this feature acts as useful confirming evidence of its assignment to octahedral LS Co^{3+} . The other difference lies in the density of states (DOS) close to the Fermi energy E_F . Gd-112 has a very small density of states close to E_F at room temperature, as it is close to the MI transition [1]. This increases as temperature is raised, as discussed in Section 3.3. In contrast, in Yb-114, there is no DOS at E_F ; the valence band maximum lies at approximately 0.2 eV BE. This is consistent with semiconducting behaviour for Yb-114. No DOS at E_F was observed for Yb-114 in the temperature range 120–300 K.

3.2. Resonant photoemission of Yb-114

The direct photoemission process for a rare-earth configuration $4f^n$ can be written as:

$$4d^{10}4f^n + h\nu \rightarrow 4d^{10}4f^{n-1} + e^- \quad (1)$$

Resonant photoemission is caused by a coherent superposition of this and the indirect channel opened up at resonance:

$$4d^{10}4f^n + h\nu \rightarrow \{4d^9 4f^{n+1}\}^* \rightarrow 4d^{10}4f^{n-1} + e^- \quad (2)$$

where * denotes an excited state. This corresponds to creation of an intermediate 4d hole state which decays through a radiationless super Coster-Krönig (sCK) Auger recombination to give the same final state as the direct process. The cross section enhancement is very effective at the $4d \rightarrow 4f$ giant resonance, providing a sensitive method of determining the 4f contribution to the valence band DOS.

Fig. 2 shows constant initial state (CIS) spectra for Yb-114, taken in the photon energy interval 170–215 eV, encompassing the Yb $4d \rightarrow 4f$ resonance (around 182 eV). The BE positions selected for the CIS scans are shown in the inset valence band spectrum.

Strong resonant behaviour is observed for features C and D, with weaker resonances to higher binding energy, particularly in the region of features G and H. No resonance can be detected for the

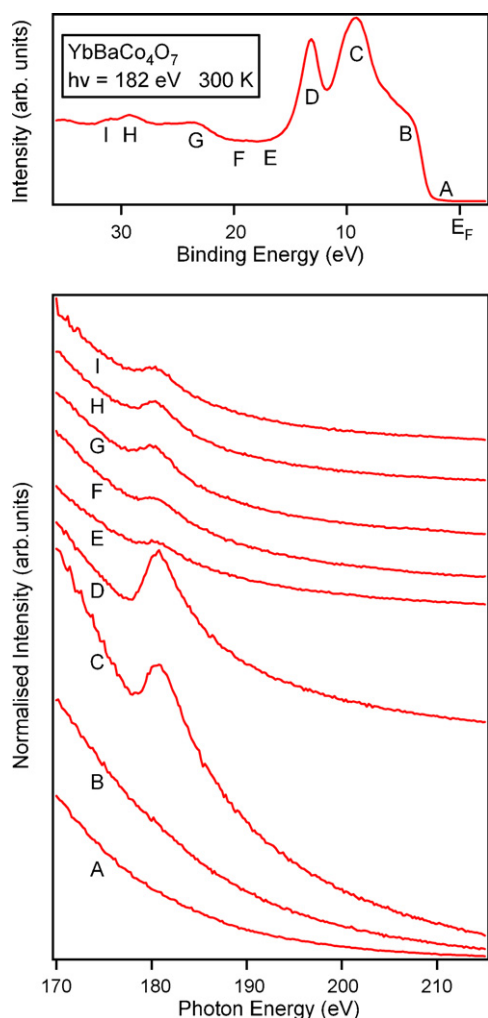


Fig. 2. CIS spectra of Yb-114 ($\delta \approx 0.2$) recorded over the photon energy range 170–215 eV (passing through the Yb 4d \rightarrow 4f threshold), obtained for selected initial states A–I in the valence band. The spectra are normalized to the incident photon flux and were recorded at 300 K. The BE positions of features A–I are labelled in the inset.

lower binding energy valence band states (A and B). We conclude that the Yb 4f contribution to the valence band states is located mainly in the range 10–13 eV BE, with a contribution from the Yb 5p states in the range 25–30 eV BE. There is no Yb 4f contribution in the vicinity of the Fermi energy. This is consistent with an oxidation state of Yb³⁺ (4f¹³) in Yb-114 [22]. Resonant photoemission of Yb²⁺ (f¹⁴) shows a large DOS close to E_F in the BE range 0–3 eV [22], which is not observed here.

Similar experiments at the Ba 4d \rightarrow 4f threshold (not shown) show the Ba states to be located in the 10–15 eV BE range, as in Ln-112 [1], while experiments at the O 2s \rightarrow 2p threshold (not shown) show that features A–C (in particular B) have O character, again similar to the behaviour found in Ln-112 [7]. We note that the observation of any enhancement at this threshold implies the transfer of some electron density from O to the cation (here Co), creating so-called ‘ligand-hole’ states typical of highly correlated oxides [11], as otherwise the O 2p states are full, and resonant excitation cannot occur.

The contribution of Co states to the valence band DOS may be probed using the Co 3p \rightarrow 3d resonance at around 62 eV, although the cross section is much lower than the ‘giant’ Ln 4d \rightarrow 4f resonances. Fig. 3 shows CIS spectra from Yb-114 recorded over the photon energy range 55–70 eV, passing through the Co 3p \rightarrow 3d

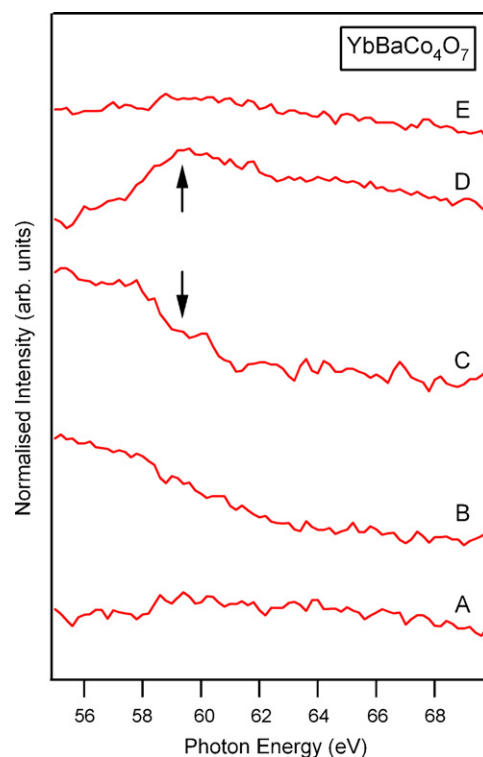


Fig. 3. CIS spectra from Yb-114 ($\delta \approx 0.2$) recorded over the photon energy range 55–70 eV (passing through the Co 3p \rightarrow 3d threshold), obtained for selected initial states A–E in the valence band. Arrows indicate the positions of the resonance and anti-resonance observed for features D and C, respectively. The spectra are normalized to the incident photon flux and were recorded at 300 K. The BE positions of features A–E are labelled in the inset to Fig. 2.

threshold. The BE positions of the points A–E are shown in Fig. 2.

The spectra were recorded at room temperature and are normalized to the incident photon flux. Features A and E reveal no clear resonance effect. As the spectral intensity at feature A is very small and the Co 3p \rightarrow 3d resonance is weak, we cannot conclude whether or not a resonance is absent in this case. A marked Co 3p \rightarrow 3d resonance for feature D can be seen in the 57–62 eV photon energy range (marked by an arrow in Fig. 3). A dip in the CIS spectrum, related to feature C (and possibly also to B), at approximately 59 eV photon energy (also marked by an arrow in Fig. 3) reveals an anti-resonance. This destructive interference, which takes place when one of the photoemission channels is suppressed, has been observed in the valence band photoemission of a number of correlated oxides, including cuprates and nickelates [23,24]. Typically, resonance of so-called ‘satellite’ features at around 12 eV BE has been associated with an unscreened photoemission final state $3d^{n-1}$, whereas the majority valence band structure arises from the screened final state $3d^n \underline{L}^1$ (where \underline{L} implies a ligand hole, *i.e.* in this case, electron transfer from an O anion) [23,24]. This is consistent with the behaviour observed here, with a resonance at around 13 eV BE, and anti-resonance in the main part of the valence band (5–10 eV BE). Thus the main part of the valence band observed in photoemission arises from screened final states, where electrons have transferred from the ligand O ion to the central Co ion, consistent with the observation of resonant enhancement at the O 2s \rightarrow 2p threshold. Overall, we may conclude that the Co 3d states contribute to the valence band spectrum in the range 5–13 eV BE, and we cannot rule out a contribution to the states closest to E_F (point A).

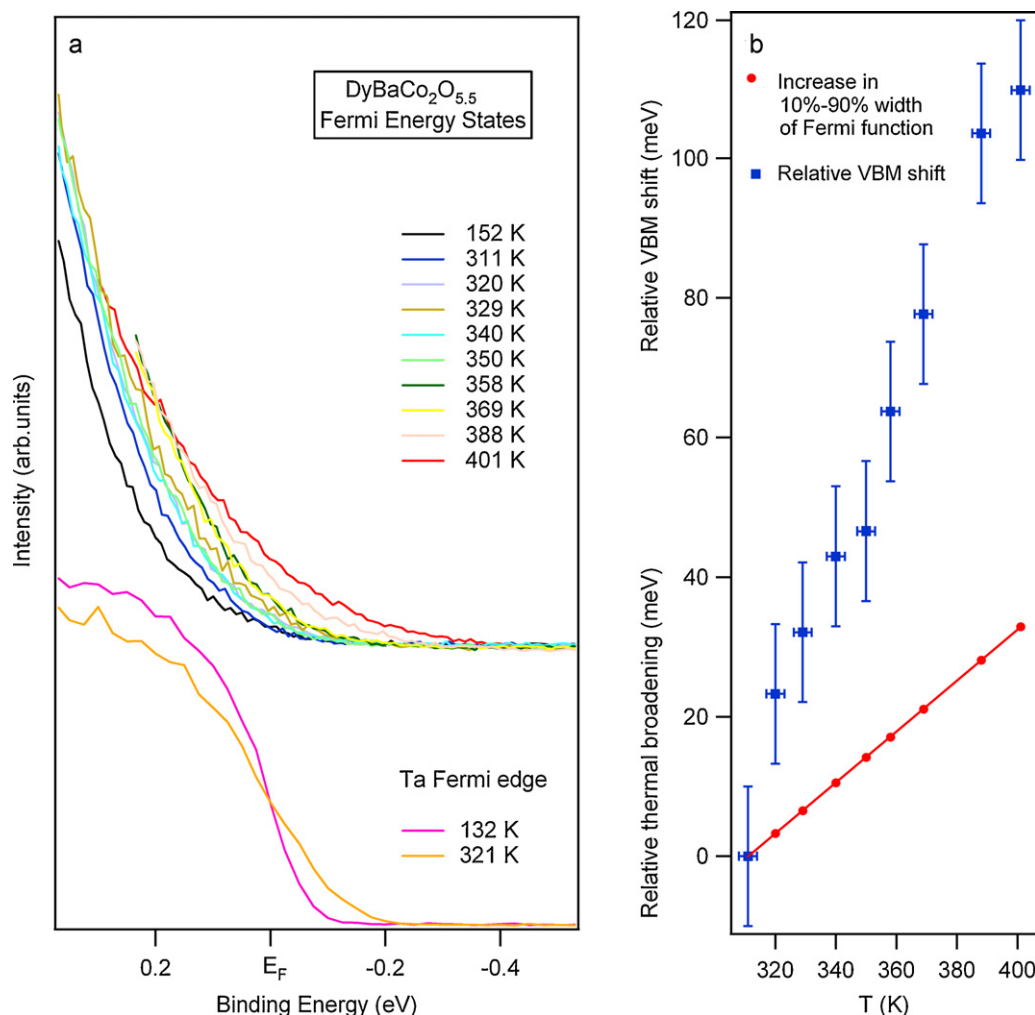


Fig. 4. (a) High-resolution photoemission spectra of the low BE states of Dy-112 ($\delta \approx 0.5$) as a function of temperature. The photon energy is 33 eV and the experimental resolution (analyser + monochromator) is fixed at 115 meV. The spectra of Dy-112 are normalized to the incident photon flux (and their intensity is expanded by a factor of approximately 50 compared with Fig. 1). For comparison, Fermi cut-off spectra of clean Ta in contact with the sample are also shown. (b) The shift of the VBM of Dy-112 ($\delta \approx 0.5$) with temperature, relative to the measured VBM position at 311 K (squares). The expected increase in the 10–90% width of a metal Fermi cut-off due to thermal broadening relative to that at 311 K (at fixed experimental resolution of 115 meV) is also shown (dots).

3.3. Variation in the DOS at E_F with temperature

As noted above, we observed no DOS at E_F for Yb-114 in the temperature range 120–300 K. In contrast, for Ln-112, we typically observe a gradual but very small enhancement in the DOS at E_F with increase in temperature, particularly in the range 300–400 K, where the MI transitions of most of the later series Ln-112 oxides are expected [2,6,7]. A typical example is shown in Fig. 4(a), for a crystal of Dy-112 which has been oxygen annealed after synthesis to achieve an oxygen content close to $\delta = 0.5$; here we expect the MI transition at around 326 K [25]. Typical spectra of a metal Fermi cut-off, recorded during the same experiment are also shown for comparison in Fig. 4(a).

The overall resolution of these spectra (including the effect of thermal broadening) rises from 128 meV (at 152 K) to 164 meV (at 311 K) and 190 meV (at 401 K). The shift of the VBM towards E_F with increasing temperature between 152 K and 311 K is around 34 meV, and is therefore attributable to thermal broadening. However, in the region of the MI transition (311–401 K), the observed shift is significantly larger and cannot be explained solely by the increase in thermal broadening. This demonstrated in Fig. 4(b) where we plot the relative shift of the VBM against temperature, and compare it with the increase in thermal broadening over the same

temperature range. Our results are consistent with those of Takubo et al. [26] for Tb-112, and our own previous measurement for Gd-112 [7]. Changes observed in the intensity of feature B with temperature (not shown) are also very gradual and slight. These observations suggest that the MI transition does not occur via a sudden switch from LS to HS as proposed by Frontera et al. [6], but is consistent with a more gradual switch in the temperature-determined equilibrium between LS, IS and HS states [10,11].

4. Conclusions

Resonant photoemission reveals strong general similarities in the atomic character of the valence band states of Ln-112 and Ln-114. In both cases, the valence band is made up primarily of Co 3d and O 2p states, with the Ln 4f character lying to higher binding energy (below around 9 eV BE). However, differences are observed in the DOS around the VBM. In particular, a feature at around 2.5 eV binding energy, previously tentatively associated with LS Co^{3+} in octahedral sites, is missing in the case of Ln-114 (which has no Co in octahedral sites for low δ). We find the VBM at around 0.2 eV BE, with no DOS at E_F in the case of Ln-114, suggesting semiconducting behaviour. In Ln-112 containing late series Ln elements, a slight and gradual increase in DOS at E_F with temperature is observed,

particularly in the region of the MI transition (typically 300–400 K) [7,26], suggesting that the MI transition does not occur via a sudden LS–HS spin flip.

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