Supplementary information

Abnormally low thermal conductivity of Co2MnO⁴ spinel induced

by cation inversion

Qi Ye,^{IIab} Shengyang Wang,^{IIb} Huilan Ma^{ab}, Wen Yin^c, Zhongbo Hu^a, and Can Li*^{ab}

- *a. University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100049, P. R. China.*
- *b. State Key Laboratory of Catalysis, Dalian Institute of Chemical Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Dalian 116023, P. R. China.*
- *c. Spallation Neutron Source Science Center, Dongguan 523803, P. R. China.*

II: equally contribution to the manuscript

Experimental methods

Preparation of spinel materials

The preparation procedures of $Co₂MnO₄$ spinel samples were taken as examples, and $CoMn₂O₄$ samples were prepared with similar methods.

Hydrothermal synthesis: Co(Ac)₂·4H₂O (0.06 mol, 99.9%, MACKLIN) and Mn(Ac)₂·4H₂O (0.03 mol, 99.9%, MACKLIN) were dissolved in DI water (100 mL), respectively. Then, $NH₃·H₂O$ was added dropwise into the Co solution until the $Co(OH)_2$ sediment was completely dissolved to form dissolved $Co(NH_3)_6^{2+}$ ions. The solution was stirred in air atmosphere until the greenish Co(II) solution was oxidized into a brownish Co(III) solution. Afterward, the Mn solution was added to the Co solution, and the mixture was stirred for 5 min (For preparation of $CoMn₂O₄$, the Co solution was added to the Mn solution in a molar ratio of 1:2). The solution was then transferred into a Teflon-lined stainless-steel autoclave and maintained at 150 °C for 10 h. After a sufficient hydrothermal reaction, the solid sample was collected by centrifugation and dried in air.

The $NiCo₂O₄$, $NiFe₂O₄$, and $ZnCo₂O₄$ samples were prepared by the same hydrothermal method with 10 h reactions at 190, 180, and 190 °C, respectively.

Sol-gel synthesis: The aqueous solutions of $Co(Ac)_{2} \cdot 4H_{2}O$ and $Mn(Ac)_{2} \cdot 4H_{2}O$ were prepared as described above, followed by addition of citric acid (90 mmol) and EDTA (60 mmol in the final dispersion) with stirring, and the mixture was stirred for 1 h. Then, $NH_3·H_2O$ was added dropwise to adjust the pH to 6–8, followed by the addition of the same amount of ethanol as that of DI water. The colloidal sol was preserved at 120 °C to form a gel. Finally, the solid mixture was calcinated at 600 °C to form the spinel samples.

Nitrate decomposition synthesis: Co(NO₃)₂·6H₂O (0.06 mol, 99.9%, MACKLIN) and $Mn(NO₃)₂·4H₂O$ (0.03 mol, 99.9%, MACKLIN) were dissolved in DI water (100 mL), respectively. Then, the Mn solution was added into the Co solution with strong stirring (For preparation of $CoMn₂O₄$, the Co solution was added to the Mn solution in a molar ratio of 1:2), followed by stirring and vaporization at 80 °C. Afterwards, the slurry obtained was calcinated at 250 °C for 2 h for the decomposition of nitrates. The resulting solid was then grounded, pressed into pellets, and calcinated at high temperature (500–900 °C) for 8 h to obtain spinel-type oxide samples.

Solid-state synthesis: Co₃O₄ and MnO solid powders were mixed in a stoichiometric ratio and then dispersed in ethanol, followed by a ball-milling for 20 h. After centrifuged and dried, the mixed powder was collected and pelleted. The pellets were calcinated at 1000 °C for 20 h to obtain the spinel samples.

Material characterizations

The powder X-ray diffraction patterns (XRD) were recorded using an X-ray diffractometer (Smartlab, Rigaku) with Cu K_{α} radiation (1.5406 Å) at room temperature under air atmosphere. The time-of-flight (TOF) powder neutron diffraction experiments were conducted on a multi-physics instrument (MPI) from China Spallation Neutron Source (CSNS). Rietveld refinements were performed on Fullprof software with the XRD and TOF ND data. The sample morphology was

revealed by a field emission scanning electron microscope (SEM, Quanta-200, FEI). The sample microstructure was probed by a transmission electron microscope (TEM, TECNAI G2 F30, FEI) together with the selected area electron diffraction (SAED). The Raman spectra were collected on a confocal Raman spectrometer (Invia, Renishaw plc.) using a 785 nm laser source under air atmosphere. All the spectra were collected under the laser power of 0.6 mW. The element ratio of the samples was measured using an inductively coupled plasma (ICP) optical emission spectrometer (ICPS-8100, SHIMADZU).

The electrical property of the samples was measured using a Hall effect analyzer (Accent HL5500 Hall System). The thermal stability of the sample was evaluated by using a thermalgravimetric analyzer (Diamond TG/DTA, PE) for thermogravimetry (TG) and differential thermal analysis (DTA) with a gradual heating in air atmosphere. An empty alumina crucible was used as the inert reference material in the DTA measurement. The thermal diffusion coefficients at different temperatures were measured by the laser flash method (LFA 467HT, Netzsch) in an argon atmosphere. The thermal conductivity was calculated by $\kappa = \alpha \times \rho \times C_p$, where α is the thermal diffusion coefficient measured by LFA, ρ is the apparent density obtained by dividing the sample mass by its volume (calculated by the measured thickness and radius of the cylindric sample), and C_p is the heat capacity estimated by the Dulong-Petit principle as $C_p = C_V = 3nR/M$, where R is the universal gas constant, n is the number of atoms in the unit cell, and *M* is the molecular mass of the unit cell. The cylindric pellets were prepared by uniaxial pressing at about 280 MPa with diameters of $\varphi = 12.7$ mm followed by sintering.

Micro structures characterizations

Figure S1. (a,**c)** TEM images and **(b**,**d)** SAED patterns (collected in the area of (a) and (c), respectively) of Co_2MnO_4 and $CoMn_2O_4$ spinel samples. The diffraction rings in SAED patterns indicate the polycrystal structure of the samples.

Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) images reveal that the sol-gel prepared samples have the morphology of nanocrystal accumulation, and the average grain size is around 0.15 μm (Figure S2). For samples prepared by solid-state method, the grain sizes are much larger, ranging from 0.5 to 5 μm, due to the higher calcination temperature.

Figure S2. SEM images for the fractured surfaces of the pressed pellets of spinel samples synthesized by sol-gel method and solid-state method with annealing temperature at 600 and 1000 °C, respectively. (a) $Co₂MnO₄$, sol-gel, 600 °C, (b) CoMn₂O₄, sol-gel, 600 °C, **(c)** Co₂MnO₄, solid-state, 1000 °C, and **(d)** CoMn₂O₄, solid-state, 1000 °C.

First principle theoretical calculations

The first principle DFT calculations were conducted with the Vienna Ab initio Simulation Package (VASP)^{1, 2}. The projector augmented wave (PAW)³ pseudopotentials were used to describe the valence electron-core ion interactions. The electron exchange correlation interactions were approximated by generalized-gradient approximation (GGA) with the Perdew–Burke–Ernzerhof (PBE)⁴ functional. A rotational invariant type GGA+U method⁵ was employed to describe the TM-3d electronic structures more precisely, and the U values were chosen to be 3.9 and 3.32 eV for Mn and Co, respectively. Spin-polarization is considered in all the calculations. The first Brillouin zone was sampled by a $6 \times 6 \times 6$ k-point mesh with the

Monkhorst–Pack scheme, and the cut-off energy for plane waves was set to be 520 eV. The lattice parameters and atomic positions of a prime cell containing 14 atoms were fully relaxed during geometry optimizations to reach a convergence with forces on atoms less than 1E-8 eV Å−1 and electronic energies less than 1E-8 eV. The harmonic phonon properties including phonon dispersion were derived from the second-order interatomic force constants calculated by density functional perturbation theory (DFPT). In DFPT calculations, $2 \times 2 \times 2$ supercells containing 112 atoms and a k-point mesh of $3 \times 3 \times 3$ were used.

The lattice thermal conductivities (LTCs) were calculated by solving the BTE⁶ with relaxation-time approximation (RTA) based on the calculated third-order interatomic force constants. The linearized phonon Boltzmann equation for LTC calculations is

$$
v_{\lambda} \cdot \nabla T \frac{\partial n_{\lambda}^o}{\partial T} = \left(\frac{\partial n_{\lambda}}{\partial t}\right)_{\text{collision}},
$$

,

in which the v_λ is the phonon group velocity of the mode $\lambda(\omega, q)$, n_λ^o and $n_\lambda = n_\lambda^0 + n_\lambda^1$ are the equilibrium and non-equilibrium phonon distribution function.^{7, 8} The right hand side is the collision term describing the phonon-phonon scattering, which is the integration of all the possible scattering mechanisms into and out of the state λ .^{9, 10} In the commonly used relaxation time approximation (RTA), the collision integration is reduced to $-n_{\lambda}^{1}/\tau_{\lambda}^{SMRT}$, from which the single mode relaxation time (SMRT) τ_{λ}^{SMRT} is derived.^{8, 11} The phonon lifetime in thermal conductivity calculation is employed as $\tau_A = \tau_A^{SMRT}$, and the mode specific phonon mean free path is then derived from the phonon lifetime and group velocity by $\Lambda_{\lambda} = v_{\lambda} \cdot \tau_{\lambda}$.¹² The above calculations were conducted using the Phonopy¹³ and Phono3py¹⁴ codes.

The LTCs of Co-Mn spinels

The calculated results of the cubic $Co₂MnO₄$ and tetragonal $CoMn₂O₄$ are shown

in Figure S3. The calculated volumetric heat capacity shows no significant difference between the two phases, and the capacity of the tetragonal phase is even slightly higher than that of the cubic phase. The phonon group velocity of the cubic phase is slightly higher than that of the tetragonal phase in the low-frequency region, indicating a better heat transport ability of acoustic phonons in $Co₂MnO₄$. Since the effects of capacity and phonon group velocity are not decisive factors, the difference in LTC should mainly originate from the difference in phonon MFP. The phonon MFP plays a decisive role in heat transport, where higher MFP signifies less phonon scattering and thus higher LTC.

Figure S3. First principle theoretical calculations on the phonon properties of the cubic Co2MnO⁴ and tetragonal CoMn2O⁴ spinels. **(a)** Phonon heat capacity and **(c)** free energy and entropy as a function of temperature; **(b)** phonon group velocity and **(d)** phonon lifetime as a function of phonon frequency.

Figure S4. Accumulated lattice thermal conductivities calculated as a function of phonon mean free path (MFP) of (a) cubic Co_2MnO_4 and (b) tetragonal $CoMn_2O_4$ spinels.

Grüneisen parameter

The Grüneisen parameter *γ* is a quantitative description of the lattice anharmonicity and has an inverse relationship with LTC. Higher *γ* often indicates stronger anharmonic phonon-phonon interaction, which reduce the phonon lifetime and thermal conductivity.15, ¹⁶

The mode Grüneisen parameter isdefined as

$$
\gamma_{\lambda} = -\frac{V}{\omega_{\lambda}} \cdot \frac{\partial \omega_{\lambda}}{\partial V}
$$

where *V* is the cell volume, $\lambda(\omega, q)$ is the specific phonon mode. With the perturbation treatment, the Grüneisen parameter can be derived as a function of the quadratic and anharmonic 3rd interatomic force constants (IFCs) as

 ^R^b iq k i j is js ijk bc ijk e M M X q X q b c , , ² 0, , ⁶ 1

where Ψ is the 3rd IFC, X is the eigen modes derived from the 2nd dynamic matrix, M is the atomic mass, τ indicates the atom position and *R* is the lattice vector.^{15, 17}

Slack's equation¹⁸ is commonly used for estimating the magnitude of LTC of nonmetallic crystals:

$$
\kappa_{\rm L} = B \frac{\overline{M} \delta \theta^3}{N^{2/3} T \gamma^2}
$$

where B is a constant, N is the number of atoms in the unit cell, M is the average atomic mass in the crystal, δ^3 is the average volume occupied by one atom, θ is the Debye temperature, and *γ* is the Grüneisen parameter. The calculated Grüneisen parameters of CoMn₂O₄ spinel have higher absolute values than those of the $Co₂MnO₄$ spinel.

Figure S5. Calculated Grüneisen parameters of (a) cubic Co₂MnO₄ and (b) tetragonal $CoMn₂O₄$ spinels.

Cation inversion calculations

Figure S6. (a) Crystal structures of the normal and inverse $Co₂MnO₄$ spinels; (b) Calculated Helmholtz free energies of normal and inverse $Co₂MnO₄$ spinels as a function of temperature; (c) Grüneisen parameters of the inverse $Co₂MnO₄$ spinel.

Among all four possible partially inversed structures, the structure *inverse-1* exhibits the lowest total energy comparing to the other three structures. The calculated phonon dispersion also indicates that the structures with higher energy are dynamically unstable. Therefore, we determined the structure *inverse-1* as the only possible partially inversed spinel phase in our calculations.

Figure S7. Structure of the normal cubic Co_2MnO_4 spinel and 4 possible partially inversed phases with the corresponding phonon dispersion.

Figure S8. (a) Crystal structure and **(b)** calculated phonon dispersion of the totally inversed Co₂MnO₄ spinel in the form of a prime cell with a space group of *Imma*.

Electronic thermal conductivities

The electrical resistivities, carrier concentrations, and Hall mobilities of $Co₂MnO₄$ and CoMn₂O₄ samples are shown in Table S1. The electronic thermal conductivities (κ_e) are estimated by Wiedemann-Franz law: $\kappa_e = L\sigma T$, where σ is the electrical conductivity, *T* is the absolute temperature, and *L* is the Lorenz number estimated by the Sommerfeld value of $L_0 = (\pi^2/3) * (k_B/e)^2 = 2.44 \times 10^{-8}$ W*Ω*K⁻² (where k_B is the Boltzmann constant and *e* is the electron charge). The electronic thermal conductivities of both the cubic and tetragonal spinel samples show negligible values compared with the measured total thermal conductivities.

Table S1. Electrical resistivities, carrier concentrations, Hall mobilities, and electronic thermal conductivities estimated by the Wiedemann-Franz law for Co2MnO⁴ and CoMn2O⁴ samples at room temperature.

Samples	Electrical resistivity $[\Omega$ cm]	Carrier concentration \lceil cm ⁻³ \rceil	Carrier mobility $[\text{cm}^2 \text{ V}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}]$	κ_e (300 K) $[\mathbf{W} \mathbf{m}$ ⁻¹ K ⁻¹]
Co_2MnO_4-1000	8.108×10^{2}	1.39×10^{16}	0.554	9.03×10^{-7}
$CoMn2O4-1000$	2.617×10^{6}	1.10×10^{13}	0.217	2.80×10^{-10}

XRD patterns and Rietveld refinement parameters

Figure S9. XRD patterns of the Co₂MnO₄ samples synthesized by four methods, as well as the PDF standard card $#23-1237$ for $Co₂MnO₄$.

Figure S10. XRD patterns and Rietveld refinements of Co₂MnO₄ samples synthesized by **(a)** solid-state method (1000 °C), **(b)** nitrate decomposition method (800 °C), and

(c) hydrothermal method (150 °C).

Table S2. Rietveld refinement parameters on the **XRD** patterns of cubic $Co₂MnO₄$ spinel samples synthesized by four methods and the tetragonal $CoMn₂O₄$ sample synthesized by sol-gel method at 600 °C.

Samples	Chi ²	$R_{\rm wp}$	$R_{\rm p}$	Lattice parameters [A]	Cation inversion degree δ [%]	O atom position $(\mathbf{X}^* \mathbf{X}^* \mathbf{X})$
$Co2MnO4-150$	1.21	1.49	1.17	8.207	33.29	0.26164
$Co2MnO4-600$	1.12	1.42	1.16	8.235	61.27	0.25797
$Co2MnO4-800$	1.22	1.47	1.17	8.257	85.46	0.25736
$Co, MnO4$ -1000	1.13	1.43	1.12	8.273	90.84	0.25555
$CoMn_2O_4-1000$	1.56	2.25	1.75	$a = b = 5.723$ $c = 9.283$	0.00	

Figure S11. TOF neutron diffraction patterns and Rietveld refinements of $Co₂MnO₄$ samples synthesized by **(a)** nitrate decomposition method (800 °C), **(b)** sol-gel method (600 °C), and **(c)** hydrothermal method (150 °C).

Table S3. Rietveld refinement parameters on the **TOF neutron diffraction** patterns of the cubic $Co₂MnO₄$ spinel samples synthesized by four methods and the tetragonal CoMn₂O₄ sample synthesized by solid-state method at 1000 °C.

Raman spectra

Figure S12. Raman spectra of Co_2MnO_4 samples synthesized by (a) nitrate decomposition method (800 °C), **(b)** sol-gel method (600 °C), and **(c)** hydrothermal method (150 °C). The measurements were conducted at room temperature under air atmosphere with a laser source of 785 nm wavelength.

Figure S13. Raman spectra of CoMn₂O₄ samples synthesized by four methods. The measurements were conducted at room temperature under air atmosphere with a laser source of 785 nm wavelength. The unchanged position of the A_{1g} peak indicates that the occupation of cations does not vary with different synthesis methods and varied annealing temperatures.

Figure S14. SEM images for the fractured surfaces of the pressed pellets of spinel samples with different annealing temperatures. (a) Co₂MnO₄, 150 °C; (b) CoMn₂O₄,

150 °C; **(c)** Co₂MnO₄, 800 °C; **(d)** CoMn₂O₄, 800 °C. The grain sizes increase with the increase of annealing temperature. At the same annealing temperature, the grain sizes of the Co_2MnO_4 and $CoMn_2O_4$ samples are almost identical with each other.

Figure S15. (a) In-situ XRD patterns of the $Co₂MnO₄-150$ sample with temperature rising. XRD patterns and Rietveld refinements of **(b)** the sample at 800 °C and **(c)** the sample cooled down to RT.

Table S4. Rietveld refinement parameters on the in-situ XRD patterns of the $Co₂MnO₄$ -150 sample, comparing to the sample $Co₂MnO₄$ -800.

Samples	$R_{\rm wp}$	$R_{\rm p}$	Chi^2	Lattice parameters [Å]	Cation inversion degree δ [%]	O atom position $(\mathbf{x}^* \mathbf{x}^* \mathbf{x})$
$Co2MnO4 - 150$, RT	1.49	1.17	1.21	8.207	33.29	0.26164
$Co2MnO4 - 150$, insitu 800°C	1.39	1.11	0.918	8.341	83.52	0.25959
$Co2MnO4$ -150, 800°C cool to RT	1.40	1.12	0.876	8.260	83.62	0.26063
$Co2MnO4$ -800, RT	1.47	1.17	1.22	8.257	85.46	0.25736

NiCo2O4, NiFe2O4, and ZnCo2O⁴ spinels

Figure S16. XRD patterns of $NiCo₂O₄$, $NiFe₂O₄$, and $ZnCo₂O₄$ spinel samples synthesized by hydrothermal method and the corresponding PDF standard cards.

Figure S17. SEM images for the fractured surfaces of the pressed pellets of $NiCo₂O₄$ spinel samples prepared at different annealing temperatures of **(a)** 190 °C, **(b)** 250 °C, **(c)** 300 °C; and NiFe₂O₄ spinels prepared at annealing temperatures of **(d)** 180 °C, **(e)** 250 °C, and **(f)** 300 °C. The changes in grain size and morphology of the spinel samples annealed at 180–300 °C are unnoticeable.

Figure S18. Raman spectra of (a) $NiCo₂O₄$, (b) $NiFe₂O₄$, and (c) $ZnCo₂O₄$ spinel samples at different annealing temperatures.

Figure S19. Calculated phonon dispersions of (a) normal and (b) inverse NiCo_2O_4 spinel, and **(c)** normal and **(d)** inverse NiFe₂O₄ spinel.

Table S5. Co-Mn element ratios and corresponding chemical formulas derived from ICP-OES.

Samples (Co/Mn ratio) Co/Mn ratio by ICP Chemical formula by ICP

Structure characterization on Co*x***Mn3-***x***O⁴**

The $Co_xMn_{3-x}O_4$ samples were prepared by sol-gel method with annealing temperature at 600 °C, and the Co/Mn ratio was tuned by changing the ratio of ingredients. The Co/Mn atomic ratios of three typical samples were measured by inductively coupled plasma (ICP) optical emission spectrometry, and the measured Co/Mn ratio is close to the corresponding ingredient proportion employed for preparation of the specific sample (Table S5). The structural evolution of the samples with changing Co/Mn ratios was characterized by XRD patterns and Raman spectra.

Figure S20. Raman spectra of Co*x*Mn3-*x*O⁴ samples.

Thermal conductivity calibration

For a better consistency between the experiment and theoretical calculations, we

adopt the relative density calibration for all the measured thermal conductivity values to exclude the influence of pores. The comprehensive effect of the porosity on the thermal conductivity can be described by Effective Medium Theory (EMT) equation 19 :

$$
v \cdot \frac{\kappa_{\rm s} - \kappa}{\kappa_{\rm s} + 2\kappa} + (1 - v) \cdot \frac{\kappa_{\rm air} - \kappa}{\kappa_{\rm air} + 2\kappa} = 0
$$

in which κ , κ_{air} and κ_s are the thermal conductivity of the porous sample, air and solid material, ν is the volume fraction of the solid, which equals to the the value of relative density. Therefore, taking the measured thermal conductivity as κ, the thermal conductivity of the solid κ_s can be derived as

$$
\kappa_{\rm s} = \kappa \cdot \frac{\left(3\nu - 2\right) \cdot \kappa_{\rm air} + 2\kappa}{2\kappa_{\rm air} + \left(3\nu - 1\right) \cdot \kappa}
$$

The theoretical density of t-CoMn₂O₄, normal c-Co₂MnO₄, and totally inversed Co_2MnO_4 spinels are 4.86, 5.57, and 5.24 g/cm³ respectively. For all the $Co₂MnO₄$ spinel samples, the theoretical density value of 5.37 g/cm³ is used, which stands for a partially inversed spinel. The thermal conductivity of air used here is 0.026 W/m*K. The revised thermal conductivity and parameters of all the measured samples are displayed below in Table S6, including the mass, relative density and thickness.

Samples Theoretical density [g/cm³] Relative density [%] Thickness [mm] Mass [g] κmeasured, ²⁵ °C [W/m*K] κcalibrated, ²⁵ °C [W/m*K] Co2MnO4-150 5.37 43.59 1.113 0.330 0.254 1.193 Co2MnO4-600 5.37 50.05 1.166 0.397 0.235 0.745 Co2MnO4-800 5.37 61.10 0.818 0.340 0.646 1.474 Co2MnO4-1000 5.37 64.74 0.815 0.359 1.020 2.107

Table S6. Theoretical and relative density, measured thermal conductivity and calibrated thermal conductivity of the spinel samples.

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