

Validity of the rigid band approximation in the study of the thermopower of narrow band gap semiconductors

Mal-Soon Lee and S. D. Mahanti

Department of Physics and Astronomy, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48824, USA

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Theoretical studies of thermoelectric properties using *ab initio* electronic structure calculations help not only to understand existing experimental data but also to predict new materials which can be potentially good thermoelectrics. However, in these studies it is inevitable to employ some approximations. It is therefore important to verify their reliability. To this end, we have investigated the validity of the rigid band approximation (RBA), commonly used in calculating the thermopower (S) in doped (sometimes heavily) narrow band gap semiconductors. We have considered two important systems: half-Heusler HfCoSb and PbTe. We calculate band structures of pure and doped systems [using quasiperiodic approximation (QPA)] by employing the density-functional method. We then use Boltzmann transport theory to calculate the thermopower using both RBA and the band structure with QPA. We find that band structures do not change significantly when isovalent impurities are present excepting in specific cases. However, charged impurities (relevant to the doping case) providing carriers can change the host band structure appreciably. We find that impurities in general remove existing degeneracies which tend to reduce the RBA value of $|S|$. The reduction is significant in both HfCoSb and PbTe when charged defects are present.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Thermoelectric (TE) devices are used for energy conversion such as power generation from waste heat or heat pumps for heating or cooling. The efficiency of thermoelectrics depends on the transport coefficients of a TE material through the dimensionless figure of merit $ZT = S^2\sigma T/\kappa$, where σ is the electrical conductivity, S is the thermopower (or Seebeck coefficient), T is temperature, and κ is the thermal conductivity. The thermal conductivity is given by the sum of contributions from the electronic carriers (κ_{el}) and the lattice (κ_l). To improve the efficiency of thermoelectrics (which depends on ZT), one can use two different approaches: increase the power factor ($PF = S^2\sigma$) which is usually achieved by engineering the electronic structure, and reduce κ by introducing phonon scatterers without affecting the electron transport.^{1,2} However, the fact that increasing σ by increasing the carrier concentration usually decreases the magnitude of S and increases κ_{el} makes the first approach rather difficult.

Metals have large σ but very small $|S|$ whereas insulators have very small σ but large $|S|$. Both of these are not good thermoelectrics. On the other hand, narrow band gap semiconductors optimize both σ and $|S|$ and are known to be the best thermoelectrics. Also, in semiconductors one can control the transport properties by carefully controlling the carrier concentration through doping. In fact, it is well known that changes in the carrier concentration and manipulation of the electronic structure in the neighborhood of the band gap and chemical potential can indeed increase the power factor of the material.³ For example, Heremans *et al.* doped Tl impurities in PbTe which is known to create a resonance state near the top of the valence band and change the host band structure.⁴ Similarly Androulakis *et al.* use K defects to produce strain induced changes in the band structure while controlling the carrier concentration through Na impurities.⁵

From a theoretical prospective, thermoelectric properties are obtained by first carrying out electronic structure

calculations using *ab initio* methods and then using these results in transport coefficient calculations. Theoretical calculations are used not only to understand the existing experimental results but also to predict potentially new high performance thermoelectric materials. In carrying out these calculations one usually makes several approximations; one of them is the RBA. In RBA, it is assumed that the band structure of the host is unchanged by doping. However, its validity needs to be carefully checked. This is the main focus of this work. For the sake of illustration we have chosen two very well studied systems: one half-Heusler (HH) compound HfCoSb, and the other PbTe.

HfCoSb crystallizes in the cubic MgAgAs-type structure which can be regarded as four interpenetrating face-centered cubic (FCC) lattices: a lattice of Hf atoms and a lattice of Sb atoms, together forming a rock-salt structure, and a lattice of Co atoms occupying the center of every other Hf₄Sb₄ cube formed by nearest neighbor Hf and Sb atoms, while the centers of the remaining Hf₄Sb₄ cubes are vacant.⁶ Half-Heusler compounds are semiconductors when there are 18 valence electrons per unit cell.⁷⁻¹² This is indeed seen in HfCoSb where calculations with local density and generalized gradient approximations (LDA/GGA) give a band gap of ~ 1.0 eV at 0 K. Compared to HfCoSb, PbTe has a simple rocksalt structure with two interpenetrating FCC lattices. The band structure of PbTe is well known.¹³ GGA calculations give a direct band gap of 0.2 eV (at 0 K) where the valence band maximum and the conduction band minimum occur at the L point of the Brillouin zone (BZ). When optimally doped, both HfCoSb and PbTe give relatively high power factors at mid-temperature range ($300 \text{ K} \leq T \leq 800 \text{ K}$). This has made them quite attractive for thermoelectric devices.¹⁴⁻¹⁹

Theoretical electronic structure calculations give the band structures $\varepsilon_{i,\mathbf{k}}$, where i is the band index and \mathbf{k} is the wave vector of the electron. Using these $\varepsilon_{i,\mathbf{k}}$, one calculates transport coefficients. Within the Boltzmann transport equation

approach, tensors of electrical conductivity ($\sigma_{\alpha\beta}$) and Seebeck coefficient ($S_{\alpha\beta}$) at zero electric field \mathbf{E} are given by

$$\sigma_{\alpha\beta}(T, \mu) = \frac{1}{\Omega} \int \sigma_{\alpha\beta}(\varepsilon) \left[-\frac{\partial f_0(T, \varepsilon, \mu)}{\partial \varepsilon} \right] d\varepsilon, \quad (1)$$

$$\nu_{\alpha\beta}(T, \mu) = \frac{1}{eT\Omega} \int \sigma_{\alpha\beta}(\varepsilon)(\varepsilon - \mu) \left[-\frac{\partial f_0(T, \varepsilon, \mu)}{\partial \varepsilon} \right] d\varepsilon, \quad (2)$$

$$S_{ij} = (\sigma^{-1})_{\alpha i} \nu_{\alpha j}, \quad (3)$$

where e is the electronic charge, α and β are tensor indices, Ω , μ , and f_0 are the volume of unit cell, chemical potential, and Fermi-Dirac distribution function, respectively. In Eq. (3), repeated index α implies summation over that index. In Eqs. (1) and (2), the transport function (TF) tensor $\sigma_{\alpha\beta}(\varepsilon)$ is defined as

$$\sigma_{\alpha\beta}(\varepsilon) = \frac{e^2}{N} \sum_{i, \mathbf{k}} \tau(i, \mathbf{k}) \cdot v_{\alpha}(i, \mathbf{k}) \cdot v_{\beta}(i, \mathbf{k}) \cdot \delta(\varepsilon - \varepsilon_{i, \mathbf{k}}), \quad (4)$$

where N is the number of \mathbf{k} points sampled in the first BZ in the \mathbf{k} summation. In the TF tensor, $v_{\alpha}(i, \mathbf{k})$ ($\alpha = x, y, z$) is the α th component of the group velocity $\mathbf{v}(i, \mathbf{k})$ of carriers and $\tau(i, \mathbf{k})$ is the relaxation time. The velocities can be obtained from the band dispersion using the relation

$$v_{\alpha}(i, \mathbf{k}) = \frac{1}{\hbar} \frac{\partial \varepsilon_{i, \mathbf{k}}}{\partial k_{\alpha}}. \quad (5)$$

As shown above, the thermopower and electrical conductivity are functions of the TF, which is energy dependent, coming from the density of state (DOS), velocity of carriers $\mathbf{v}(i, \mathbf{k})$, and relaxation time $\tau(i, \mathbf{k})$. Among these, DOS and \mathbf{v} are directly affected by the electronic structure, $\varepsilon_{i, \mathbf{k}}$.

In theoretical calculations of transport coefficients, particularly in complex systems, one commonly uses two approximations: rigid band approximation (RBA) and energy-independent relaxation time. In RBA it is assumed that doping a system does not change the host band structure, only the chemical potential changes with doping concentration and of course temperature. The relaxation time in general depends on energy (ε) and temperature (T), i.e., $\tau(\varepsilon, T)$. The T dependence of transport coefficients such as σ , S , and κ_{el} comes from, in addition to other sources, explicit T dependence of $\tau(\varepsilon, T)$ and implicitly through its energy dependence. A full energy and T dependence study of $\tau(\varepsilon, T)$ using *ab initio* band structure calculations even in simple semiconductors is not possible at the present time. However, detailed studies of $\tau(\varepsilon, T)$ using Kane model band structures and theoretical expressions developed by Ravich *et al.*^{20,21} for electron-impurity and electron-phonon couplings have been done in PbTe^{22,23} and Bi₂Te₃.²⁴ Ahmad and Mahanti²³ found that the total relaxation time in PbTe can be approximated extremely well by a scaling equation

$$\tau_{\text{tot}}(\varepsilon, T) = \frac{aT^{-p}}{b + c\varepsilon^r}, \quad (6)$$

where the parameters a , b , c , p , and r are T and ε independent but depend on carrier concentration and other fundamental constants such as electron-phonon coupling strength, etc. They found that the energy dependence, controlled by the parameter r , had very little contribution to the T dependence of the transport coefficients, the major contributions coming from

the parameter p and the T dependence of other parameters such as band gap, effective mass, etc. In particular, in the calculation of the thermopower where $\tau(\varepsilon, T)$ appears both in the numerator and denominator, the major T -dependent factor cancels out keeping only the weak r -dependent term. Since the T dependence of σ was hardly affected by r (see Fig. 10 of Ref. 23), we can assume $\tau(\varepsilon, T)$ to be energy independent in the calculation of transport coefficients at temperatures where electron-phonon scattering (from both acoustic and optical phonons) control the relaxation time. In this paper, therefore, we have assumed $\tau(\varepsilon, T) = \tau(T)$. In this way, we decouple the two major approximations and study each of them separately. Also, Chaput *et al.* have calculated S using a simple model which takes into account the k dependence of τ in doped skutterudites.²⁵ They also find a rather small difference in the S from constant τ approximation.

Recently Popescu and Woods (PW) have discussed the possibility of enhancing thermoelectric properties [power factor (PF) and ZT] of PbTe by electronic structure modifications and nanostructuring.²⁶ For the former they use a modified density of states caused by a resonant state (due to an impurity) near the chemical potential. With this modified DOS and the associated transport velocity they have calculated the PF using energy-dependent relaxation time.²² For the same carrier concentration, they indeed find an enhancement in the PF (and also ZT) depending on the position and width of the resonance peak. This indicates that RBA is not adequate for impurities (dopants) which strongly modify the host DOS. Although the PW model is empirical, this is an exciting result. To see if such an enhancement will be present in more realistic electronic structure calculations and to critically test the validity of RBA, we have investigated the effect of impurity on the electronic structure and transport properties by employing *ab initio* calculations. For this purpose we investigate the electronic structure and the thermopower of PbTe and HfCoSb with different concentrations and types of impurities.

The paper is arranged as follows. In Sec. II, we briefly describe the computational procedure. We present our results and discussion in Sec. III. A brief summary is given in Sec. IV.

II. COMPUTATIONAL DETAILS

Scalar relativistic electronic structure calculations were carried out within density-functional theory (DFT) using the projector augmented wave (PAW) methods²⁷ as implemented in VASP.²⁸ The Perdew-Burke-Ernzerhof (PBE) generalized gradient corrected exchange-correlation functionals²⁹ were used in our calculation. An energy cutoff of 400 eV was used for the plane-wave expansion, with a total energy convergence of the order of 10^{-4} eV.

We use the quasiperiodic approximation (QPA) to calculate the effect of impurity on the band structure. In this model the impurities are introduced into a periodic array of supercells of the host. If the size of the supercell is large enough, then the interaction between the impurities belonging to different supercells is negligible.

We first start our calculations with the FCC primitive unit cell having three atoms Hf, Co, and Sb in HfCoSb, and two atoms Pb and Te in PbTe. We then calculate the band structure of the pure compounds using a simple cubic (SC) unit cell

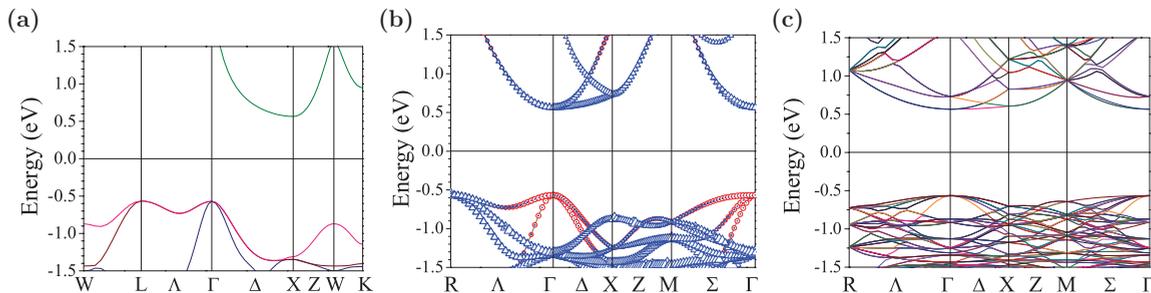


FIG. 1. (Color online) Band structure of HfCoSb with different BZ schemes: (a) FCC, (b) simple cubic (SC), and (c) $2 \times 2 \times 2$ cubic supercell (CSC). For SC, we show the contribution of Co d orbital (blue triangles) and Hf d orbital (red circle) to the bands. The size of the symbols represents the strength of the contributions. The Fermi level is set to be at zero energy.

($1 \times 1 \times 1$) having 12 atoms for HfCoSb, and a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ cubic supercell (CSC) having 96/64 atoms for HfCoSb/PbTe. We introduce impurities in the $1 \times 1 \times 1$ SC and/or $2 \times 2 \times 2$ CSC. We optimized the lattice parameters as well as the ionic positions using total energy calculations for all the cases studied. These optimized structures are then used to calculate the electronic band structure and other properties. For PbTe, we include spin-orbit interaction (SOI) since it is known to be very important.³⁰ However, SOI effect is found to be negligible in HfCoSb.

An accurate study of defect induced changes in the band structure requires large supercells. Similarly accurate calculation of transport coefficients requires a dense sampling of the \mathbf{k} space. In addition to these, if SOI interaction is important and one has to include SOI in the band structure and transport coefficient calculations, the computational requirement becomes extremely prohibitive. We have therefore calculated the thermopower for HfCoSb and PbTe without SOI. This should be adequate for HfCoSb. We will show that this is also adequate for PbTe.

The thermopower of HfCoSb with and without impurity was calculated using the band structure obtained with $31 \times 31 \times 31$ Monkhorst-Pack \mathbf{k} -point samplings³¹ for ($1 \times 1 \times 1$) SC to get more accurate velocities.^{22,25,32–35} In the case of PbTe, $21 \times 21 \times 21$ \mathbf{k} -point sampling was used for the CSC. The transport coefficients were calculated using BoltzTrap, developed by Madsen and Singh (MS).³³ Note that for accurate calculations of transport coefficients, one needs to use very large number of points in the summation over \mathbf{k} [see Eq. (4)]. MS have employed an interpolation method to obtain accurate values for $\mathbf{v}(i, \mathbf{k})$ by fitting the band structure to analytical forms using a dense \mathbf{k} mesh.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. HfCoSb

1. Band structure

As discussed earlier, HfCoSb consists of four interpenetrating FCC sublattices: Hf at $(0, 0, 0)$, Co at $(\frac{1}{4}, \frac{1}{4}, \frac{1}{4})$, Sb at $(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$, and vacancy at $(\frac{3}{4}, \frac{3}{4}, \frac{3}{4})$. The band structure in the FCC BZ along symmetry directions $W-L-\Gamma-X-Z-W-K$ near the Fermi level is shown in Fig. 1(a). It shows an indirect gap of 1.13 eV. The valence band maximum (VBM) occurs at the L point and is nearly degenerate (within ~ 4 meV) with the maximum at the Γ point. The conduction band minimum

(CBM) occurs at the X point. There are two degenerate bands at the L point and three degenerate bands at the Γ point for the VBM. However, there is no degeneracy for the CBM.

To study impurity effects in a system using the QPA, one first needs to understand how the band structure of the pure HfCoSb looks with different types of BZ such as FCC, ($1 \times 1 \times 1$) SC, and $2 \times 2 \times 2$ CSC.³⁶ We show the band structure with SC cell along high-symmetry directions $R-\Gamma-X-M-\Gamma$ in Fig. 1(b). The VBM occurs at the R point, and nearly degenerate with the one at the Γ point. The CBM occurs at the Γ point. Let us first understand the difference in the band structures between FCC and SC BZ's. The volume of SC BZ is $\frac{1}{4}$ of the FCC BZ and SC BZ maps inside the FCC BZ. The L point in the FCC BZ maps to the R point in the SC BZ. In addition, folding at the middle of $\Gamma-X$ in the FCC BZ corresponds to $\Gamma-X$ in the SC BZ. Thus the middle point of $\Gamma-X$ in the FCC BZ becomes the X point in the SC BZ. Because of this mapping, the position of the VBM changes from the L point in the FCC BZ to the R point in the SC BZ, and the CBM which is at the X point in the FCC BZ maps to the Γ point in the SC BZ. When we use CSC BZ [Fig. 1(c)], each symmetry direction between Γ and $R/X/M$ of the SC BZ is folded through the middle. Thus, R , X , and M points in the SC map to the Γ point in the CSC BZ. This results in the VBM being at the Γ point. One can see that the band structure maps and agrees very well not only for the overall shape but also for the detail energy values when the bands are folded from FCC to CSC via SC BZ's. This gives us confidence in the convergence of the $2 \times 2 \times 2$ supercell calculations.

In our previous paper³⁷ we have pointed out that the calculated transport properties in HfCoSb with RBA gives the highest power factor (PF) for a hole concentration of $\sim 4 \times 10^{21}/\text{cm}^3$ corresponding to a doping of 25%, assuming that each dopant contributes one hole. The fundamental question we address here is whether RBA is good for such a large concentration of holes, i.e., doping level. To answer this question, we use a SC cell with four atoms of each element and replace one of the elements by an impurity atom, resulting in 25% doping. We study both isovalent impurities and impurities that lead to p doping. We show the band structure of isovalent impurities in Fig. 2, where the impurities and the atom they replace are: (a) Zr, Hf (b) Ir, Co, and (c) Bi, Sb. These should be compared with Fig. 1(b), where we plot the contribution from d orbitals of Co and Hf. As seen in Fig. 1(b), VBM at the R

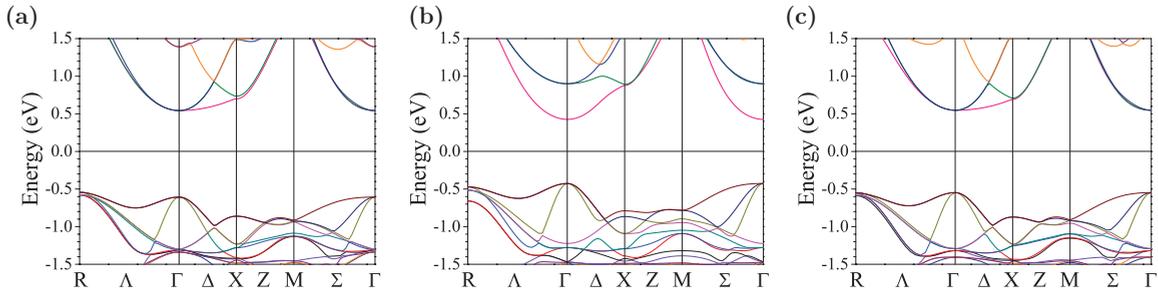


FIG. 2. (Color online) Band structure with SC BZ for (a) $\text{Hf}_{0.75}\text{Zr}_{0.25}\text{CoSb}$, (b) $\text{HfCo}_{0.75}\text{Ir}_{0.25}\text{Sb}$, (c) $\text{HfCoSb}_{0.75}\text{Bi}_{0.25}$. The Fermi level is set to be at zero energy.

point and CBM at the Γ point are predominantly Co- d , while VBM at the Γ point is Hf- d . Ir substitution changes the host band structure significantly for both VBM near the R point and CBM near the Γ point [compare Figs. 1(b) and 2(b)], while Zr or Bi substitution does not change the host band structure appreciably [compare Figs. 1(b), 2(a), and 2(c)]. Interestingly, in contrast to the VBM at the R point, the one at the Γ point is not affected by the impurities.

As regards p -doping impurities, we replace (i) Hf by Y, (ii) Co by Fe, and (iii) Sb by Ge/Sn/Pb, and the corresponding band structures are shown in Fig. 3. In contrast to the isovalent impurities, p -doping impurities distort the host band structure considerably in all cases. Similar to the isovalent impurities, the largest change is again seen for Fe substitution at the Co site, but the change in the valence bands is more than that in the conduction bands. However, when Sb is replaced by an impurity atom, the change is small compared to the substitution at the transition metal sites Hf and Co. The smallest change is seen in the case of Sn substitution. For both isovalent and p -doping impurities, the largest change occurs at the R point where the degeneracy is removed. Interestingly, conduction

bands near the Fermi level are not affected much by the impurities except when the Co site is involved, because CBM is primarily of Co- d states. Also the VBM at the Γ point is not perturbed by the impurities, similar to what we found for the isovalent impurities.

Since the above doping levels are quite large, the effect of impurities on the band structure is expected to be quite large. In experiments one deals with lower doping levels. To see what happens to the band structures for lower doping levels, we have used a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ cubic supercell which contains 32 atoms of each element of the host, and replaced 1, 4, and 8 Sb atom(s) with Sn, corresponding to 3.125, 12.5, and 25.0% of doping, respectively. To check the structural preference, we have calculated the total energy of segregation and nonsegregation cases for 12.5% doping. We find that Sn impurities prefer to segregate, and have therefore used a structure with segregated Sn atoms for 4 and 8 Sn-doping cases to calculate the band structure. As seen in Fig. 4, which should be compared with Fig. 1(c), even with 3.125% doping the valence band structure shows the removal of degeneracies at Γ and R points, and the size of splitting increases with increasing doping level.

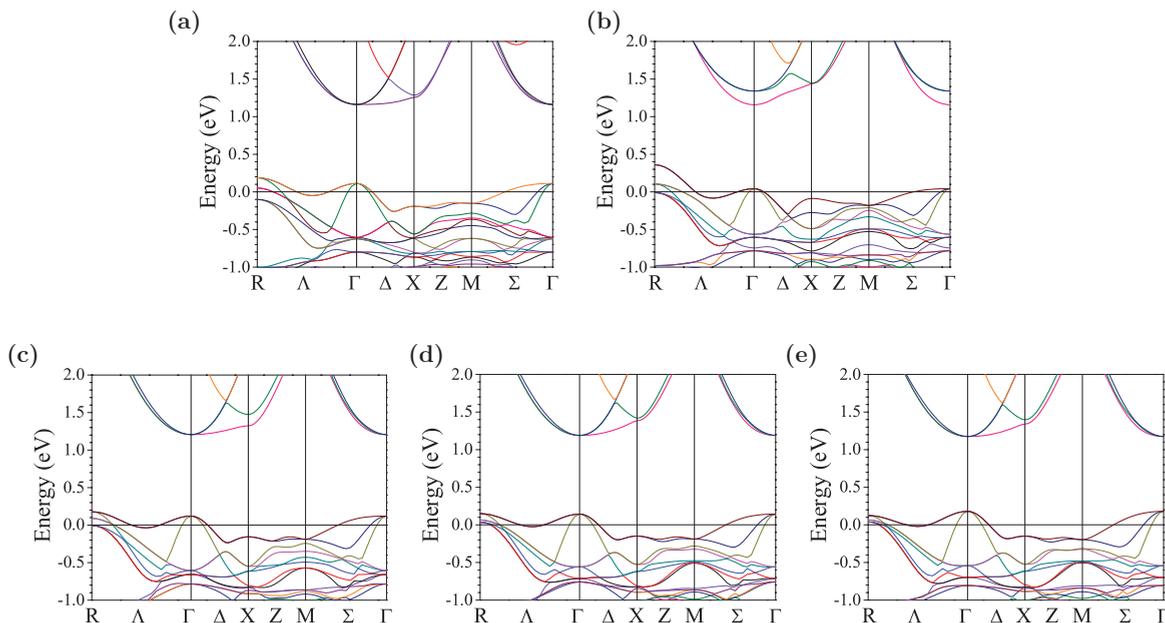


FIG. 3. (Color online) Band structure with SC BZ for (a) $\text{Hf}_{0.75}\text{Y}_{0.25}\text{CoSb}$, (b) $\text{HfCo}_{0.75}\text{Fe}_{0.25}\text{Sb}$, (c) $\text{HfCoSb}_{0.75}\text{Ge}_{0.25}$, (d) $\text{HfCoSb}_{0.75}\text{Sn}_{0.25}$, (e) $\text{HfCoSb}_{0.75}\text{Pb}_{0.25}$. The Fermi level is set to be at zero energy.

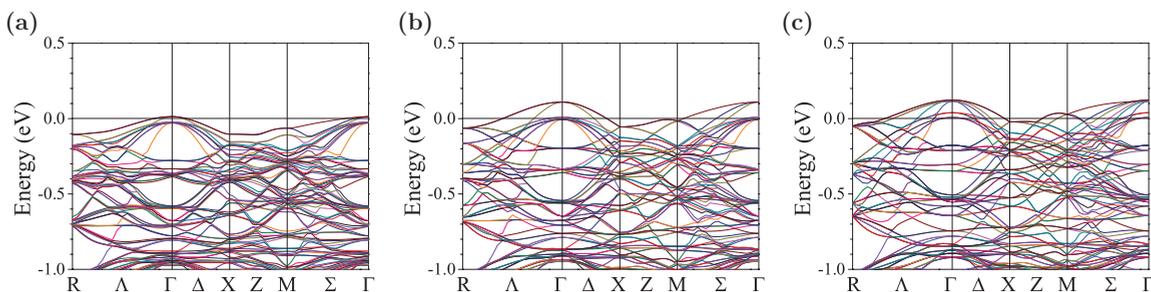


FIG. 4. (Color online) Band structure using $2 \times 2 \times 2$ CSC BZ for $\text{HfCoSb}_{1-x}\text{Sn}_x$ with (a) $x = 0.03125$, (b) $x = 0.125$, and (c) $x = 0.25$. The Fermi level is set to be at zero energy.

2. Thermopower

We have calculated the thermopower of different systems with impurities as well as pure HfCoSb as a function of temperature (Fig. 5). For pure HfCoSb and the isovalent impurity systems, we use the RBA and consider one hole per unit cell which corresponds to a 25% doping level. This is the same doping level as the nonisovalent cases. Let's first discuss the isovalent impurity cases shown in Fig. 5(a). S for $(\text{Hf,Zr})\text{CoSb}$ and $\text{HfCo}(\text{Sb,Bi})$ are very close to that for HfCoSb , consistent with small changes in the band structures of HfCoSb with impurities at the Hf and Sb sites. For $\text{Hf}(\text{Co,Ir})\text{Sb}$, S values are reduced by $\sim 10\text{--}20\%$, due to the removal of degeneracy at the R point in the band structure [Fig. 2(b)]. For the p -doped systems [Fig. 5(b)], we have calculated S using the perturbed band structures and compared with that obtained in RBA. The S values calculated using the perturbed band structures tend to be smaller than that obtained with RBA. The larger the change in the band structure, the larger the decrease in the thermopower. The smallest thermopower (about 20% reduction from the RBA value at 1000 K) is obtained in the Fe-doped system which shows the largest perturbation of the host band structure. In our previous paper,³⁷ we have discussed how contribution from different carrier pockets affects the value of S . It is also known that S depends on the degeneracy and number of symmetry points in the BZ in addition to the effective mass. Thus, relative contribution from Γ and R pockets affects S value. Because of this, the smallest S found for the Fe-doped system is due to contributions mainly from small effective mass carriers

with removed degeneracy near the topmost valence band at the R point (originally the L pockets in the FCC BZ) and a small contribution from the Γ pocket where the degeneracy is preserved. In contrast to the above, when Sb is replaced by Sn or Ge, the band structures show that nearly similar contributions to S come from both R and Γ pockets. In addition, there is no significant change in the effective mass in spite of the removal of degeneracy at the R point. We note that the reduction of the gap does not affect the thermopower and its T dependence since the gap is already large (~ 1.0 eV), and there is very little contribution from electron-hole excitations which tend to reduce the value of $|S|$. We find that the reduction in S from its RBA value is smallest for Sn and Ge among the p -doped systems. Slightly larger reduction of S in the case of Pb substitution is perhaps due to different relative contributions from the Γ and R pockets compared to Sn and Ge.

It is well known that a major drawback of half-Heusler compounds for TE applications is their high thermal conductivity. Thus to improve their TE performance, scattering centers are introduced by putting impurities. For this purpose, one usually replaces Hf by Zr in HfCoSb . Based on our calculations, replacement of Sb by Bi impurity does not reduce the thermopower. We therefore suggest that in addition to Hf/Zr mixing, Sb and Bi mixing and doping with Sn and Ge will further reduce the thermal conductivity without degrading the thermopower. Thus, we believe that the calculation of the band structure with impurity and comparison with host band structure can be used as a reliable guide for not only the

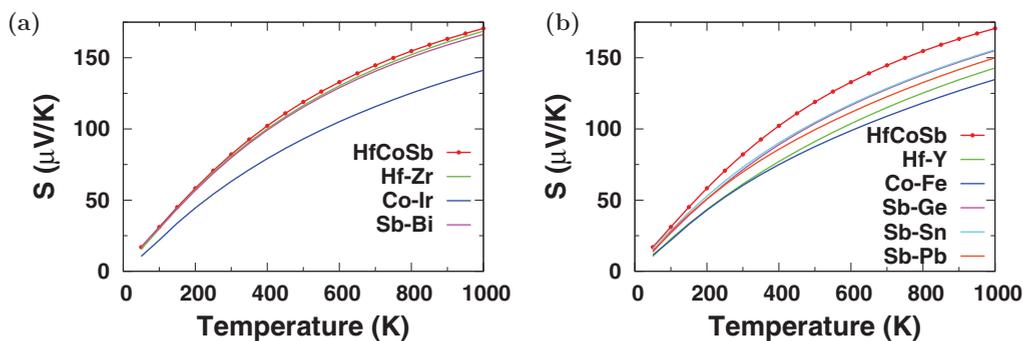


FIG. 5. (Color online) Calculated thermopower of (a) isovalent impurity, (b) p doping along with that of pure HfCoSb as a function of temperature. The thermopower of pure and isovalent-impurity HfCoSb is obtained using RBA. The corresponding carrier concentration is $4.5 \times 10^{21}/\text{cm}^3$.

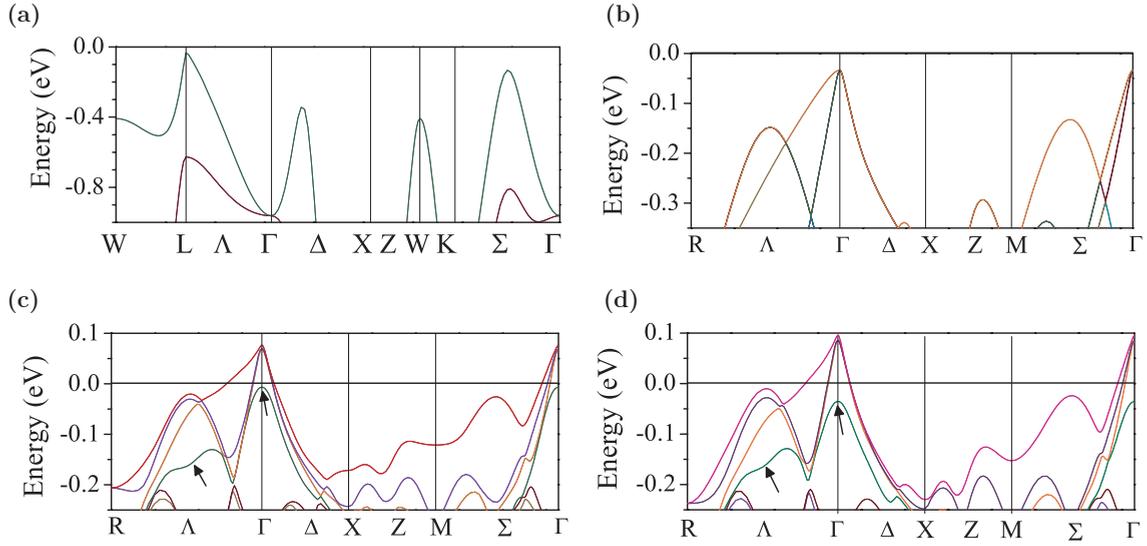


FIG. 6. (Color online) Band structure of (a) PbTe with FCC BZ, (b) PbTe with CSC BZ, (c) K-doped PbTe with CSC BZ, and (d) Na-doped PbTe with CSC BZ. The Fermi level is set to be at zero energy.

optimum doping level but also the type of impurity one should use to improve TE performance.

B. PbTe

PbTe is a well-known narrow band gap semiconductor. The calculated band structure with FCC unit cell using the optimized lattice constant ($a = 6.557 \text{ \AA}$) is shown in Fig. 6(a). It gives a direct band gap at the L point. The second highest valence band maximum occurs at a point joining Γ and K which we will loosely refer to as the Σ point, and its energy is only 0.1 eV lower compared to the energy at the L point. This is important for transport since carriers around Σ can be introduced with rather small doping levels. In order to check the validity of RBA when K/Na impurities are introduced, we have calculated the band structure of undoped PbTe using a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ supercell as shown in Fig. 6(b). We omit here the comparison between different BZ's since it has been discussed by Hoang and Mahanti (see Ref. 38) and also in Sec. III A for HfCoSb. We only point out the difference in the band structures between the FCC and CSC BZ's. In addition to the second valence band maximum at Σ seen in the band structure with the FCC BZ, the band structure of the CSC-BZ shows a third valence band maximum near the middle of the line joining Γ and R , i.e., along the Λ direction. Its energy is ~ 0.02 eV lower than the Σ point maximum. This implies that the energy landscape of PbTe is more complex compared to what is seen in the band structure shown along the symmetry directions of the FCC BZ.

Recently Androulakis *et al.* studied K- and/or Na-doped PbTe with varying doping levels up to 2.5%.⁵ They found that the thermopower becomes nearly constant for hole concentrations $n \geq 4 \times 10^{19} / \text{cm}^3$. They explained this observation with the two valence band maximum model. Motivated by their studies, we calculate the band structures of K- or Na-doped PbTe. Starting from a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ supercell of PbTe, we replace one Pb with either a K or a Na, which corresponds to 3.125%

doping. The optimized lattice constants are 13.134 \AA with K doping and 13.102 \AA with Na doping, while it is 13.114 \AA for pure PbTe. This tendency has been observed by Androulakis *et al.*, although the changes in the lattice constant seen in the experiments are smaller than ours. They suggest that an increase of the lattice constant by putting K in PbTe results in a decrease of the energy difference between the two valence band maxima occurring at L and Σ , which can in turn affect their transport properties. We will address this question in a future paper. For the present, we will confine ourselves to the issues of RBA.

The calculated band structures of K- and Na-doped PbTe are shown in Figs. 6(c) and 6(d), respectively, which agree well with earlier calculations by Hoang *et al.*³⁹ At the Γ point, which is the valence band maximum, both K and Na doping lead to a removal of the eight-fold degeneracy of pure PbTe. Removal of degeneracy is also observed at the second and third valence band maxima along the Σ ((110)) and Λ ((111)) directions. In addition, the energy of VBM at Σ becomes lower than that at Λ for Na-doped PbTe. We find that the K-doped compound shows less distortion in the band structure compared to the Na-doped one.

To see how changes in the band structure due to dopant impurities (K or Na) affect their thermopower, one has to calculate S using the calculated band structures with SOI for a very large number of \mathbf{k} points. This is too expensive computationally. We have therefore calculated S using CSC band structures in the absence of SOI. We note here that the band structure without SOI (figure is not shown) also shows the splitting of degenerate VBM along the Γ to the R direction [shown with arrows in Figs. 6(c) and 6(d)] except for the splitting of the two topmost bands along Λ , which is seen in the band structure with SOI. Furthermore the values of splitting of the degenerate bands at Γ are nearly the same (within a few meV) for both with and without SOI (0.07 eV for K doping and 0.12 eV for Na doping). We therefore believe that inclusion of SOI in the calculation of S will not change its value obtained in

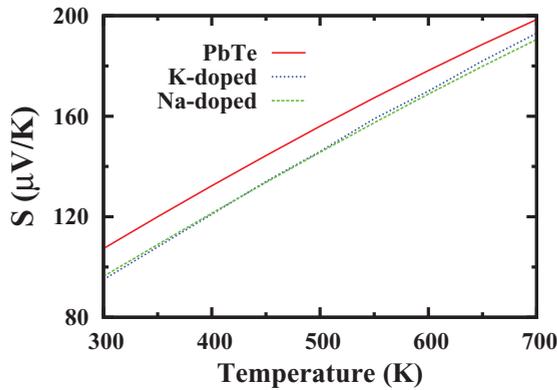


FIG. 7. (Color online) Comparison of the thermopower with and without impurity in PbTe. It is calculated without SOI using a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ supercell. The corresponding carrier concentration is $4.4 \times 10^{20}/\text{cm}^3$.

the absence of SOI significantly, particularly for the p -doped cases discussed in this paper.

The calculated S values are shown in Fig. 7, along with the RBA results. As expected, the thermopower obtained with perturbed band structure is smaller than that obtained using RBA. For example, at 300 K we find $S = 110 \mu\text{V}/\text{K}$ with RBA, compared to $95 \mu\text{V}/\text{K}$ calculated with perturbed band structure, a 12% reduction.

Recently Singh has calculated S for doped PbTe using RBA, i.e., using the band structure of pure PbTe, including SOI.⁴⁰ The thermopower is $\sim 120 \mu\text{V}/\text{K}$ at 300 K for $n \geq 4 \times 10^{19}/\text{cm}^3$. However, experimental measurements of the thermopower for K- and/or Na-doped systems give about $55 \mu\text{V}/\text{K}$ for the same concentration.⁵ Theoretical values obtained within RBA are more than twice as large. We think

that a part of this discrepancy can be ascribed to RBA. The other source of discrepancy between experiment and theory is likely to be the constant τ approximation, which we will explore in the future.

IV. SUMMARY

The present study of impurities in the HfCoSb and PbTe compounds using QPA reveals that the band structure of the host system can be affected, sometimes strongly, by impurities. The degree of perturbation depends on the type of impurity. In HH HfCoSb, the effect of isovalent impurities (Hf \rightarrow Zr, Sb \rightarrow Bi) is usually small whereas for substitution at the Co site, which contribute to VBM and CBM, regions near VBM and CBM are perturbed strongly. The perturbation scales with the impurity concentration. We find that large changes in the band structure occur for dopant impurities and the least change occurs for Sb. In PbTe, K and Na doping strongly perturb the band structure, particularly by removing the degeneracy of the VBM. The removal of degeneracy of the VBM both in HfCoSb and PbTe reduces S by $\sim 20\%$ or more from its values calculated in RBA, suggesting that RBA usually overestimates $|S|$ and the power factor, $S^2\sigma$.

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