



## The origin of the polar symmetry in huebnerite-type multiferroics

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### ABSTRACT

The magnetic structure of the multiferroic phase AF2 of huebnerite ( $\text{MnWO}_4$ ) has been re-investigated based on the polar space group  $P2$ , instead of  $P2/c$  widely accepted in literature. The site character between two independent sites for  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Mn}_a$  and  $\text{Mn}_b$ , fairly differs from each other in terms of bond valence sums. This hidden intrinsic dipole moment is the true origin of the chiral magnetic order in AF2 in the polar superspace group  $P2.1'$  ( $\alpha, 1/2, \gamma$ 0s). From structure refinements using single crystal neutron diffraction data at 10 K the ellipticity of the spin helix could be determined to be 0.92 and 0.77 at  $\text{Mn}_a$  and  $\text{Mn}_b$ , respectively. The different contributions of two chiral spin-textures to electric polarisation microscopically measurable in the  $b$  axis ( $P_b$ ) could be estimated with  $P_b$  ( $\text{Mn}_a$ ) =  $22.8 \mu\text{Cm}^{-2}$  and  $P_b$  ( $\text{Mn}_b$ ) =  $12.2 \mu\text{Cm}^{-2}$ .

### 1. Introduction

It has been accepted that the multiferroic AF2 phase of  $\text{MnWO}_4$  exhibits an incommensurably modulated helical spin ordering in the non-polar space group  $P2/c$  [1–3]. The chiral spin-waves in AF2 are understood by geometrical frustration of the Mn-O-Mn-triangle within the zigzag  $\text{MnO}_6$ -chains via inverse Dzyaloshinskii-Moriya (IDM) interaction competing with interchain isotropic exchange interactions (IEI) along the crystallographic  $c$  axis (Fig. 1). A strong spin-orbit coupling can be driven from the contra influence of IDM and IEI on the spin-spiral orientations at two symmetrically related Mn sites in  $P2/c$  [2]. This was suggested as the origin of the magnetoelectric (ME) coupling inducing electric polarisation of max.  $\sim 50 \mu\text{C}/\text{cm}^2$  at  $\sim 7.8$  K and zero external fields [2,3]. On the other hand, the so-called Rashba or/and Dresselhaus effects break inversion- or non-polar symmetries by magnetic order at polar or non-inversion atomic sites [4]. Indeed,  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  cations ( $S = 5/2$ ) in  $\text{MnWO}_4$  are located at such atomic sites,  $C_2$  in both  $P2/c$  and its direct subgroup  $P2$ , allowing strong spin-orbit coupling responsible for improper ferroelectricity. All these suggestions have been considered to explain microscopically measurable electric polarisation in the non-polar arrangement of  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  cations in the title compound.

In this context-considering the role of polar  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  sites for the ME coupling-we have investigated huebnerite [5], as well as ( $\text{In}^{3+}$ ,  $\text{Na}^+$ , vacancy)-doped  $\text{MnWO}_4$  solid-solution compounds [6–9]. Surprisingly, results from extensive neutron and X-ray diffraction including Renninger scans pointed to the polar space group  $P2$  true for all those

huebnerite-type structures [5–7,10]. There might be weak electric dipole moments in these compounds even in the paramagnetic state because of the presence of two independent polar  $C_2$  sites for  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  (denoted as  $\text{Mn}_a$  and  $\text{Mn}_b$ ). Indeed, this non-inversion property in  $\text{MnWO}_4$  and  $\text{In}^{3+}$ -doped  $\text{MnWO}_4$  crystals could be proven by a weak effect of second-harmonic generation [10]. Furthermore, we have found a strong agreement of calculated and observed inelastic neutron scattering spectra of magnon energy from two distinctly spin-canting textures in its commensurately modulated low-temperature phase AF1 using the polar superspace magnetic symmetry  $P2.1'$  ( $\alpha, 0, \gamma$ 0s) [11]. In the current report, we present the AF2 structure of huebnerite at 10 K based on the polar space group  $P2$ .

### 2. Experimental

Details of sampling, optical, and chemical information about the investigated huebnerite crystals from Pasto Bueno are found in our previous report [5]. A chemically pure huebnerite crystal was used to collect neutron single crystal diffraction (NSCD) data at 10 K at the instrument RESI in the neutron source facility Heinz Maier-Leibnitz (FRM-II at Garching, Germany) [12]. Applying a wavelength of 1.0481 Å (Cu(422) monochromator) a set of 2D raw data was detected on a MAR345 image plate and processed using the program package EVAL [13]. Relevant experimental parameters of NSCD and the crystal lattice are summarized in Table 1. Using the starting model given in Ref. [5] the nuclear structure was refined by least-squares calculation with the program package

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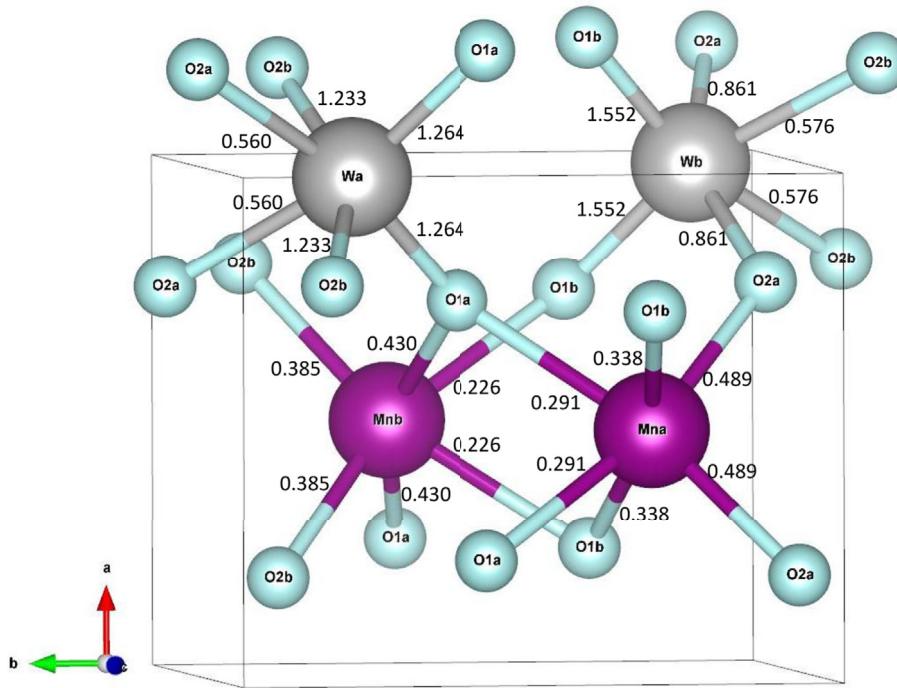


Fig. 1. Atomic sites in the unit cell of huebnerite ( $\text{MnWO}_4$ ) at 10 K in the polar space group  $P2$ . Individual bond valence to oxygens are given to the independent sites for  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  and  $\text{W}^{6+}$ .

JANA2006 [14]. The structure of AF2 was analysed according the magnetic superstructure space group formalism [15]. The representation of the magnetic structure has been made with the programme VESTA [16].

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. The atomic structure of AF2

In accord with previous observation in Ref. [5], weak  $h0l$  reflections with  $l = \text{odd}$  were detected in NSCD at 10 K, as well. They are forbidden to the c-gliding plane perpendicular to the  $b$  axis in  $P2/c$ . Therefore, the polar space group  $P2$  as the highest direct monoclinic subgroup of  $P2/c$  could be selected out to refine the atomic model of AF2. The refined parameters of the nuclear structure in AF2 are given in Table 2. Note that each pair of atoms which are named identically except for the subscripts, e.g.  $\text{Mn}_a$  and  $\text{Mn}_b$ , are symmetrically related to each other in  $P2/c$  but independent in  $P2$ . The unique site property of  $\text{Mn}_a$  distinguishable from  $\text{Mn}_b$  can be estimated by relative shifts of this atomic pair in  $P2$  from their average position in  $P2/c$ , which is extremely small, as shown in Table 3. Hence, intrinsic dipole moments from such a hidden polar atomic arrangement might be too weak to be detected microscopically.

However, a strong indication of symmetry lowering from  $P2/c$  down to  $P2$  is revealed when considering bond valence sum values (BVS) [17]. For instances, BVS of  $\text{Mn}_a\text{O}_6$  ( $= 2.236$ ) is larger than BVS of  $\text{Mn}_b\text{O}_6$  ( $= 2.162$ ). As given in Table 4, the major difference of  $\text{Mn}_a$  from  $\text{Mn}_b$  is due to their bonding distances to the same oxygen site  $\text{O}1_a$ , i.e.  $d(\text{Mn}_a\text{O}1_a) = 2.247(6)$  Å  $>$   $d(\text{Mn}_b\text{O}1_a) = 2.102(6)$  Å. For the case between  $\text{W}_a\text{O}_6$  (BVS = 6.114) and  $\text{W}_b\text{O}_6$  (BVS = 5.978),  $d(\text{W}_a\text{O}1_a) = 1.831(5)$  Å  $>$   $d(\text{W}_b\text{O}1_a) = 1.754(5)$  Å. In Fig. 1, the degree of unique site character at four octahedral sites for  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  and  $\text{W}^{6+}$  is demonstrated in terms of BVS. Similarly, we have observed a strong variation in occupancy parameters at two independent  $\text{Mn}_a$  and  $\text{Mn}_b$  sites in ( $\text{In}^{3+}$ ,  $\text{Na}^+$ )-doped  $\text{MnWO}_4$  compounds [6]. In conclusion, magnetic  $\text{Mn}^{2+}$  cations occupy two different polar atomic sites within the polar nuclear structure of AF2. This is a relevant symmetric reason for the presence of two distinct chiral spin-textures, as described in the following section.

Table 1

Experimental and refinement parameters of neutron single crystal diffraction data of huebnerite at 10 K.

| Compound   | huebnerite ( $\text{MnWO}_4$ )   |
|--|--|
| Crystal size   | $3.3 \times 6.5 \times 17.7$ mm <sup>3</sup>   |
| Calculated density                                     | 7.3167 g/cm <sup>3</sup>   |
| Lattice parameters                                     | $a = 4.808(1)$ Å<br>$b = 5.742(1)$ Å<br>$c = 4.979(1)$ Å<br>$\beta = 91.03(1)$ °<br>$V = 137.44(5)$ Å <sup>3</sup> |
| Space group of the atomistic structure                 | $P2$   |
| Magnetic superspace group                              | $P21'(\alpha 1/2 \gamma 0s)$   |
| Propagation vector $\mathbf{k}$                        | ( $-0.2152, 0.5, 0.4558$ )   |
| Wavelength of neutron radiation                        | 1.0481 Å   |
| Monochromator  | Cu(422)  |
| Measuring temperature                                  | 10 K   |
| Absorption coefficient                                 | 0.027 $\mu\text{m}^{-1}$   |
| Maximal $\sin(\theta)/\lambda$ observed                | 0.626  |
| $2\theta_{\min}, 2\theta_{\max}$                       | 14.40°, 41.06°   |
| $h k l m$ range  | $-1 < k < 6;$<br>$-7 < k < 7;$<br>$-2 < l < 3;$<br>$-1 < m < 1$  |
| Condition for unobserved reflections                   | $I > 3 \sigma(I)$  |
| R for merging  | 4.10   |
| Number of total and magnetic reflections after merging | 628/103  |
| R for against F for main reflection                    | 5.60   |
| wR for against $F^2$ for main reflections              | 10.83  |
| R for against F for magnetic reflections               | 14.04  |
| wR for against $F^2$ for magnetic reflections          | 20.01  |
| Goodness-of-Fit (S) <sup>a</sup>                       | 3.47   |
| Shift/ $\sigma_{\max}$ Shift/ $\sigma_{\min}$          | 0.0500; 0.0143   |

$$R = [\sum |F_o| - |F_c|] / [\sum |F_o|].$$

$$wR = [\sum w(F_o^2 - F_c^2)^2 / \sum wF_c^2]^{1/2}.$$

$$\text{Weighting } w = 1 / (\sigma^2(I) + 0.0004 * I^2).$$

$$S = [\sum w(F_o^2 - F_c^2)^2 / (m - n)]^{1/2}, \text{ where } F_o \text{ and } F_c \text{ are observed and calculated structure factors, respectively, } m \text{ is number of reflections, and } n \text{ is number of parameters.}$$

<sup>a</sup> There were no correlations larger than 0.9 in the last refinement cycle.

#### 3.2. The magnetic structure at 10 K

The propagation vector  $\mathbf{k}$  ( $-0.2152, 1/2, 0.4558$ ) determined at 10 K

Table 2

Refined atomic parameters of the atomistic structure of  $\text{MnWO}_4$  at 10 K in the polar space group  $P2$  with isotropic atomic displace parameter  $U_{\text{iso}}$  [ $\text{\AA}^2$ ].

| Atomic Site   | Atom type | Coordinate |                     |             | Occupancy | $U_{\text{iso}}$ [ $\text{\AA}^2$ ] |
|---------------|-----------|------------|---------------------|-------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|
|               |           | x          | y                   | z           |           |                                     |
| $\text{Mn}_a$ | Mn        | 0.5        | 0.3194(10)          | 0           | 0.5       | 0.005(2)                            |
| $\text{Mn}_b$ | Mn        | 0.5        | 0.6871(10)          | 0.5         | 0.5       | 0.005(2)                            |
| $\text{W}_a$  | W         | 0          | 0.8194 <sup>a</sup> | 0           | 0.5       | 0.007(2)                            |
| $\text{W}_b$  | W         | 0          | 0.1777(8)           | 0.5         | 0.5       | 0.001(2)                            |
| $\text{O1}_a$ | O         | –0.2520(7) | –0.3798(6)          | –0.1566(16) | 1         | 0.008(1)                            |
| $\text{O1}_b$ | O         | –0.2522(5) | –0.6306(5)          | 0.3692(17)  | 1         | 0.003(1)                            |
| $\text{O2}_a$ | O         | –0.2207(6) | 0.1021(7)           | –0.1815(19) | 1         | 0.005(1)                            |
| $\text{O2}_b$ | O         | –0.2009(6) | –0.1025(7)          | 0.2978(19)  | 1         | 0.004(1)                            |

<sup>a</sup> The coordinate y of the atomic site  $\text{W}_a$  was fixed in the entire refinement process to avoid the origin shift along the polar axis.

Table 3

Relative atomic shifts between the respective atom pairs in  $P2$  which would be equivalent to each other in  $P2/c$  (neutron single crystal data, 10 K).

| Atom site pair            | $\Delta x$ | $\Delta y$ | $\Delta z$ |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| $\text{Mn}_a\text{-Mn}_b$ | 0          | 0.0065     | 0          |
| $\text{W}_a\text{-W}_b$   | 0          | 0.0029     | 0          |
| $\text{O1}_a\text{-O1}_b$ | 0.0002     | 0.0104     | 0.0258     |
| $\text{O2}_a\text{-O2}_b$ | 0.0198     | 0.0004     | 0.0207     |

Table 4

Interatomic distance ( $R$ ) between atomic site 1 and 2, single bond valence, and bond valence sum (BVS) in the atomic structure of huebnerite in  $P2$  at 100 K.

| Site 1        | Site 2        | $R$ ( $\text{\AA}$ ) | Bonding valence <sup>a</sup> | Site 1        | Site 2        | $R$ ( $\text{\AA}$ ) | Bonding valence <sup>a</sup> |
|---------------|---------------|----------------------|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| $\text{Mn}_a$ | $\text{O1}_a$ | 2.247<br>(6)         | 0.291                        | $\text{Mn}_b$ | $\text{O1}_a$ | 2.102(7)             | 0.430                        |
|               | $\text{O1}_a$ | 2.247<br>(6)         | 0.291                        |               | $\text{O1}_a$ | 2.102(7)             | 0.430                        |
|               | $\text{O1}_b$ | 2.191<br>(7)         | 0.338                        |               | $\text{O1}_b$ | 2.280(6)             | 0.226                        |
|               | $\text{O1}_b$ | 2.191<br>(7)         | 0.338                        |               | $\text{O1}_b$ | 2.280(6)             | 0.226                        |
|               | $\text{O2}_a$ | 2.054<br>(6)         | 0.489                        |               | $\text{O2}_b$ | 2.143(6)             | 0.385                        |
|               | $\text{O2}_a$ | 2.054<br>(6)         | 0.489                        |               | $\text{O2}_b$ | 2.143(6)             | 0.385                        |
| BVS           |               |                      |                              | BVS           |               |                      |                              |
| $\text{W}_a$  | $\text{O1}_a$ | 1.831(5)             | 1.264                        | $\text{W}_b$  | $\text{O1}_b$ | 1.754(5)             | 1.552                        |
|               | $\text{O1}_a$ | 1.831(5)             | 1.264                        |               | $\text{O1}_b$ | 1.754(5)             | 1.552                        |
|               | $\text{O2}_a$ | 2.132(5)             | 0.560                        |               | $\text{O2}_a$ | 1.972(8)             | 0.861                        |
|               | $\text{O2}_a$ | 2.132(5)             | 0.560                        |               | $\text{O2}_a$ | 1.972(8)             | 0.861                        |
|               | $\text{O2}_b$ | 1.840(8)             | 1.233                        |               | $\text{O2}_b$ | 2.121(7)             | 0.576                        |
|               | $\text{O2}_b$ | 1.840(8)             | 1.233                        |               | $\text{O2}_b$ | 2.121(7)             | 0.576                        |
| BVS           |               |                      |                              | BVS           |               |                      |                              |
| $\text{O1}_a$ | $\text{Mn}_a$ | 2.247<br>(6)         | 0.291                        | $\text{O1}_b$ | $\text{Mn}_a$ | 2.191<br>(7)         | 0.338                        |
|               | $\text{Mn}_b$ | 2.102(7)             | 0.430                        |               | $\text{Mn}_b$ | 2.280(6)             | 0.226                        |
|               | $\text{W}_a$  | 1.831(5)             | 1.264                        |               | $\text{W}_b$  | 1.754(5)             | 1.552                        |
|               | BVS           |                      |                              |               | BVS           |                      |                              |
| $\text{O2}_a$ | $\text{Mn}_a$ | 2.054<br>(6)         | 0.489                        | $\text{O2}_b$ | $\text{Mn}_b$ | 2.143(6)             | 0.385                        |
|               | $\text{W}_a$  | 2.132(5)             | 0.560                        |               | $\text{W}_a$  | 1.840(8)             | 1.233                        |
|               | $\text{W}_b$  | 1.972(8)             | 0.861                        |               | $\text{W}_b$  | 2.121(7)             | 0.576                        |
|               | BVS           |                      |                              |               | BVS           |                      |                              |

$$\text{BVS} = \exp\{(R_0 - R)/b\}.$$

$$\text{Mn} + 2 \quad R_0 = 1.790; b = 0.370.$$

$$\text{W} + 6 \quad R_0 = 1.917; b = 0.370.$$

<sup>a</sup> Using the cation type-coordination number-charge-specific parameters  $R_0$  and  $b$  given in Ref. [17], as follows.is comparable to that given in literature [1,3,18,19]. The (3+1)-dim. magnetic superspace group  $P2.1'(\alpha 1/2, \gamma)0s$  is the only subgroup of the paramagnetic group  $P2.1'$  compatible with the  $\mathbf{k}$  vector [15], allowing electric polarisation magnetically induced in the crystallographic  $\mathbf{b}$ 

direction, i.e.  $P_b$  [3,18–21]. Representative operations of  $P2.1'(\alpha, 1/2, \gamma)0s$  is explicated in Table 5 with the identity (1) and the two-fold rotation in  $y$  ( $2y$ ) combined with time-inversion ( $\text{t}$ ). A fourth element of  $1/2$  in Seitz-type notations represents internal translation along the modulation component  $x_4$  for the time-inversion in  $1'$  and  $2y'$  [1]. The one-line magnetic superspace group symbol  $s$  stands for a translation of  $1/2$  in  $x_4$  by operating  $1'$  [15]. The magnetic moment is described by  $M_j(x_4) = M_{j,\text{cos}}(\cos 2\pi \cdot n \cdot x_4) + M_{j,\text{sin}}(\sin 2\pi \cdot n \cdot x_4)$ , where  $x_4 = \mathbf{k} \cdot (\mathbf{r}_j + \mathbf{t})$  with the lattice translation  $\mathbf{t}$  and the position vector  $\mathbf{r}_j$  of the atom  $j$  in the 0th unit cell. It is important to emphasize that the magnitude of the magnetic moment at  $\text{Mn}_a$  is not necessary to be equal to that at  $\text{Mn}_b$ , i.e.  $M(\text{Mn}_a) \neq M(\text{Mn}_b)$ , because of their independence in this polar magnetic superspace group. Their maximal magnitudes are  $M_{\text{max}}(\text{Mn}_a) = 4.0(5) \mu_B$  and  $M_{\text{max}}(\text{Mn}_b) = 3.2(5) \mu_B$  (Table 6). However, the spin ellipses at  $\text{Mn}_a$  and  $\text{Mn}_b$  exhibit the same direction of chirality, as illustrated in Fig. 2.

In order to compare this new AF2 model to the previous model refined using the space group  $P2/c$  in the X-centering setting  $X2.1'(\alpha, 0, \gamma)0s$  [1], a double unit cell along  $\mathbf{b}$  was chosen with the new propagation vector  $\mathbf{k}'$  ( $-0.2152, 0, 0.4558$ ), having four Mn sites with constraints:  $M(\text{Mn1}_a) = M(\text{Mn2}_a)$ ;  $M(\text{Mn1}_b) = M(\text{Mn2}_b)$ . The refined coefficients of magnetic moments in the X-centering setting are presented in Tables 6 and 7. The magnitudes of helical spin-waves at  $\text{Mn}_a$  and  $\text{Mn}_b$  differ from each other, which is independent on their atomic structure in  $P2$  [this study] and  $P2/c$  [1] due to the common polar magnetic space group. Nonetheless, the canting angles ( $\alpha$ ) of magnetic moments against the  $\mathbf{a}$  axis in the ( $\mathbf{a}$ - $\mathbf{c}$ ) plane differ in both models, as shown in Table 7. A significant distinction between the magnetization at  $\text{Mn}_a$  and  $\text{Mn}_b$  in the easy axis ( $M_{\text{easy}}$ ) and in the  $\mathbf{b}$  axis ( $M_b$ ) is found in the  $P2$  model. Consequently, their ellipticity ( $\eta$ ) values, defined as the ratio  $M_b/M_{\text{easy}}$  [19–21], are very differ in the  $P2$  model, i.e.  $\eta(\text{Mn}_a) = 0.92(6)$ ;  $\eta(\text{Mn}_b) = 0.77(4)$ . Their average value  $\eta = 0.84$  is nearly equal to the ellipticity  $\eta(\text{Mn}_a) = 0.80$  and  $\eta(\text{Mn}_b) = 83$  evaluated with the  $P2/c$  model [1]. It turns out that the ellipticity as the order parameter for ferroelectricity magnetically induced [3,19–23] shows subtle difference in both models.

The bulk electric polarisation  $P_b \sim 34.5 \mu\text{Cm}^{-2}$  in huebnerite at 10 K could be estimated according to  $P_b(T) = (21.8 \mu\text{Cm}^{-2}\text{K}^{-1/2})(T_2 - T)^{1/2}$  [23], where  $T_2$  is the magnetic phase transition from AF3 to AF2 ( $= 12.5 \text{ K}$  [8]) and  $T = 10 \text{ K}$ . For the ratio  $P_b(\text{Mn}_a)/P_b(\text{Mn}_b)$  is directly proportional  $M_{\text{easy}} M_b \sin \alpha(\text{Mn}_a)/M_{\text{easy}} M_b \sin \alpha(\text{Mn}_b) = 2.19$ , we could estimate  $P_b(\text{Mn}_a) = 22.8 \mu\text{Cm}^{-2}$  and  $P_b(\text{Mn}_b) = 12.2 \mu\text{Cm}^{-2}$  with our model for AF2. In following the microscopic model suggested by Katsura

Table 5

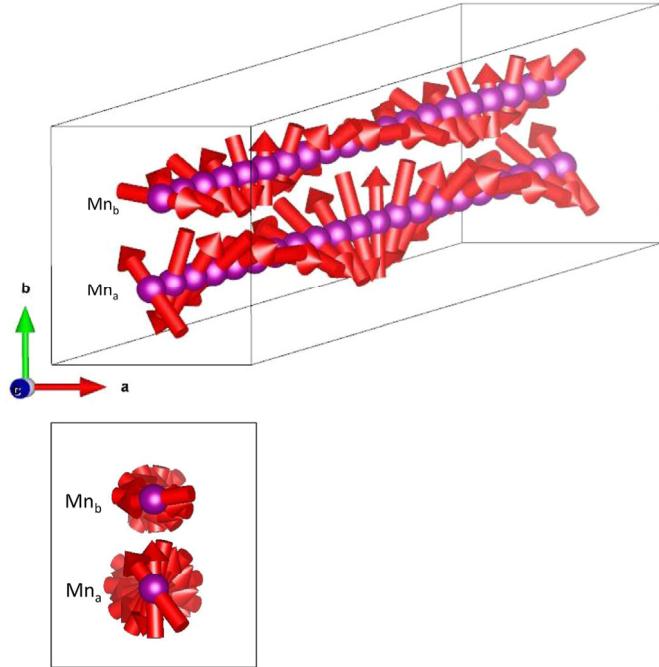
Representative operations of the magnetic superspace group  $P2.1'(\alpha, 1/2, \gamma)0s$ . Generalized Seitz notation and symmetry cards used in Jana2006 are listed with the labels m (no time inversion) and -m (time inversion involved in the operation).

| $P2.1'(\alpha, 1/2, \gamma)0s$ | $x_1$  | $x_2$ | $x_3$  | $x_4$                 | m  |
|--------------------------------|--------|-------|--------|-----------------------|----|
| $\{1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \}$       |        |       |        |                       |    |
| $\{2y \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1/2 \}$    | $-x_1$ | $x_2$ | $-x_3$ | $x_2 \cdot x_4$       | m  |
| $\{1' \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1/2 \}$    | $x_1$  | $x_2$ | $x_3$  | $x_4 + 1/2$           | -m |
| $\{2y' \ 0 \ 0 \ 0 \ 1/2 \}$   | $-x_1$ | $x_2$ | $-x_3$ | $x_2 \cdot x_4 + 1/2$ | -m |

Table 6

Coefficients describing the magnetic moment of the AF2 phase of huebnerite.  $M_{\min}$  and  $M_{\max}$  given in Bohr magnetons [ $\mu_B$ ] are the minimal and maximal magnetic moment magnitudes, respectively, within  $100 \times 100 \times 100$  unit cells for both primitive and X-centering settings.

|   | $M_{\cos}^x$ | $M_{\cos}^y$ | $M_{\cos}^z$ | $M_{\sin}^x$ | $M_{\sin}^y$ | $M_{\sin}^z$ | $M_{\min}$ | $M_{\max}$ |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| <b>P2.1' (<math>\alpha, 1/2, \gamma</math>)0s</b> |              |              |              |              |              |              |            |            |
| $M_{\text{Na}}$                                   | −2.8(4)      |              | 1.9(1)       | −1.9(1)      | 1.8(2)       | 3.0(2)       | 1.2(2)     | 3.5(3)     |
| $M_{\text{Nb}}$                                   | 2.3(4)       |              | 1.3(1)       | 1.3(3)       | 1.5(3)       | −2.0(2)      | 0.9(2)     | 2.4(6)     |
| <b>X2.1' (<math>\alpha, 0, \gamma</math>)0s</b>   |              |              |              |              |              |              |            |            |
| $M_{\text{Na}}$                                   | 0            |              | 3.6(2)       | 0            | 3.3(4)       | 0            | 2.2(2)     | 3.5(3)     |
| $M_{\text{Nb}}$                                   | 0            |              | −2.4(2)      | 0            | −2.8(4)      | 0            | −1.6(3)    | 2.4(6)     |
|   |              |              |              |              |              |              |            |            |



**Fig. 2.** Two different helical spin-waves in the multiferroic phase AF2 of huebnerite at 10 K in the polar superspace group **P2.1' ( $\alpha, 1/2, \gamma$ )0s** based on the polar space group **P2**. These two spin-textures are clearly seen on the projection parallel to the  $c$  axis at the bottom.

Table 7

Magnetic moment parameters in huebnerite at 10 K, obtained from structure refinements in **P2** using neutron single crystal data. A comparison is made with those values from a previous model refined using the non-polar space group **P2/c** [1].

|   | $\alpha$ [°] | $M_{\text{easy}}$ | $M_b$   | Ellipticity $\eta$ |
|---|--------------|-------------------|---------|--------------------|
| <b>P2</b>                                       |              |                   |         |                    |
| <b>X2.1' (<math>\alpha, 0, \gamma</math>)0s</b> |              |                   |         |                    |
| $M_{\text{Na}}$                                 | 34.5(3)      | 4.0(5)            | 3.6(2)  | 0.92(6)            |
| $M_{\text{Nb}}$                                 | 29.3(3)      | 3.2(5)            | 2.4(2)  | 0.77(4)            |
| <b>P2/c</b>                                     |              |                   |         |                    |
| <b>X2.1' (<math>\alpha, 0, \gamma</math>)0s</b> |              |                   |         |                    |
| $M_{\text{Na}}$                                 | 37(2)        | 4.1(1)            | 3.26(7) | 0.80               |
| $M_{\text{Nb}}$                                 | 30(2)        | 3.6(1)            | 2.97(6) | 0.83               |

et al. [24],  $P_b(M_{\text{Na}})$  is connected with the vector product  $[\mathbf{M}(M_{\text{Na}}) \times \mathbf{M}(M_{\text{Nb}})]$  along the  $c$ -axis via a constant,  $A(M_{\text{Na}})$ ;  $P_b(M_{\text{Nb}})$  is connected with the vector product  $[\mathbf{M}(M_{\text{Nb}}) \times \mathbf{M}(M_{\text{Na}})]$  via another constant,  $A(M_{\text{Nb}})$ . The constants  $A(M_{\text{Na}})$  and  $A(M_{\text{Nb}})$  depend on the spin-orbit coupling and super-exchange interactions [19–24]. The calculated values for  $A(M_{\text{Na}})$  and  $A(M_{\text{Nb}})$  are about  $10 \mu\text{Cm}^{-2} \mu_B^{-2}$  and  $12 \mu\text{Cm}^{-2} \mu_B^{-2}$ , respectively, with the **P2** model. Hence, a relevant conclusion is drawn: the *ME* coupling arising from the transverse-helical spin ordering is strongly dictated by atomic site symmetry.

#### 4. Conclusion

Neutron single-crystal diffraction data of huebnerite at 10 K was analysed based on the polar space group **P2**, revealing the new model for AF2 in the (3+1)-dim. superspace symmetry **P2.1' ( $\alpha, 0, \gamma$ )0s**.

The ellipticity at  $M_{\text{Na}}$  and  $M_{\text{Nb}}$  estimated to be 0.92 and 0.77, respectively, indicate different contributions of two helical spin-waves to improper ferroelectricity. The site character difference between  $M_{\text{Na}}$  and  $M_{\text{Nb}}$  is significant with respect to their bond valences to oxygens. The current study concludes that the true origin of the magnetoelectric properties observed in the title compound is the polar atomic arrangement. Weak intrinsic dipole moments can be microscopically detectable merely by the polar transverse-helical spin ordering.

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