Investigation of the local Mn-O distortions in the concentration-induced Metal/Insulator transition materials, La$_{1-x}$Ca$_x$MnO$_3$ (x= 0.16-0.22) using EXAFS.$^1$ YU JIANG, LISA DOWNWARD, FRANK BRIDGES, Physics Dept., University of California, Santa Cruz, JOHN NEUMEIER, Physics Dept., Montana State University — The pseudo-cubic manganites La$_{1-x}$Ca$_x$MnO$_3$ (LCMO) are CMR (Colossal Magnetoresistance) materials for x between approximately 0.2 and 0.5. They have a temperature driven Metal/Insulator (MI) transition at the ferromagnetic transition temperature $T_c$ which is caused by Jahn-Teller-like distortions which form around Mn sites as T increases through $T_c$. Near x=0.2 the MI is driven by concentration. To investigate the concentration and temperature dependent local distortions for low doped powder samples (LCMO $x = 16\%$, 18\%, 20\%, 22\%), we carried out EXAFS (Extended X-ray Absorption Fine Structure) experiment at SSRL (Stanford Synchrotron Radiation Laboratory). The results of our preliminary analysis show the following: (1) a sharp, step increase in $\sigma^2$ near $T_c$ ($\sigma$ is the width of the Mn-O pair distribution function (PDF)), (2) the magnitude of the step decreases rapidly with decreasing x, (3) the value of $\sigma^2$ at low T is close to the value for zero-point motion for x = 0.22, but increases substantially for lower x, indicating that in the magnetized state a large J-T distortions remain at low T for low x. Also the magnetization at low T is small for lower x, indicating that not all of the sample is ferromagnetic.

$^1$Supported under NSF grant DMR0301971

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Date submitted: 21 Nov 2006  
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