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Carrier mass measurements in degenerate indium nitride

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We present photoluminescence measurements under intense magnetic fields ($B$ up to 30 T) in $n$-doped indium nitride samples with carrier concentration ranging from about $7.5 \times 10^{17}$ cm$^{-3}$ to $5 \times 10^{18}$ cm$^{-3}$. The observation of transitions involving several Landau levels permits to determine the carrier-reduced mass $\mu$ around the $\Gamma$ point. Depending on the carrier concentration, we find $\mu$ ranging between $0.093m_0$ and $0.107m_0$ ($m_0$ is the electron mass in vacuum). This finding poses a lower limit to the electron effective mass, whose unexpectedly large value ($m_e \geq 0.093m_0$) indicates that the sources of $n$ doping in InN perturb strongly the crystal conduction band near its minimum.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Indium nitride (InN) is widely investigated because of its potential in a variety of applications ranging from photovoltaics to fast and high-power electronics. However, intrinsic indium nitride has not been obtained, yet, and as-grown InN samples have usually a free-electron concentration $n_e$ in excess of $10^{17}$ cm$^{-3}$. This is one of the reasons why the value of the band-gap energy $E_g$ has remained an elusive quantity for a long time and only few years ago it has been established that InN is—indeed—a small-gap semiconductor ($E_g ~ 0.65$ eV at room temperature). Another fundamental—not still accurately determined—quantity is the electron effective mass $m_e$.

Until now, most of the $m_e$ values reported have been inferred from infrared reflectivity or ellipsometry measurements aimed at determining the plasma resonance frequency $\omega_p^2 = (n_e e^2)/(\langle n_e \rangle e_e e_o)$, where $e_e$ is the high-frequency dielectric constant and $\langle n_e \rangle$ is the electron effective mass averaged over the density of states (DOS) of the conduction band. $\omega_p$ depends explicitly on the average electron mass as well as on the carrier concentration, whose exact determination, however, is affected by the presence of a large sheet charge located at either the InN surface or at the interface between InN and its buffer layer. In turn, this may influence the determination of the value of the electron mass. Specifically, $\langle m_e \rangle$ was found to increase sizably with doping level from $0.039m_0$ (for $n_e = 1.8 \times 10^{17}$ cm$^{-3}$) to $0.25m_0$ (for $n_e = 7 \times 10^{20}$ cm$^{-3}$), where $m_0$ is the electron mass in vacuum.

In this work, we report on the observation of Landau levels (LLs) in degenerate InN as measured by magnetophotoluminescence (magneto-PL) in samples having different electron concentration $n_e \sim (7.5-50) \times 10^{17}$ cm$^{-3}$. Up to four LL recombinations are observed that allows us to determine straightforwardly the carrier-reduced mass around the $\Gamma$ point $\mu = (1/m_e + 1/m_H)^{-1} = (0.093-0.107)m_0$, $m_e$ being the hole effective mass. The unexpectedly large value ($m_e \geq 0.093m_0$) of the electron effective mass at $k \sim 0$ in degenerate InN points toward a sizable distortion of the crystal conduction-band minimum caused by the sources of $n$-type doping.

II. EXPERIMENT

We investigated a 500-nm-thick InN sample grown by molecular-beam epitaxy on an epitaxial template formed by GaN(0001)/AlN/Al$_2$O$_3$. The narrow full width at half maximum of the sample rocking curves and a mobility value of about 1300–1500 cm$^2/$(V x s) indicate a good sample quality. The sheet carrier density derived by Hall-effect measurements is $n_H = 1.2 \times 10^{14}$ cm$^{-2}$ (assuming a uniform dopant distribution, this results in a volume concentration $n_V = 2.4 \times 10^{18}$ cm$^{-3}$) that falls in the range reported by various authors. Two pieces of the same sample were irradiated by a low-energy (10–20 eV) hydrogen-ion beam for different doses of impinging ions in order to achieve a controlled increase in the electron concentration, as reported recently in Ref. 18. Secondary ion mass spectrometry measurements on InN epilayers deuterated under the same experimental conditions employed in this work showed that the deuterium concentration profile is rather uniform over all the InN layer. PL was excited by the 532 nm line of a vanadate:Nd laser and detected by a liquid-nitrogen-cooled InGaAs photodiode coupled to a 0.25-m-long monochromator. Magneto-PL was performed in a 30 T water-cooled resistive magnet with the sample held at about 5 K (the spectra have been normalized by the optical set-up response).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Degenerate GaAs

Not many previous reports on magneto-PL in degenerate bulk semiconductors exist. In fact, in these systems a free
We ascribe the higher-energy component to an interband transition involving the second lower-energy band is clearly detected for $B > 12$ T. This is a consequence of the donor nature of hydrogen in InN that leads to a large controllable increase in the free-electron concentration. As for the lower-energy component appearing for $B > 24$ T, the corresponding $B$-induced shift gives $\mu=(0.069 \pm 0.002)m_0$ and an extrapolated transition energy at $B=0$ T equal to 1.490 eV. These values are close, respectively, to the electron effective mass and to the energy of the acceptor-related recombination ($e,A$) bands in GaAs. As a result, the lower-energy band is attributed to a free-electron to neutral-acceptor transition, whose shift with magnetic field is known to reproduce that of the lowest LL of electrons ($\mu = m_e$). The ($e,A$) transition dominates the PL spectrum at high fields likely because the increasing magnetic field leads to an enhanced overlap between the free electron and localized hole wave functions (and increased PL intensity). Such an intensity enhancement induced by $B$ should be sizable smaller for the uncorrelated electron-hole pairs involved in the LL$_0$ transition. In turn, this accounts for the relative variation in the intensity of the ($e,A$) and LL$_0$ bands with varying $B$. As mentioned, no Landau-quantization is observed until $B > 12$ T thus providing a rough estimation of the carrier scattering time $\tau=1/\nu_q = m_e/\nu (e \cdot B)=30$ fs, a value falling in the range of those reported for heavily doped GaAs.

To conclude this part, we can state that magneto-PL can be properly used to derive the carrier mass in a highly degenerate bulk semiconductor.
FIG. 2. Peak-normalized PL spectra of InN samples irradiated with different H doses \( d_H \): (a) untreated (as-grown), (b) hydrogenated \( d_H = 1 \times 10^{15} \text{ cm}^{-2} \), and (c) hydrogenated \( d_H = 2 \times 10^{15} \text{ cm}^{-2} \), where \( z \) indicates a transition between the \( n \)th Landau levels in the conduction and valence band. The dotted lines are guides for the eyes. The dashed thick lines superimposed on the \( B=0 \text{ T} \) spectra are simulations to the data via the Kane’s model (see Ref. 18).

tal density of states. In the hydrogenated samples (where the electron density is greater), several PL bands appear as \( B \) increases. In particular, the bands at high-energy lose spectral weight in favor of low-energy bands, which dominate the spectrum at the highest \( B \). The peaks of the different components move with magnetic field at a quite different pace; in particular, the high-energy lying components are much faster than those at low energy. This field dependence points toward transitions related to Landau levels with different index \( n \),

\[
E_n(B) = E(0) + \left( n + \frac{1}{2} \right) \frac{\hbar e B}{\mu}. \tag{1}
\]

It should be noted that the greater number of LLs visible in hydrogenated samples is a direct consequence of the larger density of free electrons available in those samples. In addition, with increasing \( B \), the LL degeneracy increases \( (\approx B) \) and more carriers can occupy the lower index LLs, thus determining a progressive depopulation of higher index levels, as shown in Fig. 2. The thick dashed lines superimposed on the zero-field spectra of Fig. 2 are a simulation of the PL data by the semiclassical model developed by Kane and detailed in Ref. 18. We will give details on the parameters employed in the line-shape simulation in the following.

Before proceeding with a quantitative analysis of the data shown in Fig. 2, it is worth discussing further the appropriateness of using magneto-PL data to derive the electron effective mass in InN. Indium nitride is a small-gap semiconductor and, therefore, it is more subject to nonparabolicity effects than, e.g., GaAs. As a matter of fact, previous ellipsometry and reflectivity measurements showed a marked dependence of \( (m^*_e) \) on carrier concentration, indicating a nonconstant value of the electron effective mass over the conduction-band dispersion curve. However, the shift of the Landau levels with magnetic field measured by magneto-PL is mainly determined by the value of the carrier-reduced mass at the Fermi point of the InN conduction and valence bands. Indeed, as the magnetic field is turned on, the change in the dimensionality of the carrier motion from three-dimensional (3D) to one-dimensional (1D) like implies a change in the energy dependence of the crystal DOS (Refs. 28 and 29): a much larger carrier occupancy at the band extrema is expected for 1D \((\text{DOS} \propto \sqrt{E})\) than for 3D \((\text{DOS} \propto E)\). Hence, the peak of the PL bands shown in Fig. 2 can be attributed to carriers recombining mainly at \( k=0 \) in the respective LL and the slope of the emission-peak energy with \( B \) is ultimately determined by the carrier mass at the conduction-band minimum and valence-band maximum. It is worth mentioning that magneto-optical measurements were performed on different small-gap semiconductors, such as InAs and InSb, and it was proved that the Landau theory may be applied using the effective-mass approximation.

Figure 3 summarizes the dependence on magnetic field of the peak energy of all the observed recombination bands (symbols) in untreated as well as H-irradiated samples. Lines are fits to the data by Eq. (1) with different \( n \)’s, using \( \mu \) and \( E(0) \) as free parameters. For all samples, we find \( E(0) = (0.664 \pm 0.001)\text{ eV} \), while we derive \( \mu = (0.093 \pm 0.001) m_0 \) in the untreated sample, \( \mu = (0.106 \pm 0.002) m_0 \) in the sample hydrogenated with \( d_H=1 \times 10^{15} \text{ cm}^{-2} \), and \( \mu = (0.107 \pm 0.002) m_0 \) in the sample hydrogenated with \( d_H=2 \times 10^{15} \text{ cm}^{-2} \). Nonparabolicity effects on the conduction band can be estimated using the approach described in Ref. 31. In our case, assuming a negligible contribution from valence-band nonparabolicity, we obtain a similarly good fit with the same band-gap energy at \( B = 0 \text{ T} \) and reduced masses about 10% smaller than those.
the carrier-concentration value derived from PL line-shape analysis is sizably smaller than the value found from Hall measurements (see Sec. II). As mentioned, this is likely due to a charge accumulation at the sample interfaces.\textsuperscript{15-17} This charge should not influence PL results. In fact, the contribution to PL from photogenerated carriers at the surface and/or InN/buffer interface is negligible due to the presence of large electric fields and/or dead layer effects arising from surface nonradiative centers.\textsuperscript{36} In addition, the relatively narrow linewidth of the PL spectrum of the as-grown sample points toward a constant background electron concentration over the sample volume probed by radiatively recombining carriers.

We now compare our electron mass lower limit with the \( \langle m_e \rangle \) values obtained by infrared reflectivity or ellipsometry measurements reported in the literature.\textsuperscript{5-11,13} Those measurements provide the density-of-states-averaged electron mass from \( k=0 \) to the Fermi wave vector \( k_F \), whose value depends on the doping level of the samples. In that case, the \( k=0 \) limit can be deduced for \( n_e \rightarrow 0 \) that corresponds to an \textit{ideally intrinsic} InN and gives \( m_e \sim 0.05-0.07m_0 \).\textsuperscript{37,27} Here, instead, we determine the electron effective mass mainly at \( \Gamma \) point (\( n_e \geq 0.1m_0 \)) in a \textit{really doped} \( (n_e \geq 10^{18} \text{ cm}^{-3}) \) InN sample. Therefore, the large discrepancy found between the two types of measurements ought to be due to doping in indium nitride. We speculate that in InN, the nature of n-type dopants perturbs the host crystal to a quite large extent (contrary to what is observed in degenerate GaAs). Among the proposed sources of doping are nitrogen vacancies and/or antisites and incorporation of oxygen and hydrogen atoms.\textsuperscript{18,36} Although to a different extent, these donor sources may disorder the lattice potential thus giving rise to an enhanced localized character (and increased effective mass) of the conduction-band minimum then possibly accounting for the increase in the carrier-reduced mass observed in the hydrogen-irradiated samples. Alternatively, a contribution to the PL spectra from \( k \neq 0 \) states characterized by the higher conduction-band curvature may result in a reduced Landau-level shift and, hence, in an averaged larger carrier mass.

\section*{IV. CONCLUSIONS}

In conclusion, we presented carrier mass measurements in heavily doped bulk semiconductors (GaAs and InN) by magnetophotoluminescence up to \( B = 30 \text{ T} \). In both systems, high magnetic fields (12 T and 16 T for GaAs and InN, respectively) are necessary to overcome decoherence of the carrier cyclotron orbit induced by carrier and/or donor scattering. In InN, we observe Landau-level interband recombinations, whose number increases with the sample free-electron concentration. This latter has been purposely varied from about \( 7.5 \times 10^{17} \text{ cm}^{-3} \) to \( 4.7 \times 10^{18} \text{ cm}^{-3} \) by postgrowth H irradiation. By the slope of the Landau levels, we determine the carrier-reduced mass at the \( \Gamma \) point: \( \mu = (0.093 \pm 0.002) m_0 \) in the untreated InN sample \( (n_e \sim 7.5 \times 10^{17} \text{ cm}^{-3}) \) and \( \mu = (0.106 \pm 0.002) m_0 \) in the hydrogenated samples \( (n_e \sim 2-5 \times 10^{18} \text{ cm}^{-3}) \). Due to a lack of knowledge of the hole mass, we can only set a lower limit to the electron mass equal to...
0.093m₀ in the H-free sample. This high mass at the conduction-band minimum can be justified by the strong k-space distortion caused by the crystal defects that are a source of doping in indium nitride.

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