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Authors
Bolton, S.V.
Chemla, D.S.
Sucha, G.
et al.

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CARRIER DYNAMICS IN InGaAs: QUANTUM WELLS VS. BULK

S. R. Bolton and D. S. Chemla

Department of Physics
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

Materials Sciences Division
Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

G. Sucha

IMRA America
1044 Woodbridge Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48105

D. L. Sivco and A. Y. Cho

AT&T Bell Laboratories
Murray Hill, NJ 07974

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S. R. Bolton, G. Sucha*, D. S. Chemla

Department of Physics, University of California
Materials Sciences Division, Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, University of California,
Berkeley, CA 94720

Phone: (510) 486-5265 Fax: (510) 486-5530

and

D.L. Sivco and A.Y. Cho

AT&T Bell Laboratories, Murray Hill, NJ

Abstract

Using femtosecond infrared continuum, we investigate carrier thermalization in $L=100\,\text{Å}, 600\,\text{Å} & 6000\,\text{Å}$ InGaAs layers. Surprisingly, we find that the thermalization time, $\sim 400 \,\text{fs}$, is independent of $L$. In contrast, the initial dynamics for $<100\,\text{fs}$ exhibits significant $L$-dependence.

*Permanent address: IMRA America, 1044 Woodbridge Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48105
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S. R. Bolton, G. Sucha*, D. S. Chemla

Department of Physics, University of California
Materials Sciences Division, Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, University of California,
Berkeley, CA 94720

Phone: (510) 486-5265    Fax: (510) 486-5530

and

D.L. Sivco and A.Y. Cho

AT&T Bell Laboratories, Murray Hill, NJ

InGaAs heterostructures are widely used in high speed devices such as lasers, modulators, and HBTs. Optimization of these devices' performance requires a detailed understanding of carrier relaxation dynamics. It has been predicted, however, that due to quantum confinement effects, carrier relaxation depends critically on the width of ultra thin layers, \( L \). Gain recovery dynamics have been studied in InGaAs traveling-wave optical amplifiers using single wavelength femtosecond optical pump-probe measurements [1,2]. As these were single wavelength measurements interpretation of the results is difficult. As shown in Figure 1, using an ultrashort pulse infrared broad band continuum probe [3] to follow the carrier location in \( k \)-space, we have measured, with 150 fsec resolution, the dynamics of optically injected carriers in InGaAs vs \( L \), from the almost 2D case, \( L<<a_o \), to the 3D case, \( L>>a_o \), where \( a_o\sim290\text{Å} \) is the exciton Bohr radius.

Twelve InGaAs/InAlAs samples varying from \( L=75\text{Å}~a_o/4 \) to \( L=6000\text{Å}~20a_o \) were grown by MBE, all containing 6000Å of InGaAs. Figure 2 shows the absorption spectra of the \( L=100\text{Å} \) and 6000Å samples at 7K. Excitonic features are clearly visible in the QW samples. The bulk sample shows no clear resonance, but is well described by a
3D density of states with a Sommerfeld enhancement factor, suggesting that Coulomb effects are important. Pump probe measurements on resonance reveal an excitonic character of the bulk band edge.

Femtosecond, differential absorption spectra (DAS) were obtained using a "narrow band" ($\Delta \lambda = 30\text{nm}$) pump and a broad band probe. (Fig. 1.) Carriers were excited at energies just below the LO-phonon threshold, so that carrier-carrier scattering dominates the thermalization. The DAS of the bulk sample, Fig 2(b), shows nearly complete thermalization to a carrier temperature $T \approx 550\text{K}$ at $t \geq 400\text{ fs}$. At early times the spectral hole is red shifted as compared to the pump spectrum and the DAS shows an induced absorption at higher energies. We attribute this to many-body non-equilibrium Fermi edge effects similar to those seen in GaAs [4,5]. However, they are expected to be stronger in InGaAs due to the larger ratio of $m_{hh}/m_e$. There is also a strong induced absorption at the band-edge near $800\text{meV}$, due to the combined effects of screening and coherent scattering.

Surprisingly, the quantum wells show thermalization times $t \approx 400\text{ fs}$ as well. (Fig. 2(d)) At early times, $t \leq 100\text{ fs}$, the DAS for the 100Å and 200Å samples show a more pronounced hole burning near the pump than the bulk sample, and reduced effects at the band edge. This indicates that the relative effects of screening versus phase-space filling are stronger in 3D than 2D [6]. Note that coherence effects are strong in these samples due to the narrow excitonic lines (long $T_2$).

The L=500Å sample, which is truly intermediate between 2D and 3D (Figure 3) also shows a thermalization time $t \approx 400\text{ fs}$, however in this case coherence effects due to the energetic proximity of the subbands cause very complicated DAS.
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In conclusion, although the density of states and the subband separation show extreme variations among the samples we have investigated, thermalization seems unaffected. This observation has important consequences for device applications and needs theoretical explanation.

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References


Figure Captions

Figure 1. Principle of the Experiment. (a) Schematic absorption spectrum of sample with and without pump beam. (Absorption without pump—solid. Absorption in presence of pump—dotted. Pump—dashed.) (b) Differential absorption spectrum. (DAS) (c) Experimental setup.

Figure 2. Absorption and DAS of 6000Å and 100Å samples. (a) 6000Å absorption spectrum (solid) and pump spectrum (dotted). (b) DAS for 6000Å sample. (c) Absorption spectrum and DAS of 100Å sample. (d) DAS for 100Å sample.

Figure 3. (a) DAS for 500Å sample. (b) Absorption spectrum (solid) and pump spectrum (dashed) for 500Å sample.
FIGURE 1

(a)

(b)

(c)

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FIGURE 2

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