Selective Excitation and Detection of Spin States in a Single Nanowire Quantum Dot

Maarten H. M. van Weert,† Nika Akopian,† Umberto Perinetti,† Maarten P. van Kouwen,† Rienk E. Algra,‡,§ Marcel A. Verheijen,‡ Erik P. A. M. Bakkers,‡ Leo P. Kouwenhoven,† and Val Zwiller*†


Received January 23, 2009; Revised Manuscript Received March 4, 2009

ABSTRACT

We report exciton spin memory in a single InAs0.25P0.75 quantum dot embedded in an InP nanowire. By synthesizing clean quantum dots with linewidths as narrow as about 30 µeV, we are able to resolve individual spin states at magnetic fields on the order of 1 T. We can prepare a given spin state by tuning excitation polarization or excitation energy. These experiments demonstrate the potential of this system to form a quantum interface between photons and electrons.

The unprecedented material and design freedom makes semiconducting nanowires very attractive for novel optoelectronics.1-4 Quantum dots incorporated in nanowires enable experiments on both quantum optics5-7 and electron transport.8 This system has the potential to form a quantum interface between these separate fields of research. A crucial element for such interface is control over the spin of an exciton by means of photon polarization. Optical spectra of such nanowire quantum dots, however, have so far been hampered by broad linewidths, insufficient for identifying quantum states. Here, we demonstrate clean InAs0.25P0.75 quantum dots embedded in InP nanowires with excellent optical quality. Narrow linewidths enable us to selectively excite and detect single exciton spins. We control spin excitation by the polarization or the energy of the excitation light. The dots exhibit exciton-spin memory demonstrating that nanowires are a viable alternative to the system of self-assembled dots with new design options to interface single photon9,10 with single electron devices11,12.

Photoluminescence (PL) from homogeneous nanowires13,14 and from quantum dots (QDs) embedded in nanowires15 is highly linearly polarized for light emitted perpendicular to this 1D geometry. This forms an important obstacle for controlling the spin states of excitons for which circularly polarized light is needed. Circular polarization requires the light to be precisely aligned along the nanowire axis, since nanowires are circularly symmetric around this axis. Here we report such a study on as-grown, vertical nanowires standing parallel to our optical axis. We demonstrate full optical access to the spin states of individual excitons by means of right and left circularly polarized photons.

Exciton spin states have been studied extensively in self-assembled quantum dots.16 Quantum dots in nanowires are a promising alternative to self-assembled dots when it comes to more complex circuits. For instance, multiple dots are naturally aligned in nanowires;17 heterostructure dots can be connected to gate-defined dots;18 and circuits of dots can be integrated with pn-junctions to allow for electroluminescence and photocurrent experiments. Also local gating of heterostructure dots in nanowires has become possible with recently developed wrap-around gates.19-21 These promises motivate the development of clean nanowire quantum dots where cleanliness is measured as a narrow line width in the optical spectra. Initial optical studies of nanowire quantum dots reported linewidths on the order of millielectronvolts,5-7 which is a thousand times broader than expected for the natural line width (i.e., the inverse radiative lifetime of about 1 ns). Such broad lines hampered resolving individual spin states. Here, we report on clean nanowire quantum dots with optical linewidths of tens of millielectronvolts, i.e., sufficiently sharp for measuring spin states above a magnetic field of ~1 T.

We grow InAs0.25P0.75 quantum dots embedded in InP nanowires (see methods and refs 17, 22, and 23). Figure 1a shows an image of our sample with bright spots from the
The typical distance between the nanowires is larger than our spatial resolution (\(\sim 0.6 \, \mu m\)), enabling us to select an individual dot. The dots are typically 10 nm high with a diameter of 30 nm and are surrounded by a thin shell of InP (see Figure 1b and the Supporting Information). The presented data are all taken at 4.2 K on different quantum dots. Figure 1 shows optical spectra with peaks as narrow as 31 \(\mu eV\) (limited by the resolution of our spectrometer). Figure 1d shows a single peak for exciton emission (X) at low excitation power. On increasing the power the biexciton (XX) emission becomes visible with an exciton–biexciton splitting of 2.2 meV. The PL intensities of X and XX depend, as expected, linearly and quadratically on excitation power (Figure 1e), clearly identifying these optical transitions. Note also the saturation of the peak intensities at high powers, indicating that other states also become occupied.

Next, we measure the spin splitting of the exciton transition as function of a magnetic field, \(B\), parallel to the nanowire axis (i.e., Faraday configuration). The excitation light is polarized linearly with an energy exceeding the InP bandgap. Via phonon relaxation, electrons and holes occupy the quantum states in the dot where they annihilate under emission of a photon (see panels a and b in Figure 2). We select the exciton transition from the lowest energy (s) states and measure the peak evolution as a function of \(B\). Figure 2c shows a peak splitting linear in \(B\) on top of a quadratic \(B\)-dependence. The distance between the two peak maxima corresponds to the Zeeman spin splitting, from which we obtain an exciton \(g\)-factor, \(g = (g_e + g_h) = 1.3 \pm 0.1\). A \(g\)-factor value between 1 and 2 is typical for our dots with a material fraction \(A_s/P = 1/3\). Variations between dots are likely due to small variations in the material composition and different confinements. The overall quadratic shift, \(\alpha\),...
Panels d and e in Figure 3 show the results for left and right spin excitation since the p-shell also shows spin splitting. Split-peaks are of different height due to a slightly unequal Zeeman splitting and a diamagnetic shift. Note that the two panel shows two vertical stripes that are narrow in PL energy (≈0.1 meV) but broader along the vertical axis of excitation energy states of the dot. Figure 3 was found for all seven dots that we measured. This likely indicates spin relaxation mediated by the hyperfine interaction with nuclear spins. Similar measurements have been reported on ensembles of self-assembled quantum dots under quasi-resonant excitation and resonant excitation, however, polarization memory was not observed at B = 0, possibly because of a larger exciton fine structure splitting.

As we noted, the spin memory only works for quasi-resonant excitation into the p-shell. The precise initialization of a particular spin depends on the exact excitation conditions, as exemplified by the peak height differences in Figure 3c. This excitation energy dependence can, as we discuss now, be exploited for an alternative method for spin initialization.

To understand the absorption sensitivity, we show in Figure 4a quasi-resonant PLE into the p-shell for linearly polarized excitation. The excitation energy is scanned and the spin-split exciton transition is measured at 4 T. The lower left panel shows two vertical stripes that are narrow in PL energy (≈0.1 meV) but broader along the vertical axis of excitation energy (≈3 meV). These widths are directly related to the respective lifetimes, short in the p-shell (≈ps because of fast intraband, nonradiative relaxation to the s-shell) but much...
appropriate growth conditions we were able to grow a sample with low density of nanowires containing single InAs$_{0.25}$P$_{0.75}$ quantum dots. These dots are designed to have luminescence around 1.2 eV. The gold particle is transparent for the light.

**Experimental Setup.** Micro-PL studies were performed at 4.2 K. For nonresonant excitation experiments, the nanowire quantum dots were excited with a linearly polarized 532 nm continuous wave laser focused to a spot size of 0.6 µm using a microscope objective with a numerical aperture NA = 0.85. For photoluminescence excitation experiments, a tunable titanium sapphire laser was used. The PL signal was collected by the same objective and was sent to a spectrometer, which dispersed the PL onto a nitrogen-cooled silicon array detector with 30 µeV resolution. Linear and circular emission polarizations were analyzed using a half- or quarter-waveplate, respectively, followed by a fixed polarizer. Linear and circular excitation polarization was set by placing a fixed polarizer followed by a half- or quarter-waveplate, respectively. Magnetic fields were applied in the Faraday configuration, i.e., along the quantum dot confinement axis. The data shown are all measured on different quantum dots. Similar results on polarization sensitive magneto-photoluminescence have been found on 3 dots. Polarization memory at $B = 0$ T has been measured on 7 dots, giving all similar results.

**Acknowledgment.** We acknowledge W. G. G. Immink for technical assistance. This work was supported by the European FP6 NODE (015783) project, the Dutch Organization for Fundamental Research on Matter (FOM), The Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), and the Dutch ministry of economic affairs (NanoNed). The work of R.E.A. was carried out under Project MC3.0524 in the framework of the strategic research program of the Materials Innovation Institute (M2I) (www.m2i.nl). The authors declare that they have no competing financial interests.

**Supporting Information Available:** Additional PL spectra, EDX line scans, and TEM image (PDF). This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

**References**


