**Matrix elements and excitonic effects in the direct gap absorption of semiconductors**

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Most common semiconductors have a p-bonding valence band and an s-antibonding conduction band. This band structure leads to strong interband transitions at the direct band gap, which can be observed using spectroscopic ellipsometry. The magnitude of this absorption can be predicted from the optical dipole matrix element, which is well known from k.p theory and the effective conduction and valence band masses (cyclotron resonance experiments). Due to the Coulomb interaction between the photogenerated electron and hole, excitonic effects must be considered. This theory works very well for the direct absorption of germanium.

At high temperatures and for small gap semiconductors like InSb, one must consider the conduction band nonparabolicity, the k-dependence of the optical dipole matrix element, the temperature dependence of the effective masses, the thermal occupation of the electron and valence bands (Pauli blocking), and the screening of the excitonic (Sommerfeld) enhancement by thermally excited electron-hole pairs. The calculations to explain our experimental data for the temperature-dependent dielectric function of InSb are not yet complete, but I will show results for the conduction band nonparabolicity and the chemical potential and free carrier concentration of intrinsic InSb as a function of temperature.

In inverted (gapless) semiconductors like alpha-tin, we can also observe strong intervalence band transitions in the infrared optical constants. These transitions are governed by the same principles as for InSb.

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