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Understanding the role of Si-doping on the surface charge and optical properties: A photoluminescence study of intrinsic and Si-doped InN nanowires

S. Zhao, Z. Mi,* and M. G. Kibria

*Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, McGill University,
3480 University Street, Montreal, Quebec H3A 2A7, Canada*

Q. Li, G. T. Wang

Advanced Materials Sciences, Sandia National Laboratories, Albuquerque, NM 87185, USA

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In the present work, photoluminescence characteristics of intrinsic and Si-doped InN nanowires were studied in details. For intrinsic InN nanowires, the emission is due to band-to-band carrier recombination with the peak energy at ~ 0.64 eV (at 300 K), and may involve free-exciton emission at low temperatures. The PL spectra exhibit a strong dependence on optical excitation power and temperature, which can be well characterized by the presence of very low residual electron density, and the absence or negligible level of surface electron accumulation. In comparison, the emission of Si-doped InN nanowires is characterized by the presence of two distinct peaks located at ~ 0.65 eV and $\sim 0.73 - 0.75$ eV (at 300 K). Detailed studies further suggest that these low-energy and high-energy peaks can be ascribed to band-to-band carrier recombination in the relatively low-doped nanowire bulk region and Mahan exciton emission in the high-doped nanowire near-surface region, respectively; this is a natural consequence of dopants surface segregation. The resulting surface electron accumulation and Fermi-level pinning, due to the enhanced surface doping, is confirmed by angle-resolved X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy measurements on Si-doped InN nanowires, which is in direct contrast to the absence, or negligible level of surface electron accumulation in intrinsic InN nanowires. This work has elucidated the role of charge carrier concentration and distribution on the optical properties of InN nanowires.

I. INTRODUCTION

InN, after being discovered of a narrow bandgap ($E_g \sim 0.65 - 1$ eV)¹⁻¹⁴ and predicted to possess the largest electron mobility among group-III nitrides (~ 4400 cm²·V⁻¹·s⁻¹ at 300 K),¹⁵ has emerged as a highly promising material for infrared photodetectors and lasers, solar cells, ultrahigh-speed transistors, and sensors.¹⁶⁻¹⁸ To date, however, the practical device applications of InN-based materials have been severely limited by the presence of extremely large residual electron density and the uncontrolled surface charge properties, as well as the difficulty in achieving *p*-type conductivity.^{8,19-30} For example, in general, the currently reported nominally undoped InN is *n*-type degenerate, with the residual electron densities in the range of $\sim 1 \times 10^{18}$ cm⁻³, or higher.^{8,11,25,31-34} Moreover, it has been generally observed that there exists a very high electron concentration ($\sim 1 \times 10^{13-14}$ cm⁻²) at both the polar and nonpolar *grown* surfaces of InN films,^{19,35} and the Fermi-level (E_F) is pinned deep into the conduction band at the surfaces;^{19,20,29,30} similar electron accumulation profile has also been measured at the lateral nonpolar *grown* surfaces of [0001]-oriented wurtzite InN nanowires.^{8,11,21,22,25,36}

In this regard, significant efforts have been devoted to understanding the fundamental surface charge properties of InN.^{20,23,27,29,30,37-39} The electron accumulation at polar InN surface has been explained by the presence of large density of the occupied In-In bond states above the conduction band minimum (CBM),²³ as well as the unusual positioning of the branch point energy (E_B) well above the CBM at the Γ -point, which allows donor-type surface states to exist in the conduction band;²⁰ for polar InN surface, theoretical studies agree well with experiments. In terms of nonpolar InN surface, recent studies suggest that the surface electron accumulation may depend critically on the surface states, impurities, stoichiometry, and polarity;^{27,37} and the absence of electron accumulation at nonpolar surface has been predicted.^{23,27} In experiments, however, only recent cross-sectional scanning photoelectron microscopy and spectroscopy studies at nonpolar *cleaved* InN surface exhibits the unpinned E_F ,^{38,39} while in general the electron accumulation is prevalently observed at nonpolar InN surface;^{22,34,35} the electron accumulation issue at nonpolar InN surface had remained elusive.

In the other hand, the photoluminescence (PL) properties of InN films have been investigated intensively,^{6,7,9,40-44} and the PL emission characteristics are strongly dependent on the residual electron concentrations. For low residual electron concentration, band-to-band recombination is suggested;^{6,7,10,41} while for high residual electron concentration, Mahan excitons⁴⁰, i.e., photons are produced via recombination between electrons near E_F and localized photo-generated holes, are believed to be the underlying recombination mechanism.^{7,9,40} Meanwhile, significant efforts have also been made to study the optical properties of InN nanowires.^{8,11,21,24,28,33,45} The PL spectra of nominally undoped InN nanowires typically exhibit a very large inhomogeneous broadening, a peak energy considerably larger than the bandgap of InN, as well as an anomalous dependence on temperature. Due to these strong *n*-type characteristics of nominally undoped InN nanowires, the optical properties of intrinsic InN nanowires, and the dependence on the charge carrier concentrations and surface charge properties had remained *not* clear.

Recently, with the use of an *in situ* deposited In seeding layer, high quality InN nanowires with extremely low residual electron densities in the range of $\sim 1 \times 10^{15-16}$ cm⁻³, was achieved on Si (111) substrate by radio-frequency plasma-assisted molecular beam epitaxy (RF-PAMBE).^{12,13,46} With such low residual electron density, studying the fundamental carrier dynamics, as well as the correlated electrical and optical properties of InN nanowires with controlled charge carrier concentration becomes possible.

In the present paper, both undoped and Si-doped InN (InN:Si) nanowires were grown on Si (111) substrate by the afore-mentioned RF-PAMBE process. Their PL characteristics and surface charge properties were subsequently investigated using the temperature-variable micro-PL spectroscopy and angle-resolved X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS). It was observed that the PL emission of intrinsic InN nanowires can be ascribed to band-to-band carrier recombination, and may involve free-exciton emission at low temperatures.

Compared to the intrinsic InN nanowires, InN:Si nanowires exhibit two distinct emission peaks, which are centered at ~ 0.65 eV and $\sim 0.73 - 0.75$ eV (at 300 K), respectively. Detailed power- and temperature-dependent PL analysis suggests that these low-energy and high-energy peaks are directly related to band-to-band carrier recombination and Mahan exciton emission, respectively. This can be well explained by the significantly enhanced Si-dopants incorporation in the near-surface region of InN:Si nanowires, which is further confirmed by the near-surface E_F pinning (~ 0.35 eV above CBM) measured in such InN:Si nanowires. As a comparison, the near-surface E_F locates well below the CBM for the intrinsic InN nanowires.

This study has elucidated the fundamental carrier recombination processes in intrinsic InN nanowires. In addition, we have further identified the role of charge carrier concentration, as well as the inhomogeneous charge carrier distribution due to the predominant influence of enhanced surface doping, on PL characteristics of InN:Si nanowires.

This paper is organized as follows. In Sec. II, the experimental methods, including RF-PAMBE, micro-PL, and XPS measurements are presented. In Sec. III, the PL emission characteristics for both undoped and Si-doped InN nanowires are described. A detailed discussion of the carrier recombination and PL emission mechanisms, as well as the surface charge properties is presented in Sec. IV. Finally, conclusions are made in Sec. V.

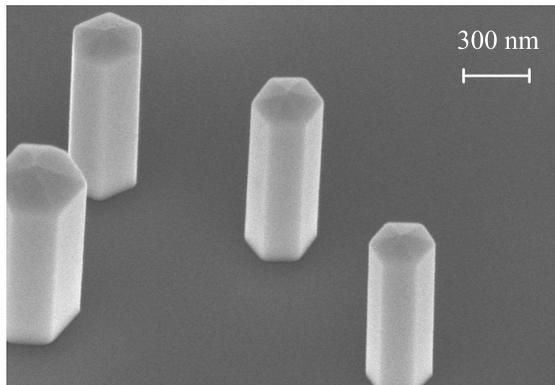


FIG. 1. (Color online) HRSEM image of undoped InN nanowires taken with a 45-degree angle. It should be noted that this near-perfect hexagonal wurtzite structure is also maintained in InN:Si nanowires.

II. EXPERIMENTAL SETUPS

Undoped and Si-doped InN nanowires were grown using a catalyst-free process on Si (111) substrate by RF-PAMBE, with substrate temperature of $T \sim 480$ °C, In flux of $\sim 6 \times 10^{-8}$ torr, RF plasma forward power of ~ 350 W and a nitrogen flow rate of ~ 1.0 sccm. For InN:Si nanowires, the Si cell temperatures were ~ 1250 °C and ~ 1350 °C, respectively. Compared to the previous approaches in growing InN nanowires,^{8,21,32,36,47-51} in this experiment an In seeding layer (~ 0.6 nm) was first deposited *in situ* onto Si (111) surface prior to the growth initiation, which can promote the formation and nucleation of InN nanowires. The detailed growth procedures were described elsewhere.^{12,46}

High-resolution scanning electron microscopy (HR-SEM) image of undoped InN nanowires is shown in Fig. 1, which exhibits near-perfect hexagonal structure. The nanowires are oriented along the [0001] polar direction with their sidewalls being nonpolar m -planes. Detailed transmission electron microscopy (TEM) studies further confirm that such undoped InN nanowires are nearly free of defects and dislocations.¹² It should be noted that this non-tapered hexagonal structure can be achieved in InN:Si nanowires as well (HRSEM images not shown here). In this study, experiments (unless otherwise states) were performed on InN nanowires with lengths of $\sim 0.7 - 0.8$ μm .

Micro-PL measurements were performed on such as-grown InN nanowires at both cryogenic and room temperatures. The nanowires were optically excited using a semiconductor diode laser with $\lambda = 635$ nm through a $100\times$ objective. The defocused beam size is ~ 5 μm . The emitted light from the nanowires, going through the same $100\times$ objective, was spectrally resolved by a high-resolution spectrometer, and detected by a liquid-nitrogen-cooled InGaAs detector with a cut-off wavelength of 2.2 μm . The signal was collected with a single channel lock-in amplifier.

Angle-resolved XPS was employed as a direct probe to the near-surface E_F in undoped and Si-doped InN nanowires. In this experiment, the X-ray beam was impinged upon the nanowire lateral surfaces with the resulting photoelectrons being collected at a near-zero take-off angle. The measurement configuration ensures that the majority of the signal is derived from the nanowire sidewalls.

III. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

A. PL spectra of undoped InN nanowires

PL emission properties of undoped InN nanowires were first investigated. Fig. 2(a) shows the temperature dependent PL spectra measured under an excitation power of 9 mW. It can be seen that as the temperature increases, the PL peak (E_{PL}^1) shifts to lower energies and the spectra become broader. The derived temperature dependence of E_{PL}^1 is shown in Fig. 2(b). Such temperature dependent peak energy can be phenomenally fitted by Varshni's equation,

$$E_g(T) = E_g(0) - \frac{\alpha T^2}{\beta + T}. \quad (1)$$

where $E_g(0)$ is the fundamental bandgap, and α and β are Varshni's coefficients which correspond to the lattice thermal expansion and Debye temperature, respectively.^{10,18} As shown in Fig. 2(b), the best fit gives $E_g(0) = 0.689 \pm 0.001$ eV, $\alpha = 0.41 \pm 0.02$ meV/K, and $\beta = 449 \pm 32$ K; these values are consistent with those obtained from absorption spectra

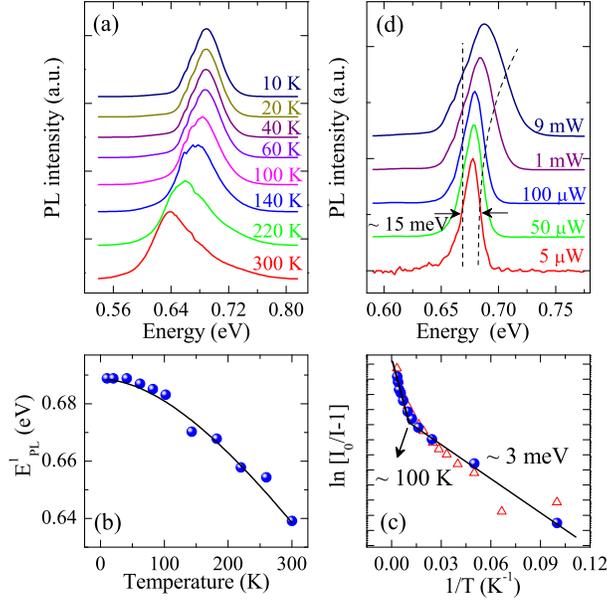


FIG. 2. (Color online) Counter-clockwise, (a) Temperature dependent PL spectra of undoped InN nanowires measured under an optical excitation power of 9 mW. (b) Temperature dependence of E_{PL}^1 , solid line is the fitting curve by Varshni's equation. (c) Scaling plot of integrated PL intensity I , as described in the text. (d) Power dependent PL spectra measured at 20 K. The arrows denote the FWHM position, and the dotted vertical line and the dotted curve exhibit the evolution of the FWHM.

and PL spectra measurements in InN films,^{5,10,18,52} suggesting the nature of this PL emission is band-to-band carrier recombination. This result is in direct contrast to the nearly temperature invariant PL emission characteristics of n -type degenerate InN nanowires.^{8,21,33}

It should be noted that the PL peak energy in general is not equivalent to bandgap energy; it is only approximately valid when under very low excitation conditions and in the absence of localized states and band-tailing effect.⁶ Table I shows the extracted $E_g(0)$, α , and β values measured under different optical excitation conditions, and with different nanowire lengths. It can be seen that in the lowest photo-generated carrier density regime (with 0.8 μm nanowire length, 1 mW excitation power, and 50 μm beam size), $E_g(0)$ is ~ 0.672 eV; this value is consistent with the smallest reported $E_g(0)$ in InN epi-layers.¹⁰

We have further investigated the integrated PL intensity as a function of temperature, which provides more insight of the underlying mechanism(s) of carrier recombination. As illustrated in Fig. 2(c), $\ln[I/I_0 - 1]$ is plotted as a function $1/T$ under an excitation power of 9 mW, where I_0 is the maximum PL intensity at low temperature, and I represents the integrated PL intensity measured at various temperatures. It can be seen that there exist two distinct slopes, which change at ~ 100 K (about ~ 8 meV); this slope change temperature sets an upper limit of the exciton binding energy,⁵³⁻⁵⁵ which is consistent with the previously reported value ~ 9 meV from Wu *et al.*¹⁸ Additionally, the exciton binding energy is suggested to be related to the activation energy derived in the low temperature range (10 to 100 K),^{56,57} which is ~ 3 meV in this study. This small activation energy is consistent with the derived exciton binding energy $\sim 2 - 3$ meV if assuming InN dielectric constant $\epsilon \sim 14$, and effective mass for electron $m_e^* = 0.05m_0$ and for hole $m_h^* = 0.3m_0$.^{6,41,58,59} These studies suggest the recombination process changes from free-exciton emission at low temperatures to electron-hole plasma emission at high temperatures in the presented undoped InN nanowires.

TABLE I. Varshni's parameters extracted from the PL spectra of InN nanowires with different lengths measured under different optical excitation conditions.

Length, power	$E_g(0)$ (eV)	α (meV/K)	β (K)
0.8 μm , 9 mW	0.689	0.41	449
4 μm , 9 mW	0.674	0.44	445
4 μm , 1 mW	0.674	0.44	502
0.8 μm , 1 mW ^a	0.672	0.30	467

^a With larger beam size 50 μm .

Such measurements were also performed on undoped InN nanowires with lengths up to $\sim 4 \mu\text{m}$, which show similar scaling behavior (see open triangles in Fig. 2(c)).

Figure 2(d) shows the power dependent PL spectra of undoped InN nanowires measured at 20 K. At low excitation conditions ($< 1 \text{ mW}$), variations of the integrated PL intensity I with optical excitation power P can be described by $I \propto P^{0.99 \pm 0.18}$. This nearly linear $I - P$ dependence further confirms that the emission is directly related to free-exciton recombination at low temperatures.⁶⁰ At high excitation conditions ($> 1 \text{ mW}$), a significant blueshift of E_{PL}^1 , accompanied by a spectral linewidth broadening was observed, which is consistent with the band-filling effect.¹³ It may also be noted that with increasing optical excitation power, the high-energy side of the PL spectra becomes significantly broader (see the dotted curve), which is a direct reflection of the E_F shifting into the conduction band. On the other hand, the low-energy side of the PL spectra does not show any variation with increasing optical excitation power (see the vertical dotted line), suggesting the absence or negligible level of the band-tailing effect and localized states.

The PL peak energy and the linewidth measured at 20 K under $5 \mu\text{W}$ optical excitation power is $\sim 0.675 \text{ eV}$ and $\sim 15 \text{ meV}$, respectively. These values are considerably smaller than those commonly reported values for n -type degenerate InN nanowires/nanorods.^{8,21,33} Under very low excitation conditions (not shown here), extremely narrow spectral linewidths, in the range of $\sim 9 - 12 \text{ meV}$, have been measured for undoped InN nanowires.⁶¹ Detailed analysis on such undoped InN nanowires shows that the residual electron densities are in the range of $\sim 4 \times 10^{15} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ or lower,⁴⁶ compared to the commonly reported values of $\sim 1 \times 10^{18-19} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ for n -type degenerate InN nanowires/nanorods.^{8,21,25}

B. PL spectra of Si-doped InN nanowires

With the distinct PL characteristics of undoped InN nanowires described above, it enables us to investigate the PL characteristics of InN nanowires with controlled n -type doping. In what follows, we describe the temperature- and power-dependent PL characteristics of InN:Si nanowires with Si cell temperatures of $1250 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ (we define it as “moderately Si-doped”) and $1350 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ (we define it as “heavily Si-doped”), which correspond to average doping concentrations of approximately $5 \times 10^{17} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ and $5 \times 10^{18} \text{ cm}^{-3}$, respectively.⁶²

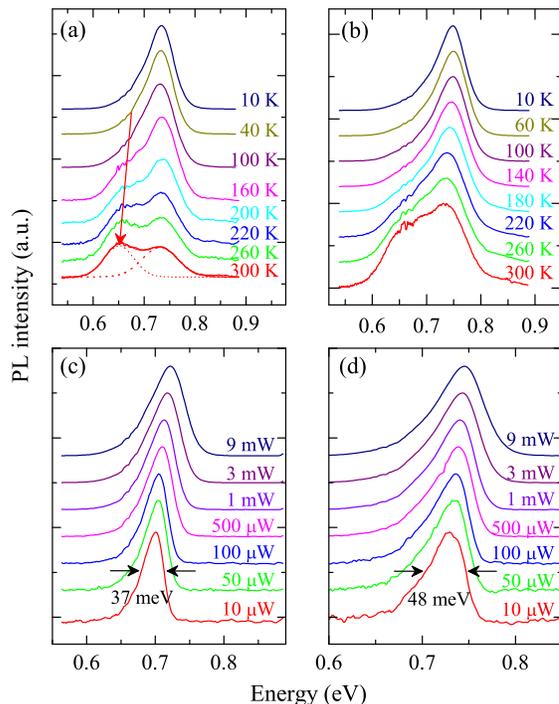


FIG. 3. (Color online) PL spectra of InN:Si nanowires with (a) moderately and (b) heavily Si-doping at different temperatures under an excitation power of 9 mW ; and (c) moderately and (d) heavily Si-doping under different optical excitation powers measured at 6 K . The narrowest measured linewidth for each Si-doped sample is labeled by the FWHM value.

PL characteristics of moderately Si-doped InN nanowires were first described. As illustrated in Fig. 3(a), it can be seen that at low temperatures ($< 160 \text{ K}$), the PL spectra are characterized by a single emission peak, with peak energy (E_{PL}^H) $\sim 0.73 \text{ eV}$. This energy is considerably larger than that of undoped InN nanowires (E_{PL}^1 , shown in

Fig. 2(a)). Such large PL peak energy has been commonly measured for n -type degenerate InN nanowires.^{8,21,33} When the temperature increases, however, in contrast to n -type degenerate InN nanowires, it is observed that a low-energy peak (E_{PL}^L) \sim 0.65 eV (at 300 K) emerges in the PL spectra. The arrow in Fig. 3(a) shows the trend of E_{PL}^L evolving with the temperature. At 300 K, the intensity of E_{PL}^L is observably higher than that of E_{PL}^H , suggesting E_{PL}^L is not likely a phonon replica (second-order effect) of the high-energy peak.

The important feature revealed from the temperature dependent spectra is that E_{PL}^L shows a clear redshift as the temperature increases; while E_{PL}^H is almost temperature invariant, which resembles those profiles measured from n -type degenerate InN nanowires.^{8,21,33} Here, we suggest E_{PL}^L and E_{PL}^H can be ascribed to the band-to-band carrier recombination from the low-doped *bulk* region and Mahan exciton emission in the high-doped *near-surface* region. Details will be discussed in Sec. IV.

With further increasing Si-doping to $\sim 5 \times 10^{18}$ cm⁻³ (Fig. 3(b)), the PL spectra exhibit similar features. However, the high-energy peak described above (E_{PL}^H) shifts to an even larger energy (E_{PL}^3) \sim 0.75 eV; such blueshift with increasing doping is consistent with Burstein-Moss effect. Moreover, the PL spectrum at each temperature is dominated by E_{PL}^3 , which could suggest the dominant emission region is E_{PL}^3 (E_{PL}^H) associated. We will show in Sec. IV that this region is the high-doped near-surface region.

From Figs. 3(a) and 3(b), it can be seen that the temperature dependent PL spectra of InN:Si nanowires are significantly different from those of undoped InN nanowires (Fig. 2(a)); such difference can also be seen from the power dependent PL spectra. Comparing Fig. 2(d), Fig. 3(c), and Fig. 3(d), it can be seen that as Si-dopants are incorporated and with increased average doping concentration, the spectral linewidth (Γ , as indicated by arrows) gets much broader under the lowest measured optical excitation powers (5 μ W for undoped InN nanowires and 10 μ W for InN:Si nanowires). Moreover, Γ has much reduced excitation power dependent, e.g., Γ is nearly power-independent for heavily Si-doped InN nanowires (Fig. 3(d)). Such nearly power-independent PL characteristics of the presented heavily Si-doped InN nanowires have been commonly reported for n -type degenerate InN nanowires.^{8,21,33} We ascribe this to the evolution of the dominant emission region from the low-doped nanowire bulk to the high-doped nanowire near-surface.

The presence of two emission regions in InN:Si nanowires, as well as the evolution of the dominant emission region from the bulk to the near-surface when Si-dopants are incorporated and with increased doping concentration, can be ascribed to the Si-dopants being preferentially incorporated to the near-surface region. Such Si-dopants surface segregation will be discussed in details in Sec. IV.

Up to here, it is important to mention that, the PL peaks of the presented InN:Si nanowires are centered at higher energies compared with those of InN films with similar doping concentrations;^{7,9,10} in addition, the PL emission in such InN films also shows considerable dependence on optical excitation power. This could indicate that, due to the large surface-to-volume ratios, the surface of InN nanowires plays an important role in the PL characteristics of n -type InN nanowires. *In this sense, the afore-mentioned two emission regions could only exist in nanowire structure, due to the enhanced surface effect.*

IV. DISCUSSIONS

From the afore-described results, it is evident that the optical characteristics of InN nanowires change significantly with Si-doping. For the undoped InN nanowires, the PL emission can be ascribed to band-to-band recombination, and may involve free-exciton emission at low temperatures. The PL characteristics can be further characterized by the strong dependence on temperature and optical excitation power. On the other hand, PL emission spectra of InN:Si nanowires measured at low temperatures resemble those of n -type degenerate InN nanowires, i.e., a peak energy (here, it is \sim 0.73 – 0.75 eV) considerably larger than the bandgap of InN, as well as the absence of band-filling effect with increasing optical excitation power.⁶³ However, with increasing the temperature, a new feature, the low-energy (E_{PL}^L \sim 0.65 eV) peak, emerges in the PL spectra of InN:Si nanowires. In the rest of this paper, we will discuss the origin of this peak, as well as the influence of the charge carrier concentrations and distributions on the optical characteristics of InN nanowires.

In order to address the afore-mentioned issues, it is critically important to understand the charge carrier distribution or the Si-dopants distribution in InN nanowires. Although the Si-doping mechanism in InN nanowires remains not clear, the surface segregation of dopant species has been commonly observed in the epitaxially grown III-nitride semiconductors as well as various nanowire structures.^{64,65} In order to examine such Si-dopants surface segregation in InN nanowires, the near-surface E_F at the lateral surfaces of undoped and moderately Si-doped InN nanowires is directly investigated by angle-resolved XPS.

As can be seen from Fig. 4(a), the near-surface E_F for undoped InN nanowires lies well below the CBM (for E_g (300 K) = 0.65 eV), suggesting the absence of surface electron accumulation and essentially *intrinsic* InN nanowires. In contrast, the near-surface E_F for InN:Si nanowires is measured \sim 1.0 eV above the valence band maximum (VBM),

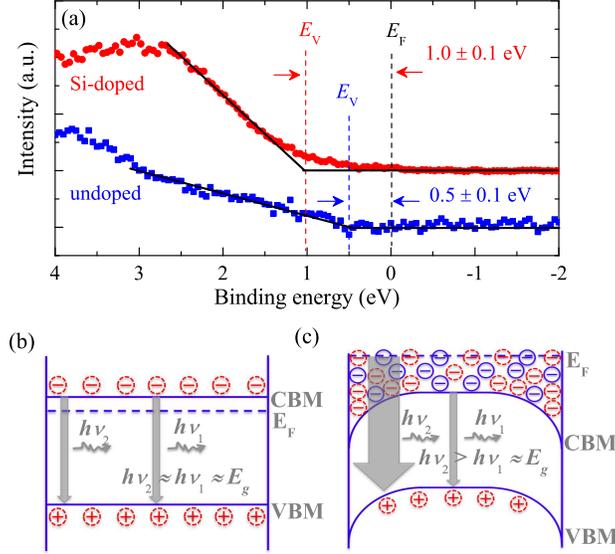


FIG. 4. (Color online) (a) X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy of intrinsic and moderately Si-doped InN nanowires. (b) and (c) are schematic plots showing the carrier distributions and recombination processes in intrinsic and InN:Si nanowires, respectively. The blue circles represent intrinsic free charge carriers, and the dotted red circles represent photo-generated charge carriers.

hence is pinned into conduction band with ~ 0.35 eV above the CBM; this corresponds to a high electron density $\sim 1 \times 10^{12-13} \text{ cm}^{-2}$ in the near-surface region,⁴⁶ which is significantly larger than the average doping concentration of moderately Si-doped InN nanowires ($\sim 5 \times 10^{17} \text{ cm}^{-3}$). These results strongly suggest that the near-surface region of InN:Si nanowires can be characterized by the presence of large density of electrons, hence is heavily Si-doped; while the bulk region of such InN:Si nanowires is therefore characterized by the presence of low density of electrons, hence is lightly Si-doped.⁶⁶ Up to here, we would like to point out that such enhanced surface doping is mostly determined by Si-dopants other than unintentional *n*-type defect dopants.⁶⁷ A detailed investigation of the surface charge properties of InN nanowires, including tuning the surface band bending and two-dimensional electron gas formation by controlled Si-dopants incorporation and/or wire morphology is published elsewhere.⁴⁶

Based on the XPS results, the carrier distributions, together with the associated carrier recombination processes are schematically shown in Figs. 4(b) and 4(c) for intrinsic and Si-doped InN nanowires, respectively. For intrinsic InN nanowires, photo-generated electron-hole pairs may distribute nearly uniformly across the lateral dimension of the nanowires, and the measured PL emission is mainly due to band-to-band carrier recombination (therefore shrinkage of bandgap and band-filling effect can be clearly observed). For InN:Si nanowires, however, the near-surface region is characterized by the presence of large density of electrons hence severe surface band bending.⁶⁸ Due to the band bending induced lateral electric field, photo-generated electrons preferentially migrate to the near-surface region. In this case, two emission regions, i.e., bulk region (low-doped), and near-surface region (high-doped), could probably exist in InN:Si nanowires; the corresponding energy is marked by $h\nu_1$ and $h\nu_2$, respectively. Moreover, as Si-doping increases, the near-surface region emission could become more important, i.e., the dominant emission region evolves from the low-doped nanowire bulk to the high-doped nanowire near-surface. In what follows, we will examine these scenarios and correlate them with the PL characteristics.

Figure 5(a) shows the extracted (by two Gaussian distributions, see the dotted curves in Fig. 3(a) for a sample fitting) temperature-dependent E_{PL}^L and E_{PL}^H of the moderately Si-doped InN nanowires. E_{PL}^1 of intrinsic InN nanowires (from Fig. 2(a)) and E_{PL}^3 of heavily Si-doped InN:Si nanowires (from Fig. 3(b)) are also shown in the same plot for comparison. It can be seen that the temperature dependence of E_{PL}^L is remarkably similar to that of E_{PL}^1 ; therefore E_{PL}^L can be ascribed to carrier recombination in the relatively low-doped region. The temperature dependence of E_{PL}^H , on the other hand, is remarkably identical to that of E_{PL}^3 in heavily Si-doped InN nanowires, as well as those commonly observed temperature dependences of peak energies from the *n*-type degenerate InN nanowires,^{8,21,33} therefore can be ascribed to carrier recombination in the relatively high-doped region. These results are consistent with InN:Si nanowires being characterized by the presence of relatively low- and high-doped regions, corresponding to the nanowire bulk and nanowire near-surface, respectively. This is a natural consequence of inhomogeneous electron distribution caused by the afore-discussed Si-dopants surface segregation.

More details about PL characteristics in the low-doped (the bulk) and high-doped (the near-surface) regions can be revealed by the extracted temperature-dependent integrated PL intensity corresponding to each region (area under

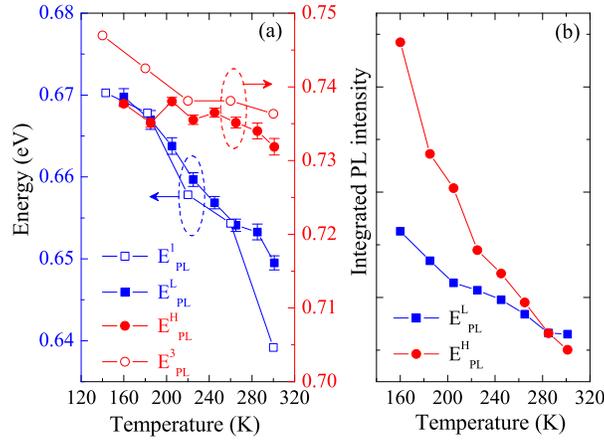


FIG. 5. (Color online) (a) Temperature dependence of peak energies: E_{PL}^L from the low-doped bulk region (filled blue squares) and E_{PL}^H from high-doped near-surface region (filled red circles) of moderately Si-doped InN nanowires; E_{PL}^1 of intrinsic InN nanowires (open blue squares); E_{PL}^3 of heavily Si-doped InN nanowires (open red circles). (b) Temperature dependent integrated PL intensity for the two emission regions of moderately Si-doped InN nanowires.

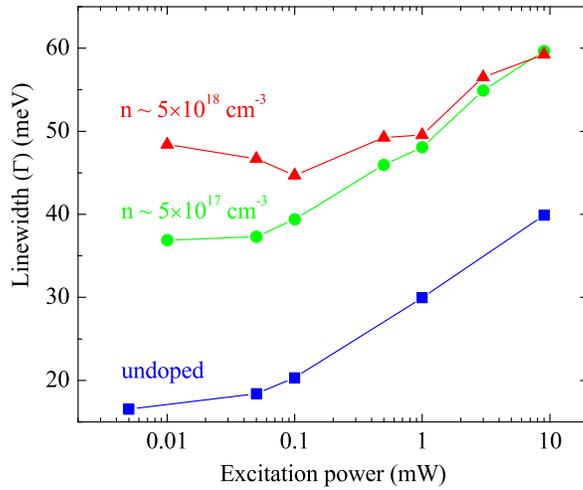


FIG. 6. (Color online) Extracted optical excitation power dependence of spectral linewidths (Γ) for intrinsic (from Fig. 2(d)) and Si-doped InN nanowires (from Figs. 3(c) and 3(d)) measured at low temperatures.

dotted curves in Fig. 3(a)). As can be seen from Fig. 5(b), with increasing the temperature the PL branch from the high-doped region quenches significantly faster than the PL branch from the low-doped region. This fast decay of PL emission from the high-doped region can also be observed in Fig. 3(a), in which as the temperature increases, the PL emission from the low-doped region gradually dominates the spectra. The fast decay with increasing the temperature in the high-doped region can be largely attributed to the significantly enhanced nonradiative recombination rate, due to the presence of large surface states and defects. This further confirms that the high-doped region locates in the vicinity of nanowire surface.⁶⁹

The afore-described scenarios can also be justified by the distinct PL characteristics of intrinsic and Si-doped InN nanowires at low temperatures. As illustrated in Fig. 6, the power-dependent PL spectral linewidths (Γ) were derived from Figs. 2(d), 3(c), and 3(d) for intrinsic, moderately Si-doped, and heavily Si-doped InN nanowires, respectively. It can be seen that Γ broadens significantly with increasing Si-doping (i.e., at fixed optical excitation power), which is directly related to the band bending in the near-surface region and the resulting highly inhomogeneous carrier distributions.

This can be understood within the framework of Mahan exciton emission. Due to the enhanced surface doping, the energy spacing between E_F and valence band tails varies along the nanowire radial direction. As a result, electrons with a broad energy distribution are involved in the recombination process, resulting in very broad PL emission spectra; such effect can only be significant in the near-surface region due to the more severe band bending. This broadening with increasing Si-doping essentially indicates the near-surface region emission gradually dominates the

PL spectra; such effect can also be observed if one compares the PL spectrum of moderately Si-doped InN nanowires with that of heavily Si-doped InN nanowires measured at 300 K (Figs. 3(a) and 3(b)).

Moreover, it can be seen from the heavily Si-doped InN nanowires that the linewidth (Γ) shows a small, or negligible dependence on optical excitation power, compared to Γ measured from intrinsic InN nanowires. This can also be explained by that, at this average Si-doping concentration the photo-generated electron density might be significantly smaller than the accumulated electron density in the near-surface region due to the enhanced surface doping. As a consequence, the PL spectra, in terms of both the peak position and spectral linewidth, are largely determined by the residual electron density in the near-surface region, instead of optical excitation power; this is in direct contrast to the case for intrinsic InN nanowires.

In this regard, it is suggested that the broad near-surface region emission predominantly determines the PL characteristics of *n*-type degenerate InN nanowires, thereby leading to a very large and temperature independent peak energy (considerably larger than the bandgap of InN), as well as a very broad and optical excitation power independent spectral linewidth. However, band-to-band carrier recombination in the relatively low-doped nanowire bulk region may also be *clearly* observed, depending on the residual electron density; as is the case for the moderately Si-doped InN nanowires in this study.

Compared to PL characteristics of intrinsic InN nanowires, which can be well explained by the absence, or negligible level of surface electron accumulation at nonpolar surface, the PL characteristics of InN:Si nanowires are fundamentally different, which are the natural results of the presence of electron accumulation at nonpolar surface.

V. CONCLUSIONS

In this work, temperature-dependent PL measurements were performed on both intrinsic and Si-doped InN nanowires. For intrinsic InN nanowires, the PL emission can be attributed to band-to-band carrier recombination, and may involve free-exciton emission. The lateral nonpolar surface is characterized by the absence, or negligible level of surface electron accumulation. Detailed analysis of InN:Si nanowires, however, indicates that the near-surface region is much more heavily doped, which results in surface electron accumulation and Fermi-level pinning, as well as the associated two emission regions from the low-doped nanowire bulk and the high-doped nanowire near-surface. Depending on the doping concentrations and degree of carrier localization, PL emission in InN:Si nanowires may involve both band-to-band carrier recombination and Mahan exciton emission. These results clearly demonstrate that the optical properties of InN nanowires are closely related to the charge carrier concentrations and distributions, as well as the surface charge properties.

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