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First-principles density functional theory study of strained wurtzite InP and InAs

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Abstract.

We report on semilocal and hybrid density functional theory (DFT) study of strained wurtzite crystals of InAs and InP. The crystal-field splitting has a large and non-linear dependence on strain for both crystals. Moreover, the study of the electronic deformation potentials reveals that the well-known quasi-cubic (QC) approximation fails to reproduce the non-ideal c/a ratio. This theoretical study is of crucial importance for the simulation of self-assembled InAs/InP nanowires.

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Semiconductor core/shellnanowires (NWs)^{1,2}hold lot of promises for applications in the field in electronics^{3,4}, photonics^{5,6}, and biochemical sensors.⁷ These systems, compared to pure semiconductor wires, demonstrate areductionof surface scattering and ionized impurity scattering⁸with improved electronic confinement properties. The synthesis processis mainly based on the gold-catalyzed vapor liquid-solid (VLS) growth mechanisms, which allows for a precise controlof geometrical dimensionsand strain accommodation.⁹The VLS method is particularly suited in interfacing highly strained III-V materials onto Si substrates.¹⁰Interestingly, it favors the hexagonal phase at the nucleation stage leading toa crystallization of III-V semiconductorsinahexagonal wurtzite (WZ) structure whereasthe bulk counterpart for most of them is cubic zinc-blende (ZB).¹¹Recently, much effort has been devoted to the growth and fabrication of strained InP/InAs/InPNW devices for the realizationof high field-effect electron mobility transistors and circuits. Advantages of thesesystems include the high electron mobility (30 000 cm²/V s at 300 K) and velocity (43000 cm/s) of InAsand a large conduction band offset between InAs and InP(0.5 eV).¹²Strain engineering is a well-established technique to tune the electronic band gap of nanostructures. For instance,the lattice mismatch ofInAs onInPis about -3 %and it is expected to tailor the band offsets and carrier mobility by lifting the degeneracy in the electronic bands. In addition, strain effects cangeneratea piezoelectric polarization charge at interfaces leading to a band bending in the active region of the wire.Determining thematerials properties ofInAs/InP NWs iskey to improving current generating efficiencies of underlying devices.The WZ and ZB band structuresfor bulk InAs and InPhave been extensively studied both theoretically and experimentally.¹²⁻¹⁴Moreover, electronic deformation potentials (DPs) of cubic semiconductors are well documented in literature.¹²However, to the best of our knowledge,no workon DPs has dealt withWZ III-V materials so far. This first step is mandatory for realistic modeling of InAs/InP NWs in the WZ structure¹⁵, including the effects of linear and non-linear electro-elastic coupling.¹⁶

In this work , we perform*ab initio* calculationsofdeformation potentials in wurtziteInAs and InP. The structural relaxations with strain perturbations are performed using the plane-wave

projector augmented wave method (PAW) as implemented in the VASP code.¹⁷ We used the Heyd-Scuseria-Ernzerhof (HSE06) DFT hybrid exchange correlation functional^{18,19} with a screening parameter $\mu=0.2$ and a mixing parameter of $\alpha = 0.25$. This approach has been found to give reliable results in group III-nitrides²⁰ and group II-oxides.²¹ Generalized-Gradient Approximation (GGA) in the Perdew–Burke–Ernzerhof (PBE) parameterization²² and single shot GW (G_0W_0) calculations implemented in VASP are also performed for comparison. We used GGA eigenvalues as input to the single shot G_0W_0 calculations leading to more reliable parameters such as band gap and deformation potentials. The semi-core d -electrons of In are treated as valence electrons. The procedure is carried out with a plane-wave cutoff of 600 eV and a $6 \times 6 \times 4$ Monkhorst–Pack mesh for k-point sampling. This allows for a full relaxation of the structural parameters. The accuracy of the predicted equilibrium lattice constants for both InP and InAs correlates directly with the level of approximation in the functional as shown in Table I. HSE gives the most accurate results and the well-known overcorrection of GGA-PBE²³ become apparent. We also note in Tab. I that the WZ structure is not perfectly tetrahedral with non-ideal c/a and u (an ideal WZ lattice consists in a tetragonal ratio $c/a=1.633$ of the lattice constants and an ideal internal cell parameter $u=3/8$) as found for both simulations and experiment.

Fig. 1 shows the InAs and InP band structures at equilibrium near the Γ -point computed with HSE. Calculations are performed without spin-orbit coupling. The direct band gap is formed by an s-like $\Gamma_{1c}(BC)$ conduction-band state and doubly degenerate p-like $\Gamma_{6v}(HH, LH)$ and $\Gamma_{1v}(CH)$ valence-band states. Two energy gaps can be defined according to the optical transitions: $\Gamma_{6v} \rightarrow \Gamma_{1c}$ (A, B) and $\Gamma_{1v} \rightarrow \Gamma_{1c}$ (C). In our simulations, E_{AB} is the fundamental transition energy for both InAs and InP. As evidenced in Fig. 1, away from the Brillouin zone-center, the valence bands are strongly admixed and their dispersion is non-parabolic. Therefore the valence-band effective masses cannot be easily derived for application in $\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{p}$ models. On the other hand, the conduction band energy dispersion is parabolic near the Γ -point and our HSE calculation of the electron masses perpendicular and parallel to the c -axis gives: 0.055 and 0.032 (in units of free

electron mass). These results are consistent with those of De and Prior obtained within an empirical pseudopotential approach.²⁴ As seen in Tab. I, the band-gap energy is sensitive to the details of the exchange and correlation functional and both the hybrid functional and single G_0W_0 reproduce values close to the experimental data. Conversely, an equivalent crystal field splitting $\Delta_{cr} = E_{HH} - E_{CH}$ is obtained for PBE and HSE and the value of InAs compares well with the self-consistent GW calculation of Zanolet *et al.*^{12,13} A similar behavior between PBE and HSE for Δ_{cr} under deformation is evidenced both for biaxial strain ε_{\perp} and for uniaxial strain ε_{zz} as shown in Fig. 2. As definition, $\varepsilon_{\perp} = (\varepsilon_{xx} + \varepsilon_{yy})$ and ε_{zz} stand for the strain components in and perpendicular of the c -plane. In the calculations, the internal parameter u was fully relaxed for each strain. A nonlinear behavior is observed for the two semiconductors which can be interpolated with a polynomial regression. It should be noted that (Fig. 2b) HSE exhibits a strong nonlinearity for the crystal field splitting of InAs even for moderate biaxial strain.

The electronic deformation potentials are defined as the linear coefficients in the expansion of the $\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{p}$ band energies with respect to strain. We interpolated the present first-principle calculations for small deformations with a derivation of DPs from a 3x3 band $\mathbf{k}\cdot\mathbf{p}$ model²⁵ which gives the linear dependence of $E_{A/B}$ and E_C on strain as:

$$E_{A/B} = E_{A/B}(0) + (a_{cz} - D_1)\varepsilon_{zz} + (a_{ct} - D_2)\varepsilon_{\perp} - (D_3\varepsilon_{zz} + D_4\varepsilon_{\perp})$$

$$E_C = E_C(0) + (a_{cz} - D_1)\varepsilon_{zz} + (a_{ct} - D_2)\varepsilon_{\perp}$$

(a_{cz}, a_{ct}) and (D_1, D_2, D_3, D_4) characterize the deformation potentials of Γ_{1c} and Γ_{1v} and Γ_{6v} , respectively. These relations are compatible with hexagonal symmetry C_{6v} . On the other hand, the breaking of symmetry C_{6v} to orthorhombic C_{2v} with in-plane anisotropic strain lifts the degeneracy of HH and LH levels as:

$$\Delta E = |E_{HH} - E_{CH}| = 2|D_5(\varepsilon_{xx} - \varepsilon_{yy})|$$

The electronic deformation potentials of WZ InAs and InP are listed in table II. Differences are

evidenced between PBE, G_0W_0 , and HSE. However, the calculations ensure an overall uniform behavior for the DPsincreasingdistinctly from InAs to InP.This trend with the band-gap has beenalso observed in group III-nitrides²⁰ and group II-oxides.²¹Moreover, the band-gap-related deformation potentialsof a_{cz} - D_1 and a_{cr} - D_2 are found more sensitive to exchange correlation functionalthan D_3 , D_4 and D_5 . Because there is currently no available experimental information and in order to gain insight into the quality of our simulations, we performed DP simulationsin ZB InAs and InP as a test. By comparison to our previous DFT-LDA calculations²⁶,HSE-based calculations lead to a better agreement with experiment.The same conclusion is drawn from our present GGA computation. This gives us confidence in the ability of the hybrid functional to model deformation potentialsin wurtzite III-V semiconductors.Finally,the QC approximation wastested for InAs and InP from HSE results. The QC approximation is extensively used in **k.p**Hamiltonians and based on a similar local atomic coordination between WZ and ZB crystals leading to a correlation of their physical properties along the [111] direction of the zinc-blende. Herein, we evaluated the deviation from the QC approximation of deformation potentials.Indeed, the same approximation in **k.p** theorylead to: $D_3 + 2D_4 = 0$ and $D_1 + D_3 = D_2$. Actually, neither for InAs nor InPsatisfiedthese equations.For instance the first one yields-0.93 eV forInP and the failure must be related to the non-ideal c/a ratio.

As a conclusion, a systematic study of the electronic band structure in wurtziteInAsand InP is presented. Hybrid-functional calculations allow for a realistic description of the strained band energies. From accurate calculations of the electronic deformation potentials, we found the widely used QC approximation is not fulfilledfor both InAs and InP. We demonstrated that the dependence of electronic bands on strain is strongly nonlinear and it should be taken into account for a proper modeling of InAs/InP nanowire-based devices.

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Figure captions.

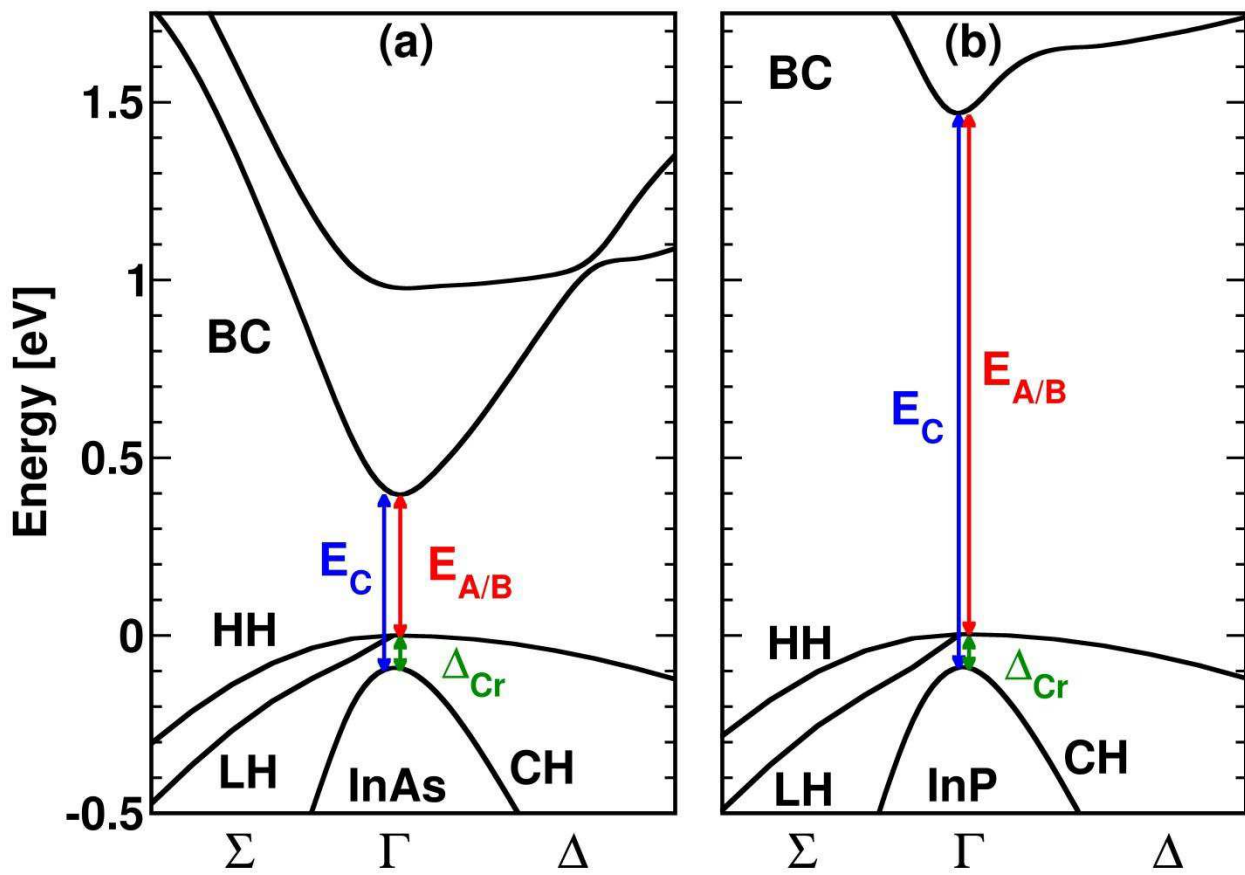


Figure 1: Blow-up of the WZ-InAs (a) and WZ-InP (b) band structures calculated with HSE close to the Γ point. Σ and Δ denote the in-plane and parallel directions with respect to c -axis. The origin of the energy scale is taken at the top of the valence band (VBM).

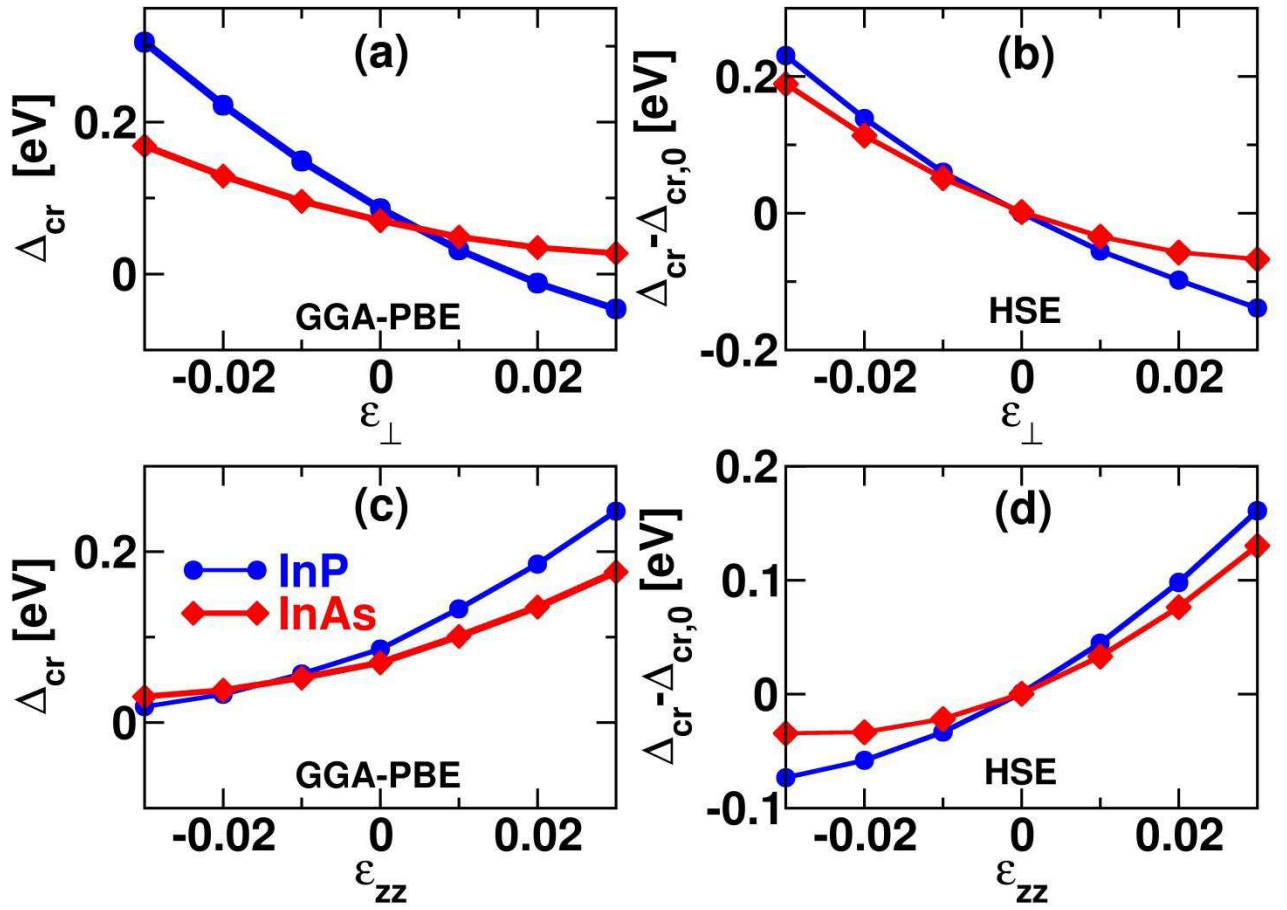


Figure 2: Left Panel:GGA-PBE dependence of the crystal-field splitting $\Delta_{cr}(\epsilon)$ of InAs and InP on (a) in-plane and(c) perpendicular strain with respect to the c-plane. Right Panel: Dependence of $\Delta_{cr}(\epsilon) - \Delta_{cr}(0)$ on (b) in-plane and(d) perpendicular strain calculated with HSE for InAs and InP. Quantization axis z is along the[0001] WZ direction.

Tables.

Table I: Results of GGA-PBE, HSE, and G_0W_0 calculations for wurtzite InAs and InP at equilibrium for the lattice constants (a , c), internal parameter u , direct band gap E_{AB} , crystal-field splitting Δ_{cr} , and compared with the experimental values^{2,14,27} (Expt.). Single G_0W_0 is performed on top of GGA calculations with identical structural parameters of GGA-PBE.

	Method	$a(\text{\AA})$	$c(\text{\AA})$	u	$E_{AB}(\text{eV})$	$\Delta_{cr}(\text{eV})$
InP	PBE	4.229	6.881	0.3776	0.67	0.086
	G_0W_0				1.43	0.090
	HSE	4.174	6.824	0.3742	1.47	0.093
	Expt.	4.150 ^a	6.777 ^a	-	1.49 ^a	-
InAs	PBE	4.426	7.164	0.3817	-0.31	0.070
	G_0W_0				0.42	0.088
	HSE	4.330	7.066	0.3756	0.40	0.091
	Expt.	4.283 ^b	6.995 ^b	0.3750 ^b	0.52 ^c	-

^a reference 27

^b reference 14

^c reference 2

Table II: Deformation potentials (eV) of wurtziteInAs and InP obtained with GGA-PBE, G_0W_0 , and HSE.

	Method	$a_{cz} - D_1$	$a_{ct} - D_2$	D_3	D_4	D_5
InAs	PBE	-3.67	-5.31	4.70	-2.18	-2.21
	G_0W_0	-3.06	-6.12	5.62	-2.77	-2.63
	HSE	-2.69	-8.33	5.85	-3.17	-2.78
InP	PBE	-3.13	-7.20	5.55	-3.09	-2.84
	G_0W_0	-3.98	-7.43	5.67	-3.15	-2.88
	HSE	-4.05	-7.64	5.92	-3.28	-2.94

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