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M. L. Cohen

J. R. Chelikowsky

Electronic Structure and Optical Properties of Semiconductors



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Electronic Structure and Optical Properties of Semiconductors

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The Electronic and Statistical-Mechanical
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- 71 **High Magnetic Fields in Semiconductor Physics**
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*to Merrill,
Mark and Susan,
and Mitzy,
Bryan, Matthew and Todd*

Preface

We began planning and writing this book in the late 1970s at the suggestion of Manuel Cardona and Helmut Lotsch. We also received considerable encouragement and stimulation from colleagues. Some said there was a need for instructional material in this area while others emphasized the utility of a research text. We tried to strike a compromise. The figures, tables, and references are included to enable researchers to obtain quickly essential information in this area of semiconductor research. For instructors and students, we attempt to cover some basic ideas about electronic structure and semiconductor physics with applications to real, rather than model, solids.

We wish to thank our colleagues and collaborators whose research results and ideas are presented here. Special thanks are due to Jim Phillips who influenced us both during our formative years and afterwards. We are grateful to Sari Yamagishi for her patience and skill with the typing and production of the manuscript. Finally, we acknowledge the great patience of Helmut Lotsch and Manuel Cardona.

Berkeley, CA
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M.L. Cohen
J.R. Chelikowsky

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Theoretical Concepts and Methods	4
2.1 The One-Electron Model and Band Structure	7
2.2 Properties of $E_n(k)$	11
3. Pseudopotentials	16
3.1 The Empirical Pseudopotential Method	20
3.2 Self-Consistent and Ab Initio Pseudopotentials	25
4. Response Functions and Density of States	30
4.1 Charge Density and Bonding	38
5. Low Energy Probes of Semiconductors	43
5.1 Band Gap Measurements	43
5.2 Excitonic Effects Near Band Edges	45
5.3 Cyclotron Resonance	47
5.4 Doping Effects in Semiconductors	49
6. Optical and Electronic Spectra of Semiconductors	51
6.1 Modulation Spectroscopy	51
6.1.1 Wavelength Modulation	53
6.1.2 Temperature Modulation	54
6.1.3 Stress Modulation	56
6.1.4 Electric Field Modulation	57
6.1.5 Other Modulation Methods	59
6.2 High Energy Reflectivity Measurements	60
6.3 Photoemission Spectra of Semiconductors	61
6.3.1 X-Ray Photoemission Spectroscopy (XPS) and Ultraviolet Photoemission Spectroscopy (UPS)	64
6.3.2 Constant Final State and Constant Initial State Spectroscopies	66
6.3.3 Angle-Resolved Photoemission Spectroscopy	67
6.3.4 Photoelectron Yield Spectroscopy	69
6.4 Electron Energy Loss Spectroscopy for Semiconductors ...	69
6.4.1 Plasmon Excitations in Solids	70
6.4.2 Experimental Measurements and Results	71
	IX

7. High Energy Probes of Semiconductors: X-Rays	73
7.1 Crystal Structure Determinations	73
7.2 Charge Density Determinations Using X-Rays	74
7.3 Temperature Dependence of X-Ray Reflections	76
8. Diamond and Zinc-Blende Structure Semiconductors .	79
8.1 Crystal Structure	79
8.2 The Electronic Structure of Silicon	80
8.3 The Electronic Structure of Germanium	92
8.4 The Electronic Structure of Gray Tin	98
8.5 Zinc-Blende Structure Semiconductors	101
8.6 The Electronic Structure of Gallium Arsenide	102
8.7 The Electronic Structure of Zinc Selenide	112
8.8 The Electronic Structure of Other III-V and II-VI Semiconductors	117
9. Wurtzite Structure Semiconductors	140
9.1 The Electronic Structure of Hexagonal Zinc Sulfide	144
9.2 The Electronic Structure of Hexagonal CdS and CdSe	154
9.3 The Electronic Structure of Hexagonal ZnO	157
10. Chalcopyrite Structure Semiconductors	161
11. IV-VI Semiconductors	172
11.1 Electronic Band Structure	173
11.2 Applications of the Electronic Band Structure	182
12. Triatomic, Layer, Chain, and Amorphous Models	189
References	205

Bibliography: Electronic Structure and Optical Properties of Semiconductors	213
B.1 Properties of Semiconductors	213
B.1.1 Charge Densities in Semiconductors	213
B.1.2 Chemical Trends and Bonding in Semiconductors	213
B.1.3 Compilation of Properties of Semiconductors	214
B.1.4 Electronic Structure of Semiconductors	215
B.1.5 Lattice Forces and Dynamics	216
B.1.6 Optical and Dielectric Properties of Solids	217
B.1.7 Photoemission and Electron Spectroscopies	220
B.1.8 Temperature and Pressure Effects in Semiconductors ...	221

B.2 General Semiconductor Articles	222
B.2.1 II–VI Semiconductors	222
B.2.2 III–V Semiconductors	223
B.2.3 IV–IV Semiconductors	225
B.2.4 IV–VI Semiconductors	226
B.3 Chalcopyrite Semiconductors	227
B.4 Properties of Specific Semiconductors	227
B.4.1 Aluminum Antimonide	227
B.4.2 Beryllium Oxide	228
B.4.3 Bismuth Triiodide	228
B.4.4 Cadmium Germanium Arsenide	228
B.4.5 Cadmium Oxide	228
B.4.6 Cadmium Selenide	228
B.4.7 Cadmium Sulphide	229
B.4.8 Cadmium Telluride	230
B.4.9 Carbon	231
B.4.10 Copper Bromide	232
B.4.11 Copper Chloride	232
B.4.12 Copper Iodide	232
B.4.13 Gallium Antimonide	233
B.4.14 Gallium Arsenide	234
B.4.15 Gallium Phosphide	237
B.4.16 Gallium Selenide	239
B.4.17 Gallium Sulphide	239
B.4.18 Gallium Telluride	240
B.4.19 Germanium	240
B.4.20 Germanium Telluride	243
B.4.21 Indium Antimonide	244
B.4.22 Indium Arsenide	245
B.4.23 Indium Phosphide	245
B.4.24 Lead Diiodide	246
B.4.25 Lead Selenide	246
B.4.26 Lead Sulphide	247
B.4.27 Lead Telluride	247
B.4.28 Magnesium Oxide	248
B.4.29 Magnesium Silicide	248
B.4.30 Mercury Selenide	248
B.4.31 Mercury Sulphide	248
B.4.32 Mercury Telluride	248
B.4.33 Selenium	249
B.4.34 Silicon	249
B.4.35 Silver Chloride	254
B.4.36 Silver Iodide	254
B.4.37 Tellurium	254

B.4.38 Tin	255
B.4.39 Tin Diselenide	255
B.4.40 Tin Disulphide	256
B.4.41 Tin Telluride	256
B.4.42 Zinc Germanium Phosphide	256
B.4.43 Zinc Oxide	257
B.4.44 Zinc Selenide	257
B.4.45 Zinc Sulphide	258
B.4.46 Zinc Telluride	259
Subject Index	261

1. Introduction

Semiconductors have played a major role in the current technological revolution. The enormous advances in electronics and computer science were made possible by a better understanding of the properties of semiconductors, and it is likely that the revolution has only just begun.

From the point of view of basic science and solid state physics in particular, semiconductors have been central and fundamental. Research on the properties of semiconductors has led not only to the transistor (Nobel Prize, 1956) but also to new insights into properties of matter such as tunneling (Nobel Prize, 1973 and 1986), disorder (Nobel Prize, 1977), and new quantum effects (Nobel Prize, 1985). In addition, studies of semiconductor band structures have had a vast impact on our understanding of the fundamental electronic structure of solids. Although most device applications focus on the minimum semiconductor band gap, which is generally around 1 eV, solid state physicists have been interested in a wider range of energy ~ 1 Ry. Research on electronic structure in this range has led to tests of the theories of quantum mechanics, optics, and electromagnetism.

For the past 50 to 60 years, a major aspiration of condensed matter physics has been to explain and predict the properties of solids knowing only the identities of the constituent atoms. Recently, this goal has been realized for many semiconductor properties. The successes are best illustrated by the progress made in understanding the electronic and optical properties of semiconductors. Recently, even crystal structures have been determined using accurate electronic calculations, but this area is in its infancy relative to the vast amount of experimental and theoretical work on optical properties.

The use of optical measurements to study a physical system is not a departure from traditional physics since it is probably true that more physics has been learned using photons as probes than by any other means. For example, the great advances of Heisenberg and Pauli were based on spectroscopic data. For many years, the major tests of quantum mechanics were almost synonymous with optical measurements in atoms (i.e., gases). However, in most areas, the transition from studying atoms to studying solids using optical probes came slowly. The standard argument was that the band spectra of solids were too broad to give useful detailed electronic structure data. It was obvious that the sharp, narrow line spectra associated with atoms lend themselves readily to interpretation in terms of electron transi-

tions between narrow energy levels, but the band spectra of solids, although they also contain definitive structure capable of being interpreted, received far less attention. For solids, the experiments and theories require more sophistication, but the data are rich with clues, and a quantum mechanical theory can be constructed to unravel the mysteries.

Dozens of crystals have been analyzed, and the extent of the collaborative effort between experimentalists and theorists in this area has few parallels. The result is a detailed picture of the underlying mechanisms associated with optical processes. Some of the achievements are: accurate determinations of the electronic energy levels, wavefunctions for electrons in specific materials, interpretation of optical spectra in terms of electronic transitions between energy levels, theories giving gross trends for a wide variety of materials, and a variety of calculations related to properties not directly associated with optical probes. The approaches and techniques have allowed critical tests of the theory of electronic structure. These studies have resulted in the development of new approaches for electronic structure calculations, response theory, and so on.

The purpose of this volume is to review some of the highlights associated with the above studies and to provide information concerning the theoretical and experimental techniques. Another important objective is to supply some of the useful information which has been gathered in these studies. Sometimes references to the literature will be given in lieu of results.

Although some general aspects of electronic structure calculations will be reviewed, the focus will be on the pseudopotential approach. On the experimental side, emphasis will be on techniques which investigate band structure. In particular, those measurements which give information about the electronic structure over a large energy range (~ 1 Ry) will be discussed in detail. The primary particle probe will be photons; reflectivity and photoemission measurements will be featured.

Our hope is that this volume can serve both as a coherent source for the underlying ideas relating electronic structure and optical properties and as a source of factual information about semiconductors. Because of the latter goal, we have included other relevant information about semiconductor properties which is not directly connected with the studies discussed, that is, lattice constants, effective masses, minimum band gaps, etc., and an attempt was made to include the most accurate and most current values. Hence, this volume is intended to lie somewhere between a textbook and a reference book. Numerous references to the literature are made, and it is hoped that these will serve as bridges to material beyond the scope of this book.

In most cases when discussing results, we have relied on a prototypical crystal. Having presented the general ideas and results for the prototype, extensions to other materials in the same class are described. Following this,

other related classes of materials are discussed. For example, silicon will be used as one prototype. The band structure, optical response curves, density of states, and other properties will be described. Results for other diamond structure materials will then be given, and only those properties which differ from silicon will be discussed in any detail. The extensions to zinc-blende and other crystal types will then be made.

2. Theoretical Concepts and Methods

Of the many options for broadly classifying solids, electrical resistivity has proved to be the most useful. The grouping of materials into insulators, semiconductors, semimetals, and metals involves a parameter with a range of order 10^{30} . The resistivity boundaries between the classifications are not very sharp, but they are sharp enough to make the separation for most practical purposes. For the semiconductor regime, the resistivity is between 10^9 and 10^{-3} ohm-cm, but we will also discuss insulators with resistivities above 10^9 ohm-cm and doped semiconductors and semimetals with resistivities below 10^{-3} ohm-cm. The distinction at the boundary between semiconductors and insulators will be made on the basis of the size of the fundamental (minimum) band gap. Semiconductors are assumed to have band gaps from 0 to ~ 4 eV, insulators > 4 eV, and semimetals ≤ 0 . Gray Sn (α -Sn) is an example of a borderline material which has zero band gap. It has been called a zero-gap semiconductor; it has also been called in ideal semimetal.

The wide range of resistivities of crystalline solids can be explained using band theory, which is one of the major successes of condensed matter theory. The existence of bands, gaps, overlap of bands, and the other important properties of band theory will be discussed later. These concepts and properties are the direct consequences of the model used to describe a solid. There are two conceptual models commonly used by theorists which are both useful and lead to a wealth of practical calculations.

The two popular models of solids are the interacting atoms model and the elementary excitation model. Since a solid is clearly a set of interacting atoms, the former model implies that the atoms retain their character and that perturbation theory on atomic properties will lead to a convenient description of solids. Only partial success has been achieved when this approach is taken too literally. The interacting atoms model has therefore evolved from describing a collection of individual atoms to a model of a solid composed of cores and valence electrons (Fig. 2.1). A core is composed of a nucleus and core electrons. In the frozen-core approximation, which is fundamental to the pseudopotential approach, the cores are taken to be inert with respect to the formation of the solid. Therefore, cores in solids are the same as the cores in isolated atoms, and only the valence electrons readjust when the solid is formed. For silicon, this implies that the electronic structure of the core is $(1s)^2(2s)^2(2p)^6$. Thus sodium, magnesium, and alu-

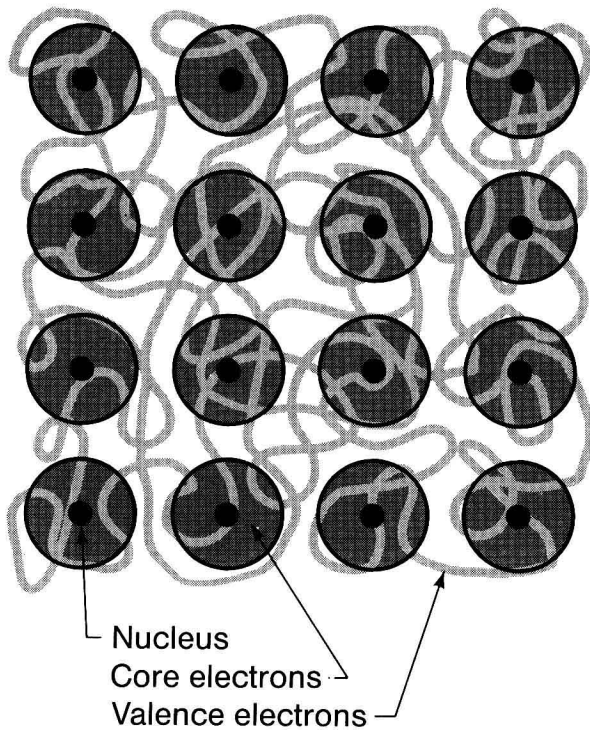


Fig. 2.1. Model of a solid with cores and valence electrons

minum all have the same core electrons as silicon, but the core charges, because of the nuclei involved, are +1 for sodium, +2 for magnesium, +3 for aluminum, and +4 for silicon. The valence electrons are $(3s)^1$, $(3s)^2$, $(3s)^2(3p)^1$, and $(3s)^2(3p)^2$ respectively for these elements.

The interacting atoms model for silicon consists of cores with charge +4 arranged in a regular array with the four valence electrons per core moving more or less freely through the core lattice. Interactions exist between the cores, between the cores and valence electrons, and between the valence electrons themselves. The Coulomb interaction dominates, and the many-body problem involving around 10^{23} particles per cm^3 can, in principle, be solved using quantum mechanics.

For the elementary excitation model, the excitations of the solid are considered to be decomposed into normal modes, and the responses of the solid to external probes are described in terms of these modes or collective excitations. A similar approach is used for describing electromagnetic radiation in terms of photons using the formalism of quantum electrodynamics. An example of an analogous description for solids would be the concept of phonons. We begin with a description of the vibrations of atomic cores. The simplest models involve masses connected by springs [2.1]. The dispersion curve, i.e., the wavevector dependent frequency, $\omega(q)$, describes

the motion of the cores in real space. The next step uses the language of quantum electrodynamics to describe the energy in the vibrational mode using the harmonic oscillator energy levels $E_n = (n + 1/2)\hbar\omega(q)$. A sound mode can be viewed as n quanta or phonons excited above the ground state. The phonons are a particular type of elementary excitation. They are collective excitations which do not resemble the constituent particles which are atomic cores and valence electrons holding the core together. Other examples of collective excitations are plasmons and magnons which result from collective motions of electrons or spins. Collective excitations are usually bosons.

There is another class of elementary excitation which consists of quasi-particles. Quasi-particles are fermions which resemble their constituent particles. Electrons excited by an external probe in a solid are quasi-particles. An electron or quasi-electron in a solid is strongly coupled to other electrons and to the lattice of atomic cores. When an electron is probed with an electromagnetic field, it does not usually respond as an individual particle. The interactions can manifest themselves in a number of ways.

One way of including these interactions is by associating an effective mass, m^* , with the electron. This concept is common in solid state physics, and it represents a convenient way of describing an interacting fermion. If the effective mass correction arises primarily from the interaction between an electron and the periodic core potential, the resulting effective mass is usually called the band mass. If the mass correction arises from electron-electron or electron-phonon interactions, then the effective mass correction is considered to be a many-body correlation correction. An example of the former is the small conduction band effective mass of InSb which arises from the interaction of electrons in the conduction band with the periodic potential. This is a band structure effect, and it will be discussed later. An example of the latter is the polaron in an ionic crystals. In this case, the electron polarizes the ionic lattice and carries a strain field with it as it moves through the crystal. The combined electron plus strain field or optical phonon cloud is a quasi-particle, a polaron, which behaves like an electron with an increased mass.

The elementary excitation picture describes a solid as a gas or liquid of excitations which can be created by external probes. The collective excitations are bosons, and they can interact with each other. An important component of this approach is based on the Landau theory of Fermi liquids. This theory demonstrates that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the excitations of a strongly coupled electron system (electron liquid) and single particles states, that is, quasi-electrons. For many applications, this important approach allows one to view the interacting electron system in terms of single particle excitations.

To make contact with experimental measurements, the concepts embodied in the interacting atoms or elementary excitation models need to