OPENING AN ENERGY GAP IN AN ELECTRON DOUBLE LAYER SYSTEM AT INTEGER FILLING FACTOR IN A TILTED MAGNETIC FIELD

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We employ magnetocapacitance measurements to study the spectrum of a double layer system with gate-voltage-tuned electron density distributions in tilted magnetic fields. For the dissipative state in normal magnetic fields at filling factor $\nu = 3$ and $4$, a parallel magnetic field component is found to give rise to opening a gap at the Fermi level. We account for the effect in terms of parallel-field-caused orthogonality breaking of the Landau wave functions with different quantum numbers for two subbands.

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Much interest in electron double layers is attracted by their many-body properties in a quantizing magnetic field. These include the fractional quantum Hall effect at filling factor $\nu = 1/2$ [1], the many-body quantum Hall plateau at $\nu = 1$ [2], broken-symmetry states at fractional fillings [3], the canted antiferromagnetic state at $\nu = 2$ [4], etc. Still, the single-electron properties of double layer systems that can be interpreted without appealing exchange and correlation effects are not less intriguing. A standard double layer with interlayer distance of about the Bohr radius is a soft two-subband system if brought into the imbalance regime in which the electron density distribution is two asymmetric maxima corresponding to two electron layers. In such a system a small interlayer charge transfer shifts significantly the Landau level sets’ positions; particularly, the transfer of all electrons in a single quantum level would lead to a shift as large as the cyclotron energy. In a double layer system with gate-bias-controllable electron density distributions at normal magnetic fields, peculiarities were observed in the Landau level fan chart: at fixed integer filling factor $\nu > 2$ the Landau levels for two electron subbands pin to the Fermi level over wide regions of a magnetic field, giving rise to a zero activation energy for the conductivity [5,6]. These findings are explained in terms of a wave-function orthogonality-breaking effect caused by parallel magnetic field component.

The samples are grown by molecular beam epitaxy on semi-insulating GaAs substrate. The active layers form a 760 Å wide parabolic well. In the center of the well a 3 monolayer thick Al$_x$Ga$_{1-x}$As ($x = 0.3$) sheet is grown which serves as a tunnel barrier between both parts on either side. The symmetrically doped well is capped by 600 Å AlGaAs and 40 Å GaAs layers. The symmetric-antisymmetric splitting in the bilayer electron system as determined from far infrared measurements and model calculations [7] is equal to $\Delta_{SAS} = 1.3$ meV. The sample has ohmic contacts (each of them is connected to both electron systems in two parts of the well) and two gates on the crystal surface with areas $120 \times 120$ and $220 \times 120 \mu m^2$. The gate electrode enables us to tune the carrier density in the well, which is equal to $4.2 \times 10^{11}$ cm$^{-2}$ at zero gate bias, and simultaneously measure the capacitance between the gate and the well. For the capacitance measurements we additionally apply a small ac voltage $V_{ac} = 2.4$ mV at frequencies in the range $3 - 600$ Hz between the well and the gate and measure both current components as a function of gate bias $V_g$ in a normal and tilted magnetic fields in the temperature interval between 30 mK and 1.2 K. An example of the imaginary current component is depicted in Fig. 1 also shown in the inset is the calculated behaviour of the conduction band bottom for our sample.

The employed experimental technique is similar to magnetotransport measurements in Corbino geometry:
in the low frequency limit, the active component of the
current is inversely proportional to the dissipative con-
ductivity $\sigma_{xx}$ while the imaginary current component
reflects the thermodynamic density of states in a double
layer system. Activation energy at the minima of $\sigma_{xx}$
for integer $\nu$ is determined from the temperature depen-
dence of the corresponding peaks in the active current
component.

The positions of the $\sigma_{xx}$ minimum for $\nu = 2, 3,$
and 4 in the $(B_\perp, V_g)$ plane are shown in Fig. 2
for both normal and tilted magnetic field. At the gate voltages
$V_{th1} < V_g < V_{th2}$, at which one subband $E_1$ of the
substrate side part of the well is filled with electrons, the
experimental points fall onto straight lines with slopes
defined by capacitance between the gate and the bottom
electron layer. Above $V_{th2}$, where a second subband $E_2$
collects electrons in the front part of the well, a minimum
in $\sigma_{xx}$ at integer $\nu$ corresponds to a gap in the spectrum
of the bilayer electron system. In this case the slope is
inversely proportional to the capacitance between gate
and top electron layer. Additional minima of the imagi-
ary current component that are related to the thermody-
namic density of states in the second subband solely
are shown in Fig. 3 by dashed lines. Hence, each of the
two different kinds of minima forms its own Landau level
fan chart. In the perpendicular magnetic field, wide dis-
ruptions of the fan line at $\nu = 4$ and a termination of the
line at $\nu = 3$ indicate the absence of a minimum in $\sigma_{xx}$
(Fig. 3a). As mentioned above, this results from a Fermi
level pinning of the Landau levels for two subbands.

Remarkably, switching on a parallel magnetic field is
found to promote the formation of a $\sigma_{xx}$ minimum at
integer $\nu > 2$, particularly at $\nu = 3$ and 4, see Fig. 2b.
This implies that the parallel magnetic field suppresses
the pinning effect, giving rise to opening a gap at the
Fermi level in the double layer system.

Figure 2 represents the behaviour of the activation en-
ergy $E_a$ along the $\nu = 3$ and 4 fan lines in Fig. 2 for
different tilt angles $\Theta$ of the magnetic field. As seen from
Fig. 3a, for filling factor $\nu = 4$ in the normal field, the
value of $E_a$ is largest both at the bilayer onset $V_{th2}$
and at balance. In between these it zeroes, which is in agree-
ment with the disappearance of the minimum of $\sigma_{xx}$ in
the magnetic field range between 2.6 and 3.4 T; in the
close vicinity of $B = 3 \, \text{T}$, $E_a$ is unmeasurably small but
likely finite as can be reconciled with the observed $\sigma_{xx}$
minimum at the fan crossing point of $\nu = 4$ and $\nu_2 = 1$
(Fig. 3a). In contrast, for tilted magnetic fields, the ac-
tivation energy at $\nu = 4$ never tends to zero, forming a
plateau, instead (Fig. 3b).

For $\nu = 3$ the parallel field effects are basically similar
to the case of $\nu = 4$ with one noteworthy distinction.
Near the balance point, the activation energy in a tilted
magnetic field exhibits a minimum that deepens with in-
creasing tilt angle, see Fig. 3b. This minimum is likely
to be of many-body origin: at sufficiently large $\Theta$ it is
accompanied by a splitting of the $\nu = 3$ fan line, which
is very similar to the behaviour of the double layer at
$\nu = 2$ discussed as manifestation of the canted antifer-
romagnetic phase 4. This effect will be considered in
detail elsewhere.

We relate the appearance of a gap at integer $\nu > 2$
in the unbalanced double layer at tilted magnetic fields to orthogonality breaking of the Landau wave functions with different quantum numbers for two subbands. Indeed, the interlayer tunneling should occur with in-plane momentum conservation so that in a tilted magnetic field it is accompanied with an in-plane shift of the center of the Landau wave function by an amount \( d_0 \tan \Theta \), where \( d_0 \) is the distance between the centers of mass for electron density distributions in two lowest subbands. Apparently, the so-shifted Landau wave functions with different quantum numbers for two subbands become overlapped. In this case the above mentioned pinning effect at integer \( \nu > 2 \) cannot occur any more. Instead, as will be discussed below, the wave functions get reconstructed, which is accompanied by the levels’ splitting.

We calculate the single-particle spectrum in a tilted magnetic field in self-consistent Hartree approximation without taking into account the spin splitting (supposing small \( g \) factor) as well as the exchange and correlation energy. The intersubband charge transfer when switching on the magnetic field is a perturbation potential in the problem that mixes the wave functions for two subbands. Account is taken of a shift of the subband bottoms due to parallel component of the magnetic field, and the value of gap at the Fermi level is determined in the first order of perturbation theory in a similar way to the \( \nu = 1 \) and \( 2 \) case at normal magnetic fields of Ref. [3].

The magnetic field dependence of the calculated gap \( \Delta \) for filling factor \( \nu = 4 \) is displayed in Fig. 3. At fixed tilt angle the calculation reproduces well the observed behaviour of the gap along the \( \nu = 4 \) fan line (cf. Figs. 3a and 3b). The quantitative difference between the gap values can be attributed to the finite width of the Landau levels which is disregarded in calculation.

The gap \( \Delta \) as a function of parallel magnetic field component \( B_{||} \) at a fixed value of \( B_{\perp} = 2.6 \) T is depicted in Fig. 4. It reaches a maximum at \( B_{||} = 3.5 \) T and then drops with further increasing field \( B_{||} \). It is clear that \( \Delta(B_{||}) \) reflects the dependence of the overlap of the Landau wave functions with different quantum numbers on their in-plane shift \( d_0 \tan \Theta \): while at sufficiently small shifts the overlap rises with shift, at large shifts the overlap is sure to vanish, restoring the wave function orthogonality.

The above explanation holds for filling factor \( \nu = 3 \) as well. We note that, in a normal magnetic field, the \( \nu = 3 \) gap for our case is of spin origin since the expected spin splitting is smaller than \( \Delta_{\text{SAS}} \). Therefore, it can increase with \( B_{||} \) for trivial reasons. The point of importance is that the Landau wave function orthogonality has to be lost for the gap to open.

In summary, we have performed magnetocapacitance measurements on a double layer system with gate-voltage-controlled electron density distributions in tilted magnetic fields. It has been found that, for the dissipative state in normal magnetic fields at filling factor \( \nu = 3 \) and 4, a parallel magnetic field component leads to opening a gap at the Fermi level. We attribute the origin of the effect to orthogonality breaking of the Landau wave functions with different quantum numbers for two subbands as caused by parallel magnetic field. The calculated behaviour of the gap is consistent with the experimental data.

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FIG. 3. Change of the activation energy with magnetic field at (a) \( \nu = 4 \) for \( \Theta = 0^\circ \) (dots), \( \Theta = 30^\circ \) (diamonds), \( \Theta = 45^\circ \) (squares), \( \Theta = 60^\circ \) (triangles); and (b) \( \nu = 3 \) for \( \Theta = 30^\circ \) (circles), \( \Theta = 45^\circ \) (diamonds), \( \Theta = 60^\circ \) (triangles). The lines are guides to the eye.

FIG. 4. The calculated gap at \( \nu = 4 \) as a function of magnetic field for (a) fixed tilt angle \( \Theta = 0^\circ \) (dashed line) and \( \Theta = 30^\circ \) (solid line); and (b) fixed \( B_{\perp} = 2.6 \) T. Also shown by a dotted line is the corresponding Zeeman splitting for \( \Theta = 30^\circ \).
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