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To cite this article: Christoph Rupprecht *et al* 2020 *2D Mater.* 7 035025

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Manipulation of room-temperature valley-coherent exciton-polaritons in atomically thin crystals by real and artificial magnetic fields

RECEIVED
3 February 2020REVISED
16 April 2020ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION
29 April 2020PUBLISHED
18 June 2020

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Keywords: transition metal dichalcogenides, exciton polaritons, valley coherence, strong light matter coupling

Supplementary material for this article is available [online](#)

Abstract

Strong spin–orbit coupling and inversion symmetry breaking in transition metal dichalcogenide monolayers yield the intriguing effects of valley-dependent optical selection rules. As such, it is possible to substantially polarize valley excitons with chiral light and furthermore create coherent superpositions of K and K' polarized states. Yet, at ambient conditions dephasing usually becomes too dominant, and valley coherence typically is not observable. Here, we demonstrate that valley coherence is, however, clearly observable for a single monolayer of WSe₂, if it is strongly coupled to the optical mode of a high quality factor microcavity. The azimuthal vector, representing the phase of the valley coherent superposition, can be directly manipulated by applying magnetic fields, and furthermore, it sensibly reacts to the polarization anisotropy of the cavity which represents an artificial magnetic field. Our results are in qualitative and quantitative agreement with our model based on pseudospin rate equations, accounting for both effects of real and pseudo-magnetic fields.

Atomically thin transition metal dichalcogenide crystals (TMDCs) belong to an emergent class of materials relevant to studies in fundamental- as well as application-oriented light matter interaction. They combine huge oscillator strength (optical activity) and giant exciton binding energies, making them a particularly interesting platform for cavity quantum electrodynamics. To date, the regime of strong light matter coupling in optical microcavities has been convincingly demonstrated with single monolayers [1], even at room temperature [2–4]. Moreover,

TMDCs yield a plethora of peculiar symmetry-related effects. As a consequence of strong spin–orbit coupling and the broken inversion symmetry of the crystal, exciton spin orientations are inverted at opposite K points at the corners of the hexagonal Brillouin zone [5, 6]. Hence, the K and K' valleys can be selectively addressed by σ_+ and σ_- circularly polarized light [7–9]. The selective polarization of the valleys has been demonstrated by various resonant- and non-resonant optical techniques [10–13]. Interestingly, it has been shown that spin-relaxation can be

suppressed in the strong light-matter coupling regime [14–18] since the relaxation dynamics is enhanced and exchange interactions are weakened.

The application of external magnetic fields lifts the energetic degeneracy of σ_+ and σ_- polarized valley excitons (and trions) via the Zeeman-effect [19–23]. It has recently been shown, that the Zeeman-splitting of valley-excitons also persists in the strong coupling regime as a consequence of light-matter hybridization [24].

Here, we study the behavior of (exciton)-polaritons formed by strongly coupling a WSe₂ monolayer exciton to a high-Q photonic mode of a monolithic microcavity. When applying high magnetic fields up to 9 T, we observe that the characteristic valley Zeeman splitting of the K and K' valley excitons is preserved and transferred to the polaritons at room temperature, with an excitonic g-factor of 4. Upon excitation with linearly polarized light, coherent superpositions of valley polaritons can be created. First, we demonstrate, that the position of the polaritons' polarization vector follows the polarization vector of the pump in the absence of a magnetic field. The lifting of the valley degeneracy by a magnetic field leads to a precession of the polaritons' polarization vector, and we demonstrate a rotation of the polarization vector by almost 90°, during their relaxation towards the ground state. The angle-dependent linear polarization splitting of the microcavity also lifts the degeneracy of the polarization modes. It can thus be understood as an artificial magnetic field, which again yields a significant rotation of the polarization angle, by up to 280°. We have modeled the effect of both types of magnetic field on valley coherence in the monolayer with a system of linear rate equations for polariton polarization states. A good qualitative agreement between modelling and experiment has been obtained.

1. Sample structure and characterization

The studied sample structure is schematically depicted in figure 1(a). The microcavity is built by transferring a WSe₂ monolayer with a dry-gel method [25] onto an SiO₂/TiO₂ bottom distributed Bragg reflector (DBR), grown onto a quartz glass substrate by physical vapor deposition. The bottom DBR consists of 10 pairs and has a stop band center at 1.653 eV. The monolayer was capped with a mechanically exfoliated flake of hexagonal boron nitride (h-BN, about 10 nm thick), to protect the monolayer from the subsequent overgrowth processing conditions. The top DBR (8 pairs) was grown by plasma-assisted evaporation (PAE) at mild processing temperatures of 80 °C [26]. The complete, but empty microcavity exhibits a clear, parabolic dispersion relation with a ground state at 1.658 eV as shown in the in-plane momentum-resolved reflectivity measurement (Fourier plane imaging method) in figure

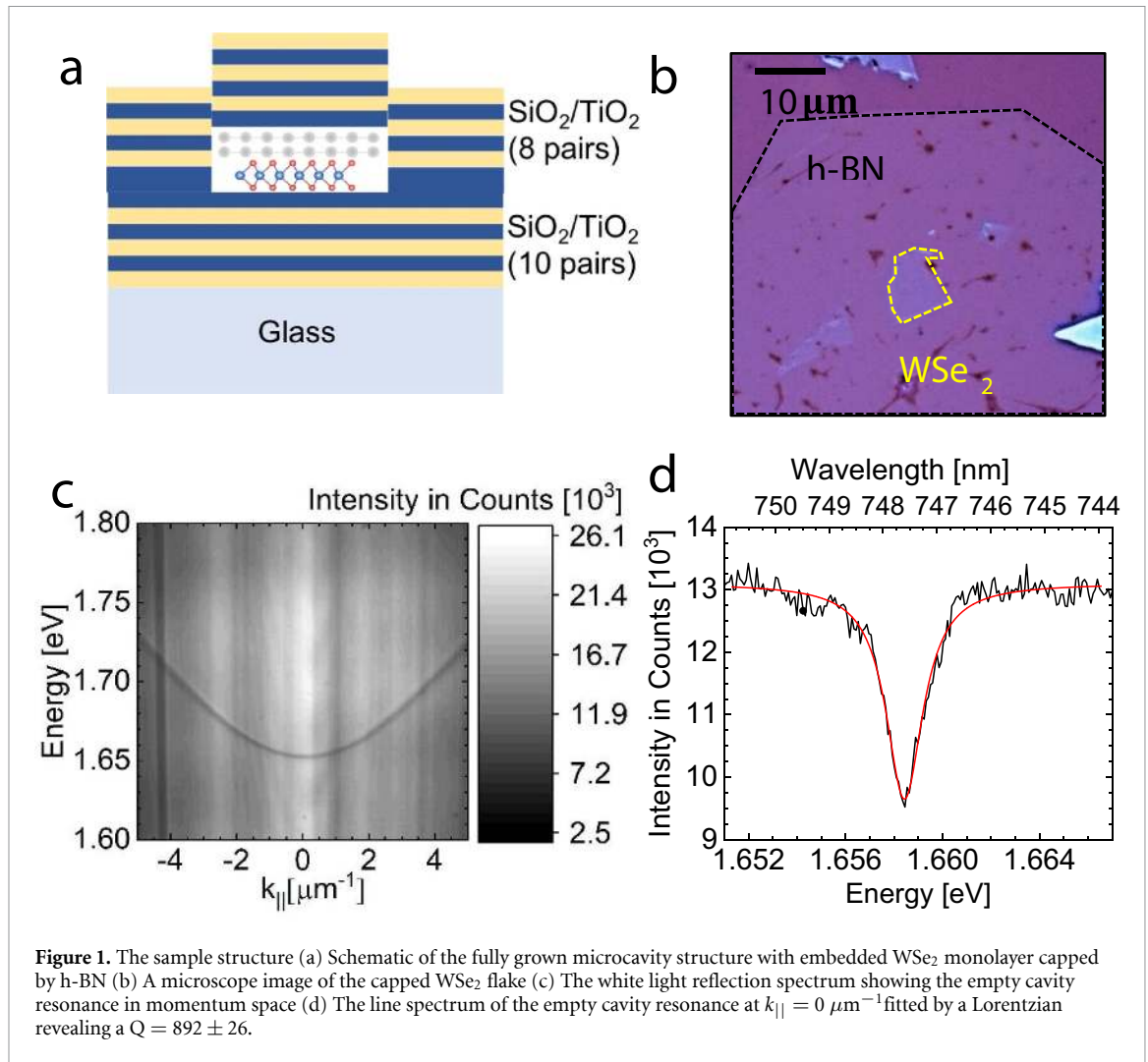
1(c). The line spectrum at zero in-plane momentum (figure 1(d)) reveals a resonance linewidth ΔE of (1.860 ± 0.054) meV, equivalent to a Q-factor of 892 ± 26 . Uncertainties were extracted from the fitting parameter of the Lorentzian. Figure 1(b) shows a microscopy image of the final sample with the monolayer of WSe₂ and h-BN capping adjacent to bulk remnants taken before the growth of the top DBR.

2. TMDC based exciton-polaritons

We study the luminescence properties of our WSe₂-cavity device via in-plane momentum-resolved photoluminescence. Figure 2(a) shows a photoluminescence (PL) spectrum of the completed microcavity sample, where we plot the emission energy as a function of the in-plane momentum. Each line spectrum (with constant $k_{||}$) was normalized to its maximum to better recognize the polariton emission at high $k_{||}$. The empty cavity resonance (lower DBR/h-BN/upper DBR; stemming from areas outside the monolayer region) is visible at ~ 1.63 eV at $k_{||} = 0 \mu\text{m}^{-1}$ (green solid line). Another empty cavity resonance (lower DBR/upper DBR) is weakly visible at ~ 1.655 eV at $k_{||} = 0 \mu\text{m}^{-1}$ (see also figure 1(c)). The extracted peak positions are plotted in figure 2(b) as function of $k_{||}$, following a well-pronounced parabolic dispersion. Accounting for the refractive index of the monolayer, the bare cavity resonance shifts to 1.610 eV ($k_{||} = 0 \mu\text{m}^{-1}$) at the monolayer position (green dashed parabola in figure 2(a)). Polaritonic modes arise on the red side of this mode with a significantly altered dispersion relation. This is best captured from the extracted peak position in figure 2(b), which clearly indicate the change in dispersion slope towards large momenta. The energy spectrum of our device can be fitted with a standard coupled oscillator model [26], yielding a mode coupling (Rabi-Splitting) of $V = (70.7 \pm 3.7)$ meV. As input parameters, we use the properties of the uncoupled exciton, the cavity resonance, as well as the measured lower polariton branch, making the coupling strength the only free fitting parameter. The Hopfield coefficient determines the exciton fraction in the polariton state and its value is $|X|^2 = 0.125 \pm 0.015$ at $k_{||} = 0 \mu\text{m}^{-1}$.

3. Polariton valley Zeeman splitting

As we have reported recently [24], the polaritons reflect the excitonic properties in that they exhibit a notable sensitivity to an external magnetic field. Thus, we investigate our completed microcavity sample in the presence of an applied magnetic field up to 9 T in the Faraday configuration. We conducted Stokes measurements by analyzing the polarization of the emission via rotating a quarter-wave plate and a linear polarizer. The PL-spectrum at $k_{||} = (1.54 \pm 0.05) \mu\text{m}^{-1}$ and at a fixed magnetic field B



was fitted for each angle θ of the quarter wave plate by a Lorentzian and the peak positions $E(\theta)$ were extracted. These were then fitted with the equation

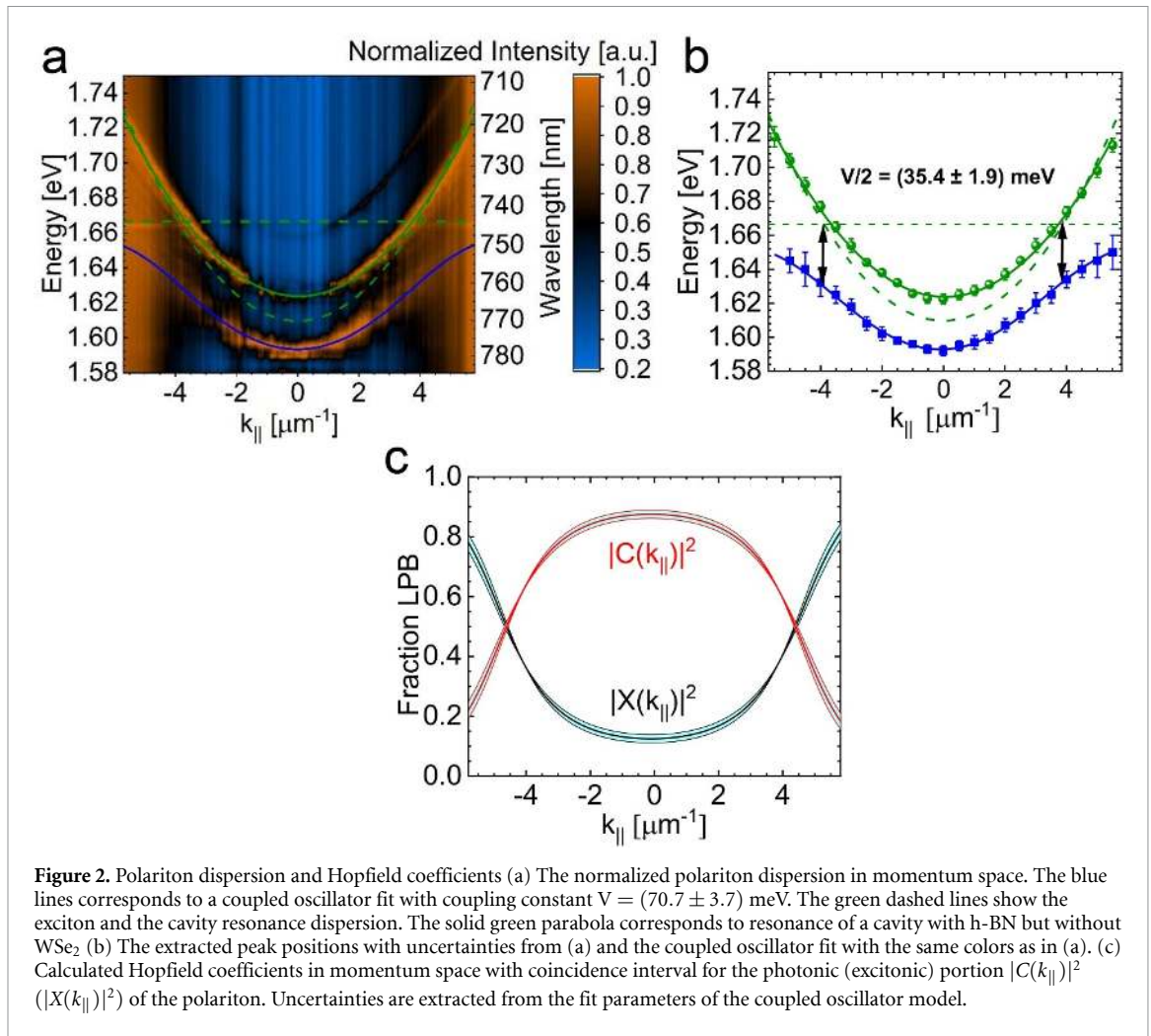
$$E(\theta) = C + D \cdot \theta + \frac{\Delta E_{\text{Pol}}(k_{||})}{4} \cos(4\theta + \phi) + \frac{\Delta E_Z(B)}{2} \sin(2\theta), \quad (1)$$

where C is a constant. $\Delta E_Z(B)$ is the Zeeman splitting as a function of the external magnetic field B and $\Delta E_{\text{Pol}}(k_{||})$ is the energetic separation of superimposed TE/TM polarizations of the structure as a function of the transverse angular momentum $k_{||}$ of the emitted light. Note that the cavity TE/TM splitting is two order of magnitude larger than the excitonic longitudinal-transverse splitting, which is thus negligible [27, 28]. ϕ takes into account the polaritons polarization rotation created by the TE/TM-splitting [29] and the linear term D describes possible drifts during a measurement series. The emergence of this equation as well as typical observed measurements are discussed more in detail in the supplementary information (available online at stacks.iop.org/TDM/7/035025/mmedia).

Figure 3(c) depicts the final results for the Zeeman-Splitting $\Delta E_Z(B)$. The Zeeman splitting increases linearly with the applied magnetic field up to a value of approximately 0.45 meV at $B = 9$ T. This is also reflected in the line spectra at 0 T and 7 T in figures 3(a) and (b). These were extracted at $\theta = 70^\circ$ and $\theta = 160^\circ$ from the Stokes measurement, where only σ^+ and σ^- polarized light reaches the spectrometer. $\Delta E_Z(B)$ can be described by [30]

$$\Delta E_Z(B) = \frac{1}{2} g \mu_B B + \frac{1}{2} \sqrt{\delta_-^2 + V^2} - \frac{1}{2} \sqrt{\delta_+^2 + V^2}, \quad (2)$$

with $\delta_{\pm} = E_C - E_X(B) \mp \frac{1}{2} g \mu_B B$. g is the excitonic g -factor, V is the coupling constant, E_C and $E_X(B)$ are the cavity and photon energies, respectively. Since the diamagnetic shift of excitons in TMDC monolayers for magnetic fields < 10 T is negligible [31], we can safely neglect the magnetic field dependence of $E_X(B)$ in our analysis. Fitting our data (red) yields an exciton g factor of 4.02 ± 0.22 , which is in excellent agreement with results obtained on bare WSe₂ excitons in the existing literature [18–20]. Furthermore, the weakly coupled character of the mode, which we have attributed to the empty cavity resonance next to the



monolayer (green solid line in figure 2(a)) is reflected by the absence of any observable splitting in figure 3(d). (Typical spectra are shown in the supplementary materials).

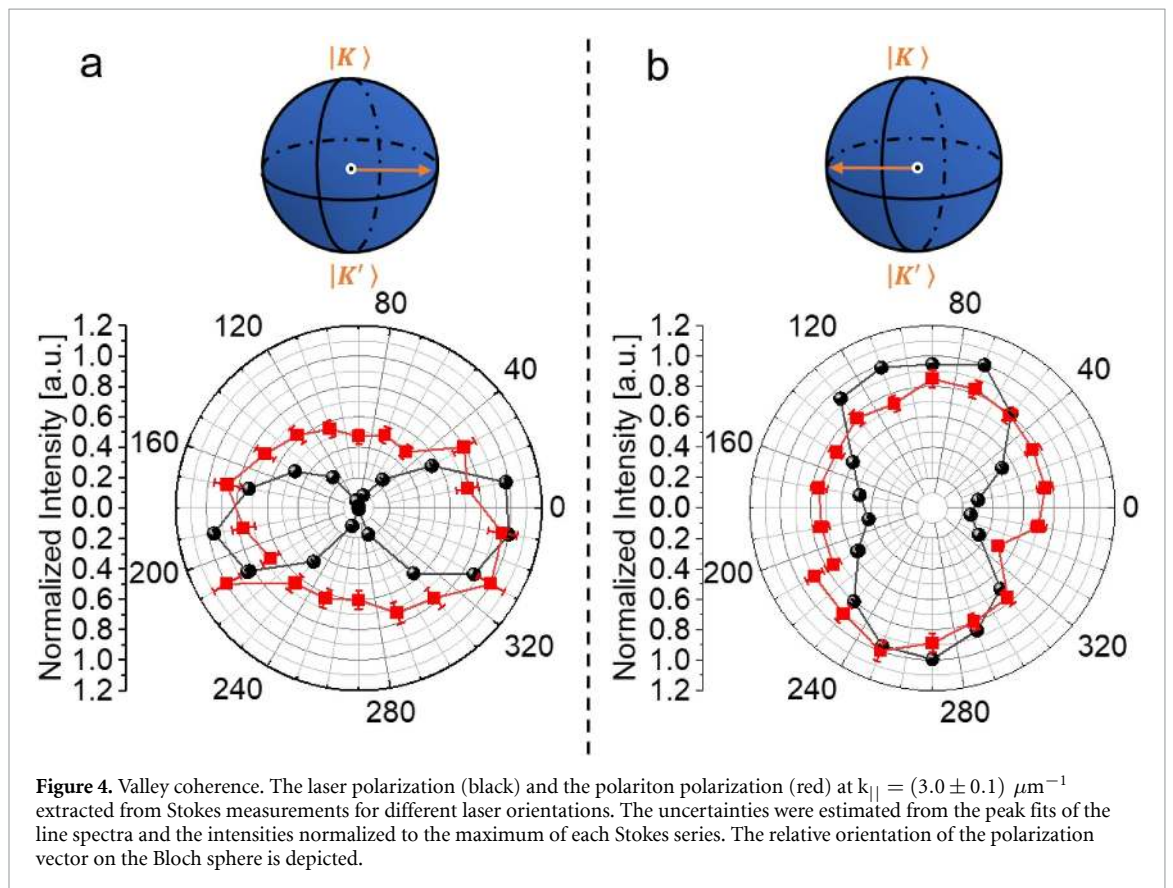
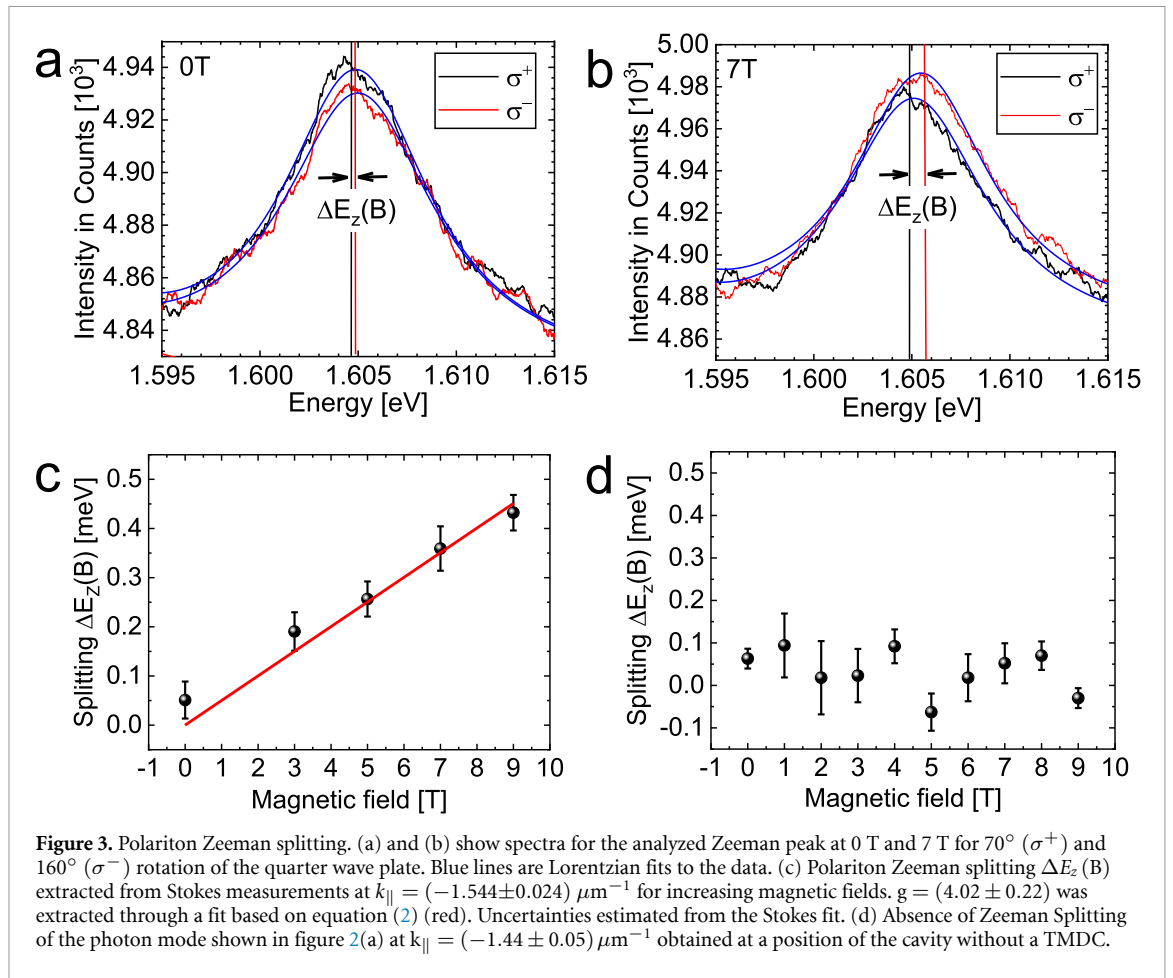
4. Room-temperature valley coherence

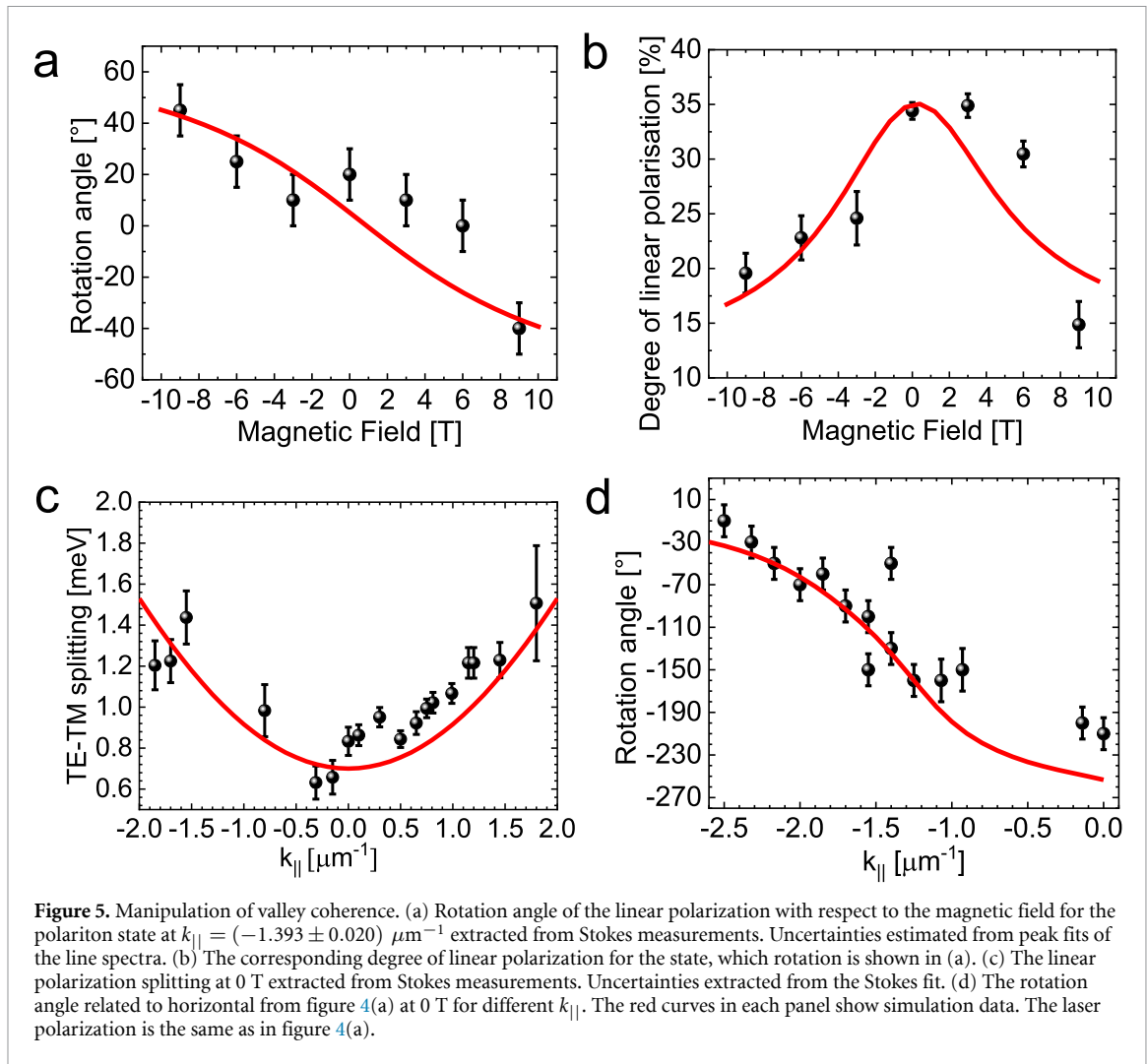
We now scrutinize the polarization properties of our structure in more detail. While significant degrees of valley polarization have been obtained in TDMC-exciton-polariton structures both at cryogenic as well as room temperature, large degrees of valley coherence have only been recently found in non-resonantly as well as quasi resonantly excited structures at cryogenic temperatures [27, 32]. First indications were also reported in a strongly coupled device at room temperature [33]. Here we have significantly extended this study and have demonstrated the room-temperature valley coherence can be widely manipulated by external fields.

Measurements at different magnetic fields were performed using a $\lambda/2$ -wave plate and a following fixed horizontal linear polarizer in the detection path. The wave plate was rotated during the experiment, thus detecting the linear polarization component

with respect to a fixed angle θ . In figures 4(a) and (b), we represent results at $B = 0$ T and at a transverse momentum of $(3.0 \pm 0.1) \mu\text{m}^{-1}$. The structure is driven by a linearly polarized cw laser at 532 nm. The degree of linear polarization (DOLP) is calculated as $(I_+ - I_-) / (I_+ + I_-)$, and reflects the degree of valley coherence retained in our sample. We make two important observations. First, in reasonable agreement with recent reports [33], the strong coupling conditions allow us to retain parts of the valley coherence, indicative by the DOLP of approx. 35% (see also figure 5(b)) in the luminescence of our device. Second, the azimuthal direction of the polarization vector follows the direction of the pump laser, which reflects that the phase between the K and K' exciton-polaritons is stable and externally tunable by the incoming pump (figure 4).

We argue, that the phase between K and K' polaritons acquires a time-dependent term, if the energy degeneracy is lifted [34]. A straightforward way to break the degeneracy between K and K' polaritons has been introduced above, as the polaritonic valley Zeeman effect. We thus study both, the direction as well as the magnitude of the linear polarization emitted from our device at a fixed in-plane momentum of





$(1.393 \pm 0.020) \mu\text{m}^{-1}$ as a function of the externally magnetic field applied field B . In figure 5(a) we plot the rotation of the polarization of the PL-light with respect to the laser polarization. We find up to 40° for $B = \pm 9$ T. The angles are extracted regarding to the horizontal axis in figure 4. This rotation is accompanied by a significant reduction of the valley coherence, which is reflected by the reduced DOLP plotted in figure 5(b).

In previous works, dedicated to the investigation of valley polarized exciton-polaritons in similar structures, it was argued that the energy splitting between TE and TM polarized cavity modes has a significant impact on the polarization properties [27, 32]. Exciton-polaritons, being superposition states formed by cavity photons and excitons confined in the TMDC monolayer, inherit properties of both their constituents, including the splitting in TE and TM modes. Due to the optical selection rules, σ^+ and σ^- circularly polarized photons are able to selectively excite spin up and spin down excitons, respectively. The spin-valley locking being a characteristic feature of TMDC monolayers leads to opposite spin orientations in opposite valleys. This allows one to

associate the photon polarization with the exciton spin-valley degree of freedom. In the basis of circular polarizations (or spin up and spin down excitons), the Hamiltonian of the polariton \mathbf{k} -state takes the following form: ????

$$\hat{H}_{\mathbf{k}} = \begin{pmatrix} \varepsilon(k) & \frac{1}{2}\Delta_{\text{LT}}(k)e^{-2i\theta} \\ \frac{1}{2}\Delta_{\text{LT}}(k)e^{2i\theta} & \varepsilon(k) \end{pmatrix}, \quad (3)$$

where $\varepsilon(k)$ is the energy of the \mathbf{k} -state. The TE-TM splitting appears in this Hamiltonian as off-diagonal elements, where θ and k are the angle and the wave number in the cavity plane characterizing the \mathbf{k} -state as $\mathbf{k} = (k\cos\theta, k\sin\theta)$. To ease notation, we omitted the subscript ' $||$ ' at k . $\Delta_{\text{LT}}(k)$ is the magnitude of the TE-TM splitting, which in general case is k -dependent. The Hamiltonian (3) can be rewritten in a more elegant form:

$$\hat{H}_{\mathbf{k}} = \varepsilon(k)\hat{\sigma}_0 + \Omega_{\mathbf{C}} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{S}}, \quad (4)$$

where we introduced the three-dimensional polariton pseudospin operator $\hat{\mathbf{S}} = \frac{1}{2}\hat{\boldsymbol{\sigma}}$, with $\hat{\boldsymbol{\sigma}} = (\hat{\sigma}_x, \hat{\sigma}_y, \hat{\sigma}_z)$ being the vector of Pauli matrices. $\hat{\sigma}_0$ is the 2×2 identity matrix. In this form, the Hamiltonian $\hat{H}_{\mathbf{k}}$

describes the precession of the polariton pseudospin around the effective in-plane magnetic field $\Omega_C = [\Delta_{\text{LT}}(k) \cos 2\theta, \Delta_{\text{LT}}(k) \sin 2\theta, 0]$ induced by the TE-TM splitting.

In our experimental configuration, we expect this effect to yield a similar rotation of the valley coherence as a real magnetic field. To make a quantitative analysis feasible, we first extract the linear polarization splitting of the polariton states as a function of the in-plane wave-vector, and plot it in figure 5(c). To determine this splitting ΔE_s , for every angle θ of the wave plate the energy position was identified by fitting a Lorentzian and these positions were adapted with

$$E(\theta) = C + D \cdot \theta + \frac{\Delta E_s}{2} \cos(4\theta + \phi_1), \quad (5)$$

where C and D are constants and ϕ_1 accounts again for a rotation of the linear polarization. This equation is discussed more in detail in the supplementary material as well as typical observed spectra are shown there. It is worth noting, that the magnitude of the effect strongly depends on the cavity TE-TM splitting and therefore on the choice of materials in the DBR mirrors, as well as on the mismatch of the cavity length from the Bragg condition. The strong splitting, which becomes as large as 1.5 meV at k_{\parallel} -vectors of only $2 \mu\text{m}^{-1}$, again yields a strong modification of the orientation of the linear polarization emitted from the polaritonic states. Indeed, the latter experience a significant rotation during their relaxation by an overall magnitude of approx. 280° , which is more than five times stronger than the effect of the real magnetic field at 9 T.

Figure 5 also illustrates the manipulation of the valley coherence in the coupled monolayer-cavity structure reproduced numerically with a dynamical pseudospin model (red curves). The latter accounts for polarization-resolved pumping of polariton states, exciton and polariton pseudospin relaxation and quasimomentum-dependent lifetimes, as well as the effect of the effective magnetic field caused by the TE-TM splitting of cavity photons and the external magnetic field. The details of the models are given in the Supplementary materials section of the manuscript. As in the experiment, the linear polarization plane rotates with the applied magnetic field accompanied by the decrease in the polarization degree. The external magnetic field causes redistribution of populations of polariton pseudospin states and guides the system from the valley coherence to the valley polarization state. At zero magnetic field ($B = 0$), the only mechanism of pseudospin is the splitting in linear polarizations which is strongly inhomogeneous over the polariton dispersion, see figure 5(c). Figure 5(d) shows the simulated rotation of the linear polarization plane with relaxation of polaritons down their dispersion.

5. Conclusion

Our paper conveys two important messages: In the regime of strong light-matter coupling, valley coherence superpositions of exciton-polaritons directly manifest at ambient conditions, and under non-resonant pumping conditions. The phase of the coherence can be influenced- and controlled externally. We demonstrate that real- as well as artificial magnetic fields have a severe impact on the valley coherence, and represent efficient tools for its manipulation. Our findings show, that the effect of the TE-TM splitting on the polarization rotation in our microcavity is significantly stronger than the effect of an external magnetic field with an amplitude as large as 9 T. Furthermore, it is straightforward to enhance and maximize the effect, e.g. by utilizing microcavities with a strong asymmetry [35], yielding strongly extended TE-TM splitting, or by engineering the natural birefringence reversibly, as has been demonstrated recently by applying external stress to semiconductor microcavities [36], or by utilizing strongly anisotropic liquid crystal filled DBR devices [37]. In such structures, it will be possible to gain control over the valley—pseudospin, its coherence, and finally the topology of valley polaritons in an unprecedented manner, by taking advantage of the coherent light-matter coupling.


Acknowledgments

The Würzburg group acknowledges support by the state of Bavaria. C.S. acknowledges support by the European Research Commission (Project unLiMIT-2D). S.H. acknowledges support by the EPSRC within the Hybrid Polaritonic Project. This work has been supported by the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft zur Förderung der angewandten Forschung e.V. F.E. and H.K. gratefully acknowledge the financial support by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (grant ID 13XP5053A). E.S. and A.K. acknowledge the support from the Project No. 041020100118 and the Program 2018R01002 supported by Leading Innovative and Entrepreneur Team Introduction Program of Zhejiang. E.S. acknowledges partial support from the Grant of the President of the Russian Federation for state support of young Russian scientists No. MK-2839.2019.2. A.K. acknowledges the Saint-Petersburg State University for the research grant ID 51125686. K.W. and T.T. acknowledge support from the Elemental Strategy Initiative conducted by the MEXT, Japan and the CREST (JPMJCR15F3), JST. S.T. acknowledges support by the NSF (DMR-1955668 and DMR-1838443). S.T. also acknowledges support from DOE DE-SC0020653. H.K. is supported via the Max Planck School of Photonics.

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