

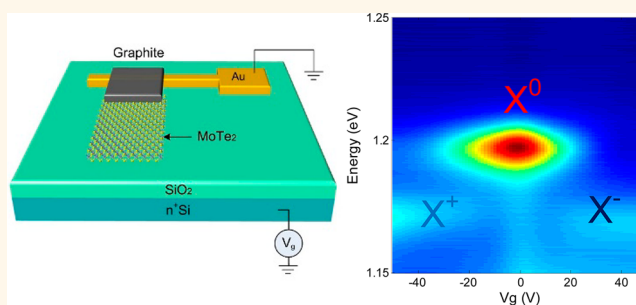
Robust Excitons and Trions in Monolayer MoTe₂

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ABSTRACT Molybdenum telluride (MoTe₂) has emerged as a special member in the family of two-dimensional transition metal dichalcogenide semiconductors, owing to the strong spin–orbit coupling and relatively small energy gap, which offers new applications in valleytronic and excitonic devices. Here we successfully demonstrated the electrical modulation of negatively charged (X^-), neutral (X^0), and positively charged (X^+) excitons in monolayer MoTe₂ via photoluminescence spectroscopy. The binding energies of X^+ and X^- were measured to be ~ 24 and ~ 27 meV, respectively.

The exciton binding energy of monolayer MoTe₂ was measured to be 0.58 ± 0.08 eV via photoluminescence excitation spectroscopy, which matches well with our calculated value of 0.64 eV.



KEYWORDS: MoTe₂ · exciton · trion · two-dimensional

Atomically thin two-dimensional (2D) transition metal dichalcogenide (TMD) semiconductors have been of great interest, owing to their unique properties, such as enhanced Coulomb interactions arising from the reduced screening,^{1,2} tightly bound excitons and trions (charged excitons),^{3,4} strong interactions with light,^{5–8} and so on. Much effort has been put into the investigations of neutral excitons and the positively or negatively charged excitons (trions) in 2D TMD semiconductors both experimentally^{3,4,9–11} and theoretically.^{12–15} Most of these studies have been focused on monolayer MX₂ ($X = S, Se$; $M = Mo, W$) TMD semiconductors. Very recently, 2H-MoTe₂ has arisen^{16–21} as a special family member of 2D TMD semiconductors. The monolayer MoTe₂ consists of one hexagonal sheet of Mo atoms sandwiched between two hexagonal Te atoms with trigonal prismatic coordination. Multiple layers in the bulk crystal are bound together by van der Waals forces, and it can be easily exfoliated mechanically into monolayers. In contrast to other Mo-related TMD semiconductors MoX₂ ($X = S, Se$), MoTe₂ has a stronger

spin–orbit coupling, which possibly leads to concomitantly longer decoherence time for exciton valley and spin indexes^{18,22} and may enable new valleytronic devices.^{23,24}

The PL emission of MoTe₂ is located in the near-infrared range at around 1.1 eV,^{16,17} bridging other comparatively large band-gap monolayer 2D TMD semiconductors and zero-band-gap graphene. Due to the small band gap, MoTe₂ is also considered an ideal system for studying exciton effects at the K point.^{22,25} The exciton and trion peaks have been successfully observed in monolayer MoTe₂ under extremely low temperature (below 40 K).¹⁶ But measurement of the exciton binding energy and the electrical modulation of exciton and trion dynamics in monolayer MoTe₂ are still lacking, which are very important for exploring new excitonic devices based on monolayer MoTe₂.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this paper, we demonstrated the electrical modulation of negatively charged (X^-), neutral (X^0), and positively charged (X^+) excitons via photoluminescence measurement

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Received for review May 4, 2015 and accepted June 3, 2015.

Published online June 03, 2015
10.1021/acsnano.5b02665

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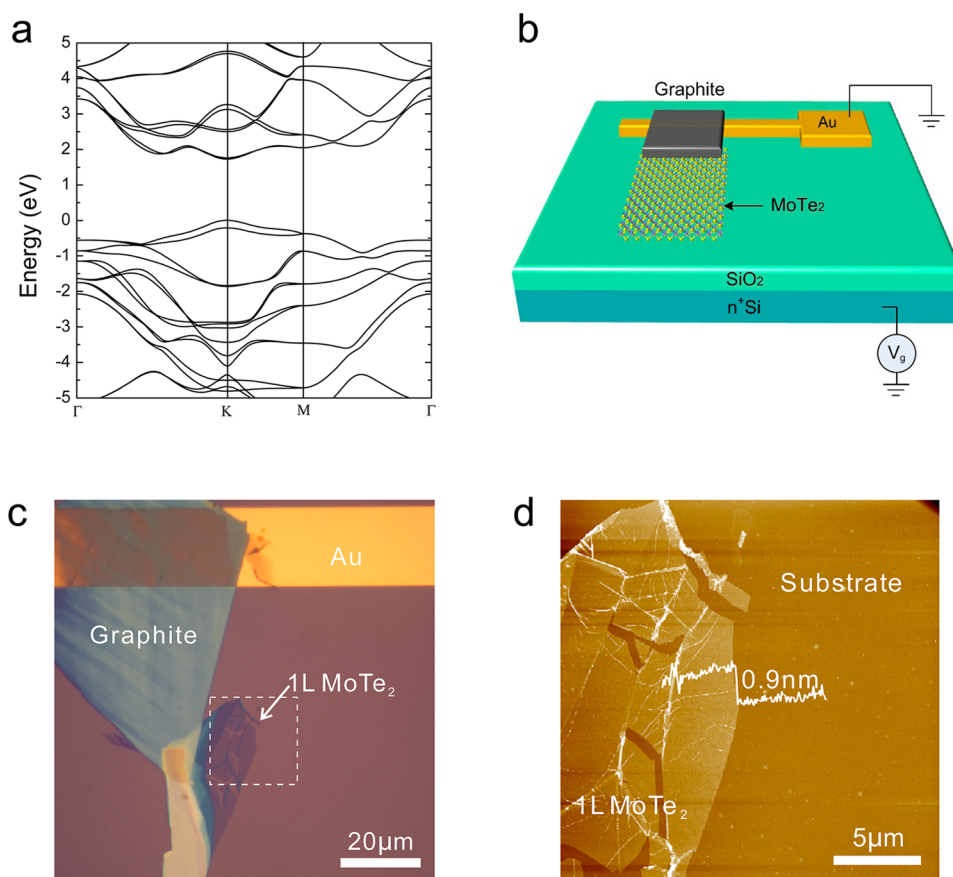


Figure 1. Calculated band diagram of monolayer (1L) MoTe₂ and the metal-oxide-semiconductor (MOS) structure. (a) Band diagram of 1L MoTe₂, indicating the direct band gap at the K point. (b) Schematic plot of a 1L MoTe₂ MOS device structure. Graphite is used as an electrical bridge. (c) Optical microscope image of the 1L MoTe₂ MOS device. (d) Atomic force microscopy (AFM) image of 1L MoTe₂ from the box enclosed by the dashed line in (c). The thickness from the height profile is 0.9 nm, well below the 2L thickness (~1.3 nm), indicating clearly that the sample is a monolayer.

on a monolayer MoTe₂ metal-oxide-semiconductor (MOS) device. The binding energies of X^+ and X^- were measured to be ~24 and ~27 meV, respectively. Moreover, the exciton binding energy of monolayer MoTe₂ was measured to be 0.58 ± 0.08 eV *via* photoluminescence excitation (PLE) spectroscopy, which matches well with our calculated value of 0.64 eV. Our work opens the door for the investigation of fundamental excitonic physics, as well as for a new generation of optoelectronic and excitonic devices based on monolayer MoTe₂.

First-principle calculations (Supporting Information Part I) based on density functional theory (DFT) have been performed, and the calculated band diagram of monolayer MoTe₂ is illustrated in Figure 1a, indicating that monolayer MoTe₂ is a direct band-gap semiconductor at the K point with a quasi-particle band gap of 1.72 eV, which agrees well with previous experiment^{16,17} and calculations.²⁶ During the experiments, monolayer MoTe₂ was mechanically exfoliated from the bulk crystal purchased from HQ Graphene and dryly transferred²⁷ onto the SiO₂/Si (275 nm thermal oxide on n⁺-doped silicon) substrate. The monolayer MoTe₂ was placed near a gold electrode that was

prepatterned on the substrate. Another thick graphite flake was similarly transferred to electrically bridge the MoTe₂ flake and the gold electrode, forming a MOS device (Figure 1). This fabrication procedure kept the MoTe₂ free from chemical contaminations by minimizing the postprocesses after the MoTe₂ flake was transferred. In the measurement, the gold electrode is grounded, and the n⁺-doped Si substrate functions as a back gate, providing uniform electrostatic doping in the MoTe₂ (Figure 1b). The optical microscope image of the MOS structure is shown in Figure 1c, with the AFM image shown in Figure 1d from the dashed line enclosed box in Figure 1c. The thickness from the atomic force microscopy (AFM) height profile is about 0.9 nm, well below the bilayer thickness of around 1.3–1.4 nm,^{16,17} indicating clearly that this is a monolayer MoTe₂ sample.

After the sample preparation and characterization, electrical modulation was applied onto the monolayer MoTe₂ sample in order to investigate the exciton charging effects. All the PL measurements were conducted in a T64000 micro-Raman/PL system equipped with both a charge-coupled device (CCD) and InGaAs detectors, along with a 532 nm Nd:YAG laser as the

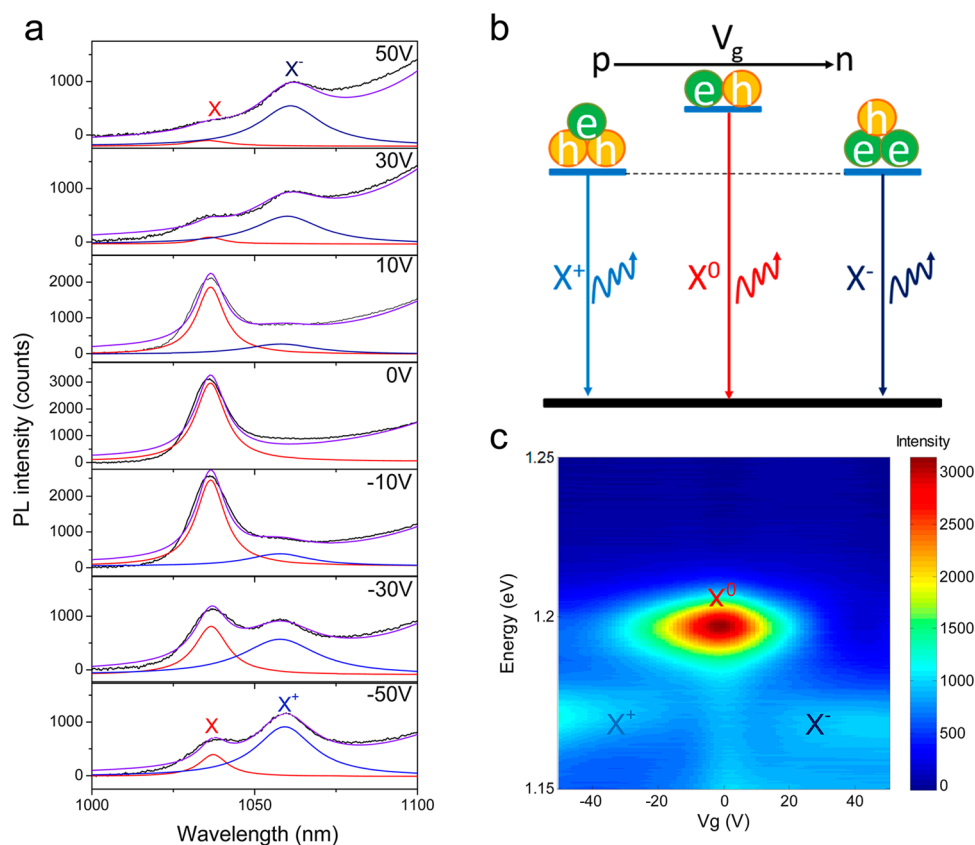


Figure 2. Electrical modulation of the exciton and trion dynamics for 1L MoTe₂. (a) Measured photoluminescence (PL) spectra of a 1L MoTe₂ sample at 83 K under different back gate voltages. Lorentzian fitting was used to extract the exciton and trion peaks of monolayer MoTe₂. Red and blue curves represent exciton and trion peaks of monolayer MoTe₂, respectively; black and purple curves are measured raw data and the cumulative fits. With nearly zero doping ($V_g = 0$ V), only neutral excitons can be observed, while with large electron (positive V_g)/hole (negative V_g) doping, negatively/positively charged excitons (trions) appear. (b) Schematic plot of the gate-dependent exciton and trion quasi-particle transitions. (c) The PL spectra of 1L MoTe₂ are plotted as a function of back gate voltage. The exciton, positive, and negative trion emissions are shown as bright spots in the 2D plot.

excitation source. Figure 2a displays the PL spectra at 83 K with a back gate voltage (V_g) from -50 to 50 V, and the black curve represents the original data from experiments. It is clear that, with zero electrical doping, only one sharp peak located at around 1035.6 nm (1.197 eV) can be observed. During our experiment, one broad peak located at around 1131.4 nm (1.096 eV) was also observed and was assigned to be the PL emission from n^+ -doped Si (Figure S2), which is not our focus in this paper. With the increase of electron (negative V_g) or hole (positive V_g) doping, the sharp PL emission peak split into two peaks, locating separately at 1036.9 nm (1.196 eV) and 1057.8 nm (1.172 eV) for $V_g = -50$ V. Under positive voltage bias ($V_g > 0$), the energy difference between these two sharp peaks is a bit higher, which will be discussed further below. The intensity weight of these two peaks can be modulated by back gate voltage, and the peak with lower energy came to dominate with high doping level. Besides, the lower energy peaks appearing at both positive and negative V_g have similar energies. Taking into account previous research on charged excitons,^{3,4} we assign the higher energy

sharp peak as the neutral exciton peak (X^0) and the lower energy sharp peak as negatively or positively charged excitons (negative trions X^- or positive trions X^+) (Figure 2b and c). Lorentzian fitting is used to extract the exciton and trion peaks of monolayer MoTe₂. In Figure 2a, red and blue curves represent the exciton and trion peak of monolayer MoTe₂, respectively, with the purple curve as the cumulative fit. The schematic of the exciton and trion transition⁴ with back gate modulation is displayed in Figure 2b. Electrons and holes are represented with green and yellow circles with e and h in the middle. The monolayer MoTe₂ sample is initially nearly undoped, and only neutral exciton emission can be detected. When applying positive back gate voltage, electrons will be injected into the monolayer MoTe₂, forming negatively charged excitons (or negative trions); likewise positively charged excitons (or positive trions) will form when holes are injected into the system with negative back gate voltage. This process can be represented as $e(h) + X^0 \rightarrow X^- (X^+)$. In order to have a better view of the exciton and trion transition, the PL spectra are plotted as a function of back gate voltage with measured PL

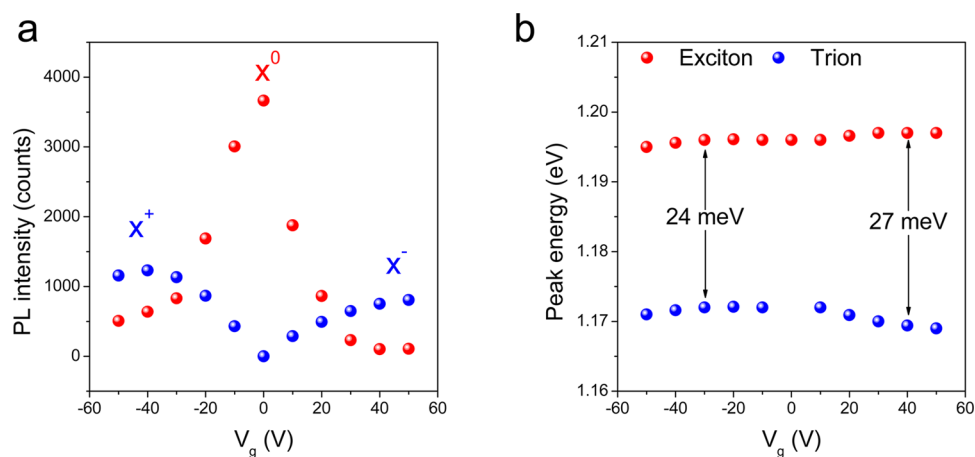


Figure 3. Exciton and trion analysis of 1L MoTe₂. (a) Exciton and trion peak intensities under different back gate voltages. (b) Exciton and trion peak energies under different back gate voltages. The binding energies of positive trion and negative trions are measured to be ~ 24 and ~ 27 meV, respectively.

intensity as a color scale, as indicated in Figure 2c. Only exciton and trion peaks of monolayer MoTe₂ are plotted here since the broad PL peak of Si is not our focus. We can clearly see the high-energy exciton bright spot (marked with X^0) when V_g is near 0 V, and when V_g increases or decreases, the exciton spot fades and the other two light spots show up (marked as X^- for positive V_g and X^+ for negative V_g), unambiguously indicating the exciton and trion transition with external electrical doping.

To further analyze the exciton and trion transition dynamics in the monolayer MoTe₂ system, exciton and trion PL intensities are plotted in Figure 3a. The intensity of the exciton peak reaches its maximum when $V_g = 0$ V and gradually drops to almost zero when the sample is either positively or negatively doped under high-voltage bias, V_g , while the intensity of the trion peak is zero when $V_g = 0$ V and saturates when the sample is either positively or negatively doped under high-voltage bias, V_g (*i.e.*, ± 50 V). The integrated PL intensity from the exciton peak (at $V_g = 0$ V) is about twice those from the trion peaks (at $V_g = \pm 50$ V) (Figure S3), which might be caused by the different internal quantum efficiency of these different emission types.²⁸ The exciton and trion peak energies from the fitting curves are plotted in Figure 3b. We found that the binding energy of positive and negative trions, *i.e.*, the peak energy difference of exciton and trion peaks, varies by about 3 meV, with the positive trion binding energy being ~ 24 meV and negative trion binding energy ~ 27 meV. The difference between the binding energies of positive and negative trions might be related to the different carrier density, dielectric screening, and effective masses of carriers in monolayer MoTe₂.^{3,12,15}

The direct measurement of the exciton binding energy of monolayer MoTe₂ is also very important for the fundamental studies of many-body interactions and for the exploration of new optoelectronic devices.

Here, photoluminescence excitation measurements were conducted to determine the exciton binding energy of monolayer MoTe₂ at room temperature. The sample used in the PLE measurements was on a transparent gel film and was the same piece for the electric modulation test previously transferred onto the Si/SiO₂ substrate, with the microscope image shown in Figure S4. In the experiments, the excitation wavelength was swept from 990 nm to 510 nm (1.25–2.43 eV) with a supercontinuum laser (SuperK EXTREME) with a precalibrated constant laser power of 40 μ W. The experimental results are plotted in Figure 4a as a 2D plot, with the *x*-axis as the emission photon energy and the *y*-axis as the excitation photon energy. Figure 4b displays three PL spectra with excitation wavelengths of 590, 690, and 730 nm (2.10, 1.80, and 1.70 eV; black, red, and green curve, respectively) along the corresponding color dashed lines in Figure 4a. From Figure 4a and b, it is clear to see that the PL intensity reaches its maximum with the excitation wavelength of 690 nm, while the emission peak is located at the same energy level since the PL emission is mainly from the same excitons. In Figure 4c, the PL peak intensity is extracted along the white dashed line in Figure 4a and presented as a function of the exciton energy. The PL peak intensity first increases and then decreases with the increase of the excitation energy, with a PL intensity maximum at the excitation energy of 1.80 eV.

To further understand why the PL intensity reaches its maximum at the excitation energy of 1.80 eV, a first-principle calculation was performed of the absorption as a function of photon energy, and the results are presented in the lower panel of Figure 4d. The red and blue curves represent the calculation results with and without considering the electron–hole interactions, respectively. The experimental results are presented in the upper panel, with the narrow red band as the exciton peak energy and the broad blue band as

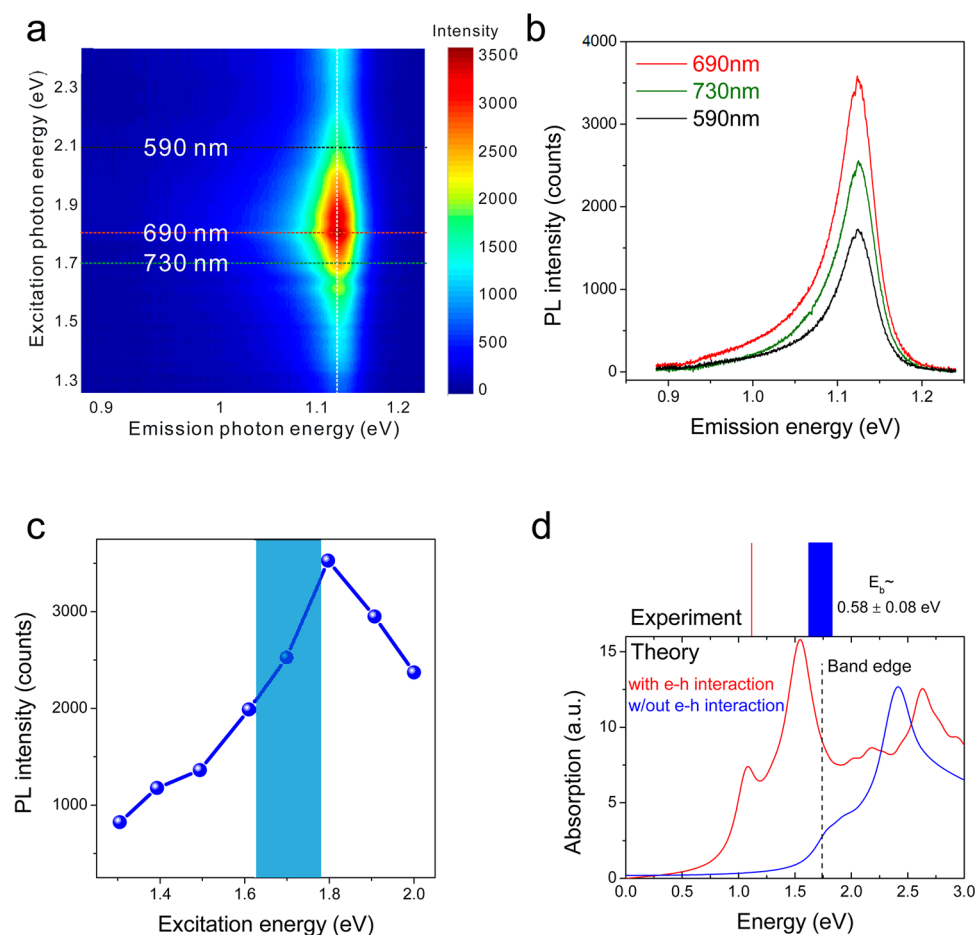


Figure 4. Photoluminescence excitation (PLE) spectra of 1L MoTe₂. (a) PLE intensity map of 1L MoTe₂ on a transparent gel film, measured at room temperature. (b) Selected PL spectra along the three horizontal dashed lines indicated in (a), showing that the PL becomes strongest when the excitation energy is at 1.80 eV (690 nm). (c) PL intensity at the emission peak of 1.12 eV as a function of excitation photon energy. The data are taken along the vertical dashed line in (a). (d) Upper: Schematic of measured exciton energy (narrow red band) and the energy of the quasi-particle band edge (broad blue band). The width of the bands indicates the experimental uncertainty. Lower: Absorption spectra from calculation with the $e-h$ interaction (excitonic, red curve) and without the $e-h$ interaction (quasi-particle, blue curve).

the quasi-particle band edge and the width of these two bands representing the experimental uncertainty. From our experiments, the exciton emission peak is located at 1.12 eV, matching well with the theoretical calculation. Also, the quasi-particle band edge extracted from the light blue band in Figure 4c is 1.70 ± 0.08 eV, matching reasonably well with the calculated band edge, indicated by a vertical dashed line in Figure 4d, where the band edge is defined as the point where the PL emission has the maximum increase rate.²⁹ This measured and calculated band edge at ~ 1.7 eV corresponds well with the measured absorption peak at ~ 1.8 eV from reflectance contrast $\Delta R/R$ spectra by Ruppert *et al.*¹⁷ Ruppert *et al.*¹⁷ have measured the reflectance contrast $\Delta R/R$ spectra for mono-, bi-, and trilayer MoTe₂ crystals on the SiO₂ substrate and successfully observed the *A* and *B*, *A'* and *B'*, and *C* and *D* absorption peaks. *A* and *B* peaks are assigned to excitonic peaks associated with the lowest direct optical transition at the K point. The splitting between the *A*, *B* and *A'*, *B'* has been related to interlayer interactions

since they are only observed in bi- and trilayer MoTe₂ samples, and *C* and *D* peaks are attributed to regions of parallel bands near the Γ point, which corresponds to the band nesting effect reported by Kozawa *et al.*³⁰ For the monolayer MoTe₂ sample, Ruppert *et al.* observed an absorption peak at ~ 1.8 eV, and they did not explain the origin of this peak. This value is quite consistent with both our measured absorption peak from PLE measurements and theoretical calculations, and we attribute the absorption peak at ~ 1.8 eV to the band edge. Hence from our experiments, the exciton binding energy of monolayer MoTe₂ is 0.58 ± 0.08 eV, which matches well with our calculated value of 0.64 eV. This measured exciton binding energy of monolayer MoTe₂ is comparable with those of other 2D TMD semiconductors.³⁰

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, we have successfully demonstrated the electrical modulation of excitons and trions in monolayer MoTe₂. Both positive and negative trions

have been observed with electrostatic doping in a MOS device. The extracted binding energies of positive and negative trions were ~ 24 and ~ 27 meV, respectively. Furthermore, the exciton binding energy of monolayer MoTe_2 was determined to be 0.58 ± 0.08 eV *via* PLE

spectroscopy measurements, consistent with our first-principle calculation result of 0.64 eV. Our research and experimental results here pave the way for future applications in near-infrared optoelectronic and excitonic devices with this material.

EXPERIMENTAL METHODS

The monolayer MoTe_2 sample was transferred onto a SiO_2/Si substrate (275 nm thermal SiO_2) by mechanical exfoliation, using GEL film (Gel-Pak). The monolayer MoTe_2 was placed near a gold electrode that was prepatterned on the substrate. Another thick graphite flake was similarly transferred to electrically bridge the MoTe_2 flake and the gold electrode, forming a MOS device. This fabrication procedure kept the MoTe_2 free from chemical contaminations by minimizing the postprocesses after the MoTe_2 flake was transferred. In the measurement, the gold electrode is grounded, and the n^+ -doped Si substrate functions as a back gate, providing uniform electrostatic doping in the MoTe_2 . All PL measurements were conducted with a T64000 micro-Raman system equipped with both CCD and InGaAs detectors. Photoluminescence excitation measurements were conducted to determine the exciton binding energy of monolayer MoTe_2 at room temperature. The sample used in the PLE measurements was on a transparent gel film and was the same piece for the electric modulation test previously transferred onto the Si/SiO_2 substrate.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no competing financial interest.

Acknowledgment. We would like to thank Prof. Chennupati Jagadish and Prof. Barry Luther-Davies from The Australian National University for their facility support. We acknowledge financial support from an ANU Ph.D. student scholarship, China Scholarship Council, Australian Research Council (grant no. DE140100805), and ANU Major Equipment Committee (grant no. 14MEC34). T.Y.L. and J.C.Z. acknowledge the support of the National Science Foundation of China (grant no. U1232110).

Supporting Information Available: Details of theoretical calculation methods, more experimental PL measurement results, and data analysis. The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website at DOI: 10.1021/acsnano.5b02665.

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