Electronic spin drift in graphene field-effect transistors
Jozsa, C.; Popinciuc, M.; Tombros, N.; Jonkman, Harry; van Wees, Bart

Published in:
Physical Review Letters

DOI:
10.1103/PhysRevLett.100.236603

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher’s version (publisher’s PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2008

Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database

Citation for published version (APA):

Copyright
Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Take-down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): http://www.rug.nl/research/portal. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.
Electronic Spin Drift in Graphene Field-Effect Transistors

C. Józsa,1,* M. Popinciuc,2 N. Tombros,1 H. T. Jonkman,2 and B. J. van Wees1

1Physics of Nanodevices, Zernike Institute for Advanced Materials, University of Groningen, The Netherlands
2Molecular Electronics, Zernike Institute for Advanced Materials, University of Groningen, The Netherlands

(Received 18 February 2008; published 13 June 2008)

We studied the drift of electron spins under an applied dc electric field in single layer graphene spin valves in a field-effect transport geometry at room temperature. In the metallic conduction regime ($n \approx 3.5 \times 10^{12} \text{m}^{-2}$), for dc fields of about $\pm 70 \text{kV/m}$ applied between the spin injector and spin detector, the spin valve signals are increased or decreased, depending on the direction of the dc field and the carrier type, by as much as $\pm 50\%$. Sign reversal of the drift effect is observed when switching from hole to electron conduction. In the vicinity of the Dirac neutrality point the drift effect is strongly suppressed. The experiments are in quantitative agreement with a drift-diffusion model of spin transport.

DOI: 10.1103/PhysRevLett.100.236603 PACS numbers: 72.25.Hg, 73.63.–b

Graphene, a two-dimensional hexagonal carbon lattice, was isolated from graphite and became available for electric transport type measurements in 2004 [1,2]. Graphene is unique in its nature by allowing the experimentalist to shift the Fermi level through the zero-gap energy bands and continuously tune the carrier density from holes to electrons via the Dirac neutrality point. Recent studies also addressed the spin degree of freedom, resulting in successful injection, transport and detection of spins in single and multiple layers of graphene [3–8]. The spin relaxation time $\tau_{sf}$ measured about 150 ps (as extracted from Hanle type spin precession measurements), which combined with a diffusion constant of $D \approx 0.02 \text{m}^2/\text{s}$ yielded a considerable room temperature spin diffusion length $\lambda_{sf} = \sqrt{D\tau_{sf}}$ of 1.5 to 2 $\mu\text{m}$.

Until now, spin transport in graphene was studied in the low bias regime where the transport is described by diffusion only. In this Letter we study the spin transport in the presence of dc electric fields. Because of the large carrier mobilities in graphene [9], the dc fields give rise to spin-drift effects which are comparable in magnitude to the spin diffusion in graphene and, therefore, become accessible experimentally. In order to study the spin-drift effect, we have built lateral spin valve devices as illustrated in Fig. 1. The graphene layer is contacted by a series of Co electrodes (F1–F5) used for the injection or detection of spins and the application of the dc electric fields. The dimensions of the contacts and their spacings given in the figure caption are the ones of the sample discussed in this paper and are characteristic for the spin valves we have fabricated. The graphene flakes we use are typically between 0.2 and 4 $\mu\text{m}$ wide and up to 50 $\mu\text{m}$ long. Besides the AFM thickness characterization of every flake, on several samples we have conducted Raman spectroscopy measurements as well [10], in order to select the single layer flakes. For a detailed description of the device fabrication see Ref. [3]. The contact resistances are between 2.5 $\Omega$ and 12 $\Omega$. A standard low-frequency ac lock-in technique with a current of 4 $\mu\text{A}$ rms was used for measuring the spin signals. The measurements were performed at room temperature and in vacuum in order to minimize the shifts of the Dirac point due to charging effects of adsorbates on the graphene layer.

An ac spin imbalance is created in graphene by injection or extraction of spin currents by the ferromagnetic electrodes F4 and F5 through an aluminum-oxide tunnel barrier. Because of the opaque Co/Al$_2$O$_3$/graphene interface, the spin transport is not disturbed by the central contact F3. The spin imbalance diffuses symmetrically, with respect to the injection points F4 and F5, through the device giving rise to an ac voltage drop between the ferromagnetic detector electrodes F2 and F1. In this nonlocal measurement geometry, the spin transport is thus completely separated from the charge transport and is solely described by the diffusion constant $D$ and the spin relaxation time $\tau_{sf}$. The nonlocal voltage drop between F2 and F1 is measured as a function of a magnetic field applied along the easy axis of the Co electrodes ($y$ direction). This results in typical spin valve signals as shown in Fig. 2(a). The variable width of the Co electrodes yields a difference in their coercive

FIG. 1 (color online). Schematic drawing of the spin-drift experiment. The Co contact widths are 350 nm (for F1), 90 nm (F2), 250 nm (F3), 90 nm (F4), 350 nm (F5) and the distances between them are (from left to right) 2 $\mu\text{m}$, 0.6 $\mu\text{m}$, 1.3 $\mu\text{m}$ and 2 $\mu\text{m}$. The 0.9 $\times$ 7 $\mu\text{m}^2$ sized graphene flake is covered by an aluminum oxide layer. A (gate) voltage, applied between the Au contacted Si($n^{++}$) substrate and the grounded electrode F5, allows for the control of the charge density in graphene. The layer thicknesses are given in the brackets.
Spin-drift effects in all-electrical graphene spin-valve devices: role of the dc electric field

D. P. Piskunov, V. M. Ustinov, D. V. S. V. S. Burschka, I. A. Shcherbakov, P. P. Fedorov, and A. O. Anikeev

Department of Physics, University of California, Los Angeles, California 90095

(Received 23 June 2008; revised 9 October 2008; published 13 June 2008)

We report on a new type of all-electrical spin-valve device with two free terminal electrodes and two ground electrodes. In this device, an additional control over carrier transport is realized through the application of a dc electric field. We find experimentally that the spin transport efficiency can be dramatically influenced by this field through the mechanism of spin drift.

FIG. 2 (color online). (a) Nonlocal spin valve measurement of the device presented in Fig. 1. The small arrows represent the magnetic orientation of electrodes F1, F2, F4, and F5. The asymmetric spin valve behavior is due to the switching order of F4 and F5 which depends on external field sweep direction (indicated by the large horizontal arrows). $R_{SV}$ represents the spin signal; see text for details. (b) 4-point measurement of the graphene resistivity between contacts F3 and F4 versus the gate voltage.

Spin drift in addition to the diffusion would in principle be possible by passing a dc current from F2 to F4. However, a strong dc bias can dramatically influence the spin injection efficiency of the electrodes [14,15] making it impossible to separate the drift effect contribution. We have conducted experiments on graphene spin valve devices where both ac spin injector electrodes are dc biased and we measured changes of the spin valve effect up to an order of magnitude compared to the non-biased measurements [16]. In order to avoid the manipulation of the spin injection efficiency, we have introduced the electrode F3 (see Fig. 1). The dc field is applied between the electrodes F3 and F5 by sending a dc current between them, with F5 being grounded. We could not avoid sharing the drain of the ac and dc circuits, the injector F5 on the far right of the device is effectively dc biased. However, the effect of changing its injection efficiency with the dc current bias is minimized as discussed later.

Experimentally, the drift will manifest itself as an asymmetric distribution of the spin imbalance on the two sides of the spin injection point F4 (and F5), in addition to the symmetric diffusion process. Between F3 and F5 thus, where the field $E$ is active, a favored direction of the spin transport will be defined by the electric field’s polarity and the carrier type. Such a device with fixed-distance injector/detector electrodes will therefore show a variable spin signal dependent on the dc electric field.

In Fig. 3 we present room temperature spin valve measurements for several dc currents (applied between F3 and F5) at three gate voltages: $-20$ V (hole conduction), $+9$ V (the Dirac neutrality point) and $+38$ V (electron conduction). The upper limit of the electric fields was set by the current densities allowed to pass through the tunnel barriers without damaging them [17]. Before each measurement, the magnetic field is ramped up to 300 mT to saturate the magnetization of the contact electrodes. The dc currents used were $\pm 40$, $\pm 20$ and 0 $\mu$A and their corresponding electric fields were $\pm 68$ kV/m, $\pm 34$ kV/m for $V_g = -20$ and $+38$ V and $\pm 206$ kV/m, $\pm 103$ kV/m for $V_g = +9$ V. Similar measurements, done on a set of samples with different geometry and/or contact resistances, support the data we present and discuss here.
towards the detectors ("downstream" transport) and the resulting drift facilitates spin transport. This transport is labeled as "upstream" since, in order to apply a field of 34 kV/m, we are in the high density hole conduction regime with a carrier concentration of $n_h = 3.5 \times 10^{16} \text{ m}^{-2}$ yielding a graphene resistivity $R_{\text{square}} \approx 1.5 \ \text{k} \Omega$. The nonlocal spin signal $R_{SV}$ reads 1 Ω when no dc field is present [graph (c)]. Applying a dc field of +34 kV/m [graph (d)] and +68 kV/m [graph (e)] decreases the spin valve signal to 0.7 Ω and 0.45 Ω respectively, indicating spin drift in the region $F3$–$F5$ that counteracts the symmetric spin diffusion. This transport is labeled as "upstream" since, in order to detect a spin valve signal at electrodes $F2$ and $F1$, the spins need to travel against the action of the carrier drift. Now, if the dc electric fields’ polarity is reversed, i.e., we apply a field of $-34 \ \text{kV/m}$ [graph (b)] and $-68 \ \text{kV/m}$ [graph (a)], the resulting drift facilitates spin transport towards the detectors ("downstream" transport) and the measured spin valve signal increases to 1.3 and 1.5 Ω, respectively.

In the case of electron conduction, the drift effect reverses, because the electric field-charge carrier interaction is opposite, as seen in the set of curves measured at $V_{g} = +38 \ \text{V}$ (right column in Fig. 3). This voltage was selected to give approximately the same parameters ($n_e, R_{\text{local}}$) on the electron conduction side of the Dirac neutrality point as for the hole conduction ($V_{g} = -20 \ \text{V}$). The spin signal scales with the field amplitude and direction as expected, reading 0.6, 0.9, 1.2, 1.5, and 1.7Ω for $-68$, $-34$, 0, +34 and +68 kV/m respectively.

At a gate voltage that locates the Fermi level close to the Dirac neutrality point ($R_{\text{square}} \approx 4.5 \ \text{k} \Omega$) the conduction happens neither via electrons, nor via holes, which means that no spin drift should take place. Examining the measurements at $V_{g} = +9 \ \text{V}$ (central column of graphs in Fig. 3), we observe a slight decreasing tendency of the spin valve signal for increasingly positive dc fields, similar to the drift in case of hole conduction. This behavior can be explained by the interplay of the following two effects.

First, under the high dc current a certain shift of the effective gate voltage is expected. Considering the 20 kΩ resistance of the structure (graphene $+ \text{contact } F5$), this shift equals to $\pm 0.8 \ \text{V}$ for currents of $\pm 40 \ \mu\text{A}$. Unlike in the case of high carrier densities, around the neutrality point such a shift can critically change the carrier density in graphene and lead to spin drift. Second, due to a shift of the Dirac point in time under a constant gate voltage stress, it is difficult to set and keep a gate voltage just at the right position to assure neutrality. In our case, it seems that we were slightly in the hole conduction regime when measuring at $V_{g} = +9 \ \text{V}$.

For a quantitative interpretation of the data we have extracted the spin signal values from all the measurements of Fig. 3 and plotted them in Fig. 4 against the dc field for the three gate voltages. For the theoretical description, we adopt the drift-diffusion model introduced by Yu and Flatté [14,18]. In steady state, the drift-diffusion equation for the spin imbalance $n_s$ reads

\begin{equation}
\frac{\partial n_s}{\partial t} = D \nabla^2 n_s - \mu \nabla V - \Gamma \frac{\partial n_s}{\partial t} - \frac{\partial n_s}{\partial t} \nabla V \cdot \nabla \nabla n_s,
\end{equation}

where $D = \mu \frac{e}{m^*}$ is the diffusion coefficient, $\mu$ is the mobility, $m^*$ is the effective mass, $\Gamma$ is the spin relaxation time, and $\nabla V$ is the electric field.

The line is the result of solving this equation numerically. The agreement with the data is good, indicating that the drift-diffusion model can describe the observed spin transport in graphene.

FIG. 3 (color online). The drift effect in a graphene spin valve. The gate voltage $V_g$ varies from left to right and it is indicated for each column. The dc electric current varies from top to down as: (a) $I_{dc} = -40 \ \mu\text{A}$, (b) $-20 \ \mu\text{A}$, (c) 0 $\mu\text{A}$, (d) $+20 \ \mu\text{A}$, (e) $+40 \ \mu\text{A}$. For clarity only the negative side of the spin valve measurements are plotted.

The change in the injection efficiency of the electrode $F5$ (common ground for the dc and ac currents) for different dc fields appears in the spin valve measurements as an increased or decreased contribution of this electrode to the device nonlocal resistance. This can be seen in Fig. 3 where, for the measurements performed at $+38 \ \text{V}$ gate voltage, the resistance step at approximately $-30 \ \text{mT}$ (corresponding to the magnetic switch of electrode $F5$) does show a dependence on the dc electric field. However, this electrode is positioned far from the ac detection circuit, and we can minimize its effect by defining the "spin signal" $R_{SV}$ as the resistance step between the parallel and antiparallel magnetic state of the two $\text{central}$ electrodes $F2$ and $F4$ (see Fig. 2). Therefore, the dc field dependence of $R_{SV}$ indicates the presence of carrier drift as explained below.

At $-20 \ \text{V}$ gate voltage (left column of graphs in Fig. 3), we are in the high density hole conduction regime with a carrier concentration of $n_h = 3.5 \times 10^{16} \text{ m}^{-2}$ yielding a graphene resistivity $R_{\text{square}} \approx 1.5 \ \text{k} \Omega$. The nonlocal spin signal $R_{SV}$ reads 1 Ω when no dc field is present [graph (c)]. Applying a dc field of $+34 \ \text{kV/m}$ [graph (d)] and $+68 \ \text{kV/m}$ [graph (e)] decreases the spin valve signal to 0.7 Ω and 0.45 Ω respectively, indicating spin drift in the region $F3$–$F5$ that counteracts the symmetric spin diffusion. This transport is labeled as "upstream" since, in order to detect a spin valve signal at electrodes $F2$ and $F1$, the spins need to travel against the action of the carrier drift. Now, if the dc electric fields’ polarity is reversed, i.e., we apply a field of $-34 \ \text{kV/m}$ [graph (b)] and $-68 \ \text{kV/m}$ [graph (a)], the resulting drift facilitates spin transport towards the detectors ("downstream" transport) and the measured spin valve signal increases to 1.3 and 1.5 Ω, respectively.
drift-diffusion spin transport is about 2 times increased or the direction scales, named upstream and downstream lengths \( \lambda_\pm \) [18]:

\[
\frac{1}{\lambda_+} = \frac{1}{2} \frac{1}{\lambda_d} + \frac{1}{4} \frac{1}{\lambda_d^2} + \frac{1}{\lambda_d^3}.
\]

The general solution to the spin imbalance equation (1) in the direction \( x \) parallel to the spin transport is

\[
n_s(x) = A \exp\left(\frac{x}{\lambda_+}\right) + B \exp\left(-\frac{x}{\lambda_-}\right).
\]

where \( A \) and \( B \) are determined by the boundary conditions. Since we take the electrode F4 as the spin source, only the decaying solution with respect to the injection point need to be considered. Therefore, we can write the spin signal \( R_{SV} \) dependence versus the applied dc field in the form

\[
R_{SV} = R_0 \exp\left(-\frac{L}{\lambda_+}\right),
\]

where \( R_0 \) is the spin signal that would be measured at the injection point, \( \lambda_+ \) carries the electric field dependence (Eq. (2)) and \( L \approx 1.5 \mu m \) is the F3 to F4 distance.

In the following we compare the drift-diffusion equation for the spin signal [Eq. (4)] with the spin-drift measurements in the high carrier density regime. From the conductivities measured in Fig. 2(b) we extract \( \mu \approx 0.25 \text{ m}^2/\text{Vs} \) using \( \sigma = n e \mu \), where the carrier concentration \( n \) is calculated from the sample’s response to gate voltage [Fig. 2(b)], using the method described in Refs. [2,13]. This gives a drift velocity of \( v_d \approx \pm 1.7 \times 10^9 \text{ m/s} \) for \( E \approx \pm 68 \text{ kV/m} \). The diffusion constant of \( D \approx 0.02 \text{ m}^2/\text{sec} \) is obtained using the Einstein relation \( \sigma = N e^2 D \), where the density of states \( N \) is determined according to Ref. [3]. Using Eq. (2) and a spin relaxation length \( \lambda_d \approx 2 \mu m \) [3], we calculate the magnitude of the drift effect manifesting in the up/downstream lengths as \( \lambda_+ = 1.3 \mu m \), \( \lambda_- = 3.0 \mu m \) for \( E = \pm 34 \text{ kV/m} \) and \( \lambda_+ = 0.9 \mu m \), \( \lambda_- = 4.4 \mu m \) for \( E = \pm 68 \text{ kV/m} \). Note, that at \( E = \pm 68 \text{ kV/m} \) the characteristic length scale of the drift-diffusion spin transport is about 2 times increased or decreased compared to the diffusion process. The value of \( R_0 \) we estimate from the spin valve measurements in zero electric field when \( \lambda_+ = \lambda_\parallel \) and \( R_0 \) is given by \( R_0 = R_{SV} \exp(L/\lambda_\parallel) \). By taking the length of the drift region \( L = 1.5 \mu m \), \( \lambda_\parallel = 2 \mu m \) and the measured \( R_{SV} \) at \( E = 0 \) we can determine \( R_0 \). Now, we are able to calculate the drift effect according to Eq. (4), all parameters being known. The theoretical curves (solid lines in Fig. 4) are in excellent agreement with the experimental data. There are no free parameters in the calculation and, in fact, these measurements could be used to extract \( \lambda_\parallel \), if it would be known.

At the Dirac point, due to the symmetry, no drift effect is expected. However, in our measurements we are probably slightly away from the Dirac point. Here we cannot apply our above analysis. It remains an open theoretical question to what the drift velocity should be at the charge neutrality point.

In conclusion, we studied spin transport manipulation in graphene, by carrier drift under the action of a dc electric field. For high charge carrier densities \( n \approx 3.5 \times 10^{16} \text{ m}^{-2} \) depending on the direction of the applied dc field and the nature of the carriers we were able to modify the effective spin relaxation length by factor of 4.8 which resulted in a modulation of the spin valve signal of about 300%. The spin-drift measurements are described well by a drift-diffusion model. The control over the drift velocity we demonstrated opens new possibilities for exploring spin related phenomena in other types of graphene devices, such as graphene p-n junctions.

We would like to acknowledge B. Wolfs and S. Bakker for technical assistance. This work was financed by MSCplus, NanoNed, NWO (via a “PIONIER” grant) and FOM.

* C. Jozsa@rug.nl

[16] C. Jozsa et al. (to be published).
[17] We have sent d.c currents as high as 80 \( \mu \text{A} \) through a similar device, at which point the Co/Al2O3 electrodes were damaged.