Sterically Suppressed Phase Segregation in 3D Hollow Mixed-Halide Wide Band Gap Perovskites

Luke Grater, Mingcong Wang, Sam Teale, Suhas Mahesh, Aidan Maxwell, Yanjiang Liu, So Min Park, Bin Chen, Frédéric Laquai, Mercouri G. Kanatzidis, and Edward H. Sargent*

ABSTRACT: Band gap tuning in mixed-halide perovskites enables efficient multijunction solar cells and LEDs. However, these wide band gap perovskites, which contain a mixture of iodide and bromide ions, are known to phase segregate under illumination, introducing voltage losses that limit stability. Previous studies have employed inorganic perovskites, halide alloys, and grain/interface passivation to minimize halide segregation, yet photostability can be further advanced. By focusing on the role of halide vacancies in anion migration, one expects to be able to erect local barriers to ion migration. To achieve this, we employ a 3D “hollow” perovskite structure, wherein a molecule that is otherwise too large for the perovskite lattice is incorporated. The amount of hollowing agent, ethane-1,2-diammonium dihydroiodide (EDA), varies the density of the hollow sites. Photoluminescence measurements reveal that 1% EDA in the perovskite bulk can stabilize a 40% bromine mixed-halide perovskite at 1 sun illumination intensity. These, along with capacitance–frequency measurements, suggest that hollow sites limit the mobility of the halide vacancies.

Metal halide perovskites have attracted significant attention due to their band gap tunability through alloying, achieved by varying the ratio of I to Br in AB(I\(_{1-x}\)Br\(_x\))\(_3\), where the A-site cation is typically an alloy of MA, FA, or Cs and the B-site cation is Pb or Sn.

When the Br content exceeds 20%, mixed-halide perovskites segregate upon exposure to light, forming I-rich domains with a band gap lower than in their parent mixed phase.\(^\text{1-3}\) Higher than 20% Br content is needed for efficient perovskite–perovskite tandem solar cells, but the performance remains hindered by halide segregation. Photogenerated carriers tend to accumulate in these low-energy regions, limiting the open-circuit voltage and thus the efficiency of multijunction cells.\(^\text{3-5}\)

Prior experimental studies correlate phase segregation with defect densities,\(^\text{6-9}\) motivating many prior contributions to focus on minimizing these through A- and X-site compositional tuning and grain passivation.\(^\text{7-10}\) Adjusting the A-site and X-site compositions, such as with Cs and Cl, has increased the resistance to segregation,\(^\text{6,7}\) as has the passivation of electronic trap states, especially those at the absorber/transport-layer interface.\(^\text{11}\)

Opportunities nevertheless remain to increase the range and stability of compositions further, including in >40% Br materials with the goal of withstanding accelerated aging conditions such as illumination above 3 suns.

Our concept here was to introduce local steric barriers against ion migration, reducing the mobility of vacancies believed to facilitate detrimental ion migration. We explore implementing this idea in hollow perovskites, a class of materials previously used to tune the optoelectronic properties of 3D perovskites.\(^\text{12,13}\) A large divalent cation, such as ethylenediammonium (EDA), is included in the perovskite ABX\(_3\) structure, expelling other atoms from the lattice: B- and X-site vacancies. In contrast to the case of 2D perovskites, the lattice retains its 3D structure, which is promising for the retention of reasonable charge transport.\(^\text{14}\) Hollow sites in the lattice have previously been shown to increase the chemical and kinetic stability,\(^\text{12}\) again suggesting promise in mitigating ion migration associated with phase segregation.

Prior studies report hollow perovskite structures in single crystals and films of monohalide, pure Pb, and mixed Pb-Sn perovskites.\(^\text{12-16}\) Here we use EDA to incorporate a 3D hollow structure into pure Pb mixed-halide thin films. We fabricated thin films of mixed-halide hollow perovskite by incorporating the hollowing agent, EDA, into a Cs\(_{0.12}\)FA\(_{0.88}\)Pb(I\(_{0.6}\)Br\(_{0.4}\))\(_3\) mixed-halide wide band gap precursor solution at varying molar percentages depending on the experiment (ranging from 0.5 to 10%). The precursor solution was then spin-coated onto substrates and annealed (details in Methods). We spin-coated a poly(methyl methacrylate) (PMMA) layer on top of the annealed films.\(^\text{17}\)

**Received:** April 27, 2023

**Accepted:** June 20, 2023
We used XRD and $^1$H NMR to assess the EDA incorporation and the formation of the hollow structure. In XRD, we observe a shift to lower $2\theta$ (expanded lattice) that increases with EDA % (Figure 1b, Supplementary Note 1). From $^1$H NMR we see that EDA is unchanged when combined in solution with other perovskite precursors and that no reaction with FA is observed (Figures S21−S27 and Supplementary Note 2), based on which we offer that it is incorporated as EDA during perovskite film formation, forming the hollow structure. This is accompanied by a widening of the optical band gap seen as a blue shift in both UV−vis absorption and PL emission (Figure 1d,e and Figure S1) with increasing hollowness. To ascertain whether the change in band gap is due to the hollow structure rather than a change in the halide ratio, we used XPS to measure the halide ratio, finding that it varies by no more than 5% over the full range of EDA studied herein (Table S1). As seen in prior studies, 12,16 films with increasing EDA show an increase in the X:B site ratio, increasing from 4.56 for nonhollow films to 4.79 for films with 10% EDA (Table S1), indicative of the Pb$^{2+}$ vacancies characteristic of hollow perovskites.

In order to relate the amount of hollowing agent in the precursor solution to the degree of hollowness in the final thin film, we calculated the unit cell volume by first assuming a cubic structure 18 and then calculating the cubic unit cell lattice parameter from the corresponding $d$ spacings of the (001) peak in the thin film XRD (Figure S2). The calculated cubic unit cell volume exhibits a linear relationship with EDA % (Figure 1c), as also seen in previous reports. 12 We therefore use the previously established single-crystal hollow perovskite composition formula, $(A)_{1−x}(en)_x(B)_{1−0.7}(X)_{3−0.4}$ to define the degree of hollowness in the thin film mixed-halide crystal structure: for example, adding 1% EDA to the precursor solution results in a corresponding hollow composition of $(Cs_{0.17}FA_{0.83}Pb(I_{0.6}Br_{0.4})_3(EDA)_{0.01}(Pb)_{0.993}(I_{0.6}Br_{0.4})_{2.996}$.

To assess the ability of the hollow perovskite structure to improve photostability, we tracked the PL from films over time as a function of EDA % as a function of light intensity. The progressive red shift and broadening of PL emission, often accompanied by the appearance and growth of a low-energy shoulder (I-rich phase), are associated with demixing of the previously homogeneous mixed-halide phase. 2,7,19 PL peak tracking was performed at 1, 3.4, and 6.9 sun equivalent illumination intensities (details in Methods) over a period of 20 min. Representative PL scans at 3.4 sun illumination intensity, along with residual PL peak analysis, are shown in Figure 2a−f, respectively, while the remainder of the scans referenced in the phase stability discussion can be found in the Supporting Information.

Films with up to 10% EDA inclusion were evaluated, since the inclusion of higher levels of EDA led to significantly decreased PL intensity (Figures S4 and S5). Without EDA, a red shift is present even after 1 min of exposure to 3.4 sun incident intensity (Figure 2a,d). The red shift and emergence of a low-energy shoulder decrease with increasing EDA concentration (Figure...
However, at 6.9 suns, 10% EDA films do begin to red shift (Figure S7). Under 1 sun, 1% EDA is sufficient to mitigate halide segregation over the course of 20 min (Figure S8).

The photoluminescence quantum yield (PLQY) (Figure 3a) decreases by roughly 1 order of magnitude in the 1% EDA case, and this is accompanied by the expected reduction in excited-state lifetime seen in transient photoluminescence (TPL) (Figure 3c). The open circuit voltage ($V_{OC}$) of hollow mixed-halide perovskite solar cells (PSCs) vs increasing EDA % follows the trend expected from PL (Figures S9 and S10).

Kanatzidis and co-workers have shown that the 3D frameworks of hollow perovskites are disrupted by the presence of metal and iodide vacancies. However, vacancies in lead-based perovskites are known to produce more benign in-band or shallow traps. We offer the possibility that the changes in PLQY and TPL with hollowing may relate to trap densities at grain boundaries rather than the hollow sites themselves.

To evaluate charge transport characteristics with respect to EDA %, we used terahertz spectroscopy to probe the photoinduced conductivity and the intragrain carrier mobility. The estimated charge carrier mobilities decrease linearly with increasing EDA %, from $\sim26$ cm$^2$ V$^{-1}$ s$^{-1}$ in the control film to $\sim6$ cm$^2$ V$^{-1}$ s$^{-1}$ in films with 10% EDA (Figure 3b). A similar linear decrease in mobility was observed for films containing 20% Br (Figure S13). The hollow structure appears to impede carrier movement within grains, likely due to the increased presence of vacancies. This is consistent with the trend in short circuit current ($J_{SC}$) (Figure S14).

Previous simulations have shown that ion transport in hollow perovskites exhibits a strong dependence on the degree of hollowness. In hollow MAPbI$_3$, the activation energy of migrating I vacancies increases with increasing EDA %. Other studies investigating ion migration in hollow FA-based perovskites have shown that the activation energy decreases with increasing EDA %. The present results for 40% Br thin films agree with the former. Since perovskites can act as an ionic conductor, changes in capacitance in the low-frequency (<10$^3$ Hz) regime are associated with ion accumulation at the interface. The decrease in capacitance in the low-frequency regime in EDA-containing mixed-halide thin films (Figure 3d) agrees with the picture of restricted ion migration, leading to increased photostability.

In summary, mixed-halide wide band gap perovskites, such as those commonly used in all-perovskite tandems (40% Br), can be stabilized by generating a hollow perovskite structure. With the increasing hollowness of the perovskite, there is further enhanced photostability, as evidenced by PL peak tracking. Terahertz spectroscopy and capacitance–frequency measurements suggest that the enhanced photostability is correlated to an increased presence of vacancies and reduced vacancy mobility induced by the hollow structure. This, we propose, may be linked to an increase in the kinetic energy required for ion migration which is consistent with a prior ion-migration...
Future studies on the passivation of intergrain boundary trap states may contribute to improving the device performance in these materials.

**ASSOCIATED CONTENT**

**Supporting Information**
The Supporting Information is available free of charge at https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.jpcl.3c01156.

Materials and Methods, Supplementary Notes 1 and 2, Tables S1–S5, and Figures S1–S27 (PDF)

Transparent Peer Review report available (PDF)

**AUTHOR INFORMATION**

**Corresponding Author**
Edward H. Sargent — Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario MSS 1A4, Canada; Department of Chemistry and Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois 60208, United States; orcid.org/0000-0001-5920-4022; Email: ted.sargent@utoronto.ca

**Authors**
Luke Grater — Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario MSS 1A4, Canada; orcid.org/0000-0001-5920-4022

Mingcong Wang — King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), KAUST Solar Center (KSC), Physical Sciences and Engineering Division (PSE), Thuwal 23955-6900, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Sam Teale — Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario MSS 1A4, Canada; orcid.org/0000-0001-9638-3453

Suhas Mahesh — Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario MSS 1A4, Canada; orcid.org/0000-0002-3897-7963

Aidan Maxwell — Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario MSS 1A4, Canada

Yanjiang Liu — Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario MSS 1A4, Canada; orcid.org/0000-0002-6119-2793

So Min Park — Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario MSS 1A4, Canada

Bin Chen — Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario MSS 1A4, Canada; Department of Chemistry, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois 60208, United States; orcid.org/0000-0002-2106-7664

Frédéric Laquai — King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), KAUST Solar Center (KSC), Physical Sciences and Engineering Division (PSE), Thuwal 23955-

---

**Figure 3.** Impact of hollowness on the optoelectronic properties of Cs$_{0.17}$FA$_{0.83}$Pb(I$_{0.6}$Br$_{0.4}$)$_3$ mixed-halide perovskites. a) Photoluminescence quantum yield (PLQY) as a function of EDA content. b) Combined carrier mobility of hollow perovskites as a function of EDA content as determined using time-resolved terahertz spectroscopy (TRTS). c) Carrier lifetimes extracted from transient photoluminescence measurements (Figure S10). d) Capacitance–frequency measurements as a function of the EDA content.
6900, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; orcid.org/0000-0002-5887-6158

Mercuri G. Kanatzidis — Department of Chemistry, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois 60208, United States; orcid.org/0000-0003-2037-4168

Complete contact information is available at: https://pubs.acs.org/10.1021/acs.jpclett.3c01156

Author Contributions

Notes
The authors declare no competing financial interest.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
This research was made possible by the U.S. Department of the Navy, Office of Naval Research (grant N00014-20-1-2572). M.G.K. was supported in part by grant SC0012541 from the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Science. This publication is based upon work supported by the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) Office of Sponsored Research (OSR) under Award No: OSR-CARF/CCF-3079, OSR-2019-CRG8-4093, and OSR-2020-CRG9-4350. L.G. thanks the University of Toronto CISTICOMP NMR Facility for their assistance with 1H NMR characterization.

REFERENCES