STM JOURNALS

International Journal of
Crystalline Materials

Volume 2, Issue 2 2025
July–December
DOI (Journal): 10.37591/IJCM

https://journals.stmjournals.com/ijcm

Review IJCM

Flaws and Defects in Crystals

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Abstract

Crystalline materials are defined by their long-range atomic order; however, no real crystal is completely free from imperfections. This article provides a comprehensive overview of the various types of crystal defects and imperfections that occur in solid materials and their significant influence on material properties. Point defects, including vacancies, interstitials, and substitutional atoms, are examined alongside line defects such as edge and screw dislocations, as well as planar defects encompassing grain boundaries, stacking faults, and twin planes. The discussion highlights how these imperfections affect mechanical strength, electrical conductivity, thermal properties, and diffusion behavior. Special emphasis is placed on the role of dislocations in facilitating plastic deformation and how defect interactions determine material toughness and ductility. Furthermore, the concept of defect engineering is explored as a strategic approach to tailor materials for specific applications. Through controlled manipulation of defect structures, scientists and engineers can enhance the performance of semiconductors, metallic alloys, and advanced ceramics. The review also examines recent developments in the characterization and computational modeling of defects, which have deepened understanding of their dynamics and formation mechanisms. Overall, this study underscores the crucial role of crystal defects in determining the functional and structural properties of materials, emphasizing their importance in both natural crystalline systems and engineered materials for modern technological applications.

Keywords: Defect engineering, point defects, dislocations, grain boundaries, material properties

INTRODUCTION

Crystal defects are flaws in the regular, repeating pattern of atoms in crystalline materials. They have a big effect on the physical and electrical properties of crystalline materials. For instance, adding small amounts of some elements to silicon can change its resistivity by a lot. There are four types of crystal defects based on their dimensionality: point defects (zero-dimensional), line defects (one-dimensional), surface defects (two-dimensional), and volume defects (three-dimensional). This naming system makes it possible to logically analyse the structural flaws that are found in crystalline materials. examples of these four kinds of problems. Crystal flaws are very important because they change the mechanical, electrical, and optical properties of materials. When atoms are missing from or moved to interstitial places in a crystal, point defects happen. Line defects, like dislocations, surface defects, like grain boundaries and stacking faults, and volume defects, like voids and inclusions, are all examples of extended defects that change atoms across hundreds of lattice spacings. Vacancies, interstitials, and substitutional atoms are all examples of point defects. Vacancies happen when atoms are missing from their lattice locations. Atoms that fill in empty spaces in interstitial flaws are called interstitial defects. Substitutional flaws happen when impurity atoms take the place of host atoms. Edge, screw, and mixed configurations are examples of line faults, often known as dislocations. You can think of an edge dislocation as an extra half-plane of atoms that is put between planes. When atomic planes spiral around a linear flaw, screw dislocations happen.

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Received Date: August 28, 2025
Accepted Date: September 05, 2025
Published Date: December 18, 2025

Citation: V. Basil Hans. Flaws and Defects in Crystals. International Journal of Crystalline Materials. 2025; 2(2): 1–15p.

Defects in Points

Point defects, which are also called zero-dimensional defects, include vacancies, interstitial atoms, and contaminants that take the place of host atoms. Vacancies are areas in a lattice where an atom is missing, and they can be thought of as regions where there is more empty space. Interstitial atoms are found between typical lattice sites. Point defects are the basic "building blocks" of crystal flaws. When certain conditions are met, these defects can come together to produce line or volume defects. Point flaws are very important since they have a big effect on many material properties. The examination of point flaws is essential for comprehending and manipulating the functionality of various materials.

Defects in Lines

Line faults are very important for figuring out how materials will behave mechanically. Dislocations are line faults that happen when two planes of atoms that are next to each other don't line up correctly. They can be edge dislocations, where the extra plane of atoms ends within the crystal, or screw dislocations, where the atoms move perpendicular to the dislocation line. They can also be a mix of the two. Dislocations, stacking faults, and grain boundaries are examples of extended defects in crystalline materials that affect their physical, chemical, and mechanical properties.

Defects on the Surface

There are surface flaws when two sections of the crystal meet. Grain boundaries, twin boundaries, and stacking faults are the most common types of surface defects. The grain boundary is the surface where the crystals grow separately and then come together. The arrangement of atoms at the border is different from the arrangement inside the crystal. A twin boundary is like a grain boundary, but the two grains that are touching each other are mirror images of each other. When the regular atomic plane sequences of a crystal are messed up, a stacking error happens.

Defects in Volume

Volume or three-dimensional defects are things that are inside the solid, like inclusions, precipitates, and voids. Voids are defined as groups of vacancies that create cavities a few nanometres in size. They are made by non-metallic precipitation, dislocation locking, and other processes that happen during deformation and annealing. The crystal lattice cannot pass through the inclusion unless it is coherent with the matrix.

CRYSTALS WITH POINT DEFECTS

Point defects, sometimes called lattice defects or zero-dimensional defects, are defects that have no dimensions. Point defects happen when atoms don't line up perfectly at a single lattice point or a very tiny group of points. Point faults only affect one or a few atomic locations. Vacancies are unfilled lattice sites, which are the most basic point defects in a crystal. An atom may sometimes fit in between the usual lattice sites. This is called an interstitial defect. There can be vacancy and interstitial flaws in various kinds of crystal formations. Some atoms in a crystal can be replaced by other atoms, which are called substitutional atoms. Some people call point flaws "zero-dimensional defects." Line flaws can be linked to point defects. Point defects, which are also called lattice defects or zero-dimensional defects, are defects that have no dimensions. Point defects are changes from perfect atomic arrangements at one lattice point or a very tiny group of points. Point faults only affect one or a few atomic locations. Vacancies are unfilled lattice sites, which are the most basic point defects in a crystal. An atom may sometimes fit in between the usual lattice sites. This is called an interstitial defect.

Openings

Crystal defects are changes in the perfect spacing or arrangement of atoms in ordered crystalline materials. Defects have a big effect on the electrical and mechanical properties of crystalline solids and the mechanical, optical, electrical, and magnetic properties of polycrystalline solids. Vacancies, interstitials, and substitutional impurities are atomic-level point defects that change the crystal's

structure. Vacancies are the most basic and prevalent kind of point defects. They happen when an atom is missing from a normal atomic network. Since it takes a lot of energy to make vacancies, their concentrations in crystalline materials at equilibrium below melting are usually quite low. When crystals are deformed or machined, the number of vacancies in them goes up. Thermal quenching or irradiation can make the number of vacancies go up by several orders of magnitude above the equilibrium level. Each vacancy creates a hole in the crystal. Even though they are not magnetic, their presence and behaviour have a big effect on the macroscopic properties of materials . Density functional theory studies of KDP crystals indicate that vacancy defects are more prone to occur on surfaces rather than in the bulk; the differently terminated and surfaces display unique formation energies and locations for hydrogen and oxygen vacancies, affecting local lattice distortions and underscoring the surface's susceptibility to vacancy-induced alterations .[1-5]

Interstitials

Permanent interstitial atoms are one of the most basic types of point defects in crystals. at a flawless crystal, interstitial atoms reside at uneven lattice positions adjacent to host atoms. By conducting thorough examinations of mechanical characteristics and isothermal sections, researchers have established a complete comparison of interstitial phases across various binary systems. Conversely, elemental crystals are incapable of attaining non-stoichiometric phases by the modification of their intrinsic atomic composition. Nevertheless, methods such as introducing a second element or modifying pressure and temperature conditions facilitate the creation of multi-component elemental crystals with stoichiometric crystal structures. However, vacancy diffusion processes that promote inward migration are not impeded by grain boundaries or triple junctions. Interstitials are created by placing atoms in the spaces between the host lattice atoms. They have diverse shapes but always create a compressive strain field . Similar combinations have been recognised in many systems 8.

Defects in Substitution

When dopants replace atoms in the crystal lattice, they create a crystal that is almost the same as the original one, but with mostly host atoms around it. In simple binary materials like GaAs, where gallium (Ga) and arsenic (As) atoms routinely switch places in the lattice, adding a sulphur (S) dopant can cause a neutral substitution, with S atoms taking the place of either Ga or As. The neighbouring atoms stay basically the same, but they make a similar compromise between size and chemical compatibility. In a crystal without point defects, the As molecules are on top of the crystal, far away from their bulk placements. The anchoring As molecules change the characteristics of the ordered surface a lot compared to the bulk crystal with no point defects. This is exactly what happens when you directly simulate sputtering and roughening [6-8]. Substitutional defects not only replace atoms, but they also change the equilibrium structure and can cause elastic strain. When the lattice parameter expands or contracts because the sizes don't match, it causes a macroscopic lattice strain and cracking, which disturbs the otherwise even distribution of the substitutional impurities. The substitutional species, together with the lattice strain it causes, subsequently moves to these grain boundaries more often than other places, changing their characteristics.

DEFECTS IN LINES: DISLOCATIONS

Dislocations are the edges of areas in a crystal that are slightly out of place with respect to each other. They commonly happen when crystals grow, and they are very important for influencing how metals and ceramics behave mechanically. You can tell the difference between edge, screw, and mixed dislocations. A BCD layer transition causes a stacking defect, and the extra step that forms between the ACC and BCD layers is a partial dislocation. Cubic metals like Ag and Au generally feature stacking faults on planes that connect partial dislocations with the same Burgers vector to make the dislocation line longer. The shape mostly governs the form factor of the Bragg reflection, while the shape and intensity distribution of the defect features are very slightly influenced. There is no noticeable size influence on the defect signatures, regardless of the defect type or Bragg reflection chosen. This confirms that a continuous description of matter is still a good way to characterise both the dislocation and the strain field.

Edge Dislocations

An edge dislocation occurs when an extra atomic half-plane is added to a crystal structure, which causes a distortion that is limited to a line defect. This half-plane ends inside the crystal, and the consequent distortion of the lattice planes shows up as a shift of atoms near the defect. The screw dislocation is another basic type of dislocation. It has a Burgers vector and a dislocation line that are both parallel. Mostdislocations observed in materials display a composite nature, integrating characteristics of both edge and screw dislocations. In face-centered cubic crystals, dislocations can separate into partial dislocations that surround faulted areas. This is evidenced by X-ray diffraction patterns that reveal how stacking faults create unique splits and fringe patterns.

Screw Dislocations

A screw dislocation is a linear crystal defect with a Burgers vector that runs parallel to its dislocation line 9. A dislocation is defined by a closed loop surrounding the dislocation core, where the sum of the displacements equals the Burgers vector, which is a lattice vector of the crystal. A screw dislocation is a displacement field that runs parallel to the dislocation line. The displacement field in quasicrystals consists of phonon and phason components, denoted as u(r) and v(r), respectively. Mixed dislocations are a third type that doesn't fit neatly into the edge or screw classes. The unbearable lattice distortion that happens along the slip plane of a pure edge dislocation causes the disclinations to bend somewhat, which gives them an intermediate.

PROBLEMS WITH THE SURFACE

Surface defects are the places where crystals meet or crystals with various orientations meet. They have a different atomic arrangement than the bulk crystal structure. Grain boundaries are important because they mark the places where crystals of different sizes and orientations meet. For instance, grain boundaries change how strong metals are and how ceramics break. Polymers that have a lot of grain boundaries are usually more brittle. Twin boundaries are the planes of contact between two crystals that have a mirror-like symmetry. Stacking faults happen when the normal order of atomic planes in a cubic close-packed structure is broken. Different polytypes can form in the same material if the stacking sequences change [9-11].

Grain Boundaries

Grain boundaries are one of the most common types of surface imperfections found in solids. The nucleation and growth of crystalline phases frequently lead to the production of single domains, which can be shaped to fit specific needs. A polycrystalline structure evolves from individual crystallites to a multidomain crystal, typically formed in a curved or dendritic configuration. The solidification process naturally creates different kinds of defects to fit the polycrystalline structure. When a liquid solidifies, migrating grain boundaries can get rid of volumetric flaws like holes, inclusions, or precipitates. Grain boundaries help fix volumetric flaws during growth, but they also make it harder for things to move. These borders are caused by big gradients and can't be gotten rid of by grain expansion. Grain boundaries continue to be the main types of surface imperfections encountered in cemented crystals[12-13].

Two Boundaries

Twin boundaries are a significant category of crystal defect. Deformed materials have different microstructures that may be anticipated based on their atomic structure, bend angle, and flake thickness. When a plane of lattice points divides two areas that are mirror images of each other, twin faults arise. Atomically sharp twin barriers are prevalent in three-dimensional metals and ceramics. They often help the crystals grow and change shape by letting strains through.

Faults in Stacking

Stacking faults are breaks in the perfect order of atomic layers in a crystal. They often happen when two orientation-state domains that are mathematically the same are present in a crystal. These faults

show up as planar defects that are linked to grain boundaries and twin boundaries. They usually run along certain crystallographic planes, like in the face-centered cubic (FFC) structure. They might also be bounded flaws that are either two- or three-dimensional. Stacking faults create step-like displacements that can be seen even in bright-field transmission electron microscopy (TEM) micrographs in close-packed structures like hexagonally close-packed (HCP) or FFC lattices. The combination of primary and secondary reflections creates unique fringe patterns around stacking faults. For instance, the fringes from the (¬n) and (¬n ¬n) reflections create fringes in the [14-28] direction. The angle at which these fringes cross can be found using the diffraction geometry. Stacking-fault energies for face-centered cubic (FCC) and hexagonal close-packed (HCP) faults can be articulated in a general form suitable for unrelaxed, perfect triangular lattice configurations. The characteristic wavenumber divides into band-structure and electrostatic components, with the established.

DEFECTS IN VOLUME

During crystal formation, voids and precipitate particles can sometimes form. Voids are bubbles that emerge when voids created by radiation condense. Macro voids, which are bigger than 2 nm in diameter, make semiconducting materials' mechanical characteristics worse. In general, macro voids have relatively modest volumes where they originate. Precipitate particles, like oxides or carbides, also change the mechanical and optical properties a lot.

Holes

Voids (or holes) are tiny empty spaces, or holes in the lattice, that form when vacancies come together. During crystal formation, voids can form when vacancy clusters, which are found in large concentrations along the solidification front, get trapped by the solid that is forming. Voids can also form during cooling or later thermal treatment if the concentration of vacancies from high-temperature annealing is higher than the concentration of vacancies at lower temperatures. Voids lower the effective cross-sectional area through which an electric current travels, which can make electrical conductivity worse. Also, during the manufacturing of polycrystalline semiconductors, voids can connect to each other and cause cracks to form within grains. [19-22]

Inclusions

Inclusions are particles of a distinct phase that are stuck in the parent matrix. There are two main types of inclusions: gas bubbles and precipitates. Gas bubbles can leave behind high-energy displacements in a crystal, but they don't modify the structure of the crystal itself.

MAKING CRYSTAL DEFECTS

At least three different physical processes cause crystal defects to form: thermal fluctuations, mechanical deformation, and chemical reactions. Higher temperatures make defects more likely to emerge because they increase the entropy that comes with adding faults. Mechanical deformation, including tension, shear, or compression, creates a stress field that causes new flaws to emerge, as shown by fracture occurring without any pre-existing deficiencies 4. Finally, the bonding environment around an impurity atom is different from that of the host matrix.

The Gibbs free energy, $G = E - TS + PV$, is used to analyse the thermodynamics of defect development. In this equation, E represents the internal energy of the crystal, P and V are the pressure and volume, respectively, and T and S are the temperature and entropy. A defect forms that lowers G and the chemical potential in boundary circumstances. For a crystal containing N1 and N2 atoms of types 1 and 2, at temperature T, pressure P, and chemical potentials $\mu 1$ and $\mu 2$, the free energy is $G = F + PV - \mu 1N1 - \mu 2N2$, where F is the Helmholtz free energy 13. For particular defect analyses, including dislocations and stacking faults that impact diffraction patterns in nanocrystals, the effect of boundary conditions is negligible, crystal morphology influences Bragg reflection form factors, and within specific size ranges (5 to 60 nm), strain fields can be accurately characterised continuously.[23-25]

Effects of Heat

Changes in temperature always affect the speed of atoms, which throws from the exact alignment in crystals. This makes the atoms in the crystals more likely to vibrate 15. When the wave amplitudes approach certain critical levels, thermal impacts effectively cause structural flaws, which changes the ideal lattice arrangement.

Stress From Machines

Mechanical pressures affect how crystal defects originate and change over time 16. Intrinsic or external mechanical stresses cause elastic deformation that isn't uniform, which leads to the production of defects. These kinds of stresses make vacancies move from areas of compression to areas of tension, where they come together and make voids. Mechanical loads can also cause point flaws in multilayer materials . When FCC materials are put under cyclic loading, they form stacking-fault tetrahedra by spontaneous vacancies.

Chemical Setting

The temperature and pressure of the processing and the composition of the environment have an effect on the production of crystal defects 17. The chemical environment, including solution and gas compositions, significantly influences the equilibrium concentration of defects and, consequently, the ultimate properties of synthetic single crystals.

HOW DEFECTS CHANGE THE PROPERTIES OF MATERIALS

Crystal defects are changes in the perfect crystal structure that change the material's properties based on the type and number of defects in the crystals 4. Defects that happen in crystals are called "impurities" in the crystal structure. Impurities are more common than perfect crystals, and they can make crystals better in some ways. The study of flaws is also expanding steadily and is very important for making new materials that people may use in their daily lives.

Point defects in crystalline materials mostly cause problems at the grain boundaries. This makes it harder for grains to form, increases diffusivity, and causes lattice strain, which helps to reinforce the matrix. Line flaws change how materials behave mechanically when they are under stress and strain. When crystals are put through plastic deformation, they generate line flaws. 3. Surface imperfections act as a place for energy to be stored at the grain boundaries. Volume flaws make the crystals less stable and have a big effect on their physical and chemical properties. Surface defects are made with fewer atoms than volume flaws, thus they don't have as big of an effect on how materials change properties. Volume imperfections have a big effect on the physical and chemical characteristics of solids. The volume of the crystal gets bigger and the density gets lower because there are voids in the materials. Cracks or volume cavities generate areas of high stress, and the strength lowers a lot. Because of all these implications, volume problems are seen as serious flaws compared to other flaws.[25-30]

Physical Properties

Classical solid-state theory showed that a perfect lattice is thermodynamically unstable. Before extrinsic conduction can happen in semiconductors, ionised dopants need to be turned on. So, before you can predict the attributes of semiconductor materials and devices, you need to know what kinds of faults there are and how bad they are. The atomic structure has a lot to do with the elastic and electrical properties. Dislocations manifest as one-dimensional defects introduced by the parent lattice at the atomic scale. In the most basic scenario, they are generally thought of as straight lines that operate as sinks and sources of point defects. Because of this, they are often very important during diffusion-driven events like impurity diffusion or electromigration 16. Dislocation networks with dislocation nodes are generally how line faults show up.

Crystal flaws change the mechanical characteristics of materials by changing the way distinct plastic deformation modes move. Plastic deformation processes also cause crystal flaws to originate and expand at the same time. The capacity of polycrystals to endure specific plastic deformation through

grain boundary-mediated mechanisms is significantly influenced by the emergence of structural defects at grain boundaries, facilitating the shift from dislocation to grain boundary sliding creep. Cavities and fissures between grains are examples of volume faults. Cavities can also be found at interfaces. When materials are being worked on, contaminants can get stuck and eventually form inclusions. These are generally linked to the existence of fragile and water-attracting phases. These kinds of inclusions make the mechanical qualities worse because they usually act as stress points that start cracks.

Properties of Electricity

Crystal defects create energy levels in semiconductor band gaps, which changes the electrical and optical properties in a big way. Point flaws in semiconductors add defect levels that can lower the threshold for optical excitation 18. A lot of these deep defect levels catch and recombine carriers, which changes the electrical conductivity by trapping or releasing charge carriers. Optical transitions can take place between defect levels or between defect levels and band edges. The excited states that go with them typically make a Rydberg series that gets closer to ionisation thresholds. Some defect configurations serve as optically active yet electrically inactive centres, characterised by a single occupied defect level situated significantly below the valence-band maximum. These kinds of defects allow optically excited states to exist without changing the host's band structure. This causes emission below the host's optical gap because of excitonic effects. Their stimulated states create pseudo-donor states. A tri-carbon interstitial cluster in 4H SiC is a good example since it causes UV emission right below the gap. Calculations based on first principles of zero-phonon-line emission energies, luminescence lineshape, and isotope shifts show that they are quite close to the PL centre U (the "carbon tri-interstitial"). This suggests a possible luminescence mechanism. Doping can be used to make these fault emitters that don't conduct electricity.

Optical Characteristics

Most materials take in light at certain wavelengths and either send it back or reflect it. Color-center spectroscopy is a branch of physics that focusses on how F-centers absorb light. When the pair a-for vacancy and trapped electron-forms in virtually pure materials such as crystals produced from the melt (silica, diamond, and so forth) or bombarded by β- or γ-rays, the resulting hue and its angular distribution can be intimately connected to defect structure and diffusion kinetics. Strong surface reflections and dispersion by pores and overgrowth inclusions make it hard for light to pass through.

CRYSTAL GROWTH AND THE MAKING OF DEFECTS

There are a number of ways to grow crystals, such as by melting, vaporising, or dissolving them. The size and flaws that can be found in a crystal are mostly determined by the growth parameters and environmental circumstances. Keeping the temperature close to the saturation limit slows down the development of crystals and lowers the chance of lattice breaking. But this can sometimes cause inclusions (as precipitates) to form in the crystal. Controlling how crystals form can lower the number of times that lattice mismatch happens or strain activity happens. You can figure out the formation volume of intrinsic defects by looking at how their equilibrium concentration changes with pressure or how the defect formation enthalpy changes with pressure. When calculating the formation enthalpy in density-functional theory (DFT), a stress term emerges alongside the formation volume of defect [30-34].

Ways to Grow

Single crystals have very clear material properties and are important parts of many devices, such as lasers, radiation detectors, and semiconductor transistors. It is still hard to make single crystals that meet strict performance specifications. To make crystals with the right qualities, you need to be able to control the concentration and distribution of impurities and the circumstances for crystal formation. To have this control, you need to know how growth circumstances affect the quality of crystals. A quick crystal growth method called spark plasma sintering can be used to make single crystals of materials including YAG, Nd:YAG, Yb:YAG, Ti:sapphire, LiNbO3, and SiC. Habit-modulating chemicals affect the surface energy of crystal facets, and measuring growth rates in situ gives us information on how

crystals form. For example, the surfaces of the polymorph of L-glutamic acid grow by a birth-and-spread mechanism. To get the qualities you want, the process of crystal formation is very important. The physical and chemical properties of formed crystals differ based on the growth strategy, even when the identical composition and preparation method are employed. Even if it's hard, reliable ways to grow have been found. Growing thin crystals is easier than growing bulk crystals because the lattice strain caused by flaws can be removed through the crystal thickness.

METHODS FOR CHARACTERISING DEFECTS

Crystals have defects that are small breaks in the flawless lattice structure. These defects are unavoidable and happen when crystals develop, are processed, or are exposed to the environment. There are four types of crystal defects based on their size: point defects (0D), line defects (1D), surface defects (2D), and volume defects (3D). There are three types of point defects: simple vacancy sites, substitutional point defects, and interstitial point defects. Edge dislocations, screw dislocations, and mixed dislocations are all types of line defects. Grain boundaries, twin boundaries, stacking faults, and free surfaces are all examples of surface defects. A crystal is a collection of atoms that are periodically linked together in three dimensions. The positions of the atoms are shown on a well-defined crystal lattice. Crystal defects are small changes in the lattice structure that happen often during crystal development or later processing and exposure to the outside world. They might be either intrinsic or extrinsic. The first ones only happen to the material being looked at, while the second ones are caused by things outside the material, including fluxes, mechanical stresses, contaminants, and so on. There are four types of crystal defects based on their size: point defects (0D), line defects (1D), surface defects (2D), and volume defects (3D). Point flaws encompass straightforward vacancy sites as well as substitutional and interstitial point defects. Edge, screw, and mixed dislocations are all types of line defects. Grain boundaries, twin boundaries, stacking faults, and free surfaces are all examples of surface defects. Voids and inclusions are examples of volume faults. There are a lot of physical factors that affect the formation of crystal defects during crystal growth. Some of these are impurities, mechanical stresses, heating and cooling rates, thermodynamic fluctuations, lattice misfit, and the rate of nucleation and growth. If these imperfections, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, are allowed to build up, they can change the mechanical, electrical, optical, and magnetic properties of metals, ceramics, polymers, and semiconductors. It is crucial to know what surface and subsurface flaws are in order to govern crystal development and processing. For example, controlling oxygen vacancies in oxide crystals can improve the performance of solid oxide fuel cells. Crystal flaws also serve as nucleation sites in the formation of minerals inside biological systems and the synthesis of ceramic materials from sintered powders.

X-ray Diffraction

X-ray diffraction is a basic analytical method that is often used in crystallographic research. It was one of the first ways to describe crystals, and it is still a useful tool for characterising materials. These examples show how a basic scientific principle—specifically, the diffraction of electromagnetic waves by a lattice with well-defined periodicity—can be turned into a strong set of characterisation tools. Characterisation procedures are very important in materials science, and crystals and crystal defects are one of the most interesting and active fields of research. Because the lattice is periodic, the Bragg equation of diffraction gives us a definite mathematical relationship between the diffraction angle, the lattice spacing, and the wavelength of the radiation. This makes it easier to understand diffraction patterns. 3

Microscopy with Electrons

Electron microscopy is an important method for looking at crystal flaws and how microstructure affects characteristics 23. High-resolution transmission electron microscopy (TEM) enables the detection of dislocations at atomic resolution in diverse crystalline materials, encompassing metals as well as inorganic and molecular crystals. Scanning transmission electron microscopy (STEM) can help us understand the structures of defects in materials like nanocrystals, semiconductors, and ceramics, as well as the source and behaviour of extended flaws in molecular crystals. Electron microscopy also connects microstructure to physical features, such as how conjugated polymers and organic

semiconductors move charge. Aside from characterising structures, it has been very helpful in looking at photochemical reactions in crystals, like dimerisation caused by electronic excitation, which can happen at dislocations, and in looking at defects that cause delayed fluorescence.

Atomic Force Microscopy

Three-dimensional atomic force microscopy (AFM) utilising water probes attains atomic-level resolution of the interfacial hydration structure. 3D AFM assessments on mineral crystals demonstrate hydration layers extending beyond five layers into the bulk. It is reasonable to predict that surface imperfections at mineral–water interfaces have a big effect on the structure of the water at the interface. The δ-FeOOH surfaces analysed by these methods display atomic-scale point defects characterised by reduced water density at the defect sites. Point flaws and their effect on interfacial hydration can be resolved using 3D AFM. Mineral cardiovascular agents exemplify the impact of surface imperfections on interfacial water structure. These systems are informative considering the significant impact of surface defects—vacancies and substitutions—at mineral–water interfaces on interfacial water, as revealed by theoretical analysis. In situ high-resolution. The findings indicate that substitution and vacancy defects alter the atomic-scale interfacial hydration structure on the mineral surface and influence a minimum of the fifth hydration layer above the defect. In situ AFM can now accurately measure flaws in the underlying crystallographic lattice. This progress facilitates investigations into one of the most complex facets of mineral surfaces—comprehending the influence of lattice and electronic defects on surface relaxation and the mineral–fluid interface. The theoretical prediction that mineral–water interfaces demonstrate a long-range ordering of the solvent, coupled with comprehensive insights into the atomic-scale surface–water structure adjacent to vacancies and substitutions, suggests the potential for addressing defects that extend beyond a single hydration layer. Imaging of point defects in fluid verifies that the influence of a defect on the AFM measurement can transcend the second hydration layer 25.

WHAT DEFECTS DO IN SEMICONDUCTOR DEVICES

In semiconductors, flaws limit the amount of doping and the number of carriers. Atoms in a pure semiconductor have four valence electrons on their outer shell. For instance, when a pentavalent atom takes the place of a tetravalent atom, the extra electron goes into an anti-bonding state spanning a range of energies. This makes a sharp energy level near the conduction band, which is easier to thermally occupy than states in the conduction band. The semiconductor turns into n-type, and the extra electron carries charge. In the same way, replacing a trivalent atom makes a hole near the valence band that has similar effects.

Doping and the Amount of Carriers

Doping is the process of adding foreign atoms, termed dopants, to a material that is otherwise pure. The extra impurity either adds free carriers to the substance or takes them away.

Doping semiconductors makes them better in conducting electricity without greatly affecting other important qualities, such how well they let light through. Doping semiconductors adds unwanted damping that comes from impurity dispersion. This makes the carriers less mobile than the intrinsic material. Dopants that are most commonly used are soluble enough in the host that doping at a wide range of levels is easy to achieve, either during crystal development or after processing. Using Beer's law of absorption/transmission of an electromagnetic wave through a material gives a direct way to find out the doping ρc, which is the density of charge carriers that were added to the material through doping. Absorption spectroscopy is a good method for figuring out the concentrations of charge carriers in many materials that are around 1018 cm−3 or higher. The concentrations of dopants ND (donors) and NA (acceptors) are frequently insignificant when juxtaposed with background impurity levels and the intrinsic carrier concentration ni; specifically, ND = NA = 0. Substitutional doping occurs when an impurity atom replaces one atom of the element that makes up the crystal. It is called interstitial when it falls into the spaces between the atoms in the lattice. 26

Problems with p-n Junctions

Crystalline faults can form and move about in p–n junctions, which are an important part of semiconductor devices. Point flaws can form and move around as a device is being made or used, which can change the electrical properties of the junction. Defects at the p–n junction contact need less thermodynamic energy to form than those caused by heavy metals. Crystallographic defects—such as screw dislocations (SDs), basal-plane dislocations (BPDs), and threading edge dislocations (TEDs)—play key roles in regulating device performance. SDs, which are places where leakage current flows, lower the breakdown voltage of diodes. BPDs, on the other hand, are places where leakage current flows without having a big effect on breakdown voltage. TEDs have less of an effect on reverse current and breakdown voltage. To make sure that devices work reliably and that fabrication yields are always the same, it is important to control the introduction and concentration of these crystallographic imperfections.

FLAWS IN METALS AND ALLOYS

There has been a lot of research on how imperfections affect traditional materials like metals and alloys. In these materials, flaws have a big impact on mechanical qualities including ductility and strength. 4. The extensive literature on this subject attests to their significant impact.

Effect on Strength

Metals get their strength from work hardening, solid-solution strengthening, precipitation and particle-strengthening actions, and cold worked and overheated treatments. The trigonal symmetry of the stacking sequence of the close-packed planes is what causes dislocations to occur. This gets rid of most other flaws and weakens the material properties 3.

Effect on Ductility

The ductility of metals and alloys differs greatly, which shows how easily different materials can handle plastic flow. Crystal flaws have a big effect on ductility. Plastic deformation can happen because of both dislocation motion and deformation twinning. Nonetheless, the comparative influences of twin boundaries and dislocations dictate the mechanical properties of numerous materials and the degree of ductility that can be attained. Precipitate hardening impacts the softest deformation mechanism that is available. It can also change the active mode of inelastic deformation, which has a big effect on ductility 29.

Precipitates create internal stress fields that change how things deform. Dislocation glide, twin boundaries, and phase barriers cause a crystalline solid to change shape in an inelastic way. These faults are caused by mechanical stress, and their movement causes inelastic deformation. Precipitates stop defects from moving. When the precipitate sizes are small, line flaws are more affected than surface defects. The discrepancy is due to the fact that dislocations are line objects and twins are surface objects. These kinds of geometric factors have a big effect on how pins behave. These phenomena have significant ramifications for materials such as magnesium, where defect mobility dictates ductility. Precipitate hardening can selectively fortify specific deformation modes, potentially improving ductility. In magnesium alloys, ageing increases the critical stress for basal dislocations by three times, although it doesn't have much of an effect on twinning. Precipitates also make steels stronger by stopping dislocation motion, but they don't have much effect on twin formation. Nickel-titanium and other shape-memory alloys use precipitates to stop dislocations, which makes them stronger while still being superelastic.

PROBLEMS WITH CERAMICS

The creation of defects is a major factor that determines how ceramic materials work. For instance, ionic conductivity in some ceramics usually depends on defects that arise when aliovalent doping happens and the unsatisfied charge balance is lowered by the generation of electrons, holes, or atomic vacancies. Defect generation may also result from several processes, including diffusion in an oxygen-rich or reducing atmosphere. Changes in how things work mechanically are also prevalent. Small imperfections can have a big impact on the strength of ceramics 30.

Conductivity of Ions

Ionic crystals are generally excellent electrical insulators; nevertheless, some demonstrate a secondary conduction mechanism known as ionic conduction, when ions, instead of electrons or holes, facilitate the conduction process. This process needs crystal imperfections to work. The presence of ionic conductivity usually has a negative effect on mechanical qualities, the most important of which are strength, toughness, and hardness.

How Things Work Mechanically

Line defects, like dislocations, are very important to how single crystals and polycrystals behave mechanically 29. The yield strength of crystalline solids is regulated by the movement of line defects, while surface defects such as twin boundaries and coherent phase borders are significantly less influenced by precipitate hardening. So, the dislocation speed affects the strain rate during crystal plasticity and the strength, work-hardening, and fracture toughness of polycrystals. These methods have been created for two-dimensional crystals and (bulk) crystals with long two-dimensional defects, but there is no method for aperiodic dislocation networks that are inside a three-dimensional crystal volume 2.

PROBLEMS WITH POLYMERS

Polymers are big molecules made up of smaller structural units that repeat. These materials can be solid, liquid crystal, or gel, among other things. Crystalline polymers usually have shapes that mix amorphous and ordered areas, but they don't have the long-range order that inorganic systems do. Polymers crystallise differently than inorganic systems like silicon and metals because they are made up of massive macromolecules 33.

Because polymers are made up of macromolecules, chemical and physical flaws have quite different effects than they do in inorganic materials. Chain ends, twist defects, and cross-linking defects are three types of defects that are often observed in polymers. Unintended changes in the polymerisation process cause chain defects, which result in chains with lower than predicted molecular weights.

Defects in the Chain

When atoms or molecules arrange themselves in a regular three-dimensional arrangement, a crystal forms. The arrangement of atoms in the unit cell and the lattice points that are spaced out at regular intervals make up the crystal structure. In a crystal, the numerous atoms or molecules usually stay in their places without moving. However, many non-ideal crystals have structural flaws, or defects, that break up the regular pattern of atoms.

Techniques for making crystals are used to precisely manage the conditions in which crystals form so that they are of good quality. But because of the harsh circumstances that exist during crystal formation, some faults are unavoidable. If you think of the crystal structure as a three-dimensional array of points, the defects can be grouped as point defects, line flaws, surface or interfacial defects, and volume defects. These flaws can have a big effect on the electrical, optical, and mechanical properties of a crystalline material. Sometimes, having defects is a good thing because the material can be changed on purpose to hide its natural properties.

Problems With Cross-Linking

Cross-linking defects are covalent connections that connect polymer chains without making rings. These faults are specific to polymers and do not pertain to other material categories, including metals, ceramics, or semiconductors. Their existence alters the polymer's characteristics and behaviour, underscoring the significant significance of flaws in material science, necessitating more investigation. Dislocations, stacking faults, and grain boundaries are all examples of extended defects in crystals that have a big effect on many material properties. In two-dimensional materials, they can create new electrical effects, as shown by recent findings in twisted graphene bilayers. Crystallographic models have been created to depict two-dimensional extended flaws for first-principles electronic structure computations.

RECENT PROGRESS IN DEFECT RESEARCH

To fully comprehend the mechanical, electrical, and optical properties of genuine crystals, especially those on the surface, you need to know how to describe crystal flaws correctly. Computer modelling has come a long way in a short amount of time, both for bulk solids and surfaces. This has greatly increased our understanding of how crystal flaws affect the real world. The current use of machine learning on a range of theoretical and experimental data bases has also helped us better understand how crystal defects interact with the material they are in. The word "perfect" crystal is typically used to describe an imaginary, idealised circumstance. This is because genuine crystals have flaws. Let's say you cut a flawless bulk crystal into equal pieces and then put them next to each other to make a big block. There won't be any faults because the edges of each component will be the same crystallographically and will be flat with no offset. In fact, the neighbouring faces of the parts definitely won't be precisely aligned with the needed crystallographic directions or perfectly flat. Also, when you put them back together, there will probably be a small offset, which will cause some flaws in the borders.

Modelling Using Computers

Extended defects in crystals, including dislocations, stacking faults, and grain borders, significantly affect the characteristics of materials. This section summarises the primary types of interatomic potentials that are often used in classical molecular dynamics simulations to explain how defects originate. The Open Knowledgebase of Interatomic Models (OpenKIM) framework demonstrates the capacity of over 100 distinct models to replicate the formation energies of more than fifty atomic-scale defects in face-centered cubic (FCC) metals. By employing a geodesic t-distributed stochastic neighbour embedding method to analyse the data, a natural map–formation energy of defects (fMED) is generated, providing a robust framework for model exploration, behavioural analysis, and classification evaluation in relation to crystal defect formation. Dislocations, stacking faults, and grain boundaries are major types of extended crystal defects that affect how materials behave. They also act as cradles for new electronic behaviours in two-dimensional crystals. For example, new electronic phenomena have been seen at the twists between graphene bilayers. Conventional experimental techniques frequently fail to thoroughly characterise prolonged flaws, underscoring the significance of theoretical and computational approaches. The development of crystallographic models supports the examination of extended two-dimensional faults in both three-dimensional and two-dimensional crystals. Approaches include (i) models that use parameters to generalise cohesive zone laws for fracture analysis and meso-scale dislocation models, and (ii) models of twisted bilayers to study twist-boundary events.

Ways to Use Machine Learning

Machine learning (ML) is a strong alternative to having people look at a lot of faulty image data. You can use easily accessible annotated datasets of micrographs to construct models that can find vacancy, interstitial, substitutional, and grain boundary defects. These kinds of technologies help speed up the search for materials with controlled defect concentrations and complimentary features. They can also improve characterisation pipelines by giving each prediction a confidence value. Machine learning methods have been used to look at defects at different levels. For instance, 35 used a convolutional neural network to automatically sort crystal structures into space groups based on diffraction patterns. This worked even with big structural defects, getting the right classification in 100,000 test sets.

USES OF DEFECT ENGINEERING

Defect engineering is the process of changing the quantity and kind of defects in a material on purpose to change its chemical, mechanical, electrical, optical, and magnetic properties. For example, defect engineering has been very important in the microelectronics industry since it has helped improve the performance of semiconductor devices by carefully controlling impurities and intrinsic faults. Some important mechanisms are: Filling voids with ion bombardment Adding interstitials with plasma immersion Adsorbing molecules to the surface Controlling the concentrations of intrinsic and impurity defects by annealing Changing the number of defects through oxidation and reduction Defect-engineering methods change the electrical properties of bulk titanium dioxide, such as the kind of

carrier, the concentration of carriers, and the mobility of carriers. Substitutional, vacancy, and interstitial defects offer pathways for modifying the electrical response, thus affecting optical absorption characteristics and other essential aspects. Controlled introduction of surface adsorbates can serve as an auxiliary method for surface imperfection engineering. The same basic ideas can be used to improve defects in other metal oxides as well. You can vary the number and type of defects in a material in ways that change how it acts. Defects can have a big effect on physical attributes like strength or toughness, in addition to electrical ones. Defects exist on surfaces in an environment that is severely disturbed, which affects their chemistry and charge state in small ways. There are two ways that surfaces and defects interact: bond exchange and electrostatics. Together, these two ways help us understand some important parts of the surface-mediated defect-modification phenomenon. Most flaws can act as places where electrons and holes come together, which makes a material less useful in applications like photocatalysis and optoelectronics.

Better Performance of Materials

Adding regulated amounts of well-defined flaws to materials has become an interesting way to improve their properties and create new functions. This method allows for more flexibility than making perfect crystals. The presence of extended defects has a big effect on how electrons move in two-dimensional objects, like semiconductor heterostructures (which exhibit ballistic, hydrodynamic, and viscous regimes) and epitaxial graphene. The consequences of these defects encompass the attenuation and reconfiguration of current filaments; Fabry-Pérot interference patterns; unusually high photocurrents that are typically prohibited by symmetry; local symmetry disruption; and the generation of valley currents, Raman signatures, and localised magnetism in graphene. To make high-quality crystals that are clean, flat, and well-ordered, you need to manage prolonged flaws while also thinking about thermodynamic factors and the methods in which they occur. Almost all crystalline materials have a lot of flaws. Any crystal seems like a solid-state version of a molecular fluid when you look at it at the right length scales. A variety of faults that happen at different lengths break up the lattice's periodicity. When mechanical and thermal stress are applied, the quantity and extent of these flaws usually grow, and this happens at higher temperatures and pressures. It is important to know how crystal defects originate and how their shapes affect the mechanical, electrical, chemical, and optical properties of materials. Not all imperfections, however, lower the material's inherent qualities; in fact, in many circumstances, their presence greatly improves the material's performance. By carefully adding faults to crystalline materials, you can change the way they conduct electricity, emit light, and perform other electronic activities. Molecular-beam epitaxy (MBE) and pulsed-laser deposition (PLD) are two of the best ways to make these kinds of flaws in represented crystal groups. This capacity to create crystal defects makes it easier to measure electronic properties and make devices with the right electrical properties.

CONCLUSION

Crystal flaws are very important in determining and changing the properties of materials, and they have a big effect on how they change over time. You can add point, line, surface, and volume defects in one or more phases at the same time or in different phases. Likewise, concurrent defect categories can be identified for a certain feature. This writing discusses single or multiple phase systems that share the same crystallographic structure. Vacancies, interstitials, and substitutional atoms are all examples of point defects. Dislocations are line defects that have a Burgers vector and other parameters that control how they travel inside the lattice. Grain boundaries, twin boundaries, and stacking faults are all examples of surface defects. There are voids and inclusions in volume faults. Defects can arise during sample processing or application due to various factors, including temperature, mechanical stress, and chemical environment. These micro- and nano-structural entities significantly alter the mechanical, electrical, and optical characteristics of materials. Using the right methods and conditions, crystal growth techniques can make single crystals that are free of faults or crystals that have imperfections at the right levels. The resultant chemicals have many uses in science and engineering. Crystal flaws can be a good or bad thing because they have a big effect on many material properties.

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