

Letter

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**Temperature Induced Large Broadening and Blueshift in the
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Methylammonium Lead Iodide Perovskite**

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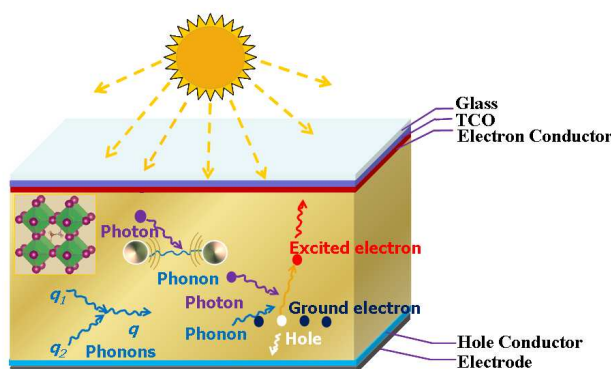
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ABSTRACT

The power conversion efficiency of hybrid halide perovskite solar cells is profoundly influenced by the operating temperature. Here we investigate the temperature influence on the electronic band structure and optical absorption of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ from first-principles by accounting for both the electron-phonon interaction and thermal expansion. Within the framework of density functional perturbation theory, the electron-phonon coupling induces slightly enlarged band gap and strongly broadened electronic relaxation time as temperature increases. The large broadening effect is mainly due to the presence of cation organic atoms. Consequently, the temperature dependent absorption peak exhibits blueshift position, decreased amplitude and broadened width. This work uncovers the atomistic origin of temperature influence on the optical absorption of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ and can provide guidance to design high-performance hybrid halide perovskite solar cells at different operating temperatures.

TOC Graphic



In span of few years, the energy conversion efficiency of organic-inorganic hybrid halide perovskites has enjoyed a remarkable increase from 3.8% in 2009 to 22.1% in 2016.¹⁻³ Besides, the hybrid halide perovskites, which mainly comprise earth-abundant elements and can be massively produced by simple solution-based processing techniques, have emerged as the most promising candidate for the next-generation high efficiency solar cell technology.⁴⁻⁶ From materials point of view, they possess the perovskite-like structure and have the general formula of ABX_3 , where A is a monovalent organic cation (typically methylammonium, $CH_3NH_3^+$), B is a divalent metallic atom (e.g. Pb, Ge or Sn), and X is a halogen atom (iodine, bromine or chlorine).^{7, 8} In the crystal structure, the corner-shared BX_6^{4-} octahedral forms cubic or pseudo-cubic three-dimensional crystalline networks with the organic cations (A^+) filling the voids in the networks.

Ever since the first discovery of hybrid halide perovskites, numerous efforts have endeavored on the materials synthesis and processing, structural dynamics, charge-carrier transport, optical characterization and solar cell demonstration.⁹⁻¹² For the working device of thin film hybrid halide perovskite solar cell, its performance is intrinsically determined by the optical absorption and charge-carrier transport capabilities of the absorbers.¹³⁻¹⁵ Thus, exploring the atomistic origin of optical absorption and charge transport in hybrid halide perovskites has become critical to advancing their applications in photovoltaics, in particular considering their structural instability and large sensitivity to temperature.^{6, 16} The structural instability originates from the fact that the organic cation has lower symmetry than BX_6 octahedron and the neighboring organic molecules can align in different ways over various length scales. Due to the highly dynamic nature, the hybrid halide perovskites would experience phase transitions when the operating temperature varies between 162 K and 327 K.^{17, 18} Consequently, the energy band alignment, absorption onset

and electronic dipole polarization will be disturbed. Foley and co-workers¹⁹ reported a band gap increase of 30-40 meV in the methylammonium lead iodide for temperatures between 301 and 358 K via the ultraviolet photoemission spectroscopy and optical spectroscopy experiments. Saidi and co-workers²⁰ performed theoretical calculations by accounting for both the electron-phonon interaction and thermal expansion, and showed that the band gap increased by 40 meV within the temperature range of 290-380 K. The capacity to accurately determine temperature dependent energy levels has greatly motivated the computational design of novel perovskite solar cell absorbers. Yet it is of great necessity to explore the temperature dependence of optical absorption which is crucial to determining the energy conversion efficiency of hybrid halide perovskite solar cells under real conditions. However, the highly dynamic nature and the presence of heavy lead atoms make hybrid halide perovskite a challenging system to investigate from first-principles.^{7, 21-24}

In this letter, we determine the temperature influence on electronic band structure and optical absorption of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ perovskite from first-principles by accounting for both the electron-phonon coupling and thermal expansion. Prior to considering the electron-phonon coupling, the highly dynamic nature of the hybrid halide perovskite structure is demonstrated via analyzing the soft phonon modes in the phonon dispersion curves. Following the Allen-Heine-Cardona (AHC) theory,^{25, 26} the temperature perturbed electronic band structure, such as edge shift and line broadening, can be captured by including up to the second-order term in the electron-phonon coupling. However, since the high-order terms in the electron-phonon coupling are neglected, the theoretically predicted band gap correction is overestimated and an energy scissor is introduced. Finally, with the temperature-perturbed electronic energy states, the

temperature-dependent optical absorption can be obtained following the electronic interband transition framework while including the excitonic (interacting electron-hole pair) effect.

Methodology. We perform first-principles calculations with the ABINIT^{27, 28} software package. Those calculations were based on the optimized norm-conserving Vanderbilt pseudopotentials (ONCVPSP)²⁹ and the semilocal Perdew-Burke-Ernzerhof (PBE)³⁰ exchange-correlation functional. During the structural optimization and ground-state calculations, the force convergence threshold was set as 0.05 meV/Å. The electronic Brillouin zone was sampled using a 6×6×6 grid and the energy cutoff was 680 eV (see Supporting Information for convergence test). The relaxed lattice constant for the cubic CH₃NH₃PbI₃ perovskite is 6.32 Å, in good agreement with the value of 6.37 Å of ref 20. For the electron-phonon coupling calculations, the *q*-point grid was chosen as 6×6×6, according to the convergence test from ref 20. The real part of the second-order electronic eigenvalues was calculated following AHC theory within the density functional perturbation theory (DFPT) framework,^{31, 32} while the imaginary part related to electronic relaxation time was evaluated using the scheme of Fermi-Dirac smearing with the smearing width of 0.1 eV. To compute the optical absorption, the excitonic effect was included via solving the Bethe-Salpeter equation (BSE).^{33,34} Note that due to the computational limitation, the spin-orbit coupling was not considered in the present work.

Within the conventional density functional theory (DFT), atoms are assumed to be frozen at their crystallographic positions. However, the reality is that atoms vibrate even at absolute 0 K and lattice vibrations will induce the finite relaxation time of electrons and broadened absorption peak.³⁵⁻³⁷ Based on the DFPT method, the lattice vibration is treated as an infinitesimal perturbation and its influence on electronic energy states is obtained within the scheme of

electron-phonon interaction.^{38, 39} Following the AHC approach,^{25, 26} the electronic energy state change due to the electron-phonon coupling at temperature T can be written as^{40, 41}

$$\Delta E_{nk}(T) = \int d\omega [N(\omega, T) + 1/2] \sum_v \frac{\partial E_{nk}}{\partial N(\omega_v, T)} \delta(\omega - \omega_v), \quad (1)$$

where N is the Bose-Einstein statistics, E is the ground-state electronic energy and $1/2$ corresponds to the zero-point vibration. The delta function δ ensures the energy conservation during electron-phonon interactions for all phonon modes v . Then the finite temperature optical absorption can be obtained by solving BSE^{33, 34} and given by⁴⁰

$$\varepsilon_2(\omega) = -\frac{8\pi}{V} \sum_{nk} |S_{nk}|^2 \text{Im}[(\omega - E_{nk}^{FA} - \Delta E_{nk}^{FA} + i\eta)^{-1}]. \quad (2)$$

The physical quantity S is the ground state electron-hole optical strength, η is a broadening parameter and V is the crystal volume.

Prior to performing electron-phonon coupling calculation, it is essential to peer into the dynamic nature of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$. In the phonon dispersion curves of Figure 1(a), we observe imaginary acoustic phonon modes centered around the high-symmetry R ($q=1/2, 1/2, 1/2$) and M ($q=1/2, 1/2, 0$) points. Those imaginary modes have been recently observed in the inelastic X-ray scattering (IXS) measurements^{18, 42} and indicate its dynamical instability. Previous studies show that those soft phonon modes are due to the zone-boundary instabilities of perovskite structure and mainly associated with the collective tilting of the corner-sharing BX_6^{4-} octahedral framework.^{43, 44} Such interpretation is further verified by the projected density of states study which shows iodide atoms mainly contribute to the imaginary acoustic phonon modes, as shown in Figure 1(a). Although those soft phonon modes contribute to the strength of

electron-phonon coupling, yet their population is relatively small and the influence on electronic band structure and optical absorption is negligible.^{20, 45} Furthermore, by analyzing the phonon dispersion relation, as shown in Figure 1(b)-(e), the phonon modes at high-symmetry points in the first Brillouin zone correspond to atomic motions, such as rotations and relative displacements, in the real space. Taking *M* point for instance, the normal vibrational modes are produced by the relative rotations of iodide atoms around lead atoms. In the meantime, the organic cations stretch and have relatively large freedom of motions, leading to the dynamic nature of hybrid halide perovskites.

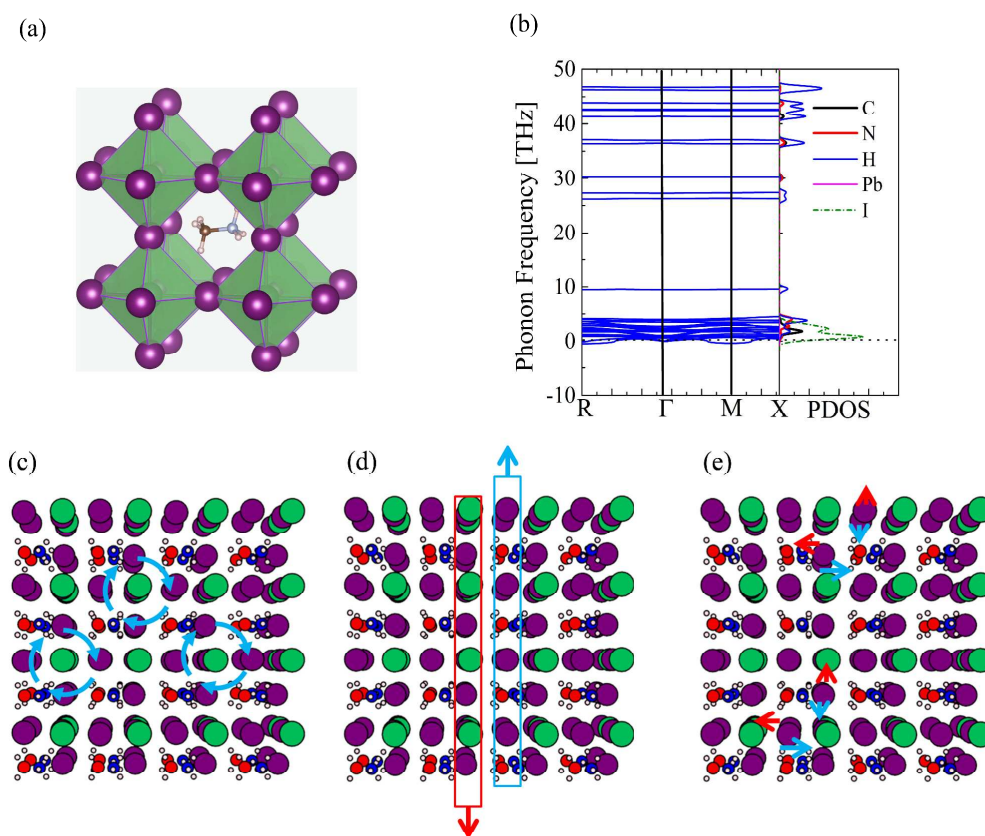


Figure 1. (a) Perovskite structure of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$, (b) the phonon dispersion curve and projected density of states (PDOS), and the corresponding atomic motions at high-symmetry points of (c) *M*, (d) *X* and (e) *R*. The arrows indicate the direction of atomic motions.

Due to its highly dynamic nature, the electron-phonon coupling in the cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ is relatively strong and it has been shown that the high-order terms make nontrivial contributions to the band gap correction even below 400 K.²⁰ However, the implemented AHC theory in this work can only include the electron-phonon coupling up to the second order term and the high-order terms are neglected.^{25, 26} Thus, to reduce errors induced by the neglect of high-order terms, an energy scissor is introduced to correct the overestimated band gap. It makes sense because the focus of this work is on the temperature induced change in the electronic band structure, optical absorption and the atomistic origin for such change. Even though the high-order terms are not included in the theoretical calculations, it shows that the electron-phonon coupling demonstrates relatively large influence on the electronic band structure of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$. In Figure 2(a) and 2(b), it is observed that the electronic energy states in the low valence bands between -8 eV and -3 eV are greatly broadened by lattice vibrations at 300 K and 600 K, respectively. After projecting the density of states into individual element, the organic carbon, nitrogen and hydrogen atoms mainly contribute to those energy states between -8 eV and -3 eV.⁴⁶ So it assumes that such large broadening effect is mainly due to the presence of those organic atoms. To verify this assumption, we compare the electronic band structure of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ and inorganic cubic CsPbI_3 at 600 K, as shown in Figure 2(b) and 2(c). By comparison, it is observed that there is no such strong line broadening for the inorganic CsPbI_3 , which further justifies that the organic cation atoms mainly contribute to the strong electron-phonon coupling in the cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$. Moreover, by analyzing the temperature-dependent band edges in details, we find a slight increase in the band gap as temperature increases. For the high-temperature cubic phase, a direct bandgap of 1.4 eV occurs at the *R* point of the cubic Brillouin zone at 0 K. As temperature increases from 300 K to 400 K, the band gap is enlarged by 86 meV, with the lowest

conduction band edge at *R* point decreasing by 30 meV and the highest valence band edge reducing by 116 meV. Upon considering the thermal expansion effect (see details in Supporting Information), the band gap is further widened by 60 meV, which coincides with previous first-principles simulations.^{19, 47} However, the band gap change of 146 meV largely overestimates the experimental measurements of 30-40 meV,¹⁹ which is mainly due to the neglect of high-order terms in the electron-phonon coupling.²⁰ On the other hand, due to the heavy Pb atoms involved, the spin-orbit coupling (SOC) can split the degenerate energy states in the conduction band and further lower the band gap correction.^{20, 22, 23, 48-50} Thus, to correct the overestimated band gap change induced by the neglect of high-order terms and SOC effect, we apply an energy scissor during the optical absorption calculations of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ over the temperature range of 200-500 K. The temperature-dependent band gap corrected by the energy scissor is provided in the Supporting Information.

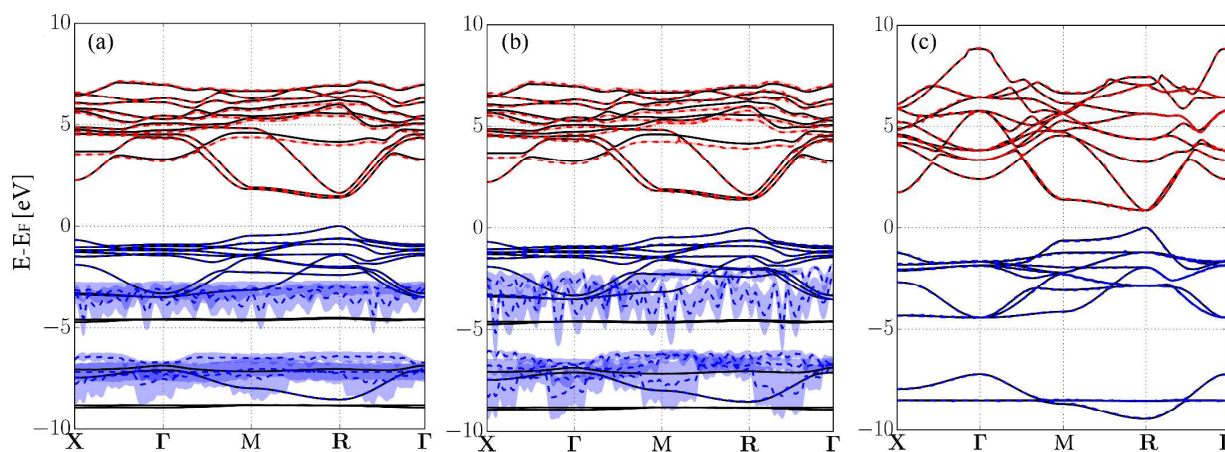


Figure 2. The electronic band structure of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ at (a) 300 K, (b) 600 K, and (c) fully inorganic cubic CsPbI_3 at 600 K.

With the temperature-perturbed electronic band structure, it is feasible to obtain the optical absorption of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ at finite temperature following the electronic interband

transition theory.^{51, 52} Yet, prior to performing the temperature-dependent optical absorption calculations, it is essential to determine the many-body effect on optical properties, since it can not only correct the underestimated band gap by conventional DFT calculations⁵³ but also be crucial in accurately determining the optical transitions with the interacting electron-hole pair.⁵⁴ In Figure 3(a), we perform three different ground-state optical absorption calculations within the scheme of random phase approximation (RPA)⁵⁵, GW^{56, 57} and BSE^{33, 34}, respectively, and compare those calculated results with literature experiment.^{54, 58} The computational details about the optical absorption calculations are provided in the Supporting Information. With the GW approach, the band gap correction of 0.7 eV is applied for the ground state DFT computation. With the BSE method^{33, 34}, the excitonic effect is included into the electronic interband transition calculations. In comparison, it shows that the theoretically calculated optical absorption with the BSE method is in better agreement with experiments upon the inclusion of excitonic effect, as shown in Figure 3(a), indicating that the many-body effect is crucial to accurately determining the optical absorption peak. Thus, we include the excitonic effect into the optical absorption calculations of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ and choose the temperature-perturbed electronic energy states as input to obtain the finite temperature optical absorption. Perturbed by lattice vibrations, the band gap is widened and line width is broadened at finite temperature and, thus, the electronic interband transition process is changed. In Figure 3(b), it is observed that the amplitude of absorption peak decreases, the position slightly shifts to higher energy and the width broadens as temperature increases. Such temperature effects on optical absorption are consistent with that in previous experiment⁵⁴ and can be interpreted by the temperature-perturbed electronic energy states. As lattice vibration is strengthened, the line broadening suggests that the electronic relaxation time is reduced and the population of electron energy states locating at the valence

band will decrease. Consequently, less electrons participate in the electronic interband transition and the optical transition strength is reduced, leading to the damped amplitude of the absorption peak. The blueshift of the absorption line can be explained by the widened band gap, and it requires higher photon energy to excite the ground state valence electrons to the conduction band. As for the broadened absorption peak, it is mainly caused by the decreased electronic relaxation time.

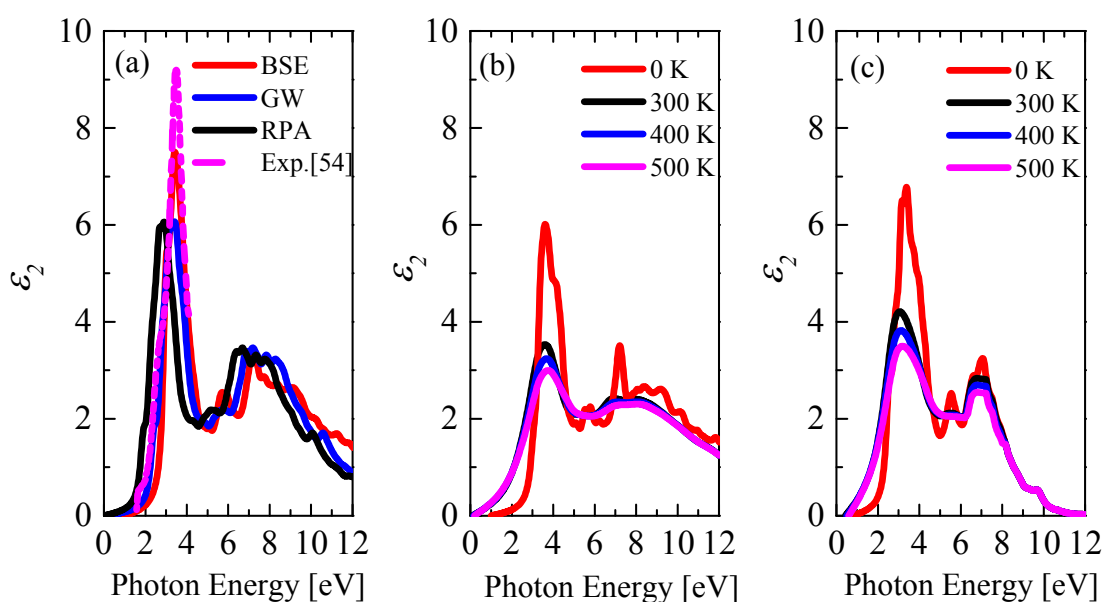


Figure 3. (a) The imaginary part of ground-state dielectric function of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ calculated by the random phase approximation (RPA)⁵⁵, GW^{56, 57} and BSE^{33, 34}, respectively, and compared with experiment⁵⁴. The imaginary part of temperature-dependent dielectric function of (b) cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ and (c) inorganic CsPbI_3 calculated with the BSE theory by accounting for both the electron-phonon coupling and thermal expansion.

In contrast with the large broadening line in the electronic band structure due to the presence of organic cation atoms, the slightly broadened absorption peak of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ suggests

that the organic cation atoms contribute little to the optical absorption. This can be interpreted from the view of electronic band structure that the organic cation atoms contribute less to the valence band maximum (VBM) and conduction band minimum (CBM).⁴⁶ On the other hand, we calculate the temperature-dependent optical absorption of inorganic CsPbI₃ as a comparison. In Figure 3(c), it shows that the dominant absorption peak of inorganic CsPbI₃ also demonstrates the slightly broadened width, blueshift position and decreased amplitude with increasing temperature, similar to that of cubic CH₃NH₃PbI₃. The similarity between the temperature-dependent optical absorption of inorganic CsPbI₃ and cubic CH₃NH₃PbI₃ further verifies that the inorganic Pb and I atoms mainly contribute to the optical absorption of hybrid halide perovskite at finite temperatures.

In summary, the temperature sensitivity of the electronic band structure and optical absorption of cubic CH₃NH₃PbI₃ is determined from atomic level using first-principles. Due to the collective tilting of octahedral framework, this hybrid halide perovskite demonstrates highly dynamical instability and there exist several soft phonon modes. Consequently, the electron-phonon coupling is relatively strong and electronic band structure is greatly perturbed by the lattice vibration, accompanied with the widened band gap and strong line broadening. Choosing those temperature-perturbed electronic energy states as input, the finite temperature optical absorption peak is modified with the decreased amplitude, blueshift position and broadened width. Moreover, the many-body effect is included via solving BSE and crucial in accurately determining the absorption peak. This work contributes to predicting the finite temperature optical properties of hybrid halide perovskites by accounting for electron-phonon coupling, thermal expansion and excitonic effect, which is not only relevant for the related solar cell

devices design but also can provide insight into the absorption and inverse radiative recombination processes.

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interests.

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ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website at DOI:.

Computational details on electron-phonon coupling with the AHC theory and optical absorption with the RPA, GW and BSE method, convergence test on plane-wave energy cutoff, thermal expansion effect and temperature-dependent band gap change for cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ as well as inorganic CsPbI_3 .

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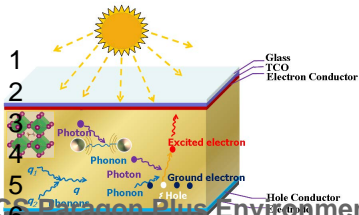
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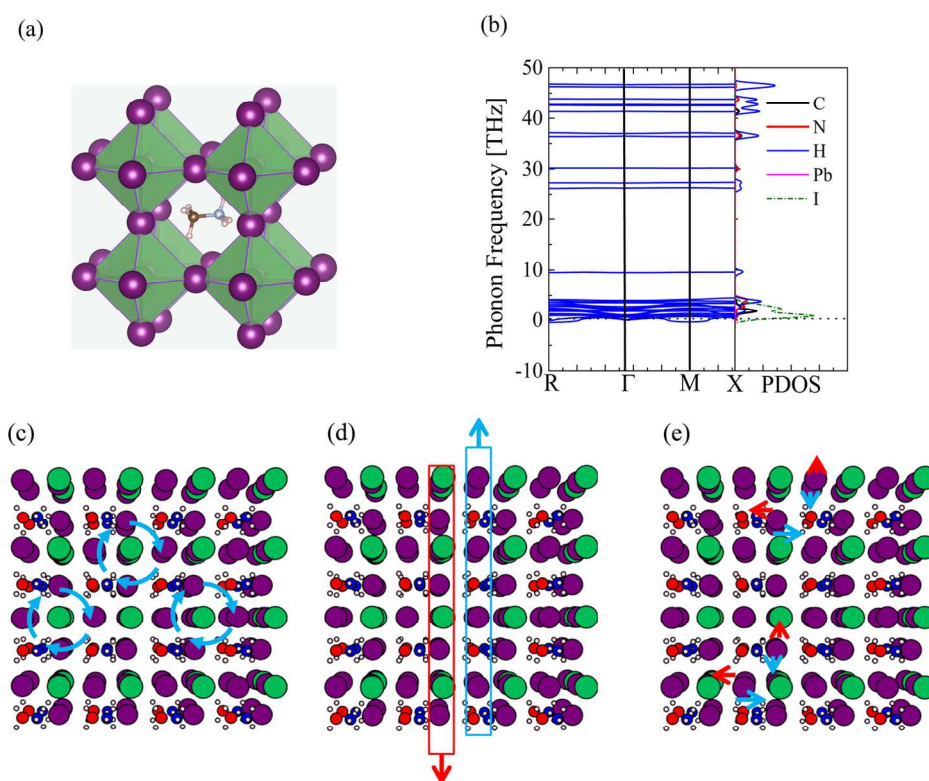


Figure 1. (a) Perovskite structure of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$, (b) the phonon dispersion curve and projected density of states (PDOS), and the corresponding atomic motions at high-symmetry points of (c) M, (d) X and (e) R. The arrows indicate the direction of atomic motions.

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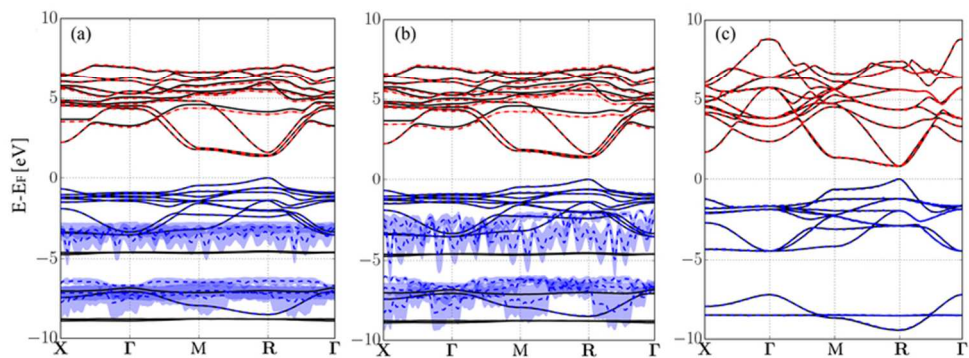


Figure 2. The electronic band structure of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ at (a) 300 K, (b) 600 K, and (c) fully inorganic cubic CsPbI_3 at 600 K.

75x29mm (300 x 300 DPI)

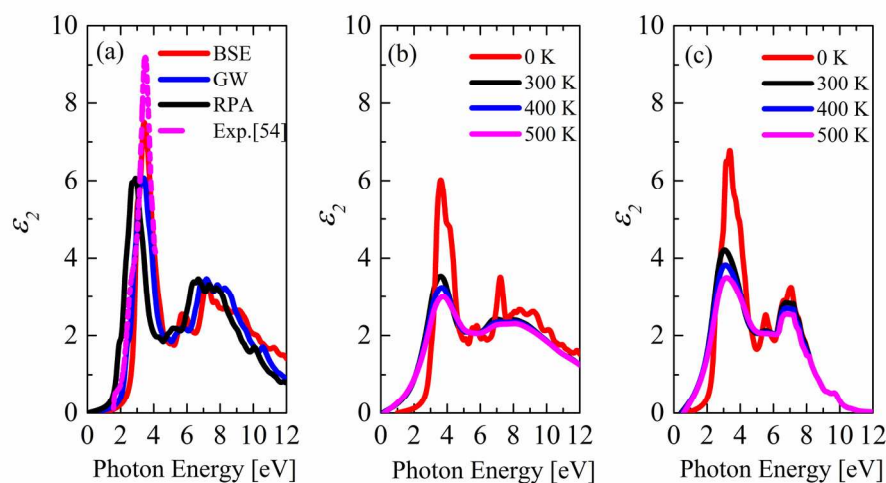


Figure 3. (a) The imaginary part of ground-state dielectric function of cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ calculated by the random phase approximation (RPA)⁵⁵, GW^{56, 57} and BSE^{33, 34}, respectively, and compared with experiment⁵⁴. The imaginary part of temperature-dependent dielectric function of (b) cubic $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$ and (c) inorganic CsPbI_3 calculated with the BSE theory by accounting for both the electron-phonon coupling and thermal expansion.

174x91mm (300 x 300 DPI)