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# Computational Investigation of the Properties and Performance Bottlenecks of Selected Metal Sulfides for Use as Solar Absorber Materials

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## **Abstract**

Clarify link between 'solar cell' and PV device here?

CZTS as a promising earth-abundant non-toxic solar absorber material for thin-film photovoltaic devices, theoretical conversion efficiency of 28 % but major bottleneck of low open circuit voltage ( $V_{OC}$ ) relative to the band gap of the material. Highlight importance of interpreting PL spectra for PV materials?

Candidate photoferroelectric materials from screening process and properties for PV that we predict.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express (whatever feelings I have) to:

- My supervisor
- My second supervisor
- Other researchers
- My family and friends

# Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 The Case for New Solar Absorber Materials for Photovoltaic Devices . . . . .	1
1.1.1 Terawatt-Scale Energy Production from Renewable Resources . . . . .	1
1.1.2 Basic Operating Principles of a Solar Cell Device . . . . .	4
1.1.3 Key Properties & Experimental Measurements to Assess Materials for Use in Solar Cell Devices . . . . .	4
1.1.4 Current Commercial Solar Cell Technologies & Limitations . . . . .	5
1.2 The Role of Computational Modelling in Material Design . . . . .	10
1.3 Overview of this Study . . . . .	11
1.3.1 Promising Candidates for Solar Absorber Materials . . . . .	11
1.3.2 Investigating Possible Bottlenecks in the Performance of CZTS ( $\text{Cu}_2\text{ZnSnS}_4$ ) Devices . . . . .	14
1.3.3 Predicting and Assessing the Properties of New Candidate Solar Absorber Materials . . . . .	16

<b>2</b>	<b>Background Theory</b>	<b>17</b>
2.1	The Description of Perfect Periodic Crystal Structures . . . . .	17
2.2	Crystal Imperfections of the First and Second Types . . . . .	17
2.3	Band Theory & Band Structure . . . . .	17
2.4	Spin Orbit Interaction . . . . .	18
2.5	Photoluminescence Spectra of Solar Absorber Materials . . . . .	18
2.6	Band Tailing in Disordered Semiconductors . . . . .	18
2.7	Impact of Defects and Disorder on Photovoltaic Performance . . . . .	19
2.8	Photovoltaic-Ferroelectric Phenomena & the Possibility of High Performance Solar Cells . . . . .	19
<b>3</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>22</b>
3.1	Calculation of the Formation Energies of Defects in $\text{Cu}_2\text{ZnSnS}_4$ . . . . .	22
3.1.1	Density Functional Theory & Hybrid Functionals . . . . .	22
3.1.2	The Supercell Method & Charged Defects . . . . .	22
3.1.3	Quasichemical Theory for Point Defects . . . . .	22
3.1.4	Chemical Potential and Defect Formation Energy as a Function of Tem- perature and Pressure for $V_S$ . . . . .	23
3.2	Monte Carlo Simulation of On-Lattice Disorder in $\text{Cu}_2\text{ZnSnS}_4$ . . . . .	23
3.2.1	Multi-Scale Monte Carlo Simulations of Thermodynamic Disorder . . . .	23
3.2.2	Convergence Tests for the Model . . . . .	23
3.2.3	Calculation of Order Parameters . . . . .	24

3.2.4	Determination of Band Tailing from Monte Carlo Simulations . . . . .	24
3.3	Calculation of Intrinsic Band Gap Broadening in $\text{Cu}_2\text{ZnSnS}_4$ . . . . .	24
3.4	Calculation of Optoelectronic Properties of Sulfosalt Materials . . . . .	24
<b>4</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>25</b>
4.1	Investigation of Performance Bottlenecks in $\text{Cu}_2\text{ZnSnS}_4$ . . . . .	25
4.1.1	Project1: Band Tailing due to Substitutional Disorder Amongst Cations	25
4.1.2	Project2: Re-Assessing the Formation Energy of $V_S$ . . . . .	25
4.1.3	Project3: Intrinsic Band Gap Broadening from Lattice Vibrations . . . .	25
4.2	Prediction and Assessment of Optoelectronic Properties of Sulfosalt Materials for Photovoltaic Applications . . . . .	25
4.2.1	Band Structures & Band Gap . . . . .	26
4.2.2	Effective Masses . . . . .	26
4.2.3	Dielectric Functions . . . . .	26
4.2.4	Absorption Coefficients . . . . .	26
<b>5</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>27</b>
5.1	Project 1 . . . . .	27
5.2	Project 2 . . . . .	27
5.3	Project 3 . . . . .	27
5.4	Future Work . . . . .	27
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>27</b>

# List of Tables





# List of Figures

1.1	Illustration of power available annually from various renewable energy resources, annual world energy consumption and total reserves of various non-renewable energy resources. Figure take from 59. . . . .	3
1.2	Levelized cost of electricity (LCOE) of renewable energy technologies and conventional power plants at locations in Germany in 2013. Specific investments are taken into account with a minimum and maximum value for each technology. Figure taken from reference 14. . . . .	4
1.3	. . . . .	6
1.4	Efficiency and cost projections for first-, second- and third-generation photovoltaic technologies, which are comprised of silicon wafer, thin-film and advanced thin-film technology respectively. Figure taken from reference 17. . . . .	9
1.5	The Shockley-Queisser detailed balance limit of efficiency of p-n junction solar cells [52], showing the theoretical limit and current record efficiency for various photovoltaic technologies. Figure courtesy of LL Kazmerski (NREL). . . . .	10
1.6	Standard solar spectrum for radiation at the top of the atmosphere. Figure taken from reference 43. . . . .	11
1.7	Figure take from 13. . . . .	14



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 The Case for New Solar Absorber Materials for Photovoltaic Devices

#### 1.1.1 Terawatt-Scale Energy Production from Renewable Resources

It is now widely accepted that the world is heading towards a major energy crisis, where there will come a point that the current major sources of energy (namely fossil fuels) will be unable to meet increasing global demand for energy as they are not a limitless supply. Furthermore, there is the ever present worry of climate change due to increased carbon dioxide emissions caused by such types of energy generation. Renewable, low-carbon alternative energy sources are therefore clearly desirable. From purely an environmental sustainability perspective, it seems clear that fossil fuels should no longer be used and we should meet our energy needs solely from renewable, low-carbon energy sources. However, it is not only environmental sustainability that must be considered, we must also consider economic sustainability. Germany is an example of a country making considerable efforts to increase the percentage of their energy supplied by solar power. On June 9 2014 Germany even generated over 50% of its electricity demand from solar for the first time [61]. Although on average the country is not able to produce such a large portion from solar power, with solar-generated power providing approximately 7.5% of net electricity

consumption in 2015 [62]. To facilitate the growth of the solar power capacity in Germany a number of schemes and financial incentives to encourage investment were introduced, such as feed-in tariffs (FiTs) . The German government first introduced Feed-In Tariffs (FiTs) in their Grid Feed-In Law (the *Stromeinspeisegesetz*), which came into force in 1991 [35]. FiTs are intended to support new supply developments by providing investor certainty, they also guarantee the provider of renewable energy a specific rate for a long period of time, typically fifteen to twenty years making providing solar power a more attractive and secure business venture. They set the rate a utility company must pay for renewable generated energy. As this cost is higher than fossil fuel based electricity, the higher price is then passed on to all customers of the utility company to spread out the higher costs so that buyers of renewable energy do not pay higher prices. In Germany, this has resulted in an increase of 6% on the average electricity bill for users in a specific region [38].

Solar energy is however a realistic candidate for replacing fossil fuels as a major supply of global energy. It is by far the largest source of energy available to us, as illustrated in figure 1.1, and it is also the most widely geographically distributed [26]. The Sun supplies  $3 \times 10^{24}$  J of energy to the Earth each year, which is  $10^4$  times more than mankind's current annual energy consumption. In theory, this would require only 0.1% of the Earth's surface to be covered in solar cells with a conversion efficiency of just 10% to satisfy our current energy needs [20]. Recent years have seen a rapid increase in the installed solar generation capacity, with the global grid-connected PV capacity growing from 1.3 GW in 2000 to 139 GW in 2014 [1], with approximately a doubling in the cumulative installed capacity every two years [29]. Additionally, creative business models have spurred investment in residential solar systems [39]. Great improvements in technology, price and performance have helped to facilitate this growth, but solar energy still only provides a minor fraction of the world's energy. In 2013 solar power only provided 0.87% of the worlds electricity [45]. Further advances are required to enable a dramatic increase in the contribution from solar power at socially acceptable costs [39]. Ultimately, solar power-generation technologies must become cost-competitive with conventional fossil-fuel based power sources.

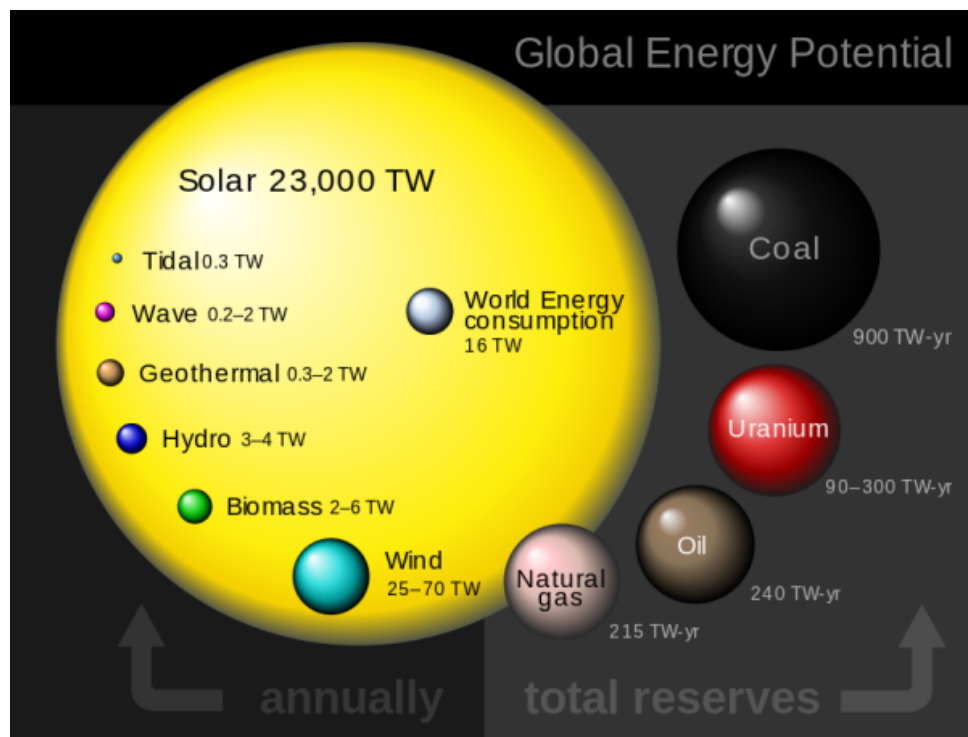


Figure 1.1: Illustration of power available annually from various renewable energy resources, annual world energy consumption and total reserves of various non-renewable energy resources. Figure taken from 59.

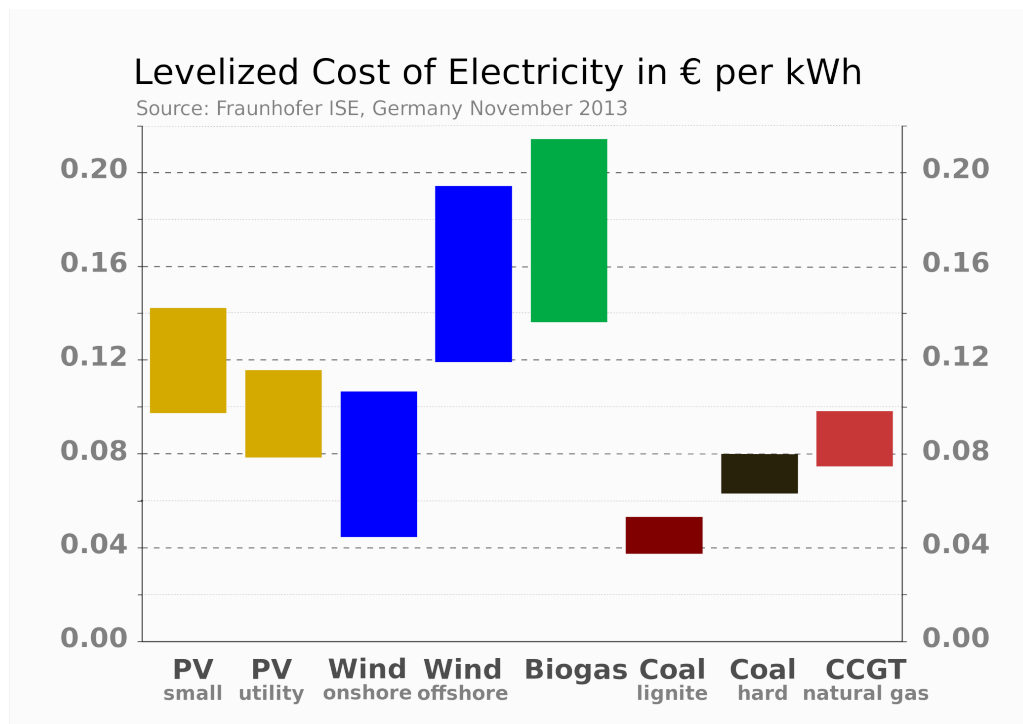


Figure 1.2: Levelized cost of electricity (LCOE) of renewable energy technologies and conventional power plants at locations in Germany in 2013. Specific investments are taken into account with a minimum and maximum value for each technology. Figure taken from reference 14.

Levelized cost of energy, or electricity, (LCOE) is a common way to assess how cost competitive renewable energy sources are with their non-renewable counterparts. LCOE allows for the measurement of the performance of different power generating technologies, which may have unequal lifetimes and differing capacities. It is calculated by summing all costs incurred during the lifetime of the technology and dividing this value by the units of energy produced during the lifetime, with units of energy expressed as dollars per kilowatt hour (\$/kWhr) [36]. This measure is also used as the key selling point for a number of commercial solar cell manufacturers such as First Solar Inc., who market their product as being able to generate electricity at an average of \$0.63 per Watt as stated in their 2013 Annual Report [25]. Using the LCOE, comparisons of grid competitiveness for renewable energy sources can be made [36]. Figure 1.2 shows the LCOE of renewable energy technologies and conventional power plants at locations in Germany in 2013, enabling an assessment of the cost-competitiveness of PV power generation at this location, accounting for, for example, typical solar irradiation at the given locations [14]. As the figure shows, both small-scale and large-scale utility solar power are still not cost competitive with the cheapest non-renewable resources.

### 1.1.2 Basic Operating Principles of a Solar Cell Device

### 1.1.3 Key Properties & Experimental Measurements to Assess Materials for Use in Solar Cell Devices

- PL
- band gap
- absorption coefficient
- effective mass
- dielectric function (screening of defects)

Why dielectric function is important – lower dielectric const in CZTS suggests electrostatic potential fluctuation is long ranged, material will be less 'defect tolerant' – look for textbook source!

#### 1.1.4 Current Commercial Solar Cell Technologies & Limitations

It was first observed in 1839 by Edmond Becquerel that sunlight could be used to generate electricity. Becquerel discovered that if silver chloride was placed in an acidic solution, connected to platinum electrodes and exposed to sunlight, an electric current flowed. However the effect was small and poorly understood before Albert Einstein's discovery of the photoelectric effect and explanation of the phenomena by the quantum nature of light in 1904 [55]. Even then, it was not until the development of semiconductor technology during the silicon revolution of the 1950's that solar cells were fabricated which were able to generate significant amounts of electricity. The first silicon solar cell was created in 1954 in the Bell Laboratories with cells achieving efficiencies of 6%. Originally solar cells were developed for terrestrial energy generation, such as the 108 solar cells used to supply energy to the Vanguard satellite in 1958 [55]. The first oil crisis in 1973 however highlighted the dependency of many economies on fossil fuels and the need to address the security of energy supply, in particular for Japan and West Germany which had few of their own resources. As a consequence, solar cell research was no longer limited to only high-cost crystalline silicon devices for terrestrial applications, but also into creating cheaper, commercial, thin-film solar cell technologies using absorber materials such as amorphous silicon, cadmium telluride and copper indium diselenide [34].

In spite of this, crystalline silicon is still the dominant solar cell technology with mono- and poly-crystalline silicon photovoltaic cells comprising up to 90% of all the solar cells produced in 2008 [48]. Silicon is the second most abundant element in the Earth's crust [18], making it a plausible material to use in large-scale solar power generation. Over 60 years of development have seen device efficiencies increase from 6% to 25% for the highest quality research devices and 15-18% for the more common industrial cells [48]. As can be seen from figure 1.5, the

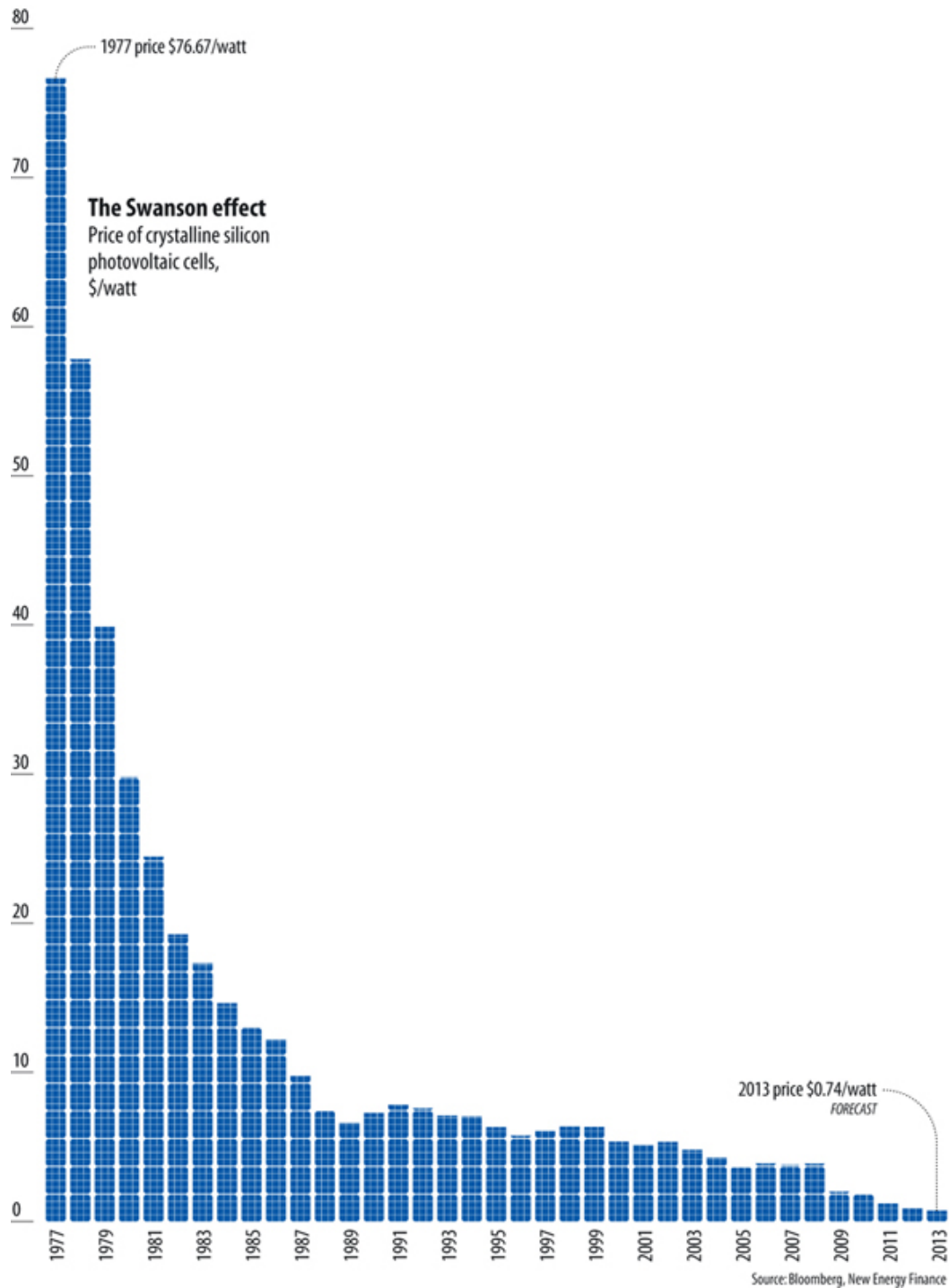


Figure 1.3:

best performing silicon devices are now very close to achieving conversion efficiencies close to their theoretical limit, as predicted by the Shockley-Queisser detailed balance limit [52]. More dramatic however is the fall in manufacturing costs which have halved since 2008 and are more than a hundred times lower than they were in 1977, as shown in figure 1.3. This development was largely aided by progress in semiconductor technology driven by the silicon chip industry,



with the solar industry benefiting from advances in silicon manufacturing processes and even making use of waste silicon produced that was not of a high enough grade for silicon chips [55]. Although the development of silicon-based technologies has clearly revolutionized the modern computer, the optical properties of silicon do not make it ideal for use as a solar absorber material in a photovoltaic device and the technology is still not able to be cost-competitive with fossil-fuel power generation, as was shown in figure 1.2.

The primary issue with silicon is that its band gap of 1.1 eV is indirect. The band structure of silicon is discussed in much more detail in section 2.3, but the key consequence of this property is that silicon is therefore not a very strong absorber of sunlight (compared to for instance newer, thin-film technologies which are discussed later), resulting in a low optical absorption coefficient compared to these newer technologies where both band gap and absorption coefficient were two of the key material properties for solar cells discussed in section 1.1.3. To absorb the same amount of sunlight with a silicon solar cell requires a thicker layer of the material than in thin-film technologies. Photovoltaic devices are very sensitive to defects and impurities. This point is discussed further in section 2.7, but the consequence for a thick layer of silicon is that very high quality, non-defective material is necessary to enable charge carrier collection before recombination occurs, which results in high manufacturing costs. The devices are made from flat sheets of crystalline or multicrystalline silicon called wafers that consist of very high quality silicon (99.999999% pure) [37]. The production processes of silicon wafers have been thoroughly optimised, but are still very energy-intensive, time-consuming and complex [21] and this is reflected by the position of this type of technology on the plot of efficiency versus cost shown in figure 1.4. Despite decades of development, commercialized silicon solar panels are still too expensive to compete with fossil-fuel based power sources [51].

The ‘holy grail’ of research into new materials for photovoltaic devices would be to find materials that are strong absorbers of sunlight that could also be produced cost-effectively from materials that are abundant enough for large-scale fabrication of the devices. Then it could be possible for solar energy generation to be economically viable on a large enough scale to

replace fossil fuels to meet global energy needs. Such a drive has resulted in the development of what are considered three generations of solar energy technology. These are shown in figure 1.4, where highly efficient crystalline silicon devices with high associated manufacturing costs are considered the first generation of solar cell technology. Thin-film solar cell devices are typically referred to as second-generation technology. These devices make use of materials that are much more optically thick than silicon (i.e. stronger absorbers of sunlight with higher optical absorption coefficients), which require less material to absorb the same amount of sunlight. It is then less important for the material to be of as high-quality as in crystalline silicon devices, which enables the use of low-cost and low-energy fabrication methods [21]. In the case of thin-film  $\text{CuInSe}_2$  devices, it has even been found that the ‘lower quality’ poly-crystalline material has a higher performance than its single crystal counterpart [49, 47]. Theoretical studies of the electronic properties of the grain boundaries in  $\text{CuInSe}_2$  have provided an explanation for this unusual observation based on beneficial band offsets at the grain boundaries [41, 42]. This effect is a special case for this particular material, but it embodies the general ideology of thin-film technology well - namely to produce materials able to convert sunlight into electricity as efficiently as possible with the simplest synthesis techniques possible. However typically the efficiencies of second-generation solar cells are less than that of the best performing first-generation devices. Examples of commercial thin-film technologies include CIGS ( $\text{Cu}(\text{In,Ga})(\text{S,Se})_2$ ) and  $\text{CdTe}$  and figure 1.5 shows that the best performing Si devices have higher efficiencies, which are also much closer to their theoretical limit, than these second-generation, thin-film technologies. Third-generation PV technology aims to make use of the low cost fabrication techniques of the second-generation devices but use multiple energy threshold devices to overcome the Shockley-Queisser limit for a single band gap solar cell, such as in tandem solar cells where semiconductor p-n junctions of increasing band gap are placed on top of each other in order to capture more of the solar spectrum. Typically the more complicated device architecture of third-generation devices result in higher fabrication costs. Research efforts are therefore largely focused on reducing the fabrication cost of multi-junction devices [64].

Current mainstream solar cell technologies, such as first-generation Si wafers and second-

generation thin-film CdTe and CIGS solar cells, would not be able to provide solar electricity at the terawatt scale due to the scarcity of Te and In and the relatively long energy payback time for crystalline Si due to the cost and energy intensive fabrication of Si wafers [65]. In order to significantly increase the contribution of solar power to global power consumption, it is therefore necessary to develop economically viable earth-abundant materials for sustainable PV electricity generation. Furthermore, there must be a considerable technological breakthrough that would enable low-cost manufacturing of highly efficient devices with enough of a cost benefit to outweigh the initial cost outlay in optimizing the manufacturing process of the whole device as has been done for silicon over the past 60 years. For this purpose, there is a drive for solar absorber materials with more optimal properties, such as a direct and sunlight matched band gap (as in thin-film technologies such as CdTe and CIGS), but also for materials that are composed of only earth-abundant components. Attempts to overcome the Shockley-Queisser conversion efficiency limit in third generation solar cell technology typically results in costly device fabrication, such as in tandem devices.

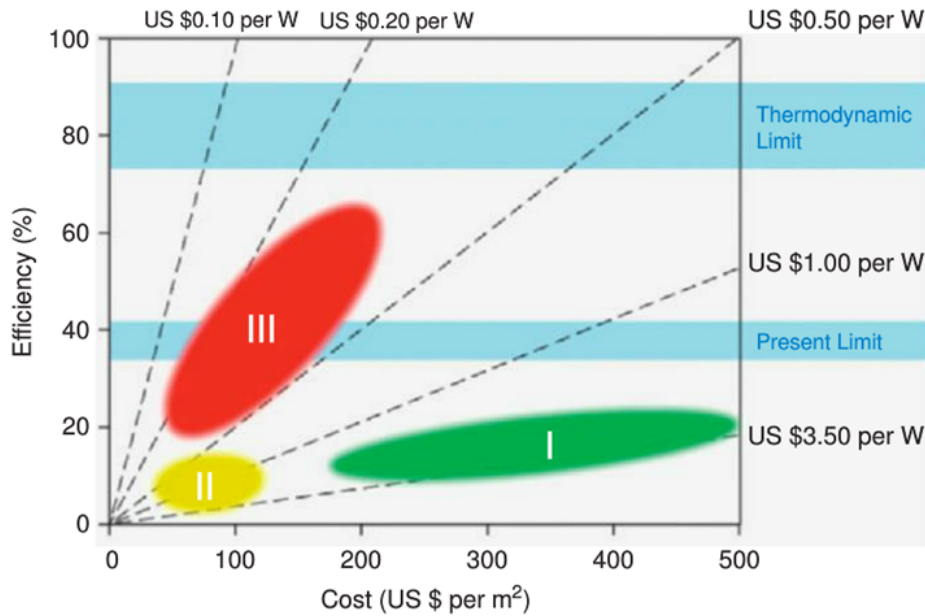


Figure 1.4: Efficiency and cost projections for first-, second- and third-generation photovoltaic technologies, which are comprised of silicon wafer, thin-film and advanced thin-film technology respectively. Figure taken from reference 17.

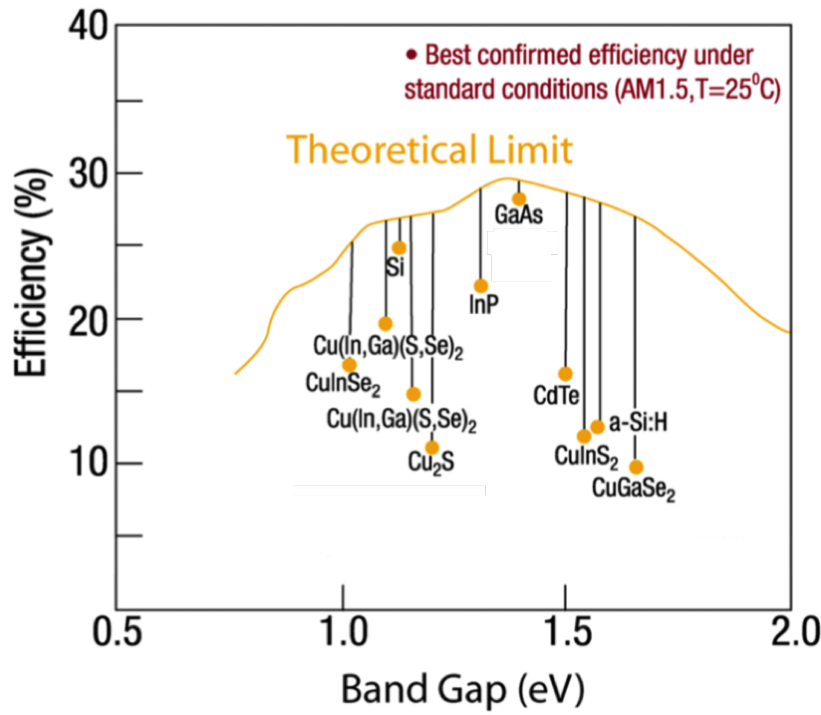


Figure 1.5: The Shockley-Queisser detailed balance limit of efficiency of p-n junction solar cells [52], showing the theoretical limit and current record efficiency for various photovoltaic technologies. Figure courtesy of LL Kazmerski (NREL).

## 1.2 The Role of Computational Modelling in Material Design

See DFT in materials science paper

Prediction of properties and insight for experimentalists + material screening

There are two main contributions that computational simulations could make towards the technological breakthrough needed for the development of photovoltaic devices for economically-viable, large-scale solar energy generation. Firstly by predicting properties and screening for certain desirable properties for a solar absorber material, such as an optimal band gap and high carrier mobility, materials simulations are able to aid in the discovery of new materials for use in photovoltaic devices. Secondly, material simulations are able to provide valuable insight to improve understanding of known photovoltaic materials to enable the synthesis of better performing devices. So far in this study we have aimed to make both of these contributions

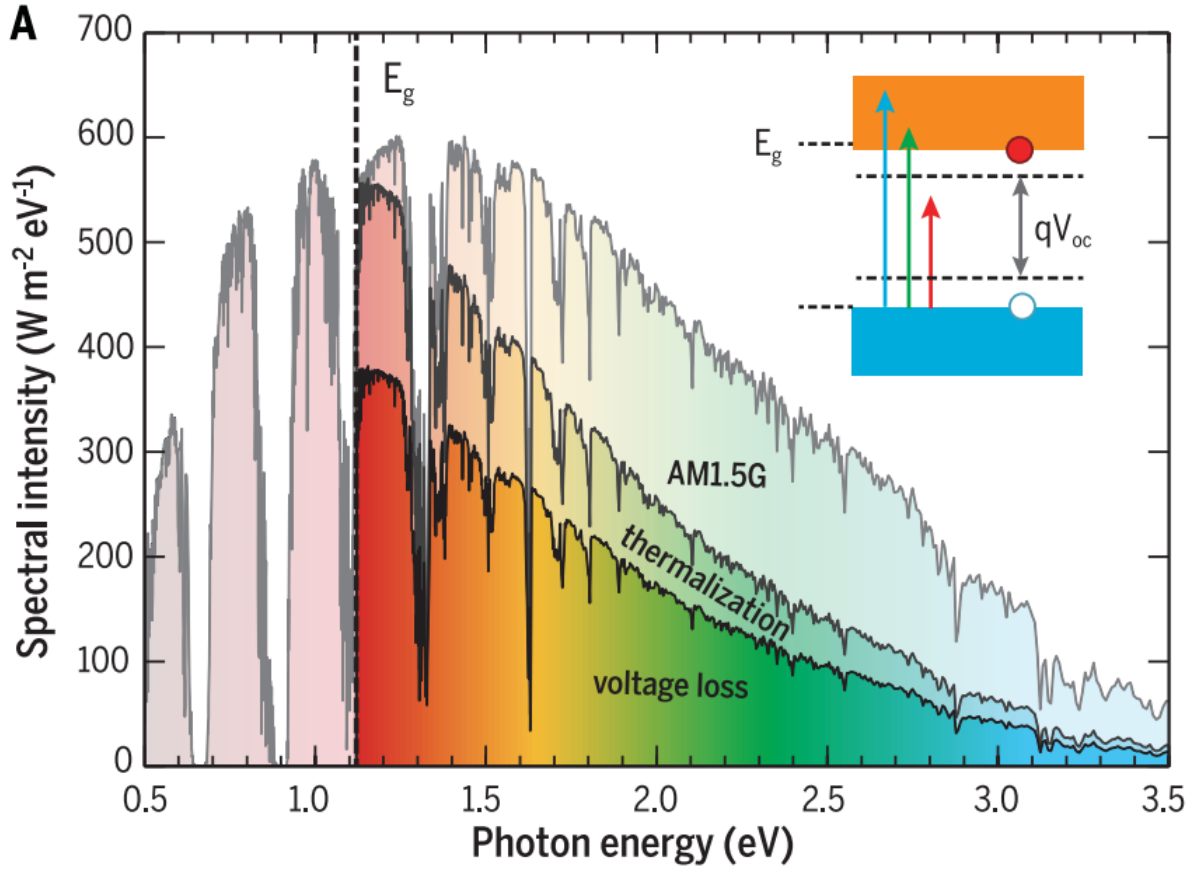


Figure 1.6: Standard solar spectrum for radiation at the top of the atmosphere. Figure taken from reference 43.

to the field. Firstly, we perform simulations to understand the performance bottlenecks in the candidate earth-abundant, non-toxic solar absorber material  $\text{Cu}_2\text{ZnSnS}_4$  (CZTS) and we also study the optical properties of three candidate photovoltaic materials which have so far received little attention as solar materials but could be another possible route for high-performance photovoltaic devices for cost-effective solar energy generation.

## 1.3 Overview of this Study

### 1.3.1 Promising Candidates for Solar Absorber Materials

As already discussed, to make solar energy generation on a large scale economically viable, it must be possible to make devices with an LCOE that is comparable to fossil-fuel sources, but the materials that make up the devices must also be sufficiently abundant such that there would

be enough to make a substantial number of devices in the first place. For this reason there is a drive for photovoltaic materials containing only earth-abundant components. Presently, two of the most studied candidate earth-abundant thin-film solar cell materials include  $\text{Cu}_2\text{ZnSnS}_4$  (CZTS) and methylammonium lead iodide ( $\text{CH}_3\text{NH}_3\text{PbI}_3$  or  $\text{MAPbI}_3$ ) [65]. The potential of CZTS for photovoltaic applications was realised in 1988 by Ito and Nakazawa [28]. The band gap of the material has been predicted [71] and measured [50] to be 1.5 eV, which corresponds to a theoretical conversion efficiency limit of 28% as predicted by Shockley-Queisser photon balance [52]. However, the current record device efficiency is 8.8% [58] and it is believed that this figure must be increased to at least 15% for the devices to be commercially viable [53]. PV devices composed of a CZTS absorber layer are hampered by low open circuit voltage ( $V_{OC}$ ) [53], which is believed to be due to the formation of secondary phases [2] and defects [10] in CZTS, although the exact origin of the low  $V_{OC}$  remains unknown. The first component of this study is therefore an attempt to determine possible origins of this deficit in CZTS.

$\text{MAPbI}_3$  is an example of a hybrid halide perovskite solar cell material, which are regarded as a convergence of inorganic thin-film and dye-sensitised solar cells (DSSC's) [5]. Research on such materials dates back to 1928 [63]. The efficiency of  $\text{MAPbI}_3$  solar cells however has increased rapidly between 2009 and 2014 from 3.8% for  $\text{MAPbI}_3$ -based DSSC's to 20.1% for a planar  $\text{MAPbI}_3$ -based thin-film solar cells [65] and has therefore surpassed the record efficiency of both conventional DSSC's as well as the earth-abundant thin-film PV absorber material CZTS [5]. The architecture of a typical photovoltaic device, such as that shown in figure (\*\*??\*\*), is dependent upon charge separation by variation in material composition, as in a p-n junction. However, in ferroelectric materials charge separation can also be achieved due to the intrinsic crystal field in a homogeneous material. The crystal polarity creates microscopic electric fields across domains, separating photogenerated excitons into free charges, and segregating the transport of the free charges to reduce recombination rates [9]. Hybrid perovskites have been shown to exhibit spontaneous electric polarization [16]. Therefore, one possible explanation for the high efficiency of  $\text{MAPbI}_3$ -based solar cells is enhanced separation of photoexcited electron and hole pairs, and hence reduced rate of electron-hole recombination, due to the presence

of ferroelectric domains [16, 5]. Although the stability of MAPbI<sub>3</sub>-based solar cells has been identified as a big challenge for these devices, as CH<sub>3</sub>NH<sub>3</sub>PbI<sub>3</sub> is very sensitive to polar solvents such as water and so readily dissolves and decomposes into PbI<sub>2</sub> [40].

A number of interesting photovoltaic phenomena have been observed in ferroelectric (FE) materials, such as the bulk photovoltaic effect (BPE) and the anomalous photovoltaic effect (APE) [9]. The BPE was first recorded in 1956 in BaTiO<sub>3</sub> [12], where photovoltages were measured in un-doped single crystals [9]. The BPE effect is distinctly different from the typical PV effect in semiconductor p-n junctions as it is the polarization electric field that is the driving force for the photocurrent in FE-PV devices [69]. The conventional PV effect is discussed further in section ?? and FE-PV phenomena are discussed further in section 2.8. The APE was first observed in PbS films in 1946 [56] and has since been reported in polycrystalline CdTe, ZnTe, InP [32, 19, 60], where photovoltages output along the polarization direction can be significantly larger than the band gap of the material [69], which is usually the limit for a semiconductor PV material [9]. The identification and understanding of such phenomena may open up the possibility of much more efficient PV devices constructed from a number of different photo-ferroelectric materials. However, most of the commonly used ferroelectric materials such as LiNbO<sub>3</sub> and BaTiO<sub>3</sub> have band gaps larger than 3 eV and can therefore only absorb sunlight in the UV range to convert into electricity, which accounts for only around 3.5% of solar energy [69], which is illustrated in figure 1.6. The optimal range for the band gap in order to absorb the majority of the solar spectrum under typical radiation conditions is between 1.06 eV and 1.50 eV [27]. Research efforts have also gone into adjusting the optical absorption of ferroelectric materials without influencing the ferroelectric properties of the material through chemical doping or alloying [69]. In Bi<sub>4</sub>Ti<sub>3</sub>O<sub>12</sub> (BiT) the optical band gap has been tuned in such a way, resulting in a decrease from 3.6 eV to 2.7 eV [11], although this is still considerably larger than the optimal range for a PV absorber material.

This then leads on to the second component of this study, which is an investigation of the optoelectronic properties of new candidate solar absorber materials that may also exhibit fer-

roelectricity, but have band gaps within the optimal range for the absorption of sunlight. In theory, these materials may exhibit the exceptionally high performance of MAPbI<sub>3</sub>-based solar cells (ideally without the instability issues suffered by MAPbI<sub>3</sub>) or enable the possibility of exploiting other novel photovoltaic phenomena such as the anomalous and bulk photovoltaic effects to overcome the Shockley-Queisser efficiency limit without the need for such complicated device architectures as in third-generation tandem solar cells. Such technologies could provide one possible route for the technological breakthrough that could enable economically-viable, large-scale solar energy generation.

### 1.3.2 Investigating Possible Bottlenecks in the Performance of CZTS (Cu<sub>2</sub>ZnSnS<sub>4</sub>) Devices

Mention kesterite as CZTS and CZTSe, combination of both gives highest performance but current study limited to just CZTS.

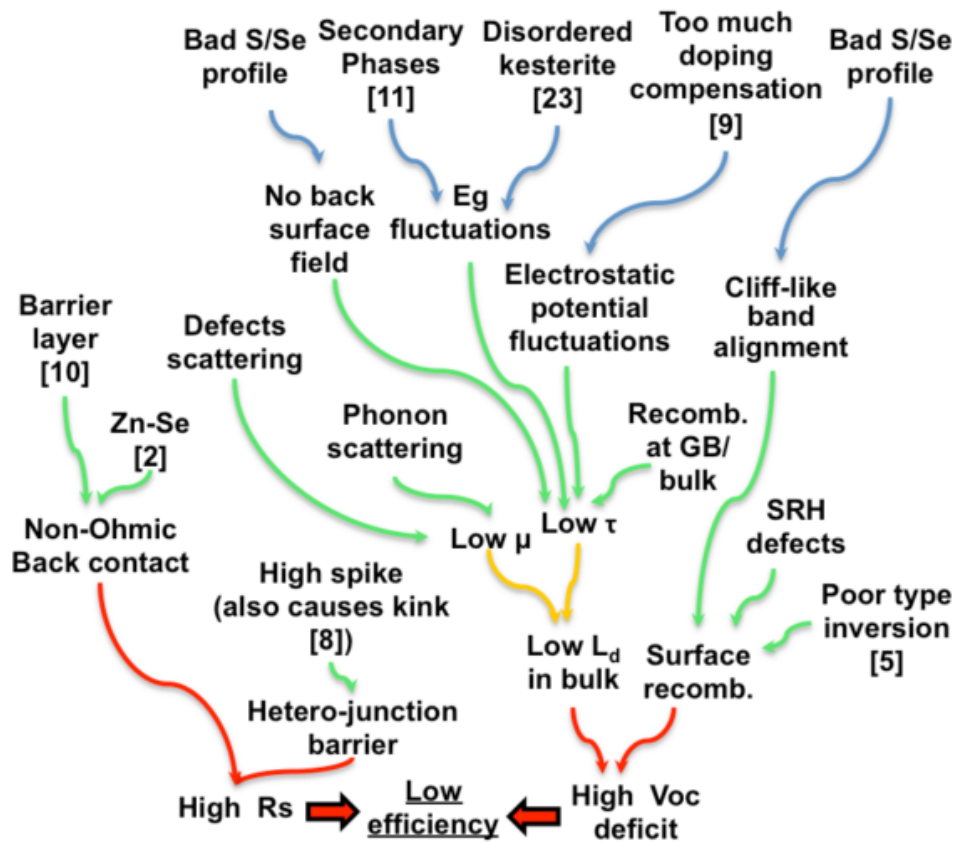


Figure 1.7: Figure take from 13.



Voc deficit + PL spectra of CZTS + disorder as a bottleneck –j essentially deciphering the PL spectra!

Photoluminescence (PL) spectra is discussed much more thoroughly in section 2.5, but the key point for our study is that the PL spectra of CZTS differs considerably from the ideal case (compare PL spectra of high quality Si, CdTe and CIGS?)

Although ultimately the aim is to make thin-film devices from CZTS, for the purposes of our study where we are currently simulating disorder in bulk CZTS, measurements performed on single crystals will be the most directly relatable to our findings as our model will not include additional spectra for recombination transitions and grain boundaries.

Other disorder studies providing evidence for Cu, Zn disorder: neutron, near-resonant Raman, etc. (see old report plan)

See Kosyak paper, top of pg 2 for discussion of why defect theory is important for CZTS because of limited exptl data whilst in early stages of development.

Ultimate aim of study is to unpick/ decipher the PL spectra of CZTS to determine sources of efficiency loss to guide experiment. There are a number of possible explanations for the PL spectra such as mid gap states (which would give rise to additional sharp optical transitions and energies below the band gap of the material), band gap broadening due to intrinsic lattice vibrations but also to disorder and band tailing due to various types of disorder.

We first study band tailing from metal disorder in CZTS. We also re-investigate the formation of S vacancies when accounting for S being in the gas state, using a full S chemical potential as  $V_S$  has been predicted to give a mid gap energy state, but calculations consider S in only the solid state have predicted a high defect formation energy and therefore the presence of this type of defect unlikely. This may not be the case when accounting for S being in the gaseous state during the synthesis of CZTS. We then go on to attempt to determine how much of the band gap broadening observed in CZTS (\*REF PVTEAM PAPER\*) is due to disorder by calculating the intrinsic (and inevitable!) contribution from the lattice expansion of perfect CZTS at finite temperatures, and subtracting this from the experimentally measured broadening.

But there are a number of further investigations (see further work section): larger systems, domains, band gap fluc + compensating defects for off-stoichiometric systems

### **1.3.3 Predicting and Assessing the Properties of New Candidate Solar Absorber Materials**

Ferroelectric materials in PV devices

Screening criteria

Properties of interest for PV (discussed above) which we aim to predict for these materials + known exptl and theoretical values from the literature (see MRes2 report and new bournonite paper)

# Chapter 2

## Background Theory

### 2.1 The Description of Perfect Periodic Crystal Structures

### 2.2 Crystal Imperfections of the First and Second Types

Notes from A. Guinier 'X-Ray Diffraction': use Ch6 to introduce then Ch8 for long and short range order in mixed crystals with substitutional disorder + see Ziman

### 2.3 Band Theory & Band Structure

See MRes2 report + use e.g. of Si, state that early figure is a simplification and use to discuss why Si is not ideal from indirect band gap, use rough calc from lecture

## 2.4 Spin Orbit Interaction

see webpages: pg 84 for discussion of effect of SOC on lattice without inversion symmetry! + useful slide

Look for textbook source?

## 2.5 Photoluminescence Spectra of Solar Absorber Materials

Photoluminescence (PL) imaging is becoming a popular method to inspect solar cell materials, it does not require a full functioning device and can be a powerful tool for probing defects in semiconductors [? ? ]. The PL spectra of  $\text{Cu}_2\text{ZnSnS}_4$  (CZTS) provides clear evidence of disorder in the material.

Overview of technique, information gained from technique, T dependent PL, PL spectra of CZTS: single crystal and thin film.

## 2.6 Band Tailing in Disordered Semiconductors

Nelson, pg 65, 3.5.4: heavy doping leading to band tailing

see Pankove + Russian 1970s papers, Urbach tail, fluctuations in electrostatic potential

See Urbach tail doc and use Cu/ Zn culprit paper

## 2.7 Impact of Defects and Disorder on Photovoltaic Performance

SRH recomb, GBs, secondary phases, band gap and electrostatic potential fluctuations

See CMP lectures on defects + ebook reading material

## 2.8 Photovoltaic-Ferroelectric Phenomena & the Possibility of High Performance Solar Cells

Ferroelectric PV materials are currently receiving a great deal of research interest, however the origin of their PV properties are considered to be unresolved [67]. A large number of theories have been proposed in an attempt to explain the two observed ferroelectric-photovoltaic (FE-PV) phenomena: the bulk PV effect (BPE), also referred to as the photogalvanic effect, and the anomalous PV effect (APE). In the BPE, a direct current appears in a homogeneous medium under uniform illumination and this can occur in all materials without a center of symmetry [3]. Ferroelectric materials exhibit this effect strongly [67] and the first observation of this effect was in 1956 with photovoltages measured in un-doped single crystals of the ferroelectric material  $\text{BaTiO}_3$  [12]. In the case of the APE, photovoltages have been measured that are orders of magnitude larger than the band gap of the material [56], but has been observed to disappear when the sample undergoes a phase transition to a paraelectric phase [44], and so no longer exhibits spontaneous electric polarization. Theories have been developed to explain the FE-PV phenomena based around experimental observations of factors that have been shown to influence the photovoltage of FE-PV devices, such as: the distance between the two opposite electrodes [23, 46], intensity of incident light [6], electrical conductivity [15], remnant polarization of the ferroelectric crystals [7], crystallographic orientation [22], the dimension or size of the crystals [46, 24], domain walls [66] and the interface between the FE material and the electrode [30].

Models have been proposed to explain the BPE in ferroelectric materials based upon the built-in asymmetry of non-centrosymmetric crystals. One model is based on asymmetric scattering centres in the materials [3]. In non-centrosymmetric crystals, the rate of the generation of charge carriers with momenta  $\pm k$  can be different due to asymmetric electron-hole scattering. A ‘ballistic current’ can then be generated due to the momentum imbalance [33]. Another model, the shift current model [33], has been proposed, which is based on the asymmetry of the electron density [9]. Light-induced transitions of charge carriers between bands in reciprocal space are accompanied by asymmetrical shifts in real space between atoms in elementary cells [33]. Such currents have been demonstrated for a number of materials, such as GaAs [54] and BiFeO<sub>3</sub>, where this has been demonstrated using both computational [68] and experimental [31] techniques. The shift current model has been used in first principles calculations to reproduce experimental photocurrent direction and magnitude as a function of light frequency resulting from the BPE in BaTiO<sub>3</sub> [67]. The nonlinear dielectric model has also been proposed to explain the BFE effect in (Pb, La)(Zr, Ti)O<sub>3</sub> (PLZT) ceramics [44]. This material exhibits the photostrictive effect, where strain is induced in the sample by incident light. In this model, the large photovoltage is believed to be due to the nonlinear response of the material to the incident light, which results in an effective DC electric field throughout the ferroelectric material [69].

The domain wall theory has been proposed to explain the large generated photovoltages in the APE [4] and the Schottky-junction effect [70] and depolarization field model [8, 57], also referred to as the screening effect, have been proposed as additional contributions to the large photovoltage. Unlike the BPE, some theories to explain the APE rely on the nano- and microstructure of the material [9]. The latter two theories are related to the interface between the FE material and an electrode in a FE-PV device, but were originally neglected as the contributions to the photovoltage were believed to be small. However, these effects become more significant in thin-film devices where photovoltages are typically low [69], and thin-films are particularly relevant for PV applications. The domain wall theory was developed to explain observations of photovoltages in thin films of BiFeO<sub>3</sub> increasing linearly with the total number of ferroelectric domain walls along the net direction of electric polarization and vanishing along

the direction perpendicular to the net polarization [66]. In this theory, the narrow ferroelectric domain walls drive the dissociation of photogenerated excitons and so act as nanoscale photovoltage generators connected in series. The photocurrent across the domain walls is therefore continuous but the photogenerated voltage accumulates along the direction of net polarization, allowing for photovoltages that are considerably larger than the band gap of the material [69]. In the Schottky-junction effect, the FE semiconductor forms a Schottky contact with the metal electrodes, which then generate a photocurrent under illumination due to the local electric field caused by the band bending near to the electrode. This photocurrent is dependent upon the Schottky barrier height and depletion region depth, but the photovoltage is still limited to the band gap of the material. Further, the additional photovoltage contribution from this effect can be cancelled out if the same electrode contacts are used, due to the opposite polarization of the two Schottky-junctions [69]. In the depolarization field model, high densities of polarization charges are believed to accumulate on surfaces of polarized FE films, this then induces a large electric field inside the FE layer if the charge is not screened. This effect will be far more pronounced in a thin-film device. The electric field is thought to not be fully screened by the free charges in the metal or semiconductor that the FE layer is in contact with, resulting in a depolarization field. This depolarization field will be larger when the FE material has a large remnant electric polarization, the FE layer is thinner and when it is in contact with a semiconductor, as opposed to a metal, due to fewer free charge carriers and higher dielectric constant in a semiconductor than a metal, giving weaker screening. The depolarization field is believed to be the dominating force for the separation of photogenerated charge carrier pairs [69].

# Chapter 3

## Methodology

### 3.1 Calculation of the Formation Energies of Defects in $\text{Cu}_2\text{ZnSnS}_4$

#### 3.1.1 Density Functional Theory & Hybrid Functionals

Go through different levels of theory used in calculations done at Duke with emphasis on hybrids for the defect calcs and why?

#### 3.1.2 The Supercell Method & Charged Defects

Discuss convergence of edge geometry? + see Aron's lectures

#### 3.1.3 Quasichemical Theory for Point Defects

See Kosyak paper, ref 19. + second page for discussion of non-interacting defects in quasichemical formalism + notes from Aron's defect sessions



### 3.1.4 Chemical Potential and Defect Formation Energy as a Function of Temperature and Pressure for $V_S$

## 3.2 Monte Carlo Simulation of On-Lattice Disorder in $\text{Cu}_2\text{ZnSnS}_4$

- General MC simulations and Metropolis algorithm
- Ising model and likeness of our simulation to ising model
- Convergence problem - difference in electrostatics summation compared to spin summation in standard ising model, briefly Ewald summation (implemented in GULP) but too comp intensive for our simulations, convergence w.r.t  $r$ , approx using some region for summation before and after swap, comparison to gulp full Ewald summation for final config (but far too comp expensive to use for each 1000's of step of MCS in simulation!)
- See GULP manual Methods section (pg 11) - eris stops at pairwise interactions whereas gulp goes to higher order terms + parameterises for higher order terms to compensate?

### 3.2.1 Multi-Scale Monte Carlo Simulations of Thermodynamic Disorder

DFT scaling: correcting bulk/ macroscopic dielectric constant with DFT to account for dielectric screening (HSE vs gulp plot)

### 3.2.2 Convergence Tests for the Model

- convergence of dE in MCS wrt gulp
- conv in dist of accepted moves to boltzmann

- check against known end points: reproducing kesterite ground state + infinite T fully disordered limit

### 3.2.3 Calculation of Order Parameters

Long range - RDF Short range - local environment of Sn?

### 3.2.4 Determination of Band Tailing from Monte Carlo Simulations

## 3.3 Calculation of Intrinsic Band Gap Broadening in $\text{Cu}_2\text{ZnSnS}_4$

## 3.4 Calculation of Optoelectronic Properties of Sulfosalt Materials

# Chapter 4

## Results

### 4.1 Investigation of Performance Bottlenecks in $\text{Cu}_2\text{ZnSnS}_4$

#### 4.1.1 Project1: Band Tailing due to Substitutional Disorder Amongst Cations

#### 4.1.2 Project2: Re-Assessing the Formation Energy of $V_S$

#### 4.1.3 Project3: Intrinsic Band Gap Broadening from Lattice Vibrations

### 4.2 Prediction and Assessment of Optoelectronic Properties of Sulfosalt Materials for Photovoltaic Applications

Re-introduce materials briefly

#### 4.2.1 Band Structures & Band Gap

#### 4.2.2 Effective Masses

#### 4.2.3 Dielectric Functions

#### 4.2.4 Absorption Coefficients

# Chapter 5

## Conclusion

### 5.1 Project 1

### 5.2 Project 2

### 5.3 Project 3

### 5.4 Future Work

Future Work.

- GBs in CZTS: Comparison to David's HRTEM images? Keith's code for lattice strain/ plausibility of interfaces, workfunction calculations
- methodology development with eris - algorithm development to simulate larger systems (e.g. parallelization by domain decomposition)

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