

Stoichiometry-Driven Tuning of Hole Conductivity in MOCVD-Grown β -Ga₂O₃ on *r*-Sapphire Substrates

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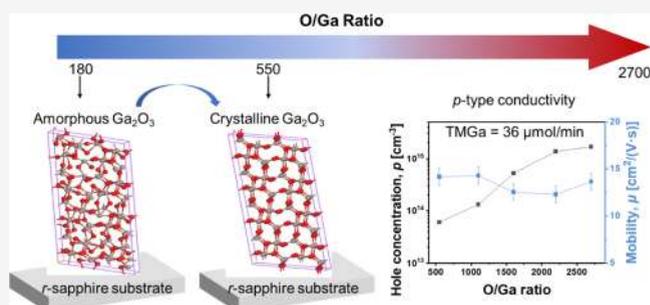
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ABSTRACT: β -Ga₂O₃ is a promising ultrawide-band-gap semiconductor for next-generation power and optoelectronic devices, but achieving stable *p*-type conductivity remains a major challenge with the limited understanding of native point defects engineering. In this work, we report a systematic study on the influence of Ga and O flow rates during MOCVD growth on the structural and electrical properties of undoped β -Ga₂O₃ epilayers. Two sets of samples were grown: (i) varying oxygen content to span O/Ga \approx 180–2700 at a fixed Ga content and (ii) varying gallium content at a fixed O/Ga = 1600. Structural characterization using out-of-plane and in-plane high-resolution X-ray diffraction, Raman spectroscopy, and scanning electron microscopy revealed a strong correlation between growth conditions and film microstructure. Increasing the O/Ga flow ratio improves grain alignment and reduces lattice disorder. Hall effect measurements show the semi-insulating *p*-type conductivity in all samples, with enhancement of native *p*-type conductivity in oxygen-rich conditions, increasing the hole concentration from 6.0×10^{13} to 1.7×10^{15} cm⁻³ at 800 K. Interestingly, the improvement in hole mobility correlates with the increase in Ga content (up to 18.5 cm²/V·s) at higher growth rate and improved grain alignment. These results demonstrate that the reproducible control of stoichiometry and microstructure of β -Ga₂O₃ thin films grown by MOCVD provides a possibility to tune native-defect concentrations and thus electrical properties of a material.



INTRODUCTION

β -Ga₂O₃ exhibits an ultrawide band gap of 4.6–4.9 eV and a predicted high critical electric field larger than 8 MV/cm^{1,2}. These properties combined with the commercial availability of 6 in. wafers, controllable *n*-type doping typically in the range of 10^{16} – 10^{20} cm⁻³ using elements such as Si,^{3,4} Sn,^{5,6} Ge,^{7,8} Nb⁹, and Hf,¹⁰ and room-temperature electron mobilities exceeding 200 cm²/(V·s)¹¹—make it a promising candidate for next-generation power electronics and optoelectronics.^{12,13} Its potential has been demonstrated in field-effect transistors,^{14,15} Schottky barrier diodes,¹⁶ *p*-NiO/*n*-Ga₂O₃ heterojunction diodes,^{17,18} and 2D transistors.¹⁹ Beyond power devices, the large band gap and radiation hardness also make β -Ga₂O₃ attractive for solar-blind UVC photodetectors.^{20–22} Excellent radiation tolerance was also reported for different Ga₂O₃ polytypes.^{23–25} Despite significant progress in realizing *n*-type doping, achieving reliable *p*-type conductivity remains a critical challenge, which limits the development of bipolar devices (e.g., *p*-*n* junction diodes), while native point defects play a key role in the determination of the electrical properties.

In β -Ga₂O₃, among native defects, oxygen vacancies (V_O 's) and gallium vacancies (V_{Ga} 's) are the most studied native defects because their formation is strongly affected by oxygen-rich vs gallium-rich conditions and they critically influence carrier compensation. V_O is predicted to introduce deep levels

(>1 eV below the conduction band) and has high formation energy under oxygen-rich conditions.^{26–31} Experimentally, V_O has instead been correlated with blue luminescence and is thought to act more as a compensating center than a donor.^{32–34} Gallium vacancies (V_{Ga} 's), in contrast, are widely recognized as deep acceptors with lower formation energies under oxygen-rich conditions. EPR,³⁵ IR,³⁶ DLTS,³⁷ and positron annihilation³⁸ studies demonstrate their role as compensating centers in *n*-type samples. In addition, it was suggested to be the origin of the *p*-type conductivity in semi-insulating samples with an ionization energy of $E_i \sim 1.2$ eV.^{37,39,40} In addition to vacancies, oxygen interstitials (O_i 's) have also been proposed as relevant native defects under oxygen-rich conditions. First-principles calculations generally predict O_i to introduce deep levels within the band gap, with charge states and stability strongly dependent on the Fermi-level position.^{26,31,41} Experimentally, O_i -related defects have

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Table 1. Summary of Selected Growth Conditions for β -Ga₂O₃ Films, including TMGa, O₂ Flow Rates, and Growth Duration^a

sample ID	TMGa ($\mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$)	O ₂ (sccm)	O/Ga ratio	duration (min)	thickness (nm)	growth rate (nm/h)	resistivity ($\Omega\text{-cm}$)	hole concentration (cm^{-3})	mobility ($\text{cm}^2/\text{V}\cdot\text{s}$)
S1	36	100	180	90	860	570			
S2	36	110	200	90	1690	1130			
S3	36	125	229	90	1850	1230			
S4	36	150	270	90	2060	1370			
S5	36	200	370	90	2030	1350			
S6	36	300	550	90	1890	1260	7.3×10^3	6.0×10^{13}	14.1
S7	36	600	1100	90	1805	1200	3.3×10^3	1.2×10^{14}	14.3
S8	36	900	1600	90	1850	1230	9.7×10^2	5.1×10^{14}	12.5
S9	36	1200	2200	90	1950	1300	3.7×10^2	1.4×10^{15}	12.3
S10	36	1500	2700	90	1810	1210	2.7×10^2	1.7×10^{15}	13.6
S11	12	300	1600	120	830	415	2.7×10^4	2.4×10^{13}	9.5
S12	24	600	1600	105	1450	830	6.3×10^2	9.1×10^{14}	10.9
S13	36	900	1600	90	1850	1230	9.7×10^2	5.1×10^{14}	12.5
S14	48	1200	1600	75	2050	1640	2.1×10^3	2.2×10^{14}	13.8
S15	60	1500	1600	60	2080	2080	5.6×10^2	6.0×10^{14}	18.5

^aThe growth rate and O/Ga ratio were calculated for each sample; the film thickness, hole concentration, and hole mobility were measured for selected samples.

been associated with deep trapping behavior and green luminescence, indicating their potential role in compensation rather than in shallow acceptor doping.²⁶ Beyond isolated point defects, intrinsic complex defects such as the $V_{\text{Ga}}-V_{\text{O}}$ divacancy also contribute to the blue luminescence^{32,34,42–45} and may have formation energy comparable to or even lower than isolated vacancies under oxygen-rich conditions; they are charge-active with stability depending on the Fermi level.^{29,46} Their acceptor levels are estimated to be from a few hundred millielectronvolts above the valence band to around the midgap. Recent positron annihilation⁴⁷ experiments also confirm the presence of such complexes in both conductive and insulating β -Ga₂O₃ samples.

Metal–organic chemical vapor deposition (MOCVD) routinely delivers high-quality epitaxial films with a high growth rate and wafer-scale uniformity. Reported room-temperature mobilities up to $194 \text{ cm}^2/(\text{V}\cdot\text{s})$ ⁴⁸ and low temperature mobility peaks up to $23,000 \text{ cm}^2/(\text{V}\cdot\text{s})$ ^{4,49,50} attest to the attainable material quality. This technique is also suitable for controllable n -^{7,10} and p -type doping.^{51,52} Critically, the formation and concentration of the point defects mentioned above are strongly dependent on growth conditions such as oxygen partial pressure and cation to anion precursor ratios (O/Ga ratio) during MOCVD growth. Yet, a systematic demonstration that controlling O/Ga stoichiometry can be used to promote native p -type conduction remains limited.

Here, we investigate high-temperature p -type conductivity in undoped β -Ga₂O₃ epilayers grown under a controlled oxygen/gallium content. By correlating film structural quality X-ray diffraction (XRD) spectra, Raman spectroscopy, and scanning electron microscopy (SEM) images with electrical transport as the O/Ga ratio and the gallium content varied at a fixed O/Ga ratio, we establish specific growth windows that correlate stoichiometry, defect landscape, and microstructural features with the realization of stable, native, semi-insulating p -type conduction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For all of the β -Ga₂O₃ thin films deposited on sapphire substrates, trimethylgallium (TMGa) and O₂ were used as Ga and O sources, respectively. The oxygen-to-gallium molar ratio

(O/Ga) was controlled by adjusting the flow of the O₂ and the TMGa vapor pressure. To map how O/Ga stoichiometry governs the growth rate and structural and electrical properties, we prepared two sets of β -Ga₂O₃ samples (S1–S15). Key growth parameters and electrical transport measurement data are summarized in Table 1.

1. First set, fixed TMGa = $36 \mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$. The O₂ flow was varied from 100 to 1500 sccm, resulting in different O/Ga ratios = 180–2700.

For clarity, samples in this set are referred to by their calculated O/Ga ratios throughout the manuscript; the corresponding sample numbers will also be indicated in each analysis section.

2. Second set, fixed O/Ga ratio = 1600. The O₂ flow was increased from 300 to 1500 sccm in 300 sccm steps, while the gallium supply was proportionally raised from 12 to $60 \mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$ correspondingly in $12 \mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$ steps.

Figure 1a plots the growth rate versus O/Ga ratios at a fixed gallium content. The rate rises with oxygen addition at low O/

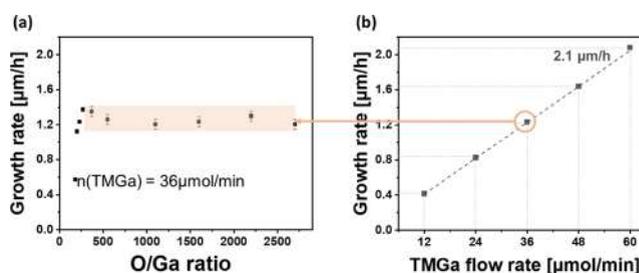


Figure 1. (a) Growth rate vs O/Ga ratios at a fixed gallium content ($36 \mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$). (b) Growth rate versus gallium flow rate at a fixed O/Ga ratio = 1600.

Ga flux ratio, indicating that oxygen is initially a limiting factor for film growth; beyond O/Ga ratio ≈ 500 , the growth rate is invariant, suggesting a transition to gallium-limited growth at this temperature. As shown later, this kinetic crossover coincides with changes in the film morphology and crystalline order. In contrast, Figure 1b shows the growth rate versus Ga content at a fixed O/Ga ratio = 1600. A nearly linear increase

is observed, consistent with previous reports,^{49,53} reaching a maximum growth rate of 2.1 $\mu\text{m}/\text{h}$ at 60 $\mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$ Ga supply.

Figures 2–4 show detailed XRD analysis of $\beta\text{-Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ films grown at a fixed TMGa content (TMGa = 36 $\mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$), with

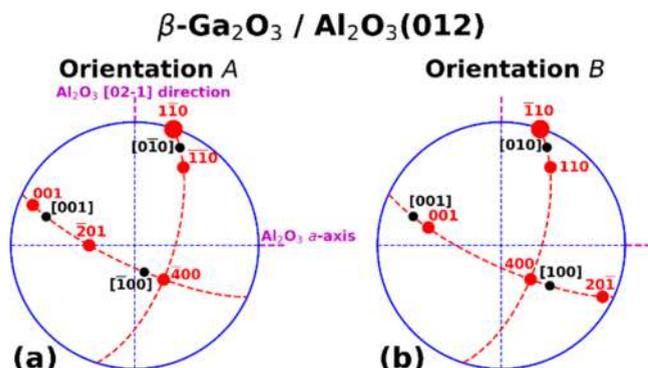


Figure 2. Orientation projections of expected epitaxies of $\beta\text{-Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ on the Al_2O_3 (012) plane: orientation A (a) and orientation B (b) where the magenta dashed horizontal line indicates the Al_2O_3 a -axis azimuth and the vertical one the Al_2O_3 $[02-1]$ direction azimuth. Equivalent orientations A' and B' are obtained by the substrate vertical a -plane mirror symmetry. $\Delta\phi$ used hereafter is defined as the azimuthal angle from the Al_2O_3 $[02-1]$ azimuth. The $\beta\text{-Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ unit-cell axes, namely, the invariant c axis ($[001]$), are indicated by black dots. The red dashed circles outline the sets of HK0 and HOL reflections, which are represented by red dots. $\beta\text{-Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ nearly in-plane 110-type reflections, marked by large red dots, are used for grazing incidence in-plane ϕ -scans to track structural changes in films.

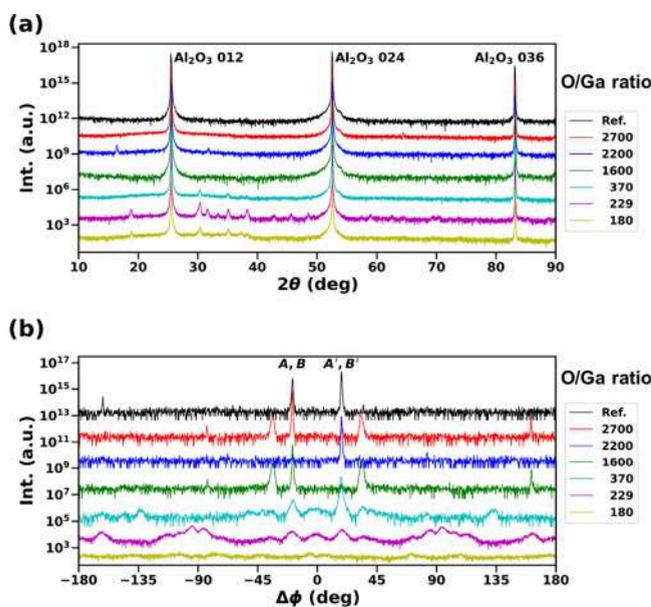


Figure 3. X-ray diffraction of $\beta\text{-Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ films on Al_2O_3 (012) as a function of the O/Ga ratios. (a) $\theta/2\theta$ scans. (b) Grazing incidence in-plane ϕ -scans of $\beta\text{-Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ 110-type reflection. The azimuthal angle (-18.3°) of 110 reflections from orientations A and B is indicated by A, B and that ($+18.3^\circ$) from mirror orientations by A' , B' .

varying O/Ga ratio = 180–2700 (samples S1, S3, S5, S9, and S10). The specific epitaxy of $\beta\text{-Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ on Al_2O_3 (012) differs from conventional epitaxy in that no lattice plane lies in the film plane: no film Bragg peaks are expected on the X-ray $\theta/2\theta$ scan. We showed that the main (-201) lattice planes of $\beta\text{-Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ are tilted relative to the film plane by about 30° toward

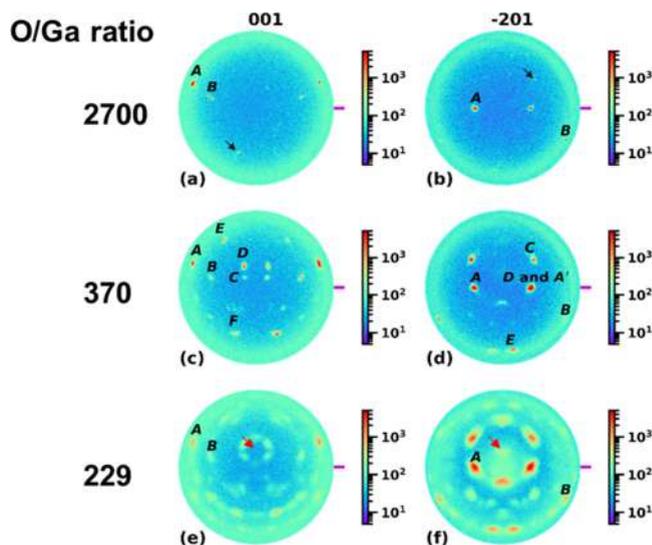


Figure 4. X-ray 001 and -201 pole figures of $\beta\text{-Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ films on Al_2O_3 (012), with O/Ga ratios of 2700, 370, and 229. (a, b) O/Ga ratio = 2700: in addition to spots from orientations A and B and twinned ones, extra weak spots indicated by black arrows. (c, d) O/Ga ratio = 370: main extra spots labeled by C, D, E, and F. (e, f) O/Ga ratio = 229: extra spots organizing into ring structures around an axis, indicated by red arrows, which is tilted by 18° toward the Al_2O_3 $[02-1]$ azimuth.

the a axis of Al_2O_3 (Figure 2a).^{54,55} This main orientation is called here orientation A. A secondary orientation, orientation B, was also identified as a twin of A in keeping the $\beta\text{-Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ c axis (Figure 2b). Two equivalent orientations, A' and B' , are automatically present due to the symmetry of the substrate a -plane mirror. The sample described in ref 54 serves here as a reference to monitor deviations in film orientations as a function of O_2 flow.

At a high O/Ga ratio (≈ 2700), as expected, only the substrate peaks are present in the X-ray $\theta/2\theta$ scan in Figure 3a, similarly to the references.^{54,55} This is inherent to the epitaxy of $\beta\text{-Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ on Al_2O_3 (012), where the main (-201) lattice planes are tilted by $\sim 30^\circ$ with respect to the substrate normal, meaning that no film Bragg peaks are expected in a conventional Bragg–Brentano $\theta-2\theta$ geometry. Therefore, the surface orientation and epitaxial relationship of the films are determined by using azimuthal ϕ -scans and pole figure measurements as discussed below. Weak additional peaks appear as the O/Ga ratio decreases from 2700 to 370 and 229, and they become less distinct at O/Ga ratio = 180, where the film approaches a polycrystalline state. However, an increase in background noise level is observed between 20 and 40° , indicating an increase in the overall structural disorder of the film. As sketched in Figure 2, the 110-type reflections associated with orientations A and B lie nearly in-plane within 1° , or the lattice planes are nearly vertical with respect to the film plane. To further examine the evolution of crystallographic texture, 360° azimuthal ϕ -scans of 110-type reflection are performed (Figure 3b). The peaks associated with orientations A and B, and symmetrically with orientations A' and B' , are at azimuths of $\pm 18.3^\circ$. Importantly, for all samples where these peaks remain visible, their azimuthal positions stay centered at $\pm 18.3^\circ$ (within experimental uncertainty), indicating that the epitaxial orientation relationship with the substrate is preserved. The degradation observed at low O/Ga ratios

actually arises from peak broadening and the emergence of additional orientations, which progressively lead to a quasicrystalline texture, rather than from any modification of lattice parameters. Indeed, the peak widths broaden from 0.4° (O/Ga ratio = 2700 and 2200) to 1.1° (370) and 6.5° (229). Furthermore, broad 110 peaks appear at other unexpected azimuths even with the Ga/O ratio = 2700. The azimuthal modulation of the 110 reflection is clearly visible for the O/Ga ratios = 370 and 229, revealing the existence of multiple grain orientations in these films. For the sample of an O/Ga ratio = 180, the azimuthal modulation nearly vanishes, approaching the case of a polycrystalline ring. These trends indicate a progressive loss of the single-orientation texture with decreasing oxygen content.

To track the multiple film orientations, X-ray pole figures of 001 and -201 reflections were analyzed in the films with O/Ga ratios = 2700, 370, and 229 (Figure 4). At O/Ga ratio = 2700, the 001 and -201 poles are located at the expected tilt and azimuth angles for orientations A and B and symmetrically for orientations A' and B' (Figure 4a,b). However, the presence of weak peaks reveals a minority orientation (see the arrows in Figure 4a,b). Minority orientations are multiplied at O/Ga ratio = 370, involving at least six orientations labeled A to F (Figure 4c,d). Here, a couple of 001 and -201 poles are identified as belonging to the same orientation by their relative angle of 49.92° . At O/Ga ratio = 229, the poles are widening in angles (Figure 4e,f). Interestingly, a complex structure, like a ring organization, appears to occur around an axis tilted about 18° toward the Al_2O_3 [0–21] azimuth (see the arrows in Figure 4e,f). It should be noted that for a nearly polycrystalline film such as that with O/Ga ratio = 180, peak broadening would lead to constant intensities in the pole figures, similarly to the 360° ϕ -scans (Figure 3b).

Overall, the θ - 2θ , ϕ -scans, and pole figures clearly demonstrate that films with good structural order are obtained at high O/Ga ratios of 2700 and 2200, with mainly the expected film orientations A and B and the mirror ones. Meanwhile, lower O/Ga ratios (370 and 229) produce multiple orientations and pronounced angular broadening, indicating increasing structural disorder. Further lowering the O/Ga ratio of 180 results in a nearly polycrystalline film.

Figure 5 shows the Raman spectra recorded in the range of 130 – 1000 cm^{-1} using 514.5 nm excitation for samples S1, S3, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, and S10, demonstrating a systematic spectral evolution with O/Ga ratio. As shown in Figure 5a, at lower O/Ga ratios (≤ 370), spectra exhibit broad, asymmetric peaks with pronounced tailing and elevated background, indicating significant structural disorder and lattice distortions that can be induced by point defect and nonstoichiometry.^{56–58} As the O/Ga ratio increases, peaks progressively become sharper and more symmetric, reflecting improved crystallinity of the film and reduced phonon scattering. From an O/Ga ratio of 550, Raman modes can be well-defined. These modes can be classified into three parts: (a) low-frequency modes (100 – 200 cm^{-1}) attributed to liberations and translations of the Ga_4O_4 tetrahedral and Ga_{11}O_6 octahedral chains, (b) midfrequency modes (~ 310 – 480 cm^{-1}) corresponding to the deformation of Ga_{11}O_6 octahedra, and (c) high-frequency modes (~ 500 – 770 cm^{-1}) associated with the stretching and bending of Ga_4O_4 tetrahedral chains.^{59,60} In addition to the Ga_2O_3 phonon modes, a broad band in the ~ 1300 – 1500 cm^{-1} (not shown in the manuscript) region is observed for samples grown under low O/Ga ratios. This contribution progressively weakens and

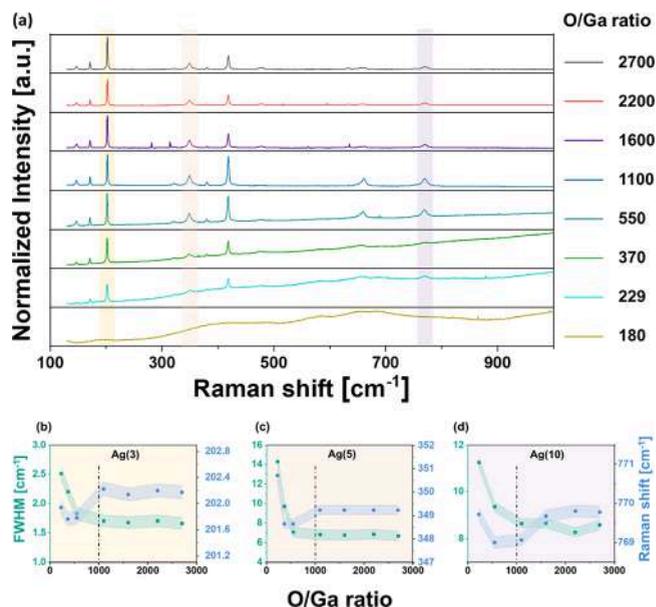


Figure 5. (a) Raman spectra of β - Ga_2O_3 layers with different O/Ga ratios at fixed TMGa = 36 $\mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$. (b–d) Raman shift and fwhm of Ag(3), Ag(5), and Ag(10) modes, respectively.

becomes negligible under an O/Ga ratio = 1100. Such a broad band is commonly attributed to disordered or graphitic carbon and is consistent with residual carbon incorporation originating from the incomplete oxidation of the MO source under oxygen-poor conditions. Although contributions from second-order Ga_2O_3 Raman scattering in this spectral range cannot be fully excluded,⁶¹ the systematic suppression of this band with increasing O/Ga ratio supports its association with carbon-related disorder rather than intrinsic lattice vibrations.

The parameters such as full width at half-maximum (fwhm) and the position of Raman shifts serve as direct probes of lattice dynamics, thermal expansion effect, anharmonic coupling between lattice points, and anharmonic coupling between phonons.⁶² To understand the structural evolution in β - Ga_2O_3 layers more clearly, Ag(3), Ag(5), and Ag(10) modes are analyzed as shown in Figure 5b–d. Note that the modes for sample at O/Ga ratio = 180 and the mode Ag(10) for sample O/Ga ratio = 370 are not available due to insufficient definition. All three modes show clear narrowing of fwhm with different levels from low to intermediate O/Ga ratio, reflecting improved lattice order. At higher O/Ga ratios (>1100), the variations of both Raman shift and fwhm plateau, reaching a regime where further changes drop below the spectral resolution limit (~ 0.2 cm^{-1}) in our system, indicating that the crystallinity improvement is less significant with further increase in oxygen flow during the growth. In particular, the Ag(5) mode exhibits the most pronounced narrowing of fwhm from 14.3 to 6.7 cm^{-1} (Figure 5c), highlighting its exceptional sensitivity. Similar observations were reported in refs 62 and 63 for β - Ga_2O_3 single crystals. The Ag(5) Raman mode was identified as the most sensitive to uniaxial stress along the $\langle 010 \rangle$ direction, exhibiting the largest sharpening under deformation, making it well suited for evaluating internal stress and lattice strain in β - Ga_2O_3 , which further confirms that oxygen-rich growth conditions relieve structural stress and improve crystalline order. Besides, the pronounced intensity of the Ag(3) mode can be attributed to its exceptionally large Raman tensor elements among the Raman-active Ag modes,⁶⁴

which induce a strong modulation of the crystal polarizability and thus a markedly enhanced Raman scattering cross section. There is less discussion on the Ag10 mode that originates from high-frequency GaO_4 stretching vibrations; it is therefore sensitive to local stoichiometry and tetrahedral-unit strain, making its redshift and narrower, a clear indicator of reduced disorder under oxygen-rich growth.

To probe how the microstructure evolves with the O/Ga ratio and with Ga content at a fixed O/Ga ratio, scanning electron microscope (SEM) analysis was carried out (Figure 6). All cross-section SEMs were taken from samples cleaved along the same substrate azimuth and imaged under identical conditions.

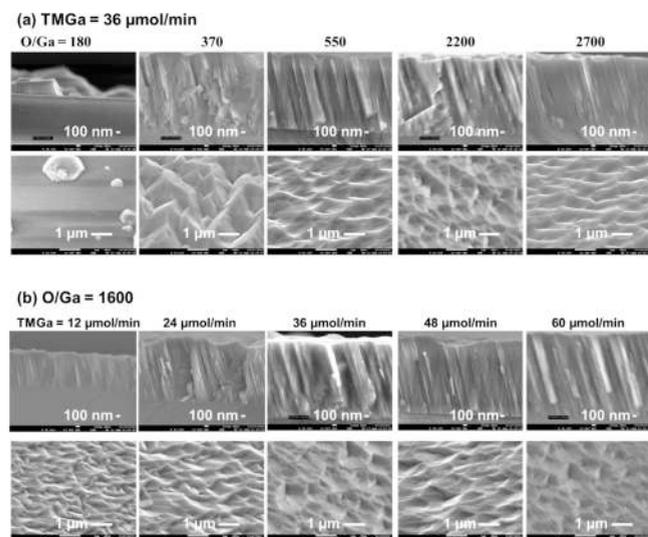


Figure 6. SEM cross-sectional and top-view images of $\beta\text{-Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ films grown at (a) $\text{TMGa} = 36 \mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$ with varying O/Ga ratios = 180–2700 and (b) O/Ga ratio = 1600 with $\text{TMGa} = 12\text{--}60 \mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$.

At a constant Ga content ($\text{TMGa} = 36 \mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$) with varying O/Ga ratios (samples S1, S5, S6, S9, and S10), the SEM cross-sectional and surface images (Figure 6a) demonstrate a clear structural evolution as the O_2 flow increases. Under O/Ga ratios < 370 , the films exhibit pronounced faceting, coarse surface morphology, and randomly oriented and short columns in the cross section. Increasing the O/Ga ratio to ~ 1100 produces a marked transition to dense, better coalesced surfaces and more aligned columnar grains that run

through the thickness. A further increase to 2200–2700 does not significantly alter the microstructure. These observations are consistent with the XRD results, which reveal the transition from polycrystalline to single-orientation films with larger and larger coherence lengths as the level of the O_2 flow increases. In addition, the azimuthal broadening of the in-plane XRD reflections decreases in the same trend, highlighting a reduction in structural disorder and misorientation.

At a fixed O/Ga ratio = 1600, the influence of increasing TMGa molar flow on film morphology is shown in Figure 6b for samples S11, S12, S13, S14, and S15. Top-view SEM images show that the surface evolves from rough and granular at low TMGa ($12\text{--}24 \mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$) to smoother and more uniform at higher TMGa values ($48\text{--}60 \mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$), reflecting improved surface coverage and grain coalescence. Cross-sectional SEM images further reveal longer and more parallel columns along the growth direction with increasing TMGa , indicating enhanced vertical crystallinity and a preferred orientation. These changes reflect a transition from sparse, short grains to dense and well-aligned microstructures, which may play a crucial role in enhancing charge carrier transport.

The well-crystallized samples (O/Ga ratios ≥ 550) were selected for electrical transport measurements, carried out at 800 K as the samples are semi-insulating as room temperature. The ohmic contacts were prepared by the silver paste at four corners of each square-shaped sample of $1 \times 1 \text{ cm}$ and measured in a Van der Pauw configuration.

Here, the $I\text{--}V$ characteristic and the Hall voltage (V_H) versus the applied magnetic field (B) at 800 K of sample S10 (with the fastest growth rate ($2.08 \mu\text{m}/\text{h}$)) in this series are shown as an example (Figure 7). The $I\text{--}V$ curve shows a linear response, ensuring the subsequent electrical transport measurement. The Hall voltage increases linearly with the applied magnetic field from -1.6 to $+1.6 \text{ T}$, confirming p -type conduction. All of the other studied samples exhibit similar behavior and thus exhibit a p -type nature. Such semi-insulating p -type conductivity has been discussed in the context of an established defect framework, where V_{Ga} -related defects have been widely reported to act as dominant acceptors in p -type $\beta\text{-Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ or compensating centers in n -type $\beta\text{-Ga}_2\text{O}_3$.^{37–39}

Figure 8a,b shows the electrical transport behavior with increasing O/Ga ratios at a fixed Ga content ($\text{TMGa} = 36 \mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$) (samples S6, S7, S8, S9, and S10). Resistivity (ρ) continuously decreases from 7.3×10^3 to $2.7 \times 10^2 \Omega\cdot\text{cm}$ with increasing O/Ga ratios from 550 to 2700. At relatively low O/Ga ratios (< 1600), increasing the O/Ga ratio leads to a more

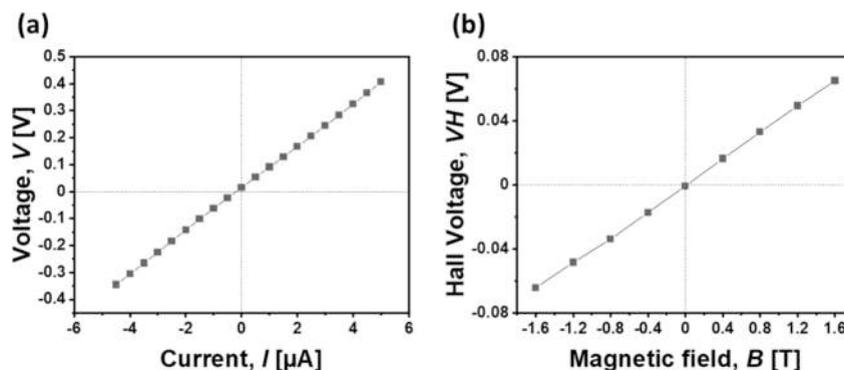


Figure 7. (a) $I\text{--}V$ characteristic. (b) Hall voltage as a function of perpendicularly applied magnetic field from -1.6 to 1.6 T at 800 K for sample S10.

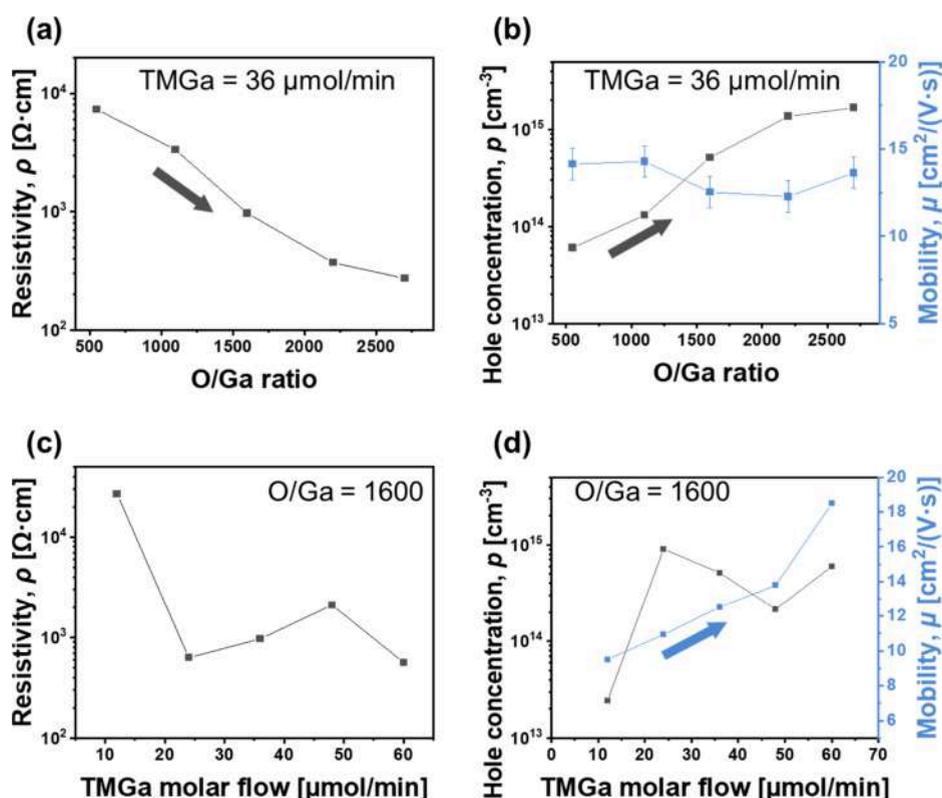


Figure 8. Electrical measurement at 800 K for semi-insulating β -Ga₂O₃ films. (a, b) Samples grown at fixed TMGa = 36 $\mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$: resistivity, hole concentration, and mobility vs O/Ga ratio. (c, d) Samples grown at fixed O/Ga ratio = 1600: resistivity, hole concentration, and mobility vs TMGa flow rates. Arrows indicate the general evolution trend of the electrical transport parameters with increasing O/Ga ratio or Ga content.

pronounced decrease in resistivity. This suggests a progressive modification of film stoichiometry and a reduction of donor-like compensating defects commonly associated with oxygen-deficient growth conditions. Beyond O/Ga ratio \approx 2200, further oxygen addition during the growth results in less significant resistivity change, indicating that the electrical behavior cannot be explained solely by the suppression or filling of oxygen vacancies. Instead, additional defect-related mechanisms are expected to contribute to the observed transport behavior. In particular, complex defects such as $V_{\text{Ga}}-V_{\text{O}}$ divacancies were predicted to have comparable or even lower formation energy than single vacancies in oxygen-rich conditions based on *ab initio* and DFT calculations,^{29,46} indicating their potential stability during oxygen-rich condition growth. They are also believed to be responsible for the appearance of a shallow acceptor center in the oxygen annealed β -Ga₂O₃ sample⁶⁵ and layers grown under high O/Ga ratio.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, their role in the present study should be regarded as consistent with the observed trends rather than as a definitive attribution. In addition, oxygen interstitials (O_{i}), which are thermodynamically favored under oxygen-rich conditions, may also influence the electrical transport behavior.^{26,31,41} The enhancement of the *p*-type conductivity can be mainly attributed to the increase of hole concentration as shown in the Figure 8b from 6.0×10^{13} to $1.7 \times 10^{15} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ in the O/Ga ratio range of 550 to 2700. Meanwhile, the Hall mobility was determined to be in the range of 12.3 and 14.3 $\text{cm}^2/(\text{V}\cdot\text{s})$ without a clear dependence on the O₂ flow. This trend corresponds to the observations in SEM and XRD in-plane scans showing that a further increase in the flow of the O₂ does not significantly improve the crystalline quality.

Figure 8c,d shows the electrical transport behavior when O/Ga ratio was fixed at 1600 (samples S11, S12, S13, S14, and S15). Resistivity drops at relatively lower Ga supply (12–24 $\mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$), from 2.7×10^4 to $6.3 \times 10^2 \Omega\cdot\text{cm}$, and becomes relatively stable above (Figure 8c), which can be mainly attributed to the increase of hole concentration. Notably, the hole mobility continuously increases from 9.5 to 18.5 $\text{cm}^2/(\text{V}\cdot\text{s})$ with higher Ga content during film growth. This observation may correlate with the evolution of film morphology observed by SEM; increasing Ga content leads to elongated and more uniformly aligned columnar structures. Such microstructural evolution is expected to improve effective charge transport pathways and reduce carrier scattering, thereby enhancing mobility, although nanoscale defect structures such as intragrain defects and nanoscale grain boundaries cannot be directly resolved by SEM.

In summary, these results demonstrate that the electrical transport properties of undoped semi-insulating *p*-type β -Ga₂O₃ films can be effectively tuned. The O/Ga ratio primarily sets the free carrier density through defect chemistry, whereas the gallium content (at fixed O/Ga) influences film texture and microstructural alignment, leading to enhanced free hole mobility.

The vapor pressure of TMGa was determined by the bubbler temperature (set to -14°C in this work). Under these conditions, the TMGa molar flow was tuned from 12 to 60 $\mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$, while the O₂ flow rate was set from 100 to 1500 sccm, resulting in O/Ga molar ratios ranging from \sim 200 to \sim 2700, as summarized in Table 1.

CONCLUSIONS

This work demonstrates that the structural and electrical properties of undoped β -Ga₂O₃ epilayers can be effectively tuned by controlling the O/Ga stoichiometry during MOCVD growth. By systematically varying the O/Ga ratio and TMGa molar flow, we identify key growth parameters when the films exhibit enhanced crystallinity and semi-insulating (high-temperature) *p*-type conductivity. By varying the O/Ga ratio (≈ 180 – 2700) at a fixed Ga content (TMGa = $36 \mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$), we identify an oxygen-rich condition range where texture alignment improves, lattice disorder decreases, and well-oriented columnar grains emerge. XRD and Raman spectra evidence a transition from polycrystalline to aligned textures with increasing oxygen flow, while electrical resistivity reduction is primarily driven by an increase in free hole concentration. In contrast, varying the gallium content (TMGa = 12 – $60 \mu\text{mol}/\text{min}$) at a fixed O/Ga ratio = 1600 refines the microstructure, promoting vertical grain elongation, with a corresponding enhancement of hole mobility from 9.5 to $18.5 \text{ cm}^2/\text{V}\cdot\text{s}$ with comparable carrier densities. Overall, our results show that adjusting the oxygen/gallium flow during the deposition, i.e., varying stoichiometry, systematically can tune electrical transport properties of semi-insulating *p*-type β -Ga₂O₃ thin films. We believe that the present work establishes a growth technology capable of manipulating native point defects, thereby enabling both a fundamental understanding and practical realization of hole conductivity in β -Ga₂O₃.

EXPERIMENTAL DETAILS

Thin Film Growth

All Ga₂O₃ samples were grown in an RF-heated horizontal MOCVD reactor on Al₂O₃ (012) (*r*-oriented sapphire) substrates. A standard substrate cleaning procedure was applied prior to growth. The substrates were sequentially cleaned in acetone, isopropanol, and deionized water in an ultrasonic bath, 15 min each, followed by drying under a N₂ flow. Trimethylgallium (TMGa) and O₂ were used as precursors for Ga and O, respectively, with separated inlets between TMGa and O₂ to avoid premature reactions in the manifold. The growth was carried out under quasi-hot-wall conditions: in addition to the heated substrate holder, the surrounding chamber walls in quartz were also heated to keep the temperature. The temperature and pressure in the growth chamber were kept at $825 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ and 33 Torr , respectively. The TMGa bubbler temperatures were fixed at $-14 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$. Key growth parameters and measurement results for both sets are summarized in Table 1.

Raman Spectra

Raman spectra were recorded by using a Renishaw inVia Reflex micro-Raman spectrometer at room temperature. The samples were excited using a cw Modu-Laser Stellar-RMN laser emitting at 514.5 nm with a power of 2 – 4 mW . The reflecting microscope objective was $50\times$ with NA 0.75 ; the excitation spot diameter was 1 mm . The backscattered light was dispersed by a monochromator with a spectral resolution of 1.4 cm^{-1} . The light was detected by a charge coupled device. The typical accumulation time was 30 s . Raman shifts were calibrated using an optical phonon frequency (520.5 cm^{-1}) of a silicon nanocrystal.

Scanning Electron Microscopy

Surface morphologies of films were obtained by FEG SEM 7001-F JEOL. The electron source was produced by a field effect cannon. The Everhart–Thornley electron secondary detector had a resolution of 1.2 nm at 30 kV and 1 nm at 1 kV . The acceleration voltage and beam current were varied from 1 to 30 kV and 1 pA to 200 nA , respectively. Image magnification was up to $1,000,000\times$.

X-ray Diffraction

The structure of the samples was studied using X-ray diffraction (XRD). Data were collected on a five-circle diffractometer (Rigaku SmartLab) with Cu K α radiation from a rotating anode (40 kV , 9 kW). For out-of-plane (OP) measurements, Cu K α radiation was selected by a channel-cut Ge(220) two-reflection monochromator. The film in-plane (IP) orientation and strain were probed by grazing incidence XRD (GIXRD) at a constant incidence of 0.5° without a monochromator. The film global orientation texture was explored by X-ray pole figures (PFs) using the IP PF configuration.

Hall Effect Measurements

Ohmic contacts were prepared by silver paint at the four corners of the sample. Hall effect measurements were performed by a home-built high-impedance, high-temperature setup in a Van der Pauw configuration at 800 K applying the magnetic fields perpendicularly to the film plane varying from -1.6 to 1.6 T under a N₂ environment.

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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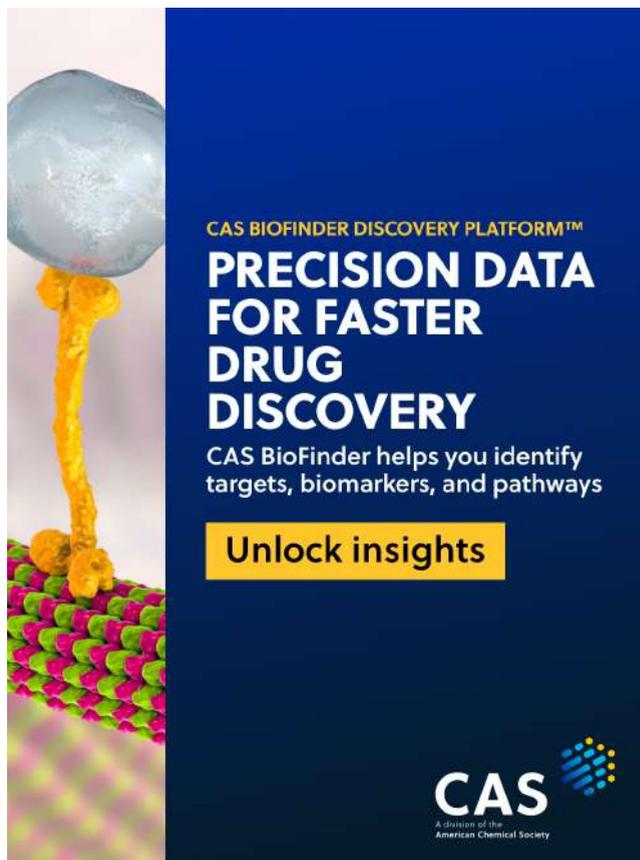
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