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# Environmental Influences on the Measurement of Rates of Charge Transport across $\text{Ag}^{\text{TS}}/\text{SAM}/\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$ Junctions

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## ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the influence of the atmosphere used in the fabrication of top-electrodes from the liquid eutectic of gallium and indium (EGaIn) (so-called “EGaIn” electrodes), and in measurements of current density,  $J(V)$ , across self-assembled monolayers (SAMs) incorporated into AgSR//Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn junctions, on values of  $J(V)$  obtained using these electrodes. A gas-tight measurement chamber was used to control the atmosphere in which the electrodes were formed, and also to control the environment in which the electrodes were used to measure current densities across SAM-based junctions. Seven different atmospheres—air, oxygen, nitrogen, argon, and ammonia, and air containing vapors of acetic acid and water—were surveyed using both “rough” conical-tip electrodes, and “smooth” hanging-drop electrodes. (The manipulation of the oxide film during the creation of the conical-tip electrodes leads to substantial, micron-scale roughness on the surface of the electrode, the extrusion of the drop creates a significantly smoother surface). Comparing junctions using both geometries for the electrodes, across a SAM of *n*-dodecanethiol, in air, gave  $\log|J|_{\text{mean}} = -2.4 \pm 0.4$  for the conical tip, and  $\log|J|_{\text{mean}} = -0.6 \pm 0.3$  for the drop electrode (and thus  $\Delta\log|J| \sim 1.8$ ); this increase in current density is attributed to a change in the effective electrical contact area of the junction. To establish the influence of the resistivity of the Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> film on values of  $J(V)$ , junctions comprising a graphite electrode and a hanging-drop electrode were compared in an experiment where the electrodes did, and did not, have a surface oxide film; the presence of the oxide did not influence measurements of  $\log|J(V)|$ , and therefore did not contribute to the electrical resistance of the electrode. The presence of an oxide film did, however, improve the stability of junctions, and increase the yield of working electrodes from  $\sim 70\%$  to  $\sim 100\%$ . Increasing the relative humidity (RH) in which  $J(V)$  was measured did not influence these values (across methyl (CH<sub>3</sub>)-

or carboxyl ( $\text{CO}_2\text{H}$ )-terminated SAMs) over the range typically encountered in the laboratory (20-60% RH).

## INTRODUCTION

Measurements of tunneling currents across insulating self-assembled monolayers (SAMs) are revealing the relationships between atomic/molecular-level structures of organic matter and this prototypically quantum behavior. The use of eutectic gallium indium alloy (EGaIn) electrodes in large-area ( $\sim 100\ \mu\text{m}^2$ ) junctions<sup>1-9</sup> of the form  $\text{Ag}^{\text{TS}}/\text{SAM}/\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$  is a particularly convenient technique to use for physical-organic studies of charge transport across SAMs.<sup>1-15</sup> The role of gallium oxide ( $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ )—a film that forms spontaneously on the surface of the EGaIn<sup>1,16,17</sup>—is technically important in this type of junction, and must be understood in order to interpret results obtained using it; this oxide film might, in principle, influence the electrical characteristics of the top interface (the interface between the SAM, the  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  film, and the EGaIn), the mechanical stability of the junctions, and/or the sources of the dispersion (or spread, as measured by standard deviation) in the data. A number of factors might contribute to these characteristics, including the gaseous environment (i.e., the concentrations of  $\text{O}_2$ ,  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ , and other volatile components in the atmosphere) in which the EGaIn-based top electrode is formed, and the gaseous environment in which it is used. The history of use of the electrode, and the roughness (and thus the area of physical contact of the surface of the oxide with the SAM), are also important.

The objectives of this work were to determine i) the influence of the atmosphere in which  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$  “conical-tip” and “spherical hanging-drop” electrodes were formed and used on their electrical properties; ii) the influence of the  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  film (both when present, and when

minimal or absent) on the absolute value, and standard deviation, of measurements of current density  $J$  at voltage  $V$  ( $J(V)$ ,  $\text{A}\cdot\text{cm}^{-2}$ ); and iii) the influence of the roughness of the  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  film on measurements on  $J(V)$ .

The gallium oxide film, and the interface between this film and the SAM, are technically the most complicated components of the  $\text{Ag}^{\text{TS}}/\text{SAM}/\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$  junction. The  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  film—a thin (nominally  $\sim 0.7 \text{ nm}^{16}$ ) film that forms on the surface of EGaIn upon exposure to air or  $\text{O}_2$ —is crucial to the characteristics and performance of the  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$  junction; it facilitates the formation of electrode tips with useful shapes and sizes. (In particular, it is the basis for the mechanical stability of what we call “conical tips”<sup>6,17</sup>). It allows the formation of tips with small radii of curvature ( $\sim 25 \text{ }\mu\text{m}$ ). It permits measurements across small areas of contact ( $\sim 100 \text{ }\mu\text{m}^2$  nominal area) as determined by optical microscopy—values substantially less than that in terms of the area of electrical contact involved in tunneling.

Measurements of charge transport across SAMs made over the course of several years using EGaIn-based junctions in ambient atmospheric conditions have suggested that the adsorption of adventitious materials from the atmosphere on the  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  film is normally not an important influence on the measured current density, or on the yield of working junctions (i.e. the ratio of non-shorting junctions to all measured junctions). For example, measurements of current density ( $J(V)$ ,  $\text{A}/\text{cm}^2 - J$  at applied bias  $V$ ) are consistent and reproducible across samples and users; the distribution of data (log standard deviation,  $\sigma_{\log}$ ) ranges from  $\sim 0.2$  to  $\sim 0.5$  (from experiments replicated by multiple user)<sup>18</sup> for  $n$ -alkanethiolates on  $\text{Ag}^{\text{TS}}$  or  $\text{Au}^{\text{TS}}$  and  $\sim 0.1 - 0.2$  for  $n$ -alkanecarboxylates<sup>3</sup> on  $\text{Ag}^{\text{TS}}$  (probably supported on a thin  $\text{AgO}_x$  surface film) in air (a value of  $\sigma_{\log} \sim 0.3$  corresponds to a range from  $\times 0.5$  to  $\times 2.0$  of the mean).

Formation of the conical tips, however, result in a rough (at the nanometer to micrometer scale), if flexible and compliant, Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> film. Although the Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> film is sufficiently electrically conductive that its resistance does not contribute significantly to, or interfere with, tunneling currents measured across SAMs,<sup>16</sup> its roughness leads to areas of electrical contact between the top Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn electrode and the SAM-bound bottom electrode that are  $\sim 10^{-4}$  the geometrical contact area (as measured by optical microscopy).<sup>1,19</sup> We estimate that this value of  $10^{-4}$  partitions into two components, a  $10^{-3}$  contribution from the roughness of Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and  $10^{-1}$  from the roughness of the silver substrate.<sup>1,20,21</sup>

We designed a gas-tight chamber to control the atmospheric environment (i.e. the identity and concentration of the gas(es) comprising the atmosphere) in which we formed the Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn electrodes, and (separately) in which we measured rates of charge transport across the molecular junction (Figure 1). The design of the chamber made it possible to change the composition of the atmosphere before and during formation of the tip and the junction, and independently, during measurements of  $J(V)$ . The Supporting Information details the design and operation of the chamber.

We measured rates of charge transport through junctions incorporating two different substrates i) a SAM formed from *n*-dodecanethiol (SC<sub>12</sub>) or 12-mercaptododecanoic acid (SC<sub>11</sub>CO<sub>2</sub>H) on template-stripped silver (Ag<sup>TS</sup>)<sup>22</sup>; the resulting junctions have the form Ag<sup>TS</sup>-S(CH<sub>2</sub>)<sub>11</sub>T//Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn, where T = CH<sub>3</sub> or CO<sub>2</sub>H, and ii) a freshly cleaved, bare, graphite substrate<sup>23,24</sup> formed by gluing a highly-ordered pyrolytic graphite chip to a metal shim (to form a junction we describe as HOPG//Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn). We also tested two different Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn top-electrode geometries—a conical tip and spherical hanging-drop (Figure 1B). The contact surface of the conical-tip electrode is rough due to asperities in the oxide, these

surface irregularities result during the formation of the tip (in particular, when the neck of the EGaIn breaks at the point of rupture).<sup>1,16,19</sup> Fabrication of the hanging-drop electrode, by contrast, does not require the EGaIn to rupture (Figure 1), and the surface of the electrode is therefore qualitatively smoother than that of a conical tip, and has (we believe) a thinner and more flexible Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> film. We measured junctions using both top electrode geometries in seven different environments: dry air (from a cylinder of compressed air), humid air (5-80% relative humidity (RH)), argon, nitrogen, oxygen, anhydrous ammonia, or air containing acetic acid. By forming the electrode in gases that have low concentrations of oxygen, we were able to limit or eliminate the formation of the oxide film on the EGaIn electrode.

This work led to four main conclusions. i) The gallium oxide on the surface of EGaIn contributes to the mechanical stability of the electrode, and is important for reproducible measurements of current density,  $J(V)$ , with narrow dispersions in data,  $\sigma_{\log}$ . ii) The oxide film does not contribute significantly to the resistance of the junction. iii) Measurements of  $J(V)$  using Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn electrodes are not affected by changes in relative humidity over a range normally encountered in the laboratory. Junctions incorporating carboxyl terminated SAMs gave current densities at 5% RH that were approximately  $\times 10$  lower than at higher RH levels. iv) Junctions using hanging drop electrodes result in higher values of  $J(V)$  than junctions using conical tip electrodes by  $\Delta \log |J|_{\text{mean}} \sim 2$  to 3. We attribute this difference in  $J(V)$  to differences in surface roughness between the conical and spherical drop electrodes.

## BACKGROUND

**Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn top-electrode in molecular junctions.** We use the Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn-based junctions primarily for *physical-organic studies*—that is, studies that correlate *trends* in the structure of the molecules composing the SAM with *trends* in current density  $J(V)$  (rather than

for studies that establish absolute values of  $J(V)$ ), for three reasons: i) The  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$  electrode makes it possible to form junctions with highly ordered SAMs conveniently (without expensive equipment and delicate operation of instruments), rapidly, and with high yields (>90%). It also yields very reproducible data (as do EGaIn-based measurements using other systems, such as cross-bar and microfluidic devices).<sup>19,25</sup> ii) The ease of use of this electrode makes it straightforward to collect large numbers (500–1000) of data per day, and therefore to generate reliable statistical information about replicability and reproducibility. iii) It can take full advantage of the ability of organic synthesis to provide easy access to a range of molecular structures appropriate for the formation of SAMs, and for testing hypotheses about relationships between tunneling current densities and molecular structure.<sup>1-3,5,26-28</sup>

Although the focus of our work is on physical-organic studies, we emphasize that we consider the absolute reproducibility and replicability of studies with conical tips (both flattened<sup>1</sup> and unflattened<sup>2-4</sup>) to be good relative to other methods (typically, one standard deviation in a fit of a Gaussian curve to the data corresponds to a factor of two to three in the value of  $J(V)$ , although this number depends on several factors, including the structure of the molecules making up the SAM, the geometry of the tip, and the roughness of the surface of the metal of the bottom electrode).

**Electrical properties of  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$ .** Under ambient conditions, a thin self-limiting layer of  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  forms very rapidly<sup>16</sup> on the surface of bulk EGaIn.<sup>17</sup> When using EGaIn as a “soft” electrode, the resistivity of the oxide film might, in principle, influence measurements of electrical current or potential. We previously estimated the resistance of the  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  layer on EGaIn<sup>1</sup> by measuring the resistance of  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$  electrodes on a HOPG substrate forming a junction with the structure HOPG// $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$ . We inferred an ohmic mechanism of



resistance, because  $\log|J(V)|$  increased linearly with increasing voltage: the resistance of the oxide calculated for the  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  film was  $R_{\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3} = 3.3 \times 10^{-4} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}^{-2}$ . This resistance is lower (by a factor of 10) than the resistance of a SAM composed of the shortest alkanethiolate ( $\text{SCH}_3$ ,  $\text{SC}_1$ ) ( $R_{\text{SC}_1} = 1.0 \times 10^{-3} \Omega \cdot \text{cm}^{-2}$ ).

The electrical<sup>29-31</sup> and physical properties of gallium oxide, and its reactivity towards different chemicals,<sup>32-34</sup> depends strongly on the method by which it is formed (the Supporting Information discusses the chemical reactivity of gallium oxide briefly). Gallium oxide, formed spontaneously on the surface of the EGaIn electrode, is probably much less structured and more conducting than pure gallium oxide (formed by vapor deposition at high temperatures<sup>29</sup>, thermal annealing<sup>30</sup>, or by epitaxial growth on GaAs<sup>31</sup>).

Simeone *et al.*<sup>1</sup> have compared a liquid drop of Hg and a conical tip  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$  electrode in measurements of a  $\text{Fe}/\text{FeO}_x$  substrate; where the  $\text{FeO}_x$  was the most resistive component of the junction. He created electrodes with equivalent nominal contact areas, and found the current density of the conical tip electrode was  $\sim 10^{-3}$  the value measured from the Hg-drop electrode. They concluded that the difference in current density was due to the fact that the  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$  conical-tip electrodes had a lower effective electrical contact area (probably due to the roughness of the electrode) than did the liquid Hg drop electrode.

**Reactivity of  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  with water.** Metal oxides have a higher surface free energy than hydrophobic *n*-alkanethiolate-based SAMs, and a partial monolayer of water forms on their surface at 10% relative humidity (RH) and a complete monolayer of water is believed to be present at 20% RH.<sup>35</sup> At higher levels of RH, multilayers of water form on the metal oxide substrate.<sup>36</sup> It is uncertain if this presumptive film of water persists (or in what form it persists) when the electrode is in contact with a hydrophobic SAM. For a SAM with a hydrophobic

surface (here we use SAMs of *n*-dodecanethiolate on Ag<sup>TS</sup>), spontaneous de-wetting is plausible at the interface between the SAM and the asperities on the surface of the Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>. We also do not know the interfacial pressure of these asperities in contact with the SAM; this pressure might be sufficient to exclude water. It is also possible that local heating at the interface between the Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and the SAM due to tunneling current (plausibly 10<sup>2</sup> A/cm<sup>2</sup>)<sup>37</sup> might dry the contact regions.

We note and emphasize that the unknown influence of water on the electrical properties of a junction is not an uncertainty that is unique to EGaIn-based junction; this problem is relevant to *all* tunneling junctions that make measurements in ambient conditions.

## EXPERIMENTAL

**SAMs of Alkanethiolates.** We used Ag<sup>TS</sup> substrates bearing SAMs of *n*-dodecanethiolate (SC<sub>12</sub>) as the standard (or reference) for comparison; measurements of current density across this SAM are well-characterized and replicable across many users.<sup>1,3</sup> We also used SAMs bearing a hydrophilic, polar terminal carboxylic acid (SC<sub>11</sub>COOH) on Ag<sup>TS</sup>: this SAM, which has a higher affinity for water molecules than does SC<sub>12</sub>,<sup>38</sup> allowed us to study the effect of environmental humidity on measurements of *J*(*V*).

**Graphite substrate for examining atmospheric effects.** We chose graphite (SP<sup>3</sup> HOPG, SPI Inc.) as a bottom electrode in some of our studies to provide a flat, well-defined surface that was unreactive toward the Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn top electrode, unreactive toward O<sub>2</sub>, and hydrophobic.<sup>39,40</sup> By using a freshly formed HOPG surface—generated by mechanical cleavage of the top layers of a piece of graphite glued to a metal shim—we could create a clean, flat, electrically conducting surface (r.m.s. roughness of 0.3-0.5 nm according to SPI technical specifications). By using graphite electrodes, we were able to attribute the majority of the

variations observed as a result of changes in the environment to the Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> film, rather than to some other part of the junction.

**Geometries of the EGaIn Electrode.** We used two different Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn electrode geometries: “selected” conical tips (Figure 1C), and spherical hanging-drops (Figure 1D). The conical tip is formed by bringing an extruded drop of EGaIn into contact with the silver substrate surface, and then pulled away from the surface until the neck ruptures into two parts (or “cones”).<sup>6,17</sup> “Selected” conical tips (which we used here, show no visible asperities during formation) are distinct from “as-formed” conical tips. A conical tip formed during the rupture of the neck may have surface asperities which reflect the processes occurring during formation. One can reduce these asperities by pre-flattening the electrode on a flat surface—compressing any “as-formed” asperities—prior to use in a junction. A description of the “pre-flattened” tip method is found in the Supplemental Information.

*“Selected” Conical Tips.* Conical tips are easy to make, and enable the rapid fabrication of junctions that have a smaller nominal contact area (50 to 1000 μm<sup>2</sup>) than those generated using the larger hanging-drop electrode. In our experience, junctions formed from conical-tip electrodes are less likely to short (~90% yield of working junctions) than hanging-drop electrodes of EGaIn (~30-60% yield). We assume that a large contact area and sensitivity to perturbation by mechanical vibration contributes to the lower yields of working junctions for the hanging-drop electrode, but have not studied the origins of these differences.

Visible asperities (i.e. whiskers) form on the surface of conical tips during the rupture of the neck (Figure 1B); these asperities are not reproducible, and contribute to dispersions in  $J(V)$  data. On average, the creation of a visible tip asperity occurs in approximately four of every ten tips formed. In order to avoid the ambiguities associated with such asperities, we examined the

tip with a microscope after formation, and selected for use the conical tips that are free of visible surface irregularities. If a conical tip electrode forms visible asperities, it is discarded either by physical removal of the tip and extrusion of a fresh drop of EGaIn, or by reconnecting the tip with the EGaIn on the substrate and withdrawing the EGaIn into a new tip. This selection of conical-tip electrodes facilitates the collection of data with a narrow distribution ( $\sigma_{\log}$ ).

*“Hanging-Drop” Electrode.* Hanging-drop electrodes of EGaIn were used in certain experiments on both graphite and on SAMs as substrates. Hanging-drop electrodes allowed us to i) compare rates of charge transport across junctions with and without the gallium oxide film, ii) correlate data from different environments, including those where a conical tip cannot be formed or is not stable, and iii) reduce the uncertainty in the contact area of the junction resulting from any effects of atmosphere. Figure S1 shows SEM images suggesting the surface roughness associated with conical tips and spherical drops of Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn.

**Environmental Conditions.** We used dry air from a compressed source (AI UZ300, Airgas Inc.) and generated low-oxygen atmospheres (<0.02% O<sub>2</sub> – our limit of detection) using Ar (99.999% purity, #AR UHP300, Airgas Inc.) or N<sub>2</sub> (99.999% purity, #NI UHP300, Airgas Inc.). For experiments in low-O<sub>2</sub> atmospheres, we began electrical measurements across the junction once the O<sub>2</sub> sensor (R-17D, Teledyne Analytical Instruments) indicated an O<sub>2</sub> concentration value of <0.2% (the minimum detectable reading for the instrument). We generated reactive atmospheres using O<sub>2</sub> and NH<sub>3</sub> gases (O<sub>2</sub> #OX300 and anhydrous NH<sub>3</sub> #AM AH35, Airgas). The acetic acid environment was generated by evaporation of glacial acetic acid (17.4 M, Sigma Aldrich) into a flowing stream of air. We did not control the concentration of the acetic acid in the vapor phase.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

## Performance of EGaIn Junctions in Alternate Environments on Graphite

**Substrates.** For measurements on graphite (no SAM present) bottom electrodes, the environmental chamber was conditioned first with the target atmosphere, followed immediately by extrusion of an EGaIn drop (conical-tip electrodes were first formed in air before environmental conditioning of the chamber) or formation of a conical tip electrode). The EGaIn electrode, thus fabricated, was lowered onto the graphite substrate to form an electrical junction.

Figure 2 displays histograms of  $\log|J|(-0.5 \text{ V})|$  collected using hanging-drop electrodes on graphite substrates; Table 1 summarizes these measurements. We did not observe a significant difference in the electrical characteristics of the EGaIn drop electrode when we changed the environment (between dry air,  $\text{O}_2$ , Ar, and  $\text{N}_2$ ) in which it was formed and the junction was measured (Figure 2A-D); in particular, the mean values and standard deviations of  $\log|J|$  (in units of  $\text{A}/\text{cm}^2$ ) are indistinguishable ( $\log|J| = 4.4$ ,  $\sigma_{\log} = 0.25$ ). EGaIn drops formed in air and  $\text{O}_2$  have surface films of  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ , while those formed in  $\text{N}_2$  or Ar either do not, or have only a thin or partial film: We therefore conclude that the  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  film does not contribute to the resistance of the junction and also does not influence the effective electrical contact area. This conclusion reinforces similar conclusions reached in previous but different studies.<sup>1,16</sup>

*Hanging Drop Electrodes Formed in Air or  $\text{O}_2$  and Measured in Air or  $\text{O}_2$ .* Figure 2 A and B summarizes measurements using hanging-drop electrodes formed in  $\text{O}_2$ -containing atmospheres (air and  $\text{O}_2$ , respectively) and a HOPG substrate; we assume that the surface of these drop electrodes have a  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  film that is chemically similar to that formed on conical tip electrodes (although not as severely buckled and probably—because it is less buckled and folded—substantially thinner and more compliant). Forming the electrode in a high- $\text{O}_2$  atmosphere (> 99.8%) rather than air does not influence the resistance of the oxide film, or that

of the junction formed with a graphite substrate. Thus, the resistance of the oxide is not sensitive to small changes in the O<sub>2</sub> concentration in which it is formed, and—as observed previously—is too small to influence the tunneling currents measured through SAMs.

Junctions using a conical tip electrode on a HOPG substrate were measured in selected atmospheres of air, argon, and anhydrous ammonia. Figure S5 of the SI summarizes these data. As we observed with measurements using a drop electrode, there was no significant difference between measurements obtained with electrodes *formed* in air, and *measured* in air or argon. We conclude that the presence of O<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere during measurements of  $J(V)$  does not play a role in the resistance of the junction. The surface roughness of the conical tip electrodes correlated with a decrease of the measured current density: the difference between the smoother hanging-drop electrodes and the rougher conical tip electrodes was  $\log|J|_{\text{mean}} \sim 1.3$ .

*Hanging Drop Electrodes Formed in Ar or N<sub>2</sub> and Measured in Ar or N<sub>2</sub>.* Atmospheres of N<sub>2</sub> (Figure 2C) or Ar (Figure 2D) contained O<sub>2</sub> concentrations at less than 0.2%. We believe that the low-O<sub>2</sub> environments resulted in EGaIn drops that certainly did not have the same Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> film that normally forms on the surface of EGaIn in air, and may only have a partial, or incomplete, thin film. Junctions formed with these electrodes on a graphite substrate had values of  $\log|J|_{\text{mean}}$  similar to those formed under air and pure O<sub>2</sub>. This result confirms that the presence or absence of the oxide on the electrode surface has no influence on the mean value of  $J(V)$ .

This observation is consistent with previous inferences;<sup>1,16</sup> the oxide film seems to serve primarily as a solid, conducting layer that resists compression, that bends easily, and that fractures on extension. This layer allows the formation of stable junctions in high yield, but does not contribute significantly to the electrical resistance of the junction.<sup>1</sup>

*Hanging Drop Electrodes Formed in “Reactive” Vapor and Measured in “Reactive” Vapor.* When drops were formed in an atmosphere of anhydrous ammonia (Figure 2E), the value of  $\log|J|_{\text{mean}}$  seems to be slightly lower than junctions formed under air, O<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>, or Ar, but the distribution was broader than those junctions, and the statistical significance of the difference was low. Ammonia vapor thus appears to be similar to N<sub>2</sub> or Ar as an “inert atmosphere,” but with some other currently undefined surface chemistry contributing to a broader dispersion in values of  $J(V)$ .

Measurements in air containing high concentrations of acetic acid (AcOH) vapor appeared to be bimodal (Figure 2F). We speculate that the low values of  $\log|J|_{\text{mean}}$  observed reflect a surface covered with a film of a gallium or indium acetate (or a multilayer soap) but we have no evidence that directly supports this conjecture.

**The Influence of Gaseous Environments on the Electrical Characteristics of Ag<sup>TS</sup>S(CH<sub>2</sub>)<sub>11</sub>CH<sub>3</sub>//Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn Junctions.** We measured charge tunneling across junctions using hanging drop electrodes and “selected” conical tips showing no visible asperities.

*Formation of “Selected” Unflattened Conical Tip Electrodes.* We first conditioned the environmental chamber with air (from a compressed source) and subsequently formed conical tip electrodes (Figure 1B). After formation of the tip, the gas feed to the chamber was either left unchanged, or changed to another atmosphere, and the electrical characteristics of the junctions were measured. When a junction shorted, we purged the chamber with air and formed a new tip, and again purged the chamber with the atmosphere to be examined.

We were unable to form conical tip electrodes under either Ar or N<sub>2</sub> (Table 1) because, in the absence of O<sub>2</sub>, the structurally stabilizing oxide film does not form. When attempting to form the conical tip by retracting the drop following contact with the substrate, the drop detached

from the syringe rather than stretching and breaking. Histograms of  $\log|J(-0.5V)|$  collected from junctions of conical  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$  tips formed in air and then used in measuring current densities across a  $\text{Ag}^{\text{TS}}\text{SC}_{12}/\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$  junction in air,  $\text{O}_2$ , Ar, and  $\text{N}_2$  showed no significant difference (Figure 3).

*Conical Tip Electrodes Formed in Air and Measured in Ar,  $\text{N}_2$ ,  $\text{NH}_3$ , and  $\text{HOAc}/\text{Air}$ .*

Measurements obtained under a  $\text{N}_2$  atmosphere (Figure 3C) provided  $\log|J|_{\text{mean}}$  values similar to those measured in air. The majority of measurements in Ar (Figure 3D) are also similar, although they include several outlying points near  $\log|J| \sim 0.5$  (these points are not included in the Gaussian fitting) and a few at  $\log|J| = +4.2$ ; the latter are shorted junctions.

The cluster of data at  $\log|J| \sim 0.5$  may be a result of junctions in which the  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  film ruptured (Figure S1C shows such ruptures) while the tip was in contact with the SAM; in this circumstance, because the concentration of  $\text{O}_2$  is low, the gallium oxide film would not reform. The resulting junction, post rupture, would plausibly have a greater area of effective electrical contact than junctions formed with typically rough conical tips, and thus give a mean value of  $\log|J(V)|$  approximately two to three times greater than typical conical tips. This increase in contact area is observed when comparing the  $\log|J|$  values of conical tip and drop junctions measured on SAM substrates. In air,  $\log|J|^{\text{drop}} - \log|J|^{\text{conical}} \approx 1.8$ , while in a nitrogen environment the difference is  $\sim 2.8$ . These values are in rough agreement with those reported by Simone *et al.*<sup>1</sup> where the conformal nature of a Hg drop caused an observed increase of  $\sim 10^3$  in  $J(V)$  relative to the contact area of a conical tip junction.

Interestingly, junctions measured in the ammonia atmosphere gave values with  $\log|J|_{\text{mean}} = +0.4$  (Figure 3E)—an increase of approximately three orders of magnitude relative to values in air,  $\text{O}_2$  and  $\text{N}_2$  (Figure 3 A,B,C) and approximately the same as the cluster of values observed



under Ar (Figure 3D). We did not observe electrical shorts in the ammonia atmosphere. To eliminate the possibility of damage to the SAM from exposure to ammonia, we changed the atmosphere from ammonia vapor to air (with the same EGaIn tip electrode and without changing the substrate) and the measured current density returned to that expected in air (Figure S6). We conclude, therefore, that the ammonia does not damage the SAM. There seem to be at least two possible rationalizations for the behavior in  $\text{NH}_3$ , both of which would increase  $J(V)$  by increasing the effective electrical contact area (relative to measurements in air): i) In one, the ammonia would provide (perhaps by corrosion of the  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$ ) a thinner and more easily deformable (and hence more compliant) oxide film than the one formed in air: ii) In a second, the ammonia would act as an “inert gas”, similar to Ar, and prevent the growth of an oxide film in regions where the film is cracked. Why all of the measurements in ammonia would present this behavior, and only a few in Ar, is not evident from the available data, although adsorption of  $\text{NH}_3$  on the surface of the EGaIn is a plausible possibility.

The data obtained using a conical tip formed in air and measured in a HOAc/air atmosphere were too scattered to provide a useful interpretation beyond the fact that the acetic acid seems to be reactive toward the  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  and/or the SAM.

*Junction Measurements Using Hanging Drop Electrodes.* We also formed junctions using hanging drop EGaIn electrodes on  $n$ -dodecanethiolate ( $\text{SC}_{12}$ ) modified  $\text{Ag}^{\text{TS}}$  substrates (Figure 4). The drops were first formed in air—thus ensuring they had a  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  film on their surface. Measurements in air resulted in  $\log|J| = -0.6$ , compared to  $-2.4$  for conical tips in the same atmosphere. We attribute this increase in current density ( $\Delta\log|J| \sim 1.8$ ;  $|J|^{\text{drop}}/|J|^{\text{conical}} \sim 100$ ) to an increase in electrical contact area; hanging-drop electrodes have a lower surface roughness and therefore better conformal contact with the substrate than conical tips. In measurements

taken in low-O<sub>2</sub> atmospheres (Ar and N<sub>2</sub>), we observed an additional increase in current density to  $\log|J| = +0.3$  with drop electrodes resulting in  $\Delta\log|J| \sim 2.8$  ( $|J|^{\text{drop}}/|J|^{\text{conical}} \sim 1000$ ). This increase, again, is probably due to the rupture of the oxide film on the drop electrode, resulting in junctions having no Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> film at the top interface between SAM and top-electrode.

When we formed *and measured* the hanging-drop electrode in N<sub>2</sub>, the yield of working junctions was 7%: all but one junction formed with the SAM resulted in an electrical short at some inconsistent point during measurements (consisting of 20 *J-V* scans), the *J-V* characteristics of the trace demonstrated an electrical short. Portions of the traces were measured at  $\log|J| = +0.3$ , suggesting the creation of an oxide-free junction prior to the failure of the junction.

Figure 5 summarizes all junctions (comprising conical and drop electrodes and SAMs of *n*-dodecanethiolate) that resulted in data appropriate for a Gaussian fitting, including outliers. Although junctions formed using conical-tip and drop electrodes have different current densities when measured under air (or oxygen containing atmospheres), both top-electrode geometries result in similar performance in low-oxygen environments. This observation suggests that, in low-oxygen environments, differences in roughness of these two types of electrode do not make the two measurements of current density distinguishably different. We speculate that in low-oxygen atmospheres, ruptures on the electrode may result in regions of contact between eutectic metal and the SAM, instead of the Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> film; the liquid metal would have a different wetting or conformal contact with the SAM, resulting in an increase in the measured current density for the junction due to an increase in the effective electrical contact area.

**Effect of Relative Humidity on Measurement of *J(V)*.** We examined the effect of relative humidity on both graphite and SAM-based junctions. We used the conical-tip electrode to contact the SAM, and a hanging-drop electrode to contact the graphite. Figure 6 indicates that

$J(V)$  is insensitive to humidity on both the graphite substrate (HOPG//Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn, square) and the SAM (Ag<sup>TS</sup>-S(CH<sub>2</sub>)<sub>11</sub>CH<sub>3</sub>//Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn, circle). Junctions having a carboxylic acid-terminated SAM (triangle) were not sensitive to changes in humidity (over a range typically encountered in the laboratory, (20-60 RH%). In a separate study,<sup>41</sup> measurements of SC<sub>11</sub>CO<sub>2</sub>H SAMs in ambient conditions gave  $J(V) = -2.1$  (~ 35% RH) while SC<sub>11</sub>CH<sub>3</sub> SAMs gave  $J(V) = -1.3$  (~45% RH), both giving  $\sigma_{\log} = 0.4$ ; these values are consistent with our measurements (within one standard deviation of the error) and demonstrate that SAMs of SC<sub>11</sub>CO<sub>2</sub>H gives  $J(V)$  values lower than those of SC<sub>11</sub>CH<sub>3</sub>. We observe, however, that for carboxyl-terminated SAMs at 5% RH, where we expect the system to be dry, there is a decrease in the  $J(V)$  measured. We speculate that some water condensation in the junction at higher values of RH provides either i) a slight decrease in the height of the tunneling barrier (relative to air), or ii) a slight increase in the area of effective electrical contact (depicted in Figure S7).

## CONCLUSIONS

We had two objectives in this work. i) To investigate the influence of different environmental conditions (i.e., different gases surrounding the Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn tip and the junctions at room temperature) on fabrication of the tip, and on the measured current densities,  $J(V)$ , across the tunneling junctions. ii) To study the influence of the surface roughness associated with the Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> on measurements of  $J(V)$  by comparing results obtained with the rougher conical tip and the smoother, although less stable, hanging drop. We summarize our findings in four points.

**The Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> film does *not* contribute to the resistivity of the junction.** Junction measurement on graphite using hanging-drop electrodes formed under N<sub>2</sub> or Ar (presumably

with little or no oxide film) demonstrated current densities similar to measurements made with hanging-drop electrodes formed in the presence of  $O_2$ , possessing a film of  $Ga_2O_3$  on the electrode surface (Figure 2). Measurements on SAMs using conical-tip electrodes (Figure 3) also demonstrated current densities similar to those in junctions formed either in low-oxygen ( $Ar$ ,  $N_2$ ) or  $O_2$ -containing (air,  $O_2$ ) atmospheres. For these measurements, the conical tips were first formed in air (ensuring a  $Ga_2O_3$  film on the electrode), and then measured in different atmospheres. Measurements in an ammonia atmosphere were the only ones giving  $J(V)$  values different from measurements in air, possibly due to adsorption of ammonia to the oxide film, or some other interaction with the gas.

The use of electrodes with thicker or thinner  $Ga_2O_3$  films thus does not seem to influence the resistance of the top electrode and has no observable effect on  $J(V)$  measurements. This conclusion is consistent with our previous conclusions that the resistance of the  $Ga_2O_3$  film is at least an order of magnitude smaller than the shortest alkyl SAM (methylthiolate), and consequently does not contribute significantly to the overall resistance of the tunneling junction.<sup>1,16</sup>

**The  $Ga_2O_3$  film on the EGaIn electrode influences junction stability.** The presence of the  $Ga_2O_3$  film increases the yields of working electrodes ( $>70\%$ ) and the reproducibility of the area of electrical contact with the bottom substrate, and thus contributes to the generation of reproducible values of  $J(V)$ , with standard deviations of  $\sigma_{\log} \sim 0.3$ . Junctions consisting of conical tip and hanging-drop electrodes created in air, and measured in  $O_2$ -containing atmospheres, had working yields of 100%. For junctions measured in low-oxygen atmospheres, the working yield decreased to a range between 60-85%. This decrease suggests that the presence of oxygen, contributes to improved electrode performance and to reproducibility in  $J(V)$  measurements by

reforming the oxide film on the EGaIn electrodes. Under low-oxygen environments, measurements of  $J(V)$  had larger standard deviations, perhaps due to cracking of the oxide film and idiosyncratic increases in the contact of the SAM with liquid EGaIn.

At the beginning of our studies of tunneling across SAMs using “EGaIn” electrodes, we used a conical shaped  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$ , but did not understand the characteristics of this electrode in any detail. Uncertainties included the importance of the roughness of the oxide film, the variability in the area of electrical contact of the EGaIn film with the surface of the SAM, and the influence of the surface chemistry of the EGaIn film on the performance of the top electrode. This work, in combination with other studies,<sup>1,16</sup> enables us to resolve problems associated with the characteristics of EGaIn electrode, and the contribution to the stability and reproducibility of tunneling junctions.

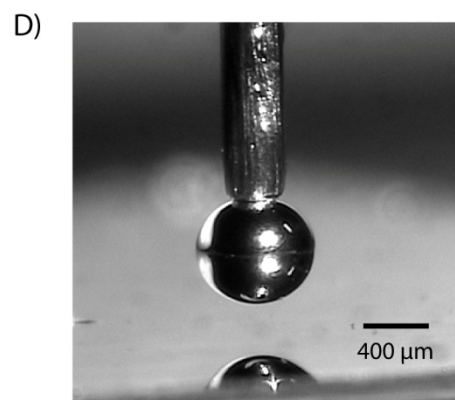
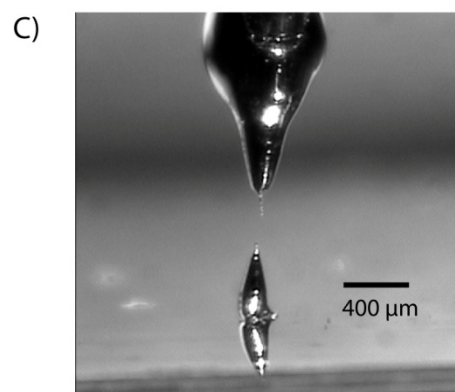
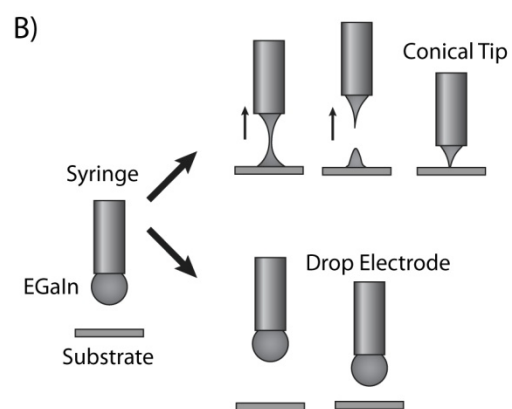
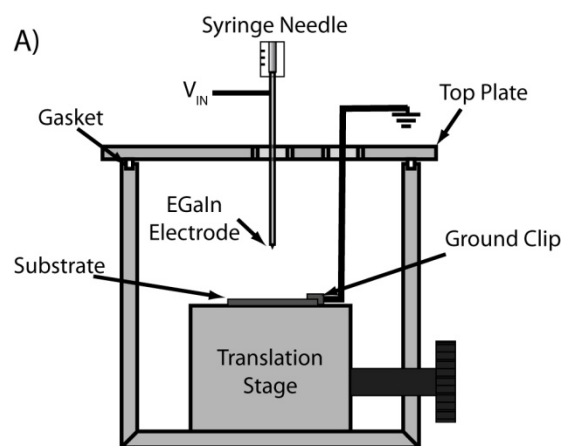
**There is no statistically distinguishable effect of normal humidity fluctuations on measurements of current density using EGaIn-based junctions.** Current density measurements on graphite, methyl-, and carboxyl-terminated SAM substrates are not significantly influenced by changes in the relative humidity (RH) within a range typically encountered in the laboratory (20-60% RH). When the atmosphere is dry (RH <5%), measurements of current density decreased across carboxyl-terminated SAMs but not across methyl-terminated SAMs. This observed decrease in current density may reflect a change in the interface of the very hydrophobic carboxyl-terminated SAM with the  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  film (Figure S7). At low humidity there is no or little water layer(s) adsorbed on the surfaces of the  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  and the  $\text{CO}_2\text{H}$ -terminated SAM. The surface free energy of the  $\text{CO}_2\text{H}$ -terminated SAMs (unlike that of methyl-terminated SAMs) may induce formation of a water layer onto its surface at higher values of RH.

**Surface roughness in the EGaIn electrode influences  $J(V)$ .** Because the rupture of the EGaIn neck during formation of the conical tip is not entirely replicable, the surface film of  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  of conical tips has a significant, but unquantified roughness (Figure S1 A and B). Formation of the drop electrode, on the other hand, does not require this rupture, and is therefore smoother (Figure S1 C).

The oxide film on the hanging drop electrode seems more flexible and thinner than that formed on the conical electrode. These characteristics (or others) results in higher values of  $J(V)$  than those obtained with a conical tip the same SAM: measurements across a  $\text{C}_{12}$  SAM in air give  $\log|J|_{\text{mean}} = -2.4$  for a conical tip and  $\log|J|_{\text{mean}} = -0.6$  for a drop electrode;  $\Delta\log|J| \sim 1.8$  (e.g.,  $|J|^{\text{drop}}/|J|^{\text{conical}} \sim 100$ ). The only difference that we have identified between these two measurements is the roughness of the  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3$  film, and thus the electrode surface. When we compare measurements in the  $\text{N}_2$  atmosphere, we observed that  $\log|J|_{\text{mean}}$  for a drop electrode is higher by a factor of  $\sim 2.8$  than  $\log|J|_{\text{mean}}$  for a conical electrode ( $|J|^{\text{drop}}/|J|^{\text{conical}} \sim 1000$ ). We suggest that the thin, compliant oxide film on the hanging drop electrode leads to more conformal contact with the surface of the SAM. In these comparisons the only uncontrolled variable was the roughness of the oxide film, all variables were held constant to the best of our abilities.

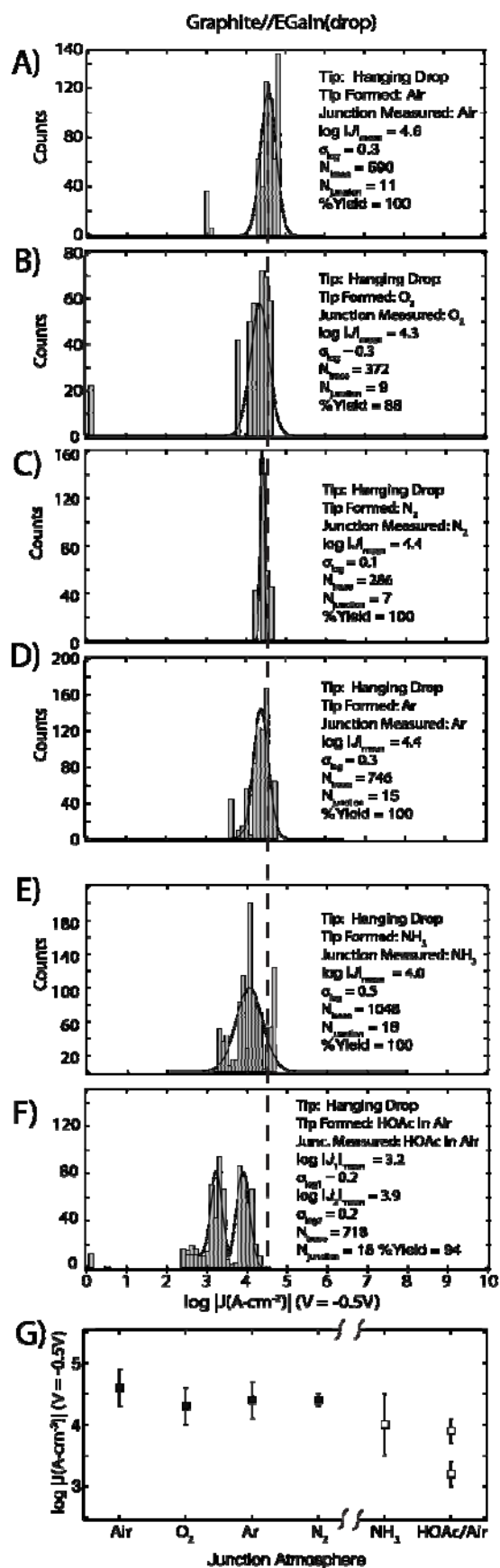
These results parallel results from Simeone *et al.*,<sup>1</sup> where a conformal Hg drop electrode measured on an  $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3/\text{Fe}$  substrate gave  $\sim 10^3$  higher current density values than an EGaIn conical tip electrodes on the same substrate. In both cases, increases in electrode roughness lead to weaker electrical contact, and to a decrease in the measured current density. We note that our results do not take into account the influence of the roughness of the substrate, which might also influence the electrical contact area of the junction.

## FIGURES

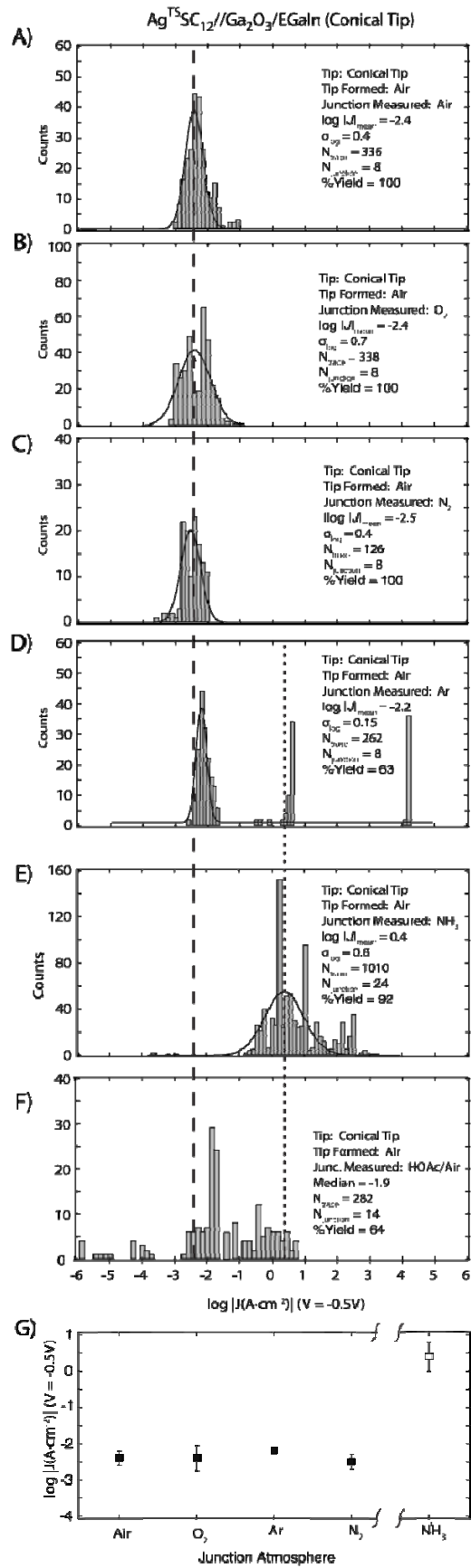




**Figure 1.** A cross sectional illustration of the environmental chamber (not to scale) (A), a schematic representation of methods to form either a conical-tip or hanging-drop  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$  electrodes from an extruded drop (B), microscopic images of a conical  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$  tip (C) and drop electrode (D). In some instances, during the formation of conical tips a whisker forms (C). These tips are often discarded, and a new tip is formed until the rupture does not create such an asperity. Further information about the operation of the chamber can be found in the Supporting Information.

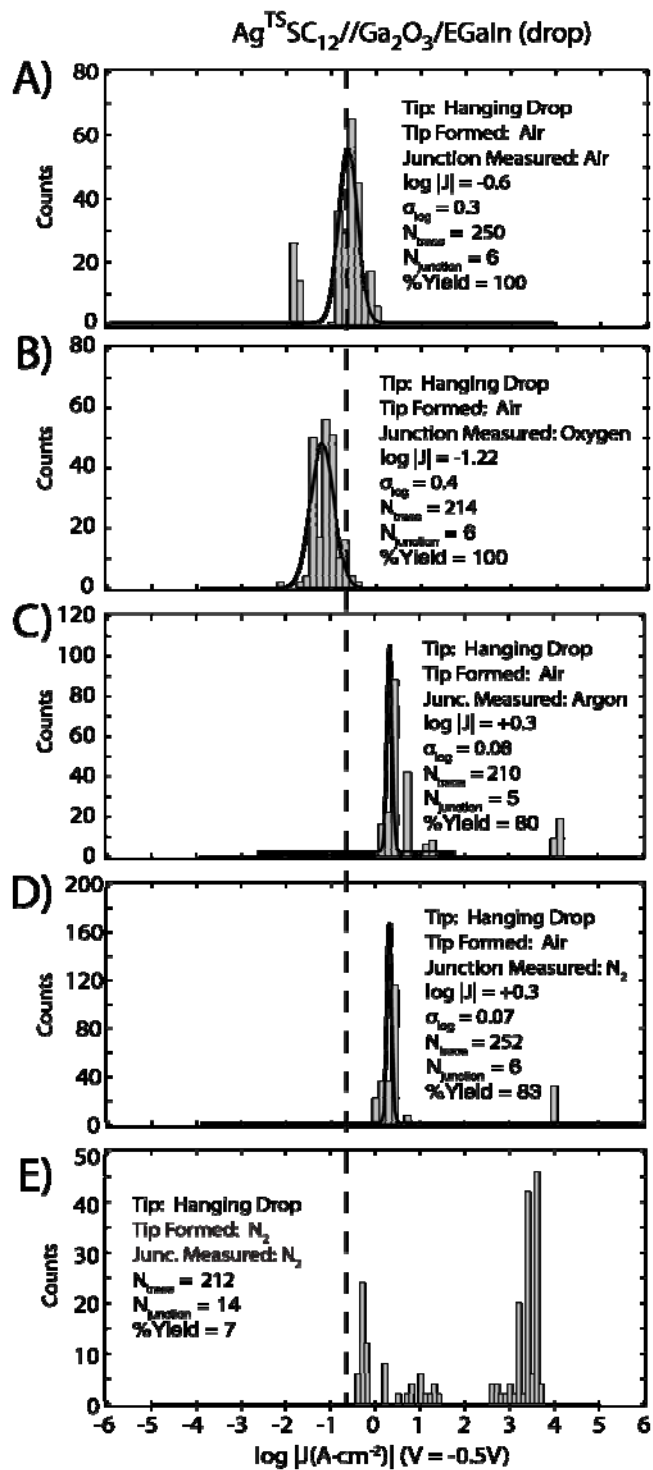


**Figure 2.** Histograms of the current density of EGaIn drop electrode junctions on a graphite substrate. Measurements were collected in an atmospheric chamber where we altered the composition of the environment in which the tips were formed and junctions were measured. “Tip Formed” represents the atmosphere in which the electrode was formed in; “Junction Measurement” refers to the atmosphere in which the junction is created (using the electrode formed in the “Tip Formed” atmosphere). The gases used were: A, compressed air; B, oxygen; C, nitrogen; D, argon; E, anhydrous ammonia; F, and acetic acid in air. Current density values ( $\log|J(-0.5V)|$ ) are estimated from Gaussian fit to the histogram. Number of scans ( $N_{\text{traces}}$ ), number of junctions ( $N_{\text{junctions}}$ ) mean (for  $\log|J|$ ), and standard deviation ( $\sigma_{\log}$ ) are presented for each atmosphere. A summary of data obtained by fitting Gaussian curves to histograms for each atmosphere is given in G.



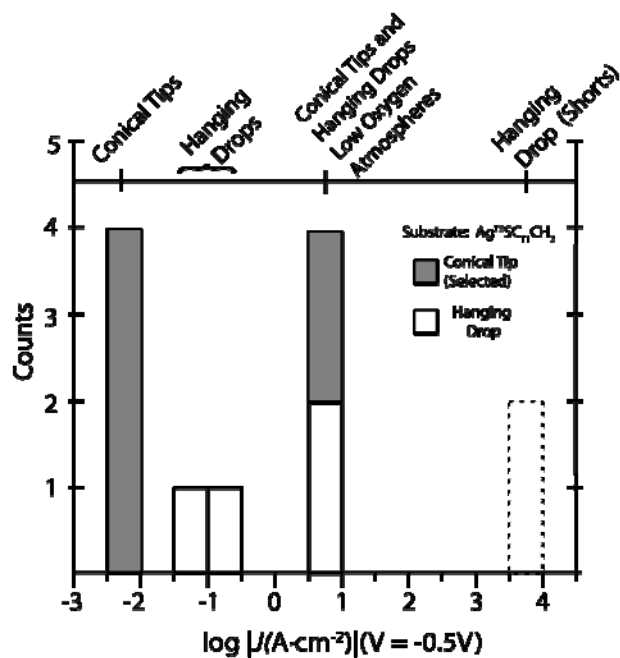
**Figure 3.** Histograms of current density measured with Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn conical tip electrodes on a dodecanethiol SAM substrate forming junctions with the structure

Ag<sup>TS</sup>-S(CH<sub>2</sub>)<sub>11</sub>CH<sub>3</sub>//Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>/EGaIn. “Tip Formed” represents the atmosphere in which the electrode was formed in; “Junction Measurement” refers to the atmosphere in which the junction is created (using the electrode formed in the “Tip Formed” atmosphere). All tips were first formed in air, junction formation and measurements were collected within the target atmosphere. Junctions were formed under: A, air; B, oxygen; C, nitrogen; D, argon; E, ammonia; F, acetic acid vapor in air. Current density values ( $\log|J(-0.5V)|$ ) are estimated from Gaussian fit to the histogram. Number of scans ( $N_{\text{traces}}$ ), number of junctions ( $N_{\text{junctions}}$ ), mean (for  $\log|J|$ ), and standard deviation ( $\sigma_{\log}$ ) are presented for each atmosphere. The Gaussian fit for argon (D) was measured for the first mode of the data at  $\log(J) = -2.2$ . No Gaussian was fit to the acetic acid data (F). A summary of Gaussian fit data for each atmosphere is given in G.

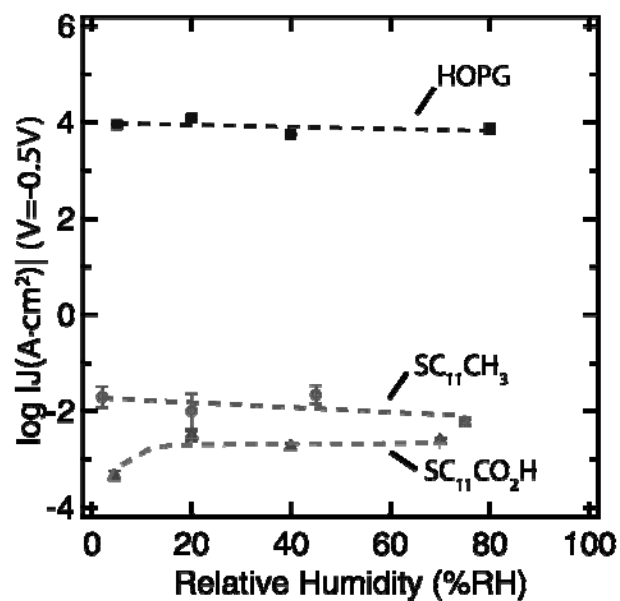


**Figure 4.** Histograms of current density measured with  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$  hanging-drop electrodes on a dodecanethiol SAM substrate forming junctions with the structure  $\text{Ag}^{\text{TS}}\text{-S}(\text{CH}_2)_{11}\text{CH}_3/\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$ . Junctions were formed under: A, air; B, oxygen; C, argon;

and D, nitrogen. Additionally E displays measurements from a drop electrode formed and measured under nitrogen; to prevent the formation of an oxide film on the drop. Current density values ( $\log|J(-0.5V)|$ ) are estimated from Gaussian fit to the histogram. Number of scans ( $N_{\text{traces}}$ ), number of junctions ( $N_{\text{junctions}}$ ), mean (for  $\log|J|$ ), and standard deviation ( $\sigma_{\log}$ ) are presented for each atmosphere.



**Figure 5.** Collection of  $\log|J|_{\text{mean}}$  values for  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$  electrodes, both conical tip and hanging drop, forming junctions on a dodecanethiol SAM substrates in various atmospheres.



**Figure 6.** Plot of influence of humidity on the current density of conical tip  $\text{Ga}_2\text{O}_3/\text{EGaIn}$  electrodes on HOPG graphite (square),  $\text{Ag}^{\text{TS}}\text{-S}(\text{CH}_2)_{11}\text{CH}_3$  (circle), and  $\text{Ag}^{\text{TS}}\text{-S}(\text{CH}_2)_{11}\text{COOH}$  (triangle) substrates. Measurements were performed in a humidity-controlled atmospheric chamber. A hanging-drop electrode was used on the graphite substrate, a conical-tip electrode was used on the SAMs.



**Table 1. Summary of tip formation and junction performance in various atmospheres**

Conical Tip (Selected)						Hanging Drop				
	Atmosphere of Tip Formation	Atmosphere of Junction Measurement	$\log  J(-0.5V)/(A/cm^2) $	$\sigma_{\log}$	Yield (%)		Atmosphere of Tip Formation	Atmosphere of Junction Measurement	$\log  J(-0.5V)/(A/cm^2) $	$\sigma_{\log}$ Yield (%)
SC <sub>12</sub> SAM	Air	Air	-2.4	0.4	100		Air	Air	-0.6	0.3 100
	Air	O <sub>2</sub>	-2.4	0.7	100		Air	O <sub>2</sub>	-1.2	0.4 100
	Air	Ar	-2.2 <sup>a</sup>	0.2 <sup>a</sup>	60		Air	Ar	0.3	0.08 <sup>a</sup> 80
	Air	N <sub>2</sub>	-2.5	0.4	100		Air	N <sub>2</sub>	0.3	0.07 <sup>a</sup> 83
	Air	NH <sub>3</sub>	0.4	0.8	85		Air	NH <sub>3</sub>		
	Air	HOAc vapor	—	—	64		Air	HOAc vapor		
Graphite (HOPG)	Air	Air	3.3	0.2	100		Air	Air	4.6	0.3 100
	Air	O <sub>2</sub>	3.1	0.1	100		O <sub>2</sub>	O <sub>2</sub>	4.3	0.3 88
	Air	Ar					Ar	Ar	4.4	0.3 100
	Air	N <sub>2</sub>					N <sub>2</sub>	N <sub>2</sub>	4.4	0.1 100
	Air	NH <sub>3</sub>					NH <sub>3</sub>	NH <sub>3</sub>	4.0	0.5 100
	Air	HOAc vapor					HOAc vapor	HOAc vapor	3.2, 3.9 <sup>b</sup>	0.2 94

<sup>a</sup> Gaussian distribution calculated for data near the mean, excluding anomalous data

<sup>b</sup> The data seems to have a bimodal distribution

## ASSOCIATED CONTENT

**Supporting Information.** Ga<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> reactivity with acids; discussion of EGaIn tip preparation methods; atmospheric chamber design and operation; SAM preparation; Ga 3d, O 1s, and C 1s XPS data and analysis; SEM images of tips; image sequence of conical tip degradation in AcOH atmosphere; *J(V)* histogram of conical tips on graphite substrates in air, Ar, and NH<sub>3</sub>; *J(V)* of single electrode exposed to air, NH<sub>3</sub>, air again; schematic of humidity interacting with oxide surface. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

EGaIn, eutectic gallium indium; SAM, self-assembled monolayer; Ag<sup>TS</sup>, template-stripped silver; HOPG, highly ordered pyrolytic graphite; AcOH, acetic acid; RH, relative humidity; SEM, scanning electron microscope.

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