

# Molecular-Weight-Dependent Interplay of Brittle-to-Ductile Transition in High-Strain-Rate Cold Spray Deposition of Glassy Polymers

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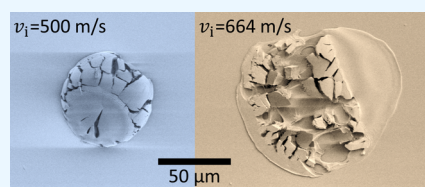


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Supporting Information

**ABSTRACT:** Based on the cold spray technique, the solvent-free and solid-state deposition of glassy polymers is envisioned. Adiabatic inelastic deformation mechanisms in the cold spray technique are studied through high-velocity collisions (<1000 m/s) of polystyrene microparticles against stationary target substrates of polystyrene and silicon. During extreme collisions, a brittle-to-ductile transition occurs, leading to either fracture- or shear-dominated inelastic deformation of the colliding microparticles. Due to the nonlinear interplay between the adiabatic shearing and the thermal softening of polystyrene, the plastic shear flow becomes the dominant deformation channel over brittle fragmentation when increasing the rigidity of the target substrate. High molecular weights (>20 kDa) are essential to hinder the evolution of brittle fracture and promote shear-induced heating beyond the glass transition temperature of polystyrene. However, an excessively high molecular weight (~100 kDa) reduces the adhesion of the microparticles to the substrate due to insufficient wetting of the softened polystyrene. Due to the two competing viscoelastic effects, proper selection of molecular weight becomes critical for the cold spray technique of glassy polymers.



## INTRODUCTION

Solid-state coating of materials is feasible by the cold spray (CS) technique, in which solid feedstock powders or microparticles ( $\mu$ Ps) are accelerated by a supersonically expanding stream of carrier gasses and are subjected to a head-on collision against a stationary surface at transonic or supersonic velocities.<sup>1</sup> Due to the collision-induced adiabatic deformation, the solid-state consolidation of  $\mu$ Ps is possible for coating and additive manufacturing.<sup>2</sup> Although CS has primarily been developed for metal deposition, similar principles can be applied for solventless deposition of polymers.<sup>3,4</sup> Moreover, the anisotropic shear flows within the deforming  $\mu$ Ps can lead to the ordering of polymer chains<sup>5</sup> along the surface of a substrate. Thus, the polymer coatings produced by CS may exhibit a higher in-plane strength if the ordering effect is preserved due to the short time scale (<400 ns)<sup>6</sup> of the plastic deformation. In addition to the practical importance of CS, the study of the collision-induced deformation characteristics of  $\mu$ Ps will lead to a deeper understanding of the rheological properties of macromolecules under the thermodynamically nonequilibrium conditions created by the extreme microscopic event.<sup>7</sup> Despite the unique advantages of CS, the deposition of glassy polymers can be particularly challenging because of their low fracture toughness<sup>8</sup> leading to  $\mu$ Ps' fragmentation rather than yielding and adhesion. Therefore, understanding the polymer's fracture toughness and its nonlinear coupling with adiabatic shear-induced heating under ultrahigh-rate (UHR) deformation

becomes crucial to realizing the solid-state consolidation of  $\mu$ Ps not using any volatile organic compounds or additional heating.

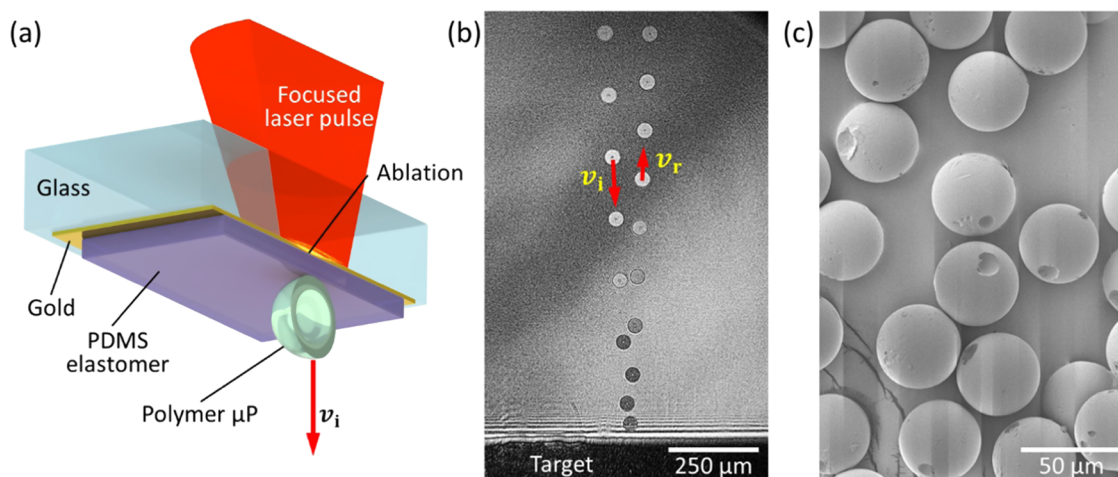
In CS,  $\mu$ P adhesion is accomplished below the melting temperature or perhaps the glass transition temperature ( $T_g$ ) of the  $\mu$ Ps' constituent materials. However, certain limited regions of a colliding  $\mu$ P, e.g., near the contact interfaces with a substrate surface or other deposited  $\mu$ Ps, can experience a rapid rise in temperature above the transition temperatures due to localized adiabatic plastic deformation and shear instability.<sup>9</sup> While the highly localized thermal softening (or melting) is crucial for the solid-state and solvent-free consolidation of  $\mu$ Ps, other inelastic mechanisms, especially brittle fracture, may also become significant, even dominating plastic deformation. Under the fracture-dominant deformation, the kinetic energy of a  $\mu$ P is mainly dissipated by creating new surfaces. Consequently, this fracture-dominant inelastic deformation mode is disadvantageous in the aspect of localized thermal softening and eventually for deposition efficiency of CS. One may attempt to predict the UHR deformation

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**Figure 1.** (a) Cross sectional illustration of the  $\mu\text{P}$  launching process in LIPIT. (b) Example of an ultrafast stroboscopic micrograph of a  $\mu\text{P}$  colliding with a PS substrate at  $v_i = 91$  m/s. (c) Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) image of 100 kDa PS- $\mu\text{Ps}$ .

**Table 1.** Measured Glass Transition Temperatures of PS having Different  $M_n$

$M_n^a$ (kDa)	PDI <sup>a</sup>	$T_g$	supplier
10	1.06	$88.3 \pm 1.1$	Pressure chemical Co., Pittsburgh, PA
20	1.01	$92.6 \pm 0.5$	Scientific polymer products Inc., Ontario, NY
40	1.04	$97.3 \pm 0.5$	PSS GmbH, Mainz, Germany
100	1.04	$96.4 \pm 0.3$	Scientific polymer products Inc., Ontario, NY

<sup>a</sup>PDI and  $M_n$  are reported by the manufacturers.

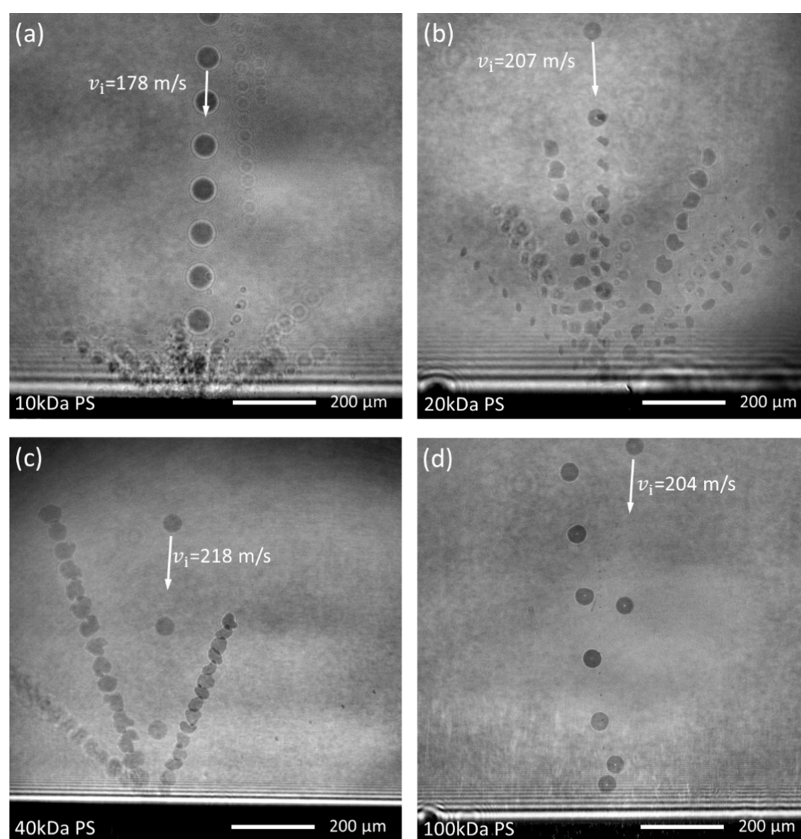
characteristics of polymers through polymers' lower temperature deformation behavior according to the time–temperature superposition principle.<sup>10</sup> However, in the UHR inelastic deformation, local temperature fields, the consequence of impact-induced plastic strains, are coupled with temperature-dependent mechanical properties. Thus, the UHR adiabatic plasticity of polymers is inherently nonlinear and is very difficult to predict via the time–temperature superposition. More specifically, because the evolution of the physical state of  $\mu\text{Ps}$  is nonlinearly governed by the interplay between the different inelastic processes, the experimental study of single  $\mu\text{P}$  UHR collisions can provide essential knowledge for the establishment of polymer-based CS additive manufacturing.

To address challenges from the complexity of the UHR deformation dynamics, the laser-induced projectile impact test (LIPIT)<sup>11,12</sup> has been introduced to produce single  $\mu\text{P}$  collisions (Figure 1) with precisely measured collision conditions, including the impact velocity ( $v_i$ ) and rebound velocity ( $v_r$ ) of individual  $\mu\text{Ps}$  with a known diameter ( $D_p$ ) and mass ( $m_p$ ). Since the first use of LIPIT in the characterization of single-crystal silver  $\mu\text{Ps}$ ,<sup>13</sup> LIPIT has been widely used for various single  $\mu\text{P}$  characterizations. The increasing use of LIPIT is attributed to the capabilities of the method providing a proper range of  $v_i$  for typical  $D_p$  of CS feedstock powders.<sup>14</sup> For example, the spectra of  $v_r$  for polystyrene (PS) and polyimide  $\mu\text{Ps}$  were measured as a function of  $v_i$  for basic knowledge of the actual CS deposition yield.<sup>15</sup> The LIPIT study of core–shell  $\mu\text{Ps}$  containing thermoset epoxy resin was performed for the fractographical study of the  $\mu\text{Ps}$ .<sup>16,17</sup> In addition to the kinematic measurements and post-impact characterizations, dynamic frictional coefficients of PS and PS-contained block copolymer  $\mu\text{Ps}$  were quantified using angled LIPIT when they collided with rigid substrates at an impact angle of  $45^\circ$ .<sup>6</sup> This angled LIPIT study demonstrated that

nonlinear interfacial rheological properties could be quantified in terms of the frictional coefficients. However, despite the success of LIPIT-based studies, the characteristic effects of the molecular weights of polymers on the consolidation process have not yet been fully or deliberately explored. Herein, the unique interplay between plastic yielding and fracture as functions of molecular weight is discussed with PS as a model glassy polymer.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Synthesis of  $\mu\text{Ps}$ .** Monodispersed PS- $\mu\text{Ps}$  were produced from purchased PS powders using the methods of Bacha et al.<sup>18</sup> Solutions of PS (each having a different number-averaged molecular weight,  $M_n$ ) at 5% w/v were prepared with narrow polydispersity indices (PDIs) and dispersed in microfluidic devices with aqueous 2% w/v 72 kDa polyvinyl alcohol (87.0–89.0% hydrolyzed, MP Biomedicals). Droplets were left as suspensions in an open beaker overnight to allow for solvent evaporation. PS- $\mu\text{Ps}$  were transferred to a round-bottom flask and stirred with a paddle stirrer at  $60^\circ\text{C}$  for 6 h. The flask was left to cool overnight and then filtered through a  $45\ \mu\text{m}$  sieve to remove large particles and contaminants. The particles were washed with deionized water, isopropanol, and hexanes before being transferred to a vacuum chamber to dry. Samples were dried for 14 days at  $70^\circ\text{C}$  under a vacuum (Figure 1c).  $T_g$  was determined by differential scanning calorimetry (DSC) in triplicate. Samples of 5–10 mg were prepared in Tzero hermetically sealed pans and heated under nitrogen twice from 0 to  $150^\circ\text{C}$  in a TA Instruments Discovery DSC 2500.  $T_g$  was determined from the second heating cycle. Details regarding molecular weight, PDI, and  $T_g$  of the utilized PS are listed in Table 1. Note that noticeable aging effects were observed from DSC curves (Figure S1) in the preparation of the PS specimens. As the aging effects were inevitable, each set of



**Figure 2.** Examples of ultrafast stroboscopic micrographs of (a) 10 kDa, (b) 20 kDa, (c) 40 kDa, and (d) 100 kDa PS- $\mu$ P colliding with the PS substrates at impact velocities of approximately 200 m/s.

PS- $\mu$ P and PS substrates with varying  $M_n$  were equally treated not to influence the main findings in this study.

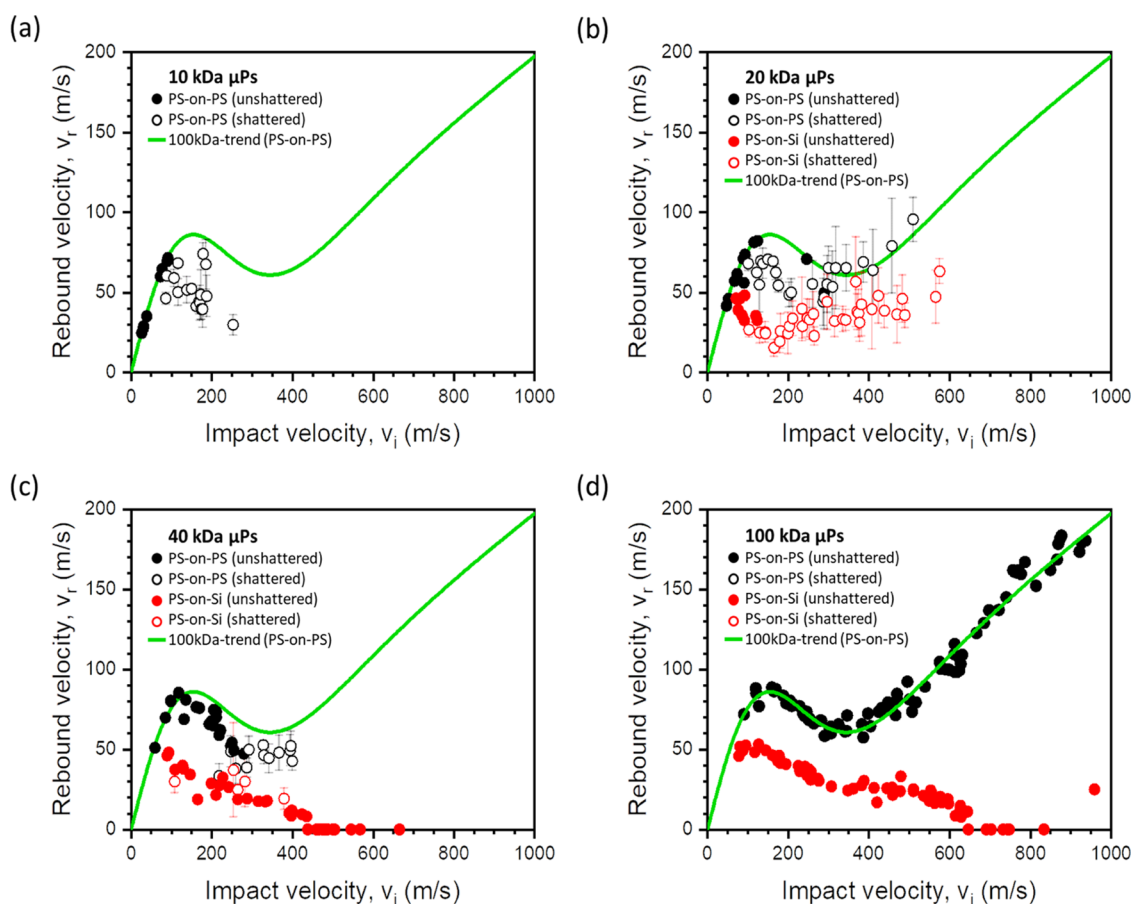
#### Conditions for the Microscopic Collision Experiment.

The LIPIT technique was used to individually accelerate PS- $\mu$ P placed on a launchpad to speeds ranging from 50 to 950 m/s. The launchpads were prepared by spin coating thermally curable poly(dimethylsiloxane) (PDMS; Sylgard 184, Corning) on an 80 nm thick gold coated cover glass (FisherBrand) at 1000 RPM for 30 s and subsequently cured at 120 °C for 2 h. A 1,064 nm laser pulse (Spectra-Physics INDI-10) was used to ablate the gold layer below a targeted  $\mu$ P. Local laser ablation of the gold layer beneath the target  $\mu$ P creates a rapid expansion of the elastomer film, indirectly accelerating the  $\mu$ P without exposure to the high-temperature ablation event (Figure 1a). The resultant collisional motion of the accelerated  $\mu$ P was captured by a stroboscopic imaging technique utilizing evenly gated ultrafast (<1 ps) white light pulses (Figure 1b). In PS-on-PS experiments, PS- $\mu$ P of varying number-averaged molecular weights ( $M_n = 10, 20, 40,$  and  $100$  kDa) were impacted on PS target substrates ( $\sim 5$  mm  $\times$  5 mm) of the same  $M_n$  to systematically study the effect of  $M_n$  on the impact dynamics. Information on how the mechanical properties of monodisperse molecular weight polystyrenes change with varying molecular weight can be found elsewhere.<sup>19,20</sup> The detailed procedure for preparing the PS substrates is described in the Supporting Information. The PS target substrates' thickness was at least 10 times greater than the diameter of impacting PS- $\mu$ P. Due to the short impact time, these experiments were assumed to represent a semi-infinite substrate condition. In PS-on-Si experiments, the PS- $\mu$ P of varying  $M_n$  were impacted on a silicon (Si) substrate to

observe the effects of substrate rigidity. Because roughness values of PS and Si substrates were 1.65 and 0.55 nm, respectively (Figure S2), they were considered smooth surfaces in this study. Additionally, while the PS target substrates showed the typical chemistry of PS in terms of the water wetting angle, the wetting angle of the Si substrate was close to that of the silica substrate due to its native oxide (Figure S3).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Deformation Images of  $\mu$ P Collisions.** The collision characteristics of PS- $\mu$ P were investigated by ultrafast stroboscopy for their  $M_n$ -dependent UHR behaviors. Due to the glassy nature of PS, most PS- $\mu$ P were shattered after collision with the PS substrates for  $M_n \leq 40$  kDa, at increased  $v_i$  (Figure 2). Note that the shattered collision was defined when fragmentation of PS- $\mu$ P was visually identified in the stroboscopic image. Fewer fragments were consistently produced from higher  $M_n$  PS- $\mu$ P, while none of the 100 kDa PS- $\mu$ P experienced shattering. Moreover, the 10 kDa PS- $\mu$ P were fractured even in the launching process (preimpact fracture) when they were subjected to higher acceleration to reach  $v_i > 200$  m/s. The observed characteristics were understood by the positive correlation of fracture toughness with  $M_n$ <sup>21</sup> that were consistent with our previous microballistic perforation study of freestanding PS films.<sup>22</sup> The entanglement density of PS, given by  $(1 - M_c/M_n)2N_0\rho/3M_c$ <sup>23</sup> linearly increased the energy required to perforate the PS films, where  $N_0$ ,  $\rho$ , and  $M_c$  are Avogadro's number, the mass density, and a critical molecular weight ( $\sim 31$  kDa) of PS, respectively. With respect to solvent-free (solid-state) coating, the brittle nature



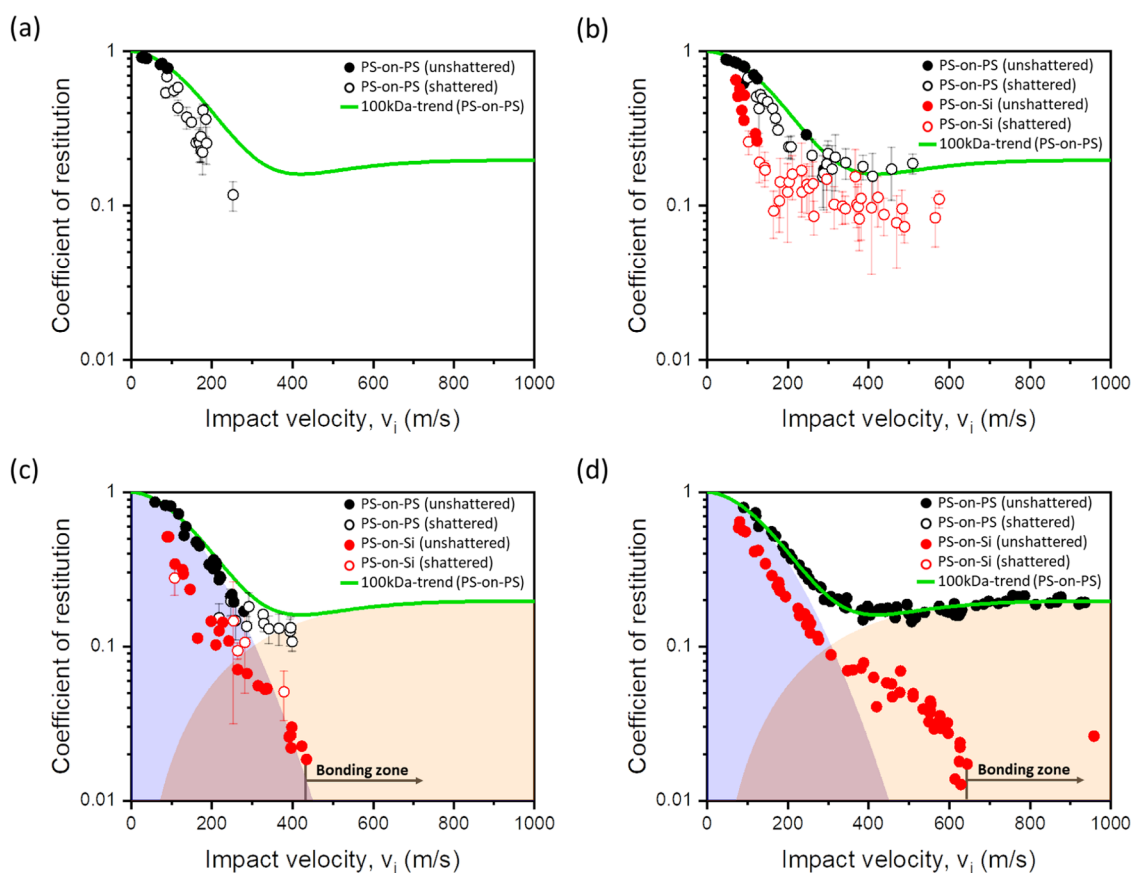
**Figure 3.**  $v_r$ -spectra of PS- $\mu$ Ps in collision with PS and Si substrates. (a)  $M_n = 10$  kDa, (b)  $M_n = 20$  kDa, (c)  $M_n = 40$  kDa, and (d)  $M_n = 100$  kDa for both  $\mu$ Ps and the substrate. The trend of PS-on-PS results of  $M_n = 100$  kDa (green curve) is co-plotted for reference. The scatter bar of each shattered event indicates the standard deviation of rebound velocities of identifiable shattered fragments.

of glassy polymers, including PS, is undoubtedly one of the most critical challenges to be addressed, as discussed earlier.

**Rebound and Adhesion Characteristics of  $\mu$ Ps.** The  $v_r$ -spectra of the PS- $\mu$ Ps were measured until the fracture trends were consistent (Figure 3). For shattered collisions, the mean value of  $v_r$ s of analyzable shattered fragments was used with a scatter bar representing the standard deviation of the fragments'  $v_r$ . Due to the lack of shattering, the  $v_r$ -spectra of 100 kDa  $\mu$ Ps in PS-on-PS provide a useful reference trend (the green curves in Figure 3) to compare characteristics of the other  $M_n$   $\mu$ Ps through the entire range of  $v_i$ . The green curve was from the fitting of the coefficients of restitution (CoR), which will be discussed in detail later. Regardless of  $M_n$ , unshattered  $\mu$ Ps showed nearly the same  $v_r$  behavior in PS-on-PS. However, the shattered events demonstrated considerably lower  $v_r$ , and this observation strongly indicated a fracture-driven energy dissipation mechanism. Moreover, although  $v_r$  typically increases with  $v_i$ , an inverse trend was observed in a range from 200 to 350 m/s. This unusual inverse trend is because the  $\mu$ Ps underwent exponentially growing inelastic processes such as fracture and softening within this range. In Figure 3b, two unshattered events were within a range of the shattering events of PS-on-PS. These outliers could be originating from the instability of the fracture-dominant deformation process or some unidentified defects of the PS- $\mu$ Ps or the PS substrate. Interestingly, the 100 kDa  $\mu$ Ps did not show adhesion to the PS substrate over the entire range of  $v_i$  although the substantially entangled PS completely suppressed

the shattering process. As the PS-on-PS can be analogous to a thick coating condition in CS, the lack of adhesion events indicates that the continuous deposition of PS feedstock powder could be challenging. Interestingly, when changing the deformable PS substrate to a rigid silicon substrate (PS-on-Si), the  $v_r$ -spectra of the PS- $\mu$ Ps were drastically altered. First, the reduction of  $v_r$  is universal regardless of  $M_n$ . Second, the PS- $\mu$ Ps demonstrated substantially less shattering (Figure 3c), a counterintuitive result since one may expect that collisions with more rigid substrates would cause more severe shattering. This observation implies that fracture and plastic yielding compete during impact-induced deformation and that more thermal softening occurs within PS- $\mu$ Ps during impact with the silicon substrate. This hypothesis will be verified through post-collision characteristics and numerical modeling in a later section. Third, both 40 and 100 kDa  $\mu$ Ps demonstrated adhesion to the Si substrate. The onset velocities of adhesion, or the critical velocities ( $v_c$ ), for the 40 and 100 kDa  $\mu$ Ps were approximately 435 m/s (Figure 3c) and 645 m/s (Figure 3d), respectively.

**CoR Spectra and Fitting.** The nonmonotonic trend of the  $v_r$ -spectra implies the complexity of the UHR collision dynamics that may be originating from multiple mechanisms. In this aspect, the dimensionless spectra of CoR ( $=v_r/v_i$ ) can be helpful for the material's nonlinear responses as simple elastic responses are normalized (Figure 4). For example, the peak near 200 m/s in the  $v_r$ -spectrum (Figure 3d) did not appear in the CoR-spectrum (Figure 4d). Despite the simpler



**Figure 4.** CoR spectra of PS- $\mu$ P<sub>s</sub> in collision with PS and Si substrates for (a)  $M_n = 10$  kDa, (b)  $M_n = 20$  kDa, (c)  $M_n = 40$  kDa, and (d)  $M_n = 100$  kDa. The scatter bar of each shattered event indicates the standard deviation of CoR values of identifiable shattered fragments. The fitting curve for 100 kDa (green) is co-plotted in all other plots for reference. The blue and orange shaded regions, corresponding to the two terms of the fitting curve,  $f_{ep}$  (blue) and  $f_{es}$  (orange), are also displayed in (c) and (d).

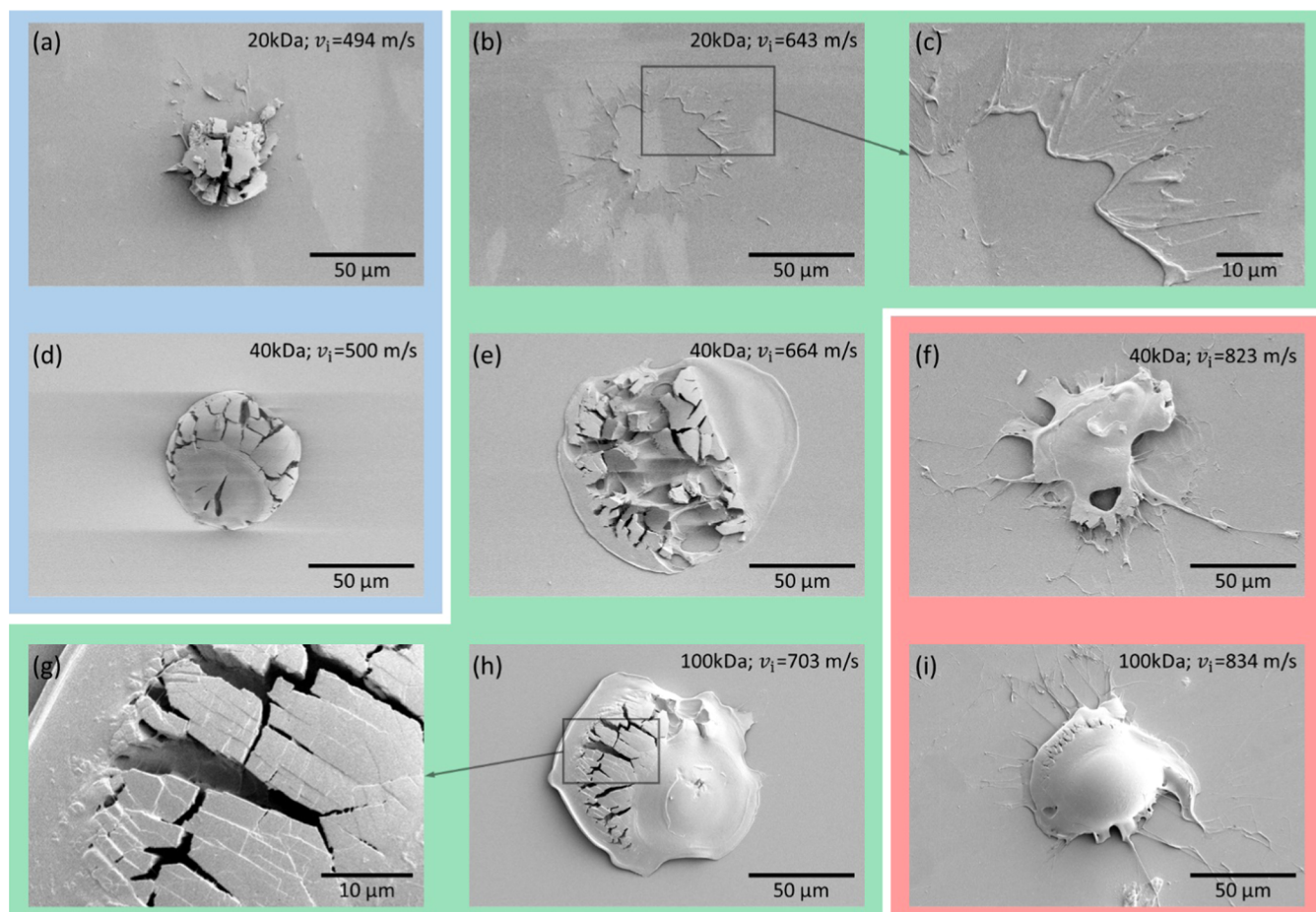
trend, the CoR-spectrum of 100 kDa PS-on-PS still exhibited a nonmonotonic trend with a minimum near 430 m/s. The whole collision process consists of an impact stage (deceleration of the center-of-mass), subsequently followed by a rebound stage (reverse acceleration of the center-of-mass), requiring that the center-of-mass pauses between the two stages. Therefore, the kinetic energy associated with the rebound motion can be decomposed into the respective elastic recoiling contributions of the  $\mu$ P and the substrate when bonding between the  $\mu$ P and the substrate was insignificant (more reasonable for the low- $v_i$  regime). Based on this understanding, we hypothesized that the CoR-spectrum of 100 kDa PS-on-PS was produced by two elastic recoiling contributions primarily from the  $\mu$ P and the substrate,  $f_{ep}$  and  $f_{es}$ . Thus, two exponential functions were phenomenologically introduced for the respective contributions, as shown in eq 1.

$$\text{CoR}(v_i) \cong f_{ep} + f_{es} = e^{-(v_i/v_p)^m} + \alpha_s[1 - e^{-(v_i/v_s)^m}] \quad (1)$$

The respective fitting parameters,  $v_p$ ,  $v_s$ ,  $\alpha_s$ , and  $m$ , were identified as  $195.2 \pm 1.6$  m/s,  $367.6 \pm 19.5$  m/s,  $0.20 \pm 0.004$ , and  $1.82 \pm 0.04$ , respectively, for the 100 kDa PS-on-PS spectrum of CoR. Since the exponent,  $m$ , is close to 2, the overall trend is dominantly driven by the kinetic energy in  $\mu$ P. At the high end of  $v_i$ , CoR tends to be saturated to  $\alpha_s \sim 0.2$ , meaning that the recoiling behavior of the PS substrate remained the same within this CoR plateau. In other words,

the PS substrate did not undergo substantial softening or melting up to 1000 m/s. Note that this fitted curve was also used to show the trend of  $v_r = v_i$  CoR in Figure 3. In this model, while  $f_{ep}$  mainly represents exponentially decaying residual elasticity of the  $\mu$ P,  $f_{es}$  represents an increasing elastic contribution of the PS substrate. As  $v_i$  increases,  $f_{ep}$  is rapidly reduced through the inelastic mechanisms, i.e., fracture and visco-plastic yielding, within a single  $\mu$ P. In contrast, the trend of  $f_{es}$  indicated that the semi-infinite PS substrate did not undergo an inelastic deformation as severely as the  $\mu$ P. Thus, the substrate supports a higher recoiling response for higher  $v_i$ . The comparably smaller inelastic deformation of the PS substrate compared with that of the  $\mu$ P is shown in Figure S6 by comparing the plastic strain fields developed in the two bodies.

According to the CoR spectra of PS-on-Si, more inelastic deformation via fracturing and yielding was evident regardless of  $M_n$ , due to the substantially larger elastic modulus of silicon ( $\sim 170$  GPa)<sup>24</sup> than PS ( $\sim 3.5$  GPa).<sup>25</sup> The considerably larger  $v_c$  of 100 kDa  $\mu$ P<sub>s</sub> compared to 40 kDa  $\mu$ P<sub>s</sub> meant that double the kinetic energy of the  $\mu$ P was required to create the bonding state. This additionally required energy for 100 kDa  $\mu$ P<sub>s</sub> was related to the difference in the CoR trends prior to the bonding zone. The CoR trend of 40 kDa PS-on-Si was exponentially reduced without a considerable recoiling contribution from the Si substrate (Figure 4c). However, the CoR trend of 100 kDa PS-on-Si exhibited a sizable recoiling contribution (apparent for  $v_i = 400$ – $600$  m/s) from the Si

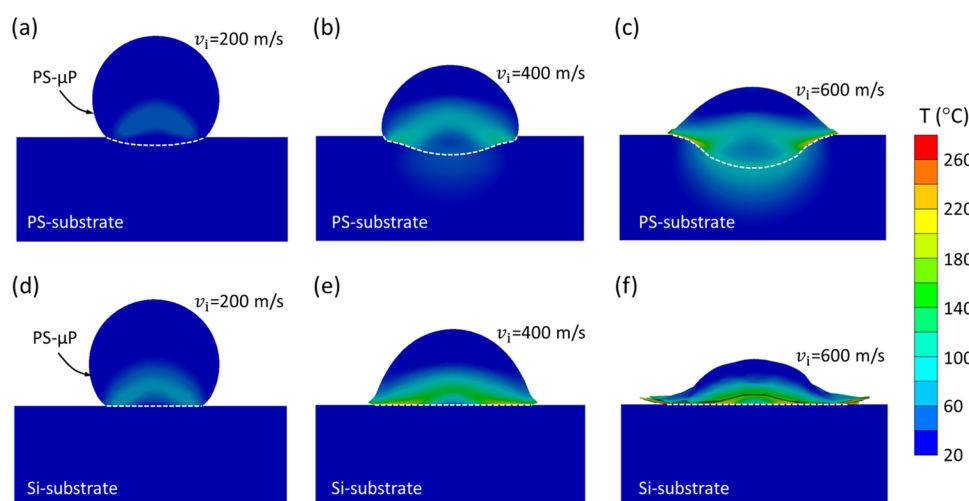


**Figure 5.** SEM images of PS- $\mu$ Ps after colliding with the Si substrate at different velocities: (a)–(c)  $M_n = 20$  kDa, (d)–(f)  $M_n = 40$  kDa, and (g)–(i)  $M_n = 100$  kDa. Three  $v_i$ -ranges around 500 m/s, 650 m/s, and 830 m/s are displayed in blue, green, and red panels, respectively.

substrate even though this contribution was relatively weaker than that of the PS substrate (Figure 4d). The substrate's elastic recoiling tends to hinder the bonding state. In other words, the absence of the substrate's elastic contribution in the 40 kDa PS-on-Si implies that interfacial adhesion of  $\mu$ Ps to the Si substrate was large enough to suppress the elastic recoiling of the Si substrate. The origin of this enhanced adhesion contribution in the 40 kDa PS-on-Si will be discussed later.

**Characteristic Features of Bonded  $\mu$ Ps.** The  $\mu$ Ps adhered to a Si substrate were assessed using scanning electron microscopy (SEM) to understand the dynamic characteristics of  $\mu$ Ps. Adhered  $\mu$ Ps at three  $v_i$ -ranges around 500, 650, and 830 m/s are displayed in Figure 5. In the 500 m/s range, although the 20 kDa  $\mu$ P was shattered, it still left some partially bonded fragments and a minor residue from jetting on the Si substrate (Figure 5a). However, despite its complete fracture, the 40 kDa  $\mu$ P did not experience any meaningful mass loss (Figure 5d). Moreover, no evident sign of jetting was shown. Meanwhile, 100 kDa  $\mu$ Ps were not left on the substrate in this  $v_i$ -range. In the 650 m/s range, the 20 kDa  $\mu$ P was completely shattered without any residual fragments (Figure 5b), but an annular remnant of jetting was observed (Figure 5c). In contrast, the 40 kDa  $\mu$ P showed brittle fragments bonded by a plastically deformed material without jetting remnants (Figure 5e). The suppression of jetting may primarily be due to the higher dynamic viscosity of 40 kDa PS in its melt state than that of 20 kDa PS. The 100 kDa  $\mu$ P also demonstrated the co-existence of fragments and plastically

deformed materials without jetting remnants (Figure 5h) with a relatively lower volume portion of fragments. The fractured region revealed exceptionally fine fragments and fibrils with craze produced by biaxial strains (Figure 5g). The delaminated and contracted perimeter of the bonded 100 kDa  $\mu$ P, not seen from the 40 kDa  $\mu$ P, clearly indicated the decreased adhesion to the substrate. This observation is also consistent with the previous discussion based on the contrasting trends of the CoR spectra appearing for  $v_i = 400$ – $600$  m/s, prior to the bonding zone (Figure 4c,d). In other words, as the PS melt of 40 kDa was less viscous than that of 100 kDa, the 40 kDa PS provided better wetting on the Si substrate. Note that the dynamic viscosity of PS melts at a constant temperature is known to be insensitive to  $M_n$  at high-strain rate cyclic loading conditions.<sup>26</sup> However, we still believe that the  $M_n$ -dependent adhesion behavior is originating from the localized thermo-rheological difference of PS melts. In the collision-induced deformation, because the shear deformation of a  $\mu$ P and its temperature are under positive feedback, a condition known as adiabatic shear instability,<sup>27</sup> the resultant rheological effect of  $M_n$  can be amplified to produce a more pronounced difference in wetting. In the 830 m/s range, both 40 and 100 kDa showed a significant mass loss and prominent jetting features (Figure 5f,i). As a result, the corresponding deposition efficiency is reduced. Note that the rheological effects of polymer melts in CS are more important than the conventional CS for metals because viscosities of molten metals<sup>28</sup> are several orders lower than those of polymers.



**Figure 6.** Temperature profiles obtained from FEA simulations of (a)–(c) PS-on-PS and (d)–(f) PS-on-Si impact for  $M_n = 100$  kDa at  $v_i = 200$ , 400, and 600 m/s. Contour maps show the deformed  $\mu$ P when the velocity of their center-of-mass is zero. Horizontal dashed lines represent the location of the interface.

The effect of collision-induced plastic deformation and the resultant temperature rise in the  $\mu$ P with regard to substrate stiffness (i.e., PS versus Si substrate) was further examined through finite element analysis (FEA) simulations of the impact process (see the [Supporting Information](#) for more details). As shown in [Figure 6](#), 100 kDa PS- $\mu$ P's impact on the stiffer substrate was significantly more likely to increase the temperature of the  $\mu$ P beyond its  $T_g$ . This increase in the overall temperature of the impacted  $\mu$ P was attributed to the higher dissipation of the kinetic energy through plastic deformation. Moreover, localized high-temperature regions over 200 °C, far beyond  $T_g$ , were predicted at the contact interface in the PS-on-Si case. This favorable condition for interfacial melting supports a higher adhesion probability for the PS-on-Si case.

## CONCLUSIONS

For the solvent-free and solid-state deposition of glassy polymers, the  $M_n$ -dependent interplay of the primary inelastic mechanisms is systematically and comprehensively investigated through ultrafast optical images from LIPIT,  $v_r$ - and CoR spectra, SEM images, and FEA numerical modeling. Regardless of  $M_n$ , the solid-state deposition of PS- $\mu$ P on a PS substrate seems to be challenging. For low- $M_n$  PS below its critical entanglement density,  $\mu$ P are shattered upon collision with the PS substrate since the fracture process dominates over the yield process in the collision-induced deformation. Although the severe brittle fragmentation can be circumvented by increasing  $M_n$  of  $\mu$ P, the deformable PS substrate hampers the adhesion of  $\mu$ P by causing insufficient thermal softening of  $\mu$ P and recoiling to  $\mu$ P. Interestingly, the solid-state deposition of PS  $\mu$ P is feasible for a Si substrate, which is substantially more rigid than PS. While the fracture process is hindered by entangled large molecules ( $M_n \geq 40$  kDa), sufficient adiabatic shear-induced thermal softening can overwhelm fracture response because of the increased shear rates during the collision with the rigid substrate. This observation suggests that the two competing processes of fracture and plastic yielding are under a dynamic balance determined by deformation rates. Moreover, although the high  $M_n$  can bring a positive effect on the adhesion process by reducing the brittle fracture mode of

$\mu$ P, an excessively high  $M_n$  can result in weak adhesion. In the presence of the adiabatic shear instability, we believe that the dynamic viscosity of melt PS formed at the adhesion interface can result in insufficient wetting behavior due to the overly viscous PS melts for excessively high  $M_n$ . Due to the opposite effects of  $M_n$  on deformation and adhesion via fracture toughness ( $T < T_g$ ) and dynamic viscosity ( $T > T_g$ ), our study demonstrates that the proper selection of  $M_n$  is crucial for the feasibility of the solvent-free and solid-state deposition of glassy polymers. Moreover, this complicated  $M_n$ -dependent rheological behavior has not been an issue in the traditional CS using metal  $\mu$ P as the interfacial viscosity of metals abruptly drops near their melting temperatures. Therefore, we believe that more extensive UHR studies should be followed to establish the polymer-based CS with more designed polymer systems having tailored distributions of  $M_n$  and functional additives.

## ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acsomega.2c02419>.

Aging characteristics of polystyrene microparticles and substrates; surface roughness and chemistry of target substrates; finite element model and boundary conditions; material constitutive model; finite element model validation (PDF)

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## Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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