Identification of Alcohol Conformers by Raman Spectra in the C−H Stretching Region

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Ⓢ *Supporting Information*

ABSTRACT: The spontaneous polarized Raman spectra of normal and deuterated alcohols (C_2–C_5) have been recorded in the C−H stretching region. In the isotropic Raman spectra, a doublet of −C_αH stretching vibration is found for all alcohols at below 2900 cm^{-1} and above 2950 cm^{-1}. By comparing the experimental and calculated spectra of various deuterated alcohols, the doublets are attributed to the −C_αH stretching vibration of different conformers. For ethanol, the band observed at 2970 cm^{-1} is assigned as the stretching vibration of −C_αH in the C_α−O−H plane of the *gauche*-conformer, while the band at 2895 cm^{-1} is contributed from both the −C_αH$_2$ symmetrical stretching vibration of the *trans*-conformer and the −C_αH stretching vibration out of the C_α−O−H plane of the *gauche*-conformer. The population of *gauche*-conformer is estimated to be 54% in liquid ethanol. For the larger alcohols, the same assignments for the doublet are obtained, and the populations of *gauche*-conformers with plane carbon skeleton are found to be slightly larger than that of ethanol, which is consistent with results from molecular dynamics simulations.
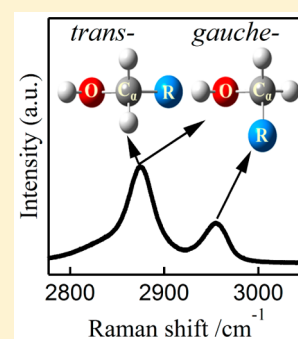
1. INTRODUCTION

The alkyl groups exist widely in organic and biological molecules. The vibrational spectroscopy in the C−H stretching region is helpful to discriminate proteins,[1] to image tissues,[2] to interpret molecular interactions,[3] and to investigate dynamical processes.[4,5] The success of these applications relies on the correct spectral assignments. Taking the energy transfer process in liquid ethanol as an example, the time-resolved anti-Stokes Raman spectra were revealed that the stretching vibrational energy moved from the −OH group to the −CH$_2$ group and then reached the −CH$_3$ group.[4] This mechanism was established based on the existing spectral assignments in the C−H stretching region. Originally, the −CH$_2$ and −CH$_3$ stretching vibration bands were found to be separated in the Raman spectra of ethanol.[6,7] However, the Raman spectra[8] and the sum of frequency generation (SFG) spectra[9] of deuterated ethanol (CH$_3$CD$_2$OH and CD$_3$CH$_2$OH) challenged the assignments. The new spectra demonstrated that the −CH$_2$ and −CH$_3$ vibrational bands were overlapped with each other.[8,9]

The controversial assignments in the C−H stretching region are due to the presence of strong spectral overlap. It is known that many Raman modes can present in this region, such as stretching vibrations of various alkys, alkyl symmetrical and asymmetrical stretching modes, and the alkyl bending overtone modes. Apart from these, the stretching modes can interact with bending overtone modes through the Fermi resonances. Previously, the spectral overlaps were eliminated through two approaches. The first one was to record Raman spectrum in gas

phase instead of liquid to generate narrow bands due to the negligible intermolecular interactions. As shown in a recent Raman spectrum of gaseous methanol,[10] more bands in the C−H stretching region were indeed resolved. According to the quantum chemistry calculation, these bands originated from the methyl out-of-plane and in-plane asymmetrical vibrations, respectively. The second approach was to measure the spectra of the deuterated compounds, which allowed resolving vibrations of different alkyls. For ethanol molecule, only −CH$_2$ and −CH$_3$ vibration modes were observed in the C−H stretching region of CD$_3$CH$_2$OH and CH$_3$CD$_2$OH, respectively.[8,9]

However, the presence of two possible conformers in alcohol molecules has made these two approaches powerless, since they cannot conquer and identify the spectral overlap from different conformers. In this context, the quantum chemistry calculation can play an important role. According to the calculations, the −CH stretching vibrations of *trans*- and *gauche*-ethanol behave differently. The −CH$_3$ asymmetric stretching vibration[11] and the overtone of −CH$_2$ bending vibration[12] of *gauche*-conformers can both contribute to the band at ~2985 cm^{-1} in the Raman spectra of gaseous ethanol and CD$_3$CH$_2$OH, respectively. Although there is no consensus on the definite assignments, these studies suggest the significance of conformers in the C−H stretching region.

There are 2, 5, 14, and 41 conformers in ethanol, *n*-propanol, *n*-butanol, and *n*-pentanol, respectively. In addition, most of the conformers could be populated, since the energy differences among the conformers are small. For example, the population ratio of *trans*- to *gauche*-ethanol was 1:1.5 in the xenon solution,[11] which agreed with the theoretical ratio 1:1.6.[13] The population ratio was 14:24:28:19:15 for the Tt, Tg, Gt, Gg, and Gg′ conformers of *n*-propanol in the recent calculations at the level of DFT/B3LYP/6-311++G(d,p).[14] In these conformers, the geometry of the same alkyl groups was different as found in previous quantum chemistry calculations.[14,15] Taking the conformer rotating around the CO bond for example, the $-C_\alpha H_2$ group is different in *trans*- and *gauche*-alcohols. In the *trans*-conformers, the OH group and both $-C_\alpha H$ groups are in different planes, and in the *gauche*-alcohols, one $-C_\alpha H$ group and OH group are coplanar, as clearly illustrated in Figure 1.
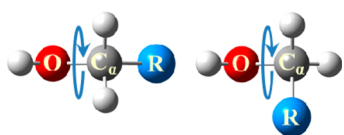
Figure 1. Geometries of *trans*-alcohol (left) and *gauche*-alcohol (right) conformers; R is alkyl group.

However, there is no direct experimental evidence to distinguish the *gauche*- and *trans*-conformers. Obviously, it is highly desirable to experimentally explore the possibility of identifying conformers in the C−H stretching region.

In this study, we measured the Raman spectra of ethanol, *n*-propanol, *n*-butanol, and *n*-pentanol in the C−H stretching region. To eliminate spectral overlap, we first recorded the spectra of gaseous alcohol and the deuterated alcohols. Two new methods were also employed to further remove spectral overlaps. First, we recorded the isotropic Raman spectra to remove asymmetric vibration modes. Second, we measured the spectrum of crystal alcohol at low temperature, which gives very sharp bands. Furthermore, density functional theory calculation was used to assign the spectra of the deuterated alcohols. In the spectra of all deuterated alcohols, a doublet was observed, which was contributed from the $-C_\alpha H$ stretching vibration of *trans*- and *gauche*-alcohol. The frequency and the intensity of the doublet tell about the structure and the population of alcohol conformers associated with the CO rotation. In addition, the molecular dynamics simulations confirmed the established populations of the alcohol conformers from the doublet.

2. EXPERIMENT

The experimental setup is similar to that used in previous studies,[16,17] and we only describe it briefly here. In this study, the backscattering geometry was employed. All the experimental data were collected with a triple monochromator system (Acton Research, TriplePro) connected to a liquid nitrogen-cooled CCD detector (Princeton Instruments, Spec-10:100B). The excitation light was a stable CW laser (Coherent, Verdi-V5, 532 nm). The laser power of 3.5 and 0.4 W was employed to excite the liquid/gas sample and the solid sample, respectively. The laser was linearly polarized with a Glan-laser prism, and its polarization direction was controlled by a half-wave plate. The Raman shifts of the spectra were calibrated with the standard lines of a mercury lamp, and the spectral resolution was ~1.0 cm^{-1}.

Carbon tetrachloride (CCl_4, 99.5%), acetonitrile (CH_3CN, 99.8%), acetic acid (CH_3COOH, 99.5%), *n*-propanol (99.0%), *n*-butanol (99.5%), and *n*-pentanol (98.5%) were purchased from Sinopharm Chemical Reagent Co. Ethanol (99.8%) was purchased from Tianjin Guangfu Fine Chemical Research Institute. CH_3CD_2OH (98%), CD_3CH_2OH (99%), and CD_3CD_2OD (99%) were obtained from Sigma-Aldrich. CD_3CHDOH (99.6%), $CH_3CD_2CD_2OH$ (99.8%), $CD_3CD_2CH_2OH$ (99.5%), $CH_3CD_2CD_2CD_2OH$ (99.4%), $CD_3CD_2CD_2CH_2OH$ (99.7%), and $CD_3CD_2CD_2CH_2OH$ (99.4%) were obtained from C.D.N Isotopes Inc. All the samples were used without further purification.

During the measurements of liquid samples, a heating bath (THD-2006, Ningbo) controlled the temperature (30 ± 0.1 °C) of the samples in a 10 × 10 mm quartz cuvette. For the gas phase measurements, the CD_3CHDOH vapor was employed at room temperature.

The crystal ethanol was prepared by using a closed-cycle cryogenic cold head which can be cooled down to 4.2 K (Janis, SHI-4-5). A mixed sample of liquid CD_3CH_2OH and CD_3CD_2OD with a mole ratio of 1:1000 was used. Then the vapor of the mixed sample was deposited on a BaF_2 plate attached to the cold head at 5 K. After deposition, the temperature of the cool head was raised slowly to 140 K and then back to 5 K. After the annealing, the deposited ethanol transferred from amorphous state to crystal, which could be characterized from much sharper line profiles in the observed spectrum.

3. COMPUTATION

All calculations were performed with the Gaussian-09 program package.[18] The geometries of conformers of deuterated alcohols were optimized at the B3LYP level with the 6-311+G(d, p) and aug-PVQZ basis sets, respectively. The harmonic vibrational frequencies were calculated at the same level, and their isotropic Raman spectra were obtained subsequently with a scaled factor of 0.963. The structures of all the conformers are displayed in the Supporting Information. We use T/t and G/g to denote the dihedral angle of the conformers, which is 180° and 60°, respectively.[19] For example, the TGg′ *n*-butanol conformer indicates that the dihedral angle of $C_\delta C_\gamma − C_\beta C_\alpha$, $C_\gamma C_\beta − C_\alpha O$, and $C_\beta C_\alpha −OH$ is 180°, 60°, and −60°, respectively.

The molecular dynamics simulations were employed to analysis the conformer populations of ethanol, *n*-propanol, *n*-butanol, and *n*-pentanol. The GROMACS simulation package[20] was used in *NPT* system. Each system consisted of 512 molecules in a cubic cell. The temperature and external pressure were fixed at 300 K and 1 atm, and they were controlled with the Nosé−Hoover thermostat[21] and Parrinello−Rahman barostat,[22] respectively. A cutoff of 1 nm was used for the LJ interactions, and the long-range electrostatic interactions were treated with the slab-adapted Ewald sum method.[23] The simulation for each system was carried out for 10−60 ns with a step of 2 fs.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Isotropic Raman Spectra. We recorded the polarized Raman spectra of all the samples, in which the polarization of Raman scattering light is parallel (I_p) or perpendicular (I_v) to that of excitation laser. The ratio between the two intensities I_v and I_p is equal to the depolarization ratio (ρ). The ρ value is in

the range from 0 to 0.75. The depolarization ratio can indicate the symmetry of vibrational mode. For the symmetric mode, ρ is smaller than 0.75, while it equals to 0.75 for the asymmetric mode. Furthermore, we can calculate the so-called isotropic Raman spectrum by the relationship[24]

$$I_{iso} = I_p - \frac{4}{3}I_v \qquad (1)$$

In this spectrum, the asymmetric vibrational bands disappear. Figure 2a shows the isotropic and parallel Raman spectra of
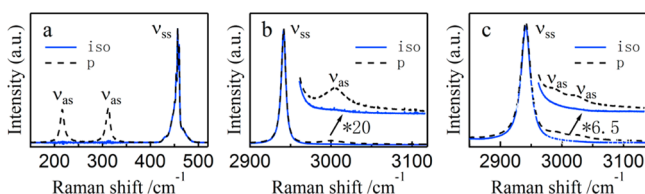
Figure 2. Isotropic and parallel Raman spectra of (a) CCl_4, (b) CH_3CN, and (c) CH_3COOH.

carbon tetrachloride (CCl_4). It can be seen that only one CCl_4 symmetric stretching band (457 cm^{-1}) exists in the isotropic spectrum. Two CCl_4 asymmetric stretching bands (216 and 312 cm^{-1}) can be found in the parallel spectrum. Figures 2b and 2c show the isotropic and parallel Raman spectra of CH_3CN and CH_3COOH, respectively. In both isotropic spectra, only one $-CH_3$ symmetric stretching band appears. It indicates that the isotropic spectra are helpful for the spectral assignment in the C—H stretching region.

4.2. Raman Spectra of Ethanol Conformers. *4.2.1. Isotropic Raman Spectra of CH_3CH_2OH, CH_3CD_2OH, and CD_3CH_2OH.* The vibrational spectra of liquid ethanol often display three bands at 2875, 2930, and 2970 cm^{-1} in the C—H stretching region. The $-CH_2$ symmetric stretching vibration and the $-CH_3$ symmetric and asymmetric stretching vibrations were believed to contribute to these bands, respectively.[6,7] Several different assignments[8,9] were given from the spectra of deuterated ethanol molecules, such as CH_3CD_2OH and CD_3CH_2OH. In these assignments,[8,9] both the $-CH_2$ and $-CH_3$ symmetric stretching modes were attributed to the band at 2875 cm^{-1}, and the Fermi resonance of the $-CH_3$ group gave rise to the band at 2930 cm^{-1}, while both $-CH_3$ asymmetric stretching vibration and the Fermi resonance of the $-CH_2$ group contributed to the band at 2970 cm^{-1}. It is noted that the spectral contributions of the ethanol conformers were completely neglected in these earlier studies.

It is well-known that both ethanol conformers can be populated at room temperature. For the gaseous ethanol, the population ratio of *trans-* to *gauche*-conformers was found to vary from 2:1 to 2:3 from different spectroscopies.[11,25] In liquid ethanol, the population of *gauche*-ethanol was found to be 50% from molecular dynamics simulations[26] or even 75% from neutron diffraction.[27] The contributions from ethanol conformers are thus necessary to consider when assigning the spectra in the C—H stretching region. This has been examined in a study on Raman spectra of gaseous ethanol. The $-CH_3$ asymmetric stretching vibration of the *gauche*-conformer is known to contribute to the band ($\sim$2985 cm^{-1}).[11] However, the same band ($\sim$2981 cm^{-1}) was still observed in the spectrum of gaseous CD_3CH_2OH, in which the spectral contribution of methyl group should not be presented.

Consequently, this band was assigned as the Fermi resonance of the $-CH_2$ stretching vibration of the *gauche*-conformer.[12]

Similar to the previous spectra,[8] we have measured the polarized Raman spectra of liquid CH_3CH_2OH, CH_3CD_2OH, and CD_3CH_2OH to generate the corresponding isotropic Raman spectra, as shown in Figure 3. As expected, only
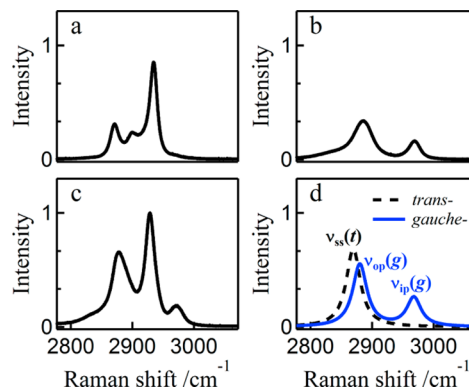
Figure 3. Experimental isotropic Raman spectra in the C—H stretching region of (a) CH_3CD_2OH, (b) CD_3CH_2OH, and (c) CH_3CH_2OH. The theoretical isotropic Raman spectra (d) of *trans-* and *gauche*-CD_3CH_2OH. All the vertical scales are the same.

symmetric vibration Raman bands appear in these spectra. It can thus be concluded that the $-CH_3$ symmetric vibrations contribute to the bands at 2871, 2900, and 2934 cm^{-1} in the isotropic spectrum of CH_3CD_2OH (Figure 3a). Similarly, the $-CH_2$ symmetric vibrations contribute to the band at 2886 and 2970 cm^{-1} in the isotropic spectrum of CD_3CH_2OH (Figure 3b). The sum of the spectrum of CH_3CD_2OH and CD_3CH_2OH is roughly equal to the spectrum of CH_3CH_2OH (Figure 3c). Furthermore, in the spectra of CH_3CH_2OH and CD_3CH_2OH, the intensities of the band at 2970 cm^{-1} are almost equal, which indicates that the $-CH_2$ symmetric vibration contributes to this band in the isotropic spectrum of CH_3CH_2OH.

As shown in Figure 3b, only a doublet at 2886 and 2970 cm^{-1} is observed in the spectrum of CD_3CH_2OH. To assign this doublet, we have calculated the isotropic Raman spectra of *trans-* and *gauche*-CD_3CH_2OH (Figure 3d). For the *trans*-conformer, only one Raman band appears at 2869 cm^{-1} as contributed from $-CH_2$ symmetrical stretching vibration. For *gauche*-ethanol, a doublet at 2880 and 2968 cm^{-1} is observed, which can be assigned to the two components of the $-C_\alpha H$ group, named as the out of the $C_\alpha-O-H$ plane $-C_\alpha H_{op}$ and in plane $-C_\alpha H_{ip}$, respectively. All vibration modes mentioned above are shown in Figure 4. Through comparing the experimental and theoretical spectra, the band at 2970 cm^{-1} in the isotropic spectra of CH_3CH_2OH and CD_3CH_2OH may
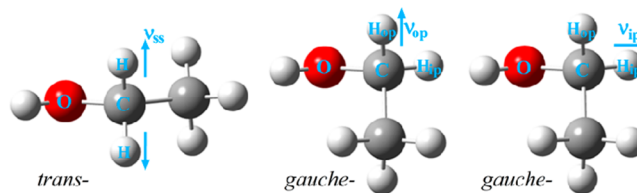

Figure 4. Methylene stretching vibration of *trans-* and *gauche*-CD_3CH_2OH.

arise from the $-C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibration of the *gauche*-conformer.

Previously, the band at 2970 cm^{-1} in the parallel Raman spectra was assigned to $-CH_3$ asymmetric stretching vibration,[6,7] the overlap of the $-CH_3$ asymmetric stretching vibration and the Fermi resonance of the $-CH_2$ group,[8,9] the $-CH_3$ asymmetric stretching vibration of the *gauche*-conformer,[11] or the Fermi resonance of the $-CH_2$ group of the *gauche*-conformer.[12] Because the asymmetric vibration is absent in the isotropic spectra, the involvement of the $-CH_3$ asymmetric stretching vibration can be ruled out. The contributions from Fermi resonance of the $-CH_2$ symmetrical vibration[8,9,12] or the $-C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibration of the *gauche*-conformer still need to be clarified, which can be achieved by measuring the Raman spectra of CD$_3$CHDOH and crystal CD$_3$CH$_2$OH.

4.2.2. Raman Spectra of CD$_3$CHDOH. As the C$_\alpha$H bending, stretching frequencies, and their Fermi Resonance of CD$_3$CHDOH are different from those of CD$_3$CH$_2$OH, we calculated vibrational frequencies of the first overtones of *trans*- and *gauche*-CD$_3$CHDOH. The theoretical $-C_\alpha H$ bending overtone Raman bands appear in the range of 2550−2750 cm^{-1} (Figure 5), while a few bands can indeed be found in the
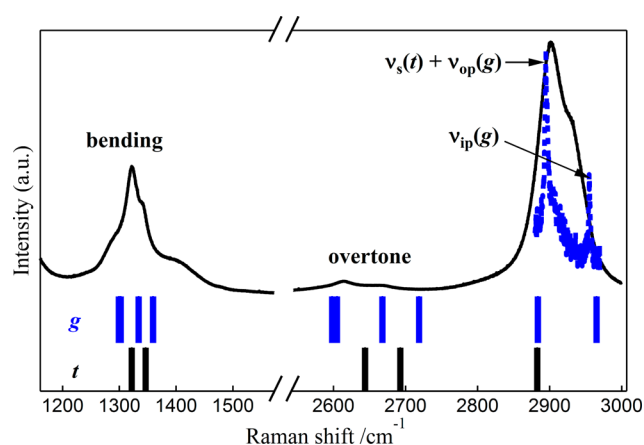


Figure 5. Calculated Raman spectra of *trans*-CD$_3$CHDOH (black) and *gauche*-CD$_3$CHDOH (blue) (vertical line). Experimental Raman spectra of liquid (solid line) and gaseous (dashed line) CD$_3$CHDOH.

experimental Raman spectrum of liquid CD$_3$CHDOH. Hence, the $-C_\alpha H$ bending overtone contributes to these weak bands, and in other words, the Fermi resonances of $-C_\alpha H$ bending overtones do not contribute to the doublet around 2900 cm^{-1}. Moreover in the spectrum of gaseous CD$_3$CHDOH, the doublet is more obvious as shown in Figure 5. According to the theoretical calculation, the $-CH_2$ symmetrical stretching vibration of *trans*-ethanol and $-C_\alpha H_{op}$ stretching vibration of the *gauche*-conformer give the band at 2895 cm^{-1}, and the $-C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibration of *gauche*-ethanol contributes to the other band at 2955 cm^{-1}. All these spectra demonstrate that the $-C_\alpha H$ stretching vibrations of *gauche*-ethanol indeed are different with those of *trans*-ethanol. Thus, the doublet in the Raman spectra can be used to identify the ethanol conformer.

4.2.3. Raman Spectra of Crystal CD$_3$CH$_2$OH. As the intermolecular interactions can influence the Fermi resonance,[28] we adjusted the molecular interactions through changing CD$_3$CH$_2$OH from liquid to solid. Because the stretching vibrations of various $-CH_2$ groups couple with each other in pure crystal CD$_3$CH$_2$OH, we did not measure the

spectrum of the pure crystal. We measured instead the parallel Raman spectrum of the crystal mixed with CD$_3$CH$_2$OH/ CD$_3$CD$_2$OD (1‰, mole fraction). In this case every CD$_3$CH$_2$OH molecule is isolated by large number of CD$_3$CD$_2$OD molecules, and the $-CH_2$ vibration coupling does not occur. Interestingly, there are more bands in the Raman spectrum of crystal ethanol. Two new bands appear at 2915 and 2932 cm^{-1}, which are consistent with the theoretical frequencies of the $-CH$ bending overtone bands of *gauche*- and *trans*-ethanol, respectively. The bands at 2869, 2880, 2896, and 2968 cm^{-1} can be assigned as the $-CH_2$ symmetrical stretching vibration of the *trans*-conformer, $-C_\alpha H_{op}$ stretching vibration of the *gauche*-conformer, $-CH_2$ asymmetric stretching vibration of the *trans*-conformer, and $-C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibration of the *gauche*-conformer, respectively. Comparing the spectra of liquid and solid samples, the Fermi resonance bands disappear in the isotropic spectra of liquid CD$_3$CH$_2$OH. In the liquid, the first peak of the doublet results from the $-CH_2$ symmetrical stretching vibration of the *trans*-conformer and the $-C_\alpha H_{op}$ stretching vibration of the *gauche*-conformer, and the second peak of the doublet belongs to the $-C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibration of the *gauche*-conformer.
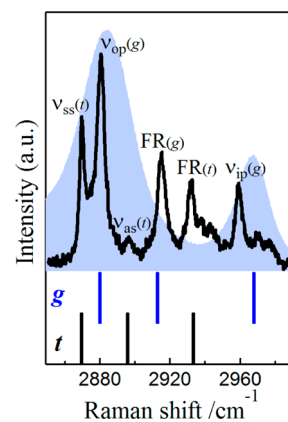

Figure 6. Parallel Raman spectrum in the C−H stretching region of crystal CD$_3$CH$_2$OH in CD$_3$CD$_2$OD at the temperature 5 K (solid line) and the isotropic Raman spectrum of liquid CD$_3$CH$_2$OH (shaded curve). The theoretical Raman spectra (vertical line) of *trans*-CD$_3$CH$_2$OH (black) and *gauche*-CD$_3$CH$_2$OH (blue).

The spectra of CD$_3$CHDOH and crystal CD$_3$CH$_2$OH demonstrate that the band at 2970 cm^{-1} does not result from the Fermi resonance of the $-CH_2$ symmetrical vibration, and it is assigned to the $-C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibration of *gauche*-ethanol. The doublet in the isotropic spectra of liquid CD$_3$CH$_2$OH can thus be used to identify the *gauche*-conformer.

Rather than the $-CH$ stretching modes, other vibration modes were employed to identify the ethanol conformers in the previous studies.[11,25,29−34] For example, $-CH_3$ rocking vibration of the *trans*-conformer and CC stretching vibration of the *gauche*-conformer contributed to the bands at 887 and 879 cm^{-1} for ethanol in the xenon solution, respectively.[11] Furthermore, the *trans*- and *gauche*-conformers induced two separated bands in the $-OH$ stretching region in the IR absorption spectra of ethanol in a nitrogen cryomatrix[29] and in the Raman spectra of jetted ethanol.[33] In this study, the doublet in the C−H stretching region of the isotropic Raman spectra of CD$_3$CH$_2$OH offers a new spectral window to identify the ethanol conformer.

4.3. Isotopic Raman Spectra of *n*-Propanol Conformers.

n-Propanol has five conformers, here they are denoted as Tt, Tg′, Gt, Gg, and Gg′. Their structures are given in Figure S1. Several spectroscopic tools have been used to identify the conformers. The rotational spectroscopy confirmed *trans*- (T) and *gauche-n*-propanol (G) in the vapor phase.[35] Recently, the same spectroscopy identified the Gt, Gg, and Gg′ conformers in the gaseous *n*-propanol.[36,37] The vibrational spectroscopy identified the *n*-propanol conformers in C−D stretching region,[14] O−H stretching region,[14,15,19,38−40] and fingerprint region.[40,41] For example, the −C_αD stretching band was used to identify the *gauche*-conformer of *n*-[1-D]propanol.[14] The bands in the −OH stretching region were employed to distinguish Tt, Tg, Gg′, and Gt conformers in diluted *n*-propanol/CCl_4 solution[38] and all the conformers in gaseous *n*-propanol.[39] Recently, the fingerprint region of IR absorption spectra helped to identify the T and G conformers of jetted *n*-propanol.[40] Based on these spectral studies, the populations of the conformers were obtained.[14,40,42] Through microwave spectroscopy, the population ratio of the four conformers Tt:Gt:Tg:Gg was estimated as 9:30:28:33.[42] The ratio was consistent with the theoretical value.[14] These spectroscopic studies indicate that the spectra of the conformers are different in various vibration region. However, to the best of our knowledge, there was no report about the C−H stretching vibration of the *n*-propanol conformers. Therefore, the characterization of *n*-propanol conformers in the C−H stretching region becomes interesting to us.

The theoretical isotropic Raman spectra of the five $CD_3CD_2CH_2OH$ conformers are shown in Figure 7. We divide
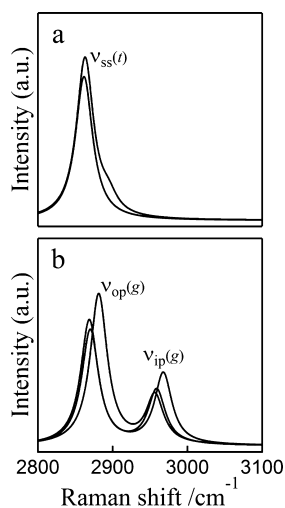
Figure 7. Calculated isotropic Raman spectra of (a) two *trans*- and (b) three *gauche*-$CD_3CD_2CH_2OH$. The same vertical scales are used.

the five conformers into two groups associated with the CO bond rotation. One group contains Tt and Gt conformers, which are named as *trans*-conformers. In this group, −OH group and both −C_αH groups are in the different plane. For the *trans*-conformers, both −C_αH bonds are almost equivalent because of the symmetrical structure. Therefore, both −C_αH stretching vibrations generate the −CH_2 symmetric and asymmetric stretching modes. Because of the absence of the asymmetric mode in isotropic spectra, only one band exists in the isotropic spectra of *trans*-conformers, as shown in Figure 7a.

The −CH_2 symmetric stretching vibration contributes to the band at 2856 cm^{-1}. The other group contains Tg, Gg, and Gg′ conformers, which are named as *gauche*-conformers. In this group, one −C_αH group is coplanar with the −OH group, while the other −C_αH group is not in the plane of C_α−O−H. For *gauche*-conformers, both −C_αH bonds generate two bands. The −$C_\alpha H_{op}$ and −$C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibration contributes to the bands below 2900 cm^{-1} and above 2950 cm^{-1}, respectively, as shown in Figure 7b. Therefore, the doublet indicates *gauche-n*-propanol, which is the same with ethanol.

The isotropic Raman spectrum of liquid $CD_3CD_2CH_2OH$ also presents the doublet, as shown in Figure 8a. Hence, the
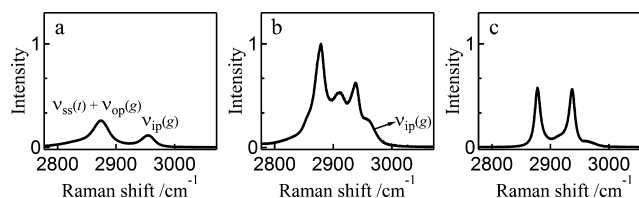
Figure 8. Experimental isotropic Raman spectra in the C−H stretching region of (a) $CD_3CD_2CH_2OH$, (b) $CH_3CH_2CH_2OH$, and (c) $CH_3CD_2CD_2OH$.

−CH_2 symmetrical stretching vibration of *trans*-propanol and the −$C_\alpha H_{op}$ stretching vibration of *gauche*-propanol are assigned to the first band at 2874 cm^{-1} and the −$C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibration of *gauche*-propanol to the second band at 2955 cm^{-1}. Figure 8b shows the isotropic Raman spectrum of liquid $CH_3CH_2CH_2OH$. There is a shoulder peak at 2960 cm^{-1}, and its intensity roughly equals that of the band at 2955 cm^{-1} for $CD_3CD_2CH_2OH$. Thus, the −$C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibration of *gauche*-conformers contributes to this shoulder. Traditionally, this band in the parallel Raman spectra was assigned as the −CH_3 asymmetric stretching vibration of liquid *n*-propanol,[43,44] but this asymmetrical stretching mode could be absent in the isotropic Raman spectra. In order to check the contribution of −CH_3 stretching vibration to the shoulder band at 2960 cm^{-1}, we measured the isotropic Raman spectrum of liquid $CH_3CD_2CD_2OH$, as shown in Figure 8c. Various −CH_3 symmetric vibrations contribute to all the bands. Because the band at 2969 cm^{-1} is very weak in the spectrum of $CH_3CD_2CD_2OH$, the −CH_3 vibration contributes very little to the shoulder band at 2960 cm^{-1} for $CH_3CH_2CH_2OH$. Again, the doublet represents the *gauche*-propanol in the isotropic Raman spectra of the −C_αH stretching vibration.

4.4. Isotopic Raman Spectra of *n*-Butanol Conformers.

n-Butanol has 14 conformers, and their structures are displayed in Figure S2. The vibrational spectroscopies were used to identify these conformers in the fingerprint and the O−H stretching region. For example, the CO stretching band in IR spectra was employed to distinguish the conformers associated with $C_\gamma C_\beta$−C_αO dihedral angle in liquid *n*-butanol.[45] The spectral region below 1600 cm^{-1} of Raman and IR spectra helped to identify the TTt and TTg in the solid *n*-butanol, and all the conformers except the GG′*x* in the liquid and glassy *n*-butanol, where *x* was denoted as t, g, and g′.[46] The −OH stretching bands in FTIR spectra were applied to distinguish the conformers associated with $C_\beta C_\alpha$−OH dihedral angle in CCl_4 solution.[47] These studies suggested that the vibration spectra of conformers were different in various region. However, there was no report about the C−H stretching vibration of these conformers. Therefore, the identification of

the conformers in the C−H stretching region becomes interesting to us.

The theoretical isotropic Raman spectra of the $CD_3CD_2CD_2CH_2OH$ conformers associated with CO rotation are displayed in Figure 9. One and two bands are observed in
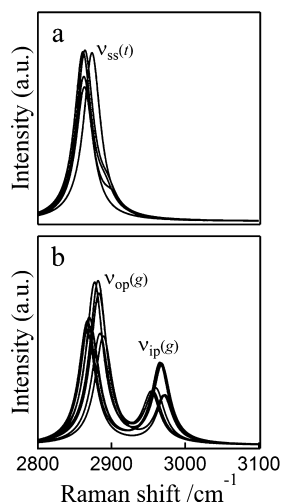
Figure 9. Calculated isotropic Raman spectra of (a) five *trans*- and (b) nine *gauche*-$CD_3CD_2CD_2CH_2OH$. The vertical scales are the same.

the isotropic spectra of *trans*- and *gauche*-conformers, respectively. Therefore, the doublet indicates the *gauche-n*-butanol. The −CH_2 symmetrical vibration contributes to the band in the spectra of *trans*-butanol. The −$C_\alpha H_{op}$ and −$C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibration of *gauche*-conformers contributes to the band below 2900 cm^{-1} and above 2950 cm^{-1}, respectively.

The isotropic Raman spectrum of liquid $CD_3CD_2CD_2$-CH_2OH also presents the doublet, as shown in Figure 10a.
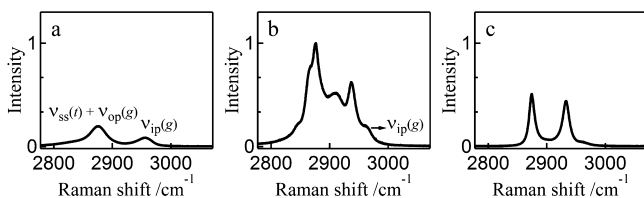
Figure 10. Experimental isotropic Raman spectra in the C−H stretching region of (a) $CD_3CD_2CD_2CH_2OH$, (b) CH_3CH_2-CH_2CH_2OH, and (c) $CH_3CD_2CD_2CD_2OH$. All the vertical scales are the same.

Therefore, the −CH_2 symmetrical stretching vibration of *trans*-butanol and the −$C_\alpha H_{op}$ stretching vibration of the *gauche*-conformer are assigned to the first band at 2876 cm^{-1} and the −$C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibration of *gauche*-butanol to the second band at 2957 cm^{-1}. A shoulder band at 2962 cm^{-1} is observed in the isotropic Raman spectrum of liquid *n*-butanol (Figure 10b); its intensity is roughly equal to that of the band at 2957 cm^{-1} in the spectrum of $CD_3CD_2CD_2CH_2OH$. Thus, the shoulder band is assigned to the −$C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibration of *gauche*-butanol. However, the band above 2950 cm^{-1} in the SFG spectrum was contributed from the −CH_3 asymmetric stretching vibration of *n*-butanol.[48] To confirm the contribution of −CH_3 group to the shoulder band at 2962 cm^{-1}, we recorded the isotropic Raman spectrum of liquid $CH_3CD_2CD_2CD_2OH$ (Figure 10c). In this spectrum, the

band at 2965 cm^{-1} is very weak, so the contribution of −CH_3 group is very little to the band at 2962 cm^{-1}. Again, the doublet or the band at 2957 cm^{-1} represents *gauche-n*-butanol.

4.5. Isotopic Raman Spectra of *n*-Pentanol Conformers. *n*-Pentanol has 41 conformers, and the structures of these conformers are shown in Figure S3. The vibrational spectroscopy was employed to identify the conformers in the O−H stretching region and the skeleton stretching region. The −OH stretching band in FTIR absorption spectra was used to distinguish the *trans*- and *gauche*-conformer associated with CO rotation in the pentanol/CCl_4 solution.[30] The CC stretching bands in Raman spectra were applied to identify the *trans*-conformers associated with the CCCC axis.[49] Recently, the skeleton deformation and stretching bands in Raman spectra helped to identify the TTT, TTG, and TGG conformers.[50] To the best of our knowledge, the spectra of the *n*-pentanol conformers were ignored in the C−H stretching region. Therefore, here we again check the spectra of the conformers in the C−H stretching region.

Figure 11 shows the theoretical isotropic Raman spectra of $CD_3CD_2CD_2CD_2CH_2OH$ conformers associated with CO
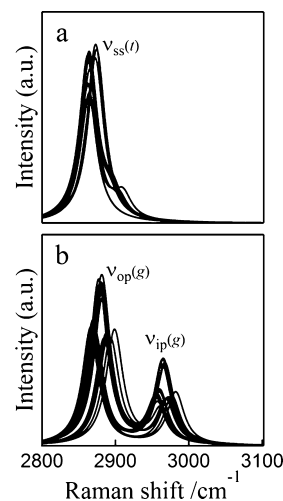
Figure 11. Calculated isotropic Raman spectra of (a) 14 *trans*- and (b) 27 *gauche*-$CD_3CD_2CD_2CD_2CH_2OH$ in the C−H stretching region. The vertical scales are the same.

rotation. Similar to ethanol, *n*-propanol, and *n*-butanol, one band and two bands appear in the spectra of *trans*- and *gauche*-conformers, respectively. The −CH_2 symmetric stretching vibration contributes to the band for *trans-n*-pentanol. The −$C_\alpha H_{op}$ and −$C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibration contributes to the band below 2900 cm^{-1} and above 2950 cm^{-1} for *gauche-n*-pentanol, respectively. Therefore, the doublet indeed indicates the *gauche-n*-pentanol.

The isotropic Raman spectrum of liquid $CD_3CD_2CD_2CD_2$-CH_2OH also presents a doublet (Figure 12a). Hence, the −CH_2 symmetric stretching vibration of *trans*-conformers and the −$C_\alpha H_{op}$ stretching vibration of *gauche*-conformers contribute to the first band at 2875 cm^{-1} and the −$C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibration of *gauche*-conformers to the second band at 2956 cm^{-1}. In addition, the isotropic spectrum of *n*-pentanol also presents a shoulder band at 2961 cm^{-1} (Figure 12b). As its intensity approximately equals to that of the band at 2956 cm^{-1}, the −CH_{ip} stretching vibration of *gauche*-conformers contributes to the shoulder band. Moreover, this band in the SFG
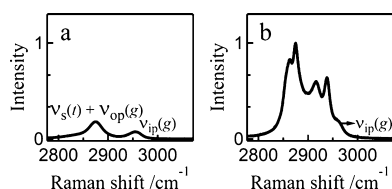
**Figure 12.** Experimental isotropic Raman spectra in the C–H stretching region of (a) $CD_3CD_2CD_2CD_2CH_2OH$ and (b) $CH_3CH_2CH_2CH_2CH_2OH$. The vertical scales are the same.

spectrum was attributed to the $-CH_3$ asymmetric stretching vibration.[51] However, the asymmetric vibration is absent in the isotropic Raman spectrum. In a word, the doublet or the band at 2956 cm^{-1} represents the *gauche-n*-pentanol.

4.6. Relative Population of the *gauche*-Conformers. All the Raman spectra present a doublet in the C_α–H stretching region for the deuterated alcohols (C_2–C_5). The band above 2950 cm^{-1} in the doublet belongs to the $-C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibrations of *gauche*-conformers. Figure 13a displays
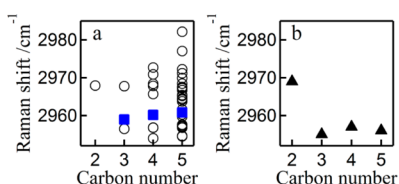
Figure 13. Carbon number dependent calculated frequencies of the $-C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching band of the *gauche*-conformers; the frequencies of the conformer with the plane carbon skeleton are indicated by blue squares (a). Carbon number dependent experimental frequencies of the $-C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching band of the deuterated alcohols (b).

the theoretical frequencies of all these vibrations for each alcohol. In recent Raman study of alcohols in the low wavenumber region, it was found that the conformer with the plane carbon skeleton was dominant in liquid alcohols.[50] The frequencies of the C_3–C_5 alcohol conformers with this geometry are smaller than that of *gauche*-ethanol, as shown in Figure 13a. Thus, the Raman shift of the $-C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching band (C_3–C_5) should be smaller than that of *gauche*-ethanol, which is observed in the experimental Raman shifts of all the alcohols (Figure 13b). The consistency between experiment and theoretical calculation indicates again that the *gauche*-conformers contribute to the doublet.

As this doublet is contributed from two kinds of conformers, we can obtain their populations with eq 2

$$\frac{I_{2950 \text{ cm}^{-1}}}{I_{2850 \text{ cm}^{-1}}} = \frac{c\sigma_{ip\text{-}gauche}}{c\sigma_{op\text{-}gauche} + (1 - c)\sigma_{trans}} \quad (2)$$

where I is the integral intensity from the spectral fitting with Lorentz function to the experimental Raman spectra, c is the population of *gauche*-conformers, and σ is the Raman scattering cross section. The theoretical scattering cross section ratio $\sigma_{trans}:\sigma_{op\text{-}gauche}:\sigma_{ip\text{-}gauche}$ is roughly 2:2:1 at the B3LYP/6-311+G-(d,p) and B3LYP/aug-PVQZ levels. Using this ratio, we obtain the populations of *gauche*-conformers in liquid alcohols, as shown in Table 1. Obviously, the *gauche*-conformers are dominant in all the alcohols. Moreover, the populations of *gauche*-conformers of the alcohols (C_3–C_5) are larger than that of ethanol. The 54% population of *gauche*-ethanol agrees well with that from previous molecular dynamics simulation.[26]

Table 1. Population of *gauche*-Conformer in Alcohols Obtained through Raman Spectroscopy and Molecular Dynamics Simulation

	ethanol	*n*-propanol	*n*-butanol	*n*-pentanol
Raman	54	67	70	68
MD simulation	50	63	60	60

Furthermore, we also performed the molecular dynamics simulations to calculate the populations of *gauche*-alcohols from ethanol to *n*-pentanol and are summarized in Table 1. The theoretical population is 50% in liquid ethanol, and the populations of *gauche*-conformers for other alcohols (C_3–C_5) are larger than that for ethanol. The theoretical populations agree well with the experimental ones.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The spontaneous Raman spectra of normal and deuterated alcohols (C_2–C_5) were recorded in the C–H stretching vibrational region. In all isotropic Raman spectra of the deuterated alcohols (C_2–C_5), a doublet of $-C_\alpha H$ stretching vibration is found for all alcohols at below 2900 cm^{-1} and above 2950 cm^{-1}, respectively. Interestingly, the band intensity at above 2950 cm^{-1} of normal alcohol is approximately equal to that of the deuterated molecule. The $-C_\alpha H$ stretching vibration is believed to contribute to the band, rather than the $-CH_3$ asymmetric stretching as previous assigned.

To identify the $-C_\alpha H$ stretching and the Fermi resonance of the $-C_\alpha H$ bending overtones, the Raman spectra of liquid/gaseous CD_3CHDOH and the crystal CD_3CH_2OH/CD_3CD_2OH have been measured. Apart from a very similar doublet around 2950 cm^{-1}, the Fermi resonance of the $-C_\alpha H$ bending overtones are observed in all the spectra. For CD_3CHDOH, the overtone bands locate in a range of 2550–2750 cm^{-1}, and for CD_3CH_2OH/CD_3CD_2OH, two overtone bands appear at 2915 and 2933 cm^{-1}. The doublet around 2950 cm^{-1} is contributed from the $-C_\alpha H$ stretching.

With the aid of the calculated Raman spectra at the level of B3LYP/6-311+G(d,p), the first band at below 2900 cm^{-1} of the doublet is contributed from both the $-C_\alpha H_2$ symmetrical stretching vibration of the *trans*-conformer and the $-C_\alpha H$ stretching vibration out of the C_α–O–H plane of the *gauche*-conformer, and the second band at above 2950 cm^{-1} is assigned to the $-C_\alpha H$ stretching vibration in the C_α–O–H plane of the *gauche*-conformer. Using the spectral intensity of the doublet, the population of *gauche*-conformer is estimated to be 54%, 67%, 70%, and 68% from ethanol to *n*-pentanol, which is consistent with that from molecular dynamics simulation.

■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

ⓢ Supporting Information

All the conformers geometries of *n*-propanol, *n*-butanol, and *n*-pentanol; frequencies of the $-C_\alpha H_{ip}$ stretching vibration for *gauche*-alcohols. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

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Notes
The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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