Optical and transport properties of an alkali-doped methanofullerene

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We examine the effects of monoderivatization on the electronic properties of C60. For this we chose the phenyl-C61-octanoic acid cholesteryl ester, [6,6]PCOCr, whose nonlinear optical properties have been investigated in the past. While the optical absorption spectrum of this methano fullerene is similar to that of C60, substantial differences are observed upon doping with potassium. Similarly, the doping-dependent conductivity of the functionalized fullerene shows two maxima as opposed to the single maximum for C60. The experimental observations are consistent with the doping-induced degeneracy removal of the parent C60 LUMO (t1u) orbital, which in potassium-doped methanofullerene splits into two components separated by about 0.5 eV. We provide experimental evidence that the doping of [6,6]PCOCr proceeds, as in C60, with six consecutive reduction (electron transfer) steps, yielding K6[6,6]PCOCr stoichiometry at the end. The transport in partially doped [6,6]PCOCr thin films occurs by thermally activated hopping of the charge carriers with activation energy Eα ≈ 0.25 eV and hopping probability proportional to the number of unpaired electrons in the reduced molecule. © 2002 American Institute of Physics.

While the optical properties of C60 have been extensively studied,1 little is known about the optical and transport properties of derivatized fullerenes. Unlike pristine C60, its compounds tend to decompose during sublimation, thus preventing epitaxial growth of solvent-free thin films, the most suitable form for optical studies. Thin films from solutions of such compounds are also difficult to obtain since most of them have poor solubility. Notable exceptions are certain methanofullerenes, shown in Fig. 1, whose functional groups consist of a benzene ring and a cholesteryl group attached to the bridgehead 61st carbon atom.2 Such derivatives are soluble in common organic solvents, giving rise to viscous solutions from which optical-quality thin films can be obtained by spin coating. As in the case of C60, photo-induced charge transfer has been detected in conjugated polymers doped with methanofullerenes,3 whereas the optical-limiting properties of methanofullerenes were found to be better than in C60 (Ref. 4).

C60 can be functionalized to form products in which a C–C double bond shared by two 6-membered carbon rings is converted to a single bond (i.e., a [6,6] derivative or methanofullerene).5 In this case, the C60icosahedral symmetry is lowered, and it is of interest to see how the eigenstates of the parent molecule and the molecule electron affinity are affected by such a perturbation. Theoretical calculations indicated6 that the most profound effect on the electronic states is a degeneracy removal of the C60 LUMO, t1u orbital. In this study, we focus on the phenyl-C61-octanoic acid cholesteryl ester, abbreviated hereafter as [6,6]PCOCr. The material used was 100% pure methanofullerene monoadduct, as determined by high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) and proton and 13C-NMR (Ref. 2). We examine the effects of the functionalization by utilizing correlated in situ optical and conductivity measurements of alkali metal-doped thin films of the methanofullerene. Such measurements can be instrumental in identifying the origin of the interband transitions in fullerences.7,8

The [6,6]PCOCr methanofullerene in Fig. 1 was spin-coated from toluene solution onto fused-silica substrates con-

FIG. 1. Absorption spectra of pristine C60 (upper trace) and that of [6,6]PCOCr with the assignment of the most prominent electronic transitions in C60. Of the two overlapping transitions at 3.6 eV, h→t1u has a much higher oscillator strength (see Ref. 1 for details).
taining two parallel gold pads separated by 3 mm. A thin film
of pristine C60 was sublimed onto a separate substrate to a
thickness of 80 nm, which roughly matched the optical den-
sity of the methanofullerene film. Absorption spectra in
1.5-6 eV region were recorded using a standard Hewlett-
Packard 8452A diode-array spectrophotometer, whose optical
cavity was modified in order to accommodate a remote
vacuum chamber in its optical path. The recorded energy
range corresponds to the optical limit of the entire apparatus.
The two substrates with films facing opposite directions were
attached to a rod and sequentially exposed to potassium flux
prior to spectral and conductivity measurements. Temperature-dependent conductance measurements were
performed in an ultra-high vacuum chamber, equipped with a
cold-finger cryostat. The methanofullerene sample was
slowly doped at room temperature until a maximum or a
minimum in conductance was reached, and then annealed at
400 K for 30 min. Temperature-dependent conductance mea-
surements were made in 5 K increments beginning at 80 K,
with the sample allowed to equilibrate for 10 min before
each conductance value was recorded. The two-probe elec-
tric conductance was measured using a high input-impedance
(1012 Ω) meter, allowing for a lowest current reading of
about 0.01 nS.

The optical absorption spectrum of pristine [6,6]PCOCr
(Fig. 1) is strikingly similar to that of C60 above 3.0 eV
except for a small but systematic 0.15 eV blue shift of the
HOMO-LUMO (σ absorption at the low energy where the parity-forbidden
C60, the conductivity of potassium-doped
KxC60 was measured using a high input-impedance
(1012 Ω) meter, allowing for a lowest current reading of
about 0.01 nS.

The optical absorption spectrum of pristine [6,6]PCOCr
(Fig. 1) is strikingly similar to that of C60 above 3.0 eV
except for a small but systematic 0.15 eV blue shift of the
main spectral features. This shift can be linked to the loss of
one σ bond in [6,6]PCOCr, which lowers the C60 σ-electron
density by 3%. Notable differences occur in the optical ab-
sorption at the low energy where the parity-forbidden
HOMO-LUMO (hν → τ1α) transition of C60 lies. The absorp-
tion of [6,6]PCOCr is distinctly weaker in this region, which
may seem surprising considering that the symmetry reduc-
tion should eliminate the parity constraints. Breaking one
fullerene double bond has apparently little effect on the sym-
bmetry of the molecular ground state electronic wave func-
tion, which still appears diagonal in the It representation.
This is not the case with the vibrational spectra of monofunc-
tionalized fullerenes, where changes due to functionalization
are extensive. The optical spectrum of the methanofullerene
is free from contributions from functional groups, such as
ketone and phenyl groups, since their extinction coefficients
are two orders of magnitude lower than that of C60 (Ref. 10).

Doping with alkali metals transforms insulating C60 into
a conductive ionic salt of the type KxC60, where 0< x <6. Conductivity in KxC60 is electronic because donated elec-
trons occupy the three-fold degenerate τ1α-derived conduction
band of C60 with itinerant electrons. The conductivity of
KxC60, shown by an inset in Fig. 2, increases by several
orders of magnitude with alkali doping, to reach 300 S cm−1
in KxC60, at which point the conduction band is half-filled
with electrons.11 Beyond this point, conductivity decreases
monotonically to reach a minimum in the K6C60 phase. Un-
lke C60, the conductivity of potassium-doped [6,6]PCOCr
shows two conductivity maxima as a function of the dopant
concentration.12 When exposed to a potassium flux, the con-
ductivity of [6,6]PCOCr thin film increases steadily to reach
a maximum of 0.1 S cm−1, after which it decreases slowly to
a certain point where it starts to rise again. After the second
maximum, conductivity decreases again to yield an insulat-
sing sample at the end of the doping cycle. The time required
to complete doping of [6,6]PCOCr films was considerably
longer than that of C60 due to the much slower diffusion of
potassium ions through the amorphous solid. Systematic
variation of the potassium flux showed that doping of C60
was limited by the potassium deposition rate, while potas-
sium ion diffusion rate was the limiting factor in the case of
[6,6]PCOCr. The diffusion constant of potassium ions in C60
is on the order of 10−16 m2 s−1 (Ref. 13), while that of
[6,6]PCOCr is about 30 times smaller. The conductivity of
potassium-doped [6,6]PCOCr film is also lower than that of
KxC60 by about four orders of magnitude. The lower conduc-
tivity is in part due to the amorphous nature of the function-
alized fullerene, which reduces mobility of the charge carri-
ers.

The temperature-dependent conductivity of potassium-
doped [6,6]PCOCr was measured at doping levels corre-
sponding to the two maxima and two minima in the conduc-
tivity curve. The results for the first conductivity maxima are
shown by the inset in Fig. 2. The temperature-activated hop-
ning conductivity can be described by

\[ \ln(s) = C - E/T^n, \]  

where n is identically 1 for the nearest neighbor carrier hop-
ping, C is a pre-exponential containing carrier attempt fre-
frequency, and E is the activation energy. The higher tempera-
ture region, for which n = 1, was directly fitted to give the
activation energies listed in Table I. The relatively large
value of the activation energies arises from electron localization
in the material, which in turn is due to considerable
separation of the methanofullerene molecules caused by their
long aliphatic tail. More importantly, however, we see that
the activation energy for nearest-neighbor hopping is inde-
dendent of the doping level and thus independent of the

\[ \ln(s) = C - E/T^n, \]

FIG. 2. Electrical DC conductivity of potassium-doped [6,6]PCOCr thin
film as a function of the doping time. Suggested is the Kx[6,6]PCOCr sto-
ichiometry as well as spin configuration of the localized electrons. Shown in
the upper left corner are the conductivity measurements performed simulta-
nously on a thin film of C60. Temperature-dependent conductance of the
Kx[6,6]PCOCr stoichiometry that corresponds to the first maximum in con-
ductivity is shown in the upper right corner.

fullerene oxidation state. Hence, based on the activation energies alone it would be difficult to reconcile the double maximum in the conductivity curve in Fig. 2, the degeneracy removal of the parent \( t_{1u} \) orbital therefore needs to be considered.

In \( C_{60} \), the \( t_{1u} \) LUMO is degenerate when either empty (\( C_{60} \)) or completely filled (\( K_{6} C_{60} \)) (Ref. 14). For the functionalized fullerene, theoretical calculations predict splitting of the three-fold degenerate parent \( t_{1u} \) orbital into a nearly doubly degenerate \( \sigma \)-like orbital and a \( \pi \)-like orbital, with a separation of about 0.4 eV (Ref. 6). The two conductivity maxima in Fig. 2 can now be explained assuming that the splitting between the two orbitals is larger than the corresponding electron correlation energy. Thus, \( K_{d}[6,6]PCOCr \) and \( K_{o}[6,6]PCOCr \) stoichiometries yield closed spin configurations, as indicated in Fig. 2, while \( K_{j}[6,6]PCOCr \), \( K_{s}[6,6]PCOCr \), and \( K_{m}[6,6]PCOCr \) consist of open-shell spin configurations which are held responsible for the conductivity observed in the experiment. Note that the ratio of the two conductivity maxima is 3:2 rather than 2:1, as it would be expected from the difference between the two stoichiometries with respect to the carrier density. We attribute this discrepancy to the slow potassium diffusion rate for the conductivity observed in the experiment. Note that the activation energy alone it would be difficult to reconcile the double transitions of \( C_{60} \), only the \( t_{1u} \) transition of \( C_{60} \) at 1.1 eV (see Fig. 1), which is known to gradually shift towards 4 eV with potassium doping (Refs. 7 and 8). As a result, an oscillatory \( \Delta A \) is obtained in agreement with experiment. The same applies to the rest of the absorption bands of \( C_{60} \). Discussion regarding \( \Delta A \) spectra of potassium-doped \([6,6]PCOCr\) is given in the body of the article.

Owing to its molecular nature, the electronic orbitals in solid \( C_{60} \) can be assigned with the help of extended Hückel analysis of the isolated \( C_{60} \) molecule.\textsuperscript{15} The same is true for alkali metal intercalated \( C_{60} \) (Refs. 1, 15), whose electronic transitions can be divided into two categories: the transitions originating from the \( C_{60} \) valence bands, consisting of \( h_{u} \) and \( (h_{g}+g_{g}) \) orbitals, and the transitions originating from the \( C_{60} t_{1u} \) conduction band. The first group persists in both pristine and alkali-doped fullerene with the exception of \( h_{g} \rightarrow t_{1u} \) and \( (h_{g}+g_{g}) \rightarrow t_{1u} \) transitions, which fade away once the \( t_{1u} \) orbital is filled. The second group of transitions, all originating from the \( t_{1u} \) orbital, is only present in doped phases. Wilson \textit{et al}.\textsuperscript{16} were the first to investigate changes in the absorption spectra of alkali-doped thin films of \( C_{60} \), where the second group of transitions is clearly visible. Whereas Wilson \textit{et al}. employed normalized differential absorption, \( \Delta A_{u}=(A−A_{o})/A_{o} \), we opt for simple differential absorption, \( \Delta A=(A−A_{o}) \) in comparing absorption spectra of potassium-doped methanofullerene with those of \( C_{60} \); in both cases, \( A_{o} \) and \( A \) represent absorbance of the undoped and doped fullerene, respectively. We choose simple differential absorption since normalized differential absorption tends to suppress changes in the high-optical density region of the spectrum and, conversely, inflate the changes at the low-density end. For alkali-doped \( C_{60} \), positive \( \Delta A \) can imply transitions originating from the \( t_{1u} \) orbital, while negative \( \Delta A \) suggests transitions terminating at that orbital. The changes in \( \Delta A \) can also occur with shifting of the energy levels which, as we discuss below, complicates interpretation of the spectra.

In Fig. 3, \( \Delta A \) of potassium-doped \( C_{60} \) in the 1.5–6 eV region is compared with that of potassium-doped \([6,6]PCOCr\). The absorption spectra were recorded every two minutes during alkali doping, but only a selected number of traces, separated by equal time intervals, is shown for clarity. Among the second group of transitions in potassium-doped \( C_{60} \), only the \( t_{1u} \rightarrow h_{g} \) transition at 1.1 eV and the \( t_{1u} \rightarrow h_{g} \) transition at 2.8 eV have been assigned with certainty.\textsuperscript{1} Consistent with this is the positive \( \Delta A \) in the low-energy region in Fig. 3(a) showing a shoulder at 1.5 eV (due to the \( t_{1u} \rightarrow h_{g} \) transition at 1.1 eV) and a broad feature at 2.8 eV. The positive \( \Delta A \) at 2.2 eV has been attributed previously to the \( t_{1u} \rightarrow h_{g} \) vibrational sidebands.\textsuperscript{16} Alternatively, this band may be the consequence of doping-induced splitting of the upper \( h_{g} \) band, visible in the density of states diagram of the alkali metal doped phases.\textsuperscript{14} The \( C_{60} \) spectra in the 3.5–6 eV re-

### Table 1. Experimental activation energies, \( E_{a} \), for different \( K_{d}[6,6]PCOCr \) stoichiometries.

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<td>( E_{a} ) (eV)</td>
<td>0.25</td>
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FIG. 3. Differential absorption spectra (\( \Delta A \)) of potassium-doped thin films of \( C_{60} \) (a) and that of \([6,6]PCOCr\) (b) taken in equal time intervals from the beginning to the end of the doping cycle. \( \Delta A \) is zero everywhere at the beginning of the doping cycle and can increase or decrease in time. Positive \( \Delta A \) normally indicates appearance of the new electronic transitions while negative \( \Delta A \) indicates fading of the existing ones. Alternating negative/positive \( \Delta A \) may indicate spectral shift of an absorption band, which leads to an oscillatory pattern clearly visible at the high-energy end of the spectra. Simulated by an inset is \( \Delta A \) of the most prominent \( h_{u} \rightarrow h_{g} \) transition of \( C_{60} \) at 4.5 eV (see Fig. 1), which is known to gradually shift towards 4 eV with potassium doping (Refs. 7 and 8). As a result, an oscillatory \( \Delta A \) is obtained in agreement with experiment. The same applies to the rest of the absorption bands of \( C_{60} \).
tion in Fig. 3(a) contain alternating intervals of negative and positive $\Delta A$. The negative $\Delta A$ at 3.6 eV is mainly due to bleaching of the $(h_u + g_g) \rightarrow t_{1u}$ transition with alkali doping, caused by the filling of the $t_{1u}$ orbital with electrons. Once the $t_{1u}$ is completely filled (as in K$_6$C$_60$), this transition ceases to exist. The same should happen to the parity-forbidden $h_u \rightarrow t_{1u}$ transition in C$_60$ at 2.7 eV, but the negative $\Delta A$ in this region is outweighed by much stronger positive $\Delta A$ due to the $t_{1u} \rightarrow h_g$ transition. Besides $(h_u + g_g) \rightarrow t_{1u}$ and $h_u \rightarrow t_{1u}$ transitions, no other transitions in C$_60$ are expected to terminate with $t_{1u}$ orbital. Consequently, the experimentally observed negative $\Delta A$ at 4.5 and 5.5 eV in Fig. 3 cannot be explained by the same mechanism. Indeed, the change in $\Delta A$ observed for both C$_60$ and [6,6]PCOCr can also be caused by spectral shifts of the electronic transitions that occur during alkali doping. As shown in the inset of Fig. 3, the oscillatory $\Delta A$ behavior can be simulated by a 0.5 eV bathochromic shift (shift towards lower energies) of a Gaussian peak with 0.8 eV half-width. The simulation is meant to mimic $\Delta A$ behavior of the first group of electronic transitions in C$_60$, which undergo a bathochromic shift during alkali doping. This shift is particularly noticeable for $h_u \rightarrow h_g$ and $(h_u + g_g) \rightarrow t_{2u}$ transitions and is attributed to the structural transformations of the intercalated fullerene lattice. The fact that such shifts also occur in the amorphous methanofullerene casts some doubts on the proposed origin of the shift, however. Instead, one can argue that adding electrons to the molecule increases screening of the Coulomb interaction between electron–hole pairs. This would produce a red shift of the electronic transitions, the magnitude of which should increase with the number of donated electrons.

Although $\Delta A$ spectra of potassium-doped [6,6]PCOCr in Fig. 3(b) show similar features to those of alkali-doped C$_60$, some important differences are present. At the low-energy end, a spectral feature appears at about 1.2 eV (when extrapolated to the beginning of the doping cycle), which gradually gains in intensity with doping and shifts towards 1.8 eV. This spectral feature stops to grow at about 2/3 of the doping cycle as if it originated from the lower (two-fold degenerate) component of the parent $t_{1u}$ orbital. This feature, completely absent in Fig. 3(a), is highly consistent with 0.5 eV proposed splitting of the parent $t_{1u}$ orbital. The two bands in the 2–3.5 eV region are also visible in Fig. 3(b), but their peak energies and relative intensities are slightly different from those in Fig. 3(a), as one may expect from two different molecules. The oscillatory behavior of $\Delta A$ above 3.5 eV is present in both spectra [Figs. 3(a) and 3(b)], yet $\Delta A$ is almost symmetric about $\Delta A = 0$ in Fig. 3(a) and quite asymmetric in Fig. 3(b). A plausible explanation is that, besides the doping-induced spectral shifts that occur in both molecules, the two main absorption bands of potassium-doped [6,6]PCOCr in the near UV region gain an additional oscillator strength in the second half of the doping cycle. It is also possible that new electronic transitions that are parity forbidden in centrosymmetric C$_60$ gain oscillator strength in non-centrosymmetric [6,6]PCOCr upon doping with potassium. Finally we note that spectra in Figs. 3(a) and 3(b) were both taken until no further changes in $\Delta A$ occurred, yet it appears as if some of the spectral features in Fig. 3(b) do not saturate. This only indicates that doping-induced spectral changes in certain parts of the spectra became accelerated towards the end of the doping cycle. More in-depth analysis of the observed electronic transitions in potassium-doped [6,6]PCOCr would require a detailed knowledge of the electronic states involved, as well as extensive near IR data.

In summary, the obvious similarity between absorption spectra of alkali-doped fullerene and methanofullerene argues on its own that, as in C$_60$, doping of the methanofullerene proceeds with six consecutive electron transfer steps, yielding K$_6$[6,6]PCOCr stoichiometry at the end of the doping cycle. Despite their lower strain energy, methanofullerenes can be easily reduced, as demonstrated by cyclic voltammetry experiments. Both transport and spectroscopy measurements of potassium-doped methanofullerenes are consistent with the splitting of the parent $t_{1u}$ orbital whose magnitude increases with doping. Due to its amorphous nature, conductivity in alkali-doped methanofullerene proceeds by thermally activated hopping.

6. Wanda Andreoni (unpublished work). See also Ref. 12 for more information regarding the predicted splitting.