Is Hyperconjugation Responsible For The "Gauche Effect" In 1-Fluoropropane And Other 2-Substituted-1-Fluoroethanes?

Paul R. Rablen  
Swarthmore College, prablen1@swarthmore.edu

R. W. Hoffman  
D. A. Hrovat  
W. T. Borden

Let us know how access to these works benefits you

Follow this and additional works at: https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-chemistry

Part of the Organic Chemistry Commons

Recommended Citation
https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-chemistry/87

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Chemistry & Biochemistry at Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Chemistry & Biochemistry Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Works. For more information, please contact myworks@swarthmore.edu.
Is hyperconjugation responsible for the “gauche effect” in 1-fluoropropane and other 2-substituted-1-fluoroethanes?†

Paul R. Rablen,* Reinhard W. Hoffmann, David A. Hrovat and Weston Thatcher Borden

Department of Chemistry, Swarthmore College, 500 College Avenue, Swarthmore, PA 19081, USA
Fachbereich Chemie, Philipps-Universität Marburg, Hans-Meerwein-Strasse, D-35032, Marburg, Germany
Department of Chemistry, Box 351700, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195-1700, USA

Received (in Cambridge) 12th March 1999, Accepted 27th May 1999

The energies and geometries of a series of 2-substituted-1-fluoroethanes were computed at the MP2/6-311+ + G**/MP2/6-31 + G* level of theory for both the maxima and minima of the rotation about the C–C bond. The results did not support the predictions of a hyperconjugative model, that both 1,2-difluoroethane and 1-chloro-2-fluoroethane would strongly prefer a gauche conformation, and that 1-fluoro-2-silylethene would strongly prefer an anti conformation. The existence of competing electrostatic interactions between the fluorine and the substituents at C-2 was indicated by the detailed geometries of the gauche conformers and by the calculated sensitivity of the gauche-anti energy differences to the presence of a polar solvent. However, Fourier analyses of the torsional potential energies were wholly consistent with hyperconjugative electron donation into the C–F σ* orbital contributing to the conformational preferences of these 1-fluoroethanes. Fourier analyses also showed that hyperconjugation contributes to the small variations in C–C and C–F bond lengths and in fluorine atomic charges that were computed. The torsional potential energies, variations in geometry and atomic charge, and sensitivity to solvent were all in accord with the expected ranking of hyperconjugative electron donating ability of bonds to carbon, C–Si > C–H > C–C > C–Cl > C–F.

Introduction

The name “gauche effect” has been given to the phenomenon that in 1,2-disubstituted ethanes 1 the gauche conformer 1g is populated to a larger extent than anti conformer 1a when the substituents X and Y are both electronegative atoms such as oxygen or fluorine (Scheme 1). This preference is surprising, since both dipole repulsions between electronegative atoms and steric effects should favor the anti conformation. A variety of 1-substituted propanes, e.g. 1 (X = CH₃, Y = Cl, F, OH), are also known to prefer a gauche conformation.5–9

The gauche effect has been attributed primarily to σ-hyperconjugation, which can be described equivalently in terms of donor–acceptor orbital interactions or resonance structures (Scheme 2).10–14 More specifically, the most stable conformation of a 1,2-disubstituted ethane has been postulated to place the best σ-donor bond anti to the best σ-acceptor bond.

Evidence for the importance of hyperconjugative electron donation into C–F σ* orbitals in neutral fluorocarbons has come from a variety of calculations and experiments.15 Therefore, if the hyperconjugative explanation of the gauche effect is correct, the preferred conformations of 2-substituted-1-fluoroethanes can be used to establish the electron donating ability of the bond to the substituent at C-2, relative to the C–H bonds at this carbon. For example, since 1-fluoropropane is known to prefer a gauche conformation,16–18 the hyperconjugative explanation of the gauche effect implies that the C₂–H σ bonds donate more strongly than the C₂–C₁ σ bond into the C₁–F σ* orbital.

The question of whether a C–H bond is a stronger or weaker hyperconjugative σ-donor than a C–C bond has long been controversial.19,20 Attempts have been made to correlate C–H versus C–C hyperconjugation with other experimental observables such as ¹³C NMR chemical shifts.21–23 However, the question might appear to have been settled by the known preference of 1-fluoropropane for the gauche conformation. Moreover, the energy difference between the gauche and anti conformations should reflect the energy difference between C–H and C–C hyperconjugative donation into the C–F σ* orbital.

Unfortunately, other explanations of the preferred conformation of 1-fluoropropane are possible. For instance, dipole-induced dipole attraction between the fluorine atom and the methyl group might significantly stabilize the gauche conformation; or bond-bending of the sort described by Wiberg24 might play an important role. Therefore, it is of some importance to establish how large a role hyperconjugation actually does play in determining the preferred conformation of 1-fluoropropane and other 2-substituted-1-fluoroethanes.

The hypothesis that hyperconjugative electron donation

Scheme 2 Schematic orbital and resonance depictions of hyperconjugative electron donation from C–Y into σ* of C–X.

† Table S1 and z-matrices from MP2/6-311+ + G* optimizations are available as supplementary data. For direct electronic access see http://www.rsc.org/suppdata/p2/1999/1719, otherwise available from BLDSC (SUPPL. NO. 57570, pp. 18) or the RSC Library. See Instructions for Authors available via the RSC web page (http://www.rsc.org/authors).
into C–F σ* orbitals plays a dominant role in governing the conformational behavior of 2-substituted-1-fluoroethanes can be tested by considering carbon–substituent bonds that can be confidently assigned as either much stronger or much weaker donors than C–H. For example, the C–F bonds in 1,2-difluoroethane should be much weaker donors than the C–H bonds. In the gauche conformer, a C–H bond is positioned to donate into each of the C–F σ* orbitals; whereas in the anti conformer only the C–F σ bonds can act as electron donors. Thus, the hypothesis that hyperconjugation controls conformation unequivocally predicts that the gauche conformer should be strongly favored. Experiments 25–30 and calculations 31–34 both indicate that 1,2-difluoroethane does, in fact, adopt a gauche geometry, thus providing support for hyperconjugative control of conformation.

At the other extreme from 1,2-difluoroethane is 1-fluoro-2-silylethane. C–Si bonds are known to be highly effective electron donors in both carborocycles 35 and neutral compounds, 36 much stronger donors than either C–C or C–H. The hyperconjugative model then leads to the unequivocal prediction that in 1-fluoro-2-silylethane the anti conformation, in which the C–Si bond acts as the donor to the C–F σ* orbital, should be strongly preferred to the gauche conformation, in which a C–H bond is the donor.

Since the torsional potential energy of 1-fluoro-2-silylethane has not, to the best of our knowledge, previously been calculated, we undertook the computational study described in this paper, in order to test the hypothesis that the anti conformation would be preferred. We found, instead, that in 1-fluoro-2-silylethane the preference for an anti conformation is so small that at some levels of theory the gauche conformer is actually predicted to be lower in energy. 37 This finding led us to perform additional calculations in order to understand more fully what factors actually do determine the conformational preferences of 2-substituted-1-fluoroethanes. Herein we report the results of these computational studies.

Calculations

Initial optimizations were carried out at HF/6-31G* and were followed by vibrational analyses to determine whether each stationary point was a minimum (anti and gauche conformers) or a transition state (syn and eclipsed structures). Subsequent geometric refinement was carried out at MP2/6-31G*, followed by single-point calculations at MP2/6-311+G** (6D). This procedure is very similar to one used successfully by Wiberg and coworkers in a related study. 38 Atomic charges were obtained from the MP2/6-31G* density using Weinhold’s natural population analysis. 39 The effect of a solvent was simulated using the IPCM continuum reaction field model, 39 with the relative permittivity set to 20 and the isotensity contour set to 0.0004 electrons per cubic bohr and using the gas-phase geometries. 41 All calculations were carried out using GAUSSIAN94. 42

Consideration was given to whether the MP2/6-311+G**(6D) calculations were sufficient for obtaining accurate relative energies of the various 2-substituted-1-fluoroethane conformers, or if a better treatment of electron correlation was necessary. The changes that occurred between the MP2/6-311+G**(6D) relative energies and the corresponding HF/6-311+G**(6D) relative energies were modest. In no case did the order of conformer energies change. No energy change exceeded 0.55 kcal mol\(^{-1}\), and most of the differences were considerably smaller, averaging less than 0.3 kcal mol\(^{-1}\). The relatively small size of the MP2 corrections suggested that a higher-level treatment of electron correlation was not required in order to achieve good accuracy.

In order to confirm the adequacy of the MP2 calculations, we carried out MP4SDTQ/6-311++G**(6D) single point calculations on 1,2-difluoroethane, the molecule for which the largest changes occurred on going from HF to MP2. As expected, the MP4SDTQ relative energies fell between the HF and MP2 relative energies, but were much closer to the MP2 energies. On going from MP2 to MP4SDTQ, the largest change in relative energy occurred for the syn conformer, which decreased by 0.4 kcal mol\(^{-1}\), but this change represented only 5% of the syn–anti energy difference. The other changes were all less than 0.2 kcal mol\(^{-1}\). Thus it seemed highly unlikely that higher levels of correlation treatment would alter the results derived from the MP2 calculations in any significant manner, and so no further such calculations were deemed necessary.

Analytical expressions for torsional potential energy functions were determined using the MP2/6-311++G**(6D)//MP2/6-311+G* energies for four conformers of each compound: the anti minimum (\(C_\text{a}\) or \(C_{\text{anti}}\)), the gauche minimum (\(C_\text{g}\) or \(C_{\text{syn}}\)), the syn transition state (\(C_\text{t}\) or \(C_{\text{syn}}\)), and the remaining eclipsed transition state (\(C_\text{e}\) or \(C_{\text{g}}\)). The four energies and corresponding torsional angles were then used to solve for the four parameters \(V_\alpha\) in eqn. (1).

\[
V(\theta) = V_0 + \frac{1}{2} V_1 \cos (\theta) + \frac{1}{2} V_2 \cos (2\theta) + \frac{1}{2} V_3 \cos (3\theta) \tag{1}
\]

Similar Fourier decompositions of contributors to torsional potential energies have been used successfully by Pople and coworkers. 43 The same technique was used by us to analyze the contributors to the geometric and atomic charge variations correlated with torsion about the C–C bond.

Results

Table 1 lists the calculated relative energies of 1,2-difluoroethane (DFE), 1-chloro-2-fluoroethane (CFE), 1-fluoro propane (FP), and 1-fluoro-2-silylethane (FSE) (Scheme 3) at the four

**Table 1** Relative energies (kcal mol\(^{-1}\))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compound</th>
<th>Conformer ((\phi))</th>
<th>MP2/6-31+G*</th>
<th>MP2/6-311++G**(6D)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DFE</td>
<td>anti (180°)</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ecl (124.6°)</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>4.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gauche (71.5°)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>syn (0°)</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td>8.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFE</td>
<td>anti (180°)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ecl (120.3°)</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gauche (67.5°)</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>syn (0°)</td>
<td>8.20</td>
<td>8.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP</td>
<td>anti (180°)</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ecl (119.5°)</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gauche (53.2°)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>syn (0°)</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>5.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSE</td>
<td>anti (180°)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ecl (115.5°)</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gauche (53.2°)</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>syn (0°)</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Single-point calculations at the MP2/6-31+G* optimized geometries.  
\(\phi\) XCY dihedral angle in degrees.  
*x Solution environment simulated using the IPCM model in GAUSSIAN94, with the relative permittivity at \(\varepsilon = 20\) and the electron density contour at 0.0004 electrons per cubic bohr.
unique stationary points on the torsional potential energy function. Calculations were performed for molecules both in the gas phase and in a polarizable medium having a relative permittivity of 20, characteristic of acetonitrile. The PCM continuum-based model used for the latter calculations is known to describe solvent effects on conformational equilibria of 1,2-disubstituted ethanes quite well, at least in non-associating aprotic solvents such as acetonitrile.\(^1\)\(^2\) The Fourier decompositions of the torsional potential energy functions, both with and without solvent, are given in Tables 2 and 3.

Many previous experimental and computational studies have addressed the conformational behavior of DFE.\(^24\)\(^\text{-}38\)\(^\text{-}47\)\(^\text{-}50\) The numerous calculations all concur that the gauche conformer is preferred to the anti in the gas phase by 0.5 – 1.0 kcal mol\(^{-1}\).\(^34\)\(^30\)\(^\text{-}38\) The highest level of calculation previously applied is probably the G2(MP2) study by Wiberg and coworkers.\(^31\) They found a gauche – anti energy difference of 0.73 kcal mol\(^{-1}\), in excellent agreement with the value of 0.80 kcal mol\(^{-1}\) reported in Table 1.

Gas-phase NMR measurements have given 0.83 kcal mol\(^{-1}\) for this energy difference, in excellent agreement with the calculated values. Older electron diffraction studies gave slightly larger values in the 1 – 2 kcal mol\(^{-1}\) range.\(^26\)\(^\text{-}29\) However, vibrational spectroscopy has been used to obtain a gas-phase energy difference of 0.8 ± 0.1 kcal mol\(^{-1}\), in excellent agreement with both the best calculated and the gas-phase NMR values.\(^36\)

Wiberg has previously calculated solvent effects on the gauche – anti energy difference in DFE, also using the polarizable continuum model.\(^34\)\(^\text{-}36\)\(^\text{-}38\) The present findings are, not surprisingly, in essentially exact agreement with the results of Wiberg’s earlier study. The calculated ratios are in reasonably good agreement with experimental determinations of the gauche – anti energy difference in solution\(^16\)\(^\text{-}48\)\(^\text{-}49\) as discussed in detail by Wiberg et al.\(^31\)

A number of previous studies have also examined the torsional potential energies of CFE.\(^1\)\(^\text{-}51\)\(^\text{-}52\)\(^\text{-}52\) Again, our calculated energy difference of 0.51 kcal mol\(^{-1}\) favoring anti over gauche is in excellent agreement with the G2(MP2) value of Wiberg and coworkers.\(^31\) Both calculations are in reasonable agreement with the gas-phase experimental values of 0.82 ± 0.08 kcal mol\(^{-1}\) derived from vibrational spectroscopy\(^34\) and 0.44 kcal mol\(^{-1}\) derived from electron diffraction.\(^52\)

The torsional potential energy function for FP has been determined experimentally by microwave spectroscopy.\(^6\) Our calculations agree with experiment that the gauche conformer is favored, and our calculated energy difference of 0.28 kcal mol\(^{-1}\) is in close agreement with the experimental value of 0.37 kcal mol\(^{-1}\). The measured barrier heights of 3.47 kcal mol\(^{-1}\) (ecl = eclipsed) and 4.19 kcal mol\(^{-1}\) (syn = synclinal) can be compared to our calculated values 3.89 kcal mol\(^{-1}\) and 5.27 kcal mol\(^{-1}\). The experimental values for the barrier heights have much larger error limits than those of the gauche – anti energy difference. The gauche – anti energy difference calculated by us is in good agreement with previously calculated values.\(^31\)\(^34\)\(^53\)\(^54\)

Fuchs et al.\(^53\) have pointed out that hyperconjugation should also influence bond lengths and charge densities. The stronger the hyperconjugation between the C–Y donor bond at C-2 and the C–X acceptor bond at C-1, the shorter should be the bond between C-1 and C-2 and the longer should be the bonds between C-2 and the donor and between C-1 and the acceptor. The negative charge on fluorine should also increase as a result of the hyperconjugative interaction (cf. Scheme 2). These predictions were largely borne out by calculations for 1,2-dimethoxyethane and DFE. Predictions regarding the C–C bond lengths were supported by substantial data from the Cambridge crystallographic data file.\(^55\)

In order to ascertain possible effects of hyperconjugation on geometries we wanted to compute accurately the optimized bond lengths. The MP2/6-31G* level of theory is known to give geometries that are in close agreement with experiment.\(^34\) An additional set of diffuse functions was used in our MP2/6-31+G* geometry optimizations, since such functions are known to be important for the description of lone pairs. The C–C and C–F bond lengths and the charges on fluorine at the various stationary points are given in Table 4, and the corresponding Fourier decompositions appear in Tables 5, 6 and 7.

Experimental structural data from electron diffraction, microwave spectroscopy and vibrational spectroscopy are
Table 6  Fourier coefficients for C–F bond lengths (Å)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compound</th>
<th>(V_0)</th>
<th>(V_1)</th>
<th>(V_2)</th>
<th>(V_3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DFE</td>
<td>1.4066</td>
<td>-0.0133</td>
<td>-0.0049</td>
<td>0.0011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFE</td>
<td>1.4069</td>
<td>-0.0124</td>
<td>-0.0037</td>
<td>0.0016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP</td>
<td>1.4178</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>-0.0025</td>
<td>0.0015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSE</td>
<td>1.4200</td>
<td>0.0052</td>
<td>0.0066</td>
<td>0.0019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Obtained from MP2/6-31+G* optimizations.

Table 7  Fourier coefficients for fluorine atomic charges (au)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compound</th>
<th>(V_0)</th>
<th>(V_1)</th>
<th>(V_2)</th>
<th>(V_3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DFE</td>
<td>-0.3995</td>
<td>0.0137</td>
<td>0.0095</td>
<td>0.0006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFE</td>
<td>-0.4004</td>
<td>0.0106</td>
<td>0.0071</td>
<td>0.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP</td>
<td>-0.4141</td>
<td>-0.0008</td>
<td>0.0047</td>
<td>0.0005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSE</td>
<td>-0.4128</td>
<td>-0.0006</td>
<td>-0.0010</td>
<td>0.0006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Obtained from natural population analyses (NPA) at MP2/6-31+G*.

available for some of the compounds for which we have performed calculations.26,30,51,55-56 Microwave55 and vibrational54 spectroscopy of DFE have independently given a value of 71.0° for the F–C–C–F dihedral angle in the gauche conformer, in very close agreement with our MP2/6-31+G* value of 71.5°. The microwave-derived values of 1.494 Å and 1.390 Å for, respectively, the C–C and C–F bond lengths are also in close agreement with the present results.53 Electron diffraction yields 71.3° for the dihedral angle and 1.503 Å and 1.389 Å for the C–C and C–F bond lengths of DFE.54

The F–C–C–Cl dihedral angle in CFE has been experimentally determined as 68° in excellent accord with the calculated value of 67.5°. Microwave spectroscopy has also been used to study FP,57 and the experimentally determined C–C–C–F dihedral angle for the gauche conformer of 62.6° is in excellent accord with our calculated value of 62.3°. Furthermore, comparison of our calculated C–C and C–F bond lengths with the experimental values of 1.506 Å and 1.390 Å again shows the high degree of agreement with experiment that is expected from this level of theory.

Discussion

Preferred conformations of 2-substituted-1-fluoroethanes

Although MP2/6-31G* calculations find a 0.73 kcal mol\(^{-1}\) preference for the gauche over the anti conformer of FSE,41 the results of both MP2/6-31+G* and MP2/6-311+G**(6D) calculations support the hyperconjugative prediction that the anti conformation should be preferred. However, even at these two higher levels of theory, the preference for anti over gauche is only 0.4–0.5 kcal mol\(^{-1}\). This finding is quite surprising, because, as discussed in the Introduction, the difference between C–Si and C–H hyperconjugative electron donation in FSE is expected to be quite substantial.

Similarly, the known preference of DFE for the gauche conformer is not as great as the hyperconjugative model might lead one to expect. In the gauche conformer each of the two sets of C–H bonds can donate into each C–F σ* orbital; whereas, in the anti conformation, donation into each C–C–F σ* orbital can only occur from a C–F bond. Therefore the preference for the gauche conformer should be much more pronounced in DFE than in FP, where the gauche-anti preference is determined by the difference between C–H and C–CH\(_4\) donation into a single C–C–F σ* orbital, rather than by the difference between C–H and C–F donation into two C–F σ* orbitals. However, as shown in Table 1, the energetic preference for gauche over anti is only slightly larger in DFE than in FP.

Finally, hyperconjugation would predict CFE to prefer a gauche conformation, much like DFE. However, our calculations show that, instead, CFE prefers an anti to a gauche conformation by about 0.5 kcal mol\(^{-1}\) in the gas-phase.

It might appear that these comparisons between the qualitative predictions of the hyperconjugative model and the conformational preferences found for DFE, CFE, FSE, and FP by high quality ab initio calculations show that hyperconjugation cannot be the dominant cause of the gauche effect. However, it is important to bear in mind that other factors also contribute to these conformational preferences. For instance, what is particularly remarkable about the fact that DFE adopts a gauche conformation is that this preference exists at all, despite the repulsion between the C–F bond dipoles that favors the anti conformer.

In CFE the electrostatic repulsion between the C–F and C–Cl bond dipoles is expected to be smaller than the repulsion between the C–F bond dipoles in DFE. The decreased electrostatic repulsion should tend to make the gauche conformation even more favored in CFE than in DFE. On the other hand, the hyperconjugative preference for gauche would be expected to be weaker in CFE than in DFE, since a C–Cl bond is both a better electron donor and a weaker electron acceptor than a C–F bond. Thus our finding that the preferred conformation changes from gauche in DFE to anti in CFE (Table 1) is presumably due to a decrease in the importance of hyperconjugation in CFE compared to DFE. The alternative explanation, that a C–Cl bond is a better hyperconjugative electron donor than a C–H bond, seems much less likely.

In FSE electrostatic interactions between the C–Si and C–F bonds should also contribute to the potential for torsion about the central C–C bond. However, unlike the case in DFE, the Coulombic interaction between the terminal groups in FSE should be attractive. Therefore, electrostatic interactions should stabilize the gauche relative to the anti conformer in the latter compound.

The validity of the hyperconjugative hypothesis thus requires the additional assumption that conformational preferences in DFE and FSE are small because electrostatic interactions oppose the only slightly larger effects of hyperconjugation.49 In contrast, although the preference for a gauche conformation that is both calculated and observed in FP could indicate that C–H is a stronger donor bond than C–C, as already noted, this preference could also be due, wholly or in part, to an electrostatic attraction between the negatively charged fluorine and a polarized C–H bond of the methyl group. Consequently, at least a qualitative indication of the importance of such electrostatic interactions in 2-substituted-1-fluoroethanes is required, in order to validate the hypothesis that hyperconjugative donation into the C–F σ* orbital actually does play a significant role in determining the preferred conformations of DFE, CFE, FSE, and FP.

One approach is to examine the size of the dihedral angle in the gauche conformers of these molecules. This angle should be less than the idealized value of 60° if there is electrostatic attraction between the fluorine and the gauche substituent, greater than 60° if there is repulsion, and about equal to 60° if there is no significant interaction between them. For example, the 72° dihedral angle in gauche DFE does provide evidence for the existence of substantial repulsion between the two C–F bonds. The 67.5° dihedral angle in gauche CFE also indicates significant repulsion between fluorine and chlorine, although of a lesser magnitude than the repulsion between the C–F bonds in DFE.

In gauche FSE, on the other hand, the unusually small dihedral angle of 53° suggests an attraction between fluorine and silicon. An attraction, presumably electrostatic, is also suggested by the finding that the syn–anti energy difference is much smaller in FSE than in any of the other compounds in Table 1.

Finally, the rather unexpected dihedral angle of 62.3° in the gauche conformer of FP provides no evidence for an electrostatic interaction between methyl and fluorine in this compound. The size of this dihedral angle thus supports the
argument that the greater ability of a $\text{C-H}$ compared to a $\text{C-C}$ bond to act as a hyperconjugative electron donor is primarily responsible for the preference for a gauche conformation in this compound.

**Solvent effects**

Another way to address qualitatively the importance of electrostatics is to consider the effect of solvent, since a polar medium will modulate moderate 1,4-electrostatic interactions but should have very little effect on hyperconjugative interactions. The isodensity polarizable continuum model (IPCM), implemented in GAUSSIAN94, provides a mechanism to study this question. Although the model is approximate, and cannot properly describe cases where specific solute–solvent interactions play an important role, Wiberg and coworkers have shown that this model provides an adequate description of the solvent effects on 1,2-dihaloethanes. Furthermore, for the present application, quantitative accuracy in the calculation of solvent effects is not required; and, in fact, the idealized nature of the IPCM model makes interpretation of the computational results obtained with it particularly straightforward.

The effects of solvent on the torsional potential energy surfaces for DFE and CFE have already been studied by both computation and experiment. In agreement with the earlier findings by Wiberg and coworkers, the results in Table 1 show that the preference for a gauche conformation in DFE increases substantially in the presence of a polar solvent. This observation supports the argument that the gas-phase preference for gauche over anti is small, not because of a small difference between hyperconjugative donation by $\text{C-H}$ and $\text{C-F}$ bonds, but rather, because of competition from electrostatic repulsion between the C–F bonds.

Furthermore, the conformational preference of CFE changes from anti to gauche upon going from the gas-phase to a polar environment. Therefore, the preferred conformation of CFE in solution, though not in the gas-phase, is that predicted by the hyperconjugational model. The solution behavior again supports the argument that the unexpected conformational preference observed in the gas-phase for CFE results from an electrostatic repulsion between fluorine and chlorine that counteracts the hyperconjugational preference for a gauche conformation.

The computational results in Table 1 also show that the preference of FSE for an anti structure would be strengthened in a polar solvent that reduces the intramolecular electrostatic attraction between fluorine and silicon. The existence of this electrostatic effect explains why the calculated preference for the anti conformation in the gas-phase is much smaller than would have been expected solely on the basis of the difference in hyperconjugative donor ability between C–H and C–Si.

Finally, the results in Table 1 indicate that a polar solvent would wipe out the small gas-phase preference for a gauche conformation in FP. This computational result strongly suggests that an electrostatic attraction between fluorine and methyl really does contribute to the gas-phase preference for a gauche conformation in FP, both computed and found experimentally. This finding also indicates that the dihedral angle of 62.3° in the gauche conformation of FP does not really imply the absence of an electrostatic attraction. Instead, this angle apparently represents a compromise between steric and electrostatic effects.

**Fourier analysis of the torsional potential energy surfaces**

The obvious conclusion of more than one factor to the preferred conformations of 2-substituted-1-fluoroethanes makes even qualitative analyses of the relative sizes of the contributions of these factors complicated. In order to determine the sizes of these contributions quantitatively, we have performed Fourier analyses of the torsional potential energies of DFE, CFE, FSE and FP along the lines originally suggested by Pople. The Fourier coefficients, $V_i$, in eqn. (1) each represent the size of a different factor that contributes to the relative energies of the various conformers. $V_i$ the $V_i$ term is a constant that has no conformational dependence and simply establishes the zero of energy at the preferred conformation. The $V_i$ term is used to indicate its maximal value at 0° (syn) and its minimal value at 180° (anti). It can therefore be associated with components of the energy that vary with this periodicity. The most obvious contributions that meet this description are the steric and electrostatic interactions between the substituent at C-2 and the fluorine at C-1. $V_i$ is positive for electrostatic and steric repulsions between them and negative for attractions. Bond-bending strain of the sort described by Wiberg would also presumably exhibit this 1-fold periodicity, and contribute to $V_i$ with a negative sign, since the bending strain would be at a minimum for a dihedral angle of 0° and at a maximum for a dihedral angle of 180°. Any preference for anti rather than synperiplanar hyperconjugation would also contribute to the $V_i$ term.

The $V_i$ term can be associated with hyperconjugation between the C–F and C–Y bonds. It is at a maximum at 0° and 180°, where the C–F and C–Y bonds in I are periplanar, and at a minimum for 90° and 270°, where these bonds are orthogonal. The sign of $V_i$ depends on whether the bond to the substituent, C–C-2 is a better or a worse hyperconjugative donor than the C–H bond at this carbon.

The $V_i$ term is positive, since it describes eclipsing interactions. It has its maxima at F–C–C–Y dihedral angles of 0°, 120° and 240° and its minima at 60°, 180° and 300°.

Fourier analyses were carried out for calculations on DFE, CFE, FSE and FP in the gas phase and, as an aid to separating electrostatic from steric interactions, also in the presence of a polarizable medium representing a solvent. As discussed earlier, the polarizable medium is expected to moderate the 1,4-intra-molecular electrostatic interactions that are present in the $V_i$ term, but to have relatively little effect on sterically contributing $V_i$ or on the sorts of interactions represented by the $V_i$ and $V_i$ terms. Table 2 lists the Fourier coefficients for the gas-phase, while Table 3 provides the corresponding values for a simulated solution environment.

The $V_i$ terms are quite similar across all four molecules; and, as expected, these terms are affected only very weakly by the presence of solvent. $V_i$ is smallest for FSE, indicating that the eclipsing interactions, averaged over all three eclipsed conformations, are a little weaker in FSE than in the other three molecules. This result can probably be rationalized on the basis of the long C–Si bond. The $V_i$ term is slightly larger for CFE than for DFE, presumably as a result of the larger size of chlorine compared to fluorine.

In the gas-phase the $V_i$ term is much larger for DFE and CFE than for FP or FSE. This result is in accord with the large electrostatic repulsion expected between the negatively charged halogen atoms. Furthermore, the large repulsive $V_i$ terms in the former pair of compounds are reduced by roughly half in the presence of solvent, consistent with a substantial electrostatic contribution to these terms. In solution $V_i$ for CFE is ca. one third larger than for DFE, probably due to the larger steric demand of chlorine, relative to fluorine.

The $V_i$ term is fairly small for FP, presumably as a consequence of the more or less electroneutral methyl group; but $V_i$ is still positive and, hence, repulsive. The calculated increase in $V_i$ in a polar solvent, which disfavors the syn and gauche structures relative to the anti, suggests that a small electrostatic attraction between fluorine and methyl really does exist in the gas-phase, perhaps due to a dipole-induced dipole interaction between them. Steric interactions, which favor the anti conformer and do not depend on the solvent, then lead to a slight preference for the anti conformer.

Quite reasonably, the attraction is reduced by 0.6 kcal mol$^{-1}$ upon inclusion of solvent. This electrostatic attraction is superimposed upon a steric repulsion between F and SiH$_3$, which is why $V_1$ changes sign in going from the gas-phase to solution.

In terms of the hyperconjugative explanation of the gauche effect, the $V_1$ term is of the greatest interest, since $V_2$ is associated with the difference in hyperconjugative donor ability between the bond to the substituent, Y, and the bonds to the hydrogen atoms at the same carbon. Positive values of $V_1$ indicate that C–Y is a weaker donor than C–H, since conformers with 90° and 270° Y–C–F dihedral angles are preferred. Negative values, on the other hand, indicate that C–Y is a stronger donor than C–H, since conformers with Y–C–F dihedral angles of 0° or 180° are preferred.

The $V_2$ term is large and positive in DFE, positive and slightly smaller in CFE, even smaller but still positive in FP, and negative in FSE. These results imply the following order of σ-donor ability of bonds to carbon: C-Si > C–H > C–C > C–Cl > C–F.

In DFE, there is a strong preference for the C–F bonds to be at right angles to each other, so that the C–H bonds can hyperconjugatively donate electron density into the C–F σ* orbitals. The preference is large for two reasons. First, there are two C–F bonds in the molecule, so that the donor ability of the C–F σ* orbitals is substantially greater than that of the C–C bond. Second, C–Cl and C–F bonds are substantially better electron donors than C–F bonds. CFE is similar to DFE, except that the bias against Cl being periplanar to F is only a little more than half as strong as that against F–F periplanarity. This change is due to C–Cl bonds being better electron donors and poorer electron acceptors than C–F bonds.

For FP, there is also a preference against a coplanar arrangement of the C–CH$_3$ and C–F bonds, indicating that the C–H bonds at C-2 are better electron donors than the C–C bond. However, the Fourier coefficient $V_2$ in FP is less than half the size of that in CFE or DFE, for two reasons. One is that there is only one electron accepting group in FP, not two as in CFE or DFE. The other reason is that the difference between the electron donating ability of the C–C and C–H bonds in CFE or between the C–F and C–H bonds in DFE is not as large as the difference between the C–Cl and C–H bonds in CFE or between the C–F and C–H bonds in DFE.

Finally, in FSE, the $V_2$ term has a negative sign, so there is a preference for the C–Si bond to be coplanar with the C–F bond. This preference indicates that the C–Si bond is a better electron donor than a C–H bond. However, it is noteworthy that the magnitude of the preference for C–Si versus C–H donation is only about the same size as the preference for C–H versus C–C donation in FP.

As shown by comparison of the results in Tables 2 and 3, the solvent effects on all the $V_2$ terms are consistently small. This absence of solvent dependence from the $V_2$ terms is in accord with their interpretation as reflecting whether C–H or C–Y donation into a C–F σ* orbital is preferred, rather than these terms having an electrostatic origin.

Bond lengths and atomic charges

As discussed by Fuchs, the hyperconjugative hypothesis for explaining the gauche effect also makes predictions about bond lengths and charge distributions. As the electron donor strength of the C–Y bond in the position anti to fluorine increases, the C–C bond should shorten, the C–F bond should lengthen, and the negative charge on fluorine should increase (Scheme 2).

Table 4 lists calculated bond lengths and atomic charges for the four conformers of each compound in Table 1.

Calculations were also carried out for the anti conformation of 1-fluoro-2-lithioethane (FLE). Full torsional analysis was not feasible for this compound, because FLE collapses to ethene and lithium fluoride, except when restricted to an anti geometry. However, the C–Li bond is of interest as an even more extreme case of a strong donor than C–Si, and examination of bond lengths and charges in the anti conformer of FLE provides a means of including this substituent.

The variations in bond lengths that appear in Table 4 are generally very small, in most cases at or beyond the limits of experimental detection; and the changes in fluorine atomic charge are also small. Nonetheless, the differences between them in the anti conformers of the molecules in Table 4 appear to be largely in agreement with the hyperconjugative hypothesis and with the expected ordering of the electron donating abilities of the C–Y bonds. For example, the C–Li bond is unambiguously the strongest donor in the series; and in FLE, the C–C bond is the shortest, the C–F bond the longest, and the fluorine charge the most negative of all the anti conformers in Table 4. At the other extreme is anti DFE, and the other 2-substituted-1-fluoroethanes in Table 4 fall between these two extremes.

However, bond lengths and atomic charges, like the conformational energies discussed above, are influenced by several factors, making the differences between geometries and charges in the anti conformers risky to interpret solely in terms of hyperconjugation. Indeed, perusal of Table 4 shows that most of these differences between the anti conformations of the 2-substituted-1-fluoroethanes are also present in the gauche conformers. Consequently, these differences between compounds cannot properly be attributed to hyperconjugation.

In addition, the variations of bond lengths with conformation for each of these compounds do not appear to be those expected on the basis of hyperconjugation. For example, based on the hyperconjugative model, changes in length with conformation would be expected to take place with particular prominence for the C–Si bond in FSE. Hyperconjugation predicts that the anti conformer, in which the C–Si bond can best act as a donor to the C–F σ* orbital, should have a longer C–Si bond than the gauche conformer. However, the charge on fluorine is not as large as the dihedral angles of 0° or 180° but at a minimum at 90° and 270°, and so the $V_2$ term of the Fourier expansions should again reflect the consequences of hyperconjugation.

As discussed above in connection with the changes in energy with conformation, appearances can be deceiving, especially when several different factors contribute to the changes in a given quantity. A better test of the predictions of the hyperconjugative model can be sought in a Fourier analysis of the variations in bond lengths and charges that occur as a function of dihedral angle. The effects of interactions between the orbitals of the C–F and C–Y bonds are expected to be at a maximum at 0° and 180° but at a minimum at 90° and 270°, and so the $V_2$ term of the Fourier expansions should again reflect the consequences of hyperconjugation.

Tables 5, 6 and 7 provide the Fourier coefficients for the variations of the C–C and C–F bond lengths and the fluorine atomic charges. The Fourier coefficients, like the changes in bond lengths and atomic charges to which they are related, are very small. However, both the signs and the relative magnitudes of the $V_2$ terms are in exact agreement with the predictions of the hyperconjugative argument and with the expected ordering of electron donor ability C–Si > C–H > C–C > C–Cl > C–F, also found in the torsional potential energies. This parallel between the changes in energies on the one hand and geometries and atomic charges on the other is reassuring.
Summary

Provided that hyperconjugation is the dominant factor in determining the preferred conformations of 1,2-disubstituted ethanes, the greater potency of a C–H bond than a C–C bond as a σ-electron donor is established by the preference of FP for a gauche conformation. However, the geometries of the gauche conformations, solvent effects on the gauche–anti energy differences, and Fourier analyses of the conformational energies all demonstrate that electrostatic and steric factors also influence the conformational behavior of these compounds. For example, electrostatic repulsions destabilize the gauche conformer of DFE and are responsible for the anti conformation of CFE being preferred in the gas-phase. In contrast, electrostatic attractions stabilize the gauche conformers of FSE and FP. Thus, in a solvent as polar as acetone the preference for an anti conformation in FSE is computed almost to double from that in the gas-phase, and the gauche and anti conformers of FP are predicted to be about equally populated.

Fourier analysis allows the rigorous deconvolution of the various factors influencing the torsional potential energies of 2-substituted-1-fluoroethanes. In this manner it was possible to isolate those variations in not only energy but also bond length and charge which have the two-fold periodicity that is unique to hyperconjugative donor–acceptor orbital interactions in these compounds. The $V_f$ terms derived for DFE, CFE, FSE and FP yield a ranking of σ-donor ability of bonds in the order C–Si > C–H > C–C > C–Cl > C–F. Based on the $V_f$ coefficient for FSE, C–Si is better than C–H as the hyperconjugative donor to a C–F σ* orbital by approximately 1 kcal mol$^{-1}$; and the $V_f$ coefficient for FP shows that C–H is, in fact, a better hyperconjugative donor than C–C by about the same amount.

Acknowledgements

The research done at the University of Washington was generously supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation. Financial support for P. R. R. while on sabbatical leave was provided by Swarthmore College. Acknowledgement is also made to the donors of the Petroleum Research Fund, administered by the American Chemical Society, and to the Camille and Henry Dreyfus Foundation for partial support of this research.

References

With DFE, CFE and FSE, hyperconjugation and electrostatics are in conflict and so the observed conformational preference for an anti or a gauche conformation is small. However, it is also possible to imagine molecules in which the two forces are in agreement. For instance, in the anionic species FCH₂CH₂BH₃⁻, both factors favor the anti conformer. Since both the BH₃⁻ group and the fluorine atom bear negative charge, the electrostatic interaction is repulsive and favors the anti conformation. On the other hand, since boron is electropositive, the C–B bond is expected to be a better electron donor than a C–H bond and so hyperconjugation favors the anti conformation as well. In agreement with these predictions, MP2/6-311++G**(6D)//MP2/6-31+G* calculations indicate that the anti conformer is preferred over the gauche conformer by 5.95 kcal mol⁻¹.

Paper 9/01974J