

# Abnormal Out-of-Plane Vibrational Raman Mode in Electrochemically Intercalated Multilayer MoS<sub>2</sub>

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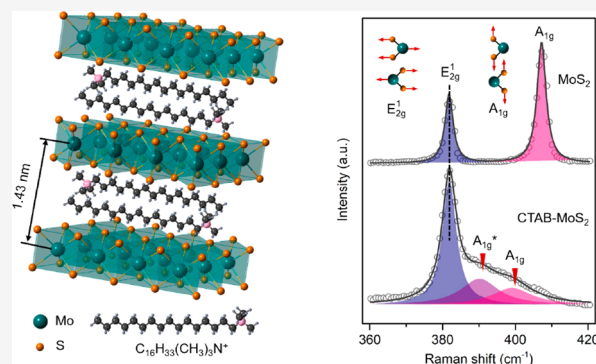
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**ABSTRACT:** Raman spectroscopy is a powerful technique to probe structural and doping behaviors of two-dimensional (2D) materials. In MoS<sub>2</sub>, the always coexisting in-plane ( $E_{2g}^1$ ) and out-of-plane ( $A_{1g}$ ) vibrational modes are used as reliable fingerprints to distinguish the number of layers, strains, and doping levels. In this work, however, we report an abnormal Raman behavior, i.e., the absence of the  $A_{1g}$  mode in cetyltrimethylammonium bromide (CTAB)-intercalated MoS<sub>2</sub> superlattice. This unusual behavior is quite different from the softening of the  $A_{1g}$  mode induced by surface engineering or electric-field gating. Interestingly, under a strong laser illumination, heating, or mechanical indentation, an  $A_{1g}$  peak gradually appears, accompanied by the migration of intercalated CTA<sup>+</sup> cations. The abnormal Raman behavior is mainly attributed to the constraint of the out-of-plane vibration due to intercalations and resulting severe electron doping. Our work renews the understanding of Raman spectra of 2D semiconducting materials and sheds light on developing next-generation devices with tunable structures.

**KEYWORDS:** CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub>, Raman behavior, electron doping, interlayer coupling



Two-dimensional (2D) layered materials emerge as promising candidates for the next-generation electronics because of their unique structures and extraordinary properties.<sup>1–3</sup> Delicate characterizations of 2D materials are of vital importance for the studies of their structures and functions. Raman spectroscopy is one of the most widely used characterization methodologies because of its fast speed and nondestructive detection.<sup>4,5</sup> Phonon Raman scattering originates from the lattice vibration of materials and can be regarded as the fingerprint of a material, which is capable of probing the lattice structures, layer numbers, functional groups, doping, interlayer coupling, and strain condition of 2D materials.<sup>6–9</sup> The study of Raman behaviors will further deepen the understanding in the phonons, electron–phonon, and electron–electron interactions of 2D materials, which will be helpful in both fundamental science and industrial applications.

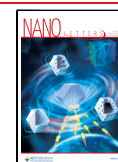
As a typical transition-metal dichalcogenide (TMDC), MoS<sub>2</sub> has attracted growing attention in the past decade. Semiconducting 2H-MoS<sub>2</sub> has shown great potential as an atomically thick key material in electronic devices, optical and optoelectronic devices, and catalysis.<sup>10–12</sup> The Raman spectra of 2H-MoS<sub>2</sub> yield two characteristic peaks, namely  $E_{2g}^1$  and  $A_{1g}$ , in the range of 360–440 cm<sup>-1</sup>, corresponding to the Mo–S in-plane vibration and out-of-plane vibrations, respectively.<sup>13–15</sup> The positions of these two Raman peaks are widely

used to analyze the strain condition, doping, and interlayer coupling in MoS<sub>2</sub>.<sup>5,6,16,17</sup> In particular, the peak interval between  $E_{2g}^1$  and  $A_{1g}$  peaks is an indicator of the number of layers of MoS<sub>2</sub> flakes. For simplicity, we still use the irreducible representations  $E_{2g}^1$  and  $A_{1g}$  of bulk 2H-MoS<sub>2</sub> for few-layer MoS<sub>2</sub>, although they should belong to different irreducible representations in odd- and even-layer MoS<sub>2</sub> due to the different point group symmetries.<sup>5</sup> Usually, when the peak interval is less than 20 cm<sup>-1</sup>, the MoS<sub>2</sub> flake is a monolayer, while the peak interval of 20–22 cm<sup>-1</sup> corresponds to a bilayer MoS<sub>2</sub> and the interval of more than 23 cm<sup>-1</sup> to a tri- or multilayer MoS<sub>2</sub>.<sup>6,13</sup> Further studies reveal that the  $E_{2g}^1$  mode is susceptible to in-plane strain and the  $A_{1g}$  mode is more sensitive to doping,<sup>16,18</sup> resulting in the fact that monolayer MoS<sub>2</sub> possibly exhibits peak interval of more than 20 cm<sup>-1</sup> on certain substrates or in specific environments. In spite of the deviations in peak interval, the  $E_{2g}^1$  and  $A_{1g}$  Raman modes are regarded as the most apparent fingerprint of MoS<sub>2</sub>, which always coexist regardless of substrates or environments.

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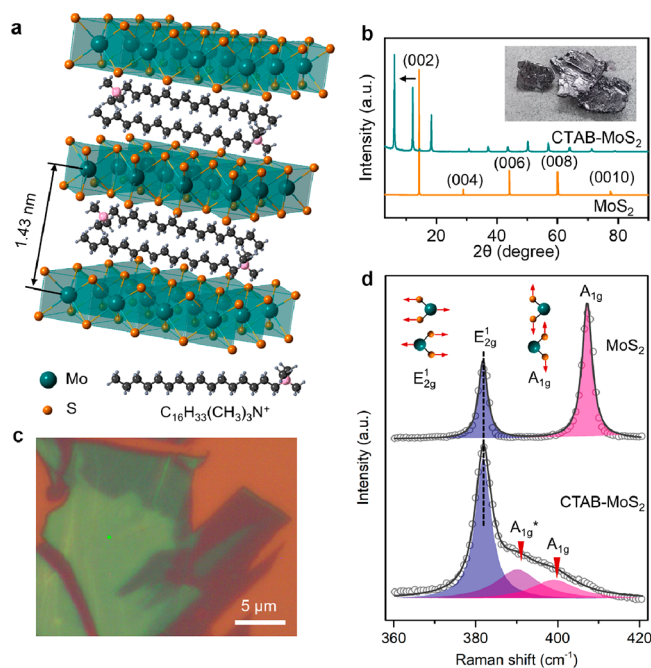
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In this work, however, we found that there is only a single evident  $E_{2g}^1$  Raman mode in electrochemically intercalated  $\text{MoS}_2$  (CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$ ), where the  $A_{1g}$  Raman mode disappears (or is highly suppressed). This abnormal Raman behavior is quite different from the softening of the out-of-plane  $A_{1g}$  vibration by some treatments.<sup>18,19</sup> It is found that with increasing the laser power the  $E_{2g}^1$  mode remains almost unchanged in peak position, but the  $A_{1g}$  peak gradually becomes visible and blue-shifts by several  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  until it reaches the position like that in a “normal”  $\text{MoS}_2$ .<sup>13,14</sup> The renormalization process can also be achieved by heating the sample or indenting its surface with a large mechanical pressure and is found to accompany the migration of the intercalated cetyltrimethylammonium cations ( $\text{CTA}^+$ ), suggesting that the interface interaction between the  $\text{MoS}_2$  and  $\text{CTA}^+$  plays a vital role in the abnormal Raman behavior. We attribute the abnormal Raman behavior to the constraint of the out-of-plane vibration induced by the intercalations and the electron-doping effect induced by the electrochemical intercalation process. Such a strong and consistent electron-doping effect can hardly be achieved by other approaches such as surface engineering or electric-field gating, which opens a new pathway for enhancing the electron density of layered 2D semiconducting materials.

CTAB-intercalated  $\text{MoS}_2$  crystals (Figure 1a) were synthesized by electrochemical intercalation of bulk  $\text{MoS}_2$  as described in previous work (see Figure S1 and Methods section for details).<sup>20</sup> The cathode reaction can be described as  $x\text{CTA}^+ + \text{MoS}_2 + xe^- = (\text{CTA}^+)_x\text{MoS}_2^{x-}$ .<sup>21</sup> X-ray diffraction (XRD) analysis shows that the (002) peak of pure bulk  $\text{MoS}_2$  locates at  $2\theta = 14.31^\circ$ , corresponding to an interlayer distance of  $d(\text{MoS}_2) = 0.62 \text{ nm}$  (Figure 1b). As a comparison, the (002) peak of CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$  (inset of Figure 1b) shifts to  $2\theta = 6.17^\circ$ , which yields an interlayer distance of  $d(\text{CTAB-}\text{MoS}_2) = 1.43 \text{ nm}$ . Cross-sectional HRTEM was also used to clarify the structure of CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$ , revealing a hexagonal structure with the (100) lattice plane spacing of 0.27 nm, similar to that of pristine  $\text{MoS}_2$ , while the interlayer distance is 1.40 nm, consistent with the XRD analysis (Figure S2). As the diameter of an individual  $\text{CTA}^+$  chain is 0.46–0.51 nm,<sup>22</sup> it is estimated that double-layer  $\text{CTA}^+$  chains antiparallely stack into the van der Waals (vdWs) gap of  $\text{MoS}_2$ ,<sup>21</sup> as shown in Figure 1a.

The abnormal Raman spectra were observed under a 532 nm excitation wavelength in thin CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$  flakes mechanically exfoliated from a bulk crystal (Figure 1c). As shown in Figures 1d and S3, the  $E_{2g}^1$  mode of the sample peaks at  $\sim 381 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  with relatively high intensities like those of pure  $\text{MoS}_2$  samples.<sup>13</sup> However, the  $A_{1g}$  peak exhibits an abnormal behavior; i.e., it appears to vanish while a new broad Raman mode emerges nearby the  $E_{2g}^1$  peak. This abnormal behavior exists in many CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$  samples, but for some other ones the behavior is not so evident where the  $A_{1g}$  peaks are only red-shifted from its normal position (around  $408 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ).<sup>5</sup> For all of the CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$  samples, we found it more accurate to analyze their Raman spectra with a multipeak fitting, namely,  $E_{2g}^1$ ,  $A_{1g}^*$ , and  $A_{1g}$ . Here, the peak ranging from 395 to  $410 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  is ascribed to the  $A_{1g}$  peak, while the peak ranging from 385 to  $395 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  is called the  $A_{1g}^*$  peak, which reflects the abnormal Raman behavior of CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$  samples and was not reported in the literature. The assignment of  $A_{1g}^*$  peak is determined by its polarized behavior and temperature-dependent behavior in Raman spectra, which will be further discussed below. The

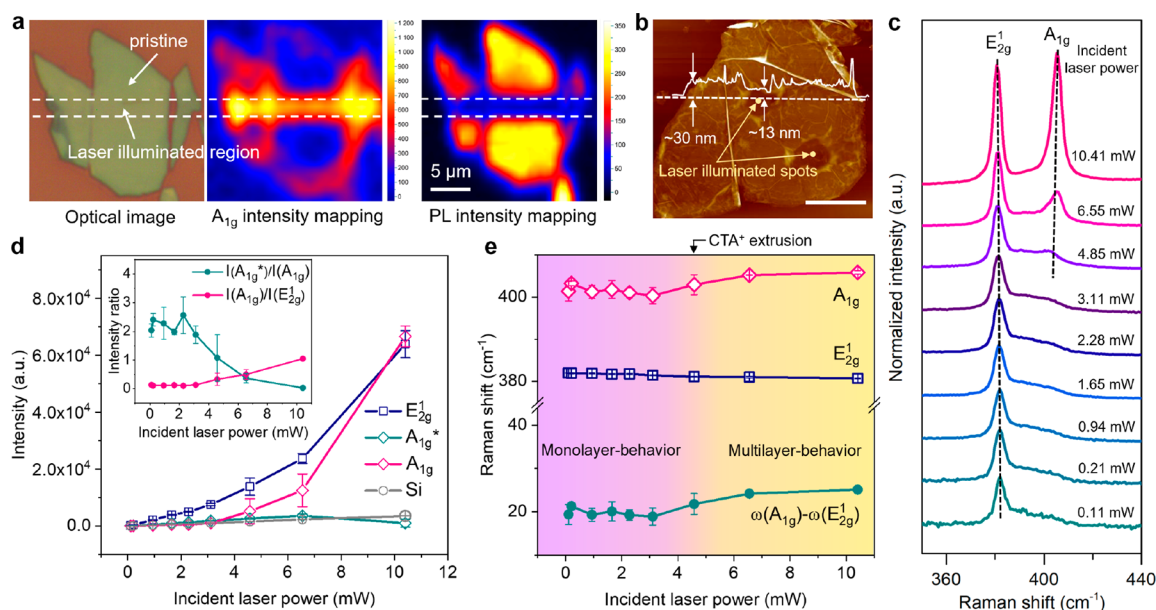


**Figure 1.** Crystal structure and Raman characterization of CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$  superlattices. (a) Crystal structure of CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$ , with double-layer  $\text{CTA}^+$  antiparallely stacked between  $\text{MoS}_2$  layers. (b) XRD analysis of bulk natural  $\text{MoS}_2$  (orange line) and CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$  (cyan line). All peaks of  $\text{MoS}_2$  originate from (002) plane family and indexed. All peaks of CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$  are also from (002) plane family but have shifted to lower degree, indicating an enlarged interlayer distance. Inset shows the optical photo of the bulk CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$ . (c) Optical microscopy image of a CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$  thin flake exfoliated on  $\text{Si}/\text{SiO}_2$  substrate. (d) Raman spectra of CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$  (lower) and pure  $\text{MoS}_2$  (upper) flakes. In comparison with pure  $\text{MoS}_2$ , the  $A_{1g}$  peak of CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$  is severely suppressed and red-shifted, and there exists a broad peak near the  $E_{2g}^1$  peak, namely  $A_{1g}^*$ . Inset shows the vibrational mode of  $E_{2g}^1$  and  $A_{1g}$ .

$A_{1g}^*$  and  $A_{1g}$  can also be observed under 488 and 633 nm laser excitations (Figure S4).

The abnormal Raman behavior of CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$  can be altered when the sample is illuminated with intense laser intensity. As shown in Figure 2a, the pristine CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$  flake exhibits a weak  $A_{1g}$  peak and a strong photoluminescence (PL) signal. After strong laser illumination, the intensity of the  $A_{1g}$  peak increases dramatically while the intensity of PL spectra significantly declines. Further multipeak and low-temperature PL analysis reveals that the decrease of PL intensity results from the vanishing of A trion and A biexciton peaks and the weakening of A and B exciton peaks (Figure S5).<sup>23</sup> The change of the Raman spectrum under large laser power may imply a structural change of CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$ . After the strong laser illumination, the thickness of the sample decreases to  $\sim 43\%$  of its original value (Figure 2b, from  $\sim 30$  to  $\sim 13 \text{ nm}$ ), which perfectly coincides with the thickness ratio of  $d(\text{CTAB-}\text{MoS}_2)/d(\text{MoS}_2)$ . Furthermore, cross-sectional HRTEM image of a laser-treated sample proves that the interlayer distance reduces to 0.67 nm after laser illumination, very close to that of pure  $\text{MoS}_2$  (Figure S6). These results indicate that the intercalated  $\text{CTA}^+$  cations have been extruded to the surrounding area by the heat induced by laser illumination, leaving pure  $\text{MoS}_2$  crystal at the laser-treated area.

To investigate the origin of the abnormal Raman peak of the CTAB- $\text{MoS}_2$  sample, we studied the evolution of its Raman



**Figure 2.** Influence of laser power on Raman spectra. (a) Optical image,  $A_{1g}$  intensity mapping and PL intensity mapping of a CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub> flake treated with strong laser along the dashed lines. (b) Atomic force microscope (AFM) morphology of the CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub> thin flakes after strong laser treatment. The solid line is the height profile along the dashed line. Scale bar: 5  $\mu\text{m}$ . (c) Evolution of Raman spectra with increasing incident laser power. (d) Evolution of the intensity of  $E_{2g}^1$ ,  $A_{1g}^*$ , and  $A_{1g}$  peaks with increasing incident laser power. Inset is the evolution of the intensity ratio of  $I(A_{1g}^*)/I(A_{1g})$  and  $I(A_{1g})/I(E_{2g}^1)$ . The peak intensity and peak position are extracted from the fitting of Raman spectra. (e) Evolution of the peak position and peak interval of  $E_{2g}^1$  and  $A_{1g}$  peaks with increasing incident laser power.

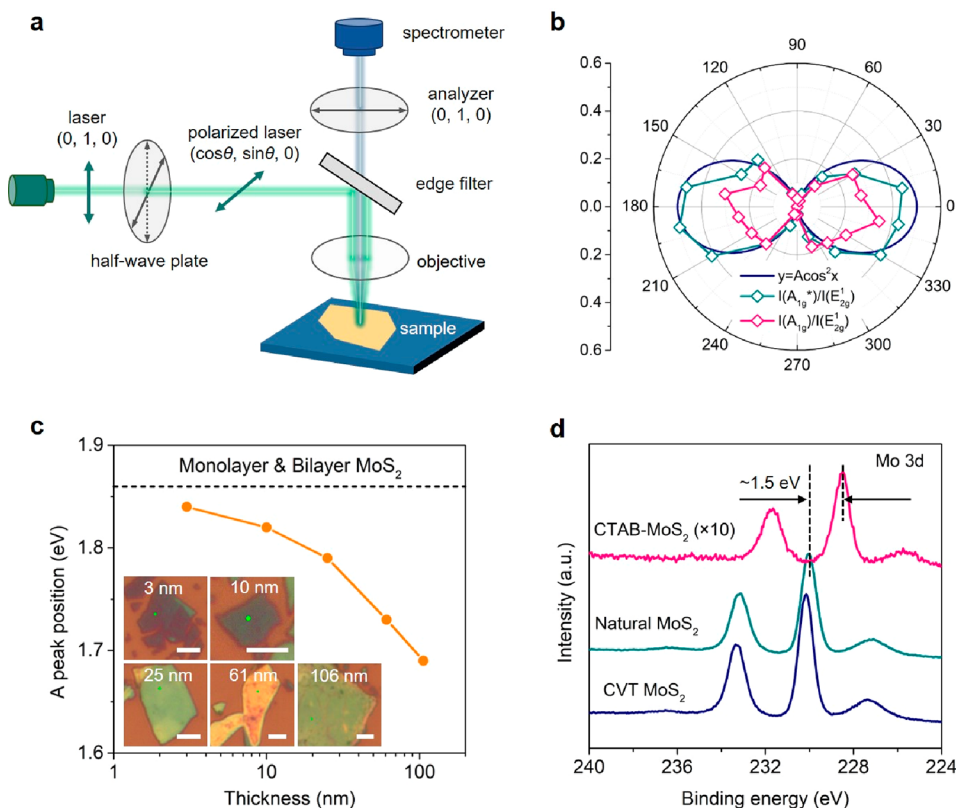
spectra under different incident laser powers (Figure 2c). The increase in the incident laser power will enhance the intensities of Raman peaks and will also locally heat the sample through the photothermal effect, as indicated by the red-shift of the  $E_{2g}^1$  peak. With increasing the laser power, the peak intensity of the silicon substrate ( $\sim 520\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) shows a normal linear increase (Figure 2d). However, the intensity of the  $E_{2g}^1$  peak of MoS<sub>2</sub> exhibits a nonlinear increase. Along with the rapid increase of the  $E_{2g}^1$  peak intensity, the initially negligible  $A_{1g}$  peak appears and sharply increases and finally surpasses the intensity of the  $E_{2g}^1$  peak when the laser power exceeds 10.41 mW. As a comparison, the intensity of the  $A_{1g}^*$  peak first undergoes a mild increase under low laser powers ( $\leq 6.55\text{ mW}$ ) but rapidly disappears when the intensity of the  $A_{1g}$  peak sharply increases. The peak interval between  $E_{2g}^1$  and  $A_{1g}$  modes is  $\sim 20\text{ cm}^{-1}$  at a low laser power ( $\leq 3.11\text{ mW}$ ), which is similar to a monolayer MoS<sub>2</sub>. At high laser power (10.41 mW), however, the peak interval reaches  $25.1\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (Figure 2e), indicating that the Raman spectrum has already changed to be akin to that in pure multilayer MoS<sub>2</sub>.<sup>24–26</sup> The changes in peak intensity and in peak interval are irreversible as the  $A_{1g}$  peak still remains its position and relative intensity when the laser power is reset at a lower level. This phenomenon is also observed under a 633 nm wavelength laser (Figure S7). To avoid nonlinear optical effects for Raman signals under high laser powers, we also tracked the evolution of Raman spectrum obtained at a low laser power after the samples were treated under high laser powers, which shows a similar evolution phenomenon (Figure S8).

According to the PL intensity mapping shown in Figure 2a, it is also reasonable to assume that the interlayer coupling of MoS<sub>2</sub> layers in CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub> is very weak. Thus, the multilayer or even bulk CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub> behaves like multiple MoS<sub>2</sub> monolayers with strong PL intensity, revealing a direct bandgap behavior.<sup>27</sup> After the strong laser illumination, the

PL signal is greatly weakened, and the sample shows optical properties similar to multilayer or bulk MoS<sub>2</sub>. This hypothesis is also proved by Kelvin probe force microscopy (KPFM, Figure S9). At the laser illuminated spot, the work function of the sample increases, which is consistent with the previous research that multilayer MoS<sub>2</sub> has a higher work function than monolayers.<sup>28</sup> All of these results suggest that the evolution of the Raman spectrum of CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub> under laser illumination results from the extrusion of intercalated CTA<sup>+</sup> cations from MoS<sub>2</sub> interlayers. In this extrusion process, the abnormal Raman spectrum gradually becomes a normal one, implying that the abnormal  $A_{1g}^*$  peak originates from the interaction between the MoS<sub>2</sub> and the CTA<sup>+</sup> intercalation.

The absence of out-of-plane vibrational mode has been hardly observed in other organic-intercalated MoS<sub>2</sub> systems,<sup>21,29–31</sup> and thus it arouses two major questions: (1) what the physical origin of the  $A_{1g}^*$  peak is and (2) why the  $A_{1g}$  peak is strongly suppressed in CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub>. To clarify these questions, we conducted a series of control experiments. At first, we clarify that the  $A_{1g}^*$  peak does not originate from the lattice vibration of the CTAB or the solvent themselves (Figure S10). Then, we conducted polarized Raman measurements on the *ab* lattice plane of CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub> samples (Figure 3a),<sup>32,33</sup> where the incident laser is intrinsically polarized along the *y*-axis that can be labeled as (0, 1, 0). After passing through a half-wave plate, the polarized laser is rotated into ( $\cos\theta$ ,  $\sin\theta$ , 0). The Raman intensities of  $A_{1g}$  and  $A_{1g}^*$  clearly show anisotropy along different rotation angles ( $\theta$ ) (Figures 3b, S11, and S12), which are well proportional to  $\cos^2\theta$  (illustrated by the blue line) and reaches the maximum at  $\theta = 0^\circ$ . The polarized Raman spectra of the  $A_{1g}$  peak correspond well with previous studies,<sup>5,34,35</sup> and the similar behavior of the  $A_{1g}^*$  peak suggests that it shows the same symmetry as that of the  $A_{1g}$  peak. We further conducted low-temperature Raman analysis to study the temperature-dependent behavior of the



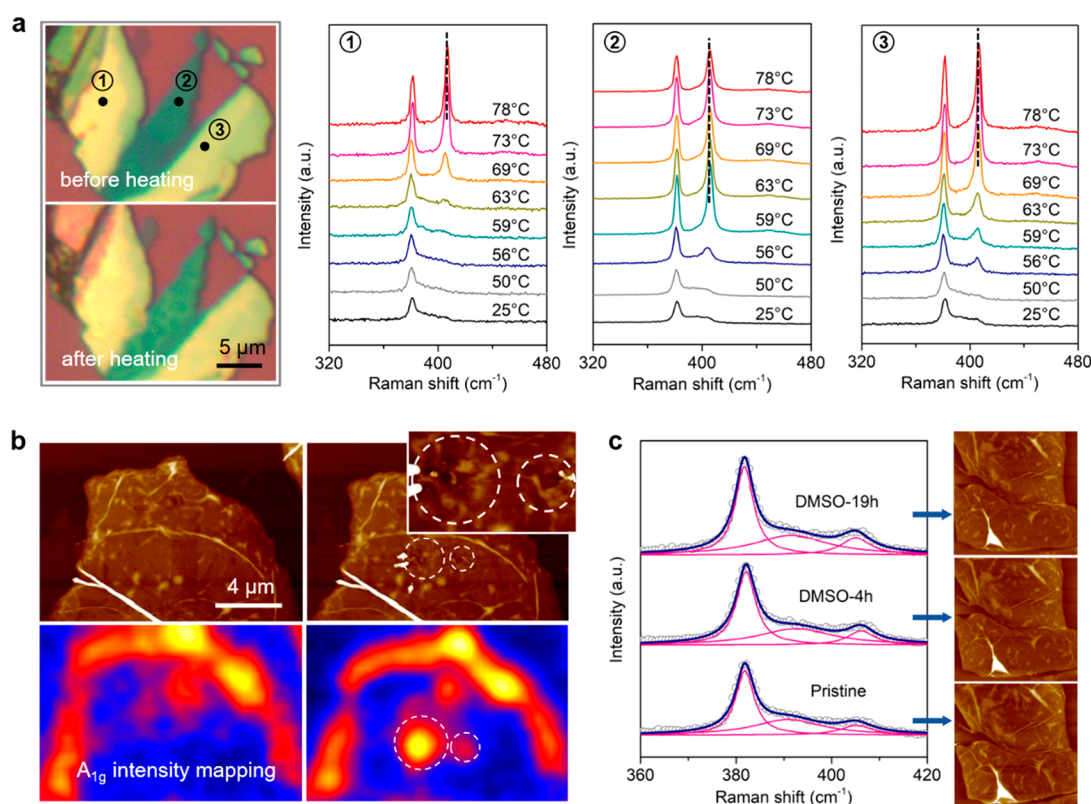


**Figure 3.** In-depth study of the abnormal Raman signal. (a) Experimental setup of the polarized Raman spectra. (b) Angular dependence of the Raman intensities of  $A_{1g}$  and  $A_{1g}^*$  peaks. The solid blue line shows the relationship following  $y = A \cos^2 \theta$ . (c) Blue-shift of the A peak position with sample thicknesses. Inset shows the optical images of the samples. Scale bars: 3 μm. (d) XPS spectra of Mo 3d orbitals of bulk CTAB- $MoS_2$ , natural  $MoS_2$ , and CVT  $MoS_2$ . The CTAB- $MoS_2$  shifts to a lower binding energy by ~1.5 eV.

Raman peaks. It is known that the Raman peak position of  $MoS_2$  linearly depends on lattice temperature.<sup>36</sup> As shown in Figure S13, the temperature coefficient of the  $A_{1g}^*$  peak is very close to that of the  $A_{1g}$  peak, while the  $E_{2g}^1$  peak has a different temperature coefficient. This proves that the  $A_{1g}^*$  peak results from a similar vibration mode as the  $A_{1g}$  peak. Combined with the experimental result on the evolution of the broad  $A_{1g}^*$  peak into the normal  $A_{1g}$  peak (Figure 2c), we can conclude that the  $A_{1g}^*$  peak should correspond to the subpeak of the red-shifted and suppressed  $A_{1g}$  peak, which might be attributed to the interactions between  $MoS_2$  and intercalated CTAB layers. In other words, all the abnormality in Raman spectra can be explained by the fact that the original  $A_{1g}$  peak is severely red-shifted and suppressed in CTAB- $MoS_2$ . However, it is still surprising that the  $A_{1g}$  peak can be red-shifted by more than 15  $cm^{-1}$ , and its intensity could be much weaker than that of the  $E_{2g}^1$  peak, which is not discovered in previous literature.

The reason for this phenomenon is an interesting question. We exclude the transition from direct bandgap in monolayer  $MoS_2$  to indirect bandgap in multilayer  $MoS_2$  from the main reason for the abnormal Raman behavior because the transition of band structures can only slightly change the peak positions of  $E_{2g}^1$  or  $A_{1g}$  and will not greatly suppress either of them.<sup>37,38</sup> On the other hand, as the  $A_{1g}$  mode originates from the out-of-plane vibration of Mo–S bond (see the inset figure of Figure 1d), it could be greatly suppressed when CTA<sup>+</sup> chains restrain the vibration of the Mo–S bond through the possible chemical bonds or vdWs forces.<sup>5,13,14,39</sup> Apart from this hypothesis, we also attribute the abnormal Raman behavior to electron doping (or n-doping) because the  $A_{1g}$

mode shows much stronger coupling effect with electrons than the  $E_{2g}^1$  mode.<sup>18</sup> To testify this, we conducted thickness-dependent PL measurements of CTAB- $MoS_2$  flakes and performed X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) on bulk CTAB- $MoS_2$ . As shown in Figures S14 and 3c, the PL peak of the thickest CTAB- $MoS_2$  flake (~106 nm, Figure S14) has red-shifted by ~0.17 eV in comparison with the mechanically exfoliated monolayer  $MoS_2$ , which is strong evidence of n-doping of  $MoS_2$  by CTA<sup>+</sup> intercalation.<sup>19</sup> Figure 3d shows the XPS spectra of CTAB- $MoS_2$ , natural  $MoS_2$  (used as the ingredient for electrochemical intercalation), and chemical vapor transport (CVT) synthesized  $MoS_2$ . It can be found that natural  $MoS_2$  and CVT  $MoS_2$  have similar XPS signals with the Mo 3d peak deviating by less than 0.1 eV. However, the Mo 3d peak of CTAB- $MoS_2$  blue-shifts by more than 1.5 eV compared to that of the natural  $MoS_2$ , indicating that the n-doping effect has triggered a reduction of  $Mo^{4+}$  to  $Mo^{3+}$  or even lower valence.<sup>40,41</sup> Following the results reported by Chakraborty et al.,<sup>18</sup> the red-shift of the  $A_{1g}$  peak of our CTAB- $MoS_2$  sample by more than 15  $cm^{-1}$  corresponds to a doping concentration of up to  $8 \times 10^{13} cm^{-2}$  for each layer. The Hall measurement of our bulk CTAB- $MoS_2$  crystal (50 μm in thickness) yields a carrier concentration of  $1.24 \times 10^{20} cm^{-3}$ , corresponding to  $3.55 \times 10^{15} cm^{-2}$  for each layer, while that of pristine  $MoS_2$  is  $1.84 \times 10^{12} cm^{-2}$  for each layer (Table S1). The CTAB- $MoS_2$  field-effect transistors (FETs) do not show clear on/off characteristic, also verifying that the CTAB- $MoS_2$  is heavily n-doped (Figure S15). We believe that the electron concentration extracted based on the Raman analysis is an underestimation because the abnormal  $A_{1g}^*$  peak may not



**Figure 4.** Impact of heating, mechanical pressure, and solvent on Raman spectra. (a) *In situ* heating experiment and the corresponding Raman spectra. The numbers 1, 2, and 3 indicate thick, thin, and moderate thickness flakes, respectively. (b) AFM image and  $A_{1g}$  intensity mapping of a  $CTA^+$ - $MoS_2$  thin flake before and after nanoindentation experiment. Dashed circles outline the indented area. (c) Evolution in Raman spectra of pristine  $CTA^+$ - $MoS_2$  thin flake and the same flake after 4 and 19 h DMSO treatment. Shown on the right are the corresponding AFM images, which show minor differences.

follow the relationship in the literature<sup>18</sup> at such a high doping concentration. The actual doping concentration should be more close to the Hall measurement results, which also reaches a high value that can hardly be achieved by other approaches such as surface engineering or electric-field-induced doping.<sup>42–46</sup> Previous work has suggested a semiconductor-to-metal (STM) transition under such strong n-doping,<sup>47</sup> but it is surprising that our  $CTAB-MoS_2$  samples still remain a semiconducting 2H phase, as revealed by the strong  $E_{2g}^1$  peak and strong PL intensity (Figure S14) that cannot be obtained in the metallic 1T phase.<sup>48–50</sup>

Following the above analyses, we can try to explain the abnormality in Raman spectra. Because of the strong n-doping and the restrain of the Mo–S bond, the original out-of-plane vibrational mode is greatly suppressed, such that the  $A_{1g}$  peak red-shifts toward the  $E_{2g}^1$  peak with a severely weakened intensity. Because of the weak interlayer coupling in the intercalated  $CTAB-MoS_2$ , the whole spectrum is the sum of Raman signal contributed by each layer. The doping effect may be induced during the electrochemical intercalation process, in which the  $CTA^+$  ions are intercalated into  $MoS_2$  interlayers, forming electric double layers at the  $CTA^+/MoS_2$  interfaces and inducing a massive number of electrons in  $MoS_2$ . After the laser treatment, the intercalations are extruded out to the surrounding regions or degraded, so that the electrons are simultaneously released and the out-of-plane vibration of Mo–S ( $A_{1g}$  mode) is reformed.

As aforementioned, the removal of intercalations leads to the normalization of the  $A_{1g}$  peak. This may imply some ways to

convert the intercalated  $CTAB-MoS_2$  sample exhibiting a behavior of highly doped multiple monolayers back to a normal multilayer  $MoS_2$ . We first conducted *in situ* global heating experiments on the samples (Figure 4a), where the temperature was calibrated by monitoring the thermal shift of the Raman peak of silicon.<sup>51</sup> As shown in Figure 4a, all the three flakes undergo the abnormality-to-renormalization transition of the  $A_{1g}$  peak, but the transition temperature depends on the sample thickness, which is lower for the thinner sample. This result indicates that the departure of the intercalations happens layer by layer, and the thinner samples are less tolerant to high temperature. The *in situ* migration of  $CTA^+$  in a thick  $CTAB-MoS_2$  flake was recorded (Figure S16). The optical contrast in the optical image of the sample changes after the heating process, further revealing the migration of  $CTA^+$ . We then applied local mechanical pressure by indenting a  $CTAB-MoS_2$  sample with an AFM tip<sup>52,53</sup> and compared the Raman intensity mapping around the normal  $A_{1g}$  peak (395–410  $cm^{-1}$ ) before and after the indentation to reveal its structural changes. The indentation process causes a local deformation of the sample (Figure 4b). The originally weak  $A_{1g}$  peak becomes significant at the indented spot (inside dashed circle). These results can be well explained by the extrusion of the intercalations induced by the heating in laser treatment or global heating and the mechanical squeezing in nanoindentation. The extrusion of the intercalations eliminates the heavy doping effect and has the out-of-plane vibration of Mo–S ( $A_{1g}$  mode) reappear, which is irreversible unless another electrochemical intercalation of  $CTAB$  is applied. The

fact that the interlayer distance has reduced to be very close to that of pure MoS<sub>2</sub> after the laser treatment is a strong evidence of the extrusion of CTA<sup>+</sup> (Figure 2b, inset of Figure 4b, and Figure S6).

Although the CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub> sample seems to be converted to a nonintercalated, multilayer MoS<sub>2</sub> sample by heating or nanoindentation, it is quite stable upon a solvent immersion at room temperature. After a 19 h immersion in DMSO, the intensity of the A<sub>1g</sub> peak only shows a very slight increase, indicating that the n-doping level is only slightly reduced (see Figure 4c). However, the morphology of this sample remains almost unchanged, and the suppression of the A<sub>1g</sub> peak is still obvious. Such a result suggests that the CTA<sup>+</sup> ions can hardly be removed by organic chemicals through the diffusion out of the interlayers, and CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub> is well resistant to solvent treatment at room temperature.

In conclusion, we synthesized CTAB-intercalated semi-conducting MoS<sub>2</sub> superlattices and observed abnormal Raman behavior in their thin flakes. The red-shifted and suppressed A<sub>1g</sub> peak is attributed to the restraint of the Mo–S out-of-plane vibration and the heavy n-doping effect. The sample remains its direct bandgap even for thick flakes and bulk crystals, and the multilayer flakes exhibit the same Raman and PL behaviors of monolayer MoS<sub>2</sub> due to the weak interlayer coupling. Laser exposure, heating, and mechanical pressure could trigger the diffusion or degradation of the intercalated organic and eliminate the intercalation effect. However, the CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub> is stable under room temperature and has good resistance to organic solvent. The relatively stable chemical properties and robust electron concentration are major advantages of this intercalated system, which can hardly be achieved by gating the MoS<sub>2</sub> flakes or surface engineering.<sup>54</sup> With remarkable electron concentration and direct bandgap, the CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub> demonstrates great potential in flexible and nanoscale thermal electric devices.

## ■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### SI Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.nanolett.3c01543>.

Methods; experimental setup of the sample preparation; characterization of the interlayer distance of CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub>; Raman spectra of CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub> thin flakes; Raman spectra under different laser wavelengths; PL analysis of a partially laser-treated CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub> sample; characterization of the interlayer distance of laser-treated CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub>; Raman spectra under different laser powers; evolution of Raman spectra after laser treatment; characterization of the weak interlayer coupling; Raman spectra of the intercalated organic; polarized Raman analysis under an excitation wavelength of 532 nm; polarized Raman analysis under an excitation wavelength of 488 nm; temperature-dependent behavior of Raman spectra; PL analysis of CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub> samples with different thicknesses; electron-doping effect of MoS<sub>2</sub> by CTA<sup>+</sup> intercalation; *in situ* heating experiments on CTAB-MoS<sub>2</sub> (PDF)

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## Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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## ■ ABBREVIATIONS

CTAB, cetyltrimethylammonium bromide; TMDC, transition-metal dichalcogenide; AFM, atomic force microscopy; DMSO, dimethyl sulfoxide; NMP, *N*-methylpyrrolidone; ACN, acetonitrile; DMF, dimethylformamide; XRD, X-ray diffraction; HRTEM, high-resolution transmission electron microscopy; vdWs, van der Waals; PL, photoluminescence; KPFM, Kelvin probe force microscopy; XPS, X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy; CVT, chemical vapor transport; FET, field-effect transistor; STM, semiconductor to metal.

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