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Gas-Phase Formation of 1-Methylcyclopropene and 3-Methylcyclopropene via the Reaction of the Methylidyne Radical (CH; $X^{2}\Pi$) with Propylene (CH₃CHCH₂; $X^{1}A'$)

Chao He,[†] Aaron M. Thomas,[†] Galiya R. Galimova,^{‡,§} Alexander M. Mebel,^{*,‡} and Ralf I. Kaiser^{*,†}

[†]Department of Chemistry, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822, United States

[‡]Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Florida International University, Miami, Florida 33199, United States

[§]Samara National Research University, Samara 443086, Russia

Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: The crossed molecular beam reactions of the methylidyne radical (CH; $X^2\Pi$) with propylene (CH₃CHCH₂; X¹A') along with (partially) substituted reactants were conducted at collision energies of 19.3 kJ mol⁻¹. Combining our experimental data with ab initio electronic structure and statistical calculations, the methylidyne radical is revealed to add barrierlessly to the carboncarbon double bond of propylene reactant resulting in a cyclic doublet C₄H₇ intermediate with a lifetime longer than its rotation period. These adducts undergo a nonstatistical unimolecular decomposition via atomic hydrogen loss through tight exit transition states forming the cyclic products 1-methylcyclopropene and 3-methylcyclopropene with overall reaction exoergicities of 168 ± 25 kJ mol⁻¹. These C₄H₆ isomers are predicted to exist even in low-temperature environments



such as cold molecular clouds like TMC-1, since the reaction is barrierless and exoergic, all transition states are below the energy of the separated reactants, and both the methylidyne radical (CH; X²Π) and propylene reactant were detected in cold molecular clouds such as TMC-1.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the last decades, the C₄H₆ isomers 1,3-butadiene, 1,2butadiene, 1-butyne, and 2-butyne along with methylcyclopropene, ubiquitous hydrocarbons in fuel-rich low-pressure laminar flames,¹⁻¹¹ have received considerable attention from the combustion, astrochemistry, and reaction dynamics communities as potential building blocks leading to the formation of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) along with their nitrogen-substituted and partially hydrogenated counterparts (Scheme 1).¹⁻³⁴ 1,3-Butadiene, 1-butyne, and 2butyne have been identified through their photoionization efficiency (PIE) curves in allene (CH₂CCH₂) and propyne (CH₃CCH) flames;³ Yang et al. identified these C_4H_6 isomers in butanol $(C_4H_{10}O)$ flames, concluding that 1,3-butadiene represents the dominant product.⁴ Note that isomerization among these C_4H_6 isomers is critical in combustion processes;^{9,35–37} at temperatures above 1100 K, 1,2-butadiene and 2-butyne isomerize rapidly to 1,3-butadiene via hydrogen atom shifts.³⁵ The isomerization between 1-butyne and 1,3butadiene, however, is slower than the rearrangement of 1,2butadiene to 1,3-butadiene.³⁵ In premixed laminar 1,3butadiene flames, 1,3-butadiene isomerizes easily to 2-butyne and 1-methylcyclopropene with nearly equal rates of $(3.0 \times$ 10^{13}) exp(-226 000/RT) s^{-1.9,38,39}

Among the C₄H₆ isomers, 1,3-butadiene has been studied more deeply in the combustion chemistry community due to its important role in promoting PAH formation.^{2,7-9,40-47} In premixed, sooting laminar flames, styrene (C₈H₈) was speculated to be formed by the reaction between the 1,3butadienyl radical (C_4H_5) with 1,3-butadiene; about 80% of benzene (C_6H_6) was proposed to originate from the vinyl radical (C_2H_3) reacting with 1,3-butadiene in a butadiene flame.⁴⁰ On the other hand, reactions between butadiene and molecular oxygen lead to degradation of the hydrocarbon and production of 1,3-butadienyl $(n-C_4H_5/i-C_4H_5)$ along with the hydroperoxyl radical (HO₂).⁴⁴ Propagation reactions with simple molecular radicals and atoms like hydroperoxyl (HO_2) , hydrogen (H), hydroxyl (OH), oxygen (O), methylidyne (CH), and vinyl (C_2H_3) might also lead to 1,3-butadienyl (*n*- $C_4H_5/i-C_4H_5$).⁴⁴ Consecutive reactions of $i-C_4H_5/n-C_4H_5$ with acetylene (C_2H_2) have been proposed as an important pathway to form one-ring aromatics such as benzene or its fulvene isomer in hydrocarbon-rich flames.^{6,9,40,41,48-52} Miller et al. speculated that the reactions between $i-C_4H_5$ and acetylene account for almost 100% of fulvene detected in 1,3-butadiene

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Scheme 1. Structures of Six Low-Lying C₄H₆ Isomers^a



^aPoint groups and energies (kJ mol⁻¹) relative to 1,3-butadiene are also shown. Energies were obtained from NIST.^{85,86}

Scheme 2. Barrierless Reactions of 1,3-Butadiene with Open-Shell Reactants Leading to Key Aromatic Molecules: Benzene (C_6H_6, D_{6h}) , Phenyl $(C_6H_5, C_{2\nu})$, Pyridine $(C_5H_5N, C_{2\nu})$ and 1,4-Dihydronaphthalene $(C_{10}H_{10}, C_{2\nu})$



flames; 30% of benzene has been inferred to be formed by a hydrogen-assisted isomerization of fulvene. 41,42

More closely related to low-temperature interstellar environments, barrierless 1,3-butadiene reactions with the ethynyl radical (C_2H), dicarbon (C_2), the cyano radical (CN), and the phenyl radical (C_6H_5) lead to aromatic systems like benzene (C_6H_6), phenyl (C_6H_5), 1,4-dihydronaphthalene ($C_{10}H_{10}$), and small fractions of pyridine (C_5H_5N), under single-collision conditions (Scheme 2).^{12–15,18,20,21,23} Benzene, the simplest building block of all PAHs, can be synthesized through the addition of the ethynyl radical to one of the terminal carbon atoms of 1,3-butadiene followed by isomerization. ¹⁴ Zhang et al. revealed that the phenyl radical represents an important product of the barrierless bimolecular reaction of triplet dicarbon and 1,3-butadiene.^{18,23} Combined experimental and computational studies revealed that the initial collision complex formed via the addition of triplet dicarbon to one

of the terminal carbons of 1,3-butadiene will undergo ring closure and hydrogen migration, eventually leading to the phenyl radical through atomic hydrogen elimination.^{18,23} Pyridine, formally derived from benzene by replacing a single CH moiety by a nitrogen atom, represents a minor product in the reaction of ground-state cyano radicals with 1,3-butadiene.^{20,21} Finally, 1,4-dihydronaphthalene was identified in the reaction of the phenyl radical with 1,3-butadiene.^{12,13,15} Similar to the aforementioned reactions, this pathway is initiated by a barrierless addition of the phenyl radical to the terminal carbon atom of 1,3-butadiene followed by ring closure, isomerization, and hydrogen atom emission.^{12,13,15}

However, despite the fundamental importance of 1,3butadiene in the formation of mono- and bicyclic aromatic molecules (Scheme 2), the underlying reaction pathways leading to distinct C_4H_6 isomers in combustion flames and distinct extraterrestrial environments are poorly understood.^{53,54} The reactions of methylidyne (CH) with propylene

 (C_3H_6) was suggested as an important route to 1,3-butadiene. In 2004, Miller et al. explored the C_4H_7 potential energy surface (PES), computationally identifying acyclic C_4H_7 isomers.¹⁹ Further, a detailed theoretical investigation on the C_4H_7 surface was conducted at the B3LYP/6-311G(d,p) and G3B3 (single-point) levels of theory.¹⁶ Both linear and cyclic C4H7 radicals were considered with the energetics of the acyclic structures being consistent with Miller's calculation.^{16,19} Kinetic experiments of methylidyne (CH) radicals with propylene were carried out in a low-pressure fast-flow reactor at 300 K with the hydrogen atom production channel reaching up to 78 \pm 10%. 1,3-Butadiene was proposed as the main product.¹⁷ Further, the reactions of $CH/CD(X^2\Pi)$ with propylene were explored at 298 K and 4 Torr, exploiting photoionization mass spectrometry.²² 1-Methylallyl was suggested to be formed through methylidyne cycloaddition to the carbon-carbon double bond of propylene followed by ring opening and hydrogen atom elimination, eventually forming three C4H6 isomers: 1,3-butadiene, 1,2-butadiene, and 1-butyne. 1,3-Butadiene was the main product with the branching fraction of 0.63 ± 0.13 with minor fractions of 1,2butadiene (0.25 \pm 0.05) and 1-butyne (0.12 \pm 0.03).²² Based on the aforementioned investigations, Ribeiro and Mebel conducted a systematic investigation of the C₄H₇ PES initiated from the reaction of methylidyne (CH) with propylene (C_3H_6) first at a zero-pressure limit under single-collision conditions and also at 5 Torr at 300 K.55 Assuming complete energy randomization and formation of an adduct via methylidyne addition to the carbon-carbon double bond, 1,3-butadiene and atomic hydrogen were predicted to be formed with branching ratios of 80% with 1,2-butadiene contributing up to 11%. If the reaction is initiated by methylidyne insertion into the terminal sp² C-H bond or into the C–C bond, the branching ratios for 1,3-butadiene and hydrogen, and 1,2-butadiene and hydrogen were predicted to be 87 and 11%, respectively. Considering an insertion of methylidyne into an sp³ C-H, 1,2-butadiene and atomic hydrogen account for almost 30% of all products.

Although the formation mechanisms of C₄H₆ isomers have been gauged previously both experimentally and theoretically, the aforementioned experimental studies only involved kinetic studies in which often hundreds of collisions might modify the nascent product distribution; likewise, hydrogen-assisted isomerization of nascent reaction products under bulk conditions presents an often-neglected complication in the identification of the initial reaction products.^{16,17,19,22,55} Therefore, a detailed and comprehensive investigation of the reaction of methylidyne radicals with propylene under singlecollision conditions is desirable. $^{18,56-64}$ These experiments are conducted under single-collision conditions and guarantee that truly primary reaction products are identified; this also eliminates hydrogen-assisted isomerization of these nascent products and a potential stabilization of reaction intermediates. Here, we performed reaction dynamics studies on the barrierless bimolecular reaction of the methylidyne (CH) radical with propylene (CH₃CHCH₂) at a collision energy $(E_{\rm C})$ of 19.3 kJ mol⁻¹ under single-collision conditions. These results are compared to Ribeiro and Mebel's computational study of the $C_4 \dot{H}_7$ PES⁵⁵ and are expanded by conducting new statistical Rice-Ramsperger-Kassel-Marcus (RRKM) calculations to predict the branching ratios under our experimental conditions. Agreements and discrepancies between computations and experiments leading to 1-methylcyclo-propene and 3methylcyclo-propene are discussed, and reaction mechanism(s) are proposed. Due to the barrierless and exoergic nature of this elementary reaction, the methylidyne (CH) radical can also react with propylene $(CH_3CHCH_2)^{65}$ in cold molecular clouds such as TMC-1;⁶⁶ hence, implications to astrochemistry are also presented.

2. METHODS

2.1. Experimental Methods. The bimolecular reactions of methylidyne (CH; $X^2\Pi$) with propylene (CH₃CHCH₂; X^1A') along with the corresponding fully deuterated counterpart (CD_3CDCD_2) and of methylidyne-d $(CD; X^2\Pi)$ with propylene (CH₃CHCH₂; X¹A') and partially deuterated isotopologues (CD₃CHCH₂) were performed under singlecollision conditions in a crossed molecular beam machine at the University of Hawaii.⁵⁶ The pulsed supersonic methylidyne beam was produced via photodissociation (COMPex 110, Coherent, Inc.; 248 nm; 30 Hz) of a helium-seeded (99.9999%; AirGas) bromoform (CHBr₃, Sigma-Aldrich Chemistry, ≥99%) held in a stainless steel bubbler at 283 K at a total pressure of 2.2 atm.⁶⁷⁻⁷⁰ After passing through the skimmer, the methylidyne beam was velocity-selected by a four-slot chopper wheel with a peak velocity of $v_p = 1782 \pm 29$ m s⁻¹ and a speed ratio S of 13.8 ± 1.6 (Table 1). By the use of

Table 1. Peak Velocities (v_p) and Speed Ratios (S) of the Methylidyne (CH), Propylene (C_3H_6) , Propylene- d_6 (C_3D_6) , and Methylidyne-d (CD) Beams along with the Corresponding Collision Energies (E_C) and Center-of-Mass Angles (Θ_{CM}) for Each Reactive Scattering Experiment

beam	$\nu_p (m s^{-1})$	S	(kJ mol^{-1})	$\Theta_{\rm CM}~({\rm deg})$
$CH(X^2\Pi)$	1782 ± 29	13.8 ± 1.6		
C_3H_6 (X ¹ A')	840 ± 10	11.0 ± 0.2	19.3 ± 0.4	56.7 ± 0.3
C_3D_6 (X ¹ A')	820 ± 10	7.8 ± 1.0	19.7 ± 0.4	59.5 ± 0.3
$CD(X^2\Pi)$	1841 ± 15	13.9 ± 0.8		
$C_3H_6(X^1A')$	840 ± 10	11.0 ± 0.2	21.5 ± 0.4	53.9 ± 0.3
$\begin{array}{c} CD_3 CHCH_2 \\ (X^1 A') \end{array}$	830 ± 10	11.0 ± 0.2	21.8 ± 0.4	55.4 ± 0.3

laser-induced fluorescence, the methylidyne beam was determined to hold a rotational temperature of 14 \pm 1 K with less than 6% of the radicals populating the first vibrationally excited level ($\nu = 1$).⁶⁸⁻⁷⁰ The supersonic beam of neat propylene (Sigma-Aldrich Chemistry, >99%) at a backing pressure of 550 Torr with a peak velocity of $v_{\rm p}$ = 840 ± 10 m s⁻¹ and a speed ratio S of 11.0 \pm 0.2 (Table 1) crossed perpendicularly with the methylidyne beam, resulting in a collision energy of 19.3 \pm 0.4 kJ mol⁻¹ and a center-of mass angle $\Theta_{\rm CM}$ of 56.7 \pm 0.3°. Each supersonic beam was generated by a piezoelectric pulse valve, which was operated at a repetition rate of 60 Hz, a pulse width of 80 μ s, and a peak voltage of -400 V. The secondary pulse valve, which introduced pure propylene gas, was triggered 95 μ s prior to the primary pulse valve. For the deuterated reactants, methylidyne-d (CD) was produced exploiting bromoform-d (CDBr₃, Sigma-Aldrich Chemistry, >99.5%) as a photodissociation precursor. The reactions of methylidyne (CH; $X^{2}\Pi$) with propylene- d_{6} (CD₃CDCD₂) and of methylidyne-d(CD; $X^2\Pi$) with propylene (CH₃CHCH₂; X^1A') and partially deuterated isotopologues (CD₃CHCH₂) were performed to

elucidate the detailed positions of the atomic hydrogen and/or deuterium loss (Table 1).

The detector is housed within a triply differentially pumped chamber and rotatable in the plane defined by both reactant beams. It consists of a Brink-type ionizer,⁷¹ a quadrupole mass spectrometer (QMS), and a Daly-type ion counter.⁷² The neutral reaction products entering the detector were ionized by electron impact (80 eV), filtered based on their mass-to-charge ratios (m/z) utilizing a QMS (Extrel; QC 150) equipped with a 2.1 MHz oscillator, and eventually recorded by a Daly-type ion counter. Up to 1.3×10^6 time-of-flight (TOF) spectra were collected at laboratory angles between $0 \le \Theta \le 69^\circ$ with respect to the methylidyne beam ($\Theta = 0^{\circ}$). A forwardconvolution routine was used to analyze the laboratory data, which is an iterative method exploiting user-defined center-ofmass (CM) translational energy $P(E_T)$ and angular $T(\theta)$ flux distributions; these functions are varied iteratively until an acceptable fit of the laboratory frame (LAB) TOF spectra and angular distributions are obtained.^{73,74} These functions define the reactive differential cross section $I(u, \theta) \sim P(u) \times T(\theta)$ with the center-of-mass velocity u. The error ranges of the $P(E_{\rm T})$ and $T(\theta)$ functions are determined within 1σ limits of the corresponding laboratory angular distribution while maintaining a good fit of the laboratory TOF spectra.

2.2. Computational Methods. Energy-dependent Rice-Ramsperger-Kassel-Marcus (RRKM) theory⁷⁵ was utilized in the calculations of unimolecular rate constants of various elementary steps on the C4H7 PES relevant to the reaction of the methylidyne radical (CH) with propylene (C_3H_6) . The C_4H_7 surface together with all structures and vibrational frequencies of the reactants, products, intermediates, and transition states have been described in the previous work by Ribeiro and Mebel.⁵⁵ In the present study, internal energy-dependent rate constants were computed within the harmonic approximation using the recently developed in-house code,⁷⁸ which allows for automatic processing of Gaussian 09 log files for the evaluation of numbers of states for transition states and densities of states for local minima within the direct count method. The energy-dependent RRKM rate constants were computed in the limit of zero pressure and hence are applicable to crossed molecular beam conditions. The unimolecular rate constants were utilized in the calculations of product branching ratios, which were obtained by solving first-order kinetic equations employing steady-state approximation.7

3. RESULTS

3.1. Laboratory Frame. For the reaction of the methylidyne radical (CH; 13 amu) with propylene (CH₃CHCH₂; 42 amu), reactive scattering signal was collected at mass-to-charge ratios (m/z) of 55 $({}^{13}\text{CC}_3\text{H}_6^+)$, 54 $(C_4\text{H}_6^+)$, and 53 $(C_4H_5^+)$. The TOF spectra recorded at these mass-tocharge ratios were superimposable after scaling, suggesting that ion counts at m/z = 55, 54, and 53 originate from the same reaction channel, i.e., CH (13 amu) + C_3H_6 (42 amu) $\rightarrow C_4H_6$ (54 amu) + H (1 amu). Here, the signal at $m/z = 53 (C_4 H_5^+)$ can be linked to a dissociative electron impact ionization of the $m/z = 54 (C_4 H_6^+)$ parent in the electron impact ionizer; ion counts at m/z = 55 (¹³CC₃H₆⁺) arose from naturally occurring ¹³C isotopes in the product. Therefore, we can state that the reaction of methylidyne with propylene is dictated by atomic hydrogen loss and the formation of C_4H_6 isomer(s). Since the ion counts of the parent ion $m/z = 54 (C_4 H_6^+)$ are only at a

level of 39 ± 4% compared to those of the fragment ion m/z = 53 (C₄H₅⁺), the TOF spectra were collected at the best signalto-noise ratio at m/z = 53 (C₄H₅⁺). The resulting TOFs were then normalized with respect to the center-of-mass angle and integrated to obtain the laboratory angular distribution (LAD; Figure 1). The LAD is nearly symmetric around Θ_{CM} and



Figure 1. Laboratory angular distribution (top) and time-of-flight (TOF) spectra (bottom) recorded at a mass-to-charge ratio (m/z) of 53 for the reaction of the methylidyne radical (CH; $C_{\infty v}$; $X^2\Pi$) with propylene (C_3H_{6j} C_{sj} ; X^1A'). The directions of the methylidyne radical and propylene beams are defined as 0 and 90°, respectively. The red solid lines represent the best-fit derived from center-of-mass functions depicted in Figure 3 with black circles defining the experimental data.

spans at least 45° in the laboratory frame. This result might suggest that the reaction of the methylidyne radical with propylene proceeds via indirect scattering dynamics through C_4H_7 reaction intermediate(s), ultimately dissociating to C_4H_6 by emitting atomic hydrogen.

The reactions of the methylidyne-*d* radical (CD; 14 amu) with propylene (CH₃CHCH₂; 42 amu) and of the methylidyne radical (CH; 13 amu) with propylene- d_6 (CD₃CDCD₂; 48 amu) and propylene- $3,3,3-d_3$ (CD₃CHCH₂) were also performed to extract detailed information on the position(s) of the hydrogen atom loss (Scheme 3). To probe the hydrogen and deuterium atom loss channels, the reaction of methylidyne-*d* (CD; 14 amu) with propylene (CH₃CHCH₂; 42 amu) was studied first (Scheme 3a). TOFs were recorded at m/z =55 $(C_4H_5D^+)$ and $m/z = 54 (C_4H_6^+/C_4H_4D^+)$ at the corresponding CM angle of 54.6°; a strong signal was observed at m/z = 54 (C₄H₆⁺/C₄H₄D⁺) with signal at m/z = 55 $(C_4H_5D^+)$ collected at a level of only $39 \pm 2\%$ of m/z = 54 $(C_4H_6^+/C_4H_4D^+)$ (Figure 2a). Recall that for the reaction of the methylidyne radical (CH; 13 amu) with propylene (CH₃CHCH₂; 42 amu), a signal at m/z = 54 (C₄H₆⁺) is collected at a level of 39 \pm 4% with respect to m/z = 53 $(C_4H_5^+)$ (Figure 2d). Since both fractions are identical within error limits, we may conclude that for the reaction of the methylidyne-d radical (CD; 14 amu) with propylene $(CH_3CHCH_2; 42 \text{ amu})$, a signal at $m/z = 54 (C_4H_6^+/$

Scheme 3. Reaction Schematics for the Reactions of (a) Methylidyne-d (CD) with Propylene (CH₃CHCH₂), (b) Methylidyne (CH) with Propylene- d_6 (CD₃CDCD₂), and (c) Methylidyne-d (CD) with Propylene-3,3,3- d_3 (CD₃CHCH₂), Leading to H-and D-Loss Products^{*a*}



^aSuccessive dissociative electron impact ionization processes of the parent ions are represented in italics.

 $C_4H_4D^+$) can be attributed to a dissociative electron impact ionization of the m/z = 55 ($C_4H_5D^+$) product in the electron impact ionizer. Here, the C_4H_5D product(s) was (were) formed via *hydrogen atom loss* from the propylene reactant. Consequently, no atomic hydrogen was emitted from the methylidyne radical (CH) within our detection limits.

To confirm this conclusion, we carried out the reaction of the methylidyne radical (CH; 13 amu) with propylene- d_6 (CD₃CDCD₂; 48 amu) (Scheme 3b). Signal was collected at mass-to-charge ratios (m/z) of 60 $(C_4D_6^+)$, 59 $(C_4D_5H^+)$, and 58 (C₄D₅⁺) (Figure 2b). Note that ions at m/z = 60 (C₄D₆⁺) and 59 (C₄D₅H⁺) can both fragment to m/z = 58 (C₄D₅⁺). Signal at $m/z = 60 (C_4 D_6^+)$ was barely visible, accounting for up to 4 ± 1% with respect to $m/z = 58 (C_4 D_5^+)$. Signal at m/z= 59 (C₄D₅H⁺) ranges at 38 \pm 5% compared to that at m/z = 58 (C₄D₅⁺). Based on these data, m/z = 58 (C₄D₅⁺) represents most likely a fragment from m/z = 59 (C₄D₅H⁺), which suggests that the deuterium loss channel exists in the methylidyne-propylene- d_6 system. Therefore, the experimental results for the reactions of methylidyne-d (CD; 14 amu) with propylene (CH₃CHCH₂; 42 amu) and methylidyne radical (CH; 13 amu) with propylene-d₆ (CD₃CDCD₂; 48 amu) are consistent, suggesting that for the 1-methylidyne (CH)-propylene (CH_3CHCH_2) system, the hydrogen emission originates within our error limits from the propylene reactant.

We further performed the reaction of the methylidyne-*d* radical (CD; 14 amu) with propylene-3,3,3-*d*₃ (CD₃CHCH₂; 45 amu) to identify the detailed hydrogen and/or deuterium emission position(s) from the propylene-3,3,3-*d*₃ reactant-(Scheme 3c). Signals at both m/z = 58 (C₄D₄H₂⁺) and m/z = 57 (C₄D₃H₃⁺/C₄D₄H⁺) were collected (Figure 2c), and the ratios between these two ion counts were determined to be 31

 \pm 5%, which is very similar to the ratio (39 ± 4%) between the parent ion m/z = 54 (C₄H₆⁺) and the fragment ion at m/z =53 (C₄H₅⁺) in the reaction of the methylidyne radical (CH; 13 amu) with propylene (CH₃CHCH₂; 42 amu). The results suggest that m/z = 57 (C₄D₃H₃⁺/C₄D₄H⁺) is most likely a fragment from m/z = 58 (C₄D₄H₂⁺) and only the H loss channel exists in the methylidyne-*d* radical (CD) with propylene-3,3,3-*d*₃ (CD₃CHCH₂) reaction. Therefore, we may conclude that, in the reaction of the methylidyne radical (CH; 13 amu) with propylene (CH₃CHCH₂; 42 amu), the H loss results from the vinyl group of the propylene reactant, but not from methylidyne radical or the CH₃ group of propylene.

3.2. Center-of-Mass Frame. For the reaction of the methylidyne radical (CH; 13 amu) with propylene (CH₃CHCH₂; 42 amu), the best-fit CM functions (Figure 3) are achieved, exploiting a single reaction channel with the products of C4H6 and atomic hydrogen; the hatched areas of the $P(E_{\rm T})$ and $T(\theta)$ define the error ranges and were determined within the 1σ error limits of the LAB angular distribution. Considering energy conservation, the maximum energy E_{max} of the CM translational energy distribution $P(E_{\text{T}})$ (Figure 3), the collision energy, and the reaction energy are correlated by $E_{\text{max}} = E_{\text{C}} - \Delta_{\text{r}}G$ for those molecules born without internal excitation. $E_{\rm max}$ terminates at 187 \pm 25 kJ mol^{-1} , suggesting a reaction energy of -168 ± 25 kJ mol⁻¹ to form the heavy product (C_4H_6) and atomic hydrogen. The distribution maximum of $P(E_{\rm T})$ is located at 32 ± 2 kJ mol⁻¹, indicating a tight exit transition state leading to C₄H₆ from the C₄H₇ intermediate(s).⁸⁰ An average translational energy of the products was calculated to be 52 ± 6 kJ mol⁻¹, which reveals that only $28 \pm 3\%$ of the energy is released into product translation degrees of freedom. Additional information on the reaction dynamics can be obtained by inspecting the CM



Figure 2. Time-of-flight (TOF) spectra for the reaction of (a) methylidyne-*d* radical (CD; $C_{\infty\nu}$; $X^2\Pi$) with propylene (C₃H₆; C_s; X^1A') recorded at mass-to-charge (*m*/*z*) ratios of 55 (C₄H₅D⁺) and 54 (C₄H₄D⁺/C₄H₆⁺), (b) methylidyne radical (CH; $C_{\infty\nu}$; $X^2\Pi$) with propylene- d_6 (C₃D₆; C_{si} ; X^1A') recorded at *m*/*z* 58 (C₄D₅⁺) and 59 (C₄HD₅⁺), (c) methylidyne-*d* radical (CD; $C_{\infty\nu}$; $X^2\Pi$) with propylene- $3,3,3-d_3$ (CD₃CHCH₂; C_{si} ; X^1A') recorded at *m*/*z* 58 (C₄D₄H₂⁺) and 57 (C₄D₃H₃⁺/C₄D₄H⁺), and (d) methylidyne radical (CH; $C_{\infty\nu}$; $X^2\Pi$) with propylene (C₃H₆; C_{si} ; X^1A') recorded at *m*/*z* 54 (C₄H₆⁺) and 53 (C₄H₅⁺).

angular distribution, $T(\theta)$ (Figure 3). $T(\theta)$ displays a nonzero intensity from 0 to 180° and a forward–backward symmetry, indicating that the lifetime of the intermediate C₄H₇ is longer than its rotational period(s) and that the product is formed via indirect scattering dynamics via activated C₄H₇ complex(es).⁸¹

4. DISCUSSION

Both hydrogen abstractions and association reactions are feasible entrance channels involved in the bimolecular reactions of methylidyne (CH; $X^{2}\Pi$) radical with propylene (CH₃CHCH₂; $X^{1}A'$). Compared to association reactions, products originating from the hydrogen abstractions lead to carbene (CH₂) and distinct C₃H₅ isomers in reactions exoergic by 57 kJ mol⁻¹. The resulting C₃H₅ (m/z = 41) isomers cannot be detected in our experiments due to the dissociative electron impact ionization of the propylene reactant leading to insurmountable background counts of the C₃H₅⁺ fragment. Considering the association reactions, the methylidyne (CH) radical can add to the carbon–carbon double bond of propylene, insert into one of its three chemically inequivalent C-H bonds, and/or may insert into the C-C single bond between the methyl and vinyl moieties. Ribeiro and Mebel examined the C₄H₇ PES, computationally connecting the methylidyne radical and propylene entrance channel via 15 C₄H₇ intermediates and 50 transition states to methyl group losses along with C₃H₄ products (p1, p12, and p13), atomic hydrogen loss products (C_4H_6) (p2-p6, p9-p11), C_2H_3 loss products (C_2H_4) (p7), and C_2H_5 loss products (C_2H_2) (p8) (Figures 4-6). Here, the complete PES is subdivided into three sections: (1) cyclic structures produced by methylidyne radical (CH) addition to the carbon-carbon double bond of propylene (Figure 4), (2) acyclic structures resulting from methylidyne radical (CH) insertion into the terminal C-H bond or the C–C single bond of propylene (Figure 5), and (3)branched structures originated from methylidyne radical (CH) insertion into the CH moiety of the vinyl group of propylene (Figure 6).



Figure 3. Best-fit center-of-mass translational energy $(P(E_T), \text{ upper})$ and angular $(T(\theta), \text{ lower})$ flux distributions of the reaction of the methylidyne radical with propylene to form C_4H_6 molecule(s) and atomic hydrogen. The red lines reveal the best-fits; the shaded areas delimit the acceptable upper and lower error limits. E_{max} defines the maximum translational energy.

Here, we combine our experimental findings with the electronic structure and statistical calculations to reveal the underlying reaction mechanism(s) (Figures 4-6, Figures S1-S9, and Table 2). First, considering the overall reaction energies, 1-methylcyclopropene (p2, C_s), 3-methylcyclopropene (**p3**, C_s), methylenecyclopropane (**p4**, $C_{2\nu}$), 1,3-butadiene $(p5, C_{2h})$, 1,2-butadiene $(p6, C_s)$, 1-butyne $(p9, C_s)$, cyclobutene (p10, $C_{2\nu}$), and 2-butyne (p11, D_{3d}) isomers are formed along with atomic hydrogen in exoergic reactions, holding computed reaction energies of -157, -143, -202, -284, -234, -229, -235, and -250 kJ mol⁻¹, respectively. A comparison of these energies with the experimentally determined reaction energy of -168 ± 25 kJ mol⁻¹ suggests that the formation of 1-methylcyclopropene (p2) and 3methylcyclopropene (p3) with reaction energies of -157 and -143 kJ mol⁻¹ correlates best with the computed data. Note that these C_4H_6 isomers $(p2{-}p3)$ are formed via the barrierless addition of the methylidyne radical to the double bond of propylene (Figure 4) as opposed to the insertion of methylidyne into C-H and C-C bonds under our experimental conditions. In a related reaction, Ribeiro and Mebel examined the probabilities of the entrance channels of the methylidyne (CH) radical with ethylene (C_2H_4) reaction and proposed that the ratio between C-C double bond addition and C-H insertion is around 85:15.55 Based on the chemical similarities of these two systems, methylidyne (CH) radical addition to the carbon-carbon double bond of propylene is likely the dominant entrance channel as demonstrated below.

4.1. Methylidyne Radical (CH) Addition to the Carbon-Carbon Double Bond. The calculations reveal that the methylidvne radical (CH) can barrierlessly add to the carbon-carbon double bond of propylene, forming the initial adducts i1 (cis-CH₃-cCH[•]CHCH₂) and i2 (trans-CH₃ $cCH^{\bullet}CHCH_2$) (Figure 4). Both isomers can be interconverted easily due to a low-lying transition state of only 6 kJ mol⁻¹ above intermediate i1 and 6 kJ mol⁻¹ above intermediate i2. The latter can eliminate the methyl group to form cyclopropene (p1) via a tight transition state lying 27 kJ mol⁻¹ above the separated products. What are the products of the hydrogen loss pathways of intermediates i1 and i2? Intermediates i1 and i2 may eliminate atomic hydrogen from the CH group of the CH(CH₃) moiety yielding 1methylcyclopropene (p2) via tight translation states located about 15 kJ mol⁻¹ above the separated products. The CH₂ groups of i1 and i2 are also susceptible to hydrogen loss forming the 3-methylcyclopropene (p3) isomer. A hydrogen atom migration between the adjacent carbon atoms from the CH(CH₃) to the CH moiety in il leads to i7 (CH₃c[•]CCH₂CH₂), whereas a hydrogen atom shift in i2 from the methyl group to the CH moiety forms i8 (°CH2cCHCH₂CH₂). Intermediates i7 and i8 are connected via a significant barrier of 176 kJ mol⁻¹ above i7; the decomposition of the latter may ultimately give rise to methylenecyclopropane (p4) via hydrogen atom loss from the CH₃ group of i7 and from the CH group of i8. 1-Methylcyclopropene (p2) can also be formed by a hydrogen atom emission from the CH₂ group of i7. In brief, p1 can be accessed via a methyl (CH_3) group emission from intermediate i2. Product p2 can be formed via three pathways with atomic hydrogen eliminated from the $CH(CH_3)$ moiety of i2 and/or from i1 and after isomerization of i1 to i7 followed by atomic hydrogen loss from one of the CH₂ moieties. An atomic hydrogen loss from the CH₂ group of i1 and/or of i2 will lead to p3. There are two pathways resulting in p4 by atomic hydrogen elimination originating from the CH group and/or from the CH₃ group. Considering the experimentally derived reaction energy of -168 ± 25 kJ mol^{-1} , 1-methylcyclopropene (p2) and 3-methylcyclopropene (p3) with reaction energies of -157 and -143 kJ mol⁻¹ are the most likely products. Most important, the results of our isotopic substitution experiments revealed that the hydrogen atom emission originated from the vinyl group of the propylene reactant. Figures S1-S9 trace the hydrogen versus deuterium loss in the isotopic substitution systems, methylidyne-propylene- d_6 , methylidyne-d with propylene, and partially deuterated isotopologue (CD₃CHCH₂) reactions. Here, the unimolecular decomposition of partially deuterated i1 and i2 from the methylene moiety of the vinyl group can account for the formation of p3. Likewise, the decomposition of i1 and i2 via hydrogen atom loss from the $CH(CH_3)$ group can rationalize the formation of p2. Note that i8 and hence the formation of p4 can be ruled out since this pathway would require a hydrogen atom loss from the methyl group, which was not observed in the isotopically labeled experiments. Further, i7 can likely be excluded as a decomposing complex to p2 since both hydrogen atom and deuterium atom losses should be both observable. Hence, we can conclude that the lifetimes of i1 and i2 are too short to allow hydrogen shifts to form i7 and i8, respectively.



Figure 4. Portion of the C_4H_7 PES following CH radical addition to the carbon–carbon double bond of propylene. Pathways leading to p2 and p3 are colored in red and blue, respectively.

4.2. Methylidyne Radical (CH) Insertion into the C-H Bonds of the Methyl and Methylidyne Moieties of Propylene. Acyclic intermediates can be formed via the insertion of the methylidyne radical into terminal C-H single bonds (Figure 5). When CH is inserted into the terminal sp^2 C-H bond of propylene of the CH₂ moiety, intermediates i4 (cis-CH₃CHCH[•]CH₂) and i3 (trans-CH₃CHCH[•]CH₂) are formed. The ring opening in il (cis-CH₃-cCH[•]CHCH₂) also leads to i3 (trans-CH₃CHCH[•]CH₂), while i4 (cis- $CH_3CHCH^{\bullet}CH_2$) can be accessed via the ring opening of i2 (trans-CH₃-cCH[•]CHCH₂). Intermediate i6 $(^{\circ}CH_2CH_2CHCH_2)$ can be generated via CH insertion into any of the C-H bonds of the methyl group of propylene. Starting from intermediates i3, i4, and i6, hydrogen atom migrations between adjacent and nonadjacent carbon atoms are feasible. In brief, intermediates i3-i6 and i8-i15 are involved, eventually leading to multiple atomic hydrogen loss channels (p5-p6, p9-p11), the methyl group loss channel (p13), and the vinyl group emission pathway (p7). The computed reaction energies of five atomic hydrogen loss products (p5-p6, p9-p11) are -284, -234, -229, -235, and -250 kJ mol^{-1} , respectively. These pathways are more excergic than observed experimentally. Therefore, the products p5-p6, p9–p11 may not be formed under our experimental condition. For instance, the isotopic labeling experiments revealed that p5 is not formed; here, atomic hydrogen elimination from the

CH₃ group of i3, i4 and/or from CH₂ group of i6 leading to 1,3-butadiene (p5) would require a hydrogen atom loss from the methyl group of the propylene reactant (Figures S2, S5, and S8); this is inconsistent with the aforementioned isotopic substitution experiments revealing that the hydrogen atom is emitted from the vinyl moiety. Further, for 1,2-butadiene (p6), the hydrogen atom had to be emitted from intermediate i9/i10 from the methylidyne radical and/or from the CH₃ group of the propylene reactant; likewise, atomic hydrogen emission can take place from i12 accessed from i6 and/or i3; these processes would require a hydrogen atom loss from the methylidyne radical and/or the methyl group of the propylene reactant. Considering the product 1-butyne (p9), the reaction sequence CH + $C_3H_6 \rightarrow [i4 \rightarrow i12]/[i3 \rightarrow i12]/[i4 \rightarrow i6 \rightarrow$ $i12]/[i3 \rightarrow i6 \rightarrow i12]/[i3 \rightarrow i14 \rightarrow i6 \rightarrow i12] \rightarrow p9 + H$ would require a hydrogen atom loss from the methylidyne radical and/or the methyl group of propylene. The pathways leading to p6 and p9 can be ruled out due to the mismatch with the isotopic substitution experiments.

4.3. Methylidyne Radical (CH) Insertion into the CH Moiety of the Vinyl Group of Propylene. The acyclic intermediate i5 $(CH_3C(^{\bullet}CH_2)CH_2)$ may be formed via methylidyne radical (CH) insertion into the central C–H bond of propylene (Figure 6). Ring closure will lead to intermediate i7 $(CH_3-c^{\bullet}CH_2CH_2CH_2)$, which is also connected to the section of the PES as shown in Figure 4. A



Figure 5. Portion of the C₄H₇ PES corresponding to CH radical insertion into the C-H bond of the methyl and CH₂ moieties of propylene.

hydrogen shift and CH_3 group migration will lead to intermediates il1 and il2, respectively, which represent open-chain intermediates also involved in PES shown in Figure 5, but not to any hydrogen atom loss as observed experimentally. Recall that i7 can decompose via hydrogen atom loss to i2. However, if i7 is formed through the methylidyne radical insertion via i5 followed by ring closure, the methylidyne groups get incorporated into the CH_2 moiety. This, in turn, predicts a hydrogen atom, leaving not only from the carbon atoms of the former vinyl group but also from the methylidyne reactant. Since the aforementioned reactions within the partially deuterated systems demonstrated that the hydrogen atom is eliminated from the vinyl group, this finding essentially suggests that methylidyne does not insert into the C-H moiety of the vinyl group.

In summary, combining the experimentally derived reaction energy of -168 ± 25 kJ mol⁻¹ with the experimental findings of a tight exit transition state from decomposing long-lived reaction intermediate(s) and isotopic studies, products p2 and p3 along with atomic hydrogen are likely formed through intermediates i1 and/or i2 via a barrierless addition to the carbon-carbon double bond of propylene. It is important to note that this experimental finding apparently contradicts the computational findings of a statistical treatment of the decomposition processes of i1 and/or i2 (Table 2). Here, RRKM theory predicts 1,3-butadiene (p5) along with atomic hydrogen to be the most likely product with branching ratios of about 80% once i1/i2 are formed via addition. This is clearly not observed experimentally under single-collision conditions. Therefore, the cyclic products 1-methylcyclopropene (p2) and 3-methylcyclopropene (p3) are formed in the reactions of methylidyne with propylene under single-collision conditions, demonstrating a critical non-RRKM behavior of this system. These findings suggest further that the hydrogen

atom loss to p2 and p3 operates on a time scale that is faster than any isomerization of i1/i2 formed via methylidyne addition. Compared to related reactions of methylidyne with methylacetylene/allene,^{67,82} the barrierless cycloaddition of the methylidyne radical to the carbon-carbon triple/double bond of methylacetylene/allene also reveals a non-RRKM behavior leading via atomic hydrogen emission to the triafulvene product in both systems with atomic hydrogen being emitted from the methyl group of the methylacetylene reactant and from the CH₂ moiety of allene, respectively. Note that previously, two kinetic experiments were performed on the methylidyne-propylene system. Bergeat et al. proposed that 1,3-butadiene represents the main reaction product at 300 K formed in a low-pressure fast-flow reactor.¹⁷ The reaction of CH/CD with propylene was also conducted at 298 K and 4 Torr yielding 1,3-butadiene as the major product along with possible contributions from 1,2-butadiene and 1-butyne.²² However, these experiments were conducted under bulk conditions allowing hundreds of collisions of the reaction intermediates such as i1 and i2 to lose their internal energy via successive collisions with the buffer gas and/or hydrogenatom-assisted isomerization as found in the reactions of the methylidyne radical (CH) with small unsaturated hydrocarbons.^{83,84} Therefore, under these conditions, the nascent product distribution may easily be modified. On the other hand, single-collision conditions allow a unique glimpse at the nascent reaction products, indicating that two cyclic C4H6 isomers are formed (p2 and p3).

5. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, the crossed molecular beam reactions of the methylidyne radical (CH; $X^2\Pi$) with propylene (CH₃CHCH₂; X^1A') along with (partially) substituted reactants were conducted at collision energies of 19.3 kJ mol⁻¹. Combining

Article



Figure 6. Portion of the C4H7 PES corresponding to CH radical insertion into the C-H bond of the CH moiety of the vinyl group of propylene.

Table 2. Statistical Branching Ratios (%) for the Reaction of the Methylidyne (CH) Radical with Propylene (CH₃CHCH₂) at Collision Energy $E_{\rm C}$ = 19.3 kJ mol^{-1a}

initial intermediate —	il	i2	i3	i4	i5	i6
	100	100	100	100	100	100
p1	1.2796	1.0229	0.0243	0.0246	0.0007	0.0025
p2	0.0701	0.0559	0.0013	0.0014	0.2155	0.0002
p3	0.2114	0.2008	0.0049	0.0049	0.0002	0.0005
p4	0.0094	0.0070	0.0010	0.0010	1.6341	0.0073
p5	83.4638	83.5392	80.4935	80.4319	0.087	16.1737
р6	1.4382	1.4335	1.0402	1.376	0.0030	0.1642
p7	12.7444	12.9762	17.4795	17.2215	0.1958	78.6169
p8	0.4653	0.4717	0.6431	0.59	0.0058	4.5521
р9	0.0812	0.0821	0.1129	0.142	0.0089	0.2873
p10	0.0145	0.0147	0.0199	0.0196	0.0002	0.1786
p11	0.0156	0.0157	0.022	0.0226	0.0	0.0015
p12	0.0949	0.0687	0.0022	0.0023	95.0226	0.0048
p13	0.1116	0.1115	0.1552	0.1623	2.8262	0.0106

^{*a*}Here, **p1-p13** are cyclopropene, 1-methylcyclopropene, 3-methylcyclopropene, methylenecyclopropane, 1,3-butadiene, 1,2-butadiene, ethylene, acetylene, 1-butyne, cyclobutene, 2-butyne, allene, and propyne.

our experimental data with ab initio electronic structure and statistical calculations, the methylidyne radical is revealed to

add barrierlessly to the carbon–carbon double bond of the propylene reactant, resulting in a cyclic doublet C_4H_7

intermediate with a lifetime longer than its rotation period. These adducts undergo a nonstatistical, unimolecular decomposition via atomic hydrogen loss from the vinyl moiety of the propylene reactant through tight exit transition states forming the cyclic products 1-methylcyclopropene and 3-methylcyclopropene with overall reaction exoergicities of 168 ± 25 kJ mol⁻¹. Considering the experiments with partially deuterated reactants, insertion reactions of methylidyne radicals into C-C and C-H bonds of propylene could be ruled out; likewise, these studies reveal that the lifetime of the initial collision complexes is too low to allow any hydrogen migration and energy randomization to occur. These cyclic C_4H_4 isomers are predicted to exist even in low-temperature environments such as cold molecular clouds like TMC-1, since the reaction is barrierless and exoergic, all transition states are below the energy of the separated reactants, and both the methylidyne radical (CH; $X^{2}\Pi$) and propylene reactant were detected in cold molecular clouds such as TMC-1.

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

S Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.jpca.9b09815.

PES figures of isotopic reactions $CD + CH_3CHCH_2$, $CH + CD_3CHCH_2$, and $CD + CD_3CHCH_2$; portion of the C_4H_6D potential energy surface (PES) following CD radical addition and CD radical insertion to the carbon–carbon double bond and C–H bond of propylene (PDF)

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Corresponding Authors

*E-mail: mebela@fiu.edu (A.M.M.). *E-mail: ralfk@hawaii.edu (R.I.K.).

ORCID 💿

Aaron M. Thomas: 0000-0001-8540-9523 Alexander M. Mebel: 0000-0002-7233-3133 Ralf I. Kaiser: 0000-0002-7233-7206

Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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