

# Competing $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4\text{-H}_2$ and $\text{SiCH}_2\text{-SiH}_4$ Channels in the Bimolecular Reaction of Ground-State Atomic Carbon ( $\text{C}^3\text{P}_j$ ) with Disilane ( $\text{Si}_2\text{H}_6$ , $\text{X}^1\text{A}_{1g}$ ) under Single Collision Conditions

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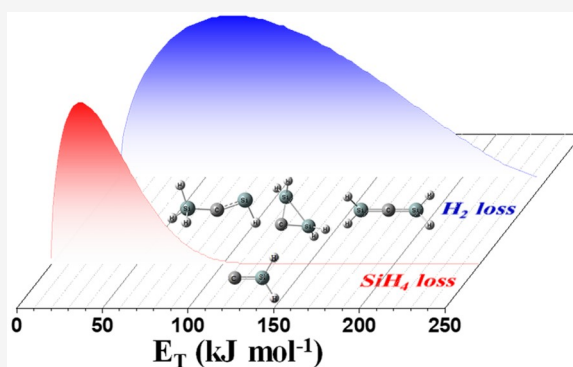


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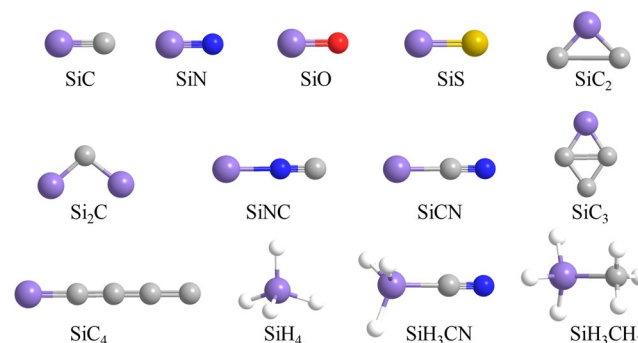
**ABSTRACT:** The bimolecular gas-phase reaction of ground-state atomic carbon ( $\text{C}^3\text{P}_j$ ) with disilane ( $\text{Si}_2\text{H}_6$ ,  $\text{X}^1\text{A}_{1g}$ ) was explored under single-collision conditions in a crossed molecular beam machine at a collision energy of  $36.6 \pm 4.5 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$ . Two channels were observed: a molecular hydrogen elimination plus  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  (reaction 1) pathway and a silane loss channel along with the formation of  $\text{SiCH}_2$  (reaction 2), with branching ratios of  $20 \pm 3$  and  $80 \pm 4\%$ , respectively. Both channels involved indirect scattering dynamics via long-lived  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_6$  reaction intermediate(s); the latter eject molecular hydrogen and silane in “molecular” elimination channels within the rotational plane of the fragmenting intermediate nearly perpendicularly to the total angular momentum vector. These molecular elimination channels are associated with tight exit transition states as reflected in a significant electron rearrangement as visible from the chemical bonding in the light reaction products molecular hydrogen and silane. Once these hydrogenated silicon-carbide clusters are formed within the inner envelope of carbon stars such as of IRC + 10216, the stellar wind can drive both  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  and  $\text{SiCH}_2$  to the outside sections of the envelope, where they can be photolyzed. This is of particular importance to unravel potential formation pathways to disilicon monocarbide ( $\text{Si}_2\text{C}$ ) observed recently in the circumstellar shell of IRC + 10216.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the very first astronomical detection of silicon dicarbide ( $\text{c-SiC}_2$ ) in the circumstellar envelope (CSE) of the carbon-rich asymptotic giant branch (AGB) star IRC + 10216 in 1984,<sup>1</sup> CSEs have emerged as molecular factories of carbon- and silicon-bearing molecules.<sup>2–7</sup> As of today, 13 molecules containing silicon have been observed in the circumstellar shell of IRC + 10216 (Scheme 1). These organosilicon molecules have received special attention considering their role as fundamental molecular building blocks in the formation of silicon-carbide dust grains in the outflow of CSEs.<sup>8</sup> An emission band close to  $11.3 \mu\text{m}$  ( $885 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) observed by the infrared astronomical satellite (IRAS) confirms the presence of silicon carbide dust grains<sup>9,10</sup> with up to 90% of the silicon carbide grains extracted from meteorites linked to circumstellar origins.<sup>11,12</sup> The molecular precursors to these grains carry silicon-carbon bond(s) and include, for instance, silicon carbide ( $\text{SiC}$ ),<sup>2</sup> silicon dicarbide ( $\text{SiC}_2$ ),<sup>1</sup> disilicon monocarbide ( $\text{Si}_2\text{C}$ ),<sup>6</sup> silicon tricarbon ( $\text{SiC}_3$ ),<sup>4</sup> silicon tetracarbide ( $\text{SiC}_4$ ),<sup>3</sup> and hydrogenated counterparts such as methyl silane ( $\text{CH}_3\text{SiH}_3$ ).<sup>7</sup> These building blocks might form close to the central star within a few stellar radii at temperatures ranging from 1000 to 2500 K,<sup>13,14</sup> followed by ejection

**Scheme 1. Silicon Containing Molecules Detected in the CSE of IRC + 10216; Silicon, Carbon, Nitrogen, Oxygen, Sulfur, and Hydrogen are Color Coded in Purple, Gray, Blue, Red, Yellow, and White, Respectively**

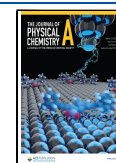


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through the stellar wind to the outer envelope, where hydrogenated silicon carbides can be photodissociated to the bare silicon carbon clusters such as the bicyclic silicon tricarbon ( $c\text{-SiC}_3$ ).<sup>15,16</sup>

Considering the importance of silicon carbide grains, it is vital to explore the fundamental reaction mechanisms initiating carbon–silicon bond formation under circumstellar conditions. Both silicon and carbon belong to main group 14 and hence should have similar reactivity according to Langmuir’s concept of isovalency.<sup>17,18</sup> However, recent laboratory studies augmented by electronic structure calculations revealed that this simple picture is largely incomplete.<sup>19,20</sup> The simplest hydrocarbon methane ( $\text{CH}_4$ ), for instance, is unreactive toward ground-state atomic carbon ( $\text{C}(^3\text{P}_1)$ ),<sup>19,21</sup> whereas the reaction with isovalent silane ( $\text{SiH}_4$ ) generates the silylenemethyl ( $\text{HCSiH}_2$ ;  $\text{X}^2\text{B}_2$ ) radical.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, the chemical bonding of “all carbon” versus “all silicon” species differs dramatically. Disilyne ( $\text{Si}_2\text{H}_2$ ), for instance, exhibits a dibridged structure as a global minimum ( $\text{Si}\mu\text{H}_2\text{Si}$ ), whereas acetylene is linear.<sup>23</sup> Disilene ( $\text{Si}_2\text{H}_4$ ) exists as a trans-bent molecule with  $\text{sp}^3$  hybridized silicon atoms, but the ethylene ( $\text{C}_2\text{H}_4$ ) molecule is planar with both carbon atoms  $\text{sp}^2$  hybridized.<sup>24,25</sup>

However, whereas an understanding of the chemistry of silane ( $\text{SiH}_4$ ) with carbon-bearing reactants in CSEs is beginning to emerge,<sup>22,26,27</sup> the chemistry of disilane ( $\text{Si}_2\text{H}_6$ ) has remained largely unexplored. An elucidation of the reaction dynamics of disilane ( $\text{Si}_2\text{H}_6$ ) with ground-state atomic carbon ( $\text{C}(^3\text{P}_1)$ ) as the simplest “organic” open shell species affords an exceptional opportunity to gauge the activation of disilane through the initial formation of silicon–carbon versus silicon–hydrogen bonds under single collision conditions. This also allows us to contemplate the reaction mechanisms with those on the isovalent disilane ( $\text{Si}_2\text{H}_6$ )–silicon ( $\text{Si}(^3\text{P}_1)$ ), leading to trisilicontetrahydride ( $\text{Si}_3\text{H}_4$ ) via molecular hydrogen elimination through non-adiabatic reaction dynamics.<sup>28</sup> Here, we explored the outcome of the bimolecular reaction of ground-state atomic carbon ( $\text{C}(^3\text{P}_1)$ ) with disilane ( $\text{Si}_2\text{H}_6$ ,  $\text{X}^1\text{A}_{1g}$ ) under single collision conditions in the gas phase, exploiting a crossed molecular beam machine. This study revealed two competing channels involving non-adiabatic reaction dynamics: molecular hydrogen ( $\text{H}_2$ ) elimination accompanied by the generation of  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  and silane ( $\text{SiH}_4$ ) plus  $\text{SiCH}_2$ .

## 2. METHODS

**2.1. Experimental Section.** The bimolecular reaction of ground-state atomic carbon ( $\text{C}(^3\text{P}_1)$ ) with disilane ( $\text{Si}_2\text{H}_6$ ,  $\text{X}^1\text{A}_{1g}$ ) was investigated under single collision conditions utilizing a universal crossed molecular beam machine.<sup>29</sup> In the primary source chamber, the carbon atoms were generated through laser ablation by focusing the fourth harmonic of the Nd:YAG laser output at 266 nm with an energy of 10 mJ pulse<sup>-1</sup> onto a rotating graphite rod at a repetition rate of 30 Hz.<sup>30</sup> A pulse of helium gas (He, 99.9999%, Gaspro) at 4 atm backing pressure in a pulsed valve was employed to seed the laser-ablated carbon species. The nascent ground-state atomic carbon ( $\text{C}(^3\text{P}_1)$ ) beam was then skimmed by a conical skimmer with an opening of 1 mm and traveled to the interaction region after velocity selection by a four-slotted chopper wheel rotating at 120 Hz. A photodiode mounted at the chopper wheel acted as a “time zero” of the experiments. The pulse valve delay between the photo diode and the laser trigger was optimized to 1894  $\mu\text{s}$ , resulting in a peak velocity of ground-state carbon atoms,  $V_p$ , of  $2595 \pm 161 \text{ ms}^{-1}$  and a

**Table 1. Peak Velocities ( $V_p$ ) and Speed Ratios ( $S$ ) of the Carbon ( $\text{C}$ ) and Disilane ( $\text{Si}_2\text{H}_6$ ) Beams along with the Corresponding Collision Energy ( $E_C$ ) and CM Angle ( $\theta_{\text{CM}}$ )**

beam	$V_p$ ( $\text{ms}^{-1}$ )	$S$	$E_C$ ( $\text{kJ mol}^{-1}$ )	$\theta_{\text{CM}}$ (deg)
$\text{C}(^3\text{P}_1)$	$2595 \pm 161$	$2.1 \pm 0.3$	$36.6 \pm 4.5$	$56.6 \pm 0.4$
$\text{Si}_2\text{H}_6(\text{X}^1\text{A}_1)$	$742 \pm 35$	$7.2 \pm 0.7$		

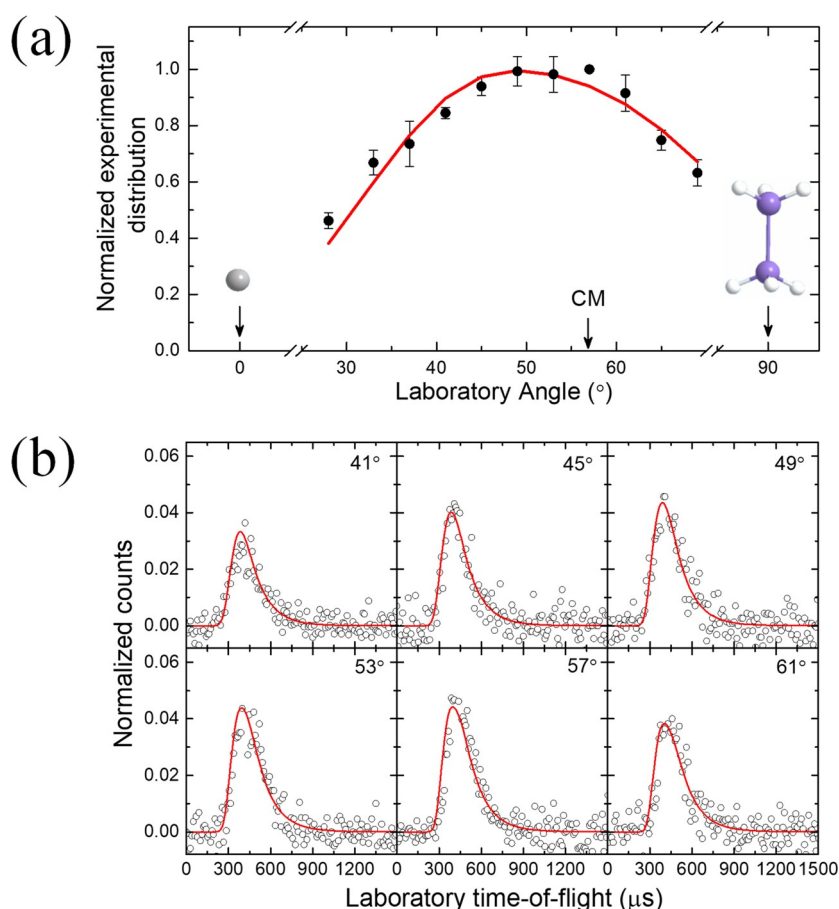
speed ratio,  $S$ , of  $2.1 \pm 0.3$  (Table 1). In the secondary source chamber, a pulsed, supersonic beam of disilane (99.998%, Voltaix) was generated with the peak velocity  $V_p$  of  $742 \pm 35 \text{ ms}^{-1}$  and the speed ratio  $S$  of  $7.2 \pm 0.7$  at a backing pressure of 500 Torr; this beam crossed the primary carbon atom beam in the interaction region perpendicularly resulting in a collision energy,  $E_C$ , of  $36.6 \pm 4.5 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  and a center of mass angle,  $\theta_{\text{CM}}$ , of  $56.6 \pm 0.4^\circ$ . In the laser ablation source,<sup>29,31–33</sup> the delay times, laser power, and laser focus were optimized to generate a beam with 95% atomic carbon; dicarbon<sup>30,34–36</sup> and tricarbon could be minimized to 5%. The center of mass angles of the dicarbon–disilane and tricarbon–disilane were  $37.2 \pm 0.4$  and  $27 \pm 0.4^\circ$ , respectively. A potential reactive scattering signal was searched for the dicarbon–disilane and tricarbon–disilane systems, but no ion counts higher than 74 were observed. Therefore, although the primary molecular beam contains dicarbon and tricarbon, they do not interfere under our experimental conditions.

The scattered products entered a triply differentially pumped universal mass spectrometric detector operating in the time-of-flight (TOF) mode. Here, the neutral reaction products were ionized by electron impact (80 eV) and then filtered according to their mass-to-charge ( $m/z$ ) ratio using a quadrupole mass spectrometer (QMS) operating in the TOF mode. The detection apparatus was housed in a differentially pumped, rotatable chamber that allowed for the measurement of angularly resolved TOF spectra in the plane of the reactant beams. The laboratory data were converted to the center-of-mass (CM) reference frame through a forward-convolution routine that relies on user-defined CM translational energy  $P(E_T)$  and angular  $T(\theta)$  flux distributions; these are varied iteratively until a best fit of the experimental data set is obtained.<sup>37,38</sup> The product flux contour map is defined by the CM functions and shows the differential reactive cross-section,  $I(u, \theta) \sim P(u) \times T(\theta)$ , as a function of intensity with respect to the angle  $\theta$  and the CM velocity  $u$ .<sup>39</sup> Errors of the  $P(E_T)$  and  $T(\theta)$  functions were determined within the  $1\sigma$  limits of the corresponding laboratory angular distributions and beam parameters such as beam velocities and speed ratios.

**2.2. Computational Details.** The geometries of possible isomers of the singlet and triplet  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  and doublet  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_3$  products for the reaction of carbon ( $\text{C}(^3\text{P}_1)$ ) with disilane ( $\text{Si}_2\text{H}_6$ ,  $\text{X}^1\text{A}_{1g}$ ) were optimized with B3LYP<sup>40,41</sup>/cc-pVTZ calculations. Their corresponding CCSD(T)<sup>42,43</sup>/CBS (complete basis set limits<sup>44</sup>) energies are then obtained by extrapolating the CCSD(T)/cc-pVDZ, CCSD(T)/cc-pVTZ, and CCSD(T)/cc-pVQZ energies, with B3LYP/cc-pVTZ zero-point energy corrections. The accuracy of these CCSD(T)/CBS energies is expected to be within 8  $\text{kJ mol}^{-1}$ .<sup>45</sup> GAUSSIAN16 programs<sup>46</sup> are facilitated in the electronic structure calculations.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

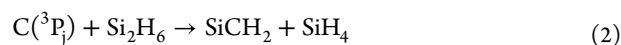
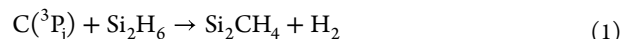
**3.1. Laboratory Data.** Reactive scattering signal was recorded at  $m/z = 74$  ( $^{28}\text{Si}^{29}\text{SiH}_5^{12}\text{C}/^{28}\text{Si}^{28}\text{SiH}_5^{13}\text{C}/^{28}$



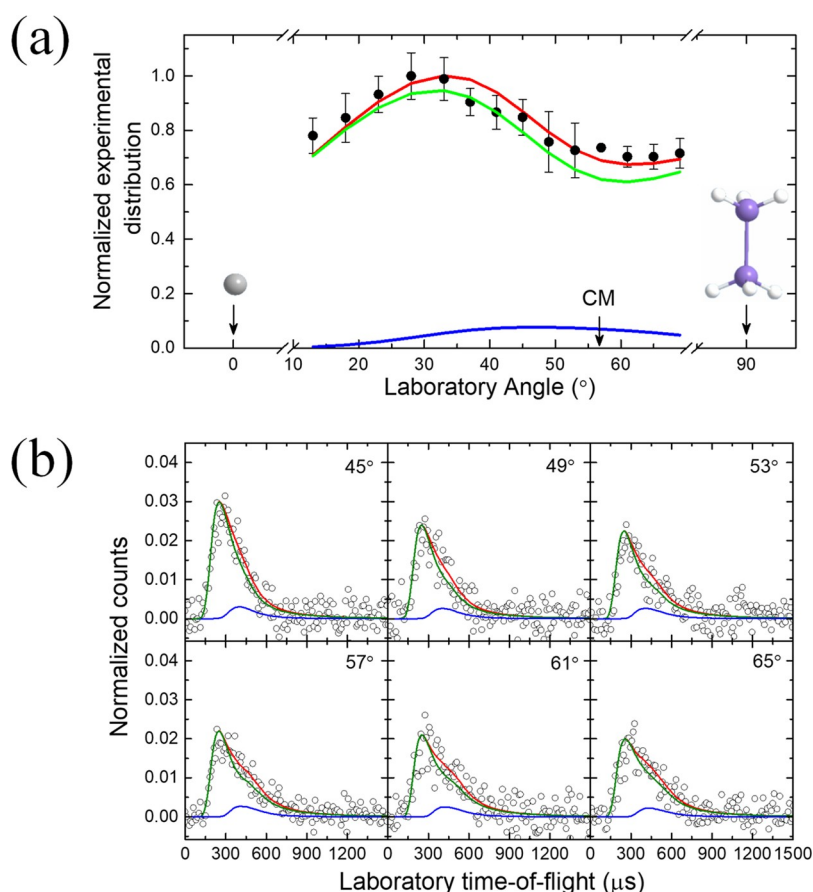
**Figure 1.** Laboratory angular distribution of the  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  product (72 amu) recorded at  $m/z = 71$  ( $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_3^+$ ) collected in the reaction of atomic carbon with disilane together with selected TOF spectra. Open circles indicate experimental data, and the solid red line the calculated distribution with the best-fit CM functions. CM designates the CM angle.

$\text{Si}^{30}\text{SiH}_4^{12}\text{C}/^{29}\text{Si}^{29}\text{SiH}_4^{12}\text{C}/^{28}\text{Si}^{29}\text{SiH}_4^{13}\text{C}/^{29}\text{Si}^{30}\text{SiH}_3^{12}\text{C}/^{28}\text{Si}^{30}\text{SiH}_3^{13}\text{C}/^{29}\text{Si}^{29}\text{SiH}_3^{13}\text{C}/^{30}\text{Si}^{30}\text{SiH}_2^{12}\text{C}/^{29}\text{Si}^{30}\text{SiH}_2^{13}\text{C}/^{28}\text{Si}^{28}\text{SiH}^{13}\text{C}$ ),  $m/z = 73$  ( $^{28}\text{Si}^{28}\text{SiH}_5^{12}\text{C}/^{28}\text{Si}^{29}\text{SiH}_4^{12}\text{C}/^{28}\text{Si}^{28}\text{SiH}_4^{13}\text{C}/^{28}\text{Si}^{29}\text{SiH}_3^{12}\text{C}/^{28}\text{Si}^{29}\text{SiH}_3^{13}\text{C}/^{29}\text{Si}^{30}\text{SiH}_2^{12}\text{C}/^{28}\text{Si}^{30}\text{SiH}_2^{13}\text{C}/^{29}\text{Si}^{29}\text{SiH}_2^{13}\text{C}/^{30}\text{Si}^{30}\text{SiH}^{12}\text{C}/^{29}\text{Si}^{30}\text{SiH}^{13}\text{C}$ ),  $m/z = 72$  ( $^{28}\text{Si}^{28}\text{SiH}_4^{12}\text{C}/^{29}\text{Si}^{28}\text{SiH}_3^{12}\text{C}/^{28}\text{Si}^{28}\text{SiH}_3^{13}\text{C}/^{28}\text{Si}^{28}\text{SiH}_3^{12}\text{C}/^{29}\text{Si}^{29}\text{SiH}_2^{12}\text{C}/^{28}\text{Si}^{29}\text{SiH}_2^{13}\text{C}/^{28}\text{Si}^{29}\text{SiH}_2^{13}\text{C}/^{29}\text{Si}^{30}\text{SiH}^{12}\text{C}/^{28}\text{Si}^{30}\text{SiH}^{13}\text{C}$ ),  $m/z = 71$  ( $^{28}\text{Si}^{28}\text{SiH}_3^{12}\text{C}/^{29}\text{Si}^{28}\text{SiH}_2^{12}\text{C}/^{28}\text{Si}^{28}\text{SiH}_2^{13}\text{C}/^{30}\text{Si}^{30}\text{SiH}^{12}\text{C}/^{29}\text{Si}^{29}\text{SiH}^{13}\text{C}$ ), and  $m/z = 42$  ( $^{28}\text{SiH}_2^{12}\text{C}/^{29}\text{SiH}^{12}\text{C}/^{28}\text{SiH}^{13}\text{C}/^{29}\text{Si}^{13}\text{C}/^{30}\text{Si}^{12}\text{C}$ ) (Table S1), taking into account the natural isotope abundances of silicon [ $^{28}\text{Si}$  (92.2%),  $^{29}\text{Si}$  (4.7%),  $^{30}\text{Si}$  (3.1%)], and carbon [ $^{12}\text{C}$  (98.9%),  $^{13}\text{C}$  (1.1%)]. Hence, the signal at  $m/z = 74$  to  $71$  can be attributed to the atomic and/or molecular hydrogen loss channels along with dissociative ionization of the primary reaction products in the electron impact ionizer. After scaling, the TOF spectra collected from  $m/z = 73$  to  $71$  reveal identical patterns (Figure S1). The ratio of the integrated ion signal of  $m/z = 72$  and  $73$  of  $7.2 \pm 1.0$  suggests that  $m/z = 73$  originates from  $^{29}\text{Si}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$ -substituted  $^{28}\text{Si}^{28}\text{SiH}_4^{12}\text{C}$  (72 amu), with the latter formed through molecular hydrogen loss. However, the signal at  $m/z = 74$  is very weak; based on the limited signal-to-noise ratio, there is no substantiative evidence of atomic hydrogen loss under the current experimental conditions. Note that based on the naturally occurring isotope fractions, a ratio of 6.3 ( $S_{m/z=72}/S_{m/z=73} = 99.9/15.9 = 6.3$ ) is expected. Furthermore, the overlapping shapes of the TOFs propose that the signal at  $m/z = 71$  originates from dissociative ionization of

the  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  neutral in the electron impact ionizer. Most importantly, the TOF spectra recorded at  $m/z = 42$  do not overlap with those collected at higher mass-to-charge ratios (Figure S2). This significant finding indicates that ion counts at  $m/z = 42$  originate at least partially from reactive scattering signals and hence result in the formation of a molecule with the formula  $^{28}\text{Si}^{12}\text{CH}_2$  (42 amu; hereafter  $\text{SiCH}_2$ ) along with the loss of silane ( $\text{SiH}_4$ ; 32 amu). Therefore, the laboratory data alone provide compelling evidence on the existence of two channels:  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  plus molecular hydrogen (reaction 1) and  $\text{SiCH}_2$  plus silane (reaction 2).



It is noted that compared to  $m/z = 72$ , the signal-to-noise (S/N) ratio at  $m/z = 71$  is enhanced by a factor of 2.3; thus, the full laboratory angular distribution was extracted at  $m/z = 71$ . The TOF spectra and the corresponding laboratory angular distributions derived from the ion counts at  $m/z = 71$  and  $42$  are displayed in Figures 1 and 2, respectively. The TOF spectra for both channels are very broad, spanning more than 500  $\mu\text{s}$ . The resulting laboratory angular distributions, which cover more than  $50^\circ$  within the scattering plane as defined by both beams, are distinct in shape. These findings also point to distinct scattering dynamics and exit channels involving the  $\text{CSi}_2\text{H}_6$  collision complex(es). To account for the broad and



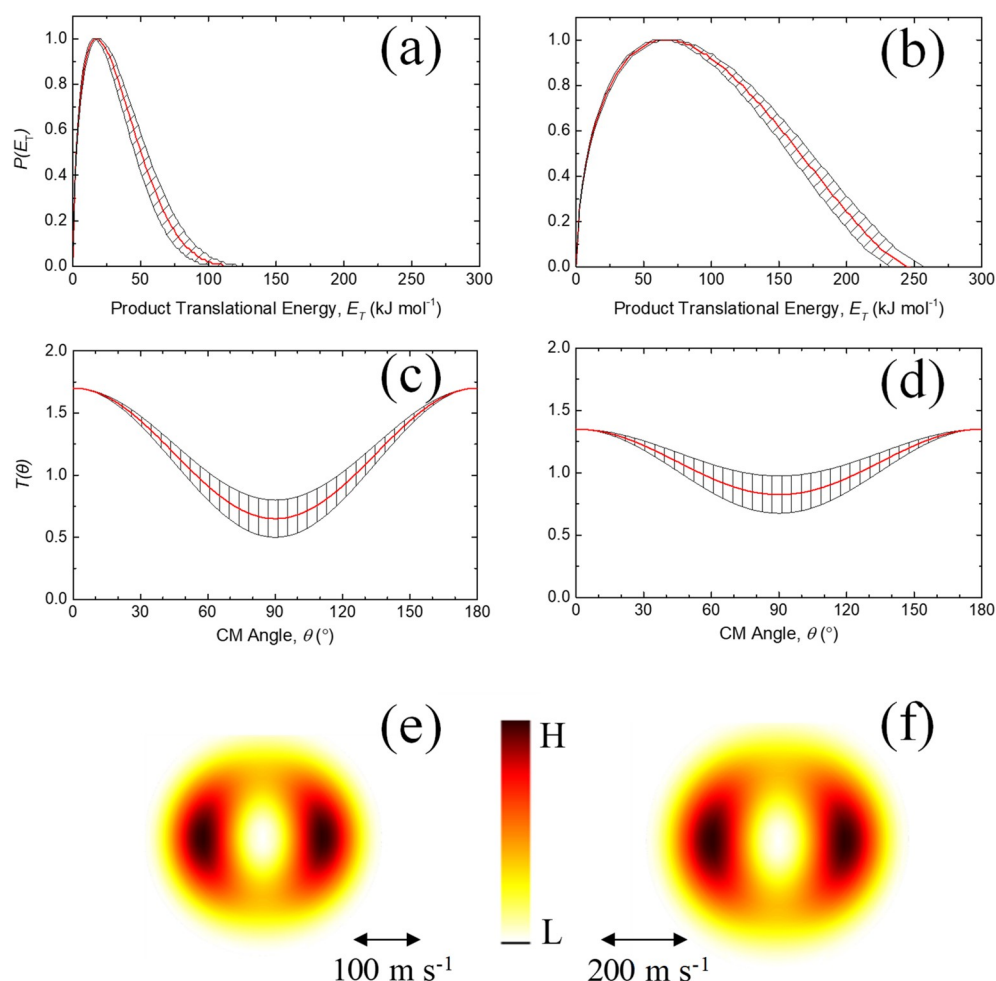
**Figure 2.** Laboratory angular distribution of  $m/z = 42$  ( $\text{SiCH}_2^+$ ) recorded for the reaction of atomic carbon with disilane together with selected TOF spectra. Open circles indicate experimental data, and the solid red line the overall calculated distribution with the best-fit CM functions. CM designates the CM angle. The two-channel fit represents the dissociative electron impact ionization of the heavy product ( $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$ ) in reaction 1 to  $m/z = 42$  (blue line) and the ionized  $\text{SiCH}_2$  product for reaction 2 (green line).

asymmetric distribution of  $\text{SiCH}_2$  formation, a channel arising from the dissociative electron impact ionization of the heavy product  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  in the electron impact ionizer to  $\text{SiCH}_2^+$  was required. This distribution yields a maximum at  $50 \pm 0.5^\circ$ , which is close to the CM angle. However, at lower laboratory angles, a single channel involving reaction 2 is sufficient to fit the reactive scattering data.

**3.2. CM Data.** To investigate the underlying mechanisms of reactions 1 and 2, we inspect the CM translational energy distributions,  $P(E_T)$ , and angular flux distributions,  $T(\theta)$  (Figure 3). The high-energy cutoff of the  $P(E_T)$  can be determined for those molecules born without internal excitation through energy conservation via  $E_T^{\text{Max}} = E_C - \Delta_r G$ , where  $E_C$  and  $\Delta_r G$  represent the collision energy and the reaction energy, respectively. The CM translational energy distribution of the  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  pathway (reaction 1) via molecular hydrogen ( $\text{H}_2$ ) loss (Figure 3b) is broader compared to  $\text{SiCH}_2$  formation via silane ( $\text{SiH}_4$ ) elimination (Figure 3a); these yield maximum kinetic energy releases of  $242 \pm 12 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  (reaction 1) and  $109 \pm 10 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  (reaction 2), respectively. A subtraction of the collision energy,  $36.6 \pm 4.5 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$ , reveals that the reactions are exoergic by  $205 \pm 12$  and  $72 \pm 10 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$ , respectively. The  $P(E_T)$ s of these two channels peak at  $66 \pm 3$  and  $36 \pm 3 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$ , indicating the presence of tight transition state(s) in the exit channel(s). Furthermore, these distributions account for an average of  $94 \pm 5$  and  $32 \pm 3 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  translational energies. With respect to the CM angular distributions,  $T(\theta)$ , both distributions reveal

forward–backward symmetries with coplanar scattering associated with a distribution minimum at  $90^\circ$  for both channels. These findings suggest the involvement of indirect scattering dynamics with  $\text{CSi}_2\text{H}_6$  collision complex(es) having a lifetime longer than their rotational periods prior to dissociation into  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  plus molecular hydrogen ( $\text{H}_2$ ) and  $\text{CSiH}_2$  plus silane ( $\text{SiH}_4$ ). These findings are also compiled in the flux contour maps (Figure 3e,f), which depict the flux intensity of reactively scattering products as a function of the scattering angle ( $\theta$ ) and product velocity ( $u$ ), providing detailed angular information about the reactive scattering process. Overall, these two channels result in a branching ratio of  $20 \pm 3$  and  $80 \pm 4\%$ , for the molecular hydrogen and silane loss channels through reactions 1 and 2, respectively.<sup>47,48</sup>

**3.3. Electronic Structure Calculations.** **3.3.1. Molecular Hydrogen Loss Channel.** To explore possible product isomers formed in the reaction of atomic carbon with disilane in reaction 1, we explore computationally the reaction energies to form various  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  isomers on the triplet and singlet surfaces. Our investigations indicate the existence of 13 triplet and 10 singlet  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  isomers displaying Si–Si–C, Si–C–Si, and cyclic Si–C–Si moieties (Figure 4, Table S2). On the triplet surface, reaction exoergicities range from 75 to  $353 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$ , while the singlet surface reveals reaction exoergicities from 311 to  $456 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$ ; these reaction energies are accurate within  $\pm 8 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$ . How do these reaction energies correlate with the experimentally derived reaction energy of  $205 \pm \text{kJ mol}^{-1}$ ? On the triplet surface, this energy could correlate well with the



**Figure 3.** CM translational energy flux distributions (a,b) and angular distributions (c,d) along with the flux contour map (e,f), leading to the formation of  $\text{SiCH}_2^+$  ( $m/z = 42$ ) and  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4^+$  ( $m/z = 72$ ) in the reaction of atomic carbon with disilane. Hatched areas indicate the acceptable upper and lower error limits of the fits. The solid red lines define the best-fit function to replicate the laboratory data as shown in Figures 1 and 2. The flux contour maps represent the flux intensity of the reactive scattering products as a function of the CM scattering angle ( $\theta$ ) and product velocity ( $u$ ). The color bar indicates the flux gradient from low (L) intensity to high (H) intensity. Panels (a,c,e) reflect reaction 2 and panels (b,d,f) reaction 1.

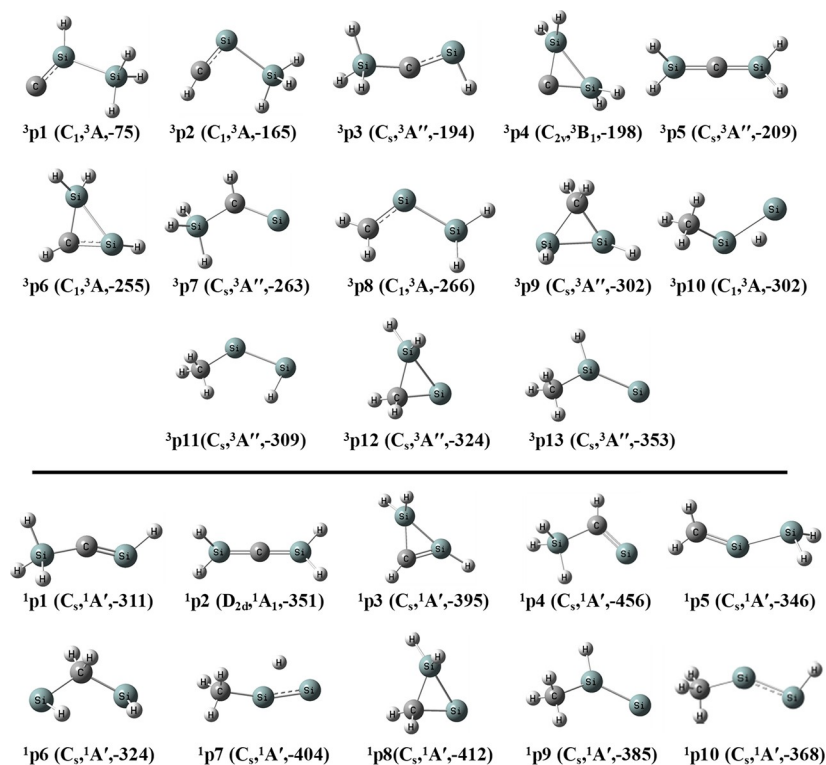
formation of  $^3p_3$  to  $^3p_5$ . These structures hold one common structural moiety: the Si–C–Si unit. This could indicate that the carbon atom reacts preferentially with the silicon atom, followed by cyclization and/or ring opening and molecular hydrogen loss on the triplet surface. Alternatively, on the singlet surface, none of the computed reaction energies can match the experimentally determined value, with the latter being too low by at least  $106 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$ . However, this discrepancy could be accounted for if, on the singlet surface, the  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  products are highly vibrationally excited. This in turn could result in significantly less energy released in the translational degrees of freedom as exposed recently for the dicarbon ( $\text{C}_2$ )–silane ( $\text{SiH}_4$ )<sup>49</sup> and methylidyne ( $\text{CH}$ )–dimethylacetylene ( $\text{CH}_3\text{CCCH}_3$ ) systems.<sup>50</sup>

**3.3.2. Silane Loss Channel.** The silane loss channel results in the formation of the heavy  $\text{SiCH}_2$  (42 amu) co-product. Extracting enthalpies of formation of three  $\text{SiCH}_2$  isomers,<sup>22</sup> the reaction exoergicities to form the three isomers are  $428 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  (silylidene,  $\text{H}_2\text{CSi}$ ),  $288 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  (silaacetylene,  $\text{HCSiH}$ ), and  $80 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  (silylenecarbene,  $\text{H}_2\text{SiC}$ ), respectively. The reaction exoergicities leading to their triplet states are  $263 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  (triplet silylidene,  $\text{H}_2\text{CSi}$ ),  $174 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  (triplet silaacetylene,  $\text{HCSiH}$ ), and  $66 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  (silylenecarbene,  $\text{H}_2\text{SiC}$ ), respectively. Errors of these data are  $\pm 8 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$ .<sup>22</sup>

On the singlet surface, all reaction energies are higher than the experimentally derived value of  $72 \pm 10 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$ . This suggests that if singlet  $\text{SiCH}_2$  (42 amu) is formed, these molecules are highly vibrationally excited, thus shifting the maximum translational energy releases to lower values. This conclusion also holds if triplet silylidene ( $\text{H}_2\text{CSi}$ ) or triplet silaacetylene ( $\text{HCSiH}$ ) are the reaction products. Note that, in principle, the computed energy of  $66 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$  for silylenecarbene ( $\text{H}_2\text{SiC}$ ) would fit nicely with the experimentally derived values. Overall, the elucidation of the isomers requires not only a computation of the complete potential energy surface (PES) on the triplet and singlet manifolds but also the identification of conical intersection for intersystem crossing (ISC). Furthermore, quasiclassical trajectory calculations are imperative to predict the center of mass functions and to compare those for distinct exit channels with the experimental findings. This endeavor is beyond the scope of this paper.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

In the present study, the elementary reaction between the ground-state atomic carbon ( $\text{C}(^3\text{P}_j)$ ) and disilane ( $\text{Si}_2\text{H}_6$ ,  $X^1\text{A}_1\text{g}$ ) was explored using the crossed molecular beam apparatus at a collision energy of  $36.6 \pm 4.5 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$ . At this collision energy,



**Figure 4.** B3LYP/cc-pVTZ-optimized geometries of triplet and singlet  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  isomers along with their CCSD(T)/CBS relative energies in  $\text{kJ mol}^{-1}$  with respect to the separated reactants.

the reactions leading to the formation of  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  and  $\text{SiCH}_2$  were attributed to two competing exit channels via molecular hydrogen and silane elimination, respectively, with branching ratios of  $20 \pm 3$  and  $80 \pm 4\%$ . Both channels involved indirect scattering dynamics via long-lived  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_6$  reaction intermediates which lose molecular hydrogen and also silane in “molecular” elimination channels within the rotational plane of the fragmenting intermediate nearly perpendicularly to the total angular momentum vector. Upon formation of these hydrogenated silicon-carbide clusters within the inner envelope of carbon stars such as of IRC+10216, the stellar wind can eject both  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  and  $\text{SiCH}_2$  outside, where they can be photolyzed.<sup>51</sup> This is of particular importance to unravel potential formation pathways to disilicon monocarbide ( $\text{Si}_2\text{C}$ ).<sup>6</sup>

## ■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### SI Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.jpca.2c08417>.

TOF spectra at different mass-to-charge ratios, natural isotopic abundance of the products, B3LYP/cc-pVTZ-optimized Cartesian coordinates, vibrational frequencies, and infrared intensities of singlet and triplet  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_4$  and doublet  $\text{Si}_2\text{CH}_5$  isomers (PDF)

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## Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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