



Cite this: *Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys.*,  
2025, 27, 24607

# Fluorescence excitation and dispersed fluorescence spectra of iso-quinolinyl radicals 4-, 5-, and 8-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ isolated in solid *para*-hydrogen

Chun-Kai Chen,<sup>a</sup> Isabelle Weber,<sup>ib</sup>\*<sup>a</sup> Qin Yang<sup>ib</sup><sup>b</sup> and Yuan-Pern Lee<sup>ib</sup>\*<sup>a,c</sup>

Nitrogen-substituted polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and their derivatives have been proposed as possible carriers of the unidentified infrared emission feature near 6.2  $\mu\text{m}$  in astronomical observations and might also contribute to the diffuse interstellar bands (DIB). We present the previously unobserved dispersed fluorescence and fluorescence excitation spectra of three isomers of hydrogenated iso-quinoline, iso-quinolinyl radicals (iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ ), isolated in solid *para*-hydrogen (*para*- $\text{H}_2$ ). The three observed progressions, originating at 18 492, 19 430, and 18 688  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  and exhibiting distinct fluorescence lifetimes, are assigned to the  $\text{D}_1$ – $\text{D}_0$  electronic transitions of the 4-, 8-, and 5-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  isomers, respectively. Assignments are supported by Franck–Condon Herzberg–Teller simulations based on (TD-)uB3PW91/6-311++G(2d,2p) optimized geometries and scaled harmonic vibrational frequencies. The dispersed fluorescence and fluorescence excitation spectra predominantly involve vibrational normal modes of  $a'$  symmetry. We compare our spectra to previously reported IR spectra and discuss how the position of hydrogenation influences vibronic structure. The potential contribution of 4-, 8-, and 5-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  to the DIB spectrum is discussed.

Received 7th September 2025,  
Accepted 4th October 2025

DOI: 10.1039/d5cp03455h

rsc.li/pccp

## 1. Introduction

Since the discovery of the first diffuse interstellar bands (DIB) by Heger in 1922,<sup>1</sup> over 500 DIB, *i.e.* absorption bands of interstellar origin observed spanning the spectral range from the near infrared (NIR) to the ultraviolet (UV), have been catalogued.<sup>2–4</sup> Yet, the carriers responsible for these bands remain largely unidentified, due to the limited availability of laboratory reference spectra suitable for comparison to astronomical observations. To date, only the buckminsterfullerene cation  $\text{C}_{60}^+$  has been conclusively identified as the carrier of five DIB in the NIR.<sup>5,6</sup> Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) and their protonated, hydrogenated, and cationic derivatives are considered promising candidates for the carriers of DIB.<sup>7,8</sup> They are also generally accepted to contribute to the unidentified infrared (UIR) emission bands at 3.3, 6.2, 7.7, 8.6, 11.2, and 12.7  $\mu\text{m}$ .<sup>9–11</sup> Variations in the line shape of the 6.2- $\mu\text{m}$  band observed, for instance, in the Spitzer/IRS spectra of starburst

dominated galaxies<sup>12</sup> suggest a potential role for nitrogen-substituted PAH (PANH) and their derivatives.<sup>13,14</sup> PANH have previously been detected in samples from the Murchison meteorite.<sup>15,16</sup> If PANH contribute to the UIR bands and are present in meteorites, they might also be DIB carriers. However, electronic absorption spectra of PANH and their derivatives at low temperatures have scarcely been recorded, and, to the best of our knowledge, no such spectra have been reported for hydrogenated PANH to date.

The low vapor pressures of large PAH and PANH pose significant challenges for obtaining their gas-phase electronic spectra. Unlike their protonated counterparts, hydrogenated PAH and PANH cannot be stored in cryogenic ion-traps, and their low-temperature gas-phase spectra have rarely been reported. Matrix isolation techniques provide an alternative, as they require lower sample concentrations and allow the matrix to be maintained at temperatures relevant to interstellar conditions. Depending on the matrix host, the preparation of radicals or ions in matrices can be relatively straightforward. Interactions between the matrix host and the isolated guest molecules, however, can induce substantial spectral shifts: matrix shifts up to several hundred wavenumbers have been reported for electronic transitions of molecules isolated in solid rare gases.<sup>17,18</sup> In contrast, the quantum solid *para*-hydrogen (*para*- $\text{H}_2$ ) is soft and interacts with guest molecules only weakly.

<sup>a</sup> Department of Applied Chemistry and Institute of Molecular Science, National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University, Hsinchu 300093, Taiwan.

E-mail: yplee@nycu.edu.tw; Fax: +886-3-5713491; Tel: +886-3-5131459

<sup>b</sup> Institute of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry, Academy of Sciences, Flemingovonáměstí 2, 16610 Prague, Czech Republic

<sup>c</sup> Center for Emergent Functional Matter Science, National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University, Hsinchu 300093, Taiwan

Protonated molecules can be conveniently prepared by proton-transfer reaction from  $\text{H}_3^+$ , which can be generated *in situ* by electron bombardment of *para*- $\text{H}_2$ . Corresponding hydrogenated molecules are coproducts in this process through either neutralization of protonated species or reactions of the parent molecule with H atoms, a side product of  $\text{H}_3^+$  generation. Infrared (IR) absorption spectra of PAH, PANH, and their protonated and mono-hydrogenated derivatives, produced from electron bombardment of *para*- $\text{H}_2$  matrices containing trace PAH or PANH, mostly exhibit narrow line widths and small matrix shifts, typically <1%, induced by the solid *para*- $\text{H}_2$  environment.<sup>19–21</sup> Despite these advantages, *para*- $\text{H}_2$  matrix-isolation spectroscopy has rarely been applied to study electronic transitions. In recent years, we have recorded dispersed fluorescence and fluorescence excitation spectra of several PAH and their protonated and hydrogenated derivatives containing  $\leq 42$  carbon atoms in *para*- $\text{H}_2$  matrices and found less-divergent and consistent red shifts relative to the gas-phase, compared to Ne and Ar matrices.<sup>22–25</sup> PANH and their derivatives, however, have not yet been examined under similar conditions in our studies.

Quinoline ( $\text{C}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ ) and iso-quinoline (iso- $\text{C}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ ), the smallest members of the PANH family, are depicted in Fig. 1. As core structural motifs in iso-quinoline alkaloids such as morphine and DTC (*d*-tubercularine chloride), iso-quinoline has long been of interest in organic, bioorganic, and pharmaceutical synthesis and analysis.<sup>26</sup> Recently, with the growing interest in molecular hydrogen as a clean energy carrier and an alternative to fossil fuels, iso- $\text{C}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ ,  $\text{C}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ , and their substituted derivatives have attracted increasing attention as potential liquid organic hydrogen carriers (LOHC). In LOHC, molecular hydrogen is stored and released through catalytic hydrogenation and dehydrogenation of  $\text{H}_2$ -lean and  $\text{H}_2$ -rich molecular pairs. The efficiency of hydrogen storage and retrieval depends on the thermodynamic properties of these molecular systems and the availability of suitable catalysts, resulting in an increased interest in the properties of partially and per-hydrogenated PANH.<sup>27–29</sup> Despite this relevance, spectral studies of these molecules remain limited.

To the best of our knowledge, the only study of mono-hydrogenated iso-quinoline, iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ , is from our laboratory. In two types of experiments, Joshi *et al.*<sup>30</sup> prepared various isomers of iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  in solid *para*- $\text{H}_2$  either by electron bombardment or by reacting iso- $\text{C}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  with H atoms generated from the reaction of Cl atoms with vibrationally excited  $\text{H}_2$ .

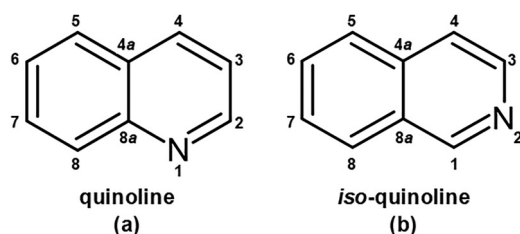


Fig. 1 Molecular structures and skeleton-atom numbering of the two smallest PANH quinoline ( $\text{C}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ ) (a) and iso-quinoline (iso- $\text{C}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ ) (b).

The recorded IR absorption features were grouped according to their behaviour upon secondary photo-irradiation at various wavelengths between 365 and 553 nm and assigned to eight isomers of iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  according to comparison with density functional theory (DFT) calculations. Hydrogenation on the N atom and on all accessible carbon atoms except two at the bridged sites 4a and 8a (Fig. 1) was observed. According to the potential energy scheme (PES) computed at the CCSD(T) level, iso- $\text{C}_9\text{H}_7\text{NH}$  (or 2-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ , hydrogenation at the N-site) has the lowest relative energy. Isomers 5-, 4-, 8-, and 1-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  lie within  $6 \text{ kJ mol}^{-1}$ , whereas 3- and 6-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  have much larger energies, 22–24  $\text{kJ mol}^{-1}$  above iso- $\text{C}_9\text{H}_7\text{NH}$ .

We extend our study of the electronic spectra of PAH and their derivatives isolated in solid *para*- $\text{H}_2$  to hydrogenated iso-quinoline and present dispersed fluorescence and fluorescence excitation spectra of three isomers, 4-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ , 5-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ , and 8-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ , characterized by three distinct progressions originating at 18 492, 18 688, and 19 430  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , respectively, with fluorescence lifetimes of  $\sim 6$ ,  $< 50$ , and  $\sim 105$  ns. Spectral assignments are derived from a comparison to vibrationally resolved electronic absorption and emission spectra simulated using a Franck–Condon Herzberg–Teller approach on the basis of quantum-chemically optimized geometries and scaled harmonic vibrational frequencies. In general, the spectra are mostly composed of vibrational normal modes of  $a'$  symmetry. The dispersed fluorescence spectra are compared with the IR absorption spectra of the same isomers in solid *para*- $\text{H}_2$  reported by Joshi *et al.*,<sup>30</sup> and spectral differences are discussed. A brief comparison to astronomical DIB data is provided.

## 2. Experimental and computational methods

The *para*- $\text{H}_2$ /laser-induced fluorescence experiment has been described in detail elsewhere;<sup>23,31</sup> therefore, only a brief overview is given here. The substrate, a nickel-coated copper flat mounted onto the second stage of a closed-cycle helium refrigerator, is cooled to  $\sim 3.5$  K and serves as the reflective surface for spectroscopy.

*Para*- $\text{H}_2$  was prepared by passing *normal*- $\text{H}_2$  (Chiah-Lung, purity 99.9999%) over a Fe(III) oxide catalyst cooled to  $\sim 13$  K; the minimum mole fraction of *ortho*- $\text{H}_2$  achievable at this temperature is  $\sim 100$  ppm. Due to the low vapour pressure of iso- $\text{C}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ , preparing pre-mixed  $\text{C}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}/\textit{para}\text{-H}_2$  samples was not feasible. Instead, a small flow of *para*- $\text{H}_2$  (flow rate  $\sim 15$  STP  $\text{L min}^{-1}$ , in which STP stands for standard temperature at 273 K and pressure at 760 torr) was passed over the liquid sample, which was purified through three freeze–pump–thaw cycles prior to use, maintained at room temperature. To produce hydrogenated iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ , the sample mixture was bombarded during deposition with an electron beam at 270 eV and 8  $\mu\text{A}$ , generated by an electron gun (Kimball Physics, EPG-7). A typical deposition lasted 5–6 h. Matrix deposition was monitored with a Fourier-transform infrared spectrometer

(FTIR, Bruker, iFS66v) equipped with a KBr beam splitter and a Hg–Cd–Te (MCT) detector cooled to 77 K. IR spectra were typically acquired over 300 scans and covered the range 500–4500  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  at a resolution of 0.25  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ .

To record dispersed fluorescence spectra, we irradiated the matrix with the output of an optical parametric oscillator (OPO, EKSPA NT340) laser, pumped by the output of a frequency-tripled Nd:YAG laser (EKSPLA, NT300) operating at 10 Hz. The OPO laser beam was expanded to a diameter of  $\sim 1.5$  cm with a telescope to maximize the overlap with the sample; the laser energy at the entrance window was  $\sim 1$  mJ. Emission from the matrix was collected with a convex lens and a collimator, coupled into an optical fiber, and transmitted to the spectrograph consisting of a monochromator (Andor Shamrock SR500i, focal length 0.5 m) and an intensified charge-coupled device (iCCD, Andor iStar DH320T-18U-73, 1024  $\times$  225 pixels, pixel size 26  $\mu\text{m} \times 26 \mu\text{m}$ ). We employed a 600 grooves per mm grating blazed at 500 nm and, for the recording of dispersed fluorescence spectra, a monochromator entrance slit width of 22  $\mu\text{m}$ , resulting in a linear dispersion of 3.33  $\text{nm mm}^{-1}$ ; in this configuration, each pixel of the iCCD corresponds to 0.086 nm. Dispersed fluorescence spectra were corrected for wavelength-dependent variations in grating efficiency and iCCD photocathode quantum efficiency. Wavelengths were calibrated with low-pressure Hg, Ne, and Kr lamps. Fluorescence excitation spectra were acquired by stepping the excitation laser wavelength in increments of 0.1 nm, corresponding to 4.9–3.3  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  across the range 450–550 nm, while probing fluorescence emission in a specific wavelength range. In the spectral range covered, the spectral linewidth of the OPO output is  $< 4$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . Laser-induced fluorescence (LIF) experiments were typically conducted over 2–3 days and no significant changes in signal intensities in the recorded dispersed fluorescence spectra were observed over this period.

Quantum-chemical calculations were performed with the Gaussian 16 program package, Revision B.01.<sup>32</sup> We computed optimized geometries and harmonic vibrational frequencies of the electronic ground state ( $D_0$ ) and electronically excited states with the uB3PW91/6-311++G(2d,2p) and TD-uB3PW91/6-311++G(2d,2p) methods, respectively. To simulate vibrationally resolved electronic absorption and emission spectra, we employed a Franck–Condon Herzberg–Teller approach;<sup>33</sup> the computed stick spectra were convoluted with Gaussian line shapes with full-width at half-maximum (FWHM) selected to match with the experimental spectra. For 1-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, the vibrationally-resolved absorption and emission spectra were calculated with a local modified version of Gaussian to achieve a higher progression by using internal coordinates and reduced dimensionality schemes.<sup>34,35</sup> Harmonic vibrational wavenumbers were scaled by 0.978 to account for systematic deviations in the calculations. This scaling factor was derived from a comparison between vibrational frequencies computed at this level of theory and the IR spectra of selected PAH isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> in previous studies.<sup>23</sup> Due to the lack of independent experimental vibrational frequencies for electronically excited states, the determination of a separate scaling factor

for excited-state vibrational frequencies was not possible. We therefore applied the same scaling factors to harmonic wavenumbers of both ground and excited states. Our previous studies support this approach: for *peri*-HBC,<sup>22</sup> the mean absolute deviations in peak positions inferred from fluorescence excitation spectra and theoretical predictions at the B3PW91/6-311++G(2d,2p) level was  $8 \pm 6$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$ .

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Quantum-chemical calculations

Hydrogenation of iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N can proceed at ten distinct atomic sites, as indicated in Fig. 1. Among these ten possible isomers, iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>NH, formed *via* H-atom addition to the N atom, is the most stable. In contrast, the two isomers 4a- and 8a-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, resulting from H-atom addition to the bridging C atoms, exhibit the highest relative energies of +100 and +91  $\text{kJ mol}^{-1}$ , respectively.<sup>30</sup> Oscillator strength ( $f$ ) and vertical absorption and emission energies corresponding to the transition between the electronic ground state ( $D_0$ ) and the first electronically excited state ( $D_1$ ) of the eight most stable isomers calculated with the TD-uB3PW91/6-311++G(2d,2p) method are summarized in Table 1; their simulated  $D_1 \rightarrow D_0$  emission spectra except 1-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, are compared in Fig. 2(d)–(j).

According to the simulations, the most intense peak in the depicted spectra corresponds to the vibrationless origin. Vibronic bands are less intense, with maximum intensities  $< 45\%$  relative to the origin band. In the  $D_0$  state, the ring-skeleton is planar, and, for most isomers except 1-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, this planarity is preserved upon excitation to the  $D_1$  state. Consequently, their vibronic spectra are composed mainly of  $a'$ -symmetric vibrational normal modes and their combination bands. For 2-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N (iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>NH), our calculations predict a slight out-of-plane deformation<sup>22,36</sup> of 2.2 and 0.2 for the N-substituted and all-C-ring moieties, respectively, resulting in lower intensities in the vibronic spectrum and vibrational progressions extending up to  $\sim 5000$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$ .

In contrast, for 1-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, TD-DFT calculations predict substantial deformation of the ring-skeleton of the optimized

**Table 1** Relative energies of various iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isomers, vertical absorption and emission wavelengths, and vertical absorption oscillator strengths  $f$  of their  $D_1$ – $D_0$  transitions and  $D_1$  spin contamination ( $\langle S^2 \rangle$ )

	Rel. energy <sup>a</sup> /kJ mol <sup>-1</sup>	TD-uB3PW91/6-311++G(2d,2p)			
		$\Delta E_{\text{abs}}^{\text{vert}}/\text{nm}$	$\Delta E_{\text{emi}}^{\text{vert}}/\text{nm}$	$f$	$\langle S^2 \rangle$
1	6	525.30	1179.79	0.001	0.842
2	0	839.58	2268.43	0.001	0.837
3	22	514.06	664.25	0.004	0.895
4	3	447.47	522.88	0.025	0.907
5	2	448.55	528.04	0.006	0.890
6	24	498.47	592.81	0.005	1.025
7	24	539.75	703.92	0.007	0.951
8	3	432.48	483.62	0.006	0.880

<sup>a</sup> Relative energies reported by Joshi *et al.*,<sup>30</sup> computed at the CCSD(T)/6-311++G(d,p)//B3LYP/6-311++G(d,p) level.

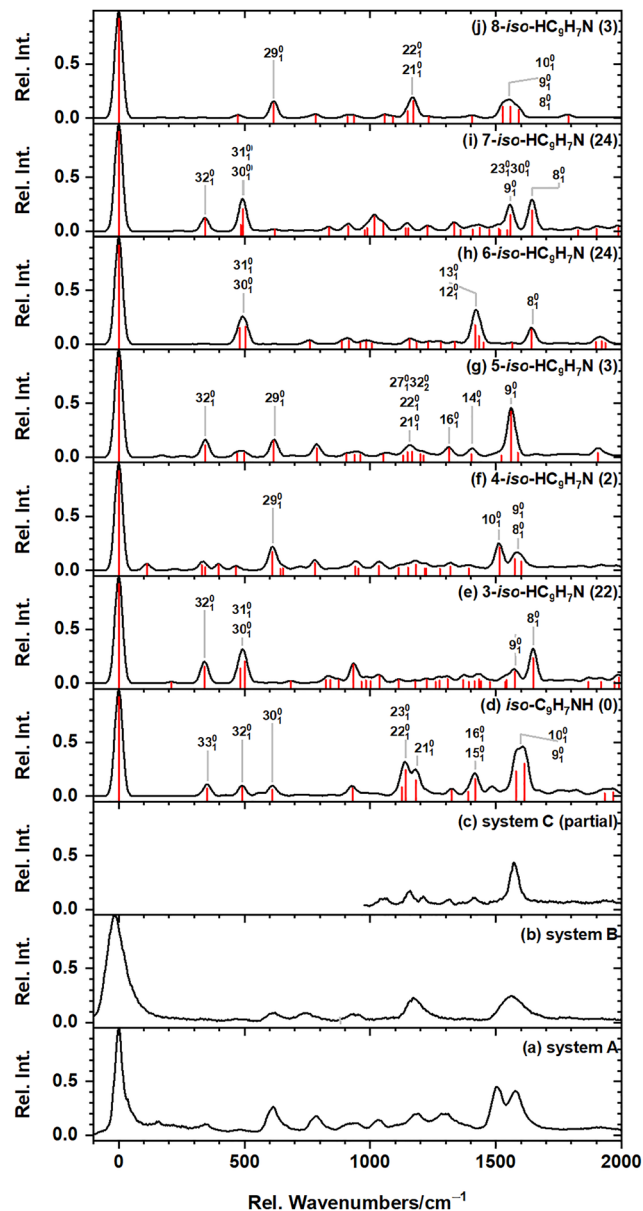


Fig. 2 Comparison of observed dispersed fluorescence spectra with simulated  $D_1 \rightarrow D_0$  emission spectra of various isomers of hydrogenated iso-quinoline. (a) Experimental system A, (b) Experimental system B, and (c) Experimental system C (partial). Simulated emission spectra of various isomers of iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  are shown in (d)–(j). To facilitate direct comparison, all spectra were shifted to align their  $0_0^0$  bands and the computed Franck–Condon Herzberg–Teller stick spectra were convoluted with a Gaussian line shape function with a full-width half-maximum (FWHM) of  $35 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ . Relative energies in  $\text{kJ mol}^{-1}$  are given in parentheses. The origin bands of the experimental spectra are located at  $18492 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  (system A),  $19430 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  (system B), and  $18688 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  (system C, not shown).

$D_1$  geometry, as shown in Fig. S1 (SI). The N-substituted ring has a planarity index of 28.2, whereas the all-C ring has a planarity index of 3.9. Due to the pronounced geometric disparity between  $D_1$  and  $D_0$ , Franck–Condon factors for fundamental vibrational normal modes and first-order overtone and combination bands are small, and the Franck–Condon

Herzberg–Teller algorithm, implemented in Gaussian 16, Revision B.01,<sup>32</sup> fails to converge. Consequently, no simulated  $D_1 \rightarrow D_0$  emission spectrum of 1- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  is depicted in Fig. 2. With new definitions of internal coordinates and a reasonable reduced dimensionality, we achieved a final spectral progression of 78% (original calculation yielded 0.01%) for the  $D_1 \rightarrow D_0$  emission spectrum of 1-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  and obtained the spectrum depicted in Fig. S2 (SI). The high periodicity of the spectral structure and the substantially reduced line density, when additional six vibrational normal modes are omitted, reflect the significant change in geometry predicted for the  $D_1$ – $D_0$  transition at this level of theory; the dominance of long progressions of overtone and combination bands was observed.

Although the vibronic patterns in Fig. 2(d)–(j) vary considerably depending on the position of H addition, several notable trends emerge. Contributions of vibrational normal mode in the observed transitions are discussed in detail in Section SA (SI).

### 3.2. Dispersed fluorescence of 4-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ and 8-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$

Upon excitation at  $497.0$  ( $20120 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) and  $475.0 \text{ nm}$  ( $21053 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) of a matrix of iso- $\text{C}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  in solid *para*- $\text{H}_2$  deposited under electron bombardment, two distinct emission patterns were observed with most intense features at  $18492 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  ( $540.8 \text{ nm}$ ; system A) and  $19430 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  ( $514.7 \text{ nm}$ ; system B), as shown in Fig. 2a and b, and also in Fig. S5 (SI). To determine their lifetimes, we probed temporal profiles of fluorescence emission and fitted the decay curves with a mono-exponential decay function  $y(t) = y_0 + A \times \exp(-t/\tau)$ , in which  $\tau$  denotes the excited-state lifetime (Fig. S6, SI). System A exhibits a fluorescence lifetime of  $\sim 6 \text{ ns}$ , whereas system B yields a longer lifetime of  $104 \pm 3 \text{ ns}$ , indicative of two distinct electronic transitions.

The observed dispersed fluorescence spectra are compared with simulated  $D_1 \rightarrow D_0$  emission spectra of various hydrogenated iso-quinoline isomers in Fig. 2. To facilitate comparison, all simulated vibronic stick spectra were shifted to align their  $0_0^0$  bands and convoluted with a Gaussian lineshape (FWHM of  $35 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ). Characteristic of system A are two intense and partially unresolved features at  $1507$  and  $1577 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ , with relative intensities of 45 and 41% compared to the  $0_0^0$  band, respectively. A moderately intense feature at  $615 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  with a relative intensity of  $\sim 25\%$  also appeared, alongside five weaker bands ( $< 20\%$ ) located between  $615$  and  $1500 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ . System B displays two characteristic bands  $\sim 1175$  and  $1570 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ , both with relative intensities of  $\sim 24\%$ , accompanied by three weaker features below  $1000 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  with relative intensities under 10%.

The simulated  $D_1 \rightarrow D_0$  emission spectra of 3-, 4-, and 7-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  all exhibit a characteristic double-peak structure in region  $1500$ – $1600 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ , as observed in system A. However, only the simulated spectrum of 4-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  reproduces the relative intensities of these two peaks in the experimental spectrum. Furthermore, in the  $500$ – $1500 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  region, the most intense peak in the simulated spectrum of 4-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$

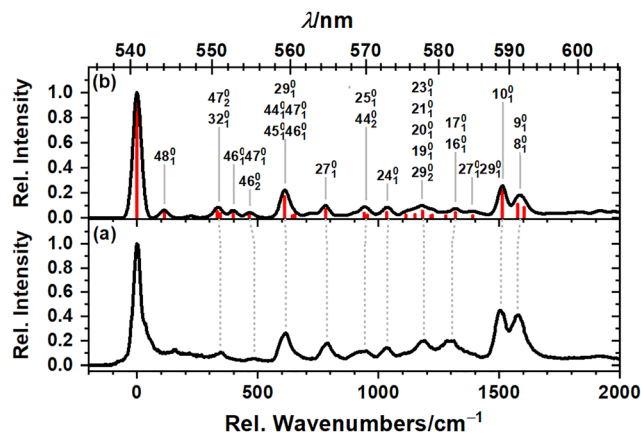


Fig. 3 Comparison of observed and simulated dispersed fluorescence spectra of 4-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ . (a) Dispersed fluorescence spectrum of 4-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  isolated in solid *para*- $\text{H}_2$  recorded upon excitation at  $20\,120\text{ cm}^{-1}$  ( $497.0\text{ nm}$ ). The bottom axis denotes the displacement from the origin band, observed at  $18\,492\text{ cm}^{-1}$  ( $540.8\text{ nm}$ ), while the top axis represents the wavelength of the observed spectrum. (b) The  $\text{D}_1 \rightarrow \text{D}_0$  emission spectrum simulated by convolution the Franck–Condon Herzberg–Teller stick spectrum (red) with a Gaussian line shape of FWHM  $40\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ; vibrational wavenumbers were scaled by 0.978. Vibrational mode assignments are indicated.

appears near  $617\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (rel. int.  $\sim 25\%$ ), consistent with experiments, and the remaining spectral features are also consistent with our experimental data. In contrast, the simulated spectra of 3- and 7-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  both show features near  $495$  and  $350\text{ cm}^{-1}$  with relative intensities of 35 and 20%, but lack any prominent feature near  $615\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . We therefore assign the dispersed fluorescence spectrum originating at  $18\,492\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (system A) to the  $\text{D}_1 \rightarrow \text{D}_0$  transition of 4-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  in solid *para*- $\text{H}_2$ .

Detailed vibrational assignments for the dispersed fluorescence spectrum of 4-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  isolated in solid *para*- $\text{H}_2$ , derived on comparison with simulations, are presented in Fig. 3 and Table 2. The relative intensities and peak positions show satisfactory agreement, with an average absolute deviation of  $8 \pm 6\text{ cm}^{-1}$ , comparable to our results for the 1-hydronaphthyl radical ( $1\text{-C}_{10}\text{H}_9$ ) in solid *para*- $\text{H}_2$ .<sup>24</sup> Most features are assigned to vibrational normal modes of  $a'$  symmetry, consistent with the preservation of ring-skeleton planarity and the symmetric deformation of the HCH angle and C–H bond lengths in the  $\text{CH}_2$  moiety upon excitation to the  $\text{D}_1$  state. The predicted weak contributions from overtone and combination bands, either involving  $a'$  vibrations or two quanta of  $a''$  vibrations ( $\nu_{45}-\nu_{48}$ ), are consistent with the allowed transitions governed by symmetry operations of the point group  $\text{C}_s$ .

The IR spectrum of 4-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  in solid *para*- $\text{H}_2$  has previously been reported by Joshi *et al.*<sup>30</sup> Consistent with the low molecular symmetry of the radical (point group  $\text{C}_s$ ), all vibrational normal modes are symmetry allowed and may contribute to both IR and LIF spectra, although their intensities might differ depending on the governing rules for electronic and vibronic transitions. In electronic spectra, the intensities of individual vibrational modes are determined by their

Table 2 Assignments of peaks in the dispersed fluorescence spectrum of 4-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  isolated in solid *para*- $\text{H}_2$

<i>para</i> - $\text{H}_2$		uB3PW91		Assignment Sym.	
IR <sup>a</sup> / $\text{cm}^{-1}$	LIF <sup>b</sup> / $\text{cm}^{-1}$	FCHT <sup>c</sup> / $\text{cm}^{-1}$	Rel. int. <sup>d</sup> / %	Scaled <sup>e</sup> / $\text{cm}^{-1}$	
	0	0	100	0	$0_0^0$ $a'$
		113	5.9	(112)	$48_2^0$ $a'$
	344	336	5.1	(331)	$47_2^0$ $a'$
		399	5.6	(398)	$32_1^0$ $a'$
	486	466	3.0	(465)	$46_1^0$ $47_1^0$ $a'$
	615	610	612	(612)	$46_2^0$ $a'$
			17.3	(642)	$29_1^0$ $a'$
			1.5	(642)	$44_1^0$ $47_1^0$ $a'$
			2.2	(653)	$45_1^0$ $46_1^0$ $a'$
(748.1)			(<0.1)	742	$40_1^0$ $a''$
	786	778	7.0	780	$27_1^0$ $a'$
	945	943	3.5	940	$25_1^0$ $a'$
			2.0	(953)	$44_2^0$ $a'$
	1036	1037	4.2	1034	$24_1^0$ $a'$
	1188	1181	2.4	1113	$23_1^0$ $a'$
			2.6	1151	$21_1^0$ $a'$
			5.4	1183	$20_1^0$ $a'$
			1.9	1217	$19_1^0$ $a'$
			2.2	(1223)	$29_2^0$ $a'$
(1245.9)			(<0.1)	1247	$18_1^0$ $a'$
1269.4	1304	1318	1.6	1277	$17_1^0$ $a'$
			4.0	1320	$16_1^0$ $a'$
		1389	1.8	(1391)	$27_1^0$ $29_1^0$ $a'$
(1483.7)			(0.8)	1486	$11_1^0$ $a'$
	1507	1514	21.8	1513	$10_1^0$ $a'$
	1577	1584	10.7	1576	$9_1^0$ $a'$
			8.3	1602	$8_1^0$ $a'$
(3087.9)			(<0.1)	3132	$1_1^0$ $a'$

<sup>a</sup> Peak positions in the IR absorption spectrum of 4-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  isolated in solid *para*- $\text{H}_2$  reported by Joshi *et al.*<sup>30</sup> Values in parentheses represent modes predicted by the Franck–Condon Herzberg–Teller (FCHT) simulations with a relative intensity of <1.5% in the simulated LIF spectrum. <sup>b</sup> Vibrational spacing relative to the origin band at  $18\,492\text{ cm}^{-1}$  ( $540.8\text{ nm}$ ). <sup>c</sup> Vibrational spacings from the convoluted simulated stick spectrum calculated with the FCHT method. <sup>d</sup> Intensities relative to the most intense peak ( $0_0^0$  band). Only vibrational modes with relative intensities  $\geq 1.5\%$  are listed. The weak features corresponding to IR absorption bands reported by Joshi *et al.*<sup>30</sup> are listed in parentheses. <sup>e</sup> Harmonic vibrational wavenumbers scaled by a factor of 0.978. Values given in parentheses for combination and overtone bands are the sum of the fundamentals.

Franck–Condon factors, which are more pronounced for vibrational modes reflecting geometry changes induced by electronic transition. Since the planarity of the ring-skeleton is retained upon electronic excitation, intense features observed in the dispersed fluorescence spectra are predominantly associated with vibrational normal modes of  $a'$  symmetry. Conversely, peak intensities in IR spectra are governed by the change in dipole moment induced by the vibrational motion, and, in consequence, the most intense IR bands ( $\nu_{40}$ ) are associated with vibrational modes of  $a''$  symmetry.

Joshi *et al.*<sup>30</sup> identified five IR lines of 4-iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  in solid *para*- $\text{H}_2$  and assigned them to  $\nu_1$  ( $a'$ ),  $\nu_{11}$  ( $a'$ ),  $\nu_{17}$  ( $a'$ ),  $\nu_{18}$  ( $a'$ ), and  $\nu_{40}$  ( $a''$ ); other IR lines predicted to have significant intensities were interfered by either iso- $\text{C}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$  or other isomers of iso- $\text{HC}_9\text{H}_7\text{N}$ . Among these modes, our simulations predict

that only  $\nu_{17}$  ( $a'$ ) and  $\nu_{11}$  ( $a'$ ) contribute weakly to the electronic emission spectrum, with intensities 1.6 and 0.8% of the most intense feature  $0_0^0$ , respectively (Table 2). The band at  $1304\text{ cm}^{-1}$  in the dispersed fluorescence spectrum is predicted to be a superposition of  $\nu_{17}$  ( $1277\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ,  $a'$ ) and  $\nu_{16}$  ( $1320\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ,  $a'$ ), with relative intensities 1.6 and 4.0%, respectively, resulting in an effective peak position at  $1308\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . The corresponding peak in the IR spectrum of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> at  $1269.4\text{ cm}^{-1}$  is assigned to only  $\nu_{17}$ , with no contribution from  $\nu_{16}$ , explaining the large deviation between the two spectra.

For system B, among all simulated spectra, only the simulated  $D_1 \rightarrow D_0$  emission spectrum of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N exhibits two peaks of comparable intensity ( $\sim 22\%$ ) near  $1178$  and  $1567\text{ cm}^{-1}$ , similar to the experimental spectrum. A third, weaker feature (rel. intensity  $\sim 15\%$ ) is predicted near  $620\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and also observed in the experimental spectrum, albeit with slightly lower intensity ( $\sim 9\%$ ); other predicted features are generally in agreement with the experimental data. The only other isomer whose simulated  $D_1 \rightarrow D_0$  spectrum displays characteristic features near  $1180$  and  $1580\text{ cm}^{-1}$  is iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>NH, the lowest-energy isomer. In this case, however, the two bands are predicted with much higher relative intensities ( $\sim 63$  and  $\sim 40\%$ , respectively), and the predicted bands near  $355$ ,  $490$ , and  $1420\text{ cm}^{-1}$  were not observed in our experiments.

Therefore, we assign system B, with an origin at  $19430\text{ cm}^{-1}$ , to the  $D_1 \rightarrow D_0$  transition of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub>. A contribution from protonated iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N to either spectrum is unlikely because our calculations predict the  $S_1-S_0$  transition of iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>NH<sup>+</sup>, the lowest-energy protonated isomer and the only one observed previously in IR absorption in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub>,<sup>30</sup> to occur at  $376.6\text{ nm}$  with an oscillator strength  $f = 0.442$ . Joshi *et al.* differentiated protonated and hydrogenated iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N based on their behavior over time: recombination of iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>NH<sup>+</sup> with solvated electrons in the *para*-H<sub>2</sub> matrix resulted in a decrease in iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>NH<sup>+</sup> and an increase in iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. No decrease in intensities in the dispersed fluorescence spectra were observed over the experimental runtime of 2–3 days, supporting that iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>NH<sup>+</sup> is unlikely to contribute to the observed spectra.

Detailed vibrational assignments for the dispersed fluorescence spectrum of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub>, derived on comparison with the simulations, are presented in Fig. 4 and Table 3. The simulated and observed peak positions and relative intensities are in satisfactory agreement, with an absolute average deviation  $6 \pm 4\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . As discussed above for 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, most of the observed peaks are assigned to vibrational normal modes of  $a'$  symmetry.

For 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, Joshi *et al.*<sup>30</sup> assigned nine IR vibrational lines to two C–H stretching modes  $\nu_1$  ( $a'$ ) and  $\nu_2$  ( $a'$ ), five C–C and C–N stretching modes  $\nu_8$  ( $a'$ ),  $\nu_{11}$  ( $a'$ ) and  $\nu_{12}$  ( $a'$ ),  $\nu_{18}$  ( $a'$ ),  $\nu_{25}$  ( $a'$ ), and two out-of-plane vibrations  $\nu_{39}$  ( $a''$ ) and  $\nu_{42}$  ( $a''$ ). Of these, only  $\nu_{25}$  ( $a'$ ) and  $\nu_8$  ( $a'$ ) are predicted to contribute to the  $D_1 \rightarrow D_0$  emission spectrum, with relative intensities of 1.7 and 7.8%, respectively.

A notable distinction between the dispersed fluorescence spectra of 4- and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N lies in the relative intensities of

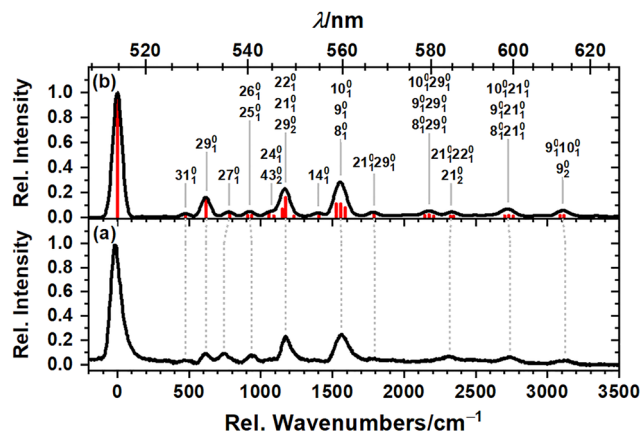


Fig. 4 Comparison of observed and simulated dispersed fluorescence spectra of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. (a) Dispersed fluorescence spectrum of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> recorded upon excitation at  $21,053\text{ cm}^{-1}$  ( $475.0\text{ nm}$ ). The bottom axis denotes the displacement from the origin band, observed at  $19,430\text{ cm}^{-1}$  ( $514.7\text{ nm}$ ), while the top axis represents the wavelength of the observed spectrum. (b) The  $D_1 \rightarrow D_0$  emission spectrum simulated by convolution of the Franck–Condon Herzberg–Teller stick spectrum (red) with a Gaussian line shape of FWHM  $75\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ; vibrational wavenumbers were scaled by 0.978. Vibrational mode assignments are indicated.

the three  $a'$  symmetric C–C and C–N stretching modes  $\nu_8$ ,  $\nu_9$ , and  $\nu_{10}$ . In the simulated  $D_1$ – $D_0$  emission spectrum of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, their relative intensities follow the order  $\nu_{10}$  (21.8%)  $\gg \nu_9$  (10.7%)  $> \nu_8$  (8.3%), whilst in the simulated  $D_1$ – $D_0$  emission spectrum of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N,  $\nu_{10}$  and  $\nu_9$  exhibit comparable relative intensities – 10.7 and 11.0%, respectively – both exceeding that of  $\nu_8$  (7.9%). Atomic displacement vectors induced by these modes are illustrated in Fig. 5. In the 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N radical,  $\nu_{10}$  primarily affects the C–N bond, and, to a lesser extent, the C(8a)–C(1) bond; the C-skeleton of the all-C ring is largely unaffected. On the contrary,  $\nu_9$  and  $\nu_8$  mostly distort the C-skeleton of the all-C ring, with the largest impact on C(6)–C(7) and C(4a)–C(8a), and C(4a)–C(5) and C(7)–C(8), respectively.

As illustrated in Fig. S4b (SI), the greatest change in bond length upon transition between the  $D_1$  and  $D_0$  in 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N occurs at the C–N bond. Among the three pairs of C–C and C–N bonds mostly impacted by the three normal modes  $\nu_8$ ,  $\nu_9$ , and  $\nu_{10}$ , the pair C(4a)–C(5) and C(7)–C(8) corresponding to  $\nu_8$  is least affected by the electronic transition, consistent with the low intensity of  $\nu_8$  predicted in the  $D_1$ – $D_0$  emission spectrum. Changing the hydrogenation site from C(4) to C(8) also changes the displacements associated with the three vibrational normal modes  $\nu_8$ ,  $\nu_9$ , and  $\nu_{10}$ : in 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N,  $\nu_{10}$  mainly affects the C(6)–C(7) bond and, to a lesser extent, C(4a)–C(5);  $\nu_9$  mainly impacts the C–N and C(4a)–C(8a) bonds, and  $\nu_8$  mainly impacts the C(8a)–C(1) and C(3)–C(4) bonds. Similar to the 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N radical, the change in bond lengths of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N associated with the  $D_1$ – $D_0$  transition is smallest for the pair of C–C bonds characteristic of  $\nu_8$ , and the intensity predicted for  $\nu_8$  in the emission spectrum is comparably small. The changes in bond lengths of the C(6)–C(7) and the C–N bonds (+3.1 and

**Table 3** Assignments of peaks in the dispersed fluorescence spectrum of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub>

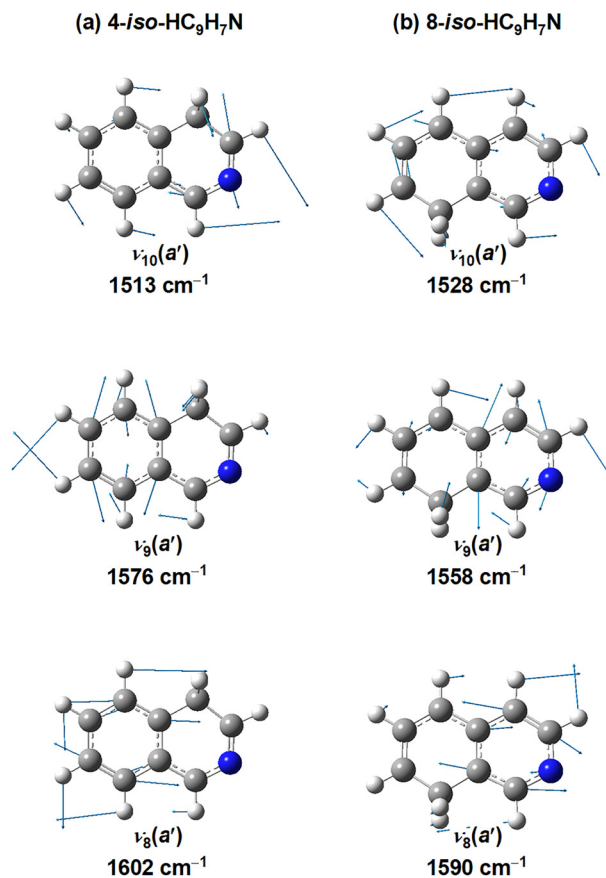
<i>para</i> -H <sub>2</sub>		uB3PW91			
IR <sup>a</sup> / cm <sup>-1</sup>	LIF <sup>b</sup> / cm <sup>-1</sup>	FCHT <sup>c</sup> / cm <sup>-1</sup>	Rel. int. <sup>d</sup> / %	Scaled <sup>e</sup> / cm <sup>-1</sup>	Assignment Sym.
	0	0	100	0	0 <sub>0</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
	474	473	2.6	472	31 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup>
	618	618	13.6	616	29 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
(653.7)			(<0.1)	648	42 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a''
	743	778	2.6	784	27 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
(830.5)			(<0.1)	831	39 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a''
	936	919	1.5	910	26 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
941.6			1.7	936	25 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			3.2	1056	24 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			1.2	(1091)	43 <sub>2</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
	1174	1166	6.7	1150	22 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			16.2	1173	21 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
(1245.5)			1.2	(1232)	29 <sub>2</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			(<0.1)	1264	18 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
(1432.2)			1.4	1404	14 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
(1467.6)			(<0.1)	1473	11 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
	1560	1553	10.7	1528	10 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			11.0	1558	9 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
1576.2			7.8	1590	8 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
	1792	1784	2.0	(1789)	21 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> 29 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
		2175	1.7	(2144)	10 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> 29 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			2.4	(2174)	9 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> 29 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			1.2	(2206)	8 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> 29 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
2311	2332		1.0	(2322)	21 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> 22 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			1.3	(2345)	21 <sub>2</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
	2737	2723	1.3	(2700)	10 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> 21 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			1.5	(2731)	9 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> 21 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			1.2	(2762)	8 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> 21 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
	3124	3106	1.4	(3086)	9 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> 10 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			1.9	(3116)	9 <sub>2</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
(3076.6)			(<0.1)	3119	2 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
(3083.9)			(<0.1)	3130	1 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'

<sup>a</sup> Peak positions in the IR absorption spectrum of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> reported by Joshi *et al.*<sup>30</sup> Values in parentheses represent modes predicted by FCHT simulations with a relative intensity of <1.5% in the simulated spectrum. <sup>b</sup> Vibrational spacing relative to the origin band at 19 430 cm<sup>-1</sup> (514.7 nm). <sup>c</sup> Vibrational spacings from the convoluted simulated stick spectrum calculated with the FCHT method. <sup>d</sup> Intensities relative to the most intense peak (0<sub>0</sub><sup>0</sup> band). Only vibrational modes with relative intensities ≥1.5% are listed. The weak features corresponding to IR absorption bands reported by Joshi *et al.*<sup>30</sup> are listed in parentheses. <sup>e</sup> Harmonic vibrational wavenumbers scaled by a factor of 0.978. Values given in parentheses for combination and overtone bands are the sum of the fundamentals.

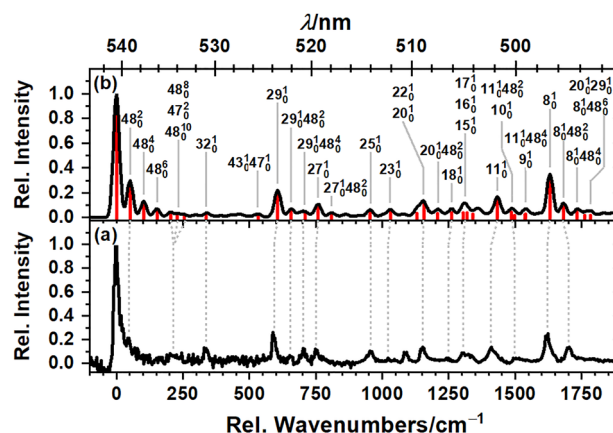
+3.3%, respectively) in 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N are similar, consistent with the comparable intensities of ν<sub>10</sub> and ν<sub>9</sub> in the simulated D<sub>1</sub>-D<sub>0</sub> emission spectrum.

### 3.3. Fluorescence excitation spectrum of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N

Probing fluorescence emission in the ranges 18 399–18 601 cm<sup>-1</sup> (537.6–543.5 nm) and 16 787–17 030 cm<sup>-1</sup> (587.2–595.7 nm), while varying the excitation wavelength at 0.1 nm increments from 490 to 516 nm and 516 to 545 nm, respectively, we obtained the fluorescence excitation spectrum depicted in Fig. 6a. This spectrum consists of a very intense 0<sub>0</sub><sup>0</sup>



**Fig. 5** Displacement vectors induced by the three a' C–C stretching modes of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N (a) and 8-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N (b) in their electronic ground states calculated at the uB3PW91/6-311++G(2d,2p) level.



**Fig. 6** Comparison of observed and simulated excitation of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. (a) Fluorescence excitation spectrum of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> obtained by probing emission in regions 16 787–17 030 cm<sup>-1</sup> (<900 cm<sup>-1</sup>) and 18 399–18 601 cm<sup>-1</sup> (>900 cm<sup>-1</sup>). The bottom axis denotes the displacement from the origin band, observed at 18 495 cm<sup>-1</sup> (540.7 nm), while the top axis represents the wavelength of the observed spectrum. (b) The D<sub>1</sub> ← D<sub>0</sub> absorption spectrum simulated by convolution the Franck–Condon Herzberg–Teller stick spectrum (red) with a Gaussian line shape of FWHM 25 cm<sup>-1</sup>; vibrational wavenumbers were scaled by 0.978. Vibrational mode assignments are indicated.

band at  $18\,495\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (540.7 nm) along with several weaker vibrational bands with relative intensities  $<25\%$ . The  $0_0^0$  band closely matches the  $0_0^0$  band at  $18\,492\text{ cm}^{-1}$  in the dispersed fluorescence spectrum of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, shown in Fig. 3a. The probed range  $16\,787\text{--}17\,030\text{ cm}^{-1}$  covers the weaker bands of  $8_1^0$ ,  $9_1^0$ , and  $10_1^0$  in the dispersed fluorescence spectrum, whereas the probed range  $18\,399\text{--}18\,601\text{ cm}^{-1}$  covers the intense  $0_0^0$  band. Consequently, the signal-to-noise ratio is superior below 516 nm. According to the overlay of dispersed fluorescence spectra of the three iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isomers recorded in this study and the probed regions shaded in gray (Fig. S7, SI), interferences due to emission of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N and 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N are expected to be negligible.

The experimental spectrum is compared with the simulated  $D_1 \leftarrow D_0$  absorption spectrum of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N in Fig. 6. Detailed assignments for the observed features are provided in Fig. 6b and Table 4. In general, the experimental and theoretical results are in satisfactory agreement, with an average absolute deviation in peak positions of  $8 \pm 7\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . We also compare this spectrum to the simulated  $D_1 \leftarrow D_0$  absorption spectra of various iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isomers in Fig. S8 (SI). The observed excitation spectrum (trace a) agrees with that predicted for 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, but not with predictions for other isomers of iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N.

Although both dispersed fluorescence and fluorescence excitation spectra of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N are primarily composed of vibrational normal modes of  $a'$  symmetry, they differ in relative intensities and in the contribution of combination and overtone bands: overtones containing  $2n$  quanta of  $\nu_{48}$  ( $a''$ ,  $26\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) up to  $n = 5$  and their combination bands with intense modes of  $a'$  symmetry are predicted to contribute only to the fluorescence excitation spectrum.

### 3.4. Fluorescence excitation spectrum of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N

To obtain the fluorescence excitation spectrum of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, we monitored fluorescence emission in the range  $18\,103\text{--}18\,312\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (546.1–552.4 nm), shaded in light red in Fig. S7 (SI), corresponding to a superposition of bands  $22_1^0$  and  $21_1^0$  in the dispersed fluorescence spectrum. The signal-to-noise ratio of this excitation spectrum is worse than that of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, likely due to the oscillator strength predicted for the  $D_1\text{--}D_0$  transition of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N being about 1/4 that of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. This spectrum, depicted in Fig. 7a, consists of an intense  $0_0^0$  band at  $19\,433\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (514.6 nm), closely matching the  $0_0^0$  band at  $19\,430\text{ cm}^{-1}$  in the dispersed fluorescence spectrum of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N; characteristic vibrational features appeared at 700, 1169, 1532, and  $1620\text{ cm}^{-1}$ .

Peak-by-peak assignments, derived *via* comparison with the simulated  $D_1 \leftarrow D_0$  spectrum of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, are listed in Table 5 and indicated in Fig. 7b. Similar to the dispersed fluorescence spectrum, the fluorescence excitation spectrum of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N is also dominated by vibrational normal modes of  $a'$  symmetry. The average absolute deviation in peak positions between experiment and simulation,  $8 \pm 6\text{ cm}^{-1}$ , is comparable to that derived for 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. We also compare

Table 4 Assignments of peaks in the fluorescence excitation spectrum of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub>

<i>para</i> -H <sub>2</sub>	uB3PW91			Assignment	Sym.	
	LIF <sup>a</sup> /cm <sup>-1</sup>	FCFT <sup>b</sup> /cm <sup>-1</sup>	Rel. int. <sup>c</sup> %			Scaled <sup>d</sup> /cm <sup>-1</sup>
		0	100	0	$0_0^0$	$a'$
48		51	29.6	(51)	$48_0^2$	$a'$
		102	13.1	(102)	$48_0^4$	$a'$
		153	6.5	(153)	$48_0^6$	$a'$
215		203	3.3	(204)	$48_0^8$	$a'$
			2.2	(228)	$47_0^2$	$a'$
			1.8	(255)	$48_0^{10}$	$a'$
			1.8	(255)	$48_0^{10}$	$a'$
338		336	1.8	336	$32_0^1$	$a'$
		528	2.0	(530)	$43_0^1 47_0^1$	$a'$
593		602	20.1	604	$29_0^1$	$a'$
655		653	5.9	(655)	$29_0^1 48_0^2$	$a'$
703		704	2.6	(706)	$29_0^1 48_0^4$	$a'$
751		755	8.1	755	$27_0^1$	$a'$
		806	2.4	(806)	$27_0^1 48_0^2$	$a'$
957		951	3.7	950	$25_0^1$	$a'$
1022		1025	5.4	1026	$23_0^1$	$a'$
1152		1150	3.2	1125	$22_0^1$	$a'$
			11.1	1151	$20_0^1$	$a'$
			3.3	(1202)	$20_0^1 48_0^2$	$a'$
1250		1256	3.9	1357	$18_0^1$	$a'$
1304		1307	3.8	1299	$17_0^1$	$a'$
			3.7	1313	$16_0^1$	$a'$
			2.6	1335	$15_0^1$	$a'$
			14.5	1428	$11_0^1$	$a'$
			4.3	(1479)	$11_0^1 48_0^2$	$a'$
1498		1483	1.8	1492	$10_0^1$	$a'$
			1.9	(1530)	$11_0^1 48_0^4$	$a'$
		2.6	1532	$9_0^1$	$a'$	
1620		1623	31.5	1624	$8_0^1$	$a'$
1700		1675	9.3	(1675)	$8_0^1 48_0^2$	$a'$
			4.1	(1726)	$8_0^1 48_0^4$	$a'$
			1.8	(1755)	$20_0^1 29_0^1$	$a'$
		2.0	(1777)	$8_0^1 48_0^6$	$a'$	

<sup>a</sup> Vibrational spacing relative to the origin band at  $18\,495\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (540.7 nm). <sup>b</sup> Vibrational spacings from the convoluted simulated stick spectrum calculated with the FCFT method. <sup>c</sup> Intensities relative to the most intense peak ( $0_0^0$  band). Only vibrational modes contributing with a relative intensity  $\geq 1.5\%$  are listed. <sup>d</sup> Harmonic vibrational wavenumbers scaled by a factor 0.978. Values given in parentheses for combination and overtone bands are the sum of the fundamentals.

this spectrum with the simulated  $D_1 \leftarrow D_0$  absorption spectra of various iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isomers in Fig. S8 (SI). The observed excitation spectrum (trace b) agrees with that predicted for 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, but not with other isomers of iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N.

Unlike 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, which shows overtones involving up to 10 quanta of  $\nu_{48}$  ( $26\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ,  $a''$ ) in Fig. 6a, no significant contribution from higher-order overtones or their combination bands is predicted for the  $D_1 \leftarrow D_0$  absorption spectrum of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. Differences between harmonic vibrational frequencies of a specific normal mode in different electronic states serve as indicators of changes in the curvature of the potential energy surface along this normal coordinate near the equilibrium geometry. In Fig. S9 (SI), quotients  $\nu_n(D_0)/\nu_n(D_1)$  for  $n = 1\text{--}48$  are plotted for 4- and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N;  $\nu_n(D_0)$  and  $\nu_n(D_1)$  are vibrational wavenumbers of the  $n$ th vibrational mode in the

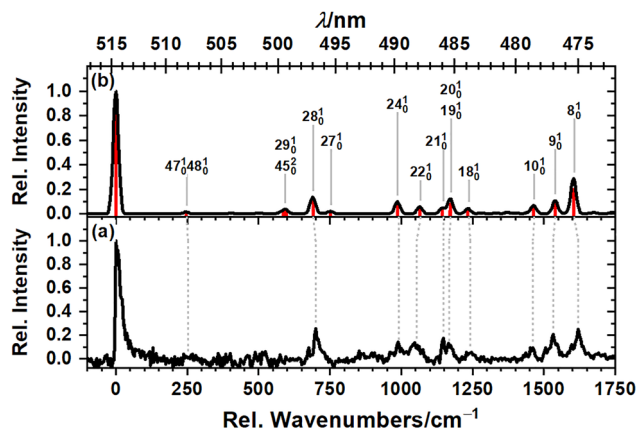


Fig. 7 Comparison of observed and simulated excitation of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. (a) Fluorescence excitation spectrum of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> obtained by probing emission at 18 103–18 312 cm<sup>-1</sup>. The bottom axis denotes the displacement from the origin band, observed at 19 433 cm<sup>-1</sup> (514.6 nm), whereas the top axis represents the wavelength of the observed spectrum. (b) The D<sub>1</sub> ← D<sub>0</sub> absorption spectrum simulated by convolution the Franck-Condon Herzberg-Teller stick spectrum (red) with a Gaussian line shape of FWHM 20 cm<sup>-1</sup>; vibrational wavenumbers were scaled by 0.978. Vibrational mode assignments are indicated.

Table 5 Assignments of peaks in the fluorescence excitation spectrum of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub>

<i>para</i> -H <sub>2</sub>	uB3PW91				
LIF <sup>a</sup> /cm <sup>-1</sup>	FCHT <sup>b</sup> /cm <sup>-1</sup>	Rel. int. <sup>c</sup> /%	Scaled <sup>d</sup> /cm <sup>-1</sup>	Assignment	Sym.
	0	100	0	0 <sub>0</sub> <sup>0</sup>	a'
252	246	1.4	(245)	47 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup> 48 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
	591	2.0	587	29 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
		1.9	(597)	45 <sub>0</sub> <sup>2</sup>	a'
700	689	12.0	690	28 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
	751	2.1	752	27 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
992	986	9.8	986	24 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
1055	1064	5.6	1065	22 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
1148	1146	4.7	1143	21 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
1169	1170	2.1	1169	20 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
		7.9	1172	19 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
1242	1232	4.0	1233	18 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
1462	1463	6.2	1464	10 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
1532	1537	9.6	1539	9 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
1620	1604	19.7	1604	8 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
	1674	0.7	(1676)	24 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup> 28 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'

<sup>a</sup> Vibrational spacing relative to the origin band at 19 433 cm<sup>-1</sup> (514.6 nm). <sup>b</sup> Vibrational spacings from the convoluted simulated stick spectrum calculated with the FCHT method. <sup>c</sup> Intensities relative to the most intense peak (0<sub>0</sub><sup>0</sup> band). Only vibrational modes contributing with a relative intensity ≥ 1.5% are listed. <sup>d</sup> Harmonic vibrational wavenumbers scaled by a factor 0.978. Numbers given in parentheses for combination and overtone bands are the sum of the fundamentals.

D<sub>0</sub> and D<sub>1</sub> state, respectively. The significant reduction of  $\nu_{48}$  from 56 to 26 cm<sup>-1</sup> upon excitation from D<sub>0</sub> to D<sub>1</sub> of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N indicates a shallower potential energy surface for  $\nu_{48}$  in the D<sub>1</sub> state, explaining the appearance of  $\nu_{48}$  overtones and their combination bands in fluorescence excitation spectrum of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N.

### 3.5. Dispersed fluorescence and fluorescence excitation spectra of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N

Upon excitation at 495.5 nm (20 182 cm<sup>-1</sup>) of a matrix of iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> deposited under electron bombardment, we observed additional emission features (system C) that could not be assigned to either 4- or 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, as illustrated in Fig. 2c and Fig. S5 (SI). Fluorescence emission probed in the range 580.9–587.6 nm (17 018–17 215 cm<sup>-1</sup>) upon excitation at 18 688 cm<sup>-1</sup> decays to <10% within 50 ns, *cf.* Fig. S10 (SI), suggesting an emission lifetime between those of 4- and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, and, hence, the presence of a third distinct species.

Varying the excitation wavelength in increments of 0.1 nm while probing emission in the range 580.9–587.6 nm (17 018–17 215 cm<sup>-1</sup>), as shown in Fig. S7 (SI), we obtained the fluorescence excitation spectrum depicted in Fig. 8a. The most intense feature is located at 18 688 cm<sup>-1</sup> (535.1 nm), accompanied by sharp bands at 1502 (relative intensity 35%), 1161 (27%), 1063 (17%), 950 (17%), 847 (13%), 591 (20%), and 469 cm<sup>-1</sup> (17%) above the most intense band. We compare this spectrum with the experimental fluorescence excitation spectra of 4- and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> and the simulated D<sub>1</sub> ← D<sub>0</sub> absorption spectra of various iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isomers in Fig. S8 (SI). The second most intense feature (relative intensity ~35%) in the simulated D<sub>1</sub> ← D<sub>0</sub> spectrum of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, located near 1530 cm<sup>-1</sup>, is consistent with the single intense experimental band near 1500 cm<sup>-1</sup>. In contrast, in the simulated absorption spectra of all other isomers, this band is either shifted further to higher energies or accompanied by additional bands of comparable intensity. Furthermore, the observed spectral pattern in the range 400–1000 cm<sup>-1</sup> is



Fig. 8 Comparison of observed and simulated excitation spectra of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. (a) Fluorescence excitation spectrum of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> obtained on probing emission in region 580.9–587.6 nm (17 018–17 215 cm<sup>-1</sup>). The bottom axis denotes the displacement from the origin band, observed at 18 688 cm<sup>-1</sup> (535.1 nm), whereas the top axis represents the wavelength of the observed spectrum. (b) The D<sub>1</sub> ← D<sub>0</sub> absorption spectrum simulated by convolution the simulated Franck-Condon Herzberg-Teller stick spectrum (red) with a Gaussian function with FWHM = 15 cm<sup>-1</sup>; harmonic vibrational wavenumbers were scaled by 0.978. Vibrational mode assignments are indicated.

**Table 6** Assignments of peaks in the fluorescence excitation spectrum of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub>

<i>para</i> -H <sub>2</sub>		uB3PW91		Assignment	Sym.
LIF <sup>a</sup> /cm <sup>-1</sup>	FCHT <sup>b</sup> /cm <sup>-1</sup>	Rel. int. <sup>c</sup> %	Scaled <sup>d</sup> /cm <sup>-1</sup>		
	0	100.0	0	0 <sub>0</sub> <sup>0</sup>	a'
341?	333	11.9	334	32 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
469	462	8.1	462	31 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
591	599	2.3	574	45 <sub>0</sub> <sup>0</sup>	a'
		18.5	599	29 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
711	712	4.9	711	28 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
760	767	8.7	766	27 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
847?	810	6.1	811	26 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
950	927	2.2	923	25 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
		1.9	933	29 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup> 32 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
	966	2.3	966	24 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
1063	1048	3.0	1050	23 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
1090?	1099	2.9	1098	22 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
	1142	5.7	1142	21 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
1161	1166	10.7	1167	20 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
	1342	2.5	1340	15 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
	1377	1.6	1365	27 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup> 29 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
		3.8	1378	13 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
	1459	6.8	1458	11 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
1502	1522	33.6	1522	9 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'
	1584	4.2	1585	8 <sub>0</sub> <sup>1</sup>	a'

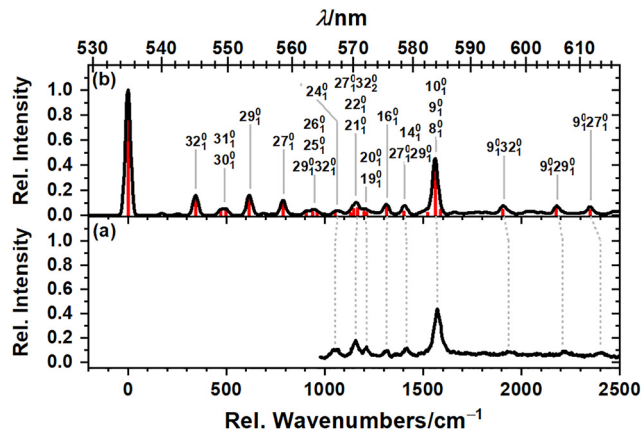
<sup>a</sup> Vibrational spacings relative to the origin band at 18 688 cm<sup>-1</sup> (535.1 nm). Tentatively assigned peaks are marked with ?. <sup>b</sup> Vibrational spacings from the convoluted simulated stick spectrum calculated with the FCHT method. <sup>c</sup> Intensities relative to the most intense peak (0<sub>0</sub><sup>0</sup> band). Only vibrational modes contributing with a relative intensity ≥ 1.5% are listed. <sup>d</sup> Harmonic vibrational wavenumbers scaled by a factor 0.978. Values given in parentheses for combination and overtone bands are the sum of the fundamentals.

satisfactorily reproduced by simulation, with the exception of the lowest-energy feature at ~335 cm<sup>-1</sup>, which is predicted but only tentatively identified in the experimentally spectrum due to its small intensity.

Vibrational assignments derived from a comparison to the simulated absorption spectrum of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N are indicated in Fig. 8b and listed in Table 6; the agreement between experiment and FCHT calculation is satisfactory, with an average absolute deviation of 13 ± 11 cm<sup>-1</sup>. This deviation is slightly larger than those of 4- and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, presumably because of the lower signal-to-noise ratio due to small fluorescence emission intensity and the likely interference due to emission from other isomers as indicated in Fig. S7 (SI).

Following the above discussion, we assign the fluorescence excitation spectrum depicted in Fig. 8a to the D<sub>1</sub> ← D<sub>0</sub> absorption of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. Similar to the fluorescence excitation spectrum of 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, the fluorescence excitation spectrum of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N is composed nearly exclusively of fundamental vibrational modes of a' symmetry.

As demonstrated in Fig. S11 (SI), except for the origin band, the fluorescence excitation spectrum of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N overlaps significantly with those of 4- and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. Due to these similarities, identifying an excitation band other than the origin band that yields an interference-free dispersed fluorescence spectrum of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N is particularly challenging. The pure dispersed fluorescence spectrum of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N



**Fig. 9** Comparison of observed and simulated dispersed fluorescence spectra of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. (a) Partial dispersed fluorescence spectrum of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> recorded upon excitation at 18 688 cm<sup>-1</sup> (535.1 nm). The bottom axis denotes the displacement from the origin band, observed at 18 688 cm<sup>-1</sup>, whereas the top axis represents the wavelength of the observed spectrum. And (b) The D<sub>1</sub> → D<sub>0</sub> emission spectrum simulated by convolution the Franck–Condon Herzberg–Teller stick spectrum (red) with a Gaussian line shape of FWHM 30 cm<sup>-1</sup>; vibrational wavenumbers were scaled by 0.978. Vibrational mode assignments are indicated.

isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub>, depicted in Fig. 9a, was acquired upon excitation at the 0<sub>0</sub><sup>0</sup> band (18 688 cm<sup>-1</sup>). Consequently, the spectrum close to the 0<sub>0</sub><sup>0</sup> band is strongly interfered by the excitation laser, and the experimental spectrum depicted in Fig. 9, therefore, only covers the energy region well below the excitation energy. Nevertheless, a comparison of the spectral structure above 1000 cm<sup>-1</sup> with the simulated D<sub>1</sub> → D<sub>0</sub> emission spectra, Fig. 2 and 9b strongly supports our assignment of the recorded spectrum to the 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N radical.

Peak positions inferred from the partial dispersed fluorescence spectrum in Fig. 9a and their assignments derived by comparison to the simulated D<sub>1</sub> → D<sub>0</sub> emission spectrum of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N are presented in Table 7, together with the IR absorption lines reported by Joshi *et al.*<sup>30</sup> The most intense feature at 1571 cm<sup>-1</sup> is assigned to the 9<sub>0</sub><sup>1</sup> transition, with partial overlap from weaker bands of 10<sub>0</sub><sup>1</sup> and 8<sub>0</sub><sup>1</sup>. Five additional features below 1500 cm<sup>-1</sup> were identified; these show satisfactory agreement with FCHT predictions. Three weak features above 1900 cm<sup>-1</sup> are tentatively assigned to combination bands involving ν<sub>9</sub> and ν<sub>27</sub>, ν<sub>29</sub>, or ν<sub>32</sub> because of their small intensities. Within the spectral range covered, simulated and experimental peak positions for fundamental vibrational modes exhibit an average absolute deviation of 6 ± 4 cm<sup>-1</sup>. When the weak combination bands are included, the average absolute deviation increases to 14 ± 15 cm<sup>-1</sup>.

Joshi *et al.*<sup>30</sup> reported five IR absorption lines below 2500 cm<sup>-1</sup> for 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub>; three a' symmetric vibrations ν<sub>42</sub>, ν<sub>41</sub>, and ν<sub>39</sub>, which are not expected to contribute to the dispersed fluorescence spectrum, and the two a' symmetric vibrations ν<sub>20</sub> and ν<sub>13</sub>, which are predicted to appear in the emission spectrum with relative intensities of 2.6 and 1.3%, respectively. The ν<sub>20</sub> band, which

**Table 7** Assignments of peaks in the dispersed fluorescence spectrum of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub>

<i>para</i> -H <sub>2</sub>		uB3PW91			Assignment Sym.
IR <sup>a</sup> / cm <sup>-1</sup>	LIP <sup>b</sup> / cm <sup>-1</sup>	FCFT <sup>c</sup> / cm <sup>-1</sup>	Rel. int. <sup>d</sup> / %	Scaled <sup>e</sup> / cm <sup>-1</sup>	
		0	100.0	0	0 <sub>0</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
		344	11.3	345	32 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
		493	3.4	471	31 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			4.2	499	30 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
		618	15.1	617	29 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
(652.3)			(<0.1)	645	42 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a''
(708.6)			(<0.1)	712	41 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a''
		786	8.4	787	27 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
(821.9)			(<0.1)	821	39 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a''
		943	3.0	906	26 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			2.4	938	25 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			2.3	(962)	29 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> 32 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
	1054	1060	2.5	1052	24 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
	1158	1158	1.6	(1132)	27 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> 32 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			4.7	1148	22 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			5.5	1167	21 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
1201.3	1211	1205	2.6	1198	20 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			1.6	1213	19 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
	1314	1314	8.2	1314	16 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
	1415	1404	2.8	1404	14 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			1.8	(1404)	27 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> 29 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
(1402.0)			(1.3)	1406	13 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
	1571	1561	1.9	1522	10 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			42.3	1561	9 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
			4.1	1587	8 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
	1934?	1905	4.2	(1906)	9 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> 32 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
	2210?	2179	5.7	(2177)	9 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> 29 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'
	2403?	2347	3.6	(2348)	9 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> 27 <sub>1</sub> <sup>0</sup> a'

<sup>a</sup> Peak positions in the IR absorption spectrum of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> reported by Joshi *et al.*<sup>30</sup> Lines in parentheses represent modes predicted by FCFT simulations with a relative intensity of <1.5%. <sup>b</sup> Vibrational spacing relative to the origin band at 18 668 cm<sup>-1</sup> (535.1 nm) in the fluorescence excitation spectrum of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. Tentatively assigned peaks are marked with ?. <sup>c</sup> Vibrational spacings from the convoluted simulated stick spectrum calculated with the FCFT method. <sup>d</sup> Intensities relative to the most intense peak (0<sub>0</sub><sup>0</sup> band). Only vibrational modes with relative intensities ≥ 1.5% are listed. The weak features corresponding to IR absorption bands reported by Joshi *et al.*<sup>30</sup> are listed in parentheses. <sup>e</sup> Harmonic vibrational wavenumbers scaled by a factor 0.978. Values given in parentheses for combination and overtone bands are the sum of the fundamentals.

overlaps with  $\nu_{19}$ , was observed in the dispersed fluorescence spectrum, whereas the  $\nu_{13}$  band was too weak to be positively identified.

For the three C–N and C–C stretching modes  $\nu_{10}$ ,  $\nu_9$ , and  $\nu_8$ , as previously discussed for 4- and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, calculations predict relative intensities of 1.9, 42.3, and 4.1%, respectively. Atomic displacement vectors associated with these vibrations and the geometry changes induced by the electronic transition between D<sub>1</sub> and D<sub>0</sub> are illustrated in Fig. S12 (SI). The electronic transition strongly affects the bond lengths of the C–N and the central C(4a)–C(8a) bond, consistent with the large Franck–Condon factor calculated for mode  $\nu_9$ . In contrast, modes  $\nu_8$  and  $\nu_{10}$  exert only minor impact on these two bonds.

Of the eight iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isomers previously identified in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> by IR spectroscopy, only the dispersed

fluorescence and fluorescence excitation spectra of the three low-energy isomers 4-, 5-, and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N were observed. The lowest-energy isomer, iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>NH, although reported as the most abundant in the study by Joshi *et al.*,<sup>30</sup> was not observed. TD-DFT calculations predict the lowest-energy electronic transition of iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>NH at 839.58 nm (11 911 cm<sup>-1</sup>, vertical excitation, Table 1), which is beyond the detection range of our iCCD. Moreover, with a predicted oscillator strength of 0.001 and a vertical emission wavelength of 2268 nm, detecting the weak fluorescence emission of iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>NH is expected to be challenging. Another low-lying isomer, 1-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N with relative energy +6 kJ mol<sup>-1</sup>, was also not observed, likely because the transition is predicted to have a low fluorescence yield ( $f = 0.001$ ). Furthermore, the D<sub>1</sub>–D<sub>0</sub> electronic transition induces a significant out-of-plane distortion of the molecule (Fig. S1, SI), resulting in a small Franck–Condon overlap between these two states and a vertical emission wavelength of 1180 nm, which is beyond our detection limit. Of the three high-energy isomers, 3-, 6-, and 7-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, Joshi *et al.*<sup>30</sup> only observed 6-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N in experiments on iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N/*para*-H<sub>2</sub> matrices deposited under electron bombardment. For this isomer, our TD-DFT calculations predict a vertical emission energy of 592.8 nm and oscillator strength of 0.005. The small oscillator strength and expected low concentration of this high energy isomer make the detection unlikely.

The positions of the vibrationless transitions inferred from the fluorescence spectra of the three experimentally observed iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isomers differ substantially from the predicted vertical excitation energies listed in Table 1. For hybrid functionals such as B3LYP and B3PW91, TD-DFT benchmark studies typically indicate mean absolute deviations of 0.3–0.5 eV in excitation energies, either between TD-DFT and experimental data or between TD-DFT and higher-level *ab initio* calculations.<sup>37,38</sup>

These benchmark studies, however, primarily concern only singlet and triplet transitions of closed-shell molecules and rarely address doublet–doublet transitions of open-shell species. As doublet states are often subject to spin-contamination and exhibit significant multi-reference character, which are in most cases not captured adequately by TD-DFT, uncertainties in excitation energies for doublet–doublet transitions are expected to be larger. The mean absolute deviation of 0.46 eV between computed vertical excitation energies and experimentally determined 0<sub>0</sub><sup>0</sup> band positions for the three iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isomers isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> therefore appears reasonable. According to our experimental results, the D<sub>1</sub>–D<sub>0</sub> energy gap increases in the order 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N < 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N < 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. TD-DFT calculations predict the highest D<sub>1</sub>–D<sub>0</sub> excitation energy for 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, in agreement with our experimental findings, but an inverted order for 4- and 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N with a minor difference of only ~1 nm from calculations.

### 3.6 Hydrogenated iso-quinolines as potential DIB carriers

The most prominent features in the fluorescence excitation spectra of 4-, 5-, and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> are located at 540.8, 535.1, and 514.7 nm, respectively; other

features are comparatively weak. Within this wavelength range, Hobbs *et al.*<sup>39</sup> reported a DIB density of  $\sim 17$  DIB per 20 nm from observations of HD 204827. Unfortunately, electronic absorption spectra of hydrogenated PAH and PANH in the gas phase have rarely been reported, and matrix shifts for electronic transitions of these open-shell species isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> are not fully understood. For 1-HC<sub>10</sub>H<sub>8</sub>, a red-shift of 86 cm<sup>-1</sup> was observed for the D<sub>1</sub>-D<sub>0</sub> transition located at 18881 cm<sup>-1</sup> in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub>,<sup>24</sup> aligning with the average matrix shift of  $70 \pm 28$  cm<sup>-1</sup> derived from available data for PAH containing up to 42 carbon atoms and their protonated and hydrogenated derivative isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub>.<sup>25</sup> Adopting this average matrix shift, we estimate positions of the D<sub>1</sub>-D<sub>0</sub> 0<sub>0</sub><sup>0</sup> bands of gaseous 4-, 5-, and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N to be 539.5–537.9 nm, 533.9–532.4 nm, and 513.6–512.1 nm, respectively. A detailed comparison of the experimental fluorescence excitation spectra with the overall DIB spectrum reported by Jenniskens and Désert<sup>40</sup> is shown in Fig. S13 (SI).

In their DIB catalogue based on observations of six stars characterised by varying degrees of reddening, Jenniskens and Désert<sup>40</sup> list four “certain” DIB in the range 510–545 nm: at 510.970, 536.214, 536.360, and 540.456 nm. The first three lie clearly outside the range of the transitions observed in this work; a matrix red shift of  $\geq 140$  cm<sup>-1</sup> would be required to map our experimental data onto these line positions, substantially larger than the average shift typically observed for PAH in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub>. The final DIB at 540.456 nm (18 503.89 cm<sup>-1</sup>) is located  $\sim 10$  cm<sup>-1</sup> higher in energy than the observed D<sub>1</sub>-D<sub>0</sub> transition of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub> at 18 492 cm<sup>-1</sup>. However, after applying the average matrix shift of  $70 \pm 28$  cm<sup>-1</sup> to our experimental transition wavelength, the corrected gas-phase transition for 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N becomes  $\sim 60$  cm<sup>-1</sup> higher in energy than the DIB band, rendering a contribution of 4-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N to the DIB spectrum unlikely. This is consistent with astrochemical models predicting that small PAH (containing less than 40 C atoms) are not stable under the conditions of the ISM. Pursuing electronic absorption spectra of larger PAH/PANH is hence desirable.

## 4. Conclusions

This study reports the previously unobserved dispersed fluorescence and fluorescence excitation spectra of three hydrogenated iso-quinoline isomers: 4-, 5-, and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. Upon deposition of a mixture of iso-C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N and *para*-H<sub>2</sub> under electron bombardment and subsequent irradiation at wavelengths  $< 540$  nm, we observed three distinct fluorescence emission progressions originating at 18 492, 18 688, and 19 430 cm<sup>-1</sup>, with characteristic emission lifetimes of  $\sim 6$ ,  $< 50$ , and  $\sim 105$  ns, respectively. These transitions were assigned to the D<sub>1</sub>  $\rightarrow$  D<sub>0</sub> transitions of 4-, 5-, and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N, based on comparison of the recorded spectra with spectra simulated by a Franck-Condon Herzberg-Teller approach. The experimental excitation spectra of these three isomers also agree satisfactorily with the corresponding

simulated absorption spectra. Dispersed fluorescence and fluorescence excitation spectra associated with the D<sub>1</sub>-D<sub>0</sub> transition of all three isomers are dominated by vibrational normal modes of a' symmetry, with the 0<sub>0</sub><sup>0</sup> band as the most intense feature. Vibrational modes inferred from the dispersed fluorescence spectra are distinctively different from those observed in the IR absorption spectra previously reported by Joshi *et al.*<sup>30</sup> Differences in relative intensities and the contribution of overtone and combination bands are discussed in relation to changes in geometries and in the vibrational potential energy surfaces between the D<sub>0</sub> and D<sub>1</sub> states. Based on the observed spectral positions and expected matrix shifts, a contribution of electronic bands of 4-, 5- and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N to the DIB appears unlikely.

## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

## Data availability

The data supporting this article have been included as part of the supplementary information (SI). Supplementary information: variation of vibronic pattern as function of the position of H-addition. Tables: Scaled harmonic vibrational wavenumbers of the D<sub>0</sub> and D<sub>1</sub> state of the eight most stable isomers of iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. Figures: Optimized geometry of the D<sub>1</sub> state of 1-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. Simulated D<sub>1</sub>  $\rightarrow$  D<sub>0</sub> emission spectrum of 1-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. Characteristic displacements induced by modes  $\nu_{29}$ ,  $\nu_{30}$ ,  $\nu_{31}$ , and  $\nu_{32}$ . Geometry changes induced by the D<sub>1</sub>-D<sub>0</sub> transition for *n*-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N ( $n = 3-8$ ). Partial dispersed fluorescence spectrum upon excitation at 497.0, 475.0, and 495.5 nm. Temporal behaviour of fluorescence emission of 4-, 8-, and 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. Relative changes of bond length and angles upon electronic transition between D<sub>0</sub> and D<sub>1</sub> for 4- and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. Normalised dispersed fluorescence and fluorescence excitation spectra of 4-, 5-, and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isolated in solid *para*-H<sub>2</sub>. Quotients of vibrational wavenumbers of the D<sub>0</sub> and D<sub>1</sub> state for 4- and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N. Comparison of observed fluorescence excitation spectra with simulated D<sub>1</sub>  $\leftarrow$  D<sub>0</sub> spectra of various iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N isomers. Changes in optimized geometries of 5-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N upon transition between D<sub>0</sub> and D<sub>1</sub> and atom displacements induced by modes  $\nu_8$ ,  $\nu_9$ , and  $\nu_{10}$ . Comparison of the fluorescence excitation spectra of 4-, 5-, and 8-iso-HC<sub>9</sub>H<sub>7</sub>N to the DIB spectrum. See DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1039/d5cp03455h>.

## Acknowledgements

This work was supported by National Science and Technology Council, Taiwan (grants NSTC113-2639-M-A49-002-ASP), Center for Emergent Functional Matter Science of National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University from The Featured Areas Research Center Program within the framework of the Higher Education Sprout Project by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in Taiwan, and the EU's Horizon Europe program MSCA

(ActBio, No. 101107213) and COST Action (CA21101 “COSY”). The National Center for High-Performance Computing (NCHC) of National Applied Research Laboratories (NARLabs) in Taiwan and the computer facilities of the Scuola Normale Superiore, Italy, provided computer time. We thank Prof. Julien Bloino for fruitful discussions and access to the Gaussian development version.

## References

- M. L. Heger, *Lick Obs. Bull.*, 1922, **10**, 141–145.
- R. Vogrinčić, J. Kos, T. Zwitter, G. Traven, K. L. Beeson, K. Čotar, U. Munari, S. Buder, S. L. Martell and G. F. Lewis, *et al.*, *Mon. Not. R. Astron. Soc.*, 2023, **521**, 3727–3748.
- H. Fan, L. M. Hobbs, J. A. Dahlstrom, D. E. Welty, D. G. York, B. Rachford, T. P. Snow, P. Sonnentrucker, N. Baskes and G. Zhao, *Astrophys. J.*, 2019, **878**, 151.
- P. Sonnentrucker, B. York, L. M. Hobbs, D. E. Welty, S. D. Friedman, J. Dahlstrom, T. P. Snow and D. G. York, *Astrophys. J., Suppl. Ser.*, 2018, **237**, 40.
- E. K. Campbell, M. Holz, D. Gerlich and J. P. Maier, *Nature*, 2015, **523**, 322–323.
- E. K. Campbell, M. Holz, J. P. Maier, D. Gerlich, G. A. H. Walker and D. Bohlender, *Astrophys. J.*, 2016, **822**, 17.
- N. L. J. Cox, *EAS Publ. Ser.*, 2011, **46**, 349–354.
- M. K. Crawford, A. G. G. M. Tielens and L. J. Allamandola, *Astrophys. J.*, 1985, **293**, L45.
- J. L. Puget, A. Leger and F. Boulanger, *Astron. Astrophys.*, 1985, **142**, L19–L22.
- L. J. Allamandola, A. G. G. M. Tielens and J. R. Barker, *Astrophys. J.*, 1985, **290**, L25–L28.
- A. G. G. M. Tielens, *Annu. Rev. Astron. Astrophys.*, 2008, **46**, 289–337.
- C. M. Canelo, A. C. S. Friaça, D. A. Sales, M. G. Pastoriza and D. Ruschel-Dutra, *Mon. Not. R. Astron. Soc.*, 2018, **475**, 3746–3763.
- D. M. Hudgins, J. C. W. Bauschlicher and L. J. Allamandola, *Astrophys. J.*, 2005, **632**, 316–332.
- A. Ricca, C. Boersma and E. Peeters, *Astrophys. J.*, 2021, **923**, 202.
- P. G. Stoks and A. W. Schwartz, *Geochim. Cosmochim. Acta*, 1982, **46**, 309–315.
- P. G. Stoks and A. W. Schwartz, *Geochim. Cosmochim. Acta*, 1981, **45**, 563–569.
- M. E. Jacox, *J. Mol. Struct.*, 1987, **157**, 43–59.
- C. Crépin and A. Tramer, *Chem. Phys.*, 2001, **272**, 227–241.
- M. Bahou, P. Das, Y.-F. Lee, Y.-J. Wu and Y.-P. Lee, *Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys.*, 2014, **16**, 2200–2210.
- M. Bahou, C.-W. Huang, Y.-L. Huang, J. Glatthaar and Y.-P. Lee, *J. Chin. Chem. Soc.*, 2010, **57**, 771–782.
- M. Tsuge, C.-Y. Tseng and Y.-P. Lee, *Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys.*, 2018, **20**, 5344–5358.
- I. Weber and Y.-P. Lee, *J. Phys. Chem. A*, 2024, **128**, 4984–4991.
- I. Weber, M. Tsuge, P. Sundararajan, M. Baba, H. Sakurai and Y.-P. Lee, *J. Phys. Chem. A*, 2022, **126**, 5283–5293.
- I. Weber, C.-W. Wang, S.-C. Huang, C.-Y. Zhu and Y.-P. Lee, *J. Phys. Chem. A*, 2022, **126**, 8423–8433.
- I. Weber, P. R. Joshi, D. T. Anderson and Y.-P. Lee, *J. Phys. Chem. Lett.*, 2024, **15**, 11361–11373.
- E. Plazas, M. C. Avila M, D. R. Muñoz and L. E. Cuca S, *Pharmacol. Res.*, 2022, **177**, 106126.
- S. P. Verevkin, S. P. Safronov, A. A. Samarov and S. V. Vostrikov, *Appl. Sci.*, 2021, **11**, 11758.
- S. P. Safronov, S. V. Vostrikov, A. A. Samarov and S. P. Verevkin, *Fuel*, 2022, **317**, 123501.
- H. Harb, S. N. Elliott, L. Ward, I. T. Foster, S. J. Klippenstein, L. A. Curtiss and R. S. Assary, *Digital Discovery*, 2023, **2**, 1813–1830.
- P. R. Joshi, M. Tsuge, C.-Y. Tseng and Y.-P. Lee, *Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys.*, 2023, **25**, 11934–11950.
- S.-C. Huang and Y.-P. Lee, *Chem. Phys. Lett.*, 2016, **665**, 53–58.
- M. J. Frisch, G. W. Trucks, H. B. Schlegel, G. E. Scuseria, M. A. Robb, J. R. Cheeseman, G. Scalmani, V. Barone, G. A. Petersson and H. Nakatsuji, *et al.*, *Gaussian 16 Rev. B.01*, Gaussian Inc., Wallingford CT, 2016.
- A. Baiardi, J. Bloino and V. Barone, *J. Chem. Theory Comput.*, 2013, **9**, 4097–4115.
- J. Bloino, A. Baiardi and M. Biczysko, *Int. J. Quantum Chem.*, 2016, **116**, 1543–1574.
- Q. Yang, M. Fusè, J. Bloino and V. Barone, *Spectrochim. Acta, Part A*, 2021, **254**, 119631.
- J. C. Dobrowolski and P. F. J. Lipiński, *RSC Adv.*, 2016, **6**, 23900–23904.
- I. Knysh, F. Lipparini, A. Blondel, I. Duchemin, X. Blase, P.-F. Loos and D. Jacquemin, *J. Chem. Theory Comput.*, 2024, **20**, 8152–8174.
- J. Liang, X. Feng, D. Hait and M. Head-Gordon, *J. Chem. Theory Comput.*, 2022, **18**, 3460–3473.
- L. M. Hobbs, D. G. York, T. P. Snow, T. Oka, J. A. Thorburn, M. Bishof, S. D. Friedman, B. J. McCall, B. Rachford and P. Sonnentrucker, *et al.*, *Astrophys. J.*, 2008, **680**, 1256–1270.
- P. Jenniskens and F.-X. Désert, *Astron. Astrophys., Suppl. Ser.*, 1994, **106**, 39–78.