

**On the Reciprocal Relationship Between Sigma-Hole Bonding and (Anti)aromaticity Gain in Ketocyclopolyenes**

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On the Reciprocal Relationship Between σ -Hole Bonding and (Anti)aromaticity Gain in Ketocyclopolynes

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σ -Hole bonding interactions (e.g., tetrel, pnictogen, chalcogen, and halogen bonding) can polarize π -electrons to enhance cyclic $[4n]$ π -electron delocalization (i.e., antiaromaticity gain) or cyclic $[4n+2]$ π -electron delocalization (i.e., aromaticity gain). Examples based on the ketocyclopolynes: cyclopentadienone, tropone, and planar cyclononatetraenone are presented. Recognizing this relationship has implications, for example, for tuning the electronic properties of fulvene-based π -conjugated systems such as 9-fluorenone.

This paper discusses the reciprocal relationship between σ -hole bonding and (anti)aromaticity in heterocycles. We recently reported that intermolecular hydrogen bonding interactions can be used to modulate aromaticity and antiaromaticity in π -conjugated ring compounds,^{1,2} and now show, in light of the recognized similarity between hydrogen bonding and σ -hole bonding,³ that interactions such as tetrel,⁴⁻⁷ pnictogen,^{8,9} chalcogen,¹⁰⁻¹³ and halogen¹⁴⁻¹⁷ bonding interactions also can perturb the (anti)aromatic characters of π -conjugated ring compounds such as cyclopentadienone, tropone, and planar cyclononatetraenone in the same way.

σ -Hole interactions like tetrel, pnictogen, chalcogen, and halogen bonding (Y...X-R) are highly directional noncovalent interactions that form between a negative site (Y, e.g., a Lewis base or anion) and the electron-deficient region of a covalently-bonded Group 14-17 atom (X).¹⁸⁻²¹ The R group generally includes one or more electron-withdrawing groups, and a σ -hole forms due to an uneven distribution of atomic charge on X. σ -Hole interactions are predominantly electrostatic,^{22,23} although the relevance of polarization, dispersion, and charge transfer effects have been recognized.²⁴⁻²⁸ Strong tetrel, pnictogen, chalcogen, and halogen bonding interactions were found to display donor-acceptor orbital interactions.²⁹ Heavier and more polarizable atoms can exhibit pronounced σ -holes and form very strong σ -hole interactions.

Even though tetrel, pnictogen, chalcogen, and halogen bonding arise as a result of a polarized σ -bond, these bonding interactions can indirectly polarize the π -system of an interacting Lewis base. For example, σ -hole bonding between the oxygen lone pair of a C=O Lewis base and an X-R group increases negative charge on the oxygen atom and enhances the resonance contribution of a polarized π -bond (i.e., C⁺-O⁻), as shown by previous examples of C=O activation via σ -hole bonding.^{30,31} In this paper, we relate the strengths of σ -hole interactions of C=O groups to the effects of (anti)aromaticity gain in ketocyclopolylene compounds, using the formally $[4n]$ antiaromatic cyclopentadienone (four ring π -electrons), $[4n+2]$ aromatic tropone (six ring π -electrons), and $[4n]$ antiaromatic planar cyclononatetraenone (eight ring π -electrons)³²⁻³⁴ as models for the interacting Lewis base.

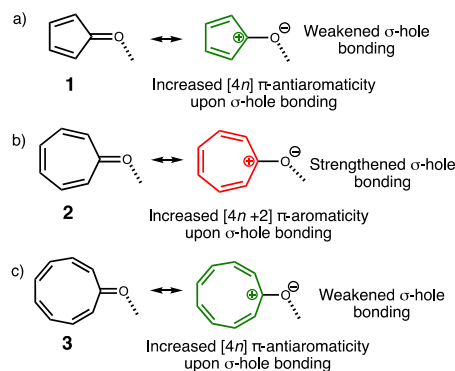


Figure 1. Illustration of (anti)aromaticity gain on the strengths of σ -hole bonding.

In cyclopentadienone, **1**, C⁺-O⁻ polarization from σ -hole bonding enhances antiaromatic character of the five membered ring (i.e., increased cyclic $[4n]$ π -electron delocalization),³⁵ and the corresponding σ -hole bonding interaction is weakened (see Figure 1a, resonance structure in green, resembling a cyclopentadienyl cation). In tropone, **2**, C⁺-O⁻ polarization from σ -hole bonding enhances aromatic character in the seven membered ring (i.e., increased cyclic $[4n+2]$ π -electron delocalization),^{33,36-38} and the corresponding σ -hole interaction is strengthened (see Figure 1b, resonance structure in red, resembling a tropylium cation). In planar cyclononatetraenone, **3**, C⁺-O⁻ polarization from σ -hole

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bonding enhances antiaromatic character in the nine membered ring (i.e., increased cyclic $[4n]$ π -electron delocalization),³³ and just as in **1**, the corresponding σ -hole interaction is weakened (see Figure 1c, resonance structure in green). Figure 1 illustrates the reciprocal relationships between σ -hole bonding and (anti)aromaticity gain in **1**, **2** and **3**.

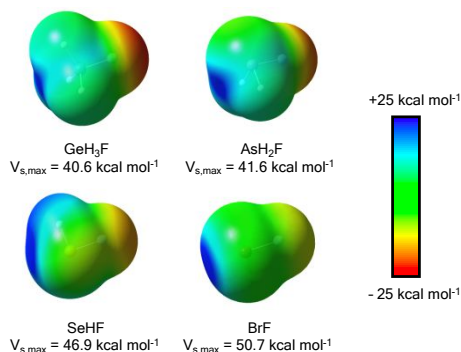


Figure 2. Computed electrostatic potential maps for GeH_3F , AsH_2F , SeHF , and BrF based on a 0.001 au contour surface. Blue color indicates positive potential, red color indicates negative potential. $V_{s,\text{max}}$ shows the most positive electrostatic potential corresponding to the σ -hole.

We evaluated a series of tetrel, pnictogen, chalcogen, and halogen bonded complexes, in which $\text{Y} = \mathbf{1-3}$, and $\text{X-R} = \text{GeH}_3\text{F}$ (**a**), AsH_2F (**b**), SeHF (**c**), and BrF (**d**). Geometry optimization for all monomers, **1-3**, and complexes, **1(a-d)**, **2(a-d)**, and **3(a-d)** were performed at $\omega\text{B97XD/def2-TZVP}$ employing Gaussian16.³⁹ The choice of functional was selected based on benchmark studies of the XB18 and XB51 set using different DFT functionals.⁴⁰ Vibrational frequency analysis verified the nature of the stationary points. Cyclononatetraenone, **3**, has a non-planar minimum, but the symmetry constrained C_s form is used here to model a formally eight π -electron antiaromatic ring. Planar cyclononatetraenone, **3**, and complexes **3(a-d)** have imaginary frequencies corresponding to distortion of the nine membered ring from planarity (see details in the Supporting Information). Single point σ -hole interaction energies (ΔE_{int}) for the complexes, **1(a-d)**, **2(a-d)**, and **3(a-d)**, were carried out at MP2/def2-TZVP.

Electrostatic potentials $V(\mathbf{r})$, calculated with a $\rho(\mathbf{r}) = 0.001$ au (electrons bohr^{-3})⁴¹ contour at $\omega\text{B97XD/def2-TZVP}$, identified the locations of the most positive electrostatic potentials ($V_{s,\text{max}}$) corresponding to the σ -holes of the X atoms of X-R : GeH_3F ($V_{s,\text{max}} = +40.6$ kcal/mol), AsH_2F (+41.6 kcal/mol), SeHF (+46.9 kcal/mol), and BrF (+50.7 kcal/mol), following the order: halogen > chalcogen > pnictogen > tetrel (see Figure 2, region colored in blue).

Table 1. Computed σ -hole interaction energies, ΔE_{int} (kcal/mol), for **1(a-d)**, **2(a-d)** and **3(a-d)**, at MP2/def2-TZVP// $\omega\text{B97XD/def2-TZVP}$.

	ΔE_{int}	ΔE_{int}	ΔE_{int}
1a	-5.3	2a	-7.4
1b	-5.9	2b	-8.1
1c	-8.1	2c	-11.3
1d	-9.2	2d	-13.0
		3a	-5.5
		3b	-6.1
		3c	-8.5
		3d	-9.4

Computed interaction energies (ΔE_{int}) for halogen, chalcogen, pnictogen, and tetrel bonding interactions in **1(a-d)**, **2(a-d)**, and **3(a-d)** (see Table 1) follow the same order: halogen (σ -hole bonding to BrF) > chalcogen (σ -hole bonding to SeHF) > pnictogen (σ -hole bonding to AsH_2F) > tetrel (σ -hole bonding to GeH_3F) interactions, correlating to the magnitude of the positive electrostatic potentials of the σ -holes. Accordingly, computed natural population analysis (NPA) charge based on natural bond orbital (NBO) computations⁴² at the $\omega\text{B97XD/def2-TZVP}$ level for the oxygen atoms of **1** (-0.563), **2** (-0.645), and **3** (-0.450) become increasingly negative upon σ -hole bonding: **1a** (-0.600), **1b** (-0.603), **1c** (-0.612), and **1d** (-0.611) (see Figure 1a), **2a** (-0.693), **2b** (-0.696), **2c** (-0.705), and **2d** (-0.702) (see Figure 1b), **3a** (-0.477), **3b** (-0.478), **3c** (-0.482), and **3d** (-0.459) (see Figure 1c).

Direct comparisons of the ΔE_{int} values of **1(a-d)**, **2(a-d)**, and **3(a-d)** show a consistently lower σ -hole bonding interaction energy for the cyclopentadienone and cyclononatetraenone complexes, **1(a-d)** and **3(a-d)**, compared to the tropone complexes, **2(a-d)** (see Table 1). This can be explained by the effects of antiaromaticity gain in the five and nine membered ring, in **1(a-d)** and **3(a-d)**, (i.e., increased cyclic $[4n]$ π -electron delocalization) in contrast to aromaticity gain in the seven membered ring in **2(a-d)** (i.e., increased cyclic $[4n+2]$ π -electron delocalization) (see Figure 1). In concert, the $\text{C=O}\dots\text{X-R}$ distances for **1(a-d)** and **3(a-d)** are shorter compared to those of **2(a-d)** (see Figure 3).

Table 2. Computed $\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}}$ (in ppm) values for **1(a-d)**, **2(a-d)** and **3(a-d)**. Computed $\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}}$ values are derived by comparing the computed $\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}}$ values for **1(a-d)**, **2(a-d)** and **3(a-d)**, to that of **1** ($\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = +19.4$ ppm), **2** ($\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = -6.7$ ppm), and **3** ($\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = +22.7$ ppm), respectively. Positive $\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}}$ values indicate antiaromaticity gain, negative $\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}}$ values indicate aromaticity gain.

	$\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}}$	$\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}}$	$\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}}$
1a	+3.3	2a	-3.2
1b	+3.8	2b	-3.7
1c	+4.4	2c	-4.4
1d	+5.9	2d	-5.4
		3a	+4.0
		3b	+4.6
		3c	+5.8
		3d	+8.0

Computed dissected $\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}}$ values^{43,44} indicate that the four π -electron antiaromatic **1** ($\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = +19.4$ ppm) becomes more antiaromatic upon tetrel ($\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = +3.3$ ppm, **1a**), pnictogen ($\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = +3.8$ ppm, **1b**), chalcogen ($\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = +4.4$ ppm, **1c**), and halogen ($\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = +5.9$ ppm, **1d**) bonding (see Table 2). In contrast, the formally six π -aromatic **2** ($\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = -6.7$ ppm) becomes more aromatic upon tetrel ($\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = -3.2$ ppm, **2a**), pnictogen ($\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = -3.7$ ppm, **2b**), chalcogen ($\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = -4.4$ ppm, **2c**), and halogen ($\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = -5.4$ ppm, **2d**) bonding (see Table 2). Like **1(a-d)**, the planar eight π -electron antiaromatic **3** ($\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = +22.7$ ppm) becomes more antiaromatic upon tetrel ($\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = +4.0$ ppm, **3a**), pnictogen ($\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = +4.6$ ppm, **3b**), chalcogen ($\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = +5.8$ ppm, **3c**), and halogen ($\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}} = +8.0$ ppm, **3d**) bonding (see Table 2). Negative $\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}}$ values indicate aromaticity gain upon σ -hole bonding. Positive $\Delta\text{NICS}(0)_{\text{rzz}}$ values indicate antiaromaticity gain upon σ -hole bonding. The tub-shaped cyclononatetraenone minimum shows little to no change in ring bond length upon σ -hole bonding (see geometries and discussion in the SI).

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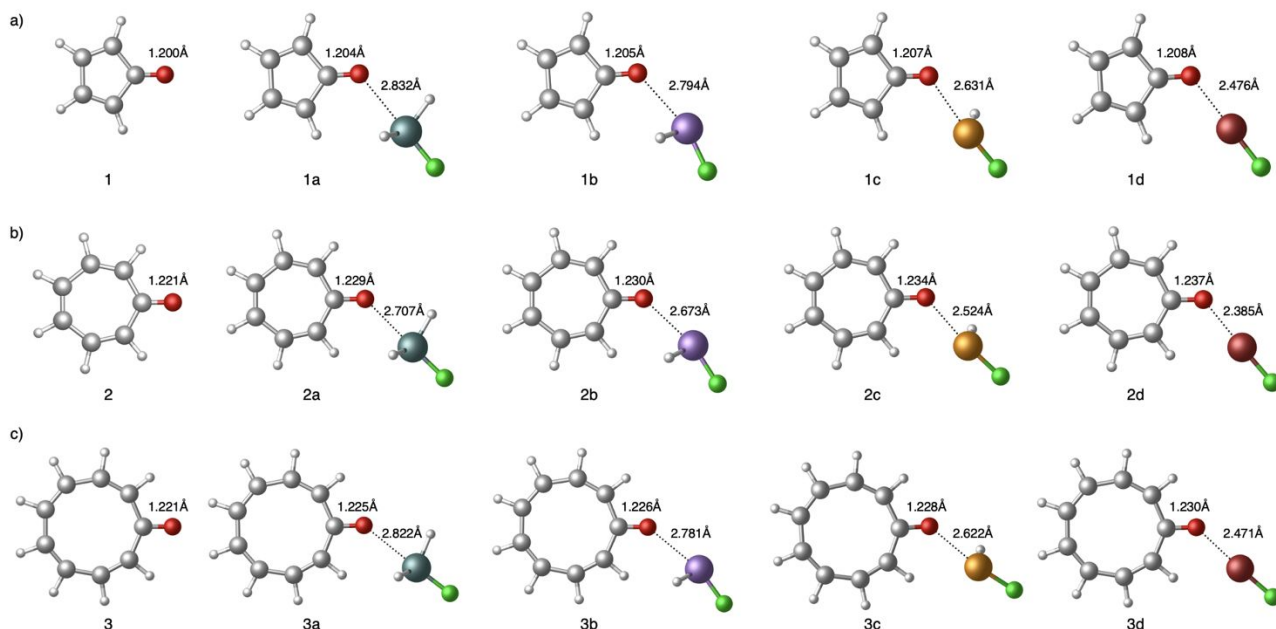


Figure 3. Optimized geometries for **1(a-d)**, **2(a-d)**, and **3(a-d)** at ω B97XD/def2-TZVP. Note more pronounced C=O bond lengthening in tropone, **2**, upon σ -hole bonding.

Dissected NICS(0)_{zz}^{43,44} analyses were computed at PW91/def2-TZVP. NICS(0)_{zz} computations were performed by placing NICS points at the ring centers of **1-3** and extracting contributions only from the shielding tensor component perpendicular to the ring plane (zz) of all of the localized π -molecular orbitals (two C=C and one C=O π -bonds in **1**, three C=C and one C=O π -bonds in **2**, four C=C and one C=O π -bonds in **3**). Δ NICS(0)_{zz} values were calculated by computed ring NICS(0)_{zz} values in the five, seven, and nine membered rings of the **1(a-d)**, **2(a-d)**, and **3(a-d)** complexes, minus the computed ring NICS(0)_{zz} values of the **1**, **2**, and **3** monomers.

π -Conjugated systems containing cyclopentadienone cores are useful organic electronics components, and the ability to modify their antiaromatic characters through σ -hole bonding interactions may have practical implications for their electronic properties.

9-Fluorenone, for example, contains a cyclopentadienone core fused to two benzenoid rings, and is extensively used as a precursor to synthesize a variety of organic electronics materials (see Figure 4). Computed NICS(0)_{zz} values at the ring centers of the six (6MR) and five (5MR) membered rings of fluorenone (6MR: -23.1 ppm, -23.1 ppm, 5MR: +22.8 ppm) display increasing paratropicity as the C=O group engages in tetrel (6MR: -22.0 ppm, -22.7 ppm, 5MR: +24.3 ppm), pnictogen (6MR: -22.0 ppm, -22.6 ppm, 5MR: +24.3 ppm), chalcogen (6MR: -21.7 ppm, -22.1 ppm, 5MR: +24.9 ppm), and halogen (6MR: -20.7 ppm, -21.9 ppm, 5MR: +26.3 ppm) bonding. Following increased antiaromatic character in 9-fluorenone upon σ -hole

bonding, the computed HOMO-LUMO gap for 9-fluorenone (3.61 eV) decreases when the exocyclic C=O bond forms tetrel (3.47 eV), pnictogen (3.46 eV), chalcogen (3.41 eV), and halogen (3.36 eV) bonding. Accordingly, the LUMO energy level for 9-fluorenone (-4.82 eV) lowers upon tetrel (-5.21 eV), pnictogen (-5.21 eV), chalcogen (-5.28 eV), and halogen (-5.39 eV) bonding. When two BrF groups form halogen bonding interactions to the carbonyl site of 9-fluorenone, the π -conjugated core shows even more pronounced paratropicity (6MR: -19.9 ppm, -19.9 ppm, 5MR: +28.2 ppm), the HOMO-LUMO gaps become narrower (3.21 eV), and the LUMO energy levels lower even more (-5.71 eV).

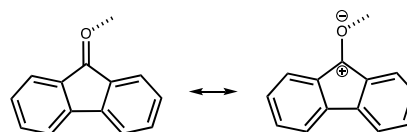


Figure 4. Effects of σ -hole bonding on the resonance form of fluorenone.

σ -Hole bonding interactions are finding an increasing number of applications in many areas of organic chemistry, e.g., protein-ligand interactions, foldamer design, anion-sensing, and crystal engineering. Here, we highlight the effects of σ -hole bonding interactions on tuning (anti)aromaticity in ketocyclopolyenes, and their immediate consequence for tuning the electronic properties of fulvene-containing π -conjugated systems. Remarkably, σ -hole interactions are useful, not only for organizing the assembly of organic electronic components,⁴⁵ but also for tuning the electronic properties of

extended π -conjugated systems, especially for those with formal [4n] antiaromatic character. We note also recent works discussing a relationship between the aromatic ring current of metalloporphyrins and the effects on halogen bonding interactions.⁴⁶

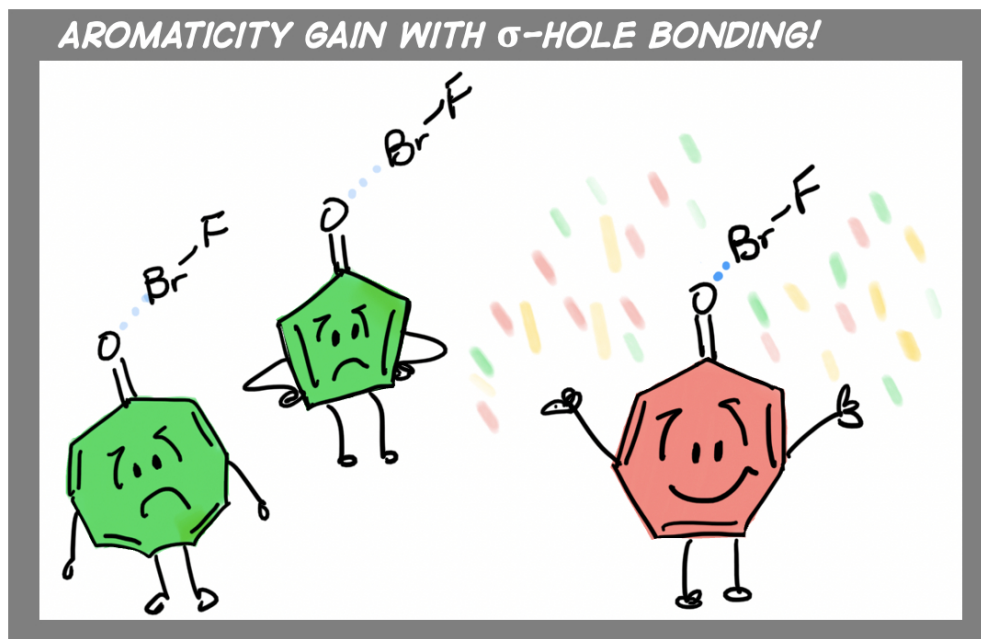
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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

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