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Journal of Macromolecular Science, Part A

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713597274>

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Online publication date: 30 August 2010

To cite this Article Kharas, Gregory B. , Hanawa, Emi , Hill, Benjamin L. , Flynn, Katherine T. , Bajaj, Nikesh H. , Bittar, Yousef , Dow, Mathew R. , Moloney, Sean , Nguyen, Thuy A. , Pitts, Stuart A. , Serret, Christina A. , Valadez, Janeth , Vallejo, Ana C. , Atlas, Salima and Raihane, Mustapha(2010) 'Novel Copolymers of 4-Fluorostyrene. 2. Alkoxy Ring-Substituted 2-Phenyl-1,1-dicyanoethylenes', *Journal of Macromolecular Science, Part A*, 47: 10, 973 – 976

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/10601325.2010.506107

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10601325.2010.506107>

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Novel Copolymers of 4-Fluorostyrene. 2. Alkoxy Ring-Substituted 2-Phenyl-1,1-dicyanoethylenes

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Received, Accepted May 2010

Novel copolymers of trisubstituted ethylene monomers, alkoxy ring-substituted 2-phenyl-1,1-dicyanoethylenes, $\text{RC}_6\text{H}_4\text{CH}=\text{C}(\text{CN})_2$ (where R is 2-methoxy, 3-methoxy, 4-methoxy, 2-ethoxy, 3-ethoxy, 4-ethoxy, 4-propoxy, 4-butoxy, 4-hexyloxy) and 4-fluorostyrene were prepared at equimolar monomer feed composition by solution copolymerization in the presence of a radical initiator (ABCN) at 70°C. The composition of the copolymers was calculated from nitrogen analysis, and the structures were analyzed by IR, ¹H and ¹³C-NMR. The order of relative reactivity ($1/r_1$) for the monomers is 2-methoxy (1.5) > 4-ethoxy (1.0) > 4-methoxy (0.8) > 3-ethoxy (0.7) = 3-methoxy (0.7) > 4-hexyloxy (0.6) = 2-ethoxy (0.6) > 4-butoxy (0.5) = 4-propoxy (0.5). High T_g of the copolymers, in comparison with that of poly(4-fluorostyrene) indicates a substantial decrease in chain mobility of the copolymer due to the high dipolar character of the trisubstituted ethylene monomer unit. Decomposition of the copolymers in nitrogen occurred in two steps, first in 284–500°C range with residue (5–9% wt), which then decomposed in the 500–800°C range.

Keywords: Trisubstituted ethylenes, radical copolymerization, 4-fluorostyrene copolymers

1 Introduction

Trisubstituted ethylenes (TSE, $\text{CHR}^1 = \text{CR}^2\text{R}^3$) continue to attract attention of polymer chemists as reactive comonomers and models for mechanistic studies. It was shown that electrophilic tri- and tetrasubstituted olefins are particularly useful in delineating the transition from radical chemistry to ionic chemistry (1). Previous studies showed that TSE containing substituents larger than fluorine have very low reactivity in radical homopolymerization due to polar and steric reasons. Although steric difficulties preclude homopolymerization of most tri- and tetrasubstituted olefins, their copolymerization with a monosubstituted alkene makes it possible to overcome these steric problems (2).

Copolymerization of TSE having double bonds substituted with halo, cyano, and carbonyl groups and electron-rich monosubstituted ethylenes such as styrene, *N*-vinylcarbazole, and vinyl acetate (3–5) show a tendency toward the formation of alternating copolymers.

Ring-unsubstituted 2-phenyl-1,1-dicyanoethylene was copolymerized with styrene (6), vinyl ethers (7), methyl methacrylate (8), and *N*-vinyl-2-pyrrolidone (9). In relation to applications, piezoelectric activity was observed in a copolymer of 1,1-dicyanoethylene (vinylidene cyanide) and vinyl acetate (10). Dielectric properties and α -relaxation phenomena of two copolymers of vinylidene methyl cyanide with 4-fluorostyrene and 4-chlorostyrene have been studied (11). The values of dielectric increment $\Delta\epsilon$ have been calculated and compared to those of similar copolymers synthesized from vinylidene cyanide with various substituted styrenes. The low values of the increment were related to the steric effect of the bulky aromatic rings.

Recently, we have described synthesis and characterization of copolymers of 2-phenyl-1,1-dicyanoethylene with 4-fluoro- and pentafluorostyrene (12). In continuation of our studies of the monomer structure-reactivity correlation in the radical copolymerization of electrophilic trisubstituted ethylene monomers, we have prepared copolymers of 4-fluorostyrene (4FST) with alkoxy ring-substituted 2-phenyl-1,1-dicyanoethylenes, $\text{RC}_6\text{H}_4\text{CH}=\text{C}(\text{CN})_2$ (where R is 2-methoxy, 3-methoxy, 4-methoxy, 2-ethoxy, 3-ethoxy, 4-ethoxy, 4-propoxy, 4-butoxy, 4-hexyloxy).

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2 Experimental

2.1 General Procedures

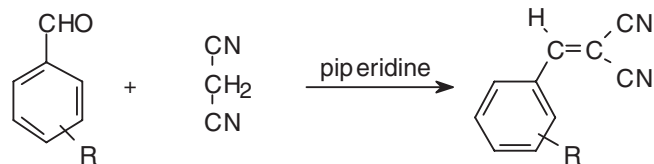
Infrared spectra of the TSE monomers and polymers (KBr plates) were determined with a Nicolet Avatar 360 FT-IR spectrometer. The melting points of the monomers, the glass transition temperatures (T_g) of the copolymers were measured with a TA (Thermal Analysis, Inc.) Model Q10 differential scanning calorimeter (DSC). The thermal scans were performed in the 25 to 200°C range at a heating rate of 10°C/min. T_g was taken as a midpoint of a straight line between the inflection of the peak's onset and endpoint. The thermal stability of the copolymers was measured by a thermogravimetric analyzer TA Model Q50 from ambient temperature to 800°C at 20°C/min. The molecular weights of the polymers were determined relative to polystyrene standards in THF solutions with sample concentrations 0.8% (wt/vol) by gel permeation chromatography (GPC) using a Altech 426 pump at an elution rate of 1.0 mL/min, TSK-GEL G4000HHR column at 25°C, and Viscotek UV 2501 detector. ^1H - and ^{13}C -NMR spectra were obtained on 10–25% (w/v) monomer or polymer solutions in CDCl_3 at ambient temperature using a Bruker Avance 300 MHz spectrometer. Elemental analyses were performed by Quantitative Technologies Inc. (NJ).

2.2 Synthesis of Monomers

2-Methoxy, 3-methoxy, 4-methoxy, 2-ethoxy, 3-ethoxy, 4-ethoxy, 4-propoxy, 4-butoxy, 4-hexyloxybenzaldehyde, malononitrile, and piperidine supplied from Aldrich Chemical Co., were used for monomer synthesis as received. The preparation procedure was essentially the same for all the monomers. In a typical synthesis, equimolar amounts of malononitrile and an appropriate ring-substituted benzaldehyde were mixed with a small amount of DMF in an Erlenmeyer flask. A few drops of piperidine were added with stirring. The crystalline product of the reaction was isolated by filtration and purified by crystallization from 2-propanol. The details of the synthesis and characterization of the alkoxy ring-substituted 2-phenyl-1,1-dicyanoethylenes were reported previously (13).

2.3 Copolymerization

4-Fluorostyrene (4FST) and toluene (Aldrich) were used as received. 1,1'-Azobis(cyclohexanecarbonitrile) (ABCN) (Aldrich) was recrystallized twice from ethyl alcohol and then dried under reduced pressure at room temperature. Copolymers of the 4FST and the TSE monomers were prepared in 25-ml glass screw cap vials at 4FST/TSE = 1/1 (mol) the monomer feed using 0.12 mol/l of ABCN at an overall monomer concentration 2.44 mol/L in 10 ml of toluene. The copolymerization was conducted at 70°C. After a predetermined time, the mixture was cooled



Sch. 1. Monomer synthesis (where R is 2-methoxy, 3-methoxy, 4-methoxy, 2-ethoxy, 3-ethoxy, 4-ethoxy, 4-propoxy, 4-butoxy, 4-hexyloxy).

to room temperature, and precipitated dropwise in a methanol/petroleum ether mixture. The composition of the copolymers was determined based on the nitrogen content.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Monomer Synthesis

The TSE monomers were synthesized by Knoevenagel condensation (14) of a ring-substituted benzaldehyde with an active hydrogen compound, malononitrile, catalyzed by a base, piperidine (Sch. 1). The condensation reaction proceeded smoothly, yielding crystalline products, which were purified by conventional techniques.

3.2 Homopolymerization

An attempted homopolymerization of the TSE monomers in the presence of ABCN did not produce any polymer as indicated by the lack of a precipitate in methanol. Inability of the monomers to polymerize is associated with steric difficulties encountered in homopolymerization of 1,1- and 1,2-disubstituted ethylenes. Homopolymerization of 4FST under conditions identical to those in the copolymerization experiments yielded 12.9% of poly(4-fluorostyrene), when polymerized for 30 min (12).

3.3 Copolymerization

Copolymerization (Sch. 2) of 4FST and the alkoxy ring-substituted 1,1-dicyanoethylenes resulted in formation of copolymers (Table 1) with weight-average molecular masses 10.6 to 34.8 kD. According to elemental analysis, between 24.7 and 37.2 mol% of TSE monomer is present in the copolymers, which is indicative of high reactivity of the monomers in cross-propagation reactions.

In an attempt to qualitatively correlate the observed monomer reactivities, we considered copolymer composition data obtained at equimolar monomer feed. The relative reactivity of 4FST in copolymerization with these monomers can be estimated by assuming applicability of the copolymer composition equation (Eq. 1) of the terminal

Table 1. Copolymerization of 4-fluorostyrene (M_1) and Alkoxy Ring-substituted 1,1-dicyanoethylenes, $RC_6H_4CH=C(CN)_2$ (M_2)

<i>R</i>	Yield ^a , wt%	<i>N</i> wt%	<i>m</i> ₂ in pol., mol%	<i>M</i> _w , kD	<i>T</i> _g ^b , °C	TGA			
						Onset of decomp., °C	10% wt. loss, °C	50% wt. loss, °C	Residue at 500°C, wt%
2-methoxy	5.3	7.79	37.2	14.0	166	270	302	339	7
3-methoxy	25.2	6.30	28.6	14.1	174	287	310	345	6
4-methoxy	28.5	6.61	30.3	16.5	171	285	310	344	6
2-ethoxy	9.4	5.86	27.1	13.9	177	284	312	351	5
3-ethoxy	8.6	6.15	28.8	10.6	172	293	309	347	6
4-ethoxy	3.9	6.96	33.8	34.8	144	279	307	349	5
4-propoxy	7.0	5.29	24.7	22.5	126	297	309	347	9
4-butoxy	21.0	5.37	26.1	22.2	142	289	320	353	5
4-hexyloxy	6.7	5.27	27.3	14.9	117	290	315	354	6

^aPolymerization time was 24 h.

^b*T*_g transition was observed by DSC.

copolymerization model (2).

$$m_1/m_2 = [M_1](r_1[M_1] + [M_2])/[M_2]([M_1] + r_2[M_2]) \quad (1)$$

*m*₁ and *m*₂ are the mole fractions of 4FST and TSE monomer units in the copolymer, respectively; [*M*₁] and [*M*₂] are the concentrations of 4FST and TSE in the monomer feed, respectively. In the absence of the self-propagation of TSE monomers (*k*₂₂ = 0, *r*₂ = 0) and at equimolar monomer feed ([*M*₁]/[*M*₂] = 1), Equation 1 yields:

$$r_1 = m_1/m_2 - 1 \quad (2)$$

or the equation for the relative reactivity of 4-fluorostyrene radical *k*₁₂/*k*₁₁ with TSE monomers:

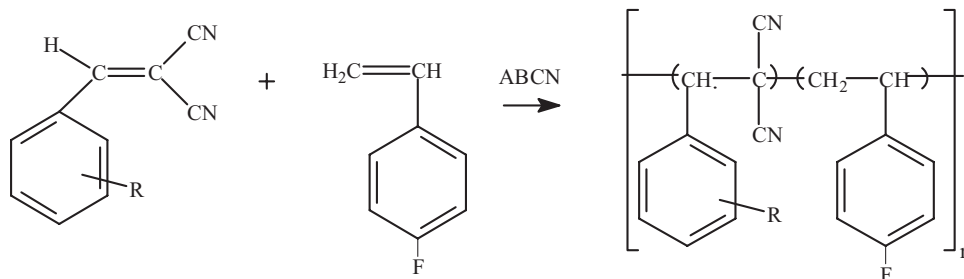
$$1/r_1 = 1/(m_1/m_2) - 1 \quad (3)$$

Consideration of monomer reactivities according to Equation 3 also involves the assumption of minimal copolymer compositional drift at equimolar monomer feed and given conversion. This non-rigorous kinetic treatment nevertheless allows estimation of the reactivity of a 4FST-ended polymer radical in reaction with electrophilic monomer. Thus the order of relative reactivity (1/*r*₁) and the tendency toward alternation of monomer units in the

copolymer for the TSE monomers is 2-methoxy (1.5) > 4-ethoxy (1.0) > 4-methoxy (0.8) > 3-ethoxy (0.7) = 3-methoxy (0.7) > 4-hexyloxy (0.6) = 2-ethoxy (0.6) > 4-butoxy (0.5) = 4-propoxy (0.5). More detailed information on the copolymer composition at different monomer feed ratios would be necessary for the application of copolymerization models that would allow prediction of copolymer composition.

3.4 Structure and Spectral Properties

A comparison of the spectra of the monomers, copolymers and poly(4-fluorostyrene) shows, that the reaction between the TSE monomers and 4FST is a copolymerization. The structure of TSE-4FST copolymers was characterized by IR and NMR spectroscopy. IR spectra of the copolymers show overlapping bands in the 3800–2800 cm⁻¹ region corresponding to C-H stretching vibrations. The spectra of the copolymers show weak cyano group absorption of the TSE monomer unit at 2230–2248 cm⁻¹ (2222–2230 cm⁻¹ in the monomer). Benzene rings of both monomer and copolymer show aromatic carbon stretching bands at approximately 1610–1600 cm⁻¹ and 1490–1510 cm⁻¹, as well as Ar-H and C-H bending movements at around 840 cm⁻¹



Sch. 2. Copolymer synthesis (where R is 2-methoxy, 3-methoxy, 4-methoxy, 2-ethoxy, 3-ethoxy, 4-ethoxy, 4-propoxy, 4-butoxy, 4-hexyloxy).

and, 610 cm^{-1} , respectively. These bands were found also in copolymers of 2-phenyl-1,1-dicyanoethylene with vinyl acetate (5) and *N*-vinyl-2-pyrrolidone (9).

^1H -NMR spectra of the 4FST-TSE copolymers show a broad double peak in a 6.0–8.0 ppm region corresponding to phenyl ring protons. The resonance at 3.2–3.8 ppm is assigned to 4FST backbone protons in the close proximity of in 4FST-TSE dyad or in 4FST centered TSE-4FST-TSE triads. The low and high field components of the 2.2–3.2 ppm peak is assigned to the overlapping resonances of the methine protons of the TSE monomer unit in head-to-tail and head-to-head structures (15). Alkoxy protons absorbances are overlapping with backbone resonances. They have the same chemical shifts as those of the TSE monomers (13). Backbone 4FST protons removed further from cyano groups give rise to the absorption in 1.8–2.3 ppm with a maximum at 2.2 ppm. The strong absorption in the 0.7–2.1 ppm range corresponds to 4FST backbone protons in 4FST-4FST dyads. The ^{13}C -NMR spectra also support the suggested skeletal structure of the copolymers. Thus, the assignment of the peaks as follows: 137–147 ppm (quarternary carbons of both phenyls), 120–145 ppm (phenyl carbons), 110–120 ppm (CN), and 55–65 ppm (methine carbons of TSE and 4FST, and 4FST methylene). The broad carbon resonances are due to presence of both head-to-tail and head-to-head dyads as discussed in more detailed assignment of ^1H and ^{13}C -NMR spectra of 2-phenyl-1,1-dicyanoethylene-4FST copolymers (15). The IR and NMR data showed that these are true copolymers, composed of 4FST and TSE monomer units.

The copolymers prepared in the present work are all soluble in methyl ethyl ketone, acetone, benzene, THF, DMF and CHCl_3 and insoluble cyclohexane, and in ethyl and petroleum ether. They are amorphous and show no crystalline DSC endotherm. Relatively high T_g of the copolymers (Table 1) in comparison with that of poly(4-fluorostyrene) ($T_g = 108^\circ\text{C}$) (12) indicates a decrease of chain mobility of the copolymer due to the high dipolar character of the TSE structural units.

Information on the degradation of the copolymers was obtained from thermogravimetric analysis. The TGA in nitrogen and air produce similar traces. Decomposition of the copolymers in nitrogen occurred in two steps, first in 284–500 $^\circ\text{C}$ range with residue (5–9% wt.), which then decomposed in the 500–800 $^\circ\text{C}$ range. The decomposition products were not analyzed in this study, and the mechanism has yet to be investigated.

4 Conclusions

Trisubstituted ethylenes, alkoxy ring-substituted 2-phenyl-1,1-dicyanoethylene were prepared via a base catalyzed condensation of appropriate substituted benzaldehyde and

malononitrile. The copolymerization of the monomers with 4-fluorostyrene results in copolymers. The composition of the copolymers was calculated from nitrogen analysis and the structure was analyzed by IR, ^1H and ^{13}C -NMR. Relatively high T_g of the copolymers (Table 1) in comparison with that of poly(4-fluorostyrene) ($T_g = 108^\circ\text{C}$) indicates decrease of chain mobility of the copolymer due to the high dipolar character of the TSE structural units. Decomposition of the copolymers in nitrogen occurred in two steps, first in the 284–500 $^\circ\text{C}$ range with residue (5–9% wt), which then decomposed in the 500–800 $^\circ\text{C}$ range.

Acknowledgments

We thank the National Science Foundation Polymer Program (DMR-0710520) for support. We are grateful to acknowledge that the project is partly supported by the Coatings Industry Education Foundation, Chicago Society of Coating Technology and Office of Sponsored Programs and Research of DePaul University. We are grateful that the project is supported by the CNRST of Morocco for the framework of cooperation Morocco-USA in the field of Materials (n $^\circ$ 87/2007: Materials World Network).

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