Distinct twist-bend nematic phase behaviors associated with the ester-linkage direction of thioether-linked liquid crystal dimers

We demonstrated the distinct helical twist-bend nematic phase behaviors associated with the ester-bond direction in two homologous series of sulfur-linked cyanobiphenyl liquid-crystal (LC) dimers (CBCOOnSCB and CBOCOOnSCB) with different molecular bend angles. We developed both homologous series and found that the helical pitches for CBOCOOnSCB were approximately double than those of CBCOOnSCB using tender resonant X-ray scattering at the sulfur K-edge. The pitches of CBOCOOnSCB and CBCOOnSCB were longer and shorter than those of the usual LC dimers, respectively. The molecular bend (or biaxiality) of LC dimers strongly impacts the helical pitch.
Distinct twist-bend nematic phase behaviors associated with the ester-linkage direction of thioether-linked liquid crystal dimers†

Yuki Arakawa,‡a Kenta Komatsu,ᵃ Jun Feng,ᵇ Chenhui Zhu,ᵇ and Hideto Tsujiᵇ,a

The twist-bend nematic phase (NTB) is a new spontaneous symmetry-breaking phenomenon observed in fluidic liquid crystal (LC) phases, which possesses a heliconical structure with a pitch ranging from several to tens of nanometers. Herein we demonstrate the distinct nano-to-macroscopic NTB phase behaviors associated with the ester-linkage direction in two homologous series of sulfur-containing cyanobiphenyl-based LC dimers, viz. CBCCOnSCB and CBCCOnSCB (n = 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10). Both the series (excluding n = 2) formed NTB phases in which the homologues (n = 4 and 6) exhibited the NTB phases across a broad temperature range, which were observed to be stable even at room temperature and eventually formed NTB glasses. We found that both homologues (n = 4 and 6) displayed distinct phase-transition properties and optical textures with respect to the NTB phases. By performing tender resonant X-ray scattering measurements at the sulfur K-edge, we discovered their distinctly different nanoscopic helical pitch lengths. Within a similar shifted temperature, the pitches for CBCCOnSCB showed strong temperature dependence and were approximately double those of CBCCOnSCB, which exhibited significantly weaker temperature dependence. Compared to those of the representative twist-bend nematicogenic dimers, the pitches of CBCCOnSCB and CBCCOnSCB are longer and shorter, respectively. It is assumed that the molecular bend (or the molecular biaxiality) of LC dimers strongly influences the precession angle of the heliconical helix, and hence the resulting pitch. These findings provide new insights into the molecular designs to modulate the nanoscale helical pitches of the NTB phases.

Introduction

Liquid crystals (LCs) are involved in several spontaneous symmetry-breaking phenomena associated with chirality and helices, which have been the subject of great interest in the field of molecular sciences.¹⁻¹⁰ At present, the twist-bend nematic (NTB) phase, a new helical LC phase, is a hot research topic in the field of LCs. Although the NTB phase was theoretically proposed¹¹,¹² and simulated in earlier works,¹³ it has only recently been experimentally demonstrated with a bent achiral dimer.¹⁴ The NTB phase is believed to originate from the twist and bend deformations of bent molecules, resulting in a heliconically arranged director periodicity, wherein the local director tilts against the helical axis. Due to this phenomenon, right- and left-handed helical nanostructures and their associated degenerate domains are observed to spontaneously form, even from achiral molecules. On the other hand, another model, named the polar-twisted nematic (NPT) phase, for the heliconical mesophase identified as the NTB phase was proposed, which is under debate.¹⁵⁻¹⁷ Macroscopic chirality of the NTB phase was verified using circular dichroism spectroscopy.¹⁸ Several techniques, including electro-optical measurements,¹⁹ freeze-fracture transmission electron microscopy,²⁰,²¹ and resonant soft, hard, and tender X-ray scattering measurements,²²⁻²⁷ suggest that the helical pitch of an NTB phase formed by several molecules is ~10 nm, which is significantly shorter than the pitch of a typical chiral N phase or cholesteric phase exhibiting a helicoidal helix (generally hundreds of nanometers). Materials that exhibit the NTB phase have been employed for various LC applications, such as wavelength-tunable selective light reflection²⁸⁻³¹ and optical memory³² devices, LC physical gels,³³ photo-switchable visco-elastic bodies,³⁴ and photoalignment technology.³⁵

---

‡ Department of Applied Chemistry and Life Science, Graduate School of Engineering, Toyohashi University of Technology, Toyohashi, 441-8580, Japan. E-mail: arakawa@tut.jp

a Advanced Light Source, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Berkeley, CA, 94720, USA

† Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available. See DOI: 10.1039/d0ma00746c
To date, a number of bent LC dimers composed of two mesogenic structures connected with an odd-numbered oligo-methylene spacer have been shown to exhibit the N\textsubscript{TB} phase.\textsuperscript{36–37} In addition, several LC oligomers (e.g., trimers,\textsuperscript{43,58–63} tetramers,\textsuperscript{58,59,64} a hexamer,\textsuperscript{65} and other types of oligomers\textsuperscript{66–69}), polymers,\textsuperscript{70} and bent-core molecules\textsuperscript{71,72} have also been identified as twist-bend nematogens. It should be noted here that the bent molecular geometry is key to designing twist-bend nematogens. The angle of the molecular bend and the stability of the N\textsubscript{TB} molecular geometry is key to designing twist-bend nematogens. It should be noted here that the bent molecular geometry is key to designing twist-bend nematogens. The N\textsubscript{TB} phase of CBCOO\textsubscript{8}SCB crystals was found to be a second-order-like transition behavior typically observed for twist-bend nematogens. The N\textsubscript{TB} phase of CBCOO\textsubscript{2}SCB appeared at 83 °C and was partially supercooled to room temperature upon cooling. This N phase could only be observed using POM due to crystallization of the dimer (Fig. S1 and S9, ESI†). CBCOO\textsubscript{6}SCB and CBCOO\textsubscript{8}SCB displayed transitions to the N\textsubscript{TB} phase from the corresponding N phase at 75 and 85 °C, respectively. Notably, CBCOO\textsubscript{6}SCB exhibited the N\textsubscript{TB} phase across a broad temperature range, which was supercooled to room temperature and ultimately underwent vitrification to form a N\textsubscript{TB} phase, similar to CBCOO\textsubscript{4}SCB.\textsuperscript{53} The DSC curves of CBCOO\textsubscript{6}SCB are shown in Fig. 2(a). The N−N\textsubscript{TB} phase-transition peak was identified as a first-order-like transition with a ΔS\textsubscript{NNTB}/C\textsubscript{0} value of 0.54, which differs from the second-order-like transition behavior typically observed for twist-bend nematogens. The N\textsubscript{TB} phase of CBCOO\textsubscript{8}SCB crystallized at 76 °C and the dimer bearing the longest spacer (i.e., CBCOO\textsubscript{10}SCB) also exhibited the N\textsubscript{TB} phase, but underwent crystallization at approximately 90 °C, as can be seen from the DSC curves (Fig. S11 and S12, ESI†); the N\textsubscript{TB} phases could be

Results and discussion

The synthetic procedures and characterization of the homologous series of CBCOO\textsubscript{n}SCB and CBCOO\textsubscript{n}SCB are described in the ESI.\textsuperscript{†} Their phase sequences, phase-transition temperatures at crystallization (T\textsubscript{c}), glass transition (T\textsubscript{g}), N–N\textsubscript{TB} phase transition (T\textsubscript{NNTB}), isotropic (I)–N phase transition (T\textsubscript{IN}), entropy changes (ΔS) scaled by the gas constant (R) at the I–N and N–N\textsubscript{TB} phase transitions (ΔS\textsubscript{NNTB}/R and ΔS\textsubscript{IN}/R, respectively), and T\textsubscript{NNTB}/T\textsubscript{IN} at a cooling rate of 10 °C min\textsuperscript{-1} are summarized in Table 1. The phase-transition data obtained during the first heating are listed in Tables S1 and S2 (see ESI).\textsuperscript{†}

In terms of the phase-transition behavior of the CBCOO\textsubscript{n}SCB series, the dimers with n = 4, 6, 8, and 10 exhibited a monotropic N\textsubscript{TB} phase below the N phase, whereas the shortest CBCOO\textsubscript{2}SCB dimer exhibited only a monotropic N phase. The monotropic N phase of CBCOO\textsubscript{2}SCB appeared at 83 °C and was partially supercooled to room temperature upon cooling. This N phase could only be observed using POM due to crystallization of the dimer (Fig. S1 and S9, ESI†). CBCOO\textsubscript{6}SCB and CBCOO\textsubscript{8}SCB displayed transitions to the N\textsubscript{TB} phase from the corresponding N phase at 75 and 85 °C, respectively. Notably, CBCOO\textsubscript{6}SCB exhibited the N\textsubscript{TB} phase across a broad temperature range, which was supercooled to room temperature and ultimately underwent vitrification to form a N\textsubscript{TB} phase, similar to CBCOO\textsubscript{4}SCB.\textsuperscript{53} The DSC curves of CBCOO\textsubscript{6}SCB are shown in Fig. 2(a). The N−N\textsubscript{TB} phase-transition peak was identified as a first-order-like transition with a ΔS\textsubscript{NNTB}/C\textsubscript{0} value of 0.54, which differs from the second-order-like transition behavior typically observed for twist-bend nematogens. The N\textsubscript{TB} phase of CBCOO\textsubscript{8}SCB crystallized at 76 °C and the dimer bearing the longest spacer (i.e., CBCOO\textsubscript{10}SCB) also exhibited the N\textsubscript{TB} phase, but underwent crystallization at approximately 90 °C, as can be seen from the DSC curves (Fig. S11 and S12, ESI†); the N\textsubscript{TB} phases could be

![Fig. 1](image_url)  
**Fig. 1** Molecular structures of CBCOO\textsubscript{n}SCB (n = 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10) and CBCO\textsubscript{n}SCB (n = 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10), where n = 2m.
Table 1  Phase sequences, transition temperatures (°C), and entropy changes scaled by the gas constant (ΔS/R) of CBOCOOnSCB and CBOCOOnSCB upon cooling

| n (CBOCOOnSCB) | Tc (°C) | ΔSc/R | TNNB (°C) | ΔSNNB/R | TIN (°C) | ΔSIN/R | TNB/TRANS |
|----------------|---------|-------|-----------|----------|----------|--------|-----------|
| 2              | Cr      | 129.0 | 11.8      |          |          | 83     |           |
| 4              | G       | 20.7  | —         | 52.3     | 0.18     | N      | 0.02      | 0.95      |
| 6              | G       | 22.3  | —         | 75.4     | 0.54     | N      | 0.97      |
| 8              | Cr      | 75.8  | 12.6      | N        | 85       | —      | N         | 0.96      |
| 10             | Cr      | 90.3  | 12.1      | N        | 87       | —      | N         | 0.95      |

| n (CBOCOOnSCB) | Tc (°C) | ΔSc/R | TNNB (°C) | ΔSNNB/R | TIN (°C) | ΔSIN/R | TNB/TRANS |
|----------------|---------|-------|-----------|----------|----------|--------|-----------|
| 2              | Cr      | 131.0 | 10.1      | —         |          |        | N         | 134       |
| 4              | G       | 17.5  | —         | 82.3     | —        | N      | 150.0     | 0.46      | 0.84      |
| 6              | G       | 14.3  | —         | 94.9     | —        | N      | 149.0     | 0.57      | 0.87      |
| 8              | Cr      | 78.7  | 10.7      | N        | 93       | —      | N         | 145.4     | 0.84      | 0.87      |
| 10             | Cr      | 97.4  | 10.9      | N        | 91       | —      | N         | 140.6     | 1.11      | 0.88      |

* Determined by POM.

Fig. 2  DSC curves of (a) CBCOO6SCB and (b) CBOCO6SCB recorded at a rate of 10 °C min⁻¹.

observed only in small supercooled N domains using POM (Fig. S3, S3, S7 and S8, ESI†).

Regarding the phase-transition behavior of the CBOCOOnSCB series, dimers with n = 4, 6, 8, and 10 formed a monotropic N₁ phase below the N phase temperature. Like CBCOO2SCB, the dimer with the shortest spacer (CBOCO2SCB) only formed the monotropic N phase. The N phase of CBOCO2SCB was very narrow, which could be observed by POM but was not detected by DSC due to crystallization during cooling (Fig. S6 and S13, ESI†). As shown in Fig. 2(b), CBOCO6SCB exhibited a remarkably stable N₁ phase when supercooled to room temperature, with vitrification taking place at 14 °C to form the N₁G phase; this behavior is similar to that of CBOCO4SCB. Likewise, the N–N₁ phase transition at 94.9 °C is similar to the second-order-like phase-transition typically observed for the majority of twist-bend nematogens. CBOCO8SCB exhibited the N₁ phase at temperatures ranging from 93 to 79 °C, below which it underwent crystallization. The N–N₁ phase transition at 85 °C could not be detected by DSC due to crystallization (Fig. S16, ESI†). Moreover, the N₁ phase was observed only in the supercooled N domains of CBOCO10SCB; hence, no N–N₁ transition peak could be detected via DSC (Fig. S8 and S17, ESI†). Unlike CBOCO8SCB, which exhibited monotropic mesophases, CBOCO8SCB with n = 4, 6, and 8 gave rise to enantiotropic N phases. In addition, the above-mentioned observations indicate that mid-length spacers (n = 4 and 6) of both homologous series enhanced the N₁ phase ranges, which ultimately resulted in the formation of a room-temperature N₁ phase or N₁G phase.

The T₁N, T₁NB, and ΔS₁N/R values as a function of n for CBOCOOnSCB and CBOCOOnSCB (n = 4, 6, 8, and 10) are displayed in Fig. 3. The phase-transition temperatures are higher for CBOCOOnSCB than for CBOCOOnSCB, except T₁N. This difference can be attributed primarily to their different geometries according to the all-trans model of spacer chains; in other words, their molecular biaxiality and shape anisotropy. The inter-arm bend angle (z) between the para-axes of the two mesogenic arms of CBOCO4SCB (z = 105°) is significantly smaller than that of CBOCO4SCB (z = 127°). This difference is caused by the opposed ester-bond directions or the different positions of carbonyl (C=O) and –O–C– bonds in the esters. Notably, the T₁N values of CBOCOOnSCB were found to strongly depend on n, whereas those of CBOCOOnSCB were only slightly affected by n. The T₁NB values of CBOCOOnSCB sharply decreased with a decrease in n, while the corresponding values of CBOCOOnSCB did not. It is worth noting that the ΔS₁N/R values are significantly smaller for CBOCOOnSCB than for CBOCOOnSCB. The abovementioned trends may be associated with the more bent geometry of CBOCOOnSCB with the smaller bend angle or the more anisotropic geometry of CBOCOOnSCB. The ΔS₁N/R values of both homologous series were found to gradually decrease with decreasing n, which can be ascribed to the molecular structural biaxiality that is enhanced by...
within each homologous series. This reflects that the N–NTB phase \( n = 4, 6, 8, \) and 10 (blue squares).

\[ \text{CBCOO}_n \]

values for \( \text{CBOCO}_n \) of \( \text{CBOCO}_n \) typically favor formation of the conventional N phase. Hence, \( \text{CBCOO}_n \) values.\(^56\)

In addition, the reduced temperature, \( T_{\text{NTB}} \), from the more supercooled N phase, resulting in lower \( T_{\text{NTB}} \) \( T_{\text{IN}} \), and these values remained nearly constant within each homologous series. This reflects that the N–NTB phase of \( \text{CBCOO}_n \) originates from the supercooled N phases, which undergo a greater degree of supercooling than those of \( \text{CBCOO}_n \). These trends can also be reasonably associated with their molecular geometry or anisotropy. More bent molecules can effectively form the N\(_{\text{TB}}\) phase, whereas more linear molecules typically favor formation of the conventional N phase. Hence, appearance of the N\(_{\text{TB}}\) phase for \( \text{CBCOO}_n \) is naturally induced from the more supercooled N phase, resulting in lower \( T_{\text{NTB}}/T_{\text{IN}} \) values.\(^{56}\)

Using POM, we observed different optical textural behaviors in the N\(_{\text{TB}}\) phases for each homologous series when \( n = 4 \) and 6. In non-treated glass cells, \( \text{CBCOO}_n \) \( n = 4 \) and 6) exhibited focal conic textures (Fig. S2, ESI†),\(^53\) which are typical of the N\(_{\text{TB}}\) phase. In addition, they displayed textures characterized by an elastic behavior (Fig. S2, ESI†); these textures could be recovered even when expansion took place through pressing and shearing. In our previous report,\(^53\) we noted that \( \text{CBCOO}_4 \) exhibited unusual striped texture with an obscure thinner-striped texture as shown in Fig. 4(a) using POM with a uniaxially rubbed planar cell. In this study, we conducted further POM analyses of \( \text{CBCOO}_4 \), \( \text{CBCOO}_6 \), \( \text{CBCOO}_8 \), and \( \text{CBCOO}_8 \) using 5 \( \mu m \)-thick uniaxially rubbed polyimide-surface-treated planar alignment cells. We found that \( \text{CBCOO}_4 \) exhibited the usual optical texture of the N\(_{\text{TB}}\) phase with clear stripes [Fig. 4(c)], which is distinct from the obscure thin stripes found in \( \text{CBCOO}_4 \) [Fig. 4(a)]. The two dimers with \( n = 6 \) also displayed clearly different optical texture behaviors: \( \text{CBCOO}_6 \) exhibited a distinct thinner-striped texture [Fig. 4(b)]; however, \( \text{CBCOO}_6 \) displayed a more typical striped texture [Fig. 4(d)]. These were similar to the different texture behaviors of \( \text{CBCOO}_4 \) and \( \text{CBCOO}_4 \). Meanwhile, \( \text{CBCOO}_8 \) exhibited a conventional striped texture that was similar to those of the typical twist-bend nematogens and the oppositely directed esters, \( \text{CBCOO}_4 \) and \( \text{CBCOO}_6 \) (Fig. S4, ESI†). It seems that the unusual textures with thinner stripes observed for \( \text{CBCOO}_n \) were changed to the typical ones with increasing length of the central spacer. In addition to the properties associated with the first and second order phase-transitions of the N\(_{\text{TB}}\) phases of \( \text{CBCOO}_n \) and \( \text{CBCOO}_n \) \( n = 4 \) and 6), respectively, the observed textural patterns inspired us to study the helical structures of the N\(_{\text{TB}}\) phases by means of comprehensive X-ray techniques, since previous studies suggested the presence of heliconical structures\(^{19–27}\) and pseudo-layer nature in the N\(_{\text{TB}}\) phase.\(^{74,75}\)

To analyze the structures of the observed mesophases, we firstly conducted conventional XRD measurements for both homologous series with \( n = 4 \) and 6 (Fig. S18–S21, ESI†). In both the N and N\(_{\text{TB}}\) phases, broadened diffraction peaks were observed in the small- and wide-angle regions. These results suggest that there is no apparent positional order along the long molecular axis, and liquid-like correlations exist among lateral molecules, thereby indicating the nature of the N phase. In addition, the small-angle diffraction pattern corresponds to pseudo-layered structures that originate from the smectic (Sm)-like or cybotactic molecular clusters in the N and N\(_{\text{TB}}\) phases. The pseudo-layer lengths in the N\(_{\text{TB}}\) phase were estimated to be similar: 1.15 nm \( (2\theta = 7.6^\circ) \) for \( \text{CBCOO}_4 \), 1.27 nm \( (2\theta = 6.9^\circ) \) for \( \text{CBCOO}_6 \), and 1.32 nm \( (2\theta = 6.7^\circ) \) for \( \text{CBCOO}_6 \) in each N phase. The intensity of the small-angle diffraction was weaker in the N\(_{\text{TB}}\) phase than in the N phase, and the \( 2\theta \) values (or the pseudo-layer lengths) were temperature-independent over the entire N\(_{\text{TB}}\) phase range, which is typical of N\(_{\text{TB}}\) phases. In the case of \( \text{CBCOO}_4 \), the small-angle diffraction could
only be detected in the N phase, disappearing after transition to the N$_{TB}$ phase (Fig. S20, ESI†).

We performed TReXS measurements at the sulfur K-edge to determine the helical pitch in the N$_{TB}$ phases of CBCOO$_n$SCB and CBOCO$_n$SCB ($n = 4$ and 6). TReXS at the sulfur K-edge enables the detection of resonant scattering that corresponds to the helical pitch in the N$_{TB}$ phase, owing to the periodically distributed bond direction (rather than the conventional electron density modulation) in heliconical structures.24–27 The two-dimensional (2D) and one-dimensional (1D) resonant X-ray scattering patterns obtained from the helical pitch periodicity in the N$_{TB}$ phase of CBCOO4SCB are shown as representative images in Fig. 5. These scattering patterns appeared at temperatures below the N phase upon cooling and disappeared upon re-entering the N phase upon reheating. The 2D scattering images of the other dimers and the corresponding 1D patterns are shown in Fig. S22–S27 (ESI†). Fig. 6(a) shows the temperature dependence of the helical pitch in the N$_{TB}$ phase for both the homologous series ($n = 4$ and 6) as a function of the shifted temperature ($\Delta T = T_{NNTB} - T$). The helical pitch lengths ($p_h$) were calculated from the wavenumber $q = 2\pi/p_h$. Upon decreasing the temperature, the $p_h$ values decreased from 8.1 to 6.8 nm for CBCOO4SCB and from 9.3 to 7.4 nm for CBCOO6SCB, while those of CBOCO4SCB and CBOCO6SCB decreased from 20.3 to 11.9 nm and from 24.4 to 13.8 nm, respectively. Compared with those of CBOCO4SCB and CBOCO6SCB, the helical pitches of CBCOO4SCB and CBCOO6SCB were not only significantly shorter but also less temperature-dependent. The helical pitch lengths of
CBOCO4SCB and CBOCO6SCB decreased upon lowering the temperature, as is typical for N_{TB} phases; this temperature dependence may be attributed to the lower number of twisted molecular conformations [or an increase in straightened conformers]^{76} and fluctuations in the unwinding process related to helical ordering at high temperatures, which relate to decreased precession of the molecules in the helices at high temperatures. However, the helical pitch lengths of CBCOO4SCB and CBCOO6SCB do not vary significantly at different temperatures. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the \( p_h \) ratios of \( p_h(\text{CBCOO4SCB})/p_h(\text{CBCOO4SCB}) \) and \( p_h(\text{CBOCO6SCB})/p_h(\text{CBCOO6SCB}) \) are close to 2, i.e., the helical pitch lengths of CBCOOnSCB \((n = 4 \text{ and } 6)\) were twice those of CBCOO0nSCB \((n = 4 \text{ and } 6)\), as shown in Fig. 6(b). Density functional theory (DFT) calculations using Gaussian 16 at the B3LYP 26/6-31G(d) level of theory show that the difference in the overall molecular lengths of CBCOO4SCB \( (2.56 \text{ nm}) \) and CBOCO4SCB \( (2.78 \text{ nm}) \) is small; therefore, the considerable difference in their helical pitches cannot be qualitatively accounted for by the molecular lengths, which will be discussed later.

The helical pitch length is associated with the tilt angle from the helical axis \((\theta)\), molecular length \((L)\), and molecular number per turn \((n_m)\) (see Fig. 7); \( p_h = n_m L \cos \theta \), and hence \( n_m \) can be estimated by calculating the value of \( 2\pi/qL \cos \theta \). With decreasing temperature, the \( \theta \) values for LC dimers typically increase by 10 to 35°.\(^{23,26,77–81} \) Nevertheless, it is realistically assumed that \( \theta \) does not significantly influence the \( n_m \) values within the heliconical region. In the low temperature region of the N_{TB} phase, the \( n_m \) values were estimated as \( n_m = 3–4 \) for CBCOO4SCB and CBCOO6SCB and \( n_m = 5–6 \) for CBOCO4SCB and CBOCO6SCB within a similar \( \Delta T \) region.

Next, the helical models of the dimers were considered based on XRD and TReXS. The azimuthal precession \((\phi)\) per
pseudo-layer was estimated from the following equation: \( \Delta \varphi = 360^\circ \times \frac{\text{[pseudo-layer length on XRD]}}{\varphi_\text{h on TRexS}} \); this can be used to elucidate the heliconical models by utilizing the polygon models. The \( \varphi \) values were estimated to be \( \sim 60^\circ \) in the \( N_{\text{h}} \) phase of CBCOOOnSCB (\( n = 4 \) and 6). These \( \varphi \) values indicate a hexagonal model separated by pseudo-layers for the \( N_{\text{h}} \) phase of CBCOOOnSCB (\( n = 4 \) and 6). On the other hand, the \( \varphi \) values of CBOnSCB (\( n = 4 \) and 6) essentially became smaller (approximately 30–40°) within the tested temperatures or led to the formation of larger polygonal structures such as a decagon due to their abnormally long helical pitches. The \( \varphi \) values of CBOn4SCB were estimated using the pseudo-layer length in the N phase since the pseudo-layer peak almost disappeared below the \( N_{\text{h}} \) phase.

Using the values of \( n_m \) and \( \Delta \varphi \), we constructed two heliconical models in the \( N_{\text{h}} \) phases of CBCOOOnSCB and CBOnSCB (\( n = 4 \) and 6). Fig. 7(a) and (b) illustrate plausible heliconical models with \( n_m = 3-4 \) and \( \Delta \varphi = 60^\circ \) for a hexagon model of CBCOOOnSCB (\( n = 4 \) and 6) and with \( n_m = 6-7 \) for CBOnSCB (\( n = 4 \) and 6), respectively. Considering the strong temperature dependence of the helical pitches in the latter, it is assumed that the bent conformation and the stacking extent of the rigid CB arms among the dimers may also be influenced by temperature, changing the precession angles.

As described in the Introduction, the \( \varphi_\text{h} \) values of the \( N_{\text{h}} \) phase are \( \sim 10 \text{ nm} \), corresponding to several dimers. For example, the \( \varphi_\text{h} \) of CB7CB, which is a representative twist-bend nematogen structurally analogous to CBCOOOnSCB and CBOnSCB dimers, has been found to vary between 8 and 10 nm depending on the temperature. However, the \( \varphi_\text{h} \) values of both CBCOOOnSCB (\( n = 4 \) and 6) were found to be somewhat smaller than those of CB7CB, while those of CBOnSCB (\( n = 4 \) and 6) were larger. That is, the oppositely directed esters caused unique and distinct helical structural modes in the \( N_{\text{h}} \) phases of these dimers which differ from those of the typical dimer. CBCOOOnSCB (\( x = 105^\circ \)) can be bent to a higher extent than CBOnSCB (\( x = 127^\circ \)), which are ascribed to the opposed ester-bond directions or the different positions of carbonyl (\( \text{C} = \text{O} \)) and \( \text{O} – \text{C} – \text{C} \) bonds in the two type esters. In addition, the linkage point between CB and \( \text{–COO}– \) of CBCOOOnSCB is more rigid than that between CB and OCO CBOnSCB. The rotational barrier of the \( \text{–C(Ar)}–\text{C}– \) bond in CBCOOOnSCB is higher than that of the \( \text{–C(Ar)}–\text{O}– \) bond in CBOnSCB. Thus, the increased bending and more rigid structure of CBCOOOnSCB should result in shorter helical pitches and a weaker temperature dependence, as compared with those of CBOnSCB and the other reported twist-bend nematogenic dimers. This can be associated with the first-order-like \( N \)–\( N_{\text{h}} \) transition peak that corresponds to the changes in the phase structure.

The main factor responsible for the longer helical pitch of CBOnSCB (i.e., approximately 10–25 nm) as compared to that of CB7CB (8-10 nm) is likely to be the molecular bend (or the molecular biaxiality) and the resulting precession angles of the helices. The molecular bend angle of CB7CB is estimated as 111° based on its all-\text{trans} model, leading to a more bent geometry for CBOnSCB than for CBOnSCB (127°).

On the other hand, the \( \varphi_\text{h} \) values of both ester homologous series were marginally shorter in homologues with \( n = 4 \) than those with \( n = 6 \), due to the different lengths of flexible spacer chains. As illustrated in Fig. 6, the temperature dependence of the \( \varphi_\text{h} \) values remained essentially unchanged for both the systems.

Finally, we estimated the correlation lengths of the helices and the number of the helical stacks in the \( N_{\text{h}} \) phases of CBCOOOnSCB and CBOnSCB (\( n = 4 \) and 6). Using the full width at half maximum (FWHM) of the Lorentzian fitting (FWHM = 2/\( \zeta \), where \( \zeta \) is the Lorentzian length) applied to the TRexS data, the Scherrer equation (\( \tau = 2\pi /\text{FWHM} \); wherein the shape factor is set to unity) can be used to estimate the longitudinal heliconical correlation or domain size. In addition, the number of helical stacks was estimated by calculating \( \tau /\varphi_\text{h} \). The longitudinal correlation lengths and helical stacks are plotted as a function of \( \Delta T \), as shown in Fig. 8. The \( \tau \) values tend to slightly increase initially with decreasing temperature in the higher \( N_{\text{h}} \) temperature region, immediately below the N phase. This initial increase in \( \tau \) is attributable to heat fluctuations that occur close to the fluidic N phase, such that \( \tau \) becomes larger. It is interesting to note that the correlation lengths and the resulting number of the helical stacks of CBOnSCB are calculated to be more than twice the corresponding values of CBOnSCB (Fig. 8). These larger correlation lengths of the helices of CBOnSCB are reasonable, considering

Fig. 8 (a) Correlation length (Å) and (b) helical stacks based on TRexS data scanned at 2471 eV.
their rigid molecular structures and approximately temperature-independent helical behavior, which are reminiscent of rigid packing. The helical pitches and correlation lengths of CBOCONSCB are also essentially temperature-independent; and the estimated helical stacks naturally display a similar behavior. On the other hand, since the helical pitches of CBOCONSCB typically depend on temperature, the helical stacks increase with decreasing temperature.

Conclusions

We herein reported the development of two homologous series of unsymmetrical ester- and thioether-linked cyanobiphenyl-based LC dimers, viz. CBOCONSCB and CBOCONSCB (n = 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10). We observed that all the dimers were mesogenic, and that CBOCONSCB and CBOCONSCB (n = 4, 6, 8, and 10) formed N_{TB} phases. In particular, CBOCONSCB and CBOCONSCB (n = 4 and 6) exhibited the N_{TB} phase across a wide temperature range. These phases were stable down to room temperature and eventually formed N_{TB} glasses. The phase-transition temperatures (excluding glass transition temperatures), and associated enthalpy and entropy changes were mostly lower for CBOCONSCB than those observed for CBOCONSCB. In addition, CBOCONSCB and CBOCONSCB (n = 4 and 6) displayed different phase-transition properties and striped optical textures. Finally, their distinct helical structures were elucidated using TReXS measurements at the sulfur K-edge. Compared with those of the typical twist-bend nematogenic dimers, CBOCONSCB (n = 4 and 6) exhibited smaller helical pitch lengths with weaker temperature dependence, whereas CBOCONSCB (n = 4 and 6) exhibited greater helical pitch lengths. The difference is ascribed to the molecular bend (or the molecular biaxiality) and structural rigidity. This study therefore provides new insights into the influence of molecular design in the N_{TB} phase, revealing that subtle structural modifications (i.e., oppositely directed esters) crucially impact helical nanostructures in the N_{TB} phase.

Experimental section

The synthetic scheme and procedures and characterization data for CBOCONSCB and CBOCONSCB are described in the ESL. The molecules were purified using column chromatography on silica gel and recrystallization. \(^{1}\)H and \(^{13}\)C nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy were recorded on a JNM-ECS400 (400 MHz for \(^{1}\)H and 100 MHz for \(^{13}\)C) or a JNM-ECS500 (500 MHz for \(^{1}\)H NMR and 126 MHz for \(^{13}\)C NMR) (JEOL Ltd, Tokyo Japan). Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR) were performed by the KBr (purchased from FUJIFILM Wako Pure Chemical Co.) method using a JASCO FT/IR-4200. High-resolution mass spectrometry (HRMS) using high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) (Agilent 1200 HPLC-Chip and 6520 Accurate-Mass Q-TOF) was conducted. Phase-transition behavior was studied based on POM with an Olympus (Tokyo, Japan) polarized optical microscope (BX50) with a Linkam (Surrey, UK) temperature controller LK-600PM and differential scanning calorimetry (DSC) with a Shimadzu (Kyoto, Japan) DSC 60 at a rate of 10 °C min\(^{-1}\) under a flow of nitrogen gas (50 mL min\(^{-1}\)). The POM images and DSC results for all the compounds are shown in the main text or ESL. \(^{\dagger}\) X-ray diffraction (XRD) measurements were conducted using a Bruker D8 DISCOVER equipped with a Vantec-500 detector using Cu-K\(_\alpha\) radiation. The specimens, kept in capillary glass tubes of 1.5 mm diameter (purchased from WJL-Glass Müller GmbH), were aligned under a magnetic field (B = 300 mT). According to the literature, \(^{25}\) TReXS measurement was performed at the beamline 5.3.1 at the Advanced Light Source, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. The X-ray beam energy was tuned around the S K-edge, 2472 eV, with a channel cut double-bounce silicon (111) monochromator. A two-dimensional (2D) Pilatus detector (300 K, Dectris, Inc.) was used to collect the scattering patterns, which were subsequently converted to one-dimensional line profiles using the Nika software package. The scattering patterns were viewed with the Xi-Cam interface\(^{86}\) at the beamline. The sample-detector distance was tuned between 488 mm and 250 mm to access relevant q range. The beam centers and the sample-to-detector distances were calibrated using both silver behenate and 8CB.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the financial supports (the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science KAKENHI grant no. 17K14493 and 20K15351, the Naito Research Grant, and research grants from the Toukai Foundation for Technology and Toyohashi University of Technology). We would like to thank Prof. Masatoshi Tokita (Tokyo Institute of Technology) for use of the instruments for XRD measurements, and Ms. Tsugumi Shiokawa and Dr Hiroko Tada in the Division of Instrumental Analysis (Okayama University) for the mass measurements. We acknowledge use of Beamlines 5.3.1 of the Advanced Light Source supported by the Director of the Office of Science, Office of Basic Energy Sciences, of the U.S. Department of Energy under contract no. DE-AC02-05CH11231.

References

1 T. Sekine, T. Niori, J. Watanabe, T. Furukawa, S. W. Choi and H. Takezoe, Spontaneous helix formation in smectic liquid crystals comprising achiral molecules, J. Mater. Chem., 1997, 7, 1307.
2 D. R. Link, G. Natale, R. F. Shao, J. E. MacLennan, N. A. Clark, E. Korblova and D. M. Walba, Spontaneous formation of macroscopic chiral domains in a fluid smectic phase of achiral molecules, Science, 1997, 278, 1924.
3 G. Pelzl, A. Eremin, S. Diele, H. Kresse and W. Weissflog, Spontaneous chiral ordering in the nematic phase of an
achiral banana-shaped compound, J. Mater. Chem., 2002, 12, 2591.

4 V. Görtz and J. W. Goodby, Enantioselective segregation in achiral nematic liquid crystals, Chem. Commun., 2005, 3262.

5 Weissflog, G. Naumann, B. Kosata, M. W. Schröder, A. Eremin, S. Diele, Z. Vakhovskaya, H. Kresse, R. Friedemann, S. A. Rama Krishnan and G. Pelzl, Ten isomeric five-ring bent-core mesogens: the influence of the direction of the carboxyl connecting groups on the mesophase behaviour, J. Mater. Chem., 2005, 15, 4328.

6 T. Kajitani, H. Masu, S. Kohmoto, M. Yamamoto, K. Yamaguchi and K. Kishikawa, Generation of a Chiral Mesophase by Achiral Molecules: Absolute Chiral Induction in the Smectic C Phase of 4-Octyoxyphenyl 4-Octyloxybenzoate, J. Am. Chem. Soc., 2005, 127(4), 1124.

7 R. Deb, R. Kanti Nath, M. Kumar Paul, N. V. S. Rao, F. Tuluri, Y. Shen, R. Shao, D. Chen, C. Zhu, I. I. Smalyukh and N. A. Clark, Four-ring achiral unsymmetrical bent core molecules forming strongly fluorescent smectic liquid crystals with spontaneous polar and chiral ordered B7 and B1 phases, J. Mater. Chem., 2010, 20, 7332.

8 H. Kim, A. Zep, S. H. Ryu, H. Ahn, T. J. Shin, S. B. Lee, D. Pociecha, E. Gorecka and D. K. Yoon, Linkage-length dependent structuring behaviour of bent-core molecules in helical nanostructures, Soft Matter, 2016, 12, 3326.

9 H. Sasaki, Y. Takanishi, J. Yamamoto and A. Yoshizawa, Achiral flexible liquid crystal trimers exhibiting chiral conglomerates, Soft Matter, 2016, 12, 3331.

10 A. Lehmann, M. Alaasar, M. Poppe, S. Poppe, M. Prehm, M. Nagaraj, S. P. Sreenilayam, Y. F. Panarin, J. K. Vij and C. Tschiernke, Stereocchemical Rules Govern the Self-Assembly of Achiral Compounds: Understanding the Heliconical Liquid-Crystalline Phases of Bent-Core Mesogens, Chem. – Eur. J., 2020, 26, 4714–4733.

11 R. B. Meyer, in Structural Problems in Liquid Crystal Physics, Molecular Fluids: Summer School in Theoretical Physics, les Houches lectures 1973, ed. R. Balian and G. Weil, Gordon and Breach, New York, 1976, pp. 271–343.

12 I. Dozov, On the spontaneous symmetry breaking in the mesophases of achiral banana-shaped molecules, Europhys. Lett., 2001, 56, 247.

13 R. Memmer, Liquid crystal phases of achiral banana-shaped molecules: a computer simulation study, Liq. Cryst., 2002, 29, 483.

14 M. Cestari, S. Diez-Berart, D. A. Dunmur, A. Ferrari, M. R. de La Fuente, D. J. B. Jackson, D. O. Lopez, G. R. Luckhurst, M. A. Perez-Jubindo, R. M. Richardson, J. Salud, B. A. Timimi and H. Zimmermann, Phase behavior and properties of the liquid-crystal dimer 1",7"-bis(4-cyanobiphenyl-4'-yl) heptane: a twist-bend nematic liquid crystal, Phys. Rev. E: Stat., Nonlinear, Soft Matter Phys., 2011, 84, 031704.

15 A. G. Vanakaras and D. J. Photinos, A molecular theory of nematic–nematic phase transitions in mesogenic dimers, Soft Matter, 2016, 12, 2208.

16 A. G. Vanakaras and D. J. Photinos, Molecular dynamics simulations of nematic phases formed by cyano-biphenyl dimers, Liq. Cryst., 2018, 45, 2184.

17 L. M. Heist, E. T. Samulski, C. Welch, Z. Ahmed, G. H. Mehl, A. G. Vanakaras and D. J. Photinos, Probing molecular ordering in the nematic phases of para-linked bimesogen dimers through NMR studies of flexible prochiral solutes, Liq. Cryst., 2020, DOI: 10.1080/02678292.2019.1711214.

18 W. D. Stevenson, X. Zeng, C. Welch, A. K. Thakur, G. Ungar and G. H. Mehl, Macroscopic chirality of twist-bend nematic phase in bent dimers confirmed by circular dichroism, J. Mater. Chem. C, 2020, 8, 1041.

19 C. Meyer, G. R. Luckhurst and I. Dozov, Flexoelectrically driven electroclinic effect in the twist-bend nematic phase of achiral molecules with bent shapes, Phys. Rev. Lett., 2013, 111, 067801.

20 D. Chen, J. H. Porada, J. B. Hooper, A. Klitnwick, Y. Shen, M. R. Tuchband, E. Korblova, D. Bedrov, D. M. Walba, M. A. Glaser, J. E. Macleman and N. A. Clark, Chiral heliconical ground state of nanoscale pitch in a nematic liquid crystal of achiral molecular dimers, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A., 2013, 110, 15931.

21 V. Borschh, Y.-K. Kim, J. Xiang, M. Gao, A. Jakli, V. P. Panov, J. K. Vij, C. T. Imrie, M. G. Tamba, G. H. Mehl and O. D. Lavrentovich, Nematic twist-bend phase with nanoscale modulation of molecular orientation, Nat. Commun., 2013, 4, 2635.

22 C. Zhu, M. R. Tuchband, A. Young, M. Shuai, A. Scharbrough, D. M. Walba, J. E. Macleman, C. Wang, A. Hexemer and N. A. Clark, Resonant Carbon K-Edge Soft X-Ray Scattering from Lattice-Free Heliconical Molecular Ordering; Soft Dilative Elasticity of the Twist-Bend Liquid Crystal Phase, Phys. Rev. Lett., 2016, 116, 147803.

23 W. D. Stevenson, Z. Ahmed, X. B. Zeng, C. Welch, G. Ungar and G. H. Mehl, Molecular organization in the twist-bend nematic phase by resonant X-ray scattering at the Se K-edge and by SAXS, WAXS and GIXRD, Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys., 2017, 19, 13449.

24 M. Salamończyk, R. J. Mandle, A. Makal, A. Liebman-Pelaez, J. Feng, J. W. Goodby and C. Zhu, Double helical structure of the twist-bend nematic phase investigated by resonant X-ray scattering at the carbon and sulfur K-edges, Soft Matter, 2018, 14, 9760.

25 Y. Cao, J. Feng, A. Nallapaneni, Y. Arakawa, K. Zhao, G. H. Mehl, F. Liu and C. Zhu, Identification of New Assembly Mode in the Heliconical Nematic Phase via Tender Resonant X-ray Scattering, arXiv:1907.11330.

26 E. Cruickshank, M. Salamończyk, D. Pociecha, G. J. Strachan, J. M. D. Storey, C. Wang, J. Feng, C. Zhu, E. Gorecka and C. T. Imrie, Sulfur-linked cyanobiphenyl-based liquid crystal dimers and the twist-bend nematic phase, Liq. Cryst., 2019, 46, 1595.

27 Y. Cao, C. Feng, A. Jakli, C. Zhu and F. Liu, Deciphering chiral structures in soft materials via resonant soft and tender X-ray scattering, Giant, 2020, 2, 100018.

28 J. Xiang, Y. Li, Q. Li, D. A. Paterson, J. M. D. Storey, C. T. Imrie and O. D. Lavrentovich, Electrically Tunable Selective Reflection of Light from Ultraviolet to Visible and Infrared by Heliconical Cholesterics, Adv. Mater., 2015, 27, 3014.
29 J. Xiang, A. Varanytsia, F. Minkowski, D. A. Paterson, J. M. D. Storey, C. T. Imrie, O. D. Lavrentovich and P. Palfy-Muhoray, Electrically tunable laser based on oblique heliconical cholesteric liquid crystal, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A., 2016, 113, 12925–12928.

30 Y. Wang, Z. Zheng, H. K. Bisoyi, K. G. Gutierrez-Cuevas, L. Wang, R. S. Zola and Q. Li, Thermally reversible full color selective reflection in a self-organized helical superstructure enabled by a bent-core oligomesogen exhibiting a twist-bend nematic phase, Mater. Horiz., 2016, 3, 442.

31 M. Mrukiewicz, O. S. Iadlovska, G. Babakhanova, S. Siemianowski, S. V. Shiyavonovskii and O. D. Lavrentovich, Wide temperature range of an electrically tunable selective reflection of light by oblique helicoidal cholesteric, Liq. Cryst., 2019, 46, 1544.

32 S. Krishna Prasad, P. Lakshmi Madhuri, P. Satapathy and C. V. Yelamagadda, A soft-bent dimer composite exhibiting twist-bend nematic phase: photo-driven effects and an optical memory device, Appl. Phys. Lett., 2018, 112, 253701.

33 V. Sridurai, M. B. Kanakala, C. V. Yelamagadda and G. G. Nair, Effect of gelation on the Frank elastic constants in a liquid crystalline mixture exhibiting a twist bend nematic phase, Soft Matter, 2019, 15, 9982.

34 S. Aya, P. Salamon, D. A. Paterson, J. M. D. Storey, C. T. Imrie, F. Araoka, A. Jakli and A. Buka, Fast-and-giant photoelectrical effect in a liquid crystal dimer, Adv. Mater. Interfaces, 2019, 6, 1802032.

35 C. Feng, J. Feng, R. Saha, Y. Arakawa, J. Gleeson, S. Sprunt, C. Zhu and A. Jakli, Manipulation of the nanoscale heliconical structure of a twist-bend nematic material with polarized light, Phys. Rev. Res., 2020, 2, 032004.

36 V. P. Panov, M. Nagaraj, J. K. Vij, Y. P. Panarin, A. Kohlmeier, M. G. Tamba, R. A. Lewis and G. H. Mehl, Spontaneous Periodic Deformations in Nonchiral Planar-Aligned Bimesogens with a Nematic-Nematic Transition and a Negative Elastic Constant, Phys. Rev. Lett., 2010, 105, 167801.

37 P. A. Henderson and C. T. Imrie, Methylene-linked liquid crystal dimers and the twist-bend nematic phase, Liq. Cryst., 2011, 38, 1407.

38 R. J. Mandle, E. J. Davis, S. A. Lobato, C.-C. A. Vol, S. J. Cowling and J. W. Goodby, Synthesis and characterisation of an unsymmetrical, ether-linked, fluorinated bimesogen exhibiting a new polymorphism containing the N_{TB} or 'twist-bend' phase, Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys., 2014, 16, 6907.

39 R. J. Mandle, E. J. Davis, C. T. Archbold, C. C. A. Voll, J. L. Andrews, S. J. Cowling and J. W. Goodby, Apolar bimesogens and the incidence of the twist-bend nematic phase, Chem. – Eur. J., 2015, 21, 8158.

40 R. J. Mandle and J. W. Goodby, Does Topology Dictate the Incidence of the Twist-Bend Phase? Insights Gained from Novel Unsymmetrical Bimesogens, Chem. – Eur. J., 2016, 22, 18456.

41 N. Sebastián, D. O. López, B. Robles-Hernández, M. R. de la Fuente, J. Salud, M. A. Pérez-Jubindo, D. A. Dunmur, G. R. Luckhurst and D. J. B. Jackson, Dielectric, calorimetric and mesophase properties of 1''-(2',4-difluorobiphenyl-4'-yloxy)-9''-(4-cyanobiphenyl-4'-yloxy) nonane: an odd liquid crystal dimer with a monotropic mesophase having the characteristics of a twist-bend nematic phase, Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys., 2014, 16, 21391.

42 Z. Ahmed, C. Welch and G. H. Mehl, The design and investigation of the self-assembly of dimers with two nematic phases, RSC Adv., 2015, 5, 93513.

43 M. G. Tamba, S. M. Saill, C. Zhang, A. Jakli, G. H. Mehl, R. Stannarius and A. Eremin, A fibre forming smectic-twist-bend liquid crystalline phase, RSC Adv., 2015, 5, 11207.

44 N. Sebastián, M. G. Tamba, R. Stannarius, M. R. de la Fuente, M. Salamonczyk, G. Cukrov, J. Gleeson, S. Sprunt, A. Jakli, C. Welch, Z. Ahmed, G. H. Mehl and A. Eremin, Mesophase structure and behaviour in bulk and restricted geometry of a dimeric compound exhibiting a nematic-nematic transition, Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys., 2016, 18, 12929.

45 R. J. Mandle, C. T. Archbold, J. P. Sarju, J. L. Andrews and J. W. Goodby, The dependency of nematic and twist-bend mesophase formation on bend angle, Sci. Rep., 2016, 6, 36682.

46 A. A. Dawood, M. C. Grossel, G. R. Luckhurst, R. M. Richardson, B. A. Timimi, N. J. Wells and Y. Z. Yousif, On the twist-bend nematic phase formed directly from the isotropic phase, Liq. Cryst., 2016, 43, 2.

47 A. A. Dawood, M. C. Grossel, G. R. Luckhurst, R. M. Richardson, B. A. Timimi, N. J. Wells and Y. Z. Yousif, Twist-bend nematics, liquid crystal dimers, structure-property relations, Liq. Cryst., 2017, 44, 106.

48 J. P. Abberley, R. Killah, R. Walker, J. M. D. Storey, C. T. Imrie, M. Salamonczyk, C. Zhu, E. Gorecka and D. Pociecha, Heliconical smectic phases formed by achiral molecules, Nat. Commun., 2018, 9, 228.

49 A. Knezevic, M. Sapunar, A. Bukljan, I. Dokli, Z. Hamersak, D. Kontrec and A. Lesac, Fine-tuning the effect of π–π interactions on the stability of the N_{TB} phase, Soft Matter, 2018, 14, 8466.

50 K. Watanabe, T. Tamura, S. Kang and M. Tokita, Twist bend nematic liquid crystals prepared by one-step condensation of 4-(4-pentylcyclohexyl) benzoic acid and alkyl dial, Liq. Cryst., 2018, 45, 924.

51 Y. Arakawa, K. Komatsu and H. Tsuji, Twist-bend nematic liquid crystals based on thioether linkage, New J. Chem., 2019, 43, 6786.

52 Y. Arakawa and H. Tsuji, Selenium-linked liquid crystal dimers for twist-bend nematogens, J. Mol. Liq., 2019, 289, 111097.

53 Y. Arakawa, K. Komatsu, S. Inui and H. Tsuji, Thioether-linked liquid crystal dimers and trimers: the twist-bend nematic phase, J. Mol. Struct., 2020, 1199, 126913.

54 R. J. Mandle and J. W. Goodby, Molecular Flexibility and Bend in Semi-Rigid Liquid Crystals: Implications for the Heliconical Nematic Ground State, Chem. – Eur. J., 2019, 25, 14454.

55 A. Zep, K. Pruszowska, L. Dobrzycki, K. Sektas, P. Szalański, P. H. Marek, M. K. Cyrański and R. R. Sicinski, Cholesterol-based photo-switchable mesogenic dimers. Strongly bent
molecules versus an intercalated structure, CrystEngComm, 2019, 21, 2779.

56 Y. Arakawa, Y. Ishida and H. Tsuji, Ether- and Thioether-Linked Naphthalene-Based Liquid-Crystal Dimers: Influence of Chalcogen Linkage and Mesogen-Arm Symmetry on the Incidence and Stability of the Twist-Bend Nematic Phase, Chem. – Eur. J., 2020, 26, 3767.

57 Y. Arakawa, K. Komatsu, Y. Ishida and H. Tsuji, Thioether-linked azobenzene-based liquid dimers exhibiting the twist-bend nematic phase over a wide temperature range, Liqu. Cryst., 2020, DOI: 10.1080/02678292.2020.1800848.

58 R. J. Mandle and J. W. Goodby, Progression from nano to macro science in soft matter systems: dimers to trimers and oligomers in twist-bend liquid crystals, RSC Adv., 2016, 6, 34885.

59 Z. Parsouzi, G. Babakhanova, M. Rajabi, R. Saha, P. Gyawali, T. Turiv, H. Wang, A. R. Baldwin, C. Welch, G. H. Mehl, J. T. Gleeson, A. Jáklí, O. D. Lavrentovich and S. Sprunt, Pretransitional behavior of viscoelastic parameters at the nematic to twist-bend nematic phase transition in flexible n-mers, Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys., 2019, 21, 13078.

60 A. Al-Janabi, R. J. Mandle and J. Goodby, Isomeric trimesogens exhibiting modulated nematic mesophases, RSC Adv., 2017, 7, 47235.

61 M. R. Tuchband, D. A. Paterson, M. Salamończyk, V. A. Norman, A. N. Scarbrough, E. Forsyth, E. Garcia, C. Wang, J. M. D. Storey, D. M. Walba, S. Sprunt, A. Jáklí, C. Zhu, C. T. Imrie and N. A. Clark, Distinct differences in the nanoscale behaviors of the twist-bend liquid crystal phase of a flexible linear trimer and homologous dimer, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A., 2019, 116, 10698.

62 R. J. Mandle and A. Al-Janabi, Utilising Saturated Hydrocarbon Isosteres of para Benzene in the Design of Twist-Bend Nematic Liquid Crystals, ChemPhysChem, 2020, 21, 697.

63 Y. Arakawa, K. Komatsu and H. Tsuji, Submitted.

64 R. J. Mandle and J. W. Goodby, A Liquid Crystalline Oligomer Exhibiting Nematic and Twist-Bend Nematic Mesophases, ChemPhysChem, 2016, 17, 967.

65 F. P. Simpson, R. J. Mandle, J. N. Moore and J. W. Goodby, Investigating the Cusp between the nano- and macro-sciences in supermolecular liquid-crystalline twist-bend nematogens, J. Mater. Chem. C, 2017, 5, 5102.

66 Y. Wang, G. Singh, D. M. Agra-Kooijman, M. Gao, H. K. Bisoyi, C. Xue, M. R. Fisch, S. Kumar and Q. Li, Room temperature heliconical twist-bend nematic liquid crystal, CrystEngComm, 2015, 17, 2778.

67 S. M. Jansze, A. Martínez-Felipe, J. M. D. Storey, A. T. M. Marcelis and C. T. Imrie, A Twist-Bend Nematic Phase Driven by Hydrogen Bonding, Angew. Chem., Int. Ed., 2015, 54, 643.

68 R. J. Mandle and J. W. Goodby, A Nanohelicoidal Nematic Liquid Crystal Formed by a Non-Linear Duplexed Hexamer, Angew. Chem., Int. Ed., 2018, 57, 7096.

69 R. Walker, D. Pociecha, A. Martínez-Felipe, J. M. D. Storey, E. Gorecka and C. T. Imrie, Twist-Bend Nematic Supermolecular Dimers and Trimers Formed by Hydrogen Bonding, Crystals, 2020, 10, 175.

70 W. D. Stevenson, J. An, X. B. Zeng, M. Xue, H. X. Zou, Y. S. Liu and G. Ungar, Twist-bend nematic phase in biphenylethane-based copolyethers, Soft Matter, 2018, 14, 3003.

71 D. Chen, M. Nakata, R. Shao, M. R. Tuchband, M. Shuai, U. Baumeister, W. Weissflog, D. M. Walba, M. A. Glaser, J. E. MacIennan and N. A. Clark, Twist-bend heliconical chiral nematic liquid crystal phase of an achiral rigid bent-core mesogen, Phys. Rev. E: Stat., Nonlinear, Soft Matter Phys., 2014, 89, 022506.

72 P. Sreenilayam, V. P. Panov, J. K. Vij and G. Shanker, The $N_{TB}$ phase in an achiral asymmetrical bent-core liquid crystal terminated with symmetric alky chains, Liqu. Cryst., 2017, 44, 244.

73 J. W. Emsley, G. R. Luckhurst, G. N. Shilstone and I. Sage, The preparation and properties of the $a,o$-bis (4,4’-cyano-biphenyloxy) alkanes: nematogenic molecules with a flexible core, Mol. Cryst. Liq. Cryst., 1984, 102, 223.

74 P. K. Challa, V. Borsch, O. Parri, C. T. Imrie, S. N. Sprunt, J. T. Gleeson, O. D. Lavrentovich and A. Jáklí, Twist-bend nematic liquid crystals in high magnetic fields, Phys. Rev. E: Stat., Nonlinear, Soft Matter Phys., 2014, 89, 060501(R).

75 J. Zhou, W. Tang, Y. Arakawa, H. Tsuji and S. Aya, Viscoelastic properties of a thioether-based heliconical twist-bend nematogen, Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys., 2020, 22, 9593.

76 W. D. Stevenson, H. X. Zou, X. B. Zeng, C. Welch, G. Ungar and G. H. Mehl, Dynamic calorimetry and XRD studies of the nematic and twist-bend nematic phase transitions in a series of dimers with increasing spacer length, Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys., 2018, 20, 25268.

77 C. Meyer, G. R. Luckhurst and I. Dozov, The temperature dependence of the heliconical tilt angle in the twist-bend nematic phase of the odd dimer CB7CB, J. Mater. Chem. C, 2015, 3, 318.

78 G. Singh, J. Fu, D. M. Agra-Kooijman, J.-K. Song, M. R. Vengatesan, M. Srinivasarao, M. R. Fisch and S. Kumar, X-ray and Raman scattering study of orientational order in nematic and heliconical nematic liquid crystals, Phys. Rev. E, 2016, 94, 060701(R).

79 D. M. Agra-Kooijman, G. Singh, M. R. Fisch, M. R. Vengatesan, J.-K. Song and S. Kumar, The oblique chiral nematic phase in calamitic bimesogens, Liqu. Cryst., 2017, 44, 191.

80 R. J. Mandle and J. W. Goodby, Order parameters, orientational distribution functions and heliconical tilt angles of oligomeric liquid crystals, Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys., 2019, 21, 6839.

81 K. Merkel, A. Kocot, C. Welch and G. H. Mehl, Soft modes of the dielectric response in the twist-bend nematic phase and identification of the transition to a nematic splay bend phase in the CBC7CB dimer, Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys., 2019, 21, 22839.

82 J. F. Yan, G. Vanderkooi and H. A. Scheraga, Conformational Analysis of Macromolecules. V. Helical Structures of Poly-{$\omega$}-aspartic Acid and Poly-{$\omega$}-glutamic Acid, and Related Compounds, J. Chem. Phys., 1968, 49, 2713.
83 M. Perricaudet and A. Pullman, An \textit{ab initio} quantum-mechanical investigation on the rotational isomerism in amides and esters, \textit{Int. J. Pept. Protein Res.}, 1973, 5, 99.

84 M. Cotrait, P. Marsau, M. Pesquer and V. Volpilhac, Molecular arrangement of mesogenic disc-like compounds: the hexa-$n$-alkoxy and hexa-$n$-alkanoyloxy triphenylenes, \textit{J. Physiol.}, 1982, 43, 355.

85 S. Ananda Rama Krishnan, W. Weissflog, G. Pelzl, S. Diele, H. Kresse, Z. Vakhovskaya and R. Friedemann, DFT and MD studies on the influence of the orientation of ester linkage groups in banana-shaped mesogens, \textit{Phys. Chem. Chem. Phys.}, 2006, 8, 1170.

86 J. Ilavsky, Nika: software for two-dimensional data reduction. Nika: software for two-dimensional data reduction, \textit{J. Appl. Crystallogr.}, 2012, 45, 324.

87 R. J. Pandolfi, \textit{et al.}, Xi-cam: a versatile interface for data visualization and analysis, \textit{J. Synchrotron Radiat.}, 2018, 25, 1261.