

Synthesis of a Mesogenic Compound with a Defined Conformation

Reinhard W. Hoffmann,^{*,a} Trixi Brandl,^a Peer Kirsch,^b Klaus Harms^a

^aFachbereich Chemie, Philipps-University of Marburg, Hans-Meerwein-Strasse, 35032 Marburg, Germany

^bMerck KGaA, Liquid Crystals Division, 64271 Darmstadt, Germany

Fax +49 6421 2828917; E-mail: rwho@chemie.uni-marburg.de

Received 22 January 2001

Abstract: The synthesis of the bicyclohexyl derivative **2** has been attained in 4 steps by bi-directional elaboration of bicyclohexanone **3**. Due to the specifically placed methyl substituents, **2** populates a single conformation at the inter-ring bond, resulting in improved material properties.

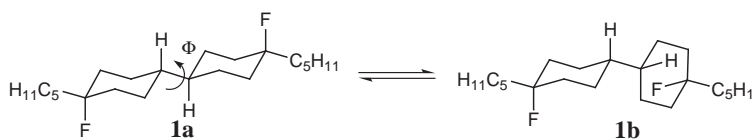
Key words: carbocycles, conformation, fluorine, liquid crystals

Increased use of liquid crystal displays in electronic devices led to a constantly growing demand of new liquid crystalline materials with optimal properties, such as high clearing temperature, low rotational viscosity or high dielectric anisotropy ($\Delta\epsilon$).¹ Recent studies on liquid crystalline compounds of the type **1** demonstrated a remarkable dependence of the dielectric anisotropy of these axially fluorinated bicyclohexyl derivatives on the conformation of the molecular backbone.² AM1-calculations indicated that the dielectric anisotropy vanishes when the dipole moments of the C-F bonds point in opposite directions and cancel each other, i.e. if the conformation at the bicyclohexyl bond is *trans* ($\Phi =$ dihedral angle H-C-C-H = 180°), cf. Scheme 1. In conformations with smaller dihedral angles the dipoles reinforce each other: the smaller Φ the more negative will be the dielectric anisotropy $\Delta\epsilon$. The actual value of $\Delta\epsilon$ is then the population weighted average over the conformer population.

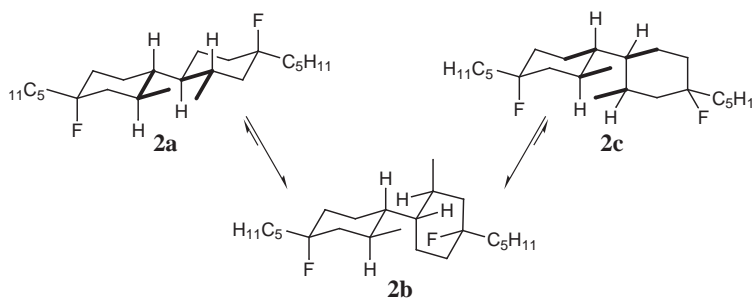
Compound **1** populates two types of conformation: The *gauche* conformation **1b** (58%, calculated $\Delta\epsilon = -2.7$)³⁻⁵

and the *trans* conformation **1a** (42%, calculated $\Delta\epsilon = -0.4$). A Boltzmann distribution over the two conformations **1a** and **1b** predicts an averaged $\Delta\epsilon$ -value of -1.7 , which is slightly lower than the experimentally determined value of $\Delta\epsilon = -2.5$. Obviously, if the conformer equilibrium can be shifted in the direction of **1b**, the compounds should possess larger negative $\Delta\epsilon$ -values. A shift in the conformer population toward **1b** could be attained by rational placement of substituents, i.e. by rational conformation design.⁶

We therefore targeted the C_2 -symmetric compound **2**, which has two additional methyl groups compared to compound **1**. While maintaining free rotation about the inter-ring bond the two equatorial methyl groups should destabilize both the *trans* conformation **2a** as well as one of the two possible *gauche* conformations (**2c**) by two *syn*-pentane interactions to the point that these arrangements are no longer minima on the rotational energy profile (a comparison of the calculated rotational profiles for **1** and **2** is given in Figure 1).^{4,5} The calculations show for **2** only two minima on the rotational energy profile: **2b** ($\Phi = -60^\circ$) and, substantially ($+4.9 \text{ kcal mol}^{-1}$) higher, another conformer which reduces *syn*-pentane interactions by increasing⁷ the dihedral angle Φ to 80° . Compound **2** should therefore populate exclusively the strain-free *gauche* conformation **2b** (cf. Scheme 2) which, due to the small dihedral angle at the inter-ring bond should lead to a significantly larger negative $\Delta\epsilon$ -value.



Scheme 1



Scheme 2

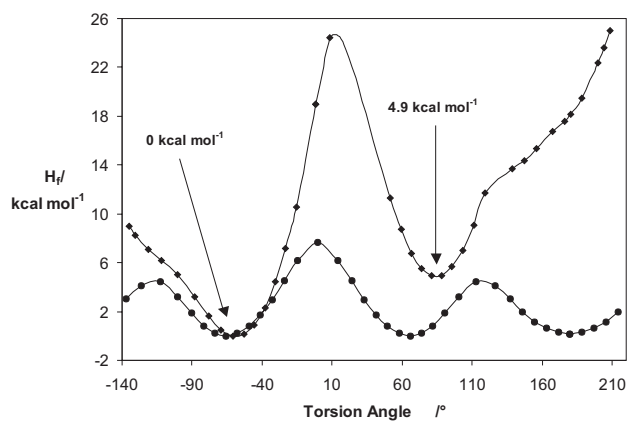
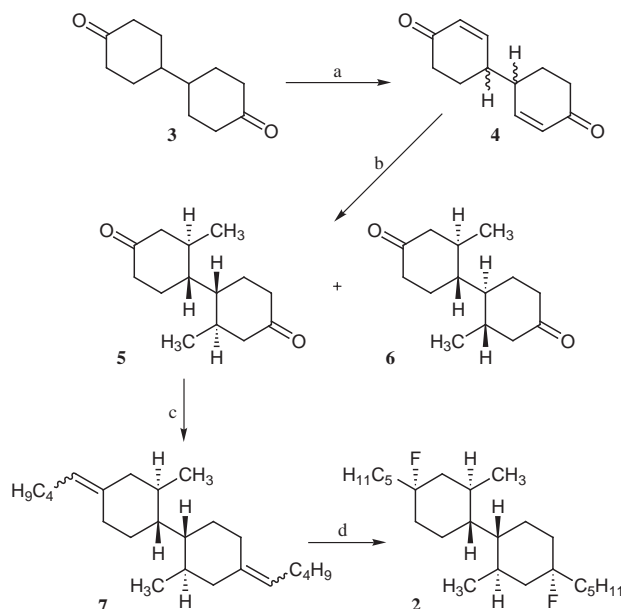


Figure 1 Influence of the torsion angle Φ on the conformational energy ΔH_f (MMFF94) • = **1**; ♦ = **2**

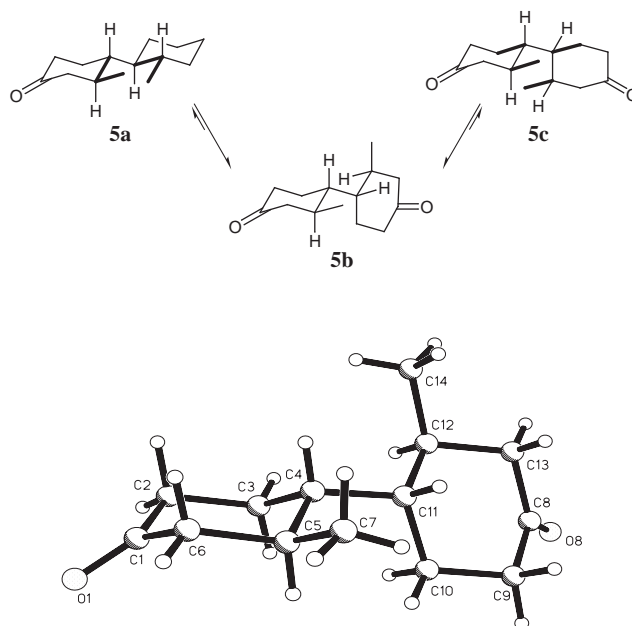
The synthesis of compound **2** originated from 4,4'-dicyclohexanone **3**.⁸ In a bi-directional approach, **3** was converted to the bis-silylenolether, which was transformed into the bis-enone **4**⁹ using the Saegusa protocol.¹⁰ This led to a 1:1 mixture of the *meso*- and *d,l*-diastereomers. Subsequent addition of Me_2CuLi introduced the two methyl groups selectively *trans* to the cyclohexyl substituent furnishing a mixture of *meso*-**5** and *d,l*-**6**.¹¹ The diastereomers were both crystalline compounds. X-ray crystal structure analysis¹² of **5** showed that this is the diastereomer which has the proper relative configuration for the synthesis of **2**. Wittig reaction of **5** with pentylidene-phosphorane led to an *E/Z*-mixture of the bisalkene **7**.¹³ Following earlier precedent,² the bis-alkene was converted with HF/pyridine (Olah's reagent¹⁴) into the target compound **2**, which was recrystallized to diastereomeric purity.¹⁵

Conformational analysis of the bicyclohexyl derivatives rests on a determination of the $^3J_{\text{H-H}}$ coupling constant across the inter-ring bond. In the case of compound **2**, this was prevented by severe signal overlap. We therefore turned to conformational analysis of the precursor ketone **5**, which should display a similar conformational behavior to that of **2**. The SELINCOR technique^{16,17} without proton decoupling permitted the determination of the $^3J_{\text{H-H}}$ coupling constant across the inter-ring bond to $J = 3.0$ Hz. This value documents the predominance of a *gauche* conformation but does by itself not differentiate between the two possible *gauche* conformations to **5b** and **5c**. Since the conformation **5b** is the only one free of *syn*-pentane interactions, the latter is likely the predominant conformation. This is indeed the conformation found in the solid state, as the X-ray crystal structure of **5** shows (Scheme 4).

The high conformational preference found for the ketone **5** should also prevail in the difluoro compound **2**, a fact that should be reflected in the dielectric anisotropy of compound **2**: With a $\Delta\epsilon$ -value of -4.2 ,¹⁸ compound **2** possesses indeed a much improved dielectric anisotropy compared to compound **1**.



Scheme 3 a) (i) LDA, THF, -78 °C, then TMSCl; (ii) $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2$, *p*-benzoquinone, CH_3CN , rt, 72%; b) Me_2CuLi , THF, -78 °C, separation of *meso* 36% and *d,l* 36%; c) $\text{C}_5\text{H}_{11}\text{PPh}_3\text{Br}$, KOTBu , Et_2O , 0 °C, 95%; d) 70% $\text{HF}\cdot\text{pyridine}$, THF, 28%



Scheme 4

We showed in this study that conformation design, i.e. the selective destabilization of undesired conformers by rational placement of substituents, led the way from **1** to compound **2** with an attendant improvement in the conformation-dependent material properties.

Acknowledgement

This study has been supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and by the Fonds der Chemischen Industrie (fellowship to T.B.).

References and Notes

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- (3) The energy profile for the rotation about the inter-ring bond was calculated using the MMFF94 force field. The structures corresponding to the minima were optimized by AM1-calculations and used as input for the calculations of the $\Delta\epsilon$ -values.
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- (9) **Bicyclohexyl-2,2'-diene-4,4'-dione (4)**. *n*-BuLi (1.53 M in hexane, 67.0 mL, 103 mmol) was added at -78°C into a solution of diisopropylamine (15.1 mL, 108 mmol) in THF (150 mL). The mixture was warmed to 0°C for 10 min, then cooled to -78°C prior to addition of a solution of the diketone **3** (4.857 g, 25.00 mmol) in THF (20 mL). After stirring for 2.5 h chlorotrimethylsilane (15.8 mL, 125.0 mmol) was added and the mixture was allowed to warm to 0°C over a 1 h period. Saturated aqueous NaHCO_3 solution (100 mL) was added, the phases were separated and the aqueous phase was extracted with pentane (3×70 mL). The combined organic phases were dried (Na_2SO_4) and concentrated. The resulting crude bis-silylenolether was dissolved in acetonitrile (120 mL) and successively treated with $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2$ (5.980 g, 55.00 mmol) and *p*-benzoquinone (12.350 g, 55.00 mmol). The resulting mixture was stirred for 12 h and filtered over a short pad of celite. After removal of the solvent the residue was purified by flash chromatography (pentane/*tert*-butyl methyl ether 1:9) to give dienone **4** (4.384 g, 92%) as a pale yellow solid as a mixture of *d,l*- and *meso*-isomers. R_f 0.16 (petroleum ether/*tert*-butyl methyl ether 1:9); mp $40\text{--}44^\circ\text{C}$; $^1\text{H NMR}$ (500 MHz, CDCl_3): $\delta = 1.84\text{--}1.87$ (m, 2H), 1.91–1.94 (m, 2H), 2.07–2.13 (m, 4H), 2.41 (ddd, 2H, $J = 1.3, 5.0, 13.8$ Hz), 2.45 (ddd, 2H, $J = 1.2, 5.0, 13.6$ Hz), 2.56 (q, 2H, $J = 4.3$ Hz), 2.60 (q, 2H, $J = 4.3$ Hz), 2.63–2.70 (m, 2H), 2.72–2.78 (m, 2H), 6.09–6.16 (m, 4H), 6.80–6.83 (m, 2H), 6.85–6.88 (m, 2H); $^{13}\text{C NMR}$ (125 MHz, CDCl_3): $\delta = 25.8$ (2C), 26.1 (2C), 37.1 (2C), 37.2 (2C), 40.0 (2C), 40.1 (2C), 130.8 (2C), 131.2 (2C), 151.2 (2C), 151.6 (2C), 198.7 (2C), 198.8 (2C); HRMS Calcd for $\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_{14}\text{O}_2$: 190.0994; Found: 190.0991.
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- (11) **2,2'-Dimethyl-bicyclohexyl-4,4'-dione (5,6)**. Methylolithium (1.3 M in Et_2O , 15.5 mL, 20.1 mmol) was added at 0°C to a suspension of CuI (1.916 g, 10.06 mmol) in Et_2O (50 mL). The solution was cooled to -78°C and a solution of the dienone **4** (598 mg, 3.14 mmol) in Et_2O (10 mL) was added dropwise. After warming to 0°C over 5 h saturated aqueous NH_4Cl solution (50 mL) and concd. aqueous NH_3 (25 mL) were added. The phases were separated and the aqueous phase was extracted with *tert*-butyl methyl ether (3×40 mL). The combined organic phases were washed with brine (10 mL), dried (Na_2SO_4) and concentrated. Purification by flash chromatography (pentane/*tert*-butyl methyl ether 1.5:1) afforded *d,l*-diketone **5** (246 mg, 36%) and *meso*-diketone **6** (261 mg, 36%) as colorless solids. **5**: R_f 0.50 (petroleum ether/*tert*-butyl methyl ether 1:9) mp: 92°C ; $^1\text{H NMR}$ (500 MHz, CDCl_3): $\delta = 1.03$ (d, 6H, $J = 6.4$ Hz), 1.40 (dq, 2H, $J_d = 4.3$ Hz, $J_q = 13.5$ Hz), 1.72–1.78 (m, 2H), 1.87–1.91 (m, 4H), 2.14 (t, 2H, $J = 13.5$ Hz), 2.30 (dd, 2H, $J = 6.1, 13.5$ Hz), 2.39–2.43 (m, 4H); $^{13}\text{C NMR}$ (75 MHz, CDCl_3): $\delta = 19.7$ (2C), 24.6 (2C), 35.1 (2C), 41.1 (2C), 42.5 (2C), 49.9 (2C), 210.7 (2C); Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_{14}\text{H}_{22}\text{O}_2$: C 75.63; H 9.97; Found: C 75.50; H 9.88. **6**: R_f 0.44 (petroleum ether/*tert*-butyl methyl ether 1:9); mp: 90°C ; $^1\text{H NMR}$ (500 MHz, CDCl_3): $\delta = 0.75$ (d, 6H, $J = 6.6$ Hz), 1.20–1.24 (m, 2H), 1.27 (dd, 2H, $J = 4.2, 12.6$ Hz), 1.34–1.42 (m, 2H), 1.50–1.59 (m, 2H), 1.78 (ddd, 2H, $J = 1.0, 10.7, 11.7$ Hz), 1.95–2.00 (m, 2H), 2.23 (ddd, 2H, $J = 2.1, 4.5, 14.1$ Hz), 2.27–2.31 (m, 2H); $^{13}\text{C NMR}$ (75 MHz, CDCl_3): $\delta = 21.2$ (2C), 28.6 (2C), 34.9 (2C), 40.7 (2C), 44.6 (2C), 49.4 (2C), 211.1 (2C); Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_{14}\text{H}_{22}\text{O}_2$: C 75.63; H 9.97; Found: C 75.92; H 10.06.
- (12) Crystallographic data (excluding structure factors) for the structure reported in this paper have been deposited with the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre as supplementary publication no. CCDC-157219. Copies of the data can be obtained free of charge on application to CCDC, 12 Union Road, Cambridge CB2 1Ez, UK.
- (13) **(1R*,2R*,1'R*,2'R*)-2,2'-Dimethyl-4,4'-dipentylidene-bicyclohexyl (7)**. Potassium *tert*-butoxide (168 mg, 1.50 mmol) was added at 0°C to a suspension of *n*-pentyltriphenylphosphonium bromide (620 mg, 1.50 mmol) in Et_2O (4 mL). The mixture was stirred for 1.5 h and then diketone **5** (98 mg, 0.44 mmol) was added. After stirring for 8 h at room temperature, silica gel (1.5 g) was added and the solvent was removed in vacuo. The residue was purified by flash chromatography (pentane) to afford an *E/Z*-mixture of the diolefin **7** (139 mg, 95%) as a colorless oil. R_f 0.81 (petroleum ether/*tert*-butyl methyl ether 1:1); $^1\text{H NMR}$ (500 MHz, CDCl_3): $\delta = 0.88\text{--}0.95$ (m, 26H), 1.29–1.36 (m, 28H), 1.48 (t, 2H, $J = 12.6$ Hz), 1.60–1.66 (m, 6H), 1.80 (t, 2H, $J = 11.6$ Hz), 1.95–2.07 (m, 8H), 2.14–2.20 (m, 4H), 2.57 (d, 2H, $J = 13.2$ Hz), 2.62 (dt, 2H, $J_d = 12.6$ Hz, $J_t = 1.8$ Hz), 5.05–5.08 (m, 4H); $^{13}\text{C NMR}$ (125 MHz, CDCl_3): $\delta = 14.0$ (4C), 19.5 (2C), 19.9 (2C), 20.0 (2C), 22.2 (2C), 26.0 (2C), 26.6 (2C), 28.6 (2C), 32.4 (2C), 34.9 (2C), 35.0 (2C), 35.7 (2C), 35.8 (2C), 37.0 (2C), 38.0 (2C), 44.3 (2C), 44.4 (2C), 44.5 (2C), 46.3 (2C), 121.1 (2C), 121.3 (2C), 138.9 (2C), 139.1 (2C); Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_{24}\text{H}_{42}$: C 87.19; H 12.81; Found: C 87.01; H 12.58.
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- (15) **(1R*,2R*,4S*,1'R*,2'R*,4'S*)-4,4'-Difluoro-2,2'-dimethyl-4,4'-dipentyl-bicyclohexyl (2)**. A solution of an *E/Z*-mixture of the diolefin **7** (165 mg, 0.50 mmol) and HF-pyridine complex (1 mL, 70% w/w) in THF (1 mL) was stirred for 12 h. The mixture was poured on ice and neutralized with solid NaHCO_3 . The phases were separated and the aqueous phase was extracted with pentane (3×3 mL). The combined organic phases were dried (Na_2SO_4) and concentrated. Purification by flash chromatography (pentane) furnished **2** (59 mg, 32%) along with monofluorinated product (42 mg, 24%) and residual diolefin **7** (46 mg, 28%). Further purification of the obtained product by crystallisation (*n*-heptane) afforded **2** (52 mg, 28%) as a single isomer. R_f 0.11 (pentane); mp: 70°C ; $^1\text{H NMR}$ (400 MHz, CDCl_3): $\delta = 0.83$ (d, 6H, $J = 6.6$ Hz), 0.89 (t, 6H, $J = 6.6$ Hz), 1.01 (dd, 2H, $J = 12.5, 13.7$ Hz), 1.11–1.19 (m, 2H), 1.29–1.58 (m, 22H), 1.74–1.93 (m, 6H); $^{13}\text{C NMR}$ (100 MHz, CDCl_3): $\delta = 14.0$

- (2C), 19.2 (2C), 20.3 (2C), 22.6 (2C), 22.8 (d, 2C, $J = 4.7$ Hz), 28.8 (2C), 32.3 (2C), 35.2 (d, 2C, $J = 22.9$ Hz), 41.1 (d, 2C, $J = 22.8$ Hz), 43.3 (2C), 44.6 (d, 2C, $J = 22.6$ Hz), 96.0 (d, 2C, $J = 167.2$ Hz); ^{19}F NMR (188 MHz, CDCl_3): $\delta = -157.5$; Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_{24}\text{H}_{44}\text{F}_2$: C 77.78; H 11.97; Found: C 77.79; H 12.26.
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Article Identifier:
1437-2096,E;2001,0,SI,0960,0963,ftx,en;Y02401ST.pdf