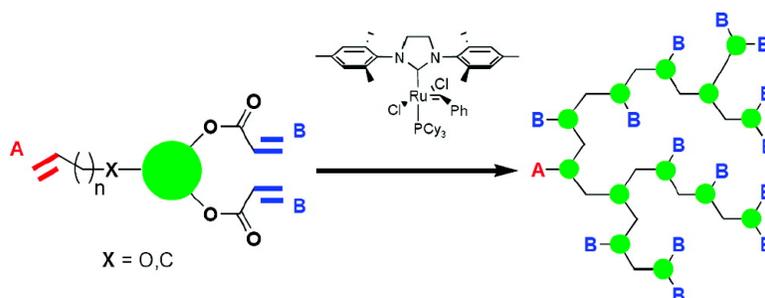


Hyperbranched Macromolecules via Olefin Metathesis

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J. Am. Chem. Soc., **2007**, 129 (42), 12672-12673 • DOI: 10.1021/ja0759040 • Publication Date (Web): 29 September 2007

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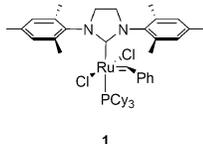
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Hyperbranched polymers are highly branched macromolecules typically prepared via a one-pot polymerization of $AB_{n \geq 2}$ monomers.¹ The A and B functionalities of these monomers readily react with each other, but neither one reacts with itself. The unique macromolecular architecture of dendritic polymers gives rise to attractive features such as multiple end groups, improved solubility, and lower solution viscosity (compared to those of linear analogues of the same molecular weight).¹ Dendrimers—structurally perfect hyperbranched macromolecules²—have already found applications in medicine,^{2,3} catalysis,^{2,4} and nanofabrication.^{2,5} Unfortunately, dendrimer synthesis can be rather labor-intensive and, thus, expensive.² As such, the preparation and study of hyperbranched polymers, which typically exhibit properties similar to those of monodisperse dendrimers,⁶ have been extensively pursued in recent years.¹ However, many of the current methods for the synthesis of hyperbranched polymers also have significant drawbacks, including the need for complex monomers and harsh reaction conditions. Herein, we report a simple method for the preparation of hyperbranched polymers via acyclic diene metathesis polymerization (ADMET)⁷ of easily synthesized monomers under mild conditions.

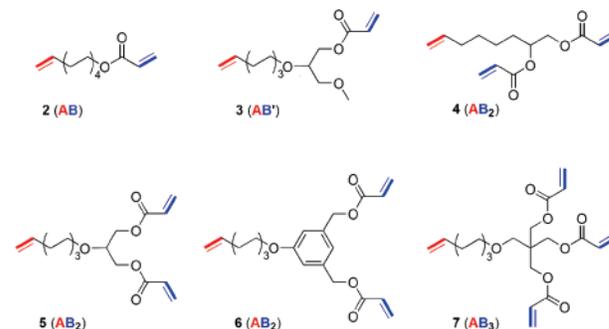
Chart 1. Acyclic Diene Metathesis Polymerization Catalyst



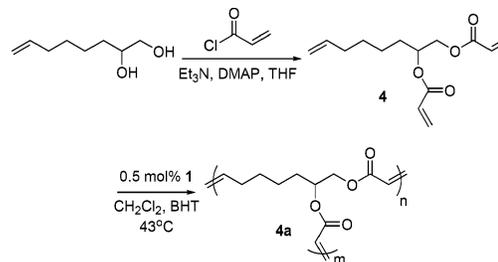
Catalyst **1** (Chart 1) was selected for ADMET hyperbranched polymerization. This imidazolynylidene-based catalyst is tolerant to many functional groups, stable to air and moisture, and readily promotes cross metathesis between electron-rich primary olefins. Furthermore, it can catalyze the cross metathesis involving low metathesis-reactive olefins, such as electron-deficient alkenes. When treated with **1**, electron-poor olefins do not homodimerize (or do so very slowly) but do participate in a secondary metathesis reaction with homodimers of more reactive olefins.⁸ Therefore, any molecule functionalized with one electron-rich olefin, such as a terminal alkene, and two or more electron-poor olefins, such as acrylates, is an AB_n -type monomer (Chart 2) that can be polymerized into a hyperbranched structure using catalyst **1** (Scheme 1).⁹

Monomers **2–7** (Chart 2) were utilized for the ADMET hyperbranched polymerization. They were prepared in one to four steps from commercially available starting materials such as glycerol, Pentaerythritol, and 5-hydroxyisophthalic acid. **2** and **3** were prepared as linear analogues to AB_2 monomers **4** and **5**, as well as the AB_3 monomer **7**. To further demonstrate the inherent flexibility of the presented method, monomer **6** was also synthesized to make a hyperbranched polymer with a different backbone.

Chart 2. Monomers for Hyperbranched ADMET Polymerization



Scheme 1. Hyperbranched ADMET Polymerization



The polymerization of each monomer is easily monitored by ¹H NMR spectroscopy.^{9a,10} For example, Figure 1 shows the ¹H NMR spectra of **4** and the resulting crude polymer **4a**. Some peak broadening due to formation of macromolecules can be observed in the spectrum of **4a**, especially for the backbone proton **b**. It can also be seen that the terminal olefins (**a**) completely disappear during the polymerization. Moreover, as expected, a new peak (**g**), a doublet of triplets, appears at 6.95 ppm due to formation of internal acrylates (AB olefins). An integration ratio of 1:1 is observed between **g** and the remaining unreacted acrylate peak **c** in the spectrum of **4a**, in accord with the fact that there are twice as many B groups as A groups in an AB_2 monomer.¹¹

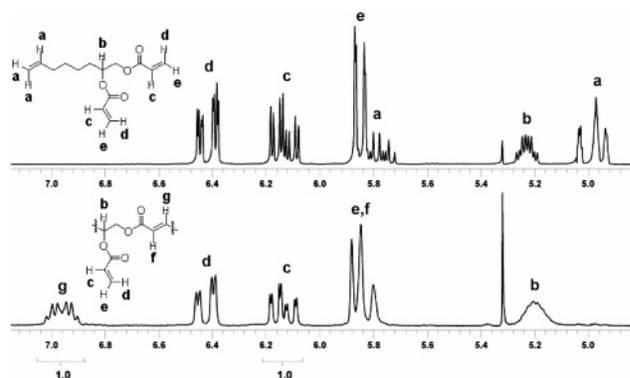


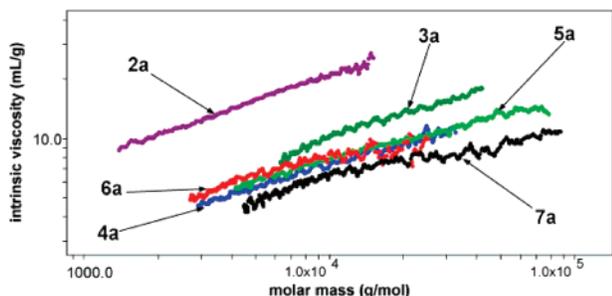
Figure 1. ¹H NMR spectra of monomer **4** and hyperbranched polymer **4a**.

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Table 1. Results of Polymerizations of 2–7^a

| polymer | M_w (kDa) | M_n (kDa) | PDI | $\alpha \times 10^{-1}$ |
|---------|-------------|-------------|-----|-------------------------|
| 2a | 4.31 | 2.07 | 2.1 | 4.45 ± 0.01 |
| 3a | 21.43 | 4.44 | 4.8 | 4.12 ± 0.02 |
| 4a | 3.61 | 0.55 | 6.5 | 3.82 ± 0.02 |
| 5a | 14.77 | 3.08 | 4.8 | 3.24 ± 0.02 |
| 6a | 10.24 | 3.17 | 3.2 | 3.34 ± 0.03 |
| 7a | 30.90 | 5.00 | 6.2 | 2.69 ± 0.02 |

^a Polymerization conditions: 0.5 mol % of **1** was used and the polymerizations were conducted in near-refluxing methylene chloride (45 °C) with venting. M_w , M_n , and PDI were calculated from triple-angle laser light-scattering and refractive index measurements. α was measured with the help of an on-line differential viscometer.

**Figure 2.** Mark–Houwink–Sakurada plots for polymers 2a–7a.

A multiangle light-scattering (MALS) detector combined with a differential refractometer and an on-line viscometer (all from Wyatt Technology Corporation) following size exclusion chromatography (SEC) was used to determine the molecular weights and PDIs of the obtained polymers. Additionally, viscometer data helped to characterize branching of the macromolecules resulting from ADMET of 2–7. Table 1 summarizes the typical crude polymerization results. The PDI values observed are quite high, which is not surprising for a hyperbranched step-type polymerization.¹²

Figure 2 compares the plots of intrinsic viscosity (IV) vs molecular weight (Mark–Houwink–Sakurada plots) for polymers 2a–7a. As expected, the IV of branched polymers 4a–7a is much lower than that of the linear polymer 2a for any given molecular weight. Interestingly, the supposedly linear polymer 3a has a drastically reduced intrinsic viscosity compared to that of 2a, although not quite as low as the viscosities of branched polymers. We attribute this property of 3a to the presence of a methoxy-methyl pendant group in each monomer unit. This group is inert during the polymerization, but its length is comparable to the monomer's overall size. Such an architecture results in a “comb”-type polymer with a lower than expected IV (relative to that of a linear analogue).¹³ Across the molecular weight range studied, the viscosity of polymer 7a, based on an AB₃ monomer 7, is even lower than that of AB₂ polymers 4a–6a. This observation indicates even more branching in the AB₃-based polymer. On the other hand, the intrinsic viscosity does not change dramatically with slight variations in the backbone; it can be seen from Figure 2 that the Mark–Houwink plots for 4a–6a completely overlap.

To extend our analysis, we compared the Mark–Houwink shape parameter α ($[\eta] = KM^\alpha$) for polymers 2a–7a (Table 1). An α parameter of 0.5–1.0 is typical for randomly coiled linear polymers.¹⁴ Polymers with a rigid-rod shape have an α of 2.0, and spherically shaped macromolecules are expected to have an $\alpha < 0.5$.¹⁴ The linear polymer 2a was found to have the highest α value

of 0.45 (Table 1), closely followed by an α of 0.41 for 3a. This observation confirms that 3a is a linear polymer despite its low viscosity. It also validates that polymers 4a–7a are not simply linear, alternating AB comb-shaped polymers. Branched AB₂-based polymers 4a, 5a, and 6a all have α parameters indicative of a spherical shape in solution. Moreover, polymer 7a yielded the lowest α value, which is in agreement with the AB₃-based polymer having the lowest intrinsic viscosity and, thus, the most branching. Overall, the α values found strongly suggest a spherical shape in solution and, therefore, hyperbranching for polymers 4a–7a.

In summary, we have demonstrated that olefin metathesis can be used to prepare hyperbranched polymers with a variety of backbones. The monomer synthesis is simple, and the polymerization is conducted under very mild conditions. It is easy to envision that functionalization of these hyperbranched polymers could lead to a number of applications. Therefore, as an extension of this work, we are currently investigating functionalization of the peripheral groups (acrylates) of the hyperbranched polymers presented here.

Acknowledgment. We gratefully acknowledge Materia, Inc. for the generous gift of catalyst **1**. We also thank Wyatt Technology Corp., especially Dr. Michelle Chen and Dr. Jeffrey Ahlgren for help with the SEC analysis and instrumentation. This research was supported by the office of Naval Research (ONR) through the Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative (MURI) program and NSF.

Supporting Information Available: Experimental procedures with full characterizations for the synthesis of 2–7 and the polymerization procedure. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

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JA0759040