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## Conformational Preferences and Internal Rotation of Methyl Butyrate by Microwave Spectroscopy

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## Abstract

The broadband rotational spectrum of methyl butyrate from 8-18 GHz, recorded using a chirppulsed Fourier transform microwave (FTMW) spectrometer, was combined with high resolution FTMW measurements over the 2-26.5 GHz region to provide a comprehensive account of its microwave spectrum under jet-cooled conditions. Two low-energy conformers, one with a fully extended, heavy-atom planar *anti/anti* structure (**a**,**a**), and the other with a *gauche* propyl chain (**g**±,**a**), were assigned in the spectrum. Torsional A/E splittings due to the internal rotation of the methoxy methyl group were resolved for both lower energy conformers, and were fitted using the program *XIAM* and *BELGI*, providing an estimate of the barrier to methyl internal rotation of  $V_3 \approx 420$  cm<sup>-1</sup>. The conformational landscape of methyl butyrate occurs on a two-dimensional potential energy surface, which was mapped out by quantum chemical calculations at the B2PLYP-D3BJ/aug-cc-pVTZ level of theory. The low torsional barrier about the C-C(=O)O bond leads to collisional removal of population originally in the (**a**,**g**±) and (**g**±,**g**±) minima into the (**a**,**a**) and (**g**±,**a**) minima, respectively, during the cooling in the expansion. Analysis of experimental intensities in the spectrum provide percent populations downstream in the expansion of 41 ± 4 % (**a**,**a**), and 59 ± 6 % (**g**±,**a**).

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Key Words: methyl butyrate, rotational spectroscopy, large amplitude motions, conformational analysis

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