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Synthesis and Structural Diversification of CPL Active, Helically Chiral ‘Confused’ *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs

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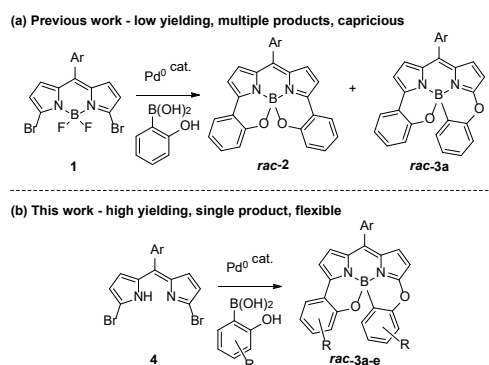
Abstract: Helically chiral boron-chelated dipyrromethene (BODIPY) dyes are known to exhibit solution phase circularly polarized luminescence (CPL), but examples are limited to a few synthetically accessible molecular architectures. We report a B-N chelation, S_NAr , Suzuki cross-coupling, B-O chelation cascade reaction for the synthesis of understudied helically chiral, *N,N,O,C*-boron chelated, “confused” BODIPYs, from readily accessible 3,5-dibromo-BODIPY starting materials. Using this approach we have prepared a series of helically chiral “confused” BODIPYs with variation of the 3,5-substituents. Following resolution by chiral HPLC, absolute stereochemistry was assigned through comparison of the experimental and calculated ECD spectra, and solution phase chiroptical properties including CPL were determined ($[g_{lum}]$ from 2.1 to 3.7×10^{-3} ; B_{CPL} from 11.3 to 27.2).

Circularly polarised luminescence (CPL) is the spontaneous differential emission of left or right circularly polarised light from an excited state in the presence of a chiral field.^[1] There is a burgeoning interest in the discovery of homochiral small organic molecules capable of efficient CPL emission in solution (CPL-SOMs), with numerous classes of CPL-SOMs thus far disclosed.^[2]

Due to their typically high fluorescence quantum yields (ϕ_F) and molar extinction coefficients (ϵ), and their potential for facile modification of photonic properties through minor structural changes, boron-chelated dipyrromethenes or BODIPYs^[3,4] have become attractive targets for the development of CPL-SOM architectures. Asymmetric perturbation of the inherently planar BODIPY core has been shown to result in chiroptical activity in such systems,^[5] leading to a number of BODIPY based CPL-SOMs in which desymmetrisation has been achieved through the introduction of axial, helical, figure-of-eight and propeller-like chiralities.^[6]

We recently reported an isolated example of a CPL-active helically-chiral BODIPY based on an unusual “confused” *N,N,O,C*-boron chelated motif.^[6g] “Confused” *N,N,O,C*-BODIPY (**rac-3a**) was serendipitously formed as a by-product from a Suzuki-Miyaura cross-coupling reaction between 3,5-dibromo-BODIPY (**1**) and 2-hydroxyphenyl boronic acid, resulting in a structure in which one of the aryl substituents at the 3,5-positions had been inverted in comparison to the parent *N,N,O,C*-boron

chelated BODIPY (**rac-2**). *N,N,O,C*-boron chelated BODIPY (**rac-2**) is also formed under these conditions, the product of a double Suzuki-Miyaura reaction and *in situ* B-O chelation (Scheme 1a). Unfortunately, this reaction proved highly capricious, with our initially reported yield of 36% proving to be unreproducible across nine reaction replicates, giving a range of yields from 2-36%. Due to our interest in the further investigation of the chiroptical properties of helically chiral “confused” BODIPYs, we decided to focus our efforts in this area on the development of a much more synthetically reliable route to these intriguing molecules. Thus, herein we report a much improved synthesis of helically chiral ‘confused’ *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs which also allows the flexible introduction of a range of substituted aryl-groups at the 3,5-positions (Scheme 1b).



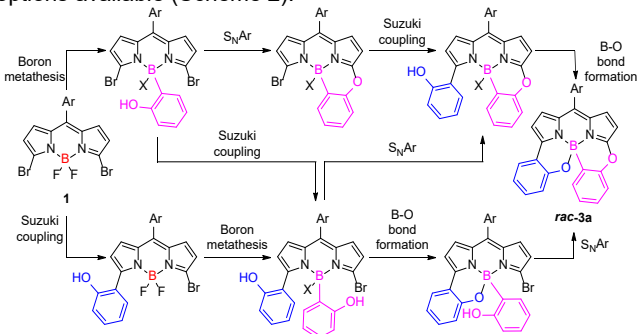
Scheme 1. (a) First reported synthesis of a helically chiral ‘confused’ *N,N,O,C*-BODIPY; (b) Improved route reported herein (Ar- = *p*-(MeCO₂)C₆H₄-).

Results and Discussion

Our first challenge in the development of new routes to helically chiral ‘confused’ *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs (**rac-3a**) was to better understand the step order which was likely to have occurred under the previously discovered reaction conditions. We postulated four main steps in the reaction: boron metathesis, intramolecular S_NAr , Suzuki-Miyaura cross-coupling, and B-O bond formation. However, the likely ordering of these reaction

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steps was not immediately apparent, with a number of viable options available (Scheme 2).



Scheme 2. Potential reaction step orderings *en route* to helically chiral 'confused' *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs (**rac-3a**) (X = F or OH; Ar- = *p*-(MeCO₂)C₆H₄-).

A key step in the potential mechanisms for the formation of 'confused' *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs (**rac-3a**) is boron metathesis, in which the BF₂ group is exchanged with the boron of the added 2-hydroxyphenyl boronic acid. Deborylation of BODIPYs is known, with examples mediated by Brønsted (e.g. TFA or HCl/MeOH)^[7] or Lewis acids (e.g. BBr₃, then H₂O),^[8] whilst spontaneous chelation of boronic acids by multidentate BODIPY like molecules has also been reported.^[9] Thus we hypothesized that the boron metathesis may involve the loss of the BF₂ group mediated by Pd²⁺ acting as a Lewis acid, likely formed by the *in situ* oxidation of Pd⁰, followed by rechelation with 2-hydroxyphenyl boronic acid. To examine the role of Pd in the overall transformation, we began with a control reaction using 5 mol% Pd(PPh₃)₄, under our previously published reaction conditions (Table 1, entry 1), in which *N,N,O,O*-BODIPY (**rac-2**) and *N,N,C,O*-BODIPY (**rac-3a**) were both formed in 34 and 14% yields respectively. Exclusion of the Pd catalyst gave rise to neither of these products (Table 1, entry 2), with some decomposition of the starting material and no detectable products arising from S_NAr chemistry. The use of 5 mol% Pd(PPh₃)₄ in the presence of air (Table 1, entry 3), to increase the availability of Pd²⁺ through air oxidation, resulted in a slight increase in the overall yield of *N,N,C,O*-BODIPY (**rac-3a**) to 16% as the major product isolated. Finally use of 5 mol% Pd(OAc)₂ gave a significant boost in the yield, 39% of *N,N,C,O*-BODIPY (**rac-3**) isolated as the major component in the reaction with only trace *N,N,O,O*-BODIPY (**rac-2**) observable (Table 1, entry 3).

Table 1. Investigation into the role of the Pd catalyst in the formation of *N,N,C,O*-BODIPY (**rac-3**) (Ar- = *p*-(MeCO₂)C₆H₄-).

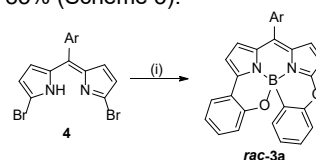
| | Catalyst | % Yield of rac-2 ^[a] | % Yield of rac-3a ^[a] |
|------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | Pd(PPh ₃) ₄ | 34 | 14 |
| 2 ^[a] | none | 0 | 0 |
| 3 ^[b] | Pd(PPh ₃) ₄ | 9 | 16 |

| 4 | Pd(OAc) ₂ | 3 | 39 |
|---|----------------------|---|----|
|---|----------------------|---|----|

Reagents and conditions: (i) 2-hydroxyphenyl boronic acid (4 eq.), Pd catalyst (5 mol %), Na₂CO₃, toluene, 1,4-dioxane, 90 °C (Ar- = *p*-(MeCO₂)C₆H₄-).^[a] Isolated yields.^[b] Reaction performed in the presence of air.

The observed change in selectivity from *N,N,O,O*-BODIPY (**rac-2**) to *N,N,C,O*-BODIPY (**rac-3a**) upon use of a Pd²⁺ catalyst, either directly via Pd(OAc)₂ or via aerial oxidation of a Pd⁰ species, supports the potential role of Pd²⁺ in a Lewis acidic mediated boron metathesis as a key early step in the formation of *N,N,C,O*-BODIPY (**rac-3a**). We reasoned that if the loss of the BF₂ moiety was indeed a key step, then starting instead from the corresponding unchelated α,α-dibromodipyrrromethene **4**, a synthetic precursor to 3,5-dibromoBODIPY **1**, could lead to direct formation of *N,N,O,C*-BODIPY (**rac-3a**).

Indeed when we reacted dibromodipyrrromethene **4**, prepared as previously,^[6g] with 2-hydroxyphenyl boronic acid in the presence of 5 mol% Pd(OAc)₂, we observed the selective formation of the desired 'confused' *N,N,O,C*-BODIPY (**rac-3a**). However, the yield was sub-optimal, owing to the lower overall activity of palladium(II) precatalysts in Suzuki-Miyaura cross-couplings. By reverting to the palladium(0) catalyst, 5 mol% Pd(PPh₃)₄, we were able to selectively synthesise *N,N,O,C*-BODIPY (**rac-3a**) in a high isolated yield of 85% (Scheme 3).



Scheme 3. Synthesis of *N,N,O,C*-BODIPY (**rac-3**). Reagents and conditions: (i) 2-hydroxyphenyl boronic acid (4 eq.), Pd(PPh₃)₄ (5 mol %), Na₂CO₃, toluene:1,4-dioxane (1:1), 90 °C (Ar- = *p*-(MeCO₂)C₆H₄-).

With our improved synthetic route in hand, we next sought to examine the scope of this approach towards functionalised *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs. Thus dibromodipyrrromethene **4** was reacted with a range of functionalised 2-hydroxyphenyl boronic acids leading to the isolation of *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs **rac-3a-e** in moderate to good yields (38-85%) (Table 2).

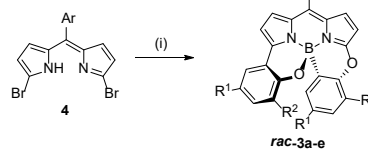


Table 2. Synthesis of an expanded range of *N,N,O,C*-BODIPY **rac-3a-e**.

| | R ¹ | R ² | Product | % Yield |
|---|----------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|
| 1 | H | H | 3a | 85 ^a |
| 2 | H | Me | 3b | 38 |
| 3 | Me | H | 3c | 55 |
| 4 | Cl | H | 3d | 75 |
| 5 | F | H | 3e | 73 |

^[a] Result from Scheme 3 included for comparison

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Following growth of a suitable crystal through slow evaporation of a chloroform solution, the structure of **rac-3c** was confirmed through single crystal X-ray diffraction analysis. A twist angle of 8.2° between the two pyrrolic rings of **rac-3c** was observed, a slight increase in the previously reported analogous twist angle of 7.7° observed in **rac-3a**, suggesting that the aryl methyl groups of **rac-3c** impart a higher degree of chiral perturbation to the planar BODIPY core, at least in the solid state (Figure 1).^[10]

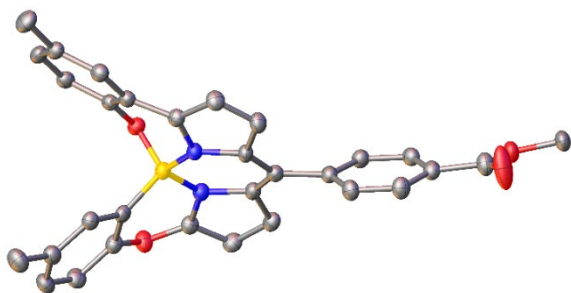


Figure 1. ORTEP diagram of a molecule in the crystal structure of **rac-3c** (H atoms are omitted for clarity; *M*-isomer shown; thermal ellipsoids shown at 50%).

Detailed assignment of the two fluorine environments of **rac-3e** (-117.0 and -123.1 ppm) was achieved through a combination of ^{19}F - ^{13}C HMQC, ^1H - ^{13}C HMBC, ^1H - ^1H ROESY and ^1H - $\{^{19}\text{F}\}$ NMR experiments, the signal at -123.1 ppm being shown to correspond to the fluorine atom of the B-O bonded aryl substituent. ^{19}F - ^{13}C HMQC showed correlations between the fluorines at -117.0 and -123.1 ppm and the carbons at 156.8 and 159.3 ppm respectively, with ^1H - ^{13}C HMBC showing a correlation between the carbon at 156.8 ppm and the proton at 7.42 ppm. ^1H - $\{^{19}\text{F}\}$ NMR confirmed a 3-bond AX coupling ($^3J = 8.2$ Hz) between the proton at 7.42 ppm and the fluorine at -123.1 ppm. Finally, ^1H - ^1H ROESY showed that the aryl and pyrrolic protons at 7.42 and 6.84 ppm respectively, were close in space, allowing assignment of the proton at 7.42 ppm and thus the fluorine at -123.1 ppm to those of the isolated aromatic C-H and the fluorine of the B-O bonded aryl substituent (See SI).

Resolution of dyes *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs **rac-3b-e** was performed by semi-preparative HPLC on a chiral stationary phase to afford the dextro- and levorotatory enantiomers of each *N,N,O,C*-BODIPY. Mirror image ECD spectra were obtained for each set of enantiomers showing good alignment with the recorded UV/Vis absorption spectra (Figure 2a). As we would anticipate, the ECD spectra of each enantiomer of *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs **3b-e** showed strong Cotton effects in the S_0 - S_1 transition in each case.

In order to assign each enantiomer as either (*P*) or (*M*), Boltzmann-weighted ECD spectra were obtained from TD-DFT calculations at the cam-B3LYP/6-311++G(3df,2pd) level for the (*P*) enantiomer of each *N,N,O,C*-BODIPY (Figure 2b). By comparison of the calculated ECD spectra and the experimental ECD spectra, we were able to unambiguously assign the (*P*) and (*M*) isomers of *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs **3b-e** (Figure 2c).

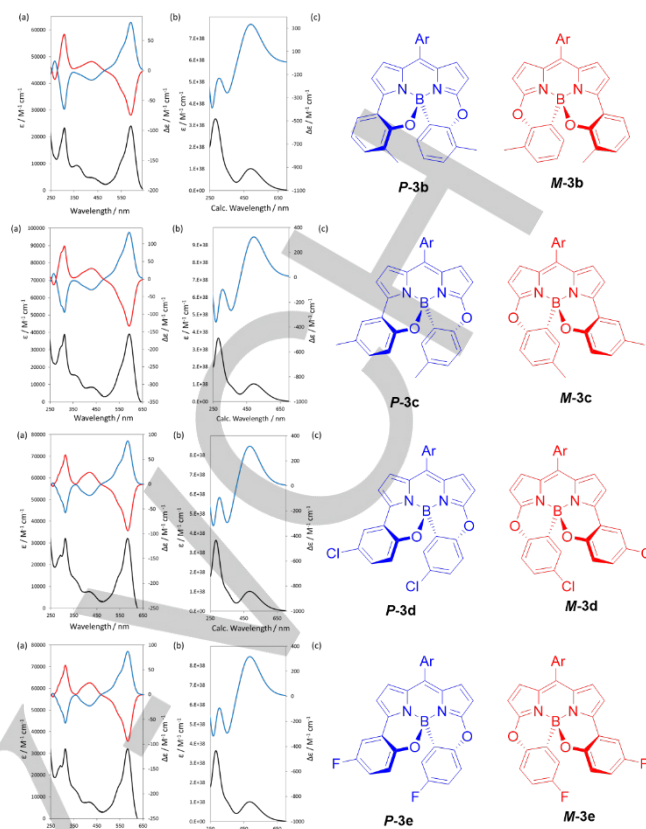


Figure 2. (a) Experimental ECD spectra (blue – (*P*)-**3b-e**, red – (*M*)-**3b-e**) and UV/Vis absorption spectrum (black – **rac-3b-e**) measured in dichloromethane; (b) Calculated Boltzmann-weighted spectra, ECD (blue – postulated (*P*)-**3b-e**, (wavelengths uncorrected)) and UV/Vis absorption spectra (black – postulated (*P*)-**3b-e** (wavelengths uncorrected)); (c) Structures of blue – (*P*)-**3b-e** and red – (*M*)-**3b-e** (Note: Experimental and calculated ECD spectra for **3a** were previously published^[6d]).

CPL measurements for (*P*) and (*M*) isomers of *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs **3b-e** were undertaken using a home-built modular PEM-CPL spectrometer, and gave mirror image spectra with the magnitude of their luminescence dissymmetry factors ($|g_{lum}|$) in the range 2.1 – 2.6×10^{-3} (Figure 3 and Table 3).^[11] Unfortunately, comparison to the previously published CPL spectra of **3a**^[6d], showed no improvements in $|g_{lum}|$ values across the four derivatives **3b-e**. However, the values obtained were typical of $|g_{lum}|$ magnitudes observed for small organic molecules, including related mono-BODIPY systems, and as predicted for π - π^* transitions in organic molecules through direct correlation with recorded $|g_{abs}|$ values ($|g_{lum}| \approx 0.8 |g_{abs}|$).^[12] Additionally, the $|g_{lum}|$ values obtained for *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs **3b-3e** are consistent across the series, which suggests that modifications to the 3,5-aryl rings can be performed without detriment to the CPL capability of the dye and thus that it should be possible in the future to maintain a predictable CPL output while introducing additional functionality. Indeed $|g_{lum}|$ were calculated for the major ground state conformers of **3a-e** from the excited S_1 optimised geometry by TD-DFT (CAM-B3LYP /6-311++G(3df,2pd)),^[13] and gave generally good agreement with the experimentally observed values. CPL brightness (B_{CPL}), the product of the molar extinction coefficient (ϵ), fluorescence quantum yield (ϕ_F) and half the luminescence dissymmetry factor ($|g_{lum}|/2$) was also calculated giving values from 11.3 to 27.2, also typical of simple chiral BODIPYs (Table 4).^[14]

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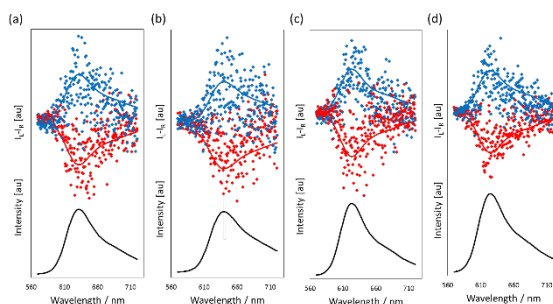


Figure 3. (a) Normalised CPL (l_L-l_R) (red – (*M*)-**3b**, blue – (*P*)-**3b**) and fluorescence spectra (black – *rac*-**3b**) measured in dichloromethane; (b) Normalised CPL (l_L-l_R) (red – (*M*)-**3c**, blue – (*P*)-**3c**) and fluorescence spectra (black – *rac*-**3c**) measured in dichloromethane; (c) Normalised CPL (l_L-l_R) (red – (*M*)-**3d**, blue – (*P*)-**3d**) and fluorescence spectra (black – *rac*-**3d**) measured in dichloromethane; (d) Normalised CPL (l_L-l_R) (red – (*M*)-**3e**, blue – (*P*)-**3e**) and fluorescence spectra (black – *rac*-**3e**) measured in dichloromethane (Note: CPL spectra for (*M*)-**3a** and (*P*)-**3a** were previously published^[6a]).

Table 3. Photophysical and chiroptical properties of *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs **3a-e**.

| | λ_{\max} (nm) | ϵ ($M^{-1}cm^{-1}$) | Φ_F | $ g_{abs} $ | $ g_{lum} _{calc}^{[c]}$ | $ g_{lum} _{exp}$ | B_{CPL} ($M^{-1}cm^{-1}$) |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 3a ^[a] | 622 | 30,000 | 0.49 | 3.1×10^{-3} | - | 3.7×10^{-3} | 27.2 |
| 3b ^[b] | 633 | 24,000 | 0.41 | 3.2×10^{-3} | 3.1×10^{-3} | 2.3×10^{-3} | 11.3 |
| 3c ^[b] | 637 | 39,000 | 0.25 | 3.4×10^{-3} | 2.2×10^{-3} | 2.6×10^{-3} | 12.7 |
| 3d ^[b] | 622 | 52,000 | 0.37 | 2.9×10^{-3} | 2.2×10^{-3} | 2.1×10^{-3} | 20.2 |
| 3e ^[b] | 623 | 32,000 | 0.43 | 2.8×10^{-3} | 2.2×10^{-3} | 2.2×10^{-3} | 15.1 |

^[a] hexane. ^[b] DCM. ^[c] $|g_{lum}|_{calc}$ shown for conformer 1 of **3b-d**. (Note: data for **3a** previously published^[6a], included for comparison).

It should also be noted that in this series of helically chiral *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs, in the case where one enantiomer absorbs circularly polarised light with a particular handedness, then it also emits light with the same handedness, also in line with previously reported cases of related helically chiral BODIPYs.

Conclusions

In summary, following an initial mechanistic investigation into the formation of confused helically chiral *N,N,O,C*-BODIPY (*rac*-**3a**), we have developed a reliable high yielding synthetic route towards these molecules tolerant of functional group variations coming from the aryl boronic acid component. This has allowed the synthesis of number of *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs (*rac*-**3a-e**) facilitating further study of the chiroptical properties of molecules in this class. *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs **3b-e** were resolved into their corresponding enantiomers, by chiral HPLC, and displayed chiroptical properties in keeping with related chiral BODIPYs published. Future work will focus on the extension of halogen functionalised *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs, such as **3d**, allowing the expansion of the chiral π -system with the potential for improved CPL-SOM design.^[15]

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Keywords: helically chiral • BODIPY • CPL • ECD • cascade reaction

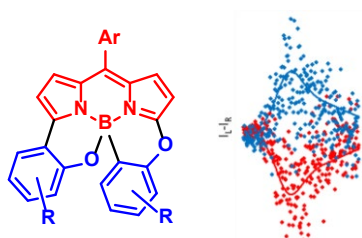
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Entry for the Table of Contents



R = H, *o*-Me, *p*-Me, *p*-Cl, *p*-F; 38-85 % yields
 I_{lum} = 2.1-3.7 $\times 10^{-3}$; B_{CPL} = 11.3-27.2

High yielding (38-85%), flexible synthetic route to a group of helically chiral *N,N,O,C*-BODIPYs exhibiting circularly polarized luminescence (CPL) in solution phase (B_{CPL} = 11.3-27.2) for resolved single enantiomers.

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