

Switching from Biaryl Formation to Amidation with Convoluted **Polymeric Nickel Catalysis**

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predominantly to give the corresponding arylamides in up to 99% yield. In contrast, the reaction of aryl halides and amides in the absence of arylboronic acid/ester did not proceed. P4VP-NiCl₂ successfully catalyzed the lactamization for preparing phenanthridinone. P4VP-NiCl₂ was reused five times without significant loss of catalytic activity. Pharmaceuticals, natural products, and biologically active compounds were synthesized efficiently using P4VP-NiCl₂ catalysis. Nickel contamination in the prepared pharmaceutical compounds was not detected by ICP-MS analysis. The reaction was scaled to multigrams without any loss of chemical yield. Mechanistic studies for both Suzuki-Miyaura and amidation were performed.

KEYWORDS: reusable catalyst, nickel catalysis, heterogeneous catalysis, Suzuki-Miyaura coupling, amidation reaction

INTRODUCTION

Transition-metal-catalyzed cross-coupling reactions are one of the most convenient, versatile, and straightforward methods for C-C or C-N bond construction.^{1,2} Despite the widespread application of palladium-catalyzed cross-coupling reactions, such processes are not preferable at industrial scales owing to the high cost of palladium. Compared with palladium, nickel is an inexpensive and earth-abundant metal, which renders nickel-catalyzed cross-coupling reactions a highly economical prospect. However, the relatively high toxicity³ and the low turnover numbers in catalysis, which requires high catalyst loadings, are the key challenges with its use. Despite several reports on homogeneous nickel-catalyzed $C-C^4$ and $C-N^5$ coupling reactions, the development of recoverable and reusable heterogeneous nickel catalysts with high catalytic activity is still in its infancy. While homogeneous catalysis is associated with nickel contamination of the desired products, heterogeneous nickel catalysis, ideally, could provide opportunities for catalyst recovery and reuse without the nickel contamination challenges. Few examples of nickel catalyst immobilization are known;⁶ however, their catalytic activity and reusability requires further improvement and is an ongoing challenge. Owing to the higher lability of nickel to ligands, heterogeneous nickel catalysts are unstable and readily

when the same reaction of aryl halides and arylboronic acid/ester

was carried out in the presence of amides, the amidation proceeded

decomposed, and therefore, the development of highly active, reusable, and bench-stable heterogeneous nickel catalysts is challenging. We reported a methodology for the preparation of highly active and reusable polymeric palladium and copper catalysts, also known as the molecular convolution methodology.7 Considering the lack of metal leaching, high activity, and reusability of the nickel catalysts developed with this approach, this methodology was applied to the development of polymeric nickel catalysts.

(0.1 mol% Ni)

Amide linkages play crucial roles in pharmaceuticals, natural products, and synthetic intermediates,⁸ including paracetamol,⁹ acebutolol,¹⁰ and phenanthridinone¹¹ (Figure 1). The most widely used method for amide synthesis is amidation of carboxylic acid derivatives,¹² and *N*-arylation of amides can be a useful alternative.¹³ Unfortunately, there are few reports on nickel-catalyzed amidation of aryl/alkyl amide and aryl halides,^{5h} probably because of the poor nucleophilicity of the

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Figure 1. Representative examples of biologically active molecules containing an amide linkage.

amide nitrogen. Recently, we reported phenylboronic acid/ ester-assisted Buchwald–Hartwig type amination, wherein the phenylboronic acid/ester acts as an activator for the formation of an ate complex with the amines.¹⁴ In the absence of phenylboronic acid, the amination did not occur. On the basis of this observation, we hypothesized that phenylboronic acid might activate amide substrates via boron–amide complex formation (Scheme 1), and this complex might enable the *N*-

Scheme 1. Hypothesis for Switchable Selectivity from Suzuki–Miyaura Coupling to Amidation



arylation of the amides. On the other hand, phenylboronic acid/ester is itself a good nucleophile in Suzuki–Miyaura-type couplings. The Suzuki–Miyaura carbon–carbon bond formation is widespread with applications in both academia and industry. Despite the several reports on these reactions,^{1,4} switchable selectivity¹⁵ between these two reactions has not yet been reported. Therefore, we explored the possibility for switchable selectivity between Suzuki–Miyaura-type coupling and amidation depending on the presence or absence of amides. Herein, we report switchable selectivity from biaryl formation to amidation, promoted by a heterogeneous, benchstable, reusable, and convoluted polymeric nickel catalyst, poly(4-vinylpyridine)⁷ (P4VP)-NiCl₂ polymer.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preparation of Convoluted P4VP-Nickel Catalysts. When a methanol solution of a commercially available linear poly(4-vinylpyridine), P4VP (I), was treated with an aqueous solution of NiCl₂·6H₂O and stirred for 6 h at room temperature, molecular convolution occurred to yield II as a greenish precipitate (Scheme 2).

Catalyst II was insoluble in water, methanol, dioxane, chloroform, and hexane. The structure of the catalyst $[Ni(P4VP)_4(H_2O)_2]Cl_2$ (II) is shown in Scheme 2 (for more details, see Figures S1–S3 in the Supporting Information).

Catalysis. The catalytic activity of **II** was examined for the amidation reaction (for more details, see p S5 in the Supporting Information). When *p*-tolyliodide (1a) and benzamide (3a) were reacted in the presence of P4VP-Ni (1000 mol ppm (0.1 mol % Ni)), no reaction occurred (Table

Scheme 2. Preparation of a P4VP-Supported Nickel Catalyst



1, entry 1). However, when the reaction was performed in the presence of phenylboronic ester (2a) as an activator, we were

Table 1. Switchable Selectivity from C–C to C–N Bond Formation^a

	$-\frac{1}{1a}$ $+$ $-\frac{1}{1a}$	0.1 mol% Ni) D_4 (3 mol equiv) ioxane C, N ₂ , 30 h	Aaa 5aa
entry	deviation from standard condi	tions yield 4aa (%)	yield 5aa (%)
1	without 2a	0	0
2	none	99	0
3	phenylboronic acid instead of	2a 98	1
4	without P4VP-Ni	0	0
5	without K ₃ PO ₄	0	0
6	KOtBu instead of K ₃ PO ₄	97	2
7	NaOtBu instead of K ₃ PO ₄	55	33
8	toluene instead of 1,4-dioxane	e 60	0
9	without 3a	0	55
10	without 3a and 5 mol equiv of	of 2a 0	91
11	air instead of nitrogen	94	0
^a Stand	ard reaction conditions: 1a	(1 mol equiv) 2a	1.5 mol equiv)

"Standard reaction conditions: 1a (1 mol equiv), 2a (1.5 mol equiv), 3a (3 mol equiv), II (0.1 mol % Ni), K_3PO_4 (3 mol equiv), and 1,4dioxane (2 mL) at 115 °C for 30 h under N₂.

pleased to find that the desired amidation product **4aa** was obtained in 99% yield with >99% selectivity, in the absence of the typical Suzuki–Miyaura reaction product **5aa** (entry 2).

The use of phenylboronic acid instead of phenylboronic ester **2a** had no significant effect on the product outcome (entry 3). In the absence of the nickel complex, no reaction took place, thus proving the role of nickel as a catalyst (entry 4). In addition, when the reaction was performed in the absence of a base, no reaction occurred (entry 5). KOtBu was also an effective base and afforded **4aa** in 97% yield and 97% selectivity (entry 6). On the other hand, NaOtBu provided a mixture of products suggesting that the presence of strong potassium bases is critical for achieving high selectivity (entry 7). Although the use of toluene as a solvent afforded a 60% yield, the amidation proceeded exclusively (entry 8). Importantly, **II** was also useful as a catalyst for Suzuki–Miyaura-type coupling in the absence of **3a** and provided the corresponding biaryl compound **5aa** in up to 91% yield with

>99% selectivity (entries 9 and 10). A use of air instead of N_2 was also successful (entry 11).

With the optimized reaction conditions in hand, the amidation of various aryl iodides with 3a was investigated (Table 2); it indicated a broad functional group tolerance.



^{*a*}All reactions were performed with 1 (1 mol equiv), 2a (1.5 mol equiv), 3a (3 mol equiv), II (0.1 mol % Ni), K_3PO_4 (3 mol equiv), and 1,4-dioxane (2 mL) at 115 °C for 30 h under N_2 .

Phenylboronic ester 2a was recoverable in up to 96% yield after the C-N bond-forming amidation. The reaction of 3methyliodobenzene (1b) and 2-methyliodobenzene (1c) afforded 4ba and 4ca in 89 and 93% yields, respectively. The bulky 4-butyl iodobenzene (1d) was converted to 4da in 71% yield. The electron-rich substrates 4-methoxy- and 4-ethoxyiodobenzenes (1e and 1f) furnished the desired product in 92 and 94% yields, respectively. Iodobenzene (1g) gave 4ga in 84% yield. Chemoselective reactions were realized when the reaction of 1-bromo-4-iodo-(1h) or 1-chloro-4-iodobenzenes (1i) was carried out with 3a. Although a trace amount of N-(4iodophenyl)benzamide was observed in the reaction of 1h, the aryl chloride did not participate in the reaction. A significant amount of the substrate remained unreactive in both cases (1h and 1i). When 1-chloro-3-iodobenzene (1j) and 1,3-dichloro-5-iodobenzene (1k) were reacted with 3a, the corresponding amidation products 4ja and 4ka were obtained in 81 and 82%

vields, respectively. The electron-deficient 4-trifluoromethyl-, 3-trifluoromethyl-, 4-acetyl-, and 4-ethoxycarbonyl-iodobenzene 11-10 were readily converted to the corresponding amidation products 4la-40a. Unfortunately, the aldehyde (1p) and nitrile (1q) containing substrates were not able to generate the desired product. The reactions of alcohol (1r) and amine (1s) substrates proceeded with 55% and 43% yields, respectively. Although 2-iodopyridine (1u) did not provide the desired reaction but the reaction of 3-iodothiophene (1t), 3iodopyridine (1v), and 5-iodo-1-methyl-1*H*-indole (1w)afforded 4ta, 4va, and 4wa in 69, 88, and 89% yields, respectively. Notably, bioactive compounds could be synthesized in a single step: N-(pyridin-3-yl)benzamide (4va) exhibited antiviral^{8f} and NAMPT inhibition activities,^{8g} and N-(thiophen-3-yl)benzamide (4ta) is a GK activator.^{8h} The naphthalene series substrates, 1-iodonapthalene (1x), and 2iodonapthalene (1y) generated the desired products in 42 and 77% yields, respectively. The N-(naphthalen-2-yl)benzamide (4ya) obtained from 2-iodonapthalene (1y) possesses miR-122 inhibition ability.8

Next, the amidation of a variety of amide counterparts was investigated (Table 3). The electronic perturbation of aromatic





^{*a*}All reactions were performed with 1a (1 mol equiv), 2a (1.5 mol equiv), 3 (3 mol equiv), II (0.1 mol % Ni), K_3PO_4 (3 mol equiv), and 1,4-dioxane (2 mL) at 115 °C for 30 h under N_2 . ^{*b*}Reaction time is 72 h.

substituents has a crucial effect on product outcomes. However, irrespective of the position of the methyl group on the benzamide (p-, m-, and o-), the amidation proceeded smoothly (entries 2–4). The electron-rich p-methoxybenzamide (**3e**) afforded **4ae** in 99% yield (entry 5). Installation of an electron-withdrawing nitro group (**3f**) completely suppressed the reaction by reducing the nucleophilicity of benzamide (entry 6). Interestingly, nicotinamide (**3g**, present in vitamin B3) successfully furnished N-(p-tolyl)nicotinamide (**4ag**) (entry 7). Aromatic and aliphatic amides are applicable in this amidation. When acetamide (**3h**) was treated under the reaction conditions, N-(p-tolyl)acetamide (**4ah**) was obtained in 82% yield (entry 8). Similarly, butyramide (**3i**) and hexanamide (**3j**) provided 98 and 84% yields of **4ai** and **4aj**, respectively (entries 9 and 10). In addition, olefin functionalities were tolerated in this reaction. When hex-5-enamide (**3k**) was treated with p-tolyliodide (**1a**), the desired amidation product (**4ak**) was obtained in 87% yield (entry 11).

With an extensive exploration of the amidation substrate scope, we turned attention to studying the substrate scope for the C–C bond-forming Suzuki–Miyaura coupling. When the reaction of *p*-tolyliodide (1a) was performed with 2-phenyl-1,3,2-dioxaborinane (2a) in the presence of 0.1 mol % Ni (II) and K_3PO_4 in 1,4-dioxane, 4-methyl biphenyl (5aa) was obtained in 91% yield (Table 4). The cross-coupling of 3-

Table 4. Substrate Scope for Aryl Iodides in the Suzuki– Miyaura Reaction^a



"All reactions were performed with 1 (1 mol equiv), 2a (5 mol equiv), II (0.1 mol % Ni), K_3PO_4 (3 mol equiv), and 1,4-dioxane (2 mL) at 115 °C for 30 h under N_2 .

methyliodobenzene (1b) and 2-methyliodobenzene (1c) also afforded coupling products 5ba and 5ca in 87 and 84% yields, respectively. The presence of the bulky butyl group at the 4position of iodobenzene did not have any adverse impact, and the coupling reaction proceeded successfully (5da). The reactions of 4-methoxyiodobenzene (1e) and 4-ethoxyiodobenzene (1f) afforded the corresponding biphenyl derivatives 5ea and 5fa in 92 and 94% yields, respectively. In the case of the polyhalide-substituted starting materials, the reaction proceeded with high selectivity. When 1-chloro-4-iodobenzene (1i) and 1,3-dichloro-5-iodobenzene (1k) were subjected to biphenyl formation conditions, 4-chloro-1,1'-biphenyl (5ia) and 3,5-dichloro-1,1'-biphenyl (5ka) were obtained in 86 and 68% yields, respectively. Similarly, 1-bromo-3-iodobenzene (1z) and 1-bromo-4-iodobenzene (1h) also gave the corresponding bromobiphenyls (5za and 5ha) in 77 and 72% yields, respectively, and no iodobiphenyls were observed among the products. The partial electron-withdrawing effect of the halides reduced the reactivity of the aryl iodides; when 1(4-iodophenyl)ethan-1-one (1n) was exposed to the reaction conditions, a 63% yield of the desired product **5na** was obtained, whereas the reaction of the stronger electronwithdrawing *p*-trifluoromethyl substitution (11) hardly proceeded. Although 3-iodopyridine furnished an 89% yield of the coupling product (**5va**), 3-iodothiophene (1t) was not able to generate a coupling product (**5ta**). The synthesis of 2phenylnaphthalene (**5ya**) was successful in 55% yield.

We also examined the effect of different boron sources (Table 5). While 2-phenyl-1,3,2-dioxaborinane 2a provided





^{*a*}All reactions were performed with 1a (1 mol equiv), 2 (5 mol equiv), II (0.1 mol % Ni), K_3PO_4 (3 mol equiv), and 1,4-dioxane (2 mL) at 115 °C for 30 h under N₂. ^{*b*}N. R.: No reaction.

5aa in 91% yield, phenylboronic acid neopentylglycol ester 2b could generate a 60% yield of 5aa. Although phenylboronic acid glycol ester 2c provided an 80% yield of 5aa, phenylboronic acid pinacol ester 2d failed to construct the C-C bond under the catalytic conditions, probably because of the bulky nature of the boron source. Simple phenylboronic acid 2e was unable to provide a coupling product. Similarly, the trifluoro(phenyl)- λ^4 -borane, potassium salt 2f, was unable to construct the biphenyl derivatives. The electron-donating tolylboronic ester 2g and (4-methoxyphenyl)boronic ester 2h furnished the biphenyls in 79 and 87% yields, respectively, whereas the electron-deficient (4-(trifluoromethyl)phenyl)boronic ester 2i afforded the coupling product in 73% yield. The results of these experiments reveal that phenylboronic ester derivatives are essential for the P4VP-Ni-catalyzed Suzuki–Miyaura type C–C bond formation.

Next, we examined the reactivity of different aryl halides in the amidation reaction. Interestingly, aryl iodides, aryl bromides, and aryl chlorides all furnished amidation reaction products (Table 6).

Having assessed the substrate scope, we investigated the reusability of II (0.1 mol %, 0.42 mg in the 1st run) (for more details, see p S37 in the Supporting Information). Unlike the typical nickel catalysts, our catalyst can be reused up to four times without significant loss of reactivity (Table 7).

The recovered catalyst can also be used for the sequential amidation and Suzuki–Miyaura-type cross-coupling sequence (Scheme 3; for more details, see p S37 in the Supporting Information). The Suzuki–Miyaura-type cross-coupling of 1a and 2a was carried out with fresh II under the standard

Table 6. Reactivity of Different Aryl Halides

	II (Y 2a (1.	/ mol% Ni) 5 mol equiv)	F ₃ C-V-NH 4lh	
F ₃ C	— X + 311 — K ₃ PO ₄ 1,4 115 °	(3 mol equiv) 1-dioxane ²C, N ₂ , 30 h		
entry	substrate	Y (mol %)	yield (%)	
1	11, X = I	0.1	75	
2	11', $X = Br$	0.5	71	
3	11", X = Cl	0.5	28	

Table 7. Catalyst Recovery and Recyclability for the Amidation Reaction

	12 + 22	recoverd II (0.1 mc 2a (1.5 mol equiv)	bl% Ni)
	1a ⁻ 3a -	K ₃ PO ₄ (3 mol equi 1,4-dioxane 115 °C, N ₂ , 30 h	V)
entry	number of runs	yield 4aa (%)	catalyst recovery yield (%)
1	1st	99	91
2	2nd	93	94
3	3rd	96	85
4	4th	89	89
5	5th	88	82

Scheme 3. Reusability of the Recovered Catalyst in C–C and C–N Bond-Forming Reactions

1st reaction	1a	+	2 a	II (1st use) ↓	<mark>5aa</mark> (91%)
2nd reaction	1a	+	3a	II (2nd use) ↓ 2a	<mark>4aa</mark> (98%)
3rd reaction	1a	+	2a	II (3rd use)	<mark>5aa</mark> (81%)

conditions to prepare **5aa** in 91% yield. The catalyst **II** was recovered and reused for the amidation of **1a** and **3a**, and it afforded **4aa** in 98% yield. Catalyst **II** was again recovered and reused for the Suzuki–Miyaura-type cross-coupling and provided **5aa** in 81% yield. These results suggest that the same catalytic species work in both reactions.

When catalyst II was applied to the intramolecular amidation reaction (lactam formation) of 2'-iodo-[1,1'-biphenyl]-2-carboxamide 6 in the presence of phenylboronic acid 2e as an activator, the cyclization proceeded smoothly to afford phenanthridinone (7) in 97% yield (Scheme 4a). Further, in the absence of 2e, cyclization did not proceed. Notably, phenanthridinone is a biologically active compound and is an important synthetic intermediate for the synthesis of several pharmaceutically active molecules.^{11e}

We applied this methodology for the 2 g scale reaction (Scheme 4b). The desired amidation product methacetin was observed with 89% yield (1.3 g). We examined the possibility of nickel contamination of the prepared biologically active molecules (for more details, see pp S14 and S38 in the Supporting Information).

The effect of the stoichiometry of 3a and 2a in the Suzuki– Miyaura coupling and amidation was examined next. The addition of 10 mol % 3a in the optimal C–C coupling conditions furnished a 9% yield of the amidation product 4aaand a 90% yield of 5aa (Figure 2). A gradual increase of 3a in the reaction mixture increased the amount of 4aa. While the





Figure 2. Effect of addition of 3a in Suzuki-Miyaura coupling.

addition of 1 equiv of 3a furnished an 82% yield of 4aa, a one to one ratio of 2a and 3a afforded an 87% yield of 4aa. The use of excess amide generated a 91% yield of 4aa and afforded 5aa as a minor product (for more details, see p S30 in the Supporting Information). In contrast, when phenylboronic ester 2a was added gradually to the optimal amidation reaction conditions, a slow nonlinear increase of the formation of 5aa with a low yield was seen and a sharp increase in the C–N coupling product was observed (Figure 3). These results indicate that 2a acts as an activator for the amidation reaction.

Plausible Catalytic Pathway. *Mechanistic Studies.* Since the amidation proceeded smoothly with both phenylboronic



Figure 3. Effect of the addition of 2a in the amidation.

acid (2e) and phenylboronic ester (2a), we examined the plausible catalytic pathway using phenylboronic acid. The mixture of phenylboronic acid (2e) and benzamide (3a) provided the reaction intermediate L1 (Scheme 5a). The

Scheme 5. Identification of Reaction Intermediates



structure of L1 was proposed based on the ¹H NMR, ¹³C NMR, ESI-MS, and DFT calculations (for more details, see pp S14–S18 in the Supporting Information). The reaction of the isolated intermediate L1 with 1a in the presence of catalyst II and K_3PO_4 efficiently furnished the desired amidation product 4aa in 82% yield (Scheme 5b). The use of the intermediate L1 in the absence of bases did not lead to C–N bond formation (for more details, see p S15 in the Supporting Information).

To examine the catalytic pathway in greater detail, we studied the effect of radical inhibitors on the reaction. The addition of (2,2,6,6-tetramethylpiperidin-1-yl)oxyl, TEMPO, or butylated hydroxytoluene(BHT) to both reactions completely suppressed product formation (Scheme 6). These experiments clearly indicate that both reactions involve a radical pathway.¹⁶

Scheme 6. Effect of the Radical Inhibitor on Reactivity

(a) 1a	+ 3a + 2a	standard conditions TEMPO (1 equiv)	4ab (0%)
(b) 1a	+ 3a + 2a	standard conditions BHT (1 equiv)	4ab (7%)
(c)	1a + 2a	standard conditions TEMPO (1 equiv)	5 aa (0%)
(d)	1a + 2a	standard conditions BHT (1 equiv)	5aa (0%)

During the analysis of the reaction products from both reactions by GC, we observed biphenyl, which originates from the oxidative coupling of phenylboronic ester 2a, resulting in a Ni(0) complex, in less than 1% yield. This nickel(0) complex further reacts with the Ni(II) complex to undergo comproportionation and forms the catalytically active Ni(I) complex, A (for more details, see p \$38 in the Supporting Information). The chemical kinetics for the amidation revealed that the reaction followed zero-order dependence on aryl iodide and the nickel catalyst, first-order dependence on arylboronic ester and amide substrates, and second-order dependence on K_3PO_4 (for more details, see Figures S5–S9 in the Supporting Information). On the other hand, the chemical kinetics for Suzuki-Miyaura-type coupling showed that the reaction followed zero-order dependence on aryl iodide and the nickel catalyst, whereas first-order dependence was observed for arylboronic ester and K₃PO₄ (for more details, see Figures S10-S13 in the Supporting Information). On the basis of these studies, we propose the intermediacy of nucleophile Nu1 for the C–C coupling reaction and putative nucleophile Nu2 for the C–N coupling reaction (Scheme 7; for more details, see p S18 in the Supporting Information).

Scheme 7. Proposed Nucleophiles for C–C and C–N Coupling Reactions



Initially, a halogen abstraction reaction between the Ni(I) catalyst and aryl halides generated intermediate **B** and an aryl radical (Scheme 8). After that, a radical rebound step provided

Scheme 8. Plausible Reaction Mechanism



intermediate C. Next, Nu1 or Nu2 underwent transmetalation to generate intermediate D. The generation of the nucleophile was the rate-determining step for both C–C and C–N bond formations. Finally, reductive elimination from intermediate D produces either C–C or C–N coupling product based on the nucleophile and regenerates Ni(I) catalyst A.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, a novel polymer-supported nickel complex was developed. The structure of this complex was proposed based on EXAFS, XANES, and DFT analyses. This complex was able to catalyze both Suzuki–Miyaura-type and amidation reactions. Moreover, perfect switchable selectivity from Suzuki–Miyaura coupling to amidation was observed. The construction of several biologically active molecules was successful. The reaction is compatible with large-scale synthesis. Notably, the catalyst is recoverable and recyclable. A more detailed investigation of the reaction mechanism and further application of P4VP-NiCl₂ on natural product synthesis is ongoing in our laboratory.

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acscatal.0c03888.

Experimental details for C–C and C–N bond formations (optimization, reaction procedure, reaction time-course measurement, and chemical kinetics) and analytical data (elemental analysis and XAFS) for the nickel catalyst; ¹H NMR, ¹³C NMR, HRMS, and DFT for reaction intermediate L1; and ¹H NMR, ¹³C NMR, melting point, and ¹⁹F NMR for all C–C and C–N coupling products (PDFs)

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Author Contributions

The manuscript was written through the contributions of all the authors. All authors have approved the final version of the manuscript.

Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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