

# Symmetry-Guided Synthesis of *N,N'*-Bicarbazole and Porphyrin-Based Mixed-Ligand Metal–Organic Frameworks: Light Harvesting and Energy Transfer

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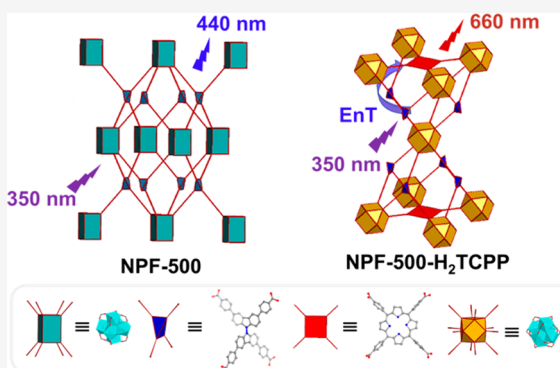


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**ABSTRACT:** In the past decades, many attempts have been made to mimic the energy transfer (EnT) in photosynthesis, a key process occurring in nature that is of fundamental significance in solar fuels and sustainable energy. Metal–organic frameworks (MOFs), an emerging class of porous crystalline materials self-assembled from organic linkers and metal or metal cluster nodes, offer an ideal platform for the exploration of directional EnT phenomena. However, placing energy donor and acceptor moieties within the same framework with an atomistic precision appears to be a major synthesis challenge. In this work, we report the design and synthesis of a highly porous and photoactive *N,N'*-bicarbazole- and porphyrin-based mixed-ligand MOF, namely, NPF-500- $H_2$ TCPP (NPF = Nebraska porous framework;  $H_2$ TCPP = *meso*-tetrakis(4-carboxyphenyl)porphyrin), where the secondary ligand  $H_2$ TCPP is incorporated precisely through the open metal sites of the equatorial plane of the octahedron cage resulting from the underlying (4,8) connected network of NPF-500. The efficient EnT process from *N,N'*-bicarbazole to porphyrin in NPF-500- $H_2$ TCPP was captured by time-resolved spectroscopy and exemplified by photocatalytic oxidation of thioanisole. These results demonstrate not only the capability of NPF-500 as the scaffold to precisely arrange the donor–acceptor assembly for the EnT process but also the potential to directly utilize the EnT process for photocatalytic applications.



## INTRODUCTION

As one of the essential processes in nature, photosynthesis relies on the efficient excited state energy transfer (EnT) between chlorophyll and carotenoid networks present in flora to harvest solar energy and transport it to the reaction center with over 95% efficiency.<sup>1</sup> Many efforts have been devoted to design highly efficient EnT systems that mimic photosynthesis, including covalently bonded porphyrin arrays,<sup>2</sup> dendrimers,<sup>3</sup> polymers,<sup>4</sup> and donor–acceptor supramolecular systems, among others.<sup>5</sup> To achieve fast and efficient EnT, it is important to have an optimal distance, alignment, orientation, and precise energy matching, i.e., a large spectral overlap of donor's emission and acceptor's absorption.<sup>6</sup> Since the typical EnT process is most effective through the assembly of an ordered network, metal–organic frameworks<sup>7</sup> (MOFs), a class of crystalline porous hybrid materials constructed from the self-assembly of organic linkers and secondary building units (SBUs), provide an ideal platform to construct photosynthesis mimics.<sup>8–14</sup> Indeed, the crystalline periodicity, molecular-scale porosity, and broad structural, topological, and compositional tunability<sup>15</sup> of MOFs facilitate multistep hopping of the excited state in the network, leading to phenomena ranging from

amplified quenching to light-harvesting,<sup>16</sup> as well as transporting remotely collected energy to sites proximal to an energy-converting catalyst, redox shuttle, or electrode.<sup>17,18</sup> As such, these porous framework materials have been widely studied for photocatalysis and fluorescence sensing where EnT plays an important role.<sup>19–23</sup>

Although building photoactive MOFs using a single type of chromogenic linker is straightforward, synthesizing mixed-ligand MOFs using both energy donors and acceptors, especially with an atomistic precision, requires special design and synthesis. To date, arguably the most commonly used strategy for the synthesis of light-harvesting mixed-ligand MOFs involves paddlewheel-type, photoactive 2-D metal–organic layers based on divalent  $Zn^{2+}$ , pillared by a second

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photoactive linker.<sup>24–31</sup> Synthesizing high-valent metal (e.g.,  $\text{Zr}^{4+}$ ,  $\text{Ti}^{4+}$ ,  $\text{Al}^{3+}$ , etc.) containing MOFs that can further increase chemical stabilities of EnT mimics is desirable yet challenging since the robust metal–ligand bonds in these systems typically limit the coordinative reversibility needed to form ordered crystalline structures. Several recent works have opted for Zr-based MOFs to build EnT systems with increased chemical stability;<sup>32–38</sup> however the precise placement of donor and acceptor in geometrically distinct positions with atomistic precision is extremely challenging to be realized. One example was just reported by Li and co-workers<sup>39</sup> involving a stepwise linker insertion strategy<sup>40</sup> to install the energy acceptor into a framework composed of an energy donor ligand (and vice versa).

Herein, we report the symmetry-guided, one-pot synthesis of mixed-ligand MOFs for light harvesting and EnT using two topologically distinct linkers. Our design is based on a highly porous and photoactive  $N,N'$ -bicarbazole-based Zr-MOF with a **flu** topology, namely, NPF-500 (NPF = Nebraska porous framework). The octahedral cage of NPF-500 has a square-shaped pocket that, with the symmetry and size-matching, enables the coordination of secondary porphyrin-based ligands:  $\text{H}_2\text{TCPP}$  and  $\text{NiTCPP}$  (TCPP = *meso*-tetrakis(4-carboxyphenyl)porphyrin). Using a one-pot synthesis, we were able to construct mixed-ligand MOFs, i.e., NPF-500- $\text{H}_2\text{TCPP}$  and NPF-500- $\text{NiTCPP}$ , with a **pfm** topology. The strong spectral overlap between the emission spectrum of  $N,N'$ -bicarbazole (as the energy donor) and absorption spectrum of porphyrin (as the energy acceptor) enables NPF-500- $\text{H}_2\text{TCPP}$  as an efficient EnT system, which is exemplified by time-resolved fluorescence spectroscopy and utilized to enhance the photocatalytic efficiency of oxygenation of thioanisole.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Structural Design.** The assembly of mixed-ligand MOFs with complex and well-ordered pore architectures can be achieved by a series of topologically distinct linkers bearing various functional groups;<sup>41–45</sup> however, for high-valent metal containing MOFs such as Zr-MOFs, more rational design is usually required to obtain an ordered structure.<sup>46</sup> Our design stems from the recognition of the 4-fold symmetry of the commercially available tetratopic square-planar ligand,  $\text{H}_2\text{TCPP}$ , which is also a common energy acceptor used in constructing EnT mimics. In order to incorporate  $\text{H}_2\text{TCPP}$  into a host framework that consists of empty pockets with matching size and symmetry, we surveyed Zr-MOFs reported to date with inherent, coordinately unsaturated metal sites and identified PCN-521, a (4,8) network composed of a tetrahedral ligand  $\text{H}_4\text{L}_0$  with a tetraphenylmethane core (Scheme 1) and

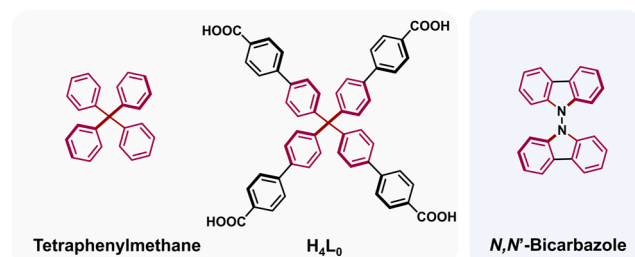
8-connected  $\text{Zr}_6$  cluster with a **flu** topology.<sup>47</sup> The octahedral cage in PCN-521 contains a square-shaped pocket along the equatorial plane, which well matches the size of  $\text{H}_2\text{TCPP}$ : the O–O distance of 20.2 Å between the two diagonal pairs of terminal  $\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{OH}^-$  groups along the *ab* plane in PCN-521 is close to the O–O distance between the two *trans*-carboxyls in  $\text{H}_2\text{TCPP}$  (~19.7 Å) (see Supporting Information, Figure S8).

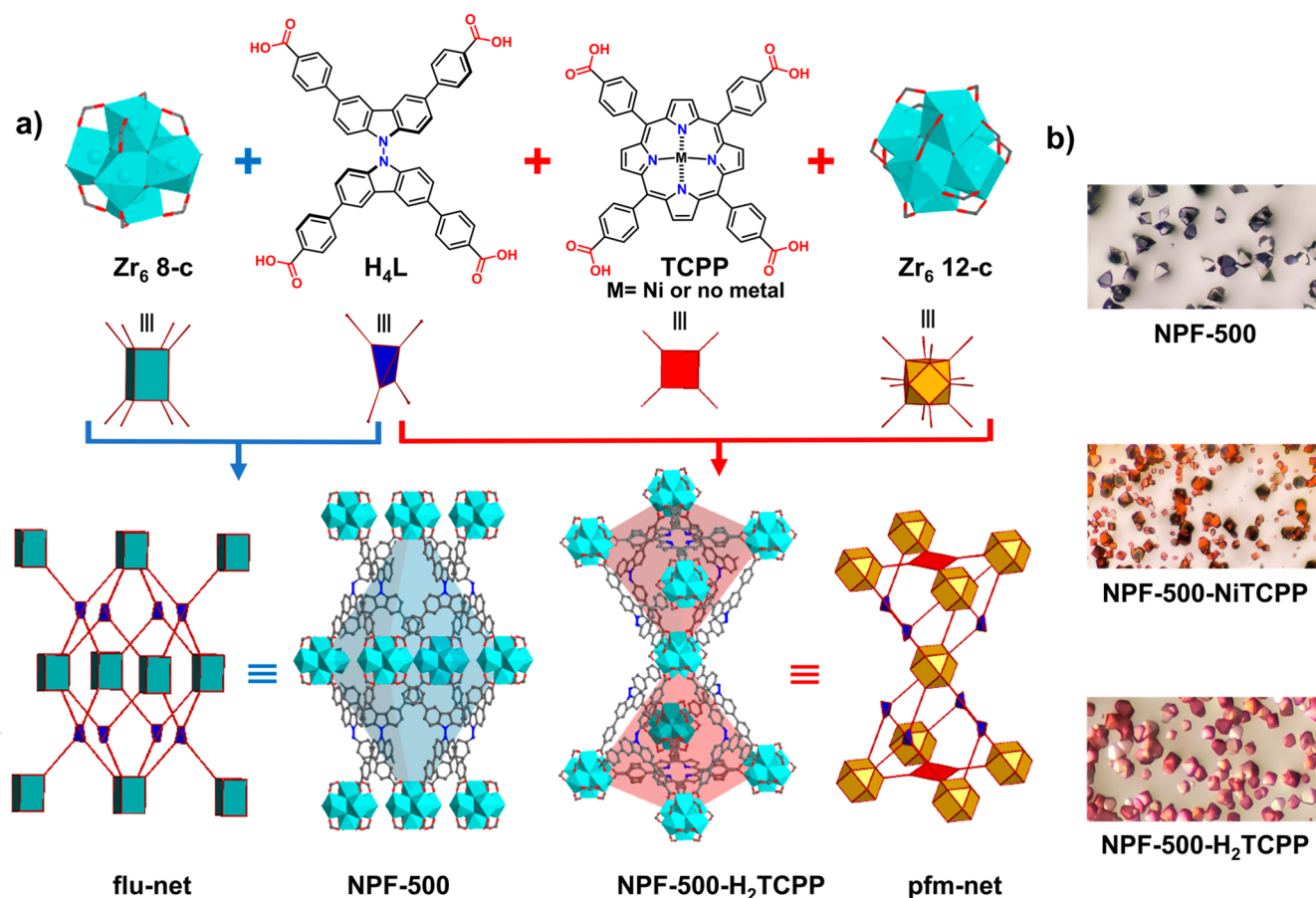
An interesting structural analogue of tetraphenylmethane is  $N,N'$ -bicarbazole (Scheme 1), of which the two carbazole planes often adopt a pseudoperpendicular geometry and thus a similar  $S_4$  symmetry to tetraphenylmethane.<sup>48–51</sup> More importantly, derivatives of  $N,N'$ -bicarbazole often exhibit emission peaks close to 450 nm,<sup>52–54</sup> which well overlap with the absorption band of  $\text{H}_2\text{TCPP}$ . Therefore, we designed a new tetratopic ligand  $\text{H}_4\text{L}$  (Figure 1a) based on  $N,N'$ -bicarbazole for two reasons: (1) its tetrahedral geometry and similar size to ligand  $\text{H}_4\text{L}_0$  likely result in the formation of a Zr-MOF with the same (4,8)-connected **flu** net as PCN-521, which consists similar empty pockets matching the size of  $\text{H}_2\text{TCPP}$ ; (2) it is likely to emit in a suitable wavelength window and serve as a good donor to transfer energy to  $\text{H}_2\text{TCPP}$ .

**MOF Synthesis and Structural Description.**  $N,N'$ -Bicarbazole-based tetratopic ligand  $\text{H}_4\text{L}$  was synthesized via an oxidative coupling of 3,6-dibromocarbazole and subsequent Suzuki coupling, followed by hydrolysis in a basic medium (see Supporting Information S-1 for the detailed synthesis procedure). Colorless truncated octahedron-shaped crystals of NPF-500 were obtained by a solvothermal reaction of  $\text{ZrOCl}_2 \cdot 8\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and  $\text{H}_4\text{L}$  in the presence of benzoic and trifluoroacetic acid acting as co-modulating agents at 120 °C for 24 h. Single-crystal X-ray diffraction studies at 273 K reveal that NPF-500 crystallizes in space group *I4/mmm* (no. 139, Table S4) of the tetragonal system with the lattice parameters  $a = b = 20.406$  Å,  $c = 43.613$  Å. Consistent with our prediction, NPF-500 is indeed a noninterpenetrated (4,8)-net where each tetrahedral ligand connects to four  $\text{Zr}_6$  clusters in a 2:1 ratio and exhibits the **flu** topology with a charge-balanced framework formula of  $\text{Zr}_6\text{O}_4(\text{OH})_8(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4\text{L}_2$ . Each  $\text{Zr}_6$  cluster is coordinated by eight carboxylate groups from eight **L** ligands, with four above and four below the equatorial plane, while the remaining sites are capped with four pairs of terminal  $\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{OH}^-$  groups. Powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD) patterns of NPF-500 confirm the bulk phase purity of the as-synthesized sample when compared to the simulated patterns from its corresponding single-crystal structure (Figure S11).

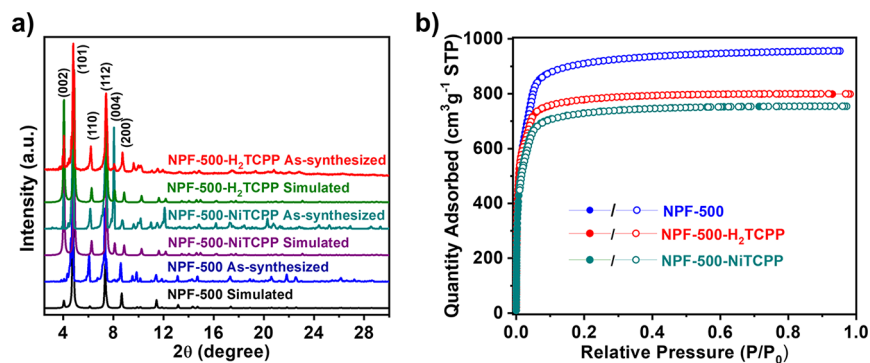
The successful formation of the **flu** net in NPF-500 is likely because  $N,N'$ -bicarbazole exhibits a similar geometric deviation from the ideal tetrahedron to that observed for ligand  $\text{H}_4\text{L}_0$  in PCN-521 (Figure S10). The interstitial octahedral cage in NPF-500 has a size of 20.9 Å × 20.9 Å × 36.4 Å, and its square equilateral plane matches well with  $\text{H}_2\text{TCPP}$ . However, our initial attempts using solvent-assisted ligand incorporation (SALI)<sup>55</sup> to integrate  $\text{H}_2\text{TCPP}$  into presynthesized NPF-500 proved unsuccessful. This result is likely due to the retarded diffusion of the relatively large  $\text{H}_2\text{TCPP}$  molecule through the small open windows (12.4 Å × 12.6 Å) of NPF-500. We next employed a one-pot synthesis and utilized both primary ligand  $\text{H}_4\text{L}$  and secondary ligand  $\text{H}_2\text{TCPP}$  to construct mixed-ligand MOFs. Briefly, solvothermal reaction of  $\text{ZrCl}_4$ ,  $\text{H}_4\text{L}$ , and  $\text{H}_2\text{TCPP}$  in the presence of benzoic and acetic acid acting as co-modulating agents in DMF at 110 °C for 12 h. To our delight, purple truncated octahedral crystals of NPF-500-

**Scheme 1.** Chemical Structures of Tetraphenylmethane,  $\text{H}_4\text{L}_0$ , and  $N,N'$ -Bicarbazole





**Figure 1.** (a) Chemical structures of  $Zr_6$  clusters,  $H_4L$ , and  $H_2TCPP$ / $NiTCPP$  and the formation of  $NPF-500$ ,  $NPF-500-H_2TCPP$ / $NiTCPP$ , and their topological representations (C, gray; O, red; N, blue; Zr, cyan polyhedra). (b) Photographs of single crystals of  $NPF-500$ ,  $NPF-500-NiTCPP$ , and  $NPF-500-H_2TCPP$ .



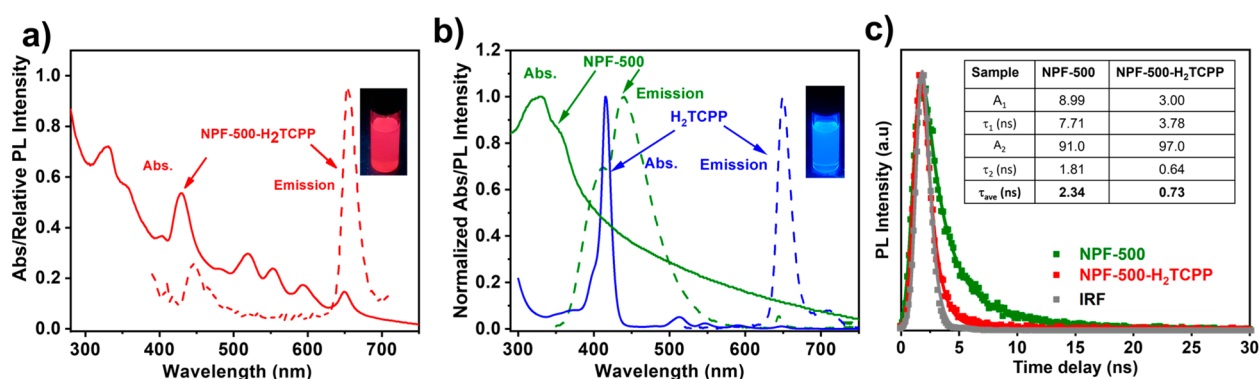
**Figure 2.** (a) Powder X-ray diffraction patterns and (b)  $N_2$  sorption isotherms of  $NPF-500$ ,  $NPF-500-H_2TCPP$ , and  $NPF-500-NiTCPP$ .

$H_2TCPP$  were obtained (Figure 1b and Figure S5) after screening the reaction conditions including the metal/ligand ratio, modulator, etc. (Table S2). Similarly, replacement of  $H_2TCPP$  by  $NiTCPP$  in the synthesis results in orange truncated octahedral crystals of  $NPF-500-NiTCPP$  that are suitable for single-crystal X-ray diffraction (Figure 1b and Figure S5).

Single-crystal X-ray diffraction reveals that  $NPF-500-NiTCPP$  crystallizes in space group  $I\bar{4}$  (No. 82, Table S6) of the tetragonal system in a cell of dimensions  $a = b = 19.952$  Å,  $c = 43.590$  Å. The structure of  $NPF-500-NiTCPP$  involves the assembly of a 12-connected  $Zr_6$  cluster, 4-connected ligand L, and 4-connected  $NiTCPP$ . Each  $Zr_6$  cluster is coordinated with

eight carboxylates from L, four above and four below the equatorial plane, like that observed in  $NPF-500$ . A remarkable difference is that the equatorial plane of the  $Zr_6$  cluster in  $NPF-500-NiTCPP$  is bridged by four carboxylates from four  $NiTCPP$  ligands resulting in an extended (4,4,12)-connected network with the formula  $Zr_6O_4(OH)_4L_2(NiTCPP)$ . Overall,  $NPF-500-NiTCPP$  is a trinodal net exhibiting the pfm topology with the point symbol  $(4^{32}.6^{30}.8^4)(4^4.6^2)(4^6)_2$  calculated using the TOPOS program.<sup>56</sup> It should be noted that this is the first time two tetracarboxylate ligands of distinct symmetry (i.e., tetrahedral and square planar) are assembled into a mixed-ligand Zr-MOF via one-pot synthesis.  $NPF-500-H_2TCPP$  also crystallizes in space group  $I\bar{4}$  and is an





**Figure 3.** (a) UV–vis absorption and emission ( $\lambda_{\text{ex}} = 350$  nm) spectra of NPF-500-H<sub>2</sub>TCPP. Inset is the photograph of NPF-500-H<sub>2</sub>TCPP under UV light irradiation. (b) UV–vis absorption and emission ( $\lambda_{\text{ex}} = 350$  nm) spectra of NPF-500 and H<sub>2</sub>TCPP. Inset is the photograph of NPF-500 under UV light irradiation. (c) Emission lifetime decay at 440 nm of NPF-500 and NPF-500-H<sub>2</sub>TCPP following 280 nm excitation.

isostructure of NPF-500-NiTCPP, and the PXRD patterns of both frameworks confirm the bulk phase purity (Figure 2a).

One structural feature of both mixed-ligand MOFs is their lowered symmetry compared to the parent framework NPF-500. In mixed-ligand MOFs, Zr<sub>6</sub> clusters deviate from the original orientations along the *ab* plane, and the carboxylate groups of the TCPP linker thus adopt a monodentate coordination mode ( $\eta^1$ ) via one O atom (Figure S9). This is in contrast to the common dinuclear-bridged, bidentate coordination mode ( $\mu\text{-}\eta^1\eta^1$ ) of the carboxylate ligand in typical Zr-MOFs such as UiO-66. Since the distance between the two diagonal pairs of terminal H<sub>2</sub>O/–OH<sup>–</sup> groups in original NPF-500 of 20.9 Å is slightly longer than the dimension of TCPP (19.7 Å), such change can facilitate the monodentate coordination mode for a better size matching (Figure S9). To our delight, the change to monodentate coordination mode does not compromise the chemical stability of the mixed-ligand MOFs (*vide infra*).

**Stability and Porosity.** The thermal stability of three NPF-500 series MOFs was assessed by thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) under N<sub>2</sub> (Figures S29, Supporting Information). The initial weight loss before 150 °C is attributed to the removal of the solvent molecules in the pores. It is interesting to note the weight loss from 200 to 350 °C that can be attributed to the removal of strongly coordinated modulating agents in NPF-500 is absent in both mixed-ligand MOFs. This is consistent with the removal of the modulators by the occupancy of a porphyrin linker at the uncoordinated sites of the Zr<sub>6</sub> cluster in the mixed-ligand MOFs. All NPF-500 series Zr-based MOFs exhibit a significant thermal decomposition around 540 °C, pointing to their excellent thermal stability. In addition, the chemical stability of the NPF-500 series was examined by treating MOFs in H<sub>2</sub>O, basic (pH = 11), and acidic (pH = 1) conditions, and excellent crystallinity remains after 24 h based on the PXRD patterns (Figures S12–S16 and Figures S19–S21).

After activation using supercritical CO<sub>2</sub> exchange, the permanent porosity of the NPF-500 series was confirmed by N<sub>2</sub> adsorption isotherms measured at 77 K (Figure 2b). NPF-500 exhibits a typical type I isotherm, with a saturated N<sub>2</sub> uptake of 956 cm<sup>3</sup> g<sup>–1</sup>, a Brunauer–Emmett–Teller surface area (SA<sub>BET</sub>) of 3737 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>–1</sup>, and a pore volume of 1.48 cm<sup>3</sup> g<sup>–1</sup>. After the incorporation of the porphyrin ligand, a slightly decreased SA<sub>BET</sub> of 2929 and 3107 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>–1</sup> for NPF-500-NiTCPP and NPF-500-H<sub>2</sub>TCPP, respectively, resulted. The solvent-accessible volume calculated by PLATON for NPF-

500 is 81.8%, while that of NPF-500-NiTCPP and NPF-500-H<sub>2</sub>TCPP is 71.3% and 70.9%, respectively.

**Control of Linker Ratio.** Mixed-ligand MOFs that are composed of ligands with the same length and symmetry usually form as a single phase with variable linker ratios.<sup>57–59</sup> However, the tetrahedral bicarbazole ligand L and square-planar TCPP in NPF-500-NiTCPP are geometrically distinct. Thus, the linker ratios that can be realized within NPF-500-NiTCPP should be studied in detail. In our investigation, the concentration of the modulating reagent (i.e., benzoic acid) and H<sub>4</sub>L ligand was kept constant, while the concentration of NiTCPP was systematically increased. PXRD was used to identify the presence of product with different structure. As shown in Figure 2a, the PXRD patterns of NPF-500 and NPF-500-NiTCPP are similar since the incorporation of the NiTCPP into the NPF-500 framework does not significantly change the unit cell, and they are considered as the same phase. To our delight, the phase purity has a large tolerance on the linker ratio; that is, as the amount of NiTCPP increases, NPF-500-NiTCPP starts to form as a pure phase exemplified by the uniform shape and color of the single crystals (Figure S17). Formation of MOFs that are solely based on NiTCPP such as PCN-222<sup>60</sup> or PCN-224<sup>61</sup> was not observed in our study, as confirmed by PXRD (Figure S18). Eventually a high NiTCPP:H<sub>4</sub>L ratio close to the ideal value of 0.5 (100% occupancy) can be obtained without the formation of any impurity (Figure S6). A similar degree of controlling the linker ratio was observed in NPF-500-H<sub>2</sub>TCPP (*vide infra*).

**Fluorescence Measurement.** The formation of NPF-500-H<sub>2</sub>TCPP was further confirmed by UV–visible absorption spectroscopy. As shown in Figure 3a, the spectrum of NPF-500-H<sub>2</sub>TCPP exhibits an absorption band at 350 nm that can be attributed to ligand L in NPF-500 and several characteristic bands from 420 to 650 nm that are originated from H<sub>2</sub>TCPP (Figure 3b), supporting the presence of both ligands in the MOF. Following the excitation at 350 nm, the emission spectrum of NPF-500 exhibits a broad band centered at ~440 nm (Figure 3b), which is consistent with the emission band of H<sub>4</sub>L (Figure S34) and can thus be attributed to the emission of H<sub>4</sub>L in NPF-500. On the other hand, H<sub>2</sub>TCPP has an emission band at 660 nm following the excitation at 425 nm (Figure 3b). The significant spectral overlap between the emission spectrum of L in NPF-500 and the absorption spectrum of H<sub>2</sub>TCPP, in combination with the close distance between the two linkers in NPF-500-H<sub>2</sub>TCPP (14.8 Å), strongly suggests the feasibility of the construction of an efficient Förster-type

resonant energy transfer (FRET) system where  $H_4L$  and  $H_2TCPP$  are the energy donor and acceptor, respectively.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the emission spectrum of NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$  (Figure 3a) following the selective excitation of  $H_4L$  in NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$  shows a prominent emission band at 660 nm that results from the emission of  $H_2TCPP$ , which unambiguously confirms that EnT occurs from L in NPF-500 to  $H_2TCPP$ . The presence of some residue emission from L suggests that the EnT is not complete. Nevertheless, the quenching does not occur in the physical mixture of  $H_4L$  and  $H_2TCPP$  (Figure S35) and is also not observed in the mixture of NPF-500 and  $H_2TCPP$  (Figure S36), underlining the importance of the close distance and/or orientation between the partners of this EnT process. Time-resolved emission experiments based on the time-correlated single-photon counting (TCSPC) technique was employed to further confirm the presence of the EnT process in NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$ . As shown in Figure 3c, compared to the emission lifetime of L in NPF-500 collected at 440 nm, the emission lifetime of L in NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$  is significantly shortened following the excitation at 280 nm, suggesting that the presence of  $H_2TCPP$  quenches L emission, which is consistent with the EnT process assigned above. The emission decay kinetics of L in both NPF-500 and NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$  can be fit by a multiexponential decay function. The average emission lifetime obtained from the best fitting (Figure 3c) is 2.34 and 0.73 ns for NPF-500 and NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$ , respectively. According to these emission lifetimes, the EnT time and efficiency can be estimated using the following equations:<sup>16,62</sup>

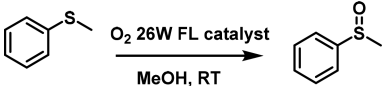
$$1/\tau_{\text{NPF-500-}H_2TCPP} = 1/\tau_{\text{NPF-500}} + 1/\tau_{\text{EnT}} \quad (1)$$

$$\eta = 1/\tau_{\text{EnT}} / (1/\tau_{\text{NPF-500}} + 1/\tau_{\text{EnT}}) \quad (2)$$

where  $\tau_{\text{NPF-500-}H_2TCPP}$  and  $\tau_{\text{NPF-500}}$  are the emission decay times for NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$  and NPF-500, respectively, and  $\tau_{\text{EnT}}$  is the EnT time. The obtained EnT rate and efficiency are 0.94 ns<sup>-1</sup> and 69%, respectively. Note that the orientation of the dipole moment of the donor and acceptor in NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$  with a fixed spatial arrangement might prevent a higher EnT efficiency.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, this EnT efficiency is comparable to many previously reported EnT systems based on mixed-ligand or porphyrin-based MOFs,<sup>10,37,63,64</sup> which not only suggests the great potential of our mixed-ligand MOFs as efficient light-harvesting materials for photocatalytic applications but also demonstrates the capability of the symmetry-guided approach for constructing functional mixed-ligand MOFs.

Having established the efficient EnT in NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$ , we next turn to the demonstration of the potential use of such a process to enhance the photocatalytic activity of the mixed-ligand MOF. Here, photosensitized oxygenation of thioanisole was chosen, and the reaction was studied in the presence of oxygen and NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$  (0.2 mol % based on  $H_2TCPP$ ) under irradiation with a CFL (compact fluorescent lamp, 26 W) (see the Supporting Information for detailed procedure). The donor-only NPF-500 exhibits no activity for this reaction, while NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$  was able to selectively oxidize thioanisole to the corresponding sulfoxide in 99% yield within 1 h (Table 1, entries 1, 2). No apparent overoxidation product of sulfone was observed, consistent with the expected singlet oxygen promoted oxidation mechanism. Control experiments revealed the essential role of light, photocatalyst, and  $O_2$  in this reaction (Table S8). Although  $H_2TCPP$  can also promote this

Table 1. Photosensitized Oxygenation of Thioanisole



entry	photocatalyst	catalyst loading (%)	conversion (%)
1	NPF-500	0	0
2	NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$	0.2	99
3	$H_2TCPP$	0.2	99
4	NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$	0.2	97 <sup>a</sup>
5	PCN-222	0.2	41

<sup>a</sup>Recycled for five times.

reaction in a similar efficiency (Table 1, entry 3), it cannot be easily recycled. On the contrary, NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$  can be repeatedly used for five times without significant decrease of the activity (Table 1, entry 4) and can also exhibit excellent stability indicated by its well-preserved crystalline nature after reaction (Figure S39). To our surprise, PCN-222, a Zr-MOF solely based on  $H_2TCPP$ , only shows a moderate oxidation efficiency of 41% (Table 1, entry 5). This likely results from the self-quenching effect due to the close distance between the chromophores in the framework as supported by the prominently reduced emission lifetime of PCN-222 compared with that of  $H_2TCPP$  (Figure S37).

To demonstrate the application of EnT in NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$  for photocatalysis, we synthesized a series of mixed-ligand MOFs with different L: $H_2TCPP$  ratios. Four samples, namely, NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$ -A,B,C,D, were synthesized, and the occupancy percentage of  $H_2TCPP$  was determined by <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy after base digestion as 68%, 40%, 16%, and 9%, respectively. When the amount of  $H_2TCPP$  in the mixed-ligand MOFs was kept constant, NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$ -C (16%  $H_2TCPP$ ) exhibits the highest photocatalytic activity (73% conversion in 20 min, Table S9, entry 3), which strongly suggests the effectiveness of EnT in enhancing its photocatalytic activity. Another comparison of these four mixed-ligand MOFs was conducted where the amount of energy donor L was kept constant. NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$ -C again gave a higher conversion (65% conversion in 20 min) than NPF-500- $H_2TCPP$ -A (51% conversion), despite a significant lower content of  $H_2TCPP$  (16% vs 68%) (Table S9, entries 5 and 6). These results provide solid proof that with an optimal D:A ratio the EnT process indeed can be utilized for enhanced efficiency in photocatalysis.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, using symmetry-guided synthesis we have successfully constructed mixed-ligand MOFs using two geometrically distinct tetrahedral  $N,N'$ -bicarbazole and square-planar porphyrin-based ligands. The close match of the size and shape between the equatorial plane of the octahedron cage in NPF-500 and photoactive porphyrin ligand  $H_2TCPP$  results in the ideal assembly of a donor–acceptor construct for light harvesting and energy transfer. The spatial closeness combined with the strong spectral overlap between the emission of the  $N,N'$ -bicarbazole-based donor and TCPP acceptor facilitates an efficient energy transfer event, which is confirmed by fluorescence spectroscopy. We further demonstrate the utility of the EnT principle in designing efficient photocatalysts using a photosensitized thioanisole oxidation reaction. In view of the versatile photochemical properties of

porphyrin, this work provides a blueprint for the future design of new efficient light-harvesting and novel photocatalytic systems.

## ■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### SI Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/jacs.1c10291>.

Synthesis, experimental data and procedures, X-ray diffraction, UV–vis absorption, and photoluminescence data (PDF)

### Accession Codes

CCDC 2103173–2103175 contain the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge via [www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data\\_request/cif](http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif), or by emailing [data\\_request@ccdc.cam.ac.uk](mailto:data_request@ccdc.cam.ac.uk), or by contacting The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre, 12 Union Road, Cambridge CB2 1EZ, UK; fax: +44 1223 336033.

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### Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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