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Systematic identification of the lysine methylome using methyllysine binding domains

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Supervisor: Shawn Li, The University of Western Ontario A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science degree in Biochemistry © Wen Qin 2019

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Abstract

Post-translational modifications (PTM) are vital regulators of protein function and homeostasis. The role of dynamic regulations of non-histone lysine methylated proteins (NHKMP) recently began to be recognized in DNA damage repair, apoptosis and transcriptional pathways. My goal was to identify components of the NHKMP network to understand its importance in a healthy versus diseased cellular state. I used membrane peptide arrays to systematically characterize nine naturally occurring lysine methyl binding domains (KMBD). Five KMBDs were chosen based on their overlapping specificities to achieve maximum coverage of lysine methylated peptides. These five KMBDs was used to enrich for methylated lysine peptides from a trypsinized HEK293 cell lysate and followed by mass spectrometry identification. We identified 229 NHKMP and 301 novel sites from HEK293. The amount of NHKMPs and sites that I have identified in total was unprecedented: this allows us to gain valuable insights into components of the lysine methylome network.

Keywords

Protein methylation, lysine methylation, non-histone protein methylation, peptide array, mass spectrometry

Summary for lay audience

Proteins can have many modifications post-synthesis, called post-translational modification. These PTMs are responsible for regulating vital pathways within the cells and ensure the survival of the cells. In this thesis, I studied one type of PTM called protein lysine methylation. Protein lysine methylations are found in DNA regulation, cell regulation and other pathways. It is also very common to have dysregulation of protein methylation within cancer cells. To understand how protein lysine methylation works within the cell, we first need to identify the proteins that are methylated. Current methods cannot identify a huge range of methylated lysine proteins within one experiment. Therefore, for my thesis, I developed a method to enrich and identify methylated lysine proteins. In this thesis, I was able to identify several novel proteins that were methylated within the cell.

Co-Authorship Statement

Dr. Suzanne Ackloo from SGC Toronto provided the plasmids for KMBDs used in this projected. Dr. Kyle Biggar generated Fig 1.5 and the peptide list for the first 70-protein peptide array used in Fig. 3.5. Dr. Lei Li and Eric Liu designed and generated the phylogenetic clustering of methylated peptides. Dr. Xuguang Liu helped with the mass spectrometry experiments and the identification of lysine methylated proteins.

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List of Abbreviation

- 53BP1 p53 binding protein 1 6-FAM 6-Carboxyfluorescein ACN Acetonitrile AP-MS Affinity-purification mass spectrometry APS Ammonium persulfate APS Ammonium persulfate BCA Bicinchoninic acid assay BSA Bovine serum albumin CBX7 Chromobox protein homolog 7 CBX8 Chromobox protein homolog 8 CD Chromatin-binding domain CHD1 Chromodomain-helicase-DNA-binding protein 1 DCM Dichloromethane DDR DNA damage repair DMEM Dulbecco's modified eagle medium DMF Dimethylformamide DMSO Dimethyl sulfoxide DNA Deoxyribonucleic acid
- DTT Dithiothreitol

- Kme3 Trimethylated lysine
- KMT Lysine methyltransferase
- L3MBTL2 Lethal (3) malignant brain tumor-like protein 2
- LB Lysogeny broth medium
- LSD1 Lysine-specific demethylase 1
- MALDI-MS Matrix-assisted laser desorption/ionization mass spectrometry
- MBT Malignant brain tumor domain
- MLL Mixed-lineage leukemia
- MOPS 3-(N-morpholino)propanesulfonic acid
- Mpp8 M-phase phosphoprotein 8
- NHKMP non-histone lysine methylated protein
- NSD nuclear-receptor-binding SET domain
- P100 Staphylococcal nuclease domain-containing protein 1
- PAGE polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis
- PBS Phosphate buffered salt
- PBST Phosphate buffered salt with Tween 20
- PHD plant homeodomain
- PHF1 PHD finger protein 1
- PHF19 PHD finger protein 19
- PMSF Phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride
- PPI protein protein interaction
- PTK Protein tyrosine kinase
- PTM Post-translational modification
- PTP Protein tyrosine phosphatase
- pTyr Phosphotyrosine
- PVDF Polyvinylidene fluoride
- PWWP Proline-tryptophan-tryptophan-proline motif
- SAM S-adenosyl-L-methionine
- SCX Strong cation exchange
- SDS sodium dodecyl sulfate
- SDS-PAGE Sodium dodecyl sulfate polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis
- SET [Su(var)3-9, Enhancer-of-zeste and Trithorax]
- Set8 N-lysine methyltransferase SETD8
- SMYD SET and MYND domain-containing proteins
- STAT Signal transducer and activator of transcription
- TBS Tris buffered saline
- TBST Tris buffered saline with Tween 20
- TD Tudor domain
- TE Tris-EDTA
- TEMED Tetramethylethylenediamine
- TFA Trifluoroacetic acid
- TIPS Tri-isopropylsilane
- TOF Time-of-flight
- UTX Ubiquitously transcribed tetratricopeptide repeat on chromosome X
- WT Wild type

Chapter 1

1 General Introduction

Protein post-translational modifications (PTM) are vital regulators of protein function. These PTMs can give a protein a specific function and can alter the protein-protein interaction (PPI) network. PTMs are a very energy-efficient way to alter protein function ¹. Thus, PTMs can give a protein the potential of interacting with a variety of partners depending on the needs of the cell. Such as turning an enzyme on or off with one or more PTMs. PTMs are tightly regulated in cellular processes to maintain homeostasis. Aberrations in PTMs can result in a diseased cell state through dysregulation of DNA damage repair (DDR), apoptosis, metabolic and other essential pathways $2,3$.

There are many known PTMs such as phosphorylation, acetylation, ubiquitination, glycosylation, methylation and others. One of the most studied PTM is protein phosphorylation ⁴ . Protein phosphorylation is highly regulated, highly dynamic and commonly found perturbed in diseased cells, such as cancer. Protein phosphorylation is known for signalling cascades and signalling transduction. Phosphorylation is a relatively fast PTM that can occur seconds to hours after stimulus ⁵. Protein phosphorylation is regulated by a protein kinase, a "writer," where it puts on the signal. Then the signal gets read by a "reader" protein. Finally, the signal gets removed by a phosphatase, an "eraser." Some of the other PTMs and other pathways are regulated via the writer-reader-eraser mechanism.

1.1 Protein methylation

Protein methylation is a very small, hydrophobic modification onto the side chains of many residues. There are at least nine different residues that could be methylated in the cell: Met, Cys, Lys, Arg, His, Gln, Asn, Glu and Asp⁶. However, the most common methylated residues are found on lysine and arginine. The addition of one or more methyl-groups onto Arg or Lys residues will not affect their overall charge (Fig. 1.1)⁷.

The first protein methylation was reported in 1959 $\frac{8}{3}$, and it was fascinating at the time. However, not much interest soon followed. It was not until the late 1990s and early 2000s when protein methylation gained more popularity⁹. The stagnation in the study of protein methylation was partly due to the dogma that protein methylation was irreversible, and it does not have much biological relevance 10 . With technological advances of the late 1990s, gene regulation by histones was a hot topic 11 . Histone methylation on lysine and arginine are important in gene regulation 12 . A hypothesis was conceived, the "histone" code," where histone PTMs, like methylation, acetylation and phosphorylation, contributing to gene regulation 13 . It catalyzed an interest to investigate further about protein methylation. Several histone methyltransferases, both arginine and lysine, were discovered at the time ⁹. However, it was not known whether methylation is dynamic or static modification until 2004, where the first lysine demethylase was discovered 14 . The discovery of a demethylase, an eraser, abolished the 45 years of dogma that protein methylation was a static and irreversible modification.

Protein methylation gained a lot of interest in the past few years because of its biological relevance, finally being unravelled, starting with the discovery of the first lysine methyltransferase (KMT) in 1996 15 . Protein methylation is involved in many key essential pathways⁹, for example, DNA damage repair, RNA processing, metabolism, cell cycle regulation, apoptosis and others $3,16$. Aberrations in protein methylation often lead to diseased cell states such as inflammation and cancer ^{3,17}.

Unlike other PTMs, protein methylation is seen as a slow form of regulation that lasts for a longer time than some other PTMs ¹⁸. Some methylation events can take hours to even days after a stimulus is introduced, and the turnover rate may also not be as fast as other PTMs, such as phosphorylation 19 . Protein methylation is regulating genes on an epigenetic level through histone modifications ²⁰.

1.2 Protein lysine methylation

Sanger first observed methylated lysine residue in 1943 22 . He observed that the methylgroup is attached to the side chain amino group of the lysine residue (ε -N-methyl-lysine) and not on the terminal amino group (Fig. $1.1A$). Sanger observed that ε -methyl-lysine residues could substitute lysine residues and were demethylated in the kidney slices 23 . However, his discovery was very advanced in his times. Now, more about lysine methylated proteins are being discovered and understood. Dedicated lysine methyltransferases and demethylases (KDM) were discovered³.

Lysine methylation follows many PTMs with the writer-reader-eraser model. For the lysine residue, one, two or three methyl-groups could be attached to the ɛ-amino group, named mono, di, tri-methylated lysine, respectively. (also known as Kme1, Kme2, Kme3). The transfer of a methyl group to a lysine residue is facilitated by a lysine methyltransferase (KMT), the writer. It generates three different modifications with increasing hydrophobicity as more methyl-groups are added $2¹$. The addition of a methylgroup does not affect the charge of the residue. After the modification is added, there are about 148 different lysine methyl-binding domains (KMBD) that can read the modification²⁴. These reader domains on effector proteins, transducing the signal or as a recruiting site to recruit other proteins $25-27$. Furthermore, these reader domains are also found on the writers and erasers to facilitate binding to their substrates. The removal of the methyl-group requires a lysine demethylase, the eraser. There are several mechanisms involved in removing a methyl-group 28 . Some demethylases can remove mono- or dimethylation; some can remove tri-methylation only, and some can remove all three 3 .

There are a lot more arginine methylation sites that have been uncovered, and a lot of these correspond to important regulatory pathways within the cell 29 . However, protein lysine methylation sites are far fewer compared to arginine methylation, 5,300 to 14,100 sites, respectively 24 . There are roughly three times more methylated arginine sites than lysine sites currently found (Fig. 1.2A), and the majority of both are mono-methylated sites. However, by comparing the number of unique proteins, the discrepancy is not as drastic (Fig. 1.2B). An interesting comparison is that there are a lot of proteins containing both arginine and lysine methylation (Fig. 1.2C). It adds to the complexity of methylation and crosstalk between lysine and arginine methylation as well as other PTMs.

Figure 1.2. Comparison between protein lysine and arginine methylation. All the data were obtained from PhosphoSitePlus 24 . A) Current protein lysine and arginine methylated sites, lysine methylation, only has about 5,300 sites discovered so far. Whereas about 14,100 sites were found for arginine methylation. B) Comparing lysine and arginine methylation when those sites are corresponding to proteins. Several arginine methylated protein has many sites. C) Looking at the crosstalk between methylated lysine and arginine proteins. There are about 1,220 proteins that have both lysine and arginine methylation sites.

1.2.1 Lysine methyltransferases and demethylases

Lysine methyltransferase adds one or more methyl-groups onto a lysine residue. The cofactor used by KMTs is S-adenosyl-L-methionine (SAM), the sulphur on the methionine serves as the electrophile that transfers the methyl-group in an S_N2 reaction 30 . There are several families of KMTs, the [Su(var)3-9, Enhancer-of-zeste and Trithorax] (SET), nuclear-receptor-binding SET domain (NSD), mixed-lineage leukemia (MLL), Suv, and the SET and MYND domain-containing proteins (SMYD) family transferases ³¹. Some of the KMTs have different specificities where it can be only able to add one out of the three modification states. Whereas other KMTs may add more than one modification states 31 . Moreover, there is an overlap between several KMTs, where they transfer to the same substrates, but they are expressed in different tissues or at different cell cycle stages ³² . For instance, SETD7 is known only to monomethylate lysine residues ³³. It monomethylates H3K4, and a starts a building block for other KMTs, such as MLL1/2 to di- or tri-methylate the substrate 34 . There are about 49 known KMTs, some are reviewed, and some are predicted and unvalidated 24 . Table 1.1 lists KMTs, as well as KDMs with their histone substrates and their modification preferences, common cancers that are linked to KMTs and KDMs.

Lysine demethylase removes the methyl-group from Kmes. There are fewer erasers known than writers. There are about 28 KDMs, and three of them are unvalidated yet 24 . There are several families of KDMs as well, and they use a different mechanism to remove the methyl group. There are four families of KDMs: lysine-specific histone demethylase 1 (LSD1), JmjC domain (JMJD), ubiquitously transcribed tetratricopeptide repeat on chromosome X (UTX) and JARID family 35 . The first-ever discovered KDM is lysine-specific histone demethylase 1 (LSD1)¹⁴. LSD1 demethylates mono- and dimethylated lysine of H3K4 and H3K9. LSD1 uses a cofactor flavin adenine dinucleotide (FAD) to oxidize the methylated lysine to remove the methyl-group 14 . Since LSD1 cannot remove Kme3, there must be other enzymes with another mechanism to remove Kme3s. Another family, the JMJD family, uses iron (II) and 2-oxoglutarate-dependent deoxygenation ³⁵. The JMJD family can remove methyl-groups from all three

modification states. The UTX and JARID core catalytic domain is JmjC, using a similar mechanism as JMJD family ³¹.

Table 1.1 A list of human lysine methyltransferase and demethylases with their substrates, inhibitors and common cancers.

LYSINE METHYLTRANSFERASES

Table 1.1. List of lysine methyltransferases and demethylases (continued)

OTHER	SETD ₆		H ₂ A.ZK4me 1:	$NF-K\beta$	kmel	٠		24, 36, 37, 62
OTHER	SETD7	KMT7	H3K4; H4K20	TAF10, p53, PPP1R12A , $NF-K\beta$, E2F1, DNMT1. STAT4	kmel	$PFI-2$	breast, multiple myeloma	3,24,33,36,37,63
OTHER	SETD ₈	SET ₈	H4K20	p53, PCNA	kmel	٠	breast, CML, HCC, NSCLC and SCLC	3,24,36,37
OTHER	DOT ₁ L	KMT4	H4K79	٠	kmel/2/ 3	EPZ004777, EPZ- 5676, SGC0946	MLL, bladder, stomach, lung	24, 36, 37, 64 66

 Table 1.1. List of lysine methyltransferases and demethylases (continued)

 Table 1.1. List of lysine methyltransferases and demethylases (continued)

UTX UTY	KDM ₆ C	UTY	H3K27me3	$\overline{}$	kme ₃	$\overline{}$	Bladder, colorectal	24,36,37
JMJC ONL Y	KDM8	JMJD5	H3K36me2	$\overline{}$	km _e 2	$\overline{}$	Endometrial, lung, stomach	24, 36, 37
JMJC ONL	NO ₆₆	ROX, MAPJD	H3K4me1/2/3 H3K36me2/3	\sim	kmel/2/ 3	٠	CRC	24,36,37
JMJC ONL	MINA		H3K9me3	$\overline{}$	kme ₃	$\overline{}$	Endometrial, stomach, bladder	24, 36, 37

Table 1.1. A list of lysine methyltransferases and demethylases. This list contains some of the lysine methyltransferases and demethylases, with their histone substrates, their catalytic modifications, any known non-histone proteins, the cancer types that it occurs most in, and if there are any inhibitors for this enzyme. Abbreviations: CRC, colorectal cancer; HCC, hepatocellular carcinoma; RCC, renal cell carcinoma; MLL, mixed-lineage leukaemia; AML, acute myeloid leukaemia; CCC, cholangiocarcinoma; CML, chronic myelogenous leukaemia; NSCLC, non-small cell lung carcinoma; SCLC, small cell lung carcinoma; ALL, acute lymphocytic leukemia; STT, soft tissue tumour; MTC, medullary thyroid cancer.

1.2.2 Lysine methyl binding domains

The reader domains are the modular domains that recognize methylated lysine residues (Fig. 1.3). Since there are four different lysine-methylated states, these reader domains need to be able to recognize Kme0, Kme1, Kme2 or Kme3. There are several families of lysine methyl-binding domains: tudor domain, chromodomain, plant homeodomain (PHD) finger domain, PWWP (Pro-Trp-Trp-Pro), WD-40 and others ²⁴. There are about 148 reader domains. However, about 40% of them are unvalidated 24 . Reader domains are found on KMTs, KDMs or other effector proteins. They help the writer and erasers to find their substrate and others to conduct their signalling cascade.

One of the big family of KMBD is the Tudor domain family. There are about thirty mammalian Tudor containing proteins, for example, p53 binding protein 1 (53BP1), KDMs, PHD finger protein family and others 24 . Tudor domain was first found in *Drosophila* on the *tud* gene⁷⁶. Tudor domain has about sixty residues, and it is folded in 4-5 antiparallel beta-strand sheets $2⁵$. It can read methylated lysine, as well as some methylated arginine residues 77 . Tudor domains attached to different proteins have different specificities. For example, 53BP1-tudor are known to read Kme1/2⁷⁸. Whereas, PHF1 and PHF19 tudor domains can read H3K36me2/3 modifications⁷⁹.

Another big family reader domain is chromodomain (CD). CDs bind to Kmes using an "aromatic cage" 27 . Just like tudor family protein, where structurally conserved CD has diverse binding specificity to Kmes ⁸⁰. CDs can bind to all three Kmes, but varying affinity depending on the protein 81 . One of the most studied CD is HP1 β , where it has a high affinity to H3K9⁸². The CD of HP1 β can bind to all three Kmes, but highest affinity on Kme3, then Kme2 with the worst affinity for Kme1 residues ⁸¹.

Different readers have different specificity and affinity towards their substrates. However, for most reader domains, their binding specificities were only tested against methylated histones and histone peptides 20 . Only a few were tested for non-histone

methylated proteins and peptides ⁴. There has not been a study to investigate non-histone methylated substrates for these reader domains.

Figure 1.3. Overview of lysine methyl binding domain. Lysine methyl binding domains (KMBD) are mostly known to bind to histone lysine methylated proteins. There are several big family groups of reader groups listed above. They are part of bigger enzyme complexes to read the information and pass it onwards. These KMBDs all have different specificities and different expression rates. Chromodomain uses an aromatic cage to bind to its substrates. 53BP1-tudor domain forms a similar cage structure ^{81,83,84}.

1.3 Histone methylation – methyllysine

With the advancement of genomic techniques, a lot of protein methylation found in the 1990s and 2000s was on histone tails ⁹. These histone methylations, along with other PTMs, contribute to the global chromatin organization 13 . Histone lysine methylation contributes to gene repression and gene activation. For example, H3K9 methylation contributes to gene silencing and forming heterochromatin ⁸⁵. There are several KMTs which target H3K9, such as SETDB1 facilities mono-methylation, providing a substrate for SUV39H1/2 to di and tri-methylated lysine residues on H3K9 in heterochromatin region $86-88$. Several KDMs can remove the attached methyl-groups to H3K9 31 . Another well-studied histone methylation is H3K4, where it is found to activate a gene ⁸⁹. The degrees of methylation is found at distinct regions of an active gene; Kme1s at the enhancer region, Kme2s at 5' end of the transcribing gene and Kme3s are mostly found at the promoter region of the active gene 90 . Several methyltransferases and demethylases are responsible for adding and removing the methyl-groups. Table 1.1 has a list of KMTs and KDMs for the most commonly known lysine histone modifications. H3K27, H3K36 methylation contributes to gene repression ³¹. Whereas H3K79 methylation is associated with active transcription ⁹¹. Moreover, H4K20 methylation is associated with genome stability⁹².

Many cancer cells are found to have dysregulated histone methylations³¹. For example, the dysregulation of KMTs at the H3K4 site increases the chance of various cancers, such as infant leukemia⁹³. The majority of the infant leukemia resulted from a translocation of the MLL1 gene onto different genes 94 . However, uncontrolled H3K4 methylation by MLL1-AF9 requires the entire MLL1 gene ⁹⁵. Efforts are pouring into finding MLL1 inhibitors to combat this subtype of leukemia cancer cells 96 . There are also diseases associated with dysregulated KDMs on the H3K4 site, where overexpression of JARID1 contributes to breast and testicular cancer ⁹⁷. Other dysregulated KMT and KDM on other histone sites are summarized in table 1.1.

Since the early 2000s and for the next decade, a lot of focus in the field of protein methylation was on histone methylation⁹. Indeed, histone methylation incorporates a lot of information, and its regulation is still far from being understood.

1.4 Non-histone methyllysine proteins

Early on, most of the methylation sites were found on histones and thought they only occur on histones ³¹. However, with the gaining of interest in the protein methylation and their dynamic regulation, other non-histone methylated proteins were identified ⁹. One of the most studied oncogenic protein p53 was found to have four methylation sites: K370, K372, K373 and K382 $⁹⁸$. P53K372me1 increases the stability of p53, whereas</sup> p53K373me2 is an inhibitory mark ⁹⁹. Different degree of methylation of K370 and K382 determines the stability and activity of $p53^{100}$. K370 and K382 di-methylation contribute to p53 stabilization via p53BP1 binding protein. Whereas their mono-methylation reduces p53 activity 98 . One fascinating crosstalk between p53 PTM is by methylating K370/382; it blocks the lysine sites from being ubiquitinated and subsequent degradation ¹⁰¹. The dynamic regulation of lysine methylation contributes to another level of protein regulation. Thus, it begs the question of what the other non-histone methylated proteins are and what are their functions.

The Janus kinase (JAK) – signal transducer and activator of transcription (STAT) signalling pathway play an important role in development and homeostasis in humans 102 . Lysine methylation on STAT3 plays an important regulatory role 21 . There are two key residues on STAT3 for lysine methylation: K180 and K140. STAT3 can be activated via the addition of a methyl-group by EZH2 methyltransferase to K180 103 . The phosphorylation facilitates the activation of EZH2 at S21 by protein kinase B. STAT3 activity could also be shut down by di-methylation at K140 by SETD7 methyltransferase ¹⁰⁴. This pathway demonstrates the importance of methylation, which can modulate the activity of STAT3. It also highlights the crosstalk between methylation and other PTMs.

However, the disparity in the amount of research between histone and nonhistone methylation is drastic (Fig. 1.4). There are thousands of papers being published on histone methylation where only a few dozen in the recent years on nonhistone methylated proteins and even less for lysine methylated proteins.

There are more and more lysine methylated sites and proteins being discovered. Figure 1.5 shows the biological processes with enriched lysine methylated proteins ¹⁰⁵. These proteins are involved in many vital pathways such as DNA damage repair, apoptosis, metabolism, cell cycle regulation etc. It demonstrates the importance of lysine methylation.

Figure 1.4. Published papers on histone methylation versus nonhistone methylation in the past 50 years. The number of publications in histone methylation versus nonhistone methylation in the past 50 years. The data was obtained through Pubmed. There are about a dozen or so papers published on nonhistone methylation while hundreds and in the thousands of histone methylation papers being published in the past ten years.

Figure 1.5. BiNGO analysis of major biological processes where lysine methylation was enriched. This BiNGO analysis shows overrepresented Gene Ontology (GO) categories ¹⁰⁵. There are many NHKMPs involved in all the circled pathways: DNA repair, apoptosis, cell cycle regulation, chromatin organization, translation, RNA processing steroid pathways and metabolic processes. Image adapted from Dr. Kyle Biggar.

1.5 Previous studies

Due to the limited amount of methyllysine antibodies, pan-specific antibodies and the huge cost associated with developing these antibodies, another way of enriching for methyllysine proteins must be developed ⁹. Previously our lab and other labs have attempted to use naturally occurring lysine methyl-binding domains to enrich for methyllysine peptides ^{4,106}.

In our lab previously, Dr. Liu used a chromodomain (CD), HP1β, to enrich for Kme peptides⁴. HP1 β CD binds to H3K9 and H3K23, and it is a good candidate to look at DNA damage repair where protein methylation is involved 82 . Dr. Liu covalently linked his HP1β CD onto magnetic beads to enrich for Kme peptides from digested HEK293 lysate. They used a variety of proteases: trypsin, GluC, ArgC, elastase and chymotrypsin. This enrichment, followed by mass spectrometry analysis, yielded a total of 109 methyllysine proteins⁴. Furthermore, Dr. Liu used a peptide array to characterize HP1β CD specificities. It gave us insights into HP1β CD binding profile and was able to use this to predict novel substrates.

Another group, about the same time as our lab, used 3x MBT domain ¹⁰⁷. They attempted to enrich for as many Kme peptides as possible and to monitor the changes between different treatment groups. Their technique showed better enrichment for Kme peptides from current Kme antibodies 107 . They conjugate their GST-3x MBT domain and GST-3x MBT_{D355N} onto GSH-sepharose beads. They used stable isotope labelling by amino acids (SILAC) of heavy and light conditions to compare different treatments. However, they had only enriched 79 proteins. Within the 79 proteins, 30% were ribosomal proteins and some histone proteins; only about 40 nonhistone methylated proteins.

Another popular method of enriching methylated peptide is the strong cation exchange (SCX) ¹⁰⁸. However, this method works best for methyl-arginine peptides and does not work very well for methyl-lysine peptides. The methylated residue still carries a positive charge and usually not at the C-terminal end of the peptide due to less efficient digestion

by trypsin ¹⁰⁹. One group enrichment using SCX, the majority of the peptides enriched were methyl-arginine peptides ¹⁰⁸. They enriched 250 methylated arginine proteins and only about 11 lysine methylated proteins.

1.6 Rationale and objectives

Currently, there are about five thousand methylated lysine sites recorded, and less are validated. By comparing lysine methylation to tyrosine phosphorylation, we believe there is a lot of non-histone lysine methylated protein that has not been discovered. For tyrosine phosphorylation, there are around 90 tyrosine kinases, 31 protein tyrosine phosphatases and over 100 tyrosine binding domains ¹¹⁰. More than 47,000 tyrosine phosphorylation sites have been discovered $¹¹¹$. Compared to around 50 lysine</sup> methyltransferases, 30 lysine demethylases and over 100 KMBDs. But, only 4,500 sites recorded, corresponding to 2,740 proteins 24 . Drawing parallel from tyrosine phosphorylation, with a half the writers and similar erasers and readers, we believe there should be at least 25,000 sites.

Many of the currently known lysine methylated proteins are involved in essential pathways in the cell, and when they are perturbed, cells are in stress and can result in diseases³. Thus, by expanding on the current lysine methylome, it can give us insight into other components of the lysine methylome and potential hubs of regulation.

One of the impediments in discovering the lysine methylome is missing a highthroughput, high-coverage enrichment method ⁹. The low abundance of methyl-lysine within the cell means we must enrich them first before mass spectrometry. Previous attempts using antibody enrichment methods have its downfalls. First, the cost of making a specific antibody to each type of methylation state (Kme1, Kme2 and Kme3) is high 112 . Second, the methyl-groups are small, hydrophobic modifications and a pan-specific antibody for all three will have a weak affinity. Third, even for single methylation state antibodies, their affinity is not great, due to the size and non-charge nature of the

modification⁷. Other approaches using a single natural KMBD were not able to capture all the targets $4,107$.

The goals of this thesis were to develop a high-throughput, high-coverage enrichment and identification method to monitor the lysine methylome between different treatment groups. First, I aimed to establish a method to enrich as many Kme peptides as possible. Since using a single domain gave a limited set of data, my objective was to conjugate several different KMBDs onto beads and then combine them into a super-column. Subsequently, I used this super-column to enrich for Kme peptide from HEK293 cell lysate to see how many peptides I can identify in a single experiment.

My Specific aims were to:

- 1. Systematically characterize the binding specificities of KMBDs to determine the combination to be used for super-column.
- 2. Test different binding and eluting conditions for Kme peptides onto KMBDs for mass spectrometry
- 3. Analyze the identified peptides from mass spectrometry data of the enriched Kme peptides

Chapter 2

2 Methods

2.1 Protein expression and purification

Plasmid construction was done by our collaborator from Structure Genomics Consortium at the University of Toronto. Nine lysine methyl-binding domains were received (Table. 3.1). In brief, the p28BIOH-LIC plasmids were constructed from pET28a (Novagen), with the protein of interest, N-terminal AviTag for *in vivo* biotinylation and C-terminal 6X HIS tag. Plasmids were amplified using *E. coli* DH5α via standard transformation protocol. The plasmids were purified using the EZ-10 Spin Column Plasmid DNA Miniprep kit (Bio Basic) according to the manufacturer's instructions. The KMBDs were biotinylated *in vivo* via the bacteria. Another plasmid pBirAcm (Avidity), encodes a biotin ligase, chloramphenicol resistant $(10 \mu g/mL)$. Both p28BIOH-LIC and pBirAcm were transformed into *E. coli* BL21, with chloramphenicol (10 µg/mL), kanamycin (50 μ g/mL) and D-biotin (50 μ g/L) in Luria Broth (Bio Basic). Bacteria culture was grown at 37 °C with shaking to an OD600 of 0.6-0.8 absorbance before induction. 1 mM IPTG was used to induce the expression of BirA and KMBD and temperature was lowered to 18 °C to grow overnight. Bacteria were pelleted by 8000g centrifugation at 4 °C for 15 minutes and washed with 4 °C PBS. These bacteria were lysed with 1 mg/mL lysozyme (Bio Basic), with 2% (v/v) Triton-X100 (Sigma), 25 units/mL benzonase (Sigma) and 100 mM PMSF in PBS at 37 °C on a shaker for 40 minutes. The lysate was centrifuged at 25,000g for 30 minutes at 4 °C. His-tagged KMDBs were purified by His-Select Nickel Affinity Gel (Sigma). The column was equilibrated with 20 column volumes of PBS. The supernatants were loaded onto the equilibrated column, washed with 20 column volumes of PBS, 10 column volumes of 10 mM imidazole (Sigma) and 10 column volumes of 20 mM imidazole. The desired proteins were eluted with 250 mM imidazole in 1 mL fractions until no proteins were detected via simple Bradford assay (5 µL protein into 200 µL Bradford assay). The protein quality was analyzed via Coomassie-stained bis-tris

SDS-PAGE. The purified proteins were dialyzed in PBS overnight at 4 °C. The dialyzed proteins were also analyzed with a western blot to see if they are biotinylated.

2.2 Bradford Assay

Concentrated Bradford solution was purchased from (Bio-Rad), the working solution was 4-part water, 1-part Bradford concentrate. Protein standard were diluted from 2 mg/mL albumin standard (Thermo) to 1000, 750, 500, 250, 125, 62.5, 31.25, 0 µg/mL albumin. The assay was done in 96-well plates, 200 μ L of Bradford reagent was added to each well. 5 μ L of sample and standards were loaded into the wells, with triplicate repeats and taking the average of the three for best accuracy. The plate was shaken on a microplate shaker to ensure adequate mixing. The readings were read on EnVision 2103 Multilabel Reader (Perkin Elmer) at 595 nm.

2.3 Bis-Tris SDS-PAGE and Coomassie staining

Bis-Tris SDS-PAGE was used with MOPS running buffer. For the best protein separation, 10% gel was chosen. Brief recipe: 0.36 M bis-tris, 10% (w/v) acrylamide adjust total volume to 5 mL with water, $25 \mu L$ 10% (w/v) APS, 10 μ L TEMED. A $20x$ MOPS running buffer was prepared: 1 M MOPS (Bio Basic), 1 M tris-base (Bio Basic), 69.3 mM SDS (Sigma), 20.5 mM EDTA (Bio Basic). 1x running buffer was diluted on the day of gel and used for only one run. The Coomassie blue staining recipe was composed of 45% (v/v) methanol (Sigma) with 0.05% (w/v) Coomassie Brilliant Blue R-250 (Bio Basic) and 10% (v/v) acetic acid (Sigma) and 45% (v/v) dH_2O . The destain composed of 10% (v/v) acetic acid, 20% (v/v) methanol and 70% (v/v) dH_2O . The gels were running at 120V for 50 minutes (Bio-Rad Mini-Protean) in 1x MOPS. Gels were stained with Coomassie blue for 30 minutes on a shaker, and destained overnight with Kimwipes (Kimtech) to soak the excess dye. Images were taken via ChemiDocTM XRS+ system (Bio-Rad).

2.4 Western blot

Samples were prepared, and an equal amount of protein was loaded into each lane following the bis-tris SDS-PAGE method. The proteins were transferred onto polyvinylidene fluoride (PVDF) membrane (Sigma) pre-activated with methanol. The transfer cassette was placed in a cold room with an ice bath on the outside to cool down the transfer buffer. Transfer performed at 100V for 1 hour in 1x transfer buffer: 25 mM Tris, 190 mM glycine and 20% (v/v) methanol. After transfer, the PVDF membrane was washed in TBS-T (20 mM Tris, pH 7.5, 150 mM NaCl, 0.1% (v/v) Tween 20, all chemicals from Sigma) for three times for 5 minutes each time. The membrane was blocked in 15 mL of 5% (w/v) skim milk powder (Bio Basic) or 3% (w/v) BSA (Sigma) in TBS-T for 1-2 hours at room temperature with shaking. The membrane was incubated with primary antibody diluted in the blocking buffer at 4° C overnight. The next day, the membrane was washed with 20 mL TBS-T three times for 5 minutes each time. The membrane was incubated with 10 mL of secondary antibody crosslinked to horseradish peroxidase (HRP) diluted in blocking buffer for 30 minutes at room temperature with shaking. The membrane was washed three times again for 5 minutes, each with 20 mL of TBS-T. For detection, using 5 mL of our in-house HRP substrate at room temperature for 2 minutes. Solution A: 2.5 mM Luminol, 400 μ M p-Coumaric acid and 100 mM Tris-Cl, pH 8.8; Solution B: 0.02% (v/v) hydrogen peroxide in 100 mM Tris-Cl, pH 8.8 (all chemicals purchased from Sigma). Images were taken via ChemiDocTM XRS+ system.

2.5 Peptide membrane array synthesis

The methods used here were previously described methods⁴. In brief, the peptide membrane was synthesized in-house from 24 cm Whatman 1 filter paper (Whatman) to make them amino-functional; they were cut into 12 cm by 8 cm rectangular shapes to fit the Intavis MultiPep SRi peptide synthesizer. The peptides were chosen from known and predicted methylated peptides from the human proteome. The membranes were synthesized according to the manufacturer's instructions using Fmoc (N-(90fluorenyl) methoxycarbonyl) chemistry¹¹³. In brief, the peptides were synthesized from C-terminal

to N-terminal due to the amino-functional processed filter membrane. A total of 600 spots were available to be synthesized into any peptide; each amino acid was spotted twice to ensure no miss dotting. After membrane synthesis was completed, the membrane needed to go through post-synthesis treatment. First, this involves a TFA cocktail: 95% (v/v) trifluoracetic acid (TFA), 3% (v/v) tri-isoproplsilane (TIPS) and 2% (v/v) dH_2O (chemicals bought from Fisher). Incubate the newly synthesized peptide membrane with 100 mL of 50% (v/v) TFA cocktail and 50% (v/v) dH_2O for 1 hour with no shaking, and this cleaves the protected groups on the peptides. This step is important, and the TFA cocktail will make membrane fragile, too much shaking can break the membrane. Pour off the TFA cocktail carefully and incubated with 100 mL of 100% TFA cocktail for 30 minutes, no shaking. After, the membrane was washed with 100 mL of dichloromethane (DCM), three times for two minutes each time. Followed by washing the membrane with 100 mL of DMF, three times for two minutes each time. Finally washed with 100 mL of ethanol, three times for two minutes each. Let the membrane air dry and stored in darkness in -20 °C.

2.6 Peptide membrane binding and analysis

The processed membrane was taken out of -20 °C and incubated with 40 mL of 100% ethanol for 1 second, and it was diluted with 40 mL of dH2O for 15 minutes at room temperature with shaking. After the membrane was washed 60 mL with 100% dH_2O , three times, each for 15 minutes with shaking at room temperature. After the membrane was incubated with 60 mL of PBS-T, washed three times, each for 5 minutes with shaking. The membrane was blocked with 5% (w/v) BSA in PBS-T overnight with shaking at 4 °C. The membrane was blotted with the protein of interest at a predetermined concentration in 40 mL of 5% (w/v) BSA in PBS-T overnight at 4 \degree C with shaking. The next day, the primary antibody was diluted into the blocking buffer and incubated for two hours with shaking. The membrane was washed three times, with 40 mL of PBS-T for 5 minutes each. The secondary antibody was diluted in blocking buffer for one hour with shaking at room temperature. If no primary antibody required, one can

proceed directly to the secondary antibody. For HRP linked secondary antibody, the method was covered in 2.4. The image was saved in a TIFF file and transferred to the analysis computer. The intensity of each spot was read by Array-Pro Analyzer 4.5 (Meyer Instruments). It analyzed the intensity of each spot, and the program detected the location of the spots and numbered them following the synthesis file. The darker the spot, the more protein it bound, but we could not determine the K_D from the peptide array. The intensities were compared with known substrates to the binding domain, for example, H4K20me2 for the 53BP1-tudor domain.

2.7 In-solution peptide synthesis

The in-solution peptides were synthesized either on Tentagel resin (Intavis) or Wang resin (Sigma) on the MultiPep SRi peptide synthesizer (Intavis). It also used the Fmoc chemistry¹¹³. These peptides were also synthesized from the C-terminal to the Nterminal. The yield for each peptide was about 2μ mol. However, the uneven distribution of resin could result in varying yield of the final peptide amount. These peptides were mostly used to track binding to protein and fluorescence polarization; thus, at the end of their N-terminal, they were labelled with either biotin (Sigma) or 6-carboxyfluorescein (Sigma). After the synthesis, the peptides were cleaved with the TFA cocktail mentioned in 2.5. The peptides were precipitated with cold-ether and centrifuged at 1000g for 5 minutes. They were washed three more times with cold-ether and dried overnight in the fume hood. The peptides were stored in darkness at 4° C. The peptides can be resuspended in 100 µL of water or DMSO depending on their solubility.

2.8 Mammalian cell culture

HEK293 cells were cultured in DMEM – high glucose (Sigma) supplemented with 10% (v/v) FBS (Wisent), 100 U/mL penicillin-streptomycin (Gibco), 2 mM L-glutamine (Wisent), 1 mM sodium pyruvate (Gibco) at 37 °C humidified incubator (Napco) with 5% CO2. Cells were grown in T-75 flasks (Thermo) to about 80% confluent and passaged to avoid senescence. The cells were washed carefully with pre-warmed 37 °C PBS

(Wisent) once and quickly aspirated. Cells were incubated with 10 mL of 37 °C PBS for 3 minutes and shaken to dislodge cells from the flasks. Cells were collected into a 15 mL falcon tube and centrifuged at 1000 RPM for 3 minutes. The supernatant was aspirated, and the cell pellet was resuspended in 1 mL of media. The cell pellet was pipetted several times to break cell clumps to allow the cells to separate into singlets. A hemocytometer checked the quality of separation under the microscope. Cells were passaged 1:5 to remain at a higher rate of cell growth.

Cell lysis for mass spectrometry analysis was done by washing 80-90% confluent HEK293 cells with warm PBS, followed by a three-minute incubation of PBS. The flasks were shaken to release the cells from the bottom. Cells were collected into a 15 mL falcon tube and centrifuged at 1000 RPM for 3 minutes. The supernatant was aspirated and resuspended in 1 mL of PBS and transferred into a 1.5 mL Eppendorf tube. The cells were pelleted at 1000 RPM for 3 minutes, and the supernatant aspirated. The cell pellet was lysed using 1 mL of freshly made 8 M urea with 50 mM Tris-HCl at pH 7.4. The cell lysate was put on an end-over-end rotator for 30 minutes in 4°C cold room to allow lysis to complete. The lysate was sonicated at strength 4-5 for 10 seconds on ice and rest for 30 seconds on ice three times. The lysates were centrifuged at 15,000 RPM on a tabletop centrifuge (Eppendorf) at $4 \text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ for 1 hour. After the supernatants were precipitated with five times the volume of supernatant with ice-cold acetone/ethanol/acetic acid $(50\%/50\%/0.1\%$ v/v), the solution was stored in -20 °C. Proteins were left to precipitate overnight at 4 \degree C. The precipitated proteins were pelleted with 5000 RPM at 4 \degree C for 15 minutes. Pellet was resuspended in freshly made 8 M urea and 50 mM Tris. The final protein concentration was determined via Bradford assay. The proteins were reduced by 5 mM DTT (Sigma) with head-to-toe rotation for 1 hour at 37 °C and followed by alkylation by 14 mM IAA (Sigma) in darkness, where tubes were wrapped with tin foil with rotation for 1 hour. The addition of 5 mM DTT neutralized the unreacted IAA and rotated for 1 hour in darkness. These proteins were followed by trypsin digestion using sequencing grade modified trypsin (Promega), following manufacturer's instructions. The

enzyme to protein ratio used was 1:50 (w/w) and digested at 37 °C overnight in a shaker. The peptide mixture was stored at -80 °C for future experiments.

2.9 Streptavidin pull-down

For the pull-down experiment, streptavidin sepharose (GE Healthcare) was used. $30 \mu L$ of beads were used for one plate of HEK293 cells, about 1-1.5 mg of total protein. All the buffers used here were mass spectrometry grade to minimize mass spec contamination. The streptavidin beads were washed three times with 1 mL of water (Fisher), followed by three washes of 1 mL 50 mM ammonium bicarbonate pH 8. The beads were washed with 1 mL binding buffer 1x PBS pH 7.4 for three times. For each wash, the Eppendorf tubes were put on an end-over-end rotator at 4 °C for 3 minutes and centrifuged at 2000 RPM for 2 minutes at 4° C. After the beads were washed, 3 mg of the desired biotinylated KMDB was conjugated to the streptavidin beads at 4° C on an end-over-end rotator for 2 hours. The protein-bead conjugate was washed stringently six times to remove any nonbiotinylated proteins. After the wash, $10 \mu L$ of bead-protein was taken and incubated with a 4x protein loading buffer and boiled at 100 °C for 5 minutes. The sample was loaded onto bis-tris SDS-PAGE stained with silver staining to detect if there are any other contaminants bound to the beads.

2.10 Silver staining

The silver staining was used to detect if any trace amounts of non-specific proteins binding to the streptavidin beads. After the bis-tris SDS-PAGE of KMDB on streptavidin beads, the gel was stained for silver staining. This protocol was adapted from Rockefeller University. First, the gel was fixed in 150 mL of 50% (v/v) methanol with 10% (v/v) acetic acid for 30 minutes. Then washed with 150 mL of 50% methanol for 20 minutes. Followed by washing with dH_2O 3 times 10 minutes each. 150 mL of 0.02% (w/v) sodium thiosulfate was prepared and incubated the gel for 1 minute and washed three times with dH_2O for 1 minute each. For the silver reaction, the gel was incubated in 150 mL of 0.1% (w/v) silver nitrate with 0.08% (v/v) formaldehyde (37%) for 30 minutes.

The gel was washed three times in dH_2O for 2 minutes each. For developing, the gel was incubated in 150 mL of 2% (w/v) sodium carbonate with 0.04% (v/v) formaldehyde (37%) until the desired staining intensity. The reaction was stopped by 150 mL 5% (v/v) acetic acid for 10 minutes.

2.11 Mass spectrometry

The samples after KMBD enrichment were desalted via Strat-X columns (Phenomenex) following the manufacturer's instructions. In brief, the column was washed with 1 mL of 100% ACN, followed by 1 mL of 50% (v/v) ACN, after washed 3x with 1 mL MS grade H2O. The samples were loaded and washed 3x with 1 mL MS grade H2O. The enriched methylated peptides were eluted with $2x 200 \mu L$ of 75% (v/v) ACN in 0.1% (v/v) FA. The eluted peptides were tried via the speed vac and resuspend in 20 μ L of 0.1% (v/v) FA. The mass spectrometry's parent mass tolerance was set to 10.0 ppm. Maxed missed cleavage was 3, with non-specific cleavages. The masses of Kme1, Kme2 and Kme3 are 14.02 Da, 28.03 Da, 42.05 Da, respectively.

2.12 Fluorescence polarization assay

Fluorescein labelled peptides were taken out of the 4° C and carefully diluted to the working concentration. The working concentration can vary, but the fluorescence intensity should be between 20,000 and 60,000 units when measuring emission at 520 nm on Envision 2103 Multilabel Reader (Perkin Elmer). Due to the difficulty of measuring peptide concentration, we decided to dilute the peptides within a range. Using a 384-well plate, the total volume in each well was $35 \mu L$, $30 \mu L$ of protein and $5 \mu L$ of the peptide. The peptide concentration was the same in all wells, and the protein concentration varied. Dialyzed KMBDs were concentrated to a range from 100 to 200 μ M; they were subsequently diluted 14 times, half each time with PBS. The experiment was done in duplicate to minimize technical error. A multichannel peptide (Eppendorf) was used to minimize human error. The proteins were incubated in darkness with the peptide at room temperature for 10 minutes. The fluorescence polarization was measured at the emission

of 520 nm, and it was excited at 480 nm. The binding curve and K_D were determined using Prism 6.0 software (GraphPad Software Inc.) with formulas from Rossi ¹¹⁴.

2.13 Systematic clustering of lysine methylated peptides

All the known reported methylated peptides recorded in PhosphoSitePlus were collected. The known peptides were separated into unique peptide sequences with modified lysine at the center and \pm 5 residues. Clusters were formed using an algorithm based on local amino acid similarities. Taking consideration of the charge, polarity and size of the amino acid residue. Two peptides with similar sequences will be grouped into the same cluster. At the time when the clustering was done, there was a total of 2018 unique methylysine peptides. The maximum number of clusters is 2018, where all the clusters have exactly one peptide. Due to the testing limit, we were only able to fit 140 clusters onto one membrane of 600 spots with adequate control peptides. Each of the peptides chosen will have four variants: none, mono-, di- or tri-methylated central lysine.

Chapter 3

3 Results

3.1 Characterizing lysine methyl binding domain specificity

3.1.1 Expression and purification of lysine methyl binding domains

To determine the best enrichment method and combination of domains to use, we first had to determine the specificities and binding patterns of each domain that we are going to use. With the help of Dr. Brown and his team from SGC Toronto, we were able to obtain nine different KMBD plasmids (Table. 3.1). These domains have an N-terminal biotinylation tag and will be biotinylated *in vivo* during the induction phase. All the domains contain a purification 6xHis-Tag at the C-terminal. Using a nickel-NTA column to purify the protein from the whole bacterial lysate. The average yield was about 10 mg of protein from 1 L of culture. From one single nickel-NTA purification, the proteins were above 90% pure. A sample purification of CHD1-CD, MPP8-CD, PHF1-tudor is shown in Figure 3.1. Proteins were dialyzed to remove imidazole and ready for the other experiments.

Table 3.1. List of lysine methyl binding domains used in this study. Table showing where the domains were from, the residues sequences, their molecular weight (MW), total MW with his-tag as well as biotinylation tag, their extinction coefficient and also the known histone binding sites for these binding domains ^{4,84,115–118}. All proteins used are all human proteins. Structural Genomics Consortium Toronto provided plasmids of these proteins.

3.1.2 Biotinylation of KMBD

The domains were used to link to streptavidin beads. Thus, I checked whether these proteins were properly biotinylated. A western blot was prepared for each KMBD using streptavidin-HRP (Thermo 21124) secondary antibody (Fig. 3.2). This western blot confirmed that the *in vivo* biotinylation process was conserved and little to no unintended biotinylated proteins. The exact amount of purified protein with biotin was not calculated; however, from Fig. 3.2, it demonstrated that the majority of the protein of interest was biotinylated.

The protein biotinylation was also tested by incubating L3MBTL2-3xMBT biotinylated proteins with streptavidin beads for them to conjugate for 30 minutes at room temperature. Due to the nature of biotin and streptavidin binding affinity, the conjugate was washed ten times to ensure all the proteins left were biotinylated. The beads conjugate was boiled in a 4x loading buffer for 15 minutes at 100 \degree C to denature the streptavidin beads and the KMBD. The denatured sample was loaded onto a gel with original stock protein and the wash fractions (Fig. 3.2). From this, I observed the major band at the desired protein molecular weight. Very little proteins in the washes suggested that most of the bound proteins were biotinylated. The bottom band at around 14 kDa were streptavidin monomers from the streptavidin beads. The streptavidin proteins were released from the beads after they were boiled for 15 minutes in a 4x SDS loading buffer.

Figure 3.2. MPP8-CD purification and western blot with streptavidin-HRP. MPP8- CD is his-tagged and expressed in BL21 (DE3) *E. coli*, induced with 1 mM IPTG, grown for 18 hours after induction at 18 °C. Bacterial cells were lysed with 1 mg/mL lysozyme, 1 mM PMSF, 2% triton-X. A) The protein purification, as seen in Fig. 3.1. B) western blot with streptavidin-HRP, $2 \mu L$ of elution was taken and transferred onto the PVDF membrane. The membrane was blocked with TBS-T for 2 hours and incubated with streptavidin-HRP for 30 mins at room temperature with shaking.

3.1.3 53BP1-tudor binding to standard peptides

To proceed with further experiments, I had to make sure the protein domains were functionally active. I first used the 53BP1-tudor domain to test its binding to H4K20 peptides. 53BP1-tudor domain is known to bind to H4K20me1/2 and with a 42.5 ± 24.6 μ M affinity for H4K20me2¹⁰⁶. I synthesized four variants of H4K20, with K20 at the center and seven flanking residues on each side of the central K20, with fluorescein at the N-terminus of the peptides. The peptide sequence is Fluro-GGAKRHR**K**VLRDNIQ.

Fluorescence polarization was performed on the 53BP1-tudor domain with fluorescently labelled H4K20me0/1/2/3 peptides (Fig. 3.4). The purified 53BP1-tudor domains were concentrated to 100 μ M and diluted 14 times to 0.006 μ M. The experiment was performed on a 384-well dark plate, each well with 30 μ L of protein with 5 μ L of the peptide. The proteins and peptides were mixed via pipetting and left to incubate for 10 minutes at room temperature in the dark. This experiment was done in two replicates. The fluorescence polarization was measured at the emission of 520 nm, and it was excited at 480 nm. The binding curve and K_D was determined using the formula from 114 . From this result, the biotinylated 53BP1-tudor was active and can bind to H4K20me2 with 40.0 \pm 12.1 µM affinity, which was similar to previously reported data. The binding to H4K20me1 was also relatively strong at $41.6 \pm 18.1 \,\mu$ M. However, H4K20me0/3 did not have a determinable K_D . The undetermined K_D could be the result of their low-affinity nature, or they did not bind. Previously reported H4K20me0/3 also had no binding to the 53BP1-tudor domain⁴.

Figure 3.4. The kinetic dissociation constant of 53BP1-tudor with H4K20 peptides was determined by fluorescence polarization. H4K20 peptides were synthesized with fluorescein at the N-terminus: Fluro-GGAKRHR**K**VLRDNIQ. The bolded lysine has four different variants, Kme $0/1/2/3$. The kinetic dissociation constant (K_D) of the 53BP1tudor domain to these four H4K20 peptides was determined. The calculations were based on two replicates. The concentrations of the 53BP1-tudor domain used starting from 100 μ M, diluted 14 times to 0.006 μ M and one control at 0 μ M.

3.1.4 Peptide membrane array to probe KMBD specificity

To investigate the specificities and binding pattern of each KMBD in a high throughput manner, I used peptide membrane arrays. The initial array consisted of 70 proteins where their peptides were methylated or predicted to be methylated in cells. Each peptide was 15 amino acid residues in length with lysine at the center and seven residues flanking the lysine from both sides (Table S.1). Each peptide had four different variants: none methylated (Kme0), mono (Kme1), di (Kme2), or trimethylated (Kme3) center lysine residue. The protein peptides were picked based on a previous prediction experiment done in our lab, where they were potential lysine methyltransferase targets. Thus, these peptides were good candidates for the KMBD binding experiments. As well, histone peptides like H4K20 and H3K9 were included as controls.

All the KMBDs were expressed and purified from BL21 (DE3) *E. coli*. The peptide membrane was processed and blocked by 5% BSA overnight at 4 $°C$. 1 µM of purified KMBD was incubated with the membrane overnight at 4° C. The next day, the binding was detected by streptavidin HRP and chemiluminescence via ECL solutions.

All the KMBDs were probed individually onto the membrane as well as some combination KMBDs to see whether it will impact the binding patterns (Fig. 3.5). To observe the preferred binding patterns, they were all compared to the Km0 variant of each peptide. Here, I assumed that the binding domains have a higher affinity to the methylated peptide than the non-methylated copy. Red means higher affinity compared to Kme0 and green means weaker affinity than Kme0, whereas yellow means neutral. Since these are methyl-binding domains, I assessed more carefully for the interactions that were red and orange.

From figure 3.5, there were some distinct binding patterns for each KMBD. For instance, the 53BP1-tudor domain and CBX7 chromodomain have a strong Kme1 binding preference, whereas PHF1 and CHD1 have more affinity towards Kme3. There were

others with more Kme1/Kme3 preferences like L3MBTL2 and MPP8. SET8 is a methyltransferase, and it was included as a control. I expected SET8 to bind to Kme0 with the strongest affinity since it adds a methyl group to its substrates. Thus, for SET8, the Kme1/2/3 was mostly green. 53BP1-tudor domain was known to bind to H4K20me1 and H4K20me2 ⁷⁸. In my experiment, H4K20me1/2 was strongly bound to by 53BP1 tudor domain compared to Kme0. Suggesting that the quality of my peptide membrane array was good, and the results were trustworthy.

Strong

-
Neutral

Figure 3.5. Lysine methyl binding domain binding heat map to 70 proteins peptide array. This 70 proteins peptide array was derived from a previous prediction experiment, where these proteins were predicted to be methylated within the cells. All KMBDs were expressed and purified from BL21 (DE3) *E. coli*. 1 µM of KMBD was incubated with the blocked peptide membrane at 4 °C overnight with shaking. The results of Kme1/2/3 were compared to Kme0. If the bindings were stronger than Kme0, it would be red; if they were weaker than Kme0, then it would be green. The Kme0 peptides were used as the negative control. 53BP1-tudor and CBX7 showed strong Kme1/2 preference. Whereas MPP8 showed Kme3 preference. SET8 was used as a control since SET8 is a Kme1 methyltransferase; it should have the greatest affinity for Kme0 substrates. The majority of the SET8 binding patterns were green.

3.2 Lysine methyl binding domain substrate prediction

3.2.1 Construction of lysine methylated peptide based on a phylogenetic tree approach

Mapping out and predicting KMBD domain substrate specificity requires a wild variety of substrates to be tested. I wanted to make a high-throughput screening method to map out the KMBD binding specificities. I used peptide membrane array for the assay. To pick the most representative group of peptides to test, I decided to use a phylogenetic-like approach. From the PhosphoSitePlus database, we downloaded all the currently validated lysine methylated peptides. With the help of Dr. Li Lei and Eric Liu from our lab, we grouped the peptides into different clusters based on their similarity to each other. In the beginning, each of the 2018 peptides was individually clustered, as we lessen the total amount of total clusters, peptides with similar residues were grouped into the same cluster. Due to the testing limit, we can only spot 600 peptides onto a membrane, and each peptide must have four modification states: none methylated, mono-, di- and trimethylated. We picked 140 clusters of lysine methylated peptides to be spotted on a peptide array (560 spots), and 40 spots of controlled peptides (Table S.2). This peptide array later will be referred to as the 140-cluster array.

By grouping similar clusters together, I was able to test the widest array of different potential substrates in a systematic fashion.

3.2.2 Results from the 140-cluster peptide array

The peptide arrays were synthesized and probed with all nine of the KMBDs.

In figure 3.6, it showed the raw binding using the 53BP1-tudor domain on the 140-cluster array. Note the positive control H4K20me1/2 was shown in the red box (Fig. 3.6). From this experiment, by looking at the top 5% of highly bound substrates, I observed that the 53BP1-tudor domain bound strongly to Kme1 and Kme2 peptides. It was expected from my previous experiment. However, I did not see much binding of Kme3 peptides. Even though 53BP1-tudor domain bound well to Kme1/2 peptides, some Kme0 peptides were

bound. The binding to Kme0 peptides could suggest that local amino acid composition may play a more significant role in the 53BP1-tudor binding to its substrates (Fig. 3.6).

From the 53BP1-tudor 140-cluster result, I also wanted to assess what the amino acid compositions of the strong binding peptides versus the weak binding peptides. I looked at the residue logos of the top 5% binding Kme1 compared to the bottom 5% of Kme1 peptides (Fig. 3.7). The positions -2 to $+3$ has the most differences in terms of how the 53BP1-tudor domain bound to its substrates. In the top 5%, I saw several positively charged amino acids and no acidic residues within this region. Whereas in the bottom 5%, there were a lot of negatively charged amino acids within this region. To further validate these findings, I decided to take a look at the structure of the 53BP1-tudor domain ⁷⁸. From the 53BP1-tudor domain structure, I saw that the important residues in the binding interface were Trp1495, Tyr1502, Phe1519 and Asp1521. The negatively charged D1521 which complements well to substrate peptides with positively charged residue around the methyl-lysine. The data corresponded very well to the structural data. Thus, this added another level of validation for our peptide membrane array to tease out binding patterns of KMBDs.

Figure 3.6. 140-cluster peptide array binding with the 53BP1-tudor domain. The 140-cluster peptide array membrane was blotted with 1 μ M 53BP1-tudor domain at 4 °C overnight with shaking. Subsequently was bound by streptavidin-HRP and developed with an ECL solution. The darker the spots, the more binding it has occurred. The blue box contains the control peptides H3K9me0/1/2/3 vertically. The green box contains H3K27me0/1/2/3, and the red box contains the control peptide H4K20me0/1/2/3. From left to right, every four dots in a row are Kme0/1/2/3. The last two columns on the right control peptides.

Figure 3.7. Logos of top and bottom 5% of Kme1 peptides to the 53BP1-tudor domain from 140-cluster peptide array. All the Kme1 peptides were ranked based on the binding intensity from the 140-cluster array. The top and bottom 5% were separated, and their sequences were compared using a sequence $\log o$ ¹¹⁹. In the top 5%, Kme1s with strong binding to 53BP1-tudor in the -2 to +3 $(4,5,7,8,9)$ positions contained mainly basic residue and no acidic residue. On the other hand, the bottom 5% Kme1s with little to no binding contained various acidic residues in the -2 to +3 region.

Figure 3.8. Lysine methyl binding domain heatmap of 140-cluster peptide array. The Kme1/2/3 peptides were compared to the Kme0 peptides. A bigger and more systematic expansion from the 70 proteins array. Here, 53BP1-tudor showed a strong Kme1/2 binding preference. While MPP8-CD appeared to be a balanced binder of all Kme modifications. PHF1-tudor preferred Kme3 peptides. As well as CBX7 preferred Kme1 substrates.

3.2.3 KMBD biding specificity from 140-cluster array versus previous 70-protein array

The 140-cluster array (Fig. 3.8) was a systemic expansion of the previous 70 proteins array (Fig. 3.5). The 140-cluster array peptides were chosen from a database of methylated peptides discovered from human cell lines. From the 140-cluster array, at least one variant of the methylation was observed in a cell. Whereas the 70 proteins array some were real, some were predictions and may not exist in a cell.

The 140-cluster array contained the patterns found in the 70-protein array and magnified it and became more systematic. Both data support each other, and the 140-cluster array gave us a big picture of the protein specificity and preferences.

Note from the figure. 3.6, the binding affinity was not raw intensity, but it was the Kme1/2/3 peptides compared to its Kme0 peptide. Thus, some of the weak binding substrates even though it showed an enriched preference for Kme1/2, but their actual affinity might not be very high. For example, in Fig. 3.6 in blue, it showed three dots, and in green, it showed two faint dots. Even though the blue and green boxes, their $Kme1/2$ were both red in Fig 3.8, but their actual binding affinity was not the same. 53BP1-tudor bound to the blue box was much tighter than the green box substrates. Another issue is some Kme0s have more binding than other peptide kme1/2s. It was observed again in Fig. 3.6, where the Kme0 of the blue box was darker than the kme1/2 of the green box. Fig. 3.8 gave us an idea of what kind of substrates the protein may prefer; however, it does not tell us about its affinity to the peptide.

The raw binding intensity can infer binding affinity. I could not determine the precise K_D , but I could determine the relative binding strength between the two peptides. The darker the spot, the stronger the protein binds to the substrate. The pattern was important, but we also need to keep in mind about the raw intensity (Fig. 3.9A). The majority of the Kme0/3s were not super high intensity; there were a few that bound well to 53BP1-tudor.

3.2.4 53BP1-tudor domain binding substrate prediction

53BP1-tudor domain shown to have the most diverse binding amongst all nine KMBDs that were tested. Thus, we wanted to use it to make a specificity pattern to predict potential substrates. We first organized the binding data, which allowed us to see the distribution of peptide binding separated into their individual modifications (Fig. 3.9A). Based on the positive control data for H4K20me2 having a net intensity of 107.8, we decided to use 100 as a cut-off to find the enriched amino acids amongst the peptides with at least 1 out of 4 modifications over 100 net intensity (Fig. 3.9C). From this enriched pattern, we saw a lot of basic residues that were enriched compared to the rest of the peptides having less than 100 net intensity. This enriched pattern will be the primary prediction feature. Subsequently, when there is a tie between a couple of peptides, we will need to use the secondary prediction features (Fig. 3.9D). The secondary prediction features were formed by taking a lower cut-off than the primary prediction features. For the secondary features, we took a cut-off of 50 and compared to the peptides with less than 50 net intensity.

Out of the first 140 clusters, we found some interesting binding substrates, and one that caught our eyes was NHEJ1, involved in the DNA damage repair pathway. From WT peptide, it had 4/6 basic residues enriched pattern, and it was a very strong binding substrate (Fig. 3.9). Thus, we wanted to perform a permutation array on this already strong binding peptide. Permutation array replaces each amino acid with 19 different amino acids at that spot to see if there were any critical amino acids involved and also to test our enriched features. In this permutation array (Fig. 3.10), the total protein used was significantly reduced due to the strong binding nature. This permutation array showed that our enriched features were accurate, with only a few places of differences. The interesting discovery was the residue at the -5 positions. By changing the arginine into a lysine, it showed a markedly increased intensity compared to the WT. Also, by changing the serine at the -1 position to arginine, the intensity went up compared to the WT. Out of the rest of the 18 amino acids, only the histidine residue increased binding a bit, as predicted, and everything else was either neutral or worse than WT. More interestingly,

when -2 to +3 region is permutated with an acidic residue, the peptide binding went down. Surprisingly by having proline, leucine and isoleucine, it could also increase the binding affinity towards the peptide.

Thus, I believe a consensus sequence exists for the identification of putative substrates of the 53BP1-tudor domain.

Figure 3.9. Using 140-cluster data to construct binding prediction logos for the 53BP1-tudor domain. A) The binding intensity was plotted based on their modification. For Kme1/2, there were a lot of high scoring peptides compared to Kme0/3. B) General peptide logo of all 600 peptides to see if there were any biases from our 140-cluster array. C) The primary prediction features, residue enrichment from peptides scoring above an intensity of 100 compared to those that were less. Many basic residues were enriched for 53BP1-tudor binding. D) Secondary prediction features were enriched using all peptides, with an intensity score of 50.

Figure 3.10. Permutation array of NHEJ1, the number one predicted substrate for the 53BP1-tudor domain. NHEJ1 was predicted to be the best substrate for the 53BP1 tudor domain. A permutation array was done on its WT sequence. By changing one amino acid at one time per position, using all amino acids except cysteine. The permutation array results agreed with our primary prediction features. By changing -5 to lysine, the binding affinity went up. As well as changing -1 position to an arginine. Acidic residues within -2 to +3 region decreased the binding affinity to 53BP1-tudor.
3.2.5 53BP1-tudor domain predicted substrates

By using the 53BP1-tudor binding features from above, I wanted to try to predict peptides substrates from the known methylated peptide list from PhosphoSitePlus 24 . There are currently 5,355 recorded Kme sites, and some are not validated. Out of the 5,355 sites, we filtered out the peptide sequences that were the same, to a list of 4,642 unique sequences. The amino acid residues from the peptide were separated from -5 to $+5$ with the modified lysine at the center, 0. Each position was assigned a score based on the enrichment logo features. First, the peptides with acidic residues from -2 to $+3$ were separated and moved to the bottom of the list. From our previous experiments, these peptides did not have a good binding with the 53BP1-tudor domain. The primary prediction score came from the 100 or higher net intensity enrichment logos. After the secondary scores came from the 50 or higher net intensity enrichment logo to break the ties in certain situations to rank the peptides. The sum of the score of each amino acid was added and ranked (Fig. 3.11). From this list, I saw there was a group of high scoring candidates and flanked by candidates scoring 0. Several of the known 53BP1-tudor binding substrates were all ranked in the top 15% of the prediction. For example, H3K9 ranked in the top 1%, p53K370 ranked in the top 3%, p53K382 ranked in the top 9%, and H4K20 ranked in the top 14% of all the peptides. With known binding substrates scoring in the top 15%, we have strong confidence in the predicted proteins.

We dove further into the top 100 predicted non-histone binding substrates of the 53BP1 tudor domain (Fig. 3.12). Here, we observed that the top 100 substrates belonged to five biological processes: Transcription regulation, RNA and mRNA processing, cell division, apoptosis regulation and DNA damage repair pathways. The predicted proteins fit into the current knowledge of the 53BP1-tudor domain, which binds to p53 and is involved in DNA damage repair ¹²⁰.

Several known 53BP1-tudor binding domains scored high on our prediction ranking, and the predicted biological processes fit into the role of the 53BP1-tudor domain. Thus, I am confident that there will be some valid and novel substrates for the 53BP1-tudor domain identified in this prediction.

Figure 3.11. Prediction ranking of all known methyllysine sites to a 53BP1-tudor domain based on peptide array data. All of the currently known methyllysine peptides from PhosphoSitePlus were obtained ²⁴. All peptides were ranked using primary and secondary features developed in Figure 3.9. A peptide with an acidic residue in -2 to $+3$ region will receive a prediction score of 0, due to the less likely chance of binding. Each residue within the primary and secondary feature receives a score and a weight. In the end, the total score is added based on all residues within the peptide. Many of the known 53BP1-tudor domain substrates were within the top 10%.

Figure 3.12. Biological pathway analysis of the top 100 predicted 53BP1-tudor binding substrate. Looking at the top 100 predicted substrates of the 53BP1-tudor domain and their biological processes. These five biological processes are vital to the cell but also corresponds to the function of 53BP1 within the cell.

3.3 Lysine methylome identification

3.3.1 Elution conditions for KMBD using standard peptides

Several parameters must be considered for peptide binding and eluting to ensure KMBDbiotin is linked to streptavidin beads during the elution condition but strong enough to release the bound peptides. Additionally, the binding and washing processes must be taken into consideration since the binding affinity for methylated substrates is quite low due to their small, non-polar modification. The final consideration was whether to pulldown whole proteins or digested peptides from the whole cell lysate.

3.3.1.1 Testing KMBD-biotin and streptavidin binding strength

During the enrichment process, we did not want to elute our binding protein off the streptavidin beads. It was critical to identify the conditions where their binding may be disrupted. Here, I used a varying concentration of urea $(0 - 8 M)$ and varying pH $(2 - 6 M)$ pH) (Fig. 3.13). In this experiment, MPP8-CD-biotin was purified and conjugated to the streptavidin beads. We saw that neither urea nor low pH was able to elute MPP8-CDbiotin off the streptavidin beads. To make sure that our protein was accurately bound to the beads, I boiled the bead conjugate with a loading buffer at $100 \degree C$ for 15 minutes. Only when the beads were boiled, MPP8-CD-biotin was in the solution and at the same molecular weight as the stock protein.

To ensure that no protein was coming off during the harsh conditions, I performed silver staining on p100-tudor binding to streptavidin beads (Fig. 3.14). The proteins were purified and conjugated to streptavidin beads. Excess protein was washed off, followed by several washes to ensure all the nonbinding proteins were washed off. After increasing various concentrations of urea and decreasing the pH, no protein was eluted off the streptavidin beads. The final protein-beads were boiled, and p100-tudor was on the beads. Thus, confirming that pH and urea conditions tested were safe to use and will not elute off any of our KMBDs.

Figure 3.13. Coomassie blue staining of MPP8-CD binding to streptavidin beads at varying urea concentration and pH. Purified MPP8-CD was conjugated to streptavidin beads. 10 µL of streptavidin beads were used and were conjugated to saturation. A) Testing streptavidin and MPP8-CD-biotin binding to the beads with varying concentrations of urea. After MPP8-beads were conjugated, they were rigorously washed before starting the urea test. We saw that at concentrations 2, 5 and 8 M urea, no proteins came off. After the beads were boiled at 100 °C for 15 minutes, the proteins came off the beads. B) Testing streptavidin and MPP8 binding with varying pH. We saw at pH 2, the proteins were still intact and could only be found in the boiled beads. The wavy band was due to an unbalanced pH before running the gel.

Figure 3.14. Silver staining of p100 binding to streptavidin beads at varying pH and urea concentrations. Testing streptavidin beads binding to the biotinylated protein, we used p100-tudor to test binding. The sensitivity was higher when using silver staining than Coomassie blue-staining. It allowed us to monitor small changes in p100-tudor and if it fell off the beads. The red box represents p100-tudor. A) Varying pH did not remove any conjugated proteins from the beads. B) Varying concentration of urea did not remove p100-tudor from streptavidin beads.

3.3.1.2 pH elution of standard peptides with 53BP1-tudor

After knowing that pH 2 will not elute our binding proteins from the streptavidin beads, I wanted to determine the conditions where I could elute the bound peptide from the KMBDs. I used the 53BP1-tudor domain for testing the conditions needed. Standard peptides of H4K20me0/2 were made with a fluorescein tag on the N-terminus. Peptides were added to the conjugated 53BP1-tudor-streptavidin beads in the dark. They were on an end-to-end rotator for 30 minutes at room temperature for binding. After washing several times, the peptides were eluted with varying pH comparing the two peptides (Fig. 3.15). In this experiment, it showed that the proportion of Kme0 peptides bound to the conjugated beads were much lower than Kme2 peptides. It showed us that the majority of peptides were eluted off 53BP1-tudor at pH 4 and most if not all were eluted at pH 3. Whereas on the basic spectrum, at pH 11, virtually eluted all the peptides off.

Taking consideration that low pH was better for the next step processing for mass spectrometry, I decided to use low pH elution for the rest of the experiments. Interestingly, 0.1% FA, used in MS processing, is about pH 2.7, which was great for eluting these peptides because most of the peptides will be eluted at that pH.

Figure 3.15. Using fluorescein tagged H4K20me0/2 peptide testing elution conditions with varying pH. Purified 53BP1-tudor domain was conjugated to streptavidin beads. Fluorescent H4K20me0/2 were incubated with the protein-beads, with the experiment done in duplicates. The starting point was pH 7.4 and serial addition of lower or high pH until pH 2 and 13, respectively. The pH of the elution was adjusted to pH 7.4 due to fluorescein sensitivity to change in pH. At pH 4 and pH 11 majority of the peptides will be eluted from 53BP1-tudor.

3.3.1.3 Strong cation exchange column

Several groups used strong cation exchange columns (SCX) to enrich their digested peptides for MS processing ¹⁰⁸. However, the majority of the paper where SCX applied was enriching for arginine methylated peptides. Although only a few have used SCX to enrich for lysine methylated peptides, I decided to see if I could utilize SCX to increase the amount of lysine methylated peptides in my enrichment process. Using the fluorescein tagged H4K20me0/2 peptides (Fig. 3.16), I found that no significant differences between the methylated peptide versus the non-methylated peptide. It could be because methyl-group does not affect the charge of the lysine residue being modified 29 .

Figure 3.16. Using fluorescein tagged H4K20me0/2 peptide testing SCX conditions with varying pH. Testing if SCX could separate methylated or non-methylated peptides by using fluorescent H4K20me0 versus H4K20me2. The binding condition was with 50 mM sodium acetate at pH 4.5. By increasing pH from 4.5 to 12, we saw that most of the peptides were eluted around pH 11. However, SCX did not distinguish between methylated or non-methylated peptide.

3.3.1.4 Whole protein pull-down

The canonical method of affinity purification of cell lysate was trypsinized whole cell lysate. However, I wanted to try to do an undigested protein pull-down using one of our KMBDs, 53BP1-tudor domain. I wanted to see if and how many intact proteins I could enrich using our domains. I used a protocol by Cold Spring Harbor, a non-denaturing cell lysis protocol with lots of protease inhibitors ¹²¹. Following their protocol, I was able to obtain non-denatured protein lysate from HEK293 cells. I incubated the lysate with conjugated 53BP1-tudor-streptavidin beads for 1 hour at room temperature in PBS pH 7.4. After, it was washed 3x with PBS and eluted with 0.1% FA. The elution was put onto a western blot with a pan-lysine-methyl antibody (Fig. 3.17A). The only detectable band was p53. The elution was trypsinized 1:50 concentration of trypsin to protein at 37 °C overnight with shaking. The sample was prepared and sent to MS. The results were not great, and we were only able to pull-down four non-histone methylated proteins.

Thus, I believe the majority of methyllysine proteins bind with μ M to mM affinity ¹²². The interactions were weak and transient. Pulling down the intact proteins would be difficult, and the proteins could be lost due to the washing step. Thus, I next decided to attempt enriching methyllysine proteins from trypsinized whole cell lysate.

Figure 3.17. Western blot and a far-western blot of intact protein pulldown from HEK293 lysate via the 53BP1-tudor domain. HEK293 cells were lysed in a nondenaturing lysis buffer with protease inhibitors. The purified 53BP1-tudor domains were conjugated onto 30 µL of packed streptavidin beads. The intact proteins from HEK293 lysate were mixed with 53BP1-tudor-beads for 2 hours at room temperature on an endover-end rotator. Control was streptavidin beads with biotin with HEK293 lysate. A) Using a pan-methyllysine antibody to monitor the elution results. We saw there were lots of methylated proteins in the cell. However, there was only one band around the size of p53 was observed. B) Using 53BP1-tudor-biotin to do a far-western blot to observe where 53BP1-tudor were binding to on the lysates and flow through. From this, we saw there were lots of proteins that 53BP1-tudor could have bound onto from the lysate. However, they were washed away or lost during elution.

3.3.2 Methyl peptide enrichment

Based on the peptide arrays data, we picked five KMBDs: 53BP1-tudor, CBX7-CD, L3MBTL2-3xMBT, MPP8-CD, PHF1-tudor. These domains complement each other in their binding specificity to have the highest overall coverage. The domains 53BP1-tudor and CBX7-CD preferred Kme1/2 peptides, especially 53BP1-tudor (Fig. 3.8). L3MBTL2-3xMBT domain was one of the balanced domains, where it had the potential to bind to all three Kme modifications. Lastly, MPP8-CD and PHF1-tudor domains preferred Kme3 peptides, which will complement the 53BP1-tudor and CBX7-CD. Thus, these five KMBDs had their preferences, and with these preferences, we can have the highest coverage of all three modifications of Kme.

I have done experiments of enriching HEK293 cell lysate with the single domain as well as a combination of five "in a super-column." In these experiments, the HEK293 cells were not stimulated with any stressors. HEK293 cells were grown to a confluence of 80% and lysed via 8 M urea. One replicate was done with two 10 cm culture dishes, to a final protein concentration of 2 mg of total protein. The sample was prepared and processed by mass spectrometry for peptide identification.

3.3.2.1 Methyl peptide enrichment by 53BP1-tudor

I wanted to test a few single domains to monitor the enrichment amount and compare it to the five KMBDs super-column. I used freshly purified and dialyzed 53BP1-tudor domain for this enrichment. The starting protein concentration was $2 \text{ mg/mL} (111 \mu\text{M}) 53 \text{BP1}$ tudor. I used $120 \mu L$ of streptavidin beads mixture, 50:50 solution to beads, with a packed beads volume of $60 \mu L$. The beads were washed vigorously to avoid any contaminants and polymers. After, 1 mg of protein was added to the beads and mixed for 10 minutes at room temperature. Excess proteins were washed off with PBS. To ensure the streptavidin beads were saturated, I added another 500 µg of protein onto the beads. The unbound protein was determined via Bradford assay to be around 500 μ g; thus, I concluded that the streptavidin beads were saturated. The experiments were done with two biological repeats. The conjugated protein-beads were divided equally into two

Eppendorfs, each with $30 \mu L$ of packed protein-beads. Then, two biological repeats of 2 mg of digested HEK293 cell lysates were incubated with each correctly labelled Eppendorf tube. The tubes were put on an end-to-end rotator for 2 hours at room temperature for peptide binding. They were washed twice with 1 mL of PBS. The peptides were eluted twice with 100 µL of 0.1% FA. Samples were desalted via C18 column following the manufacturer's instructions. The eluted peptides were vacuum dried and resuspended in 20 µL of 0.1% FA for MS identification.

The MS results were analyzed by PEAKS 5.3 program ¹²³. By combining the identification from both replicates, I was able to identify 84 Kme sites and corresponding to 56 proteins. Out of the 84 sites, 29 were Kme1, 54 were Kme2 and 1 Kme3 peptide (Fig. 3.18A). These Kme sites further correspond to 20 Kme1 proteins, 37 Kme2 proteins and 1 Kme3 protein (Fig. 3.18B). From this experiment, I observed that not a lot of proteins overlap in terms of methyl modifications. There were 30 proteins overlap in both biological replicates, which consists of 54% of the total discovered proteins (Fig. 3.18C). Fig. 3.18D showed the percentages of replicate proteins and sites compared to the total number of proteins and sites found in this experiment. Out of the total 84 Kme sites identified, 77 sites were found to be novel by manually inserting into PhosphoSitePlus database 24 . Furthermore, out of the 56 proteins found, 23 proteins were unreviewed on Uniprot. There were 33 peptides associated with the 23 unreviewed proteins and were classified as a novel since there was no data on these proteins.

Figure 3.18. Methyllysine sites and proteins identified via 53BP1-tudor affinity purification of HEK293 cell lysate followed by MS. Two biological replicates of HEK293 cells were lysed using 8 M urea and processed for trypsinization. Purified 53BP1-tudor-biotin were conjugated to 30 µL of packed streptavidin beads. Trypsinized HEK293 peptides were mixed with protein-beads for 2 hours at room temperature on an end-to-end rotator. A) Total enriched Kme sites, as well as how many per replicate. B) The Kme sites were corresponding to proteins, a Venn diagram of Kme1/2/3 proteins. Not many proteins pulled out have more than one type of modification. C) The overlap of proteins between the two biological replicates. D) Percentage of replicate enriched proteins and sites compared to the combined proteins and sites across both replicates. As well as the known and novel sites.

3.3.2.2 Methyl peptide enrichment by MPP8-CD

Furthermore, we have tested another single domain enrichment of HEK293 trypsinized lysate with MPP8-CD. MPP8-CD purified well and had great results from the 140-cluster peptide array (Fig. 3.8). Moreover, it had a balanced preference for all Kme substrates instead of Kme1/2 focused like 53BP1-tudor. The same procedure was followed as the 53BP1-tudor domain enrichment. One process that was different from a 53BP1-tudor domain was the MS identification software. We switched from PEAKS to Maxquant software for identification 124 . The results are shown in Fig. 3.17. I was able to identify 48 Kme peptides, corresponding to 33 proteins. Interestingly, for MPP8-CD enrichment, the Kme peptides were balanced, with 17 Kme1, 16 Kme2 and 15 Kme3 peptides. This result also affirms our 140-cluster peptide array experiment. Moreover, all the peptides identified in this experiment were novel. It was particularly strange to not enrich any known sites for MPP8 in two biological replicates. Even though the overlap of the two experiments was low, neither of the two was able to enrich any known sites.

Figure 3.19. Methyllysine sites and proteins identified from HEK293 cell lysate via MPP8-CD affinity purification and MS. Two biological replicates of HEK293 cells were used. Purified MPP8-CD was conjugated to the streptavidin beads for affinity purification. A) The total number of Kme1/2/3 and the number of Kmes for each replicate. B) Venn diagram of Kme1/2/3 proteins and only three proteins overlap Kme2/3. C) The number of proteins being identified in each replicate, with an overlap of about 30%. D) Percentage of proteins and sites from individual replicate comparing to combined proteins and data from both replicates.

3.3.2.3 Methyllysine peptide enrichment by combined super column

After the single binding enrichments, the next step was to test the combination of five KMBDs to see if I could enrich more peptides. To keep everything consistent, I used 30 μ L of packed beads. All KMBDs were 1:1:1:1:1 ratio, thus each KMBD was 6 μ L of the total packed beads. The KMBDs were conjugated to streptavidin beads individually, and all beads were loaded to saturation. After the protein-beads were diluted and equivalent to 6 µL of packed beads were pipetted into an Eppendorf tube. Two biological replicates were used. The KMBD super-column experiment was performed twice, both were on HEK293 cells, but spanned multiple months apart. These experiments will be referred to as KMBD-1 (Exp 1) and KMBD-2 (Exp 2).

Overall, by combining both experiments, with four biological replicates, 8 mg of total cell lysate and $120 \mu L$ of conjugated protein-beads, I was able to enrich 214 Kme sites, corresponding to 148 proteins. Out of the 148 proteins, only three histone proteins were identified, and 145 NHKMPs were identified. From the 214 Kme sites identified, there were 82 Kme1, 103 Kme2 and 29 Kme3 sites (Fig. 3.20D). Those sites corresponded to 67 Kme1 proteins, 84 Kme2 proteins and 27 Kme3 proteins (Fig. 3.20C). From Fig. 3.20C, I observed that several proteins had multiple Kme states, and seven proteins had all three methylation states found on the same residue. These sites were very interesting because it was regulated heavily by various KMT and KDMs.

By looking at the two experiments separately, they did not have a high overlap in terms of proteins enriched in both experiments (Fig. 3.20B). Only 16 proteins were enriched from both experiments, and the majority of the proteins and sites were enriched from the individual experiments. In KMBD-1, it enriched 93 proteins and 134 sites. However, the overlap between replicate 1 and 2 was only about 25% (Fig. 3.20A). On the other hand, KMBD-2 had about 51% overlap between replicates, but the amount of protein and sites were a bit lower as well, 71 and 98, respectively. However, I ran into a problem during the MS injection. The signal from one injection was too strong that not all the sample was processed. Thus, this injection problem could contribute to the variation between replicates and, as well, between experiments.

Nonetheless, the five KMBD super-column was far superior to the single domain enrichment. With similar amounts of proteins as a single domain enrichment, I was able to get twice as many sites and proteins from the KMBD super-column.

Figure 3.20. Methyllysine sites and proteins identified from HEK293 cells via five KMBD super-column followed by MS. 53BP1-tudor, MPP8-CD, CBX7-CD, PHF1 tudor and L3MBTL2-3xMBT domains were used to form the super-column. Each domain is 6 µL of packed streptavidin beads. Two separate experiments were done E1 (Experiment 1) and E2 (Experiment 2), each with two biological repeats. A) Percentage of proteins per replicate compared to the combined proteins identified from both replicates. E1 had about half the overlap between replicates as E2. B) The number of Kme proteins identified from each experiment with 16 proteins overlap. C) The Kme protein distribution. Interesting, seven proteins contained all three modifications, and some were on the same residue. D) The number of sites identified from both experiments as well as novel sites being discovered.

Exp	Mod	Uniprot ID	Gene	Site	Sequence	Found (Y/N)
53BP1	Kme2	A0A075		207	GGDRGGFKNFGGHRD	N
53BP1	Kme2	A0A087	recA	601	LQQSGTNKEFYYDIK	N
53BP1	Kme2	A0A0C4		679	QAWTDKQKGLEEKHR	N
53BP1	Kme2	A0A0C4		380	RLQAWTDKQKGLEEK	N
KMBD-2	Kme2	A1L390	PKHG3	953	RPPLQWEKVAPERDG	${\sf N}$
53BP1	Kme2	A6NC78	GOG8I	327	GALQAQVKNNQRISL	N
MPP8	Kme3	A8MV72	YH009	277	LQQGNMRKNMRVLSR	${\sf N}$
53BP1	Kme2	B4DUK8	PRKAG3	263	SPLRSTCKAASSLWS	N
53BP1	Kme2	B7ZBI5	COL20A1	124	RVGLQGPKGMRGLEG	${\sf N}$
53BP1	Kme2	C9JIG9	OXSR1	297	FFQKAKNKEFLQEKT	N
53BP1	Kme2	C9JIG9	OXSR1	295	HKFFQKAKNKEFLQE	${\sf N}$
53BP1	Kme2	D6REQ7	ZGRF1	34	KITHLGNKIQCL	N
53BP1	Kme1	E9PFJ4	MLIP	181	KSRILLKKEEEVYEP	N
53BP1	Kme1	F8VU51	YLPM1	490	KTWQGHMKATQSYLQ	${\sf N}$
53BP1	Kme1	F8VU51	YLPM1	483	QEYEKQWKTWQGHMK	${\sf N}$
53BP1	Kme2	HOYAN8	ARHGEF10	815	PRLQGIPKVTGRGMV	N
53BP1	Kme2	H0YAW0	TRPA1	562	CKEYLLMKWLAYGFR	${\sf N}$
53BP1	Kme1	HOYES2	DEPDC1	292	FQERCAKKMQLVNLR	N
53BP1	Kme1	HOYFD6	HADHA	111	INMLAACKTLQEVTQ	${\sf N}$
53BP1	Kme2	HOYFD6	HADHA	625	LLTQMVSKGFLGRKS	N
53BP1	Kme2	HOYNEO	MORF4L1	80	VPESRVLKYVDTNLQ	${\sf N}$
53BP1	Kme2	HOYNEO	MORF4L1	88	YVDTNLQKQRELQKA	N
53BP1	Kme1	H3BNL9	TUBGCP4	506	QMQRKHLKSNQTDAI	${\sf N}$
53BP1	Kme1	H3BNL9	TUBGCP4	57	SNQTDAIKWRLRNHM	N
53BP1	Kme2	H7C5H8	CLIP2	23	AMRSCPDKAQDKH	${\sf N}$
53BP1	Kme2	I3L2Y3	RNF167	112	IPTHDYQKGDQYDVC	N
53BP1	Kme2	I3L520	DNAH ₂	1125	IDYEGTQKLLALDPS	${\sf N}$
53BP1	Kme1	J3QSZ5	SON	356	GEGLGKNKEGNKEPI	N
53BP1	Kme2	K7EJJ0	ABCA9	23	LCKNCLKKWRMKRQT	N
53BP1	Kme2	K7EJJ0	ABCA9	22	LLCKNCLKKWRMKRQ	N
53BP1	Kme2	K7EJJ0	ABCA9	18	QTWALLCKNCLKKWR	${\sf N}$
53BP1	Kme1	K7EK07	H3F3B	79	REIAQDFKTDLRFQS	Υ
53BP1	Kme2	K7EK07	H3F3B	79	REIAQDFKTDLRFQS	Υ
53BP1	Kme2	M0QYA0	ZNF649	26	QFLSPAQKDLYRDVM	N
KMBD-1	Kme2	000148	DDX39A	333	LSRYQQFKDFQRRIL	N
KMBD-1	Kme1	000571	DDX3X	81	SRSDSRGKSSFFSDR	Υ
53BP1	Kme2	014578	CTRO	653	KAESLSDKLNDLEKK	N

Table 3.2. List of all the enriched Kme sites from HEK293 cells by KMBDs.

KMBD-1	Kme1	Q9UPW6	SATB ₂	724	EENADKSKAAPAEID	N
KMBD-1	Kme2	Q9UPW6	SATB ₂	722	AEEENADKSKAAPAE	N
KMBD-1	Kme2	Q9UPW6	SATB ₂	724	EENADKSKAAPAEID	N
KMBD-2	Kme2	Q9Y233	PDE ₁₀	754	DNLSQWEKVIRGEET	N
KMBD-2	Kme2	Q9Y233	PDE ₁₀	328	EIRFSIEKGIAGQVA	N
KMBD-2	Kme2	Q9Y233	PDE ₁₀	402	KTDENNFKMFAVFCA	N
KMBD-1	Kme1	Q9Y283	INVS	315	FLKHPSVKDDSDLEG	N
MPP8	Kme2	Q9Y2H2	SAC ₂	509	QVQQNELKKMFIQCQ	N
MPP8	Kme2	Q9Y2H2	SAC ₂	510	VQQNELKKMFIQCQT	N
MPP8	Kme3	Q9Y2H2	SAC ₂	509	QVQQNELKKMFIQCQ	N
MPP8	Kme3	Q9Y2H2	SAC ₂	510	VOONELKKMFIOCOT	N
53BP1	Kme2	Q9Y2W1	TR150	202	DNQGDEAKEQTFSGG	N
53BP1	Kme1	Q9Y3R5	DOP ₂	886	VLWNQLNKETREHHV	N
MPP8	Kme2	Q9Y471	CMAH	494	TNEPNRNKFSVENKA	N
MPP8	Kme3	Q9Y6N7	ROBO1	51	EPATLNCKAEGRPTP	N

 Table 3.2. List of all the enriched Kme sites from HEK293 cells by KMBDs (Continued)

Table 3.2. List of all the enriched Kme sites from HEK293 cells by KMBDs. This table lists all the Kme sites enriched with KMBDs, all four experiments from HEK293 cells. The lysine modification is labelled under Mod. The table also has Uniprot ID, gene name where applicable. The sequence is \pm 7 residue from the central modified lysine, where protein is at the end or beginning, "__" indicates the number of spaces. Found column signify whether this site has been previously reported, where Y means known site and N means novel site.

4 Discussion and future directions

4.1 General discussion and conclusions

4.1.1 Systematic characterization of KMBD binding profile

4.1.1.1 Probing KMBD binding via membrane peptide array

Membrane peptide array is a powerful tool for high throughput substrate screening ¹²⁵. In this project, three different peptide membranes were generated. First, designed by Dr. Kyle Biggar from his prediction experiments, and we picked the top 70 protein candidates and made four different variants of it with Kme0, 1, 2 and 3 (Fig 3.5). Each of the peptides was 15 amino acid residues with lysine at the center. The second peptide array used was the 140-cluster array from the phylogenetic-like clustering approach (Fig. 3.8). By grouping similar peptide sequences based on similarity and origin, we were able to pick out 140 clusters with four different modifications of the center lysine with some control peptides. These peptides were also 15 residues in length with center lysine. The third array was a permutation array of NHEJ1 peptide (Fig. 3.10). This permutation array was 11 residues in length with center lysine. Each of the amino acid residues was permutated to another amino acid residue, except for cysteine. Cysteines during reaction could result in sulphide bridges to complicate the synthesis $4,106$. The permutation array was used to assess whether any one type of residue can impact the affinity of the peptide for the protein, whether it can increase or decrease binding affinity 125 .

There were several important factors to achieve maximum results from these membrane peptide arrays — first, the background binding to the membrane. Achieving the best data from the membrane peptide array requires the background binding to be kept to a minimum. The background should be white to minimize signal interference for positive binding. The higher the background, the harder to distinguish if a spot was binding or it was just background noise. One way to minimize the background was to block the membrane in 5% BSA in PBS at 4 °C overnight with mild shaking. Blocking the

membrane 12-24 hours achieved the best results to have minimal background noise. Second, the purity of the purified protein would determine the amount of binding and can increase the background noise if the protein sample was not pure. Even though the sample was 90% pure, it was best to run another column to make the purity even higher. With pure proteins, there will be less contamination, less undesired binding and cleaner background. Third, the protein concentration blotting onto the peptide array. Choosing the correct concentration of binding protein was important. Too much protein could result in over binding or over-saturation of a spot 126 . Too little protein could result in less than ideal binding or very weak signals from the spots. The best way to determine what protein concentration to use is by trial and error. Last, the chemiluminescence solution that was being used and the exposure time. Depending on the enhanced chemiluminescence (ECL) used, the incubation time and exposure time could be different. Too many substrates could result in very dark spots across all spots and make the background very dark as well. Too little substrates could result in underdeveloped spots. We used our house-made ECL and substrates to incubate our membrane for two minutes and manual exposure of one picture every five seconds for 60 seconds. With the continuous exposure, I could pick the picture with the most optimal exposure for all the spots and a clear background.

There were several controls that one needs to do before the start of the experiment. First, the freshly synthesized membrane was blotted with the antibody (or antibodies) to assess whether there were any interactions from the antibody with the peptides and the membrane. This step will ensure that all the interactions seen on the membrane happened between our protein of interest and the membrane peptides. Second, evaluate the antibody (or antibodies) binding to our protein of interest. Third, assess whether the membranes could be stripped and reused. If the proteins could be stripped off the membrane without a trace and reblotting yield similar results, the reuse of membranes will be cost-effective. I used two stripping buffers to strip the proteins of our membranes (Fig. S.1). After stripping the proteins, the membrane was exposed to ECL and substrate to see if there were any residual antibodies left on the membrane. Subsequently, I incubated the

membrane with antibody assess whether any proteins were left on the membrane. In figure S.1, it showed that the stripped membrane was protein-free and reblotting the membrane yielded similar data.

One important quality control (QC) was the sequence fidelity of the peptides on the membrane; how accurate were they? It was a very important question and a hard one to answer. I needed to make sure that each spot was what we intended, and no mutations occur during synthesis. However, it was difficult to do QC on every single membrane. There were groups using membrane peptide array to synthesize peptides and cleave them for MS studies 127 . They would design tryptic peptides and use trypsin to digest the peptides off the membrane. However, our designed peptides, most of the time, were not tryptic. Only peptide sequences with one lysine or arginine at the C-terminal could work. In the past, our group tried the tryptic digestion method for QC. However, the digestion was poor. Now, I included control peptides during our synthesis for each batch of synthesis. For example, I would include GGpYGG peptide, which can be bound by the 4G10 antibody, placing this peptide in a few positions on the membrane to make sure the dotting was robust. Furthermore, I included biotin on the N-terminal ends of peptides, with the random amino acid composition of various lengths, up to the maximum length of our peptide on the membrane. These biotinylated peptides were done in duplicates, one with biotin and the other without. When the synthesis was complete, the control peptides were blotted and evaluated. Through these control peptides, I assumed the rest of the synthesis was good.

One of the drawbacks of using peptide array was that stronger signal does not necessarily translate to a higher affinity. However, the stronger signal does suggest the interaction was strong, but we could not determine the actual K_D from comparing the signals of control to another peptide. We could determine that our protein had bound with this peptide, and they have a good interaction or a weak interaction. The actual K_D could not be determined by this method. The peptide arrays are a great screening tool to assess binding or no binding. There were several reasons why a stronger signal does not

translate to a stronger binding. First, we did not know the precise number of peptides that were on each spot; Intavis gave us a rough estimate of $1 \mu M$ of the peptide. The synthesis has a range of peptides being spotted into each spot, but the precise number of peptides per spot could not be determined easily. Thus, two same peptides with different quantities will result in one having a stronger signal. Second, K_{on} and K_{off} could not be determined since the membrane was already at equilibrium 128 . Last, signal saturation and overexposure. There was a certain range where the signal has a linear response 129 . However, after a certain range, the signal did not respond linearly anymore. Thus, we could not infer any binding affinity from peptides with strong signals. Since the analysis program also has a maximum pixel density, by overexposing the image, it will not behave linearly ¹³⁰. However, strong signal, stronger than positive control would mean a positive binding, even though the binding affinity could not be determined.

4.1.1.2 Substrate binding affinity via fluorescence polarization

Fluorescence polarization (FP) is a powerful tool to test protein-substrate binding affinity 114 . The fluorescent-labelled peptides, when excited, it will rotate rapidly, and when bound to a protein, its rotation will be slowed, and the emitted light is polarized 131 . With our FP experiments, the control experiments with 53BP1-tudor and H4K20 peptides showed binding to Kme1/2 (Fig. 3.4). However, in some other experiments, the change in fluorescence polarization (ΔFP) was low. With the H4K20 experiment, I had ΔFP max around 200 mP. However, with the other ones, the ΔFP max was only 50 mP. There were experiments with max ΔFP less than 25 mP, where the data was ambiguous, hard to distinguish a positive binding or just background noise. Some known binding peptides to our proteins showed weak ΔFP and sometimes no ΔFP. There had been a few peptides that were giving me a hard time.

After all the peptides were synthesized, I sent all the peptides to MALDI to examine if the synthesis was successful. All in-solution peptides used in the project were validated via MALDI, and all the peptides were correctly synthesized. One important aspect of FP is the pH of the peptides and the proteins. Fluorescein is sensitive to pH, and its emission

will change upon different pH^{132} . All the proteins and peptides were diluted with PBS. However, a lot of the methylated peptides have many basic residues, where their pI was above 12. These Kme peptides were diluted more than 1,000 times. Thus, their pH should be the same as PBS at pH 7.4. Before I began the experiments, I used a pH paper to test the pH of our peptide solution and the protein solution. Both were the same, had a pH of 7.4. However, this did not solve that several peptides were not giving good FP results. Resulting in elusive K_D in some interesting peptides that I wanted to know.

4.1.2 53BP1-tudor substrate prediction

The 53BP1-tudor domain had the best binding performance compared to the other eight KMBDs that I had tested. It had lots of interactions with various degrees of binding (Fig. 3.6). Based on that, I was able to make an enriched amino acid logo for the top 5% from the peptide array. As well as, taking into consideration of the amino acid composition of the top 5% Kme1s versus the bottom 5% of Kme1s (Fig. 3.7), I was able to find a pattern that acidic residues from -2 to $+3$ region will have poor interaction with the 53BP1-tudor domain. This binding pattern was supported by the structure of 53BP1-tudor binding pocket from crystallography data 78 . There was an acidic residue, D1521, in the binding pocket of the 53BP1-tudor domain.

From the predicted substrate list, by looking at the top-ranked candidates, and grouping them by biological processes, it gave us important hints to the 53BP1-tudor domain interactions with several major pathways. It was already known that 53BP1-tudor binds to p53 during cellular stress and during DNA damage events 25 . All the top predicted pathways were very important and related to 53BP1 and its tudor domain. 53BP1, its name is p53 binding protein 1, it binds to p53 during cellular stress 25 . Since it binds to p53, it is involved in apoptosis regulation, DNA damage pathway, cell division ³. During DNA double-strand break (DSB), 53BP1-tudor recognizes histone markers H3K9, H3K79 and H4K20 and important in the DSB repair pathway ^{78,120}. I observed some of the best-predicted proteins were involved in DNA damage repair: NHEJ1, ETAA1 and SETX. 53BP1-tudor domain relation to RNA process could be led by tudor interacting

repair regulator protein (TIRR). TIRR inhibits the 53BP1-tudor domain by binding onto it during no stress conditions¹³³. It prevents the 53BP1-tudor binding to H4K20 and other substrates. During DNA damage, TIRR interacts with RNA molecule and releases 53BP1, and it is recruited to DSB site 134 . Thus, the categories of predicted proteins fell in line with the function of 53BP1.

The amount of data used to generate the enriched logo was still a little less than ideal. By taking consideration of NHEJ1 permutation data, I was able to rank all the currently known Kme peptides. However, there were still several peptides that were tied in score, and this can be observed by the sudden dips and horizontal dots from Fig. 3.11. I am in the process of generating another set of arrays to validate the prediction list. Choosing the top 400 peptides, along with 50 peptides at 25%, 50%, 75% and 100% percentile. This second array is to validate the predicted substrates, and I also wanted to have more data points to refine the enrichment logo.

If I can get the data from our prediction array, I could potentially have enough data points to use a deep learning model to predict 53BP1-tudor substrate from all human proteins 135 . Based on its binding specificity, I could identify novel methylated sites. These sites will require *in vitro*, as well as *in vivo* validation. *In vitro* validation could be done using the peptide array. Whereas, *in vivo* validation would require using cell lines to enrich for the specific site. The *in vivo* validation could be achieved by using a Q-TRAP MS to pick out the peptide transitions and screen for peptides that match our predicted transitions ¹³⁶.

4.1.3 Methyllysine peptide enrichment by KMBDs

Previously, many groups used KMBDs to enrich for methyllysine peptides ^{4,107}. However, they only used one domain for their enrichment. Here, I differ by using five different domains and five relatively less commonly used in Kme peptide enrichment. I first systematically characterized all the nine KMBDs that were available, then based on their complementary binding profile, I picked five KMBDs. These KMBDs were 53BP1 tudor, CBX7-CD, L3MBTL2-3xMBT, MPP8-CD, PHF1-tudor. Overall, the results of all
four experiments combined, the number of proteins found were 229 with 301 novel Kme sites. With lots of Kme1/2 sites as well as many Kme2 novel sites. Since the number of discovered Kme2 sites was small compared to Kme1, there are more out there to be discovered. Thus, pulling out several hundred novel Kme2 sites was not very surprising.

There were several factors to improve the enrichment of Kme peptides. One, optimize the washing step after peptide incubation. Unlike other AP approaches where their substrate affinities are in the nanomolar range 137 . The affinity of KMBDs to their substrates was much lower, sub-micromolar at best to high micromolar to even millimolar range ¹²². Due to their lower binding affinity to their substrates, the amount of washing after incubation with trypsinized cell lysate needs to be specially optimized. In my current method, I washed the KMBDs twice, with a total of 400 times the dilution factor. I did not want to wash too much to dislodge the Kme substrates and those weak binding Kme substrates. At the same time, I wanted to remove as many unspecific binders as possible. Thus, I kept the washing at a minimum, but there were many non-modified peptides within the final sample. It could be the result of inadequate washing. More interestingly, it could also be the result of a non-modified form of the Kme peptides. From the binding data, I observed that some of the Kme0s had higher binding or higher affinity than Kme1/2/3 of another peptide. Since the KMBD recognition was mostly sequence-based, Kme0 of a high-affinity substrate could be higher affinity than other methyllysine peptides (Fig. 3.6). This, however, could potentially replace methylated substrate and leaving the nonmodified peptide in the binding pocket. This theory should be considered in future experiments and check the whole MS spectra to see any of these non-methylated highaffinity peptides do exist in the enrichment.

Another factor to consider was that the peptides used for the test conditions and peptide arrays were not trypsinized peptides. It could affect how the KMBDs binds to their substrates and our characterization of their binding specificity. Trypsinized peptides will end with lysine or an arginine residue, and it is common to find these residues within ± 5 residues around the modified lysine. It could potentially cut off parts of the substrate and

making the KMBD binding to this truncated substrate weaker. There was also the possibility that the modified lysine was the last residue on the peptide. These truncated peptides could abolish half of the binding recognition, making it an even weaker substrate. However, trypsin did have less efficiency to cleave at modified lysines due to the methyl-groups 109 . But there will be some methylated peptides having C-terminus modified lysines. Truncated Kme peptides and C-terminus Kme peptides were not tested in this project. It would be an interesting experiment to assess the binding differences between the full-length peptide versus the truncated peptides.

Another crucial factor in having a good enrichment was the amount of conjugated KMBDs, and the starting digested cell lysates that were used. Previously, people used from 5 mg to upwards of 30 mg of starting cell lysate $^{138-140}$. Here, in this project, I used 30 µL of packed streptavidin beads and 2 mg of starting cell lysate. I chose to use less cell lysate was particularly due to our MS machine injection limit of 500 ng. Since protein methylation events are low in the cells, it would be better to increase the amount of starting material. However, more starting material could potentially translate to more unspecific substrates. I kept the amount of KMBDs the same since more binders could result in more unspecific binding and more non-modified peptides into the MS. Also, the more abundant non-modified peptides could interfere by masking the lower abundant Kme peptides signals ¹⁴¹. By using more starting material, and keeping KMBDs constant, with improved enrichment method, I believe I can achieve higher enrichment numbers.

During sample preparation for mass spectrometry, several key factors could determine the number of peptides going through for detection. One crucial factor was peptide loss through cleaning steps. I lost, on average, about 30% of our peptides during C18 desalting step 142 . By our current method using two C18 cleaning steps, I am losing about 50% of enriched peptides. I could use another method involves using a 10 kD concentrator method 143 . By switching to this method, I could remove all the trypsin and undigested peptides, which could cause problems in the MS. It will ensure only digested peptides passes through; I also would lose fewer peptides compared to a C18 cleanup.

And this leads to another issue in sample preparation for MS, which is the undigested or partially digested peptides. When digesting proteins overnight with trypsin, there may be some undigested proteins and partially digested peptides, due to the decreasing activity of trypsin over time ¹⁴⁴. However, acidifying the solution would precipitate trypsin but not partially digested peptides. And C18 columns bind hydrophobic peptides and partially digested could also bind to it. Thus, it creates a problem down the line and into the MS machine. By using the new method, the partially digested peptides would be sequestered, buffers changed without a C18 cleanup. It could potentially increase the quality of the MS sample, as well as more peptides retained. The last important issue was the sample was not clean, or some impurities were causing problems with the MS column ¹⁴⁵. It will reduce the MS sensitivity and reduce the usage of the column. Here, MS grade buffers and clean glassware were to be used all the time to reduce contamination. Plastic tubes, Eppendorf tubes were all prewashed with the harshest buffers to clean up any residual polymer contaminants. All reagents, buffers, proteins, lysates were handled with extreme care in MS grade buffers to ensure minimal contamination. However, there were contaminants in the final MS sample, which could be due to partially digested peptides or polymers from tubes or beads. One important factor mentioned above was the washing step after lysate and KMBDs incubate. This step could be optimized to minimize contamination.

4.1.4 Strong cation exchange column in methyllysine enrichment

Strong cation exchange column could potentially add another layer of filtering and purification before the KMBD domains. In my preliminary test for SCX, I used the nonmethylated H4K20 and H4K20me1/2 to compare their binding to the SCX column. The mechanism of SCX is that Kme peptides get retained on the column longer than other peptides due to the extra lysine or arginine positive charge. Trypsin has less efficiency at cleaving modified lysine and arginine residues ¹⁰⁹. As mentioned before, methylated lysine or arginine did not suppress its charge. Thus, in a perfectly tryptic peptide should have only one positive charged residue and locate at the C-terminus of the peptide. The modified lysine or arginine will remain uncut and retain one extra positive charge. It was

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different from my testing condition, where the number of charges for both modified and non-modified lysine peptides was the same. Thus, resulting in no enrichment for H4K20me1/2 (Fig. 3.16). This experiment could be redone using tryptic peptides with a non-modified peptide with exactly one basic residue and modified having two basic residues.

The SCX column should be used in conjunction with KMBDs enrichment by enriching Kme peptides using our KMBD super column first to extract as many Kme peptides as possible. After, the flow-through and the washed off peptides are enriched using the SCX column. Combining the SCX column will allow us to capture Rme peptides, as well as some escaped Kme peptides. Especially those Kme peptides having modified lysine residues near the C-terminus. From this addition, I could analyze the whole methylome inside the cell and comparing the differences between treatments.

4.1.5 Mass spectrometry identification and database search

MS database searching software is every important in obtaining reliable data, as well as novel sites. There was a huge difference when switching from PEAKS to Maxquant ¹⁴⁶. The 53BP1-tudor AP-MS was searched using PEAKS. I was able to get almost twice as many proteins and peptides as the Maxquant search of MPP8-CD. However, the databases the software used were different. PEAKS had a putative protein database, any peptides that "hit" will be a novel site since it is a putative, non-reviewed protein. I had gotten 23 of these proteins in my 53BP1-tudor experiment. Whereas Maxquant searched from the reviewed Uniprot list. However, this could miss a few actual putative proteins that exist in the cells.

With the combination of all four experiments, I was able to identify 229 NHKMPs, 404 Kme sites and 301 out of 404 were novel Kme sites. Even more interesting was the number of Kme1/2 sites I was able to identify; 129 Kme1 and 173 Kme2 sites. Moreover, 107 out of 129 Kme1 sites were novel, composing 83% of total Kme1s identified. Furthermore, 169 out of 173 Kme2 sites were novel, composing 97.7% of total Kme2

identified. Currently, the number of Kme2/3 sites are very low compared to Kme1 (Fig. 1.2). There were only 610 Kme2 sites known to date 24 . In my experiments, I identified 173 Kme2 sites, with 169 novel Kme2 sites. The amount of novel site that has been identified here was about 28% more than what was currently published. Kme2, as a methyl marker, is unique. It is in a transition modification with lots of KDM and KMTs that could act on them (Table 1.1). It can be built up or broken down, a very versatile middle modification.

The number of sites being reported could depend on how the search parameters were set up during the database search. With less stringent parameters, when a shift of 15 Da for Kme1, 30 Da for Kme2, 45 Da for Kme3 were found, the placement of the modified residue depends on the parameters set 147 . Due to trypsin inefficiency at digesting methylated lysine residues, it can result in missed cleavages around Kme residue resulting in multiple lysines or arginine residues within proximity to each other 109 . By having a loose search parameter, if there were two lysine residues, the Kme1 could be designated to either one or the other lysine, making this a two-site "hit." Kme2 could also follow the same lose parameter. It has even more ways of placing the Kmes, assigning one Kme1 to each lysine or assigning Kme2 to either one or the other lysine, thus making this a three-site "hit." Thus, the possibility of Kme3s is even greater. These site identifications could cause a problem due to poor search parameters and dumping lots of potential sites but not valid sites. Thus, the data processing must be stringent and robust to ensure the highest quality of data.

One interesting group of proteins that I thought were going to mask other Kmes due to their high abundance but was not very abundant in our enrichment were the histone proteins. Histones are full of Kme and other PTM modifications 27 . However, not many histone proteins were enriched. One reason was due to many basic residues within histone proteins ¹⁴⁸. When histones were digested by trypsin, it resulted in many small peptides that were too small for the MS detection ¹⁴⁹. Another possibility was the partially digested histone proteins that contained a few basic residues were cleaned up by

the C18 column 150 . By using 0.1% FA, all the side chains on these basic residues will be protonated and having a positive charge. There retention time on the C18 column was greatly reduced and washed off. Thus, resulting in very little histone proteins being enriched and detected via MS.

4.2 Future Directions

With the results achieved here, the immediate future would be to test two different conditions on a cell line. One condition could be using doxorubicin to treat HEK293 cells and compare the lysine methylome changes with and without treatment. Since a lot of proteins being pulled out in the DNA damage repair and RNA processing pathways, with doxorubicin disrupting DNA stability, would stimulate a response from the cell ¹⁵¹. It could signal a starting point, and if there were important key lysine methylated proteins in play between the two conditions, I could use SILAC to quantify the amount of increase or decrease 109 .

Another direction to take the project is to characterize all the KMBDs and, based on their binding specificity, make a prediction logo or algorithm and integrate deep learning into the prediction 135 . From this, I could predict their potential substrates from the current known lysine methylated database. But more importantly, to generate a database from all the human proteins \pm 5 residues from a central lysine and predict the chances of this being methylated. And I could validate this approach via AP-MS from cell culture. Only the positive results could confirm our predictions.

Another direction in the future would be to optimize the purification, digestion, binding and washing conditions. By having pure proteins, to begin with, this would minimize contamination. Binding and washing conditions would need to be optimized to have the highest amount of peptide binding and washing away the unmodified peptides. Currently, the washing step was not great due to lots of non-modified peptides being found in the elution. For protein digestion, there may be a lot of undigested proteins or large undigested peptides. We can use another method of protein digestion to minimize the

number of undigested proteins and filter out large undigested peptides using a 10k spin column ¹⁴³. Instead of digesting proteins in diluted urea, we can treat the cell lysate before and add the trypsin onto precipitated proteins. This way, it is easier to monitor the digestion. Also, by using the 10k spin column, it can filter out all the trypsin and undigested proteins 143 . This step could potentially save one C18 cleaning and can achieve a higher yield of peptides for the KMBD enrichment.

The application of this research could be applied to identifying key regulatory markers between cancer and healthy cells by monitoring the changes in lysine methylome between different cells. This method can track the changes of protein methylation status that are different between the cell lines to identify novel regulatory proteins. Thus, this method could identify novel targets for therapeutic intervention.

5 Reference

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Supplemental Data

Table S.1. List of peptides used in the 70-protein array.

Position	Peptide Sequence	Protein	Site	Modification
$\mathbf{1}$	EETRGVLKVFLENVI	H4K59	k59	kme3
$\overline{2}$	TSLARFLKKTLSEKK	MYO15A	k577	kme3
3	IKHLDFLKEIKWFAV	SAMD9L	k436	kme3
4	DRMTYAIKNFVEEKM	DNAH17	k3829	kme3
5	AQEREQIKVLNDKFA	KRT74	k145	kme3
6	AVLHSFQKQNVTIMD	iNOS	k422	kme3
$\overline{7}$	TKRKMNLKIQELRRQ	CCDC150	k212	kme3
8	ILASKYLKMLKEEKR	CHRAC1	k105	kme3
9	KESKSGLKIIKLTDS	DNAH6	k3099	kme3
10	QEIKGEVKVLNNITN	MSR1	k245	kme3
11	KKQKEIIKKLIERKQ	PCAF	k671	kme3
12	RAHSSHLKSKKGQST	p53	k370	kme3
13	KGLGMQLKGPLGPGG	AVEN	k230	kme3
14	RTKQTARKSTGGKAP	H3K9	k9	kme3
15	EETRGVLKVFLENVI	H4K59	k59	kme2
16	TSLARFLKKTLSEKK	MYO15A	k577	kme2
17	IKHLDFLKEIKWFAV	SAMD9L	k436	kme2
18	DRMTYAIKNFVEEKM	DNAH17	k3829	kme2
19	AQEREQIKVLNDKFA	KRT74	k145	kme2
20	AVLHSFQKQNVTIMD	iNOS	k422	kme2
21	TKRKMNLKIQELRRQ	CCDC150	k212	kme2
22	ILASKYLKMLKEEKR	CHRAC1	k105	kme2
23	KESKSGLKIIKLTDS	DNAH6	k3099	kme2
24	QEIKGEVKVLNNITN	MSR1	k245	kme2

Position	Peptide	Mod*	Gene Name	Site	Uniprot #
$\mathbf{1}$	KEPTIKFYTKQ	0	MAP3K15	K755	Q6ZN16
$\overline{2}$	KEPTIKFYTKQ	1	MAP3K15	K755	Q6ZN16
3	KEPTIKFYTKQ	2	MAP3K15	K755	Q6ZN16
4	KEPTIKFYTKQ	3	MAP3K15	K755	Q6ZN16
5	ALRRQKKKDTL	0	CDH12	K641	P55289
6	ALRRQKKKDTL	1	CDH12	K641	P55289
7	ALRRQKKKDTL	2	CDH12	K641	P55289
8	ALRRQKKKDTL	3	CDH12	K641	P55289
9	AVTYAKVKHSR	0	LILRB4	K362	Q8NHJ6
10	AVTYAKVKHSR	1	LILRB4	K362	Q8NHJ6
11	AVTYAKVKHSR	$\overline{2}$	LILRB4	K362	Q8NHJ6
12	AVTYAKVKHSR	3	LILRB4	K362	Q8NHJ6
13	AKSEPKPGLPE	0	CMSS1	K88	Q9BQ75
14	AKSEPKPGLPE	1	CMSS1	K88	Q9BQ75
15	AKSEPKPGLPE	$\overline{2}$	CMSS1	K88	Q9BQ75
16	AKSEPKPGLPE	3	CMSS1	K88	Q9BQ75
17	GNKMAKARQYP	0	SEPTIN11	K251	Q9NVA2
18	GNKMAKARQYP	1	SEPTIN11	K251	Q9NVA2
19	GNKMAKARQYP	$\overline{2}$	SEPTIN11	K251	Q9NVA2
20	GNKMAKARQYP	3	SEPTIN11	K251	Q9NVA2
21	IIGQAKKHPSL	0	NDUFA4	K10	000483
22	IIGQAKKHPSL	$\mathbf{1}$	NDUFA4	K10	O00483
23	IIGQAKKHPSL	$\overline{2}$	NDUFA4	K10	O00483
24	IIGQAKKHPSL	3	NDUFA4	K10	000483
25	DGDDKKRPVII	0	TARSL ₂	K663	A2RTX5
26	DGDDKKRPVII	1	TARSL ₂	K663	A2RTX5
27	DGDDKKRPVII	$\overline{2}$	TARSL ₂	K663	A2RTX5

Table S.2. List of peptides used in the 140-cluster array.

Figure 21

Figure S. 1. Stripped 140-cluster array. A) The original membrane blotted with the 53BP1-tudor domain. B) Stripped membrane blotted with streptavidin HRP to detect residual proteins left on the membrane.

Curriculum Vitae

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