1

The extra-terminal domain drives the role of BET proteins in transcription

Iwona Pasionek[1,†], Agnieszka Machowska[1,†], John B. Ridenour[1], Magdalena Donczew[1], Rafal

Donczew[1,2,*]

[1] Cell Cycle and Cancer Biology Research Program, Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation,

Oklahoma City, 73104, OK, USA.

[2] Department of Cell Biology, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, Oklahoma City,

73104, OK, USA.

[†] These authors contributed equally to this work.

[*] To whom correspondence should be addressed. Tel: 405-271-7437; Email: rafal-

donczew@omrf.org.

Abstract

BET proteins facilitate transcription of most eukaryotic genes but the specific mechanisms by which BET proteins perform their functions remain poorly understood. As chromatin readers, BET proteins use their tandem bromodomains to interact with acetylated lysine residues on histones and other protein partners. However, recent findings illustrate that bromodomain activity does not fully explain BET protein roles in transcription, highlighting the significance of other BET protein domains. We evaluated the importance of all conserved domains of BET proteins and determined that the extra-terminal (ET) domain is essential for cell viability, genome-wide transcription and BET protein chromatin occupancy. Furthermore, we provide evidence that the ET domain performs these functions serving as a hub for interactions with other factors involved in transcription regulation. Our findings expand current understanding of the complex biology of BET proteins and suggest the mechanisms by which cells can bypass bromodomain inhibition in pathologic states.

Introduction

Bromodomains (BDs) are reader modules that recognize acetylated lysine residues on histones and other protein targets (*1–3*). Proteins from the bromodomain and extra-terminal domain (BET) family are conserved chromatin readers with important roles in regulation of transcription by RNA polymerase II (Pol II) (*4–7*). Consistently, BET proteins were implicated in sustaining pathologic transcription in various human conditions (*8–10*). Chemical inhibition of BET BDs is a promising approach in treatment of cancer and other diseases, but resistance to BD inhibitors develops quickly and alternative strategies to target BET proteins are needed (*11–17*). However, a comprehensive model of BET protein functions in transcription remains to be determined.

All three mammalian BET proteins expressed in somatic tissues (BRD2, BRD3, and BRD4) contribute to gene transcription, but BRD4 is a dominant BET factor in transcription regulation (*7, 18–20*). A current literature consensus is that BRD4 controls transcription primarily through its roles in transcription elongation (*5–7, 21*). There are two BET proteins in budding yeast (Bdf1 and Bdf2, referred to here as Bdf1/2), and at least one is required for viability. Bdf1/2 have redundant contributions to transcription but, similarly to BRD4 in mammalian cells, yeast cells depend primarily on Bdf1 (*4, 22, 23*). On the mechanistic level, Bdf1/2 contribute both to the initiation and elongation stages of transcription (*4*). Importantly, mammalian BET proteins were

also implicated in transcription initiation, indicating that the roles of BET proteins in transcription

are largely conserved across eukaryotic phyla (*6*, *24*).

According to the canonical model, tandem BDs are the primary module that supports BET

protein function (*1*, *2*, *11*, *23*, *25*). Multiply acetylated histone H4 N-terminal tail is a preferred

target of most BET BDs, including both BDs in Bdf1 (*23*, *26*, *27*). We previously showed that the

rapid loss of H4 acetylation results in only ~50% decrease of Bdf1 chromatin occupancy (*4*).

Consistent with this result, yeast cells are viable without acetylated residues on H4 tail (*28*, *29*),

Bdf1 is recruited to immobilized promoter DNA in the absence of nucleosomes (*22*, *30*), Bdf1

mutant with deactivated BDs suppresses temperature sensitivity resulting from *BDF1* gene

deletion (*26*), and chemical inhibition of BET BDs in mammalian cells does not cause a

complete dissociation of BET proteins from chromatin or abolish their function (*6*, *21*, *24*, *31*).

Altogether, these findings indicate that BET protein roles in transcription involve important but

poorly understood mechanisms that do not rely on the BDs.

BET proteins have a modular architecture that includes conserved structured (BDs, motif B, and

an extra-terminal (ET) domain) and unstructured regions (phosphorylated regions N and C

terminal phosphorylation sites (NPS and CPS), and basic interaction domain (BID)), separated

by unstructured regions with no sequence conservancy (**Fig. 1A**). The significance of the non-

BD BET domains has not been comprehensively investigated although existing evidence

supports their important roles. For example, the ET domain of mammalian BET proteins is an

interaction site for several protein partners (*2*, *32–35*) and it was proposed that these

interactions are important for BRD4 roles in transcription and BRD4 recruitment to chromatin

(*31*, *32*, *36*, *37*). However, the significance of the ET domain for BET protein function *in vivo*

remains to be determined. Further, BET protein phosphorylation in the NPS and CPS regions

was proposed to lead to increased association with chromatin and protein partners (*15*, *16*, *25*,

38). Other conserved domains, motif B and BID, were biochemically shown to facilitate BET

protein dimerization (*39*, *40*).

Here, we defined the contributions of conserved domains of BET proteins to cell viability,

transcription, BET protein chromatin association, and recruitment of partner proteins. Our key

findings established the importance of the ET domain for BET protein function in living cells and

allowed us to propose a new model of transcription regulation by BET proteins.

Results

BET protein ET domain is essential for cell survival.

Prior yeast genetic studies determined that BDs and NPS/CPS regions of BET proteins are

important for viability, but the significance of other domains is unknown (*26*, *38*). We previously

showed that while Bdf1 and Bdf2 have redundant functions in transcription, Bdf1 is the dominant

BET protein in yeast (*4*). Therefore, we chose Bdf1 as our model BET protein. We constructed a

collection of *BDF1* gene variants with deletions or targeted mutations in all conserved BET

protein domains. If prior studies suggested a functional overlap, we included combinations of

perturbations in more than one domain. Since intrinsically disordered regions (IDRs) were

proposed to be important for BRD4 roles in mammalian cells, we also constructed a *BDF1*

variant with truncations in IDRs that do not overlap with conserved unstructured domains NPS,

CPS, and BID (*41*, *42*). In case of BDs and NPS/CPS regions, we included targeted mutation of

residues essential for BD function and of serine residues with evidence of phosphorylation,

respectively (*26*, *38*, *43*, *44*). As a comparison, we prepared a *BDF1* phosphomimetic variant

with all phosphorylated serine residues substituted for glutamate residues. In total, we

constructed eighteen *BDF1* variants (**Fig. 1B**). To facilitate stable expression in yeast cells, we

cloned *BDF1* variants or unmodified *BDF1* into a minichromosomal plasmid pRS315 under the

control of endogenous *BDF1* promoter and 3' untranslated region (**Table S1**) (*45*).

We performed a complementation assay in a strain that relies solely on *BDF1* expressed from a

minichromosomal plasmid as endogenous *BDF1/2* are deleted. We attempted replacing the

plasmid carrying an unmodified copy of *BDF1* and the *URA3* gene with plasmids carrying *BDF1*

variants by selecting for viable transformants on a medium supplemented with 5-Fluoroorotic

acid (5-FOA), which inhibits growth of cells that contain the *URA3* gene (*46*). We found that five

BDF1 variants did not support viability – a double BD deletion or mutation variants, variants with

deletion or mutation of both NPS/CPS regions or serine to alanine substitutions in both

NPS/CPS regions, and a variant with the ET domain deletion (**Fig. 1B**). Importantly, except for

the variant with double BD deletion (ΔBD1/2), the variants not supporting viability were

expressed at near endogenous levels (**Fig. S1A**). In summary, while prior studies addressed the

in vivo requirement for the BDs and NPS/CPS regions of BET proteins in yeast (*26*, *38*), we are

the first to show that the ET domain is essential for cell viability.

Fig. 1. **BET protein ET domain is essential for viability.** (**A**) Conserved domain organization of BET proteins. BD – bromodomain, A/B – motifs A/B, BID – basic interaction domain, ET – extra-terminal domain, NPS/CPS – N/C-terminal phosphorylation sites, CTM – C-terminal motif (BRD4 long isoform only). (**B**) *BDF1* variants constructed in this work. Ability to support growth in the absence of endogenous *BDF1/2* genes is indicated. (**C**) Sequence alignment of the ET domain of BRD4 (top) and Bdf1 (bottom). Four conserved acidic residues important for BRD4 interactions with protein partners are marked. Coordinates for Bdf1 are shown below the arrows. Three ET domain mutants selected for subsequent experiments are shown. (**D**) Schematic representation of the experimental strategy for the viability assay and genomic assays (SLAM-seq and ChEC-seq). Experiments were based on strains where endogenous Bdf1/2 carried auxin-inducible degron (AID) tags and *BDF1* variants (or unmodified *BDF1*) were expressed from the *TRP1* locus. During experiments, endogenous Bdf1/2 were depleted by the addition of 3-indolacetic acid (IAA). (**E**) Growth assay comparing the fitness of a control strain expressing unmodified *BDF1* (WT) to strains expressing *BDF1* variants after 15 h exposure to IAA. Black markers indicate mean generation times and error bard correspond to 95% confidence intervals.

A conserved stretch of acidic residues in the ET domain is required for its function.

Conserved acidic residues between second and third helices of the ET domain were shown to

mediate BRD4 interactions with several protein partners (*32–34*). To evaluate the *in vivo*

significance of this region of the ET domain, we designed six additional *BDF1* variants wherein

different number of four conserved acidic residues (amino acids 567, 569, 571, 573 in Bdf1)

were substituted alanine (**Figs. 1C and S1B**). We tested the new *BDF1* variants in the

complementation assay and found that mutation of three or more acidic residues in the ET

domain is lethal for yeast cells, indicating that this region of the ET domain is essential for its

function (**Fig. S1B**). For the subsequent experiments, we selected a representative set of three

ET domain mutations including a single (D571A; mET(1)), double (D571A, D573A; mET(2)) and

a quadrupole mutation (mET(4)) (**Fig. 1C**).

To support subsequent experiments, we integrated all *BDF1* variants and unmodified copy of

BDF1 into the *TRP1* locus of a strain where endogenous Bdf1/2 carry auxin inducible degron

(AID) tags (Bdf1/2-AID strain) (**Figs. 1D, and Tables S1 and S2**) (*4, 47*). In this context, *BDF1*

variants are constitutively expressed from ectopic locus under the control of endogenous *BDF1*

promoter and 3' untranslated region, while endogenous Bdf1/2 can be rapidly depleted by

addition of 3-indolacetic acid (IAA) (**S1C).** Importantly, additional copy of unmodified *BDF1* did

not change cell viability and most integrated *BDF1* variants were ectopically expressed at

endogenous or modestly higher levels, both with and without depletion of endogenous Bdf1/2

(**Fig. S1D-E**). We did not detect expression of variants containing BD2 deletion (ΔBD2, ΔBD1/2)

and deletion of the N-terminal unstructured region (ΔIDRs), suggesting that the antibody we

used recognizes epitopes in these two regions of Bdf1. Nevertheless, correct expression of

ΔBD2, ΔBD1/2 and ΔIDRs variants is supported by the results of experiments described below.

The complementation assay revealed which domains of BET proteins are required for viability.

To extend these findings, we quantified changes in growth rate of yeast cells resulting from

BDF1 mutations. We cultivated yeast cells in the presence of IAA, forcing them to rely on Bdf1

variants as endogenous Bdf1/2 are depleted, and calculated generation time after ~15 hours of

growth (**Fig. 1D**). First, we observed a complete inhibition of growth of strains carrying *BDF1*

variants that did not support viability in the complementation assay, validating our prior results.

Second, we found that while a single point mutation in the ET domain was well tolerated,

mutation of only two of the conserved acidic residues resulted in a severe growth phenotype. As

a comparison, the loss or mutation of a single BD did not affect the growth of yeast cells (**Fig.**

1E). Third, we observed that CPS, but not NPS, mutation or deletion causes a modest delay in

growth. Interestingly, the NPS/CPS phosphomimetic Bdf1 variant fully supported viability,

suggesting that BET proteins function optimally in a fully phosphorylated state and their

phosphorylation is not dynamically regulated under normal growth conditions (**Fig. 1F**). Fourth,

a combined loss of B/BID regions strongly affected cell growth, supporting a proposed role of

this region in facilitating BET dimerization (*39, 40*). Finally, we observed that truncation of Bdf1

IDRs does not interfere with viability, indicating that the large and unstructured N-terminal region

of BET proteins does not have an important biological function (**Fig. 1F**). As a validation, we

obtained very similar growth rates for all viable strains relying solely on *BDF1* variants

expressed from minichromosomal plasmids (**Fig. S2A and Table S2**). In summary, the assays

described so far determined the contributions of all conserved domains of BET proteins to yeast

viability and revealed a region of the ET domain that is required for its function.

The ET domain is essential for genome-wide transcription.

The essential role of BET proteins is sustaining global transcriptional programs (*4–7*). To

characterize the importance of the ET and other conserved domains for genome-wide

transcription we used our collection of strains expressing *BDF1* variants in the context of

endogenous Bdf1/2 carrying AID tags (**Fig. 1D and Table S2**). We already confirmed that the

additional copy of unmodified *BDF1* does not compromise cell viability and that protein levels

are similar when Bdf1 is expressed ectopically or from its endogenous locus (**Fig. S1D-E**). We

further validated that the additional copy of unmodified *BDF1* does not substantially change

baseline transcription and rescues most defects in transcription caused by depletion of

endogenous Bdf1/2 (**Figs. S3A-B**). We also tested if *BDF1* mutant variants cause dominant

negative growth phenotype in the presence of endogenous Bdf1/2 and found that the two

strains carrying variants with combined deletion or mutation of both NPS/CPS regions exhibited

slow-growth phenotypes (**Fig. S3C**).

In contrast to the growth assay, where cells had to rely on mutant Bdf1 variants for several

generations, here we depleted endogenous Bdf1/2 for 25 minutes immediately followed with 4

minute labeling of newly synthesized RNA for quantitation using SLAM-seq (*48*) (**Fig. 1D**). This

approach allowed us to track direct consequences of Bdf1 mutations, including lethal mutations,

with minimized bias from indirect effects that accumulate during extended reliance on adverse

genetic variants. We performed three replicate experiments for all strains with (IAA) or without

(dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO)) depletion of endogenous Bdf1/2 (**Table S3**). The variability in RNA

levels between replicate experiments in our final dataset (see Materials and Methods) was

<30% for most genes (**Figs. S4A-B and Tables S4 and S5**). We calculated changes in

transcription due to perturbations in BET protein domains by comparing the results obtained for

strains expressing *BDF1* variants to the control strain expressing unmodified *BDF1* in the

context of depletion of endogenous Bdf1/2 (IAA treatment) (**Table S6**). To identify dominant

negative effects, we compared the results for strains expressing *BDF1* variants without

depletion of endogenous Bdf1/2 to the Bdf1/2-AID strain, which does not contain additional copy

of *BDF1* (**Fig. S4C and Table S7**). In agreement with the results of growth assay (**Fig. S3D**),

the two strains expressing *BDF1* variants with mutations or deletions in both NPS/CPS regions

(mNPS/CPS and ∆NPS/CPS) showed substantial deviations in transcription (median change >

2-fold) without depletion of endogenous Bdf1/2. Additionally, we observed a similar dominant

negative phenotype for the strain expressing CPS region deletion variant (∆CPS).

Consequently, we excluded ∆CPS, mNPS/CPS and ∆NPS/CPS strains from further analysis.

We aligned the results calculated in the context of depletion of endogenous Bdf1/2 with changes

in transcription due to a loss of Bdf1/2 in the Bdf1/2-AID strain. Surprisingly, we found that only

the *BDF1* variants with the ET domain deletion or mutation of all four conserved acidic residues

in the ET domain (henceforth called ET domain mutation) caused substantial defects in

transcription (median decrease of 3.6-fold and 2.6-fold, respectively). In contrast, deletion or

mutation of both BDs caused relatively small changes in transcription (median decrease of 1.5-

fold and 1.4-fold, respectively) (**Figs. 2A and S5A**). Importantly, defects in transcription

observed for the loss of the ET domain function were comparable to defects due to the loss of

Bdf1/2 in the Bdf1/2-AID strain (median decrease of 3.7-fold). Analysis of changes in

transcription at the level of individual genes or previously characterized major gene classes

further confirmed that the loss of the ET domain function largely phenocopies the loss of BET

proteins (*4*) (**Figs. 2B-C and S5B**). Perturbations in other domains had a small effect on

genome-wide transcription, except for the CPS mutation and the combined deletion of B/BID

regions, which caused modest changes (median decrease of 1.7-fold and 1.6-fold, respectively)

(**Fig. S5A**).

A modest change in transcription due to inactivation of BDs was surprising considering a lethal

phenotype associated with the loss of function of both BDs. To validate our results, we extended

depletion time to monitor for accumulating indirect effects on transcription. We observed that

after 3 hours of IAA treatment a median change in transcription in BD1/2 and ET domain

mutants reached 3-fold and 22.6-fold, respectively, suggesting that the loss of viability in BD1/2

mutant is driven primarily by indirect defects in transcription (**Fig. 2D**). Nevertheless, such

indirect effects on transcription are considerably stronger in case of the ET domain mutation,

reflecting the direct changes we observed after rapid depletion of endogenous Bdf1/2. In

summary, we revealed a surprisingly small direct contribution of the BDs to transcription and

showed that the ET domain is a dominant BET protein domain in transcription regulation.

Fig. 2. **The ET domain is required for transcription of most genes.** (**A**) Boxplot showing log2

changes in transcription due to *BDF1* mutations measured by SLAM-seq after depleting

endogenous Bdf1/2 for 25 min (n = 4,836). The results of depletion of Bdf1/2 in the absence of

additional copy of *BDF1* are shown in the first column from the left. (**B**) Heatmap representation

of selected results from (**A**). Genes are divided into previously defined major yeast gene classes

(CR – coactivator-redundant, TFIID – TFIID-dependent) (*54*). (**C**) Scatter plots comparing

selected results from (**A**). Pearson correlation coefficient (r) is shown. (**D**) Boxplot showing log2

changes in transcription due to *BDF1* mutations measured by SLAM-seq after depleting

endogenous Bdf1/2 for 3 h (n = 4,836).

The ET domain facilitates BET protein recruitment to chromatin.

To modulate transcription, BET proteins first need to be recruited to gene regulatory elements.

Experiments in both yeast and mammalian cells illustrated that the BD function does not fully

explain BET protein chromatin occupancy (*4*, *6*, *22*, *24*, *31*). To identify BET protein domains

contributing to Bdf1 recruitment to chromatin, we modified selected yeast strains used in SLAM-

seq experiments by inserting a micrococcal nuclease (MNase) coding sequence before the stop

codon of *BDF1* variants to facilitate ChEC-seq assays (**Tables S1 and S2**) (*49*, *50*). We

previously found that ChEC-seq complements and outperforms ChIP-seq in mapping BET

protein chromatin occupancy in yeast cells (*4*). First, we validated that ectopically expressed

Bdf1-MNase supports normal growth in the presence of AID-tagged endogenous *BDF1/2* (**Fig.**

S6A). We also confirmed that ectopically expressed Bdf1-MNase shows a highly similar binding

pattern as Bdf1-MNase expressed from the endogenous locus, both in the presence or absence

of endogenous Bdf1/2 (**Fig. S6B**). Similarly to SLAM-seq assays, sample collection was

preceded by depletion of endogenous Bdf1/2 for 25 minutes to eliminate possible confounding

effects due to the presence of endogenous BET proteins. For example, endogenous Bdf1/2

could dimerize with Bdf1 variants thus facilitating recruitment. All experiments were done in

three biological replicates and the results for individual replicate samples were highly similar

(**Fig. S6C**).

To evaluate the impact of targeted mutations in BET protein domains on Bdf1 recruitment, we

compared data collected for strains expressing *BDF1* variants to the control strain expressing

unmodified *BDF1* in the context of depletion of endogenous Bdf1/2 (IAA treatment). In

agreement with the major impact on transcription, we found that the ET domain broadly

contributes to Bdf1 chromatin occupancy (**Figs. 3A-C**). Surprisingly, at most gene promoters,

contribution of the ET domain to Bdf1 occupancy exceeds that of the BDs. We observed very

similar effects in case of deletion of the BDs or the ET domain (**Fig. S7A-C**). Among other

domains, we found that perturbations in the CPS domain and B/BID regions also strongly affect

Bdf1 recruitment, indicating that both BET protein phosphorylation and dimerization are

important factors in establishing proper BET protein occupancy genome-wide (**Fig. S7D-F**). We

did not observe redistribution of Bdf1 due to mutations except for small subsets of promoters.

Generally, all Bdf1 mutations decreased Bdf1 occupancy at loci bound by unmodified Bdf1, not

caused Bdf1 recruitment to new loci. Finally, we found that changes in Bdf1 recruitment to gene

promoters are not correlated with changes in transcription (**Fig. S7G**), in agreement with a lack

of correlation between Bdf1 occupancy and transcription under normal conditions (*4*). In

summary, we revealed that the ET domain, not the BDs, is a primary contributor to BET protein

occupancy.

Fig. 3. **The ET domain has a major role in facilitating BET protein recruitment to chromatin.** (**A**) Genome browser snapshot showing binding pattern of unmodified Bdf1 (WT) and Bdf1 variants with mutations in the BDs or the ET domain as determined by ChEC-seq. Data for the first 100,000 bases of chromosome III is shown. (**B**) Venn diagrams showing the overlap of Bdf1-bound promoters for the indicated experiments. (**C**) Heatmaps showing occupancy of unmodified Bdf1 and Bdf1 variants with mutations in the BDs or the ET domain around the transcription start sites (TSS) of 3,388 genes, which promoters are bound by unmodified Bdf1. Genes are sorted by the TSS signal (+/- 200 bp) in the WT experiment.

The ET domain is required for Mediator and TFIID recruitment to gene promoters.

The ET domain of BRD4 was proposed to modulate transcription by mediating protein-protein interactions with several protein partners, but this model has not been systematically verified *in vivo* (*2*, *31*, *32*). Both yeast and mammalian BET proteins have been linked with coactivators Mediator and TFIID that regulate transcription initiation (*4*, *22*, *31*, *51*, *52*). Our prior work demonstrated that Bdf1/2 are required for transcription initiation and the loss of Bdf1/2 decreases Mediator and TFIID promoter occupancy (*4*). Similarly, changes in Mediator chromatin association were previously linked with the loss of BET protein function in mammalian cells (*6*, *52*). Based on this background and our findings described so far, we hypothesized that an important function of the ET domain in transcription regulation is facilitating recruitment of Mediator and TFIID. To verify this hypothesis, we applied ChEC-seq to quantify changes in

Mediator and TFIID occupancy in cells relying solely on Bdf1 variants after rapid depletion of

endogenous Bdf1/2. Previously, we used MNase fusions on Mediator subunits Med8 and Med

17, which detect Mediator at a small number of genes and only at upstream activating

sequences, not promoters (*4*, *53*). Our recent work showed that by using MNase fusions to the

Med10 subunit we could detect Mediator directly at promoters for ~50% of genes (*53*). Thus, we

placed MNase coding sequence on Med10 in the Bdf1/2-AID strain and quantified changes in

Med10 chromatin occupancy following Bdf1/2 depletion. We observed that yeast BET proteins

have a strong impact on Mediator recruitment to most promoters occupied by Med10 (**Fig. S8A-**

B) (*53*).

Next, we inserted MNase coding sequence on Med10 and Taf1 (TFIID) in three strains used in

SLAM-seq assays – the control strain carrying unmodified additional copy of *BDF1*, and strains

carrying *BDF1* variants with mutations in the ET domain or the BDs (mET(4) and mBD1/2,

respectively). We depleted endogenous Bdf1/2 and determined changes in Med10 and Taf1

recruitment comparing the data collected for strains carrying *BDF1* variants to the control strain.

Experiments were done in three biological replicates, and the replicate results were highly

reproducible (**Fig. S9A**). We observed a general loss of Med10 association with promoters in

the context of the ET domain mutation, but not BD mutation (**Fig. 4A-B**). Importantly, changes in

Med10 occupancy due to the ET domain mutation or a complete loss of BET proteins were

comparable, indicating that the ET domain is a sole region of BET proteins implicated in

Mediator recruitment (**Fig. S9B**). In contrast, both the ET domain and the BDs contributed to

TFIID recruitment to promoters, although the contribution of the ET domain was larger at most

loci (**Fig. 4C-D**). Finally, we observed that changes to Mediator and TFIID recruitment in the

context of Bdf1 mutations did not correlate with changes in transcription (**Fig. S9C**). In

agreement, we previously reported that transcription was uncoupled from a baseline Mediator or

TFIID promoter occupancy and changes in Mediator and TFIID occupancy did not correlate with

changes in transcription due to a complete loss of BET proteins (*4*, *53*, *54*). In summary, we

showed that the ET domain facilitates Mediator recruitment to gene promoters while both the ET

domain and the BDs contribute to TFIID recruitment.

Fig. 4. **The ET domain recruits Mediator and TFIID to promoters.** (**A**) Genome browser snapshot showing Med10 (Mediator) binding pattern in the context of unmodified Bdf1 or Bdf1 variants with mutations in the BDs or the ET domain as determined by ChEC-seq. Data for the first 100,000 bases of chromosome III is shown. (**B**) Heatmaps showing Med10 occupancy around transcription start sites (TSS) of 3,156 genes, which promoters are bound by Med10 (*53*), in the context of unmodified Bdf1 or Bdf1 variants with mutations in the BDs or the ET domain. Genes are sorted by the signal around TSS (+/- 200 bp) in the WT experiment. (**C**) Genome browser snapshot showing Taf1 (TFIID) binding pattern in the context of unmodified Bdf1 or Bdf1 variants with mutations in the BDs or the ET domain as determined by ChEC-seq. Data for the first 100,000 bases of chromosome III is shown. (**D**) Heatmaps showing Taf1 occupancy around TSS of 3,103 genes, which promoters are bound by Taf1 (*4*), in the context of unmodified Bdf1 or Bdf1 variants with mutations in the BDs or the ET domain. Genes are sorted by the signal around TSS (+/- 200 bp) in the WT experiment.

The ET domain of yeast and human BET proteins uses the same mechanism to engage its targets.

Based on proteomic data, two consensus motifs recognized by the ET domain of mammalian BET proteins were proposed - Φ[+]Φ[+] or (Φ/[+])ΦΦ[+](Φ/[+]), where Φ is M, L, V, I, or F and [+] is K or R (ETM [ET-interacting motif]) (*2, 33, 34*). Importantly, only a few potential interactions involving the ET domain were experimentally validated. It remains to be found how many factors associate with the ET domain and what are the functional consequences of these

interactions. To begin to address these questions, we screened the annotated yeast nuclear

proteome and found 974 proteins carrying at least one ETM (**Fig. S10A and Table S8**). This list

included TFIID subunit Taf7, which is the only confirmed interacting partner of yeast BET

proteins. A region interacting with Bdf1 was mapped to the N-terminal end (first 101 amino

acids) of Taf7 where we identified four ETMs (**Fig. S10B**) (*22*). We applied a yeast two-hybrid

(Y2H) system to test if Bdf1-Taf7 interaction is mediated by the ET domain (**Fig. 5**). We found

that Bdf1 ET domain interacted with Taf7 and this interaction was abolished by mutating either

the ET domain or by substituting basic residues to alanine in all four ETMs in the N-terminal part

of Taf7. This finding provides mechanistic basis for the reported Bdf1-Taf7 interaction, suggests

that the ET domain of yeast and mammalian BET proteins engages its targets using a

conserved mechanism, and validates our approach to systematically identify and characterize

interacting partners of the ET domain in yeast cells.

Fig. 5. **Y2H analysis of interaction between Bdf1 ET domain and Taf7.** Plasmids expressing
Bdf1 ET domain, Taf7 or empty plasmids (EV) were co-transformed to a host strain as
indicated. Cells were serially diluted ten-fold, plated on indicated media and imaged after three
days of growth (n = 3). ET mut – ET domain with four conserved acidic residues substituted to
alanine. Taf7 mut – Taf7 with all four ETMs in the N-terminal end (first 101 amino acids (*22*))
mutated by substituting basic residues to alanine.

Discussion

Discovery of specific inhibitors of BET BDs brought a promise of effective treatment of cancer

and other diseases (*11*, *12*). However, the clinical application of BD inhibitors faced significant

obstacles due to emerging resistance, cellular heterogeneity, and limited understanding of the

biology of BET proteins (*14*, *17*, *55*). In this work we utilized a highly versatile yeast model

system to reveal the contributions of all conserved domains of BET proteins to cell viability,

gene transcription and BET protein chromatin occupancy. We found that the ET domain, not the

BDs, constitutes a primary functional module of BET proteins. Our results complement and

challenge the existing models of BET protein functions in transcription, explain conflicting results

from prior studies, and suggest directions for future research.

Many studies reported recruitment and function of BET proteins that was resistant to BD-

inhibition (*15–17*, *21*, *31*, *56*). Based on genetic analysis, we identified five domains of BET

proteins essential for cell viability including BDs, the ET domain, and phosphorylated regions

NPS/CPS. The requirement for at least one BD and NPS/CPS regions was previously reported

(*26*, *38*), but we are the first to show that the ET domain is essential for cell survival. In

agreement with changes to viability, we observed that the ET domain has major contributions to

global transcription and BET protein recruitment to chromatin that exceed the contributions by

the BDs. Additionally, guided by prior studies (*32–34*), we identified conserved acidic residues

required for the ET domain function *in vivo*. The ET domain was proposed to be a feasible drug

target to modulate aberrant transcription in human pathologies (*2*, *39*, *57*). An interesting

direction for future research is development of bivalent inhibitors capable of modulating the

activities of the BDs and the ET domain simultaneously (*39*). The ET domain structures with

peptide ligands are available and our data showed that the mechanistic basis of interactions

involving the ET domain are conserved between yeast and humans (*33–35*, *57*). As such, the

yeast model system can serve as valuable tool to evaluate the ability of small molecule

inhibitors to interfere with the function of the ET domain. In combination with prior studies, our

findings provide a justification and framework for the development of approaches to modulate

BET protein activity by targeting the ET domain in place of or in combination with BD inhibition.

Other phenotypes we observed for Bdf1 mutants also complement and extend prior studies.

Motif B and BID were found to facilitate BRD4 dimerization in biochemical assays and motif B

deletion caused dissociation of BRD2 from chromatin (*39*, *40*, *58*). We observed a significant

growth phenotype correlated with changes in Bdf1 recruitment and, to a lesser extent, changes

in transcription resulting from deletion of B/BID regions. These findings indicate that BET

proteins act as dimers and future studies should address the role of dimerization in modulating

BET protein recruitment and activity. For example, an important layer of regulation of BET

protein function may be based on the relative ability of BET proteins to form homo- and

heterodimers. Next, phosphorylation of BET proteins in NPS and CPS regions was linked with

resistance to BD-inhibition and BET protein their ability to associate with proteins partners (*15*,

16, *25*, *39*, *59*). Prior studies suggested that NPS/CPS phosphorylation may act as a switch to

modulate BET protein affinity to distinct partners and propensity for dimerization (*25*, *39*, *59*). In
contrast, our finding that a phosphomimetic *BDF1* variant supports normal growth and causes
only mild changes in transcription and Bdf1 chromatin occupancy suggests that dynamic
regulation of BET protein phosphorylation is not necessary for BET protein function. Further, it
was proposed that NPS and CPS regions may have distinct roles. For example, NPS
phosphorylation was linked with activity of the BDs while CPS phosphorylation was suggested
to modulate function of the ET domain (*15*, *25*). We observed that mutation or deletion of NPS
did not affect BET protein function, mutation or deletion of CPS was detrimental, while a
simultaneous perturbation in both regions was lethal. Based on these findings, we propose that
phosphorylation of NPS and CPS regions is linked to the same role or roles of BET proteins.
Nevertheless, the functional significance of BET protein phosphorylation remains enigmatic and
requires further investigation.
465
Two recent works provided mechanistic explanations of the BD-independent functions of
mammalian BET proteins in transcription (*21*, *31*). Zheng et al. (*21*) showed that the C-terminal
fragment specific to the long isoform of BRD4 is able to independently support the release of
paused Pol II by interaction with pTEFb, and rescue transcription of many genes in the context
of depletion of endogenous BRD4. There is no equivalent of BRD4 long isoform in yeast and
transcription in yeast does not involve regulated Pol II pause and release. Nevertheless, since
Bur1 is a yeast functional homologue of CDK9, it would be interesting to test if BET protein
association with Bur1/CDK9 is conserved in yeast. Since Bur1 contains two ETMs, it is possible
that in yeast such association is mediated by the ET domain. In such case, evolutionary gain of
the long BRD4 isoform could have been driven by a need to separate BET protein functions in
transcription elongation from other functions mediated also by a short BRD4 isoform, which
could be shared with BRD2 and BRD3 (*2*, *19*, *32*). Zhang et al. (*31*) reported that BRD4 is
recruited to estrogen receptor binding sites and activates transcription in a BD-independent
manner. Zhang et al. showed that association with Mediator is important for BD-independent
BRD4 recruitment, while BD-independent association of BRD4 with elongation factors PAF1C,
SPT5 and SPT6 directly supports transcription. In agreement, our findings indicate that BET
proteins associate with Mediator through the ET domain, not BDs, and support a model where
the ET domain facilitates interactions with multiple partners. Importantly, our list of putative
interacting partners of the ET domain in yeast includes Spt5, Spt6 and subunits of PAF1C and
Mediator (**Table S8**). We will focus future studies on characterizing these and other putative
interactions involving the ET domain. Finally, we anticipate that even though depletion of BET

proteins or the ET domain mutation decreases Mediator chromatin occupancy, it is possible that

a loss of Mediator would also affect Bdf1 recruitment. Based on the results presented here and

prior studies, we propose that multiple protein-protein interactions involving the ET domain

facilitate both recruitment of different components of the transcription machinery as well as

recruitment of BET proteins. Importantly, our model agrees with the current models of

transcription regulation based on formation of transcriptional condensates through transient

interactions involving multivalent protein factors (*60, 61*), and the propensity of BET proteins to

support liquid-liquid phase separation at gene regulator elements (*41*).

BET proteins are the key regulators of transcription and possibly other chromatin-based

processes (*4–7, 62, 63*). Despite their fundamental and clinical relevance, many aspects of their

biology remain poorly understood. We revealed critical roles of BET protein ET domain in

sustaining global transcription and facilitating BET protein recruitment to chromatin. We

provided evidence that the ET domain performs these functions serving as a hub for interactions

with multiple protein partners, including transcription coactivators TFIID and Mediator. Our

findings bring another mechanistic explanation for the failure of BD inhibitors to abolish BET

protein chromatin occupancy and function in the clinical setting and suggest directions for future

investigations towards a comprehensive model of the complex roles of BET proteins in

transcription regulation.

Materials and Methods

Yeast cell growth

All *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* and *Schizosaccharomyces pombe* strains used in this study are

listed in Table S2. For strain construction, *S. cerevisiae* strains were grown in YPD medium (1%

yeast extract, 2% peptone, 2% glucose, 20 µg/ml adenine sulfate) or synthetic complete (SC)

media (0.17% yeast nitrogen base without ammonium sulfate or amino acids (BD Difco), 5 g

ammonium sulfate, 40 µg/ml adenine sulfate, 0.6 g amino acid dropout mix and supplemented

with 2 µg/m Ura and 0.01% other amino acids to complement auxotrophic markers) at 30°C.

Standard amino acid dropout mix contains 2 g each of Tyr, Ser, Val, Ile, Phe, Asp, Pro, and 4 g

each of Arg, Thr, Lys and Met. 1.5% Bacto-agar (BD Difco) was added to medium as required

for growth on solid media. For complementation assay, *S. cerevisiae* strains were grown in SC

medium lacking Leu to select for cells carrying an episomal plasmid with *BDF1* variants and

plated onto medium containing 5-fluoroorotic acid (5-FOA) to shuffle out the wild-type *BDF1*

plasmid carrying URA3 marker. For genomic and growth assays, *S. cerevisiae* cells were grown

in YPD medium at 30°C with shaking. *S. pombe* cells were grown in YE medium (0.5% yeast

extract, 3% glucose) at 30°C with shaking. In experiments involving degron depletion of target

proteins, cells were treated with 1 mM IAA dissolved in DMSO or with DMSO alone for 25 min

or 3 h to induce protein degradation followed by protocol-specific steps. In SLAM-seq and

ChEC-seq experiments, *S. cerevisiae* cells were grown to OD600 ~0.5. *S. pombe* cells were

grown to OD600 ~1.0. In growth assays, cells were grown from OD 0.0001 – 0.0005 for 15 h

with or without addition of IAA or DMSO. Three biological replicates were collected in all

experiments, except for growth assay based on expression of *BDF1* variants from episomal

plasmid, where 5-6 replicates were collected.

Plasmid and strain construction

DNA plasmids and *S. cerevisiae* were constructed using standard methods. Proteins were

chromosomally tagged by yeast transformation and homologous recombination of PCR-

amplified DNA. For ChEC-seq experiments, proteins were tagged with 3xFLAG-MNase::TRP1

using pGZ110 (*49*).

Western blot analysis

1 ml cell culture was collected and pelleted from strains after treatment with IAA or DMSO,

washed with 500 μl water, then resuspended in 100 μl yeast whole cell extract buffer (60 mM

Tris, 6.8, 10% glycerol, 2% SDS, 5% 2-mercaptoethanol, 0.0025% bromophenol blue). After

heating for 5 min at 95°C, samples were centrifuged for 5 min at 21K × g and analyzed by SDS-

PAGE and western blot where protein signals were visualized by using the Odyssey DLx

scanner (Li-Cor) and quantified using Odyssey Empiria Studio software (Li-Cor). Fluorescent

signal for total protein content (Li-Cor Total Protein Stain workflow) was used to normalize

signals for target proteins.

SLAM-seq

SLAM-seq was performed as previously described (*48*). Briefly, following DMSO or IAA

treatment, *S. cerevisiae* cultures were treated with 5 mM 4-thiouracil (4tU) in DMSO or DMSO

alone for 4 min. Cells were immediately fixed in cold methanol on dry ice and stored at –80°C.

The OD600 at the time of collection was ~ 0.7. *S. pombe* cultures were treated with 4tU and

collected as described above. Three biological replicates were collected in all experiments. RNA

purification and DNase I treatment were performed using a Quick-RNA Fungal/Bacterial

Miniprep kit (Zymo Research) based on the manufacturer's recommendations under reducing

conditions as described (*64*). Five micrograms of total RNA was used for alkylation (*65*, *66*). A

total of 200 ng of alkylated RNA was used to construct 3′ mRNA-sequencing libraries. Libraries

were sequenced on a NovaSeq 6000 (Illumina) at the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation

(OMRF) Clinical Genomics Center (Oklahoma City, OK, USA).

SLAM-seq data analysis

Data (paired-end 150 bp reads) were analyzed as previously described (*48*). Briefly, reads were

preprocessed using fastp (version 0.23.2) (*67*) and bbduk (BBMap version 39.06)

(https://sourceforge.net/projects/bbmap/). Reads were subsequently processed using SLAM-

DUNK (version 0.4.3) (*65*, *68*). Total read counts are defined as the number of reads remaining

after alignment and filtering in SLAM-DUNK. T>C read counts are defined as the number of

reads that have ≥2 T>C conversions. We limited the list of analyzed genes by excluding genes

for which there were no T>C read counts in at least one replicate sample among all collected

experiments based on 25 min depletion. Normalization and differential expression analysis were

performed on T>C read counts using DESeq2 (version 1.38.3) (*69*). Normalization factors were

calculated based on total read counts or spike-in read counts, depending on the experiment.

Spike-in read counts were used for normalization in case of 3 h depletion where major changes

to total read counts were expected. Adjusted p-values were calculated using IHW (version

1.26.0) (*70*). Genes that do not meet criteria for fold change and/or p-value calculations in

DESeq2 were excluded from subsequent analyses. Finally, 4836 genes were included in the

analysis.

ChEC-seq

ChEC-seq was performed as previously described with minor modifications (*4*, *50*, *53*). Briefly,

50 ml *S. cerevisiae* cultures were pelleted at 2000 × g for 3 min. Cells were resuspended in 1 ml

of Buffer A (15 mM Tris, 7.5, 80 mM KCl, 0.1 mM EGTA, 0.2 mM spermine (Millipore Sigma),

0.3 mM spermidine (Millipore Sigma), protease inhibitors mix (Millipore Sigma), transferred to a

1.5 ml tube, and pelleted at 1500 × g for 30 s. Cell were washed twice with 1 ml of Buffer A and

finally resuspended in 570 µl of Buffer A. 30 µl 2% digitonin (Millipore Sigma) was added to a

final concentration of 0.1%, and cells were permeabilized for 5 min at 30°C with shaking (900

rpm). 0.2 mM CaCl2 was added to the samples followed by incubation for another 5 min at

30°C. 100 µl cell suspension was mixed with 100 µl Stop Solution (400 mM NaCl, 20 mM EDTA,

4 mM EGTA). Samples were incubated with 0.4 mg/ml Proteinase K (Thermo Fisher Scientific)

for 30 min at 55°C, and the DNA was purified using ChIP DNA Clean and Concentrator kit

(Zymo Research). DNA was eluted in 30 µl elution buffer. 0.3 mg/ml RNase A (Thermo Fisher

Scientific) was added to each sample and incubated for 20 min at 37°C. 30 µl of Mag-Bind

reagent (Omega Biotek) was added, and the samples were incubated for 10 min at RT.

Supernatants were transferred to a new tube, and the volume was adjusted to 175 µl (10 mM

Tris, 8.0). DNA was purified using ChIP DNA Clean and Concentrator kit (Zymo Research) and

eluted in 30 µl of Elution Buffer.

ChEC-seq data analysis

Data (paired-end 150 bp reads) were analyzed as previously described (*4*, *50*, *53*) with

modifications. Briefly, reads were preprocessed using bbduk (BBMap version 39.06)

(https://sourceforge.net/projects/bbmap/). Reads were aligned against the *S. cerevisiae* genome

(version R64-3–1 using Bowtie 2 (version 2.5.0) (*71*) with the following options: --maxins 700 --

dovetail --no-unal --no-mixed --no-discordant. BAM files were created, sorted, and indexed

using Samtools (version 1.18). Genome coverage was calculated and normalized by counts per

million (CPM) using deepTools2 (version 3.5.4) (*72*). Average genome coverage across

replicates was calculated using BEDTools (version 2.30.0) (*73*) and bedGraphToBigWig (*74*).

SAM files for *S. cerevisiae* data were converted to tag directories with the HOMER

(http://homer.ucsd.edu; (*75*)) 'makeTagDirectory' tool. Peaks were called using HOMER

'findPeaks' tool with optional arguments set to '-o auto -C 0 L 2 F 2', with the free MNase

dataset used as a control (*4*). These settings use a default false discovery rate (FDR; 0.1%) and

require peaks to be enriched twofold over the control and twofold over the local background.

Resulting peak files were converted to BED files using 'pos2bed.pl' program. For each peak, the

peak summit was calculated as a mid-range between peak borders. For peak assignment to

promoters, the list of all annotated ORF sequences (excluding sequences classified as 'dubious'

or 'pseudogene') was downloaded from the SGD website (https://www.yeastgenome.org). Data

for 5888 genes were merged with TSS positions (*76*). If the TSS annotation was missing, TSS

was manually assigned at position −100 bp relative to the start codon. At this point, the results

of biological replicate experiments for each sample were averaged. Peaks were assigned to

promoters if their peak summit was in the range from −300 to +100 bp relative to TSS. In a few

cases, where more than one peak was assigned to the promoter, the one closer to TSS was

used. Promoters bound in at least two out of four replicate experiments were included in a final

list of promoters. To quantify log2 change in promoter occupancy, signal per promoter was

calculated as a sum of normalized reads in a 200 bp window around the promoter peak summit.

ET-interacting motif discovery

Putative ET-interacting motifs (ETMs) were identified using SLiMSearch (version 4) (*77*) to search the *S. cerevisiae* proteome for proteins containing two previously described classes of ET-binding motifs: Φ[+]Φ[+] and (Φ/[+])ΦΦ[+](Φ/[+]), where Φ is M, L, V, I, or F and [+] is K or R (*78*). ETMs were limited to those in nuclear proteins based on evidence in AllianceMine (Alliance of Genome Resources Consortium, 2024). ETMs with a disorder score ≥ 0.3 or an accessibility score ≥ 0.3 were kept. ETMs below these cutoffs were assessed in specific instances. Disorder and accessibility scores were calculated in SLiMSearch using IUPred3 (*79*) and Alphafold2 (*80*), respectively.

Yeast two-hybrid analysis

Yeast two-hybrid experiments were performed using the Matchmaker Gold Y2H system (Takara Bio) based on the manufacturer's recommendations with modifications. Briefly, the *S. cerevisiae* strain Y2HGold was co-transformed with *TRP1*-marked Gal4-BD and *LEU2*-marked Gal4-AD plasmids, pGBKT7 and pGADT7, respectively. Co-transformed strains were cultured in SC-Leu-Trp medium at 30°C overnight, adjusted to an OD600 of 1, and serially diluted ten-fold. Five microliters was spotted onto SC-Leu-Trp, SC-Leu-Trp-His, or SC-Leu-Trp-His supplemented with 2 mM 3-Amino-1,2,4-triazole (3-AT, MilliporeSigma). Plates were incubated at 30°C and imaged daily for a minimum of four days.

Acknowledgments

We thank Linda Thompson, Dean Dawson, Christopher Sansam and Karen Arndt for helpful comments, Steven Hahn for plasmids, and Stephen Buratowski for anti-Bdf1 antibody.

Funding

National Science Foundation (NSF) grant 2346844 (RD).

Oklahoma Center for Adult Stem Cell Research (OCASCR) grant 231012 (RD).

National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant 1P20GM103636 (Linda Thompson, Project 2 to RD).

Author contributions

Conceptualization: JR, MD, RD

Methodology: JR, MD, RD

Investigation: IP, AM, MD, RD

Visualization: IP, AM, JR, MD, RD

Supervision: JR, MD, RD

Writing—original draft: RD

Writing—review & editing: JR, MD, RD

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

References

1. P. Filippakopoulos, S. Picaud, M. Mangos, T. Keates, J.-P. Lambert, D. Barsyte-Lovejoy, I. Felletar, R. Volkmer, S. Müller, T. Pawson, A.-C. Gingras, C. H. Arrowsmith, S. Knapp, Histone Recognition and Large-Scale Structural Analysis of the Human Bromodomain Family. *Cell* **149**, 214–231 (2012).

2. J.-P. Lambert, S. Picaud, T. Fujisawa, H. Hou, P. Savitsky, L. Uusküla-Reimand, G. D. Gupta, H. Abdouni, Z.-Y. Lin, M. Tucholska, J. D. R. Knight, B. Gonzalez-Badillo, N. St-Denis, J. A. Newman, M. Stucki, L. Pelletier, N. Bandeira, M. D. Wilson, P. Filippakopoulos, A.-C. Gingras, Interactome Rewiring Following Pharmacological Targeting of BET Bromodomains. *Mol Cell* **73**, 621-638.e17 (2019).

3. M. Yun, J. Wu, J. L. Workman, B. Li, Readers of histone modifications. *Cell Res* **21**, 564–578 (2011).

4. R. Donczew, S. Hahn, BET family members Bdf1/2 modulate global transcription initiation and elongation in Saccharomyces cerevisiae. *Elife* **10**, e69619 (2021).

5. M. Muhar, A. Ebert, T. Neumann, C. Umkehrer, J. Jude, C. Wieshofer, P. Rescheneder, J. J. Lipp, V. A. Herzog, B. Reichholf, D. A. Cisneros, T. Hoffmann, M. F. Schlapansky, P. Bhat, A. von Haeseler, T. Köcher, A. C. Obenauf, J. Popow, S. L. Ameres, J. Zuber,

SLAM-seq defines direct gene-regulatory functions of the BRD4-MYC axis. *Science* **360**,
800–805 (2018).

6. G. E. Winter, A. Mayer, D. L. Buckley, M. A. Erb, J. E. Roderick, S. Vittori, J. M. Reyes, J.
di Iulio, A. Souza, C. J. Ott, J. M. Roberts, R. Zeid, T. G. Scott, J. Paulk, K. Lachance, C.
M. Olson, S. Dastjerdi, S. Bauer, C. Y. Lin, N. S. Gray, M. A. Kelliher, L. S. Churchman, J.
E. Bradner, BET Bromodomain Proteins Function as Master Transcription Elongation
Factors Independent of CDK9 Recruitment. *Molecular Cell* **67**, 5-18.e19 (2017).

7. B. Zheng, Y. Aoi, A. P. Shah, M. Iwanaszko, S. Das, E. J. Rendleman, D. Zha, N. Khan, E.
R. Smith, A. Shilatifard, Acute perturbation strategies in interrogating RNA polymerase II
elongation factor function in gene expression. *Genes Dev.* **35**, 273–285 (2021).

8. T. Fujisawa, P. Filippakopoulos, Functions of bromodomain-containing proteins and their
roles in homeostasis and cancer. *Nature Reviews Molecular Cell Biology* **18**, 246–262
(2017).

9. N. Wang, R. Wu, D. Tang, R. Kang, The BET family in immunity and disease. *Signal
Transduction and Targeted Therapy* **6**, 1–22 (2021).

10. Y. Xu, C. R. Vakoc, Targeting Cancer Cells with BET Bromodomain Inhibitors. *Cold Spring
Harb Perspect Med* **7**, a026674 (2017).

11. P. Filippakopoulos, J. Qi, S. Picaud, Y. Shen, W. B. Smith, O. Fedorov, E. M. Morse, T.
Keates, T. T. Hickman, I. Felletar, M. Philpott, S. Munro, M. R. McKeown, Y. Wang, A. L.
Christie, N. West, M. J. Cameron, B. Schwartz, T. D. Heightman, N. La Thangue, C. A.
French, O. Wiest, A. L. Kung, S. Knapp, J. E. Bradner, Selective inhibition of BET
bromodomains. *Nature* **468**, 1067–1073 (2010).

12. E. Nicodeme, K. L. Jeffrey, U. Schaefer, S. Beinke, S. Dewell, C. Chung, R. Chandwani, I.
Marazzi, P. Wilson, H. Coste, J. White, J. Kirilovsky, C. M. Rice, J. M. Lora, R. K. Prinjha,
K. Lee, A. Tarakhovsky, Suppression of inflammation by a synthetic histone mimic. *Nature*
468, 1119–1123 (2010).

13. T. Shorstova, W. D. Foulkes, M. Witcher, Achieving clinical success with BET inhibitors as
anti-cancer agents. *Br J Cancer* **124**, 1478–1490 (2021).

14. Z.-Q. Wang, Z.-C. Zhang, Y.-Y. Wu, Y.-N. Pi, S.-H. Lou, T.-B. Liu, G. Lou, C. Yang,
Bromodomain and extraterminal (BET) proteins: biological functions, diseases and
targeted therapy. *Sig Transduct Target Ther* **8**, 1–26 (2023).

15. S. Shu, C. Y. Lin, H. H. He, R. M. Witwicki, D. P. Tabassum, J. M. Roberts, M.
Janiszewska, S. Jin Huh, Y. Liang, J. Ryan, E. Doherty, H. Mohammed, H. Guo, D. G.
Stover, M. B. Ekram, G. Peluffo, J. Brown, C. D'Santos, I. E. Krop, D. Dillon, M. McKeown,

C. Ott, J. Qi, M. Ni, P. K. Rao, M. Duarte, S.-Y. Wu, C.-M. Chiang, L. Anders, R. A. Young, E. P. Winer, A. Letai, W. T. Barry, J. S. Carroll, H. W. Long, M. Brown, X. Shirley Liu, C. A. Meyer, J. E. Bradner, K. Polyak, Response and resistance to BET bromodomain inhibitors in triple-negative breast cancer. *Nature* **529**, 413–417 (2016).

16. J. Calder, A. Nagelberg, J. Luu, D. Lu, W. W. Lockwood, Resistance to BET inhibitors in lung adenocarcinoma is mediated by casein kinase phosphorylation of BRD4. *Oncogenesis* **10**, 27 (2021).

17. Y. Sun, Z. Zhang, K. Zhang, Y. Liu, P. Shen, M. Cai, C. Jia, W. Wang, Z. Gu, P. Ma, H. Lu, L. Guan, W. Di, G. Zhuang, X. Yin, Epigenetic heterogeneity promotes acquired resistance to BET bromodomain inhibition in ovarian cancer. *Am J Cancer Res* **11**, 3021–3038 (2021).

18. M. Arnold, A. Bressin, O. Jasnovidova, D. Meierhofer, A. Mayer, A BRD4-mediated elongation control point primes transcribing RNA polymerase II for 3'-processing and termination. *Mol Cell*, S1097-2765(21)00506–2 (2021).

19. O. Gilan, I. Rioja, K. Knezevic, M. J. Bell, M. M. Yeung, N. R. Harker, E. Y. N. Lam, C.-W. Chung, P. Bamborough, M. Petretich, M. Urh, S. J. Atkinson, A. K. Bassil, E. J. Roberts, D. Vassiliadis, M. L. Burr, A. G. S. Preston, C. Wellaway, T. Werner, J. R. Gray, A.-M. Michon, T. Gobbetti, V. Kumar, P. E. Soden, A. Haynes, J. Vappiani, D. F. Tough, S. Taylor, S.-J. Dawson, M. Bantscheff, M. Lindon, G. Drewes, E. H. Demont, D. L. Daniels, P. Grandi, R. K. Prinjha, M. A. Dawson, Selective targeting of BD1 and BD2 of the BET proteins in cancer and immunoinflammation. *Science* **368**, 387–394 (2020).

20. S.-K. Kim, X. Liu, J. Park, D. Um, G. Kilaru, C.-M. Chiang, M. Kang, K. M. Huber, K. Kang, T.-K. Kim, Functional coordination of BET family proteins underlies altered transcription associated with memory impairment in fragile X syndrome. *Science Advances* **7**, eabf7346 (2021).

21. B. Zheng, S. Gold, M. Iwanaszko, B. C. Howard, L. Wang, A. Shilatifard, Distinct layers of BRD4-PTEFb reveal bromodomain-independent function in transcriptional regulation. *Molecular Cell* **83**, 2896-2910.e4 (2023).

22. O. Matangkasombut, R. M. Buratowski, N. W. Swilling, S. Buratowski, Bromodomain factor 1 corresponds to a missing piece of yeast TFIID. *Genes Dev.* **14**, 951–962 (2000).

23. E. García-Oliver, C. Ramus, J. Perot, M. Arlotto, M. Champleboux, F. Mietton, C. Battail, A. Boland, J.-F. Deleuze, M. Ferro, Y. Couté, J. Govin, Bdf1 Bromodomains Are Essential for Meiosis and the Expression of Meiotic-Specific Genes. *PLOS Genetics* **13**, e1006541 (2017).

24. T. Kanno, Y. Kanno, G. LeRoy, E. Campos, H.-W. Sun, S. R. Brooks, G. Vahedi, T. D.
Heightman, B. A. Garcia, D. Reinberg, U. Siebenlist, J. J. O'Shea, K. Ozato, BRD4 assists
elongation of both coding and enhancer RNAs by interacting with acetylated histones. *Nat*
Struct Mol Biol **21**, 1047–1057 (2014).
25. S.-Y. Wu, A.-Y. Lee, H.-T. Lai, H. Zhang, C.-M. Chiang, Phospho switch triggers Brd4
chromatin binding and activator recruitment for gene-specific targeting. *Mol Cell* **49**, 843–
857 (2013).
26. O. Matangkasombut, S. Buratowski, Different sensitivities of bromodomain factors 1 and 2
to histone H4 acetylation. *Mol. Cell* **11**, 353–363 (2003).
27. M. J. Slaughter, E. K. Shanle, A. Khan, K. F. Chua, T. Hong, L. D. Boxer, C. D. Allis, S. Z.
Josefowicz, B. A. Garcia, S. B. Rothbart, B. D. Strahl, I. J. Davis, HDAC inhibition results in
widespread alteration of the histone acetylation landscape and BRD4 targeting to gene
bodies. *Cell Rep* **34**, 108638 (2021).
28. P. C. Megee, B. A. Morgan, B. A. Mittman, M. M. Smith, Genetic Analysis of Histone H4:
Essential Role of Lysines Subject to Reversible Acetylation. *Science* **247**, 841–845 (1990).
29. P. S. Kayne, U.-J. Kim, M. Han, J. R. Mullen, F. Yoshizaki, M. Grunstein, Extremely
conserved histone H4 N terminus is dispensable for growth but essential for repressing the
silent mating loci in yeast. *Cell* **55**, 27–39 (1988).
30. J. A. Ranish, E. C. Yi, D. M. Leslie, S. O. Purvine, D. R. Goodlett, J. Eng, R. Aebersold,
The study of macromolecular complexes by quantitative proteomics. *Nat. Genet.* **33**, 349–
355 (2003).
31. S. Zhang, R. G. Roeder, Resistance of estrogen receptor function to BET bromodomain
inhibition is mediated by transcriptional coactivator cooperativity. *Nat Struct Mol Biol*, 1–15
(2024).
32. S. Rahman, M. E. Sowa, M. Ottinger, J. A. Smith, Y. Shi, J. W. Harper, P. M. Howley, The
Brd4 extraterminal domain confers transcription activation independent of pTEFb by
recruiting multiple proteins, including NSD3. *Mol Cell Biol* **31**, 2641–2652 (2011).
33. Q. Zhang, L. Zeng, C. Shen, Y. Ju, T. Konuma, C. Zhao, C. R. Vakoc, M.-M. Zhou,
Structural Mechanism of Transcriptional Regulator NSD3 Recognition by the ET Domain of
BRD4. *Structure* **24**, 1201–1208 (2016).
34. T. Konuma, D. Yu, C. Zhao, Y. Ju, R. Sharma, C. Ren, Q. Zhang, M.-M. Zhou, L. Zeng,
Structural Mechanism of the Oxygenase JMJD6 Recognition by the Extraterminal (ET)
Domain of BRD4. *Sci Rep* **7**, 16272 (2017).

35.   B. L. Crowe, R. C. Larue, C. Yuan, S. Hess, M. Kvaratskhelia, M. P. Foster, Structure of
the Brd4 ET domain bound to a C-terminal motif from γ-retroviral integrases reveals a
conserved mechanism of interaction. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*
113, 2086–2091 (2016).

36.   N. Alerasool, H. Leng, Z.-Y. Lin, A.-C. Gingras, M. Taipale, Identification and functional
characterization of transcriptional activators in human cells. *Molecular Cell* **82**, 677-695.e7
(2022).

37.   J. Trojanowski, L. Frank, A. Rademacher, N. Mücke, P. Grigaitis, K. Rippe, Transcription
activation is enhanced by multivalent interactions independent of phase separation.
Molecular Cell **82**, 1878-1893.e10 (2022).

38.   C. Sawa, E. Nedea, N. Krogan, T. Wada, H. Handa, J. Greenblatt, S. Buratowski,
Bromodomain factor 1 (Bdf1) is phosphorylated by protein kinase CK2. *Mol. Cell. Biol.* **24**,
4734–4742 (2004).

39.   F. Malvezzi, C. J. Stubbs, T. A. Jowitt, I. L. Dale, X. Guo, J. P. DeGnore, G. Degliesposti,
J. M. Skehel, A. J. Bannister, M. S. McAlister, Phosphorylation-dependent BRD4
dimerization and implications for therapeutic inhibition of BET family proteins. *Commun*
Biol **4**, 1–13 (2021).

40.   J. D. Weissman, A. K. Singh, B. N. Devaiah, P. Schuck, R. C. LaRue, D. S. Singer, The
intrinsic kinase activity of BRD4 spans its BD2-B-BID domains. *Journal of Biological*
Chemistry **297**, 101326 (2021).

41.   B. R. Sabari, A. Dall'Agnese, A. Boija, I. A. Klein, E. L. Coffey, K. Shrinivas, B. J. Abraham,
N. M. Hannett, A. V. Zamudio, J. C. Manteiga, C. H. Li, Y. E. Guo, D. S. Day, J. Schuijers,
E. Vasile, S. Malik, D. Hnisz, T. I. Lee, I. I. Cisse, R. G. Roeder, P. A. Sharp, A. K.
Chakraborty, R. A. Young, Coactivator condensation at super-enhancers links phase
separation and gene control. *Science* **361** (2018).

42.   X. Han, D. Yu, R. Gu, Y. Jia, Q. Wang, A. Jaganathan, X. Yang, M. Yu, N. Babault, C.
Zhao, H. Yi, Q. Zhang, M.-M. Zhou, L. Zeng, Roles of the BRD4 short isoform in phase
separation and active gene transcription. *Nat Struct Mol Biol* **27**, 333–341 (2020).

43.   A. G. Ladurner, C. Inouye, R. Jain, R. Tjian, Bromodomains Mediate an Acetyl-Histone
Encoded Antisilencing Function at Heterochromatin Boundaries. *Molecular Cell* **11**, 365–
376 (2003).

44.   C. Dhalluin, J. E. Carlson, L. Zeng, C. He, A. K. Aggarwal, M.-M. Zhou, Structure and
ligand of a histone acetyltransferase bromodomain. *Nature* **399**, 491–496 (1999).

45. R. S. Sikorski, P. Hieter, A system of shuttle vectors and yeast host strains designed for
efficient manipulation of DNA in Saccharomyces cerevisiae. *Genetics* **122**, 19–27 (1989).

46. J. D. Boeke, J. Trueheart, G. Natsoulis, G. R. Fink, "[10] 5-Fluoroorotic acid as a selective
agent in yeast molecular genetics" in *Methods in Enzymology* (Academic Press, 1987;
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/0076687987540769)vol. 154 of
Recombinant DNA Part E, pp. 164–175.

47. K. Nishimura, T. Fukagawa, H. Takisawa, T. Kakimoto, M. Kanemaki, An auxin-based
degron system for the rapid depletion of proteins in nonplant cells. *Nat Methods* **6**, 917–
922 (2009).

48. J. B. Ridenour, R. Donczew, An end-to-end workflow to study newly synthesized mRNA
following rapid protein depletion in Saccharomyces cerevisiae. *BMC Methods* **1**, 8 (2024).

49. G. E. Zentner, S. Kasinathan, B. Xin, R. Rohs, S. Henikoff, ChEC-seq kinetics
discriminates transcription factor binding sites by DNA sequence and shape in vivo. *Nature*
Communications **6**, 8733 (2015).

50. L. Mahendrawada, L. Warfield, R. Donczew, S. Hahn, Low overlap of transcription factor
DNA binding and regulatory targets. *Nature*, 1–9 (2025).

51. S. Sdelci, C.-H. Lardeau, C. Tallant, F. Klepsch, B. Klaiber, J. Bennett, P. Rathert, M.
Schuster, T. Penz, O. Fedorov, G. Superti-Furga, C. Bock, J. Zuber, K. V. M. Huber, S.
Knapp, S. Müller, S. Kubicek, Mapping the chemical chromatin reactivation landscape
identifies BRD4-TAF1 cross-talk. *Nat Chem Biol* **12**, 504–510 (2016).

52. A. S. Bhagwat, J.-S. Roe, B. Y. L. Mok, A. F. Hohmann, J. Shi, C. R. Vakoc, BET
Bromodomain Inhibition Releases the Mediator Complex from Select cis-Regulatory
Elements. *Cell Rep* **15**, 519–530 (2016).

53. L. Warfield, R. Donczew, L. Mahendrawada, S. Hahn, Yeast Mediator facilitates
transcription initiation at most promoters via a Tail-independent mechanism. *Molecular Cell*
82, 4033-4048.e7 (2022).

54. R. Donczew, L. Warfield, D. Pacheco, A. Erijman, S. Hahn, Two roles for the yeast
transcription coactivator SAGA and a set of genes redundantly regulated by TFIID and
SAGA. *eLife* **9**, e50109 (2020).

55. A. Alqahtani, K. Choucair, M. Ashraf, D. M. Hammouda, A. Alloghbi, T. Khan, N. Senzer, J.
Nemunaitis, Bromodomain and extra-terminal motif inhibitors: a review of preclinical and
clinical advances in cancer therapy. *Future Science OA* **5**, FSO372 (2019).

56. S. Shu, H.-J. Wu, J. Y. Ge, R. Zeid, I. S. Harris, B. Jovanović, K. Murphy, B. Wang, X. Qiu,
J. E. Endress, J. Reyes, K. Lim, A. Font-Tello, S. Syamala, T. Xiao, C. S. Reddy

Chilamakuri, E. K. Papachristou, C. D'Santos, J. Anand, K. Hinohara, W. Li, T. O.

McDonald, A. Luoma, R. J. Modiste, Q.-D. Nguyen, B. Michel, P. Cejas, C. Kadoch, J. D.

Jaffe, K. W. Wucherpfennig, J. Qi, X. S. Liu, H. Long, M. Brown, J. S. Carroll, J. S. Brugge,

J. Bradner, F. Michor, K. Polyak, Synthetic Lethal and Resistance Interactions with BET

Bromodomain Inhibitors in Triple-Negative Breast Cancer. *Molecular Cell* **78**, 1096-

1113.e8 (2020).

57. S. Aiyer, G. V. T. Swapna, L.-C. Ma, G. Liu, J. Hao, G. Chalmers, B. C. Jacobs, G. T.

Montelione, M. J. Roth, A common binding motif in the ET domain of BRD3 forms

polymorphic structural interfaces with host and viral proteins. *Structure* **29**, 886-898.e6

(2021).

58. P. Garcia-Gutierrez, M. Mundi, M. Garcia-Dominguez, Association of bromodomain BET

proteins with chromatin requires dimerization through the conserved motif B. *Journal of*

Cell Science **125**, 3671–3680 (2012).

59. C.-M. Chiang, Phospho-BRD4: Transcription Plasticity and Drug Targeting. *Drug Discov*

Today Technol **19**, 17–22 (2016).

60. M. Stortz, D. M. Presman, V. Levi, Transcriptional condensates: a blessing or a curse for

gene regulation? *Commun Biol* **7**, 1–10 (2024).

61. K. Ryu, G. Park, W.-K. Cho, Emerging insights into transcriptional condensates. *Exp Mol*

Med **56**, 820–826 (2024).

62. C. G. Sansam, K. Pietrzak, B. Majchrzycka, M. A. Kerlin, J. Chen, S. Rankin, C. L.

Sansam, A mechanism for epigenetic control of DNA replication. *Genes Dev.* **32**, 224–229

(2018).

63. J. Zhang, A. M. Dulak, M. M. Hattersley, B. S. Willis, J. Nikkilä, A. Wang, A. Lau, C.

Reimer, M. Zinda, S. E. Fawell, G. B. Mills, H. Chen, BRD4 facilitates replication stress-

induced DNA damage response. *Oncogene* **37**, 3763–3777 (2018).

64. H. Alalam, J. A. Zepeda-Martínez, P. Sunnerhagen, Global SLAM-seq for accurate mRNA

decay determination and identification of NMD targets. *RNA* **28**, 905–915 (2022).

65. V. A. Herzog, B. Reichholf, T. Neumann, P. Rescheneder, P. Bhat, T. R. Burkard, W.

Wlotzka, A. von Haeseler, J. Zuber, S. L. Ameres, Thiol-linked alkylation of RNA to assess

expression dynamics. *Nat Methods* **14**, 1198–1204 (2017).

66. A. Klein-Brill, D. Joseph-Strauss, A. Appleboim, N. Friedman, Dynamics of Chromatin and

Transcription during Transient Depletion of the RSC Chromatin Remodeling Complex. *Cell*

Reports **26**, 279-292.e5 (2019).

67. S. Chen, Y. Zhou, Y. Chen, J. Gu, fastp: an ultra-fast all-in-one FASTQ preprocessor.
Bioinformatics **34**, i884–i890 (2018).

68. T. Neumann, V. A. Herzog, M. Muhar, A. von Haeseler, J. Zuber, S. L. Ameres, P.
Rescheneder, Quantification of experimentally induced nucleotide conversions in high-
throughput sequencing datasets. *BMC Bioinformatics* **20**, 258 (2019).

69. M. I. Love, W. Huber, S. Anders, Moderated estimation of fold change and dispersion for
RNA-seq data with DESeq2. *Genome Biology* **15**, 550 (2014).

70. N. Ignatiadis, W. Huber, Covariate Powered Cross-Weighted Multiple Testing. *Journal of*
the Royal Statistical Society Series B: Statistical Methodology **83**, 720–751 (2021).

71. B. Langmead, S. L. Salzberg, Fast gapped-read alignment with Bowtie 2. *Nature Methods*
9, 357–359 (2012).

72. F. Ramírez, D. P. Ryan, B. Grüning, V. Bhardwaj, F. Kilpert, A. S. Richter, S. Heyne, F.
Dündar, T. Manke, deepTools2: a next generation web server for deep-sequencing data
analysis. *Nucleic Acids Research* **44**, W160–W165 (2016).

73. A. R. Quinlan, I. M. Hall, BEDTools: a flexible suite of utilities for comparing genomic
features. *Bioinformatics* **26**, 841–842 (2010).

74. W. J. Kent, A. S. Zweig, G. Barber, A. S. Hinrichs, D. Karolchik, BigWig and BigBed:
enabling browsing of large distributed datasets. *Bioinformatics* **26**, 2204–2207 (2010).

75. S. Heinz, C. Benner, N. Spann, E. Bertolino, Y. C. Lin, P. Laslo, J. X. Cheng, C. Murre, H.
Singh, C. K. Glass, Simple combinations of lineage-determining transcription factors prime
cis-regulatory elements required for macrophage and B cell identities. *Mol Cell* **38**, 576–
589 (2010).

76. D. Park, A. R. Morris, A. Battenhouse, V. R. Iyer, Simultaneous mapping of transcript ends
at single-nucleotide resolution and identification of widespread promoter-associated non-
coding RNA governed by TATA elements. *Nucleic Acids Res* **42**, 3736–3749 (2014).

77. I. Krystkowiak, N. E. Davey, SLiMSearch: a framework for proteome-wide discovery and
annotation of functional modules in intrinsically disordered regions. *Nucleic Acids*
Research **45**, W464–W469 (2017).

78. J.-P. Lambert, S. Picaud, T. Fujisawa, H. Hou, P. Savitsky, L. Uusküla-Reimand, G. D.
Gupta, H. Abdouni, Z.-Y. Lin, M. Tucholska, J. D. R. Knight, B. Gonzalez-Badillo, N. St-
Denis, J. A. Newman, M. Stucki, L. Pelletier, N. Bandeira, M. D. Wilson, P.
Filippakopoulos, A.-C. Gingras, Interactome Rewiring Following Pharmacological Targeting
of BET Bromodomains. *Mol Cell* **73**, 621-638.e17 (2019).

79. G. Erdős, M. Pajkos, Z. Dosztányi, IUPred3: prediction of protein disorder enhanced with
unambiguous experimental annotation and visualization of evolutionary conservation.
Nucleic Acids Research **49**, W297–W303 (2021).
80. J. Jumper, R. Evans, A. Pritzel, T. Green, M. Figurnov, O. Ronneberger, K.
Tunyasuvunakool, R. Bates, A. Žídek, A. Potapenko, A. Bridgland, C. Meyer, S. A. A. Kohl,
A. J. Ballard, A. Cowie, B. Romera-Paredes, S. Nikolov, R. Jain, J. Adler, T. Back, S.
Petersen, D. Reiman, E. Clancy, M. Zielinski, M. Steinegger, M. Pacholska, T.
Berghammer, S. Bodenstein, D. Silver, O. Vinyals, A. W. Senior, K. Kavukcuoglu, P. Kohli,
D. Hassabis, Highly accurate protein structure prediction with AlphaFold. *Nature* **596**, 583–
589 (2021).
934
935
936