Amelioration of Brain Histone Methylopathies by Balancing a Writer-Eraser Duo

KMT2A-KDM5C

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Abstract

Histone H3 lysine 4 methylation (H3K4me) is extensively regulated by seven writer and six eraser enzymes in mammals. Nine H3K4me enzymes are associated with neurodevelopmental disorders to date, indicating their important roles in the brain. Opposing activities of writer-eraser enzymes highlight activity modulation as a therapeutic strategy. However, interplay among H3K4me enzymes in the brain remains largely unknown. Here, we show functional interactions of a writer-eraser duo, *KMT2A* and *KDM5C*, which are responsible for Wiedemann-Steiner Syndrome (WDSTS), and mental retardation X-linked syndromic Claes-Jensen type (MRXSCJ), respectively. Despite opposite enzymatic activities, the WDSTS and MRXSCJ mouse models, deficient for either *Kmt2a* or *Kdm5c*, shared reduced dendritic spines and increased aggression. Double mutation of *Kmt2a* and *Kdm5c* clearly reversed dendritic morphology deficits and key behavioral traits including aggression, and partially corrected altered transcriptomes and H3K4me landscapes. Thus, our study uncovers common yet mutually suppressive aspects of the WDSTS and MRXSCJ models and provides a proof of principle for balancing a single writer-eraser pair to ameliorate their associated disorders.

Introduction

Dysregulation of histone methylation has emerged as a major contributor to neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) such as autism spectrum disorders and intellectual disabilities (1-3). Histone methylation can be placed on a subset of lysines and arginines by histone methyltransferases (writer enzymes) and serves as a signaling platform for a variety of nuclear events including transcription (4). Reader proteins specifically recognize methylated histones, thereby converting methylation signals into higher-order chromatin structures (5). Histone methylation can be removed by a set of histone demethylases (eraser enzymes) (6). Pathogenic variants in all three classes of methyl-histone regulators cause NDDs, indicating critical, yet poorly understood roles of histone methylation dynamics in brain development and function (7-9).

Histone H3 lysine 4 methylation (H3K4me) is one of the most well-characterized histone modifications. H3K4me is primarily found at transcriptionally active areas of the genome. The three states, mono-, di-, and tri-methylation (H3K4me1-3), uniquely mark gene regulatory elements and play pivotal roles in distinct steps of transcription. While H3K4me3/2 are enriched at transcriptionally engaged promoters, H3K4me1 is a hallmark of transcriptional enhancers (10, 11). At promoters, H3K4me3 contributes to recruitment of general transcription machinery TFIID and RNA polymerase II (12, 13). H3K4me1 has been shown to tether BAF, an ATP-dependent chromatin remodeling complex, to enhancers (14).

H3K4me is extensively regulated by seven methyltransferases and six demethylases in

mammals (6). Consistent with the important roles of H3K4me in transcriptional

regulation, genomic distribution of H3K4me appears highly dynamic during brain

development (15), in which widespread gene expression changes take place.

Developmental H3K4me dynamics appear to be altered in the prefrontal cortices of

individuals with autism (16, 17). However, the contributions of each of the 13 enzymes

in the dynamic H3K4me landscapes of the developing brain remain largely unknown.

Strikingly, genetic alterations in nine of the 13 H3K4me enzymes and at least two

H3K4me readers have been associated with human NDDs to date, indicating the critical

roles of H3K4me balance (18) (Figure 1A). These human conditions can be collectively

referred to as brain H3K4 methylopathies and point to non-redundant yet poorly

understood roles of these genes controlling this single post-translational modification for

faithful brain development.

As histone modifications are reversible, one can, in theory, correct an imbalance by

modulating the writers or erasers. Chemical inhibitors of histone deacetylases (HDACs)

have been successfully used to rescue phenotypes in mouse models of NDDs. HDAC

inhibitors were able to ameliorate learning disabilities in mouse models of Rubinstein-

Taybi and Kabuki syndromes, which are deficient for CREBBP or KMT2D, writer

enzymes for histone acetylation or H3K4me, respectively (19, 20). However, none of

these chemical compounds has yet been proven applicable to human NDDs. Moreover,

the HDAC inhibitors, such as SAHA and AR-42, used in these studies interfere with

multiple HDACs (21), which could potentially result in widespread side effects. Given

the non-redundant roles of the H3K4me enzymes, a more specific perturbation is

desirable.

In order to achieve specific modulation of H3K4me rather than inhibiting multiple histone

modifiers in a given NDD, an important first step is to delineate functional relationships

between the H3K4 enzymes. In the present work, we focus on a pair of NDD-associated

writer/eraser enzymes: KMT2A and KDM5C. Haploinsufficiency of *KMT2A* underlies

Weidemann-Steiner Syndrome (WDSTS), characterized by developmental delay,

intellectual disability, characteristic facial features, short stature, and hypotonia (22, 23).

Loss of KDM5C function defines Mental Retardation, X-linked, syndromic, Claes Jensen

type (MRXSCJ), in which individuals display an intellectual disability syndrome with

aggression, short stature, and occasional autism comorbidity (24-27). Mouse models

have provided experimental support for causative impacts of KMT2A and KDM5C

deficiencies in impaired cognitive development. Heterozygous *Kmt2a* knockout (KO)

mice show compromised fear learning (28), and excitatory-neuron-specific *Kmt2a*

deletion similarly led to impaired learning, memory, and anxiety behaviors, as well as

altered H3K4me3 distributions and transcriptomes (29, 30). In these studies, however,

the social behavior and relevant cellular consequences of *Kmt2a* loss were not

examined. *Kdm5c*-knockout (KO) mice mimic many MRXSCJ features, including small

body size, aggressive behavior, and reduced social activity and learning (31, 32).

Kdm5c-KO neurons in the basolateral amygdala exhibit malformation of dendritic arbors

and spines along with misregulation of neurodevelopmental genes. However, the

functional relationships between KMT2A and KDM5C, e.g. how deficiencies in opposing

enzymatic activities can lead to same learning deficits, remain elusive. Additionally,

despite the strong association with NDDs, successful modulation of histone methylation

to restore normal brain physiology has not been reported in these or any other animal

models of histone methylopathies.

In the present work, we tested whether modulating either single H3K4me writer or

eraser can ameliorate the neurodevelopmental symptoms observed in the WDSTS and

MRXSCJ mouse models. We generated *Kmt2a-*, *Kdm5c-*double mutant (DM) mice, and

performed systematic comparisons between wild-type (WT), single mutants, and DM

mice.

Results

KMT2A and KDM5C co-exist broadly in the brain

We first examined expression patterns of KMT2A and KDM5C using publicly available

resources, and found the two genes are broadly expressed throughout brain regions of

adult mice and humans (Figure S1) (33-37) (38). *Kmt2a* and *Kdm5c* are expressed at

comparable levels in all major excitatory and inhibitory neuron subtypes as well as glia

cells in mouse visual cortices (Figure S1A), and also throughout mouse brains (Figure

S1B). Consistently, developing and aging human brains express *KMT2A* and *KDM5C* at

high, steady levels (Figure S1C). Thus, both writer and eraser are co-expressed across

brain cell types, regions, and developmental stages in both humans and mice.

Generation of *Kmt2a*-*Kdm5c* double-mutant (DM) mice

To test genetic interaction of *Kmt2a* and *Kdm5c*, we generated *Kmt2a*-*Kdm5c* double-

mutant (DM) mice. Experimental mice were F1 hybrids of the two fully congenic

laboratory mouse strains: 129S1/SvImJ *Kmt2a*$^{+/-}$ males (39) and C57BL/6J *Kdm5c*$^{+/-}$

females (31) (Figure 1B). This cross resulted in the following genotypes of male mice in

an identical genetic background: wildtype (WT); *Kmt2a* heterozygote (*Kmt2a*-HET:

Kmt2a$^{+/-}$), *Kdm5c* hemizygous knock-out (*Kdm5c*-KO: *Kdm5c*$^{-/y}$), and *Kmt2a*-*Kdm5c*

double-mutant (DM: *Kmt2a*$^{+/-}$, *Kdm5c*$^{-/y}$), thereby allowing us to perform a systematic

comparison between the WDSTS model (*Kmt2a*-HET), the MRXSCJ model (*Kdm5c*-

KO), and their composite (DM). We focus on males, because MRXSCJ predominantly

affects males and *Kdm5c*-heterozygous female mice exhibit only minor cognitive deficits

(32).

These mice were born at expected Mendelian ratios of 25% per genotype,

demonstrating the DM mice were not synthetic lethal (Figure 1C). Genotypes were

confirmed at RNA and DNA levels (Figure S2A-C), and protein level for KDM5C (Figure

S2D). Brain anatomy showed no gross deformities in any of the genotypes (Figure

S2E). Body weight, during the course of development and in adult, however, was

reduced in the two single mutants as well as in DM mice (Figure 1D, Figure S2F). Note

that for all the four-way comparisons in this study, we first represent the *p*-values from

one-way ANOVA tests of genotype-phenotype interaction with histograms of measured

values. We then report *p*-values from post-hoc tests of all six genotype comparisons

with 95% confidence intervals of group mean differences. Both *Kmt2a*-Het and *Kdm5c*-

KO mice showed significant body weight reduction compared to WT (Figure 1D, One

Way ANOVA: $F_{(3, 55)} = 10.28$, $p < 1.0 \times 10^{-4}$, Tukey's multiple comparison test: WT vs

2A: $p = 0.008$, WT vs 5C: $p = 0.008$). DM body weight was significantly smaller

compared to WT (DM vs WT: $p < 1.0 \times 10^{-4}$). Thus, loss of *Kdm5c* and *Kmt2a*

heterozygosity both led to growth retardation, which was not corrected but rather slightly

exacerbated in DM mice.

Memory impairments in *Kdm5c*-KO were ameliorated in DM

We first sought to determine the effect of loss of *Kmt2a* and/or *Kdm5c* on mouse

behavior through a battery of behavioral tests. Learning and memory measured by two

independent tests, contextual fear conditioning (CFC) and novel object recognition

(NOR), significantly interacted with genotypes (CFC: $F_{(3,64)}$ = 2.83, p = 0.046). NOR:

$F_{(3,64)}$ = 3.20, p = 0.030). In accordance with previous findings (31, 32), *Kdm5c*-KO

showed significant deficits in associative fear memory in the CFC (Figure 2A, WT vs 5C:

p = 0.018, WT vs 2A: p = 0.789). In the NOR, where WT mice showed preference for

the new object, *Kdm5c*-KO mice tended to avoid the novel object (Figure 2B) (WT vs

5C: p = 0.007). Previous work reported that homozygous deletion of *Kmt2a* in excitatory

hippocampal neurons leads to impaired fear memory in the CFC (30). In our tests,

Kmt2a-HET mice showed no deficits in either CFC or NOR (Figure 2A-B) (CFC: p =

0.789; NOR; p = 0.888), indicating that *Kmt2a*-heterozygosity does not lead to learning

impairment measured in these assays. Importantly, DM mice also showed no

differences from WT mice (Figure 2A-B) (CFC: p = 0.246; NOR: p = 0.756), suggesting

that *Kmt2a* heterozygosity rescues memory deficits of *Kdm5c*-KO mice. These

differences in memory tasks were not attributable to differences in locomotor activity or

shock responsiveness, as none of these parameters showed significant differences

among the genotypes (Figure 2C-D).

Social behavior in the single and double mutants

We next examined social behavior using the three independent behavioral paradigms.

First, social interaction was tested with the three-chambered preference test. *Kmt2a*-

HET mice showed no differences from WT (Figure 3A, WT vs 2A: p = 0.082) in

accordance with previous tests in conditional *Kmt2a*-KO mice (30). In contrast, *Kdm5c*-

KO mice, as previously shown (31), exhibited significantly less preference for the

stranger mouse compared with WT animals (WT vs 5C: $p= 0.002$). Similar to *Kdm5c-*

KO, DM mice spent less time with stranger mice compared to WT (WT vs DM: $p =$

0.011). No difference was detected between *Kdm5c*-KO and DM (5C vs DM: $p= 0.709$).

These data indicate that *Kmt2a* heterozygosity does not alter social preference or

rescue the deficit of *Kdm5c*-KO.

In tests of social dominance (Figure 3B), both *Kmt2a*-HET and *Kdm5c*-KO mice won

more frequently against WTs (2A vs WT: 60.9%, $p = 0.091$, 5C vs WT: 68.4%, $p =$

0.008). In contrast, DM animals lost more than 80% of their bouts against WT (DM vs

WT: $p = 1.47 \times 10^{-5}$). Although DM mice were slightly smaller compared to single

mutants (Figure 1D), this is unlikely to drive submissive behaviors, as body mass has

been shown to have minimal impact on social hierarchy unless excess difference (>

30%) is present between animals (40-42), which is not the case in our study (Figure 1D)

(2A vs WT:11%, 5C vs WT: 17%, DM vs WT: 25%). These results indicate that the two

single mutants share heightened social dominance and the double mutation reverses

the social dominance.

Lastly, in the resident-intruder test, similar to other behavioral paradigms, overall effects

of genotype were evident in both aggressive and submissive behavior (Figure 3C,

aggressive behavior: $F(3,61) = 4.071$, $p = 0.011$, submissive behavior: ($F(3,61) = 4.071$,

$p = 0.011$). The genotype effect on aggressive behaviors inversely correlated with that

of submissive behavior, reinforcing the changes in specific behaviors rather than

general locomotor activity. Both *Kmt2a*-HET and *Kdm5c*-KO show a trend of increased

aggression and decreased submission when we combine frequency of all aggressive or

submissive behavior types compared to WT (Figure 3C). With regard to specific

aggressive behavior, we found significantly increased darting (Figure S3A) in both

Kdm5c-KO ($p = 0.006$) and *Kmt2a*-HET ($p = 0.032$) mice.

DM mice showed significantly reduced overall aggression compared to the two single

mutants (Fig. 3C, DM vs 5C: $p = 0.015$, DM vs 2A: $p = 0.011$). Reciprocally, DM mice

were more submissive compared to single mutants (DM vs 5C: $p = 0.001$, DM vs 2A: p

$= 0.011$). Comparison between DM and WT mice did not yield any significant

differences. However, DM mice showed a strong trend of greater submission compared

to WT (aggression: DM vs WT: $p = 0.189$; submission: DM vs WT: $p = 0.054$); these

findings are consistent with the results of the social dominance test described above.

The decreased aggression and increased submission of DM relative to the single

mutants were also observed in multiple behavior types, including mounting, chasing for

aggression (Figure S3A) and cowering and running away for submission (Figures S3B).

Thus, these results suggest that double mutations alleviate aggressive behavior of both

Kmt2a-HET and *Kdm5c*-KO mice.

Together, the behavioral studies revealed more pronounced deficits in *Kdm5c*-KO

animals compared to *Kmt2a*-HET mice in terms of memory and social interaction, while

Kmt2a-HET and *Kdm5c*-KO mice shared increased social dominance and aggression.

The consequences of double mutations varied between the tests, with clear rescue

effects on cognitive tasks, dominant behavior, and aggression, and no effect on social

interactions. No behavioral traits were exacerbated in DM. Interestingly, DM mice

showed opposite phenotypes in social dominance and aggression compared to single

mutants, which is reminiscent of the increased spine density in the DM basolateral

amygdala but not in the hippocampal CA1 (Figure 4). These results establish common

and unique behavioral deficits of *Kdm5c*-KO and *Kmt2a*-HET mice and mutual

suppression between the two genes in some of the behavioral traits.

Roles of KMT2A, KDM5C, and their interplay in neuronal morphology

Altered dendrite morphology is a hallmark of many human NDDs, as well as animal

models of NDDs (31, 43-46). We previously found reduced dendritic length and spine

density in basolateral amygdala (BLA) neurons of *Kdm5c*-KO adult male mice (31).

Assessment of dendritic morphology in *Kmt2a*-HET has not been reported. We first

performed comparative dendrite morphometry of pyramidal neurons in the BLA using

Golgi staining for the four genotypes (Figure 4). For *Kdm5c*-KO neurons, we

recapitulated our previous findings of reduced dendrite lengths (Figure 4A and B, one-

way ANOVA followed by Tukey's multiple comparison test, WT vs 5C: $p = 0.034$) and

lower spine density (Figure 4A and C, WT vs 5C: $p = 0.008$). Similar to *Kdm5c*-KO

neurons, *Kmt2a*-HET cells exhibited a reduction in spine density (Figure 4B and C, WT

vs 2A: $p = 0.005$) but not in dendritic length (WT vs 2A: $p = 0.177$).

Dendrite lengths of DM did not differ significantly from WT (Figure 4B, WT vs. DM: $p = $

0.550); however, these lengths were also not different from *Kdm5c*-KO (*Kdm5c*-KO vs.

DM: $p = 0.534$), representing a weak restorative effect. In contrast, dendritic spine

density of DM showed a significant increase that surpassed a rescue effect: DM spine

density was significantly higher than those of the other three genotypes (Figure 4C). As

morphology of dendritic spines progressively changes during synaptogenesis and

development (47) (Figure S4), we also asked whether developmental subtypes of

dendritic spines were altered in any genotype. We did not find dramatic changes in

spine morphology among the four genotypes (Figure 4D), indicating selective

requirement of *Kdm5c* and *Kmt2a* for regulation of spine numbers.

Next we tested the impact of single and double mutations on morphology of

hippocampal neurons (Fig. 4E and 4F). Since the ventral hippocampus CA1 (vCA1)

receives inputs from BLA (48), we performed morphometry analyses of pyramidal

neurons in this region. Genotype had significant impact on dendritic spine density (one-

way ANOVA, F (3, 92) 11.51, $p < 1.0 \times 10^{-4}$) but not on dendritic length (F (3, 92) =

0.564, p=0.639). While dendritic length did not show any difference in *Kdm5c*-KO and

Kmt2a-HET neurons, spine density was concomitantly decreased in the two single

mutants compared to WT (WT vs 2A: $p = 2.0 \times 10^{-4}$, WT vs 5C: $p < 1.0 \times 10^{-4}$).

In DM vCA1, spine density showed a trend of degrease compared to WT, yet this did

not reach statistical significance (WT vs DM: $p = 0.066$). DM spine density was

significantly higher than *Kdm5c*-KO (DM vs 5C: $p = 0.021$) but not compared to *Kmt2a*-

HET (DM vs 2A: p=0.223). These analyses indicate reduced spine density in both

Kdm5c-KO and *Kmt2a*-HET vCA1 neurons and its partial correction in DM.

Overall, we conclude that *Kmt2a*-HET and *Kdm5c*-KO share a reduced spine density in

both BLA and vCA1. Double mutations led to reversal of spine phenotype in BLA and

partial restoration of normal spine density in vCA1, supporting mutually suppressive

roles of KMT2A and KDM5C in dendritic spine development.

Roles of KMT2A and KDM5C in mRNA expression

We previously showed *Kdm5c*-KO mice exhibit aberrant gene expression patterns in the

amygdala and frontal cortex (31), and hippocampus (32). Excitatory-neuron specific

conditional *Kmt2a*-KO mice were also characterized with altered transcriptomes in the

hippocampus and cortex (29, 30). However, the global gene expression of *Kmt2a*-HET,

which is akin to the WDSTS syndrome genotypes, has not been determined. To

compare the impact of *Kmt2a*-heterozygosity and *Kdm5c*-KO on the transcriptomes, we

performed mRNA-seq (49) using the amygdala and the hippocampus of adult mice with

four animals per genotype. We confirmed the lack or reduction of reads from *Kdm5c*

exons 11 and 12 and *Kmt2a* exons 8 and 9 in the corresponding mutants (Figure S2A-

B). The accurate microdissection of brain regions was confirmed by stronger co-

clustering of our data with another published mRNA-seq dataset from amygdala and

hippocampus tissues (50) (Figure S5A). Principal component analysis (PCA) indicated

that transcriptomic divergence was much larger between brain regions compared to the

four genotypes (Figure S6A)

In the amygdala, we identified 132 differentially expressed genes (DEGs, *padj* < 0.1) in

Kdm5c-KO (5C-DEGs) and no 2A-DEG (Figure 5A and S6). The hippocampus yielded a

consistently higher number of DEGs across the genotypes (344 5C-DEGs and 4 2A-

DEGs). The small number of 2A-DEGs is likely due to the one remaining copy of *Kmt2a*.

Given the increased social dominance (Figure 3B) and clear reduction of dendritic

spines (Figure 4) in *Kmt2a*-HET mice, we reasoned that such phenotypes might be

associated with mild gene misregulation, which was not detected by DEseq2. To be

able to analyze the gene expression in *Kmt2a*-HET, we set a relaxed cut off ($p < 0.005$)

and retrieved 78 and 139 genes as 2A-DEG from the amygdala and hippocampus,

respectively (Figure 5B and S6). Table S1 lists all DEGs found in the study.

Between the amygdala and hippocampus, 5C-DEGs overlap substantially (72 DEGs,

Figure S7A). The heat map analysis of DEG points to a similarity in dysregulation of not

only 5C-DEGs but also 2A-DEGs between the two brain regions, which was not

detected as identity of genes (Figure S7B). These data suggest that the two brain

regions share gene expression programs that require KMT2A or KDM5C for their

normal expression.

We first sought to compare the gene expression profiles between the single mutants.

The majority of 5C-DEGs were upregulated and 2A-DEGs were downregulated (Figure

5A and 5B, S6). This result agrees with KMT2A's primary role as a transcriptional

coactivator by placing H3K4me (39, 51, 52) and KDM5C's suppressive activity on

transcription by removing this mark (53), yet KDM5C can also act as a positive regulator

of transcription (54, 55). If KMT2A and KDM5C counteract, DEGs would be oppositely

misregulated between the single mutants. Indeed, we found that 28-29% of 5C-DEGs

show signs of upregulation in *Kmt2a*-HET, while 8-17% of 2A-DEGs tend to be

downregulated in *Kdm5c*-KO brain tissues (Figure S8A and S8B). While these minor

fractions of DEGs show opposite changes between the single mutants, substantial

fractions of DEGs were misregulated in the same directions (Figure S8A and S8B),

which might be due to indirect consequences of gene manipulations. The same-

direction changes reflect on the similar phenotypes observed in some of behavioral

tests, including social dominance, and reduced spine density in the two single mutants

(Figure 3 and 4).

Impact of double mutations on mRNA expression

If the double mutations fully restore the normal transcriptome, the DM transcriptome

should resemble to that of WT over single mutants. However, the DM brain tissues had

a similar number of DEGs as *Kdm5c*-KO (Figure 5A). Many DM-DEGs overlap with 5C-

DEGs (84 in the amygdala and 116 in the hippocampus), and 30 DM-DEGs overlap with

2A-DEGs in the hippocampus (Figure S8C). Thus, the DM transcriptome still retains

some mRNA misregulations of single mutants and does not fully return to the normal

state, which may not be surprising given that only one of six writer or eraser enzymes

was manipulated (Figure 1).

Next, we sought to test more quantitatively whether the transcriptome alterations in

single mutants were restored in DM to some extent. We first compared fold changes of

single-mutant DEGs as a group in DM. Expression of 5C-up-regulated genes was

significantly lower in the DM amygdala and hippocampus (Paired Wilcoxon signed-rank

test, $p < 1.41 \times 10^{-8}$, Figure 5C). Reciprocally, expression of 2A-down-regulated genes

was significantly higher in DM brain tissues ($p < 1.26 \times 10^{-8}$, Figure 5C). We then

examined how individual DEGs behaved in DM. The fold changes of 5C-DEGs and 2A-

DEGs in single mutants clearly correlated with those in DM, indicating that single-

mutant DEGs are similarly dysregulated in DM in general. However, the slopes of linear

regression were lower than 1 with statistical significance, suggesting the partial rescue

effect (Figure 5D). The mildest rescue effect was observed in 5C-DEGs in the DM

amygdala (linear regression slope=0.91±0.03), while 5C-DEGs in the hippocampus and

2A-DEGs-R exhibit more pronounced rescue effects (slope: 0.51~0.73). These results

indicate that misregulation of genes in both *Kdm5c*-KO or *Kmt2a*-HET was partially

corrected in the DM brain tissues.

We then sought to isolate genes that might have contributed to the rescue effects at

cellular and behavioral levels. As shown by the red circles in Figure 5D, some DEGs

exhibit stronger rescue effects than others. We selected these genes as potential

drivers of rescue effects (see Materials & Methods). While 10 genes in the amygdala

and 81 genes in the hippocampus drove rescue effects of 5C-DEGs, 36 genes in the

amygdala and 46 genes in the hippocampus contributed to the partial restoration of

normal 2A-DEGs expression in DM (Table S2). We then performed pathway analysis on

these rescue-driving genes using the Enrichr program (56, 57). While 2A-rescue genes

did not yield any statistically significant enrichment (*padj* < 0.05), 5C-rescued genes

showed strong enrichment of a mouse KEGG pathway, "neuroactive ligand-receptor

interaction" (*padj* = 5.60×10^{-3}, Odds ratio: 6.01). The following 10 genes contributed to

the enrichment: *Pomc*, *Adcy2*, *Agt*, *Adora2a*, *Mc3r*, *Gabre*, *P2ry14*, *Tacr1*, *Trh*, *and Lhb*.

Except for *P2ry14*, all these genes have known roles in learning and memory or

aggression (Table 1).

Interestingly, most of these genes encode peptide hormones, their receptors, or

downstream signaling molecules. For example, Pro-opiomelanocortin (POMC) is a

peptide hormone primarily known for its roles in regulating hypothalamic functions, such

as feeding (58). In addition to its high expression in the hypothalamus, *Pomc* is also

expressed in the amygdala and the hippocampus (58, 59). POMC signaling in these

regions has been implicated in the cognitive decline of Alzheimer's disease as well as in

drug-induced stress response (60, 61). Another gene in the list, *Mc3r*, encodes a POMC

receptor. *Mc3r* is expressed in the hypothalamus and limbic structures such as the

amygdala and hippocampus (62). Similar to *Pomc*, *Mc3r*'s roles have been primarily

studied in the hypothalamus (63), yet this gene has also been implicated in

hippocampal memory consolidation (64). Collectively, these results raise the possibility

that aberrant peptide hormone signaling and its normalization underlie phenotypic

outcomes of *Kdm5c*-KO and DM mice.

H3K4me3 landscapes in WDSTS and MRXSCJ models

H3K4me3 is a reaction product of KMT2A-mediated methylation (51), while a substrate

for KDM5C-mediated demethylation (53, 65). We sought to determine the impact of

KMT2A- and KDM5C-deficiencies and double mutation on the H3K4me3 landscape

within the amygdala. In Western blot analyses, global H3K4me1-3 levels were not

altered dramatically in any mutant (Figure 6A). We thus performed H3K4me3 chromatin

immunoprecipitation coupled with deep sequencing (ChIP-seq) to probe local changes

genome-wide. To assess the IP specificity, we spiked-in an array of recombinant

nucleosomes carrying 15 common methylations along with DNA barcodes appended to

the Widom601 nucleosome positioning sequence (66) (see Methods). The two

H3K4me3 nucleosomes dominated the Widom601-containing DNA in all IP reactions

with negligible signals from other methylation states such as H3K4me1 or H3K4me2

(Figure S9A), demonstrating a superb specificity of the ChIP.

PCA analyses of H3K4me3 distribution indicated that WT and *Kmt2a*-HET are close

each other, while *Kdm5c*-KO and DM cluster separately from the WT-2a-HET cluster.

Reminiscent of the transcriptome data (Figure 5), we did not recover any differentially

methylated regions (DMRs) in *Kmt2a*-HET, while *Kdm5c*-KO had 1,147

hypermethylated regions (Figure 6C, S9, padj < 0.05 in DEseq2, see method). In

Kdm5c-KO, 583 loci are hypomethylated compared to WT, and these regions are highly

methylated regions at baseline (Figure 6C and S9C). By relaxing the threshold, we

obtained weak 2A-HET DMRs (Figure 6C, 357 hypermethylated and 240

hypomethylated). We then examined how these single-mutant DMRs behaved in the

other single mutant. Compared to the transcriptome data (Figure S8A and S8B), we

were able to recover more DMRs that are misregulated in opposite directions between

the single mutants (Figure 6D). These results suggest that, as a primary substrate of the

two enzymes, H3K4me3 changes represent the action of KMT2A and KDM5C more

directly compared to mRNA expression. Comparable numbers of DMRs still show

same-direction H3K4me3 changes, which may again reflect indirect consequences of

Kmt2a heterozygosity and *Kdm5c* deficiency.

Rescue effect of H3K4me3 landscapes in DM

We next examined the impact of double mutations on H3K4me3 distributions. Notably,

in the PCA plot, the second replicate of DM was distant from the other two replicates

and clustered closer with the WT-2A group, indicating that expressivity of rescue effect

varies among individual animals (Figure 6B). The number of DMRs in DM are smaller

than those of single mutants (Figure 6C). We then assessed how single-mutant DMRs

behave in DM. Note that, we focus on hypomethylated loci in *Kmt2a*-HET and

hypermethylated loci in *Kdm5c*-KO (colored loci in Figure 6D) based on the enzymatic

activity of KMT2A and KDM5C. The opposite-direction 2A-DMRs showed complete

normalization in DM, while the same-direction 2A-DMRs were even more

hypomethylated in DM (Figure 6E). Likewise, the opposite-direction 5C-DMRs showed

more pronounced rescue effect in DM compared to same-direction 5C-DMRs (Figure

6E). This direction-dependent rescue effect persisted even when we omitted DM rep2

from the analysis (Figure S10). These results strongly support the idea that KMT2A and

KDM5C counteract to normalize H3K4me3 levels in specific genomic loci.

Peak annotation revealed that these genomic loci, which are misregulated in single

mutants and rescued in DM, tend to be outside the promoters, such as distal intergenic

regions, introns, and internal exons (Figure 6F). Examples of in such changes are

represented in Figure S11. Finally, we tested whether the rescue effects in gene

expression involve normalization of H3K4me3. We took all rescued 2A-DEGs

regardless of direction of changes in single mutants and plotted DM vs 2A fold changes

of H3K4me3 as a function of DM vs 2A mRNA changes (Figure 6G and see method).

Rescued 2A-DEGs mostly showed an increase in mRNA levels in DM (Q2 and Q4).

When mRNA expression increases from 2A-HET to DM, H3K4me3 levels also tend to

increase, which results in the larger number of genes within the upper right quadrant of

the plot (Q2, 47 genes, $p < 1.0 \times 10^{-4}$, χ^2 test) compared to lower-right quadrant (Q4, 30

genes). Similarly, when mRNA expression decreases from 5C-KO to DM, the majority of

genes are accompanied by decreased H3K4me3 nearby (Q3: 45 genes vs Q1: 20

genes, $p < 1.0 \times 10^{-4}$, χ^2 test). Furthermore, the magnitude of mRNA changes and

H3K4me3 changes show positively correlation to some extent (Pearson $r = 0.16$, $p =$

0.110, and $r = 0.27$, $p = 0.020$ for 2A- and 5C-DEGs, respectively). Thus, misregulation

of mRNA expression and its partial correction involve corresponding changes in the

H3K4me3 levels.

Discussion

The present work, to our knowledge, represents the first genetic interactions between

chromatin modification writer and eraser enzymes *in vivo*. Discovery of chromatin-

modifying enzymes in the past decades made it clear that virtually no DNA- or histone-

modifications are irreversible, and instead are subjected to dynamic regulation by writer

and eraser enzymes. The genes encoding these enzymes appear to have undergone

duplication events during evolution. Complex organisms carry a greater number of

genes that encode enzymes for single chromatin modification. For example, only one

enzyme, Set1, is responsible for H3K4 methylation in fission yeast. In flies three genes,

Trx, *Trr*, and *Set1* mediate H3K4me installation, and all three genes were duplicated in

the mammalian genomes, which resulted in six SET-family H3K4 writers (67). A

plethora of work has demonstrated specialized as well as redundant roles of individual

histone-modifying enzymes within a family, in broad biological processes such as

cancer and embryonic development (68). A fundamental question remained — is there

any specific writer-eraser pairing in such highly duplicated gene families for a single

chromatin modification? Mishra et al. showed that KDM5A antagonizes KMT2A,

KMT2B, and KMT2D to modulate the transient site-specific DNA copy number gains in

immortalized human cells (69). Cao et al. found that failed differentiation of mouse

embryonic stem cells due to *Kmt2d* deletion can be rescued by *Kdm1a* knockdown (70).

These pioneering efforts identified functional interplay between the opposing enzymes

in vitro; however, no *in vivo* study has been reported. Thus, the present study

substantially advances our understanding of how methyl-histone writer and eraser

enzymes functionally interact during brain development and function.

Brain development is particularly relevant to the H3K4me dynamics, because a cohort

of neurodevelopmental disorders have been genetically associated with impaired

functions of these enzymes, as discussed earlier. Unlike previous studies using

chemical approaches that block multiple chromatin regulators (19-21), we demonstrated

that manipulation of a single enzyme, KMT2A or KDM5C, is sufficient to reverse many

neurological traits in both of the two single-mutant models. It may not be surprising that

not all traits were reversed in DM mice, because compensatory actions by remaining

H3K4me-regulators may potentially mediate these un-rescued traits. Our work opens a

new avenue for future studies to delineate the full interplay between the 13 H3K4me-

regulatory enzymes throughout brain development and function.

Several challenges remain, especially in linking molecular functions of KMT2A and

KDM5C to cellular and behavioral outcomes. First, gene expression profiles did not

perfectly correlate with cellular outcomes. While restorative effects on spine density

were stronger in DM amygdala compared to hippocampus (Figure 4), the misregulation

and rescue effects in the gene expression profile appear to be more pronounced in the

hippocampus (Figure 5). One possible explanation is the difference in cell-type

composition between the two brain regions, which is masked in our bulk tissue mRNA-

seq. In addition, "causative" gene misregulation underlying cellular and behavioral traits

may occur during a critical developmental time window and therefore not be sensitively

captured in our study using adult brains. Second, histone modifying enzymes, including

KDM5C, have been increasingly shown to exert their non-enzymatic function (27, 71-

74). Third, although it has not been reported, there might be a non-histone substrate for

KMT2A and KDM5C, as shown in other histone modifying enzymes (75). Finally, in a fly

model of KMD5C-intellctual disability (76), impaired intestinal barrier and the altered

microbiota appears to contribute to abnormal social behavior of the kdm5-mutant flies

(77). One technical aspect is that while our RNA-seq was done primarily using 4–5-

month-old animals, ChIP-seq was carried out using 8–14-month-old mice (Table S3).

Nonetheless, we found that the rescue effects in mRNA levels do involve H3K4me3

normalization (Figure 6G). Future studies are warranted to isolate the causal events

between cell autonomous and non-cell autonomous mechanisms, enzymatic and non-

enzymatic functions, and histone and non-histone substrates. The first step would be to

test the functional contribution of candidate genes, many of which encode peptide-

hormone signaling (Table 1), to the phenotypes in the single mutants and its rescue

effect in DM mice.

Increased social dominance is a novel behavioral trait we observed in both WDSTS and

MRXSCJ mouse models. The amygdala is well known to mediate social behaviors (78,

79). For example, lesions of BLA result in decreased aggression-like behavior and

increased social interactions (80, 81), and changes in transcriptional regulation in BLA

are observed after social interactions (79). The dorsal hippocampus CA1 is a direct

recipient region of BLA inputs (48). Decreased BLA and CA1 spine densities in *Kmt2a*-

HET and *Kdm5c*-KO mice inversely correlate with increased social dominance and

aggression (Figures 4 and 6). Together, these observations imply that decreased spine

density is not a cause of increased social dominance, but rather reflects compensatory

reduction of net synaptic strength due to increased excitation and/or a loss of inhibitory

control in this circuit. Thus, determining the connectivity of the amygdala with other

regions, including prelimbic, infralimbic, and orbitofrontal cortices (82) as well as the

ventral hippocampus, (78) will be critical for understanding the changes in social

behaviors in both WDSTS and MRXSCJ models.

It is important to note that the double mutations introduced in our mice were constitutive,

and therefore a lifetime of adaptation to loss of these two major chromatin regulators

may occur from early developmental stages. A more realistic therapeutic strategy may

be acute inhibition of KDM5C and KMT2A in the juvenile or mature brain. Previous work

characterizing mouse models with excitatory-neuron specific ablation of *Kdm5c* or

Kmt2a via *CamKII*-Cre found that conditional *Kmt2a* deletion led to clear learning

deficits (30), while cognitive impairments in the conditional *Kdm5c*-KO mice were much

milder than those of constitutive *Kdm5c*-KO mice (32). These results suggest a

developmental origin of phenotypes in *Kdm5c*-KO. Future investigations are needed to

address whether the effects of acute inhibition of opposing enzymes in these mouse

models can restore such neurodevelopmental deficits.

Materials & methods

Mouse models

The *Kdm5c*-KO allele was previously described and maintained in C57BL/6J congenic

background (31). *Kmt2a*-HET mice were generated by crossing previously described

Kmt2a-flox (exons 8 and 9) mice with B6.129-Gt(ROSA)26Sor$^{tm1(cre/ERT2)Tyj}$/J-Cre mice

(83). Our strategy was to use F1 hybrid for all studies as previously recommended as a

standard practice to eliminate deleterious homozygous mutations, which can result in

abnormalities in the congenic lines, e.g. deafness in C57/BL6 (84). We backcrossed

Kmt2a$^{+/-}$ mice onto the desired 129S1/SvImJ strain, by marker-assisted accelerated

backcrossing through Charles River Labs. *Kmt2a*$^{+/-}$ mice were bred to the N4 generation

at minimum, where mice were >99% congenic for 129S1/SvImJ. All experimental mice

were generated as F1 generation hybrids from mating between 129S1/SvImJ *Kmt2a*$^{+/-}$

males and C57Bl/6 *Kdm5c*$^{+/-}$ females: WT males (*Kmt2a*$^{+/+}$, *Kdm5c*$^{+/y}$); *Kdm5c*-KO

males (*Kmt2a*$^{+/+}$, *Kdm5c*$^{-/y}$); *Kmt2a*-HET males (*Kmt2a*$^{+/-}$, *Kdm5c*$^{+/y}$); and *Kdm5c-Kmt2a*-

DM males (*Kmt2a*$^{+/-}$, *Kdm5c*$^{-/y}$). Genotypes were confirmed using the following primers:

for *Kmt2a*, 5'-GCCAGTCAGTCCGAAAGTAC, 5'-AGGATGTTCAAAGTGCCTGC, 5'-

GCTCTAGAACTAGTGGATCCC; for *Kdm5c*, 5'-

CAGGTGGCTTACTGTGACATTGATG, 5'-TGGGTTTGAGGGATACTTTAGG, 5'-

GGTTCTCAACACTCACATAGTG.

Western blot analysis

Total proteins from adult brain tissues were subjected to Western blot analysis using in-

house anti-KDM5C (31) and anti-GAPDH antibodies (G-9, Santa Cruz). For histone

proteins, nuclei were enriched from the Dounce-homogenized brain tissues using Nuclei

EZ prep Kit (Sigma, NUC-101). DNA were digested with micrococcal nuclease (MNase,

NEB) for 10 minutes at room temperature, and total nuclear proteins were extracted by

boiling the samples with the SDS-PAGE sample buffer. The following antibodies were

used for Western blot analyses: anti-H3K4me3 (Abcam, ab8580), anti-H3K4me2

(Thermo, #710796), anti-H3K4me1 (Abcam, ab8895), and anti-H3 C-terminus (Millipore,

CS204377).

Brain histology

Mice were subjected to transcardial perfusion according to standard procedures. Fixed

brains were sliced on a freeze microtome, yielding 30 μm sections that were then fixed,

permeabilized, blocked, and stained with DAPI. Slides were imaged on an Olympus

SZX16 microscope, with an Olympus U-HGLGPS fluorescence source and Q Imaging

Retiga 6000 camera. Images were captured using Q-Capture Pro 7 software. Data were

collected in a blind fashion, where samples were coded and genotypes only revealed

after data collection was complete.

Behavioral paradigms

Prior to behavioral testing, mice were acclimated to the animal colony room for one

week single-housing in standard cages provided with a lab diet and water *ad libitum*. A

12-hour light-dark cycle (7:00AM-7:00PM) was utilized with temperature and humidity

maintained at 20 ±2 ºC and >30%, respectively. The University of Michigan Committee

on the Use and Care of Animals approved all tests performed in this research. Five

tests, listed in order of testing, were performed: Novel Object Recognition (five days),

Context Fear Conditioning (two days), Three-Chambered Social Interaction (two days),

Social Dominance Tube Test (three to four days), and Resident-intruder (two to three

days). All testing was conducted in the morning by experimenters blind to genotype.

The cleaning agent used in every test between each trial was 70% ethanol. Data were

collected in a blind fashion, where mice were coded and genotypes were only revealed

after testing was complete.

Novel Object Recognition: Mice were first habituated to testing arenas (40 x 30 x 32.5

cm^3) in three, 10-minute sessions over six consecutive days (85, 86). Twenty-four hours

later, mice were allowed to explore two identical objects (a jar or egg, counterbalanced

across animals) for two, 10-minute trials spaced three hours apart. All animals were

returned to the arena, tested 24 hours after the first training session, and presented with

one training object ("familiar" object: jar or egg) and one "novel" object (egg or jar).

Exploration of the objects was defined as nose-point (sniffing) within 2 cm of the object.

Behavior was automatically measured by Ethovision XT9 software using a Euresys

Picolo U4H.264No/0 camera (Noldus, Cincinnati, OH). Preference was calculated as

the time spent exploring novel object/total time exploring both objects. One-sample t-

tests against 50% (no preference) were used to establish whether animals remembered

the original objects.

Contextual Fear Conditioning: Context fear conditioning was assessed as previously

described (87). Mice were placed into a distinct context with white walls (9 ¾ × 12 ¾ × 9

¾ in) and a 36 steel rod grid floor (1/8 in diameter; ¼ spaced apart) (Med-Associates,

St. Albans, VT) and allowed to explore for three minutes, followed by a two-second 0.8

mA shock, after which mice were immediately returned to their home cages in the

colony room. Twenty-four hours later, mice were returned to the context and freezing

behavior was assessed with NIR camera (VID-CAM-MONO-2A) and VideoFreeze

(MedAssociates, St Albans, VT). Freezing levels were compared between genotypes

using a between-groups analysis (one-way ANOVA) with genotype as the between-

subjects factor.

Three-Chambered Social Interaction: Mice were placed into a three-chambered

apparatus consisting of one central chamber (24 x 20 x 30 cm^3) and two identical side

chambers (24.5 x 20 x 30 cm^3) each with a containment enclosure (8 cm diameter; 18

cm height; grey stainless steel grid 3 mm diameter spaced 7.4 mm apart) and allowed

to habituate for 10 minutes. Twenty-four hours later, mice were returned to the

apparatus that now included a 2-3 month-old stranger male mouse (C57BL/6N) on one

side of the box ("stranger"), and a toy mouse approximately the same size and color as

the stranger mouse on the other ("toy"). Exploration of either the stranger or toy was

defined as nose-point (sniffing) within 2 cm of the enclosure and used as a measure of

social interaction (88). Behavior was automatically scored by Ethovision XT9 software

as described above, and social preference was defined as time exploring stranger/total

exploration time. Social preference was analyzed using one-sample t-tests for each

genotype. A repeated measures analysis was used for each aggressive (genotype x

aggression measures ANOVA) and submissive behavior (genotype x submissive) to

analyze aggressive behaviors.

Social Dominance Tube Test: Twenty-four hours prior to testing, mice were habituated

to a plastic clear cylindrical tube (1.5 in diameter; 50 cm length) for 10 minutes. During

the test, two mice of different genotypes were placed at opposite ends of the tube and

allowed to walk to the middle. The match concluded when the one mouse (the dominant

mouse) forced the other mouse (the submissive mouse) to retreat with all four paws

outside of the tube (a "win" for the dominant mouse) (89-91). Each mouse underwent a

total of three matches against three different opponents for counterbalancing. Videos

were recorded by Ethovision XT9 software as described above, and videos were

manually scored by trained experimenters blind to genotype. The number of "wins" was

reported as a percentage of total number of matches. Data were analyzed using an

Exact Binomial Test with 0.5 as the probability of success (win or loss).

Resident-intruder aggression: Resident-intruder tests were used to assess aggression.

Tests were performed on consecutive days, where the resident mouse was exposed to

an unfamiliar intruder mouse for 15 minutes (92, 93). A trial was terminated prematurely

if blood was drawn, if an attack lasted continuously for 30 seconds, or if an intruder

showed visible signs of injury after an attack. Resident mice were assessed for active

aggression (darting, mounting, chasing/following, tail rattling, and boxing/parrying), as

well as submissive behaviors (cowering, upright, running away). Intruder mice were

assessed for passive defense (freezing, cowering, and digging). Behavior was recorded

and videos scored manually by experimenters blind to genotype. Data were analyzed

using a between-groups analysis (one-way ANOVA) with genotype as the between-

subjects factor.

Neuronal Golgi staining and morphological analyses

Brains from adult (2-8 months) mice were dissected and incubated in a modified Golgi-

Cox solution for two weeks at room temperature. The remaining procedure of Golgi

immersion, cryosectioning, staining and coverslipping was performed as described

previously (94).

Morphological analyses of dendrites were carried out as described previously (94). Four

animals were used for each genotype, and pyramidal neurons in the basolateral

amygdala and dorsal hippocampus CA1 per animal were quantified: N=24 neurons for

WT, *Kmt2a*-HET and *Kdm5c*-KO, and N=27 neurons for DM. Quantification was done

using commercially available software, NeuroLucida (v10, Microbrightfield, VT), installed

on a Dell PC workstation that controlled a Zeiss Axioplan microscope with a CCD

camera (1600 x 1200 pixels) and with a motorized X, Y, and Z focus for high-resolution

image acquisition (100X oil immersion) and quantifications. The morphological analyses

included: dendritic lengths, spine counts, and spine subtype morphology. All sample

genotypes were blinded to the analysts throughout the course of the analysis.

The criteria for selecting candidate neurons for analysis were based on: (1) visualization

of a completely filled soma with no overlap of neighboring soma and completely filled

dendrites, (2) the tapering of most distal dendrites; and (3) the visualization of the

complete 3-D profile of dendritic trees using the 3-D display of the imaging software.

For quantitative analysis of spine subtypes (thin, stubby, mushroom, filopodia, and

branched spines), only spines orthogonal to the dendritic shaft were included in this

analysis, whereas spines protruding above or beneath the dendritic shaft were not

sampled. This principle remained consistent throughout the course of analysis.

After completion, the digital profile of neuron morphology was extrapolated and

transported to a multi-panel computer workstation, then quantitated using

NeuroExplorer program (Microbrightfield, VT), followed by statistical analysis (one- and

two-way ANOVAs, $p < 0.05$).

RNA-seq

Brains from adult (4.5 to 8 months) male mice were microdissected to obtain the

amygdala and hippocampus from Bregma ~ 4.80 mm regions. N=4 animals were used

per genotype. The ages of mice used for genomics study, RNA-seq and ChIP-seq, are

summarized in Table S3. Tissue was homogenized in Tri Reagent (Sigma). Samples

were subjected to total RNA isolation, and RNA was purified using RNEasy Mini Kit

(Qiagen). ERCC spike-in RNA was added at this stage, according to manufacturer's

instructions (Life Technologies). Libraries were prepared using the NEBNext® Ultra™ II

Directional RNA Library Prep Kit with oligo-dT priming. Multiplexed libraries were pooled

in approximately equimolar ratios and purified using Agencourt RNAClean XP beads

(Beckman Coulter).

Libraries were sequenced on the Illumina Novaseq 6000 platform, with paired-end 150

base pair reads (24-35 million reads/library), according to standard procedures. Reads

were mapped to the mm10 mouse genome (Gencode) using STAR (v2.5.3a) (95),

where only uniquely mapped reads were used for downstream analyses. Duplicates

were removed by STAR, and a counts file was generated using FeatureCounts

(Subread v1.5.0) (96). BAM files were converted to bigwigs using deeptools (v3.1.3)

(97, 98). Differentially expressed (DE) genes were called using DESeq2 (v1.14.1) (99,

100). Data analyses were performed with RStudio (v1.0.136). Fold change heatmaps

was created using gplots heatmap.2 function.

To validate the microdissection of hippocampus and amygdala, we compared our RNA-

seq datasets with similar RNA-seq data from Arbeitman (50) datasets, which involved

the cerebellum, cortex, hippocampus, and amygdala. Briefly, count data underwent

variance stabilizing transformation via DEseq2 vst function and Euclidean distances of

the transformed values were calculated by dist command and the heatmap was

generated by the pheatmap function. Linear regression analysis was performed using

the smtr v3.4-8 slope.test function with intercept = FALSE and robust=FALSE options.

Rescue-driving genes were chosen as genes that satisfy two conditions using R, **1)** abs

(log2FC (single mutant vs DM) > 2, **2)** abs (log2FC (DM vs WT) < 0.7.

The RNA-seq data have been deposited in NCBI's Gene Expression Omnibus (101).

Data are accessible through GEO series accession numbers, SuperSeries GSE127818

and SubSeries GSE127722, and can be accessed with secure token *ovuhykuazryxrad*.

ChIP-seq

Amygdala tissues were microdissected from adult (8-14.5 months) male mice. N=2

animals were used for WT, and N=3 animals were used for *Kmt2a*-HET, *Kdm5c*-KO,

and DM as biological replicates. Nuclei were isolated using a Nuclei EZ prep Kit (Sigma,

NUC-101), and counted after Trypan blue staining. Approximately 20,000 nuclei for

each replicate were subjected to MNase digestion as previously described (102). We

essentially followed the native ChIP-seq protocol (102) with two modifications. One was

to use a kit to generate sequencing libraries in one-tube reactions (NEB, E7103S).

Another modification was to spike-in the panel of synthetic nucleosomes carrying major

histone methylations (EpiCypher, SKU: 19-1001) (66). For ChIP, we used the rabbit

monoclonal H3K4me3 antibody (Thermo, clone #RM340).

Libraries were sequenced on the Illumina NextSeq 500 platform, with single-end 75

base-pair sequencing, according to standard procedures. We obtained 20-59 million

reads per sample. Reads were aligned to the mm10 mouse genome (Gencode) and a

custom genome containing the sequences from our standardized, synthetic

nucleosomes (EpiCypher) for normalization (103), using Bowtie allowing up to two

mismatches. Only uniquely mapped reads were used for analysis. The range of

uniquely mapped reads for input samples was 38-44 million reads. All IP replicates had

a mean of 9.1 million uniquely mapped reads (range: 7.4-13.9 million). The enrichment

of mapped synthetic spike-in nucleosomes compared to input was calculated and used

as a normalization coefficient for read depth of each ChIP-seq replicate (103).

Peaks were called using MACS2 software (v 2.1.0.20140616) (104) using input BAM

files for normalization, with filters for a q-value < 0.1 and a fold enrichment greater than

1. Common peak sets were obtained via DiffBind (105), and count tables for the

common peaks were generated with the Bedtools multicov command. We removed

"black-list" regions that often give aberrant signals (106). Resulting count tables were

piped into DEseq2 to identify DMRs incorporating the synthetic nucleosome

normalization into the read depth factor. We used ChIPseeker (107) to annotate

H3K4me3 peaks with genomic features including mm10 promoters (defined here as ±1

kb from annotated transcription start site [TSS]). Normalized bam files were converted

to bigwigs for visualization in the UCSC genome browser. Genes near peaks were

identified by ChIPseeker. RNA-seq and ChIP-seq data were integrated using standard

R commands and rescued amygdala DEGs were chosen as genes that meet two

criteria, **1)** abs (log2FC (single mutant vs DM) > 1, **2)** abs (log2FC (DM vs WT) < 0.7. All

scripts used in this study are available upon request.

The ChIP-seq data have been deposited in NCBI's Gene Expression Omnibus (101).

Data are accessible through GEO series accession numbers, SuperSeries GSE127818

and SubSeries GSE127817, and can be accessed with secure token *ovuhykuazryxrad*.

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Conflict of interest

MCW is CEO of Neurodigitech, LLC. The other authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contributions

CNV, NCT, and SI conceived the study and designed the experiments. BR and KMC performed the mouse behavioral tests under the guidance of NCT. MCW oversaw dendritic morphometry analyses. CNV, KMB, PMG, and SI analyzed RNAseq data. YAS performed global H3K4me3 analyses. RSP and SI performed H3K4me3 ChIP-seq analyses. YD and CEK provided key experimental recourse and made important intellectual contributions. All authors contributed to the writing and editing of the manuscript.

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Figures and Legends

Figure 1. The H3K4 methylopathies and generation of the *Kmt2a-Kdm5c* double-

mutant (DM) mouse. (A) Histone H3 lysine 4 (H3K4me) methyltransferases (writers)

and demethylases (erasers) depicted by their ability to place or remove H3K4me.

Reader proteins recognizing specific H3K4me substrates (arrows) are depicted below.

Genes are listed next to their associated neurodevelopmental disorder. KMT2A and

KDM5C are highlighted in purple and green, respectively. WDSTS: Weideman-Steiner

Syndrome; ID: intellectual disability; ASD: autism spectrum disorder, CPRF: cleft palate,

psychomotor retardation, and distinctive facial features; ARID: autosomal recessive ID;

MRXSCJ: mental retardation, X-linked, syndromic, Claes-Jensen type. **(B)** Mouse

breeding scheme crossing congenic 129S1/SvlmJ *Kmt2a*-heterozygous males with

congenic C57/Bl6 *Kdm5c*-heterozygous females, resulting in F1 generation mice. Only

males were used in this study. **(C)** Numbers of male offspring across 30 litters, showing

Mendelian ratios of expected genotypes. **(D)** Left panel: Body weight of adult mice > 2

months of age (mean ± SEM, ****$p < 0.0001$ in one-way ANOVA). Right panel:

Difference between group means of weight (mean ± 95% confidence intervals, *$p<0.05$,

**$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$, ****$p<0.0001$ in Tukey's multiple comparison test).

Figure 2. Deficit of memory-related behavior in *Kdm5c*-KO and its rescue in DM.

(A) Contextual fear conditioning test. Left panel: Freezing levels after shock on test day

(mean ± SEM, *$p < 0.05$ in one-way ANOVA). Right panel: Difference between group

means of freezing (mean ± 95% confidence intervals, *$p<0.05$ in Least Significant

Difference (LSD) test). **(B)** Novel object recognition test. Left panel: Preference for novel

versus familiar object (mean ± SEM, *$p < 0.05$ in one-way ANOVA). Right panel:

Difference between group means of freeze response (mean ± 95% confidence intervals,

*$p<0.05$ in Least Significant Difference (LSD) test). **(C)** Response to mild foot-shock

(mean ± 95% confidence intervals, no statistical significance [n.s.], one-way ANOVA).

(D) Locomotor activity (mean ± 95% confidence intervals, no statistical significance

[n.s.], one-way ANOVA). N=21 WT, N=16 *Kmt2a*-HET, N=16 *Kdm5c*-KO, and N=12 DM

animals were used for all studies.

Figure 3. Differential impacts of double mutation in social behavior. (A) Three

chamber test for social interaction. Left panel: preference for stranger versus toy mouse

(mean ± SEM, **$p < 0.01$ in one-way ANOVA). Right panel: Difference between group

means of preference (mean ± 95% confidence intervals, *$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$ in Least

Significant Difference (LSD) test). **(B)** Tube test for social dominance. Proportion of wins

in matches of each mutant versus WT. Numbers on colored bars represent total number

of wins for WT (grey, above) or each mutant (below) in every matchup. **$p<0.01$,

***$p<0.001$, Exact binomial test. **(C)** Resident intruder test. Left panel: average number

of all aggressive behaviors (mean ± SEM, *$p < 0.05$ in one-way ANOVA). Right panel:

Difference between group means of aggressive behaviors (mean ± 95% confidence

intervals, *$p<0.05$ in Least Significant Difference (LSD) test). N=21 WT, N=16 *Kmt2a*-

HET, N=16 *Kdm5c*-KO, and N=12 DM animals were used for all studies.

Figure 4. Altered dendrite morphology of *Kdm5c*-KO and *Kmt2a*-HET was

reversed in DM animals. (A) Representative images of basolateral amygdala (BLA)

pyramidal neurons across all genotypes, depicting overall neuron morphology including

dendrite lengths and dendritic spines. Scale bars represent: 100μm (above, whole

neuron image), 10μm (below, spine image). **(B and C)** Left panel: Total dendrite lengths

(B) or spine density **(C)** (mean ± 95% *$p<0.05$, ****$p<0.0001$, one-way ANOVA). Right

panel: Difference between group means (mean ± 95% confidence intervals, *$p<0.05$,

$p<0.01$, ***$p<0.001$, ****$p<0.0001$ in Tukey's multiple comparison test). **(D)

Quantification of spine morphology subtypes represented as percentage of total spines

counted. **(E and F)** Morphometry of pyramidal neurons within the dorsal hippocampus

CA1. At least 20 neurons from four animals per genotype were quantified for all panels.

Figure 5. The transcriptomes in the amygdala and hippocampus. (A) Number of

differentially expressed (DE) genes across genotypes were determined using a

threshold of *padj*-value < 0.1. or relaxed cut-off of $p < 0.005$ for *Kmt2a*-HET in **(B)** (see

also Table S1). We analyzed amygdala and hippocampal tissues from four animals for

each genotype. **(C)** Behavior of single-mutant DEGs in DM. Log2 fold change of DEGs

relative to WT were plotted across the three mutants. Boxplot features: box, interquartile

range (IQR); bold line, median; gray dots, individual genes. Associated *p* values result

from Wilcoxon signed-rank tests. **(D)** Identification of rescue-driving genes and

regression analysis. Blue fitting lines and slopes result from linear regression of log2

fold changes between the two genotypes. Gray shade: 95% confidence interval. *P-*

values indicate probability of the null hypothesis that the fitting line does not differ from 1

(108). Red circles: rescue-driving genes (see method).

Figure 6. Altered H3K4me3 landscapes in the amygdala and rescue effect in DM.

(A) Western blot of whole brain lysates showing unchanged global H3K4 methylation across genotypes. Total histone H3 was detected using an antibody recognizing the C-terminus of H3, and used as a control for equal loading. **(B)** PCA analysis of H3K4me3 ChIPseq replicates. We analyzed amygdala tissue from 2 to 3 animals (rep1-3) for each genotype (see Methods). **(C)** Number of H3K4me3 DMRs in 2a-HET, 5c-KO, or DM compared to WT across the genome. 2A-HET DMRs are retrieved with a relaxed threshold ($p < 0.05$). **(D)** Direction of H3K4me3 changes between single mutants. Genes are colored based on the direction of misregulation between the single mutants. **(E)** Behavior of single-mutant DMRs in DM. Log2 fold change of DMRs relative to WT were plotted across the three mutants. Boxplot features: box, interquartile range (IQR); bold line, median; gray dots, individual genes. Associated p values result from Wilcoxon signed-rank tests. **(F)** Genomic features of H3K4me3 peaks. **(G)** Involvement of H3K4me3 restoration near rescued DEGs. H3K4me3 log2 fold changes (FC) are plotted as function of mRNA log2 FC between DM and single mutants. Red line: linear regression fitting line with 95% confidence interval (gray shade). The gene numbers fall into each of the four quadrants as indicated (Q1-Q4). Results (p) of χ^2 test and Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) and p-value (p) are noted.

Supplementary Figure 1. Expression of KMT2A and KDM5C. (A) Expression of *Kmt2a* and *Kdm5c*, from FACS-sorted single cells of mouse visual cortex, shown in reads per kilobase of transcript per million mapped reads (RPKM). Neuronal cells:

GABAergic (GABA), Glutamatergic (Glu). Non-neuronal cells: astrocytes (A); endothelial

cells (E); microglia (M), oligodendrocyte precursor cells (OPC); oligodendrocytes (O);

smooth muscle cells (SMC). Image credit: Broad Institute "Single Cell Portal"

transcriptome of adult mouse visual cortex (38). **(B)** Expression of *Kmt2a* and *Kdm5c*

mRNA from adult mouse brain, shown in log2 of raw expression value from *in situ*

hybridization. Brain regions: Isocortex, olfactory areas (OLF), hippocampal formation

(HPF), cortical subplate (CTXsp), striatum (STR), pallidum (PAL), thalamus (TH),

hypothalamus (HY), midbrain (MB), pons (P), medulla (MY), cerebellum (CB). Image

credit: Allen Institute, Allen Mouse Brain Atlas (2004) (34). **(C)** Expression of *KMT2A*

and *KDM5C* transcripts, from developing and adult human brains, shown in RPKM.

Human development and adulthood were split into the following Periods: 1-7 fetal

development; 8-9 birth and infancy; 10-11 childhood; 12 adolescence; and 13-15

adulthood. Image credit: Human Brain Transcriptome Atlas (36, 109)

Supplementary Figure 2. Basic features of mutant mice. (A-B) RNA-seq read

coverage of *Kmt2a* **(A)** and *Kdm5c* **(B)** genes and targeted exons (highlight) confirmed

the intended gene manipulations. **(C)** Genotyping using genomic DNA, confirming

presence of *Kmt2a* and/or *Kdm5c* deleted alleles ("del") only in appropriate genotypes.

(D) Western blot for KDM5C protein. Stars indicate non-specific bands present in all

samples. GAPDH shown for equal loading. **(E)** Serial brain sections 30 μm thick stained

with DAPI to mark nuclei. Sections shown at Bregma regions 1.41, 0.49, -2.15, and -

2.91 mm (top to bottom). Regions highlighted: anterior forceps of the corpus callosum

(fmi), caudate putamen (CPu), corpus callosum (cc), lateral ventricle (LV), piriform

cortex (Pir), olfactory tubercle (Tu), hippocampal fields CA1 and CA2, dentate gyrus

(DG), anteromedial nucleus (AM), third ventricle (3V), substantia nigra pars reticularis

(SNR). Scale bar: 1mm. **(F)** Body weight tracked from birth, postnatal day 1 (P1).

Supplementary Figure 3. Individual behavior types in the resident intruder test.

(A) Individual aggressive behaviors (mean ± SEM, **$p < 0.01$ in one-way ANOVA). N.S.

depicts no statistical difference. Left panel: average number of all submissive behaviors

(mean ± SEM, *$p < 0.05$ in one-way ANOVA). Right panel: Difference between group

means of submissive behaviors (mean ± 95% confidence intervals, **$p<0.01$,

***$p<0.001$ in Least Significant Difference (LSD) test). **(B)** Individual submissive

behaviors (mean ± SEM, **$p < 0.01$ in one-way ANOVA). N.S. depicts no statistical

difference. N=21 WT, N=16 *Kmt2a*-HET, N=16 *Kdm5c*-KO, and N=12 DM animals were

used for all studies. Differences between group means all aggressive **(A)** and

submissive **(B)** behaviors (mean ± 95% confidence intervals, *$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$ in Least

Significant Difference (LSD) test).

Supplementary Figure 4. Schematic of dendrite spine subtype analysis. (A)

Projection image of a dendritic segment from a series of Z stack images derived from

BLA pyramidal cells. Numerical marks adjacent to corresponding spine subtypes,

represented as: 1. Filopodia, 2. Thin, 3, Stubby, 4. Mushroom, and 5. Branched.

Supplementary Figure 5. Validation of brain microdissection. (A) To validate

accuracy of our brain microdissection, we compared our RNAseq data of the

hippocampus (HIP) and amygdala (AMY) with those of the Arbeitman paper (50), which

involved the hippocampus (Hippo), amygdala (Amy), cerebellum (Cer), cerebral cortex

(Ctx). Euclidian distance between all combination of RNA-seq data are plotted (see

method). Samples from this study and the Arbeitman study are clustered separately,

likely due to difference in experimental procedures and/or sex of mice. Our study used

adult male mice, while the Arbeitman study used adult females. Nonetheless, our

amygdala samples showed the shortest distance to the Arbeitman amygdala data

compared to any other brain tissues (red rectangles). Likewise, our hippocampus data

are closest to the Arbeitman hippocampus data among the four brain regions. The data

demonstrate that the microdissection of brain regions in the two studies are consistent

with each other.

Supplementary Figure 6. Basic analysis of RNA-seq data. (A) PCA analysis of RNA-

seq libraries. Tissue types are a stronger segregating factor than genotypes. **(B)**

Volcano plot representation of differential expressed genes (DEGs) in mutant vs WT

comparisons. Red dots: DEGs with *padj* < 0.1 (see Table S1). **(C)** Mildly dysregulated

genes in Kmt2a-HET were recovered with a relaxed threshold.

Supplementary Figure 7. Similarity of gene misregulation between the amygdala

and hippocampus. (A) Overlap of single mutant DEGs between the amygdala (AMY)

and hippocampus (HIP). 5C-DEGs overlap between the two brain regions. **(B)** Heatmap

representation of log2 fold changes of 2A-DEGs (left) and 5C-DEGs (right). Overall the

patterns of gene misregulation are similar in the two brain regions.

Supplementary Figure 8. Direction of gene misregulation between *Kmt2a*-HET and *Kdm5c*-KO and their overlap in DM brain tissues. (A) Behavior of single-mutant DEGs in the other single mutant. Log2 fold changes of DEGs found in a single mutant were plotted as a function of log2 fold changes in the other single mutant. Red shade covers genes that are regulated in the opposite direction between *Kmt2a*-HET and *Kdm5c*-KO brain tissues. Blue shade covers deregulated genes in the same direction. **(B)** The larger number of genes is dysregulated in the same direction between the two single mutants. **(C)** Overlap of DEGs between mutants. 5C- and DM-DEGs overlap substantially.

Supplementary Figure 9. Basic characterization of H3K4me3 ChIP-seq data. (A) Validation of H3K4me3 ChIP-seq specificity. Barcode reads originating from spike-in nucleosomes were counted. The two synthetic nucleosomes with the H3K4me3 barcodes dominated all ChIP samples, with H3K4me1/2 nucleosomes rarely detected. **(B)** Volcano plot represents the statistical significance of differentially methylated regions (DMRs). **(C)** MA plots of DMRs revealed signal intensity-dependent misregulation of H3K4me3 in *Kdm5c*-KO, where hypomethylated regions in the mutant were highly methylated in WT.

Supplementary Figure 10. Rescue effect without DM rep2. (A) DM rep2 showed strong rescue effect (Figure 6B). To test if H3K4me3 misregulations were alleviated in other DM replicates, we removed DM rep2 and then examined the behavior of single-

995   mutant DMRs in DM. Log2 fold change of DMRs relative to WT were plotted across the

996   three mutants. Boxplot features: box, interquartile range (IQR); bold line, median; gray

997   dots, individual genes. Associated *p* values result from Wilcoxon signed-rank tests.

998   Rescue effects were still evident in DM and also dependent on the direction of

999   misregulation between the single mutants.

1000

1001   **Supplementary Figure 11. Representative loci found in the H3K4me3 ChIP-seq**

1002   **analysis. (A)** Representative genome browser view of two representative loci for each

1003   of the major genome areas: rescued intergenic DMRs **(A)**, rescued promoter DMRs **(B)**,

1004   un-rescued DMRs **(C)**.

Gene symbol	Encoded protein	Chromosome	Description
Tacr1	Tachykinin receptor 1	chr6	Tachykinin receptor (aka neurokinin-1 or Substance-P receptor). G-protein coupled receptors found across the brain (110). Elevated *TACR1* mRNA levels in ASD patients with heightened aggression (111). Decreased aggression in *Tacr1*-KO mice (112).
Lhb	Beta subunit of luteinizing hormone (LH)	chr7	Major roles of LH in testosterone production (113). Additional roles of LH in learning and memory functions, e.g. elevated LH impairs spatial memory of rodents (114) and is associated with poor memory recall in men (115).
Trh	Thyrotropin-releasing hormone (TRH)	chr6	Primary TRH production in hypothalamic neurons. Some production and activity within the hippocampus (116). TRH stimulates GABA release within CA1 of the hippocampus (117). TRH increases during spatial learning tasks and is correlated with performance of rats (118).
Gabre	The epsilon subunit of the GABA-A	chrX	The epsilon subunit of GABA-A Receptor, an inhibitory chloride channel. Agonist-independent activity produces a tonic inhibitory tone onto neurons (119). Highest in the hypothalamus (120).
Adcy2	Adenylyl cyclase 2	chr13	Expressed at low levels throughout the brain and is stimulated by G-protein signaling and PKC (121). High expression in the soma and dendrites of hippocampal neurons and a proposed role in coincidence detection (122).
Adora2a	Adenosine A2a receptor	chr10	A G-protein coupled receptor of extracellular adenosine (123). A regulator of neurogenesis and hippocampal volume. Contribution of *ADORA2A* SNPs in Alzheimer's disease progression (124). Modulatory roles of BDNF expression and GABA and glutamate signaling in the hippocampus (125). Increased body mass, anxiety, and heightened aggression in *Adora2a*-KO mice (123).
Pomc	Pro-opiomelanocortin	chr12	A peptide hormone regulating the hypothalamic function such as feeding (58). High expression in the hypothalamus, and lower expression in the amygdala and hippocampus (58, 59). There, proposed roles in responding to stress (60). Impaired POMC expression in CA3 of the hippocampus is associated with cognitive decline in Alzheimer's disease (61).
Mc3r	Melanocortin 3 receptor	chr2	MC3R is receptor for cleavage products of POMC (64). Expression in the hypothalamus and limbic structures such as the amygdala and hippocampus (62). The hypothalamic function in weight and feeding (63). Roles in hippocampal memory consolidation (64).
Agt	Angiotensinogen	chr8	A peptide hormone primarily produced by astrocytes and converted into Angiotensin, neuroactive peptides (126). Well-known roles in vascular regulation, such as blood pressure (127). Angiotensin II inhibits LTP in the dentate gyrus in the hippocampus (128). Roles in mood and cognition (129).
P2ry14	Purinergic receptor P2Y, G-protein coupled	chr3	G-protein coupled receptor that binds UDP-glucose (130). Highly expressed in the placenta but moderately expressed in the brain (131). Upregulated in response to immune challenge and typically found within glia (130).

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Table 1. Rescued 5C-DEGs that drove enrichment of the KEGG pathway "Neuroactive ligand-receptor interaction"

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Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

A Global H3K4me level (AMY)

B Inter-replicate distance

C Number of DMRs in AMY

D Direction of H3K4me3 changes between single mutants

KMT2A-DMRs in 5C-KO

KDM5C-DMRs in 2A-HET

○ Same direction
○ Opposite direction

E Behavior of 2A- and 5C-DMRs in DM

F Genomic feature distribution of H3K4me3 peaks

G Correlation of mRNA vs H3K4me3 levels of rescued genes

Figure 6

Supplementary Figure 1

A Resident intruder: aggressive behaviors

B Resident intruder: submissive behaviors

Supplementary Figure 3

A

Dendritic spine subtypes

1. Filopodia
2. Thin
3. Stubby
4. Mushroom
5. Branched

Supplementary Figure 4

A Euclidean distances between RNA-seq samples from various brain regions

Supplementary Figure 5

A Principal component analysis

B RNA-seq differentially-expressed genes (DEGs, padj < 0.1)

Amygdala

2A vs WT

5C vs WT

DM vs WT

Hippocampus

2A vs WT

5C vs WT

DM vs WT

C *Kmt2a*-HET DEGs, p < 0.005)

2A vs WT

2A vs WT

Supplementary Figure 6

A **Overlap DEGs between tissues**

HIP_2A

1 gene

AMY_2A

AMY_5C

HIP_5C

72 genes

B **Similarity in DEG expression between the two brain regions**

2A-DEGs

Amygala

| 2A | 5C | DM |

Hippocampus

| 2A | 5C | DM |

5C-DEGs

Amygala

| 2A | 5C | DM |

Hippocampus

| 2A | 5C | DM |

-2   0   2
Log2 FC mut/WT

Supplementary Figure 7

Supplementary Figure 8

Supplementary Figure 9

A **Behavior of 2A- and 5C-DMRs in DM without DM-rep2**

Supplementary Figure 10

A   Rescued DMRs: intergenic

B   Rescued DMRs: promoter

C   Unrescued DMRs

Supplementary Figure 11