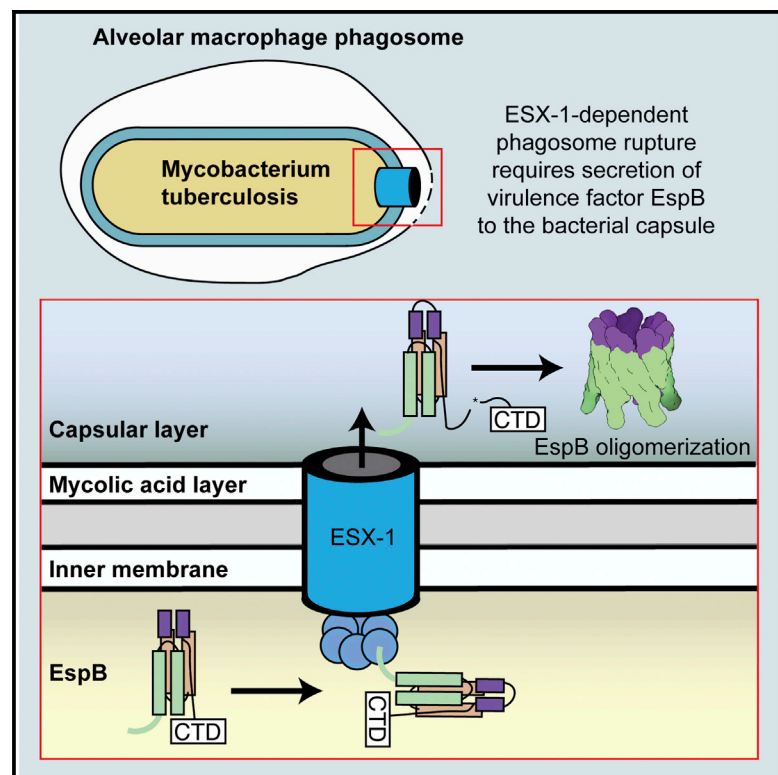


Structure

Structure of EspB from the ESX-1 Type VII Secretion System and Insights into its Export Mechanism

Graphical Abstract



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In Brief

Mycobacterium tuberculosis exports virulence factors to its surface using the ESX-1 secretion system, progressing the infection of human macrophages. Solomonson et al. show that one of these factors, EspB, adopts a PE/PPE-like fold and oligomerizes to form a barrel-shaped structure with heptameric symmetry.

Highlights

- The crystal structure of EspB reveals a fused PE/PPE homology domain
- EspB has a stabilized bipartite secretion signal that targets the EccCb1 ATPase
- EspB oligomerizes to form a ring-shaped heptamer
- A model of the heptamer was fit to EM density and crosslinking data

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Structure of EspB from the ESX-1 Type VII Secretion System and Insights into its Export Mechanism

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SUMMARY

Mycobacterium tuberculosis (*Mtb*) uses the ESX-1 type VII secretion system to export virulence proteins across its lipid-rich cell wall, which helps permeabilize the host's macrophage phagosomal membrane, facilitating the escape and cell-to-cell spread of *Mtb*. ESX-1 membranolytic activity depends on a set of specialized secreted Esp proteins, the structure and specific roles of which are not currently understood. Here, we report the X-ray and electron microscopic structures of the ESX-1-secreted EspB. We demonstrate that EspB adopts a PE/PPE-like fold that mediates oligomerization with apparent heptameric symmetry, generating a barrel-shaped structure with a central pore that we propose contributes to the macrophage killing functions of EspB. Our structural data also reveal unexpected direct interactions between the EspB bipartite secretion signal sequence elements that form a unified aromatic surface. These findings provide insight into how specialized proteins encoded within the ESX-1 locus are targeted for secretion, and for the first time indicate an oligomerization-dependent role for Esp virulence factors.

INTRODUCTION

Mycobacteria possess a unique hydrophobic cellular envelope that confers resistance to various stresses and contributes to the resilience of pathogens such as *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (*Mtb*) (Niederweis et al., 2009). The mycobacterial cell wall is composed of an inner membrane, peptidoglycan/arabinogalactan layers, a mycolic acid-containing layer, and an outer capsular layer (Sani et al., 2010) (Figure 1A). To export proteins across these physical barriers, mycobacteria utilize the general secre-

tion pathway, twin-arginine transporter, and up to five distinct ESX secretion systems (designated ESX-1 through ESX-5, referred to as the type VII secretion system), which variously function in virulence (ESX-1), iron acquisition (ESX-3), and cell surface decoration (ESX-5) (Champion and Cox, 2007). The ESX-1 system of pathogenic bacteria is of particular interest due to its involvement in essential pathogenesis steps including host phagosomal permeabilization (Watson et al., 2012), bacterial escape to cytosol (van der Wel et al., 2007), and macrophage killing (Simeone et al., 2012). Intriguingly, the ESX-1 locus involved in DNA conjugation in the non-pathogenic *Mycobacterium smegmatis* is nearly syntenic and to some extent interchangeable with the virulence locus (Wirth et al., 2011), making *M. smegmatis* ESX-1 a useful model system.

Despite its central role in pathogenesis, the structure of the ESX apparatus remains poorly characterized. The core inner membrane export machinery consists of an EccC ATPase, a membrane-bound MycP protease that processes secreted proteins (Ohol et al., 2010), and several other transmembrane apparatus proteins (Abdallah et al., 2007) (Figure 1A). Each locus also encodes a more variable set of components such as chaperones, ATPases, transcription factors, and, crucially, a specific set of secreted proteins (Houben et al., 2013).

These secreted proteins are the focus of intense study due to their external location in the bacterial cell wall and growth media, placing them in a position to manipulate the surrounding environment. However, their molecular functions remain an issue of some contention. Previous hypotheses suggest that ESX-secreted proteins may possess pore-forming activity (de Jonge et al., 2007; Hsu et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2008), chelate metals (Ilghari et al., 2011), modulate extracellular signaling pathways (Pathak et al., 2007), or are structural components that form the extracellular portion of the secretion apparatus itself (Pallen, 2002). In any case, each ESX system is associated with a specific set of secreted proteins that likely contribute to the specialized nature of each system. A close comparison of unique secreted proteins across ESX systems will help explain how, for example, ESX-3 functions in iron acquisition while ESX-1 is associated with pathogenesis and DNA conjugation. Along these lines,

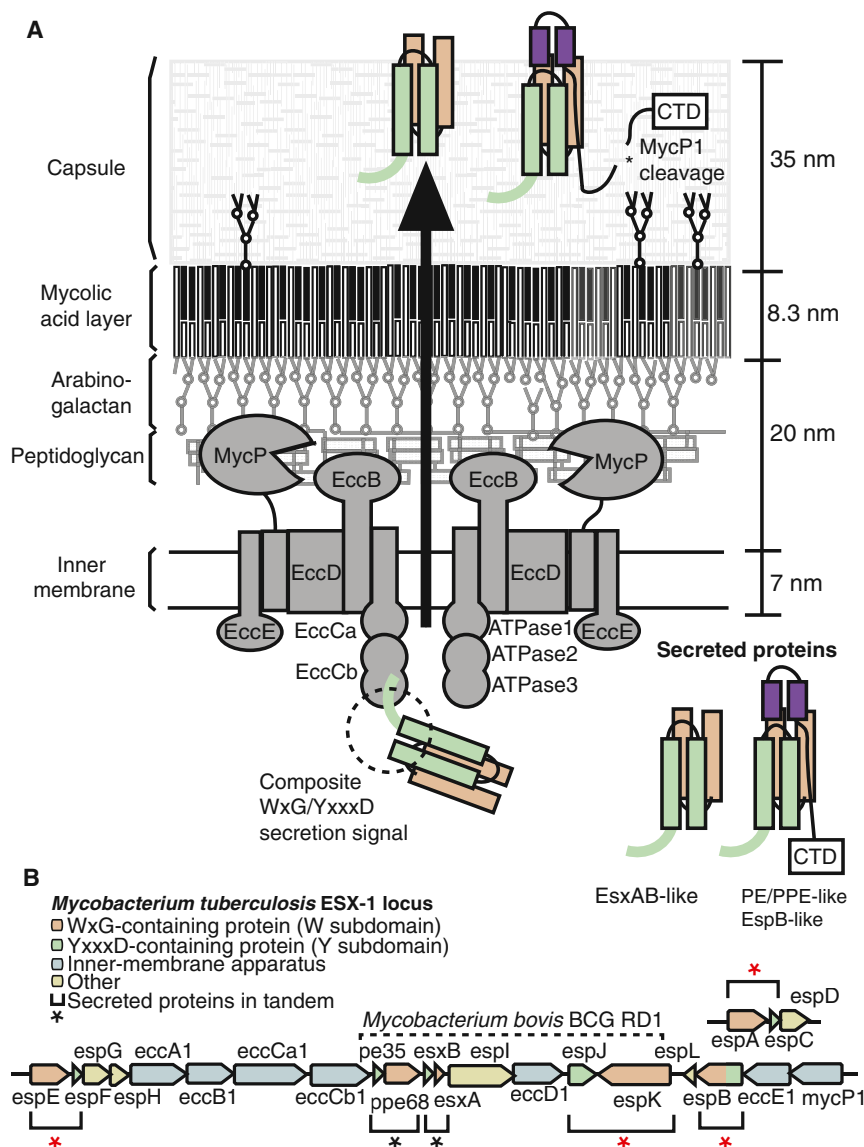


Figure 1. Overview of ESX Secretion in Mycobacteria

(A) Schematic summary of inner membrane secretion complex, secreted proteins, and mycobacterial cell wall composition and dimensions (schematic adapted from Brennan and Crick, 2007; Houben et al., 2012; Sani et al., 2010).

(B) The *M. tuberculosis* ESX-1 virulence locus, with tandemly organized secreted proteins that together possess the full composite secretion signal marked by asterisks.

infection models (Gao et al., 2004). A transposon mutant of EspB also decreases *M. smegmatis* conjugation efficiency by 1000-fold, suggesting a role in conjugal transfer as well (Coros et al., 2008). EspB has a C-terminal domain (CTD) that is processed by the membrane-bound protease, mycosin-1 (MycP1), following secretion (McLaughlin et al., 2007; Ohol et al., 2010; Solomonson et al., 2013; Wagner et al., 2013; Xu et al., 2007) (Figure 1A). The purpose of this cleavage event is unknown but is required for full pathogenesis of *Mtb*, and has been reported to modulate the quantity of protein secreted by ESX-1 (Ohol et al., 2010) and/or regulate phospholipid binding by EspB (Chen et al., 2013b).

Despite this dual role in regulating and mediating ESX-1 virulence, structural data are lacking for EspB or any other secreted Esp protein in the ESX-1 locus. Moreover, the mechanism by which Esp proteins are secreted through ESX-1 is not entirely clear. Recent work has culminated in the identification of a general “secretion signal” that targets cytoplasmic ESX substrates, including EspB,

ESX-1 secretes a number of proteins not encoded by the simpler ESX loci of Gram-positive bacteria and are also absent in ESX-2 through ESX-5 loci of mycobacteria, many of which are essential for ESX-1 virulence phenotypes in *Mtb* and conjugal DNA transfer in *M. smegmatis*. These include EspA (Fortune et al., 2005), EspC (Millington et al., 2011), EspE (Sani et al., 2010), EspF (Sani et al., 2010), EspJ (Champion et al., 2014), EspK (Champion et al., 2014; Sani et al., 2010), and EspB (Gao et al., 2004; McLaughlin et al., 2007; Xu et al., 2007) (Figure 1B, red asterisks).

EspB in particular is directly involved in ESX-1 membranolytic function, and strains lacking this secreted protein are as attenuated for virulence as those lacking the entire secretion apparatus (Gao et al., 2004). Knocking out EspB in the related pathogen *Mycobacterium marinum* abrogates red blood cell hemolysis (Gao et al., 2004), eliminates macrophage cytotoxicity (Gao et al., 2004), inhibits intracellular growth and phagosome maturation (McLaughlin et al., 2007; Xu et al., 2007; Huang and Bao, 2014), and completely attenuates virulence in zebrafish

to the secretion apparatus for export across the inner membrane (Champion et al., 2006; Daleke et al., 2012a) (Figure 1A). The structure of this secretion signal has primarily been studied in the simplest ESX-secreted substrates of the WXG100 family such as EsxA and EsxB (Arbing et al., 2010, 2013; Ilghari et al., 2011; Poulsen et al., 2014; Renshaw et al., 2005). WXG100 family members are secreted as homo- or heterodimeric complexes that adopt elongated, antiparallel helical bundles, where a WxG motif is present in at least one member of the heterodimer (labeled “W subdomain” and colored orange in Figures 1 and 2). This WxG motif forms one half of a bipartite composite secretion signal (Sysoeva et al., 2014) that is thought to target the heterodimeric complex to EccC for export (Champion et al., 2006) (Figure 1A). The second member of the heterodimer contributes the other half of this composite secretion signal: a flexible C-terminal “export arm” that harbors a characteristic Tyr-x-x-x-[Asp/Glu] (YxxxD) motif and at least one additional conserved hydrophobic residue seven positions downstream of the YxxxD motif

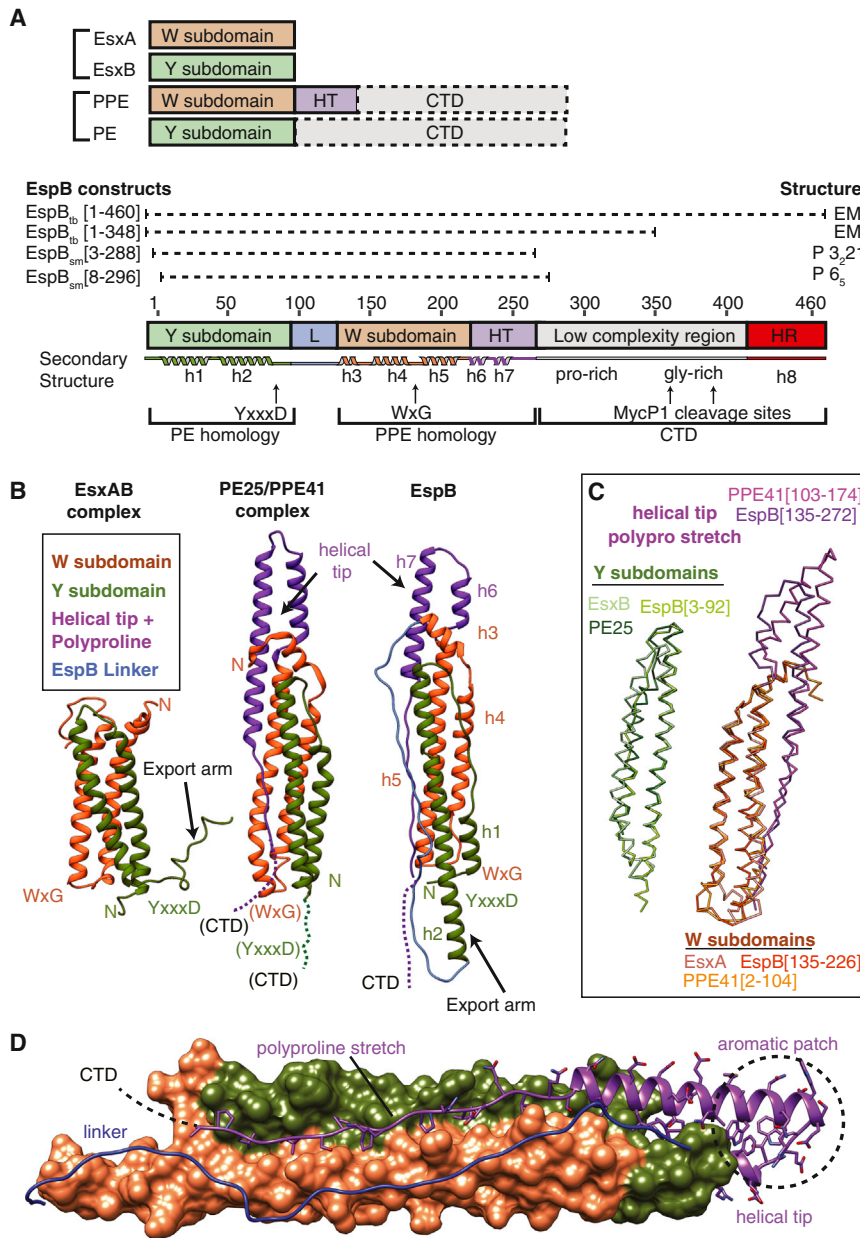


Figure 2. Crystal Structure of *M. smegmatis* EspB Compared with Model ESX Substrates EsxAB and PE25/PPE41

(A) Summary of ESX-secreted proteins discussed in this paper. W subdomain indicates presence of WxG motif, Y subdomain indicates presence of YxxxD motif. L, linker; HT, homology region; HT, helical tip.

(B) Structures of representative members of Esx (1WA8) and PE/PPE (2G38) families for comparison with EspB, color-coded by feature.

(C) Structural superposition of isolated Y and W subdomains across ESX-secreted protein classes demonstrates conserved modularity.

(D) Surface representation of EspB Y and W subdomains, with the linker, helical tip, polyproline stretch, and aromatic patch regions shown as ribbon and/or sticks.

sized to promote antigenic variation at the cell surface. Crystallographic analysis of the PE25/PPE41 complex from ESX-5 revealed a helical bundle reminiscent of the EsxAB heterodimer (Strong et al., 2006) (Figure 2B).

Here, we describe for the first time the crystal structure of EspB from *M. smegmatis* (EspB_{sm}), which reveals structural elements common to both the EsxAB and PE/PPE family of proteins, with a structured view of the composite secretion signal that clearly classifies it as a member of the WXG100 superfamily. EspB_{sm} adopts a distinct homomeric helical bundle and an additional customized appendage that, like the PE/PPE heterodimers, replaces one of the dual signal sequences present in canonical ESX substrates. Our light scattering and negative stain electron microscopy (EM) data further show that EspB from *Mtb* (EspB_{tb}) has a propensity to oligomerize, revealing the potential for EspB to serve as structural subunits in the construction of cell

(Poulsen et al., 2014) (this member is labeled “Y subdomain” and colored green in Figures 1 and 2). Previous nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) (Renshaw et al., 2005), crystallographic (Arbing et al., 2013; Poulsen et al., 2014), and two-hybrid studies (Champion et al., 2006) indicate that this dynamic export arm is stabilized such that residues align on the same face to interact with the EccC ATPase, representing a key phase of the export cycle and a potential determinant of ESX substrate specificity (Champion et al., 2009).

The final class of ESX-secreted protein relevant to the work presented here are the PE and PPE protein subfamilies, named for the characteristic Pro-Glu or Pro-Pro-Glu motifs located in the N-terminal regions of the respective variants (Sampson, 2011). Like EspB, PE and PPE proteins also possess CTDs, which encode for low-complexity repetitive structures hypothe-

wall-associated architectures of mycobacteria as widely hypothesized (Champion et al., 2009; Fortune et al., 2005).

RESULTS

Crystal Structure of EspB

The X-ray crystallographic structure of the N-terminal helical domain of EspB from *M. smegmatis* was determined in two crystal forms, one encompassing residues 3–288 (space group P3₂21, PDB code 4WJ1) and a second crystal form encompassing residues 8–296 (space group P6₅, PDB code 4WJ2 (Table 1). Due to predicted disorder, the CTD was not included in the construct used to grow the P3₂21 form (Figure 2A), and this CTD was also not observed in the P6₅ form even though it was included in the construct, likely due to proteolytic degradation

Table 1. Data Collection and Refinement Statistics

	<i>M. smegmatis</i> EspB [3–288] Se-Met SAD	<i>M. smegmatis</i> EspB [8–296] Native MR
Data Collection		
Space group	P 3 ₂ 2 1	P 6 ₅
Cell dimensions		
a, b, c (Å)	125.75, 125.75, 75.06	148.29, 148.29, 49.69
α, β, γ (°)	90, 90, 120	90, 90, 120
Resolution (Å) ^a	61.8–2.41 (2.51–2.41)	48.5–2.80 (2.95–2.8)
CC _{1/2}	0.999 (0.972)	0.997 (0.845)
R _{pim}	0.026 (0.137)	0.054 (0.309)
R _{meas}	0.121 (0.627)	0.145 (0.852)
I/σI	22.8 (5.6)	12.9 (2.3)
Completeness (%)	100.0 (100.0)	97.6 (99.3)
Redundancy	21.8 (20.7)	7.1 (7.4)
Refinement		
Resolution (Å)	61.8–2.41	48.5–2.8
No. of reflections	26,584	15,287
R _{work} /R _{free} ^b	0.1755/0.2011	0.2378/0.2718
No. of atoms		
Protein	2162	2039
Ligand/ion	0	0
Water	152	41
B factors		
Protein	48	57
Ligand/ion	0	0
Water	51	64
Rms deviations		
Bond lengths (Å)	0.008	0.010
Bond angles (°)	1.033	1.015
Ramachandran		
% Favored	99	96
% Allowed	1	4
% Outliers	0	0
Molprobit		
Clashscore	6	10

^aValues in parentheses represent the highest-resolution shell.

^b10% of reflections were excluded from refinement and used to calculate R_{free}.

or disorder within the large crystal solvent channels of this crystal form (~80% solvent). Although highly similar in overall architecture (0.69 Å backbone root-mean-square [rms] deviation), the two structures display significant differences in functionally relevant regions (discussed below). Unless noted, we describe structural features based on the P3₂21 form, as this structure was refined to higher resolution (2.4 Å).

EspB_{sm} (residues 3–288, Figure 2A) is composed of long, anti-parallel coiled-coil helices characteristic of a PE/PPE heterodimer (Figure 2B, right). Unlike other ESX-associated proteins, EspB_{sm} is not a heterodimer but rather adopts a PE/PPE-like fold due to an apparent genetic fusion of heterodimeric members into a single open reading frame by a 35-residue linker (Figure 2A). A side-by-side comparison of EspB_{sm} with the crystal structures

of the ESX-secreted substrates EsxAB and PE25/PPE41 reveals the modular nature of ESX-secreted proteins (Figures 2B and 2C). The helix-turn-helix domains of PE25, EsxB, and the N-terminal domain of EspB_{sm} residues 1–92 are roughly superimposable, each with a characteristic YxxxD motif at the turn (this subdomain is labeled “Y subdomain” and colored green in Figures 1 and 2.) EspB_{sm} residues 135–226, EsxA, and PPE41 residues 2–104 are also roughly superimposable, each with a WxG motif at the turn of the second helix-turn-helix subdomain (labeled “W subdomain” and colored orange in Figures 1 and 2). In EspB_{sm}, the Y and W subdomains form an extensive interface of non-covalent interactions, and the linker connecting them adopts an extended conformation that anchors loosely to the helical bundle through van der Waals interactions (Figure 2D).

Compared with PE25/PPE41, EspB_{sm} has a shorter h1 helix, with residues in this position instead adopting an extended conformation (Figure 2B). EspB_{sm} and PE25/PPE41 possess features that are not found in EsxAB. Notably, helix 3, helix 6, and helix 7 of EspB_{sm} (residues 231–269) create a “helical tip” that is rich in solvent-exposed hydrophobic/aromatic/acidic residues (Figure 2D, purple). This helical tip is slightly smaller in EspB_{sm} than in PE25/PPE41. The tip ends in an extended polyproline stretch (residues 270–288) that sandwiches between the Y and W subdomains through hydrophobic interactions provided by prolines and aliphatic side chains (Figure 2D). Sequence comparisons suggest that in EspB_{sm} and many PPE family proteins, this helical tip is connected via the polyproline stretch to the CTD of varying sequence (Figure 2D).

EspB Has a Bipartite Signal Sequence that Targets the EccCb1 ATPase

The EspB_{sm} crystal structure also reveals the unique relative disposition of multiple characteristic ESX sequence motifs, including a structured view of the helical export arm (Figure 3A, middle). In this work, we define the export arm as EspB_{sm} residues 78–93, corresponding to the appendage that is dynamic in the EsxAB NMR structure (Figure 3A, left) and lacking electron density in the PE25/PPE41 structure (Figure 3A, right). The prevalent view is that residues from the export arm align on the same helical face upon binding the EccCb1 ATPase, targeting ESX-secreted substrates for secretion (Callahan et al., 2009; Champion et al., 2006; Daleke et al., 2012a). In keeping with this hypothesis, residues within the export arm of EspB are identical in sequence to those shown to be essential for EsxB_{tb} interaction with EccCb1 (Champion et al., 2006), and either mutation of Y78 in the YxxxD motif (Daleke et al., 2012a) or deletion of the EccCb1 ATPase (McLaughlin et al., 2007) similarly disrupts EspB secretion. In the EspB_{sm} P3₂21 structure, this arm takes the form of a fully stabilized helix where export arm residues Y78, D81, L89, S90, and M93 indeed align on the same helical face to interact with a symmetry-related molecule in the P3₂21 crystal, representing a disposition that we suggest mimics the EccCb ATPase-bound state (Figure 3A, middle and Figure S1A). The α-helical pattern is similar to that seen in recent Esx structures (Arbing et al., 2013; Poulsen et al., 2014), in particular to the *Streptococcus agalactiae* homodimeric EsxA structure determined by Poulsen and colleagues (Figure S1B). Notably, the portion of this arm containing L89/S90/M93 was not resolved in the electron density of the P6₅ structure of EspB_{sm}, which has

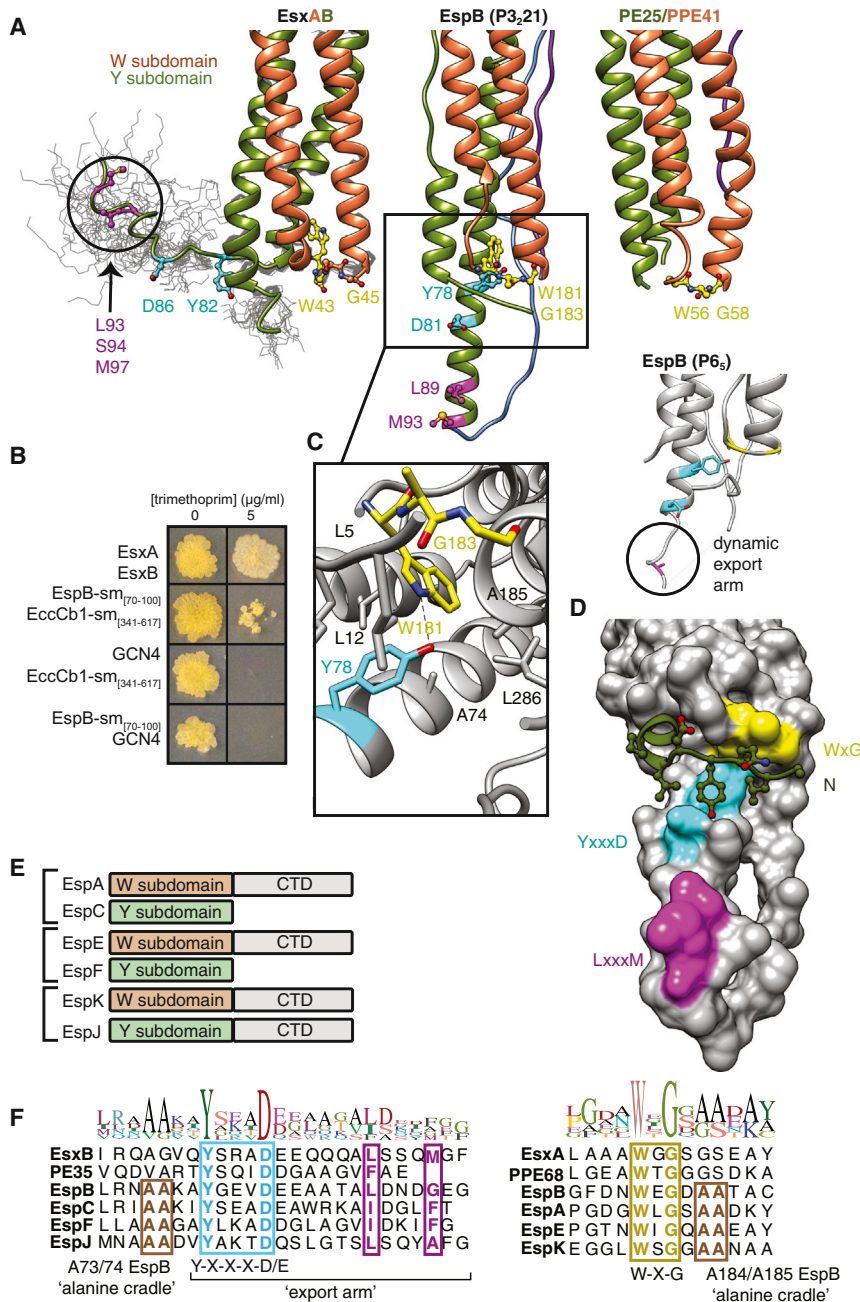


Figure 3. Structure of EspB_{sm} Stabilized Bipartite Composite Secretion Signal

(A) Comparison of secretion signal structures across the major ESX-secreted protein classes. 28 structures of the EsxAB NMR ensemble (1WA8) and PE25/PPE41 (2G38) crystal structures are shown.

(B) *M. smegmatis* murine dihydrofolate reductase protein fragment complementation assay demonstrates in vivo interaction between EspB_{sm}[70–100] “export arm” and the second FtsK-homology domain of EccCb1_{sm}, residues (341–617).

(C) Compared with EsxAB, EspB has a flipped WxG motif that allows the W180 indole nitrogen to form a direct hydrogen bond with the Y78 side chain hydroxyl. The interaction is stabilized by conserved hydrophobic residues that form an “alanine cradle.”

(D) The composite secretion signal creates a continuous hydrophobic surface that interacts with the N-terminal portion of the construct in the P3₂₁ structure.

(E) Presence of secretion signal motifs in other Esp proteins of the ESX-1/EspACD locus.

(F) Multiple sequence alignment of the bipartite composite signal sequence-containing proteins in the *M. tuberculosis* ESX-1/EspACD locus. See also Figure S1.

containing the antibiotic trimethoprim. A strain expressing known interacting proteins, EsxB-F[1,2] and EsxA-F[3], served as a positive control, and growth was observed (Figure 3B). For negative controls, EspB_{sm}-F[1,2] and EccCb1-F[3] were co-expressed with GCN4-F[3] and GCN4-F[1,2], respectively. GCN4 is a protein not associated with ESX-1 and no interaction is expected, and indeed no growth for these strains was observed (Figure 3B). The experimental strain expressing EspB_{sm}-F[1,2] and EccCb1-F[3] did exhibit growth, indicating an interaction, but to a lesser extent than the positive control (Figure 3B). It is established that in the mDHFR assay, growth is proportionate to the strength of the interaction (Singh et al., 2006), suggesting that the export arm associates weakly with the EccC. The structural and in vivo interaction data are thus compelling evidence that EspB and EsxB are secreted through ESX-1 by a similar export mechanism involving recognition of a conserved stabilized helix by the EccCb1 ATPase.

no such stabilizing crystal contacts, indicating that in the unbound conformation, a portion of the EspB_{sm} export arm adopts a dynamic state similar to that of EsxB (Figure 3A, lower right, Figure S1C).

To determine if the export arm of EspB_{sm} interacts with EccCb1_{sm} in vivo, we carried out a murine dihydrofolate reductase (mDHFR) protein fragment complementation assay (Singh et al., 2006). EspB_{sm} residues 70–100, which encompass the export arm, were fused to the mDHFR-F[1,2] fragment. The second FtsK-like ATPase domain of EccCb1, residues 341–617, was fused to the mDHFR-F[3] fragment. If the fused proteins interact, the F[1,2] and F[3] halves of mDHFR associate and enzyme activity is reconstituted, allowing *M. smegmatis* to survive on media

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Recent secretion/mutagenesis experiments with the *Bacillus subtilis* homodimeric ESX substrate Yuke suggest that the WxG motif works in conjunction with the YxxxD motif adjacent to the stabilized export arm (Sysoeva et al., 2014). The WxG motif has also been shown to be indispensable for EspA secretion (Chen et al., 2013a), and this is presumably also the case for EspB. Remarkably, in the EspB_{sm} crystal structure, Y78 from the YxxxD motif and W181 from the WxG motif are seen interacting directly

(Figure 3C). A survey of Esx protein structures deposited in the PDB indicates that this is the first observation in which both elements of the Esx bipartite signal sequence are in direct contact (Figure S1D). In our EspB_{sm} structure, the WxG motif is uniquely flipped towards the YxxxD motif within the export arm such that the Y78 side chain hydroxyl forms a direct hydrogen bond with the W180-N_ε side chain indole nitrogen. Furthermore, the flip of the WxG is dependent on G182 within the motif, adopting dihedral angles that can only be assumed by glycine (Figure 3C). The interaction between Y78 and W180 is specifically stabilized by surrounding hydrophobic residues, primarily through a conserved “alanine cradle” formed by side chains of L12, A73, and A74 which interact with the Y78 aromatic ring, and L12, A184, A185, and L286 which interact with the indole ring atoms of W181 (Figure 3C). These surrounding hydrophobic residues appear to stabilize a configuration in which the Y78 and W181 side chains form a perpendicular, aromatic surface that is observed in both crystal forms, independent of crystal contact influence (Figure 3D). When structures from the two EspB_{sm} crystal forms are compared, this aromatic surface is variably bound to hydrophobic side chains of Y6 in P3₂21 structure or L294 in the P6₅ structure, suggesting that this surface may have indiscriminately bound the adjacent free N- and C-terminal regions of the constructs that were crystallized (Figure 3D; Figure S1E). In a physiological context, it is possible that rather than binding these termini, the stabilized export arm and WxG loop may operate as a unified protein-protein interaction surface that is poised to interact with the EccCB ATPase (Sysoeva et al., 2014).

We next investigated whether this composite secretion signal is a general feature of other Esp proteins in the ESX-1/EspACD loci. Using the structural homology server PHYRE2 (Kelley and Sternberg, 2009) we established that EspC, EspF, and EspJ each have predicted Y subdomains, and EspA, EspE, and EspK each have predicted W subdomains fused to CTDs (Figure 3E). Furthermore, the residues forming the alanine cradle that stabilize the interaction between the WxG and YxxxD motifs in the EspB_{sm} structure are conserved across these Esp proteins (Figure 3F). As EspA and EspC, EspE and EspF, and EspJ and EspK are tandemly arrayed in a similar manner as known ESX heterodimers (Figure 1B), it is tempting to speculate that these pairs also associate with similarly positioned export features as EspB, and that these other Esp proteins likely belong to the WXG100 superfamily.

Quaternary Structure of EspB

While our structural studies of the N-terminal domain of *M. smegmatis* EspB_{sm} provide insight into the molecular basis of ATPase-mediated export, subsequent analysis of our full-length *Mtb* EspB (EspB_{tb-[1-460]}) revealed that EspB has the capability of forming higher order oligomeric states. Immediate clues of EspB oligomerization arose during purification, with protein eluting on a gel filtration column at multiple retention times, suggesting that this protein can self-associate in a concentration-dependent manner. To more accurately determine the subunit stoichiometry of the higher molecular species, we carried out size-exclusion chromatography coupled to multi-angle light scattering (SEC-MALS) analysis. The SEC-MALS experiment detected a monodisperse peak of molecular weight 52 kDa (corresponding to mass of a single EspB_{tb-[1-460]} monomer) as well

as a polydisperse high molecular weight peak with a molecular mass of 351 kDa at its center, equivalent to seven EspB copies (Figure 4A; Figure S2). In agreement with the SEC-MALS data, our analytical ultracentrifugation sedimentation velocity experiments identified a low molecular weight 2.1S species (44 ± 5 kDa) and a high molecular weight species with a sedimentation coefficient of 10.5S (317 ± 41 kDa) (Figure 4B).

To characterize the structural properties of the EspB_{tb-[1-460]} oligomer, we next subjected the peak fraction from our gel filtration run to negative stain EM analysis. Raw images show ring-shaped structures that were evenly distributed across the grid (Figure 4C). Indeed, more than 90% of the two-dimensional (2D) class averages obtained from reference-free classification of 2,733 particles show an overall circular ring shape, with several displaying unfused or incomplete rings (Figure 4D; Figure S3A). To determine which part of EspB was responsible for ring formation, we generated a truncated construct EspB_{tb-[1-348]} that approximates the previously determined position of the mycosin protease (MycP1) cleavage site (Figure 2A) and thus mimics the physiologically processed form (Solomonson et al., 2013). This truncation mutant, which encompasses the N-terminal PE/PPE homology domain and a portion of the low-complexity region of the CTD, still produced ring-shaped structures, indicating that it is the PE/PPE homology region of EspB forming the ring (Figure 4D; Figure S3B). However, the truncated EspB_{tb-[1-348]} shows a more diverse set of orientations compared with full-length EspB_{tb-[1-460]}, with 20% of the class averages depicting a tubular shape that appears to represent a side view, as its width is consistent with that estimated from the top-view averages (Figure 4D). Even with no imposed symmetry, projection averaging of the “ring” views clearly showed seven distinct “nodes” (Figure 4D, red arrows), which is fully consistent with our SEC-MALS and analytical ultracentrifugation data. Notably, a distinct appendage was seen protruding from the core of the ring in some of the top-view EspB_{tb-[1-460]} averages (Figure 4D, blue arrow). This structure was absent in the EspB_{tb-[1-348]} averages, suggesting that this region corresponds to EspB residues 350–460. However, the EspB_{tb-[1-348]} averages did reveal some unidentified density located at one end of the putative side view, which may correspond to the residual 50 CTD amino acids (Figure 4D, green arrows).

We next determined the 3D reconstruction of the EspB_{tb-[1-348]} multimer using an approach that involves generating an initial model by rotating a side view class average 360° about the z axis and iteratively refining this initial model against un-tilted data containing top and side views. The final map, with 7-fold symmetry imposed, has a resolution of 30 Å as measured by the Fourier shell correlation (FSC) function using the 0.5 FSC criterion (EM Data Bank accession code EMD-6120) (Figure 5A). This EM structure shows that seven copies of the EspB_{tb-[1-348]} PE/PPE homology domain associate to form an overall cylindrical shape of 100 Å by 80 Å with a central pore of 50 Å in diameter.

Modeling the EspB Oligomer

To determine the molecular details of how the monomeric EspB structure assembles into a heptameric complex, we examined the P3₂21 and P6₅ EspB_{sm} crystal lattices for potential interaction interfaces. The P3₂21 crystal exhibits a remarkable

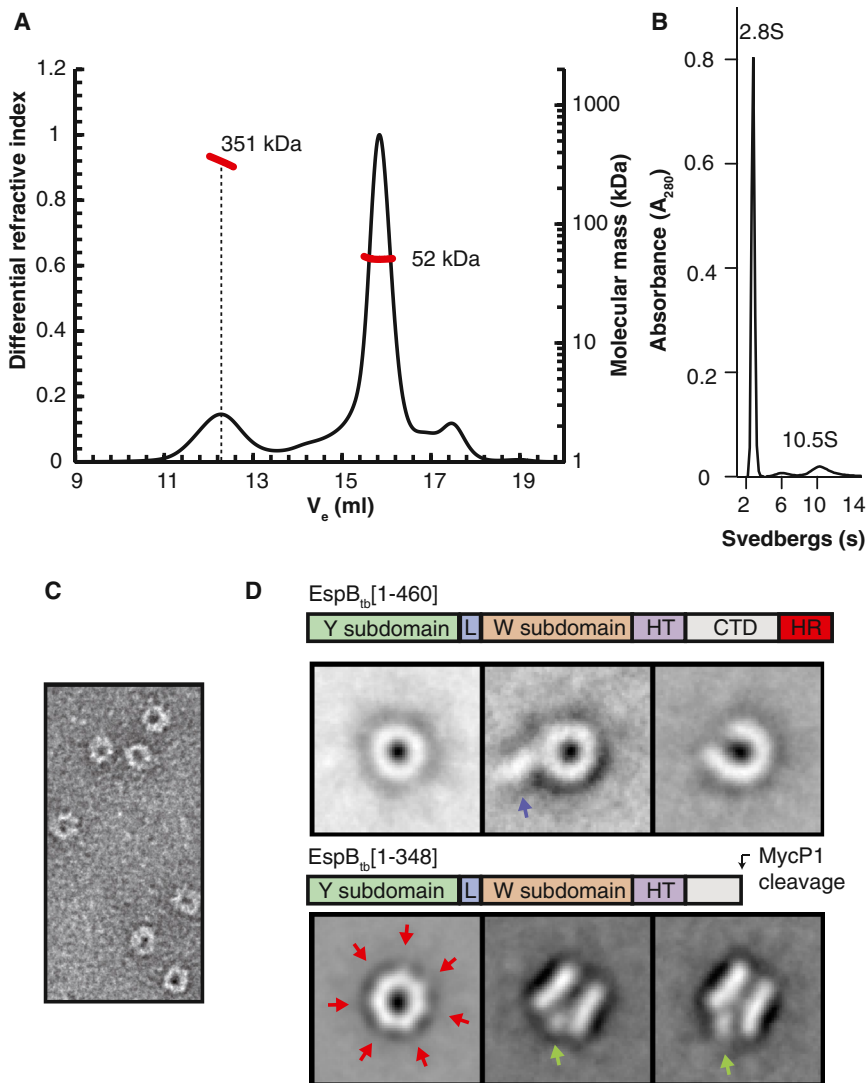


Figure 4. Quaternary Structure of Purified EspB_{tb}

(A) SEC-MALS analysis of EspB_{tb-[1-460]}} shows presence of higher order species. (B) Analytical ultracentrifugation analysis of EspB. (C) Representative negative stain EM micrograph of full-length EspB_{tb}. (D) 2D class averages of EspB_{tb-[1-460]}} and truncated EspB_{tb-[1-348]}}. Red arrows draw attention to distinct nodes in the unsymmetrized averages that provide evidence for heptameric stoichiometry. Blue arrow indicates appendage protruding from the core of the ring found only in EspB_{tb-[1-460]}} averages. Green arrows indicate unexplained density in the side view. See also [Figures S2](#) and [S3](#).

The fourth-lowest energy cluster was selected as the final model, as it satisfies constraints from our CXMS data (density-fitted model PDB code: 3J83, [Figure 5C](#)). The calculated model-map correlation was 0.9, indicating good agreement between the heptameric EspB_{tb} model and the EM reconstruction ([Figure 5A](#)). Regions of EspB lying outside the EM density correspond to the dynamic export arm, which, according to the P6₅ EspB crystal structure, are unlikely to be well ordered in the EM reconstruction. The model places the C-terminal region of the helical domain of EspB_{tb} in close proximity to the unexplained density located at one end of the multimer, which is consistent with this density corresponding to the residual 50 residues of the CTD. While further experiments will be necessary to refine the exact orientation and molecular interactions involved, this model provides a framework for

hexagonal lattice in which EspB monomers interlock in a herringbone pattern formed by tight side-by-side stacking at the hexagonal edges and tip-to-tail contacts between export arm residues and the helical tip. However, the potential oligomeric structures generated by these symmetries do not match the dimensions estimated from the EspB_{tb} EM structure. We next carried out chemical crosslinking coupled to mass spectrometry (CXMS) using the isotopically coded cleavable affinity-purifiable crosslinker cyanur-biotin-dimercapto-propionyl-succinimide (CBDPS). In multiple independent experiments, we identified CBDPS crosslinks between K259-K259' and K259-K267' peptides ([Table 2](#)), indicating that these residues are located within 25 Å from one another. Our CXMS data definitively show that intermolecular interactions based on crystal contacts are different from the ones mediating EspB oligomerization. As such, we decided to carry out *in silico* Rosetta-based symmetric modeling with an EspB_{tb-[11-286]}} homology model using an approach we have previously developed ([DiMaio et al., 2011](#); [Bergeron et al., 2013](#)). Simulations with a stoichiometric constraint of seven resulted in model convergence to several low-energy clusters ([Figure 5B](#)).

delineating how EspB_{tb} oligomerizes in the context of the ESX secretion apparatus.

DISCUSSION

The EspB crystal structure provides new insight into the common structural characteristics shared by ESX substrates, and the elevated complexity of ESX-secreted proteins found in mycomembrane-encapsulated bacteria. Ancestral ESX-secreted proteins in Gram-positive bacteria likely originated as symmetric homodimers with WxG and YxxxD motifs located at both ends, and this is still observed in homodimeric substrates such as *B. subtilis* YukE ([Sysoeva et al., 2014](#)) ([Figure 6A](#)). However, organisms such as *Mtb* encode more complicated heterodimeric ESX substrates, with each "monomer" possessing either a WxG motif or a YxxxD motif, but not necessarily both. This arrangement places the composite signal sequence at just one end of the helical bundle ([Figure 6B](#)). In the case of EspB, a linker has merged the heterodimer into a single open reading frame. Furthermore, in EspB and other PPE proteins of mycobacteria,

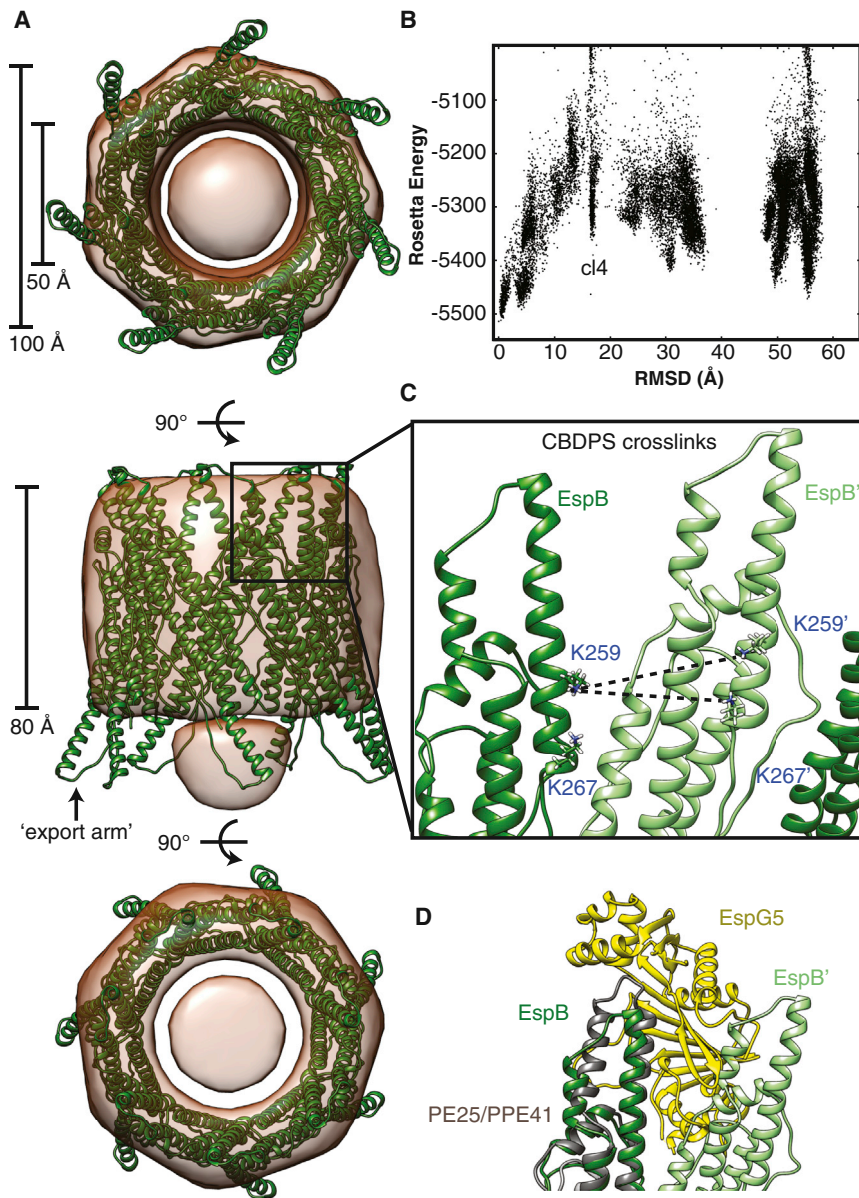


Figure 5. Heptameric EspB_{tb} Model Fit to Negative Stain 3D Reconstruction Density with Location of Mass Spectrometry-Derived Crosslinks Mapped to Adjacent Subunits

(A) EspB negative stain 3D reconstruction with heptameric EspB_{tb} model fit to the EM density, approximate dimensions indicated. (B) Top Rosetta energies for EspB_{tb} heptameric model. (C) Locations of CBDPS-crosslinked lysine residues mapped to the proposed model. (D) Overlay of the PE25/PPE41/EspG5 ternary chaperone complex (4KXR) on the heptameric EspB model.

the composite signal. Our analysis also shows that the ESX-1-associated EspA, EspE, and EspK have WxG motifs and EspC, EspF, and EspJ have YxxxD motifs, and all have residues of the “alanine cradle” that potentially support their direct interaction. We predict EspAC, EspEF, and EspJK to be heterodimeric complexes that associate to ensure the presence of both secretion motifs in the complex with a similar structural configuration observed in EspB, perhaps allowing some or all of these unique ESX-1 substrates to be secreted through the same pathway as the well-studied EsxAB heterodimer. Thus, we suggest that these proteins be included in the WXG100 family, resulting in a total of five heterodimeric WXG100 pairs in addition to one fused homomer (EspB) in the ESX-1 locus, which in pairwise combination possess the complete composite secretion signal (Figures 1B and 3F).

Of particular interest are the mycobacteria-specific features of ESX-secreted proteins, such as the helical tip we observe in EspB and PPE proteins (Fig-

ure 6B). The helical tip is relatively hydrophobic, raising the possibility of its involvement in traversing the mycomembrane or perhaps in facilitating interaction with an unidentified component that aids this process. This appendage may also have a role in oligomerization, particularly in light of recent studies showing that EspG chaperones bind directly to the helical tip of PPE41 from the PE25/PPE41 complex, preventing self-aggregation (Daleke et al., 2012b; Ekiert and Cox, 2014; Korotkova et al., 2014). When the PE25/PPE41/EspG5 ternary complex (4KXR) is aligned to EspB in the context of our heptameric model, the EspG5 chaperone is situated at an interface identical to that of the crosslinked lysines identified by our CXMS experiments (Figure 5D). This raises the possibility that EspB may also have a yet to be identified chaperone that prevents premature self-association in the *Mtb* cytoplasm.

the canonical motifs on one end of the helical bundle have been phased out and replaced by a “helical tip” (Figure 6B). The EspB structure reveals an unexpected hydrogen-bonded interaction between the defining tyrosine and tryptophan side chains in the YxxxD and WxG motifs positioned in our structure on the same helical face as conserved acidic and hydrophobic residues of the stabilized export arm. We note the similarity of the stabilized export arm to the signal peptides of the secretory pathway, which also adopt a helical conformation when bound to lipids or translocon components (Briggs et al., 1986; Chou and Gierasch, 2005). We suspect the unique conformation of the WxG and YxxxD motifs observed in our crystal structure represents a functional disposition that is adopted by all ESX substrates at some critical point during their translocation. The conserved alanine cradle serves to stabilize this direct interaction, perhaps favoring a secretion-competent conformation of

the composite signal. Our analysis also shows that the ESX-1-associated EspA, EspE, and EspK have WxG motifs and EspC, EspF, and EspJ have YxxxD motifs, and all have residues of the “alanine cradle” that potentially support their direct interaction. We predict EspAC, EspEF, and EspJK to be heterodimeric complexes that associate to ensure the presence of both secretion motifs in the complex with a similar structural configuration observed in EspB, perhaps allowing some or all of these unique ESX-1 substrates to be secreted through the same pathway as the well-studied EsxAB heterodimer. Thus, we suggest that these proteins be included in the WXG100 family, resulting in a total of five heterodimeric WXG100 pairs in addition to one fused homomer (EspB) in the ESX-1 locus, which in pairwise combination possess the complete composite secretion signal (Figures 1B and 3F).

Of particular interest are the mycobacteria-specific features of ESX-secreted proteins, such as the helical tip we observe in EspB and PPE proteins (Fig-

Table 2. Identified Inter-Protein CBDPS Crosslinks of EspB_{tb-[1-348]} and EspB_{tb-[1-460]}

Deconvoluted mass (MH+) (L)	Δ , ppm	Residue numbers		Peptide sequence (1)	Crosslinked residue (1)	Residue numbers		Peptide sequence (2)	Crosslinked residue (2)	Peptide sequence (2)	Fragment ion score	Intensity score	CID-cleavage products	Modification	Digestion	¹⁴ N/ ¹⁵ N inter/intra
		(1)	(2)			(1)	(2)									
EspB_{tb-[1-348]}																
3157.43919	-0.1	2	257-267	259	(R)SEKVLTEYNK(A)	257-267	259	(R)SEKVLTEYNK(A)	85	42	4	CBDPS	Tr	Inter		
1242.55321	0.7	2	259-261	259	(E)KVL(T)	265-267	267	(Y)NKK(A)	188	9	4	CBDPS	PK	Inter		
1543.74107	1.2	2	257-262	259	(R)SEKVLTE(E)	259-261	259	(E)KVL(T)	107	16	4	CBDPS	PK	Inter		
1644.79063	0	2	257-262	259	(R)SEKVLTE(E)	259-262	259	(E)KVLTE(E)	150	18	4	CBDPS	PK	Inter		
EspB_{tb-[1-460]}																
3173.43207	0.3	4	257-267	259	(R)SEKVLTEYNK(A)	257-267	259	(R)SEKVLTEYNK(A)	185	50	4	CBDPS+	Tr	Inter		

L, light isotopic form of the crosslink. Δ , mass difference between theoretical and observed crosslink masses. Peptide sequences are shown with preceding and following residues in the protein sequence in parentheses. Fragment ion, intensity scores, and CID-cleavage products number reflect crosslink MS/MS spectrum match quality. PK, Proteinase K; Tr, trypsin. Reconfirmation of crosslinks as intra- or inter-protein origin with ¹⁴N/¹⁵N crosslinking experiments is indicated.

In the context of the ESX system as a whole, the finding that EspB_{tb} can oligomerize is particularly exciting, as it indicates that the helical domains of ESX-secreted proteins may serve a structural role in addition to, or as part of, their role in facilitating export. Our proposed model places the helical tips of EspB on one side of the multimer, opposite the composite secretion signals and CTD (Figure 6C). This creates an arrangement of seven closely spaced hydrophobic helical tips, which in combination with the pore generated by the multimer, appears to lend itself to contribute to the membrane-puncturing activity required for export across the mycolic acid layer and/or carrying out ESX-1-mediated phenotypes such as phagosome permeabilization within *Mtb*-infected macrophages (de Jonge et al., 2007; Hsu et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2008) or conjugal transfer of DNA in *M. smegmatis*. Does EspB promote these activities in isolation or in concert with other components of ESX-1, such as the remaining five WXG100 pairs encoded by the locus and/or the inner membrane apparatus? It is currently thought that the inner membrane-spanning portion of the ESX apparatus forms a large molecular weight complex of probable symmetric composition (Houben et al., 2012), and EspB could contribute to the extracellular portion of this, perhaps anchoring to a tip of a membrane-spanning filament. That secreted proteins of ESX-1 are extracellular components of the secretion apparatus is supported by the co-localization of apparatus and secreted components to discrete poles of the bacteria (Carlsson et al., 2009; Wirth et al., 2011), and is further supported by the finding that many Esx/Esp proteins are co-dependent for secretion (Champion et al., 2009; Fortune et al., 2005). Moreover, expression of EspB with its endogenous promoter has been shown to be important in recovering the wild-type ESX phenotype, suggesting that stoichiometric expression levels of EspB is key (Xu et al., 2007). It should perhaps not be ruled out that in vivo, EspB may form structures of a higher order than cyclic heptamer to extend its span to the extracellular space, for example through helical assembly. The extent to which ESX-secreted proteins structures resemble the filamentous protein building blocks from other secretion systems has been noted (Pallen, 2002).

Finally, our 2D averages of top-view EspB_{tb-[1-460]} show a region of density that we propose corresponds to the EspB_{tb} CTD cargo domain. Previous reports suggest that this CTD is unstructured (Wagner et al., 2013), but our EspB_{tb-[1-460]} data indicate it may become structured in the context of the multimer. This structured CTD is presumably driven by self-association of the conserved homology region of the CTD (Figure 6C), which was absent in the truncated EspB_{tb-[1-348]} construct. Indeed, the top-view averages obtained using the EspB_{tb-[1-348]} construct exhibited no such density extending from the ring. This suggests that MycP1-mediated proteolytic cleavage is an essential maturation event (Ohol et al., 2010) that has the potential to visibly alter the length of the CTD in context of the EspB_{tb} multimer. However, the EspB_{tb-[1-348]} EM averages do exhibit a region of density located at the mouth of the pore in the side view averages. This observation is intriguing, particularly in light of secretion experiments showing that MycP1 negatively regulates ESX-1 secretion by cleaving EspB. If EspB indeed contributes to the secretion system channel through which other ESX substrates are also secreted, the density we observe adjacent to the pore of processed EspB may function as a “plug” that carries out

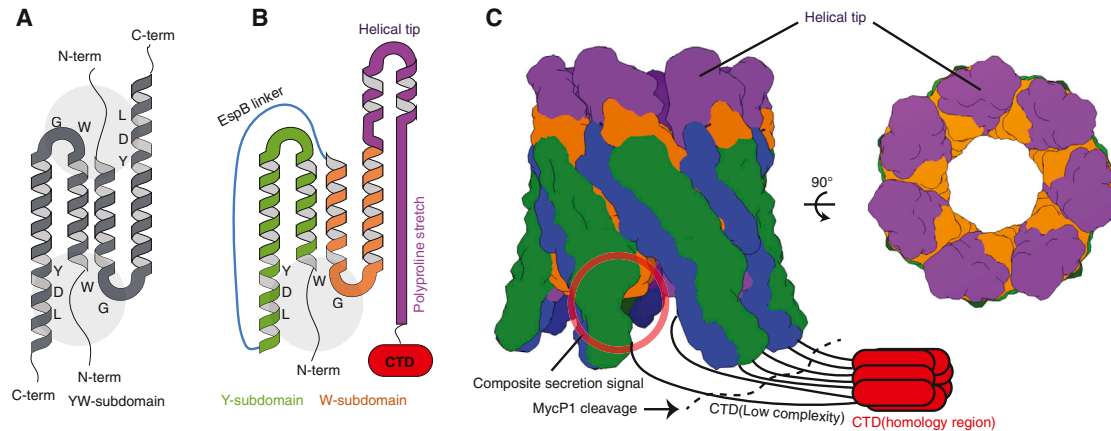


Figure 6. Schematic Summary of ESX-Secreted Protein Specialization in Mycobacteria

(A) Ancestral ESX substrates were homodimeric and displayed essential export motifs on both sides of the helical bundle with N/C termini on separate sides. (B) Mycobacterial ESX proteins such as EspB, which are located in the cell walls of these organisms, have become increasingly asymmetric, losing one of the bipartite signal elements and gaining a helical appendage. (C) Proposed model of EspB quaternary structure, placing the helical tip and secretion signals on opposite sides.

this negative regulation. Alternatively, perhaps this density corresponds to a domain that mediates interaction with other secretion system components, allowing assembly to be regulated by MycP1 processing.

We have shown that EspB possesses a structurally conserved WXG100 bipartite secretion signal that accounts for its localization to the *Mtb* cell wall. Once exported to the cell wall, EspB appears to be equipped to operate as a structural building block, which we propose to underlie its involvement in ESX-1-mediated macrophage killing that is essential for *Mtb* disease progression. Further characterization of key *Mtb* secreted proteins such as EspB will likely accelerate tuberculosis vaccine development, a field where major advancements have previously depended on genetic manipulation of the ESX loci and their associated secreted antigens.

EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES

Purification, Crystallization, and Structure Determination of EspB

EspB coding sequences from *M. smegmatis* (MSMEG_0076) and *Mtb* (Rv3881c) were cloned into pET28a(+), in-frame with an N-terminal cleavable histidine affinity tag with the sequence MGSSHHHHHHHHSSGLVPRGSH. Plasmids were transformed into *Escherichia coli* BL21 codon-plus (DE3)-RIPL-competent cells (Stratagene). Induction was initiated with 1 mM isopropyl 1-thio- β -D-galactopyranoside at $A_{600} = 0.6$ followed by growth for 20 hr at 20°C. Cells expressing Se-Met derivative EspB_{sm-[1-292]}} were grown as previously described (Larsson, 2009). Prior to purification, cells were resuspended in 50 mM HEPES (pH 7.5), 500 mM NaCl, 10 mM imidazole, and protease inhibitor tablets (Roche cOmplete), and lysed with a C5 homogenizer (Avisten). Lysate was spun at 45,000 rpm for 1 hr, and the supernatant was passed over HisPur Ni-NTA resin (Thermo, 88222) and washed with buffer containing 25 mM imidazole, and finally eluted in buffer containing 250 mM imidazole. Eluate was concentrated and further purified on a Superose 6 10/300 GL column equilibrated with 20 mM HEPES (pH 7.5) and 150 mM imidazole. EspB_{tb} protein corresponding to the oligomeric peak was concentrated and flash frozen at -80°C prior to EM, light scattering, and analytical ultracentrifugation analyses. The EspB_{sm} variants were digested overnight with thrombin and purified on a Superdex 200 column prior to crystallization.

Diffracting Se-Met derivative P3₂₁ crystals grew using the EspB_{sm-[1-292]}} construct at 80 mg/ml in 100 mM HEPES (pH 6.8), 540 mM MgCl₂, and 15%

PEG 6000, and reached maximum size in 5 days. Crystals of the P6₅ space group were obtained using the EspB_{sm} full-length construct at 20 mg/ml in 0.1 M Bis-tris propane (pH 6.5), 200 mM MgCl₂, and PEG 3350, reaching a maximum size after 1 month. The P3₂₁ crystals were flash frozen directly, while the P6₅ crystals were cryoprotected in 20% glycerol prior to flash freezing. The data collected at the Canadian Light Source Canadian Macromolecular Crystallography Facility (CMCF) were integrated, scaled, and merged with Mosflm/Pointless (Bailey, 1994) and the structure was solved, built, and refined with the Phenix package (Adams et al., 2010) and Coot (Emsley and Cowtan, 2004). PHENIX Autosol located 13 selenium atoms in the substructure solution (figure of merit = 0.42 using data from 3.2 to 61.8 Å). The P3₂₁ structure served as a molecular replacement search model for solving the P6₅ native data set using PHASER (McCoy et al., 2007). The structures were analyzed and figures generated using UCSF Chimera (Pettersen et al., 2004).

M. smegmatis Protein Complementation Assay

The coding sequence for EspB_{sm} residues 70–100 was cloned into pUAB100, in-frame with the C-terminal murine dihydrofolate reductase F[1,2] fragment and the coding sequence for EccCb1_{sm} residues 341–617 was cloned into pUAB200, in-frame with a C-terminal murine dihydrofolate reductase F[3] fragment, and the assay was carried out as described (Singh et al., 2006). Plasmids were co-transformed into *M. smegmatis* mc¹⁵⁵ by electroporation and plated on 7H10 media containing 25 μ g/ml kanamycin and 50 μ g/ml hygromycin. Overnight cultures grown from glycerol stocks were adjusted to OD = 1.0, and 4 μ l of cells were spotted on 7H11 plates containing 25 μ g/ml kanamycin and 50 μ g/ml hygromycin, in the absence or presence of 5 μ g/ml trimethoprim.

Multi-Angle Light Scattering

EspB_{tb-[1-460]}} samples (10 mg/ml, volumes of 100 μ l) were loaded onto a Superose 6 10/300 GL column (GE Healthcare) equilibrated with 20 mM HEPES (pH 7.5) and 150 mM NaCl at 25°C with a flow rate of 0.5 ml/min followed by light scattering/refractive index measurements made with a mini-DAWN TREOS detector coupled to a Optilab T-REX differential refractometer following chromatographic separation. The ASTRA software package (Wyatt Technologies) was used to analyze the data and determine molar mass/polydispersity.

Analytical Ultracentrifugation

Analytical ultracentrifugation experiments were carried out at 20°C using a Beckman XL-I analytical ultracentrifuge, an An-60 Ti rotor, and absorbance optics. EspB_{tb-[1-460]}} samples were loaded at 1.0 mg/ml and spun at 47,000 rpm in two-channel carbon-filled Epon centerpieces. The data were analyzed with Sedfit (Schuck, 2000).

Negative Stain EM

EspB_{1b} was diluted to 0.01 mg/ml and prepared for EM as described previously (Ohi et al., 2004), and visualized using a Tecnai Spirit transmission electron microscope (FEI) operated at with an accelerating voltage of 120 kV. Images were taken at a nominal magnification of 49,000 \times using an FEI Eagle 4K \times 4K charge-coupled device (CCD) camera at a defocus value of $-1.2 \mu\text{m}$. For image processing, 2×2 image pixels were averaged for a 4.7 \AA pixel size. For 2D analysis, individual particle images were selected using Boxer (Ludtke et al., 1999). The particles were next subjected to reference-free alignment and sorted into classes by K-means classification using algorithms in the SPIDER image processing suite (Frank et al., 1996). Particle images in each class were averaged to generate EspB 2D class averages.

To produce the EspB 3D reconstruction, a representative 2D class average corresponding to a side view of the EspB heptamer was rotationally extruded about the symmetry axis to form an initial 3D model using John Rubinstein's program "build_fspace_v2_00" (<https://sites.google.com/site/rubinsteingroup/3-d-fourier-space>). Single particle images belonging to class averages corresponding to both top and side views of the EspB complex (1,455 particles) were used to refine the initial model using EMAN2. The final resolution was determined using the FSC function using the 0.5 FSC criterion.

Oligomeric Modeling

Starting with EspB_{1b} homology based on the EspB_{3sm} structure (Song et al., 2013), we ran the Rosetta symmetric docking protocol (Soding, 2005) guided by density data to build a C7 symmetric system. In total, 25,000 docked models were generated. The 500 of lowest energy were selected and clustered, yielding four distinct clusters. The centroids of each cluster were then compared with crosslinking data. A full description of the modeling procedure is included in the [Supplemental Materials and Methods](#).

Crosslinking and Mass Spectrometry

Equimolar ratio of ^{14}N - and ^{15}N -metabolically labeled EspB were mixed to determine intra- or inter-protein origin of the identified crosslinks for both EspB_{1b-[1-348]}} and EspB_{1b-[1-460]}}. Samples were crosslinked with 1 mM CBDPS-H8/D8, digested with trypsin or Proteinase K, and subjected to mass spectrometric analysis (Petrochenko et al., 2014a). Data were analyzed using 14N15N DXMSMS Match program (Petrochenko et al., 2014b). A full description of the crosslinking procedure is included in the [Supplemental Materials and Methods](#).

ACCESSION NUMBERS

The PDB accession numbers for the X-ray protein structures reported in this paper are 4WJ1 and 4WJ2. The PDB accession number for the EM density-fit model reported in this paper is 3J83. The EM databank accession number for the electron microscopy density map reported in this paper is EMD-6120.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

Supplemental Information includes three figures, Supplemental Materials and Methods, and 3D molecular models and can be found with this article online at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.str.2015.01.002>.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

M.S. and N.C.J.S. designed the research. M.S. carried out cloning, protein preparation, crystallization, and X-ray crystallographic structure determination. D.S. and C.K.Y. acquired/processed EM data with some input from M.S. E.L. and M.S. carried out SEC-MALS experiments. M.S. and J.R.B. conducted the preliminary EM experiments. M.V. provided technical assistance with some cloning. D.G.C. and M.S. carried out the analytical ultracentrifugation experiments. F.D. carried out Rosetta modeling. K.A.T.M., E.V.P., and C.H.B. performed mass spectrometry/crosslinking experiments and analyzed data. M.S. and N.C.J.S. analyzed all data and wrote the paper.

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