



# **Connecting the dots of the bacterial cell cycle: a potential role for Spo0J in Z ring positioning**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February 2018



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# Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I, Isabella Veronica Hajduk, certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

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This research is supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

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Isabella Hajduk, February 2018

# Acknowledgements

What a journey this has been. I have so many people to thank that have come along on this ride with me. First and foremost, my supervisor, mentor and inspiring friend and woman, Liz Harry. Thank you for all your guidance, love and support over all these years on all fronts: scientific, mental and emotional. Thank you for picking me up on the bad days and showering me with praise on the good ones. Thank you for also introducing me to the cutest kitties in the world!

Thank you to my co-supervisor and original lab mentor back in the day, Chris Rodrigues. You are an absolute force to be reckoned with. Thank you for keeping me on my toes scientifically, and for igniting in me the fire for science both in the past and the present. Also thank you to both Liz and Chris for all your feedback and drafting of this thesis.

Thank you to all the Harry lab family: immediate and extensive, past and present. Thank you for accepting my high expectations for morning tea, but my goodness, we've had some good food over the last few years! Thank you for the laughs, love and support, both in and out of the lab. Also special thank you to Kevin, my first honours student, and the best student anyone could ask for – thanks mate!

Thank you to my PhD crew. Thank you for all the caffeine over the years, but mostly thank you for listening to me vent and sharing in my PhD woes. A special thanks to Kate, Jacqueline and Krish, my immediate PhD family, for all the laughs and food (especially from Krish)! Thank you to Cyn, Jen and Sue for cheering me on and providing priceless advice over the last few years. To my non-PhD friends, I'm sorry for being so MIA over the years, but thank you for still sticking by me and I promise my ghosting days are coming to an end!

A huge thanks to my family including mum, Rob, dad, and Ciocia for always trying to understand what I do, but also for your patience and support. I especially thank my mum for being the bestest buddy and mum anyone could ask for. You have been an absolute champion with your love and support over all these years.

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To my darling partner Michael, I could not ask for a better person to have by my side through this adventure. I can't put into words what you mean to me, and I will be forever grateful for our time together. I can't wait to explore the post-PhD life with you <3 >|0

Finally, I would also like to thank the Australian Commonwealth Government Department of Industry for the Australian Postgraduate Award Scholarship I received throughout my PhD candidature.

# Abstract

Cell division is of utmost importance for the propagation of all living organisms. In bacteria, the earliest stage of cell division is the formation of the cytokinetic Z ring at the division site at the cell centre (midcell), which must be tightly co-ordinated with chromosome replication and segregation to ensure that each newborn cell receives a full complement of the genetic material. What still eludes us is how bacterial cells position their division site so precisely at the cell centre to enable the production of two genetically identical daughter cells.

The current understanding of how bacterial cells position their division site is that it occurs via the combination of two negative regulators, the Min system and nucleoid occlusion mediated by the protein Noc. These two systems act by preventing the Z ring from forming at incorrect positions, either at the cell poles or within the vicinity of the chromosome, respectively. The overall result is that the two systems prevent the Z ring from forming anywhere other than the cell centre. However, as discovered recently, they do not define the division site, suggesting the existence of other regulatory mechanisms for midcell Z ring assembly. So what does define the division site? It has been shown in *Bacillus subtilis* that Z ring assembly may be coupled with the early stages of DNA replication and recent work in this area has led to the proposed Ready-Set-Go model.

The Ready-Set-Go model proposes a putative link between Z ring positioning and DNA replication such that the progress through the initiation phase of DNA replication promotes an increase in ability of the Z ring to assemble midcell. Specifically, mutants blocked at an early stage of initiation lead to fewer midcell Z rings than those blocked at later stages of initiation. Importantly, this correlation between DNA replication initiation progression and Z ring position is only observed in *noc* mutants. Interestingly the observations that led to this model also hinted at an alternative possibility: mechanisms linked to chromosome organisation may also impact Z ring positioning. Thus the primary objective of the work presented in this

thesis was to obtain a better understanding of the link between the early stages of DNA replication and cell division in the model organism *B. subtilis*, and how chromosome organisation plays into this link. To explore this possibility further, and ultimately test the validity of the Ready-Set-Go model, this thesis examined the role of Soj and Spo0J, two players with distinct roles in the regulation of DNA replication initiation and chromosome organisation, in Z ring positioning using the same conditions that led to the Ready-Set-Go model. Surprisingly, a *spo0J noc* double mutant, but not a *soj noc* double mutant, allows for wild-type levels of midcell Z ring assembly, regardless of the block imposed at the initiation stage of DNA replication. This suggests that the ability to assemble a Z ring at midcell is not linked to the progression of the initiation stage of DNA replication, thus challenging the idea of a link between DNA replication initiation and Z ring position. Importantly, this result and others, also suggest a role for Spo0J in the regulation of Z ring position.

To start to elucidate how Spo0J plays into the regulation of Z ring position, Z ring positioning was examined in cells blocked at an early event of DNA replication initiation that also harbor point mutants of Spo0J impacting its function in DNA replication initiation through *soj* or points mutants that impact its function in the recruitment of SMC (required to organise the chromosome). Interestingly, this data and others support two models for how Spo0J may function in Z ring positioning: Spo0J, like Noc, is a nucleoid occlusion protein or Spo0J-mediated chromosome organisation blocks midcell Z ring assembly by a generating a nucleoid morphology that inhibits midcell Z ring assembly. Both models are discussed and contrasted in detail in light of recent advances in the understanding of bacterial chromosome organisation.

Collectively, this thesis challenges the long-standing idea of a link between DNA replication initiation and Z ring positioning and creates a solid foundation for future studies examining how chromosome organisation impacts Z ring positioning.

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# Publications

## Journal articles

Monahan LG, [Haiduk IV](#), Blaber SP, Charles IG, Harry EJ (2014) Coordinating Bacterial Cell Division with Nutrient Availability: a Role for Glycolysis. *mBio* 5

[Haiduk IV](#), Rodrigues CDA, Harry EJ (2016) Connecting the dots of the bacterial cell cycle: Coordinating chromosome replication and segregation with cell division. *Seminars in Cell & Developmental Biology* 53: 2-9

## Conference proceedings

Poster presentation Australian Society for Microbiology Annual Scientific Meeting	2014
Poster presentation Gordon Research Conference, Vermont	2014
Poster presentation BacPath 12	2013
Poster presentation Federation of European Microbiology Societies	2013
Oral presentation 12th East Coast Bacillus Meeting	2012
Poster presentation 29th RNSH/UTS/USYD Scientific Research Meeting	2012
Poster presentation 28th RNSH/UTS/USYD Scientific Research Meeting	2011

# Abbreviations

AGRF	Australian Research Genome Facility
Ab	antibody
<i>B.</i>	<i>Bacillus</i>
bp	base pair(s)
BP	band pass
BSA	bovine serum albumin
<i>cat</i>	chloramphenicol
CFP	cyan fluorescent protein
cm	centimetres
CCD	charged coupled device
DAPI	4'6-diamidino-2-phenylindole
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
<i>E.</i>	<i>Escherichia</i>
<i>erm</i>	Erythromycin
<i>et al.</i>	and others
FRAP	fluorescence recovery after photobleaching
<i>fts</i>	filamentation temperature sensitive
<i>g</i>	centrifugal force
g	gram(s)
GFP	green fluorescent protein
GMD	germination medium defined
IFM	immunofluorescence microscopy
IgG	Immunoglobulin G
IPTG	isopropyl-1-thio- $\beta$ -D-galactopyranoside
<i>kan</i>	Kanamycin
L	litre(s)
LP	long pass
M	moles per litre
MQW	Milli-Q purified water
MSA	mineral salts A
NA	numerical aperture
N/A	not applicable



<i>neo</i>	Neomycin
OD <sub>x</sub>	optical density at (x refers to the wavelength in nm)
<i>P</i>	probability
P <sub>xyI</sub>	xylose-inducible promoter
PAB	penassay antibiotic medium 3 broth
PAGE	polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis
PBP	penicillin binding protein
PBS	phosphate buffered saline
PCR	polymerase chain reaction
pH	power of Hydrogen
<i>phleo</i>	phleomycin
RNA	ribonucleic acid
ROW	reverse osmosis purified water
rpm	revolutions per minute
RT	room temperature
SDS	sodium dodecyl sulfate
SEM	standard error of the mean
spp.	species
<i>spc</i>	spectinomycin
TBAB	tryptose blood agar base
<i>tet</i>	tetracycline
thy <sup>-</sup>	thymine auxotroph
Tris	tris(hydroxymethyl)methylamine
Trp	L-Tryptophan
ts	temperature sensitive
U	units (enzyme activity)
UV	ultraviolet
V	volt(s)
v/v	volume per volume
w/v	weight per volume
YFP	yellow fluorescent protein
μ	micro- (10 <sup>-6</sup> )