Endocytosis in Filter-grown Madin–Darby Canine Kidney Cells

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Abstract. In this paper, we have characterized the apical and basolateral endocytic pathways of epithelial MDCK cells grown on filters. The three-dimensional organization of the endocytic compartments was analyzed by confocal microscopy after internalization of a fluorescent fluid-phase marker from either side of the cell layer. After 5 min of internalization, distinct sets of apical and basolateral early endosomes were observed lining the plasma membrane domain from which internalization had occurred. At later time points, the apical and the basolateral endocytic pathways were shown to converge in the perinuclear region. Mixing of two different fluorescent markers could be detected after their simultaneous internalization from opposite sides of the cell layer. The extent of the meeting was quantitated by measuring the amount of complex formed intracellularly between avidin internalized from the apical side and biotinylated horseradish peroxidase (HRP) from the basolateral side. After 15 min, 14% of the avidin marker was complexed with the biotinylated HRP and this value increased to 50% during a subsequent chase of 60 min in avidin-free medium. We also determined the kinetics of fluid internalization, recycling, transcytosis, and intracellular retention using HRP as a marker. Fluid was internalized with the same rates from either surface domain ($1.2 \times 10^{-4} \mu m^3/min$ per $\mu m^2$ of surface area). However, significant differences were observed for each pathway in the amounts and kinetics of marker recycled and transcytosed. The content of apical early endosomes was primarily recycled and transcytosed (45% along each route after 1 h internalization), whereas delivery to late endocytic compartments was favored from the basolateral early endosome (77% after 1 h). Our results demonstrate that early apical and basolateral endosomes are functionally and topologically distinct, but that the endocytic pathways converge at later stages in the perinuclear region of the cell.

The analysis of the endocytic pathway in simple epithelia is complicated by the polar organization of the cell layer. Epithelial cells, lining the body cavities, form sheets between the external and internal environments. As a result of these boundary functions, epithelial cells have evolved two specialized plasma membrane domains with distinct protein and lipid compositions (Simons and Fuller, 1985). The apical membrane confronts the outside world, whereas the basolateral domain faces the basement membrane and the blood supply. The specificity of these two domains is maintained by tight junctions, which form a fence to prevent mixing of apical and basolateral membrane components as well as an occluding barrier between neighboring cells (Gumbiner, 1987).

Endocytosis is known to occur from both the apical and the basolateral surfaces (Simons and Fuller, 1985). There is another major difference from nonpolarized cells (Courtoy, 1989; Gruenberg and Howell, 1989). Molecules endocytosed by epithelial cells are not only recycled or transported to lysosomes for degradation but can also be transcytosed to the opposite cell surface via a transcellular vesicular route (Mostov and Simister, 1985). Nevertheless, despite continuous endocytosis and transcytosis, epithelial surface polarity is maintained. How this is achieved is not known, nor is the overall organization of the endocytic pathways in simple epithelia well characterized. Most of the studies on endocytosis in simple epithelial cells (Abrahamson and Rodewald, 1981; Christensen, 1982; Herzog, 1984; Gonnella and Neutra, 1984; van Deurs and Christensen, 1984) have been performed on whole tissues where access to both sides of the epithelium is difficult to control. In both isolated rabbit proximal tubules (Nielsen et al., 1985) and in the rat parotid acinar gland (Oliver, 1982), ferritin internalized from the apical membrane domain and horseradish peroxidase (HRP) endocytosed from the basolateral membrane were routed to the same lysosomes. However, the extent of meeting was not quantitated nor was the site of convergence identified.

We have grown MDCK strain I cells on permeable polycarbonate supports to gain experimental access to both apical and basolateral plasma membrane domains independently.

I. Abbreviations used in this paper: bBSA, biotinylated BSA; bHRP, biotinylated horseradish peroxidase; HRP, horseradish peroxidase; IM, internalization medium; LY, Lucifer yellow; PBS*, PBS with 1 mM Ca2+ and 0.5 mM Mg2+.
Under these conditions, the cells form a monolayer with very high transepithelial resistance that closely mimics the epithelial organization observed in vivo (Richardson et al., 1981; Fuller et al., 1984). In this study, we have extended our previous work on endocytosis in filter-grown MDCK cells (von Bonsdorff et al., 1985). The topology of the apical and basolateral endocytic compartments was analyzed after internalization of fluorescent fluid phase markers from either surface domain. The spatial distribution of the markers within the cell was visualized by confocal fluorescence microscopy, coupled to three-dimensional image reconstruction. The different routes accessible to the internalized fluid phase markers were assessed using two biochemical approaches. Internalization from either cell surface domain and subsequent recycling, transcytosis, and transport to later endocytic compartments were quantitated with HRP. The extent of the meeting of the apical and basolateral pathways was measured using avidin and biotinylated HRP internalized from opposite sides of the cell layer. In a companion paper, the organization and the meeting of the endocytic pathways were further studied by EM.

Materials and Methods

Materials

Dextran-Texas Red (molecular weight 10,000) was purchased from Molecular Probes, Inc. (Eugene, OR) and was purified on a Sephadex G-50 (Pharmacia Fine Chemicals, Uppsala, Sweden) column, dried from acetone, and stored at −20°C. Lucifer yellow (LY), wheat germ agglutinin (WGA)-Texas Red, ribonuclease A (RNase), avidin (egg white), HRP (type II), 1,4-diazabicyclo(2.2.2)octane (DABCO), and BSA (essentially fatty acid free, fraction V) were obtained from Sigma Chemical Co. (St. Louis, MO). LY was inactivated in methanol/acetone (2:1), dried under N2, and stored at −20°C. Lysozyme (1 mg/ml) was from Calbiochem-Behring Corp., (Frankfurt, FRG). Proteins were biotinylated as described (Gruenberg et al., 1989). A polyclonal antibody against avidin was raised in rabbits and affinity purified.

Fixation of Cells for Confocal Microscopy

The polycarbonate filters were briefly rinsed in PBS* at 4°C. All subsequent steps were at room temperature. The fixation was performed in a two-step procedure, adapted from Berod et al. (1981). First, the cells were immersed in 3.7% paraformaldehyde in 80 mM Pipes, pH 6.5 (5 mM EGTA, 2 mM MgCl2) for 4 min to allow the paraformaldehyde to penetrate the cells. The filters were then transferred to 3.7% paraformaldehyde in 100 mM sodium borate (pH 11) to promote polymerization of the paraformaldehyde. After 8 min, the cells were rapidly washed three times in PBS* and the free aldehydes were quenched with 75 mM NaH2Cit and 20 mM glycine in PBS* for 10 min. The fixation procedure ended by three 10-min washes in PBS*. Then the filters were mounted on coverslips in PBS* containing 50% glycerol as well as 100 mg/ml DABCO to reduce photobleaching (Langanger et al., 1983). The height of the cells after fixation and mounting was similar, within 5%, to that of unfixed cells, a good indication that the three-dimensional cellular organization had been preserved. In addition, electron microscopic examination of the cells after fixation showed no major alterations of the cellular organization when compared with control cells fixed in glutaraldehyde, as in Parton et al. (1989).

Confocal Scanning Beam Laser Microscopy

A description of design and operating principles of the confocal microscope developed at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory has been published previously (Balcarova-Stander et al., 1984), uvomorulin (Gumbiner and Simons, 1986), or nuclear lamin B (Lehner et al., 1986) by indirect immunofluorescence. The detecting antibody was an anti-mouse IgG coupled to either rhodamin or Texas Red (Dianova, Hamburg, FRG). To stain the basolateral plasma membrane after uptake of the fluorescent fluid phase marker, the cells were washed in PBS*-BSA at 4°C and the basolateral medium was replaced by PBS*-BSA containing 50 µg/ml WGA-Texas Red. The cells were further incubated for 1 h at 4°C, washed three times in PBS*-BSA, and fixed as above. To stain the nuclei, the cells were first fixed as above, then treated with 1 mg/ml RNase in PBS for 20 min at room temperature. After three brief washes in PBS*, the cells were treated with 2 µg/ml propidium iodide in PBS* for 15 min at room temperature.

Continuous Uptake Measurement with HRP

The same experimental protocol was used as for the uptake of fluorescent markers from both sides of the cell layer, except that phenol red was omitted from the internalization medium (IM-H). For internalization experiments, the filters were incubated in IM-H containing 2–10 mg/ml HRP. Typically, the volumes were 400 and 200 µl for the apical and the basolateral medium, respectively, and HRP was present at either side as indicated. After internalization, the apical and basolateral media were collected and centrifuged at 3,000 g for 5 min to remove any debris. Cells were cooled to 4°C in Texas Red and 10 mg/ml LY were added to the apical and the basolateral medium, respectively. For the labeling of late endocytic compartments, the marker was first internalized for 30 min, then the cells were washed briefly and further incubated in medium-free IM-F for an additional hour. All incubations were terminated by four 10-min washes in ice-cold PBS* (PBS with 1 mM Ca2+, 0.5 mM Mg2+) containing 0.5% BSA (PBS*-BSA) before fixation.

Uptake of Fluorescent Fluid Phase Markers

For apical uptake, the cells on filters were briefly rinsed in incubation medium (IM-F; MEM, 0.05% BSA, buffered with 10 mM Hepes to pH 7.4) at 37°C. The filters were then placed in six-well plates (Costar Corp.) containing 2 ml IM-F in each well and prewarmed in a 37°C water bath. After two brief washes with premixed IM-F, 10 mg/ml LY in 500 µl IM-F was added to the apical side. For basolateral uptake, the edge of the filters on the side opposite to the cells was carefully blotted with a filter paper to remove excess basolateral medium. The filter was placed onto a 100-µl drop of 10 mg/ml LY in IM-F premixed at 37°C on a piece of parafilm in a humid chamber. Then 850 µl of premixed IM-F was added to the apical side and incubation was carried out for the desired time. For simultaneous internalization from the apical and the basolateral side, 10 mg/ml dextran-tetraacryloxy-63244
Biochemical Detection of the Meeting of the Two Cold Plate at 4°C. The apical medium containing avidin was replaced by the out in the presence of bBSA (0.5 mg/ml) so that the formation of the avidin-Enocytic Pathways

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because von Bonsdorff et al. (1985) reported a linear degradation rate of 5 % per h, when HRP was taken up by MDCK cells from the basolateral side. The assay had to be performed after internalization bHRP present in the lysate was sufficient to saturate avidin. Lysosomal degradation present in the lysate was not due to the release of HRP adsorbed onto the cell surface. (a) The cells were preloaded for each time period with HRP at 37°C and after washing at 4°C and reincubated for 5-10 at 37°C in marker-free medium. After this short chase period, no HRP activity was detected in the apical or the basolateral medium of the cell. The activity associated with the cell monolayer was carried out within 3% of the value obtained without this short treatment. (b) When reincubation in marker-free medium was performed at 4°C, the HRP activity detected was within 3% of that detected directly after loading at 37°C.

Biochemical Detection of the Meeting of the Two Endocytic Pathways

The experimental protocol was the same as described for the uptake of fluorescent markers from both sides of the cell layer, except that IM-F was replaced by MEM containing 0.35 g HCO3/liter and supplemented with 0.2 % BSA and 10 mM Hepes). Typically, 400 μl of IM-M containing 2 mg/ml avidin was added apically, and the filter was placed on a drop (150 μl) of medium containing 2 mg/ml of the basolateral marker, biotinylated HRP (bHRP). The incubation was stopped by transferring the filters to a cold plate at 4°C. The apical medium containing avidin was replaced by the same volume of biotinylated BSA (bBSA) in PBS* (0.5 mg/ml) for 30 min at 0-4°C, to quench avidin possibly adsorbed to the cell surface. The filters were washed twice with ice-cold 0.2 % BSA in PBS*, cut out of their holders, and washed six times for 30 min each in 5 ml 0.2 % BSA in PBS* with shaking. The filters were blotted to remove excess solution and extracted with 200 μl lysis buffer for 30 min at 4°C. Solubilization was carried out in the presence of bBSA (0.5 mg/ml) so that the formation of the avidin-bHRP complex could only result from meeting in vivo during endocytosis, before detergent solubilization. To determine the total amount of avidin present in the cells, bBSA was omitted, allowing binding of avidin to internalized bHRP present in the lysate. Exogenous bHRP added to the lysate did not bind avidin (data not shown), suggesting that the amount of bHRP present in the lysate was sufficient to saturate avidin. Lysozymol degradation was not likely to be of quantitative importance in the time scale of the assay because von Bonsdorff et al. (1985) reported a linear degradation rate of 5% per h, when HRP was taken up by MDCK cells from the basolateral side. The amount of complex formed was quantitated using an ELISA described by Gruenberg et al. (1989). The assay had to be performed after internalization of avidin from the apical domain. When the conditions were reversed, namely avidin internalized basolaterally and bHRP apically, the large excess of avidin over bHRP within the cells (and to some extent also adsorbed nonspecifically to the polycarbonate filters) exceeded the capacity of the ELISA wells. Attempts made with biotinylated insulin as quencher (Brail, 1987) were unsuccessful, because it interfered with our ELISA assay, whereas bBSA did not.

Results

Confocal Microscopy of MDCK Cells

To visualize the organization of the endocytic pathways in filter-grown MDCK cells, the fluoroscent fluid phase marker LY (Swanson et al., 1985) was selectively internalized from either the apical or the basolateral surface domain for various times at 37°C. The spatial distribution of the marker was analyzed by confocal beam scanning laser microscopy and the digitalized data were used to generate two- and three-dimensional views of the fluorescent specimens. Conventional fluorescence microscopy could not be used for imaging, because the MDCK cell layer is too thick and is grown on a filter that gives increased background fluorescence. These problems can be overcome by confocal microscopy. With this method it is possible to visualize sequentially a series of focal planes along the vertical axis of the MDCK cell, with each plane containing exclusively the fluorescence in focus. Fig. 1 shows 24 horizontal planes between the apical (plane I) and the basal poles (plane 24), which document the complete cellular distribution of LY-labeled compartments after 5 min internalization from the basolateral side. Because the height of the cells in the layer varied, the tallest cells apparent in this field were in the lower left quadrant and the shortest in the upper left corner. The endosomes in these latter cells were first seen in plane 8. In each cell, the endosomes appeared to distribute in a ring very close to the lateral membrane. When moving deeper into the monolayer, the endosomes surrounded the nucleus, which appeared as a black area in these images. These images show that the endosomes (labeled after 5 min of internalization) of two adjacent cells were distributed in double rows, each row lining the lateral membrane of one cell (see plane I3). After specific labeling of the basolateral membrane (see below), these endosomes were observed to distribute not only along the lateral membrane (planes 1-2) in the typical ring-like pattern but also above the basal membrane facing the filter (planes 22 and 23). This distribution suggests that internalization of fluid phase markers occurred equally from the entire basolateral membrane.

Spatial Organization of the Apical and Basolateral Endocytic Pathways

The presentation of the data was simplified by the selection of three representative planes in each subsequent focal series that illustrate the distribution of the fluid phase marker over the entire cell height (Fig. 2, A and B). The three focal planes were in the apical region of the cell (I), in the middle of the cell around the top of the nucleus (II), and in the most basal area of the cell (III). The nuclei were stained with propidium iodide (DNA-binding dye exhibiting a red fluorescence emission) after internalization of the endocytic markers and cell fixation, to provide an internal reference. Two consecutive focal series were then recorded to detect selectively either fluorophore, and superimposed plane to plane, using the image analysis program. In the resulting images,
Figure 1. Confocal series showing the basolateral endosome distribution. LY was internalized for 5 min from the basolateral domain of the cell layer. Planes 1–24 are consecutive horizontal focal planes in a confocal series in which the cell layer was scanned along the vertical axis starting at the apical pole. The apical region of the cells above the tight junctions contained no labeling and is therefore not shown (above plane 1). Plane 24 is an optical section in the filter next to the basal membrane and shows the background level of fluorescence of the filter. Because of differences in the height of the cells in the monolayer, the cells in the upper left and lower right quadrants come into focus later. Arrows in plane 13 show the endosome distribution of two adjacent cells as a double row, each lining the lateral membrane of one cell. Two consecutive sections are 0.5 μm apart and represents a field of 60 × 60 μm.
LY-labeled endosomes appeared in green (or yellow) and nuclei in red.

In Fig. 2 B, the three confocal planes document the distribution of basolateral endosomes after LY internalization; planes I, II, and III correspond respectively to planes 7, 13, and 22 in Fig. 1. After 5 min, LY labeled peripheral endosomes, and after 30 min of continuous basolateral internalization, the fluid phase marker also reached structures in the perinuclear area, which appeared heterogeneous in size and formed a punctate pattern above (I) and around the nucleus (II and III). When this 30-min internalization was followed by a 60-min chase in marker-free medium, most of the intracellular LY redistributed to the apical region and the peripheral rows of endosomes were no longer visible (i and II). The labeling in the basal part of the cell was significantly reduced (III).

When LY was internalized from the apical side for 5 min at 37°C, a fine punctate pattern depicting the peripheral endosomes was observed underneath the apical plasma membrane (Fig. 3 A). After 30 min of continuous apical internalization, LY appeared also in larger structures located mostly above the nucleus and to a lesser extent also around the lower part of the nucleus. A fine punctate pattern lining the lateral membrane became visible and may represent transcytotic vesicles en route to the basolateral side of the layer. The endocytic marker was depleted from the basal half of the cell during a subsequent 60-min chase in LY-free medium.

The digitalized data from the confocal analysis can be processed to generate stereo views of the whole cell layer. To provide spatial references within the cell, we first labeled the apical and the basolateral membrane and the nuclei using appropriate antibodies (stereo images, Fig. 3). The differences in cell height is shown by the wavy appearance of the apical membrane (Fig. 3, top). The basolateral membranes of the same cells are shown in Fig. 3 (middle). The nuclei occupied a large portion of the cell volume (Fig. 3, bottom).

We then generated stereo pair views (Fig. 4) to localize all the endocytic compartments labeled with LY relative to the basolateral membrane stained with WGA-Texas Red (top) or to the nuclei stained with propidium iodide (middle and bottom).

A comparison between the stereo pair images obtained after endocytosis from either cell surface domain showed that significantly less LY had accumulated in the cells after apical endocytosis (Fig. 4 A) than after basolateral endocytosis (Fig. 4 B). The different locations of the apical and basolateral endosomes in MDCK cells after 5 min of LY internalization were striking in these stereo images (top). We will refer to these endosomes underlying the apical and the basolateral plasma membrane domains as apical and basolateral early endosomes, respectively (see Courtoy, 1989; Gruenberg et al., 1989). Their spatial location is distinctly peripheral and they seem to contain the bulk of the endocytosed label up to 10 min of internalization (data not shown).

The stereo views after 30 min of LY internalization became complex. In addition to the early endosomes, perinuclear structures were labeled from both sides (middle). A significant amount of the internalized LY (particularly after apical application) was released during the subsequent 60-min chase in marker-free medium (bottom). The retained LY was mostly confined to the apical perinuclear region after both apical and basolateral internalization. The perinuclear endocytic structures seen after longer internalization (>20 min) most likely correspond to late endosomes and lysosomes (see Courtoy, 1989; Gruenberg and Howell, 1989).

Biochemical Quantitation of Endocytosis and Transcytosis

We proceeded to correlate the spatial distribution of the apical and basolateral endocytic elements with a kinetic analysis of both pathways. HRP was used as a fluid phase marker and was administered either apically or basolaterally to the cell monolayer. We determined the amount of HRP accumulated in the cell after different times of continuous internalization at 37°C, as well as the net amount of HRP transcytosed across the cell layer in both directions (Fig. 5). As observed previously (von Bonsdorff et al., 1985), the extent of endocytosis from the apical side was strikingly lower than from the basolateral side; 30 times less HRP was intracellular after 60 min of internalization. The amount of intracellular HRP retained after basolateral application, reached a plateau between 10 and 20 min and subsequently started to increase linearly. These kinetics may reflect a rapid filling of the early endosomes (0-10 min) followed by an apparent steady state (10-20 min) between HRP internalization and efflux by recycling and transcytosis before significant amounts of HRP are delivered to late endocytic compartments (>20 min). This plateau was also seen after apical endocytosis but it was not so pronounced. In agreement with von Bonsdorff et al. (1985), we found that the amounts of fluid transcytosed in both apical and basolateral directions were of the same magnitude.

Biochemical Quantitation of Recycling

The third route, namely the recycling of endocytosed fluid, could not be monitored during continuous HRP internalization. To quantitate the extent of recycling, cells were first preloaded for different times at 37°C from either the apical or the basolateral side, washed extensively at 4°C to remove surface adsorbed HRP and then reincubated in marker-free medium for various times at 37°C. The kinetics of recycling were determined by measuring the amount of HRP released into the medium bathing the surface from whence internalization had occurred. The kinetics of HRP transcytosed and retained inside the cell were also determined.

After internalization of HRP for 60 min from the basolateral side, followed by a 90-min chase in marker-free medium, 10% of the internalized HRP was recycled back to the basolateral medium and 10% was transcytosed, corresponding to a total efflux of 20% (Fig. 6 B). In contrast, when the same experiment was carried out from the apical side (Fig. 6 A), the total efflux corresponded to 70% of the internalized HRP with 30% recycled back to the apical side and 40% transcytosed to the basolateral medium. Neither recycling nor transcytosis was detected when the chase was carried out at 4°C in marker-free medium. These results suggest that the bulk of HRP internalized during 1 h from the basolateral side was transferred to late endocytic compartments from where little if any was recycled or transcytosed. In contrast, when internalized from the apical side for the same period of time, the bulk of HRP was released from the cell layer equally by recycling and transcytosis. Ap-
Figure 2. Distribution of apical and basolateral endocytic compartments in the apical, middle, and basal region of MDCK cells. LY was internalized at 37°C from the apical (this page) or the basolateral (next page) side of the cells for 5, 30, or 30 min followed by 60 min incubation in marker-free medium. After fixation of the cells, the nuclei were labeled with propidium iodide. The LY and the propidium iodide fluorescence of the specimens were observed sequentially in the confocal microscope. Then, the corresponding focal planes of each series were superimposed in a double-colored image in which the LY endosomal pattern appeared in green (or yellow) and the propidium iodide nuclear pattern appeared in red. The figure is reproduced in black and white. The LY staining can be differentiated from the nuclear staining by its dot appearance. A schematic outline of the endosomal pattern is represented for each observed time point and the level of the three selected planes indicated by arrows. On this page, note that after 5 min, plane I is located closer to the apical surface than the corresponding planes to visualize the distribution of apical early endosomes. Appearance of some nuclei in plane I reflects differences in cell height (see Fig. 1). Each image represents a field of 60 × 60 μm².
Figure 2.
The Internalized Fluid Is Recycled and Transcytosed from Early Endosomes

To characterize more precisely the kinetics of recycling and transcytosis, MDCK cell layers were loaded for short times to fill only the early endosomes with HRP. When basolateral endosomes were preloaded for 5, 10, or 15 min, subsequent recycling and transcytosis followed a similar time course (Fig. 7 B). After 30 min efflux, approximately equal amounts of HRP were delivered to the apical and the basolateral medium by transcytosis and recycling, respectively, and these amounts stayed constant irrespective of the loading period. The main change observed when the loading period was extended from 5 to 15 min was that of the fraction of HRP remaining inside the cell after a 30-min chase in HRP free-medium increased from 40 to 65%.

When the same protocol was applied to the apical side, different results were obtained (Fig. 7 A). After preloading the apical early endosome for 5 min, a rapid and extensive recycling to the apical medium was observed, but transcytosis to the basolateral medium was only detected after a lag of 10 min and this lag time was still observed when early apical endosomes had been loaded for 10 min. By the end of the chase in HRP-free medium, the amount of HRP that had been transcytosed equaled the amount recycled. The amount that was retained in the cells was only ~30% of the HRP that had been internalized during the 15-min loading period.

In Fig. 8, we have plotted the time course of HRP uptake by the cell layer (solid symbols) compared with the total efflux (sum of recycling and transcytosis; open symbols) at the corresponding times. The fast initial rate of HRP efflux at all time points of apical endocytosis shows the rapid depletion of apical endosomal fluid content (Fig. 8 A). In contrast, the much smaller HRP efflux during basolateral endocytosis suggests that the bulk of internalized HRP is routed to late endocytic compartments, where recycling and transcytosis cannot occur (Fig. 8 B). In Table I, the data for fluid recycling, transcytosis, and retention within the cell have been summarized.

Convergence of the Apical and the Basolateral Endocytic Pathways

Confocal microscopy analysis showed that the fluid phase marker entered late endocytic structures, located all around the nucleus ~30 min after internalization from either side of the cell layer and that an additional hour of incubation in marker-free medium led to accumulation of the marker in the region above the nucleus. Therefore, we analyzed whether mixing of apical and basolateral endocytic markers occurred in these structures.

Two different fluid phase markers, dextran-Texas Red and LY were applied simultaneously to opposite sides of the cell layer. As expected, dextran-Texas Red and LY were first observed in the two distinct groups of early endosomes after 5 min of internalization at 37°C (data not shown). After 15 min of incubation at 37°C, a colocalization of both markers became apparent in structures above the nucleus (data not shown). After 30 min, this colocalization extended to structures located in the more basal region of the cells (Fig. 9 A). When the cell layers were incubated for an additional hour in marker-free medium after a 30-min loading period, many endocytic structures containing both markers were observed. These endocytic elements where meeting of the two pathways occurred were located mainly around the apical part of the nucleus, whereas the basal half was depleted of markers (Fig. 9 B).

Quantitation of the Meeting

The extent of this meeting was quantitated using a biochemical assay based on the high affinity of avidin for biotin that has been useful for studies of endocytic vesicle fusion in vitro (Braell, 1987; Gruenberg et al., 1989). Avidin was applied apically and bHRP was applied basolaterally. After different times of internalization, the endocytic compartment of MDCK cells contained either avidin, bHRP, or both. The
formation of the avidin-bHRP complex would only occur when the two pathways had met and mixed their contents in vivo. The amount of avidin-bHRP complex formed in vivo was quantitated after solubilization of the cells in the presence of bBSA to quench the free avidin that had been endocytosed but did not react with bHRP during internalization. The relative efficiency of the meeting could be quantitated as the percentage of the total avidin internalized from the apical

and the bar is the SEM when larger than the size of the symbol. (Left) Amount of HRP retained intracellular (I, closed symbols) and transcytosis (T, open symbols) from the apical side. (Right) Amount of HRP retained intracellular (I, closed symbols) and transcytosis (T, open symbols) from the basolateral side.
Figure 6. Recycling and transcytosis of preinternalized HRP. Cells were preloaded at 37°C for 60 min with HRP on the apical or the basolateral side of the monolayer. After washing at 4°C, the cell layers were reincubated in marker-free medium at 37°C. At the indicated times, both apical and basolateral medium were collected, the cells were washed at 4°C and extracted. The HRP activity in the sample was converted into volume as in Fig. 5 and plotted versus the time of reincubation in HRP-free medium. (Left) Apical preloading. HRP activity remaining in the cell (I, crosses). HRP recycled to the basolateral medium (R, open symbols). HRP transcytosed to the apical medium (T, closed symbols). (Right) Basolateral preloading. HRP activity remaining in the cell (I, crosses). HRP recycled to the apical medium (R, open symbols). HRP transcytosed to the basolateral medium (T, closed symbols). Error bars are shown as in Fig. 5.

Figure 7. Kinetics of HRP efflux (recycling and transcytosis) from apical and basolateral early endosomes. HRP was applied to the apical (left) and the basolateral (right) side of the monolayer for 5, 10, or 15 min at 37°C. Then, HRP efflux was followed in marker-free medium as in Fig. 6. Symbols are as shown in Fig. 6 and error bars are as shown in Fig. 5.
Transcytosis and intracellular accumulation rates were calculated from the values obtained after 60 min of continuous uptake from either the apical or the basolateral side of the cell layer. These values were from Fig. 5 and converted to μm³/cell per min using 3.75 x 10⁶ cells/filter as determined in the companion paper (Parton et al., 1989). Because recycling could not be measured during continuous internalization experiments, the fraction of internalized marker recycled to either surface domain was calculated from the experiments described in Fig. 7, A and B. The recycling rate was calculated relative to that of transcytosis, assuming that transcytosis and recycling take place from the early endosomes. The ratio of the amount recycled and transcytosed after loading for 15 min and subsequent incubation in HRP-free medium for 30 min, should give a realistic estimate of the rates. The endocytosis rate was calculated as the sum of the three rates; recycling, transcytosis, and intracellular accumulation.

At 37°C, the in vivo formation of avidin-bHRP complexes was first detected after 15 min internalization. After 60 min internalization of the two markers, 20% of the avidin had met bHRP. The formation of the complex was greatly reduced at 20°C (Fig. 10 c). The lag time of 15 min at 37°C, as well as the reduced signal at 20°C (Griffiths et al., 1988; Gruenberg et al., 1989) suggested that the two pathways met in a late endocytic compartment. The percentage of meeting was increased to 50% when internalization of both markers was carried out for 15 min followed by a subsequent chase for an additional 60 min in marker-free medium at the apical side (Fig. 10 c). The time-course of complex formation agreed well with the confocal microscopy analysis (Fig. 9) and confirmed that the convergence of the two endocytic pathways occurred in late endocytic compartments.

### Discussion

In this study, the general organization of the apical and basolateral endocytic pathways has been visualized in MDCK cells by the use of confocal microscopy and three-dimensional image reconstruction. We have complemented this morphological characterization by a detailed analysis of how the fluid phase marker, HRP, is handled by the polarized cell after internalization from either side of the cell layer. Our results demonstrate that there are distinct sets of early apical and basolateral endosomes where recycling and transcytosis primarily occur.

The early endosomes are seen close to the plasma membrane domain to which the fluid phase marker had been applied. Apical early endosomes are distributed below the apical microvilli above the ring of tight junctions (Bomsel, M., unpublished observation), whereas basolateral early endosomes lie alongside the lateral as well as the basal membrane. The peripheral location of early endosomes conforms with earlier observations in nonpolarized cells (Herman and Albertini, 1981; Pastan and Willingham, 1981) as well as in hepatocytes (Wäll et al., 1980; Geuze et al., 1983; Hopkins, 1983), kidney proximal tubules (van Deurs and Christensen, 1984; Rodman, 1986), exocrine acinar cells (Oliver and Hand, 1978; Oliver, 1982) and enterocytes (Gonnella and Neutra, 1984). Further work is required to analyze the early endosomes biochemically and to find out whether they conform to the criteria defined for early endosomes in other cell types (Wolkoff et al., 1984; Mueller and Hubbard, 1986; Schmid et al., 1988; Cain et al., 1989; Fuchs et al., 1989; Gruenberg et al., 1989). The distinct spatial distribution of apical and basolateral early endosomes in MDCK cells clearly suggests that each population is exclusively involved.

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Table I. Rate of Fluid Phase Marker Recycling, Transcytosis, and Intracellular Accumulation by Filter-grown MDCK Cells

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<tr>
<th>Side of Internalization</th>
<th>Apical</th>
<th>Basolateral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recycling</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcytosis</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intracellular accumulation</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endocytosis</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Transcytosis and intracellular accumulation rates were calculated from the values obtained after 60 min of continuous uptake from either the apical or the basolateral side of the cell layer.*
Figure 9. Meeting of the apical and basolateral endocytic pathways. Texas Red-dextran (left) and LY (right) were applied for 1 h at 37°C (this page) to the apical and basolateral sides of the monolayer, respectively, followed by a 30-min incubation in marker-free medium (next page). The samples were scanned twice to generate confocal series, each with the appropriate filters. The overlapping between the Texas Red-dextran and LY patterns was analyzed plane to plane to identify the endocytic compartments containing both markers. The three planes presented are located at the same heights of the cell, as in Fig. 2. Examples of compartments, labeled with both markers (large arrows), Texas Red-dextran only (arrowheads), or LY only (small arrows), are pointed out. Note that on next page, the basal half of the cell (planes III) is depleted of labeled structures.
Figure 9.
in endocytosis from the corresponding plasma membrane domain. This is supported by our confocal and biochemical observations that two different fluid phase markers internalized simultaneously from either side of the cell layer do not colocalize in early endosomes but meet at a later stage of the pathway.

The analysis of the kinetics of fluid phase marker internalization, recycling, transcytosis, and intracellular retention reveals important characteristics of membrane traffic to and from early endosomes at either surface domain. The total amount of fluid phase marker internalized appears 3.6 times higher at the basolateral surface than at the apical surface. However, because the ratio of apical to basolateral plasma membrane surface area in filter-grown MDCK strain 1 cells is 3.8 (Parton et al., 1989), our conclusion is that the amount of fluid internalized per unit of plasma membrane surface area is similar from both domains, corresponding to \( \sim 4.2 \times 10^4 \, \text{µm}^2/\text{min} \), in keeping with our earlier proposal (von Bonsdorff et al., 1985).

Although fluid was internalized at the same rates from both surface domains per unit area, apical and basolateral early endosomes distributed their fluid phase content for recycling, transcytosis, or towards later endocytic compartments with strikingly different kinetics. 5–15 min after apical internalization, the efflux (recycling and transcytosis) was ninefold higher than the efflux after basolateral internalization. Correspondingly, the fraction of basolaterally internalized HRP that accumulated intracellularly was nine times higher than measured from the apical side. These results suggest that the content of basolateral early endosomes is far more efficiently routed to perinuclear endocytic compartments than returned to the medium by recycling or transcytosis. In contrast, most of the content of apical early endosomes is recycled or transcytosed. This agrees well with morphological observations in intercalated kidney cells showing that efficient apical recycling occurred but that little HRP internalized from the apical side was observed in structures deep in the cytoplasm (Brown, 1989). Efficient recycling from the apical early endosome to the apical domain has also been reported in proximal tubules (Christensen, 1982; van Deurs and Christensen, 1984; Hatae et al., 1988).

The kinetic studies show that the half-time of fluid content recycling from the early endosomes was \( \sim 5 \) min both after apical and basolateral internalization. Rapid recycling of fluid phase markers from the early endosome with similar kinetics has also been observed in several nonpolarized cells (Besterman et al., 1981; Adams et al., 1982; Swanson et al., 1985). Transcytosis of early endosomal content occurred with a similar half-time from the apical and from the basolateral side, corresponding to a value of \( \sim 10 \) min. This somewhat larger half-time when compared with recycling presumably reflects the slower transport of transcytotic vesicles.
from either side of the cell layer shows that the two pathways start to converge after 15 min of endocytosis in the perinuclear region. This was shown both by confocal microscopy and by direct biochemical analysis. In the companion paper (Parton et al., 1989), the characterization of the compartments where the two apical and basolateral pathways meet has been extended to the ultrastructural level.

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References


