Cross-tolerance evolution is driven by selection on heat tolerance in

Drosophila subobscura

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ABSTRACT

The evolution of heat tolerance is a crucial mechanism for the adaptive response to

global warming, but it depends on the genetic variance carried by populations and on

the intensity of thermal stress in nature. Selection experiments for heat tolerance have

been key to understanding the evolution of heat tolerance, but the effect of variable heat

stress intensity on the correlated responses of resistance traits has not been investigated.

Here, the effects of heat intensity selection (fast and slow ramping temperatures) for

increasing knockdown temperature in *Drosophila subobscura* were evaluated on

knockdown time at different stress temperatures (35, 36, 37 and 38 ºC), thermal death

time (TDT) curves, and desiccation and starvation resistance. Correlated evolution was

found for these four resistance traits in *D. subobscura*, indicating that the evolutionary

response to tolerate higher temperatures also confers the ability to tolerate other stresses

such as desiccation and starvation. However, these correlated responses were dependent

on the intensity of thermal selection and on sex, which may limit our ability to

generalize these results to natural scenarios. Nevertheless, this study confirms the value

of the experimental evolutionary approach for exploring and understanding the adaptive

responses of natural populations to global warming.

Keywords: correlated evolution, global warming, heat stress intensity, stress resistance

evolution, thermal tolerance landscape.

INTRODUCTION

Rising environmental temperatures are a major challenge for ectotherms (i.e., organisms

whose body temperature depends on the ambient temperature) because their

morphology, physiology, behavior, and performance depend on the thermal

environment (Huey and Stevenson 1979; Cossins and Bowler 1987; Angilletta 2009).

Furthermore, rising environmental temperatures increase the risk of extinction for many

species living near their upper thermal limits (Deutsch et al. 2008; Huey et al. 2009;

Hoffmann and Sgrò 2011). However, ectotherms can avoid the negative effects of heat

through behavioral thermoregulation, evolutionary change, and/or phenotypic plasticity

of the upper thermal limits (Visser 2008).

42   Evolutionary adaptation depends on the genetic variation exhibited by upper

thermal limits, but some studies have suggested that heat tolerance has a limited

evolutionary potential to respond to increasing environmental temperatures (Chown et

al. 2009; Mitchell and Hoffmann 2010; Kellermann et al. 2012). Nevertheless,

theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that heritability estimates for heat tolerance

tend to be lower when heat tolerance is measured in longer assays (e.g., slow-ramping

assays or static assays using sublethal temperatures) than in shorter assays (e.g., fast-

ramping assays or static assays using extremely high temperatures) (Chown et al. 2009;

Mitchell and Hoffmann 2010; Rezende et al. 2011; Blackburn et al. 2014; Heerwaarden

et al. 2016; Castañeda et al. 2019). Thus, the intensity of heat stress may influence our

predictions regarding the evolutionary potential of heat tolerance, but how do

populations respond to variable selection driven by heat stress? Selection under

laboratory conditions has a long history of providing information on the adaptive

evolution of specific selective agents (Lenski and Bennett 1993; Garland Jr 2003; Fuller

et al. 2005; Gibbs and Gefen 2009). In particular, experimental evolution of heat

tolerance has been studied in several species, including fish, corals, and insects (Baer

and Travis 2000; Kelly et al. 2012; Geerts et al. 2015; Esperk et al. 2016). Experimental

evolution of heat tolerance has also been studied in several *Drosophila* species,

including D. melanogaster (Gilchrist and Huey 1999; Folk et al. 2006), *D. subobscura*

(Quintana and Prevosti 1990; Mesas et al. 2021; Mesas and Castañeda 2023), and *D.*

buzzatti (Krebs and Loeschcke 1996). Most of these studies reported the evolution of

heat tolerance using fast ramping protocols, ranging from 0.4 ºC/min in Folk et al. (Folk

et al. 2006) to 1 °C/min in Gilchrist and Huey (Gilchrist and Huey 1999), or static high

temperature assays (40 °C), as in Bubliy and Loeschcke (2005). Recently, Mesas et al.

(Mesas et al. 2021) reported that selected lines of *D. subobscura* evolved higher heat

tolerance, regardless of the heating rate used during the selection experiments (slow-

ramping rate: 0.08 °C/min and fast-ramping rate: 0.4 °C/min).

69   Interestingly, several of these selection experiments on heat tolerance in

Drosophila have found correlated responses in other traits such as starvation resistance,

desiccation resistance, and heat shock proteins (Hoffmann et al. 1997; Feder et al. 2002;

Bubliy and Loeschcke 2005). However, the intensity of thermal stress is expected to

have important effects on the correlated responses of other traits to heat tolerance

selection (Fragata and Simões 2022). For example, fast-ramping selected lines have

evolved thermal performance curves with higher optimum temperatures and narrower

thermal breadths than slow-ramping selected lines (Mesas et al. 2021). In addition,

Mesas and Castañeda (Mesas and Castañeda 2023) reported that the evolution of heat

tolerance was associated with reduced activity of the enzymes involved in the glucose-

6-phosphate branch point and increased performance of life-history traits in slow-

ramping selected lines. However, they did not observe any changes in the metabolic rate

of the selected lines, as predicted by Santos et al. (2012). In summary, there is evidence

that heat stress intensity determines the magnitude of the evolutionary responses of

performance, metabolic, and life-history traits to heat tolerance selection; however, the

correlated evolution of resistance traits has not yet been tested. This information

provides important clues as to how thermal stress intensity might determine the

evolution of cross-tolerance to stressful environmental conditions. Natural populations

are exposed to multiple environmental stressors, and it is known that increased tolerance

to one stressor can boost tolerance to another (Rodgers and Gomez Isaza 2023). Cross-

tolerance induced by thermal stress has been widely studied in several arthropod

species, increasing resistance to desiccation, insecticides, and pathogens (Kalra et al.

2017; Rodgers and Gomez Isaza 2021; Singh et al. 2022). However, the cross-tolerance

patterns at the evolutionary level can be constrained or facilitated by genetic

correlations between resistance traits depending on the environmental context (Lande

and Arnold 1983; Bubliy and Loeschcke 2005; Gerken et al. 2016).

The effects of heat stress intensity have previously been studied on the heat

knockdown temperature in *D. subobscura* and its correlated responses on the thermal

performance curves (Mesas et al. 2021), and on energy metabolism and fitness-related

traits (Mesas and Castañeda 2023). The evolutionary response of these traits was

evaluated using two thermal selection protocols that differed in the rate of temperature

increase (hereafter, ramping rate) used to measure the heat knockdown temperature:

slow-ramping selection (0.08ºC min^{-1}) and fast-ramping selection (0.4ºC min^{-1}). The

present study investigates the effects of heat intensity selection for increasing

knockdown temperature on the cross-tolerance evolution of four different resistance

traits in *D. subobscura*: knockdown time at different stress temperatures, thermal-death-

time curves (TDT), desiccation resistance, and starvation resistance. In particular, TDT

curves represent an integrative approach to assess how the probability of survival

depends on the intensity and duration of heat stress, as they allow the estimation of the

critical thermal maxima (CT_{max}) and thermal sensitivity using the thermal tolerance

measurements obtained at different stress temperatures (Rezende et al. 2014). Here, it is

expected that fast-ramping selected lines would exhibit higher knockdown time at

highly stressful temperatures and higher CT_{max} because fast-ramping protocols reduce

the confounding effects on heat tolerance associated with the assay length. In contrast,

slow-ramping selected lines should exhibit higher desiccation and starvation resistance,

because individuals with higher starvation and desiccation resistance exhibit higher

thermal tolerance during long assays.

Materials and Methods

Sampling and maintenance

D. subobscura females were collected in the spring of 2014 at the Botanical Garden of

the Universidad Austral de Chile (Valdivia, Chile; 39º 48' S, 73º 14' W) using plastic

traps containing banana/yeast baits. A total of 200 females were collected and

individually placed in plastic vials containing David's killed-yeast *Drosophila*

medium to establish isofemale lines. In the next generation, 100 isofemale lines were

randomly selected, and 10 females and 10 males per line were placed in an acrylic

cage to establish a large outbred population. In the next generation, the flies contained

in this cage were divided into three population cages (R1, R2, and R3), attempting to

assign the same number of flies to each cage. After three generations, the flies of each

replicate cage were divided into four population cages, trying to assign the same

number of flies to each cage. This procedure allowed to establish 12 population cages

that were assigned to each artificial selection protocol in triplicate: fast-ramping

selection, fast-ramping control, slow-ramping selection, and slow-ramping control

lines (Fig. S1). During the selection experiments, population cages were maintained at

18 °C (12:12 light-dark cycle) in a discrete generation, controlled larval density

regime (Castañeda et al. 2015). Each population cage had a population size of 1000-

1500 breeding adults.

Heat tolerance selection

For each replicate line, 120 four-day-old virgin females were randomly mated with

two males for two days, after which the females were individually placed in a capped

5-mL glass vial and the males were discarded. The vials were attached to a plastic rack

and immersed in a water tank with an initial temperature of 28 °C, controlled by a

heating unit (model ED, Julabo Labortechnik, Seelbach, Germany). After an

equilibration period of 10 min, the temperature was increased to a rate of 0.08 °C min^{-1}

for the slow-ramping selection protocol or 0.4 °C min^{-1} for the fast-ramping selection

protocol. Assays were stopped when all flies collapsed. Each assay was recorded using

a high-resolution camera (model D5100, Nikon, Tokyo, Japan) and then visualized to

score the knockdown temperature for each fly, which was defined as the temperature

at which each fly ceased to move. Flies were ranked by knockdown temperature, and

four virgin females were selected from the progeny of the 40 flies with the highest

knockdown temperature (top 30% of each assay) to establish the next generation. For

the fast and slow control lines, the knockdown temperature was measured as described

above, but the progeny was randomly selected to establish the next generation,

regardless of the knockdown temperature of their mother.

This artificial selection experiment was performed for 16 generations after which

flies from each selection treatment were placed in separate acrylic cages and

maintained without selection (e.g., relaxed selection) at 18 °C and a 12:12 light-dark

cycle.

Knockdown time in static assays

Eggs were collected from each population cage and transferred to vials at a density of

40 eggs/vial. At 4 days of age, ten females and ten males from each population cage

were tested to measure their heat knockdown time at four different static temperatures:

35, 36, 37, and 38°C. This experimental design allowed the measurement of 960 flies

(10 flies × 2 sexes × 4 static temperatures × 4 selection treatments × 3 replicated lines).

Static assays were performed similarly to knockdown temperature assays, but static

temperatures were used instead of ramping temperatures. A total of 240 flies were

measured for each static temperature, except for the assay at 35°C (178 flies) because

two flies died before the start of the assay, and a video file of one assay was corrupted

(data for 60 flies were lost). For the 37°C assay, four flies died before the beginning of

the assay, and the collapse time could not be measured for six flies. Finally, for the 38ºC

assay, three flies died before at the start of the assay and the collapse time could not be

measured for five flies. Heat knockdown assays were performed in the generation 23

(Fig. S1).

Desiccation and starvation resistance

Eggs from each replicate cage were collected and maintained in vials at a density of 40

eggs/vial. Only fast control lines were measured as control lines. This decision was

based on logistical reasons (i.e., the high number of vials) and statistical support

because fast and slow control lines did not differ in their knockdown times and CT_{max}

values (see *the Results* section).

For desiccation resistance assays, five flies from each sex were separately placed

in a vial containing five desiccant droplets (Drierite) and sealed with parafilm (flies had

no access to food or water during the assay). For starvation resistance assays, five flies

from each sex were separately placed in a vial containing agar only (flies had access to

water but no food). For both desiccation and starvation resistance assays, the number of

live flies was counted every 3 h until all the flies were dead. Desiccation and starvation

resistance were measured in 126 vials containing 10 flies each, respectively (7 vials × 2

sexes × 3 selection treatments × 3 replicate lines). These experiments were conducted at

18 °C using flies from generation 24 (Fig. S1).

Statistical analysis

Normality and homoscedasticity were tested for all variables, and the knockdown times

were log_{10}-transformed to meet the parametric assumptions. All analyses were

performed with R software (R Development Core Team 2011).

Heat tolerance

Analyses to evaluate the evolutionary response of the heat tolerance to ramping

selection was performed separately for the fast and slow ramping selection because it is

well known that the knockdown temperature is higher in fast ramping than in slow

ramping assays (Chown et al. 2009; Mesas et al. 2021). Mixed linear models with

ramping selection (fixed effect), sex (fixed effect), and replicate lines nested within

thermal selection (random effect) were performed for knockdown temperature and

knockdown time using the library *lme4* package for R (Bates et al. 2015). Fixed effects

were tested by a type III ANOVA using the library *lmerTest* package for R (Kuznetsova

et al. 2017), while the random effect was tested by a likelihood ratio test comparing the

model with and without the replicate lines. If the selection effect was significant, *a*

posteriori comparisons were performed using Tukey tests implemented in the *emmeans*

package for R (Lenth et al. 2018).

Knockdown times were also used to plot the survival curves based on the

Kaplan-Meier formula using the *survfit* function implemented in the *survival* package

for R (Therneau 2023).

Thermal death time curves (TDT)

Average knockdown times were calculated for each sex, replicate lines, and selection

treatment combination (Table S1). These values were regressed against the assayed

temperatures according to equation 1 (Rezende et al. 2014):

$$log_{10}t = \frac{CT_{max} - T}{z} \qquad \text{eqn. 1}$$

, where T is the assayed static temperature (ºC), CT_{max} is the upper thermal limit (ºC), t

is the knockdown time (min), and z is the thermal sensitivity. These curves allowed the

estimation of CT_{max} as the extrapolated temperature that would result in a knockdown

time of $log_{10}t = 0$ (i.e., knockdown time at 1 min) and the estimation of the thermal

sensitivity ($z = -1/\text{slope}$), where the lower z values, the higher the thermal sensitivity.

Using equation 1, 24 TDT curves (2 sexes × 3 replicate lines × 4 selection

protocols) were fitted, from which CT_{max} and z values were estimated as described

above. A linear model with ramping selection treatment, sex, and their interaction was

performed to evaluate their effects on CT_{max} and z values.

Desiccation and starvation resistance

To determine the lethal time at which 50% of flies of each vial were dead (LT_{50}), a

generalized linear model following a binomial distribution was fitted with the

proportion of flies alive as the dependent variable and time as the predictor variable.

The generalized linear model was run using the g*lm* function of the *lme4* package for R

(Bates et al. 2015). The LT_{50} of each vial was then estimated using the function *dose.p*

from the *MASS* package for R (Venables and Ripley 2002).

To estimate the median LT_{50} and the 95% confidence intervals for each selection

treatment and sex, each LT_{50} was transformed into a survival object using the *Surv* and

survfit functions of the *survival* package for R (Therneau 2023). This procedure also

allowed to estimate the survival curves in each vial. Finally, to test the effect of

selection treatment and sex on desiccation and starvation resistance, a Cox proportional

regression model was fitted with LT_{50} as the dependent variable, and selection protocol

and sex as predictor variables. The Cox model was run using the *coxph* function of the

survival package (Therneau 2023).

RESULTS

Knockdown temperature evolution

Knockdown temperature evolved in response to artificial selection for increased heat

tolerance, regardless of the ramping assay protocol: knockdown temperature was

significantly higher in fast-ramping selected lines than in to fast-ramping control lines

(mean fast-ramping selected lines [95% CI] = 37.71 ºC [37.63 – 37.78] and mean fast-

ramping control lines [95% CI] = 37.23 ºC [37.0 – 37.38]; $F_{1,4}$ = 32.0, P = 0.005); and

the knockdown temperature in slow-ramping selected lines was significantly higher

than in slow-ramping control lines (mean slow-ramping selected lines [95% CI] =

35.48ºC [35.41 – 35.55] and mean fast-ramping control lines [95% CI] = 34.97 ºC

[34.82 – 35.12]; $F_{1,4}$ = 41.7, P = 0.003). These results were previously reported by

Mesas et al. (2021) and are reported here to contextualize the following results.

Knockdown time evolution

As expected, the knockdown time decreased significantly as the assay temperatures

increased ($F_{1,877}$ = 649.1, $P < 2 \times 10^{-16}$). The mean knockdown time and 95% CI for each

static assay are as follows: 35º C = 33.77 min [32.1 – 35.5]; 36º C = 16.98 min [16.1

– 17.9]; 37º C = 8.84 min [8.4 – 9.3]; and 38º C = 6.78 min [6.3 – 7.0].

Knockdown times differed significantly between selection treatments when flies

were assayed at 36 and 37ºC (Table 1; Fig. 1). At these temperatures, slow and fast

selected lines showed higher heat tolerance than slow and fast control lines (Table S1,

S2; Fig. 1C, E). Also, fast-selected lines showed a higher heat tolerance than slow-

selected lines in flies assayed at 37ºC but not at 36ºC (Table S1, S2; Fig. 1C, E),

whereas fast and slow control lines did not differ (Table S2; Fig 1). On the other hand,

replicate lines had no significant effect on knockdown time, indicating consistent

evolutionary responses within each selection and control treatment (variance among

replicate lines = 0, χ^2_1 = 0, and P =1 for all static assays). With respect to sex, females

showed a higher thermal tolerance than males but only when flies were assayed at 35

and 38ºC (Table 1; Fig. 1B, H). Finally, non-significant interactions between selection

and sex were found for all temperatures assayed (Table 1).

TDT curves evolution

Linear regressions between $\log_{10}(LT_{50})$ and assayed temperatures allowed the

estimation of 24 TDT curves (4 selection treatments × 3 replicate lines × 2 sexes) with

high coefficients of determination (mean $R^2 = 0.946$, range: 0.820 – 0.989; Table S3),

confirming that heat knockdown time is linearly related to stressful sublethal

temperatures. From these TDT curves, the mean CT_{max} [95% CI] was 41.21ºC [41.02

– 41.41], and the mean z [95% CI] was 4.18ºC [4.03 – 4.32]. CT_{max} were significantly

different between selection treatments ($F_{3,20} = 4.46$, $P = 0.015$; Fig. 2A). A post hoc

analysis showed that fast-ramping selected and slow-ramping control lines were

significantly different in their CT_{max} values ($t_{20} = 3.195$, $P = 0.02$), whereas fast and

slow control lines had similar CT_{max} values ($t_{20} = 0.911$, $P = 0.80$). Thus, when control

lines are pooled, CT_{max} still differs between selection treatments ($F_{2,18} = 6.69$, $P =$

0.007), with fast-ramping (mean CT_{max} [95% CI] = 41.55 ºC [41.2 – 41.9]) and slow-

ramping selected lines (mean CT_{max} [95% CI] = 41.43 ºC [41.1 – 41.8]) had higher

CT_{max} than control lines (mean CT_{max} [95% CI] = 40.94 ºC [40.7 – 41.2]) ($t_{18} = 3.27$, P

= 0.01 and $t_{18} = 2.64$, $P = 0.04$, respectively). CT_{max} was not different between the

selected lines ($t_{18} = 0.54$, $P = 0.85$). On the other hand, sex and the interaction between

selection treatments and sex had no significant effect on CT_{max} ($F_{1,18} = 0.004$, $P = 0.95$

and $F_{3,18} = 2.11$, $P = 0.15$, respectively). Regarding z (i.e., thermal sensitivity), it shows

no significant effects of selection treatments ($F_{3,16} = 0.91$, $P = 0.46$; Fig. 2), sex ($F_{1,16} =$

1.30, $P = 0.27$), nor the interaction between selection treatments and sex ($F_{3,16} = 2.23$, P

= 0.12). In summary, the evolution of a higher CT_{max} is not associated with an

evolutionary change in thermal sensitivity (Fig. 2B). Indeed, the relationship between

CT_{max} and z did not change with the evolution of increasing thermal tolerance ($r_{control\text{-}lines}$

$= 0.979$ and $r_{selected\text{-}lines} = 0.929$; Z-test $= 0.76$, $P = 0.45$).

Desiccation resistance evolution

Survival analysis showed a significant interaction between selection treatments and sex

on desiccation resistance (LTR: $\chi^2_5 = 83.55$, $P < 2\times10^{-16}$). Males showed a higher risk

of desiccation than female flies (hazard ratio $= 7.11$, $P < 2\times10^{-7}$; Fig. 3). Females

showed a significant difference between selected and control lines (LTR: $\chi^2_2 = 6.72$, P

$= 0.03$; Fig. 3A). Specifically, females of the slow-ramping selection lines showed a

higher desiccation resistance than females of the control lines (Hazard ratio $= 0.42$, $P =$

0.009), whereas females of the fast-ramping selection and control lines showed similar

desiccation risk (hazard ratio $= 0.56$, $P = 0.072$). On the other hand, males showed no

differences in desiccation resistance between selected and control lines (LTR: $\chi^2_2 =$

1.88, $P = 0.4$; Fig. 3B). Results of the desiccation survival analysis testing the effect of

selection protocol, sex, and their interaction are reported in the Table S4.

Starvation resistance evolution

Survival analysis showed a significant interaction between selection treatments and sex

on desiccation resistance ($LTR_5 = 94.89$, $P < 2\times10^{-16}$). Males had a higher risk of

starvation than female flies (hazard ratio $= 22.75$, $P < 1\times10^{-16}$; Fig. 4). In female flies

(Fig. 4A), fast-ramping selection and slow-ramping selection lines showed a higher

starvation risk than control lines (hazard ratio $= 2.37$, $P = 0.009$; and hazard ratio $=$

2.20, $P = 0.014$, respectively). In contrast, male flies had an opposite pattern (Fig. 4B):

slow-ramping selection lines had a lower starvation risk than control lines (hazard ratio

= 0.50, $P = 0.03$), but nonsignificant differences were found between fast-ramping

selection and control lines (hazard ratio = 0.64, $P = 0.16$). Results of the starvation

survival analysis testing the effect of selection protocol, sex, and their interaction are

reported in Table S5.

Discussion

Studying the evolutionary responses of thermal limits is key to understanding the

adaptive responses and evolutionary constraints to global warming. Cross-tolerance

studies can then provide valuable information on the evolutionary response to multiple

environmental stressors. Cross-tolerance evolution has been reported among different

resistance traits (Hoffmann and Parsons 1993; Bubliy and Loeschcke 2005; Stazione et

al. 2020; Singh et al. 2022), but the magnitude of the evolutionary response could be

explained by the trait under direct selection or the stress intensity (Gerken et al. 2016).

Here, artificial selection for heat tolerance (i.e., knockdown temperature) resulted in

correlated responses in heat knockdown time, the thermal tolerance landscape (TDT

curves), desiccation resistance, and starvation resistance. However, these responses

depended on the intensity of thermal selection and sex, suggesting that the evolutionary

response to tolerate higher temperatures also confers partial tolerance to other stresses

such as desiccation and starvation.

Different approaches to measuring the upper thermal limit of ectotherms

produce different genetic and phenotypic estimates. In general, fast ramping assays

estimate higher upper thermal limits and higher heritabilities than slow ramping assays

(Chown et al. 2009; Rezende et al. 2011). In fact, the heritability of thermal tolerance of

was 0.13 for fast assays and 0.08 for slow assays (Castañeda et al. 2019). Because

heritability is commonly used as a predictor of the evolutionary response of a trait to

natural or artificial selection, the evolutionary response of heat tolerance would be

expected to depend on the ramping rate used during selection. However, previous work

did not support this prediction for *D. subobscura*, finding that the evolution of heat

tolerance was independent of the ramping rate (Mesas et al. 2021), but the correlated

responses of the thermal performance curves or the energy metabolism depended on the

intensity of the thermal selection (Mesas et al. 2021; Mesas and Castañeda 2023). In the

present study, the evolution of knockdown temperature (e.g., heat tolerance measured in

dynamic assays) induced a correlated response on the heat knockdown time (e.g., heat

tolerance measured in static assays) when it was assayed at intermediate temperatures

(36 and 37ºC), but not at less or more extreme assayed temperatures (35 and 38ºC).

These findings can be explained because stress tolerance at 35ºC should depend on the

physiological state of the organism during prolonged thermal assays (e.g., availability of

energy resources; see Rezende et al. 2011, but also see Overgaard et al. 2012) and not

only on heat tolerance, whereas heat tolerance at 38ºC could be limited by physical

properties of ectotherms (e.g., protein denaturation, membrane permeability). However,

a previous study found a clinal pattern for heat tolerance in *D. subobscura* only for flies

assayed in static assays (specifically at 38ºC), but this clinal pattern was not detected

using ramping assays (Castañeda et al. 2015). Differences between these two studies

could be explained by the number of generations under thermal selection, which could

result in a different evolutionary response of heat tolerance. According to Begon (1976),

D. subobscura can have between 4 and 6 generations per year, which makes it possible

to estimate about 125 generations of selection from the introduction of *D. subobcura* in

Chile until the study by Castañeda et al. (2015). On the other hand, the type of selection

is completely different between the two studies (e.g., natural versus artificial selection),

which could lead to different evolutionary outcomes. In any case, beyond these results

from specific thermal assays, these findings support the idea that (1) the use of a single

static temperature would miss genetic or phenotypic effects on heat tolerance, and (2)

unifying several knockdown time estimates into a single approach (TDT curves) should

be necessary to elucidate genetic and phenotypic patterns of heat tolerance in

ectotherms (Rezende et al. 2014; Jørgensen et al. 2021).

379   TDT curves evolved in response to heat tolerance selection in *D. subobscura*.

TDT curves showed that fast- and slow-ramping selected lines evolved higher CT_{max}

than control lines ($\Delta CT_{max} = 0.49$ ºC). This differential CT_{max} value is slightly lower

than the population differences (0.9ºC) observed between the lowest and highest latitude

populations (~8 latitudinal degrees) of *D. subobscura* studied by Castañeda et al. (2015)

and even lower than the CT_{max} variation reported among *Drosophila* species (Jørgensen

et al. 2019; Alruiz et al. 2022). On the other hand, although CT_{max} and z (i.e., thermal

sensitivity) are phenotypically correlated (see Castañeda et al. 2015; Molina et al.

2023), the evolutionary increase in CT_{max} was not associated with a correlated response

in thermal sensitivity (z). This result suggests that both thermal parameters are not

genetically constrained, but further evidence from quantitative genetic studies is needed

to assess the genetic association between CT_{max} and z. A caveat for this finding could be

related to the fact that thermal selection for heat tolerance was carried out over 16

generations, followed by 7 generations of relaxed selection (i.e., no selection).

However, previous evidence suggests that differences in heat tolerance between control

and selected lines were consistent between generations 16 and 25 (Mesas et al. 2021).

Indeed, Passananti et al. (2004) also reported that phenotypic values did not change

after 35 generations of relaxed selection in desiccation-selected populations of *D.*

melanogaster.

It was expected that flies selected for higher heat tolerance using slow-ramping

rate protocols would exhibit greater desiccation and starvation resistance than flies

selected using fast-ramping selection protocols. This is because flies assayed for heat

tolerance in long assays are also exposed to desiccation and starvation stress (Santos et

al. 2012) . This study provides partial support for this hypothesis. First, slow-ramping

selected lines evolved a higher desiccation resistance compared to control and fast-

ramping selected lines. However, this was only observed in female flies, while males of

the different selection treatments did not show any difference in desiccation resistance.

On the other hand, starvation resistance evolved in opposite directions depending on

sex: females of the fast-ramping and slow-ramping selected lines showed lower

starvation resistance than females of the control lines, whereas males of the slow-

ramping selected lines showed higher starvation resistance than males of the control and

fast-ramping selected lines. Differential evolutionary responses between the sexes could

be explained because heat thermal selection was only applied to females, which could

have exacerbated the evolutionary responses of female flies. However, previous studies

that artificially selected exaggerated male traits also found fitness consequences in

females (Harano et al. 2010). Differential evolutionary responses between females and

males can then be explained by sexually antagonistic selection on genetically correlated

traits (Eyer et al. 2019; Fanara et al. 2023). Kwan et al. (2008) reported that desiccation-

selected females had higher desiccation resistance than desiccation-selected males (see

also Chippindale et al. 2004), which can be explained by males using resources at a

faster rate than females (e.g., males lose weight, water, and metabolites faster rate than

females). In fact, sexual dimorphism in stress resistance traits has been mainly

explained by differences in cuticular composition, resource storage, and energy

conservation between the sexes (Schwasinger-Schmidt et al. 2012; Rusuwa et al. 2022).

Although energy content was not measured here, Mesas and Castañeda (2023) found

that body mass and metabolic rate were similar between control and heat-tolerance

selected lines of *D. subobscura*, suggesting that neither resource storage nor energy

conservation explains the sex-dependent correlated response for stress resistance traits.

However, the same study found that heat-tolerance selected lines had higher fecundity

than control lines, whereas previous studies have found negative associations between

fecundity and starvation resistance in *D. melanogaster* (Bubliy and Loeschcke 2005;

Kalra et al. 2017). Then, the decrease in starvation resistance in females of the heat-

selected lines could be related to increased fecundity, which is consistent with the

reported trade-off between stress resistance traits and life-history traits (van Noordwijk

and de Jong 1986; Rion and Kawecki 2007).

In conclusion, the present study shows that heat tolerance evolution is associated

with evolutionary responses in other stress resistance traits, which could be explained

by pleiotropic effects or linkage disequilibrium among the traits evaluated. However,

further evidence (e.g., quantitative genetic or genome-wide analysis studies) is needed

to elucidate the genetic basis of the cross-tolerance evolution in *D. subobscura*. In

addition, this study provides evidence for rapid evolutionary responses in ectotherms

mediated by thermal selection, but the evolutionary outcomes depend on the intensity of

the thermal stress (Mesas and Castañeda 2023) and sex (Rogell et al. 2014; Rusuwa et

al. 2022). This study also highlights the importance of *D. subobscura* as a suitable

model to study thermal adaptation mediated by natural selection (Huey 2000; Gilchrist

et al. 2008; Castañeda et al. 2013, 2015), and laboratory selection (Santos et al. 2005,

Santos et al. 2021; Simões et al. 2017; Mesas et al. 2021; Mesas and Castañeda 2023).

In addition, this study highlights the relevance of experimental evolutionary studies for

understanding the adaptive responses to climate change (Mitchell and Whitney 2018;

Brennan et al. 2022; Kelly 2022). Finally, these results suggest that ectotherms may

evolve in response to climate warming, but evolutionary responses may differ between

sexes and/or the warming rates experienced by natural populations, which may make it

difficult to propose general trends in the fate of ectotherms in a changing world where

temperature is not the only driver of climate change, but species are also expected to be

exposed to changes in precipitation patterns and food availability.

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Data availability

Data and scripts are available at

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Conflict of interest disclosure

Author declares that he complies with the PCI rule of having no financial conflicts in

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Table 1. Mixed linear effect model for the knockdown time of *Drosophila subobscura*

assayed in four static temperature assays. For simplicity, results for the random effect

(replicate lines) are not shown because they were not statistically significant (see

Materials and Methods). Significant P-values (< 0.05) are indicated in boldface type.

Knockdown time	Selection	Sex	Selection × Sex
Static assay at 35ºC	$F_{3,170} = 0.62$ *P*-value = 0.60	$F_{1,170} = 8.64$ ***P*-value = 0.004**	$F_{3,170} = 0.64$ *P*-value = 0.59
Static assay at 36ºC	$F_{3,232} = 9.86$ ***P*-value = 3.8×10⁻⁶**	$F_{1,232} = 2.65$ *P*-value = 0.10	$F_{3,232} = 0.74$ *P*-value = 0.53
Static assay at 37ºC	$F_{3,222} = 18.39$ ***P*-value = 1.1×10⁻¹⁰**	$F_{1,222} = 0.001$ *P*-value = 0.97	$F_{3,222} = 2.05$ *P*-value = 0.11
Static assay at 38ºC	$F_{3,224} = 1.93$ *P*-value = 0.13	$F_{1,224} = 4.63$ ***P*-value = 0.032**	$F_{3,224} = 2.44$ *P*-value = 0.07

Figure 1. Heat-induced mortality in *Drosophila subobscura* flies assayed at four static

temperatures. Left panels show the heat knockdown time of slow-ramping control (solid

black line), fast-ramping control (dashed black line), slow-ramping selection (red line),

and fast-ramping selection lines (blue lines). The right panels show the heat knockdown

time of female (purple line) and male (green line) flies. Dotted lines indicate the median

knockdown time for each selection protocol (left panels) and sex (right panels).

Figure 2. (A) Thermal death curves for control (black solid and dashed lines) and

selected (red and blue lines) lines for increasing heat tolerance in *Drosophila*

subobscura. Symbols represent the average knockdown time at the different

temperatures assayed. Each symbol represents the average knockdown time for each

replicate line for each thermal regime: slow-control (black circle), fast-control (black

triangle), slow-ramping (red circle), and fast-ramping (blue triangle). (B) Relationship

between CT_{max} and z for slow-ramping control (solid black line), fast-ramping control

(dashed black line), slow-ramping selection (red line), and fast-ramping selection lines

(blue lines). Each symbol represents the CT_{max} and z estimated for each replicate line.

Figure 3. Desiccation survival curves of (A) females and (B) males from control (black

line), slow-ramping selection (red line), and fast-ramping selection lines (blue lines) of

Drosophila subobscura. Dashed lines indicate the median mortality time for each

selection protocol (pooled replicate cages).

Figure 4. Starvation survival curves of (A) females and (B) males from control (black

line), slow-ramping selection (red line), and fast-ramping selection lines (blue lines) of

Drosophila subobscura. Dashed lines indicate the median mortality time for each

selection protocol (pooled replicate cages).

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