Evidence for natural selection and barrier leakage in candidate

loci underlying speciation in wood ants

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Abstract

While speciation underlies novel biodiversity, it is poorly understood how natural

selection shapes genomes during speciation. Selection is assumed to act against gene

flow at barrier loci, promoting reproductive isolation and speciation. However,

evidence for gene flow and selection is often indirect. Here we utilize haplodiploidy

to identify candidate barrier loci in hybrids between two wood ant species and

integrate survival analysis to directly measure if natural selection is acting at

candidate barrier loci. We find multiple candidate barrier loci but surprisingly,

proportion of them show leakage between samples collected ten years apart, natural

selection favoring leakage in the latest sample. Barrier leakage and natural selection

for introgressed alleles could be due to environment-dependent selection,

emphasizing the need to consider temporal variation in natural selection in future

speciation work. Integrating data on survival allows us to move beyond genome

scans, demonstrating natural selection acting on hybrid genomes in real-time.

Keywords: Speciation, Hybridization, Haplodiploid, Hymenoptera, *Formica* wood

ants, genomic island of divergence, genomic scan, incompatibility, gene network

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Short title: Candidate loci of speciation and barrier leakage

Introduction

New species are formed when populations become reproductively isolated, i.e. they do not interbreed and exchange genetic material [1]. However, until complete reproductive isolation has evolved gene flow may still occur between the diverging lineages. This genetic exchange is usually localized in the genome, with some regions of the genome resisting gene flow better than others. Regions resistant to gene flow are thought to harbor "barrier loci" that can drive the divergence between lineages despite the homogenizing effect of gene flow [2]. Barrier loci could contribute to reproductive isolation by allowing differential adaptation between diverging lineages [2]. Alternatively, barrier loci could consist of genes incompatible between the diverging lineages (Dobzhansky-Muller incompatibilities [3,4], DMIs) driven by drift or divergent selection [5].

Several recent studies have searched for barrier loci using genome scans and identified genomic islands of differentiation using various measures of genetic differentiation [e.g. refs *6–8*]. The underlying assumption in these genome scans is that the most differentiated genomic regions between hybridizing lineages are those that are resistant to gene flow and hence drive reproductive isolation. Genetic differentiation however is an indirect measure of gene flow and several problems with genome scans have been discussed [e.g. refs *9, 10*]. The main problem lies in the fact that several other evolutionary forces (such as low recombination rate or drift) can bring about genomic regions of seemingly high differentiation between populations. Thus, we need more studies that test if natural selection is promoting speciation and halting gene flow at these genomic regions in natural populations.

Here we use ants as a model system to discover genomic regions of divergence (i.e. putative barrier loci) and to test for natural selection acting on them. In ants, males are haploid and born from unfertilized eggs from the mother, whereas females are diploid and arise via normal sexual reproduction. The haploid males thus allow the observation of natural selection acting on recessive alleles that are masked in female heterozygotes. Specifically, we use a naturally occurring hybrid population between two mound-building wood ant species, *Formica aquilonia* and *F. polyctena* from Southern Finland. These species have been estimated to diverge within the last

500, 000 years, probably at least partly in allopatry in different glacial refugia [10].

The hybrid population is well suited for unraveling the genetic basis of speciation:

genetic incompatibilities segregate and persist across generations allowing to measure

selection acting on these alleles in nature [11,12].

Previously, we have shown that haploid hybrid eggs (i.e. hybrid males) are laid each

generation, but that males with specific introgressed alleles have low viability and die

during development [12]. Yet diploid hybrid females with the same alleles persist in

the population and seem to be favored over more parental-like individuals. This

suggests recessive nuclear incompatibilities are in action in the haploid hybrid males,

but these are masked in the diploid hybrid females where heterozygotes for

introgressed alleles are favored [12]. Modeling work suggests that these opposite

selective pressures between males and females can lead to purging of

incompatibilities or their long-term maintenance depending on their initial

frequencies, strength of selection and recombination [13]. The age of the hybrid

population is unknown, but present-day individuals are not first-generation hybrids.

Instead, the study population divides into two genetic lineages in a very similar way

to the swordtail fish [14]; within the hybrid population one lineage is genetically more

similar to one of the parental species, *Formica aquilonia* (previously referred to as W

group), and the other is closer to the other parental species, *F. polyctena* (previously

referred to as R group) [15]. Even though both lineages are of hybrid origin they show

signs of reproductive isolation, as 94.5 % of successful matings are within a lineage

[11,12] and we have never observed reproductive adult F1 individuals in nature. The

Formica system differs from the genetic caste determination system observed e.g. in

Pogonomyrmex harvester ants [16], because in *Formica* both queens and workers

arise from the same mating events and show no genetic difference in contrast to

Pogonomyrmex. Both lineages have previously lacked adult males with specific

introgressed alleles (i.e. heterospecific alleles) or had them at low frequency due to

negative selection, while the same alleles were favored in females as heterozygotes.

This has resulted in strong allele frequency differences between sexes at specific

marker loci, females having frequencies as high as 0.4 while males lack these alleles

altogether [11]. We have shown that this antagonistic selection acting on introgressed

alleles is stronger in the *F. polyctena*–like lineage, where over 90 % of male eggs

were estimated to die [12]. Selection is weaker on the males of the *F. aquilonia*–like
lineage, as is the evidence for selection favoring female heterozygotes.

Here we discover and annotate candidate barrier loci, i.e. the genomic regions that
associate with hybrid male breakdown and thus act as barriers for gene flow between
the two wood ant species. We then test if natural selection is acting on these candidate
barrier regions in nature using SNP genotyping and survival analysis. This allows for
testing the role of natural selection in genomic islands of divergence and reproductive
isolation within a natural population, which has not been possible in most of the
genomic studies of speciation.

Results

*Multiple barrier loci throughout the genome are candidates for hybrid male
breakdown*
We used pooled genomic sequencing to discover the genomic regions associated with
hybrid male breakdown (see Figure 1 for experimental design). We sequenced four
samples, each consisting of 24 individuals: *F. polyctena*–like males, *F. polyctena*–like
females (unmated queens), *F. aquilonia*–like males and *F. aquilonia* –like females
(unmated queens). These individuals were classified into lineages based on six to
seven diagnostic microsatellite alleles [11]. Due to haplodiploidy, this resulted in 24
and 48 chromosomes sampled for male and female pools, respectively. These pools
represent population samples and came from two to four nests each, all of which
belong to the same supercolony, where nests have hundreds of reproductive queens
and relatedness approaching zero. Our previous [11,12] and current analyses (see
Results) show there is no differentiation between nests within a lineage, justifying
pooling of individuals from different nests. We sequenced each pool with 100 bp
paired-end reads on its own lane in Illumina HiSeq2000 and made a *de novo* assembly
from each pool. Subsequently, the assembly of *F. polyctena*–like males was used as a
reference (genome size = 222.6 Mb, N50 = 1748 bp, 327,480 total scaffolds). Each
pool was mapped to the reference assembly and SNPs were called after filtering. We
retained 166,167 bi-allelic SNPs displaying coverage between 20 and 60 in each pool
and minor allele count of four over all pools.

Figure 1. Overview of our approach. a) Study system, where two hybrid *F. aquilonia × F. polyctena* lineages coexist in different nests within the same population. b) Discovering candidate barrier regions with pooled genomic sequencing of adults, with a schematic representation of the male (haploid) and the female (diploid) genomes of the two lineages (simplified as a single chromosome). Red rectangles represent alleles originating from the *F. polyctena*-like lineage and blue represent alleles originating from *F. aquilonia*-like lineage. c) Testing natural selection at candidate barrier loci between larval (Early) and adult stages (Late).

We defined barrier loci as SNP positions where the male genomes from the *F. aquilonia*–like and *F. polyctena*–like lineages were fixed differently (i.e. $F_{ST} = 1$, see Supplementary Figure 1). This criterion is arbitrary in the sense that many loci showing significant differentiation (but not fixed) could be under selection too. However, loci fixed differently in males, despite shared hybrid history and variable in females are expected to experience the strongest antagonistic selection in the current population and offer the best opportunity to test for selection acting on barrier loci. We assumed that the allele fixed in *F. aquilonia*–like males represents the parental *F. aquilonia* allele and the allele fixed in *F. polyctena*–like males represents parental *F. polyctena,* from lineages that gave rise to the hybrid population.

The mean F_{ST} estimate between the *F. aquilonia*–like and *F. polyctena*–like lineages was 0.14 (s.e. = $4.66×10^{-4}$) between the males, and 0.07 (s.e. = $2.27×10^{-4}$) between the female pools. We found 711 SNPs (0.43 % of the total) alternatively fixed between

males of the *F. aquilonia*–like and *F. polyctena*–like lineages, but no fixed differences

between the female pools. As expected under antagonistic selection, SNPs fixed

differently in males were polymorphic and had mean F_{ST} of 0.34 (s.e. = 5.83×10^{-3},

Supplementary Figure 1) in the females. The alternatively fixed SNPs between the

male pools represent genomic regions of high differentiation between the two male

lineages despite their shared hybrid history, and thus mark candidate barrier loci that

are predicted to contribute to reproductive isolation and speciation. These 711 SNPs

fell into 610 assembled contigs (cumulative size: 2.09 Mb, 0.94% of the genome),

whose lengths vary between 515 – 23,815 bp (mean = 3430 bp). Seventy-eight

contigs had more than two barrier SNPs (maximal number of barrier SNPs on a single

contig was 5).

We were interested in how these candidate barrier loci locate in the genome, because

this can provide information about the origin of reproductive isolation and play a role

in how efficient the barrier loci are in maintaining divergence despite hybridization

and gene flow. If candidate barrier loci are co-localized in the genome their origin and

maintenance could be explained by selection on a few genomic regions that could, for

example, harbor structural re-arrangements. Alternatively, candidate barrier loci

scattered across the genome could effectively reduce gene flow over much of the

genome. We used the genome of the closely-related *Formica exsecta* [17] (277 Mb,

14,617 scaffolds, N50 = 997,654), which is better assembled compared to the poolseq

genome assembly, to map the location of candidate barrier loci. *F. exsecta* is

estimated to have diverged from the parental species of our hybrid population 5 Mya

[18]. We used the 610 contigs containing candidate barrier SNPs as queries and

searched the *F. exsecta* genome assembly using BlastN. If our query scaffold was

larger than 5, 000 bp we used +/- 2, 500 bp surrounding the candidate barrier SNP as

query. Our candidate barrier loci map to a total of 134 *F. exsecta* contigs, with a

cumulative coverage of 56.2 % of the *F. exsecta* genome, both of which are

significantly less than for a similar number of random SNPs in our data set

(Supplementary Figure 2). Haploid chromosome number varies between 26 and 28 in

Formica [19]. Assuming evenly-sized chromosomes our candidate barrier loci are

likely to be situated in over 10 chromosomes.

Candidate barrier loci are predicted to interact at the protein level

Next, we were interested in the possible functions of our candidate barrier loci, as

they can be informative about the putative selection pressures and mechanisms of

hybrid male breakdown. We annotated each of the 610 contigs containing candidate

barrier SNPs, first extracting the transcripts of the genes located in those regions from

the closely related *F. exsecta*. Out of 571 candidate barrier regions (see Material and

Methods; each region was defined as 5, 000 bp around the candidate barrier SNP) that

we were able to anchor in *F. exsecta* (all blastn *e*-values $< 10^{-141}$), we recovered 590

unique genes. Sixty-three of the candidate genomic regions did not contain any

annotated gene. The mean number of genes per candidate genomic region was 1.4,

and the maximum was six. For each gene, its *F. exsecta* transcript sequence was

recovered and blasted (blastx) against *Drosophila melanogaster* r6.15 proteins

recovering 317 genes, whose homologs reside in candidate barrier regions

(Supplementary Table 1).

The genetic model for hybrid breakdown suggests inviability and sterility are caused

by dysfunction and negative epistatic interactions between diverged genes from the

parental species. One possible mechanism that can result in epistasis are molecular

interactions. We thus asked if there was any evidence for molecular interactions in the

form of protein-protein interactions between the gene products in candidate barrier

regions. For this we used the recovered *D. melanogaster* proteins and the STRING

database [20], which contains information on known and predicted protein-protein

interactions. We found that candidate barrier regions harbor proteins that show

significantly more interactions with each other than a random set of proteins drawn

from the *D. melanogaster* genome (PPI enrichment *p*-value = 9.65×10^{-13}, Figure 2).

Out of 268 genes annotated and having information in the STRING database, 167

genes fall into a single interaction network, with evidence for protein-protein

interactions in *D. melanogaster* or other species. Seventy-four of the network genes

had evidence for interactions which were experimentally determined or obtained from

curated database (PPI enrichment *p*-value = 0.03). However, randomly drawing 711

SNPs from our pooled sequencing data 1000 times showed that similar enrichment in

protein-protein interactions (i.e. network) could be retrieved for a random set of SNPs

as well. This suggests either a bias towards functional and interacting sets of genes in

our total SNP dataset or a bias in our method towards interacting sets of genes arising

due to conservation (only genes conserved between ants and *D. melanogaster* can be

included in the analysis). However, this does not mean the interactions which were

documented would be unreliable. In summary, our results suggest interactions among

the genes in candidate barrier regions, but these interactions are not significantly more

abundant than for random sets of SNPs in our data.

Figure 2. STRING interaction network. Each circle represents one candidate gene and lines connecting
them indicate support for interaction between the genes. Majority of interactions fall into a single
network. Line color indicates following: blue = data from curated databases, pink = experimentally
determined interactions, black = co-expression. Analysis is based on *D. melanogaster* homologs. Left
panel: all interactions, and right panel: experimentally determined interactions or interactions obtained
from curated databases.

Next, we were interested in the functions of genes within candidate barrier regions.

For this we used the *D. melanogaster* gene IDs. The top three biological processes

characterizing our candidate barrier genes are "developmental process" ($p = 3.5 \times 10^{-18}$),

"system development" ($p = 3.5 \times 10^{-18}$), and "single-organism developmental

process" ($p = 4.03 \times 10^{-18}$). Similarly, the top three molecular functions are "ion

binding" ($p = 8.55 \times 10^{-6}$), "protein binding" ($p = 3.67 \times 10^{-5}$) and "calcium ion binding"

($p = 8.74 \times 10^{-5}$). These biological processes and molecular functions were highly

significantly enriched when compared to the genome average of *Drosophila*

melanogaster. However, they were not significantly enriched if compared to a random

299 set of SNPs drawn from our data, as all of them are found in over 5 % of our

300 simulations.

302 *Testing for signs of selection at candidate barrier loci in a natural population*

303 We tested for selection during development by genotyping altogether 96 individuals

304 at early (larva) and 100 individuals at late (adult or late stage pupa) developmental

305 stages (Supplementary Table 2), with 180 random and 183 candidate barrier SNPs

306 (Figure 1). Out of these, 163 candidate barrier SNPs and 137 random SNPs were

307 successfully genotyped. The 137 random SNPs were located on 136 contigs

308 (cumulative size: 484 kb, 0.22% of the genome), whereas the 163 candidate barrier

309 SNPs located on 159 contigs within our assembly (cumulative size: 523 kb, 0.23% of

310 the genome). Individuals used in genotyping were collected in Spring 2014 from the

311 same hybrid population as the one sampled for the pooled sequencing analysis ten

312 years earlier.

314 The SNP genotyping confirmed that within the hybrid population, *F. polyctena*–like

315 and *F. aquilonia*–like lineages are genetically distinct from one another

316 (Supplementary Figure 3). We found two small female larvae, which were genetically

317 intermediate and had unique combinations of putative parental alleles from the two

318 lineages suggesting they were early-generation hybrids between the lineages

319 (Supplementary Figure 3). The *F. polyctena*–like individuals, and especially the

320 males, were previously shown to experience strongest selection. Unfortunately, we

321 were able to sample only 8 males from this lineage, five of which turned out to be

322 diploid, thus *F. polyctena*–like males were excluded from the analysis. The following

323 analyses were performed for *F. polyctena*-like females, *F. aquilonia*-like males and *F.*

324 *aquilonia*-like females.

326 First, we asked if adult allele frequencies inferred from the pooled sequencing

327 correlated with adult allele frequencies estimated from the SNP genotyping data, as

328 the two data sets have been collected ten years apart and allele frequencies were

329 estimated in different ways. Over all the genotyped SNPs, allele frequencies between

330 the two data sets correlated well in *F. polyctena*–like females (Spearman's

331 correlation, $\rho = 0.87$, $CI_{95} = [0.82, 0.90]$, $p < 0.001$) and in *F. aquilonia*–like females

($\rho = 0.91$, $CI_{95} = [0.88, 0.94]$, $p < 0.001$) (Figure 3). The correlation was lower for the

males with a Spearman's correlation coefficient of 0.71 ($CI_{95} = [0.64, 0.76]$, $p <$

0.001) between adult allele frequencies estimated from pooled sequencing and

genotyping (Figure 3). The lower correlation in males compared to females can be

explained, at least in part, by the lower number of sampled chromosomes for

(haploid) males compared to (diploid) females creating a larger error in the estimated

allele frequencies. Overall, correlations between allele frequency estimates are in line

with other studies focusing on the accuracy of allele frequency estimates derived from

poolseq [21] and suggest pooled sequencing and SNP genotyping gave similar results.

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Figure 3. Allele frequencies correlate between pooled sequencing (adults sampled in 2004) and SNP
genotyping in late stage (adults sampled in 2014). Putative barrier loci are colored according to their
polarization (red: allele introgressed from *F. polyctena*-like to *F. aquilonia*-like, blue: allele introgressed
from *F. aquilonia*-like to *F. polyctena*-like). Control SNPs (in grey) are polarized by the minor allele in
the poolseq data. Linear regressions are indicated for each class of SNPs according to their colors, along
with their Spearman's correlation coefficients and their significance (***: $p < 0.001$).

Candidate barrier SNPs show significant heterozygote excess in females

Next, we tested if the barrier loci showed significant allele or genotype frequency

changes during development from larva to adult compared to the random loci. This

would demonstrate natural selection acting on the candidate barrier loci in nature. No

significant allele frequency change was observed between larval and adult stage at

candidate barrier loci compared to random loci in females of *F. aquilonia*– or *F.*

polyctena–like lineage (Figure 4, Figure 5).

375 Our previous microsatellite-based study showed that introgressed alleles were favored

376 in females when heterozygous. This selection acted throughout the female lifetime.

377 Thus, we searched for signs of similar selection testing for increase in heterozygote

378 excess between early and late stages using F_{IS} estimates. Indeed, there was a tendency

379 for more negative mean F_{IS} values (i.e. greater excess of heterozygosity) in candidate

barrier loci at the adult stage (*F. aquilonia*–like F_{IS} = –0.116, *F. polyctena*– F_{IS} = –0.2) compared to the larval stage (*F. aquilonia*–like F_{IS} = –0.085, *F. polyctena*– F_{IS} = –0.179) in both female lineages (Figure 6), but this tendency was not statistically significant in either lineage when compared to random loci (*F. aquilonia*–like *p* = 0.295, *F. polyctena*–like *p* = 0.643). However, candidate barrier loci had significantly greater heterozygote excess compared to random loci already at larval stage (GLMM, *z*-value = –4.404, *p* < 0.001) and this pattern remained at adult stage as well (GLMM, *z*-value= –7.133, *p* < 0.001) in *F. polyctena*–like females. To account for possible effects of linkage disequilibrium, the SNP data set was pruned by omitting SNPs closer than 50 kb, 100 kb or 500 kb according to their BLAST hits in the *F. exsecta* assembly. Pruning did not affect the above results (all *p* -values reported above from GLMMs remained significant for all pruning intervals; Supplementary Figure 8, panels A-D). Greater excess heterozygosity in candidate barrier SNPs compared to random SNPs can result from either (i) strong allele frequency differences between parental genotypes or (ii) selection for heterozygosity that has already acted at candidate barrier loci before the larval stage we sampled (i.e. between egg and larval stage).

Figure 6. Mean F_{IS} estimates in early (larva) and late (adult) developmental stages in random (grey) and candidate barrier loci (green) in year 2014.

Evidence for selection in candidate barrier SNPs in F. aquilonia–like males

Then, we tested for allele frequency changes in *F. aquilonia*–like males, expecting the
introgressed alleles to decrease in frequency during development as shown in our
previous microsatellite based study [12]. Allele frequencies were significantly
different between larval and adult developmental stages in candidate barrier SNPs
compared to the random SNPs (glmer, *z*-value= –2.98, p = 0.00286), the candidate
barrier SNPs showing more frequency change during development (Figure 5).
However, the frequencies of the introgressed alleles increased from larval to adult
developmental stages in *F. aquilonia*–like males (Figure 4), a pattern opposite to our
expectations. Significant increase of introgressed alleles at candidate barrier loci in
contrast to alleles at random loci suggests selection favored the introgressed alleles in
F. aquilonia–like males during development. Again, this result remained significant
after pruning the SNP data (Supplementary Figure 8, panel E). Unfortunately, we
were unable to test selection acting at candidate barrier loci in *F. polyctena*–like
males, the lineage where we had the strongest expectation of negative selection,
because too few *F. polyctena*–like males were sampled from the population. The low
occurrence of these males is consistent with their estimated high mortality [12].

Barrier leakage and significant variation in the strength of barriers through time

Introgressed (i.e., *F. polyctena*–like) alleles were absent from adult *F. aquilonia*–like
males at 163 candidate barrier loci in year 2004 (allele frequency of zero in the
poolseq data). However, in year 2014 significant proportion of these loci harbored
alleles introgressed from the *F. polyctena*–like lineage (123 loci, i.e. 75.5%) to *F.
aquilonia*–like males. The mean frequency of introgressed alleles in these males was
0.36, the most common introgressed allele being at a frequency of 0.81. Sampling
different sub-populations within a lineage at different years is unlikely to drive
increase of introgressed allele frequencies between 2004 and 2014 in our samples of
F. aquilonia–like males: We observed no population substructure within the *F.
aquilonia*–like lineage in 2005 or 2014 (Supplementary Figures 3 and 4). Increase of
introgressed alleles in males is not likely to be caused by errors in male poolseq-based
allele frequency estimates either. All but one of the candidate barrier SNPs (33 out of
34 SNPs) that were initially fixed in both adult males and females of the *F.
aquilonia*–like lineage in the pooled sequencing data (year 2004) were still fixed in
the genotyping data (year 2014), showing consistency across data sets. If differences

between allele frequency estimates from 2004 and 2014 were caused by errors in

poolseq allele frequency estimates, this should affect all SNP loci equally. However,

this is not the case, as only candidate barrier SNPs that were polymorphic in females

of the *F. aquilonia*–like lineage have now "leaked" into *F. aquilonia*–like males. Our

results thus suggest that in year 2014 a proportion of the barrier loci are "leaking" in

F. aquilonia–like males. At these loci introgressed alleles were on average selected

for in males as evidenced by significant frequency increase between larval and adult

stages (see above), a pattern opposite to our previous observations [11,12].

Using microsatellite genotyping, we further verified that increasing frequencies of

introgressed alleles at candidate barrier SNPs in *F. aquilonia*–like males did not

represent technical artifacts. Specifically, we genotyped the individuals collected in

2014 and used in SNP genotyping with nine previously used microsatellite markers

[5,12] and compared them to samples collected in 2004, 2008 and 2011

(Supplementary Table 3). Microsatellite allele frequencies from 2014 paralleled the

pattern observed in candidate barrier SNPs in the same year. Indeed, *F. aquilonia*–like

males in 2014 harbor microsatellite alleles introgressed from the *F. polyctena*–like

lineage that were missing from them in 2004 (Table 2). Specifically, the frequencies

of two microsatellite alleles ($Fy3_{190}$ and $Fy15_{222}$) introgressed from *F. polyctena* to *F.*

aquilonia–like males have fluctuated over the years from 0 in 2004 to 0.28 in 2014

for $Fy15_{222}$ and from 0 in 2004 to 0.45 in 2014 for $Fy3_{190}$ (Supplementary table 3,

Figure 7A). No leakage of alleles introgressed from the *F. aquilonia*-like lineage to

the *F. polyctena*–like males was observed, the five introgressed microsatellite alleles

remaining at a null frequency in adult *F. polyctena*–like males in 2004 (N=35), 2008

(N=41) and 2011 (N=23, Supplementary table 3).

Discussion

Several recent genome scan studies have used next-generation sequencing to map

genomic regions putatively under divergent natural selection and underlying

reproductive isolation (reviewed in [2]). Approaches can often be based solely on

comparing genomes, because observing natural selection, collecting data on fitness or

molecular characterization of loci underlying reproductive isolation is challenging.

However, several suggestions have been made to move beyond genome scans with an

integrative approach [2,22]. To bridge the gap between genotype and fitness in

genome scan studies we first took advantage of male haploidy in ants and discovered

genomic regions of high divergence (i.e. candidate barrier regions). We then tested if

natural selection is acting on these genomic regions in a natural population using a

SNP panel and survival analysis, expecting haploid males to show the strongest

signals of selection against gene flow at barrier loci. However, instead we document

signature of barrier leakage at the candidate loci, with significant increase in the

frequency of introgressed alleles in *F. aquilonia*–like males during development.

Below we discuss reasons for the signatures of barrier leakage including environment-

dependent incompatibilities, formation of compatible combinations of parental alleles

and recombination breaking association between selected and hitchhiking loci. The

ant system is dynamic and allows further investigations into how selection acts on

hybrid genomes in cases of speciation with gene flow.

Considering barrier loci that evolve in a network

Hybrid breakdown is expected to result from deleterious epistatic interactions (i.e.

intrinsic incompatibilities) between diverged genes of the parental species [3,4].

Relatively few studies have investigated the effect of incompatibilities in networks or

incompatibility loci with more than one interaction (in comparison to two-locus

DMIs) for speciation, but see [5,23–25]. This is in stark contrast with our

understanding of molecular biology: genes and their products interact with several

other genes, are part of gene interaction networks, and are regulated by transcription

factors. We found that candidate barrier and hitchhiking loci likely cover a large

proportion of the genome in two *Formica* ant species, which diverged within the last

500 000 years [10]. We also found support for multiple protein-protein interactions

between genes located among the candidate barrier regions. Majority of genes in these

regions were predicted to form a single protein-protein interaction network, with

interactions for homologous proteins documented or predicted in other species.

However, our bootstrap analysis shows that the network found among the candidate

barrier loci was not significantly different from the genomic background: any

polymorphisms we were able to call within our pooled sequencing data was likely to

give significant enrichment of protein-protein interactions using our analysis pipeline.

Our annotation is based on *D. melanogaster* homologs, which makes our pipeline

biased towards conserved genes. If conserved genes are also more likely to have

evidence for protein-protein interactions (as suggested by some studies [26]), that

could lead to enrichment of interactions among both candidate barrier loci and

random sets of SNPs with our data and pipeline. Our results highlight potential biases

when extrapolating data from model organisms into non-model systems.

Bootstrapping analyses, such as presented here, can reveal that candidate genes are

not any different from genomic background of the focal species. However, this does

not mean that the interactions we found would be unimportant. Protein-protein

interactions could still create epistatic interactions among the barrier loci. Our results

are consistent with the idea of multiple genes underlying hybrid breakdown that

interact in a network instead of multiple two-locus interactions. Functional and

population studies in *Formica* are needed to test if mismatching combinations of

parental alleles at network loci lead to hybrid inviability, as predicted if protein-

protein interactions cause negative epistasis [3,4].

Annotation of candidate barrier regions suggests genes in these regions play a role in

development, with 133 genes out of 268 investigated having the GO term

"developmental process". These results are consistent with our previous findings

where we show hybrid male breakdown during development in the *F. polyctena*–like

lineage [12]. Furthermore, developmental problems are a common cause of hybrid

breakdown [27,28]. Our analysis pipeline is likely to produce a bias towards

conserved genes because it is based on *D. melanogaster* homologs, and

developmental genes are more likely to be conserved at the sequence level [29]. Thus,

it is likely that additional gene functions could be found if we were able to annotate

the function of all open reading frames within candidate barrier regions. Interestingly,

our candidate barrier loci included homologs of two major barrier loci in *Heliconius*:

a member of the *Wnt* gene family and *optix,* which are known to act as barriers to

gene flow and are responsible for variation in wing patterning between *Heliconius*

races [6].

But why would a developmental gene network have diverged between the two

Formica species parental to the hybrids? Divergence could have been driven by drift

or differential adaptation between the parental species. The parental species have

likely diverged in allopatry and may now be adapted into different climatic

conditions, *F. aquilonia* being distributed in Northern Eurasia and higher altitudes of

Central Europe, while *F. polyctena* is likely adapted to warmer climate and occurs in

Central Europe and Southern parts of Fennoscandia and Russia [30]. While the

species have adapted into different climatic regimes it is plausible that their

developmental programs have adapted and diverged too. However, developmental

programs can diverge also at least partly by drift. Developmental system drift is a

common phenomenon [31] where homologous characters develop via different

regulation of genes or involve completely different sets of genes.

Signs of selection at candidate barrier loci and barrier leakage

Previously we have shown antagonistic selection on ant hybrids, where introgressed

alleles were favored in female heterozygotes, but selected against in haploid males,

with strongest evidence of this in the *F. polyctena*–like lineage [11,12]. Our current

dataset shows a trend of increasing heterozygosity excess at candidate barrier loci

during female development, but this is not statistically significant after removal of

two outlier individuals likely to be early generation hybrids. However, we find a

significant excess of heterozygosity at the candidate barrier loci compared to the

random loci. This excess heterozygosity is likely to be caused by selection either in

the current generation or earlier in population history. First, strong allele frequency

differences between mothers and fathers would result in high heterozygosity in

diploid females without the action of selection in the sampled generation. However, in

this scenario initial differentiation between sexes at candidate barrier loci was likely

caused by selection acting in earlier generations (see below). Second, selection that

favors heterozygotes may have already acted on the candidate loci before the larval

stage we sampled. Our previous study documented selection during development

using eggs and few days old larvae and compared them to adults, whereas here we use

1-2 week old larvae and adults. Thus, in the current study we are likely to miss any

signal of selection acting earlier in development.

We assumed the candidate barrier loci to represent recessive incompatibilities and loci

linked to them, thus expecting to find evidence of negative selection in the haploid

males [11,12]. However, we find the opposite with introgressed alleles increasing in

frequency at the candidate barrier loci in the *F. aquilonia*–like males during

development. This is consistent with natural selection favoring introgression in these

males. The magnitude of change is comparable to that observed within a generation in

other systems, e.g. in stick insects for the color pattern locus [32].

Selection for introgression within a generation in males may be connected to patterns

we observed between years: A proportion of the barrier loci showed barrier leakage

resulting in increase of introgressed alleles in males sampled 10 years apart. These

rising frequencies of introgressed alleles in *F. aquilonia*–like haploid males between

years can be explained by at least three hypotheses, which are not mutually exclusive.

First, the barriers to gene flow can be gradually breaking down in *F. aquilonia*–like

males, which could explain both within- and between-year patterns. Barrier breakage

could be due to recombination and subsequent formation of compatible combinations

of barrier loci in males. Barriers for gene flow could also break down due to relaxed

selection. Under this model the haplodiploid systems (and X-chromosomes) can show

fluctuating allele frequencies at candidate barrier loci, comparable to those observed

in our data, if sexes had different allele frequencies to begin with. However, gradual

breakdown of barriers for gene flow can only explain changes observed between

years and not selection for introgressed alleles within a generation in males. Also,

allele frequency differences between sexes are not expected to be maintained without

selection over multiple generations. Second, a proportion of marker loci may have

been hitchhiking due to close genomic location with barrier loci and so missing from

males in 2004, but these hitchhikers are now becoming dissociated from the barrier

loci via recombination and consequently found in males in 2014. Again, this

hypothesis cannot explain the significant increase of introgressed alleles within a

generation in males. A third possibility is that the incompatibilities could be

environment-dependent, which could explain both within-generation and between-

years effect. Environment-dependence means that the negative effects of the

incompatibilities would be expressed only in certain environments. This situation is

comparable to genotype $\times$ genotype $\times$ environment interaction, where fitness effects

of a genetic variant are dependent on the genomic background it is found in, as well

as the external environment. Previous empirical evidence for environment-dependent

incompatibilities comes e.g. from yeast [33] and *Drosophila* [34]. Current results for

ants are most consistent with environment-dependent incompatibilities, but new

genome-wide data needs to be collected over multiple years and generations in order

to rule out other hypotheses.

Can environment drive barrier leakage?

Environment dependent incompatibilities have been largely neglected in the

speciation context: DMIs are assumed to be deleterious, no matter the environment.

Yet, we know cases where barriers for gene flow hold in one environment but not in

the other [14,33,34]. The fact that we see fluctuations rather than directional changes

in the frequency of introgressed alleles at microsatellite loci (years 2004, 2008, 2011

and 2014) in the ant system is consistent with the idea of environment-dependent

incompatibilities. What could be the selective agent? Temperature is one possible

environmental variable that could affect the expression of incompatibilities due to two

reasons. First, temperature differs between the current environments of the parental

species, *F. aquilonia* being more Northern and *F. polyctena* being more Southern

species. Second, temperature can show fluctuation between and within years. Indeed,

the frequency of introgressed alleles in *F. aquilonia*–like males appears to co-vary

with temperature during developmental season, but due to the limited time-series this

correlation cannot be tested statistically (Figure 7). Further studies are needed to show

if temperature is a key selective pressure that creates variation in the survival of ant

hybrids. These analyses allow testing if incompatibilities are environment-dependent,

an aspect that has been to a large extent ignored in speciation studies.

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Figure 7. Frequency of introgressed alleles in adult *F. aquilonia*–like males appears to co-vary with
yearly spring temperature. A) Frequency of alleles introgressed from *F. polyctena* to *F. aquilonia*–like
males at two microsatellite loci (dashed FY13_190, straight FY15_222) in years 2004, 2008, 2011, 2014.
B) Mean temperature (°C) in March during male development each year (Finnish Meteorological
Institute, data from the nearest measurement point, Helsinki). C) Introgressed alleles at candidate SNPs
(N=163) increase significantly more in frequency than alleles at random loci (N=137) between 2004 and
2014.
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Conclusions

Here we bridged the gap between genome scan studies and fitness by mapping

candidate barrier loci between two recently diverged wood ant species and tested for

natural selection acting on candidate barrier regions. We do document selection at

candidate barrier loci, but it is acting on opposite direction than expected, favoring

introgression in males. This barrier leakage may depend on the environment and

fluctuate between years. These results highlight the dynamic nature of the ant system

that allows investigations into genomic and molecular consequences of hybridization,

areas where many questions still remain to be answered.

Materials and Methods

Experimental design

Our first aim was to use a genome scan approach to discover candidate barrier

regions, i.e. genomic regions that drive divergence between two wood ant species

despite of hybridization and gene flow. For this we used pooled whole genome

sequencing. Our second aim was to directly measure if natural selection is promoting

divergence and so speciation in the current-day hybrid population at the candidate

barrier regions using survival analysis and SNP genotyping.

Discovery of candidate barrier regions with pooled genomic sequencing

We used pooled genomic sequencing to compare male and female genomes between

F. aquilonia–like and *F. polyctena*–like hybrid lineages and to discover the candidate

barrier loci (i.e. genomic regions putatively associated to hybrid male breakdown).

We collected the samples used for pooled sequencing from the Långholmen hybrid

population (Kulmuni et al. 2010) in the year 2004. The samples were freshly frozen

and kept in -20°C and genomic DNA was extracted in the year 2010 from half a body

using Qiagen kit. We sequenced altogether four pools of individuals, where each pool

consisted of the following number of individuals; 1) 24 *F. aquilonia*–like males, 2) 24

F. polyctena–like males, 3) 24 *F. polyctena*–like females and 4) 24 *F. aquilonia*–like

females. The sample concentrations were checked with Qubit and pooled into the four

pools in equal amounts. Each pool was sequenced with 100bp paired-end sequencing

on its own lane in Illumina HiSeq2000 in the Institute for Molecular Medicine

Finland (FIMM). This resulted in 46,106,000 to 108,204,481 total number of reads

per pool. We quality trimmed reads by removing up to 20 bp that had phred score <

20 using FASTX-Toolkit. Next, we made denovo assemblies of each of the four

samples with Soapdenovo trying out different kmer sizes (31, 41, 51, 61, 71) for each

assembly. The *F. polyctena*–like male assembly with kmer size of 41 was best in

terms of completeness and quality (genome size: 222.6 Mb, 327480 contigs, average

contig length: 679 bp, N50 = 1748 bp) and chosen as our reference assembly. We then

mapped each sample back to the *F. polyctena*–like male reference assembly after

removing contigs of the assembly shorter than 500bp using Bowtie2 v2.0.2. Reads

mapped in proper pairs and with a mapping quality superior to 20 were filtered and

combined in a single mpileup file using samtools 1.4. Since coverage of the *F.*

aquilonia–like male pool was low (mean = 16, s.d. = 38), overlaps between read pairs

were kept. For all SNPs (see below) and in each pool, read counts were compared

with or without filtering of read pair overlaps using χ^2 tests. Over all pools, four SNPs

displayed significant allele frequency change ($P < 0.05$, for stringency no Bonferroni

correction was applied) and were removed from the dataset (Supplementary Figure 5).

The mpileup file was then converted in a synchronized file using Popoolation2 [35].

Indels and their 5-bp flanking sequences were masked, and only bi-allelic sites

displaying a minimum base quality of 20, coverage between 20 and 60 for each

population and a minor allele count of four across all populations were considered.

These steps led to the identification of 166,167 SNPs for which F_{ST} estimates were

computed from read count data using Popoolation2, adjusting for differences in

ploidy levels between haploid male and diploid female pools. These estimates were

compared with those obtained following a more recently developed approach [36]:

both methods provided similar results ($\rho = 0.96$) and identified a similar number of

SNPs differentially fixed in males (Popoolation2: 711; Poolfstat: 719, including all

the loci found using Popoolation2). Popoolation2 results were more conservative (i.e,

less differentially fixed SNPs) and were used for the rest of the study. For the

comparison between poolseq and SNP genotyping data sets, allele counts were

imputed from read counts using a maximum-likelihood approach [37], considering the

number of chromosomes sampled per pool.

Gene Annotation, protein-protein interactions and GO term Enrichment Analysis

We defined barrier loci as SNP positions where the male genomes (sampled in 2004)

from the *F. aquilonia*–like and *F. polyctena*–like lineages were fixed differently (i.e.

$F_{ST} = 1$, see Supplementary Figure 2), which led to identification of 711 SNPs. These

fall into to 610 assembled scaffolds. We created an automated pipeline to annotate

genomic regions around candidate barrier SNPs, taking advantage of the recent

release of the closely related *F. exsecta* genome [17]. First, using our assembly we

extracted a sequence of 5,000 bp centered on each of the 711 outlier SNPs. If the

contig was smaller than 5,000 bp, the full contig sequence was recovered. Since some

SNPs located on the same contig, and sometimes less than 5 kb apart, 639 unique

sequences were recovered and were blasted against the *F. exsecta* assembly. For each

queried sequence, hits covering less than 60% of its length were filtered out and the

best hit was kept per query based on e-value (over all queries, *e*-value $< 10^{-141}$). This

allowed to anchor 571 genomic regions on the *F. exsecta* assembly. The coordinates

of these regions were extended if needed to reach 5,000 bp, so that sampling effort

was equal among genomic regions. *F. exsecta* genes overlapping with best hits were

collected using the GenomeIntervals Bioconductor package v1.38. Overall, 590

unique genes overlapped with our 571 genomic regions. Sixty-three of the candidate

genomic regions did not contain any annotated gene. The mean number of genes per

candidate genomic region was 1.4, and the maximum was six. For each gene, its *F.*

exsecta transcript sequence was recovered and blasted against *D. melanogaster* r6.15

proteins after filtering for the longest protein per gene. Alignments below 150 bp and

with less than 35% identity were filtered out and the best hit was kept for each query

based on e-value (over all queries, *e*-value $< 10^{-20}$). This pipeline recovered 317 *D.*

melanogaster genes whose homologs reside in candidate barrier regions. These

candidate barrier genes were used for subsequent analyses (e.g., GO and PPI

enrichment analyses). For a complete list of scaffolds annotated with their gene names

see Supplementary Table 1. GO term enrichment analysis was performed using the

Gene Ontology Consortium tool and protein interactions were analyzed using

STRING database and *D. melanogaster* homologs for our candidate genes. We

performed 1,000 simulations to assess whether the observed PPI enrichment indicated

by STRING was significantly different from what would be expected for a random set

of SNPs from our dataset. For each simulation, we randomly drew 711 SNPs from the

total dataset (166,167 SNPs) and annotated their flanking regions using the same

automated pipeline and parameter values as presented above. The number of genes

recovered per simulation varied between 267 and 368 (mean = 319). For all

simulations and empirical data, PPI enrichment values were computed with STRING

v10 using the STRINGdb Bioconductor package [20], setting the score threshold to

800.

We investigated the location of the candidate barrier SNPs blasting to the genome of

closely related *F. exsecta*[17] (277 Mb, 14617 scaffolds, N50 = 997654), as our own

genomic assembly is highly fragmented.

Testing for selection by genotyping candidate barrier and random SNPs

To test for selection acting on candidate barrier SNPs we genotyped a set of candidate

and random SNPs from samples collected from the study population in 2014. These

samples were used to test if significant allele frequency changes occur between larval

and adult stages in candidate barrier SNPs but not in random SNPs, as expected if

these barrier SNPs mark genomic regions under selection. Genotyping was done at

individual level for a total of 196 individuals (Supplementary table 2). Samples were

randomly assigned to 96-well plates for genotyping.

Primer design and genotyping were done at LGC genomics using KASP genotyping

chemistry. We randomly chose 350 SNPs from the total SNP dataset. Out of these

180 were appropriate for primer design and genotyping. We further chose 183

candidate barrier SNPs out from the 711 SNPs identified previously. Candidate

barrier SNPs had F_{ST} of 1 between the male genomes but F_{ST} varied between females

at these loci. We aimed at variable F_{ST} estimates between females at the genotyped

barrier SNPs and initially chose the 50 SNPs with lowest F_{ST}, 50 SNPs with highest

F_{ST} and 100 randomly chosen from the remaining (Figure S1). Of these, 144 SNPs

were suitable for genotyping. Therefore, another 106 candidate barrier SNPs were

extracted, of which 76 passed the LGC primer design pipeline. In total 220 candidate

barrier SNPs were suitable for genotyping and from these we chose 183 SNPs

(Supplementary Figure 1). After removal of SNPs or individuals with more than 10%

missing data, diploid males from the *F. polyctena*–like lineage and three ambiguous

individuals (see Supplementary Figure 3), we were left with 181 individuals (for the

F. polyctena–like females, early stage: 27, late stage: 32, for the *F. aquilonia*–like

individuals, males early stage: 32, late stage: 32, females early stage: 31, late stage:

31) genotyped at 300 SNPs (137 random and 163 putative barrier loci).

Linkage disequilibrium could bias our results if putative barrier SNPs are non-

independent or if putative random loci are actually located close to barrier regions. We

took advantage of the more contiguous *F. exsecta* genome assembly and pruned the

SNP genotyping data based on the location of BLAST hits in the *F. exsecta* genome

(see above for BLAST parameters). Since the extent of linkage disequilibrium decay is

unknown, we considered three different pruning intervals for SNPs which located on

the same *F. exsecta* scaffolds: 50 kb (before pruning: $N_{barrier} = 163$, $N_{random} = 137$; after

pruning: $N_{barrier} = 137$, $N_{random} = 127$), 100 kb ($N_{barrier} = 121$, $N_{random} = 122$) and 500kb

($N_{barrier} = 80$, $N_{random} = 100$). We then tested if this had impact on our estimates for F_{IS}

in females and allele frequency change in males between early and late developmental

stages by re-running analysis with the different pruned data sets.

Statistical analyses

We tested for significant differences in allele counts in *F. aquilonia*–like males

between larval and adult stages at candidate barrier SNPs compared to the random

SNPs using generalized linear mixed effects model in R [38]. We used locus type

(candidate or barrier) and developmental stage (larva or adult) as explanatory

variables and locus_ID as a random factor. F_{IS} values were estimated per genotyped

locus and per group using the HierFstat package [39]. To test if F_{IS} estimates were

significantly different at candidate barrier loci in females between larval and adult

stages we used linear mixed effects model [38] and locus type, developmental stage

and group (*F. polyctena* –like or *F. aquilonia*–like) as explanatory variables and

locus_ID as a random factor.

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