

1 Modern human changes in regulatory regions implicated in  
2 cortical development

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9 **Abstract**

10 Recent paleogenomic studies have highlighted a very small set of proteins carrying modern  
11 human-specific missense changes in comparison to our closest extinct relatives. Despite being  
12 frequently alluded to as highly relevant, species-specific differences in regulatory regions re-  
13 main understudied. Here, we integrate data from paleogenomics, chromatin modification and  
14 physical interaction, and single-cell gene expression of neural progenitor cells to report a set of  
15 genes whose enhancers and/or promoters harbor modern human single nucleotide changes that  
16 appeared after the split from the Neanderthal/Denisovan lineage. These regulatory regions  
17 exert their functions at early stages of cortical development and control a set of genes among  
18 which those related to chromatin regulation stand out. This functional category has not yet  
19 figured prominently in modern human evolution studies. Specifically, we find an enrichment  
20 for the SETD1A histone methyltransferase complex, known to regulate WNT-signaling for the  
21 generation and proliferation of intermediate progenitor cells.

## 22 1 Introduction

23 Progress in the field of paleogenomics has allowed researchers to study the genetic basis of modern  
24 human-specific traits in comparison to our closest extinct relatives, the Neanderthals and Denisovans  
25 [1]. One such trait concerns the period of growth and maturation of the brain, which is a major  
26 factor underlying the characteristic ‘globular’ head shape of modern humans [2]. Comparative  
27 genomic analyses using high-quality Neanderthal/Denisovan genomes [3–5] have revealed missense  
28 changes in the modern human lineage affecting proteins involved in the division of neural progenitor  
29 cells, key for the proper generation of neurons in an orderly spatiotemporal manner [4, 6]. But the  
30 total number of fixed missense changes amounts to less than one hundred proteins [1, 6]. This  
31 suggests that changes falling outside protein-coding regions may be equally relevant to understand  
32 the genetic basis of modern human-specific traits, as proposed more than four decades ago [7].  
33 In this context it is noteworthy that human positively-selected genomic regions were found to be  
34 enriched in regulatory regions [8], and that signals of negative selection against Neanderthal DNA  
35 introgression were reported in promoters and conserved genomic regions [9].

36 Here, we report a set of genes under the control of regulatory regions that harbor modern human-  
37 lineage genetic changes and are active at early stages of cortical development (Figure 1). We inte-  
38 grated data on chromatin immunoprecipitation and open chromatin regions identifying enhancers  
39 and promoters active during human cortical development, and the genes regulated by them as re-  
40 vealed by chromatin physical interaction data, together with paleogenomic data of single-nucleotide  
41 changes (SNC) distinguishing modern humans and Neanderthal/Denisovan lineages. This allowed  
42 us to uncover those enhancer and promoters that harbor modern human SNC (thereafter, mSNC)  
43 at fixed or nearly fixed frequency (as defined by [6]) in present-day human populations and where  
44 the Neanderthals/Denisovans carry the the ancestral allele (*Methods* section 4.1). Next, we anal-  
45 ysed single-cell gene expression data and performed co-expression network analysis to identify the  
46 genes plausibly under human-specific regulation within genetic networks in neural progenitor cells  
47 (*Methods* sections 4.2-4.3). Many of the genes controlled by regulatory regions satisfying the afore-  
48 mentioned criteria are involved in chromatin regulation, and prominently among these, the SETD1A

49 histone methyltransferase (SETD1A/HMT) complex. This complex, which has not figured promi-  
50 nently in the modern human evolution literature until now, appears to have been targeted in modern  
51 human evolution and specifically regulates the indirect mode of neurogenesis through the control  
52 of WNT/ $\beta$ -CATENIN signaling.

## 53 **2 Results**

54 212 genes were found associated to regulatory regions active in the developing human cortex (from  
55 5 to 20 post-conception weeks) that harbor mSNCs and do not contain Neanderthal/Denisovan  
56 changes (Suppl. Mat. Tables S1 & S2). Among these, some well-studied disease-relevant genes are  
57 found: *HTT* (Huntington disease) [10], *FOXP2* (language impairment) [11], *CHD8* and *CPEB4*  
58 (autism spectrum disorder) [12, 13], *TCF4* (Pitt-Hopkins syndrome and schizophrenia) [14, 15],  
59 *GLI3* (macrocephaly and Greig cephalopolysyndactyly syndrome) [16], *PHC1* (primary, autosomal  
60 recessive, microcephaly-11) [17], *RCAN1* (Down syndrome) [18], and *DYNC1H1* (cortical malfor-  
61 mations and microcephaly) [19].

62 Twelve out of the 212 genes contain fixed mSNCs in enhancers (*NEUROD6*, *GRIN2B*, *LRRC23*,  
63 *RNF44*, *KCNA3*, *TCF25*, *TMLHE*, *GLI4*, *DDX12P*, *PLP2*, *TFE3*, *SPG7*), with *LRRC23* having  
64 three such changes, and *GRIN2B*, *DDX12P* and *TFE3*, two each. Fourteen genes have fixed mSNCs  
65 in their promoters (*LRRC23*, *SETD1A*, *FOXJ2*, *LIMCH1*, *ZFAT*, *SPOP*, *DLGAP4*, *HS6ST2*,  
66 *UBE2A*, *FKBP1A*, *RPL6*, *LINC01159*, *RBM4B*, *NFIB*). Only one gene, *LRRC23*, exhibits fixed  
67 changes in both its enhancer and promoter regions. To identify putatively mSNC-enriched regions,  
68 we ranked regulatory regions by mutation density (*Methods* section 4.4). Top candidates enhancers  
69 (top 5% in hits-per-region length distribution) were associated with potassium channel KCNQ5,  
70 actin-binding protein FSCN1, and neuronal marker NEUROD6. Top candidate promoters were  
71 linked to cytoplasmic dynein DYNC1H1, nuclear factor NFIB, PHD and RING finger domains-  
72 containin PHRF1, and kinesin light KLC1 (Suppl. Mat. Table S3 & S4). Interestingly, most of  
73 these are known to be involved in later stages of neurogenesis (differentiation and migration steps).

74 A significant over-representation was found for enhancers (permutation test; p-value 0.01) and

75 promoters (permutation test; p-value  $10^{-4}$ ) overlapping with putative modern human positively-  
76 selected regions [8]. In addition, we found a significant enrichment for enhancers (permutation  
77 test; p-value 0.04; while for promoter regions p-value 0.08) overlapping with genetic loci associated  
78 to schizophrenia [20]. By contrast, no significant overlap was found for enhancers/promoters and  
79 autism spectrum disorder risk variants ([21], retrieved from [22]) (Suppl. Fig. S1). We also  
80 performed motif enrichment analysis for our enhancer/promoter region datasets (*Methods* section  
81 4.4). We found a motif enrichment in enhancer regions for transcriptional regulators IRF8, PU.1,  
82 CTCF (Benjamini q-value 0.01) and OCT4 (Benjamini q-value 0.02); while for promoter regions  
83 a motif enrichment was detected for the zinc finger-containing (and WNT signaling regulator)  
84 ZBTB33 (Benjamini q-value 0.03).

85 Next, we evaluated relevant gene ontology and biological categories in our 212 gene list (*Meth-*  
86 *ods* section 4.4). We identified a substantial proportion of genes related to beta-catenin binding  
87 (GO:0008013; h.t.: adj p-value 0.11) and transcriptional regulation (GO:0044212; hypergeometric  
88 test (h.t.): adj p-value 0.17), and detected a significant enrichment from the CORUM protein com-  
89 plexes database for the SETD1A/HMT complex (CORUM:2731; h.t.: adj p-value 0.01). Indeed,  
90 three members of the SETD1A/HMT complex are present in our 212 gene list: SETD1A (fixed  
91 mSNC in promoter), ASH2L (mSNC in enhancer) and WDR82 (mSNC in enhancer). SETD1A as-  
92 sociates to the core of an H3K4 methyltransferase complex (ASH2L, WDR5, RBBP5, DPY30) and  
93 to WDR82, which recruits RNA polymerase II, to promote transcription of target genes through hi-  
94 stone modification H3K4me3 [23]. Furthermore, the *SETD1A* promoter and the *WDR82* enhancer  
95 containing the relevant changes fall within putative positively-selected regions in the modern human  
96 lineage [8].

97 The abundance of transcriptional regulators and the specific enrichment for the SETD1A/HMT  
98 led us to examine the gene expression programs likely under their influence in neural progenitor  
99 cells. From 5 to 20 post-conception weeks, different types of cells populate the germinal zones  
100 of the developing cortex (Figure 2). We re-analyzed gene expression data at single-cell resolution  
101 from a total of 762 cells from the developing human cortex, controlling for cell-cycle heterogeneity  
102 as a confounding factor in the analysis of progenitor populations (*Methods* section 4.2). We fo-

103 cused on two progenitor cell-types—radial glial and intermediate progenitor cells (RGCs and IPCs,  
104 respectively)—two of the main types of progenitor cells that give rise, in an orderly manner, to  
105 the neurons present in the adult brain (Figure 2). Two sub-populations of RGCs were identified  
106 (*PAX6*+/*EOMES*- cells), and three sub-populations of IPCs were detected (*EOMES*-expressing  
107 cells, with cells retaining *PAX6* expression and some expressing differentiation marker *TUJ1*),  
108 largely replicating what has been reported in the original publication for this dataset (Suppl. Fig.  
109 2). We next identified genetic networks (based on highly-correlated gene expression levels) in the  
110 different sub-populations of progenitor cells (except for IPC sub-population 3, which was excluded  
111 due to the low number of cells) (*Methods* section 4.3; Suppl. Fig. S3 & S4) .

112 An over-representation of genes related to the human phenotype ontology term ‘Neurodevelop-  
113 mental abnormality’ was detected in the RGC-2 turquoise module (HP:0012759; h.t.: adj p-value  
114 0.03, Suppl. Mat. Table S5). Indeed, a considerable amount of genes were found to be associated  
115 to phenotype terms ‘Neurodevelopmental delay’ and ‘Skull size’ (HP:0012758 and HP:0000240, re-  
116 spectively; h.t.: adj p-value 0.07 and 0.13, respectively; Suppl. Mat. Table S6). Two chromatin  
117 regulators with mSNC in regulatory regions are present in these two ontology terms and are associ-  
118 ated to neurodevelopmental disorders: KDM6A (mSNC in promoter), which associates to the H3K4  
119 methyltransferase complex [23], and is mutated in patients with Kabuki syndrome [24]; and PHC1  
120 (mSNC in promoter), a component of the repressive complex PRC1 [23], found in patients with  
121 primary microcephaly-11 [17]. Among the total genes related to the ‘Skull size’ term (n = 109),  
122 we found an over-representation of genes (*CDON*, *GLI3*, *KIF7*, *GAS1*) related to the hedgehog  
123 signaling pathway (KEGG:04340; h.t.: adj p-value 0.05). Of these, *GLI3* (mSNC in promoter) is  
124 perhaps the most salient member. *GLI3* is a gene linked to macrocephaly [16] and under putative  
125 modern human positive selection [8]. Considering that hedgehog signaling plays a critical role in  
126 basal progenitor expansion [25], we note the presence in this turquoise module of the outer radial  
127 glia-specific genes *IL6ST* and *STAT3* [26]. The forkhead-box transcription factor FOXP2 is also  
128 present in RGC-2 turquoise module and associated to the ‘Neurodevelopmental delay’ ontology  
129 term. Its promoter harbors an almost fixed (>99%) mSNC. FOXP2 is a highly conserved protein  
130 involved in language-related disorders whose evolutionary changes are particularly relevant for un-

131 derstanding human cognitive traits [27]. This mSNC (7:113727420) in the *FOXP2* promoter adds  
132 new evidence for a putative modern human-specific regulation of *FOXP2* together with the nearly  
133 fixed intronic SNC that affects a transcription factor-binding site [27].

134 While we did not detect a specific enrichment in the modules containing SETD1A/HMT complex  
135 components ASH2L or WDR82 genes, the IPC-2 midnightblue module, which contains SETD1A,  
136 shows an enrichment for a  $\beta$ -CATENIN-containing complex (SETD7-YAP-AXIN1- $\beta$ -CATENIN  
137 complex; CORUM:6343; h.t.: adj p-value 0.05; Suppl. Mat. Table S7) and indeed contains WNT-  
138 effector TCF3, which harbors nearly fixed missense mutations in modern humans [6]. SETD1A is  
139 known to interact with  $\beta$ -CATENIN [28, 29] and increase its expression to promote neural progenitor  
140 proliferation [30].

### 141 **3 Discussion**

142 By integrating data from paleogenomics and chromatin interaction and modification, we identified  
143 a set of genes controlled by regulatory regions that are active during early cortical development  
144 and contain single nucleotide changes that appeared in the modern human lineage after the split  
145 from the Neanderthal/Denisovan lineage. This study complements previous research focused on  
146 protein-coding changes [4, 6] and helps extend the investigation of species-specific differences in  
147 cortical development that has so far relied on detailed comparisons between humans and non-human  
148 primates [31–35].

149 The regulatory regions reported here significantly overlap with putative modern human positively-  
150 selected regions and schizophrenia genomic loci, and control a set of genes among which we find a  
151 high number related to chromatin regulation, and most specifically the SETD1A/HMT complex.  
152 Regulators of chromatin dynamics are known to play key roles during cell-fate decisions through  
153 the control of specific transcriptional programs [36–38]. Both SETD1A and ASH2L, core compo-  
154 nents of the HMT complex, regulate WNT/ $\beta$ -CATENIN signaling [28–30, 39], which influences  
155 cell-fate decisions by promoting either self-maintenance or differentiation depending on the stage  
156 of progenitor differentiation (Figure 3).

157 SETD1A (fixed mSNC in promoter), implicated in schizophrenia and developmental language  
158 impairment [40, 41], acts in collaboration with a histone chaperone to promote proliferation of  
159 neural progenitor cells through H3K4 trimethylation at the promoter of  $\beta$ -CATENIN, while its  
160 knockdown causes reduction in proliferative neural progenitor cells and an increase in cells at the  
161 cortical plate [30]. In addition, one of SETD1A direct targets is the WNT-effector TCF4 [42], whose  
162 promoter also harbors a mSNC. Similarly, ASH2L specifically regulates WNT signaling: Conditional  
163 knock-out of *ASH2L* significantly compromises the proliferative capacity of RGCs and IPCs by the  
164 time of generation of upper-layer neurons, with these progenitor cells showing a marked reduction in  
165 H3K4me3 levels and downregulation of WNT/ $\beta$ -CATENIN signaling-related genes (defects that can  
166 be rescued by over-expression of  $\beta$ -CATENIN) [39]. Taken together, depletion of components of the  
167 SETD1A/HMT complex impairs the proliferative capacity of progenitor cells, altering the indirect  
168 mode of neurogenesis, with a specific regulation of the conserved WNT signaling. Our data points  
169 toward a putative modern human positive selection of their regulatory regions. Interestingly, in a  
170 recent work studying species-specific differences in chromatin accessibility using brain organoids,  
171 regulatory regions associated to *SETD1A* and *WDR82* were found in differentially-accessible chro-  
172 matin regions in human organoids in comparison to chimpanzee organoids, with the *SETD1A* region  
173 overlapping with a human-gained histone modification signal when compared to macaques [35].

174 The dysfunction of chromatin regulators is among the most salient features behind causative  
175 mutations in neurodevelopmental disorders [43]. Our data highlights chromatin modifiers and re-  
176 modelers that play prominent roles in neurodevelopmental disorders affecting brain growth and  
177 facial features. Along with the aforementioned chromatin regulators PHC1 (microcephaly) and  
178 KDM6A (Kabuki syndrome), another paradigmatic example is the ATP-dependent chromatin re-  
179 modeler CHD8 (mSNC in enhancer), which controls neural progenitor cell proliferation through  
180 WNT-signaling related genes [44, 45]. CHD8 is a high-risk factor for autism spectrum disorder and  
181 patients with CHD8 mutations characteristically present macrocephaly and distinctive facial fea-  
182 tures [12]. Intriguingly, another ATP-dependent chromatin remodeler, CHD2 (mSNC in enhancer),  
183 presents a motif in the SETD1A promoter region containing the fixed mSNC (16:30969654; UCSC  
184 Genome Browser). The study of modern human evolutionary changes affecting chromatin regu-

185 lators integrated with the examination of neurodevelopmental disorders promises to improve our  
186 understanding of modern human-specific brain ontogenetic trajectories.

187 We have focused on the early stages of cortical development. While single-cell gene expression  
188 data of neural progenitor cells still remains limited, future integration of these data with other  
189 datasets covering different neocortical regions [46] will shed further light on modern human changes  
190 and cortical areas-specific progenitor cells. We acknowledge, in addition, that the genetic changes  
191 distinguishing modern humans and Neanderthals/Denisovans may be relevant at other stages of  
192 neurodevelopment, including the adult human brain. Progress in single-cell multi-omic technologies  
193 applied to brain organoid research will be critical to assess the impact of such changes in the diverse  
194 neural and non-neural cell-types through different developmental stages. Moreover, we excluded the  
195 examination of regulatory regions harboring Neanderthal/Denisovan changes due to the low number  
196 of high-quality genomes from Neanderthal/Denisovan individuals, which makes the determination  
197 of allele frequency in these species unreliable. We hope that the availability of a higher number of  
198 high-quality genomes for these species in the future will make such examination feasible.

## 199 **4 Methods**

### 200 **4.1 Data processing**

201 Integration and processing of data from different sources was performed using IPython v5.7.0. We  
202 used publicly available data from [6] of SNC in the modern human lineage (at fixed or above 90%  
203 frequency in present-day human populations) and Neanderthal/Denisovan changes. [6] analyzed  
204 high-coverage genotypes from one Denisovan and two Neanderthal individuals to report a catalog of  
205 SNC that appeared in the modern human lineage after their split from Neanderthals/Denisovans.  
206 Similarly, [6] also reported a list of SNC present in the Neanderthal/Denisovan lineages where  
207 modern humans carry the inferred ancestral allele.

208 For enhancer–promoter linkages, we used publicly available data from [47], based on transposase-  
209 accessible chromatin coupled to sequencing and integrated with chromatin capture via Hi-C data,  
210 from 15 to 17 post-conception weeks of the developing human cortex. A total of 92 promoters and



211 113 enhancers were selected as harboring mSNC and being depleted of Neanderthal/Denisovan SNC  
212 (from a total of 2574 enhancers and 1553 promoters present in the original dataset). Additionally, we  
213 completed the previous dataset filtering annotated enhancer-gene linkages via Hi-C from the adult  
214 prefrontal cortex [48] (PsychENCODE resource portal: <http://resource.psychencode.org/>). In  
215 this case, enhancers ( $n = 32803$ ) were selected for further analyses if their coordinates completely  
216 overlapped with signals of active enhancers (H3K27ac) (that do not overlap with promoter signals  
217 (H3K4me3)) from the developing human cortex between 7 to 12 PCW [49]. A total of 43 enhancers,  
218 containing mSNC but free of Neanderthal/Denisovan SNC, passed this filtering. As a whole, the  
219 final integrated dataset covered regulatory regions active at early stages of human prenatal cortical  
220 development and linked to 212 genes. The coordinates (hg19 version) of the regulatory regions  
221 containing mSNC are available in the Supplementary Material Tables S1 & S2.

222 Human positively-selected regions coordinates were retrieved from [8].

## 223 4.2 Single-cell RNA-seq analysis

224 The single-cell transcriptomic analysis was performed using the Seurat package v2.4 [50] in RStudio  
225 v1.1.463 (server mode).

226 Single-cell gene expression data was retrieved from [49] from PsychENCODE portal (<http://development.psychencode.org/#>). We used raw gene counts thresholding for cells with a min-  
227 imum of 500 genes detected and for genes present at least in 10% of the total cells ( $n=762$ ). Data  
228 was normalized using "LogNormalize" method with a scale factor of 1000000. We regressed out  
229 cell-to-cell variation due to mitochondrial and cell-cycle genes (*ScaleData* function). For the latter,  
230 we used a list of genes ([51]) that assigns scores genes to either G1/S or G2/M phase (function  
231 *CellCycleScoring*), allowing us to reduce heterogeneity due to differences in cell-cycle phases. We  
232 further filtered cells (*FilterCells* function) setting a low threshold of 2000 and a high threshold of  
233 9000 gene counts per cell, and a high threshold of 5% of the total gene counts for mitochondrial  
234 genes.

235  
236 We assigned the label 'highly variable' to genes whose average expression value was between 0.5  
237 and 8, and variance-to-mean expression level ratio between 0.5 and 5 (*FindVariableGenes* function).

238 We obtained a total of 4261 genes for this category. Next, we performed a principal component  
239 analysis on highly variable genes and determined significance by a jackStraw analysis (*JackStraw*  
240 function). We used the first most significant principal components ( $n = 13$ ) for clustering analysis  
241 (*FindClusters* function; resolution = 3). Data was represented in two dimensions using t-distributed  
242 stochastic neighbor embedding (*RunTSNE* function). The resulting twelve clusters were plotted  
243 using *tSNEplot* function. Cell-type assignment was based on the metadata from the original pub-  
244 lication [49].

### 245 **4.3 Weighted gene co-expression network analysis**

246 For the gene co-expression network analysis we used the WGCNA R package [52, 53]. For each  
247 population of progenitor cells (RGC-1, 34 cells (15017 genes); RGC-2, 30 cells (14747 genes); IPC-  
248 1, 52 cells (15790 genes); IPC-2, 41 cells (15721 genes); IPC3 population was excluded due to low  
249 number of cells), log-transformed values of gene expression data were used as input for weighted  
250 gene co-expression network analysis. A soft threshold power was chosen (12, 12, 14, 12 for RGC-1,  
251 RGC-2, IPC-1, IPC-2 populations, with R2: 0.962, 0.817, 0.961, 0.918, respectively) and a bi-  
252 weight mid-correlation applied to compute a signed weighted adjacency matrix, transformed later  
253 into a topological overlap matrix. Module detection (minimum size 200 genes) was performed using  
254 function *cutreeDynamic* (method = 'hybrid', deepSplit = 2), getting a total of 32, 26, 9, 23 modules  
255 for RGC-1, RGC-2, IPC-1, IPC-2, respectively (Suppl. Fig. S3 & S4).

### 256 **4.4 Enrichment analysis**

257 We ranked regulatory regions by mutation density calculating number of single nucleotide changes  
258 per regulatory region length (for those regions spanning at least 1000 base pairs). Top candidates  
259 were those raking in the distribution within the 5% out of the total number of enhancers or promot-  
260 ers (Suppl. Mat Tables S3 & S4). The g:Profiler2 R package [54] was used to perform enrichment  
261 analyses (hypergeometric test; correction method 'gSCS') for gene/phenotype ontology categories,  
262 biological pathways (KEGG, Reactome) and protein databases (CORUM, Human Protein Atlas)  
263 for the gene lists generated in this study. Permutation tests (10,000 permutations) were performed

264 to evaluate enrichment of enhancers/promoters regions in different genomic regions datasets using  
265 the R package regioneR [55]. The Hypergeometric Optimization of Motif EnRichment (HOMER)  
266 software v4.10 [56] was employed for motif discovery analysis, selecting best matches (Benjamini  
267 q-value < 0.05) of known motifs (n = 428; ChIP-seq-based) in our promoter and enhancer datasets.

## 268 **Author contributions**

269 Conceptualization: C.B. & J.M.; Data Curation: J.M.; Formal Analysis: J.M.; Funding Acquisition:  
270 C.B.; Investigation: C.B. & J.M.; Methodology: C.B. & J.M.; Software: J.M.; Supervision: C.B.;  
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## 279 **Data availability**

280 The data not present in the manuscript or in the supplementary material will be available in  
281 Figshare open access repository, as well as the code used to perform the analysis reported in this  
282 study.

## 283 **Competing interests**

284 Authors declare NO competing financial or non-financial interest.

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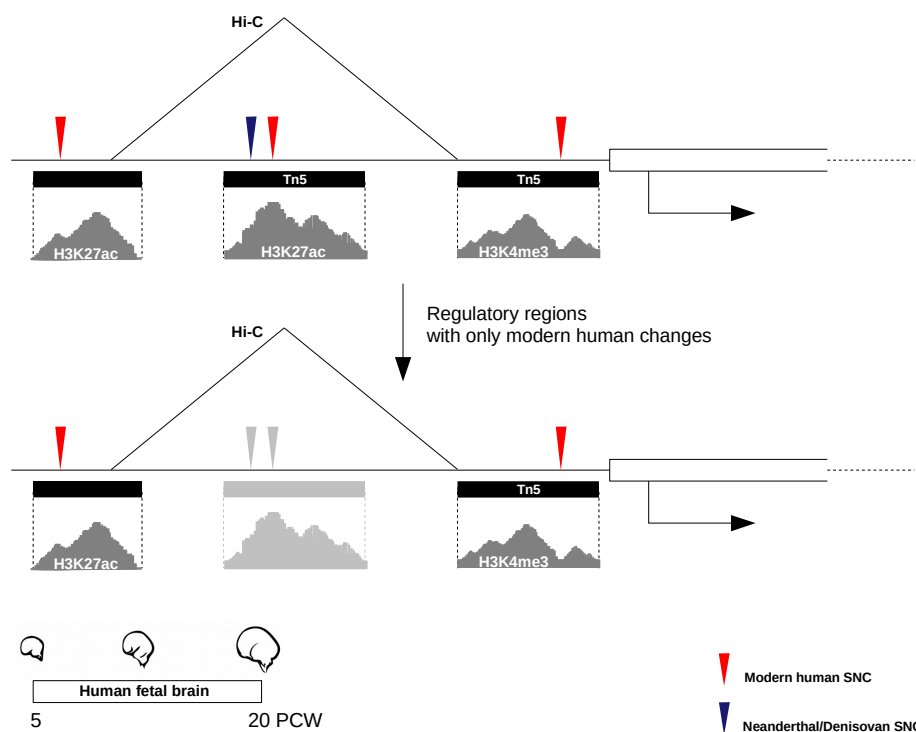
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## 421 Figures

Figure 1: **Regulatory regions characterized in this study.** Active enhancers are typically located in regions of open chromatin and nucleosomes in their vicinity are marked by histone modifications H3K27 acetylation and H3K4 mono-methylation. By contrast, H3K4 tri-methylation defines active promoters [57]. We considered signals of active enhancers and promoters, as well as transposase (Tn5)-accessible chromatin regions, in the developing human brain (from 5 to 20 post-conception weeks) that harbor modern human single-nucleotide changes filtering out those regulatory regions that also contain Neanderthal/Denisovan changes. Chromosome conformation capture (Hi-C) data revealed the genes controlled by these regulatory regions.





**Figure 2: Cell-type populations at early stages of cortical development.** (a) Apical radial glial cells (RGCs) populate the ventricular zone and prolong one process apically to the ventricular surface and another one to the basal lamina, which serves as a scaffold for neuronal migration. RGCs also proliferate and differentiate to give rise to another RGC, a basal intermediate progenitor (indirect neurogenesis), or a neuron (direct neurogenesis) [58]. Intermediate progenitor cells (IPCs) are basal progenitors lacking of apical-basal cell polarity. IPCs migrate to the subventricular zone and, after a couple of self-renewal divisions, differentiate to give rise to two neurons [58]. (b) The tSNE plot shows twelve clusters detected analyzing a total of 762 cells. (c) The violin plots show expression of two markers (*PAX6*, *EOMES*) across the different clusters, distinguishing between RGCs and IPCs. (d) The miniature tSNE plots show the distribution across the sub-populations of a selection of genes discussed in the main text.

IPC: Intermediate progenitor cells; NascentN: Nascent neurons; ExN: Excitatory neurons; Astro: Astrocytes; RGC: Radial glial cells; InN: Interneurons; Oligo/OPC: Oligodendrocyte progenitor cells; OPC; Oligo: Oligodendrocytes; CL\_12: Cluster 12 (unidentified cells).

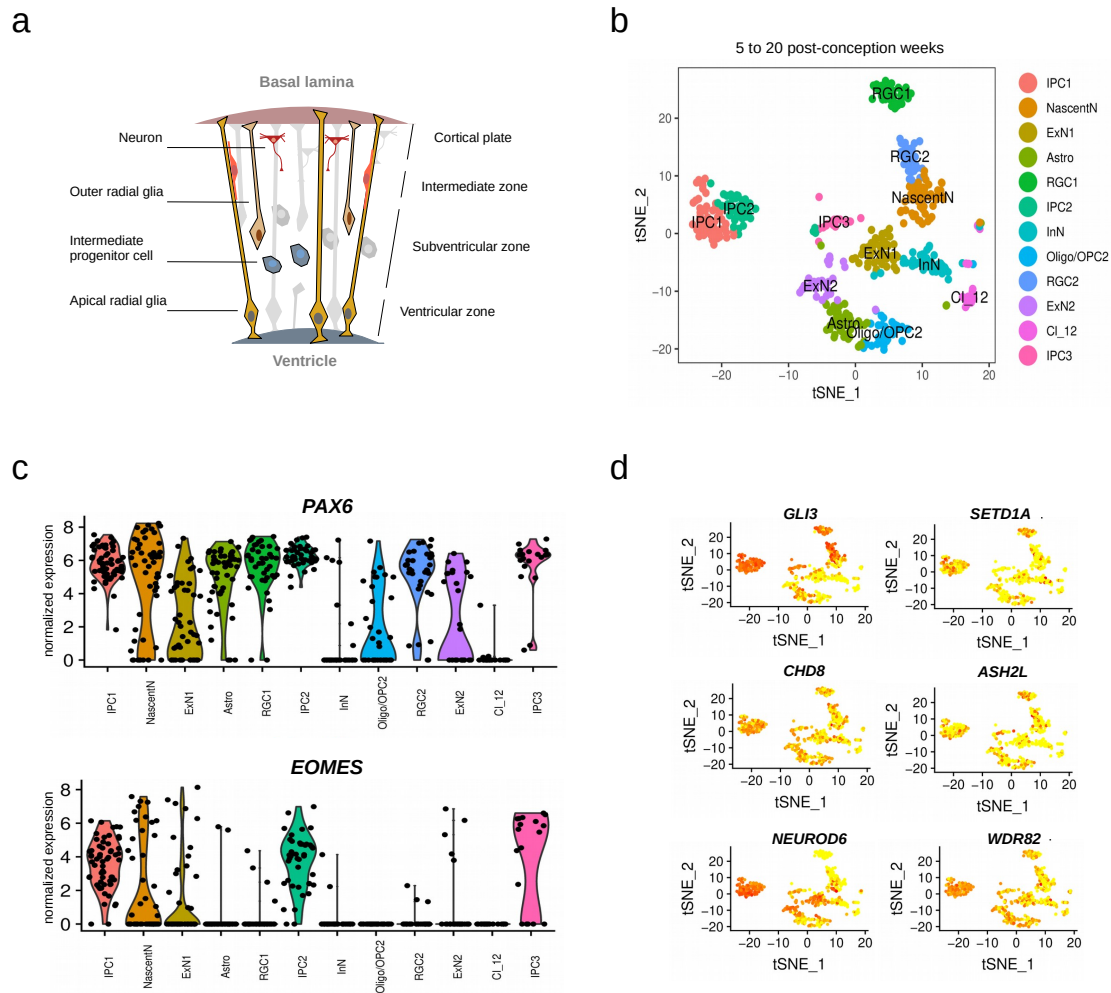
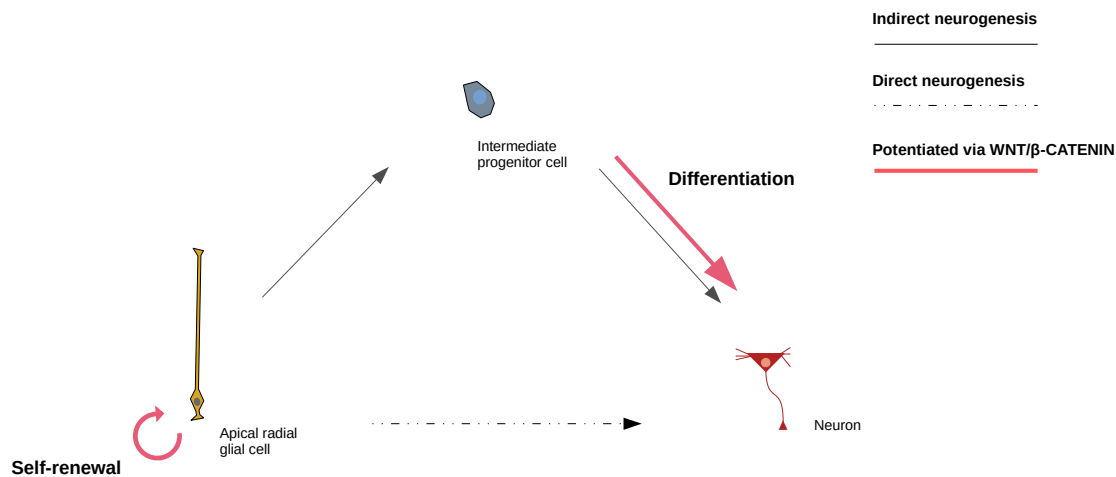


Figure 3: **Progenitor cell-fate decisions shaped by WNT/ $\beta$ -CATENIN signaling.** Based on studies in mice, it is hypothesized that early during neurodevelopment, WNT/ $\beta$ -CATENIN signaling promotes neural stem and progenitor cell self-renewal whereas its depletion causes premature neuronal differentiation [59–61]; later on, its down-regulation is required for generation of intermediate progenitor cells [61, 62]. Lastly, WNT/ $\beta$ -CATENIN signaling promotes differentiation of intermediate progenitors to produce neurons [60].



422 **Supplementary Figures**

Figure S1: **Enrichment analyses.** Permutation tests were applied to determine enrichment of enhancers/promoters within human positively-selected regions (n=314, from [8]; overlap = 10 prom; 4 enh), schizophrenia genomic loci (n=108, from [20]; overlap = 2 prom; 3 enh), and autism risk variants (n=58, [21], retrieved from [22]; no overlap).

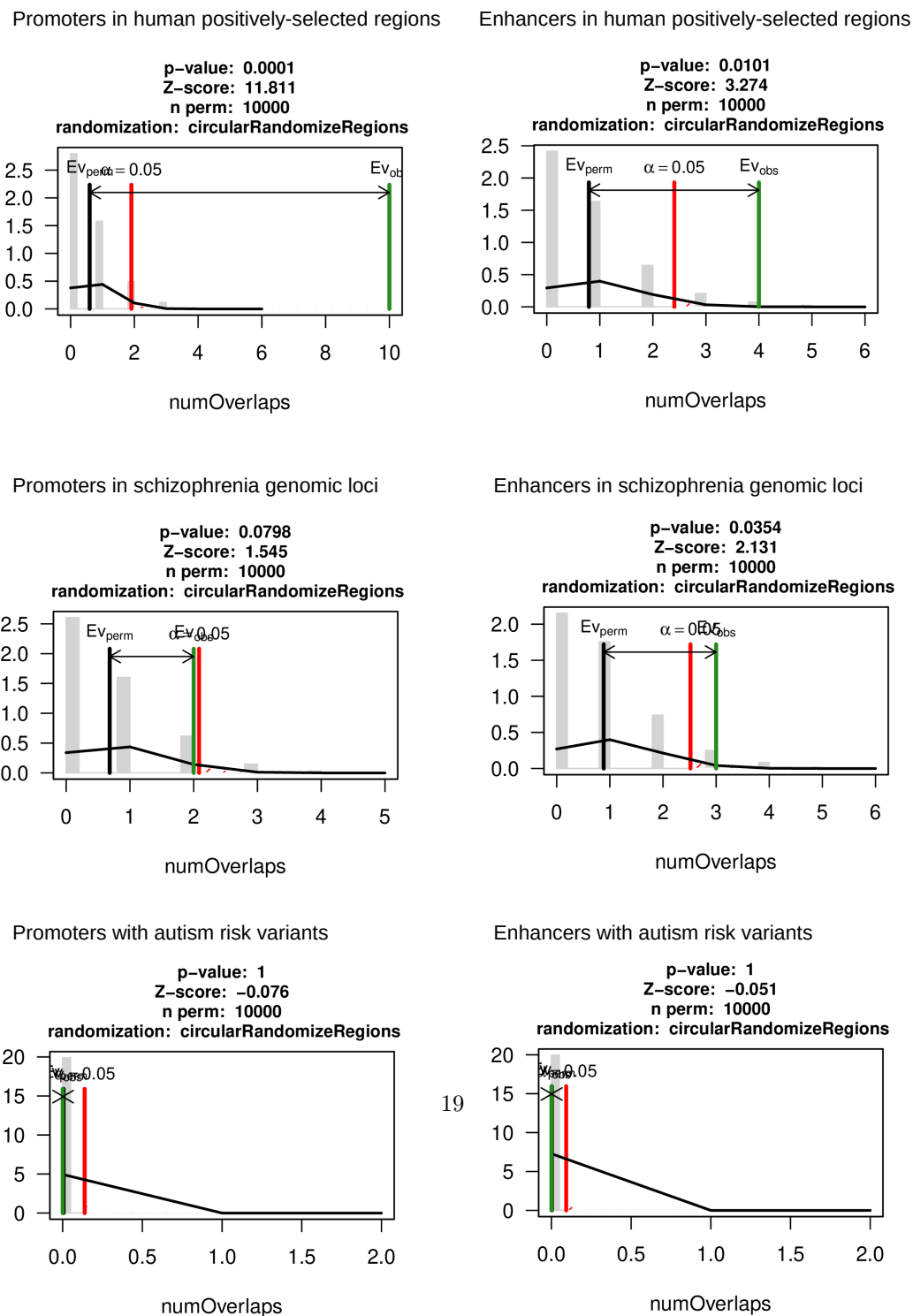


Figure S2: **Clustering results obtained in the original study.** [49] generated and analysed the single-cell transcriptomic data used in this study (5 to 20 post-conception weeks human prenatal brain). They reported two clustering results (A and B) after using different methodologies. Note in B the presence of the three sub-populations for intermediate progenitor cells and the two clusters of radial glial cells, as in our analysis. Images are reproduced with copyright permission from *Science*.

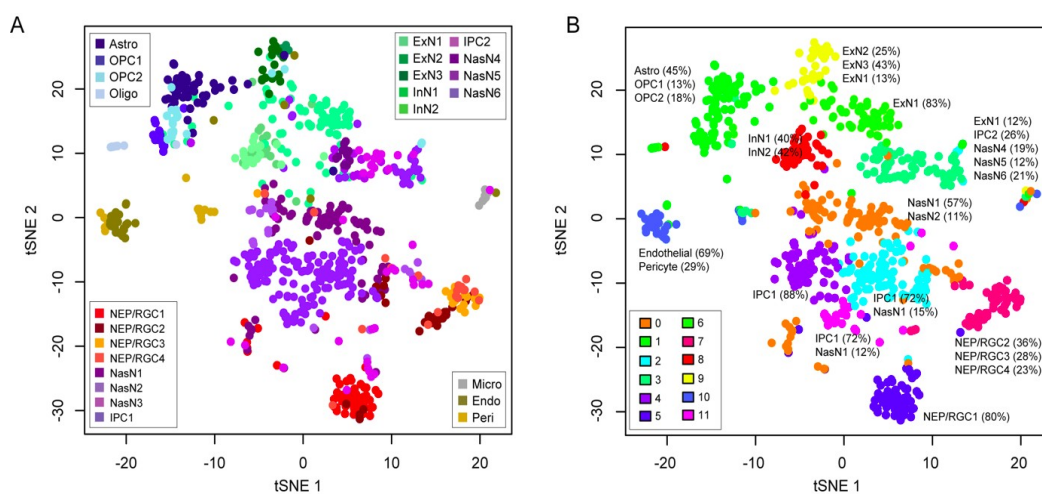


Figure S3: **Co-expression network analysis - Radial glial cells gene modules.** We used the two identified radial glial cell clusters for co-expression analyses. The dendrogram shows genes grouped in different modules (tree branches) that were assigned a color code (bottom). A total of 32 modules were detected for RGC-1 sub-population and 26 modules for RGC-2 sub-population.

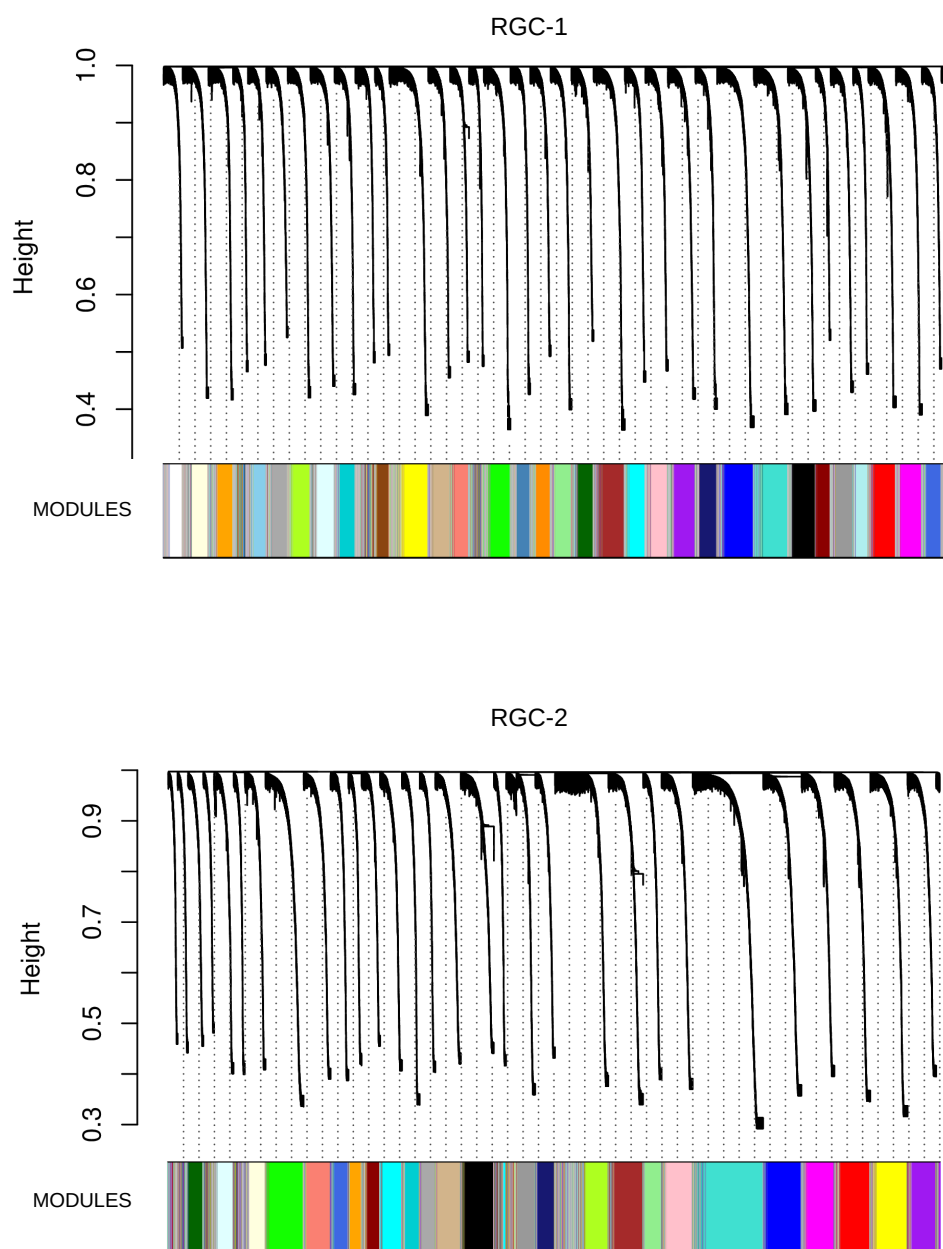


Figure S4: **Co-expression network analysis - Intermediate progenitor cells gene modules.** Two intermediate progenitor cell clusters (IPC-1 and IPC-2) were used for co-expression analyses. A total of 9 modules were detected for IPC-1 sub-population and 23 modules for IPC-2 sub-population.

