Molecular Evolution of the Sex Peptide Network in *Drosophila*

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Abstract

Successful reproduction depends on interactions between numerous proteins beyond

those involved directly in gamete fusion.   While such reproductive proteins evolve in response

to sexual selection pressures, how networks of interacting proteins arise and evolve as

reproductive phenotypes change remains an open question. Here, we investigated the molecular

evolution of the "sex peptide network" of *Drosophila melanogaster,* a functionally well-

characterized reproductive protein network. In this species, the peptide hormone sex peptide

(SP) and its interacting proteins cause major changes in female physiology and behavior after

mating. In contrast, females of more distantly related *Drosophila* species do not respond to SP.

In spite of these phenotypic differences, we detected orthologs of all network proteins across 22

diverse *Drosophila* species and found evidence that most orthologs likely function in

reproduction throughout the genus. In *D. melanogaster* and closely related species that show

similar responses to SP, we detected the recurrent, adaptive evolution of several network

proteins, consistent with sexual selection acting to continually refine network function. We also

found some evidence for adaptive evolution of several proteins along two key branches of the

Drosophila phylogeny on which major changes in SP-related phenotypes likely occurred.

Finally, we used gene expression profiling to examine the likely degree of functional

conservation of the paralogs of an SP network protein that arose via gene duplication. Our

results suggest a dynamic history for the SP network in which network members arose before the

onset of robust SP-mediated responses and then were shaped by both purifying and positive

selection.

Keywords: sex peptide, *Drosophila*, seminal fluid, sexual selection, molecular evolution

Introduction

Successful reproduction requires the fusion of egg and sperm cells, yet this fusion is often facilitated by proteins that are not part of the gametes. For example, non-gametic reproductive proteins provided in male seminal fluid or produced in the female reproductive tract can facilitate sperm motility, induce or manage sperm storage, or cause changes to female reproductive physiology (Wilburn & Swanson, 2016, Schnakenberg et al., 2011). While proteomic and comparative genomic methods have enabled the identification of hundreds of gametic and non-gametic reproductive proteins across diverse taxa (reviewed in McDonough et al., 2016), understanding how these proteins interact, and how such interactions evolve, remain areas of active research.

Some of the best-characterized reproductive protein interactions occur in the "sex peptide network" of *Drosophila melanogaster* that regulates female post-mating behavior and physiology. The network centers on the sex peptide (SP), a short peptide hormone transferred from males to females as a non-gametic component of seminal fluid (Chen et al., 1988). The presence of SP in the female reproductive tract stimulates egg production (Soller et al., 1999), reduces receptivity to remating (Liu & Kubli, 2003, Chapman et al., 2003), facilitates the release of sperm from storage prior to fertilization (Avila et al., 2010), and affects numerous other female behaviors, including feeding, defecation and sleep (Carvalho et al., 2006, Apger-McGlaughon & Wolfner, 2013, Isaac et al., 2010). SP-mediated effects on females persist for several days after mating because SP binds to sperm, which become stored in specialized sperm storage organs in the female tract (Peng et al., 2005). SP is then gradually cleaved from sperm and released from the storage organs into the female tract, where it interacts with the sex peptide receptor (SPR), a G-protein coupled receptor that is expressed in a subset of neurons innervating

the uterus (Yapici et al., 2008, Hasemeyer et al., 2009, Yang et al., 2009). This gradual "dosing"

of SP causes the persistence of the hormone's effects on female behavior and physiology. SPR

signaling is also required for the efficient release of sperm from the storage organs (Avila et al.,

2015).

While the molecule(s) on sperm to which SP binds remain unknown, RNAi screens have

identified several additional male seminal fluid proteins and female reproductive tract proteins

required for robust SP responses (Ravi Ram & Wolfner, 2007, Ravi Ram & Wolfner, 2009,

LaFlamme et al., 2012, Findlay et al., 2014, Singh et al., 2018). Together with SP and SPR,

these proteins comprise the SP network. The male-derived proteins include: predicted C-type

lectins CG1652 and CG1656; predicted proteases/protease homologs CG9997, seminase,

aquarius and intrepid; and, predicted cysteine-rich secretory proteins CG17575 and antares. The

female-derived proteins include fra mauro (a predicted metallopeptidase), Esp (a predicted anion

transporter) and hadley (which lacks identifiable protein domains). The male-derived proteins

act interdependently to facilitate SP binding to sperm (Ravi Ram & Wolfner, 2009, Findlay et

al., 2014, Singh et al., 2018), while the female-derived proteins act downstream of SP binding to

sperm, potentially by facilitating SP-SPR signaling (Findlay et al., 2014). Other genes expressed

in the secondary cells of the male accessory gland are also required for SP-mediated responses,

though it remains unclear whether these genes encode proteins that interact directly with the

network proteins described above (Sitnik et al., 2016).

SP's functions and interactions have been well characterized in *D. melanogaster*, but

comparative genomic and functional studies have shown that the SP response is not conserved

throughout the *Drosophila* genus. Tsuda et al. (2015) found that only species of the

melanogaster group of *Drosophila* (Fig. 1) show changes in female remating receptivity and egg

production upon injection with synthetic SP, even though SP and SPR orthologs can be detected

outside of this group. Furthermore, by incubating GFP-labeled SP with female reproductive

tracts from progressively more divergent species, Tsuda et al. (2015) discovered that SP could

bind to the female tract only in *melanogaster* group species. This observation suggested that

robust expression of SPR in the female tract evolved on the phylogenetic lineage leading to the

melanogaster group, which the authors tested by comparing *SPR* gene expression between in-

group and out-group species (Tsuda et al., 2015). Consistent with *D. melanogaster* expression

patterns (Yapici et al., 2008), they found that *SPR* was expressed in non-reproductive areas in

both sexes of all species examined. However, its expression in the female reproductive tract was

largely limited to the *melanogaster* group. (The only outgroup species that showed expression in

this location was *D. virilis*, but conspecific GFP-labeled SP did not bind to female reproductive

tracts in this species). Intriguingly, the SP ortholog from *D. pseudoobscura* (a non-*melanogaster*

group species) is expressed in *D. pseudoobscura* male reproductive tracts (Yang et al., 2018) and

can trigger SP-mediated responses when injected into *D. melanogaster* females, but not when

injected into conspecifics (Tsuda et al., 2015). This result suggests that the SP protein might have

evolved the potential to affect female post-mating behavior before the emergence of the

melanogaster group, but this function was not fully realized until the subsequent evolution of

SPR expression in the female reproductive tract (and, perhaps, within specific neurons in the

tract) (Hasemeyer et al., 2009, Yang et al., 2009, Yapici et al., 2008, Rezaval et al., 2012). It is

also possible that the transition to high levels of SPR expression in the female reproductive tract

created or increased an evolutionary selective pressure to bind higher levels of SP to stored

sperm.

While *Drosophila* species differ in reproductive traits for many reasons (Markow &

O'Grady, 2005), some of these differences relate directly to the SP network and could thus be

causes or consequences of SP network evolution. For example, a change in sperm length may

affect the amount of SP that can bind, and other structural changes to sperm could affect the

binding of SP and other network proteins that interact with sperm, such as CG1652 and CG1656

(Ravi Ram & Wolfner, 2009, Singh et al., 2018). The amount of SP bound to sperm, the rate and

efficacy of its release (Peng et al., 2005), and its ability to bind SPR (Yapici et al., 2008) could

affect re-mating rates, while the structure of female sperm storage organs could affect the ability

of the network proteins to bind SP to sperm or modulate SP's interaction with SPR. Changes in

these traits – sperm length, female remating rate, and female sperm storage structures – have

been well documented in the literature (Alpern et al., 2019, Joly & Bressac, 1994, Markow,

1996, Markow & O'Grady, 2005, Pitnick et al., 1999, Snook et al., 1994, Snook, 1995, Singh et

al., 2002), and we summarize them and infer their timing in Figure 1. Of particular relevance to

this study, the phenotypic and phylogenetic data are consistent with SPR evolving to be

expressed in female reproductive tracts along the lineage leading to the *melanogaster* group of

flies (Tsuda et al., 2015; branch 11), and an increase in sperm length on the lineage leading to *D.*

ananassae and *D. bipectinata* (Joly & Bressac, 1994, Markow, 1996, Pitnick et al., 1999; branch

15).

In light of the differences between species in reproductive phenotypes, we used

comparative genomics and molecular evolutionary analysis to gain insights into the evolution of

the SP network. While robust, long-lasting changes in female behavior and physiology due to

SP are found only in the *melanogaster* group of *Drosophila*, we identified orthologs of each SP

network protein in numerous outgroup species and verified their expression in the male

reproductive system in two such species using published data (Yang et al., 2018, Kelleher et al.,

2009). Using PAML (Yang, 2007) we determined that recurrent positive selection has acted on

specific sites in several of these proteins. We also detected marginal evidence that positive

selection has acted on certain network proteins on key phylogenetic lineages corresponding with

major changes in SP-related phenotypes. Finally, we used gene expression analysis to

investigate the functional consequences of a gene duplication event that gave rise to one of the

SP network proteins, seminase. Taken together, our results suggest that the members of the SP

network had the potential to influence reproductive success before the onset of SP/SPR-mediated

responses in the reproductive tract of mated females of the *melanogaster* group of species.

However, additional adaptive changes in these proteins occurred concurrent with, and

subsequent to, these critical changes in the fly reproductive system. These results underscore the

strength of sexual selection acting in *Drosophila* and illustrate potential molecular changes that

occur in the face of such selection.

Methods

Identification of SP network proteins across Drosophila *species*

  We obtained the protein sequence for each SP network protein in *D. melanogaster* from FlyBase. For species for which protein annotations were available on FlyBase (Drosophila 12 Genomes et al., 2007), we obtained orthologous protein-coding DNA sequences using the FlyBase Orthologs feature. These species included *Drosophila simulans, sechellia, yakuba, erecta, ananassae, pseudoobscura, persimillis, willistoni, mojavensis, virilis* and *grimshawi.* For species with sequenced genomes that lacked FlyBase protein annotations (Chen et al., 2014), we manually searched for gene orthologs using tBLASTn and the *D. melanogaster* protein sequence as the query. These species include *Drosophila ficusphila, eugracilis, takahashii, elegans, rhopoloa, kikkawai, bipectinata, miranda* and *albomicans.* For genes expected to have introns based on the *D. melanogaster* gene structure, we looked in the unannotated species for the approximate location of the *D. melanogaster* intron, and used known intron border consensus sequences and six-frame translation, implemented in EMBOSS SixPack (Madeira et al., 2019), to identify predicted intron borders and remove intronic sequences prior to the analyses below.

  To study the gene duplication events that gave rise to *seminase* and its tandem gene duplicates (*CG10587* and *CG11037* in *D. melanogaster*), we identified the genes flanking these three genes and used them to identify the syntenic region of the other *Drosophila* genomes. We assumed conservation of gene order within this syntenic region in assigning orthologs for this gene family (Figure S1).

  For all putative orthologs identified by bioinformatic methods, we verified that the ortholog was the reciprocal best BLAST hit to the expected SP network member of *D. melanogaster.* Inferred orthologs with a high degree of similarity, successful reciprocal best hits,

and a sequence that could be translated conceptually to produce a polypeptide without premature

stops, were retained for study. In cases of duplicate genes (*seminase*, *CG1652* and *CG1656*), we

also used gene order and synteny to confirm correct ortholog identification.

Sequence alignment

For each SP network protein, we used MUSCLE as implemented in MEGA 6.06 (Tamura

et al., 2013) to align amino acid sequences, then visually checked and edited each alignment for

accuracy. Amino acid alignments were then back-translated in MEGA to obtain the cDNA

alignment.

Phylogenetic analysis

To infer a *Drosophila* consensus phylogeny based on all SP network proteins, we

concatenated the amino acid alignments of all SP network proteins within each of the 22 species.

We used PROML in Phylip (Felsenstein, 2005) to infer an unrooted maximum-likelihood

phylogeny (with random input order, slow analysis, and all other default parameters). Gaps in the

alignment were used in cases in which a protein was not present in a particular species. The

resulting phylogeny matched published *Drosophila* phylogenies, expect for *D. virilis* and *D.*

mojavensis (Drosophila 12 Genomes et al., 2007, Markow & O'Grady, 2005, Seetharam &

Stuart, 2013). We then used this consensus tree for the PAML analyses, with species removed

on a gene-by-gene basis as described below.

Detection of recombination

Because recombination within a gene sequence can impact the results of analyses to

detect selection, we first used GARD with default parameters as implemented in DataMonkey

2.0 to check for evidence of recombination within each gene (Kosakovsky Pond et al., 2006,

Weaver et al., 2018). Genes were partitioned at breakpoints evaluated as significant by the

Kishino-Hasegawa test (p-value < 0.05 for both LH and RH; Table S2), and PAML was run on

each gene segment separately. We performed PAML analyses on sequence alignments spanning

two different ranges in the *Drosophila* phylogeny: the branch and branch-sites tests (see below)

were run on species from the entire genus, while the sites test (see below) was run on species

from only the *melanogaster* group. Thus, we generated a set of recombination breakpoints for

each set of species (Table S2). For each species set, six SP network genes showed evidence of

recombination, but the sets of genes that showed recombination differed between the two sets of

species.

PAML analyses

For each protein, we used codeml of the PAML package to perform evolutionary

analyses on protein-coding DNA sequence (Yang, 2007). To test for heterogeneity in the rate of

each protein's evolution across the phylogeny, we utilized the PAML branch test, which uses a

likelihood ratio test (LRT) to compare the "free ratio" model, allowing for different ω values for

each branch, with model M0, which estimates a single ω for the whole phylogeny (Yang, 1998).

For these tests, and for the branch-sites tests below, we used the consensus tree described above

that covered the entire *Drosophila* phylogeny, but manually removed from it any species for

which: a) an ortholog could not be identified, or b) an ortholog was identified, but it could not be

confidently aligned due to ambiguity over an intron position or the end of the protein-coding

region. Table S1 shows the set of species used for the molecular evolutionary analyses for each

gene.

To test whether a subset of sites in a protein had evolved under recurrent positive

selection, we used LRTs to compare an evolutionary model (M8) that allows a class of sites to

have $\omega > 1$ to models M7 and M8a, which do not (Swanson et al., 2003, Yang et al., 2000). For

proteins for which model M8 was significantly preferred to models M7 and M8a, we used the

Bayes Empirical Bayes (BEB) approach to identify at the 0.9 confidence level the specific

residues that have evolved adaptively. These comparisons were done only for species within the

melanogaster group due to the possibility of synonymous site saturation if more divergent

species were included. To check for convergence in the 'free-ratio' and the sites models, we ran

codeml twice with the initial omega set at 0.4 and 2, respectively.

Finally, we performed the branch-sites test for positive selection (Zhang et al., 2005) to

identify classes of sites that had evolved adaptively along either of two specific lineages in the

phylogeny that we identified *a priori* because they represent likely evolutionary transitions in

key SP-related traits. First, we tested for sites under selection on the branch leading to the

melanogaster group of species (Fig. 1, branch 11), since this branch corresponds with the

inferred timing of when the SP receptor became expressed in the female reproductive tract and,

consequently, when females became sensitive to the non-receptivity effect caused by SP (Tsuda

et al., 2015). Second, we tested for sites under selection in the lineage that leads to and separates

D. ananassae and *D. bipectinata* from the rest of the *melanogaster* group species (Fig. 1, branch

15), because these species are known to have somewhat longer sperm (Joly & Bressac, 1994,

Markow, 1996, Pitnick et al., 1999). Although we inferred other important evolutionary

transitions in reproductive traits on the broader *Drosophila* phylogeny (Fig. 1), we limited our

branch-sites analyses to these two lineages because of the greater number of available sequenced

species in the *melanogaster* group.

222   In the branch-sites test, we used a LRT to compare a null model allowing for only

purifying and neutral selection on the focal branch with an alternative model allowing for a class

of sites to evolve under positive selection (Yang, 2007, Yang & Dos Reis, 2011, Zhang et al.,

2005). Recently, Venkat et al. (2018) found that this branch-sites test can have a high rate of

false positives driven by multinucleotide mutations within codons (i.e., mutations at adjacent

sites). To control for this issue, we implemented the tests in the Venkat model, a version of

PAML developed by these authors that runs the analysis after masking these sites. PAML

analyses were implemented using custom batch scripts for GNU parallel (Tange, 2018) and

PAML version 4.8a, or HyPhy version 2.5.1 (in the case of the Venkat model).

Identification of seminase *orthologs and paralogs*

233   We identified the predicted amino acid sequences for orthologs of seminase, CG11037

and CG10587 in *Drosophila* species using the methods described above. To confirm that calls of

orthology for seminase and its paralogs were accurate, we used Phylip's PROML program

(Felsenstein, 2005) to infer a maximum-likelihood rooted tree (using the single copies in *D.*

pseudoobscura and *D. persimillis* as the outgroup, and default PROML parameters). This was

consistent with the orthology assignments made using conserved gene order, except for *D.*

ananassae and *D. bipectinata*, which are likely confounded by their long branch length.

Evaluation of gene expression

D. melanogaster, D. yakuba, D. ficusphila, D. bipectinata, D. annanassae, D.

pseudoobscura and *D. willistoni* were raised in the lab as in Tsuda et al. (2015). We CO_2-

anesthetized 9-day-old flies of each species, separated them by sex, homogenized male or female

whole flies in TRIzol reagent, and purified RNA from samples and synthesized cDNA as

previously described (Gubala et al., 2017). We then used species-specific primers to amplify

seminase, *CG11037*, *CG10587* and *RpL32* as a housekeeping gene control. Genomic DNA was

used as a positive control for PCR reactions, and water was used in place of template in negative

control reactions.

Results and Discussion

SP network proteins are present in species outside of the melanogaster *group*

While SP orthologs have been found in species outside of the *melanogaster* group, only females of species within this group appear to show large-scale SP-mediated reproductive responses (Tsuda et al., 2015). One likely factor for this change is the evolution of *SPR* expression in the female reproductive tract in the last common ancestor of the *melanogaster* group (Tsuda et al., 2015). This evolutionary history raises the question of whether the remaining members of the SP network – all of which are critical for SP responses in *D. melanogaster* – are present outside of the group. We addressed this question bioinformatically by searching for intact orthologs across 22 *Drosophila* species with sequenced genomes.

Figure 2 shows that all SP network protein-coding gene orthologs are detectable in a large majority of the species surveyed, including those outside of the *melanogaster* group. For example, we found all currently known network proteins in *D. pseudoobscura* and *D. willistoni*, and all but one ortholog in *D. virilis*. To assess whether these orthologs were likely to function in reproduction outside of the *melanogaster* group, we examined publicly availably RNAseq data from male reproductive tracts in *D. pseudoobscura* (Yang et al., 2018) and proteomic data from male accessory glands in *D. mojavensis* (Kelleher et al., 2009). Transcripts of orthologs of male-derived network proteins were consistently enriched in (or entirely specific to) samples from whole males, male testes, and male carcasses in *D. pseudoobscura*, while showing either no or low expression in females or in male heads (Fig. S2). This pattern is consistent with expectations for reproductive proteins produced in the male accessory gland, with the "testis" expression likely reflecting contamination of testis dissections with accessory gland tissue. The genes encoding female-derived proteins showed broader expression patterns (Fig. S2), including

in whole females and whole males, but this pattern is consistent with their *D. melanogaster*

orthologs, the expression of which is not limited to the female reproductive system (Brown et al.,

2014). Predicted orthologs of the male-derived network proteins CG1652, CG1656, CG9997,

CG17575, seminase, aquarius and antares were also identified in a proteomic analysis of the *D.*

mojavensis accessory gland (Kelleher et al., 2009). Subsequent work showed that males of this

species transfer transcripts of the *antares* ortholog to females during mating (Bono et al., 2011).

Thus, RNAseq and proteomic data from two outgroup species are consistent with many SP

network proteins functioning in reproduction outside of the *melanogaster* group.

It is likely that some SP network proteins function in other processes in certain species

that impact their evolutionary trajectories. For example, SPR is expressed in both sexes outside

of the reproductive tract (Tsuda et al., 2015, Yapici et al., 2008), and myoinhibitory peptides

(MIPs) are known ligands in addition to SP (Kim et al., 2010, Poels et al., 2010, Yamanaka et al.,

2010). SPR-MIP interactions outside of the reproductive tract affect sleep patterns in both sexes

and remating propensity in females (Jang et al., 2017, Oh et al., 2014). Such interactions, in

addition to the sexual selective pressures exerted by SP network-mediated interactions and

reproductive phenotypes, have likely contributed to the evolution of SP network proteins in

various *Drosophila* lineages. While most male-derived network proteins appear to have male-

specific or heavily male-biased expression (in species for which expression data are available),

the female-derived proteins show broader expression patterns. Understanding these proteins'

non-reproductive functions will shed additional light on evolutionary forces that may have

shaped them.

SP network proteins demonstrate evolutionary rate heterogeneity across the Drosophila

phylogeny

Because recombination within a gene can cause false positive results in the PAML

analyses, we first analyzed each set of orthologs using GARD (Kosakovsky Pond et al., 2006) to

identify high-confidence recombination sites, which were detected for six of the proteins (Table

S2). These six proteins were thus split into segments corresponding to the regions between

recombination breakpoints, which we analyzed independently.

To begin investigating these proteins' molecular evolution across the genus, we used

PAML model M0 to estimate a single d_N/d_S ratio (ω) for each full-length protein-coding

sequence across all species. For the six genes for which we detected evidence of recombination

(Table S2), we also estimated ω across the full length of each segment. We then performed the

branch test (Yang, 1998) to assess whether ω varied significantly across different branches of the

phylogeny. Most network proteins (and segments of proteins) had full-length ω estimates

between 0.2 and 0.3 across the full-genus tree (Table S3). Three proteins showed notably slower

evolutionary rates: CG17575 ($\omega = 0.07$), a male-expressed cysteine-rich secretory protein

required for binding of SP to sperm (Ravi Ram & Wolfner, 2009); Esp ($\omega = 0.03$), a female-

expressed, predicted sulfate membrane transporter also required for long-term fertility (Findlay

et al., 2014); and SPR ($\omega = 0.06$), the female-expressed G-protein coupled receptor for SP

required for female post-mating changes including egg-laying, resistance to remating and release

of sperm from sperm-storage organs (Avila et al., 2015, Yapici et al., 2008). While these

proteins' slow rates of evolution could indicate that they play highly conserved roles in

reproduction, it is also possible that they have evolved adaptively at only a few sites or on a few

lineages (see below).

We next ran the "free ratio" model in which PAML estimates an ω value for each branch

of the phylogeny. We found significant evidence of evolutionary rate heterogeneity for all but

one network protein, intrepid (Table S3). Additionally, all proteins but intrepid had at least one

phylogenetic branch for which ω was estimated to be > 1. While the branch test is not a rigorous

test of positive selection acting on specific branches, the results indicate that the evolutionary

rates of most SP network proteins have varied significantly across their evolutionary histories.

In contrast, the constant, slow rate of evolution for intrepid implies that this protein has likely

played a conserved and important role since the origin of the genus. Intrepid has undergone less

functional characterization than other male-expressed male network proteins, so we cannot

speculate further about its specific role(s) in reproduction.

Several SP network proteins have undergone recurrent positive selection at specific sites since

the evolution of SPR expression in female reproductive tracts

To determine the extent to which positive selection has shaped the evolution of the SP

network proteins, we used the PAML sites test to ask whether any protein had a particular subset

of sites that had undergone recurrent positive selection. Because of the likelihood of

synonymous site saturation over longer phylogenetic distances, we limited the sequences used in

this analysis to those from the *melanogaster* group. This set of species also represents the likely

extent of major SP/SPR-mediated post-mating responses, as only these species express SPR at

high levels in the female reproductive tract and respond to injection of synthetic SP (Tsuda et al.,

2015). Thus, our analyses identify proteins that might have evolved adaptively to further

improve/refine network function in the past ~15 million years (Seetharam & Stuart, 2013).

The results of the sites analyses are shown in Table 1. Four proteins – CG9997, fra

mauro, CG1652 and hadley – show significant evidence for having a class of amino acid sites

that have evolved under recurrent positive selection across the *melanogaster* group of species.

Three other proteins (antares, intrepid and CG17575) each have a class of sites found to be under

positive selection in the Model M7/M8 comparison, but these results are no longer significant

when comparing Models M8 and M8a, suggesting that the class of more quickly evolving sites

identified for each protein in Model M8 may be evolving neutrally rather than under positive

selection.

The male-expressed network proteins that have evolved adaptively are functionally co-

dependent. CG9997, a serine protease homolog predicted to be catalytically inactive, must be

produced in the male accessory glands for CG1652, a C-type lectin, to be transferred to mated

females (Ravi Ram & Wolfner, 2009). Likewise, in the absence of CG1652, CG9997 is not

efficiently "processed" from its 45-kDa form to its 36-kDa form in mated females (Ravi Ram &

Wolfner, 2009, Singh et al., 2018). The loss of either protein prevents SP from accumulating on

stored sperm in females. Recent work has shown that both CG9997 and CG1652 also bind to

sperm, though their sperm-binding is detectable only in the hours after mating, while SP binding

lasts for several days (Peng et al., 2005, Singh et al., 2018). CG9997 and CG1652 also show

significant evidence of evolutionary rate covariation (Findlay et al., 2014). These results suggest

that pressure to maintain their functional interactions may be a factor driving the adaptive

evolution of CG9997 and CG1652, as has been observed for pairs of interacting reproductive

proteins in other systems (Clark et al., 2009, Grayson, 2015).

Other work on CG9997 is consistent with its adaptive evolution. Wong et al. (2008)

found evidence for recent positive selection acting on this gene by examining patterns of

polymorphism and divergence between populations of *D. melanogaster* and *D. simulans*. They

hypothesized that non-catalytically active serine protease homologs like CG9997 function as

agonists or antagonists for active proteases, while others have speculated that protease homologs

bind to other proteins or molecules in the female tract to slow their rate of digestion by active,

female-derived proteases (Laflamme & Wolfner, 2013). Under either scenario, protease

homologs like CG9997 may need to continually coevolve with their interacting partners,

providing the impetus for the recurrent, adaptive evolution detected here. Additionally,

knockdown of *CG9997* diminishes male sperm competitive ability (Castillo & Moyle, 2014),

suggesting another potential factor in its adaptive evolution.

Less functional information exists for the adaptively evolving, female-expressed proteins.

Both fra mauro and hadley were identified in a screen for female-expressed proteins that

coevolved with a male-expressed SP network protein; in each case, the coevolutionary signal

was with CG17575 (Findlay et al., 2014). RNAi knockdown of either gene reduced female

fertility, though knockdown females could receive SP and store it properly on sperm (Findlay et

al., 2014). These data suggested that the proteins could be involved in maintaining the female

long-term response to SP, though *fra mauro* knockdown females also showed a significant

fertility defect in the 24 hrs after mating (Findlay et al., 2014). The fra mauro protein encodes a

predicted neprilysin protease, which may coevolve with its as yet unknown molecular targets or

antagonists (Laflamme & Wolfner, 2013). As noted above, functional domains have not been

identified for the hadley protein, so it is difficult to speculate on potential forces driving its

adaptive evolution.

Notably, several proteins in the SP network showed no evidence of recurrent adaptive

evolution within the *melanogaster* group, while others had subsets of sites with evolutionary

rates that were elevated, but approximated neutrality. These data suggest that while some

network proteins may contain regions that are under relaxed constraint, much of the functionality

and interdependence of the network might have already existed at the origin of the *melanogaster*

group.

Several network proteins underwent adaptive evolution on specific lineages correlating with

changes in reproductive phenotypes

While the PAML sites test described above detects recurrent adaptive evolution, protein

networks can also be shaped by bursts of episodic positive selection acting on specific

phylogenetic lineages. One important evolutionary transition for the SP network occurred at the

base of the *melanogaster* group, when *SPR* evolved expression in the lower female reproductive

tract (Tsuda et al., 2015). This change likely created (or exacerbated) a selective pressure for

higher SP levels in this location, as prolonged SP-SPR signaling could promote continued egg

production and prolong female non-receptivity to re-mating. Because a primary purpose of the

male-expressed SP network proteins in *D. melanogaster* is to bind SP to sperm to prolong the

post-mating response, we hypothesized that some of these proteins might have experienced a

burst of adaptive evolution on the same phylogenetic branch on which female reproductive *SPR*

expression is inferred to have evolved. Likewise, the increase in *SPR* expression in females

could have created a selective pressure for other female-expressed members of the network to

evolve. To test these ideas, we used the Venkat model, a modified PAML branch-sites test

(Venkat et al., 2018, Zhang et al., 2005), to ask whether any network protein had a subset of sites

under selection on the branch leading to the *melanogaster* group (i.e., branch 11 in Fig. 1).

Table 2 shows the results of these tests. Two proteins show marginal evidence for

adaptive evolution on branch 11: CG1656 and SPR. As originally formulated (Zhang et al.,

2005), the LRT for the branch-sites test follows a null distribution described as an equal mixture

of point mass 0 and a chi-square distribution with 1 degree of freedom (df). Under this null

distribution, the test statistic corresponding with a p-value of 0.05 is 2.71, a value exceeded by

each gene. However, the test is typically conducted conservatively (Venkat et al., 2018, Zhang

et al., 2005), following only a chi-square distribution with 1 df. The p-values listed in Table 2

are calculated based on this latter distribution, and they are marginally significant ($0.05 < p <$

0.1) for CG1656 and SPR.

The potential adaptive evolution of sites in the SPR protein along branch 11 is

interesting, because this lineage also represents the time during which the protein became

expressed in the female reproductive tract (Tsuda et al., 2015). Thus, it is possible that the SPR

gene underwent both regulatory and protein-coding adaptations that altered how the female post-

mating response is controlled. The other protein that potentially underwent adaptive evolution

along this lineage is the predicted C-type lectin CG1656, which functions similarly to its

recurrently rapidly evolving paralog described above, CG1652. Both lectins are required for

SP's long-term binding to stored sperm, and both proteins themselves bind sperm temporarily in

the hours after mating (Singh et al., 2018). Given the potential selective pressure to bind more

SP to stored sperm in female tracts expressing *SPR*, it is possible that the adaptive evolution of

CG1656 on this key phylogenetic branch could have helped to improve the efficiency of SP's

binding to sperm. This idea could be tested in future experiments by either identifying and

mutating the residues likely to have changed along branch 11 and/or by substituting an outgroup

ortholog of CG1656 (and potentially its duplicate, CG1652) into *D. melanogaster* and examining

the effects on SP's sperm binding and on the female long-term post-mating response.

Prior work demonstrated that SP binds to the full length of *D. melanogaster* sperm (Peng

et al., 2005, Ravi Ram & Wolfner, 2009, Singh et al., 2018). Indeed, the ability of SP (and

potentially other molecules) to bind sperm and then influence post-mating responses is one

hypothesis for why sperm tails have evolved to be so long in many *Drosophila* species. Within

the *melanogaster* group species that experience SP-mediated post-mating responses, one notable

change in reproductive physiology is that the sperm of *D. ananassae* and its closely related

species are considerably longer than those of *D. melanogaster* (*D. ananassae* sperm length: 3.3

mm; *D. melanogaster* and other *melanogaster* group species sperm length: just under 2 mm

(Pitnick et al., 1999, Joly & Bressac, 1994, Markow, 1996)). We thus infer that a major (>50%)

increase in sperm length occurred on the branch of the phylogeny leading to *D. ananassae* and

its close sister species *D. bipectinata* (branch 15 in Fig. 1).

To test for whether any SP network proteins experienced adaptive evolution concurrent

with this change in sperm length, we again used the modified branch-sites test. Two network

proteins, antares and CG17575, show evidence of positive selection acting on specific sites on

the lineage leading to *D. ananassae* and *D. bipectinata* (Table 3). Antares' signal of selection is

significant under both null distributions described above, while CG17575's signal is significant

under the mixed null distribution and marginally significant ($p = 0.0504$) under the conservative

test. In addition to facilitating SP's long-term binding to sperm, antares also binds to sperm itself

for a shorter period (Findlay et al., 2014, Singh et al., 2018). Thus, antares might have evolved

adaptively to facilitate greater or more efficient binding of either itself or SP to sperm as sperm

tails lengthened. Interestingly, the antares ortholog in outgroup species *D. mojavensis* and *D.*

arizonae was also found to evolve under diversifying selection (Bono et al., 2015), even though

D. mojavensis does not have a currently detectable SP ortholog (Tsuda et al., 2015) (Fig. 2).

Heterospecific matings between these species fail due to post-mating, pre-zygotic isolating

barriers, which include problems with sperm storage in the female reproductive tract (Kelleher &

Markow, 2007). It is thus possible that antares plays an essential role in binding molecules to

sperm and/or facilitating sperm storage, and that the male reproductive activity of antares has

been refined by different selective pressures in different lineages.

CG17575 is a male-expressed, cysteine-rich secretory protein required for SP and other

sperm-binding network proteins to localize from the female uterus, where seminal proteins and

sperm are first deposited, into the seminal receptacle (SR), the primary site of sperm storage in

D. melanogaster (Ravi Ram & Wolfner, 2009, Singh et al., 2018). Since CG17575 does not

itself bind sperm (Singh et al., 2018), further details of how CG17575 provides for proper

localization of other seminal proteins to the seminal receptacle are needed before we can

speculate on the selective forces that might have contributed to its evolution in this lineage.

The branch-sites tests for branches 11 and 15 reported above were conducted using full-

length gene sequences, since the test has limited power. However, we repeated this analysis on

all segments of the six genes for which recombination was detected. These results (Table S4)

found marginal evidence for selection for antares on branch 11 and for a segment of CG1652 on

branch 15. CG1656 was not among the genes for which recombination was detected (Table S2),

so its results above are unaltered.

Seminase gene duplicates retain male-specific expression patterns across melanogaster *group*

species

In addition to CG17575, the male-expressed serine protease seminase is required for the

localization of SP and other male-expressed proteins to the SR after mating (LaFlamme et al.,

2012, Singh et al., 2018). Seminase arose through gene duplication in the lineage leading to the

melanogaster group of flies. The genomes of *D. pseudoobscura* and other outgroup species

contain only one detectable copy of the gene, but in *D. melanogaster* and its fellow *melanogaster*

group members, there are three tandemly arrayed, intron-containing copies, suggesting two

distinct DNA-based duplication events (Figure S1). The other genes are *CG10587* and

CG11037. Like *seminase*, both are expressed specifically in the male accessory gland in *D.*

melanogaster (Brown et al., 2014, Leader et al., 2018). While we detected no recurrent or

episodic positive selection acting on seminase after these duplications (Tables 1-2), we were

curious whether it or its paralogs might have evolved different expression patterns (and, thus,

potential functions) after duplication. We thus performed RT-PCR to amplify each paralog from

cDNA isolated from males or females of a variety of species from the *melanogaster* group. We

also assessed the expression of the single-copy parent gene from *D. pseudoobscura* and *D.*

willistoni. Our results (Figure 3) show that both the single-copy genes from the outgroup

species, as well as all of paralogs from all *melanogaster* group species tested, are expressed

specifically in adult males. This result is consistent with the ancestral single copy of seminase

also functioning in male reproduction (and potentially with other SP network proteins).

Given that seminase itself has additional reproductive functions beyond its role in the SP

network (LaFlamme et al., 2012), it is possible that the paralogs have sub- or neo-functionalized

to have unique roles, in spite of their conserved expression patterns. Future studies should

evaluate how the paralogs contribute to reproduction, which may suggest possible evolutionary

forces that affected their evolution after the gene duplication events.

Conclusions

Sex peptide is directly responsible for major changes in female post-mating behavior and

physiology and is therefore one of the best characterized reproductive proteins to date. SP-

mediated responses appear to have arisen specifically in the *melanogaster* group of *Drosophila*,

and they manifest in full only with the help of a suite of male- and female-derived proteins, the

SP network. We have shown that these proteins are present and expressed in species outside of

the *melanogaster* group, suggesting they likely function in reproduction in these species and that

they did so in a common ancestor. Within the *melanogaster* group, several network proteins

(CG9997, CG1652, fra mauro, and hadley) have experienced recurrent positive selection,

suggesting that continued, adaptive evolution refined SP network function. A non-overlapping

set of proteins, including CG1656, SPR, antares, and CG17575, showed some evidence of bursts

of adaptive evolution on specific phylogenetic lineages corresponding with major changes in SP

network reproductive phenotypes. Taken together, these data suggest that SP network proteins

may have interacted to affect reproduction before the evolution of major SP-mediated changes in

the *melanogaster* group. However, once SPR became expressed at high levels in the female

reproductive tract in the common ancestor of this group (Tsuda et al., 2015), a combination of

both quick bursts of adaptation on specific lineages and recurrent changes at specific protein sites

helped the network evolve into the present form observed in *D. melanogaster*. This study

demonstrates how changes in both regulatory and protein-coding regions can affect the evolution

of protein networks and motivates future functional studies of the SP network proteins in

Drosophila species both within and outside of the *melanogaster* group.

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Figure Legends

Figure 1. Phylogeny of *Drosophila* species examined in this study. The gray box indicates the
melanogaster group. Each branch is numbered for reference in the main text. Key changes in
reproductive tracts are indicated by letters a-d and are based on an examination of the literature
(references cited in main text). The PAML branch-sites tests (see Results) were conducted on
branches 11 and 15. Branch lengths are not proportional to evolutionary distances.

Figure 2. Bioinformatic identification of SP network proteins across 22 *Drosophila* species.
Identified orthologs that were also reciprocal best BLAST hits are noted with a + sign, while a –
sign indicates no ortholog could be identified.

Figure 3. RT-PCR on *seminase* and paralogs shows conserved, male-biased expression after
duplication. Orthologs of *seminase*, *CG10586* and *CG11037* show male-specific expression in
various *melanogaster* group species, though the level of expression between paralogs and species
is somewhat variable. The single-copy parent gene in *D. pseudoobscura* and *D. willistoni* is also
expressed in a male-specific manner.

Table 1. PAML sites tests for positive selection acting on SP network genes. Asterisks
indicate genes for which recombination was detected, which were split into numbered segments
as indicated. Specific codons that were inferred to be under selection by PAML's Bayes
Empirical Bayes (BEB) analysis with Pr > 0.9 are shown for genes or segments for which
positive selection was detected (i.e., in which model M8 was a significantly better fit to the data
than models M7 and M8a). Amino acid site positions and identities refer to the *D. melanogaster*
protein sequence.

Gene	Segment Sites	M0 ω estimate	M7 vs. M8		M8 vs. M8a		% sites in ω > 1	Sites with BEB Pr > 0.90
			2*ΔlnL	*p*-value	2*ΔlnL	*p*-value		
aqrs		0.21	3.950	0.1388	0.773	0.3792		
antr		0.22	10.194	0.0061	1.935	0.1643		
intr		0.21	6.719	0.0348	0.547	0.4597		
CG9997		**0.25**	**21.001**	**2.75E-05**	**5.974**	**0.0145**	**10%**	**152S**
CG1652*		0.19	0.000	1.0000	0	1.0000		
CG1652_1	1-70	0.08	5.877	0.0529	0.797	0.3721		
CG1652_2	71-106	0.01	0	1.0000	0	1.0000		
CG1652_3	107-144	0.01	4.822	0.0897	0	1.0000		
CG1652_4	145-187	0.03	0	1.0000	0	1.0000		
CG1652_5	**188-322**	**0.67**	**6.953**	**0.0309**	**4.398**	**0.0360**	**38%**	**233P, 234G, 250V**
CG1656*		0.26	3.829	0.1474	3.221	0.0727		
CG1656_1	1-69	0.19	0.816	0.6651	0	1.0000		
CG1656_2	70-328	0.08	2.981	0.2252	0	1.0000		
CG17575*		0.06	24.088	5.88E-06	2.154	0.1422		
CG17575_1	1-139	0.03	0	1.0000	0	1.0000		
CG17575_2	140-298	0.08	16.612	0.0002	1.373	0.2413		
SP		0.22	1.463	0.4813	0	1.0000		
SPR		0.04	1.817	0.4031	8.828	0.0030		
Esp		0.03	0	1.0000	2.096	0.1477		
frma*		**0.24**	**15.986**	**0.0003**	**4.812**	**0.0283**	**7%**	**392A**
frma_1	**1-347**	**0.26**	**13.421**	**0.0012**	**4.515**	**0.0336**	**11%**	**none**
frma_2	**348-611**	**0.21**	**8.188**	**0.0167**	**6.106**	**0.0135**	**2%**	**392A**
hdly*		**0.29**	**36.156**	**1.41E-08**	**31.463**	**2.03E-08**	**6%**	**173V, 201I, 229S, 239I, 304A**
hdly_1	**1-364**	**0.30**	**42.194**	**0.0000**	**37.383**	**0.0000**	**7%**	**173V, 201I, 229S, 239I, 304A**
hdly_2	365-445	0.12	0.494	0.7813	0.463	0.4964		
sems		0.20	0	1.0000	0	1.0000		
sems_1	1-93	0.28	0.640	0.7262	0.409	0.5227		
sems_2	94-275	0.18	0.899	0.6379	0.320	0.5715		

726 **Table 2. Venkat model branch-sites tests for positive selection acting on specific sites of SP**
727 **network proteins on the lineage (Branch 11) leading to the *melanogaster* group of**
728 ***Drosophila.*** P-values are calculated based on a χ_1^2 distribution. Asterisks indicate likelihood
729 ratio test statistics that reach the $p < 0.05$ significance threshold for a null distribution derived
730 from a 50:50 ratio of point mass 0 and the χ_1^2 distribution.
731

Gene	Whole-Gene ω estimate	Venkat Model	
		2*ΔlnL	***p*-value**
antr	298.77	2.464	0.116
aqrs	1.00	0	1.000
CG1652	7.62	1.428	0.232
CG1656	122.47	3.238*	0.072
CG9997	1.04	0	1.000
CG17575	424.52	2.425	0.119
Esp	1.08	0	1.000
frma	1.08	0.034	0.854
hdly	1.08	0	1.000
intr	1.00	0.039	0.843
sems	1.00	0	1.000
SP	1.00	0	1.000
SPR	9999.99	3.064*	0.080

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Table 3. Venkat model branch-sites tests for positive selection acting on specific sites of SP network proteins on a lineage (Branch 15) corresponding to increased sperm length in *D. ananassae*. *P*-values are calculated based on a χ_1^2 distribution. Asterisks indicate likelihood ratio test statistics that reach the $p < 0.05$ significance threshold for a null distribution derived from a 50:50 ratio of point mass 0 and the χ_1^2 distribution.

Gene	Whole-Gene ω estimate	Venkat Model	
		2*ΔlnL	***p*-value**
antr	**6.19**	**3.948**	**0.047**
aqrs	2.53	0.388	0.533
CG1652	1.05	0.006	0.938
CG1656	1.04	0	1.000
CG9997	1.05	0.022	0.882
CG17575	422.98	3.827*	0.050
Esp	1.08	0	1.000
frma	1.04	0.012	0.913
hdly	1.64	0.008	0.929
intr	1.02	0	1.000
sems	403.51	0.962	0.327
SP	1.04	0.002	0.963
SPR	1.08	0	1.000

Supplemental Materials

Table S1. Orthologs used for each gene in PAML analyses. Some orthologs that were identified in Table 2 were excluded from PAML analysis due to unresolved intron borders and/or poor alignment quality. Only species above the dotted line (the *melanogaster* group) were analyzed in the sites tests.

Table S2. GARD results showing inferred recombination breakpoints. Breakpoint positions refer to nucleotide positions in the alignment files used. However, since alignments include gaps, these positions do not necessarily have a 3:1 correspondence with the *D. melanogaster* amino acid positions reported in Tables 1-3. The first table shows recombination breakpoints detected for aligned sequences from the entire *Drosophila* genus, which were used for the branch and branch-sites tests. The second table shows recombination breakpoints detected for aligned sequences from only the *melanogaster* group, which were used for the sites tests.

Figure S1. RNAseq data from *D. pseudoobscura* support reproductive functions for SP network proteins in a species that lacks full-scale SP responses. A) *D. pseudoobscura* expression patterns for each member of the SP network. Dark shading indicates high expression levels, stripes indicate low (but detectable) expression, and no shading indicates no expression detected in a given sample. Male-derived network proteins show male-biased or male-specific expression, consistent with reproductive functions. B) Examples of *D. pseudoobscura* expression data for several SP network genes; shading in part (A) is based on these data. The RNAseq data were accessed via FlyBase and generated by Yang et al. (Yang et al., 2018).

Table S3. Branch tests for rate heterogeneity. Partitions were implemented in PAML analyses if they were significant in both the LH and RH tests.

Table S4. Venkat model branch-sites tests for positive selection acting on specific sites of SP network proteins detected by GARD to have multiple recombination segments. The table shows results for both branch 11 and branch 15 tests. Only the six genes for which recombination was detected in the relevant trees are shown in the table. *P*-values are calculated based on a χ^2_1 distribution. Asterisks indicate likelihood ratio test statistics that reach the $p <$ 0.05 significance threshold for a null distribution derived from a 50:50 ratio of point mass 0 and the χ^2_1 distribution.

Fig. 1

a Sperm size changes
b Sperm storage changes
c Remating frequency
d Change in SPR expression

Fig. 2

	intrepid	CG1652	CG1656	aquarius	antares	CG9997	CG17575	seminase	sex peptide	fra mauro	hadley	Esp	SPR
D.melanogaster	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.sechellia	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.simulans	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.erecta	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.yakuba	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.eugracilis	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.takahashii	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.biarmipes	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.elegans	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.rhopoloa	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.ficusphila	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.kikkawai	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+
D.bipectinata	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.ananassae	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.pseudoobscura	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.persimilis	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.miranda	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.willistoni	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
D.mojavensis	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+
D.virilis	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
D.albomicans	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
D.grimshawi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	+	-	+

Fig. 3

	seminase				CG11037				CG10587				RpL32			
	M	F	g	(-)	M	F	g	(-)	M	F	g	(-)	M	F	g	(-)
D. melanogaster																
D. yakuba																
D. ficusphila																
D. bipectinata																
D. ananassae																
D. pseudoobscura																
D. willistoni																