Rates of molecular evolution predict intraspecies genetic diversity

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Abstract

Because the evolution of modern humans from early mammals has been a continuous

process, human genetic diversity at the molecular level should reflect mammalian genetic

diversity. To test this prediction, we contrasted the proportion of segregating sites, q, in

human data from the 1000 Genome Project with phylogenetic trees of genes in 96

mammalian genomes ranging from human to platypus. The evolvability of a gene in the

human population was found to be positively correlated with the long-term molecular

evolutionary rate ($r = 0.592$). Further analysis of human singleton and *de novo* mutations

suggested that natural selection begins shaping intraspecies genetic diversity soon after a

mutation's initial appearance. By introducing the rate of molecular evolution as a predictor of

q, species-specific selection on genes can be detected as deviations from predicted values.

We analyzed the average deviations of 10,173 disease-related gene sets and detected 33 gene

sets likely to be under human species-specific selection. Among them, nine gene sets were

related, with highly significant and positive *t*-values, to substance-related disorders, thus

indicating that the accelerated evolution of the natural reward pathway is the most

representative adaptation in humans. Eight gene sets were significantly related, with negative

t-values, to infectious diseases. This result may reflect co-evolution between pathogens and

humans or recent bottlenecks in the human population caused by pandemic infectious

diseases. Our findings demonstrate the potential usefulness of this population genomics

approach that incorporates the rates of long-term molecular evolution as predictors.

Introduction

As pointed out by R. A. Fisher, the majority of mutations in a population are deleted by chance[1]. According to Motoo Kimura's neutral theory of molecular evolution, most mutations are either deleterious or selectively neutral[2; 3]. Hence, the molecular evolutionary rate of a gene is the product of the mutation rate and the proportion of neutral mutations[4]. In contrast, intraspecies genetic diversity is generated by mutations occurring along genealogies in a population that have neither reached fixation nor been lost. The shape of a genealogy depends on population history and effective population size, and the lifespan of a mutation depends on the selection intensity as well[5; 6]. Here, we note that all genes in a genome share the same population history. Among-gene variation in genetic diversity thus largely reflects among-gene variation in the proportion of neutral mutations, as lineages originating from deleterious mutants are too short to substantially contribute to present genetic diversity. Because among-gene variation in molecular evolutionary rates is also determined by the among-gene variation in the proportion of neutral mutations[7], we arrive at the hypothesis that long-term molecular evolutionary rates affect intraspecies genetic diversity.

To test the above hypothesis, we analyzed and compared the genetic diversity of humans with the mammalian molecular evolutionary rates of each gene, focusing on protein coding regions. The different evolutionary time scales of mammals and humans, including examples of gene trees and intraspecies genetic diversities, are shown in Figure 1. Indices of genetic diversity capture different age groups of surviving mutations. Depending on their unique population histories, the effect of long-term molecular evolutionary rates on intraspecies genetic diversity may be different among species. The proportion of segregating sites (q) is the most direct estimate of human intraspecies genetic diversity. Singletons are the collection of recent mutations along the terminal edges of a genealogy. The allele frequency of singletons in autosomes is 1/5,008, which is less than 0.002% of the number of sites in 1000 Genome Project data[8-10]. *De novo* mutations are obtained by comparing genomes of direct offspring with those of their parents, with the differences uncovered being the most close reflection of germ cell mutations[11]. By comparing the effects of molecular evolutionary rates on these different indices, we may gain some sense of the longevity of deleterious or slightly deleterious mutations that have been selected against[3].

In each population, natural selection works on phenotypes as well as the sets of genes that generate them. Depending on the surrounding environment, the targets of natural selection may vary among species. To identify species-specific targets, we searched for

significant deviations from the genetic diversities predicted by long-term molecular

evolutionary rates. Genes with an unexpectedly large genetic diversity may be under reduced

functional constraints, whereas those with an unexpectedly small genetic diversity may be

subject to enhanced ones.

Materials and Methods

The probability of intraspecies polymorphism and measurement of molecular

evolutionary rates

Genetic polymorphism within a species is generated by past mutations that have not reached

fixation nor been deleted. The probability q that a site is polymorphic is formulated as

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$$q = \int_{t=0}^{\infty} dt \int_{-\infty}^{0} g(s) ds \Pr(T > t | s, N_e(u), 0 \le u \le t) 2N_e(t)v \,. \qquad (1)$$

Here, v is the mutation rate, s and $g(s)$ are the selection intensity and its distribution, and

$N_e(u)$ is the effective population size at time u before present. We note that the probability of

a positive value for s can be assumed to be negligible. T, which is the survival time of a

mutation against either being fixed in the population or deleted, depends on the selection

intensity and population history. Ignoring the contribution of slightly deleterious mutations

for simplicity, we considered the scenario in which genetic polymorphism is largely

generated by neutral mutations. In this scenario, (1) becomes

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$$q = vpF, \qquad (2)$$

85 where

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$$F = \int_{t=0}^{\infty} \Pr(T > t | s = 0, N_e(u), 0 \le u \le t) 2N_e(t) dt \,.$$

The probability that a mutation is selectively neutral, p, expresses the extent of the

independence of the mutation from functional constraints. While p varies among genes, F

does not. As a result, among-gene variation of the proportion of segregating sites reflects

either the variation of mutation rates or the variation of functional constraints.

Interspecies molecular evolution, in contrast, is based on mutations that have become

fixed in populations. Assuming the above scenario, the neutral theory of molecular evolution

expresses the molecular evolutionary rate as

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$$r = 2N_e(t)v \times p \times \frac{1}{2N_e(t)} = vp. \qquad (3)$$

Although intraspecies genetic variation is many orders of magnitude lower than that

generated during the evolution of all mammals, equations (2) and (3) predict that the among-

gene variation of the proportion of segregating sites is correlated with the among-gene

variation of the molecular evolutionary rate.

The among-gene variation of the molecular evolutionary rate may be measured from

the variation in total branch lengths of gene trees, which expresses the number of

substitutions across the whole tree. At the same time, mean branch lengths of gene trees

should well reflect the variation in evolutionary rates among genes, even in the presence of

missing values, unless the resultant sub-trees of the (unobserved) gene trees are seriously

skewed. Gene trees sometimes include extremely long terminal branches, even after careful

inspection to control the quality of the alignment. Because mean branch length is sensitive to

extremely long outlier branches, we also calculated the median of branch lengths as a robust

estimate of among-gene variation in molecular evolutionary rates.

108   Neutral theory extended to multiple-gene molecular evolution

The well-accepted neutral theory of molecular evolution asserts that selectively

advantageous mutations are rare among those mutations leading to inter-species variation[2].

As a result, the rate of molecular evolution is the product of the mutation rate, v, and the

proportion of neutral mutations, p[4]. By extending this relationship to the rates of multiple-

gene molecular evolution, we obtained the following formula for the branch lengths of gene

trees[7]:

$$b_{(i)}^k = c \times \bar{p}_i \times (t_k \times v_k) \times \bar{p}_{ik}.$$

116   Here, $\bar{p}_i$ represents the relative variability of gene i ($i = 1, \ldots, N$), and t_k and v_k are the

117   evolutionary time span and mutation rate along branch k ($k = 1, \ldots, M$). By applying a two-

118   way ANOVA-type Poisson regression to the scaled branch lengths $\tilde{N}_{(i)}^k = b_{(i)}^k \times L_i$ (where L_i

119   is the length of gene i), namely,

$$E[\tilde{N}_{(i)}^k] = c \times L_i \times \alpha_i \times \beta_k$$

$$\text{where } \sum_{i=1}^{N} L_i \times \alpha_i = \sum_{k=1}^{M} \beta_k = 1,$$

122   we can estimate $\bar{p}_i$ and $t_k \times v_k$ based on gene effect $\hat{\alpha}_i$ and branch effect $\hat{\beta}_k$. The interaction

123     $\bar{p}_{ik}$, which captures the among-branch variation of functional constraints on a gene, is

124   estimated as the ratio of $\tilde{N}_{(i)}^k$ to the predicted value. When genomes include a complete set of

125 orthologous genes for all species, the maximum likelihood estimators of the gene effect and
126 the branch effect can be obtained as follows:

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$$\hat{\alpha}_i = \frac{\sum_{k=1}^{M} b_{(i)}^k}{\sum_{i=1}^{N} M \sum_{k=1}^{M} b_{(i)}^k \times L_i}$$
(*)

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$$\hat{\beta}_k = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N} b_{(i)}^k \times L_i}{\sum_{i=1}^{N} M \sum_{k=1}^{M} b_{(i)}^k \times L_i}$$

Summary statistics describing variation in long-term evolutionary rates among genes in
a genome

In this study, we investigated the possibility that intraspecies population genetic
diversity is affected by the between-species long-term molecular evolutionary rate.
Specifically, we contrasted the rate of segregation in humans with the rate of molecular
evolution in mammals. As can be seen in equation (*), the among-gene variation of the
molecular evolutionary rate can be measured from the total branch lengths of gene trees.

In actual practice, however, gene trees often include missing taxa, partly because of
incomplete sequencing but mainly because of gene loss over the course of mammalian
evolution. As a result, the among-gene variation of total branch lengths reflects not only the
among-gene variation of molecular evolutionary rate but also variation in taxon sampling. To
reduce the effect of differential taxon sampling, we used mean branch lengths:

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$$\bar{b}_{(i)} := \frac{1}{M} \sum_{k=1}^{M} b_{(i)}^k.$$

The variation in mean branch length should well reflect the variation in evolutionary rates
among genes, even in the presence of missing values, unless the resultant sub-trees of the
(unobserved) complete gene trees are seriously skewed.

The generated gene trees sometimes included extremely long terminal branches. Long
branches in a gene tree may be ascribed to three phenomena: 1) sequencing or annotation
errors, 2) bias caused by the model used for tree inference, or 3) lineage-specific selection.
Even after careful inspection to control the alignment quality, however, we could not exclude
the possibility of incomplete modeling of molecular evolution or lineage-specific selection in
some cases. Because mean branch length is sensitive to extremely long outlier branches, we

also calculated the median of the branch lengths as a robust estimate of the among-gene

variation in molecular evolutionary rates:

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$$r_{(i)} \propto \tilde{b}_{(i)} := \frac{b_{(i)[\#b_{(i)} \div 2]} + b_{(i)[\#b_{(i)} \div 2 + 1]}}{2}.$$

With regard to protein evolution at the amino acid level, more than half of the

branches of some extremely conserved genes were of zero length; this resulted in a median

branch length of 0, which would be problematic in the succeeding regression analysis. We

therefore removed the top five longest branches from each gene tree and obtained the

truncated mean of branches, $\hat{\bar{b}}_{(i)}$, as an estimate of $\bar{r}_{(i)}$. Both $\hat{\bar{b}}_{(i)}$ and $\tilde{b}_{(i)}$ were used in this

study.

Observed and corrected correlations between intraspecies genetic diversity and long-

term molecular evolutionary rates

To examine the effects of long-term molecular evolutionary rates on intraspecies

genetic diversity, we calculated the correlation between the rate of molecular evolution $B =$

$\{b_{(1)}, b_{(2)}, \dots, b_{(i)}, \dots\}$ and the number of segregating sites $K = \{K_{(1)}, K_{(2)}, \dots, K_{(i)}, \dots\}$.

Because $\bar{b}_{(i)}$ and $K_{(i)}$ were accompanied by the random noise of estimation and sampling, we

corrected the observed correlation by taking into account the sampling variances of each $\bar{b}_{(i)}$

and $K_{(i)}$.

To see the effect of sampling variance, we denote the observed values of B and K as

$\hat{B}$ and $\hat{K}$, where $\mathrm{E}_s[\hat{B}|B] = B$, $\mathrm{E}_s[\hat{K}|K] = K$, and the subscript "S" represents the sampling

mean and variance. In addition, we use the subscript "G" to represent the among-gene mean

and variance. To the first order, the expectation of the observed correlation between $\hat{B}$ and $\hat{K}$,

$r_G(\hat{B}, \hat{K})$, is contrasted with $r_G(B, K)$ as follows:

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$$\mathrm{E}_s[r_G(\hat{B}, \hat{K})] \sim \frac{\mathrm{E}_s[\mathrm{COV}_G(\hat{B}, \hat{K})]}{\sqrt{\mathrm{E}_s[\mathrm{V}_G(\hat{B})]\mathrm{E}_s[\mathrm{V}_G(\hat{K})]}}$$

174
$$= \frac{r_G(B, K)}{\sqrt{\left(1 + \frac{\mathrm{E}_G[\mathrm{V}_S[\hat{B}|B]]}{\mathrm{V}_G(B)}\right)\left(1 + \frac{\mathrm{E}_G[\mathrm{V}_S[\hat{K}|K]]}{\mathrm{V}_G(K)}\right)}} .$$

175   By evaluating the sampling variances of $\hat{B}$ and $\hat{K}$, we obtain the bias-corrected correlation as

176   follows:

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$$r_G(\hat{B},\hat{K}) := r_G(\hat{B},\hat{K}) \times \sqrt{\left(1 + \frac{\mathrm{E}_G\left[\hat{\mathrm{V}}_S[\hat{B}|B]\right]}{\mathrm{V}_G(\hat{B})}\right)\left(1 + \frac{\mathrm{E}_G\left[\hat{\mathrm{V}}_S[\hat{K}|K]\right]}{\mathrm{V}_G(\hat{K})}\right)}.$$

Sampling variance of mean branch lengths

We evaluated the sampling variance of branch lengths with reference to the Poisson random

variables for the numbers of nucleotide or amino acid substitutions. Given that the branch

length of gene i of branch k , $\hat{b}_{(i)}^k$, is the expected number of substitutions per site, we assume

that the stochastic variance of $\hat{b}_{(i)}^k l_{(i)}$ is approximated by the variance of a Poisson random

variable with mean $b_{(i)}^k l_{(i)}$, where $l_{(i)}$ is the sequence length of gene i:

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$$\hat{V}\left(\hat{b}_{(i)}^k l_{(i)}\right) = \hat{b}_{(i)}^k l_{(i)}.$$

185   The variance of the mean branch lengths of gene i is therefore evaluated as

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$$\hat{V}\left[\bar{\bar{b}}_{(i)}\right] = \hat{V}\left[\frac{1}{M}\sum_{k=1}^{M}\hat{b}_{(i)}^k\right] = \frac{1}{M^2}\sum_{k=1}^{M}\hat{V}\left(\hat{b}_{(i)}^k\right) = \frac{1}{M^2}\sum_{k=1}^{M}\frac{\hat{b}_{(i)}^k}{l_{(i)}} = \frac{1}{Ml_{(i)}}\bar{b}_{(i)}\ .$$

Bootstrap resampling of columns in the alignment would allow estimation of the variance of

median and mean branch lengths. As an alternative approach, we developed a simple

simulation method to evaluate the stochastic variance due to the randomness of substitutions.

Given a gene tree, we generated the number of substitutions for each branch from the Poisson

distribution, with a mean set to the product of the branch length and the gene length. We

obtained the sample of the mean (and median) branch length by dividing the mean (and

median) of the generated number of substitutions by the gene length.

The stochastic variance of intraspecies genetic diversity

If one assumes that mutations in a population are neutral and that the population is at

equilibrium, the variance in the number of segregating sites, K, is

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$$Var(K) = E(K) + \left(E(K)\right)^2 \frac{b_n}{a_n^2}$$

198   where $a_n = \sum_{i=1}^{n-1}\frac{1}{i}$ and $b_n = \sum_{i=1}^{n-1}\frac{1}{i^2}$. $\theta^2 b_n$, while n is the number of chromosomes in a

199   sample from the population[12]. The first term reflects the randomness of mutations, and the

200 second term measures the stochasticity of the genealogy. When the population is not at

201 equilibrium but has its own history, the variance becomes

202
$$Var(K) = E(K) + \left(E(K)\right)^2 \frac{V(T_c)}{E(T_c)^2}.$$

203 Here, $E(T_c)$ and $V(T_c)$ are the mean and variance of waiting times of coalescence events in

204 genealogies[13]. Unfortunately, detailed information on genealogies is not available in most

205 cases. We note, however, that the above variance formula is consistent with the variance

206 formula of a negative binomial distribution. We therefore applied negative-binomial

207 regression with a log link:

208
$$\log[E(K)] = \log(L) + \alpha + \beta \log(BL) + \gamma D_X$$

209 where $L = \{l_{(1)}, l_{(2)}, \ldots, l_{(i)}, \ldots\}$ is the length of genes and BL is the mean branch length. D_X is

210 a dummy variable for genes on the X chromosome that incorporates differences in effective

211 population size between an autosome and the X chromosome. We carried out this regression

212 using the function `glm.nb` in the R package MASS[14]. The variance of K can be obtained by

213
$$V(K) = E(K) + \frac{[E(K)]^2}{\hat{\theta}}$$

214 where $\hat{\theta}$ is the shape parameter of the negative binomial distribution.

215 We also applied the model

216
$$E(K) = L \times [\alpha + \beta(BL)] \times \exp(\gamma D_X).$$

217 Maximum likelihood inference was conducted by applying the function `optim`. A positive

218 value of α implies the intraspecies survival of mutations destined for deletion from the

219 population on a macroevolutionary time scale.

Species specificity: the significant deviation of trait-associated gene sets

Intraspecies genetic diversity is affected by long-term molecular evolutionary rates.

Species-specific enhanced/reduced functional constraints may be observed as residuals of the

prediction of the above negative binomial regression. For each gene in a trait-associated gene

set, we calculated the *p*-value of the observed number of segregating sites based on the

predicted value and the estimated scale parameter. To obtain the significance of the gene set,

we standardized the *p*-values by transforming them to the percentiles of their corresponding

standard normal distribution. The *p*-value of the sample mean of these transformed values

was obtained using a *t*-distribution as a reference. The *t*-values measure the deviation from

the predicted genetic diversities of genes in gene sets. Positive *t*-values imply the existence of

reduced functional constraints or diversifying selection in a human lineage, whereas negative

values indicate the presence of enhanced functional constraints or purifying selection. Given

the value of false discovery rate, significant genes were selected by the Benjamini and

Hochberg procedure[15].

Multiple alignment of mammalian single-copy genes

We downloaded 96 complete mammalian genomes from GenBank and used a custom

Perl script to extract protein-coding sequences of each species. We generated a multi-

sequence file of all 6,366 single-copy genes in Class Mammalia listed in Wu et al. (2017)[7].

Alignments at the codon level were performed in Prank v.170427[16]. Gaps and sites with less

than 70% coverage among species as well as sequences with less than 30% coverage among

gene loci were removed. Out of the 6,366 single-copy genes, 6,137 were shared by more than

70 species and were used in this study. The total aligned sequence length of the 6,137 genes

was 12,665,862 bp corresponding to 4,221,954 amino acid residues.

Inference of gene trees

We estimated the maximum likelihood tree for each gene using IQ-TREE software[17],

which automatically performed model selection and determined the best data partitions. The

best evolutionary model for each gene was independently selected based on the Bayesian

information criterion and used for inference of the nucleotide tree. For the protein trees, we

used the MAM + F + γ model[7; 18], where MAM is the amino acid substitution matrix fitted to

the data[7]. All gene trees were calculated using 1,000 bootstrap replicates.

Population data

We downloaded single-nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) data for 2,504 humans

(*Homo sapiens*) from the 1000 Genome Project (Phase 3 data)[8-10]. On the basis of exon

annotations of reference genomes, we assigned each SNP to a gene. Only SNPs assigned to

coding regions of a gene were used in this study. Finally, we obtained 902,040 SNPs for

humans.

Information on *de novo* mutations in the human genome was collected from Jonsson

et al.[11] Human ancestral alleles were collected from Keightley and Jackson[19]. Individual-

derived alleles of each gene were collected by comparing SNPs of each individual with

human ancestral sequences.

Improvement of exon annotations

Because our study required precise identification of the codon positions of each SNP,

we further improved the exon annotations, especially the information on start codons in the

1000 Genome Project human annotation file.

We first extracted exon sequences from chromosomes. Next, we translated the exon

sequences into protein sequences using different start codons, i.e., with the codon starting

from either the first, second, or third nucleotide. We then used the translated protein

sequences as queries in blast searches (blastp-short in blast+ [20]) against all human proteins in

the 1000 Genome Project database. The blast results were further screened on the basis of

identity and the results of comparisons between query and match lengths. We defined

matches with an identity of 1 and a length equal to the query length as successful hits. Using

this approach, the start-codon annotations of all exons were further improved. We obtained

251,702 reliable exons in 17,921 genes from human reference genome hg19 and extracted

synonymous and non-synonymous SNPs based on the improved exon annotations in the

reference genome. Due to some gene includes missing information on its ancestral alleles, we

used 16, 260 human genes in this work.

Data availability

We combined all data into a single tab-delimited text file using a custom Perl script. Because

of inconsistencies in annotations and missing data, only 5,560 genes were used in the

correlation analysis. Source data and gene trees are available at

https://github.com/wujiaqi06/Long-Term-Rate.

Results

Limits on gene evolvability at the molecular level

After collecting human ancestral alleles from the data of Keightley and Jackson[19], we

counted the number of derived alleles of 16, 260 genes in 2,504 human individuals and found

strong evidence for a limit on evolvability at the molecular level. Figure 2A, in which each

point represents a gene and the mean and variance of this number among individuals is

indicated, shows the differences between mean derived alleles and the proportion of

segregating sites of each gene. In this figure, the number of derived alleles is obviously much

smaller than the proportion of segregating sites. To control variability due to differences in

gene lengths, we plotted all values after dividing them by gene lengths. The among-

individual variance was extremely close to the mean as long as the mean was less than $1 \times$

10^{-4} per coding-region site. In sharp contrast, the variance became extremely small when the

mean was larger than 1×10^{-3} per site.

The equality of the variance to the mean suggests a Poisson distribution, which is

consistent with neutral mutations on the star-like genealogy generated by the expanding

human population[12]. The low level of the variance, however, means that the number of

evolvable sites is strictly controlled, possibly by epistasis. A value of 1×10^{-4} per site

corresponds to an average of 10 kb between neighboring sites with derived alleles.

Bridging micro- and macroevolution at the molecular level

We obtained 5,560 single-copy genes across 96 mammalian species, ranging from platypus to

human, and calculated median branch lengths of nucleotide gene trees as an estimate of

among-gene variation in mammalian molecular evolutionary rates. Because such rate

variation arose during 185 million years of mammalian evolution[21], we refer to these rates as

long-term rates. In addition, we collected genomes of 2,504 humans from the 1000 Genome

Project (phase 3 data[8-10]) and calculated the proportion of segregating sites (q) as the among-

gene variation in human genetic polymorphism (Figure 2C). The time to the most recent

common ancestor of modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) is only 202,000 years[22], which

corresponds to approximately 0.1% of the mammalian time scale (Figure 1). As expected,

strong linear relationships were found between mammalian long-term rates and human q

(Figure 2C, cor = 0.592, $p < 2 \times 10^{-16}$).

Because uncertainties in branch lengths, the randomness of mutations, and the

stochasticity of genealogies deflate the values of net correlations, differences among species

in these correlations are difficult to evaluate (see Methods). Here, we note that the variance in

the proportion of segregating sites (q) is generally in the form of the sum of two terms. The

first term reflects random mutations and can be assumed to follow a Poisson distribution. The

second term, the stochasticity of genealogies, is proportional to the square of the mean[6; 13].

This variance formula is consistent with that of a negative binomial distribution, which takes

into account over-dispersion relative to the Poisson distribution. Because the coefficient of

the second term is determined by factors such as population histories, it can be assumed to be

constant among genes. We therefore conducted a negative binomial regression of human q on

mammalian long-term rates, with gene length included as an offset (Figure 2C, red curve).

The variances in human q were obtained using the estimated shape parameter of the negative

binomial distribution. With the estimated variances, we corrected the correlation between

mammalian long-term rates and human q. The bias-corrected correlation was as high as 0.665

(Figure 1C, $p < 2 \times 10^{-16}$), which indicates that the intraspecies genetic diversity of a gene is

thus largely influenced by the long-term evolutionary rate of the gene. Variation in functional

constraints on genes is the likely source of this causal relation[23]. The estimated shape

parameter in the negative binomial distribution was as large as 125,785, thus indicating that

over-dispersion of human q can be ignored, and human q largely followed a Poisson

distribution.

Duration of the bridge between micro- and macroevolution

Functional constraints vary among lineages[7], and molecular evolutionary rates accordingly

vary as well. Consequently, intraspecies genetic diversity may be more strongly correlated

with molecular evolutionary rates in subtrees of closely related species. The size of the most

influential subtree may depend on the scale of variability. We thus also wished to address the

question of how long the "long-term" molecular evolutionary rate of a gene affects

intraspecies diversity.

Figure 2D shows the raw correlation between the human proportion of segregating

sites (q) and molecular evolutionary rate variations inferred from different taxonomic

hierarchies, ranging from the human/chimpanzee divergence (human terminal branches) to

Family Hominidae (great apes) to superorder Euarchontoglires. Significant correlations

between human q and rate variations were found for all clades, with higher taxonomic

hierarchies showing stronger correlations. Furthermore, among-gene rate variations of

rodents and Laurasiatheria, neither of which includes humans, were highly correlated with

human q (cor = 0.453 and 0.552, respectively; both $p < 2 \times 10^{-16}$). The rate variation of the

Euarchontoglires had the highest raw correlation with human q (cor = 0.600, $p < 2 \times 10^{-16}$).

Taken together, these results indicate that long-term molecular evolutionary rates may have

been established at the early stage of the origin of mammals, thus acting as the main force

impacting the intraspecies genetic diversity of mammalian species.

The immediate effect of natural selection

Among-gene variation of intraspecies genetic diversity is caused by among-gene variation of

mutation rate and among-gene variation of functional constraints. To examine whether the

long-term molecular evolutionary rate of a gene is correlated with its mutation rate, we

regressed the rate of point mutations per generation (proportion of human *de novo* mutations)

on mammalian long-term rates. We found no correlation between the proportion of *de novo*

mutations and mammalian long-term rates (cor = 0.00, Figure 2E, Table 1). In contrast, the

proportion of singletons in 1000 Genome Project human data was found to be affected by

mammalian long-term rates (cor = 0.467; Figure 2F, Table 1). The expected number of

singletons was estimated as

$$E[\text{number of singletons}]/(\text{gene length}) = 0.116 \times (\text{long} - \text{term rates})^{0.418}.$$

The effect of long-term molecular evolutionary rate was highly significant ($p < 2 \times 10^{-16}$).

Singletons, which reflect relatively recent changes, may help shape complex traits[24;

25]. Selection, caused by long-term evolutionary force, has in turn influenced human genetic

diversity over a short time scale, probably soon after the occurrence of the initial mutation.

Human species-specific evolution

Summarizing the above results, the intraspecies genetic diversity of a gene depends on the

functional constraints on that gene, which are reflected by its long-term molecular

evolutionary rate. The next issue we addressed was species specificity. Species-specific

enhanced/reduced functional constraints may be ascertained by examining deviations in the

proportion of segregating sites (q) from predictions based on long-term molecular

evolutionary rates. We standardized the deviation by transforming the negative binomial

regression to a standard normal distribution. First, we obtained the lower tail *p*-value of a

gene by contrasting the observed *q*-value with a negative binomial distribution based on the

predicted value and the estimated shape parameter. This *p*-value was mapped to the quantile

of the standard normal distribution. A positive value for the deviation indicates a reduction in

functional constraints or the presence of diversifying selection, whereas a negative value

reflects enhancement of functional constraints or the occurrence of purifying selection.

To examine species-specific constraints on traits, we analyzed the average deviation

of disease-associated genes. In this manner, we hoped to identify the human species-

specificity of biological traits responsible for various diseases. We first downloaded disease-

associated gene sets from the DisGeNET database[26]. To obtain a robust result based on

multiple genes, we focused on gene sets that included at least two genes contained in our own

dataset. Consequently, we analyzed 10,173 disease-related gene sets (Table 2, S1–S2). To

obtain the average deviation of a gene set from predicted genetic diversities, we converted the

p-values of genes in the gene set to quantiles of the standard normal distribution. The average

deviation was measured as the *t*-value of the quantiles (see Methods). Using a false discovery

rate of 0.10, we identified 33 disease-associated gene sets in humans.

Positive emotion shapes modern humans

Out of the 33 detected human gene sets, 9 were related to substance-related disorders, and

their relationships were all highly significant (Table 2, Figure 3B). Substance-related

disorders are mainly defined by a reliance and/or abuse of a certain substance. The

underlying mechanism of these disorders stems from the function of the "substance" (e.g.,

drug) on the natural reward pathway of the human motivational-emotional system. In nature,

reward pathways generate positive emotions that motivate organisms to search for food,

water, mates, and other beneficial environmental resources and to avoid predators[27]. Humans

have the most complex societal culture of all living organisms and enjoy the largest array of

"natural rewards", including science, art, literature, and music. Motivation is a basic driver of

human behavior, and positive emotion is at its core[28]. The positive *t*-values associated with

substance-related disorders imply that their human specificity among mammals is due to

evolution of the natural reward pathway in the motivational-emotional system. We also

conducted a gene set analysis using human singletons (Table S1). The detected diseases were

mostly substance-related disorders, which indicates that such selection has occurred quite

recently.

We extracted a subset comprising non-synonymous SNPs and conducted a gene set

test. Because changes in amino acids in protein sequences are subject to stronger selection

pressure, the detected gene sets were almost all associated with negative *t*-values (Table S2);

however, substance-related disorders with a positive *t*-value ($t = 4.286$) were also found in

the significant selected gene sets. We conclude that genes related to substance-related

disorders are under positive selection in modern humans and are the most representative

example of species-specific selection in our own species. Finally, gene sets related to

profound mental retardation were also uncovered with a negative *t*-value (Table 2, $t =$

-3.993).

Selection on cancer-associated gene sets

The cancer gene sets detected in humans had negative *t*-values. The associated cancers were

all blood cancers; for example, multiple myeloma, B-cell lymphomas, and chronic

lymphocytic leukemia were listed as well as adult T-cell lymphoma/leukemia, a blood cancer

caused by human T-lymphotropic virus 1 (HTLV-1) infection. These cancers may have

severe effects on the human population; thus, the associated gene sets are under strong

purifying selection. These results are consistent with those obtained using non-synonymous

SNPs.

Echoes of infectious diseases in the human genome

The human outliers also included eight gene sets with negative *t*-values associated with

infectious diseases. These diseases were influenza, chronic hepatitis B, *Helicobacter pylori*

infection, candidiasis, lupus vulgaris, adult T-cell lymphoma/leukaemia, Saint Louis

encephalitis, and gingivitis (Table 2). The unexpectedly low genetic diversity of these gene

sets has two possible causes related to ancient infectious disease—either a pathogen co-

evolved with humans, or an infectious disease affected human populations worldwide,

leading to a selection bottleneck. *Helicobacter pylori* is known to have coevolved with

human populations and has caused adaptations of disease-associated genes[29]. Influenza has

infected almost the entire human population and has caused several severe pandemics within

the last 300 years[30]. In regard to the other infectious diseases mentioned above, their

relationship to human evolution has rarely been studied.

Discussion

Intraspecies genetic diversity is influenced by long-term molecular evolutionary rates, which

are largely the products of mutation rate and the proportion of neutral mutations. Because we

saw no correlation between the rate of *de novo* mutations and long-term evolutionary rates,

the among-gene variation in genetic diversity may reflect variable selective constraints on

genes and is therefore correlated at the protein level with mammalian molecular evolutionary

rates. The correlation between the human proportion of segregating sites (q) and mammalian

molecular evolutionary rates at the protein level was 0.493, which was not as strong as the

correlation between human q and mammalian nucleotide molecular evolutionary rates (cor =

0.592). Protein-level long-term rates had an unexpectedly lower predictive power than DNA-

level long-term rates, which is possibly because the former encompassed smaller numbers of

evolutionary events.

The intraspecies diversity level of a gene can be decomposed into the proportion of

segregating sites and the pattern of allele frequencies of the segregating sites. The long-term

molecular evolutionary rate largely affects the proportion of segregating sites, the latter

determining evolvability at the molecular level. The lifespan of deleterious mutations is short,

and intraspecies evolvability is mostly determined by the proportion of neutral mutations.

In summary, we have demonstrated that the molecular evolutionary rate, which

represents interspecies genomic diversity, sets the baseline for intraspecies genetic diversity.

This effect has been largely ignored in population genomics studies, in part because of an

insufficient amount of genomic data. The effect of natural selection on intraspecies genetic

diversity has been implicitly assumed to be small because recent mutations, which may be

destined for deletion from a population over a long-term evolutionary time scale, have a

better chance of survival to the present. The evolvability of mutations over an evolutionary

time scale, however, seems to be determined shortly after their origin. The amount of

intraspecies genetic diversity can be predicted from interspecific genetic diversity, and

deviations from predicted values represent the species specificity of enhanced/reduced

functional constraints. An in-depth inspection of these deviations is in progress.

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Contributions

J.W., T.Y., and H.K. designed the research. J.W. and H.K. formulated the methods and

performed the data analysis. J.W., T.Y., and H.K. wrote the paper.

Declaration of interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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Tables

Table 1. Negative binomial regression of the proportion of human *de novo* mutations
and singletons on mammalian molecular evolutionary rates of genes. The regression
model is $\log(\mathrm{E}[\text{counts}]/(\text{gene length})) = \alpha + \beta \log(\text{long term rates})$,

that is, $\mathrm{E}[\text{counts}]/(\text{gene length}) = e^{\alpha}(\text{long term rates})^{\beta}$.

	De novo mutation			Singleton		
	Estimate	SE	*p*-value	Estimate	SE	*p*-value
Intercept	−10.403	0.544	$< 2 \times 10^{-16}$	−2.158	0.046	$< 2 \times 10^{-16}$
Log(long-term rates)	−0.084	0.110	0.443	0.418	0.009	$< 2 \times 10^{-16}$

Table 2. Significant disease-associated human gene sets with a false discovery rate of 10%.

	t-value*	p-value	q-value	Disease Type
Substance-related disorders	5.974	1.18×10^{-7}	0.0012	Mental disease
Organic mental disorders, substance-induced	5.826	2.51×10^{-7}	0.0013	Mental disease
Prescription drug abuse	5.826	2.51×10^{-7}	0.0009	Mental disease
Multiple myeloma	−5.060	6.43×10^{-7}	0.0016	Blood cancer
Drug use disorders	5.462	9.52×10^{-7}	0.0019	Mental disease
Substance dependence	5.218	1.91×10^{-6}	0.0032	Mental disease
Drug habituation	4.995	4.47×10^{-6}	0.0065	Mental disease
Influenza	−4.607	7.98×10^{-6}	0.0101	Infectious disease
Substance use disorders	4.556	2.15×10^{-5}	0.0243	Mental disease
Substance abuse problem	4.520	2.46×10^{-5}	0.0250	Mental disease
Hepatitis B, chronic	−4.373	5.49×10^{-5}	0.0508	Infectious disease
Thyroid-associated opthalmopathies	−4.568	7.39×10^{-5}	0.0626	Autoimmune disease
Calcification of coronary artery	4.087	7.72×10^{-5}	0.0604	Blood vessel disease
Pneumonia	−4.029	8.97×10^{-5}	0.0652	Infectious disease
Infection	−3.995	1.03×10^{-4}	0.0699	Infectious disease
Thrombocytopenia due to platelet alloimmunization	−4.996	1.10×10^{-4}	0.0702	Blood disease
B-Cell Lymphomas	−3.922	1.16×10^{-4}	0.0695	Blood cancer
Drug abuse	4.000	1.25×10^{-4}	0.0707	Mental disease
Infection caused by *Helicobacter pylori*	−4.005	1.33×10^{-4}	0.0709	Infectious disease
Candidiasis	−5.516	1.33×10^{-4}	0.0675	Infectious disease
Lupus erythematosus	−3.992	1.38×10^{-4}	0.0666	Autoimmune disease
Profound mental retardation	−3.993	1.42×10^{-4}	0.0655	Mental disease
Joubert syndrome 21	−4469.702	1.42×10^{-4}	0.0630	Developmental disorders
Chronic lymphocytic leukemia	−3.825	1.57×10^{-4}	0.0664	Blood cancer
Lupus vulgaris	−3.968	1.64×10^{-4}	0.0668	Infectious disease
Lupus erythematosus, discoid	−3.893	1.95×10^{-4}	0.0762	Skin disease
Autoimmune thrombocytopenia	−4.386	1.98×10^{-4}	0.0745	Autoimmune disease
Dysplastic nevus	−4.476	2.31×10^{-4}	0.0841	Developmental disorders
Fanconi anemia	−3.794	2.46×10^{-4}	0.0864	Genetic disease
Immunosuppression	−4.080	2.57×10^{-4}	0.0873	-
Adult T-Cell lymphoma/leukemia	−3.740	2.58×10^{-4}	0.0847	Blood cancer
Encephalitis, St. Louis	−4.104	3.01×10^{-4}	0.0957	Infectious disease
Gingivitis	−4.645	3.17×10^{-4}	0.0978	Infectious disease

 *see Methods.

489 **Figures**

A   **Class: Mammalia (185 Mya)**   **Subfamily: Homininae (10.2 Mya)**   *Homo sapiens* (0.2 Mya)

B   **Mammalian gene trees**

C   **Population genetic polymorphisms**

Figure 1. Time scales of mammalian and human evolution. A. The differing evolutionary

time scales of Class Mammalia, Subfamily Homininae, and *Homo sapiens*. The time tree for

mammals is from dos Reis (2012)[21]. **B.** Examples of mammalian gene trees. **C.** Examples of

population-level genetic diversities, including indels and single nucleotide polymorphisms

(SNPs).

Figure 2. Limits on evolvability at the molecular level. A. Differences between mean

derived alleles and the proportion of segregating sites of 17,591 genes across 2,504 human

individuals. **B.** Mean and variance of derived alleles of 17,591 genes across 2,504 human

individuals. **C.** Correlation between the human proportion of segregating sites (q) and the rate

of mammalian molecular evolution (r) of 5,560 genes. **D.** Correlation between the human

proportion of segregating sites (q) and the rate of molecular evolution (r) based on gene trees

of different taxonomic clades. **E.** Correlation between the proportion of human *de novo*

mutations and the rate of mammalian molecular evolution (r) of 5,560 genes. **F.** Correlation

between the proportion of human singletons and the rate of mammalian molecular evolution

(r) of 5,560 genes.

Figure 3. Disease-associated human gene sets. **A**. Scatter plot, boxplot, and regression

model of the human proportion of segregating sites (q) vs. mammalian molecular

evolutionary rates of 5,560 genes. **B.** Examples of significant disease-associated gene sets in

humans revealed by analysis of 10,173 disease-associated gene sets. Genes related to the

following diseases in humans are shown as examples: substance-related disorders ($n = 64$),

multiple myeloma ($n = 395$), and influenza ($n = 588$).

Supplemental table captions

Table S1. Significant disease-associated gene sets of human singletons with a false

discovery rate of 10%.

Table S2. Significant disease-associated gene sets of human non-synonymous SNPs with

a false discovery rate of 10%.

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