- 1 Concise Title:
- 2 PhenoMIP: High Throughput Phenotyping of Diverse C. elegans Populations via
- 3 Molecular Inversion Probes
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10 Running Title:

# 11 Quantitative fitness analysis in *C. elegans* via PhenoMIP

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#### 27 Abstract

28 Whether generated within a lab setting or isolated from the wild, variant alleles continue to be an important resource for decoding gene function in model organisms such as Caenorhabditis 29 elegans. With advances in massively parallel sequencing, multiple whole-genome sequenced 30 31 (WGS) strain collections are now available to the research community. The Million Mutation 32 Project (MMP) for instance, analysed 2007 N2-derived, mutagenized strains. Individually, each 33 strain averages ~400 single nucleotide variants amounting to ~80 protein coding variants. The effects of these variants, however, remain largely uncharacterized and guerying the breadth of 34 35 these strains for phenotypic changes requires a method amenable to rapid and sensitive high-36 throughput analysis. Here we present a pooled competitive fitness approach to quantitatively 37 phenotype subpopulations of sequenced collections via molecular inversion probes (PhenoMIP). We phenotyped the relative fitness of 217 mutant strains on multiple food sources 38 and classified these into five categories. We also demonstrate on a subset of these strains, that 39 40 their fitness defects can be genetically mapped. Overall, our results suggest that approximately 80% of MMP mutant strains may have a decreased fitness relative to the lab reference, N2. The 41 costs of generating this form of analysis through WGS methods would be prohibitive while 42 43 PhenoMIP analysis in this manner is accomplished at less than 1% of projected WGS costs. We propose methods for applying PhenoMIP to a broad range of population selection experiments 44 in a cost-efficient manner that would be useful to the community at large. 45

# 46 Introduction

47 The C. elegans haploid genome is compact, containing just over 100 Mb, and yet is capable of generating a complex organism with a defined cell lineage (Sulston et al., 1983). Despite our 48 detailed knowledge of this organism, much of its biology remains unclear. At current, only 9,645 49 50 Wormbase genes (Wormbase web site, 2019) have phenotype descriptions reported from either 51 variant alleles or RNAi knockdown experiments, suggesting that the function of nearly half of C. elegans protein coding genes remain experimentally uncharacterized. Knowledge of where and 52 53 when a gene is expressed can provide clues to function and many large data sets have 54 elucidated gene expression patterns across embryonic, larval and adult timepoints. 55 Furthermore, multiple techniques have begun to resolve tissue-specific and even cell-specific expression profiles (Boeck et al., 2016; Cao et al., 2017; Gracida and Calarco, 2017; Kaletsky et 56 al., 2018; Warner et al., 2019). However, this information does not directly reveal gene function 57 58 per se.

59 Forward genetics screens by methods such as chemical mutagenesis, provide a means of recovering alleles that result in a detectable phenotype of interest such as sterility, lethality, or 60 altered reporter expression. These alleles can then be genetically mapped, sequenced, and 61 62 functionally analysed. In this manner, a specific phenotype can be screened across hundreds of thousands of mutated genomes, thereby guerying a very large search space (Brenner, 1974; De 63 Stasio and Dorman, 2001; Kevin et al., 2006). The identification of causal variants across this 64 65 space can be a laborious process although a variety of methods now exist to aid in the 66 sequencing and mapping of mutant genomes (Doitsidou et al., 2010; Jaramillo-Lambert et al., 67 2015; Minevich et al., 2012; Mok et al., 2017). In contrast, a reverse genetics screen by RNAi, generates a smaller potential search space by querying a collection of specific gene knock-68 down targets for a detectable phenotype in a limited number of genetic backgrounds (Fraser et 69 70 al., 2000; Kamath et al., 2003; Lehner et al., 2006). Consequently, the solution space is 71 relatively well-defined since validated hits require no genetic mapping, although such screens

72 are generally confined to knocking down gene expression rather than necessarily exploring 73 states of altered protein function. Depending upon assay format, an RNAi screen's throughput can be comparatively less than a mutagenesis screen. Furthermore its effects may be 74 problematic, producing false negatives or weak hits due to incomplete knockdown or false 75 76 positives from the knockdown of gene families (De-Souza et al., 2019; Fraser, 2000; Parrish et 77 al., 2000). In both screening methods, the ability to score a detectable phenotype can be 78 affected by the presence of redundant paralogs or entire parallel systems that can compensate 79 for a reduced function (for review see (Jorgensen and Mango, 2002)).

80 Whether because of paralogs or other reasons, phenotypically weak alleles in both 81 screens are potentially missed or simply disregarded. These weak alleles might be mistaken for 82 stochastic variation in a cursory analysis but could provide important insights into function. For example, such weak alleles could produce small changes in developmental timing or fecundity 83 84 that would affect population fitness (Diaz and Viney, 2014; Perez et al., 2017; Richards et al., 85 2013; Schnabel et al., 1997). Subtle population-wide shifts in phenotypic fitness require quantitative methods of analysis that go beyond low-resolution phenotype qualifiers such as 86 slow-growth, sterile, or lethal. In recent years, strides have been made in the quantitative 87 88 analysis of fitness (Crombie et al., 2018; Elvin et al., 2011; Ramani et al., 2012). Advances in next generation sequencing technologies have led to a number of quantitative approaches to 89 90 population analysis of singular genetic backgrounds by comparing deeply-sequenced samples 91 for changes to transcription, small RNA populations, and heterochromatin (Araya et al., 2014; 92 Boeck et al., 2016; Daugherty et al., 2017; Warf et al., 2012). Leveraging current sequencing 93 paradigms to analyse population fitness would contribute to the process of assigning function to poorly characterized genes or alleles. 94

To further expand our knowledge of *C. elegans* gene function, we sought to develop an assay that could 1) mimic the allelic diversity of a forward genetics screen but with a smaller solution space much like a reverse genetics screen and 2) generate quantitative data regarding

98 population fitness to assess potential gene function. We exploited the self-fertilizing 99 hermaphroditic nature of C. elegans to grow multiple strains in pools without genetic mixing. We also realized that the distinct mutations in each strain could be treated as a barcode to identify 100 101 and quantify the representation of the strain in the pool. To assay the mutations and thus the 102 representation of each strain in these pools, rather than use whole genome sequencing, which 103 would have been prohibitively expensive, we adapted molecular inversion probes (MIPs) to identify strain-specific variants (Hiatt et al., 2013). We previously used MIPs for the genetic 104 105 mapping of temperature-sensitive alleles in a collection of *C. elegans* mutant strains (Mok et al., 106 2017); here we analyse population growth in a multi-generational competitive fitness assay to 107 phenotype by MIPs (PhenoMIP) by quantifying the proportion of each strain in a pool. As a proof 108 of principle, we utilized the Million Mutation Project (MMP) as a source for our strains. The MMP 109 library of 2007 N2-derived mutant strains harbours a variety of coding alleles including potential 110 null alleles across 8150 protein-coding genes, and coding or splice site-altering SNVs across 19,666 genes (Thompson et al., 2013). The phenotypic consequences for many of these 111 112 variants remain unexplored; we hypothesized that some may play a role in overall fitness. Therefore, we identified unique genetic markers suitable for detection by MIPs for each strain; 113 114 using these strain-specific MIPs, we effectively generated barcodes for composition analysis of genotypes within a genetically heterogenous population – analogous to methods used in yeast 115 (Hardenbol et al., 2003). We analysed population composition at multiple timepoints, thus 116 117 determining the relative fitness for each individual strain within a pool, and thereby cataloging 118 the potentially subtle phenotypes of this collection. Our observations suggest that PhenoMIP 119 can identify strains with a range of population fitness phenotypes, including those that may 120 ordinarily be overlooked. Overall, we show that PhenoMIP is a quantitative approach that combines mutagenized genomes that have been previously sequenced and assays them 121 122 across multiple substrate conditions in a cost-efficient and high-throughput fashion.

123 Results

### 124 Molecular inversion probes reliably track multiple strains within a mixed sample

125 Previously, we demonstrated the usefulness of MIPs as a method to genetically map mutant alleles (Mok et al., 2017). In that study, our empirical analysis of MIP behaviour suggested that 126 their accuracy and precision were highest when identifying smaller subpopulations of variants. 127 128 Based on this observation, we recognized that the MIP assay could be applied in a large-scale 129 analysis of diverse compositions of strains with complex mixtures of genomic DNA. The mutagenized strains of the MMP collection presented an excellent test set. The MMP strains 130 131 have, on average, nearly 400 single nucleotide variants (SNVs) per strain, of which, 132 approximately 80 are protein coding changes (Thompson et al., 2013). These strains represent 133 a unique resource for analysing gene function on a large scale.

As a first step we designed a specific set of MIPs to track strain-specific variants (Figure 134 **1a**). In order to avoid targeting closely spaced variants that might influence the effectiveness of 135 136 individual MIP assays and because we wanted to preserve the ability to make pools from any 137 combination of MMP and wild isolate strains, we first combined variants from the 2007 mutant and 40 wild isolates strains of the entire MMP project. We eliminated shared alleles, and then 138 chose SNVs separated by a minimum distance of 300 bp. From this list of unique candidate 139 140 sites, we generated candidate MIP sequences (Mok et al., 2017) and for each strain we identified the highest scoring MIP sequence on each linkage group. From these top six MIPs, 141 we assigned four representative MIPs specific to each strain (Figure 1b, and Supplemental 142 143 **Data SD1**) with the purposes of tracking chromosomal representation in the event of cross-144 progeny contamination while maintaining minimal reagent costs.

To ascertain the representation of each strain in a pool, the four MIPs representing each target strain within a desired composition of strains were combined into a single pool (**Figure 1**c) and used in the generation of MIP sequencing libraries. The libraries were sequenced, demultiplexed and individual annealing events tracked by the unique molecular identifier (UMI) present on each oligo (**Figure 1d, e**). Probe sets were then combined to determine mean

relative abundance for each target strain within a pooled set of genomes (**Figure 1f**). To successfully analyse mixed populations in an efficient high-throughput manner the PhenoMIP approach would require 1) a relatively balanced distribution of reads for each probe; 2) a low false positive rate to determine a reasonable lower bound on probe accuracy; and 3) precision between strain-specific targets to ensure that subpopulation analysis was consistent.

155 To test the above parameters, we generated a pool of 192 MIPs designed to target SNV sites for 48 MMP strains (Supplemental Data SD2). We generated five different sets of 156 157 genomic DNA mixtures composed of subsets of 46 of the 48 MMP target strains in different 158 proportions (two strains failed to yield adequate amounts of DNA) and used these as template samples for the generation of MIP sequencing libraries (Supplemental Data SD2). From these 159 160 libraries we observed the expected composition and proportion of genotypes for the original 161 genomic templates, suggesting that overall cross-MIP interference from multiplexing was 162 negligible (Supplemental Figure S1a) and that the variant information from sequencing was correct. We analysed the total number of UMIs for each MIP to gauge the efficiency of each 163 164 probe. We observed eleven MIP targets that, across all libraries, consistently produced UMI counts below 20% of the mean number of UMIs per MIP in an individual library; these were 165 166 removed from further analyses (Supplemental Figure S1b). To investigate the read distribution 167 of this adjusted dataset, we normalized the UMI counts for each MIP against the minimum read number within its sequencing set. The normalized distribution of reads spanned across a ~9-fold 168 169 range with an inter-quartile range of 2-fold to 6-fold suggesting that our distribution was 170 relatively unimodal and ranged within a single order of magnitude (Supplemental Figure S2a 171 and S2b).

172 Next, for each sequenced library, we analysed the MIP reads from target strains that 173 were excluded from the genomic template, calculating a total false positive rate of 1.6x10<sup>-4</sup> 174 across five MiSeq-generated data sets for which the mean UMI count per MIP was 1630 with 1.2x10<sup>6</sup> unique capture events across the total set. We also compared two sequencing runs of the same PhenoMIP library with false positive rates of  $1.49 \times 10^{-4}$  at  $3.9 \times 10^{5}$  total capture events versus  $1.18 \times 10^{-4}$  at  $5.14 \times 10^{6}$  total capture events. Combining all data sets we confirmed a total false positive rate of  $1.25 \times 10^{-4}$  across all MIPs. We estimated the mean false positive rate per individual MIP to be  $1.29 \times 10^{-4} \pm 1.38 \times 10^{-4}$ , which compares well with our prior observations (Mok et al., 2017).

When initially planning experimental design, we chose to work with pools of 181 approximately 50 strains per set, resulting in an expected average initial population abundance 182 183 of 2x10<sup>-2</sup>. With such a low starting abundance it was important to assess the precision between 184 each set of strain-specific MIPs to ensure that the variation between these probes was low enough to consider their mean value a consistent assessment of strain abundance. We 185 observed the mean standard deviation across all strain-specific MIP sets was  $2.33 \times 10^{-3} \pm$ 186 187 6.88x10<sup>-3</sup>. Confirming prior observations, the absolute variance between strain-specific MIPs 188 was dependent upon relative abundance within the sample. Subsetting the data, target strains above 5x10<sup>-2</sup> abundance had a combined standard deviation between strain-specific MIPs of 189 1.62x10<sup>-2</sup>. Samples with abundance below 2x10<sup>-2</sup>, however, had a combined standard deviation 190 between MIPs of 2.12x10<sup>-4</sup>, which is similar in magnitude to our false positive rate. These 191 192 findings were in line with our expectations from prior modeling of MIP behaviour (Mok et al., 193 2017) (Supplemental Figure S2c).

From our analyses, we concluded that relatively consistent and balanced pools of MIPs 194 195 could be generated for future analysis on complex populations; that our false positive rates 196 remained in line with previous observations; and that overall variance among MIPs for a specific 197 target strain was low, especially in the lower ranges of abundance. In combination with our MIP-MAP data (Mok et al., 2017), our analysis conservatively suggests that MIPs can accurately 198 detect variant abundances as low as five standard deviations above the estimated false positive 199 rate. We determined that relative abundances as low as 8.2x10<sup>-4</sup> would have a high probability 200 of being true signal as our largest false-positive value from the dataset was 7.4x10<sup>-4</sup>. For 201

simplicity, we designated  $1 \times 10^{-3}$  as the minimum abundance required to be considered as biologically present within a given pooled population. Practically speaking, based on an average pooled experiment of 50 strains, this translates to detecting a 20-fold decrease from the expected initial abundance for a target strain. The cut-off value of  $1 \times 10^{-3}$  was the foundation for later analysis of our data sets with these and other MIP pools (**Methods**).

## 207 MIPs identify strain fitness defects over multiple generations

208 Confident of the estimation capabilities of the MIPs, we selected sets of MMP strains to pool for 209 growth analysis. Each pool was made up of 45-60 different MMP strains and 8-10 independent 210 replicates were grown for multiple generations to look for differences in fitness between the 211 strains (Table 1). In addition, to investigate the effects of different propagation methods, three 212 food sources (E. coli strains HT115, NA22 or OP50) were used in different experiments and in 213 one experiment two different methods of transfer were used (see below). The proportion of each 214 strain in the pool was assayed at the start, terminal and various intermediate points. To ensure 215 that a similar number of animals was present at the start and in each of the replicates (and 216 different conditions in experiments where more than one condition was assayed), we handpicked 20 animals from each strain at either the L1 (pool M1, M3, M5) or L4 (pool M7, M8, M10, 217 218 M11) stages to duplicate E. coli seeded plates. We grew these "starter" pools to starvation and combined uncontaminated plates for an estimated 300-700K animals. This population was 219 220 collected and aliguots containing 5-10K animals were used to inoculate replicate cultures under 221 their specific conditions. Cultures were grown to starvation (72-96 hours at 20-22°C; about a 222 generation) and aliquots transferred to fresh plates. For all pools except M11, animals were 223 transferred by chunking, while M11 replicates were split into two groups with transfer either by 224 chunking or by washing (Table 1, Methods). This inoculation-to-starvation cycle was repeated 4-9 times, depending on the experiment. At each cycle a fraction of the population was saved 225 226 for later DNA analysis. (Figure 2).

227 In toto, we used 217 MMP strains across seven experimental pools (Table 1, 228 Supplemental Data SD3) to assay their relative fitness. To check the reproducibility of the data and observe overall trends we applied principal component analysis to the datasets. For 229 230 example, with the M11 dataset, replicate samples with the same food source and transfer 231 method tended to cluster tightly, but with clusters from different generations separating well after 232 the first generation, particularly along the axis of the first principal component (Figure 3a, b and Supplemental Figure S3). Samples also separated by the methods of transfer. PCA analysis 233 234 on all the M11 samples at a single timepoint shows the effect of food source as well as method 235 of transfer (Figure 3c and Supplemental Figure S4). The OP50 replicates were not as well-236 correlated, and it was observed that these populations starved more quickly than other food 237 sources. Our observations suggest that under a given experimental condition, population 238 composition was changing with each generation in a consistent manner that was detectable by 239 PhenoMIP analysis.

Confident that the assay was behaving well overall, we next assessed each strain 240 separately for relative changes in its abundance over multiple generations across multiple 241 replicates. For each replicate condition within a pooling experiment, this effectively created a 242 243 growth profile for each strain consisting of the total fold-change and the mean fold-change rate (FCR) per generation. For example, Figure 4a plots the relative abundance of strain VC20019 244 in the M11 pools under various conditions. The log-fold change is modest, with the mean across 245 246 all conditions almost zero, indicating that this strain is of average fitness. Closer inspection 247 suggests that some of the variation is due to the different growth conditions used in M11, with 248 replicates grown on NA22 and transferred by washing showing better than average growth, 249 whereas growth on HT115 and chunk transfer grew less well. In agreement with the overall 250 PCA analysis, growth on OP50 resulted in the most variable log-fold change. We combined 251 results across replicates for all strains to analyse FCR as a distribution across conditions (Figure 4b and Supplemental Figure S5). We identified 15 strains that failed to thrive (class 0) 252

in the initial pool expansion steps (initial abundance  $< 2.5 \times 10^{-3}$ ) suggesting they harboured 253 254 potentially strong deficits to population fitness (Supplemental Table S1). We classified the 255 remaining 202 strains using 393 sequencing libraries across seven competitive fitness pooling 256 experiments on 95 replicate conditions to generate profiles for 170 strains grown on the bacteria 257 HT115, 149 strains grown on NA22, and 105 strains grown on OP50 (Supplemental Figure S6a). While we observed more subtle differences within some strains for growth on different 258 bacteria and even for methods of transfer (Supplemental Figure S6b,c), we observed 259 260 pronounced differences in growth profiles between strains and focused further analysis on this 261 feature. We observed strains that exhibited poor growth with steep population decline suggesting fitness defects as well as strains with enhanced growth when compared to our 262 reference strain VC20019. Based on these observations, we classified each strain into one of 263 264 four classes as determined by its mean FCR across all experimental replicates (Table 2, 265 Supplemental Data SD3). Classes were designated using a simple 10-generation growth model to calculate a final abundance  $(A_{10})$  based on the log<sub>2</sub>-transformed mean fold-change rate 266  $(\overline{FCR})$  such that 267

268

$$A_{i+1} = A_i * 2^{FCR}$$

From our initial modeling of MIP behaviour, we determined a lower limit of 1x10<sup>-3</sup> on abundance 269 within a pooled sample; we, therefore, used A<sub>10</sub> cut-offs of 1x10<sup>-3</sup>, 1x10<sup>-2</sup>, 1x10<sup>-1</sup> as boundaries 270 for determining classes 1 through 4 (Supplemental Figure S5). In particular, we observed that 271 272 the MMP strain VC20019, which we had previously observed as having a rate of growth similar to the lab reference strain N2, fell into class 3 with a  $\overline{FCR}$  of 0.135 or growth multiplier (2<sup> $\overline{FCR}$ </sup>) of 273 274 1.10 per generation (Figure 4b). Subdividing VC20019 data by experimental pool, however, suggested there was potential for pool-specific variation on a larger scale (Supplement Figure 275 **S7**). The higher  $\overline{FCR}$  for pool M8 is likely a result of over-representation in the seeding 276 277 population by double as VC20019 was also conspicuously absent from the M7 seeding

population, which was pooled in parallel to M8. Our analysis of the  $\overline{FCR}$  across all strains suggests a wide range of fitness phenotypes across the MMP collection (**Figure 4c**).

#### 280 The reduced fitness phenotypes of MMP strains were mapped to candidate mutations

281 Based on the results of our growth analysis, we hypothesized that underlying mutations within 282 some strains could account for the observed growth rates. We proceeded to genetically map a 283 subset of class 0 and class 1 strains as they exhibited the greatest reduced fitness in 284 comparison to our control strain VC20019. We used our MIP-MAP protocol (Mok et al., 2017) to competitively select against the reduced fitness phenotype and identify a small genomic region 285 286 containing the associated causal variant. Briefly, mutant strains were crossed with males of the 287 mapping strain VC20019 and the population was grown until starvation. A small portion of the population was then transferred to OP50-seeded 10cm NGM plates. This transfer was 288 289 completed approximately once per generation for up to 6 generations. Samples were taken at 290 each transfer step and used to prepare genomic DNA for MIP-MAP libraries and sequencing.

291 We chose five class 0 and two class 1 strains to map, and successfully identified a 292 single locus linked to a reduced population fitness for six strains (Table 3 and Supplemental 293 **Figure S8**); a seventh strain appeared to have two loci. After phenotyping individual strains for 294 possible causes of fitness defects, we were able to assign candidate alleles based on genes 295 with shared phenotypes. In particular, we verified the mapping results of strain VC40788 by 296 following a partially penetrant maternal-effect embryonic lethal phenotype (Figure 4d). From 297 VC40788 and VC20019 cross progeny, we individually cultured 100 F2 animals and observed F3 and F4 progeny to specifically identify recombinant populations that failed to produce dead 298 299 embryos or those that starved at the same rate as VC20019 controls. Positively identified populations were combined for MIP-MAP analysis (Methods). The primary candidate mutation 300 for VC40788 is a G405R mutation in the mitochondrial protein B0303.3, which is predicted to 301 302 have multiple functions including an acetyl-CoA C-acyltransferase activity. B0303.3 has no reported hypomorphic or null mutant alleles but is reported to have an embryonic lethal 303

phenotype by RNAi (Gönczy et al., 2000; Sönnichsen et al., 2005) and its human ortholog *HADHB* is implicated in trifunctional protein deficiency phenotype (Purevsuren et al., 2009;
Spiekerkoetter et al., 2003). The identification of a maternal hypomorphic allele of *B0303.3*provides a means with which to study this disease and its phenotypes in a nematode model.

308 Discussion

With advances in sequencing, genome-editing, and imaging, one remaining bottleneck in 309 the characterization of the C. elegans genome is our ability to identify the phenotypes 310 311 associated with gene function (Granier and Vile, 2014; Houle et al., 2010). The ability to quantify 312 population fitness along a spectrum provides a window into gene functions that may otherwise be overlooked under current experimental paradigms. Dissecting the contribution of weaker 313 alleles will help to generate new gene networks and build upon our understanding of worm 314 development, reproduction, and overall fitness. With PhenoMIP, we analysed strains from the 315 316 Million Mutation Project, which offers a unique library of mutagenized genomes with coding and 317 non-coding elements that remain largely unexplored. We efficiently identified phenotypic traits 318 related to population fitness in a high-throughput manner by pooling multiple MMP strains in a multi-generational experiment and sequencing these populations with molecular inversion 319 320 probes.

To use MIPs as a means of barcoding strains for population analysis, we designed a series of probes for the 2007 MMP strains and tested a subset on the MMP collection. We observed that we could accurately gauge a strain's relative abundance within a sample. By sequencing multiple genomic mixtures, we confirmed a low false positive rate, suggesting we could use MIPs to accurately identify subpopulations with abundance as low as  $8\times10^{-4}$  which translates to better than 1 in 1000 genomes per sample.

As a demonstration of this method, we pooled MMP strains into groups and dissected population composition over multiple generations. Our observations suggest that this form of population barcoding is indeed capable of identifying specific Million Mutation Project strains

330 with differing levels of relative fitness. Our analysis shows that PhenoMIP identifies reproducible 331 condition-dependent population stratification among populations that have been separated for multiple generations. Based on the strains tested thus far, we estimate upwards of 82% of MMP 332 strains may harbour alleles contributing to fitness phenotypes in the range of class 0 to class 2. 333 334 Given the mutagenized and inbred nature of the MMP strains (Thompson et al., 2013), it is not 335 surprising to find such an array of fitness phenotypes. These strains, however, represent a valuable resource to study fitness as the causative alleles of these effects may be in putative 336 337 essential genes, poorly characterized genes with only small effects on fitness, or even 338 regulatory regions of the genome.

The observed population-level phenotypes presented in this work are a readout of 339 340 relative fitness in a multi-strain competitive environment. Depending on selection and pooling method, weaker changes to relative fitness may be attributed to the population mixture rather 341 342 than the selection variable itself. For instance, in our series of experiments, pools were initially 343 generated by combining small numbers of larval animals as a seeding parental population that was expanded before aliguoting out to replicate experiments. During the initial expansion of the 344 seed population, the stochastic loss of even a single parental animal could impact the 345 346 abundance of a strain in the initial stages of the experiment. Conversely, we saw in our analysis of pool M8, that the doubling of VC20019 animals in the initial pooling also affected the 347 population structure and mean fold-change rate of VC20019 itself. A potential solution to 348 349 mitigate "seeding" variation would be to bleach synchronize (Stiernagle, 2006) all of the target 350 strains to the L1 larval stage and then combine them in equal portions into a single population 351 before aliquoting to replicate experiments. Another influence on population structure is the 352 group of Class 4 strains identified in our study. Their rapid growth and expansion can lead to drastic population stratification and the premature loss of subpopulations. In these cases, the 353 354 quantitative phenotyping of less fit strains may be hindered, less informative, or potentially less accurate when analysing a multi-generational experiment. Therefore, depending on the nature 355

356 of the experiment, it may be more advantageous to consider pooling strains of a similar fitness 357 based on prior phenotype data. Our observations also suggest that food source can alter population growth with food scarcity contributing to greater variation between replicates. For 358 example, our OP50 replicates may have experienced premature starvation or uneven food 359 360 distribution amongst populations, leading to lower population sizes and possibly affecting the 361 consistency of the OP50-grown replicates. For an auxotrophic food source such as OP50, it would be best to highly concentrate cultures in order to generate a thicker lawn for nematode 362 363 populations to consume. Lastly, the method and timing of population transfer is a potential 364 source of selective influence. Our data suggested that chunking versus washing populations to 365 propagate them did introduce technical variation with some strains. A method of population transfer that was not addressed in this work is the bleach synchronization method (Stiernagle, 366 367 2006), which would add the benefit of removing sporadic contamination while indirectly assaying 368 developmental timing and fecundity. Some strains may also be differentially sensitive to 369 bleaching, starvation or recovery from starvation (Baugh, 2013; Webster et al., 2019). Over 370 many generations, the above technical variation can amplify within the population, potentially skewing the changes observed. Therefore, when applying specific selective pressures to a 371 372 population (temperature, food source, RNAi, etc.), the proper use of control conditions and replicates can help to reduce the effects of technical variation with minimal impact to the 373 sequencing burden of the experiment. 374

Looking to the future, given the wide range of sequenced strains available from the Million Mutation Project and *Caenorhabditis elegans* Natural Diversity Resource (Cook et al., 2017), a more extensive competitive fitness assessment by PhenoMIP would set the stage for generating balanced pools of strains based on similar growth rates. From similarly profiled strains, balanced pools could be generated randomly or based on parameters such as geographic distribution or specific genotypes or haplotypes of interest. These pools could be used to screen for phenotypic differences among any number of conditions from temperature or

382 food source (Dirksen et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2017) to resource limitation, small molecule 383 exposure, or pathogen infection. Recently, Webster et al., utilized RAD-seq techniques to assess starvation resistance on a multiplexed pool of 96 wild isolate strains (Webster et al., 384 2019). This form of competitive fitness selection is an ideal experimental context for PhenoMIP 385 386 to increase potential throughput by addressing additional parameters or variables related to 387 starvation response. Furthermore, the process of pooled competition facilitates screening on multiple strains in scenarios where the substrates or reagents to test have limited availability. In 388 389 combination with GWAS and genetic mapping, PhenoMIP could prove useful in assembling a 390 greater understanding of the many unexplored gene and regulatory sequence functions within the C. elegans genome. 391

392 To our knowledge these experiments are the first to use molecular inversion probes to analyse C. elegans populations for relative fitness. With PhenoMIP, we analysed 217 MMP 393 394 strains across 95 replicate conditions and 29 timepoints for a total of 393 genomic samples. A 395 similar analysis of our experimental data via whole genome sequencing across 393 genomic samples would be prohibitively expensive. In contrast, our data can be generated on the 396 equivalent of a single Illumina NextSeq run. Targeted sequencing by PhenoMIP permits 397 398 experimentation at a scale well beyond what is reasonably accomplished by standard WGS. 399 PhenoMIP, however, is not without its caveats as the data generated is limited to assessing 400 relative abundance and the variants assessed are limited to the population of strains in the 401 experiment. We believe, however, that the initial processing steps and costs as well as the 402 "limited" variant diversity of the data are outweighed by the increase in experimental throughput.

PhenoMIP has the potential to be applied beyond the MMP and wild isolate strains to the quantitative analyse of genomic variants in many contexts. Coupled with genome-level editing techniques, PhenoMIP could be useful in studying allelic series or mutants of entire pathways for subtle phenotypic effects. The assay format could be converted to look at selection of phenotypes occurring within a single event or generation, as in a bulk taxis assay or as a

- 408 method for targeted genome monitoring under selective conditions. The fundamental leverage
- 409 of this method is the use of MIPs to reduce the sequencing burden while maintaining informative
- 410 parity with WGS formats in identifying subpopulation frequency. In doing so, the throughput of
- 411 experimentation can be increased without raising experimental sequencing costs.

#### 412 Methods

#### 413 *MIP site selection and design*

MIP sites were selected in two rounds. Initially the entire MMP SNV data set was used to select 414 for sites that were spaced a minimum of 300 bp apart to avoid potential collisions with 415 416 neighbouring probes. Site selection and rejection was completed in a linear manner based on the first available SNV on each linkage group within the data set. Locations were not filtered or 417 optimized to reduce the occurrence of neighbouring SNVs within the 300 bp window. The initial 418 419 set of MMP mutant strain MIP sites was then used to remove candidate sites from the MMP wild 420 isolate data set. Any wild isolate sites within a 350 bp window of mutant candidate sites was removed from selection. Of the remaining wild isolate SNV sites, a 350 bp selection window was 421 422 used to identify potential MIP sites. The list of candidate MIP sites were used to design and 423 score MIPs based on previously published criteria (Mok et al., 2017). The list of designed MIPS 424 was subdivided into each individual strain where the highest-scoring MIP for each linkage group 425 was identified. Of the six MIPs designed for each strain, four were randomly selected for use in

426 population analysis (**Supplemental Data SD1**)

# 427 MIP library pooling, preparation and sequencing

428 MIPs were pooled based on worm pools being tested and generated as previously published (Mok et al. 2017). Individual MIPs were normalized to a concentration of 100 uM and pooled to 429 a maximum volume of 85 ul. 10 ul of 10X Polynucleotide Kinase (PNK) Buffer and 5 ul of PNK 430 431 were added to a volume of 85 ul pooled MIPs before incubating for 45 minutes at 37°C and 20 432 minutes at 80°C. This pool was then diluted to a working concentration of 330 nM. MIP libraries 433 were generated with 500 ng genomic DNA and appropriate MIP pools as previously described 434 in Mok et al., 2017. Libraries were sequenced on Illumina MiSeg or NextSeg systems. Libraries across pools ranged between 8.3x10<sup>6</sup> and 32.7x10<sup>6</sup> total reads with an average 1507 reads per 435 436 probe.

# 437 *Worm maintenance and pooling*

438 Worms were maintained on standard nematode growth media (NGM) seeded with OP50. Worm 439 pools were generated from well-fed source plates using exclusively twenty L1 or L4 animals for each strain. Starting pools were grown on 15cm NGM made with 8X peptone and seeded with 440 NA22 or HT115. Pools were grown at 20°C to starvation as mostly L1 animals (96-120 hours) 441 442 before washing off with 10-15 mL M9. Worms were pelleted and aspirated to 5-6 mL before population density was assessed. 50-100 ul of pellet was frozen as a representative sample of 443 444 the initial pooled population. Pools were then redistributed in equal-sized populations between 5000 and 10000 animals on 15 cm NGM plates that were prepared based on experimental 445 446 conditions and grown for 4 days before being transferred to replicate condition plates either by 447 chunking or washing again. Any remaining animals were washed from plates with doubledistilled water, pelleted, and frozen as samples for later analysis. Each cycle of transfer 448 449 approximately followed a single generation and pooling experiments were propagated for 6-10 450 generations. Heavily contaminated plates/conditions were terminated from propagation and 451 removed from analysis.

#### 452 Mapping of mutant strains

Mutant strains were mapped using either the VC20019 mapping strain or DM7448 (VC20019; 453 454 Ex[pmyo-3::YFP]). Briefly, mapping strain males were crossed with mutant hermaphrodites. 15-455 20 cross progeny L4 hermaphrodites were selected to a single 10 cm OP50-seeded NGM plate and grown to starvation before propagating a subpopulation to a replicate 10 cm plate. Slow 456 457 growth mutants were mapped on 10 cm NGM plates seeded with OP50 and grown at 20°C. 458 Mapping populations were propagated under selection for four to seven generations. 459 Representative samples were chosen to extract genomic DNA as template for MIP-MAP 460 libraries and then sequenced on Illumina MiSeg or NextSeg instruments. MIP-MAP analysis was completed as previously described (Mok et al., 2017). 461

#### 462 **Competitive Fitness MIP library data analysis**

For each specific MIP pool, reads were initially analysed as previously described (Mok et al., 2017) with the exclusion of the normalization step for each MIP. After abundance of each MIP was calculated, an average abundance was calculated for each strain as well as a standard deviation across this average. These values were used in downstream analysis of population structure across multiple timepoints.

Population structure and fold-change analysis was calculated across each experiment 468 using the amalgamated data from above. Strains with a starting abundance value below 2.5x10<sup>-</sup> 469 <sup>3</sup> were eliminated from downstream population analysis. Remaining data were further 470 transformed with any values below 1.0x10<sup>-3</sup> being converted to this value to accommodate log 471 472 growth analysis. Total fold-change and mean fold change are calculated based on starting and 473 end-point changes in abundance versus total generations (one generation per expansion). In samples with negative trajectories, however, the final generation of growth was calculated as 474 475 the first instance of abundance at or below the lower limit of 1.0x10<sup>-3</sup>. Mean fold-change rate 476 was calculated based on the total fold-change abundance in the final generation of growth 477 divided by the expected number of generations passed.

## 478 Data Availability

File SD1 contains molecular inversion probe sequences and data for all 2007 MMP strains and 40 wild isolates of the Million Mutation Project. Four candidate probes for each strain were designed and listed in this file. File SD2 contains all information used in the false positive and precision analysis of PhenoMIP. File SD3 contains all mean FCR data for each strain on each replicate in each experimental pool. Custom scripts used to analyse sequencing data are available upon request. Raw sequence files for each pool are available upon request.

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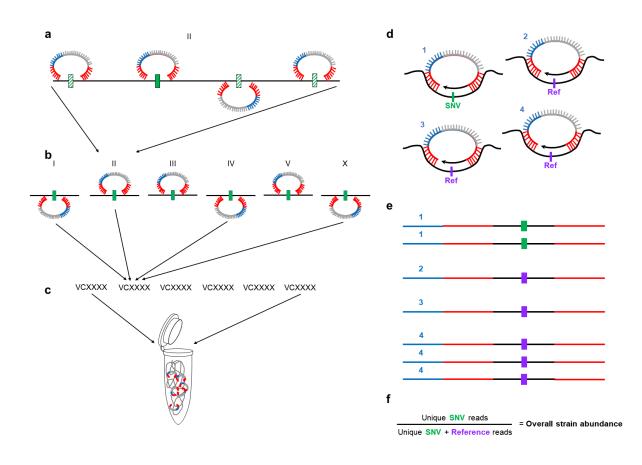
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632

Figure 1. Molecular inversion probes as a system of barcoding *C. elegans* strains. MIP 633 sequences include two annealing arms complementary to target sites (red), a unique molecular 634 identifier (UMI, blue) and a common backbone used for library amplification and barcoding 635 (grey). MIP sites were selected for each of 2047 MMP strains across each chromosome by 636 excluding shared variants from all strains and then choosing sites (regardless of strain) across 637 the genome that were separated by a minimum of 300-350bp. (a) For each strain, MIP 638 639 candidate sequences were scored (solid and hatched variants). (b) The highest-scoring MIP on each chromosome (solid green) was identified. (c) Four of the six MIPs were then selected to 640 identify a target strain amongst a pool of strain-specific MIPs. The MIPs would therefore have 641 two identifiable states from the gap-fill segment of a sequencing read (d); either the strain-642 specific single nucleotide variant (SNV, green), or a sequence identical to the reference genome 643 (purple). (e) After sequencing, each sample was demultiplexed by MIP target and further by the 644 645 UMI to count the total number of unique annealing events specific to the SNV or reference 646 sequences. (f) Values were compared to estimate the percentage of SNV events versus the total annealing events. 647

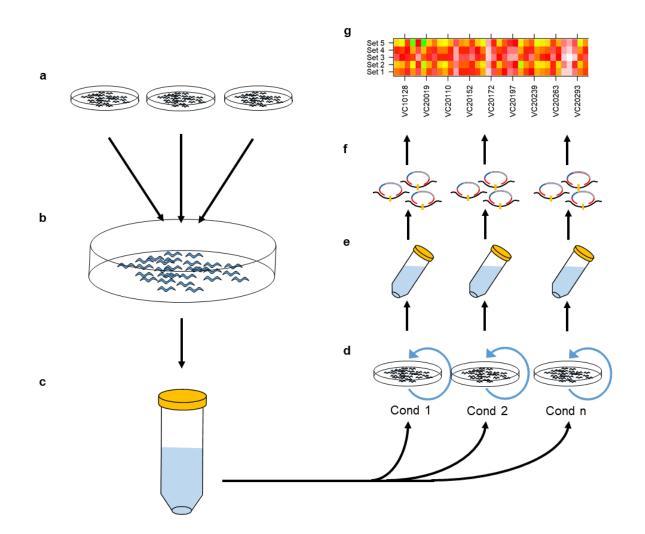
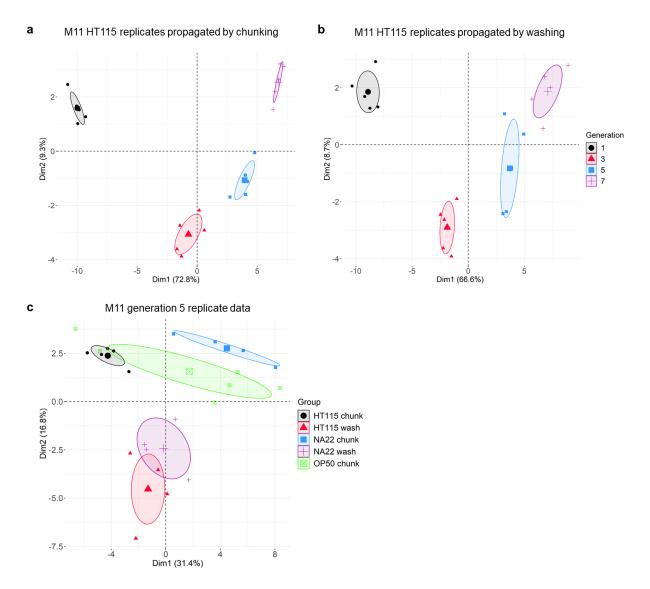


Figure 2. Workflow of PhenoMIP multigeneration competitive fitness assay. (a) MMP 648 strains were selected and grown as separate populations in relative synchronization before 20 649 animals of each strain at the L1 (pools M1, M3, M5) or L4 stage (M7, M8, M10, M11) are 650 transferred (b) to a communal NGM plate seeded with a bacterial lawn. The communal plates 651 are grown in duplicate until the population has starved. (c) Uncontaminated plates are then 652 653 washed and combined into a single starting population and counted for population density 654 before being redistributed (d) onto multiple 150 mm NGM plates of varying conditions. Every 72-96 hours, the plates reach starvation and a subpopulation of animals is transferred to a new 655 plate of the same experimental condition. (e) The remaining animals are collected for extraction 656 657 of genomic DNA to generate MIP libraries for sequencing (f) and data analysis (g) of strain abundance and relative fitness. 658

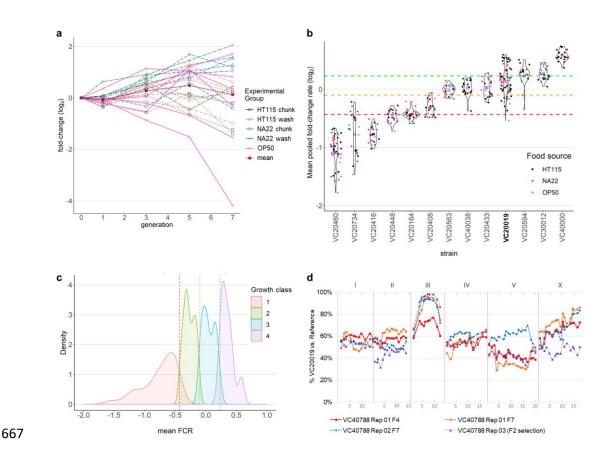


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Figure 3. Principal component analysis of PhenoMIP data suggests consistent population stratification related to growth conditions. (a) PCA of M11 HT115 population replicates propagated by chunking and (b) M11 HT115 population replicates propagated by washing are projected along principal component 1 and 2 with samples coloured by generation. PCA of all M11 replicates from generation 5 projected along principal component 1 and 2 with samples coloured by combined food source and transfer method.

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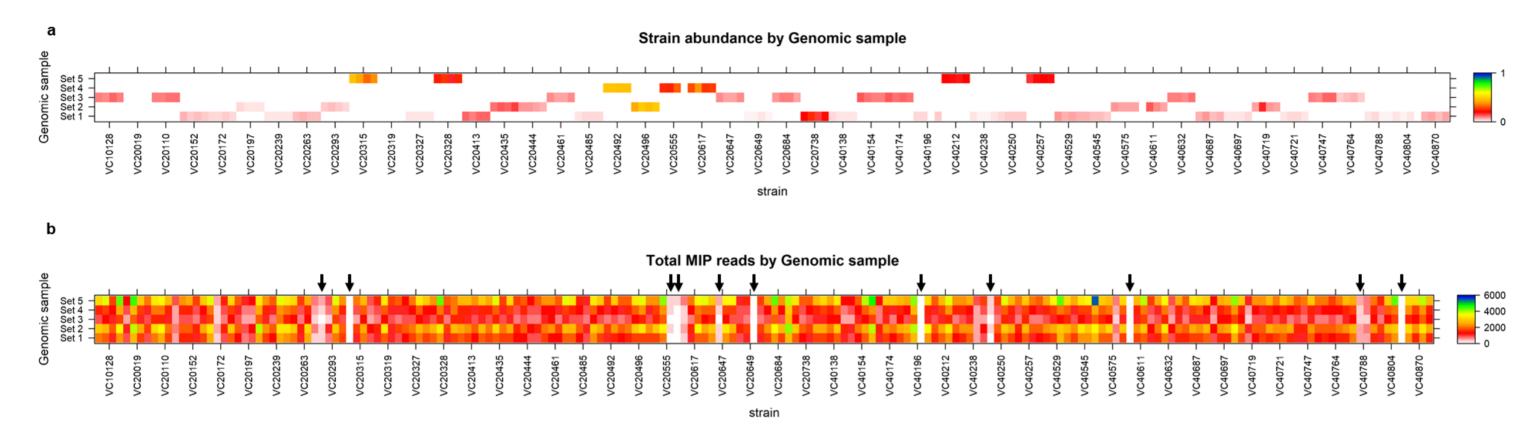
bioRxiv preprint doi: https://doi.org/10.1101/857854; this version posted November 29, 2019. The copyright holder for this preprint (which was not certified by peer review) is the author/funder, who has granted bioRxiv a license to display the preprint in perpetuity. It is made available under aCC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 International license.



# **Figure 4. Relative fitness can be quantified by PhenoMIP and classified into subgroups**.

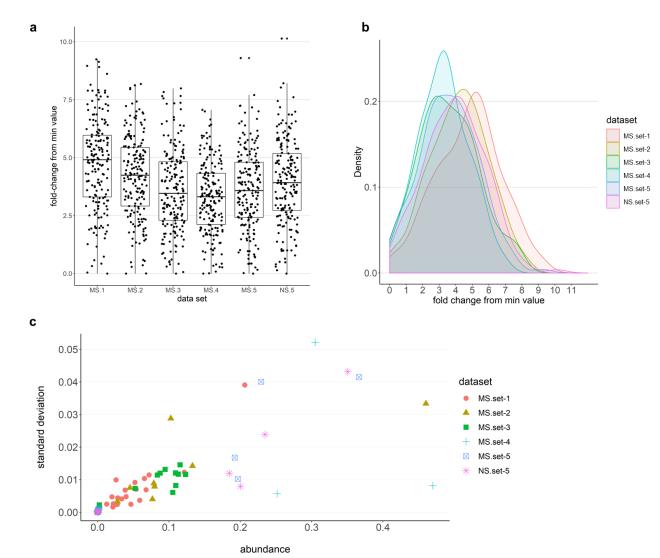
(a) Line graph of VC20019 growth rate from pool M11 with y-axis showing fold-change (log<sub>2</sub>) in 669 abundance relative to initial abundance at generation 0 (starting population) across multiple 670 generations (x-axis). Replicates are coloured by experimental food source and transfer method: 671 HT115 chunk (black squares), HT115 wash (orange circles), NA22 chunk (blue triangles), NA22 672 673 wash (green cross), OP50 chunk (pink x) and mean (mean fold change abundance across all 674 replicates, red square). (b) Violin plots of mean fold-change per generation for a representative panel of strains. Each point represents the mean fold-change rate calculated from multiple 675 timepoints for an experimental replicate across one or more pooling experiments. Dots are 676 colour-coded by experimental condition for growth on either HT115 (black squares), NA22 (red 677 circles), OP50 (blue triangles) E. coli as a food source with overall mean fold change rate (FCR, 678 679 purple cross). Coloured dotted lines represent category boundaries using an FCR of -0.4315 (red), -0.0.985 (yellow), and 0.2327 (green). VC20019 (bold) is provided as a reference for 680 681 comparison to growth rates shown in (a). (c) 202 strains were assigned a mean FCR and 682 subdivided into one of four growth classes with kernel density plots for each class. (d) Mapping 683 data for VC40788, a strain observed to have poor growth rate, identified an interval of interest at III:7.6-10.8 Mb. Mapping was accomplished using two replicates by competitive fitness for wild 684 685 type growth (orange circle and blue diamond) as well as by identifying F2 homozygous wild-type F2 recombinants in a bulk segregant assay (purple triangle). X-axis units are in megabases 686 across each chromosome. 687

#### Supplemental Figure Legends 689



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Supplemental Figure S1. MIPs provide sufficient read depth to specific subpopulations of strain abundance in complex compositions of genomic DNA. (a) Strains from non-overlapping sets of mixed genomic samples are identified using a multiplexed 691 pool of MIPs. Strain abundance for each set is indicated by the heatmap legend. (b) A heatmap of total reads per MIP per set broken down by specific strain with black arrows indicating probes with total reads below 20% of the mean read depth across the set. 692



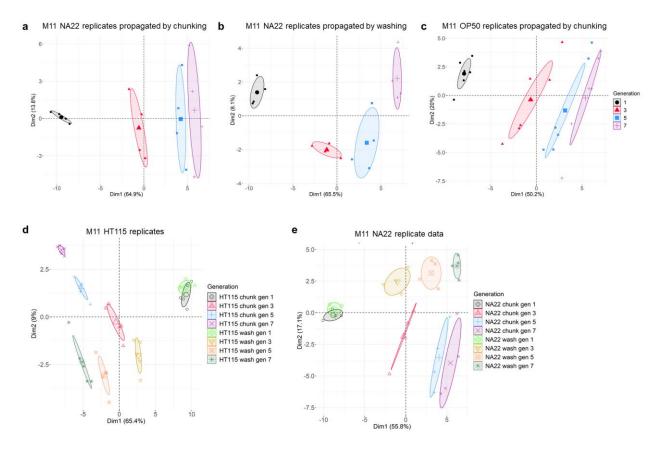
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# 695 Supplemental Figure S2. MIP pooling across multiple targets remains balanced and

precise. (a) Boxplot of sequencing libraries for the same set of probes across 5 separate
 genomic templates overlaid with the fold-change for each probe based on the probe with the
 fewest reads in each set. (b) a kernel density plot of each dataset based on the fold-change in
 read depth of each probe (MS = MiSeq-generated data; NS = NextSeq-generated data). (c) A
 scatterplot of abundance for all strains within each sequenced set versus the standard deviation

of the 3 to 4 probes used to calculate that abundance.



# 702

# 703 Supplemental Figure S3. Principal component analysis of M11 samples suggest

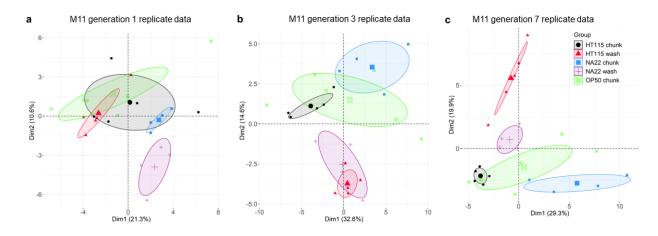
consistent changes to population structure at each generation. PCA of M11 datasets

separated by combined food source and transfer method into (a) NA22 replicates propagated by
 chunking, (b) NA22 replicates propagated by washing and (c) OP50 replicates propagated by

chunking, IC/ 1422 replicates propagated by washing and (c) of so replicates propagated by rot chunking. PCA of M11 HT115 replicate (d) and NA22 replicate (e) data projected along principal

components 1 and 2 with samples identified by combination of transfer method (chunking or

washing) and sample generation (1, 3, 5, or 7).

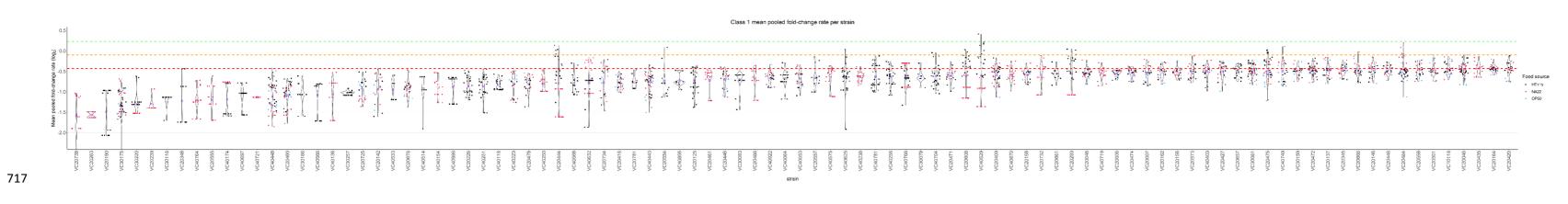


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Supplemental Figure S4. Principal component analysis of M11 samples suggest
 condition-dependent population structure. PCA of M11 replicate datasets separated into (a)
 generation 1, (b) generation 3, and (c) generation 7. Samples are projected along principal

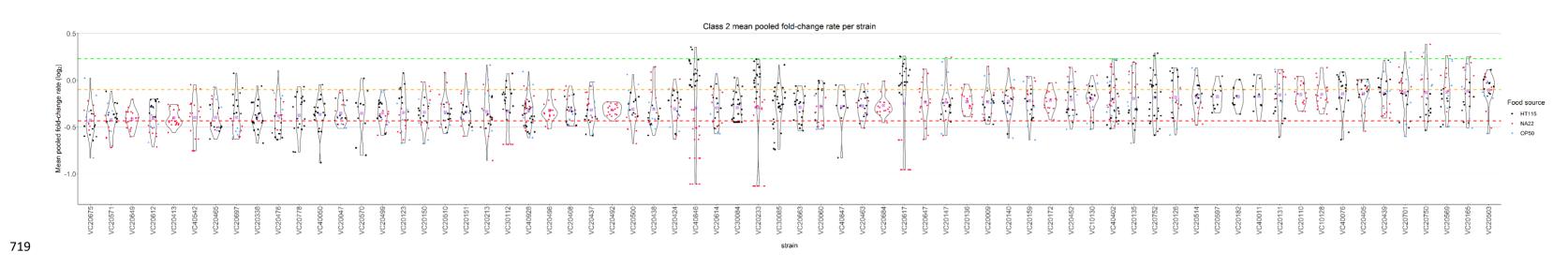
components 1 and 2 for each individual data set and identified by combination of food source

715 and transfer method.

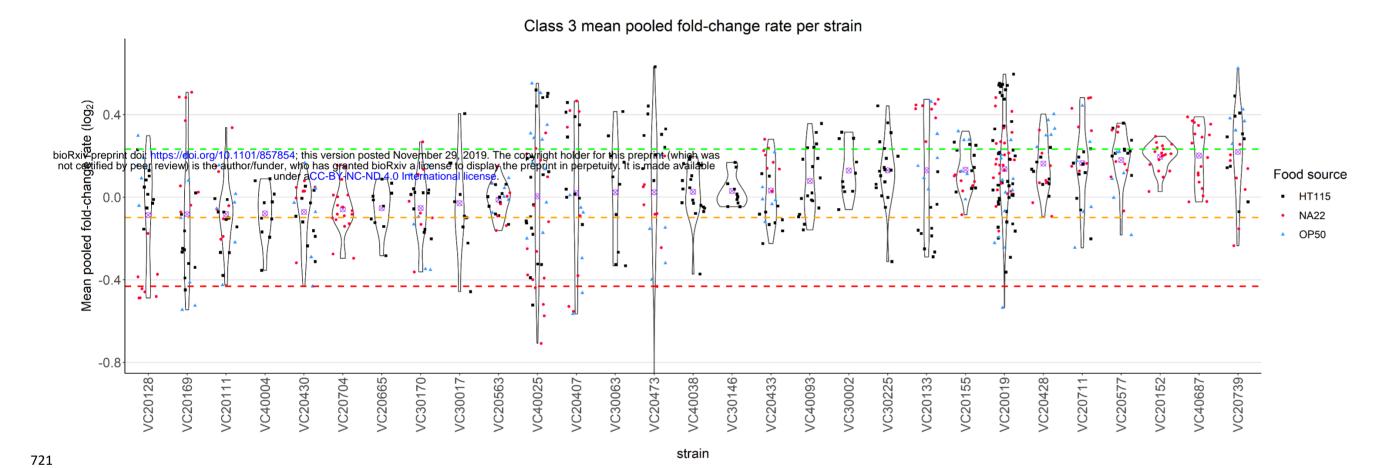


718 **b** 

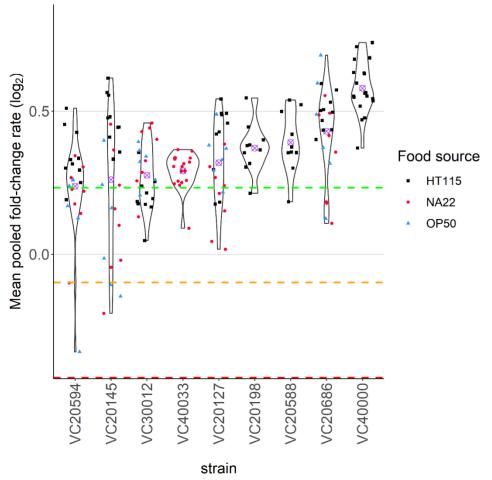
716 **a** 



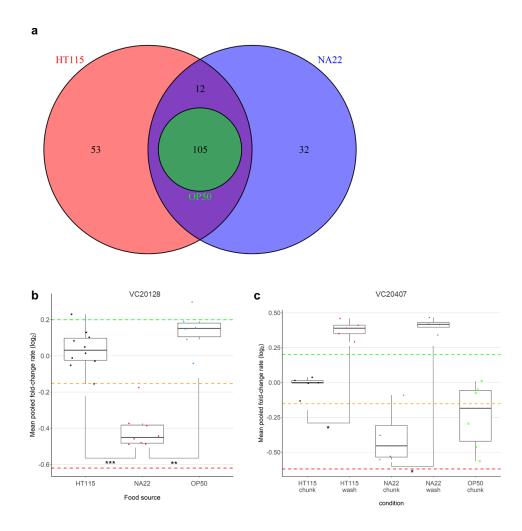
720 **C** 



# Class 4 mean pooled fold-change rate per strain



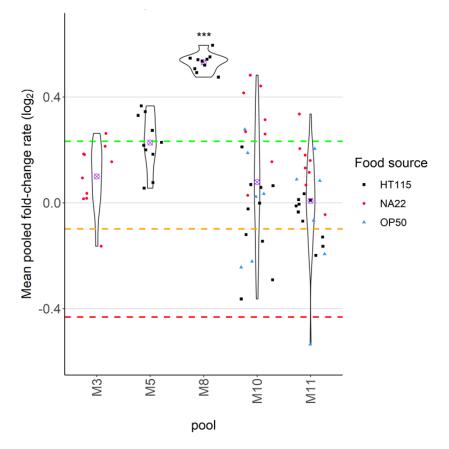
Supplemental Figure S5. PhenoMIP can generate a gradient of fitness phenotypes from severe to subtle. Violin plots of mean fold change rate per replicate for 202 MMP strains across the 4 defined classes 1 (a), class 2 (b), class 3 (c), and class 4 (d). Each violin plot discriminates between food sources HT115 (black squares), NA22 (red circles) and OP50 (blue triangles). Strains are sorted within class by the mean FCR (log<sub>2</sub>, purple cross) of all replicate conditions for that strain. Coloured dotted lines represent category boundaries using an FCR of -0.4315 (red), -0.0.985 (yellow), and 0.2327 (green).



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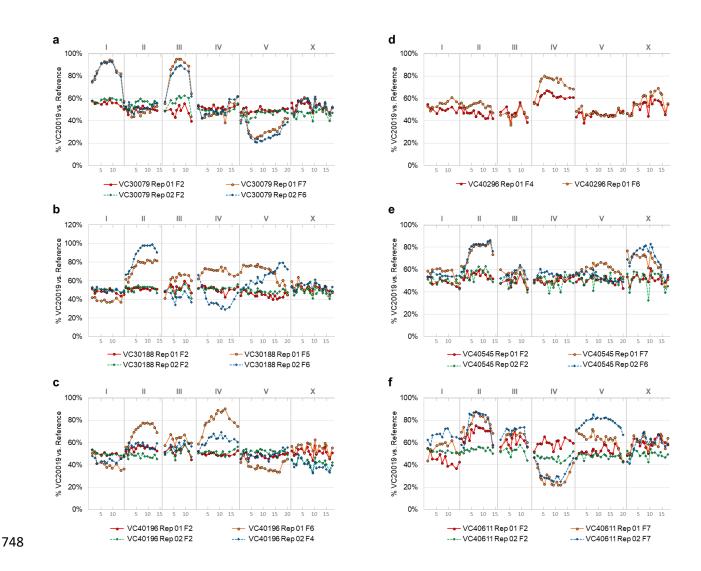
728 Supplemental figure S6. MMP strains were tested across a trio of food sources. (a) Venn diagram of each food source used in the PhenoMIP assays and the number of strains tested 729 with HT115 (pink), NA22 (purple) and OP50 (green). 105 strains were tested on all three food 730 conditions. (b) VC20128 data from the same pool (M10) suggests specific fitness differences 731 between growth on NA22 versus growth on HT115 and OP50. (c) VC20407 data from the same 732 pool (M11) suggests significant changes to growth when comparing samples transferred by 733 734 chunking versus washing - regardless of food source. Coloured dotted lines represent category boundaries using an FCR of -0.4315 (red), -0.0.985 (yellow), and 0.2327 (green). \* p < 0.05; \*\* 735 p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001 by Kruskal-Wallis with p-values adjusted for multiple testing by 736

737 Benjamini-Hochberg method



738

Supplemental Figure S8. Violin plots of VC20019 mean FCR for all replicates grouped by 739 740 pool. Violin plots for VC20019 replicates in each pool were generated with M11 represented by combining datasets based on food source (HT115 = HT115 chunk + HT115 wash; NA22 = 741 NA22 chunk + NA22 wash). M8 replicate data is significantly different compared to M3, M5, 742 743 M10 and M11 which are not significantly different from each other. Each violin plot discriminates between food sources HT115 (black squares), Na22 (red circles) and OP50 (blue triangles) and 744 mean FCR (purple cross). Coloured dotted lines represent category boundaries using an FCR 745 746 of -0.4315 (red), -0.0.985 (yellow), and 0.2327 (green). \*\*\* p < 0.001 by Kruskal-Wallis with pvalues adjusted for multiple testing by Benjamini-Hochberg method. 747



Supplemental Figure S9. MIP-MAP data for 6 strains categorized as class 0 or class 1 by mean FCR. Strains were mapped using VC20019 with the y-axis representing the proportion of VC20019 present versus all reads for a MIP target at each locus across the genome. Strains were mapped in replicate (solid versus dotted lines) and sequenced at two timepoints each (ie. F2 vs F4). The strains mapped in this fashion were (a) VC30079, (b) VC30188, (c) VC40196, (d) VC40296, (e) VC40545, and (f) VC40611. X-axis units are in megabases across each chromosome.

# 756 Table 1. Summary of pooled strains

757

		Final				
Pool		sequenced	HT115	NA22	OP50	Combined
name	Strains	generation	replicates	replicates	replicates	replicates
M1	56	7	0	8	0	8
M3	57	9	0	10	0	10
M5	45	4	10	0	0	10
M7	41	4	9	0	0	9
M8	42	4	10	0	0	10
M10	60	7	10	8	6	24
M11	59	7	10 (5+5)*	8 (4+4)*	6	24
	Unique	Timepoints	Total	Total	Total	Total
Combined	strains	Sequenced	HT115	NA22	OP50	Replicates
Total	217	29	49	34	12	95

758

8 \* Two different methods of transfer were used for replicates

# 759 Table 2. Mean fold-change rate summary

# 760

Class	Lower bound FCR	Upper bound FCR	Total strains	% of strains
0	NA	NA	15	6.9
1	-8.64	< -0.4315	96	44.2
2	≥ -0.4315	< -0.0985	68	31.3
3	≥ -0.0985	< 0.2327	29	13.4
4	≥ 0.2327		9	4.1

# 761

# 762 Table 3. Mapping data summary

763

		Mean		Mapping	Coding	Likely
Strain	Pools	FCR	Class	Interval	alleles	Candidate
VC20019	All but	0.136	3			
	M1					
VC30079	M5, M6	-0.740	1	II:7.49-11.5 Mb	3	hpo-35
				III:5.8-7.6 Mb	3	dig-1
VC30188	M5, M6	-1.038	1	II:6.2-12.1 Mb	1	mel-11
VC40196	M1, M3		0	IV:8.4-13.9 Mb	13	
VC40296	M5, M6		0	IV:4.2-6.4 Mb	2	rme-2
VC40545	M1, M3		0	II:4.4-8.1 Mb	12	tsn-1
VC40611	M1, M3		0	II:6.3-8.1 Mb	7	
VC40788	M1, M3		0	III:7.6-10.8 Mb	2	B0303.3

# 765 Supplemental Table S1. Class 0 mutants, not analysed due to low abundance at 766 experimental start

767

Strain	Pool(s)	Initial abundance
VC20190	M5	0.00180 / 0.00077
VC20245	M1 / M3	0.00027 / 0.00026
VC20262	M5	0.00074 / 0.00128
VC20315	M1 / M3	0.00000 / 0.00059
VC20328	M1 / M3	0.00136 / 0.00216
VC20338	M5	0.00166 / 0.00209
VC40291	M1 / M3	0.00114 / 0.00000
VC40296	M5	0.00118 / 0.00017
VC40545	M1 / M3	0.00064 / 0.00017
VC40611	M1 / M3	0.00000 / 0.00034
VC40697	M1 / M3	0.00176 / 0.00219
VC40745	M5	0.00098 / 0.00118
VC40747	M1 / M3	0.00151 / 0.00147
VC40788	M1 / M3	0.00038 / 0.00029
VC40804	M1 / M3	0.00054 / 0.00036

768