

More genes underwent positive selection in chimpanzee evolution than in human evolution

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Observations of numerous dramatic and presumably adaptive phenotypic modifications during human evolution prompt the common belief that more genes have undergone positive Darwinian selection in the human lineage than in the chimpanzee lineage since their evolutionary divergence 6–7 million years ago. Here, we test this hypothesis by analyzing nearly 14,000 genes of humans and chimps. To ensure an accurate and unbiased comparison, we select a proper outgroup, avoid sequencing errors, and verify statistical methods. Our results show that the number of positively selected genes is substantially smaller in humans than in chimps, despite a generally higher nonsynonymous substitution rate in humans. These observations are explainable by the reduced efficacy of natural selection in humans because of their smaller long-term effective population size but refute the anthropocentric view that a grand enhancement in Darwinian selection underlies human origins. Although human and chimp positively selected genes have different molecular functions and participate in different biological processes, the differences do not ostensibly correspond to the widely assumed adaptations of these species, suggesting how little is currently known about which traits have been under positive selection. Our analysis of the identified positively selected genes lends support to the association between human Mendelian diseases and past adaptations but provides no evidence for either the chromosomal speciation hypothesis or the widespread brain-gene acceleration hypothesis of human origins.

molecular evolution | population size

Although humans and their closest living relatives, chimpanzees, are highly similar at the genomic level (1–6), they differ in many morphological, physiological, and behavioral traits (7). Phenotypically, modern humans appear to have changed considerably more than modern chimps from their common ancestors (7–10). Many of these evolutionary modifications in humans, such as the origins of bipedalism, speech and language, and other high-order cognitive functions, are widely thought to be adaptive (11–13). These observations led to a common belief that more genes underwent positive Darwinian selection in the human lineage than in the chimpanzee lineage. Indeed, there are more reports of positively selected genes (PSGs) in humans than in chimps (12, 13). Nonetheless, this difference may be largely due to a lack of study in chimps. To avoid such a bias, one could identify and compare all PSGs from the human and chimp genomes. Positive selection acting on a protein-coding gene may be detected by various population genetic and molecular evolutionary methods that use intraspecific polymorphism data, interspecific divergence data, or a combination of the two (14–16). However, because of the paucity of polymorphism data from chimps, a fair comparison between the two species would have to be limited to the divergence data. Such data can be used to estimate the ratio of nonsynonymous to synonymous substitution rates (ω). An ω value significantly >1 indicates the action of positive selection, whereas an ω significantly <1 indicates negative (or purifying) selection. Using this approach, two earlier studies (17, 18) pioneered the identification of human and chimp PSGs at the genomic scale, although no comparison was made between the numbers of human and chimp PSGs. In fact, the studies' results would be unsuitable for the comparison, owing to a

number of deficiencies. First, both studies used the mouse as an outgroup, to distinguish between human-specific and chimp-specific nucleotide substitutions, because of the unavailability of genome sequences from any closer outgroups at that time. Because mouse is distantly related to human and chimp, this practice introduces errors. Second, one of the studies (17) was based on less reliable statistical methods and assumptions (19), whereas the other (18) used the draft chimp genome sequence (1) known to contain many more errors than the finished human genome sequence (20, 21). Because the majority of genes in a genome have $\omega < 1$, and sequencing errors have an expected ω of 1, the errors inflate ω and the false detection of positive selection. In this work, we first design a protocol to rectify these problems and then use the protocol to identify and compare human and chimp PSGs. Our results show substantively more PSGs in chimpanzee evolution than in human evolution.

Results and Discussion

Study Design. To compare human and chimp PSGs impartially, we made three improvements in the design of the analysis. First, to distinguish nucleotide substitutions that occurred in the human lineage from those that occurred in the chimp lineage, we used the macaque monkey as the outgroup. Because the divergence time between the macaque and human/chimp is approximately a quarter of that between the mouse and human/chimp (22–24), the reliability of our analysis was expected to increase significantly. Gene orthology determination and sequence alignment among the more closely related human–chimp–macaque gene trios is also more reliable than among human–chimp–mouse trios.

Second, we applied an improved branch-site likelihood method for identifying PSGs (25), which has been shown by computer simulation to produce good results even when some of the assumptions are violated (25). The method requires that the branches in a phylogenetic tree be separated into foreground and background branches *a priori*, where foreground branches are tested for the occurrence of positive selection. The method assumes that two classes of codons, either negatively selected (class 0) or neutral (class 1), exist in the background branches. This null model is compared with an alternative model in which a proportion of class 0 codons, and the same proportion of class 1 codons, become positively selected in the foreground branches. Positive selection in foreground branches is inferred for a gene if the likelihood of the observation of the gene sequences is significantly higher under the alternative model than under the null model. To further verify the suitability of the method in the present context, we conducted additional computer simulations specifically designed to mimic the

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Abbreviation: PSG, positively selected gene.

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Table 1. Genic positive selection in human and chimp lineages since their split

Comparison	Chimp	Human	Chimp/human ratio	<i>P</i> , %*
No. of genes analyzed	13,888	13,888	1	>5
No. of PSGs	233	154	1.51	<0.01
No. of PSGs after Bonferroni correction	21	2	10.5	<0.01
No. of PSGs at 5% false discovery rate	59	2	29.5	<0.01
No. of synonymous changes in all genes	29,644	30,083	0.985	>5
No. of nonsynonymous changes in all genes	17,701	19,000	0.932	<0.01
Mean ω of all genes	0.245	0.259	0.946	<0.01
Mean ω of 13,508 non-PSGs	0.238	0.252	0.944	<0.01

*Probability that the ratio = 1.

evolution of human, chimp, and macaque genes [see [supporting information \(SI\) Materials and Methods](#)]. Our results showed that the false-positive rate is acceptable, except for extreme conditions when it slightly exceeds the nominal rate (see [SI Tables 3 and 4](#)).

Third, we used high-quality nucleotides from the 4 \times coverage chimp genome sequence to allow a fair comparison with the human sequence. Briefly, we assembled alignments of orthologous genes from human, chimp, and macaque, using publicly available genome sequences and annotations (see [Materials and Methods](#)). We then eliminated alignment gaps and those codons in which one or more chimp nucleotides did not meet our quality cutoff. Three different cutoffs, low (Q0), intermediate (Q10), and high (Q20), were used to generate three data sets. After removing alignments of <100 codons, we obtained our final data sets, containing 13,955, 13,924, and 13,888 genes for the Q0, Q10, and Q20 cutoffs, respectively (see [SI Table 5](#)). Even the smallest data set (Q20) has a total alignment length of 17,995,887 nucleotides, with a mean alignment length of 432 codons (standard deviation, 339 codons). All three data sets contain >50% of genes in a primate genome and cover >50% of all protein-coding regions in the genome. Using parsimony, we inferred the numbers of nucleotide substitutions in human and chimp lineages since their split. This inference is expected to be accurate because the three species studied here are closely related. We found that the ratio of the number of synonymous substitutions in the chimp lineage to that in the human lineage is $r = 1.103 \pm 0.009$, 1.020 ± 0.008 , and 0.985 ± 0.008 for the Q0, Q10, and Q20 data sets, respectively. Assuming identical mutation rates per year between human and chimp lineages, r is expected to be 1. If the mutation rate is 3% lower in humans than in chimps, as has been suggested (26), r is expected to be 1.03. Given these considerations, Q0 data, as used in an earlier study (18), are apparently unsuitable because the observed r is significantly higher than the expectation. To make our conclusion more conservative, we use Q20 rather than Q10 data. Two other independent assessments of the chimp genome sequence, one of which evaluated it against 172 kb of finished chimp sequence, also recommended the use of Q20 data for comparison with the human genome sequence (1, 20). Most importantly, the number of synonymous substitutions is already 1.5% lower in chimp than in human when the cutoff of Q20 is used, suggesting that the chimp sequencing errors become negligible at this quality level. The comparison between the 172 kb of draft and finished chimp sequences also showed that the use of cutoffs higher than Q20 is undesirable because many chimp-specific nucleotide changes tend to be lost (20). This is probably because polymorphic sites in the chimp individual that was sequenced, estimated to be 0.1% of all sites (1), tend to have lower qualities than homozygous sites. These polymorphic sites are excluded progressively as one increases the quality cutoff, which hampers a fair comparison with human because the human genome sequence contains polymorphic sites (1). Note that errors in the macaque genome sequence should not affect our analysis because the probability for a macaque error to occur at a nucleotide position where human and chimp differ is small. Even when such rare events occur, they should affect human

and chimp equally and hence would not bias our results. Our human–chimp comparison should not be biased by indel errors because the detection of positive selection does not use indel information.

More PSGs in Chimp Evolution than in Human Evolution. Applying the likelihood method and a P value of 5% for statistical significance (25), we identified 154 genes that were under positive selection in the human lineage (Table 1 and [SI Table 6](#)) and 233 in the chimp lineage (see [SI Table 7](#)). Thus, chimps have 51% more PSGs than humans have. As expected, the excess of chimp PSGs is even greater (157%) should the Q10 data be used ([SI Table 5](#)). The proportion of PSGs in the genome is $233/13,888 = 1.7\%$ for the chimp lineage, significantly greater than that ($154/13,888 = 1.1\%$) for the human lineage ($P < 10^{-4}$, χ^2 test). Because 13,888 statistical tests were conducted for each lineage, it is necessary to control for multiple testing. Under Bonferroni correction, two human genes and 21 chimp genes remain statistically significant (see [SI Table 8](#)). With use of a false discovery rate of 5%, the same two human genes and 59 chimp genes are significant ([SI Table 8](#)). The proportion of PSGs in the chimp genome remains significantly greater than that in the human genome ($P < 10^{-4}$, χ^2 test), even after the multiple-testing corrections (Table 1).

To further confirm our results, we analyzed the recently released 6 \times chimp genome assembly for the 233 chimp PSGs identified above. We found that 212 (or 91%) of them still show significant signals of positive selection (see [SI Materials and Methods](#)). Hence, when this new data set is used, chimps have 38% more PSGs than humans have ($P = 0.002$, χ^2 test). Note that this is a conservative estimate because we did not consider non-PSGs from the 4 \times sequence that may become PSGs in the 6 \times sequence. Such incidences are possible because potentially more nucleotides per gene can be analyzed in the 6 \times sequence, leading to improved statistical power in identifying PSGs. Additionally, 4 \times and 6 \times sequences may differ at polymorphic sites, which can affect the outcome of PSG identification when the number of substitutions is small. Because the analyses of the 4 \times and 6 \times sequences both indicate substantially more PSGs in chimps than in humans, and because the 6 \times assembly is preliminary and unpublished, our subsequent analyses use the PSGs identified from the Q20 data of the 4 \times assembly. An additional reason for using the 4 \times assembly is the finding of a number of cases in which the 4 \times assembly is apparently more accurate than the 6 \times assembly (see [SI Materials and Methods](#)).

We found that the mean ω of all genes is 0.259 ± 0.002 in the human lineage, significantly larger than that (0.245 ± 0.002) in the chimp lineage ($P < 10^{-4}$; Table 1). For the common set of 13,508 non-PSGs between humans and chimps, the mean ω is also significantly larger in human (0.252 ± 0.002) than in chimp (0.238 ± 0.002) ($P < 10^{-4}$; Table 1). Because the majority of non-PSGs are under negative selection, as reflected in their low ω values, the above results indicate stronger negative selection in chimps than in humans. Multiple-population genetic data indicate that the long-

term effective population size of humans (in the last 1–2 million years) is several-fold smaller than that of chimps and than that of the human–chimp common ancestor (2, 27–34). A recent analysis of 1 million base pairs of Neanderthal nuclear DNA also suggested that the common ancestor of modern humans and Neanderthals had a small effective population size (35). It is thus probable that the effective population size is greater in the chimp lineage than in the human lineage for a large portion of the divergence time between the two lineages. Population genetic theories (36) predict that both positive and negative selection are more effective in large populations than in small populations. Our observation that chimps have more PSGs but fewer nonsynonymous substitutions in non-PSGs than humans is consistent with these predictions.

Computer simulations showed that the branch-site likelihood method cannot detect all PSGs. Rather, the detection rate increases as the ω of background branches increases (see SI Table 9). If the overall strength of positive selection is weaker in humans than in chimps because of smaller populations of humans than chimps, a higher average background ω is required for PSGs to be detectable in humans than in chimps. We found that in the macaque branch of the human–chimp–macaque tree, the mean ω for all genes is 0.226 ± 0.001 . For human PSGs, the mean ω in the macaque branch is 0.294 ± 0.007 , significantly greater than the mean ω in the macaque branch (0.278 ± 0.005) for chimp PSGs ($P < 0.05$). Hence, these observations are consistent with the simulation result and further support the notion that positive selection was weaker in the human lineage than in the chimp lineage. Theories also predict that recombination can increase the efficacy of selection (37). Indeed, PSGs tend to be located in high-recombination regions, although this effect is significant in chimps ($P = 0.041$) but not in humans ($P = 0.32$) (see SI Fig. 4), probably as a result of a difference in statistical power caused by the difference in the number of PSGs in the two species.

Similarities and Differences Between Human and Chimp PSGs. It has been claimed that genes of certain functional categories, such as olfaction and nuclear transport, were more frequently under positive selection in humans than in chimps, based on the ranking of all genes by their P values in the likelihood test of positive selection (17). Because genes with reduced negative selection also tend to have low P values (although unlikely to be as low as 0.05), such ranks potentially mix genes under positive selection with those under reduced negative selection. We took a more rigorous approach by limiting our analysis to the PSGs we detected. We found that seven genes are shared between the human and chimp PSGs (see SI Table 10), significantly greater than expected by chance (2.6; $P < 0.02$, binomial test), suggesting the presence of some common targets of positive selection in the two lineages. We classified all PSGs into biological process groups and molecular function groups, as defined in the PANTHER database (38). A randomization test indicated a significant difference in distribution of human and chimp nonoverlapping PSGs among biological process groups (Fig. 1A) and among molecular function groups (Fig. 1B). Those groups showing the greatest differences between the two species are listed in Fig. 1C. Interestingly, however, the majority of these groups (e.g., protein metabolism and modification, anion transport, phosphate transport, and lyase) do not correspond to the widely assumed adaptive phenotypic differences between humans and chimps (e.g., neurogenesis), suggesting the existence of yet-to-be-recognized adaptive phenotypic differences between the two species. We did not detect several previously reported PSGs that control brain size or cognitive functions (39–42) because previous identifications of these PSGs were based on a comparison of polymorphism and divergence data, whereas only divergence data are used here. As mentioned above, due to the paucity of chimp polymorphism data, any fair genome-wide comparison of human and chimp PSGs would have to be limited to divergence data at this time.

Using microarray data of human gene expression, we found that

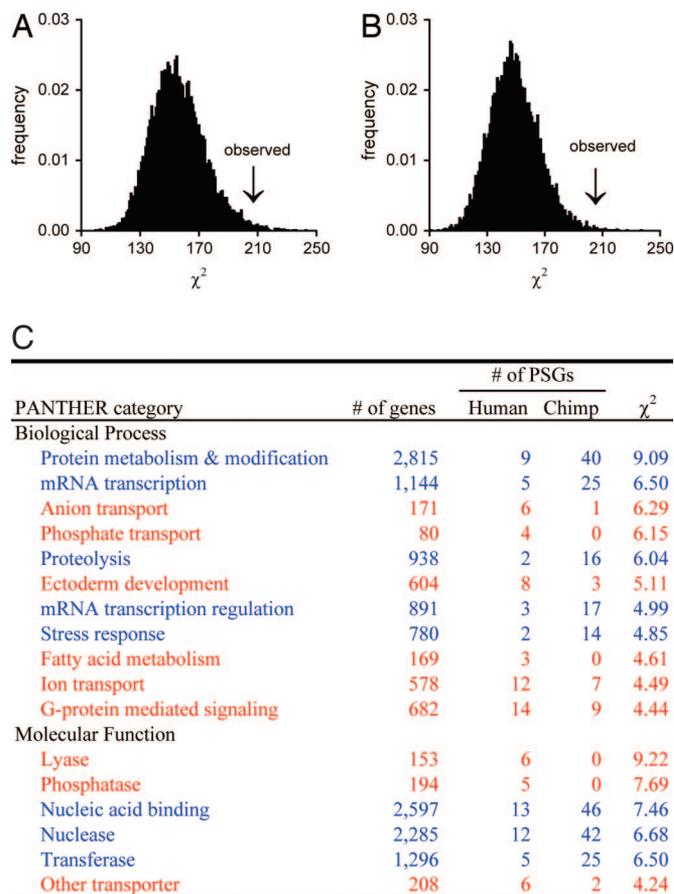


Fig. 1. Functional differences between human and chimp unshared PSGs. (A and B) Human and chimp PSGs show a significantly larger difference in distribution across biological process groups (A) and molecular function groups (B) than by chance ($P = 0.84\%$ and 0.26% , respectively, one-tail randomization test). The bars show the frequency distribution of the χ^2 values in 10,000 random divisions of the 373 unshared PSGs into 147 human PSGs and 226 chimp PSGs. The arrow indicates the observed χ^2 . Here, the randomization test is superior to the standard χ^2 test because the functional groups are not independent of one another, and a single gene may belong to more than one group. Similar results are obtained when the seven shared PSGs are included. (C) Biological process and molecular function groups that show the greatest differences between human and chimp unshared PSGs, as ranked by individual χ^2 values. Shown are the groups that each contribute at least 2% of the total χ^2 of all groups. Groups with a higher frequency of human PSGs than chimp PSGs are shown in red; those with a higher frequency of chimp PSGs than human PSGs are shown in blue.

human and chimp PSGs are not significantly different in their distributions between the categories of tissue-specific genes and nonspecific genes ($P > 0.5$, χ^2 test; and see SI Table 11). On examining the peak-expression tissue group for each gene (see SI Table 12), we again found no significant difference in the overall tissue distribution between human and chimp PSGs (Fig. 2). Notably, 14 (11%) human PSGs and 13 (6.7%) chimp PSGs have peak expressions in one or more parts of the brain, but the difference is not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 1.74$, $P = 0.19$). On the contrary, for the central nervous system outside of the brain, human (8) has fewer PSGs than chimp (14) ($\chi^2 = 0.09$, $P = 0.77$). These findings are consistent with recent comparative genomic analyses (21, 43) and do not support more positive selection in humans than in chimps in regard to nervous system genes (44).

Genome-wide identification of human and chimp PSGs helps to test several evolutionary hypotheses. First, it has been argued that PSGs are more likely than non-PSGs to underlie known Mendelian

Recombination rate data for 1-megabase segments of human chromosomes were downloaded from University of California, Santa Cruz (<http://genome.ucsc.edu/cgi-bin/hgTables>). A recombination rate was assigned to each gene in the Q20 data set, based on the 1-megabase segment in which the midpoint of the gene lies. Of the 13,888 genes analyzed here, 13,714 are found in regions of known recombination rates. Among these 13,714 genes, 152 human and 228 chimp PSGs have available recombination rates. We then computed the mean recombination rate of the 152 human PSGs. To estimate the expected value of this mean, we randomly picked 152 genes from 13,714 genes and computed the mean. This procedure was repeated 10,000 times to estimate the probability that the observed mean is greater than the expected mean. The same procedure was applied to chimp PSGs, under the assumption that the recombination rate of a chimp gene is the same as for its human

ortholog, which is probably correct for the majority of genes at the 1-megabase scale (73).

Performance of the Improved Branch-Site Likelihood Method. The performance of the improved branch-site likelihood method is described in *SI Materials and Methods*.

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