

TRANSFER-DEFECTIVE MUTANTS OF SEX FACTORS IN
ESCHERICHIA COLI. II. DELETION MUTANTS OF
AN F-PRIME AND DELETION MAPPING OF
CISTRONS INVOLVED IN GENETIC TRANSFER

EIICHI OHTSUBO

*Department of Biology, Faculty of Science, Osaka University,
Toyonaka, Osaka, 560 Japan*

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IN the preceding paper (OHTSUBO, NISHIMURA and HIROTA 1970), at least seven cistrons involved in genetic transfer directed by F and R factors were identified by complementation analysis between transfer-defective mutants of F and R factors. The sequence of these cistrons on the F or R factor, however, was not determined.

An R factor can be transduced by phage P1*kc*, which sometimes produces deletion mutations affecting the drug resistance markers (WATANABE and FUKASAWA 1961) or in the genes controlling conjugal fertility (SUGINO and HIROTA 1962). It has also been found that the sex factor moiety of an F-prime is transduced by phage P1*kc* jointly with exogenote genes associated with it (FRÉDÉRICQ 1965; HIROTA personal communication). These facts suggest the possibility that transfer-defective deletion mutants of an F-prime may be isolated by transduction with phage P1*kc*. Such mutants, if isolated, can be utilized for the mapping of the cistrons involved in genetic transfer. Transfer-defective mutants, in fact, can be readily isolated by transduction to a *rec*⁻ recipient in which the integration of transducing fragments into the chromosome is inhibited.

In this paper, isolation and characterization of deletion mutants of F₈, an F-prime carrying galactose genes (HIROTA and SNEATH 1961), and mapping of six cistrons involved in genetic transfer are reported.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Bacteria, transfer-defective R factors, and phages: The strains of *E. coli* K12 used in these experiments are listed in Tables 1a and 1b. Transfer-defective R factors used were R₁₀₀₋₃₀₀, R₁₀₀₋₆₇, R₁₀₀₋₇₃, R₁₀₀₋₇₅, R₁₀₀₋₆₉, and R₁₀₀₋₇₀ which belong to cistrons, A, B, C, D, E, and F, respectively. Their derivations and characters were described in the preceding paper (OHTSUBO, NISHIMURA and HIROTA 1970).

Male-specific phages used were M12, MS2, f2, Qβ, f1, and ZD and the female-specific phage used was *tau*(τ) (OHTSUBO, NISHIMURA and HIROTA 1970). Phage P1*kc* (LENNOX 1955) has been used in transduction experiments.

Detection of F gal mutants with defects in galactose operon and analysis of galK mutations by spot tests: A culture of bacteria harboring F *gal* was spotted on streaks of known *gal*⁻ cultures and Gal⁺ prototrophs were selected on EM-galactose-minimal agar. Numerous Gal⁺ papillae are a good indication that complementation has occurred, and a reduced yield of Gal⁺ papillae sug-

TABLE 1a

E. coli K12 strains used in transduction experiments

Strain	Characteristics*	Source or reference
W4520	F ₈ ⁺ † <i>met</i>	HIROTA and SNEATH (1961)
JE170	F ⁻ R ₁₀₀₋₁ ⁺ ‡ <i>lac-11 mal-5 str</i>	EGAWA and HIROTA (1962)
W4573	F ⁻ <i>galK-2 lac-85 ara-2 xyl-2 str</i>	LEDERBERG (1960)
W3623	F ⁻ <i>galT-6 trp str</i>	LEDERBERG (1960)
W3110	F ⁻ <i>gal</i> ⁺	LEDERBERG (1960)
W3623 <i>recA</i>	Same as W3623 except <i>recA arg</i>	OGAWA, SHIMADA and TOMIZAWA (1968)
W3623 F ₈ ⁺	Same as W3623 except F ₈ ⁺	F ₈ transfer from W4520
W3623 <i>recA</i> F ₈ ⁺	Same as W3623 <i>recA</i> except F ₈ ⁺	F ₈ transfer from W4520
W3623 R ₁₀₀₋₁ ⁺	Same as W3623 except R ₁₀₀₋₁ ⁺	R ₁₀₀₋₁ transfer from JE170
JE3264	F ⁻ <i>galK-2 galT-1 lac</i>	a <i>lac</i> ⁻ mutant of W3350
JE3264 F ₈ ⁺	Same as JE3264 except F ₈ ⁺	F ₈ transfer from W4520

Genetic symbols are those used by TAYLOR and TROTTER (1967).

* Suffixes of symbols signify independent origin of mutations.

† F₈ is an F-prime carrying a galactose operon.

‡ R₁₀₀₋₁ is an R factor derepressed for fertility.

gests that complementation has not occurred. F *gal* mutants which did not complement *galK* mutants were detected in such a way. Next, the strains harboring these F *gal* mutants were analyzed for mating with a number of *galK* mutants by spot tests as described above. When the F *gal* donors were *recA*⁻ from which the transfer of host *gal* genes was inhibited (CLOWES and MOODY 1966; WILKINS 1969), no or a reduced but considerable yield of Gal⁺ papillae were formed on the spots. The latter indicates that the F *gal* covers the *galK* mutation and recombi-

TABLE 1b

*Galactose negative strains**

Strain	Mutation	Strain	Mutation
Kinase (<i>galK</i>) mutants			
W3102	<i>gal-2</i>	W3748	<i>gal-12</i>
W3108	<i>gal-8</i>	W3965	<i>gal-14</i>
W4670	<i>gal-10</i>		
Transferase (<i>galT</i>) mutants			
W3101	<i>gal-1</i>	W3104	<i>gal-4</i>
W3991	<i>gal-1</i>	W3107	<i>gal-7</i>
Epimerase (<i>galE</i>) mutants			
W3995	<i>gal-22</i>		
Kinase-transferase double mutant			
W3350	<i>gal-1 gal-2</i>		
Triply defective mutant			
W3109	<i>gal-9</i>		

* All mutants were isolated and described by MORSE, LEDERBERG, and LEDERBERG (1956a,b) and LEDERBERG (1960).

Kinase, transferase, and epimerase are abbreviations of galactokinase, galactose-1-phosphate uridyl transferase, and UDP-galactose 4-epimerase, respectively. *galK*, *galT* and *galE* are cistrons specifying these enzymes.

nation has occurred. Thus, with various *F gal* mutants, various *galK* mutations were classified and mapped by the method of overlapping deletions.

Complementation analysis of transfer cistrons: A set of transfer-defective R mutants were transduced by phage P1kc into the cells harboring transfer-defective F_8 (OHTSUBO, NISHIMURA and HIROTA 1970). The culture of bacteria harboring both factors was cross-brushed on streaks of a $F^- R^- Gal^-$ recipient culture (W4573) and Gal^+ prototrophs were selected on EM-galactose-minimal agar. Numerous Gal^+ papillae indicates that complementation has occurred between defective F_8 and defective R factors and a few Gal^+ papillae indicates that complementation has not occurred (OHTSUBO, NISHIMURA and HIROTA 1970).

For *media and methods of the other experiments*, see the preceding paper (OHTSUBO, NISHIMURA and HIROTA 1970).

RESULTS

Transduction of F_8 by phage P1kc: When both the donor and recipient had the same galactose-negative mutation in their chromosomes and the donor carried an $F_8 gal^+$ exogenote, only the exogenote galactose genes on F_8 were scored in Gal^+ transductants.

With W3623 $F^- galT-6 rec^+$ and W3623 $F^- galT-6 recA^-$ as gal^- recipients and W3623 $F_8^+ gal^+ / galT-6 rec^+$ as a donor, Gal^+ transductants were formed in both recipients. However, with the rec^- recipient one hundred fewer transductants were formed. When W3110 $F^- gal^+ rec^+$ was a donor, in which wild-type *gal* genes were chromosomal, no Gal^+ transductants appeared in the rec^- recipient. A chloramphenicol resistance marker (Cm^R) of a drug resistance factor, R_{100-1} which replicates autonomously, could be transduced into the rec^- recipient as efficiently as into the rec^+ recipient (Table 2). It seems, therefore, that only *gal*⁺ genes capable of replicating autonomously can be scored as Gal^+ transductants in the rec^- recipient.

Transfer ability for the *gal* genes of the transductants was tested. In the rec^+ recipient about 50 percent of the gal^+ transductants had transmissible *F gal*, while in the rec^- recipient 94 percent contained transmissible *F gal* (Table 3).

TABLE 2

Transduction of episomal or chromosomal genes into rec^+ or rec^- recipients with phage P1kc

Donor*	Recipient†	Gene transduced	Transduction frequency‡
W3623 $rec^+ F_8^+$	W3623 rec^+	Episomal gal^+	3.7×10^{-6}
W3623 $rec^+ F_8^+$	W3623 rec^-	Episomal gal^+	3.3×10^{-8}
JE3264 $rec^+ F_8^+$	JE3264 rec^+	Episomal gal^+	1.4×10^{-6}
W3110 $rec^+ F^-$	W3623 rec^+	Chromosomal gal^+	5.5×10^{-6}
W3110 $rec^+ F^-$	W3623 rec^-	Chromosomal gal^+	$< 10^{-8}$
W3623 $rec^+ R_{100-1}^+$	W3623 rec^+	Episomal Cm^R	4.0×10^{-5}
W3623 $rec^+ R_{100-1}^+$	W3623 rec^-	Episomal Cm^R	9.4×10^{-6}

According to the method by LENNOX (1955); gal^+ or Cm^R transductants formed on DAVIS-minimal sugar-agar (DAVIS and MINGIOLI 1955) containing necessary amino acid, sugar, or antibiotic where selected.

* All host bacteria of donor phage P1kc were λ nonlysogenic.

† W3623 has a gal^- mutation, *galT-6*. JE3264 has two mutations, *galK-2* and *galT-1*.

‡ Frequencies of transduction were expressed as the number of gal^+ or Cm^R colonies formed per donor phage P1kc.

TABLE 3

The properties of episomal gal⁺ transductants derived from rec⁺ and rec⁻ recipients

Recipient	Total colonies tested	Transmissible		Nontransmissible†		Integrated gal
		Entire gal	Deleted gal*	Entire gal	Deleted gal	
W3623 rec ⁺	400	154	16	0	0	230
W3623 rec ⁻	405	351	29	24	1	0
JE3264 rec ⁺	100	50	0	0	0	50

* Mutants with deletion mutations in *galK* cistron on F₈. They complemented *galE* and *galT* mutants but not *galK* mutants upon transfer to the appropriate recipients.

† Transfer-defective mutants of F₈. Their gal⁺ transfer was restored by introduction of R₁₀₀₋₁.

F₈ carries the entire galactose operon, three cistrons in the order, operator–epimerase (*galE*)–transferase (*galT*)–kinase (*galK*). The recipient W3623 was a *galT*⁻ mutant. All Gal⁺ transductants having transmissible F_{gal} complemented the *galE* mutant, W3995 *gal-22*, but did not complement various kinds of *galK* mutants upon transfer of F_{gal} to the appropriate recipients. Among Gal⁺ transductants of JE3264 *galT-1 galK-2*, there formed no *galE* mutant of F_{gal}. Thus, no mutant which lacks the operator side of the galactose operon was observed. These results indicate that these mutants were formed by deletions of the distal end of the galactose operon.

The nontransmissible Gal⁺ transductants were examined to determine if they contained defects in the cistrons involved in genetic transfer. If so, it was expected that the strains would recover transfer ability for *gal* genes when R₁₀₀₋₁ was introduced into them (OHTSUBO, NISHIMURA and HIROTA 1970). None of the nontransmissible Gal⁺ transductants derived from the rec⁺ recipient recovered gal⁺ transfer ability when R₁₀₀₋₁ was introduced. On the other hand, all of those derived from the rec⁻ recipient recovered gal⁺ transfer ability when infected with R₁₀₀₋₁. Thus the nontransmissible Gal⁺ transductants derived from the rec⁻ recipient are presumed to have transfer-defective F_{gal} with deletions in F. In the rec⁺ recipient, the gal⁺ genes were presumably integrated into the chromosome and all or a great part of F was lost or excluded. The nontransmissible Gal⁺ transductants obtained from the rec⁺ recipient were not cured of Gal⁺ properties by treatment with acridine orange while the transmissible Gal⁺ transductants were efficiently cured. (*gal* genes of all Gal⁺ transductants obtained from the rec⁻ recipient were not cured. Even the genes on wild F₈ transferred into this rec⁻ recipient strain were not cured. These nontransmissible or transmissible *gal* genes transferred into a Gal⁻ rec⁺ recipient with or without the helper R₁₀₀₋₁ were cured by acridine. Thus, these F_{gal} in the rec⁻ recipient were in an autonomous state but resistant to acridine curing.)

From 200 Cm^r transductants of R₁₀₀₋₁ derived either from rec⁺ or rec⁻ recipients, no nontransmissible mutant of R was found. One transductant derived from the rec⁺ recipient was tetracycline-sensitive (Tc^s).

Deletion mapping of the galK cistron: The twenty-nine transductants harboring transmissible F_{gal} with deletions in the *galK* cistron were analyzed by

TABLE 4

Complementation analysis of transfer-defective mutants of F_8^*

Group	Number of mutants	Transfer-defective R factor introduced†					
		$R_{100-300}$	R_{100-67}	R_{100-73}	R_{100-75}	R_{100-69}	R_{100-70}
1‡	15	—	+	+	+	+	+
2	9	—	—	+	+	+	+
3	4	—	—	—	+	+	+
4	1	—	—	—	—	+	+
5	2	—	—	—	—	—	+

* A set of transfer-defective R factors were transduced by phage *P1kc* into the cells harboring transfer-defective F_8 mutants (see MATERIALS AND METHODS). Recovery of transfer of *F gal* shows complementation occurred between defective F and defective R factor and designated as +.

† $R_{100-300}$, R_{100-67} , R_{100-73} , R_{100-75} , R_{100-69} , and R_{100-70} are mutants having mutations in the A, B, C, D, E, and F cistrons, respectively, which are involved in genetic transfer and analyzed in the preceding paper (OHTSUBO, NISHIMURA and HIROTA 1970).

‡ One mutant in group 1 contains a deletion in the *galK* cistron.

classified into five groups as shown in Table 4. Among F_8 mutants of group 1, one mutant contains a deletion extending from the A cistron of the F-prime and into the *galK* cistron, between *gal-14* and *gal-2*. Thus, defects in one or more transfer cistrons of these F_8 mutants can be explained as being due to the deletions. By the method of overlapping deletions, a map of F_8 was constructed (Figure 2).

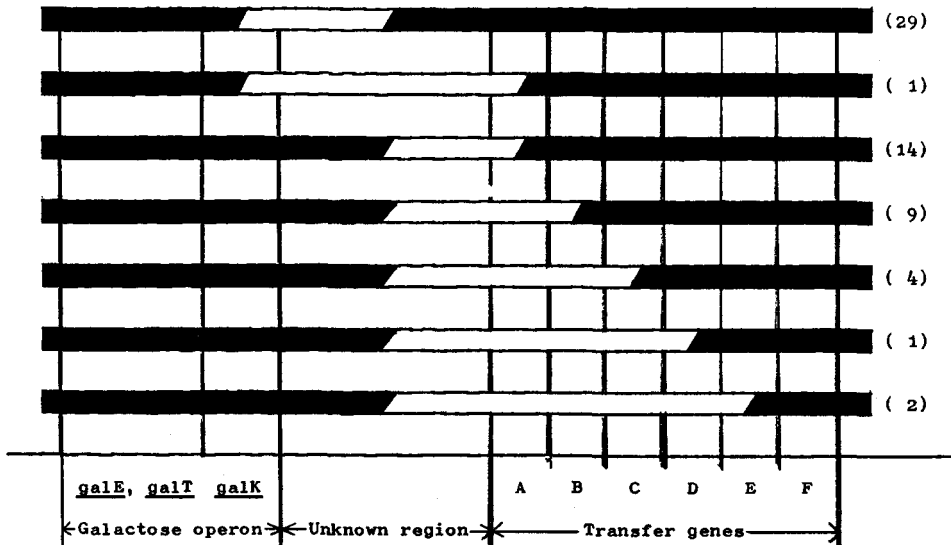


FIGURE 2.—Deletion map of transfer genes on F_8 . This map was based on the data in Table 4 and constructed with galactose operon by the method of overlapping deletions. Open spaces show deleted regions on the F_8 chromosome. The numbers in () show the number of independently isolated deletion mutants.

TABLE 5

Male properties associated with deletions in transfer cistron

Group	Cistron(s) deleted	Male-specific phage sensitivity to:						Growth inhibition to phage τ	Number of mutants
		M12	MS2	f2	f1	Q β	ZD		
1	A	S	S	S	S	S	S	+	15
2	A, B	R	R	R	S	S	S	+	9
3	A, B, C	R	R	R	S	S	S	+	1
		R	R	R	R	R	R	+	3
4	A, B, C, D	R	R	R	R	R	R	+	1
5	A, B, C, D, E	R	R	R	R	R	R	+	2
F ₈ ⁺	Wild	S	S	S	S	S	S	+	..

Symbols S and R signify sensitive and resistant to male-specific phage, respectively. All the strains having deletion mutants of F *gal* inhibit the growth of phage τ .

Male properties of deletion mutants of F₈: It is of interest to know which male properties are defective in deletion mutants of F *gal* that have lost one or more cistrons involved in conjugation, since mutants of F and R factors with mutations in each cistron have characteristic properties (OHTSUBO, NISHIMURA and HIROTA 1970). As summarized in Table 5, they retained all or a part of the male properties analyzed.

DISCUSSION

Transfer-defective mutants of F₈ could be isolated among Gal⁺ transductants after transduction with phage P1*kc*. Such deletion mutants were isolated only in a rec⁻ recipient. However, mutants of F *gal* with deletions in the *galK* cistron could be isolated at the same frequency among Gal⁺ transductants harboring F *gal* derived both from rec⁺ and rec⁻ recipients.

It should be noted that the transduction frequency of F*gal* in the rec⁻ recipient was much lower than in the rec⁺ recipient. This difference may be related to a lower efficiency of circle formation in the rec⁻, since some sorts of autonomously replicating F factors have been shown to have circular DNA forms (HICKSON, ROTH and HELINSKI 1967; FREIFELDER 1968), and DNA in transducing particles is linear (IKEDA and TOMIZAWA 1965). Thus the transducing DNA molecule probably has to circularize in the recipient before it can establish itself as an autonomously replicating unit. This circularization may be effected by recombination events controlled by the rec system. An R factor which lacks homology with the host chromosome was transduced at a similar frequency to rec⁺ and rec⁻ recipients. Therefore, the failure to isolate transfer-defective F₈ mutants in the rec⁺ recipient may be due to the fact that mutants with deletions in part of an F moiety are unstable in the rec⁺ and their homologous *gal* genes alone tend to be integrated into host chromosome.

Deletion mutants of an R factor were not readily isolated by transduction with phage P1*kc* and a higher transduction frequency was observed with R than with

F₈. These differences might result from a difference in the number of DNA copies (IKEDA and TOMIZAWA 1965), or from different degrees of linkage of the selective markers with the genes necessary for autonomous replication.

It is of interest that in the various kinds of deletion mutants obtained by transduction of F₈ into a *rec*⁻ recipient, the two ends of transduced DNA which has *gal* genes on one end and the cistrons controlling conjugation on another end were not fixed. This fact raises the possibility that the linear DNA molecule of the transducing fragment may circularize by illegitimate crossing over at the ends of the deletion. Illegitimate crossing over, producing deletions, has been shown to occur in *rec*⁻ cells (FRANKLIN 1967; INSELBURG 1967).

The order of cistrons involved in genetic transfer has been determined by the method of overlapping deletions; they can be arranged on F₈ with the galactose genes in the following order: *gal* (operator-epimerase-transferase-kinase)-*A-B-C-D-E-F*. One group of cistrons (*A* and *B*) containing mutations that do not affect production of specific pili (*pili*⁺) are contiguous; another group of cistrons (*C*, *D*, *E*, and *F*) contain mutations which affect F-pili production (*pili*⁻) and these cistrons are also contiguous.

The male properties associated with deletion mutations show that even when all or a part of cistrons *A* and *B* is deleted, the F-pilus is formed. This confirms the previous conclusion that cistrons *A* and *B* are not concerned with the piliation specific to F and R factors, except for the possibility that they control some minor components of the pilus (OHTSUBO, NISHIMURA and HIROTA 1970). Analysis of the mutations in cistron *C* had shown the same peculiarity, in that some mutants containing these mutations were *pili*⁺ and others were *pili*⁻. That such phenotypically similar mutants were obtained as deletion mutations may suggest the presence of subunits in cistron *C* which probably control piliation. The *pili*⁺ mutants having deletions for all of cistron *A* and at the same time, for a part or all of cistron *B* in which mutants are resistant to some, but sensitive to other, male-specific RNA phages, show the same phenotype as mutants with mutations in cistron *B*. As for cistrons *D*, *E*, and *F* it was also confirmed that they were probably genes controlling pili formation, as mutants with deletions in these cistrons did not produce F-pili.

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SUMMARY

Phage P1*kc*-mediated transduction of galactose genes of an F-prime, F₈, into a *rec*⁻ *gal*⁻ recipient could efficiently select autonomous deletion mutants of F₈ having defects in one or more cistrons involved in genetic transfer and the galactokinase cistron of the galactose operon. By the method of overlapping deletions, these cistrons were found to form a cluster and were arranged on F₈ with the galactose genes in the following order: *gal*(operator-epimerase-transferase-kinase)-*A-B-C-D-E-F*.

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