

Effect of Genetic Variation in a Drosophila Model of Diabetes-Associated Misfolded Human Proinsulin

Bin Z. He^{*,1,2}, Michael Z. Ludwig^{*}, Desiree A. Dickerson^{*}, Levi Barse^{*}, Bharath
Arun^{*}, Bjarni J. Vilhjálmsen^{‡‡}, Soo-Young Park[†], Natalia A. Tamarina[†], Scott B.
Selleck[§], Patricia J. Wittkopp^{§§}, Graeme I. Bell^{†,‡}, Martin Kreitman^{*,2}

^{*} Department of Ecology and Evolution, The University of Chicago, Chicago, IL 60637

[†] Department of Medicine, The University of Chicago, Chicago, IL 60637

[‡] Department of Human Genetics, The University of Chicago, Chicago, IL 60637

^{‡‡} Department of Epidemiology, and Department of Biostatistics, Harvard School of
Public Health, Harvard University, Boston, MA 02115

[§] Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, The Pennsylvania State University,
University Park, PA, 16802

^{§§} Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, and Department of Molecular,
Cellular, and Developmental Biology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109

¹ Current Address: FAS Center for Systems Biology, Harvard University, 52 Oxford
Street, Cambridge, MA 02138

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26 ² Corresponding authors:

27 Martin Kreitman

28 Mailing address: Department of Ecology and Evolution, The University of Chicago, 1101

29 E 57th Street, Chicago, IL 60637-1573.

30 Phone: +1 773 702 1222. Fax: +1 773 702 9740.

31 Email: martinkreitman@gmail.com.

32

33 Bin Z. He

34 Mailing address: FAS Center for Systems Biology, Harvard University, 52 Oxford Street,

35 Cambridge, MA 02138

36 Phone: +1 312 550 8421. Fax: +1 617 496 5425

37 Email: binhe@fas.harvard.edu

38

39

ABSTRACT

The identification and validation of gene-gene interactions is a major challenge in human studies. Here, we explore an approach for studying epistasis in humans using a *Drosophila melanogaster* model of neonatal diabetes mellitus. Expression of the mutant preproinsulin (hINS^{C96Y}) in the eye imaginal disc mimics the human disease: it activates conserved stress response pathways and leads to cell death (reduction in eye area). Dominant-acting variants in wild-derived inbred lines from the *Drosophila Genetics Reference Panel* produce a continuous, highly heritable distribution of eye degeneration phenotypes in a hINS^{C96Y} background. A genome-wide association study (GWAS) in 154 sequenced lines identified a sharp peak on chromosome 3L, which mapped to a 400bp linkage block within an intron of the gene *sulfateless* (*sfl*). RNAi knock-down of *sfl* enhanced the eye degeneration phenotype in a mutant-hINS-dependent manner. RNAi against two additional genes in the heparan sulfate (HS) biosynthetic pathway (*ttv* and *botv*), in which *sfl* acts, also modified the eye phenotype in a hINS^{C96Y}-dependent manner, strongly suggesting a novel link between HS-modified proteins and cellular responses to misfolded proteins. Finally, we evaluated allele-specific expression difference between the two major *sfl*-intronic haplotypes in heterozygotes. The results showed significant heterogeneity in marker-associated gene expression, thereby leaving the causal mutation(s) and its mechanism unidentified. In conclusion, the ability to create a model of human genetic disease, map a QTL by GWAS to a specific gene, validate its contribution to disease with available genetic resources, and the potential to experimentally link the variant to a molecular mechanism, demonstrate the many

62 advantages *Drosophila* holds in determining the genetic underpinnings of human
63 disease.

INTRODUCTION

Limitations imposed by human subject research can be overcome by investigating models of human disease in experimental organisms. *Drosophila* can provide genetic insights relevant to human biology and disease, owing to the conservation of fundamental cellular and developmental processes. We constructed a fly model of protein misfolding disease, by creating a transgene of a diabetes-causing, human mutant preproinsulin (hINS^{C96Y}) that could be expressed in the eye imaginal discs and other tissues (Park et al., 2013). This misfolded proinsulin protein causes the loss of insulin-secreting pancreatic beta cells and diabetes in humans and mice (Støy et al., 2007). When misexpressed in the *Drosophila* eye imaginal disc, it disrupts eye development, resulting in a reduced eye area in adult flies (Park et al., 2013).

In the accompanying paper (Park et al., 2013), we crossed the transgenic line bearing the mutant preproinsulin and an eye-specific Gal4 driver (GMR>>hINS^{C96Y}) with a subset of the lines from the *Drosophila* Genetics Reference Panel (DGRP). The F1 lines displayed a wide, nearly continuous, range of heritable eye degeneration phenotypes, suggesting a polygenic basis for this genetic background variation (Park et al., 2013). To investigate the genetic basis of this background variation, here we performed a genome-wide association study in a larger set of 154 DGRP lines.

Drosophila's many favorable attributes for mapping quantitative trait loci (QTL) — a high density of common variants, relatively little population subdivision, a decay of linkage disequilibrium (LD) over a scale of only 100's of bp, controlled crosses allowing repeat measurements, and excellent resources for confirmatory genetics — allowed us to identify a variant in the heparan sulfate (HS) biosynthesis pathway gene, *sulfateless*

(*sfl*), contributing to the eye degeneration phenotype, and then confirm a genetic interaction between mutant hINS and *sfl* by RNAi knockdown analysis. Two other genes in the HS biosynthetic pathway, *tout-velo* (*ttv*) and *brother of tout-velo* (*botv*), displayed a similar interaction upon genetic analysis, implicating HS-modified proteins, or proteoglycans (HSPG), in the response to misfolded proteins.

We then tested the hypothesis that the intronic *sfl* variants act by decreasing gene expression by measuring the relative expression level of each allele in 15 heterozygotes containing both alleles. The results are mixed, with seven crosses showing a difference that is consistent with the hypothesis; however, overall there is only modest correlation between the genotype and the expression level, which leaves the causal mutation(s) and its mechanism yet to be identified.

Although our model of neonatal diabetes in the fly — transgenic expression of a mutant disease-causing human insulin allele — is Mendelian, the severity of the disease trait is exquisitely sensitive to genetic background, and behaves as a complex trait. We discuss the prospects for modeling complex human disease in the fly with this general approach.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

***Drosophila* stocks and crosses**

The {GMR-Gal4, UAS-hINS^{C96Y}} line was generated by crossing the GMR-Gal4 line (Stock #1104, Bloomington Stock Center) with the UAS-hINS^{C96Y} line (Park et al., 2013), and obtaining the recombinant 2nd chromosome, which was balanced over CyO. DGRP

lines were obtained from the Bloomington stock center. RNAi lines against *sfl* (GD5070), *ttv* (GD4871), *botv* (GD37186) were from the Vienna *Drosophila* RNAi center. Mutant lines for *ttv* (*ttv*⁶⁸¹) and *botv* (*botv*⁵¹⁰) were described previously (Ren et al., 2009).

Eye area measurement

All crosses were reared at 25°C. Total eye area was measured as described in (Park et al., 2013). At least 10 images (independent flies) passing the quality check were collected for each cross. Raw data is available in **Table S1**.

Principal Component Analysis

The whole-genome SNP dataset for the 154 DGRP lines used for GWAS (see **Table S2** for the list of line numbers) was downloaded from the DGRP website (<http://dgrp.gnets.ncsu.edu/>, freeze 1). To characterize population structure, 900K SNPs (after LD pruning using PLINK v1.07, with parameter --indep-pairwise 50 5 0.5) were used to identify the top 15 principal components (PCs) (SmartPCA software in EIGENSOFT v3.0, no outlier exclusion). We then estimated the correlation between the hINS^{C96Y} phenotype (line mean) and projection length in the direction of the top five principle components in each DGRP line to test whether population structure is a confounding source of association in GWAS.

Genome wide association using linear regression

The mean eye area of 154 DGRP lines crossed to the hINS^{C96Y} line was regressed on each SNP with a minor allele frequency (MAF) > 5% (PLINK 1.07, quantitative trait

mode). 1,616,121 autosomal and 256,948 SNPs on the X chromosome were tested. The F1 males inherited their X chromosome from the common transgene-containing strain. The identity by descent of this X chromosome allowed us to test whether the X-linked SNPs in the DGRP sample conformed to a null distribution assuming no association (although linkage is likely to cause deviation from this expectation). This was tested in quantile-quantile (Q-Q) plot analysis.

Association by mixed linear model to control for genetic relatedness

A Python implementation of EMMAX (Kang et al., 2010; Segura et al., 2012) was used to estimate the Genetic Related Matrix (GRM) using inverse variance weighted SNPs. The GRM is plotted using the pheatmap package in R to visualize any cryptic relatedness (Kolde, 2011). When performing mixed linear model regression, we used the GRM estimated from just the X-chromosome SNPs, for which the mixed model yields a narrow sense heritability of 0.83 (SNPs with $MAF > 0.05$). By doing so, we increase our power to detect associations at loci on the other chromosomes, because those are not included in the GRM (Listgarten et al., 2012). The ~250K SNPs on the X chromosome are sufficient for inferring the population structure in the sample and thereby controlling population stratification. This is evident by the uniform p-value distribution in the Q-Q plots (**Fig. S4**). To assess the genome-wide significance threshold while accounting for both the relatedness structure in the data as well as the non-independence between SNPs due to LD, we performed a permutation procedure (details in **Text S1**).

Conditional analysis using *sfl* intronic SNPs as covariates

To identify possible secondary associations in *sfl* or elsewhere in the genome independent of the intronic QTL variants in *sfl*, we fit a linear model with the most significant variant, a 18 bp /4 bp insertion/deletion polymorphism, as a covariate. This analysis was performed either within the *sfl* locus or genome-wide. The p-values were corrected for multiple testing using Bonferroni's method.

Estimate proportion of variance explained by common SNPs

We first used GCTA (v1.0) to estimate the genetic relatedness matrix with all SNPs with minor allele frequency greater than 5% (--maf 0.05). We then used the restricted maximum likelihood method implemented in GCTA to estimate the quantity V_G / V_P (--reml), i.e. the narrow sense heritability.

Expression of *sfl* and CG32396

Expression profiles in adult tissues were assessed using data from FlyAtlas (Chintapalli et al., 2007) and modENCODE (Roy et al., 2010). To assay expression in the eye imaginal discs, we isolated total RNA from 10 pairs of discs from 3rd instar larvae. Individual larva was sexed and dissected in 1X phosphate buffer saline (PBS); the eye portions of the eye-antennal disc were collected and the isolated discs immediately dissolved in 300 µl Trizol (Invitrogen). Total RNA was extracted according to the manufacturer's instructions. cDNA libraries were constructed using (dT)20 primers after DNase I treatment (Invitrogen). Real time quantitative PCR was performed with primer pairs targeting either *sfl* or CG32396, with expression of the gene *rp49* as an

endogenous reference (SYBR-Green assay). Primers used for qRT-PCR are listed in **Table S3**.

RNAi and validation studies

All RNAi lines were originally from the Vienna Drosophila RNAi Center as P-element insertion lines on a co-isogenic w1118 background. Each RNAi line was first tested to determine whether it alone had an effect on eye development by crossing it to GMR-Gal4 and comparing the eye area of the F1 males (or females) to the control cross between w1118 and GMR-Gal4. In all crosses, GMR-Gal4 was used as the maternal parent. To test its effect on the hINS^{C96Y}-induced eye degeneration phenotype, the RNAi line was crossed to the GMR>>hINS^{C96Y} line (used as maternal parent), so that both hINS^{C96Y} and the RNAi constructs are driven by GMR-Gal4. The resulting phenotype was compared to the cross between hINS^{C96Y} females and w1118 males. At least 10 individual flies were measured per cross and a t-test was used to determine significance at 0.05 level with multiple testing correction. For mutant lines, GMR-Gal4 was replaced with w1118 in the first test and used as a control. The same scheme was used for the second test. It is worth noting that because the mutants were tested in heterozygous states, only dominant interaction with hINS^{C96Y} will be revealed.

sfl expression studies

Six lines carrying the 18 bp indel allele and eight carrying the 4 bp allele were chosen and paired to form 15 crosses (**Figure S1A**). Three sets of ten late 3rd instar (wandering stage) larvae were collected from each cross and dissected in 1X PBS to isolate eye

imaginal discs. RNA isolation and cDNA library preparation are the same as described above. Genomic DNA was extracted from adult flies from the same cross. Because the 18 bp/4 bp polymorphism is in the intron of *sfl*, a SNP in the cDNA was identified that could be used to distinguish the two alleles in each cross (**Figure S1B**). Four such SNPs were chosen and pyro-sequencing assays were designed (primers listed in **Table S3**). Pyro-sequencing was performed as previously described (Wittkopp, 2011). Briefly, each of the three cDNA and one gDNA sample per cross was analyzed by pyrosequencing in four replicate PCR amplifications to determine relative expression. The ratio in genomic DNA analysis was used to account for amplification bias. The resulting 12 ratios were first log2 transformed and analyzed using ANOVA according to the model $y_{ij} = \alpha + L_i + \varepsilon_{ij}$, where α is the estimate of the relative expression ratio, which is expected to be significantly different from zero when the two alleles are differentially expressed; L_i is a random effect term for the biological replicates ($i = 1,2,3$). For 13 of the 15 crosses the p-value > 0.1; for these crosses the data were fit to a reduced ANOVA model $y_i = \alpha + \varepsilon_i$, from which the estimate and the 95% confidence interval for the ratio of expression (α) were calculated. In the two cases where the random effect term was nominally significant ($P < 0.1$), a linear mixed-effect model was fit using the lme package in R to obtain an estimate and 95% confidence interval for the same ratio.

RESULTS

Effect of natural variation on *hINS*^{C96Y}-induced eye phenotype

224 We crossed the transgenic fly line (w; P{GMR-Gal4}, P{UAS-hINS^{C96Y}}/CyO) as the
225 maternal parent to 178 inbred lines from DGRP (only 154 were used in the subsequent
226 GWAS analyses due to genome sequence availability). These lines represent a
227 spectrum of natural variation, except for recessive lethal variants, which were eliminated
228 in the formation of the DGRP. Among several eye phenotypes observed — rough eye,
229 reduced total area, distortion of the oval shape and black lesion spots — we chose total
230 eye area as the phenotype to carry out a GWAS. We quantified eye area in ten male
231 progeny from each hINS^{C96Y} x DGRP cross. We observed a continuously varying
232 distribution of this phenotype, ranging from 13% to 86% of wild type fly eye area (**Figure**
233 **1**). ANOVA indicated that 58.6% of the variance is between genotypes (approximately
234 equal to the broad sense heritability (Falconer, 1981, p115), indicating a large genetic
235 component. Males were chosen for measurement and analysis because they showed a
236 more severe phenotype than females (Park et al., 2013). However, we also measured
237 F1 females for a subset of 38 lines and found a strong correlation between the two
238 sexes from the same cross ($r=0.8$, **Figure S2**).

239 The observed variation in eye degeneration is consistent with the hypothesis that it
240 reflects differences in cellular response to the expression of hINS^{C96Y}. The severity of
241 the eye degeneration phenotype is not correlated with body size of the same individual,
242 or the mean eye size of the same line; neither is it correlated with GAL4 protein levels in
243 eye imaginal discs (Park et al., 2013). The GWAS described below showed no evidence
244 for association between eye area and SNPs in or surrounding the *glass (gl)* locus, the
245 trans-activator of GMR-Gal4, a result consistent with Gal4 protein measurements and
246 the fact that the eye degeneration phenotype is insensitive to GMR-Gal4 gene dose

when hINS^{C96Y} is present in single copy (Figure 3 in Park et al., 2013). Finally, when we expressed hINS^{C96Y} in the notum (rather than the eye) and measured the loss of macrochaetae in F1 crosses to 38 DGRP lines for which we also collected eye degeneration data, we observed no correlation between the two traits, indicating that the degeneration phenotypes are not caused by line-specific differences in mutant insulin expression (Park et al., 2013).

Genome-wide association analysis

To identify candidate genetic loci and variants underlying the phenotypic variation, we carried out GWAS on the F1 males from the crosses of hINS^{C96Y} and 154 DGRP lines. We used mean eye area as a quantitative trait to perform single marker regression for 1.6 million autosomal SNPs, restricted to bi-allelic sites for which the minor allele frequency is at least 5%. The result revealed a strong peak on chromosome 3L and minor ones on other major chromosome arms (**Figure 2C**). The most significant SNP underlying the chromosome 3L peak has a raw p-value of 2.4×10^{-8} (t-test); the Bonferroni corrected $P = 0.04$.

Population stratification is a potential confounder for GWAS – it can inflate the test statistic for non-associated variants if the population structure correlates with the phenotype. We assessed its impact in our study in three ways. First, we evaluated the Quantile-Quantile (Q-Q) plots for autosomal and X-linked variants. Neither showed a systematic shift towards low p-values compared to the null expectation, which would be expected if population structure induces false association signals (**Figure 2A,B**). Second, we used Principle Component Analysis (PCA) to calculate the top eigenvectors

270 explaining the most genetic variation in the sample. Plotting the phenotype of each
271 cross against the coordinate of each of the top five eigenvectors revealed no correlation
272 between the two (Materials and Methods, **Figure S3**). Third, because all F1 males
273 inherited their X-chromosome from the GMR>>hINS^{C96Y} tester line, we expect no
274 association between the phenotype and X-linked SNPs. Indeed, we only found an
275 excess of low p-values in autosomal variants, but not in X-linked ones (**Figure 2A,B**).
276 The above analyses suggested that population stratification does not correlate with the
277 trait and does not influence the results of the association study.

278 Cryptic relatedness, i.e. unknown genetic relationships between individuals in a
279 sample, can also confound the association analysis due to non-independence and
280 larger than expected phenotypic variance (Cheng et al., 2010; Voight & Pritchard, 2005).
281 We estimated the Genetic Relatedness Matrix (GRM) from whole genome SNP data
282 using mixmogam (a Python implementation of EMMAX) (Kang et al., 2010; Segura et al.,
283 2012). We found while the majority of the 154 lines are genetically unrelated (**Figure**
284 **S4A**), several pairs of lines showed higher levels of relatedness, e.g. RAL-350/RAL-358
285 and RAL-352/RAL-712 (**Figure S4B**). Next, we performed mixed linear model (MLM)
286 regression to explicitly account for the cryptic relatedness as well as population
287 stratification (Atwell et al., 2010; Yu et al., 2006). A permutation procedure specifically
288 designed to preserve the phenotype covariance structure is used to establish a
289 genome-wide 5% significance threshold (**Text S1**). The resulting p-value distribution is
290 qualitatively similar to the linear regression analysis, and it identified *sfl* as significantly
291 associated with the trait under a permutation-based 5% genome-wide threshold (**Figure**
292 **S4E**). The most significant SNP (3L:6523119, dm3) has a raw *p*-value of 1.4×10^{-8} .

Below we will focus on identifying the gene(s) underlying the peak and genetically testing its association with the phenotype.

sulfateless (sfl) modifies eye area phenotype

The peak on chromosome 3L is confined to the third intron of the gene, *sfl* (**Figure 2D**). This intron also contains a nested gene (CG32396) lying close to the association peak. CG32396 is predicted to encode a protein with a probable tubulin beta-chain. To determine which of the two genes, or possibly both, is responsible for the association, we examined the expression pattern of each gene and also used RNAi to knock down gene expression. *sfl* is expressed in the eye-antennal imaginal disc and eye and brain in adults (**Figure S5, S6**). CG32396 has a testis-specific expression pattern in adults, with very low expression in the adult eye (**Figure S5**) and no detectable expression in eye imaginal discs by RT-PCR (**Figure S6, S7**).

RNAi knockdown of either *sfl* or CG32396 in the eye imaginal disc had no measurable effect on eye area. In contrast, RNAi against *sfl*, but not CG32396, significantly decreased mean eye area in the presence of hINS^{C96Y} but not hINS^{WT} (**Figure 3**). These results rule out CG32396 as the causal gene, and strongly implicate *sfl* as the genetic modifier of hINS^{C96Y}-induced eye degeneration.

To test if *sfl* also modifies the hINS^{C96Y}-induced phenotype in other tissues, we carried out RNAi knockdown of *sfl* in the developing wing (using a dpp-Gal4 driver) and notum (using an ap-Gal4 driver). In both experiments we observed more severe phenotypes than that caused by hINS^{C96Y} alone (**Figure S8, S9**). However, the interpretation is made complicated by the fact that *sfl* knockdown alone causes mutant

phenotypes in these tissues, consistent with previous knowledge (Lin, 2004). At present we cannot distinguish the alternative hypotheses of additive vs. epistatic interactions between *sfl* and *hINS*^{C96Y}.

Heparan sulfate biosynthetic pathway modifies the hINS^{C96Y}-induced eye degeneration

Sulfateless encodes a bi-functional enzyme in the heparin sulfate biosynthesis pathway. An important component of the cell surface and extracellular matrix (Kirkpatrick & Selleck, 2007), heparan sulfate-modified proteins, or proteoglycans (HSPG) regulate signaling during development by influencing the levels and activity of growth factors and morphogens at cell surfaces and in the extracellular matrix (Fujise et al., 2003; Giráldez et al., 2002; Häcker et al., 1997; Kirkpatrick et al., 2004; Nakato et al., 1995). The involvement of HSPGs in the cellular responses to misfolded proteins (proteostasis) has not been previously described.

To further examine the *hINS*^{C96Y}-dependent interaction of *sfl*, we examined RNAi knockdowns and mutants for two additional genes in the HS biosynthetic pathway: *ttv* and *botv*, producing the glycosaminoglycan polymer that is modified by *sfl* (Lin, 2004). SNPs in neither of the genes showed evidence of association in our GWAS (lowest adjusted $P > 0.5$ in both loci, adjusted for multiple-testing using Bonferroni's method). RNAi knockdown of both genes shows a *hINS*^{C96Y}-dependent effect on eye area in the same direction as *sfl* RNAi (**Figure 4**). In addition, a mutant allele of *botv* also showed a significant dominant enhancement of the eye degeneration phenotype. These results

implicate HSPGs in modifying the cellular response to misfolded proteins. Neither of the genes, however, was identified in the GWAS.

Intronic variation and *sfl* expression

We re-sequenced a 3 kb region containing the GWAS peak in *sfl* (and the nested gene CG32396) in 19 of the 154 DGRP lines and the transgenic hINS^{C96Y} stock to identify all the variants in this region. We found that the SNP achieving the lowest p-value genome-wide was an 18 bp/4 bp length polymorphism (relative to the *D. simulans* orthologous sequence) (**Figure 5A**). We also found three other insertion/deletion (INDEL) polymorphisms in this region, with sizes ranging from 4 – 30 bp and the minor alleles (deletion in all three cases) being present only once or twice in the sample. In contrast, the 18/4 bp polymorphism is present at 50% frequency in the DGRP sample. Below we will use the term "Single Feature Polymorphism" (SFP) to refer to both INDEL and single nucleotide polymorphism in the *sfl* locus.

A plot of haplotype structure surrounding the association peak (Haploview v4.2) pinpoints an LD block of 400 bp (block 66 in **Figure 5A**, chr3L:6523119-6523518). There are two major haplotypes in this block, each represented by two equal-sized groups among the 154 DGRP lines (**Figure 5B**). For convenience, we refer to these two haplotypes as the 18bp or 4bp allele, although it is worth noting that we don't have the ability to distinguish between the SFPs within this block, unless further recombinant individuals are sampled or generated.

Because all coding variants in *sfl* lie outside of this 400 bp LD block, we hypothesized that one or more of these intronic SFPs are the causal variant(s) and

361 modify the hINS^{C96Y}-induced eye phenotype by altering *sfl* expression. We tested this
362 hypothesis by examining the correlation between the allelic states and the allele-specific
363 expression level. We selected pairs of 4 bp and 18 bp lines from the respective
364 phenotypic spectrum, crossed them to obtain F1 individuals heterozygous for the two
365 alleles, and used pyro-sequencing to estimate the relative expression of the two alleles
366 in eye imaginal discs. This method allowed us to measure the ratio of expression of *sfl*
367 associated with each allele in the same animal, thereby controlling for both the trans-
368 environment as well as experimental noise, resulting in highly reproducible results
369 (**Figure S10**). Based on RNAi knock-down of *sfl*, which enhanced the hINS^{C96Y}
370 phenotype, we expected the 4 bp allele (associated with more severe phenotypes in the
371 GWAS) to produce less transcript than the 18 bp allele.

372 Allele-specific expression of *sfl* differed in both magnitude and direction among the
373 15 crosses (**Figure 6**). Seven crosses supported the hypothesis by exhibiting
374 significantly greater expression from the 18 bp allele, with an 18/4 bp ratio ranging from
375 1.03 - 2.8 (median = 1.15). Two crosses, however, showed slightly greater expression
376 from the 4 bp allele (18 bp/4 bp ratios of 0.94 and 0.96). The remaining six crosses
377 showed no significant differences in expression of the two alleles in our test. While both
378 more strains showed higher expression of the transcript linked to the 18 bp allele, and
379 the difference in this direction is stronger, the small sample size and the modest
380 correlation between the allelic states and the transcription level prevented us from
381 drawing a conclusion. Proving the causal mutation(s) and identifying the mechanisms
382 require further experiments making precise changes at the candidate loci and assaying
383 the effects in the same genetic background.

Search for additional association by conditional analysis

In light of the above finding, we carried out a conditional analysis to identify variants that act independently of the 18 bp/4 bp SFP. To do so, we tested variants other than the 18/4 bp SFP, either within the *sfl* locus or genome-wide, by treating the 18/4 bp SFP as a covariate in a linear regression model. After accounting for multiple testing, we observed no significant signals in either case (**Figure S11**). The lack of significance genome-wide may be attributable to the lack of power after correcting for multiple testing. The analysis restricted to the 40 kb *sfl* locus reduces the burden of multiple testing by several orders of magnitude, but also fails to identify a significant association. Considering the large range of allele-specific expression differences between the 18 bp and 4 bp alleles observed in the 15 crosses, the additional *cis*-acting expression variants must either be low frequency alleles or have epistatic properties, two situations this analysis would be underpowered to detect.

DISCUSSION

sfl and hINS^{C96Y}-induced eye degeneration

Statistical (GWAS) and genetic (RNAi) evidence support a role for *sfl* as a natural genetic modifier for hINS^{C96Y}-induced eye degeneration. Although we conducted a GWAS for dominant-acting modifiers in a relatively small sample of lines (154) considering the large number of segregating common SNPs (1.6M), we found statistical support for a QTL in *sfl* in a mixed model analysis, which addresses effects of both population structure and genetic relatedness in the sample. One possible reason the *sfl*

407 QTL achieves statistical significance is because the two alternative alleles occur at
408 approximately a 50% frequency in the sample, where GWAS is maximally powerful.

409 RNAi knockdown experiments showed that perturbation of *sfl* expression, and also
410 two other genes in the HS biosynthesis pathway, has a measurable effect on eye
411 degeneration, but only in the presence of hINS^{C96Y} expression, indicating a specific
412 interaction between protein misfolding and HS biosynthesis (also see (Park et al., 2013).
413 RNAi against CG32396, the gene nested inside the intron of *sfl*, had no effect on eye
414 area both in the absence and presence of hINS^{C96Y}, suggesting that the hINS^{C96Y}-
415 induced eye degeneration phenotype is not simply a consequence of RNAi expression.
416 We caution, however, that a genetic proof of *sfl* as modifying the phenotype in this
417 population will require additional studies.

418 A direct test for *sfl* and the intronic variation being causal would be to genetically
419 engineer two lines in the same genetic background, differing only at the *sfl* locus. A
420 potential caveat of this approach lies in the assumption that the differential activity of the
421 two alleles is independent of the genetic background (*i.e.*, no epistasis), which, if
422 violated, will lead to a false negative result (Chandler et al., 2013). We used instead an
423 indirect approach by examining the correlation between the allelic states and the
424 expression level. To take into account the genetic background differences, we
425 measured allele-specific gene expression of 18bp and 4bp *sfl* alleles in 15 different
426 “controlled” genetic backgrounds, but keeping the background the same for the two
427 alleles by comparing their expression ratios in heterozygotes. The results are mixed: the
428 ratio of expression from the 18 bp/4 bp alleles differed in the 15 crosses, ranging from
429 2.8 to 0.94 (**Figure 6**); nearly half (7/15) showed greater expression from the allele

associated with the 18 bp variant, consistent with the expectation based on the RNAi result; two showed a small difference in the contrary direction (18bp/4bp ratio = 0.94 and 0.96); the remaining six were insignificant in our test. This marked heterogeneity in expression means we can neither accept nor reject the hypothesis of a causal role for the intronic variants and the expression level of *sfl*. Hence we are also not able to conclude that expression difference is the mechanism underlying the genotype-phenotype association, though it remains a possibility. Future experiments employing genome-editing technologies will allow better resolution of the mechanism(s) underlying the association (Gratz et al., 2013; Jinek et al., 2012; Ran et al., 2013).

Finally, we investigated whether additional eQTLs exist in *sfl* or in other genes acting epistatically with *sfl*. Likely due to lack of power, a conditional analysis failed to identify additional variants in the *sfl* locus or elsewhere in the genome. However, it is now well established that gene expression is a highly polygenic trait in *D. melanogaster*, with many eQTLs contributing to expression variability both in cis and trans (Brem et al., 2005; Brem et al., 2002; West et al., 2007), and intra-locus genetic complexity influencing a quantitative trait has long been known, as in the *Adh* example (King et al., 2012). In the 40 kb region spanning the *sfl* locus alone, 1,358 SNPs are present among the 14 lines used in this experiment, which individually or in combination could influence expression of the gene. Thus, predictions based on one or two strongly associated variant(s) is not adequate. A polygenic risk predictor may be needed to summarize contributions even from a single locus.

HSPG function and misfolded protein response

453 Our study identified the HS biosynthesis pathway (*sfl*, *ttv* and *botv*) as a modifier of eye
454 degeneration induced by expression of a misfolded human proinsulin protein. Although
455 we do not yet know whether this response is to a specific misfolded protein (hINS^{C96Y})
456 or whether it applies to a broader class of misfolded proteins, our discovery now
457 implicates the HSPGs in the regulation of cellular proteostasis.

458 We propose that genetic variation in HS biosynthesis influences the response to
459 misfolded protein through its biological activity in vesicular trafficking of misfolded
460 protein. HS-modified proteins (heparin sulfate proteoglycans, HSPGs) are abundant
461 components of cell surfaces and extracellular matrices, and are best understood for
462 their roles in cell signaling and in functioning as co-receptors, processes integral to
463 normal development (Hacker et al., 2005; Kirkpatrick & Selleck, 2007). HSPGs are
464 also involved in endocytosis (Ren et al., 2009; Stanford et al., 2009) and vesicular
465 trafficking (Nybakken & Perrimon, 2002; Sarrazin et al., 2011), roles that may link them
466 to cellular response to misfolded proteins (Higashio & Kohno, 2002; Kim et al., 2009;
467 Kimmig et al., 2012).

468 HSPGs may also influence membrane trafficking indirectly, perhaps by regulating
469 signaling events that impinge on trafficking processes. The generation of
470 phosphatidylinositol (3,4,5) triphosphate [PtdIns(3,4,5)P₃] by type I phosphoinositide
471 (PI) 3-kinases is affected by a number of growth factors and cytokines, many of which
472 are influenced by HSPGs as accessory molecules. PtdIns(3,4,5)P₃ affects a number of
473 trafficking events, including endocytosis and autophagy (Downes et al., 2005).

474 In a yeast study of the mutant protein folding assistant, protein disulfide isomerase
475 (Pdi1a'), the authors found that more than 50% of the 130 genes identified as synthetic-

lethal were related to vesicle trafficking, while only 10 belonged to the canonical unfolded protein response (UPR) pathway (Kim et al., 2009). In another study, Kimmig *et al* found an enrichment of vesicle-trafficking related genes among those that changed expression significantly after induction of ER-stress (Kimmig et al., 2009). Both studies indicate that a global regulation of vesicle trafficking is important to a cell's response to unfolded or misfolded protein. Activation of UPR has also been shown to affect ER-to-Golgi transport via stimulation of COPII vesicle formation from the ER (Higashio & Kohno, 2002). We propose that either natural variation or genetic perturbation of HS biosynthesis influences the global regulation of vesicle trafficking, which in turn affects the cell's ability to process an excess of unfolded or misfolded protein. Prolonged ER-stress may then lead to apoptosis.

Genetic architecture of the hINS^{C96Y}-induced eye degeneration phenotypes

Phenotypic heterogeneity that is dependent on the genetic background is a common phenomenon, and in humans, imposes a significant challenge in both diagnosis and treatment. Our fly model provides a tractable system for studying the genetic and molecular basis for such phenotypic heterogeneity, but with limitations imposed by the sample size of the study. To assess the power for identifying QTL using this population, we did a simple calculation for a t-test based statistic at $P = 0.05$ level, with Bonferroni's correction for multiple testing, which indicates that we have 66% power to identify a variant at 50% population frequency, with an effect-size of 1.0 (measured as the shift in phenotypic mean in units of standard deviation of the trait, see **Table S4**). This example was chosen to match the estimates for the 18 bp/4 bp indel polymorphism in the *sfl*

intron in the sample of 154 crosses. Any variant with a smaller effect-size and/or lower frequency than the 18bp/4bp polymorphism would likely have been missed in this study.

Sulfateless was the only QTL identified as genome-wide significant in this study (**Figure 2, S4**); its association with the trait is robust with respect to population structure and cryptic relatedness (**Figure S3, S4**). This does not mean, however, that the genetic architecture for the hINS^{C96Y}-induced eye phenotype involves a single locus. Rather, we have several reasons to believe the genetic architecture must involve many loci. First, the distribution of the phenotype, i.e. eye areas expressed as line means, suggests a non-Mendelian genetic basis (**Figure 1**). Second, while ANOVA estimates that nearly 60% of the total phenotypic variance is between crosses, less than 20% within the 60% (i.e. < 12% of the total variance) can be attributed to the *sfl* locus. Even this 20% estimate, because it is derived from the same population used to identify the locus, is liable to be an overestimate due to the Winner's Curse effect (Garner, 2007).

To estimate what percentage of the between-cross variance can be explained by the additive effects of common variants combined, we applied the GCTA tool, which uses a mixed linear model method, to the line means of the 154 crosses (Yang et al., 2011). The result showed that 83% (standard error = 37%) of the variance between crosses could be attributed to common, autosomal variants with minor allele frequencies greater than 5%. Analysis using GEMMA (v0.94beta), which used a Bayesian method, achieved nearly identical results (posterior mode = 0.83, s.e. = 0.41). We then did the same analysis with GCTA, but including the 18bp/4bp indel polymorphism as a covariate to remove the effect of *sfl*, in order to estimate the remaining additive heritability. As a result, we got 62% (s.e. 47%). The large standard error as a result of the limited sample

size leaves the proportion of variance explained by all common SNPs undetermined.

However, the estimates are encouraging and suggest that a potentially large proportion of phenotype variance may be explained by additional loci, which require larger sample size to identify.

Relationship to common, complex diseases

While our fly model is of a monogenic form of diabetes, it exhibits a complex genetic architecture when placed on a diverse set of genetic backgrounds. We posit that fly models of monogenetic disease are suitable subjects for the genetic dissection of common disorders in human.

One role of the Mendelian mutation is to sensitize the fly to allow phenotypic effects of background genetic modifiers to become visible. Although common disorders are normally considered as lacking a major mutation, a careful consideration suggests that this view is inaccurate. What common disorders lack are large-effect mutations shared by a substantial proportion of the affected individuals. For many diseases, perturbation may be required to boost the expressivity of additive genetic variation that would otherwise be cryptic, i.e., below a disease-causing threshold. Such a perturbation could be genetic, such as driver mutations in cancer, but could also be environmental, such as diet and life-style changes in the case of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. Consistent with this view, it has been proposed that recent genome evolution and rapid environmental as well as cultural changes in human history have decanalizing effects on physiology, which release cryptic genetic variation and underlie the rising incidence of common human disorders (Gibson, 2009).

A genetic screen for naturally occurring modifiers in a sensitized background, such as the one we employed here, should apply equally well in the study of Mendelian or complex disease. Were this not the case, two different classes of genetic modifiers would have to be posited. An intriguing question, which we found little empirical evidence for or against, could be addressed in the fly by constructing a series of sensitized backgrounds utilizing different disease-causing mutant hINS alleles of varying effect on disease (e.g., neonatal diabetes vs. maturity-onset diabetes of the young (Støy et al., 2007)), and comparing the composition of naturally occurring modifiers.

Advantages of a fly model of complex disease

A primary mutation can manifest itself in different ways and with tissue-specific effects (Mefford et al., 2008), possibly a consequence of its interdependence with the individual's genetic background. The binary Gal4-UAS system enables the creation of a series of models using the same disease mechanism, but directed to different tissues with high tissue-specificity. The ability to construct and study multiple related models in parallel can provide insight into the basis of disease heterogeneity. In the accompanying paper we show, for example, that the developing eye and notum have different sets of genetic background modifiers of hINS^{C96Y}-dependent disease (Park et al., 2013). Sex-specific difference in disease risk and severity are also readily modeled in the fly. In both the fly and mouse model of hINS^{C96Y}-induced disease, males consistently show more severe disease phenotypes (Wang et al., 1999; Park et al., 2013).

Drosophila models of human disease provide a useful alternative to the study of complex disease in patient populations. First, many models of human disease have been established in the fly, most notably neurodegeneration and cancer (Bilen & Bonini, 2005; Gonzalez, 2013). We predict that natural variation will influence the severity of disease phenotypes in all of them. Second, many models of disease can be created by expression of a mutant allele, which makes them suitable for F1 screens between a tester stock and inbred population collections, such as we employed here. Our study shows that dominant genetic variation for disease severity is abundant. This outcrossing design also avoids unwanted effects of inbreeding on traits and better mimics the natural heterozygosity of low frequency variants. Third, this experimental design facilitates repeated measurement of a disease phenotype, thereby increasing the power to detect a causal association (Mackay et al., 2009). Fourth, LD is low in *D. melanogaster* and SNP are 20-40X more abundant than in humans. Finally, both forward and reverse genetics can be applied to investigate the biology and pathway genetics of candidate variants. For all these reasons we believe fly models will prove useful in understanding the genetic architecture of complex human disease.

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FIGURE LEGENDS

Figure 1 Distribution of eye area in $hINS^{C96Y}$ x DGRP crosses. Mean \pm 1 s.d., sorted by the mean, is shown for crosses between the transgenic {GMR>> $hINS^{C96Y}$ } line to 178 DGRP lines, and two randomly chosen DGRP inbred lines (red). Representative photographs of eyes from across the range of the distribution are shown. The rightmost image is of a non-transgenic wild type fly eye.

Figure 2 Genome-wide scan identifies candidate locus associated with the $hINS^{C96Y}$ -induced phenotype. Quantile-Quantile (Q-Q) plot reveals an excess of small p-values on autosomes (A) but not on the X chromosome (B), which is not variable in the mapping population due to cross design. (C) Manhattan plot shows a strong peak (green) on chromosome 3L. The blue and red horizontal lines indicate raw $P < 10^{-5}$ and Bonferroni corrected $P < 0.05$, respectively. (D) UCSC browser view of the *sfl* locus containing the association peak. The intron containing the peak also contains a nested gene CG32396.

Figure 3 RNAi knockdown confirms *sfl* and excludes CG32396 as the causal gene. The effect of knocking down either CG32396 or *sfl* was tested in the absence ({UAS-RNAi} x {GMR-Gal4}) or presence ({UAS-RNAi} x {GMR-Gal4, UAS- $hINS^{C96Y}$ }) of $hINS^{C96Y}$. Compared to the control crosses (first and third columns in both sexes), significant difference in mean eye area was observed only with RNAi against *sfl* and only in the presence of $hINS^{C96Y}$ (n=15, asterisks above a box plot indicate significant differences at 0.05 level determined by a student's t-test, with Bonferroni correction for multiple testing). In box plots, the median (black dot), interquartile (box) and 1.5 times

739 the interquartile range (whiskers) are indicated; data points outside the range are
740 represented by circles.

741

742 **Figure 4** RNAi and mutant analysis for heparin sulfate biosynthesis pathway genes.

743 The experimental design is the same as in Figure 3. Left panel shows the effect of RNAi
744 or mutant alleles in the absence of hINS^{C96Y} expression; right panel shows the effect
745 when hINS^{C96Y} is expressed in the eye imaginal disc. Mutants were tested in
746 heterozygous states for a dominant interaction with hINS^{C96Y}. Fifteen male flies are
747 measured for each group. The statistical significance of differences from the control
748 cross (gray, w1118) was determined by a two-sided student's t test. Those that are
749 significant at 0.05 level after Bonferroni correction are marked with a red arrowhead.

750

751 **Figure 5** Sequencing of a 3 kb region in *sfl* and the LD patterns in the region. (A)

752 Alignment of 19 DGRP sequences ordered by their eye degeneration phenotype (mean,
753 most severe on the bottom). The hINS^{C96Y} transgenic line (asterisk) was also
754 sequenced. Red ticks and white spaces indicate SNPs and deletions relative to the
755 reference sequence. No insertions relative to the reference were found. The purple
756 track shows the $-\log_{10}$ of GWAS P-values. The bottom track shows the linkage blocks as
757 determined by Haploview (4.02) using the solid spine method with default settings ($D' >$
758 0.8). (B) Detailed haplotype block structures. Each numbered column represents a
759 polymorphic site, with the alleles colored as blue or red; each row represents a
760 haplotype with frequency > 0.01 . An arrowhead marks the 18/4 bp indel polymorphism
761 (see text; 18 bp: blue; 4 bp: red). Finally, the number between any two blocks

represents the multi-allelic D' , which quantifies the associations between adjacent blocks.

Figure 6 Pyro-sequencing measure of *sfl* allele-specific transcript ratio in 18 bp/4 bp heterozygotes. (A) Schematic diagram of the pyro-sequencing approach. Colored lines represent transcripts (mRNA) associated with either the 18 bp or the 4 bp allele, expressed at different levels. Common primers were used to amplify both transcripts of the gene of interest from the cDNA library made from eye imaginal disc tissues. Pyro-sequencing was carried out on the amplified products. (B) A pyrogram of a heterozygote with the polymorphic site (G/C) that is diagnostic for the 18 bp/4 bp indel highlighted. The ratio of the two peaks (light intensity, y-axis) are used to calculate the relative ratio of the two alleles. (E: enzyme, S: substrate, A/C/G/T: nucleotides). (C) Log₂ transformed ratio of 18 bp/4 bp allele expression in 15 crosses between randomly paired 18bp and 4bp lines. Estimates of the ratio and 95% confidence intervals are plotted. The dotted line corresponds to equal expression from the two alternative alleles.

SUPPLEMENTARY FIGURES

Figure S1 Pyro-sequencing cross and assay design. (A) Cross design for pyro-sequencing. Six 18 bp and eight 4 bp lines were chosen from the 154 DGRP lines used in GWAS. The Bloomington center stock number is listed. In each cell, the order of the letter/number indicates the direction of the cross. For example, A1 indicates that males of #28240 were crossed to virgin females of #28190. (B) Pyro-sequencing assays. Four SNPs were selected within the transcribed regions to distinguish alleles associated with the 18/4 bp indel polymorphism.

Figure S2 Correlations of eye area between F1 males and females within the same cross. Mean \pm 1 s.d. are plotted for a subset of 38 lines. The least square linear fit is indicated.

Figure S3 Population structure assessed through principal component analysis (PCA) using 900K autosomal SNPs after LD pruning. (A) 154 DGRP inbred lines projected onto the plane spanned by the first two principal components (PC1, PC2). The points are colored according to the phenotype severity in the $hINS^{C96Y}$ crosses (red: severe, or first 25%; blue: intermediate, 25%-75%; green: mild, 75%-100%, percentiles in eye area distribution from small to large). (B) projection onto PC1 grouped by the severity of the eye phenotype showed no correlation between the two.

Figure S4 Mixed linear model regression accounting for cryptic relatedness. (A) The heat map shows a 154 x 154 matrix representing the centered genetic relatedness

matrix (GRM) estimated using EMMAX. The boxed area is shown in detail in (B), with their line ID (RAL#) indicated on the right and bottom. The GRM was used in a mixed linear model to perform genome wide association in the 154 lines. And the resulting p-values for autosomal and X-linked variants are plotted as Q-Q plot in (C) and (D), with the red line indicating matches between the data and the null (uniform) p-value distribution. (E) Manhattan plot showing the $-\log_{10}$ p-values against the chromosomal coordinates. No association is expected on the X chromosome. The blue dotted line indicates a Bonferroni corrected $P < 0.05$, while the red solid line indicates a 5% genome-wide significant level based on 500 permutations.

Figure S5 FlyAtlas expression report for CG32396 and *sfl*. (A) CG32396 (B) *sfl*. Figure obtained through FlyBase.

Figure S6 Quantitative RT-PCR quantification of mRNA levels for CG32396 and *sfl* in eye imaginal disc samples. Two DGRP lines were chosen and eye imaginal discs were prepared from either six male or six female larvae, resulting in four biological samples. qRT-PCR were performed for each sample and three genes (RP49 -- red curve, *sfl* -- yellow, and CG32396 -- green). Shown is the amplification plot: x-axis -- cycle number; y-axis -- base-line corrected relative fluorescence intensity proportional to the amount of amplicons. Both RP49 and *sfl* were first detected in the 18-20th cycle, whereas the appearance of CG32396 did not occur until after 32 cycle. In addition, multiple melting points were detected for CG32396 assays, but not in the other two genes.

824 **Figure S7** Relative quantity of mRNA quantified by qRT-PCR in male and female larvae.
825 In each category, the first three bars represent three independent female larvae sample
826 (whole larva), each assayed with three technical replicates. The heights of the bars
827 represent the mean; the full range of RQ values are indicated by the error bars. The
828 next three bars correspond to three independent male larvae assayed for the same
829 gene. *kl-3* and *Pp1-Y2* are both located on the Y-chromosome and are known to have
830 testis-specific expression. The RQ values were measured using *RP49* gene as the
831 internal control, with the first female larva sample (F-1) as the reference and RQ set to
832 one.

833
834 **Figure S8** Depletion of *sfl* by RNAi in the developing wing expressing *hINS*^{C96Y} driven
835 by *dpp-Gal4*. For both females and males, *dpp >> hINS*^{C96Y} or *Dpp >> sfl* RNAi
836 expression alone reduces wing area between the L2 and L4 longitudinal veins relative
837 to the posterior-most sector of the wing (bordered by L5). This reduction is more severe
838 in the *sfl* knockdown genotype than in the *hINS*^{C96Y}-expressing genotype. Co-
839 expression of *sfl* RNAi and *hINS*^{C96Y} by *dpp-Gal4* results in the obliteration of the L3
840 vein and further relative reduction of the L2-L4 area. (A): Wild type wing showing the
841 measured regions of the wing used to quantify the effects of both *sfl* RNAi and *hINS*^{C96Y}
842 expression in *dpp-Gal4* domain (L3-L4 intervein sector). Quantification of the (B)
843 female or (E) male wing phenotypes generated by transgenes *dpp-Gal4*; *dpp-Gal4*
844 *>UAS-hINS*^{C96Y}; (C, G) *dpp-Gal4 >> UAS-sfl* RNAi; and (D, H) *dpp-Gal4 >>UAS-sfl*
845 RNAi; *UAS-hINS*^{C96Y}. The values represent the ratio of the third posterior cell (in pink

846 color) divided by the L2-L4 intervein sector (in green color) wing area. ***, $P < 0.001$;
847 Mann-Whitney U test.

848 Females: dpp-Gal4 (n= 15; Mean= 0.62), dpp-Gal4 >UAS-hINS^{C96Y} (n= 15; Mean=0.65),
849 dpp-Gal4 >> UAS-*sfl* RNAi (n= 23; Mean=1.3) and dpp-Gal4 >>UAS-*sfl* RNAi; UAS-
850 hINS^{C96Y} (n= 22; Mean=1.76).

851 Males: dpp-Gal4 (n= 15; Mean=0.59), dpp-Gal4 >UAS-hINS^{C96Y} (n= 15; Mean=0.64),
852 dpp-Gal4 >> UAS-*sfl* RNAi (n=23; Mean=1.2) and dpp-Gal4 >>UAS-*sfl* RNAi; UAS-
853 hINS^{C96Y} (n= 29; Mean=1.68).

854

855 **Figure S9** Depletion of *sfl* by RNAi in the developing notum expressing hINS^{C96Y} driven
856 by ap-Gal4. For both females and males, ap > hINS^{C96Y} or ap > *sfl* RNAi expression
857 alone reduces notum area and causes loss of dorsal macrochaetae. Co-expression of
858 *sfl* RNAi and hINS^{C96Y} by ap-Gal4 results in greater destruction of the notum and
859 macrochaetae in both sexes. However, in the male the notum and additional dorsal
860 structures are absent and this phenotype is lethal.

861 ap-Gal4 > hINS^{C96Y} (A) female and (D) male;

862 ap-Gal4 > *sfl* RNAi (B) female and (E) male;

863 ap-Gal4>> hINS^{C96Y}, *sfl* RNAi (C) female (F) male

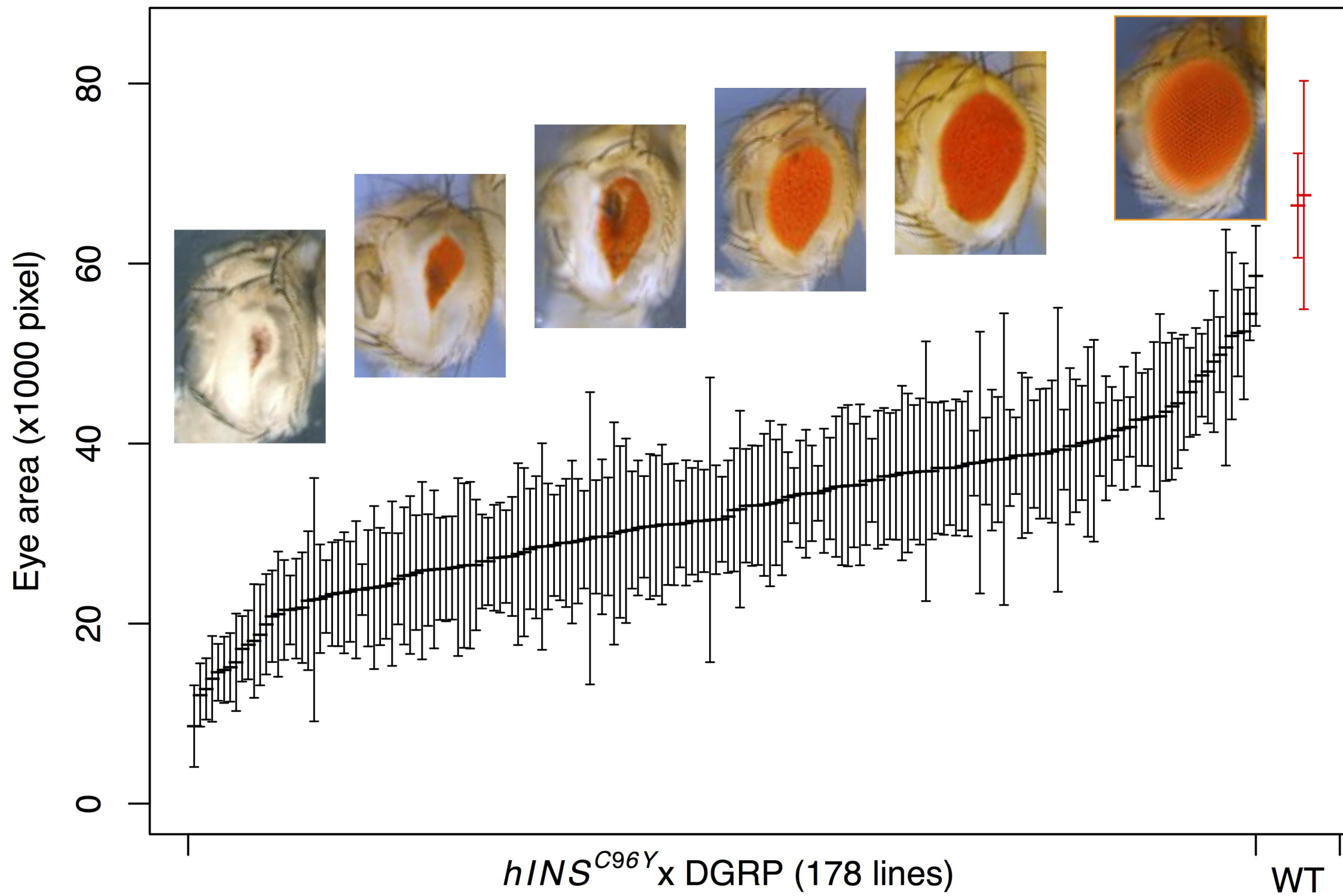
864

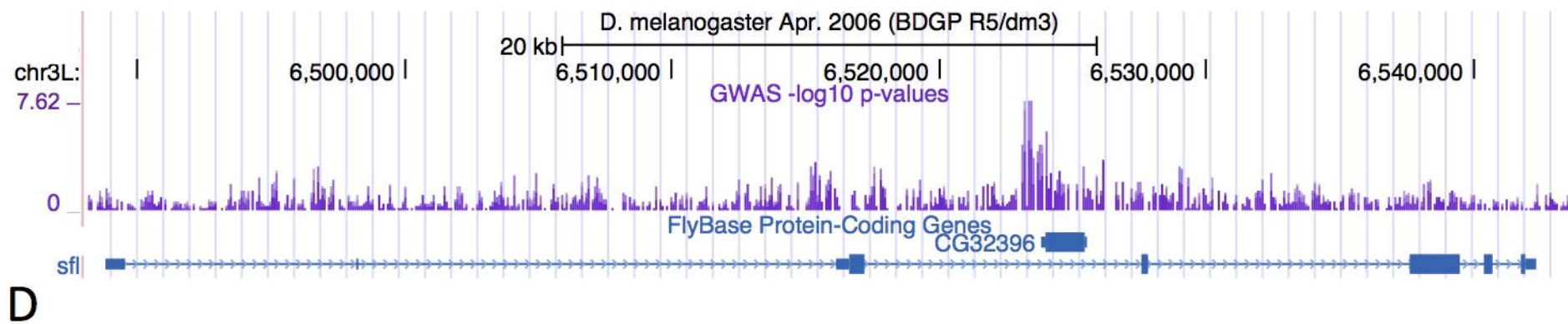
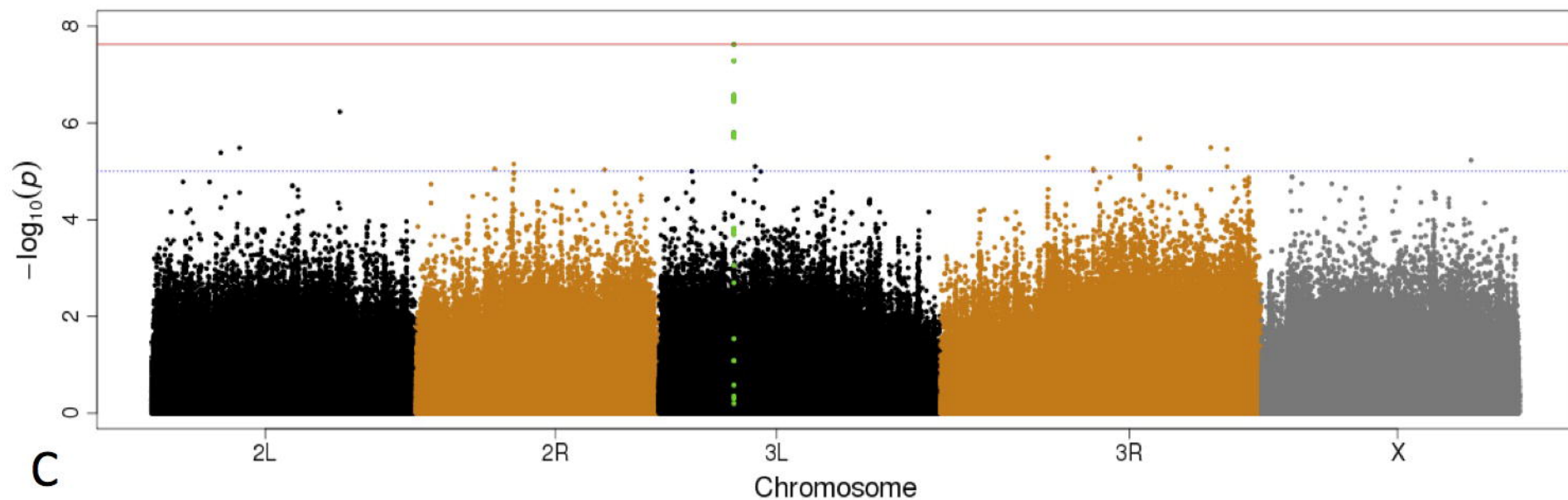
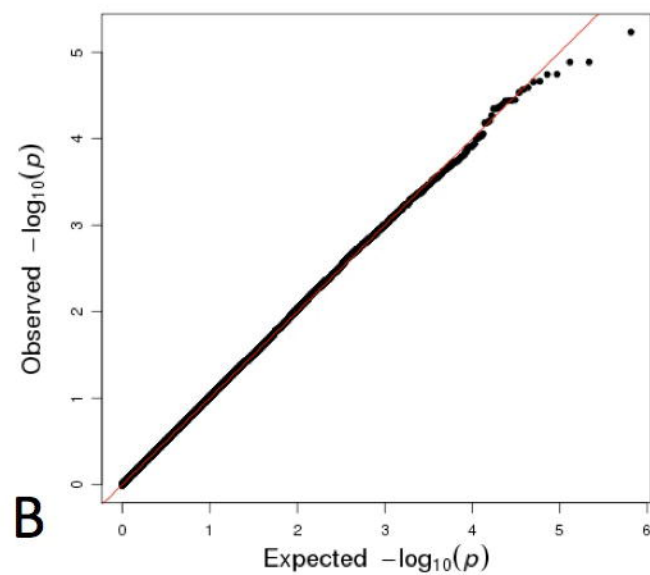
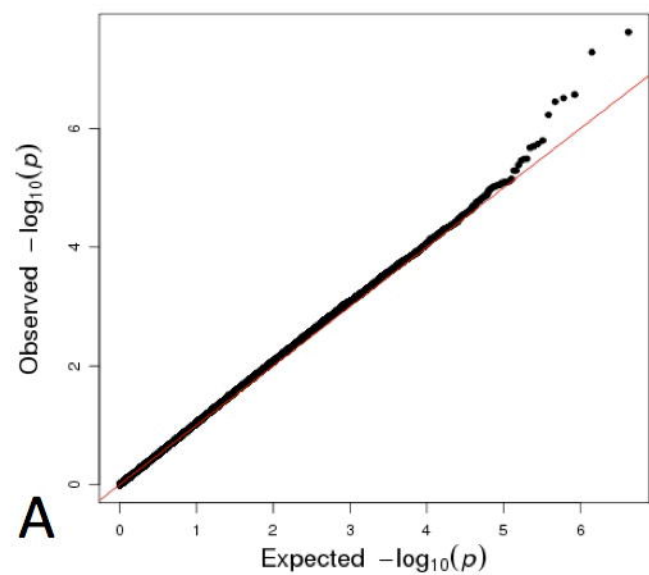
865 **Figure S10** log2 transformed ratios between transcript levels associated with 18 bp/4
866 bp alleles. The allele-specific expression ratios were measured in each F1 heterozygote
867 by pyro-sequencing, with three (or four) biological replicates and four (or three) pyro-
868 technical replicates, to obtain a total of 12 measurements. In each of the 15 crosses, the

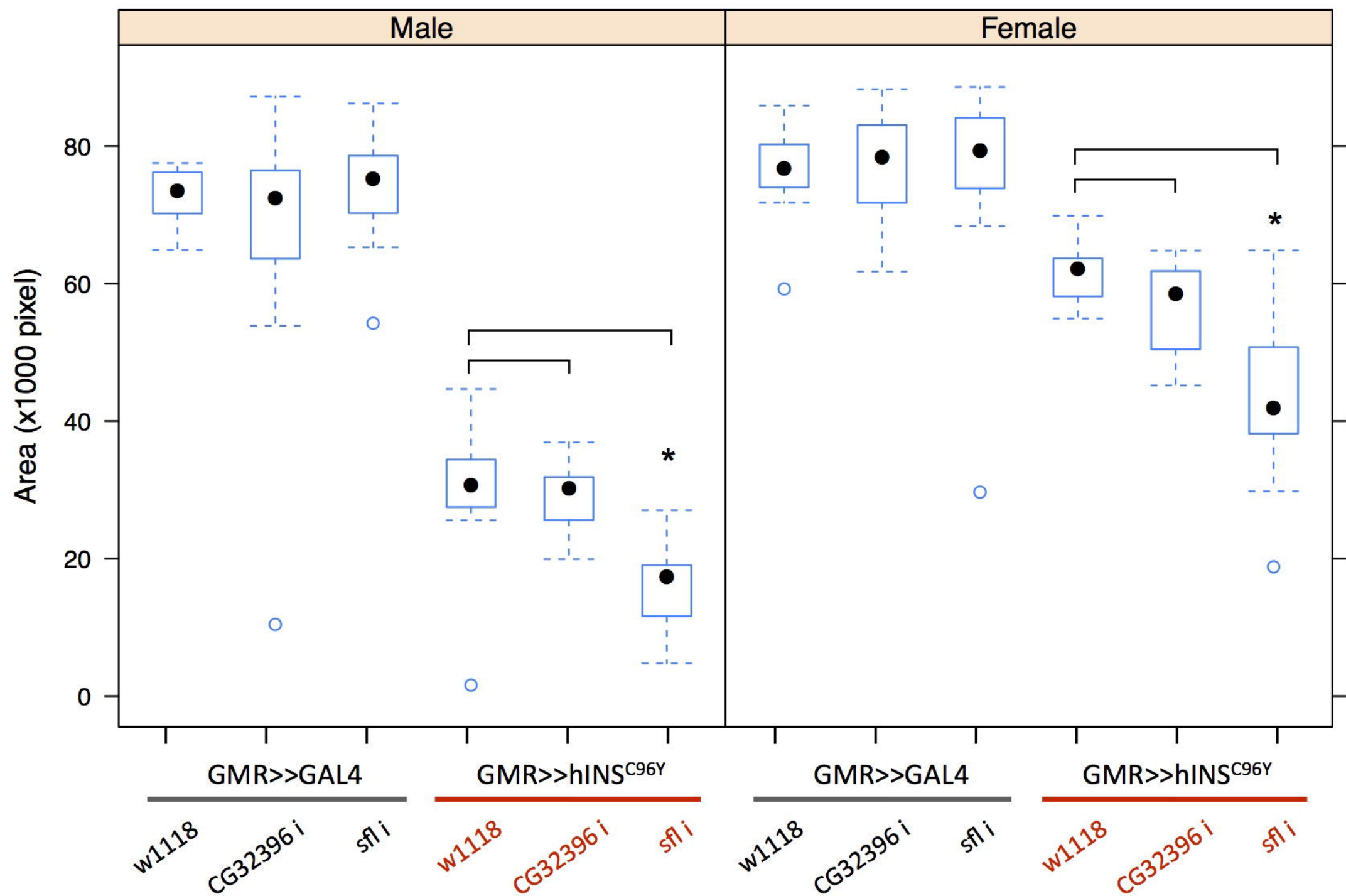
869 technical replicates were plotted in a single column, with different columns representing
870 the biological replicates. In the titles of each panel, the last three digits in the stock
871 number were shown for lines used in the cross.

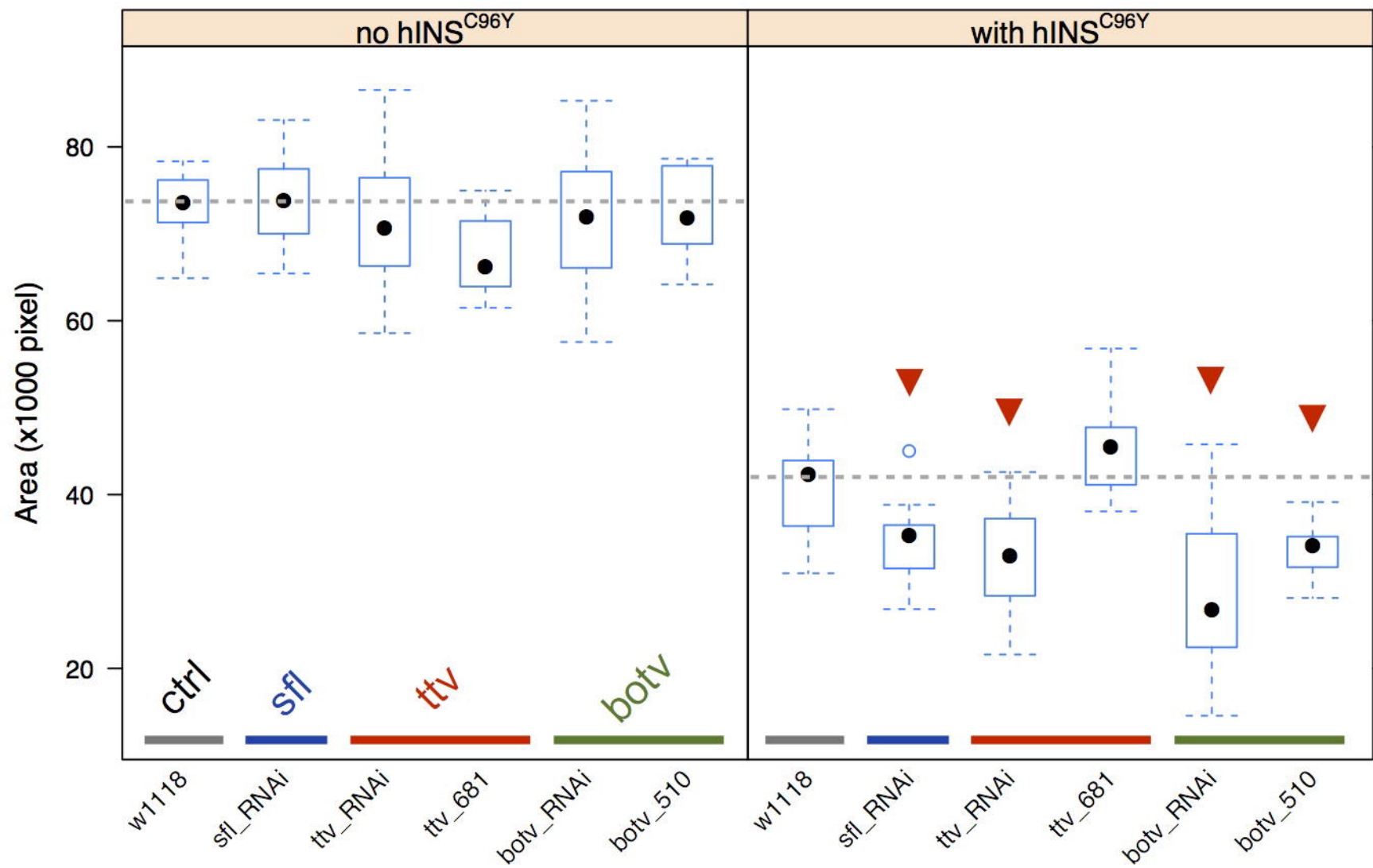
872

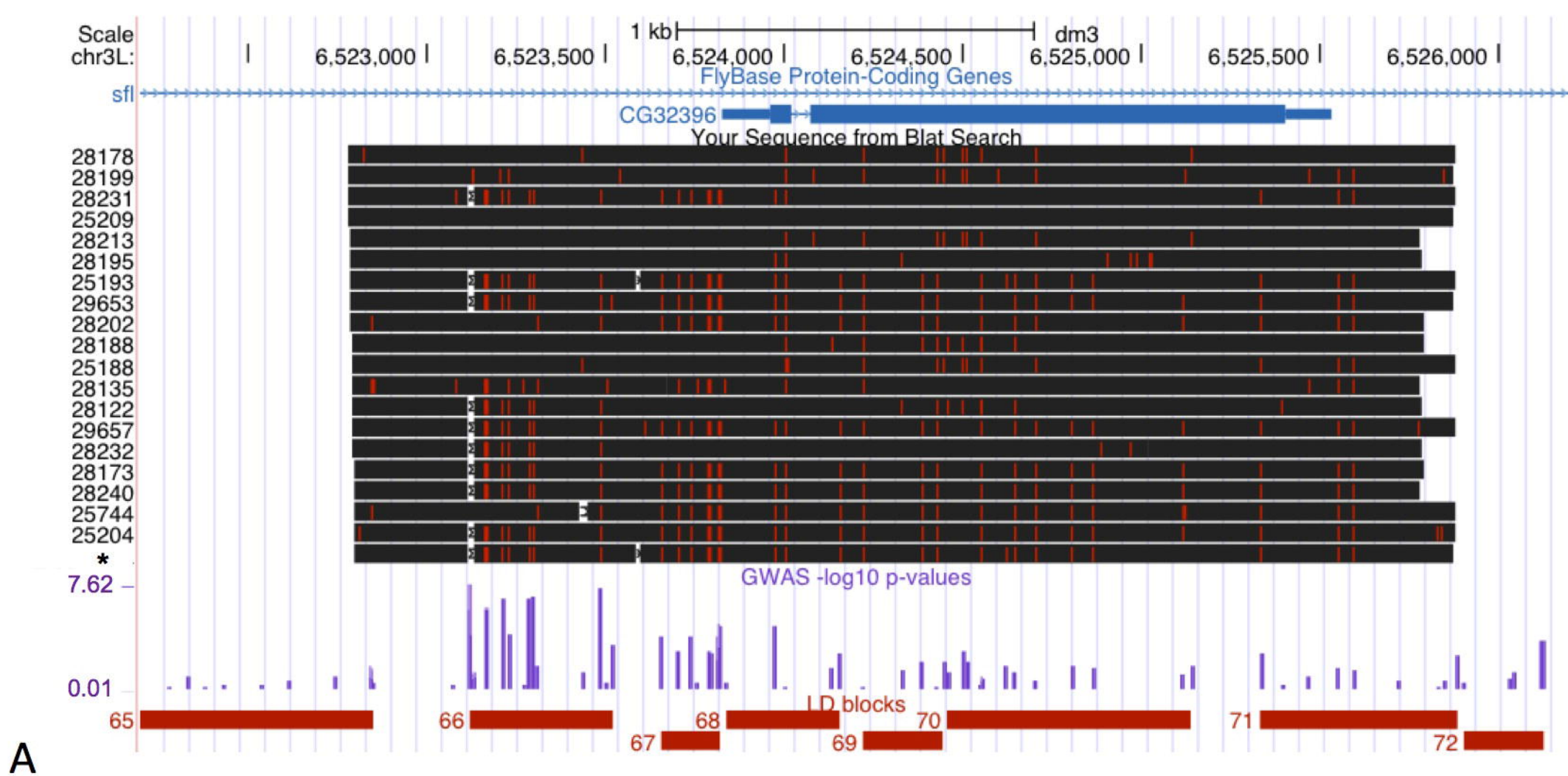
873 **Figure S11** Conditional regression analysis to detect additional SNPs associated with
874 the phenotype of interest. (A) within the *sfl* locus; (B) all chromosomes. The intronic 18
875 pb/4 bp polymorphism in *sfl* is included in the linear model as a covariate. The two
876 dotted lines in (A) correspond to a single test 0.05 level (red) and the multiple testing
877 corrected 0.05 level using Bonferroni's method (blue). The red line in (B) represents the
878 Bonferroni corrected 0.05 level.



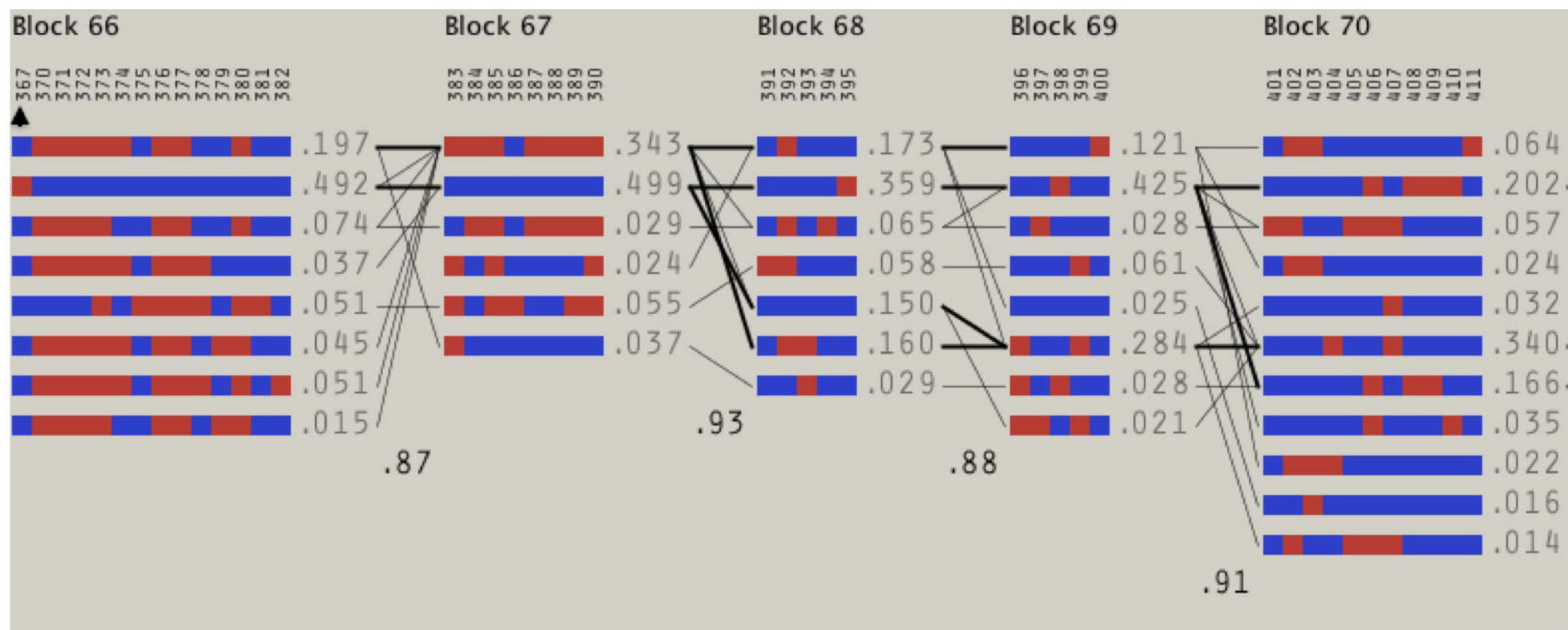








A



B

