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## IMPACT DES INTERACTIONS GÈNE-ENVIRONNEMENT SUR L'EXPRESSION DE DEUX GÈNES RELIÉS À LA CROISSANCE CHEZ L'OMBLE DE FONTAINE, *SALVELINUS FONTINALIS*

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## Résumé

Le rôle des interactions génotype/environnement comme facteur responsable de la variation phénotypique dans différents environnements est depuis longtemps établi. Par contre, la connaissance de l'architecture moléculaire qui est sous-jacente à ces interactions GxE est limitée. Dans cette optique, l'objectif général de la présente étude est d'étudier les interactions entre l'environnement, le sexe, la valeur génétique et le niveau d'expression de deux gènes clés associés au système (récepteur de l'hormone de croissance, *GHR* et le facteur analogue à l'insuline, *IGF-1*) *GH/IGF* et de déterminer l'influence de ces interactions sur la croissance chez l'omble de fontaine, *Salvelinus fontinalis*. Les résultats ont démontré que i) la croissance des poissons a été supérieure en eau douce et que les mâles ont montré une croissance plus élevée, ii) le niveau d'expression des gènes liés à l'axe *GH/IGF* était plus élevé en milieu salé iii) les mâles ont montré un niveau d'expression de chaque gène. Ce projet représente un avancement dans la compréhension des impacts environnementaux et sexuels sur la relation entre l'activité des gènes et l'occurrence du phénotype.

## Abstract

Genotype-by-environment interaction is well established as a factor responsible for the phenotypic variation that occurs between different environments. However, genetic architecture behind this GxE interaction is not well understood. In this context, the aim of this study was to determine the impact of interactions between environment, sex and genetic value on the expression level of two keys genes associated with the *GH/IGF* system (growth hormone receptor, *GHR* and insulin-like growth factor, *IGF-1*), and their influence on growth in the brook charr, *Salvelinus fontinalis*. The results show that i) growth was higher for fish reared in freshwater as compared to those reared in saltwater and that males had a higher growth rate than females, ii) expression level of *GHR* and *IGF-1* of males was higher than that of females, iv) there is GxE interaction for individual gene expression. This work represents a marked advance towards mapping environmentally and sexually induced variance of gene activity and to understand the resulting phenotypes.

## **Avant-Propos**

Depuis maintenant plus de trois ans j'ai commencé ma maîtrise, et je vois enfin la lumière au bout du tunnel. Mon parcours a été parsemé de moments difficiles et surtout de moments plus heureux. Au cours de ces années, j'ai eu la chance de travailler dans un environnement des plus motivants et enrichissants. Je dois d'abord remercier mon directeur de recherche, Louis Bernatchez. Merci d'avoir cru en mes capacités et de m'avoir guidé avec justesse et rigueur tout au long de mon projet. J'en ressors grandi à tous les points de vue, tant au niveau social qu'académique. J'ai eu la chance de côtoyer des personnes vraiment merveilleuses. Je veux souligner la présence de Vincent, Marika, Jérome, Lucie, Vicky, Lysandre, Pierre-Philippe, Mélissa, Nicolas, Mélanie et Scott. Un merci spécial pour Marika, Vicky et Scott pour l'aide accordée à la correction du mémoire.

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développement en aquaculture continental (SORDAC) et la société de développement de l'industrie maricole (SODIM).

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## Introduction

#### Plasticité phénotypique et norme de réaction

Pour tous les organismes, le phénotype est le résultat de l'expression du génotype, de l'environnement et, probablement le plus important, de la façon dont l'environnement interagit avec le génotype (interaction génotype/environnement (GxE)) (Falconer et Mackay, 1996). La capacité d'un génotype à produire différents phénotypes selon l'environnement est appelée plasticité phénotypique (Bradshaw 1965; Schlichting et Pigliucci 1998). L'ensemble des différents phénotypes exprimés par un seul génotype en réponse à des conditions environnementales variables est décrit comme étant la sensitivité environnementale ou la norme de réaction d'un génotype (Falconer 1990; Schlichting et Pigliucci 1998; Tufto 2000). Il est possible de définir une population comme un regroupement de normes de réaction puisqu'elle est composée de plusieurs génotypes et que la norme de réaction est propre à chaque génotype (van Noordwijk, 1989).

C'est en 1909 que R. Woltereck propose pour la première fois le terme norme de réaction pour décrire les variations morphologiques observées chez des clones de daphnies, (*Daphniasp.*). En représentant graphiquement la taille de la tête en fonction d'une mesure de l'environnement pour chaque groupe de clones, Woltereck a démontré que les différences observées pour la taille de la tête étaient reliées à la disponibilité de la nourriture. C'est seulement dans les années quarante, avec les travaux de Goldschmidt (1940) et Schmalhausen (1949), qu'une norme de réaction fût considérée comme un facteur évolutif important (Schlichting et Pigliucci, 1998). En fait, il est raisonnable de penser que la plasticité dans les normes de réaction est amenée à évoluer si le phénotype adaptatif fournit un avantage sélectif (Via, 1993) et si les changements environnementaux sont prévisibles, c'est-à-dire que les individus sont capables de percevoir les signaux environnementaux (Stearns 1989; Via et *al.*, 1995; Roff, 2002).

La plasticité permet aux individus d'atténuer les effets causés par les changements environnementaux en altérant leur physiologie et leurs comportements. Cela a toutefois comme conséquence de modifier leurs patrons de mortalité, de croissance et de fécondité spécifiques à l'âge (traits d'histoire de vie) (Hutchings, 1996). La théorie prédit que la plasticité d'une stratégie d'histoire de vie est favorisée chez les organismes dont la descendance se disperse aléatoirement, indépendamment de leur génotype et sur de grandes distances, voyant ainsi augmenter leurs probabilités de rencontrer une hétérogénéité environnementale spatiale et temporelle (Hutchings, 2004). Par exemple, chez les poissons, ces conditions existent pour plusieurs espèces de salmonidés pour lesquelles la variation dans l'abondance de nourriture est dépendante des variations abiotiques (ex. : composition du substrat, vélocité et profondeur de l'eau) et biotiques (ex. : présence de compétiteurs potentiels et de prédateurs) de l'environnement (Hutchings, 1996).

#### Interaction génotype/environnement

À l'intérieur d'une population, il est possible d'observer une variance dans les normes de réaction en fonction des différents génotypes qui la composent. Cette variance est due à la présence d'interactions génotype/environnement (GxE), c'est-à-dire que les différences phénotypiques entre différents génotypes ne sont pas nécessairement constantes d'un environnement à l'autre (Fishback et *al.*, 2002; Komoldin et *al.*, 2002). En d'autres mots, la présence d'interactions GxE signifie que l'environnement peut affecter l'expression d'un caractère en activant ou en désactivant des gènes ou encore, en modifiant le niveau d'expression des gènes impliqués dans l'expression de ce caractère (Via et *al.*, 1995) et que cette modulation peut varier d'un individu à l'autre (génotype).

Les interactions GxE peuvent être vues dans une perspective évolutive ou de manière plus appliquée, comme par exemple dans un contexte de rendement économique de production.. Du point de vue évolutif, il existe dans la littérature un nombre important d'études qui démontrent le rôle des interactions GxE dans le maintien de la variation génétique quantitative pour des traits reliés au «fitness» (Gurganus et *al.*, 1998, Merilä et Fry, 1998; Vieira et *al.*, 2000; Brotherstone et Goddard 2005; Denoel et *al.* 2005). De même, d'autres

études concluent que la variation observée dans les mesures d'héritabilité entre les environnements est le résultat d'interactions GxE (Hoffmann et Merilä, 1999; Qvarnstrom, 1999; Garant et *al.*, 2003). Dans une perspective de production, les interactions GxE jouent un rôle important dans l'élaboration des programmes d'amélioration génétique pour des espèces liées à l'agriculture ou l'aquaculture (Komoldin et *al.*, 2002; Fikse et *al.*, 2003; Evans et Langdon, 2006; Perry et *al.*, en préparation). Dans un programme d'amélioration des cultures ou des élevages, les interactions GxE peuvent compromettre les améliorations obtenues, car la performance d'un génotype ou d'une lignée n'est pas constante d'un environnement à l'autre.

#### Architecture moléculaire

Bien que la présence d'interactions GxE soit bien documentée dans la littérature, la compréhension de l'activité des gènes sous-jacents à ces interactions est limitée. Des travaux récents commencent à examiner la modification dans l'activité des gènes en fonction de l'environnement (Gabillard et *al.*, 2003, 2006; Scott et *al.*, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Weber et Bosworth, 2005; Fangue et *al.*, 2006). Par exemple, Scott et *al.* (2004) ont démontré que chez le choquemort (*Fundulus heteroclitus*), l'expression de plusieurs gènes codant pour des protéines de transport d'ions (Na+-K+-ATPase- $\alpha_{1a}$ , NKCC1 et le récepteur des glucocorticoïdes) est supérieure après un transfert en eau salée. Cependant, Scott et *al.* (2004) n'ont pas tenu compte de l'effet du génotype dans leurs analyses de la variance du niveau d'expression à l'intérieur et entre les deux environnements. D'autre part, l'impact d'un génotype sur la variance transcriptionnelle a bel et bien été observé chez la drosophile (*Drosophila melanogaster*, Jin et *al.*, 2001) et le choquemort (*Fundulus heteroclitus*, Oleksiak et *al.*, 2002), mais cette fois, l'effet du génotype sur le niveau de transcription n'a pas été évalué en fonction d'un changement des conditions environnementales.

D'un point de vue moléculaire, un changement catégorique ou quantitatif dans l'activité des gènes d'un individu est le premier et le plus simple résultat de l'adaptation à un nouvel environnement (Schulte, 2001). En raison du fait que les interactions GxE sont le résultat d'un changement de la performance du génotype en fonction de l'environnement, il est

vraisemblable qu'elles soient déterminées principalement par un changement catégorique ou quantitatif dans l'activité des gènes. Ainsi, les fondements génétiques et physiologiques des ajustements phénotypiques dans différents environnements peuvent être détectables par un suivi du profilage d'ARN chez des individus ayant un patron génétique similaire, mais évoluant dans différents environnements (Pigliucci, 1996). Une connaissance des interactions GxE au niveau des gènes individuels par une quantification précise des mécanismes intracellulaires pourrait permettre d'avoir une meilleure compréhension de la suite des événements qui s'établit entre les gènes et l'occurrence du phénotype.

#### Techniques de profilages d'ARN

Au cours des dernières années, différentes techniques ont été développées pour effectuer un profilage du contenu en ARN messager (ARNm) chez des individus en entier ou au niveau de certain tissus. Les bio-puces à ADN (DNA microarrays) (Schena et al., 1995) de même que la PCR quantitative par transcriptase inverse (RT-qPCR) (Weis et al., 1992) sont deux exemples de techniques couramment utilisés. Ces techniques se retrouvent pratiquement dans tous les domaines de la biologie, de la biologie médicale (ex : profil d'expression lié au cancer du poumon, Chen et al., 2007) en passant par la biologie comportementale (profil d'expression entre abeilles butineuses et nourrices, Whitfield et al., 2002), la biologie évolutive (étude de la divergence adaptative chez le complexe d'espèces du Grand Corégone, Coregonus clupeaformis, Derome et al., 2006) et la physiologie comparative (profil d'expression des gènes impliqués dans l'osmorégalation chez le choquemort, Fundulus heteroclitus, Scott et al., 2004). Dans l'ensemble, les deux techniques se ressemblent du fait qu'elles permettent une quantification du contenu en ARNm et de par leur utilisation de la fluorescence comme moyen de détection. Cependant, elles diffèrent au niveau de l'échelle d'analyse, car les bio-puces permettent d'identifier rapidement à l'échelle du génome les gènes qui montrent une variation relative d'expression entre deux individus, alors que la RT-qPCR ne quantifie qu'un seul gène à la fois pour chaque individu.

Généralement, une bio-puce à ADN est une lamelle de verre sur laquelle sont déposées, à des positions connues, des étiquettes de séquences exprimées (*expressed sequence tags* (ESTs)) de clones d'une banque d'ADN complémentaire (ADNc) (Gibson, 2002). La lame est ensuite hybridée avec l'ADNc marqué par fluorescence. Cet ADNc est obtenu par rétrotranscription des ARNm des individus à l'étude. L'intensité du signal de fluorescence est représentative de l'abondance relative du transcrit d'ARNm d'un individu. Pour chaque lame, deux individus sont hybridés simultanément, et ce sont les différences d'intensité entre les deux individus qui sont utilisées pour refléter la variation d'expression relative entre les deux individus.

En ce qui concerne la PCR quantitative en temps réel, elle est considérée comme la plus flexible et la plus sensible des méthodes utilisées pour quantifier les niveaux d'ARN. Dans une réaction PCR traditionnelle, les données sont récoltées à la fin de la réaction d'amplification lorsque la réaction a atteint sa phase plateau. Conséquemment, les différences de quantités initiales de transcrits du gène cible ne peuvent pas être estimées. Dans une réaction de RT-qPCR, les données sont plutôt récoltées pendant la phase exponentielle de l'amplification. Au cours de cette phase, l'efficacité de la réaction est généralement de 100%, ce qui fait en sorte que le nombre de transcrit double à chaque cycle de la réaction. Le nombre de cycles d'amplification nécessaires pour atteindre un seuil de fluorescence donné est un indicateur de la quantité initiale du nombre de transcrits du gène cible dans notre échantillon. Par conséquent, plus l'échantillon de départ contient des copies du gène ciblé, plus la phase exponentielle d'amplification est atteinte rapidement. La quantification relative de l'abondance des transcrits d'ARN d'un échantillon peut alors se faire par la comparaison avec l'abondance d'un échantillon référence (tous les individus sont comparés à cet échantillon de référence). Dans le but de standardiser l'amplification entre les individus, l'abondance des transcrits d'un gène contrôle (qui s'exprime de la même façon chez tous les individus) est utilisée.

#### Omble de fontaine, Salvelinus fontinalis

L'omble de fontaine (Salvelinus fontinalis; Osteichthyes: Salmonidae) est indigène au nord-est de l'Amérique du Nord. Cependant, l'espèce a été introduite dans plusieurs systèmes d'eau douce dans l'ouest de l'Amérique du Nord et à d'autres endroits à travers le monde, tels que l'Amérique du Sud, la Nouvelle-Zélande, l'Asie et l'Europe. Au Canada, son aire de répartition géographique naturelle s'étend depuis les provinces maritimes jusqu'au nord-est du Manitoba. Reconnue pour avoir la capacité de s'adapter à un large éventail d'habitats, l'omble de fontaine se retrouve autant en ruisseau, en rivière qu'en lac (Groot, 1996). Cette espèce est aussi reconnue pour exprimer une grande variabilité des traits d'histoire de vie. Par exemple, certaines populations sont résidentes, d'autres sont anadromes et d'autres peuvent à la fois comporter des individus résidents et anadromes. Les individus des populations résidentes sont cantonnés en eau douce et passent généralement leur vie entière dans le même habitat. De l'autre côté, les populations anadromes changent de milieu et effectuent une migration annuelle vers les eaux salées. Leurs déplacements se limitent souvent aux estuaires et aux régions côtières de leur rivière d'origine (Power, 1980; Naiman et al., 1987). Les ombles de fontaine anadromes quitteraient la rivière tôt au printemps, immédiatement après la crue, soit en avril ou en mai pour revenir à l'automne, soit pour hiverner en eau douce et/ou pour se reproduire (Dutil et Power, 1980; Naiman et al., 1987). L'anadromie aurait en fait évoluée en réponse à la disponibilité relative de nourriture en eau salée et en eau douce (Gross, 1987). Lorsque les ressources en eau salée sont supérieures à celles en eau douce, comme c'est souvent le cas dans les régions froides et tempérées, l'anadromie serait favorisée (Gross, 1987). Cette migration en eau salée peut être avantageuse puisqu'elle donne l'accès à une ressource alimentaire plus importante, permettant ainsi aux individus anadromes d'atteindre une taille supérieure (>4 kg) et d'avoir une plus grande longévité (>8 ans) comparativement aux individus résidents qui demeurent uniquement en douce (<1 kg et de 3 à 4 ans) (Power, 1980). À l'opposé, le principal avantage associé à la résidence est probablement le faible taux de mortalité comparativement à la stratégie anadrome (Lenormand et al. (2004), Thériault et Dodson, 2003). Cet avantage est par contre contrebalancé par une diminution significative de la fécondité, fortement liée à la taille, puisque la croissance est limitée en eau douce relativement à la croissance en eau salée (Morita et Takashima, 1998). Les

travaux de Boula et *al.* (2002) et Perry et *al.* (2005) ont mis en évidence évidence une différenciation génétique entre les deux types d'histoire de vie, soit la résidence et l'anadromie dans la rivière Laval (Québec, Canada) alors que les travaux Thériault et *al.* (2007) indiquent plutôt que les deux formes font partie d'un même pool génétique dans la rivière Sainte-Marguerite (Québec, Canada). Étant donné que le niveau de croissance semble être un trait important pour la différence entre les individus anadromes et résidents, il est possible de supposer que l'exposition à l'environnement salé implique du même coup une variation de l'activité des gènes qui contrôlent la croissance.

#### L'axe *GH/IGF*

Chez les mammifères, l'hormone de croissance (GH) et le facteur analogue à l'insuline-1 (IGF-1) sont deux éléments reconnus comme étant des régulateurs endocriniens de la croissance (DeChiara et al, 1990; Baker et al, 1993; Moriyama et al, 1994; Le Bail et al, 1998). Chez les téléostéens, GH est une hormone pluripotente principalement produite par la glande pituitaire, laquelle est située à la base du cerveau. L'action de la GH est transmise via un récepteur transmembranaire simple, le récepteur de l'hormone de croissance (GHR). Le contact du ligand, l'hormone GH, induit la dimérisation du récepteur GHR et produit ainsi un complexe trimérique actif (Reinecke et al, 2005). Ce complexe actif stimule la transcription et la production du facteur analogue à l'insuline-1 (IGF-1), une hormone qui joue un rôle central dans le contrôle de la croissance en potentialisant l'action de l'hormone GH produite par la glande pituitaire. L'IGF-1 stimule la croissance et la prolifération cellulaire ainsi que la synthèse de protéines, d'ADN et d'ARN.

La nature directe ou indirecte du mode d'action de l'hormone *GH* reste à clarifier, mais il semble que *GH* agit de façon ciblée au niveau d'un tissu pour stimuler la production locale d'*IGF-1* (mode d'action autocrine/paracrine) ou encore agit au niveau du foie pour augmenter le niveau d'*IGF-1* dans le plasma (mode d'action endocrine) (Björnsson et *al.*, 2004). Chez plusieurs espèces de poissons, le niveau d'ARNm d'*IGF-1* transcrit dans les tissus est positivement corrélé avec le taux de croissance (Duan 1997; Uchida et *al.* 2003; Beckman et *al.*, 2004; Reinecke et *al.*, 2005). De façon similaire, des travaux sur le saumon

coho (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*, Duan, 1997) et la dorade royale (*Sparus aurata*, Calduch-Giner et *al.*, 2003) indiquent que l'abondance hépatique de *GHR* est reliée avec la performance de croissance.

L'impact de l'environnement sur les niveaux d'expression des gènes de l'axe *GH/IGF* est bien documenté dans la littérature. Par exemple, les travaux de Gabillard et *al.* (2003, 2006) sur la truite arc-en-ciel (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) démontrent qu'une augmentation de température est associée à une augmentation significative du niveau d'ARNm d'*IGF-1* et de *GHR* au niveau du foie. D'autres études démontrent que l'alimentation est aussi un facteur qui affecte le niveau d'activité des gènes de l'axe *GH/IGF*. Parmi celles-ci, les travaux de Chauvigné et *al.* (2003) sur la truite arc-en-ciel (*O. mykiss*) et de Duan et Plisetskaya (1993) sur le saumon coho (*O. kisutch*) indiquent qu'une période d'alimentation suivant une période de jeûne est associée à une augmentation du niveau d'expression de l'ARNm d'*IGF-1* dans les muscles pour la truite arc-en-ciel et dans le foie pour le saumon coho.

En plus de l'environnement et de l'alimentation, le sexe de l'individu fait partie intégrante du contrôle physiologique/génétique de l'axe GH/IGF. Les différences entre les sexes dans le niveau d'activité et la fonction des gènes sont couramment observées pour des éléments de l'axe GH/IGF (GH et IGF-1, Veldhuis 1995, Chowen et al. 1998, Riley et al., 2002; GH, Baumbach et Bingham 1995, Parvizi et al. 2001) et les systèmes physiologiques associés (ex. : récepteur du cortisol, Uchida et al. 2003). Ces informations suggèrent que les mâles et les femelles ont des réponses génétiques différentes face aux conditions environnementales. Plus spécifiquement, les différences de production d'IGF et de GHobservées chez le poulet (Goddard et al. 1996; voir aussi Romero et al. 1996) et le porc (Parvizi et al. 2001) suggèrent que les mâles ont un taux de production supérieur comparativement aux femelles.

## Objectif général

Peu de recherches ont été réalisées sur la compréhension des fondements moléculaires sous-jacents aux interactions GxE. La présente étude a pour premier objectif d'évaluer les interactions GxE au niveau de gènes individuels chez l'omble de fontaine, *Salvelinus fontinalis*. Les niveaux d'expression de deux gènes impliqués dans la croissance, soit le récepteur de l'hormone de croissance (*GHR*) et le facteur analogue à l'insuline (*IGF-1*), seront quantifié chez des individus regroupés selon leur génotype et ayant été élevés dans deux environnements, soit l'eau douce et l'eau salée. Cette étude devrait contribuer à améliorer notre compréhension des processus moléculaires impliqués dans la détermination de l'expression phénotypique.

The influence of gene-environment interactions on *GHR* and *IGF-1* and their association with growth in Brook charr, *Salvelinus fontinalis* 

## Résumé en français

Le rôle des interactions génotype/environnement comme facteur responsable de la variation phénotypique entre environnements est établi depuis longtemps. Par contre, la connaissance de l'architecture moléculaire qui est sous-jacente à ces interactions GxE a été peu étudiée. Dans cette optique, l'objectif général de la présente étude était de déterminer les impacts des interactions entre l'environnement, le sexe, et la valeur génétique et le niveau d'expression de deux gènes clés associés au système GH/IGF ainsi qu'à leur influence sur la croissance chez l'omble de fontaine, *Salvelinus fontinalis*. Les résultats ont démontré que i) la croissance des poissons a été supérieure en eau douce et que la croissance des mâles était supérieure à celle des femelles, ii) le niveau d'expression des gènes liés à l'axe *GH/IGF* était plus élevé en milieu salé iii) les mâles ont montré un niveau d'expression de *GHR* et *IGF-1* plus élevé que les femelles, iv) la présence d'interactions GxE pour le niveau d'expression de gène individuel. Ce projet représente un avancement dans la compréhension des impacts environnementaux et sexuels sur la relation entre l'activité des gènes et l'occurrence du phénotype.

## Introduction

#### Genotype-by-environment interaction

Individual phenotype is determined by its genotype, the environmental milieu of development and the interaction between these factors, termed genotype-by-environment interaction (GxE) (Falconer and Mackay, 1996). A considerable body of work exists regarding the role of GxE in the maintenance of quantitative genetic variation via environmental variance in genetic fitness functions (Gurganus et *al.*, 1998, Merilä and Fry, 1998; Vieira et *al.*, 2000; Brotherstone and Goddard 2005; Denoel et *al.* 2005), and environmental variation in heritability (Hoffmann and Merilä, 1999; Qvarnstrom, 1999; Garant et *al.*, 2003) including selective programs for agriculture and aquaculture (Komoldin et *al.*, 2002; Fikse et *al.*, 2003; Perry et *al.*, in prep), but opinion regarding the mechanics of plasticity theory is divided.

Under the genetic assimilation theory, reaction norms occur as incident (*i.e.* congenital) morphotypic alterations occurring in response to novel environmental shifts, where phenotypic plasticity exists only as a transitory intermediary between alternate, fixed ecotypes (Waddington 1953; Pigliucci and Murren 2003; West-Eberhard 2003; Schlichting 2003). The alternate position – the adaptive hypothesis – is that phenotypic plasticity represents the morphological expression of underlying quantitative genetic variance expression on contact with new environmental surfaces (de Witt and Scheiner 2004; Scheiner 2002; de Jong 2005) distributed on a factorial scale with genetic connectivity (*i.e.* genetic correlation) (deWitt and Scheiner 2004a, b) or as specific points on a (potentially multivariate) function relating quantitative changes in environmental parameters to quantitative genetic variance (Via and Lande 1985; Gavrilets 1993; Huber et *al.* 2004).

#### Molecular architecture

Beyond mere uncertainty in the underlying mechanism of plastic variation at the individual, quantitative level, there is even less comprehension at the more basal level of genomic activity, although recent works have begun to examine environmental modification of gene activity (Fangue et al., 2006, Gabillard et al., 2003, 2006, Scott et al., 2004, 2005a, b, 2006, Weber and Bosworth, 2005). There is also some knowledge of environmental-genotypic variation - for example, heterozygotes exhibit generally more stable genotypic means across different environments than homozygotes (Geiger-Thornberry and Mackay 2002) but the mechanics of specific genes are less well known. From the intra-individual perspective, changes in gene expression or activation would probably be the simplest method of adaptation to the environment (GxE) (see Schulte, 2001). A suite of changes in gene expression, integrated with biochemical, physiological and behavioral responses to environmental change, collectively makes up the acclimatization response (Schulte, 2001). As a fundamental shift in genetic value among environments, it is likely that GxE interaction is primarily determined by categorical or quantitative changes in gene activity, and that the physiological genetic basis of phenotypic reactions to environmental change should therefore be discernable at a molecular level in animals with similar genetic backgrounds exposed to different environments (Pigliucci, 1996). Knowledge about GxE at the level of individual genes, by precise quantification of intracellular processes, could provide a new insight in all events occurring between the gene and the appearance of the trait. Such presumptive associations should be particularly effective for genes in known genomic pathways of particular phenotypes.

#### Brook charr

Brook charr (*Salvelinus fontinalis*; Osteichthyes: Salmonidae) habitat ranges from small streams to large lakes and marine incursions (Groot 1996) in either lifetime fresh water residency or anadromy life-history tactic, where individuals make summer migrations into intermediate-high salinity estuaries or coastal marine waters (Power 1980, Barton 1996). Despite potential tradeoffs

with survival (Lenormand et *al.*, 2004), annual saltwater migration is considered to be advantageous because it provides access to superior food resources compared to the freshwater environments, translating into higher final weight-at-age (>4 kg) at the end of the saltwater period and greater longevity (8+ years) compared to residents (<1 kg and 3-4 years) (Power 1980, Barton 1996). There is evidence of genetic differentiation between the resident and anadromous life history types, both at the population level (Boula et *al.* 2002; Perry et *al.* 2005), and as distinct quantitative genetic basis within the same population (Thériault et *al.*, 2007). Exposure to the saline environment might therefore involve differentiation in the activity of genes in the growth pathway.

#### GH /IGF pathway

As in mammals, the growth hormone (GH) and insulin-like growth factor (IGF) are two major molecular targets in the potential endocrine regulation of growth (DeChiara et al., 1990, Baker et al., 1993, Le Bail et al., 1998, Moriyama et al., 1994). GH is a pluripotent hormone produced by the pituitary gland in teleosts and acts by binding to a single-transmembrane receptor, the GH receptor (GHR). Ligand binding induces receptor dimerization producing an active trimeric complex (Reinecke et al., 2005). This active complex stimulates the transcription and production of insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF-1), a hormone which plays a central role by mediating the growth-promoting actions of pituitary growth hormone (Duan, 1997) (Fig. 1). The direct versus indirect nature of GH action remains to be clarified, but GH appears to act both locally at the target tissue level to stimulate the autocrine/paracrine action of IGF-1, as well as on the liver to increase plasma IGF-1 levels (Björnsson et al., 2004). Both IGF-1 and growth hormone receptor (GHR) mRNA are detected in multiple fish tissues, but expression appears to be greatest in the liver (Wood et al., 2005). The impact of environment on expression level of GH/IGF-1 pathway gene is well documented in fish. Work in rainbow trout (Oncorhynchus mykiss) (e.g. Gabillard et al. (2003, 2006) showed that higher water temperature increases the level IGF-1 and GHR mRNA in liver tissues. Other work on rainbow trout (O. mykiss) by Chauvigné et al. (2003) and coho salmon (O. kisutch) by Duan and Plisetskaya (1993) also demonstrated that the feeding

period is associated with an increased of *IGF-1* mRNA expression in muscle and liver respectively.

In several fish species, tissue levels of *IGF-1* mRNA positively correlate with body growth rate (Duan 1997; Uchida et *al.* 2003; Beckman et *al.*, 2004, Reinecke et *al.*, 2005). Similarly, work with coho salmon (*O. kisutch*) (Duan, 1997) and gilthead sea bream (*Sparus aurata*) (Calduch-Giner et *al.*, 2003) indicated that the level of hepatic *GHR* is related to growth performance. However, investment in somatic growth carries inherent metabolic costs and obliquely limits, or is limited by, energetic suites for maintenance, reproduction and activity (Iwama, 1996). Thus, the relative production of molecules in physiological pathways for growth should be restricted by the genomic perception of environmental substrate available to support such pathways. For example, growth hormones might operate at greatest efficiency in salmonids exposed to saltwater, given that salinity reflects the most overt element of the classical salmonid feeding lek during the summer anadromous migration.

Besides environment and gross genetic value, sex may be integral to the physiological-genomic control of gene activity. Differences in gene activity and function between the sexes are common to elements of the *GH/IGF-1* axis in vertabrates(*GH*, *IGF-1*, Veldhuis 1995; *GH*, Baumbach and Bingham 1995; Parvizi et *al.* 2001; *GH* and *IGF-1*, Chowen et *al.* 1998, Riley et *al.*, 2002) and associated physiological systems (*i.e.* cortisol receptor, tilapia, Uchida et *al.* 2003) suggest moreover that males and females may vary in their genomic response to conditions on different points of common environmental functions. Thus, there is high interdependence of the molecular basis for sex and the *GH/IGF* axis (Han 1996; Andrade et *al.* 2002; Goya et *al.* 2002). Ecologically, there is also evidence for differences in male:female ratios in migratory *vs.* resident salmonid populations (Rikardsen et *al.* 1998).

#### Hypotheses

In this study, we investigated the effects GxE interactions on levels of gene expression and growth by documenting the impact of rearing environment (freshwater vs. saltwater), sex and

genotypic value on the expression of insulin-like growth factor (*IGF-1*) and growth hormone receptor (*GHR*). We hypothesized that: i) growth of individual brook charr would be higher under simulated estuarine/near coastal conditions, corresponding to optimal feeding zones for the brook charr (Gross, 1987, Power, 1980,); ii) the production of *IGF-1* and *GHR* would be correspondingly higher in saltwater-reared fish as a molecular, architectural basis for improved saline growth; and iii) as in mammals, the production of *IGF-1* and *GHR* should differ between sexes according to the different tactics associated with male and female salmonid ecology.

## **Materials and Methods**

#### Husbandry and strain history

In 2001, 20 mixed full-sib families were generated at the Laboratoire Régional des Sciences Aquatiques (LARSA, Université Laval, QC, Canada) from 15 sires and 10 dams (Appendix 1) originating from a commercial strain of brook charr used in Québec aquaculture derived from the Rupert River which drains into the James-Hudson Bay in northwestern Québec. Individuals, marked by external T-tags (Floy Inc., Seattle, Washington, USA), were randomly divided and assigned to one of two recirculation units, each composed of three 3000 L tanks. All fish were maintained at 10°C and 90% oxygen saturation, and on external photoperiod (50°25'N, 73°53'W, Québec, CA). Fish were fed 0.8% of their body weight (commercial feed pellets, Corey Feed Mills, Inc., NB) throughout the experiment. At the end of June 2004 (2+ age class), salinity was increased in one of the units (20‰) (SW; n=415) while being maintained at freshwater ( $\approx 0\%$ ) (FW; n=433) in the other for a period of five months. This salinity is typical of conditions commonly encountered by brook charr in estuarine and coastal marine waters.

#### Growth measurements and tissue sampling

Absolute growth ( $G_A = ((W_2-W_1)/d)$ , where  $W_1$  and  $W_2$  represent weight for the two successive samplings and *d* represents the interval in days (Barton 1996) were calculated for the entire population for the period of July to October. In November 2004, between 6 to15 fish were selected at random within each full-sib family (see below) in the freshwater and saltwater treatments. Fish were killed by rapid decapitation and  $\approx 200$  mg of liver tissue was removed and immediately frozen in liquid nitrogen for subsequent analysis of gene expression by reverse transcribed quantitative PCR (RT-qPCR). Individuals were sexed by examination of the gonads at euthanization.

#### Quantitative genetic modeling

We employed a reduced animal model (Mrode 1996; Lynch & Walsh 1998; Kruuk 2004) for the estimation of additive quantitative genetic variance ( $\sigma^2_a$ ) and best linear unbiased predictions (BLUP; Lynch and Walsh 1998) of breeding value (estimated breeding value; EBV) for absolute growth for all individuals (Perry et *al.* unpublished). Parent-offspring relationship and growth rate (as a single-vector phenotype) were coded using PEST (Groeneveld et *al.* 1990) for REML in VCE5.1 (Kovac et *al.* 2002) with the iteration of analytical gradients (Mrode 1996) in the animal model

$$y = X\beta + Za + e$$

where y is the phenotypic vector for growth rate, X is the design matrix  $(n \ge p)$  of fixed effects,  $\beta$  the fixed effects coefficient vector  $(p \ge 1)$ , Z is the incidence/relationship matrix  $(n \ge q)$  of genetic effects, a is the vector  $(u \ge 1)$  for additive genetic effects and e is random error. The above REML model was fit separately for each treatment. Rearing tank and group intercept within treatment tank were fit as fixed effects, and animal was the sole random effect. Two groups of three full-sib families having the most extreme mean EBV for growth were selected to represent the 'HIGH' and 'LOW' growth categories, respectively (see Appendix 1)

#### Total RNA extraction and reverse transcription

Total RNA was extracted from approximately 25 mg of liver tissue using a Qiazol isolation reagent (RNeasy 96 Universal Tissue, Qiagen), following the manufacturer's instructions. RNA concentrations were determined spectrophotometrically (GeneQuant, Pharmacia). Following DNAse treatment to remove residual genomic DNA, 10  $\mu$ g total RNA was used in a 100  $\mu$ l reaction to obtain first-strand cDNA by reverse transcriptase reaction (cDNA Archive Kit, Applied Biosystems).

#### Oligonucleotide design and Real-time PCR analysis of gene expression

The mRNA sequence for *IGF-1* and *GHR* were not available for brook charr in the EMBL or NCBI GeneBank (Benson et al, 2000). Consequently, we used the mRNA *IGF-1* sequence from chum salmon (*O. keta*) (Acc. No. AF063216) and mRNA *GHR* sequence from coho salmon (*O. kisutch*) (Acc. No. AF403539) to design non-specific primers. We used these primer pairs to amplify and sequence a region ( $\approx$ 200 bp) of brook charr *IGF-1* and *GHR* mRNA. Gene specific primers and probes were designed from this sequence using Primer Express® software (Table 1). Primers were tested using conventional PCR and tested by amplifying a single band of approximately 90 bp. Primer concentrations were optimized following the manufacturer's instructions (ABI PRISM ®7000 Sequence Detection System (SDS), Applied Biosystems). Relative quantification of gene expression was achieved by concurrent amplification of the eukaryotic 18S rRNA endogenous control (Applied Biosystems).

Each reaction (25  $\mu$ l) was run in triplicate and contained 5  $\mu$ l of cDNA (diluted 1: 10 for target genes and 1: 100 for 18S rRNA gene), 12.5  $\mu$ l Taqman Universal PCR master mix (Applied Biosystem), and 0.9  $\mu$ M F/R primers. The thermocycling profile used was the default from the SDS 2.0 software (50 °C for 2 min, 95 °C for 10 min, followed by 40 cycles of 95 °C for 15 s and 60 °C for 1 min). For each primer and probe set, two negative controls were also amplified: non-reverse transcribed total RNA treated with DNase (as a control for contamination by genomic DNA) and a template negative sample, to control for any contamination of the reagents. Amplification efficiencies for all primer/probe sets were calculated following the manufacturer's instructions, and all values proved to be sufficient to allow direct comparison of amplification plots according to the  $\Delta\Delta C_t$  method (see Sequence Detection Systems Quantitative Assay Design and Optimization, Applied Biosystems).

#### Statistical modeling

All data were modeled under a linear mixed-effects framework (S-Plus 6.1; Insightful Corporation), in which each family was nested as a random factor within their respective EBV type (HIGH/LOW). Thus, the underlying covariance structure inherent within the data set due to non-replicable nesting of one grouping factor within another was accounted for as random variation between EBV type (HIGH/LOW) and among families within each EBV type. Effects of rearing environment (saltwater (SW) vs. freshwater (FW)) and sex (male vs. female), and their interactions with genotypic value (HIGH vs. LOW EBV) were modeled as fixed-effects, with parameter estimated by maximum likelihood. Although this analysis captures interaction effects with EBV group, the significance of the main effect of genotypic value cannot directly be estimated from the model due to insufficient (0) degrees of freedom associated with the nesting factor (EBV group). Consequently, the EBV group effect was estimated separately using a linear mixed effects model incorporating random variation among families and fixed-effect differences between EBV groups. Underlying assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were evaluated with diagnostic plots. In one case (growth relative to GHR expression; see subsequent section), heteroscedasticity of within group errors was incorporated into the model via separate variance estimators for each grouping stratum.

Model selection followed a backwards step-wise procedure. A maximal model incorporating all simple and interaction terms was initially defined, of the form

 $y_{ijk} = (\beta_0 + b_i + b_{ij}) + \beta_1 E + \beta_2 S + \beta_3 GxE + \beta_4 GxS + \beta_5 ExS + \beta_6 GxExS + \epsilon_{ijk}$ 

where  $y_{ijk}$  is mRNA expression (*GHR* or *IGF-1*) or individual absolute growth for the *k*th individual from the *i*th family of the *k*th EBV group, betas ( $\beta$ ) corresponding to fixed-effects coefficients for the terms environment (E), sex (S) and EBV group (G), herein also representative of genotypic effects, and b<sub>i</sub> b<sub>ij</sub> represent random effects vectors describing variation around the model intercepts (*i.e.* whole-experimental mean) attributable to the *i*th family nested within the *k*th EBV group, and  $\varepsilon_{ijk}$  is random error. The significance of each term (*i.e.* model coefficient) was evaluated by conditional F-tests (Appendix 2a, b, c). Progressively simpler models were subsequently defined by removing non-significant terms from precedent models beginning with interaction effects. Nested models were then evaluated using likelihood

ratio tests to select the most parsimonious model. The reported p-values correspond to results of the likelihood ratio tests wherein a value greater than the nominal level of significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) indicates that removal of the model term does not increase model deviance significantly. In the event that term removal resulted in a likelihood ratio test approaching a marginal level of significance ( $0.05 \le p \le 0.10$ ), final model selection was made through use of the Akaike Information Criterion. Finally, group means were estimated as linear predictors based on the most parsimonious model. Standard errors for each estimate were determined from a bootstrap distribution (1,000 iterations) of model predictions.

#### Individual transcript efficiency (iTE)

Given the direct role of both *IGF-1* and *GHR* in the physiological process of vertebrate growth (Baker et al. 1993; Duan 1997; Le Bail et al. 1998; Moriyama et al. 1997; Calduch-Giner et al. 2003; Beckman et al. 2004; Reinecke et al. 2005), the effect of environmental modification on their ultimate phenotypic expression might be most effectively surveyed from the direct ratio of gram-to-gain for inferred mRNA production to phenotype. Such an analysis would reflect that of a simple single-QTL design or candidate gene analysis without control for physiological/genomic background. Here, mRNA production was inherently evaluated relative to that of an endogenous control molecule (eukaryotic 18S rRNA; see above), which at the least controls for gross effects of general physiological background. Thus, in order to evaluate relative association between mRNA production and phenotype, we defined a novel ratio which is term 'individual transcript efficiency' (iTE). This iTE ratio represents the effective growth per unit of mRNA production  $(G_A/X)$ , where  $G_A$  is the absolute growth and X is the production in units of IGF-1 or GHR (units is arbitrary, herein the value representing the fold difference between a given gene and individual control). We tested iTE for GHR and IGF-1 using the same general model (see above under Statistical modeling) to evaluate effects associated with integral genetic value (families from either HIGH or LOW growth category), saline environment (FW/SW), sex and GxE interaction on the relative genomic efficiency for each gene, *i.e.* the dependence of their specific capacity to produce phenotype depending on environmental and genetic group effects.

## Results

#### Freshwater and saltwater growth

We observed marked differences in growth between the two salinity conditions (0‰ and 20‰) (Table 2, Figure 2, see also Appendix 3a for details on each family) with freshwater-reared individuals growing almost 30% faster than their saltwater-reared full-sibs at the same feeding regime ( $\mu_{FW}$ =1.52±0.0689 g·d<sup>-1</sup>;  $\mu_{SW}$ =1.15±0.0572 g·d<sup>-1</sup>). Males had a significantly higher growth than females, independently of the environment ( $\mu_{male}$ =1.46±0.0597 g·d<sup>-1</sup>,  $\mu_{female}$ =1.20±0.0666 g·d<sup>-1</sup>). HIGH-EBV families also exhibited higher growth ( $\mu$ =1.58±0.0663 g·d<sup>-1</sup>) relative to those in the LOW-EBV category ( $\mu$ =0.970±0.0537 g·d<sup>-1</sup>). There was also evidence of interaction among EBV group and environment on growth within these families, as detailed below (Table 2).

#### Main sexual, familial and environmental effects on gene activity

Contrary to initial expectations, level of *GHR* gene expression of individuals in the HIGH-EBV was significantly lower ( $\mu$ =0.620±0.0819) than that observed in the LOW-EBV group ( $\mu$ =0.839±0.0855) (Table 3, Figure 2; see also Appendix 3b). *GHR* expression was also much higher for fish in the saltwater rearing environment ( $\mu$ =0.848±0.0460) than their full sibs in the freshwater treatment ( $\mu$ =0.611±0.0510) despite the fact that growth in saltwater was slower. There were also marked effects of sex on gene transcription for *GHR*. In contrast to the above findings of higher growth in FW-reared fish despite lower hepatic *GHR* and higher growth in males, *GHR* expression was significantly higher for brook charr males ( $\mu$ =0.907±0.0537) than females ( $\mu$ =0.551±0.0485). As for *GHR* and growth, there were major effects of sex on *IGF-1* expression. Thus, *IGF-1* expression was almost four times higher in males ( $\mu_m$ =2.38±0.114) than females ( $\mu_f$ =0.583±0.0910). However, in contrast to *GHR*, there was however no evidence of environmental effects or genotypic impact on the expression of *IGF-1* (Table 3, Figure 2)

#### Individual transcript efficiency (iTE)

We detected highly significant differences in growth relative to *GHR* expression among environments with substantially lower gains per unit *GHR* investment (iTE<sub>*GHR*</sub>) in the saltwater environment ( $\mu$ =2.00±0.246 g·d<sup>-1</sup>·u<sup>-1</sup>) compared to their freshwater-reared sibs ( $\mu$ =3.71±0.253 g·d<sup>-1</sup>·u<sup>-1</sup>) (Table 4, Figure 2; see also Appendix 3c). Females also had significantly higher iTE<sub>*GHR*</sub> ( $\mu$ =3.122±0.229 g·d<sup>-1</sup>·u<sup>-1</sup>) than males ( $\mu$ =2.362±0.286 g·d<sup>-1</sup>·u<sup>-1</sup>). Differences among EBV groups for iTE<sub>*GHR*</sub> were also highly significant where the LOW-EBV group ( $\mu$ =1.97±0.241 g·d<sup>-1</sup>·u<sup>-1</sup>) showed a lower effective growth per unit *GHR* production than the HIGH-EBV group ( $\mu$ =3.73±0.239 g·d<sup>-1</sup>·u<sup>-1</sup>). Also, there was evidence of interaction between EBV group and environment for iTE<sub>*GHR*</sub> (see below; Table 4).

We detected differences in iTE<sub>*IGF-1*</sub> between the saltwater and freshwater rearing environments; similar to findings for *GHR*, fish in the saltwater group had significantly lower growth per unit *IGF-1* mRNA ( $\mu_{iTE}=2.34\pm0.516 \text{ g}\cdot\text{d}^{-1}\cdot\text{u}^{-1}$ ) than full-sibs reared in freshwater ( $\mu_{iTE}=3.67\pm0.530$ g·d<sup>-1</sup>·u<sup>-1</sup> Table 4 and Figure 2). Like *GHR* also, females had significantly higher iTE ( $\mu=3.877\pm0.471 \text{ g}\cdot\text{d}^{-1}\cdot\text{u}^{-1}$ ) than males ( $\mu=1.276\pm0.588 \text{ g}\cdot\text{d}^{-1}\cdot\text{u}^{-1}$ ) (Table 4). Likewise, there was apparent differentiation in iTE<sub>*IGF-1*</sub> between the HIGH- and LOW-EBV group where growth per unit *IGF-1* was higher in the former ( $\mu=3.78\pm0.488 \text{ g}\cdot\text{d}^{-1}\cdot\text{u}^{-1}$ ) than the latter ( $\mu=2.35\pm0.491 \text{ g}\cdot\text{d}^{-1}\cdot\text{u}^{-1}$ ). We also detected evidence of GxE for iTE<sub>*IGF-1*</sub> (see below; Figure 2).

#### Genotype-by-environment interaction

Significant EBV group-by-environment interaction for each trait studied indicated the presence of genotype-by-environment interactions. Namely, significant GxE interaction, supported by non-parallel reaction norms (Figure 2), was observed for absolute growth (Table 2), expression level of both *GHR* and *IGF-1* genes (Table 3), as well as individual transcript efficiency for both *GHR* and *IGF-1* genes (Table 4).

### Discussion

The aim of this study was to determine the impact of interactions between environment, sex and genetic value on the expression level of two key genes associated with the *GH/IGF* system, and their influence on growth in the brook charr. For this purpose we performed an experiment where individuals (n=415) from 20 full-sib families were transferred into a simulated estuarine condition (20 ‰) for a five month period while their siblings were maintained in freshwater. From the list of parental fish ranked according to their genotypic value (EBV), we selected individuals from six families from HIGH- and LOW-EBV sires and dams. A quantitative RT-PCR approach was then used to determine the impact of environment, sex, genotypic value and their interactions on expression level of *GHR* and *IGF-1* in liver tissue. Overall, our results provided evidence GxE interaction for individual gene expression. However, the patterns we observed between levels of gene expression and growth in different environments did not systematically fit a priori expectations. Below we discuss these results in the context of the evolutionary significance of anadromy in salmonids.

#### Environmental and sex effect on growth

A key factor shaping the evolution of anadromy is the higher productivity that characterizes the saline environment relative to freshwater at higher latitudes (Gross, 1987). The adoption of this life-history strategy is advantageous for fish because it translates into higher final weigh-at-age and greater fecundity. Contrary to a priori expectation, however, we observed that freshwater-reared individuals grew almost 30% faster than saltwater-reared full-sibs under the same feeding regime. Our results, thus suggest strongly the intolerance of moderate salinity by this population, either as a failure of plastic acclimation to saltwater, or through inappropriate genetic architecture for saltwater tolerance (see also Perry et *al.* in prep). Higher variability in values for individual growth for saltwater reared-fish (data not shown) supports the hypothesis of inappropriate genetic architecture for saltwater tolerance. Recent studies on Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) (Staurnes et *al.*, 1992) and kokanee (*O. nerka*) (Foote et *al.*, 1994) showed that

shifts from non-anadromy to anadromy are physiologically possible for populations that have lived in freshwater for thousands of generations. That is, they retained the ability to osmoregulate in saltwater, although usually not as well as the ancestral anadromous form. Similarly, there is also a well documented case of the adoption of anadromy in a population of introduced rainbow trout (*O. mykiss*) (Pascual et *al.*, 2001). Therefore, we expected a priori that similar plasticity would also apply to brook charr. In contrary, our results suggest that the capacity to osmoregulate efficiently in saltwater is not ubiquitous among resident populations of andromous species and that this capacity may have been partially lost in the brook charr population used in this study.

We also observed that females had lower overall growth than males, whereas no evidence of sexby-environment interaction was observed associated with growth. This also contrasts with observations made on wild populations of other salmonids, wherein a marked preference is given to saltwater migration by females compared to males, likely due to greater body size related fitness gains in females, such as increased fecundity (Morita and Takashima, 1998) and a competitive advantage in obtaining better spawning sites, as well as access to mates (Holtby and Healey, 1990). Failure of females to attain growth advantages over males in saltwater (*i.e.* failure of sex-by-environment interaction) may suggest that exposure to saltwater represented a disruption in the typical eco-physiological range for the Rupert population. In addition, the higher overall growth for males compared to females could also be the result of differences in bioenergetic costs associated with sexual maturation. Given that our sampling was made during late summer and early fall, the period immediately preceding spawning, it is plausible that females were allocating proportionally more energy to gonadal tissues, and less to skeletal growth, than males (Jonsson et *al.*, 1991, Jonsson and Jonsson, 1997, Hutchings, 2006).

#### Environmental and sex effect on gene expression

Environmental modification of gene activity is being increasingly documented in the literature (Gabillard et *al.*, 2003, 2006, Scott et *al.*, 2004, Weber and Bosworth, 2005). Our results add to these studies by revealing differential gene expression under distinct environments in the brook

charr. However, our results refuted our working hypothesis that the production of IGF-1 and GHR would be higher in saltwater-reared fish as a molecular architectural basis for improved growth in this environment. In contrast, we observed that while fish reared in saltwater expressed more GHR mRNA, they had a slower growth rate than fish reared in freshwater. As a consequence, effective growth relative to transcript production – individual transcript efficiency (iTE) – was also considerably higher in freshwater-reared individuals than their saltwater-reared siblings for GHR and IGF-1. To our knowledge, there has never been an investigation of relative genomic 'efficiency' on such an environmental contrast, at least not in salmonid fishes. At any given point in ordinary development, organisms must invest energy into basal and active metabolism, reproduction, catabolic processes and stress resistance. Our findings suggest that the relative investment to produce the same amount of tissue in saltwater-reared brook charr is considerably higher than in the freshwater environment, and most particularly for GHR. This suggests either an environmental inhibition of molecular elements of growth below GHR and/or a failure of control in the production of GHR and/or precursors to it in the saltwater environment. Since we are unable to account for genetic-physiological effects beyond the genes specifically surveyed here, direct ratios of growth with gene production on the g-per-unit mRNA scale implicit in the iTE index assumes proportionality and uniformity in pathways of the GH/IGF system candidate genes themselves and in the surrounding metabolic systems along the transcriptional and translational axes. As such, our analysis is analogous to a single-gene analysis just above the level of candidate gene analysis, or of a single-QTL effect on phenotypic variance observed in contrasting environments which partitions phenotypic variance into locusspecific effects without specific knowledge of physiological processes occurring between DNA gene sequence and the catabolism of phenotype. While our family-replicated design should have sufficiently accounted for most sources of background variance, we also note that we cannot exclude the possibility that full-sib means were partially mediated by dominant genetic effects which may partially bias estimates of additive variance (Roff 1997; Pante et al. 2002). Future studies should emphasize a more complete analysis with a full range of physiological products of the growth pathway and associated members. Creating numerous, complete coefficients similar to iTE would be preferable and might reveal associated structure in other important subcomponents. However, it is noteworthy that the genes employed here are ubiquitous in the process of growth, and represent reasonable candidates for the description of this pathway.

The discrepancy between the expression levels in genes associated with *GH/IGF* and growth rate could also be the result of other physiological activities. The GH/IGF system has long been recognized as an important participant in the osmoregulatory physiology of fishes (Björnsson et al., 2002, Wood et al., 2005). Moreover, the absence of difference for the level of liver mRNA *IGF-1* between salt and freshwater environments has also been observed in rainbow trout, for which an abrupt transfer to 80% seawater resulted in increased IGF-1 mRNA levels in gills and kidneys, but not in the liver (Sakamoto and Hirano, 1993). In contrast, and similar to our observations for GHR, Sakamoto and Hirano (1991) showed that rainbow trout acclimated to seawater experienced an initial decrease in liver GHR followed by a significant increase after four days. Thus, our results and those of Sakamoto and Hirano (1991) indicate the likelihood of at least partial mediation by the liver in seawater adaptation. Unlike Sakamoto and Hirano (1991), however, we did not evaluate the level of active GHR in the membrane, but rather estimated the number of copies of the gene product. This suggests that the density of the receptor at the cell surface depends not only on the rate of gene expression and the stability of the GHR mRNA, but also on the removal of the protein, either by proteases (shedding) or by endocytosis and lysosomal breakdown (Björnsson et al., 2002). It can be argued that poorer growth in saltwater despite higher GHR expression could be the result of a false correlation between the number of copies of the gene product and the level of active GHR in the membrane, or because the higher GHR expression was related to other physiological activities (i.e. osmoregulatory activity).

#### Sex and genomic environmental response

We also detected a sex effect on gene activity in which the expression of *IGF-1* and *GHR* was significantly higher for brook charr males. Differences between sex in *IGF* and *GH* production have also been reported in other species, such as chickens (Goddard et *al.* 1996; see also Romero et *al.* 1996), and pig (Parvizi et *al.* 2001), where males typically have higher production rates

than females, as was observed in this study. Yet, these authors observed that male growth per GHR production was actually lower than that of females. This correlates with our results showing that higher expression of GHR was actually associated with poorer relative growth. Sex steroid hormones may influence the GH/IGF axis. Riley et al. (2002) found that in sexually dimorphic tilapia, injection of  $17\beta$ -estradiol into males resulted in a *GH/IGF* profile more closely resembling that of female fish (namely a lower plasma level of IGF-1 and higher plasma levels of GH), whereas administering di-hydrotestosterone to females elicited a serum GH/IGF profile resembling that of males. From these observations (see also Moriyama et al. 1997, Riley et al. 2002) Wood et al. (2005) suggested cross-involvement between sex steroid hormones and the GH/IGF axis, possibly at the level of hepatic GHR. GH resistance induced by sex steroids may thus contribute to the developmental switch between somatic and reproductive development associated with sexual maturation in fishes. Given this argument and the fact that our sampling occurred during late summer and early fall, the poorer relative growth despite higher expression in saltwater could be the result of an interaction between sex steroid hormones produced with the sexual maturation and the *GH*/*IGF* axis. This interaction could inhibit the utilization of *GHR* for growth processes or the transformation of the mRNA in active GHR in the membrane.

#### Genotype-by-environment interaction

Genotypic impact on gene expression, measured as the difference between EBV groups, was observed for both *GHR* and *IGF-1*. This corroborates previous observations (e.g. *Drosophila melanogaster*, Jin et *al.* (2001); *Fundulus heteroclitus*, Oleksiak et *al.* (2002)) that the genotype has a significant impact on variation in expression levels between individuals. Variation in gene expression among individuals within the same population is essential if natural selection is to select optimal phenotypes for novel environmental conditions, a primary requisite for adaptation to environmental change. Although the Rupert population survived in the novel, saline environment, its failure to attain an optimal phenotype within this environment may be viewed as evidence of lacking the appropriate genetic architecture for competitive growth within this environment. To our knowledge, this study represents one of very few reports of a GxE interaction for levels of gene expression, whereby the effect of genotypic value on gene

expression changed in relation to environmental condition. As such, observed non-parallel reaction norms for expression of *GHR* and *IGF-1* indicate variance in genetic value for growth at the level of individual genes in the *GH/IGF-1* axis as a function of the environment. Given its close relationship with fitness, genetic variation for growth could be maintained by a form of balancing selection: the presence of GxE interaction for individual genes of the *GH/IGF* axis can change the genetic target for selection because different genotypes may produce optimal phenotypes under different environmental conditions. Both mutations and environmental shock during developmental processes (Pigliucci and Murren 2003; West-Eberhard 2003), as well as quantitative genetic variance for environmental reaction, have been proposed for explaining phenotypically plastic responses to different environments (de Witt and Scheiner 2004a,b, de Jong 2005). Genotype-by-environment interaction from variance in full-sib family means for growth (see also Perry et *al.* in prep) in stressful systems implies genetic variance in local adaptability rather than transient instability leading to fixation.

In summary, we documented that both environment and sex had major impacts on the expression of mRNA for two key genes, *GHR* and *IGF*, involved in the physiological pathway for growth. We also demonstrate for the first time, at least in fish, genotype-by-environment interaction at the level of individual gene activity. As such, this work contributes significantly to ongoing efforts towards mapping environmentally and sexually induced variance of gene activity and to understand the resulting phenotypes. However, to achieve a more complete understanding of the molecular architecture responsible for the variation of a quantitative trait such as growth, future research should quantify both gene expression and the resultant proteins implicated in the physiological pathway underlying the trait. The continued increase in the use of methods such as RT-qPCR and microarrays in different fields of biology and physiology will provide an abundance of data for a better understanding of the functional and evolutionary significance of variation in gene expression.

TARGET GENE	PRIMER SET $(5' \rightarrow 3')$	PROBE $(5' \rightarrow 3')$
IGF-1	FORWARD: CAGGCATCCAGATTGTGCAA	CAGCCATTACTCTCTG
	REVERSE: ACCATGTTCTGAGAATTCCTGTGTT	
GHR	FORWARD: CCCACTGCCCCCTGTATCT	ACCATGGTGGAAGGAG
	REVERSE: CTTCAGAAGGAGGCTGTTTTGC	

Table 1. Primers and probes used in real time PCR assays of gene expression levels

	Absolute	growth	
Source of variation	d.f.	F	Р
Intercept	143	718.239	<.0001*
Environment	1	22.552	<.0001*
EBV group	1	51.569	0.002*
Sex	1	9.757	0.002*
EBV group x environment	2	19.945	<.0001*

Table 2 <u>.</u>Results of the maximum likelihood analysis of variance in mixed models for factors explaining absolute growth.

Asterisks indicate significant effects ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ).

		GHR			IGF-1	
Source of variation	d.f.	F	Р	d.f.	F	Р
Intercept	145	388.001	<.0001*	145	299.664	<.0001*
Environment	1	12.005	0.001*	1	0.093	0.761
EBV group	1	7.170	0.055*	1	2.444	0.193
Sex	1	13.603	0.001*	1	134.533	<.0001*
EBV group x environment	2	3.689	0.027*	2	4.066	0.019*

Table 3 Results of the maximum likelihood analysis of variance in mixed models for factors explaining expression level of *GHR* and *IGF-1*.

Asterisks indicate significant effects ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ).

		iTE_GHR			iTE_ <i>IGF</i> -	1
Source of variation	d.f.	F	Р	d.f.	F	Р
Intercept	146	246.948	<.0001*	146	29.991	<.0001*
Environment	1	60.215	<.0001*	1	6.096	0.014*
EBV group	1	27.786	0.006*	1	5.599	0.077
Sex	1	3.991	0.048*	1	8.699	0.004*
EBV group x environment	2	17.484	<.0001*	2	3.060	0.050*

Table 4 Results of the maximum likelihood analysis of variance in mixed models for factors explaining individual transcript efficiency (iTE) for *GHR* and *IGF-1* 

Asterisks indicate significant effects ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ).



Figure 1. *GH/IGF* axis. Illustration of the endocrine axis controlling growth in teleost fish. Multiple hormonal and nutritional factors may stimulate (+) the production and/or modify (+/-) the activity of *IGF-1*. Negative feedback (-) by *IGF-1* inhibits growth hormone secretion by the pituitary.



Figure 2. Predicted linear mean for absolute growth, relative gene expression an individual transcript efficiency (iTE) for male and female of HIGH- and LOW-EBV group reared in freshwater and saltwater (20‰) environments. Gene x Environment interaction between EBV group-by-environment for growth and iTE<sub>*GHR*</sub> is not systematically well illustrated by non-parallel reaction norms because the difference between EBV group within each environment was small, albeit statistically significant.

DAM	EBV	SIRE	EBV	FAMILY	Ν	EBV
						GROUP
126	-0.253	196	-0.205	1	102	LOW
126	-0.253	100	-0.042	2	52	
126	-0.253	162	-0.204	3	78	
193	-0.029	162	-0.204	4	88	
193	-0.029	100	-0.042	5	90	
193	-0.029	138	-0.178	6	82	
252	0.184	88	0.276	7	90	HIGH
252	0.184	249	-0.313	8	84	
252	0.184	196	-0.205	9	79	
252	0.184	138	-0.178	10	13	
217	-0.262	250	-0.262	13	102	LOW
242	0.218	84	0.185	15	93	HIGH
251	-0.159	177	-0.081	16	44	
231	-0.049	114	-0.049	17	93	
38	-0.188	247	-0.197	20	27	LOW
38	-0.188	148	-0.185	21	134	
38	-0.188	177	-0.081	22	127	
94	0.212	148	0.185	24	88	HIGH
135	-0.048	177	-0.081	26	55	
135	-0.048	235	-0.030	27	84	

Appendix 1 Rupert strain pedigree, estimated breeding value (EBV) for each dam and sire, number of individuals and family selected in reference to HIGH- and LOW EBV group (in bold characters).

Appendix 2a. Model selection for absolute growth using a backwards step-wise procedure. Progressively simpler models are subsequently defined by removing terms from previous models beginning with interaction effects (*e.g.* 1 vs. 2). Nested models were evaluated using likelihood ratio tests to select the most parsimonious model. The reported p-values correspond to results of the likelihood ratio tests wherein a value greater than the nominal level of significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) indicates that removal of the model term does not increase model deviance significantly. The final, parsimonious model that was selected is indicated in bold characters (Env = environment, EBV = EBV group).

	Abso	olute grow	th
Model	Log likelihood	Test	Р
<b>Growth</b> ~Env + Sex + EBV·Env + EBV·Sex +Env·Sex +EBV·Env· Sex (1)	-107.460		
~Env + Sex + EBV·Env + EBV·Sex +Env·Sex (2)	-108.443	1 vs. 2	0.169
$\sim$ Env + Sex + EBV·Env + EBV·Sex (3)	-108.499	2 vs. 3	0.737
~Env + Sex + EBV·Env (4)	-108.607	3 vs. 4	0.643
~Env + Sex (5)	-112.465	4 vs. 5	0.021

ModelLogTestPLogTestPlikelihoodlikelihoodlikelihoodlikelihoodlikelihood	GHR IGF-1	ocedure. Progressively simpler models vith interaction effects (e.g. 1 vs. 2), nonious model. The reported p-values ominal level of significance indicates he final, parsimonious model that was In the case of GHR, removal of the est. However, the interaction term was in a greater penalised likelihood score in a greater penalised likelihood score IGF-I IcF-I Icg Test P likelihood	a level using a backwards step-wise pro as from previous models beginning w od ratio tests to select the most parsim ests wherein a value greater than the n rease model deviance significantly. Th $\tau$ = environment, EBV = EBV group). nally non-significant likelihood ratio te 85.02), given that its exclusion resulted GHR GHR Iog Test $Plikelihood$	lix 2b. Model selection for expression sequently defined by removing term models were evaluated using likeliho ond to results of the likelihood ratio to aoval of the model term does not incu i is indicated in bold characters (Env nv term (model 5) resulted in a margi 1 in the final model (model 4 AIC = 18 5 AIC=186.11).	Appenc are sub Nested corresp that ren selected EBVxE retained (model
	ModelLogTestPLogTestPlikelihoodlikelihoodlikelihood		x	$\sim \text{Env} + \text{Sex} + \text{EBV} \cdot \text{Env} + \text{EBV} \cdot \text{Se}$	Gene
GHR IGF-1		in a greater penalised likelihood score	85.02), given that its exclusion resulted	l in the final model (model 4 AIC = 18 5 AIC=186.11).	retained (model
retained in the final model (model 4 AIC = 185.02), given that its exclusion resulted in a greater penalised likelihood scor (model 5 AIC=186.11). <i>GHR GHR G</i>	retained in the final model (model 4 AIC = 185.02), given that its exclusion resulted in a greater penalised likelihood score (model 5 AIC=186.11).	he final, parsimonious model that was In the case of GHR, removal of the sst. However, the interaction term was	rease model deviance significantly. Th = environment, EBV = EBV group). nally non-significant likelihood ratio te	noval of the model term does not incu l is indicated in bold characters (Env inv term (model 5) resulted in a margi	that ren selectec EBVxE
that removal of the model term does not increase model deviance significantly. The final, parsimonious model that wa that removal of the model term does not increase model deviance significantly. The final, parsimonious model that wa selected is indicated in bold characters (Env = environment, EBV = EBV group). In the case of GHR, removal of th EBVxEnv term (model 5) resulted in a marginally non-significant likelihood ratio test. However, the interaction term wa retained in the final model (model 4 AIC = 185.02), given that its exclusion resulted in a greater penalised likelihood scor (model 5 AIC=186.11).	that removal of the model term does not increase model deviance significantly. The final, parsimonious model that was selected is indicated in bold characters (Env = environment, EBV = EBV group). In the case of GHR, removal of the EBVxEnv term (model 5) resulted in a marginally non-significant likelihood ratio test. However, the interaction term was retained in the final model (model 4 AIC = 185.02), given that its exclusion resulted in a greater penalised likelihood score (model 5 AIC=186.11).	vith interaction effects (e.g. 1 vs. 2). Nonious model. The reported p-values	out verwerge conservations and the models beginning when previous models beginning when the most parsim	sequently defined by removing term models were evaluated using likeliho	are sub Nested
are subsequently defined by removing terms from previous models beginning with interaction effects (e.g. 1 vs. 2. Nested models were evaluated using likelihood ratio tests to select the most parsimonious model. The reported p-value correspond to results of the likelihood ratio tests wherein a value greater than the nominal level of significance indicate that removal of the model term does not increase model deviance significantly. The final, parsimonious model that wa selected is indicated in bold characters (Env = environment, EBV = EBV group). In the case of GHR, removal of th EBVxEnv term (model 5) resulted in a marginally non-significant likelihood ratio test. However, the interaction term wa retained in the final model (model 4 AIC = 185.02), given that its exclusion resulted in a greater penalised likelihood scor (model 5 AIC=186.11).	are subsequently defined by removing terms from previous models beginning with interaction effects (e.g. 1 vs. 2). Nested models were evaluated using likelihood ratio tests to select the most parsimonious model. The reported p-values correspond to results of the likelihood ratio tests wherein a value greater than the nominal level of significance indicates that removal of the model term does not increase model deviance significantly. The final, parsimonious model that was selected is indicated in bold characters (Env = environment, EBV = EBV group). In the case of GHR, removal of the EBV xEnv term (model 5) resulted in a marginally non-significant likelihood ratio test. However, the interaction term was retained in the final model (model 4 AIC = 185.02), given that its exclusion resulted in a greater penalised likelihood score (model 5 AIC=186.11).	ocedure. Progressively simpler models	n level using a backwards step-wise pro	lix 2b. Model selection for expression	Append

			GHR			IGF-1	
Model		Log likelihood	Test	d	Log likelihood	Test	Р
Gene	~Env + Sex + EBV·Env + EBV·Sex +Env·Sex +EBV·Env· Sex (1)	-82.617			-198.918		
	~Env + Sex + EBV·Env + EBV·Sex +Env·Sex (2)	-83.111	1 vs. 2	0.320	-199.142	1 vs. 2	0.502
	$\sim Env + Sex + EBV \cdot Env + EBV \cdot Sex$ (3)	-83.460	2 vs. 3	0.403	-199.170	2 vs. 3	0.815
	~Env + Sex + EBV·Env (4)	-84.513	3 vs. 4	0.147	-200.233	3 vs. 4	0.145
	~Env + Sex (5)	-87.055	4 vs. 5	0.079	-203.634	4 vs. 5	0.033

likelihood likelihood											
	Appendix 2c. Model selection for individual transcript efficiency using a backwards step-wise procedure. Progressively simpler models are subsequently defined by removing terms from previous models beginning with interaction effects ( <i>e.g.</i> 1 vs. 2). Nested models were evaluated using likelihood ratio tests to select the most parsimonious model. The reported p-values correspond to results of the likelihood ratio tests wherein a value greater than the nominal level of significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) indicates that removal of the model term does not increase model deviance significantly. The final, parsimonious model that was selected is indicated in bold characters (Env = environment, EBV = EBV group). In the case of iTE <sub><i>IGF-I</i></sub> , removal of the EBVXEnv term (model 5) resulted in a marginally non-significant likelihood ratio test. However, the interaction term was retained in the final model (model 4 AIC = 890.47), given that its exclusion resulted in a greater penalised likelihood score (model 5 AIC= 891.34). ITE_ <i>GHR</i> is indicated in the final model (model 4 AIC = 890.47), given that its exclusion resulted in a greater penalised likelihood score (model 5 AIC= 891.34).										
Model Log Test P Log Test P	Appendix 2c. Model selection for individual transcript efficiency using a backwards step-wise procedure. Progressively simpler models are subsequently defined by removing terms from previous models beginning with interaction effects (e.g. 1 vs. 2). Nested models were evaluated using likelihood ratio tests to select the most parsimonious model. The reported p-values correspond to results of the likelihood ratio tests wherein a value greater than the nominal level of significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) indicates that removal of the model term does not increase model deviance significantly. The final, parsimonious model that was selected is indicated in bold characters (Env = environment, EBV = EBV group). In the case of iTE <sub><i>IGF-1</i></sub> , removal of the EBVXEnv term (model 5) resulted in a marginally non-significant likelihood ratio test. However, the interaction term was retained in the final model (model 4 AIC = 890.47), given that its exclusion resulted in a greater penalised likelihood score (model 5 AIC= 891.34).										
iTE_GHRiTE_IGF-IModelLogTestP	Appendix 2c. Model selection for individual transcript efficiency using a backwards step-wise procedure. Progressively simpler models are subsequently defined by removing terms from previous models beginning with interaction effects ( <i>e.g.</i> 1 vs. 2). Nested models were evaluated using likelihood ratio tests to select the most parsimonious model. The reported p-values correspond to results of the likelihood ratio tests wherein a value greater than the nominal level of significance ( $\alpha$ = 0.05) indicates that removal of the model term does not increase model deviance significantly. The final, parsimonious model that was selected is indicated in bold characters (Env = environment, EBV = EBV group). ). In the case of iTE <sub>IGF-I</sub> , removal of the EBVXEnv term (model 5) resulted in a marginally non-significant likelihood ratio test. However, the										
removal of the EBVxEnv term (model 5) resulted in a marginally non-significant likelihood ratio test. However, the interaction term was retained in the final model (model 4 AIC = 890.47), given that its exclusion resulted in a greater penalised likelihood score (model 5 AIC = 891.34). iTE_GHR its exclusion resulted in a greater it is exclusion resulted in a greater model (model 5 AIC = 891.34).	Appendix 2c. Model selection for individual transcript efficiency using a backwards step-wise procedure. Progressively simpler models are subsequently defined by removing terms from previous models beginning with interaction effects ( <i>e.g.</i> 1 vs. 2). Nested models were evaluated using likelihood ratio tests to select the most parsimonious model. The reported										

iTE_GHR iTE_IGF-I	iTE_IGF-I   Log Test   Log Test   -436.651 1 vs. 2   -436.657 1 vs. 2   -436.897 2 vs. 3   -437.236 3 vs. 4	<i>P</i> 0.388 0.474 <b>0.331</b>	E_ <i>GHR</i> Test 1 vs. 2 vs. 3 <b>3 vs. 4</b>	iT Log likelihood -297.317 -297.689 -297.945 -298.417	av + Sex + EBV·Env + EBV·Sex nv·Sex +EBV·Env· Sex (1) nv + Sex + EBV·Env + EBV·Sex nv·Sex (2) nv + Sex + EBV·Env + EBV·Sex (3) nv + Sex + EBV·Env (4)
Log     Test     P     Log     Test       + EBV·Env + EBV·Sex     -297.317     -436.651     1vs. 2       BV·Env Sex (1)     -297.317     -436.651     1vs. 2       + EBV·Env + EBV·Sex     -297.689     1 vs. 2     0.388     -436.657     1 vs. 2       + EBV·Env + EBV·Sex     -297.689     1 vs. 2     0.388     -436.657     1 vs. 2       + EBV·Env + EBV·Sex     -297.689     1 vs. 2     0.388     -436.657     1 vs. 2       + EBV·Env + EBV·Sex     -297.945     2 vs. 3     0.474     -436.897     2 vs. 3       + EBV·Env (A)     -297.945     2 vs. 3     0.474     -436.897     2 vs. 3	-439.672 4 vs. 5	0.012	4 vs. 5	-302.856	(2)
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$\begin{array}{c ccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	-436.897 2 vs. 3 (	0.474	2 vs. 3	-297.945	$(+ EBV \cdot Env + EBV \cdot Sex (3))$
LogTestPLogTestlikelihoodlikelihoodlikelihood1+ EBV·Env + EBV·Sex-297.317-436.651	-436.657 1 vs. 2	0.388	1 vs. 2	-297.689	+ EBV·Env + EBV·Sex
LogTestPLogTestlikelihoodlikelihoodlikelihood	-436.651			-297.317	+ EBV·Env + EBV·Sex 3BV·Env· Sex (1)
	Log Test likelihood	Ρ	Test	Log likelihood	

		Absolut	e growth	
	Fres	shwater	Sal	twater
Family	Female	Male	Female	Male
LOW-EBV-1	0.832±0.127	1.513±0.323	0.870±0.187	0.843±0.162
LOW-EBV-13	1.125±0.152	1.511±0.187	0.806±0.138	0.855±0.264
LOW-EBV-20	1.491±0.457	1.291±0.227	0.729±0.162	0.961±0.187
HIGH-EBV-7	1.363±0.205	1.781±0.145	1.242±0.173	1.294±0.187
HIGH-EBV-15	1.709±0.132	2.321±0.264	1.392±0.145	1.902±0.229
HIGH-EBV-24	1.853±0.152	1.092±0.229	1.516±0.264	1.745±0.264

Appendix 3a. Absolute growth for male and female of HIGH- and LOW-EBV families reared in freshwater and saltwater environments.

Values are LS means  $\pm$  SE. LS means were estimated as linear predictors based on the most parsimonious model. Standard errors for each estimate were determined from a bootstrap distribution (1,000 iterations) of model predictions.

Appendix 3b. Expression level for *GHR* and *IGF-1* genes for male and female of HIGH- and LOW-EBV families reared in freshwater and saltwater environments.

		5	HR			10	H-1	
	Fresl	hwater	Salt	water	Fresh	nwater	Salt	water
Family	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
LOW-EBV-1	0.687±0.102	1.306±0.260	0.893±0.150	$1.087 \pm 0.130$	0.651±0.217	1.820±0.554	0.557±0.320	1.435±0.277
LOW-EBV-13	$0.400 \pm 0.123$	0.626±0.150	$0.697 \pm 0.106$	1.833±0.213	$0.419 \pm 0.260$	$2.609 \pm 0.320$	0.365±0.226	2.293±0.452
LOW-EBV-20	$0.205 \pm 0.260$	$0.679 \pm 0.184$	$0.636 \pm 0.130$	1.017±0.150	0.196±0.554	$2.137 \pm 0.391$	0.338±0.277	2.525±0.320
HIGH-EBV-7	$0.500 \pm 0.165$	0.579±0.116	$0.679 \pm 0.139$	0.506±0.150	$0.489 \pm 0.350$	2.495±0.248	$1.989 \pm 0.296$	$1.779 \pm 0.320$
HIGH-EBV-15	$0.322 \pm 0.106$	0.549±0.213	$0.664{\pm}0.116$	$1.184 \pm 0.184$	0.495±0.226	2.474±0.452	$0.649 \pm 0.248$	3.355±0.391
HIGH-EBV-24	0.612±0.122	0.861±0.213	0.320±0.184	0.659±0.213	0.577±0.261	2.979±0.452	$0.273 \pm 0.391$	2.667±0.452
Values are LS mestimate were det	$cans \pm SE. LS n$ termined from a	neans were estim t bootstrap distrib	ated as linear pre oution (1,000 iter	edictors based on the a ations) of model pred	nost parsimoniou ictions.	s model. Standar	rd errors for each	

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Appendix 3c. Individual transcript efficiency (iTE) of *GHR* and *IGF-1* for male and female of HIGH- and LOW-EBV families reared in freshwater and saltwater environments.

		iTE_	GHR			iTE_/	GF-1	
	Fresh	Iwater	Saltv	vater	Fresh	water	Saltv	/ater
Family	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
LOW-EBV-1	2.500±0.545	$1.158 \pm 1.390$	$1.205 \pm 0.802$	$0.804 \pm 0.695$	3.363±1.112	$0.831 \pm 2.854$	2.624±1.648	0.665±1.427
LOW-EBV-13	3.450±0.655	2.960±0.802	$1.381 \pm 0.593$	$0.740 \pm 1.135$	4.284±1.345	$0.588 \pm 1.648$	2.920±1.217	$0.510 \pm 2.330$
LOW-EBV-20	4.522±1.390	$1.887 \pm 0.983$	$1.440 \pm 0.695$	$0.988 \pm 0.802$	4.190±2.854	$0.676 \pm 2.018$	3.185±1.427	0.379±1.648
HIGH-EBV-7	3.979±0.879	4.268±0.622	2.208±0.743	$4.001 \pm 0.802$	4.881±1.805	4.954±1.276	$1.633 \pm 1.525$	$3.924{\pm}1.648$
HIGH-EBV-15	$6.121 \pm 0.567$	4.824±1.135	2.798±0.622	$1.863 \pm 0.983$	6.312±1.165	0.960±2.330	3.661±1.276	$0.574 \pm 2.018$
HIGH-EBV-24	4.472±0.655	2.028±1.135	3.392±0.983	2.825±1.135	5.360±1.345	0.557±2.330	4.121±2.018	$0.701 \pm 2.323$
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Values are LS means  $\pm$  SE. LS means were estimated as linear predictors based on the most parsimonious model. Standard errors for each estimate were determined from a bootstrap distribution (1,000 iterations) of model predictions.

## Conclusion

Le rôle des interactions génotype/environnement comme facteur responsable de la variation phénotypique entre environnements est établi depuis longtemps. Par contre, la connaissance de l'architecture moléculaire qui est sous-jacente à ces interactions GxE est limitée. Pourtant, ces connaissances permettraient de mieux comprendre l'implication de variations dans l'expression des gènes individuels en fonction de l'environnement dans la suite des événements qui s'établit à partir du niveau des gènes jusqu'à l'occurrence des traits phénotypiques. Dans cette optique, l'objectif de la présente étude était de déterminer les impacts des interactions entre l'environnement, le sexe et la valeur génétique et le niveau d'expression de deux gènes clés associés au système *GH/IGF* ainsi que leur influence sur la croissance chez l'omble de fonatine.

#### Effets de l'environnement et du sexe sur la croissance

Dans les régions froides et tempérées, l'eau salée offre souvent une ressource alimentaire plus importante qu'en eau douce (Gross, 1987). Cette différence de productivité est généralement reconnue comme étant un facteur important dans l'évolution de l'anadromie (Gross, 1987). L'atteinte d'une taille finale supérieure et d'une plus grande fécondité sont les principaux avantages qui découlent de l'adoption d'une stratégie d'histoire de vie anadrome. Contrairement à nos prédictions, nous avons observé que les poissons élevés en eau douce ont un taux de croissance 30% plus important que les poissons issus des mêmes familles élevés en eau salée, et ce avec le même régime alimentaire.

Nos résultats suggèrent que la souche de poisson utilisée montre une intolérance marquée pour l'environnement salé. Cette intolérance pourrait être le résultat d'une architecture génétique inappropriée pour la tolérance à l'eau salée ou de l'absence de signaux physiologiques généralement présents dans l'environnement (ex. : température de l'eau ou photopériode), ce qui aurait amené une incapacité des individus à s'acclimater à l'eau salée. Chez plusieurs populations naturelles de salmonidés, un biais est observé en faveur des femelles pour la migration en eau salée. Pour ces dernières, l'obtention d'une grande taille à

maturité est particulièrement avantageuse pour le succès reproducteur puisqu'une plus grande taille est en général synonyme d'une plus grande fécondité (Morita et Takashima, 1998) et d'un meilleur accès aux mâles et aux sites de fraie de plus grande qualité (Holtby et Healey, 1990). Pour la population de la présente étude, les résultats suggèrent plutôt le contraire puisque les femelles ont un niveau de croissance inférieur à celui des mâles. Par contre, il est raisonnable de penser que la plus grande croissance des mâles est le résultat des coûts bioénergétiques associés avec la maturation sexuelle des femelles. Notre échantillonnage s'étant déroulé au début de l'automne, il est possible que les femelles aient investi proportionnellement plus d'énergie dans le développement des tissus gonadiques que dans la croissance corporelle comparativement aux mâles (Jonsson et *al.*, 1991; Jonsson et Jonsson, 1997; Hutchings, 2006).

#### Effets de l'environnement sur l'expression des gènes

Dans la lignée des récentes études portant sur le sujet (Gabillard et al., 2003, 2006; Scott et al., 2004; Weber et Bosworth, 2005), nos résultats révèlent une expression différentielle des gènes en fonction de l'environnement, du moins pour GHR. Dans l'optique où l'augmentation du niveau d'activité des gènes de l'axe GH/IGF est responsable de l'amélioration de la croissance en eau salée, le résultat attendu était une augmentation de l'expression de *GHR* et *IGF-1* pour les poisons élevés dans un environnement d'eau salée. Nous avons bel et bien observé une expression supérieure de GHR pour les poissons élevés en eau salée. Cependant, ces mêmes poissons ont montré un taux de croissance inférieur à ceux élevés en eau douce. Au cours de leur développement, les organismes doivent à tout moment, investir de l'énergie dans le métabolisme de base, le métabolisme actif, la reproduction, les processus cataboliques et la résistance au stress. Nos résultats suggèrent que l'investissement relatif pour produire la même quantité de tissu pour les poissons gardés en eau salée est plus élevé que pour les poissons gardés en eau douce. Il est plausible de supposer que l'environnement salé altère la capacité de certains éléments de l'axe GH/IGF, en particulier GHR, à exercer un contrôle sur la croissance. La discordance observée entre le niveau d'expression des gènes associés à l'axe GH/IGF et le taux de croissance pourrait être le résultat d'autres activités physiologiques. En fait, le système

GH/IGF est depuis longtemps reconnu comme une composante importante dans le processus d'osmorégulation chez les poissons (Björnsson et al., 2002; Wood et al., 2005). L'absence de différences dans le niveau de transcription de l'ARNm d'IGF-1 dans le foie entre eau douce et eau salée a aussi été observée dans une étude portant sur la truite arc-enciel (O. mykiss) (Sakamoto et Hirano, 1993). De plus, nos résultats, en ce qui a trait à une augmentation de l'expression de GHR en eau salée, sont similaires à ceux obtenus par Sakamoto et Hirano (1991). Ces derniers ont montré que les truites arc-en-ciel présentaient une augmentation du nombre de GHR hépatiques après quatre jours en eau salée. Nos résultats et ceux de Sakamoto et Hirano (1993) appuient l'hypothèse d'une intervention possible des GHR hépatiques dans l'acclimatation à l'eau salée. Cependant, comparativement à Sakamoto et Hirano (1991), nous n'avons pas évalué la quantité de GHR actifs dans la membrane, mais plutôt le nombre de copies de l'ARNm du gène. Cela suggère que la densité de récepteurs à la surface de la cellule ne dépend pas uniquement du taux d'expression ou de la stabilité de l'ARNm de GHR, mais aussi du taux d'enlèvement des protéines par les protéases, par endocytoses ou encore des suites d'une dégradation par les lysozymes (Björnsson et al., 2002). On peut donc supposer que la croissance plus faible en eau salée, malgré une plus grande expression de GHR, pourrait être le résultat d'une mauvaise corrélation entre le nombre de copies du gène et le nombre de GHR actifs dans la membrane ou par d'autres activités physiologiques (ex. : activité d'osmorégulation).

#### Effet du sexe sur le niveau d'expression

En plus d'observer des différences d'expression entre les environnements, le sexe de l'individu a aussi un impact sur le niveau d'activité des gènes *GHR* et *IGF-1*. Nos résultats, soit une surexpression de *GHR* et *IGF-1* pour les mâles, sont comparables à ceux observés chez d'autres espèces comme le poulet (Goddard et *al.* 1996; Romero et *al.* 1996) et le porc (Parvizi et *al.* 2001), où les mâles présentent un taux de production d'*IGF* et de *GH* supérieur aux femelles. Cette différence d'expression peut être expliquée par l'influence des hormones stéroïdiennes sexuelles sur l'axe *GH/IGF*. En effet, Wood et *al.* (2005) ont suggéré la présence d'une interaction entre les hormones stéroïdiennes sexuelles et l'axe *GH/IGF*, possiblement au niveau des *GHR* hépatiques. La résistance à l'hormone de

croissance (*GH*) induite par les hormones stéroïdiennes pourrait ainsi contribuer aux changements physiologiques impliqués dans le développement somatique et reproductif au cours de la maturation sexuelle chez les poissons. En tenant compte de cet argument et du moment de notre échantillonnage (début de l'automne), il est possible que la croissance plus faible en eau salée, malgré une plus grande expression, résulte d'une interaction entre l'axe *GH/IGF* et les hormones stéroïdiennes sexuelles produites lors de la maturation sexuelle. Cette interaction pourrait inhiber l'utilisation de *GHR* pour la croissance ou nuire à la transformation de l'ARNm en *GHR* actif.

#### Interaction génotype/environnement

L'effet du génotype sur le niveau d'expression des gènes a été évalué pour les gènes GHR et IGF-1. Les résultats sont en accord avec ceux d'autres études (ex.: Drosophila melanogaster, Jin et al. (2001); Fundulus heteroclitus, Oleksiak et al. (2002)) qui ont montré que le génotype a un impact significatif sur le niveau d'expression observé entre individus. Pour les individus qui doivent s'adapter à un nouvel environnement, un changement dans l'expression des gènes est la première et la plus rapide des réponses. Ainsi, d'un point de vu évolutif, la variation dans l'expression des gènes entre individus d'une même population est essentielle pour que la sélection naturelle puisse potentiellement créer le phénotype optimal lorsqu'il y a des modifications dans l'environnement. Même si notre population a survécu en eau salée, on peut supposer que son incapacité à avoir une croissance supérieure en eau salée par rapport à l'eau douce soit le résultat d'une architecture moléculaire inappropriée. À notre connaissance, notre étude représente une des premières démonstrations d'interactions génotype/environnement au niveau de l'expression de gènes individuels puisque l'effet de la valeur génétique sur le niveau d'expression change en relation avec la condition environnementale. L'observation des interactions GxE pour l'expression de GHR et IGF-1 suggère la présence de variance dans la valeur génétique pour la croissance au niveau des gènes individuels de l'axe GH/IGF en fonction de la variance environnementale. De par sa relation avec le succès reproducteur, la variation génétique pour la croissance pourrait être maintenue par une forme de sélection balancée. Plus précisément, la présence d'interactions GxE pour des gènes individuels de l'axe *GH/IGF* pourrait amener la sélection naturelle à favoriser différents génotypes selon la condition environnementale.

Même s'il reste encore beaucoup à faire, l'utilisation de plus en plus courante des méthodes de profilages d'ARN dans les différents domaines de la biologie évolutive et de la physiologie comparée nous permet d'envisager une meilleure compréhension des implications fonctionnelles et évolutives causées par les changements d'expression. Cette étude avait pour but de quantifier les niveaux d'expression pour deux gènes clés dans le contrôle de la croissance, soit les gènes *GHR* et *IGF-1*, en fonction de l'environnement d'élevage, du sexe et de la valeur génétique des individus. Nous avons observé que l'environnement, le sexe et la valeur génétique ont un impact important sur le niveau d'expression des ARNm pour les gènes d'un système physiologique impliqué dans la croissance, l'axe *GH/IGF*. Encore plus intéressant, nous avons démontré, pour la première fois chez les poissons, la présence d'interactions génotype/environnement au niveau de l'activité de gènes individuels. Cette étude apporte une contribution dans la compréhension des processus impliqués dans la détermination du phénotype, soit de l'étape de l'expression des gènes jusqu'à celle des traits phénotypiques.

Pour avoir une meilleure compréhension de l'architecture moléculaire responsable de la variation observée pour un trait quantitatif tel que la croissance, les travaux futurs devront porter sur la quantification du plus grand nombre possible d'éléments qui composent la machinerie physiologique derrière ce trait. Cette quantification devra se faire à la fois pour l'expression des gènes, mais aussi des protéines qui en découlent. Il pourrait aussi être intéressant d'évaluer si les différences observées entre génotypes pour les niveaux d'expression des gènes se maintiennent entre les générations. Si tel est le cas, les individus qui arrivent à modifier de manière plus efficace leur niveau d'expression pourraient être sélectionnés dans un programme d'amélioration génétique.

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