

X-chromosomal markers in Forensic Genetics

GHEP 2025 Virtual workshop series. **March** 10.17 and 24th Daniel Kling and Andreas Tillmar





Teachers

Daniel Kling. PhD



- Forensic Expert
- National Board of Forensic Medicine. Sweden
- Worked in the field for 15 years
- Developer of Familias. FamLink and FamLinkX
- Applied biostatistics. relationship inference. genetic genealogy

Andreas Tillmar. PhD



- Forensic geneticist & Associate professor
- National Board of Forensic Medicine. Sweden and Linköping University. Sweden
- Worked in the field for over 15 years
- Technical leadership mixed with R&D
- Applied biostatistics. relationship inference.
 population genetics. genetic genealogy.
- Lead author of the ISFG Commission on Xchromosomal testing



Session 2 – Ad	vanced (March 17)		Presentations, exercises etc are available at
16:00	Introduction		https://familias.name/GHEP2025/
16:15-17:00	Advanced theory X-Deca	nlex	
17:00-17:10	Short break Argus	X12	Write your questions in the chat-function and
17:10-18:00	Haplotypes and databases		we will try to answer direct! (or save it to the
18:05-18:40	Exercises		end of the day)
18:40-19:00	Summary		
Session 1 – Basics (N	larch 10)	Session 3 – Ap	plications and examples (March 24)
16:00 Intro	oduction	16:00	Introduction
16:15-17:00 Basic	s of kinship testing and the utility of X-chromosor	n ^{16:15-17:00}	Summary of theory and some more advanced topics
17:00-17:10 Shor	t break	17:00-17:10	Short break
17:10-18:00 Softv	vare: FamLinkX	17:10-18:00	Examples
18:05-18:40 Exerc	cises	18:05-18:40	Exercises
18:40-19:00 Sumi	mary	18:40-19:00	Summary

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Solving relationship issues with DNA data

Legal situations: (e.g.) paternity. immigration. missing person identification. criminal acts (incest. human trafficking). investigative leads and more





X chromosome in humans

- A female has two X chromosomes
- A male has one X chromosome
- In rare occasions other variations may exist. XXY (Klinefelter). X0 (Turner). XXX (Triple X). XYY





X-chromosomal inheritance pattern





Inheritance pattern (one X locus)





Basic notations: Allele. haplotype. genotype. diplotype

Female



Maternal Paternal

 \cdot 10 is an *allele*

• 10/14.2 (or 10.14.2) is a *genotype*

 \cdot 10_12 is a *haplotype*

10_12/14.2_19 is a diplotype (or 10_12|14.2_19) (or 10|14.2 12|19)



Inheritance pattern makes X-chromosomal analysis more (or less) informative compared with autosomal DNA analysis

Generally more informative

- Paternal half-sisters vs unrelated
- Paternal grandmother/granddaughter vs unrelated
- For many pedigress. the exclusion probability is not null



Generally less informative

- Father/son vs unrelated
- Paternal grandfather/grandson vs unrelated
- Paternal halfbrothers vs unrelated



Tillmar et al.. 2017

See Pinto et al.. 2011



Two common X-chromosomal marker panels

- STRs (short tandem repeats)
- "X-Decaplex"

Focus in the first lecture

- 10 X STRs. in genetic linkage but mostly not in linkage disequilibrium (LD. allelic association).
- Developed by GEP-ISFG (Gusmao et al. 2009)

• Argus X-12QS

- 12 X STRs. in four "linkage groups". in genetic linkage but mostly not in linkage disequilibrium (LD. allelic association).
- Investigator Argus X-12 QS (Qiagen)





Which hypothesis is best supported by observed DNA profiles?









 $\Pr(DNA \mid H_1)$





Genotype/diplotype. allele/haplotype frequencies

• By applying Hardy-Weinberg formulas. we can obtain the needed genotype/diplotype frequencies from allele/haplotype frequencies (assuming HW equilibrium).

 \mathcal{D}_i The probability to observe allele *i* in the population

Allele:



 X_i Count of allele *i*

N Total number of observed alleles in the population database

Will be covered in Daniel's presentation

Haplotype:

$$p_i \approx \frac{x_i + \lambda \pi_i}{N + \lambda}$$

- p_i The probability to observe haplotype *i* in the population
- X_i Observed count of haplotype *i*
- N Total number of observed haplotypes in the population database
- π_i Prior probability of haplotype *i* (estimated from allele frequencies)
- λ $\;$ Lambda. the weight given to the prior probability $\;$



Allele/haplotype frequencies



• https://famlink.se/fx_databases.html

• Gusmao et al.. 2025



Μ

G_M=a.b

Paternity trio – <u>A simple example with one X-chromosomal marker</u>

 $\Pr(DNA \mid H_1) = \Pr(G_C, G_{AF}, G_M \mid H_1) = \Pr(G_{AF}, G_M \mid H_1) \cdot \Pr(G_C \mid G_{AF}, G_M, H_1)$



$$R = \frac{\Pr(DNA \mid H_1) = 2 \cdot p_a \cdot p_b \cdot p_c \cdot 0.5 \cdot 1}{\Pr(DNA \mid H_2) = 2 \cdot p_a \cdot p_b \cdot p_c \cdot 0.5 \cdot p_c} = \frac{1}{p_c}$$



L

 $G_{c}=a.c$

AF

G_{AF}=c

$$LR = Pr(DNA | H_2) = 2 \cdot p_a \cdot p_b \cdot p_c \cdot 0.5 \cdot p_c$$

$$AF$$

$$G_{AF}=C$$

$$Pr(DNA | H_2) = 2 \cdot p_a \cdot p_b \cdot p_c \cdot 0.5 \cdot p_c$$



Two common X-chromosomal marker panels

•	 STRs (short tandem repeats) "X-Decaplex" 10 X STRs. in genetic linkage but most disequilibrium (LD. allelic association Developed by GEP-ISFG (Gusmao et all state) 	In focus first lecture Iy not in linkage). I 2009)	DXS8378 DXS9898 DXS7133 GATA31E08 GATA172D05 DXS7423 DXS6809 DXS7132	 All markers located on the same chromosome. Markers are
•	 Argus X-12QS 12 X STRs. in four "linkage groups". in but mostly not in linkage disequilibriu association). 	genetic linkage ım (LD. allelic	DXS6809 DXS7132 DXS9902 DXS6789	genetically linked

- Investigator Argus X-12 QS (Qiagen)



Linkage and Linkage disequilibrium

- Linkage (or genetic linkage)
 - Can be described as the co-segregation of closely located loci within a family or pedigree.
 - Effects the transmission probabilities!
- Linkage disequilibrium (LD)
 - Allelic association.



- Two alleles (at two different markers) which is observed more often/less often than can be expected.
- Effects the founder genotype probabilities. not the transmission probabilities!
- Haplotype frequencies rather than allele frequencies must be used







Linkage and how it impacts the LR



- 1. A recombination must have occurred at AGM to explain the data (given this pedigree).
- 2. The probability of the observed DNA data (given this pedigree) depends on the recombination rate between marker 1 and marker 2!
- 3. E.g. if this recombination rate is very low. the probability is very low. Also. if the recombination rate is 0 (very very close markers). the observed data is not possible (given this pedigree)
- 4. Ignoring genetic linkage may result in false LRs



Genetic linkage















Recombination rate



Recombination rate/frequency

- When gametes are formed in meiosis. the two copies of each chromosome may be mixed together via **crossovers**.
- Closer chromosomal segments have a higher probability of staying together.
- If one. or an odd number. of crossovers occurs. a recombination has occurred.
- The probability of a recombination event to occur is the recombination rate/frequency.
- The recombination rate/frequency is used during likelihood calculation as the transmission probability.
- The recombination rate is normally correlated to the physical positions. but recombination hot spots exist!



We need information about the **genetic distance** between loci

- Centimorgan (cM) is a unit of genetic distance
- 1 cM \approx 1% recombination frequency
- More precise estimators are Haldane's and Kosmabi's mapping functions



Haldane's Mapping Function

- Assumes no crossover interference
- Uses Poisson distribution
- The relationship between recombination rate ("r") and genetic distance ("d") can be estimate via Haldane's mapping function as:

Formula [edit] $r=rac{1}{2}(1-e^{-2d})$

Inverse [edit]

$$d=-rac{1}{2}\ln(1-2r)$$



Kosambi's Mapping Function

- Accounts for crossover interference
- More accurate for larger distances
- The relationship between recombination rate ("r") and genetic distance ("d") can be estimate via Kosambi's mapping function as:

Formula [edit]

$$r=rac{1}{2} anh(2d)=rac{1}{2}rac{e^{4d}-1}{e^{4d}+1}$$

Inverse [edit]

$$d=rac{1}{2} anh^{-1}(2r)=rac{1}{4}\ln(rac{1+2r}{1-2r})$$



Correlation between genetic distance (cM) and recombination rate





Genetic Maps: Rutgers. deCODE. and HapMap

Rutgers Genetic Map

•The Rutgers map integrates data from various genetic studies. including linkage disequilibrium and pedigree-based analyses. The primary method for estimating genetic distances involves interpolation of recombination rates derived from multi-generational family data. which is further refined using computational models to improve accuracy. •http://compgen.rutgers.edu/rutgers_maps.shtml

deCODE Genetic Map

• The deCODE map estimates genetic distances by analyzing recombination events in a large Icelandic pedigree database. Recombination fractions between markers are directly observed from meiotic events within families. allowing for precise distance calculations.

https://genome.ucsc.edu/cgi-bin/hgTrackUi?db=hg38&g=recombRate2

•https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aau1043

HapMap Genetic Map

•Unlike traditional family-based genetic maps. the HapMap project estimates recombination rates using populationbased LD data. Genetic distances are inferred by analyzing correlations between genetic variants and identifying historical recombination events within populations.

•https://www.genome.gov/10001688/international-hapmap-project



X-Decaplex STR genetic positions

Marker	Physical (cM)	Rutgers v2 (cM)
DXS8378	9.33	20.21
DXS9902	15.23	32.32
DXS7132	64.57	90.75
DXS9898	87.68	101.29
DXS6809	94.83	108.12
DXS6789	95.34	108.47
DXS7133	108.93	118.18
GATA172D05	113.06	124.36
GATA31E08	140.06	160.54
DXS7423	149.46	184.19

https://chrx-str.org/xdb/marker.jsf?marker=DXS7133



X-Decaplex STR genetic positions (distance between neighboring STRs)

Marker	Physical	Rutgers v2	Physical recomb (%)	Rutgers recomb (%)
DXS8378	9.33	20.21	0	0
DXS9902	15.23	32.32	5.57	10.76
DXS7132	64.57	90.75	31.36	34.46
DXS9898	87.68	101.29	18.51	9.50
DXS6809	94.83	108.12	6.66	6.38
DXS6789	95.34	108.47	0.51	0.35
DXS7133	108.93	118.18	11.90	8.83
GATA172D05	113.06	124.36	3.97	5.81
GATA31E08	140.06	160.54	20.86	25.75
DXS7423	149.46	184.19	8.57	18.84









Recombination rate



STR mutations

"The possibility of mutation shall be taken into account whenever a genetic inconsistency is observed" (Gjertson et al.. 2007)

- Brinkmann et al (1998) found 23 mutations in 10.844 parent/child offsprings. Out of these 22 were single step and 1 were two-step mutations.
- Gusmao et al (2025)



• Mutation rate may depend on marker. sex (female/male). age of individual. allele size





Different approaches to calculate LR accounting for mutations exist. The most used one *"Stepwise mutation model"* $LR \sim (\mu_{tot}*adj_steps)/p(paternal allele)$



Paternity trio - Mutation



$$Pr(mut_{13\rightarrow 12})$$

Mutation model decreasing with range





Paternity trio - Mutation





FamLinkX





H2: M. C1 and C2 are all unrelated







H2: M. C1 and C2 are all unrelated

	Genetic position			
Name	(Rutgers)	Μ	C1	C2
Amel	-	X/X	X/Y	X/Y
DXS8378	20.21	10/11	10	10
DXS9902	32.32	11/12	11	11
DXS7132	90.75	13/14	13	13
DXS9898	101.29	11/12	11	11
DXS6809	108.12	31/32	31	31
DXS6789	108.47	20/21	20	21
DXS7133	118.18	9/10	9	9
GATA172D05	124.36	10/11	10	10
GATA31E08	160.54	11/12	11	11
DXS7423	184.19	14/15	14	14

No genetic inconsistencies between M and C1. and M and C2







H2: M. C1 and C2 are all unrelated

	Genetic position				
Name	(Rutgers)	M	C1	C2	Marginal LR
Amel	-	X/X	X/Y	X/Y	
DXS8378	20.21	10/11	10	10	1.8
DXS9902	32.32	11/12	11	11	3.6
DXS7132	90.75	13/14	13	13	4.6
DXS9898	101.29	11/12	11	11	26.7
DXS6809	108.12	31/32	31	31	29.1
DXS6789	108.47	20/21	20	21	0.03
DXS7133	118.18	9/10	9	9	0.3
GATA172D05	124.36	10/11	10	10	4.4
GATA31E08	160.54	11/12	11	11	7.0
DXS7423	184.19	14/15	14	14	4.2

Marginal LR for DXS6789 is very low. even tough no apparent inconsistency between M and C1. C2!

- \Rightarrow A recombination event must have occurred to explain the observed data.
- \Rightarrow Only 0.5 cM between DXS6809 and DXS6789







H2: M. C1 and C2 are all unrelated

	Genetic position				
Name	(Rutgers)	M	C1	C2	Marginal LR
Amel	-	X/X	X/Y	X/Y	
DXS8378	20.21	10/11	10	10	1.8
DXS9902	32.32	11/12	11	11	3.6
DXS7132	90.75	13/14	13	13	4.6
DXS9898	101.29	11/12	11	11	26.7
DXS6809	108.12	31/32	31	31	29.1
DXS6789	108.47	20/21	20	21	0.03
DXS7133	118.18	9/10	9	9	0.3
GATA172D05	124.36	10/11	10	10	4.4
GATA31E08	160.54	11/12	11	11	7.0
DXS7423	184.19	14/15	14	14	4.2

Marginal LR for DXS6789 is very low. even tough no apparent inconsistency between M and C1. C2!

- \Rightarrow A recombination event must have occurred to explain the observed data.
- \Rightarrow Only 0.5 cM between DXS6809 and DXS6789





H1: C1 and C2 are full siblings



H2: C1 and C2 are all unrelated

Name	Genetic position (Rutgers)	C1	С2	Marginal LR
Amel	-	X/Y	X/Y	
DXS8378	20.21	10	10	1.8
DXS9902	32.32	11	11	2.3
DXS7132	90.75	13	13	2.7
DXS9898	101.29	11	11	6.0
DXS6809	108.12	31	31	7.0
DXS6789	108.47	20	21	0.03
DXS7133	118.18	9	9	1.1
GATA172D05	124.36	10	10	1.7
GATA31E08	160.54	11	11	3.0
DXS7423	184.19	14	14	2.6

Marginal LR for DXS6789 is very low. even tough no data from. M!

- \Rightarrow A recombination event is probably to have occurred to explain
 - the observed data (given population frequencies).
- \Rightarrow Only 0.5 cM between DXS6809 and DXS6789





H1: C1 and C2 are paternal half siblings



H2: C1 and C2 are unrelated

	Genetic position			
Name	(Rutgers)	C1	C2	
Amel	-	X/X	X/X	
DXS8378	20.21	10/12	11/12	
DXS9902	32.32	11/13	11/13	
DXS7132	90.75	13/15	13/15	
DXS9898	101.29	11/13	12/13	
DXS6809	108.12	31/33	31/33	
DXS6789	108.47	20/22	21/22	
DXS7133	118.18	9/11	9/11	
GATA172D05	124.36	10/12	11/12	
GATA31E08	160.54	11/13	11/13	
DXS7423	184.19	14/16	15/16	

No genetic inconsistencies between C1 and C2

 \Rightarrow LR=322. Is this expected? Let's simulate





H1: C1 and C2 are paternal half siblings

	Genetic position			
Name	(Rutgers)	C1	C2	
Amel	-	X/X	X/X	
DXS8378	20.21	10/12	11/12	
DXS9902	32.32	11/13	11/13	
DXS7132	90.75	13/15	13/15	
DXS9898	101.29	11/13	12/13	
DXS6809	108.12	31/33	31/33	
DXS6789	108.47	20/22	21/22	
DXS7133	118.18	9/11	9/11	
GATA172D05	124.36	10/12	11/12	
GATA31E08	160.54	11/13	11/13	
DXS7423	184.19	14/16	15/16	



H2: C1 and C2 are unrelated

No genetic inconsistencies between C1 and C2 \Rightarrow LR=322. Is this expected? Let's simulate:

 \Rightarrow Median around LR=300





H1: C1 and C2 are paternal half siblings



H2: C1 and C2 are unrelated

What about mutations?

	Genetic position			
Name	(Rutgers)	C1	C2	
Amel	-	X/X	X/X	
DXS8378	20.21	10/12	11/11	#
DXS9902	32.32	11/13	11/13	
DXS7132	90.75	13/15	13/15	
DXS9898	101.29	11/13	12/13	
DXS6809	108.12	31/33	31/33	
DXS6789	108.47	20/22	21/22	
DXS7133	118.18	9/11	9/11	
GATA172D05	124.36	10/12	11/12	
GATA31E08	160.54	11/13	11/13	
DXS7423	184.19	14/16	15/16	

LR=1.2 (LR decreases with a factor 300. Is this to expect?)





H1: C1 and C2 are paternal half siblings

	Genetic position			
Name	(Rutgers)	C1	C2	
Amel	-	X/X	X/X	
DXS8378	20.21	10/12	11/11	#
DXS9902	32.32	11/13	11/13	
DXS7132	90.75	13/15	13/15	
DXS9898	101.29	11/13	12/13	
DXS6809	108.12	31/33	31/33	
DXS6789	108.47	20/22	21/22	
DXS7133	118.18	9/11	9/11	
GATA172D05	124.36	10/12	11/12	
GATA31E08	160.54	11/13	11/13	
DXS7423	184.19	14/16	15/16	

LR=1.2 (LR decreases with a factor 300. Is this to expect?)



 $\Pr(mut_{10->11} or \ mut_{12->11} \ or \ mut_{11->10} \ or \ mut_{11->12}) \\ \approx 4 \cdot (1 \cdot \mu_{Tot} \cdot 0.9 \cdot 0.5)$

H2: C1 and C2 are unrelated



X-chromosomal markers in Forensic Genetics

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Linkage disequilibrium, LD

- Allelic association at a population level
 - "12" at STR 1 is observed with "16" at STR 2 much more often than expected
- Causes:
 - **Genetic linkage**: When loci are physically close on the same chromosome, recombination is less likely to separate them, leading to LD.
 - **Mutation**: A new mutation at one locus can create LD if it arises on a specific haplotype and recombination has not yet had time to break the association.
 - Population genetic effects: Drift, Founder effects, Bottlenecks; If a population undergoes a sharp reduction in size or is founded by a small number of individuals, certain allele combinations can become more common, creating LD.
- "Break down" of LD
 - Recombinations and random mating.