

Gametophyte Genetics in *Zea mays* L.: Dominance of a Restoration-of-Fertility Allele ($Rf3$) in Diploid Pollen

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ABSTRACT

In *Zea mays* L. plants carrying the S-type of sterility-inducing cytoplasm, male fertility is determined by a gametophytic, nuclear restoration-of-fertility gene. Haploid pollen carrying the fertility-restoring allele (historically designated $Rf3$) is starch-filled and functional, whereas pollen carrying the nonrestoring allele (historically designated $rf3$) is shrunken and nonfunctional. Because restoration of fertility occurs in haploid tissue, the dominance relationship of restoring and nonrestoring alleles is unknown. We have tested the dominance relationship of the restoring and nonrestoring alleles at the $rf3$ locus in diploid pollen. The meiotic mutant *elongate* was used to generate tetraploid plants carrying both $Rf3$ and $rf3$ alleles in the S cytoplasm. These plants shed predominantly starch-filled pollen, consistent with dominance of the restoring allele. Restriction fragment length polymorphisms linked to the $rf3$ locus demonstrated cotransmission of $rf3$ and $Rf3$ alleles through heterozygous diploid pollen, providing conclusive genetic evidence that the restoring allele is the dominant or functional form of this restoration-of-fertility gene. We suggest that other S-cytoplasm restorers result from loss-of-function mutations and propose analysis of unreduced gametes as a test of this model.

CYTOPLASMIC male sterility (CMS) systems provide an opportunity for molecular and genetic investigations of mitochondrial-nuclear genome interactions in higher plants (HANSON and CONDE 1985). The mitochondrial genome encodes this maternally inherited failure to shed functional pollen (reviewed in HANSON and CONDE 1985; LEVINGS 1990; HANSON 1991). Nuclear restoration-of-fertility genes can, however, condition a male-fertile phenotype in the presence of a sterility-inducing cytoplasm (reviewed in DUVICK 1959; HANSON and CONDE 1985). Three different sterility-inducing cytoplasmic systems of maize (C, T and S) were originally recognized by their genetically distinct nuclear restoration-of-fertility systems (DUVICK 1965; BECKETT 1971; GRACEN and GROGAN 1974). Investigations of these different fertility restoration mechanisms may provide insights into different aspects of mitochondrial-nuclear genome interactions.

Nuclear restoration of fertility in the CMS-S system of maize is gametophytic. Pollen carrying the restoring allele (designated $Rf3$) is starch-filled and functional, whereas pollen carrying the nonrestoring allele (designated $rf3$) is shrunken and nonfunctional. Heterozygous CMS-S plants ($Rf3/rf3$) are phenotypically semifertile, shedding 50% starch-filled and 50% shrunken pollen grains (BUCHERT 1961). Because $Rf3$ acts in hap-

loid tissue, the dominance or functional relationship of the restoring and nonrestoring alleles is unknown. The restoring allele might act to inhibit the expression of male sterility. Alternatively, the nonrestoring allele might induce the male-sterile phenotype. Knowledge of the functional or dominance relationship of restoring and nonrestoring alleles is fundamental to molecular and genetic investigations of restorer gene action. We have therefore investigated this relationship through the construction and fertility analysis of CMS-S tetraploid (4N) plants carrying both restoring and nonrestoring alleles. These plants produced functional heterozygous ($Rf3/rf3$) pollen grains, providing conclusive evidence that the restoring allele is the dominant or functional form for this restoration-of-fertility gene.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Construction of 4N lines: The plant lines employed in this study are described in Table 1. The *elongate* (*el*) mutation of maize was used to construct 4N plants. This mutation, in the homozygous condition, causes an elevated frequency of unreduced female gametes. The unreduced gametes result primarily from failure of the second meiotic division (RHOADES and DEMPSEY 1966). The restorer status of a normal cytoplasm, *el/el* stock (805E) was determined by using 805E plants to pollinate a CMS-S $rf3/rf3$ inbred line (W182BN). The 805E plants were also self-pollinated. Progeny from the CMS-S W182BN \times 805E pollinations were grown and scored for male fertility based on pollen shed. Male-sterile ($rf3/rf3$) plants exerted few anthers and shed no pollen. Semifertile ($Rf3/rf3$) plants exerted anthers and shed pollen. Families (of 16 plants) with only male-sterile plants and families segre-

This work is dedicated to the memory of John R. Laughnan.

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TABLE 1
Maize lines used in the construction and analysis of CMS-S 4N plants

Line	Cytoplasm	Genotype	Source
805E	N	<i>el/el</i>	Maize Stock Center No. 84-666
805E-rf3	N	<i>el/el rf3/rf3</i>	This study
W182BN	CA ^a	<i>rf3/rf3</i>	D. R. PRING
Ky21	S	<i>Rf3/Rf3</i>	S. GABAY-LAUGHNAN No. 87-509
W23 2N	N	<i>rf3/rf3</i>	S. GABAY-LAUGHNAN No. 89-333
W23 4N (N107B)	N	<i>rf3/rf3/rf3/rf3^b</i>	Maize Stock Center No. 87-2239
N104B	N	unknown 4N	Maize Stock Center No. 85-676

^a CA is a subgroup of the S cytoplasm (Stisco *et al.* (1985).

^b Genotype was assigned based upon RFLP and fertility analyses performed in this study.

gating male-sterile and semifertile plants were recovered. This demonstrated that the 805E stock was segregating for *Rf3* and *rf3* alleles and enabled us to identify an *rf3/rf3* 805E plant. Self-pollination of the *rf3/rf3* 805E plant established the *rf3/rf3 el/el* stock (805E-rf) used for the construction of CMS-S 4N plants.

The construction of CMS-S 4N plants is outlined in Figure 1. The CMS-S *Rf3/Rf3 El/El* maize inbred Ky21 was pollinated with the *rf3/rf3 el/el* stock. The heterozygous genotype of the resulting F₁ progeny with respect to *rf3* was confirmed by microscopic examination of pollen as described below. These plants (CMS-S *Rf3/rf3 El/el*) were self-pollinated. The predicted F₂ progeny are shown in Figure 1. Tissue samples (for DNA extraction) and pollen samples (for microscopic examination) were collected from 63 F₂ plants. Microscopic examination of pollen was used to distinguish between *Rf3/rf3* and

Rf3/Rf3 genotypes. An undetermined number of F₂ plants were pollinated with the 4N version of the maize inbred line W23, and seeds were recovered from ears borne by two fully male-fertile F₁ plants. The W23 diploid (2N) is known to be *rf3/rf3* (BECKETT 1971). The W23 4N stock was therefore expected to carry one or more *rf3* alleles. Restriction fragment length polymorphism (RFLP) analysis (described below) was consistent with this expectation. The predicted genotypes of the CMS-S 4N progeny are shown in Figure 1 for the case of a W23 4N parent carrying four *rf3* alleles. An unrelated 4N stock (N104B) was used as a female parent in testcrosses with the CMS-S 4N plants.

Fertility analysis: Male fertility was determined by microscopic examination of pollen. Pollen was collected from field or greenhouse grown plants by shaking freshly exerted anthers over a drop of acetocarmine stain (Stisco *et al.* 1985) on

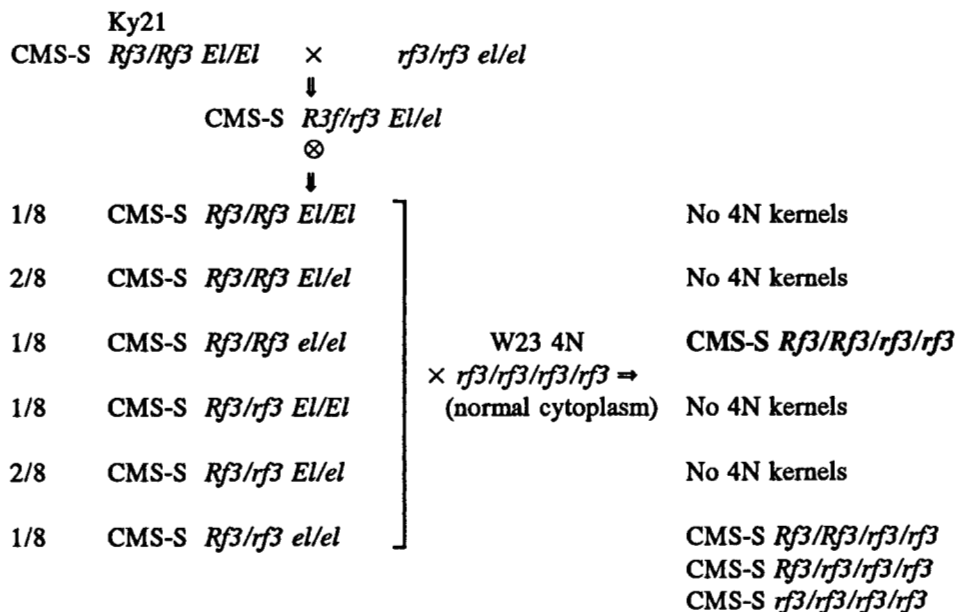


FIGURE 1.—Crossing scheme for the production of CMS-S tetraploid plants. The CMS-S Ky21 inbred was pollinated with an *el/el* plant known to carry the *rf3/rf3* genotype in normal cytoplasm. The resulting F₁ was self-pollinated to produce an F₂ population. The predicted F₂ genotypes and frequencies are shown. The *rf3* and *el* loci are unlinked, mapping to chromosomes 2 and 8, respectively. The *rf3/rf3* genotype is absent due to failure of *rf3* pollen in the presence of the S cytoplasm (BUCHERT 1961). *Rf3/rf3* F₁ and *Rf3/Rf3* F₂ individuals were verified by microscopic examination of pollen and confirmed by RFLP analysis as described in the text as shown in Figure 3, lanes 3–4. F₂ plants were pollinated with the 4N version of maize inbred W23 in normal cytoplasm. Only *el/el* F₂ genotypes will produce 2N eggs and 4N kernels in this cross. Kernels resulting from the pollination of haploid eggs by 2N pollen fail due to imbalance of maternal and paternal genomes in the developing endosperm (LIN 1984). The predicted progeny genotypes are shown for the case of a W23 4N parent carrying four *rf3* alleles.

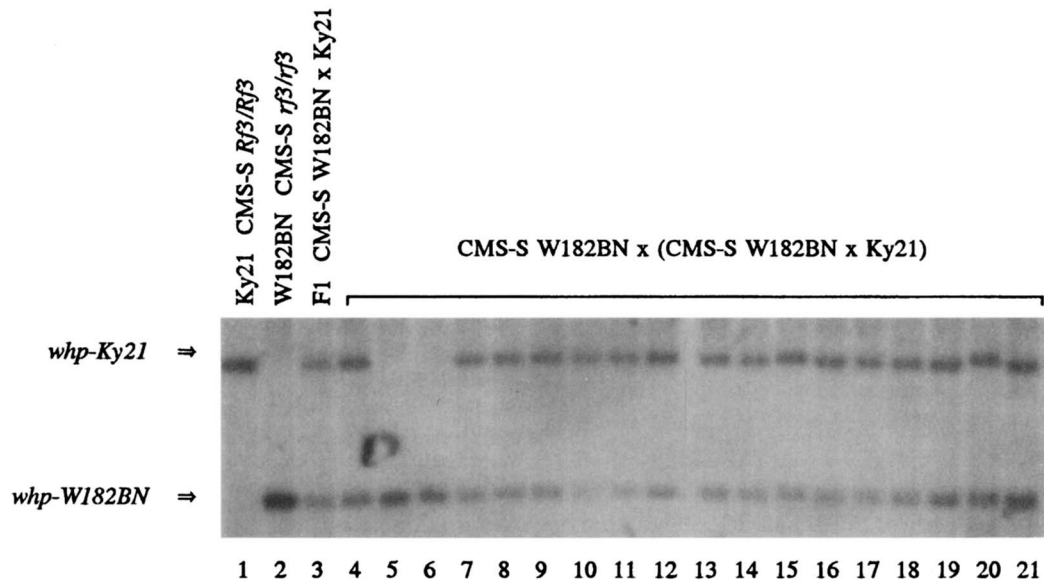


FIGURE 2.—Cosegregation of *whp* and *rf3* alleles in a backcross population. A backcross population [W182BN/CA × (W182BN/CA × Ky21/S)] was analyzed for male fertility by microscopic examination of pollen grains and for segregating *whp* RFLP markers by Southern blot hybridization. The *Sst*-digested DNA of the 18 semifertile (*Rf3*-Ky21/*rf3*-W182BN) progeny shown above demonstrated cosegregation of the 10.2-kb *whp*-Ky21 RFLP with the *Rf3*-Ky21 allele. Two semifertile recombinant individuals (lanes 5 and 6) did not carry the *whp*-Ky21 RFLP; the total population of 47 semifertile plants contained three recombinants in the *whp*-*rf3* interval.

a microscope slide. Pollen grains were examined under a light microscope at ×100 magnification. At least 500 grains were counted for each plant. Rounded grains that stained with acetocarmine were scored as functional. Shrunken grains without staining were scored as aborted.

DNA blot analysis: Alleles of *Rf3* were identified and tracked with linked RFLPs. We obtained a white pollen (*whp*) gene-specific clone (pwhpC6) from U. WEINAND, Max Plank Institut, Koln. Plasmid DNA was prepared by the triton lysis procedure (LONSDALE *et al.* 1981). The cloned *whp* sequence was purified by agarose gel electrophoresis (HEERY *et al.* 1990) and radiolabeled *in vitro* by randomly primed DNA synthesis (FEINBERG and VOGLESTEIN 1984). Maize nucleic acids were prepared from frozen leaf tissues or etiolated seedlings as described by DELLAPORTA *et al.* (1983). Nucleic acids were digested with restriction endonucleases, fractionated by agarose gel electrophoresis, transferred to nylon supports and hybridized with radiolabeled probes. Hybridizations and washes were performed at 65° in the buffers described by CHURCH and GILBERT (1984).

RESULTS

Restriction fragment polymorphisms cosegregating with the *rf3* locus: The *rf3* locus was mapped to the distal region on the long arm of maize chromosome 2, flanked by the *whp* and *bnl17.14* RFLP loci. Recombination frequencies placed *rf3* ~6 cM from each of these flanking loci (T. L. KAMPS and C. D. CHASE, unpublished data, Maize Genetics Cooperation Newsletter 66:45). Of the two flanking RFLP markers, only *whp* was informative for all materials used in this study (not shown). The cosegregation of *whp* and *rf3* loci in a mapping backcross is shown in Figure 2.

Construction of 4N plants: The construction of 4N plants, as outlined in Figure 1, was successful. Seeds were recovered from pollination of two *Rf3*/*Rf3* F₂ plants by the W23 4N line. The *whp* probe distinguished alleles carried by CMS-S Ky21 (original donor of the *Rf3* allele), the *el/el rf3/rf3* stock and the W23 2N stock (also *rf3/rf3*) (Figure 3, lanes 1, 2 and 5). These alleles were designated *whp*-Ky21, *whp*-*el*, and *whp*-W23, respectively. Alleles at the *whp* locus were used to confirm genotypes of the F₁ and F₂ plants used in the construction of CMS-S 4N plants (Figure 3, lanes 3 and 4).

Male fertility of CMS-S 4N plants: Fertility analysis was performed on the CMS-S 4N plants derived from the pollination of CMS-S *Rf3*/*Rf3* *el/el* plants with the 4N version of inbred W23 (Figure 1). Because the W23 2N is known to have the *rf3/rf3* genotype (5), we expected the CMS-S 4N plants to have the *Rf3*/*Rf3*/*rf3*/*rf3* genotype. RFLP and male fertility analyses (described below) were consistent with this expectation. Table 2 presents the predicted genotypes and phenotypes of pollen grains shed by CMS-S *Rf3*/*Rf3*/*rf3*/*rf3* plants in the case of a dominant (or functional) restoring allele and in the case of a dominant (or functional) nonrestoring allele. Because the *rf3* locus was unlinked to the chromosome 2 centromere, alleles of *rf3* on the eight chromatids were expected to segregate independently, giving rise to 28 possible combinations of two alleles in 2N pollen. Of the 28 combinations, 22 contain an *Rf3* allele. If the restoring allele is dominant, plants are predicted to shed 79% (22/28) starch-filled grains. If the nonrestoring allele is dominant, plants are pre-

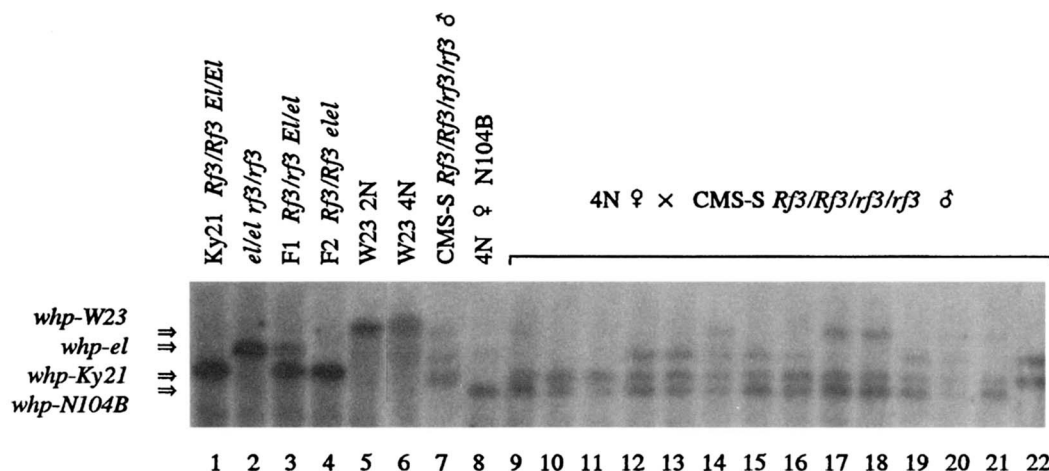


FIGURE 3.—Transmission of *Rf3* and *rf3* alleles through 2N pollen. A 4N female (from stock N104B) was pollinated with a CMS-S plant carrying *Rf3* and *rf3* alleles. Alleles of *Rf3* and *rf3* were identified and tracked with RFLPs at the linked *whp* locus. Genomic DNAs prepared from progenitor stocks, parent plants, and testcross progeny plants were digested with *Bam*HI, fractionated by agarose gel electrophoresis, blotted to nylon supports and hybridized with a radiolabeled *whp* probe. The *whp*-W23, *whp*-*el*, *whp*-Ky21 and *whp*-N104B RFLPs were 26.3 kb, 17.8 kb, 13.2 kb and 11.7 kb, respectively. Gel lanes were loaded as follows: 1, CMS-S Ky21 stock; 2, *el/el rf3/rf3* stock; 3, F₁ plant from CMS-S Ky21 × *el/el rf3/rf3*; 4, CMS-S *Rf3/Rf3 el/el* F₂ plant, female parent of lane 7 plant; 5, W23 2N stock; 6, W23 4N stock; 7, CMS-S *Rf3/Rf3/rf3/rf3* male testcross parent; 8, N104B 4N stock; 9–22, progeny of N104B 4N × CMS-S *Rf3/Rf3/rf3/rf3* lane 7 plant.

dicted to produce 21% (6/28) starch-filled, functional grains, which might be inadequate for anther exertion and dehiscence. Two families of 4N plants (the progeny of two different *Rf3/Rf3* F₂ plants) were examined for pollen fertility. In one family of 14 progeny, individual plants shed from 88–92% starch-filled pollen. In a second family of six progeny, individual plants shed 78–88% starch-filled pollen. As a control, we analyzed 22 normal cytoplasm W23 4N plants. These shed 88–98% starch-filled pollen. Pollen analysis was therefore consistent with a dominant fertility restoration allele, given a CMS-S *Rf3/Rf3/rf3/rf3* genotype.

Transmission of restoring and nonrestoring alleles through 2N pollen: To confirm the production of functional *Rf3/rf3* 2N pollen grains, a CMS-S 4N plant with the predicted genotype of *Rf3/Rf3/rf3/rf3* (as shown in bold in Figure 1) was used to pollinate an unrelated 4N plant (stock N104B). The resulting progeny were grown and analyzed for alleles at the *whp* locus (Figure

3). In addition to the *whp*-Ky21, *whp*-*el*, and *whp*-W23 alleles, the *whp* probe distinguished an allele in the N104B 4N stock (*whp*-N104B) (Figure 3, lanes 1, 2, 5, and 8). The N104B and the W23 4N stocks were also segregating for the *whp*-*el* allele (Figure 3, lanes 6 and 8). The presence of this allele suggests that the *elongate* mutation may have been used in the construction of these 4N stocks.

The CMS-S 4N plant used as a male parent in the transmission experiment carried *whp*-Ky21, *whp*-W23 and *whp*-*el* alleles (Figure 3, lane 7). The two *whp*-ky21 alleles were contributed by the F₂ parent (Figure 3, lane 4) of this CMS-S 4N plant, while the *whp*-*el* and *whp*-W23 alleles were contributed by the W23 4N parent (Figure 3, lane 6). The analysis of 14 4N progeny plants is shown in Figure 3, lanes 9–22. Each of the 14 progeny plants inherited the *whp*-Ky21 allele from the 4N male parent. Six of the progeny (lanes 9, 14, 17, 18, 20 and 21) also inherited the *whp*-W23 allele from the 4N male parent. Cotransmission of *whp*-Ky21 and *whp*-W23 alleles indicated cotransmission of *Rf3*-Ky21 and *rf3*-W23 alleles through heterozygous diploid pollen. The presence of the *whp*-Ky21 allele in all progeny examined (including 11 additional progeny not shown in Figure 3) was consistent with a requirement for the *Rf3* allele in functional pollen.

As we did not construct the W23 4N line, which contributed a *whp*-*el* allele to our CMS-S 4N parent, we could not directly verify the linkage of this *whp*-*el* allele to an *rf3* allele. However, the results shown in Figure 3 argue strongly against the presence of an additional restoring allele (*i.e.*, an *Rf3*-Ky21/*Rf3*-Ky21/*Rf3*-*el*/*rf3*-W23 genotype) in our CMS-S 4N male parent. If an

TABLE 2

Predicted genotypes and phenotypes of diploid pollen grains shed by CMS-S *Rf3/Rf3/rf3/rf3* plants

Genotype	Frequency ^a	Phenotype	
		Dominant restorer	Recessive restorer
<i>Rf3/Rf3</i>	6/28	Starch filled	Starch filled
<i>Rf3/rf3</i>	16/28	Starch filled	Aborted
<i>rf3/rf3</i>	6/28	Aborted	Aborted

^a Frequencies are based upon random segregation of alleles on eight chromatids.

additional restoring allele was present, functional pollen without the *Rf3-Ky21* allele (and linked *whp-Ky21* allele) would be produced and result in progeny lacking the *whp-Ky21* allele. Such progeny were not observed among the 25 plants we examined by RFLP analysis. The probability of recovering a *whp-Ky21* allele in 25 progeny of a CMS-S *Rf3-Ky21/Rf3-Ky21/Rf3-el/rf3-W23* male parent by chance alone is $(22/27)^{25}$ or 0.006 (assuming *rf3/rf3* pollen to be inviable). While we consider an *Rf3-Ky21/Rf3-Ky21/Rf3-el/rf3-W23* 4N male parent to be improbable, the presence of an *Rf3-el* allele in the male parent would in no way alter our conclusion regarding the dominance of the *Rf3* allele based upon the cotransmission of *Rf3-Ky21* and *rf3-W23* alleles through 2N pollen, as demonstrated by cotransmission of *whp-Ky21* and *whp-W23* alleles (Figure 3, lanes 9, 14, 17, 18, 20 and 21).

Collectively, our observations argue against an active role of the nonrestoring allele (*rf3*) in pollen abortion. The restoring allele (*Rf3*) must be dominant to the nonrestoring allele and function in some way to suppress the CMS phenotype.

DISCUSSION

The collapse of CMS-S *rf3* pollen grains occurs suddenly and late in pollen development (LEE *et al.* 1980). The expression of the CMS-S sterility determinant may therefore be restricted to this stage of gametophyte development. Expression of the mitochondrial protein associated with CMS in *Phaseolus vulgaris* is restricted to sporophytic and gametophytic reproductive tissues (ABAD *et al.* 1995). Restoration-of-fertility alleles for sterility determinants expressed only in the gametophyte would, of necessity, exhibit a gametophytic mode of inheritance. However, expression of gametophytic restoration-of-fertility genes is not necessarily limited to the gametophyte. A class of genes controlling male fertility through expression in both sporophytic and gametophytic tissues has been identified in *Arabidopsis* (XU *et al.* 1995).

In unusual circumstances (such as haplo-insufficiency), a dominant phenotype can result from the loss of gene function. In the case of *Rf3*, the plant phenotype is based upon gene action in haploid tissues, and an active role for the *Rf3* gene product in restoration of fertility is the simplest interpretation of a dominant *Rf3* allele. The expression of novel mitochondrial genes has been associated with CMS in a number of systems (LEVINGS 1990; HANSON 1991; GRELON *et al.* 1994; KRISHNASAMY and MAKAROFF 1994; MONEGER *et al.* 1994; ABAD *et al.* 1995). Identification of sterility determinants has allowed the characterization of fertility restoration mechanisms including the destabilization of CMS transcripts (MONEGER *et al.* 1994), altered processing of CMS transcripts (DEWEY *et al.* 1986; KENNEL *et al.* 1987;

SINGH and BROWN 1993), and effects on either the translation or stability of CMS gene products (KRISHNASAMY and MAKAROFF 1994; ABAD *et al.* 1995). While most fertility restoration mechanisms characterized to date affect the expression of CMS genes within the mitochondria, a dominant restoring allele could also compensate for the presence of a functional CMS gene product. A mitochondrial reading frame has recently been associated with the maize S cytoplasm (GABAY-LAUGHNAN *et al.* 1995). Further characterization of this reading frame and its expression will facilitate investigations of the *Rf3* restoration mechanism.

Characteristics of other S-cytoplasm restorers of fertility suggest that restoring alleles for this cytoplasm are not always dominant. In CMS-S maize plants, nuclear reversion to fertility gives rise to additional fertility restorers. The new restorers (*RfI-RfX*) are gametophytic and each maps to a different genome location (LAUGHNAN and GABAY 1973, 1978; LAUGHNAN *et al.* 1981). With the exception of *RfIV*, all of the new restorers are associated with deleterious effects including decreased transmission through the female gamete and lethality in the homozygous condition (LAUGHNAN and GABAY 1975). New restorers arise at relatively high frequencies and their molecular-genetic basis is currently unknown.

The new restorers of fertility may result from loss-of-function mutations in nuclear genes affecting mitochondrial gene expression. This class of mutations would alter expression of the mitochondrial CMS determinant as well as other mitochondrial genes. A general effect on mitochondrial gene expression would account for the deleterious, sporophytic phenotype associated with homozygosity for a new restoring allele. The large number of nuclear genes involved in mitochondrial gene expression (TZAGOLOFF and DIECKMANN 1990) may contribute to the relatively high frequency with which new restorers are recovered.

The loss-of-function model implies tissue-specific differences in requirements for mitochondrial gene expression, with plant growth and pollen development requiring a higher level of function than pollen maturation and fertilization. Tissue-specific differences in the level of mitochondrial expression have been observed in a number of higher plant species (PIECHULLA 1988; EHRENSHAFT and BRAMBL 1990; MONEGER *et al.* 1992; CONLEY and HANSON 1994; SMART *et al.* 1994). The expression levels of nuclear genes encoding mitochondrial proteins (PIECHULLA 1988; EHRENSHAFT and BRAMBL 1990; CONLEY and HANSON 1994; HUANG *et al.* 1994) also exhibit tissue-specific differences.

S-cytoplasm restorers of fertility are in many ways analogous to the high chlorophyll fluorescence (*hcf*) mutations of maize (MILES 1982). The *hcf* phenotype results from mutations in nuclear genes that affect chloroplast gene expression. Many *hcf* mutations are recessive and homozygous lethal. They are recovered at high

frequency and affect processes such as plastid RNA processing and translation. These mutations can result in decreased accumulation of all chloroplast proteins or characteristic sets of chloroplast proteins (BARKAN *et al.* 1986; BARKAN 1993). One difference between the restorers of fertility and the *hcf* mutants is the stage of lethality in homozygotes. Mutants affecting plastid function are lethal at the seedling stage, whereas the S-cytoplasm restorers are lethal in the zygotic stage. Lethality in the zygotic stage is consistent with the requirement for functional mitochondria in seed development and germination.

The ability to construct tetraploid lines and track the transmission of alleles with linked RFLPs will enable us to test dominance relationships of restoring and nonrestoring alleles at the new S-cytoplasm restoration of fertility loci and critically test the loss-of-function model. In addition to the S-cytoplasm fertility restorers, there are a number of maize loci exhibiting gametophytic patterns of inheritance (NELSON 1994). The tetraploid approach may also prove useful in studies of other gametophyte factors in maize.

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