

General transcription factor specified global gene regulation in archaea

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Cells responding to dramatic environmental changes or undergoing a developmental switch typically change the expression of numerous genes. In bacteria, σ factors regulate much of this process, whereas in eukaryotes, four RNA polymerases and a multiplicity of generalized transcription factors (GTFs) are required. Here, by using a systems approach, we provide experimental evidence (including protein-coimmunoprecipitation, ChIP-Chip, GTF perturbation and knockout, and measurement of transcriptional changes in these genetically perturbed strains) for how archaea likely accomplish similar large-scale transcriptional segregation and modulation of physiological functions. We are able to associate GTFs to nearly half of all putative promoters and show evidence for at least 7 of the possible 42 functional GTF pairs. This report represents a significant contribution toward closing the gap in our understanding of gene regulation by GTFs for all three domains of life and provides an example for how to use various experimental techniques to rapidly learn significant portions of a global gene regulatory network of organisms for which little has been previously known.

archaea | regulatory networks | systems biology

Transcriptional regulation by general transcription factors (GTFs) is an important control point for large-scale regulation of physiology across all three domains of life. It is generally understood that in bacteria, σ factors help to modulate large changes in gene expression in response to environmental stimuli. Meanwhile, in eukaryotes, families of large multisubunit general transcription complexes initiate large-scale changes in transcription from various promoters. Relatively little is known, however, about how GTFs in archaea help confer fitness across a broad range of environments, including hostile ones, such as thermal vents and hypersaline ponds, to milder environments, such as the oceans and the human oral cavity and gut (1–4).

In archaea, two GTFs orthologous to eukaryotic transcription factor IIB (TFB) and TATA-binding proteins (TBPs) are necessary and sufficient for initiating basal transcription (5). These GTFs are present in multiple copies in several archaeal species [supporting information (SI) Table 2]. *Halobacterium* NRC-1 is particularly complex, because its genome encodes six TBP and seven TFB proteins (6). Because we know that a TBP must pair with a TFB to recruit RNA polymerase to the promoter to form an active preinitiation complex the presence of six TBPs and seven TFBS in *Halobacterium* NRC-1 theoretically encodes 42 possible TFB–TBP pairs, which may drive transcription from an equally diverse set of promoters in *Halobacterium* NRC-1.

Here, we investigate the following: (i) the degree to which members of the two families interact with one another; (ii) whether the promoter specificities of the individual TFBS and TBPs have diverged significantly from one another, or whether they have retained considerable overlap in their genomic binding sites; (iii) whether a higher-order regulatory network architecture has emerged by interactions among these factors; and (iv) if so, what are the consequences of such a network on global transcriptional control? We address these questions through an

integrated analysis of protein–DNA interactions (evidence for direct regulation of gene expression), protein–protein interactions (evidence for pairwise interactions), and environmental and genetic (nonnative expression and knockouts of GTFs) perturbation-induced global transcriptional changes to provide a rare view into global transcriptional regulation in archaea. Further, we present several testable hypotheses regarding specific mechanistic principles of gene regulation in archaea.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary Analysis of Existing Data. Phylogenetic analysis. We show that the haloarchaeal TFB family can be roughly divided into four phylogenetic clades on the basis of their amino acid sequence similarities (Fig. 1A and SI Fig. 6). A similar analysis for TBP is presented in SI Fig. 7. These evolutionary groupings represent a line of experimental evidence regarding the putative relationships among GTFs in *Halobacterium* NRC-1 (6). The patterns seen in the evolutionary analysis suggest certain GTF interactions may have coevolved to occur preferentially over others.

GTF gene expression profiles across numerous conditions. We investigated the broad-scale patterns in transcriptional responses of GTFs in *Halobacterium* NRC-1 from >300 microarrays reflecting a number of environmental perturbations (Fig. 1B, SI Tables 3–5, and SI Fig. 8) by calculating a dendrogram of expression profile distances of GTFs relative to themselves. This revealed two large groupings of expression profiles. One contains only a single TBP (TBPe) and TFBS -b, -f, and -g. The second group contains all other GTFs. Finer divisions in expression profiles are also evident. We also note similarity of expression for TBPe and TFBa and the TFB/TBP pair TBPe and TFBg, suggesting that these specific pairs of GTFs may function together. Moreover, this analysis, in combination with the phylogenetic analysis in Fig. 1A, shows that the transcriptional regulation of several structurally related GTFs, those from similar phylogenetic groupings (specifically pairs TFBc and -g and TFBb, -g, and -d) have clearly diverged from one another.

Systematic Gene Knockouts Reveal Likely Essential GTFs. A systematic effort to knock out each of the GTFs has revealed that two

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Abbreviations: GTF, general transcription factor; TFB, archaeal transcription factor IIB ortholog; TBP, TATA-binding protein.

Data deposition: The microarray and proteomic data reported in this paper have been deposited in the National Center for Biotechnology Information Gene Expression Omnibus (GEO) database (GEO accession nos. GSE6776 and GSE7045).

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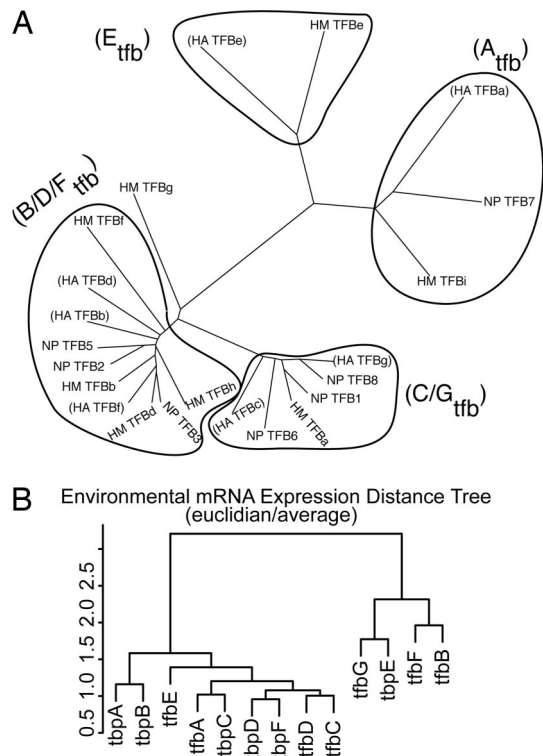


Fig. 1. Evolutionary and gene expression relationships among GTFs (A) Haloarchaeal TFB sequence analysis reveals four distinct groups. TFB sequences from three fully sequenced haloarchaeal genomes were initially aligned by using ClustalW (24) and subsequent dendrograms generated with Phylip (25). Groups are named in parentheses according to the membership of *Halobacterium* NRC-1 TFBS. Sequences were accessed from the National Center for Biotechnology Information database and renamed according to organism as follows: HA, *Halobacterium* sp. NRC-1; HM, *Haloarcula marismortui*; and NP, *Natronomonas pharaonis* DSM 2160. There are four clear groups of TFBS, with the exception of HM-TFBg. (B) Dendrogram of the expression profiles of GTFs across >300 microarray conditions summarized in SI Table 3.

TFBs (-f and -g) and three TBPBs (-b, -e, and -f) appear to be essential for growth under standard laboratory conditions. Although three TBPBs (TBPb, -c, and -d) that are present in at least two copies in the genome were successfully deleted, TBPb presents a particular challenge, because it is present in four copies. Although this result implies that only 5 of the 13 GTFs in *Halobacterium* are absolutely necessary for life under standard laboratory conditions, it does not exclude the possibility that the other GTFs provide added fitness under various stressful or nonstandard laboratory growth conditions.

Genome-Wide Localization of TFB-Binding Sites. ChIP followed by microarray chip analysis (ChIP-Chip) of C-terminally *myc*-

Table 1. Intergenic bias in ChIP-Chip experiments

GTF	Number of tiles	Fraction intergenic	Random intergenic	P value
tbpB	317	0.74	0.50	1.1E-20
tfbA	322	0.57	0.50	1.5E-3
tfbB	279	0.85	0.50	1.0E-37
tfbC	228	0.82	0.50	3.1E-25
tfbD	271	0.87	0.50	1.1E-40
tfbE	253	0.43	0.50	0.986
tfbF	324	0.86	0.50	4.4E-46
tfbG	396	0.79	0.50	8.5E-37

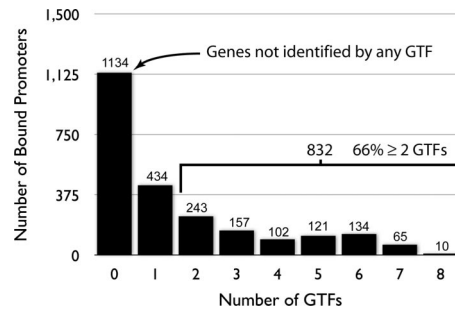


Fig. 2. Distribution of ChIP-Chip interactions across the genome. This histogram summarizes the number of putative genes that have been associated with none, one, or multiple TFBS or TBPBs by the ChIP-Chip method described elsewhere. The number of promoters in each category is written above each bar. Nearly 66% of all identified promoters are associated with more than one GTF. This suggests there is likely some mechanistic redundancy in the gene regulatory network specified by these factors and from the standpoint of high-level regulatory processes that many cellular processes have a high degree of functional overlap.

tagged TFBS and TBPBs was performed as described in *Methods*. An analysis of putative binding sites shows a significant bias toward binding regions that overlap intergenic sequence (Table 1). Because such a description of a system-wide architecture of an archaeal GTF network is previously uncharacterized, we used stringent criteria to select what most likely represent high occupancy and/or high binding-affinity sites.

Using this approach, we mapped binding sites for all seven TFBS and TBPBs to 1,048 promoters in the *Halobacterium* NRC-1 genome (SI Dataset 1). When this set is expanded by putatively cotranscribed operon structures, it represents 1,266 genes (hereofore operon-expanded; SI Dataset 2). This represents 51% of the 2,445 unique genes in the *Halobacterium* NRC-1 genome and is well correlated with the maximum number of genes we have observed to be differentially expressed during some single environmental perturbation experiments.

Although this approach resulted in a low false-positive discovery rate, it does not exclude the possibility of binding sites with lower affinity. In addition, because of the dynamic condition-dependent nature of biological networks, the complete set of protein-DNA interactions elucidated from this ChIP-Chip represents a portion of all possible interactions. Despite these stipulations, this data set is comprised of real high-affinity/occupancy physical interactions that can occur *in vivo* and can be interrogated for functional insight.

Distribution of TFB-Binding Events. Unique associations. There are two components of the binding distribution that are of functional interest. The first are the genomic locations (promoters) that are bound by only a single GTF in our experiment (Fig. 2). The second are the remaining genomic regions bound by multiple GTFs (Fig. 2). In this section, we discuss the 37% of all identified promoters that were bound by only a single GTF. Although we do not explicitly exclude the possibility that other GTFs could bind to these regions under different conditions, our data strongly suggest that some unique promoter-GTF combinations have indeed evolved. Notwithstanding yet-uncharacterized influences on gene expression, this GTF promoter selectivity strongly implies that functional segregation of transcriptional regulation can be mediated by GTFs in archaea.

To extend this idea, we filtered gene sets selected by a single GTF by expression correlation to that particular GTF (SI Fig. 9). This allows us to reduce our list of candidate genes to those that have the greatest probability of being directly regulated by a given GTF (SI Table 6). This also yields an assessment of functional association and segregation of gene expression by GTFs. One interesting conclusion from these filtered data

suggests that TFBf binds in a functionally relevant manner to promoters of genes encoding proteins involved in ribosome biogenesis. Meanwhile, TFBg likely uniquely regulates genes encoding phosphate transport and phototrophy proteins. These two observations are indirectly supported by our inability to knock out TFBf and -g, because deleting either would seriously impact the regulation of functions that are key for survival. A similar analysis is provided for all TFBS and TBPb in [SI Table 6](#). We also note that segments of the GTF regulatory network that are poorly represented in Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes (KEGG) and Gene Ontology (GO) databases or other functional association databases will not be amenable to this sort of analysis but are nevertheless important components of cellular physiology, for which we now present recently discovered associations.

Shared associations. More than half (832, operon-expanded) of the target genes in the protein–DNA interaction map are associated with more than one GTF. This suggests that at least 34% of all genes in *Halobacterium* NRC-1 may be regulated by more than one TFB. This high degree of multiple protein–DNA associations mechanistically offers at least two distinct physiological benefits for the organism. First, genes putatively under the control of more than one GTF may be less susceptible to changes in the relative concentrations of GTFs within the cytosol that, as observed in our microarray data (7–9), are expected to occur as a consequence of environmental perturbations. This scheme can allow for the uninterrupted transcription of genes whose products are required for distinct but overlapping physiological states in a variety of environmental conditions. Alternatively, competitive binding of multiple GTFs with different binding affinities for the same promoter (a process that may be modulated by other factors) may alter promoter activity, which can further contribute to the regulation of physiology. Although further evidence for this idea is presented later, we note that examples of such processes are well characterized in bacteria by using alternate sigma factors (10–12). Each of these proposed functions adds a measure of complexity to the possible modes of gene regulation. Second, multiple GTF associations contribute resilience to core biological processes in the face of random damaging events such as loss of GTF through mutation. This hypothesis is supported by the observation that many of the GTFs could be singly removed without compromising viability.

Our inability to localize binding sites for TBPs aside from TBPb is curious but may reflect a consequence of epitope-tagging TBPs, functional attenuation by dimerization, condition-specific TBPb recruitment, or the requirement of other factors. Nevertheless, the significant influence of TFBS on transcriptional segregation (particularly their abundant segregation along global gene expression profile groups) suggests that, although useful, knowledge of TBP-binding site distributions would simply serve to refine the current regulatory divisions delineated by the existing TFB network presented herein.

Protein–Protein Interactions Among TFBS and TBPs. The presence of multiple GTFs (seven TFBS and six TBPs) in *Halobacterium* NRC-1 allows 42 different potential combinations of TFB–TBP pairs to drive transcriptional initiation from presumably as many promoter subsets across the genome (6). To assess whether the organism functionally explores this theoretically possible combinatorial repertoire and if so, in what fashion, we analyzed the protein composition of transcription complexes enriched by immunoprecipitation with antibodies targeting each of the individual proteinA-tagged GTFs expressed in *Halobacterium* NRC-1. Using the method described in *Methods*, control immunoprecipitations did not identify any GTF peptides, thus all statistically significant identifications of either TFBS or TBPs in noncontrol experiments were interpreted as evidence of association with the epitope-tagged GTF. Fig. 3 and [SI Dataset 3](#) show

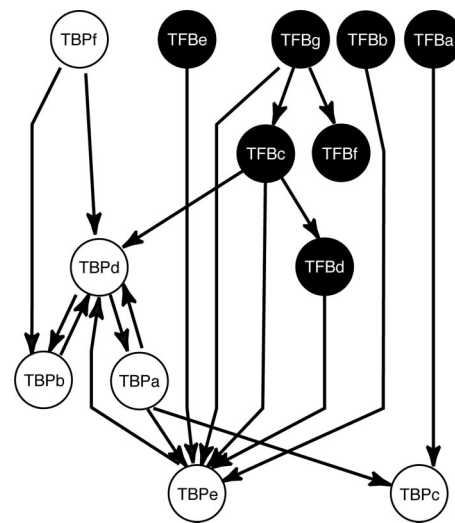


Fig. 3. GTF protein–protein and protein–DNA self interactions. The GTF protein–protein association network reveals inter- and intraspecies interactions. Protein–protein associations were determined by coimmunoprecipitation experiments of protein A-tagged basal transcription factors followed by tandem mass spectrometry. All experiments were conducted under 4.5 M salinity to preserve native interactions. The source node from which a directed edge leaves is the bait protein, whereas the target node is that which was immunoprecipitated with the bait. All edges were selected with a peptide probability (19) of ≥ 0.9 and a minimum of two unique identifying peptides (20).

the resulting interaction network among families of TFBS and TBPs.

Seven TFB–TBP pairs were detected in the GTF protein–protein interaction map, and at least five of the seven TFBS (TFBb, -c, -d, -e, and -g) interact with TBPc. In addition, there are two unique TFB–TBP interactions; TFBc with TBPd and TFBa with TBPc. High similarity between mRNA level changes for TFBa and TBPc across all assayed environmental conditions reinforce the selective and likely cofunctional relationship between these two factors (Fig. 1B). These two unique TFB–TBP interactions do not preclude alternative pairings that may form under physiological conditions different from those assayed in this experiment. They illustrate, however, that some physiologically important TFB–TBP pairings are favored under selected conditions and thus, that the evolutionary expansion of transcription regulation through selective pairings among TBPs and TFBS has indeed occurred in archaea.

Meanwhile, the observation that TBPc interacts with numerous TFBS recalls the results of a proteomic survey of *Halobacterium* NRC-1 in which TBPc was the only detected TBP (13). Taken together, protein abundance of TBPc and its numerous interactions with TFB, although perhaps linked, suggest a dominant role among TBPs for TBPc. This view may also be related to the observation that most archaea have a single TBP and multiple TFBS and highlights that, whereas the set of *Halobacterium* NRC-1 GTF is highly expanded with respect to other sequenced archaea, the general principles learned in this study are likely applicable to other archaea, both simpler and the not-yet-discovered more sophisticated. In such a system, the partitioning of basal transcription must be largely accomplished by the TFBS. Intriguingly, *Halobacterium* NRC-1 has, nevertheless, taken advantage of the opportunities for the unique combinatorial pairings of TFBS and TBPs leading to a mechanism for increasing the partitioning of transcription by GTFs.

Integration of ChIP Data with TFB Perturbation Transcriptome Profiles. To further refine our understanding of GTF behavior in *Halobacterium*, we applied a complementary approach to inves-

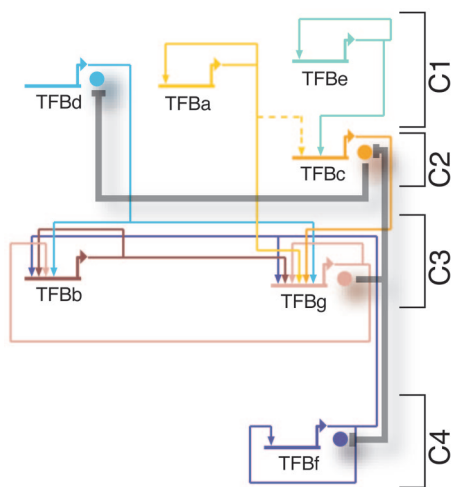


Fig. 5. The structure of the TFB self-association network. If we take into account the behavior of TFB gene expression (Fig. 1B) with the ChIP-Chip data, we can infer the TFB self-association network as shown here in which lines represent interactions between TFBs and the promoters of other TFBs. Colored circles represent TFB protein products, and the thick gray lines connecting them represent putatively repressing protein-protein interactions derived from Fig. 3. This protein-protein regulation represents a second layer of regulation by GTFs among themselves and may help provide both regulation and stability to the regulatory module. The structure of this network reveals a highly connected central group, TFBb and -g. The remaining TFBs are much less connected and appear to influence the expression of TFBb and/or -g directly or indirectly. One edge, inferred from perturbation transcriptome data (Fig. 4) between TFBa and -c (dashed line) coupled with the edge between TFBc and -e, highlights the idea that TFBc may act as a separate layer in this regulatory network. The differential expression of TFBf from that of TFBa, -c, -d, and -e (Fig. 1) also suggests it may act as a unique component of the regulatory network. Therefore, we have annotated the network as having four putative regulatory components, C1–C4.

latory control at the level of RNA polymerase (RNAP) recruitment, the protein-protein interactions among the TFBs (Fig. 3) most likely occur away from the DNA and may represent another mechanism to modulate RNAP recruitment. These TFB-TFB interactions are similar to those known to occur among TBPs. If functional, these would represent a regulatory layer that needs to be further investigated and integrated into our understanding of archaeal and eukaryotic gene regulatory networks. In this network, however, these interactions provide a direct means of communication between the expression-segregated TFB and may constitute a mechanism of regulatory feedback during the switch between states defined by individual sets of GTFs.

Conclusion

We have provided evidence, like numerous σ factors in bacteria and four different RNA polymerases and multiple GTFs in eukaryotes, that a multiplicity of GTFs in archaea also accomplishes large-scale regulation of transcription. Specifically, our study provides insights into how an expanded family of TFBs controls transcription in *Halobacterium* NRC-1 to functionally segregate genes while also providing some resistance to environmental or genetic perturbation. In addition, like most archaea whose genomes encode a single TBP, this organism favors interactions of most TFBs with a single TBP (TBPe). The use of at least some of the 42 possible TFB-TBP pairs by *Halobacterium* NRC-1 represents an instance in evolution wherein expansion of families of interacting transcription factors has been exploited for selective combinatorial use to regulate transcription. In light of our study, a particularly relevant example of a similar mech-

anism in eukaryotes is the use of developmental and tissue-specific TBP and TFIIB homologues (14, 15).

Finally, this study has demonstrated that the integration of various systems-level data types (protein-DNA and -protein interactions, differential gene regulation in response to environmental and genetic perturbations) can provide relatively rapid and unprecedented insight into the organization of global gene regulatory circuits, in this case specified by two expanded families of GTFs. We expect that this type of systems approach can easily be adapted to uncover additional gene regulatory mechanisms adopted by other relatively poorly studied organisms from each of the three domains of life. We further expect that *Halobacterium* NRC-1 will continue to serve as a model organism in which to test a large number of hypotheses raised in this study, such as role of TFB-TFB interactions in transcription regulatory mechanisms in archaea.

Methods

Strain Culturing and Plasmid Construction. All *Halobacterium* NRC-1 strains were cultured under standard conditions (16). pNBPA vector was constructed by replacing the GFP coding sequence (CDS) with a proteinA (pA) CDS downstream to the ferredoxin promoter in pKJ419 (a generous gift from John Spudich, University of Texas, Houston, TX). For vector pMT-Fcmcy, the pA CDS was replaced with a Cmyc CDS. GTF genes were cloned into the NdeI restriction sites of the pMTFcmcy and pNBPA vectors for Cmyc and pA tagging, respectively, and transformed by standard protocols. Transformants were selected on CM agar containing 20 μ g/ml mevinolin (A.G. Scientific, San Diego, CA).

Immunoprecipitation and Mass Spectrometry Analyses of Protein Complexes. Culture pellets (1.5 liters) of epitope-tagged GTF strains were lysed in 50 ml of basal salt solution (BSS -CM without peptone) containing Complete Protease Inhibitors (CH; Roche, Indianapolis, IN) by using a microfluidizer model 110 S (Microfluidics, Newton, MA), clarified by centrifugation, and incubated overnight at 4°C with IgG Sepharose 6 Fast Flow gel matrix (Amersham, Piscataway, NJ) preequilibrated in BSS. IgG-Sepharose-bound protein complexes were washed with 5 ml of BSS, transferred to Micro Bio-Spin columns (BioRad, Hercules, CA), and washed thrice with 1 \times PBS. Protein complexes were eluted with 150 ml of 0.5 M acetic acid, dried, dissolved in 100 μ l of H₂O, trypsinized, and analyzed with microliquid chromatography-electrospray ionization tandem MS, as described (17, 18). SEQUEST (ThermoFinnigan, Waltham, MA), PeptideProphet (19), and ProteinProphet were used to assign spectra to peptides and peptides to proteins (20).

HaloSpan Array Construction, ChIP, and TFB Localization. PCR products representing 99.9% of the entire genome were generated by amplifying successive 500-bp regions of the *Halobacterium* genome (21). PCR products were verified for purity on an agarose gel, cleaned by using a 96-well PCR vacuum filtration plate, mixed 50:50 with DMSO (Sigma, St. Louis, MO), and spotted in quadruplicate on GAPSII slides (Corning, Corning, NY) with a VersArray (BioRad) spotter instrument (HaloSpan array).

ChIP of Cmyc-tagged protein complexes was conducted as described by Ren *et al.* (22). Amplified DNA from both ChIP complexes and non-IP DNA were each directly labeled by using either Alexa532/Alexa546 and Alexa647 (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA) or Dyomics-547 and -647 (Kreatech, Leiden, The Netherlands). Hybridization, washing, scanning, and spot-finding were conducted by using standard microarray procedures (7).

Statistical Analysis to Identify Significant GTF-Promoter Associations. Each ChIP-Chip consisted of at least two independent biological replicates, with at least 16 replicate spots in each. The signifi-

cance of DNA fragment enrichment in raw ChIP-chip microarray data was estimated by maximum-likelihood analysis, which yielded \log_{10} ratios and the λ significance statistic (23). Plots of \log_{10} ratios against λ demonstrated even distributions of \log_{10} ratios in the absence of tagged transcription factors. In the presence of transcription factors, the \log_{10} ratio distribution was significantly skewed toward the cross-linked sample relative to control, indicating specific nonrandom enrichment of DNA fragments. Therefore, features (tiles) associated with a \log_{10} ratio in the experimental sample greater than the fifth-highest λ statistic in the control were considered representative of true enrichment attributable to transcription factor binding (SI Fig. 10). Finally, genes 50 bp downstream of tiles associated with transcription factor binding were considered to be putatively under control of the transcription factor.

Transcriptome Profiling. RNA preparation, labeling, and microarray analysis were conducted as described (7). For environmental data presented in Fig. 1, data collection procedures are described

in SI Table 2. For GTF perturbation experiments (Fig. 4), duplicate biological samples were harvested during three (late-lag, exponential, and early-stationary) growth phases (for 13 nonnatively expressed GTF strains (seven TFB and six TBP) and all possible knockouts (five TFB and three TBP) and processed as noted above.

Construction of In-Frame Gene Deletion Strains. Gene knockouts were constructed as described (7) to chromosomally delete all but the first 21 bp of each gene.

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