DCs are a highly diverse family of related cell types that are distributed throughout the body. They provide a first line of defense against foreign pathogens, while also acting to maintain tolerance to self. DCs can be divided into four major classes. Conventional DCs (cDCs) and plasmacytoid DCs (pDCs) predominate at steady-state, whereas monocyte-derived DCs are the main population in an inflammatory setting (Belz and Nutt, 2012). Langerhans cells (LCs) constitute the fourth major category of DCs. LCs are found in the epidermis and are at the forefront of environmental insults resulting from the breakage of the skin barrier by commensal organisms or environmental antigens.

LCs are distinct from other DC populations not only due to their location but also their differentiation requirements. For instance, pDC and cDC development is intricately linked to their responsiveness to the cytokine Flt3L (Flt3 ligand) and its receptor Flt3 (McKenna et al., 2000; Tussiwand et al., 2005; Waskow et al., 2008), as the absence of either factor leads to reduced numbers of cDC and pDC, whereas LC differentiation and frequency are not affected (Onai et al., 2007a; Merad et al., 2008; Waskow et al., 2008). In contrast, LCs are selectively absent in mice lacking either the macrophage colony stimulating factor 1 receptor (MCSFR, also known as CSF1R; Ginhoux et al., 2006) or TGF-β (Borkowski et al., 1996). The finding that LCs are generated in mice carrying a mutation resulting in the inactivation of the gene encoding MCSF (Csf1) gene was initially puzzling (Witmer-Pack et al., 1993), but recent studies reconciled this discrepancy by showing that LCs fail to develop in mice lacking IL-34, a stroma-derived cytokine binding with high affinity to the MCSFR (Greter et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2012).

Another striking difference between cDCs and LCs lies in their homeostasis. Although cDCs and pDCs are constantly renewed from Flt3+ BM precursors (Naik et al., 2007; Onai et al., 2007b), steady-state LCs derive from myeloid...
precursors that seed the prospective skin very early in embryogenesis (Hoefel et al., 2012). This epidermal LC progenitor proliferates rapidly during the first few days after birth and subsequently acquires LC-like features such as dendrites and expression of the LC markers CD11c, MHCII, and Langerin (CD207; Tripp et al., 2004; Chorro et al., 2009). Despite the detailed understanding of the phenotype and function of LCs, our understanding of the transcriptional network driving their differentiation is relatively poor. Studies addressing the signaling mediators downstream of TGF-β signaling highlighted the critical roles for ID2 (Hacker et al., 2003) and RUNX3 in driving LC homeostasis and or differentiation (Fainaru et al., 2004). In addition, a role for the IRF8 (IFN regulator factor 8, also known as ICSBP [IFN consensus sequence binding protein]) in the development and migration of LCs has been proposed, as If8−/− mice display a twofold reduction in LC frequency in the epidermis and impaired LC trafficking to lymphoid organs (Schiavoni et al., 2004). Another likely candidate regulator of LCs is the ETS family member transcription factor PU.1 (encoded by the Sfpi1 gene). PU.1 is an essential regulator of many aspects of early hematopoiesis and myeloid cell differentiation (Dakic et al., 2007). Recently, PU.1 was shown to be a crucial transcription factor in controlling Flt3 expression in a dose-dependent manner, thereby promoting cDC and pDC differentiation (Carotta et al., 2010). A potential role for PU.1 in promoting LC differentiation has been postulated but has not yet been formally shown experimentally, and the molecular basis for such a function remains unexplored (Iwama et al., 2002; Heinz et al., 2006).

In this study, we have examined the requirement of key transcriptional regulators in promoting the differentiation and homeostasis of both steady-state and inflammation-induced LC populations. The removal of PU.1 and ID2 in a DC-specific manner has revealed a central requirement for PU.1 in both types of LCs, whereas ID2 was essential for steady-state, but not inflammation-derived LCs. We show that PU.1 regulates the expression of the essential LC gene Runx3 in a TGF-β–dependent manner, a finding which highlights how a broadly expressed transcription factor such as PU.1 can have a context-specific role in LCs. Thus, the dual origin of the LC network relies on two distinct transcriptional networks, both of which are governed by PU.1.

**RESULTS**

**Transcription factor expression in LCs**

To better define the transcriptional network controlling LC differentiation, the expression of the transcription factors PU.1, ID2, IRF4, and IRF8 was analyzed by flow cytometry. PU.1 and ID2 expression was monitored using our reporter strains where an IRES (internal ribosome entry site)–eGFP cassette has been inserted into the 3′ untranslated region of the Sfpi1 and Id2 genes, generating PU.1GFP and ID2GFP reporters, respectively (Nutt et al., 2005; Jackson et al., 2011). PU.1 and ID2 were both constitutively expressed in epidermal LCs, and the expression of the latter increased on migration to the skin draining LNs (Fig. 1 A).

Homozygous knockin mice harboring eGFP fused to the C terminus of the IRF8 protein were used to follow IRF8GFP expression (unpublished data). IRF8 was relatively weakly expressed in epidermal LC but strongly up-regulated in the migratory LCs in LNs (Fig. 1 A). Similarly, intracellular staining for IRF4 revealed that LCs did not express IRF4 in the epidermis; however, IRF4 expression was up-regulated in the LN LCs (Fig. 1 A).

**PU.1 and ID2, but not IRF4 and IRF8, are required for the generation of LC**

To rigorously assess the function of PU.1, ID2, IRF4, and IRF8 in LC differentiation, mice harboring floxed alleles of each gene were crossed to Itgaxcre mouse, whereby Cre-mediated deletion is under the control of the CD11c promoter (Caton et al., 2007). This led to the generation of four new mouse strains: Itgaxcre Sfpi1fl/fl, Itgaxcre Irf4fl/fl, Itgaxcre Irf8fl/fl, and Itgaxcre Id2fl/fl, hereafter named PU.1cKO, IRF4cKO, IRF8cKO, and Id2cKO, respectively.

The presence of LCs in the epidermis of each of the mouse strains was followed by flow cytometry. This showed an almost complete loss of epidermal CD11c+MHCII+ LCs in PU.1cKO and Id2cKO mice (Fig. 1 B). LC loss was also apparent after immunohistochemical staining for Langerin in epidermal sheets from adult mouse (Fig. 1 C). Deletion of either IRF4 or IRF8 in CD11c-expressing cells had no effect on the frequency of LCs found in the epidermis, a finding consistent with our observation that these transcription factors were very lowly expressed in epidermal LCs (Fig. 1, A and B). To further corroborate these findings, LC cells were enumerated from epidermal sheets of If4−/− and If8−/− mice. Consistently with our observations using cKO mice, neither factor was required for the generation of normal numbers of LCs (unpublished data). Although our finding contrasts with a previous study using If8−/− mice that found a twofold reduction in the frequency of LCs (Schiavoni et al., 2004), our results are consistent with the recent findings on human harboring mutations in IRF8 disrupting its interaction with the DNA (Hambleton et al., 2011) and unpublished observation in the mouse that LC generation is largely independent of IRF8 (Hashimoto et al., 2011).

As expected, the frequency of migratory DCs was severely reduced in the peripheral LNs of PU.1cKO and Id2cKO mice (Fig. 1 D). In the case of PU.1, while all migratory DCs were reduced in number, the majority of the remaining Langerin+ cells found in the skin-draining LN coexpressed CD103, which marks a subset of migrating dermal DCs (Bursch et al., 2007; Fig. 1 E–G). In keeping with previous findings, both the CD103+ Langerin+ dermal DCs and CD103− Langerin+ LC compartments were severely reduced in the absence of ID2 (Hacker et al., 2003; Ginhoux et al., 2009; Fig. 1, E–G).

Ablation of IRF8 did not strongly impair the egress of LCs from the skin, as the frequency of migratory LCs found in the LN mirrored the wild-type controls (Fig. 1 D). Importantly,
supports LC development was needed. TGF-β1 is critical for LC differentiation in vivo (Borkowski et al., 1996, 1997; Becker et al., 2011) and has been shown to cooperate with GM-CSF to drive the differentiation of CD14+ human monocytes into LCs (Geissmann et al., 1998). Consistently, Becker et al. (2011) have recently described an in vitro system, where the addition of TGF-β to BM precursors cultured in the presence of MCSF and GM-CSF could readily generate LC-like cells. To examine this differentiation system in more detail, BM cells were cultured with GM-CSF and TGF-β for 3 d. Examination of the CD11c+MHCII+ component of the resulting cultures showed the presence of CD103+ dermal DCs were absent from the LNs of IRF8cKO, consistent with previous studies and confirming that CD11c-driven deletion was efficient at this locus (Fig. 1 E). In keeping with the up-regulation in IRF4 expression upon migration, the frequency of migratory LCs in peripheral LNs was greatly reduced in IRF4cKO (Fig. 1, D–G). Collectively, these data highlight the pivotal and DC-intrinsic role of PU.1 and ID2 for the development and or maintenance of epidermal LC.

In vitro generated LCs

To systematically investigate the role of different transcription factors during LC differentiation, an in vitro system that supports LC development was needed. TGF-β1 is critical for LC differentiation in vivo (Borkowski et al., 1996, 1997; Becker et al., 2011) and has been shown to cooperate with GM-CSF to drive the differentiation of CD14+ human monocytes into LCs (Geissmann et al., 1998). Consistently, Becker et al. (2011) have recently described an in vitro system, where the addition of TGF-β to BM precursors cultured in the presence of MCSF and GM-CSF could readily generate LC-like cells. To examine this differentiation system in more detail, BM cells were cultured with GM-CSF and TGF-β for 3 d. Examination of the CD11c+MHCII+ component of the resulting cultures showed the presence of four phenotypically distinct subpopulations of dermal DCs.
distinct populations based on the expression of DEC205 and EPCAM, markers commonly used to delineate LCs (Fig. 2A). While all four fractions arose from a TGF-β responsive precursor, which had undergone multiple cell divisions, their relative abundance was dependent on the TGF-β concentration (Fig. S1, A–C). Furthermore, GM-CSF was also found to be essential in this culture system, as DEC205+EPCAM+ DCs could not be generated from BM precursors cultivated in the presence of MCSF alone or supplemented with TGF-β (Fig. S1 D).

To better understand the relationship between these different populations induced by GM-CSF and TGF-β, the four fractions were sorted by flow cytometry and recultured for a further 24 h before reanalysis (Fig. 2B). Fraction I, defined as DEC205−EPCAM−, retained multipotent potential as these cells generated all four subsets. Fraction II (DEC205+EPCAM−) failed to generate any other population and is likely to be terminally differentiated. Fraction III (DEC205−EPCAM+), differentiated predominantly into the DEC205+EPCAM+ fraction IV, while fraction IV cells maintained their identity but showed a further up-regulation of DEC205 (Fig. 2B).

To characterize the lineage identity of these four different fractions, cells were sorted according to EPCAM and DEC205 cell surface expression. Cytospins of each population were stained with hematoxylin and eosin and analyzed for cellular morphology. Consistent with the above finding that fraction I maintained some developmental plasticity, this fraction retained a variety of cells in size and shape, while fraction II was highly enriched for cells with macrophage morphology. Fractions III and IV were more homogeneously small in size and presented small cytoplasmic protrusions (Fig. 2C). Although Langerin expression is known to be relatively low in this culture system (Becker et al., 2011), we found that the mRNA for Cd207 (encoding Langerin) was exclusively found in
Fraction IV, suggesting that this fraction contained cells with a more mature phenotype than those found in fraction III (Fig. 2 D). To further define the nature of these in vitro generated LC-like cells, CD103 expression was measured by flow cytometry. CD103 is a marker commonly used to distinguish LCs (Langerin+CD103+) from CD103+ DCs (Langerin+CD103+), although GM-CSF is known to induce CD103 expression in non-CD103+ DC subsets in vitro (Edelson et al., 2011; Jackson et al., 2011; Sathe et al., 2011). Despite CD103 expression being higher in fraction IV (Fig. 2 E), these cells lacked the transcriptional signature of CD103+ DCs, as the expression of the key transcription factor BATF3, and the chemokine receptor XCR1 was much lower than in conventional CD103+ and CD8α+ DCs (Fig. 2 E; Hildner et al., 2008; Edelson et al., 2010; Crozat et al., 2011; Bachem et al., 2012). In keeping with their expression in LCs in vivo, the mean fluorescence index of ID2GFP and IRF8GFP increased in fractions III and IV, whereas PU.1 expression was uniform in all populations (Fig. 2 G).

In DCs, the TGF-β–induced response is mediated by the transcription factor RUNX3 (Fainaru et al., 2004). Although all cells were exposed to TGF-β, qPCR analysis revealed that Runx3 expression was restricted to fractions III and IV, confirming that these cells arose from a TGF-β responsive BM precursor (Fig. 2 H). In contrast, Klf4 (Kruppel-like factor 4), a transcription factor essential for macrophage function (Liao et al., 2011), was highly enriched in fraction II, whereas Irf4 showed a reciprocal expression pattern (Fig. 2 H). Collectively, these observations highlight the fact that TGF-β–driven DEC205+EPCAM+ cells express a transcriptional profile and morphological features consistent with those of LCs.

In vitro generated LCs require PU.1 but not ID2

We next examined whether in vitro BM-derived LCs rely on the same transcriptional machinery as LCs generated in vivo by culturing BM cells from ckO mice cultured in the presence of GM-CSF and TGF-β. At day 3, CD11c−MHCII+ cells were monitored by flow cytometry for their expression of DEC205 and EPCAM. A representative plot for each genotype is shown. Numbers represent the frequency of CD11c−MHCII+ cells generated for each indicated genotype. Bar graphs show the mean proportion ± SD of in vitro generated LC from at least four experiments per genotype. ***, P < 0.001 (unpaired Student’s t test) compared with the wild-type sample. Data from IFN-γ-deficient (IFN-γ KO) cells are from Ifng−/− mice. (B) BM cells from the indicated genotype were cultured in the presence of GM-CSF and TGF-β. At day 3, CD11c−MHCII+ cells were sorted and DNA extracted. The deletion efficiency was assessed by PCR. Cre−, cells derived from the respective floxed (floxed) mice; H2O, no DNA added to the reaction. The position of the wild-type (wt), loxP flanked (fl), and deleted (Δ) alleles are shown for each genotype. Data are representative of three independent experiments.
DCs, whereas PU.1 expression in inflammatory monocytes was similar to the levels of splenic cDCs, while resident monocytes expressed higher PU.1 (Fig. 4 D).

We then tested whether either PU.1 or ID2 were required for the differentiation of BM-derived LCs after skin injury induced by UV exposure. To this end, lethally irradiated C57BL/6 Ly5.1+ mice were reconstituted with wild-type, PU.1cKO, or ID2cKO BM (all Ly5.2+). Six wk after reconstitution, mice were exposed to UV light for 30 min to deplete host LCs. Three wk after UV exposure, the recruitment of donor Ly5.2+ cells into the epidermis was monitored by flow cytometry. As expected, BM-derived Ly5.2+ LCs were generated in Ly5.1+ mice reconstituted with wild-type BM, whereas host Ly5.1+ LCs were severely reduced (Fig. 5 B). Analysis of the ears, trunk epidermis, and LNs of mice reconstituted with Ly5.2+ wild-type, PU.1cKO, or ID2cKO BM revealed a similar degree of chimerism regardless of donor genotype (Fig. 5 C). Mice reconstituted with Ly5.2+ PU.1cKO BM failed to differentiate into CD11c-MHCII+ epidermal LCs, highlighting the pivotal role of PU.1 in driving their differentiation from a BM-derivered precursor (Fig. 5 D). In contrast, LCs were generated in Ly5.1+ mice reconstituted with Ly5.2+ ID2cKO BM (Fig. 5 D). These results perfectly mirrored the results generated using the in vitro LC differentiation system and demonstrate that in contrast to steady-state LC where ID2 is indispensable, inflammatory BM-derived LCs are insensitive to ID2 loss.

Consistent with the above findings, Langerin+ cells in peripheral LNs were severely reduced in mice reconstituted with PU.1cKO, whereas they were only slightly reduced in mice reconstituted with ID2cKO BM (Fig. 5) E). Analysis of the cell surface markers expressed by migratory DCs revealed that the vast majority of Langerin+expressing cells derived from ID2cKO are CD103+ and therefore represent LCs (Fig. 5 E). In contrast, mice reconstituted with Ly5.2+ PU.1cKO BM contained Langerin+CD103+ dermal DCs and few epidermal LCs (Fig. 5 E).

To determine whether the LCs generated from ID2cKO BM could persist longer-term, we repeated the UV-induced skin injury model described above (Fig. 5 A) and analyzed the LC repopulation 6 wk after UV treatment. ID2cKO-derived LCs (Fig. 5 F), which had efficiently excised the targeted ID2 allele (Fig. 5 G), were still present at the time point, indicative of sustained LC reconstitution.

To gain insights into differential requirement of LCs generated after UV-induced skin injury for PU.1 and ID2, we reconstituted lethally irradiated Ly5.1+ mice with either PU.1GFP or Id2GFP BM (both Ly5.2+). Six wk after reconstitution, mice were exposed to UV, and 3 wk later the epidermis was isolated and analyzed by flow cytometry. Donor-derived cells were able to differentiate into three distinct subsets based on the surface expression of the markers CD11c and MHCII (Fig. 6 A). Both CD11c−MHCII+ and CD11c+MHCII+ cells lacked PU.1GFP and expressed Id2GFP constitutively, whereas the CD11c+MHCII+ LCs expressed high levels of PU.1 and ID2. Thus, despite the induction of ID2 expression in BM-derived

- **Figure 4.** Characterization of the expression of PU.1 and ID2 in circulating monocytes. (A) Circulating mononuclear cells were isolated from blood and analyzed by flow cytometry. CD11b+MCSFR+ monocytes (left plot) were gated and the expression of Ly6C and CD11c was analyzed (right plot). Histograms represent the expression of CXCR1 using CXCR1GFP reporter mouse on inflammatory CD11c-Ly6GFP monocytes (dashed green histogram) and resident CD11c-Ly6GFP monocytes (green filled histogram). (B) The mean of frequency of total CD11b+MCSFR+ circulating monocytes (B) and CD11b+MCSFR+ CD11c+Ly6C+inflammatory monocytes (C) are shown. The data are the mean ± SD from five mice. (D) Reporter mice of the indicated genotypes were assessed for the expression of GFP in in the CD11b+MCSFR−CD11c−Ly6C+ (dashed green line) and CD11b+MCSFR−CD11c+Ly6C−/low (filled green line) compartments. Gray histograms show autofluorescence in identical populations isolated from wild type blood. Numbers represents the MFI of GFP for the indicated population ± SD. Data are representative of two independent experiments.

- **Figure 4 A, with Itgax+cve activity being restricted to resident monocytes (Caton et al., 2007; Gaiser et al., 2012).** Both populations were found in normal numbers in PU.1cKO and ID2cKO mice (Fig. 4 A, B and C), demonstrating that any Cre-mediated gene deletion in monocytes did not impact on their frequency and thus potential to respond to the inflammatory signals that induced LC repopulation. To further characterize those monocytes, expression of PU.1GFP and Id2GFP within those populations was monitored by flow cytometry. Both populations expressed low levels of ID2 compared with spenic...
LCs, ID2 deletion did not affect LC differentiation in this setting, whereas PU.1 was found essential (Fig. 5, D–G).

Recently, it has been reported that during inflammation two distinct types of LCs seed the epidermis: a short-term LC, which persisted for up to 4 wk and was ID2 independent, and a long-term ID2-dependent LC (Seré et al., 2012). In that study, the short-term LC subset exhibited a distinct phenotype characterized by the lack of Langerin expression. In contrast the ID2cKO LCs that were present in the epidermis 3 wk after UV treatment in our experiments expressed Langerin in a manner indistinguishable from wild-type LCs (Fig. 6 B). As we have shown that all CD11cMHCII+ cells derived from wild-type (wt) donor (Ly5.2+) and host (Ly5.1+) Numbers respond the frequency of the gated populations. (C) Chart represents the mean frequency of chimerism ± SD for the indicated genotype in the ear, trunk, and LNs (n = 4/genotype). (D) Contour plots show the expression of CD11c and MHCII in epidermal cells derived from donors of the indicated genotypes. Graphs show the mean frequency ± SD of donor-derived LCs found in the host epidermis from four mice per genotype. (E) Top left, expression of CD11c and Langerin in donor (Ly5.2+) cells of the indicated genotype from peripheral LNs. Bottom left, dot plots show the expression of CD103 and Langerin within Ly5.2+CD11c+MHCII+ cells. Numbers represent the frequency of the gated populations. Right, bar graphs show the mean proportion ± SD of either CD11c-Langerin+ LN cells (gated as in top left) or CD11c-Langerin+CD103+ LCs (gated as in bottom left) derived from the indicated genotype. Data in B–E are representative of two independent experiments with at least four independent chimeric mice per genotype. **, P < 0.01; ***, P < 0.001 (unpaired Student’s t test) compared with the wild-type sample. (F and G) Ly5.1 mice were reconstituted with BM from l2dKO and exposed to UV. The repopulation of the epidermis by Ly5.2+ inflammatory LCs was assessed by flow cytometry after 6 wk. Contour plots show the expression of CD11c and MHCII in cells derived from donor (Ly5.2+, l2dKO) and host (wt, l5.1+) in the trunk. Numbers represent the mean frequency of LC (n = 3 ± SD) for the indicated compartment. (G) DNA was extracted from wild-type (L5.1+) and l2dKO (L5.2+) BM-derived LC, gated as in F. The ID2 deletion efficiency was assessed by PCR. l2dKO, CD11cCre−, l2dKO, and a wild-type control are shown. H2O, no DNA added to the reaction. The position of the wild-type, loxP flanked (fl), and deleted (Δ) alleles are indicated. Numbers on the left indicate the molecular weight in base pairs. Data are representative of two independent experiments.
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PU.1-dependent. In addition, these results demonstrate that in vitro BM-derived LCs can be used as a surrogate system to study the molecular mechanisms involved in inflammation-induced LC differentiation in vivo, as LC differentiation in both models is PU.1 sensitive and ID2 insensitive.

**PU.1 regulates RUNX3 expression in LCs**

To further determine how PU.1 affects the differentiation of BM-derived LCs, we focused our analysis on the transcription factor RUNX3, which is pivotal in mediating LC differentiation in response to TGF-β (Fainaru et al., 2004). Real-time RT-PCR analysis showed that Runx3 expression was strongly reduced in PU.1-deficient DC generated in vitro (Fig. 7 A). To determine whether PU.1 was able to directly regulate Runx3 expression, BM cells from PU.1cKO were cultured in the presence of BM-CSF and TGF-β, and transduced with retroviral vectors expressing either GFP alone or with PU.1. Strikingly, Runx3 expression was significantly increased in DC11c+MHCII− DCs ectopically expressing PU.1 compared with DCs expressing GFP alone (Fig. 7 B). LC numbers were increased in vitro when PU.1cKO cells were transduced with PU.1, suggesting that PU.1 controls Runx3 expression in LCs (Fig. 7 C).

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Figure 6. Inflammatory LCs express PU.1, ID2, and Langerin. (A and B) Donor cells (Ly5.2+) from either PU.1GFP and ID2GFP (A) or wild-type (wt) and ID2cKO mice (B) were subjected to the same experimental regimen outlined in Fig. 5 A. (A) Expression of GFP within the CD11c−MHCII− (black line), CD11c+MHCII+ inflammatory LC (filled red) fractions was determined by flow cytometry. (B) BM-derived LCs from wild-type or ID2cKO donors (Ly5.2+) were analyzed for expression of CD11c, Langerin, and MHCII by flow cytometry. Expression of MHCII within the CD11c−Langerin− (black line), CD11c+Langerin− (filled blue), and CD11c+Langerin+ (filled red) fractions was determined by flow cytometry. (C) Leukocytes from ID2cKO donors (Ly5.2+) were analyzed for expression of CD11c and MHCII by flow cytometry. Gated Ly5.2+CD11c+MHCII− (gate I) and Ly5.2+CD11c+MHCII+ (gate II) were examined for TCR-β and TCR-γδ by flow cytometry. Data in this figure are representative of two independent experiments.
runx3 locus as defined by ChIPseq analysis of BM derived macrophages. The PU.1 ChIPseq data have been previously described (Ghisletti et al., 2010). The PU.1 peaks that were subjected to further analysis in LCs are labeled A and B. Sequence below highlights additional putative PU.1 binding site (black boxes) found in the promoter of Runx3. Primers used for ChIP PCR are highlighted in gray. (E) Wild-type BM cells were cultured in GM-CSF ± TGF-β for 3 d. Binding of PU.1 to the regions labeled as A and B in D was analyzed by ChIP and enrichment was calculated by quantitative real time PCR as the mean fold of enrichment ± SD (compared with IgG control). Results are representative of two independent experiments.

DNA regions in myeloid cells were retrieved from the online available database (Ghisletti et al., 2010). PU.1 bound to several intronic and 3′ regions of the Runx3 gene, most of which contained the PU.1 consensus core motif (GGAA, Fig. 7 D). In addition, in silico analysis of Runx3 promoter showed other potential PU.1 binding sites. To test whether PU.1 directly binds in the Runx3 gene in LCs, PU.1-bound chromatin was immunoprecipitated from wild-type cells cultured in the presence of GM-CSF ± TGF-β. Consistent with the ChIPseq data from macrophages, PU.1 was constitutively bound to the first intron of Runx3. Interestingly, although no binding of PU.1 to the Runx3 promoter was observed in BM cells cultured in GM-CSF alone, the addition of TGF-β to the media induced the recruitment of PU.1 to Runx3 promoter and also increased its binding to the intronic region (Fig. 7 E). Collectively, these observations suggest that PU.1 directly regulates Runx3 expression in a TGF-β-dependent manner and thereby promotes LC differentiation.

**RUNX3 expression rescues LC differentiation in the absence of PU.1**

To test if the requirement of PU.1 for LC generation could be circumvented by constitutive expression of RUNX3, PU.1cKO BM cells were cultured in GM-CSF ± TGF-β and transduced with retroviral vectors expressing either GFP alone or with RUNX3. Strikingly, restoring RUNX3 expression could bypass the requirement of PU.1 to drive LC differentiation. Retroviral transduction of RUNX3 into wild-type BM precursors also increased the numbers of LCs generated by twofold when compared with control cultures, suggesting that the expression of RUNX3 is normally limiting for LC differentiation in vitro (Fig. 8 A).

A cardinal feature of the RUNX proteins is their highly conserved Runt domain, which is essential for DNA binding and protein–protein interaction (Ito, 2004). Alignment of the sequence coding for the Runt domains of RUNX1 and RUNX3 showed very high homology. The critical residues for RUNX1 DNA binding (arrows) were almost exclusively retained in the predicted DNA binding domain (box, Fig. 8 B), and were highly conserved in RUNX3 (Michaud et al., 2002; Li et al., 2003). Therefore, based on these similarities, a single point mutation within the last DNA contacting residue of RUNX3 (RUNX3<sup>R196Q</sup>) was introduced and enabled to address the functionality of such mutant in promoting LC differentiation. Constitutive expression of RUNX3<sup>R196Q</sup> failed to promote enhanced LC differentiation in wild-type cells or to rescue the deficiency of PU.1cKO to differentiate into LCs (Fig. 8 C). Collectively, these results highlight the critical role for RUNX3 DNA binding in promoting LC differentiation and support the hypothesis that RUNX3 levels are a limiting factor for LC differentiation.

**DISCUSSION**

This study uses newly generated genetic tools to address the requirement of four transcription factors—PU.1, ID2, IRF4, and IRF8—in the development and/or maintenance of LCs.
up-regulation renders LCs sensitive and responsive to CCR7 ligands. The signaling events leading to IFR4 expression remain to be fully explored, but it will be important to address this question, as in some viral infections, such as HIV, infected LCs vehicle the viruses to the periphery and infect other DCs and T cells (Cunningham et al., 2008).

Epidermal LCs expressed a relatively low amount of IRF8, which was also up-regulated upon migration to the LN. However, IRF8 was found to be dispensable for LC homeostasis in the two mouse models (Irf8−/− and IRF8cKO) used in this study. This is in contrast to earlier observation made in Irf8−/− mice, where epidermal LC numbers and subsequent motility to the LNs were reduced (Schiavoni et al., 2004).

Our results mirror recent observations that humans with dysfunctional IRF8—due to mutations that cripple its DNA binding activity—have a normal LC network, despite the severe immunodeficiency caused by the lack of circulating monocytes and DCs (Hambleton et al., 2011). Despite the combination of the use of reporter mice strains and the genetic ablation of these key transcription factors in a DC-specific manner, our study offers for the first time a comprehensive picture of the transcriptional network underlying LC homeostasis.

The detailed analysis of the expression pattern of PU.1, ID2, and IRF8 revealed their expression in the skin, whereas IRF4 was only up-regulated upon migration. LC numbers found in the LNs were considerably reduced in absence of IRF4, a finding which could be explained defects in either survival and/or migration in the absence of IRF4. Although EPCAM, an important regulator of LC migration (Gaiser et al., 2012), was normally expressed in the absence of IRF4 (unpublished data), IRF4 has also been shown to have a prominent role in promoting the expression of CCR7 in CD11b+ dermal DCs (Bajaña et al., 2012). CCR7 governs the migration of skin DCs under steady and inflammatory conditions. Yet CCR7 is not expressed on epidermal LCs. Therefore, one could speculate that upon maturation IRF4 up-regulation renders LCs sensitive and responsive to CCR7 ligands. The signaling events leading to IFR4 expression remain to be fully explored, but it will be important to address this question, as in some viral infections, such as HIV, infected LCs vehicle the viruses to the periphery and infect other DCs and T cells (Cunningham et al., 2008).
strong up-regulation of IRF8 expression in LN LCs, migration to the LN was also unaffected in IRF8cKO. Future studies should now address whether LCs are fully functional in the absence of IRF8.

In contrast to IRF4 and IRF8, steady-state LC development absolutely required ID2 and PU.1. In a screen designed to establish the transcriptional signature of DC development, ID2 was previously found to be a critical mediator of TGF-β signaling (Hacker et al., 2003). Consistent with this, both ID2- and TGF-β-deficient mice lack LCs (Borkowski et al., 1996; Strobl and Knapp, 1999; Hacker et al., 2003). To address the molecular function of ID2 and PU.1 in LC differentiation, we made use of an in vitro culture system, where addition of TGF-β has been shown to bias the differentiation of DC precursor into LC-like cells (Borkowski et al., 1996; Strobl and Knapp, 1999; Becker et al., 2011). These experiments showed that although the in vitro generation of BM-derived LCs was completely dependent on PU.1, the same process was insensitive to the loss of ID2, suggesting that the function of ID2 in LCs was context specific.

It has been shown that monocytes can be recruited to the inflamed skin and differentiate into LCs in response to external stress (Merad et al., 2002; Ginhoux et al., 2006; Nagao et al., 2012; Seré et al., 2012). One possible explanation for the differential requirement of steady-state epidermal LCs and in vitro–derived LCs for ID2 would be that the two populations were in fact generated from a distinct precursor, which relies on a distinct transcriptional network. To test this hypothesis, we made use of a model of inflammatory LC differentiation where circulating monocytes can be recruited to the dermis after UV-induced skin injury and differentiate into LCs (Merad et al., 2002; Ginhoux et al., 2006). Importantly, the results obtained in this in vivo setting mirrored the observation made in vitro as we observed that although donor-derived LCs expressed ID2, their development was ID2 independent.

Overall, the conclusion that inflammatory LCs do not depend on ID2 agrees with a recent study using ID2-null mice (Seré et al., 2012). However, those authors found that inflammatory LCs (termed short-term LCs in that study) did not express Langerin and thus were readily distinguishable from steady-state counterpart (Seré et al., 2012), whereas our data show that the LCs that repopulate the skin after inflammation expressed MHCII and Langerin to similar levels as steady-state LCs (Fig. 6). Similar to Sere et al. (2012), we also observed CD11c+Langerin+ cells; however, these cells lacked PU.1GFP expression and expressed the markers indicative of tissue-resident T cells. Sere et al. (2012) proposed that short-term LCs were ID2-independent and persisted for up to 4 wk after skin injury, after which they were replaced by Langerin+ ID2-dependent cells they termed long-term LCs. In contrast, we found that the repopulation of injured epidermis with BM-derived LCs was in general ID2-independent and persisted for at least 6 wk. Some of these differences in the phenotype and longevity of the LCs may result from differences in the experimental setup, as Sere et al. (2012) used either Id2−/− null mice or alymphoid NOD/SCID/common γ chain−/− recipients in their transfer assays (Seré et al., 2012), both of which have severely compromised immune systems, whereas we used immune-competent wild-type (Ly5.1) mice which may react differently to the UV treatment. Despite these important differences, both studies support the conclusion that steady-state and inflammatory BM-derived LCs derive from distinct pathways that differ in their requirement for ID2.

We recently addressed the function of PU.1 in cDC and pDC differentiation and reported that PU.1 is essential to support the expression of Flt3 in a dose-dependent manner (Carotta et al., 2010). A potential role for PU.1 in LC differentiation has been postulated; however, the underlying molecular mechanism was hitherto largely unexplored (Iwama et al., 2002; Heinz et al., 2006). The requirement for PU.1 in LCs is also not explained by the regulation of Flt3 by PU.1 as Flt3 signaling is dispensable for LC homeostasis (Onai et al., 2007a; Merad et al., 2008; Waskow et al., 2008). One candidate target of PU.1 was the transcription factor RUNX3, which is pivotal to induce the signaling cascade mediated by TGF-β and thus LC formation (Fainaru et al., 2004). We found that PU.1 bound to Runx3 regulatory elements, and its overexpression led to increased level of RUNX3, which ultimately promoted LC differentiation. RUNX3 appears to be a critical target of PU.1, as ectopic expression of RUNX3 alone was sufficient to restore LC formation in the absence of PU.1. In addition, RUNX3 overexpression in wild-type progenitors increased the number of precursors committing to the LC lineage. These results suggest that levels of RUNX3 are normally limiting for the differentiation of progenitors into mature LCs.

Interestingly, the PU.1 binding to the Runx3 promoter was entirely dependent on TGF-β signaling, while the binding to an intronic sequence was enhanced by TGF-β. Thus, LC differentiation requires synergy between a major transcription factor (PU.1) and an extrinsic signal (TGF-β) to promote the expression of RUNX3, the lineage-defining transcription factor. The synergy between PU.1 and the TGF-β signaling pathway explains why ectopic PU.1 expression cannot promote LC generation in the absence of TGF-β (Heinz et al., 2006). Interestingly, several master regulatory transcription factors, including PU.1, have been shown to direct SMAD proteins to TGF-β–targeted genes, thereby determining cell type–specific effect of TGF-β (Mullen et al., 2011). Therefore, it is tempting to speculate that the recruitment of PU.1 in a TGF-β–dependent manner at the promoter of Runx3 poises the locus allowing the recruitment and co-occupancy of SMAD proteins, which ultimately drive Runx3 transcription and LC differentiation.

In summary, our results provide important insights into the transcriptional circuitry driving LC homeostasis. We show that steady-state and inflammatory LCs rely on distinct transcriptional networks that are PU.1 regulated but differentially dependent on ID2. As the transcriptional network guiding their differentiation is different, this study also raises questions of whether or not steady-state and inflammatory LCs fulfill...
distinct cutaneous immune functions. Our recently developed genetic tools give us an unprecedented opportunity to explore this question in the future.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Mice. Sfpi1fl/fl (Dakae et al., 2005), Ifg8fl/fl (Klein et al., 2006), Ifg8fl/fl (Feng et al., 2011), and Id2fl/fl (Seillet et al., 2013) mice were bred to the Irgafllox/lox (Caton et al., 2007) strain that expresses Cre recombinase from the CD11c promoter. PCR assay for gene deletion was performed as described for Sfpi1fl/fl (Dakae et al., 2005) and Id2fl/fl (Seillet et al., 2013), Analysis of Cre-mediated deletion of the Ifg8fllox allele was performed using primers A (5′-TTGGGAGGTTTCAGGCTGTTCTA-3′), B (5′-CACAGGGAGGTCTCTCTTACCATGTTA-3′), and C (5′-AACACCAAGGCTGACGCTTTGAC-3′) to generate fragments of 214 bp (A/B wild type), ~300 bp (A/B/B), and ~700 bp (A/C exon2-deleted).

The PU.1GFP (Nutt et al., 2005), ID2GFP (Jackon et al., 2011), CX3CR1GFP (Jung et al., 2000), Irf8+/−/− (Mittrücker et al., 1997), and Irf8−/− (Holschke et al., 1996) strains have been previously described. Irgafllox and CX3CR1GFP mice were obtained from The Jackson Laboratory, C57BL/6 Ly5.1 mice were maintained in house. Experiments involved 8–12 wk-old mice unless otherwise stated. Animal procedures were approved by The Walter and Eliza Hay Institute the Animal Ethics Committee.

Antibodies and flow cytometry. Antibodies against CD11c (N418), CD45.2 (A20), CD45.1 (104), MHCII (M514.15.2), CD8a (5–6.7), TCR-β (H57–597), TCR-γδ (GL3), and CD4 (GK1.4) were purchased from BD. Other antibodies were purchased from eBioscience (Ly6C [HK1.4] and CD103 [2E7]), Dendritics [Langerin [V198A11]], BioLegend (EPCAM [13G8]), Santa Cruz Biotechnology, Inc. (IRF4), R&D Systems (RUNX3), or generated in house (DEC2/5 [NLDC205]).

Cells were resuspended in FACS buffer (PBS plus 0.5% BSA; Sigma-Aldrich), blocked with Fc block, and stained in FACS buffer at 4°C. For intracellular analysis, cells were fixed and permeabilized using Cytofix/Cytoperm kit (BD) according to the manufacturer’s protocol. All analyses were performed on a FACS canto (BD) and data were analyzed using FlowJo software. Sorting was performed on a FACS Aria (BD).

Cell isolation. Spleen and LNs were harvested, minced into fine pieces, and incubated for 30 min in FACS buffer containing collagenase and DNase (Gibco). For epidermal LC isolation, skin pieces (1 cm²) were incubated for 1 h at 37°C in 2 U/ml Dispase (Gibco). After treatment, epidermal sheets were peeled from the dermis, cut into fine pieces, and digested with 50 U/ml collagenase for 45 min at 37°C.

Immunofluorescence and confocal microscopy. Epidermal sheets were peeled from the dermis 30 min after treatment with 4% ammonium thiocyanate. Sheets were fixed in acetone for 5 min, blocked for 30 min with Fc block, and stained with anti-Langerin and anti-CD3 (2C11; phycoerythrin). Sheets were fixed in acetone for 5 min, blocked for 30 min with Fc block, and stained with anti-Langerin and anti-CD3 (2C11; phycoerythrin). Sheets were fixed in acetone for 5 min, blocked for 30 min with Fc block, and stained with anti-Langerin and anti-CD3 (2C11; phycoerythrin). Sheets were fixed in acetone for 5 min, blocked for 30 min with Fc block, and stained with anti-Langerin and anti-CD3 (2C11; phycoerythrin). Sheets were fixed in acetone for 5 min, blocked for 30 min with Fc block, and stained with anti-Langerin and anti-CD3 (2C11; phycoerythrin).

Cell culture. Isolated BM cells were cultured in mouse toxicity RPMI-1640 supplemented with 10% heat inactivated fetal calf serum, 2 mM l-Glutamine (Gibco), 50 µM 2-mercaptoethanol (Sigma-Aldrich), and 100 U/ml penicillin/streptomycin (Gibco). 5 × 10⁶ cells/ml were stimulated with 20 ng/ml GM-CSF (made in house) and 5 ng/ml TGF-β (or otherwise as indicated; eBioscience) for 3 d. For division tracking, BM cells were labeled with CFSE (Molecular Probes).

Retroviral transduction. The retroviral supernatants were produced using the pMIG-iresGFP (empty vector), pMIG-PU.1iresGFP, pMIG-RUNX3iresGFP, and pMIG-RUNX3CreiresGFP vectors as described in Carotta et al. (2010). 48 h after infection, cells were harvested and stained for flow cytometry analysis.

Skin inflammation. C57BL/6 Ly5.1 mice were lethally irradiated (2 × 0.55 Gy), and reconstituted with Ly5.2+ wild-type, Irgafllox/Sfpi1fl/fl or Irgafllox/Id2fl/fl BM, 6 wk after reconstitution, Ly5.1+ LCs were depleted from the skin by exposing mice to UV for 30 min (wavelength 254 nm, voltage 8W, source: 38 cm). Replenishment of the LC network was assessed 3 or 6 wk after UV exposure.

RT-PCR. RNAs were isolated using RNeasy Plus Mini kit according to manufacturer’s recommendations. cDNAs were synthesized from total RNAs with an oligo(dT) primers (Invitrogen) using Superscript III Reverse transcription according to the manufacturer’s instructions. Amplification was performed with SYBR green master mix (BioIabs) on a CFX 384 (Bio-Rad Laboratories) using the primers described in Table S1.

Chromatin immunoprecipitation. 10² cells were cross-linked 1% paraformaldehyde (Sigma-Aldrich) in PBS and then lysed (1% SDS + 1 mM EDTA + protease inhibitors). Cross-linked DNA was sonicated with the Bioruptor (Diagenode). Protein G Dynabeads (Invitrogen) were incubated with 20 µg PU.1 antibody (T-20; Santa Cruz Biotechnology, Inc.) according to the manufacturer’s protocol. Coupled antibody was added to 100 µg chromatin and incubated overnight at 4°C. Unbound chromatin was removed using a series of four washes. Following elution, bound chromatin was reverse cross-linked and subjected phenol/chloroform immunoprecipitation. Recovered DNA was resuspended in TE buffer and enrichment for specific region of the genome was measured by real-time PCR using the primers described in Table S2.

Online supplemental material. Fig. S1 shows in vitro generation of LCs, related to Fig. 2. Table S1 shows oligonucleotide primers for RT-PCR. Table S2 shows oligonucleotide primers for ChIP. Online supplemental material is available at http://www.jem.org/cgi/content/full/jem.20130930/DC1.

We thank L. Klein and T. Mak for mice, J. Leshy, N. Iannarella, R. Cole, M. Camilleri, and A. D’Amico and the institute flow cytometry facility for excellent technical assistance, and R. Allan and S. Naik for comments on the manuscript draft.

This work was supported by project grants (APP1048278 and APP1023266) and fellowships from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) of Australia (to L. Wu, G.T. Belz, and S.L. Nutt), and the Intramural Research Program of the National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (to H.C. Morse III). S.L. Nutt and G.T. Belz are supported by an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship. This work was made possible through Victorian State Government Operational Infrastructure Support and Australian Government NHMRC IBRS.

The authors have no competing financial interests.

Author contributions: M. Chopin designed, performed experiments and wrote the manuscript. S. Chevrier and C. Seillet analyzed data. H.C. Morse III, H. Wang, and L. Wu provided key reagents. S.L. Nutt and G.T. Belz supervised experimental design, analyzed data, and co-wrote the manuscript.

Submitted: 6 May 2013
Accepted: 24 October 2013

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Published November 18, 2013

JEM

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