

Bimodal hybrid zones and the scale of a snail

In their recent *TREE* perspective, Jiggins and Mallet discussed the intriguing distinction between unimodal hybrid zones (where the hybrid zone is made up largely of recombinant genotypes) and bimodal zones (where recombinants form the minority)¹. They indicated that bimodality is associated with assortative mating, and that it might be the stage where parapatric speciation and reinforcement take place.

Two aspects of uni- or bimodality remain unexplored in their paper. The first of these is the fact that deciding whether a zone is uni- or bimodal depends on the sampling scale. A unimodal hybrid zone would be classified as bimodal if the sampling area was larger than the zone itself, which is a real possibility in organisms where limited capacities for dispersal produce extremely narrow hybrid zones. The second aspect, which might warrant more attention, is the fact that a single hybrid zone might be unimodal in some places and bimodal in other places, depending on the environmental circumstances.

Both these phenomena are present in the hybrid zone between the land snails *Albinaria hippolyti aphrodite* and *Albinaria hippolyti harmonia* in Crete. This zone runs for a distance of approximately 10 km along a cliff where rugged terrain changes into more gently undulating hills². In places where the environmental transition is gradual, the hybrid zone is more than 300 m wide. Where the ecotone is more abrupt, the hybrid zone can be as narrow as a few metres. Using a standard sampling area of 10 × 10 metres (and based on morphological hybrid indices and allozymes³), we would have to classify the 300 m hybrid zone as unimodal and the narrow hybrid zone as bimodal. Choosing a larger sampling area would render both situations bimodal, whereas unimodality would appear at extremely small sampling areas.

The histogramical representation of any hybrid zone should not be used to infer speciation without reference to the ratio between the sampling area and the dispersal distance of the organism under study. As it happens, in *Albinaria*, dispersal is only of the order of one metre per year⁴, thus assortative mating and reinforcement are unlikely where the hybrid zone is wide because parental types are not within cruising range of one another, whereas they might be in the narrower sections of the zone.

Menno Schilthuis

Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Locked Bag 2073, 88999 Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia (schilthuis@excite.com)

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Reply from C.D. Jiggins and J. Mallet

Schilthuis's comments¹ highlight two important aspects of bimodality in hybrid zones. First, perhaps we did not emphasize enough that, when identifying bimodality and measuring linkage disequilibria within a zone, it is critically important that samples represent locally panmictic populations². It is a well known result of standard population genetics that mixing geographic samples with divergent gene frequencies will create artificial heterozygote deficits and linkage disequilibria; it is the local bimodality and concomitant deviations from Hardy–Weinberg or linkage equilibrium that are of special interest in the study of speciation. Of course, in practice, 'local populations' might be difficult to define. If present, bimodality should be evident at the smallest spatial scale at which it is feasible to sample, provided this is small relative to the dispersal distance of the organism concerned. We would probably consider the *Albinaria* zone to be unimodal throughout because 'unimodality would appear at extremely small sampling areas'.

Bimodality can also be difficult to detect because many loci might be undifferentiated. If there are few loci examined, each with small frequency differences between taxa, many heterozygotes and pairwise recombinant genotypes might be present locally, thus leading to unimodal distribution on a hybrid-index plot. Adding more loci, especially if more strongly differentiated, will give greater statistical power to detect bimodality. On a plot of hybrid index, the two peaks might slowly pull apart as more loci are added. Part of the problem is the loss of resolution involved in representing a multidimensional (multilocus) property – bimodality – on a two-dimensional hybrid-index plot. Likelihood analysis of multilocus genotypes³ is a more appropriate statistical method and should detect bimodality with greater sensitivity; hybrid-index plots² are merely a useful means of data display.

Second, there is often considerable variation between populations within a single zone. Given the ubiquity of ecological differentiation across hybrid zones, it is not surprising that environmental variation, such as that described by Schilthuis, should affect the genetic structure of hybrid zone populations. In the case of *Albinaria*, it

appears that the width of the hybrid zone is primarily affected, thus leading to difficulty in choosing a suitable sampling scale. However, the degree of bimodality can also vary. As with sympatric sibling species⁴, the local strength of disruptive natural selection might vary in space and time. Alternatively, habitat and population structure, leading to differences in dispersal pattern, can have similar effects: in *Bombina* hybrid zones, most populations are unimodal but some are nearly bimodal where the habitat is more patchy². Although in individual cases it is often difficult to determine whether divergence between hybridizing taxa occurred *in situ* or in allopatry, such variation in bimodality is exactly the pattern expected if hybrid zone populations represent transitional stages in a process of gradual parapatric speciation.

Chris D. Jiggins James Mallet

The Galton Laboratory, University College London, 4 Stephenson Way, London, UK NW1 2HE (c.jiggins@ucl.ac.uk; j.mallet@ucl.ac.uk)

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Spite in social insects

In a past *TREE* News & Comment, Gadagkar¹ asked the question 'can animals be spiteful?'; that is, do they ever harm another without a gain in personal reproduction. The cited examples¹, the killing of chicks in gulls and egg cannibalism in sticklebacks, were later shown to be better interpreted as plain selfishness². This led Keller *et al.*² to conclude that 'spiteful animals are still to be discovered'. Here, we draw attention to recent work on conflict in insect societies, which reveals several clear examples of spiteful actions.

The first class of examples are behaviours that Wilson³ termed spiteful. He proposed that harmful behaviour could, in the absence of personal benefits, be favoured through benefits to a third party (Fig. 1). Consider sex-ratio biasing in ants⁴, where workers kill their brothers to increase the production of more valuable sister queens (fratricide; Fig. 1). Fratricide, although detrimental to the male recipients, is not carried out to benefit the personal reproduction of the worker because