



Characteristics of evolutionary genetics of hybridization

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DESCRIPTION

The dynamics of gene flow among populations are ultimately determined by behavioural interactions among individuals, which include chemical and mechanical interactions in plants and microorganisms. As a result, the mechanisms underlying mate selection can determine whether hybridization promotes or retards speciation. Furthermore, the nature of the processes underlying mating decisions places significant constraints on their role as selection agents. Understanding the evolutionary genetics of hybridization necessitates a more in-depth examination of what factors influence mating interactions between individuals. For hybridization to have significant evolutionary consequences, two things must occur: first, matings between males and females from divergent populations must occur, and second, hybrids must mate with each other and/or backcross to parentals. A growing body of evidence suggests that behavioural barriers to interspecific mating are brittle and susceptible to environmental change. Once hybridization occurs, novel sets of signals and preferences can either facilitate backcrossing to parentals or lead to hybrid speciation. They will go over each of these processes in turn. Mate selection is a spectrum that crosses species boundaries. While choosers may evaluate different signals when attending to inter or intraspecific signal variation, from an individual's perspective, conspecific mate recognition and within-species mate choice represent a unitary process. Signal detection theory provides a useful framework for considering mating choices. A chooser has the option of accepting or rejecting a potential.

Assuming that hybridization has a fitness cost, choosers must make an unavoidable trade-off: be permissive and accept a wide range of mates, risking higher fitness costs due to hybridization, or be picky and accept a narrow range of mates, risking reduced fitness due to choice costs or missed mating opportunities. In general, if species are closely related enough to allow interspecific gene flow, there is likely to be some overlap in how choosers perceive mating signals. Choosers will exhibit some degree of permissiveness and thus accept heterospecific matings under a wide range of circumstances. Hybridization has long been recognised as being especially common in disturbed and edge habitats. In terms of individual mating decisions, this phenomenon can be explained in at least three ways. The first is that environmental disturbance can impair sexual communication to the point where choosers are unable to distinguish conspecifics from heterospecifics. Eutrophication, for example, caused by increased nutrient load, acts to limit the transmission or reception of both visual and olfactory signals, resulting in hybridization in two groups of freshwater fishes. While most studies have focused on anthropogenic impacts, natural events such as eutrophication can also occur. Disturbance episodes may thus play an important role in driving lineage hybridization.

CONCLUSION

To begin, behavioral experiments and multivariate analyses of mating patterns on both

parental and hybrids can be used to characterise how choosers evaluate suites of mating signals, generating predictions about how traits and preferences should move across natural hybrid zones. Second, Quantitative Trait Locus (QTL) mapping of multivariate traits and preferences can be used to identify genetic architecture elements associated with interspecific differences in mating traits. Third, the distribution of these QTL across current natural hybrid zones as well as along phylogenies of closely related species can be used to test predictions about how mating traits should interact to influence genetic exchange across hybrid zones.

Given recent advances in comparative genomics, such an approach has the potential to greatly advance their understanding of the evolutionary genetics of the display traits that are the target of mate choice. A more sophisticated understanding of the mechanistic underpinnings of mating preferences will improve our understanding of their critical and unusual influence on genetic exchange between populations.