

# working title Compatibility system and stigma size are the main predictors of heterospecific pollen effect

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Pollinator sharing can have negative consequences for plant fitness with the arrival of foreign pollen. However, the costs of heterospecific pollen are not yet well understood. We conducted a glasshouse experiment to understand how phylogenetic relatedness and plant traits mediate the impacts of heterospecific pollen transfer. We conducted 1800 crosses by experimentally transferring pollen (50% and 100% ratio) with reciprocal crosses between 10 species belonging to three different families: Brassicaceae, Solanaceae and Convolvulaceae. Seed set was used as proxy of plant fitness. We found that for 65% of the treatments with 50% mix reduced seed set. Moreover, the reduction in seed set was dependent on the degree of relatedness and reproductive traits of the pollen recipient and not the pollen donor. Our results show that certain traits, particularly compatibility system, are critical in understanding the costs of heterospecific pollen.

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**Keywords:** heterospecific pollen, plant reproduction, fitness, interspecific competition, phylogenetic distance.

## INTRODUCTION

In most ecosystems, plant species normally coexist and share their floral visitors with other species Waser et al. (1996). From the plants' perspective, pollinator sharing can be positive for some plants Carvalheiro et al. (2014) or negative for others Pauw (2013), depending on the facilitation gradient. An increasing number of visits often correlates with higher chances of fertilization Engel and Irwin (2003). However this is not always the case, among these possible flower visitors there are also nectar robbers and pollen thieves Inouye (1980); Magrach et al. (2017). Receiving both sufficient quantity and quality deposited on the stigma is thus highly relevant to the pollination success of the plant Aizen and Harder (2007).

34 By visiting many plant species, many pollinators are responsible for conspecific pollen loss and the  
35 transport of foreign pollen, both of which can have important detrimental effects on species fitness  
36 Morales and Traveset (2008); Ashman and Arceo-Gómez (2013); Arceo-Gómez and Ashman (2016).  
37 Foreign pollen arrival can play an important role in plant species fitness but outcomes are variable and  
38 appear to be context dependent as there is not always a decrease in fitness Morales and Traveset (2008).  
39 Some of this variation is likely due to the enormous variability of foreign pollen transferred across  
40 systems ranging from 0 to 75 percent. However, most studies report ranges of heterospecific pollen  
41 between 0 and 20 percent of the total pollen load Bartomeus et al. (2008) Montgomery and Rathcke  
42 (2012); Ashman and Arceo-Gómez (2013); Fang and Huang (2013), yet even these relatively low  
43 amounts of heterospecific pollen transferred can decrease fitness greatly Thomson et al. (1982). While  
44 we now have some understanding of the impacts of heterospecific pollen quantity, we have less  
45 understanding of other factors that could be driving the variation in impacts upon fitness. Ashman and  
46 Arceo-Gómez (2013) postulated the first predictive framework that identifies a need to understand how  
47 plant traits might mediate heterospecific pollen effect, whereby mating system and pollen size were  
48 predicted to potentially mediate the impact of foreign pollen transfer on plant fitness. This concept is  
49 supported by specific case studies, such as Tong and Huang (2016) that demonstrate an asymmetrical  
50 effect in 6 species of *Pedicularis* whereby the pollen of long styled species was able to grow the full  
51 length of the style on short styled species but not vice versa. While this suggests that the impacts of  
52 heterospecific pollen may differ among pollen donor and recipient, few studies have been conducted to  
53 ascertain whether this pattern is in fact a general trend or to identify the extent to which other plant  
54 traits are critical to heterospecific pollen impacts.

55 Plant traits are crucial to understand heterospecific pollen effect but the multifactorial nature of the  
56 traits that are involve in the pollen-pistil interaction make difficult to unravel what are the main traits  
57 in driving the effect. These traits can be seen from a male perspective of both donor and recipient  
58 where pollen size, pollen aperture number and pollen allelopathy are key components to understand the  
59 outcome of foreign pollen arrival Murphy and Aarssen (1995); Ashman and Arceo-Gómez (2013). In  
60 Ashman and Arceo-Gómez (2013) small pollen is predicted to cause a greater fitness decrease, although  
61 this can be true there are also other possibilities to consider which can obscure a predictive framework  
62 like big pollen can clogg small stigmas with fewer pollen grains, bigger stigmas are less likely to be

63 clogged by small pollen grains and bigger pollen can outcompete smaller pollen grains due to faster  
64 pollen tube growth rate Williams and Rouse (1990). Moreover, to understand the different mechanical  
65 or chemical effects of pollen also the female traits of the pollen recipient have to be considered, from  
66 the literature these main traits are: stigma size, style length, number of ovules, incompatibility system  
67 and also a structural trait such as flower morphology Montgomery and Rathcke (2012); Ashman and  
68 Arceo-Gómez (2013); Tong and Huang (2016). For example, greater stigmatic area is positively  
69 correlated with greater heterospecific pollen deposition Montgomery and Rathcke (2012) and therefore  
70 possibly with an increase in negative effect. For species that are self-incompatible the barriers towards  
71 heterospecific pollen are stronger than self-compatible species Ashman and Arceo-Gómez (2013).  
72 Nonetheless, an effect of foreign pollen is a bit obscured by the variability within species, however  
73 species that are strong selfers or strong outcrossers have less variability in mating systems and  
74 predictions of effect could be more realistic (see figure 1 from Whitehead et al. (2018)). Although past  
75 research has progress in the understanding of what traits can mediate the effect as we have shown here,  
76 there are multiple traits involved and multiple possible scenarios still to be explored empirically for a  
77 full understanding of the importance of heterospecific pollen effect in nature.

78 For the understanding at what level or intensity the interference of pollen can occur is important to  
79 consider the relatedness of the interacting species. Closely related species are more likely to have  
80 similar traits Letten and Cornwell (2015). The similarity in traits between closely related species can  
81 lead to higher chances of ovule usurpation/abortion Arceo-Gómez and Ashman (2011) and therefore  
82 studies predict and show a greater negative effect of closely related species Ashman and Arceo-Gómez  
83 (2013); Arceo-Gómez and Ashman (2016). Few studies however, have focused on the impacts of  
84 heterospecific pollen on fitness of distantly related species Galen and Gregory (1989); Neiland and  
85 Wilcock (1999). Despite the fact that far related species are also able to decrease species fitness  
86 (REFS). Yet, most insects and most stigmas have been found to carry multiple species of foreign pollen  
87 with little attention to degree of relatedness (Arceo-Gómez and Ashman (2016); Fang and Huang  
88 (2013). Understanding the role of foreign pollen from distantly related species thus deserves greater  
89 attention. The relatedness of foreign pollen gives a first snapshot of where the pollen competition can  
90 occur and therefore could be a proxy of effect. With that said, Arceo-Gómez and Ashman (2016) is the  
91 only work which has proven a greater effect of close related species through a meta-analysis but with

low sample sizes and lack of significance. Therefore, there is a need to study the effect of heterospecific pollen of far and close related species at community level beyond single pairwise interactions.

Heterospecific pollen studies in nature have the complexity added of great environmental variability which can lead to confounding interpretations. Moreover, the great diversity of floral structures and small sizes of some of them such as Asteraceae species make tedious or almost impossible the studies of heterospecific pollen on the field. For this reason, we investigated how floral reproductive traits and relatedness mediate the impact of heterospecific pollen by creating an artificial co-flowering community in a glasshouse with 10 species belonging to three different families with different traits. Our study tries to answer the following questions: (i) Do heterospecific pollen reduce seed set? To what extent do (ii) floral reproductive traits and (iii) relatedness, mediate the impacts of heterospecific pollen on seed set.

## METHODS

The study was conducted in a glasshouse at University of New England (Armidale, Australia) from November 2017 to March 2018. Rooms were temperature controlled depending on the requirements of the species with day and night temperature differences. The experimental design had species from three different families: Solanaceae, Brassicaceae and Convolvulaceae (**Table 1**). The species of the study had different reproductive traits and different degree of relatedness where the reciprocal crosses between species allowed us to have multiple different scenarios of both traits and relatedness. Moreover, the species selected had fast life cycle and low structural flower complexity in order to perform the pollination treatments and grow the different species from seeds. For the purpose of the experiment all the species were considered as pollen recipient and as pollen donor (see interaction matrix, fig 2). Species were watered once or twice per day and fertilized weekly (NPK 23: 3.95: 14).

**Table 1**

Family	Genus	Species
Brassicaceae	Brassica	Brassica rapa
Brassicaceae	Brassica	Brassica oleracea

Family	Genus	Species
Brassicaceae	Eruca	Eruca versicaria
Brassicaceae	Sinapis	Sinapis alba
Convolvulaceae	Ipomoea	Ipomoea aquatica
Convolvulaceae	Ipomoea	Ipomoea purpurea
Solanaceae	Capsicum	Capsicum annuum
Solanaceae	Petunia	Petunia integrifolia
Solanaceae	Solanum	Solanum lycopersicum
Solanaceae	Solanum	Solanum melongena

## 114 Hand-pollination

115 Foreign pollen effect was studied through two different treatments, one with 50% conspecific pollen and  
116 50% heterospecific pollen and a second one with 100% foreign pollen (N=10) in order to see if foreign  
117 pollen can trigger fruit production by itself or even seeds through ovule usurpation. Therefore, 180  
118 different combinations were performed with N=10 per combination. Seed set was the proxy of effect for  
119 all our treatments. Moreover, hand cross pollination (between individuals of the same species), hand  
120 self pollination, apomixis (bagged emasculated flowers) and natural selfing were tested for each species  
121 (N=10). For the treatments with foreign pollen and hand cross pollination, flowers were emasculated  
122 the day prior anthesis and hand pollinated next day with a toothpick. Hand-pollination was conducted  
123 with 3-4 gentle touches on the stigma surface. For each species 20 anthers were collected and their  
124 pollen counted with a hemocytometer, each anther was counted 4 times and then an average of these  
125 counts was performed. Once, the average number of pollen grains per anther was known, the  
126 proportion of anthers per mix was calculated in order to achieve a 50-50% mix. In order to confirm  
127 that the treatments applied were the desire proportions, for each focal species the total stigmatic load  
128 of pollen was counted from one donor of each family (N=3).

## 129 Traits and evolutive distance

130 The traits measured for each species were pollen per anther, number of ovules and stigma, style, ovary

width and length. For the stigma, the stigmatic area was also measured and moreover the stigmas were divided in wet/dry type. All the morphometrical measurements were performed with a stereophotomicroscope. Pollen was counted for 20 anthers of each species with 4 replicates per sample with an hemocytometer. Previously, anthers were squashed on a known solution with the pippete tip and homogeneize with a vortex for 30 seconds. Ovule number was counted with the help of an stereomicroscope and a small grid over a petri dish from 15 randomly selected flowers. Fruits per number of flowers treated were counted for Solanaceae species and for the rest, the number of seeds produced per average number of ovules of each species. Levels of self incompatibility were estimated by dividing the fruit set of hand self pollination by hand cross pollination Lloyd and Schoen (1992).

## Analysis

To evaluate heterospecific pollen effect on seed production we performed linear mixed models. The distinct heterospecific pollination treatments were compared thorough releveling each variable with the cross pollination treatment which was our control for optimum seed production for all the species. The different replicates of each treatment were considered as random effects. The changes of seed production across species were compared through scaling the seed production with mean 0 and standard deviation of 1 prior to the analysis. All the analysis were conducted with the statistical language R (R Core Team 2018).

In order to test the relative effect of traits on seed production with foreign pollen we performed Mantel test between the assymetrical matrix of heterospecific pollen effect (10 by 10 matrix) with the different distance matrices of traits (Euclidean distances). Heterospecific pollen effect was obtain through the subtraction of seed production by hand cross pollination minus seed production of the different heterospecific pollen treatments. To find a model with the best explanatory traits we used the function **bioenv** from R. We also conducted Mantel test between the matrix of heterospecific pollen effect and the distance matrix from all the traits. Moreover, we explored also the correlation between traits and heterospecific pollen effect through generalized mixed models where the response variable was heterospecific pollen effect and the explanatory variable the different traits.

We conducted mantel test to check for correlations between heterospecific pollen effect and phylogenetic distance. Due to improvents in statistical power we used the square root of the phylogenetic distance

159 (Letten & Cornwell 2014). Two different phylogenetic distances were used from two kinds of markers: 1)  
160 Internal transcribed spacer (ITS) and 2) ribulose-bisphosphate carboxylase (RBCL). The sequences  
161 were obtained from GenBank (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/genbank/>, accessed 20 Oct. 2018). The  
162 sequences were aligned with clustal omega and the pairwise evolutive distances calculated with MEGA7.

163 [Phylogenetic signal of traits?](#)

## 164 RESULTS

165 Results of hand cross pollination, self hand pollination, natural selfing and apomixis are presented in  
166 **Table 2.** Heterospecific pollen reduced seed set significantly with the 50-50% heterospecific pollen  
167 treatments for 65% of the pairwise interactions  $p < 0.05$ . Across families we found a very similar effect  
168 but when species were looked at species level they responded differently even within the same family  
169 rephrase and maybe test statistically?, for instance for two species of the Brassicaceae family *Brassica*  
170 *oleracea* and *Eruca versicaria* we found very contrasting effects of foreign pollen where for the first one,  
171 all donors reduce seed set significantly and for the second, just two species did out of nine. The 100%  
172 foreign pollen treatments barely produced seeds or fruits and just for *Sinapis alba* we did not find  
173 significant differences between the hand cross pollination and one treatment with pollen from a  
174 confamilial- IB Unclear. Solanaceae species with berry fruit type developed small fruits or even normal  
175 fruits in some cases under which treatment. *S. lycopersicum* seems to produce small fruits (35% of the  
176 treatments) independently of pollen and pollen donor due to also apomictic treatments did, never  
177 normal size. *C. annuum* produced some fruits (9%) of both small and normal size and finally *S.*  
178 *melongena* produced seedless normal fruits with just confamilial pollen (3%), for both species seems  
179 that fruit formation was induced by pollen on the stigma because of lack of fruit production with  
180 treatments that tested for apomixis. clarify this descriptive statistics part- Also a figure with a summary  
181 of the treatments effect would be cool, or at least in the appendices

182 **Table 2.** Percentage of seeds produced per ovule for the ten species used in the experiment. The  
183 treatments presented are hand cross pollination, hand self pollination, natural selfing and apomixis  
184 (emasculated flowers). turn into a figure somehow?

Species	Cross	Self	Natural_selfing	Apomixis
Brassica oleracea	32.06897	0.0000000	0.00000	0
Brassica rapa	44.97041	0.0000000	0.00000	0
Eruca versicaria	23.75000	0.4166667	0.00000	0
Sinapis alba	43.33333	48.3333333	5.00000	15
Ipomoea aquatica	40.00000	30.0000000	20.00000	0
Ipomoea purpurea	31.66667	86.6666667	31.66667	0
Capsicum annuum	100.00000	66.2240664	23.48548	0
Petunia integrifolia	100.00000	24.7727273	0.00000	0
Solanum lycopersicum	90.38043	43.4782609	70.00000	0
Solanum melongena	60.47525	87.9702970	21.56436	0



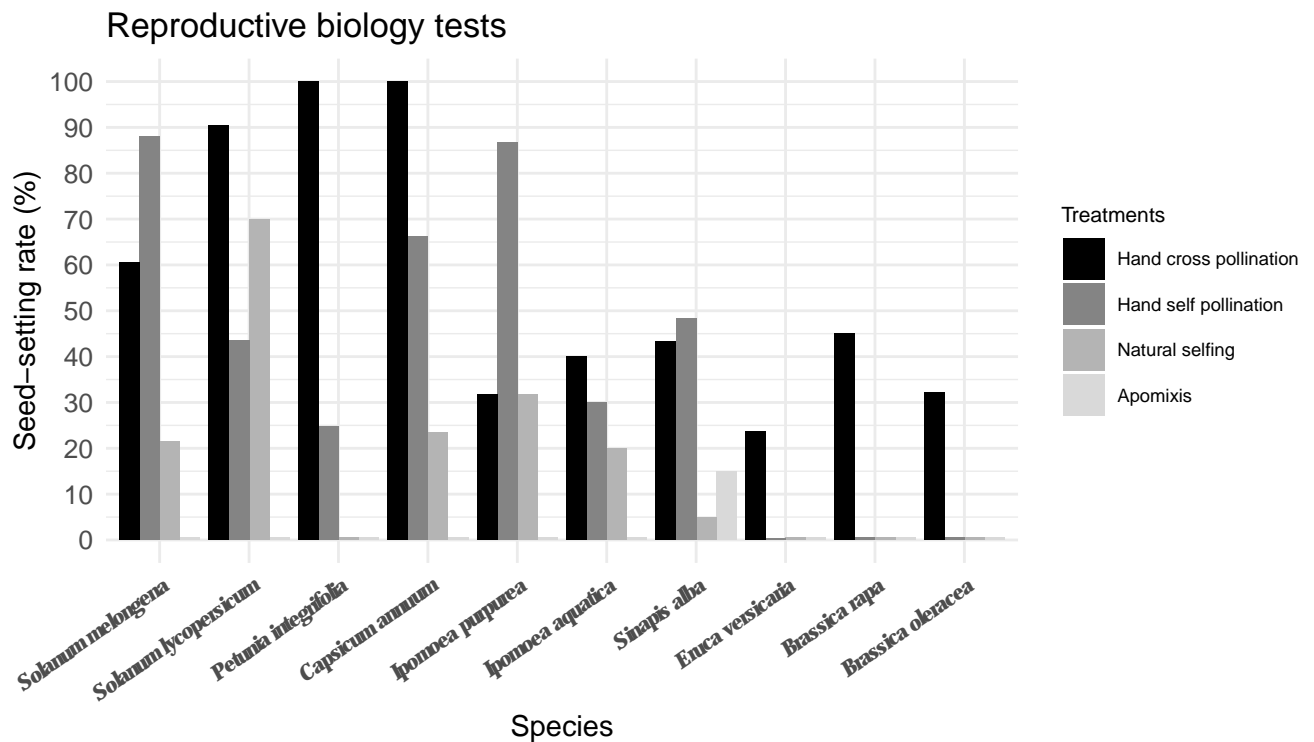


Figure 1: Barplot with the different treatments that provide information of the reproductive biology of the ten species. The y axis is the proportion of ovules converted to seed in percentage. The different treatments (N=10) which are presented in the legend are, hand cross pollination, hand self pollination, natural selfing and apomixis. More information about these treatments can be found in Methods and Appendices.

Mantel test indicates that a possible?? It exists! correlation exist between heterospecific pollen effect and the evolutive relative distances, for ITS and RBCL markers we had r coefficients of 0.29 and 0.25 respectively  $p < 0.05$  think on a figure - maybe using NMDS. Moreover, Mantel test indicates that also a possible?? correlation between stigma width and stigma type exist (stats??). Trait correlations were also explored with GLMM

I have done it at the moment just for Compatibility system Also I have to fix from mixed linear model to GLMM, just realize that

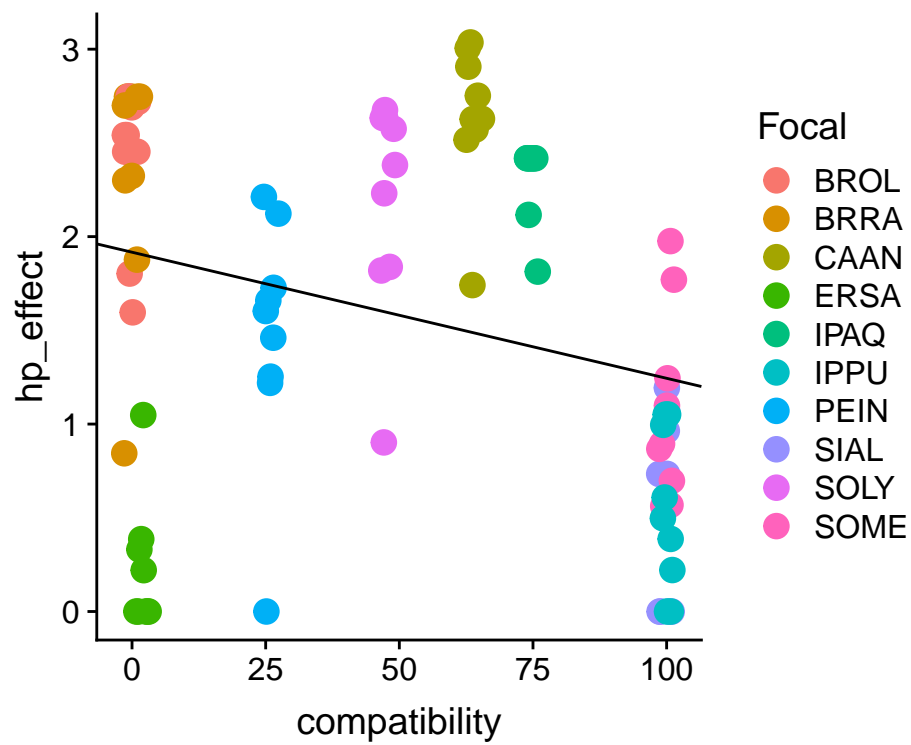


Figure 2: The effect of heterospecific pollen (scaled see set) is represented in function of the compatibility system (self/cross\*100) for the the different species. Each coulored dot represents the interaction of a focal species with a different pollen donor.

192 [Compatibility index don´t multiply per 100 from Lloyd](#)

## 193 **DISCUSSION**

### 194 Discussion

195 Herbs vs trees, annual vs perennial... Many flowers vs few flowered species; structural composition on  
196 a system

197 What are the implications of the findings?

198 Ideas about pollen size in heterospecific pollen effect. (still have to develop it more...)

199 Let's classify pollen size in three groups in order to understand the interaction between pollen donor  
200 and recipient: 1) Donor pollen size < Recipient pollen size 2) Donor pollen size = Recipient pollen size  
201 3) Donor pollen size > Recipient pollen size

202 Now I try to develop each part

203 1) Donor pollen size < Recipient pollen size

204 Effect:

- 205 • Donor's pollen could clog the stigma
- 206 • Chemical inhibition

207 Traits associated with bigger pollen of the recipient:

- 208 • Recipient's pollen have faster pollen tube growth (example with my data)
- 209 • Reduction in number of ovules (Also with my species)
- 210 • Big differences in pollen size can be translated in low relatedness therefore less likely of pollen  
211 germination on a far related stigma.

212 2) Donor pollen size = Recipient pollen size

- 213 • Very relatedness dependant this point

214 • Similar probabilities of taken space on the stigma

215 3) Donor pollen size > Recipient pollen size

216 Effect:

217 -In small stigmas big pollen grains can occupy great part of the stigmatic area.

218 -small pollen grains can get embedded

219 IB: Think also on using tree analysis to test if hp effect depends on complex trait combinations. Tree  
220 analysis are great when two different strategies lead to the same outcome. This would never been pick  
221 up by GLMs. The r package is `party`. You can see an example applied to birds is Sol et al 2010  
222 Science. Ask me if you want more details or code examples.

## 223 CONCLUSIONS

## 224 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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