

# Quantifying the effects of parasites on the maintenance of sex

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## Summary

Why must **sexual reproduction** persist in nature given its **two-fold cost**? The **Red Queen Hypothesis** predicts sexually reproducing individuals to overcome the cost of sex by escaping infection more easily under strong parasite selection. Here, we tried to quantify the effect of the Red Queen and perform a power analysis.

## Evolution of sex

- **Two-fold cost of sex:** (1) cost of producing males and (2) cost of meiosis
- the two-fold cost of cost of sex assumes that **all else is equal**
- only 0.01% eukaryotes conform to purely asexual reproduction. How?

## Red Queen Hypothesis

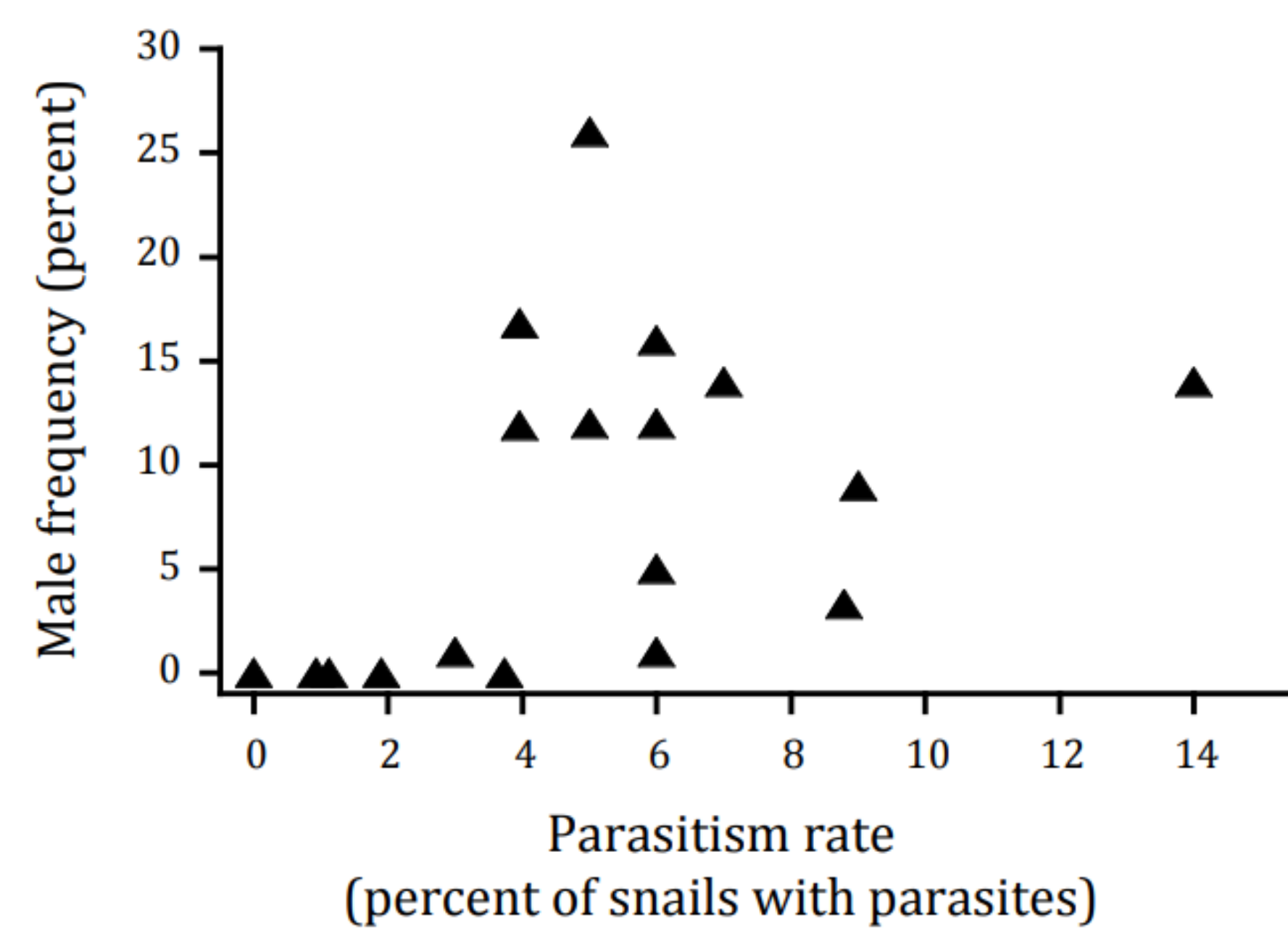


Figure 1: Parasitism rate is positively correlated with male frequency [1].

- sexual reproduction creates rare genotypes that can escape infection (**negative frequency dependence**)
- snail population in New Zealand (host for sterilizing trematode infection) is believed to support the hypothesis [2]
- prevalence of sex should be **positively correlated** with prevalence of infection [3]
- unable to detect any correlation in a similar snail-trematode system. Why? [4]

## Mathematical model

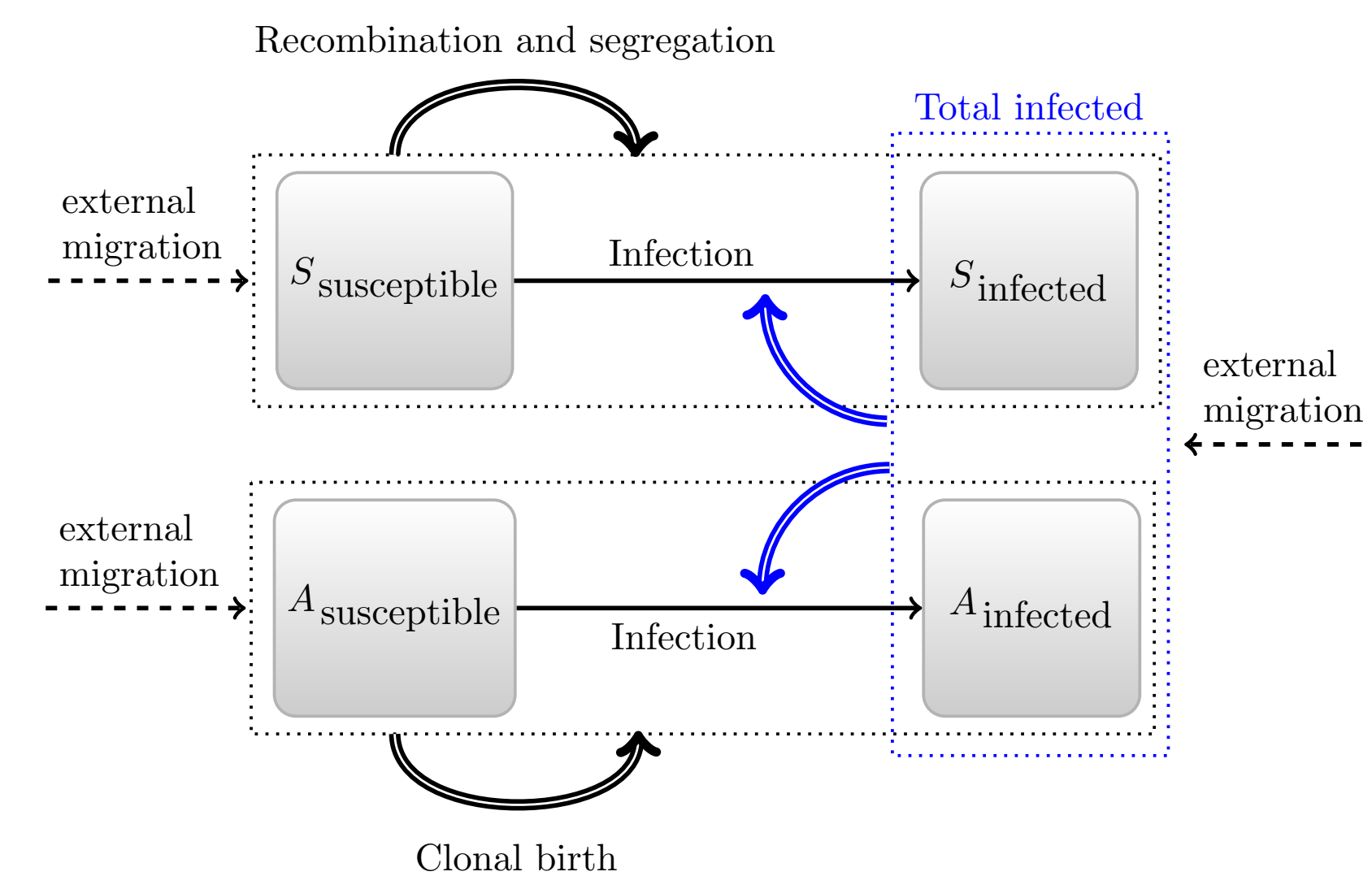


Figure 2: Graphical representation of the model. Double lined arrows represent dynamics that are affected by mixing between habitats.

- competition between obligate sexual ( $S$ ) and clonal ( $A$ ) population under parasite selection is represented by a mathematical model [5]
- hosts stay within their habitats and can mix with hosts in different habitats
- varying transmission rates across habitats
- relies on stochastic computer simulations

## Approximate Bayesian Computation (ABC)

- a random sample of parameters is drawn
- simulated data is compared to the observed data
- if the difference is small enough, the parameter sample that generated the data is *accepted*
- repeated until enough sample is obtained

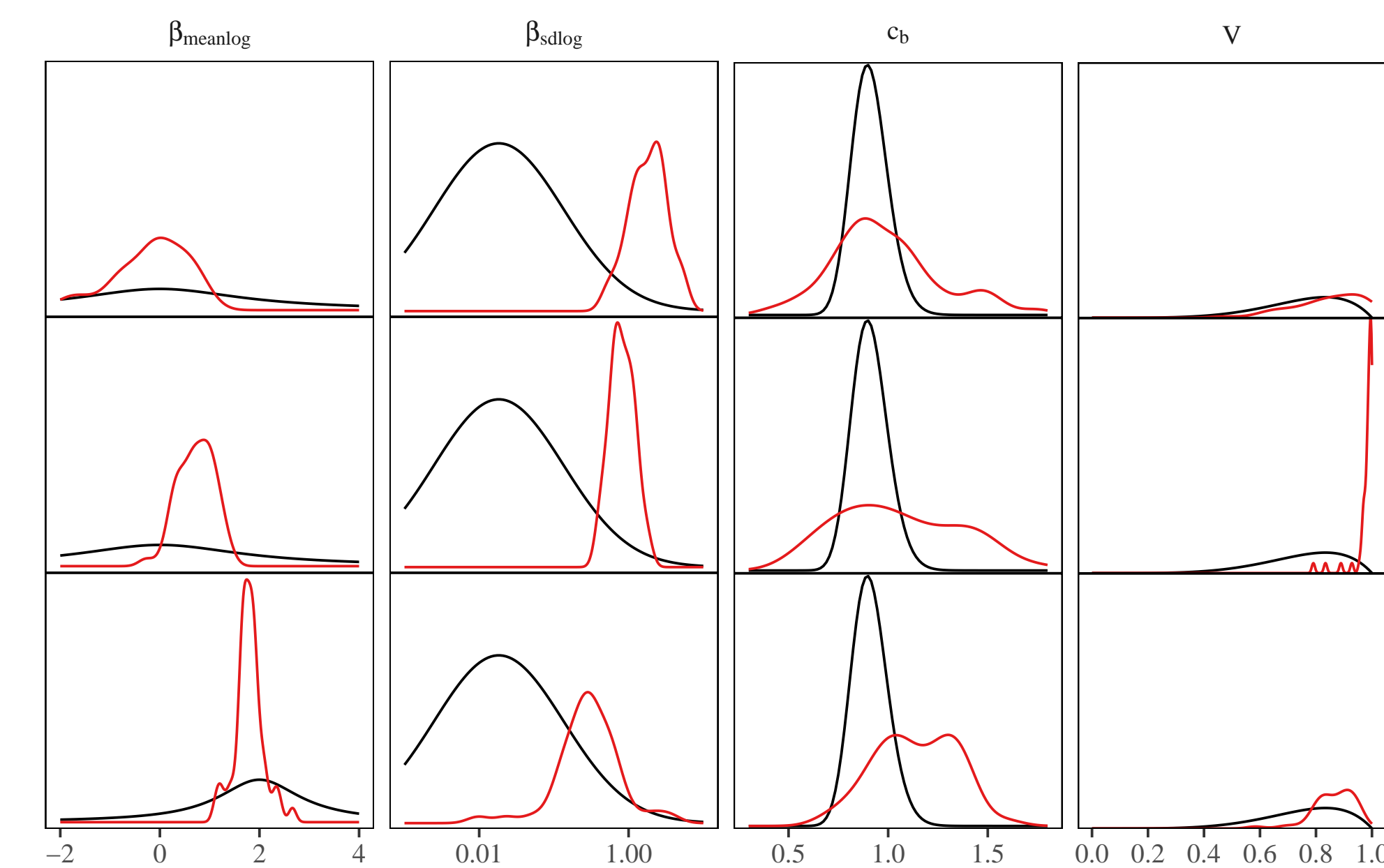


Figure 3: (black) prior distributions where parameters sampled from and (red) posterior distributions obtained from ABC

## Results

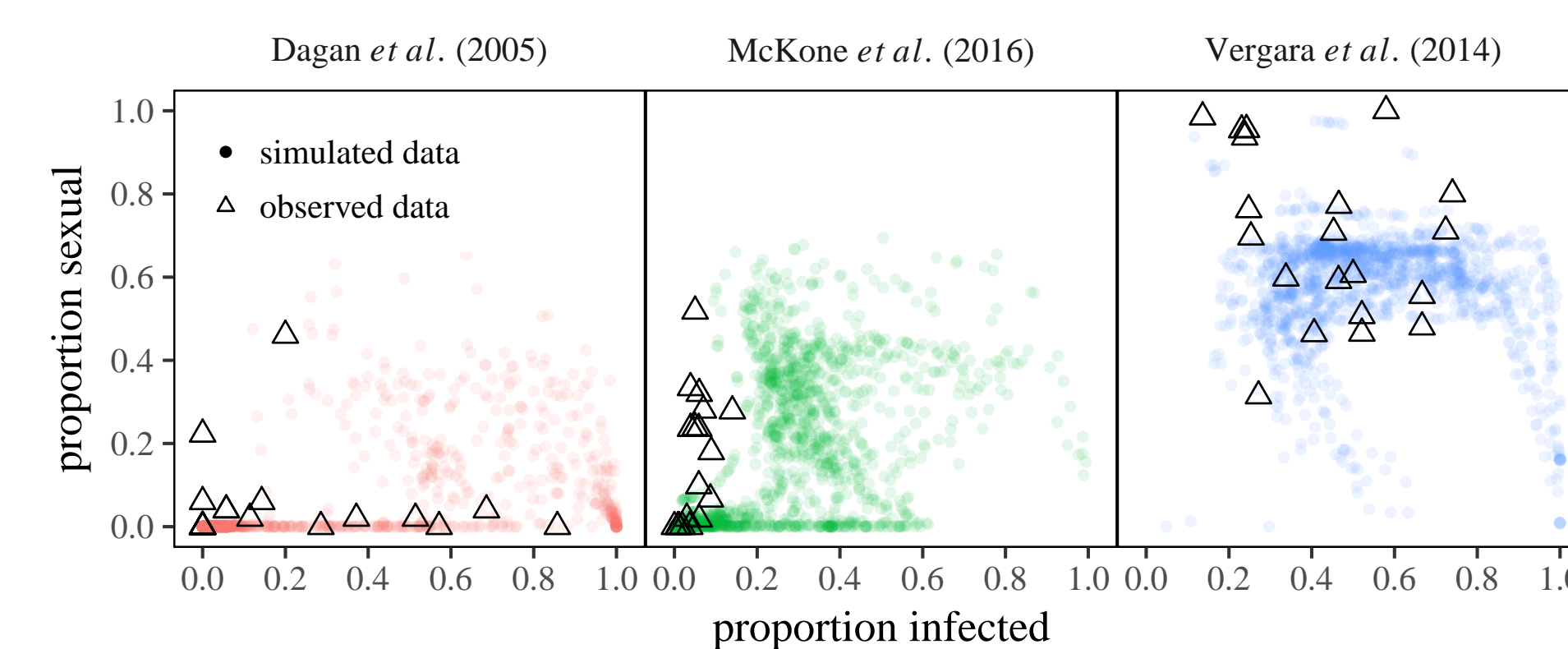


Figure 4: Simulated data v.s. observed data. Each point represents mean proportion infected and sexual at each site.

- fitted result does not match Dagan *et al.* [4]
- overestimates proportion infected when fitted to McKone *et al.* [1]
- spatial structure allows high level of infection to be maintained even at high virulence (middle panel)
- initially increasing prevalence of sexual reproduction pulls back infection (consistent with [3]) and causes prevalence of infection to decrease; quadratic overall?

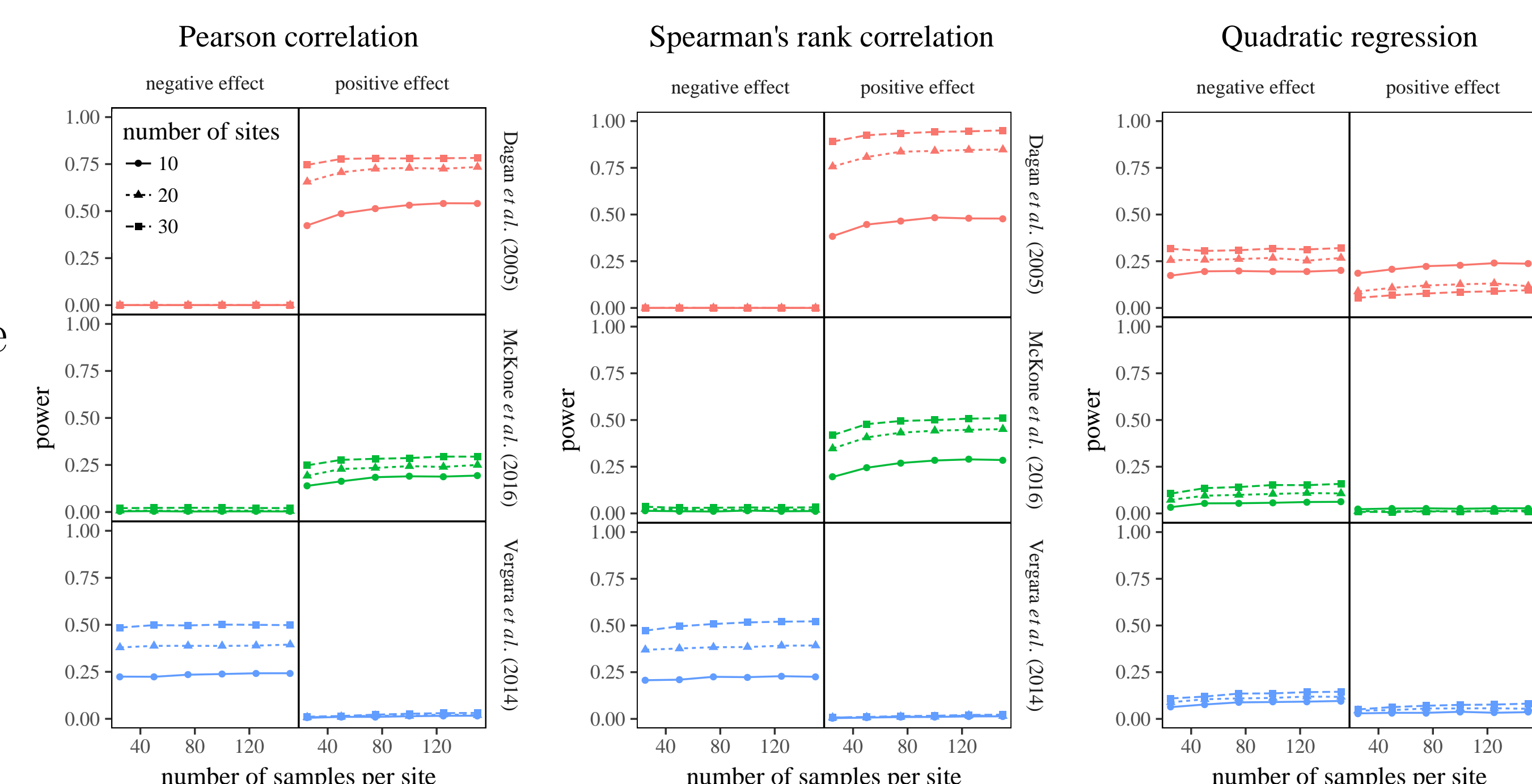


Figure 5: Power analysis for detecting a correlation and negative quadratic curvature.

## Discussion

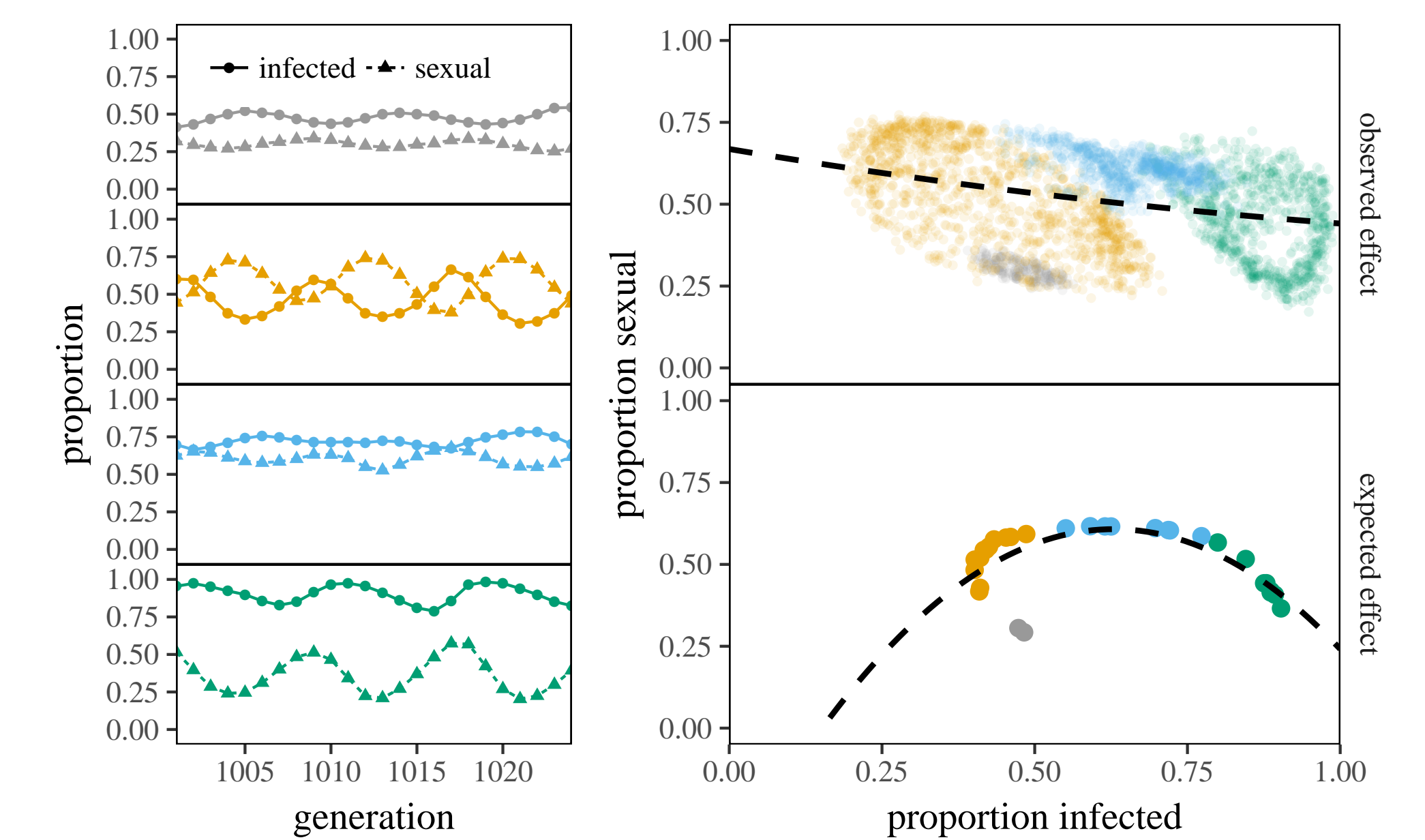


Figure 6: A sample data from a posterior sample. (left) type of cycles present in a simulated data (right) observed relationship v.s. expected relationship. (dashed line) quadratic regression.

- "expected effect" is masked by different cycles (explains low power)
- high asexual diversity [4] and different environment (e.g., seasonal flood [6] and highly interconnected but diverse [4]) may not be appropriate for the Red Queen Hypothesis?
- unusual sampling problems in nature ([2] v.s. [7])

## Conclusion and further questions

- spatial data provides limited information; only Vergara *et al.* [2] had spatiotemporal data
- is there a way to detect the Red Queen cycles from a spatiotemporal data?
- consider pluralistic approach (Red Queen hypothesis + other mechanisms for maintaining sex)

## Reference

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- [3] Curtis M Lively. Trematode infection and the distribution and dynamics of parthenogenetic snail populations. *Parasitology*, 123(07):19–26, 2001.
- [4] Y Dagan, K Liljeroos, J Jokela, and F Ben-Ami. Clonal diversity driven by parasitism in a freshwater snail. *Journal of evolutionary biology*, 26(11):2509–2519, 2013.
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- [7] Daniela Vergara, Curtis M Lively, Kayla C King, and Jukka Jokela. The geographic mosaic of sex and infection in lake populations of a new zealand snail at multiple spatial scales. *The American Naturalist*, 182(4):484–493, 2013.