

## Environmental stress maintains trioecy in nematode worms

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### Abstract

Sex is determined by chromosomes in mammals but it can be influenced by the environment in many worms, crustaceans and vertebrates. Despite this, there is little understanding of the relationship between ecology and the evolution of sexual systems. The nematode *Auanema freiburgensis* has a unique sex determination system in which individuals carrying one X chromosome develop into males while XX individuals develop into females in stress-free environments and self-fertile hermaphrodites in stressful environments. Theory predicts that trioecious populations with coexisting males, females and hermaphrodites should be unstable intermediates in evolutionary transitions between mating systems. In this article we study a mathematical model of reproductive evolution based on the unique life history and sex determination of *A. freiburgensis*. We develop the model in two scenarios, one where the relative production of hermaphrodites and females is entirely dependent on the environment and one based on empirical measurements of a population that displays incomplete, ‘leaky’ environmental dependence. In the first scenario environmental conditions can push the population along an evolutionary continuum and result

in the stable maintenance of multiple reproductive systems. The second ‘leaky’ scenario results in the maintenance of three sexes for all environmental conditions. Theoretical investigations of reproductive system transitions have focused on the evolutionary costs and benefits of sex. Here, we show that the flexible sex determination system of *A. freiburgensis* may contribute to population-level resilience in the microscopic nematode’s patchy, ephemeral natural habitat. Our results demonstrate that life history, ecology and environment may play defining roles in the evolution of sexual systems.

## Introduction

1

2 The evolution of self-fertility has occurred in animals, fungi and plants and is one of the most fre-  
3 quent mating system transitions observed (Smith, 1978). Despite this there is little understanding  
4 of the factors driving transitions between mating systems. Nematodes in the order Rhabditida vary  
5 in reproductive mode with androdioecious populations composed of males and self-compatible  
6 hermaphrodites, dioecious populations composed of males and females (Blaxter et al., 1998) and  
7 trioecious species with males, females and self-compatible hermaphrodites (Kanzaki et al., 2017;  
8 Strauch et al., 1994; Fig. 1, SFig. 1). The diversity of mating systems may reflect the exploitation  
9 of many different habitat types which can select for a diverse array of life history strategies. This  
10 may select for mating systems that best take advantage of their sexes’ particular strengths.

11 For instance, males and females are particularly suited for outcrossing because they cannot  
12 fertilize themselves. Outcrossing has many uses from promoting recombination to remove or slow  
13 the spread of deleterious alleles (Bell, 1982; Charlesworth and Charlesworth, 1987; Smith, 1978)  
14 and creating beneficial genetic combinations that facilitate adaptation (Crow, 1992; Smith, 1978).  
15 Outcrossing can therefore be a useful strategy for responding to ecological challenges. *C. elegans*  
16 outcrossing rates increase in response to starvation (Morran et al., 2009a), increased mutation  
17 load and adaptation to a new environment (Morran et al., 2009b), and coevolution with parasites  
18 (Morran et al., 2011). Males and females, being obligate outcrossers, guarantee these benefits. On

19 the other hand, males and females can often be poor colonizers. Individuals must arrive at the  
20 same time and place and in the right sex ratios to successfully colonize a new habitat.

21 Self-compatible hermaphrodites are better suited for dispersal and colonization because they  
22 can fertilize themselves independent of the arrival of others (Baker, 1955, 1967). Dispersal is also a  
23 useful strategy for responding to ecological challenges. It enables organisms to leave degraded  
24 habitats and avoid breeding with close relatives which depresses fitness (Charlesworth and Willis,  
25 2009) and slows the production of new genetic variants (Wright, 1933). Certain habitat types,  
26 like rotting organic matter, require regular dispersal between patches as patches degrade. For  
27 instance, nematodes in the order Rhabditida exploit such habitats and even have a designated  
28 dispersal stage called the dauer (Felix and Braendle, 2010; Kiontke et al., 2011; Fig. 2a) which is  
29 induced by environment stress including increasing temperature, increasing population density, or  
30 decreasing food levels (Ailion and Thomas, 2000; Cassada and Russell, 1975; Golden and Riddle,  
31 1984). Dauers attach to invertebrate hosts to leave stressful patches and resume development on  
32 new patches (Golden and Riddle, 1984; Kiontke et al., 2011; Poinar, 1983). Lineages that live in  
33 similarly patchy habitats may find hermaphrodites useful for their dispersal capabilities despite  
34 their drawback, namely their lack of obligate outcrossing.

35 Lineages may employ mating systems that balance the comparative need for outcrossing  
36 versus colonizing, although a mating system with all three sexes could have the best of both  
37 worlds. Despite this, species employing three sexes had not been found and trioecy was long  
38 thought to be a temporary, transitory mating system (Charlesworth, 1984; Lande and Schemske,  
39 1985). Previous mathematical models have failed to find stable trioecious equilibria (Chasnov,  
40 2010; Gregorius et al., 1983; Pannell, 2008; Wolf and Takebayashi, 2004; Fig. 1a). These theoretical  
41 predictions are now at odds with accumulating empirical evidence for trioecy in crustaceans  
42 (Sassaman and Weeks, 1993), plants (Mirski et al., 2017), and nematodes (Chaudhuri et al., 2015;  
43 Kanzaki et al., 2017). *Auanema* is a recently described nematode genus with two trioecious species,  
44 *A. rhodensis* and *A. freiburgensis* (Kanzaki et al., 2017) and is distantly related to the trioecious  
45 *Heterorhabditis* sp. (Strauch et al., 1994).

46 In this article, we develop a new mathematical model to study how the flexible sex determi-  
47 nation system of *A. freiburgensis* (Chaudhuri et al., 2011; Fig. 2b) can generate and maintain all  
48 three sexes. While there is a body of work studying the molecular underpinnings of reproductive  
49 systems in nematodes (Berenson and Baird, 2018; Guo et al., 2009; Hill et al., 2006; Yin and  
50 Haag, 2019), there is little understanding of the ecological factors that push some species towards  
51 androdioecy while others maintain dioecy or trioecy (Fig. 1b). Our model uses empirical species  
52 data to show that *A. freiburgensis* may employ trioecy to guarantee outcrossing and dispersal,  
53 contributing to environmental resilience at a population level and causing the persistence of this  
54 rare mating system. Dependence of life history on environment may therefore play a key role in  
55 the evolution of sexual systems.

## 56 **Materials and Methods**

### 57 *Biology of A. freiburgensis*

58 In *A. freiburgensis*, mothers sense environmental stress, which may be increasing temperature,  
59 increasing population density or decreasing food (Ailion and Thomas, 2000; Cassada and Russell,  
60 1975; Golden and Riddle, 1984). As stress increases, mothers induce more of their offspring to be-  
61 come developmentally-arrested, non-feeding dauer. Unlike other Rhabditids, *Auanema* spp. use the  
62 dauer stage for part of their sex determination, making it a hybrid chromosomal/environmental  
63 system (Chaudhuri et al., 2011; Zuco et al., 2018). *A. freiburgensis* males have one copy of the  
64 sex chromosome (XO) and nonmales have two (XX) (Kanzaki et al., 2017). *A. freiburgensis* XX  
65 nonmales can either become adult females or hermaphrodites depending on whether or not they  
66 pass through the dauer stage, a decision induced by their mother after sensing stress (Fig. 1b).  
67 XX adults that do not go through dauer are always female (Chaudhuri et al., 2011) while those  
68 that develop via dauer are always hermaphrodites (Zuco et al., 2018). Males cannot pass through  
69 dauer at all and thus their development is not thought to be affected by environmental stress  
70 (Chaudhuri et al., 2011; Fig. 1b). Hermaphrodites are self-compatible and can be fertilized by

71 males, but hermaphrodites cannot fertilize females or other hermaphrodites.

72 The sex ratios produced by *Auanema* spp. are highly skewed due to atypical gamete formation  
73 and spermatogenesis (Fig. 3; Shakes et al., 2011; Tandonnet et al., 2018). Meiosis has not been  
74 characterized in *A. freiburgensis* but it has for its close relative *A. rhodensis* and we assume the  
75 process in *A. freiburgensis* is similar. Hermaphrodites produce diplo-X sperm and nullo-X eggs  
76 resulting in male progeny when hermaphrodites are outcrossed (Table 1-2; Tandonnet et al.,  
77 2018). Males are produced at a reduced rate from male-female crosses and hermaphrodite selfing  
78 (Table 1-2). Two sets of sex ratios were compiled for this model: Model 1, in which stress  
79 perfectly explains XX phenotype and Model 2 based on empirical data of a 'leaky' environmental  
80 dependence (Zuco et al., 2018; A. Pires-daSilva, personal communication).

### 81 *Model 1*

82 We first build a model in which nonmale phenotype is strictly determined by stress,  $s$  (Table  
83 1). When no stress is present,  $s = 0$  and all XX nonmale progeny become females. When  $s = 1$ ,  
84 the worms experience maximum stress and all XX nonmales become hermaphrodites. Since  
85 dauer-inducing stress is not binary but a continuous scale (Cassada and Russell, 1975), we assume  
86 that as stress increases from  $s = 0$  to  $s = 1$ , the frequency of hermaphrodites increases and the  
87 frequency of females decreases in a linear relationship (SFig. 2). The mutational path from dioecy  
88 to self-fertility in nematodes is likely short (Baldi et al., 2009). For example, in the dioecious *C.*  
89 *remanei* just two mutations, one lowering transcription levels of the gene *tra-2* to permit sperm  
90 production and one increasing transcription of the sperm activation protein SWM-1, are required  
91 for females to generate self-sperm (Baldi et al., 2009). Accordingly, we assume these mutations  
92 occur frequently in natural populations and focus here on studying the conditions that maintain  
93 trioecy after these mutations have arisen.

94 For the resulting model, let the frequency of females be  $P$ , hermaphrodites be  $Q$ , and males be  
95  $R$ . Not all individuals will find a male mate, so  $\theta_F$  and  $\theta_H$  represent the probability that a female  
96 and hermaphrodite are unable to find a male mate, respectively. Therefore, the proportion of

97 females that reproduce is  $(1 - \theta_F)P$ . The proportion of hermaphrodites that self is  $\theta_H Q$ .

98 The progeny of selfed hermaphrodites are expected to have some degree of fitness cost due to  
99 inbreeding depression. Let  $d$  be equal to the relative fitness cost when compared to outcrossed  
100 progeny, such that  $(1 - d)Q$  is the proportion of selfed progeny that are viable. So that all  
101 frequencies sum to unity, we must denote a normalizing variable  $w$ . For each generation  $n$ , we  
102 have the following model:

$$wP_n = (1 - s)(0.82(1 - \theta_F)P_{n-1} + 0.913(1 - d)\theta_F Q_{n-1}) \quad (1)$$

$$wQ_n = s(0.82(1 - \theta_F)P_{n-1} + 0.863(1 - d)\theta_H Q_{n-1}) \quad (2)$$

$$wR_n = (1 - \theta_H)Q_{n-1} + 0.18(1 - \theta_F)P_{n-1} + 0.087(1 - s)(1 - d)\theta_H Q_{n-1} + 0.136s(1 - d)\theta_H Q_{n-1} \quad (3)$$

where the normalizing equation is:

$$w = P_n + Q_n + R_n. \quad (4)$$

103 For each run of the model, the starting frequencies of the three sexes ( $P_0$ ,  $Q_0$ , and  $R_0$ ) sum to  
104 unity but are otherwise randomly chosen. We explored constant intermediate stress by randomly  
105 assigning a value between  $s = 0$  and  $s = 1$  and maintaining this across all future generations.  
106 To model populations experiencing fluctuating stress we assigned  $s$  a new value drawn from  
107 a standard uniform distribution  $U(0, 1)$  in each generation (SFig. 3). We assumed that males  
108 are always present at a low level in these populations and studied the influence of parameters  
109 on the relative proportions of females and hermaphrodites by iterating the stress parameter  $s$ ,  
110 the inbreeding coefficient  $d$ , the difficulty of finding a mate for females  $\Theta_F$  and the difficulty of  
111 finding a mate for hermaphrodites  $\Theta_H$  across the range of possible values .

## 112 *Model 2*

113 The second model incorporates empirical sex ratio data measured in laboratory populations  
114 of *A. freiburgensis* (Table 2). Stress has been shown to have no effect on the sex determination of

115 the progeny of a male-female cross, possibly because the laboratory strain of *A. freiburgensis* is  
116 hyper-sensitive to crowding and is constantly stressed at the densities needed for reproduction  
117 (S. Tandonnet, personal communication). Additionally, a ‘leak’ is seen in hermaphrodite selfing  
118 such that a small proportion of hermaphrodites are produced when there is no stress, and  
119 a small proportion of females are produced when there is stress (A. Pires-daSilva, personal  
120 communication). We still assume a linear relationship between environmental stress ( $0 > s > 1$ )  
121 and XX nonmale phenotype, though hermaphrodites are overrepresented in low stress compared  
122 to Model 1 (SFig. 4).

123 Hermaphrodites will be produced under any amount of environmental stress; when  $s = 0$ ,  
124 hermaphrodites have a frequency of  $\approx 0.4$ . However, the frequency of females will mirror Model  
125 1 and continue to decrease as stress increases:

$$wP_n = 0.911(1-s)(1-d)\theta_H Q_{n-1} + 0.062s(1-d)\theta_H Q_{n-1} \quad (5)$$

$$wQ_n = 0.82(1-\theta_F)P_{n-1} + 0.801s(1-d)\theta_H Q_{n-1} + 0.002(1-s)(1-d)\theta_H Q_{n-1} \quad (6)$$

$$wR_n = (1-\theta_H)Q_{n-1} + 0.18(1-\theta_F)P_{n-1} + 0.087(1-s)(1-d)\theta_H Q_{n-1} + 0.136s(1-d)\theta_H Q_{n-1} \quad (7)$$

where the normalizing equation is:

$$w = P_n + Q_n + R_n \quad (8)$$

126 We also modeled a semi-random stress distribution that more accurately represents natural  
127 populations of *A. freiburgensis*. *A. freiburgensis* was isolated from dung, an ephemeral patchy  
128 habitat, and the closely-related *A. rhodensis* was isolated using invertebrates as bait to pick up  
129 waiting dauers (Kanzaki et al., 2017), so we believe *Auanema* spp. act like typical Rhabditids.  
130 We assume here that in small ephemeral patches, stress will continually increase as the patch  
131 degrades. Once the patch is too stressful, *A. freiburgensis* dauers would likely abandon the patch  
132 and disperse to new lower-stress patches. Therefore, environmental stress may approximate a  
133 sawtooth pattern (SFig. 5). To represent stochastic patch degradation  $s_{n+1} = s_n + x^2 + y^2(1-x)$

134 where  $x$  and  $y$  are drawn from the standard uniform distribution  $U(0,1)$ ,  $s_0 = x$  and  $y$  is redrawn  
135 each generation. If  $s > 0.7$  (an arbitrary dispersal threshold) both  $x$  and  $y$  are redrawn from the  
136 standard normal distribution  $U(0,1)$  to represent dispersal to a fresh patch. The speed at which  
137 the patch degrades is stochastic, as well as the number of generations per patch and the initial  
138 stress level of each new patch. For Model 2 we also assumed that males are always present at  
139 a low level and studied the influence of parameters on the relative proportions of females and  
140 hermaphrodites by iterating across the range of possible values for stress  $s$ , inbreeding  $d$ , the  
141 difficulty of finding a mate for females  $\Theta_F$  and the difficulty of finding a mate for hermaphrodites  
142  $\Theta_H$ .

## 143 Results

### 144 *Model 1*

145 When there is no stress ( $s = 0$ ), the population is composed of only females and males. Any  
146 hermaphrodites present at generation  $n = 0$  are immediately lost and do not return, as no XX  
147 nonmales can become hermaphrodites when  $s = 0$  (Fig. 4a). When there is constant stress ( $s = 1$ ),  
148 females drop out of the model and the population is composed of only hermaphrodites and  
149 males (Fig. 4b). At constant intermediate stress ( $s = 0.5$ ) males, females and hermaphrodites are  
150 maintained in the population (Fig. 4c). When the idealized model is run with environmental stress  
151  $s$  that randomly fluctuates with each new generation, all three sexes are maintained indefinitely  
152 regardless of starting proportions (Fig. 4d). A single hermaphrodite can invade a dioecious  
153 population and result in the maintenance of a trioecious population (SFig. 6).

154 The complex coefficients of the normalizing equation reduce to  $w = P_n(1 - \Theta_F) + Q_n(1 -$   
155  $\Theta_H(d(1 + 0.001s) - 0.001s))$ . Accordingly, the stress level  $s$  has the largest influence on the  
156 proportion of XX individuals that are female in the population (Fig. 5) with the inbreeding  
157 coefficient,  $d$ , exerting little influence. The relative difficulty of finding a mate for females  $\Theta_F$   
158 and for hermaphrodites  $\Theta_H$  impact the relative proportions of females and hermaphrodites but  $s$



159 determines the maximum and minimum values of these proportions (SFig 7-9).

## 160 *Model 2*

161 The 'leaky' sex ratio data of Model 2 results in the maintenance of trioecious populations for  
162 all scenarios including no stress ( $s = 0$ ; Fig. 6a), constant high stress ( $s = 1$ ; Fig. 6b), constant  
163 intermediate stress ( $s = 0.5$ , Fig. 6c) and fluctuating stress (Fig. 6d). A single hermaphrodite  
164 produces female, hermaphrodite and male offspring and can found a new trioecious population  
165 (Fig. 7). The sex determination system under Model 2 is complex and the relative proportion  
166 of females and hermaphrodites has nonlinear dependence on  $s$ ,  $d$ ,  $\Theta_F$ , and  $\Theta_H$  (Fig. 8). The  
167 parameter  $s$  exerts a large influence on the relative proportion of XX individuals that are female  
168 and determines the maximum proportions of females and hermaphrodites in the population (SFig  
169 10-12).

## 170 **Discussion**

171 The evolution of self-fertility affects important aspects of a species' genetics including the  
172 spectrum of mutational effects (Charlesworth, 2003) and molecular and developmental adaptation  
173 (Shimizu and Tsuchimatsu, 2015). The causes and consequences of reproductive evolution are thus  
174 important questions in biology. Previous authors have used mathematical models to demonstrate  
175 that trioecious systems should be temporary, transitive states (Chasnov, 2010; Gregorius et al.,  
176 1983; Pannell, 2008; Wolf and Takebayashi, 2004). In the work presented here, a trioecious system  
177 was supported by a mathematical model when the model incorporated empirically measured  
178 values from *A. freiburgensis*. Our model demonstrated that females, males and hermaphrodites  
179 co-exist in the population depending on the dynamics of environmental stress. Flexibility in sex  
180 determination and mating system may be critical for population resilience in patchy, resource-  
181 limited environments.

182 In our first model, dependence on stress produced the entire range of reproductive modes

183 observed in Rhabditid nematodes. When stress was absent the population was dioecious (Fig. 4a)  
184 and constant high stress pushed populations to androdioecy (Fig. 4b). Intermediate levels of stress,  
185 whether constant or fluctuating, resulted in the stable maintenance of trioecious populations (Fig.  
186 4c-d). A single hermaphrodite, produced by a short mutational path in nematodes, could readily  
187 invade a dioecious population experiencing intermediate stress (Fig. 7).

188 Our second model, based on laboratory measurements of *A. freiburgensis*, resulted in tri-  
189 oecious populations for all tested parameter combinations. In these laboratory populations  
190 the female stress experience does not alter the sex ratio of her offspring. Relative to our first  
191 model the sex ratios of the second model were 'leaky' and environmental sex determination only  
192 occurred for offspring of hermaphrodites. This leaky system confined populations to trioecy.  
193 Hermaphrodites selfed to produce all three sexes in both stressful and stress-free conditions and a  
194 single hermaphrodite could readily found a new trioecious population.

195 In our first model, stress determined mating system transitions. A stress-free environment did  
196 not induce the formation of hermaphrodites at any appreciable level, collapsing the trioecious  
197 system down to a functionally dioecious system with males and females. In natural populations,  
198 deleterious mutations in hermaphrodite-forming genes could then knock hermaphrodites out of  
199 the species and solidify a true dioecious system. On the other hand, an environment of constant  
200 high stress caused XX individuals to become hermaphrodites, collapsing the system down to a  
201 functionally androdioecious one. Importantly, these alterations could also come about through  
202 changes in how the animal senses stress. For example, the laboratory strain of *A. freiburgensis* is  
203 thought to be hyper-sensitive to crowding and senses that it is always under stressful conditions in  
204 the lab environment. Similarly, a nematode strain could evolve to a stress-free state by becoming  
205 less sensitive to stressors; *Caenorhabditis* dauer formation can be induced with pheromones (Golden  
206 and Riddle, 1984) and there is natural variation among strains of *C. elegans* for pheromone response  
207 and dauer induction (Viney et al., 2003). Loss-of-function deletions in the chemoreceptor genes  
208 *srg-36* and *srg-37* appear to underlie part of this variation in *C. elegans* and the lab-adapted N2  
209 strain is relatively less sensitive to dauer pheromones than wild-collected strains (Lee et al., 2019).

210 Rather than being a temporary or transitional mating system (Charlesworth, 1984; Lande and  
211 Schemske, 1985), trioecy may be a stable adaptive strategy to reap the benefits of outcrossing  
212 and dispersal in the same organism, avoiding the drawbacks inherent in androdioecy and dioecy.  
213 Androdioecious nematodes have hermaphrodites which are superior colonizers but may suffer  
214 from mutation accumulation because they are not obligate outcrossers; though males can outcross  
215 with hermaphrodites, hermaphrodites can and will self-fertilize even in the presence of males. The  
216 outcrossing rate in many androdioecious species is lower than the selfing rate (Barriere and Felix,  
217 2005; Charlesworth, 1984; Sivasundar and Hey, 2003). Dioecious nematodes on the other hand  
218 guarantee outcrossing but are not as successful at colonization because they lack hermaphrodites.  
219 Trioecy combines both strategies by having a self-fertilizing sex conducive to colonization while  
220 also having obligate outcrossing sexes conducive to maintaining genetic diversity within a patch.  
221 How the production and maintenance of the three sexes is controlled to best utilize their strengths  
222 is probably group specific, but the nematode *A. freiburgensis* appears to do this by tying the  
223 production of hermaphrodites to stress which induces the formation of a higher percentage of  
224 dauer larvae. New habitats can be colonized by self-fertile hermaphrodites, allowing for a first  
225 generation to be produced quickly and reliably. This first generation is born into a lower stress,  
226 resource-rich habitat and can produce obligate outcrossing sexes until environmental stress or  
227 inbreeding levels are too high and dispersal is necessary again.

228 The application of Baker's Law to metapopulations shows that the relative colonization  
229 advantage provided by self-compatible hermaphrodites depends on many parameters including  
230 rate of habitat decay and rate of colonization (Pannell and Barrett, 1998). Different habitats with  
231 different colonization and extinction rates might cause trioecy to collapse down to either dioecy or  
232 androdioecy depending on the comparative need for outcrossing versus colonizing. Differences in  
233 habitat and ecological context could at least in part explain the wide variety of mating systems  
234 seen in Rhabditida and in other such as crustaceans and plants.

235 One of the odd limitations of the nematode system is that while much is known about their  
236 underlying genetics and development, very little is known about nematode ecology (Felix and

237 Braendle, 2010). This is in part due to a historical mis-identification of the model organism *C.*  
238 *elegans*' natural habitat that has only recently been corrected (Kiontke et al., 2011) as well as the  
239 primary focus on *C. elegans*' genetics and development (Brenner, 1974). *C. elegans* is ostensibly  
240 only one species out of many in Rhabditida, but its lack of good natural ecology data has affected  
241 research that uses *C. elegans* as a reference and a starting point, leaving our understanding of  
242 Rhabditid natural habitats and colonization severely lacking. The work we have presented here  
243 demonstrates that a complete understanding of the causes and consequences of reproductive  
244 evolution will require an integrated approach to studying the ecology, genetics and development  
245 of real organisms.

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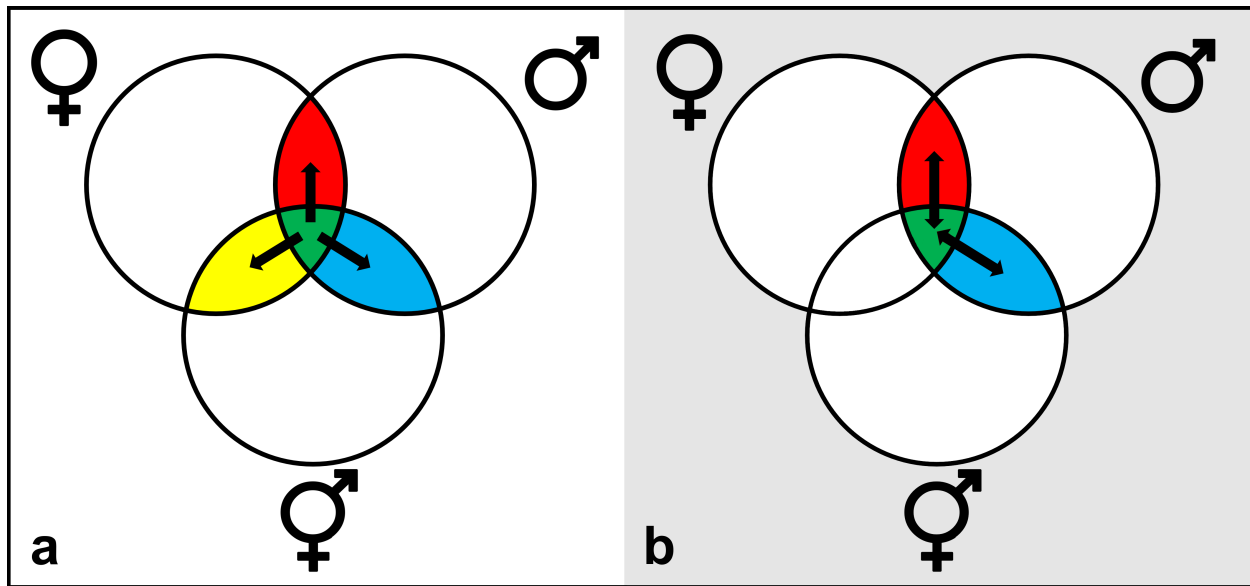


**Table 1:** In Model 1 the progeny of females and selfing hermaphrodites are female-biased in the absence of stress. When stress is present, these progeny go into dauer and become hermaphrodites. Male frequency is not impacted by stress. Data were compiled from Kanzaki et al., 2017; Shakes et al., 2011; Tandonnet et al., 2018; Zuco et al., 2018.

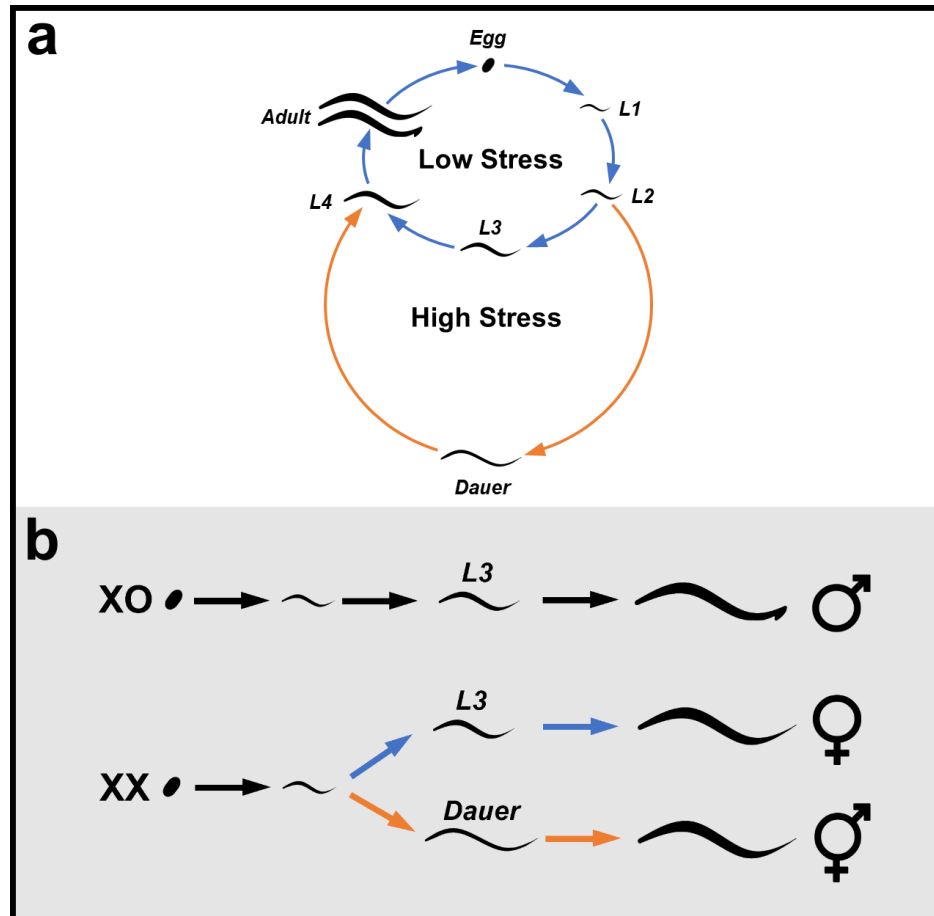
	NO STRESS			STRESS		
	♂	♀	♀	♂	♀	♀
♂ × ♀	18%	0%	82%	18%	82%	0%
♂ × ♀	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
♀	8.7%	0%	91.3%	13.6%	86.3%	0%

**Table 2:** In Model 2 environmental stress only impacts the frequency of female and hermaphrodite progeny of selfing hermaphrodites. Data were compiled from Kanzaki et al., 2017; Shakes et al., 2011; Tandonnet et al., 2018; Zuco et al., 2018; A. Pires-daSilva, personal communication.

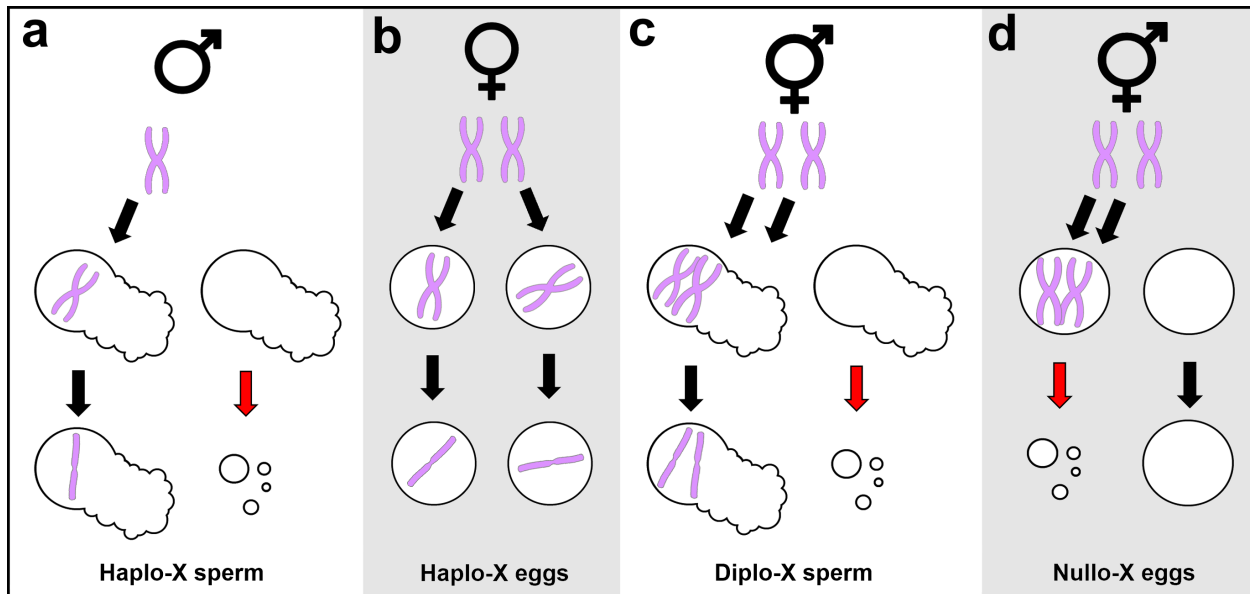
	NO STRESS			STRESS		
	♂	♀	♀	♂	♀	♀
♂ × ♀	18%	82%	0%	18%	82%	0%
♂ × ♀	100%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
♀	8.7%	0.2%	91.1%	13.6%	80.1%	6.2%



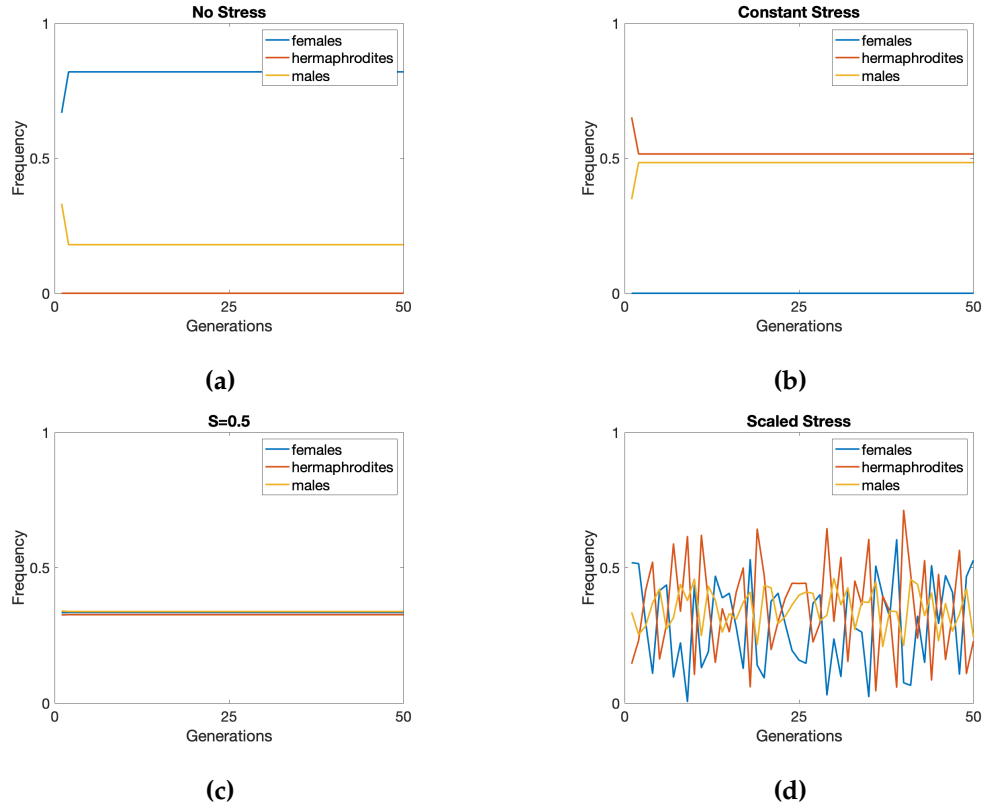
**Figure 1:** Intersections of the diagram represent mating systems with that combination of sexes. (a) Trioecy (green) is unstable and tends to collapse to a two-sex mating system. (b) In nematodes it has been proposed that trioecy (green) can be used as a temporary mating system in the transition between dioecy (red) and androdioecy (blue).



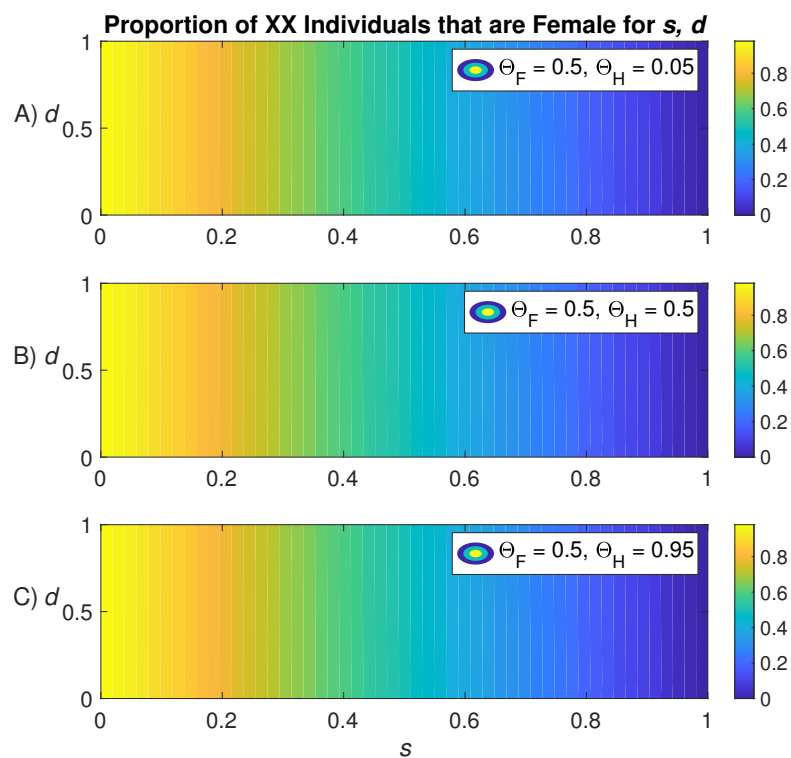
**Figure 2:** (a) Nematodes have a conserved life cycle of four larval stages. Many nematodes have an additional larval stage, the dauer, that is entered when stress is high. (b) In *A. freiburgensis* XO individuals always develop through the L3 stage and become males. XX individuals can develop one of two ways depending on the maternal stress conditions. XX worms produced by mothers under low stress (blue) pass through L3 and develop into females. XX worms produced by mothers under high stress (orange) pass through dauer and become hermaphrodites.



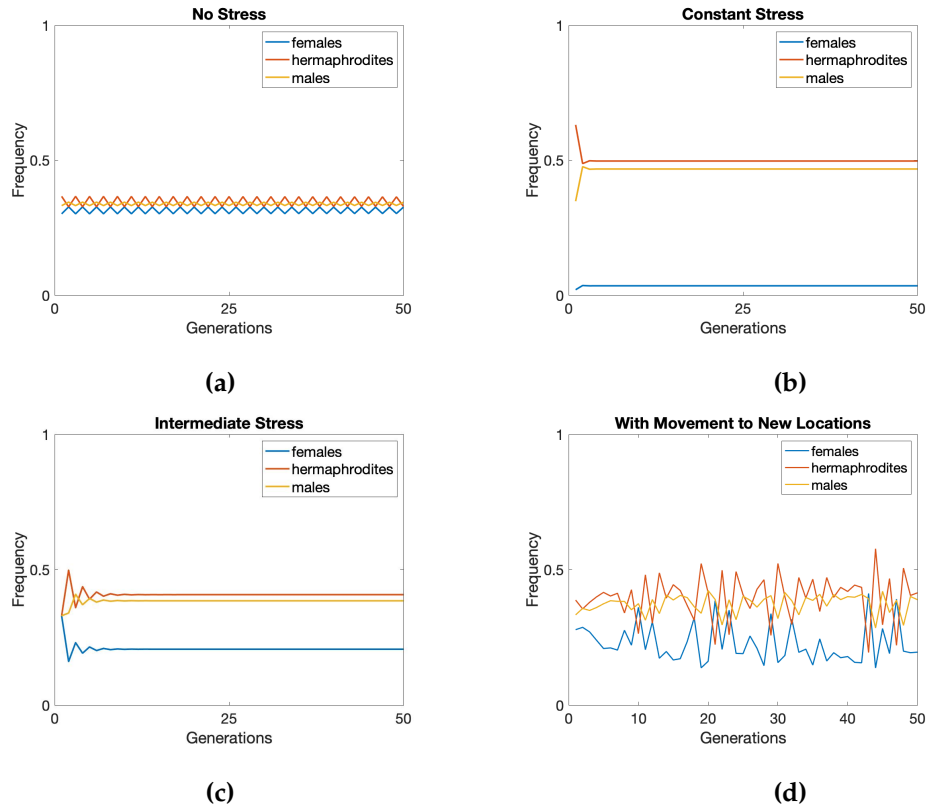
**Figure 3:** Meiosis in *A. rhodensis* produces unexpected gametes in males and hermaphrodites. The gametes formed, as well as a relatively high frequency of nondisjunction, probably contribute *A. freiburgensis* sex ratio data that are highly divergent from what would be expected.



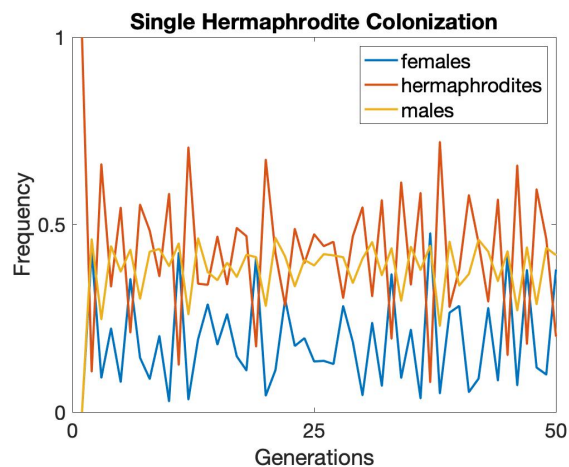
**Figure 4:** In Model 1 the mating system is determined by environmental stress. When there is no stress (a) the population is composed of females and males and when there is high stress (b) the population is composed of hermaphrodites and males. With (c) intermediate stress trioecy is stably maintained and with (d) fluctuating random stress all three genders are maintained in the population. Here,  $\theta_F = 0.2$ ,  $\theta_H = 0.6$ ,  $d = 0.01$ ,  $P_0 = 0.33$ ,  $Q_0 = 0.33$  and  $R_0 = 0.33$ .



**Figure 5:** In Model 1 the proportion of females relative to hermaphrodites is strongly determined by  $s$ . Here, the proportion of females is calculated as  $P/(P + Q)$ . Iteration over the full range of combinations of  $s, d, \Theta_F$  and  $\Theta_H$  is shown in the Supplemental Materials.



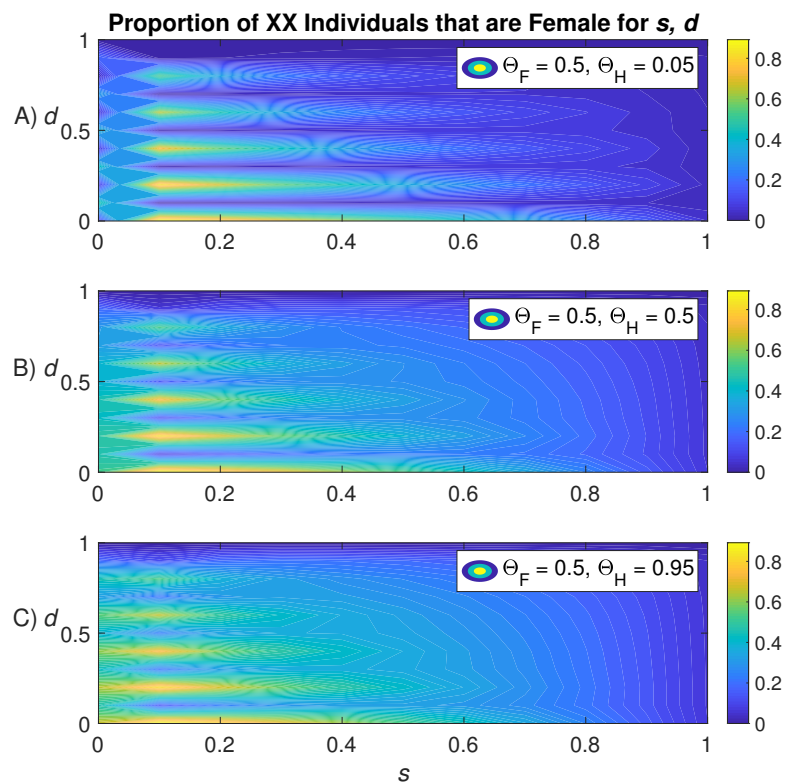
**Figure 6:** In Model 2 females, males and hermaphrodites are maintained in populations that experience (a) no stress; (b) constant stress; (c) intermediate stress; and (d) varying stress. For each generation in (d), a random value between 0 and 1 was chosen to represent the stress in the environment at generation  $n$ . Here,  $\theta_F = 0.2$ ,  $\theta_H = 0.6$ ,  $d = 0.01$ ,  $P_0 = 0.33$ ,  $Q_0 = 0.33$  and  $R_0 = 0.33$ .



**Figure 7:** A single hermaphrodite can produce a trioecious population under the conditions of Model 2.

Here,  $\theta_F = 0.2$ ,  $\theta_H = 0.6$ ,  $d = 0.01$ ,  $P_0 = 0.33$ ,  $Q_0 = 0.33$  and  $R_0 = 0.33$ .





**Figure 8:** In Model 2 the proportion of females relative to hermaphrodites is nonlinear across the range of  $s$  and  $d$ . Here, the proportion of females is calculated as  $P/(P + Q)$ . Iteration over the full range of combinations of  $s, d, \Theta_F$  and  $\Theta_H$  is shown in the Supplemental Materials.