

# Genotypic variation in a foundation tree alters ecological network structure of an associated community

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1 Biological evolution occurs in the context of complex networks of  
2 interacting species in which natural selection defines the structure  
3 of ecological networks. Fundamental to this evolutionary process  
4 is the discovery of a genetic basis to ecological network structure.  
5 Although previous work has demonstrated that tree genotype con-  
6 tributes to interaction network structure at the scale of forest stands,  
7 the contribution of tree genetics to localized interaction networks  
8 at the scale of individual trees has not yet been explored. To test  
9 the degree to which tree genetics can contribute to network struc-  
10 ture we conducted quantitative modeling of interaction networks. We  
11 constructed networks of epiphytic lichen associated with individual  
12 trees that were a part of a long-term experimental common garden  
13 of genotypes of (*Populus angustifolia*), a foundation species. We  
14 found three main results. First, tree genotype significantly predicted  
15 lichen network similarity, i.e. trees of the same genotype had more  
16 similar lichen networks. Second, bark roughness and condensed  
17 tannin concentration were both predicted by tree genotype and cor-  
18 related with lichen network similarity. Third, the network metrics, the  
19 number of links and centrality, were both correlated with several tree  
20 traits, including bark roughness and condensed tannin concentra-  
21 tion. We conclude that tree genotype influences lichen interaction  
22 network structure with two potential pathways through bark rough-  
23 ness and condensed tannin concentration. These results provide  
24 evidence that variation in ecological networks can result from genet-  
25 ically based variation in foundation species.

networks | heritability | community | genetics | lichen | cottonwood |  
Populus | common garden

- 1 Evolution occurs in complex ecosystems
- 2 Community genetics studies have demonstrated  
3 the importance of genetics and evolutionary dynamics in structuring communities and ecosystems
- 6 Community composition, ecosystem processes  
7 have been shown to vary in response to the  
8 genetic variation of foundation species
- 9 Previous studies have examined aspects of net-  
10 works but to date, no studies have examined the  
11 genetic basis of networks of interacting species
- 12 Here we examine the genetic basis of network  
13 structure on a community of sessile lignicolous

(i.e. bark) lichen on cottonwood trees. This system is ideal for examining for this kind of study because it:

- 1 Lichen do not move among trees, although  
2 asexual propagules could move to other  
3 trees in the garden
- 2 Is not unapproachably complex
- 3 Is comprised of distinct individuals that  
4 are small enough for an entire community  
5 to occur on a single tree but not too small  
6 to be quantified easily

## Significance Statement

Evolution occurs in the context of ecosystems comprised of complex ecological networks. Research at the interface of ecology and evolution has primarily focused on pairwise interactions among species and have rarely included a genetic component to analyses. Here, we use a long-term common garden experiment to reveal the effect that genotypic variation can have on networks of lichens that occur on the bark of a foundation tree species. We found that lichen interaction network structure is genetically based and is correlated with heritable bark traits, including roughness and condensed tannins. These findings demonstrate the importance of genetic variation and evolutionary dynamics in shaping ecological networks as evolved traits.

M.L. and L.L. conceived the study, M.L. and L.L. conducted the field work, R.N. assisted in lichen identifications, M.L. wrote the first draft of the manuscript, S.B. and T.W. contributed substantively to the conceptual development, T.W. established the common garden. All authors contributed to revisions of the manuscript.

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- 25 • We hypothesize that trees will vary in some  
 26 phenotypic traits, such that trees of the same  
 27 genotype will tend to have similar traits produc-  
 28 ing similarities in lichen network structure. To  
 29 test this hypothesis, we use a common garden  
 30 of cottonwood trees with lichen communities.

31 **E**volution occurs in the context of complex eco-  
 32 logical networks. Initially, evolution in a com-  
 33 munity context was focused on examples of highly  
 34 co-evolved pairs of species (e.g. Darwin's famous  
 35 prediction of the Sphinx Moth and Christmas  
 36 Orchid) citeWade2007. However, studies of dif-  
 37 fuse co-evolution (*sensu* citeJanzen1980) citeStinch-  
 38 combe2002, Strauss2007, Dicke2010, geographic mo-  
 39 saics of co-evolution citeThompson2005 and com-  
 40 munity genetics citeWhitham2006 have provided an  
 41 in-road for ecological network approaches citeFor-  
 42 tuna2009, Keith2017, Lau2016 to illuminate a more  
 43 complex perspective of the interface between eco-  
 44 logical and evolutionary dynamics. There is now  
 45 evidence to support that selection tends to occur  
 46 among groups of species citeWade2007, Pieterse2007,  
 47 Dicke2010 favoring the development of small webs  
 48 citeNuismer2006, Guimaraes2007, Gomez2009 and  
 49 that genetic variation and phylogenetic relatedness  
 50 contributes to variation in community assembly (1)  
 51 and species interactions citeWhitham2006a, Bai-  
 52 ley2009, Moya-Larano2011, which shapes the eco-  
 53 logical interaction networks (2).

54 Community genetics studies (3) have shown that  
 55 genetic variation in foundation species (4) plays a  
 56 significant role in defining distinct communities of in-  
 57 teracting organisms: such as, endophytes, pathogens,  
 58 lichens, arthropods, and soil microbes. Multiple stud-  
 59 ies have now demonstrated that genetic variation  
 60 influences numerous functional traits (e.g., phyto-  
 61 chemical, phenological, morphological) produces a  
 62 multivariate phenotype (5) that contributes to varia-  
 63 tion in associated communities (6). The importance  
 64 of genetic variation in structuring ecological systems  
 65 was recently reviewed by Des Roches et al. (2018).

66 Additional work has provided support for the hy-  
 67 pothesis that not only does composition vary among  
 68 genetically distinct genotypes of foundation species,  
 69 it also impacts the structure of the network of species  
 70 interactions in these communities. Two studies have  
 71 demonstrated conceptually (7) and empirically (8).  
 72 However, studies in the network ecology literature  
 73 generally do not include a genetic component (see

74 review by Borrett et al. 2014) and community genet-  
 75 ics papers do not have data on network structure of  
 76 associated communities. Currently, we are aware of  
 77 only one paper that empirically examines the genetic  
 78 basis of network structure of a community citeBar-  
 79 bour2019.

80 Here, we investigate how genetic variation in a  
 81 foundation tree species determines the structure of a  
 82 network of interactions among a community of tree  
 83 associated lichen species. Using a long-term (20+  
 84 years), common garden experiment with replicated  
 85 individuals of known genetic identity and a naturally  
 86 established stand of *Populus angustifolia*. We focused  
 87 on a model community of 9 epiphytic lichen species,  
 88 as previous research has demonstrated significant  
 89 compositional responses of epiphytes to genotypic  
 90 variation (9, 10). In addition, the life-history char-  
 91 acteristics of lichens, having highly localized, direct  
 92 contact interactions and slow population turnover  
 93 rates, allowed us to assess interactions among lichen  
 94 species on individual trees. We hypothesize that in  
 95 natural systems evolution occurs in a community  
 96 context involving interactions of complex networks  
 97 of interacting species (7, 8, 11, 12). If correct, we  
 98 expect to find that network structure is genetically  
 99 based in which different plant genotypes support  
 100 different interaction networks and that these interac-  
 101 tions networks can function as indicators of ecologi-  
 102 cal dynamics important for conserving biodiveristy.  
 103 Applying a probability-theory based network mod-  
 104 eling approach, we constructed a set of interaction  
 105 network models for the lichens associated with indi-  
 106 vidual trees. Using these models, we then examined  
 107 the genetic basis of the structure of these ecological  
 108 networks.

## Materials and Methods

109 The study was conducted along the Weber River, UT  
 110 (USA), which is a cottonwood (*Populus* spp.) dominated  
 111 riparian ecosystem. Although two native species, *Populus*  
 112 *angustifolia* (James) and *Populus fremontii* (S. Watson),  
 113 occur here and are known to hybridize, only pure or  
 114 advanced generation backcrosses of *P. angustifolia* were  
 115 sampled. Bark lichens have been extensively studied  
 116 in this system and provide an ideal system in which to  
 117 observe and model lichen interaction networks, as their  
 118 sessile nature permits accurate identification of individuals  
 119 (13).

120 A long-term, common garden experiment was used  
 121

123 to isolate the effect of tree genotype from the effect of  
124 the localized microenvironment associated with each individual  
125 and spatial autocorrelation. Established in 1992,  
126 asexually propagated clones of genotyped *P. angustifolia*  
127 individuals were obtained from wild collections and  
128 planted in fully randomized design at the Ogden Nature  
129 Center, Ogden, UT. From the population of established  
130 individuals in the common garden, we chose a total of  
131 thirteen genotypes, replicated between 3 and 8 times each,  
132 for sampling.

133 **Bark Lichen Observations.** On each tree, presence or absence  
134 of each lichen species was assessed in 50 total 1 cm<sup>2</sup>  
135 cells arrayed in a checkerboard pattern. Given the small  
136 size and sessile nature of lichens, we were able to rapidly  
137 assess lichen interactions by quantifying thalli in close  
138 contact. Sampling was restricted to the northern aspect  
139 of the trunk to maximize the abundance of lichen and  
140 control for the effect of trunk aspect. Two adjacent 10  
141 cm<sup>2</sup> quadrats centered at 50 cm and 85 cm from ground  
142 level were sampled (Fig 1 A and B). The observed lichen  
143 community included (abbreviations are given for species  
144 present in study): Xg = *Xanthomendoza galericulata*, Xm  
145 = *X. montana*, Ch = *Caloplaca holocarpa*, Cs = *Candeliella subdeflexa*, Rg = *Rinodina glauca*, Lh = *Lecanora hagenii*, Pm = *Phyciella melanchra*, Pa = *Physcia adscendens*, Pu = *Physcia undulata*. Several other species were  
149 not observed in the present study but are known to occur  
150 in this region: *Phaeophyscia orbicularis*, *Phaeophyscia ciliata*, *Melanelia sublivacea*, *Meanelia elegantula*.

152 The cell size and checkerboard sampling pattern was  
153 chosen to isolate the individuals in each cell. In a previous  
154 survey of lichen thallus size in this common garden, we  
155 had observed a median thallus size of 0.12 ± 0.001 cm<sup>2</sup> (1  
156 S.E.) (see Supporting Information). Based on the median  
157 thallus size, we expected thalli observed in each cell to  
158 generally be spatially independent of thalli present in  
159 other cells but exposed to similar micro-environmental  
160 conditions created by the bark and the location of the  
161 sampling area on an individual tree. Therefore, we were  
162 confident in treating the cell-wise observations in quadrats  
163 as independent with respect to lichen-lichen interactions.

164 We also measured several bark traits for each tree:  
165 including, bark roughness and chemistry. **INSERT  
166 FROM LAMIT.**

167 **Lichen Network Modeling and Analysis.** For each tree,  
168 repeated observations of lichen were made in order to construct  
169 replicated interaction networks for each genotype.  
170 We quantified the presence of lichen in the 1 cm<sup>2</sup> cells on  
171 individual trees of *P. angustifolia*. Unipartite networks  
172 were generated using the conditional probabilities of each  
173 species pair, i.e. the probability of observing one species  
174 given an observation of another species  $P(S_i|S_j)$ , based on  
175 the method developed by (14). To calculate conditional  
176 probabilities, we quantified the individual probabilities

177 of species occurrences  $P(S_i)$  and the joint probability  
178 of co-occurrences  $P(S_i, S_j)$  using the frequencies of each  
179 species and their co-occurrences. We were then able to  
180 calculate the conditional probabilities of each species pair  
181 as  $P(S_i|S_j) = \frac{P(S_i, S_j)}{P(S_j)}$ , based on the axioms of probability.  
182 This yielded a matrix that could possibly be asymmetric, i.e.  
183  $P(S_i|S_j)$  does not have to be equal to  $P(S_j|S_i)$ . Another  
184 important property of this matrix is that the diagonal  
185 ( $S_{ii}$ ) was equal to one for all species present and zero for  
186 species that were not observed in any cell.

187 We then applied an analytical procedure to remove  
188 non-significant links between species. This procedure  
189 determines if the joint probability of a species pair  
190 (i.e.  $P(S_i, S_j)$ ) is different from zero (Fig. 2). Here, a  
191 confidence interval  $CI_{95\%}$  is calculated as  $CI_{95\%} =$   
192  $E[S_i S_j] * Z_{95\%} * \sqrt{V(S_i S_j)}$ , where the expected  
193 frequency of co-occurrences  $E(S_i S_j)$  is the total number  
194 of cells surveyed ( $N$ ) times the independent probabilities  
195 of each species  $P(S_i) * P(S_j)$ ,  $Z_{95\%}$  is the Z-score  
196 for 95% from a Z-distribution and the expected variance  
197 of  $E(S_i S_j)$  is the total number of cells times the  
198 expected probability of  $S_i S_j$  and its compliment (i.e.  
199  $V(S_i S_j) = N * E[P(S_i, S_j)] * (1 - E[P(S_i, S_j)])$ ). If the  
200 observed number of co-occurrence falls outside of the  
201 confidence interval, the joint probability  $P(S_i, S_j)$  is de-  
202 termined to be equal to the product of the individual  
203 probabilities (i.e.  $P(S_i) * P(S_j)$ ), and the conditional prob-  
204 ability reduces to the individual probability of that species  
205  $P(S_i)$ . Therefore, unless the co-occurrence of a species  
206 pair falls outside the confidence interval, the probabil-  
207 ity that the observation of one species given the other  
208 is no different than simply observing that species alone.  
209 This enables us to remove links from a given network by  
210 re-scaling the resulting conditional probabilities by sub-  
211 tracting the individual probabilities from the conditional  
212 probabilities (i.e. how different the conditional probability  
213 is from the independent probability), which makes any  
214 species with a non-significant conditional probability zero.  
215 The resulting matrix ( $\mathbf{D} = D_{ij}$ ) can be interpreted as  
216 how one species impacts another with zero being no effect  
217 and values less than or greater than zero interpreted as  
218 negative and positive effects, respectively. Here, we will  
219 refer to this matrix ( $\mathbf{D}$ ) as an interaction matrix with  
220 the properties that it can be asymmetric (i.e.  $P_{ij}$  does not  
221 necessarily equal  $P_{ji}$ ), and the diagonal ( $P_{ii}$ ) is zero (i.e.  
222 a species does not influence its own probability of being  
223 observed).

224 **Statistical Analyses, Software and Data.** We used a com-  
225 bination of parametric and non-parametric, permutation  
226 based frequentist statistical analyses to test for the effects  
227 of genetic variation on lichen communities and their inter-  
228 action networks. To assess the effect of genotype on uni-  
229 partite responses, we used additive, random effects models  
230 with Restricted Maximum Likelihood (REML). We used  
231 a combination of Least Squares Regression, Analysis of



**Fig. 1.** The communities of bark lichens were observed in a common garden of replicated genotypes of narrowleaf cottonwood trees (*P. angustifolia*) at the Ogden Nature Center (Ogden, UT). Lichens were sampled within a fixed area ( $10 \text{ cm}^2$ ) on individual trees at two heights, 40cm and 80cm from the ground (A and B, respectively). (C) a photo of a typical community of bark lichen species interacting on the trunk of a cottonwood tree, including one of the more abundant species, *Xanthomendoza galericulata*, in the center. (D-K) shows the other lichen species observed, respectively: *X. montana*, *Candelariella subdeflexa*, *Rinodina* sp., *Caloplaca holocarpa*, *Physcia adscendens*, *Phyciella melanchra*, *Physcia undulata* and *Lecanora hagenii*. Photo Credits: L.J. Lamit (A-C) and R.R. Naesbourg (D-K).

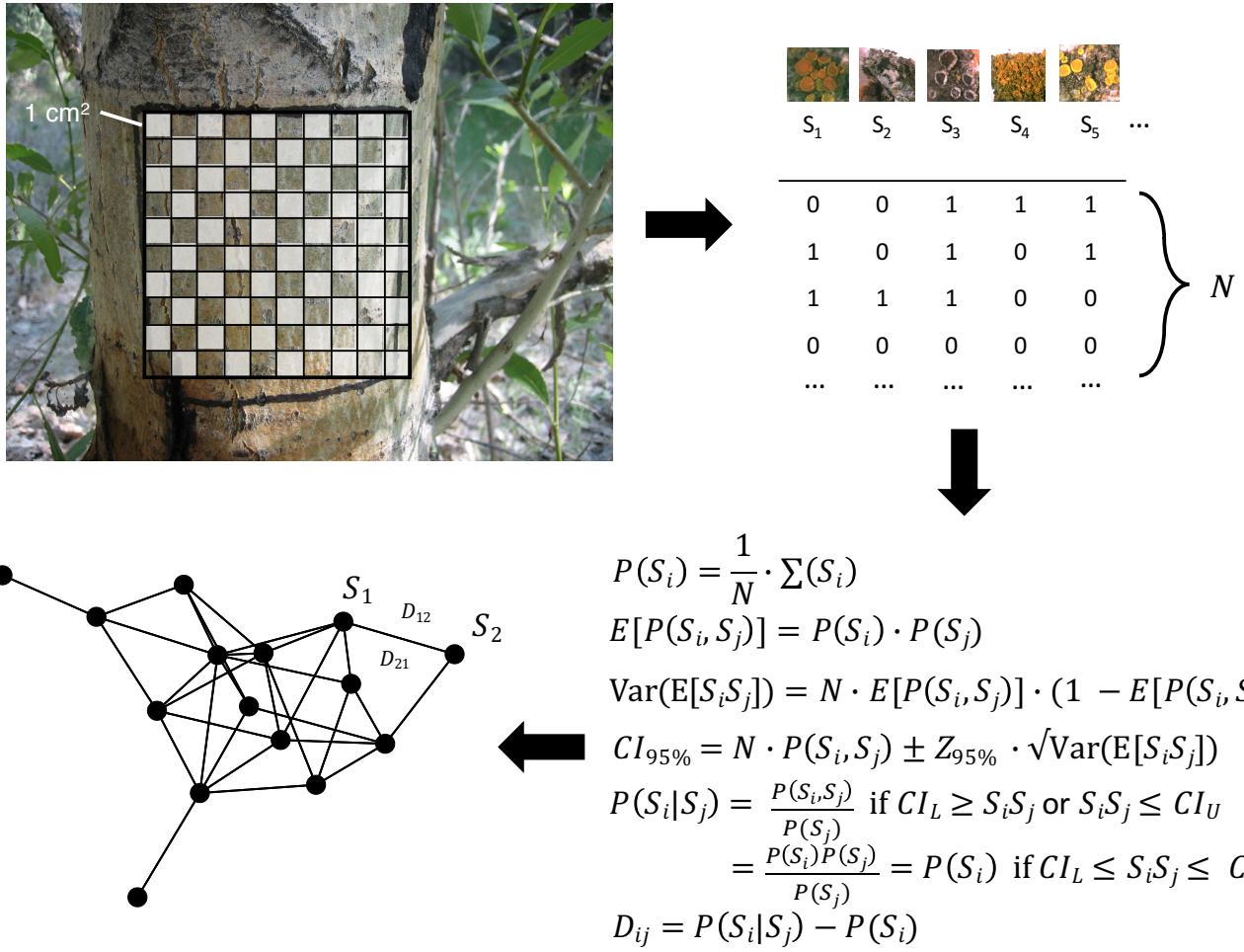
232 Variance (ANOVA) and correlation tests to quantify and  
 233 test for the relationship among other variables. Bark  
 234 roughness, lichen cover and species richness were square-  
 235 root transformed to meet the assumptions of homogeneity  
 236 of variance and normality for these tests.

237 For multivariate response variables, such as lichen com-  
 238 munity composition and network structure, we used dis-  
 239 tance based multivariate statistical approaches, including  
 240 Permutational Analysis of Variance (PERMANOVA) and  
 241 Mantel tests. For some analyses, community composition  
 242 was relativized by species maxima to reduce the effect  
 243 of the highly abundant *X. galericulata*. For community  
 244 composition we used Bray-Curtis dissimilarity, which has  
 245 optimal performance with count data citepMinchen1998.  
 246 To quantify the similarity of lichen networks among indi-  
 247 vidual trees, we calculated the pairwise Euclidean distance  
 248 of the **D** interaction matrices among all pairs of trees.

249 For visualization of multivariate patterns, we used Non-  
 250 metric Multi-Dimensional Scaling (NMDS) citeecodist  
 251 to produce dimensionally reduced ordinations of these  
 252 multi-variate responses and fitted vectors for continuous  
 253 predictor variables to the ordinated values citevegan. Us-  
 254 ing random initial configurations with a maximum of 500

iterations and a change in stress threshold of less than  
 $10^{-12}$ . Final configurations has the lowest stress with at  
 most a stress level of 0.10.

255 For each network, we also calculated metrics that mea-  
 256 sure different structural aspects. Although there are many  
 257 other metrics, for the sake of simplicity we focus on a sub-  
 258 set that represent several interesting features of network  
 259 structure (see (15)). We calculated the number of interac-  
 260 tions or “links” in each network, which provides a measure  
 261 of the size of the network citepLau2015, Borrett2014. We  
 262 also calculated the centralization of each network, which  
 263 measures the evenness of the distribution of interactions  
 264 among the species in the network citeButts2005. In a net-  
 265 work with a low level of centralization species have similar  
 266 amount of interaction in the network, while a network  
 267 with a high level of centralization tends to have one or  
 268 small number of species that interact with other species.  
 269 We used a related function to calculate the centrality of  
 270 each species (i.e. node level centrality) in each network  
 271 as well. The modularity of each network was also quanti-  
 272 fied using a weighted algorithm citeBeckett2016, which  
 273 measures the degree to which a given network is divided  
 274 into groups of species more connected to each other than  
 275



**Fig. 2.** Lichen interaction networks were constructed by conducting field observations in  $1 \text{ cm}^2$  cells within a  $10 \text{ cm}^2$  grid on each tree using a checkerboard pattern (grey cells). Thus, a set of  $N$  total cell observations were recorded for each tree with the presence or absence of each species recorded for each cell. Applying the probability-based network modeling method adapted from (14), we calculated the conditional probabilities,  $P(S_i|S_j)$ , for all species pairs and removed (i.e. set equal to zero) species pairs whose joint probabilities,  $P(S_i, S_j)$ , were not significant using a confidence interval based comparison of their observed co-occurrence frequency,  $S_i S_j$ , to that expected due to chance alone,  $E[P(S_i, S_j)] = P(S_i)P(S_j)$ , and  $P(S_i|S_j)$  reduces to  $P(S_i)$ , the observed individual probability of species  $S_i$ .

other species. As with the other response variables, the number of links was log-transformed and both modularity and centralization scores were fourth-root transformed to meet variance and normality assumptions.

All code and data for the project are openly available online. Code and data are available at [github.com/ecgen/comgen](https://github.com/ecgen/comgen). The project is also archived via Zenodo at [zenodo.com/doiXXXXXX](https://zenodo.com/doiXXXXXX). All analyses were conducted using the programming language R version 3.6.1 (R Development Core Team 2019).

## Results

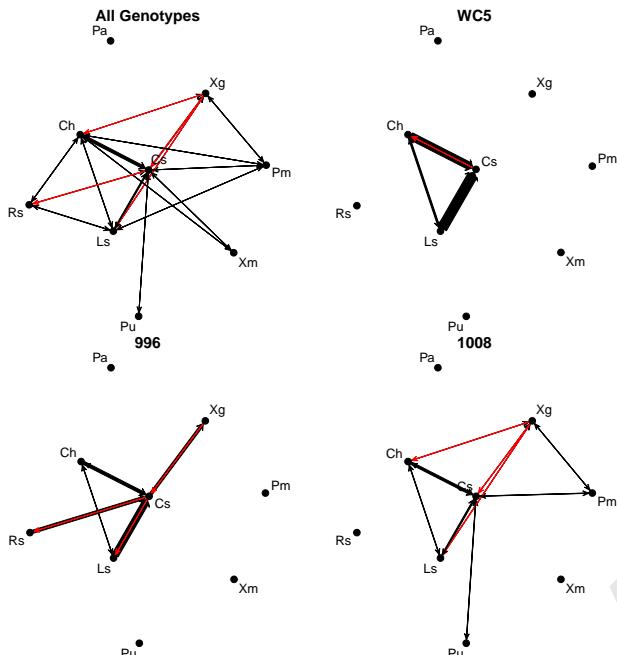
Network similarity and several tree traits were genetically based. Tree genotype was a significant predictor of network similarity ( $H^2 = 0.16$ ,  $p\text{-value} \leq 0.001$ ). Bark roughness ( $H^2 = 0.38$ ,  $p\text{-value} \leq 0.001$ ) and condensed tannin concentration ( $H^2 = 0.28$ ,  $p\text{-value}$

$= 0.014$ ) also showed a signature of tree genotype (Fig. 4); however, this was not the case for other tree traits, bark pH and carbon to nitrogen ratio. Also, none of the lichen network metrics were significantly predicted by tree genotype, either at the scale of the entire network (Table 1) or for individual species (see Supporting Information). Although both showed a response to tree genotype, bark roughness and condensed tannins were not correlated (Pearson's  $r = 0.084$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.556$ ).

Tree traits and lichen community metrics were correlated with lichen networks. The genetically based traits, bark roughness and condensed tannins were both significant predictors of network similarity (Table 2). Bark C:N ratio was also a significant predictor of network similarity, but, as shown previously (see

	df	SS	R2	F	p-value
geno	9.0000	257.2922	0.3710	1.7697	0.0957
Residual	27.0000	436.1515	0.6290		
Total	36.0000	693.4437	1.0000		

**Table 2. PERMANOVA Pseudo-F Table of lichen network similarity.**



**Fig. 3.** Lichen networks varied in structure among tree genotypes. Network diagrams of the mean lichen interaction matrices averaged for all trees and for several individual genotypes showing a range of interaction network structure. Directionality (arrowheads) and sign (red = negative, black = positive) of interactions are shown as edges between species (abbreviated by the first letter of the genus and specific epithet), which are scaled by their magnitude. The sign of the interaction is indicative of greater (positive) or lesser (negative) paired occurrences than expected relative to the overall frequency of occurrence of each species. Ecologically, the links in the network are likely the product of multiple types of interactions (e.g. mutualism, parasitism, competition, facilitation) that could vary over both space and time.

Response	H2	p-value
Lichen Network Similarity	0.1734	0.0957
Number of Network Links	0.3156	0.0269
Network Centrality	0.3305	0.0196
Network Modularity	0.0012	0.4513
Percent Lichen Cover	0	1
Lichen Species Richness	0	0.458
Lichen Species Evenness	0	1
Lichen Species Diversity	0	0.4558
Community Composition	-0.0789	0.8469
Percent Rough Bark	0.3221	0.0128
Condensed Tannins (CT)	0.0041	0.4513
Carbon-Nitrogen (CN) Ratio	0	1
pH	0	1

**Table 1. Genotypic effects on the associated lichen community.**

this model) (0.001, ?)

G -> Net (0.07, 0.042)

ADONIS SSg = 11.093 SSR = 24.428 SST = 35.521

P = 0.053 R2 = 0.31 nperm = 100000

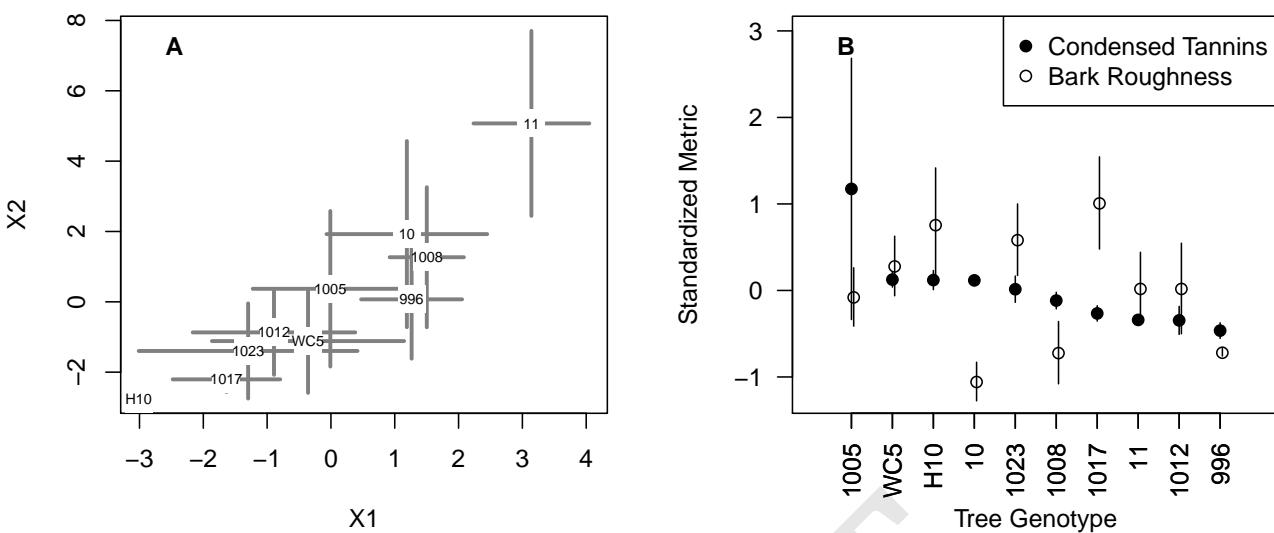
## Discussion

- We found:
  - Lichen networks genetically based
  - Several genetically based traits also explained variation in lichen network structure
  - Although correlated with lichen network structure, the network metrics explored were not genetically based
- Genetic response of lichen networks is not a function of the abundance, richness, diversity or composition of lichen communities and is not reducible to simple network metrics. This is likely the result of having similar interactions among similar species in networks on trees of the same genotype. This is difficult to disentangle with the current set of analyses. Future work should apply a structural statistical approach, such as SEM or path analysis.
- Habitat filtering of communities (richness, composition) vs environmental influence on inter-

Table 1), there is not sufficient evidence support a genetic basis for it. Bark pH was not a significant predictor of lichen network similarity (Table 2). The abundance, richness, evenness and diversity of the bark lichen community, although also not predicted by tree genotype, were all significantly correlated with lichen network structure (Table 2). Lichen community composition was not correlated with lichen network similarity, either when species abundances were relativized (Mantel R = -0.09, p-value = 0.139) or not (Mantel R = -0.03, p-value = 0.573).

Structural model using path analysis based on partial Mantels.

G -> CT -> SR -> Net (0.05, 0.067) (0.24, 0.053) (0.13, 0.041) G -> Net (included as a path within



**Fig. 4.** Tree genotype affected lichen networks and several bark traits. A. The plot shows genotype centroids of NMDS ordinated ( $R^2 = 0.999$ , stress = 0.008) lichen networks ( $\pm 1$  S.E.). Centroids that are closer are more similar in the structure of their lichen networks. B. Plot showing the standardized ( $\frac{x - \bar{x}}{\sigma}$ ) means ( $\pm 1$  S.E.) for the two genetically based tree traits: tree bark roughness and condensed tannin concentration.

actions. Likely a combination of both of these factors.

- Lichen network structure correlated with species richness, evenness and diversity
- Lichen community composition not correlated with network structure
- None of these were genetically based

- An important consequence for diversity is that genotypes could be supporting unique communities, even if the composition of the communities is the same among individuals and genotypes.
- Genetic diversity could be influencing the stability of communities through the effects on interactions. Some network structures are likely to be more stable, either in response to disturbance or via self-organized dynamics. Although, none of the metrics examined, such as the number of links, modularity or centrality, showed a genetic signature.
- Important factors to consider in studies of other ecological networks:
  - Relative body size
  - Mobility

– Reproductive isolation

- Future work should consider the potential influence on evolutionary dynamics of communities
- Network structure influences network stability
- Are the communities nested subsets?

**TGW: I think window is too vague and this topic sentence needs to be much stronger for a journal like PNAS. Might be stronger by saying "Our findings argue there is a genetic component to network structure, which implies that network structure could be subject to selection and networks can evolve."**

**TGW: Could we also make the comparison that genetically more similar trees also have more similar communities? We've done this in the past and it has worked, e.g., Randy's genetic similarity rule.**

- Genetic assembly rule = similar genetics will have more similar communities
- What we don't know is whether or not these interactions will also lead to similar interactions among other species.

- 396 • Thus, it would be possible for genetics to not  
397 only influence other species directly, but also  
398 indirectly by influencing the interactions among  
399 other species.

400 We observed significant lichen interaction struc-  
401 ture that varied among genotypes of a foundation  
402 tree species, narrowleaf cottonwood (*P. angustifo-*  
403 *lia*). We found that a genetically based trait, bark  
404 roughness, partially explained the variation in lichen  
405 interaction networks. Some of this variation in lichen  
406 networks was related to both the overall abundance  
407 and species richness of lichen; though, statistically  
408 controlling for the effect of genotype on these vari-  
409 ables indicates that a significant portion of the vari-  
410 ance in lichen species richness is due to a factor  
411 other than tree genotype. By using network metrics,  
412 we were also able to probe for specific characteris-  
413 tics of how these networks were responding to tree  
414 genotype. We found that both number of links and  
415 the centralization of the networks were highly corre-  
416 lated with network similarity and that tree genotype  
417 significantly predicted network centrality but only  
418 marginally predicted the number of network links.  
419 This latter result could be due to the relationship  
420 between species richness and the number of links  
421 in the network, which were significantly correlated  
422 with each other. We also found that bark roughness  
423 did not significantly predict either the number of  
424 links or the centrality of lichen networks, suggesting  
425 that bark roughness has some other effect on the  
426 structure of the lichen networks. Taken together,  
427 these findings support the hypothesis that genotypic  
428 variation in a foundation species contributes to the  
429 structure of a network of interacting species.

430 **LJL: I wonder if you need to have so much**  
431 **on richness here. Overall, I think you want to**  
432 **focus on the network responses and patterns**  
433 **among genotype first, and then go into mech-**  
434 **anism later. I think we don't quite have a**  
435 **good mechanism yet so I don't think it needs**  
436 **to come up in the first paragrpah of the dis-**  
437 **cussion.**

438 These findings point to the importance of under-  
439 standing the community level effects of genetic varia-  
440 tion in plant functional traits and highlights the  
441 potential for indirect effects of genetic variation to  
442 propagate through networks of interacting species  
443 and trophic levels.

444 This work corroborates previous findings of the

importance of plant genetics in shaping community  
445 structure and ecosystem processes. citepBangert2008  
446

447 Altering the structure of interaction networks  
448 presents a means for genetic effects to be magni-  
449 fied within the system of interacting species. For  
450 example, (8) showed that the genetics based interac-  
451 tions of aphid resistant and aphid susceptible trees  
452 resulted in different interaction networks of their  
453 associated arthropod communities composed of 139  
454 species. At the scale of ecosystems, trophic net-  
455 works or food webs direct and control the rates of  
456 energy and nutrient flux (16). Furthermore, in a  
457 predator-prey-plant study, Smith (17), showed that  
458 the interactions among species across trophic levels  
459 depended on plant genotype.

460 Also, work by (18–20) observed consistent pat-  
461 terns of centralized interactions of species modules  
462 focused around hubs of plant-fungal interactions. In  
463 other words, a small number of plant and fungal  
464 symbionts tended to have disproportionate numbers  
465 of interactions with other species and likely are the  
466 drivers in determining community assembly, struc-  
467 ture and dynamics.

468 More on the importance of ecological networks  
469 (21, 22).

470 From Thompson2014

- 471 • Pairwise interactions are usually influenced by  
472 other species
- 473 • Selection favors the development of small webs
- 474 • Evolution of new lifestyles leads to changes in  
475 selection on large and small webs

476 Specific hypothesis from Thompson2014

477 **LJL: If I recall, the Elamo paper just looks**  
478 **at genetic correlations between pairwise indi-**  
479 **vidual abundances. I would suggest maybe it**  
480 **doesn't deserve to be in this 1st paragraph.**  
481 **Perhaps it actually should be in the 2nd or**  
482 **3rd paragraph, just as a reference that points**  
483 **to the potential for genotype to influence net-**  
484 **works. Definately our 2015 JOE paper goes**  
485 **much further, too, since it has whole com-**  
486 **munities being correlative. But, again, I**  
487 **would put both of these as citation in the com-**  
488 **munity genetics paragraphs (2 of 3) instead**  
489 **of the first paragrpah, which focuses on the**  
490 **general network lit.**

491     **LJL:** It could be useful to point out that  
492 our findings are not related to trophic inter-  
493 actions, which is pretty cool. Also, we talk  
494 about interaction networks but it is not clear  
495 to me if the interactions tend to be positive  
496 or negative. Can we get at that with the ap-  
497 proach used?

498     **TGW:** Is there any adaptive component to  
499 the tree in having certain lichen communi-  
500 ties? e.g., can they feed back to affect tree  
501 performance in some way or is this a pas-  
502 sive outcome of a trait that affects bark for  
503 other adaptive reasons and lichens are pas-  
504 sive players that tag along for the ride? I  
505 could envision that lichens covering the bark  
506 of a tree act as a barrier between insects and  
507 pathogens, much like ectomycorrhizae cover  
508 fine roots as a first line of defense by invad-  
509 ing microorganisms. Uptake of N that gets  
510 passed to the tree??

511     **LJL:** I agree that there is a general over-  
512 arching theme that evolution occurs in a com-  
513 munity network context, but I'm not sure  
514 that we should state that as our main hypoth-  
515 esis. It seems more that this is a fundamen-  
516 tal foundation for our work. The hypoth-  
517 esis is more what we are testing directly, but  
518 we don't test this directly. I guess I don't  
519 want to give the impression that our com-  
520 munities are necessarily the result of each  
521 species evolving into its place in the commu-  
522 nity on these tree genotypes (although I do  
523 understand this as Shuster et al 2006's funda-  
524 mental explanation for why we see different  
525 communities on different genotypes; I don't  
526 necessarily agree that this is the only rea-  
527 son we would see different communities on  
528 dif genotypes). Most of these are pretty gen-  
529 eralist lichens, which could be found on other  
530 deciduous trees in the surrounding city or nat-  
531 ural areas. I would look at it more like an  
532 assembling of lichen species into unique con-  
533 figurations on genetically different substrates.  
534 There may be some selection for different  
535 genotype of lichen during the community as-  
536 sembly process but we can't really tell that  
537 just by differences in species abundances or  
538 coocurneces. I guess to me the evolutionary  
539 context that is more direclty related to this

540 work is that the tree genotype is a central  
541 controller (indeed a sort of hub species in the  
542 network) of network structure. By anchor-  
543 ing the lichen network to tree genotype (and  
544 variation among networks to variation among  
545 tree genotypes), our study highlights the pos-  
546 sibility that natural selection acting on the  
547 trees may have an extended consequence for  
548 the network structure of organisms living on  
549 the trees...the extra thing we add to the field  
550 is that we show interaction networks are sen-  
551 sitive to genotype. I doubt the lichens have  
552 a direct effect on tree fitness, but favorabil-  
553 ity of some tree genotypes over others during  
554 natural selection will then go on to favor and  
555 disfavor certain lichen communities of differ-  
556 ent network structures. By being sensitive  
557 to tree genotype, the lichen community net-  
558 works are passive riders on the waves of evolu-  
559 tionary dynamics that occur within the tree  
560 species they inhabit.

561     **MKL:** In response to Lamit's comment  
562 above, I agree that it is not required that  
563 there is co-evolution. Another, perhaps sim-  
564 pler, explanation is that there is variation in  
565 environmental filtering of lichen individuals  
566 created in part by genetic variation in tree  
567 individuals.

568     **TGW:** might be good to cite papers on  
569 competition in lichens or other organizing fac-  
570 tors to back up the least expected statement.  
571 as epiphytes we might not expect them to  
572 care.

573     **TGW:** I think we need to emphasize the  
574 long-term nature of our common garden  
575 study as very few common garden studies of  
576 lichens likely exist. Any refs on this? If true  
577 might want to mention this up front in intro.

578     **MKL:** Environmental filtering is evidenced  
579 by species richness, but also possibly species  
580 interaction varying based on environment as  
581 networks varied in terms of sign and magni-  
582 tude as well.

583     **MKL:** The effect of bark roughness on  
584 network similarity was primarily genetically  
585 based, and there are likely other factors at  
586 play.

587     Discussion of network implications for sta-  
588 bility with genetics.

589 Bark roughness had previously been shown to be  
590 an important tree trait influencing bark lichens (13)  
591 that is under strong genetic control (23).

592 Although our study was conducted with a community  
593 of lichens, these results should be generalized  
594 to other groups of diverse organisms around the  
595 world that also exhibit significant genetic signals at  
596 the community level (24, 25). In the face of the  
597 high degree of complexity and potential context de-  
598 pendence of ecological processes, the current study  
599 points to the utility of considering the spatial and  
600 temporal scales of interactions, as discussed to some  
601 in previous studies (26–28). In the present study,  
602 we found that community assembly processes, such  
603 as environmental filtering and species interactions,  
604 are genetically based. This is likely due, in part,  
605 to the large difference in the differences in size and  
606 longevity of the lichen and cottonwood individuals  
607 with the trees determining the environment in which  
608 the lichen occur. We suggest that future work would  
609 be aided by determining these modules within the  
610 biotic community that include species with similar  
611 differences in body-size and time-scales. As heritable  
612 variation is the raw material for natural selection  
613 to act upon, a genetic basis for interaction network  
614 structure indicates evolutionary dynamics should be  
615 considered at the community level and that con-  
616 serving genetic variation is important to consider in  
617 efforts to restore or preserve complex species interac-  
618 tions and their associated ecosystem functions (29).  
619 With such findings, it appears that we are closer to  
620 understanding the evolutionary drivers of Darwin’s  
621 entangled bank and the interconnectedness of species  
622 in complex communities.

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