- A Combination of Positive and Negative Niche
- 2 Construction Favors the Evolution of

Cooperation

4

5 Abstract

6 TODO

7 Introduction

- 8 Cooperative behaviors are common across all branches of the tree of life. In-
- sects divide labor within their colonies, plants and soil bacteria exchange es-
- sential nutrients, birds care for others' young, and the trillions of cells in the
- 11 human body restrain their growth and coordinate to provide vital functions.
- Each instance of cooperation presents an evolutionary challenge: How can in-
- dividuals that sacrifice their own well-being to help others avoid subversion by
- those that do not? Over time, we would expect these defectors to rise in abun-
- dance at the expense of others, eventually driving cooperators—and perhaps
- the entire population—to extinction.

Several factors can prevent this tragedy of the commons (Hamilton, 1964; Hardin, 1968; Nowak, 2006; West et al., 2007b). One important factor involves non-random social interaction, in which cooperators benefit more from the cooperative act than defectors. This can occur when cooperators are clustered together in spatially-structured populations (Fletcher and Doebeli, 2009; Nadell et al., 2010; Kuzdzal-Fick et al., 2011) or when cooperators use communication (Brown and Johnstone, 2001; Darch et al., 2012) or other cues (Sinervo et al., 2006; Gardner and West, 2010; Veelders et al., 2010) to cooperate conditionally with kin. Cooperation can also be bolstered by pleiotropic connections to personal benefits (Foster et al., 2004; Dandekar et al., 2012) or alleles encoding self-benefitting traits (Asfahl et al., 2015). In the latter case, 27 the alleles may provide (private) benefits that are completely independent from 28 the (public) benefits of cooperation. In a population of both cooperators and defectors, this sets the stage for an "adaptive race" in which both types vie for the first highly beneficial adaptation (Waite and Shou, 2012; Morgan et 31 al., 2012). The tragedy of the commons can be deferred if a cooperator, by chance, wins the adaptive race. Hammarlund et al. (2015) recently showed that in spatially structured populations, cooperators can gain a substantial leg up on defectors in an adaptive race. Specifically, cooperation increases local population density, thus increasing the likelihood of acquiring beneficial mutations. By hitchhiking along with these adaptations, the cooperative trait can rapidly rise in abundance. Nevertheless, this advantage is fleeting. As soon as the opportunities for adaptation are exhausted, cooperators are once again at a disadvantage against adapted

defectors. However, Hammarlund et al. (2015) demonstrated that cooperation can be maintained indefinitely when frequent environmental changes produce a steady stream of adaptive opportunities. Although organisms typically find themselves in dynamic environments, change might not occur at a rate that provides sufficient adaptive opportunities to ensure long-term cooperator persistence.

In this work, we explore whether cooperation can be maintained indefinitely
by niche construction. We expand upon the model presented in Hammarlund
et al. (2015) to allow populations to alter their local environment. As environments change, so too does selection, which creates an eco-evolutionary feedback
whereby selection is dependent on the genotypes present in the population, and
the composition of genotypes is dependent on selection. Niche construction
can be positive or negative, depending on whether the environmental change
increases or decreases the fitness of the niche-constructing individual. We investigate whether these selective feedbacks can act as a continual source of
adaptive opportunities for cooperators.

Although niche construction occurs independently of cooperation in our model, the increase in density that results from cooperation has a profound effect on how populations evolve in the presence of selective feedbacks. First, these populations exert greater influence on their environments, which better enables them to benefit from positive niche construction. Additionally, as environments change, either through negative niche construction or external influences, these larger populations can adapt more quickly. Finally, because large populations produce more emigrants, these populations will exert a stronger in-

- fluence on neighboring populations, effectively exporting their niche. Because
- of these potential benefits, we also focus our attention on how population size
- and migration rate influence evolutionary outcomes in these environments.

68 Methods

- 69 We build upon the model described in Hammarlund et al. (2015), in which
- 70 cooperators and defectors compete and evolve in a metapopulation (a collec-
- tion of populations). Individuals in each of the populations reproduce, mutate,
- ⁷² and migrate to neighboring populations. Importantly, adaptation can occur.
- 73 In our model here, we further allow populations to modify their local environ-
- ment, and these modifications feed back to affect selection.

75 Model Description

- Our simulated environment consists of N^2 patches arranged as an $N \times N$
- 177 lattice (see Table 1 for model parameters and their values), where each patch
- 78 can support a population.

79 Individuals and Genotypes

- Each individual in a population has a genotype, which is an ordered list of
- ₈₁ L+1 integers (loci). A binary allele at the last locus (L+1) determines
- whether that individual is a cooperator (1) or a defector (0). Cooperators
- incur a fitness cost c. The first L loci are adaptive loci, and are each occupied

by 0 or an integer from the set $\{1, 2, ..., A\}$, where A is the number of alleles conferring a selective benefit. Specifically, the presence of any non-zero allele at any of these loci represents an adaptation that confers a fitness benefit δ . We choose $\delta > c$, which allows a minimally adapted cooperator to recoup the cost of cooperation. The fitness benefits of these adaptations are purely endogenous, and are not affected by other individuals or the environment.

90 Niche Construction

Populations also influence their environment, which feeds back to affect selection. This process adds a second, exogenous component to each individual's fitness. Here, the "niche" is defined implicitly by the allelic states present in the population. As allelic states change, a population constructs its unique niche. We use a form of density dependent selection to increasingly favors individuals that match their niche.

Specifically, the selective value of adaptive allele a at locus l increases with the number of individuals in the population that have allele a+1 at locus l+1. We treat both adaptive loci and allelic states as "circular", so the allelic state at locus L is affected by the allelic composition of the population at locus l+1, and the selective value of allele l+1 at any locus increases with the number of individuals carrying allele l+1 at the next locus. For the remainder of this section, this circularity is represented by the function below, which gives the integer that follows an arbitrary value l+1 in the set l+1 at locus l+1 integer that follows an arbitrary value l+1 in the set l+1 at locus l+1 at loc

$$\beta(x, X) = \text{mod}_X(x) + 1 \tag{1}$$

Here, $\operatorname{mod}_Y(y)$ is the integer remainder when dividing y by Y. Thus, the selective value of adaptive allele a at locus l increases with the number of individuals that have allele $\beta(a,A)$ at locus $\beta(l,L)$. The slope of this increase is ϵ , which specifies the intensity of niche construction. Consider a genotype g with allelic state at locus l given by $a_{g,l}$; its fitness is defined as:

$$W_g = z + \delta \sum_{l=1}^{L} I(a_{g,l}) + \epsilon \sum_{l=1}^{L} n(\beta(a_{g,l}, A), \beta(l, L)) - ca_{g,L+1}$$
 (2)

where z is a baseline fitness, and I(a) indicates whether a given adaptive allele is non-zero:

$$I(a) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } a \in \{1, 2, \dots, A\} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$
 (3)

As a consequence of this form of density dependent selection, genotypes with sequentially increasing allelic states will tend to evolve. Because mutations are random (see below), each population will evolve different consecutive sequences. These different sequences represent the unique niches constructed by populations.

Population Growth and the Benefit of Cooperation

Cooperation allows the population to reach greater density. If p is the proportion of cooperators in a population at the beginning of a growth cycle, then that population reaches the following size:

$$S(p) = S_{min} + p(S_{max} - S_{min}) \tag{4}$$

The function S(p) reflects the benefit of cooperation. During growth, individuals compete for inclusion in the resulting population. The composition of a population with size P and cooperator proportion p after growth is multinomial with parameters and S(p) and $\{\pi_1, \pi_2, \dots, \pi_P\}$, where:

$$\pi_i = \frac{W_{\gamma(i)}}{\sum_{j=1}^P W_{\gamma(j)}} \tag{5}$$

Here, $W_{\gamma(i)}$ is the fitness of an individual i with genotype $\gamma(i)$ (see Equation 2). The value π_i therefore reflects an individual's reproductive fitness relative to others' in the population.

128 Mutation

For simplicity, we apply mutations after population growth. Mutations occur independently at each locus and cause an allelic state change. At each adaptive locus, mutations occur at rate μ_a . These mutations replace the current allele with a random selection from the set $\{0\} \cup \{1, 2, ..., A\}$. Note that this allows

for the possibility of an allele replacing itself, thus slightly reducing the effective mutation rate. At the binary cooperation locus, mutations occur at rate μ_c . These mutations flip the allelic state, causing cooperators to become defectors and vice versa.

Migration

After mutation, individuals emigrate to an adjacent patch at rate m. The destination patch is randomly chosen with uniform probability from the source patch's Moore neighborhood, which is composed of the nearest 8 patches on the lattice. Because the metapopulation lattice has boundaries, patches located on an edge have smaller neighborhoods.

143 Metapopulation Initialization and Simulation

Metapopulations are initiated in a state that follows an environmental change. First, populations are seeded at all patches with cooperator proportion p_0 and grown to density $S(p_0)$. An environmental challenge is then introduced, which subjects the population to a bottleneck. For each individual, the probability of survival is μ_t , which represents the likelihood that a mutation occurs that confers tolerance. Survivors are chosen by binomial sampling. Because individuals have not yet adapted to this new environment, the allelic state of each individual's genotype is set to 0 at each adaptive locus. Following initialization, simulations are run for T cycles, where each discrete cycle consists of population growth, mutation, and migration. At the end of each cycle, populations are thinned to allow for growth in the next cycle. The individuals that remain are chosen by binomial sampling, where each individual persists with probability d, regardless of allelic state.

Source Code and Software Environment

The simulation software and configurations for the experiments reported are available online. Simulations used Python 3.4, NumPy 1.9.1, Pandas 0.15.2 (McKinney, 2010), and NetworkX 1.9.1 (Hagberg *et al.*, 2008). Data analyses were performed with R 3.1.3 (R Core Team, 2015). Confidence intervals were estimated by bootstrapping with 1000 resamples.

163 Results

We follow the evolution of cooperation in a metapopulation consisting of populations connected by spatially-limited migration. Individuals in these popu-165 lations can gain a limited number of adaptations that confer selective benefits. 166 While the allele at an individual's cooperation locus does not directly affect 167 the value of alleles at adaptive loci, cooperation can have indirect effects on the process of adaptation. Specifically, because cooperation increases population 169 density, isolated cooperators experience more mutational opportunities to gain adaptations. Cooperation can hitchhike along with these adaptations, which 171 compensate for the cost of cooperation. Additionally, populations alter their 172 environment. Here, we explore how niche construction can favor the evolution

of cooperation. Our simulation environment is defined by the parameter values listed in Table 1. Unless otherwise noted, 10 replicate simulations were
performed for each experiment. We quantify cooperator success using the area
under the cooperator proportion curve. This measure of cooperator presence
increases as cooperators rise in abundance or remain in the population longer.

Niche Construction Maintains Cooperation

Without any opportunity for adaptation (L=0), cooperators are swiftly eliminated in competition with defectors (Figure 1A). Despite an initial lift due 181 to increased productivity, the cost of cooperation becomes disadvantageous as 182 migration mixes the initially isolated populations. When there are opportun-183 ties for adaptation (L=5) but no niche construction $(\epsilon=0)$, cooperators are 184 maintained transiently (Figure 1B). Here, the additional mutational oppor-185 tunities provided by their larger sizes allows cooperator populations to more 186 quickly adapt to their environment. As previously described by Hammarlund 187 et al. (2015), however, cooperation is subsequently lost as adapted defector 188 populations arise via mutation. When niche construction in incorporated, 189 cooperation persists (Figure 1C). 190

Fitness Increases Alone do not Support Persisting Cooperation

In our model, niche construction introduces additional selective benefits. To determine how these selective effects influence evolutionary outcomes, we per-

formed simulations in which the selective effects of niche construction were removed ($\epsilon = 0$), and we instead increased the fitness benefits conferred by 196 adaptation ($\delta = 0.6$). Here, we are consevative by lifting the selective value of 197 exogenous adaptation by the maximum value possible from niche construction. 198 We find that higher selective values do not provide a significant increase in 199 cooperator presence (Figure 2B). As shown in Figure 3, cooperators gain adap-200 tations more quickly than defectors, which provides a fitness advantage. How-201 ever, the cost of cooperation puts defectors at an advantage once these popu-202 lations become fully adapted. 203

Negative Niche Construction is Critical to Cooperator Persistence

Negative niche construction occurs in our model due to selection for sequentially-increasing allelic states and the circular arrangement of these alleles. When the genome length (L) is not evenly divided by the number of adaptive alleles (A), then it is not possible for the population to be fixed for a genotype that is perfectly adapted to the constructed environment. Technically (in terms of the model) this is because the equality:

$$\beta(a_{g,l}, A) = a_{g,\beta(l,L)}$$

cannot simultaneously hold for all l.

For example, consider genotype (1,2) when L=2 and A=3. Here, allelic

state 2 at locus 2 will be be beneficial, because it follows allelic state 1 at locus 1. However, due to the circular effects, allelic state 1 at locus 1 will be 215 deleterious relative to allelic state 3 at locus 1. Yet, fixation for genotype (3, 2)216 does not solve the problem, because a mutant (3,1) is fitter, and so on. 217 We first focus on the effects of positive niche construction by removing the 218 allelic conflict that leads to negative niche construction ($L=5,\,A=5$). In 219 the absence of this conflict, cooperator presence is significantly increased (Fig-220 ure 2C). Within these environments, we find that positive niche construction 221 prolongs the fitness advantage that cooperators have over defectors (Figure 3C). 223

Positive niche construction is important to cooperator persistence

To determine how negative niche construction influences the evolution of cooperation, we maximize the allelic conflict (L=1, A=6). Here, selection for increasing allelic states among the adaptive loci means that any allelic state will not be greater than at the previous allele (itself), and thus there will always be opportunity for adaptation. Despite this constant opportunity, niche construction does not increase cooperator presence (Figure 2D).

NC Enables Cooperator Spread

Figure 4 - if not, could be why thinning is a must.

NC Prevents Defector Invasion

Figure 5

236 How Cooperation Fuels all of this

To directly explore how the increase in population size affects evolutionary 237 outcomes, we vary the maximum size that a population can reach $(S_{max}, \text{ see})$ 238 Equation 4). Figure 6A shows the result of these simulations. (TODO de-239 scription of results) 240 To address how migration affects the evolutionary process in this system, we 241 vary the rate at which migration occurs (m). As seen in Figure 6B, cooperation 242 decreases as migration rate increases. This is likely because migration defines 243 the spatial structuring in this system. As migration increases, the population 244 becomes more like a well-mixed system, where defectors are better able to 245 exploit the benefits of cooperation (Griffin et al., 2004; Kümmerli et al., 2009). # Discussion Despite their negative effects, deleterious traits can rise in abundance due to 248 genetic linkage with other traits that are strongly favored by selection (Maynard Smith and Haigh, 1974). In a process termed the "Hankshaw effect", Hammarlund et al. (2015) recently demonstrated that cooperative behaviors 251 can prolong their existence by actively increasing their likelihood of hitchhik-252 ing with a beneficial trait. While this process does favor cooperation in the 253 short term, it eventually reaches a dead end. When the opportunities for adaptation are exhausted, and cooperators can no longer hitchhike, they face

extinction. In this work, we have considered whether niche construction can maintain cooperation indefinitely.

We demonstrate that when niche construction occurs, cooperation can indeed 258 persist (Figure 1C). But what aspects of niche construction produce this result? In our model, niche construction introduces additional selective effects 260 that could influence the evolutionary process. However, simply raising the 261 selective benefits provided by adaptations does not significantly increase co-262 operator presence (Figure 2B), and indicates that niche construction plays an 263 important role. Although cooperators benefit greatly from positive niche con-264 struction, it does not fully explain our results (Figure 2C). Indeed, despite an 265 initial increase in abundance, cooperators are eventually driven to extinction 266 when environmental change produces only positive fitness effects. As with the 267 Hankshaw effect, adaption eventually slows, allowing defectors to outcompete 268 cooperators (Figure 3C). While it does not benefit cooperation when alone 269 (Figure 3E), negative niche construction acts to prevent this stasis. Combined, 270 we find that both positive and negative niche construction are required to main 271 cooperation. 272

When successful, we observe that populations do not reach the maximum possible fitness (Figure 3A). Although cooperation is the focus of this study, it can be seen as deleterious. Previous work has shown that niche construction can favor deleterious alleles (Laland *et al.*, 1996, 1999). Similarly here, cooperation is maintained in the presence of niche construction, but lost otherwise. Van Dyken and Wade (2012) showed that when two cooperative behaviors co-evolve and niche construction feedbacks benefit the other type, niche construction can increasingly favor these traits, which were otherwise disfavored when alone.

By their very nature, public goods benefit populations by making their envi-282 ronment more hospitable (West et al., 2007a). For example, bacteria produce 283 a host of extracellular products that find soluble iron (Griffin et al., 2004), 284 digest large proteins (Diggle et al., 2007; Darch et al., 2012), and reduce the 285 risk of predation (Cosson et al., 2002). While many studies have explored how 286 the environment affects the evolution of cooperative behaviors such as these, 287 relatively few have examined how those behaviors affect the environment and 288 how the resulting feedbacks influence evolutionary trajectories. 289

In our model, the environmental state was implicitly modeled, and depended 290 solely on the current state of the population. In natural settings, however, the 291 timescales at which environments are modified and reproduction are likely to 292 be decoupled. For example, a multitude of factors including protein durabil-293 ity (Brown and Taddei, 2007; Kümmerli and Brown, 2010), diffusion (Allison, 294 2005; Driscoll and Pepper, 2010), and resource availability (Zhang and Rainey, 295 2013; Ghoul et al., 2014) influence both the rate and the degree to which public goods alter the environment. These factors are likely to influence evolution-297 ary trajectories (Laland et al., 1996). Lehmann (2007) demonstrated that a 298 cooperative, niche constructing behavior can be favored when it only affected 299 selection for future generations, thus reducing the potential for competition 300 among contemporary kin. The evolutionary inertia that this creates, however, 301 may ultimately work against cooperators. When public good accumulates in 302 the environment, cooperators must reduce their investment in production to re-

main competitive (Kümmerli and Brown, 2010; Dumas and Kümmerli, 2012). Cooperation that occurs facultatively, perhaps by sensing the abiotic (Bernier 305 et al., 2011; Koestler and Waters, 2014) or biotic environment (Brown and 306 Johnstone, 2001; Darch et al., 2012), are likely to be favored in these environ-307 ments. 308 In many instances of cooperation, the environment is itself a biological entity, 309 which can produce additional evolutionary feedbacks. As the host population 310 changes, so too will selection on their symbiont populations. Here, evolution-311 ary outcomes depend greatly on the degree of shared interest between the host 312 and symbiont. For example, the cooperative production of virulence factors by 313 the human pathogen P. aeruqinosa in lung infections is harmful to those with 314 cystic fibrosis (Harrison, 2007). Conversely, cooperative light production by A. 315 fischeri is vital for the survival of its host, the Hawaiian bobtail squid (Ruby, 316 1996). It was recently argued that incorporating the effects of niche construc-317 tion is critical for improving our understanding of viral evolution (Hamblin et318 al., 2014) and evolution in co-infecting parasites (Hafer and Milinski, 2015). 319 Incorporating host dynamics, co-evolution, and the feedbacks that they pro-320 duce into models is likely to be equally important for gaining an understanding 321 of how cooperative behaviors evolve in these host-symbiont settings.

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330 Figures

Figure 1

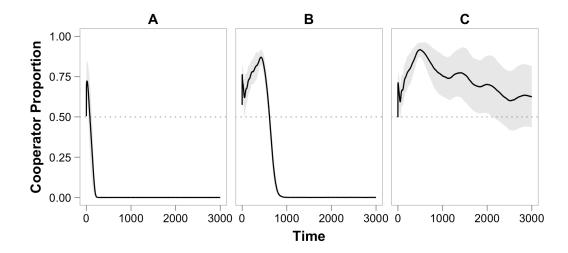


Figure 1: Adaptation, niche construction, and the evolution of cooperation. The proportion of cooperators present in the population is shown for the duration of simulations. Curves show the average among replicates, and shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals. Unless otherwise noted, parameter values used are listed in Table 1. (A) When there is no opportunity for adaptation (L, the number of adaptive loci, is zero), cooperation is quickly lost. (B) When adaptation can occur (L=5), but populations do not alter their environment (ϵ , the intensity of niche construction, is zero), cooperators temporarily rise in abundance before eventually going extinct. (C) Niche construction enables cooperation to be maintained indefinitely. After 3000 cycles, cooperation was the dominant phenotype in 13 of 18 replicate populations.

Figure 2

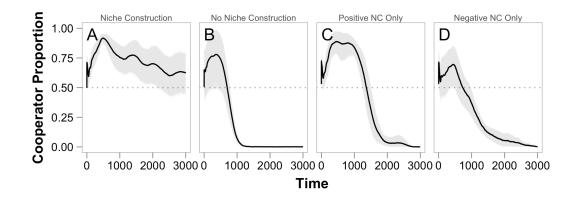


Figure 2: Niche Construction and the Evolution of Cooperation. The proportion of cooperators present in the population is shown for the duration of simulations. Curves show the average among replicates, and shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals. (A) Niche construction enables cooperation to be maintained indefinitely. In the majority of populations, cooperation remained as the dominant strategy. (B) When niche construction is removed $(\epsilon = 0)$ and the fitness benefit of adaptation is increased as compensation $(\delta = 0.6)$, cooperation is quickly lost when adapted defectors arise. (C) Positive niche construction alone can not maintain cooperation (A = 5). Here again, cooperation is driven to extinction by equally-adapted defectors. (D) However, negative niche construction alone is also not sufficient to maintain cooperation, and cooperators are rapidly lost. (TODO do we know how?)

Figure 3

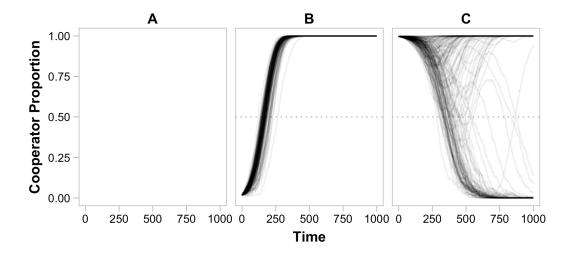


Figure 3: Fitness Effects of Mutation Accumulation by Cooperators and Defectors. Lines indicate the grand mean of cooperator (blue) and defector (red) fitness among replicate populations, while shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals. Upper and lower dotted lines indicate the maximum fitness values achievable by defectors and cooperators, respectively. (A) In the presence of niche construction, cooperators persist in the population by maintaining a greater mean fitness. (B) When selective values are increased $(\delta = 0.6)$, populations rapidly adapt. In the absence of niche construction $(\epsilon = 0)$, defectors eventually become equally adapted and surpass cooperators. At this point, cooperators are driven from the population due to the cost of cooperation. (C) With the effects of niche construction removed ($\epsilon = 0$), positive niche construction prolongs the time when cooperators are at an advantage over defectors. Once again, however, defectors eventually become equally adapted, leading to the loss of cooperation. (D) Without positive niche construction or further adaptive opportunities $(L=1, a_{max}=6)$ cooperators do not benefit from niche construction.

Figure 4

Cooperators invade defector population. Fully adapted but mismatched. Negative NC.

Figure 5

Defectors invade cooperator population. Fully adapted and matched. Role of Export.

Figure 6

Figure 6A - Effect of Public Good Benefit (Smax-Smin)

Figure 6B - Effect of Migration Rate (m)

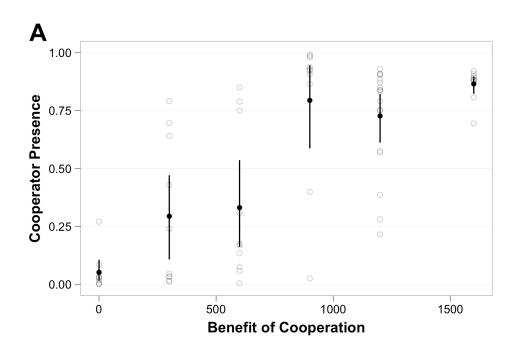


Figure 4: Cooperator Presence as a Function of Population Size and Migration Rate. Cooperator presence for each replicate population is shown as an open circle. The mean among these replicates is represented by a filled circle, and bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. (A) Cooperator presence increases proportional to increases in population size. Here, the benefit of cooperation (S_{max}) is varied (the density-dependent fitness effects of niche construction are adjusted accordingly in the model parameter ϵ). (B) Cooperator presence decreases with migration rate (m). When migration is low, cooperators can not export their niche, which limits expansion. When migration is high, the defectors immigrate into populations more quickly than cooperators can adapt.

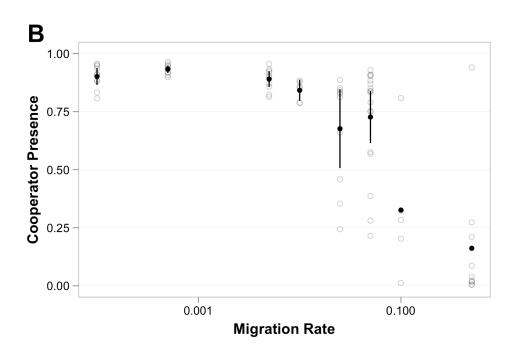


Figure 5: Will share caption with 6A

343 Tables

Table 1: Model parameters and their value

Parameter	Description	Base Value
N^2	Number of metapopulation sites	625
L	Number of adaptive loci	5
c	Fitness cost of cooperation	0.1
A	Number of alleles	6
δ	Fitness benefit, nonzero alleles	0.3
ϵ	Fitness benefit, sequential alleles	0.00015
z	Baseline fitness	1
S_{min}	Minimum population size	800
S_{max}	Maximum population size	2000
μ_a	Mutation rate (adaptation)	10^{-5}
μ_c	Mutation rate (cooperation)	10^{-5}
m	Migration rate	0.05
p_0	Initial cooperator proportion	0.5
μ_t	Mutation rate (tolerance to new environment)	10^{-5}
T	Number of simulation cycles	1000
d	Population dilution factor	0.1

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