- 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 develop an individual-based model in which populations of cooperators
- and defectors evolve and compete in a spatially-structured metapopulation (a
- 71 collection of populations). Through mutations, individuals gain adaptations to
- their environment, which increase reproductive fitness, and allow those lineages
- to rise in abundance. Migration among neighboring populations allows more
- ⁷⁴ successful lineages to spread.
- We expand upon the model described by Hammarlund et al. (2015) to allow
- 76 populations to modify their local environment. As this process occurs, envi-
- 77 ronmental changes feed back to affect selection. We perform simulations using
- 78 this model to explore how niche construction affects this adaptation process
- and whether selective feedbacks allow cooperation to be maintained.

80 Model Description

81 Individual Genotypes and Adaptation

- Each individual in a population has a genotype, which is an ordered list of L+1
- integers, or *loci* (see Table 1 for model parameters and their values). Different

values at these loci represent different alleles. A binary allele at locus L+1 determines whether that individual is a defector (0) or a cooperator (0), which carries fitness cost c. Cooperation is independent from adaptation to the environment. The first L loci are adaptive loci, and are each occupied by 0 or an integer from the set $\{1, 2, ..., A\}$. Allele 0 represents a lack of adaptation, while a non-zero allele represents one of the A possible adaptations at that locus. The presence of any of these adaptations confers a fitness benefit δ . We choose $\delta > c$, which allows a minimally adapted cooperator to recoup the cost of cooperation and gain a fitness advantage. The benefits that these adaptations engender are purely endogenous, and are not affected by the other individuals or the state of the environment.

95 Niche Construction and Selective Feedbacks

- Individual fitness is also affected by the current state of the local environment.
- 97 Here, we represent the "niche" implicitly based on the allelic states present in
- the population. As allelic states change, populations alter their environment
- 99 in different ways, creating a unique niche.
- We use a form of density dependent selection to favors individuals that better 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. As a consequence, genotypes with sequentially increasing allelic states will tend to evolve. We treat both adaptive loci and allelic states as "circular", so the selective value of an allele at locus L is affected by the allelic

composition of the population at locus 1. Similarly, the selective value of allele A at any locus increases with the number of individuals carrying allele 1 at the next locus. This circularity is represented by the function $\beta(x, X)$, which gives the integer that follows an arbitrary value x in the set $\{1, 2, ..., X\}$:

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

Here, $\operatorname{mod}_X(x)$ is the integer remainder when dividing x by X. 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 the allelic state at locus l given by $a_{g,l}$; the fitness of an individual with this genotype 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)

Thus, an individual's fitness is determined both endogenously by adaptation (δ) and exogenously by its niche (ϵ).

Because mutations occur randomly (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 benefits a population by allowing it to reach greater density. This benefit affects all individuals equally and accumulates linearly with the proportion of cooperators in the population. If p is the proportion of cooperators in a population at the beginning of a growth cycle, then that population reaches the following size:

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

During growth, individuals compete for inclusion in the resulting population.

Each individual's probability of success is determined by its fitness. 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 represents an individual's reproductive fitness relative to others in the population.

136 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 existing 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.

145 Migration

Our simulated environment consists of N^2 patches arranged as an $N \times N$ lattice, where each patch can support a population. After mutation, individuals emigrate to an adjacent patch at rate m. During each migration event, a single destination patch is randomly chosen with uniform probability from each source patch's Moore neighborhood, which is composed of the nearest patches on the lattice. Because the metapopulation lattice has boundaries, patches located on an edge have smaller neighborhoods.

153 Metapopulation Initialization and Simulation

Metapopulations are initiated in a state that follows an environmental change, which leaves most patches empty. 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. 157 For each individual, the probability of survival is μ_t , which represents the like-158 lihood that a mutation occurs that confers tolerance. Because individuals have 159 not yet adapted to this new environment, the allelic state of each individual's 160 genotype is 0 at each adaptive locus. Following initialization, simulations are 161 run for T cycles, where each discrete cycle consists of population growth, mu-162 tation, and migration. At the end of each cycle, populations are thinned to 163 allow for growth in the next cycle. Each individual persists with probability 164 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). Reported confidence intervals were estimated by bootstrapping with 1000 resamples.

172 Results

We follow the evolution of cooperation in a metapopulation consisting of populations connected by spatially-limited migration. Individuals in these populations can gain a limited number of adaptations that confer selective benefits. While the allele at an individual's cooperation locus does not directly affect

the value of alleles at adaptive loci, cooperation can have indirect effects on the process of adaptation. Specifically, because cooperation increases population 178 density, isolated cooperators experience more mutational opportunities to gain 179 adaptations. Cooperation can hitchhike along with these adaptations, which 180 compensate for the cost of cooperation. Additionally, populations after their 181 environment. Here, we explore how niche construction can favor the evolution 182 of cooperation. Our simulation environment is defined by the parameter val-183 ues listed in Table 1. Unless otherwise noted, 10 replicate simulations were 184 performed for each experiment. We quantify cooperator success using the area 185 under the cooperator proportion curve. This measure of cooperator presence 186 increases as cooperators rise in abundance or remain in the population longer. 187

Niche Construction Maintains Cooperation

Without any opportunity for adaptation (L=0), cooperators are swiftly elim-189 inated in competition with defectors (Figure 1A). Despite an initial lift due 190 to increased productivity, the cost of cooperation becomes disadvantageous as 191 migration mixes the initially isolated populations. When there are opportun-192 ties for adaptation (L=5) but no niche construction $(\epsilon=0)$, cooperators are 193 maintained transiently (Figure 1B). Here, the additional mutational oppor-194 tunities provided by their larger sizes allows cooperator populations to more 195 quickly adapt to their environment. As previously described by Hammarlund 196 et al. (2015), however, cooperation is subsequently lost as adapted defector 197 populations arise via mutation. When niche construction ins incorporated, cooperation persists (Figure 1C).

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-203 formed simulations in which the selective effects of niche construction were 204 removed ($\epsilon = 0$), and we instead increased the fitness benefits conferred by 205 adaptation ($\delta = 0.6$). Here, we are consevative by lifting the selective value of 206 exogenous adaptation by the maximum value possible from niche construction. 207 We find that higher selective values do not provide a significant increase in 208 cooperator presence (Figure 2B). As shown in Figure 3, cooperators gain adap-209 tations more quickly than defectors, which provides a fitness advantage. How-210 ever, the cost of cooperation puts defectors at an advantage once these popu-211 lations become fully adapted. 212

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 222 state 2 at locus 2 will be be beneficial, because it follows allelic state 1 at 223 locus 1. However, due to the circular effects, allelic state 1 at locus 1 will be deleterious relative to allelic state 3 at locus 1. Yet, fixation for genotype (3, 2) does not solve the problem, because a mutant (3,1) is fitter, and so on. We first focus on the effects of positive niche construction by removing the 227 allelic conflict that leads to negative niche construction ($L=5,\,A=5$). In 228 the absence of this conflict, cooperator presence is significantly increased (Fig-229 ure 2C). Within these environments, we find that positive niche construction 230 prolongs the fitness advantage that cooperators have over defectors (Figure 231 3C). 232

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

245 How Cooperation Fuels all of this

To directly explore how the increase in population size affects evolutionary outcomes, we vary the maximum size that a population can reach $(S_{max}, \text{ see})$ Equation 4). Figure 6A shows the result of these simulations. (TODO de-248 scription of results) 249 To address how migration affects the evolutionary process in this system, we 250 vary the rate at which migration occurs (m). As seen in Figure 6B, cooperation 251 decreases as migration rate increases. This is likely because migration defines 252 the spatial structuring in this system. As migration increases, the population 253 becomes more like a well-mixed system, where defectors are better able to 254 exploit the benefits of cooperation (Griffin et al., 2004; Kümmerli et al., 2009). 255 # Discussion

Despite their negative effects, deleterious traits can rise in abundance due to genetic linkage with other traits that are strongly favored by selection (May-258 nard Smith and Haigh, 1974). In a process termed the "Hankshaw effect", 259 Hammarlund et al. (2015) recently demonstrated that cooperative behaviors 260 can prolong their existence by actively increasing their likelihood of hitchhik-261 ing with a beneficial trait. While this process does favor cooperation in the short term, it eventually reaches a dead end. When the opportunities for 263 adaptation are exhausted, and cooperators can no longer hitchhike, they face 264 extinction. In this work, we have considered whether niche construction can 265 maintain cooperation indefinitely. 266

We demonstrate that when niche construction occurs, cooperation can indeed 267 persist (Figure 1C). But what aspects of niche construction produce this re-268 sult? In our model, niche construction introduces additional selective effects 269 that could influence the evolutionary process. However, simply raising the 270 selective benefits provided by adaptations does not significantly increase co-271 operator presence (Figure 2B), and indicates that niche construction plays an 272 important role. Although cooperators benefit greatly from positive niche con-273 struction, it does not fully explain our results (Figure 2C). Indeed, despite an 274 initial increase in abundance, cooperators are eventually driven to extinction 275 when environmental change produces only positive fitness effects. As with the Hankshaw effect, adaption eventually slows, allowing defectors to outcompete cooperators (Figure 3C). While it does not benefit cooperation when alone (Figure 3E), negative niche construction acts to prevent this stasis. Combined, we find that both positive and negative niche construction are required to main

281 cooperation.

When successful, we observe that populations do not reach the maximum possible fitness (Figure 3A). Although cooperation is the focus of this study, it 283 can be seen as deleterious. Previous work has shown that niche construction 284 can favor deleterious alleles (Laland et al., 1996, 1999). Similarly here, coop-285 eration is maintained in the presence of niche construction, but lost otherwise. 286 Van Dyken and Wade (2012) showed that when two cooperative behaviors 287 co-evolve and niche construction feedbacks benefit the other type, niche con-288 struction can increasingly favor these traits, which were otherwise disfavored 289 when alone. 290 By their very nature, public goods benefit populations by making their envi-291 ronment more hospitable (West et al., 2007a). For example, bacteria produce 292 a host of extracellular products that find soluble iron (Griffin et al., 2004), 293 digest large proteins (Diggle et al., 2007; Darch et al., 2012), and reduce the risk of predation (Cosson et al., 2002). While many studies have explored how 295 the environment affects the evolution of cooperative behaviors such as these, relatively few have examined how those behaviors affect the environment and how the resulting feedbacks influence evolutionary trajectories. 298 In our model, the environmental state was implicitly modeled, and depended 299

In our model, the environmental state was implicitly modeled, and depended solely on the current state of the population. In natural settings, however, the timescales at which environments are modified and reproduction are likely to be decoupled. For example, a multitude of factors including protein durability (Brown and Taddei, 2007; Kümmerli and Brown, 2010), diffusion (Allison,

2005; Driscoll and Pepper, 2010), and resource availability (Zhang and Rainey, 304 2013; Ghoul et al., 2014) influence both the rate and the degree to which public 305 goods alter the environment. These factors are likely to influence evolution-306 ary trajectories (Laland et al., 1996). Lehmann (2007) demonstrated that a 307 cooperative, niche constructing behavior can be favored when it only affected 308 selection for future generations, thus reducing the potential for competition among contemporary kin. The evolutionary inertia that this creates, however, 310 may ultimately work against cooperators. When public good accumulates in 311 the environment, cooperators must reduce their investment in production to re-312 main competitive (Kümmerli and Brown, 2010; Dumas and Kümmerli, 2012). 313 Cooperation that occurs facultatively, perhaps by sensing the abiotic (Bernier 314 et al., 2011; Koestler and Waters, 2014) or biotic environment (Brown and 315 Johnstone, 2001; Darch et al., 2012), are likely to be favored in these environ-316 ments. 317

In many instances of cooperation, the environment is itself a biological entity, 318 which can produce additional evolutionary feedbacks. As the host population 319 changes, so too will selection on their symbiont populations. Here, evolution-320 ary outcomes depend greatly on the degree of shared interest between the host 321 and symbiont. For example, the cooperative production of virulence factors by 322 the human pathogen P. aeruqinosa in lung infections is harmful to those with 323 cystic fibrosis (Harrison, 2007). Conversely, cooperative light production by A. fischeri is vital for the survival of its host, the Hawaiian bobtail squid (Ruby, 1996). It was recently argued that incorporating the effects of niche construction is critical for improving our understanding of viral evolution (Hamblin et

328 al., 2014) and evolution in co-infecting parasites (Hafer and Milinski, 2015).
329 Incorporating host dynamics, co-evolution, and the feedbacks that they pro330 duce into models is likely to be equally important for gaining an understanding
331 of how cooperative behaviors evolve in these host-symbiont settings.

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339 Figures

Figure 1

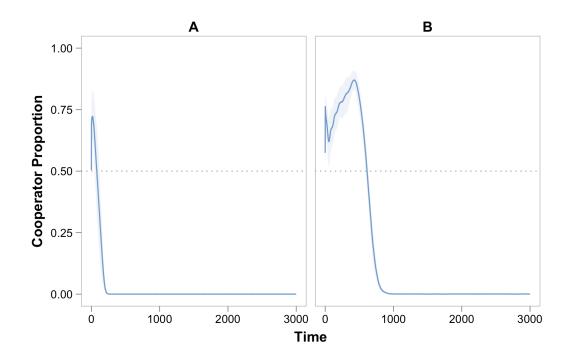


Figure 1: Adaptation, Hitchhiking, and the Evolution of Cooperation. The proportion of cooperators present in the population is shown for the duration of simulations. Curves show the average among replicate populations, and shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals. Unless otherwise noted, parameter values are listed in Table 1. (A) Without any opportunity to adapt (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 $(\epsilon, \text{the intensity of niche construction, is zero)}$, cooperation hitchhikes along with adaptions, allowing cooperators to temporarily rise in abundance before eventually going extinct.

Figure 2

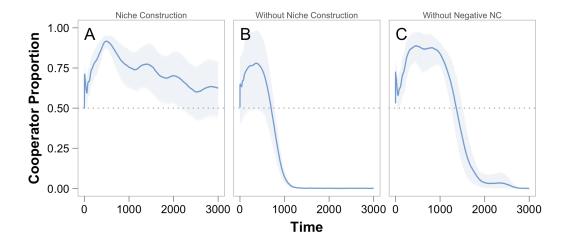


Figure 2: Niche Construction and the Evolution of Cooperation. The proportion of cooperators present in the population is shown for the duration of simulations. Curves show the average among replicate populations, and shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals. (A) Niche construction enables cooperation to be maintained indefinitely. In the majority of populations, cooperation remained as the dominant strategy. (B) When niche construction is removed and the fitness benefit of adaptation is increased as compensation ($\epsilon = 0, \delta = 0.6$), adapted defectors arise and drive cooperators to extinction. (C) Without negative niche construction, cooperation is not maintained (A = 5). Here again, cooperators are at a selective disadvantage against equally-adapted defectors.

Figure 3

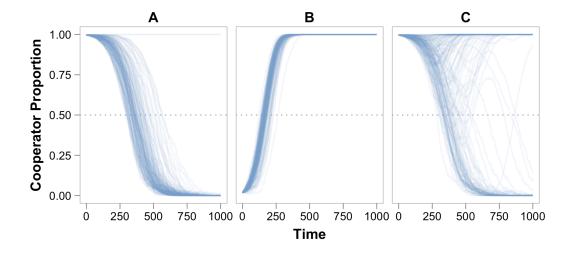


Figure 3: Niche Construction and Invasion. Curves trace the proportion of cooperators present in the population for the duration of 160 replicate simulations. These experiments examine whether a strategy initiated at a single population in the center of the metapopulation lattice $(N^2 = 121)$ can invade. Unless otherwise noted, we disable mutations $(\mu_a = 0, \mu_c = 0)$ to focus on how invasion depends on particular combinations of genotypes. (A) When cooperators and defectors are matched (i.e., genotypes [1,2,3,4,5]) and adaptation can not occur, defectors quickly drive cooperators to extinction due to the cost of cooperation. Defectors were stochastically eliminated in 2 replicate populations. (B) However, the adaptive opportunities produced by negative niche construction and density dependence enable an adapted cooperator (genotype [1,2,3,4,6]) to invade a population of defectors. (C) These same adaptive opportunities can allow cooperators to resist invasion by initially-matching defectors, which arise via mutation and remain a constant threat. Here, cooperation persisted in 91 populations ($\mu_a = 0.00005$, the base mutation rate).

Figure 4

Cooperators invade defector population. Fully adapted but mismatched. Neg-

ative 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)

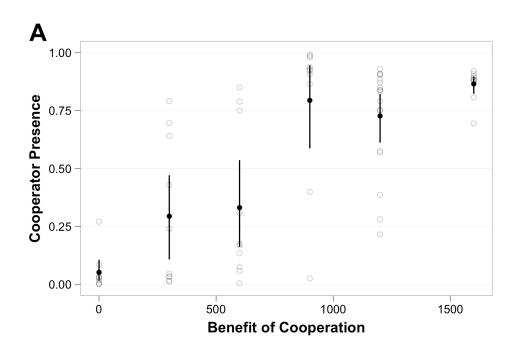


Figure 4: Cooperator Presence as a Function of Population Size and Migration Rate. Cooperator presence for each replicate population is shown as an open circle. The mean among these replicates is represented by a filled circle, and bars indicate 95% confidence intervals. (A) Cooperator presence increases 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.

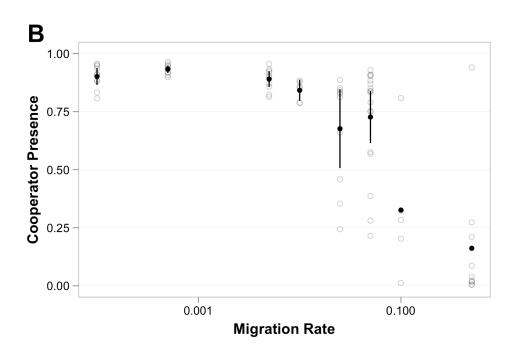


Figure 5: Will share caption with 6A

Tables

Table 1: Model parameters and their value

| Parameter | Description | Base Value |
|----------------|--|------------|
| \overline{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} |
| N^2 | Number of metapopulation sites | 625 |
| m | Migration rate | 0.05 |
| p_0 | Initial cooperator proportion | 0.5 |
| μ_t | Mutation rate (tolerance to new environment) | 10^{-5} |
| d | Population dilution factor | 0.1 |
| T | Number of simulation cycles | 1000 |

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