Negative Niche Construction Favors the

Evolution of Cooperation

3

4 Abstract

5 TODO

6 Introduction

- ⁷ Cooperative behaviors are common across all branches of the tree of life. In-
- 8 sects divide labor within their colonies, plants and soil bacteria exchange es-
- 9 sential nutrients, birds care for others' young, and the trillions of cells in the
- human body coordinate to provide vital functions. Each instance of cooper-
- 11 ation presents an evolutionary challenge: How can individuals 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 abundance at the expense of
- others, eventually driving cooperators—and perhaps the entire population—to
- 15 extinction.

Several factors can prevent this tragedy of the commons (Hamilton, 1964; Nowak, 2006; West et al., 2007b). One such 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 through association with alleles encoding self-benefitting traits (Asfahl et al., 2015). In these cases, the alleles may provide private benefits that are completely inde-27 pendent from the public benefits of cooperation. In an asexual population of 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 al., 2012). The tragedy of the commons can be deferred if a coop-31 erator, by chance, wins the adaptive race. Hammarlund et al. (2015) recently demonstrated that in spatially-structured populations, the "Hankshaw effect" can give cooperators a substantial leg up on defectors in an adaptive race. When cooperation increases local population density, the likelihood of acquiring beneficial mutations is also increased. The cooperative trait can rise in abundance by hitchhiking along with these adaptations. Nevertheless, this advantage is fleeting. As soon as the opportunities for adaptation are exhausted, cooperators are once again at a selective disadvantage against equally-adapted defectors that arise via mutation. However,
Hammarlund et al. (2015) demonstrated that cooperation can be maintained
indefinitely when frequent environmental changes produce a steady stream of
new adaptive opportunities. Although organisms typically find themselves in
dynamic environments, the nature and frequency of these changes might not
ensure long-term cooperator survival.

Importantly, however, organisms do not simply play passive roles in environmental change and in evolution. Through their activities, their interactions
with others, and even their death, organisms constantly modify their environ-

mental change and in evolution. Through their activities, their interactions with others, and even their death, organisms constantly modify their environment. These changes can produce evolutionary feedback loops in which environmental change alters selection, which, in turn, alters the distribution of phenotypes and their corresponding influence on the environment (Odling-Smee et al., 2003). Because of these feedback loops, populations may find themselves continually chasing beneficial mutations as their adaptive land-scape perpetually shifts beneath them.

Here, we explore whether the selective feedbacks that result from niche construction can prolong cooperation. We build upon the model presented by Hammarlund et al. (2015) to allow populations to modify their local environments in ways that affect fitness. We first use this model to address whether niche construction can extend the Hankshaw effect, allowing cooperation to continue to hitchhike as populations continually adapt. We then focus on how niche construction influences outcomes when isolated cooperator populations encounter populations of defectors, either through migration or through mutations that inevitably produce defectors that share the same adaptations. Finally, niche construction has frequently been shown to increase diversity (???). We explore whether this diversity helps or hinders the evolution of cooperation.

67 Methods

We develop an individual-based model in which populations of cooperators and defectors evolve and compete in a spatially-structured metapopulation (a 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 successful lineages to spread.

We expand upon the model described by Hammarlund et al. (2015) to allow populations to modify their local environment. As this process occurs, environmental changes feed back to affect selection. We perform simulations using this model to explore how niche construction affects this adaptation process and whether selective feedbacks allow cooperation to be maintained.

79 Model Description

${}_{80}$ 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 cooperator (1), which carries fitness cost c, or a defector (0). 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. Adaptations confer a fitness benefit δ , regardless of which non-zero allele is present. 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.

94 Niche Construction and Selective Feedbacks

- Individual fitness is also affected by the current state of the local environment.
- ₉₆ Here, we represent the "niche" implicitly based on the allelic states present in
- 97 the population. As allelic states change, populations alter their environment
- 98 in different ways, creating a unique niche.
- We use a form of density dependent selection to favor 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

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. The selective value of adaptive allele a at locus l is increased by ϵ for each individual in the population that has allele $\beta(a,A)$ at locus $\beta(l,L)$. Thus, ϵ 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 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.

135 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.

144 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 the periphery have smaller neighborhoods.

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 all populations to a bottleneck. 156 For each individual, the probability of survival is μ_t , which represents the like-157 lihood that tolerance to the new environmental conditions arises via mutation. 158 Because individuals have not yet adapted to this new environment, the allelic 159 state of each individual's genotype is 0 at each adaptive locus. Following ini-160 tialization, simulations are run for T cycles, where each discrete cycle consists 161 of population growth, mutation, and migration. At the end of each cycle, pop-162 ulations are thinned to allow for growth in the next cycle. Each individual 163 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). Reported confidence intervals were estimated by bootstrapping with 1000 resamples.

171 Results

Using the model described in the previous section, we perform simulations that follow the evolution of cooperation in a metapopulation consisting of populations connected by spatially-limited migration. Individuals compete in these populations by gaining a limited number of adaptations that confer fitness benefits. While cooperation does not directly affect the selective value of
these adaptations, cooperation can have indirect effects on the adaptive process. Specifically, cooperation increases population density. As a result, larger
populations of cooperators experience more mutational opportunities to gain
adaptations. Cooperation can hitchhike along with these adaptations, which
compensate for the cost of cooperation. During this process, populations alter
their local environments, which, in turn, influences selection. Here, we explore
how niche construction affects the evolution of cooperation in the simulation
environment defined by the parameter values listed in Table 1.

185 Cooperation Persists with Niche Construction

Without any opportunity for adaptation (L=0), cooperators are swiftly elim-186 inated in competition with defectors (Figure 1A). Despite an initial lift in 187 cooperator abundance due to increased productivity, the cost of cooperation 188 becomes disadvantageous as migration mixes the initially isolated populations. 189 When there are opportunities for adaptation (L=5) but no niche construction 190 $(\epsilon = 0)$, cooperators are maintained transiently (Figure 1B). Here, larger coop-191 erator populations can more quickly adapt to their environment. As previously 192 described by Hammarlund et al. (2015), however, cooperation is subsequently 193 lost once populations become fully adapted to their environment. Once this 194 has occurred, adapted defectors that arise via mutation at the cooperation 195 locus have a selective advantage and drive cooperators from the population. 196 However, when niche construction creates selective feedbacks, cooperation per-197

sists in 13 of 18 replicate populations (Figure 2A).

Fitness Increases Alone do not Support Persisting Cooperation

In the model, both adaptation and niche construction contribute to an individual's fitness. To determine whether cooperation is maintained solely due to the larger selective values that result from the contributions of niche construction (ϵ) , we performed simulations in which these contributions were removed $(\epsilon = 0)$, and we instead increased the fitness benefits conferred by adaptation $(\delta = 0.6)$. In doing so, we conservatively mimic the selective effects of niche construction, as fitness benefits of this magnitude would only be given for sequential allelic states that are fixed in full populations. We find that simply increasing selective values does not allow cooperators to persist (Figure 2B).

Negative Niche Construction is Critical to Cooperator Persistence

Negative niche construction can occur in our model due to the selection for sequentially-increasing allelic states and the circular arrangement of these alleles. When this occurs, adaptations at one locus reduce the selective effects at another locus, and thus negatively affect fitness. This occurs when when the genome length (L) is not evenly divided by the number of adaptive alleles (A), which makes it impossible to evolve sequentially increasing allelic states.

This allelic conflict exists with our base parameter values (Table 1), where 218 L=5 and A=6. Here, a mutation that produces genotype [1,2,3,4,6] is 219 beneficial in a population where [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] has fixed, as a 6 at the last locus 220 precedes the 1 at the first locus. However, once [1, 2, 3, 4, 6] fixes, genotype 221 [1, 2, 3, 5, 6] will be favored, and so on. When we remove negative niche con-222 struction (L = 5, A = 5), cooperators are again driven to extinction after 223 an initial lift in abundance (Figure 2C). Here we observe that because niche 224 construction presents additional opportunities for hitchhiking, the Hankshaw 225 effect extends the initial lift in cooperation. However, once a genotype with 226 sequential allelic states fixes, cooperation... 227

Selective Feedbacks Limit Defector Invasion

The adaptation resulting from selective feedbacks can limit invasion by de-229 fectors, which arise either through immigration from neighboring patches or 230 through mutation from a cooperator ancestor. The challenge is particularly 231 threatening, as they are equally adapted, yet do not incur the cost of coopera-232 tion. When homologous defectors (i.e., defectors with identical adaptive loci) 233 are introduced as a single population in the center of an 11x11 metapopulation 234 of cooperators, they quickly spread (Figure 3A). However, when resident co-235 operators can adapt and respond to defector invasion, the situation improves 236 dramatically, allowing cooperation to evade defector invasion in 91 of 160 repli-237 cate simulations (57%; Figure 3B). Figure 4 depicts one such instance where 238 cooperators gained an adaptation that stopped and eliminated invading de-239

fectors. We further highlight this process in Figure 3C, where an adapted cooperator genotype can rapidly invade a population of defectors.

Diversity Hampers the Evolution of Cooperation

TODO: defector can invade a diverse population of cooperators, while adaptation to a matching defector can't spread to stop invasion.

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-247 nard Smith and Haigh, 1974). In a process termed the "Hankshaw effect", 248 Hammarlund et al. (2015) recently demonstrated that cooperative behaviors 249 can prolong their existence by actively increasing their likelihood of hitchhiking 250 with a beneficial trait. While this process does favor cooperation in the short 251 term, it eventually reaches a dead end; when the opportunities for adaptation 252 are exhausted, and cooperators can no longer hitchhike, they face extinction. 253 In this work, we have considered whether niche construction can maintain cooperation indefinitely. When niche construction occurs, cooperation can indeed persist (Figure 2A). In 256 our model, niche construction introduces additional selective effects that could 257 influence the evolutionary process, leading to a more pronounced Hankshaw 258 effect. However, simply raising the selective benefits provided by adaptations

does not prolong cooperation (Figure 2B), and indicates that niche construction plays an important role.

We find that cooperator success is due to niche construction. Further, we find that it is specifically negative niche construction that maintains cooperation (Figure 2C). Without adaptive opportunities, adaptation eventually slows. 264 Once this occurs, cooperators face the threat of invasion by defectors that arise 265 de novo through mutation. Since these defectors are equally adapted but do not bear the cost of cooperation, they are favored by selection, and quickly 267 drive cooperators to extinction. By reducing fitness, negative niche construc-268 tion creates adaptive opportunities. These opportunities can allow cooperators 269 to resist invasion by defectors, even when defectors are equally adapted (Figure 270 3B). Here we observe another facet of the Hankshaw effect: because popula-271 tions of cooperators are larger, they are better able to respond to the adaptive 272 opportunities that result from negative niche construction. 273

²⁷⁴ TODO: diversity results TODO: references about diversity

In our model, cooperation and niche construction are orthogonal, which allows us to focus on hitchhiking. However, the form of cooperation used in this model could itself be seen as a niche constructing behavior. Explicitly modeling this cooperative behavior, which is akin to the production of public goods, would likely yield additional insights into the relationship between cooperation and niche construction. For example, previous work has shown that niche construction can favor deleterious alleles (Laland *et al.*, 1996, 1999). Cooperation, especially in competition against equally-adapted defectors, can

be considered deleterious, so introducing selective feedbacks from cooperation could further bolster cooperation. 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. Arguably, this can be viewed as another instance of hitchhiking: the maladaptive form of cooperation is maintained by association with the adaptive form. However, negative niche construction then reverses these roles and perpetuates the cycle.

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 scavage soluble iron (Griffin et al., 2004), 293 digest large proteins (Diggle et al., 2007; Darch et al., 2012), and reduce the 294 risk of predation (Cosson et al., 2002). While many studies have explored 295 how the environment affects the evolution of cooperative behaviors such as 296 the production of these public goods, relatively few have examined how the 297 resulting selective feedbacks influence evolution as public goods modify the 298 environment. In these instances, environmental changes are likely to occur 299 on different timescales than reproduction. These differences can have pro-300 found effects. For example, a multitude of factors including protein durabil-301 ity (Brown and Taddei, 2007; Kümmerli and Brown, 2010), diffusion (Allison, 302 2005; Driscoll and Pepper, 2010), and resource availability (Zhang and Rainey, 303 2013; Ghoul et al., 2014) influence both the rate and the degree to which public 304 goods alter the environment. Lehmann (2007) demonstrated that cooperative, niche constructing behaviors can be favored when they affect selection for

future generations. When this occurs, conflict among contemporary kin is reduced. The evolutionary inertia that this creates, however, may ultimately 308 work against cooperators. When public goods accumulate in the environment, 309 cooperators must decrease production to remain competitive (Kümmerli and 310 Brown, 2010; Dumas and Kümmerli, 2012). This favors cooperation that oc-311 curs facultatively, perhaps by sensing the abiotic (Bernier et al., 2011; Koestler and Waters, 2014) or biotic environment (Brown and Johnstone, 2001; Darch 313 et al., 2012). In many instances of cooperation, the environment is itself a biological entity, 315 which can produce additional evolutionary feedbacks. As the host population 316 changes, so too does selection on their symbiont populations. Here, evolution-317 ary outcomes depend greatly on the degree of shared interest between the host 318 and symbiont. For example, the cooperative production of virulence factors by 319 the human pathogen P. aeruqinosa in lung infections is harmful to hosts with 320 cystic fibrosis (Harrison, 2007). Conversely, cooperative light production by A. 321 fischeri is vital for the survival of its host, the Hawaiian bobtail squid (Ruby, 322 1996). It was recently argued that incorporating the effects of niche construc-323

al., 2014) and evolution in co-infecting parasites (Hafer and Milinski, 2015).

Incorporating host dynamics, co-evolution, and the feedbacks that they produce into models is likely to be equally important for gaining an understanding

of how cooperative behaviors evolve in these host-symbiont settings.

tion is critical for improving our understanding of viral evolution (Hamblin et

324

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336 Figures

Figure 1

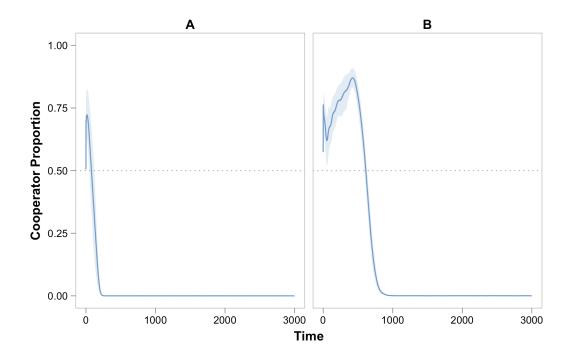


Figure 1: Adaptation, Hitchhiking, and the Evolution of Cooperation. The proportion of cooperators present in the population is shown for the duration of simulations. Curves show the average among replicate populations, and shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals. Unless otherwise noted, parameter 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

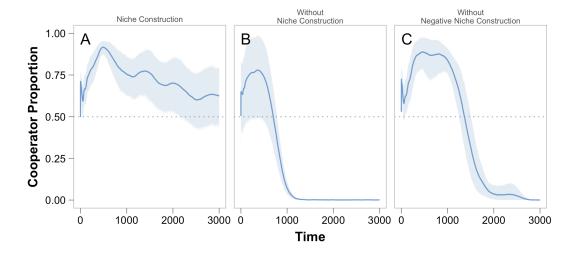


Figure 2: Niche Construction and the Evolution of Cooperation. The proportion of cooperators present in the population is shown for the duration of simulations. Curves show the average among replicate populations, and shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals. (A) Niche construction enables cooperation to be maintained indefinitely. In the majority of populations (13/18), cooperation remained 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 that arise via mutation.

Figure 3

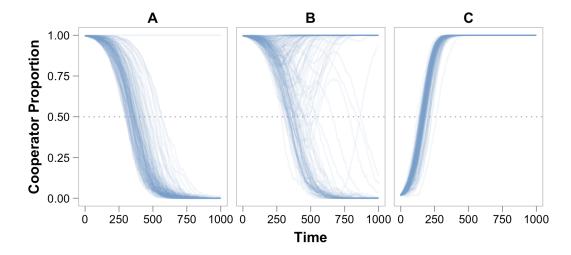


Figure 3: Niche Construction and Invasion. Curves trace the proportion of cooperators present in the population for the duration of 160 replicate simulations (T=1000). These experiments examine whether a rare cooperator or defector strategy can invade when initiated at a single population in the center of the metapopulation lattice ($N^2 = 121$). Unless otherwise noted, mutations ($\mu_a = 0, \mu_c = 0$) are disabled in these ecological simulations to focus on the dynamics of invasion. This limitation is removed in the results shown in Figure SX. (A) When cooperators and defectors are matched (i.e., genotypes [1,2,3,4,5]) and adaptation cannot occur, rare defectors quickly invade and 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 can allow cooperators to resist invasion by initially-matching defectors. Here, cooperation persisted in the majority of populations ($\mu_a = 0.00005$, the base mutation rate). (C) Here we demonstrate that these adaptations can enable an adapted cooperator (genotype [1,2,3,4,6]) to displace a population of defectors when defectors cannot arise or adapt via mutation.

Figure f 4

TODO: snapshots of cooperators adapting to thwart defector invasion

Figure 5

TODO: A: defector invading diverse C population, B: Adapted cooperators

cannot spread to resist defector invasion.

345 Supplemental Figure 1

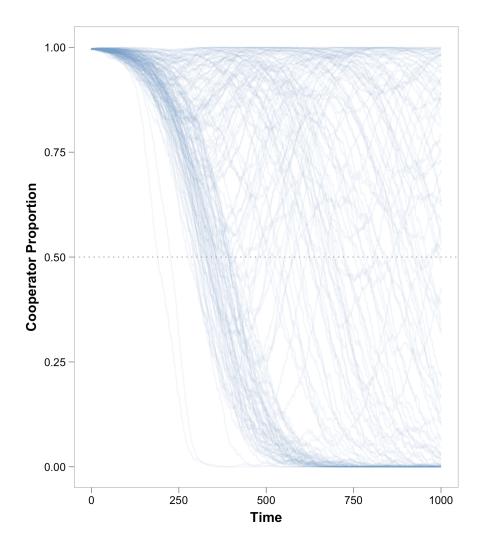


Figure S1: **Defector Invasion with Mutations.** With mutations occurring both at the adaptive loci and the cooperation locus (Z), cooperation remains the dominant strategy in 58 replicate simulations. Curves trace the proportion of cooperators present in the population for the duration of 160 replicate simulations (T=1000)

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	3000

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