

Non-Vertical Cultural Transmission, Assortment, and the Evolution of Cooperation

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September 14, 2020

Abstract

We study the cultural evolution of cooperation under vertical, horizontal, and oblique transmission. Conditions are found for fixation and coexistence of cooperation and defection. We find that the evolution of cooperation is facilitated by horizontal transmission, especially when there is an association between cooperation and transmission, and that the effect of oblique transmission depends on the bias in horizontal transmission. Interestingly, stable coexistence of cooperation and defection can occur. A spatial model is constructed and compared to results from an unstructured model. Comparisons are drawn with Hamilton's rule and the concepts of relatedness and assortment.

Introduction

Cooperative behavior can reduce an individual's fitness and increase the fitness of its conspecifics or competitors (Axelrod and Hamilton, 1981). Nevertheless, cooperative behavior appears to occur in many non-human animals (Dugatkin, 1997), including primates (Jaeggi and Gurven, 2013), rats (Rice and Gainer, 1962), birds (Stacey and Koenig, 1990; Krams et al., 2008), and lizards (Sinnero et al., 2006). Evolution of cooperative behavior remains an important conundrum in evolutionary biology.

Since the work of Hamilton (1964) and Axelrod and Hamilton (1981), theories for the evolution of cooperative and altruistic behaviors have been intertwined often under the rubric of *kin selection*. Kin selection theory posits that natural selection is more likely to favor cooperation between more closely related individuals. The importance of *relatedness* to the evolution of cooperation and altruism was demonstrated by Hamilton (1964), who showed that an allele that determines cooperative behavior will increase in frequency if the reproductive cost to the actor that cooperates, c , is less than the benefit to the recipient, b , times the relatedness, r , between the recipient and the actor. This condition is known as *Hamilton's rule*:

$$c < b \cdot r, \quad (1)$$

where the relatedness coefficient r measures the probability that an allele sampled from the cooperator is identical by descent to one at the same locus in the recipient.

Eshel and Cavalli-Sforza (1982) studied a related model for the evolution of cooperative behavior. Their model included *assortative meeting*, or non-random encounters, where a fraction m of individuals in the population each interact with an individual of the same phenotype, and a fraction $1 - m$ interacts with a randomly chosen individual. Such assortative meeting may be due, for example, to population structure or active partner choice. In their model, cooperative behavior can evolve if¹ (Eshel and Cavalli-Sforza, 1982, eq. 3.2)

$$c < b \cdot m, \quad (2)$$

where b and c are the benefit and cost of cooperation. Here m in inequality 2 takes the role of the relatedness coefficient r in inequality 1.

The role of assortment in the evolution of altruism was emphasized by Fletcher and Doebeli (2009). They found that in a *public-goods* game, altruism will evolve if cooperative individuals experience more cooperation, on average, than defecting individuals, and “thus, the evolution of altruism requires (positive) assortment between focal *cooperative* players and cooperative acts in their interaction environment.” With some change in parameters, this condition is summarized by (Fletcher and Doebeli, 2009, eq. 2.3)

$$c < b \cdot (p_C - p_D), \quad (3)$$

where p_C is the probability that a cooperator receives help, and p_D is the probability that a defector receives help.² See Bijma and Aanen (2010) for treatment of non-public-goods games.

In this paper we study the evolution of a cooperative behavior that is subject to *cultural transmission*, which allows an individual to acquire attitudes or behavioral traits from other individuals in its social group through imitation, learning, or other modes of communication (Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman, 1981; Richerson and Boyd, 2008). Feldman et al. (1985) introduced the first model for the evolution of altruism by cultural transmission. They demonstrated that if the fidelity of cultural transmission of

¹In an extended model, which allows an individual to encounter N individuals before choosing a partner, the righthand side is multiplied by $E[N]$, the expected number of encounters (Eshel and Cavalli-Sforza, 1982, eq. 4.6).

²inequality 3 generalizes inequality 1 and inequality 2 by substituting $e_C = r + p$, $e_D = p$ and $e_C = m + (1 - m)p$, $e_D = (1 - m)p$, respectively, where p is the frequency of cooperators.

60 altruism is φ , then the condition for evolution of altruism in the case of sib-to-sib altruism is (Feldman
et al., 1985, Eq. 16)

$$62 \quad c < b \cdot \varphi - \frac{1 - \varphi}{\varphi}. \quad (4)$$

In inequality 4, φ takes the role of relatedness (r in inequality 1) or assortment (m in inequality 2),
64 but the effective benefit $b \cdot \varphi$ is further reduced by $(1 - \varphi)/\varphi$. This shows that under a combination
of genetic and cultural transmission, the condition for the evolutionary success of altruism entails a
66 modification of Hamilton's rule (inequality 1).

Cultural transmission may be either viewed as vertical, horizontal or oblique: vertical transmission
68 occurs between parents and offspring, horizontal transmission occurs between individuals from the
same generation, and oblique transmission occurs to offspring from the generation to which their
70 parents belong (i.e. from non-parental adults). Evolution under either of these transmission models
can be more rapid than under pure vertical transmission (Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman, 1981; Lycett
72 and Gowlett, 2008; Ram et al., 2018). Both Woodcock (2006) and Lewin-Epstein et al. (2017)
demonstrated that non-vertical transmission can help explain the evolution of cooperative behavior
74 (the former using simulations with cultural transmission, the latter using a model where cooperation is
mediated by microbes that manipulate their host's behavior.) Some of the analyses by Lewin-Epstein
76 et al. (2017) can be applied to cultural transmission, because models of cultural transmission are
mathematically similar to those for transmission of infectious diseases (Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman,
78 1981).

Here, we study cultural-evolution models of cooperation that include both vertical and non-vertical
80 transmission. We investigate these models using mathematical analysis and simulations. In our
models behavioral changes are mediated by cultural transmission that can occur specifically during
82 social interactions. For instance, there may be an association between the choice of partner for social
interaction and the choice of partner for cultural transmission. As another example, when an individual
84 interacts with an individual of a different phenotype, this exposure to a different phenotype may lead
it to learn or convert its phenotype. Our results demonstrate that cultural transmission can enhance
86 the evolution of cooperation even when genetic transmission cannot, partly because it facilitates the
generation of assortment (Fletcher and Doebeli, 2009), and partly because non-vertical transmission
88 can protect traits from the effect of natural selection (Ram et al., 2018). This further emphasizes that
treatment of cooperation as a cultural trait, rather than a genetic one, can lead to a better understanding
90 of its evolutionary dynamics.

Models

92 Consider a very large population whose members are characterized by their phenotype ϕ , which can
be of two types, $\phi = A$ for cooperators or $\phi = B$ for defectors. An offspring inherits its phenotype
94 from its parent via vertical transmission with probability v or from a random individual in the parental
population via oblique transmission with probability $(1 - v)$. Following Ram et al. (2018), given that
96 the parent phenotype is ϕ and assuming uni-parental inheritance, the conditional probability that the
phenotype ϕ' of the offspring is A is

$$98 \quad P(\phi' = A \mid \phi) = \begin{cases} v + (1 - v)p, & \text{if } \phi = A \\ (1 - v)p, & \text{if } \phi = B \end{cases}, \quad (5)$$

where $p = P(\phi = A)$ is the frequency of A among all adults in the parental generation.

100 Not all adults become parents due to natural selection, and we denote the frequency of phenotype A
among parents by \tilde{p} . Therefore, the frequency \hat{p} of phenotype A among juveniles (after selection and
102 vertical and oblique transmission) is

$$\begin{aligned}\hat{p} &= \tilde{p}[v + (1 - v)p] + (1 - \tilde{p})[(1 - v)p] \\ &= v\tilde{p} + (1 - v)p.\end{aligned}\tag{6}$$

104 Individuals are assumed to interact according to a *prisoner's dilemma*. Specifically, individuals
interact in pairs; a cooperator suffers a fitness cost $0 < c < 1$, and its partner gains a fitness benefit
106 b , where we assume $c < b$. Table 1 shows the payoff matrix, i.e. the fitness of an individual with
phenotype ϕ_1 when interacting with a partner of phenotype ϕ_2 .

	$\phi_2 = A$	$\phi_2 = B$
$\phi_1 = A$	$1 + b - c$	$1 - c$
$\phi_1 = B$	$1 + b$	1

Table 1: Payoff matrix for prisoner's dilemma. The fitness of phenotype ϕ_1 when interacting with
phenotype ϕ_2 . A is a cooperative phenotype, B is a defector phenotype, b is the benefit gained by an
individual interacting with a cooperator, and c is the cost of cooperation. $b > c > 0$.

108 Social interactions occur randomly: two juvenile individuals with phenotype A interact with probability
 \hat{p}^2 , two juveniles with phenotype B interact with probability $(1 - \hat{p})^2$, and two juveniles with different
110 phenotypes interact with probability $2\hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})$.

Horizontal cultural transmission occurs between pairs of individuals from the same generation. It
112 occurs between social interaction partners with probability α , or between a random pair with prob-
ability $1 - \alpha$ (see Figure 1). The social association α is therefore the fraction of population that
114 receives (horizontal transmission) from the social interaction partner, and $1 - \alpha$ receives randomly.
Horizontal transmission is not always successful, as one partner may reject the other's phenotype. The
116 probability for successful horizontal transmission of phenotypes A and B are T_A and T_B , respectively
(Table 2).

118 Therefore, the frequency p' of phenotype A among adults in the next generation, after horizontal

Phenotype ϕ_1	Phenotype ϕ_2	Frequency	Fitness of ϕ_1	$P(\phi_1 = A)$ via horizontal transmission:	
				from partner, α	from population, $(1 - \alpha)$
A	A	\hat{p}^2	$1 + b - c$	1	$\hat{p} + (1 - \hat{p})(1 - T_B)$
A	B	$\hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})$	$1 - c$	$1 - T_B$	$\hat{p} + (1 - \hat{p})(1 - T_B)$
B	A	$\hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})$	$1 + b$	T_A	$\hat{p}T_A$
B	B	$(1 - \hat{p})^2$	1	0	$\hat{p}T_A$

Table 2: Interaction frequency, fitness, and transmission probabilities.

transmission, is

$$\begin{aligned}
p' = & \hat{p}^2[\alpha + (1 - \alpha)(\hat{p} + (1 - \hat{p})(1 - T_B))] \\
& + \hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})[\alpha(1 - T_B) + (1 - \alpha)(\hat{p} + (1 - \hat{p})(1 - T_B))] \\
& + (1 - \hat{p})\hat{p}[\alpha T_A + (1 - \alpha)\hat{p}T_A] \\
& + (1 - \hat{p})^2[(1 - \alpha)\hat{p}T_A],
\end{aligned} \tag{7}$$

which simplifies to

$$p' = \hat{p}^2(T_B - T_A) + \hat{p}(1 + T_A - T_B). \tag{8}$$

The frequency of A among parents (i.e. after selection) follows a similar dynamic, but also includes the effect of natural selection, and is therefore

$$\begin{aligned}
\bar{w}\tilde{p}' = & \hat{p}^2(1 + b - c)[\alpha + (1 - \alpha)(\hat{p} + (1 - \hat{p})(1 - T_B))] \\
& + \hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})(1 - c)[\alpha(1 - T_B) + (1 - \alpha)(\hat{p} + (1 - \hat{p})(1 - T_B))] \\
& + (1 - \hat{p})\hat{p}(1 + b)[\alpha T_A + (1 - \alpha)\hat{p}T_A] \\
& + (1 - \hat{p})^2[(1 - \alpha)\hat{p}T_A],
\end{aligned} \tag{9}$$

where fitness values are taken from Table 1 and Table 2, and the population mean fitness is

$$\bar{w} = 1 + \hat{p}(b - c). \tag{10}$$

Eq. 9 can be simplified to

$$\begin{aligned}
\bar{w}\tilde{p}' = & \hat{p}^2(1 + b - c)(1 - (1 - \hat{p})(1 - \alpha)T_B) \\
& + \hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})(1 - c)(\hat{p}(1 - \alpha)T_B + 1 - T_B) \\
& + (1 - \hat{p})\hat{p}(1 + b)(\hat{p}(1 - \alpha) + \alpha)T_A \\
& + (1 - \hat{p})^2\hat{p}(1 - \alpha)T_A.
\end{aligned} \tag{11}$$

where $\hat{p} = v\tilde{p} + (1 - v)p$. Table 3 summarized the model variables and parameters.

Symbol	Description	Values
A	Cooperator phenotype	
B	Defector phenotype	
p	Frequency of phenotype A among adults	$[0, 1]$
\tilde{p}	Frequency of phenotype A among parents	$[0, 1]$
\hat{p}	Frequency of phenotype A among juveniles	$[0, 1]$
v	Vertical transmission rate	$[0, 1]$
c	Cost of cooperation	$(0, 1)$
b	Benefit of cooperation	$c < b$
α	Social association	$[0, 1]$
T_A, T_B	Horizontal transmission rates of phenotype A and B	$[0, 1]$

Table 3: Model variables and parameters.

Results

Oblique and Horizontal Transmission

With only oblique and horizontal transmission, i.e. $v = 0$, Eq. 6 becomes $\hat{p} = p$ and Eq. 8 becomes

$$p' = p^2(T_B - T_A) + p(1 + T_A - T_B) . \quad (12)$$

Solving for $p' > p$ we get the following result.

Result 1 (Oblique and horizontal transmission of cooperation). *Without vertical transmission ($v = 0$), if there is a horizontal transmission bias in favor of cooperation, namely*

$$T_A > T_B , \quad (13)$$

then the frequency of the cooperator phenotype among adults increases every generation, $p' > p$.

That is, in the absence of vertical transmission, selection plays no role in the evolution of cooperation (i.e. b and c are missing from Eq. 12). The dynamics are determined solely by differential horizontal transmission of the two phenotypes, that is, the relative tendency of each phenotype to be horizontally transmitted to peers (see Figure 6c). Note that without bias in horizontal transmission, $T_A = T_B$, phenotype frequencies are static, $p' = p$.

Vertical and Horizontal Transmission

With only vertical and horizontal transmission, i.e. $v = 1$, Eq. 6 becomes $\hat{p} = \tilde{p}$, and Eq. 11 for the frequency of the cooperative phenotype among parents in the next generation \tilde{p}' can be written as

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{w}\tilde{p}' &= \tilde{p}^2(1 + b - c)[1 - (1 - \tilde{p})(1 - \alpha)T_B] \\ &\quad + \tilde{p}(1 - \tilde{p})(1 - c)[\tilde{p}(1 - \alpha)T_B + 1 - T_B] \\ &\quad + \tilde{p}(1 - \tilde{p})(1 + b)[\tilde{p}(1 - \alpha) + \alpha]T_A \\ &\quad + (1 - \tilde{p})^2\tilde{p}(1 - \alpha)T_A . \end{aligned} \quad (14)$$

Fixation of either cooperation, $\tilde{p} = 1$, or defection, $\tilde{p} = 0$, are equilibria of Eq. 14, that is, they solve $\tilde{p}' = \tilde{p}$. We therefore assume for the remainder of the analysis that $0 < \tilde{p} < 1$.

If $\alpha = 1$, then $\tilde{p}' = \tilde{p}$ is reduced to

$$\tilde{p}(1 - \tilde{p})[(1 + b)T_A + (1 - c)(1 - T_B) - 1] = 0 , \quad (15)$$

and there are no additional equilibria. For cooperation to take over the population (for $\tilde{p} = 1$ to be globally stable) we require $\tilde{p}' > \tilde{p}$; that is,

$$\tilde{p}^2(1 + b - c) + \tilde{p}(1 - \tilde{p})[(1 - c)(1 - T_B) + (1 + b)T_A] > \bar{w}\tilde{p} . \quad (16)$$

Factoring out $\tilde{p}(1 - \tilde{p})$ and setting $\bar{w} = 1 + \tilde{p}(b - c)$, we find that $\tilde{p}' > \tilde{p}$ if

$$(1 - c)(1 - T_B) + (1 + b)T_A > 1 . \quad (17)$$

If $\alpha < 1$, divide both sides of Eq. 14 by \tilde{p} and set $\bar{w} = 1 + \tilde{p}(b - c)$. Then $\tilde{p}' > \tilde{p}$ if

$$\begin{aligned}
 1 + \tilde{p}(b - c) &< \tilde{p}(1 + b - c)(1 - (1 - \tilde{p})(1 - \alpha)T_B) \\
 &+ (1 - \tilde{p})(1 - c)(\tilde{p}(1 - \alpha)T_B + 1 - T_B) \\
 &+ (1 - \tilde{p})(1 + b)(\tilde{p}(1 - \alpha) + \alpha)T_A \\
 &+ (1 - \tilde{p})^2(1 - \alpha)T_A.
 \end{aligned} \tag{18}$$

Simplifying, we find that $\tilde{p}' > \tilde{p}$ if and only if

$$c(1 - T_B) - b\alpha T_A - (T_A - T_B) < \tilde{p} \cdot b(1 - \alpha)(T_A - T_B). \tag{19}$$

In addition to the the fixation states $\tilde{p} = 0$ and $\tilde{p} = 1$, there may be an actual polymorphic equilibrium of $\tilde{p}' = \tilde{p}$ in Eq. 14, namely

$$\tilde{p}^* = \frac{c(1 - T_B) - b\alpha T_A - (T_A - T_B)}{b(1 - \alpha)(T_A - T_B)}, \tag{20}$$

which is legitimate if $0 < \tilde{p}^* < 1$.

Since all parameters are positive, we can apply inequality 19 and see that a requirement for $\tilde{p}' > \tilde{p}$ is that either

$$T_A > T_B \quad \text{and} \quad \tilde{p} > \tilde{p}^*, \quad \text{or} \tag{21}$$

$$T_A < T_B \quad \text{and} \quad \tilde{p} < \tilde{p}^*. \tag{22}$$

We define the *cost boundaries*,

$$\gamma_1 = \frac{b\alpha T_A + (T_A - T_B)}{1 - T_B}, \quad \gamma_2 = \frac{b\alpha T_B + (1 + b)(T_A - T_B)}{1 - T_B}. \tag{23}$$

Then, applying Eqs. 20, 21, and 22, we summarize the possible outcomes in the following result and corollaries.

Result 2 (Vertical and horizontal transmission of cooperation). *With vertical and horizontal but without oblique transmission ($v = 1$), the cultural evolution of cooperation will follow one of the following scenarios, depending on the cost boundaries γ_1 and γ_2 (Eq. 23):*

1. Fixation of cooperation: if (i) $T_A \geq T_B$ and $c < \gamma_1$; or if (ii) $T_A < T_B$ and $c < \gamma_2$.
2. Fixation of defection: if (iii) $T_A \geq T_B$ and $\gamma_2 < c$; or if (iv) $T_A < T_B$ and $\gamma_1 < c$.
3. Stable coexistence: if (v) $T_A < T_B$ and $\gamma_2 < c < \gamma_1$.
4. Unstable coexistence: if (vi) $T_A > T_B$ and $\gamma_1 < c < \gamma_2$.

These conditions are illustrated in Figure 3.

Cooperation and defection can coexist stably at frequencies \tilde{p}^* and $1 - \tilde{p}^*$ (Eq. 20) if there is horizontal transmission bias for defection, $T_A < T_B$, and the cost of cooperation is intermediate, $\gamma_2 < c < \gamma_1$; see yellow area in Figure 3b. When unstable coexistence occurs, phenotype A will fix if initially at a frequency $p > \tilde{p}^*$, and phenotype B will fix if initially at a frequency $1 - p > 1 - \tilde{p}^*$; this occurs when there is horizontal transmission bias for cooperation, $T_A > T_B$, and the cost is intermediate, $\gamma_1 < c < \gamma_2$. Figure 2 shows the mapping $\tilde{p} \rightarrow \tilde{p}'$; see blue areas in Figure 3a and Figure 3b.

Much of the literature on evolution of cooperation focuses on conditions for initially rare cooperative phenotype to invade a population of defectors. The next corollary deals with such a condition.

Corollary 1 (Condition for cooperation to increase when initially rare). *If the initial frequency of cooperation is very close to zero, $\tilde{p}_0 \approx 0$, then its frequency will increase if*

$$c < \gamma_1 = \frac{b\alpha T_A + (T_A - T_B)}{1 - T_B}. \quad (24)$$

Note that the right-hand side equals γ_1 . This condition follows from combining the conditions for fixation of cooperation and for stable coexistence.

In general, these conditions cannot be formulated in the form of Hamilton's rule due to the horizontal transmission bias $T_A - T_B$. Without horizontal transmission bias, i.e., with $T = T_A = T_B$, these conditions reduce to a form of Hamilton's rule.

Corollary 2 (Symmetric horizontal transmission). *If $T = T_A = T_B$, then cooperation will take over the population if*

$$c < b \cdot \alpha \frac{T}{1 - T}. \quad (25)$$

Note that the right-hand side equals γ_1 when $T = T_A = T_B$. This condition is obtained by setting $T = T_A = T_B$ in inequality 19 and can be interpreted as a version of Hamilton's rule ($c < b \cdot r$, inequality 1) or as a version of inequality 3, where $\alpha T/(1 - T)$ can be regarded as the *effective relatedness* or *effective assortment*, respectively. Figure 6a illustrates this condition.

The condition in inequality 25 demonstrates the importance of the social association α . The following corollaries provide additional demonstrations.

Corollary 3 (Perfect social association of transmission and cooperation). *With perfect social association ($\alpha = 1$), the only equilibria are the fixation states, $\tilde{p} = 0$ and $\tilde{p} = 1$, and cooperation will evolve from any initial frequency, $\tilde{p}' > \tilde{p}$, if*

$$c < \frac{b \cdot T_A + (T_A - T_B)}{1 - T_B}. \quad (26)$$

This condition is obtained from inequality 17, and the right-hand side equals γ_1 when $\alpha = 1$ (Eq. 23). Perfect social association (horizontal transmission always occurs during the cooperative interaction) is also assumed in the model studied by Lewin-Epstein et al. (2017), and therefore this corollary is equivalent to their result (see their eq. 1).

Inequality 26 can also be written as $1 - (1 - c)(1 - T_B) < (1 + b)T_A$, which provides an interesting interpretation for the success of cooperation. In the interaction between a cooperator and a defector, $(1 - c)(1 - T_B)$ is the probability that the cooperator remains cooperative and also reproduces. Therefore, $1 - (1 - c)(1 - T_B)$ is the probability that either the cooperator becomes a defector, or that it fails to reproduce. This is the *effective cost of cooperation* from this interaction. Similarly, $(1 + b)T_A$ is the probability that during an interaction between a cooperator and a defector, the defector becomes cooperative and reproduces, which is the *effective benefit of cooperation* from this interaction. Thus, inequality 26 entails that cooperation can evolve if the effective cost of cooperation is less than the effective benefit during an interaction between a cooperator and a defector.

Corollary 4 (No social association of transmission and cooperation). *Without social association ($\alpha = 0$) cooperation can take over the population if there is horizontal transmission bias for cooperation, $T_A > T_B$, and if either*

$$c < \frac{T_A - T_B}{1 - T_B} \quad \text{or} \quad \tilde{p}_0 > \tilde{p}^* = \frac{c(1 - T_B) - (T_A - T_B)}{b(T_A - T_B)}. \quad (27)$$

Figure 3a illustrates these conditions, which are obtained by setting $\alpha = 0$ in Eq. 20 and Eq. 23. If there is horizontal transmission bias for cooperation ($T_A > T_B$) then cooperation can evolve from any initial frequency if the cost is low enough, $c < \gamma_1$ (green area below solid line). If the cost is not low enough, cooperation can also evolve if starting from high frequency and the cost is not too high, $c < \gamma_2$ (blue area between solid and dashed lines).

We can interpret these condition as follows. First, when cooperators are rare, they will mostly interact with defectors. Therefore, for cooperation to increase in frequency and fix, the *effective cost of cooperation* must be lower than the horizontal transmission of cooperation, $1 - (1 - c)(1 - T_B) < T_A$, which is equivalent to the left condition in Eq. 27. Second, if T_A is not large enough, cooperation will fix if the initial frequency is higher than the threshold \tilde{p}^* ; thus, this threshold must be below one, which entails $1 - (1 - c)(1 - T_B) < T_A + b(T_A - T_B)$. That is, the effective cost of cooperation must be lower than the combined effect of horizontal transmission of cooperation, T_A , and the benefit of cooperation multiplied by the transmission bias, $b(T_A - T_B)$.

Given the previous two corollaries for no association and perfect association ($\alpha = 0$ and $\alpha = 1$), it is interesting to examine the general effect of social association on the evolution of cooperation. We denote the social association boundaries by

$$a_1 = \frac{c(1 - T_B) - (1 + b)(T_A - T_B)}{b \cdot T_B}, \quad a_2 = \frac{c(1 - T_B) - (T_A - T_B)}{b \cdot T_A}. \quad (28)$$

Applying Eqs. 20, 21, and 22, we have the following corollary.

Corollary 5 (Intermediate association of transmission and cooperation). *Cooperation will increase from rarity if social association is high enough, or specifically if*

$$\begin{aligned} &T_A > T_B \text{ and } a_2 < \alpha, \quad \text{or} \\ &T_A < T_B \text{ and } a_1 < \alpha. \end{aligned} \quad (29)$$

Figure 3c demonstrates these conditions. With horizontal transmission bias for cooperation ($T_A > T_B$), cooperation can fix from any initial frequency if $a_2 < \alpha$ (green area in positive x-axis). Otherwise, cooperation can also fix if the horizontal bias is strong, the initial frequency is high, and social association is high, $a_1 < \alpha$ (blue area). With horizontal bias for defection ($T_A < T_B$), cooperation can fix from any frequency if social association is high, $a_1 < \alpha$ (green area in negative x-axis), and can also increase in rarity and maintain a stable coexistence with defection if social association is intermediate, $a_2 < \alpha$ (yellow area). Without horizontal bias ($T_A = T_B$) fixation of cooperation occurs if social association is high enough, $\frac{c}{b} \cdot \frac{1-T}{T} < \alpha$ (inequality 25; in this case $a_1 = a_2$).

With Vertical and Oblique Transmission

With both vertical and oblique transmission, $0 < v < 1$, the recursion system is more complex, and we focus on local rather than on global stability. To proceed, we note that Eq. 6 can give \hat{p}' as a function of both p' and \tilde{p}' . Eq. 8 gives p' as a function of \tilde{p} , since \hat{p} is given in Eq. 6 as a function of \tilde{p} and Eq. 11 gives \tilde{p}' as a function of \hat{p} . Combining these equations, we find an equation for \hat{p}' as a function of \hat{p} (shown in Appendix A). We then determine the equilibria, namely, solutions of $\hat{p}' = \hat{p}$, and analyse their local stability.

We apply Eqs. 6, 8, and 11 to obtain the function $f(\hat{p})$ (see Appendix A):

$$f(\hat{p}) = \bar{w}(\hat{p}' - \hat{p}) = \beta_1 \hat{p}^3 + \beta_2 \hat{p}^2 + \beta_3 \hat{p}, \quad (30)$$

274 where

$$\begin{aligned}\beta_1 &= [c(1 - v) - b(1 - \alpha v)](T_A - T_B), \\ \beta_2 &= -\beta_1 - \beta_3, \\ \beta_3 &= \alpha bvT_A - cv(1 - T_B) + (T_A - T_B).\end{aligned}\tag{31}$$

276 If $T = T_A = T_B$ then $\beta_1 = 0$ and $\beta_3 = -\beta_2 = \alpha bvT - cv(1 - T)$, and $f(\hat{p})$ becomes a quadratic polynomial:

$$278 \quad f(\hat{p}) = \hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})[\alpha bvT - cv(1 - T)].\tag{32}$$

Clearly the only two equilibria are the fixations $\hat{p} = 0$ and $\hat{p} = 1$. These equilibria are locally stable if $f'(\hat{p}) < 0$ near the equilibrium (Appendix B), and

$$f'(\hat{p}) = (1 - 2\hat{p})[\alpha bvT - cv(1 - T)],\tag{33}$$

282 with

$$\begin{aligned}f'(0) &= \alpha bvT - cv(1 - T), \\ f'(1) &= -\alpha bvT + cv(1 - T).\end{aligned}\tag{34}$$

284 Therefore with symmetric horizontal transmission, fixation of the cooperative phenotype ($\hat{p} = 1$) occurs under the same condition as Corollary 1.1, namely Eq. 25.

286 In the general case where $T_A \neq T_B$, the coefficient β_1 is not necessarily zero, and $f(\hat{p})$ is a cubic polynomial. Therefore, three equilibria may exist, two of which are $\hat{p} = 0$ and $\hat{p} = 1$, and the third is

$$288 \quad \hat{p}^* = \frac{\beta_3}{\beta_1}.\tag{35}$$

290 Note that the sign of the cubic (Eq. 30) at positive (negative) infinity is equal (opposite) to the sign of β_1 . If $T_A > T_B$, then

$$292 \quad \beta_1 < [c(1 - \alpha v) - b(1 - \alpha v)](T_A - T_B) = (1 - \alpha v)(c - b)(T_A - T_B) < 0,\tag{36}$$

since $c < b$ and $\alpha v < 1$. Hence the signs of the cubic at positive and negative infinity are negative and positive, respectively. First, if $\beta_3 < \beta_1$ then $1 < \hat{p}^*$ and therefore $f'(0) < 0$ and $f'(1) > 0$; that is, fixation of the defector phenotype B is the only locally stable legitimate (i.e. between 0 and 1) equilibrium. Second, if $\beta_1 < \beta_3 < 0$ then $0 < \hat{p}^* < 1$ and therefore $f'(0) < 0$ and $f'(1) < 0$, that is, both fixations are locally stable and \hat{p}^* separates the domains of attraction. Third, if $0 < \beta_3$ then $\hat{p}^* < 0$ and therefore $f'(0) > 0$ and $f'(1) < 0$; that is, fixation of the cooperator phenotype A is the only locally stable legitimate equilibrium.

300 Similarly, if $T_A < T_B$, then

$$\beta_1 > [c(1 - \alpha v) - b(1 - \alpha v)](T_A - T_B) = (1 - \alpha v)(c - b)(T_A - T_B) > 0,\tag{37}$$

302 since $c < b$ and $\alpha v < 1$, and the signs of the cubic at positive and negative infinity are positive and negative, respectively. First, if $\beta_3 < 0$ then $\hat{p}^* < 0$ and therefore $f'(0) < 0$ and $f'(1) > 0$; that is, fixation of the defector phenotype A is the only locally stable legitimate equilibrium. Second, if $0 < \beta_3 < \beta_1$ then $0 < \hat{p}^* < 1$ and therefore $f'(0) > 0$ and $f'(1) > 0$; that is, both fixations are locally unstable and \hat{p}^* is a stable polymorphic equilibrium. Third, if $\beta_1 < \beta_3$ then $\hat{p}^* > 1$ and therefore $f'(0) > 0$ and $f'(1) < 0$, and fixation of the cooperator phenotype A is the only locally stable legitimate equilibrium.

We define new cost boundaries, $\hat{\gamma}_1$ and $\hat{\gamma}_2$,

$$310 \quad \hat{\gamma}_1 = \frac{bv\alpha T_A + (T_A - T_B)}{v(1 - T_B)}, \quad \hat{\gamma}_2 = \frac{bv\alpha T_B + (1 + b)(T_A - T_B)}{v(1 - T_B) + (1 - v)(T_A - T_B)},\tag{38}$$

and define a vertical transmission threshold,

$$\hat{v} = \frac{T_B - T_A}{1 - T_A}. \quad (39)$$

Assume $T_A < T_B$. For $\beta_3 < 0$ we need $\hat{\gamma}_1 < c$. For $\beta_3 < \beta_1$ we need $c[v(1 - T_B) + (1 - v)(T_A - T_B)] > b v \alpha T_B + (1 + b)(T_A - T_B)$. Note that the expression in the square brackets is positive if and only if $v > \hat{v}$. So, for $\beta_3 < \beta_1$ we need $v > \hat{v}$ and $\hat{\gamma}_2 < c$ or $v < \hat{v}$ and $c < \hat{\gamma}_2$. So, for $0 < \beta_3 < \beta_1$ we need $v > \hat{v}$ and $\hat{\gamma}_2 < c < \hat{\gamma}_1$, or $v < \hat{v}$ and $c < \min(\hat{\gamma}_1, \hat{\gamma}_2)$; and for $\beta_1 < \beta_3$ we need $v > \hat{v}$ and $c < \hat{\gamma}_2$ or $v < \hat{v}$ and $\hat{\gamma}_2 < c$. However, some of these conditions cannot be met, since $v < \hat{v}$ implies $c < 1 < \hat{\gamma}_2$. A similar analysis can be made when $T_A > T_B$.

The following result summarizes the possible outcomes.

Result 3 (Vertical, oblique, and horizontal transmission of cooperation). *With vertical, horizontal, and oblique transmission, the cultural evolution of a cooperator phenotype will follow one of the following scenarios depending on the cost boundaries $\hat{\gamma}_1$ and $\hat{\gamma}_2$ (Eq. 38) and the vertical threshold \hat{v} (Eq. 39) :*

1. Fixation of cooperation: if (i) $T_A \geq T_B$ and $c < \hat{\gamma}_1$; or if (ii) $T_A < T_B$ and $v > \hat{v}$ and $c < \hat{\gamma}_2$.
2. Fixation of defection: if (iii) $T_A \geq T_B$ and $\hat{\gamma}_2 < c$; or if (iv) $T_A < T_B$ and $\hat{\gamma}_1 < c$.
3. Stable Coexistence: if (vi) $T_A < T_B$ and $v > \hat{v}$ and $\hat{\gamma}_2 < c < \hat{\gamma}_1$.
4. Unstable coexistence: if (vii) $T_A > T_B$ and $\hat{\gamma}_1 < c < \hat{\gamma}_2$.

These conditions are illustrated in Figure 4.

With population structure

We constructed an additional model in which social association emerges from the population structure. We model a non-overlapping population colonizing a 2D grid of size 100-by-100, where each site is inhabited by one individual, similarly to Lewin-Epstein and Hadany (2020). Each individual is characterized by its phenotype which is either a cooperator, A , or a defector B . In each generation individuals interact with their neighbors, i.e. individuals that inhabit adjacent sites, in a prisoner's dilemma game (Table 1) and in horizontal cultural transmission. As before, T_A and T_B are the probabilities to transmit the phenotypes A and B during horizontal transmission. At each generation, each individual is chosen to "initiate" interactions with probability $1/2$. Initiators then interact with a random neighbor for a prisoners dilemma game and a random neighbor (with replacement) for horizontal cultural transmission (as both the game and the transmission are symmetrical, the expected number of each of these interactions per individual per generation is 1). Therefore, the effective social association α in this model is the probability that the same neighbor is picked for both interactions, or $\alpha = 1/m$, where m is the number of neighbors. On an infinite grid, $m = 8$, but on a finite grid m can be lower in edge neighborhoods close to the grid border.

The order of the interactions across the lattice on each generation is random. After all interactions take place, individual's fitness is determined by $w = 1 + b \cdot n_b - c \cdot n_c$, where n_b is the number interactions of that individual with cooperative neighbors, and n_c is the total number of interactions of that individual ($n_b \leq n_c$). Then a new generation is generated. Each site is colonized by an offspring of one of the individuals that inhabit either this site or one of the neighboring sites. The parent is randomly drawn with probability proportional to its fitness, divided by the average fitness in his neighborhood. Offspring then have the same phenotype as their parents.

Figure 7 shows that the highest cooperation cost to benefit ratio (c/b) that permits the evolution of cooperation in simulations of the spatial model is roughly $\alpha \cdot T/(1 - T)$, where $T = T_A = T_B$ is the horizontal transmission rate. This agrees with the condition we derived in Corollary 2 for a population without population structure. This demonstrates that the social association parameter α can emerge from local interactions between individuals in a structured population.

Discussion

We studied the evolution of cooperation under non-vertical transmission using deterministic discrete-time evolutionary models with fitnesses in the form of payoffs from a prisoner's dilemma game. Under oblique and horizontal cultural transmission, a horizontal transmission bias for the cooperative phenotype was found to be sufficient and necessary for evolution of cooperation (Result 1). Under a combination of vertical, oblique, and horizontal transmission, cooperation or defection can either fix or coexist at a stable polymorphism, depending on the relationship between the cost and benefit of cooperation, the horizontal bias, and the association between cooperation and transmission (Results 2 and 3). Remarkably, stable coexistence between cooperation and defection can be maintained if horizontal transmission is biased for defection ($T_B > T_A$) and both the cost of cooperation and social association are intermediate (yellow areas in Figure 3).

We tested the applicability of our analytic results to a complex spatial stochastic model (Figure 7). Indeed, our derived condition provide a good approximation to simulation results, demonstrating that association between cooperation and transmission can arise in a structured population simply because the choice of individuals for social interactions is small.

Feldman et al. (1985) studied the dynamics of an altruistic phenotype with vertical cultural transmission and a gene that modifies the transmission of the phenotype. Their results are very sensitive to this genetic modification: without it, the conditions for invasion of the altruistic phenotype reduce to Hamilton's rule. Further work is needed to include such genetic modification of cultural transmission to our model.

Woodcock (2006) has previously argued the significance of non-vertical transmission for the evolution of cooperation. He executed simulations with prisoner's dilemma payoffs but without horizontal transmission or social association ($\alpha = 0$). Nevertheless, his results demonstrated that it is possible to sustain altruistic behavior via cultural transmission for a significant duration of time. Our results provide strong evidence for his hypothesis that horizontal transmission could have an important role in the evolution of cooperation.

To understand the role of horizontal transmission, we first discuss the role of *assortment*. Eshel and Cavalli-Sforza (1982) showed that altruism can evolve when there is enough *assortative meeting*, namely, a tendency for individuals to interact within their phenotypic group. Fletcher and Doebeli (2009) have further argued that a general explanation for the evolution of altruism is given by *assortment*: the correlation between individuals that carry an altruistic trait and the amount of altruistic behavior in their interaction group. They therefore suggested that to explain the evolution of altruism, we should seek mechanisms that generate such assortment, like population structure, repeated interactions, and individual recognition. Our results highlight another mechanism for generating assortment: an association between social interactions and horizontal transmission that creates a correlation between one's partner for interaction and partner for transmission. This mechanism does not require population structure, repeated interactions, or individual recognition. We show that high levels of such social association greatly increase the potential for evolution of cooperation (Figure 3). With enough social association ($\alpha > (c(1 - T_B) + (T_B - T_A))/bT_A$), cooperation can increase in frequency when initially rare even when there is horizontal transmission bias against it ($T_B > T_A$, see Result 2).

How does non-vertical transmission generate assortment? Lewin-Epstein et al. (2017) and Lewin-
 398 Epstein and Hadany (2020), who suggested that microbes that manipulate their hosts to act altruistically
 can be favored by selection, and may help explain the evolution of cooperation. From the kin selection
 400 point-of-view, if microbes can be transmitted *horizontally* from one host to another during host
 interactions, then following horizontal transmission the recipient host will carry microbes that are
 402 closely related to the microbes of the donor host, even when the two hosts are (genetically) unrelated.
 However, we are more interested in the assortment point-of-view: infection by behavior-determining
 404 microbes during interactions effectively generates assortment because recipient of help may be
 infected by the behavior-determining microbe and therefore become a helper. Cultural horizontal
 406 transmission can similarly generate assortment between the cooperative phenotype and the benefit
 of cooperation if cultural transmission and helping interactions occur between the same individuals,
 408 which in our model occurs with probability α .

Thus, with horizontal transmission, “assortment between focal cooperative players and cooperative
 410 acts in their interaction environment” (Fletcher and Doebeli, 2009) is generated not because *the helper*
is likely to be helped, but rather because *the helped is likely to become a helper*. These conclusions
 412 highlight the importance of non-vertical cultural transmission for explaining complex evolutionary
 phenomena, and furthers our understating of the cultural evolution of cooperation.

414 Acknowledgements

We thank Lilach Hadany and Ayelet Shavit for discussions and comments. This work was supported in part by
 416 the Israel Science Foundation 552/19 (YR), and Minerva Stiftung Center for Lab Evolution (YR).

Appendices

418 Appendix A

We want to find the frequency of juveniles with phenotype A in next generation \hat{p}' as a function of
 420 frequency of juveniles with phenotype A in the current generation \hat{p} . Starting from Eq. 6,

$$\hat{p}' = v\tilde{p}' + (1 - v)p', \quad (\text{A1})$$

422 we substitute p' using Eq. 8 and \tilde{p}' using Eq. 11, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \hat{p}' = & \frac{v}{\bar{w}} \left\{ \hat{p}^2(1 + b - c) \left[1 - (1 - \hat{p})(1 - \alpha)T_B \right] \right\} \\ & + \frac{v}{\bar{w}} \left\{ \hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})(1 - c) \left[\hat{p}(1 - \alpha)T_B + 1 - T_B \right] \right\} \\ & + \frac{v}{\bar{w}} \left\{ \hat{p}(1 - \hat{p})(1 + b) \left[\hat{p}(1 - \alpha) + \alpha \right] T_A \right\} \\ & + \frac{v}{\bar{w}} (1 - \hat{p})^2 \hat{p}(1 - \alpha)T_A \\ & + (1 - v)\hat{p}^2(T_B - T_A) + (1 - v)\hat{p}(1 + T_A - T_B), \end{aligned} \quad (\text{A2})$$

424 where $\bar{w} = 1 + \hat{p}(b - c)$. We define $f(\hat{p})$ as

$$f(\hat{p}) = \bar{w}(\hat{p}' - \hat{p}) \quad (\text{A3})$$

426 Using *SymPy* (Meurer et al., 2017), a Python library for symbolic mathematics, we simplify Eq. A3
 to eqs. 30-31.

428 Appendix B

Denote $f(p) = \lambda(p' - p)$, where $\lambda > 0$, and assume $f(p^*) = 0$; i.e., p^* is an equilibrium. We want a
 430 condition for $|p' - p^*| < |p - p^*|$.

If $p > p^* = 0$, we want a condition for $p' < p$, or $\frac{p'}{p} < 1$, or $\lambda \frac{p' - p}{p} < 0$, or $\frac{f(p)}{p} < 0$. Using a linear
 432 approximation for $f(p)$ near 0, we have

$$\begin{aligned} p' < p &\Leftrightarrow \\ \frac{f'(0) \cdot p + O(p^2)}{p} &< 0 \Leftrightarrow \\ f'(0) + O(p) &< 0. \end{aligned} \tag{B1}$$

434 Therefore, by definition of big-O notation, if $f'(0) < 0$ then there exists $\epsilon > 0$ such that for any
 $0 < p < \epsilon$, it is guaranteed that $0 < p' < p$, that is, p' is closer than p to zero.

436 If $p < p^* = 1$, we want a condition for $1 - p' < 1 - p$, or $\frac{1 - p'}{1 - p} < 1$, or $\lambda \frac{-(p' - p)}{1 - p} < 0$, or $-\frac{f(p)}{1 - p} < 0$.
 Using a linear approximation for $f(p)$ near 1, we have

$$\begin{aligned} 1 - p' < 1 - p &\Leftrightarrow \\ \frac{f'(1)(p - 1) + O((p - 1)^2)}{p - 1} &< 0 \Leftrightarrow \\ f'(1) - O(1 - p) &< 0. \end{aligned} \tag{B2}$$

Therefore, if $f'(1) < 0$ then there exists $\epsilon > 0$ such that for any $1 - \epsilon < 1 - p < 1$ it is guaranteed that
 440 $1 - p' < 1 - p$, that is, p' is closer than p to one.

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Figures

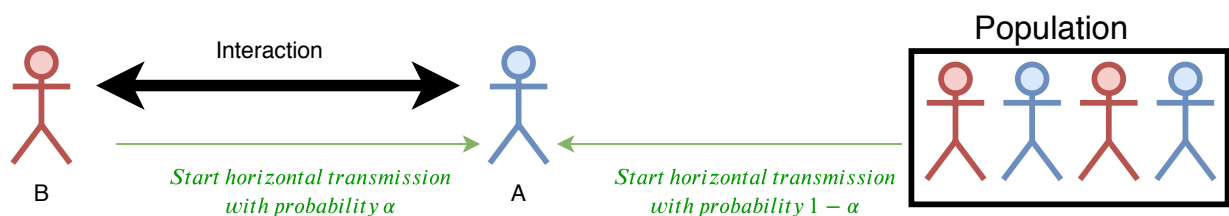


Figure 1: Cultural horizontal transmission with assortment. Transmission occurs between interacting partners with probability α (left) or between two random peers with probability $1 - \alpha$.

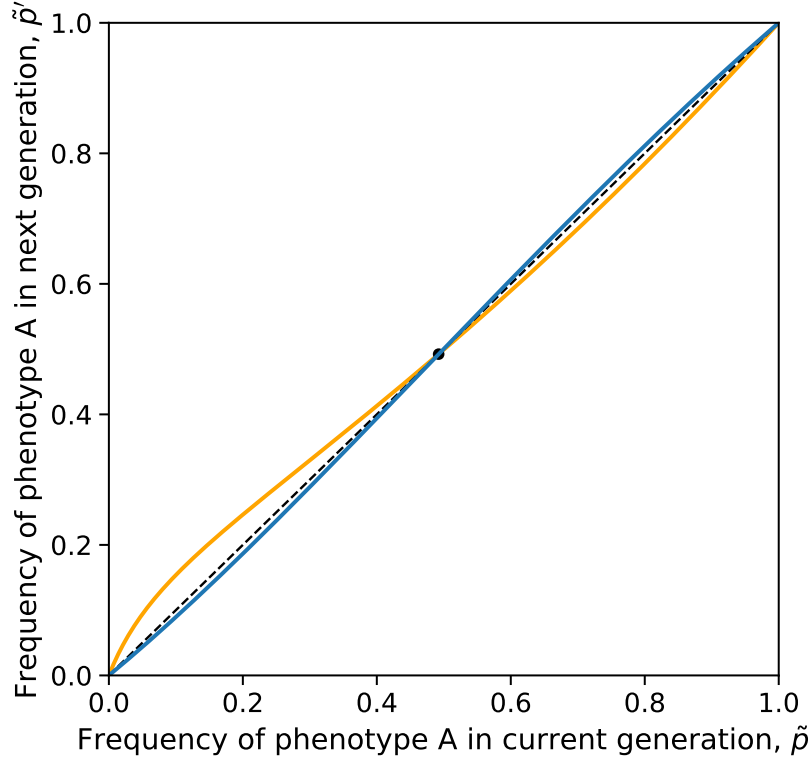


Figure 2: Stable and unstable coexistence between cooperation and defection without oblique transmission. The curves show the frequency of the cooperative phenotype A among parents in the next generation \tilde{p}' vs. the current generation \tilde{p} (Eq. 14). The dashed black line is $\tilde{p}' = \tilde{p}$. The curves and the dashed line intersect at the polymorphic equilibrium \tilde{p}^* (black circle). When the curves are above the dashed line, $\tilde{p}' > \tilde{p}$, then \tilde{p} increase. When the curves are below the dashed line, $\tilde{p}' < \tilde{p}$, then \tilde{p} decreases. The orange curve, for which the polymorphic equilibrium is stable, is given by $T_A = 0.4$, $T_B = 0.9$, $b = 12$, $c = 0.35$, and $\alpha = 0.45$, which give $\gamma_2 < c < \gamma_1$ (Eq. 23) The blue curve, for which the equilibrium is unstable, is given by $T_A = 0.5$, $T_B = 0.1$, $b = 1.3$, $c = 0.904$, and $\alpha = 0.4$, which give $\gamma_1 < c < \gamma_2$. In both cases there is no oblique transmission, $\nu = 1$; see Figure 5 for $\nu < 1$.

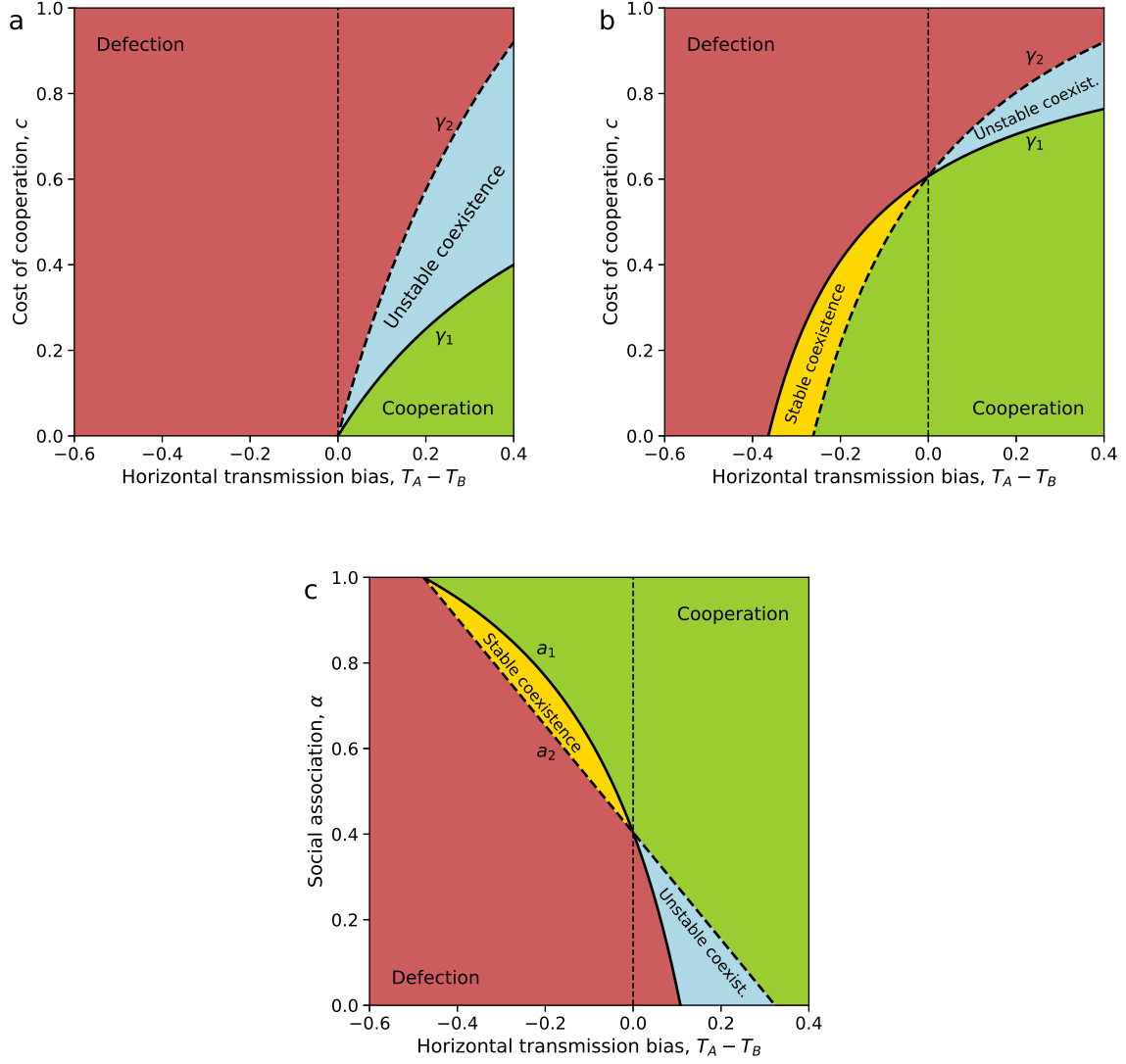


Figure 3: Evolution of cooperation under vertical and horizontal cultural transmission. The figure shows the global fixation of cooperation (green), global fixation of defection (red), fixation of either cooperation or defection depending on the initial conditions, i.e. unstable coexistence (blue), and stable coexistence of cooperation and defection (yellow). In all cases the horizontal bias ($T_A - T_B$) is on the x-axis. **(a-b)** The cost of cooperation c is on the y-axis; the cost boundaries γ_1 and γ_2 (Eq. 23) are the solid and dashed lines. **(c)** social association α is on the y-axis; the social association boundaries a_1 and a_2 (Eq. 28) are the solid and dashed lines. Here, $b = 1.3$, $T_A = 0.4$. **(a)** $\alpha = 0$. **(b)** $\alpha = 0.7$. **(c)** $c = 0.35$.

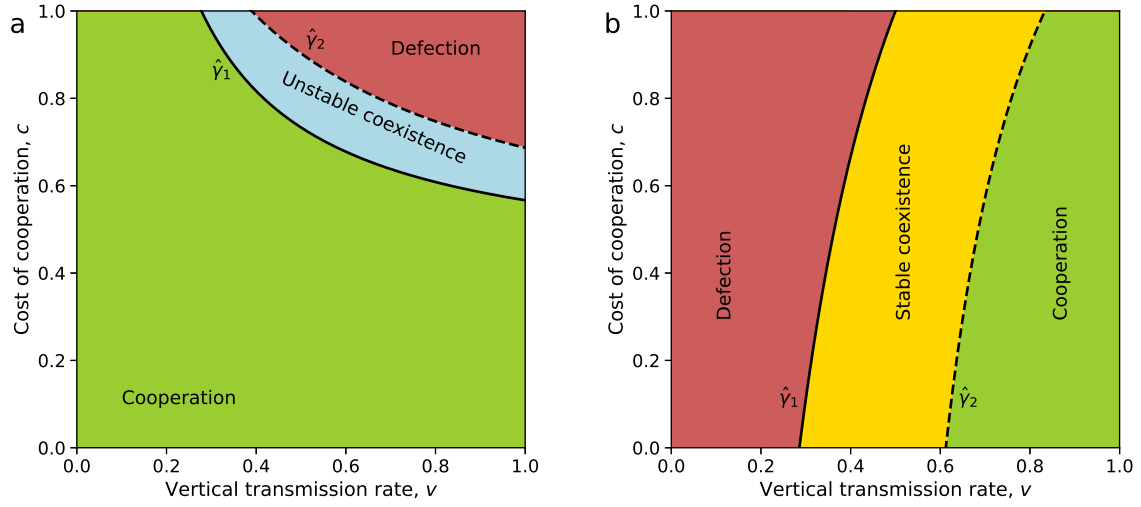


Figure 4: Evolution of cooperation under vertical, oblique, and horizontal cultural transmission. The figure shows the global fixation of cooperation (green), global fixation of defection (red), fixation of either cooperation or defection depending on the initial conditions, i.e. unstable coexistence (blue), and stable coexistence of cooperation and defection (yellow). The vertical transmission rate v is on the x-axis. Horizontal transmission bias **(a)** for cooperation, $T_A > T_B$ and **(b)** for defection, $T_A < T_B$. Cost boundaries \hat{v}_1 and \hat{v}_2 (Eq. 38) are represented by the solid and dashed lines. **(a)** $b = 1.2$, $T_A = 0.5$, $T_B = 0.4$, $\alpha = 0.4$. **(b)**, $b = 2$, $T_A = 0.5$, $T_B = 0.7$, $\alpha = 0.7$.

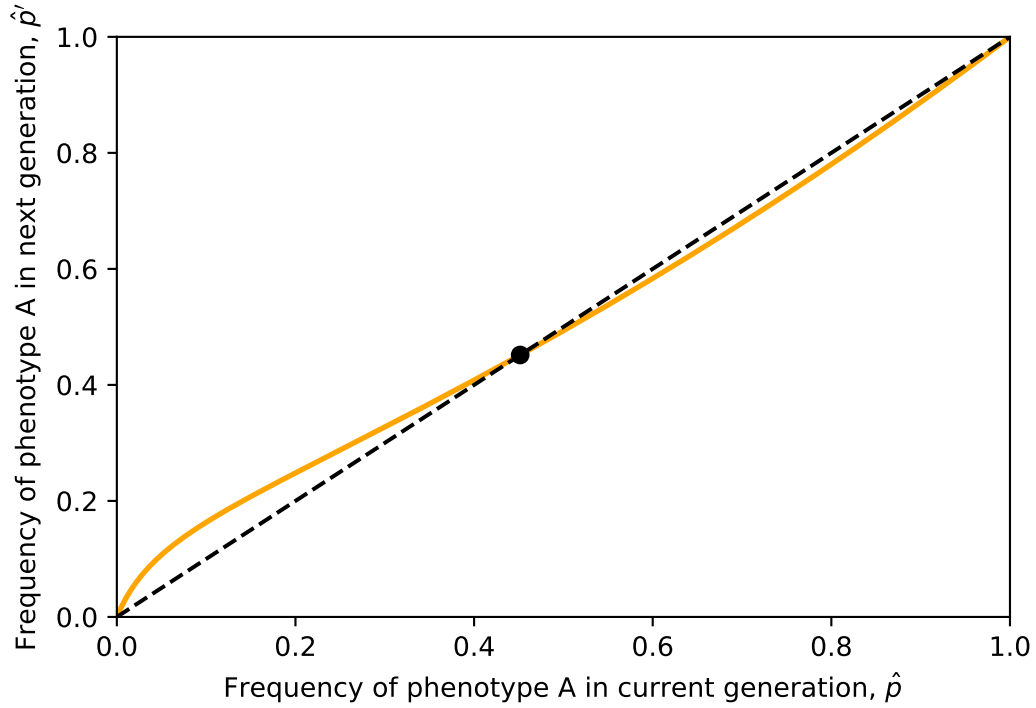


Figure 5: Stable coexistence between cooperation and defection with oblique transmission. The curve shows the frequency of the cooperative phenotype A among juveniles in the next generation \hat{p}' vs. the current generation \hat{p} (Eq. 6). The dashed black line is $\hat{p}' = \hat{p}$. The curve and the dashed line intersect at the stable equilibrium \hat{p}^* (black circle). When $\hat{p} < \hat{p}^*$ then the curve is above the dashed line, $\hat{p}' > \hat{p}$, and \hat{p} increases towards \hat{p}^* . When $\hat{p} > \hat{p}^*$ then the curve is below the dashed line, $\hat{p}' < \hat{p}$, and \hat{p} decreases towards \hat{p}^* . Here, $T_A = 0.4$, $T_B = 0.9$, $b = 20$, $c = 0.1$, $\alpha = 1$, and $v = 0.4$, which give $0 < \beta_3 < \beta_1$ (Eq. 31).

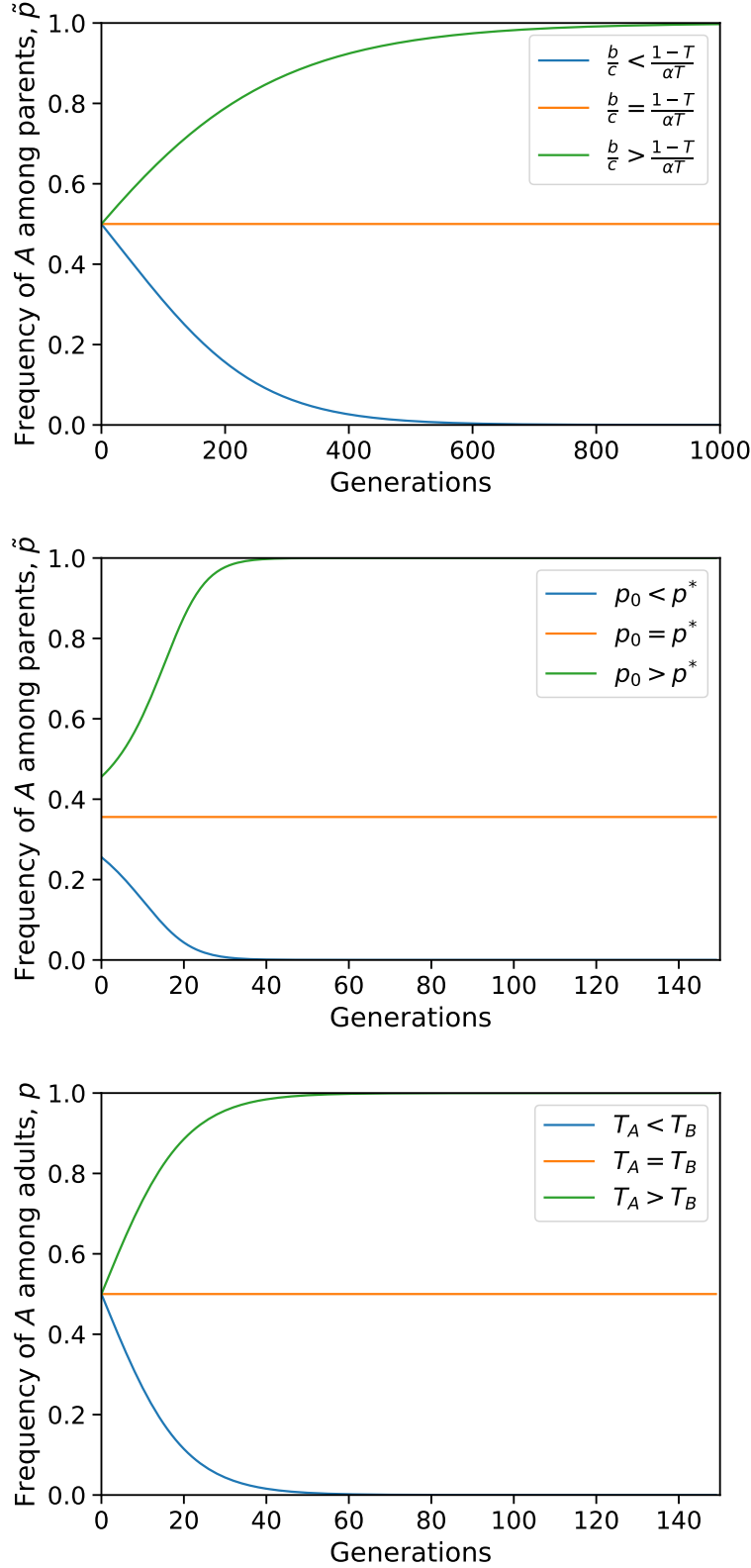


Figure 6: Dynamics of the frequency of cooperation. The frequency \tilde{p} of parents with cooperative phenotype A in (a-b) and the frequency p of adults with cooperative phenotype A in (c). The different lines correspond to parameter values that lead to fixation of cooperation (green), extinction of cooperation (red), or stable coexistence of cooperators and defectors (yellow). (a) $v = 1$, $T_A = T_B = T = 0.2$, $\alpha = 0.5 \neq 0$, $\tilde{p}_0 = 0.5$ and $c = 0.1$; (b) $v = 1$, $\alpha = 0$, $\tilde{p}^* \approx 0.35$, $T_A = 0.65$, $T_B = 0.1$, $b = 1.3$ and $c = 0.65$; (c) $v = 0$, $\alpha = 0.5$, $p_0 = 0.5$, $T_A = 0.5$, $b = 1.3$ and $c = 0.5$.

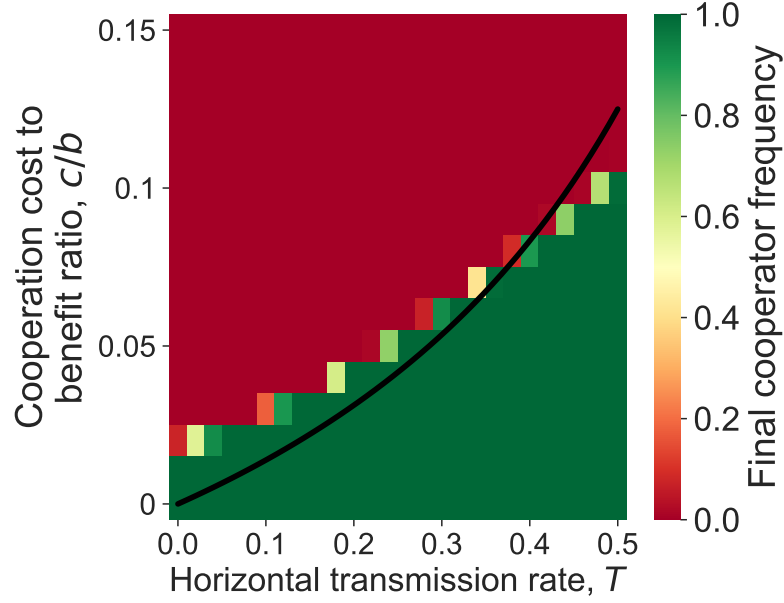


Figure 7: Evolution of cooperation in a spatial model. The expected frequency of cooperators in a structured population after 10,000 generations is shown (red for 0%, green for 100%) as function of both the ratio between the cost and benefit of cooperation (c/b) on the y-axis, and the horizontal transmission rate (without transmission bias, $T = T_A = T_B$) on the x-axis. The population evolves on a 100-by-100 grid. Selection, cooperation, and horizontal cultural transmission are all local between adjacent sites. The black curve represents the condition for the evolution of cooperation in a well-mixed population with social association, $c/b < \alpha T / (1 - T)$, where $\alpha = 1/8$; see Eq. 25. Note that in the structured population, selection is local, whereas in the unstructured population, selection is global. This can explain the small difference in the results. Here, population size is 10,000 (100-by-100 grid); cost of cooperation, $c = 0.05$. 50 simulations were executed per parameter set. Simulations were stopped at generation 10,000 or if one of the phenotypes fixed.