Recruit symbiosis establishment and Symbiodiniceae composition influenced by adult corals and reef sediment

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KEWORDS: coral, symbiosis, Symbiodiniceae, horizontal transmission, sediment, metabarcoding, ITS2

ABSTRACT

For most reef-building corals, the establishment of symbiosis occurs via horizontal transmission, where juvenile coral recruits acquire their algal symbionts (family Symbiodiniaceae) from their surrounding environment post-settlement. This transmission strategy allows corals to interact with a diverse array of symbionts, potentially facilitating adaptation to the newly settled environment. We exposed aposymbiotic *Pseudodiploria strigosa* recruits from the Flower Garden Banks to natal reef sediment (C-S+), symbiotic adult coral fragments (C+S-), sediment and coral fragments (C+S+), or seawater controls (C-S-) and quantified rates of symbiont uptake and Symbiodiniaceae community composition within each recruit using metabarcoding of the ITS2 locus. The most rapid uptake was observed in C+S+ treatments and this combination also led to the highest symbiont alpha diversity in recruits. While C-S+ treatments exhibited the next highest uptake rate, only one individual recruit successfully established symbiosis in the C+S- treatment, suggesting that sediment both serves as a direct symbiont source for coral recruits and promotes (or, potentially, mediates) transmission from adult coral colonies. In turn, presence of adult corals facilitated uptake from the sediment, perhaps via chemical signaling. Taken together, our results reinforce the key role of sediment in algal symbiont uptake by *P. strigosa* recruits and suggest that sediment plays a necessary, but perhaps not sufficient, role in the life cycle of the algal Symbiodinaceae symbionts.

38 **INTRODUCTION**

39 Algal symbionts in the family Symbiodiniaceae are one of the most diverse groups of
40 endosymbionts across marine environments and are hosted by a variety of invertebrates ranging
41 from cnidarians, to mollusks, to sponges (Baker 2003; Stat et al. 2006; LaJeunesse et al. 2018). In
42 adult tropical reef-building corals, these algal symbionts supply photosynthetic products to the
43 coral host in return for inorganic nutrients and a residence (Muscatine and Porter 1977; Muscatine
44 and Cernichiari 1969; Trench and Blank 1987). Coral-associated algal symbionts have radiated
45 into genetically divergent lineages, formerly known as clades (A thru I: Stat et al., 2012) and
46 recently reclassified as separate genera (LaJeunesse et al. 2018), which exhibit extensive
47 morphological and functional diversity. Symbionts in the genus *Durusdinium* (clade D) have been
48 shown to be highly infective (Abrego et al. 2009a) and offer increased thermal tolerance to their
49 coral hosts (Berkelmans and van Oppen 2006) but reduce coral growth rates (Jones and
50 Berkelmans 2011; Pettay et al. 2015). Alternatively, symbionts in the genus *Cladocopium* (clade
51 C) provide a fitness advantage under ambient temperatures through increased carbon fixation and
52 translocation (Cantin et al. 2009) and corals hosting algal symbiont in the genus *Symbiodinium*
53 (clade A) experience reduced carbon fixation (Stat et al. 2008). Some corals have been shown to
54 harbor a diverse assemblage of Symbiodiniaceae lineages, and it has been suggested that this
55 functional diversity can greatly impact the ecology of a given coral host (*e.g.* Berkelmans and van
56 Oppen 2006). It is also important to note that variation in thermal tolerance varies significantly
57 within genera, such as *Cladocopium* (Howells et al. 2012) and interactions between hosts and
58 symbionts also impact holobiont performance (Abrego et al. 2008; Cunning et al. 2015; Parkinson
59 et al. 2015)

60 In corals, symbionts are either maternally transmitted (vertical transmission) or obtained
61 from their environment (horizontal transmission) (Harrison and Wallace 1990; Baird et al. 2009).
62 Corals that obtain their symbionts vertically are expected to host a lower diversity of symbionts
63 since this relationship is stable through time, facilitating the co-evolution of host-symbiont partners
64 (van Oppen 2004; Douglas 1998). On the other hand, horizontally transmitting species release
65 aposymbiotic larvae that can travel great distances (Davies et al. 2015; Baums et al. 2014; Rippe
66 et al. 2017) and upon settlement these recruits are capable of establishing symbiosis with diverse
67 algal symbiont communities that do not necessarily reflect the symbionts hosted by local
68 conspecifics or adults of their same species (Coffroth et al. 2001; Weis et al. 2001; Little et al.
69 2004; Abrego et al. 2009b). However, as coral recruits mature, the hosted symbiont community
70 becomes dominated by a single clone of the lineage typical for the location (reviewed in Thornhill
71 et al. 2017)) while establishment of symbiosis with novel Symbiodiniaceae species happens very
72 rarely or never (Coffroth et al. 2010; LaJeunesse et al. 2010; Boulotte et al. 2016). Therefore, this
73 initial acquisition of symbionts during recruitment represents a critical stage in coral-algal
74 symbioses for horizontally-transmitting coral hosts.

75 The flexible symbioses of broadly dispersing, horizontally transmitting coral juveniles
76 have been hypothesized to facilitate adaptation of the coral to environmental variation (Fournier
77 2013; van Oppen 2004; Sampayo et al. 2008; Davies et al. biorxiv), and indeed these associations
78 have been implicated in local adaptation of the holobiont (Howells et al. 2013; Barfield et al. 2018).
79 While much research has quantitatively described the diversity of coral-Symbiodiniaceae
80 symbioses across species and environments at the adult life stage, much less is known about
81 adaptations and mechanisms that symbionts employ to ensure transmission to the next coral
82 generation. One potential mechanism for establishing symbiosis is through infection from a nearby

83 conspecific adult coral (van Oppen 2004). Corals constantly expel photosynthetically active algal
84 symbionts (Ralph et al. 2001; Hill and Ralph 2007). In theory, these cells could directly establish
85 symbiosis with newly settled recruits. Alternatively, these expelled symbionts could colonize reef
86 sediment, which could enable them to persist until the arrival of new recruits. Multiple studies
87 have demonstrated that coral recruits are capable of establishing symbiosis in the presence of reef
88 sediment (Adams et al. 2009; Cumbo et al. 2013; Nitschke et al. 2016), however it remains unclear
89 whether these sediment-derived symbionts recapitulate the diversity of Symbiodiniaceae hosted
90 by local adult corals on the same reef.

91 In this study, we first compared post-settlement symbiont uptake rates in the horizontally
92 transmitting coral, *Pseudodiploria strigosa*, across multiple symbiont sources. *P. strigosa* recruits
93 were placed in fully-crossed treatments that included the presence of natal reef adult coral
94 fragments (C+S-), natal reef sediment (C-S+), a combination of adult coral fragments and natal
95 reef sediment (C+S+), and seawater controls (C-S-) to test which environment promoted the most
96 efficient uptake. The diversity of these established symbiont assemblages was examined using
97 metabarcoding of the Internal Transcribed Region 2 (ITS2), to characterize Symbiodiniaceae
98 communities within each individual recruit, adult coral fragment, and population of conspecific
99 adults on the native reef to explore how variation in symbiont communities among recruits
100 correlates with the Symbiodiniaceae communities found within local coral hosts.

101

102 **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

103 **Experimental Methods**

104 ***Coral spawning and larval rearing:***

105 During the annual coral spawning event at the Flower Garden Banks (FGB) on the evening

106 of August 9th, 2012 at 21:15CDT (nine days after the full moon), gamete bundles from eight
107 *Psuedodiploria strigosa* colonies were collected via scuba diving and spawning tents (Sharp et al.
108 2010). Gamete bundles were combined at the surface in a 14 L plastic tub filled with 1 µm filtered
109 seawater (FSW) and left to cross-fertilize for two hours. Excess sperm was then removed by rinsing
110 embryos through 150 µm nylon mesh. Developing larvae were reared in 1 µm FSW in three
111 replicate plastic culture vessels at a density of two larvae per ml. Larvae were transferred to the
112 laboratory at the University of Texas at Austin one-day post fertilization (dpf). Sediment
113 collections were completed August 8th and were maintained in 1 µm filtered seawater. One large
114 fragment of a single adult *Orbicella faveolata* was collected and maintained in the laboratory to
115 serve as the adult coral source of algal symbionts. All collections were completed under the Flower
116 Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS) permit #FGBNMS-2012-002.
117
118 ***Symbiont uptake experimental design:***
119 On August 14th, 2012 (5 dpf) twelve (5.5 gallon) experimental tanks were filled with
120 artificial seawater (Instant Ocean, Blacksburg, VA, USA) and 800 ml of 1 µm filtered FGB water
121 was added to each tank. Tanks were randomly assigned to one of four treatments (*n*=3/treatment):
122 1. FGB natal reef sediment only (C-S+), 2. *Orbicella faveolata* coral host fragment only (C+S-),
123 3. FGB natal reef sediment and *O. faveolata* coral host fragment (C+S+), and 4. Seawater control
124 (C-S-) (Supplemental Figure S1). Tanks were maintained at identical salinity (35.5 ppt) and
125 temperature (as measured by hobo data loggers: 25.5-28.5°C, Supplemental Fig. S2) throughout
126 the uptake experiment. Four dpf, thousands of competent *P. strigosa* larvae were placed in sterile
127 plastic dishes filled with artificial seawater (Instant Ocean, Blacksburg, VA, USA) and conditioned
128 glass slides. Autoclaved, finely ground FGB crustose coralline algae (CCA) was added to slides

129 to induce settlement (as per Davies et al. (2014, 2015)) and larvae were given four days in dark
130 conditions to metamorphose. Four days later (8 dpf) plastic dishes were cleaned, and settlement
131 conditions were replicated with new larvae to maximize recruitment rates per slide.

132 On August 21st (12 dpf), slides with settled *P. strigosa* recruits were randomly placed into
133 each treatment tank (*n*=3 slides per tank; Supplemental Figure S1). Symbiont uptake was visually
134 assessed using a fluorescent stereomicroscope MZ-FL-III (Leica, Bannockburn, IL, USA)
135 equipped with F/R double-bandpass filter (Chroma no. 51004v2). Recruits were considered as
136 having established symbiosis when individual algal symbiont cells were obvious in recruit
137 tentacles (Fig. 1 A, B). Recruits were surveyed daily from August 22-28th (13-19 dpf), after which
138 surveys were completed every three days. Uptake was continually monitored until October 16th
139 (68 dpf) when final counts were completed due to algae overgrowth causing coral recruit death.
140 Individuals successfully infected with symbionts were then individually collected using sterile
141 razor blades, preserved in 95% EtOH and stored at -20°C until processing.

142

143 ***Symbiont genotyping:***

144 Symbiont DNA was isolated from individual recruits using a DNeasy Plant Mini Kit
145 (Qiagen) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Recruits were disrupted by micropestle for
146 5 min using an aliquot of Lysing Matrix A (MP Biomedicals). Symbiont DNA was isolated from
147 adult corals following Davies et al. (2013).

148 The ITS2 region was amplified via PCR using the forward primer *its-dino* (5'
149 GTGAATTGCAGAACTCCGTG 3') and the reverse primer *its2rev2* (5'
150 CCTCCGCTTACTTATATGCTT 3') (Pochon et al. 2001), following the protocols described in
151 Kenkel et al. (2013) and Quigley et al. (2014), using 2µl of template DNA of unknown

152 concentration. Briefly, amplifications were verified on agarose gels following 21 cycles and
153 additional cycles were added as necessary to achieve a faint band (to reduce PCR biases) when
154 3µl of product was loaded on a 1% agarose gel and run for 15 min at 180 V (Supplemental Figure
155 3A). Cycle numbers ranged from 26 - 41 across samples (Supplemental Table S1), however several
156 samples were amplified to 42 cycles along with no-template negative controls to assure that results
157 at high cycle numbers were not due to contamination (Supplemental Figure 3B). These 'cycle-
158 check' PCR's were performed on a Tetrad 2 Peltier Thermal Cycler (Bio-Rad) using the following
159 conditions: 94°C for 5 min, followed by 21 cycles of 94°C for 15 s, 59°C for 30 s and 72°C for 30
160 s and a final extension of 10 min at 72°C. Once optimal cycle numbers were obtained, all samples
161 were re-amplified to their previously specified cycle number and verified on a gel to test for
162 equivalent band intensity across samples (Supplemental Figure 3A).

163 Each PCR reaction was cleaned using a PCR clean-up kit (Fermentas) following the
164 manufacturer's instructions, measured using a NanoDrop 1000 spectrophotometer (Thermo
165 Scientific) and diluted to 10 ng/µl. This product was then used as template for an additional PCR
166 step used to incorporate 454-RAPID primers and barcodes to each sample. Each PCR contained
167 0.33 µM B-Rapid ITS2-forward primer (Br-ITS2-F: 5'
168 CCTATCCCCTGTGTGCCTTGAGAGACGHC+GTGAATTGCAGAACTCCGTG 3') in
169 addition to 0.33 µM of unique A-Rapid-reverse primer containing an 8-bp barcode for subsequent
170 sample identification (e.g. Ar-ITS2-R-16: 5' CCATCTCATCCCTGCGT
171 GTCTCCGACGACT+**TGTAGCGC**+CCTCCGCTTACTTATATGCTT 3', barcode sequence in
172 bold). Each sample was uniquely barcoded.

173 Amplifications were visualized on a gel and based on visually assessed band intensities
174 varying amounts of each barcoded sample were pooled for 454 sequencing. This pooled sample

175 was cleaned via ethanol precipitation and re-suspended in 25 µl milli-Q water. 10 µl of this cleaned
176 product was run on a 1% Agarose gel stained with SYBR Green (Invitrogen) for 45 min at 100V.
177 The gel was visualized on a blue-light box and the target band was excised using a sterile razor
178 blade and placed in 25 µl milli-Q water for overnight incubation at 4°C. The resulting supernatant
179 was then submitted for 454 sequencing at the Genome Sequencing and Analysis Facility at the
180 University of Texas at Austin. Raw sff files were uploaded to Sequence Read Archive (SRA)
181 Accession Number SRP144167.
182
183 ***Statistical analyses***
184 All analyses were completed in the R statistical environment (R Core Team 2017) and
185 scripts are available at http://github.com/NicolaKriefall/sym_uptake. Rates of symbiont uptake by
186 coral recruits were compared using the package *Survival* (Therneau and Lumley 2015). Numbers
187 of recruits that established symbiosis with algal symbionts, measured as binary variables of
188 successes and failures, were fit to a Cox's proportional hazards regression model. A cumulative
189 incidence curve was generated from this model and an ANOVA test was run to test for significant
190 differences in uptake rates. To assess differences between pairs of treatments, the analysis was run
191 pairwise for adult host fragment, natal reef sediment, and adult host fragment and natal reef
192 sediment treatments.
193 To determine the community composition of Symbiodiniaceae in each coral recruit, 454
194 sequencing data were analyzed using the package *dada2* (Callahan et al. 2016). First, 454
195 pyrosequencing files were converted to FASTQ format using the package *R453Plus1Toolbox*
196 (Klein et al. 2011) as *dada2* only processes FASTQ files (Callahan et al. 2016). Using *dada2*,
197 FASTQ files were then trimmed to 300 bp in length as determined by associated quality profiles.

198 Primers were clipped and sequences were de-replicated to obtain unique sequences. A sequence
199 table was created to determine the distribution of sequence lengths in each sample and to remove
200 those sequences that deviated from the expected sequence length. After de-noising sequencing
201 data, chimeric sequences were removed and taxonomy was assigned by mapping to the
202 GeoSymbio ITS2 database (Franklin et al. 2012). The package *phyloseq* (McMurdie and Holmes
203 2013) was then used to generate an OTU counts table (Supplemental Table S1) and to create bar
204 plots to visualize and sort relative abundances of different Symbiodiniaceae lineages. Cumulative
205 reads across lineages within a sample were then log-normalized following Green et al. (2014) and
206 *pheatmap* (Kolde 2015) was used to visualize lineage differences across recruits and adults.
207 *Phyloseq* was also used to construct an alpha diversity plot using Simpson and Shannon diversity
208 controlling for effect of sample size. All raw sequence numbers through *dada2* filtering steps can
209 be found in (Supplemental Table 2).
210 Lastly, a phylogenetic tree of the most abundant unique sequences from ITS2 sequencing
211 of all samples (GenBank Accession #SUB4526136) together with a reference sequence of
212 Symbiodiniaceae type B1 obtained from Green et al. (2014) and a second B1 reference and all
213 other Symbiodiniaceae types from the GeoSymBio database by Franklin et al. (2012) was
214 constructed. First, Multiple Sequence Comparison by Log-Expectation aligned sequences,
215 Gblocks selected conserved sequences, phyML and the approximate Likelihood-Ratio Test
216 (aLRT) assigned phylogeny and bootstrap values based on the maximum likelihoods model, and
217 finally the TreeDyn function in Phylogeny.fr visualized the tree (Dereeper et al. 2008, 2010).The
218 Newick output of the constructed tree was visualized using R package *ggtree* (Yu et al. 2017).
219
220

221 **RESULTS**

222 ***Coral recruit symbiont uptake***

223 Initial symboint uptake by *P. strigosa* recruits was not observed until 36 days post
224 fertilization (dpf), which was 18 days after recruits were added to uptake treatments. Uptake was
225 confirmed by assessing chlorophyll fluorescence (Fig. 1A,B). The first recruits to exhibit uptake
226 were in FGB natal reef sediment and *O. faveolata* coral host fragment treatments (C+S+) (Fig.
227 1C). Additionally, slides in C+S+ treatments were the only slides on which 100% of recruits
228 successfully established symbiosis by the end of the experiment (68 dpf; 56 days after being placed
229 in uptake treatments). The FGB natal reef sediment (C-S+) treatment was the second to exhibit
230 uptake (Fig. 1C), however, significantly fewer recruits acquired symbionts when compared to
231 C+S+ treatments (Wald's $p < 0.05$). *Orbicella faveolata* coral host fragment (C+S-) treatments
232 exhibited the slowest uptake rates (Fig. 1C), and final uptake proportions in this treatment were
233 significantly lower than C+S+ treatments (Wald's $p < 0.01$) and C-S+ treatments (Wald's $p <$
234 0.05). As expected, recruits in seawater control treatments (C-S-) exhibited no uptake (Fig. 1C).

235 The likelihood of symbiont uptake by *P. strigosa* recruits was significantly affected by
236 experimental treatment ($\chi^2 = 30.779$ and $p < 0.0001$). Hazard ratios from the Cox's proportional
237 hazards model demonstrated that uptake in the C-S+ treatment was significantly lower than the
238 C+S+ treatment (0.294, CI: 0.097, 0.893), but higher than C+S- treatments (0.034, CI: 0.004,
239 0.283), suggesting that the presence of sediment increased the probability of symbiont acquisition
240 in *P. strigosa* recruits.

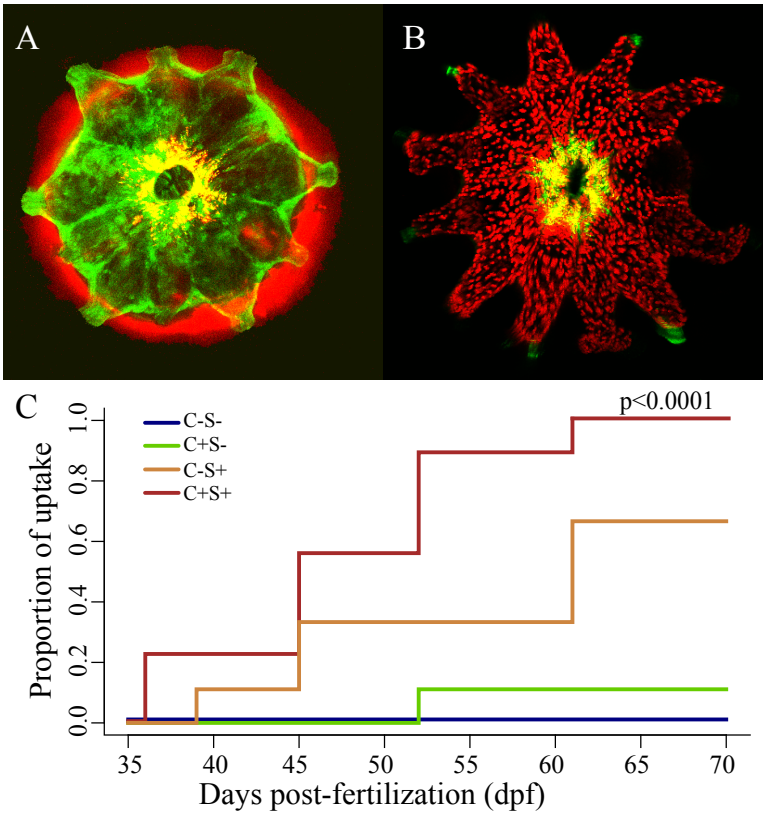

Figure 1: Algal symbiont uptake in *Pseudodiploria strigosa* recruits. Single *P. strigosa* recruit under confocal microscopy showing A. no algal symbiont uptake and B. symbiosis with the algal symbiont demonstrating the clear phenotypic differences in recruit uptake using fluorescence microscopy. Green fluorescence is innate green fluorescence from coral recruit and red excites chlorophyll, which can be seen surrounding the recruit in A (turf algae) and as discrete algal cells in B. C. Mean cumulative uptake of algal symbionts in *P. strigosa* recruits through time demonstrating the proportion of recruits that established symbiosis through time (dpf: days post fertilization) across the four experimental uptake treatments. P-value corresponds to cox-proportional hazards model indicating significant differences in uptake rate. C-S+ = FGB natal reef sediment only, C+S- = *Orbicella faveolata* coral host fragment only, C+S+ = FGB natal reef sediment and *O. faveolata* coral host fragment, and C-S- = seawater control.

Symbiodiniaceae Genetic Diversity

To compare Symbiodiniaceae diversity among individual infected recruits across treatments, a total of 42 corals were successfully genotyped using 454 metabarcoding of the ITS2 locus (Supplemental Table S2). Thirty of these samples were individual recruits from experimental treatment tanks, six were *O. faveolata* host fragments from experimental treatment tanks and six were native *P. strigosa* adults collected from the east Flower Garden Banks (FGB) (Supplemental Table S1). A total of 67,027 raw reads were generated, 55,589 of which were left after adaptor

259 trimming, quality filtering, and discarding reads shorter than 300 bp using the statistical package
260 *dada2*. Recruit 2B1 was excluded from statistical analysis due to low number of remaining reads.
261 Number of filter-passing reads in retained samples ranged from 589 to 4,341 with an average of
262 1264 reads (Supplemental Table S2).

263 The dominant lineage in adult *P. strigosa* was Symbiodiniaceae was B1 (genus *Breviolum*
264 (LaJeunesse et al. 2018)), representing nearly 100% of sequences retrieved from *P. strigosa*
265 colonies (*i.e.* they exclusively hosted B1, Fig. 2). Lineage B1 was also the dominant
266 Symbiodiniaceae reference sequence in *O. faveolata* adults (98.7%-100%), but this species also
267 associated with background levels of B10 (up to 1.3%, Fig. 2).

268 Notably, the average proportion of lineage B1 in juvenile *P. strigosa* recruits was 8.9% (i.e.
269 were background) and only a single recruit from the C+S+ treatment was dominated by B1 (Fig
270 2A). In general, the majority of sequences observed in coral recruits were not detected at any level
271 in adult fragments (Fig 2A). Still, the two most common symbiont lineages among recruits did
272 belong to the genus *Breviolum*, however they were lineage B2 (average proportion of 36.6% in
273 recruits) and lineage B3 (average proportion of 43.5% in recruits). *P. strigosa* recruits also
274 established symbiosis with a wider diversity of symbionts compared to adult samples (lineages:
275 A1.1, A2, A3, A4, A4a, A4.3, B1, B10, B2, B19, B3; Fig 2 and Fig 3A). Lineage B2 was observed
276 at higher abundances in C-S+ treatments, comprising an average proportion of 87.8% in each
277 individual recruit, while B3 was common in treatments that included adult coral fragments (C+S-
278 and C+S+). B3 represented 93.3% of sequences in C+S- treatment, however, these values were
279 derived from a single recruit. In C+S+ treatments, lineage B3 was present at higher average
280 proportions (53.3%) when compared to B2 (24.1%) (Fig 2; Fig 3A).
281

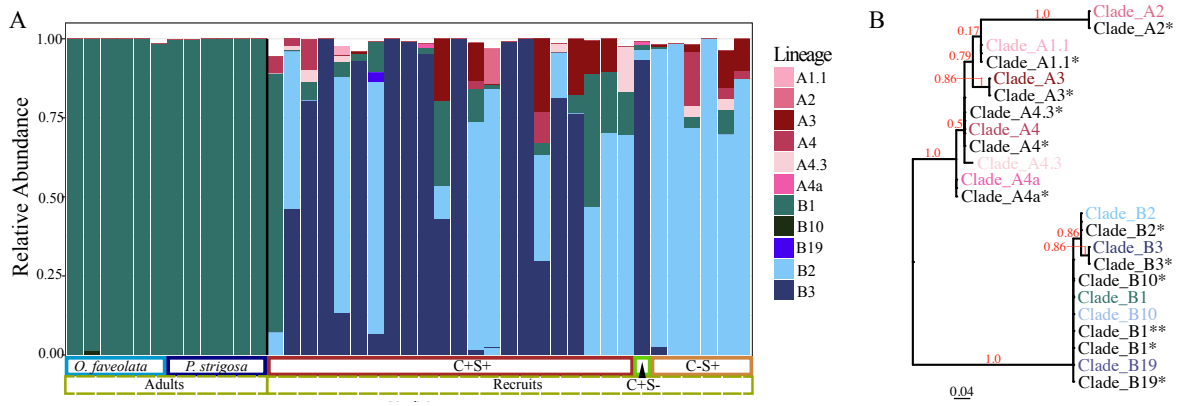

Figure 2: Symbiodiniaceae communities across adult *P. strigosa* in natal reef sites, adult *O. faveolata* used in uptake experiment (collected from natal reef site) and *P. strigosa* recruits in uptake experiment. A. Relative abundance of total reads mapping to reference sequences in GeoSymBio ITS2 database where each vertical bar denotes one coral's Symbiodiniaceae community. The experimental uptake treatment of coral recruits and the two species of adult corals are indicated below the barplot. The black line demarcates adult corals from recruits, contrasting the differences in Symbiodiniaceae communities across the two life stages. C-S+ = FGB natal reef sediment only, C+S- = *O. faveolata* coral host fragment only, and C+S+ = FGB natal reef sediment and *O. faveolata* coral host fragment. B. Phylogenetic analysis of the most abundant unique Symbiodiniaceae sequences within coral samples in the present study in addition to reference ITS2 sequences that were successfully mapped to. Branch support values are shown on the branches at divisions between distinct clades in red. The scale bar represents replacements per nucleotide site. * indicates reference sequences from the GeoSymBio ITS2 database while ** indicates B1 reference sequence from Green et al. (2014).

Shannon and Simpson alpha diversity were calculated for each treatment and a one-way ANOVA tested for diversity differences across symbiont source treatments. Both diversity measures indicated that alpha diversity varied significantly across source treatments (Simpson: F=15.77, $p<0.0001$; Shannon: F=11.01, $p<0.0001$; Table 1) and Tukey's post-hoc tests confirmed that C+S+ treatments exhibited significantly higher mean Simpson and Shannon alpha diversities when compared to alpha diversities of other treatments and adult host fragments of both species ($p<0.05$; Table 2). C+S- treatment was not included in pairwise comparisons since only a single recruit achieved symbiosis.

Table 1: Tukey post-hoc pairwise statistics for Simpson and Shannon alpha diversities with respect to recruits in different uptake treatments and adult coral host Symbiodiniceae communities. P-values: *<0.05, **<0.01, ***<0.001 Note: Adult host fragment only treatments (C+S-) were not included given that too few recruits were observed to uptake algal symbionts. C-S+ = FGB natal reef sediment only and C+S+ = FGB natal reef sediment and *O. faveolata* coral host fragment.

Treatment	**Simpson p-value**	**Shannon p-value**
Adult *O. faveolata* – *P. strigosa*	0.8404	0.7645
Adult *P. strigosa* – C+S+	0.0017**	0.0124 *
Adult *P. strigosa* – *C-S+*	0.8119	0.9402

Adult *O. faveolata* – *C+S+*	0.0001***	0.0004 ***
Adult *O. faveolata* – *C-S+*	0.9999	0.9773
C-S+ – C+S+	0.0001***	0.0018 **

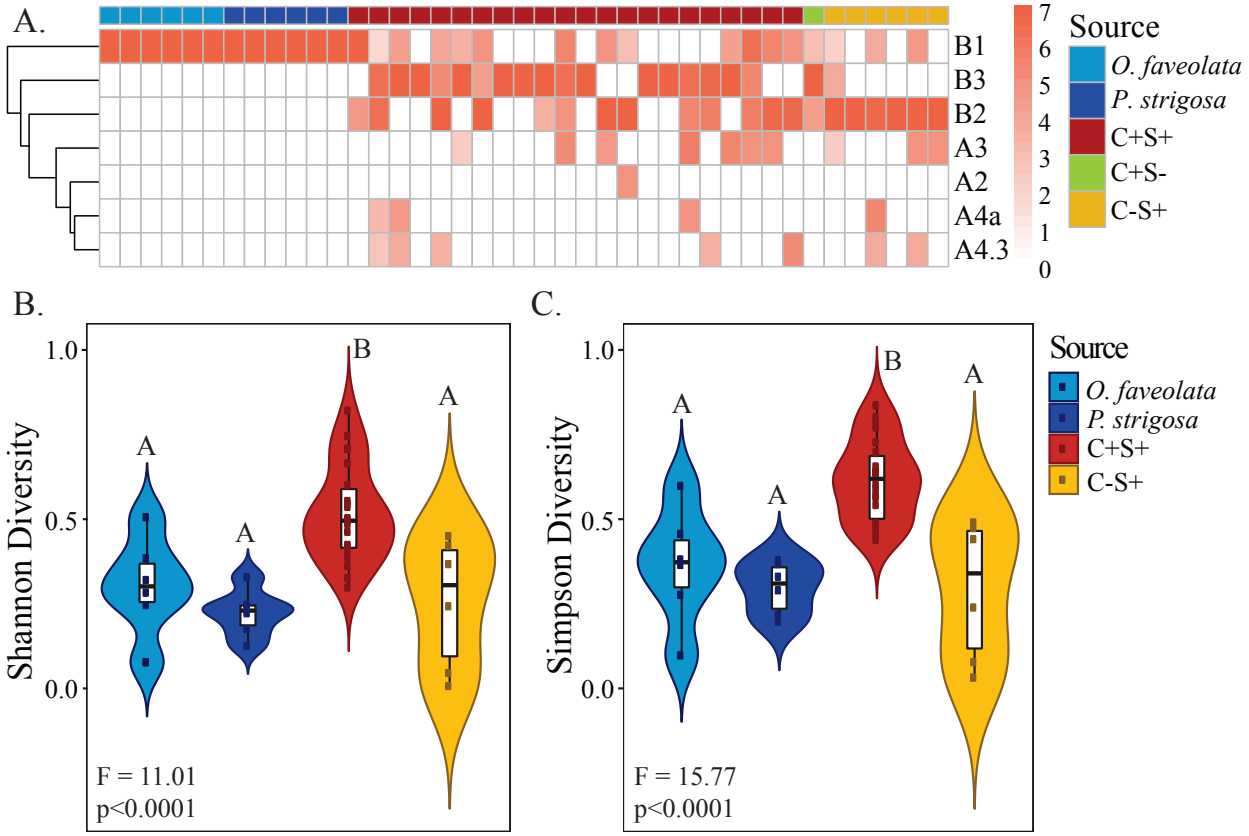

Figure 3: Symbiodiniaceae community diversity across adult *P. strigosa* in natal reef sites, adult *O. faveolata* used in uptake experiment (collected from natal reef site) and *P. strigosa* recruits in uptake experiment. A. Heatmap of *log* normalized counts within a lineage for all sequenced samples. B. Mean Shannon and Simpson alpha diversities for Symbiodiniaceae communities across adult corals and recruits in experimental uptake treatments. Widths of colored bands in violin plots correspond to the probability distribution of diversity indices. The boxplot and whiskers correspond to the interquartile range, median, and 95% confidence interval of alpha diversity measures. C-S+ = FGB natal reef sediment only, C+S- = *Orbicella faveolata* coral host fragment only, and C+S+ = FGB natal reef sediment and *O. faveolata* coral host fragment. *Orbicella faveolata* coral host fragment only treatments (C+S-) were excluded from analyses due to low sample size (N=1).

320 **DISCUSSION**

321 The reservoirs of free-living Symbiodiniaceae available for uptake by horizontally
322 transmitting corals remain unresolved (Quigley et al. 2017). Here we assessed the relative roles
323 that availability of reef sediment and coral adults play in the establishment of symbiosis in the
324 horizontally transmitting reef-building coral *Pseudodiploria strigosa*. We found that reef sediment
325 appears necessary for the successful establishment of symbiosis in *P. strigosa* coral recruits since
326 recruits in treatments with sediment (C+S+ and C-S+) consistently exhibited significantly higher
327 uptake rates when compared to treatments without sediment (C+S- and C-S-) (Fig 1C). This
328 outcome is consistent with previous studies investigating symbiont uptake, which have similarly
329 found that sediment serves as an important reservoir of Symbiodiniaceae for horizontally
330 transmitting coral larvae and recruits (Adams et al. 2009; Cumbo et al. 2013; Nitschke et al. 2016).
331 Free-living Symbiodinaceae are ubiquitous in the reef environment (Coffroth et al. 2006; Pochon
332 et al. 2010; Takabayashi et al. 2012; Quigley et al. 2017; Porto et al. 2008) and their densities in
333 the sediment have been estimated to be up to 15 times higher when compared to densities in the
334 water column (Littman et al. 2008) due to the symbiont's largely immobile lifestyle and because
335 they are negatively buoyant (Coffroth et al. 2006; Yacobovitch et al. 2004). In light of these
336 Symbiodiniaceae distributions, it is perhaps not surprising that we observed significantly higher
337 uptake rates in treatments with sediment available (C-S+, C+S+) (Fig 1A).

338 We observed that only a single coral recruit took established symbiosis in the presence of
339 adult coral but in the absence of sediment (C+S-); notably, most of these symbiont types were not
340 detected in the adult tissue (Fig 2). Therefore, similarly to the algal communities established from
341 sediment, these symbiont lineages likely represent free-living strains populating the coral's surface
342 or exposed skeleton rather than algal symbionts establishing symbiosis directly from adult coral.

343 The most surprising of our results is the finding that the combined C+S+ treatment
344 exhibited much higher uptake rates than can be expected from just the sum of individual C-S+ and
345 C+S- effects (Fig 1). Perhaps the presence of an adult coral alone increases uptake rates through
346 the use of chemical cues. Previous work has linked chemical cues between corals and algal
347 symbionts (Fitt and Trench 1981; Hagedorn et al. 2015; Fitt 1984; Takeuchi et al. 2017), however
348 facilitation of the onset of symbiosis via adult specific cues is a novel hypothesis. In turn, the
349 presence of sediment might facilitate uptake of algal symbionts from other sources. If the B3
350 symbiont type, which was never detected in adult coral colonies and was detected nearly
351 exclusively in C+ treatments, is derived from the surface of the adult coral, then the sediment
352 appears to have strongly promoted its uptake (Fig 2A). It is possible that sediment is required for
353 the alga to complete a certain life cycle transition before it can infect recruits.

354 While *P. strigosa* recruits took up a small proportion of the "adult-like" B1 symbiont, they
355 also took up many other Symbiodiniaceae lineages that were undetectable in adult *O. faveolata*
356 (Fig 2A; Fig 3A). Stark differences in Symbiodiniaceae communities between early life stages and
357 adults have been observed in multiple horizontal-transmitting corals, including Pacific Acroporids
358 (Abrego et al. 2009a, 2009b; Little et al. 2004; Gómez-Cabrera et al. 2007) and Caribbean
359 *Orbicella faveolata* (McIlroy and Coffroth 2017). We demonstrate similar results for a divergent
360 Caribbean coral lineage (*P. strigosa*), suggesting that this phenomenon is a common feature of
361 horizontally transmitting corals.

362 We did not assess the Symbiodiniaceae diversity present in the sediment, so we cannot
363 determine if uptake of symbionts from the sediment was random or if certain lineages were more
364 infectious. Future studies should sequence sediment Symbiodiniaceae communities to address this
365 shortcoming, especially given that Quigley et al. (2017) found that Symbiodiniaceae communities

366 in the sediment had four times as many OTUs when compared with Symbiodiniaceae communities
367 hosted by juvenile *Acropora* recruits. In addition to finding more OTUs, Quigley et al. (2017)
368 determined that very few OTUs were shared among juveniles and sediment, indicating that
369 infection capabilities of different strains are not equal.

370 While high diversity symbiont communities in juvenile horizontally transmitting corals are
371 well-established, the reason for this remains unclear. Increased diversity in recruits could be due
372 to the lack of robust symbiont recognition mechanisms (Cumbo et al. 2013). Alternatively,
373 harboring a more diverse Symbiodiniaceae community could confer varied functional and
374 physiological advantages, perhaps even allowing them to cope with a variable local environments
375 (Thornhill et al. 2017). Interestingly, uptake of B1 was not significantly higher in the presence of
376 the coral fragment, suggesting that endosymbiotic B1 cells did not contribute significantly to the
377 algal population capable of infecting recruits. Once again, this suggests that infective
378 Symbiodiniaceae cells are free-living, and that transition to this state from the state of
379 endosymbiosis is either indirect or takes considerable time.

380 Our results corroborate prior work showing that both sediment and host corals enhance the
381 establishment of symbiosis in horizontally-transmitting corals. Most notably, we found that the
382 presence of adult corals interacted synergistically with the presence of sediment. Clearly, more
383 work on the life history of Symbiodiniaceae is required to explain these observations and to
384 understand all the steps leading to transmission of resident endosymbionts to the next generation
385 of coral hosts.

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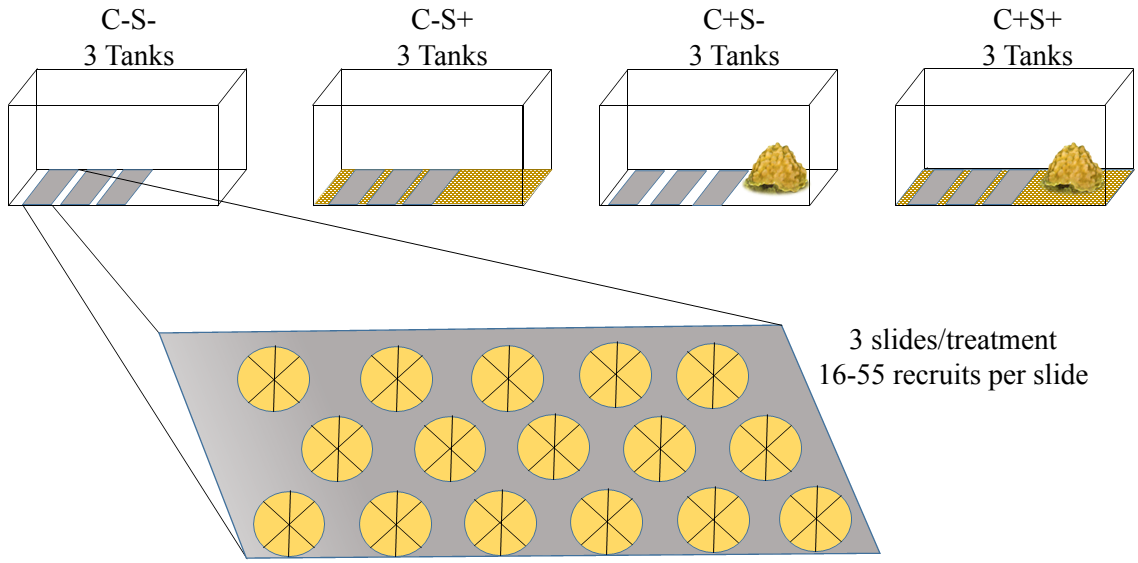
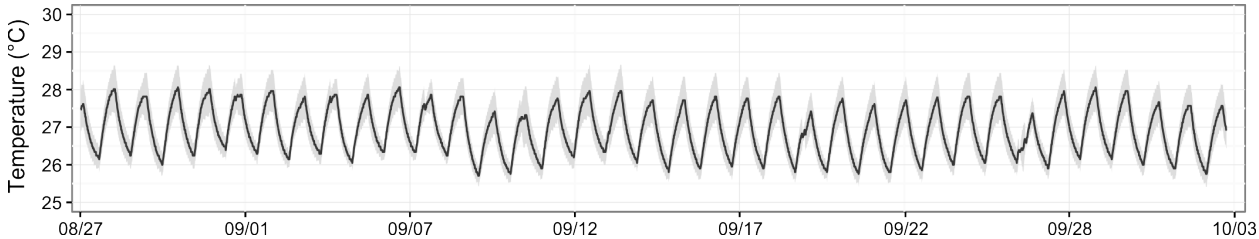
Supplemental Information:

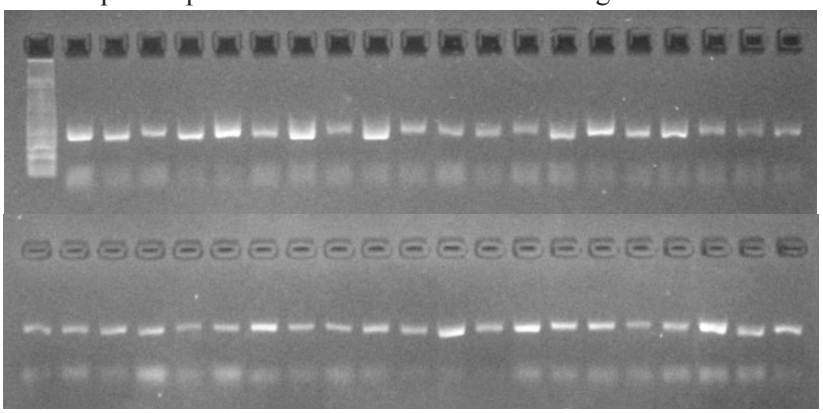


Supplemental Figure 1: Symbiodiniaceae uptake experimental design demonstrating the four different uptake treatments and the three replicate slides with settled *P. strigosa* corals (N=16-55 recruits per slide) within each tank (3 tank systems for each uptake treatment). C-S+ = FGB natal reef sediment only, C+S- = *Orbicella faveolata* coral host fragment only, C+S+ = FGB natal reef sediment and *O. faveolata* coral host fragment, and C-S- = seawater control.

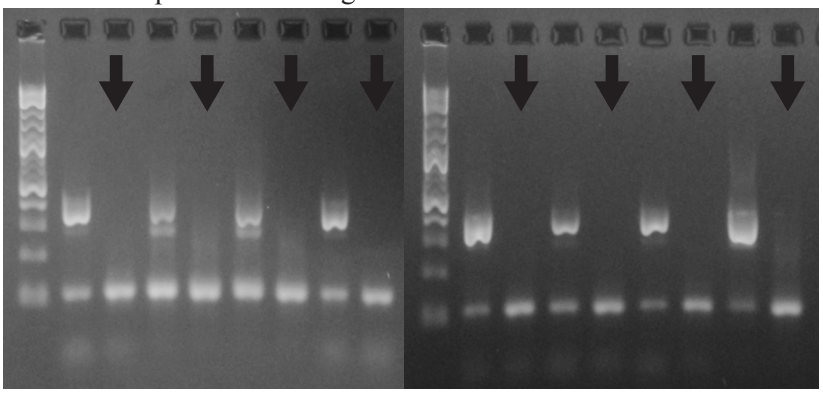


Supplemental Figure 2: Mean temperature in a representative experimental tank through time. Black line indicates mean temperature and grey shading shows 95% confidence interval around that mean. Data were collected using Hobo data loggers.

A. Sample Amplifications for ITS2 Metabarcoding



B. ITS2 Amplicons with Negative Control



Supplemental Figure 3: ITS2 Symbiodiniaceae community library preparation. A. ITS amplicon for each sequenced coral adult and *P. strigosa* recruit. Cycle numbers ranged from 26 - 41 across samples (Supplemental Table S1). B. ITS2 amplicons alongside their no-template negative controls (black arrows) demonstrating that even under high cycle numbers (42 cycles) no amplification is observed in negative controls.

Supplemental Table S1: Raw OTU counts

Supplemental Table S2: Coral adult and recruit DNA sample ID's and their associated uptake treatment tanks, raw 454 sequence numbers, *dada2* filtered sequence numbers and total number of PCR cycles (PCR) ran for each sample to achieve a visual band on agarose gel (Supplementary Figure 3A). Sample in bold was not included in downstream analyses due to low read depth. C-S+ = FGB natal reef sediment only, C+S- = *Orbicella faveolata* coral host fragment only, C+S+ = FGB natal reef sediment and *O. faveolata* coral host fragment, and C-S- = seawater control.

Sample ID	Treatment	Raw	Filtered	PCR
FAV1	Adult – *O. faveolata*	2353	2143	26
FAV2	Adult – *O. faveolata*	4796	4341	26
FAV4	Adult – *O. faveolata*	2007	1830	26
FAV6	Adult – *O. faveolata*	1048	990	26
FAV7	Adult – *O. faveolata*	934	876	26
FAV11	Adult – *O. faveolata*	1056	983	26
DIP10	Adult – *P. strigosa*	3789	3535	26
DIP11	Adult – *P. strigosa*	1190	1117	26
DIP12	Adult – *P. strigosa*	2540	2385	26
DIP13	Adult – *P. strigosa*	1779	1604	26
DIP14	Adult – *P. strigosa*	1938	1785	26

DIP23	Adult – *P. strigosa*	1364	1250	26
2B_1	**Recruit – C+S+**	**494**	**386**	**36**
2C_1	Recruit – C+S+	1168	921	31
2C_2	Recruit – C+S+	2155	1714	36
2C_3	Recruit – C+S+	719	589	28
2C_4	Recruit – C+S+	1175	971	36
2C_5	Recruit – C+S+	915	744	31
2C_6	Recruit – C+S+	1568	1226	36
2C_7	Recruit – C+S+	1298	1091	31
6A_1	Recruit – C+S+	1261	1036	30
6A_2_3	Recruit – C+S+	2173	1772	36
6A_4	Recruit – C+S+	1044	790	36
6B_2	Recruit – C+S+	1995	1665	26
6B_3	Recruit – C+S+	1494	1202	36
6B_4	Recruit – C+S+	1542	1167	36
6B_5	Recruit – C+S+	2164	1789	26
6C_1	Recruit – C+S+	787	598	32
6C_2	Recruit – C+S+	1077	818	38
6C_3	Recruit – C+S+	1401	1097	38
6C_4	Recruit – C+S+	1892	1407	41
6C_5	Recruit – C+S+	753	472	36
6C_6	Recruit – C+S+	909	679	36
11C_1	Recruit – C+S+	809	651	36
4A_1	Recruit – C+S-	2759	2218	36
10C_1	Recruit – C–S+	2831	2305	31
10C_2	Recruit – C–S+	1299	1047	34
10C_3	Recruit – C–S+	1410	1102	31
10C_4	Recruit – C–S+	1677	1359	38
10C_5	Recruit – C–S+	1071	797	36
3C_1	Recruit – C–S+	1393	1137	36