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Polar lipid fatty acids as indicators of trophic associations in a deep-sea vent system community

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Abstract:

The polar lipid fatty acid (PLFA) profiles of invertebrates living in chemosynthetic communities can indicate the degree to which these animals depend on specific types of bacteria. To identify the nutritional sources of various species from deep-sea hydrothermal vents of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, a Principal Component Analysis was performed using individual PLFA profiles as descriptors. Two associations representing different feeding groups were identified: (i) mussels, commensal polychaetes and gastropods, (ii) shrimps and crabs. The first association relies more on sulphide-oxidizing bacteria, while the second one has more anaerobic sulphate-reducing bacteria biomarkers. Other small invertebrates reveal different diets. The polychaete *Amathys lutzi* shows the most diversified bacterial diet, with fatty acid biomarkers from both S-oxidizing and S-reducing bacteria.

Keywords: fatty acids, hydrothermal vents, biomarkers, Mid-Atlantic Ridge

1 **Abstract:**

2 The polar lipid fatty acid (PLFA) profiles of invertebrates living in chemosynthetic
3 communities can indicate the degree to which these animals depend on specific types
4 of bacteria.

5 To identify the nutritional sources of various species from deep-sea hydrothermal
6 vents of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, a Principal Component Analysis was performed
7 using individual PLFA profiles as descriptors. Two associations representing
8 different feeding groups were identified: (i) mussels, commensal polychaetes and
9 gastropods, (ii) shrimps and crabs. The first association relies more on sulphide-
10 oxidizing bacteria, while the second one has more anaerobic sulphate-reducing
11 bacteria (SRB) biomarkers. Other small invertebrates reveal different diets. The
12 polychaete *Amathys lutzii* shows the most diversified bacterial diet, with FA
13 biomarkers from both S-oxidizing and SRB bacteria.

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23 **Problem**

24 It is widely known that fatty acid analyses (FA) can be good indicators of specific
25 microorganisms, since different groups of bacteria may have different FA

1 compositions (Lechevalier, 1977; Goodfellow and Minnikin, 1985). Hence, FAs
2 have been used in classical enumeration procedures to reveal and estimate which
3 microorganisms are associated with biofilms, soils and sediments (Guezennec et al.,
4 1998) (table 1).

5 Polar lipid fatty acids (PLFA) are good biomarkers for disclosing and describing
6 trophic relations between vent community animals, as well as for confirming the
7 importance of bacteria in the nutrition of organisms endemic to hydrothermal vents.
8 Highly unsaturated fatty acids (HUFA) composed of long carbon chains (e.g.,
9 C₂₀:4 ω 6, C₂₀:5 ω 3 or C₂₂:6 ω 3) can be indicative of phytoplankton (Chuecas &
10 Riley, 1969), although some bacteria can also synthesize them (Nichols 2003). These
11 HUFA are characteristic of all heterotrophic marine invertebrates and are usually
12 present in high concentrations in the tissue of these organisms (Sargent et al., 1990).
13 Therefore, very low levels of HUFA in the hydrothermal vent communities suggest a
14 trophic web that is not primarily based on phytoplankton. Likewise PLFA in
15 invertebrates living in communities where the food chain is based on microorganisms
16 can indicate the degree to which these animals feed on bacteria and suggest which
17 bacteria they rely on, since bacteria-specific PLFA can be used as biomarkers
18 (Guezennec, 1995).

19 It has been proposed that animals whose diets predominantly consist of bacteria, i.e.,
20 diets rich in 16:0, 16:1(n-7), and 18:1(n-7) fatty acids, while being relatively
21 deficient in (n-3) PUFAs, produce Non-methylene interrupted dienoic (NMID) fatty
22 acids from monenoic fatty acids (Ackman and Hooper, 1973) which effectively
23 substitute for the low levels of (n-3) PUFAs (Pond et al, 2002). This FA have been
24 observed in symbiotic organisms and some molluscs (Conway & Capuzzo, 1991).

1 Several authors have studied FA composition and compound-specific stable isotopes
2 of Mid Atlantic Ridge hydrothermal vent invertebrate species (Pond et al., 1997a,
3 1997b, 1998; Rieley et al., 1999; and Allen et al., 2001). Although these studies have
4 contributed greatly to the knowledge of the feeding strategies of individual species,
5 they did not establish trophic links between species and their respective predators. A
6 special case is the dominant vent shrimp at the deeper Mid-Atlantic Ridge
7 hydrothermal vent sites *Rimicaris exoculata*. It is the only species that actively seeks
8 the active facies from the hydrothermal structures and several hypotheses developed
9 the importance of bacteria in the nutrition of these shrimps. In this study we ask: (1)
10 What is the relationship between the lipid profiles of the various species? (2) Can
11 trophic relationships be established from PLFA profiles? (3) What are the feeding
12 strategies of *Rimicaris exoculata*?

13

14 **Material and Methods:**

15 **Animal collection**

16 Samples were taken during three deep-sea hydrothermal vent cruises along the Mid-
17 Atlantic Ridge (MAR). MAR/97, in 1997, sampled all of the known hydrothermal
18 vent fields along the MAR at that time. (Menez Gwen 37,51°N 840m; Lucky Strike
19 37,18°N 1700m; Rainbow 36,13°N 2300m; Broken Spur 29,10°N 3000m; TAG
20 26,08°N 3600m; Snake Pit 23,22°N 3400m, and Logatchev 14,45°N 2900m); two
21 other cruises (MARVEL in 1997 & PICO in 1998) sampled the Azores Triple
22 Junction hydrothermal vent fields (Menez Gwen; Lucky Strike; Rainbow). Animals
23 were collected using the submersible's packman scoop, or by using a slurp gun.
24 *Mirocaris fortunata*, *Chorocaris chacei*, and *Rimicaris exoculata* shrimps;
25 *Bathymodiolus* spp mussels; the *Segonzacia mesatlantica* crab; and the

1 *Phymorhynchus moskalei* whelk were dissected immediately upon arrival on board in
2 order to retrieve the digestive gland. The mouth parts were retrieved only from the *R.*
3 *exoculata* shrimp. The remaining specimens collected were not dissected due to their
4 reduced size. Samples were subsequently deep-frozen (-80°C) on board and freeze-
5 dried at the shore laboratory. Whole animal PLFA profiles were determined in the
6 polychaete *Amathys lutzii* (n=5), the polychaete *Branchipolynoe seepensis* (n=12)
7 commensal with mussels, the pycnogonid *Sericosura* sp. (n=2), the amphipods (n=2)
8 (unknown species) and the shrimp *Alvinocaris markensis* (n=1).
9 PLFA profiles were also determined for the digestive glands of the mussels (n=26)
10 (*Bathymodiolus azoricus*, *B. puteoserpentis* and *Bathymodiolus* spp.), crab (n=15)
11 (*Segonzacia mesatlantica*), whelk (n=6) (*Phymorhynchus* sp.), and shrimps (*R.*
12 *exoculata* (n=13), *C. chacei* (n=2) and *M. fortunata* (n=6)) , along with *R. exoculata*
13 mouthparts (n=4).

14 **Lipid analysis**

15 Lipids were extracted using a modified version of the Bligh and Dyer method (Bligh
16 and Dyer, 1959; White et al., 1979). Total extractable lipids were fractionated by
17 silicic acid column chromatography. The PLFA esters were methylated by acid
18 methanolysis of the polar lipid fractions. Quantification was based on comparing
19 peak areas to an internal injection standard (19:0). Gas chromatography was carried
20 out using a HRGC 5160 Megaserie (Carlo-Elba) equipped with an injection system
21 *on column*, and with a flame ionisation detector (FID), connected with an integrator
22 SP42070 (Spectra Physics) D-2500 (Merck). Chromatography was carried out using
23 a non polar column CP-Sil-5 CB[®] (Chrompack).

24 **FA STRUCTURAL VERIFICATION**

1 Two-derivatization methods (DMDS and D-MOX) were used to identify the mono
2 and polyunsaturated double bond position (Guezennec, 1986; Nichols et al., 1986;
3 Yu et al., 1989; Fay and Richli, 1991). FA identification was by GC/MS. GC-MS
4 was carried out using a HRGC 5160 Megaserie (Carlo-Elba) chromatograph
5 equipped with a NERMAG R 10 x 10 quadripolar mass spectrometer.

6 **STATISTICS**

7 To identify associations between the different species, principal component analysis
8 (PCA) was performed using individual PLFA profiles as descriptors for the different
9 individuals. The matrix was standardized by dividing each row by the standard
10 deviation and subtracting off the mean of each row.

11 We hypothesize that if the species fall within the same group, it signifies a strong
12 association among the species. They either eat the same food source or feed on each
13 other. The higher trophic level (predation or omnivory) is established when two
14 species are associated and one presents lower amounts of bacterial origin fatty acid.

15 Due to the low number of samples, no statistical analysis was performed to compare
16 the PLFA profiles of the digestive glands and mouth parts of the shrimp *R.*
17 *exoculata*. Graphs are presented comparing the PLFA profiles.

18

19 **RESULTS**

20

21 **RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TAXONOMIC GROUPS**

22 Table 2 summarizes the percentage of each PLFA for each species or taxonomic
23 group. Several PLFA profiles were assessed for each taxonomic group; however, no
24 specific PLFA profile could be established for a species or taxonomic group,
25 although the percentages obtained in some cases merit attention.

1 The pycnogonid *Sericosura* sp. and the *M. fortunata* and *C. chacei* shrimps have a
2 high percentage of C18:0. For mussels and the polychaete *A. lutzi*, C16:0 is present at
3 more than 20 percent. The *R. exoculata* and *M. fortunata* shrimps show large
4 amounts of C14:0.

5 The percentage of monounsaturated fatty acid (MUFA) varied considerably between
6 all the groups. The shrimp *R. exoculata* was the only species that possessed
7 C14:1 ω 7. The fatty acids C16:1 ω 9 and C16:1 ω 7 were present at levels of more than
8 8% in all the groups except for the pycnogonid *Sericosura* sp. and the whelk
9 *Phymorhynchus* sp. The highest percentages of C18:1 ω 13+C18:1 ω 9 were found in
10 the amphipods, the shrimp *A. markensis*, and the crab *S. mesatlantica*. C18:1 ω 7 was
11 important in all taxonomic groups except for the mussels. The whelk *Phymorhynchus*
12 sp. had noticeable amounts of C20:1 ω 13 and C20:1 ω 9 as did the commensal worm
13 (*B. seepensis*) and the mussels. C20:1 ω 7 is present in similar amounts in the
14 polychaete *A. lutzi*, commensal worm, mussel and whelk, but was present at low
15 levels in the other taxonomic groups. C21:1 ω 9 was found exclusively in the
16 polychaete *A. lutzi*.

17 The highest percentages of branched PLFA were seen in the polychaete *A. lutzi* and
18 the shrimps *R. exoculata* and *M. fortunata*. However, iC19:0 was an exception, with
19 highest percentages found in the mussel, followed by the shrimp *M. fortunata* and the
20 amphipod. Polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA) were present in different quantities in
21 all the taxonomic groups sampled. Nearly all the animals contained nonmethylene-
22 interrupted dienoic fatty acids (NMID) from the Δ 5-desaturation pathway. A higher
23 percentage of the PUFA C18:3 ω (9,12,15) was present in mussels and amphipods
24 than in the other taxonomic groups (<1%). High proportions of the NMID
25 C20:2 ω (7,15) were found in mussels, the shrimp *R. exoculata* and the whelk

1 *Phymorhynchus* sp. The mussel and commensal worm had relatively high
2 percentages of the NMID C20:2 ω (6,15), as did the whelk and the amphipods. The
3 percentage of NMID C20:2 ω (8,15) was greater than 1% in the polychaete *A. lutzii*, in
4 the commensal worm, mussels, whelk, amphipod and in the shrimp *M. fortunata*.
5 The PLFA profiles of the digestive gland or the entire animal were used as
6 descriptors to perform the principle component analysis (PCA) (Fig. 1). The first
7 component differentiates the mussels *Bathymodiolus* spp, the *Phymorhynchus* sp.
8 whelk and the commensal worm *B. seepensis*. The shrimps and crab are grouped
9 separately, and at the center of the axes other non-dominant invertebrates, such as the
10 polychaete *Amathys lutzii*, the pycnogonid *Sericosura* sp., and amphipod, are
11 identified. The second component differentiates the mussel, shrimps and part of the
12 crab from the commensal worm, the whelk *Phymorhynchus* sp., the polychaete *A.*
13 *lutzii* and the remaining crabs.

14

15 **PARTICULAR CASES:**

16 **Shrimp *Rimicaris exoculata***

17 For a better understanding of the *R. exoculata* food source, the PLFA profiles of
18 mouthparts and digestive gland were compared (Figures 2). The profiles of these
19 tissues in *R. exoculata* individuals, three from Rainbow hydrothermal field and the
20 other from Lucky Strike hydrothermal field, overlap. With the exception of some
21 NMID, both individuals exhibited similar PLFA profiles. Generally the mouthparts
22 presented higher quantities of the same MUFAs and branched fatty acids than the
23 digestive gland.

1 **Mussels (*Bathymodiolus azoricus*, *B. puteoserpentis*, *Bathymodiolus***
2 **spp.)**

3 Despite the existence of S-oxidizing and methanotrophic endosymbiotic bacteria in
4 mussel gill tissue (Fiala-Médioni et al, 2002), no typical methanotrophic bacteria
5 biomarkers were found. However, the large percentage of iC19:0 and C18:1 ω 13 +
6 C18:1 ω 9 is certainly related to the presence of endosymbiotic bacteria.

7

8 **DISCUSSION**

9 The presence of bacteria-specific biomarkers such as iC15:0 and iC17:1 ω 7, as well
10 as large quantities of the 1 ω 7 series, low levels of PUFA, the absence of HUFA
11 (notably the absence of C20:5 ω -3 and C22: 6 ω -3, which are phytoplankton
12 biomarkers) and the presence of NMID all indicate that the vent communities rely
13 almost entirely on bacteria. Those species that present more branched fatty acids
14 from the ω 7 series rely more on S-reducing bacteria, while the ones with more
15 MUFA from the ω 7 series and more NMID from this series rely more on S-oxidizing
16 bacteria.

17

18 **RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SPECIES**

19 The most striking result of the PCA analyses was the observation of two different
20 groups. Despite the fact that no species presented a specific PLFA profile, organism
21 associations were found. The two associations: mussel-commensal worm-whelk and
22 shrimps-crab have different PLFA indicative of different bacteria in their diets. The
23 mussel-commensal worm-whelk association relies more on S-oxidizing bacteria,
24 while the crab-shrimp association has more S-reducing bacteria (SRB) anaerobic
25 biomarkers. This indicates that the latter group of animals apparently lives in

1 conditions closer to anoxia than the other, which is congruent with the
2 microdistribution of these organisms (Desbruyères et al., 2001). The large central
3 group represents omnivorous species that feed on bacteria in addition to other types
4 of food (e.g., *C. chacei*). The individual fatty acids do not differentiate groups; but
5 the percentage and composition of PUFA are responsible for the observed
6 distribution.

7 These two associations (mussel-commensal worm-whelk and shrimps-crab) were
8 also demonstrated by stable isotope analysis, with the first association presenting
9 very depleted $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ (around -30‰), and the second presenting less depleted $\delta^{13}\text{C}$
10 (around -11‰) values (Colaço et al., 2002).

11 The individuals at the center of the PCA axes have a more diversified bacterial diet,
12 with several different biomarkers from S-oxidizing and SRB bacteria. The
13 association of mussels and *Phymorhynchus* sp. was also observed through stable
14 isotope analysis (Fisher et al., 1994; Colaço et al., 2002) as was the mussel-
15 commensal worm coupling (Colaço et al., 2002).

16 The fatty acid composition of *M. fortunata* fell midway between that of the other
17 shrimp species (*R. exoculata*, *C. chacei*, *A. markensis*). *R. exoculata* is considered to
18 be bactivorous, and *C. chacei* and *A. markensis* to be carnivorous or scavengers. The
19 PLFA profile of *M. fortunata* indicates that this species is omnivorous, feeding not
20 only on other animals (carnivorous) but also on S-oxidizing bacteria (bactivorous), as
21 indicated by the presence of branched fatty acids, monounsaturated $\omega 7$ fatty acids
22 and more NMID (c. f. Table 2). However, according to our definition, this species
23 might also be a secondary consumer, eating animals that are eating the bacteria, as
24 was indicated by Colaço et al., 2002. The crab *S. mesatlantica* shows a similar
25 pattern to that of *M. fortunata*, despite possessing fewer branched fatty acids.

1 According to Colaço et al., 2002, the crab's trophic position is not that of omnivore,
2 but rather predator, feeding on bacterivorous animals like amphipods and other
3 mixotrophs like shrimps. If this is the case, the bacterial FA present in these animals
4 is from the prey food source and not from bacteriophagy.

5 The polychaete *A. lutzii* presented a characteristic fatty acid profile, with the higher
6 amounts of branched fatty acids indicative of a diversified bacterial diet. Its mobility
7 allows it to feed on different food sources at the hydrothermal vents.

8 Detailed analyses of the fatty acid profiles shows an absence of HUFA (C20:5 ω 3 and
9 C22:6 ω 3) in all the taxonomic groups studied, suggesting that if the vent fauna relies
10 on photosynthetically produced material, it is as transformed material like nutrients
11 or polysaccharide molecules, rather than lipids. The low amounts of PUFA also
12 support this idea, especially in light the absence of C20:4 ω 6.

13 The presence of phyto-biomarkers at some hydrothermal vent fields (e.g. 13°N) and
14 their absence at the Galapagos field was tentatively related to the mussel's condition.
15 The condition parameter was the loss of symbionts (Ben-Mlih et al., 1992). This
16 situation is not surprising, since the mussels did not lose their filter-feeding capacity,
17 and in the absence of symbionts, phytodetritus-derived particles would be one of the
18 available energy sources. Mussel symbionts disappear when the mussel environment
19 loses the symbionts' energy source (Dando, pers. com.)

20 The PUFA present in the PLFA lipids of the studied species are due to two factors,
21 the desaturation possible in all aerobic Δ 9 organisms, and the desaturation specific to
22 certain Δ 5 marine invertebrates. The presence of high proportions of NMID from
23 C18:1 ω 7 is a clear indicator that the species rely on chemoautotrophic bacteria, as
24 has already been indicated by several authors (Zhukova, 1991; Pond et al., 1997b;
25 Pranal et al., 1997).

1 **PARTICULAR CASES**

2 ***Shrimps Rimicaris exoculata***

3 In the deep-sea hydrothermal vent fields at MAR, the three main sources of dietary
4 carbon that are available to the shrimp *R. exoculata* are: (i) bacteria fixed on the
5 mouthparts of this species; (ii) bacteria associated with the minerals that these
6 organisms ingest from the sulphide chimneys, and (iii) detritus from the oceanic
7 photic zone. The absence of HUFA, the low levels of PUFA with the exception of
8 the NMID, makes the third hypothesis rather improbable, consistent with the results
9 of Rieley et al. (1999). The lipid profile of this species is also different from deep-sea
10 benthic shrimps (*Nematocarcinus gracilis*) that rely on phototrophically derived
11 organic matter (Allen, 1998). However, and according to Pond et al., (1997a),
12 juvenile *Rimicaris exoculata* rely on material from the photic zone of the ocean.
13 Allen et al. (2001) also showed that in this species, adults and juveniles exhibit
14 different partitioning of lipids in tissues, with an increased proportion of bacterial-
15 derived organic matter in adults compared to that of juveniles.

16 Comparison of mouthparts and digestive gland PLFA profiles revealed a close
17 similarity, with the digestive gland having more NMID. When looking at the
18 monounsaturated fatty acids that might underlie the origin of these NMID, the FA
19 profiles of the mouthpart and the digestive gland are very similar. Earlier studies
20 showed that the bacteria from the mouthparts (epibionts) and bacteria from sulphides
21 are closely related (Rieley et al., 1999). However, by means of a specific compound
22 stable isotope analysis, it was shown that the epibiont bacteria have a $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ signal
23 similar to that of the shrimp, while the sulphide bacteria are much more ^{13}C depleted.
24 Considering these factors, and from the results presented here, we conclude that this
25 species relies on bacteria present in its mouthparts.

1 **Mussels (*Bathymodiolus azoricus*, *B. puteoserpentis*, *Bathymodiolus* spp.).**
2 Analyses of fatty acids as biomarkers often allow for an evaluation of host-symbiont
3 energy relationships and carbon sources (Jahnke et al., 1995; Pranal et al., 1997).
4 Despite the fact that the mussels host S-oxidizing and methanotrophic bacteria
5 (Fiala- Medioni et al., 2002), no methanotrophic biomarker was observed on the
6 mussel PLFA profiles. This result contradicts Pond et al. (1998), in which these
7 biomarkers were found in mussels from Lucky Strike and Menez Gwen. Type I
8 Methanotroph biomarkers (C16:1 ω 6; and C18:1 ω 6) were observed in other species
9 but in smaller amounts. The presence of the fatty acid C18:1 ω 13, a methylotrophic
10 bacteria fatty acid, do not allow the determination to which type of methanotrophic
11 bacteria the mussels rely on, since Methylotrophs are ubiquitous microorganisms that
12 can use C1 compounds (methanol, methylamine, methane, etc.) for growth and just
13 some specialized methylotrophs, are the methanotrophs. Bowman et al. (1991)
14 characterised several methanotrophic bacteria from PLFA profiles and showed that
15 some bacteria did not present the typical biomarkers of the methanotrophic types.
16 Despite the lack of typical methanotrophic PLFA, the presence of other
17 methanotrophic bacteria cannot be excluded. The presence of NMID C20:2 ω 6, 15
18 and C20:2 ω 8,15 in mussels leads us to believe that these fatty acids are the result of
19 a specific biosynthetic pathway based on chain elongation and original Δ 5
20 desaturation of the fatty acids C16:1 ω 6; C16:1 ω 8; 18:1 ω 6 and C18:1 ω 8 (which are
21 methanotrophic biomarkers). The methanotrophic FA published in Pranal, et al,
22 1997, were not detected in the mussels. As the deep-sea hydrothermal environment is
23 continually changing, the hypothesis that the mussels have lost methanotroph
24 symbionts and began using other symbionts cannot be ruled out. The presence of S-
25 oxidizing bacteria biomarkers (C16:1 ω 7; and C18:1 ω 7; C20:11 ω 7) and NMID

1 derived from fatty acids (ex: C18:3 ω 7,10,13; C20:3 ω 7,10,15; C20:2 ω 7,15) and the
2 absence of HUFA are in agreement with results of Pond et al. (1998) and are
3 consistent with other studies on animals hosting S-oxidizing endosymbiotic bacteria
4 or feeding on them (Conway and Cappuzo, 1991; Zhukova, 1991; Zhukova et al.,
5 1992; Fullarton et al., 1995; Pranal et al., 1997)

6 The presence of PLFA from S-reducing bacteria in mussels proves that they continue
7 to be filter feeders.

8 **Conclusions**

9 Fatty acids from polar lipids can be used to reveal associations among invertebrate
10 species, revealing carbon utilization patterns between species and identifying the
11 organisms that rely on the same type of bacteria. Such associations imply that the
12 species eat the same food types, or that there is a prey-predator relationship. The
13 associations revealed here showed that some species rely more on S-oxidizing
14 bacteria (mussel-commensal-whelk), while the shrimp and crabs rely more on S-
15 reducing bacteria. The PLFA can be used to establish trophic relationships in the
16 vent environment. However to generalize there is a need to validate the hypothesis
17 that prey and predator present similar fatty acids or elongation, and this has only
18 been done for the relationship between the primary producers (bacteria and
19 phytoplankton) and the primary consumers.

20

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4

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1 Fig.1 PCA performed on the fatty acid profiles of all samples. Component 1 represents
2 16.81% of the variance, and component 2 represents 12.52% of the variance. The
3 eigenvalues are 14.80 and 11.04.

4
5 Fig. 2 PLFA profiles from *Rimicaris exoculata* mouthpart and digestive gland. **A** represents
6 the Rainbow hydrothermal vent field (n=3), **B** represents the Lucky Strike hydrothermal vent
7 field (n=1).

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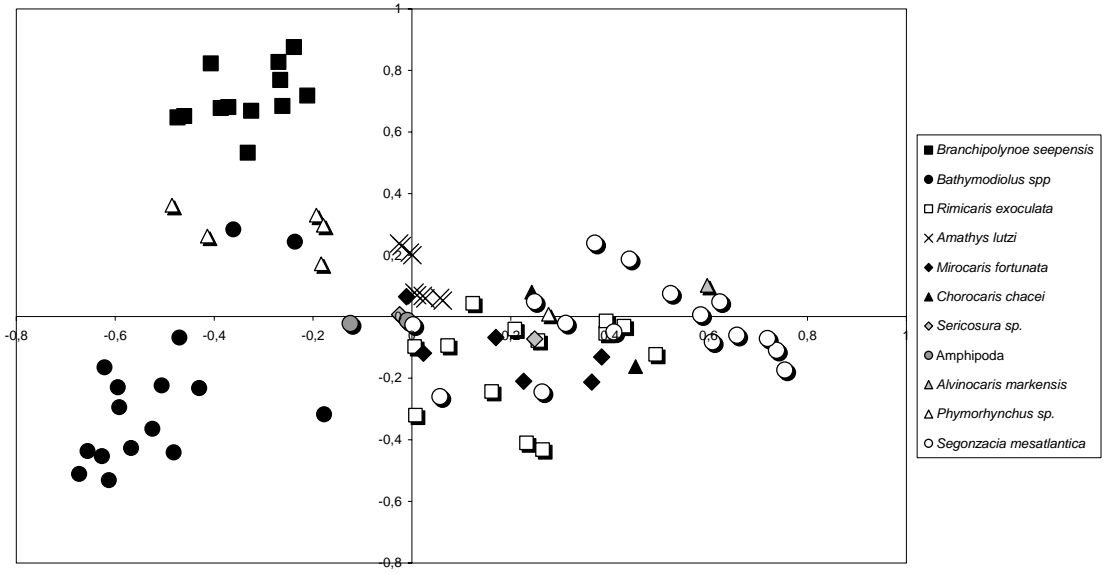
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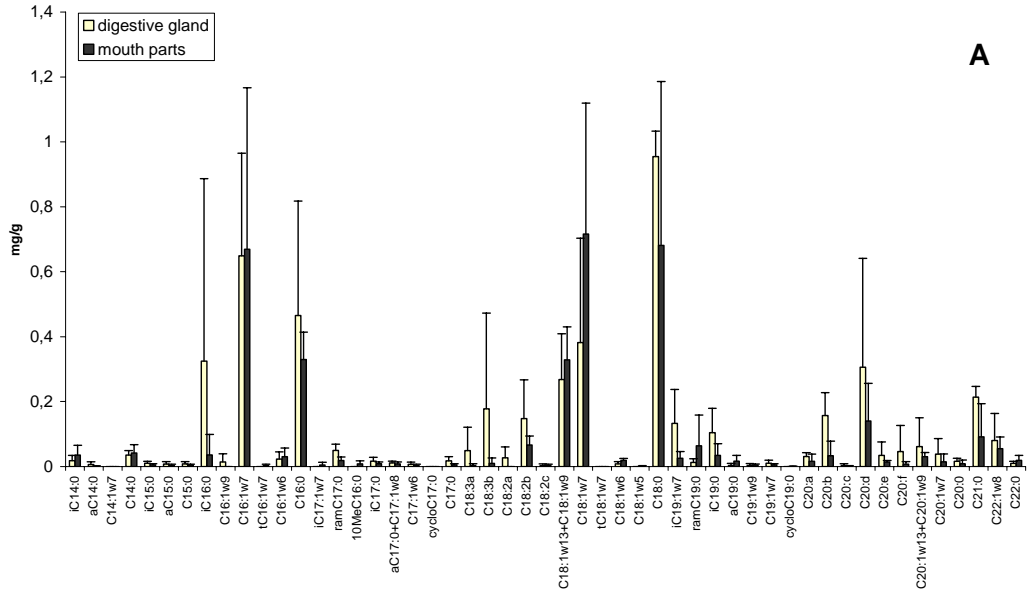
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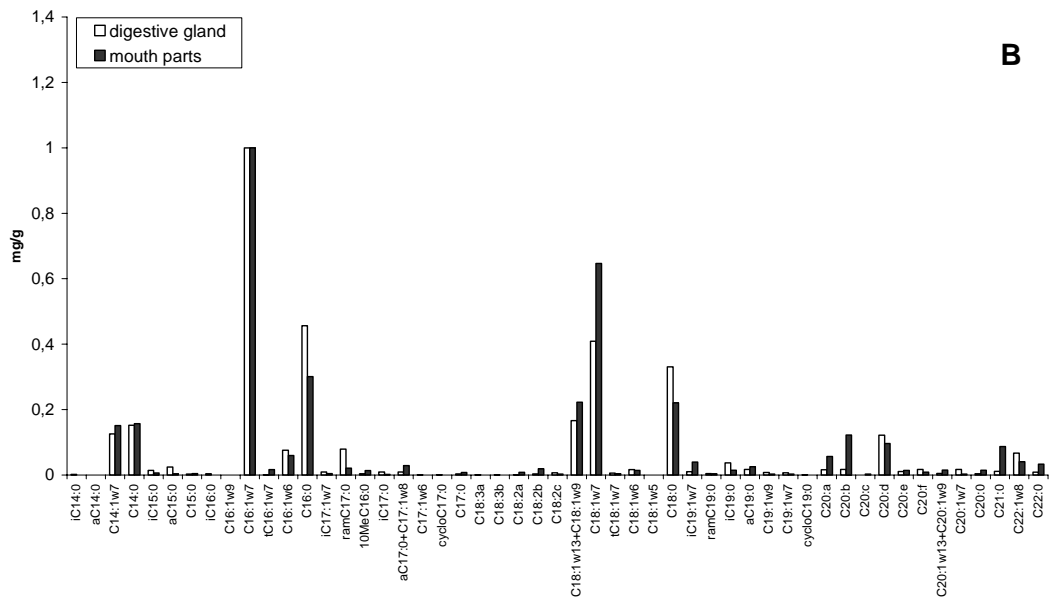
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Figure 2

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1 Table 1 Most abundant fatty acids biomarkers for the stated microorganisms.

Microorganism	Biomarker	References
Archaea	Glycerol Ether	Guezzenec, 1995
Phytoplankton	C20:5 ω 3; C20:6 ω 3	Chuecas & Rieley, 1969
<i>Desulfovibrio</i> (Sulfate reducer)	iC17:1 ω 7c; iC15:1 ω 7c; iC19:1 ω 7c;	Nichols <i>et al.</i> , 1986
<i>Desulfobacter</i> (Sulfate reducer)	10Me16; cyC18	Boon <i>et al.</i> , 1977
Thiooxidizing	C16:1 ω 7; C18:1 ω 7	McCaffrey <i>et al.</i> , 1989
Methanotrophs	C16:1 ω 5t; C16:1 ω 6; C16:1 ω 8; C18:1 ω 6; C18:1 ω 8	Nichols <i>et al.</i> , 1987; Bowman <i>et al.</i> , 1993
<i>Thiobacillus</i> sp. (Sulfur oxidizer)	iC17:1 ω 510-11 Me C18:1 ω 6;	Kerger <i>et al.</i> , 1986

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Table 2 Fatty acid composition of polar lipids expressed as a percentage of the total fatty acids for each taxonomic group. MG stands for Menez Gwen, LS for Lucky Strike; Rb for Rainbow; BS for Broken Spur; SP for Snake Pit; Lg for Logatchev and are indicative of the number of animals studied (not the number of profiles) for each vent field. “dg” stands for digestive gland. On the fatty acids, Br stands for branched.

Fatty acids	<i>A. lutzi</i> (all) LS =2; Rb =2	<i>B. seepensis</i> (all) LS =8; Rb =1; SP =1	<i>Bathymodiolus</i> spp.(dg) MG =4; LS= 14; Rb= 4; BS=1; SP=2; Lg=1	<i>R. exoculata</i> (dg) LS 1; Rb= 6; BS=1; SP=2; TAG=2 Lg=1	<i>M. fortunata</i> (dg) LS=4; Rb=2	<i>C. chacei</i> (dg) LS=1; BS=1	<i>Sericosura</i> sp. (all) LS=2	Amphipod (all) MG =1; LS= 1	<i>A. markensis</i> (dg) SP=1	<i>Phymorhynchus</i> sp (dg) LS=2; Rb= 2; SP=1; TAG=1	<i>S.mesatlantica</i> (dg) LS= 6; Rb= 3; BS=2; TAG=2; Lg=2
C12:0	0	0	0.01	0.09	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.04
iC14:0	0	0	2.00	0.15	0	0.06	0	0	0	6.00	0.17
aC14:0	0	0	3.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7.00
C14:1W7	0	0	0	1.32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C14:0	0.91	0.46	0.29	2.28	1.52	0.56	0.89	0.17	0.60	0.45	1.00
iC15:0	0.24	0.09	6.00	0.32	0.14	0	0.45	0	0.28	0.08	0.21
aC15:0	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.13	0	0	0	0	0	0.05	0.04
C15:0	0.62	0.09	0.11	0.91	0.63	0.04	0	0	0.12	0.06	0.38
iC16:0	0.03	0	0.17	1.65	0.25	0	0	0	2.13	0.12	0.07
C16:1w9	1.02	0.86	0.67	8.50	0	0	0	0.43	0.30	0.14	0.72
C16:1w7	8.46	8.09	13.03	14.91	24.29	13.90	1.42	12.42	15.41	3.19	15.37
tC16:1w7	0.18	0.04	9.00	0	0	0.10	0	0.22	0	0	0.14
C16:1w6	0	0	0	0.98	0	0.11	0	0.16	0.20	0.05	0.28
C16:0	26.86	10.84	20.87	106.00	12.36	11.45	12.06	10.70	11.06	14.92	15.99
iC17:1w7	0.13	0.14	0.26	0.71	0.27	0.11	0	0.21	0	0.16	0.14
BrC17:0	1.26	0.11	0.19	1.64	0.12	0.24	0	0	0.29	1.10	0.64
10MeC16:0	0.18	0	0	0.05	0	0.21	0	0	0	0	0
iC17:0	1.00	0.14	0.13	0.51	0	0.04	0	0.17	0.17	0.04	0.26
aC17:0+C17:1w8	2.07	0.11	0.15	0.19	0.36	0.35	0	0.11	0.75	0.07	0.48
C17:1w7	0.20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.18	0
C17:1w6	0.42	0	0	0.03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
cycloC17:0	0	0	0.03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C17:0	0.72	0.81	0.66	0.37	0.32	0.33	0.26	0.19	0.11	0.44	0.16
C18:3(7.10.13)	0.24	8.00	0.13	0.18	0	0	0	0	0.64	2.55	0.13

C18:3(9.12.15)	0.44	0.53	4.30	0.68	0.44	0.75	0	6.97	0.97	0.03	0.13
Unknown a	0	0	0	0.21	0	0	0	0.71	0	0	0
C18:2(5.13)	0.57	0.27	0.31	2.38	0.06	0.08	0	2.58	0.17	0.37	0.14
C18:2(6.9)	2.92	0.17	0.78	0.15	2.04	0.40	0	4.19	1.41	0.73	0.47
C18:2c	2.09	1.05	0.08	0.23	0.06	0.16	0	1.01	0.37	1.24	0.45
C18:1w13+C18:1w9	6.32	6.10	2.95	5.11	5.86	11.61	3.21	13.52	27.57	2.93	18.42
C18:1w7	8.59	14.36	3.05	12.10	12.20	13.59	3.73	12.12	22.06	9.21	19.06
tC18:1w7	0	0.15	5.00	0.03	0	0	0	0	0	1.00	0.42
C18:1w6	0	0	0	0.22	0	0.15	0	0	0.71	0.27	0.50
C18:1w5	0.73	0.13	0.03	0	0	0	0	0.20	0	0.02	0
C18:0	5.96	7.90	9.04	17.51	21.75	28.30	54.54	8.36	4.20	10.05	8.64
iC19:1w7	0.07	0.08	0.13	1.48	1.57	0.64	0	0.28	0.37	0.19	0.42
Unknown b	0	0	3.00	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BrC19:0	0.17	0.05	0.25	0.44	0.07	0.30	0	0.50	0	0.11	0.08
iC19:0	1.93	0.41	4.30	1.82	1.85	0.84	0	2.18	1.18	1.95	1.50
aC19:0	0	0	0	0.14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.21
C19:1w9	0.29	1.00	0.63	0.16	0.30	0.08	0	0.16	0	0.40	0.14
C19:1w7	0.23	1.38	0.85	0.22	0	0.46	0	0.48	0.31	0.66	0.32
cycloC19:0	0	0	0	0.03	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown c	0	0	0.13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C20:3(7.10.15)	4.06	0.62	0.76	0.74	0.68	1.10	0.96	2.62	1.23	2.43	0.28
C20:3(9.12.15)	3.61	4.15	3.95	2.15	1.93	3.42	17.53	6.54	1.14	5.17	1.65
C20:2(6.15)	0.50	5.18	4.05	0.17	0.69	0.60	0	2.05	0.48	3.61	0.51
C20:2(7.15)	0.48	0.64	5.10	3.25	0.78	1.03	0	1.04	0.16	3.88	0.61
C20:2(8.15)	1.02	1.38	1.46	0.33	0.79	0.53	0	1.70	0.16	2.34	0.58
C20:2(10.15)	1.22	4.84	0.42	0.47	1.15	1.19	0.24	0.51	0.18	3.00	0.37
C20:1w13+C20:1w9	2.49	16.13	5.84	0.73	1.11	0.61	1.66	1.38	2.90	17.58	2.19
C20:1w7	7.12	7.65	4.51	0.31	1.28	1.20	2.23	2.61	1.82	5.79	1.99
C20:0	0.59	2.35	7.03	0.30	0.82	0.47	0	0.37	0.54	0.93	2.43
C21:1w9	0.77	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C21:1w7	2.26	0	0	0	1.61	1.53	0	2.53	0	0	0
C21:0	1.03	1.70	3.34	2.69	1.99	0.89	0.82	0.62	0	3.32	0.98
C22:1wx	0	0	0	0.99	0.71	2.17	0	0	0	0.12	0.98
C22:0	0	0	0	0.05	0	0.41	0	0	0	0.05	0.34