

Microbial diversity of extreme habitats in human homes

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High-throughput sequencing techniques have opened up the world of microbial diversity to scientists, and a flurry of studies in the most remote and extreme habitats on earth have begun to elucidate the key roles of microbes in ecosystems with extreme conditions. These same environmental extremes can also be found closer to humans, even in our homes. Here, we used high-throughput sequencing techniques to assess bacterial and archaeal diversity in the extreme environments inside human homes (e.g., dishwashers, hot water heaters, washing machine bleach reservoirs, etc.). We focused on habitats in the home with extreme temperature, pH, and chemical environmental conditions. We found a lower diversity of microbes in these extreme home environments compared to less extreme habitats in the home. However, we were nonetheless able to detect sequences from a relatively diverse array of bacteria and archaea. Habitats with extreme temperatures alone appeared to be able to support a greater diversity of microbes than habitats with extreme pH or extreme chemical environments alone. Microbial diversity was lowest when habitats had both extreme temperature and one of these other extremes. In habitats with both extreme temperatures and extreme pH, taxa with known associations with extreme conditions dominated. Our findings highlight the importance of examining interactive effects of multiple environmental extremes on microbial communities. Inasmuch as taxa from extreme environments can be both beneficial and harmful to humans, our findings also suggest future work to understand both the threats and opportunities posed by the life in these habitats.

1 **Microbial diversity of extreme habitats in human homes**

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27 **Abstract:**

28 High throughput sequencing techniques have opened up the world of microbial diversity to
29 scientists, and a flurry of studies in the most remote and extreme habitats on earth have begun to
30 elucidate the key roles of microbes in ecosystems with extreme conditions. These same
31 environmental extremes can also be found closer to humans, even in our homes. Here, we used
32 high throughput sequencing techniques to assess bacterial and archaeal diversity in the extreme
33 environments inside human homes (e.g., dishwashers, hot water heaters, washing machine bleach
34 reservoirs, etc.). We focused on habitats in the home with extreme temperature, pH and chemical
35 environmental conditions. We found a lower diversity of microbes in these extreme home
36 environments compared to less extreme habitats in the home. However, we were nonetheless
37 able to detect sequences from a relatively diverse array of bacteria and archaea. Habitats with
38 extreme temperatures alone appeared to be able to support a greater diversity of microbes than
39 habitats with extreme pH or extreme chemical environments alone. Microbial diversity was
40 lowest when habitats had both extreme temperature and one of these other extremes. In habitats
41 with both extreme temperatures and extreme pH, taxa with known associations with extreme
42 conditions dominated. Our findings highlight the importance of examining interactive effects of
43 multiple environmental extremes on microbial communities. Inasmuch as taxa from extreme
44 environments can be both beneficial and harmful to humans, our findings also suggest future
45 work to understand both the threats and opportunities posed by the life in these habitats.

46 Keywords: Community Structure, Extreme environments, Human Homes, Interactive effects,
47 Microbial Diversity

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51 **Introduction:**

52 The innovation of culture-independent, high-throughput sequencing techniques has facilitated the
53 discovery of high microbial diversity in many habitats once considered inhospitable to life
54 (Rothschild and Mancinelli 2001). The species in these environments are frequent targets for the
55 discovery of useful enzymes (Niehaus et al. 1999, van den Burg 2003, Elleuche et al. 2014), and
56 studies of microbes living in extreme environments have provided key insights into the evolution
57 of microbial metabolism (Valentine 2007, Hoehler and Jorgensen 2013). Often overlooked,
58 however, is that the attributes that define many of the most extreme habitats on Earth, such as
59 extremes of temperature, pH, water activity, or low nutrient levels, can also be found more
60 immediate to everyday experience. Human homes, for example, contain microhabitats as hot,
61 acidic, basic or salty as any encountered elsewhere on Earth (Martin et al. 2015).

62 We know of only two extreme habitats within homes where microbial diversity has been studied
63 to date, and in both cases culture-dependent techniques were used. In 1973, Brock and Boylen
64 discovered a species of the genus *Thermus* (*T. aquaticus*) living in hot water heaters. Species of
65 this genus had previously been known only from hot springs (Brock and Boylen 1973). In
66 addition, studies have considered the biology of tap water. Tap water is hospitable in terms of its
67 abiotic conditions (e.g. temperature, pH, toxicity) but is very low in nutrients and so was long

68 assumed to be relatively devoid of life; until, that is, it was studied. Tap water has now been
69 shown to contain many species of bacteria capable of surviving in low nutrient environments
70 (Kalmbach et al. 1997, Szewzyk et al. 2000, Boe-Hansen et al. 2002). If life exists in hot water
71 heaters and tap water, it seems possible and even likely that many extreme habitats in homes
72 sustain life. That the environmental extremes imposed by these conditions in homes (cold, hot,
73 acidic, alkaline, wet or dry) delineate which species are present seems inevitable. That they are
74 lifeless is unlikely.

75 Here, we used culture-independent, high-throughput sequencing to address the following
76 questions: (1) What is the relative diversity of microbes (specifically, Bacteria and Archaea)
77 under extremes of temperature, pH and chemical environments of southeast US homes and how
78 does it compare to habitats without each extreme conditions? Harrison et al. (2013) recently
79 argued that because many extreme environments include simultaneous extremes in multiple
80 environmental factors, interactive effects of these multiple sources of extreme conditions are
81 likely to be important determinants of microbial diversity in extreme environments. Therefore,
82 we additionally asked (2) how do multiple, simultaneous extreme conditions influence microbial
83 diversity in human homes? Finally, we asked (3) which bacterial and archaeal genera from the
84 broader home (Dunn et al. 2013) fail to persist in extreme home habitats, and which microbial
85 genera persist only in these extreme habitats?

86 **Methods:**

87 *Sampling extreme home environments*

88 We sampled extreme environments in six houses in the Raleigh-Durham metropolitan area
89 (Supp. Fig 1). In each house, we used dual-tipped sterile BBL™ CultureSwabs™ or 50 ml

90 conical tubes to collect water from each of 10 standardized extreme locations in homes. The sites
91 sampled in all six houses included environments that were extreme in terms of their temperature,
92 pH and/or chemical environments (Supp. Table 1). Our assumptions concerning these sampling
93 locations are based upon publicly available consumer resources regarding certain commercial
94 and industrial requirements (e.g. [http://www.nsf.org/consumer-resources/health-and-safety-](http://www.nsf.org/consumer-resources/health-and-safety-tips/home-product-appliance-tips/sanitizing-dishwasher)
95 [tips/home-product-appliance-tips/sanitizing-dishwasher](http://www.nsf.org/consumer-resources/health-and-safety-tips/home-product-appliance-tips/sanitizing-dishwasher),
96 <http://energy.gov/energysaver/projects/savings-project-lower-water-heating-temperature>). For
97 example, our sampling of dishwashers was influenced by the NSF/ANSI 184 standard for
98 residential dishwashers to provide a final rinse at a temperature of at least 150 °F (65.6 °C).
99 Additionally, temperature ranges for residential water heaters are 90 to 150 F (32 – 65.6 °C),
100 depending on the manufacturer. Bleach receptacles in clothes washing machines would also be
101 assumed to have a pH of 12 when bleach is present. Although the pH and chemical composition
102 of laundry detergent and dishwasher detergent can be quite variable, manufacturing standards are
103 generally within the 7-10 pH range. While measurements, opposed to assumptions, would be
104 very useful, taking measurements of all the potential extreme axes under various sample sites in
105 multiple homes was not feasible. All samples were preserved at -20°C immediately after
106 collection.

107 *Isolating and identifying microbes in extreme home environments*

108 Genomic DNA was extracted from all samples using the MoBio Power Soil DNA extraction kit
109 (MoBio, Carlsbad, CA) as described previously (Fierer et al., 2008; Lauberet al., 2009). For
110 swabs, the tips were placed in PowerBead tubes containing solution C1 and swirled vigorously
111 for approximately 10 seconds to release contents and removed. Water samples were thawed and
112 filtered using Corning 50 ml 0.22um cellulose acetate filters after which the filters were added to

113 the PowerBead tubes. The extractions were subsequently performed as directed by the
114 manufacturer, except that the final elution was performed in 50µl of 70° C C6 elution buffer.
115 Because the water samples were frozen prior to filtering and extraction, the results reported for
116 the water samples likely under-represents the true diversity of taxa in those environments.

117 We used methods described in Bates et al (2011) to amplify bacterial and archaeal DNA from the
118 samples collected from homes and six negative controls. Briefly, amplicons were produced by
119 PCR with universal bacterial/archaeal 515F and 806R primers to which Roche 454 B
120 pyrosequencing adapters had been added, as described in Hulcr et al. (2012). The 515F primer
121 contained an additional 12-bp barcode sequence for individual sample identification. All the
122 samples were amplified by triplicate PCR reactions, cleaned using the UltraClean-htp 96-well
123 PCR Clean-up kit (MoBio), and quantified with a Quant-iT PicoGreen dsDNA Assay kit
124 (Invitrogen). Equimolar amounts of each sample were pooled into a single sample to sequence.
125 DNA pyrosequencing was performed at Selah Clinical Genomics Center at Innovista (University
126 of South Carolina, USA) using a Roche Genome Sequencer 454 FLX system to facilitate
127 comparison to previous related work that utilized this platform (Dunn et al, 2013). Though these
128 methods here do not distinguish living from recently dead cells, with the comparative approach
129 used here, we presume that taxa frequently identified in one habitat but rare or absent in most
130 others are likely surviving in the habitat from which they are frequently identified. The
131 sequences were submitted to NCBI (SRA accession number SRP071677).

132 The QIIME analysis package (Caporaso et al, 2010a) was used to process and analyze the
133 barcoded microbial (bacterial and archaeal) amplicon sequences. Sequences were quality filtered
134 to a minimum quality score of 25 with no unambiguous bases and sorted to each sample by the
135 12 bp barcodes. The 454 pyrosequencing produced 197,305 reads that passed the quality

136 screening. The sequences were grouped into Operational Taxonomic Units (OTUs) that shared at
137 least 97% sequence similarity. A representative sequence was taken for each OTU group and
138 PyNAST (Caporaso et al, 2010b) was employed to align these representative sequences to the
139 Greengenes database (DeSantis et al, 2006) and the taxonomic identity of each OTU was
140 determined using the RDP Classifier (Wang et al, 2007). Phylotypes were considered to be
141 contaminants if they were seen in at least two of the six negative control samples. There were
142 152 OTUs at the genus level present in more than one negative sample, representing 9% of the
143 total OTUs at this level. After removing contaminant sequences and singletons, the number of
144 quality-filtered reads per sample was between 6 and 5861 (median=2306). Finally, we removed
145 any OTU's represented by 20 or fewer reads to reduce the possibility of spurious results from the
146 sequencing process. For among samples comparisons we rarefied to each to a depth of 1000
147 sequences. Thus, our assessments of microbial diversity are conservative.

148

149 *Analysis of the relative diversity of microbes in extreme temperature, pH and chemical*
150 *environments of homes and how it compares to habitats without each extreme condition*

151 We compared microbial species accumulation among three extreme variables in homes:
152 temperature, pH, and chemical extremes. Temperature was classified on a scale of 1-5, with 1
153 representing the coldest environments and 5 representing the hottest environments. We then
154 binned 1 and 5 into an extreme temperature category and 2-4 into an intermediate temperature
155 category. Similarly, environments were classified as acidic, basic or neutral and then binned into
156 extreme pH (acidic or basic environments) *versus* neutral environments. Finally, chemical
157 extremes were those environments characterized by the presence of detergent, bleach, metals,
158 ammonia, or natural gas (Supp. Table 2).

159 We used EstimateS v. 9.1.0 (Colwell 2013) to construct individual-based species accumulations
160 for all three extreme environments and their non-extreme counterparts. For these curves, reads
161 were used as individuals and the curves were constructed using 1000 iterations. To formally
162 assess differences in accumulated species by read, we used \pm 95% confidence intervals for each
163 curve. Non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals are considered formal evidence of significance
164 (Knezevic 2008).

165 *Assessing how multiple, simultaneous extreme conditions influence microbial diversity in human*
166 *homes*

167 We were interested in testing the hypothesis that interactive effects of multiple, simultaneously
168 extreme environmental conditions are important determinants of microbial diversity in extreme
169 home environments (Harrison et al. 2013). Our study included multiple samples with more than
170 one environmental extreme (Supp. Table 1); however, we only had sufficient replication to
171 assess this hypothesis for 2-way interactions between extremely high temperatures and extreme
172 pH as well as high temperature and chemical environments. Because number of reads varied
173 significantly among different environmental extremes, we could not use a standard 2-way
174 ANOVA. Instead, we assessed these effects using an ordination framework.

175 We visualized the composition of bacteria and archaea from extreme habitats in homes using
176 non-metric multidimensional scaling ordination (NMDS) in Primer-E v.7.0.9 with
177 PERMANOVA +1 (Clarke & Gorley, 2015). To do this, we first constructed NMDS plots with
178 100 restarts and a Type I Kruskal fit scheme based on a Dissimilarity matrix of Bray-Curtis
179 distances. To assess the relationship between temperature (extreme vs. intermediate) and the
180 other extremes (pH: extreme vs. neutral; chemicals: extreme vs. none) for α -diversity of
181 microbes, we conducted a permuted multivariate analysis of variance (PERMANOVA) test with

182 temperature class and either pH or chemical class and their interaction as factors, 9,999 iterations
183 and Type III sums of squares. When interactions were significant (Anderson et al. 2008), we
184 conducted pairwise PERMANOVA to determine which treatment combinations significantly
185 differed from one another. Similarly, we assessed these relationships in terms of β -diversity
186 using a permuted dispersion (PermDisp) test of a presence/absence matrix of OTU occurrences.
187 When these tests were significant, we conducted pairwise tests of extreme vs. non-extreme
188 chemical and pH environments in habitats with intermediate and extreme temperatures (thus 2
189 tests per treatment combination). Finally, we conducted SIMPER analyses for each significant
190 treatment combination to determine the OTUs that contributed the most to pairwise between-
191 group differences in ordination space. Because we conducted two separate analyses for each
192 level of diversity, we accounted for the additional error associated with multiple tests, using a
193 revised $\alpha=0.05/2=0.025$ as our cut-off for statistical significance for the results of each test. This
194 conservative α is particularly important because we did not have equal sample sizes in all groups
195 for these analyses, which can increase the risk of Type I error (Anderson & Walsh 2013).

196

197 *Determining which microbial genera differentiate extreme home habitats from the rest of the*
198 *home*

199 We compared the occurrences of microbes in our samples to those reported in less extreme home
200 environments (Dunn et al. 2013). Human-associated microbes were common to both datasets,
201 and we were particularly interested in those taxa unique to our dataset, relative to the broader
202 home (Dunn et al. 2013). Therefore, we removed human-associated OTU's from our dataset. We
203 identified these human-associated OTU's using databases that identified human gut (Flores et al.
204 2014) and skin (Urban et al. 2016) microbiomes. OTU's that occurred in at least 80% of the

205 samples in those databases were considered human-associates and excluded from our analyses of
206 the microbial diversity of extreme habitats in human homes. We then determined the identity of
207 microbes that were absent from the broader homes dataset, but present in extreme environments
208 and then tabulated the extreme habitat(s) in which they were present. Likewise, we identified the
209 non-human associated microbes that were present in the broader home environment, but absent
210 from all extreme environments in our samples.

211

212 **Results and Discussion:**

213 *What is the relative diversity of microbes in extreme temperature, pH and chemical environments*
214 *of southeast US homes and how does it compare to habitats without each extreme condition?*

215 The cumulative diversity (OTU richness) in habitats with extreme temperatures was more
216 than twice as high as in habitats with extreme pH (maximum of 73 vs. 33, Fig. 1) and almost
217 three times as high as habitats with extreme chemical environments (27.6; Fig. 1). Habitats with
218 extreme temperatures also had higher OTU richness than habitats with intermediate temperatures
219 (Fig. 2a). Conversely, previous research indicates that the diversity in habitats with either
220 extremely high or extremely low temperatures is generally low, and dominated by a small
221 number of abundant bacterial species (Lewin et al. 2013). For example, Sharp et al. (2014)
222 recently found that OTU richness in hydrothermal vents peaked at intermediate temperatures
223 (24°C), with reduced OTU richness in extremely hot or cold environments (Sharp et al. 2014).
224 We did not detect significant differences in the rarefied species richness of bacterial and archaeal
225 microbes in extreme vs. neutral pH conditions; however, the marginally non-significant trend
226 suggests that extreme pH environments also had higher microbial diversity than neutral habitats

227 (Fig. 2b). Recent studies have demonstrated that pH is a key predictor of microbial diversity in
228 both extreme environments, such as acid mine drainage sites (Kuang et al. 2013), and less
229 extreme environments, such as tropical soils (Tripathi et al. 2012). In both cases, habitats with
230 neutral pH had higher microbial diversity than those with a pH higher or lower than neutral.
231 Thus, we again found different patterns in extreme home environments compared to other studies
232 comparing extreme and non-extreme habitats. One possible explanation for the difference
233 between our findings and these recent studies is that human-associated microbes are present in
234 home environments with intermediate temperatures. Perhaps these species are able to dominate
235 habitats with intermediate, but not extreme, conditions. Alternatively, the lower diversity in
236 habitats with intermediate temperatures and neutral pH in our study could be due to the
237 occurrence of extreme conditions along different axes (e.g. intermediate temperature, but
238 extreme pH or chemical habitats). We examine potential interactive effects of these polyextreme
239 habitats in the next section.

240 In contrast, habitats with extreme chemicals had significantly lower accumulated OTU
241 richness than did habitats without these extreme conditions (Fig. 2c). Extreme chemical
242 environments are poorly studied and understood (Rothschild and Mancinelli 2001). Our data
243 suggest that they could act as strong filters in extreme environments.

244 *How do multiple, simultaneous extreme conditions influence microbial diversity in extreme home*
245 *environments?*

246 Many of the habitats in this study were characterized by more than one extreme
247 environmental condition. Therefore, we also examined the potential for interactive effects of
248 multiple, simultaneous extreme conditions on microbial diversity. Due to limited replication
249 across all environmental extremes, we were only able to examine extreme pH and chemical

250 habitats with and without extreme temperatures. We used an ordination framework to examine
251 these interactive effects (see methods).

252 We found significant interactions between extreme temperature and both extreme pH
253 (PERMANOVA: Pseudo- $F_{1,82} = 2.53$, $P=0.0001$; Figure 3A) and extreme chemical
254 (PERMANOVA: Pseudo- $F_{1,82} = 3.16$, $P=0.0001$; Figure 3C) environments for OTU
255 composition. When temperatures were intermediate, there were no significant differences in
256 microbial composition in extreme vs. neutral pH habitats (pairwise PERMANOVA: $t_{1,38} = 1.02$,
257 $P = 0.40$). However, when temperatures were extreme, there was a very large difference between
258 the composition of microbes in extreme pH habitats, compared to neutral habitats (pairwise
259 PERMANOVA: $t_{1,38} = 1.70$, $P=0.0001$; Fig. 3A). The five genera that contributed the most to
260 differences between these two habitat types (from SIMPER analysis) were *Parascardovia*,
261 *Micrococcus*, *Rothia*, *Brachybacterium*, and an unknown genus from Sphingomonadaceae. Most
262 of these genera are associated with humans (Oshima et al. 2015, Gueimonde et al. 2012, Kloos et
263 al. 1975, Kocur et al. 2006, Vaccher et al. 2007, Uchibori et al. 2012). Sphingomonadaceae are
264 widespread in aquatic habitats, including drinking water (Vaz-Moreira et al. 2011), but also other
265 aquatic environments (e.g. tree holes-Xu et al. 2008). *Brachybacterium* is usually associated with
266 marine environments (Ward and Boru 2006), including Antarctic sea ice (Junge et al. 1998).
267 However, it was recently detected in an urban shopping center (Tringe et al. 2008). All of these
268 genera were more common in habitats with extreme temperatures and neutral pH than they were
269 in habitats with both extreme temperatures and extreme pH. While different houses had
270 significantly different microbial composition (3-way PERMANOVA, $P=0.0001$), there were no
271 significant 2-or 3-way interactions with house (Supp. Table 3).

272 The interaction between temperature and chemical extremes was similar. Microbial composition
273 was indistinguishable between the habitats that only had one extreme condition-regardless of
274 whether it was temperature or chemicals that were extreme. There were also no significant
275 differences between habitats with neither extreme temperatures nor extreme chemical conditions
276 and habitats that had a single extreme condition. However, habitats with both extreme
277 temperatures and extreme chemicals had significantly different microbial composition compared
278 to all other groups (pairwise PERMANOVA; $t_{1,38} = 1.75$, $P=0.0001$; Fig. 3C). The five genera
279 that contributed the most to compositional difference between these two habitats (from SIMPER
280 analysis) were *Methylobacterium*, an unknown genus of Moraxellaceae, *Sejonia*, an unknown
281 genus of Sphingomonadaceae, and *Flavobacterium*. With the exception of the unknown genus
282 of Moraxellaceae, which was more common in extreme chemical and temperature environments,
283 all of these genera were more common in the habitats without temperature and chemical
284 extremes. Moraxallaceae have been found in other extreme environments, including deep sea
285 sediments (Maruyama et al. 1997). Although it was more common in our less extreme
286 environments, *Sejonia* is better known from Antarctic ice (Yi et al. 2005). Sphingomonadaceae
287 as described above are common to aquatic habitats. *Methylobacterium* is a widespread habitat
288 generalist that is facultatively methyltrophic (Green 2006). Finally, *Flavobacterium* is common
289 in freshwater and marine ecosystems but tends to flourish in cold environments with high salinity
290 (Bernardet and Bowman 2006).

291 There were also significant differences in the β -diversity in home environments with more than
292 one extreme condition. When temperatures were intermediate, there were no significant
293 differences between neutral and extreme pH environments (Figure 4A; PermDisp: $P = 0.3864$).
294 However when temperatures were also extreme, habitats with extreme pH conditions had

295 significantly higher β -diversity than those with neutral pH conditions (Figure 4A; PermDisp:
296 $P=0.0014$). Similarly, at intermediate temperatures, there was a non-significant trend (Figure 4B;
297 PermDisp: $P=0.03$, Bonferroni-corrected $\alpha = 0.025$) in which habitats without extreme
298 chemicals present had higher β -diversity than those with extreme chemicals present. However,
299 when temperatures were also extreme, habitats with extreme chemicals present had higher β -
300 diversity than those without extreme chemicals (Figure 4B; PermDisp: $P = 0.0006$). This
301 increase in β -diversity in extreme pH and chemical environments when temperatures were also
302 extreme suggests that polyextreme conditions may support a higher diversity of extremophiles
303 and/or reduced occurrences of numerically dominant genera compared to environments with a
304 single extreme condition, at least among habitats (in contrast to within habitats). The 5 genera
305 that contributed the most to differences in β -diversity between neutral and extreme pH conditions
306 when temperatures were also extreme were: *Veillonella*, *Kocuria*, *Peptoniphilus*, *Parascardovia*,
307 and *Anaerococcus*. Interestingly, these were also the top 5 genera contributing to differences
308 between habitats with and without extreme chemicals that also had extreme temperatures. All of
309 these genera were less common in habitats with 2 extremes than they were in habitats with only
310 extreme temperatures. They are also genera that include human-associated species (Bhatti &
311 Frank 2000, Fadda et al. 2001, Song et al. 2007, Gueimonde et al. 2012).

312

313 *Which microbial genera differentiate extreme home habitats from the rest of the home?*

314 After removing all human-associated microbes (see methods), there were a total of 241 unique
315 genera in the broader homes dataset (Dunn et al. 2013). Our extreme samples contained 135 of
316 the remaining broader homes genera, but ~44% of the genera found in the broader homes were
317 absent from our extreme home samples (Supp. Table 4), the absence of which might simply be

318 due to the larger number of samples in Dunn et al. (2013). More interestingly, we found 20
319 genera present among our samples that were absent from the broader homes dataset. Nine of
320 these genera were found in all three categories of extreme environments (Table 1); one genus
321 (*Solibacter*) was absent from habitats with extreme pH, but occurred in both extreme chemical
322 and temperature environments. *Solibacter* is a common and abundant soil microbe, especially in
323 tropical regions (Guan et al. 2013, Wang et al. 2015). There was also one genus
324 (*Brevundimonas*) that was absent from extreme chemical environments, but present in both
325 extreme temperature and extreme pH environments; *Brevundimonas* is one of the only genera
326 thought to be able to survive the low temperatures and ionizing radiation on Mars (Dartnell et al.
327 2010). There were three genera (*Azobacteroides*, *Elizabethkingia*, and *Xiphinematobacter*) that
328 occurred in both extreme pH and chemical environments that were absent in extreme
329 temperature environments. Both *Azobacteroides* and *Xiphinematobacter* are gut symbionts of
330 invertebrates; *Azobacteroides* is commonly found inside the protozoan symbionts of termites
331 (Noda et al. 2007), and *Xiphinematobacter* is an endosymbiont of nematodes (Vandekerckhove et
332 al. 2000). In invertebrate guts these microbes likely experience extreme chemical and pH
333 environments frequently, while being relatively protected from temperature stress.
334 *Elizabethkingia* is a cosmopolitan genus, with species that are endosymbionts of mosquitoes
335 (Kämpfer et al. 2011), and others that are pathogens of both humans (Ceyhan and Celik 2011)
336 and frogs (Xie et al. 2009). There was one genus that was only found in extreme chemical
337 environments (*Helcococcus*). Interestingly, members of the genus *Helcococcus* possess the
338 ability to degrade detergents. In fact, the detergent Tween-80 can be added to media to enrich
339 *Helcococcus* (Collins et al. 1993, Chagla et al. 1998). Finally, we found 5 genera (*Brochothrix*,
340 *Buchnera*, *Polynucleobacter*, *Ralstonia*, and *Thermicanus*) unique to extreme temperature

341 environments. *Brochothrix* is a common spoilage bacterium in meat (Rattanasomboon et al.
342 1999). *Buchnera* is a widespread aphid endosymbiont (Shigenobu et al. 2000). Recently, a
343 survey of homes in Raleigh, NC demonstrated that aphids could be quite common in human
344 homes (Bertone et al. 2016), which could explain how this genus arrived in the homes in our
345 study (via aphids in the home). The genus *Polynucleobacter* includes both free-living species and
346 species that are endosymbionts of nematodes (Vannini et al. 2007). *Ralstonia metallidurans* is a
347 bacterium specifically adapted to toxic metal environments (Mergeay et al. 2003). Other species
348 of *Ralstonia* have been shown to be effectively controlled using high temperature treatments in
349 commercial crops (Kongkiattikajorn and Thepa 2007). In our study, *Ralstonia* were collected in
350 both high and low temperature environments. Finally, *Thermicanus* is, as its name suggest, a
351 thermophilic bacterial genus (Wrighton et al. 2008).

352 **Conclusions:**

353 This study has provided a glimpse into the microbial diversity that lives in habitats of human
354 homes similar in their extreme temperature, pH and chemical conditions to some of the most
355 extreme habitats on Earth. We discovered that these conditions have lower diversity than the
356 surrounding home environment; yet tens of bacterial lineages can be found in these extreme
357 habitats of the human home, including many taxa with known associations with extreme
358 conditions. Habitats with extreme temperatures alone appear to be able to support a greater
359 diversity of microbes than habitats with extreme pH or extreme chemical environments alone.
360 Microbial diversity is significantly lowest when habitats have both extreme temperature and one
361 of these other extremes. Interestingly, environments in homes often alternate between periods of
362 extreme and non-extreme conditions. For example, dishwashers are only likely to have extremely
363 high temperatures while cleaning and drying dishes. This variability could lead to temporal shifts

364 in microbial composition, similar to those found for human vaginal microbes (Gajer et al. 2012).
365 This variability may also explain the presence of human-associated generalist species in our
366 samples. Future work, with samples taken before and after appliances (like many of those used in
367 our study) are operated, could elucidate the importance of episodic extreme conditions for
368 microbial communities in homes. Additionally, a key next step is understanding which of the
369 relatively few species that are found in these poly-extreme environments in the home are
370 metabolically active there and both whether these polyextreme taxa pose health threats (as was
371 recently suggested by Gümral et al. 2015) and/or might be useful industrially.

372

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377 **References**

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538 **Figure Captions:**

539 Figure 1: OTU accumulation curves for each extreme environment, expressed as number of
540 OTUs by number of reads from sequencing. Each curve was constructed using 1000 iterations,
541 and the dotted lines represent 95% confidence intervals. Non-overlapping confidence intervals
542 indicate that the accumulation curves are significantly different. Thus, habitats with extreme
543 temperatures had significantly more accumulated species than habitats with either extreme pH or
544 extreme chemical environments. However, the accumulated species in habitats pH and chemical
545 extremes did not differ significantly.

546 Figure 2: Comparison of rarefaction curves between extreme and non-extreme habitats. (A)
547 extreme vs. intermediate temperatures, (B) extreme vs. neutral pH environments, and (C)
548 extreme chemicals present vs. absent. Rarefaction curves are expressed as number of OTU by

549 number of reads from sequencing. Each curve was constructed using 1000 iterations, and the
550 dotted lines represent 95% confidence intervals. Significance tests were as described for Figure
551 1.

552 Figure 3: NMDS ordinations OTU occurrence by (A-B) Temperature & pH and (C-D)
553 Temperature & chemical environments in the home. Large symbols represent centroids ± 1 SE
554 (A, C), and small symbols represent each sample (B, D). The interaction between temperature
555 and pH was significant (PERMANOVA: (pseudo)- $F_{1, 85} = 2.53$, $P(\text{perm}) = 0.0001$), as was the
556 interaction between extreme temperature and chemical conditions (PERMANOVA: (pseudo)- $F_{1, 85} = 3.16$, $P(\text{perm}) = 0.0001$). The ordination was constructed with Bray-Curtis distances and 100
557 restarts; 2-D stress was 0.21. PERMANOVA analyses were conducted using type III sums of
558 squares and 9,999 iterations.

560 Figure 4: Average distances between samples and centroids (β -diversity) across home
561 environments that differ with respect to extreme temperatures and (A) extreme pH conditions &
562 (B) extreme chemical conditions. Data were assessed using PermDisp; dispersion was
563 significantly different across extreme temperatures and extreme pH conditions ($F_{3, 82} = 4.08$,
564 $P=0.024$) and across extreme temperatures and extreme chemical conditions ($F_{3, 82} = 6.99$,
565 $P=0.0017$). Post-hoc pairwise tests: * $P<0.025$, ** $P<0.01$, *** $P<0.001$.

566 **Table Captions:**

567 Table 1: Summary of occurrences of microbes that were present in samples from extreme home
568 environments, but absent from the broader home samples. Numbers indicate the number of reads
569 of each genus by extreme environment. The first group includes genera that were only present in
570 one extreme environment, the second group includes genera that were present in two extreme

571 environments, and the last group includes genera that were present in all three extreme home
572 environments.

573 **Supplementary Tables and Figures:**

574 Raw Data: Output file from QIIME at the genus level (L6), rarefied to 1000 reads.

575 Supp. Table 1: Description of sample locations. Standardized locations were sampled in all 6
576 houses, while special locations were only sampled in a subset of the houses (due to availability
577 of samples across houses)

578

579 Supp. Table 2: Classifications of sampled extreme home environments based upon temperature,
580 pH and chemical conditions.

581 Supp. Table 3: Results from PERMANOVAs testing (a) the effects of house ID on microbial
582 composition; and (b) the effects of temperature class, pH class, and house ID on microbial
583 composition.

584 Supp. Table 4: List of non-human associated microbes in extreme and non-extreme (Dunn et al.
585 2013) home habitats

586

587 Supp. Figure 1: Map of houses that were sampled for the study

588 Supp. Figure 2: NMDS plot with houses and sampling locations labeled.

589 Supp. Figure 3: Histograms depicting the % of reads from bacterial and archaeal classes in (a)
590 habitats with extreme temperatures, (b) habitats with extreme pH, and (c) habitats with extreme
591 chemicals.

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Table 1 (on next page)

Table 1

Summary of occurrences of microbes that were present in samples from extreme home environments, but absent from the broader home samples. Each X indicates that the genus was found in a given extreme environment. $\text{t}^{\text{h}6\text{0}}\text{>}$

1

2 **Table 1:** Summary of occurrences of microbes that were present in samples from extreme home
 3 environments, but absent from the broader home samples. Numbers indicate the number of reads of each
 4 genus by extreme environment. The first group includes genera that were only present in one extreme
 5 environment, the second group includes genera that were present in two extreme environments, and the
 6 last group includes genera that were present in all three extreme home environments.

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Genus	Extreme Temperatures	Extreme pH	Extreme Chemical
<i>Brochothrix</i>	265	0	0
<i>Buchnera</i>	22	0	0
<i>Polynucleobacter</i>	33	0	0
<i>Ralstonia</i>	21	0	0
<i>Thermicanus</i>	34	0	0
<i>Helcococcus</i>	0	0	22
<i>Solibacter</i>	86	0	30
<i>Brevundimonas</i>	184	189	0
<i>Azobacteroides</i>	0	33	33
<i>Elizabethkingia</i>	0	25	24
<i>Xiphinematobacter</i>	0	19	21
<i>Azospira</i>	139	33	44
<i>Brachybacterium</i>	101	52	69
<i>Enhydrobacter</i>	452	387	408
<i>Gluconobacter</i>	23	21	22
<i>Oligella</i>	40	74	77
<i>Parascardovia</i>	141	46	107
<i>Photobacterium</i>	71	65	93
<i>Propionibacterium</i>	73	31	40
<i>Salinibacterium</i>	108	334	355

Figure 1

OTU accumulation curves for each extreme environment

OTU accumulation curves for each extreme environment, expressed as the number of OTUs by the number of reads from sequencing. Each curve was constructed using 1000 iterations, and the dotted lines represent 95% confidence intervals. Non-overlapping confidence intervals indicate that the accumulation curves are significantly different. Thus, habitats with extreme temperatures had significantly more accumulated species than habitats with either extreme pH or extreme chemical environments. However, the accumulated species in habitats pH and chemical extremes did not differ significantly.

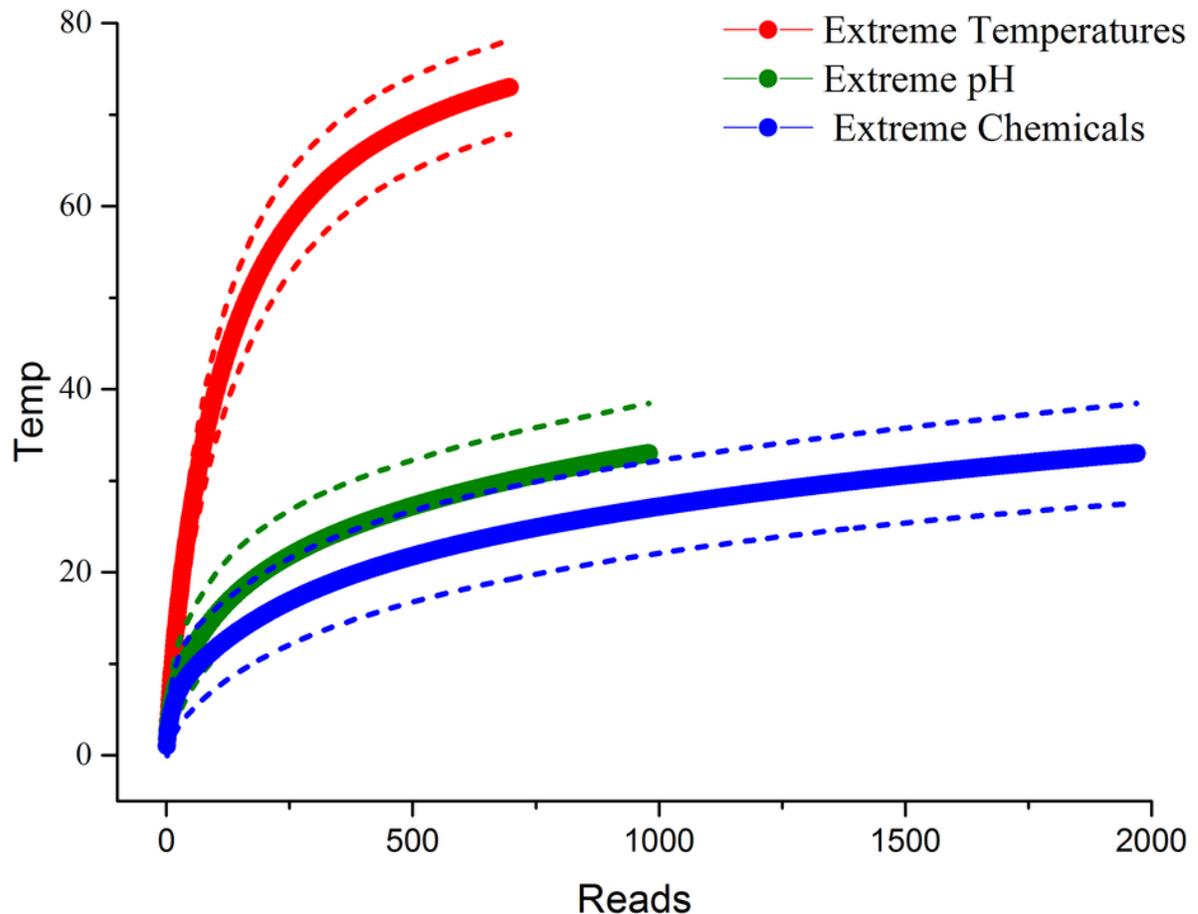


Figure 2

Comparison of rarefaction curves between extreme and non-extreme habitats

Comparison of rarefaction curves between extreme and non-extreme habitats . (A) extreme vs. intermediate temperatures, (B) extreme vs. neutral pH environments, and (C) extreme chemicals present vs. absent. Rarefaction curves are expressed as number of OTU by number of reads from sequencing. Each curve was constructed using 1000 iterations, and the dotted lines represent 95% confidence intervals. Significance tests were as described for Figure 1.

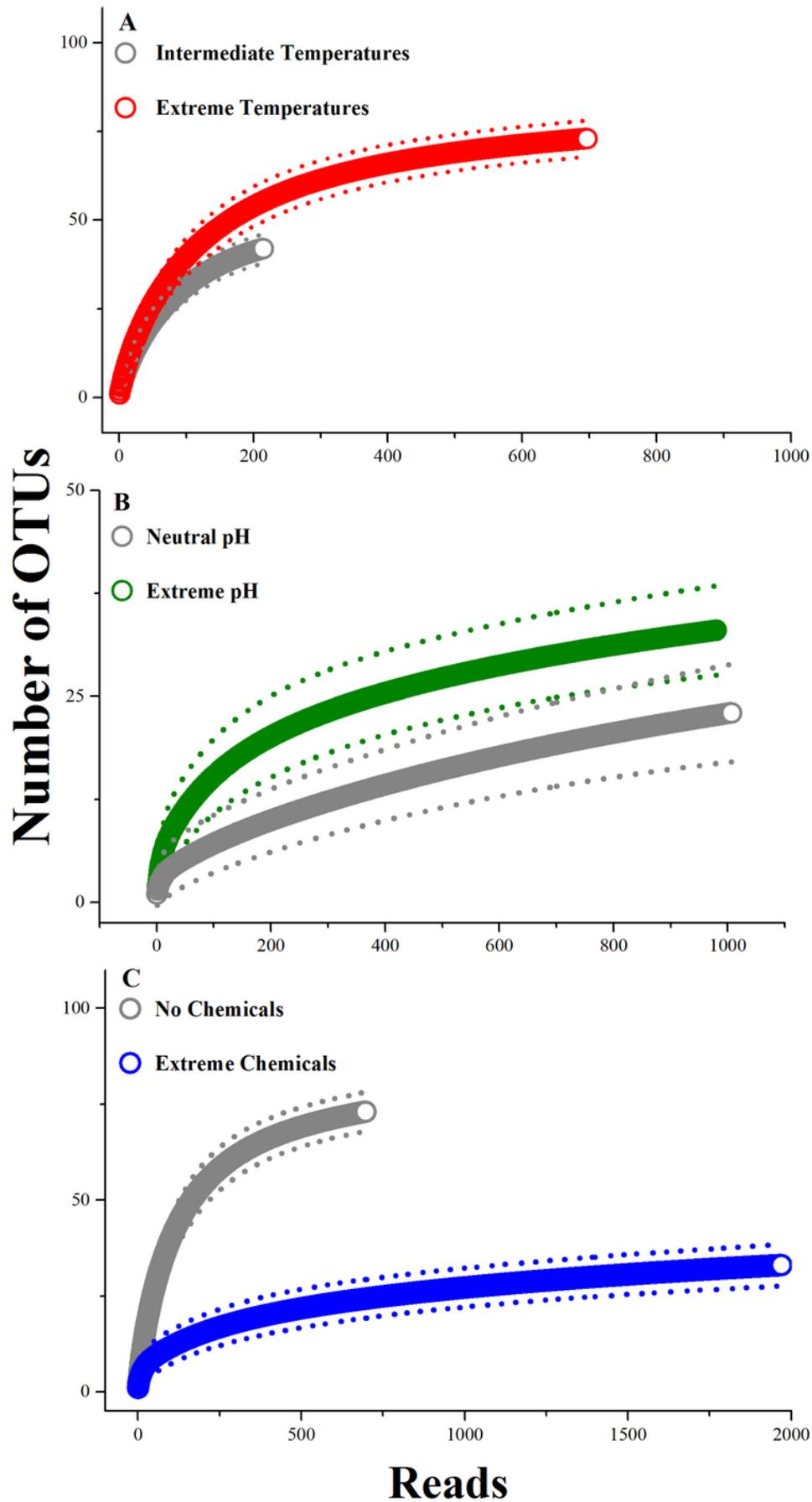


Figure 3

NMDS ordinations OTU occurrence by (A-B) Temperature & pH and (C-D) Temperature & chemical environments in the home.

NMDS ordinations OTU occurrence by (A-B) Temperature & pH and (C-D) Temperature & chemical environments in the home. Large symbols represent centroids ± 1 SE (A, C), and small symbols represent each sample (B, D). The interaction between temperature and pH was significant (PERMANOVA: (pseudo)- $F_{1,85} = 2.53$, $P(\text{perm}) = 0.0001$), as was the interaction between extreme temperature and chemical conditions (PERMANOVA: (pseudo)- $F_{1,85} = 3.16$, $P(\text{perm}) = 0.0001$). The ordination was constructed with Bray-Curtis distances and 100 restarts; 2-D stress was 0.21. PERMANOVA analyses were conducted using type III sums of squares and 9,999 iterations.

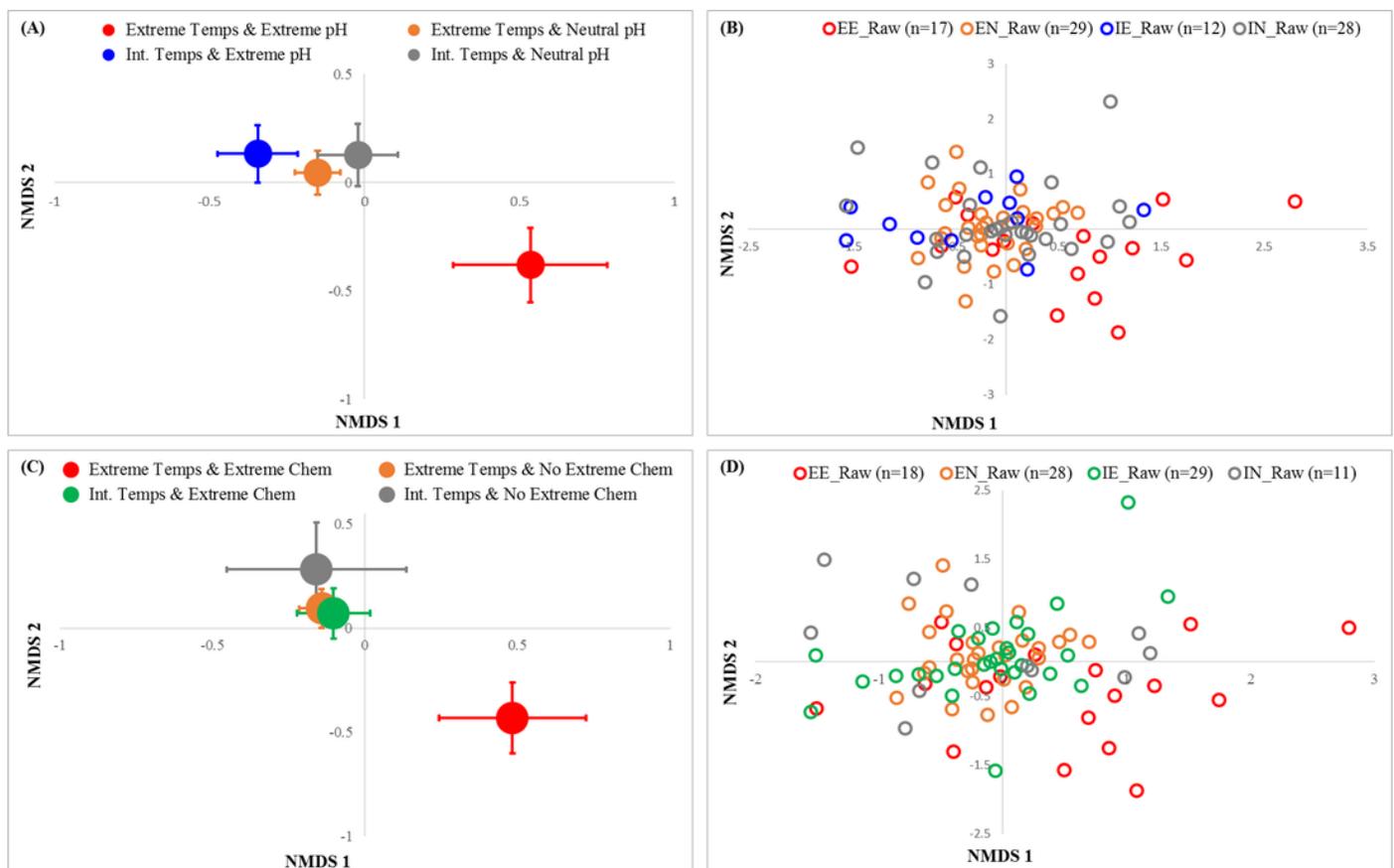


Figure 4

Average distances between samples and centroids (β -diversity) across home environments

Average distances between samples and centroids (β -diversity) across home environments that differ with respect to extreme temperatures and (A) extreme pH conditions & (B) extreme chemical conditions. Data were assessed using PermDisp; dispersion was significantly different across extreme temperatures and extreme pH conditions ($F_{3,82} = 4.08$, $P=0.024$) and across extreme temperatures and extreme chemical conditions ($F_{3,82} = 6.99$, $P=0.0017$). Post-hoc pairwise tests: * $P<0.025$, ** $P<0.01$, *** $P<0.001$.

