

Systematic evaluation of the gut microbiome of swamp eel (*Monopterus albus*) by 16S rRNA gene sequencing

Xuan Chen¹, Shaoming Fang², Yulan Wang³, Lili Wei^{Corresp., 4}, Qiwang Zhong^{Corresp. 1}

¹ College of Biological Science and Engineering, Jiangxi Agricultural University, Nanchang, China

² State Key Laboratory of Pig Genetic Improvement and Production Technology, Jiangxi Agricultural University, Fujian, China

³ Tyumen State Agricultural Academy, Nanchang, China

⁴ College of Animal Science and Technology, Jiangxi Agricultural University, Nanchang, China

Corresponding Authors: Lili Wei, Qiwang Zhong

Email address: hbliliwei@163.com, zhongqw2000@163.com

The contribution of gut microbiome in fish growth and health is being increasingly recognized. However, little was known about the microbial community in the intestine of swamp eel (*Monopterus albus*). Here, we analyzed microbial communities of five distinct gut compartments (foregut content and mucosa, hindgut content and mucosa, and stools) of swamp eel based on high-throughput 16S rRNA gene sequencing. The results showed that the number of observed OTUs decreased from proximal to distal of intestine and samples from different gut compartments showed significant separations. Nevertheless, there were 54 core OTUs shared by all gut compartments and 36 out of 54 core OTUs significantly varied in the abundances in different gut compartments. Furthermore, we discovered 66 compartment-specific enriched KEGG pathways. These compartment-specific enriched microbial taxa (e.g., *Bacillus*, *Lactobacillus*) and potential function capacities (e.g., amino acid metabolism, carbohydrate metabolism) might play vital roles in nutrients metabolism, immune modulation, and host-microbe interactions of swamp eel. This study should provide basic insights into the gut microbiome of swamp eel.

1 **Systematic evaluation of the gut microbiome of swamp eel (*Monopterus albus*) by 16S rRNA**
2 **gene sequencing**

3

4 Xuan Chen ^{a#}, Shaoming Fang ^{b#}, Lili Wei ^{c*}, Qiwang Zhong ^{a*}

5

6 ^a College of Biological Science and Engineering, Jiangxi Agricultural University, 330045,
7 Nanchang, China

8 ^b College of Animal Science, Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University, 350002, Fuzhou, China

9 ^c College of Animal Science and Technology, Jiangxi Agricultural University, 330045, Nanchang,
10 China

11

12 # These authors contributed equally to the study

13

14 * Corresponding author 1: Qiwang Zhong

15 Tel& Fax: +86-791-83813459

16 Postal address: College of Biological Science and Engineering, Jiangxi Agricultural University,
17 No. 1101 Zhimin Road, Nanchang 330045, P.R. China.

18 mail addresses: zhongqiwang@jxau.edu.cn

19

20 Corresponding author 2: Lili Wei

21 Tel& Fax: +86-791-83853503

22 Postal address: College of Animal Science and Technology, Jiangxi Agricultural University, No.
23 1101 Zhimin Road, Nanchang 330045, P.R. China.

24 E-mail addresses: hbliliwei@163.com

25

26

27

28

29

30 Abstract

31 The contribution of gut microbiome in fish growth and health is being increasingly recognized.
32 However, little was known about the microbial community in the intestine of swamp eel
33 (*Monopterus albus*). Here, we analyzed microbial communities of five distinct gut compartments
34 (foregut content and mucosa, hindgut content and mucosa, and stools) of swamp eel based on
35 high-throughput 16S rRNA gene sequencing. The results showed that the number of observed
36 OTUs decreased from proximal to distal of intestine and samples from different gut
37 compartments showed significant separations. Nevertheless, there were 54 core OTUs shared by
38 all gut compartments and 36 out of 54 core OTUs significantly varied in the abundances in
39 different gut compartments. Furthermore, we discovered 66 compartment-specific enriched
40 KEGG pathways. These compartment-specific enriched microbial taxa (e.g., *Bacillus*,
41 *Lactobacillus*) and potential function capacities (e.g., amino acid metabolism, carbohydrate
42 metabolism) might play vital roles in nutrients metabolism, immune modulation, and host-
43 microbe interactions of swamp eel. This study should provide basic insights into the gut
44 microbiome of swamp eel.

45 **Key words:** *Monopterus albus*; 16S rRNA sequencing; microbial taxa; function capacities

46

47 Introduction

48 Swamp eel (*Monopterus albus*) taxonomically belongs to Order Synbranchiformes, Family
49 Synbranchidae, and is an economically important fish species (Li et al., 2017). Due to its great
50 growth performance and rich nutrient content, swamp eel has become a commercially important
51 farmed species in China, and in 2016 the production of swamp eel reached 367,547 tons.
52 Diseases and low feed efficiency are two major factors restricting the development of swamp eel
53 aquaculture (Chen et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2016). Previous studies revealed that the administration
54 of probiotics could reduce disease susceptibility and improve feed efficiency (Hai, 2015; Newaj-
55 Fyzul, Austin, 2015). Probiotics are live microbial feed supplements which can regulate balance
56 of intestinal bacterial community. It suggested that the dysbiosis and homeostasis of gut
57 microbiota might be associated with swamp eel's diseases pathogenesis and food digestion.

58 Earlier researches on gut microbiota of freshwater and marine fishes had demonstrated that gut

59 microbiota played a crucial role in host nutrients metabolism, growth and health. Wu *et al.*
60 reported that many cellulose-decomposing bacteria, such as *Anoxybacillus*, *Actinomyces*, and
61 *Citrobacter*, harbored in the intestine of grass carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idellus*) (Wu *et al.*, 2012).
62 Pompano (*Trachinotus blochii*) showed high abundance of *Clostridia* which was associated with
63 polysaccharides degradation, when fed with commercial pellet (Rasheeda *et al.*, 2017). Yan *et al.*
64 observed the alpha diversity and the dominant bacterial taxa significantly changed with the
65 development of *Siniperca chuatsi* (Yan *et al.*, 2016). Small *et.al* revealed that interactions
66 between threespine stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*) and gut microbiota play a key role in the
67 development of gut innate immunity (Small *et al.*, 2017). What's more, gut microbial
68 communities in the different gut compartments exhibited distinct differences in diversity and
69 richness. Ye observed significantly higher alpha-diversity indices in the foregut than the hindgut
70 in both Asian silver carp and gizzard shad (Ye *et al.*, 2014). In salmon, microbial richness was
71 greater in the digesta than in the mucosa, however, in the rabbitfish (*Siganus fuscescens*), the
72 microbial richness significantly increased from content compartment to mucosal compartment
73 (Gajardo *et al.*, 2016; Nielsen *et al.*, 2017). Since gut microbiome are complex and dynamic
74 communities which have profound influences on fishes, it is important to systematically
75 characterize the bacterial communities in different gut compartments. However, to the best of our
76 knowledge, there is few study about the gut microbiome of swamp eel.

77 The main objective of this study was to investigate gut microbial structures, compositions, and
78 function capacities of different gut compartments of swamp eel using 16S rRNA gene
79 sequencing. We wondered whether the different structural and functional characteristics of gut
80 microbial community in different compartments were correlated with swamp eel's nutrients
81 metabolism, immune modulation, and host-microbe interactions. This study would provide the
82 first glimpse of gut microbiome of swamp eel.

83

84 **Methods**

85 **Sample collection**

86 Swamp eel individuals were sampled from different net cages of a commercial swamp eel farm,
87 and then acclimated in dechlorinated tap water and fed the same surimi diet in the same 10 L

88 aquarium tanks for 8 weeks until dissection. Fecal samples were collected immediately and
89 separately before euthanasia. Four individuals were anesthetized with tricaine methanesulfonate
90 and the whole intestine were aseptically removed from the abdominal cavity. The intestine was
91 further dissected using sterile instruments to separate the foregut (immediately after the stomach)
92 and the hindgut (immediately before the anus) sections. The contents in each gut section were
93 squeezed out and collected separately. The proximal and distal sections of the intestine were then
94 washed with sterile PBS three times to remove remnants of the gut content. All procedures for
95 handling and euthanasia of swamp eel were approved by Animal Care and Use Committee of
96 Jangxi Agricultural University.

97 **DNA extraction and 16S rRNA gene sequencing**

98 Total DNA was extracted from gut content and gut mucosa using the PowerSoil[®] DNA Isolation
99 Kit (Mo Bio, San Diego, CA, USA) according to the manufacturer's instruction. Fecal DNA
100 extraction was performed using the QIAamp Stool Mini Kit (QIAGEN, Germany). The barcoded
101 fusion forward primer 338F (5'-ACTCCTACGGGAGGCAGCA-3') and the reverse primer 806R
102 (5'-GGACTACHVGGGTWTCTAAT-3') were used to amplify the V3-V4 hyper variable region
103 of the 16S rRNA gene. The Barcoded V3-V4 amplicons were sequenced using the paired-end
104 method on Illumina MiSeq platform (Illumina, USA) following the standard protocols.

105 **16S rRNA gene sequencing data analysis**

106 The raw sequencing data were removed the barcodes and low quality sequences to obtain the
107 clean data using FASTX-Toolkit. FLASH software was used to merge high-quality paired-end
108 reads into tags (Magoc, Salzberg, 2011). Operational Taxonomic Unit (OTU) picking was
109 performed using the USEARCH pipeline with a 97% sequence identity (Edgar, 2010). We
110 performed taxonomic assignments for the aligned sequences using the Ribosomal Database
111 Project (RDP) classifier program with 80% confidence threshold (Wang et al., 2007). Microbial
112 taxa abundance and diversity indices were generated using Quantitative Insights Into Microbial
113 Ecology (QIIME) (Caporaso et al., 2010). Phylogenetic investigation of communities by
114 reconstruction of unobserved states (PICRUST) was used to predict the functional profile of the
115 microbial community (Yang et al., 2017). We extracted the closed reference OTU table from
116 quality control reads in QIIME against the Greengenes database. OTU normalization, gene

117 family abundances prediction, and function categorization based on KEGG (Kyoto Encyclopedia
118 of Genes and Genomes) pathway was performed by PICRUSt according to the default settings.

119 **Statistical analysis**

120 Microbial species richness was analyzed using the observed number of OTUs. Principal
121 Coordinate Analysis (PCoA) of the beta diversity was performed based on the unweighted
122 distance matrix (Donaldson et al., 2016). Permutation multivariate analysis of variance
123 (PERMANOVA) was performed to identify compartment specific enriched microbial taxa and
124 functional capacities (Nielsen, Wilkes Walburn, Verges, Thomas, Egan, 2017). The output results
125 were visualized using ggplot2 and gplots in R package except the Venn diagrams which were
126 drawn using the online tool (bioinformatics.psb.ugent.be/webtools/Venn/).

127

128 **Results**

129 Both data sets are accessible through NCBI's SRA, under study accession number SRP [145040].

130 **Microbial diversities and compositions in different gut compartments**

131 At first, 405, 642, 227, 372 and 171 OTUs were found presented in the foregut content, foregut
132 mucosa, hindgut content, hindgut mucosa, and stools, respectively (Figure 1). Then, we identified
133 specific and common OTUs in different compartments via a Venn diagram. 63 common OTUs
134 were detected among foregut content, hindgut content, and stools. 315 OTUs were shared by both
135 the foregut mucosa and hindgut mucosa. Importantly, we found 54 common OTUs as a core
136 microbiota presented in all intestinal compartments, while 53, 254, 5, 16 and 37 specific OTUs
137 were also detected for foregut content, foregut mucosa, hindgut content, hindgut mucosa, and
138 stools, respectively. What's more, PCoA analysis also revealed significant separations among
139 samples from different gut compartments (Figure 2).

140 To further uncover characteristics of microbial compositions in different gut compartments,
141 relative abundances of OTUs assigned for the phylum level and the genus level were analyzed
142 (Figure 3). At phylum level, *Firmicutes*, *Fusobacteria*, *Proteobacteria*, *Bacteroidetes*, and
143 *Actinobacteria* were the five most dominant phyla. At genus level, *Cetobacterium*, *Ralstonia*, and
144 *Rhodococcus* were the most predominant genera. Interestingly, the abundances of these microbial
145 taxa changed significantly among different gut compartments. For instances, *Firmicutes* occupied

146 a large proportion of the gut microbiota in both foregut and hindgut regardless of the locations
147 sample obtained, but it only occupied a small proportion of the gut microbiota in stools samples.
148 *Fusobacteria* accounted for a higher proportion of gut microbiota in the content compartment
149 than in the mucosal compartment. *Cetobacterium* was predominant in all samples, but a lower
150 abundance in the foregut was observed when compared to the hindgut and stools. In contrast, the
151 abundance of *Rhodococcus* in foregut was higher than that in hindgut and stools.

152 **Core microbial taxa enriched in different gut compartments**

153 To identify the differential enrichment of the core microbial taxa in specific gut compartment,
154 we analyzed the abundance of the 54 core OTUs across all compartments. As shown in Figure 4,
155 total 36 compartment-specific enriched OTUs were observed. In the foregut content, seven
156 enriched OTUs were annotated to *Enhydrobacter*, *Comamonadaceae*, *Caulobacteraceae*,
157 *Microbacteriaceae*, *Peptostreptococcaceae*, *Bradyrhizobium*, and *Deinococcus*, respectively.
158 Meanwhile, OTUs annotated to each of *Roseburia*, *S24-7*, *Bacillus*, *Acidobacteria*, *Paracoccus*,
159 *Lactococcus*, and *Oxalobacteraceae* were enriched in the foregut mucosa. On the other hand,
160 OTUs enriched in the hindgut content were annotated to *Cetobacterium somerae*, *Arthrobacter*,
161 *Coprococcus*, *Bacteroidaceae*, *Ruminococcaceae*, *Epulopiscium*, and *Citrobacter*. OTUs
162 annotated to *Clostridium*, *Pseudomonas*, *Rhodococcus*, *Ralstonia*, *Achromobacter*, *Streptococcus*,
163 and *Lactobacillus* showed great abundance in the hindgut mucosa. Besides, 8 OTUs derived from
164 *Chryseobacterium*, *Comamonas*, *Serratia*, *Acinetobacter johnsonii*, *Pedobacter*, *Plesiomonas*
165 *shigelloides*, *Pseudoxanthomonas Mexicana*, and *Aeromonadaceae* increased in abundance in the
166 stools samples.

167 **Comparison of microbial potential capacities in different gut compartments**

168 To compare the potential functional capacity of microbial community in different gut
169 compartments, the relative abundances of KEGG pathways were predicted by PICRUSt. The
170 results showed that 66 KEGG pathways exhibited significant differences in abundances across
171 different gut compartments (Figure 5). Among these, 26 pathways from the foregut samples, 28
172 pathways from the hindgut samples, and 12 pathways from stools samples. Notably, we found
173 some characteristics of the distribution of differential pathways in specific gut compartment. For
174 example, amino acid metabolism pathways such as lysine degradation, arginine and proline

175 metabolism, and valine, leucine and isoleucine degradation were predominant in the foregut
176 content. Cofactor and vitamins metabolism and signal transduction related pathways were
177 overrepresented in the foregut mucosa. In the hindgut, carbohydrate and lipid metabolism
178 pathways were prominent in the content, while bacterial replication, transcription, and translation
179 related pathways were outstanding in the mucosa. What's more, we observed that microbial
180 community was more capable of metabolizing secondary metabolites and xenobiotics in the
181 stools.

182

183 **Discussion**

184 In this study, 16S rRNA sequencing analysis revealed the diversity, composition, and potential
185 functional capacity of microbial community across different gut compartments in swamp eel. To
186 our best knowledge, this is the first study systematically evaluating the gut microbiome of swamp
187 eel (*Monopterus albus*).

188 It was found that the number of observed OTUs decreased from the proximal section to the
189 distal section of intestine in swamp eel. This result was different from many vertebrate
190 microbiome studies which revealed that the distal section of intestine had higher richness and
191 diversity than the proximal section. This difference might be associated with the specific
192 physiological structure of the intestine in swamp eel. Swamp eel's intestine is short and straight,
193 however, many other freshwater-cultured fishes and mammals have long and coiled intestines
194 (He et al., 2017; Steinert et al., 2013; Tan et al., 2018; Tok et al., 2011). Due to this special
195 physiological structure, nutrients metabolism in swamp eel's intestine is faster than other
196 freshwater-cultured fishes (Zhou, Qin, 2007). Considering the crucial role of gut microbiota in
197 host nutrients metabolism, we speculated that much more microbes inhabitation in the proximal
198 section of swamp eel's intestine should benefit to host fast digestion and absorption of nutrients.
199 Furthermore, much more OTUs presented in the mucosal compartment than the content
200 compartment regardless of the locations that samples obtained. This result was consistent with
201 gut microbiome studies in rabbitfish (*Siganus fuscescens*) and loach (Nielsen et al., 2017; Yanget
202 al., 2017) and reinforced the previous findings that the intestinal mucosa might serve as a
203 reservoir of diverse bacterial species (Lu et al., 2014). OTUs assigned for the phylum level and

204 genus level further revealed some specific features of microbial compositions of swamp eel.
205 Previous study demonstrated that the high abundance of *Firmicutes* was observed in the gut
206 microbiome of omnivorous fishes and *Fusobacteria* was the predominant phylum in the gut
207 microbiome of carnivorous fishes (Liu et al., 2016). Here, the microbial communities of swamp
208 eel were dominated by *Firmicutes*, *Fusobacteria*, *Proteobacteria*, *Bacteroidetes*, and
209 *Actinobacteria*. It implied that gut microbial composition of swamp eel may be associated with
210 its varied feeding habits. What's more, we found that *Firmicutes* was more predominant in the
211 foregut and hindgut than the stools, while the abundance of *Fusobacteria* was higher in the
212 content compartment than the mucosal compartment. The most dominant genus *Cetobacterium*
213 and *Rhodococcus* also varied in the abundances across different gut compartments. These results
214 suggested that using samples from single gut compartment to represent an overview of gut
215 microbiota would likely fail to detect community variation responding to physiological variations
216 of the gut (Durban et al., 2011).

217 Although the gut microbiota showed distinct spatial heterogeneity, we still identified a core
218 microbiota consisting of 54 common OTUs in all gut compartment. It was in line with previous
219 fishes gut microbiome studies indicating that specific microbial taxa could form a stable core
220 microbiota in the intestine (Baldo et al., 2015; Rudi et al., 2018). Furthermore, we found that the
221 enrichments of these microbial taxa were associated with nutrients metabolism, immune
222 modulation, and habitat adaptations. In the content compartment, most of the enriched microbial
223 taxa were associated with nutrients metabolism. For example, dietary fiber degradation associated
224 bacteria *Enhydrobacter* and *Comamonadaceae* and amino acid metabolism associated bacteria
225 *Comamonadaceae* and *Microbacteriaceae* were enriched in the foregut content (Premalatha et
226 al., 2015; Sakurai et al., 2017; Yin et al., 2017). Gut microbial taxa equipped with multiple
227 carbohydrate active enzymes such as *Bacteroidaceae*, *Ruminococcaceae*, *Coprococcus*, and
228 *Citrobacter* which involved in non-digestible dietary carbohydrates metabolism showed great
229 abundance in the hindgut content (Luo et al., 2017; Tap et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2012). Notably,
230 *Cetobacterium somerae* as a vitamin B-12 and antimicrobial metabolites producing species had a
231 higher abundance in the hindgut content. It was in agreement with the results from many fishes
232 gut microbiota studies (Bledsoe et al., 2016; Larsen et al., 2014). Interestingly, stools samples as

233 an end product of nutrients metabolism in the content compartment, several potential aquatic
234 pathogenic bacteria were enriched including *Serratia*, *Acinetobacter johnsonii*, *Plesiomonas*
235 *shigelloides*, and *Aeromonadaceae* (Gonzalez et al., 2000; Martins et al., 2013; Nadirah et al.,
236 2012; Sheikhlar et al., 2017). However, they did not cause any infections or diseases in our
237 feeding swamp eels. It indicated that they were native inhabitants of swamp eel's stools.
238 Meanwhile, many immune modulation associated bacteria were found inhabiting in the mucosal
239 compartment. For instance, *S24-7* modulated mucosal immune homeostasis, *Roseburia* regulated
240 innate immunity, and potential probiotics including *Bacillus*, *Acidobacteria*, and *Lactococcus*
241 were predominant in the foregut mucosa (Bernardeau et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2017; Lv et al.,
242 2016; Patterson et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2018). *Clostridium* and *Lactobacillus* involved in immune
243 response, *Pseudomonas* and *Achromobacter* had strong antimicrobial activities, and
244 *Rhodococcus* showed properties of probiotic were overrepresented in the hindgut mucosa
245 (Nayak, 2010; Sharifuzzaman et al., 2017; Zothanpuia et al., 2016). Besides, it was noteworthy
246 that the distributions of compartment-specific enriched microbial taxa also reflected their
247 adaptations to habitat, particularly to the oxygen concentration. Aerobic bacteria *Bradyrhizobium*,
248 *Deinococcus*, *Arthrobacter*, and *Comamonas* preferred to thrive in the content compartment.
249 Anaerobes and obligate anaerobes such as *Paracoccus*, *Ralstonia* and *Streptococcus* were more
250 prevalent in the mucosal compartment.

251 The potential functional capacities of microbial communities were distinctly different across
252 different gut compartments and these differential microbial functional capacities should be
253 related to host physiological functions and host-microbes interactions. Amino acid metabolism
254 pathways were more abundant in the foregut content. It was correlated with foregut as a major
255 segment for amino acid metabolism and suggested that gut microbiota in the foregut content
256 might help swamp eel to digest dietary amino acids (Oliva-Teles, 2012). Cofactors and vitamins
257 metabolism and cellular signals processing pathways were enriched in the foregut mucosa. Since
258 fishes lack the biosynthetic capacity for most vitamins, vitamins produced by gut microbiota will
259 play a key role in host growth, intestinal mucosal immune and signaling molecules expression
260 (Feng et al., 2016; Li et al., 2015). In the hindgut content, a high level of carbohydrate and lipid
261 metabolism was identified. It was in line with previous studies that gut microbiome of fish

262 hindgut fermented dietary non-digestible polysaccharides to short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs)
263 (Geraylou et al., 2013; Mountfort et al., 2002). In the hindgut mucosa, microbial replications,
264 transcriptions and translations related pathways were concentrated and this was in consistent with
265 that hindgut mucosa was an essential gut region where interactions between gut microbiota and
266 host cells happened (Morgan et al., 2015; Sellers, Morton, 2014). Intriguingly, we observed that
267 microbial xenobiotics and secondary metabolites metabolism pathways were more predominant
268 in the stools samples. This result and the enriched microbial taxa in stools above indicated that
269 stools may service as a “wastes dump” of swamp eel and microbial community.

270

271 **Conclusions**

272 In the present study, we comprehensively characterized the microbial communities in different
273 gut compartments of swamp eel. Our results showed that the microbial diversity, composition,
274 and function capacity were varied substantially in longitudinal and radial parts of the intestine.
275 The microbial diversity and composition across different gut compartments could reflect the
276 characteristics of swamp eel’s intestine structures and feeding habit. The gut compartment-
277 specific enriched core microbial taxa and function capacities may exert an important role in
278 swamp eel’s nutrients metabolism, immune modulation, and host-microbe interactions. Taken
279 together, these results should provide a basis for further research on gut microbiome of swamp
280 eel.

281

282

References

- 283 Baldo, L., Riera, J.L., Tooming-Klunderud, A., Alba, M.M., Salzburger, W., 2015. Gut Microbiota Dynamics during
284 Dietary Shift in Eastern African Cichlid Fishes. *PloS one*. 10, e0127462.
- 285 Bernardeau, M., Lehtinen, M.J., Forssten, S.D., Nurminen, P., 2017. Importance of the gastrointestinal life cycle of
286 *Bacillus* for probiotic functionality. *Journal of food science and technology*. 54, 2570-2584.
- 287 Bledsoe, J.W., Peterson, B.C., Swanson, K.S., Small, B.C., 2016. Ontogenetic Characterization of the Intestinal
288 Microbiota of Channel Catfish through 16S rRNA Gene Sequencing Reveals Insights on Temporal Shifts
289 and the Influence of Environmental Microbes. *PloS one*. 11, e0166379.
- 290 Caporaso, J.G., Kuczynski, J., Stombaugh, J., Bittinger, K., Bushman, F.D., Costello, E.K., Fierer, N., Pena, A.G.,
291 Goodrich, J.K., Gordon, J.I., Huttley, G.A., Kelley, S.T., Knights, D., Koenig, J.E., Ley, R.E., Lozupone,
292 C.A., McDonald, D., Muegge, B.D., Pirrung, M., Reeder, J., Sevinsky, J.R., Turnbaugh, P.J., Walters, W.A.,
293 Widmann, J., Yatsunencko, T., Zaneveld, J., Knight, R., 2010. QIIME allows analysis of high-throughput

- 294 community sequencing data. *Nature methods*. 7, 335-336.
- 295 Chen, D., Liu, J., Chen, W., Shi, S., Zhang, W., Zhang, L., 2015. Expression and ontogeny of growth hormone (Gh)
296 in the protogynous hermaphroditic ricefield eel (*Monopterus albus*). *Fish physiology and biochemistry*. 41,
297 1515-1525.
- 298 Donaldson, G.P., Lee, S.M., Mazmanian, S.K., 2016. Gut biogeography of the bacterial microbiota. *Nature reviews*.
299 *Microbiology*. 14, 20-32.
- 300 Durban, A., Abellan, J.J., Jimenez-Hernandez, N., Ponce, M., Ponce, J., Sala, T., D'Auria, G., Latorre, A., Moya, A.,
301 2011. Assessing gut microbial diversity from feces and rectal mucosa. *Microbial ecology*. 61, 123-133.
- 302 Edgar, R.C., 2010. Search and clustering orders of magnitude faster than BLAST. *Bioinformatics*. 26, 2460-2461.
- 303 Feng, L., Li, S.Q., Jiang, W.D., Liu, Y., Jiang, J., Wu, P., Zhao, J., Kuang, S.Y., Tang, L., Tang, W.N., Zhang, Y.A.,
304 Zhou, X.Q., 2016. Deficiency of dietary niacin impaired intestinal mucosal immune function via regulating
305 intestinal NF-kappaB, Nrf2 and MLCK signaling pathways in young grass carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*).
306 *Fish & shellfish immunology*. 49, 177-193.
- 307 Gajardo, K., Rodiles, A., Kortner, T.M., Krogdahl, A., Bakke, A.M., Merrifield, D.L., Sorum, H., 2016. A high-
308 resolution map of the gut microbiota in Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*): A basis for comparative gut
309 microbial research. *Scientific reports*. 6, 30893.
- 310 Geraylou, Z., Souffreau, C., Rurangwa, E., Maes, G.E., Spanier, K.I., Courtin, C.M., Delcour, J.A., Buyse, J.,
311 Ollevier, F., 2013. Prebiotic effects of arabinoxylan oligosaccharides on juvenile Siberian sturgeon
312 (*Acipenser baerii*) with emphasis on the modulation of the gut microbiota using 454 pyrosequencing. *FEMS*
313 *microbiology ecology*. 86, 357-371.
- 314 Gonzalez, C.J., Santos, J.A., Garcia-Lopez, M.L., Otero, A., 2000. Psychrobacters and related bacteria in freshwater
315 fish. *Journal of food protection*. 63, 315-321.
- 316 Hai, N.V., 2015. The use of probiotics in aquaculture. *Journal of applied microbiology*. 119, 917-935.
- 317 He, M., Wang, K., Liang, X., Fang, J., Geng, Y., Chen, Z., Pu, H., Hu, Y., Li, X., Liu, L., 2017. Effects of dietary
318 vitamin E on growth performance as well as intestinal structure and function of channel catfish (*Ictalurus*
319 *punctatus*, Rafinesque 1818). *Experimental and therapeutic medicine*. 14, 5703-5710.
- 320 Larsen, A.M., Mohammed, H.H., Arias, C.R., 2014. Characterization of the gut microbiota of three commercially
321 valuable warmwater fish species. *Journal of applied microbiology*. 116, 1396-1404.
- 322 Li, L., Feng, L., Jiang, W.D., Jiang, J., Wu, P., Kuang, S.Y., Tang, L., Tang, W.N., Zhang, Y.A., Zhou, X.Q., Liu, Y.,
323 2015. Dietary pantothenic acid deficiency and excess depress the growth, intestinal mucosal immune and
324 physical functions by regulating NF-kappaB, TOR, Nrf2 and MLCK signaling pathways in grass carp
325 (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*). *Fish & shellfish immunology*. 45, 399-413.
- 326 Li, Z., Chen, F., Huang, C., Zheng, W., Yu, C., Cheng, H., Zhou, R., 2017. Genome-wide mapping and
327 characterization of microsatellites in the swamp eel genome. *Scientific reports*. 7, 3157.
- 328 Liu, H., Guo, X., Gooneratne, R., Lai, R., Zeng, C., Zhan, F., Wang, W., 2016. The gut microbiome and degradation
329 enzyme activity of wild freshwater fishes influenced by their trophic levels. *Scientific reports*. 6, 24340.
- 330 Liu, J., Bian, G., Sun, D., Zhu, W., Mao, S., 2017. Starter Feeding Supplementation Alters Colonic Mucosal Bacterial
331 Communities and Modulates Mucosal Immune Homeostasis in Newborn Lambs. *Frontiers in microbiology*.
332 8, 429.
- 333 Lu, H.P., Lai, Y.C., Huang, S.W., Chen, H.C., Hsieh, C.H., Yu, H.T., 2014. Spatial heterogeneity of gut microbiota
334 reveals multiple bacterial communities with distinct characteristics. *Scientific reports*. 4, 6185.
- 335 Luo, Y., Zhang, L., Li, H., Smidt, H., Wright, A.G., Zhang, K., Ding, X., Zeng, Q., Bai, S., Wang, J., Li, J., Zheng, P.,
336 Tian, G., Cai, J., Chen, D., 2017. Different Types of Dietary Fibers Trigger Specific Alterations in

- 337 Composition and Predicted Functions of Colonic Bacterial Communities in BALB/c Mice. *Frontiers in*
338 *microbiology*. 8, 966.
- 339 Lv, L.X., Fang, D.Q., Shi, D., Chen, D.Y., Yan, R., Zhu, Y.X., Chen, Y.F., Shao, L., Guo, F.F., Wu, W.R., Li, A., Shi,
340 H.Y., Jiang, X.W., Jiang, H.Y., Xiao, Y.H., Zheng, S.S., Li, L.J., 2016. Alterations and correlations of the gut
341 microbiome, metabolism and immunity in patients with primary biliary cirrhosis. *Environmental*
342 *microbiology*. 18, 2272-2286.
- 343 Magoc, T., Salzberg, S.L., 2011. FLASH: fast length adjustment of short reads to improve genome assemblies.
344 *Bioinformatics*. 27, 2957-2963.
- 345 Martins, P., Cleary, D.F., Pires, A.C., Rodrigues, A.M., Quintino, V., Calado, R., Gomes, N.C., 2013. Molecular
346 analysis of bacterial communities and detection of potential pathogens in a recirculating aquaculture system
347 for *Scophthalmus maximus* and *Solea senegalensis*. *PloS one*. 8, e80847.
- 348 Morgan, X.C., Kabakchiev, B., Waldron, L., Tyler, A.D., Tickle, T.L., Milgrom, R., Stempak, J.M., Gevers, D.,
349 Xavier, R.J., Silverberg, M.S., Huttenhower, C., 2015. Associations between host gene expression, the
350 mucosal microbiome, and clinical outcome in the pelvic pouch of patients with inflammatory bowel disease.
351 *Genome biology*. 16, 67.
- 352 Mountfort, D.O., Campbell, J., Clements, K.D., 2002. Hindgut fermentation in three species of marine herbivorous
353 fish. *Applied and environmental microbiology*. 68, 1374-1380.
- 354 Nadirah, M., Ruhil, H.H., Jalal, K.C., Najiah, M., 2012. Occurrence of *Plesiomonas shigelloides* in cultured red
355 hybrid tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) from tropical rivers, east coast Malaysia. *Pakistan journal of*
356 *biological sciences : PJBS*. 15, 600-603.
- 357 Nayak, S.K., 2010. Probiotics and immunity: a fish perspective. *Fish & shellfish immunology*. 29, 2-14.
- 358 Newaj-Fyzul, A., Austin, B., 2015. Probiotics, immunostimulants, plant products and oral vaccines, and their role as
359 feed supplements in the control of bacterial fish diseases. *Journal of fish diseases*. 38, 937-955.
- 360 Nielsen, S., Wilkes Walburn, J., Verges, A., Thomas, T., Egan, S., 2017. Microbiome patterns across the
361 gastrointestinal tract of the rabbitfish *Siganus fuscescens*. *PeerJ*. 5, e3317.
- 362 Oliva-Teles, A., 2012. Nutrition and health of aquaculture fish. *Journal of fish diseases*. 35, 83-108.
- 363 Patterson, A.M., Mulder, I.E., Travis, A.J., Lan, A., Cerf-Bensusan, N., Gaboriau-Routhiau, V., Garden, K., Logan,
364 E., Delday, M.I., Coutts, A.G.P., Monnais, E., Ferraria, V.C., Inoue, R., Grant, G., Aminov, R.I., 2017.
365 Human Gut Symbiont *Roseburia hominis* Promotes and Regulates Innate Immunity. *Frontiers in*
366 *immunology*. 8, 1166.
- 367 Premalatha, N., Gopal, N.O., Jose, P.A., Anandham, R., Kwon, S.W., 2015. Optimization of cellulase production by
368 *Enhydrobacter* sp. ACCA2 and its application in biomass saccharification. *Frontiers in microbiology*. 6,
369 1046.
- 370 Rasheeda, M.K., Rangamaran, V.R., Srinivasan, S., Ramaiah, S.K., Gunasekaran, R., Jaypal, S., Gopal, D.,
371 Ramalingam, K., 2017. Comparative profiling of microbial community of three economically important
372 fishes reared in sea cages under tropical offshore environment. *Marine genomics*. 34, 57-65.
- 373 Rudi, K., Angell, I.L., Pope, P.B., Vik, J.O., Sandve, S.R., Snipen, L.G., 2018. Stable Core Gut Microbiota across the
374 Freshwater-to-Saltwater Transition for Farmed Atlantic Salmon. *Applied and environmental microbiology*.
375 84.
- 376 Sakurai, T., Sakurai, A., Chen, Y., Vaisman, B.L., Amar, M.J., Pryor, M., Thacker, S.G., Zhang, X., Wang, X., Zhang,
377 Y., Zhu, J., Yang, Z.H., Freeman, L.A., Remaley, A.T., 2017. Dietary alpha-cyclodextrin reduces
378 atherosclerosis and modifies gut flora in apolipoprotein E-deficient mice. *Molecular nutrition & food*
379 *research*. 61.

- 380 Sellers, R.S., Morton, D., 2014. The colon: from banal to brilliant. *Toxicologic pathology*. 42, 67-81.
- 381 Sharifuzzaman, S.M., Rahman, H., Austin, D.A., Austin, B., 2017. Properties of Probiotics Kocuria SM1 and
382 Rhodococcus SM2 Isolated from Fish Guts. *Probiotics and antimicrobial proteins*.
- 383 Sheikhlari, A., Meng, G.Y., Alimon, R., Romano, N., Ebrahimi, M., 2017. Dietary *Euphorbia hirta* Extract Improved
384 the Resistance of Sharptooth Catfish *Clarias gariepinus* to *Aeromonas hydrophila*. *Journal of aquatic animal
385 health*. 29, 225-235.
- 386 Small, C.M., Milligan-Myhre, K., Bassham, S., Guillemin, K., Cresko, W.A., 2017. Host Genotype and Microbiota
387 Contribute Asymmetrically to Transcriptional Variation in the Threespine Stickleback Gut. *Genome biology
388 and evolution*. 9, 504-520.
- 389 Steinert, R.E., Feinle-Bisset, C., Geary, N., Beglinger, C., 2013. Digestive physiology of the pig symposium:
390 secretion of gastrointestinal hormones and eating control. *Journal of animal science*. 91, 1963-1973.
- 391 Tan, X., Sun, Z., Zhou, C., Huang, Z., Tan, L., Xun, P., Huang, Q., Lin, H., Ye, C., Wang, A., 2018. Effects of dietary
392 dandelion extract on intestinal morphology, antioxidant status, immune function and physical barrier
393 function of juvenile golden pompano *Trachinotus ovatus*. *Fish & shellfish immunology*. 73, 197-206.
- 394 Tap, J., Furet, J.P., Bensaada, M., Philippe, C., Roth, H., Rabot, S., Lakhdari, O., Lombard, V., Henrissat, B.,
395 Corthier, G., Fontaine, E., Dore, J., Leclerc, M., 2015. Gut microbiota richness promotes its stability upon
396 increased dietary fibre intake in healthy adults. *Environmental microbiology*. 17, 4954-4964.
- 397 Tok, C.Y., Chew, S.F., Ip, Y.K., 2011. Gene Cloning and mRNA Expression of Glutamate Dehydrogenase in the
398 Liver, Brain, and Intestine of the Swamp Eel, *Monopterus albus* (Zuiew), Exposed to Freshwater, Terrestrial
399 Conditions, Environmental Ammonia, or Salinity Stress. *Frontiers in physiology*. 2, 100.
- 400 Wang, Q., Garrity, G.M., Tiedje, J.M., Cole, J.R., 2007. Naive Bayesian classifier for rapid assignment of rRNA
401 sequences into the new bacterial taxonomy. *Applied and environmental microbiology*. 73, 5261-5267.
- 402 Wu, S., Wang, G., Angert, E.R., Wang, W., Li, W., Zou, H., 2012. Composition, diversity, and origin of the bacterial
403 community in grass carp intestine. *PloS one*. 7, e30440.
- 404 Wu, Z.B., Gatesoupe, F.J., Li, T.T., Wang, X.H., Zhang, Q.Q., Feng, D.Y., Feng, Y.Q., Chen, H., Li, A.H., 2018.
405 Significant improvement of intestinal microbiota of gibel carp (*Carassius auratus gibelio*) after traditional
406 Chinese medicine feeding. *Journal of applied microbiology*. 124, 829-841.
- 407 Xu, Q.Q., Xu, P., Zhou, J.W., Pan, T.S., Tuo, R., Ai, K., Yang, D.Q., 2016. [Cloning and expression analysis of two
408 pro-inflammatory cytokines, IL-1beta and its receptor, IL-1R2, in the Asian swamp eel *Monopterus albus*].
409 *Molekuliarnaia biologii*. 50, 760-774.
- 410 Yan, Q., Li, J., Yu, Y., Wang, J., He, Z., Van Nostrand, J.D., Kempfer, M.L., Wu, L., Wang, Y., Liao, L., Li, X., Wu,
411 S., Ni, J., Wang, C., Zhou, J., 2016. Environmental filtering decreases with fish development for the
412 assembly of gut microbiota. *Environmental microbiology*. 18, 4739-4754.
- 413 Yang, S., Duan, Y., Zhang, J., Zhou, J., Liu, Y., Du, J., Zhao, L., Du, Z., Han, S., 2017. Observational comparisons of
414 intestinal microbiota characterizations, immune enzyme activities, and muscle amino acid compositions of
415 loach in paddy fields and ponds in Sichuan Province. *Applied microbiology and biotechnology*. 101, 4775-
416 4789.
- 417 Ye, L., Amberg, J., Chapman, D., Gaikowski, M., Liu, W.T., 2014. Fish gut microbiota analysis differentiates
418 physiology and behavior of invasive Asian carp and indigenous American fish. *The ISME journal*. 8, 541-
419 551.
- 420 Yin, J., Han, H., Li, Y., Liu, Z., Zhao, Y., Fang, R., Huang, X., Zheng, J., Ren, W., Wu, F., Liu, G., Wu, X., Wang, K.,
421 Sun, L., Li, C., Li, T., Yin, Y., 2017. Lysine Restriction Affects Feed Intake and Amino Acid Metabolism via
422 Gut Microbiome in Piglets. *Cellular physiology and biochemistry : international journal of experimental*

- 423 cellular physiology, biochemistry, and pharmacology. 44, 1749-1761.
- 424 Zhou, W.Z., Qin, P., 2007. [Effects of salinity on feeding rhythm and feces excretion time of *Monopterus albus*].
- 425 Ying yong sheng tai xue bao = The journal of applied ecology. 18, 1171-1174.
- 426 Zothanpuia, Passari, A.K., Gupta, V.K., Singh, B.P., 2016. Detection of antibiotic-resistant bacteria endowed with
- 427 antimicrobial activity from a freshwater lake and their phylogenetic affiliation. PeerJ. 4, e2103.
- 428

Figure 1(on next page)

The observed OTU numbers, unique and shared OTUs in different gut compartments.

(A) Bar plot shows the observed OTU numbers in foregut content (FC), foregut mucosa (FM), hindgut content (HC), hindgut mucosa (HM), and stools (S). (B) Venn diagram displays the number of shared and unique OTUs among foregut content (FC), hindgut content (HC), and stools (S). (C) Venn diagram displays the number of shared and unique OTUs between foregut mucosa (FM) and hindgut mucosa (HM). (D) Venn diagram displays the number of core OTUs shared by all gut compartments.

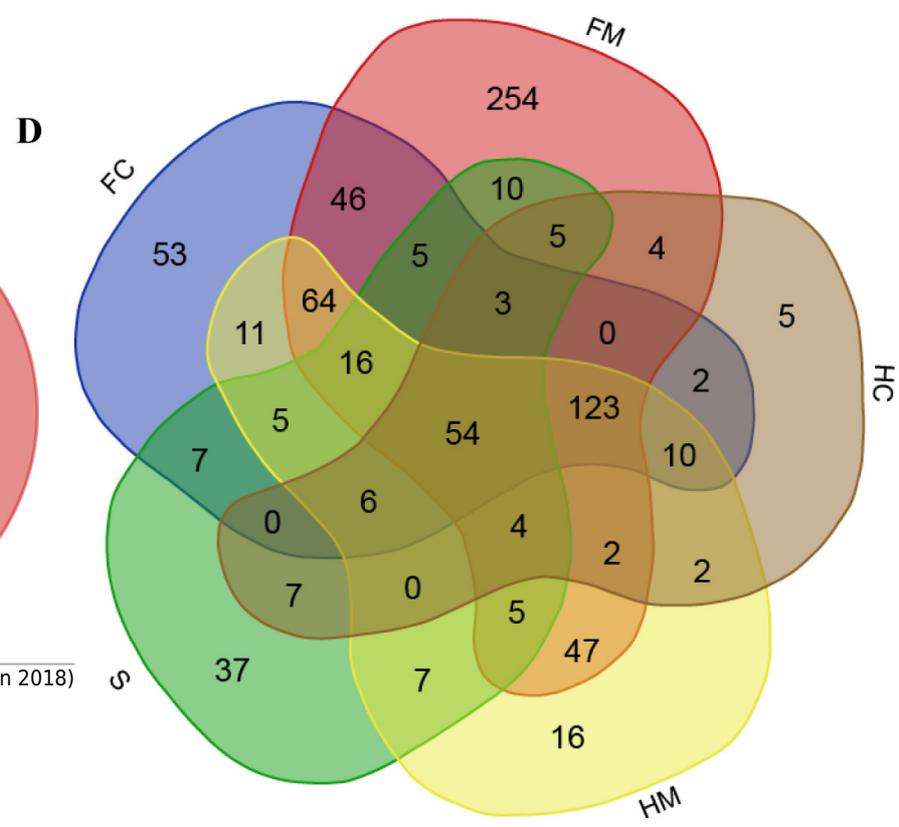
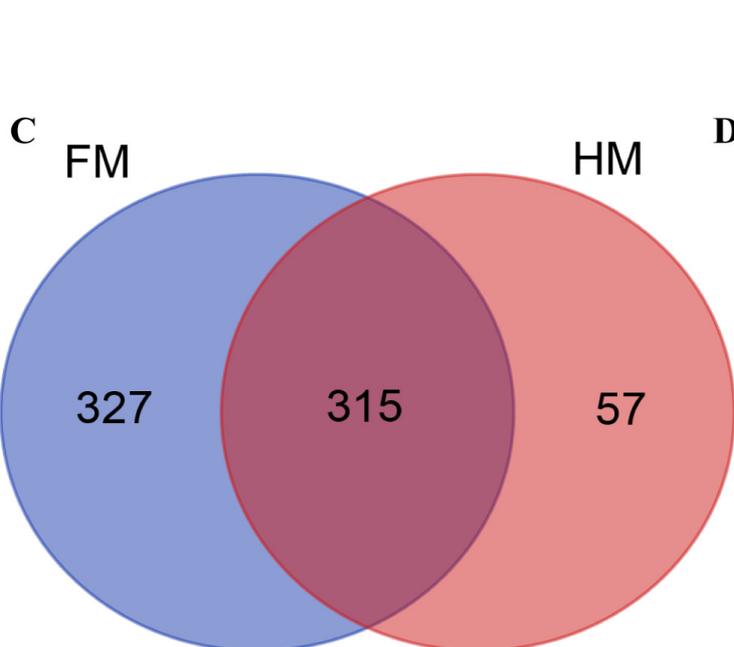
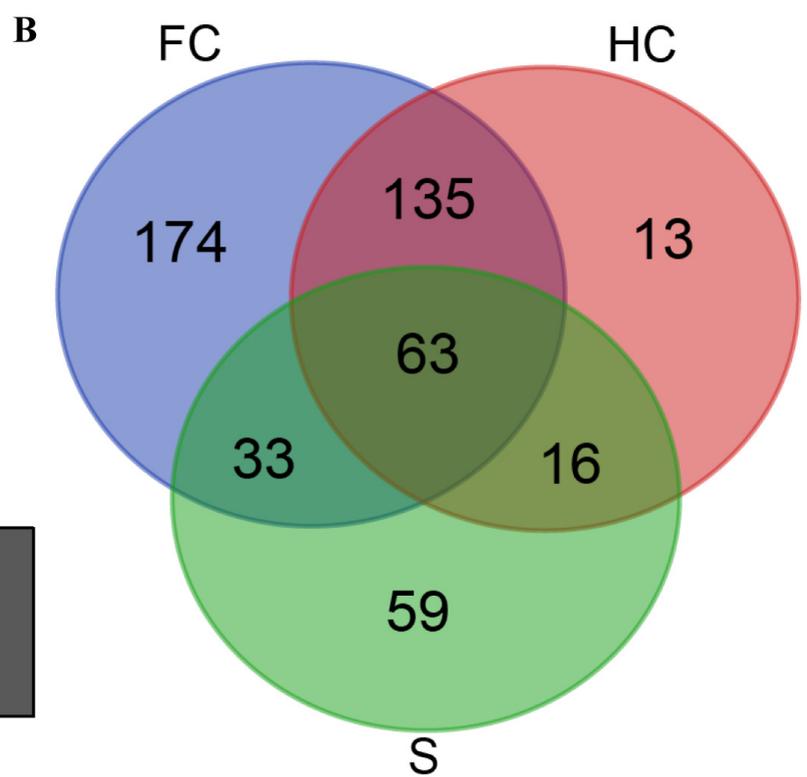
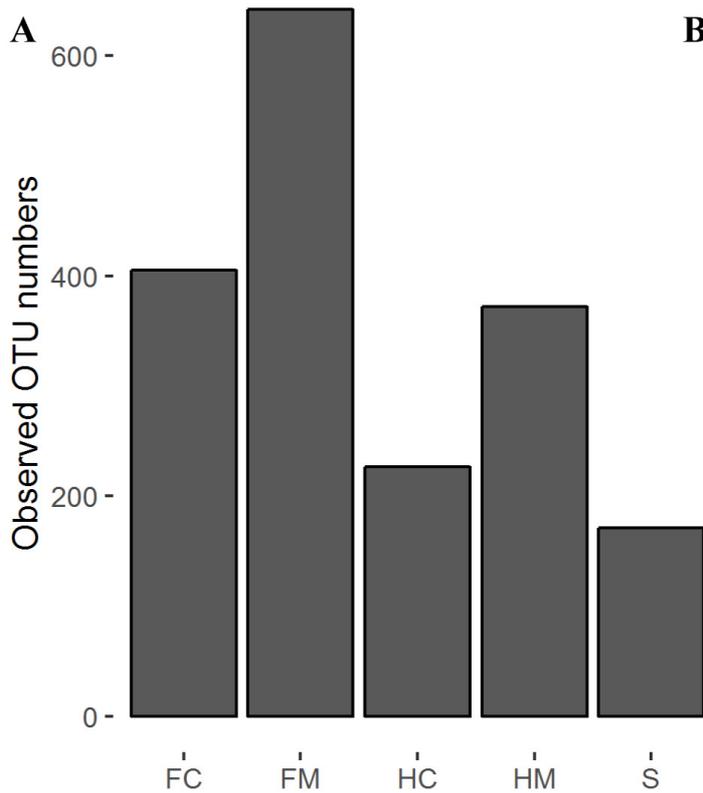


Figure 2 (on next page)

Principal Coordinate Analysis (PCoA) of microbial community in different gut compartments based on the Unweighted UniFrac distance matrix.

The individual samples are color- and shape-coordinated according to the gut compartment.

FC : foregut content, FM: foregut compartment, HC: hindgut content , HM: hindgut mucosa, S: stools.

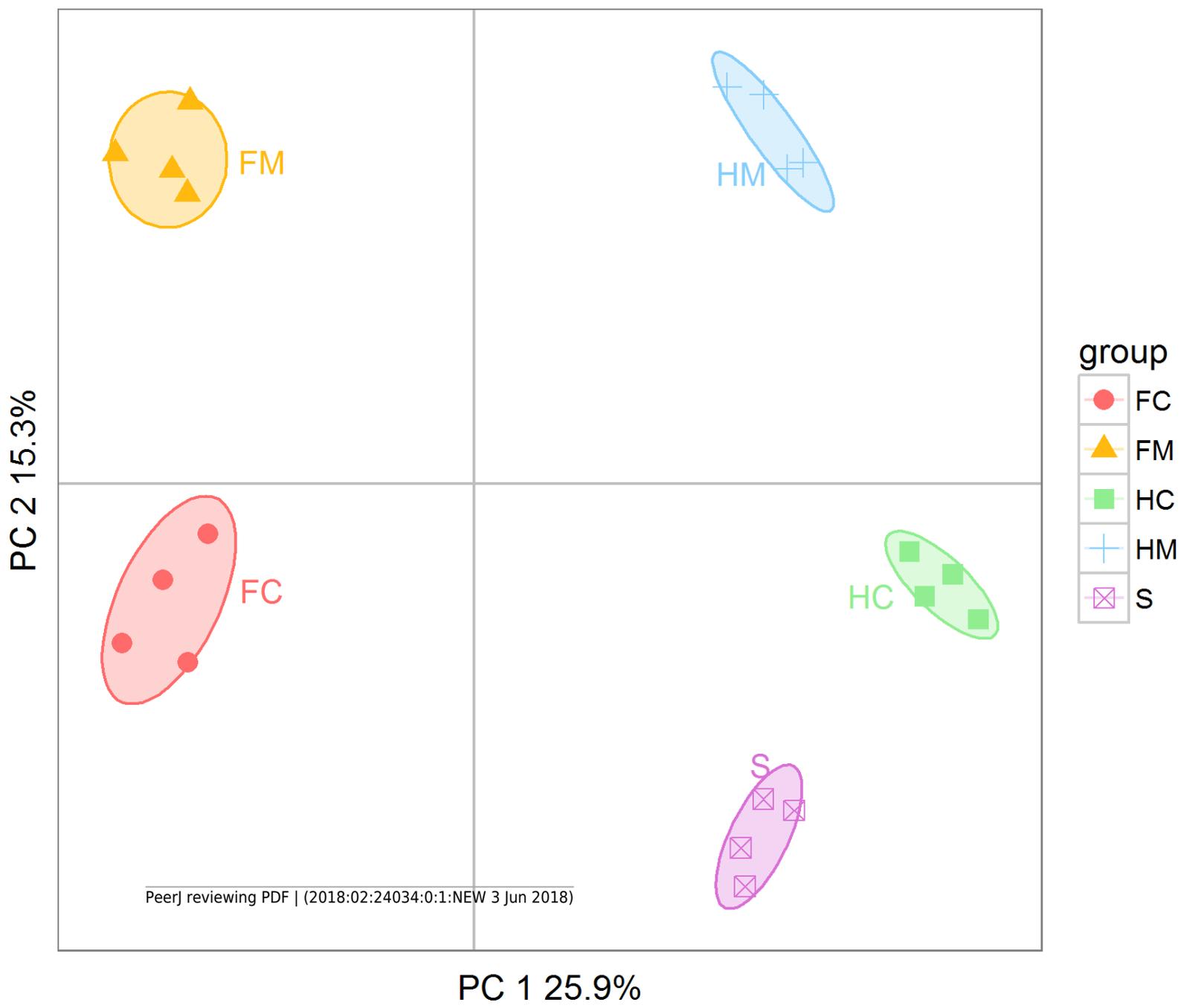
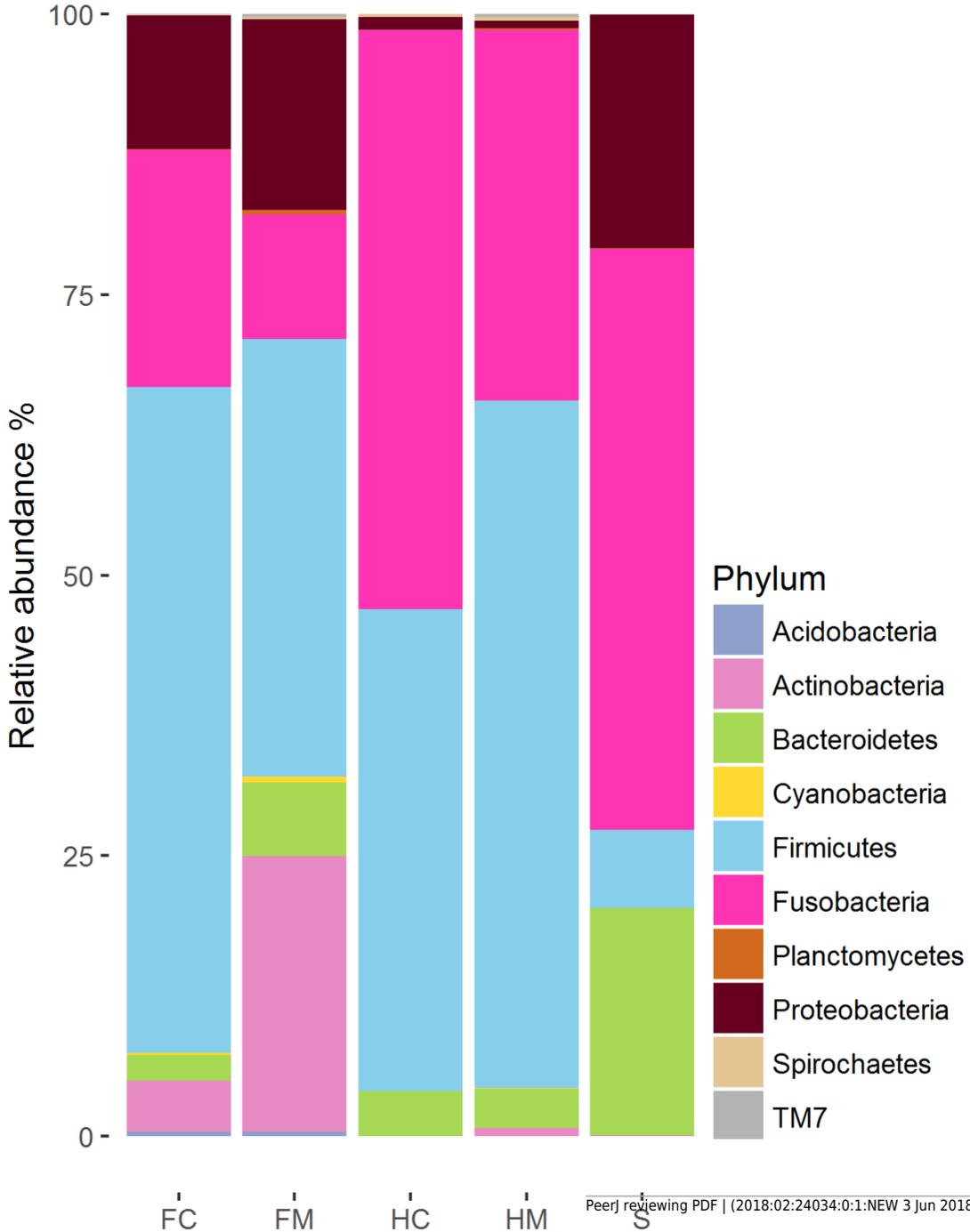


Figure 3(on next page)

Gut microbial compositions at the phylum level and genus level.

(A) Each bar represents average relative abundance of each phylum of gut microbiota in foregut content (FC), foregut mucosa (FM), hindgut content (HC), hindgut mucosa (HM), and stools (S). (B) Each bar represents average relative abundance of each genera of gut microbiota in foregut content (FC), foregut mucosa (FM), hindgut content (HC), hindgut mucosa (HM), and stools (S). t

A



B

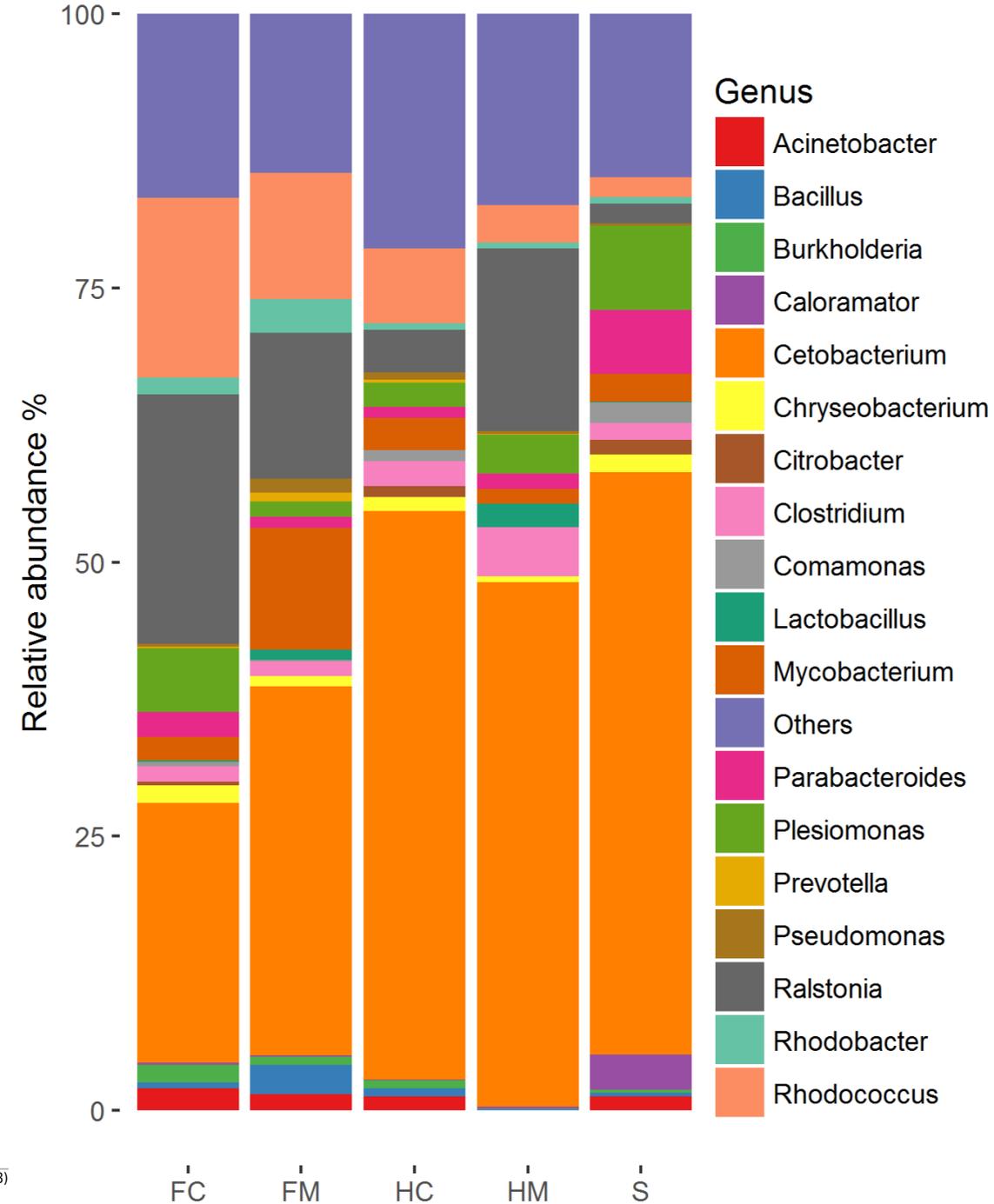


Figure 4(on next page)

Gut compartment-specific enriched core OTUs.

Heat map shows core OTUs significantly varied in abundances in different gut compartments (cell note on the heat map represents differentially abundant OTUs annotated to microbial taxa).

Color Key

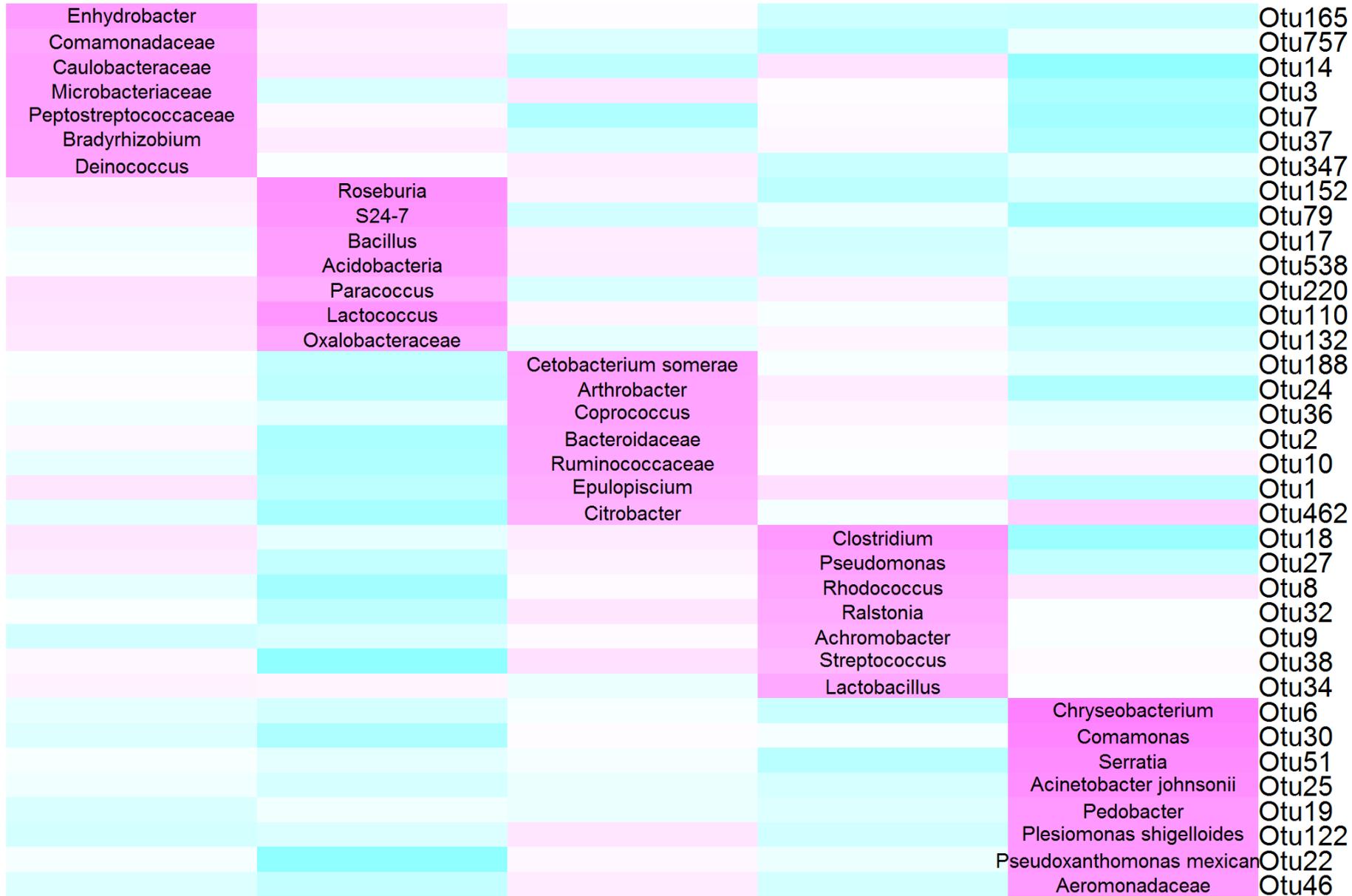


-2 0 2

Z score

PeerJ

Manuscript to be reviewed



FC

FM

HC

HM

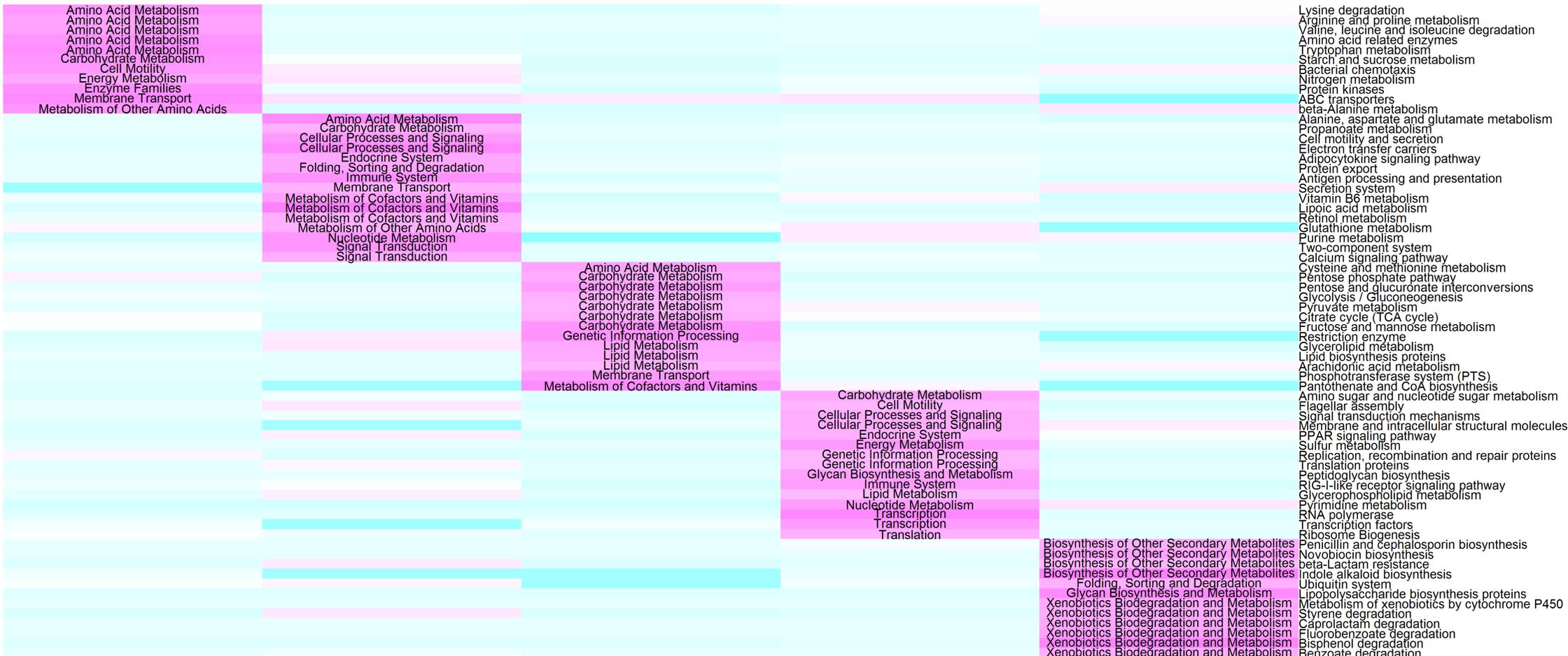
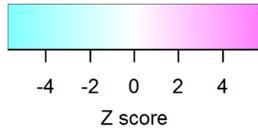
S

Figure 5(on next page)

Comparison in the abundance of gut microbial potential function capacities in different gut compartments.

Heat map shows the abundances of gut microbial KEGG pathways (level 3) significantly changed in different gut compartments (cell note on the heat map represents differentially abundant KEGG pathways at level 2).

Color Key



FC

FM

HC

HM

S