# BIOLOGICAL DEGRADATION OF SOLUBLE MICROBIAL PRODUCTS IN A COMBINED SYSTEM OF ANAEROBIC PACKED-BED REACTORS AND A DOWN-FLOW HANGING SPONGE REACTOR

BY

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### DISSERTATION

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### **ABSTRACT**

Anaerobic biological processes are a reliable alternative to the conventional activated sludge process for the treatment of high-strength industrial wastewater, offering various advantages. Such advantages include, for example, less sludge generation, less operational cost, greater energy recovery, and a smaller footprint. An anaerobic up-flow packed-bed reactor maximizes the advantages by retaining a high concentration of biomass in the system, providing sufficient sludge retention time to slow growing anaerobic microorganisms. The inherent configuration of the reactor, however, is prone to increasing soluble microbial products (SMP). SMP are soluble organic cellular components that are released from biomass metabolisms in mixed culture biotechnology, which often result in a hindrance to efficient performance, lower effluent quality, and toxicity and a precursor of disinfectant by-products in discharged water. Despite several attempts to reduce SMP through coagulation and adsorption, a long-term treatment of SMP has not been achieved.

In this study, a combined process of anaerobic packed-bed reactors and a down-flow hanging sponge (DHS) reactor is proposed. As a matter of post-treatment, the DHS reactor further degraded SMP produced from the anaerobic methanogenic reactors, using selectively enriched microbial consortia-utilizing SMP. As such, the primary research aims of this project are as follows: (1) to understand the microbial community structure and ecology treating highstrength organic wastewater in the anaerobic packed-bed reactors; (2) to investigate biological SMP degradation in the DHS reactor; and (3) to explore phylogenetic characteristics and the metabolic functionality of the enriched microbial community involved in SMP degradation.

This study discussed the diversity and dynamics of microbial communities in anaerobic packed-bed reactors in the process of optimizing operational parameters. The communities were influenced by an increasing organic loading rate, which indicated a strong association with the abundance of *Bacteroidetes* and *Chloroflexi* among the dominant populations. These populations may take charge of initiating the degradation of organic compounds in the system. Next, the biological degradation of SMP, with respect to the selective enrichment of the microbial community in the DHS reactor, was demonstrated. SMP produced from the anaerobic reactors originated primarily from biomass metabolisms, exhibiting a bimodal MW distribution with 14- 20 kDa and <4 kDa. The sub-fractions of SMP indicated different degradation fates in the DHS reactor with an overall stable removal (>70%) of the total SMP. Spatial and temporal variability

of the DHS microbial communities was significantly influenced by operational parameters. In particular, *Saprospiraceae* was the most correlated population in the community for increasing SMP loading, which indicated positive co-occurrences with neighboring bacterial populations. Different microbial diversity, along with the vertical depth of the reactor, suggested that stratified microbial communities might participate in the SMP degradation. Lastly, the genetic functional potential and expression of the DHS microbial community, with regard to SMP degradation, were explored. Despite the disparate microbial communities with the increase of SMP loading, a functional convergence for the SMP degradation was observed. The gene expression of the dominant draft genomes, based on carbohydrate-active enzymes, indicated that *Bacteroidetes*-related draft genomes actively represented cell associated enzyme-related genes, which were specific to the polysaccharide components of peptidoglycan. This finding led to speculation that the majority of SMP herein may be composed of detrital cell structural components released from peptidoglycan.

Ultimately, the findings from this study suggest a possible application of the biological SMP degradation, using a DHS reactor, to improve treatment performance and efficiency in bioprocesses. It also broadens current understanding of SMP, which are produced from mixed culture biotechnology, and their microbial utilization.

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### **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

### **1.1.1 Biological anaerobic treatment of high strength organic wastewater**

Anaerobic biological treatment for wastewater treatment is a promising alternative method to conventional treatments that use an aerobic activated sludge (AS) process. It holds potential due to its high capacity to degrade concentrated and recalcitrant substrates, $1-2$  as well as low requirement of operational cost, small land requirements, and low excess sludge production.<sup>1, 3-4</sup> Additionally, it minimizes the energy requirement by producing biogas as a renewable energy, which can compensate for the electricity required for the operation.<sup>5-8</sup> The high-rate anaerobic treatment makes the process to be more appealing for high-strength organic wastewater treatment, such as food, soft drinks, and distillery industrial wastewater.<sup>1, 9-14</sup> The upflow anaerobic sludge blanket (UASB) reactor was one of the robust anaerobic configurations in cases of organic overloads, providing favorable conditions for slow-growing anaerobic microorganisms to be well retained with a long sludge retention time  $(SRT)$ <sup>15-16</sup> Further by maximizing the density of biomass in the system with immobilized supporting media, an anaerobic packed-bed reactor was reported to provide greater efficiency, stability, and resilience than a UASB reactor.17-18 Despite the advantages of the anaerobic treatment and the development of its configuration, the effluent of the anaerobic processes still contain residual organic matters and nutrients, which are not suitable to be discharged into the natural water body,<sup>19-21</sup> suggesting the need for a post-treatment system to further polish the effluent.

# **1.1.2 Application of a down-flow hanging sponge (DHS) reactor as a post treatment for anaerobic process**

A down-flow hanging sponge (DHS) reactor was recently developed as a post-treatment for UASB processes.<sup>22</sup> The configuration of the DHS reactor is the same as a trickling filter reactor: wastewater is sprinkled over the tops of the filters, which trickles down to where biofilms are attached. Since air diffuses naturally through the highly porous polyurethane sponge filters, which are used as biofilm supporting media in the DHS reactor, high levels of dissolved oxygen throughout the reactor can be maintained without aeration.<sup>23-24</sup> The practical application of the DHS reactor has been studied intensively, exhibiting various advantages in terms of cost

and treatment efficiency. There is no need for external controls, such as pH and temperature, and it achieves a large capacity for biomass growth and a long sludge retention time  $(SRT)$ .<sup>22, 25-27</sup> The combined system of an up-flow anaerobic reactors and a DHS reactor is a promising technology for the treatment of high strength organic wastewater.

# **1.1.3 Negative impacts of soluble microbial products on water and wastewater treatment systems**

The residual organic matters in the effluent of the anaerobic process, mentioned above, were derived from the metabolism of biomass, known as soluble microbial products (SMP). Anaerobic reactors operated under a long SRT condition, such as an up-flow packed bed reactor, is prone to generate a high content of SMP. With an application of membrane separation in the anaerobic process, although the system enables the achievement of high-sludge concentration by decoupling a hydraulic retention time (HRT) from a  $SRT$ ,<sup>5, 28-29</sup> SMP are also severely accumulated in the system, resulting in fouling on the membrane and deteriorating the quality of the effluent.<sup>5, 30-32</sup> Besides causing fouling in the membrane-based processes, SMP comprise a large portion of the remaining soluble chemical oxygen demand (SCOD) in effluents from conventional biological wastewater treatment processes.<sup>33-34</sup> SMP in discharge water from wastewater treatment systems alone cause toxicity as well as environmental hazards by acting as precursors of disinfection by-products.<sup>35-36</sup> Their accumulation in the system hinders efficient respiration, flocculation, and the settling ability of AS by deforming the physical properties of the AS.37-38 In a nitrification process, SMP are one of the main causes inhibiting a nitrification efficiency.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, understanding the property of SMP and finding methods to control SMP production as well as their removal remain important for improving the performance of the anaerobic processes and the effluent quality. Ultimately, this aids in the achievement of gradually stricter discharge standards.<sup>40</sup>

# **1.1.4 Definition of SMP and their characteristics**

SMP are soluble organic cellular components that are released from cell metabolism and lysis in bioprocesses.<sup>41</sup> Since SMP can be generated from any microbial activity, they are ubiquitous in bioprocesses and contain various complex mixtures of polysaccharides, proteins, lipids, humic and fulvic acids, extracellular enzymes, amino acids, DNA, and other cell structure

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debris.<sup>41-42</sup> According to the unified theory of SMP proposed by Laspidou and Rittmann,<sup>41</sup> SMP are classified into two sub-groups: utilization-associated products (UAP) that are produced directly from substrate utilization, i.e., released metabolic intermediates, and biomass-associated products (BAP) that are formed from cell lysis and decay. Regarding the characterization of SMP, various extant studies measured the molecular weight (MW) distribution of SMP from various origins.33-34, 43-44 Despite a wide range of MW distribution from different kinds and amounts of SMP, researchers commonly found that a majority showed a bimodal distribution with small MW, less than 1 kDa, and large MW, greater than 10-100 kDa. Moreover, a minor portion of SMP exhibited MWs between the two clusters.<sup>33-34</sup> In addition, Ni et al.<sup>45</sup> reported that the bimodal distribution could be related to the sub-fractions of the SMP. UAP were found to have low MWs, and they were readily utilized by the AS as substrates; whereas, BAP tended to have high MWs and accumulated in the reactor.

### **1.1.5 Parameters affecting SMP production**

The production and accumulation of SMP in anaerobic processes are affected by various operational factors and the biodegradability of their sub-fractions. It has been reported that any kind of stress conditions on microbial activity led to increased SMP production; nutrient deficiency and toxic compounds considerably increased SMP concentrations in anaerobic chemostats.<sup>46</sup> Temporal organic shock loading, reduction of HRTs, and low pH also enhanced SMP formation. In particular, this includes accelerated cell lysis from shortened HRTs which increased the release of BAP.<sup>47</sup> Biomass treating highly saline substrates (over 30 g NaCl  $1^{-1}$ ) produced more high-MW SMP that were difficult to degrade compared with those treating lowsalinity substrates.<sup>48</sup> Decreasing temperature and a higher initial biomass concentration were reported as other factors enhancing SMP production in an anaerobic baffled reactor.<sup>49</sup> In addition, the long SRTs and short HRTs inherent in membrane bioreactors (MBR) are the most significant factors in the production and accumulation of SMP. Although there were some controversial results in the effects of SRT and HRT on the SMP production, $49-50$  many previous studies have reported that SRTs longer than 10 days led to the accumulation of SMP, especially by increasing the BAP concentrations; whereas, the portion of UAP among the SMP decreased.<sup>29, 34, 45, 51-55</sup> Regarding these simultaneous effects, Huang et al.<sup>51-52</sup> concluded that

decreased HRTs and long SRTs in the submerged MBR, accelerated membrane fouling, causing a high SMP production.

#### **1.1.6 Biological degradation as an alternative strategy to reduce SMP**

Among SMP, the large BAP compounds tend to be accumulated as a semi-labile and refractory matter in a biological process.<sup>43</sup> Structural groups, such as carboxylic or phenolic groups, make cross-links with polyvalent cations, like  $Ca^{2+}$  and  $Mg^{2+}$ , through acid-metal complexation, resulting in the formation of foulants in MBRs.<sup>56-59</sup> Various strategies were attempted in an effort to directly reduce SMP and to prevent formation of the foulants caused by SMP in bioprocesses, which included the adsorption and coagulation of SMP. It also included a chemical cleaning of polyvalent cations, using ion exchanges, salt cleaning, and metal chelating agents.<sup>5-6, 60-65</sup> Regardless, these chemical and physical attempts to remove SMP may not be a suitable long-term solution, providing just weeks to months of limited applications. Instead, the biological removal of SMP was considered recently as an alternative strategy to control SMP. However, the very low biodegradability of SMP was reported for both aerobic and anaerobic treatments. Between the two sub-fractions of SMP, BAP exhibited a slow biodegradation rate of 0.1 g COD/g VSS-d, whereas that of UAP reached to 1.8 g COD/g VSS-d, indicating that BAP tend to accumulate in the system while UAP might be readily degradable.<sup>54, 66-68</sup> Despite the tendency of the slow degradation of SMP, Backer et al.<sup>49</sup> suggested that SMP generated from anaerobic chemostats could be effectively removed in the following aerobically conditioned reactors. In their study, it was observed, specifically, that large MW SMP (> 10 kDa, >100 kDa, and >300 kDa), which were considered to be BAP, showed almost complete degradation (up to 96%) under aerobic conditions with enriched sludge for SMP uptakes.

#### **1.1.7 Microorganisms involved in the degradation of SMP**

Despite the low biodegradability of SMP, previous research reported that biological degradation of SMP was possible even with general activated sludge which was not acclimatized to specifically utilize the SMP as a substrate. This implies that a more effective degradation of SMP can be achieved with microbial consortia, preferentially, by utilizing microbial products. To identify SMP-degrading microorganisms and their community-level groups and to understand how they are involved in the degradation remain to be characterized. Few previous studies are

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limited to identifying phylogenetic groups of heterotrophic bacteria, utilizing SMP that were produced by nitrifying bacteria at the phylum and class levels.<sup>69-71</sup> In particular, Okabe et al.<sup>69</sup> observed that *Chloroflexi* played an important role to utilize microbial products together with a *Cytophaga-Flavobacterium* cluster, *α-Proteobacteria,* and *γ-Proteobacteira* among the heterotrophs. These were coexisting with nitrifying autotrophs without an external carbon supply. As such, the *Chloroflexi* tended to uptake microbial products derived from biomass decay (BAP), rapidly degrading glucose and N-acetyl glucosamine (the main component of cell peptidoglycan layers), whereas the *Cytophaga-Flavobacterium* cluster gradually ingested both metabolic intermediates (UAP) and structural cell components (BAP) from the nitrifying bacteria. Okamura et al.<sup>57, 72</sup> isolated *Phialemonium curvatum* from AS for removing the uronic acids, which formed a matrix-like layer on the membranes, and evaluated the efficiency of preventing membrane fouling. Further, the decrease of SMP in the system was speculated to have a correlation with the abundance of *Klebsiella* in a biological activated carbon reactor<sup>73</sup> and *Chloroflexi* in a membrane bioreactor (MBR)<sup>74</sup>. Therefore, it is speculated that an abundance of SMP-degrading microbes might exist, a significant amount of which may not be usually found in the conventional bioprocesses of wastewater treatment. Information about them, such as their phylogenetic relationship and metabolic properties, remain to be revealed.

# **1.1.8 Application of high throughput sequencing to explore SMP degrading microorganisms**

The gap of knowledge related to the microbial community structures and their metabolic functions involved in production and degradation of SMP may be addressed by using 16S ribosomal RNA (rRNA) gene, metagenomic, and metatranscriptomic sequencings, which are based on high throughput Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) (Figure 1.1).<sup>75-78</sup> First, these high throughput sequencing techniques, which are culture-independent, allow us to characterize unknown microbiomes that might rely on complex symbioses, representing in situ conditions of biological samples.79-80 An amplicon sequencing of the 16S rRNA genes, which are highly conserved and used to differentiate among organisms of other species, enables us to reveal the phylogenetic microbial community composition of the complex microbiomes.<sup>81-82</sup> Metagenomics provides complementary characteristics of the community composition and information about the metabolic potential of entire communities and individual genomes in the biological niche.

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This is accomplished by analyzing the entire genetic materials of the samples.<sup>83-86</sup> Further, metatranscriptomics enables a determination of the functional profile of the active populations in the microbial community.<sup>85-87</sup> Given the merits of these techniques, a multi-pronged approach for profiling genomic and expressional diversity and dynamics have been applied to various environmental and engineered microbiomes from marine water,  $88-89$  oil spill,  $90$  soil,  $86, 91-93$  and human<sup>94-95</sup> and animal<sup>96-97</sup> guts. Recently, the application of these integrated sequencing methods expanded to analyses of microbial communities found in biological wastewater treatment processes.<sup>78, 98-99</sup> The in-depth resolution of the genetic information, using these integrated sequencing approaches, would be helpful to enlighten characteristics of the microbial communities involved in the degradation of SMP in this study.



**Figure 1.1** Schematic representation of metagenomic and metatranscriptomic approaches to analyze an uncultured microbial community.

### **1.2 Objectives**

Many previous studies concluded that despite various advantages of up-flow anaerobic packed-bed reactors to treat high strength wastewater, their inherent configurations, resulting in long SRT, are prone to the low efficiency of COD removal, which is mostly caused by accumulation of SMP. However, the SMP from anaerobic processes can be biologically degraded in a subsequent aerobic process. A more effective degradability of the SMP is expected when the microbial consortia have been acclimated to utilizing the SMP. Therefore, in this study, a combined system of anaerobic packed-bed reactors and a DHS reactor was applied in an effort to provide a long SRT for the anaerobic process. Also, it aimed to produce high quality effluent by reducing SMP in the effluent from the anaerobic reactors using the DHS reactor. This research expects to enhance the degradation of the SMP that are produced from the anaerobic reactors by enriching microbial consortia specifically utilizing the SMP. Significantly, the purpose of this study is to understand the anaerobic microbial communities treating high strength organic wastewater, characteristics of the SMP produced by them, the biological SMP degradation by the enriched microbial consortia in the DHS reactor, and their metabolic characteristics. To address this purpose, the specific objectives of the chapters are as follows:

- 1. To understand the microbial community structure and ecology treating high-strength organic wastewater in the anaerobic packed-bed reactors by investigating their temporal changes during the operation through 16S rRNA gene pyrosequencing.
- 2. To investigate the biological degradation of SMP produced from the anaerobic packed-bed reactors using selectively enriched microbial consortia in the DHS reactor. The spatial and temporal variability of the microbial community composition and structure was characterized using 16S rRNA gene pyrosequencing. The relationships between the microbial populations and the operational factors were identified and evaluated by applying network and redundancy analyses.
- 3. To explore metabolic potential and expression of the microbial consortia involved in SMP degradation and to disclose the active roles of the key microbial populations by analyzing overrepresented metabolic genes.

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### **1.3 Experimental approach**

A combined system of two up-flow anaerobic packed-bed reactors (an anaerobic packedbed (AP) reactor and a hybrid packed-bed (HP) reactor) and a DHS reactor was configured to treat synthetic soft-drink-production wastewater containing polyethylene glycol (PEG), fructose, and glucose as the primary constituents (SCOD 3000 mg/L) (Figure 1.2). The anaerobic packedbed reactors (7.6 L working volume) were filled with ceramic supporting media and operated at 35 °C without regular discharge of biomass to provide a sufficient SRT for the mesophilic anaerobic microbiomes to proliferate. To optimize the operational factors, the organic loading rate (OLR) increased from 0.5 g SCOD/L/day to 2.0 g SCOD/L/day by decreasing the HRT, stepwise, for over 800 days. The DHS reactor (10L working volume), which was filled with polyurethane sponge media (porosity 0.985 vol./vol.), was fed with a combined effluent discharged from the anaerobic packed-bed reactors as the sole substrate. The OLR and HRT in the DHS reactor were adjusted as the HRT and the effluent organic concentration in the anaerobic reactors changed and divided into five phases. The reactor was maintained at room temperature without external adjustment, such as aeration and pH control. To determine the SMP contained in the effluent from the anaerobic reactors and degraded in the DHS reactor, SCOD removal and reduction propensity of SMP sub-fractions by analyzing the molecular weight (MW) distribution were investigated. Biomass samples for microbial community analysis were periodically collected from the anaerobic packed-bed reactors and the DHS reactor over the different operational phases. Separate biomass samplings from the DHS reactor at low and high OLR conditions were conducted for metabolic characterization involved in the SMP degradation.



**Figure 1.2** Schematic diagram of the combined system of the anaerobic packed-bed reactors (AP and HP) and the DHS reactor used in this study.

### **1.4 Dissertation organization**

In Chapter 2, titled "Microbial community analysis of anaerobic reactors treating soft drink wastewater," the methanogenic microbial communities in the AP and HP reactors, achieving >95% SCOD removal efficiency, were studied using 16S rRNA gene pyrosequencing. The diversity and dynamics of the microbial communities were correlated with respect to the optimized operational parameters. The results indicated that both AP and HP communities were predominated by *Bacteroidetes*, *Chloroflexi*, *Firmicutes*, and candidate phylum KSB3, which may degrade organic compounds in wastewater treatment processes. The community compositions were influenced by the increasing OLR, indicating a strong association with an abundance of *Bacteroidetes* and *Chloroflexi* among the dominant populations.

In Chapter 3, titled "Enrichment and characterization of microbial consortia degrading soluble microbial products discharged from anaerobic methanogenic bioreactors," biological degradation of SMP produced from the AP and HP reactors, using selectively enriched microbial community in the DHS reactor, were demonstrated. As the operational conditions were changed in the five phases for >800 days, a stable SMP removal between 68.9 to 87.5% was achieved. The size-exclusive chromatogram demonstrated that the SMP produced from the AP and HP reactors exhibited a bimodal MW distribution with 14-20 kDa and <4 kDa. The sub-fractions of SMP indicated different degradation fates in the DHS reactor. The enriched microbial communities were characterized using 16S rRNA gene pyrosequencing, and their spatial and temporal variability were correlated with operational parameters. The results indicated that a great shift in the dominant microbial populations was observed as increasing SMP loading. *Saprospiraceae* was the most correlated population to the loading increase, indicating positive co-occurrences with neighboring bacterial populations. Different microbial diversity at the different vertical depth of the reactor was observed, suggesting that stratified microbial communities might participate in the SMP degradation.

In Chapter 4, titled "Phylogenetic and functional characterization of the microbial community degrading soluble microbial products in a DHS reactor using a metagenomic and metatranscriptomic approaches," the genetic functional potential and expression of the microbial community in the DHS reactor, which were expected to be related to the mechanism of SMP degradation, were studied using metagenomic and metatranscriptomic sequencing analyses. The functional annotation based on SEED Subsystems exhibited that although the microbial community compositions became disparate as SMP loading, a functional convergence was observed for the SMP degradation, including amino acids and derivatives, carbohydrates, and protein metabolisms. The gene expression of the dominant draft genomes base on carbohydrateactive enzymes (CAZy) indicated that *Bacteroidetes*-related draft genomes actively represented cell associated enzyme-related genes, which were specific to polysaccharide components of peptidoglycan. This finding implies that the microbial communities, degrading SMP in the DHS reactor, were selectively enriched for the utilization of detrital cell structural components, which were released from peptidoglycan.

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Chapter 5 summarizes the main findings and contributions of this research, and it proposes future works. The research evidenced in Chapter 2 and 3 was published. Moreover, the recent work demonstrated in Chapter 4 will be submitted in the near future.

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# **CHAPTER 2: MICROBIAL COMMUNITY ANALYSIS OF ANAEROBIC REACTORS TREATING SOFT DRINK WASTEWATER**

### **2.1 Abstract**

The AP and HP reactors containing methanogenic microbial consortia were applied to treat synthetic soft drink wastewater, which contains polyethylene glycol (PEG) and fructose as the primary constituents. The AP and HP reactors achieved high COD removal efficiency (>95%) after 80 and 33 days of the operation, respectively, and operated stably over 2 years. 16S rRNA gene pyrotag analyses on a total of 25 biofilm samples generated 98,057 reads, which were clustered into 2,882 operational taxonomic units (OTUs). Both AP and HP communities were predominated by *Bacteroidetes*, *Chloroflexi*, *Firmicutes*, and candidate phylum KSB3 that may degrade organic compound in wastewater treatment processes. Other OTUs related to uncharacterized *Geobacter* and *Spirochaetes* clades and candidate phylum GN04 were also detected at high abundance; however, their relationship to wastewater treatment has remained unclear. In particular, KSB3, GN04, *Bacteroidetes*, and *Chloroflexi* are consistently associated with the OLR increase to 1.5 g COD/L-d. Interestingly, KSB3 and GN04 dramatically decrease in both reactors after further OLR increase to 2.0 g COD/L-d. These results indicate that OLR strongly influences microbial community composition. This suggests that specific uncultivated taxa may take central roles in COD removal from soft drink wastewater depending on OLR.

## **2.2 Introduction**

As the global consumption of soft drinks continues to grow, 687 billion liters in 2013, the global value reach 830 billion USD.<sup>1</sup> However, this incurs copious production (up to 2.0 trillion liters per year) and discharge of wastewater<sup>2</sup> containing high concentrations of sugar $3-5$  and polyethylene glycol (PEG; HO[CH<sub>2</sub> CH<sub>2</sub> O]<sub>n</sub> H), a detergent for bottle washing and equipment rinsing.<sup>6</sup> As such, the wastewater stream is characterized by high organic content with the COD ranging from 1.2 to 8.0 g/L and BOD<sub>5</sub> from 0.6 to 4.5 g/L,<sup>3</sup> and required to be treated to reduce COD to prevent the occurrence of contamination in the natural environment. Previous studies report physicochemical treatment, including reverse osmosis,<sup>2</sup> filtration,<sup>2,7</sup> ion-exchange,<sup>2,7</sup> and ozonation;<sup>8</sup> however, such approaches are relatively ineffective for removing soluble compounds (e.g., PEG and fructose) compared with biological methods.<sup>5, 9-10</sup> While aerobic biological

treatment systems have also been applied, $11-12$  long HRT, high aeration requirement, extensive land requirement, high sludge production, and poor biomass settling are significant drawbacks.<sup>13</sup> Anaerobic biological treatment is a promising alternative due to its high capacity to degrade concentrated and recalcitrant substrates.<sup>13-14</sup> Several studies have successfully applied anaerobic bioprocesses to treat soft drink wastewater, including immobilized cell bioreactors, <sup>15-16</sup> UASB reactors,  $^{13, 17}$  anaerobic filters,  $^{18}$  and up-flow anaerobic pack-bed reactors.<sup>19</sup> Although these reactors achieved satisfactory COD removal, none of these studies report the microorganisms that facilitate degradation of the wastewater organic compounds. Without understanding of the microbial community structure and ecology, development of strategies to maintain and improve treatment efficiency and stability can be difficult. In the present study, we developed anaerobic bioreactors treating synthetic soft-drink-production wastewater and investigated the temporal change in microbial community structure during the operation through 16S rRNA gene pyrosequencing. Specifically, we identify organisms potentially related to reactor operational conditions.

### **2.3 Material and methods**

## **2.3.1 Reactor operation**

Two anaerobic up-flow bioreactors (7.6 L working volume) were operated separately at 35°C (Figure 2.1). The anaerobic packed-bed reactor (AP) and hybrid packed-bed reactor (HP) were filled with the Siporax ceramic media (LxDxH; 15x15x15mm) (Aquatic Eco Systems, Apopka, FL, USA) to fill 10.2% and 5.0% of their working volume, respectively. Seed sludge sample was taken from anaerobic digester at Urbana, IL, USA.



**Figure 2.1** Cross-section illustration of the AP and HP reactors. The reactors were equipped with water jacket and heated by water heater to kept at 35<sup>o</sup>C. The numbers in italics indicate size (mm).

The reactors were fed with 3,000 mg COD/L synthetic wastewater that mimicked the composition of wastewater discharged from soft drink-processing factory:<sup>3, 5, 7, 15, 17, 20</sup> 1, 100 mg/L of polyethylene glycol 200 (PEG200); 1,500 mg/L of Corn Sweet High Fructose 55 (ADM, IL, USA); 30 mg/L of acetone; 30 mg/L of ethanol; 10 mg/L of silicone grease; 16 mg/L of K<sub>2</sub>HPO<sub>4</sub>; 19 mg/L of FeSO<sub>4</sub>, 7H<sub>2</sub>O; 366 mg/L of NaHCO<sub>3</sub>; 2 mg/L of NaF; 2.5 mg/L of NaOCl; and 28 mg/L of NH<sub>4</sub>HCO<sub>3</sub>. These components were dissolved in tap water, and pH was adjusted to 9.5–10.0 with 5M KOH to maintain the pH at 7.3–7.8 in the AP and HP. The internal circulation rates were 300 mL/min for both reactors. The reactors were operated under different HRT and organic loading rates (OLR) ranging from 1.5 to 6 days and from 0.5 to 2.0 g

SCOD/L/day, respectively (Figure 2.2). To avoid overloading of the organic compounds on initial microbial consortia, two reactors were operated for 11 days with constant recirculation of synthetic wastewater and no fresh influent. After day 11, both AP and HP reactors were fed with influent at a HRT of 6 days and an OLR of 0.5 g SCOD /L/day. For AP reactor, the HRT was decreased to 5, 4, and 3 days and the OLR gradually increased to 0.6, 0.75, and 1.0 g SCOD /L/day at 77, 91, and 115 days of the operation, respectively. For HP reactor, the HRT was decreased to 3 days and the OLR increased to 1.0 g SCOD /L/day after 31 days. After day 655, the HRT was decreased to 2 days and the OLR increased to 1.5 g SCOD /L/day for both reactors. Furthermore, the HRT of both reactors was decreased to 1.5 days and the OLR increased to 2.0 g SCOD /L/day after 744 days of the operation.



**Figure 2.2** Closed circle, COD removal (%) in AP; open circle, COD removal (%) in HP; closed triangle, effluent COD concentration  $(g/L)$  in AP; open triangle, effluent COD concentration  $(g/L)$  in HP; black line, pH in AP; gray line, pH in HP; closed square, methane gas production (L/day) in AP; open square, methane gas production (L/day) in HP. The reactors were operated at different OLR ranging from 0.5 to 2.0 g SCOD/L/day. The COD concentration of influent synthetic wastewater was decreased due to absence of polyethylene glycol 200 (1,100 mg/L) during days 398–411. The triangles in the bottom indicate the periods for biomass sampling from the reactors.

### **2.3.2 COD and methane gas measurements**

The soluble COD was measured with COD digestion kit (HACH, Loveland, CO, USA) and DR/4000 U Spectrophotometer (HACH) according to the Standard Method 5220D.<sup>21</sup> Methane gas produced from the reactors was collected in gas sampling bag (Standard Tedlar PVF Bags, DuPont, DE, USA) and measured using a GC-2014 Gas Chromatograph (Shimadzu Scientific Instruments, Kyoto, Japan) equipped with a thermal conductivity detector (Shimadzu Scientific Instruments) and a Molecular Sieve 13X packed column (2,000xg 2 mm) (Restek, PA, USA).

## **2.3.3 Biomass sampling**

Biomass samples for microbial community analysis were collected from AP and HP at 64, 121, 181, 251, 321, 435, 462, 530, 600, 664, 722, and 772 days of the operation (Figure 2.2). The ceramic media (ca. 5 pieces) were collected from 16 cm depth from effluent outlet with autoclaved forceps and put into 50-mL tube. After 10 mL of  $1\AA \sim PBS$  was added, the media was vortexed rigorously to remove the biofilm. After centrifugation (8,500 xg, 3 min), the biomass samples were collected and stored in − 80°C freezer until DNA extraction.

# **2.3.4 DNA extraction, PCR, and pyrosequencing**

DNA extraction, PCR, and pyrosequencing were performed as previously described.<sup>22</sup> Briefly, DNA was extracted using the FastDNA SPIN Kit for Soil (MP Biomedicals, Carlsbad, CA, USA). The 16S rRNA gene was amplified with the U515F forward primer and U909R reverse primer.<sup>23</sup> Pyrosequencing was performed using the GS-FLX Titanium platform (Roche/454 Life Sciences, Branford, CT, USA) at the Roy J. Carver Biotechnology Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (IL, USA).

## **2.3.5 Pyrosequencing data analysis**

Raw 16S rRNA gene sequences were screened and trimmed with QIIME  $1.8.0^{24}$  using a sequence length ( $\geq$ 150 nt) and quality score ( $\geq$ 25) cut-off. The trimmed sequence data was clustered with the UCLUST algorithm using  $\geq$ 97% sequence identity cut-off<sup>25</sup>. Representative sequences of each OTU were aligned using  $PyNAST<sup>26</sup>$  and chimeric sequences were removed using ChimeraSlayer.<sup>27</sup> The phylogenetic assignment of each OTU was carried out with a dataset obtained from Greengenes\_web\_site (gg\_13\_5\_otus; http://greengenes.secondgenome.com/ ).<sup>28</sup> The Chao1 index and rarefaction curve were calculated by EstimateS (version 9.1.0).<sup>29</sup> The coverage values were calculated using equation  $[1 - (n/N)]$ , where n is the number of OTUs in a single read (singleton) and N is the total number of reads analyzed.<sup>30</sup> The weighted UniFrac distances were used for principal coordinate analysis  $(PCoA)^{31}$  Phylogenetic trees for 16S rRNA gene pytotags and previously reported sequences were constructed with the ARB program based on the neighbor-joining algorithm.<sup>32</sup> Insertion of pyrotag sequences (ca. 370 bp) was performed with the parsimony insertion tool of the ARB program. The topology of the trees was estimated by 1,000 bootstrap replicates. $33$ 

## **2.3.6 Statistical analysis**

In order to correlate microbial community profiles with reactor operational conditions (ORL, HRT and reactor type), statistical analysis including redundancy analysis (RDA) and correspondence analysis (CA) were performed using CANOCO software version 4.5 (Microcomputer Power, Ithaca, NY, USA).<sup>34</sup> According to the instruction of CANOCO, when the longest length lies between 3 and 4, it is reasonable to apply either linear method (RDA) or unimodal method (CA). All OTUs were used for calculation and major groups were picked out manually and plotted with operation conditions.

### **2.3.7 Nucleotide sequences accession number**

The pyrosequencing data obtained in this study have been deposited under DDBJ/EMBL/GenBank accession no. DRA002423.

# **2.4 Results and discussion**

### **2.4.1 Reactor operation**

The operational performance of anaerobic packed-bed (AP) and hybrid packed-bed (HP) reactors treating synthetic soft drink wastewater is shown in Figure 2.2 and Table 2.1. AP and HP were continuously operated for more than 800 days. The removal efficiency of COD consistently maintained at 93–97% with an effluent COD mostly below 100 mg/L after 77 and 12 days of operation of AP and HP, respectively. After the days of operation, no apparent differences in performance were observed between AP and HP. The total volume of methane

increased gradually with an increase in OLR (Figure 2.2). The average values of pH were stable during the operation, implying no obvious acid accumulation in the reactors. These results indicated that enriched microbial consortia in AP and HP retain the stability against the feeding of synthetic soft drink wastewater at 2.0 g SCOD/L/day. Dark gray-black-colored biofilm was formed on the surface of ceramic media in both reactors. The biofilm samples were retrieved and used for microbial community analysis (Figure 2.2).

Parameters				AP						HP		
Day	$0 - 11$	$12 - 76$	77-90	91-114	115-654	655-743	744-810	$0 - 11$	$12 - 30$	31-654	655-743	744- 810
HRT (day)	Batch	6		4	3	2	1.5	Batch	6	3	$\overline{c}$	1.5
<b>OLR</b> $(g$ SCOD/L/d)	Batch	0.5	0.6	0.75	1.0	1.5	2.0	Batch	0.5	1.0	1.5	2.0
COD removal $(\%)$	$22.4 \pm 5.5$	$41.3\pm$ 27.5	$95.9\pm$ 0.6	$94.5 \pm$ 1.6	$97.4 \pm$ 2.3	$97.2 \pm$ 1.6	$96.4\pm$ 1.0	$66.0 \pm$ 19.7	$93.5\pm$ 0.9	$95.1 \pm$ 5.0	$96.2\pm$ 1.4	$97.2 \pm$ 0.3
Methane (L/day)	N.D.	N.D.	$514.4\pm$ 32.5	793.6± 53.9	$1216.1\pm$ 242.8	$2657.1\pm$ 424.6	$3642.2\pm$ 218.4	N.D.	N.D.	$1402.5\pm$ 237.3	$2478.1\pm$ 391.7	3352.2 士 260.2
pH	$7.3 \pm 0.3$	$7.4 \pm 0.1$	$7.4 \pm 0.2$	$7.5 \pm 0.1$	$7.3 \pm 0.3$	$7.0 \pm 0.1$	$7.1 \pm 0.1$	$7.6 \pm 0.2$	$7.5 \pm 0.2$	$7.4 \pm 0.3$	$7.1 \pm 0.1$	$7.1 \pm 0.1$

**Table 2.1** Operational parameter of AP and HP reactors.

AP, anaerobic packed-bed reactor; HP, hybrid packed-bed reactor; COD: chemical oxygen demand; HRT, hydraulic retention time; OLR, organic loading rate; N.D. not determine

### **2.4.2 Overview of 16S rRNA gene pyrosequencing**

16S rRNA gene pyrotag libraries were constructed for twelve AP and HP biofilm samples each and their seed sludge. A total of 98,057 16S rRNA gene pyrotag reads were retrieved and further classified into 2,882 OTUs using a 97% sequence identity cut-off (Table A.1). Although the rarefaction curves of most samples were insufficient to achieve the plateau (Figure A.1), the high Good's coverage values (>93%) suggested that obtained OTUs adequately estimated the microbial diversity of the reactors. According to the Chao1 indexes, the biofilm may contain approximately 1.53– 2.23-fold more OTUs than detected. Comparing microbial community composition between samples, unweighted UniFrac-based PCoA clearly showed that the community composition varied with time (Figure 2.3). Specifically, the microbial constituents continuously change over 321 days and reached stable structure only after 462 days, based on Jackknife clustering analysis, weighted UniFrac-based PCoA and correspondence analysis (CA) (Figure A.2, A.3, and A.4). Despite the dynamic community structure, the steady COD removal indicates that the enriched microbial consortia at all stages were suitable for soft drink wastewater treatment at the respective operation conditions (Figure 2.2). Using OTU-level phylogenetic analyses, we identify dominant organisms (Figure 2.4) and discuss their potential ecological roles below.



**Figure 2.3** PCoA based on the abundances of 16S rRNA gene OTUs (unweighted UniFrac). For this analysis, observed 16S rRNA gene OTUs were normalized to 1,400 reads per sample. A and H indicate the samples taken from the AP and HP reactors. The numbers following A and H indicate days of the operation for biomass sampling.



Figure 2.4 The numbers below AP and HP on top row indicate days of the operation for biomass sampling.

# **2.4.3 Bacteroidetes, Chloroflexi, Firmicutes, and Spirochaetes**

Phyla thought to take part in the anaerobic digestion nexus,<sup>35-39</sup> Bacteroidetes, *Chloroflexi*, *Firmicutes*, and *Spirochaetes* , were detected in all samples (Table A.2 and Figure 2.4).

Firmicutes family *Clostridiaceae* (OTU1253, 2383, and 2853) were found in seed sludge and consistently observed throughout operation. On the other hand, although only two abundant OTUs (349 and 2758) were found in seed sludge within the phylum *Bacteroidetes*, other seven major OTUs emerged during the operation and their abundances behaved differently over time: OTUs 245, 349, 630, 1452, and 1955 predominated before day 435 and decreased in the later stages while OTUs 131, 1295, and 1382 increased after 321 days. Despite no dominant *Chloroflexi*-related OTUs in seed sludge, the abundances of three *Chloroflexi*-type OTUs (OTU316, 2001, and 2352) were frequently detected at day 121-435 and decreased after day 530, while OTU3036 predominated in later stage. Based on redundancy analysis (RDA) to correlate the abundance of major OTUs with operational conditions (Figure A.5), HRT, OLR, and reactor type were the major explanatory variables; further, this RDA plot supported the fluctuation of the discussed *Bacteroidetes*, *Chloroflexi*, and *Firmicutes* OTUs (Figure A.5). The members of the phyla may be responsible for fermentative degradation of protein and, more importantly, sugar to VFAs, based on previous reports.<sup>40-42</sup> In addition, Bacteroidetes found in the reactor may perform PEG degradation as a Bacteroidetes member, Bacteroides sp. PG1, has been observed to degrade PEG1000 axenically or in co-culture with *Methanobacterium* sp. DG1.<sup>43</sup> While *Spirochaetes* is neither known to degrade sugars nor PEG, related OTUs (555, 704, 851, 1270, and 3238) were consistently observed after 121 days (Figure 2.4 and Figure A.5), indicating that relatively high OLR condition  $(>1.0 \text{ g } SCOD L/day)$  facilitated their proliferation in the reactors. Although studies have reported *Spirochaetes* populations performing syntrophic acetate oxidation<sup>44</sup> and acetogenesis<sup>45</sup> in methanogenic environments, their ecological function still remains unclear.

## **2.4.4 Candidate phyla KSB3 and GN04**

Besides such phyla widely associated with anaerobic digestion, we also observed populations of candidate phyla KSB3 and GN04 during later stages of operation (Figure 2.4). After 600 days, KSB3 (OTU389) predominated up to 38.3% and 4.8% in AP and HP respectively. This KSB3 closely relates to a clone (99.2% similarity to clone SwB25fl, accession no. AB266941) associated with a mesophilic UASB reactors treating sugar-containing wastewater (Figure 2.5).<sup>35</sup> Further, KSB3 was also previously observed to degrade carbohydrates (i.e., glucose and maltose), especially in association with increase in influent sugar

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concentration.46-47 Thus, KSB3 likely participates in fructose degradation in both AP and HP reactors. The GN04-related OTU3172 was detected in the AP (2.6-5.6%) and HP (1.5-8.1%) reactors after 530 days operation (Figure 2.4). Like KSB3, this GN04 OTU is related to a lineage (specifically MSB-5A5) associated with mesophilic UASB reactors treating sugar-containing wastewater (e .g ., 99.5% identity with clone N2B95fl; accession no. AB266976) (Figure 2.6).<sup>35</sup> However, in both cases, their physiology and in situ functions remains largely unknown. The RDA plot indicated that GN04 and KSB3 populations are positioned close to the origin of the axes, indicating that their appearance could not be explained by the environmental factors tested. Further study on metagenomic and single-cell genomic analyses would provide more useful information to elucidate the ecophysiological traits of these functionally unknown microbes.



**Figure 2.5** Distance matrix tree of 16S rRNA gene sequences assigned to the candidate phyla GN04 and KSB3 retrieved from anaerobic reactors based on the neighbor-joining method. Boldface indicates the sequences obtained in this study. The 16S rRNA gene sequences of *Methanosaeta harundinacea* 8Ac (AY817738), *Methanosaeta pelagica* 03d30q (AB679167), *Methanosaeta concilii opfikon* (X51423) were used as outgroup. The bar indicates 10% base substitution. Branching points supported probabilities  $>95\%$ ,  $>75\%$ , and  $>50\%$  by bootstrap analyses (based on 1,000 replicates) are indicated by solid circle, open circles, and open square, respectively.



**Figure 2.6** Distance matrix tree of 16S rRNA gene sequences assigned to the *Geobacter* retrieved from anaerobic reactors based on the neighbor- joining method. Boldface indicates the sequences obtained in this study. The 16S rRNA gene sequences of *Thermodesulfobacterium commune* DSM 2178 (AF418169), *Thermodesulfobacterium hveragerdense* DSM 12571 (NR\_029311), and *Thermodesulfobacterium hydrogeniphilum* DSM 14290 (NR\_025146) were used as outgroup. The bar indicates 10% base substitution. Branching points supported probabilities  $>95\%$ ,  $>75\%$ , and  $>50\%$  by bootstrap analyses (based on 1,000 replicates) are indicated by solid circle, open circles, and open square, respectively.

# **2.4.5 Methanogens and syntrophs**

In order to accomplish complete conversion of sugar to  $CH_4$  and  $CO_2$ , it is necessary to further degrade  $H_2$ , acetate, and other volatile fatty acids (VFAs; e.g., propionate and butyrate) likely generated from sugar fermentation by the aforementioned organisms. Specific methanogen

clades are known to individually degrade H2 and acetate to CH4 and CO2. On the other hand, degradation of VFAs is thermodynamically limited in methanogenic environments,<sup>48-50</sup> and syntrophs and methanogens are known to form obligate mutualistic metabolic interactions to accomplish such degradation. As expected, OTUs associated with known methanogens and syntrophs were consistently observed in AP and HP during operation (Figure 2.4). For methanogens, *Methanobacterium* (OTU143 and 908) was the dominant H2 -oxidizing methanogen throughout reactor operation. Similarly, aceticlastic *Methanosaeta*-related OTU649 was found not only in all sludge samples  $(1.0-27.1\%$  of the total population) but also in seed sludge (3.1%), likely degrading acetate derived from fructose and/or PEG.<sup>51-52</sup> An OTU (2892) related to *Methanosarcina*, capable of both acetate- and H2 -oxidation, was detected at relatively higher abundances at day 121 in AP (5.5%) and day 64 in HP (12.4%). RDA revealed that *Methanosarcina*- and *Methanobacterium*-related OTUs (OTU143, 908, and 2892) were represented by relatively short arrows in the direction of HRT, indicating their proliferation at higher HRT conditions. For *Methanosaeta* populations, OTU649 had no significant correlation with HRT and OLR. In contrast, the OTU661 was strongly correlated with OLR. For *Methanosaeta* populations, OTU649 had no significant correlation with HRT and OLR. It has been reported that the affinity for acetate could be relevant to the growth of aceticlastic methanogens, and under high acetate concentrations, *Methanosarcina* spp. often outcompete *Methanosaeta* spp.<sup>53-54</sup> While the acetate concentration was not measured in the reactor, it was likely very low due to the dilution of substrate concentration from internal circulation and reactor volume right after entering the reactor. Even in such low acetate concentration, *Methanosaeta* related OTU661 might be affected by different OLR conditions. As for degradation of VFAs, in both reactors, we found known syntrophic populations, including *Syntrophomonas* (OTU1550), *Syntrophobacter* (OTU2866 and 3104), and *Smithella* (OTU544 and 584) (Figure 2.4). Among them, *Syntrophomonas*-related OTU1550 was found in seed sludge as a major syntrophic population (0,44%). Based on characteristics of these genera,  $48,55$  they are most likely involved in the degradation of butyrate (*Syntrophomonas*) and propionate (*Syntrophobacter* and *Smithella*) through with syntrophic partnership with methanogens (e.g., *Methanobacterium*). Such VFAs may be produced by butyrate- or propionate producing fermentative bacteria, such as the members of the phyla Firmicutes and Bacteroidetes.<sup>56-60</sup> The relatively low abundances of syntrophic bacteria (< 1.6% of the total populations) are in good accordance with the results of

quantitative analyses of anaerobic bioreactors with membrane hybridization<sup>61</sup> and sequencespecific 16S rRNA cleavage method.<sup>62</sup> These results suggest that hydrogenotrophic methanogens and syntrophs observed here might play a supporting role in the VFA removal to maintain process stability. RDA plot of known syntrophs showed that the OTUs associated with propionate-oxidizing syntrophs (OTU544 and 584, 2866, and 3104) shared similar trend going along with OLR axis (Figure A.5A). Given that these microbes utilize propionate as major substrate for syntrophic metabolism, $48$  it is reasonable to conclude that propionate fermentation might be the dominant sugar degradation pathway as OLR increased. *Syntrophomonas*-related OTU1550 that primarily utilizes butyrate, showed opposite trending with propionate oxidizers, implying a major role of butyrate fermentation in lower OLR condition.

### **2.4.6 Geobacter**

Unlike most other methanogenic environments, *Geobacter*-related organisms were frequently observed in the AP and HP reactor pyrotag libraries, although they were minor populations in seed sludge (< 0.31%) (Figure 2.4). OTU1431 closely related to *G. chapelleii*  strain 172 (99.5% sequence identity; accession no. U41561), a non-fermentative, iron-reducing bacterium capable of oxidizing acetate, formate, ethanol, and lactate (Figure 2.5).<sup>63</sup> RDA indicated that OLR correlated with the abundance of the OTU1431 (Figure A.5), suggesting that *G. chapelleii*-related organism might contribute to oxidizing acid (i .e ., formate, acetate, and lactate) or alcohol (i .e ., ethanol) possibly produced by fermentative degradation of sugar and PEG. Three other OTUs (278, 2675, and 2907) were distantly related to known *Geobacter* isolates (i.e., OTU278 has 98.0% identity with *G. argillaceus* strain G12; accession no. NR\_043575, and OTU2675 and 2907 have 99.0% identity with *G. daltonii* strain FRC-32; accession no. NR\_074916), and clustered with environmental clones that retrieved from mesophilic UASB reactors treating wastewater discharged from sugar- and amino acidprocessing factories (Figure 2.6).<sup>35</sup> These observations suggested the importance of these *Geobacter*-related organisms in anaerobic processes treating food-processing wastewater. Within this poorly characterized Geobacter clade, 16S rRNA gene sequence of a syntrophic ethanoloxidizing bacterium NE23-3 (accession no. AB231802) was deposited. Albeit no report on its physiology has yet been published, such unidentified Geobacter may oxidize ethanol (and possibly other syntrophic substrates) in association with hydrogenotrophic methanogens. RDA

plot showed that these OTUs had no correlations with OLR/HRT. It is puzzling that *Geobacter* predominated the reactor community despite no substantial addition of oxidized metals (e .g ., Fe<sup>3+</sup> and Mn<sup>4+</sup>). However, recent studies suggest that *Geobacter* may thrive under methanogenic conditions through interspecies electron transfer with methanogens.<sup>64-65</sup> In short, while we suspect they ought play an important role in the treatment of soft drink wastewater based on their consistent presence, more studies are necessary to investigate their ecological contribution.

### **2.5 Conclusions**

We successfully operated AP and HP reactors to treat synthetic soft drink wastewater. Based on the 16S rRNA gene pyrotag analyses, we identified core microbial constituents and assigned their possible function based on previously known physiological characteristics: *Methanosaeta*, *Methanosarcia*, and *Methanobacterium* as major methanogenic archaea; *Bacteroidetes*, *Chloroflexi*, *Firmicutes*, and KSB3 as fermentative bacteria; *Bacteroidetes* as PEG degrader. *Syntrophs*, *Syntrophomonas*, *Syntrophobacter*, and *Smithella* may support degradation of VFAs derived from sugar and PEG degradation by the fermenters. While we also identify *Geobacter*, *Spirochaetes*, and GN04 members prevalent in the reactor, their ecological role in soft drink wastewater treatment remains unclear. Interestingly, many of these organisms, especially KSB3 and GN04, appear to be strongly influenced by operational conditions, indicating that specific organisms may be adapted to and responsible for sugar/PEG degradation under specific conditions.

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# **CHAPTER 3: ENRICHMENT AND CHARACTERIZATION OF MICROBIAL CONSORTIA DEGRADING SOLUBLE MICROBIAL PRODUCTS DISCHARGED FROM ANAEROBIC METHANOGENIC BIOREACTORS**

# **3.1 Abstract**

SMP produced in bioprocesses have been known as a main cause to decrease treatment efficiency, lower effluent quality and promote membrane fouling in water reclamation plants. In this study, biological degradation of SMP using selectively enriched microbial consortia in a DHS reactor was introduced to remove SMP discharged from anaerobic methanogenic reactors. On average, 68.9 to 87.5% SMP removal was achieved by the enriched microbial consortia in the DHS reactor for >800 days. The influent SMP fed to the DHS reactor exhibited a bimodal MW distribution with 14-20 kDa and <4 kDa. Between these two types of SMP, the small MW SMP were biodegraded in the upper part of the reactor, together with most of the large MW SMP. Using 16S rRNA gene pyrosequencing technology, the microbial community composition and structure were characterized and correlated with operational factors, such as hydraulic retention time, organic loading rate, and removal of soluble COD at different depths of the reactor by performing network and redundancy analyses. The results revealed that *Saprospiraceae* was strongly correlated to the increasing SMP loading condition, indicating positive co-occurrences with neighboring bacterial populations. Different microbial diversity along with the depth of the reactor implies that stratified microbial communities could participate in the process of SMP degradation. Taken together, these observations indicate that the spatial and temporal variability of the enriched microbial community in the DHS reactor could effectively treat SMP with respect to changes in the operational factors.

### **3.2 Introduction**

Biological treatment processes have been extensively used to treat wastewater containing dissolved organic materials. In these treatment processes, microbial cells are enriched to high concentrations  $(>1-2 \text{ g/L})$  to effectively degrade and mineralize organic matters to carbon dioxide. Concurrently, energy is derived for the growth of microbial cells, and soluble microbial products (SMP) are secreted into the bulk solution. SMP generally

contain a wide range of soluble, complex, and heterogeneous compounds with a MW ranging from  $0.5$ -1000 kDa.<sup>1-3</sup> They are present in the effluent discharged from the treatment processes and are primary substances contributing to the increase in effluent  $\mathrm{COD}^{2,4}$ . They can be a cause of increasing toxicity of the effluent by themselves<sup>5</sup> and an environmental hazard by acting as a precursor of disinfection by-products.<sup>5-7</sup> Accumulation of SMP in AS processes not only decreases respiration rates but also reduces efficiencies in flocculation, settling ability, and dewaterbility of AS by affecting physical properties in the processes, such as sludge structure, turbidity, and viscosity $8-9$ . Increase of SMP in tertiary treatments can also have inhibitory effects on nitrification.<sup>10</sup>

The presence of SMP in discharged water can potentially have negative impacts to water reclamation processes. In membrane bioreactors and in membrane separation processes for water purification, SMP are reported to be responsible for membrane fouling by accumulating on the surface of membranes, blocking pores, and subsequently reducing the water flux through the membranes. $11-13$  To remove foulants deposited on the membrane surface and restore the water flux passing through the membrane, membrane backwashing or chemical cleaning is often used. In extreme cases, these foulants can no longer be removed from the membrane surface. As a result, replacement of new membrane modules is required, which can increase operation costs.

It is important to develop strategies to effectively control and remove SMP in membrane-based water treatment and reclamation processes.<sup>14-15</sup> In these processes, adsorption and coagulation as pretreatments are often used to reduce SMP, and this can prevent or minimize the extent of fouling taking place on the membrane surface.<sup>16-20</sup> The most commonly used adsorbent is activated carbon in a form of granules or powders,<sup>17-18, 20-</sup>  $21$  and its use prior to microfiltration and ultrafiltration is reported as the most effective pretreatment to control SMP in secondary effluent.<sup>22-23</sup> However, the long-term application of activated carbon can be limited by its adsorption capacity.18, 20-21, 23

Alternatively, biologically degrading SMP has been suggested to control the amount of SMP in water treatment systems.<sup>24</sup> Biodegradation of SMP is feasible but at a slow rate due to the large MW and complex chemical structures.<sup>25-26</sup> However, when appropriate conditions are provided, effective degradation of SMP discharged from an anaerobic reactor can be achieved with efficiency up to 96% on high MW SMP ( $> 100$  kDa); the degradation

efficiency of SMP is observed to be more effective under aerobic conditions than anaerobic conditions.<sup>27</sup> Microbial community compositions related to anaerobic SMP degradation have not been characterized, but a few previous studies are limited to identifying phylogenetic groups of heterotrophic bacteria utilizing SMP produced by nitrifying bacteria at the phylum and class levels.<sup>28-30</sup> The decrease of SMP in the system was just speculated to have a correlation with the abundance of *Klebsiella* in a biological activated carbon reactor<sup>31</sup> and *Chloroflexi* in a membrane bioreactor (MBR).<sup>32</sup>

Several reports have also described the use of a down-flow hanging sponge (DHS) reactor as a post-treatment to treat the effluent discharged from UASB processes treating domestic wastewater.33-37 Additional 70-80 % reduction in COD by the DHS reactor was reported. Although no measurement was performed to confirm the molecular size of the COD present in the UASB effluent, it is possible that the majority of the COD was primarily made of SMP, and a large fraction of the SMP was biodegraded by the microbial populations selectively enriched in the DHS reactors.

In this study, to understand biological degradation of SMP in a DHS reactor as a post-treatment process to the effluent of anaerobic methanogenic reactors, the spatial and temporal variability of the community composition and structure of the enriched microbial consortia was characterized using 16S rRNA-based pyrosequencing. In addition, the key microbial populations involved in SMP degradation and their relationships with the operational factors were identified and evaluated by applying network and redundancy analyses.

## **3.3 Material and methods**

### **3.3.1 Experimental set up**

Figure 1A illustrates the use of a DHS reactor to enrich microbial consortia that could degrade SMP present in the effluent of anaerobic bioreactors. To produce the required SMP-containing effluent, two anaerobic reactors, named an anaerobic packed-bed reactor (AP) and a hybrid packed-bed reactor (HP), were operated to treat synthetic wastewater that mimicked the wastewater composition discharged from soft drink production plants (Table B.1). The detailed information of the system performance of the AP and the HP reactors is described elsewhere.<sup>38</sup> Briefly, the OLR increased from 0.5 g SCOD/L/day to 2.0 g

SCOD/L/day, and the removal efficiency of SCOD was 93-97% with consequent average effluent SCOD 121.9  $\pm$  106.5 mg/L and 123.4  $\pm$  74.9 mg/L in the AP and the HP reactors, respectively. The DHS reactor was fed with combined effluent discharged from the anaerobic reactors as the sole substrate. With a working volume of 10 L, the DHS reactor was filled with polyurethane sponge media (porosity 0.985 vol./vol.) covered by net cylinder-shape polyethylene cases (L34xD34xH34, unit mm). AS from the Urbana-Champaign sanitary district at Urbana, Illinois was inoculated into fifteen pieces of sponge and randomly placed at the top, middle, and bottom parts of the DHS reactor. The HRT was decreased from 1.82 to 0.52 days stepwise with a consistent internal-circulation rate of 50 ml/min (Table 3.1). In total, five phases based on HRT and OLR were defined for the operation conditions. The reactor was maintained at room temperature without additional aeration and pH adjustment.

Phase		Day	Average influent SCOD (mg/L)	<b>HRT</b> (Day)	Influent <b>SCOD</b> (mg/L)	$OLR$ (mg SCOD/L/day)	<b>SCOD</b> removal $(\% )$	<b>SCOD</b> removal (mg SCOD /L/day)
	$\mathbf{1}$	$0 - 135$	$106.5 \pm 9.6$	1.82	$106.5 \pm 9.6$	$58.5 \pm 5.3$	$65.8 \pm 22.5$	$38.5 \pm 5.1$
	$\overline{\mathbf{i}}$	136-230	$66.9 \pm 11.3$	1.82	$66.9 \pm 11.3$	$36.8 \pm 6.2$	$66.4 \pm 5.3$	$24.4 \pm 3.0$
	. 111	231-335	$105.2 \pm 13.8$	1.82	$105.2 \pm 13.8$	$57.8 \pm 7.6$	$76.8 \pm 5.2$	$44.4 \pm 3.7$
	iv	336-461	$55.9 \pm 15.5$	1.82	$55.9 \pm 15.5$	$30.7 \pm 8.5$	$65.8 \pm 7.0$	$20.2 \pm 4.2$
$\mathbf{I}$		462-603	$48.7 \pm 8.3$	1.21	$48.7 \pm 8.3$	$40.2 \pm 6.8$	$72.9 \pm 5.5$	$29.3 \pm 2.3$
Ш		604-691	$112.8 \pm 60.8$	0.91	$112.8 \pm 60.8$	$124.0 \pm 66.8$	$72.9 \pm 6.3$	$90.4 \pm 25.0$
IV		692-753	$92.9 \pm 23.8$	0.67	$92.9 \pm 23.8$	$138.7 \pm 35.5$	$73.9 \pm 5.6$	$102.5 \pm 32.7$
V		754-824	$225.3 \pm 65.3$	0.52	$225.3 \pm 65.3$	$433.3 \pm 125.6$	$87.5 \pm 6.5$	$379.1 \pm 142.4$

**Table 3.1** Operational conditions and performance of the DHS reactors in the five phases.

### **3.3.2 Analytical procedures**

Soluble COD (SCOD) in the samples was characterized using COD digestion kits (HACH, 2125815) with a UV/VIS spectrophotometer (DR/4000 U Spectrophotometer\_115 Vac, HACH Company, USA) after filtration with 0.22 µm filters (Millex-GP, Millipore, MA, USA). Dissolved organic carbon in the filtered sample was measured using an automated total organic carbon analyzer (TOC\_Vcph, Shimadzu, Japan). The filtered

soluble samples were subjected to MW distribution of SMP, using a high performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) – size exclusion chromatography (SEC) (P680A LPG-2, Dionex, US) equipped with a Zorbax GF-250 column. SMP were detected with the UV detector at a wavelength of 254 nm. 0.01M phosphate solution filtered through 0.22 μm filters was used as the mobile phase at a flow rate of 1.0 mL/min. A standard curve was generated using a protein-based molecular weight marker kit (MWGF-200, MW ranges 12-200 kDa, Sigma) and Q-Dextran (MW 4 kDa, Sigma). The peak areas were calculated based on the peak intensity and the peak retention time in the chromatograms.

# **3.3.3 Biomass sampling, DNA extraction, amplification of 16S rRNA genes, and pyrosequencing analysis**

To sample the biomass from the DHS reactor, a piece of sponge media was collected bimonthly from the upper (depth, 0.16 m) and lower (depth, 0.94 m) parts of the reactor. The biomass in the sponge was suspended in 25 ml of 1x phosphate buffered saline (PBS) solution by vortexing, pelleted by centrifugation (10000 rpm, 3 min), and stored in  $-80^{\circ}$ C prior to DNA extraction. Biomass was taken at days 82 (only from the upper part), 136, 196, 258, 373, and 454 in Phase I, days 528 and 602 in Phase II, day 648 in Phase III, day 723 in Phase IV, and day 798 in Phase V.

DNA was extracted using a FastDNA spin kit for soil (MP Biomedicals, Carlsbad, CA, USA) and purified with the Promega Wizard DNA clean up system. A LIB-L kit (454, Roche, Basel) with a primer set targeting the 515F-909R region of 16S rRNA gene sequences<sup>39</sup> was used for PCR amplification. PCR products were separated by  $1.5\%$  low melting gel electrophoresis and extracted with a Wizard SV Gel and PCR clean-up system (Promega, USA). A Qubit fluorometer (Invitrogen, USA) was used to quantify the PCR products. Equal amounts of the PCR products were combined and analyzed by a 454 Genome Sequencer FLX Titanium platform (Roche/454 Life Sciences, Branford, CT, USA) at the Roy J. Carver Biotechnology Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (IL, USA) for pyrosequencing. The pyrosequencing data have been deposited in NCBI-Sequence Read Archive (accession no. SRP056366). The Quantitative Insights Into Microbial Ecology (QIIME) pipeline was used to process the pyrosequencing data.<sup>40</sup>

Pyrosequencing results were processed using the Quantitative Insights Into Microbial Ecology (QIIME) pipeline<sup>40</sup> with the default settings as follows: after the sequences were denoised, operational taxonomic units (OTUs) were assigned by the UCLUST algorithm ( $\geq$ 97% pairwise identity). Representative sets of sequences from each OTU were then formed with identical sequences collapsing. Then,  $PyNAST<sup>41</sup>$  was used to align the representative sequences of each OTU to the Greengenes imputed core reference sequences. Chimeric sequences were removed by Chimera Slayer.<sup>42</sup> The PyNAST alignment was filtered to remove gaps and a phylogenetic tree was built using FastTree.<sup>43</sup> The taxonomy of each OTU was assigned using the Ribosomal Database Project (RDP) classifier with a Greengenesbased training dataset at a confidence threshold of  $0.8$ . Chao1 richness estimator,<sup>44</sup> Good's coverage,<sup>45</sup> Equitability, phylogenetic diversity (PD), and Shannon diversity indices were calculated in QIIME.

## **3.3.4 Statistical methods**

A weighted UniFrac beta-diversity distance matrix was constructed from the phylogenetic tree and subjected to the non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) analysis. Redundancy analysis (RDA) was used to evaluate the correlation of the operational factors, including HRT, OLR, SCOD removal and sampling locations with the temporal and spatial variability of the microbial community at the genus (Table 3.1). RDA was conducted using CANOCO v.4.5 (Microcomputer Power, Ithaca, NY). To determine statistically significant variables  $(P<0.05)$ , the forward selection method was conducted using the Monte Carlo test (499 permutations).<sup>46</sup>

# **3.3.5 Association network analysis**

Network analysis of operational taxonomic units (OTUs) with the operational factors was performed using CoNet.<sup>47</sup> OTUs that had a relative abundance of at least 4% of the total in any community were considered (Table B.2). The association between i) the abundances of any two OTUs and ii) the abundance of an OTU and the value of an operational factor was calculated based on the Pearson correlation. The association network analysis was conducted with both operational factors, HRT and OLR, respectively and the respective two networks were subsequently merged.

### **3.3.6 Phylogenetic analysis**

In order to assess the phylogenetic affiliation of the OTUs that indicated a significant correlation with HRT and OLR in the network analysis, the aligned sequences of the OTUs were imported into ARB and then added to the Greengenes ARB database (Greengenes\_16S\_2011\_1.arb) using ARB parsimony method. A phylogenetic tree for the aligned sequences with their neighboring sequences was built using the neighbor-joining algorithm with Jukes-Cantor correction. Bootstrap values were calculated based on 1000 replications.

# **3.3.7 Principal component analysis of 16S rRNA gene sequences data sets from DHS and other ecosystems**

The 16S rRNA gene sequences of AS, sewage, a pilot-scale DHS process, and soil were collected from the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) and GenBank nucleotide databases (Table B.3). QIIME pipeline was used for phylogenetic analysis of the 35 microbial communities with the default settings described previously. The principal component analysis (PCA) was carried out based on the relative abundance of phylogenetic groups at the family level in each sample using the Multibase program (Numerical Dynamics; www.numericaldynamics.com).

#### **3.4 Results and discussion**

## **3.4.1 Operational conditions and SCOD removal**

The DHS operation during the 824 days was divided into five phases according to the decrease in HRTs from 1.82 days to 0.52 days (Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1). Under an HRT of 1.82 days, Phase I was further divided into four different sub-phases based on OLRs. Despite fluctuation in the OLR, the effluent SCOD concentration was stabilized at  $23.1 \pm$ 5.8 mg/L, and the average SCOD removal efficiency was  $68.9 \pm 10\%$ . As the HRT was decreased, the OLR was increased almost 10 times from Phase I (46.3  $\pm$  14.2 mg) SCOD/L/day) to Phase V (433.3  $\pm$  125.6 mg SCOD/L/day). Still, the effluent SCOD concentration remained around  $23.9 \pm 9.9$  mg/L, and the SCOD removal efficiency increased from  $68.9 \pm 10.0\%$  in Phase I to  $87.5 \pm 6.5\%$  in Phase V. During the overall

operation, the performance of the DHS reactor in terms of SCOD removal was not seriously affected by the fluctuation or a sudden increase in influent organic loading, suggesting that DHS reactors could effectively polish the effluent quality and produce stable and low SCOD effluent under various organic loading conditions. During the 824 days of operation, either sloughing or detachment of biomass was not observed.



Figure 3.1 (A) Schematic diagram of the anaerobic packed-bed reactors the DHS reactor. (B) SCOD removal of the DHS reactor in five different phases. Phase I was divided into four different subphases based on OLRs. The arrows along with the time axis indicate the operational days when biomass in the supporting sponge media was collected for microbial community analysis.

### **3.4.2 SMP removal**

SCOD reduction in the DHS reactor suggested that SMP released from the anaerobic reactors could be effectively degraded. To analyze and compare changes in SMP profiles before and after the DHS treatment, samples from the effluent of the AP and HP reactors and the DHS reactors were collected in each phase. The MW distribution of the SMP showed a bimodal distribution with the major MW between 14-20 kDa, and the minor MW less than 4 kDa (Figure 3.2). Considering that the major constituents in the synthetic wastewater (Table B.1) were glucose, fructose, and polyethylene glycol (MW, 200 Da), of which the MWs were less than 200 Da, the observed SMP with a MW of 14-20 kDa in the anaerobic effluent were likely to be SMP-derived from metabolism of the anaerobic biomass.<sup>2, 48-49</sup> Figure 3.2 further indicated the relative SMP removal of the large and small MW fractions in the DHS reactor, respectively. Although quantitative comparison of SMP reduction in the DHS reactor could not be made without standard compounds for quantification at each MW range, it was observed that the SMP associated with the peak areas (14-20 kDa) in the chromatogram in the AP and HP effluent were greatly reduced in the DHS effluent. Most of the SMP with an MW less than 4 kDa were degraded through the DHS in most of the phases. The pertinent chromatograms are shown in Figure B.1.

The SMP degradation profile, after combined with the recirculation, along the reactor depth was further investigated (Figure 3.2). For the SMP with an MW of 14-20 kDa (n=4), 80.4% reductions in the chromatogram area was observed in the upper part of the reactor with a depth between 0.0 m and 0.32 m, and 8.6% reductions occurred in the lower part (0.65-1.14 m). For the small MW SMP (< 4 kDa), reduction was mainly observed in the upper part of the reactor. A SCOD profile for the degradation of the total organic compounds also indicated that 64.5% and 15.3% of influent SCOD were removed in the upper and lower part of the reactor, respectively (Figure B.2).



**Figure 3.2** HPLC-SEC analyses of the effluent SMP from the AP and HP reactors, and the effluent from the DHS reactor in the five phases: (A) a chromatogram in Phase I at day 447, (B) degradation profiles of SMP sub-fractions along with the DHS reactor depth (n=4), (C) chromatogram peak areas corresponding to MW range of 14-20 kDa, and (D) chromatogram peak areas corresponding to MW range of <4 kDa. The peak areas were calculated based on the peak intensity and the peak retention time in the chromatograms. The number in parentheses indicates the days when the samples were collected.

## **3.4.3 Microbial community dynamics**

A NMDS plot based on weighted UniFrac distances (stress value = 0.046) indicated that samples collected from the DHS reactor tended to cluster together and were separated from the inoculated AS and the influent biomass (Figure 3.3). A significant shift in microbial composition for the samples collected from the upper part of the reactor was observed over time. Four of the six samples taken in Phase I were closely clustered, and this cluster could be differentiated from those taken in Phases II-III and Phases IV-V, which also formed individual distinct clusters. The samples collected from the lower part of the reactor clustered separately from the samples taken from the upper part, likely due to differences in substrate concentration at the upper and lower parts of the reactor. Among these samples, there is no clear shift in community structure along with the different phases (I-V).



**Figure 3.3** Ordination diagrams of (A) non-metric multidimensional scaling and (B) redundancy analysis for the samples from the upper and lower parts of the DHS reactor. The upper part samples are indicated in black circles with the sampling days in black letters, and the lower part samples are indicated in gray circles with the sampling days in gray letters. 'AS' stands for the inoculated activated sludge. HRT, OLR, and SCOD removal are indicated by red arrows due to their statistical significance ( $P < 0.05$ ), and reactor depth is indicated by a red dotted arrow  $(P > 0.05)$ .

To determine the factors affecting the spatial and temporal differences in the microbial communities observed above, RDA was applied with four explanatory variables (HRT, OLR, SCOD removal, and reactor depth). Results indicated that HRT, OLR, and SCOD removal were the statistically significant variables ( $P < 0.05$ ) correlating with the microbial community compositions classified by genus (Figure 3.3). Due to the stable reactor performance in terms of SCOD removal (Table 3.1), OLR and SCOD removal indicated a high positive correlation with each other. The four samples (136, 196, 258, and 373) collected in Phase I from the upper part of the reactor exhibited the strongest correlation with HRT but exhibited negative correlations with the rest of the variables, whereas the upper part samples in the later phases came to have positive correlations with OLR and SCOD removal but rather a negative correlation with HRT. Comparing the upper and lower part samples of the same sampling days, as expected the samples from the lower part of the reactor had stronger correlations with the reactor depth than the upper ones. In this comparison, the lower samples, projecting away from the increasing direction of OLR and SCOD removal in the ordination, were not immediately affected by changes in the organic loading. This is possibly because the microorganisms at the lower part were exposed to the partially degraded organics derived during the SMP degradation from the upper part of the reactor. However, in Phase V when the organic loading significantly increased, the lower part sample was also affected by OLR and SCOD removal the most, rather than the other variables.

## **3.4.4 Microbial community composition**

The microbial community profile indicates clear shifts of dominant microbial populations in the individual samples at the genus level (relative abundance >3% of the total sequencing reads in any sample) with respect to the different phases and the sampling depth (Figure B.3). *Gordonia* (14.5-34.3%) and *Ectothiorhodospiraceae* (9.9-25.4%) were most abundant in both the upper and lower parts of the reactor in Phase I, and rapidly decreased to < 1% in Phases II-V. The genus *Cytophaga* (12.1-22.8%) also dominated in Phase I and was more abundant at the lower part than at the upper part. In Phases II-V, the abundances of *Flavobacteria* and *Saprospiraceae* in samples taken from the upper part increased from 4.4% to 25.9% and from 12.1% to 30.1%, respectively. In addition, *Bacteroidales*-related

genus, *Dechloromonas*, and *Geobacter*, which were hardly detected in Phases I-III, increased up to 25.9%, 5.1%, and 8.7% in Phase IV-V, respectively. Unclassified *Sphingobacteriales* genus (2.7-12.5%) was found evenly in all samples collected at the different depths and the phases.

We further compared the microbial composition in the DHS with that present in the anaerobic reactor effluent. Out of 4613 OTUs detected in the DHS community, 4328 were unique to the DHS (Figure B.5). Among the shared OTUs, three most-abundant OTUs detected in the anaerobic effluent were selected and their abundances plotted along with the DHS operation (Figure B.5). The abundance profiles of these three OTUs in the DHS did not exhibit the same trends as observed in the anaerobic reactor effluent. Similar observations could be made with all dominant OTUs found in DHS and the anaerobic effluent during the DHS operation (Table B.7). Thus, it could be concluded that microbial populations enriched in the reactor primarily represented the microbial community in the DHS reactor, and the microbial populations carried over from the anaerobic reactor effluent had insignificant impact on the microbial composition in the DHS.

To investigate the correlation of the microbial population shifts with HRT and OLR at the different depths of the reactor, microbial association networks with respect to the operational factors were constructed based on relatively abundant OTUs (Table B.2). Twelve OTUs were determined to have direct significant correlations with either HRT or OLR (Figure 3.4). The detailed phylogenetic examination of the OTUs was performed by constructing a neighbor-joining tree with previously reported sequences (Figure B.4). OLR was positively associated with proliferation of *Saprospiraceae*-related OTUs (OTUs 1229, 2194, and 588), *Flavobacteriales*-related OTU2195, *Geobacter*-related OTU6110, and *Azobacter*-related OTU3311. Of those, OTUs 1229, 2194, 2195, and 588 were negatively associated with HRT together with *Phycisphaerae*-related OTU2325. OTUs showing strong positive correlations with HRT were *Ectothiorhodospiraceae*-related OTU1933, *Gordonia*related OTU5208, *Cytophaga-*related OTUs 1661 and 3624, and *Nitrospira*-related OTU225. When the relative abundance of these OTUs between the upper and lower reactor was compared, OTUs 1229, 2194, 2195, and 6110 adapted to the increasing OLR faster in the upper part of the reactor than the lower part, whereas OTUs 3311 and 588 became proliferative in the lower part. Among the OTUs that were strongly correlated to the HRT,

OTUs 1993 and 5208 were abundant in the upper part of the reactor while OTUs 1661, 225, and 3624 were abundant in the lower part.



**Figure 3.4** Association network of OTUs with two operational factors (HRT and OLR). Each node represents an OTU (defined at 97% identity level). The size of the node represents the average relative abundance of the OTU across all communities. The node is color-coded (see key) by the mean fold change (logarithmic scale) of the average relative abundance at the upper parts compared to the lower parts. Each edge represents a positive or negative association with a correlation coefficient higher than 0.5 or less than -0.5 and P value of < 0.05. OTUs that were the first neighbors of either HRT or OLR are shown. The taxonomic classification of the OTU is provided in parentheses.

Similar results to the network analysis were observed in the RDA ordination with the relatively abundant genera (Figure B.5). *Dechloromonas*, *Geobacter*, and genera in *Bacteroidales*, *Flavobacteria*, and *Saprospiraceae* were strongly correlated to OLR and SCOD removal, whereas *Ectotiorhodospiraceae*-related genus, *Gordonia*, and *Cytophaga* were closely correlated to HRT. The genera showing the most positive correlation with reactor depth included *Nitrospira* and *Caldilineaceae*-related genus. *Sphingobacteriales*- related genus (OTU1682) that was abundant throughout all phases did not show a strong correlation with any of the variables.

#### **3.4.5 Characteristics of SMP**

Carbohydrate and protein complexes are often identified as the main components of SMP.<sup>3, 50</sup> These SMP were identified to contain long-chain alkenes, alkanes, aromatic compounds, esters, humic acids, uronic acids, and nucleic acids using advanced analytical methods such as gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) and matrix-assisted laser desorption/ionization (MALDI)-time of flight (TOF)/mass spectrometry  $(MS)^{2, 51-54}$  To describe how SMP originate, they are classified into utilization-associated products (UAP), which are produced directly from substrate utilization, and biomass-associated products (BAP), which are formed from cell lysis and decay.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, SMP can be characterized based on the MW distribution. A bimodal MW distribution was verified as a generic phenomenon in various studies, although the compositions and ranges of the MW greatly varied depending on feed water compositions, sludge mixtures, and operational and environmental conditions that a system was exposed to.<sup>1, 3, 25, 55-57</sup> Several studies among them reported that most SMP found in a range of  $\leq 1$  and  $\geq 10$  kDa as SMP  $\leq 4$  kDa and between 14-20 kDa was observed in our study.<sup>3, 55-57</sup> The skewed bimodal distribution to the large MW SMP can be observed in a system operated at a long solid retention time (SRT), as were the anaerobic reactors in this study.<sup>58</sup> To correlate the MW of SMP and the origin, it was suggested that UAP were made of low MWs, and BAP tended to contain high MWs and accumulated in the bioreactor.<sup>58</sup> Taking this into consideration, we surmise that SMP detected in the range of < 4 kDa MW could likely represent UAP, and those detected in the range of 14-20 kDa MW could likely represent BAP. The small MW SMP were almost completely removed, whereas the large MW ones were partially degraded. The difference in the degradability of the large and small MW fractions was likely due to the difference in the structure complexity of SMP; the biodegradability of the BAP fraction was relatively lower than that of the UAP fraction.<sup>59</sup> Despite the low biodegradability of large MW SMP, Barker et al. (2000) reported that relatively high removal (74%) of large MW SMP (> 10 kDa) produced from an anaerobic reactor could be achieved in a following aerobic treatment. This

observation was relevant to our results that more than half of the peak areas of the 14-20 kDa MW SMP in the chromatograms were reduced by the degradation in the DHS reactor.

### **3.4.6 Uniqueness of SMP-degrading microbial community in DHS**

Based on the efficiency of SMP degradation obtained in this study, we conclude that SMP-degrading microbial community was successfully enriched in the DHS reactor. It is not clear how different the SMP-degrading microbial community is from those found in conventional wastewater treatment processes. To address this, PCA was used to compare the SMP-degrading microbial communities in the DHS reactor with those (Table B.3) observed in AS, integrated fixed-film AS (IFAS), a pilot-scale DHS reactor (PS-DHS) treating effluent discharged from a UASB reactor, raw sewage, and soil at the family level (Figure 3.5).37, 60-63 The microbial communities in the DHS reactor were relatively close to the PS-DHS, sewage, and IFAS, and distinctly distant from the AS and soil. Especially, the microbial communities in the upper part of the PS-DHS were the closest related ones to the DHS. This result is reasonable as the microorganisms in the upper part of the PS-DHS could effectively degrade organic matter in the UASB effluent that were likely made of mainly SMP<sup>37</sup>. However, the detailed phylogenetic affiliation of the most abundant OTUs in the upper part of the PS-DHS showed a different observation from our study. In the PS-DHS, the majority of the sequences were related to *Dechloromonas* in the early phase and then to *Firmicutes* and *Xanthomonas* later, whereas these were generally minor in the DHS even though the abundance of *Dechloromonas* and *Fusibacter* in *Firmicutes* slightly increased in Phase V. Also, the methane-oxidizing family significantly found in the PS-DHS was nearly undetectable in the DHS. Microbial communities from the middle and lower parts of the PS-DHS, where nitrifiers became abundant for ammonia and nitrite oxidation, formed a more distant cluster from the DHS than those in the upper part. The overall results suggest that the microbial consortia in the DHS were uniquely enriched for SMP degradation, which were apparently different from the other wastewater treatment processes.



**Figure 3.5** Principal component analysis of the six different environmental samples using the relative abundance of bacterial 16S rRNA gene sequences at the family level. DHS stands for the samples collected in this study. AS, IFAS, and PS-DHS stand for activated sludge, integrated fixed-film activated sludge, and pilot-scale DHS, respectively. Among the samples from the PS-DHS, the samples collected from the upper part of the reactor are indicated by black squares, the samples collected from the middle part by gray squares, and the samples collected from the lower part by white squares.

## **3.4.7 Microbial populations involved in SMP degradation**

The unique microbial community detected in the DHS reactor strongly suggested certain microbial populations were capable of directly or indirectly utilizing SMP. So far, there is very little information describing the composition and diversity of microbial populations degrading SMP prior to this study. Using microautoradiography combined with fluorescence in situ hybridization (MAR-FISH) analysis, it was revealed that several

bacterial groups, including *Chloroflexi*, *Cytophaga-Flavobacterium* cluster, *α-Proteobacteria*, and *γ-Proteobacteira*, were able to take up <sup>14</sup>C-labeled SMP released from nitrifiers in nitrification reactors.<sup>28</sup> Specifically, it was suggested that *Chloroflexi*-related populations took up BAP, and the *Cytophaga-Flavobacterium*-related populations gradually ingested both UAP and BAP from the nitrifying bacteria. Miura et al.<sup>32, 64</sup> further reported that the abundance of *Chloroflexi* was correlated to the decrease of microbial products accumulated in a MBR, suggesting that *Chloroflexi* could alleviate membrane fouling by utilizing SMP from other heterotrophs. Unlike the high abundance of *Chloroflexi* observed in SMP-degrading MBR reactors  $(14{\text -}26\%)$ , <sup>64</sup> our study detected low abundance of *Chloroflexi* (0.02-9.2%) in the DHS reactor. This difference clearly suggests that microbial populations other than *Chloroflexi* could play an important role in the degradation of SMP in the DHS reactor.

In this study, a rapid increase in the abundance of *Flavobacteriales* and *Saprospiracea* was observed to correlate with an increase in OLR (Figure 3.4). These populations were key active members in SMP degradation in the DHS reactor, in particular at the upper part. The family *Saprospiraceae* was reported as active protein hydrolyzers, showing epiphytic growth attached to filamentous bacteria, like the phylum *Chloroflexi*. 65 The most abundant *Saprospiraceae*-related OTU2194 (average relative abundance 2.5%) showed a 99% similarity to *Candidatus Epiflobacter* sp. (EF523446), constituting a deep branch with the sequences in this genus that specifically utilizes amino acids as energy and carbon sources rather than other types of macromolecules (Figure B.6). $^{66}$  Co-occurrence of commensal *Flavobacteria* and *Sphingobacteria* with *Saprospiraceae* was observed in AS treating municipal wastewater, which leads to a speculation that the commensal bacteria rely on amino acids hydrolyzed from proteins by *Saprospiraceae*. <sup>67</sup> Considering that members of *Saprospiracea* could behave like a micropredator to obtain nutrients under conditions where organic substrates are limited,<sup>68-69</sup> the proliferation of *Saprospiracea* in the DHS reactor was likely due to the degradation of protein-like SMP released from biomass lysis, so that the neighboring *Flavobacteriales*, *Geobacter*, and *Azobacter*-related OTUs in the network were to be cross-fed on intermediates in the protein degradation. Enhancing abundance and activity of these key microbial populations, specifically responding to increase in the SMP

loading, in enriched consortia would be helpful to improve the removal efficiency of SMP in practical bioprocesses.

Although, in previous studies, *Cytophaga* and *Flavobacteria* in *Bacteroidetes* as a cluster have been often targeted together for utilization of dissolved organic materials and microbial products,28, 70 *Cytophaga*-related OTUs (OTU1661 (average relative abundance 3.2%) and OTU3624 (average relative abundance 1.3%)) in our study, unlike the *Flavobacteriales*, were observed to be most abundant at the lower part of the reactor in the early phases when 3 to 10 times less SMP were fed compared with Phase IV and Phase V. The OTUs were also positively associated with HRT that made a negative correlation with OTU2195 in the network (Figure 3.4). This suggests that *Cytophaga* might have higher substrate affinity than *Flavobacteria* when low SMP were available.

The other OTUs strongly correlated with HRT were OTU5208 and OTU1933. OTU5208 is closely related to the *Gordonia* species (i.e., 99% similarity to *G. hydrophobica* (X87340)) that are capable of oxidizing various types of aliphatic and aromatic hydrocarbons including recalcitrant natural compounds (Figure B.4).<sup>71</sup> Considering that various refractory alkenes, alkanes, and aromatic compounds were produced from anaerobic reactors fed with simply biodegradable substrates,<sup>51</sup> it is speculated that the *Gordonia* sp. might contribute to the degradation of carbohydrate- and aromatic-like fractions of the SMP that were not preferably consumed by other bacteria under the long HRT condition. OTU1933 is distantly related to *Ectothiorhodospiraceae*-related genera, such as *Thioalkalivibrio* which is known as autotrophic halo-alkaliphilic sulfur-oxidizing bacteria<sup>72</sup> (Figure B.4). Since the abundance of OTU1933 was concordant with OTU5208 over all phases and both had strong association with each other in the network (Figure 3.4), *Ectothiorhodospiraceae*-related OTU5208 might be commensal to the *Gordonia* sp., relying on intermediates released from sulfur-containing aromatic compounds.

### **3.4.8 Microbial diversity affected by the operational factors**

This study observed that the microbial community in the upper part of the reactor became less diverse than that in the lower part over phases. The phenomenon was pronounced in Phase IV-V, when the OLR substantially increased compared with the previous phases, as the microbial communities from the upper part had fewer observed and

estimated OTUs and lower evenness at similar coverage than those from the lower part (Table B.4). This difference in the microbial diversity was likely due to the stratification of SMP degradation developed along with the reactor depth. Small MW SMP tended to be readily degraded by the microbial community at the upper part of the reactor, whereas degradation of large MW SMP, which likely represents BAP, could still occur at the lower part and might require a complex microbial community (Figure 3.2). This is supported by the strong correlation of *Caldilineaceae* in the phylum *Chloroflexi* with the reactor depth in the RDA (Figure B.5), considering that *Chloroflexi* was known for preferential utilization of BAP.28 In addition, *Nitrospira* was more abundant in the lower part of the reactor than the upper part, which had a considerable correlation with reactor depth in the RDA analysis (Figure B.5). It indicates that nitrification occurred in this part of the reactor despite the lack of ammonia in the substrate and ammonia-oxidizing bacteria present in the microbial community. In consideration of the high transcription activity of ammonia-oxidizing bacteria at low abundance,<sup>73</sup> we infer that the presence of more *Nitrospira* at the lower DHS was due to the ammonia released from protein-like SMP degradation. A similar pattern of microbial diversities at different stratified layers was reported in the pilot-scale DHS reactor for oxidation of the organic matters and nitrification.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the difference in the microbial diversity along the depth could be resulted from the differences in oxygen, nutrients, and SMPs availability in individual sponges along the reactor. Since the dissolved oxygen of the trickling flow in the DHS reactor was observed to vary from zero to 6-8 mg/L, likely due to differences in biomass concentration in each sponge and air diffusion into it,<sup>74</sup> microaerophilic and anaerobic condition could take place in the upper part of the reactor toward to the later phases (IV and V) of the operation. This could contribute to the increase in the abundances of facultative and obligate anaerobes, like *Dechloromonas* and *Geobacter*, in the upper part.

## **3.5 Conclusion**

The microbial community selected in the DHS reactor effectively utilized SMP produced from anaerobic methanogenic reactors. Microbial community analysis further indicated that unique microbial communities different from other wastewater treatment processes were developed. Microbial groups that were not previously reported for taking

SMP, such as *Flavobacteriales-*, *Saprospiraceae-*, and *Gordonia*-related microorganisms, could play important roles in SMP degradation together with the microorganisms known for SMP utilization, like *Chloroflexi* and *Cytophaga*. The abundance of these microbial groups was significantly affected by HRT, OLR, and SCOD removal, and the microbial diversity was influenced by reactor depth. Although the microbial community effectively degrading SMP was revealed in this study, it is still unclear how the individual microbial populations participated in the degradation of SMP. Future studies should focus on the mechanisms of SMP degradation and the role of individual microbial populations by applying functiondriven genomic approaches (e.g., metagenomics and metatranscriptomics). Meanwhile, these findings suggest that SMP reduction by enriched microbial consortia in a DHS reactor will be a useful post-treatment of anaerobic processes, in the aspect of improving effluent quality as well as treatment performance and efficiency in bioprocesses and preventing fouling from a following membrane process for water reclamation.

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# **CHAPTER 4: PYLOGENETIC AND FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERIZATION OF THE MICROBIAL COMMUNITY DEGRADING SOLUBLE MICROBIAL PRODUCTS IN A DHS REACTOR USING METAGENOMIC AND METATRANSCRIPTOMIC APPROACHES**

# **4.1 Abstract**

Soluble microbial products (SMP), ubiquitously found in bioprocesses, have been identified as a main cause for the decreasing efficiency of water and wastewater treatment systems. Despite recent attempts for the biological removal of SMP to control the negative impacts of their accumulation, the mechanisms of SMP degradation and the roles of the microbial community remain unsolved. To gain a better understanding of biological SMP degradation in a down-flow hanging sponge reactor that treats SMP, and to profile the active functions of the microbial populations therein, the metabolically active microbial communities were assessed by comparative metagenomic and metatranscriptomic analyses. Taxonomic classification identified that the dominant microbial populations shifted from *Sphingobacteriales*, *Flavobacteriaceae*, and *Cytophaga*-relatives to *Saprospiraceae*, *Dechloromonas*, and *Geobacter*-relatives with increasing SMP loading. In the lower part of the reactor, other populations, besides *Sphingobacteriales*, *Opitutus,* and *Nitrospira*, contributed to a significant distribution. Global functionality and gene expression annotation based on SEED subsystems exhibited that, despite these phylogenetically disparate microbial communities with SMP loading, a functional convergence was observed for the stratified SMP degradation, including amino acids and derivatives, carbohydrates, and protein metabolisms. Further, functional gene expression analysis, focusing on carbohydrate-active enzymes with respect to assembled genome bins, revealed that cell associated enzyme-related genes, specific to polysaccharide components of peptidoglycan, were significantly represented by the dominant assembled genome bins in *Bacteroidetes*. The observations reflect that the microbial communities, degrading SMP in the down-flow hanging sponge (DHS) reactor, were selectively enriched for the utilization of detrital cell structural components, such as peptidoglycan and lipopolysaccharides, that contributed to biomass associated products (BAP).

#### **4.2 Introduction**

Soluble microbial products (SMP) are ubiquitously present in water and wastewater treatment processes based on mixed culture biotechnology, contributing to predominant constituents of the organic fraction of discharged effluent.<sup>1</sup> Since SMP are soluble organic compounds produced from microbial metabolism and decay, the predominant presence of them is inevitable in the bioprocesses. SMP primarily consist of polysaccharides and proteins<sup>2</sup>. Depending on the mechanism of SMP formation, they are classified into two subgroups, utilization-associated products (UAP) produced from substrate utilization during biomass growth and biomass-associated products (BAP) derived from cell lysis and decay.<sup>1-</sup>  $2$  SMP were reported to be a cause of negative impacts to the treatment processes since they contributed to effluent chemical oxygen demand  $(COD)$ ,<sup>3-5</sup> effluent toxicity,<sup>6</sup> and a potential precursor of disinfection by-products.<sup>7-8</sup> Their accumulation not only hinders efficient respiration, flocculation, and settling ability of activated sludge (AS) by deforming the physical properties of the AS, but it also inhibits nitrification efficiency. Last, but most importantly, SMP are a major obstacle impeding application of membrane bioreactors (MBRs) for water reclamation causing membrane fouling. $9-11$ 

Numbers of studies were conducted to investigate the characteristics of SMP, their adsorption and coagulation properties, and effects by operational conditions in a way of developing strategies to reduce the accumulation of SMP in the bioprocesses and enhancing the understanding of them.<sup>12-17</sup> Nevertheless, a strategy providing a long-term stable application for SMP removal has not been established likely because the composition and property of SMP vary depending on substrates, sludge mixtures, and operational conditions.<sup>2, 12, 18-21</sup>

Several studies have confirmed that various microorganisms were capable of utilization of SMP as their sole energy and carbon source, suggesting biological removal of SMP as alternatives. First, it was reported that microbial products derived from nitrifiers without organic substrates could be used as carbon sources for the growth of heterotrophs, mainly *Cytophaga*-*Flavobacterium*-*Bacteroides* (CFB) cluster.22-25 Next, effective reduction of SMP released into the MBRs by inoculating either a specific microorganism or microbial consortium was reported.<sup>26-27</sup> Miura and Okabe (2008) also showed that the population dynamics of *Chloroflexi* was inversely related to the SMP concentration in the MBR.<sup>28</sup>

Based on these findings, in our previous study, a long-term and stable removal of SMP were demonstrated in a DHS reactor using selectively enriched microbial consortia for SMP degradation.<sup>29</sup> The temporal and spatial diversity and dynamics of the microbial community were characterized using 16S rRNA-based pyrosequencing, and revealed that highly specialized microbial community with predominant populations related to *Bacteroidetes* had been enriched. Despite these community-wise informative findings, the microbial functions essential for degrading SMP remain to be elucidated. Metagenomic and metatranscriptomic sequencing based on Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) enables to fill the gaps of the ecological roles of microorganisms detected in the DHS reactor by providing microbial structure, functional potential, and identified gene expression.<sup>30-33</sup> An in-depth resolution of the genetic information using coupled metagenomic and metatranscriptomic approaches would be not only helpful to unveil the unique characteristics of selectively enriched microbial communities in the DHS reactor, but beneficial to develop biological strategies to control the accumulation of SMP in the system. The aims of this study, therefore, were i) to determine the complementary phylogenetic characteristic of the microbial community structure to that of targeted 16S rRNA gene sequencing; ii) to explore microbial metabolic potential and expression; and iii) to disclose the active roles of various microbial populations involved in SMP degradation.

#### **4.3 Material and methods**

#### **4.3.1 DHS microbial consortia**

Biomass was collected from the DHS reactor treating SMP generated from the anaerobic packed-bed bioreactors at day 648 in Phase III and day 798 in Phase V (Figure 4.1). The detailed operational conditions and the system performance were described in elsewhere.<sup>29</sup> The samples collected from the upper (depth,  $0.16$  m) and lower (depth,  $0.94$ m) part of the DHS reactor at day 648 were named U648 and L648, respectively. The samples at day 798 were collected from the upper part of the reactor, named U798.



**Figure 4.1** Sampling for metagenomic and metatranscriptomic analyses. (A) The operational factors in Phase II, III, IV, and V were shown with the performance of the DHS reactor. (B) sampling locations of the DHS reactor was indicated in the schematic diagram of the system.

#### **4.3.2 DNA and RNA extraction**

The biomass in the sponge was suspended in 25 ml of 1x phosphate buffered saline (PBS) solution by vortexing, pelleted by centrifugation (10000 rpm, 3 min), and stored in - 80°C. Genomic DNA was extracted using the FastDNA SPIN kit for soil (MP biomedicals, USA) according to the manufacturer's instruction and resuspended in TE (10 mM Tris-HCl with 1 mM EDTA) buffer at the last step. The samples collected in Phase V was duplicated. DNA in one of them, U798 1, was extracted using the same kit as the previous samples were treated, and DNA in the other, U798 2, was extracted following the established protocol (Bacterial genomic DNA isolation using CTAB, http://my.jgi.doe.gov/general/). The concentration and the purity of DNA were assessed using a Nanodrop 1000 spectrophotometer (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA).

Three sponges were collected for biological triplicates of RNA extraction at each sampling time and location. The biomass was suspended in 25ml of soluble reactor effluent filtered with 0.22  $\mu$ m filters (Millex-GP, Millipore, MA, USA) by vortexing at 4 °C. Two volumes of RNAprotect bacterial reagent (Qiagen, CA) were added into 2ml of the suspended biomass, immediately mixed by vortexing, and incubated for 5 min at room temperature. The pellets were harvested by centrifugation (7000 rpm, 10 min) at  $4^{\circ}$ C. For enzymatic lysis of the biomass, the pellets were resuspended with 200 µL TE (30 mM Tris-Cl, 1 mM EDTA, pH 8.0) buffer containing lysozyme (15 mg/ml) and 20  $\mu$ L Proteinase K (Qiagen, CA) by vortexing and incubated at room temperature for 15 min. RNA was extracted using the RNeasy Mini Kit (Qiagen, CA). Genomic DNA during the RNA preparation was excluded by using RNase-free DNase I (Qiagen, CA. The concentrations of RNA in the samples were measured, which were 103.7 ng/ml, 86.8 ng/ml, and 55.0 ng/ml for the triplicates of U648, 54.4 ng/ml, 58.5 ng/ml, and 49.8 ng/ml for L648, 49.8 ng/ml, 221.3 ng/ml, and 165.5 ng/ml for U798 by a Nanodrop 1000 spectrophotometer. The integrity of the extracted DNA and RNA was verified by running 100ng of each sample with a DNA molecular weight marker (1kb DNA ladder, Promega) on a 1% denaturing formaldehyde agarose gel for electrophoresis prior to sequencing (Figure C.1).

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#### **4.3.3 DNA and cDNA library construction and sequencing**

The extracted DNA and RNA samples were submitted to the Roy J. Carver Biotechnology Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (IL, USA) for sequencing and DNA and cDNA library construction. The DNA libraries were constructed for each sample using the TruSeq DNA sample prep kit (Illumina Inc. San Diego, CA), and the pooled libraries were quantitated by qPCR and sequenced on one lane for 101 cycles from each end of the fragments on a HiSeq2000 sequencer (Illumina, San Diego, CA, USA) using a TruSeq SBS sequencing kit v3 (Illumina Inc. San Diego, CA). The genomic libraries were analyzed with Casava1.8.2. The triplicate RNA libraries, after removal of rRNA with the Ribo-Zero™ rRNA Removal Kit (Meta-Bacteria, Illumina, WI, USA), were prepared with the TruSeq Stranded RNA Sample Prep kit (Illumina Inc. San Diego, CA). The rest of the process was the same as described for the DNA library construction.

# **4.3.4 Metagenomic and metatranscriptomics sequence analysis**

# **4.3.4.1 Quality control, rRNA subtraction, and 16S rRNA gene reconstruction**

The raw genomic and transcriptomic reads were trimmed using a Q 13 Phred quality score cutoff and screened with minimum length 50 bp cutoff using SolexaQA v3.1.2<sup>34</sup> for a quality control (QC) (Table C.1). The post-QC reads have been deposited in MG-RAST (http://metagenomics.anl.gov/?page=MetagenomeProject&project=9993, of which MG-RAST projetc ID (mgp9993) and MG-RAST library IDs were listed in Table C.1. Sequences encoding rRNA genes in the genomic and transcriptomic datasets were separated from the coding-DNA sequences and non-rRNA sequences in the post-QC datasets by SortMeRNA v.2.0<sup>35</sup> with default settings against SILVA SSU and LSU databases (release 119).<sup>36</sup> The post QC genomic datasets were used to reconstruct full length of 16S rRNA using  $EMIRGE<sup>37</sup>$  with 0.99 OTU identity and default settings for the rest of conditions to reveal the microbial community compositions. The reconstructed genes for the three datasets were combined and subjected to an operational taxonomic units (OTUs) assignment by the UCLUST algorithm  $(≥ 97%$  pairwise identity) in Quantitative Insights Into Microbial Ecology (QIIME).<sup>38</sup> The representative sets of the OTUs were formed and Chimeric sequences were removed by Chimera Slayer.<sup>39</sup> PyNAST<sup>40</sup> was used to align the representative sequences to the Greengenes imputed core dataset. The phylogenetic

affiliation of the representative sequences was classified in the Greengenes ARB database (Greengenes\_16S\_2011\_1.arb) using ARB parsimony method. A phylogenetic tree for the aligned sequences with their neighboring sequences was built using the neighbor-joining algorithm with Jukes-Cantor correction. Bootstrap values were calculated based on 1000 replications. The relative abundance of the representative sequences in each genomic dataset was expressed in percentage of the raw sequencing reads mapped to the representative sequences using Blastn with a cutoff of 95% identity and the parameters of  $X = 150$ ,  $q = -1$ and  $F = F$  at default settings.

#### **4.3.4.2 Assembly of the metagenomic datasets**

The Velvet<sup>41</sup>, SOAPdenovo $2^{42}$ , and IDBA-UD<sup>43</sup> assemblers were used to preassemble Illumia short reads of each dataset into contigs using different k-mer sizes (49-65 for Velvet; 49-83 for SOAPdenovo2; 45-95 for IDBA-UD). The k-value used for the preassemblies and their statistics were described in the Table C.2. The preassemblies for each dataset that provided longer maximum contig sizes and n50s were chosen and assembled in to one final assembly using Newbler v2.9.<sup>44</sup> In the process of getting the final assembly, the U798  $\pm$  1 and U798 2 datasets were merged since separated preliminary analysis showed that the two datasets were proved to be exact replicates.

#### **4.3.4.3 Protein encoding gene prediction**

The assembled contigs longer than 300 bp were submitted to the MG-RAST pipeline45 and subjected to protein encoding genes (PEG) prediction (MG-RAST ID, 4579439.3).<sup>46</sup> Taxonomic annotation was performed against the SEED database using a Best Hit Classification approach with a maximum e-value cutoff of 1E-5, a similarity cutoff of 60%, and a minimum alignment length of 15 measured in amino acids for protein and base pairs for RNA databases. Functional annotation was conducted by comparison to the subsystems using a hierarchical classification algorithm with a maximum e-value cutoff of 1E-5, a similarity cutoff of 60%, and a minimum alignment length of 15 amino acids. The PEGs longer than 300 bp were applied to the further expression analysis.

#### **4.3.4.4 Normalization for expression analysis**

For gene expression analysis, the relative abundance of PEGs was estimated by following steps; the coding-DNA and non-rRNA sequences were mapped to the PEGs using Blastn with at least 95% identity and 50% query length coverage and the parameters of  $X =$ 150,  $q = -1$  and  $F = F$  at default settings. The length of the coding DNA and non-RNA sequences mapped to each PEG were summed and divided by the length of the PEG to calculate the genomic and transcriptomic coverage of each PEG. The coverage per 1Mb of sequences was computed to provide the genomic relative abundance and the transcriptional activity of a gene independent of the size of the datasets. The ratio of the transcriptional relative abundance to the genomic relative abundance was calculated to estimate the absolute transcriptional activity regardless of the genomic relative abundance in the microbial community.

#### **4.3.4.5 Assembled genome bins from the metagenomic datasets**

Assembled contigs greater than 1000 bases were subjected to cluster into genome bins based on metagenomic read coverage, tetranucleotide frequency, and occurrence of essential single copy genes, using MaxBin (y 2.0)<sup>47</sup> MetaBat, <sup>48</sup> and MetaWatt (y 3.5.2).<sup>49</sup> The overlapped contigs among the clustered contigs using each binning tool were manually extracted to group into draft bins. CheckM (v  $1.0.5$ )<sup>50</sup> was used to estimate the completeness and contamination of the draft genomic bins based on number of single-copy marker genes identified in each bins. Bins with more than 10% contamination or less than 20% completeness were discarded from further analyses. The taxonomic affiliation of the assembled genome bins was carried out using  $AMPHORA2<sup>51</sup>$  and the resulted marker lineage was reported when 75% of the classifications reached a consensus taxonomic level. $52$ A genome-wide phylogenetic analysis of the assembled genome bins was conducted using PhyloPhlAn.<sup>53</sup> The predicted protein encoding genes for the assembled genome bins were identified and aligned on a subset of 400 conserved protein sequences. The assembled genome bins and reference genomes were integrated into the tree of life with 3,171 microbial genomes. The bins were submitted under the MG-RAST project (ID: mgp9993). The annotated information of each assembled genome bin was retrieved from  $RAST^{54}$  and PATRIC.<sup>55</sup>

#### **4.3.4.6 Carbohydrate-active enzyme annotation**

The clustered contigs for the major assembled genome bins were subjected to gene prediction using FragGeneScan v1.30.<sup>56</sup> A carbohydrate-active enzyme (CAZy)-family specific hidden Markov model (HMMs) were downloaded from the dbCAN database  $(\text{http://csbl.bmb.uga.edu/dbCAN/})^{57}$  and used in screening amino acid sequences of the predicted ORFs for similarity to 192 families (9 auxiliary activity (AA), 32 carbohydratebinding module (CBM), 16 carbohydrate esterase (CE), 79 glycoside hydrolase (GH), 42 glycosyl transferase (GT), and 12 polysaccharide lyase (PL) families) in the CAZy database.<sup>58</sup> The protein sequences were compared to the profile HMMs by employing hmmscan of the HMMER 3.1.b2 software package (hmmer.org). As instructed in the dbCAN database, the overlapping hits and the hits with a higher e-value and a coverage of less than 30% of the respective HMM were removed. The remaining hits were processed with an e-value cutoff of  $1e^{-5}$  for alignments longer than 80 amino acids and  $1e^{-3}$  for alignments shorter than 80 amino acids. Duplicated hits found in the CAZy-families were manually removed. The major assembled genome bins based on the hits of the CAZy genes and families were clustered, and the values of the hits were plotted using the heatmap.2 function of the gplots package (v 3.0.1) in R. To compare the genomic encoding and transcriptional expression of the CAZymes in the assembled genome bins, the relative abundance of the CAZymes was normalized to 1Mb of sequences as described in the section, 4.2.4.4.

#### **4.4 Results and discussion**

# **4.4.1 Microbial phylogenetic community structure in the DHS reactor**

Out of 820 days of the DHS reactor operation for SMP degradation, three biomass samples U648 and L648 in Phase III and U798 in Phase V were collected from the supporting media for metagenomic and metatranscriptomics analyses. Because of the decreasing HRT in the system, the organic loading rate (OLR) to the DHS reactor in Phase V, 433 mg SCOD/L/day, was almost four times higher than that in Phase III, 124 mg SCOD/L/day. Along with the OLR increase, the SCOD removal in the DHS reactor also increased about four times (Figure 4.1). The detailed operational conditions and the system performance were described in elsewhere.<sup>29</sup> The analytical workflow of metagenomic and metatranscriptomic datasets was illustrated in Figure C.2. The Illumina sequencing of SMP degrading microbial community provided paired-end metagenomic reads (100 bp; a range of fragment size, 380bp to 640bp;  $0.9 \times 10^8$  reads for U648,  $1.1 \times 10^8$  reads for L 648, and 2.0  $x 10<sup>8</sup>$  reads for U798) and single-end metatranscriptomic reads (100 bp; a range of fragment size, 130bp to 480bp; average  $1.5x10^7$ ,  $1.5x10^7$ , and  $1.7x10^7$  reads for U648, L648, and U798, respectively) (Table C.1). Approximately 0.2% of post QC genomic reads were sorted out as rRNA sequences in the genomic dataset  $(Table C.1)^{35}$  and blasted to the EMIRGE-based reconstructed 16S rRNA gene sequences<sup>37</sup> and aligned to the reference 16S sequences in the SILVA database (release 119).<sup>59</sup> A strong consistency between the community structures based on EMIRGE and SILVA was observed in all three datasets (Pearson correlation coefficient  $r > 0.9$ ). The most abundant bacteria found at the phylum level were *Bacteroidetes* and *Proteobacteria* in all datasets (Figure C.3). At the class level, *Sphingobacteria* (EMIRGE, 25.0% and raw 16S rRNA reads, 19.3%) in U648, *Alphaproteobacteria* (EMIRGE, 19.9% and raw 16S rRNA reads, 19.4%) in L648, and *Betaproteobacteria* (EMIRGE, 31.8% and raw 16S rRNA reads, 26.5%) in U798 were the most dominant populations.

To see a consensus of the microbial community structures between 16S rRNA genebased PCR-dependent and independent assays, a phylogenetic tree was constructed with dominant EMIRGE-constructed sequences and representative operational taxonomic units (OTUs) of the amplified 16S rRNA genes by pyrosequencing in the previous study<sup>29</sup> (relative abundance  $>1\%$  of the total number of bacterial 16s rRNA gene sequences in any sample) (Figure C.4). Most of the EMIRGE-constructed sequences constituted a deep branch together with paired OTUs. Similar distribution in the relative abundance of the paired EMIRGE-constructed sequences and OTUs was observed (correlation coefficient  $r=0.88$  for U648,  $r=0.71$  for L648, and  $r=0.72$  for U798), suggesting that the microbial community structures derived from the metagenomes concurred with the results of pyrosequencing despite an inherent bias of 16S rRNA gene amplification. In U648, *Sphingobacteriales*-related members (DHS\_OTU 1435, 7.5% and DHS\_Emg 87, 8.2%) were most abundant followed by *Flavobacteriaceae*-related members (DHS\_OTU 246, 4.1%, DHS\_Emg 78, 5.8%, DHS\_OTU 567, 3.6%, and DHS\_Emg 19, 4.3%) and

*Cytophaga*-related members (DHS\_OTU 897, 5.6% and DHS\_Emg 72, 3.6%). The abundance of these dominant members in *Bacteroidetes* decreased to be minor except for the *Cytophaga* relatives in U798. Shifts in the abundant members to *Saprospiraceae*-related members (DHS\_OTU 660, 9.6% and DHS\_Emg 21, 3.6%) and another *Sphingobacteriales* relatives (DHS OTU 150, 9.4% and DHS Emg 121, 4.3%) were observed. Furthermore, *Dechloromonas*-related members (DHS\_OTU 1496, 4.6% and DHS\_Emg 99, 5.8%) in *Rhodocyclaceae* and *Geobacter*-related members (DHS\_OTU 331, 4.7% and DHS\_Emg 12, 3.2%) increased in U798. Unlike the microbial community in the upper part of the reactor, L648 indicated a more diverse community with relatively even distribution such as high abundances in *Opitutus* (DHS\_OTU 666, 3.7% and DHS\_Emg 117, 7.1%) and *Nitrospira* (DHS\_OTU 248, 6.6% and DHS\_Emg 51, 4.5%) besides *Sphingobacteriales* relatives.

Microbial community composition from metagenomes is also assessed based on taxonomic homology of  $PEGs$ .<sup>60-61</sup> In comparison with the community compositions derived from the 16S rRNA sequence based analyses, a consistent taxonomic composition was observed in U648 and U798 metagenomic datasets (Figure C.5). *Spingobacteriales* (11.9%), *Flavobacteriales* (7.1%), and *Cytophagles* (8.6%) were the most abundant order groups in U648, and the dominant orders shifted from these Bacteroidetes to *Desulforomonadales* (7.4%) and *Rhodocyclales* (14.1%), predominantly *Geobacter* and *Dechloromonas* in U798, respectively. In contrast, in L648 *Burkholeriales* (8.4%) and *Rhizobiales* (11.2%) were the most abundant members rather than *Nitrospira* and *Opitutus*. Meanwhile, we observed the taxonomic origins of the non-rRNA transcript sequences to display the transcriptional activity in the microbial community determined based on the metagenomes. In the two datasets form the upper part of the reactor, the taxonomic composition from the metatranscriptomes showed a similar distribution to those from the metagenomes. However, in L648 the highest transcriptional activity in *Solibactrales*, predominantly *Candidatus Solibacter*, was detected.

#### **4.4.2 Global functionality and expressions of the DHS microbial communities**

58.4%, 51.5% and 58.5% of the 67, 77, and 143 million reads of total metagenomic sequences in the three datasets (in order of U648, L648, and U798) were included in the de novo assembly integrated by MetaVelvet, SoupDenovo2, IDBA-UD, and Newbler (Table

C.2). The assembly generated a metagenome of 45,392 contigs with total sequences of 440.6 Mb, N50 of 25,560 bp, and N90 of 3,186 bp. 45,037 assembled contigs longer than 300 bp were subjected to MG-RAST functional annotation, predicting 272,083 ORFs. Among these ORFs, 200,515 were annotated with putative protein functions and 166,555 were assigned to a functional classification. of them 57.0% of features were classified as SEED Subsystemsbased PEGs (Table C.4). Among the PEGs by Subsystems, 19.6-49.6% showed transcriptional activity with at least one aligned non-rRNA sequence (Table C.6).

Highly encoded and expressed metabolic pathways of the DHS microbial communities at the SEED Subsystems level 1 were exhibited (Figure 4.2). Genomically, the two systems, Cluster-based Subsystems (11.8-12.2%) and Carbohydrates (9.3-10.5%) were most abundantly encoded in all three metagenomic datasets, followed by Amino acids and derivatives (8.0-8.3%) and Protein metabolism (7.6-7.9%). On the other hand, the transcriptional pattern indicated that the systems, Protein metabolism (17.1-22.4%), Clustering-based subsystems (9.5-10.5%), and Carbohydrates (7.4-8.2%) were highly expressed in the two dataset from the upper part of the reactor. In the metatranscriptomic dataset from the lower part of the reactor, the systems, Amino acids and derivatives (27.1%) and Protein metabolism (12.5%) were the most abundantly expressed systems. An interesting clustering observed in the pattern of SEED Subsystems level1 was that, among the metagenomes, the two libraries collected in Phase III were closely clustered than the other library in Phase V whereas, in the metatranscriptional analysis, the two triplicate datasets from the upper part of the reactor in Phase III and V were more closely clustered than the dataset collected from the lower part of the reactor at the same operational phase. This indicated that phylogenetically and genomically disparate microbial communities, U648 and U798, resulted in similar transcriptional consequences. The same clustering was observed in the detailed systemic categories of the metabolic pathway, SEED Subsystems at level 3 that were significantly abundant at the 98% confidence level (Figure C.6).



Among the most enriched systems in the metagenomic and metatranscriptomic libraries, the transcriptional activity profiles of the three systems that are related to SMP catabolism, Amino acid and derivatives, Carbohydrates, and Protein metabolism, were further presented at the Subsystems level 3 for each datasets and the ten most dominant orders (Figure C.7 and Table C.7). In the sub-level of the amino acids derivatives system, alanine biosynthesis, predominantly branched-chain amino acid aminotransferase (EC 2.6.1.42), was the most actively expressed in L648 and more specifically by *Solibacterales*. Another function showing a substantial transcription was glutamate dehydrogenases (EC 1.4.1.2) by *Sphingobacteriales* especially in U648. Ornithine degradation was activated by Unclassified *Opitutae* in U648 and U798 and by *Bacteroidales* and *Clostridiales* in L648. Lysine utilization was found to be highly expressed by *Desulfuromonadales* and *Cytophagales* in U798. Threonine anaerobic utilization were activated by *Desulfuromonadales* mostly in L648.

In the subcategories of the Carbohydrates system, oligosaccharides and polysaccharides utilization transported from the outer membrane was overrepresented in U648; trehalose uptake and utilization that was mostly genes involved in glucose-specific phosphotransferase system (EC 2.7.1.69) showed high transcriptional activity together with fructose-bisphosphate aldolase (EC 4.1.2.13). An ABC transporter gene among Nacetylglucosamine catabolic operon was also overrepresented. The activity of alanine dehydrogenase (EC 1.4.1.1) to convert alanine to pyruvate in the system, pyruvate alanine serine interconversions, was induced by various orders such as *Flavobacteriales*, *Solibacterales*, *Desulfuromonadales*, *Cytophagales*, and *Bacteroidales*. Cellulosome, more specifically SusC like outer membrane binding protein for extracellular polysaccharides, was highly expressed in all three datasets especially by *Flavobacteriales*, *Rhizobiales, Cytophagales,* and *Bacteroidales*. In U798, catabolism of these extracellular carbohydrates by fermentation was highly activated by *Desulfuromonadales*. Since the profile was for transcriptional activity of the most abundant orders, the biosynthesis and processing-related subgroups in Protein biosynthesis were activated by all of the top ten orders. In the protein degradation-related subgroups, bacteria-driven proteolysis and proteasome were highly expressed in all datasets. Dipeptidases and aminopeptidases were significantly expressed by *Bacteroidales* in U648.

#### **4.4.3 Potential encoding and expression of CAZy families**

To further investigate the key metabolic features and physiology of the dominant microbial populations in the DHS reactor, a metagenomic binning was conducted to reconstruct assembled genome bins. Sixty nine high quality bins with less than 10% contamination and more than  $20\%$  completeness were observed.<sup>52</sup> Of them, 28 bins, which contributed top 50% of relative abundance of PEG in the metagenomic and metatranscriptomic datasets, were listed in Figure 4.4. AMPHORA $2^{51}$  software with 31 conserved bacterial phylogenetic protein marker genes were employed to identify a taxonomic affiliation of the major assembled genome bins; a total of 850 marker genes were assigned. 12 bins were affiliated with *Proteobacteria*, and the second most abundant taxonomic bin classification was *Bacteroidetes* with 7 bins. The rest of bins were classified into *Verrucomicrobia* (3), *Planctomycetes* (2), *Acidobacteria* (1), *Firmicutes* (1), *Gemmatinomonadetes* (1), and *Nitrospira* (1) (Figure 4.3 and Table C.8). The relative abundance of gene encoding and expression by the assembled genome bins basically reflected the population structure as observed in the phylogenetic analysis of the DHS microbial communities. The genome-wide phylogenetic analysis using PhyloPhlAn indicated that the four assembled genome bins (Bin87, Bin 55, Bin74, and Bin 09) in the *Bacteroidetes*, among the most assembled genome bins attributing PEG abundances with a high completeness, constituted a deep branch with *Haliscomenobacter hydrossis* DSM 1100 (IMG taxon ID: 2504756004). Bin08 and Bin 55 in *Bactroidetes* constructed a branch with *Chitinophaga pinensis* UQM 2034 (IMG taxon ID: 644736340). In the *betaproteobacteria*, *Dechloromonas aromatica* RCB (IMG taxon ID: 637000088) was closely clustered with Bin78 and Bin80. In the *gammaproteobacteria*, *Geobacter metallireducens* GS-15 (IMG taxon ID: 637000119) was clustered with Bin79.



**Figure 4.3** The genome-wide phylogenetic analysis and the abundance profile of the major bins contributing top 50% of protein encoding gene relative abundance for each dataset. The phylogenetic tree was generated by PhyloPhlAn and iTOL from predictied protein sequences of the major bins and 3,171 other reference genomes (bootstrap 1000:  $>90\%$ ) black node, >70% gray node, and >50% white node; IMG taxon ID of the reference genomes in parenthesis). MG refers to a metagenomic dataset, and MT refers to an average of the triplicate metatranscriptomic datasets. The genome completeness was shown as black pie charts.

Intrigued by the findings in the carbohydrate related metabolisms of the entire microbial communities, we analyzed the major 28 assembled genome bins with respect to the genomic potential and transcriptomic expression of hydrolytic enzymes involved in polysaccharide and glycan degradation. The profile hidden Markov model specifying CAZy database was used, offering a sequence-based family classification of enzymes involved in degradation and cleavage of various types of polysaccharides.<sup>58</sup> The total number of putative genes and the respective CAZy families from the assembled genome bins were listed, which the assembled genome bins were clustered for glycoside hydrolases based on (Figure C.8). The most genomically predicted enzymes belonged to CBM families 20, 32, 37, 40, 44, 50, 61, GH families 13, 23, 33, 74, 109, PL families 9, 22, CE families 1, 4, 10, and AA family 2, including the separate families of Cohesin and Dockerin (Figure 4.4). Among those, the affiliates of the *Bacteroidetes* were closely clustered and showed the highest expression in the families, Cohesin, Dockerin and CBMs. Among the *Haliscomenobacter*-related assembled genome bins (Bin09, Bin55, Bin 74, and Bin87), scaffolding and binding genes by Bin09 and Bin55 were highly expressed in U648 and L648 whereas the genes by Bin74 and Bin87 became more abundantly expressed in U798. *Chitinophaga*-related assembled genomes bins (Bin08 and Bin56) were highly expressed in U648 except for the families of Cohesin and Dockerin. Bin24 in the *Bacteroidetes* encoded and actively expressed genes in the glucan specific CBM family (CBM44). Expression of peptidoglycan specific binding modules (CBM50) in U798 was also overrepresented by *Geobacter* and *Dechloromonas*related assembled genome bins, Bin78 and Bin79. The predicted glycoside hydrolytic GH families were mostly endoglucanase (GH74), GalNAc hydrolase (GH109), and peptidoglycan lyase (GH23). As the binding modules were expressed by the microbial population in the *Bacteroidetes*, the GH families were also covered by Bin08, Bin09, and Bin74 in U648 and L648. They were continuously covered by Bin74 and taken over by Bin87, Bin78 and Bin79 in U798. Thiopeptidoglycan lyses (PL9) was uniquely expressed by *Deltaproteobacteria*-related genome (Bin03) in L648. GlcNAc and MurNAc deacetylase (CE1, 4, and 10), enzymes released in the process of endo-utilization of peptidoglycan construction units, were also highly encoded and expressed by the *Bacteroidetes*-related assembled genome bins. Oligogalactouronate lyase (PL22) and peroxidase (AA2) in U798 was again transcribed by Bin74 and Bin78.



**Figure 4.4** Potential encoding and expression of carbohydrate-active enzymes (CAZy) by the dominant draft genomes. The genomic normalized abundance (closed circle) and the transcriptional normalized abundance (open circle) of the each CAZy family from the draft genomes were plotted, and the transcriptional activities of the CAZy families from the draft genomes in each dataset, which were significantly abundant at the 98% confidence level, were marked with a line pattern in the open circle.

# **4.4.4 Characteristics of predominant BAP of SMP from the AP and HP reactors**

Based on the performance of the DHS reactor and SMP degradation during the operation described in the previous study,<sup>29</sup> the samples for the metagenomic and metatranscriptomic analyses were collected at the two time points; one was day 648 in Phase III, which was the last phase when the low and stable SMP loading in terms of SCOD concentration was provided to the DHS reactor, and the other was day 798 in Phase V when the four times higher SMP loading was given to the reactor than that in Phase III. The SMP produced from the AP and HP reactor were characterized as bimodal MW distribution with large compounds, 14-20 kDa, and small compounds, less than  $4 \text{ kDa}^{29}$  Classified by the unified theory of SMP, the large compounds were contemplated as BAP and the small compounds were considered to represent  $UAP$ .<sup>1</sup> In both phases when the samples for the meta-omic analyses were collected, very skewed SMP MW distributions to the large MW were detected, meaning that the majority of the SMP were likely associated with BAP, detritus released from cell lysis and decay. These skewed proportion of BAP between two types of SMP was generally observed in processes with a long SRT under which the AP and HP reactors were operated.<sup>12, 21, 62</sup> The remaining BAP may be related to a low biodegradability caused by their intrinsic complex heteropolymeric structures compared to UAP. The accumulation and preservation of BAP in the system might be because relatively limited microbial organisms can utilize BAP whereas diverse microbial assemblages are able to preferentially uptake UAP as a form of substrates.<sup>25</sup>

# **4.4.5 Degradation of carbohydrate components of SMP in the DHS reactor**

One of the most abundant metabolic category in the global functionality analysis of the DHS microbial communities was Carbohydrates. In the sub-categories of Carbohydrates, outer membrane binding proteins for extracellular polysaccharides in the Cellulosome subcategory of the all three datasets were consistently activated together with transporting functions for mono- and di-saccharide uptakes, such as the glucose-specific PTS and the GlcNAc-specific ABC transporter. It led to the speculation that the microbial communities utilized extracellular polysaccharides composed of glucose and GlcNAc by confining the polysaccharides for glycoside hydrolases to cleave the bonds of targeted polymers. To

further investigate the genomic potential and transcriptional expression of the polysaccharide degrading gene families in individual organisms, the metagenomic and metatranscriptomic data were mapped on to the binned contigs that encoded the CAZy genes. As intrigued in the Carbohydrate metabolic gene activities, cohesin, dockerin, and binding module protein families were highly expressed by *Haliscomenobacter*-related assembled genome bins (Bin09, Bin55, Bin74, and Bin87) together with Bin24 in the all three datasets and the part of expression was taken over by *Geobacter* (Bin79) and *Dechloromonas*-related genomes (Bin78). Active gene expressions of these assembled genome bins also showed a similar pattern in the GH families such as endoglucanses, GalNAc hydrolases, and peptidoglycan lyases with expression of GlcNAc and MurNAc deacetylase in the CE families. When hydrolytic enzyme systems act on homogeneous and heterogeneous polysaccharide chains, including glucan, glycan, cellulose, hemicellulose, and pectin, extracellular hydrolases and lyases that are free or cell associated must be produced by microorganisms. Endo- and exo- hydrolases randomly cleave glycosidic bonds at an internal amorphous sites and an end of polysaccharide chains, respectively, into oligosaccharides. The freed oligosaccharides are further hydrolyzed into di- and monosaccharides by glycosidases.<sup>63</sup> In this process, CBMs facilitate for the glycosidic hydrolases, which are anchored to the cell wall scaffold by the combined unit of cohesin and dockerin, to be close to the concentrated polysaccharides.<sup> $63-64$ </sup> Each CBM binds to its specific target saccharides.<sup>63</sup> The most expressed four CBMs at the 98% confidence level, in this study, had a binding property to the peptidoglycan and its constituents such as GlcNAc. For instance, CBM44, which Bin09, Bin24, Bin55, Bin74, and Bin87 significantly expressed in, facilitates endo-(1,4)-beta-glucanase, which is able to cleave beta-(1,4)-glycosidic bond of a GlcNAc and MurNAc linkage. CBM 32, 37, and 50 bind to the GlcNAc residues in peptidoglycans to effect facilitated lysins, such as muramidase, N-acetylglucosaminidase, muropeptidase, and N-acetylmuramoyl-L-alanine amidase. Considering the recalcitrant property of the peptidoglycan and the outer membrane components among the detritus of microbial cell lysis,65-7172-73 the highly encoded and expressed binding modules may indicate that the major populations utilized the fragmented polysaccharide cell wall structures, initiating the binds to them. In addition, the facilitated GH families by the CBMs, endoglucanses, GalNAc hydrolase, and peptidoglycan lyases, were represented by the major assembled genome bins.

GlcNAc and MurNAc deacetylases (CE4), one of the enzymes to convert GlcNAc to fructose-6-phosphate entering into gluconeogenesis, were significantly activated by *Haliscomenobacter*-related assembled genome bins (Bin87) in U798.

#### **4.4.6 Degradation of protein derivatives of SMP in the DHS reactor**

Amino acid and derivatives and Protein metabolism in the global functionality contained by the DHS microbial communities were the most abundantly encoded and expressed functional categories related to utilization of SMP. It was observed that the DHS microbial communities were significantly involved in the degradation of detrital cell wall components including peptidoglycans as a form of SMP by the genes showing high expressional activities at the sub-levels of these categories. First, in the Protein categories ATP dependent proteolysis and proteasome were evenly activated among the three data sets and the major twelve homologs at the order level. Endopeptidase Clp, which hydrolyzes oligopeptidases shorter than five amino acids in the absence of ATP, in the sub-categories, proteolysis and proteasome, were highly activated, suggesting that the overall expression of the genes were to cleave interpeptide bridges crosslinking the peptidoglycan strands and stemmed amino acids.<sup>74</sup> *Bacteroidales* relatives were observed to significantly express Dipeptidases. In the Amino acid derivatives category, metabolisms of amino acids composing the stemmed peptidoglycan-peptides, including alanine, glutamine, lysine, ornithine, and threonine showed outstanding expressions. The expression of aminotransferases converting alanine and glutamate to pyruvate and alpha-ketoglutarate, respectively, that are metabolites entering into the citric acid cycle, significantly activated in the upper and lower datasets in Phase III. Especially these expressions were predominated by *Solibacterales*, which also indicated high expression in proteasome for hydrolysis of oligopeptidases. *Sphingobacteriales* actively expressed glutamate dehydrogenases, deaminating glutamate to alpha-ketoglutarate in all three datasets followed by *Flavobacteriales* in U648, *Bacteroidetes* and *Clostridiales* in U798. Taken together, it was speculated that *Solibacterales* and *Sphingobacteriales* played important roles in fragmentation of peptide fragments released from cell membrane components to alanine and glutamate, as well as their catabolic processes.

# **4.4.7 Comparison of genes related to structural biomass detritus utilization in the major assembled genome bins**

Given from the genome-wide phylogenetic analysis, it was revealed that the most dominant assembled genome bins in the three meta-data sets were closely clustered with *Haliscomenobacter hydrossis* and *Chitinophaga pinensis* in the *Bacteroidetes* phylum. These gram negative filamentous bacteria have been detected worldwide in activated sludge, especially known as specialized feeders using a narrow range of substrate groups such as glucose and N-acetylglucosamine under strict aerobic conditions, not various fatty acids.<sup>75-78</sup> The property of these bacteria explained their dominant existence in an activated sludge process, since the specialization on sugar degradation allowed them to convert cell wall structural components, such as lipopolysaccharides and peptidoglycan, liberated by decaying cells in the process.<sup>76</sup> To utilize the specialized substrates, these bacterial groups were known for presence of exo-enzyme activity, such as chitinase, glucuronidase, esterase, and phosphatase. Furthermore, they were identified to be equipped with genes (hex, nagZ, nagK, murQ, nagA, and nagB), which were necessary to catabolize N-substituted polysaccharide components found in lipopolysaccharides and peptidoglycan, such as GlcNAc, GalNAc and MurNAc. Here, gene inventory of the six assembled genome bins (Bin08, Bin09, Bin55, Bin56, Bin74, and Bin87) in *Bacteroidetes* was compared with *H.hydrossis* DSM1100 and *C.pinensis* UQM2034 as references to found out whether genes for the specialized substrate utilization were equipped in those bins (Figure 4.5 and Table C.9). Chitinase, targeting hydrolysis of N-acetylglucosamine polymers, lytic murein transglycosylase-related genes, and peptidoglycan binding lysine motifs were found the most of the assembled genome bins. Consecutive gene sets with TonB-dependent receptors, SusC, and SusD, which are transporters in outer membranes for the N-substituted oligosacchride derivatives from the exo-enzyme activities, were found in the all assembled genomes except for Bin09. Those assembled genome bins also contained nagX and nagP, which are specific transporters for N-acetylglucosamine in cytoplasmic membranes, together with nagA and nagB that are necessary deacetylase and deaminase to convert Nacetylglucosamine to Fructose-6-phposphate to get into the glycolysis pathway. Furthermore, among glycosidases in the assembled genome bins, beta-galactosidase and beta-glucanase, which hydrolyze major components of lipopolysaccharides, found in the

most of the genome bins. Having these findings, it is contemplated that the abundant existence of the filamentous bacteria-related to *Bacteroidetes* in the DHS consortia, compared to the conventional activated sludge process, was caused by the limited carbon and energy source from the influent, and rather they specifically adjusted to rely on utilization of biomass structural detritus released from the decaying cells. Furthermore, the three assembled genome bins (Bin03, Bin78, and Bin79) in Proteobacteria, the abundance of which increased in Phase V, were added to the comparison together with *Dechloromonas aromatica* RCB and *Geobacter metallireducens* GS-15 as references (Figure 4.5 and Table C.9). The most of the outer membrane gene sets were found in these assembled genome bins, whereas the specific transporters for N-substituted oligosaccharides and the gene sets for their catabolic processes were absent in the genomic bins proliferating in Phase V.



**Figure 4.5** Gene inventory analysis related to N-substitued biomass structural detritus utilization. (A) Related gene content of reference genomes and assembled genome bins. (B) Reconstruction of the N-substituted polysaccharide utilization pathway.

#### **4.5 Conclusions**

In this study, we investigated how the DHS microbial communities were functionally involved in the degradation of SMP generated from the anaerobic methanogenic reactors using metagenomic and metatranscriptomic approaches. As an increase of the SMP loading, a shift of the dominant microbial populations from *Sphingobacteriales*, *Flavobacteriaceae*, and *Cytophaga* to *Saprospiraceae*, *Dechloromonas*, and *Geobacter* was observed, whereas global functionality of the microbial communities for the SMP degradation was converged into the amino acids and derivative, carbohydrate, and protein-related metabolisms. On the other hand, a different functionality was assessed with high expression of the oligopeptide metabolism by relatively diverse community in the lower part of reactor compared to the upper, indicating a stratified SMP degradation in the reactor. The gene expression of carbohydrate-active enzymes in the dominant assembled genome bins and related gene set comparison with the reference genomes in *Bacteroidetes* showed that *Bacteroidetes*-related assembled genome bins mainly played important roles to specifically bind and utilize polysaccharide fragments derived from lipopolysaccharide and peptidoglycan-like BAP. The findings from the function-driven metagenomic and metatranscriptomic approaches suggested that the microbial communities degrading SMP in the DHS reactor were enriched to metabolize detrital components originated from microbial cell wall structural components. This is considered to be a unique observation, compared to conventionally used activated sludge microbial communities generally representing more central carbohydrate metabolisms by the dominant *Proteobacteria* and *Actinobacter*-related populations.

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### **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

The AP and HP methanogenic reactors were successfully operated to treat highstrength synthetic soft drink wastewater, providing stable and high SCOD removal efficiency (>95%) over 800 days. Based on 16S rRNA gene pyrosequencing analyses, the predominant microbial populations in the AP and HP reactors were identified. As regards the bacterial classification, *Bacteroidetes*, *Chloroflexi*, *Firmicutes*, and KSB3 were the most dominant populations, which may primarily degrade organic constituents, such as glucose, fructose, and PEG. *Syntroph*-related populations, such as *Syntrophomonas*, *Syntrophobacter*, and *Smithella*, may support the degradation of VFAs, which are derived from the organic compounds. As for the archaeal classification, *Methanosaeta*, *Methanosarcia*, and *Methanobacterium* were detected as major methanogenic populations, oxidizing  $H_2$  and acetate in the reactors. While the ecological role involved in the treatment of soft drink wastewater was not defined clearly, *Geobacter*, *Spirochaetes*, and GN04 were also detected as prevalent microbial groups in the anaeorbic reactors. The RDA analysis indicated that *Bacteroidetes*, *Chloroflexi*, KSB3, and GN04 were strongly influenced by changes in the OLR. This finding suggested that specific microorganisms in the microbial community, which are responsible for the sugar/PEG degradation, might be adapted to changes in the operational conditions.

The effluent produced from the AP and HP reactors were further treated in the following DHS reactor to improve the effluent quality by reducing the SMP in it. During the long-term and stable operation, the microbial consortia in the DHS reactor were selectively enriched to utilize SMP. The SMP contained in the effluent from the AP and HP reactors exhibited a bimodal MW distribution with 14-20 kDa and <4 kDa. About 70% of SMP in terms of SCOD removed by the enriched microbial consortia in the DHS reactor. Using 16S rRNA gene pyrosequencing analyses, the microbial community structure was characterized, and the spatial and temporal variability was correlated with operational factors by performing network and redundancy analyses. The results revealed that *Flavobacteriales*, *Saprospiraceae*, *Cytophaga*, and *Chloroflexi* were the predominant bacterial populations and significantly involved in SMP degradation. In particular, the *Saprospiraceae*-related

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population was strongly correlated to the increasing SMP loading condition, indicating positive co-occurrences with neighboring bacterial populations. The abundance of these microbial groups was significantly affected by HRT, ORL, and SCOD removal. Moreover, the microbial diversity was influenced by reactor depth, implying adaptation of the microbial communities for an increased SMP loading and stratified degradation in the DHS reactor.

Besides an identification of the microbial communities, degrading SMP in the DHS reactor, in order to understand the functional mechanisms that are activated for the SMP degradation by the microbial community, it was important to address the role of individual populations and their interactions. Employing metagenomic and metatranscriptomic approaches, functional profiles, as well as the phylogenetic profiles of the DHS microbial communities, were assessed. The microbial composition was shifted, as with the increasing SMP loading; the dominant populations changed from *Sphingobacteriales*, *Flavobacteriaceae*, and *Cytophaga* to *Saprospiraceae*, *Dechloromonas*, and *Geobacter*. Nevertheless, the disparate microbial communities indicated a functional convergence in the annotation analyses of gene encodings and expressions based on a SEED subsystem. Composition and functionality of the microbial community in the lower part of the DHS reactor differed from those in the upper part, suggesting that stratified SMP degradation occurred. Results of the active gene expression in the global functionality, and the CAZy families, demonstrated that the microbial community significantly represented genes related to the metabolism of oligopeptides and polysaccharide constituents of peptidoglycan. Observations from the function-driven metagenomic and metatranscriptomic approaches reveal how microbial communities in the DHS reactor were to utilize detrital cell structural components released from peptidoglycan. These components may compose the majority of the SMP produced from the AP and HP reactors.

# **5.2 Contribution**

This research demonstrated a promising alternative process, offering a combined process of anaerobic packed-bed reactors and a DHS reactor, to treat high-strength industrial wastewater. The process maximizes the advantages of an anaerobic reactor by retaining a high concentration of biomass in the system. Also, it successfully minimizes side effects

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caused by the high concentration of biomass, such as increasing residual COD derived from SMP, by employing a DHS reactor as post-treatment. Biological SMP degradation, using a DHS reactor, herein, may resolve long-term application of SMP reduction, which remained limited by conventionally used chemical and physical methods. Additionally, this work studied an origin of the residual organic compounds in effluent from the anaerobic process and characterized their properties, which had been still unclear in previous reports that described the combined system of UASB and DHS reactors. The findings proved that the majority of SCOD in the anaerobic effluent originated from anaerobic biomass metabolisms, rather than yet-untreated raw wastewater. Upon verifying the feasibility of a long-term reduction of SMP, via selectively enriched microbial consortia in the DHS reactor, this study also scrutinized the phylogenetic characteristic and metabolic functionality of the DHS microbial community involved in the SMP degradation, using the NGS technology. The findings, which resulted from an observation of the overrepresented genes by the DHS microbial community, also led to the speculation that SMP might be derived from the detrital materials of the cell structures of the anaerobic biomass, such as peptidoglycan. These findings provide a possible application for the biological degradation of SMP using a DHS reactor, as well as broaden knowledge of SMP produced from mixed culture biotechnology.

## **5.3 Future prospects**

Future research, in the context of the findings in this study, may take two directions: (1) the practical applications of biological SMP degradation; and (2) a fundamental understanding of commensal interactions among the microorganisms involved in the SMP degradation. SMP, ubiquitously present in bioprocesses, are often found to negatively impact the processes. Their compositions and properties vary, depending on system configurations, operational parameters, and substrates, among others. As regards a broad application of the biological process for SMP reduction, the utility of the SMP-reducing process needs to be investigated for improving the efficiency of conventional wastewater treatment systems and water reclamation. This study identified the microbial community involved in the SMP degradation and investigated their metabolic roles related to the depolymerization of SMP. Possible commensal interactions of the dominant microbial

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populations were interpreted using statistic-networking analysis. In addition to these findings, genomic aspects of the commensalisms in the microbial community for the SMP degradation need to further studied further.



**Figure A.1** Rarefaction curves of 16S rRNA gene sequences of (A) anaerobic packed-bed (AP) and (B) hybrid packed-bed (HP) reactors.



**Figure A.2** Jackknife clustering of 16S rRNA gene pyrotag libraries from anaerobic packed-bed (AP) and hybrid packed-bed (HP) reactors based on (A) unweighted and (B) weighted Uni- Frac normalized to 1,400 reads per sample. "Cluster" indicates the grouped samples showed in Fig. 3 (unweighted) and S3 Fig. (weighted).



**Figure A.3** PCoA based on the abundances of 16S rRNA gene OTUs (weighted UniFrac). For this analysis, observed 16S rRNA gene OTUs were normalized to 1,400 reads per sample. A and H indicate the samples taken from the anaerobic packed-bed (AP) and hybrid packed-bed (HP) reactors. The numbers following A and H indicate days of the operation for biomass sampling.



**Figure A.4** Correspondence analysis (CA) based on the abundances of 16S rRNA gene OTUs. A an H indicate the samples taken from the anaerobic packed-bed (AP) and hybrid packed-bed (HP) reactors. The numbers following A and H indicate days of the operation for biomass sampling.



**Figure A.5** Redundancy analysis (RDA) based on the abundances of 16S rRNA gene OTUs of (A) known methanogens, syntrophs and Geobacter populations and (B) the phyla Bacteroi- detes, Chloroflexi, Firmicutes, and Spirochaetes and candidate phyla KSB3 and GN04 popu- lations.

			Operation days at sampling on AP reactor													
	seed	64	121	181	251	321	435	462	530	600	664	722	772			
Total 16S pyrotag reads	14,090	4,622	4,717	4,363	2,035	2,823	1,031	2,213	6,215	5,510	5,881	4,229	4,262			
Total OTU number $($ >97% identity)	1.008	274	304	318	153	184	133	198	432	395	317	361	307			
Good's coverage	96.8	96.8	97.4	96.7	96.2	96.8	93.8	96.3	96.8	96.7	97.6	95.8	96.8			
Chao1	1,680	552	525	612	341	338	259	302	716	688	533	682	522			

**Table A.1** Pyrosequencing results of 16S rRNA genes amplicon reads from anaerobic packedbed (AP) and hybrid packed-bed (HP) reactors.



AP, anaerobic packed-bed reactor; HP, hybrid packed-bed reactor; OTU,operational taxonomic unit.

		Sampling date on AP reactor (population %)										Sampling date on HP reactor (population %)													
Group	Seed	64	121	181	251	321	435	462	530	600	664	722	772	64	121	181	251	321	435	462	530	600	664		722 772
<i>Bacteria</i>																									
Deltaproteobacteria	4.4	6.9	24.0	22.9	43. 7	35.8	18 .3	$\cdot$ 3 41	33.6	28.6	16.4	23.8	13.3	8	15 $\overline{A}$	43 .6	44.7	43.0	24 5	24.8	24.4	23.7	28.	14	.5 22.2
<b>Bacteroidetes</b>	18.2	43.1	20.9	14.6	10.6	8.5	22.4	8.2	6.4	5.1	2.9	11.9	13.7	40.8	20.9	13.9	8.3	7.2	7.8	4.4	8.5	6.4	8.0		12.9 11.4
Chloroflexi	8.6	5.0	10.7	12.0	10.7	19.4	9.6	10.8	9.2	7.0	3.9	6.2	13.4	3.7	10.2	7.3	11.5	12.5	18.5	11.2	10.3	12.4	12.4	12.8	10.9
Firmicutes	35.6	9.0	12.5	15.4	9.7	.2 11	9.2	5.9	4.9	3.5	2.4	3.5	12.8	16.6	13.0	8.5	6.6	7.4	3.9	4.6	5.1	3.6	5.2	3.9	8.7
Spirochaetes	5.8	0.6	2.8	7.1	7.4	13.6	20.6	14.9	11.8	10.9	9.0	7.8	15.8	1.6	3.5	$\cdot$ 11	5.8	11.6	20.6	17.8	11.7	16.3	16.5		14.0 20.8
Nitrospirae	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	1.8	2.7	1.9	2.7	3.9	2.5	1.0	2.2	1.8	0.0	0.0	1.7	1.0	1.1	2.0	0.9	1.6	1.4	2.1	.4	2.0
Planctomycetes	0.6	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.7	0.6	2.9	1.2	1.5	1.2	1.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.9	1.1	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.2
Chlorobi	0.1	0.3	0.9	2.8	1.6	2.4	1.6	3.2	4.5	3.4	2.6	3.4	1.9	0.1	0.6	1.0	0.5	1.4	0.5	0.6	3.3	1.1	0.6	1.0	0.4
Acidobacteria	0.1	0.1	$_{0.0}$	0.1	0.1	0.6	0.9	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.2	0.9	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.4	1.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.5
Alphaproteobacteria	2.9	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.0	0.3	0.7	0.7	0.2	0.3	$_{0.1}$	0.1	1.1	0.3	1.0	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0
Caldiserica	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Verrucomicrobia	1.1	0.0	0.1	1.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1
Cyanobacteria	0.1	0.0	0.9	3.5	0.1	0.1	1.7	1.6	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	3.3	1.0	0.2	0.8	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.4	0.1
Armatimonadetes	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Gemmatimonadetes	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.2	$_{0.1}$	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Betaproteobacteria	3.6	0.7	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.1	1.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.6	0.1
Actinobacteria	3.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Synergistetes	2.4	0.6	1.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	3.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Gammaproteobacteria	0.9	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.6	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.2
Thermotogae	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Tenericutes	0.4	0.2	0.7	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.5	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Fusobacteria	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Fibrobacteres	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Lentisphaerae	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Epsilonproteobacteria	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Chlamydiae	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.4
Elusimicrobia	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Thermi	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

**Table A.2** Microbial community composition of anaerobic packed-bed (AP) and hybrid packed-bed (HP) reactors.



# **Table A.2 (cont.)**

	Seed					Sampling date on AP reactor (population %)													Sampling date on HP reactor (population %)						
Group		64	121	181	251	321	435	462	530	600	664	722	772	-64	121	181	251	$32^{\circ}$	435	462	530	600	664	722	772
Archaea																									
Methanosaeta	3.1	27.1	10.3	5.2	3.3	1.0	6.2	3.4	14.9	14.7	15.5	16.5	16.1	2.7	15.4	2.6	8.7	8.4	13.3	24.9	22.4	17.7	14.7		26.1 16.2
Methanosarcina	0.0	0.0	5.5	1.2	0.0	0.1	4.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	12.4	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.8	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Methanospirillum	0.4	0.0	1.9	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Methanolinea	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0
Methanoculleus	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other Methanomicrobiales	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Methanobacterium	0.0	1.3	1.4	1.3	4.2	0.0	1.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	1.0	3.2	2.7	6.5	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.1
Methanobrevibacter	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other Methanobacteriaceae	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Methanomassiliicoccaceae	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1
Crenarchaeota	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.0
Parvarchaeota	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Unassigned	0.6	2.1	1.7	2.0	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.7	0.3	3.6	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.2	0.2

**Table A.2 (cont.)**



### **APPENDIX B: SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS IN CHAPTER 3**

**Figure B.1** High performance liquid chromatography-size exclusion chromatography (HPLC-SEC) analyses of the effluent SMP from the AP and HP reactors and the effluent from the DHS reactor in Phases I-V: (A) the standard curve, (B) the chromatograms of the standards, (C) the chromatograms of a water sample, and (D-J) the chromatograms of the samples. The number in parentheses indicates the days when the samples were collected.



**Figure B.2** SMP degradation profiles in terms of SCOD removal along with the DHS reactor depth (n=4). Eight samples in a depth between 0.0-1.2 m were collected from the supporting sponge media, and a sample in a depth between 1.2-1.4 m was collected from the water reservoir.



**Figure B.3** Pyrosequencing profiles showing the relative abundance of the microbial communities in the DHS reactor at the genus level (abundance >3% in any sample). The roman numerals indicate the five phases. 'AS' stands for the inoculated activated sludge, 'Inf' stands for influent, and the numbers indicate the days when the biomasses were collected.



**Figure B.4** Phylogenetic tree based on the abundant OTUs  $(>4\%)$  that had direct correlations with the operational factors in the network. Boldface indicates the sequences obtained in this study. The tree was constructed using the neighbor-joining algorithm with Jukes-Cantor correction and out-grouped with *Thermotoga lettingae* TMO strain (AF355615). The bar indicates 10% base substitution. Bootstrap values were calculated based on 1000 replications. >90%, >70%, and >50% of bootstrap values are indicated by black, gray, and white circles, respectively.



**Figure B.5** RDA ordination of the microbial community by genus (A) and the samples from the DHS reactor (B). Correspondence of the 414 genera and the 23 samples with the operational variables, HRT, OLR, SCOD removal, influent SCOD and reactor depth, were analyzed. For (A), eleven dominant genera are selectively shown in the ordination by black triangles. HRT, OLR, SCOD removal, and influent SCOD are indicated by red arrows due to their statistical significance ( $P < 0.05$ ), and reactor depth is indicated by a red dotted arrow ( $P > 0.05$ ).



#### $0.10$

**Figure B.6** Phylogenetic tree based on *Saprospiraceae*-related OTUs with *Candidatus Epiflobacter* spp. in the family *Saprospiraceae*. The tree was constructed using the neighbor-joining algorithm with Jukes-Cantor correction and out-grouped with *Marinobacterium* sp. strain. BSA01 (AY723744). The bar indicates 10% base substitution. Bootstrap values were calculated based on 1000 replications. >90%, >70%, and >50% of bootstrap values are indicated by black, gray, and white circles, respectively.



**Figure B.7** Unique and shared OTUs between the microbial communities in the DHS reactor and the AP and HP reactors: (A) venn diagram of the shared and uniqeu OTUs and (B) abundance profiles of the three dominant OTUs that were commonly detected in the DHS reactor and the AP and HP reactors.

Components	Concentration $(mg L^{-1})$
Synthetic wastewater composition	
High fructose corn syrup (CornSweet® High Fructose 55, ADM)	
Carbohydrate composition (dry weight basis)	
55% Fructose	1500.0
41% Glucose	
$4\%$ Polysaccharides	
Polyethylene glycol 200	1100.0
Acetone	30.0
Ethanol	30.0
Potassium phosphate $(K_2HPO_4)$	16.0
Ferrous sulfate (FeSO <sub>4</sub> $\cdot$ 7H <sub>2</sub> O)	19.0
Sodium bicarbonate (NaHCO <sub>3</sub> )	366.0
Sodium fluoride (NaF)	2.0
Sodium hypochlorite (NaOCl)	2.5
Ammonium bicarbonate (NH <sub>4</sub> HCO <sub>3</sub> ) <sup>a</sup>	28.0
Characteristics	
<b>Total COD</b>	3000.0
Soluble COD	2939.0

**Table B.1** Synthetic wastewater composition and characteristics.

a Ammonium biocarbonate was added as a component of synthetic wastewater at day 84.

**Table B.2** Summary of the relative abundance of OTUs (at least >4%) applied to the network analysis.





Sample ID		Accession info.	Sample name	Sample description	Reactor type	Method	Country	No. of bacterial 16S rRNA gene sequences	Reference	
1			Suo-Jin-Cun (Nanjing, PRC)		Anoxic/aerobic		China	20964		
$\overline{2}$			Tuan-Dao (Qingdao, PRC)		Anaerobic/anoxic/aerobic		China	24456		
$\mathfrak{Z}$			Ha-Er-Bin (Haerbin, PRC)		Anoxic/aerobic		China	22603		
4			Min-Hang (Shanghai, PRC)		Anoxic/aerobic		China	21412		
5			Bei-Xiao-He (Beijing, PRC)		Anaerobic/anoxic/aerobic+MBR		China	23621	Zhang et	
6			Long-Wang-Zui (Wuhan, PRC)	Full-scale	Anaerobic/anoxic/aerobic		China	22497		
$\tau$	<b>NCBI</b>	SRA026842	Da-Tan-Sha (Guangzhou, PRC)	activated sludge	Anaerobic/anoxic/aerobic	Pyrosequencing	China	22098		
8			Ulu Pandan (Singapore)	treating domestic	Conventional activated sludge+MBR		China	23967	al., 2012	
9			Columbia Regional (Columbia, USA)	wastewater	Conventional activated sludge		<b>USA</b>	25500		
10			Potato Creek (Griffin, USA)		Oxidation ditch		<b>USA</b>	26383		
11			Guelph (Guelph, Canada)		Conventional activated sludge		Canada	22098		
12			Sha-Tin 1 (Hong Kong, PRC)		Anoxic/aerobic		China	28260		
13			Sha-Tin 2 (Hong Kong, PRC)		Anoxic/aerobic		China	26900		
14			Stanley (Hong Kong, PRC)		Anoxic/aerobic		China	24796		
15		EF222481- EF248596	<b>Brazil</b>		$\overline{a}$		<b>Brazil</b>	26140		
16	Genbank	EF276845- EF308590	Illinois	Soil	$\overline{a}$	Pyrosequencing	USA, Illinois	31818	Roesch et al., 2007	
17		EF308591- EF361836	Canada		$\overline{\phantom{a}}$		Canada	53533		
18	Genbank	GU481685-	Suspended sample	Full-scale fixed-film	Fixed-film activated sludge			86	Kwon et	
19		GU549391	Attached samples	activated	system (IFAS)	Sanger	Korea	82	al., 2010	

**Table B.3** Information of the data used in the principal component analysis of the different ecosystems.





Sample ID		No. of	No. of	Chao1	Good's				
Phase	Day	Location	reads	$\mathrm{OTUs}^a$	richness estimator <sup>b</sup>	$\mbox{coverage}^{\mbox{c}}$	Equitability <sup>b, d</sup>	$PD^b$	Shannon <sup>b</sup>
	82	Up	2296	325	577	0.93	0.80	36.3	6.59
	136	Up	1070	133	203	0.93	0.71	55.1	6.53
		Low	6357	585	768	0.95	0.69	24.8	5.37
	196	Up	1570	203	377	0.94	0.71	54.0	6.74
		Low	1054	209	332	0.89	0.85	15.6	4.77
I	258	Up	3165	285	466	0.96	0.69	55.5	6.84
		Low	1573	241	510	0.91	0.75	52.3	5.74
	373	Up	2846	196	327	0.97	0.55	65.8	7.51
		Low	2003	256	439	0.94	0.67	59.1	6.59
	454	Up	9509	849	934	0.94	0.69	58.8	7.19
		Low	11351	967	939	0.94	0.69	56.1	6.33
	528	Up	8516	839	968	0.95	0.73	53.6	6.22
$\mathbf{I}$		Low	7272	743	967	0.94	0.66	55.2	7.28
	602	Up	9145	792	887	0.95	0.72	32.6	5.51
		Low	9338	870	950	0.95	0.76	39.1	5.29
III	648	Up	8168	785	933	0.94	0.73	29.8	5.84
		Low	5601	709	975	0.94	0.77	23.6	6.30
IV	723	Up	7351	661	822	0.95	0.62	25.0	4.16
		Low	6681	866	1125	0.93	0.77	29.4	6.14
	798	Up	7765	451	540	0.97	0.61	33.5	5.36
V		Low	8320	810	933	0.95	0.76	14.0	3.90

**Table B.4** Coverage and diversity of the microbial communities of the samples collected from the DHS reactor.

<sup>a</sup> Operational taxonomic units (OTU) were defined at a 97% similarity threshold.

 $b$  Chao1 richness estimators at 95% confidence interval, Equitability, PD, and Shannon diversity indices were calculated using QIIME pipeline.

 $\epsilon$  Good's coverage was calculated using the equation:  $[1-(n/N)]$ , where n is the number of singleton reads and N is the total number of reads.

<sup>d</sup> Equitability index was a measure of evenness.

# **APPENDIX C: SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS IN CHAPTER 4**



Figure C.1 Electrophoresis gel of extracted genomic DNA (left) and the triplicates of total



**Figure C.2** Overview of the bioinformatic analytical workflow.



**Figure C.3** Microbial community composition at the phylum/class level in U648, L648, and U798 metagenomic datasets. Relative abundances of reads blasted to the reconstructed 16S rRNA genes using EMIRGE (Emg) and reads blasted to the SILVA rRNA gene database (release 119) are shown with Pearson correlation coefficient.



**Figure C.4** Microbial phylogenetic composition in the DHS reactor. In the 16S rRNA genebased phylogenetic tree (bootstrap 1000: >90% black node, >70% gray node, and >50% white node), DHS Emg refers to reconstructed ribosomal sequences using EMIRGE, and DHS OTU refers to representative operational taxonomic units (OTU) from amplified 16S rRNA gene analysis by pyrosequencing. The relative abundance of the pyrosequencing OTUs (16S) and reads from the metagenome datasets blasted to the reconstructed 16S rRNA genes using EMIRGE (Emg) is indicated with color codes. The relative abundance is normalized to total number of bacterial 16s rRNA gene sequences in each dataset.



**Figure C.4 (cont.)**



**Figure C.5** Microbial community compositions determined by protein encoding gene-based analyses in the metagenomes and metatranscriptomes. Taxonomic classification was assigned at the order level for the entire datasets (on left), and the genus level classifications were further indicated in the dominant order groups (on right).



Figure C.6 SEED subsystem level 3 that is significantly abundant at the 98% confidence level. Three columns on the left indicated metagenomic library, and the three triplicate columns on the right indicated each metatranscriptional library that is relative to the corresponding the metagenomic libraries.



**Figure C.7** Global analysis of metabolic potential and functional activities in the DHS communities. Genomic relative abundance and expression profile of dominant orders at the SEED subsystem level 3. The genomic and transcriptomic relative abundance in percentage was indicated by white-purple scale color codes for the ten most dominant orders in sequence from left to right, and the transcriptional activity in terms of ratio of the transcriptional relative abundance to the genomic relative abundance was represented in log 2-fold change by white-red scale color codes. Light gray indicates U648, gray indicates L648, and dark gray indicates U798. The tree columns on the left side showed the entire transcriptional activity of each datasets, and the rest of the columns on the right side represented the transcriptional activity by each dominant order. \* Unclassified *Opitutae* at the order level.



**Figure C.8** Heatmap reflecting the putative genes of carbohydrate-active enzyme families in the dominant draft genomes.

Sample	Library name	Pre-QC no. of reads <sup>a</sup>	Post-QC no. of reads <sup>a</sup>	rRNA reads	Coding DNA reads and non-rRNA reads	Coding DNA reads and to the assembly $($ >95% similarity)	non-rRNA reads aligned MG-RAST ID <sup>b</sup>
	U648	89,172,658	66,692,412 (74.8%)	119,188	66,573,224 (99.8%)	38,902,409	4623852.3 58.40%
Genome	L648	106,079,512	77,214,480 (72.8%)	146,348	77,068,132 (99.8%)	39,653,970	51.50% 4623716.3
	U798	195, 173, 938	143,790,358 (73.7%)	320,343	143,470,015 (99.8%)	83,954,088	58.50% 4623717.3
	U648 1	14,559,832	13,283,368 (91.2%)	9,919,717	3,363,651 (25.3%)	980,798	29.20% 4622228.3
	U648 2	14,362,838	13,130,084 (91.4%)	9,218,856	3,911,228 (29.8%)	1,336,392	34.20% 4622229.3
	U648 3	15, 113, 751	13,773,593 (91.1%)	7,251,092	$6,522,501$ (47.4%)	2,433,721	37.30% 4622230.3
	L648 1	15,177,201	13,784,821 (90.8%)	9,375,257	4,409,564 (32.0%)	1,003,397	22.80% 4622226.3
Transcriptome	L648 2	13,890,712	12,646,690 (91.0%)	3,623,167	9,023,523 (71.4%)	2,241,401	24.80% 4622351.3
	L648 3	14,599,754	13,217,552 (90.5%)	2,983,808	10,233,744 (77.4%)	2,606,952	25.50% 4622227.3
	U798 1	18,183,052	16,651,704 (91.6%)	13,998,258	2,653,446 (15.9%)	965,784	36.40% 4622352.3
	U798 2	18,297,640	16,744,277 (91.5%)	12,864,623	3,879,654 (23.2%)	1,495,042	38.50% 4622234.3
	U798 3	15,842,203	14,589,031 (92.1%)	9,605,762	4,983,269 (34.2%)	1,987,216	39.90% 4622235.3

**Table C.1** Information of genomic and transcriptomic datasets and subtraction of rDNA and rRNA.

a. QC, quality control

**b.** The listed libraries were submitted under the MG-RAST project (ID: mgp9993).
Dataset	Assembler	k-value	Post-QC no. of reads	Assembled reads	Total contig size	No. of contig	Max. contig size	N50	N90
	Velvet	61	72,824,136	38,228,542	141,585,064	226,253	295,973	1,521	272
U798-1	SOAPdenovo2	75	72,824,136	30,399,419	104,645,387	180,721	296,063	703	257
	<b>IDBA-UD</b>	55-95	72,824,136	45,412,756	235,275,495	114,100	770,539	7,347	679
	Velvet	65	70,966,222	25,032,687	102,094,822	160,681	295,977	1,624	272
	SOAPdenovo2	65	70,966,222	27,416,319	151,940,000	307,211	279,983	606	218
U798-2	SOAPdenovo2	73	70,966,222	22,103,187	96,872,247	165,165	224,654	799	250
	<b>IDBA-UD</b>	59-99	70,966,222	31,570,350	178,946,071	91,167	474,299	9,572	611
	Velvet	49	66,692,412	40,703,566	276,956,125	784,337	384,151	607	176
	SOAPdenovo2	69	66,692,412	26,384,373	136,996,898	306,880	415,117	427	230
U648	SOAPdenovo2	83	66,692,412	14,799,218	35,239,331	42,786	249,487	1,968	284
	<b>IDBA-UD</b>	49-79	66,692,412	39,109,187	264,379,966	161,141	750,416	6,449	441
	Velvet	51	77,214,480	43,954,847	314,226,368	942,534	426,095	486	178
	Velvet	63	77,214,480	29,572,859	141,284,737	237,453	136,179	1,204	257
L648	SOAPdenovo2	49	77,214,480	46,542,214	406,086,569	1,135,112	414,414	384	168
	SOAPdenovo2	73	77,214,480	24,096,435	123,339,653	236,266	65,682	586	246
	<b>IDBA-UD</b>	45-95	77,214,480	43,754,598	341, 435, 213	226,361	1,008,602	3,579	475
Final assembly	Newbler				440,563,666	45,392	1,008,159	25,560	3,186

**Table C.2** Pre- and final- assemblies and their statistics.

	Total	Contigs	Contigs	Contigs	Contigs
	scaffolds	$>$ 300 bp	$> 1$ kb	$>$ 50 kb	$>100$ kb
Total Base (Mbp)	440.6	440.5	440.2	165.9	110.9
Number of contigs	45,392	45,037	44,592	1,354	551
Mean length (bp)	9,705	9,781	9,872	122,523	201,273
$N50$ (bp)	25,560	25,560	25,560	143,676	217,873
$N90$ (bp)	3,186	3,186	3,186	60,804	114,858
Largest Scaffold (bp)	1,008,159	1,008,159	1,008,159	1,008,159	1,008,159

**Table C.3** Assembly statistic of metagenomic datasets.

Item	<b>Statistics</b>
Contigs	45,037
Average length (bp)	$9,780 \pm 27,941$
Total length (bp)	440,496,337
Predicted ORFs	272,083
Annotated	200,515
rRNAs	511
<b>Functional category</b>	166,555
Unrecognized	71,568

**Table C.4** MG-RAST annotation of Assembly (contigs > 300 bp).

	Total number of protein encoding genes	95,002
Summary of protein encoding genes (length)	Minimum	300
	1st Quantile	907
	Median	1,458
	Mean	1,875
	$3rd$ Quantile	2,389
	Maximum	29,070

**Table C.5** Summary of protein encoding genes annotated by SEED subsystem.

Genomic sample	Present protein encoding genes		Transcriptomic sample	Expressed protein encoding genes	
			U648 1	34,291	36.1%
U <sub>648</sub>	81,025	85.3%	U648 2	32,684	34.4%
			U648 3	47,054	49.5%
			L648 1	27,442	28.9%
L648	76,121	80.1%	L648 2	38,546	40.6%
			L648 3	38,605	40.6%
			U798 1	18,647	19.6%
U798	86,674	91.2%	U798 2	25,886	27.2%
			U798 3	27,926	29.4%

Table C.6 Protein encoding genes aligned with coding-DNA and non-rRNA sequences.

	U648		L648		U798		
Order	MG <sup>a</sup>	MT <sup>a</sup>	MG <sup>a</sup>	MT <sup>a</sup>	MG <sup>a</sup>	MT <sup>a</sup>	
Sphingobacteriales	11.9	15.7	3.3	4.2	5.1	6.1	
Flavobacteriales	10.0	10.5	2.9	2.7	9.4	9.6	
Rhodocyclales	1.7	0.9	2.8	0.8	14.1	21.6	
Rhizobiales	7.8	4.3	11.2	8.1	5.2	1.4	
<b>Burkholderiales</b>	7.1	5.5	8.4	3.3	8.3	4.5	
Solibacterales	1.7	4.3	3.0	26.3	1.0	0.4	
Desulfuromonadales	2.3	3.9	4.0	3.6	7.4	13.9	
Cytophagales	8.6	9.0	2.6	2.7	6.1	5.2	
<b>Bacteroidales</b>	3.1	4.1	1.0	1.6	4.8	5.5	
Rhodospirillales	3.7	4.3	4.9	3.5	2.0	0.6	
Clostridiales	1.4	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.5	4.9	
$Optitutae*$	1.9	0.8	4.1	2.3	0.4	0.1	

**Table C.7** Metagenomic and metatranscriptomic statistics of the ten most dominant homologous orders at the subsystem level 3.

a. Percentage based on each dataset

Bin ID		U648				L648				U798		Marker lineage		Marker gene copies			Complete- ness			Contami- nation	Size (Mb)	Contig count		$\overline{\mbox{ORF}}^{\rm e}\,$ PEG
		$MG^{\degree}$ $MT1^{^{\degree\degree}}$ $MT2^{^{\degree}}$		$MT3^{ab}$		$MGa$ $MT1ab$ $MT2ab$ $MT3ab$			MG <sup>a</sup>	MT1	$MT2^{ab}$	$MT3^{ab}$		$\bf{0}$	1	$\overline{c}$	3							
Bin01	9.3	2.8	2.6	3.7	38.4	22.2	19.7	18.0	0.1	0.1	0.1		$0.0 \, \mathrm{g}$ <i>Opitutus</i>		226	3	$\theta$	99.3	1.4	3.6	34	2294	872	
Bin02	9.6	2.4	1.2	2.5	41.7	8.6	12.1	7.9	0.7	0.2	0.2		0.1 o Burkholderiales	19	403	2	1	98.6	1.0	3.8	22	2448	958	
Bin03	1.3	5.1	2.0	4.2	24.4	46.1	45.0	41.4	0.0	0.1	0.1		0.0 o Desulfuromonadales	37	148	5	$\overline{0}$	86.3	3.8	5.2	372	3351	877	
Bin04	2.9	2.0	1.5	2.4	17.3	17.7	19.5	18.3	0.0	0.0	0.0		$0.0 g$ Nitrospira	7	170	4	$\overline{0}$	95.9	2.8	3.1	30	2002	612	
Bin05	21.1	14.7	9.5	7.7	39.5	15.7	13.5	11.4	0.5	0.4	0.5		0.2 o Rhodospirillales	7	325	4	$\overline{0}$	97.5	1.7	7.8	103		5701 1716	
Bin06	1.7	4.4	2.2	5.0	12.8	38.4	26.7	36.3	3.5	0.1	0.9		$0.6 \,$ g Gemmatimonas	3	143		$\overline{0}$	96.7	1.1	3.2	12	1715	523	
Bin07	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.3	14.3	2.1	1.6	1.7	0.4	0.0	0.0		0.0 f Planctomycetaceae	$\overline{0}$	141	$\overline{c}$	$\Omega$	100.0	2.3	4.9	99	3205	693	
Bin <sub>08</sub>	61.9	24.0	18.4	23.7	24.1	10.8	13.9	10.0	3.5	0.3	1.0		$0.3 \,$ g Chitinophaga		297	$\overline{c}$	1	99.5	1.5	6.7	82	4610	1203	
Bin09	25.1	47.6	57.7	40.8	11.2	21.4	22.6	19.7	0.1	0.1	0.1		$0.0 \,$ g Haliscomenobacter	2	300	$\overline{0}$	$\overline{0}$	99.0	0.0	4.2	72	2809	636	
Bin11	0.5	0.7	0.7	3.6	9.8	14.1	19.0	15.8	0.1	0.0	0.0		0.0 f Planctomycetaceae	14	128		$\overline{0}$	95.5	1.1	4.0	106	2546	687	
Bin12	3.3	2.3	1.7	3.4	17.1	9.1	10.4	9.2	0.9	0.1	0.1	0.1	o Desulfuromonadales	20	219	8	$\overline{0}$	90.8	2.6	6.4	335	4534	1190	
Bin14	1.5	0.9	0.5	0.6	17.8	2.3	2.9	2.1	0.1	0.0	0.1		0.1 o Burkholderiales	6	411	2	$\overline{0}$	98.4	0.4	6.5	204	4327	1392	
Bin23	14.7	10.6	10.9	8.8	7.0	5.4	9.0	6.9	0.2	0.1	0.0		0.0 f Verrucomicrobiaceae	2	223	5	$\overline{0}$	98.7	3.4	5.5	143	3225	833	
Bin24	24.5	22.8	23.4	22.5	5.7	6.8	8.0	7.7	53.4	23.7	28.5		17.6 g Fluviicola		274	3	0	99.5	1.6	4.4	71	2449	704	
Bin44	5.6	56.7	28.3	39.2	2.8	9.6	10.0	10.9	18.6	1.4	3.0		3.6 o Desulfuromonadales	17	227	3	$\overline{0}$	93.7	1.9	5.4	223	3319	792	
Bin55	8.7	23.3	40.6	36.9	0.9	2.8	2.4	3.2	0.0	0.1	0.1		$0.0 g$ Haliscomenobacter	20	274	8	$\overline{0}$	91.8	2.0	6.1	236	3409	924	
Bin56	56.7	62.7	66.5	51.6	0.6	3.5	11.0	11.5	0.1	0.1	0.0		$0.0 g$ Chitinophaga	2	299		$\overline{0}$	99.0	0.5	4.7	71	3310	905	
Bin65	10.3	36.9	28.0	22.2	0.4	0.7	1.8	1.0	9.8	0.6	3.3		2.2 f Acetobacteraceae	38	292	$\Delta$	2	86.4	1.3	4.6	544		3603 1337	
Bin68	18.8	23.6	25.7	30.1	0.6	0.7	2.1	1.5	3.7	1.0	1.3		0.8 o Burkholderiales	56	342	28	$\overline{0}$	90.7	8.5	6.2	760	4564	1852	
Bin70	28.1	1.3	1.0	1.4	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.6	0.3	0.3	0.1	f Verrucomicrobiaceae		222	6	$\boldsymbol{0}$	99.3	4.5	6.0	57	3641	931	
Bin72	1.4	1.5	1.3	1.4	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	28.8	21.4	28.2		16.0 o Burkholderiales	15	408	3	$\overline{0}$	98.3	0.8	6.1	97		3935 1763	
Bin74	9.6	44.2	64.7	51.2	0.1	0.4	0.3	0.4	46.2	44.9	43.9		50.1 g Haliscomenobacter		299	2	$\overline{0}$	99.5	0.5	5.7	109	3944	899	
Bin78	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	40.6	77.6	78.5		78.6 g Dechlomonas	59	343	23	$\overline{0}$	90.8	3.9	3.9	122		2444 1226	
Bin79	0.5	1.2	2.6	0.8	0.0	0.5	0.2	0.1	36.6	91.1	100.5		$110.8 \text{ g}$ Geobacter	2	230	15	$\overline{0}$	99.3	3.5	4.7	93		2685 1121	
Bin80	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	22.3	34.0	38.2		38.0 g Dechlomonas	181	241	3	$\overline{0}$	62.6	1.0	2.8	219	1878	927	
Bin87	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	21.9	79.8	73.1		70.9 g Haliscomenobacter	2	284	11	1	99.0	5.7	6.0	364	3194	1021	
Bin88	1.5	0.3	0.7	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.5	65.1	42.1		45.0 o Clostridiales	5	232	10	$\overline{0}$	96.9	4.7	3.4	304	2204	736	
Bin99S	0.6	12.6	8.3	11.3		2.6 147.6	113.8	158.8	0.1	0.1	0.2		0.0 s Ca.Solibacter	113	72	0	$\Omega$	35.7	0.0	1.6	213	1221	381	

**Table C.8** Metagenomic bins that contributes top 50 % of abundance in genomic presence and transcriptomic expression.

- a. Normalized abundance of genomic (MG) and transcriptomic (MT) datasets aligned to the protein-coding genes. The bins contributes top 50% of abundance for each dataset highlighted in bold.
- b. Average values of the triplicates.
- c. Completeness and contamination of genome bins were assessed using CheckM. Bins that were less than 60% complete or with greater than 10% contamination were discarded.
- d. Marker lineage was analyzed using AMPHORA2 and reported if 75% of the classifications were in agreement at a particular taxonomic level.
- e. Open reading frames (ORFs) were predicted using FragGeneScan.
- f. The listed bins were submitted under the MG-RAST project (ID: mgp9993).

Genome	Feature ID	Protein locus tag (accession)	Functional role
Haliscomenobacter hydrossis $(NC_015510)$	fig 760192.3.peg.1023	Halhy 0946 CDS_1166632_1169307_- (YP 004445720.1)	TonB-dependent receptor
	fig 760192.3.peg.1033	Halhy 0956 CDS 1176470 1177717 - (YP 004445730.1)	N-acetylglucosamine related transporter, NagX
	fig 760192.3.peg.1058	Halhy 0978 CDS 1204720 1207575 - $(YP_004445750.1)$	TonB-dependent receptor
	fig 760192.3.peg.1133	Halhy 1044 CDS 1278061 1280481 - (YP 004445816.1)	TonB-dependent receptor
	fig 760192.3.peg.1134	Halhy 1045 CDS 1281067 1283394 - $(YP_004445817.1)$	beta-glucosidase (EC 3.2.1.21)
	fig 760192.3.peg.1212	Halhy 1118 $CDS$ <sub>1378600</sub> 1381563 + $(YP_004445889.1)$	TonB-dependent receptor
	fig 760192.3.peg.1289	Halhy 1187 CDS 1480711 1481445 + (YP 004445957.1)	Glucosamine-6-phosphate deaminase (EC 3.5.99.6
	fig 760192.3.peg.1465	Halhy 1353 CDS 1686331 1688622 + (YP 004446121.1)	TonB-dependent receptor
	fig 760192.3.peg.1496	Halhy 1383 CDS 1738919 1741129 + (YP 004446151.1)	TonB-dependent receptor
	fig 760192.3.peg.1552	<b>Halhy 1436</b> CDS 1798408 1801230 + (YP 004446203.1)	TonB-dependent receptor
	fig 760192.3.peg.1593	Halhy 1472 CDS_1852891_1856088 + (YP 004446239.1)	TonB-dependent receptor
	fig 760192.3.peg.1642	Halhy 1513 CDS 1907633 1910611 + (YP 004446278.1)	TonB-dependent receptor

**Table C.9** Gene inventory analysis related to N-substituted biomass structural detritus utilization.










































































#### $T^*$   $C^*$

Beta-glucosidase (EC 3.2.1.21)

fig|6666666.223310.peg.3732 contig02209\_19572\_21824\_+ Beta-glucosidase (EC 3.2.1.21)<br>fig|6666666.223310.peg.1260 contig00450\_35922\_33208\_- Beta-glucosidase (EC 3.2.1.21)







<u> 1980 - Johann Stoff, amerikansk politiker (d. 1980)</u>































































#### **C.1 Supplemental descriptions for additional metagenomic datasets in Chapter 4**

In the chapter 4, ecological roles of the microbial community, selectively enriched in the DHS reactor for biological degradation of SMP, was revealed by providing the community structure and the functionality in both community and population levels using coupled metagenomic and metatranscriptomic approaches. To verify that the microbial community shift and the functional preservation between Phase III and Phase V were in a temporal continuity, additional samples from the upper part of the reactor at days 528 and 602 in Phase II, and 723 in Phase IV were collected (Figure 4.1). The additional samples were analyzed by as same methods as possible in the section 4.3. The detailed differences were described below.

#### **C.2 DNA extraction, library construction, and sequencing**

The procedures for biomass collection and DNA extraction were followed as written in section 4.3.2. The concentrations of DNA in the samples were measured by a Nanodrop 1000 spectrophotometer, which were 100.2 ng/ml, 236.4 ng/ml, and 247.7 ng/ml for U528, U602, and U723, respectively. The integrity of the extracted DNA was verified by running 100ng of each sample with a DNA molecular weight marker (1kb DNA ladder, Promega) on a 1% denaturing formaldehyde agarose gel for electrophoresis prior to sequencing (Figure C.1). The extracted DNA samples were submitted to the Roy J. Carver Biotechnology Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (IL, USA) for sequencing and DNA and library construction. The DNA libraries were constructed for each sample using a Hyper Library construction kit (Kapa Biosystmes), and the pooled libraries were quantitated by qPCR and sequenced on one lane for 151 cycles from each end of the fragments on a HiSeq4000 sequencer (Illumina, San Diego, CA, USA) using a HiSeq 4000 sequencing kit version 1. The genomic libraries were generated and demultiplexed with the bcl2fastq v2.17.1.14 Conversion Software (Illumina, San Diego, CA, USA).

#### **C.3 Quality control, rRNA subtraction, and 16S rRNA gene reconstruction**

The raw genomic reads were trimmed using a Q13 Phred quality score cutoff and screened with minimum length 50 bp cutoff using SolexaQA v3.1.7<sup>1</sup> for a quality control (QC) (Table C.10). The post QC genomic datasets were used to reconstruct full length of

16S rRNA using EMIRGE2 with 0.99 OTU identity and default settings for the rest of conditions to reveal the microbial community compositions. The reconstructed genes for the three genomic datasets were combined and subjected to an operational taxonomic units (OTUs) assignment in  $QIIME<sup>3</sup>$  and the phylogenetic affiliation of the OTUs was classified based on the Greengenes ARB database (Greengenes\_16S\_2011\_1.arb) using ARB parsimony method and visualized in a phylogenetic tree as described in the section 4.3.4.1. The relative abundance of the representative sequences in each genomic dataset was expressed in percentage of the raw sequencing reads mapped to the representative sequences using Blastn with a cutoff of 95% identity and the parameters of  $X = 150$ ,  $q = -1$  and  $F = F$ at default settings.

#### **C.4 Metagenomic assembly and assembled genome bins**

The three post OC genomic dataset were subjected to be assembled together using  $MEGAHIT<sup>4</sup>$  with a range of k-mer sizes, 21-141 (Table C.10). The assembled contigs longer than 300 bp were submitted to the MG-RAST pipeline<sup>5</sup> and subjected to protein encoding genes (PEG) prediction (MG-RAST ID, 4740023.3 in the project, mgp 9993).<sup>6</sup> Taxonomic annotation was performed against the SEED database using a Best Hit Classification approach with a maximum e-value cutoff of 1E-5, a similarity cutoff of 60%, and a minimum alignment length of 15 measured in amino acids for protein and base pairs for RNA databases. Functional annotation was conducted by comparison to the subsystems using a hierarchical classification algorithm with a maximum e-value cutoff of 1E-5, a similarity cutoff of 60%, and a minimum alignment length of 15 amino acids. The PEGs longer than 300 bp were applied to the further expression analysis. The relative abundance of PEGs was estimated by following steps described in the section 4.3.4.4.

The assembled contigs greater than 1000 bases were subjected to cluster into genome bins, using MaxBin (v 2.2.1).<sup>7</sup> Assembled genome bins, the estimated completeness and contamination of which using CheckM (v  $1.0.5$ )<sup>8</sup> were less than 20% and more than 10%, respectively, were discarded.  $AMPHORA2<sup>9</sup>$  was used to estimate the taxonomic affiliation of the assembled genome bins, and the resulted marker lineage was reported when 75% of the classifications reached a consensus taxonomic level.<sup>10</sup> A genome-wide phylogenetic analysis of the assembled genome bins was conducted using  $PhyloPhlAn.$ <sup>11</sup> The predicted
protein encoding genes for the assembled genome bins were identified and aligned on a subset of 400 conserved protein sequences. The assembled genome bins and reference genomes were integrated into the tree of life with 3,171 microbial genomes.

#### **C.5 Carbohydrate-active enzyme annotation**

The clustered contigs for the most abundant thirty four assembled genome bins (Table C.14) were subjected to gene prediction using FragGeneScan v1.30.<sup>12</sup> A carbohydrate-active enzyme (CAZy)-family specific hidden Markov model (HMMs) were downloaded from the dbCAN database (http://csbl.bmb.uga.edu/dbCAN/)<sup>13</sup> and used in screening amino acid sequences of the predicted ORFs for similarity to 385 families (13 auxiliary activity (AA), 81 carbohydrate-binding module (CBM), 16 carbohydrate esterase (CE), 145 glycoside hydrolase (GH), 103 glycosyl transferase (GT), and 27 polysaccharide lyase (PL) families) in the CAZy database.<sup>14</sup> The protein sequences were compared and sorted as described in the section 4.3.4.6 using hmmscan. The CAZy families which the related genes of the major bins belong to were plotted using the heatmap.2 function of the gplots package (v 3.0.1) in R. The relative abundances of the CAZy families were normalized as described in the section, 4.2.4.4.

#### **C.6 Microbial phylogenetic community structure in Phase II and Phase IV**

The additional samples collected were named U528 and U602 in Phase II and U723 in Phase IV to determine the temporal continuity between the samples collected in Phase III and V. To compare the phylogenetic community structures among those samples, the three microbial community samples were sequenced using Illumina, and the sequencing results provided paired-end 150 bp metagenomic reads with a range of fragment size 150 bp to 800 bp (2.4 x  $10^8$  reads for U528, 2.4 x  $10^8$  reads for U602, 2.2 x  $10^8$  reads for U723) (Table C.10). The post QC genomic reads were blasted to the EMIRGE-based reconstructed 16S rRNA gene sequences.<sup>2</sup> The dominant bacterial EMIRGE-constructed representative sequences that indicated relative abundance  $>1\%$  of the total number of 16s rRNA gene sequences in any sample were included in constructing a phylogenetic tree with closely related references (Figure C.9). In U528, *Acidithiobacillales*-related member in *Gammaproteobacteria* (DHS\_Emg 28, 6.0%), *Saprospiraceae*-related member in

*Sphingobacteriales* (DHS\_Emg 0, 5.5%), and *Cytophaga*-related members (DHS\_Emg 33, 2.4%) were most abundant. Compared to U528, in U602, *Saprospiraceae*-related members (DHS Emg 0, 5.8%, DHS Emg 29, 3.0%, and DHS Emg 19, 2.2%) became more abundant followed by *Cytophaga*-related members (DHS\_Emg 33, 2.3%), whereas DHS\_Emg 28 dramatically decreased to less than 0.2%. As previously indicated in a comparison between U648 and &798, in U723 a clear shift among the abundant *Saprospiraceae*-related members was observed; the abundance of all three *Saprospiraceae*-related members, DHS\_Emg 0, DHS Emg 29, and DHS Emg 19 decreased to about 0.1% in U723. Instead, another *Saprospiraceae*-relative (DHS\_Emg 22, 7.4%) became most abundant. In addition, *Dechloromonas*-related members (DHS\_Emg 8, 2.9%) and *Geobacter*-related members (DHS\_Emg 18, 5.8%) increased in U798. These population shifts which observed in U723 indicated transitional microbial community in the upper part of the DHS reactor between U648 and U798.

**Table C.10** Assembly statistic of metagenomic datasets.

Assembly	Assembler	kmer size		Total trimmed reads <sup>a</sup>	Assembled reads $(95\%$ similarity)		Total contig size	Number of contig	Max contig s <sub>1</sub> ze	N50
		21	U <sub>528</sub>	238,473,718	212,229,902	89%				
<b>TGTHR</b>	<b>MEGAHIT</b>	۰.	U602	238,432,590	217,195,520	91%	3,519,636,225	1,972,366	2,892,810	3,813
		141	U723	219,542,298	193,956,863	88%				

a. The raw genomic reads were trimmed using a Q13 Phred quality score cutoff and screened with minimum length 50 bp cutoff using SolexaQA v3.1.7.



**Figure C.9** Microbial phylogenetic composition in Phase II (U528 and U602) and Phase IV (U723). In the 16S rRNA gene-based phylogenetic tree (bootstrap 1000: >90% black node, >70% gray node, and >50% white node), DHS\_Emg refers to reconstructed ribosomal sequences using EMIRGE. The relative abundance is normalized to total number of bacterial 16s rRNA gene sequences in each dataset.

#### **C.7 Microbial global functionality and expressions in Phase II and Phase IV**

The de novo assembly produced using  $MEGAHIT<sup>4</sup>$  included 89% of the 238 million reads in U528, 91% of the 238 million reads in U602, and 88% of the 220 million reads in U723 (Table C10). The assembly contained 1,972,366 contigs with a total sequence size of 3.5 Gb, a maximum contig size of 2.9 Mb and N50 of 3,813 bp with cutoff 300 bp. Using MG-RAST functional annotation, 3,404,512 ORFs were predicted, 1,950,961 ORFs of which were annotated with putative protein functions and 1,579,174 ORFs were assigned to a functional classification (Table C11). Among the annotated ORFs, 86.0% of features were classified as SEED Subsystems-based PEGs (Table C12). 85.2%, 82.4%, and 78.9% of the PEGs by Subsystems encoded in U528, U602, and U723 post QC datasets, respectively (Table C13). The relative abundance of the genomic encodes at the SEED Subsystem level 1 were exhibited (Figure C.10). Cluster-based subsystems (12.0-13.9%) and Carbohydrates (10.5-11.4%) were the two systems most abundantly encoded, followed by Amino acids and derivatives (9.4-10.7%) and Protein metabolism (7.8-8.3%). These subsystems indicated the constant metabolic categories and abundances as analyzed in the three datasets in Phase III and Phase V. U528 and U602 were closely clustered together rather than with U723, which indicated that change of the global functionality was likely subjected to temporal variation.



**Figure C.10** Global analysis of metabolic potential and functional activities in the DHS communities. Clustering of the three metagenomic and triplicated metatranscriptomic datasets based on normalized relative abundance of SEED subsystem level 1. Hierarchical clustering of the metagenomic and the metatranscriptomic datasets were separately conducted with Euclidean distance using R package (Stats v3.2.0).

Item	<b>Statistics</b>
Contigs	1,972,366
Average length (bp)	$1,784 \pm 10,535$
Total length (bp)	3,519,636,225
Predicted ORFs	3,404,512
Annotated	1,950,961
rRNAs	1,493
<b>Functional category</b>	1,579,174
Unrecognized	371,787

Table C.11 MG-RAST annotation of Assembly (contigs > 300 bp).

Total number of protein encoding genes		1,677,780
	Minimum	47
	1st Quantile	505
Summary of protein encoding genes	Median	804
(length)	Mean	1,174
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quantile	1,404
	Maximum	71,960

**Table C.12** Summary of protein encoding genes annotated by SEED Subsystems.

Genomic sample	Number of aligned reads (95% similarity blasted to protein encoding genes among the trimmed reads)		Present protein encoding genes	
U528	141,047,525	59%	1,428,607	85.15%
U602	160,287,239	67%	1,382,469	82.40%
U723	125,549,466	57%	1,323,504	78.88%

**Table C.13** Protein encoding genes aligned with coding-DNA.

#### **C.8 Potential encoding of CAZy families in the assembled genome bins**

As a result of a metagenomic binning to reconstruct assembled genome bins, the assembled contigs were clustered into 244 bins with less than 10% contamination and more than 20% completeness.<sup>10</sup> 34 assembled genome bins that contributed top 50% of relative abundance of PEG in any dataset were subjected to construction of a genome-wide phylogenetic analysis with other 3,171 reference genomes using  $PhyloPhlAn<sup>11</sup>$  (Figure C.11 and Table C14). Additionally, their taxonomic affiliations were assigned using AMPHORA2<sup>9</sup> software with 31 conserved bacterial phylogenetic protein marker genes (Table C14). 12 bins were assigned in *Bacteroidetes*, six of which (BinN002, BinN013, BinN022, BinN024, BinN026, and BinN424) constituted a deep branch with *Haliscomenobacter hydrossis* DSM 1100 (IMG taxon ID: 2504756004). BinN013 and BinN040 constructed a branch with *Chitinophaga pinensis* UQM 2034 (IMG taxon ID: 644736340). As observed in the community structure (Figure C.9), a shift was observed in the relative abundance of the genomic encodes; BinN002 was the most abundant in Phase II while BinN008 and BinN024 became abundant in Phase IV. In *Proteobacteria*, 14 bins were classified affiliated: *alphaproteobacteria* (5), *betaproteobacteria* (6), *deltaproteobacteria* (2), and *gammaproteobacteria* (2). The relative abundance was shifted from BinN001 in *gammproteobacteria*, constituting a deep branch with *Alkalilimnicola ehrlichii* MLHE-1(IMG taxon ID: 637000324), in Phase II to BinN042 in *deltaproteobacteria* and BinN115 and BinN213 in *betaproteobacteria*. This shift may indicate a continuity to the abundance of the *Geobacter* and *Dechloromonas*-related assembled genome bins later in U798. The rest of them were affiliated with *Acidobacteria* (2), *Gemmatinomonadetes* (1), *Planctomycetes* (2), and *Verrucomicrobia* (2).

To further investigate how the functionally dominant microbial populations were involved in polysaccharide and glycan degradation, the 34 major assembled genomic bins were subjected to the carbohydrate-active enzyme analysis using the profile hidden Markov model specifying CAZy database. The normalized genomic abundances of each CAZy family, which were significantly abundant at the 98% confidence level, were shown (Figure C.12). As previously observed in the datasets in Phase III and Phase V, the assembled genomic bins affiliating *Bacteroidetes* indicated the most abundant genomic encodes in the predicted enzymes. The abundance among the *Bacteroidetes*-related genomic bins were

changed from the *Haliscomenobacter*-related bin, BinN002, in U528 and U602, to another *Haliscomenobacter*-related bin, BinN024, and *Chitinophaga*-related bin, BinN008, in U723. The most genomically predicted enzyme families by them were CBM families 32, 37, 40, 44, and 50, together with Cohesin and Dockerin, of which the glucan specific CBM family, CBM44, was most highly encoded. The most predicted glycoside hydrolytic GH families were endoglucanase (GH74), GalNAc hydrolase (GH109), oligo-alpha-glucosidase (GH13) and peptidoglycan lyase (GH23). The predicted glycoside hydrolytic GH families were mostly endoglucanase (GH74), GalNAc hydrolase (GH109), and peptidoglycan lyase (GH23). Carboxyl esterase enzyme families (CE1 and 10) were also highly encoded by the *Bacteroidetes*-related assembled genome bins. In spite of the temporal variance, the *Bacteroidetes*-related bins were equipped with the CAZy families involved in both binding modules to glucan and glycan substrates and following glycoside hydrolases and esterases. The gene inventory of the *Bacteroidetes*-related bins, further, showed that these bins were fully equipped with exo-enzymes and intracellular genes (chitinase, glucuronidase, hex, nagZ, nagK, murQ, nagA, and nagB), which were necessary to bind and degrade Nsubstituted oligosaccharides (Table C15). Laster increasing abundance of these CAZy families in *Geobacter* and *Dechloromonas*-related assembled genome bins were observed, but insignificant in U723.



**Figure C.11** The genome-wide phylogenetic analysis and the abundance profile of the major assembled genome bins contributing cumulative top 50% of relative abundance for each dataset. The phylogenetic tree was generated by PhyloPhlAn and iTOL from predicted protein sequences of the major bins and 3,171 other reference genomes (bootstrap 1000: >90% black node, >70% gray node, and >50% white node; IMG taxon ID of the reference genomes in parenthesis.



**Figure C.12** Potential encoding and expression of CAZy by the dominant assembled genome bins. The genomic normalized abundance of each CAZy family, which was significantly abundant at the 98% confidence level, were plotted with closed circles.

$U528^a$ U602 <sup>a</sup> $U723^a$ Bin Id				Marker lineage <sup>c</sup>	Marker gene copies				Completeness	$\mathrm{Continuation}^\mathrm{b}$	Size	GC	Contig
					2	3	h		(Mb)	$(\% )$	count		
BinN001	6.4	1.9	0.9	o Chromatiales	8	266	$\mathbf{1}$	$\mathbf{0}$	97.1	0.1	2.6	63.4	1164
BinN002	5.2	5.5	0.2	g Haliscomenobacter	3	298		$\theta$	98.5	0.3	6.7	56.8	364
BinN003	3.0	0.2	0.0	f Planctomycetaceae	8	143		$\theta$	93.2	1.1	5.7	64.5	2921
BinN004	3.3	1.3	0.0	o Burkholderiales	21	403		$\Omega$	93.4	0.1	3.9	58.6	223
BinN008	1.1	1.4	6.7	g Fluviicola	$\overline{2}$	273	3	$\theta$	98.9	1.6	4.3	60.6	434
BinN009	1.2	1.4	0.1	g Cytophaga	6	441	7	$\theta$	98.5	0.7	4.5	41.7	47
BinN010	1.1	0.2	0.0	c Alphaproteobacteria	$\theta$	349	$\boldsymbol{0}$	$\boldsymbol{0}$	100.0	0.0	3.0	56.9	564
BinN011	1.0	0.5	0.0	g Cytophaga	25	404	23	$\overline{2}$	94.5	6.5	3.9	49.1	47
BinN013	0.8	1.1	0.0	g Chitinophaga	6	295		$\theta$	97.5	0.5	4.7	43.8	364
BinN014	0.6	1.4	0.5	o Nitrospirales	5	179	$\overline{4}$	$\theta$	95.7	2.0	3.8	53.2	2258
BinN016	1.1	0.9	2.1	o Verrucomicrobiales		208	19	$\mathbf{1}$	99.3	6.3	6.3	62.6	88
BinN017	0.5	0.5	0.0	f Gemmatimonadaceae	$\overline{2}$	139	$\overline{2}$	$\boldsymbol{0}$	97.7	2.3	4.9	70.7	2921
BinN018	1.5	1.0	0.1	o Rhodospirillales	14	301	20	1	95.7	5.8	7.1	67.8	63
BinN019	0.7	1.8	0.3	o Burkholderiales	$\overline{2}$	417	5	1	99.1	1.6	4.1	69.0	223
BinN020	0.5	1.4	0.0	f Xanthomonadaceae	11	637	11	$\theta$	98.3	1.4	4.8	62.2	55
BinN021	0.6	1.2	0.1	c Betaproteobacteria	10	401	14	$\theta$	96.4	3.8	3.8	61.5	223
BinN022	0.4	1.4	0.1	g Haliscomenobacter	$\overline{2}$	299		$\theta$	99.0	0.3	4.2	36.2	364
BinN023	0.7	0.8	0.2	f Gemmatimonadaceae	$\overline{2}$	140	5	$\mathbf{0}$	97.8	4.8	5.8	69.6	2993
BinN024	0.6	0.4	7.6	g Haliscomenobacter	1	295	6	$\theta$	99.5	1.4	5.8	36.3	364
BinN025	0.4	0.8	0.2	c Solibacteres	8	174	6	$\theta$	94.0	5.1	4.0	51.5	2258
BinN026	0.5	0.2	0.9	g Haliscomenobacter	$\overline{3}$	298		$\theta$	98.5	0.5	5.7	55.1	364
BinN029	0.8	1.3	3.7	o Rhodospirillales	27	286	22	$\mathbf{1}$	91.7	6.8	5.0	66.2	63
BinN040	0.5	2.0	1.0	g Chitinophaga	-1	297	$\overline{2}$	$\mathbf{1}$	99.5	1.5	6.7	42.0	364
BinN041	0.3	0.6	0.1	c Alphaproteobacteria	60	326	$\overline{2}$	$\theta$	94.6	0.8	3.1	62.6	468
BinN042	0.4	0.5	2.2	o Desulfuromonadales	11	233	3	$\theta$	93.3	1.9	6.0	64.4	83
BinN046	0.3	0.9	0.0	o Verrucomicrobiales	1	228		$\theta$	99.3	0.7	3.7	66.2	88
BinN115	0.2	0.2	2.4	o Burkholderiales	8	395	22	$\mathbf{1}$	98.0	5.6	6.3	68.5	193
BinN128	0.0	0.0	0.6	o Rickettsiales	3	306	11	3	98.6	8.3	1.7	33.8	83
BinN148	0.1	1.4	0.0	g Haliscomenobacter	15	274	13	$\theta$	94.2	4.3	6.4	48.0	364
BinN154	0.1	3.6	2.2	o Myxococcales	15	227	$\overline{4}$	1	91.2	2.8	9.4	69.9	83
<b>BinN213</b>	0.1	0.5	1.3	o Burkholderiales	53	369	5	$\mathbf{0}$	97.2	2.3	5.3	68.4	193
BinN398	0.0	0.0	1.1	o Rhizobiales	26	299	24	$\theta$	92.7	6.4	3.0	64.0	564
BinN422	0.0	0.0	0.5	g Fluviicola	16	298	$\overline{2}$	$\theta$	93.3	1.0	3.6	33.9	350
BinN424	0.0	0.0	1.2	g Haliscomenobacter	2	285	10		99.0	4.7	6.1	52.5	364

**Table C.14** Assembled genome bins that contribute top 50 % of abundance in each genomic dataset.

- a. Normalized abundance of genomic datasets aligned to the protein-coding genes. The bins contributing top 50% of abundance for each dataset were listed in the table.
- b. Relative abundance ratio (%), defined by the actual coverage levels divided by summed coverage levels of all assembled genome bins that are retrieved from the results using MaxBin (v.2.2.1). The assembled genome bins that contribute cumulative top 50% of relative abundance were listed.
- c. Completeness and contamination of the assembled genome bins were assessed using CheckM. Bins that were less than 90% complete or with greater than 10% contamination were discarded.
- d. Marker lineage was analyzed using AMPHORA2 and reported if 75% of the classifications were in agreement at a particular taxonomic level.
- e. The listed bins were submitted under the MG-RAST project (ID: mgp9993).

**Table C.15** Gene inventory analysis related to N-substituted biomass structural detritus utilization in the *Bacteroidetes*-related genome bins.

Glucosamine--fructose-6-phosphate aminotransferase [isomerizing] (EC BinN002 fig 6666666.273398.peg.103 contig1035842 8895 7054 - 2.6.1.16 fig 6666666.273398.peg.1076 TonB-dependent receptor contig1349688 118669 121344 + fig 6666666.273398.peg.108 contig1035842 13474 11981 - Membrane-bound lytic murein transglycosylase D precursor (EC 3.2.1.-) fig 6666666.273398.peg.12 contig1032987 15020 17965 + TonB family protein / TonB-dependent receptor N-acetylglucosamine related transporter, NagX fig 6666666.273398.peg.1203 contig1383735 90043 91290 + fig 6666666.273398.peg.1204 contig1383735 92895 91402 - SusD, outer membrane protein fig 6666666.273398.peg.1205 contig1383735 96015 93022 - SusC, outer membrane protein involved in starch binding contig1383735 106999 104462 - fig 6666666.273398.peg.1212 TonB-dependent receptor contig1383735 113438 111045 - TonB-dependent receptor fig 6666666.273398.peg.1219 fig 6666666.273398.peg.127 contig1035842 36180 33691 - TonB-dependent receptor, putative Phosphomannomutase (EC 5.4.2.8) / Phosphoglucosamine mutase (EC contig176149 132715 131336 - fig 6666666.273398.peg.1571 5.4.2.10 fig 6666666.273398.peg.1585 contig176149 151447 150149 - N-acylglucosamine 2-epimerase (EC 5.1.3.8) TonB family protein / TonB-dependent receptor fig 6666666.273398.peg.1590 contig176149 157374 160664 + fig 6666666.273398.peg.1616 contig176149 191066 192037 + N-acetyl-gamma-glutamyl-phosphate reductase (EC 1.2.1.38) Chitinase (EC 3.2.1.14) fig 6666666.273398.peg.1643 contig176149 228293 237829 + contig1871866 43359 41020 - TonB-dependent receptor, plug precursor fig 6666666.273398.peg.1848 fig 6666666.273398.peg.1918 contig1871866 140886 139576 - N-acetylglucosaminyltransferase (EC 2.4.1.-) fig 6666666.273398.peg.192 contig1035842 106495 109506 + TonB family protein / TonB-dependent receptor contig1035842 109630 110964 + fig 6666666.273398.peg.193 SusD/RagB family protein TonB family protein / TonB-dependent receptor fig 6666666.273398.peg.1939 contig1871866 163665 160750 - N-acetylglucosamine deacetylase (EC 3.5.1.-) / 3-hydroxyacyl-[acyl-carrier- contig1871866 189217 187796 - fig 6666666.273398.peg.1958 protein] dehydratase, FabZ form (EC 4.2.1.59) Chitinase (EC 3.2.1.14) contig1888521 25362 22282 - fig 6666666.273398.peg.1996 D-alanyl-D-alanine carboxypeptidase (EC 3.4.16.4) fig 6666666.273398.peg.2021 contig1903360 27132 25714 - fig 6666666.273398.peg.208 TonB-dependent receptor, putative contig1041127 15712 13019 - Membrane-bound lytic murein transglycosylase A precursor (EC 3.2.1.-) fig 6666666.273398.peg.2150 contig1937582 61602 60550 - SusD, outer membrane protein fig 6666666.273398.peg.2475 contig211462 101956 100382 - fig 6666666.273398.peg.2476 contig211462 105130 102098 - SusC, outer membrane protein involved in starch binding	Genome	Feature ID	Protein locus tag (accession)	Functional role

















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