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# **A large metabolic carbon contribution to the $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ record in marine aragonitic bivalve shells**

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## Abstract

25 It is well known that the incorporation of isotopically light metabolic carbon ( $C_M$ ) significantly affects the stable carbon isotope ( $\delta^{13}C$ ) signal recorded in biogenic carbonates. This can obscure the record of  $\delta^{13}C$  of seawater dissolved inorganic carbon ( $\delta^{13}C_{DIC}$ ) potentially archived in the shell carbonate. To assess the  $C_M$  contribution to *Mercenaria mercenaria* shells collected in North Carolina, USA, we sampled seawater  
30  $\delta^{13}C_{DIC}$ , tissue, hemolymph and shell  $\delta^{13}C$ . All shells showed an ontogenic decrease in shell  $\delta^{13}C$ , with as much as a 4 ‰ decrease over the lifespan of the clam. There was no apparent ontogenic change in food source indicated by soft tissue  $\delta^{13}C$  values, therefore a change in the respired  $\delta^{13}C$  value cannot be the cause of this decrease. Hemolymph  $\delta^{13}C$ , on the other hand, did exhibit a negative relationship with height indicating that respired  
35  $CO_2$  does influence the  $\delta^{13}C$  value of internal fluids and that the amount of respired  $CO_2$  is related to the size or age of the bivalve. The percent metabolic C incorporated into the shell ( $\%C_M$ ) was significantly higher (up to 37 ‰, with a range from 5-37 ‰) than has been found in other bivalve shells, which usually contain less than 10  $\%C_M$ . Interestingly, the hemolymph did contain less than 10  $\%C_M$ , suggesting that complex fractionation  
40 might occur between hemolymph and calcifying fluids. Simple shell biometrics explained nearly 60 ‰ of the observed variability in  $\%C_M$ , however, this is not robust enough to predict  $\%C_M$  for fossil shells. Thus, the metabolic effect on shell  $\delta^{13}C$  cannot easily be accounted for to allow reliable  $\delta^{13}C_{DIC}$  reconstructions. However, there does seem to be a common effect of size, as all sites had indistinguishable slopes between the  $\%C_M$  and  
45 shell height (+0.19 ‰ per mm of shell height).

## 1. Introduction

Stable isotope geochemistry has become a key tool in paleo-climate and paleo-  
50 oceanographic reconstruction. The oxygen isotopic ( $\delta^{18}\text{O}_\text{S}$ ) signatures of different  
biogenic carbonates have been used to reconstruct both sea surface temperature and  
salinity (e.g., Jones et al., 1989; Weidman et al., 1994; Ingram et al., 1996; Dettman et  
al., 2004). In inorganic carbonates, stable carbon isotope enrichment factors for  
aragonite-bicarbonate and calcite-bicarbonate are independent of temperature and show  
55 no effect of precipitation rate (Romanek et al., 1992). On the other hand, the stable  
carbon isotopic composition of biogenic carbonate ( $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{S}$ ) varies in a more complex  
manner. Although some works suggested that  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{S}$  reflected the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  of dissolved  
inorganic carbon in seawater ( $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{DIC}$ ) (e.g., Mook and Vogel, 1968); many others have  
suggested that both kinetic and metabolic effects play an important role in determining  
60  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{S}$  (Keith et al., 1964; Swart, 1983; Tanaka et al., 1986; Klein et al., 1996;  
McConnaughey et al., 1997; Dettman et al., 1999; Lorrain et al., 2004; Gillikin et al  
2006). Kinetic effects generally affect both  $\delta^{18}\text{O}_\text{S}$  and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{S}$  and result in a good  
correlation between them (McConnaughey, 1989). As bivalves generally precipitate in  
oxygen isotope equilibrium with their surroundings (Epstein et al., 1953; Wefer and  
65 Berger, 1991; Chauvaud et al., 2005), kinetic effects should be minimal and  
disequilibrium should be mainly due to metabolic effects. Metabolic effects result from  
changes in the internal DIC pool, which is a combination of both seawater DIC and  
internally produced metabolic DIC (McConnaughey et al., 1997). Although, to our  
knowledge, the isotopic composition of this internal DIC pool has never been measured

70 in an invertebrate, it is widely assumed that respiration, composed of  $^{12}\text{C}$ -enriched  $\text{CO}_2$ ,  
decreases the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  value of the internal DIC pool. The  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  value of respired  $\text{CO}_2$  can be  
assumed to approximately match the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  of the respiring tissue ( $\delta^{13}\text{C}_R$ ) (McConnaughey  
et al., 1997), but a recent study showed that coral  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_R$  was up to 3 ‰ different from  
75 tissues (Swart et al., 2005). However, this offset would only change the percentage of  
respired carbon in the skeleton by about 3 % when using the equation of McConnaughey  
et al. (1997; see discussion). An earlier study suggested that up to 85 % of mollusk-shell  
carbonate is composed of metabolic C ( $C_M$ ) (Tanaka et al., 1986), but more recently  
McConnaughey et al. (1997) have shown that the former study overestimated the  
metabolic contribution partly because it erroneously included the enrichment factor  
80 between carbonate and aqueous  $\text{CO}_2$ . The  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$  decrease in the internal DIC pool is  
now generally considered to result in small (< 2 ‰) changes in  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$ , or approximately a  
10 % contribution from respired  $\text{CO}_2$  (McConnaughey et al., 1997).

In bivalves there are varying degrees of  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$  disequilibrium from  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$ . In some  
85 species, strong ontogenic decreases in  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$  have been noted (Krantz et al., 1987;  
Kennedy et al., 2001; Keller et al., 2002; Elliot et al., 2003; Lorrain et al., 2004), whereas  
in others there is no discernable decrease (Buick and Ivany, 2004; Gillikin et al., 2005a,  
2006; Surge and Walker, 2006). Lorrain et al. (2004) showed that the ratio of respired to  
precipitated carbon, which represents the amount of metabolic carbon available relative  
90 to the carbon requirements for calcification, increases through ontogeny in scallops. This  
suggests that the decrease of  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$  through ontogeny is actually caused by increased  
utilization of this metabolic carbon to satisfy carbon requirements for calcification.

Furthermore, they propose that seawater  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$  could perhaps be reconstructed from bivalve shells if the metabolic contribution could be accounted for.

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In this study, we sampled seawater DIC, tissue, hemolymph (circulatory fluid equivalent to blood) and shell  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  from *Mercenaria mercenaria* collected in North Carolina, USA to assess the contribution of metabolic carbon to the shell. *M. mercenaria* is a large aragonitic clam (Elliot et al. [2003] have shown that *M. mercenaria* precipitate aragonite shells), which can obtain ages of nearly 50 years (Peterson, 1986) and is therefore suitable to detect long-term ontogenic effects in shell geochemistry. Our aim was to 1) determine if *M. mercenaria* exhibits an ontogenic decrease in  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{S}$ ; 2) determine what causes the decrease in  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{S}$ ; and 3) assess if vital effects can be accounted for in order to estimate  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$ .

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## 2. Methodology

*Mercenaria mercenaria* specimens were collected alive from the Cape Lookout region of North Carolina, USA, from three sites: Jarrett Bay (34°45'47"N, 76°29'08"W), Johnson Creek (34°45'06"N, 76°26'10"W), and Back Sound (34°39'27"N, 76°33'25"W) (Fig 1). Salinity at Jarrett Bay ranges from 23 – 37 and from 28 – 34 at Johnson Creek and Back Sound, but lower salinities are usually short lived events after storms; temperature typically ranges from 1 to 35 °C (Peterson et al., 1983,1984; Gillikin et al. 2005b). Sediments were muddy at the Jarrett Bay and Johnson Creek sites and were more sandy at Back Sound (Gillikin et al. 2005b). Precipitation varies between a high of 170 mm in

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July and minimums of 76 and 88 mm in April and November, respectively, with an annual average of  $113 \pm 27$  mm (based on average data from nearby Morehead City from 1896-1987; Leith et al. 1999). Major rain storms typically occur from July to September (Leith et al. 1999). Specimens were collected by hand from shallow (<1 m) muddy  
120 sediments below mean low water spring tide (MLWS). These clams are typically buried in the sediment from 0 to 25 mm deep, but all siphon water from the water column (Roberts et al., 1989). Additionally, to test if any pattern found in these shells is the result of modern changes in the environment, a Pliocene (~3.2 million years old) shell was collected from the Duplin Formation in South Carolina (1.5 km northwest of  
125 Timmons ville) and analyzed.

In Jarrett Bay, an extensive sampling was conducted where the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  of shells of various sizes (35.5 – 99.2 mm), different tissues (gill, mantle, muscle, and foot), hemolymph, water DIC, particulate matter and sediment were sampled (all on 17 Aug. 2004, when  
130 water depth was about 0.6 m). As  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$  may differ between the water column and the sediment – water interface, DIC was collected by drawing water just above the sediment surface into a clean 25-ml syringe and gently transferring it to a glass headspace vial, adding 30  $\mu\text{l}$  of  $\text{HgCl}_2$  and capping with a butyl septum. To sample hemolymph, first the mantle cavity fluid was drained by prying the valves apart with a knife, then a sterile  
135 syringe and needle (fitted with a filter; 0.2  $\mu\text{m}$ , cellulose acetate) was inserted into the adductor muscle and hemolymph was gently drawn into the syringe. The hemolymph sample was then quickly transferred to a sealed He-flushed headspace vial containing  $\text{HgCl}_2$  (see Gillikin, 2005 for more details). Soft tissues were dissected in the field using

a scalpel and were stored in microcentrifuge tubes in a cool box on ice until they were  
140 frozen (-20 °C) later in the day. Suspended particulate matter was sampled by filtering  
150 mL of seawater through precombusted 25 mm glass fiber filters (Whatman GF/F, 0.7  
mm), which were later dried. The top 1 cm of sediment was scraped off an area of ca. 10  
cm diameter and was later dried.

145 Shells were collected from the other sites (Johnson Creek and Back Sound) in 1980,  
1982, and 2002. Water samples and muscle tissues from various sized clams (29.3 – 88.8  
mm shell height) were collected as described above at Johnson Creek (Aug. 2003), but  
not at Back Sound.

150 Shells were sectioned along the axis of maximal growth and were sampled in the middle  
shell layer (see Elliot et al., 2003 or Gillikin et al. 2005c). Only the most recently formed  
shell carbonate was sampled from the Jarrett Bay specimens by milling a 300 µm spot at  
the growing edge (in cross-section) using a Merchantek MicroMill. Shells from Johnson  
Creek and Back Sound were sampled at an annual resolution using the annual growth  
155 lines on the shell, which form in late summer/ early winter in this region (Peterson et al.,  
1983). To accomplish this, lines were milled between annual growth lines using the  
MicroMill and a 300-µm drill bit. The Pliocene shell was sampled by continuously  
milling holes every 300 µm. Similarly, one of the Back Sound shells was also sampled at  
a high resolution (BS1). Carbonate powders (~75 µg) were reacted in an automated  
160 carbonate preparation device (ThermoFinnigan Kiel III) coupled to a ThermoFinnigan  
Delta<sup>plus</sup>XL dual inlet IRMS with a long-term precision of 0.039 ‰ for δ<sup>13</sup>C and 0.085 ‰



for  $\delta^{18}\text{O}$  on the NBS-19 standard ( $n = 292$ ;  $\delta^{13}\text{C} = +1.95 \text{ ‰}$ ,  $\delta^{18}\text{O} = -2.20 \text{ ‰}$ ), and 0.068 ‰ for  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  and 0.111 ‰ for  $\delta^{18}\text{O}$  on the NBS-18 standard ( $n = 22$ ;  $\delta^{13}\text{C} = -5.04 \text{ ‰}$ ,  $\delta^{18}\text{O} = -23.05 \text{ ‰}$ ). Results are reported relative to VPDB by calibration to the NBS-19  
165 reference standard ( $\delta^{13}\text{C} = +1.95\text{‰}$  and  $\delta^{18}\text{O} = -2.20 \text{ ‰VPDB}$ ).

For the analysis of  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$  from both water and hemolymph, the method of Gillikin and Bouillon (2007) was followed. Briefly, a He headspace was created (in the case of water samples), and ~300 mL of  $\text{H}_3\text{PO}_4$  was added to convert all inorganic carbon species to  
170  $\text{CO}_2$ . After overnight equilibration, part of the headspace was injected into the He stream of an elemental analyzer–isotope ratio mass spectrometer (EA-IRMS, ThermoFinnigan Flash 1112 and ThermoFinnigan Delta+XL) for  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  measurements. The obtained  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  data were corrected for the isotopic equilibration between gaseous and dissolved  $\text{CO}_2$  by using the algorithm presented in Miyajima et al. (1995).

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Soft tissues were freeze-dried, homogenized with a mortar and pestle, and about 1 mg was placed into a silver cup. Two to three drops of 5 % HCl were added to decarbonate the sample, and the cups were allowed to dry in an oven overnight, after which they were folded closed. Tissue  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  was measured on the EA-IRMS described above. Using this  
180 same instrument and method, Verheyden et al. (2005) reported a long-term analytical precision for  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  of 0.08 ‰ on 214 analyses of the IAEA-CH-6 standard ( $1\sigma$ ). Particulate matter and sediment  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  were analyzed following standard procedures similar to that described above (see also Lorrain et al., 2003; Bouillon et al., 2004; Gillikin et al., 2006).

### 3. Results

All shells, regardless of collection site or time of collection exhibit a large ontogenic decrease in  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{S}$ , up to 4 ‰ (Fig. 2), including the Pliocene shell (Fig. 3, 4). The Pliocene shell did not appear to have undergone isotopic diagenesis, as indicated by both  $\delta^{18}\text{O}_\text{S}$  and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{S}$  being similar to modern shells and not being well correlated ( $R^2 = 0.11$ ) and because pure aragonite (i.e., no calcite) was detected by XRD analysis (see Elorza and Garcia-Garmilla, 1996, 1998, and Labonne and Hillaire-Marcel, 2000 for discussions of diagenetic indicators). The high-resolution profile of shell BS1 is shown in Figure 5.

190 All  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{S}$  data are within the range found in *M. mercenaria* shells by Elliot et al. (2003).

The different tissues from Jarrett Bay clams had significantly different  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  values ( $p < 0.01$  for all), except for mantle ( $-19.1 \pm 0.4$  ‰) and muscle ( $-19.1 \pm 0.4$  ‰) tissues ( $p = 0.74$ ), with gills being the least negative ( $-18.4 \pm 0.4$  ‰) and the foot the most negative ( $-19.5 \pm 0.03$  ‰) (see Table 1). None of the tissues from the Jarrett Bay samples exhibited a correlation with shell height. In contrast, there was a significant strong positive correlation between muscle  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  values and height in the Johnson Creek clams (slope =  $0.048 \pm 0.012$ ,  $R^2 = 0.98$ ,  $p = 0.0011$ ,  $n = 5$ ; Annex A). Three replicate  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{DIC}$  samples taken at Jarrett Bay (Aug. 2004) gave a mean of  $-0.77 \pm 0.2$  ‰, which is similar to the average of 10 samples taken in Aug. 2002 ( $-0.3 \pm 0.6$  ‰; collected on 10 different days between 11 Aug and 28 Aug. 2002; Annex B). The  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  of organic carbon in both sediments ( $-20.3 \pm 0.14$  ‰) and suspended matter ( $-21.5$  ‰) were within 2.5 ‰ of tissues

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(~ -19 ‰) at Jarrett Bay. Hemolymph  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  at Jarrett Bay was negatively correlated with shell height (Fig. 6;  $R^2 = 0.94$ ,  $p = 0.007$ ,  $n = 5$ ), but not with tissue or shell  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  (Table  
210 1). The  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$  samples from Johnson Creek ( $-2.4 \pm 0.26$  ‰;  $n = 3$ ) were more negative than Jarrett Bay; however, this difference was not reflected in the muscle tissues of Johnson Creek clams ( $-18.2 \pm 1.2$  ‰;  $n = 5$ ; Annex A).

#### 4. Discussion

##### 215 4.1 $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$ through ontogeny

All *M. mercenaria* shells investigated showed a clear ontogenic decrease in  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$  (Figs. 2-5, 7). The high resolution profiles show the intra-annual variability of  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$  can be large, up to 2.4 ‰, but is generally about 1.5 ‰. The standard deviation on annual  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$   
220 is shown in Fig 4, which clearly illustrates that the differences in inter-annual  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$  values are more important than the intra-annual variability. This is also evident in data presented in Elliot et al. (2003; see their Fig. 4). Therefore the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$  decrease through time is not an artifact of the sampling methodology.

##### 225 4.2 Causes of $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$ decrease through ontogeny

There are several potential causes for the decrease in  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$ ; however, kinetic effects can most definitely be ruled out. Kinetic effects result in a good, positive correlation between  $\delta^{18}\text{O}_S$  and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$  (McConnaughey, 1989), which has not been observed in *M. mercenaria*  
230 shells (Elliot et al., 2003; Gillikin, 2005; this study). Other possible causes for the

ontogenic decrease in  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{S}$  can be separated into two main categories: changes in environmental  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{DIC}$ , and biological changes resulting in a change in the internal DIC pool. Environmental changes include the Suess effect, caused by increasing amounts of anthropogenic  $^{13}\text{C}$ -depleted  $\text{CO}_2$  in the atmosphere, which leads to more negative  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{DIC}$  in seawater. This phenomenon has been recorded in sclerosponge skeletons (e.g., Druffel and Benavides, 1986; Lazareth et al., 2000), but the change in seawater  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{DIC}$  over the past 50 years is on the order of 0.5 ‰, far less than the changes observed in these shells (up to 4 ‰). Additionally, similar decreases in  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{S}$  are noted regardless of whether the clam was collected in 1980 or 2003 (Fig. 2), and the ontogenic decrease is also evident in the Pliocene shell (Fig. 3), which grew well before anthropogenic  $\text{CO}_2$  inputs were present. Thus, a secular change of seawater  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{DIC}$  is obviously not the dominant cause. Another possibility is that the clams may live deeper in the sediment as they age and utilize a more negative environmental  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{DIC}$  source, as suggested by Keller et al. (2002) and Elliot et al. (2003). Indeed, strong gradients in pore water  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{DIC}$  have been observed within the initial 5 cm of sediment due to the remineralization of organic matter (up to  $-1 \text{ ‰ cm}^{-1}$ ; McCorkle et al., 1985). However, this is probably not a cause, as Roberts et al. (1989) found that the depth of *M. mercenaria* in the sediment was independent of clam size (they are all just below the surface when feeding and calcifying). Thus different size classes can be considered to use similar water sources as all size classes siphon water at the sediment-water interface. Moreover, as *M. mercenaria* have high pumping rates (Hamwi and Haskin, 1969), it can be assumed that they utilize water well above the pore water and sediment-water interface and therefore their shells should not be greatly influenced by processes affecting  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{DIC}$  in the sediments. Some

255 authors have suggested that infaunal bivalves are more depleted in  $^{13}\text{C}$  relative to epifaunal bivalves (Krantz et al., 1987). However, other species of both epifaunal (e.g., Lorrain et al., 2004; Gillikin et al. 2006) and infaunal bivalves (e.g., Gillikin et al. 2005a) have been shown to incorporate less than 10%  $C_M$ . Thus, the most probable cause is a change in the internal DIC pool, which is strongly supported by the negative relationship between shell height and hemolymph  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  (Fig. 6).

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A change in the internal DIC pool could be due to differences in  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_R$  caused by food sources with different  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  signatures. However, in this study, tissue  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  and shell height (or age) were generally not correlated. Although some tissue  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  data had a positive relationship with shell height, this is opposite to what is observed in the shells (i.e., a negative correlation between shell  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  and shell height). Thus, a change in food as the animal ages is not likely the cause of the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  trend in the shells. Since lipids have a lighter  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  signal than other biochemical components (Tieszen et al., 1983), changes in lipid metabolism can also result in changes in  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_R$ , but this would be expected to be reflected in the tissue  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ , which it is not. Moreover, lipid content has been shown to be 270 low in *M. mercenaria* tissues, only changing the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  value of tissues by  $\sim 0.5\%$  (O'Donnell et al., 2003). pH can also affect  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$ , with increasing pH resulting in decreasing  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$ , as has been observed in foraminifera (Spero et al., 1997). However, internal pH has been shown to decrease in older bivalves (Sukhotin and Pörtner, 2001), which would lead to an increase in  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$ .

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Lorrain et al. (2004) proposed that the increase of absolute metabolic rate in bivalves as shell-growth rate slows with age, leads to a larger availability of metabolic C for  $\text{CaCO}_3$  precipitation through ontogeny. In other words, as the animal ages and the carbon availability from seawater remains constant, there is an increase in metabolic  $\text{CO}_2$  production which is larger than the carbon demand for calcification, resulting in a larger amount of metabolic C available in the internal DIC pool. This can be simply expressed by a ratio of respired to precipitated carbon (see Lorrain et al., 2004) which increases through age. We therefore expect this ratio of respired to precipitated carbon also to increase through ontogeny in *M. mercenaria*. *M. mercenaria* has been shown to have a high metabolic rate compared to other bivalves (Hamwi and Haskin, 1969). This high metabolic rate, coupled with slow shell growth at older ages, would result in a very high ratio of respired to precipitated carbon and would account for the unusually large ontogenetic  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{S}$  decrease of up to 4‰. Larger metabolic carbon availability with age should lead to a decrease in the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  value of calcifying fluids because the metabolic carbon is more depleted in  $^{13}\text{C}$  compared to DIC. The negative relationship observed between shell height and hemolymph  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  in this study (Fig. 6) proves for the first time that there is effectively a decrease in  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  of internal fluids with age (or shell height), which seems to confirm the findings of Lorrain et al. (2004).

However, a simple mixture between seawater  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{DIC}$  and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{R}$  might not be occurring. The hemolymph data presented here are similar to seawater  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{DIC}$  in an individual 66 mm in height (Fig. 6), whereas  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_\text{S}$  already decreases with height in individuals with smaller shell sizes (Fig. 5). Furthermore, although carbon species seem to be freely

exchangeable between the extrapallial fluid (EPF; where calcification occurs) and  
300 hemolymph (Greenaway, 1971; Wilbur and Saleuddin, 1983), hemolymph  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  may not  
be a good proxy of the EPF  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ . The hemolymph is separated from the EPF by a  
membrane, where enzymatic reactions (e.g., carbonic anhydrase activity) facilitate  $\text{CO}_2$   
diffusion into the EPF (see Crenshaw, 1980; McConnaughey, 1989; Cohen and  
McConnaughey, 2003), which may be associated with kinetic fractionations, and thus  
305 change the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  value. Hemolymph  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  probably can be carried over to the EPF, just not  
necessarily in absolute terms. Indeed, in an experimental study in a rainbow trout,  
Solomon et al. (2005) found a large difference between blood and endolymph  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  values  
- which are internal fluids in fish equivalent to hemolymph and EPF in bivalves -  
suggesting that fractionation might occur between these internal fluids. In any case, our  
310  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  hemolymph data generally agree with the respiratory gas-exchange model of  
McConnaughey et al. (1997), where they state that ~90 % of the  $\text{CO}_2$  inside aquatic  
invertebrates is derived from the water and ~10 % from respiration (our data range from  
~0 % to ~10 %  $\text{CO}_2$  in hemolymph derived from respiration; calculated using:  $[\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC-hemolymph}} - \delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC-water}}] / [\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{R}} - \delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC-water}}]$ ). It is possible that during calcification the  
315 metabolic  $\text{CO}_2$  is preferentially used over bicarbonate from seawater because it more  
easily can cross biological membranes. Moreover, we cannot rule out the possibility that  
the EPF may actually have more contact with ambient interstitial fluids than does the  
hemolymph. Both of these possibilities could explain why the shell is apparently  
precipitated from a significantly more negative fluid.

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Considering that the hemolymph data cannot be directly related to the shell, the best standing model to calculate the amount of metabolic C ( $C_M$ ) in the shell is given by McConnaughey et al. (1997):

$$325 \quad \%C_M * (\delta^{13}C_R) + (1 - \%C_M) * \delta^{13}C_{DIC} = \delta^{13}C_s - \epsilon_{ar-b} \quad (1)$$

where  $\%C_M$  is the percent metabolic  $CO_2$  contribution,  $\epsilon_{ar-b}$  is the enrichment factor between aragonite and bicarbonate (2.7 ‰ from Romanek et al., 1992), and  $\delta^{13}C_R$  is approximated from tissue  $\delta^{13}C$ . Although we only have  $\delta^{13}C_{DIC}$  from late summer, the  
330 temporal variability in  $\delta^{13}C_{DIC}$  should not be too large as is evidenced by the similarity of the samples taken in Jarrett Bay on separate years. Also, August rainfall (153 mm) is between the annual average ( $113 \pm 27$  mm) and maximum rainfall (170 mm) and therefore  $\delta^{13}C_{DIC}$  should not be largely impacted by freshwater runoff. Moreover, despite the fact that Elliot et al. (2003) collected their shells from sites near and far from  
335 freshwater inputs, they noted similar  $\delta^{13}C_s$  values. Nevertheless, absolute  $\%C_M$  values may be over or under estimated, but the general pattern of decreasing  $\delta^{13}C_s$  seen in shells from all three sites and in the Pliocene shell (Fig. 7) would not be largely affected. In the future, similar studies would greatly benefit from high resolution  $\delta^{13}C_{DIC}$  data.

340 At the Jarrett Bay site, where we had corresponding tissue, water and shell data (shells from this site do not represent an annual average, but are sampled from there most recently formed shell material), eq. 1 gave results ranging from 15.8 to 37.8  $\%C_M$ , with a linear relationship between shell height and  $\%C_M$  (Fig. 8). The  $\delta^{13}C$  values from the



muscle tissue were used in these calculations for two reasons: 1) the muscle has the  
345 slowest turnover time, so it integrates the longest time period (see Lorrain et al., 2002);  
and 2) it has the same  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  value as the mantle tissue, which is closest to the calcification  
site and should have the largest effect on the internal DIC pool.

For the Johnson Creek and Back Sound sites, we do not have tissue or water data to  
350 match our carbonate samples for each year. In this case, we used the data recently  
collected from Johnson Creek and applied them to the entire Johnson Creek dataset (i.e.,  
 $\delta^{13}\text{C}_R = -18.2\text{‰}$  and  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}} = -2.4\text{‰}$ ). Water properties for Back Sound were assumed:  
water at the Back Sound site exchanges with the open ocean (Peterson and Fegley, 1986),  
so should have a  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$  value closer to oceanic values. Thus we assume  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}} = -0.5$   
355  $\text{‰}$  and tissues =  $-19\text{‰}$  (i.e., the mean of the tissues from the Jarrett Bay site) at the Back  
Sound site. A maximum error of  $\sim 1\text{‰}$  can be expected from these assumptions, which  
would change  $\%C_M$  by  $\sim 5\%$  for a  $1\text{‰}$  change in  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$  and  $\sim 1\%$  for a  $1\text{‰}$  change in  
 $\delta^{13}\text{C}_R$  (i.e.,  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  of tissues). Using eq. 1 and the assumptions listed above results in  $\%C_M$   
values ranging from  $7.4\%$  to  $31.4\%$  for the Back Sound and Johnson Creek shells (Fig.  
360 8). Correcting for the correlation between tissue  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  and shell height found in Johnson  
Creek clams (see results), only changes  $\%C_M$  by a maximum of  $2.3\%$ . The change in  
tissue  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  with shell height (slope =  $+0.05 \pm 0.01$ ) may be due to larger individuals  
including microphytobenthos in their diet, which have heavier  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  values ( $\sim -15\text{‰}$ ,  
Middelburg et al., 2000; Herman et al., 2000) compared to phytoplankton ( $\sim -20\text{‰}$ , see  
365 Gillikin et al., 2006), or simply due to aging of the tissues (*cf.* Overman and Parrish,

2001). Nevertheless, the change in tissue  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  does not contribute greatly to the  $\%C_M$  in the shell.

At all sites, the  $\%C_M$  ranges are substantially higher than the proposed 10 %  
370 (McConnaughey et al., 1997), even when considering possible errors. Furthermore, there is a linear relationship between  $\%C_M$  and shell height (Fig. 8), with no significant difference between the slopes or intercepts of the Back Sound and Johnson Creek datasets ( $p > 0.05$ ). The Jarrett Bay data had a similar slope to the other sites ( $p = 0.81$ ), but the intercept is much higher (Fig. 8). This could be the result of different metabolic  
375 rates between the sites (cf. Lorrain et al., 2004; Gillikin et al., 2006) or errors in assumed environmental variables. Interestingly, the similarity in slopes suggests that the age effect between different populations with apparently different  $\%C_M$  incorporation is general, with a change in  $\%C_M$  of +0.19 % per mm of shell height. Moreover, the shell Elliot et al. (2003) sampled from Hatteras Inlet, North Carolina (~100 km northeast of this study) had  
380 the same slope of +0.19  $\%C_M$  per mm of shell height ( $\%C_M$  ranged from 8 to 21% assuming similar conditions to Back Sound, but note that the slope is independent of these assumptions).

#### 4.3 *Can the metabolic effect be accounted for?*

385

Being able to predict the contribution of metabolic carbon in the shell carbonate of mollusks would be of great value for reconstructing environmental conditions. With known  $\%C_M$ ,  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$ , and tissue  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ , eq. 1 can be used to calculate  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$  at the time the

shell grew. Although tissue  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  would not be available for fossil or specimens collected  
390 in the past, the shell organic matter  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  could be used as a proxy of tissue  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ .  
O'Donnell et al. (2003) found that the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  value of organic matter extracted from *M.*  
*mercenaria* shells was indistinguishable from tissue  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ . However, the predictability of  
 $\%C_M$  from shell height is weak, with an  $R^2$  of 0.48 for Back Sound and Johnson Creek  
shells and 0.64 for Jarrett Bay shells. We attempted to improve the linear model by  
395 including several biometric parameters in addition to total shell height (i.e., a multiple  
linear regression with annual growth-increment height, calculated annual growth  
increment weight, and age), but they did not improve the model by more than 4 %. For  
example, combining age and height from the Johnson Creek and Back Sound datasets to  
predict  $\%C_M$  resulted in the highest  $R^2$  (0.52). Additionally, the large difference in  
400 intercepts between the two regressions shown in Figure 8 suggests that there is no general  
relationship between height and  $\%C_M$ . Thus, unfortunately, there is too much  
unexplained variability in the data and apparently large differences in metabolic rates (or  
other factors) between sites, making  $\%C_M$  predictions difficult and back calculating  
 $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$  highly uncertain. However, as suggested by Lorrain et al. (2004),  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_S$  may  
405 provide information about metabolic rates for different populations of marine mollusks.

## 5. Summary and recommendations for future research

This study has shown that a large amount of metabolic carbon (as much as 25 - 40%) can  
410 be present in bivalve shells and complicate the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  record in the shell. This is the first  
time such a large amount of metabolic carbon has been reported in a bivalve shell.

Moreover, the hemolymph  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  data confirm an increase in metabolic carbon availability through ontogeny and support the hypothesis of Lorrain et al. (2004) - that size of the bivalve plays an important role in the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  record in the shell. Unfortunately, we were  
415 unable to use simple shell biometrics to account for this metabolic contribution to the shell. Our results show that using shell  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  as a proxy for  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$  can lead to erroneous conclusions.

This work highlights the point that more research is necessary to determine fractionations  
420 at each step from carbon source to shell. The different compartments such as hemolymph and EPF need to be better characterized. Controlled laboratory experiments, where environmental parameters can be varied (such as  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$ ,  $\text{CO}_2/\text{O}_2$  ratios,  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  of food, etc.) and removed (such as a possible pore-water source) would be very beneficial.

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**Table 1.** Carbon isotope data ( $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ ) from hemolymph DIC and various tissues from 12 *M.*

615

*mercenaria* collected in Jarrett Bay on 17 Aug 2004.  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$  of water collected near the sediment – water interface was  $-0.77 \pm 0.2 \text{ ‰}$  at the time of sampling.

Shell height (mm)	Hemolymph (‰)	Gill (‰)	Mantle (‰)	Muscle (‰)	Foot (‰)	Shell edge (‰)	%C <sub>M</sub> shell	%C <sub>M</sub> hemo.
99.2	-2.5	-18.5	-19.2	-19.0	-19.0	-5.0	37.8	9.8
96.0	-2.7	-18.5	-18.5	-19.0	-19.2	-4.6	35.7	10.7
85.1	-2.2	-18.8	-19.3	-19.3	-19.6	-3.4	28.8	7.9
68.0	-1.1	-18.8	-19.1	-19.3	-19.7	-4.2	33.3	2.0
66.5	-0.7	-18.5	-19.3	-19.3	-19.5	-5.0	37.5	0.0
65.0		-18.2	-18.9	-18.9	-19.1	-3.7	30.9	
48.1		-18.4	-19.4	-19.1	-19.6	-2.5	24.2	
48.0		-18.4	-18.8	-19.0	-19.6	-3.9	32.1	
46.3		-19.0	-19.7	-19.6	-19.9	-5.9	41.8	
39.0		-18.0	-18.8	-18.8	-19.6	-3.2	28.7	
36.0		-17.7	-18.6	-18.2	-18.9	-2.0	22.5	
35.5		-18.3	-19.5	-19.3	-19.7	-3.2	27.7	
	Average	$-18.4 \pm 0.4$	$-19.1 \pm 0.4$	$-19.1 \pm 0.4$	$-19.4 \pm 0.3$			

## Figure legends

**Figure 1.** Shell collection sites in eastern North Carolina, near Cape Lookout (BS: Back  
620 Sound, JC: Johnson Creek, JB: Jarrett Bay).

**Figure 2.** Annual shell  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  from *Mercenaria mercenaria* shells collected at two sites (Johnson  
Creek, JC shells and Back Sound, BS shells) plotted versus year showing the clear ontogenic  
decrease. The samples from Jarrett Bay (each 'x' represents the most recent shell material from a  
625 different clam) are also shown here for comparison.

**Figure 3.** High resolution  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_s$  (solid circles) and  $\delta^{18}\text{O}_s$  (open circles) data from a Pliocene  
*Mercenaria mercenaria* shell plotted versus distance from the umbo. The dashed lines illustrate  
the separation between different growth years. The  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_s$  data was averaged between these marks  
630 (see Fig. 4).

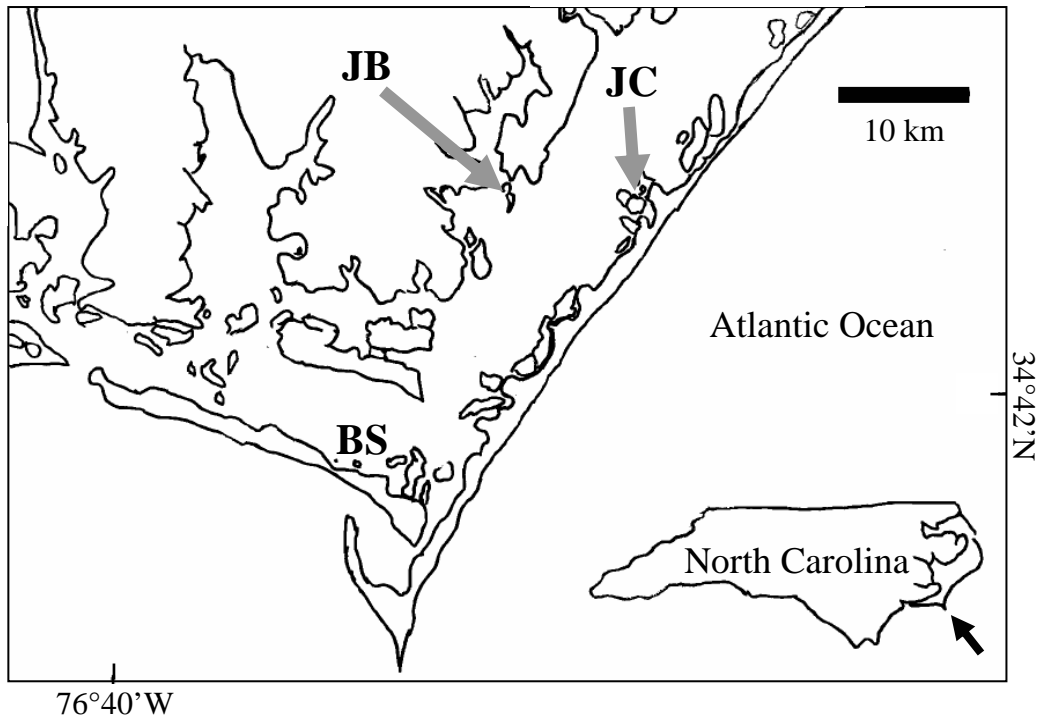
**Figure 4.** Average and standard deviation of annual  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_s$  data from the Pliocene *Mercenaria*  
*mercenaria* shell (data in Fig. 3). Age of the samples were estimated from growth lines on the  
shell and  $\delta^{18}\text{O}_s$  (see Fig 3).  
635

**Figure 5.** High resolution  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_s$  (solid circles) and  $\delta^{18}\text{O}_s$  (open circles) data from shell BS1 (Back  
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was averaged between these marks.  
640

**Figure 6.**  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  values of filtered *Mercenaria mercenaria* hemolymph samples from Jarrett Bay plotted versus shell height (H in mm) (closed circles) with the linear relationship: hemolymph  $\delta^{13}\text{C} = -0.055 (\pm 0.027) * H + 2.35 (\pm 2.28) (R^2 = 0.93, p < 0.01, n = 5 \text{ clams})$ . The mean  $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$  value of the water where the clams were collected is also given (horizontal solid line) with the standard deviation (horizontal dashed line). The complete dataset is available in Table 1.

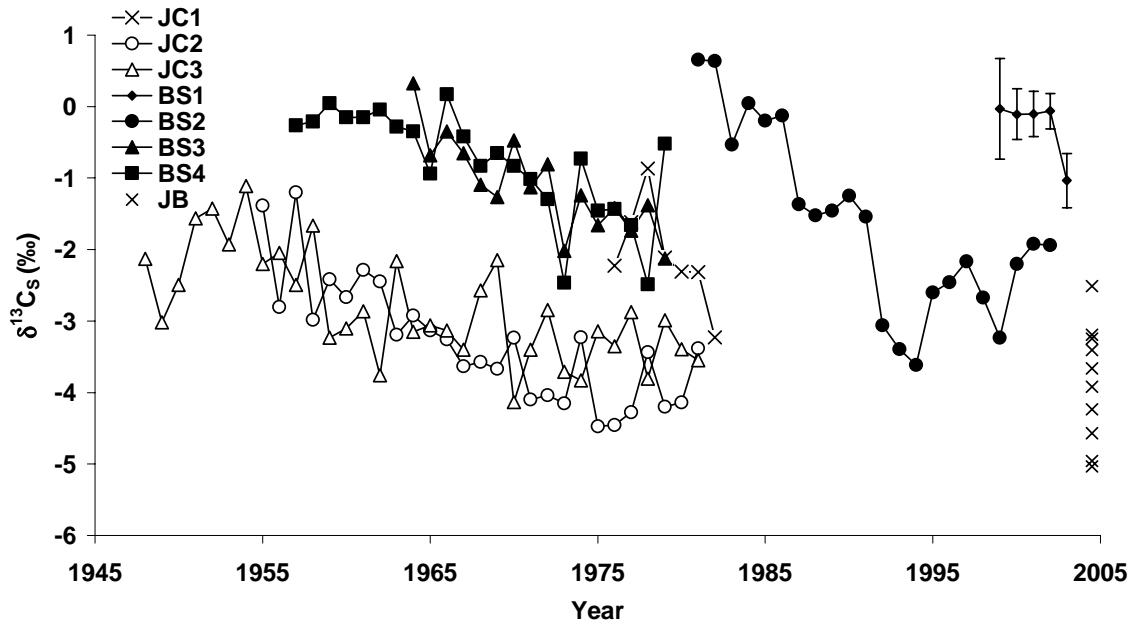
**Figure 7.** Annual shell  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  from *Mercenaria mercenaria* shells collected at two sites (Johnson Creek, JC shells and Back Sound, BS shells) plotted versus shell height. Data from Jarrett Bay (JB) shells are also given, but it should be noted that these samples represent less than one year (i.e., only the most recent shell material was sampled) and thus are expected to have a higher variability than the other shells which integrate a full year of growth. Each data point from JB is a different shell. Data from the Pliocene shell (P1; annual average) are also shown.

**Figure 8.** Percent metabolic C ( $\%C_M$ ) incorporated into *Mercenaria mercenaria* shells plotted versus shell height (H in mm). Data are from Jarrett Bay clams where tissue, water and the most recent shell material were sampled for each shell, and the annual  $\%C_M$  incorporated into *M. mercenaria* shells collected at the other two sites (Johnson Creek, JC shells and Back Sound, BS shells). The slope and intercept were not significantly different between the JC and BS shells ( $p \geq 0.9$ ). The linear relationship for the combined Johnson Creek and Back Sound datasets is  $\%C_M = 0.190 (\pm 0.035) * H + 7.65 (\pm 2.25) (p < 0.0001, n = 129, R^2 = 0.48)$ . The Jarrett Bay relationship is  $\%C_M = 0.187 (\pm 0.092) * H + 18.92 (\pm 5.65) (p < 0.001, n = 13, R^2 = 0.64)$ . The slopes between the two regressions (combined JC and BS and JB) are not statistically different ( $p = 0.81$ ).

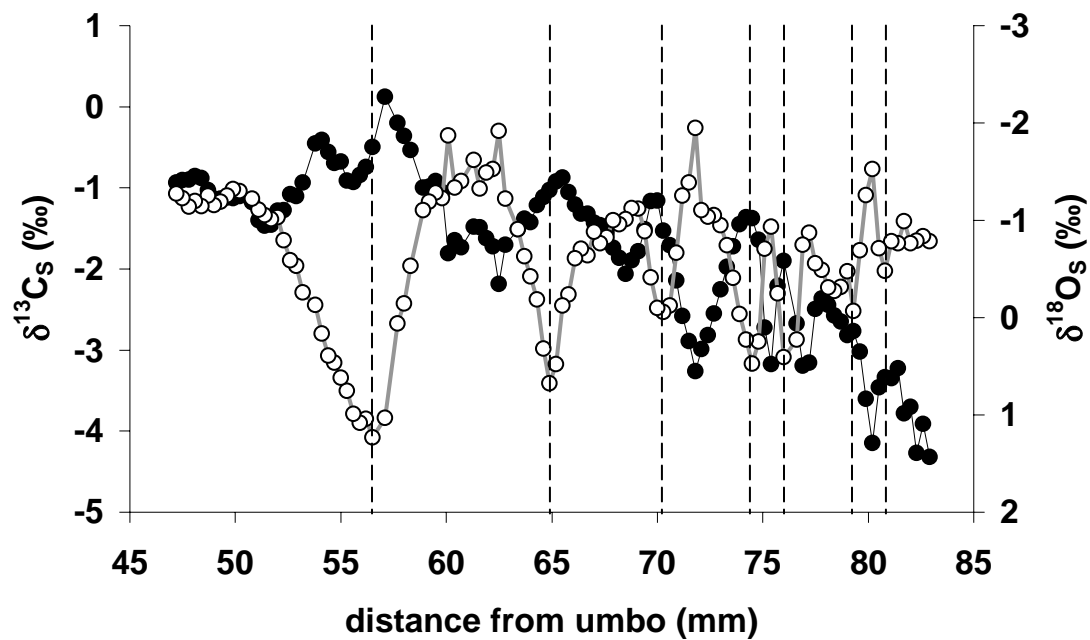


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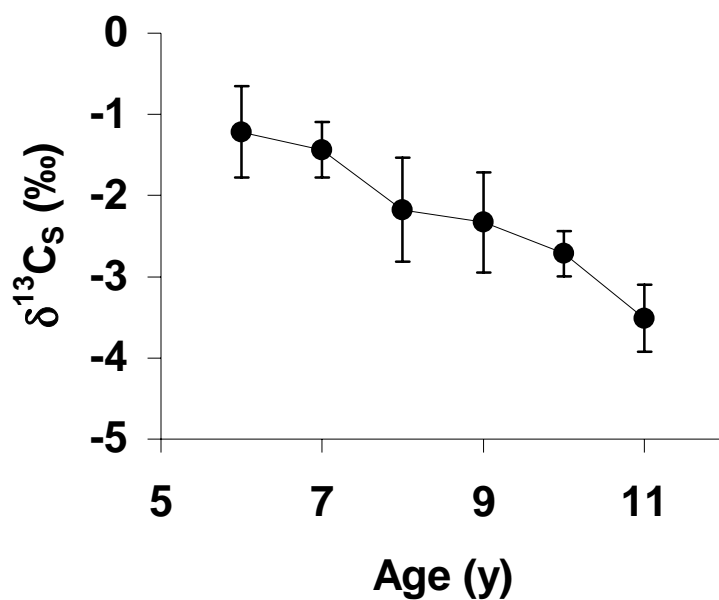




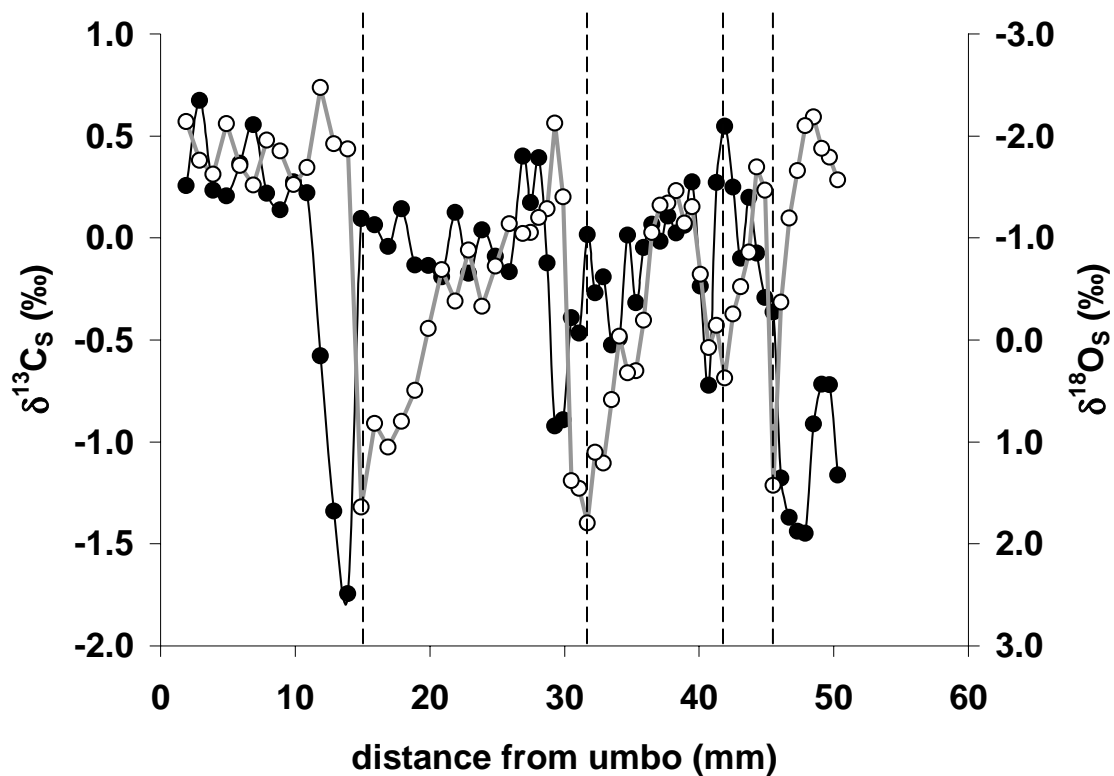
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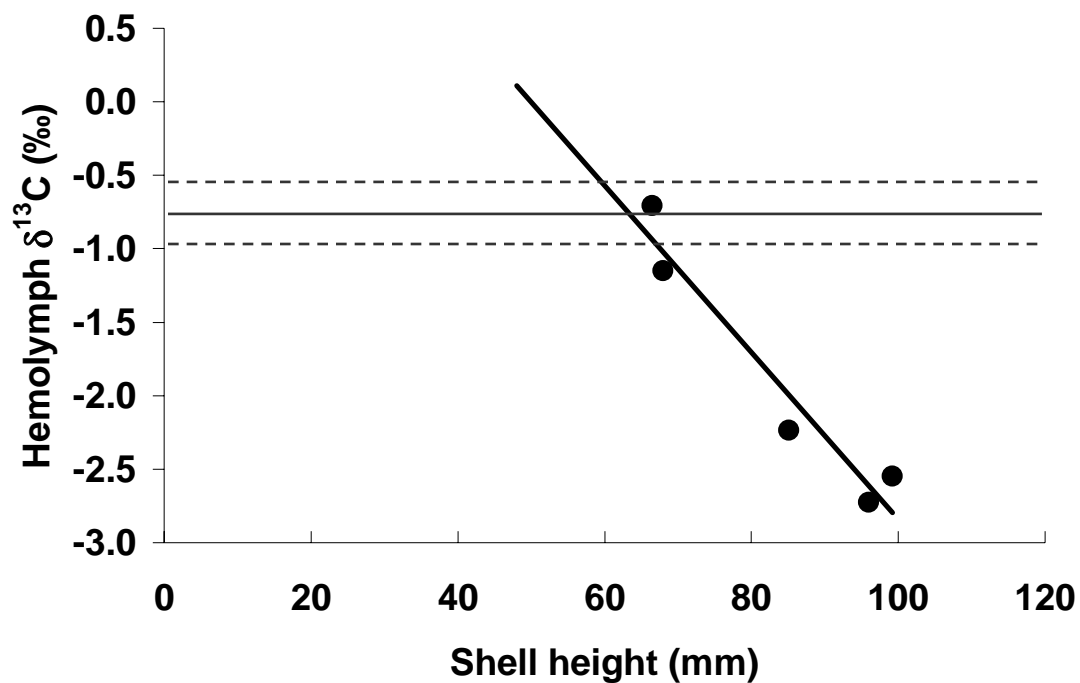
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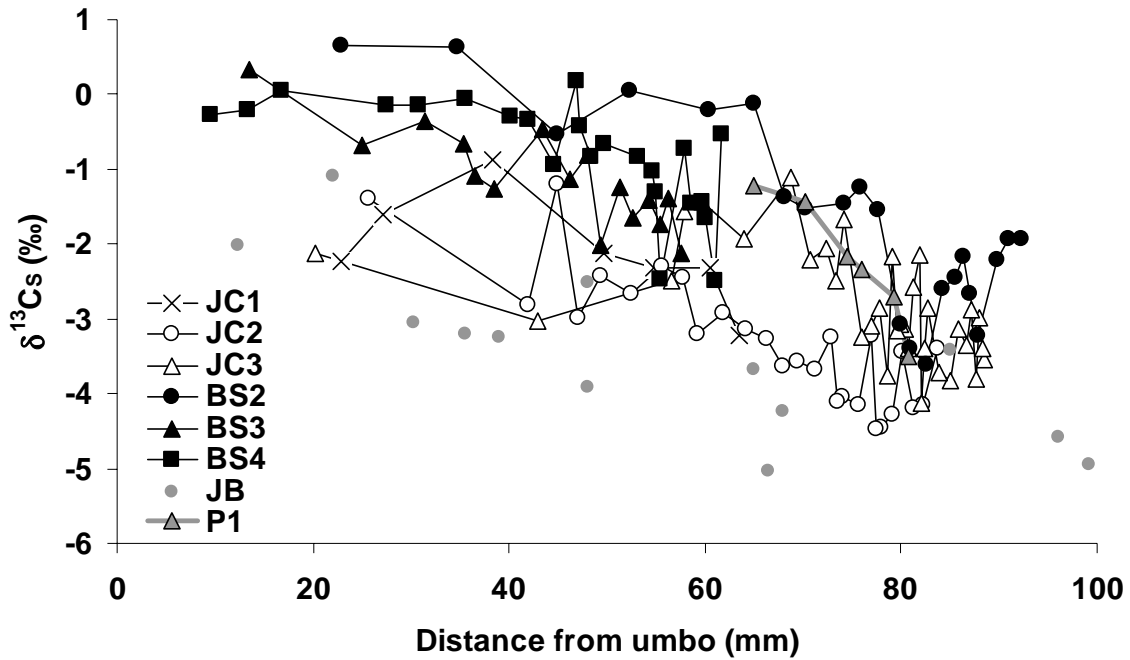
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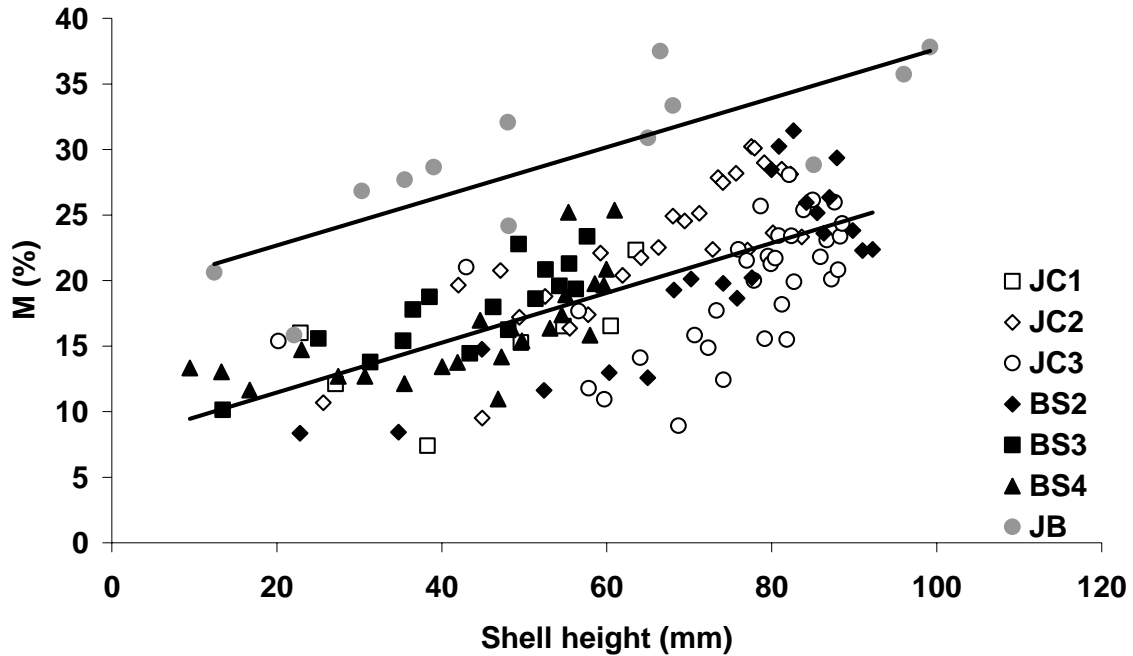
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