

1 **A simple optical index shows spatial and temporal**
2 **heterogeneity in phytoplankton community composition**
3 **during the 2008 North Atlantic Bloom**

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14
15 **Abstract**

16 The ratio of two *in situ* optical measurements, chlorophyll fluorescence (*Chl F*) and optical
17 particulate backscattering (b_{bp}), varied with changes in phytoplankton community composition
18 during the North Atlantic Bloom experiment in the Iceland Basin in 2008. Using ship-based
19 measurements of *Chl F*, b_{bp} , chlorophyll *a* (*Chl*), HPLC pigments, phytoplankton composition
20 and carbon biomass, we found that oscillations in the ratio varied with changes in plankton
21 community composition; hence we refer to $Chl F/b_{bp}$ as an “optical community index”. The
22 index varied by more than a factor of two, with low values associated with pico- and
23 nanophytoplankton and high values associated with diatom dominated phytoplankton
24 communities. Observed changes in optical index were driven by taxa-specific chlorophyll-to-
25 autotrophic carbon ratios and by physiological changes in *Chl F* driven by the silica limitation. A
26 Lagrangian mixed-layer float and four Seagliders, operating continuously for two months, made
27 similar measurements of the optical community index and followed the evolution and later

1 demise of the diatom spring bloom. Temporal changes in optical community index and, by
2 implication the transition in community composition from diatom to post-diatom bloom
3 communities, were not simultaneous over the spatial domain surveyed by the ship, float and
4 gliders. The ratio of simple optical properties measured from autonomous platforms, when
5 carefully validated, provides a unique tool for studying phytoplankton patchiness on extended
6 temporal scales and ecologically relevant spatial scales, and should offer new insights into the
7 processes regulating patchiness.

8

9 **1 Introduction**

10 Autonomous observations of phytoplankton are becoming increasingly ubiquitous, including *in*
11 *situ* optical sensing from Argo-type and Lagrangian floats, gliders, and moorings, as well as
12 remote sensing from space. Phytoplankton biomass is assessed through several different optical
13 proxies including *in situ* chlorophyll *a* fluorescence (*Chl F*; Lorenzen, 1966), phytoplankton
14 absorption coefficient ($a_{phy}(\lambda)$) or particulate absorption coefficient in waters dominated by
15 phytoplankton (Bricaud et al., 1995; Roesler and Barnard, 2014), and chlorophyll derived from
16 *in situ* or remotely-sensed ocean reflectance at visible wavelengths (O'Reilly et al., 1998). High-
17 frequency optical measurements are ideal for detecting temporal change and spatial patchiness,
18 and in improving understanding of the role of meso- and submeso-scale physics on the
19 distribution of phytoplankton in the ocean (Denman and Platt, 1976; Yoder et al., 1987; Munk,
20 2000). Autonomous optical observations have enabled advances in understanding the timing of
21 and mechanisms responsible for initiating blooms (Perry et al., 2008; Boss and Behrenfeld, 2010;
22 Ryan et al., 2011; Mahadevan et al., 2012; Matrai et al., 2013).

23 Less common, more challenging, but increasingly important are autonomous measurements of
24 phytoplankton community composition. Knowledge of the community composition is critical to
25 understanding and predicting vital ecosystem functions such as carbon flux and efficiency of
26 carbon transfer to higher trophic levels (biomass is not enough), particularly as the oceans
27 change in response to climate change and ocean acidification. A few direct autonomous
28 measurements of phytoplankton community composition have been made, but only on moorings
29 due to the high power consumption of the flow or imaging-in-flow cytometric sensors (Olson
30 and Sosik, 2007; Sosik and Olson, 2007; Campbell et al., 2013). A diversity of satellite-based

1 algorithms for determining phytoplankton functional types from ocean color reflectance has been
2 developed in the last decade (see review of Moisan et al., 2012), although without community
3 consensus as to robustness. Nencioli et al. (2010) implied that changes in the ratio of *Chl*-to-
4 particulate beam attenuation coefficient (c_p) and the backscattering ratio (b_{bp}/b_p , where b_{bp} is total
5 particulate scattering coefficient and b_p is backscattering coefficient) are associated with changes
6 in phytoplankton composition and physiological (light) adaptation in eddies off Hawaii. In a
7 mooring study of the spring bloom in the Labrador Sea, change in phytoplankton species
8 composition is offered as the explanation for the observed variability in $Chl F/c_p$, although this
9 suggestion is unconfirmed by *in situ* measurement of species composition (Strutton et al., 2011).

10 In this study we define an “optical community index” as the ratio $Chl F$ -to- b_{bp} and connect it to
11 plankton community composition using ship-based measurements of $Chl F$, b_{bp} , HPLC pigments,
12 phytoplankton composition, and carbon biomass during two cruises to the Iceland Basin. For two
13 months during the 2008 North Atlantic Bloom experiment (NAB 2008), we used a Lagrangian
14 float as the reference frame to track the initiation of the diatom bloom in mid-April, through
15 depletion of silicic acid and bloom termination in mid-May. The optical index, $Chl F/b_{bp}$, varied
16 as a function of plankton community composition, decreasing by a factor of two as the early
17 diatom spring bloom community transitioned into a recycling community dominated by smaller
18 pico- and nanophytoplankton (Cetinić et al., 2012). Rigorous cross-calibration of optical sensors
19 amongst all platforms enabled us to project the optical community index to data collected by four
20 Seagliders. This is, to our knowledge, first attempt of its kind to use such approach to construct a
21 spatial time series of the evolution of phytoplankton community structure and to document its
22 spatial heterogeneity. This approach, of using simple optical measurements validated with more
23 expensive ship-based measurements, allows projection of the ship measurements to broader
24 temporal and spatial scales.

25

26 **2 Material and methods**

27 **2.1 Study site and platforms**

28 A Lagrangian float and four Seagliders were deployed near the JGOFS NABE 60°N site
29 (Ducklow and Harris, 1993) from the *R/S Bjarni Saemundsson* on yearday, YD, 95 (4 April

1 2008; Fig. 1; (Briggs et al., 2011; Alkire et al., 2012; Mahadevan et al., 2012). The float tracked
2 the horizontal motion of the mixed layer for almost two months, until the end of its mission on
3 YD 146 (25 May 2008). An extensive discussion of the evolution of the bloom in the patch
4 tracked by the float is provided in Alkire et al. (2012). The gliders were piloted to survey an
5 approximately 50 km region around the float. Depending on currents and eddies, they
6 occasionally swept further away (up to 175 km from the float). By the end of the float
7 deployment in late May, they operated within 50 km of the float. A water sampling and sensor
8 inter-calibration cruise on the *R/V Knorr* occurred between YD 123 –142 (2 – 21 May 2008),
9 when the ship surveyed waters in proximity of the float and gliders.

10 The Lagrangian float, designed and built at the University of Washington Applied Physics
11 Laboratory, was similar to the MLFII model described in D'Asaro (2003). The float's deployment
12 and sampling strategy, detailed in Alkire et al. (2012), were designed to mimic the motion of
13 plankton, drifting within the mixed layer; once per day (~ 15 UTC) it profiled from the surface to
14 a depth of ~ 230 m, returning thereafter to the mixed-layer drift mode. The float measured
15 temperature and conductivity with two CTD sensors (Sea-Bird Electronics, Inc., SBE 41), one
16 near the top and another near the bottom of the platform (see list of measured parameters and
17 associated methods in the Table 1). A WET Labs FLNTU mounted at the bottom of the float
18 measured *Chl F* ($\lambda_{\text{ex}}=470$ nm, $\lambda_{\text{em}}=700$ nm) and optical backscattering ($\lambda=700$ nm) at an angle, θ ,
19 of 140°. Photosynthetically active radiation, PAR (400 – 700 nm), was measured by a
20 downwelling cosine PAR sensor (LI-COR 192-SA) mounted at the top of the float.

21 Seagliders, autonomous underwater vehicles designed for long ocean deployments, move
22 forward horizontally while gliding vertically in a sawtooth pattern (Eriksen et al., 2001). Four
23 Seagliders (SG140, SG141, SG142 and SG143) were deployed during this experiment, with an
24 adaptive mission to follow the Lagrangian float on its path and provide measurements on larger
25 spatial scales and to depths of 1,000 m. All gliders were equipped with an unpumped custom
26 Sea-Bird Electronics, Inc., CT sensor that measured conductivity and temperature and carried a
27 WET Labs BB2F that measured backscattering at two wavelengths (470 and 700 nm; $\theta=124^\circ$)
28 and *Chl F* ($\lambda_{\text{ex}}=470$ nm, $\lambda_{\text{em}}=700$ nm).

29 Extensive surveys around the float and glider deployment area were carried out during a three-
30 week process cruise aboard the *R/V Knorr*, with 134 CTD profiles. The CTD rosette was

1 equipped with a Sea-Bird Electronics, Inc., SBE 911*plus* CTD. A WET Labs FLNTU (similar to
2 that on the float) was mounted on the bottom of the frame. A Biospherical QSP2300 sensor
3 mounted on the top of the CTD rosette frame measured scalar underwater PAR. The same set of
4 optical sensors was used during the short, six-day deployment cruise aboard the *R/S Bjarni*
5 *Saemundsson*; fewer profiles and samples were collected during this cruise (9 CTD profiles).

6 All data used in this paper and the cited calibration reports are available under the project name
7 NAB 2008 from the Biological and Chemical Oceanography Data Management Office (BCO-
8 DMO, at <http://osprey.bcodmo.org/project.cfm?flag=view&id=102&sortby=project>).

9 **2.2 In situ optical measurements and sensor inter-calibration procedure**

10 *Chl F* and b_{bp} were measured on the float, four gliders and ship, with a total of six sensors (two
11 FLNTUs and four BB2Fs). The ship's FLNTU was used as the primary reference sensor to
12 which the autonomous sensors were brought into alignment via *in situ* inter-calibrations. All
13 sensors were factory calibrated before and after the cruise *en masse* (with the exception of
14 sensors on SG142, which was not retrieved). Dark readings (voltage) for both channels of the
15 ship's FLNTU sensor were measured *in situ* by covering the detector window with black
16 electrical tape on two profiles to 600 m, as suggested by Twardowski et al. (2007); these *in situ*
17 dark measurements agreed with the mean factory dark volts. Prior to inter-calibration, mean pre-
18 and post-deployment factory calibrations were applied to all sensors to convert *Chl F* into
19 nominal *Chl* concentration and scattering measurements to the volume scattering function, β_{total}
20 $(\theta, 700 \text{ nm})$, which was converted to b_{bp} as follows. The volume scattering function of seawater,
21 $\beta_{sw}(\theta, 700 \text{ nm})$, calculated following Zhang et al. (2009), was subtracted from $\beta_{total}(\theta, 700 \text{ nm})$ to
22 yield the volume scattering function of particles, $\beta_p(\theta, 700 \text{ nm})$, which was then converted to b_{bp}
23 by multiplying $\beta_p(\theta, 700 \text{ nm})$ by $2\pi\chi$, using χ factors of 1.132 for FLNTU and 1.077 for BB2F
24 (Sullivan et al., 2013).

25 Offsets were applied to the factory calibrated glider data to bring the pre-bloom deep values for
26 all gliders into alignment. The autonomous sensors were further aligned with ship sensors using
27 matchups from intentional calibration stations, in which the float or glider was brought to the
28 surface within close proximity to the ship and a CTD cast made as the vehicle descended. A total
29 of 11 float casts and 2-3 casts per glider were made. Profiles were aligned in density coordinate
30 space and ship profiles were interpolated to match the densities of the more sparse autonomous

1 measurements, creating a ship-autonomous sensor matchup for every autonomous measurement
2 from each of the inter-calibration casts. Matchups from float inter-calibration casts were pooled
3 to calculate a single linear regression for each sensor type (*Chl F* and b_{bp}), which were used to
4 align float sensors to the ship. Matchups were insufficient to align each glider to the ship
5 independently, so matchups from all four gliders (already aligned at depth) were pooled to
6 calculate a single regression per sensor type, aligning all gliders with the ship as well. Finally,
7 *Chl F* for all sensors was converted to volts, V (referenced to the ship's FLNTU). More details
8 on the inter-calibration procedures are available in (Briggs et al., 2011) and in the reports
9 available on BCO-DMO (Briggs, 2011).

10 PAR was measured with a LI-COR cosine PAR on the float and a Biospherical scalar PAR on
11 the ship's CTD Rosette frame. Both instruments were factory calibrated prior to the experiment,
12 with NIST traceable calibration lamps; the data reported here are based on factory calibrations
13 only. The float made a single daily vertical profile (~ noon/early afternoon); PAR from this
14 profile was used to derive the diffuse attenuation coefficient, K_d , using all data $> 10 \mu\text{mol}$
15 $\text{photons m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$. K_d was applied to all measurements of PAR acquired during the float's mixed-
16 layer drift mode and extrapolated to the surface to produce hourly subsurface PAR fields from
17 which daily isolumes were computed. The isolume of $0.415 \text{ mol photons m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$ is taken as the
18 radiation level below which net photosynthesis does not occur (Letelier et al., 2004; Boss and
19 Behrenfeld, 2010), and is hereafter referred to as the 0.415 isolume.

20 **2.3 Water samples and laboratory analyses**

21 Water samples were collected from the CTD upcast with 10 L Niskin bottles mounted on the
22 CTD Rosette. Samples for nitrate plus nitrite, hereafter referred as to nitrate, and silicic acid, Si,
23 were collected directly from Niskin bottles into acid-washed LDPE bottles, pre-rinsed three
24 times with sample (Kallin et al., 2011). Unfiltered water samples were frozen immediately after
25 collection and stored at -20°C for up to 8 mo. Samples were thawed in the dark prior to analysis
26 and vigorously vortexed (Gordon et al., 1992) prior to absorptiometric analysis on a Lachat
27 Quickchem 8000 Flow Injection Analysis System (Lachat, 1996, 1999). In addition to quality
28 control of the Lachat output spectra, profiles of Si and nitrate concentrations were examined
29 following the recommendation of the IODE workshop on quality control of chemical
30 oceanographic data (IOC, 2010).

1 Water samples for pigments and spectral absorption coefficients were filtered through Whatman
2 GF/F filters. Samples for fluorometric analysis of *Chl* were extracted in 5 mL of 90% acetone at
3 -20° C for 24 h and analyzed on a Turner Designs Model 10-AU digital fluorometer that was
4 calibrated before and after the field experiment with Turner Designs *Chl* standards. *Chl*
5 concentrations were calculated following JGOFS protocol (Knap et al., 1996). Filters collected
6 for HPLC pigment analysis were stored in liquid nitrogen until analysis (up to 5 mo). Horn Point
7 Laboratories performed HPLC pigment analyses, using a methanol-based reversed-phase
8 gradient C8 chromatography column system and appropriate standards (Van Heukelem and
9 Thomas, 2001; Hooker et al., 2009). Chl_{HPLC} is the sum of *Chl* plus chlorophyllide *a*, with the
10 latter adjusted to *Chl* equivalent mass (x 893.5/614 molecular mass ratio); the ratio of
11 chlorophyllide-to- Chl_{HPLC} is also reported in *Chl* mass equivalents. Filters collected for
12 particulate spectral absorption coefficients were scanned at sea on a Varian Cary 50 UV-Visible
13 spectrophotometer with a xenon flash lamp and a 1.5 nm slit width, following the Mitchell and
14 Kiefer (1988) method. The filters were extracted in hot methanol and re-scanned to measure
15 residual detrital particulate absorption (Kishino et al., 1985). The difference between the total
16 particulate and detrital absorption coefficients was attributed to the phytoplankton absorption
17 coefficient ($a_{phy}(\lambda)$).

18 Microbial plankton cell size and numerical concentrations were determined on fresh samples at
19 sea during the May cruise (Sieracki and Poulton, 2011). Cells smaller than 20 μm were analyzed
20 with a flow cytometer (FACScan, BD Biosciences), using *Chl* and phycoerythrin fluorescence as
21 discriminators for three groups of phytoplankton: eukaryotic pico- and nanophytoplankton,
22 cryptophytes, and prokaryotic *Synechococcus* spp. (*Prochlorococcus* was not observed).
23 Heterotrophic microbes were analyzed on separate subsamples and detected using fluorescent
24 stains; heterotrophic bacteria were stained with PicoGreen – Life Technologies Inc. (Veldhuis et
25 al., 1997) and heterotrophic nanoprotists were stained with LysoTracker Green – Life
26 Technologies Inc. (Rose et al., 2004). Cell size for all these groups was determined from forward
27 scatter, where size and scatter relationships were established with microbead size standards and
28 algal cultures of known cell size (Sieracki and Poulton, 2011). Phytoplankton cell carbon was
29 estimated from cell size following the algorithm of Verity et al. (1992). Cells larger than 20 μm
30 were analyzed using a Fluid Imaging Technologies FlowCAM, with image collection triggered
31 by *Chl F*. Four major sub-groups were identified: diatoms, dinoflagellates (autotrophic and

1 mixotrophic), ciliates, and ‘other’ microphytoplankton. Biovolume estimates were determined
2 following the method of Sieracki et al. (1989), where particle boundary points were found using
3 the Connected Component Labeling algorithm of Chang et al. (2004), as implemented in Burger
4 and Berge (2008). Cell carbon was calculated from derived biovolumes using the algorithms of
5 Menden-Deuer and Lessard (2000). Heterotrophic microprotists were not enumerated with the
6 FlowCAM, and hence estimates of their carbon biomass missing from analyses of heterotrophic
7 carbon. Total particulate organic carbon (POC) was analyzed as reported in (Cetinić et al., 2012).

8 **2.4 Data analysis and derivation of proxies**

9 Optical data were median filtered (7 point running median) to remove spikes associated with
10 aggregates and other larger particles in the water column (Briggs et al., 2011). Water samples
11 were collected on the upcast, with the CTD held at a constant depth for 60 s before the Niskin
12 bottle closed; only data recorded during the last 30 s before bottle closure were used for analysis.
13 *Chl F* samples collected during the *R/V Knorr* cruise were used to convert the ship’s FLNTU *Chl F*
14 voltage to *Chl* ($\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$) using a non-linear best-fit function of temperature, PAR, depth and YD
15 (Figs. 2A, B; $n=835$; D’Asaro, 2011); this algorithm mostly removed the effects of solar
16 quenching (Fig. 2C) and Si limitation (Section 3.4) on *Chl F*. The resulting *Chl* product
17 converted *Chl F* to *Chl* within an error of 30 – 50% (Figs. 2A, B). This uncertainty, and the lack
18 of PAR sensors on the gliders, caused us to use *Chl F* rather than *Chl* in the subsequent analysis.
19 Glider *Chl F* in digital counts was converted to V, referenced to the ship’s FLNTU, based on the
20 inter-calibration procedures; *Chl F* is therefore reported as V for all platforms and the optical
21 community index, $Chl F/b_{bp}$, is reported in units of V m.

22 In this paper, we focus on properties of the upper water column, i.e., 50 m and shallower.
23 Daytime fluorescence quenching is a ubiquitous phenomenon in surface layers of the ocean, with
24 decreases in *Chl F* caused by photo-inhibitory and/or energy-dependent quenching (Sackmann et
25 al., 2008). *Chl F* normalized to fluorometrically measured *Chl* declined at values of $PAR > 100$
26 $\mu\text{mol photon m}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$ (Fig. 2C). Since 92 % of all PAR values $> 100 \mu\text{mol photon m}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$ were
27 measured within the top 10 m by both ship and float, we omitted *Chl F* and b_{bp} data collected at
28 depths shallower than 10 m from further analysis for all platforms to avoid potential bias
29 associated with solar quenching of *Chl F*. However, data from water samples (nutrients, HPLC
30 pigments, etc.) collected at all depths shallower than 50 m are included in the analyses.

1 Principal component analysis (PCA) for assessing potential sources of variability in $Chl F/b_{bp}$
2 was performed on data from 38 CTD profiles from the May cruise. Input parameters for PCA
3 were temperature, mixed layer depth (calculated as the depth at which density differed from the
4 mean density in the top 10 m by $< 0.05 \text{ kg m}^{-3}$), depth of the 0.415 isolume, nitrate, Si, $Chl F/b_{bp}$
5 and a term representing diatom dominance of phytoplankton biomass (defined in Section 3.3). A
6 single median value for the upper 50 m was assigned to each parameter for each profile, except
7 for $Chl F/b_{bp}$ for which median values were calculated for 10 – 50 m (as explained above). The
8 0.415 isolume for a given day was derived from float data and assigned to a CTD profile based
9 on YD. Prior to analysis, data were standardized by subtracting the mean and dividing by the
10 standard deviation. Scores of individual data points were scaled by the maximal absolute value
11 of the sample scores and maximal coefficient vector length (Matlab code *biplot.m*).

12 A “heterogeneity index” for similarity of plankton community composition was calculated based
13 on similarity/dissimilarity of $Chl F/b_{bp}$ between pairs of autonomous platforms. The six-hour
14 median value of $Chl F/b_{bp}$ between 10 and 50 m was determined for each platform and assigned
15 to one of three optical community groups (as described in Results). These assignments were then
16 compared for each platform pair (total of 10 comparisons). A value of 0 was assigned if the
17 community groups were identical (low heterogeneity) and a value of 1 (high heterogeneity) if
18 they were different. The final heterogeneity index reported for a given time is the average of the
19 10 comparisons.

20

21 **3 Results**

22 **3.1 The evolution of the spring bloom observed from the Lagrangian float**

23 The evolution and community succession of the spring bloom was measured by the Lagrangian
24 float. Alkire et al. (2012) divided the evolution into six periods based on measured physical and
25 biogeochemical parameters. The float was deployed into a deep wintertime mixed layer with Chl
26 $< 0.5 \mu\text{g L}^{-1}$ (the period of *Deep Mixing*, Fig. 3A). During the *Early Bloom* (YD 114 – 119) the
27 mixed layer shoaled from $> 100 \text{ m}$ to $\sim 50 \text{ m}$, approximately the depth of the 0.415 isolume (Fig.
28 3B); during this period Chl exponentially increased to $\sim 2 \mu\text{g L}^{-1}$. Surface phytoplankton
29 concentration was diluted and net growth was slowed by a storm (*Storm*) which deepened the

1 mixed layer to ~ 100 m between YD 119 and 123, slightly decreasing near-surface *Chl*.
2 Following the storm, the upper ocean quickly restratified and the mixed layer shoaled above the
3 0.415 isolume. *Chl* continued to increase during the *Main Bloom* (YD 124 – 134). Beginning
4 around YD 126, spikes below 200 m in *Chl F* and b_{bp} were observed in ship and glider data, as
5 well as in ship c_p data, indicating the onset of a flux event of sinking diatom aggregates (Briggs
6 et al., 2011). *Chl* reached a maximal value of $4.6 \mu\text{g L}^{-1}$ on YD 133 and shortly thereafter
7 abruptly declined to a quarter of the peak bloom value, $\sim 1 \mu\text{g L}^{-1}$, by YD 137. Bloom
8 termination continued into the *Eddy* period; *Chl* remained relatively unchanged during the *Post*
9 *Bloom* period and until the end of the float mission on YD 146.

10 **3.2 Diel and longer temporal patterns in the optical community index**

11 The optical community index at the location of the float varied over time on both diel and longer
12 time scales; the observed diel variability was due mostly to *Chl F*, with the peak consistently
13 occurring around midnight (Fig. 3A, C, D). Similar diel patterns have been previously observed
14 for both *Chl F* and b_{bp} (Marra, 1997; Loisel et al., 2011). Although the effects of solar quenching
15 on daytime values of *Chl F* (Sackmann et al., 2008) were minimized by removing data from the
16 upper 10 m (Fig. 2C), a small daytime quenching signal remained. The longer term variations in
17 $Chl F/b_{bp}$ were considerably larger than the diel and, as shown below, were associated either
18 with shifts in the phytoplankton community composition, i.e., diatom vs. pico and
19 nanophytoplankton dominance, or a physiological response of diatoms to Si limitation between
20 YD 133 – 136.

21 During the *Deep Mixing* period, the optical community index was low and variable (Fig. 3D).
22 Part of this variability may have been due to instrumental noise since both *Chl F* and b_{bp} were
23 small (Fig. 3C). There is insufficient ship data during this period to determine whether the
24 variability was due to real fluctuations in community composition. Starting mid-way into the
25 *Early Bloom*, the optical community index increased and remained high until the end of the *Main*
26 *Bloom* period. As Si concentrations measured from ship samples dropped below 1 mmol m^{-3}
27 (YD 133 – 136), the optical community index increased to its highest values. It then abruptly
28 decreased by more than a factor of two (end of *Main Bloom*) and remained low (*Eddy* and *Post*
29 *Bloom*) through the end of the float mission.

1 Figure 4A shows a scatter plot of *Chl F* vs. b_{bp} ; three groupings are evident. Within Groups 1 and
2 2, *Chl F* and b_{bp} covaried linearly but with different slopes; Group 1: $Chl F = 53.63 b_{bp} + 0.01$;
3 Group 2: $Chl F = 105.34 b_{bp} - 0.02$. The range in b_{bp} was equivalent, indicating that the
4 relationship was not driven by the changes in magnitude of b_{bp} . Group 1 is characteristic of the
5 *Eddy* and *Post Bloom* periods; Group 2 of the *Early* through *Main Bloom* periods. Groups 2 and
6 3 reflect a biphasic relationship, with a break in the slope at higher values of b_{bp} . The regression
7 intercept for the third group is non-linear and does not pass near zero (regression not shown).
8 Group 3 occurred only in the latter part of *Main Bloom* period.

9 The frequency histogram in Fig. 4B also illustrates these patterns, with two clearly defined
10 groupings of the optical community index: low (Group 1 is centered on 58 V m) and
11 intermediate (Group 2 is centered on 98 V m). Group 3 is more diffuse. As a way to more clearly
12 separate Groups 2 and 3, a frequency distribution was constructed for YDs 120 – 127, a period
13 when diatoms were clearly dominant and Si was not limiting. The results of this analysis (shown
14 as a dashed gray line in Fig. 4B) confirmed the upper limit of the optical community index for
15 Group 2 as 120 V m. Indices in excess of 120 V m were classified as Group 3. Cetinić et al.
16 (2012) refers to Group 1 as a ‘recycling community’ comprised primarily of pico- and
17 nanophytoplankton and Groups 2 and 3 as a ‘diatom community’; in Section 3.3 we present the
18 justification for these designations, which are used henceforth.

19 **3.3 Optical community index is a proxy for phytoplankton community** 20 **composition**

21 Ship-based measurements of phytoplankton cell carbon allowed us to establish that changes in
22 $Chl F/b_{bp}$ corresponded to changes in phytoplankton community composition. In May, the
23 fraction of diatom cell carbon as a percentage of total autotrophic cell carbon, % *diatom_C*, was
24 calculated from flow cytometer and FlowCAM samples. The diatoms were primarily chain
25 formers, belonging to the genera *Chaetoceros*, *Thalassionema* and *Pseudo-nitzschia* (K.
26 Richardson, *pers. comm.*). Coincident measurements of flow cytometer, FlowCAM and HPLC
27 pigments (n=16) were used to create a proxy that converted the mass ratio of fucoxanthin-to-*Chl*
28 (*Fuco/Chl*, g/g) to the fraction of diatom cell carbon. This relationship, shown in Fig. 5A (Type
29 II regression, $r^2=0.78$, $p<0.01$), allowed us to include all HPLC samples in the analysis of
30 community composition:

1 $\% \text{ diatom}_C = 77.36(\pm 9.87) \times \text{Fuco/Chl} - 11.31(\pm 4.85) .$ (1)

2 The combined data set, including both the direct $\% \text{ diatom}_C$ measurements and those derived
3 from (1), was designated as $\% \text{ diatom}_C \text{ product}$ and provided information for a total of 94
4 individual samples from 42 stations, of which 4 were from early April and 38 from May.

5 Figure 5B used the $\% \text{ diatom}_C \text{ product}$ to show that the optical community index was low when
6 pico and nanoplankton dominated (Group 1) and high when diatoms dominated (Groups 2 and
7 3), with a transition at about 80 V m, as in Figs. 3D and 4B (one-tail t-test, $p < 0.001$). There was
8 no clear distinction between Groups 2 and 3 in terms of percent diatom domination. An
9 alternative visualization of the optical community index also shows that the highest values were
10 associated with diatoms (Fig. 6A). Changes in $\text{Chl } F$ or b_{bp} were not strongly correlated with
11 variability of $\% \text{ diatom}_C$ (respective r^2 of 0.21 and 0.16, and p of < 0.01 and $p < 0.1$). During May,
12 the ratio of Chl -to-autotrophic carbon showed a moderate trend of higher ratios associated with
13 diatom-dominated communities (Fig. 5C; Type II regression, $r^2 = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$). Here $\% \text{ diatom}_C$
14 is used rather than the $\% \text{ diatom}_C \text{ product}$, since total autotrophic carbon is available only from
15 flow cytometer and FlowCAM samples. Samples from periods when mixed layers were deeper
16 than 70 m were excluded to avoid confounding effects of low light photo-adaption on the Chl -to-
17 carbon ratio.

18 The absolute magnitude of heterotrophic carbon (sum of heterotrophic bacteria and
19 nanoflagellate carbon) varied between 15 and 30 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$. The corresponding percentage of
20 heterotrophic carbon-to-POC varied between $\sim 10 - 25\%$ and was not correlated with the
21 variability observed in the optical community index (Fig. 5D, $n = 74$, Type II regression, $r^2 = 0.07$,
22 $p > 0.01$). Thus, the optical community index $\text{Chl } F/b_{bp}$ varies with the fraction of the planktonic
23 carbon due to diatoms.

24 **3.4 Principal component analysis**

25 PCA of R/V Knorr CTD profiles (Fig. 7, $n = 38$) also show a separation between recycling and
26 diatom dominated communities. Principal component one (PC 1; 38.5% of variance) is
27 dominated by an inverse relationship of surface temperature with mixed layer depth and nutrient
28 concentrations. However, PC 2, explaining nearly as much of the variance (30.2 %), is nearly
29 parallel to $\text{Chl } F/b_{bp}$ (i.e., the $\text{Chl } F/b_{bp}$ vector is nearly vertical in Fig. 7). Most stations with a

1 recycling community (low optical community index) had lower loadings on PC 2, while stations
2 with a diatom community (high optical community index) had higher loadings. The analysis
3 confirmed that trends observed in $Chl F/b_{bp}$ are associated with the proportion of diatoms, as the
4 % *diatom_C product* had the largest loading on the second component (0.66).

5 Although PC 2 shows no significant difference in the % *diatom_C product* among stations for the
6 two types of diatom communities, i.e., Groups 2 and 3 (n=27; two tailed t-test, $p > 0.05$), PC 1
7 separated them as a function of nutrient concentration, as shown by the high loadings on Si
8 (0.57). Nitrate was not a limiting factor for phytoplankton growth, decreasing from an initial
9 concentration of $> 12 \text{ mmol m}^{-3}$ in early April to a minimal value of $\sim 8 \text{ mmol m}^{-3}$ in late May
10 (Alkire et al., 2012). In contrast, Si was likely limiting to diatoms by the peak of the bloom,
11 decreasing from initial surface concentrations of $> 4 \text{ mmol m}^{-3}$ in early April to $< 1 \text{ mmol m}^{-3}$
12 towards the end of the *R/V Knorr* cruise (Fig. 6B).

13 **3.5 Ancillary analyses**

14 Ancillary analyses of chlorophyllide and phytoplankton UV absorption spectra are also
15 indicative of differences between diatoms vs. pico and nanophytoplankton. The highest ratios of
16 chlorophyllide-to- Chl_{HPLC} were measured at CTD stations with high values of $Chl F/b_{bp}$ (Fig.
17 8A). Unfortunately, no HPLC samples were collected next to the float during the period when
18 $Chl F/b_{bp}$ was highest. In May some of the phytoplankton absorption spectra exhibited unusual
19 spectra. UV peaks with a ratio of $a_{phy}(\lambda\text{-UV peak})/a_{phy}(676)$ in excess of 2 were correlated with a
20 high optical index, i.e., in excess of 80 V m (Fig. 8B); 18 out of 63 spectra fit this criterion.
21 While most UV peaks were centered between 325 – 330 nm, four samples associated with Group
22 3 had up to seven-fold higher peak heights with maxima shifted to lower wavelengths (310 – 320
23 nm), increased absorption at 412 nm and reduced absorption at 437 and 467 nm peaks.

24 **3.6 Patchiness of phytoplankton communities**

25 The evolution of the diatom spring bloom, its demise and transition to a pico- and
26 nanophytoplankton community was assessed over a two-month period for the float and four
27 gliders. Both the optical community index and mixed layer depths showed some spatial
28 variability (Figs. 9A, B), likely reflecting submesoscale variability as well as variability in the
29 timing of the diatom bloom initiation and termination. During the bloom peak in May, the *R/V*

1 *Knorr* carried out a series of bow-tie sampling patterns and the optical community index varied
2 between some of the lowest and highest values as the ship moved in and out of different patches
3 (Fig. 6, YD 130 – 135). The period of greatest heterogeneity in phytoplankton community
4 composition occurred between YD 115 – 137 (Fig. 9C). The strong salinity component in PC 2
5 (Fig. 7) also reflects this patchiness; the float patch had an anomalously high value of salinity in
6 addition to a high value of the optical community index.

7

8 **4 Discussion**

9 **4.1 Why does the $Chl F/b_{bp}$ ratio vary?**

10 High and low values of the optical community index were correlated with diatom-, and pico- and
11 nanophytoplankton-dominated communities, respectively (Figs. 5, 6 and 7). The direct
12 measurement of HPLC pigments and phytoplankton from the flow cytometer and FlowCAM
13 allowed us to create an optical proxy for phytoplankton community composition for this specific
14 period and to apply it to glider and float data to assess community composition over a broader
15 spatial scale (Fig. 9). The question remains, why does this optical index vary as a function of
16 phytoplankton type? Is it strictly taxonomical, or is it based on physiology, or combination of
17 both?

18 Ratios must be interpreted with caution, as changes could be due either to the numerator,
19 denominator, or both. *Chl F* is a proxy for *Chl*, but with physiological variability associated with
20 solar quenching (Sackmann et al., 2008; Roesler and Barnard, 2014) and nutrient stress
21 (Cleveland and Perry, 1987). However, neither solar quenching nor Si limitation appears to be
22 responsible for the difference in optical community index between Groups 1 and 2. The
23 influence of the former was minimized by the deliberate exclusion of depths less than 10 m.
24 Nitrogen limitation was unlikely, but indications of Si limitation were correlated only with the
25 highest values of $Chl F/b_{bp}$ (see Section 4.2, and Figs. 6B and 7). The denominator, b_{bp} , is a
26 function of particle concentration. Although b_{bp} is also influenced by particle size and refractive
27 index (Stramski et al., 2004), the relationship between POC and b_{bp} within the mixed layer
28 during the May NAB 2008 cruise did not vary as a function of plankton community composition
29 (Cetinić et al., 2012), making a change in particle optics an unlikely explanation.

1 We examined two hypotheses for the observed patterns of the optical community index. First, the
2 relative contribution of heterotrophic carbon to POC and b_{bp} could vary systematically between
3 the different communities. If the contribution of heterotrophs was consistently greater for Group
4 1, $Chl\ F/b_{bp}$ would be lower. However, heterotrophic (bacteria and nanoprotoist) carbon as a
5 percentage of POC was not correlated with the optical community index (Fig. 5D), making it
6 unlikely that heterotrophic carbon was responsible for changes in the ratio. Although
7 heterotrophic protists $> 20\ \mu\text{m}$ were not analyzed, their carbon is less than 30% of the
8 heterotrophic nanoprotoist carbon at this time of year (Verity et al., 1993) and inclusion of these
9 larger protists would not change the observed trend.

10 Second, the Chl -to-carbon ratio of diatoms could be larger than that of pico and
11 nanophytoplankton, thereby increasing $Chl\ F/b_{bp}$ in the diatom community. In laboratory
12 cultures for the same irradiance, Chl per cell volume scales inversely with cell size (cf. Fujiki
13 and Taguchi, 2002), resulting in higher Chl -to-carbon ratios for larger cells. Field studies where
14 cell carbon was determined from measurements of cell volume show higher Chl -to-carbon ratios
15 for diatom dominated communities in contrast to communities dominated by small
16 phytoplankton (Llewellyn et al., 2005; Putland and Iverson, 2007). In the California Current,
17 observations supported by models also find higher Chl -to-carbon ratios for diatoms than
18 picoplankton for similar environmental conditions (Li et al., 2010). Our data revealed the same
19 trend, approximately a factor of two higher ratios of Chl -to-autotrophic carbon for samples
20 dominated by diatoms, although with considerable scatter (Fig. 5C). We conclude that
21 differences observed in $Chl\ F/b_{bp}$ between Groups 1 and 2 are primarily due to taxa specific
22 differences in the cellular Chl -to-autotrophic carbon ratios and that the optical community index
23 $Chl\ F/b_{bp}$ varies as a function of the fraction of the planktonic carbon due to diatoms. While
24 changes in the Chl -to-carbon ratio of individual species do occur in response to changing light,
25 nutrient, and temperature conditions (e.g. Geider, 1987), species succession offers an alternative
26 hypothesis to that of physiological change as the sole explanation for change in phytoplankton
27 Chl -to-carbon and hence ratios of $Chl\ F/b_{bp}$ in the field (cf. Behrenfeld et al. 2005).

28 **4.2 Evidence of Si limitation**

29 Analysis by Egge and Aksnes (1992) indicates that diatoms are unlikely to do well in waters with
30 Si concentrations $< 2\ \text{mmol m}^{-3}$. In their review of silicon metabolism in diatoms, Martin-

1 Jezequel et al. (2000) compiled data for the Michaelis-Menten half saturation constant for Si-
2 dependent growth rate; the median half saturation constant for 17 studies was 1.0 mmol m^{-3} .
3 Concentrations of Si at highest values of $Chl F/b_{bp}$ were $< 1 \text{ mmol m}^{-3}$ (Fig. 6B), leading us to
4 suggest that Group 3 represented diatoms whose photosynthetic physiology was limited by Si.

5 Does Si limitation affect photosynthetic efficiency and $Chl F$? Reduced photosynthetic
6 efficiency is a typical response to limitation by nitrogen, phosphorous and iron due to the
7 structural and functional roles of these elements in photosynthesis. For most species, Chl
8 concentration per cell volume decreases with nutrient limitation, while fluorescence normalized
9 to Chl concentration increases when nutrients are limiting (Kruskopf and Flynn, 2006). The
10 increase in fluorescence is due in part to an increase in the Chl -specific absorption coefficient
11 due to reduced pigmentation and in part to reduced photochemical quenching due to nutrient
12 limitation (Cleveland and Perry, 1987). While Si itself is not directly associated with
13 photosynthesis and relatively few papers report the effect of Si limitation on fluorescence
14 efficiency in diatoms, the available results suggest that Si limitation does reduce photosynthetic
15 efficiency. For Si-limited cultures of the diatom *Thalassiosira weissflogii*, (Lippemeier et al.,
16 1999; Bucciarelli and Sunda, 2003) report a decrease in photosynthetic efficiency (equivalent to
17 F_v/F_m). In a field study in the Iceland Basin and Rockall Trough in May and June 2001, Moore et
18 al. (2005) found F_v/F_m to be correlated with Si concentration, suggesting reduction in
19 photosynthetic capacity in response to Si stress (note, N concentrations in that study were always
20 $> 3 \text{ } \mu\text{M}$, but Si concentrations were often $< 1 \text{ } \mu\text{M}$). They also found $\sim 2 \times$ higher values of F_0/Chl
21 associated with low Si concentrations. During the *Main Bloom* period in NAB 2008, enhanced
22 $Chl F$ normalized to both b_{bp} (i.e., optical community index) and extracted Chl coincided with Si
23 depletion (Figs. 2D, 4A, 6B, 7). During this period Briggs and Gudmundsson (*pers. comm.*)
24 found that rates of net primary productivity based on float diel cycles of optics and oxygen could
25 only be reconciled with photosynthesis vs. irradiance (P–E)-based estimates of productivity if the
26 P–E parameters were reduced with a Michaelis-Menten-like function and a K_s of $1 \text{ } \mu\text{M}$. Hence,
27 we propose that the highest values of $Chl F/b_{bp}$ are indicative of diatom Si limitation.

28 Two other measurements are also suggestive of physiological effects of Si limitation at the end
29 of the diatom bloom. Chlorophyllide is a pigment linked with diatom senescence (Lorenzen,
30 1967; Jeffrey, 1980; Llewellyn et al., 2008). Although chlorophyllide is noted as a potential
31 extraction artifact (Jeffrey and Hallegraeff, 1987), this pigment has often been used as a marker

1 for senescent diatoms at the end of diatom blooms in coastal, open ocean, and high latitude
2 environments (Ridout and Morris, 1985; Head and Horne, 1993; Sigleo et al., 2000; Llewellyn et
3 al., 2008). High relative concentrations of chlorophyllide were associated with both Groups 2
4 and 3, suggesting that diatoms were in transition to senescence. Unusual features in
5 phytoplankton absorption spectra were only found for samples with high optical community
6 indices, including peaks in the UV typically suggestion of MAAs (mycosporine-like amino
7 acids; Fig. 8B). While such UV peaks are often interpreted as MAAs, Llewellyn and Airs (2010)
8 caution that for diatoms, UV absorption peaks can be associated with derivatives of
9 photosynthetic pigments. Since no direct chemical analyses of MAAs were made, the UV peaks
10 may be another indicator of diatom senescence. *In toto*, these observations suggest that as Si
11 became limiting to diatoms, Si limitation was responsible for the highest values of $Chl F/b_{bp}$, as
12 well as the termination of the Main Bloom, leading to subsequent dominance of pico- and
13 nanophytoplankton that do not require Si in the post-bloom community

14 **4.3 Patchiness of phytoplankton communities**

15 The ship, float and gliders carried sensors for $Chl F$ and b_{bp} that had been rigorously inter-
16 calibrated, allowing us to directly compare optical measurements across all platforms. The float
17 tracked a parcel of water, within the constraints discussed by Alkire et al. (2012). The gliders
18 tracked the float, typically operating within 50 km of the float, although at the beginning of the
19 experiment strong currents and eddies occasionally swept them further away. The timeline
20 within the float patch showed a steady progression of increasing phytoplankton biomass
21 beginning about YD 110 and continuing through the *Main Bloom* (Fig. 3A). The increase in
22 biomass was accompanied by an increase in the optical community index, reflecting the
23 beginning of the transition from wintertime pico- and nanophytoplankton to spring bloom
24 diatoms (Fig. 3D); within the float patch, the optical index was relatively constant between YD
25 118 – 132.

26 Initially, a similar pattern of low biomass was observed in data from all four gliders, but as the
27 bloom progressed more than a five-fold variation was observed on any given day (Mahadevan et
28 al., 2012). Not only was biomass patchy, but the optical community index was also patchy as the
29 gliders (and ship during the May cruise) moved in and out of water parcels with different
30 phytoplankton communities (Figs. 6A, 9A).

1 Through analysis of glider and model data, Mahadevan et al. (2012), showed that the springtime
2 stratification is due to the action of submesoscale mixed layer eddies that drive a net horizontal
3 transfer of lighter water above heavier water, thereby stratifying the mixed layer. This
4 mechanism generates patches of shallower mixed layers as seen in Fig. 9B, resulting in patchy
5 blooms. They speculated that different species might dominate in different patches, but they
6 referenced patchiness only as biomass. Here we show patchiness in community composition,
7 with the period of highest heterogeneity occurring after YD 115 and persisting for ~ 20 d (Fig.
8 9C). Our observation is similar to that of d'Ovidio et al. (2010), who used satellite data to
9 determine that submesoscale patches are short-lived (O(weeks)) ecological niches that allow
10 different phytoplankton taxa to bloom.

11 This is, to our knowledge, the first analysis of this kind, where the distribution of the
12 phytoplankton community was assessed for a two-month period with such high spatial and
13 temporal resolution. Our observations raise the question as to the mechanism(s) of the observed
14 patchiness in phytoplankton community composition. Is it a product of temporal offsets in bloom
15 evolution in the various patches, related to restratification by submesoscale mixed layer eddies,
16 or potential nutrient injection (Levy et al., 2012)? Or to a lack of diatom bloom development in
17 some water parcels, perhaps due to zooplankton patchiness or insufficient diatom seed
18 populations? Or a combination of controlling factors? The float patch appeared to have persisted
19 for the longest time period as a diatom community, although at least one glider briefly observed
20 a diatom patch after the bloom terminated at the float (yellow dots on YD 147-148). The
21 mechanism for diatom bloom termination might also differ among the different patches,
22 controlled by patch-specific abiotic and biotic factors. One mechanisms of diatom bloom
23 termination observed on board the ship was resting spore formation and sinking (Rynearson et
24 al., 2013). This appeared to be widespread as judged by the dominance of these spores in
25 sediment traps at depth. Regardless, from YD 140 to the end of the float mission 5 days later, all
26 five autonomous platforms observed only the single phytoplankton community, i.e., Group 1.

27

28 **5 Conclusions**

29 Simple optical measurements made from autonomous platforms allow us to follow the variability
30 in phytoplankton biomass (*Chl F*) and POC concentration (b_{bp}) on highly resolved spatial and

1 temporal scales. The ratio of these optical measurements provides additional, more qualitative
2 information about the plankton community composition. The interpretation of these ratios must
3 be based on *in situ* validation and used within a limited set of conditions, at least until a better
4 mechanistic understanding is developed. In late April the increase in the ratio $Chl F/b_{bp}$ signaled
5 a transition from a winter phytoplankton community dominated by pico- and nanophytoplankton
6 to an early spring community dominated by diatoms. The observed shift in the optical index was
7 primarily driven by the change in phytoplankton composition and distribution of biomass,
8 reflecting differences in taxa-specific chlorophyll-to-autotrophic carbon ratios. Furthermore, the
9 optical index allowed us to observe changes in the physiological status of the community as well,
10 clearly isolating the senescent, Si-limited, termination stage of the diatom bloom from
11 surrounding patches of diatoms not yet in senescence. However, the changes in $Chl F/b_{bp}$, and by
12 implication the transition in community composition, was not simultaneous over the spatial
13 domain surveyed by the ship and gliders. The application of the optical index demonstrated, for
14 the first time on appropriate spatial and temporal scales, that mesoscale and submesoscale
15 variability in physical structures is reflected not only in total biomass, but in community
16 composition as well. Although our analysis did not manage to resolve the primary drivers of the
17 observed spatial patchiness in community composition, the optical ratio approach offers a new
18 tool set to study plankton patchiness *in-situ* on temporal and spatial scales relevant to ecosystem
19 and biogeochemical research.

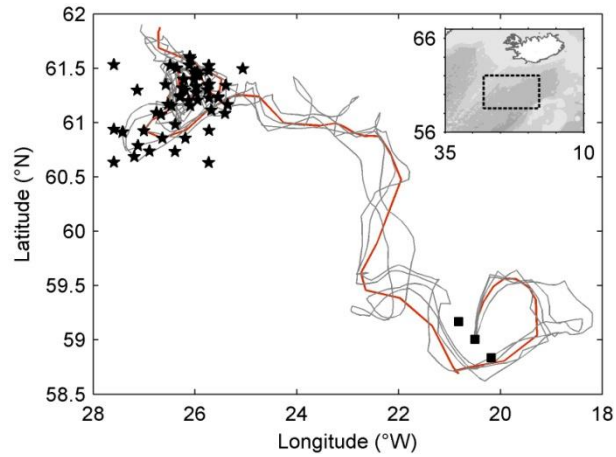
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22 **Acknowledgements**

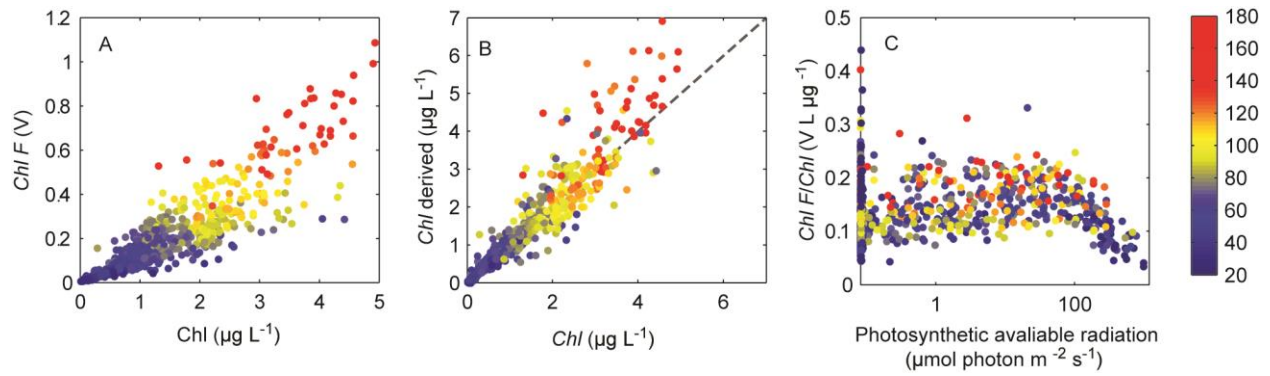
23 We thank Katherine Richardson for species data, Giorgio Dall'Olmo, Andrea Drzewianowski,
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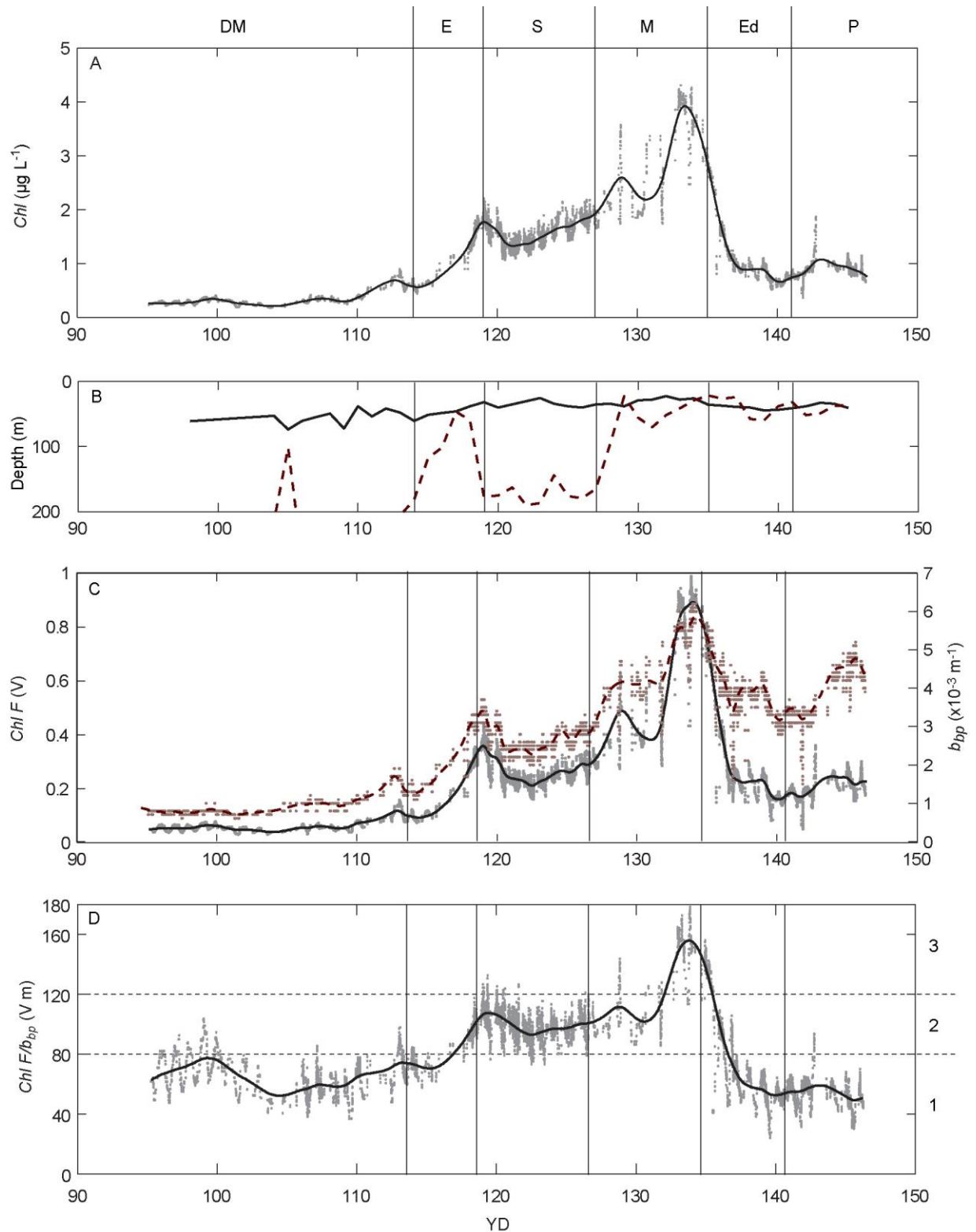
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Figure 1. Map of NAB 2008 study area with the Lagrangian float path (red line) and four Seaglider paths (gray lines). Autonomous platforms were deployed during the *R/S Bjarni Saemundsson* cruise in early April 2008; squares indicate ship stations. Additional ship samples were collected on a process cruise on the *R/V Knorr* in May 2008 (stars). Inset map indicates study location relative to Iceland.



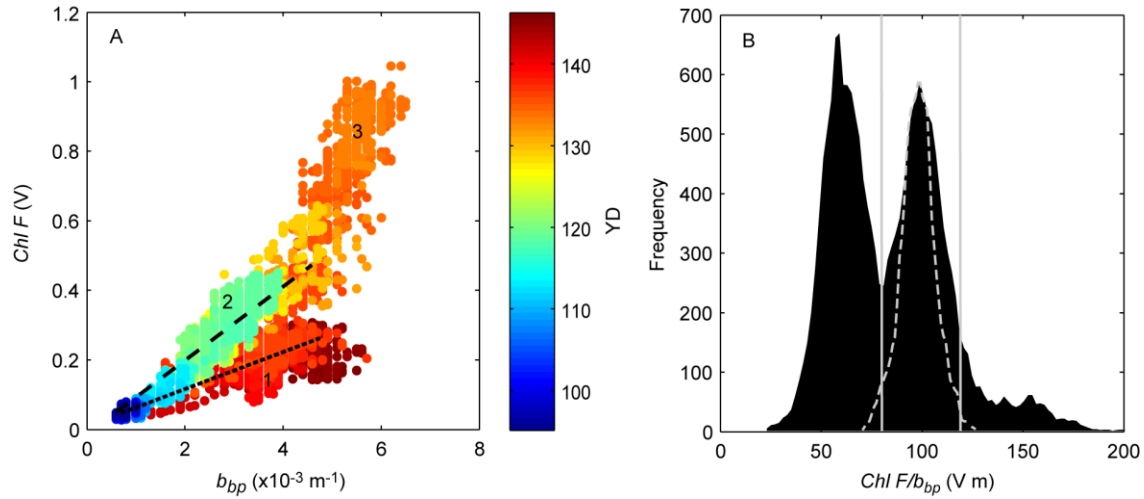
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 2 Figure 2. Chlorophyll data from *R/V Knorr* CTD profiles in May, color coded by the optical
 3 community index, $Chl F/b_{bp}$ (color bar on right; units are V m). (A) $Chl F$ vs. extracted
 4 chlorophyll concentration, Chl , was used to develop a non-linear best-fit function of temperature,
 5 PAR, depth and YD for converting float $Chl F$ to Chl (D'Asaro, 2011). (B) Best-fit derived Chl
 6 vs. extracted Chl shows deviation at higher concentrations (1:1 gray dashed line). (C) $Chl F$
 7 normalized to Chl exhibits photoquenching at high PAR (surface samples).

8



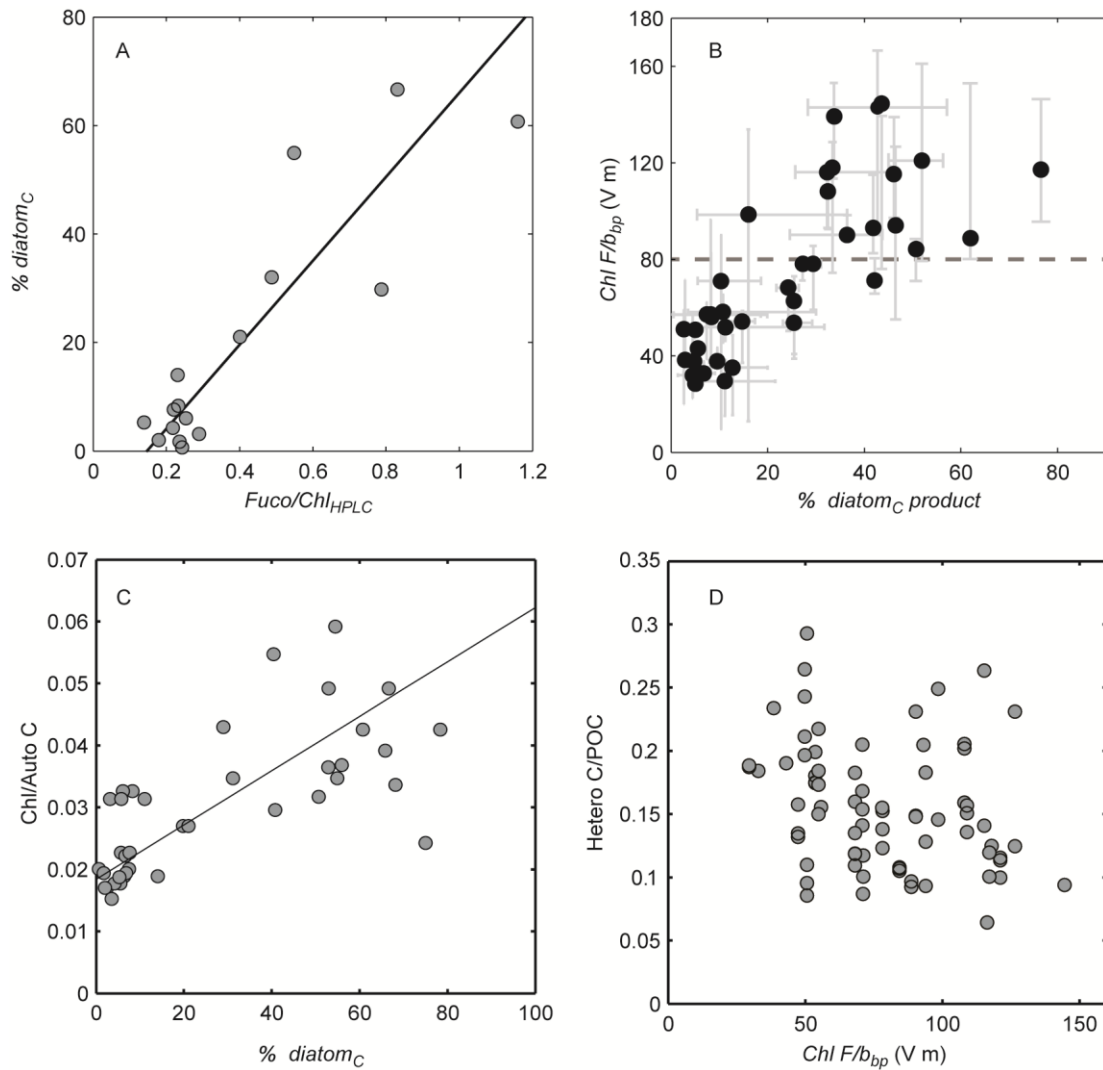
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 2 Figure 3. Float data collected for 10 – 50 m for YD 95 –146 (4 April to 25 May 2008). Vertical
 3 lines and letters indicate periods in bloom evolution (see section 3.1); DM – *Deep Mixing*, E –
 4 *Early Bloom*, S – *Storm*, M – *Main Bloom*, Ed – *Eddy*, P – *Post Bloom*. Dots represent initial

1 median filtered data (7 point running median); superimposed line is smoothing spline fit (Matlab
2 code *spaps.m*, smoothing parameter 0.1). (A) *Chl* derived from *Chl F*. (B) Mixed layer depth
3 (dashed line) and depth of 0.415 mol photons $\text{m}^{-2} \text{d}^{-1}$ isolume (solid line). (C) *Chl F* (solid line)
4 and b_{bp} (heavy solid line). (D) Optical community index, $Chl F/b_{bp}$. Horizontal dashed lines
5 indicate transitions between Groups 1 – 2 and 2 – 3. Also see Fig. 6.
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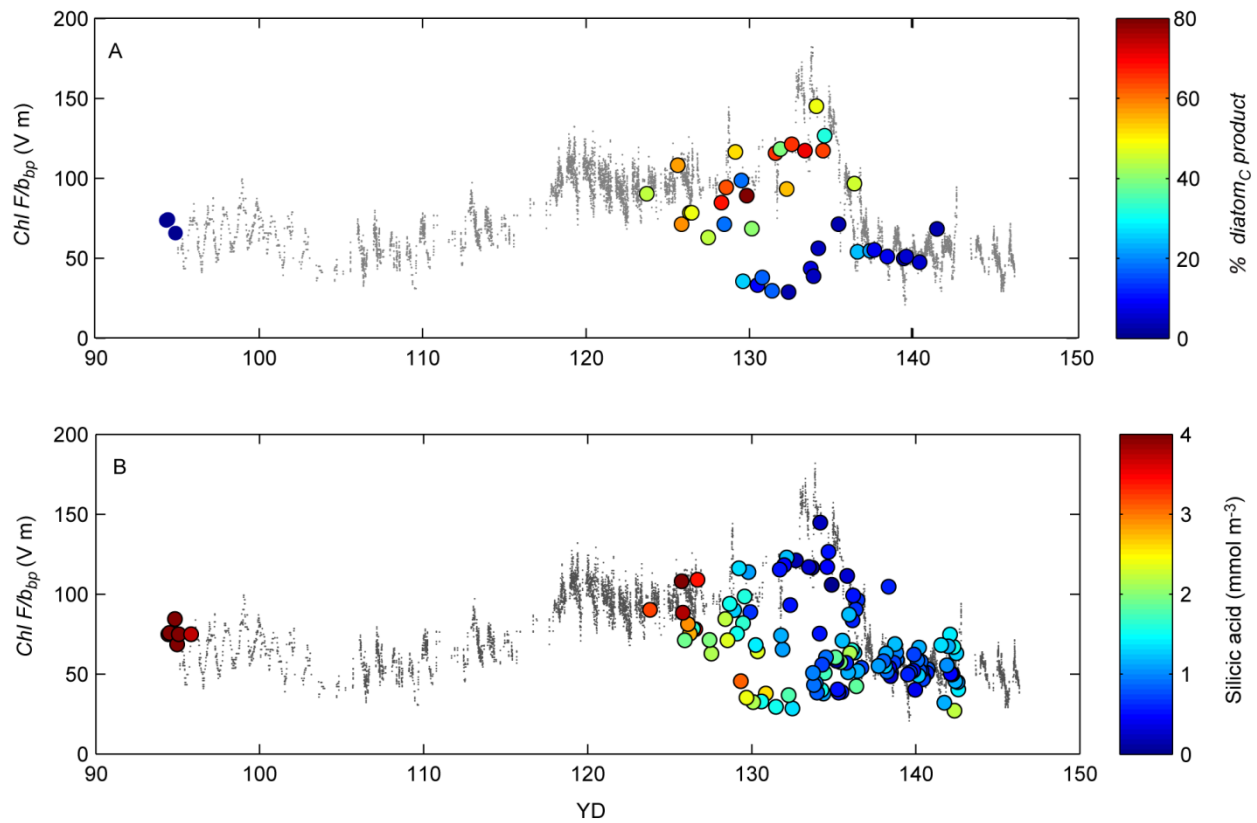
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Figure 4. Optical community index and its components from entire float deployment; data from 10 – 50 m. (A) $Chl F$ vs. b_{bp} shows three groups: Group 1 (dotted line); Group 2 (dashed line); Group 3, no regression calculated. Some data points in Group 3 are obscured by Group 2. Color coding is YD. (B) Frequency distribution of the optical community index (additional 2 point median filter). Centroids corresponding to the regression lines in panel A. Gray dashed line corresponds to the frequency distribution of the optical community index during period YD 120 – 127.

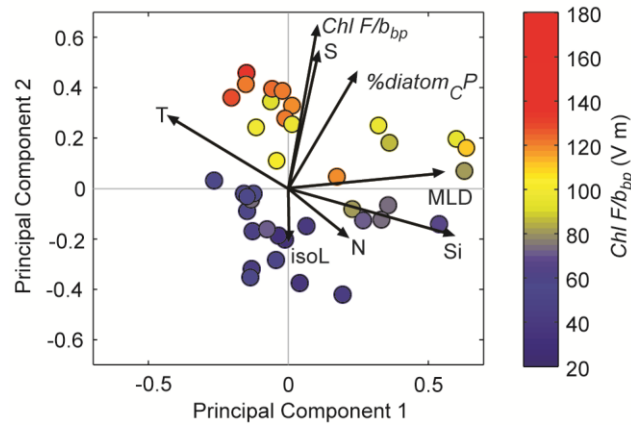


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Figure 5. Community composition. Gray circles in Panels A, C and D are for individual water samples; black circles in Panel B are averages for each profile. (A) *Fuco/Chl_{HPLC}* (g/g) is correlated with % *diatom_C*. (B) Optical community index is related to phytoplankton community composition, represented as % *diatom_C product*. Bars are the range of individual values within each profile; horizontal line indicates the division between Groups 1 and 2 based on Fig. 4B. (C) *Chl*-to-autotrophic carbon increases with the fraction of diatoms. (D) Ratio of heterotrophic carbon biomass to total POC is not correlated with optical community index.



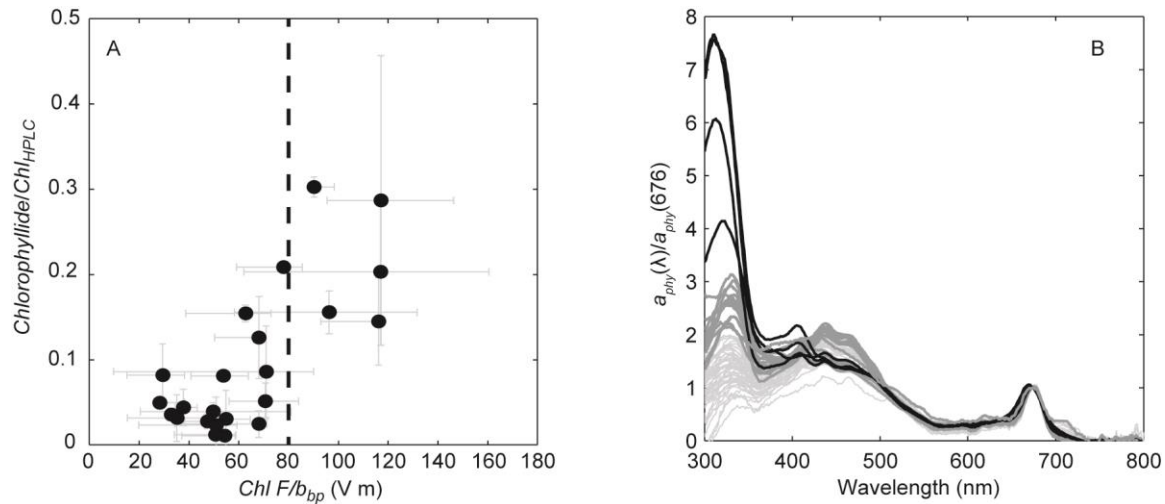
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 2 Figure 6. Optical community index, $Chl F/b_{bp}$, from ship CTD profiles (circles) superimposed on
 3 float data (gray); 10 – 50 m median is plotted for each ship profile. (A) The optical community
 4 index color coded by % *diatom_C product* (n=42). The index was high when the relative diatom
 5 abundance was high. (B) Same but color coded by Si concentration. Highest values of $Chl F/b_{bp}$
 6 were concurrent with lowest values of Si (n = 123).
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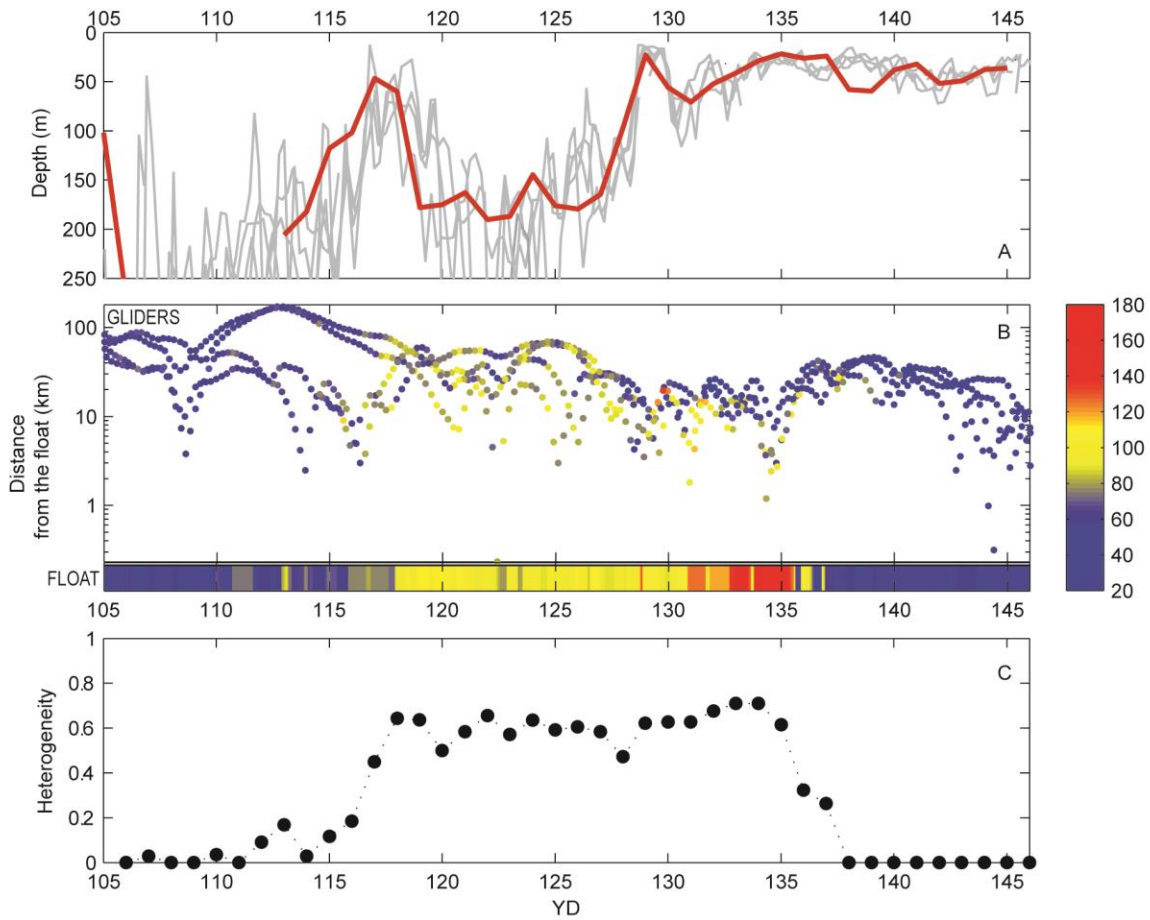
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2 Figure 7. PCA biplot for *R/V Knorr* CTD stations ($n = 38$), color coded by median $Chl F/b_{bp}$ for
 3 10-50 m, where blue corresponds to Group 1, yellow to Group 2 and red to Group 3. Together
 4 PCs 1 and 2 explain 68.7% of the variance. The length of a single parameter vector (black line
 5 with arrow) describes its contribution to the PC, while the direction of the vector, starting from
 6 the axes intersection, depicts the "biplot" gradient of the specific parameters: T – temperature, S
 7 – salinity, IsoL – 0.415 isolume depth, MLD – mixed layer depth, N – nitrate, Si – silicic acid,
 8 $Chl F/b_{bp}$ – optical community index, and % $diatom_{CP}$ (here representing % $diatom_C$ product for
 9 brevity).

10



1
 2 Figure 8. (A) Chlorophyllide concentration normalized to Chl_{HPLC} (g/g) was greater at higher
 3 values of the optical community index. Bars are the range of individual samples within each
 4 profile (23 profiles, 60 HPLC samples). (B) Phytoplankton absorption coefficient, a_{phy} ,
 5 normalized to absorption at 676 nm; all available data are shown for completeness (n=63). Large
 6 peaks near 300 nm occurred when the optical community index exceeded 80 $V m$ (dark grey and
 7 black lines); black lines note spectra with shifts in the absorption peak from 325 – 330 nm to 310
 8 – 315 nm.



1

2 Figure 9. Spatial heterogeneity in phytoplankton community composition, determined from four
 3 gliders and the float. (A) Mixed layer depths, from gliders (gray line) and float (red line). (B)
 4 Distances between gliders and Lagrangian float. Data are color coded as $Chl F/b_{bp}$; dots
 5 represent glider data and color bar at bottom represents float data. (C) Heterogeneity index for
 6 community composition, defined in Section 2.4.

1 Table 1. List of measured variables and methodologies, as measured on different platforms. .

Parameter measured	Symbol /Acronym	Instrument or method for specific platform		
		Ship	Lagrangian Float	Seagliders
Temperature, Conductivity (Salinity)	T, S	SBE 911 <i>plus</i>	SBE 41	unpumped, custom SBE CT sensor
Chlorophyll fluorescence	<i>Chl F</i>	WET Labs FLNTU	WET Labs FLNTU	WET Labs BB2F
Volume scattering function, calculated optical backscattering	$\beta(700 \text{ nm}), b_{bp}$	WET Labs FLNTU	WET Labs FLNTU	WET Labs BB2F
Photosynthetically active radiation	PAR	Biospherical QSP2300	LI-COR 192-SA	
Nutrients: nitrate and silicic acid	N, Si	Kallin et al. (2011), Lachat (1996, 1999)	ISUS (not reported)	
Chlorophyll from extracts	<i>Chl</i>	Knap et al. (1996)		
Chlorophyll, HPLC analysis	<i>Chl</i> _{HPLC}	Van Heukelem and Thomas (2001), Hooker et al. (2009)		
Phytoplankton absorption coefficient	$a_{phy}(\lambda)$	Mitchell and Kiefer (1988), Kishino et al., (1985)		
Phytoplankton cell carbon		Sieracki and Poulton (2011) and references therein		
Particulate organic carbon	POC	Cetinić et al. (2012)		

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