Allometric scaling and taxonomic variation in nutrient utilization traits and maximum growth rate of phytoplankton

Kyle F. Edwards,⁎ Mridul K. Thomas, Christopher A. Klausmeier, and Elena Litchman

Abstract

Nutrient utilization traits can be used to link the ecophysiology of phytoplankton to population dynamic models and the structure of communities across environmental gradients. Here we analyze a comprehensive literature compilation of four traits: maximum nutrient uptake rate; the half-saturation constant for nutrient uptake; the minimum subsistence quota, measured for nitrate and phosphate; and maximum growth rate. We also use these traits to analyze two composite traits, uptake affinity and scaled uptake affinity. All traits tend to increase with cell volume, except for scaled uptake affinity and maximum growth rate, which tend to decline with cell volume. Most scaling relationships are the same for freshwater and marine species, although important differences exist. Most traits differ on average between major taxa, but between-taxon variation is nearly always due to between-taxon variation in volume. There is some evidence for between-trait correlations that could constrain trait evolution, but these correlations are difficult to disentangle from correlation driven by cell volume. These results should enhance the parameterization of models that use size or taxonomic group to structure physiological variation in phytoplankton communities.

Nutrient utilization traits have long been used to link the ecophysiology of phytoplankton to competitive interactions and the structure of communities across environmental gradients (Eppley et al. 1969; Tilman 1982). Such traits can be used to parameterize models that predict population dynamics and competitive outcomes in the laboratory (Grover 1991), implying that trait-based models may allow a mechanistic understanding of natural dynamics and distributions (Litchman and Klausmeier 2008). Many traits have been shown to scale allometrically with cell volume, such as maximum nutrient uptake rate, the half-saturation constant for uptake, subsistence quotas, and uptake affinity (Shuter 1978; Grover 1989; Litchman et al. 2007; Tambi et al. 2009). Such scaling relationships allow the parameterization of models that predict how optimal size, or community size structure, should vary with the nutrient supply regime. For example, the relative abundance of large cells is predicted to increase with increasing nitrogen supply (Irwin et al. 2006), and nitrogen supplied in pulses may allow large cells to outcompete small cells (Stolte and Riegman 1996; Litchman et al. 2009). Likewise, major phytoplankton taxa often differ in average trait values (Smayda 1997; Litchman et al. 2007), and this can permit a more mechanistic understanding of patterns in taxonomic structure and the biogeochemical effects of taxonomic variation. For example, annual fluctuation in the relative abundance of marine diatoms, coccolithophores, and prasinophytes can be predicted from a model that incorporates taxonomic differences in nutrient and light utilization traits (Litchman et al. 2006); and predicted seasonal patterns of oceanic CO₂ uptake are altered by the inclusion of a separate functional group representing coccolithophores (Signorini et al. unpubl.).

In order to better quantify interspecific variation in nutrient utilization traits, we have comprehensively compiled trait data from published studies. Our compilation includes nitrate and phosphate utilization traits of both freshwater and marine species, as nitrogen and phosphorus are the main limiting nutrients in both environments (Hecky and Kilham 1988; Elser et al. 2007). We have also compiled maximum growth rates for a large number of freshwater and marine species. We use this compilation to ask a series of questions: (1) what are the power-law exponents that describe how each trait scales with volume; (2) do the exponents differ between marine and freshwater species; (3) do average trait values differ between taxa; (4) do between-taxon differences exist when controlling for between-taxon variation in cell volume; (5) how do empirical power-law exponents compare to theoretical predictions; and (6) is there evidence for trade-offs among traits that would constrain the evolution of competitive ability. Many of these questions have been addressed previously, in separate analyses using smaller datasets or a subset of traits (Banse 1976; Shuter 1978; Grover 1989; Tang 1995; Smayda 1997; Litchman et al. 2007). In this study we synoptically address these questions using a thorough collection of currently available data.

Methods

Trait compilation—We comprehensively searched the literature for traits related to nutrient uptake and nutrient-limited growth. Specifically, we collected parameters of the Michaelis-Menten model of nutrient uptake,

\[ \text{Uptake} = V_{\text{max}} \frac{R}{K + R} \]
and the Droop model of phytoplankton growth,

$$\text{Net growth} = \mu_n \left(1 - \frac{Q_{\text{min}}}{Q}\right) - m$$  \hspace{1cm} (2)

where $V_{\text{max}}$ is the maximum cell-specific nutrient uptake rate ($\mu$mol nutrient cell$^{-1}$ d$^{-1}$), $K$ is the half-saturation constant for nutrient uptake ($\mu$mol nutrient L$^{-1}$), $R$ is the external nutrient concentration ($\mu$mol nutrient L$^{-1}$), $\mu_n$ is the specific growth rate at infinite quota (d$^{-1}$), $Q$ is the internal nutrient concentration or quota ($\mu$mol nutrient cell$^{-1}$), $Q_{\text{min}}$ is the minimum quota at which growth rate equals zero, and $m$ is the specific mortality rate (d$^{-1}$).

Here we focused on the parameters $V_{\text{max}}, K,$ and $Q_{\text{min}}$, measured for nitrate and phosphate. We denoted the nitrate parameters as $V_{\text{N max}}, K_{\text{N}},$ and $Q_{\text{N min}}$, and the phosphate parameters as $V_{\text{P max}}, K_{\text{P}},$ and $Q_{\text{P min}}$. We compared nitrate but not ammonium parameters because ammonium parameters have been measured for many fewer species. We used studies in which temperature was at or near 20°C, and light was not severely limiting. It is possible that allometric relationships and taxonomic differences involving these parameters could vary with temperature, but data on the temperature dependence of these parameters are limited, and using studies performed close to 20°C allowed us to make consistent interspecific comparisons. The maximum rate of uptake ($V_{\text{max}}$) often declines as cellular nutrient content increases (Morel 1987), and therefore we included only estimates of $V_{\text{max}}$ measured under conditions of intracellular nutrient depletion. We included estimates of uptake kinetics both from studies using isotopic methods, and studies using the rate of depletion of filtrate nutrient concentration. Cell volumes were determined from the literature, if not measured in the focal studies. Species and traits present in the dataset are listed in the Web Appendix (Table A1). These estimates were compiled from studies of nutrient-limited growth, light-limited growth, and maximum growth rate as a function of temperature. We compiled maximum achievable growth rates, rather than $\mu_n$ from the Droop model (Eq. 2), because measurements of $\mu_{\text{max}}$ were available for more species. If only $\mu_n$ was available, when possible we converted to $\mu_{\text{max}}$ using the equation $\mu_{\text{max}} = \mu_n \times (Q_{\text{max}} - Q_{\text{min}})/Q_{\text{max}}$ where $Q_{\text{max}}$ is the maximum possible nutrient quota, which is obtained when $\mu = \mu_{\text{max}}$ (Morel 1987). All estimates of $\mu_{\text{max}}$ were measured at or near 20°C. Marine species for which we have maximum growth rate data range in volume from $4.6 \times 10^{-3}$ to $1.6 \times 10^{2}$ $\mu$m$^3$, and the freshwater species range in volume from $1.8$ to $3.8 \times 10^{4}$ $\mu$m$^3$.

Statistical analyses—In order to quantify scaling relationships between nutrient traits and cell volume, we used standardized major axis (SMA) regression (also referred to as reduced major axis regression). This method is more appropriate than least-squares regression for estimating the line of best fit for the relationship between two variables (Warton et al. 2006). SMA slopes were estimated only if the two variables had a significant (at $p < 0.05$) Kendall rank-correlation coefficient. Analysis was performed with the “smatr” package in R version 2.11.0 (Warton and Ormerod 2007). Relationships between nutrient utilization traits and cell volume are typically linear when both variables are log-transformed, resulting in a power-law relationship on the linear scale (Litchman et al. 2007); we therefore performed all analyses on log$^{10}$-transformed values.

We tested for between-taxon trait differences using analysis of variance; we tested for between-taxon trait differences while controlling for the effect of volume by performing analysis of variance and post hoc Tukey pairwise comparisons with the residuals from the SMA regressions. For taxonomic comparisons, species were classified into the following groups: diatoms, dinoflagellates, cyanobacteria, desmids, non-desmid chlorophytes, haptophytes, and raphidophytes. Freshwater and marine species were analyzed separately, because of differences in taxon representation; also, for each trait we excluded from the analysis those taxa for which the trait was measured on
fewer than two species. Therefore, the following groups were compared for freshwater species: cyanobacteria, diatoms, desmids, and non-desmid chlorophytes (desmids were only present for the phosphate traits). For the marine species, the following groups were compared: diatoms, dinoflagellates, chlorophytes, haptophytes, and raphidophytes. We also used t-tests to compare mean trait values for freshwater and marine diatoms, because diatoms from both environments were relatively well represented.

We tested for correlations between the primary nutrient utilization traits, which could indicate physiological trait constraints or correlated selection pressures. Because most traits are correlated with volume, we also tested for partial correlations that controlled for the combined effect of volume on each pair of traits. Correlations between the composite traits are the subject of a separate manuscript, in which we use techniques for multivariate analysis in the presence of missing data to better estimate the correlations between cell volume, uptake affinity, and scaled uptake affinity for N and P (Edwards et al. 2011).

Results

Trait–volume scaling—All six of the primary nutrient traits tend to increase with cell volume (Fig. 1). Four of these traits have no significant difference in slope between freshwater and marine species: \( V_{\text{max}}^N \), \( Q_{\text{min}}^N \), \( V_{\text{max}}^P \), and \( Q_{\text{min}}^P \) (Table 1; Fig. 1). In contrast, \( K_N \) and \( K_P \) both have significantly different slopes for freshwater vs. marine species, with freshwater species exhibiting a steeper slope for \( K_N \), but exhibiting no significant relationship with volume for \( K_P \) (Fig. 1B,E). Of the four composite nutrient traits, P affinity, N affinity, and scaled N affinity all have slopes that are indistinguishable for freshwater and marine species. Both P affinity and N affinity increase with cell volume, whereas scaled N affinity decreases with cell volume (Fig. 2A,B,D). Scaled P affinity exhibits significantly different slopes for freshwater and marine species, with marine species showing a negative relationship with volume, and freshwater species showing no significant relationship (Fig. 2C). Maximum growth rate tends to decline with cell volume (Fig. 3A), and marine species show a significantly shallower slope than freshwater species (Table 1).

Between-taxon trait differences—\( \mu_{\text{max}} \) differs significantly between taxa for both freshwater and marine species, with and without controlling for volume (Table 2: Fig. 3C,D). Because of the greater amount of data for \( \mu_{\text{max}} \), we also tested for differences in the allometric exponent between taxa; SMA slopes did not differ by taxon for freshwater (likelihood ratio = 6.46, \( p = 0.09 \)) or marine species (likelihood ratio = 0.58, \( p = 0.96 \)). For marine species, after controlling for volume, mean maximum
Table 1. Coefficients for SMA regression of nutrient utilization traits and $\mu_{\max}$ with cell volume. Intercepts (int.) and slopes are listed for separate regressions of freshwater and marine species, and the common intercepts and slopes are listed for regressions that combine freshwater and marine species. 95% confidence intervals for each parameter are in parentheses. ns is listed for traits not significantly correlated with volume. The final column lists the $p$ value for a test of whether the freshwater and marine species have different slopes. $p$ values < 0.05 are marked with an asterisk.

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<td>$P_{\max}$</td>
<td>-8.8(-10, -7.4)</td>
<td>1.3(0.82, 2.1)</td>
<td>-8.1(-8.8, -7.3)</td>
<td>0.82(0.65, 1)</td>
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<td>0.82(0.68, 0.98)</td>
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<td>$K_{\max}$</td>
<td>-0.71(-1.1, -0.28)</td>
<td>0.52(0.37, 0.73)</td>
<td>0.84(-1.2, -0.44)</td>
<td>0.33(0.24, 0.45)</td>
<td>-0.61(-0.88, -0.34)</td>
<td>0.33(0.26, 0.42)</td>
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<td>$Q_{\max}$</td>
<td>-8.7(-9.2, -8.2)</td>
<td>0.68(0.51, 0.93)</td>
<td>-9.2(-9.6, -8.7)</td>
<td>0.88(0.77, 1)</td>
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<td>0.84(0.76, 0.94)</td>
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<td>$P_{\min}$</td>
<td>-8.4(-8.9, -7.9)</td>
<td>0.81(0.64, 1)</td>
<td>-9.1(-10, -8.2)</td>
<td>1.0(0.8, 1.3)</td>
<td>-8.7(-9.2, -8.3)</td>
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<td>$K_{\min}$</td>
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<td>$Q_{\min}$</td>
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<td>0.86(0.74, 1)</td>
<td>-10.6(-11.1, -10.1)</td>
<td>0.97(0.84, 1.1)</td>
<td>-10.7(-10.9, -10.4)</td>
<td>0.96(0.87, 1.1)</td>
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<td>P affinity</td>
<td>-9(-9.7, -8.2)</td>
<td>1.0(0.76, 1.3)</td>
<td>-8.1(-8.8, -7.5)</td>
<td>0.73(0.58, 0.94)</td>
<td>-8.5(-9, -8.1)</td>
<td>0.85(0.72, 1)</td>
<td>0.089</td>
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<td>N affinity</td>
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<td>1.0(0.6, 1.7)</td>
<td>-8.2(-9, -7.4)</td>
<td>0.75(0.58, 0.98)</td>
<td>-8.1(-8.7, -7.6)</td>
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<td>P scaled</td>
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<td>ns</td>
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<td>2.9(1.9, 3.9)</td>
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<td>$\mu_{\max}$</td>
<td>0.69(0.52, 0.86)</td>
<td>-0.36(-0.30, -0.43)</td>
<td>0.70(0.54, 0.85)</td>
<td>-0.24(-0.20, -0.29)</td>
<td>0.65(0.53, 0.76)</td>
<td>-0.28(-0.25, -0.32)</td>
<td>0.0014*</td>
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Reviews in L&O
557
Correlations between traits—Raw correlations between primary nutrient utilization traits are dominated by strong positive correlations (Table 3). For the marine species, all pairs of traits are significantly positively correlated. For the freshwater species, most pairs of traits are also significantly positively correlated or show no significant correlation. The single exception to this pattern is a significant negative correlation between $K_P$ and $K_N$ among the freshwater species (Table 3). The dominance of positive correlations among traits is likely driven by the fact that all traits tend to increase with cell volume (Fig. 1). A similar argument applies to the fact that all of the raw correlations of nutrient traits with $m_{\text{max}}$ are negative (Table 3). We therefore tested for partial correlations, which control for the simultaneous effect of cell volume on each pair of traits. In this analysis, positive correlations between nutrient traits still dominate, as do negative correlations between nutrient traits and $\mu_{\text{max}}$ (Table 3). Among marine species, five pairs of traits still show significant positive correlations between nutrient traits; among freshwater species, four pairs of traits show significant positive correlations, whereas $K_P$ and $K_N$ again show a negative correlation. As discussed below, the preponderance of positive correlations that remain while controlling for volume may indicate that the effect of volume is not fully removed.

$Q_N^{\text{min}}:Q_P^{\text{min}}$ ratios—We tested whether the ratio $Q_N^{\text{min}}:Q_P^{\text{min}}$ tended to differ between marine and freshwater habitats. Both habitats showed broad variation in this ratio, but freshwater species had a significantly higher ratio on average (Fig. 8; freshwater median molar ratio, 24.4; marine median molar ratio, 13.6; two-sample Wilcoxon test, $p = 0.032$).

Discussion

Scaling relationships and marine–freshwater differences—We find that $V_{\text{max}}$, $K$, and $Q_{\text{min}}$ all tend to increase as cell volume increases, although this is not the case for $K_P$ among freshwater species (Fig. 1; Table 1). It is noteworthy that marine and freshwater slopes are indistinguishable for those traits that appear to be the most strongly constrained by volume, $V_{\text{max}}$ and $Q_{\text{min}}$ (Fig. 1). In contrast, the half-saturation constants for uptake appear to be less strongly constrained by volume, and have significantly different slopes for freshwater and marine species (Fig. 1B,E), possibly reflecting different selective pressures from N or P limitation. If P limitation is more prevalent in freshwater environments, it may select for low $K_P$ and thus decrease this trait’s dependence on cell volume. The generally positive effect of volume on all of these traits is consistent
with prior analyses (Shuter 1978; Grover 1989; Litchman et al. 2007). These results are also largely consistent with the idea that marine and freshwater phytoplankton have similar physiological ecology (Kilham and Hecky 1988), although the different environments may modify trait patterns to some extent. For example, diatoms in marine and freshwater systems appear to occupy somewhat different ecological niches and exhibit different strategies. Marine diatoms are a fast-growing group compared to other marine taxa and appear to be adapted to high nutrient conditions. In contrast, freshwater diatoms have intermediate growth rates and low $K_P$ compared to other freshwater taxa. They also have a relatively high $P$ affinity among freshwater groups, likely being adapted to $P$-limited conditions. When marine and freshwater diatoms are compared, marine diatoms have significantly higher growth rates and $K_P$ than freshwater diatoms; conversely, marine diatoms also tend to have lower $K_N$ than freshwater diatoms. These differences possibly reflect different selective pressures in marine and freshwater environments. Because of the heavy silica frustules of diatoms, in marine environments diatoms benefit from mixing conditions associated with high nutrients that select for high growth rates. In freshwaters, diatoms also are associated with mixing conditions, but in shallow lakes mixed layer depths are too small and strongly select against diatoms (Ptacnik et al. 2003). Therefore, freshwater diatoms may be more prevalent in deeper lakes that also tend to be lower in $P$ (Dillon and Rigler 1974), causing freshwater diatoms to be good $P$ competitors.

Uptake affinity is often used as a proxy of the ability to grow or compete under nutrient limitation; therefore, it is important to note that uptake affinity on a per-cell basis increases with cell volume (Fig. 2A,B), because $V_{\text{max}}$ scales...
Tests of between-taxon trait differences. For each trait, the statistic and $F_p$ value are listed for a one-way analysis of variance testing the effect of taxon in Table 2. Common intercepts across taxa in an SMA regression with cell volume (‘‘Taxon with volume [w/vol.]’’ rows). Values $P \leq 0.05$ are marked with an asterisk.

Maximum growth rate tends to decline with increasing cell volume, consistent with prior results (Banse 1976; Chisholm 1992). To our knowledge, this is the first study comprehensively comparing marine and freshwater species, and we find that the allometric slope is shallower for marine species (Table 1; Fig. 3). The consequence of this difference in slopes is that, on average, marine phytoplankton of a certain size grow faster than freshwater species of the same size, and this difference is greater as cell size increases (Fig. 3A). The allometric slopes of $\mu_{\text{max}}$ for freshwater and marine species are $-0.36$ and $-0.24$ respectively, and the slope when all species are combined is $-0.28$ (Table 1). These slopes are steeper than some previously reported slopes (Banse 1976; Tang 1995), but this may be due to our use of SMA regression. Lines fit using ordinary least squares (OLS) have slopes biased towards zero (Warton et al. 2006), and if we fit our data using OLS the slopes are $-0.10$ and $-0.096$ for freshwater and marine species, respectively. Because allometric exponents are used to parameterize ecosystem models (Irwin et al. 2006), and to test hypothesized mechanisms for scaling relationships (DeLong et al. 2010), we recommend the use of SMA regression in comparative analyses, as discussed in detail by Warton et al. (2006).

In general, there are a number of limitations to our comparisons of freshwater and marine species. The freshwater species in our dataset cover a smaller range of cell volumes, which may limit our ability to detect scaling relationships and therefore obscure potential effects of volume on scaled uptake affinity. However, freshwater phytoplankton may have a smaller cell size range compared to marine phytoplankton in general (Litchman et al. 2009; Kamenir et al. 2010). In addition, the species in our compilation are those that phytoplankton ecologists have chosen to study in the lab, rather than a random or size-structured sample from natural communities. Future work on trait–volume scaling relationships would benefit from a more detailed analysis of natural communities.
more comprehensive sampling of natural communities, including endpoints of the size spectrum, from picoplankton to giant diatoms.

**Between-taxon differences**—We find strong differences between taxa in average nutrient trait values (Figs. 3–6; Table 2). At the same time, few between-taxon differences remain when controlling for cell volume (Table 2), indicating that taxonomic variation in nutrient utilization traits is largely driven by size variation. Considering raw trait values (not corrected for volume), among marine species differences in scaled uptake affinities suggest that the relatively small haptophytes and prymnesiophytes should be better competitors under P limitation, whereas the relatively large dinoflagellates and raphidophytes should be poorer competitors (Fig. 7C). The same trends occur for scaled N affinity, although there are no data for chlorophytes (Fig. 7D). Among freshwater species, the data for scaled P affinity suggest that cyanobacteria tend to be better competitors, whereas the desmids are poor competitors, with diatoms and non-desmid chlorophytes in between (Fig. 5C). There are fewer data for scaled N affinity among freshwater species, but the present patterns suggest that cyanobacteria may be poorer competitors for nitrate (Fig. 5D); however, only two cyanobacteria are present in this analysis, and one of these species can fix nitrogen, which may compensate for low nitrate affinity.

There is significant variation in mean $\mu_{\text{max}}$ between taxa (Table 2), with most variation due to the fact that among marine species, diatoms have high growth rates relative to their cell volume, whereas among freshwater species, cyanobacteria have low growth rates relative to their cell volume (Fig. 3C,D). However, because of the relatively small size of cyanobacteria cells, their raw growth rates are still relatively high among freshwater species, on average (Fig. 3B).

**Q_N : Q_P ratios**—Our analysis of the structural N:P ratio supports prior work showing broad variation in this ratio across phytoplankton (Rhee and Gotham 1980; Klausmeier et al. 2004). We also find that $Q_N^{\text{min}} : Q_P^{\text{min}}$ is greater on average for freshwater species. If the evolution of this ratio is driven by the relative availability of N and P, the difference between habitats may be due to greater prevalence of P limitation in freshwater systems (Elser et al. 2007). Alternatively, if the evolution of this ratio is driven by allocation to resource acquisition proteins vs. ribosomes (Klausmeier et al. 2004), higher ratios among freshwater species may indicate a greater tendency for nutrient or light limitation in freshwater systems, and a greater tendency for near-maximal growth rates in marine systems (Goldman et al. 1979).

**Comparison of scaling exponents to theoretical predictions**—The observed scaling exponents of nutrient utilization
traits can be compared to those expected under a mechanistic model of nutrient uptake (Aksnes and Egge 1991). If $V_{\text{max}}$ is determined by the number of uptake sites on the cell surface, and if the density of uptake sites does not vary with cell volume, then cell-specific maximum uptake rate should be proportional to surface area. For spherical cells, this will result in a scaling exponent of $2/3$ for $V_{\text{max}}$ relative to cell volume. Although a prior analysis of nitrate traits in marine species found a scaling exponent consistent with two-thirds scaling (Litchman et al. 2007), with the current, larger dataset, both $V_{\text{max}}^N$ and $V_{\text{max}}^P$ scale more steeply than $2/3$ (95% confidence intervals are [0.68, 0.98] and [0.81, 1.1], respectively: Table 1). However, an interspecific comparison has found that species with greater cell volume tend to show greater deviation from a spherical shape, and as a result the surface area:volume ratio declines with increasing cell volume, but it declines more slowly than expected for spherical cells (Reynolds 2006). Therefore, our results for the scaling of $V_{\text{max}}$ are not inconsistent with a scaling relationship driven by surface area.

$K$ appears to be less constrained by cell volume than either $V_{\text{max}}$ or $Q_{\text{min}}$, and unlike these traits, $K$ exhibits different scaling patterns for freshwater and marine species, with $K^P$ showing no correlation with volume for freshwater species (Table 1; Fig. 1). Therefore, although cell volume may affect $K$ by altering the mass transfer coefficient (Aksnes and Egge 1991), our results suggest that other factors beyond cell volume strongly affect $K$.

We hypothesized earlier (Litchman et al. 2007) that allometric exponents for $Q_{\text{min}}$ may range from $2/3$ to 1, if we assume that the minimum nutrient quota is contained in the cytoplasm that occupies most of the cell volume in small cells (isometric scaling), or is distributed along the cell wall in cells with large vacuoles (thus scales with cell surface, $2/3$ of volume). We are, however, unaware of mechanistic predictions for whether $Q_{\text{min}}$ scaling exponents should be different for N and P. Intriguingly, $Q_{\text{min}}^N$ scales allometrically with volume (95% confidence interval [0.76, 0.94]; Table 1), whereas the scaling of $Q_{\text{min}}^P$ is indistinguishable from isometric (95% confidence interval [0.87, 1.1]; Table 1). This also implies that the ratio $Q_{\text{min}}^N : Q_{\text{min}}^P$ may decline as volume increases. In our dataset, this is true when marine and freshwater species are combined (Kendall rank correlation: $-0.28$, $p = 0.013$), although not when marine and freshwater species are analyzed separately (marine correlation $-0.059$, $p = 0.77$; freshwater correlation $-0.25$, $p = 0.14$).

The allometric scaling of uptake affinities and scaled uptake affinities are consistent with the scaling of the
component parameters $V_{\text{max}}$, $K$, and $Q_{\text{min}}$. $V_{\text{max}}$ tends to increase more steeply with volume than $K$, resulting in an increase in cell-specific uptake affinity with volume (Fig. 2). When uptake affinity is scaled by $Q_{\text{min}}$, this results in a decrease in scaled uptake affinity with increasing volume, because the scaling exponents of $V_{\text{max}}$ and $Q_{\text{min}}$ tend to be similar. The exception to this trend is scaled P affinity for freshwater species, which does not decline with increasing volume; this may be due to the fact that $K_P$ does not decline with volume.

Potential constraints among nutrient utilization traits—A raw correlation analysis reveals a preponderance of positive correlations among nutrient traits (Table 3). These positive correlations may partially constrain the evolution of competitive ability, because for a given nutrient, a positive correlation between $V_{\text{max}}$ and $K$, or between $V_{\text{max}}$ and $Q_{\text{min}}$, constrains the evolution of equilibrium competitive ability, whereas a positive correlation between $K$ and $Q_{\text{min}}$ has the opposite effect (Litchman et al. 2007). However, if these trait correlations are driven solely by cell size, then the only relevant constraints for trait evolution are those that will constrain size evolution, i.e., the trait–volume scaling parameters (Litchman et al. 2009). Our partial correlation analysis, which tested for trait correlations after controlling for the effect of cell volume, yielded equivocal results. This analysis yielded only positive significant correlations between nutrient traits, with the exception of $K_P$ vs. $K^N$ for freshwater species, which is also negative in the raw correlation analysis (Table 3). Furthermore, the significant correlations occurred among pairs of traits that were strongly correlated in the raw correlation analysis (Table 3). It therefore seems possible that the partial correlation analysis did not succeed in fully removing the correlated effect of volume on nutrient traits. Measurement error for either nutrient traits or cell volume, along with plasticity in cell volume, will tend to add noise to the trait–volume relationship. This noise will prevent the partial correlation from fully removing the true relationship between a trait and volume. The same considerations apply to the negative correlations between $\mu_{\text{max}}$ and nutrient traits (Table 3).

However, some of the partial correlations may indeed represent constraints, or correlated selection pressures. The negative correlation between $K_P$ and $K^N$ among freshwater species is unlikely to be driven by volume, and may contribute to a trade-off in competitive ability for nitrate vs. phosphate among freshwater species. Among the positive partial correlations, nearly all would constrain the evolution of high scaled uptake affinity for a single nutrient (for marine species, $V_{\text{max}}^N$ vs. $Q_{\text{min}}^N$, $V_{\text{max}}^P$ vs. $K_P$; for freshwater species, $V_{\text{max}}^N$ vs. $Q_{\text{min}}^N$), or would constrain the simultaneous evolution of high scaled uptake affinity for both nutrients (for marine species, $V_{\text{max}}^N$ vs. $K_P$, $V_{\text{max}}^P$ vs. $K^N$; for freshwater species, $V_{\text{max}}^N$ vs. $V_{\text{max}}^P$, $V_{\text{max}}^P$ vs. $Q_{\text{min}}^N$). Therefore, these relationships may represent eco-evolutionary
Fig. 7. Between-taxon variation in composite traits for marine species. All variables are log_{10}-transformed. For each taxon, mean trait value and mean volume are plotted, ± 1 SE. The SMA fits from Fig. 2 are plotted as dotted lines. hapt, haptophytes; diat, diatoms; chlor, chlorophytes; dino, dinoflagellates; raph, raphidophytes. (A) P affinity, (B) N affinity, (C) scaled P affinity, (D) scaled N affinity.

Table 3. Correlation matrices for between-trait relationships. Entries in the upper right are for marine species, entries in the lower left are for freshwater species.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$V_N^{\text{max}}$</th>
<th>$K_N$</th>
<th>$Q_N^{\text{min}}$</th>
<th>$V_P^{\text{max}}$</th>
<th>$K_P$</th>
<th>$Q_P^{\text{min}}$</th>
<th>$\mu_{\text{max}}$</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Raw Kendall rank correlations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$V_N^{\text{max}}$</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td>0.69**</td>
<td>0.6**</td>
<td>0.71**</td>
<td>0.54*</td>
<td>-0.37*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$K_N$</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.53*</td>
<td>0.66**</td>
<td>0.69**</td>
<td>0.84**</td>
<td>-0.61**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$Q_N^{\text{min}}$</td>
<td>0.66**</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.66**</td>
<td>0.52*</td>
<td>0.56*</td>
<td>-0.27*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$V_P^{\text{max}}$</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.45*</td>
<td>-0.3</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.64**</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$K_P$</td>
<td>-0.037</td>
<td>0.55**</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
<td>-0.0034</td>
<td>0.65*</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>$Q_P^{\text{min}}$</td>
<td>0.7**</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>-0.032</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mu_{\text{max}}$</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td>-0.032</td>
<td>-0.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial Kendall rank correlations that control for cell volume</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$V_N^{\text{max}}$</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.45*</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.53*</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>$K_N$</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.37*</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.078</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.39*</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.53*</td>
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<tr>
<td>$V_P^{\text{max}}$</td>
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<td>-0.38*</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$K_P$</td>
<td>0.39*</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.62**</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$Q_P^{\text{min}}$</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>$\mu_{\text{max}}$</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.027</td>
<td>-0.042</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05, ** p < 0.001.
trade-offs among nutrient utilization traits. Edwards et al. (2011) used the same dataset to test for trade-offs among scaled N affinity, scaled P affinity, and cell volume. They found evidence for a general three-way trade-off among these three traits, with the relationship between scaled N affinity and scaled P affinity most evident in freshwater species, and the relationship between cell volume and the two nutrient traits most evident in marine species.

Our extensive compilation of nutrient utilization traits in marine and freshwater phytoplankton shows that there are fundamental scaling relationships for most traits, and these relationships are usually shared by marine and freshwater phytoplankton. However, there are some trait differences that possibly reflect different selective pressures between marine and freshwater environments, such as the relative strength of limitation by different nutrients. Major taxa differ in their nutrient utilization traits, reflecting contrasting ecological strategies that are often driven by differences in cell volume. Our data also suggest that some taxa, such as diatoms, may have different strategies in marine vs. freshwater environments, highlighting the interaction of phylogeny and environmental controls.

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