

1 Early life stress causes persistent impacts on 2 the microbiome of Atlantic salmon

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8 9 10 Abstract

11 Intensively farmed fish are commonly stressed, often leading to immune impairment and
12 increased susceptibility to disease. Microbial communities associated with the gut and skin
13 are vital to host immune function, but little is known about how stress affects the fish
14 microbiome, especially during the sensitive early life stages. We compared the effects of two
15 aquaculture-relevant stressors on the gut and skin microbiome of Atlantic salmon fry: an
16 acute cold stress during late embryogenesis, and a chronic environmental stress during the
17 larval stage. Acute cold stress had a lasting effect on the structure of both the gut and the
18 skin microbiome, likely due to disruption of the egg shell microbial communities which seed
19 the initial colonisation of the teleost microbiome upon hatching. In contrast, chronic post
20 hatch stress altered the structure of the gut microbiome, but not that of the skin. Both types
21 of stressors promoted similar Gammaproteobacteria ASVs, particularly within the genera
22 *Acinetobacter* and *Aeromonas* which include several important fish pathogens and, in the
23 gut, reduced the abundance of Lactobacillales. This suggests that there may be common
24 signatures of stress in the salmon microbiome, which may represent useful stress
25 biomarkers in aquaculture.
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34 Introduction

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36 Microbial communities associated with the gut, skin and other mucosal surfaces have a
37 fundamental influence on host fitness, including nutrient acquisition, metabolism and
38 immune competence (Koskella et al. 2017). In particular, the microbiome plays a critical role
39 in the maturation of the vertebrate adaptive immune system and the stimulation of immune
40 response, and can directly enhance host pathogen defence via colonisation resistance and
41 production of inhibitory compounds (Brestoff & Artis 2013; Kamada et al. 2013). Evidence
42 from mammalian studies suggests that host resilience to stress, disease and immune-related
43 disorders is critically dependent on microbiome diversity and functionality (Rea et al. 2016).
44 However, the host-microbiota relationship is finely balanced and sensitive to disruption by
45 environmental stressors (Foster et al. 2017). Stress influences the mammalian brain-gut-
46 microbiota axis, including neural, immuno, and endocrine signalling pathways, via complex
47 and interacting mechanisms (Foster et al. 2017). For example, host stress response
48 mediated via the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis (i.e. secretion of corticosteroids
49 and catecholamines) can directly influence microbiome diversity, structure and function
50 (Huang et al. 2015), while microbiota and their metabolites are also known to exert
51 modulatory effects throughout the HPA system, altering stress response (de Weerth 2017;
52 Simard et al. 2014). Disruption of the gut-brain axis, including microbiome dysbiosis, has
53 been linked to a number of stress-related conditions, including suppression of immune
54 function, depression and anxiety, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), obesity and metabolic
55 syndrome (Borre et al. 2014; Foster et al. 2017; Rea et al. 2016).

56 In intensive aquaculture, fish are often reared at unnaturally high densities and exposed
57 to a range of other handling and social stressors, which can induce adverse health effects
58 such as impaired growth and fitness, altered behaviour and depressed immunity (Conte
59 2004; Ellison et al. 2018; Iwama et al. 2011; Rodriguez-Barreto et al. 2019). Some evidence
60 indicates that aquaculture related stressors can alter fish microbiome diversity and structure
61 (Boutin et al. 2013; Ringø et al. 1997; Zha et al. 2018). Additionally, environmental stressors
62 such as temperature, toxicant exposure or pH may directly affect the microbiome of aquatic
63 species which are in intimate contact with the external environment (Claus et al. 2016;
64 Sylvain et al. 2016; Zarkasi et al. 2014). This suggests that aquaculture has the potential to
65 disrupt fish microbial communities in the gut, as well as on the skin and other mucosal
66 surfaces, which may have consequences for fish health and disease resistance. However,
67 relatively little is known about the impacts of different types of aquaculture-related stress on
68 the fish microbiome, or how these may influence host health.

69 The early life stages of teleost fish are particularly sensitive to environmental stressors,
70 reflecting developmental plasticity during critical periods for the assembly of the teleost

71 microbiome, as well as maturation of the nervous and immune system (Giatsis et al. 2015;
72 Uren Webster et al. 2018b). In mammals, stress during early life has a critical influence on
73 gut microbial colonisation and community establishment, with long lasting effects on both the
74 microbiome and health of the host (Foster et al. 2017), however the sensitivity of the fish
75 microbiome to early-life stress is unknown. The teleost intestine is colonised upon hatching
76 from microbes present in the surrounding water and attached to egg-shell fragments, and
77 these early communities are very dynamic and readily influenced by environmental variation
78 (Giatsis et al. 2015; Ingerslev et al. 2014). Although diet becomes a dominant factor shaping
79 further proliferation and differentiation of the gut microbiota (Giatsis et al. 2015; Smith et al.
80 2015), earlier community dynamics may still have significant lasting effects on future
81 microbial colonisation (Sprockett et al. 2018; Walter & Ley 2011). Here we examined the
82 effect of two aquaculture-relevant stressors on the microbiome of Atlantic salmon (*Salmo*
83 *salar*) during early development. We hypothesised that microbiome diversity and structure
84 would change depending on the timing and nature of the stressor. Therefore, we
85 characterised the skin and gut microbiome of four month old Atlantic salmon following
86 exposure to an acute cold stress applied during late embryogenesis and a chronic post-
87 hatch environmental stress.

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90 Methods

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92 *Ethics*

93 All experiments were performed with the approval of the Swansea Animal Welfare and
94 Ethical Review Body (AWERB; approval number IP-1415-6).

95

96 *Stress experiments*

97 The stress experiments and husbandry conditions are fully described in Uren Webster et
98 al. (2018b). Briefly, Atlantic salmon eggs from 10 families were maintained in vertical
99 incubators, supplied with flow-through de-chlorinated tap water. Hatched larvae were
100 transferred to shallow troughs (100L x40W x 8D) supplied with artificial substrate to provide
101 support for egg sac reabsorption and shelter for alevins until emergence. Fry were fed with a
102 commercial salmonid feed (Nutraplus, Skretting, UK) of the appropriate grade and quantity
103 recommended by the manufacturer. Water oxygen saturation (>90%), ammonia (<0.02
104 mg/L), nitrite (<0.01 mg/L), nitrate (<15 mg/L) and pH (7.5 ± 0.2) were maintained within
105 appropriate ranges. Water temperature was gradually increased from 9 °C to 11 °C and
106 photoperiod adjusted from 10L:14D to 14L:10D over the four months of the experiments,
107 reflecting seasonal change.

108 Eggs were randomly assigned to three experimental groups: control, acute cold stress
109 and chronic environmental stress. Each group was maintained in two replicate egg trays/fry
110 troughs, each containing 500 individuals. The acute stress consisted of a cold shock (five
111 minutes immersion in iced water (0.2 °C), followed by five minutes air exposure (12 °C)),
112 during late embryogenesis (360 degree days; DD). For the chronic stress, hatched larvae
113 were maintained in bare fry troughs lacking the artificial substrate provided to supply support
114 during yolk sac reabsorption and shelter for larvae/fry in the other experimental groups
115 throughout the duration of the experiment (from 475-1532 DD). Mortality, hatching success,
116 and size were recorded throughout the experiment. Neither the acute or chronic stressors
117 altered overall hatching success or survival and, although we initially measured a modest
118 reduction (15%) in the weight of chronically stressed fish, there was no difference in final
119 size (length, weight) or condition index at the end of the four month experimental period
120 (Uren Webster et al. 2018b).

121

122 *16S rRNA sequencing & bioinformatics*

123 At the final sampling point (1532 degree days) fish were euthanised via an overdose of
124 anaesthetic (Phenoxyethanol; 0.5 mg/L), followed by destruction of the brain according to
125 UK Home Office regulations. Skin mucus was collected using Epicentre Catch-All™ Sample
126 Collection Swabs (Cambio, Cambridge, UK), by swabbing each fish along the entire length
127 of the lateral line five times in both directions, on the left-hand side of the body. Sterile
128 dissection of the whole intestine was performed to include both the intestinal contents and
129 epithelial associated microbial communities. Skin swabs, intestine samples and 50 ml water
130 samples from each tank were stored in sterile tubes at -80 °C until DNA extraction.

131 16S rRNA analysis was performed for a total of 10 individuals (five per replicate tank)
132 from each of the three experimental groups (acute stress, chronic stress, control). DNA
133 extraction from the intestine, skin swabs and water samples was performed using a
134 PowerSoil DNA Isolation Kit (Qiagen, Manchester, UK) according to the manufacturer's
135 instructions. 16S library preparation using Nextera XT Index kit was performed according the
136 Illumina Metagenomic Sequencing Library Preparation guide, amplifying the V4
137 hypervariable region of the bacterial 16S gene as fully described in Uren Webster et al.
138 (2018a). The primers 519F (5'-AGCMGCCGCGGTAA-3') and 785R (5'-
139 TACNVTGGTATCTAATCC-3') were used for skin and water samples but were associated
140 with excessive non-specific amplification of host DNA from the gut, therefore the primers
141 341F (5'-CCTACGGGNGGCWGCAG-3') and 785R (5'-GACTACHVGGGTATCTAATCC-3')
142 were used for the gut samples instead.

143 Raw sequence reads have been deposited in the European Nucleotide Archive under
144 study accession number PRJEB32293. Analyses of gut, skin and water samples were

145 performed separately, within Qiime2 (v2019.4, (Bolyen et al. 2018)). Raw sequence reads
146 were initially quality screened and truncated to 280 bp (forward reads) and 240 bp (reverse
147 reads), and the first 8 bp were removed to eliminate potential adaptor contamination.
148 Trimmed reads were then de-noised, merged, subject to chimera screening and removal,
149 and assigned into actual sequence variants (ASVs) using DADA2 (Callahan et al. 2016).
150 Taxonomic classification of ASVs was performed using the Silva reference taxonomy (v132;
151 (Quast et al. 2013)) with a custom trained classifier (Bokulich et al. 2018) specific to the
152 primer pair employed. Host mitochondrial sequences and chloroplast sequences were
153 removed from the dataset, and good reads were subsampled to an equal depth (skin and
154 water- 6718; gut- 2716) before calculation of alpha and beta diversity metrics (Chao1
155 richness, Shannon diversity, and Bray-Curtis dissimilarity). One gut sample (control) and one
156 skin sample (chronic stress) were eliminated from the analysis due to very low read
157 numbers.

158

159 *Statistical analysis*

160 All statistical analysis was performed in R v3.5.0. We employed linear mixed effect
161 models (using the lme4 package) to examine the effects of stress treatment and fish size on
162 measures of alpha diversity in the skin and gut, including tank identity as a random factor.
163 We included fish length as a covariate of size effects because it had a lower coefficient of
164 variation than fish mass (CV= 8% vs 28.2%). In each case we achieved model simplification
165 by performing backward selection using the *step* and *drop1* functions and selected the
166 model with the lowest AIC value. We then refitted the final model using Restricted Maximum
167 Likelihood, or as a linear model when tank identity (random component) did not improve
168 model fit. We examined the effects of stress treatment on alpha diversity in the tank water
169 using linear models. Structural analysis (microbial beta diversity) was based on community
170 distance matrices calculated using the Bray-Curtis dissimilarity index. Non-metric
171 multidimensional scaling ordination was performed using the vegan package in R (Oksanen
172 et al. 2017). To examine the impact of stress treatment and fish size (length) on community
173 structure, multivariate statistical analysis of community separation (PERMANOVA) was
174 performed using Adonis in the vegan package having first checked that the data met the
175 assumption of homogeneity of variance using the Betadisper function.

176 We examined the effect of stress treatment on the abundance of individual ASVs within
177 the gut and skin microbiomes using DeSeq2 (Love et al. 2014), using rarefied data as
178 recommended for microbiome libraries (Weiss et al. 2017). The DeSeq2 models included
179 independent filtering of low coverage ASVs, employed default settings for outlier detection
180 and moderation of ASV dispersion estimates, and optimised power for identification of

181 differentially abundant ASVs at a threshold of $\alpha=0.05$. ASVs abundance was considered
182 significantly different at $FDR < 0.05$.

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185 Results

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187 *Microbiome alpha and beta diversity*

188 There was no detectable effect of stress or fish size on measures on alpha diversity in the
189 gut or skin microbiome, or in the tank water (Figure 1). For Chao1 richness there was no
190 significant effect of stress (Gut: $F_{2,26} = 3.11$, $P=0.06$; Skin: $F_{2,26} = 1.93$, $P=0.17$; Water: $F_{2,3}$
191 $= 5.54$, $P=0.10$). For Shannon diversity, there was no detectable effect of either stress
192 treatment or fish size ($P > 0.4$ in all cases).

193 In contrast, we identified a pronounced effect of stress on microbiome beta diversity
194 (Figure 2). There was a significant effect of stress, but not fish size (length), on both gut and
195 skin community structure (Gut: *Stress* $F_{25,2} = 1.95$, $P = 0.012$, *Length* $F_{25,1} = 0.85$, $P = 0.582$;
196 Skin: *Stress* $F_{25,2} = 3.81$, $P = 0.001$, *Length* $F_{25,1} = 0.85$, $P = 0.692$). In particular, the skin
197 microbiome of acutely stressed fish was clearly separated from that of the controls and
198 chronically stressed groups.

199

200 *Microbiome composition and ASV abundance*

201 Overall, the most abundant bacterial phyla present in the gut microbiome were Firmicutes
202 and Proteobacteria, with lower levels of Terenicutes, Actinobacteria and Planctomycetes.
203 The skin microbiome was dominated by Proteobacteria (mainly Gammaproteobacteria), with
204 smaller numbers of Firmicutes, Actinobacteria and Bacteroidetes, while the tank water
205 samples were dominated by Proteobacteria and Bacteroidetes.

206 There was a clear effect of both acute cold stress and chronic environmental stress on
207 the composition of the gut microbiome. We identified 65 gut ASVs with significantly different
208 abundance ($FDR < 0.05$) in acutely stressed fish compared to the controls, and 32 gut ASVs
209 that were differentially abundant between chronically-stressed and control fish. Of these, 24
210 (75%) were similarly affected by both types of stress (Table S1, Figure 3). Notably, 25 out of
211 the 36 gut ASVs that were present at higher levels in acutely-stressed fish were members of
212 the class Gammaproteobacteria and, in particular, 19 (53%) were from the genus
213 *Acinetobacter*. Similarly, amongst the 14 gut ASVs present at higher abundance in
214 chronically stressed fish, 11 (79%) were Gammaproteobacteria including five ASVs within
215 the genus *Plesiomonas* and two ASVs within the genus *Acinetobacter*. Overall, *Plesiomonas*
216 and *Acinetobacter* were amongst the most abundant gut genera in both stress groups,
217 although there was considerable variation in their abundance between individual fish.

218 Several *Lactobacillus* sp., *Gemmata* sp. and *Candidatus Bacilloplasma* ASVs were amongst
219 those showing the largest decline in abundance in fish subject to both stressors, compared
220 to the controls.

221 There was also a clear effect of acute cold stress, but not of chronic stress, on the
222 composition of the skin microbiome. We identified 87 individual skin ASVs that were present
223 at significantly different abundance levels in acutely stressed fish compared to that of the
224 control fish, but only one ASV was differentially abundant in fish subject to the chronic fish.
225 Similarly to that observed in the gut, a number of Gammaproteobacteria ASVs were present
226 at significantly higher levels in the skin of acutely stressed fish. Notably, these included four
227 of the most abundant skin ASVs across all fish; three *Acinetobacter* sp. and one *Aeromonas*
228 sp. (Table S2, Figure 3). However, in contrast to the gut microbiome, acute cold stress had a
229 far more consistent effect on the skin microbiome between individual fish.

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231

232 Discussion

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234 Our results indicate that stress experienced during early-life can have persistent effects
235 on the diversity and structure of the Atlantic salmon microbiome, even in the absence of
236 significant effects on survival, growth or condition factor (Uren Webster et al. 2018b). The
237 impact of stress on the salmon microbiome was dependent on the type of stressor, as well
238 as community type (gut or skin). However, we also identified some similarities in microbiome
239 response to stress, suggesting there may be some common stress-signatory bacterial taxa.
240 Acute cold stress during late embryogenesis induced very marked and consistent changes in
241 the overall structure of the skin microbiome four months post hatch. This was characterised
242 by the altered abundance of a large number of individual ASVs, and in particular a marked
243 increase in several *Acinetobacter* sp. and *Aeromonas* sp., which were amongst the most
244 abundant taxa present in the skin microbiome. In contrast, chronic, post-hatch environmental
245 stress had few discernible effects on skin microbial community diversity or structure. The gut
246 microbiome was altered by both stressors in a similar way, although acute cold stress had a
247 more extensive effect. These changes were characterised by a shift from a community
248 largely dominated by Bacilli, especially Lactobacilli, Mollicutes and Planctomycetes in the
249 control fish, to one dominated by Gammaproteobacteria with elevated abundance of
250 *Acinetobacter* sp. and/or *Plesiomonas* sp. in particular.

251

252 *Likely mechanisms of microbiome stress disruption*

253 Microbiome community assembly is determined by a series of complex interactions with
254 the host, the environment and between microbiota, which vary with age and body site

255 (Walter & Ley 2011). Our results suggest that the mechanisms by which the acute and
256 chronic stress affect the salmon microbiome are likely to be different, reflecting the different
257 timing, nature and duration of each stressor, as well as the differential communities
258 associated with the skin and the gut.

259 In the case of the acute stress during late embryogenesis, it is probable that exposure to
260 iced water directly affected microbial communities associated with the egg shell, and thus
261 the subsequent assembly of the gut and skin microbiome. The egg shell microbiome is
262 extremely diverse and known to be directly influenced by the chemical and physical
263 characteristics of the surrounding water, including temperature (Liu et al. 2014; Wilkins et al.
264 2016). Upon hatching, these microbial communities are the primary colonisers of the fish
265 intestine and skin and therefore fundamentally influence successive community structure
266 (Stephens et al. 2016; Wilkins et al. 2016). Differences in microbial colonisation history can
267 alter the availability of ecological niches for successive colonisers, and can explain lasting
268 differences in community assembly in otherwise identical environmental conditions (Fukami
269 2015; Sprockett et al. 2018; Walter & Ley 2011). The host-associated microbiome is
270 extremely dynamic during these early stages of colonisation and proliferation, and is
271 therefore likely to be particularly sensitive to environmental variation (Rea et al. 2016).
272 Notably, both *Acinetobacter* sp. and *Aeromonas salmonicida*, are known psychrophiles
273 (Beaz-Hidalgo & Figueras 2013; Doughari et al. 2011). Therefore it seems likely that in this
274 case, the acute cold shock disrupted the eggshell microbiome, favouring these taxa with
275 higher cold tolerance, which in turn altered initial colonisation of mucosal surfaces upon
276 hatching. Once established, these taxa are then likely to have had an enhanced ability to
277 out-compete subsequent colonisers and retain their dominant position through niche pre-
278 emption (Sprockett et al. 2018; Walter & Ley 2011). It could be that these colonisation
279 effects remained more pronounced and consistent in the skin microbiome because gut
280 microbial communities are subsequently more readily influenced by the diet (Ingerslev et al.
281 2014; Lokesh et al. 2019).

282 Host stress response is likely to be an important factor underlying the effects of chronic
283 stress on gut microbiome structure. In these same fish we also found evidence of
284 considerable stress-related transcriptional changes, including in the expression of genes
285 involved in glucocorticoid production and oxidative stress response, and a depressed
286 immune response to a simulated pathogenic challenge (Uren Webster et al. 2018b).
287 Furthermore, a similar chronic environmental stress, consisting of lack of tank enrichment,
288 has previously been reported to cause elevated stress levels (plasma cortisol) in juvenile
289 Atlantic salmon (Näslund et al. 2013). Therefore, elevated levels of circulating cortisol and/or
290 stress-induced changes in the immune system may have influenced the gut microbiota.
291 Cortisol-mediated stress response in salmonids is established at two weeks post hatching

292 (Barry et al. 1995), and in mammals cortisol is known to directly affect microbiome diversity
293 and composition. Specifically, elevated glucocorticoid concentrations have been shown to
294 promote Gammaproteobacteria and inhibit probiotic taxa including Lactobacilliales (Mudd et
295 al. 2017; Stothart et al. 2016; Zijlmans et al. 2015). This is highly consistent with the changes
296 we observed in the gut microbiome.

297

298 *Potential implications of stress-disruption of the microbiome*

299 While our results suggest that acute cold stress and chronic environmental stress affect
300 the salmon microbiome via different mechanisms, both stressors favoured an increase in the
301 abundance of certain taxa within the class Gammaproteobacteria, especially *Acinetobacter*,
302 *Aeromonas* and *Plesiomonas*. The same taxa have previously been linked to hypoxia and
303 social stress (Boutin et al. 2013; Ringø et al. 1997), suggesting they could have an
304 inherently higher resilience to stress, and the ability to thrive in the absence of wider
305 microbial competition (Shade et al. 2012). *Acinetobacter* and *Aeromonas* are both widely
306 distributed in soil, water and as commensals in many animals (Doughari et al. 2011; Janda &
307 Abbott 2010) and, crucially, also include a number of pathogenic genera that cause
308 significant mortalities and economic loss in aquaculture (Austin & Austin 2007).
309 Opportunistic *Aeromonas* infections are common in fish subject to stressful conditions, for
310 example elevated temperatures, poor water quality and during spawning, typically causing
311 septicaemia, ulceration, haemorrhages and chronic lethargy (Beaz-Hidalgo & Figueras
312 2013). Psychrophilic *A. salmonidica*, usually the predominant species found in cold-water
313 fish, is the cause of fish furunculosis which is most associated with salmonids, while
314 mesophilic species including *A. hydrophila* and *A. veronii* also cause an assortment of
315 stress-induced diseases in warmer-water fish (Austin & Austin 2007; Beaz-Hidalgo &
316 Figueras 2013). Additionally, *Acinetobacter johnsonii*, *Acinetobacter iwoffii* and *Acinetobacter*
317 *pittii* have been reported as emergent, antibiotic-resistant, opportunistic fish pathogens, with
318 pathologies including scale loss, skin/fin erosion, haemorrhaging, intestinal inflammation and
319 ~20% mortality rate (Kozłowska et al. 2014; Li et al. 2017; Roald & Hastein 1980).

320 Mucosal-associated microbial communities in the gut and on the skin provide protection
321 against pathogens through colonisation resistance, secretion of antimicrobial compounds
322 and stimulation of the immune system (Brestoff & Artis 2013; Kamada et al. 2013).
323 Disrupting the integrity of this critical defence mechanism can increase risk of infection
324 (Khosravi & Mazmanian 2013). Therefore, this increased abundance of the taxa which may
325 include important fish pathogens in the gut following both acute and chronic stress, as well
326 as in the skin following acute stress, suggests an enhanced risk of opportunistic infection in
327 the case of further stress or injury. In the gut we also observed that both acute and chronic
328 stress reduced the abundance of beneficial *Lactobacillus* sp., which has been linked to

329 intestinal inflammation and increased susceptibility to enteric pathogens (He et al. 2013; Liu
330 et al. 2016). Furthermore, disruption of microbiome balance through increased dominance of
331 certain taxa, as we observed in the gut of stressed fish, is known to follow exposure to stress
332 during early life in mammals and, critically, has also been associated with wider adverse
333 effects on health status and immunity (Borre et al. 2014; Foster et al. 2017; Khosravi &
334 Mazmanian 2013; Rea et al. 2016).

335 There were no lasting effects on survival or growth, but in parallel we also found that both
336 of these early life stressors induced considerable transcriptional and epigenetic effects in the
337 gills of these fish (Uren Webster et al. 2018b). Chronic stress, in particular, was associated
338 with differential expression of a number of genes with critical immune function, as well as
339 wider metabolic function. We also found that chronic stress impaired immune response to a
340 subsequent pathogenic challenge while the acute stress enhanced it, and there was
341 evidence that stress-altered mechanisms of epigenetic regulation may have contributed to
342 these effects. Importantly this shows that both the acute and chronic stress had wider effects
343 on the immune system. Links between intestinal microbiota and the host immune system
344 have been well established, with the microbiome playing a critical role in the maturation and
345 differentiation of the adaptive immune system, while immune cells also regulate microbiota
346 assemblage (Belkaid & Hand 2014; Brown et al. 2013). While it is not possible to directly
347 relate these effects of stress on the gut and skin microbiome with the effects on the immune
348 system identified in the gill, our results highlight that disruption of the microbiome may
349 potentially contribute to broader, interactive effects of stress on Atlantic salmon fry.

350

351 In summary, we found that early life stress induced persistent effects on the gut and skin
352 microbiome of Atlantic salmon fry, in a stress, and tissue, specific manner. This highlights
353 the importance of considering subtle, sub-lethal impacts of early-life stress on the
354 microbiome, even in the absence of outward effects on growth and condition. While acute
355 cold shock during late embryogenesis caused extremely pronounced changes in skin
356 microbial community, both the acute stress and chronic post-hatch stress caused similar, but
357 more variable, changes in the structure and diversity of the gut microbiome. Different
358 mechanisms are likely to account for this stress and tissue specificity. Disruption of eggshell
359 microbial communities, altering microbial community colonisation and succession is perhaps
360 most likely to explain the effects of acute cold stress on the skin and gut microbiome, while
361 host stress response may contribute to the effects of chronic stress in the gut. The two
362 different stressors promoted the same ASVs within the genera *Acinetobacter* and
363 *Aeromonas*, which include several important fish pathogens. This suggests that early life
364 stress may increase the risk of opportunistic infections in the case of further stress or injury,
365 which is very relevant for intensive aquaculture, where multiple stressors are commonplace

366 (Iwama et al. 2011). Given that these taxa have also been reported to respond to other types
367 of stress in a range of fish species (Boutin et al. 2013; Ringø et al. 1997; Zha et al. 2018),
368 they may represent novel biomarkers of stress of potential use in aquaculture.

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566

567 Figure Legends

568

569 **Figure 1.** Alpha diversity (Chao1 richness and Shannon diversity) in the gut and skin
570 microbiome in fish exposed to an acute cold stress during embryogenesis and a chronic
571 post-hatch environmental stress.

572 **Figure 2.** Non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) ordination of microbial community
573 structure based on Bray-Curtis distances, for all gut and skin samples.

574 **Figure 3.** Genus-level composition of the gut and skin microbiome. Each bar represents the
575 relative abundance of the top 30 genera, expressed as a percentage of subsampled reads.

Figure 1

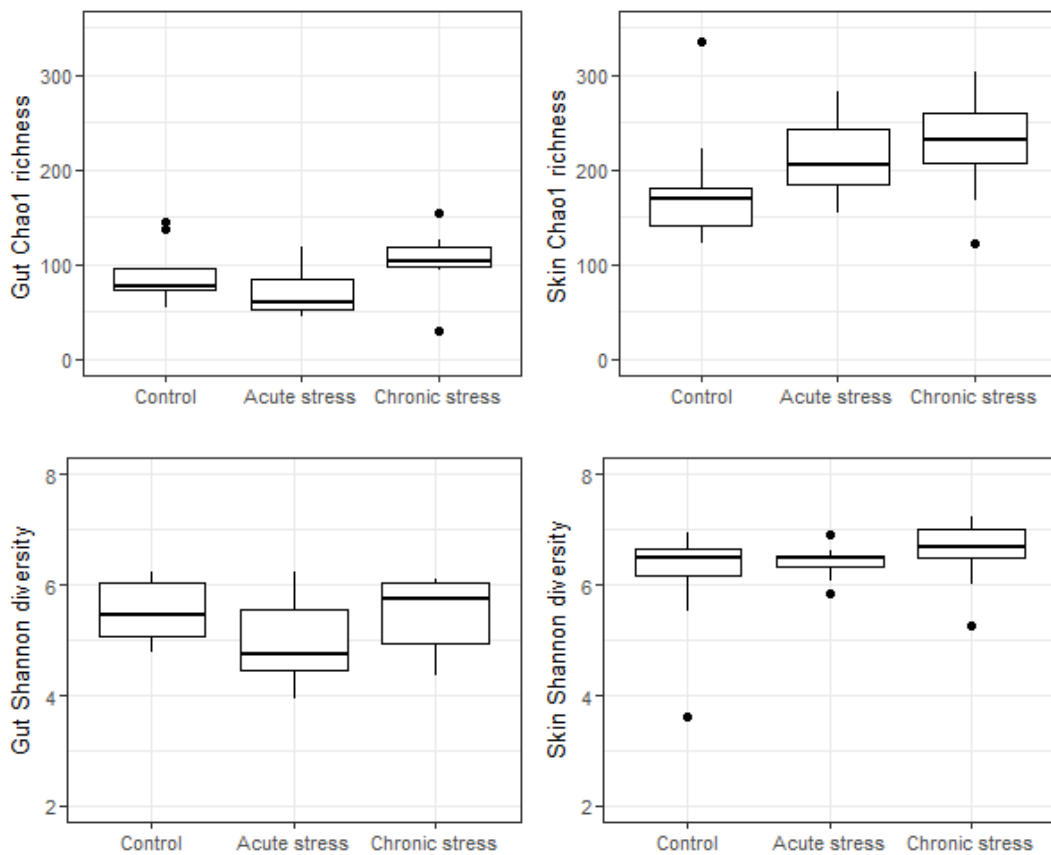


Figure 2

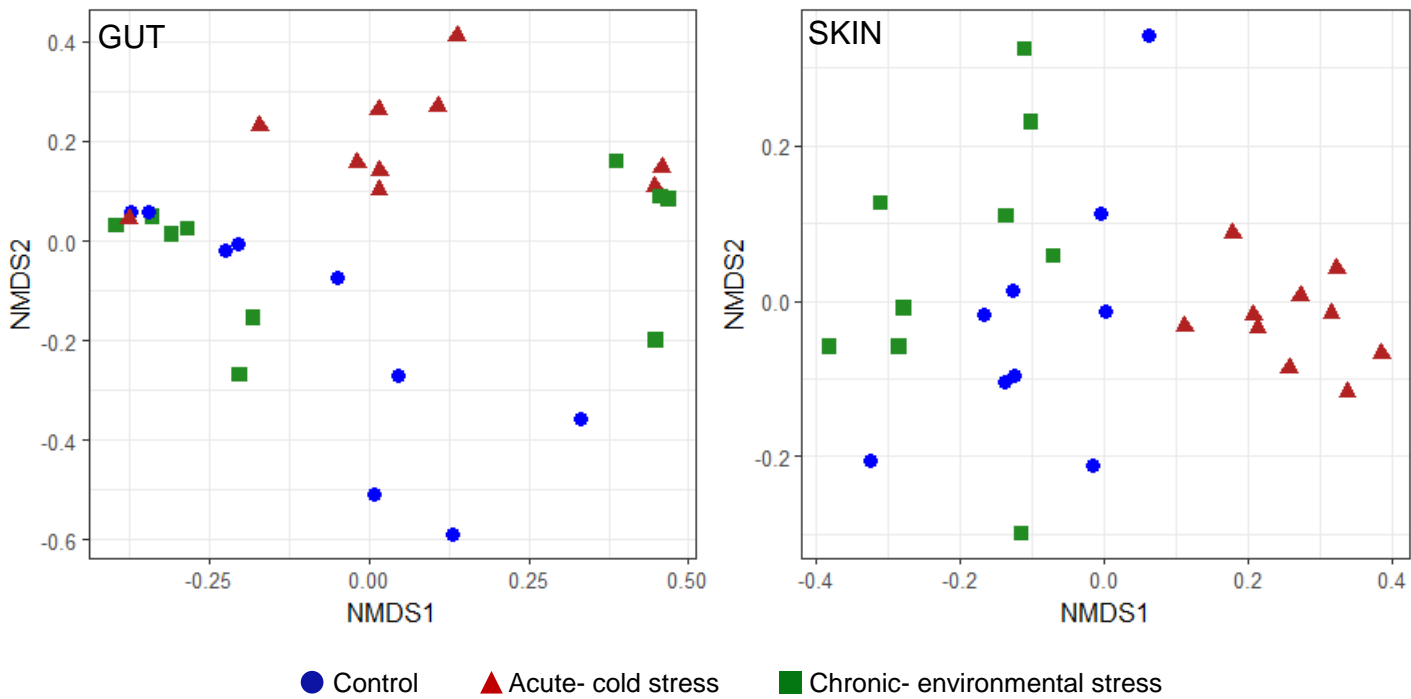


Figure 3

