Carbon and nitrogen metabolism in mycorrhizal networks and mycoheterotrophic plants of tropical forests: a stable isotope analysis

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Mycoheterotrophic (MH) plants obtain carbon (C) from mycorrhizal networks and indirectly exploit nearby autotrophic plants. We compared overlooked tropical rainforest MH plants associating with arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) to well-reported temperate MH plants associating with ectomycorrhizal basidiomycetes. We investigated $^{13}$C and $^{15}$N abundances of MH plants, green plants, and AMF spores in Caribbean rainforests. Whereas temperate MH plants and fungi have higher $^{13}$C than canopy trees, these organisms displayed similar $^{13}$C values in rainforests, suggesting differences in C exchanges. Although temperate green and MH plants differ in $^{15}$N, they display similar $^{15}$N abundances, and likely nitrogen (N) sources, in rainforests. Contrasting with the high N concentrations shared by temperate MH plants and their fungi, rainforest MH plants had lower N concentrations than AMF, suggesting differences in C/N of exchanged nutrients. We provide a framework for isotopic studies on AMF networks and suggest that MH plants in tropical and temperate regions evolved different physiologies to adapt in diverging environments.
slightly increases $^{15}$N abundance; Trudell et al., 2003). In consequence, abundances of heavy isotopes are higher in MH plants than in cooccurring green plants (Trudell et al., 2003). This pattern is also reported in some tropical forests where MH plants associate with ectomycorrhizal fungi (Roy et al., 2009). Isotopic abundances were also instrumental in the discovery that several green plants, phylogenetically close to MH species, obtain part of their C from ectomycorrhizal networks, since their $^{13}$C and $^{15}$N abundances are intermediate between autotrophic and MH plants (Gebauer and Meyer, 2003; Julou et al., 2005; Tedersoo et al., 2006; Roy et al., 2009). This nutrition is called partial mycoheterotrophy, a kind of mixotrophy that mixes photosynthetic and MH nutrition (for review, see Selosse and Roy, 2009).

However, most MH species live in tropical forests devoid of ectomycorrhizal fungi (Leake, 1994; Smith and Read, 2008). In these forests, some MH orchids associate with saprotrrophic basidiomycetes (e.g. Martos et al., 2009; Ogura-Tsujita et al., 2009), but most MH lineages connect to another kind of mycorrhizal network, formed by arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF; Imhof, 2009). AMF are obligate biotrophic fungi that belong to Glomeromycota and evolved mycorrhizal symbioses independently from Basidiomycetes (Smith and Read, 2008; Sanders and Croll, 2010). Few AMF-associated MH plants (AMF-MH) have been investigated so far, and studies have focused on mycorrhizal morphology (Imhof, 2009) and identification of AMF partners (Bidartondo et al., 2002; Franke et al., 2006; Merckx and Bidartondo, 2008). Two features limit the use of stable isotopes in AMF-MH. First, AMF can associate with C$_3$, C$_4$, or CAM plants, and may thus mix C sources that differ in $^{13}$C abundance (Allen and Allen, 1990), whereas ectomycorrhizal fungi only associate with C$_3$ plants. Second, AMF produce spores without conspicuous organs such as the fruitbodies of basidiomycetes, and extraradical mycelium and spores of AMF are not easy to sample for isotopic measurements. Allen and Allen (1990) and Nakano et al. (1999) analyzed $^{13}$C abundances in spores of AMF associated with herbs: The $^{13}$C abundance followed that of their C$_3$ or C$_4$ hosts, with some depletion ($-2\%$ to $-4\%$ in $^{13}$C). Isotopic abundances were recently measured in two tropical rainforest AMF-MH, *Burmannia capitata* (Burmanniaceae) and *Voyria aphylla* (Gentianaceae): They showed higher $^{13}$C abundance (+5.5‰ in $^{13}$C), but similar $^{15}$N abundance compared with understory green plants (Merckx et al., 2010). Enrichment in $^{13}$C for AMF-MH is paradoxical, since depletion is expected in AMF (Allen and Allen, 1990; Nakano et al., 1999). However, isotopic abundances in AMF and canopy trees, likely the main C donors to forest mycorrhizal networks (Högberg et al., 1999), have not been investigated up to now. Our aim was to provide isotopic data for several points along the continuum between tropical plant (canopy and understory), AMF fungus, and AMF-MH. A precise understanding of this continuum is required before predictions can be made on partially MH species associated with AMF.

We focused on four AMF-MH species at five sites of a Caribbean rainforest harboring C$_3$ trees (Rousteau, 1996; Bonal et al., 2000; see Supplemental Table S1). They belong to two families that independently evolved MH nutrition (two species each of Gentianaceae and Burmanniaceae; see Supplemental Fig. S1), allowing a phylogenetic replication of our results. We extracted AMF spores from the soil to measure their $^{13}$C and $^{15}$N abundances, and we verified that they included the species colonizing AMF-MH. We provide here, to our knowledge, the first report of $^{13}$C and $^{15}$N abundances along an AMF network in situ, including MH plants. We did not detect significant differences in isotopic abundances between canopy leaves, AMF mycorrhizal roots, AMF, and AMF-MH; however, due to specific photosynthetic conditions, green understory leaves are considerably depleted in $^{13}$C. We propose a general framework for the interpretation of isotopic studies on AMF-MH, including predictions of isotopic abundances to be expected in partially MH species associated with AMF. Moreover, AMF-MH unexpectedly showed lower nitrogen (N) contents than MH plants associated with basidiomycetes, suggesting some physiological differences in N nutrition. Thus, we speculate that, beyond superficial similarities, tropical AMF-MH and—mostly temperate—MH taxa associated with basidiomycetes have different nutritional physiologies that evolved in adaption to their respective environments.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

$^{13}$C Abundances Differ in Canopy versus Understory Green Leaves

Since isotopic abundances significantly differed at the five study sites for each sample category ($H = 15.706$, degrees of freedom [df] = 4, $P < 0.001$ and $H = 27.143$, df = 4, $P < 0.001$ for $^{13}$C and $^{15}$N, respectively; Kruskal-Wallis test, see Supplemental Table S1); data were analyzed separately (Fig. 1, A–E). Values for $^{13}$C were variable for canopy leaves, due to interspecific differences (see Supplemental Table S1 for detailed sampling at Soñá 1), as expected in tropical rainforests (Bonal et al., 2000; Buchmann et al., 2004), and values for $^{15}$N were in the usual range for rainforests (e.g. Högberg and Alexander, 1995). Leaves of understory plants were significantly depleted in $^{13}$C compared with canopy leaves at all sites (on average by 5.3‰, but there was no significant difference in $^{15}$N (Fig. 1, A–E). An approximately 5‰ difference in $^{13}$C between canopy trees and understory plants is common in rainforests, as well as in any dense forest, due to several factors (for review, see Buchmann et al., 2004; Lüttge, 2008). First, high light conditions enhance photosynthesis and drier conditions reduce stomatal conductance: These two factors limit equili-
C vs. N isotope abundance of plants and fungi at the five investigated sites (A–E) and N concentration (pooled for all sites; F), means ± s.e. Labels of AMF-MH organs are underlined. Abbreviations: AAS, shoots of the MH Burmanniaceae A. aphylla; AMR, fine roots of canopy trees mycorrhizal with AMF; AMS, spores of AMF; CL, green canopy leaves (see Supplemental Table S1 for species names); GSS, shoots of the MH Burmanniaceae Gymnosiphon sp.; SF, saprotrophic fungi (1: Lycogalopsis solmsii; 2: Collybia sp.; 3: Marasmius sp.); UL, green understory leaves (see Supplemental Table S1 for species names); VAR, roots of the MH Gentianaceae V. aphylla; VAS, shoots of V. aphylla; VTR, roots of the MH Gentianaceae V. tenella; VTS, shoots of V. tenella; ORS, shoots of the MH orchid W. aphylla. Different letters denote significant differences according to pairwise t-tests (Bonferroni corrected, \( P < 0.01 \); in A–E, the first letter is for \( \delta^{13}C \) and the second one for \( \delta^{15}N \)).

Figure 1. C versus N isotope abundance of plants and fungi at the five investigated sites (A–E) and N concentration (pooled for all sites; F), means ± s.e. Labels of AMF-MH organs are underlined. Abbreviations: AAS, shoots of the MH Burmanniaceae A. aphylla; AMR, fine roots of canopy trees mycorrhizal with AMF; AMS, spores of AMF; CL, green canopy leaves (see Supplemental Table S1 for species names); GSS, shoots of the MH Burmanniaceae Gymnosiphon sp.; SF, saprotrophic fungi (1: Lycogalopsis solmsii; 2: Collybia sp.; 3: Marasmius sp.); UL, green understory leaves (see Supplemental Table S1 for species names); VAR, roots of the MH Gentianaceae V. aphylla; VAS, shoots of V. aphylla; VTR, roots of the MH Gentianaceae V. tenella; VTS, shoots of V. tenella; ORS, shoots of the MH orchid W. aphylla. Different letters denote significant differences according to pairwise t-tests (Bonferroni corrected, \( P < 0.01 \); in A–E, the first letter is for \( \delta^{13}C \) and the second one for \( \delta^{15}N \)).

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Incorporation of \( ^{13}C \)-depleted CO\(_2\) originating from soil respiration. To summarize, measured isotopic abundances in autotrophic plant leaves indicated a canonical tropical rainforest pattern.
AMF Negligibly Differ in Isotopic Abundances from Canopy Trees

AMF spores isolated from soil contained mixes of several species, as showed by barcoding on the internal transcribed spacer (ITS) of nuclear ribosomal DNA that provided several operational taxonomic units (OTUs; see Supplemental Table S3; GenBank accession numbers HQ857159–91 and JF276256–74). Despite probable differences in species composition and proportions, independent replicates showed quite similar isotopic abundances at each site (differences between replicates <0.5‰ in $\delta^{13}C$ and <1.1‰ in $\delta^{15}N$, see Supplemental Table S1). Thus, we make the approximation, in this discussion, that AMF locally share a common isotopic abundance. AMF hyphae, which are the active transport pathways, may differ isotopically from AMF spores that are enriched in C reserves. However, in natural ecosystems, it is difficult to recover clean hyphae without cytoplasm loss by hyphal breakage. In addition, our results in simpler systems (sorghum [Sorghum bicolor] and flax [Linum usitatissimum] cultures in a terragreensand mixture; F. Walder, unpublished data) have shown similar $\delta^{13}C$ values in AMF spores and hyphal networks. Thus, we assume here that isotopic abundances in spores are a good proxy for these in AMF mycelia.

Spores were higher in $\delta^{13}C$ than both understory and canopy leaves (Fig. 1, A–E), but this difference was only significant for understory leaves. When they were available for analysis, mycorrhizal fine roots of canopy trees were also slightly, but nonsignificantly, more depleted in $\delta^{13}C$ than AMF spores (by 0.96‰; Fig. 1, A, B, and E). The observed $\delta^{13}C$ enrichment in spores contrasts with the 2‰ to 4‰ depletion reported for spores of AMF colonizing temperate herbes, as compared with their host’s roots (Allen and Allen, 1990, on mixed AMF); a similar approximately 2‰ depletion as compared to host was obtained in our sorghum (C$_4$) and flax (C$_3$) cultures mentioned above (F. Walder, unpublished data). A contribution of C$_4$ or CAM host plants could enrich AMF in $\delta^{13}C$ (Nakano et al., 1999), on Gigaspora margarita or roots and shoots (Allen and Allen, 1990, on mixed AMF); a similar approximately 2‰ depletion as compared to host was obtained in our sorghum (C$_4$) and flax (C$_3$) cultures mentioned above (F. Walder, unpublished data). A contribution of C$_4$ or CAM host plants could enrich AMF in $\delta^{13}C$ (Nakano et al., 1999), but such plants were absent at our study sites. Since AMF displayed similar $\delta^{13}C$ differences with leaves and roots at all sites (Fig. 1, A–E), this $\delta^{13}C$ enrichment might be an idiosyncrasy of rainforest ecosystems. Indeed, as compared with previously studied temperate herbes, rainforest trees may differ by a higher flux of photosynthates to AMF (a higher flux would reduce the intensity of fractionation; Dawson et al., 2002); alternatively, tropical AMF may have lower levels of anaplerotic C fixation: This pathway, which provides carboxylic acids to control cellular pH and/or assimilate N, often refixes respiratory CO$_2$ depleted in $\delta^{13}C$ (Raven and Farquhar, 1990).

Can a contribution of understory plants explain AMF $\delta^{13}C$? On the one hand, mixing canopy and depleted understory sources could lead to the observed $\delta^{13}C$ value in AMF if the latter receive compounds enriched in $\delta^{13}C$ from all sources (see Supplemental Materials and Methods S1). Actually, carbohydrates transferred in plants from leaves to roots and likely to AMF are enriched in $\delta^{13}C$ by approximately 3‰ in comparison with leaf bulk C (Gleixner et al., 1993). Detailed calculation (see Supplemental Materials and Methods S1) nevertheless shows that for enrichments up to 3‰, the major contribution (55%–100‰) is of canopy origin. On the other hand, available data showing depletion in $\delta^{13}C$ in AMF spores (Allen and Allen, 1990; Nakano et al., 1999; see above) is incompatible with this calculation, which assumes enrichment as compared with the plant source (see Supplemental Materials and Methods S1). If little or no depletion occurs, then the use of compounds from understory plants would reduce the $\delta^{13}C$ value in AMF as compared with canopy tree leaves and roots. Although the exact fractionation at the plant/AMF interface deserves further study, we thus conclude that, in all scenarios, canopy trees constitute the major C source for AMF. This is congruent with the higher photosynthetic activity of canopy leaves (Lüttge, 2008), and with the situation reported in temperate regions, where forest ectomycorrhizal basidiomycetes receive 57% to 100% of their C from canopy trees (Högberg et al., 1999). Nevertheless, the observed isotopic pattern contrasts with ectomycorrhizal basidiomycetes from temperate forests, which are 1.2‰ to 2.9‰ enriched compared with canopy leaves (Högberg et al., 1999), and this suggests a different fractionation, or the transfer of isotopically distinct C compounds, during C exchange in AMF mycorrhizae and ectomycorrhizae.

AMF spores were significantly less enriched in $\delta^{15}N$ than saprotrophic fungi (Fig. 1, A and D). Even if considerable variation may occur depending on the N source (Gebauer and Taylor, 1999), this contrasted with the $\delta^{15}N$ enrichment usually reported in ectomycorrhizal fungi (Hobbie et al., 2001; Mayor et al., 2009). AMF were enriched in $\delta^{15}N$ as compared with tree mycorrhizal roots (+3.01‰ on average) and all green leaves (+1.02‰), but often not significantly (Fig. 1, A–E). This is less than the ~5‰ difference in $\delta^{15}N$ between ectomycorrhizal fungi and host plant leaves in both temperate forests (Gebauer and Taylor, 1999; Trudell et al., 2003; Tedersoo et al., 2006; Selosse and Roy, 2009) and tropical rainforests (Roy et al., 2009; Diédhiou et al., 2010). We think that these differences do not only result from tropical conditions, but mainly from physiological differences between AMF and ectomycorrhizal fungi. Although the pathways for N transfer to the plant are subject to debate (Chalot et al., 2006), they may not be fully identical in these two symbioses, leading to different fractionations. To summarize, to our knowledge, we provide the first measurements of $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{15}N$ values for rainforest AMF in situ, and reveal negligible differences between AMF and canopy tree leaves. The reasons for these negligible differences deserve further physiological studies.

AMF-MH Negligibly Differ in Isotopic Abundances from AMF Spores

ITS barcoding of mycorrhizal fungi revealed OTUs from a single Glomus group A clade in Gymnosiphon sp.
at Seconde Chute Carbet (SCC) and *Apteria aphylla* at Cascade aux Ecrevisses 2 (CE2), as well as another clade in *V. aphylla* at Sofáía 2 and CE2 (see Supplemental Table S2; Fig. 2; *Voyria tenella* was not investigated). At Sofáía 2, *V. aphylla* displayed most of the OTUs from *Glomus* group A found at CE2 (11 out of 13), plus OTUs from four additional Diversisporales clades (Fig. 2). Although barcoding on a single, highly polymorphic locus such as ITS has some limitations (Sanders and Croll, 2010), our data are congruent with published evidence, based on ribosomal DNA coding sequences, that different AMF clades cooccur in *Voyria* species (Bidartondo et al., 2002; Merckx et al., 2010), and that several *Glomus* species occur in Burmanniaceae (Merckx and Bidartondo, 2008; Merckx et al., 2010). Fungal specificity is often relaxed in tropical MH species (Martos et al., 2009; Roy et al., 2009), although the absence of fungal overlap between coexisting AMF-MH at CE2 is congruent with some partner preference. Beyond these corroborating results, AMF diversity in *V. aphylla* roots overlapped with that of AMF sporulating in soil at CE2 and Sofáía 2: At least one OTU from each *V. aphylla* mycorrhizal clade was found, among other OTUs, in spores pooled from surrounding soil (Fig. 2; see Supplemental Table S3). Thus, ITS barcoding confirms that AMF colonize our AMF-MH and that investigated soil spores partly originate from the mycorrhizal network linked to our AMF-MH. We did not further test whether the same OTUs occurred on the nearby tree roots, since it would be difficult to investigate the dense cluster of surrounding roots, but we consider that mycelia sporulating or providing C to AMF-MH are necessarily connected with surrounding plants to support their C needs.

Shoots of cooccurring AMF-MH species did not significantly differ in $\delta^{13}C$, except at CE1, nor in $\delta^{15}N$, except at CE2 (Fig. 1, A–E); reasons for these exceptions are unclear. Conversely, at Sofáía 1, *A. aphylla* had sharply lower $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{15}N$ values than the MH orchid *Wuellischaegelia aphylla*, which associates with saprotrophic basidiomycetes (Martos et al., 2009; Fig. 1A). This supports the hypothesis of a similar nutrition for all AMF-MH, differing from the nutrition in other MH plants. AMF-MH shoots did not significantly differ from canopy leaves, AMF spores, and AMF roots for both $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{15}N$ (with few exceptions, showing diverging trends; Fig. 1, A–E). *A. aphylla*, *V. aphylla*, and *V. tenella* are on average somewhat depleted in $^{13}C$ compared to AMF spores, but this is not statistically significant. This situation resembles that for MH plants associated with basidiomycetes that share similar $^{13}C$ and $^{15}N$ abundances with their fungi (Gebauer and Meyer, 2003; Julou et al., 2005; Roy et al., 2009; Selosse and Roy, 2009), as exemplified here by the MH orchid *W. aphylla* and saprotrophic fungi.

At Sofáía 2, the only site where enough material was recovered, AMF-MH roots did not differ isotopically from AMF-MH shoots and AMF spores (Fig. 1B). As a result, AMF-MH shoots were significantly higher in $\delta^{13}C$ than understory leaves (on average by 4.8‰), but similar in $\delta^{15}N$ (or slightly higher at Sofáía 1; Fig. 1, A–E). Our finding corroborates data from a French Guiana rainforest, where shoots of the AMF-MH *Dictyostega orobanchoides* (Burmanniaceae) and *V. aphylla* were enriched in $^{13}C$ (by 5.5‰ and 5.4‰ respectively) but not in $^{15}N$ as compared with understorey leaves (Merckx et al., 2010). However, having access to AMF spores, we demonstrate here that the difference in $\delta^{13}C$ is not driven by the AMF-MH metabolism or by $\delta^{13}C$ values in AMF (Fig. 3), but that it likely arises from the photosynthetic conditions in canopy and understorey trees, added to negligible changes in $\delta^{13}C$ along AMF networks. In this respect, AMF-MH plants contrast with MH plants associated with basidiomycetes, whose high $\delta^{13}C$ is driven by the $^{13}C$ enrichment of their mycorrhizal fungi.

**Unexpectedly Low N Contents in AMF-MH**

C and N concentrations did not differ among sites for each sample category ($H = 2.157$, df = 4, $P = 0.707$ for C and $H = 2.327$, df = 4, $P = 0.676$ for N; Kruskal-Wallis test, see Supplemental Table S1), and analyses at each site or on pooled data were congruent. C concentrations did not significantly differ (see Supplemental Fig. S2), while N concentrations revealed some differences (Fig. 1F). Together with saprotrophic fungi, AMF spores had significantly higher N concentrations than all other samples, except the MH orchid *W. aphylla* (see below). AMF-MH shoots showed nonsignificant differences in N concentrations between species (Fig. 1F), which did not correlate with their systematic position, i.e. Gentianaceae versus Burmanniaceae. In *V. aphylla* and *V. tenella*, N concentrations were higher in roots than in shoots (Fig. 1F), as expected since N-rich AMF colonize their roots.

N and C concentrations of AMF-MH were in the range typical for all green leaves (Fig. 1F). Conversely, MH plants associated with basidiomycetes always have a higher N concentration than green plants (Gebauer and Meyer, 2003; Julou et al., 2005; Roy et al., 2009; Selosse and Roy, 2009), and tend to have reduced C concentrations (Stöckel et al., 2011), as exemplified here by the MH orchid *W. aphylla* (Martos et al., 2009; Fig. 1F). The current interpretation for these MH plants is that they recover biomass from fungi with low C/N, and, by partly respiring it, further concentrate N (Abadie et al., 2006; Tedersoo et al., 2006; Stöckel et al., 2011). Moreover, high $^{15}N$ enrichment in these MH plants supports the hypothesis that they obtain fungal N through pathways differing from those in autotrophic plants (Gebauer and Meyer, 2003; Selosse and Roy, 2009). AMF-MH contrast with this scenario: First, to account for their moderate N enrichment after respiration, we have to suppose that they receive a fungal material with higher C/N than the average fungal biomass; second, as already stated by Merckx et al. (2010), similar $^{15}N$ enrichments in AMF-MH and green plants suggest that all tap isotopically similar N sources. To summarize, AMF-MH plants from two independent families, Gentianaceae and Burmannia-
ceae, differ from MH plants associated with basidiomycetes for mycorrhizal exchanges and N physiology, but are similar to green plants for N nutrition.

Beyond superficial similarities, such as reduced leaves or absence of stomata (Leake, 1994), the different MH lineages evolved independently, each within dif-
Different ecological contexts. It was suggested that MH plants associated with basidiomycetes, mostly from temperate regions, might have arisen from a situation where C was simply hitchhiking with organic N and phosphorus (Selosse and Roy, 2009). Mixotrophic plants phylogenetically related to MH support this hypothesis: these partially MH plants are considered to retain the ancestral situation predisposing to MH evolution. In temperate regions, some of them, such as the orchid *Limodorum abortivum* (Girlanda et al., 2006) or ericaceous relatives of *Pyrola* (Tedersoo et al., 2006; Zimmer et al., 2007), occur in environments where N is limiting, but not light. These plants may recover fungal compounds mainly as a source of mineral nutrients, including N (Selosse and Roy, 2009). Even if C acquisition now plays the major role in MH plants associated with basidiomycetes, their high N content may have been inherited from this past functioning, persisting as an abuse of fungal N. Conversely, AMF-MH lineages probably arose in tropical forests (Merckx and Bidartondo, 2008), where light is limiting, but not N (Hedin et al., 2009; Huston and Wolverton, 2009). Thus, we speculate that tropical AMF-MH could have been selected directly for C acquisition, explaining why their N concentration and N nutrition are similar to those of surrounding plants. Thus, the convergence toward a similar MH nutrition may mask divergent histories and physiologies.

**Implications for Future Research**

We currently have only two isotopic studies on AMF-MH, all from South American rain forests (Merckx et al., 2010; this study); more broadly, research on tropical mycorrhizal symbioses should be encouraged (Alexander and Selosse, 2009). More direct assessments of the fractionation at the interface between AMF and AMF-MH or autotrophic hosts are required, including analyses of transferred carbohydrates. Especially, the physiology of AMF-MH associations deserves the development of experimentally tractable AMF-MH models. Moreover, population-level, small-scale studies, using more marker loci than here, could rigorously demonstrate that AMF genets link AMF-MH to autotrophic hosts. In the future, investigations on the few available temperate AMF-MH (Bidartondo et al., 2002) could allow us to delineate which of the previous features are tropical, or strictly AMF dependent.

An exciting perspective is that some green species related to AMF-MH may be partially MH (Selosse and Roy, 2009; Cameron and Bolin, 2010; Merckx et al., 2010). Since AMF-MH are similar in $^{15}$N and $^{13}$C to their fungal sources, which are also similar to their own food source, isotopic enrichment is not a general fingerprint for MH nutrition. However, we predict that in dense forests at least, photosynthetic differences between canopy and understory plants (Fig. 3) may result in $^{13}$C differences between partially MH plants and surrounding understory plants. This may not apply to open forest or grassland ecosystems where all leaves receive similar light levels, entailing similar $^{13}$C abundances, and where higher frequency of C_4 plants (Bonal et al., 2000; Lütge, 2008) complicates the use of $^{13}$C abundances. Published investigations on candidate partially MH (=mixotrophic) plants associated with AMF showed that five green *Burmannia*...
species from French Guiana grassland (Merckx et al., 2010) and two Gentianaceae species from North American hardwood forest (Cameron and Bolin, 2010) were not enriched in $^{13}$C, or in $^{15}$N (except for one Gentianaceae), as compared with surrounding ground plants. Given the higher light level in these ecosystems, this finding does not necessarily disprove partial MH nutrition in itself, and, indeed, Merckx et al. (2010) conclude compellingly that the ability of the Burmannia species to grow in pots, isolated from any mycelial network, demonstrates the possibility of full autotrophy. In any case, we recommend (1) joint analysis of isotopic abundances in AMF spores and leaves from understory and canopy (the most likely C providers), and (2) the use, in dense C$_3$ forests only, of $^{13}$C abundance for detecting partially MH plants.

CONCLUSION

This isotopic abundance analysis of AMF symbioses from rainforests offers a framework for understanding previous studies and planning future studies on AMF-MH and AMF networks. There is negligible isotopic change along the investigated points of the continuum between AMF (N providers to all partners), AMF-MH, and canopy trees (main C providers to all partners; Fig. 3). Thus, all MH plants, associated with AMF or basidiomycetes, share similar $^{13}$C and $^{15}$N abundances with their mycorrhizal fungi, but high $^{13}$C abundance as compared with green plants is not per se a general property of all MH plants. AMF networks differ from ectomycorrhizal ones by (1) a negligible difference in $\delta^{13}$C between green plants (canopy trees) and fungi, (2) the use of isotonically indistinguishable N sources by green and MH plants associated with AMF (Merckx et al., 2010), and (3) a low N concentration in AMF-MH. The latter trend, found in two families that independently evolved AMF-MH species, suggests a different metabolism in AMF-MH as compared with MH plants associated with basidiomycetes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Sites and Sampling

Study sites are tropical rainforests along the wet eastern coast of the La Guadeloupe Caribbean Island. The forest harbors C$_3$ shrubs and canopy trees (main C providers to all partners; Fig. 3). Thus, all MH plants, associated with AMF or basidiomycetes, share similar $^{13}$C and $^{15}$N abundances with their mycorrhizal fungi, but high $^{13}$C abundance as compared with surrounding ground plants, is not enriched in $^{13}$C, or in $^{15}$N (except for one Gentianaceae), as compared with surrounding ground plants. Given the higher light level in these ecosystems, this finding does not necessarily disprove partial MH nutrition in itself, and, indeed, Merckx et al. (2010) conclude compellingly that the ability of the Burmannia species to grow in pots, isolated from any mycelial network, demonstrates the possibility of full autotrophy. In any case, we recommend (1) joint analysis of isotopic abundances in AMF spores and leaves from understory and canopy (the most likely C providers), and (2) the use, in dense C$_3$ forests only, of $^{13}$C abundance for detecting partially MH plants.
and abundances of $^{13}$C and $^{15}$N were measured using an online continuous flow CN analyzer (NA 150; Carlo Erba) coupled with an isotope ratio mass spectrometer (Delta S; Finnigan). Isotope abundances are expressed in $\delta^{13}$C and $\delta^{15}$N values in parts per thousand relative to international standards V-PDB and atmospheric N$_2$: $\delta^{13}$C or $\delta^{15}$N = ($R_{\text{sample}} / R_{\text{standard}} - 1) \times 1,000$, where $R$ is the isotope ratio, i.e. $^{13}$C/$^{12}$C or $^{15}$N/$^{14}$N. The s0 of the replicated standard samples ($n = 13$ per each 100 samples) was 0.027‰ for $^{13}$C and 0.245‰ for $^{15}$N.

Statistics

$N$ and $C$ concentrations, as well as $\delta^{13}$C and $\delta^{15}$N values were tested for normality and homogeneity of variances using a nonparametric test (the Kruskal-Wallis test) as the distribution of replicates is not homogenous between sites. One-way ANOVAs were performed for each variable and each site, followed by a pairwise t-test (Bonferroni corrected) to calculate pairwise comparisons between group levels at $\alpha = 0.01$. All values were estimated by mean values followed by 95% confidence intervals. A general linear model procedure was used to calculate univariate ANOVA and to evaluate site effects on $\delta^{13}$C, $\delta^{15}$N, and $C$ and $N$ concentrations. Statistical analyses were computed using SPSS.

Sequence data from this article can be found in the GenBank/EMBL data libraries under accession numbers HQ885719 to HQ885719 and JF726256 to JF726274.

Supplemental Data

The following materials are available in the online version of this article.

Supplemental Figure S1. The four AMF-MH species under study.

Supplemental Figure S2. C concentrations (pooled for all sites), means $\pm$ SE.

Supplemental Table S1. The five study sites and samples investigated for isotopic abundances and $N$ concentrations.

Supplemental Table S2. GenBank accession numbers of ITS sequences for the OTUs recovered from AMF-MH roots fungii at Sofaı¨a 2, SCC, and CE2.

Supplemental Table S3. GenBank accession numbers of ITS sequences for the OTUs recovered from V. *aphylla* roots fungii and/or from AMF spore pools from the soil surrounding V. *aphylla* roots at Sofaı¨a 2 and CE2.

Supplemental Materials and Methods S1. Mixing model for $\delta^{13}$C of AMF biomass, assuming a contribution of canopy and understory sources and an isotopic enrichment as compared with these plant sources.

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