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# 1 Machine Learning Insights into the Geochemical Life Cycle of the 2 Columbia River Flood Basalts

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4 **Rachel Hampton<sup>1,2</sup> and Leif Karlstrom<sup>1</sup>**

5 *<sup>1</sup>University of Oregon, Department of Earth Sciences, Eugene, OR 97403*

6 *<sup>2</sup>Kobold Metals, 64 Shattuck Square UNIT 210, Berkeley, CA 94704*

7 \*Corresponding author: rachelhampton1120@gmail.com

## 8 **ABSTRACT**

9 Flood basalts are challenging to characterize in detail, despite enormous their erupted volumes,  
10 due to their age and chemical homogeneity. Here we explore machine learning (ML) approaches  
11 for classification and pattern identification in whole rock geochemical data of the Columbia  
12 River Flood Basalts (CRFB), which provide key constraints on magma generation, transport, and  
13 emplacement. We utilize supervised and unsupervised ML workflows to (1) classify unknown  
14 samples into an assumed CRFB stratigraphy, and (2) identify geochemical patterns independent  
15 of eruptive order that fingerprint the underlying petrologic processes associated with magma  
16 genesis and ascent. We synthesize a large new database of chemical analyses and use a high  
17 dimensional approach that leverages all possible ratios of major and trace elements. The  
18 supervised model demonstrates ~99% effectiveness for classification into Formation level  
19 classes and ~89% effectiveness on a member level from a complete labeled dataset, and slightly  
20 lower (~90%) Formation-level accuracy for a partially labeled dataset. Unsupervised clustering  
21 suggests similarities between member classes across stratigraphic boundaries in mantle source  
22 composition and crustal processing pathways. In particular, we find compositional clusters that  
23 point to a rapid expansion of crustal storage within the Grande Ronde, and primitive samples  
24 spanning all Formations that likely fingerprint persistent recharge from multiple mantle sources.  
25 Comparison of supervised and unsupervised approaches re-enforces known patterns in CRFB  
26 chemistry but also highlights areas where further data assimilation could lead to robust insights.  
27 This approach represents a powerful framework for classification and highlights significant  
28 future opportunities to objectively characterize petrologic datasets like the CRFB.

29        **1. INTRODUCTION**

30            Flood basalts are an exceptional endmember of mafic volcanism in both their volume and  
31 emplacement rate (Wignall, 2001; Bryan and Ferrari, 2013; Bond and Wignall, 2014; Ernst,  
32 2014; Black et al., 2021). Physical mapping, paleomagnetic characterization, and geochemical  
33 data have long formed a basis for understanding the stratigraphy and interpreting the magmatic  
34 processes driving the Large Igneous Provinces (LIPs) associated with flood basalt eruptions  
35 (Ernst, 2014). In particular, whole rock geochemistry plus isotopic data and mineralogic data  
36 where available provide insights into the structure of crustal magma transport and chemical  
37 evolution of magmas from mantle melting to surface eruption (Bryan and Ferrari, 2013; Ernst,  
38 2014). However, geochemical variations in LIPs, particularly with respect to crustal magma  
39 transport processes, are notoriously challenging to identify. Although flood basalts are generally  
40 chemically homogenous and often crystal poor (Marsh, 1987; Pearce et al., 2021), variation is  
41 commonly observed between different eruptive packages. But crustal processing of ascending  
42 magma often maps in a complicated way to the observed erupted stratigraphy even for smaller  
43 volume modern eruptions (e.g., Lerner et al., 2021) and compositional heterogeneity within  
44 single mappable flow units within LIPs have also been recognized (e.g., (Vye-Brown et al.,  
45 2019). Defining stratigraphy at a level granular enough to constrain variations in eruption rate  
46 through time in massive flood basalt provinces is therefore challenging (Pearce et al., 1984,  
47 2021; Ernst and Buchan, 1997; Camp, 2013; Hastie et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2016; Karlstrom et  
48 al., 2019; Biasi and Karlstrom, 2021). Yet such cryptic fingerprints of petrologic evolution  
49 represent our best available tools for understanding the processes driving LIP eruption cycles,  
50 volatile fluxing and associated climate impacts, and ultimately the geodynamic origins of LIPs.

51            Large geochemical datasets collected to understand LIPs (eg. Ernst, 2014; Pearce et al.,  
52 2021), along with datasets available for basaltic systems globally (e.g., Ueki et al., 2018),  
53 represent an opportunity to test automated tools for pattern recognition and classification in a  
54 petrologic setting. In this work we build a machine learning (ML) framework that utilizes both  
55 supervised and unsupervised techniques to examine extrusive lava flow data from the Columbia  
56 River Flood Basalts (CRFB) with the ultimate goal of building a model that can (1) classify  
57 unknown samples in an assumed known stratigraphy, and (2) identify geochemical patterns  
58 independent of eruptive order that fingerprint the underlying petrologic processes associated with  
59 magma ascent. To accomplish this, we develop a workflow for manipulating the feature space

60 associated with major and trace element compositions to identify characteristic patterns between  
61 elements that lead to robust classification, dimensionality reduction, and clustering.

62 We focus on the CRFB as the youngest, best-preserved, and most comprehensively  
63 characterized flood basalt province globally (Hooper, 2000; Wolff et al., 2008; Reidel et al.,  
64 2013; Camp et al., 2017b) to demonstrate the utility of ML on large geochemical datasets. The  
65 progression of eruptive volumes and tempo defines a rapid waxing, a voluminous “main phase”  
66 defined by massive groups of flows, and prolonged waning characteristic of the LIP life cycle  
67 globally (Black et al., 2021).

68 Erupted lavas have been categorized at the Formation and member level (informal at this  
69 stage, so will be labeled with lower case), and even sub-member ‘unit’ level, on the basis of  
70 geochemistry, mapped location, and magnetic polarity (Wright et al., 1973; Mcdougall, 1976;  
71 Swanson et al., 1979; Reidel, 1982; Hooper, 2000; Barry et al., 2013; Conrey et al., 2013; Reidel  
72 et al., 2013; Reidel and Tolan, 2013; Reidel, 2015; Kasbohm and Schoene, 2018; Moore et al.,  
73 2018; Cahoon, 2020; Cahoon et al., 2020, 2023). CRFB Formations are well-recognized,  
74 however some member and finer classifications are still debated as mapping and characterization  
75 of deposits continues (e.g., Webb et al., 2019). The classification debate in part motivates our  
76 ML model development.

77 We have assembled a large database of published and unpublished CRFB whole rock  
78 geochemistry to train our model. These chemical analyses, while all in the modern instrumental  
79 era, span several decades of sample collection and multiple analytical facilities, therefore a  
80 primary initial challenge is to derive a common set of chemical elements to work with and a  
81 common set of labels to establish a training dataset. Applying a Supervised Classification ML  
82 analysis to this compiled database, we demonstrate ~99% effectiveness for supervised  
83 classification of unknown major and trace element analyses on a Formation level and ~89%  
84 effectiveness on a member level, based on established metrics for model precision and recall of  
85 our training data. Supervised learning approaches thus align in the identification of geochemical  
86 variations between Formations and members and generally confirm the robustness and utility of  
87 member-level stratigraphy in the CRFB, although we also identify consistent signatures of  
88 stratigraphic ambiguity that lead to non-unique classifications in some cases. We apply the

89 classifier as an application to a suite of samples (N=1,561) that did not have member-level labels  
90 in our database as an additional independent test.

91 We then use unsupervised learning methods to demonstrate that, while Formation-level  
92 differences are largely identifiable algorithmically, members are blurred when stratigraphic  
93 position and polarity is not assumed. In particular, unsupervised clustering suggests a far smaller  
94 number of categories is required to explain the chemical variation within the CRFB. We interpret  
95 these clusters as reflecting variations in mantle source composition and Recharge-Assimilation-  
96 Fractional Crystallization (RAFC) processes within the crust ('path effects', borrowing  
97 terminology from seismology). Some clusters suggest systematic evolution of both source and  
98 path over time in the CRFB, while others span multiple members as well as Formations and  
99 indicate recurring petrologic processes.

## 100 **1.1 The Columbia River Flood Basalts whole rock geochemical database**

101 The CRFB erupted ~210,000 km<sup>3</sup> of basalt onto eastern Oregon, Washington, and parts  
102 of Nevada and Idaho, with numerous long-traveling lava flows extending from the inland  
103 Columbia Basin to the ocean, hundreds of kilometers away (Wells et al., 2009; Reidel et al.,  
104 2013). Although CRFB eruptions span ~11 Myr, increasingly precise geochronology now shows  
105 that the "main phase", consisting of the Imnaha and Grande Ronde Formations was erupted  
106 between ~16.8-15.9 Ma, with the Grande Ronde Formation representing 72% of the total erupted  
107 volume was emplaced in ~450 kyr (Kasbohm and Schoene, 2018; Kasbohm et al., 2023). The  
108 CFRB onset with the Steens Formation, while post-main phase eruptions associated with the  
109 Wanapum and Saddle Mountains formations occurred with more temporal irregularity over ~10  
110 Myr following the main phase (Barry et al., 2013; Moore et al., 2018; Kasbohm et al., 2023). A  
111 sixth formation, the Picture Gorge basalt, erupted around the same time as the Grande Ronde and  
112 perhaps earlier, possibly coeval with Steens Formation lavas (Cahoon, 2020; Cahoon et al., 2020,  
113 2023; Pivarunas et al., 2025).

114 Early research on the CRFB stratigraphy (Waters, 1961; Snavely, 1962; Trimble, 1963;  
115 Gibson, 1969; Wright et al., 1973; Swanson et al., 1979) categorized flows based on field  
116 relations and petrographic evidence (e.g., the presence or absence of olivine and plagioclase)  
117 (Waters, 1961). Using these methods, the stratigraphy was classified into two large groupings  
118 and further subdivided into the Yakima Basalt group (Wright et al., 1973; Mcdougall, 1976;

119 Reidel, 1982; Reidel and Tolan, 1989; Swanson et al., 1989). Based on field observations it was  
120 difficult to correlate flows over the vast distances that they cover and also difficult to distinguish  
121 units with very similar petrographic characteristics (i.e. aphyric units). Low-cost XRF (X-Ray  
122 Fluorescence) technology, aided by paleomagnetic data, increased the precision of chemical  
123 correlations between flows and subdivision of the stratigraphy (e.g. Audunsson & Levi, 1997;  
124 Hooper, 2000; Jarboe et al., 2010; Wilson & Watkins, 1967). This data permitted geochemical  
125 analyses to be compiled into paleomagnetic time frame (Dominguez and Van der Voo, 2014).  
126 More recent work has sought to refine discrepancies between paleomagnetic and geochronologic  
127 timelines (Barry et al., 2013; Kasbohm and Schoene, 2018; Kasbohm et al., 2023) and isotopic  
128 characterization (e.g., Camp et al., 2013; Hooper & Hawkesworth, 1993; Mcdougall, 1976;  
129 Moore et al., 2018; Takahashi et al., 1998; Wolff et al., 2008), refining stratigraphic boundaries  
130 using combined paleomagnetic, geochemical and field evidence (e.g., Cahoon et al., 2020, 2023;  
131 Davis et al., 2017; Webb et al., 2019; R. E. Wells et al., 2020).

132         Each of the six major Formations (a small seventh Formation, the Prineville Basalt  
133 (Hooper and Hawkesworth, 1993; Reidel et al., 2016), is not considered in this work) has been  
134 subsequently broken down into members and individual flows (Reidel and Tolan, 1989; Hooper,  
135 2000; Reidel et al., 2013). Although many of these are not formal, the stratigraphy of Reidel et  
136 al., 2013 represents the most comprehensive attempt to order the CRFB at a sub-Formation level  
137 to date. Still, some member-level stratigraphic boundaries are not entirely clear-cut, either on the  
138 basis of field evidence for intermingling (e.g., Davis et al., 2017; Katona et al., 2021; Reidel,  
139 2005) and inconsistent stratigraphic ordering (e.g., Cahoon et al., 2020; Swanson et al., 1979;  
140 Webb et al., 2019) or non-unique chemical proxies that may reflect mass loss from hydrothermal  
141 alteration (Sawlan, 2017, 2019).

142         Major and trace element discrimination remains a primary tool for distinguishing lavas  
143 from each other and form the basis for understanding petrologic processes. Traditionally,  
144 patterns and classification are inferred via visual inspection of geochemical biplots, in which  
145 pairs of elements or ratios of elements are plotted and assessed in terms of end member models  
146 (White, 2013). But in the absence of phenocryst populations and with bulk rock compositions  
147 that exhibit overall homogeneity, constraining flow stratigraphy can be difficult based only on  
148 binary classification of geochemical data. Reidel (2002) identified elements most useful for

149 bivariate classification including TiO<sub>2</sub>, MgO, P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>, and Zr, and suggested that trace elements,  
150 particularly Ba and Cr, are also useful.

151         Clearly it would be useful to leverage all elements together simultaneously. Previous  
152 Discriminant analysis on the Grande Ronde member level chemistry, using scores based on  
153 combinations of linear predictor variables in the geochemical data (Reidel, 1982), suggested that  
154 clustering analysis only leads to a 66% reproducibility. We aim to revisit this result here, by  
155 building a large database of modern analyses and testing different ML procedures for  
156 classification.

157         Our CRFB geochemical database (Supplementary Dataset S1) synthesizes 55 sources  
158 spanning nearly 40 years from the refereed and gray literature, described in Supplementary  
159 Information section S1. We do not require that samples be categorized at the member level.  
160 Because not all studies report analyses for the same elements, we consider three subsets of our  
161 data that isolate the role of major versus trace elements. These are summarized in Fig. 1. Because  
162 we focus on maximizing the number of samples N, largely focus on the member-level  
163 stratigraphy defined by Reidel et al., (2013), and include several older compilations from XRF  
164 analyses (as opposed to more complete ICPMS), none of our three datasets contain the full range  
165 of trace elements.

166         We take data “as is” and do not attempt to clean published datasets or correct for different  
167 reported iron oxidation states – we simply remove iron altogether from our analyses. We do not  
168 require that samples are classified at member level, which excludes 1,561 analyses from each  
169 subset (Supplementary Dataset S2). As a result, while in total our fully labeled dataset compiles  
170 N=7,975 analyses, even our least restrictive data subset D1 (major elements only: SiO<sub>2</sub>, TiO<sub>2</sub>,  
171 MgO, Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, Na<sub>2</sub>O, CaO, MnO, K<sub>2</sub>O, P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>) contains several hundred samples that are unused.  
172 Our more restrictive datasets include two subsets with different numbers of trace elements. Data  
173 subset D2 (majors + Ni, Cr, Sc, V, Ba, Rb, Sr, Zr, Y, Nb, Cu) chooses the maximum number of  
174 elements and still retains at least 7 samples in every assumed member category. Data subset D3  
175 includes all elements in D2 plus Pb, La, Ce, and Th, representing a larger number of elements  
176 but for which not all member categories are covered. In what follows we largely focus on results  
177 from data subset D2 but include select results from D1 and D3. Our trained classification model

178 for these subsets can be found (along with a python Jupyter notebook for plotting) in the  
179 Supplement.

## 180 **2. METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS WORKFLOW**

181 To characterize the variation and groupings in the CRFB geochemical database, and  
182 ultimately to interpret the processes that may have caused such variation, we require a suite of  
183 techniques that leverage the size and high dimensional nature of our dataset. We begin with a  
184 discussion of preprocessing (Section 2.1) and perform a general analysis of the CRFB dataset  
185 structure (Section 2.2) to facilitate ML algorithm selection. We then perform a Principal  
186 Component Analysis of the dataset as a preamble to high-dimensional characterization (Section  
187 2.3) and finally describe our procedure for supervised (Multinomial Logistic Regression, Section  
188 2.4) and unsupervised (Gaussian Mixture Model, Section 2.5) machine learning on the data.

189 A central challenge in applying ML methods to geochemistry is data density (Petrelli and  
190 Perugini, 2016). Several thousand analyses is not “big data”, as social networks or advertising  
191 databases can comprise billions of instances or samples (Norinder and Norinder, 2022), and in  
192 Earth Science similar sized data can be found in the domains of seismology or climate science  
193 (Madhukar, 2019; Azari et al., 2021; Arrowsmith et al., 2022). The size of our database (our max  
194 in data subset D1 is 6,259 samples) is smaller in magnitude than the largest geochemical  
195 databases currently available (e.g., the global whole rock database of (Gard et al., 2019) or the  
196 GeoRoc or PETDB databases which have tens of thousands of samples or more depending on the  
197 compilation, or the Holocene volcanic rock database of (Oggier et al., 2023) has >100,000  
198 samples), but is still large for a single volcanic province.

199 Our database is of sufficient size to robustly characterize high dimensional patterns with  
200 statistical confidence. Each dimension, also called a “feature” with respect to the ML algorithm,  
201 represents a geochemical feature such as element, isotope, or ratio. While the analysis of high  
202 dimensional compositional data has been considered in petrology for ~100 years (e.g., (Clarke,  
203 1920), research on the use of automated techniques for this kind of analysis has only gained  
204 popularity within the last two decades. We will explicitly leverage the capability to analyze high  
205 dimensional data not only by simultaneously considering 9-25 elements (with a minimum of 7  
206 analysis per dimension) but also include the ratios of elements as additional features.

## 207 **2.1 Preprocessing**

208 Before we can implement clustering and classification, preprocessing of the data is  
209 necessary to remove the influence of different units (i.e. wt.% vs ppm) and of the varying  
210 magnitudes of variation within the features. Data can be transformed or preprocessed in a variety  
211 of ways, all generally seeking to enhance variation agnostic of the original units (Aitchison,  
212 1983; Aitchison et al., 1993; Dangeti, 2017; Geron, 2017). Preprocessing plays a major role in  
213 implementation of ML algorithms in most complex datasets. For both unsupervised and  
214 supervised ML approaches, we tested over 50 different combinations of preprocessing steps,  
215 experimenting with outlier removal, categorical balancing, and normalization. We settled on two  
216 relatively simple approaches:

### 217 ***Ratio Combinatorics***

218 Geochemists regularly create ratios during bivariate analysis of geochemical data to make  
219 patterns and groupings in the data more obvious by exaggerating variation. This approach, in  
220 combination with normalization, has been shown to aid in ML classification (e.g., (Lubbers et  
221 al., 2023) (although in a linear model ratios have been shown to be of negligible use; (Aitchison  
222 et al., 1993)). The number of ratio combinations  $\Phi$  between two lists is:

$$223 \quad \Phi = n! (n - r)! \quad (1)$$

224 where  $n$  is the number of features (elements) in the original dataset and  $r$  is the number of  
225 features in each combination (two in this case since we are creating pairs) (Peck et al., 2005). In  
226 general, geochemical data often is expressed in terms of elemental sums (for example total alkali  
227 versus silica plots), but we limit the statistical exploration to monomial combinations here. These  
228 features reflect all possible ratios of each element, greatly expanding our data subsets from 9  
229 major and 11-16 trace elements to a feature set of 210 (for data subset D2) or 325 (for D3).  
230 However, ratios computed according to equation (2) may have wildly different magnitudes, so  
231 we must normalize the data to compare variation equally.

232 ***Box-Cox Power Transform***

233 We use the Box-Cox Power Transform, a nonlinear normalization that is useful for comparing  
234 non-negative distributions and making them more Gaussian in shape (Box and Cox, 1964;  
235 Howarth and Earle, 1979; Ueki et al., 2018), defined for a data vector  $y$  as

$$236 \quad y^{PT} = \begin{cases} \frac{y^{\lambda}-1}{\lambda}, & \text{if } \lambda \neq 0 \\ \ln y, & \text{if } \lambda = 0 \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

237 where  $\lambda$  is a parameter found through maximum likelihood optimization (accomplished through  
238 the Sci-Kit Learn library in Python) to find the new vector  $y^{PT}$ . The transformation in equation  
239 (3) is invertible, and we generally transform back to physical units after a ML computation to  
240 facilitate interpretation.

241 ***A note on balanced classes***

242 One of the primary challenges identified when clustering geochemical data is the lack of  
243 even sampling amongst different categories (e.g., Formation, member). This is likely due to  
244 constraints on sampling in the field, exposure biases, and differential interest in some geologic  
245 units over others (Petrelli and Perugini, 2016). There are many ways of dealing with category  
246 imbalance. The most straightforward method is just to gather more data; however, this can be  
247 costly and inefficient or even impossible in some geologic scenarios.

248 Oversampling or under sampling is another possibility that has seen application in some  
249 volcanologic studies (e.g. (Pitcher and Kent, 2019; Sheldrake et al., 2020)). When oversampling  
250 the number of samples in each class matches the largest sample count in any category, while  
251 under sampling the number of samples is selected based on the smallest group count. However,  
252 in a category with few samples, oversampling may have the effect of eliminating important  
253 variation. In under-sampling, categories are defined based on just a few samples which may  
254 oversimplify the variation in the dataset. In our application we see both options as unappealing  
255 and find through experimentation on synthetic data that balancing categories in the CRFB dataset  
256 causes over-fitting within the supervised and unsupervised models. While the overall accuracy  
257 on test data split from the training data goes up, model performance on unknown samples  
258 decreases dramatically. We therefore do not balance categories in this work, but do try to ensure  
259 that we have a minimum number of samples in each of the 46 assumed members to reasonably

260 represent their variability: the smallest sample number per member in dataset D2 (representing  
261 all given members with the largest number of elements) is 7.

## 262 **2.2 Structural characteristics of the dataset**

263 The underlying statistical structure of the dataset informs which ML classification  
264 algorithms will be most effective, what we can expect from the outcomes, and how to think  
265 about normalizing or processing the data prior to analysis. We find it useful to examine the  
266 element-wise moments of the CRFB data, as these provide clear links to standard distributions  
267 (e.g., Gaussian) that form the basis for some ML algorithms. If  $f(x)$  is the probability  
268 distribution function of an element in a dataset with  $x$  the concentration, the  $m$  moments of  $f(x)$   
269 around a mean concentration  $c$  are (e.g., (Peck et al., 2005))

$$270 \mu_m = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} (x - c)^m f(x) dx \quad (3)$$

271 Often the first few moments of a distribution are sufficient to distinguish its characteristics. The  
272 first moment  $\mu_1$  is the mean concentration (zero for central moment), the second moment  $\mu_2$  is  
273 the variance or dispersion,  $\mu_3$  is the skewness (symmetry of the distribution about the mean; -1 to  
274 1 is considered close to a “normal” distribution) and  $\mu_4$  is the kurtosis (the ‘peakiness’ of the  
275 distribution; -3 to 3 is considered “normal”) (Field, 2013). These moments can change with  
276 normalization or standardization as shown in Fig. 2, where the Box-Cox power transform,  
277 performed on the Grand Ronde data subset, shows not only a reduction in outliers but also the  
278 normalization of magnitudes on both axes as the distributions are centered around 0. This is a  
279 critical part of preprocessing prior to machine learning analyses, and moments provide some  
280 intuition for the clusterability of the dataset. Datasets with minimal variability (i.e. overlap  
281 between samples and between groupings) are more difficult to cluster than datasets with an  
282 increase in variability and in the separation between cluster. Too much variability results in more  
283 overlap and a decrease in the ability for the algorithm to recognize clusters.

284 We illustrate these trade-offs in the context of the CRFB dataset specifically by  
285 generating synthetic data with known structure. We created 10,000 synthetic test datasets with 3  
286 centers, 10 features, 100 samples per distribution, and a range in standard deviations of the  
287 clusters from 0.1 to 7 utilizing the MakeBlobs tool in Sci-Kit Learn. We then clustered the data  
288 and related the V-score to the various data structure factors to assess the effect of different data

289 structures on clusterability. The V-score (called the HCV metric in Sci-Kit Learn syntax) uses  
290 ground truth labels and combines measures of homogeneity (each cluster only has samples from  
291 a single class) and completeness (all samples that have the same label are clustered together in a  
292 category) by taking the harmonic mean of the two measures (Rosenberg and Hirschberg, 2007).  
293 In order to get a perfect clustering configuration both the homogeneity and completeness must be  
294 maximized suggesting that all samples are categorized where we expect them to be (Rosenberg  
295 and Hirschberg, 2007; Geron, 2017). We utilize this to create both a synthetic regime diagram as  
296 well as for assessment of our supervised ML algorithm.

297 Fig. 3 shows results of this synthetic testing, plotting V-score as a function of mean  
298 pairwise distance between all points in a distribution and dip-test p-value, which is the  
299 probability that we can reject a null hypothesis that our distribution is unimodal. This regime  
300 diagram shows how clusterability varies with the structure of the underlying dataset. Lower p-  
301 values suggest more multimodal data distributions while lower pairwise distances suggest  
302 increased density of points; thus, the most highly clusterable datasets have dense, multimodal  
303 distributions.

304 We can then compare the synthetic data to our real data in the CRFB to assess Formation  
305 level and member level data structure and thus the applicability of various ML methods. It is  
306 well known that CRFB stratigraphic classes exhibit systematic variation along some elemental  
307 features (or ratios of elements) but are tightly clustered in others (e.g., Hooper 2007; Camp et al,  
308 2017). For example, from Fig. 3 we can see that the Steens distribution of samples is likely close  
309 to unimodal with a dense clustering of points (also on display in the Lower Steens and Upper  
310 Steens members which themselves are nearly unimodal). Meanwhile, the Grand Ronde,  
311 Wanapum, Picture Gorge, and Saddle Mountains formations all appear very likely multimodal  
312 (this does not tell us how many groups are present, just the probability that it isn't unimodal), but  
313 have variations in the density of points with Saddle Mountains and Picture Gorge have  
314 considerably more spread in their distributions than the Grand Ronde and Wanapum formations.  
315 The complexities exhibited by this regime diagram illustrate the importance of using  
316 multidimensional analysis techniques and utilizing analysis of subset distributions within the  
317 dataset.

318 To motivate a choice of unsupervised learning algorithm, we also want to assess to what  
319 degree each dataset feature can be treated as a Gaussian. This can be done by comparing  
320 moments at a member level to moments expected for a Gaussian distribution (Peck et al., 2005).  
321 Most members in the CRFB dataset are well represented by Gaussian out to the fourth moment  
322 (Fig.4), suggesting that this is reasonably starting model for the CRFB data structure. The color  
323 bars in Fig. 4 represent a comparison of the distributions in each member to predicted Gaussian  
324 distributions. The lines within the plots on Panels A and B show the expected standard deviation  
325 for various values of the inter-quartile range based on the common scaling factor 1.4826 (Leys et  
326 al., 2013). In all panels, the color bar “Difference from Gaussian” is calculated by taking the  
327 estimated standard deviation value from the IQR and subtracting that from the actual standard  
328 deviation calculated from the distributions. In this way positive values show a spread that is  
329 larger than expected based on the IQR, while negative values indicate that the actual spread is  
330 smaller than expected. Values of the difference from Gaussian that are close to 0 indicate that the  
331 actual spread is roughly in line with the expected value if the distribution were Gaussian. Using  
332 this metric helps us to gauge, in addition to the expected Gaussian range for the skew and  
333 kurtosis, how close these distributions are to Gaussian in their shape.

334 While assuming most of the data represent Gaussian distributions, there is a group of ~10  
335 members that have excess positive kurtosis values that indicate heavily tailed distributions (Fig.  
336 4) arising from small groups of outlier samples. For example, the largest kurtosis is found in the  
337 Sentinel Bluffs Member of the CRB which has a distinct outlier group within its chemistry (Fig.  
338 4). For this and perhaps other members, hydrothermal alteration has been suggested as a possible  
339 source of chemical variability within the lavas (Sawlan, 2017, 2019), but High Ti members of the  
340 Grande Ronde also show that chemical variability and outliers can also be tied to magmatic  
341 processes (Hooper et al., 2007; Reidel and Tolan, 2013). Regardless of the source, we find that  
342 these outliers are not systematic throughout all members and represent <0.5% of the data. For  
343 example, Kurtosis and skew plotted against the number of samples within each grouping shows  
344 no systematic pattern (Fig. 4). This indicates that there is no bias introduced by the imbalanced  
345 sample classes in our data and thus that we can effectively utilize logistic regression methods for  
346 supervised learning (Fig. 4).

## 347 **2.3 Principal Component Analysis**

348 To leverage the high dimensional nature of igneous geochemical data containing the  
349 standard major and trace element suites, we now apply appropriate statistical methods for  
350 quantifying variability between CRFB samples. We first perform Principal Component Analysis  
351 (PCA) as a reference model (Fig. 5). PCA is a matrix decomposition technique that facilitates  
352 dimensionality reduction to approximate the original data by rotating the coordinate axes to  
353 minimize variability (Aitchison, 1983; Aitchison et al., 1993; Praus, 2005; Filzmoser et al., 2009;  
354 Chen et al., 2015). PCA decomposition allows us to recognize the features that are responsible  
355 for that variation as well as providing tools to describe that variation (Praus, 2005; de Caritat and  
356 Grunsky, 2013; Pouget et al., 2014; Iwamori et al., 2017; Ueki and Iwamori, 2017; Cahoon et al.,  
357 2023). From a linear algebra perspective PCA represents a rotation of basis (set of coordinate  
358 axes) that is ordered such that the greatest variance of the data lies on the first of the new basis  
359 vectors (called the first ‘principal component’), the second greatest variance on the second, and  
360 so on.

361 The new set of basis vectors completely describe the data, but often only a subset of  
362 principal components is necessary to approximate the dataset and assess which features are  
363 primarily responsible for the variation between sample instances in the dataset. In this way PCA  
364 functions as a dimensionality reduction technique (Aitchison, 1983; Aitchison et al., 1993).  
365 However, the linear combinations of the original data coordinates within principal components  
366 are not always interpretable (Lee and Seung, 2000; Vesselinov et al., 2018). We implement PCA  
367 by first computing the eigenvalues and eigenvectors of the data covariance matrix, then sorting  
368 the eigenvectors by decreasing eigenvalues (Iwamori et al., 2017; Ueki and Iwamori, 2017).

369 PCA is known to be strongly impacted by features with different magnitudes (Filzmoser  
370 et al., 2009), therefore we apply the power transform normalization as a pre-processing step. We  
371 do not compute all possible elemental ratios but rather ask whether linear combinations of  
372 elements are sufficient to explain the data. Fig. 5 shows that the first two principal components  
373 explain ~68% of the variance, and seven are required to get above 90% variance explained.  
374 Thus, PCA does reduce the data dimensionality, but not enough to be easily interpretable.

375           The first two principal components suggest groupings of elements that separate, to some  
376 extent, stratigraphic Formations (Fig. 5B) and whose eigenvector weights (Fig. 5C-D) suggest  
377 combinations of elements that can distinguish them. For example, the Grande Ronde  
378 stratigraphic member has variation that is defined by changes in Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, SiO<sub>2</sub>, Na<sub>2</sub>O, K<sub>2</sub>O and Sr,  
379 Rb, Ba, while the Wanapum formation appears to have more variation captured by changes in  
380 TiO<sub>2</sub>, P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>, MnO, Y, and Nb. Steens, Imnaha, and Picture Gorge samples overlap but clearly  
381 reflect the negative weights associated with lower SiO<sub>2</sub> and higher MgO. This analysis suggests  
382 that high-dimensional classification may be successful and provides a comparison point for the  
383 other methods utilized.

## 384 **2.4 Supervised Classification via Multinomial Logistic Regression**

385           Applications of ML to classification generally fall into two categories: supervised and  
386 unsupervised learning (Geron, 2017). Our full workflow for both approaches is presented in  
387 Figure 6. To accomplish the supervised task of training and testing a model we multinomial  
388 logistic regression (MLR), an approach that has seen success in other geochemical supervised  
389 classification studies (e.g., (Ueki et al., 2018)). Many supervised learning algorithms exist; we  
390 choose MLR specifically for its simplicity, and transparency of evaluation, and efficiency. The  
391 result of an MLR classification is the probability of a categorical target variable belonging to a  
392 certain class (Fig. 1). The dependent or target variables, in the case of our CRFB application, are  
393 lithostratigraphic positions, the features of the dataset are the elemental concentrations and ratios,  
394 and the instances are individual samples.

395           The MLR algorithm is as follows (Peck et al., 2005; Geron, 2017; Ueki et al., 2018; Itano  
396 et al., 2020): (1) A linear model for the distribution of target classes is defined, involving a  
397 weighted sum of all features. (2) Guess the weights and predict classifications using a sigmoid  
398 function to assign a probability between 0 and 1 that a sample is part of a particular class. (3)  
399 Define a cost function using the known class labels and minimize this cost function with gradient  
400 descent algorithm to find the weights that minimize cost while maximizing the probability. We  
401 use the cross-entropy cost function, a maximum likelihood estimator of weights that maximizes  
402 probability (Pedregosa et al., 2011). (4) The model parameters are constrained once a set of  
403 weights has been found, but we then repeat with random initial starting weights (we use 50

404 iterations) and gradient descent calculations (1200 maximum iterations each) to find the best  
405 model.

406 We use a random train-test-split approach to validate the MLR model that randomly sets  
407 aside 30% of the data to be used as test data. On our dataset of full CRB samples this resulted in  
408 ~700-800 test samples, depending on the elements used. For each iteration of the training model,  
409 test data are classified, then assessed in terms of accuracy, precision and recall (Pedregosa et al.,  
410 2011). Accuracy quantifies how well the model predicted classes match with the known labels  
411 for the test data. Precision is defined as the ratio between “true positives” and the sum of “true  
412 positives” and “false positives”, indicating how well correct predictions were made (Geron,  
413 2017). Recall is defined as the ratio between “true positives” and the sum of “true positives” and  
414 “false negatives”, indicating how well the model identified incorrect predictions (Geron, 2017).

415 Once the highest accuracy model is chosen from the 50 iterations of starting weights, we  
416 finally train a model using these parameters on the complete test dataset (not just 70%). This is  
417 the model used to predict unknown samples. For each population that is analyzed, every sample  
418 is given a suite of probabilities that provide a quantitative measure for how likely it is that a  
419 given sample fits into each class.

420 To visualize MLR training success and failure, we plot each sample based on the model  
421 predicted stratigraphic category vs the original labels given to the sample in the dataset, defined  
422 by (Reidel et al., 2013). This ‘confusion matrix’ represents the relative proportion of each known  
423 label classified into a predicted group and is normalized to show the proportion of each sample  
424 class (y-axis), that was categorized into each predicted stratigraphic label (x-axis) (Fig. 7). We  
425 focus on detailed presentations of the D2 data subset here (Fig. 1), although qualitatively similar  
426 results were found for D1 and D3 (Supplementary Table S1).

427 At the Formation level, the best training score on the preprocessed features resulted in an  
428 overall accuracy, recall, and precision of ~99%. This high accuracy is suggestive of a strong  
429 stratigraphic framework overall, with a few instances within the stratigraphy where members  
430 appear more closely related within the formations than is suggested by hard stratigraphic  
431 boundaries. At the member level, we have a slightly lower overall accuracy (~89% for D2) but  
432 overall find consistency with the Formation-level result as incorrect classification largely is  
433 restricted to within-Formation members (Fig. 7B). Overall uncertainty within the model appears

434 to be primarily related to member level categories with less data. This is a much larger factor  
435 than outliers in affecting classification probabilities as the classes with some of the strongest  
436 outlier groups are also the ones that have very high classification probabilities.

437 Fig. 7 provides a guide for MLR accuracy, but much more information is provided on a  
438 sample-by-sample basis, because each candidate class is assigned a probability by the MLR  
439 model prediction. We visualize this with a circular bar plot for each sample that describes the full  
440 suite of probabilities for each class, labeling probabilities >10%. Fig. 8 shows two example  
441 classifications (from the unknown dataset to be discussed subsequently). Fig. 8A shows a robust  
442 classification in which the sample is predicted to be Wapshilla Ridge with an 85% probability.  
443 Fig 8B shows a more ambiguous classification, with three possible member classes (all within  
444 the Grande Ronde) each with probabilities >25%. This more detailed look suggests that there is  
445 more ambiguity in the overall predictive power of the MLR model than is suggested solely by  
446 the high scores during model training.

447 An obvious question is why some samples are easier to classify than others. We address  
448 this by examining the coefficients in our trained MLR models. Coefficients in and of themselves  
449 describe which features the model uses and in what weight to make decision boundaries between  
450 the classes of interest (in this case the stratigraphic boundaries). We use this to understand what  
451 separates and differentiates the classes in a multidimensional space. The pattern of coefficient  
452 magnitudes shows that some Formations seem to be clearly classified with 1-2 coefficients (Fig.  
453 9). For example, Grande Ronde and Steens are both distinguished on the basis of SiO<sub>2</sub> (more  
454 evolved and less evolved than other Formations, as evident by positive and negative coefficients  
455 in Fig. 9.B). Saddle Mountains seems dominantly distinguished on the basis of Nb/Zr, a ratio  
456 between a more immobile and incompatible element versus a more compatible element that can  
457 be used as an indicator of more primitive magmas (high Nb/Zr) versus magmas that have  
458 experienced more crustal contamination or fractionation (lower Nb/Zr). Another interesting  
459 comparison is Y/V, which ranks second for Imnaha with a positive coefficient and first for  
460 Wanapum with a negative coefficient (Fig. 9.B); Y/V also appears with negative weight for  
461 Steens. It's presence as a helpful indicator between Imnaha, Wanapum and Steens basalts could  
462 provide a useful indicator element in the future for distinguishing samples in these formations.

463 For Formation classes in which the MLR classification is more evenly distributed  
464 amongst 10 (or more) features, the model is leveraging the high dimensional nature of the data to  
465 create decision boundaries between classes and decide how much to rely on the decision  
466 boundary of each feature. Wanapum and Innaha, and to some extent Picture Gorge, demonstrate  
467 this flat pattern (Fig. 9.A), where significantly more features are needed to distinguish between  
468 samples in these classes. One interesting note is that neither MgO nor CaO appear in the top 10  
469 feature list, although these elements commonly appear on bivariate plots used to visualize the  
470 CRFB. This indicates that certain class boundaries are more definitive in other feature  
471 dimensions and perhaps more elements can be used to reliably describe the difference between  
472 stratigraphic classes.

473 At the member level, similar examination reveals that only a small number of members  
474 can be distinguished based on 1-2 elements, notably Upper Steens, Buckhorn Springs and  
475 Esquatzel (Fig. 10). A few others, Birch Creek, Roza, and Meyer Ridge, also have a relatively  
476 steep pattern of MLR coefficients, indicating that fewer features are required by the model to  
477 separate those classes, making them more chemically distinct from other members in the  
478 stratigraphy. Most other members require more multidimensional weight to be placed on the  
479 decision boundary analysis for classification.

## 480 **2.5 Unsupervised Clustering using a Gaussian Mixture Model**

481 The supervised classification problem specifies categories, but for the CRFB there  
482 remains debate at a sub-Formation level about stratigraphic boundaries. We also want to  
483 understand the petrologic pathways reflected in observed lava compositions. These are both  
484 problems where we can leverage the strengths of unsupervised learning, defined by a set of  
485 algorithms that seek to separate a dataset into categories. Unsupervised learning is often  
486 associated with dimensionality reduction or blind source separation (Carniel and Guzman, 2012;  
487 Petrelli and Perugini, 2016; Geron, 2017), assuming no prior information on categories such that  
488 groupings may cross stratigraphic boundaries. These methods are now ubiquitous in seismic  
489 applications (e.g., (Holtzman et al., 2018))and are becoming common for classification problems  
490 across volcano science (e.g., (Boschetty et al., 2022; Kubo Hutchison et al., 2023; Jutzeler et al.,  
491 2024)).

492 A generic workflow for unsupervised ML involves preprocessing the data, determining  
493 the correct number of components or clusters, assessing the outcome and repeating until the best  
494 fit model parameters can be found, and finally interpreting the output. There are dozens of  
495 known clustering algorithms, but not all perform well on non-negative geochemical data  
496 (Lacassie et al., 2006; Templ et al., 2008; Pedregosa et al., 2011; Iwamori et al., 2017; Ueki and  
497 Iwamori, 2017). For example, the k-means algorithm is excellent at choosing isotropic clusters,  
498 but fails to predict cluster boundaries for complex data distributions (Pedregosa et al., 2011;  
499 Ellefsen et al., 2014; Geron, 2017). Other methods, such as DBSCAN, are excellent for noisy  
500 datasets but are very dependent on user-defined parameters and can thus be non-unique  
501 (Pedregosa et al., 2011; Geron, 2017).

502 We implement the Gaussian Mixture Model (GMM) algorithm which assumes the data is  
503 well described by a multivariate Gaussian distribution (Pedregosa et al., 2011; Ellefsen et al.,  
504 2014). This algorithm generalizes k-means to include covariance between each data dimension,  
505 implemented as GaussianMixture in Python's Sci-Kit Learn library (we use the  
506 covariance\_type="full" option). GMMs take a probabilistic approach to drawing high-  
507 dimensional cluster boundaries, and each sample is assigned a probability for each class. The  
508 number of desired clusters (or "components") must be specified for the dataset at the outset; this  
509 becomes a primary parameter in the GMM model fitting exercise. The model begins by  
510 randomly seeding the cluster components and calculating the probability that each sample was  
511 generated by each of those components (Pedregosa et al., 2011; Geron, 2017). This 'expectation  
512 maximization' process is repeated until the highest probability can be found across all the  
513 samples (Dempster et al., 1976).

#### 514 ***Measuring success***

515 Measuring the success of unsupervised learning can be very difficult when there are no  
516 ground truth labels for the categories. To assess the best number of clusters we use two metrics  
517 to assess how well a given number of clusters fits the data. The BIC (Bayesian Information  
518 Criterion) and AIC (Akaike Information Criterion) metrics both favor the most efficient model  
519 that maximizes the probability that each sample belongs to a given class (i.e. The lowest AIC and  
520 BIC scores) while also penalizing for excessive model parameters (Hastie et al., 2001) to assess  
521 overfitting.

522 If AIC and BIC do not reach a clear minima, cluster number is often determined by slope  
523 breaks in the AIC/BIC score as a function of cluster number (the ‘elbow test’) (Hastie et al.,  
524 2001). We will find that this is an issue for the CRFB dataset. Rather than seek a unique number  
525 of clusters for our GMM model, we take a more exploratory approach and assess the sensitivity  
526 of cluster properties to their number (as well as to the database subset used). We can also assess  
527 the success of clustering by computing the V-score metric introduced in Section 3.1 as well as  
528 the ‘Silhouette Score’ (Hastie et al., 2001; Rosenberg and Hirschberg, 2007; Pedregosa et al.,  
529 2011; Geron, 2017), which measures how overlapping clusters are. Silhouette scores closer to 1  
530 indicate better clustering, while negative values indicate mis-clustering.

### 531 **3. PREDICTING CRFB STRATIGRAPHIC LABELS USING SUPERVISED** 532 **CLASSIFICATION**

533 As an application of our MLR classifier, we predict the stratigraphic labels for a subset of  
534 our CRFB dataset, from numerous published sources, as “undifferentiated” with Formation but  
535 not member label provided. This dataset (Supplementary Dataset S2) comprises 1,561 samples  
536 that span the elements in our data subset D2, which we will exclusively use as the ML classifier  
537 here so as to include all assumed members with the largest number of features. The unknown  
538 data spans all Formations except Picture Gorge, and because the Formation labels are given, we  
539 can test the accuracy of our model at this level. This provides an independent assessment of  
540 model robustness, which we can then use in the context of the predicted member labels for which  
541 we have no ground truth.

542 Fig. 11 shows the results of our prediction (probabilities of Formation and member level  
543 categories for every sample are included in Supplementary Data File S2). We predict a  
544 classification of 1,346 samples at greater than 0.75 probability at Formation, 86% of the  
545 unknown dataset. Somewhat unexpectedly, we also find that considering the highest probability  
546 classification for each sample results in only an 89% success rate in matching the given  
547 Formation labels (in other words, we predict the wrong label for 11% of the dataset). While still  
548 a high success rate, 89% is lower than the 98% accuracy predicted by the train-test-split  
549 approach described in Section 3. Of the misclassified samples, 173 samples have two separate  
550 probabilities  $>0.25$  and 42 have a single classification below 0.75. There are three possible  
551 explanations: (1) the precision/recall/accuracy metrics are not a sufficient characterization of

552 MLR model training, (2) some samples represent outliers not captured by the model training  
553 dataset, or (3) some of the labels (either in the training data or the unknown data) are incorrect.  
554 We do not attempt to assess (3) here or fully explore (1). However (2) is plausible; for example,  
555 samples labeled as Picture Gorge were not a part of the unknown dataset but were predicted at  
556  $>0.9$  probability for 19 samples. Picture Gorge is known to share similarities with primitive  
557 samples in other Formations (Wright et al., 1973; Wolff and Ramos, 2013; Cahoon, 2020;  
558 Cahoon et al., 2020, 2023) but is under-represented in our training dataset compared to the  
559 others.

560 We generally find increased accuracy of predictions by setting a threshold probability.  
561 For example, if we restrict only to samples with a classification probability of 0.9 or more, we  
562 still classify 1136 samples at Formation level but correctly predict the label for 92% of these.  
563 This suggests that applications of the MLR classifier to unknown samples should consider only  
564 samples with high probability of classification.

565 When we apply our classifier at the member level, we find that the total number of  
566 samples predicted with  $>0.75$  reduces somewhat to 893 samples (57% of the unknown dataset).  
567 At this more granular level, we also see a larger proportion of samples classified multiply at  
568 lower (but still significant) probabilities (e.g., Fig. 8B). Of these, 334 samples have two members  
569 that are predicted at more than 0.25 probability, while 668 in total have a maximum  
570 classification probability below 0.75. Fig. 12.A-B shows the distribution of predicted members in  
571 the unknown dataset at greater than 0.75 probability and less than 0.25 probability.

572 It is interesting to examine the samples for which the MLR model struggles to find a clear  
573 category. These samples shed light on similarities between categories that likely reflect the  
574 underlying petrologic processes that challenge MLR classification. Fig. 12.B shows the  
575 distribution of low probability classifications across members, and Fig 12.C shows the pair-wise  
576 distribution. We see that there is a tendency to multiply classify within Formations, and between  
577 stratigraphically adjacent Formations. In particular, samples in the Grande Ronde and  
578 specifically the Wapshilla Ridge and Sentinel Bluffs members pose a challenge for the model.  
579 These members have the highest sample number representation in the training dataset (Fig. 1), so  
580 we cannot explain this ambiguity by lack of training data. A more plausible explanation is that  
581 these members exhibit real variation and commonalities with the chemistry of other members.

582 Finally, although we have emphasized where the model fails in this discussion, Fig. 12  
583 also illustrates notable successes: for some members we see very little ambiguity in MLR  
584 classification. Asotin, Priest Rapids, Meyer Ridge, Kendrick Grade, and Rock Creek all exhibit  
585 many more robust ( $>0.75$ ) than ambiguous ( $<0.25$ ) classifications, with few multiple  
586 classifications. This indicates that the MLR model recognizes real variability in the CRFB  
587 geochemistry and classifying appropriately. Overall, the independent assessments of MLR  
588 classification accuracy performed here (the train-test-split exercise and the classification of  
589 unknown samples with ground-truth Formation labels) suggest that our model can be used with  
590 confidence to categorize CRFB geochemical analyses into the established Formation and  
591 member level stratigraphy at  $>90\%$  confidence, especially if the maximum MLR probabilities  
592 are higher than 0.9. Supplemental datasheet S2 includes our predicted Formation and member  
593 level classifications as well as the max probabilities.

#### 594 **4. UNSUPERVISED CLUSTERING TO ELUCIDATE COMMON PETROLOGIC** 595 **PATHWAYS**

596 The results of the supervised classification invite further investigation and exploration of  
597 the groupings within the CRFB. An obvious question is: if we applied unsupervised  
598 classification to our CRFB lava dataset, do we recover the known Formation and member level  
599 stratigraphy? In general, we do not. Instead, we find groupings of samples for which chemical  
600 composition is similar across stratigraphic boundaries. These we will suggest reflects common  
601 source (mantle melt compositions) and path (crustal processing) contributions. However, we also  
602 find that clusters can be associated in a qualitative way with stratigraphic height. This indicates  
603 an overall chemical evolution of CRFB lavas over the lifetime of the LIP.

604 We evaluate the optimal number of clusters based on lowest AIC and BIC scores as  
605 outlined in Section 3.5, exploring a range of clusters from 2 to 50 (encompassing the given  
606 number of Formations and members). We summarize the results in Fig. 13 for all three data  
607 subsets. The BIC minimum predicts 29 clusters for D1, 5 clusters for D2, and 3 clusters for D3.  
608 The AIC metric has no minimum for D1, predicts 25 clusters for D2, and 16 clusters for D2.

609 Diminishing returns are expected when increasing the number of data dimensions while  
610 only moderately increasing the dataset size (Hughes, 1968), and as before focus on interpretation

611 of data subset D2 (largest number of elements with at least 7 samples spanning all members in  
612 Fig. 1). A notable feature of the AIC pattern for D2 is the broad global minimum, with ~17-28  
613 clusters exhibiting similar AIC values. This is borne out by examination of other metrics – there  
614 is variation of less than ~1% in both V-score and Silhouette scores over this range. Moreover, we  
615 find that GMM generates empty clusters for higher numbers. We choose to analyze two cases  
616 here: 5 clusters (V-score of 0.42, Silhouette score of 0.23), corresponding to the BIC minimum  
617 of D2, and 21 clusters (V-score of 0.72, Silhouette score of 0.24), a representative of the broad  
618 AIC minimum of D2. We note that the 21 cluster case exhibits one empty cluster (a feature  
619 common to GMM modeling) – we thus discuss only the 20 non-empty clusters in what follows.  
620 Assuming more clusters in GMM models generally results in more empty clusters, which  
621 indicates diminishing returns of the GMM.

622         The case of 5 clusters is close to the assumed number of Formations (6 in total), while the  
623 case with 20 clusters is far more than the number of Formations but less than half the assumed  
624 number of members (46 in total). We compare the distribution of samples in each GMM cluster  
625 to the corresponding Formation and member level labels. Fig. 14 and 16 show the Formation and  
626 member level comparison. On these plots, yellow boxes indicate that no samples from a given  
627 classification appear in the corresponding GMM cluster. Grayscale boxes with numbers indicate  
628 the fraction of the GMM cluster occupied by the corresponding class (columns sum to unity).  
629 Histograms show the number of samples in each GMM cluster and each class label.

630         It is also interesting to examine the GMM clusters in chemical biplots, to seek patterns  
631 that might be interpretable petrologically. We invert our Power-Transformed data back to real  
632 units (e.g., Fig. 2; Supplement Figs S4-S5), and plot according to elements or ratios that either  
633 have been used in other CRFB studies or that were found to be important for MLR supervised  
634 classification. The fitted GMM model in both cases is included as supplementary material. Fig  
635 15,17 show these biplots; each circle is the median and error bars are the interquartile range of  
636 values for a given cluster, while symbol color indicates GMM cluster number (as given on Fig.  
637 14,16).

638         For the Formation comparison with 5 GMM clusters, Fig. 14 shows that Cluster 0  
639 encompasses samples from all Formations, while Fig. 15 shows that Cluster 0 contains the most  
640 primitive samples in the dataset. We interpret this cluster to represent samples that best reflect

641 the mantle source(s) of the CRFB. Cluster 1 and 2 dominantly encompass samples from the  
642 Grande Ronde and Wanapum but also include a fraction of samples from the earlier phases  
643 (Steens, Imnaha, Picture Gorge). These clusters are somehow transitional, and we hypothesize  
644 are reflective of increasing AFC influence in biplots. Cluster 3 contains dominantly Grande  
645 Ronde samples and is interpreted as reflecting the unique characteristics of this Formation,  
646 although small fractions of Saddle Mountains samples also are found in this cluster. Cluster 4 is  
647 dominantly Saddle Mountains, very high in Zr and Ba (incompatible tracers that indicate more  
648 magmatic evolution and FC contributions).

649 Overall, while samples in GMM clusters span multiple Formations, the geochemical  
650 composition of cluster features varies in a systematic way that seems to reflect progressive  
651 crustal processing (AFC). Although not mapping one-to-one with stratigraphic order, the  
652 ordering in Fig 14 and corresponding array in Fig. 15 indicate a systematic progression of CRFB  
653 composition through time away from primitive compositions. However, primitive samples also  
654 appear in all Formations (cluster 0).

655 The member comparison with 20 GMM clusters is more complex but also potentially  
656 more informative about process – from here forward, when a cluster number is referenced, it is  
657 with respect to this GMM model. Once again, we see a rough correspondence with stratigraphic  
658 order in Fig. 16, and once again we see clusters that contain samples spanning multiple members.  
659 A higher V-score at this cluster number suggests that at this level the GMM is capturing more  
660 clearly distinct groups than for the five cluster example. We represent cluster median and  
661 interquartile range values in terms of biplots on Fig. 17. Here we choose element ratios in part  
662 based on those predicted from MLR to be the most important discriminants:  $Zr/P_2O_5$ ,  $Zr/Ba$ ,  
663  $Nb/Zr$ , and  $SiO_2$  are the highest magnitude coefficient in our Formation-level MLR model, and  
664 as expected these broadly separate the fields. We also plot Ni versus MgO to look for distinct  
665 mantle source compositional trends following (Soderberg and Wolff, 2023), and plot trace  
666 elements Cr versus Rb as these are sensitive to AFC with Idaho Batholith as assimilant ((Wolff  
667 and Ramos, 2013); also see Supplemental section S2) .

668 With the insights from Fig. 16 and 17, we find that it is possible to interpret the 20 GMM  
669 clusters. Clusters 0-4 nearly encompass the early CRFB Formations and Picture Gorge, so  
670 represent onset phases of the CRFB life cycle. With one exception, these clusters form the end of

671 a broad array on Ni vs MgO plot, with clusters 3 and 4 (both contain a large fraction of Picture  
672 Gorge samples) forming a distinct trend from clusters 0-2. We interpret these clusters as tracking  
673 distinct mantle sources (e.g., (Soderberg and Wolff, 2023)).

674 Clusters 5-11 are almost entirely composed of Grande Ronde (GRB) samples, but there  
675 are interesting sub-groupings to examine. Cluster 5 plots towards primitive influence, similar to  
676 clusters 0-4 although it is entirely composed of Grande Ronde samples. Clusters 10-11 have a  
677 small number of Picture Gorge samples. We suspect that these represent episodes of mantle  
678 recharge. Clusters 6-9 span several Grande Ronde members in entirety, although all are mainly  
679 composed of Wapshilla Ridge samples. They form a tight cluster on several of the biplots,  
680 characterized by the highest SiO<sub>2</sub> and incompatible trace element values.

681 Although some Wapshilla samples appear in other clusters, the following members are  
682 entirely spanned by clusters 6-9: Center Creek, Kendrick Grade, Skeleton Creek, Downey Gulch,  
683 and Ortle. If we include cluster 11, additionally Grouse Creek, Mt Horrible, Hoskin Gulch, and  
684 China Creek are completely characterized. We note that Cluster 11 is dominantly Sentinel Bluffs  
685 samples, and along with Cluster 10 includes Picture Gorge samples suggesting a recharge  
686 influence. Cluster 6 includes Saddle Mountains samples from Wilbur Creek and could also  
687 plausibly represent influence from the process of magma recharge. Notable in the Grande Ronde  
688 clusters is that that Meyer Ridge occupies almost its own cluster (#10), while Cold Springs  
689 Gulch, Brady Gulch, and Indian Ridge share one (#5). Sentinel Bluffs spans many clusters, both  
690 those representing early/primitive influence as well as clusters residing within the Saddle  
691 Mountains.

692 Clusters 12-14 map onto Wanapum Formation nearly completely, but notably the Eckler  
693 Mountain member spans clusters associated with Imnaha and Picture Gorge as well as GRB  
694 (Teepee Butte) samples. Clusters 15-19 then map onto Saddle Mountains members. Umatilla is  
695 mapped 1-to1 between GMM cluster 15 and the given member; it is the only cluster to  
696 encompass all samples of a member class in Fig. 17. Cluster 16 (Asotin and Weissenfels Ridge)  
697 and 19 (Weippe and Pomona with small amount of Sentinel Bluffs) plot more in the primitive  
698 chemical fields and suggest recharge influence, while others in this group are among the most  
699 evolved. This is consistent both with previous interpretations and observations that the majority  
700 of the variation within the entire CRB is captured by the Saddle Mountains Formation and not by

701 the main phase (Hooper, 2000; Conrey et al., 2013; Reidel et al., 2013; Wolff and Ramos, 2013;  
702 Camp et al., 2017a).

## 703 **5. DISCUSSION**

704 The primary goals of this study are to apply a machine learning (ML) workflow to the  
705 Columbia River Flood Basalt (CRFB) lava whole rock chemistry, building models to (1)  
706 objectively classify unknown samples into established stratigraphy, and (2) identify common  
707 patterns underlying the geochemical data independent of eruptive order. To accomplish this, we  
708 conduct three classes of statistical analysis using ML tools. First, we characterize the dataset and  
709 conduct Principal Component Analysis. Then we build a Multinomial Logistic Regression model  
710 (supervised ML) and a Gaussian Mixture Model (unsupervised ML) of a large new whole rock  
711 major and trace element lava database (Supplementary Dataset S1). Together the supervised and  
712 unsupervised approaches accomplish our goals, albeit raising questions about the CRFB  
713 stratigraphy and identifying clear systematic signals of distinct petrologic pathways. The  
714 following discussion synthesizes our ML results and points to future applications of these  
715 methods.

### 716 **5. 1. Implications of machine learning for the stratigraphy of the CRFB lavas**

717 Decades-long efforts underly the mapping and categorization of CRB lavas at Formation,  
718 member, and even more granular unit stratigraphic levels (e.g., (Reidel, 1982; Reidel and Tolan,  
719 1989; Hooper, 2000; Reidel et al., 2002, 2013; Camp, 2013; Camp et al., 2013; Martin et al.,  
720 2013; Moore et al., 2018; Cahoon et al., 2023). That member level classifications are still  
721 ambiguous (e.g., (Davis et al., 2017; Webb et al., 2019)) speaks to the challenges of  
722 disentangling eruptive products in such a chemically homogeneous sequence of lavas.  
723 Classification in a high dimensional system with systematic variability (as demonstrated by our  
724 initial statistical characterization of the dataset Fig. 3-4) is an area where supervised learning  
725 approaches are expected to excel, and indeed the MLR classifier is extremely successful in the  
726 majority of cases studied here. The D2 model exhibits ~89% success at recovering known  
727 member labels in our test dataset and ~99% success at the Formation level (although as  
728 discussed in Section 3, we suspect a true accuracy of ~90% based on application to an unknown  
729 dataset). The unsupervised GMM clusters recover known chemical groups such as similar

730 primitive signatures across Steens, Innaha, and Picture Gorge samples, and more subtle  
731 discriminators such as the “TiO<sub>2</sub> gap” identified by Hooper et al., (2007) that separates  
732 Wanapum from underlying Formations (Supplementary Fig. S3.A).

733         But what to make of the cases where the MLR model fails? Fig. 12 shows that ambiguous  
734 classifications of our unknown dataset are not random and occur persistently with certain  
735 members, for example Buckhorn Springs (GRB) and American Bar (Innaha), and then between  
736 Wapshilla and Sentinel Bluffs, Winter Water (both GRB), and Frenchman Springs (Wanapum).  
737 In every one of these cases, GMM clusters – a completely independent method – grouped some  
738 samples from these paired members together. GMM cluster 2 contains both Buckhorn Springs  
739 and American Bar, cluster, clusters 6-10,11 have various groupings of Wapshilla with Winter  
740 Water and Sentinel Bluffs, while cluster 13 includes Wapshilla samples along with Frenchman  
741 Springs. That both supervised and unsupervised ML classifications cross stratigraphy to group  
742 members together, suggest two possible interpretations: (1) the CRFB member stratigraphy is not  
743 as robust as we’ve assumed here, or (2) there are common processes occurring at multiple times  
744 within the stratigraphy. Ongoing discussion about CRFB stratigraphy in the literature suggests  
745 that (1) may be partially true, but we will focus here on the implications of (2).

746         The precise number of GMM clusters is not certain at this stage in our analysis (within or  
747 between database subsets), although the qualitative patterns discussed in Section 4 are robust for  
748 different choices of cluster number. We expect that additional chemical features (for example  
749 HFSRE elements sensitive to garnet (Takahahshi et al., 1998), mineral-scale constraints  
750 (Petcovic and Grunder, 2003) isotopes (Mcdougall, 1976; Dodson et al., 1997; Wolff et al.,  
751 2008)), magnetic polarity (Pivarunas et al., 2025), high precision geochronology (e.g., (Kasbohm  
752 et al., 2023)) and information about known stratigraphic position will increase the uniqueness of  
753 GMM clusters. We hope that future work along these lines can establish clusters that objectively  
754 define a member-level stratigraphy of the CRFB.

755         Our statistical workflow is naturally suited for identifying outliers and compositional  
756 trends that reflect a variety of processes. As illustrated in Fig. 4, members that do not follow the  
757 overall trend in these elements and plot more than three standard deviations away from average  
758 compositions predicted by Gaussian distribution, are a group of outlier compositions that in most  
759 cases are dictated by highly enriched trace elements. Although representing a small number of

760 samples (<0.5% of the dataset), it is possible that the variation in these samples may have been  
761 imparted during post eruption cooling and crystallization or hydrothermal alteration processes  
762 (e.g. (Sawlan, 2017)). However, outlier groups in dimensions such as Rb (a fluid mobile element  
763 sensitive to alteration) show only small population sizes (2 samples from the Innaha formation  
764 show anomalous Rb, as do a population of undifferentiated Grande Ronde samples) and suggest  
765 that if this process is present, much of the data remains unaffected. Additional signals in  
766 elements such as V could also be indicative of changes in the redox state of the system, which  
767 was not investigated in detail during this study but presents a potential future direction of study.  
768 We expect that systematic examination of GMM cluster output identifies groupings of samples  
769 across stratigraphic boundaries that exhibit geochemical signals attributed to post-emplacement  
770 chemical differentiation in addition to crustal RAFC as considered here.

## 771 ***5.2 Implications for time-evolving magma storage and eruption***

772 Our goals in this manuscript are largely methodological, but nonetheless with  
773 compositions of the different clusters identified we can relate these objective groupings to the  
774 relative timing of RAFC processes in the CRB geochemical stratigraphy. Numerous studies have  
775 applied general considerations of RAFC on whole rock chemistry (e.g., O'Hara and Mathews,  
776 1981; Lee et al., 2014) to the CRFB (e.g., Wolf and Ramos 2013; Yu et al., 2015; Moore et al.,  
777 2018). We conduct a set of thermodynamic simulations motivated by these studies to ground  
778 similar interpretations in our CRFB data. These simulations are described in Supplement Section  
779 S2. We use the Magma Chamber Simulator, an energy-constrained phase equilibria calculator  
780 (Bohrson et al., 2014), to predict major and trace element evolution for idealized RAFC  
781 scenarios at 5 kbar pressures with an assumed Innaha parent and different possible assimilated  
782 compositions, including the Wallowa Batholith and Idaho Batholith (Supplementary Fig. S1-S2).  
783 These simulations provide a guide for interpreting variation seen between GMM clusters (arrows  
784 on Fig. 15 and 17). They are not intended to be a complete parameter exploration, and we  
785 therefore view the resulting RAFC as semi-qualitative, setting the stage for future work that  
786 seeks to integrate petrologic constraints with thermomechanical considerations of crustal magma  
787 transport. For details of the parameters utilized see Supplement Section S2.

788 Considering the entire CRFB, we first examine the relationship between member labels  
789 of each chemical analysis in the database to the GMM label assigned, with 5 and 20 clusters as

790 comparators to Formation and member labels. At a Formation level (Fig. 14), we see that  
791 samples from the Steens, Imnaha, and Picture Gorge all group together and are found through all  
792 later Formations. This suggests that compositional signatures of primary mantle melts are found  
793 throughout the stratigraphy and suggest persistent recharge. This “primitive” cluster splits into  
794 multiple groupings that have clearer member-level comparators in the 20 cluster case (Fig. 16),  
795 which suggest different mantle sources spanning Steens, Imnaha and Picture Gorge (e.g.  
796 (Soderberg and Wolff, 2023; Cahoon et al., 2023). We also see evidence for recharge within  
797 Grande Ronde, Wanapum, and Saddle Mountains Formations via clusters that are both clearly  
798 compositionally distinct from other nearby members but also trend back towards primitive  
799 compositions (Yu et al., 2015) defined by other clusters (Fig. 15 and 17). For example, clusters  
800 14 and 10 (dominantly Priest Rapids and Meyer Ridge, with other minor contributors) seem  
801 plausibly like RAFC products of cluster 2 (Imnaha) in Fig. 17.C-D. It is notable that recharge-  
802 signature clusters are associated with transitional members between Imnaha and Grande Ronde,  
803 and again between the Grande Ronde and Wanapum (Fig. 16).

804         The greatest degree of overlap between distinct members occurs in clusters associated  
805 with the Grande Ronde, and these clusters also trend towards more evolved compositions  
806 expected for assimilation of continental crust. This suggests a common tendency towards AFC  
807 with significant crustal interaction, as would be expected for residence in a common storage  
808 zone. It is tempting to use the proximity of clusters 6-9 and 11 in Fig 16-17 as evidence for a  
809 common reservoir or crustal differentiation pathway for these Grande Ronde members, involving  
810 a sudden increase in storage zones that provides expanded surface area for assimilation (e.g.,  
811 (Karlstrom and Richards, 2011). Indeed, clusters 6 and 9 (early and later GRB but both  
812 containing Wapshilla Ridge samples) are offset from the arrays in Fig. 17C-D and are plausibly  
813 more clearly AFC dominated based on our petrologic models (red arrows).

814         Nearly coeval emplacement of some of these members (e.g., Mt Horrible, Grouse Creek,  
815 Wapshilla Ridge) has been previously suggested by interfingering of near vent deposits (Davis et  
816 al., 2017). Indeed, ‘transitional contacts’ between lavas are suggested for all R2 magnetic  
817 polarity section (Reidel and Tolan, 2013). It is worth noting that the span of members  
818 represented by clusters 6-9 and 11 represents a combined volume of 108,800 km<sup>3</sup>, a staggering  
819 ~51% of the entire CRFB erupted volume and ~71% of the Grande Ronde Formation (Reidel and

820 Tolan, 2013; Reidel et al., 2013, 2016). Combined U-Pb and  $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$  high precision (Kasbohm  
821 et al., 2023) puts the entire GRB emplacement duration at  $\sim 450$  kyr. Individual ages obtained by  
822 Kasbohm et al., (2023) at the Ortleigh member and Center Creek member span all samples in  
823 clusters 6-9 and 11 and imply a shorter duration of  $\sim 240$  kyr. The implied average eruption rate  
824 for these members – without considering the other units in the stratigraphy that do not lie in  
825 GMM clusters 6-9 and 11 – is  $\sim 0.45$  km<sup>3</sup>/yr (noting that individual eruptions likely have  
826 exhibited instantaneous eruption rates orders of magnitude higher, (Biasi, 2021; Biasi and  
827 Karlstrom, 2021)).

828         However, thermomechanical considerations (e.g., (Karlstrom et al., 2012; Geshi and  
829 Neri, 2014; Mittal et al., 2021)), observational evidence (e.g., (Mittal and Richards, 2021)), and  
830 petrologic modeling (e.g., (Wolff and Ramos, 2013)) suggest at most 10-30% of total stored  
831 volume can be erupted in LIP-scale eruptions. Assuming a representative 10:1 intrusive:  
832 extrusive ratio this implies that a central storage zone for these members processed volumes in  
833 excess of  $10^6$  km<sup>3</sup>, and when combined with eruptive age constraints the implied magma flux is  
834 on the order of 4 km<sup>3</sup>/yr. This is similar order of magnitude although larger than the ‘primary  
835 magmatic flux’ estimated based on petrologic modeling to explain the assimilation signature of  
836 the GRB by Wolff and Ramos (2013).

837         And yet, the Grande Ronde itself cannot be fully explained by a single reservoir or  
838 differentiation pathway – the distinct clusters seem to imply multiple storage zones, with  
839 different RAFC histories. These clusters are comprised of samples from members that are  
840 interleaved in time with Wapshilla Ridge, likely requiring mechanically distinct pathways of  
841 magma transport through the crust even during Wapshilla Ridge emplacement and persistent  
842 recharge. Later groups within the Wanapum and Saddle Mountains appear to share similarities  
843 with Grande Ronde members (for example cluster 12 with Birch Creek, cluster 13 with  
844 Wapshilla Ridge, and clusters 18 and 19 with Sentinel Bluffs). Reuse of crustal structures and  
845 remobilization/mixing of older magma by subsequent members could help explain the known  
846 variability in Saddle Mountain members (Hooper, 2000; Reidel et al., 2002, 2013). Although the  
847 Saddle Mountains largely occupy a distinct compositional space than prior lavas, overlap in  
848 GMM clusters between small percentages of other Formations (including apparent mixing of  
849 American Bar with several Saddle Mountains members in cluster 17) suggests residual fluxing of

850 magma through these increased storage zones left from the main phase eruptions. Clusters 16  
851 (dominantly Asotin) and 18 (Weissenfels Ridge and Ice Harbor with a few samples from  
852 Sentinel Bluffs) could plausibly reflect a FC or RAFC trend in Fig. 17.C-D from Picture Gorge  
853 dominated primitive compositions (cluster 4). The trend overall across all members seems to  
854 push early primitive compositions to more evolved compositions through assimilation and  
855 fractional crystallization to varying degrees, and then later compositions appear to reflect a  
856 recharge driven return to more primitive compositions and further FC and AFC to create large  
857 variations in composition in the later stages of the eruptive activity (Figure 17.C,D).

858 Taking an onset age for the CRFB at 16.9 Ma (Kasbohm et al., 2023), eruption rate for  
859 the cumulative  $\sim 42,800 \text{ km}^3$  of lava prior (spanning Steens, Imnaha, and early N1 magnetic  
860 polarity Grande Ronde members) to cluster 6 would be  $\sim 0.12 \text{ km}^3/\text{yr}$ , similar to the long-term  
861 average modern eruption rate of the Hawaiian hotspot (Lipman and Calvert, 2013). Similarly, if  
862 we examine the latter part of the Grande Ronde constrained by the Kasbohm et al., (2023) ages  
863 (Fields Spring member on) not encompassed by our clusters 6-9 and 11 through the end of the  
864 Wanapum (Priest Rapids member),  $\sim 27,500 \text{ km}^3$  erupted volume is associated with 297 kyr and  
865 the implied average eruption rate is  $\sim 0.09 \text{ km}^3/\text{yr}$ .

866 The later eruption rates of R2 magnetic polarity Grande Ronde lavas through Imnaha thus  
867 appear smaller (although similar in magnitude) to that leading up to the middle Grande Ronde  
868 members. And the compositions of GMM clusters associated with transitional members entering  
869 and leaving the Grande Ronde (clusters #3-4 and #12-13) plot together for some elements (e.g.,  
870 Fig 17.B,D) but not others (e.g., Fig. 17.C), which may indicate either post-depositional  
871 alteration, or similarities driven by similar magmatic processes affecting the beginning of the  
872 eruptive phase and the waning end of Grande Ronde activity. Consideration of magma storage  
873 dynamics suggest that the thermal legacy of a large mantle melt pulse and assimilation episode is  
874 a shift towards increased storage, so we speculate that the sharp decrease in eruption rates seen at  
875 the end of the Grande Ronde reflects a decrease in the efficacy of the crust to transmit magma  
876 (e.g., Black et al., 2024). We also note that the only notable hiatus identified in CRFB main  
877 phase volcanism by the dating of Kasbohm et al., (2023) occurs at the end of Grande Ronde  
878 time, which is consistent with (although not uniquely explained by) a shift in crustal storage  
879 capacity.

880 In the context of ML for igneous processes generally, it is notable that we in this section  
881 have returned to ‘traditional’ methods, relying on element- or ratio-wise comparisons with  
882 expectations for a given RAFC scenario (using bivariate diagrams) to interpret patterns of GMM  
883 clusters as a visualization bridge between traditional petrologic analysis and automated  
884 multidimensional analysis. Because the Magma Chamber Simulation and other similar tools  
885 predict the full suite of major and trace elements, it should be possible to derive RAFC  
886 interpretations for petrologic evolution involving all features simultaneously in a ML framework  
887 (e.g., (Till, 2025)). Ideally, thermodynamic evolution is itself constrained by mechanical models  
888 of eruption cycles, in which mass and energy transfer associated with recharge and evacuation  
889 from magma storage zones are physically self-consistent with the rheologic evolution of the crust  
890 (e.g., (Karlstrom et al., 2017)). We however leave this development to future work.

### 891 **5.3 Conclusions**

892 We have developed a combined supervised and unsupervised machine learning workflow  
893 for classification of high dimensional geochemical data, based on Multinomial Logistic  
894 Regression and Gaussian Mixture Models. This workflow (Fig. 6) provides a powerful  
895 framework for classification that can be leveraged to robustly and quantitatively characterize  
896 petrologic datasets generally, but here we exclusively study the Columbia River Flood Basalts.  
897 We compile a large database (N=7,975) of labeled published and unpublished whole rock  
898 analyses, systematically exploring supervised classification and then unsupervised clustering.  
899 The results of this exercise identify cryptic patterns that span the established CRFB stratigraphy  
900 and provide insight into the complex and time-evolving mantle source and crustal pathways that  
901 led to the observed eruption sequence, fingerprinting the geochemical life cycle of the CRFB.

902 Overall, our interpretation both at Formation and member level is of sudden expansion of  
903 crustal differentiation pathways in the N1 paleomagnetic phase of the Grande Ronde Formation,  
904 which likely indicates a transition in the mode of crustal transport associated with increased flux  
905 and thermal/rheologic priming that ultimately ended the massive eruptions of the main phase  
906 (Karlstrom and Richards, 2011). Mantle recharge signatures throughout the CRFB stratigraphy  
907 suggests that pre- as well as post-main phase eruptions established new pathways through the  
908 crust but also likely interacted episodically with pre-existing, and likely compartmentalized (e.g.,  
909 Mittal and Richards, 2021a), storage regions. Further unraveling this complex sequence is

910 critical for understanding the life cycle of the CRFB and other flood basalts, and we hope that the  
911 tools developed here will aid in this effort.

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921 models for classification, may be found at [https://github.com/leifkarlstrom/CRB\\_ml\\_classifiers](https://github.com/leifkarlstrom/CRB_ml_classifiers) .

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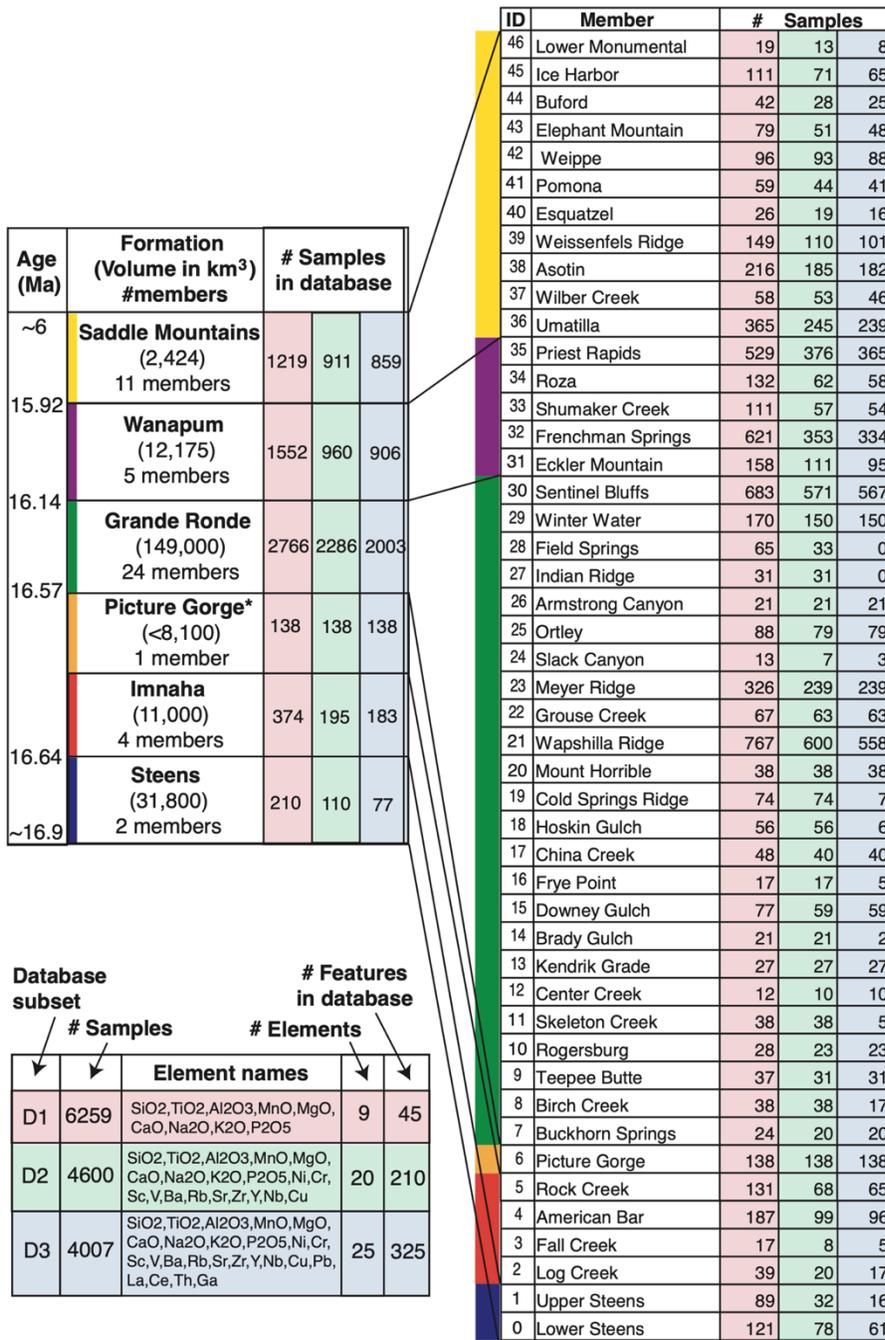
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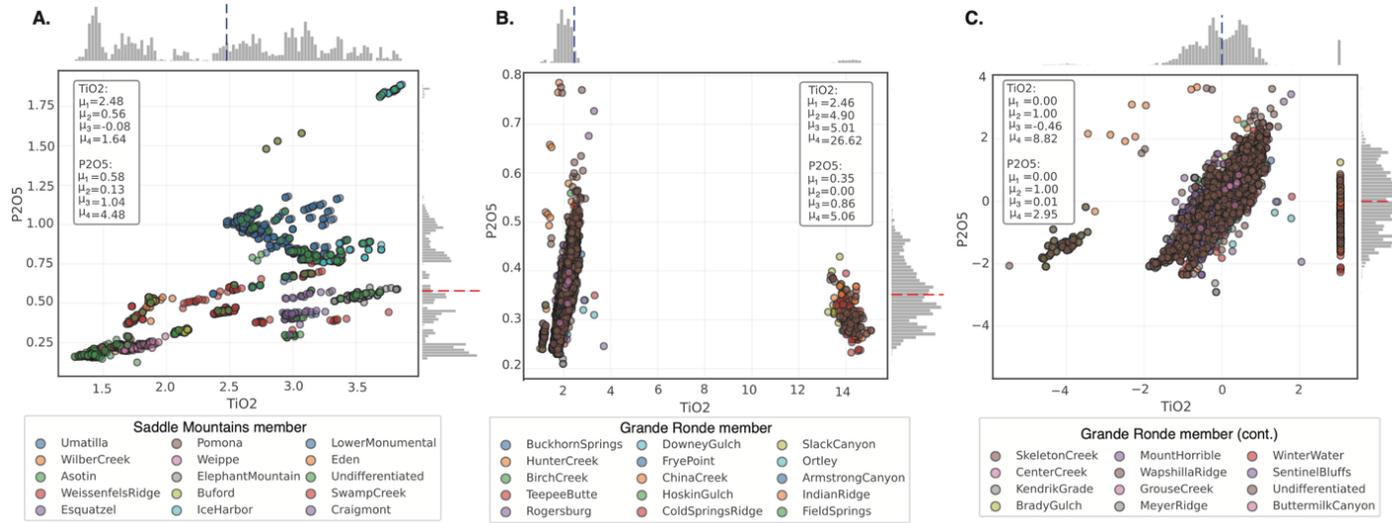
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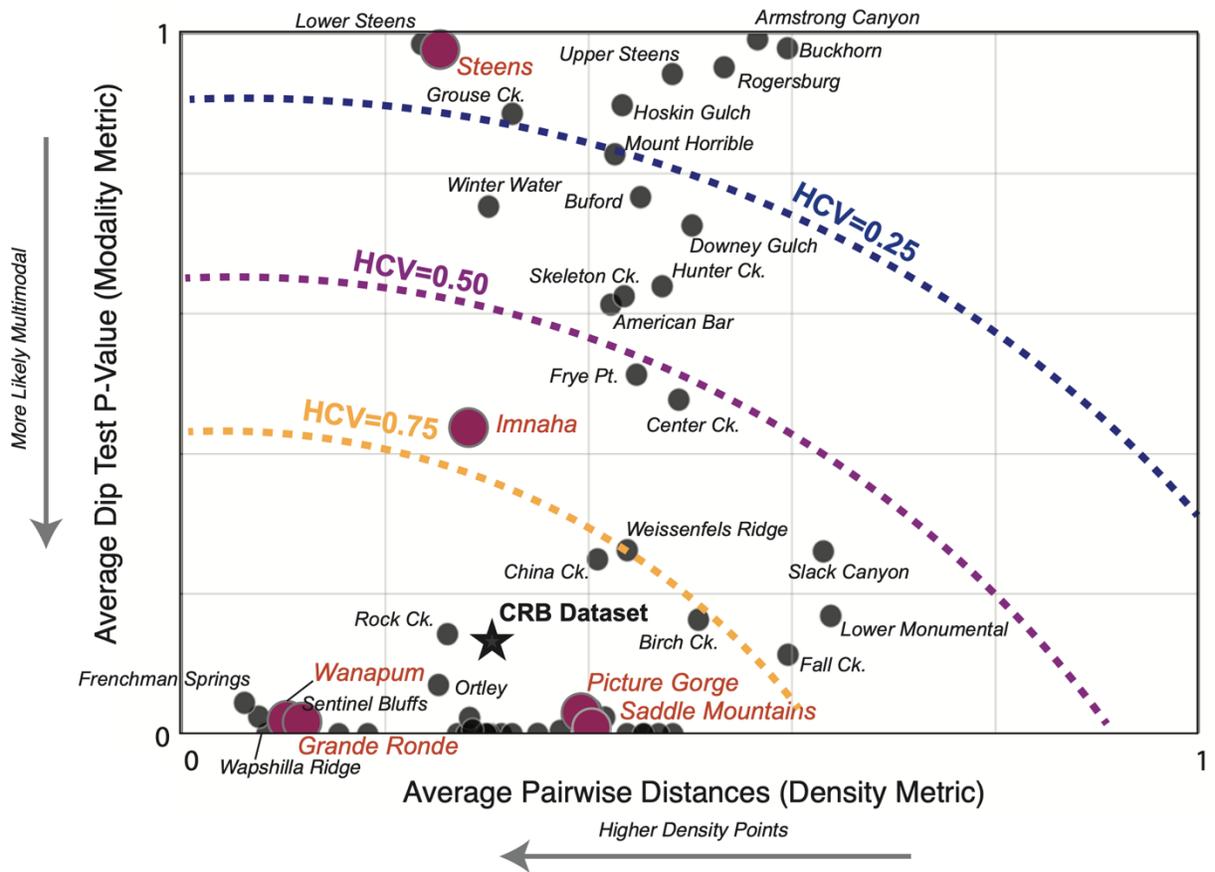
1397 **Figure 1:** Stratigraphy of the CRFB and databases compiled in this work, based on Reidel and  
 1398 Tolan (2013) and Reidel et al., (2013), dates from Kasbohm et al., (2023) and Barry et al. (2013)  
 1399 for Saddle Mountains. Color scheme for Formations will be used throughout, as will numerical  
 1400 labels for members. Data subsets D1-D3 include differing numbers of trace elements, which  
 1401 changes the total number of samples and data features resulting from ratios of elements.



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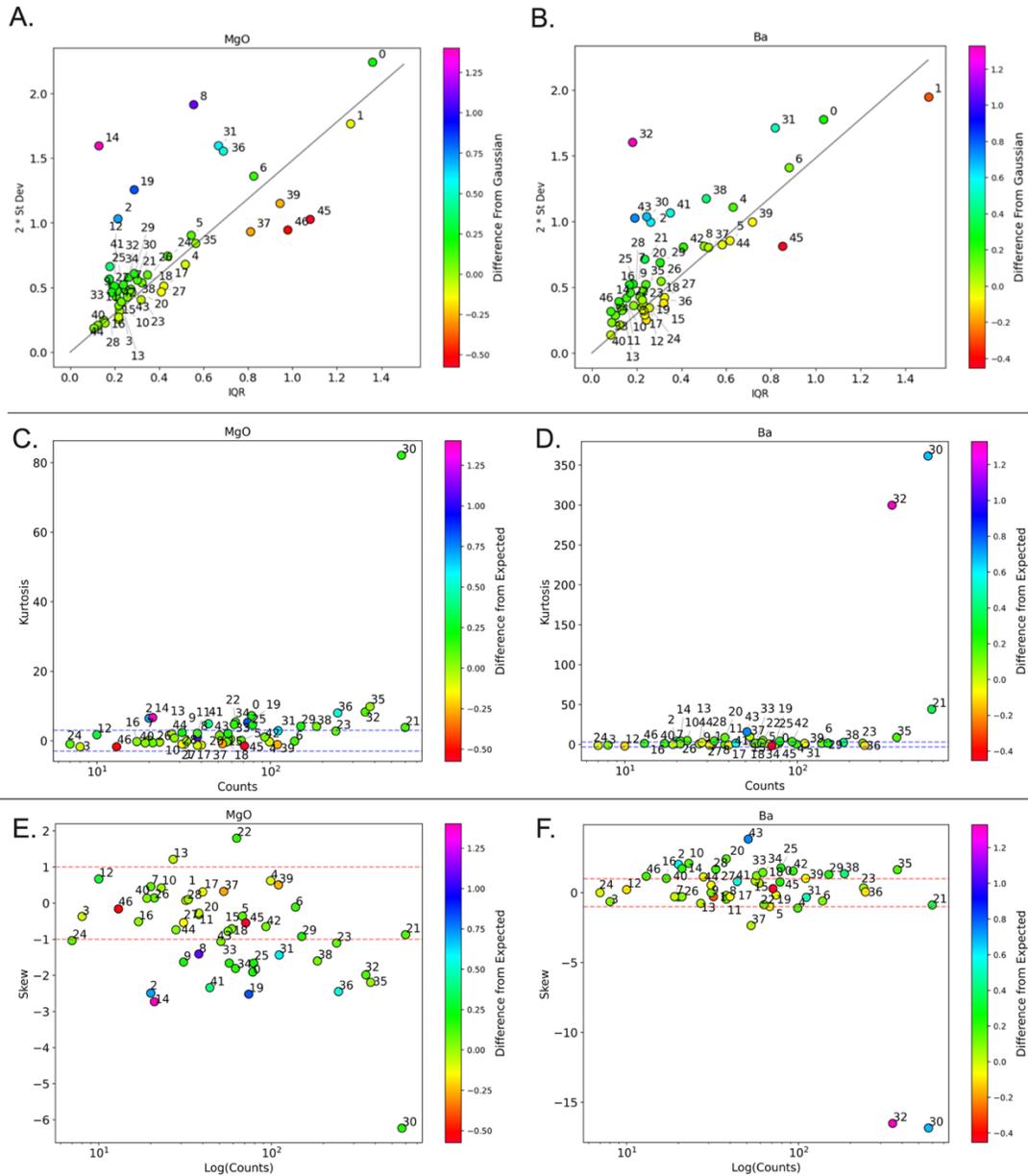
1403 **Figure 2:** Biplots of TiO<sub>2</sub> versus P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> for **A.** Saddle Mountains Formation, **B.** Grande Ronde  
 1404 Formation, **C.** Same as (B) but after Box-Cox Power Transform. Histograms on top and right are  
 1405 projections of sample data, and the first four moments of these distributions are listed. The  
 1406 “Undifferentiated” label in both cases is the dataset we use as application of our ML classifier in  
 1407 Section 4.

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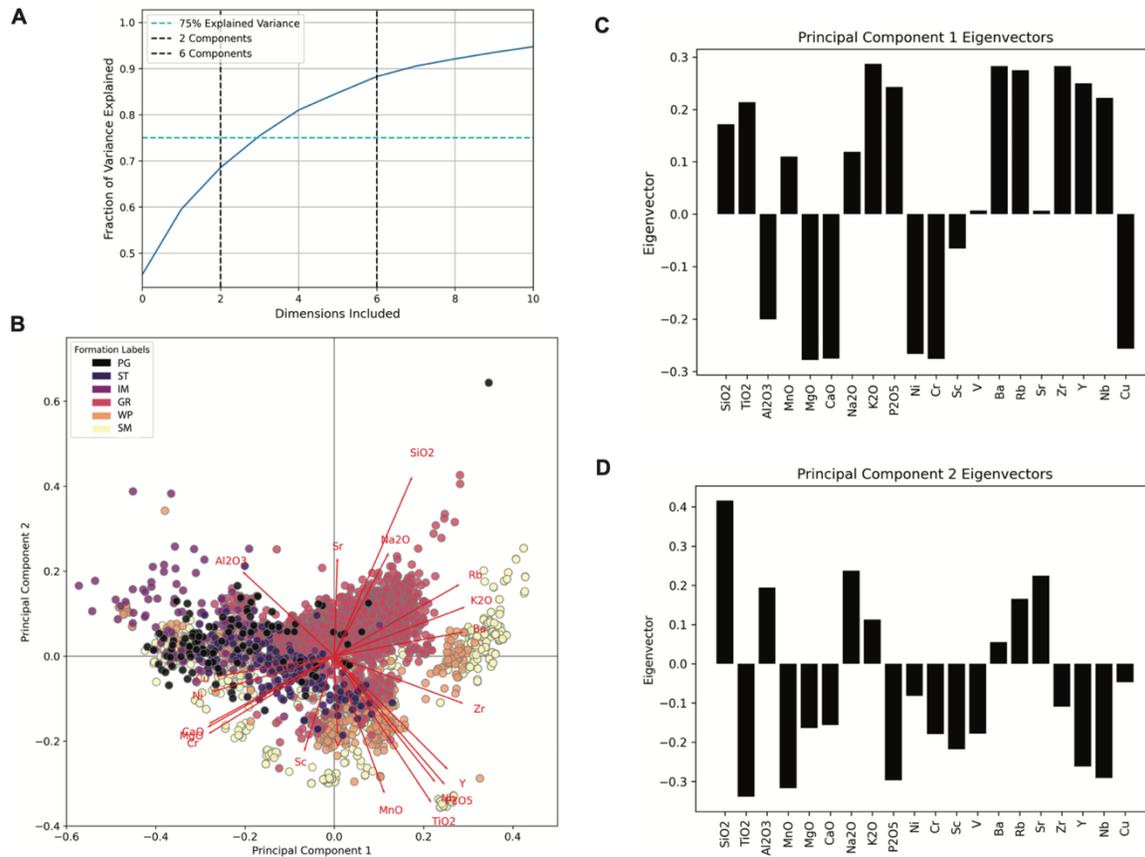
1409

1410 **Figure 3:** Regime diagram based on synthetic Gaussian data of "clusterability" based on the V  
 1411 score (known as the HCV metric in the Python Sci-Kit Learn library), as a function of average  
 1412 pairwise distance between all features and the p-value of the distribution of interest according to  
 1413 the Hartigan Dip Test (Hartigan and Hartigan, 1985). Members and Formations as well as CRFB  
 1414 dataset D2 are also plotted.



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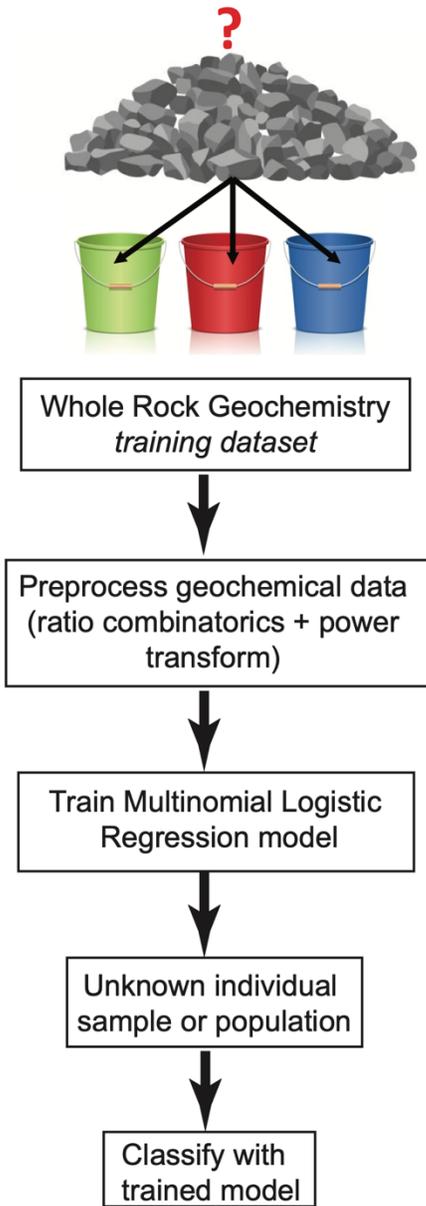
1416 **Figure 4:** Member-wise moments compared to expected values from a Gaussian distribution,  
 1417 using MgO and Ba as representative major and trace elements. **A.** and **B.** IQR vs  $2 \times$ second  
 1418 moment ( $\mu_2$ ) with the expected Gaussian line ( $\text{IQR} \times 1.4826$ ) shown in grey and the difference  
 1419 from that expected as the colors. **C.** and **D.** Count in each member versus the Kurtosis ( $\mu_4$ ) with  
 1420 the color indicating the difference from the expected Gaussian line in column 1, and the expected  
 1421 Gaussian range of -3 to 3 shown by the dashed line (Field, 2013). E and F) Same analysis but  
 1422 with the Skewness ( $\mu_3$ ) and the Gaussian bounds between -1 and 1.



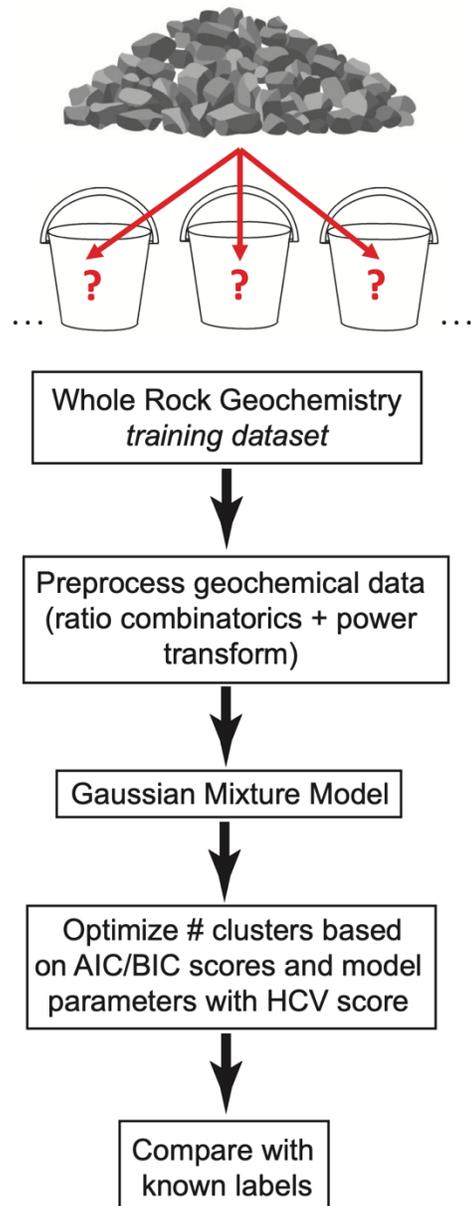
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1424 **Figure 5:** Principal Component Analysis on power transformed data. **A.** Explained variance per  
 1425 principal component dimension. **B.** Biplot showing the CRFB dataset plotted by the first and  
 1426 second principal component (PC) scores as well as the eigenvectors for each feature dimension  
 1427 shown in the red lines. **C** and **D.** Principal component 1 and 2 eigenvector weights  
 1428 respectively, showing the contributions of each feature in the rotated coordinate axes.

**A. Supervised Learning via Multinomial Logistic Regression**



**B. Unsupervised Learning via Gaussian Mixture Modeling**

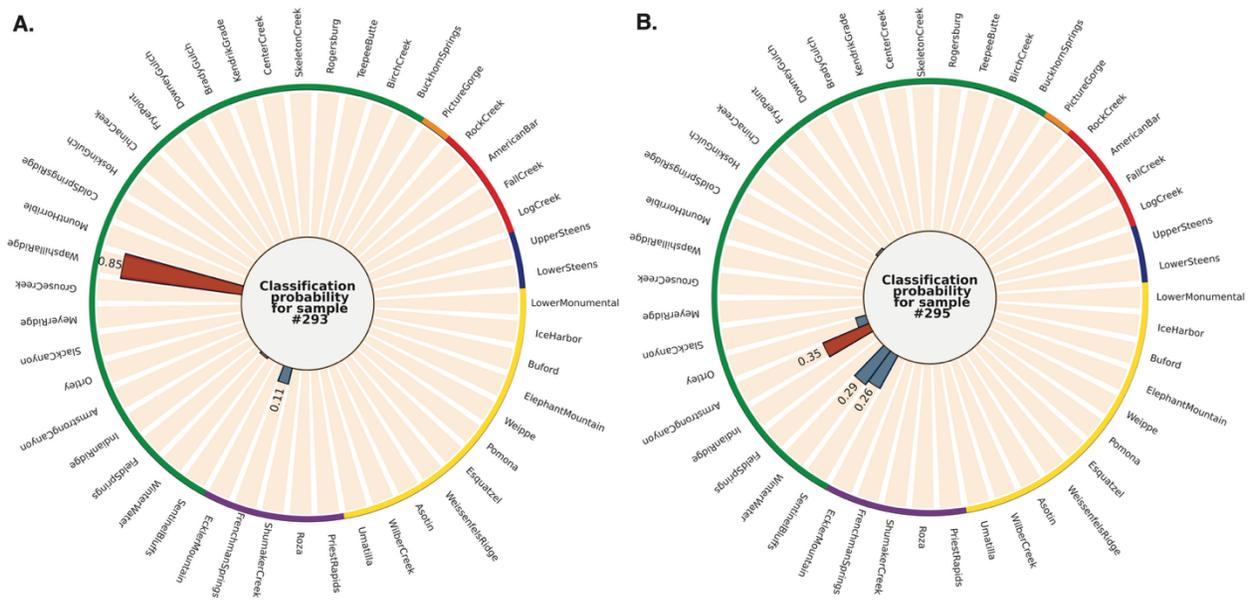


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1430 **Figure 6:** Workflow for **A.** Supervised learning via Multinomial Logistic Regression and **B.**

1431 Unsupervised learning with Gaussian Mixture Modeling.

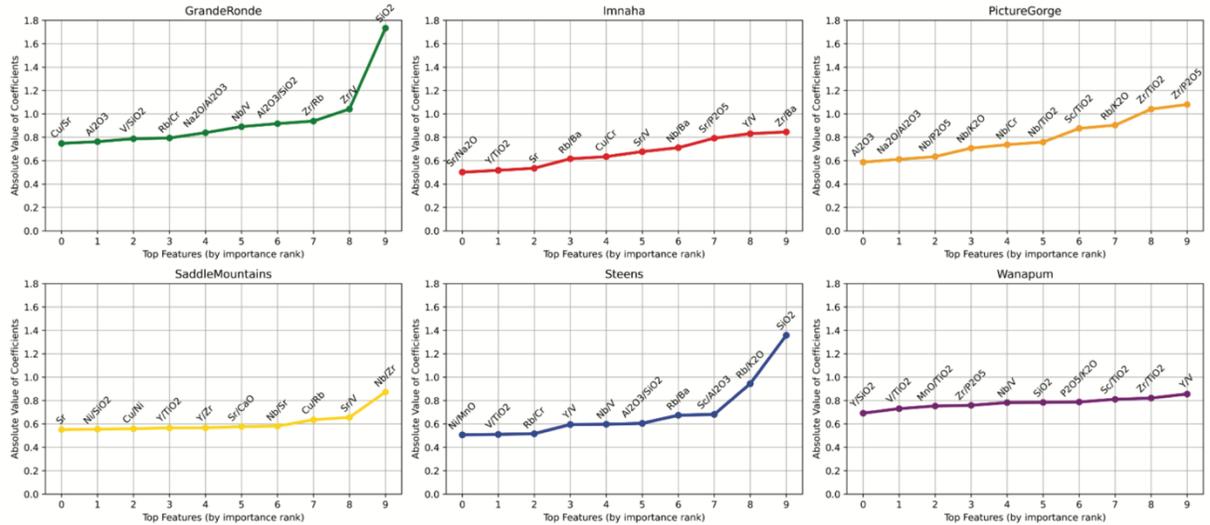




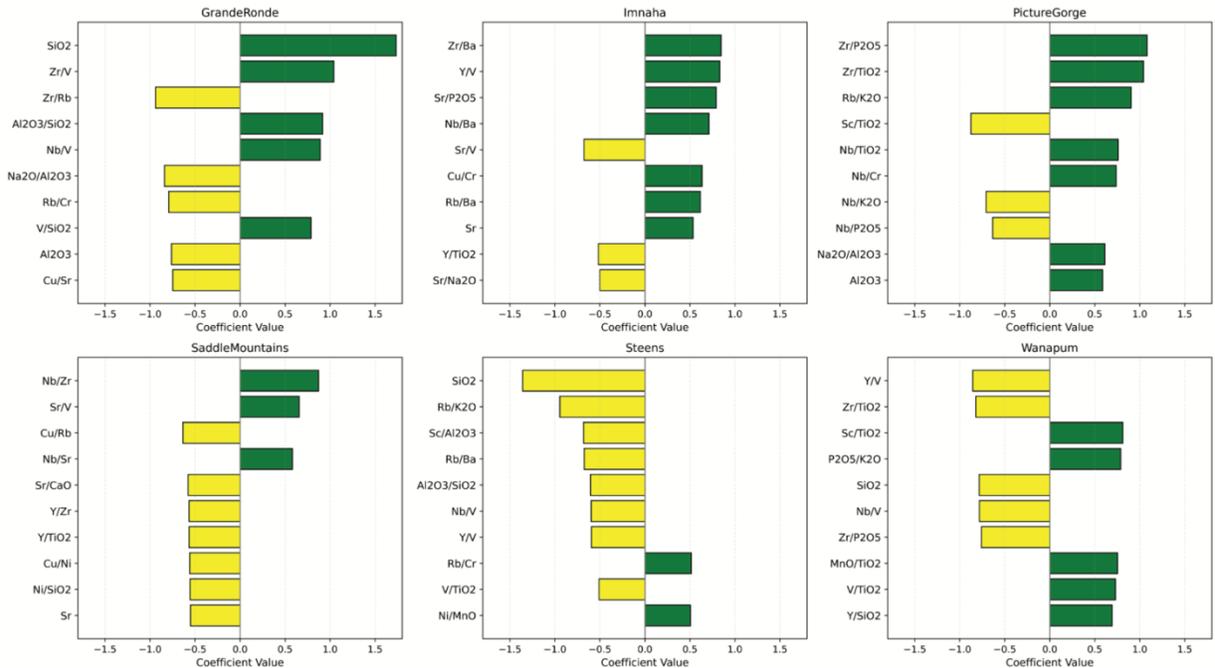
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1441 **Figure 8:** Example circular barplots showing MLR classification probabilities at member level  
 1442 for specific samples in our “undifferentiated” Formation-level CRFB data (Supplemental Dataset  
 1443 S2). **A.)** An example of a clear prediction. **B.)** An example of an ambiguous prediction.

**A.** *Absolute Value of Top 10 MLR Coefficients by Formation*

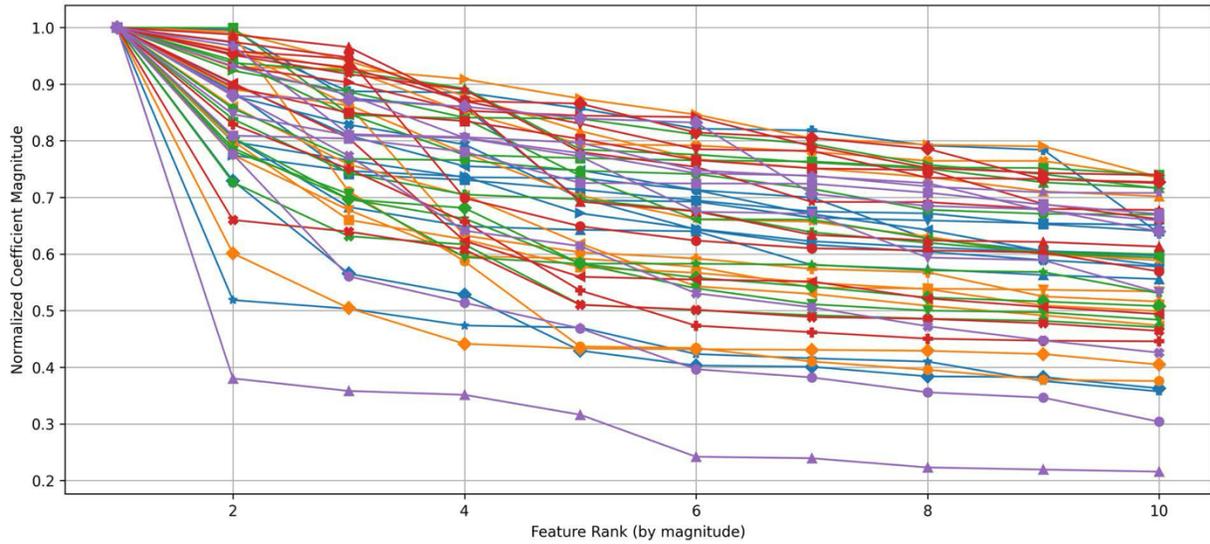


**B.** *Raw Value of Top 10 MLR Coefficients by Formation*



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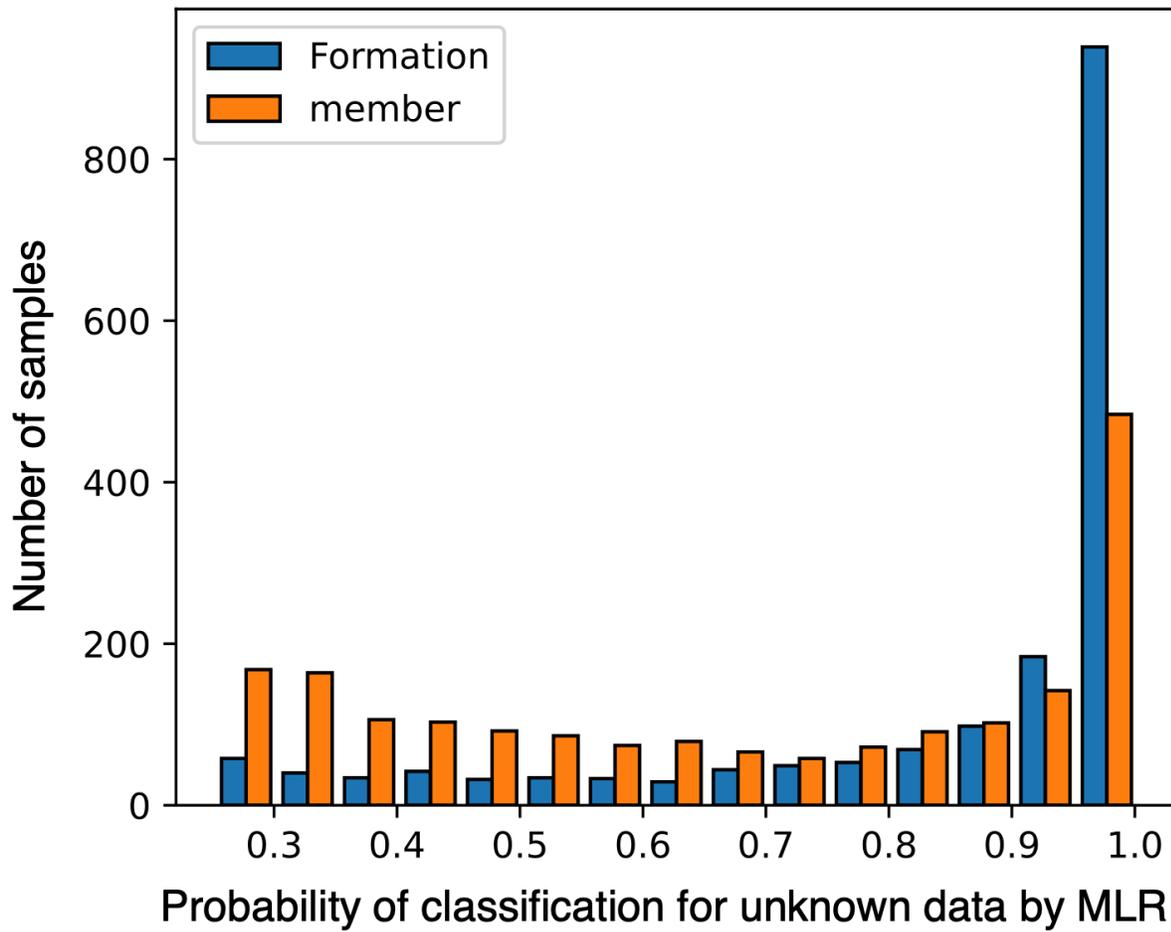
1445 **Figure 9:** A.) Plots showing the top 10 coefficients for predicting each Formation level class in  
 1446 the CRFB. The y-axis represents the normalized coefficients that the supervised multinomial  
 1447 logistic regression model utilized to create decision boundaries for each class in the dataset on  
 1448 each feature utilized by the model. B.) Un-normalized coefficients associated with panel A.



- |                   |                    |                    |                   |                  |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| ● AmericanBar     | ● ChinaCreek       | ● FrenchmanSprings | ● LogCreek        | ● PriestRapids   | ● TeepeeButte      |
| ■ ArmstrongCanyon | ● ColdSpringsRidge | ● FryePoint        | ● LowerMonumental | ● RockCreek      | ■ Umatilla         |
| ▲ Asotin          | ● DowneyGulch      | ● GrouseCreek      | ● LowerSteens     | ● Rogersburg     | ▲ UpperSteens      |
| ◆ BirchCreek      | ■ EcklerMountain   | ● HoskinGulch      | ● MeyerRidge      | ● Roza           | ● WapshillaRidge   |
| ▼ BradyGulch      | ▲ ElephantMountain | ● HunterCreek      | ● MountHorrible   | ● SentinelBluffs | ▼ Weippe           |
| ▲ BuckhornSprings | ◆ Esquatzel        | ■ IceHarbor        | ● Ortley          | ● ShumakerCreek  | ▲ WeissenfelsRidge |
| ● Buford          | ▼ FallCreek        | ▲ IndianRidge      | ● PictureGorge    | ● SkeletonCreek  | ● WilberCreek      |
| ● CenterCreek     | ● FieldSprings     | ◆ KendrikGrade     | ● Pomona          | ● SlackCanyon    | ● WinterWater      |

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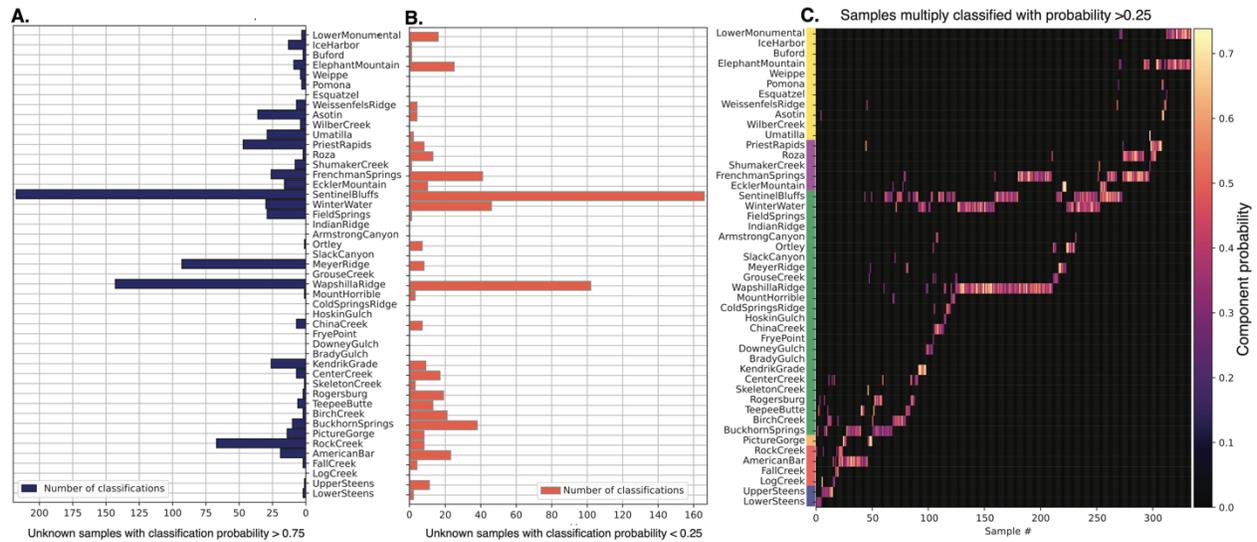
1450 **Figure 10:** Normalized coefficient magnitude amongst the top 10 ranked features for each  
 1451 member level class in the MLR model for data subset D2. Distributions with steeper slopes  
 1452 across the top 10 ranked require fewer features for model classification.



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1454 **Figure 11:** Histograms of MLR classification probability for the unknown CRFB lava dataset  
 1455 (N=1,572), at both Formation and member level using the trained model from data subset D2.

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1458 **Figure 12:** A. Distribution of unknown CRFB lava samples classified at member level by the  
 1459 MLR model at >75% probability. B. Distribution of samples classified at <25% probability. C.

1460 Samples classified at >25% probability for two members. Color is the probability of

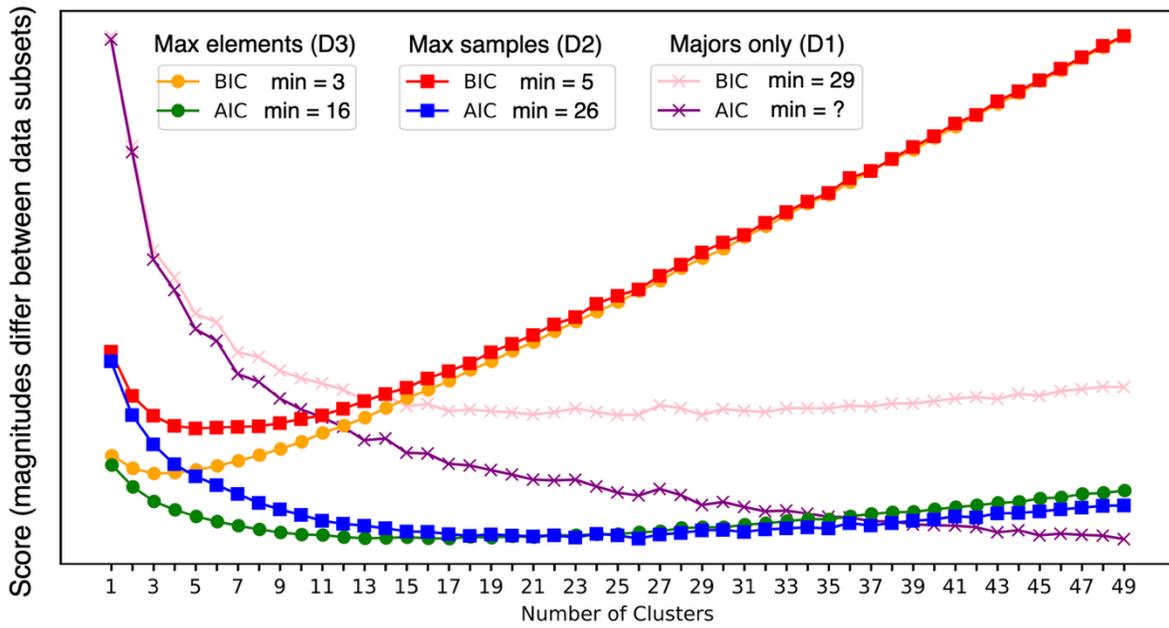
1461 classification on a per-sample basis.

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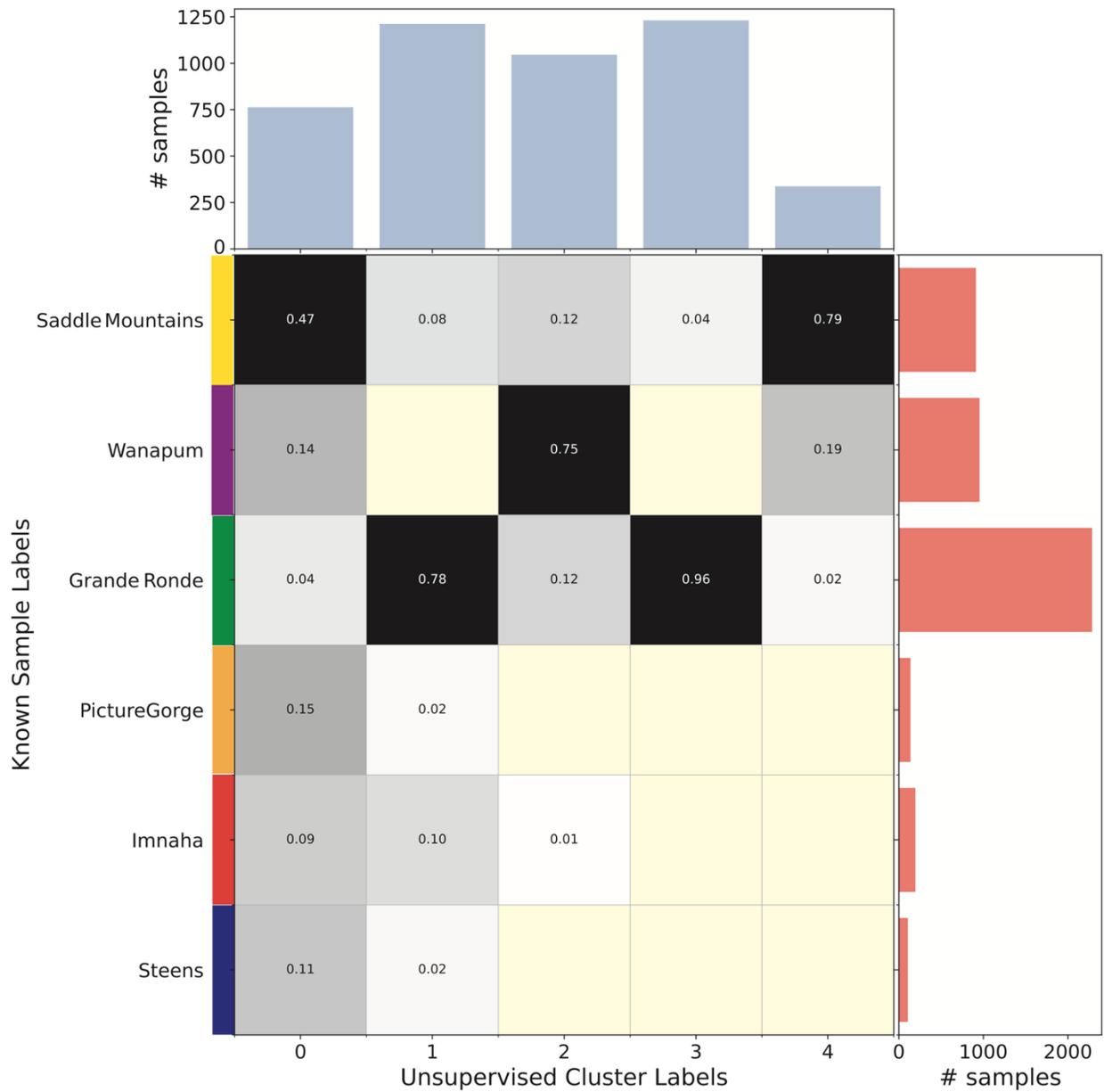
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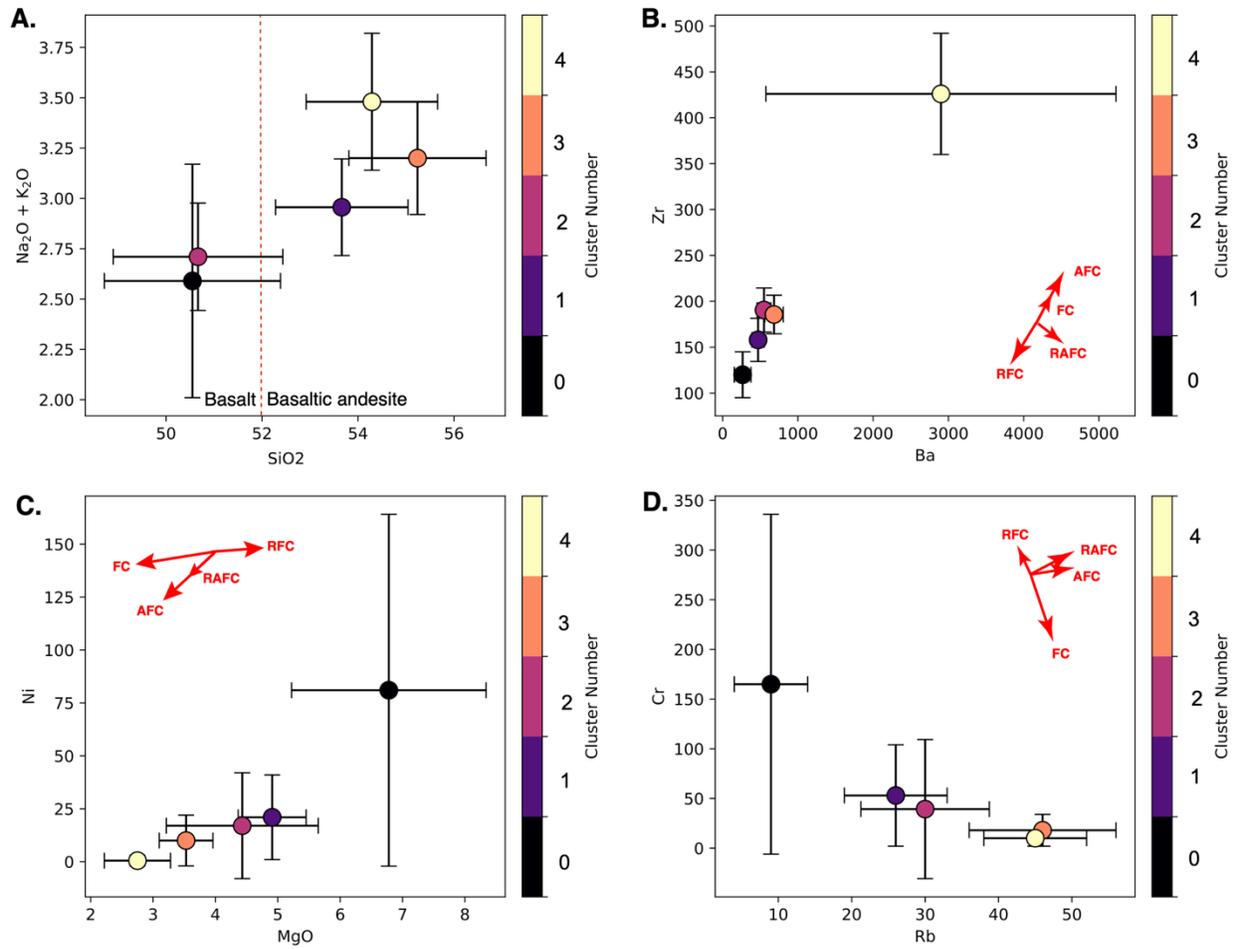
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1467 **Figure 13:** AIC and BIC scores for GMM clustering of each data subset. Y axis units are omitted  
 1468 for the purpose of comparison. All three data subsets are plotted along with the cluster number  
 1469 associated with minimum scores. We focus on GMM of data subset D2 here and specifically  
 1470 study 5 and 21 clusters.



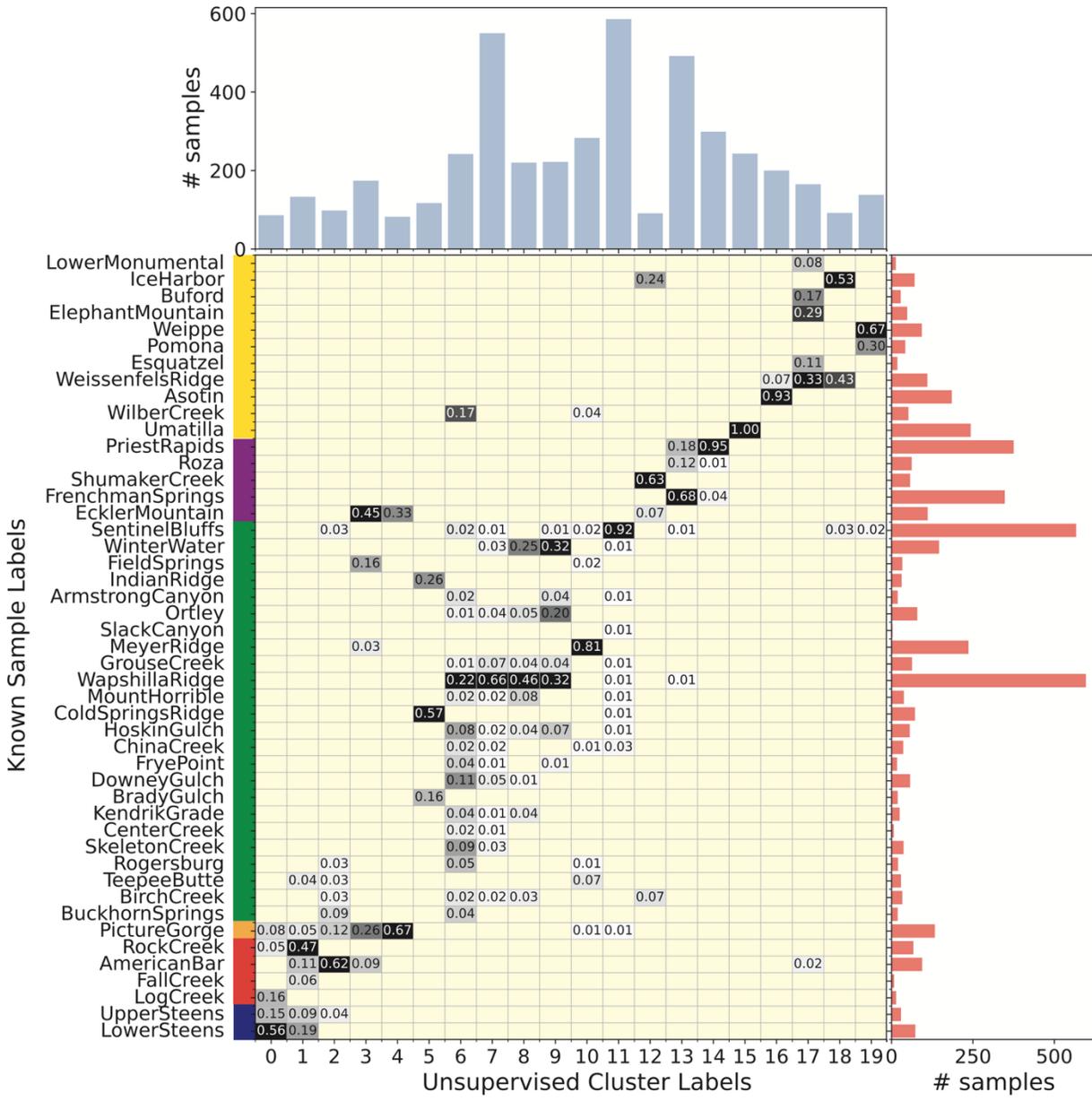
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1472 **Figure 14:** Comparison of GMM cluster assignment groupings (assuming 5 clusters) to known  
 1473 Formation level labels. Colors follow Fig. 1. Boxes with numbers indicate the fraction of a  
 1474 GMM cluster in the corresponding Formation, while yellow boxes contain no samples.  
 1475 Histograms at the top and right indicate the number of samples in each category.



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1477 **Figure 15:** Biplots of GMM cluster centers using data subset D2 with 5 clusters. Points represent  
 1478 cluster median values and error bars are the IQR calculated for the geochemistry of each cluster  
 1479 distribution. Color corresponds to the cluster number in Fig. 14. Red arrows indicate the  
 1480 direction of RAFC based on petrologic modeling (Supplementary Information Section S2).



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**Figure 16:** Comparison of GMM cluster assignment groupings (assuming 21 clusters, one empty cluster omitted here) to known member level labels. Formation colors follow Fig. 1 for

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reference. Boxes with numbers indicate the fraction of a GMM cluster in the corresponding

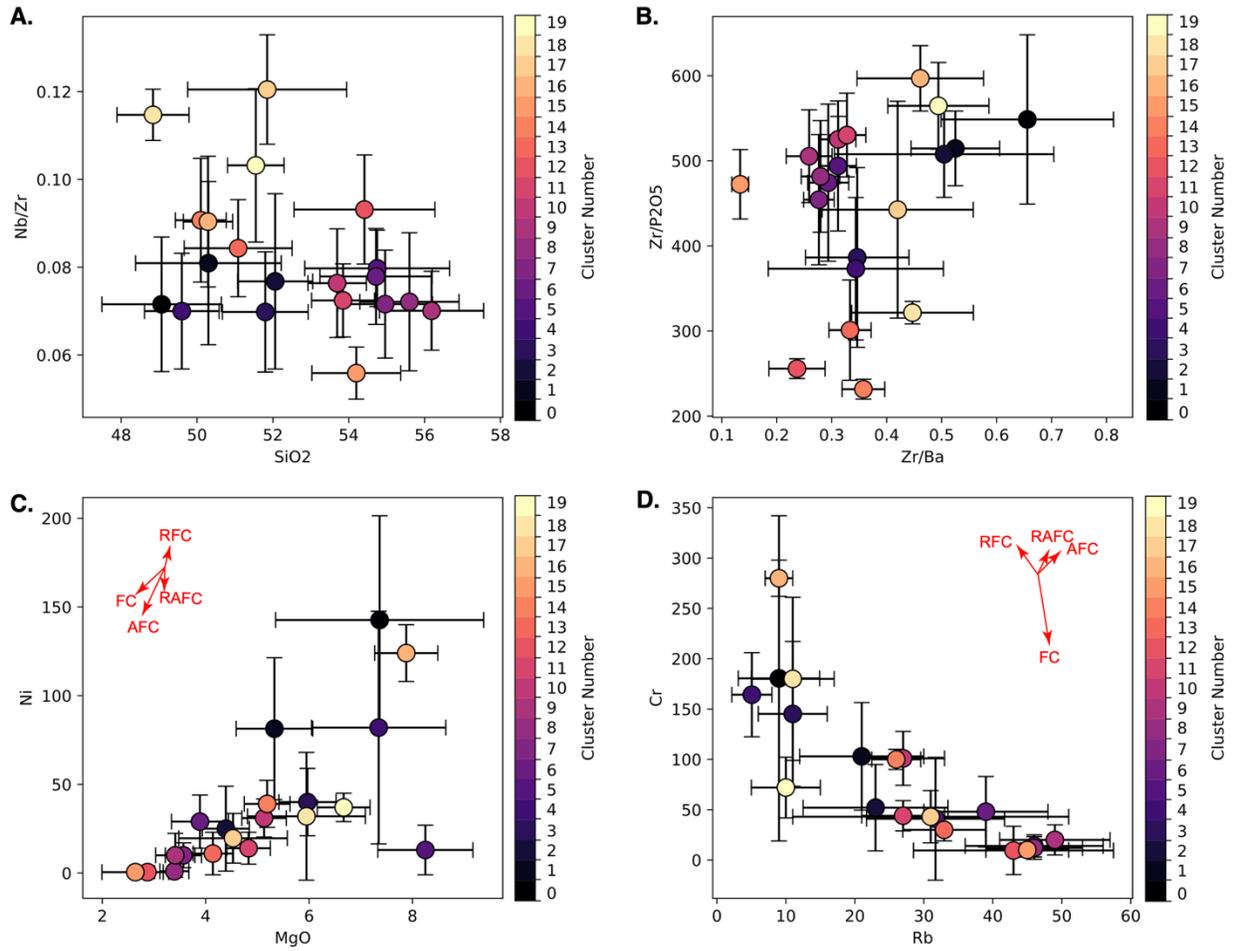
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member, while yellow boxes contain no samples. Histograms at the top and right indicate the

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number of samples in each category.

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1488 **Figure 17:** Biplots of GMM cluster centers using data subset D2 with 20 clusters. Points  
 1489 represent cluster median values and error bars represent the IQR calculated for the geochemistry  
 1490 of each cluster distribution. Color corresponds to cluster number in Fig. 16. Additional biplots  
 1491 may be found in Supplementary Fig. S3. Red arrows indicate direction of RAFC based on  
 1492 petrologic modeling (Supplementary Information Section S2).

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## **Supplementary Material**

### **S1. Columbia River Flood Basalt lava data sources**

Supplementary Data File S1 is a labeled (at Formation and member level) database of CRFB whole rock geochemistry for Machine Learning model training. In this section we describe this compiled dataset. The separate Supplementary Data File S2 file contains samples for which Formation level labels are available but not member labels. Several existing published datasets are the starting point for any CRB geochemical investigation. Peter Hooper published a seminal dataset that established the full Formation and member level identification of most of the CRB lavas (Wright et al., 1973; Reidel, 1982; Hooper, 2000; Camp et al., 2013; Conrey et al., 2013; Reidel et al., 2013; Reidel, 2015).

In addition to these published datasets, we have incorporated unpublished data from Dr. Steve Reidel and the Washington State Geoanalytical Lab, led by Dr. John Wolff, so that every assumed member in our stratigraphy had sufficient samples to justify training for our Multinomial Logistic Regression model. The analytical lab provided us with 3,600 samples with full major and trace element analyses. In total our database includes 36 sources (see “Reference” column of Supplementary Data File S1).

We also added data from the USGS and OWRD (Oregon Well Resource Department) groundwater well sites in the region available respectively at the USGS website for the Columbia River Basalt Stratigraphy in the Pacific Northwest (Conlon, 2020a) and at the Oregon Water Resources Department's GRID Website (“Oregon Water Resources Department - Well log query tool”). As the holes were drilled, cuttings and core from the holes allowed researchers to collect geochemical information from the lavas that made up the well stratigraphies (Conlon, 2020c). It is worth noting that the USGS stratigraphic nomenclature for the CRFB system (Conlon, 2020b) differs slightly from ours. This is an example of the persistent ambiguity in the stratigraphy today that could be addressed in an objective manner via machine learning (ML) classification.

#### **S1.1 Steens Basalt and Picture Gorge**

The larger datasets had some small amounts of undifferentiated Steens data (Hooper, 2000; Wolff et al., 2008; Reidel et al., 2013) but data from the Steens Formation was minimal. Most data for the Steens basalt comes from the work of Dr. Nikki Moore who characterized the

chemical composition of the exposed lava flows in detail (Moore et al., 2018, 2020). Camp et al. (2013) measured and sampled from several stratigraphic sections around Steens Mtn. to characterize the flows; data from this work has been digitized from the published work and added into the larger dataset (Camp et al., 2013). We also include more recent analyses of Upper Steens rocks (Day et al., 2021) as well as a small package of data from an older study on the Steens (Gunn and Watkins, 1970).

Some picture gorge information was available from Dr. John Wolff and the Washington State Geoanalytical Lab, but most of the data we have from this formation came from the work of Dr. Emily Cahoon and collaborators (Cahoon, 2020; Cahoon et al., 2020, 2021, 2023).

## **S1.2 Innaha, Grande Ronde, and Wanapum Basalts**

The multi-member datasets provide detailed information for the members within the main phase of the CRB, but several small-scale datasets supplemented our geochemical compilation. The work of (Conrey et al., 2013) detailed the geochemistry of three large volume flows of the main phase CRB (Conrey et al., 2013). 1,057 samples taken from various members in the Wanapum and Grande Ronde formations were compiled from a study by Yuh et al. in 2022 (Yuh et al., 2022). A small sample batch was also added from the work of Drs. Cruz and Streck (Webb et al., 2019; Cruz and Streck, 2022). This data has been included in the compilation and was collected from the Littlefield area (Cruz and Streck, 2022). These basalts were collected in conjunction with study of the Dinner Creek Tuff which fell within the lava stratigraphy in the area (Webb et al., 2019; Cruz and Streck, 2022). Additional Innaha Formation geochemical data was added from a 2023 study on the earliest CRFB magmas (Streck et al., 2023) and additional Grande Ronde data across formations was provided by Dr. Stephen Reidel in 2022 to fill in the gaps in member data.

Variation within distinct flows that have been identified within the Sentinel Bluffs member has generated debate (Reidel, 1982, 2005; Reidel and Tolan, 1989; Sawlan, 2017, 2019; Baker et al., 2019) about the stratigraphy of this flow. Sawlan (2017) used geochemical variation in Mg and other elements to identify a signature of alteration within this flow (Sawlan, 2017). As a result, we have been able to accumulate 766 samples of this member.

Work west of the Cascade mountains through the Columbia River Gorge also increased the amount of data coverage for some main phase members. We used data from the Wells et al., (2009) Field Trip Guide which compiled data on the CRB group from the Cascade Range to the Pacific Ocean (Wells et al., 2009). Additional data was added from mapping collections. 308 samples of main phase CRB was collected during mapping of the Greater Portland Metropolitan Area and Surrounding Region by Wells and colleagues and published (Wells et al., 2009, 2020). 60 more samples were added from three Map Quads compiled by USGS researcher Dr. Russ Evarts primarily: the Geologic Map of the Washougal Quadrangle, Clark County, Washington, and Multnomah County, Oregon (Evarts et al., 2013), the Geologic Map of the Woodland Quadrangle, Clark and Cowlitz Counties, Washington (Evarts, 2004b) and the Geologic Map of the Saint Helens Quadrangle, Columbia County, Oregon, and Clark and Cowlitz Counties, Washington (Evarts, 2004a).

Careful attention was paid specifically to gathering data for the Wapshilla Ridge flow (presumed to be the largest volume flow in the CRFB stratigraphy). There were many contributing sources to this compilation of Wapshilla Ridge data, including both academic papers and government reports from Oregon, Washington, and Idaho and geologic maps (Reidel et al., 1992; Schuster, 1993; Ferns, 1999, 2002; Ferns and Madin, 1999; Derkey et al., 1999, 2004; Bush et al., 2001, 2004, 2005, 2018; Madin, 2004; Caprarelli and Reidel, 2004; Ferns and McConnell, 2005, 2015; Garwood and Bush, 2005; Schmidt et al., 2005, 2009; Derkey and Hamilton, 2007; Garwood et al., 2008; Kauffman et al., 2008, 2011; Madin and Niewendorp, 2008; Dinterman and Duvall, 2009; Reidel and Tolan, 2013; Evarts and Fleck, 2017; U.S. Geological Survey, 2019; EarthRef.org, 2019). Additional data was provided by Dr. Stephen Reidel via personal communication in 2019, who generously provided us with data on geochemical sections through the Wapshilla Ridge member.

### **S1.3 Saddle Mountains**

The compiled dataset contains 1,450 Saddle Mountains geochemical samples. These come primarily from the compilation work of John Wolff and the Washington State Geoanalytical Lab (Hooper, 2000; Reidel and Tolan, 2013), and the work of Dr. Peter Hooper (2000) and Dr. Steve Reidel (2013). Dr. Don Swanson's data compilation of Wanapum and Saddle Mountains samples also helped to provide more data for this formation (Swanson et al.,

1989). Additional data from the OWRD and USGS well databases supplemented these composite datasets.

## **S2: Modeling petrologic evolution with the Magma Chamber Simulator**

To assess the potential roles of RAFC processes (Fig. 15 and 17 in the main text), we perform calculations of idealized magmatic differentiation scenarios using a thermodynamic model, the Magma Chamber Simulator (Bohrson and Spera, 2001; Bohrson et al., 2014). The Magma Chamber Simulator (MCS) predicts equilibrium compositions (major and trace elements) under variation of thermodynamic parameters in a magmatic system (Bohrson et al., 2014). The MCS is based on the MELT's thermodynamic calculator (e.g., (Ghiorso and Sack, 1995), combining the MELT's minimization of Gibbs free energy with an enthalpy balance to understand the effect of assimilation and recharge on the equilibrium phase relations of magma (Bohrson and Spera, 2001; Bohrson et al., 2014).

MCS simulations are conducted as follows: we model intrusion of a parental basalt composition, matching average Imnaha basalt composition (calculated as an average of values in our database), into batholithic crust (Fig. S1, S2). This magma is intruded at 5 kbar pressure into a defined country rock composition with a mass ratio of 2:1 wall rock to basalt. In each scenario the magma is instantaneously emplaced into the crust and begins a temperature descent in increments of 20°C starting at 1400°C. Heat transferred to the wallrock drives partial melt once it reaches the solidus temperature. In each simulation the partial melt is assimilated (homogenized) into the remaining melt once it reaches a melt fraction of 0.05. The simulation ends when the magma and wallrock reach the same temperature or once the magma reaches 850°C, whichever comes first. During model runs that incorporate recharge, as the temperature of the melt drops to a certain temperature (in this case 1100°C), magma with composition equivalent to the Imnaha parent was added to the melt in a proportion of 50% by mass. While assimilation and fractional crystallization occur gradually over many time steps, recharge is a short-lived process that imparts an immediate but short-lived signal (unlike a real system where recharge may be more sustained). Once the recharging magma is added to the chamber it is immediately considered well mixed and begins to undergo AFC processes once again, from a more primitive composition than the previous steps. Other isobaric pressure scenarios (from 2-10 kbar) can be found in (Hampton, 2022).

We model four wallrock compositions in the mid crust (5 kbar): An average mid continental crust (granodiorite) (Rudnick and Gao, 2003), an average upper continental crust (granite) (Rudnick and Gao, 2003), the unmelted composition of tonalite from the Wallowa Mtns. (Petcovic and Dufek, 2005), and the average composition of the Atlantic pluton within the Idaho Batholith (Gaschnig et al., 2011) (Fig. S1). We also study the potential influence from recharging mafic magma similar in composition to the Imnaha (e.g., Wolff and Ramos, 2013). We calculate the percent change for each element in the magma melt during various permutations of Recharge, Assimilation and Fractional Crystallization, (RAFC) (Bohrson et al., 2014), shown in Fig. S2.

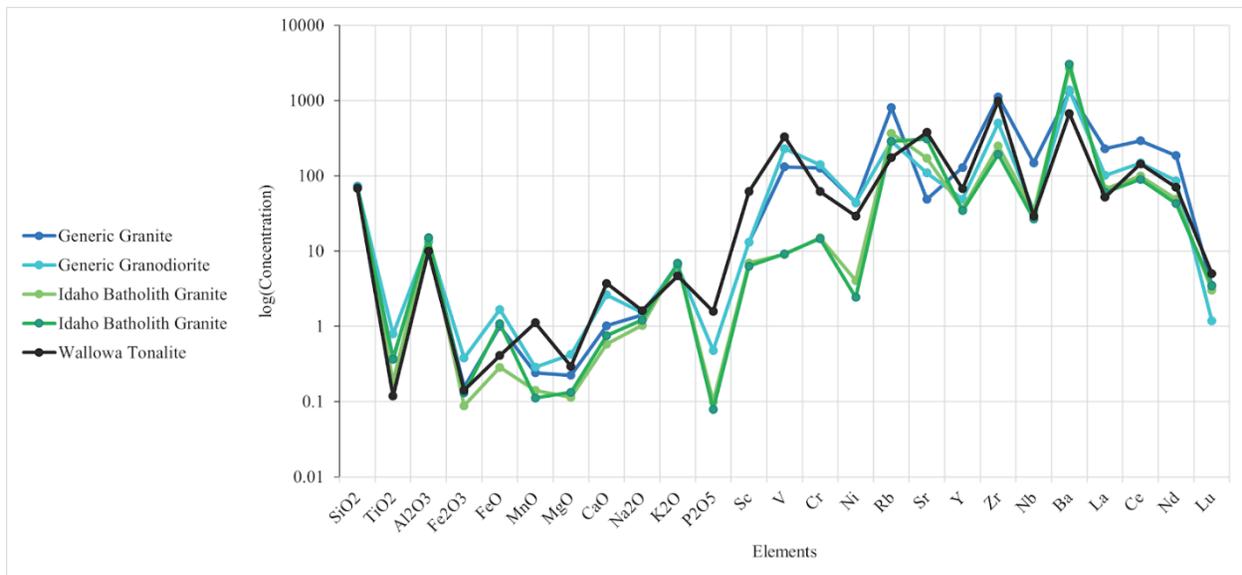
The effect of the different wallrock assimilant compositions is particularly evident when we plot the composition of partial melt from each wallrock melting scenario (Fig. S1). The partial melt consists in all cases of enrichments in incompatible elements (Fig. S1). The Idaho Batholith partial melt composition is depleted in Cr, V and Ni versus the other partial melts (Fig. S1, S2). It also has orders of magnitude higher Ba and Rb than Wallowa batholith partial melt or partial melt generated from generalized crustal compositions (Fig. S1). The partial melting of the Wallowa tonalite composition results in a marked enrichment in Zr concentration, but experiences overall less partial melting and less enrichment in other incompatible elements.

In every simulation fractional crystallization causes a strong depletion in Cr and relatively less strong depletions in MgO and CaO when the percent change within each process was calculated (Fig. S2). At the same time, FC increases other more incompatible trace elements, though not to the same degree as the addition of assimilant (Fig. S2). This is consistent with crystallization of clinopyroxene as the primary phase by mass and with secondary crystallization of plagioclase. Secondary crystallization of olivine and orthopyroxene also occurs during simulations.

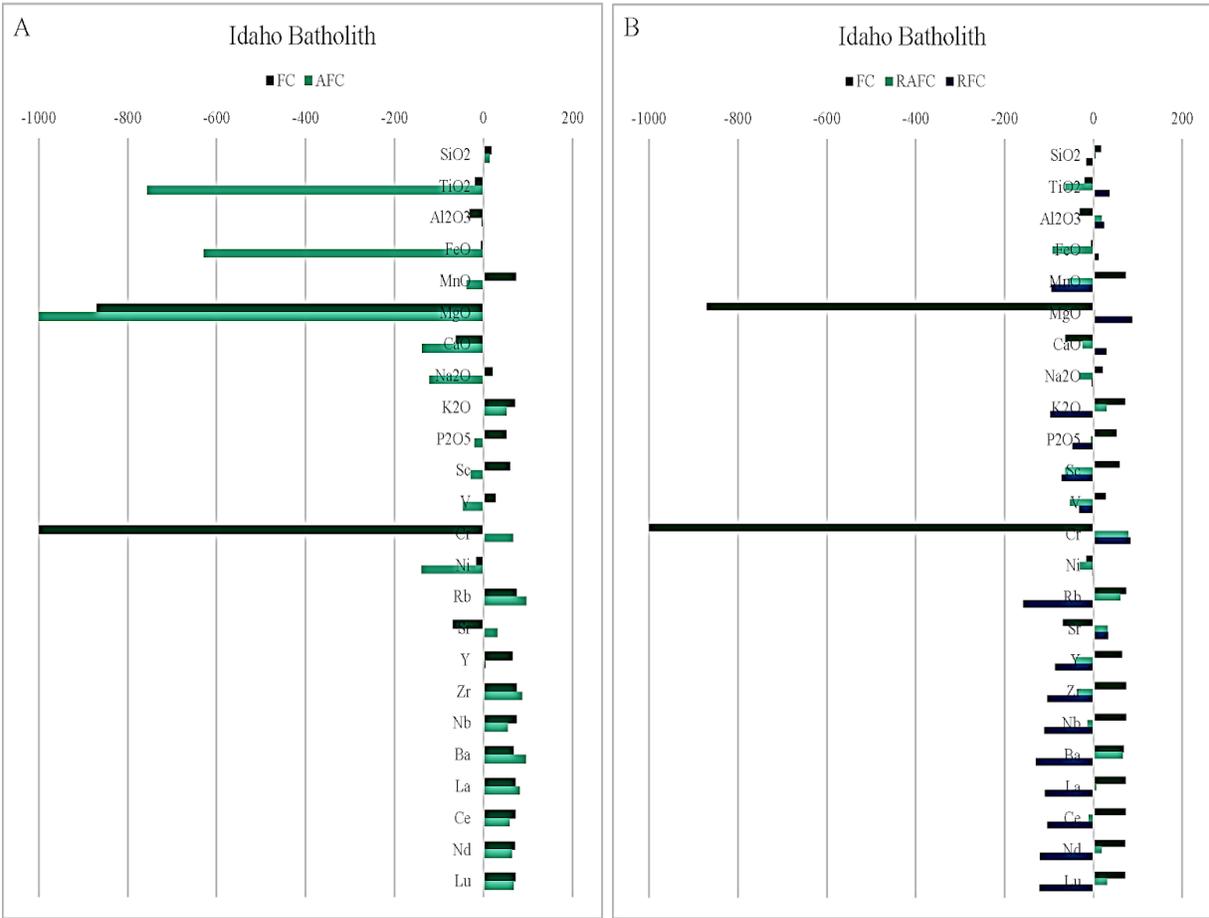
Assimilation of each type of wallrock increases the trace element concentration of Rb, Ba, Zr, Y, Nb, La, Ce, Nd, and Lu (Fig. S1). However, the strongest signal of trace element increase comes from assimilation of partial melt derived from the Idaho Batholith composition. In this wallrock scenario Rb and Ba particularly experience a strong increase in the magma melt (Fig. S2). The Wallowa batholith also increases the trace element concentrations; however, it most significantly affects Zr and has the lowest effect on Ba and Rb concentration, which are

important sources of variation within the CRFB dataset (e.g., Fig. 15 and 17 in main text). This suggests that at least one likely assimilant may be compositionally close to the Idaho Batholith.

Recharge of Innaha melt has some distinct effects on the magma melt composition in comparison to FC or AFC (Fig. S2). Many of the incompatible trace element concentrations are decreased while more compatible elements such as Cr and MgO increase in the magma (Fig. S2). However, this is RFC and not just recharge alone. If this RFC was the primary process affecting our melt, we would not expect Cr to dominate the variation. Rather we would expect to see strong trends toward a more primitive magma, for example a decrease in incompatible trace element concentration and trends in MgO.



**Supplemental Figure S1** Compositions of partial melt created during various AFC experiments of the Magma Chamber Simulator (Bohrson et al., 2014). The Idaho Batholith is run under two scenarios, one including recharge and one without recharge (Gaschnig et al., 2011), shown in green. This figure presents only the results for the simulation at 5000 bars of pressure, which captured all main processes. In each scenario the magma is instantaneously emplaced into the crust and begins a temperature descent in increments of 20°C starting at 1400°.



**Supplemental Figure S2** A) The calculated percent change in each element during model runs that isolate various RAFC scenarios from the reported results of the MCS, assuming an initial Innaha parent composition and Idaho batholith composition assimilated. B) percent change including instances of recharge (RAFC) by an Innaha composition magma. The top bar in each element is the same as in panel A. This presents results for the pressure temperature conditions of 5000 bars of pressure, where the magma is instantaneously emplaced into the crust and begins a temperature descent in increments of 20°C starting at 1400°.

### **S3. Multinomial Logistic Regression model statistics and trained models**

<b>Classification level</b>	<b>Data subset</b>	<b>Num Samples</b>	<b>Num Features</b>	<b>Precision</b>	<b>Recall</b>
Formation	D3	4007	276	0.994	0.994
Formation	D2	4600	210	0.989	0.989
Formation	D1	6259	45	0.926	0.926
Member	D3	4007	276	0.913	0.914
Member	D2	4600	210	0.893	0.897
Member	D1	6259	45	0.822	0.831

Table S1. MLR classification statistics for each data subset considered here.

The github repository [https://github.com/leifkarlstrom/CRB\\_ml\\_classifiers](https://github.com/leifkarlstrom/CRB_ml_classifiers) contains MLR models associated with data subsets D1-D3, which are available as .csv files as well as accessible via a python Jupyter notebook [Classify from trained CRBmodel.ipynb](#). This script loads one of these models and uses it to classify samples in the undifferentiated CRB database (Supplementary Dataset S2). Plots similar to those included in the main text are generated. The code used to train new MLR models is also available at this repository.

These trained models can be easily modified to classify any CRFB geochemical data, provided that these data include the elements used.

### **S3. Additional GMM results**

Here we show additional biplots to illustrate other elemental differences between GMM groupings for the 21 cluster case, representing in power-transformed axes. The github repository [https://github.com/leifkarlstrom/CRB\\_ml\\_classifiers](https://github.com/leifkarlstrom/CRB_ml_classifiers) contains scripts to train and plot results from GMM models.

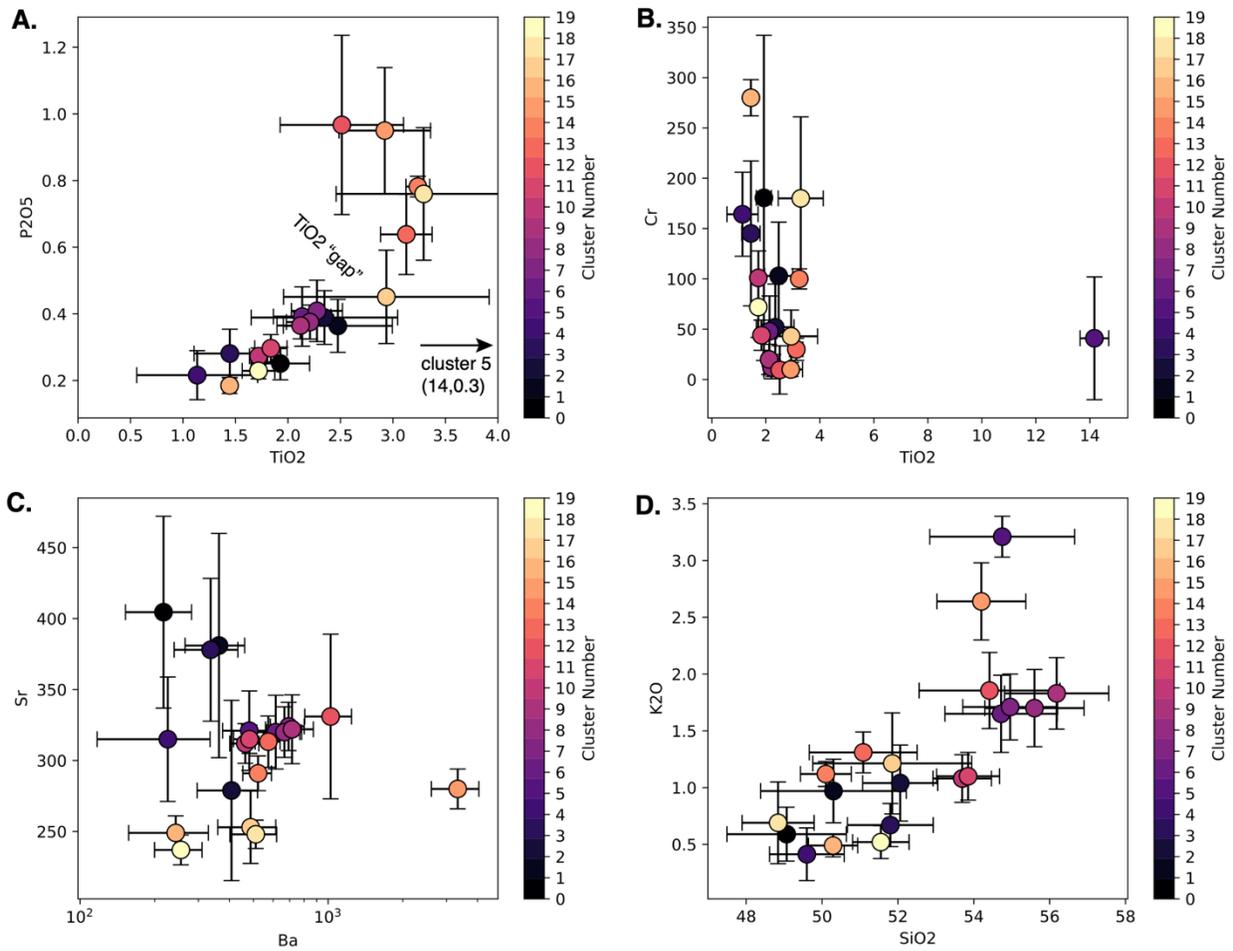


Figure S3. Additional biplots to augment Fig. 17 in the main text. Symbols are cluster medians, while error bars are cluster interquartile range. (A)  $P_2O_5$  versus  $TiO_2$ . Note the "Ti gap" articulated by Hooper et al., (2007) separating clusters with dominantly Wanapum membership (cluster numbers are as given in Fig. 16 of main text) from other formations. (B) Cr versus  $TiO_2$ . (C) Sr versus Ba, plotted by (Sawlan, 2017) to track alteration. (D)  $K_2O$  versus  $SiO_2$ .

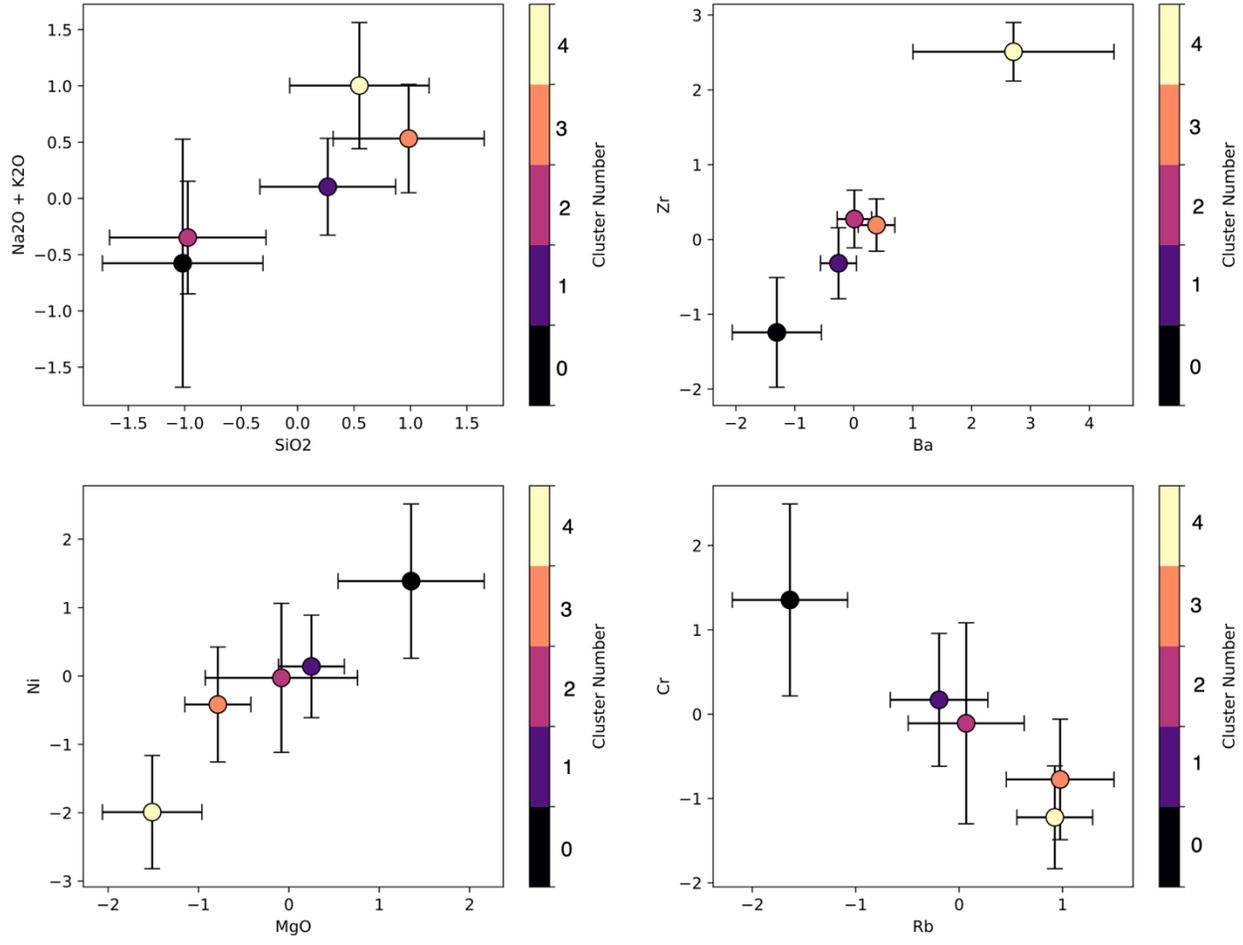


Figure S4. Same as Fig. 15 in the main text but displayed in terms of Power Transformed axes (which is what we use for GMM clustering). Cluster numbers are those in Figure 14 of the main text.

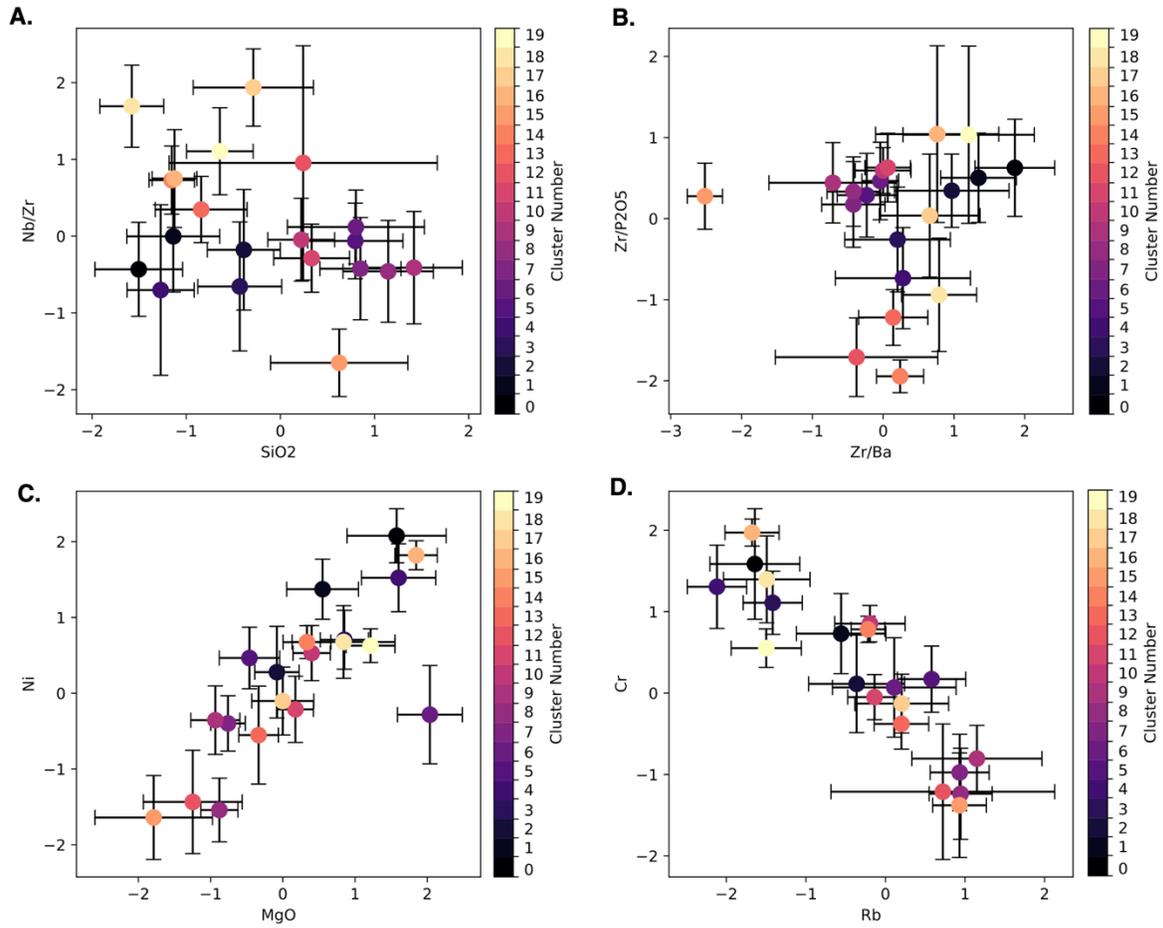


Figure S5. Same as Fig. 17 in the main text but displayed in terms of Power Transformed axes. Cluster numbers are those in Figure 16 of the main text.