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Ecological Response of Plankton to Environmental Change – Thresholds for Extinction

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Abstract

Severe climatic and environmental changes are far more prevalent in Earth history than major extinction events, and the relationship between environmental change and extinction severity has important implications for the outcome of the ongoing anthropogenic extinction event. The response of mineralized marine plankton to environmental change offers an interesting contrast to the overall record

of marine biota, which is dominated by benthic invertebrates. Here, we summarize changes in the species diversity of planktic foraminifera and calcareous nannoplankton over the Mesozoic-Cenozoic and that of radiolarians and diatoms over the Cenozoic. We find that, aside from the Triassic-Jurassic and Cretaceous-Paleogene mass extinction events, extinction in the plankton is decoupled from that in the benthos. Extinction in the plankton appears to be driven primarily by major climatic shifts affecting water column stratification, temperature, and, perhaps, chemistry. Changes that strongly affect the benthos, like acidification and anoxia, have little effect on the plankton, or are associated with radiation.

Keywords: Plankton, Triassic-Jurassic Boundary, Oceanic Anoxic Events, Cretaceous-Paleogene Boundary, Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum, Eocene-Oligocene Boundary

Introduction

Human activity has been causing significant disruption of the biosphere for centuries through over-hunting, over-fishing, habitat destruction, pollution, eutrophication, invasive species introduction, and climate change (e.g., Barnosky et al., 2011). As society seeks ways to mitigate this disruption, it is critical to understand how life responds to and recovers from such perturbations.

Paleontology has an important but currently underdeveloped role to play in understanding, predicting, and communicating the changes that are occurring and will occur in the biosphere due to human actions. Just as paleoclimatology has become essential for validating climate models and constraining the effects of different $p\text{CO}_2$ concentrations using ancient analogs, paleontology and related disciplines provide the ideal tools for constraining the response of the biosphere at a variety of spatial and temporal scales. This includes developing Holocene baselines of biodiversity and variability within ecosystems, understanding deeper-time response of organisms and ecosystems to particular pressures, and determining post-extinction recovery dynamics and timing. Mass extinctions are each unique events, with different preconditions, drivers, and outcomes, and the ecological response to each has been unique as well. Just as there is no perfect paleoclimate analog for the Anthropocene, there is no perfect

paleoecological analog for what is currently happening to the biosphere. Studying and comparing different ancient events, however, can illuminate processes that will affect the future of the biota.

Earth has experienced a number of significant mass extinction events from a variety of causes (Raup and Sepkoski, 1982). Although modern losses of biodiversity do not yet equal those of the so-called Big Five mass extinction events (Barnosky et al., 2011), the anthropogenic impact on global biodiversity is undeniable (e.g., Periera et al., 2012), and the recovery from those ancient events may help us understand the mechanisms that will drive recovery in the future. Moreover, Earth has experienced an even larger number of severe environmental and climatic changes which did not result in mass extinction; why do some of these events cause major extinctions while others do not? Are particular environmental changes more damaging, or particular ecosystems more vulnerable?

When we discuss major mass extinctions (i.e., the “Big Five” first defined by Raup and Sepkoski, 1982) we generally mean declines in the total diversity of marine organisms, a record dominated by benthic invertebrates. But the oceans are an ecologically varied place, and by delving into specific groups we can discover the nuances of the ecological response of marine organisms to environmental change. In particular, how does the record of extinction and origination in those groups differ from the overall marine (mostly benthic invertebrate) record? Marine plankton are both ecologically important to the oceans and robustly represented in the geological record. The ubiquitous presence and high abundance of microfossils in marine sediments, combined with >50 years of scientific ocean drilling, have resulted in a geographically widespread and temporally highly resolved record of species-level diversity for each of the major marine microfossil groups.

Cyanobacteria and organic-walled green algae were probably the dominant primary producers in the Paleozoic oceans (Falkowski et al., 2004). The fossil records of photosynthesizing calcareous nannoplankton (coccolithophores), dinoflagellates, and diatoms, as well as heterotrophic planktic foraminifera, indicate that they all evolved in the Mesozoic (Falkowski et al., 2004; Knoll and Follows, 2016). This turnover in dominant plankton groups was part of the Mesozoic Marine Revolution (e.g.,

Vermeij, 1977) and fundamentally altered ocean ecosystems and energy cycling, as larger cell sizes facilitated more efficient energy transfer to higher trophic levels (Knoll and Follows, 2016). Phytoplankton like diatoms and calcareous nannoplankton form the base of the marine food web, while zooplankton like radiolarians and planktic foraminifera, though themselves less critical to food webs in the modern ocean, can serve as a proxy for non-mineralizing members of this important trophic level. Plankton are also an important part of the carbon cycle, both as vehicles for transporting organic carbon to the sea floor and as pelagic calcifiers (e.g., Henehan et al., 2016).

The rise of Mesozoic-Cenozoic plankton groups was influenced by a number of significant environmental changes, including the two most recent major mass extinctions: the Triassic-Jurassic (T-J; 201 Ma) and the Cretaceous-Paleogene (K-Pg; 66 Ma). Although these two events had the greatest effect on plankton diversity, they paint an incomplete portrait of turnover in the plankton and the ecological response to environmental change. Extinction events scale from “background extinction” to “mass extinction,” and the space between those end members is populated by a range of increasing magnitudes of species loss. This includes some “major extinctions” that are above background rates and felt by certain groups or ecosystems, but are below the scale the catastrophic, global mass extinctions (Bambach et al., 2004).

Figure 1 compares the ranked extinction rates of marine genera binned by stage by Bambach et al. (2004) (using Sepkoski’s (1998) compilation of marine genera) to the ranked extinction rates of our compilation of planktic foraminifera and calcareous nannoplankton species binned at 1-myr intervals (see Methods, below). Although the magnitude of extinction can be expected to be higher at the species level than the genus level (most genera contain many species, after all), species and genus extinction are strongly correlated (Fraass et al. 2015). Differences in the relative severity of extinction between the plankton and the total marine record can be informative about the response of the plankton compared to the overall marine realm (skewed toward macroinvertebrates and shelf species). In both datasets the K-Pg and T-J clearly stand above the rest, followed by a transitional interval with a steeper slope connecting the

major mass extinctions to the background rates, which plot on a long tail with a low slope. Beyond the K-Pg and T-J, there is little similarity between which extinctions were most severe in marine genera overall and in the plankton in particular. In the Bambach et al. (2004) stage-level data, the transition to background extinction values spans the entire Triassic. They interpret this more as a failure of diversification with only moderate rates of extinction than a true “extinction” event, resulting in overall elevated rates of diversity loss (Bambach et al., 2004). A number of events that fall within the background of the Bambach data, such as the Eocene-Oligocene (E-O) boundary and Oceanic Anoxic Event 1b (OAE1b), appear as above-background events in the plankton-only data. The Toarcian OAE (T-OAE), the 4th-largest extinction of calcareous nannoplankton, is the 5th-smallest extinction in the total marine diversity data. Conversely, Oceanic Anoxic Event 2 (OAE2) is one of the most severe extinction events overall, but is only the third-most severe OAE among both planktic foraminifera and calcareous nannoplankton, and plots well within the interval of background extinction for these groups.

Why do the plankton respond to threshold events in Earth history differently than marine biota as a whole? Open-ocean plankton are adapted to live in specific depth habitats (created by thermal stratification of the water column), nutrient conditions, and biogeographic provinces reflecting latitudinal temperature gradients. In the modern ocean, the greatest diversity of calcareous plankton is in the tropics/subtropics, while that of siliceous plankton is near the poles. Plankton and other open-ocean groups are included in the dataset used by Bambach et al. (2004) but they are diluted by the huge diversity of life on shelves and in shallow seas, which have a fundamentally different response to environmental changes than the deep sea. For example, expanding oxygen minimum zones (OMZs) during OAE2 led to a severe extinction of benthic organisms on carbonate platforms and shallow shelves (e.g., Parente et al., 2008). But many plankton simply lived in habitats above the OMZ, and only a few deeper-dwelling taxa were driven to extinction (e.g., Leckie et al., 2002). Thus, the response of the plankton to major environmental changes can provide additional insight to the susceptibility of particular ecologies to different types of negative environmental forcing. Here, we summarize the open-ocean environmental

changes and the response of the plankton during major and minor events from the Triassic to the Neogene to understand how environmental and biotic changes drive turnover, which ecologies are more likely to survive or go extinct due to particular pressures, and the factors controlling the recovery of planktic ecosystems after biodiversity loss.

2. Methods

We compare updated species-level biodiversity records for calcareous nannoplankton and planktic foraminifera from the Mesozoic to the Recent and previously published species level diversity records for radiolarians and diatoms from just the Cenozoic. Calcareous nannoplankton diversity is an updated version of the record of Bown et al. (2004), based on the online atlas Nannotax (<http://www.mikrotax.org/Nannotax3/>). New taxa described since 2004 have been added and temporal resolution increased to 1 myr. Planktic foraminifer morphospecies diversity is an update of Fraass et al. (2015), representing a revision of the higher-level taxonomy and the inclusion of key newly erected taxa. As stated in Fraass et al., the pre-Cretaceous planktic foraminifer record is fragmentary and poorly preserved, and should be viewed with that in mind (Figure 2). Cenozoic planktic foraminifer lineage diversity is from Aze et al. (2011). These two datasets differ in that while Fraass et al. was constructed from atlas sources (e.g., Olsson et al., 1999) and contains all recognized morphotaxa of the planktic foraminifera, the Aze et al. (2011) dataset uses a lineage phylogeny to remove the pseudo-extinction and pseudo-origination caused by anagenetic evolution. Cenozoic radiolarian and diatom macroevolutionary rate and diversity data are from Spencer-Cervato (1999) and Renaudie et al. (2018), respectively. Data here are all presented at 1 myr resolution to allow for a shared frame of reference, as previously published work is in that resolution. The species richness is the total number of taxa that occur for some part of, or throughout, each stratigraphic bin, and extinction and origination rates reflect the percentage of taxa not carried over from the previous bin (extinction rate) or new taxa which did not occur in the previous bin (origination rate). As the microfossil record is of the highest quality, singletons have not been excluded from this calculation.

Taxonomy in these groups is always shifting, and while there are consistent patterns within each of the groups (compare the diversity curve in Tappan & Loeblich, 1988 to Fraass et al. 2015), stating macroevolutionary rates to a precise tenth of percent is not warranted. Thus, we try to limit our discussions to how rates rank with one another, and not cite precise values when possible (Table 1 is presented for completeness, however). We make an exception for this with non-calcifying plankton in the Mesozoic (when there are no diversity curves at a useful resolution for these groups) and cite examples from the literature of diversity and ecological change at specific intervals.

Finally, it is important to note that the lack of standardized methodology for the development of diversity records hampers the inter-comparison of the fossil groups studied here. Most diversity records must take into account unequal sampling and rock volume. Siliceous species are more commonly preserved at high latitudes, except during discrete time intervals (e.g., the Eocene) but the majority of deep sea samples come from tropical and subtropical latitudes. Note that although the radiolarian diversity data used here begin in the Eocene, the record of this group extends back to the Cambrian, and diatoms are known from the mid-Cretaceous onward. There is a clear pull of the recent in both radiolarian and diatom data, but even that masks the true diversity of these groups. For example, Turbovitz et al. (2019) found >500 radiolarian taxa in preliminary results from late Neogene samples from IODP Site U1337, many of which were in a size fraction smaller than commonly used for radiolarian analysis. In addition, the different compilations have distinct characteristics. For example, diatom occurrence data are from the NSB database (<http://www.nsb-mfn-berlin.de/>), an update of the original Neptune database (e.g., Lazarus, 1994) and are thus based on species occurrence data from scientific ocean drilling expeditions. The planktic foraminifer morphospecies dataset, on the other hand, is based on first appearance and last appearance datums from atlas compilations (e.g., Olsson et al., 1999) representing a synthesis of foraminifer micropaleontologists' species concepts. These records are measuring similar but distinctly different qualities of the organisms, and should only be compared with that caveat in mind. In addition, there is obvious misfit within our compiled data, as paleoceanographic events are 'felt' in one bin for one

group, then ‘felt’ in a subsequent bin in a different group. This is, again, a function of the above described differences between different microfossil groups and their workers. The micropaleontology community should come together to produce comparisons between these different methods for generating compilations. More importantly, studies using the same methods on multiple groups are needed. Such work would greatly advance our science.

3. Extinction Events

Mesozoic-Cenozoic diversity curves for the plankton groups discussed here are plotted in Figure 2. A ranking of extinction (Figure 1B) and origination (Figure 1C) rates of calcareous nannoplankton and planktic foraminifera are presented in Figure 1. These clearly show that planktic foraminifera are more sensitive to change than calcareous nannoplankton. It is not clear, however, if this is because of the consistently higher diversity of calcareous nannoplankton, or if planktic foraminifera have ecologies that are more susceptible to extinction (e.g., thermocline/subthermocline niches). It should also be noted that our 1 myr bin size affects these values. For example, planktic foraminifera are commonly cited as having ~90% extinction across the K-Pg (e.g., Olsson et al., 1999), but the appearance of a number of new Paleocene planktic foraminifer taxa within a few hundred kyr of the boundary makes the extinction of foraminifera appear less severe than it truly was.

3.1 Triassic-Jurassic Boundary

The initial rifting of the modern Atlantic Ocean ~200 million years ago (Ma) was associated with the emplacement of the Central Atlantic Magmatic Province (CAMP), possibly the largest flood basalt on Earth (Wignall, 2001). Between $2-4 \times 10^6 \text{ km}^3$ of volcanic material (Wignall, 2001) was erupted between 580 ± 100 (Olsen et al., 2003) to 840 ± 60 thousand years (kyr) (Schaller et al., 2012) with 3-5 main eruptive pulses (Schaller et al., 2012) that emitted up to 21,000 gigatons (Gt) of carbon and 57,000 Gt of sulfur in total (Beerling and Berner, 2002). This resulted in 3-4°C of warming (McElewain et al., 1999), shifting climate zones, and possibly ocean acidification (Greene et al., 2012). Newly evolved calcareous

nannoplankton were severely affected by this event, but this was early in their evolutionary history and diversities were very low: 4 of 5 known Triassic nannoplankton species went extinct, as did 6 of 20 species of dinoflagellates (MacRae et al., 1996). Although nearly 20 genera and 130 species of siliceous radiolarians disappeared across the T-J boundary (Carter and Hari, 2005), elevated extinction rates of radiolaria characterized the whole Triassic (something true of the total marine fossil record as well; Bambach et al., 2004), and it is not clear if radiolarian populations were adversely affected by CAMP volcanism in particular (Kiessling and Danelian, 2011).

The aftermath of the T-J mass extinction saw a major radiation of calcareous nannoplankton. Within ~10 myr, 9 of 16 Mesozoic families appeared, representing a significant portion of the Mesozoic higher taxa and morphological diversity (Bown et al., 2004). This radiation occurred in two distinct pulses (Figure 2B), the first in the Hettangian, re-establishing the Triassic murolith groups, and the second in the Pliensbachian, which saw the appearance and diversification of new placolith families. Elevated rates of origination and extinction also coincide with the Toarcian OAE (Figure 2B) although this is at least partly an artifact of high numbers of small and fragile species that have only been recorded in the clay-rich sediments associated with the event. However, there are also true nannoplankton extinctions and originations during this interval (Peti et al., 2017), and these may have resulted from the rapid environmental fluctuations that accompanied the OAE, which included global warming of ~7° C, elevated $p\text{CO}_2$, water mass stratification, hypoxia, and elevated nutrients (Cohen et al., 2004; McElwain et al., 2005). Nannoplankton community shifts at this time were likely a response to warming and changing nutrient levels, but carbonate accumulation declines are difficult to distinguish within organic-rich sediments and during intervals of increased weathering and runoff, and the nannolith size fluctuations may not be significantly different to background (Peti and Thibault, 2017).

Planktic foraminifera first appeared in the late Early Jurassic, ~20 myr after the T-J, with the evolution of the genus *Conoglobigerina* from a benthic ancestor (Hart et al., 2003; Leckie, 2009). The large oscillations in planktic foraminifer extinction and origination rates in the Jurassic and Early

Cretaceous (dashed line on Figure 2C) are an artifact of the low number of taxa during this time interval. There are plenty of well-studied Jurassic shelf sections with good carbonate preservation (as evidenced by the diverse nannoplankton record described above), which suggests that planktic foraminifera were not very dispersed or abundant early in their history.

3.2 Cretaceous Oceanic Anoxic Events

The Cretaceous oceans experienced periodic intervals of enhanced burial of organic carbon, resulting in the widespread deposition of black shales, local development of anoxia and euxinia, and corresponding global perturbations of the carbon cycle expressed as positive carbon isotope excursions; these events are known as Oceanic Anoxic Events (OAEs; Schlanger and Jenkyns, 1976; Arthur and Schlanger, 1979; Pratt and Threlkeld, 1984; Leckie et al., 2002; Jenkyns, 2010). The exact number of OAEs depends on how you choose to define them; we focus here on the four that had a significant effect on the plankton: the early Aptian OAE1a, the Aptian-Albian OAE1b, the late Albian OAE1d, and the Cenomanian-Turonian OAE2. A radiation of planktic foraminifera occurred in the Santonian (Premoli Silva and Sliter, 1999), during an interval sometimes called “OAE3.” However, this “event” is associated with a ~3-myr interval of black shale deposition in the South Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, and North American Western Interior Seaway with no clear carbon isotope excursion; because it’s not really an event (or, arguably, an OAE; Wagreich, 2012; Lowery et al., 2017), it is not discussed here.

OAEs are all associated with the emplacement of large igneous provinces (LIPs) in the marine realm (e.g., Leckie et al., 2002). These events are also associated with significant changes in sea level, water column stratification, and ocean circulation which were likely more important than anoxia in driving plankton turnover. Much of the work summarized in this section represents an update of the review of OAEs and plankton evolution presented by Leckie et al. (2002).

3.2.1 OAE1a

OAE1a was caused by the emplacement of the Ontong Java plateau in the southwest Pacific Ocean (Tarduno et al., 1991; Leckie et al., 2002). The event was preceded by a short, negative carbon isotope excursion thought to reflect the injection of volcanic CO₂ into the atmosphere (Jenkyns, 1995; Erba et al., 2015), or possibly destabilization of methane hydrates (e.g., Jenkyns, 2010). This time period is associated with the “Nannoconid Crisis” (Erba, 1994; Erba et al., 2019) in which the nominate group of calcareous nannoplankton declined for at least a million years, but did not go extinct; this decline began ~40 kyr before the OAE carbon isotope excursion (Giraud et al., 2018). The cause of the ‘crisis’ is uncertain, not least because this is an entirely extinct non-coccolith nannofossil group, but the decline has been related to a variety of OAE environmental factors, including increased nutrients, elevated *p*CO₂, and trace metal enrichment (e.g., Erba et al., 2019). Nannoplankton were otherwise little affected by this OAE, with origination and extinction rates at background levels (Figure 2).

Planktic foraminifera, in contrast, experienced an extinction during OAE1a (Leckie et al., 2002). The early Aptian was preceded by a small radiation (6 species) of planktic foraminifera in the late Barremian, and an equal number of species were lost during the OAE (Figure 2). The OAE1a interval is characterized by depauperate assemblages dominated by the morphologically aberrant *Leupoldina cabri* (Premoli Silva et al., 1999). In the aftermath of this event, planktic foraminifera radiated, with diversity increasing through the late Aptian. Many new species of *Globigerinelloides* and *Hedbergella* appeared; proportionally, this was one of the largest planktic foraminifer speciation events of the Cretaceous (Figure 1C).

Radiolarians also experienced a turnover during OAE1a. Regional occurrence data from the North Atlantic and western Tethys shows significant local extinction at OAE1a, with a loss of 41% of species (Erbacher and Thurow, 1997). Much like foraminifera, it was deeper-dwelling radiolarians that went extinct during OAE1a, indicating a loss of suitable thermocline habitat due to the expansion of oxygen minimum zones or a break down in water column stratification.

The rest of the Aptian was characterized by a return to more stable water column stratification and a corresponding increase in species that lived below the mixed layer. Nannoconids reappeared in nannoplankton assemblages (although were generally only common in tropical, shallow water settings; Erba, 1994; Giraud et al., 2018), and new species of deeper-dwelling planktic foraminifera (Leckie et al., 2002) and radiolarians (Erbacher and Thurow, 1997) appeared and diversified. Foraminifer test size also increased following OAE1a (Leckie et al., 2002).

3.2.2 OAE1b

The Aptian-Albian OAE1b saw the largest extinction of planktic foraminifera in the Cretaceous (Premoli Silva and Sliter, 1999; Leckie et al., 2002; Huber and Leckie, 2011; Fraass et al. 2015; Figure 1B). OAE1b is comprised of a series of discrete black shale horizons (and corresponding carbon isotope excursions) spanning the latest Aptian to the early Albian. These black shales, which are mainly found in the Tethys/Atlantic region, are associated with the emplacement of the Kerguelen Plateau in the southern Indian Ocean (Whitechurch et al., 1992; Leckie et al., 2002; McAnena et al., 2013). This time period is characterized by cooling and sea level fall in the latest Aptian, followed by sea level rise in the earliest Albian (Leckie et al., 2002; McAnena et al., 2013). OAE1b itself is associated with a breakdown in water column stratification, although the mechanism for this is uncertain. Watkins and Browning (2008) and McAnena et al. (2013) suggest it was related to late Aptian cooling, whereas others have invoked reorganization of North Atlantic deep water circulation following deepening of the gateway linking the North and South Atlantic Ocean (Arthur and Natland, 1979; Huber and Leckie, 2011).

Average foraminifer test size fell by 100 μm (Leckie et al., 2002) at the Aptian-Albian boundary, as larger, ornamented, heavily-calcified planktic foraminifera (particularly deeper-dwelling taxa) were replaced with small, simple, thin-walled forms (Leckie, 1989; Premoli Silva and Sliter, 1999; Leckie et al., 2002; Huber and Leckie, 2011). Total abundance of planktic foraminifera also crashed at many sites at this time (Huber and Leckie, 2011). Planktic foraminifer diversity took the entire Albian, ~10 myr, to recover to previous levels. Geographically limited data indicates that the early Albian ocean was weakly

stratified, and planktic foraminifera only lived in the mixed layer (Leckie et al., 2002; Huber and Leckie, 2011). Planktic foraminifer diversity and test size rose steadily throughout the remainder of the middle and late Albian (Figure 2), as did water column stratification (Leckie et al., 2002).

In contrast, nannoplankton show no significant change during this interval, with evolutionary rates falling within the background range. A minor turnover was documented at Blake Nose in the western North Atlantic, but this was likely a regional feature related to local nutrient increases (Browning and Watkins, 2008). Radiolarians passed through the Aptian-Albian boundary unscathed but experienced elevated turnover in the early Albian (42% extinction and 36% origination; Erbacher and Thürow, 1997).

3.2.3 OAE1d

The late Albian OAE1d, first defined by Erbacher et al. (1996), is enigmatic. The exact cause is not currently known, and most black shales recognized from this time are not quite coeval with the relatively minor carbon isotope excursion, suggesting additional carbon burial in an as-yet unidentified region (Petrizzo et al., 2008). Although there are some data indicating increased water column stratification in the Tethys (Gambacorta et al., 2016), most data suggest a weakening of stratification at this time: calcareous nannoplankton indicate a breakdown of stratification at DSDP Site 545 concurrent with an increase in productivity (Watkins et al., 2005), and single species planktic foraminifer isotope data from Blake Nose suggest a breakdown in vertical temperature gradients (Wilson and Norris, 2001; Petrizzo et al., 2008). Whatever the cause, this breakdown in water column stratification led to significant extinction in planktic foraminifera (Nederbragt et al., 2001; Petrizzo et al., 2008; Fraass et al., 2015) and radiolarians (Erbacher and Thürow, 1997; Wang et al., 2019), while calcareous nannoplankton only experienced minor local turnover (Watkins and Bergen, 2003; Watkins et al., 2005).

Deeper dwelling planktic foraminifer genera like *Ticinella* and *Biticinella* that had evolved during the gradual increase in water column stratification that followed OAE1b disappeared and new mixed-layer genera like *Praeglobotruncana* and *Paracostellagerina* appeared for the first time. Radiolaria

also experienced significant turnover, as 15 taxa disappeared during OAE1d, followed by the appearance of 12 new forms typical of Cenomanian oceans (Erbacher and Thurow, 1997).

3.2.4 OAE2

The most significant OAE in the overall marine fossil record (Figure 1A), is the Cenomanian-Turonian OAE2. It was driven by the emplacement of the Caribbean LIP (Leckie et al., 2002; Snow et al., 2005; Turgeon and Creaser, 2008; Monteiro et al., 2012). This volcanism spurred increased productivity either due to direct injection of nutrients from hydrothermal fluids (Leckie et al., 2002) and/or by causing significant warming (e.g., Friedrich et al., 2012), which led to increased flux of terrigenous nutrients into the oceans following a strengthening of the hydrological cycle (Pogge von Strandmann et al., 2013). Ostrander et al. (2017) showed that the OAE2 carbon isotope excursion was preceded by 40 kyr of progressive deoxygenation of the oceans, indicating a gradual onset. It is unclear if such a ramp-up of deoxygenation occurred prior to other OAEs because OAE2 is the only one investigated with the thallium isotope oxygenation proxy (Ostrander et al., 2017) thus far, but this is probably a reasonable assumption. Warming at the Cenomanian-Turonian boundary led to a breakdown of vertical stratification in the oceans and an increase in upwelling (Arthur and Natland, 1979; Leckie et al., 1998; Huber et al., 1999; Trabucho Alexandre et al., 2010).

Despite causing a major extinction among other marine groups (e.g., Bambach et al., 2004; Parente et al. 2008; Figure 1A), OAE2 is associated with only minor turnover in the planktic foraminifera, with the loss of just a few thermocline/subthermocline taxa (Figure 2). Deeper-dwelling planktic foraminifera, notably *Rotalipora* and *Thalmanninella*, disappeared during the event, but this decrease in diversity was offset by the radiation of new forms before, during, and after the OAE, as the first double-keeled taxa, which were common throughout the rest of the Cretaceous, appeared in the late Cenomanian (Premoli Silva and Sliter, 1999).

The Cenomanian-Turonian boundary interval is associated with a drop in calcareous nannoplankton diversity, a rare interruption of the long-term increase that had continued unabated through previous OAEs (Figure 2). However, this decline began in the mid-Cenomanian (as noted by Bown et al., 2004) and continued into OAE2, which is associated with a series of extinctions (~9 species), but overall the evolutionary rates are at background levels. A step-wise extinction of radiolarians also began in the mid-Cenomanian and culminated during OAE2 (Erbacher and Thürow, 1997) with 29 taxa disappearing during the event; 20 new forms appear within or just after the OAE2 interval in the Umbria-Marche region of Italy (Erbacher and Thürow, 1997; see Musavv-Moussavou et al. 2009 for a more recent report on this same region).

3.3 Cretaceous-Paleogene Boundary

The most recent of the “Big Five” mass extinctions (Raup and Sepkoski, 1982) is the Cretaceous-Paleogene boundary event. It was caused by the impact of an asteroid on the Yucatán carbonate platform in the southern Gulf of Mexico (e.g., Alvarez et al., 1980; Smit and Hertogen, 1980; Hildebrand et al., 1991; the best review of the impact hypothesis remains Schulte et al., 2010; see also Lowery et al., 2019 for an update of current results from recent scientific drilling in the crater). The Chicxulub impact lofted gigatons of dust, soot from widespread fires, and, most importantly, sulfur from the evaporite-rich target rock, into the stratosphere, resulting in a sharp reduction in solar insolation and a coincident crash in photosynthesis, which led to a collapse of marine food webs (Zachos et al., 1989; Toon, 1997; D’Hondt et al., 1998; Coxall et al., 2006; Brugger et al., 2017; Artemieva et al., 2017). A side effect of this severe cooling was a major breakdown in open ocean stratification; one recent model (Brugger et al., 2017) indicates that the ocean’s mixed layer plunged from its normal depth of <100 m to >2500 m at 60° latitude and >1000 m in the tropics (Brugger et al., 2017). Other stressors on the pelagic realm include ocean acidification and hypoxia. Although geographically limited evidence exists for the expansion of intermediate depth oxygen minimum zones at the K-Pg boundary, particularly at Caravaca, Spain (e.g., Kaiho et al., 1999; Mizukami et al., 2013), it is unclear how widespread this may have been. Meanwhile,

recent work with Boron isotopes shows rapid, severe surface ocean acidification (drop of 0.2-0.3 pH units) right at the boundary followed by a rebound and overshoot of surface ocean pH (increase of 0.5 pH units) within 40 kyr (Henehan et al., 2019). However, a similar magnitude of surface ocean acidification has been observed at the PETM (decrease of 0.3 pH units; Penman et al., 2014), which is only associated with minor extinction in the plankton (see below). This is in line with model results of sulfate and nitrate production from the impact, which suggest that these were too low to cause acidification severe enough to drive extinction in the plankton, unless nearly all of it was put in the oceans within a year (which is unlikely) (Tyrell et al., 2015). Despite this, the K-Pg was selective for calcareous taxa despite. This could be explained by the higher latitude habitat of most non-calcareous microfossils, or the many cyst-forming groups of diatoms and dinoflagellates that may have been better equipped to withstand a short period of global darkness and unstable waters. Early recovery assemblages were characterized by acmes of calcareous dinoflagellates like *Cervisiella* (e.g., Lamolda et al., 2005; Alvarez et al., 2019); if these were indeed resting cysts this was likely a useful attribute for survival.

Although it is difficult to determine the specific lethality of any one of these extreme environmental changes, together they drove severe extinction in the marine realm: ~75% of marine species went extinct at the K-Pg (e.g., Jablonski, 1995). However, the extinction was selective for species living in the upper ocean, while deep sea biodiversity was barely affected (e.g., Culver, 2003). Greater than 90% of planktic foraminifera went extinct, leaving just four survivors with clear Paleocene populations: *Guembelitra cretacea*, *Muricohedbergella holmdelensis*, *M. monmouthensis*, and *Rectuvigerina cretacea*; of these, only the first three had descendants (Olsson et al., 1999). A fifth survivor, *Zeauvigerina waiparaensis*, was the ancestor of a genus that ranged into the Eocene before going extinct, but its isotope paleobiology plots more closely to benthics than other planktics, and this genus may be polyphyletic (Huber et al., 2006). Approximately 93% of calcareous nannoplankton also went extinct, with ~10 survivor species (Bown et al., 2004). Survivors from both planktic foraminifera and calcareous nannoplankton were shallow water, often neritic, taxa with a more opportunistic trophic

strategy (Leckie, 1987; D'Hondt and Keller, 1991; Bown, 2005a). A good example of this is the planktic foraminifer *Guembelitra cretacea*, which was common in nearshore waters during the Cretaceous (Leckie, 1987) but dominated open ocean assemblages in the earliest Paleocene (D'Hondt and Keller, 1991; Arenillas et al., 2000).

Records of siliceous and organic-walled fossils are more poorly developed at the K-Pg (D'Hondt, 2005). Dinoflagellates lost ~40% of their diversity (~200 species; MacRae et al., 1996), although this occurred across a broader interval. Sims et al. (2006) show that 63% of diatom species went extinct at the K-Pg; the majority of survivors were high latitude, neritic species capable of forming resting cysts (Sims et al., 2006). Radiolarian extinction rates suggest little extinction (Hollis et al., 2003), but recent upward revisions of dinoflagellate and diatom extinction rates (e.g., MacRae et al., 1996; Simms et al., 2006) suggest this should be taken with a grain of salt. However, the species loss in these three groups is still well below the catastrophic level (>90%) suffered by calcareous plankton.

The most important change in the open ocean at the K-Pg is the weakening of the biological pump, which removes organic matter from the surface ocean to the deep sea. Photosynthesis favors ^{12}C ; sinking of dead organic matter therefore preferentially removes ^{12}C from the upper water column and thus creates a carbon isotope gradient from the surface waters to the seafloor. This gradient collapsed after the K-Pg (D'Hondt et al., 1998) and was not repaired for at least 1.8 million years (Birch et al. 2016). Although the collapse of this gradient was originally taken as evidence of the complete shutdown of the biological pump (the so-called Strangelove Ocean, e.g., Hsü and MacKenzie, 1985), subsequent work has shown that an increase in the amount of organic matter remineralized in the upper water column from 90 to 95% (D'Hondt et al., 1998; Henehan et al., 2019) can explain the observed isotope values. Calcareous nannoplankton were one of the dominant primary producers of the Cretaceous, and the sharp decline in this group left a gap in ocean food webs. Biomarkers indicate blooms of algae and other non-fossilizing phytoplankton just above the boundary in the Fish Clay of Denmark (Sepulveda et al., 2009). Given the at least partial continuity of marine food webs in the early Danian (e.g., Hull and Norris, 2011; Alegret and

Thomas, 2012) and the early recovery of productivity in nearshore marine environments (Sepulveda et al., 2019), it may be presumed that blooms of non-fossilizing primary producers occurred elsewhere in the ocean, too, but thus far such data exists only from the Fish Clay, and further investigation is needed.

). The final recovery of the biological pump also appears related to calcareous nannoplankton diversity. A highly-resolved nannoplankton record from Pacific Ocean Site 1209 (Shatsky Rise), shows a post-extinction interval of almost 2 million years of highly unstable communities, characterized by a succession of acme events (100s of kyr scale), before a more stable, equilibrium-state community emerged that displayed indicators of resilience (Alvarez et al., 2019). The transition to this equilibrium-state community occurred as cell sizes and species richness increased and was coincident with restoration of a fully functioning biological pump, suggesting a fundamental link between ecosystem recovery and biogeochemical cycling (Birch et al., 2016; Alvarez et al., 2019). On shorter timescales, export productivity reconstructions based on the biogenic barium proxy have found that some open ocean sites experienced an increase in export production in the earliest Danian (Hull and Norris, 2011). This may have been driven by local differences in the efficiency of the biological pump, and there is evidence to suggest that these differences were a factor in the initial recovery of calcareous nannoplankton assemblages. For example, at Chicxulub a reduction in initially-high post-extinction export productivity is associated with turnover in the nannoplankton from a *Braarudosphaera*-dominated assemblage of survivor species to more diverse assemblages of new Paleocene taxa (Jones et al., 2019). Reduced biological pump efficiency would result in the concentration of nutrients in the upper water column and thus may have actually increased local primary productivity (Jones et al., 2019).

The recovery of nannoplankton following the K-Pg mass extinction was an explosive radiation with a handful of Cretaceous survivor species quickly joined by miniscule incoming new taxa that formed a striking series of global acmes (Bown, 2005a). Origination rates are some of the highest in the history of the group (Figure 1C), with ~25 species added in the first million years of the Danian, although full recovery of pre-extinction diversities took another 10 million years (Figure 1C; see also Alvarez et al.,

2019). The synchrony of some of these nannoplankton acmes has been questioned, with lags explained by incumbency or environmental heterogeneity (Jiang et al., 2010; Schueth et al., 2015; Jones et al., 2019). However, some of these events are widely applied in biostratigraphy (e.g., Varol, 1989; Agnini et al., 2014), suggesting roughly synchronous timing across ocean basins, and it may be that reported discrepancies are caused by taxonomic inconsistency (unavoidable among incoming, minute groups with similar morphologies), inconsistent preservation of small, fragile species, problems with age models, or localized effects. These issues will likely become clearer as further sections are studied at high resolution (e.g., Jones et al., 2019, Alvarez et al., 2019).

The recovery of planktic foraminifera from the K-Pg mass extinction is also frequently cited as an example of explosive adaptive radiation (e.g., Smit et al., 1982; Coxall et al., 2006; Hull et al., 2011; Birch et al., 2012). Our data show that it is characterized by only moderately elevated origination rates (Figure 1C), although this may be a function of the binning scheme. The timing of planktic foraminiferal recovery is synchronous across the oceans, with a succession of dominant taxa observed across the Tethys/North Atlantic within relatively diverse populations (Arenillas et al., 2000; Alegret et al., 2004). Within the Chicxulub Crater, where nannoplankton disaster taxa (*Braarudosphaera* spp. and *Cervisiella* spp.) remained the longest, the full diversity of early Danian planktic foraminifera appeared essentially immediately, within 30 kyr of the boundary (Lowery et al., 2018). Thus, the mechanisms driving the recovery of autotrophic calcareous nannoplankton and heterotrophic planktic foraminifera appear to be disconnected.

Recovery of both planktic foraminifera and calcareous nannoplankton diversity to roughly mid-Cretaceous levels took roughly the entire Paleocene (10 myr; Figure 2).

3.4 Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum

The Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum (PETM) was the most extreme hyperthermal event of the Paleogene, and probably the best ancient analog for the current rate of CO₂ release, with an initial

onset of the event occurring in as little as 4,000 years (still an order of magnitude lower than modern rates) (Zeebe et al., 2016). Although the mechanism for carbon release (indicated by a negative carbon isotope excursion that defines the event) is still debated, with many in favor biogenic methane as the main culprit (e.g., Dickens et al., 1995, 1997; DeConto et al., 2012), although Gutjahr et al. (2017) argue that volcanic sources are sufficient. Either way, between 2000 and 6000 Pg carbon were released (Panchuk et al., 2008; Zeebe et al., 2009), resulting in significant ocean acidification (e.g., Hönisch et al., 2012) and the shoaling of the calcite compensation depth (CCD) by as much as 2 km (Zachos et al., 2005). Surface pH dropped by 0.3 pH units (Penman et al., 2014). This acidification had a severe effect on the biosphere, resulting in a major extinction of deep sea benthic foraminifera (Thomas, 2007), a turnover of shallow water larger benthic foraminifera (Scheibner and Speijer, 2008), and a collapse of corallgal reefs (Scheibner and Speijer, 2008).

Among the plankton, however, the PETM resulted in relatively muted levels of speciation and extinction (e.g., Gibbs et al. 2006a), although turnover across the broader interval was high in nanoplankton (Figure 1B and C). Although a few planktic foraminifera species disappeared, overall diversity rose significantly across the Paleocene-Eocene boundary (Figure 2) (Kelly et al., 1996, 1998; Pardo et al., 1999; Gibbs et al., 2006a,b; Sluijs et al., 2006; Bown and Pearson, 2009; Speijer et al., 2012). Unusual morphologies occur in a minor number of nanoplankton during the PETM (Raffi and De Bernardi, 2008; Bralower and Self Trail 2016) and planktic foraminifera and calcareous nanoplankton both produced several “excursion taxa” (Kelly et al., 1998) which only lived during the carbon isotope excursion (e.g., *Morozovella alisonensis*; *Coccolithus bownii*). Changes in assemblage structure have been reported in both organic-walled dinoflagellates (Sluijs and Brinkhuis, 2009) and calcareous nanoplankton (Gibbs et al., 2006a, b), the former of which, at least, were widespread and inferred to be a response to stratification in the open ocean and nutrient increases in shelf seas. Tropical and subtropical planktic foraminifer and nanoplankton assemblages expanded poleward due to warming (Thomas and Shackleton, 1996; Pardo et al., 1999; Sluijs et al., 2006), while extreme warmth in the tropics (up to

40°C) may have led to exclusion (“dead zones”) of both calcareous and organic-walled plankton at some locations due to thermal stress (Aze et al., 2014; Frieling et al., 2017)

Radiolaria also experienced evolutionary radiation during the PETM, with the extinction of a few species and the appearance of more than a dozen (Sanfillipo and Blome, 2001; Hollis et al., 2006; Liu et al., 2011). Note that our radiolarian record in Figure 2 (from Spencer-Cervato et al., 1999) begins in the Eocene, and thus this turnover is not documented.

Subsequent Eocene warming events also had no negative effect on planktic foraminifer or nannoplankton diversity but assemblage shifts are evident (e.g., Gibbs et al., 2013). The magnitude of the hyperthermals (i.e., the size of the carbon isotope excursion) scales with evidence of community variance in the nannoplankton and, to a lesser extent, planktic foraminifera and dinoflagellates, suggesting perturbation of the plankton communities even if these events didn’t exceed the threshold to drive extinction (Gibbs et al., 2013; Alvarez et al., 2019). There is evidence for “bleaching” (i.e., loss of symbionts) in symbiont-bearing planktic foraminifera due to warming during the Middle Eocene Climate Optimum (MECO) hyperthermal and a concurrent reduction in average test size, but this ecological stress did not result in any extinction (Edgar et al., 2013). In fact, the middle Eocene was the Cenozoic high point for diversity of both planktic foraminifera and calcareous nannoplankton (Figure 2). Warming during the MECO is also associated with a significant increase in accumulation rates of siliceous plankton in the Southern Ocean (Witkowski et al., 2012) and North Atlantic (Witkowski et al., 2014). The proportionate response of the plankton communities to these environmental perturbations and rapid recovery after each event suggests that these plankton groups were resilient to environmental changes of this magnitude throughout the Paleocene and Eocene (Alvarez et al., 2019).

3.5 Eocene-Oligocene Boundary

The Eocene-Oligocene boundary event, also known as the Eocene-Oligocene Transition (EOT), was the first major step in the progressive cooling that characterized the second half of the Cenozoic. It is

associated with a global benthic oxygen isotope shift of about 1.5‰ (Zachos et al., 1996, 2001) that corresponds to about 2.5°C cooling in the deep sea (Lear et al., 2008) and the inception of the East Antarctic Ice Sheet (DeConto and Pollard, 2003). Early thinking held that the cooling was related to a thermal isolation of Antarctica with the opening of the Drake Passage (e.g., Kennett, 1977), but it has since been demonstrated that orbital controls on temperature and CO₂ concentration played a primary role in the appearance and growth of the ice sheet (DeConto and Pollard, 2003) and, importantly, that the Drake Passage opened at a different time, beginning around 41 Ma, or the late middle Eocene (Scher and Martin, 2006).

The transition resulted in fundamental changes in the global ocean. Indeed, given that there were no major ice ages in the Mesozoic, we would argue that most major eukaryotic plankton groups originated and diversified in a greenhouse world that ended at the EOT. The CCD deepened by roughly a kilometer (Coxall et al., 2005), and North Atlantic Deep Water began to form, resulting in a significant reorganization of global circulation (Scher and Martin, 2008; Cramer et al., 2009; Katz et al., 2011). These events led to the decline of warm water groups and the diversification of cold water groups. Planktic foraminifera suffered their 3rd worst extinction (Figure 1B), with more than half of species, mostly warm water tropical and subtropical taxa, going extinct in the early Oligocene. Calcareous nannoplankton had a more drawn-out but similarly severe extinction, losing ~33 species across the EOT and into the early Oligocene, with overall diversity declining through the rest of the epoch. Among both groups, this was a protracted loss of species over ~1 myr or more, rather than a mass extinction event focused at the boundary.

Conversely, diatoms added ~30 new species during this event (Lazarus et al., 2014). Radiolarian diversity stayed fairly consistent across the EOT (the large increase in Figure 2 is likely an artifact of available datasets and the aforementioned pull of the recent), with declines in tropical taxa offset by the appearance of new cold-water adapted species (Funkawa et al., 2006). There are records of very significant local losses of radiolarian diversity at the E/O boundary (e.g., Palike et al., 2009), and

Kamikuri and Wade (2012) report a decline in the late Eocene that is not reflected in the Spencer-Cervato et al. (1999) global diversity data plotted here. Overall, while there is a clear need to improve existing diversity compilations, the oceanographic and climatic reorganization that began in the Oligocene clearly suited non-calcareous plankton (Bown, 2005b; Lazarus et al., 2014). It is possible that changes in circulation resulted in increased productivity at higher latitudes, favoring siliceous taxa and displacing calcareous nannoplankton equatorward. Perhaps, because cooler waters at high latitudes are more corrosive, the cooling at the E-O boundary pushed calcareous plankton out of those environments, allowing non-calcareous plankton to thrive in their place. Kidder and Erwin (2001) demonstrated that biogenic silica is more widespread in the oceans during colder periods, when more vigorous circulation caused more widespread upwelling, stimulating increased productivity and silica production, although low and mid latitude biogenic cherts were widespread during the warmest part of the Paleogene greenhouse (Muttoni and Kent, 2007).

Our diversity data show that planktic foraminifer diversity remains low for the duration of the Oligocene, ~11 myr, before rebounding in the Miocene and diversifying up to the present day high. Diatoms also diversified throughout the Neogene, achieving their maximum biodiversity in the Recent (although this may be an artifact of the pull of the recent). Calcareous nannoplankton, however, have not seen their diversity rebound after the E-O boundary although they are still key primary producers in the Neogene ocean. This reduced diversity may partly reflect smaller size ranges and more fragile coccoliths in many of the later Cenozoic nannoplankton groups, and reduced preservation potential in many Neogene and modern taxa (Young et al., 2005).

4. The Ecological Response of Plankton to Environmental Change

Each of these environmental events affected the plankton in unique ways, and the response of each group was not always consistent from extinction to extinction. What aspects of plankton ecology are important during and after mass extinctions?

Does shell material (e.g., calcareous vs. siliceous/organic) explain the observed differences? It's necessary to preface this discussion with the disclaimer that the record of siliceous and organic walled microfossils is currently much poorer than the record of calcareous microfossils, and these trends will likely change when higher quality records of those groups are developed. With that caveat, the answer is "no." Only the K-Pg and E-O boundaries were strongly selective against calcareous taxa only. Other extinctions, like OAEs, were not selective for wall type but drove extinctions of planktic foraminifera and radiolarians but not calcareous nannoplankton.

Calcareous taxa tend to dominate in the tropics, where warm waters and low productivity result in high carbonate saturation. Siliceous taxa tend to dominate in the higher latitudes, where colder water, higher productivity, and, often, seasonal upwelling result in lower carbonate saturation. The extinctions which were selective for calcareous taxa (K-Pg, E-O) were also ones that generally favored cold-adapted taxa. Although there is evidence for ocean acidification at the K-Pg (Henehan et al., 2019), it is of the same magnitude as acidification observed at the PETM (Penman et al., 2014) which is not associated with elevated extinction rates, and thus we think it is more likely that the K-Pg extinction was driven primarily by global darkness and, to a lesser extent, stratification changes. High latitude organisms must have been already adapted to cold and months of darkness in unstratified waters, and were therefore more likely to survive than species living in the warm, sun-bathed Maastrichtian tropics. The E-O boundary was marked by the first significant glaciation of the Antarctic, and this major cooling event resulted in a significant expansion of cool water taxa at the expense of warmer water groups. As discussed above, cool water taxa tend to be siliceous and warm water taxa tend to be calcareous, so the former diversified while the latter declined. In both cases, survival vs. extinction was not dictated by shell material directly (e.g., susceptibility to acidification). Instead, the traits that were related to survival (e.g., adapted to living in cool polar/subpolar waters) were ones that are more common in non-calcareous groups.

Water column structure has always been considered an important control on planktic foraminifer diversity (e.g., Hart, 1980; Premoli Silva and Sliter, 1999; Leckie et al., 2002; Ezard et al., 2011; Fraass et

al., 2015). Many open-ocean species are adapted for a specific depth habitat, associated with a certain salinity, temperature, level of sunlight, and food supply; a breakdown of stratification would push these species out of their comfort zone and, if sustained, lead to extinction. A consistent through-line of many of the extinction events discussed is a breakdown of stratification. OAEs are associated with the (local) collapse of water column stratification at each event and the coeval decline or disappearance of deeper-dwelling taxa (e.g., Leckie et al., 1998, 2002; Browning and Watkins, 2008; Petrizzo et al., 2008; Huber and Leckie, 2011; McAnena et al., 2013). The local disappearance of such taxa is often diachronous with the local onset of black shale deposition, suggesting that stratification, not anoxia, was the primary stressor in the turnovers of the mid-Cretaceous. It is likely that changes in water column stratification played an important role in the Cenozoic mass extinctions as well. The K-Pg was characterized by a complete breakdown of water column stratification in addition to the collapse of food webs, and all the survivor species and most of the first generation of new Paleocene foraminifer taxa were mixed layer species. Water column structure remained fairly intact during the PETM, and this event was more of a turnover than an extinction, despite significant surface ocean acidification. The EOT was characterized by a major reorganization of ocean circulation and water column structure, and corresponding severe extinctions among planktic foraminifera and calcareous nannoplankton. Changes in water column stratification have a stronger affect on the plankton than benthic organisms, most of which occupy niches unrelated to water column structure, and the importance of water column changes in driving extinction in the plankton likely explains much of the difference between the overall record of marine biodiversity and that of the plankton studied here.

Ezard et al. (2011) found that climate and ecology are the primary drivers of extinction in Cenozoic macroperforate planktic foraminifera. This appears to be true across all the plankton groups studied here. Warming and gateway changes led to breakdown of water column stratification during Cretaceous OAEs and drove the extinction of taxa adapted to a deeper habitat. Cooling and darkness led to the collapse of ocean food webs and the elimination of water column stratification following the K-Pg

mass extinction, driving severe extinction in photosynthesizing calcareous nannoplankton and deep-dwelling (and most mixed layer) planktic foraminifera. Bown et al. (2004) suggested that the ecological response of calcareous nannoplankton to cooling was different during the Mesozoic and Cenozoic. Cooling events superimposed on the greenhouse climate of the Cretaceous stimulated diversification by increasing biogeographic partitioning in the oceans. The Cenozoic shift from greenhouse to icehouse, however, contracted the viable range of calcareous nannoplankton taxa to only the temperate to tropical latitudes and allowed the proliferation of diatoms in high latitude waters (Bown et al., 2004; Bown 2005b). We observe a similar process in the planktic foraminifera, although while calcareous nannoplankton diversity remained low after the onset of late Cenozoic cooling, planktic foraminifera began to diversify again in the Neogene, as icehouse conditions intensified.

Ezard et al. (2011) also found that diversity was the primary control on speciation (although climate and ecology play key roles in their model as well). Diversification begins immediately following all the major extinctions discussed here, but full post-extinction diversification often takes about 10 myr. Calcareous nannoplankton diversified in several pulses in the 10 myr following the T-J mass extinction, each of which involved the origination of new families, indicative of significant evolutionary innovations (Bown et al., 2004). Planktic foraminifera took ~10 myr to rebuild diversity following the severe OAE1b extinction and ~11 myr (roughly the entire Oligocene) to rebuild diversity after the E-O. Both groups took ~10 myr to rebuild diversity following the K-Pg. An average 10 myr delay in the recovery of diversity following mass extinctions is well known from the Phanerozoic marine invertebrate record (e.g., Kirchner and Weil, 2000; Alroy, 2008). Kirchner and Weil (2000) speculated that this was driven by the need to rebuild ecospace following mass extinctions, as life strategies disappear along with species during such events. Lowery and Fraass (2019) tested this hypothesis with the record of planktic foraminifer morphological complexity (essentially ecospace occupation in simple groups like foraminifera) following the K-Pg mass extinction and found that ecospace expansion does indeed pace diversification. This suggests a fundamental macroevolutionary speed limit on diversification after mass extinctions. Our

review here shows that the lag in diversification is present among other plankton groups and after other extinction events. Because we lack detailed morphological data for other groups of plankton we can only speculate that these delays are also driven by the same need to rebuild ecospace.

4.1 Ecological Response to Future Change

The major environmental perturbations affecting the ocean today – acidification (e.g., Doney et al., 2009) and hypoxia (e.g., Ito et al., 2017) – are the ones that have the most severe effect on the shallow benthos but little or no effect on biodiversity of the plankton. Similar magnitudes of ocean acidification at the K-Pg (Henehan et al., 2019) and PETM (Penman et al., 2014) with vastly different extinction rates among calcareous plankton suggest that ocean acidification alone is not a major driver of extinction in the plankton. Planktic extinction during Cretaceous oceanic anoxic events appears more related to changes in water column stratification than anoxia (e.g., Leckie et al., 2002). While this is likely good news for modern plankton biodiversity, it still bodes ill for coral reefs, commercial fisheries, and the vast array of benthic life on the shelves, which will be devastated by acidification and growing dead zones.

This isn't to say that anthropogenic changes won't result in major changes in community structure and biogeography; migrations and assemblage shifts during OAEs and the PETM indicate that the potential for local changes which may cascade through other trophic levels and alter ecosystem function. Indeed, planktic foraminifera assemblages are already shifting poleward due to warming (Jonkers et al., 2019), as are diatoms and dinoflagellates (Barton et al., 2016). The shift from greenhouse to icehouse at the E-O boundary resulted in a significant decline in tropical and temperate plankton diversity; will a shift back toward greenhouse conditions eventually drive an extinction of high latitude plankton (Lazarus et al., 2014)? There is no good analog for this in the paleontological record. Moreover, warming is expected to cause a >20% decline in primary productivity (Moore et al., 2018), likely resulting in additional changes in plankton community structure (and reduced carbon sequestration, fisheries declines, etc.).

4.2 Next Steps

One of the most important takeaways from this review should be the need for detailed, robust records of species-level diversity of siliceous and organic-walled microfossil groups. Planktic foraminifera and calcareous nannoplankton are very well represented from outcrops and deep sea cores, and so have better constrained histories extending back to the Mesozoic, but the lack of similar records of other groups limits our ability to fully reconstruct ecological trends in the plankton. Even among the calcareous plankton, high resolution records tend to focus on events. This is understandable, but means we have a much poorer understanding of intervals of relative stability and what drives “background” turnover in these groups.

Another key unknown is the response of non-fossilizing plankton to the events discussed here. Very little work has been done reconstructing the abundance or diversity of other autotrophs like cyanobacteria and archaea in the past. For example, following the K-Pg, calcareous nannoplankton declined severely, but food supply to the deep sea remained relatively constant (Culver, 2003; Alegret et al., 2012). We may assume that non-fossilizing phytoplankton became more abundant at this time, but there is very little evidence for or against this hypothesis. Sepulveda et al. (2009) showed blooms of non-fossilizing phytoplankton just about the K-Pg boundary in the Fish Clay of Denmark, but that is the only such record from this time, and the K-Pg is probably the best studied mass extinction in this regard. Moreover, what about non-fossilizing zooplankton, or nektonic organisms? The collapse of the marine food web is the primary hypothesis for the extinction of marine macrofauna like ammonites, plesiosaurs, and mosasaurs at the K-Pg, but we don’t know what the middle step in that extinction was. Did jellyfish bloom in the earliest Danian? What about during OAEs, or the PETM? If they did bloom, what did this mean for food webs and the biological pump? Decades of careful research on mineralizing plankton diversity and ecology has led to a composite dataset that, while still open to improvement, has provided a uniquely detailed picture of evolution and extinction in the pelagic realm since the Mesozoic. Such detailed reconstructions may never be possible for non-mineralizing plankton, but those organisms are an

integral part of the modern open-ocean ecosystem and even minor improvements in their paleo record would greatly improve our knowledge of the ancient oceans.

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Figures

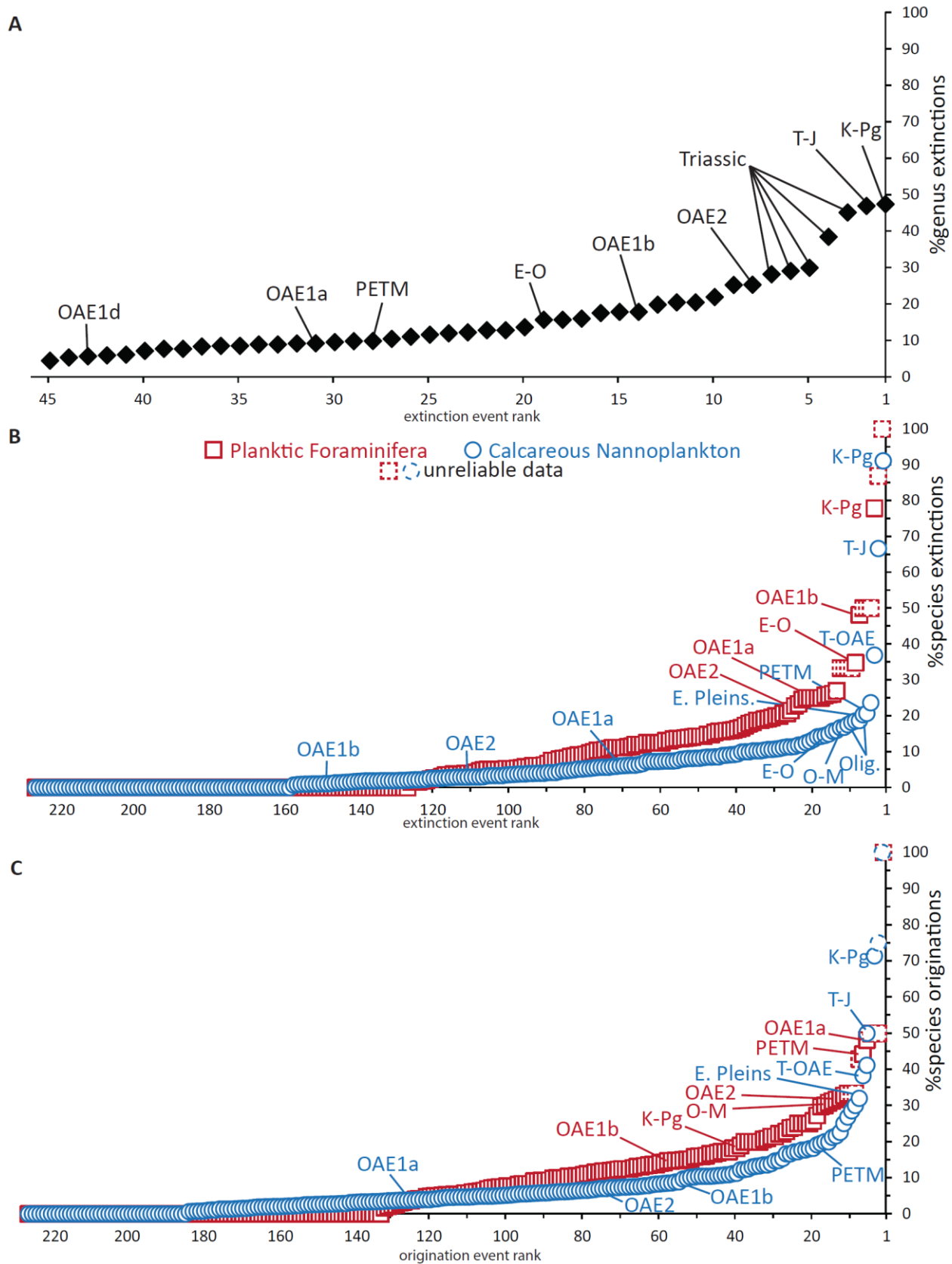


Figure 1. (A) Extinction rates of all marine genera binned at the stage level and ranked highest (right) to lowest (left) from Bambach et al. (2004). (B) Ranked extinctions and (C) ranked originations of calcareous nannoplankton and planktic foraminifera species binned at 1 myr time intervals this work. The x-axis is the rank of each bin, with 1 being the highest. Outliers in the plankton caused by low diversity (e.g., an extinction where 1 out of 3 total species go extinct, which happened 4 times in the planktic foraminifera, ranked just below the E-O Boundary on part B) are represented by dashed circles/squares. K-Pg: Cretaceous-Paleogene boundary; T-J: Triassic-Jurassic boundary; OAE: Oceanic Anoxic Event; E-O: Eocene-Oligocene boundary; PETM: Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum; T-OAE: Toarcian OAE; E. Pleins: Early Pleinsbachian. See Appendix for full ranked list.

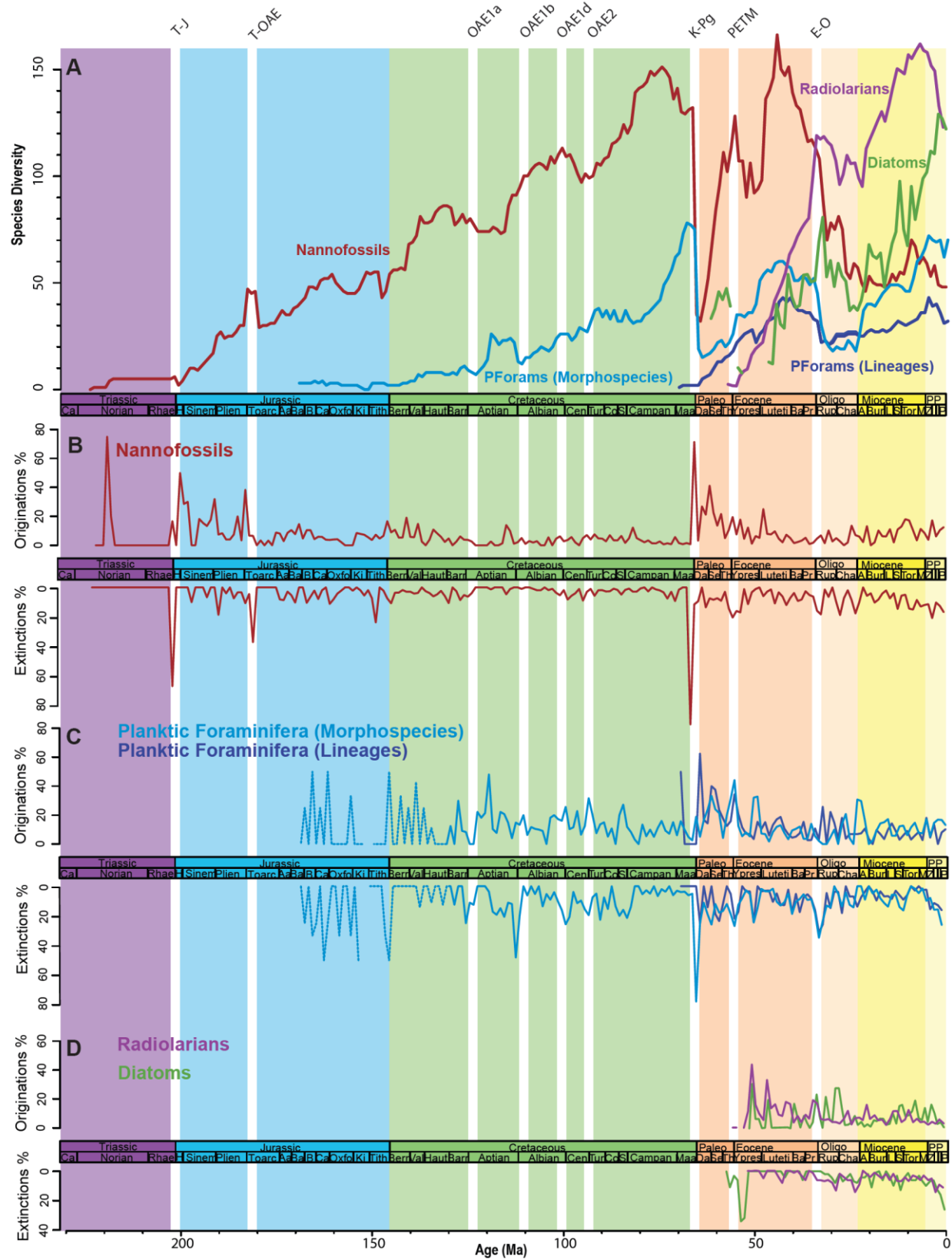


Figure 2. (A) Species diversity of calcareous nannoplankton and planktic foraminifera from the Mesozoic to Recent, and of Diatoms and Radiolarians from the Paleocene to the Recent. Rates of origination (top) and extinction (bottom) of (B) calcareous nannoplankton, (C) planktic foraminifera, and (D) radiolarians and diatoms. 100% originations and extinctions are omitted; the Jurassic and early Cretaceous record of planktic foraminifera extinction and origination is dashed to indicate that they are likely artifacts of low diversity and poor records. Events discussed in this paper are highlighted with white lines (see Figure 1 caption for abbreviations).

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