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10 **Ecological Response of Plankton to Environmental Change – Thresholds for**
11 **Extinction**

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20
21 **Abstract**

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

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

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

35 **Introduction**

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

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

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

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

60 When we discuss major mass extinctions (i.e., the “Big Five” first defined by Raup and Sepkoski,
61 1982) we generally mean declines in the total diversity of marine organisms, a record dominated by
62 benthic invertebrates. But the oceans are an ecologically varied place, and by delving into specific groups
63 we can discover the nuances of the ecological response of marine organisms to environmental change. In
64 particular, how does the record of extinction and origination in those groups differ from the overall
65 marine (mostly benthic invertebrate) record? Marine plankton are both ecologically important to the
66 oceans and robustly represented in the geological record. The ubiquitous presence and high abundance of
67 microfossils in marine sediments, combined with >50 years of scientific ocean drilling, have resulted in a
68 geographically widespread and temporally highly resolved record of species-level diversity for each of
69 the major marine microfossil groups.

70 Cyanobacteria and organic-walled green algae were probably the dominant primary producers in
71 the Paleozoic oceans (Falkowski et al., 2004). The fossil records of photosynthesizing calcareous
72 nannoplankton (coccolithophores), dinoflagellates, and diatoms, as well as heterotrophic planktic
73 foraminifera, indicate that they all evolved in the Mesozoic (Falkowski et al., 2004; Knoll and Follows,
74 2016). This turnover in dominant plankton groups was part of the Mesozoic Marine Revolution (e.g.,

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

82 The rise of Mesozoic-Cenozoic plankton groups was influenced by a number of significant
83 environmental changes, including the two most recent major mass extinctions: the Triassic-Jurassic (T-J;
84 201 Ma) and the Cretaceous-Paleogene (K-Pg; 66 Ma). Although these two events had the greatest effect
85 on plankton diversity, they paint an incomplete portrait of turnover in the plankton and the ecological
86 response to environmental change. Extinction events scale from “background extinction” to “mass
87 extinction,” and the space between those end members is populated by a range of increasing magnitudes
88 of species loss. This includes some “major extinctions” that are above background rates and felt by
89 certain groups or ecosystems, but are below the scale the catastrophic, global mass extinctions (Bambach
90 et al., 2004).

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

100 major mass extinctions to the background rates, which plot on a long tail with a low slope. Beyond the K-
101 Pg and T-J, there is little similarity between which extinctions were most severe in marine genera overall
102 and in the plankton in particular. In the Bambach et al. (2004) stage-level data, the transition to
103 background extinction values spans the entire Triassic. They interpret this more as a failure of
104 diversification with only moderate rates of extinction than a true “extinction” event, resulting in overall
105 elevated rates of diversity loss (Bambach et al., 2004). A number of events that fall within the background
106 of the Bambach data, such as the Eocene-Oligocene (E-O) boundary and Oceanic Anoxic Event 1b
107 (OAE1b), appear as above-background events in the plankton-only data. The Toarcian OAE (T-OAE), the
108 4th-largest extinction of calcareous nannoplankton, is the 5th-smallest extinction in the total marine
109 diversity data. Conversely, Oceanic Anoxic Event 2 (OAE2) is one of the most severe extinction events
110 overall, but is only the third-most severe OAE among both planktic foraminifera and calcareous
111 nannoplankton, and plots well within the interval of background extinction for these groups.

112 Why do the plankton respond to threshold events in Earth history differently than marine biota as
113 a whole? Open-ocean plankton are adapted to live in specific depth habitats (created by thermal
114 stratification of the water column), nutrient conditions, and biogeographic provinces reflecting latitudinal
115 temperature gradients. In the modern ocean, the greatest diversity of calcareous plankton is in the
116 tropics/subtropics, while that of siliceous plankton is near the poles. Plankton and other open-ocean
117 groups are included in the dataset used by Bambach et al. (2004) but they are diluted by the huge diversity
118 of life on shelves and in shallow seas, which have a fundamentally different response to environmental
119 changes than the deep sea. For example, expanding oxygen minimum zones (OMZs) during OAE2 led to
120 a severe extinction of benthic organisms on carbonate platforms and shallow shelves (e.g., Parente et al.,
121 2008). But many plankton simply lived in habitats above the OMZ, and only a few deeper-dwelling taxa
122 were driven to extinction (e.g., Leckie et al., 2002). Thus, the response of the plankton to major
123 environmental changes can provide additional insight to the susceptibility of particular ecologies to
124 different types of negative environmental forcing. Here, we summarize the open-ocean environmental

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

129 **2. Methods**

130 We compare updated species-level biodiversity records for calcareous nannoplankton and
131 planktic foraminifera from the Mesozoic to the Recent and previously published species level diversity
132 records for radiolarians and diatoms from just the Cenozoic. Calcareous nannoplankton diversity is an
133 updated version of the record of Bown et al. (2004), based on the online atlas Nannotax
134 (<http://www.mikrotax.org/Nannotax3/>). New taxa described since 2004 have been added and temporal
135 resolution increased to 1 myr. Planktic foraminifer morphospecies diversity is an update of Fraass et al.
136 (2015), representing a revision of the higher-level taxonomy and the inclusion of key newly erected taxa.
137 As stated in Fraass et al., the pre-Cretaceous planktic foraminifer record is fragmentary and poorly
138 preserved, and should be viewed with that in mind (Figure 2). Cenozoic planktic foraminifer lineage
139 diversity is from Aze et al. (2011). These two datasets differ in that while Fraass et al. was constructed
140 from atlas sources (e.g., Olsson et al., 1999) and contains all recognized morphotaxa of the planktic
141 foraminifera, the Aze et al. (2011) dataset uses a lineage phylogeny to remove the pseudo-extinction and
142 pseudo-origination caused by anagenetic evolution. Cenozoic radiolarian and diatom macroevolutionary
143 rate and diversity data are from Spencer-Cervato (1999) and Renaudie et al. (2018), respectively. Data
144 here are all presented at 1 myr resolution to allow for a shared frame of reference, as previously published
145 work is in that resolution. The species richness is the total number of taxa that occur for some part of, or
146 throughout, each stratigraphic bin, and extinction and origination rates reflect the percentage of taxa not
147 carried over from the previous bin (extinction rate) or new taxa which did not occur in the previous bin
148 (origination rate). As the microfossil record is of the highest quality, singletons have not been excluded
149 from this calculation.

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

157 Finally, it is important to note that the lack of standardized methodology for the development of
158 diversity records hampers the inter-comparison of the fossil groups studied here. Most diversity records
159 must take into account unequal sampling and rock volume. Siliceous species are more commonly
160 preserved at high latitudes, except during discrete time intervals (e.g., the Eocene) but the majority of
161 deep sea samples come from tropical and subtropical latitudes. Note that although the radiolarian
162 diversity data used here begin in the Eocene, the record of this group extends back to the Cambrian, and
163 diatoms are known from the mid-Cretaceous onward. There is a clear pull of the recent in both radiolarian
164 and diatom data, but even that masks the true diversity of these groups. For example, Turbovitz et al.
165 (2019) found >500 radiolarian taxa in preliminary results from late Neogene samples from IODP Site
166 U1337, many of which were in a size fraction smaller than commonly used for radiolarian analysis. In
167 addition, the different compilations have distinct characteristics. For example, diatom occurrence data are
168 from the NSB database (<http://www.nsb-mfn-berlin.de/>), an update of the original Neptune database (e.g.,
169 Lazarus, 1994) and are thus based on species occurrence data from scientific ocean drilling expeditions.
170 The planktic foraminifer morphospecies dataset, on the other hand, is based on first appearance and last
171 appearance datums from atlas compilations (e.g., Olsson et al., 1999) representing a synthesis of
172 foraminifer micropaleontologists' species concepts. These records are measuring similar but distinctly
173 different qualities of the organisms, and should only be compared with that caveat in mind. In addition,
174 there is obvious misfit within our compiled data, as paleoceanographic events are 'felt' in one bin for one

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

180 **3. Extinction Events**

181 Mesozoic-Cenozoic diversity curves for the plankton groups discussed here are plotted in Figure
182 2. A ranking of extinction (Figure 1B) and origination (Figure 1C) rates of calcareous nannoplankton and
183 planktic foraminifera are presented in Figure 1. These clearly show that planktic foraminifera are more
184 sensitive to change than calcareous nannoplankton. It is not clear, however, if this is because of the
185 consistently higher diversity of calcareous nannoplankton, or if planktic foraminifera have ecologies that
186 are more susceptible to extinction (e.g., thermocline/subthermocline niches). It should also be noted that
187 our 1 myr bin size affects these values. For example, planktic foraminifera are commonly cited as having
188 ~90% extinction across the K-Pg (e.g., Olsson et al., 1999), but the appearance of a number of new
189 Paleocene planktic foraminifer taxa within a few hundred kyr of the boundary makes the extinction of
190 foraminifera appear less severe than it truly was.

191 **3.1 Triassic-Jurassic Boundary**

192 The initial rifting of the modern Atlantic Ocean ~200 million years ago (Ma) was associated with
193 the emplacement of the Central Atlantic Magmatic Province (CAMP), possibly the largest flood basalt on
194 Earth (Wignall, 2001). Between $2-4 \times 10^6$ km³ of volcanic material (Wignall, 2001) was erupted between
195 580 ± 100 (Olsen et al., 2003) to 840 ± 60 thousand years (kyr) (Schaller et al., 2012) with 3-5 main
196 eruptive pulses (Schaller et al., 2012) that emitted up to 21,000 gigatons (Gt) of carbon and 57,000 Gt of
197 sulfur in total (Beerling and Berner, 2002). This resulted in 3-4°C of warming (McElewain et al., 1999),
198 shifting climate zones, and possibly ocean acidification (Greene et al., 2012). Newly evolved calcareous

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

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

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

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

228 **3.2 Cretaceous Oceanic Anoxic Events**

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

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

246 **3.2.1 OAE1a**

247 OAE1a was caused by the emplacement of the Ontong Java plateau in the southwest Pacific
248 Ocean (Tarduno et al., 1991; Leckie et al., 2002). The event was preceded by a short, negative carbon
249 isotope excursion thought to reflect the injection of volcanic CO₂ into the atmosphere (Jenkyns, 1995;
250 Erba et al., 2015), or possibly destabilization of methane hydrates (e.g., Jenkyns, 2010). This time period
251 is associated with the “Nannoconid Crisis” (Erba, 1994; Erba et al., 2019) in which the nominate group of
252 calcareous nannoplankton declined for at least a million years, but did not go extinct; this decline began
253 ~40 kyr before the OAE carbon isotope excursion (Giraud et al., 2018). The cause of the ‘crisis’ is
254 uncertain, not least because this is an entirely extinct non-coccolith nannofossil group, but the decline has
255 been related to a variety of OAE environmental factors, including increased nutrients, elevated *p*CO₂, and
256 trace metal enrichment (e.g., Erba et al., 2019). Nannoplankton were otherwise little affected by this
257 OAE, with origination and extinction rates at background levels (Figure 2).

258 Planktic foraminifera, in contrast, experienced an extinction during OAE1a (Leckie et al., 2002).
259 The early Aptian was preceded by a small radiation (6 species) of planktic foraminifera in the late
260 Barremian, and an equal number of species were lost during the OAE (Figure 2). The OAE1a interval is
261 characterized by depauperate assemblages dominated by the morphologically aberrant *Leupoldina cabri*
262 (Premoli Silva et al., 1999). In the aftermath of this event, planktic foraminifera radiated, with diversity
263 increasing through the late Aptian. Many new species of *Globigerinelloides* and *Hedbergella* appeared;
264 proportionally, this was one of the largest planktic foraminifer speciation events of the Cretaceous (Figure
265 1C).

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

271 The rest of the Aptian was characterized by a return to more stable water column stratification
272 and a corresponding increase in species that lived below the mixed layer. Nannoconids reappeared in
273 nannoplankton assemblages (although were generally only common in tropical, shallow water settings;
274 Erba, 1994; Giraud et al., 2018), and new species of deeper-dwelling planktic foraminifera (Leckie et al.,
275 2002) and radiolarians (Erbacher and Thurow, 1997) appeared and diversified. Foraminifer test size also
276 increased following OAE1a (Leckie et al., 2002).

277 **3.2.2 OAE1b**

278 The Aptian-Albian OAE1b saw the largest extinction of planktic foraminifera in the Cretaceous
279 (Premoli Silva and Sliter, 1999; Leckie et al., 2002; Huber and Leckie, 2011; Fraass et al. 2015; Figure
280 1B). OAE1b is comprised of a series of discrete black shale horizons (and corresponding carbon isotope
281 excursions) spanning the latest Aptian to the early Albian. These black shales, which are mainly found in
282 the Tethys/Atlantic region, are associated with the emplacement of the Kerguelen Plateau in the southern
283 Indian Ocean (Whitechurch et al., 1992; Leckie et al., 2002; McAnena et al., 2013). This time period is
284 characterized by cooling and sea level fall in the latest Aptian, followed by sea level rise in the earliest
285 Albian (Leckie et al., 2002; McAnena et al., 2013). OAE1b itself is associated with a breakdown in water
286 column stratification, although the mechanism for this is uncertain. Watkins and Browning (2008) and
287 McAnena et al. (2013) suggest it was related to late Aptian cooling, whereas others have invoked
288 reorganization of North Atlantic deep water circulation following deepening of the gateway linking the
289 North and South Atlantic Ocean (Arthur and Natland, 1979; Huber and Leckie, 2011).

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

296 stratified, and planktic foraminifera only lived in the mixed layer (Leckie et al., 2002; Huber and Leckie,
297 2011). Planktic foraminifer diversity and test size rose steadily throughout the remainder of the middle
298 and late Albian (Figure 2), as did water column stratification (Leckie et al., 2002).

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

304 **3.2.3 OAE1d**

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

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

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

322 **3.2.4 OAE2**

323 The most significant OAE in the overall marine fossil record (Figure 1A), is the Cenomanian-
324 Turonian OAE2. It was driven by the emplacement of the Caribbean LIP (Leckie et al., 2002; Snow et al.,
325 2005; Turgeon and Creaser, 2008; Monteiro et al., 2012). This volcanism spurred increased productivity
326 either due to direct injection of nutrients from hydrothermal fluids (Leckie et al., 2002) and/or by causing
327 significant warming (e.g., Friedrich et al., 2012), which led to increased flux of terrigenous nutrients into
328 the oceans following a strengthening of the hydrological cycle (Pogge von Strandmann et al., 2013).
329 Ostrander et al. (2017) showed that the OAE2 carbon isotope excursion was preceded by 40 kyr of
330 progressive deoxygenation of the oceans, indicating a gradual onset. It is unclear if such a ramp-up of
331 deoxygenation occurred prior to other OAEs because OAE2 is the only one investigated with the thallium
332 isotope oxygenation proxy (Ostrander et al., 2017) thus far, but this is probably a reasonable assumption.
333 Warming at the Cenomanian-Turonian boundary led to a breakdown of vertical stratification in the oceans
334 and an increase in upwelling (Arthur and Natland, 1979; Leckie et al., 1998; Huber et al., 1999; Trabucho
335 Alexandre et al., 2010).

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

343 The Cenomanian-Turonian boundary interval is associated with a drop in calcareous
344 nannoplankton diversity, a rare interruption of the long-term increase that had continued unabated through
345 previous OAEs (Figure 2). However, this decline began in the mid-Cenomanian (as noted by Bown et al.,
346 2004) and continued into OAE2, which is associated with a series of extinctions (~9 species), but overall
347 the evolutionary rates are at background levels. A step-wise extinction of radiolarians also began in the
348 mid-Cenomanian and culminated during OAE2 (Erbacher and Thurow, 1997) with 29 taxa disappearing
349 during the event; 20 new forms appear within or just after the OAE2 interval in the Umbria-Marche
350 region of Italy (Erbacher and Thurow, 1997; see Musavu-Moussavou et al. 2009 for a more recent report
351 on this same region).

352 **3.3 Cretaceous-Paleogene Boundary**

353 The most recent of the “Big Five” mass extinctions (Raup and Sepkoski, 1982) is the Cretaceous-
354 Paleogene boundary event. It was caused by the impact of an asteroid on the Yucatán carbonate platform
355 in the southern Gulf of Mexico (e.g., Alvarez et al., 1980; Smit and Hertogen, 1980; Hildebrand et al.,
356 1991; the best review of the impact hypothesis remains Schulte et al., 2010; see also Lowery et al., 2019
357 for an update of current results from recent scientific drilling in the crater). The Chicxulub impact lofted
358 gigatons of dust, soot from widespread fires, and, most importantly, sulfur from the evaporite-rich target
359 rock, into the stratosphere, resulting in a sharp reduction in solar insolation and a coincident crash in
360 photosynthesis, which led to a collapse of marine food webs (Zachos et al., 1989; Toon, 1997; D’Hondt et
361 al., 1998; Coxall et al., 2006; Brugger et al., 2017; Artemieva et al., 2017). A side effect of this severe
362 cooling was a major breakdown in open ocean stratification; one recent model (Brugger et al., 2017)
363 indicates that the ocean’s mixed layer plunged from its normal depth of <100 m to >2500 m at 60°
364 latitude and >1000 m in the tropics (Brugger et al., 2017). Other stressors on the pelagic realm include
365 ocean acidification and hypoxia. Although geographically limited evidence exists for the expansion of
366 intermediate depth oxygen minimum zones at the K-Pg boundary, particularly at Caravaca, Spain (e.g.,
367 Kaiho et al., 1999; Mizukami et al., 2013), it is unclear how widespread this may have been. Meanwhile,

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

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

393 strategy (Leckie, 1987; D'Hondt and Keller, 1991; Bown, 2005a). A good example of this is the planktic
394 foraminifer *Guembelitra cretacea*, which was common in nearshore waters during the Cretaceous
395 (Leckie, 1987) but dominated open ocean assemblages in the earliest Paleocene (D'Hondt and Keller,
396 1991; Arenillas et al., 2000).

397 Records of siliceous and organic-walled fossils are more poorly developed at the K-Pg (D'Hondt,
398 2005). Dinoflagellates lost ~40% of their diversity (~200 species; MacRae et al., 1996), although this
399 occurred across a broader interval. Sims et al. (2006) show that 63% of diatom species went extinct at the
400 K-Pg; the majority of survivors were high latitude, neritic species capable of forming resting cysts (Sims
401 et al., 2006). Radiolarian extinction rates suggest little extinction (Hollis et al., 2003), but recent upward
402 revisions of dinoflagellate and diatom extinction rates (e.g., MacRae et al., 1996; Simms et al., 2006)
403 suggest this should be taken with a grain of salt. However, the species loss in these three groups is still
404 well below the catastrophic level (>90%) suffered by calcareous plankton.

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

418 Thomas, 2012) and the early recovery of productivity in nearshore marine environments (Sepulveda et al.,
419 2019), it may be presumed that blooms of non-fossilizing primary producers occurred elsewhere in the
420 ocean, too, but thus far such data exists only from the Fish Clay, and further investigation is needed.

421). The final recovery of the biological pump also appears related to calcareous nannoplankton
422 diversity. A highly-resolved nannoplankton record from Pacific Ocean Site 1209 (Shatsky Rise), shows a
423 post-extinction interval of almost 2 million years of highly unstable communities, characterized by
424 a succession of acme events (100s of kyr scale), before a more stable, equilibrium-state
425 community emerged that displayed indicators of resilience (Alvarez et al., 2019). The transition to this
426 equilibrium-state community occurred as cell sizes and species richness increased and was coincident
427 with restoration of a fully functioning biological pump, suggesting a fundamental link between
428 ecosystem recovery and biogeochemical cycling (Birch et al., 2016; Alvarez et al., 2019). On shorter
429 timescales, export productivity reconstructions based on the biogenic barium proxy have found that some
430 open ocean sites experienced an increase in export production in the earliest Danian (Hull and Norris,
431 2011). This may have been driven by local differences in the efficiency of the biological pump, and there
432 is evidence to suggest that these differences were a factor in the initial recovery of calcareous
433 nannoplankton assemblages. For example, at Chicxulub a reduction in initially-high post-extinction
434 export productivity is associated with turnover in the nannoplankton from a *Braarudosphaera*-dominated
435 assemblage of survivor species to more diverse assemblages of new Paleocene taxa (Jones et al., 2019).
436 Reduced biological pump efficiency would result in the concentration of nutrients in the upper
437 water column and thus may have actually increased local primary productivity (Jones et al., 2019).

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

443 2019). The synchrony of some of these nannoplankton acmes has been questioned, with lags explained by
444 incumbency or environmental heterogeneity (Jiang et al., 2010; Schueth et al., 2015; Jones et al., 2019).
445 However, some of these events are widely applied in biostratigraphy (e.g., Varol, 1989; Agnini et al.,
446 2014), suggesting roughly synchronous timing across ocean basins, and it may be that reported
447 discrepancies are caused by taxonomic inconsistency (unavoidable among incoming, minute groups with
448 similar morphologies), inconsistent preservation of small, fragile species, problems with age models, or
449 localized effects. These issues will likely become clearer as further sections are studied at high resolution
450 (e.g., Jones et al., 2019, Alvarez et al., 2019).

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

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

464 **3.4 Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum**

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

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

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

492 40°C) may have led to exclusion (“dead zones”) of both calcareous and organic-walled plankton at some
493 locations due to thermal stress (Aze et al., 2014; Frieling et al., 2017)

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

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

513 **3.5 Eocene-Oligocene Boundary**

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

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

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

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

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

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

561 **4. The Ecological Response of Plankton to Environmental Change**

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

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

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

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

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

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

615 mass extinction, driving severe extinction in photosynthesizing calcareous nannoplankton and deep-
616 dwelling (and most mixed layer) planktic foraminifera. Bown et al. (2004) suggested that the ecological
617 response of calcareous nannoplankton to cooling was different during the Mesozoic and Cenozoic.
618 Cooling events superimposed on the greenhouse climate of the Cretaceous stimulated diversification by
619 increasing biogeographic partitioning in the oceans. The Cenozoic shift from greenhouse to icehouse,
620 however, contracted the viable range of calcareous nannoplankton taxa to only the temperate to tropical
621 latitudes and allowed the proliferation of diatoms in high latitude waters (Bown et al., 2004; Bown
622 2005b). We observe a similar process in the planktic foraminifera, although while calcareous
623 nannoplankton diversity remained low after the onset of late Cenozoic cooling, planktic foraminifera
624 began to diversify again in the Neogene, as icehouse conditions intensified.

625 Ezard et al. (2011) also found that diversity was the primary control on speciation (although
626 climate and ecology play key roles in their model as well). Diversification begins immediately following
627 all the major extinctions discussed here, but full post-extinction diversification often takes about 10 myr.
628 Calcareous nannoplankton diversified in several pulses in the 10 myr following the T-J mass extinction,
629 each of which involved the origination of new families, indicative of significant evolutionary innovations
630 (Bown et al., 2004). Planktic foraminifera took ~10 myr to rebuild diversity following the severe OAE1b
631 extinction and ~11 myr (roughly the entire Oligocene) to rebuild diversity after the E-O. Both groups took
632 ~10 myr to rebuild diversity following the K-Pg. An average 10 myr delay in the recovery of diversity
633 following mass extinctions is well known from the Phanerozoic marine invertebrate record (e.g.,
634 Kirchner and Weil, 2000; Alroy, 2008). Kirchner and Weil (2000) speculated that this was driven by the
635 need to rebuild ecospace following mass extinctions, as life strategies disappear along with species during
636 such events. Lowery and Fraass (2019) tested this hypothesis with the record of planktic foraminifer
637 morphological complexity (essentially ecospace occupation in simple groups like foraminifera) following
638 the K-Pg mass extinction and found that ecospace expansion does indeed pace diversification. This
639 suggests a fundamental macroevolutionary speed limit on diversification after mass extinctions. Our

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

643 **4.1 Ecological Response to Future Change**

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

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

664 4.2 Next Steps

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

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

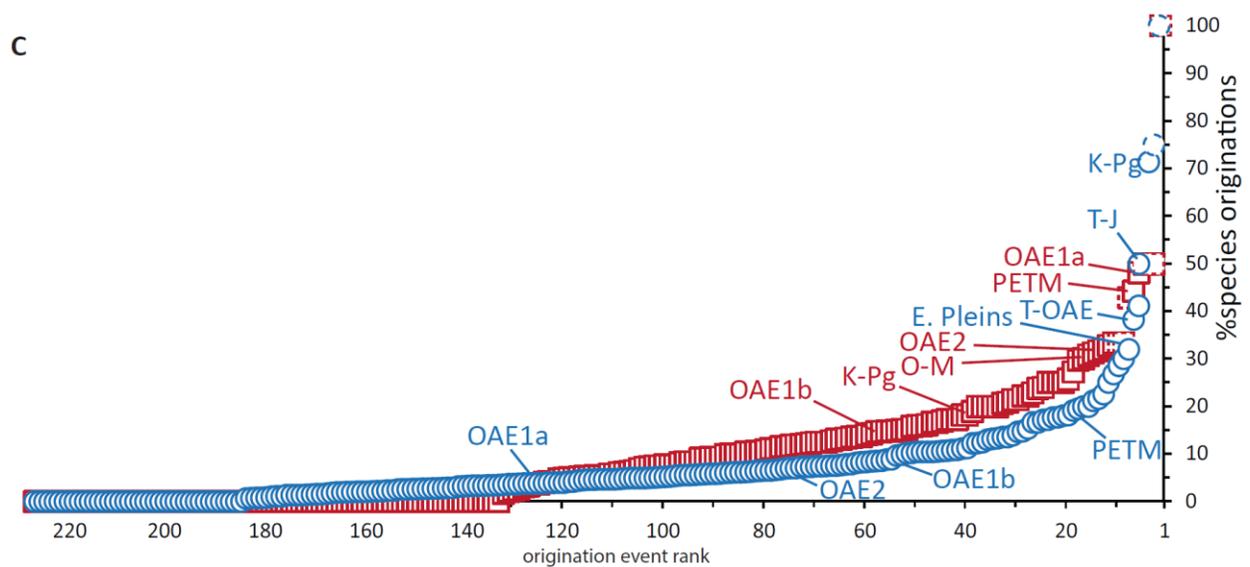
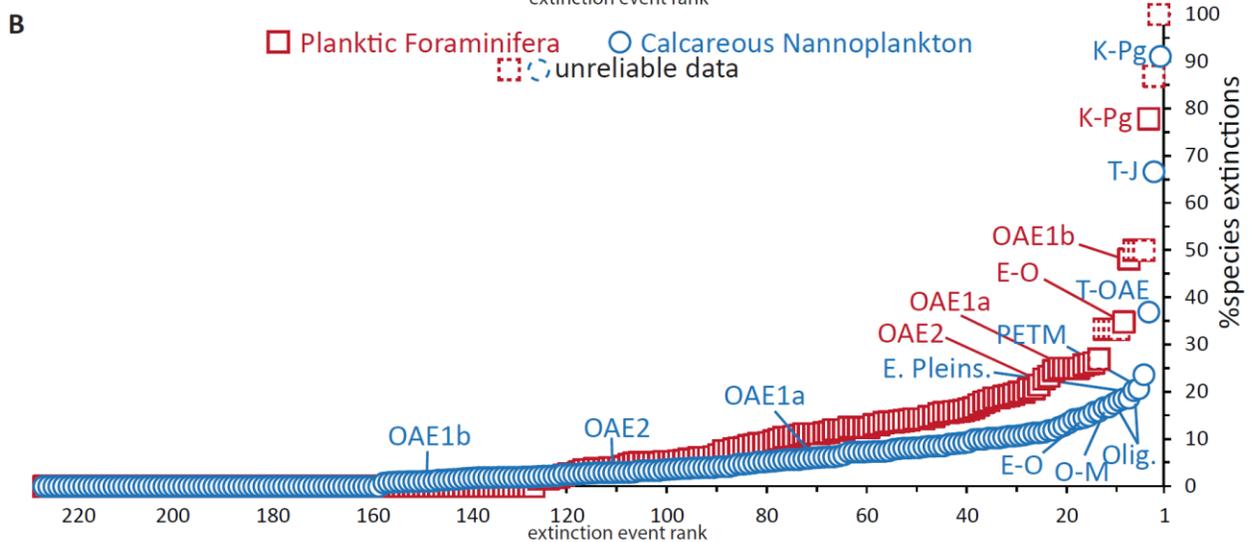
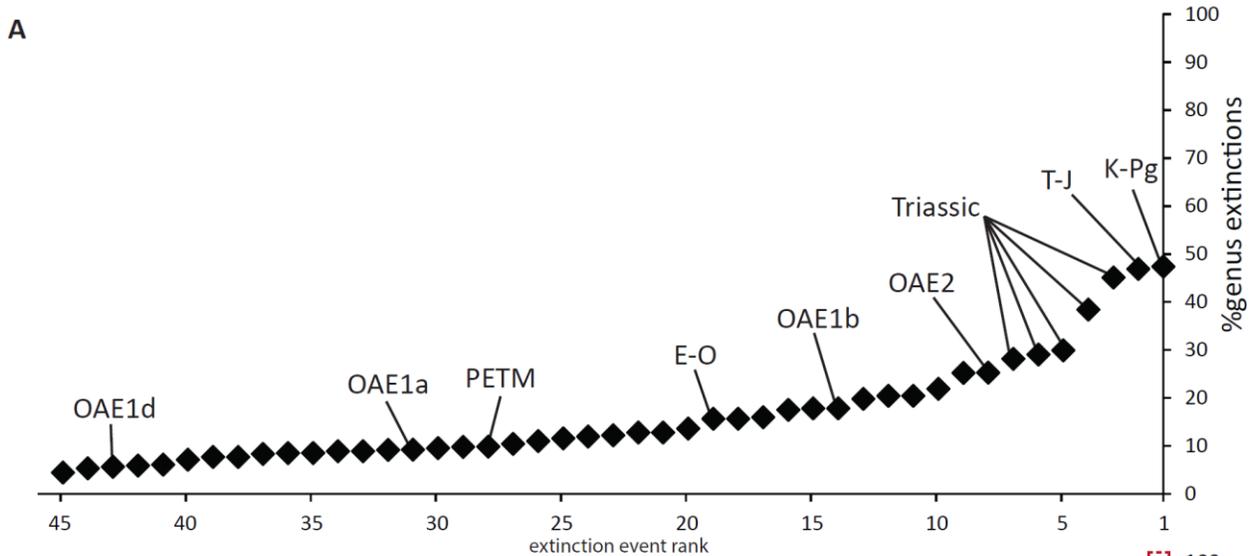
689 integral part of the modern open-ocean ecosystem and even minor improvements in their paleo record
690 would greatly improve our knowledge of the ancient oceans.

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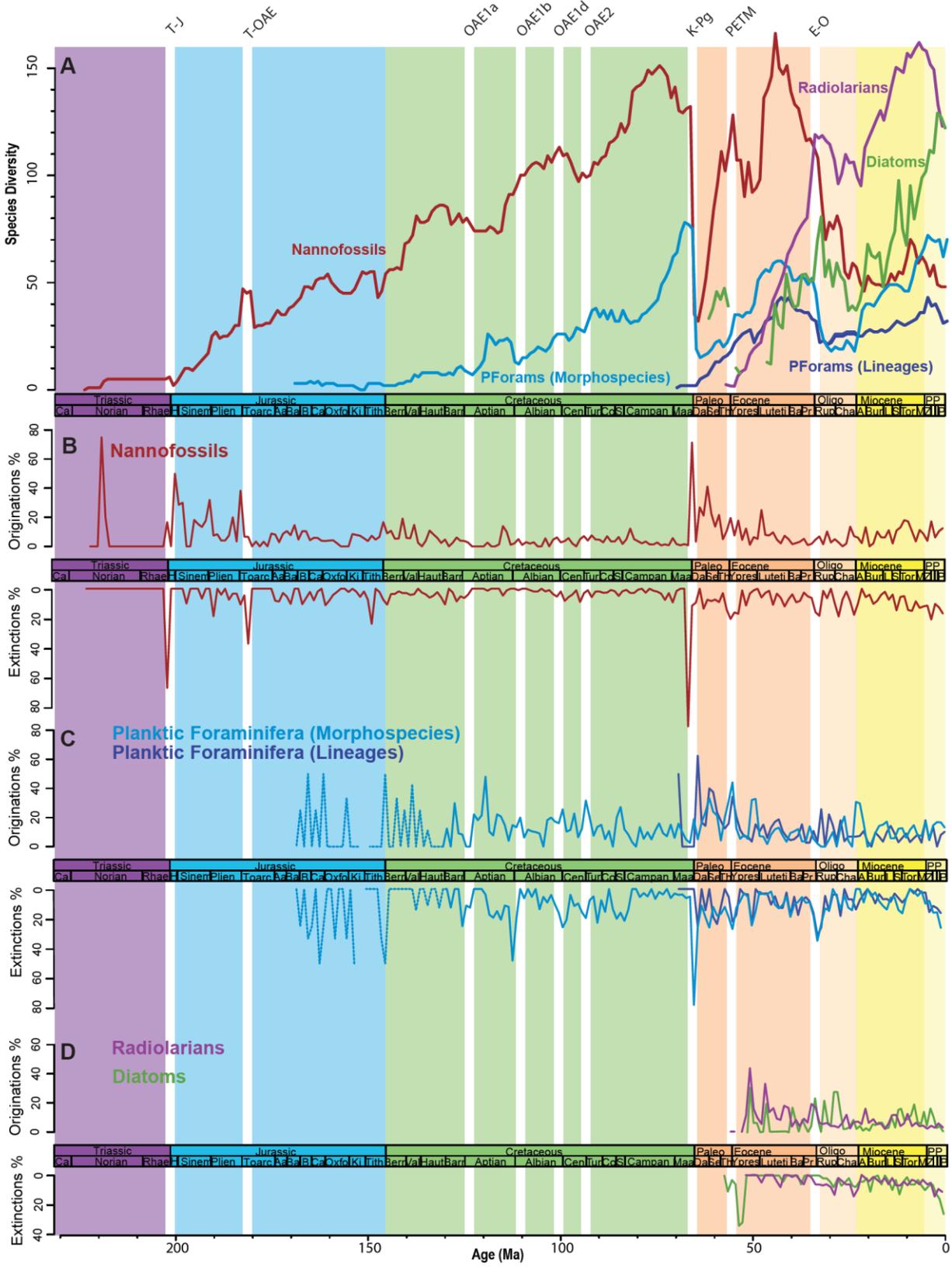
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697

698 **Figures**



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



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

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