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# Copepods As A Model System For Exploring The Impacts Of Climate Change On Marine Ectotherms

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# COPEPODS AS A MODEL SYSTEM FOR EXPLORING THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON MARINE ECTOTHERMS

A Dissertation Presented

by

Lauren W. Ashlock

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Specializing in Biology

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Defense Date: August 31, 2022 Dissertation Examination Committee:

Melissa Pespeni, Ph.D., Advisor Stephen Keller, PhD., Chairperson Hans Dam, Ph.D. Brent Lockwood, Ph.D. Jason Stockwell, Ph.D. Cynthia J. Forehand, PhD., Dean of the Graduate College

#### **ABSTRACT**

Marine ecosystems provide essential habitat to ecologically and economically impactful species and provide humans with a wealth of ecosystem services. With climate change, marine ecosystems are increasing in mean temperature and temperature variability. Marine ectotherms are vulnerable to this change and are important sentinels of warming, as their internal physiology is dependent on the external thermal environment.

Copepods are marine ectotherms that play a critical role in trophic transfer and nutrient cycling. Importantly, copepods are relatively short-lived, allowing them to track ocean change as it happens. Together, these qualities make copepods a reliable model for understanding the impacts of global change on marine ectotherms. In this dissertation, I assess the impact of climate change on copepods through three strategies, 1) Examining the vulnerability of the nutrient rich copepod *Neocalanus plumchrus* to ocean warming, 2) Investigating the roles of plasticity and adaptation in copepod response to climate change stressors, 3) Testing the importance of latitude and life history stage in determining copepod thermal tolerance.

My results reveal the nutrient rich copepod *Neocalanus plumchrus* and the numerically dominant copepod *Acartia tonsa* are potentially vulnerable to continued warming. Integrating ten years of plankton survey data with satellite temperature data, I find that thermal thresholds vary by copepod species and that the most nutrient rich species, *Neocalanus plumchrus*, has a relatively low upper thermal threshold for occurrence of 11.5°C. Additionally, results demonstrate that *N. plumchrus* abundance was reduced during the 2014-2016 marine heatwave. With experimental methods, I demonstrate that *Acartia tonsa* thermal tolerance is reduced after rapid salinity shock, indicating its susceptibility to simultaneous salinity and temperature change. Together these results indicate that copepods are vulnerable to continued climate change.

My research also elucidates important determinants of thermal tolerance in the copepod *Acartia tonsa*. Using experimental evolution, I find that development at ocean warming conditions imparts the same level of thermal tolerance as >50 generations of ocean warming. Additionally, through field collections and two generations of common garden conditions, I find that thermal tolerance varies with latitude, with copepods from Maine having lower thermal tolerances than copepods collected in New York and Florida. Importantly, we also find that juvenile *A. tonsa* are more thermally tolerant than larvae and adults. These results highlight the importance of plasticity in defining thermal tolerance, emphasizing the importance of the developmental environment for marine ectotherms. Additionally, results reveal that thermal tolerance is specific to life history stage and latitude of collection.

# **CITATIONS**

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# **DEDICATION**

To my grandma Stella.

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# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

<span id="page-8-0"></span>The ocean serves as a habitat for marine organisms, protects coastal communities from storms, and provides humans with a critical food source (Palumbi et al., 2009, Sandifer and Sutton-Grier, 2014, Scavia et al., 2002). Additionally, the ocean buffers the impacts of anthropogenic climate change by absorbing and sequestering greenhouse gases and heat (Booth et al., 2017, Reid et al., 2010, Bates et al., 2012). The ocean is also threatened by climate change induced increases in mean sea surface temperatures, temperature variability, and marine heatwaves (Scheffers et al., 2016, Harley et al., 2006, Frölicher *et al*., 2018, Oliver *et al*., 2018). Changing environmental temperatures will directly impact the physiology of ectotherms (Huey and Kingsolver, 1989, Angilletta et al., 2010). Importantly, marine ectotherms have narrower thermal safety margins than terrestrial ectotherms, indicating they may be more vulnerable to climate change (Pinsky et al., 2019). Additionally, these thermal safety margins will narrow with continued warming (Gunderson and Stillman 2015). Advancement of research on the mechanisms of thermal tolerance in marine ectotherms may help mitigate the detrimental effects of anthropogenic climate change on marine ecosystems.

Thermal tolerance is a complex and plastic trait that changes across life stages, populations, and acclimation temperatures. The thermal tolerance breadth of marine ectotherms increases with latitude, while upper and lower thermal limits decline with latitude (Sunday et al., 2019). Importantly, the thermal limits of ectotherms show a positive relationship with extreme thermal temperatures (Sunday et al., 2019), indicating that the increasing prevalence of temperature extremes and marine heat waves under

global change may influence thermal tolerance. Response to these changes will depend in part on the life history strategies of marine organisms, which are complex and diverse with many species having a planktonic life stage (Marshall and Morgan 2011). Life history stages can have distinct morphologies, physiologies, and habitats (Tangwancharoen and Burton 2014, Marshall et al., 2016). This results in life history stage dependent thermal tolerance, where primarily early life stages are more vulnerable than later life stages (Pandori and Sorte 2019, but see Tangwancharoen and Burton 2014). In addition to life history stage differences in thermal tolerance, local adaptation to temperature in marine invertebrates is evident (Gleason and Burton 2013, Willett 2010, Kelly et al., 2012). Even within life stages and populations, acclimation temperature can impact thermal tolerance, with animals acclimated to higher temperatures having higher thermal tolerance limits (Sasaki and Dam 2019, Stillman and Somero 2000).

Marine ectotherms are not simply subject to environmental temperatures, but can adjust their thermal tolerance through plasticity and adaptation. Plasticity is the capacity for genotypes to express different phenotypes in response to environmental change (Fordyce et al., 2006, West-Eberhard 2003, Somero et al., 2017, Whitman et al., 2009). Importantly, plasticity can cause phenotypic change within a generation (Somero et al., 2017). Therefore, plasticity provides short-term resilience to changing climate conditions by buying populations time to adapt in response to change across generations (Snell-Rood et al., 2018, Diamond and Martin 2021). Another potential coping strategy for changing environmental conditions is adaptation, the process of genetic change in a population across generations in response to selection that improves population fitness in a given environment (Hartl, 2000, Hendry, 2016). *Drosophila subobscura* exhibits

2

genome-wide shifts in allele frequencies in response to a heat wave, indicating genetic adaptation to thermal conditions (Rodríguez-Trelles et al., 2013). Additionally, coccolithophores and copepods exhibit rapid adaptation in response to increased experimental temperatures (Schlüter et al., 2014, Dam et al., 2021, Sasaki and Dam 2021). Exploring the dynamics and limitations of plasticity and adaptation in response to climate change is critical for understanding ectotherm mechanisms of response to changing climate conditions.

Copepods are an excellent model system for understanding patterns of plasticity, adaptation, and thermal tolerance in marine ectotherms. Copepods are highly impactful aquatic organisms and are one of the most abundant metazoans on the planet (Humes, 1994, Turner 2004). They drive nutrient cycling in the ocean (Dam and Baumann 2017, Steinberg *et al*., 2017, Richardson *et al*., 2008, Frangoulis et al., 2010), connect primary producers and the microbial food web to upper-level consumers (Dam and Baumann 2017, Liu et al., 2017), and transport carbon to the benthos (Dam and Baumann 2017, Richardson *et al*., 2008). Additionally, copepods have relatively short generation times, making them valuable sentinels of change in aquatic ecosystems (Hays et al., 2005, Liu et al., 2017, Richardson et al., 2008, Dam, 2013). Their short generation time also allows for tractable studies regarding evolutionary response to environmental change. Importantly, copepods are a critical food source for ecologically and economically important fishes (Steinberg et al., 2017, Richardson et al., 2008). Therefore, knowledge of their tolerance to climate change is relevant to food web stability and fisheries health.

Here, I combined experimental methods with environmental data science to reveal determinants of thermal tolerance and potential vulnerability of copepods to changing climate conditions. My work is subdivided into three chapters 1) Temperature and Patterns of Occurrence and Abundance of Key Copepod Taxa in the Northeast Pacific, 2) Developmental Temperature more than Long-Term Evolution Defines Thermal Tolerance in an Estuarine Copepod, and 3) Latitudinal and Life Stage Differences in High Temperature and Low Salinity Tolerance in an Estuarine Copepod. Each chapter fulfills the respective specific aims, 1) Identify vulnerability of an ecologically and economically impactful copepod to ocean warming and marine heatwaves, 2) Reveal the relative roles and limitations of plasticity and adaptation in the copepod response to ocean warming, 3) Elucidate the impact of collection location and life history stage on the thermal tolerance of copepods. The fulfillment of these aims contributes to the fields of marine ecology, evolutionary biology, and thermal physiology while also furthering knowledge about aquatic ectotherm resilience to global change. Assessments of thermal tolerance and adaptive capacity are important for determining future species persistence in the face of climate change (Nicotra et al., 2015, Bernhardt et al., 2013, Collin et al., 2021). Additionally, the literature calls for vulnerability assessments and biodiversity management efforts that incorporate evolutionary capacity and plasticity (Hoffmann and Sgrò 2011, Ofori et al., 2017). Importantly, ignoring the components of adaptive capacity can influence the results of species vulnerability assessments (Ofori et al., 2017). This motivates my research on the thermal limits, evolutionary capacity, and thermal tolerance plasticity of copepods.

4

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# <span id="page-16-0"></span>**CHAPTER I**: TEMPERATURE AND PATTERNS OF OCCURRENCE AND ABUNDANCE OF KEY COPEPOD TAXA IN THE NORTHEAST PACIFIC

#### <span id="page-16-1"></span>**Abstract**

The Northeast Pacific is a highly heterogeneous and productive ecosystem, yet it is vulnerable to climate change and extreme events such as marine heat waves. Recent heat wave induced die-offs of fish, marine mammals, and seabirds in the Gulf of Alaska were associated with the loss of large, lipid-rich copepods, which are a vital food resource for forage fishes. The critical and temperature sensitive role of copepods in this ecosystem motivates our investigation into the impacts of temperature on copepod occurrence, abundance, and phenology. Here, we pair long term *in situ* copepod data from Continuous Plankton Recorder surveys with satellite temperature data to determine the influence of water temperature on three key copepod taxa: *Neocalanus plumchrus*, *Calanus pacificus*, and *Oithona spp*. Through the use of linear models and thermal threshold methods, we demonstrate that *N. plumchrus* is most vulnerable to warming and future marine heat waves in this region. Linear models demonstrate that *N. plumchrus* abundance is negatively related to temperature, and thermal threshold methods reveal that *N. plumchrus* has an upper thermal threshold of 11.5°C for occurrence, and 10.5°C for abundance. Additionally, examining *N. plumchrus* abundance before and during the 2014–2016 marine heat wave demonstrates reduced species abundance during past warming events*. Oithona spp.* and *C. pacificus* appear to be less vulnerable to warm temperatures. However, their presence will not be sufficient to supplement the loss of the larger-bodied and lipid-rich *N. plumchrus*. Our findings demonstrate the power of using

long-term *in situ* data to determine thermal tolerances, and suggest the need to further examine the potential resilience of *N. plumchrus* to climate change.

**Keywords**: copepod, thermal threshold, *in situ* data, Continuous Plankton Recorder, marine heat wave, phenology, climate change, Northeast Pacific

#### <span id="page-17-0"></span>**Introduction**

The Northeast Pacific's highly productive and diverse ecosystems (Weingartner et al., 2002; Sousa et al., 2016) are marked by variation in temperature across regions, seasons, years, and long-term patterns of climate variability (Benson and Trites, 2002; Batten et al., 2006; Janout et al., 2010; Johnstone and Mantua, 2014; Hill et al., 2015). Recently, the Northeast Pacific (NEP) experienced increasingly frequent warm-water periods, including an intense marine heat wave (MHW) during 2014–2016 (Di Lorenzo and Mantua, 2016), and again in 2019 (Amaya et al., 2020). The biological effects of these MHWs were dramatic across trophic levels, with changes in plankton community composition and die-offs of fish, marine mammals, and seabirds (Cavole et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2018; Peña et al., 2019; Piatt et al., 2020). With the apparent increase in the magnitude and frequency of MHWs globally (Scheffers et al., 2016; Frölicher et al., 2018; Oliver et al., 2018), understanding the impact of these events is critical for predicting future ecosystem and fisheries health and productivity under changing conditions.

In the NEP, MHW induced die-offs of Coho salmon and Alaskan walleye pollock were attributed to the loss of large lipid-rich copepods in the diet of juvenile stages

(Cavole et al., 2016). Additionally, mortality seen in marine mammals and seabirds was likely caused by losses of forage fishes, which also rely on copepods for food (Cavole et al., 2016; Piatt et al., 2020). A challenge in studying the impact of MHW on copepods is the availability of long-term *in situ* data. While there are many laboratory studies investigating thermal responses of copepods (Kelly et al., 2012; Pereira et al., 2017; Sasaki and Dam, 2019), geographically comprehensive *in situ* datasets can be cost prohibitive. In the NEP, the Continuous Plankton Recorder survey (CPR; Batten et al., 2003a; Reid et al., 2003) has collected consistent *in situ* data each year since 2000, providing a unique opportunity to study the responses of multiple copepod taxa to a wide range of thermal conditions. In this study, we pair 16 years of CPR data with temperature data to examine the impact of temperature on patterns of occurrence, abundance, and phenology of copepods in the Gulf of Alaska (GoA). This study spans the extreme MHW of 2014–2016, allowing us to examine the impacts of this event on copepods in the region.

To represent taxa with different life histories and biogeographic affinities, we examined the abundance of three dominant taxa in the NEP: *Neocalanus plumchrus*, *Calanus pacificus*, and *Oithona spp*. *N. plumchrus* are large-bodied (3.0– 4.5 mm) and lipid-rich, dominating the mesoplankton biomass in the spring and early summer (Batten et al., 2003b; Batten and Mackas, 2009; McKinstry and Campbell, 2018). *C. pacificus* are medium-sized (1.5–2.5 mm), and found throughout the NEP, and in mid to high latitudes (Coyle and Pinchuk, 2003, 2005; Lee et al., 2006; Liu and Hopcroft, 2007; Nuwer et al., 2008). *Oithona spp*. are smaller (∼1 mm) and occur from tropical to polar environments (Hansen et al., 2004; Madsen et al., 2008; Dvoretsky and Dvoretsky, 2009). *C. pacificus*

and *Oithona spp*. contain modest lipid stores, yet are an important food resource for fish after *N. plumchrus* exit the surface waters in mid-summer to diapause at depth (Coyle and Pinchuk, 2003, 2005; Kobari et al., 2004; Hopcroft et al., 2005; Ward and Hirst, 2007). These taxa also have different thermal affinities, with *N. plumchrus* favoring generally cooler waters, *C. pacificus* favoring warm waters, and *Oithona spp*. being found at a wide range of temperatures (Kobari and Ikeda, 2001; Coyle and Pinchuk, 2003; Batten and Walne, 2011; Castellani et al., 2016). While *C. pacificus* and *Oithona spp*. may be resilient to changing ocean temperatures, *N. plumchrus* seasonal abundance is sensitive to warming. *N. plumchrus* biomass peaks appeared earlier in warmer years, and narrowed in width in 2000–2007, as compared to 1957–1965 (Mackas et al., 1998, 2007; Batten and Mackas, 2009). The mechanism for this shift is not well-known, though it is likely that warmer environmental temperatures play a role (Batten and Mackas, 2009).

Here, we investigate temperature associated changes in copepod occurrence and abundance by: (1) Examining the relationship between copepod occurrence and abundance and temperature in the NEP through the use of General Linear Models (GLM) and thermal threshold methods, (2) Identifying how copepod abundance varies in space by subdividing our study area, and characterizing regional thermal regimes, and (3) Demonstrating how copepod abundance varies in time, both across seasons and years in relation to temperature. We hypothesize that *Neocalanus plumchrus* occurrence and abundance will decrease with warming, *Calanus pacificus* occurrence and abundance will increase with warming, and *Oithona spp*. occurrence and abundance will show no significant relationship with temperature. Additionally, we hypothesize that warming will impact the phenology (timing of abundance) of *N. plumchrus*, resulting in earlier and

more narrow abundance peaks in warmer years. Results from this study have implications for the effects of continuous warming and MHWs on zooplankton, and the future health of this biologically diverse and vital marine ecosystem.

#### <span id="page-20-0"></span>**Methods**

# **Data**

We obtained copepod data from the North Pacific CPR Survey (Batten et al., 2003a; Reid et al., 2003). The CPR was towed behind commercial ships at about 7 m of depth, and filtered plankton from the water through a band of  $270 \mu m$  mesh. The continuous mesh record was divided into discrete samples, each representing 18.5 km of each sampling voyage. Every fourth sample was microscopically processed to provide taxonomically-resolved abundance data for the zooplankton retained on the filtering mesh (CPR; Batten et al., 2003a; Reid et al., 2003).

The North Pacific CPR survey consists of transects that span the Gulf of Alaska (Figure 1). Sampling along these transects began in March 2000, and samples have been processed through 2016. The first transect is 2,200 km long, sampling from Juan de Fuca Strait to Cook Inlet, Alaska, monthly from approximately April to September. Prior to 2004 this transect began in California and ended at the entrance to Prince William Sound, Alaska. The second transect is 6,500 km long and samples from Juan de Fuca Strait to Asia, typically passing through the Aleutian Islands. This transect is sampled three times a year in the spring, summer, and fall. Additionally, we used data from a subregion where

two CPR transects overlap that were sampled at a higher temporal resolution (nine samplings over a six-month period) in the eastern Gulf of Alaska (48N to 55N and 145W to 130W). These data were analyzed by Batten and Mackas (2009), and were updated here to include data through 2018. The higher resolution samples from this subregion facilitated our analysis of seasonal shifts in *Neocalanus plumchrus* abundance with warming.

The plankton data were filtered to include only our three focal taxa: *Neocalanus plumchrus*, *Calanus pacificus*, and *Oithona spp*. Additionally, we filtered the data to include only samples from May through August, to capture warm months that may limit *N. plumchrus* occurrence and abundance. Counts for *Calanus pacificus* and *Oithona spp*. were of late stage copepodites [Copepodite stage 5 (CV)] and adult copepods. However, *Neocalanus plumchrus* counts were only of CV copepodites, as adults are found exclusively in deep waters and are not sampled by the CPR (Batten et al., 2003b; Batten and Mackas, 2009).

Sea surface temperature (SST) data for this analysis came from two sources: the NASA Multi-Scale Ultra High Resolution SST dataset (JPL MUR MEaSUREs Project, 2015), and the Met Office Hadley Centre SST reanalysis dataset (HadISST 1, Rayner et al., 2003). MUR-SST merges multiple satellite datasets to obtain daily global SST at 1km resolution starting in 2002. The MUR-SST data was co-located with each CPR sample and averaged over a region of 0.5° for the 15 days prior to the sampling date. We used the MUR-SST data from May through August for GLM and thermal threshold analyses. The HadISST dataset provides global SST at 1° spatial resolution and monthly temporal

resolution, with data available since the 1800's. We used the HadISST dataset for our phenology and annual SST analyses because it spans a longer time frame, and Spearman's correlation coefficient demonstrated that HadISST and MUR-SST are highly correlated  $(r = 0.96$  at a 15-day resolution for MUR-SST, Supplementary Figure 1).

Bathymetric data to delimit regions were obtained from the ETOPO1 dataset, which has a 1 arc-minute resolution<sup>1</sup>. This dataset was also co-located with each CPR sample to determine which region each sample belonged to. The entire study region was then subdivided into four areas: three regions over the continental slope out to 3000 m depth and one oceanic region deeper than 3000 m. The shelf regions were divided into western (between −175W and −155W), northern (between −155W and −140W) and eastern regions (east of −136W). The continental shelf and slope are characterized by strong currents, with the meandering and 'warm' Alaska Coastal Current in the east, to the faster and narrower Alaska Stream in the north, and leading to the fast and cold current through the Unimak Pass into the Bering Sea in the west. The oceanic area has less water movement, as it is home to the Alaska Gyre and mesoscale eddies that are separate from the Alaska Coastal Current (Crawford et al., 2007; Henson and Thomas, 2008).

<sup>1</sup> https://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/mgg/global/

#### **Modeling Abundance**

To explore the relationship of copepod abundance to temperature, we log-transformed counts  $\log 10(N + 1)$ , and performed a GLM (assuming normal distributions). We examined the relationships between taxon abundance and co-located MUR-SST, date,

depth, and region. The Variance Inflation Factor was recorded for each model to identify the extent of multicollinearity in the data. While our emphasis is on the impact of temperature, date was included in the models because *Neocalanus plumchrus* are highly seasonal in their abundance. Additionally, region and depth were included due to the spatial heterogeneity of oceanographic characteristics in the study region. Regional definitions were the same as the ones used above (section "Data"). Water depth was defined as a binary variable, separating shelf/slope, and oceanic habitats as being less or greater than 3000 m of depth. The influence of two-way interaction terms was also explored in our models, when applicable.

To determine the impact of warm water years on *Neocalanus plumchrus* abundance, we used the marine heat wave of 2014– 2016 as a natural experiment. This was done by categorizing years as marine heat wave years, or not, and running a one-way ANOVA to examine the effect of marine heat wave years on log10(N + 1) counts of *N. plumchrus* abundance.

#### **Thermal Thresholds**

Thermal thresholds were calculated by looking at rapid and large changes in occurrence and abundance with the co-located MURSST for each taxon (Carstensen et al., 2012). The temperature range was divided into  $1^{\circ}$ C bins, and for copepod data falling in each bin we used two metrics: (i) percentage of occurrence relative to the total number of samples in the bin, and (ii) the 95th percentile of abundance. We used the 95th percentile for abundance because we were interested in how temperature limits

occurrence and abundance, and because it summarized the shape of the distribution of the abundance data (Supplementary Figures 2–4). A cut-off of 20% of the maximum value of the abundance metric for all temperatures was designated as an effective lower limit. When the percent occurrence or the 95th percentile of abundance for a given temperature-bin crossed and stayed beyond this cut-off, we classified this point as the thermal threshold for that taxon. Thresholds were calculated across all regions, and also for each region separately. We also examined differences in thermal thresholds by month and depth. Additionally, regional HadISST time series data were analyzed to investigate how often upper thermal thresholds were crossed. This was done to indicate how often taxa were outside of their thermal threshold, allowing for the inference of potential impacts of warming to future copepod occurrence and abundance in this region.

#### **Phenology of** *Neocalanus plumchrus* **With Temperature**

As noted above, *Neocalanus plumchrus* are highly seasonal in surface waters. Additionally, data prior to 2009 indicate that peaks in *N. plumchrus* abundance narrowed and shifted earlier in warmer years (Mackas et al., 1998, 2007; Batten and Mackas, 2009). To identify if these shifts in phenology continued through 2018, changes in the timing and width of the *N. plumchrus* abundance peak were assessed. This was done by using the high temporal resolution data set described in section "Data". The higher temporal resolution allowed for a more accurate depiction of the shape and timing of the abundance peak. Cumulative integration was performed through each year of the abundance vs. date curve. Abundance peak was taken to be the midpoint of the season, when the cumulative curve reached the 50th percentile. The cohort width was the number of days between the 25th and 75th percentile. These data were paired with annual mean HADISST and 1 year lagged annual mean HADISST to see the relationship between temperature and cohort width, and between temperature and the midpoint of the annual abundance peak (Batten and Mackas, 2009). This was done by running four separate linear models: one looking at the influence of annual SST on cohort width, one looking at the influence of lagged annual SST on cohort width, one looking at the influence of SST on abundance peak midpoint, and one looking at the influence of lagged annual SST on abundance peak midpoint. We examined annual 1 year lagged HadISST in addition to annual SST, because it was identified as the strongest determinant of cohort width and midpoint in Batten and Mackas (2009).

#### <span id="page-25-0"></span>**Results**

#### **Modeling Abundance**

*Neocalanus plumchrus* abundance was best modeled by temperature, date, and water depth (Table 1). Increasing date and temperature reduced *N. plumchrus* abundance, and abundance was greater in oceanic habitats. In comparison, the best model for *Calanus pacificus* abundance included temperature and region as independent variables. *C. pacificus* abundance increased with increasing temperature, and the oceanic region had a higher abundance as compared to the shelf/slope regions in the east, north, and west. The best model for *Oithona spp*. abundance also included temperature and region as independent variables. Temperature was negatively related to *Oithona spp*. abundance, while the oceanic region had higher *Oithona spp*. abundance as compared to the eastern

and northern regions. All models had relatively low explanatory power, with the model for *N. plumchrus* explaining the largest amount of variation in abundance, at 15%. The low explanatory power in these models is likely due to the large sample size and high variability in the data (Table 1).

Results from our marine heat wave analysis demonstrated that *Neocalanus plumchrus* was less abundant during the  $2014-2016$  marine heat wave ( $p = 0.0006$ ) (Supplementary Figure 5).

# **Thermal Thresholds**

*Neocalanus plumchrus* was found at a range of temperatures from 3.68–12.99◦C, with an upper-end abundance thermal threshold of 10.5°C (Figure 2), and an occurrence upper threshold of 11.5°C. *Calanus pacificus* was found at temperatures ranging from 4.25 to 15.56°C, with occurrence and abundance of *C. pacificus* showing a low-end thermal threshold of 7.5 and 8.5°C, respectively, (Figure 2). While *C. pacificus* abundance dipped below the 20% cut-off between 12 and 13°C, it did not have an upper thermal threshold (Figure 2) in this dataset. *Oithona spp*. was present at temperatures ranging from 3.68 to 15.66°C, with relatively low, but consistent occurrence across all temperatures (Figure 2). *Oithona spp*. abundance was variable, but overall lower for higher temperatures (Figure 2). While *Oithona spp*. abundance dipped below our 20% cut-off at 9.5°C and 12.5°C, it did not have an upper thermal threshold in this dataset. The profile of the 95th percentile of abundance with temperature was similar between

shelf/slope and oceanic habitats for each taxon (Supplementary Figure 6). The 95th percentile of abundance did vary for taxa among regions (Supplementary Figure 7).

Interestingly, in years where mean temperature was above the regional thermal threshold, *Neocalanus plumchrus* had reduced mean abundance (Figure 3). These results corroborate our Marine Heat Wave analysis, by showing reduced *N. plumchrus* abundance during the Marine Heat Wave of 2014–2016. Thermal thresholds were relatively stable across months for *N. plumchrus* and *Calanus pacificus* (Supplementary Figures 8–11). Monthly changes in thermal thresholds revealed a dip in *Oithona spp*. abundance in July and August (Supplementary Figures 10, 11).

Historical HadISST data demonstrated that temperatures in the eastern region rarely surpassed the 10.5°C *Neocalanus plumchrus* abundance threshold in May (Figure 4). However, temperatures in this region frequently exceeded the 10.5°C *N. plumchrus* abundance threshold and the 11.5°C *N. plumchrus* occurrence threshold in June. Temperatures in the eastern region were exclusively above both thresholds in July (Figure 4). In the northern, western, and oceanic regions temperatures never surpassed either thermal threshold in May. In June, the northern region rarely exceeded the 10.5°C abundance and 11.5°C occurrence thresholds, and the western and oceanic regions never exceeded these thresholds. Temperatures in the northern, and oceanic regions frequently surpassed both the 10.5°C abundance and 11.5°C occurrence threshold in July. However, temperatures in the western region rarely surpassed the 10.5°C abundance threshold in July.

#### **Phenology of** *Neocalanus plumchrus* **With Warming**

Our results supported those of Batten and Mackas (2009), with the midpoint of the *Neocalanus plumchrus* abundance peak appearing earlier in warmer years for both annual SST and 1 year lagged annual SST ( $p = 0.019$  and  $p = 0.006$ , respectively) (Figure 5A). However, while Batten and Mackas (2009) saw a narrowing of cohort width, we did not find a significant relationship between annual mean SST or one-year lag mean HADISST and cohort width ( $p = 0.45$  and  $p = 0.24$ , respectively) (Figure 5B). Interestingly our results show a more significant relationship between lagged annual mean SST than annual mean SST with no lag.

#### <span id="page-28-0"></span>**Discussion**

Results from our GLM and thermal threshold analyses supported hypotheses that *Neocalanus plumchrus* occurrence/abundance had a negative relationship, and *Calanus pacificus* occurrence/abundance had a positive relationship with temperature. However, our results did not support our hypothesis that *Oithona spp*. occurrence/abundance had no relationship with temperature, with *Oithona spp*. abundance decreasing with increasing temperatures. Importantly, results from our marine heat wave analysis indicated that *N. plumchrus* had reduced abundance during the marine heat wave of 2014–2016. Additionally, results from our *N. plumchrus* phenology analysis supported our hypothesis that warming affected the phenology of *N. plumchrus*. Overall, our results indicate that future warming may impact patterns of copepod occurrence/abundance, particularly for the subarctic-water favoring species *N. plumchrus*.

#### **Modeling Occurrence and Abundance**

Our GLM demonstrated that *Neocalanus plumchrus* abundance decreases with increasing temperature. Our analysis also showed a negative relationship between *N. plumchrus* abundance and date. This is in line with our hypothesis, as *N. plumchrus* has a strong seasonal expression in surface waters (Batten et al., 2003b; Batten and Mackas, 2009). We found that the *N. plumchrus* abundance increased with water depth. *N. plumchrus* is known to be a pelagic species that occupies areas off the shelf/slope (Mauchline, 1998). Therefore, it is not surprising that their occurrence increased with increasing water depth. Somewhat surprisingly, our results revealed that region did not explain any more of the variance in *N. plumchrus* abundance than water depth. Additionally, our marine heat wave and thermal threshold analyses demonstrated that *N. plumchrus* was less abundant in marine heat wave years (Figure 3 and Supplementary Figure 5). This aligns with our characterization of *N. plumchrus* as a cool water favoring species, and is supported by work done in the California Current demonstrating reductions in cool water favoring copepods during the 2014–2016 Marine Heatwave (Peterson et al., 2017). Together, this indicates that *N. plumchrus* and other cool water copepods may be vulnerable to increasing frequency and intensity of marine heat waves with warming.

While *Oithona spp*. abundance decreased with increasing temperature, *Calanus pacificus* abundance increased with increasing temperature. Neither *C. pacificus* or *Oithona spp*. had a significant relationship with date. However, region did add significant value to the models of *C. pacificus* and *Oithona spp*. abundance. Interestingly, *C.* 

*pacificus* had the highest abundance in the oceanic region, indicating that *C. pacificus* and *Neocalanus plumchrus* are both oceanic species. *Oithona spp*. also had increased abundance in the oceanic region.

It is important to note that our models explained only up to 15% of the variance in taxon abundance. Therefore, this analysis serves as an initial exploration of potential drivers of abundance, rather than a method for prediction. The low explanatory power of our models is primarily due to the very large sampling region and substantial variability observed in the data. The variability in this dataset may be related to patchiness in the spatial distribution of plankton (Mackas et al., 1985). There are other potential drivers of spatial variability that we did not examine, such as current patterns, primary production, and predator-prey dynamics (Mackas et al., 1985). While these other variables may contribute to patterns of abundance, we focused here on SST due to its importance in our study region, its ability to be accurately measured, and the direct and indirect effects it has on copepod abundance.

#### **Thermal Thresholds and Implications for Climate Change**

In support of our regression analyses, the thermal threshold analysis revealed an upper thermal threshold of 10.5°C for *Neocalanus plumchrus* abundance, and an upper threshold of 11.5°C for *N. plumchrus* occurrence. Our analysis demonstrated that thermal thresholds limit abundance, with years where mean temperature exceeded regional *N. plumchrus* thermal thresholds coinciding with reduced *N. plumchrus* abundance (Figure 3). Additionally, we found that temperatures in the eastern, northern, and oceanic regions

regularly exceeded the occurrence and abundance thermal thresholds in months where *N. plumchrus* is known to occupy the surface waters (Figure 4). Together these results indicate that *N. plumchrus* may be vulnerable to continually warming water temperatures and future marine heatwaves. This potential vulnerability of *N. plumchrus* to warming is supported by other studies in the Northeast Pacific that have seen the loss of large lipid rich copepods with warming (Peterson et al., 2017).

Our threshold analysis revealed no upper thermal threshold for *Calanus pacificus*. This supports existing knowledge of *C. pacificus* as a warm water favoring species that has been shown to possess a positive relationship with temperature (Coyle and Pinchuk, 2003; Batten and Walne, 2011). Interestingly, there was a lower thermal threshold of occurrence at 7.5°C and abundance at 8.5°C. Regional climatology indicates that *C. pacificus* may appear earlier and in higher abundances in the western, northern, and oceanic regions with warming (Supplementary Figure 12). Our results align well with findings demonstrating increased abundances of *C. pacificus* in the Northeast Pacific in warm years associated with Marine Heat Waves (Peterson et al., 2017; Fisher et al., 2020). We did see a dip in abundance and occurrence for *C. pacificus* between temperatures 12–13°C. We hypothesize that this dip may correspond to the end of a first cohort and beginning of a second cohort in warmer shelf/slope regions in the north and the east (Supplementary Figure 3; Conover, 1988; Osgood and Frost, 1994).

Our thermal threshold analysis did not reveal any thresholds of occurrence or abundance for *Oithona spp*. This aligns well with the wide range of latitudes and temperatures that *Oithona spp*. is known to occupy (Ward and Hirst, 2007; Zamora-Terol et al., 2014; Castellani et al., 2016). There was a dip in abundance and occurrence between 10 and 13°C. This break in abundance may reflect reduced abundance values seen in July and August (Supplementary Figures 10, 11). Alternatively, gaps in abundance and occurrence could correspond with differing species within the *Oithona* genus. Data from our study region demonstrates that species *O. similis* dominates the water column at >50% abundance (Pers.Comm. Moira Galbraith). However, *O. atlantica*, *O. setigera*, and *O. tenuis* are also found in our study region (Pers.Comm. Moira Galbraith). While warming temperatures may not limit *Calanus pacificus* and *Oithona spp*. occurrence or abundance, the vulnerability of *Neocalanus plumchrus* to warming could have dire consequences. *N. plumchrus* are a vital source of nutrient dense biomass that cannot be supplemented by smaller warm water species, such as *C. pacificus* or *Oithona spp*. (Mackas et al., 1998; Evanson et al., 2000; Batten et al., 2003b; Batten and Mackas, 2009; Cavole et al., 2016; McKinstry and Campbell, 2018). This is particularly concerning for the economically and culturally important fish, marine mammals, and seabirds that rely on *N. plumchrus* as a food source (Kawamura and Hirano, 1985; Mackas et al., 1998; McKinstry and Campbell, 2018).

#### **Phenology of** *Neocalanus plumchrus* **With Warming**

Our results demonstrated that the seasonal surface appearance of *Neocalanus plumchrus* was earlier with warmer temperatures. These results corroborate previous work demonstrating earlier shifts in the abundance peak of *N. plumchrus* (Batten and Mackas, 2009). Bertram et al. (2001) linked warm spring water temperatures, and the earlier appearance of copepods, with reduced reproductive success in Cassin's auklet.

With continued warming, we could see additional impacts of these seasonal shifts in abundance on upper trophic levels that rely on *N. plumchrus* as a primary food source. Unlike Batten and Mackas (2009), we did not see a statistically significant effect of temperature on cohort width in the longer time series examined here. However, with further temperature increases in this region there may be a stronger influence of temperature on cohort width in the future. Alternatively, there may be a limit to how narrow a cohort can be, or a limit to our power to detect changes in cohort width with our current sampling resolution.

Interestingly, we found 1 year lagged annual mean SST to be a stronger driver of abundance midpoint than annual mean SST. While same year mean SST influences the developmental time and time spent at the surface accumulating lipids for the current cohort, lagged annual mean SST reflects lipid stores and potential reproductive timing and success of adults that found the next generation. We hypothesize that temperatures experienced by the previous cohort have a stronger influence than temperatures experienced by earlier developmental stages of the same cohort due to the life history strategy of *Neocalanus plumchrus*. Subadult (copepodite stage V) and adult *N. plumchrus* spend the majority of time at depth, with only early to mid-copepodite stages occurring at the surface and experiencing the temperatures there (Batten and Mackas, 2009). At depth, animals are buffered from surface temperatures. Therefore, the temperatures and surface conditions experienced by copepodites of the previous annual cohort are likely to have a stronger impact on seasonal abundance timing of the next generation.

# **CONCLUSION**

Here, we demonstrated that a critical species in the trophic and ecosystem dynamics of the Northeast Pacific, *Neocalanus plumchrus*, is vulnerable to continued warming of the oceans due to anthropogenic climate change. This is of particular concern in our region of study, because of the recent history of intense marine heat waves, and the trophic dominance and nutritional importance of this species. Our results indicate that with increasing temperatures, *N. plumchrus* biomass may decline and there may be changes in their phenology, which could impact fish, marine mammals, and seabirds that rely on *N. plumchrus* as a food resource.

Future research should be aimed at better understanding the thermal tolerance of this important species and the direct versus indirect effects of temperature. Acclimating *Neocalanus plumchrus* to a range of temperatures and assessing their upper thermal limits would provide valuable information regarding the isolated effect temperature has on survival and performance. In addition, it would be of great value to understand the capacity of *N. plumchrus* to adapt in response to warming in the Northeast Pacific. This would provide critical information regarding the potential of *N. plumchrus* to respond to and persist despite rapidly changing ocean conditions.

# **DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT**

The data and code underlying this study have been made available on GitHub: https://github.com/27lsevier-institute/ ThermalPatterns\_Copepods\_NorthEastPacific.

#### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

LA wrote the manuscript text. LA, MG-R, and WS designed the experiment. LA and MG-R made the manuscript figures. WS assisted with statistical analyses. SB provided and advised on plankton data and helped write sections on phenology of *Neocalanus plumchrus* with temperature. MG-R and CG processed satellite temperature data. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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### **SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL**



**Supplementary Figure 1.** Spearman correlations between HadISST and MURSST show that they represent SST similarly, and there is little difference between time scales. As expected, the one-month means are the best fit. However, it is more likely that this is due to the temporal resolution.



**Supplementary Figure 2.** Log abundance values by temperature for *N. plumchrus*. Colors and symbols denote subregion.



**Supplementary Figure 3.** Log abundance values by temperature for *C. pacificus*. Colors and symbols denote subregion.



**Supplementary Figure 4.** Log abundance values by temperature for *Oithona spp*. Colors and symbols denote subregion.



**Supplementary Figure 5.** *N. plumchrus* abundance by marine heat wave status. Amb denotes samples taken in non-marine heat wave years. MHW denotes samples taken during the 2014-2016 marine heatwave.



Supplementary Figure 6. Plots represent 95<sup>th</sup> percentile for abundance. Red points represent oceanic samples (>3000m) and blue points represent shelf/slope samples (<3000m). The horizontal lines represent 20% of the maximum 95th percentile of abundance. A. Plot of *N. plumchrus* abundance. B. Plot of *C. pacificus* abundance. C. Plot of *Oithona spp*. abundance. D. Histogram depicting the distribution of temperatures for samples collected from each habitat type.



Supplementary Figure 7. Plots represent 95<sup>th</sup> percentile for abundance. Different colors and shapes represent different regions. The horizontal lines represent 20% of the maximum 95th percentile of abundance.A. Plot of *N. plumchrus* abundance. B. Plot of *C. pacificus* abundance. C. Plot of *Oithona spp*. abundance. D. Distribution of temperatures for samples collected from each region.



**Supplementary Figure 8.** Thermal threshold analysis for the month of May. Blue bars represent percent occurrence and red dots represent the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of abundance. The horizontal line represents 20% of the maximum 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of occurrence. All data are divided by 1°C SST (based on MUR-SST) bins. A. Plot of *N. plumchrus* occurrence and abundance. B. Plot of *C. pacificus* occurrence and abundance. C. Plot of *Oithona spp*. occurrence and abundance. D. Histogram of sample temperatures.



**Supplementary Figure 9.** Thermal threshold analysis for the month of June. Blue bars represent percent occurrence and red dots represent the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of abundance. The horizontal line represents 20% of the maximum 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of occurrence. All data are divided by 1°C SST (based on MUR-SST) bins. A. Plot of *N. plumchrus* occurrence and abundance. B. Plot of *C. pacificus* occurrence and abundance. C. Plot of *Oithona spp*. occurrence and abundance. D. Histogram of sample temperatures.



**Supplementary Figure 10.** Thermal threshold analysis for the month of July. Blue bars represent percent occurrence and red dots represent the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of abundance. The horizontal line represents 20% of the maximum 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of occurrence. All data are divided by 1°C SST (based on MUR-SST) bins. A. Plot of *N. plumchrus* occurrence and abundance. B. Plot of *C. pacificus* occurrence and abundance. C. Plot of *Oithona spp*. occurrence and abundance. D. Histogram of sample temperatures.



**Supplementary Figure 11.** Thermal threshold analysis for the month of August. Blue bars represent percent occurrence and red dots represent the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of abundance. The horizontal line represents 20% of the maximum 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of occurrence. All data are divided by 1°C SST (based on MUR-SST) bins. A. *N. plumchrus* occurrence and abundance. B. *C. pacificus* occurrence and abundance. C*. Oithona spp*. occurrence and abundance. D. Histogram of sample temperatures.





**Supplementary Figure 12.** Monthly mean HADISST per region per year. Color and y-axes indicate temperature. Black dotted line indicates the lower thermal threshold for *C. pacificus* occurrence and abundance (8.5°C). A. SST plots of eastern region. B. SST plots of northern region. C. SST plots of western region. D. SST plots of oceanic region.



**Supplementary Figure 13.** Distribution plots of focal taxa. The size of points represents abundance and color of points represent year. A. *N. plumchrus* distribution plot. B. *C. pacificus* distribution plot. C. *Oithona spp*. distribution plot.

# **Supplementary Table 1**







### **Supplementary Table 2**

**Supplementary Table 2.** All models tested for *C. pacificus* abundance. The highlighted row represents the selected model. Sample size is 1,069 observations.







#### **Supplementary Table 3**

**Supplementary Table 3.** All models tested for *Oithona spp*. abundance. The highlighted row represents the selected model. Sample size is 1,069 observations.







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### **Tables and Figures**



## **TABLE 1.** Model selection for copepod abundance.

#### **Figure legends**

**FIGURE 1**. Map of the Gulf of Alaska and eastern Bering Sea with symbols representing locations of Continuous Plankton Recorder samples. Colors and symbols indicate region: eastern shelf/slope, northern shelf/slope, western shelf/slope, and oceanic. Shelf/slope regions include samples 3,000 m depth.

**FIGURE 2.** The blue bars represent taxon percent occurrence in samples. Red dots indicate the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of taxon abundance. The horizontal line represents the thermal threshold based on the  $95<sup>th</sup>$  percentile of abundance metric (20% of the maximum value of 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of abundance metric for the region). Percent occurrence and 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of abundance for each taxon are from the entire study region and span the entire seasonal period. All data are divided by 1°C SST (based on MUR-SST) bins. (A) Plot of *Neocalanus plumchrus* occurrence and abundance. (B) Plot of *Calanus pacificus* occurrence and abundance. (C) Plot of *Oithona* spp. occurrence and abundance. (D) Histogram of sample temperatures.

**FIGURE 3.** Annual mean *Neocalanus plumchrus* abundance plotted by region. Years where temperatures exceed regional thermal thresholds are marked in red.

**FIGURE 4.** Monthly SST above (red) and below (blue) the 10.5°C threshold of abundance for *Neocalanus plumchrus* for the months of May, June, and July for each region. The horizontal dashed lines indicate 11.5°C threshold for occurrence. (A) Temperature plots for the eastern region. (B) Temperature plots for the northern region. (C) Temperature plots for the western region. (D) Temperature plots for the oceanic region.

**FIGURE 5.** (A) Plot of cohort abundance midpoint against one-year lag mean HadISST. (B) Plot of cohort width against one-year lag mean HadISST.







**Figure 2** 



**Figure 3** 







**Figure 5**

# **CHAPTER II**: DEVELOPMENTAL TEMPERATURE MORE THAN LONG-TERM EVOLUTION DEFINES THERMAL TOLERANCE IN AN ESTUARINE COPEPOD

#### **Abstract**

Estuarine organisms are experiencing increasingly variable temperature and salinity with climate change. Plasticity and adaptation are critical strategies for responding to environmental change, and understanding their role in response to climate change is essential for predicting species and ecosystem resilience. Here we characterized the response of the copepod, *Acartia tonsa*, to sequential temperature and salinity stress. Copepods originated from one of two >50 generation old temperature adapted lines: Ambient (AM, 18°C), and Ocean Warming (OW, 22°C). Copepods from these lines were subjected to one or three generations at the reciprocal temperature. Copepods from all treatments were then assessed for differences in temperature and salinity tolerance. Development, three generations, and >50 generations of warming increased thermal tolerance compared to Ambient conditions, with developmental OW resulting in equal thermal tolerance to three and >50 generations of OW. Strikingly, developmental OW and >50 generations of OW had no effect on low salinity tolerance relative to Ambient. By contrast, when environmental salinity was reduced first, copepods had lower thermal tolerances. These results highlight a critical role for plasticity in the copepod climate response and suggest that climate change may leave estuarine copepods vulnerable to increasingly variable temperature and salinity conditions.

**Keywords**: Plasticity, adaptation, thermal tolerance, salinity tolerance, climate change, copepod

#### **Introduction**

Mean water temperatures and variation in water temperature are expected to increase with climate change (Scheffers et al., 2016, Harley et al., 2006). Marine heat waves are also increasing in prevalence and duration, and the hydrological cycle is expected to intensify with increases in wet and dry extremes (Singh et al., 2013, Frölicher et al., 2018, Oliver et al. 2018). Organisms can use plasticity and adaptation to respond to these changes. Plasticity is the ability of genotypes to exhibit multiple phenotypes in response to environmental change (Fordyce et al., 2006, West-Eberhard 2003, Somero et al., 2017, Whitman et al., 2009). Adaptation is genetically-based phenotypic change driven by the process of selection that maximizes relative fitness in a given environment (Hartl, 2000, Hendry, 2016). Importantly, plasticity can result in new phenotypes within a generation, while adaptation acts across generations (Hartl, 2000, Somero et al., 2017). Understanding the relative roles of plasticity and adaptation in the response to a changing climate will reveal the potential tolerances and vulnerabilities of marine organisms.

Estuaries are excellent ecosystems for understanding population-level responses to a variety of stressors. Estuarine ecosystems are characterized by a temporally and spatially dynamic physical environment, with regular and stochastic variation in temperature and salinity (Najjar et al., 2000, Moyle et al., 2010). These complex ecosystems foster high productivity, and support large populations of fish, mammals, birds, and invertebrates (Harris et al., 2016, Moyle et al., 2010). Copepods are critical

members of estuarine ecosystems, connecting primary producers to higher trophic levels, contributing to biogeochemical cycling, and providing a vital food source to forage fishes (Richardson et al., 2008, Steinberg et al., 2017). Copepods are also excellent sentinels of environmental change, as their short generation times allow them to closely mirror changing environmental conditions (Dam 2013). Further, copepods are ideal models for lab experiments. They are easily cultured in a lab setting, and have short generation times, facilitating their study across generations.

*Acartia tonsa* is a globally distributed, numerically dominant, estuarine copepod (González 1974, Calliari et al., 2008, Johnson and Allen 2012), which makes a suitable model for global change studies*. Acartia tonsa* is a generalist with respect to temperature and salinity, and highly responsive and relatively robust to anthropogenic warming (Rice et al., 2015, Rice et al., 2016, Rahlff et al., 2017, Garzke et al., 2015). Both plasticity and adaptation play a critical role in the *A. tonsa* response to temperature variation. Plasticity affects the thermal tolerance of *A. tonsa*, with populations that develop at higher temperatures having higher thermal tolerances (Sasaki and Dam 2019). Additionally, *A. tonsa* subjected to 25 generations of experimental Ocean Warming show increased performance and fitness over time, indicating adaptation to Ocean Warming (Dam et al., 2021). While the influence of adaptation and plasticity on *A. tonsa* thermal tolerance is characterized, the relative importance and potential limitations of these two strategies remains unknown.

Despite thermal tolerance plasticity and adaptive capacity of *A. tonsa* to ocean warming, exposure to chronic ocean warming may leave *A. tonsa* vulnerable to additional stressors. With warming, ectotherms experience increases in metabolic rate and therefore have a higher energetic demand (Kelly et al., 2016, Sheridan and Bickford 2011, Garzke et al., 2015), which may come at the expense of energy available for the acute response to temperature or salinity change. Additionally, rapid response to temperature change may limit the capacity of *A. tonsa* to respond to additional stressors such as salinity, if traits lack modularity or if adaptation reduces standing genetic diversity for tolerance to other stressors (Ellegren and Galtier 2016, Jump and Penuelas 2005). *A. tonsa* populations exposed to warming demonstrate increases in thermal performance across generations which are correlated with decreases in thermal tolerance plasticity (Sasaki and Dam 2021). Therefore, increasingly dynamic estuaries may leave rapidly responsive *A. tonsa* populations vulnerable to unpredictable acute changes in temperature and salinity.

Here, we measured the impact of developmental, short-term, and long-term multigenerational exposure to Ocean Warming (OW) on acute temperature and salinity tolerance. This experimental design allowed us to examine plastic and genetic responses to temperature in *A. tonsa*. We predicted developmental exposure (one generation), shortterm adaptation (three generations), and long-term adaptation (>50 generations) to OW would increase copepod tolerance to acute heat stress. Specifically, we anticipated that tolerance to acute heat stress would increase proportionally to the length of the temperature treatment. Additionally, we predicted that any experimental exposure to OW would reduce copepod tolerance to acute salinity stress.
# **Methods**

# **2.1 Collection and Culture**

Animals originated from Ambient (AM) and Ocean Warming (OW) lineages from a long-term multigenerational experiment (Dam et al., 2021). Adult *Acartia tonsa* were collected from the Long Island Sound (41.3°N, 72.0°W; Groton, CT, USA) in June 2016 using a 250 µm plankton net with a solid cod end. Animals were raised as stock cultures at the University of Connecticut, Avery Point campus (Dam et al. 2021) for three generations before splitting them into four replicates each at AM (18°C), and OW conditions (22°C). Replicates were seeded by eight stock cultures with 160 female, and 80 male adult copepods (Dam et al., 2021). Replicates were fed *ad libitum* with a mixture of the phytoplankters *Rhodomonas sp.*, *Tetraselmis sp*., and *Thalassiosira weissflogii*  (Dam et al., 2021). Replicates were maintained at a salinity ranging from 31-36ppt (Dam et al., 2021). Copepod and algal cultures were maintained on a 12:12 light dark cycle. Algal cultures were intentionally raised at AM temperature (18°C) to avoid potential changes in nutritional content if they were cultured at OW.

After >50 generations, animals from all eight replicates (two treatments, with four replicates per treatment) were transferred to the University of Vermont in October 2019. Organisms were transported at 18°C for five hours and returned to their respective temperature conditions upon arrival at UVM. Light and food conditions were maintained the same as at Avery Point. After an additional three generations in the lab, copepods from three replicates at AM and four replicates at OW were assessed for their Upper Lethal Temperature (ULT) (Figure 1).

# **2.2 Upper Lethal Temperature (ULT) Assay**

To assess ULT, four adults from each replicate were placed in their own individual well of a 12-well plate with water at their treatment temperature, food replete conditions, and 30ppt salinity. Adults were isolated from the culture the day prior to the assay, and allowed to acclimate to the plate wells at their respective treatment temperatures overnight. The following day, plates were removed from incubators and plates from both treatments were equilibrated to room temperature. Plates were then sealed with parafilm and placed in a water bath where the temperature ramped from 22 to 34°C over 60 minutes (0.2°C/min), unmonitored. These temperatures were unmonitored because previous ULT assays in our lab demonstrated that they are sublethal to *Acartia tonsa* from the Long Island Sound (Supplemental Figure 1). Temperature was then ramped at a rate of 0.0125°C/ minute. Copepods were assessed for survival (no movement for 10 seconds after disturbing the water in the well) at every  $0.5^{\circ}$ C, until no surviving copepods remained.

# **2.3 Reciprocal Transplants**

To assess the relative importance of plasticity and adaptation in defining thermal tolerance we created two sets of reciprocal transplants. Transplant cultures were created by setting all adults from each replicate aside to lay eggs for 48 hours. Total eggs produced by each replicate were separated in half by volume and split between the control and reciprocal condition. Three reciprocal transplant cultures were assessed for

ULT after development from egg to adult (AM<sub>DevOW</sub>). The remaining three transplant cultures were assessed for ULT as adults after three generations at  $22^{\circ}C(AM_{3GensOW})$ . In comparing developmental warming  $(AM_{DevOW})$ , to three generations of warming  $(AM_{3GensOW})$ , to  $>50$  generations of warming (from our OW line), we can determine which treatment condition had the largest impact on thermal tolerance.

To test for relaxed selection and potential loss of thermal tolerance, eggs from the warming line replicates were used to seed transplant cultures at 18°C. Of the animals that were moved to ambient conditions, three replicate populations stayed there for development from egg to adult (OW<sub>DevAM</sub>), while the other three remained in ambient conditions for three generations (OW3GensAM). We measured ULT of four adult animals from each condition.

# **2.4 Temperature and Salinity Relationship**

To assess the effect of OW on salinity tolerance, animals from the AM, OW, and AMDevOW lines were assessed for their Lower Lethal Salinity (LLS). The LLS assay consisted of four adults from each replicate being placed in a 12-well plate. Wells did not contain food, and had a starting salinity of 30ppt. Temperature was maintained the same as the respective treatment temperature conditions.

Adults were isolated from the culture the day prior to the assay, and allowed to acclimate to the plate wells overnight. Adults started at 30ppt, and then salinity was reduced stepwise by full water replacement every 30 minutes from 30ppt to 20ppt, 15ppt, 10ppt, 8ppt, 6ppt, 4ppt, 2ppt, and 0ppt. Survival was monitored at every step. Preliminary experiments revealed limited mortality above 10ppt salinity (Supplemental Figure 2), therefore we focused on finer resolution increments at lower salinity levels.

To explore the relationship between temperature and salinity tolerance further, we reversed the order of events and measured the effect of low salinity acclimation on ULT. We took seven animals from each replicate of our AM line and acclimated them to three sublethal salinity conditions: 30ppt, 20ppt, and 15ppt. One third of adults  $(n = 7)$  started and remained at 30ppt, another set was moved stepwise from 30 ppt to 20ppt after 30 minutes ( $n = 7$ ), and another set was moved from 20 ppt to 15ppt after an additional 30 minutes ( $n = 7$ ). Animals were maintained at 18<sup>o</sup>C throughout the assay. After 12 hours of acclimation to the three salinity levels (with 100% survival), animals from all treatments were assessed for their ULT. ULT assays were performed at the respective acclimatized salinity.

To test how consistent the relationship between temperature and salinity tolerance was, we assessed animals from the experimental AM replicates as well as another more recent collection from Long Island Sound that had been acclimated to the lab (collected in July 2018, at Hammonasset Beach State Park, CT; 41.3°N, 72.5°W). For each population and salinity condition, we isolated seven adults, 42 adults total.

## **2.5 Data Analysis**

We assessed the normality of the data using the Shapiro-Wilk test and tested for homogeneity of variance using the Levene test. Our results indicated that our data were not normally distributed and did not have equal variance across replicates therefore differences between ULT and LLS were assessed using non-parametric methods.

Additionally, we performed the Levene test to reveal potential differences in variance among treatments. We used the non-parametric Aligned Rank Transform ANOVA in cases with more than one independent variable (Wobbrock et al., 2011). The ART ANOVA, and multifactor contrast tests, were performed using the R package ARTool (Wobbrock et al., 2011, Elkin et al., 2021). We used the Kruskal Wallis test when there was only one independent variable. The Dunn test was used as a post-hoc test when applicable. All analyses were performed in R version 4.0.3 (R Core Team 2020).

# Results

#### **3.1 Upper Lethal Temperature Assays**

Ocean warming (22 $^{\circ}$ C), whether for one, three, or  $>50$  generations resulted in increased thermal tolerance for copepods (Dunn test,  $Z = -3.65, -3.78, 2.85, P_{adj} = 0.002$ , 0.002, and 0.02 respectively; Figure 2). Importantly, there was no additional thermal tolerance gained for AM<sub>3Gens</sub>ow or OW compared to AM<sub>DevOW</sub> (Dunn test,  $Z = -0.39$ ,  $P_{\text{adj}}=0.69$  (AM<sub>3GensOW</sub>), Z= -0.81,  $P_{\text{adj}}=0.48$  (OW); Figure 2). In addition, AM<sub>DevOW</sub> had greater variance in ULT compared to all other treatment groups (Levene Test,  $P_{\text{adj}} =$  $0.001$  (AM),  $0.009$  (AM<sub>3GensOW</sub>), and  $0.004$  (OW)), suggesting that elevated temperature during development reveals a diversity of ULT phenotypes that are lost over subsequent generations.

# **3.2 Reciprocal Transplants**

To reveal any sustained benefits or costs of long-term adaptation to OW, animals from the OW line were transplanted into ambient conditions for one  $(OW<sub>DevAM</sub>)$  and three

generations (OW<sub>3GensAM</sub>). We found that after either OW<sub>DevAM</sub> or OW<sub>3GensAM</sub>, there was no significant loss of thermal tolerance (Figure 3, Dunn test,  $Z = 1.17, 1.95, P_{\text{adj}} = 0.36$  and 0.10, respectively). However, animals from both of these transplanted groups had intermediate thermal tolerances between the AM and OW line animals (Figure 3).

# **3.3 Temperature and Salinity Relationship**

To test for an effect of long- and short-term ocean warming on lower lethal salinity, we exposed AM, AM<sub>DevOW</sub>, and OW line animals to sequentially lower salinities. We found no effect of one or  $>50$  generations of ocean warming on low salinity tolerance relative to AM (Kruskal Wallis,  $X^2 = 0.81$ ,  $P=0.67$ , Figure 4), suggesting no costs of elevated temperature on low salinity tolerance. To test the reverse, if a low salinity environment affects thermal tolerance, we sequentially lowered the salinity from 30ppt, to 20ppt, to 15ppt for AM animals as well as a fresh collection of copepods also from the Long Island Sound that had been acclimated to the lab for at least three generations. We found that one day at a lower salinity of 15ppt reduced mean Upper Lethal Temperature of AM animals by  $0.6^{\circ}$ C (ART ANOVA, F= 6.98,  $P = 0.002$ ; Figure 5). Comparing among the salinity treatments, ULT was higher for copepods that stayed at 30ppt than copepods that were moved to 15ppt (ART ANOVA contrasts  $P < 0.004$ ). ULT was also higher for animals that were moved to 20ppt than animals that were moved to 15ppt (ART ANOVA contrasts  $P < 0.01$ ). Interestingly, although the two populations were collected from sites only 50 km apart in the Long Island Sound, we saw an effect of population on ULT (ART ANOVA,  $F= 48.94$ ,  $P < 0.0001$ ), with the fresh collection

having higher thermal tolerance and broader range of tolerances (Levene test, *Padj* = 0.02).

## **Discussion**

Here, we examined the effect of short and long-term Ocean Warming on acute temperature and salinity tolerance in the estuarine copepod *A. tonsa*. As predicted, warming for one ( $AM_{DevOW}$ ), three ( $AM_{3GenSOW}$ ), or >50 generations (OW) increased copepod tolerance to acute heat stress. However, thermal tolerance did not increase proportionally to the number of generations in elevated temperature conditions. Rather, copepods from Ambient conditions that developed at Ocean Warming (AM<sub>DevOW</sub>), spent three generations (AM<sub>3GensOW</sub>), or > 50 generations at  $22^{\circ}$ C (OW) had the same mean thermal tolerance. Developmental OW also revealed phenotypic diversity in thermal tolerance not present in the AM line, this diversity was subsequently lost after three and >50 generations of OW. Surprisingly, our prediction that experimental warming would reduce copepod tolerance to acute salinity stress was not supported, with no duration of experimental warming affecting lower lethal salinity. However, we did see a relationship between salinity and temperature tolerance, with animals acclimatized to lower environmental salinities having lower thermal tolerances. These results indicate copepods may be vulnerable to increasingly dynamic temperature and salinity conditions in estuarine ecosystems. Additionally, our results indicate that tolerance to one stressor is impacted by the occurrence of additional stressors. As oceans are multifaceted

ecosystems with many concurrent changing variables, it is essential to consider how these environmental stressors interact to determine organism tolerance.

We found that AM<sub>DevOW</sub> individuals had a higher thermal tolerance than AM animals. An additional three and  $>50$  generations at  $22^{\circ}$ C did not further improve thermal tolerance. This differs from *A. tonsa* LD<sub>50</sub> after experimental evolution to warming, which continuously improved across 40 generations (Sasaki and Dam, 2021). Differences here may be due to differences in the thermal tolerance metric assessed. Sasaki and Dam,  $2021$ , assessed LD<sub>50</sub>, the temperature at which 50% the population dies. In this study we assessed Upper Lethal Temperature, the temperature at which each individual copepod dies. Upper Lethal Temperature represents a hard physiological limit, and is likely more constrained than  $LD_{50}$  (Bennett et al., 2021).

Our results also indicate that adaptation does not impart any improvement in Upper Lethal Temperature, beyond plasticity. These results align well with existing research that demonstrates relatively high plasticity in the *A. tonsa* response to elevated temperature conditions (Rice et al., 2016, Rahlff et al., 2017, Garzke et al., 2015, Sasaki and Dam 2019). Our results also corroborate research in *Daphnia sp*., demonstrating that acclimation temperature has a larger impact on thermal tolerance than local adaptation (Yampolsky et al., 2014). Additionally, plasticity plays a larger role than genetic variation in determining temperature tolerance in *Drosophila melanogaster* (Ayrinhac et al., 2004 and Hoffmann et al., 2005). Together these results indicate that plasticity plays a critical role in thermal tolerance, particularly in the context of changing climate conditions. *A. tonsa* exhibited reduced transcriptional plasticity after long-term adaptation to concurrent warming and increased pCO2, while adaptation to the same combination of stressors reduced thermal tolerance plasticity (deMayo, et al. 2021, Brennan et al., 2022a). Consequently, thermal tolerance plasticity in *A. tonsa* may be dampened in the face of multiple climate stressors. Additionally, in response to heat tolerance selection the tidepool copepod, *Tigriopus californicus* demonstrated reduced phenotypic and gene expression plasticity (Kelly et al., 2017). Therefore, exposure to temperature stress alone can reduce the thermal tolerance plasticity of marine copepods.

Interestingly, AMDevOW revealed a wider range of Upper Lethal Temperature values than other treatment groups (Figure 2). This result supports theory and other empirical studies that suggest novel environments may disrupt organism homeostasis (Badyaev et al., 2005) and reveal trait variability that is otherwise hidden (Salinas et al., 2019, Badyaev et al., 2005). Importantly, AM<sub>DevOW</sub> also exhibited the highest observed thermal tolerances in our study (ULT  $>38$  °C) that were no longer observed after three and  $>50$ generations at 22°C, suggesting a possible cost of adaptation to warming. Additionally, we see decreasing thermal tolerances in  $OW<sub>DevAM</sub>$  and  $OW<sub>3GensAM</sub>$  compared to the OW line. This indicates that maintaining high thermal tolerances is potentially costly under ambient conditions, further indicating a cost of adaptation to warming temperatures. Importantly, treatment temperatures were static. Therefore, copepods in the AM3GensOW and >50 generations of warming (OW) treatments experienced no temperature variability in the generation prior to thermal tolerance assessment. This is distinct from the AM<sub>DevOW</sub> that experienced a temperature change from 18  $^{\circ}$ C to 22  $^{\circ}$ C during early development. Differences in trait variability may be due to this difference in exposure to temperature

variability rather than costs of maintaining high thermal tolerance across generations. Future work in this system should vary the amplitude and predictability of treatment temperature (Bitter et al., 2021), to elucidate the influence of these factors on plasticity in thermal tolerance. Additionally, such experiments could test if variability that is lost beyond one generation at warming is due to constant temperature conditions in the lab, or if there are other costs to maintaining high thermal tolerances.

We also saw an intermediate thermal tolerance phenotype in OW<sub>DevAM</sub> and OW3GensAM. This loss of thermal tolerance under ambient conditions may indicate potential relaxed selection, where the removal of a selective force leads to trait loss (Lahti et al., 2009). Importantly, the developmental environment plays a critical role in defining thermal tolerance (Schaefer and Ryan 2006, Sasaki and Dam 2019, Ayrinhac et al., 2004, Hoffmann et al., 2005). Therefore, lower thermal tolerances may be due to acclimation to a lower developmental temperature. Despite this resultant loss of thermal tolerance, it is important to remember that thermal tolerance was gained within one generation at OW for the AM line animals. Therefore, even if extended periods of relaxed temperature selection occur, *A. tonsa* is likely capable of quickly regaining thermal tolerance during periods of warming.

Importantly, copepods in the Lower Lethal Salinity assay in the present study were assessed in the absence of food. Food was not used in this assay because we were focusing on relative differences in salinity tolerance between treatments. Copepods with higher resource availability perform better at suboptimal salinities (Rippingale and Hodgkin 1977 and Hammock 2016), although this is not a universal feature in copepods (Van Someran Gréve et al., 2020). Therefore, it is possible that salinity tolerances may have been higher under food replete conditions.

Counter to our initial hypothesis, there was no effect of OW on hypo-salinity tolerance. Our results align well with empirical studies done in the intertidal copepod *Tigriopus californicus* that revealed selection for increased heat tolerance did not impact salinity tolerance (Kelly et al., 2016). In strong support of our results, Kelly et al., 2016 found that when the order of events was reversed, copepods from low salinity conditions had lower thermal tolerances. Kelly et al., 2016 hypothesized this may be due to competing energetic demands between osmoregulation and responding to increasing temperatures. These results together are particularly important, because *T. californicus*  and *A. tonsa* are hardy species that experience regular salinity and temperature fluctuations. Our results indicate that even euryhaline species, like *A. tonsa*, are vulnerable to simultaneous salinity and temperature fluctuations. These conditions are environmentally relevant to southern populations of *A. tonsa*, as summer corresponds with the wet season in Southwest Florida estuaries. Therefore, copepods and other estuarine and nearshore animals are exposed to periods of extreme salinity fluctuations and warm temperatures at the same time (Heilmayer et al., 2008, Tolley et al., 2005). With climate change, we expect more precipitation extremes and marine heat waves (Singh et al., 2013, Frolicher et al., 2018, Oliver et al. 2018). Such conditions could have negative implications for *A. tonsa* and other copepods that are less tolerant of temperature and salinity fluctuations.

Despite being collected within 50 km of each other, AM copepods and copepods more recently collected from Hammonasset Beach (HB) had distinct mean thermal tolerances and variation in thermal tolerance. Differences in mean thermal tolerance among populations could be due to environmental differences between locations. Population level differences may also be due to different collection months, as *A. tonsa* has seasonal genetic differences in thermal tolerance (Sasaki and Dam, 2020). Additionally, *A. tonsa* is a cryptic species complex, with deeply diverging lineages (Figueroa et al., 2020). Therefore, these two populations may represent two distinct clades. Differences in variance among populations may indicate that extended culture in the lab impacts trait variability. The AM population spent  $\sim$  50 more generations in the lab than the HB population. Therefore, reduced variability in the AM population compared to the HB population could be due to a longer history of static treatment temperatures in the AM animals. Further, AM animals maintained at the University of Connecticut Avery Point are shown to adapt to laboratory conditions (Sasaki and Dam 2021; Brennan et al., 2022b). Consequently, differences in trait variability may be due to lab adaptation reducing genetic variability in the AM line compared to the HB population.

We demonstrated the contribution of plasticity to the copepod climate response, indicating the importance of the developmental environment in determining copepod thermal tolerance. Additionally, we found that environmental salinity reductions of 15ppt resulted in decreased Upper Lethal Temperatures by 0.6°C in AM animals. These salinity reductions are well within the range already experienced by *A. tonsa* in the Long Island Sound. Therefore, our results indicate that *A. tonsa* in this region may be vulnerable to

continually increasing variation in temperature and salinity. Revealing the relationship between temperature and salinity tolerance in this species suggests that other less tolerant species may experience consequences of these two shifting variables as well. This motivates further exploration of the influence of temperature and salinity on survival and fitness in additional marine ectotherms.

# **Supplemental Information**





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# **Supplemental Figure 2**.



**Supplemental Figure 2**. Preliminary assessment of Lower Lethal Salinity (LLS) for animals from AM<sub>DevOW</sub>.

# **Figures and Tables**

# **Figure legends**

**Figure 1.** Schematic of experimental design. Blue lines represent AM temperature conditions (18°C), red lines represent OW conditions (22°C). Plasticity vs. Adaptation bracket indicate the treatment groups necessary to compare the relative roles of plasticity and adaptation in the copepod climate response. The Relaxed selection bracket indicates the treatment groups necessary to identify a potential loss in thermal tolerance.

**Figure 2**. Upper Lethal Temperature (ULT) for ambient line animals moved into ocean warming conditions for one ( $AM_{DevOW}$ ), three ( $AM_{3GenSOW}$ ), and  $>50$  generations (OW). Dots represent individual copepods, each in their own well. Whiskers represent standard error, and bold horizontal bar represents the mean. Dots outside the box are outliers. Color denotes treatment temperature.

**Figure 3**. Upper Lethal Temperature for OW line animals moved into AM conditions. Dots represent individual copepods, each in their own well. Whiskers represent standard error. Bold horizontal line represents the mean. Dots are outliers. Color denotes treatment temperature. Note that >50Gens and Ambient groups are the same data represented in Fig. 2, presented separately for clarity of hypothesis testing.

**Figure 4.** Lower Lethal Salinity (LLS) after one (AM<sub>DevOW</sub>) and >50-generations at warming (OW). Dots represent individual copepods, each in their own well. Whiskers represent standard error, and bold horizontal line represents the mean. Dots are outliers. Color denotes treatment temperature.

**Figure 5**. Upper Lethal Temperature after sequential lowering of salinity for AM animals (Esker Point) and a fresh collection from Long Island Sound (Hammonasset Beach). Dots represent individual copepods, each in their own well. Whiskers depict standard error. Bold horizontal line represents the mean. Dots are outliers. Colors denote population.















**Figure 4**



# **Figure 5**

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# **CHAPTER III**: LATITUDINAL AND LIFE STAGE DIFFERENCES IN HIGH TEMPERATURE AND LOW SALINITY TOLERANCE IN AN ESTUARINE COPEPOD

# **Abstract**

Increases in mean temperature and temperature variability are manifestations of current climate change. Climate change is also characterized by changes in precipitation amount and variability, which impact salinity. In order to understand future ecosystem health, it is imperative that we examine tolerances of marine organisms to these changing conditions. The cosmopolitan estuarine copepod *Acartia tonsa* is an emerging model for understanding population persistence to changing temperature and salinity conditions. Importantly, *A. tonsa* have complex life histories and are broadly distributed, meaning the response to environmental change may be different across developmental stages and geographic space. Here, we aim to characterize the temperature and salinity tolerance of *A. tonsa* across life history stages and latitudes of collection. Results from this study will reveal the temperature and salinity tolerance of *A. tonsa*, and indicate potential patterns of stage and latitude specific tolerances. We found that temperature and salinity tolerance differ across life history stages, with the juvenile stage being the most thermally tolerant and least salinity tolerant, suggesting a potential trade-off between temperature and salinity tolerance. Interestingly, copepod larvae and adults had equivalent tolerances to temperature and salinity, contrasting with studies across a broad range of taxa that have found larval stages to be more sensitive to climate stressors than adults. Additionally, temperature and salinity tolerance differed with collection location. Temperature tolerance followed the expected relationship with latitude, Maine populations were the

least temperature tolerant and Florida populations were the most temperature tolerant. Interestingly, we found that Florida copepods were more tolerant of hyposalinity than Maine and Connecticut copepods. Taken together these results suggest that life history stage and latitude play important roles in determining the temperature and salinity tolerance of the copepod *A. tonsa,* and these factors should be considered in estimations of population dynamics and persistence with warming and increasing salinity variability.

**Keywords**: copepod, ontogeny, thermal tolerance, salinity tolerance

## **Introduction**

As climate change persists, marine organisms are faced with increasing mean temperatures and an increase in the prevalence of marine heat waves (Frölicher *et al*., 2018, Oliver *et al*., 2018). Consequences of this warming include seasonal changes to plankton food web dynamics, mass mortality, and increasing prevalence of disease (Gibson et al., 2011, Batten et al., 2022, Oliver *et al*., 2018). Extreme heat events are expected to be more frequent with time (Pandori and Sorte 2021, Oliver *et al*., 2018, Frölicher *et al*., 2018), which may result in further changes to marine community structure and ecosystem function. In addition to warming, the frequency of extreme precipitation events is increasing globally (Janssen et al., 2014, Lehmann et al., 2015). Precipitation changes are driven in part by anthropogenic climate change, are expected to intensify with continued warming (Lehmann et al., 2015, Singh et al 2013, Zhang et al., 2007) and lead to rapidly shifting salinity conditions in marine and estuarine habitats.

Understanding the influence of increasing temperature and fluctuating salinity on marine organisms will provide critical knowledge about their persistence in a warming ocean.

Exposure to fluctuating temperature and salinity may impact organisms differently across their life history stages. Many marine organisms have complex life histories, with differences in physiology and ecology across each stage. Life history stages of marine ectotherms also often occupy different habitats, resulting in differential exposure to climatic stress across ontogeny (Makino and Ban 2000). Consequently, many marine organisms vary in stress tolerance throughout their life cycle (Pandori and Sorte, 2019, Tangwancharoen and Burton, 2014, Miller et al., 2013). A meta-analysis of 287 experiments, across Annelida, Arthropoda, Chordata, Cnidaria, Echinodermata, and Mollusca, revealed that earlier life stages were more negatively impacted by warming than older life stages (Pandori and Sorte 2019). However, there are examples in copepods, porcelain crabs, and kelp crabs where earlier life stages exhibit stronger tolerances than their older counterparts (Tangwancharoen and Burton, 2014, Miller et al., 2013, Storch et al., 2011). The most vulnerable stage will determine the vulnerability of the species to climate change. Therefore, it is critical to understand the stage-specific tolerance of marine organisms.

Copepods are a convenient system for examining the differences in stress tolerance across life stages. Copepods have complex life cycles with larvae, juveniles, and adults differing in habitat, swimming ability, feeding strategy, morphology, and physiology (Fulton, 1984, Meunier et al., 2016, Bradley et al., 2013, Mathews et al., 2018, Peterson 2001). Additionally, copepods play a critical role in food webs as a major connector of primary producers and the microbial food web to higher trophic levels (Calbet and Saiz

2005, Aberle et al., 2015, Dam and Baumann 2017, Liu et al., 2017). Many larval fish rely on copepods as a critical food source, tying copepods to fisheries health (Steinberg et al., 2017, Richardson et al., 2008). Copepods also make for excellent sentinels of change, as they are short-lived ectotherms that are highly responsive to environmental conditions (Liu et al., 2017, Richardson et al., 2008). *Acartia tonsa* is a coastal estuarine copepod that has 12 life history stages from egg to adult (Mauchline, 1998). *A. tonsa* is dominant in estuaries off the east coast of the United States, and is also found in many parts of the world (Gonzalez 1974, Johnson and Allen 2012). As an estuarine species, *A. tonsa* experiences temperature and salinity variability and extremes at a greater frequency than open ocean copepods. Therefore, *A. tonsa* is a tractable model for understanding the differences in temperature and salinity tolerance across ontogeny.

Here we examined the Upper Lethal Temperature (ULT) of the copepod *A. tonsa*, across larval, juvenile, and adult life stages for common garden reared populations originating from Maine, New York, and the gulf coast of Florida. Additionally, we investigated the attributes of environmental Sea Surface Temperature (SST) across different timescales most important for determining ULT. Further, we examined the Lower Lethal Salinity (LLS) of *A. tonsa* across stages for each population of origin. Drawing on previous results in the tidepool copepod, *Tigriopus californicus*, that show larvae and juveniles to be more temperature tolerant than adults, we predicted that larval and juvenile *A. tonsa* would be more tolerant of temperature and salinity stress than adults (Tangwancharoen and Burton, 2014). Additionally, we predicted that locationspecific thermal tolerance would vary with source population with copepods from Maine populations less thermally tolerant than New York and Florida.

## **Materials & Methods**

# Collections and Laboratory Culture

We collected copepods from Hurricane Island, Maine ( $n = 222$ , Lat/Long = N 44.02°, W -68.54 °); Esker Point, Connecticut (n=1000, Lat/Long = N 41.32 °, W -72.00 °); Brookhaven, New York (n=20, Lat/Long = N 40.95  $\degree$ , W -73.03  $\degree$ ); and Punta Gorda, Florida (n>1000, Lat/Long = N 26.48 °, W -82.01 °). Connecticut copepods were collected in June 2016, while Maine, New York, and Florida copepods were collected between July and September 2018. These collections took place across months where *A. tonsa* are present in the water column across all collection locations (Sasaki and Dam, 2019). Additionally, populations were all collected in summer months, minimizing seasonally dependent genetic differences in thermal tolerance (Sasaki and Dam, 2020)

Copepods were collected using a 200 µm mesh plankton net at 1-2 m depth. Adult *Acartia tonsa* were sorted from each plankton tow using a stereo microscope and maintained in a climate-controlled laboratory at 18°C and 30 ppt salinity using Instant Ocean® mixed with reverse-osmosis filtered water. *A. tonsa* were cultured using a 12:12 light:dark cycle and fed ad libitum on a mixed diet of the diatom *Thalassiosira weissflogii*, and the flagellates *Tetraselmis sp.* and *Rhodomonas lens*. Copepods from all locations were held under common temperature and salinity conditions (18°C and 30 ppt) for at least two full generations before assessing Upper Lethal Temperature (ULT).

#### Upper Lethal Temperature

We performed ULT assays on early nauplii (NII/NIII), early copepodites (CII/CIII), and adults (CVI). One day prior to the assay, 12-well plates were filled with 2 mL sea water at 30 ppt, with a mix of *T. weissflogii*, *Tetraselmis sp*., and *R. lens* totaling 500 µg C/L (Feinberg and Dam 1998), and copepods were assigned to wells randomly, with one copepod in each well. Due to cultures being staggered with regard to life history stage and constraints on the number of plates that could be processed at a given time, the assessment of animals of different stages and different populations took place on different days. To ensure that environmental temperature and ramp speed were the same across days, we randomly placed an iButton temperature data logger (https://www.maximintegrated.com/en/products/ibutton-one-wire/ibutton.html, DS 1921G) in two wells, which recorded temperature every two minutes.

We assessed twelve copepods for each population at each life history stage. Each copepod was checked for survival prior to running the assay. We then added parafilmsealed plates to a ThermoScientific PC200 water bath, where the temperature ramped from 20 to 30 $\degree$ C at a rate of 1 $\degree$ C every 15 minutes. Temperature ramp for copepodites from Maine and New York was 0.012°C/minute on average +/- 0.001°C/minute. All subsequent assessment of ULT was held at a consistent ramp of 0.012°C/minute. Individuals were checked for survival using a stereo microscope every 0.5°C until all individuals were scored as dead. Individuals were scored as dead if no movement was observed within 10 seconds following water disturbance in the well.

#### Environmental Temperature Data

To determine the influence of Sea Surface Temperature (SST) on ULT, we analyzed data from buoys near each of our four collection sites (Bar Harbor, ME Station ATGM1- 8413320, New London, CT Station NLNC3-8461490, Fort Meyers, FL Station FMRF1- 8725520). We examined the SST min, mean, max, and range for three different time frames: the decade prior to collection, the summer of collection, and 30 days prior to collection (Figure 1). For the decade prior and the summer of collection, we used data from June-September when copepods from all collection locations are present in the water column (Sasaki and Dam 2019). To determine which time frame and metric had the strongest relationship with ULT, we ran individual regressions for each SST metric. We then compared  $r^2$  and AIC values across models to identify the strongest determinant of ULT.

# Lower Lethal Salinity

Lower Lethal Salinity (LLS) assays were conducted on the Maine, Connecticut, and Florida populations. Copepods were held under the same temperature and salinity conditions for at least two full generations before assessing LLS. Stock solutions of 20, 15, 10, 8, 6, 4, 2, and 0 ppt were made by combining aerated tap water with Instant Ocean salt. Twelve copepods from each stage and population were picked from their cultures at 30 ppt and 18°C and moved into 12-well plates with water at the same conditions. Each well contained one copepod and 2 mL of water. Salinity was reduced stepwise every 30 minutes until each copepod died. Copepods were determined to be dead by disturbing well water and waiting 10 seconds without movement.

#### Data Analysis

The normality of the data was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test and homogeneity of variances were assessed with the Levene test. Results indicated that the Upper Lethal Temperature data were not normally distributed ( $W= 0.96$ ,  $p=0.01$ ), but that there were equal variances across samples ( $F=0.87$ ,  $p=0.55$ ). Results for Lower Lethal Salinity indicated that the data were not normally distributed (W=  $0.87$ , p<  $0.001$ ) and that variance was not homogeneous ( $F=2.25$ ,  $p=0.03$ ). Therefore, we compared Upper Lethal Temperature and Lower Lethal Salinity across life history stages and locations using the non-parametric Aligned Rank Transform (ART) ANOVA (Wobbrock et al., 2011). The ART ANOVA, and multifactor contrast tests, were performed using the R package ARTool (Wobbrock et al., 2011, Elkin et al., 2021).

## **Results**

Both population (F = 36.89, p < 0.0001,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.44$ ) and life history stage (F = 26.20,  $p < 0.0001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.36$ ) affected ULT (Figure 2). However, there was no population by stage interaction effect (F=1.7,  $p = 0.16$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$ ). Maine copepods were less thermally tolerant than New York copepods ( $p < 0.0001$ ) and Florida copepods ( $p < 0.0001$ ). Additionally, New York copepods were less thermally tolerant than Florida copepods (p  $= 0.02$ ). When considering life history stage, copepodites were more thermally tolerant than adults ( $p < 0.0001$ ) and nauplii ( $p < 0.0001$ ), while adults and nauplii did not differ in ULT ( $p = 0.17$ ). The mean, minimum, maximum, and range of temperatures measured across the decade prior to collection, the summer of collection, and 30 days prior to collection were highly correlated with each other (Figure 3). When modeling each

temperature variable separately, we found that the maximum temperature the summer of collection was the strongest predictor of ULT ( $R^2 = 0.23$ , AIC = 410.91) (Figure 4, Table 1).

Similarly, for low salinity tolerance, both population ( $F = 4.03$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.08$ ) and stage (F = 17.37, p < 0.0001,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.27$ ) affected LLS (Figure 5). Florida copepods showed lower LLS than copepods from Connecticut ( $p = 0.05$ ) and Maine ( $p = 0.03$ ), while copepods from Maine and Connecticut showed no difference in LLS ( $p= 0.98$ ). In terms of life history stage, copepodites were less tolerant of hyposalinity than adults ( $p <$ 0.0001) and nauplii ( $p < 0.0001$ ). However, there was no difference in salinity tolerance between adults and nauplii ( $p = 1.00$ ). In contrast to thermal tolerance, the effect of population on salinity tolerance depended on stage ( $F = 7.56$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = 0.24$ ), with Maine copepodites being less tolerant of low salinity than Florida copepodites ( $p =$ 0.004).

# **Discussion**

We investigated the impact of life history stage and collection location on the Upper Lethal Temperature and Lower Lethal Salinity of the copepod *A. tonsa*. Results demonstrate a clear effect of life history stage on temperature and salinity tolerance. Juvenile copepods were more thermally tolerant than larval and adult copepods. Interestingly, the converse is true for salinity, with adults and larval stages being more salinity tolerant than juveniles. Additionally, predictions that location-specific thermal tolerance will be related to latitude were confirmed by our results. Our results indicate the importance of considering life history stage and collection location when estimating the stress tolerance of marine ectotherms.

Together with previous studies, our results demonstrate that thermal tolerance across life history stages is specific to the species and method of assessment. We found that *A. tonsa* nauplii and adults have comparable ULTs. In contrast, *A. tonsa* nauplii and adults acclimated to the same treatment temperature  $(18^{\circ}C)$  as our study have divergent tolerances, with nauplii less tolerant than adults (Sunar and Kir, 2021). Differences in results between these studies may be due to the faster ramp speed in Sunar and Kir, (2021), as differences in ramp speed can influence thermal tolerance metrics (Moyen et al., 2019, Allen et al., 2012, 2016). While we found that copepodites were the most thermally tolerant stage, Tangwancharoen and Burton 2014 observed that both nauplii and copepodites of *Tigriopus californicus* were more thermally tolerant than adults. Differences in stage-specific thermal tolerance may be due to ecological and/or physiological differences between species. *T. californicus* life history stages occupy the same tidepool habitat (Tangwancharoen and Burton 2014), while different life stages of *A. tonsa* can occupy different parts of the water column (Cuker and Watson, 2002, Fulton, 1984, Holliland et al., 2012). This may impact how stage influences temperature tolerance. There were also important differences in our methodology. In the present study, animals were gradually ramped over many hours to their acute temperature treatment, while in Tangwancharoen and Burton 2014, copepods were immediately immersed for one hour in their temperature treatments. It would be powerful for future studies to look at stage-specific thermal tolerance across multiple species of copepods

97

with consistent methodologies. This would provide important insight into the influence of ontogeny on temperature tolerance.

We found that copepodites were the least salinity tolerant stage. Stage-specific salinity tolerance is supported by previous studies demonstrating that crustaceans modulate their osmoregulation strategy and efficiency with ontogeny (Charmantier, 1998), and that copepods occupy waters with different salinities at different life history stages (Dur and Souissi 2018). We found that *Acartia tonsa* nauplii are equally tolerant of hyposalinity as adults, in contrast to salinity tolerance of the invasive shrimp, *Palaemon macrodactylus*, whose larvae tolerate a narrower range in salinity than adults (Vázquez et al., 2016). Our results also diverge from studies in *Cancer irroratus*, that found that the ability to osmoregulate and salinity tolerance were higher in adults than in earlier developmental stages (Charmantier and Charmantier-Daures 1991). Importantly, salinity tolerance in *C. irroratus* decreases in late larval stages and is lowest in post-larval megalopae (Charmantier and Charmantier-Daures 1991). This is consistent with our results demonstrating that salinity tolerance is lowest in early juvenile stages. Additionally, our results align with research in *Acartia sp*., finding copepodites to be less tolerant of dilution than adult females (Lance, 1964). Within the *Acartia tonsa* species complex, the F and S clades are delineated by environmental salinity (Chen and Hare, 2008, 2011, Plough et al., 2018). Additionally, salinity is important in defining plankton distribution more broadly (Dur and Suissi 2018). This demonstrates the importance of salinity in shaping biodiversity and species distributions and the need for more research on the stage-specific salinity tolerances of crustaceans.

98

Our results indicate a potential trade-off between temperature and salinity tolerance across all life history stages. In the tidepool copepod, *Tigriopus californicus*, selection studies demonstrated the absence of a genetic trade-off between high temperature and low salinity tolerance (Kelly et al., 2016). However, exposing *T. californicus* to simultaneous high temperatures and low salinities revealed a clear physiological tradeoff, potentially due to competing energetic demands (Kelly et al., 2016). In previous studies, the same individual copepods experienced changes in temperature and salinity. However, in this study, temperature and salinity tolerance were measured in different individuals. Therefore, the trade-off we see is not due to competing energetic demands. Explorations of the trade-off between temperature and salinity tolerance are rare, motivating future studies examining the basis of this trade-off.

Results from our study indicate that upper thermal tolerance decreases with increasing latitude, consistent with previous observations of thermal performance in copepods and marine ectotherms more broadly (Tangwancharoen and Burton, 2014, Sunday et al., 2011, Sasaki and Dam 2019). By contrast, hyposalinity tolerance results show a non-continuous difference between source latitudes, with only the Florida population having a higher hyposalinity tolerance than Maine and Connecticut. *Tigriopus californicus* and *Acartia tonsa* are both found along salinity gradients with higher salinities in the south (Schoch et al., 2006, Gordon and Giulivi 2008). Conversely studies in the tidepool copepod *T. californicus* demonstrate an inverse relationship between latitude and hyposalinity tolerance, with northern populations more tolerant to hyposalinity conditions than southern populations (Leong et al., 2018). Results from Debiasse et al., 2018 provided evidence to support this trend. It would be informative for

a future study to deploy salinity loggers in each collection location, potentially revealing if local salinity variability drives differences in the latitudinal patterns of salinity tolerance in *A. tonsa*. Importantly, location-specific temperature and salinity tolerance may not be indicative of locally adapted populations of one species. Rather, animals collected from different locations may be more distantly related sister species (Figueroa et al., 2020). Location- specific tolerances in this case are even more critical, as local extirpation could mean the loss of a species or subspecies, rather than the loss of an interconnected population (Figueroa et al., 2020). Understanding of *A. tonsa* temperature and salinity tolerance would improve with a comprehensive examination of clade-specific temperature and salinity tolerance.

We found that maximum summer temperature explained the most variation in ULT and had the model with the lowest AIC. However, our results demonstrate that environmental temperature metrics are highly correlated with each other and explain a relatively low amount of the variability in ULT (Figure 3, Figure 4). This suggests that environmental temperature plays a limited role in defining ULT. Additionally, we do not see large differences in  $r^2$  and AIC among models (Figure 4, Table 1). This suggests that across different timescales and metrics SST explains a similar amount of variance in ULT.

Our results suggest a trade-off between temperature and salinity tolerance in *A. tonsa*, indicating this species may be potentially vulnerable in the face of multiple varying stressors. This is particularly relevant for this species, as they are predominantly present in estuarine habitats. Additionally, we find that our Florida population had the highest temperature tolerance and the highest hyposalinity tolerance, indicating this may be our
most tolerant population as temperature and salinity variability continue to increase with climate change.

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# **Tables & Figures**

# **Figure legends**

**Figure 1**. Buoy recorded Sea Surface Temperature near each collection site. Subplots represent data from three different time frames: A) decade prior to collection, B) summer of collection, C) and 30 days prior to collection. Color denotes collection location.

**Figure 2**. Upper Lethal Temperatures for individual nauplii, copepodites, and adults from three study populations. Color is by population. Whiskers represent standard error, and bold horizontal bar represents the median.

**Figure 3**. Correlation matrix of each SST metric and experimental Upper Lethal Temperature.

**Figure 4**. Scatter plots of each SST metric regressed against Upper Lethal Temperature values for each population. Collection refers to metrics for 30 days prior to collection, Decade is for temperature metrics the decade prior to collection, and Summer is for temperature metrics the summer prior to collection. The blue line represents the regression.

**Figure 5**. Lower Lethal Salinity for individual nauplii, copepodites, and adults from three study populations. Grey scale is by population. Whiskers represent standard error, and bold horizontal bar represents the median.

**Table 1**. Comparison of mixed models. Each model name represents the temperature metric assessed as the independent variable for that model. All models included Population and Stage as random effects.



Buoy Sea Surface Temperature Data at Different Timescales





**Figure 2.** 



**Figure 3.** 



**Figure 4.** 



**Figure 5.** 



**Table 1.** 

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In this work, I demonstrated that aquatic ectotherms are at once resilient and vulnerable to climate warming. Results from Chapter One indicate the ecologically and economically impactful marine copepod, *Neocalanus plumchrus*, is vulnerable to ocean warming and marine heatwaves (Ashlock et al., 2021). While other warm water species may supplement the loss of *N. plumchrus*, they contain lower nutrient content (Cavole et al., 2016). Importantly, loss of nutrient rich copepods is implicated in reduced recruitment and increased mortality in pollock and salmon fisheries (Cavole et al., 2016). Chapter Two demonstrates the importance of plasticity, with development conferring the same thermal tolerance benefits as  $> 50$  generations of warming. Additionally, Chapter Two shows that *Acartia tonsa*, a copepod robust to temperature and salinity fluctuations is vulnerable in the face of increasingly variable temperature and salinity conditions with climate change. Chapter Three highlights the importance of collection location and life history stage in defining thermal tolerance. Results from this chapter also emphasize a need for standardized thermal tolerance methods across species of copepods, and marine ectotherms more broadly.

Results from this dissertation add to the fields of marine ecology and evolutionary biology. Work from Chapter One is novel in that it examines the temperature dependent abundance of *Neocalanus plumchrus* across unprecedented time and space (Ashlock et al., 2021, Sonia Batten, *Pers. Comm*.). Additionally, Chapter One establishes methods for identifying thermal thresholds of copepod abundance and occurrence, identifying

vulnerabilities of *N. plumchrus* to continued warming and marine heat waves. Chapter Two adds to the field of evolutionary biology in that it reveals the potential importance of plasticity in determining thermal tolerance. This highlights the importance of considering plasticity in species assessments of vulnerability to ocean warming (Hoffmann and Sgrò 2011, Ofori et al., 2017). Additionally, results from Chapter Two show a loss of the most thermally tolerant individuals after adaptation to ocean warming, suggesting that rapid adaptation to ocean warming may incur thermal tolerance costs. Chapter Three adds to the literature on the effects of life history stage and latitude on thermal tolerance of the dominant estuarine copepod *Acartia tonsa*. Importantly, juvenile stages of *A. tonsa* are more thermally tolerant and less salinity tolerant than adults and larvae. This indicates that copepodites will limit species salinity tolerance, while adults and nauplii will limit species temperature tolerance.

Reflecting back on this work, I recognize opportunities for improvement to scientific methods. In Chapter Two I found that plasticity has the same effect on thermal tolerance as >50 generations of Ocean Warming. This reveals the importance of plasticity and demonstrates the developmental environment is critical in determining thermal tolerance. In Chapter Two, copepods were not fed during salinity tolerance assays. While feeding was not critical in understanding the relative salinity tolerance between treatments, I am unable to rule out the potential effect of short-term starvation on copepod salinity tolerance. Chapter Three would be improved if I was able to identify the clades that each population represented. This would have allowed for a more specific understanding of thermal tolerance in this cryptic species complex. Additionally, Chapter Three would

have benefitted from the addition of transcriptomic data from the three different life history stages. This was originally planned to be included in this chapter, however, extracting sufficient levels of high-quality RNA from early life stages of copepods proved challenging. Importantly, the Upper Lethal Temperature assay used in Chapter Two and Chapter Three could be improved by reducing the time course of the assay and by being able to monitor copepod survival *in situ*, without removing them from the water bath. This is currently under development in the Pespeni Lab and will likely improve the efficiency of the assay and smooth out the profile of the temperature ramp.

Each chapter presented in this dissertation motivates prospective future studies. Chapter One would benefit from exploring *Neocalanus plumchrus* thermal tolerance plasticity. This would be relatively tractable to assess in late stage copepodites that are found in the surface waters of the Northeast Pacific (Batten et al., 2003). Additionally, the Northeast Pacific Continuous Plankton Recorder and the NASA Multi-Scale Ultra High-Resolution SST dataset (JPL MUR MEaSUREs Project, 2015) are still running. This provides an opportunity to continue tracking changes in abundance with changing temperatures and potential future marine heatwaves. Future work for Chapter Two could use fluctuating temperature treatments instead of static temperature treatments. Fluctuating temperature treatments would more realistically mirror ocean conditions (Bernhardt et al., 2013). Additionally, temperature variability and predictability can impact thermal tolerance and plasticity (Reed et al., 2010, Lande, 2009, Bitter et al., 2021). Therefore, variable temperature would provide a more accurate picture of thermal tolerance and plasticity. Interestingly, in Chapter Two, I found that exposure to novel

environments reveals cryptic phenotypic variability in thermal tolerance. Replicating exposure to new developmental temperatures to see if this result is repeatable would reveal the influence of novel environments on trait variability. In Chapter Three, I identify a need for more studies that include multiple species with consistent methodologies when assessing thermal tolerance. Additionally, with the *Acartia tonsa* cryptic species complex (Figueroa et al., 2020), I could look at clade-level differences in thermal tolerance and adaptive capacity. This would identify potentially vulnerable and tolerant clades and indicate future clade persistence in the face of climate change.

The development of this dissertation expanded my biological and computational knowledge, while teaching me the value of collaboration with colleagues from different backgrounds. When I began my Ph.D., my experience was predominantly in marine field ecology and conservation. I pursued a degree in Dr. Melissa Pespeni's lab because I was inspired by her innovative research regarding the adaptive capacity of marine organisms to climate change. It was my hope that with my dissertation research, I could apply concepts of evolution to understand the potential persistence of marine organisms in response to global change stressors. In pursuit of this goal, I learned that knowledge of plasticity and evolutionary dynamics are essential for understanding the response of marine organisms to climate change. Additionally, the achievement of this goal is shared with my collaborators in the Dam lab at UCONN Avery Point, the Lockwood lab at the University of Vermont, and the Farallon Institute. Copepods are central to this dissertation and the Dam lab taught me everything I know about copepods with kindness, patience, and humor. Thermal tolerance is also a pillar of this work, using thermal

tolerance limits to understand copepod response to changing thermal conditions. The Lockwood Lab, in particular Dr. Brent Lockwood and Dr. Emily Mikucki, taught me about the influence of temperature on invertebrates from the molecular to the organismal level. My collaboration with the Farallon Institute taught me to work with scientists from all different backgrounds, ranging from ecology, to physical oceanography, to data science. Additionally, through this work I discovered the power of leveraging existing environmental and copepod data to ask scientific questions about the potential resilience of marine organisms to climate change. These collaborators, and my colleagues at the University of Vermont, inspire and motivate me to continue researching the impacts of climate change on marine organisms beyond the completion of this degree.

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