A Possible Role for Immersion Freezing in Mixed-Phase Stratus Clouds

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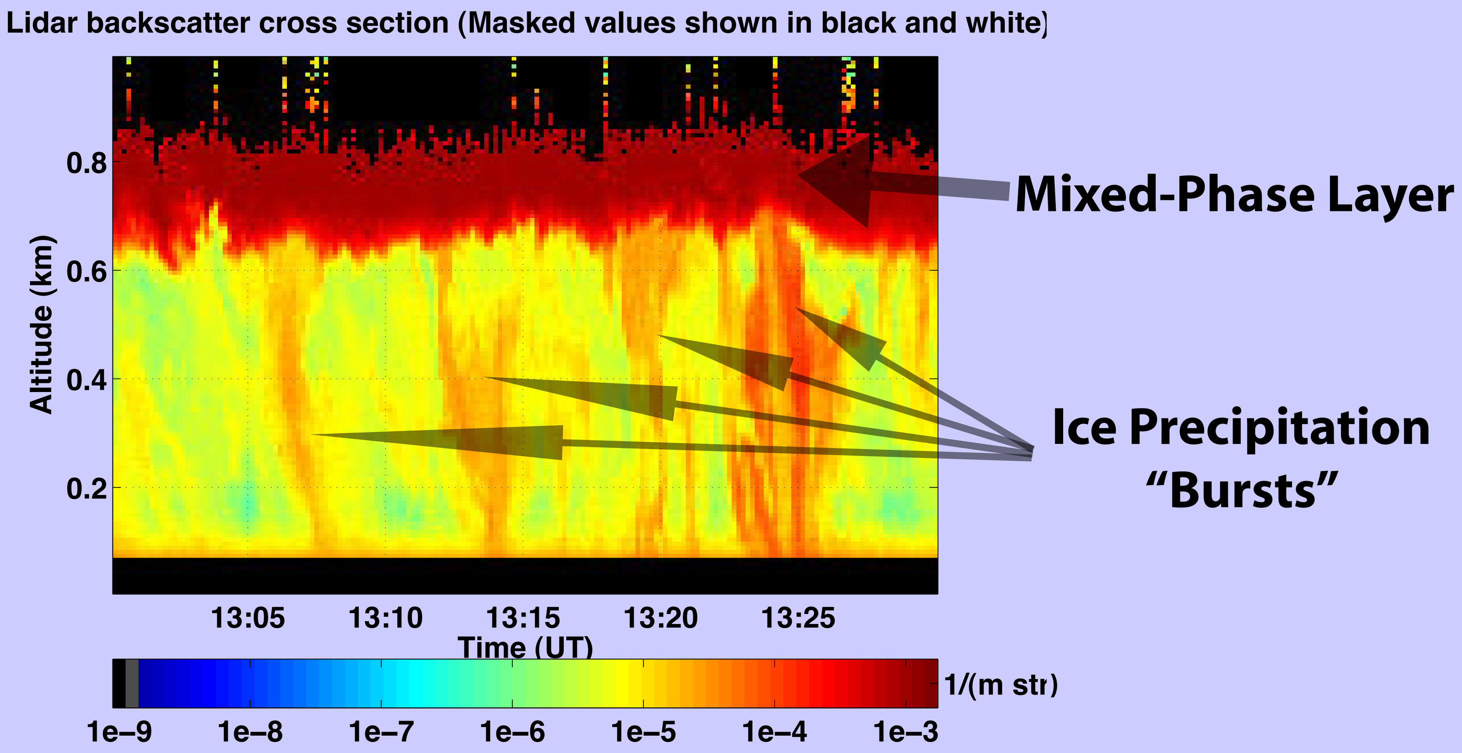
(1) Introduction

Ice formation appears to a dominant factor controlling the lifecycle of Arctic mixed-phase clouds. To date, our understanding of ice formation in these long-lasting cloud structures does not explain the formation of observed ice amounts. Particularly puzzling are observations taken from the 2004 Mixed-Phase Arctic Clouds Experiment (M-PACE) at the ARM North Slope of Alaska site (NSA) which show continuous mixed-phase clouds present with only minimal ice forming nuclei (IN) available. In-situ measurements of both ice particle and IN concentrations show IN concentrations multiple orders of magnitude lower than the ice particle concentrations. This discrepancy leads to the belief that certain classical nucleation mechanisms, such as contact, condensation and deposition freezing are not primarily responsible for ice production, as all require free IN for activation. Immersion freezing is not included with this grouping, however, as it is unclear whether immersed IN would be observed at all with instruments commonly used to measure IN concentrations, such as the Continuous Flow Diffusion Chamber (CFDC).

Here, we investigate the potential role of immersion freezing in Arctic mixed-phase stratus. A theory on how immersion freezing fits into the lifecycle of these clouds, as well as a review of previous studies supporting this theory are presented.

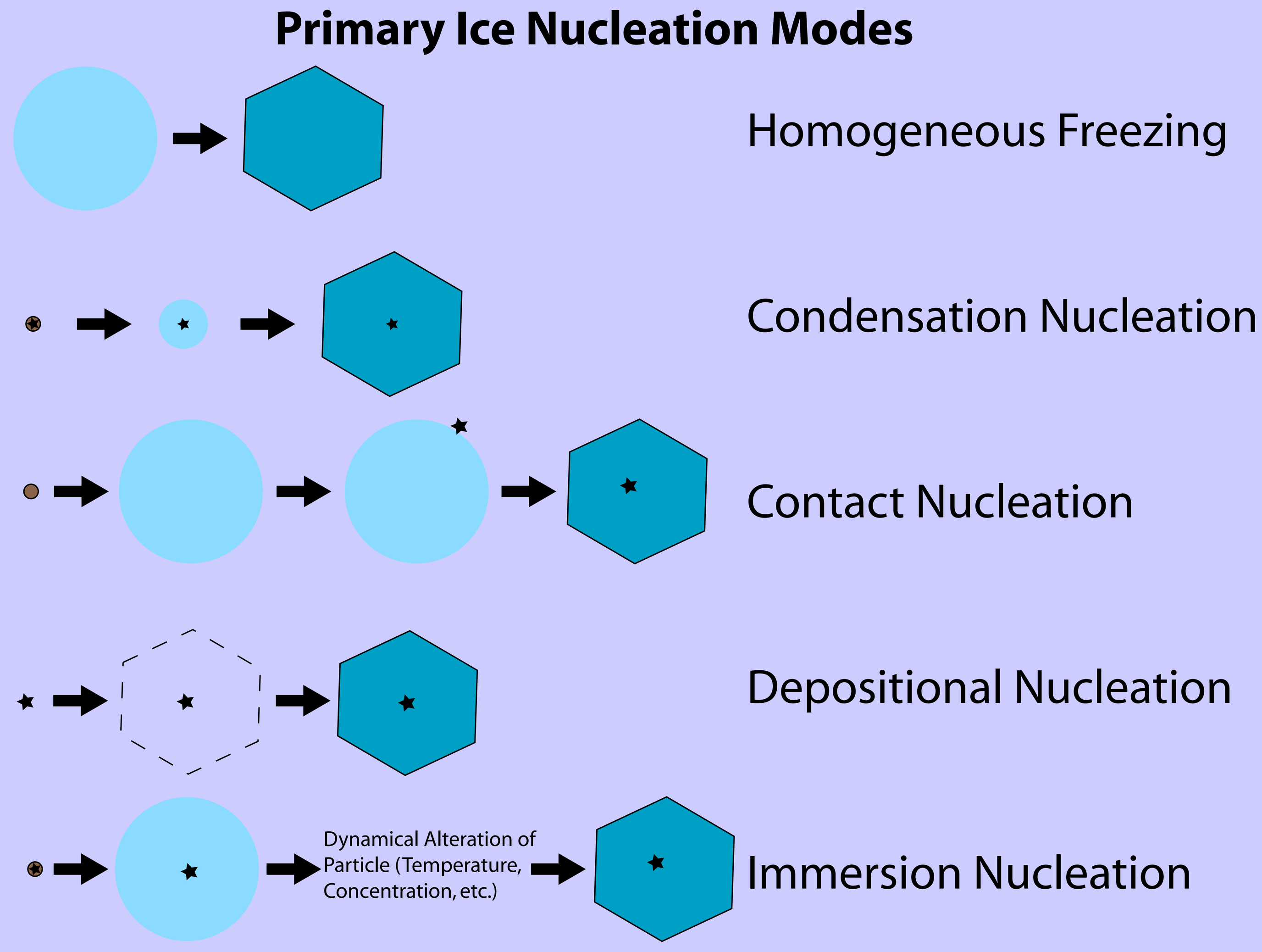
(2) Mixed-Phase Arctic Stratus from M-PACE

Lidar backscatter cross section (Masked values shown in black and white)



(3) Fundamentals

Primary Ice Nucleation Modes

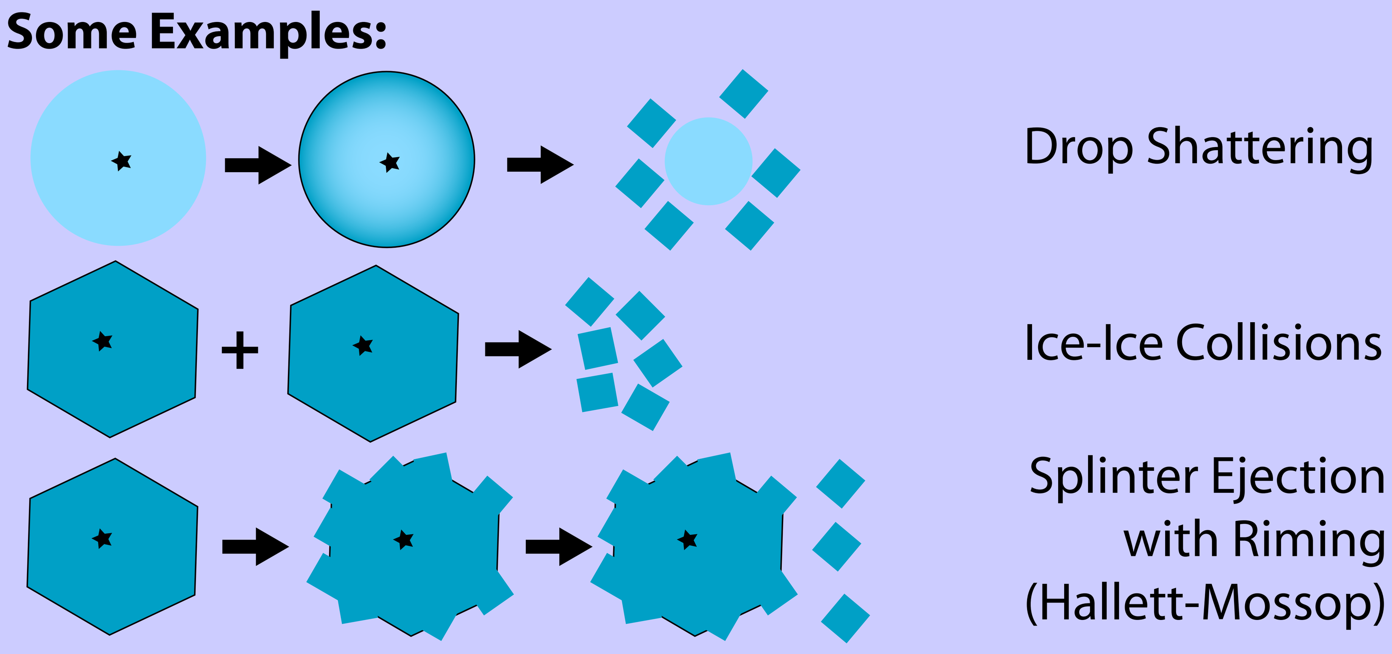


So which one drives ice production in Arctic Stratus?

- Homogeneous freezing is insignificant > -35 C (Hagen et al., 1981; Sassen and Dodd, 1988; Jensen et al., 1998, others) Arctic stratus are observed at temperatures significantly above this (de Boer et al., 2008 in preparation).
- Ice crystal concentrations often significantly exceed measured IN concentrations (particularly for M-PACE!) (Mossop, 1970; Fridlind et al., 2007), meaning contact and depositional nucleation likely are unlikely the driving nucleation mechanism.
- Condensation nuclei would be detected with conventional tools (such as a CFDC).

(4) Secondary Processes

Some Examples:



How do these processes contribute?

- Drop shattering may result in 15 ice fragments/drop, but only in about 10% of drops larger than 50 μm, multiplying total ice by factor of 2, rarely (if ever) greater than factor of 10. (Pruppacher and Klett, 1997)
- Ice-ice collision multiplication (Rangno and Hobbs, 2001) requires significant ice to be present initially and would require a several order of magnitude multiplication factor.
- Splinter ejection during the riming process appears to be limited to air temperatures of -3° to -8° C. (Heymsfield and Mossop, 1984) Additionally, the production from this is estimated at 1 splinter per 250 larger than 12 μm drops rimed onto one crystal (Koenig, 1977; Beheng, 1982,1987; Cotton et al. 1986).

- Although these and likely other (e.g. evaporation freezing, Fridlind et al., 2007) mechanisms may be active within mixed-phase stratus, it remains unproven that any one of these mechanisms would serve as a dominant nucleation mechanism covering the discrepancy in ice observed in these clouds and IN measurements.

(5) Theory

Why Immersion Freezing?

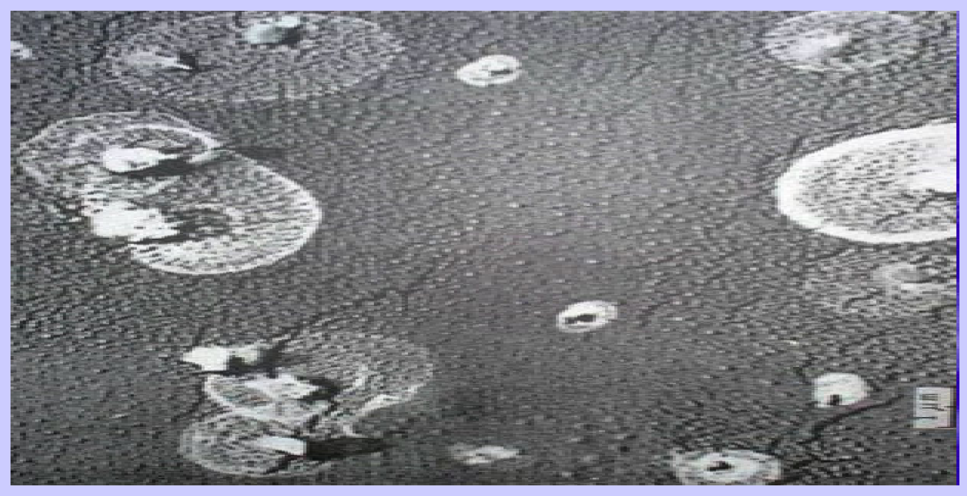


Image courtesy of J.P. Blanchet

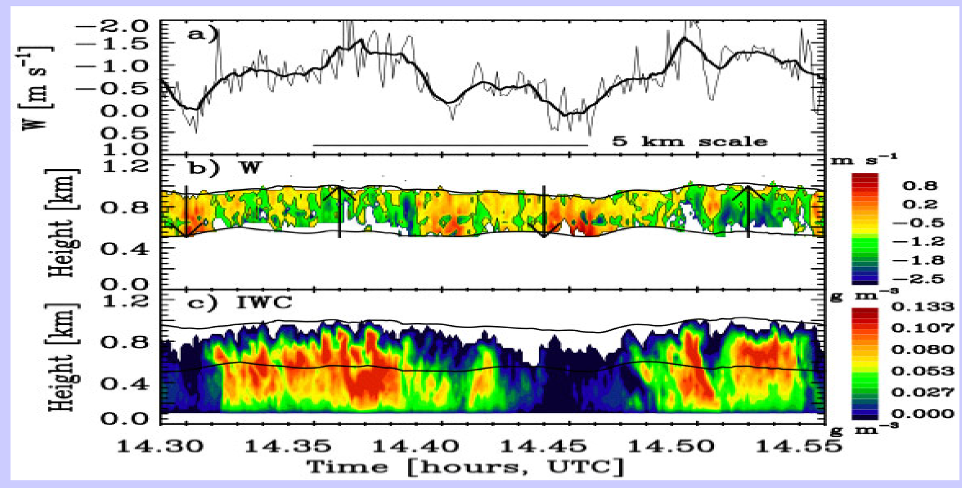
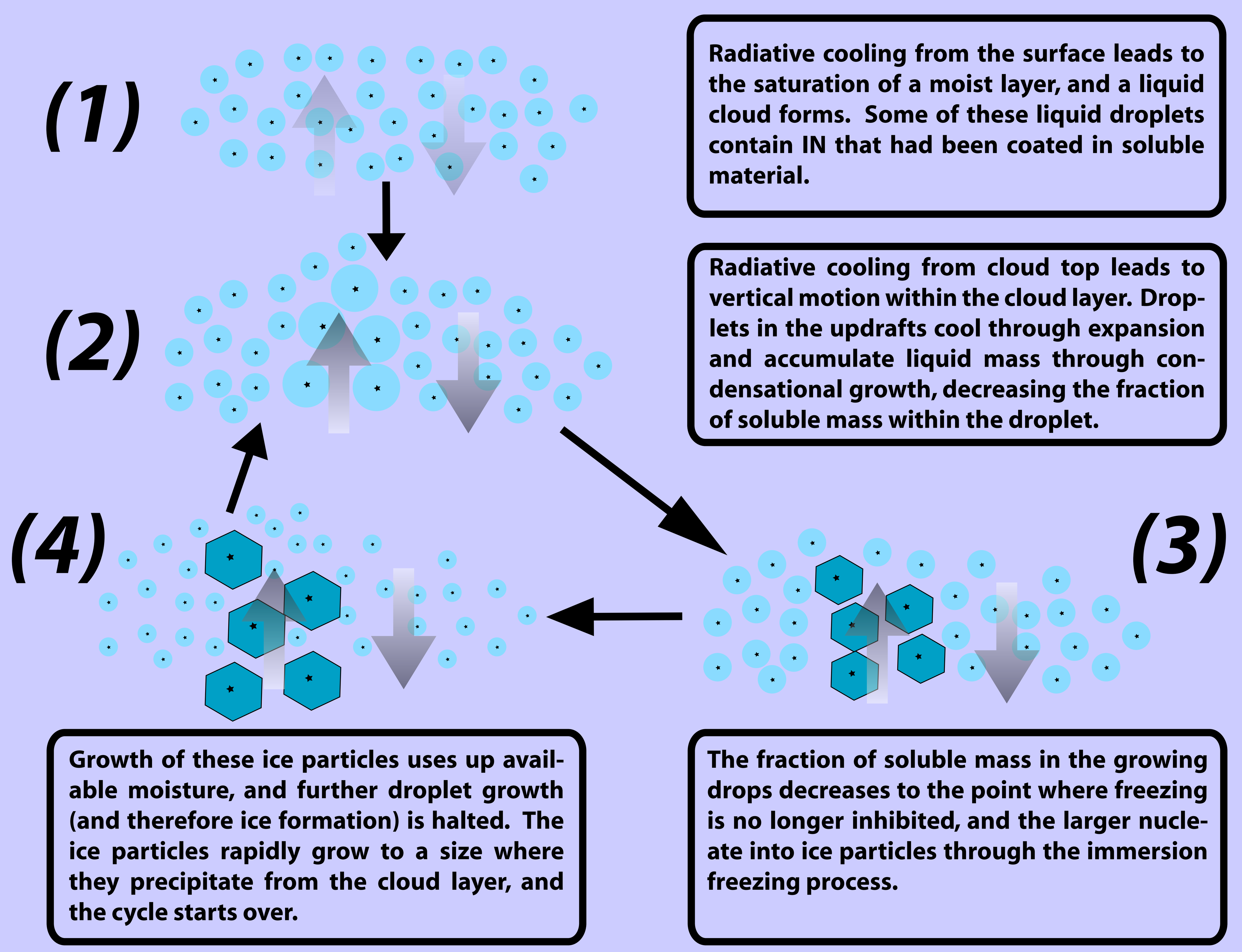


Image courtesy of Matthew Shupe

- Bigg (1980) observed sulfuric acid coating on aerosol particles during the winter.
- Blanchet (2007) hypothesises that this sulfur coating is the result of anthropogenic emissions from Siberia, and are transported throughout the Arctic.
- This coating of soluble material inhibits ice formation on these particles, a process confirmed in the laboratory by Bertram and Girard, preventing uniform rapid ice formation.

- Shupe (2006) illustrated that ice formation is seemingly linked to areas of upward vertical motion. This indicated that the formation of ice is tied into the internal dynamics of the cloud system, and likely an alteration of the aerosol or cloud particles involved in nucleation.
- Additionally, Shupe illustrated that ice water content and liquid water content seem to vary in phase with each other, hinting that liquid growth may lead to ice formation.
- In-situ measurements from Rangno and Hobbs (2001) reveal that ice crystal concentrations are highly proportional to the concentration of drops larger than 20 μm.

(6) Conceptual Model

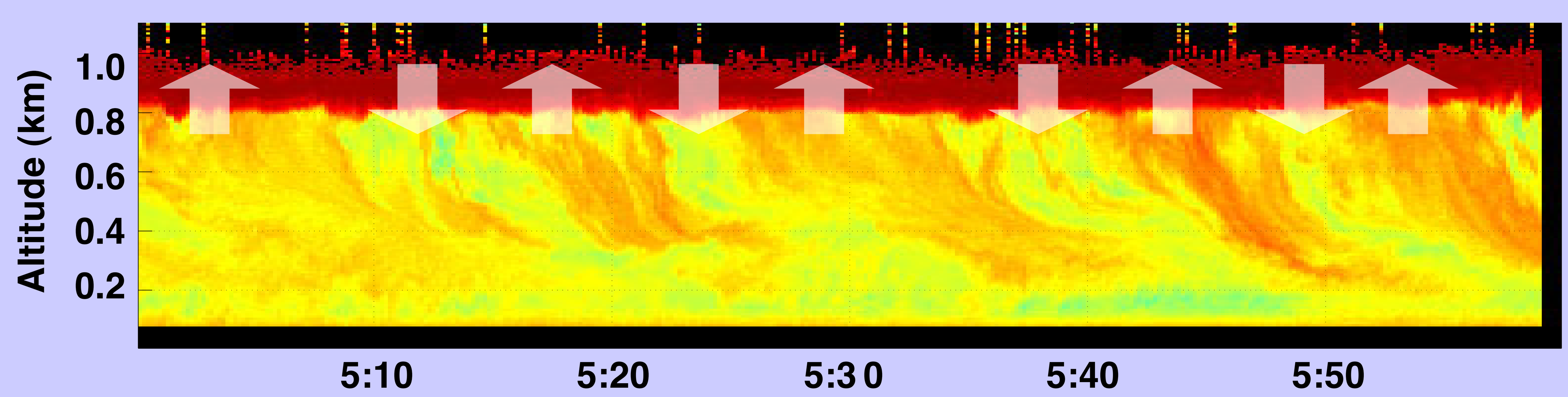


Radiative cooling from the surface leads to the saturation of a moist layer, and a liquid cloud forms. Some of these liquid droplets contain IN that had been coated in soluble material.

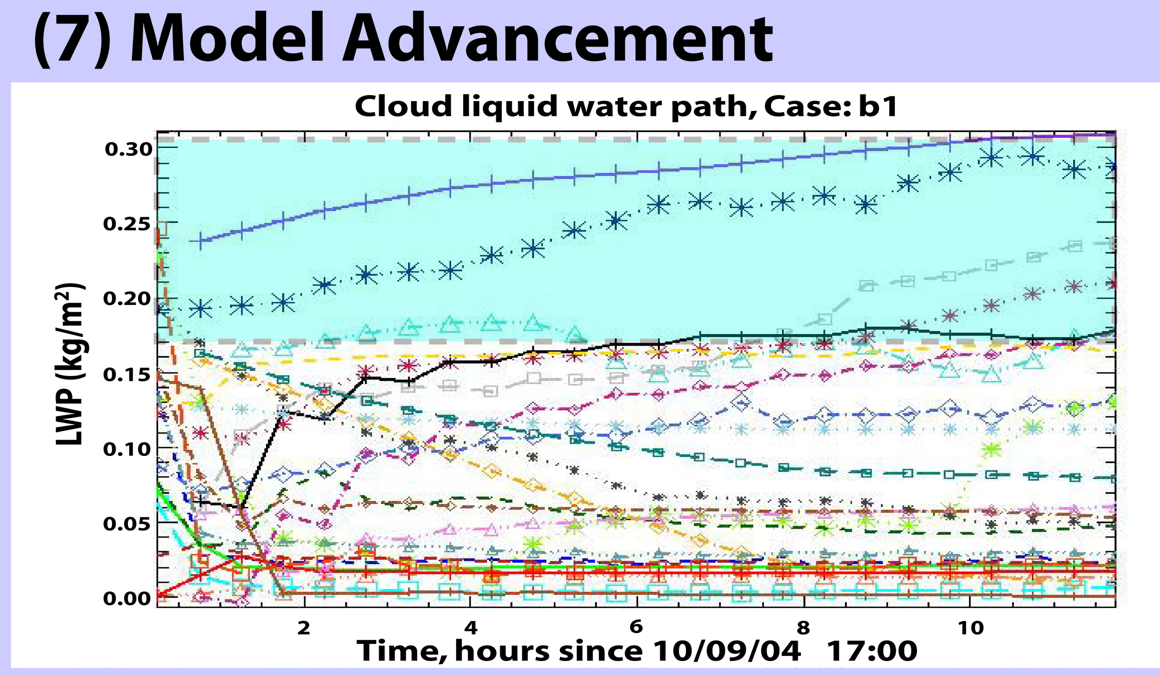
Radiative cooling from cloud top leads to vertical motion within the cloud layer. Droplets in the updrafts cool through expansion and accumulate liquid mass through condensational growth, decreasing the fraction of soluble mass within the droplet.

The fraction of soluble mass in the growing drops decreases to the point where freezing is no longer inhibited, and the larger nucleate into ice particles through the immersion freezing process.

Growth of these ice particles uses up available moisture, and further droplet growth (and therefore ice formation) is halted. The ice particles rapidly grow to a size where they precipitate from the cloud layer, and the cycle starts over.



(7) Model Advancement



- This figure illustrates widespread disagreement in liquid water path predictions by 26 different models for the same single layer mixed-phase stratus case (from ARM M-PACE intercomparison case 1, Klein et al., 2008 in preparation). The blue shading represents the range of LWP values obtained using Turner's MWR retrieval.

- Current models have limited ability to handle the immersion freezing process. Most utilize temperature only in determining whether immersion freezing is active.

(8) Contact Info. / Acknowledgements

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