

Responses to Reviewer 1

This is a WRF-Chem modeling study using a case of summertime convection in Houston from the ACPC Model Intercomparison Project. The focus is on the indirect aerosol effects on deep convection, using both SBM and Morrison microphysical schemes. The paper is certainly within the scope of ACP. It is well organized and clearly written, with adequate introduction and scientific review. The goals of the study, as elucidated in the first paragraph of section 5, are to (1) evaluate the performance of the WRF-Chem-SBM scheme, (2) explore the differences in aerosol effects on deep convective clouds produced by the SBM and Morrison schemes, and (3) explore the major factors responsible for the differences. The first two goals are descriptive in nature, they are fulfilled and clearly documented. However, I found the deductions made regarding the third goal to be questionable and poorly-supported by the data presented. The manuscript concludes that, the “warm-phase invigoration” effect is absent with the Morrison scheme, and this is “mainly due to limitations of the saturation adjustment approach for droplet condensation and evaporation calculation”. While the saturation adjustment is probably the root cause, I find it unlikely that it is the DIRECT cause of the simulated sensitivities. Other processes have to be involved, and they need to be identified and properly analyzed. I’ll elaborate on this in my specific comments. This flaw needs to be addressed before the manuscript is published.

We thank the reviewer for your time and constructive comments. We have provided detailed responses point-by-point as below.

Specific Comments:

There are three sets of model sensitivity tests using either realistic anthropogenic aerosol loadings or no anthropogenic aerosol: the explicit SBM scheme, the 2-moment Morrison scheme with saturation adjustment technic, and the Morrison scheme improved with a super saturation formula. The SBM scheme simulated stronger convection and more aerosol sensitivity compared with the original Morrison scheme, whereas the improved Morrison scheme produced results and sensitivities closer to the SBM results. The conclusion followed was that “. . .the saturation adjustment method for the condensation and evaporation calculation is mainly responsible for the limited aerosol effects with the Morrison scheme.” This should be the correct conclusion, that the limitations in saturation adjustment are the root cause of the simulated differences in sensitivities. However, it cannot be the DIRECT cause. I can think of two pieces of evidence to support my assertion.

1. In the conclusion, the authors stated: “. . .the saturation adjustment method actually leads to a smaller condensation latent heating than the explicit calculation with supersaturation. . .” (L407). Fig. 12b was given to support the statement. However, saturation adjustment cannot be the direct reason for the smaller latent heating in Fig. 12b (or in any of the plots in Figs. 11~14). Figs. 11~14 only showed mean vertical profiles of various variables for the “top 25 percentiles” of the simulated updrafts. The main reason the Morrison scheme has smaller latent heating in Fig. 12b is not because of the saturation adjustment, it is because the updrafts are weaker (Fig. 11 a, b). The dynamics already determined the differences in the latent heating, buoyancy, condensation rate, et al. shown in Figs. 11~14, not the other way around. In other words, the top 25 percentile of the updrafts are already weaker in the Morrison scheme simulation. As a result, latent heating should be weaker. Whether saturation adjustment causes this or not cannot be established by Figs. 11~ 14.

2. If saturation adjustment were the immediate/main cause of the simulated sensitivities, then the original Morrison scheme should produce stronger convection than SBM, given the same aerosol loading. This is because the saturation adjustment converts ALL supersaturation into cloud water, and thus should release the most latent heating among all schemes used. The fact that the SBM_anth case has much stronger convection than MOR_anth clearly precludes this possibility. If the authors plot Fig. 12 for the same vertical velocity (or super saturation), the Morrison scheme should have more latent heating, not less. In conclusion, the saturation adjustment cannot be the direct cause of the simulated sensitivities. Something else must interact with it to cause these sensitivities. The authors actually observed the oddity of their conclusion in their conclusion, L401~L405. They noted that their study differs from Lebo et al. (2012). In this sense, Lebo et al. (2012) gave a feasible explanation, that the “cold-phase invigoration” is in play together with saturation adjustment. The current case study may or may not have the same mechanism. Nevertheless, the authors need to find the missing link between the saturation adjustment, which produces the maximum possible latent heating by eliminating all super saturation, and the enhanced convection when super saturation is allowed.

Although it is difficult to untangle the cause and effect relationship between the updraft and latent heating, the simulation sets of MOR and MOR_SS (i.e., MOR_anth vs MOR_SS_anth and MOR_noanth vs MOR_SS_noanth) allow us to attribute the differences in the response of latent heating and convective intensity to the method of saturation adjustment versus explicit treatment of supersaturation for condensation and evaporation. In Figs. r1, latent heating rates at 1700, 1900, and 2100 UTC are shown (first, second, and third columns, respectively). Note that at 1700 UTC, MOR_anth has stronger convection than MOR_SS_anth, suggesting that saturation adjustment removes all supersaturation and releases more latent heating. However, the development of deep convection is slower and weaker in MOR_anth because MOR_SS_anth has much more increase in latent heating significantly above the cloud base (one important feature of “warm-phase” invigoration) from 1700 to 1900 UTC. This suggests MOR_anth with supersaturation adjustment has limitation on “warm-phase” invigoration. After the convection in MOR_SS_anth become stronger than MOR_anth, the stronger updrafts further enhance the latent heating, suggesting a positive feedback. The saturation adjustment also shows weaker responses to different aerosol loadings with incorrect aerosol effect on diffusional growth (MOR_anth vs MOR_noanth).

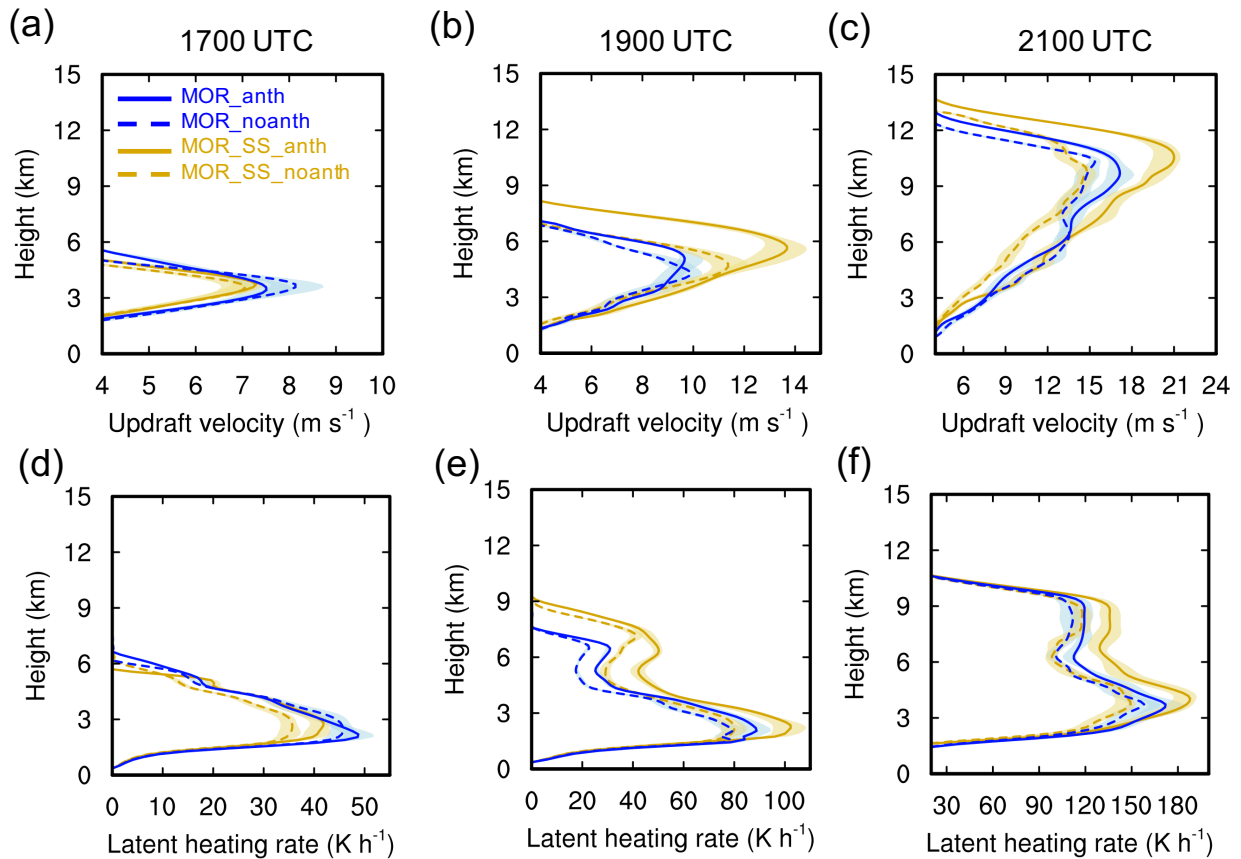


Figure r1 Vertical profiles of (a-c) updraft velocity and (d-f) latent heating rate averaged over the top 25 percentiles (i.e., 75th to 100th) of the updrafts with value greater than 2 m s^{-1} from the simulations MOR_anth, MOR_noanth, MOR_SS_anth and MOR_SS_noanth over the analysis domain as shown in the red box in Figure 7 at 1700 UTC, 1900 UTC and 2100 UTC.

Another result that puzzles me comes from Fig. 9a, where the high aerosol loading cases (SBM_anth and MOR_anth) rain earlier than the low aerosol cases. Why? The conventional wisdom is the opposite. High aerosol loading will produce more, smaller cloud droplets, reducing auto conversion and delaying surface rainfall onset. Can this be checked and explained? The warm rain period is very weak (analysis box averaged rain rate at $\sim 0.02 \text{ mm hr}^{-1}$) and short ($\sim 10 \text{ min}$), so the delay of precipitation is too hard to be shown from Fig. 9a. Actually, the clean cases initialize the rain about 5min earlier. The surface rain become large until the precipitation from deep clouds are formed. The time shift at $\sim 1900 \text{ UTC}$ from Fig. 9a may suggest that the high aerosol loading cases has faster transition from warm rain to mixed-phase precipitation.