PMIP2 climate model-proxy data intercomparisons for the LGM

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Climate models may perform equally well for simulating the present-day and 20th century climates, yet produce very different responses to likely changes in forcing (such as greenhouse gases and insolation) in the future. Therefore, it is important to compare current state-of-the-art climate model simulations of past climates against the benchmarks of paleo-observations. The Paleoclimate Modelling Intercomparison Project (PMIP) is a long-standing initiative endorsed by PAGES and the World Climate Research Programme JSC/CLIVAR Working Group on Coupled Models (WGCM). It provides for coordination of paleoclimate modeling activities on the mechanisms of climate change, the identification of key feedbacks operating in the climate system, and on the capability of climate models to reproduce climates that are different from modern.

PMIP initially focused on two periods, the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM; ca. 21 cal kyr BP) and the mid-Holocene (MH; ca. 6 cal kyr BP). The experiments were designed to examine the climate response to Milankovitch orbital forcings for the MH and the presence of large ice sheets and low greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations for the LGM. Seventeen modeling groups participated in simulations of these time periods with atmosphere-only models (PMIP1), and twelve groups in the second phase of the project (PMIP2) using ocean-atmosphere or ocean-atmosphere-vegetation models. With the incorporation of coupled atmosphere-ocean-sea ice models into PMIP2, new comparisons to proxy data can now be used in evaluating the capabilities of current climate models to simulate climate conditions different than present. Here, we describe two such comparisons of the PMIP2 LGM simulations to glacial proxy data: deep-ocean tempera-
tures and salinities in the Atlantic Ocean, and sea ice extent around Antarctica.

**PMIP2 LGM simulations**

Six international modeling groups have contributed PMIP2 simulations for the LGM: CCSM (the National Center for Atmospheric Research CCSM3 model), HadCM (the UK Met Office HadCM3 model), FGOALS (the LASG/Institute of Atmospheric Physics FGOALS-g1.0 model), IPSL-CM4-V1-MR model, MIROC (the CCSR/NIES/FRCGC MIROC3.2.2 medres model), and ECBilt-CLIO (the KNMI ECBilt/Louvain-la-Neuve CLIO intermediate complexity model)—models also used for the IPCC AR4 simulations of future climate change. For the PMIP2 LGM simulations (Braconnot et al., 2007), all of the models used the ICE-5G reconstruction of LGM continental ice sheets (Peltier, 2004), the same change from pre-industrial levels of atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O) based on the ice core records (Fluckiger et al., 1999; Dallenbach et al., 2000; Monnin et al., 2001), the specification of additional land due to a lowering of sea level, and the change to insolation resulting from a slightly different orbit of the Earth. The presence of extensive glacial ice sheets accounts for over half of the total radiative forcing of the troposphere (Hewitt and Mitchell, 1997), and the lowering of GHG concentrations (primarily the CO₂) accounts for most of the remaining radiative forcing (Otto-Bliesner et al., 2006), with small contributions from the additional land and insolation changes.

**Atlantic deep-ocean temperatures and salinities**

Pore fluid measurements of the chloride concentration and the oxygen isotopic composition from Ocean Drilling Program (ODP) cores in the Atlantic have allowed the simultaneous reconstruction of salinity and temperature of the deep ocean for the LGM (Fig. 1) (Adkins et al., 2002). For modern, the core top samples indicate the presence of warm, salty North Atlantic Deep Water at great depths for latitudes north of ~40°N, with the colder and somewhat fresher Antarctic Bottom Water dominating south of this latitude. For LGM, these cores indicate that the Southern Ocean deep water extended its influence far into the North Atlantic. LGM Atlantic deep waters were much colder and saltier than modern day. Additionally, deep ocean potential temperatures (θ) were relatively homogenous over the north-south extent of the Atlantic, compared to modern data. The data also suggest a significant north-south deep ocean salinity gradient during the LGM in the Atlantic, with the deep Southern Ocean much saltier than the North Atlantic.

The PMIP2 models can be used to simulate the three-dimensional temperature and salinity structure of the oceans. Model-ODP comparisons show that the models reproduce the modern deep ocean temperature-salinity structure in the Atlantic basin relatively well (Fig. 1). They simulate warmer and saltier deep waters at Feni Drift in the North Atlantic than at Shona Rise in the Atlantic sector of the Southern Ocean, with deep ocean density gradients mainly due to the temperature difference. Greater differences between models occur for the LGM simulations. Three of the models simulate a very cold and relatively homogeneous temperature structure from north to south in the Atlantic basin, with CCSM also simulating the observed large north-south salinity differences during the LGM. The other three models also simulate colder LGM deep waters and somewhat greater salinity increases in the Southern Ocean than the North Atlantic as compared to modern but retain the temperature-salinity structure of the modern simulation.

**Southern hemisphere sea ice**

Planktic foraminiferal estimates of sea surface temperature and abundances of diatoms and radiolarians preserved in deep-sea sediments in the Southern Ocean have been utilized for reconstructing LGM sea ice extent around Antarctica. Increasing abundances of taxa that show a strong correspondence to sea ice or open ocean have been used to estimate statistically the number of months per year of sea ice cover (Gersonde et al., 2005; Crosta, 2007). The diatom records confirm the presence of extensive sea ice around Antarctica during LGM winters, similar to the reconstruction of CLIMAP (CLIMAP project members, 1981) but argue for a more restricted extent during LGM summers (Fig. 2). The diatom-reconstructed LGM summer sea ice margin around Antarctica extended far northward to ~55-60°S in the Atlantic, while in the Indian Ocean sector, the extent was similar to modern. The climate models used for PMIP2 predict the thermodynamics and dynamics of sea ice with sea ice models of varying complexities. All the models simulate an expansion of sea ice at LGM compared to modern, with greater expansion in the Atlantic sector than the Pacific sector. Overall, the models agree with the data on winter LGM sea ice extent in the Pacific sector but only two models extend the sea ice as far northward as the data in the Atlantic sector. The model simulations of summer sea ice extent are much less consistent. Three of the models simulate LGM summer sea ice extent comparable to modern extent in the Southern Ocean, while the other three models simulate much more expansion of LGM summer sea ice. The asymmetry of LGM summer sea ice extent between the Atlantic and Indian Ocean sectors, as indicated by the data, is simulated poorly by all the models. The FGOALS model simulates the greatest sea ice extent during the LGM, with relatively small seasonal variation.

**Implications**

It has been shown that the response of the coupled climate system to changes in GHG forcing is dependent on the simulation of sea ice physics and strong sea ice...
Are paleo-proxy data helpful for constraining future climate change?

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How sensitive is our climate system to CO₂? This is a key issue in a world of rising greenhouse gas concentrations. Estimating the temperature sensitivity of the Earth to changes in atmospheric CO₂ has therefore been the subject of intensive research. Yet, uncertainty in our knowledge of this sensitivity is still large—as expressed by the broad 2-4.5°C range of climate sensitivity (ΔTₑ) estimates (Meehl et al., 2007). Commonly ΔTₑ is defined as the equilibrium global-mean temperature change for doubling the pre-industrial CO₂ concentration. The direct radiative effect is a warming by 1°C but what makes the total warming uncertain is the strength of the fast climatic feedbacks—mainly ice-albedo, water vapor, lapse rate and cloud feedback. Here, we discuss how paleo-data can be used to reduce uncertainty in the range of ΔTₑ.

One way to compute climate sensitivity is to use climate models that calculate the feedbacks and thus ΔTₑ. Another approach is to use the observed response of the climate system to constrain climate sensitivity. Studies using the climate signal provided by the instrumental record of the past 100-150 years were unable to rule out ΔTₑ values above the IPCC range (Meehl et al., 2007). Unless we wait for the climate change signal to become much stronger, it will not be possible to greatly reduce uncertainty in ΔTₑ in this way. A way out of this dilemma may be the use of paleo-data, which contain information on how sensitively the climate system has responded in the past to a radiative perturbation.

The three critical conditions for the success of this approach are: (1) a sufficiently large climate response in order to separate the signal from climatic noise, and sufficiently accurate data describing both (2) the climate change and (3) the forcing of this climate change. A promising candidate is the climate of the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM; 21 kyr BP), a time period that was on global average 4-7 °C colder than today (Schneider von Demling et al., 2006a) with an abundance of good data on the forcing and the temperature distribution.

The observed response, seen through past climate changes, can be used in two ways for inferring ΔTₑ:

(1) The ratio of past temperature change to forcing is estimated based on data and is then taken as a measure for the temperature response to doubling of CO₂ (paleo-calibration, Covey et al., 1996). This approach assumes that the strength of the climate feedbacks inferred from the past can be taken as a direct measure for ΔTₑ. As the past is not a perfect analog for the future (e.g., the spatially inhomogeneous glacial forcing differs from the homogeneous 2xCO₂ forcing), this assumption may be questionable.

(2) Using paleo-data in conjunction with climate models to constrain model...