Factors controlling Hadley circulation changes from the Last Glacial Maximum to the end of the 21st century

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13 Key Points:

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14	The Hadley circulation extent and strength are analyzed in simulations spanning the
15	Last Glacial Maximum to global warming scenarios
16	The Hadley circulation generally widens and weakens as the climate warms
17	Changes in meridional temperature gradients have a modest modulating effect, prin-
18	cipally on the southern hemisphere Hadley circulation

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19 Abstract

The Hadley circulation (HC) extent and strength are analyzed in a wide range of 20 simulated climates from the last glacial maximum to global-warming scenarios. Moti-21 vated by HC theories, we analyze how the HC is influenced by the subtropical stability, 22 the near-surface meridional potential temperature gradient, and the tropical tropopause 23 level. The subtropical static stability accounts for the bulk of the HC changes across the 24 simulations. However, since it correlates strongly with global-mean surface temperature, 25 most HC changes can be attributed to global-mean surface temperature changes. The HC 26 widens as the climate warms, and it also weakens, but only robustly so in the northern 27 hemisphere. On the other hand, the southern hemisphere strength response is uncertain, 28 in part because subtropical static stability changes counteract meridional potential temper-29 ature gradient changes to various degrees in different models, with no consensus on the 30 response of the latter to global warming. 31

32 **1 Introduction**

Simulations of greenhouse gas (GHG) induced global warming consistently point 33 to a widening of the Hadley circulation (HC) as the climate warms, which has been sug-34 gested to be linked to an increase of the subtropical static stability [Walker and Schnei-35 der, 2006; Frierson et al., 2007; Lu et al., 2007, 2008]. Such a widening has also been 36 observed in recent decades [Hu and Fu, 2007; Seidel et al., 2008; Birner, 2010; Davis and 37 Rosenlof, 2012; Nguyen et al., 2013; Adam et al., 2014; D'Agostino and Lionello, 2017]. 38 However, what causes these changes has not been clearly established. A substantial frac-39 tion of recent HC variations are not related to changes in subtropical static stability: The 40 HC narrows as meridional temperature gradients strengthen, as seen under El Niño [e.g., 41 Lu et al., 2008; Adam et al., 2014]. It expands and weakens as meridional temperature gra-42 dients weaken, for example, in GHG induced global warming scenarios [Seo et al., 2014] 43 and under La Niña conditions [Lu et al., 2008]. 44

In angular momentum-conserving theories [*Held and Hou*, 1980], the HC extent depends on meridional temperature gradients but not on the static stability. However, Earth's HC usually is not close to the angular momentum-conserving limit [*Walker and Schneider*, 2006; *Schneider*, 2006]. Instead, especially near the subtropical HC edges where Rossby numbers are generally small, the direction of the upper-tropospheric meridional mass flux

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is controlled by the sign of the eddy momentum flux divergence. Because the eddy mo-50 mentum fluxes are baroclinically generated, this opens up the possibility that the HC ex-51 tent and strength depend on baroclinicity measures, which generally involve the isentropic 52 slope and thus depend on meridional temperature gradients, the static stability, and gen-53 erally also the tropopause level [Held, 2000; Schneider, 2006; Schneider et al., 2010]. In-54 deed, the HC extent and strength have been quantitatively linked to factors such as the 55 static stability, meridional temperature gradients, and the tropopause level in wide ranges 56 of dry and moist idealized general circulation model studies [Schneider and Walker, 2008; 57 Korty and Schneider, 2008; O'Gorman, 2011; Levine and Schneider, 2015]. 58

Motivated by such theories of the HC, here we analyze the relationship of HC changes 59 to variations in subtropical static stability, meridional temperature gradients, mean temper-60 ature, and tropopause level in a wide range of simulated climates within the Paleoclimate 61 Modelling Intercomparison Project Phase 3 (PMIP3) and from the Coupled Model Inter-62 comparison Project Phase 5 (CMIP5). This approach allows us to test theories of the HC 63 response to climate change under a broader range of conditions than considered previ-64 ously. We include simulations of GHG warming, as most previous studies did, [Lu et al., 65 2007, 2008; Seo et al., 2014], but also simulations with changes in orbital parameters and 66 ice cover. 67

68 **2** Data and Methods

We use monthly PMIP3 and CMIP5 data from the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM), Mid-Holocene (MIDH), Pre-Industrial Control (PIC), Historical (HIST), and Representative Concentration Pathways 4.5 and 8.5 (RCP4.5 and RCP8.5) experiments. For each of these experiments, we use the first ensemble member (r1i1p1) of available models (Table S1). All datasets are zonally averaged and interpolated to 1° latitude resolution.

74 Analysis is based on the meridional mass streamfunction

$$\psi = \frac{2\pi a \cos\phi}{g} \int_0^p v dp \,, \tag{1}$$

where v is the zonal-mean meridional wind component, p is pressure, g is the gravitational acceleration, a is Earth's radius, and ϕ is latitude. As an index of HC extent, we compute by linear interpolation the subtropical zero-crossing latitude of ψ averaged between the 300- and 700-hPa levels. As an index of HC strength, we use the streamfunction maximum in the northern hemisphere (NH) and minimum in the southern hemisphere

80	(SH) between the 100- and 700-hPa levels and equatorward of 30° . We use absolute val-
81	ues for the indices of NH and SH HC extent (ϕ_{NH} and ϕ_{SH}) and strength (ψ_{NH} and ψ_{SH}).
82	Climatologies are calculated for the last 30 years of the RCP experiments, for the
83	years 1979-2004 of the HIST experiment, for the full-length of the PIC time series and
84	over 200 years centered at year 1000 for MIDH and LGM. We examine the covariance of
85	the HC extent and strength with the following factors:
86	1. The tropical mean surface temperature $(<11>)$ equatorward of 30°. Here we use
87	<tt> instead of the global mean surface temperature to minimize effects of en-</tt>
88	hanced continental warming and ice-sheet cover changes. However, results based on
89	global mean temperature do not differ qualitatively from those based on <tt>, as</tt>
90	their correlation is very high ($R = 0.96$, 5% significance level, Student <i>t</i> -test).
91	2. The meridional near-surface (averaged between the 700- and 800-hPa levels) poten-
92	tial temperature contrast ($\Delta_h \theta$), calculated as the difference between the potential
93	temperature in the deep tropics (equatorward of 10°) and the extratropics (between
94	40° to 60° in each hemisphere).
95	3. The subtropical near-surface static stability ($\Delta_v \theta$), defined as the potential tempera-
96	ture difference between the 700- and 800-hPa levels and averaged between 20° and
97	40° latitude in each hemisphere.
98	4. The tropical (15°S–15°N) tropopause pressure level (p_t), calculated as the low-
99	est level at which the lapse rate drops below 2 K km ⁻¹ , following the method de-

scribed in Birner [2010].

101 **3 Results**

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Figure 1 shows the seasonal cycle of HC strength and extent across the climates, 102 computed as the ensemble mean of seasonal cycles in individual models. Across all sea-103 sons, both ϕ_{NH} and ϕ_{SH} shift poleward from the coldest (LGM) to the warmest (RCP8.5) 104 experiment. In the NH, the poleward shift is larger in late boreal summer/early fall than in 105 the winter, while in the SH it is approximately constant throughout the year. In the NH, 106 the month in which the maximum northward extent is reached shifts progressively later in 107 the year as the climate warms, being delayed by about one month in the warmest relative 108 to the coldest climate. This likely reflects the tendency for a delayed retreat of the north-109 ern hemisphere summer monsoons under global warming [Kitoh et al., 2013]. The winter 110

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and summer HC generally weaken with global warming in both hemispheres, roughly in proportion to their climatological mean strength. The NH winter HC is strongest and narrowest in LGM. In contrast, the SH winter HC is strongest and narrowest in MIDH. This suggests that inter-hemispheric temperature differences (which are maximal during NH winter in LGM and during SH winter in MIDH, see Figure S1) can modulate HC extent and strength [*Chiang and Friedman*, 2012].

Since HC strength variations are most significant in winter, and since HC extent variations are consistent across all seasons, here we focus on winter HC variations. Analysis of summer HC variations is provided in the supplementary informations.



Figure 1. Seasonal cycle of the multimodel ensemble-mean (a) ϕ_{NH} , (b) ϕ_{SH} , (c) ψ_{NH} , and (d) ψ_{SH} . Experiment color codes are listed in (a) for: LGM (ensemble-mean <TT> = 294.0 K), MIDH (296.5 K), PIC (296.9 K), HIST (297.4 K), RCP4.5 (299.0 K), and RCP8.5 (300.6 K).

Figure 2 shows the multimodel mean winter streamfunction difference in the LGM, 123 MIDH, and RCP8.5 scenarios relative to PIC. The PIC multimodel mean was calculated 124 separately for LGM, MIDH, and RCP8.5, accounting for the different model ensembles in 125 each experiment. However, this does not affect results significantly, as shown by the sim-126 ilarity of the reference PIC streamfunctions (black contours) in the three columns. The 127 HC shows opposite behaviors between the coldest (LGM) and the warmest (RCP8.5) ex-128 periment: in both hemispheres, the HC shifts poleward and weakens and the tropopause 129 pressure level decreases (height increases) with global warming, as was shown in previ-130



Figure 2. Multimodel ensemble-mean streamfunction difference between LGM, MIDH, and RCP8.5 and relative to PIC. In each panel, the difference is indicated by filled colors (contour interval 10 Sv, 1 Sv = 10^9 kg s⁻¹) for DJF (upper row) and JJA (lower row). Black contours show the PIC reference streamfunction: dashed (solid) lines indicate negative (positive) values of the streamfunction (contour interval 40 Sv).

- ous studies [*Diaz and Bradley*, 2004; *Schneider*, 2004; *Otto-Bliesner and Clement*, 2004;
 Schneider, 2007; *Braconnot et al.*, 2007]. On the other hand, the HC in MIDH differs sub stantially from both LGM and RCP8.5, with a northward displacement and weakening of
 the NH HC relative to PIC in austral winter, and little change in boreal winter.
- In order to identify the dominant mechanisms leading to HC changes, we compute 139 the linear regression coefficients of the HC extent and strength on factors associated with 140 theories of the HC. To reduce the sensitivity of our results to variability in the mean states 141 of the climate models, we base our analysis on deviations from the PIC experiment, de-142 noted by δ and computed separately for each climate model. Robust regressions are used 143 to reduce sensitivity to outliers [Huber, 1981]. Figure 3 shows the correlation coefficients 144 and their error bars based on the scatter plots in supplementary figures S2 and S3. They 145 indicate a consistent relation of the HC in both hemispheres with subtropical static sta-146 bility $\Delta_v \theta$ and tropopause level p_t . The HC widens and weakens as the subtropical static 147 stability increases and as the tropical tropopause pressure level decreases. Both factors ex-148 plain a comparable amount of $\phi_{\rm NH}$, $\phi_{\rm SH}$, $\psi_{\rm NH}$, and $\psi_{\rm SH}$ variance (Table 2). However, they 149

Table 1. Mutual winter correlations (*R*) between tropical surface temperature (<TT>), meridional tem-

perature gradient ($\Delta_{\rm h}\theta$), subtropical static stability ($\Delta_{\rm v}\theta$), and tropical troppause (p_t), for the NH (above

diagonal) and SH (below diagonal). All correlations are significant (5% significance level, Student *t*-test).

R	<tt></tt>	$\Delta_{ m h} heta$	$\Delta_{ m v} heta$	p_t
<tt></tt>	_	-0.57	+0.85	-0.93
$\Delta_{ m h} heta$	+0.59	-	-0.54	+0.49
$\Delta_{ m v} heta$	+0.97	+0.55	_	-0.92
p_t	-0.93	-0.52	-0.92	_

Table 2. Explained variance (R^2) for regression models of ϕ_{NH} , ϕ_{SH} , ψ_{NH} , and ψ_{SH} on $\Delta_{\text{h}}\theta$, $\Delta_{\text{v}}\theta$, p_t and (TT>). The last line shows results of a multiple regression model using $\Delta_{\text{h}}\theta$, $\Delta_{\text{v}}\theta$, and p_t as predictors. Adjusted variance (R_{adj}^2) , accounting for the increased degrees of freedom in the multiple regression model, is shown in parentheses.

\mathbb{R}^2	$\phi_{ m NH}$	$\phi_{ m SH}$	$\psi_{ m NH}$	$\psi_{ m SH}$
$\Delta_{ m h} heta$	13%	50%	54%	1%
$\Delta_{ m v} heta$	54%	90%	41%	5%
p_t	54%	86%	52%	4%
< TT >	62%	90%	71%	6%
3 predictors	60% (58%)	93% (93%)	79% (78%)	18% (15%)

are themselves strongly correlated (Table 1) and therefore cannot be regarded as indepen dent predictors. Additional details for specific models and inter-model spread are provided
 in figures S2 and S3.

The dependence of HC extent and strength on $\Delta_{\rm h}\theta$ differs between the hemispheres. In the SH, $\Delta_{h}\theta$ increases with global warming, while in the NH it decreases, primarily because $\Delta_{h}\theta$ increases in the NH in the LGM simulations as a result of ice cover changes. In general, identifying how much the HC strength in the SH ($\psi_{\rm SH}$) is influenced by the various factors we considered is made difficult by its weak overall change with global warming. Note that the opposite signs of the correlation of $\Delta_{\rm h}\theta_{\rm SH}$ and $\Delta_{\rm h}\theta_{\rm NH}$ with <TT>, on one hand, and the weak correlation of $\psi_{\rm SH}$ with all factors (Figure 3b and Table 2),

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- ¹⁶⁷ with large error bars reflecting the large scatter among simulations, reinforce these state-
- 168 ments.



Figure 3. Correlation coefficients across the collection of simulations (Fig. S2 and S3) between winter values of ϕ_{NH} and ϕ_{SH} (upper panel) and ψ_{NH} and ψ_{SH} (lower panel) with $\Delta_{\text{h}}\theta$, $\Delta_{\text{v}}\theta$, p_t , and <TT> in the NH (gray bars) and SH (white bars). Error bars show lower and upper bounds for a 95% confidence interval for each correlation coefficient.

As shown in Table 1, all factors are strongly correlated with the tropical tempera-173 ture <TT>. Figures 4 show scatter plots of $\phi_{\rm NH}$, $\phi_{\rm SH}$, $\psi_{\rm NH}$, and $\psi_{\rm SH}$, all vs. <TT>. The 174 HC edges shift poleward with increasing <TT> in both hemispheres at a similar rate of 175 0.35°/K. The HC weakens with increasing <TT> only in the NH, at a rate of 6 Sv/K. The 176 SH exhibits a large intermodel spread, with 50% of the models showing a strengthening 177 of the SH HC under warming. Variations of tropical temperatures <TT> alone can explain 178 62% of the wintertime variance in the NH strength $\phi_{\rm NH}$, 90% of $\phi_{\rm SH}$, 71% of $\psi_{\rm NH}$, and 179 6% of ψ_{SH} . Results during the summer do not differ qualitatively from winter, except for 180 the NH summer HC, which robustly contracts equatorward with global warming, as a re-181 sult of a seasonality change (Figure S4). 182

- Since the various factors cannot easily be isolated because of their strong correlations, we evaluate the combined contribution of the factors in a multiple regression model using $\Delta_{\rm h}\theta$, $\Delta_{\rm v}\theta$, and p_t as predictors.
- As expected, this model does improve the total explained variance relative to the simple regressions (Table 2) for each predictor, although for ψ_{SH} , a large fraction of the total variance remains unaccounted for even in the multiple regression model. Similar

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Figure 4. Relation of winter values of $\langle TT \rangle$ with (a) ϕ_{NH} , (b) ϕ_{SH} , (c) ψ_{NH} , and (d) ψ_{SH} . What is plotted are differences from PIC (denoted by δ). Experiments are identified by different colors, following the legend listed in (a). Each model is marked by a number, as in Table S1. Robust regressions over the whole collection of models are indicated by black lines. Regression coefficients (α) and correlation coefficients (R) are listed inside each panel. Statistically significant correlations (5% significance level, Student *t*-test) are indicated by an asterisk.

results are obtained for regression analyses with only 2 predictors. From the R^2 values 189 in Table 2, it is evident that <TT> is the single best predictor of HC extent and strength 190 in both hemispheres, with a predictive power comparable to that of the multiple regres-191 sion model. Likely this arises because increases in latent heat release in warmer climates 192 lead to an increased static stability [Schneider and O'Gorman, 2008], and the tropopause 193 height increases with warming as implied by radiative-convective considerations [Schnei-194 der, 2007]. This leads to strong correlations among mean temperature, static stability, and 195 tropopause level. Both the static stability and tropopause level naturally arise in theories 196 for HC extent and strength [Schneider et al., 2010]. But nothwithstanding the strong cor-197 relation of <TT> with HC extent and strength, it is unlikely that mean temperature itself 198 should enter HC theories explicitly, for example, because in dry atmospheres, the mean 199 temperature can only affect dynamics through its nonlinear effects on radiative transfer. 200

207 4 Conclusions

We investigated the HC extent and strength in a wide range of PMIP3 and CMIP5 climate simulations, ranging from LGM to RCP8.5 experiments. The wide range of climate variations allowed us to extract robust results on HC variations, including the GHG induced changes on which previous studies have focused [*Lu et al.*, 2007; *Seo et al.*, 2014].

We found that changes in subtropical static stability, meridional temperature gradi-212 ents, and tropical tropopause level are all strongly correlated with the tropical mean tem-213 perature across models and experiments. Tropical temperature therefore emerged as the 214 best predictor of HC variations across the range of simulations we considered. Consistent 215 with previous studies, we found that the HC widens as the tropical temperature increases, 216 at a rate of ~0.7°/K on average. This is of similar magnitude but slightly higher than 217 the rate calculated for the IPCC-AR4 high-emission scenario (~0.6°/K, Lu et al. [2007]), 218 but lower than that calculated taking into account only CMIP5 HIST simulations (~1°/K, 219 Adam et al. [2014]). 220

The HC generally weakens with global warming, by up to about 4%/K, which can 221 be compared with the multimodel ensemble-mean of 1.2%/K calculated for the AR4 high-222 emission scenario [Lu et al., 2007; Vecchi and Soden, 2007]. The weakening occurs in all 223 seasons, but it is more significant in the NH. The HC weakens at a rate of about 6 Sv/K 224 and 2 Sv/K in the NH winter and summer, respectively, but by only 1 Sv/K and 0.8 Sv/K 225 in the SH winter and summer. The relatively small HC strength change in the SH hides 226 substantial variations across models: about half of the models show a strengthening and 227 half a weakening of the SH HC. Some of the scatter across models depends on the degree 228 of compensation between effects of changes in the subtropical static stability and in the 229 near-surface meridional potential temperature contrast, which decreases in most models 230 but increases in some. However, even the multiple regression model accounts for only a 231 small fraction of the variations across models. This suggests that other factors than those 232 we considered are important for accounting for the variations in SH HC strength and its 233 scatter across models. 234

Our analysis suggests that subtropical static stability changes, which correlate strongly with tropical and global-mean surface temperature changes, account for the most of the HC changes. Tropical temperature therefore emerges as a good predictor in these climate change experiments. However, in other climate changes, for example, in which mean tem-

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²³⁹ perature changes and changes in meridional temperature gradients decouple, the merid-

ional temperature gradient and other factors may exert a greater independent influence on
 the HC.

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