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1Changes in reactivity as chemistry becomes confined2 to an interface. The case of free radical oxidation of3 $C_{30}H_{62}$ alkane by OH

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11ABSTRACT

12Here we examine in a simple organic aerosol the transition between heterogeneous chemistry 13under well-mixed conditions to chemistry under interfacial confinement. A single reaction 14mechanism, shown to reproduce observed OH oxidation chemistry for liquid and semisolid 15C₃₀H₆₂ is used in reaction-diffusion simulations to explore reactivity over a broad viscosity 16range. The results show that when internal mixing of the aerosol is fast and the particle interface 17is enriched in C-H groups, ketone and alcohol products, formed via peroxy radical 18disproportionation, predominate. As viscosity increases the reactions become confined to a shell 19at the gas-aerosol interface. The confinement is accompanied by emergence of acyloxy reaction 20pathways that are particularly active when the shell is 1nm or less. We quantify this trend using 21a reaction-diffusion index, allowing the parts of the mechanism that control reactivity as 22viscosity increases to be identified.



24TOC graphic



27INTRODUCTION

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The presence of aerosols in the troposphere increases substantially the complexity of 30 models for the chemical evolution of planetary atmospheres. This complexity is due in large part 31 to chemistry that couples gas and condensed phase reaction mechanisms. Aerosol reactivity with 32a gas is generally measured with an uptake coefficient, γ , which is calculated from composition 33 data using the expression

$$34 \qquad \gamma = \frac{2k_{rx}d_p \rho_0 N_A}{3cM}(1)$$

35 where k_{rx} is the apparent disappearance rate constant for the starting material in the aerosol, d_p is 36 the particle diameter, ρ_0 is the aerosol density, c is the velocity of the gaseous reactant molecules, 37 *M* is the molecular weight of the aerosol material, and N_A is Avogadro's number. This expression 38 applies if the aerosol is well mixed and the entire volume of the particle participates in the 39 reaction. However, the rates of multiphase processes such as heterogeneous reactions¹⁻⁷ and 40 evaporation⁸⁻¹¹ and condensation kinetics are inextricably connected to internal mixing timescales 41 in aerosols. These timescales can span many orders of magnitude and are controlled by water 42 content and aerosol phase state (liquid, solids and glasses).

43 Discovery of predictive elementary reaction mechanisms that take diffusion into account 44provides some insights to how transport affects reactivity. For example, Knopf *et al.*² and Davies 45*et al.*,³ observed a complex nonlinear relationship between the organic diffusion constant and OH 46reaction rate (i.e. effective reactive uptake) with levoglucosan and citric acid aerosol, 47respectively. Berkemeier et al.,¹² used a kinetic multilayer model to explain the complex time 48dynamics of O₃ uptake onto glassy and semi-solid shikimic acid. This complex relationship was 49used to identify more broadly how a multiphase system can evolve through limiting kinetic 50regimes represented by trajectories through a "kinetic cube".¹³ Houle *et al.*,⁴ showed how the 51uptake coefficient depends upon both the timescales for a reactive surface collision and internal 52mixing, showing that multiphase uptake should be considered an emergent property of the 53system (gas + particle), rather than a measure of the intrinsic reactivity of the interface. This 54description is consistent with results reported by Wiegel *et al.*,⁵ who showed that for OH 55reactions with semisolid alkane aerosols, there is no straightforward relationship between 56measurements of an effective uptake coefficient obtained in experiment and the inherent OH 57reactivity of triacontane.

These previous studies elucidate how diffusion affects consumption kinetics for specific 59cases. Here we consider broader trends, looking at how reactivity (i.e. product distribution) 60evolves with changes in the internal aerosol mixing times when the governing reaction 61mechanism is held constant. Our approach is to examine $C_{30}H_{62}$ aerosol + OH, whose mechanism 62has been validated for liquid and semi-solid phases,^{5, 14} and systematically vary the alkane 63diffusion coefficient (viscosity) in between these extrema to trace how the free radical chain and 64product distributions depend on viscosity. We connect reactivity to diffusion by defining a 65reaction-diffusion index that quantifies the governing kinetics, and links them to specific sections 66of the reaction mechanism.

67RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

69 A reaction-diffusion model framework for $OH + C_{30}H_{62}$ alkane aerosol has been 70 constructed from known chemistry and rate coefficients, and validated using experimental data **71** for liquid $C_{30}H_{62}$, squalane,^{4, 14} and its semisolid isomer, triacontane.⁵ A diagram of the reaction 72mechanism is presented in Scheme S1 in the Supplementary Information. The free radical chain 73reaction is initiated by H abstraction from a C-H bond located near the surface of the particle.^{4-5,} 74^{14-15} The resulting alkyl radical reacts rapidly with O₂ to form a peroxy radical. Peroxy radicals 75disproportionate to form mainly alcohols and ketones in C-H rich environments via the Russell 76and/or Bennet-Summers mechanisms, but also have minor channels forming alkoxy and acyloxy 77 radicals that lead to aldehyde and carboxylic functionalities, as well as fragmentation to form 78new alkyl radicals.^{5, 14} This chemistry is not represented explicitly in the simulations, rather, the 79alkane is treated as a collection of functional groups and carbon backbones that track formation 80of free radical intermediates (such as peroxy and acyloxy radicals), stable product functional **81** groups (such as ketones), and backbone fragments (such as C_{24}). This description allows the free 82 radical chemistry to be represented across the entire oxidation process, from a pure alkane to 83complete conversion into CO_2 , using a tractable number of reaction steps.

In this work, we focus on trends in reactivity that would be observed in a typical flow 85tube experiment using the reaction scheme for triacontane, which is the same as for squalane but 86does not have tertiary alkyl functionalities. Flow tubes are often used to provide data on aerosol 87reactions that can be used for atmospheric chemistry models. Reaction-diffusion simulations 88have been performed using a gas phase OH density of 5.04×10^{10} molec/cm³ ^{16, 17} and the reaction 89time 60s, which are typical conditions for flow tube measurements. Liquid squalane has a self-90diffusion coefficient of 8.5×10^{-7} cm²/s,¹⁸ and is well-mixed. Test simulations revealed that this behavior persists until a value of 1 x 10^{-11} cm²/s, therefore we restricted the C₃₀H₆₂ diffusion coefficients *D* to the range from 1 x 10^{-11} - 8.39 × 10^{-19} cm²/s (the self-diffusion coefficient of triacontane⁵). All product species in the simulation are assumed to diffuse with the same coefficient as the alkane. Viscosity changes may occur as a result of oxidation.^{5, 19} These effects are neglected in the present work in order to focus on broad trends. To provide a unified way to characterize reactivity across such a broad range of diffusion coefficients, we define a reaction-diffusion index (*I*_{RD}). *I*_{RD} is a dimensionless number calculated from timescales, and is similar to the Damköhler number, or the square of the Thiele modulus;²⁰

$$I_{RD} = k_{rx} |gas| \tau_{cd}$$
⁽²⁾

100where k_{rx} is a phenomenological rate constant for consumption of starting material, as used in (1), 101and τ_{cd} is the characteristic complete mixing time for a particle of a specific diameter.⁶ The 102reaction-diffusion index can be written for the specific C₃₀H₆₂ viscosities (*D*), OH density 103([OH(g)]) and particle size:

104
$$I_{RD} = \frac{k_{rx} [OH(g)] d_p^2}{4 \pi^2 D} (3)$$

105 If $I_{RD} \ll 1$, mixing is fast relative to arrival of OH at the aerosol surface and the supply 106of OH is rate limiting. If $I_{RD} \gg 1$, the rate of mixing to bring organic molecules to the aerosol 107surface is rate limiting. If $I_{RD} = 1$, then reaction rates and internal transport rates are balanced. 108This is the midpoint of the transition between kinetically limiting regimes.

109 Figure 1 shows the initial uptake coefficients, γ , calculated from simulated C₃₀H₆₂ 110disappearance curves as a function of *D* and *I_{RD}*: they undergo a significant decrease in the range 111*D* = 10⁻¹² - 10⁻¹⁴ cm²/s. This sigmoidal dependence of γ on *D* is consistent with previous 112experimental observations in levglucosan and citric acid as well as with predictions of Houle et 113al.⁴ The free radical reactions initiated by OH uptake generate oxygen-containing functionalities 114(ketones, alcohols, aldehydes, carboxylic acids); their predicted fractions in the particle at 60s are 115shown in Figure 2. When *I*_{RD} is small, *i.e.* the OH radical supply is rate limiting and the alkane is 116liquid, ketones and alcohols are the primary products as found previously in simulations of 117squalane oxidation.¹⁴ As *D* decreases, *I*_{RD} is large and mixing is rate limiting, and ketones become 118the dominant functional group accompanied by a modest increase in carboxylic acids and 119disappearance of aldehydes and alcohols. The full time-dependent product compositions and 120maps



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122Figure 1. Initial uptake coefficient calculated from $C_{30}H_{62}$ disappearance curves as a function of **123** diffusion coefficient and I_{RD} .

124.



127Figure 2. Product functionality fractions in the aerosol as a function of diffusion coefficient and $128I_{RD}$.

129of unreacted $C_{30}H_{62}$ within the particle are shown in Figure S1 in the Supplementary Information. **130**It is evident that the decrease in γ and change in product distributions is accompanied by a **131**transition from chemistry under well-mixed conditions to chemistry under confinement to the **132**near-surface region of the aerosol.

133 The extent of confinement for a particular D has been described in terms of a reacto-134diffusion length, L. It is the thickness of a shell that is accessible for chemistry surrounding the 135particle core. L is given by

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$$L = \left(\frac{8D}{[gas]c\pi \sigma d_p^2}\right)^{1/2} (4)$$

137where [*gas*] is the density of the gaseous reactant, and σ is the probability that a colliding gas 138molecule will stick to the aerosol surface long enough to react.⁴ In the limit of complete mixing 139on the timescale of the chemistry, $d_p = 2L$, and a more general form of (1) is

140
$$\gamma = \frac{2k_{rx}\rho_0 N_A}{3cMd_p^2} [d_p^3 - (d_p - 2L)^3](5)$$

141 Equations (4) and (5) predict that γ decreases as D and L decrease. Equation (4) also 142 assumes that k_{rx} is constant under all conditions, i.e. the reactivity does not change. A value for 143 k_{rx} applicable to a particular I_{RD} , [OH(g)] and D can be estimated from (5). For I_{RD} = 1, a 200 nm **144**diameter particle under flow tube conditions and $D = 1 \ge 10^{-12} \text{ cm}^2/\text{s}$, $k_{rx} = 2.12 \ge 10^{12} \text{ molecules}$ 145cm⁻³ s. This is essentially the same as the phenomenological rate constant for the initial decay of 146C₃₀H₆₂ when the aerosol is well-mixed $(2.16 \times 10^{12} \text{ molecules cm}^{-3} \text{ s})$.¹⁵ When $D > 1 \times 10^{-12} \text{ cm}^2/\text{s}$ 147 and I_{RD} < 1, the aerosol particle is reasonably well-mixed (Figure S1), and reaction is controlled **148**by the arrival and reaction of OH at the aerosol surface. When $D < 1 \ge 10^{-12} \text{ cm}^2/\text{s}$ and $I_{RD} > 1$, the 149 reaction is controlled by the rate of internal mixing of the aerosol at a particular value of *D*, *i.e.* 150delivery of unreacted C-H bonds to the surface. As I_{RD} is varied from 10^{-2} to 10^{6} , corresponding 151to the range of D used in the present calculations, k_{rx} varies about $\pm 6\%$ (see Table S1 and Figure 152S2 in the SI). This variation in rate coefficient is modest, and could be interpreted to mean that 153the chemical reaction does not change much over this very broad range in diffusivities. Such a 154 conclusion is not consistent with the dramatic change in product distributions shown in Figures 2 155and S1, however.

156 It is evident from equations (1), (3) and (5) that γ , *L* and *I*_{*RD*} are related. Substituting (3) 157 into (4),

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$$L = \left(\frac{2k_{rx}}{I_{RD}\pi^3 c\sigma}\right)^{1/2} (6)$$

159This relationship allows the reaction-diffusion length to be connected to the balance between 160reaction and diffusion to be assessed over the entire range of conditions linking the limiting 161cases.

162 What does this tell us about trends in product formation? Figures 2 and S1 show that 163disproportionation chemistry to form ketones and alcohols is favored when the reactions are 164limited by OH – particle collisions ($I_{RD} < 0.1$). As the reactions become mixing limited ($I_{RD} > 10$) 165and diffusively confined to the interface, ketones are the major component of the particle 166because alcohols and aldehydes are consumed by abstraction by OH and by reaction with 167 additional peroxy radicals that are formed by fragmentation during the free radical chain reaction 168(see Scheme S1). Further insights are possible using marker species in the simulations, which is 169straightforward using the stochastic simulation methodology, to determine the nature of 170 reactivity as I_{RD} varies. Abstraction markers track the number of OH abstraction events, which 171 occur predominately at the surface of the aerosol and initiate the free radical chain reaction.^{4, 21} 172Disproportionation markers track the number of bimolecular reaction events involving peroxy 173 radicals of all types. Fragmentation is the major chain propagation process. C₃₀ fragmentation 174 markers track dissociation of the initial $C_{30}H_{62}$ alkane backbone at random locations via alkoxy 175 radical formation and decomposition, which leads to formation of volatile fragments and mass 176loss from the particle. Acyloxy radical fragmentation markers track CO₂ loss from the end of the 177 oxidized alkane, an "unzipping" process that becomes important when the aerosol has become 178heavily oxidized.⁵



181Figure 3. Frequency of disproportionation and fragmentation and acyloxy radical fragmentation 182reactions and fraction of each functionality formed during the oxidation reaction, as a function of 183the reacto-diffusion length *L*. The reaction frequencies are calculated by normalizing the number 184of events of each type to the number of abstraction events. The range for *L* corresponds to $10^{-1} \le$ 185 $I_{RD} \le 10^2$, and 10^{-14} cm²/s $\le D \le 10^{-11}$ cm²/s. Disproportionation and fragmentation occur 186essentially uniformly over this range, denoted as L_1 . Acyloxy fragmentation has a much smaller 187characteristic reacto-diffusion length, L_2 , and leads to a significant change in functionalities 188formed.

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By normalizing disproportionation, C_{30} fragmentation and acyloxy fragmentation to OH 191abstraction events for each value of *D* and using Equation (6), we can establish a measure of the 192relative importance of each of these parts of the free radical chain reaction as a function of the 193reacto-diffusion length *L* as shown in Figure 3. Disproportionation and C₃₀ fragmentation both 194involve reactions that are second order in peroxy radical concentration, and have a characteristic 195 L_1 that extends up to the center of the particle when viscosity is low.^{5, 14} Acyloxy fragmentation, 196on the other hand, is very different. The unimolecular "unzipping" reaction is only kinetically 197significant at a much smaller L_2 (< 1nm), and the oxidation process is confined to the outer 198surface of the aerosol. This indicates that as the reaction-diffusion length for a system changes, 199not only does the average composition of the particle change, the dominant part of the reaction 200mechanism also changes. This result shows that it cannot be assumed that measurements of γ 201trends and k_{rx} for a particular system are easily connected to the chemical reactions of a particular 202aerosol across a range of conditions.

Finally, the simulations show that measurements of composition at the exit of the flow 204tube are meaningful as snapshots, but cannot be assumed to reveal the dominant chemistry. As 205seen in Figure S1, at the earliest times for all D and I_{RD} , ketone and alcohol functionalities are 206produced at the same rate, but then diverge. This indicates that while C-H bonds are abundant, 207the Russell mechanism for disproportionation is operative. As C-H bonds become constrained, 208ketones become the dominant product functionality at all times. This represents a transition from 209disproportionation chemistry to functionalization + fragmentation chemistry. The extent of this 210transition is clearly time-dependent as well as D-dependent, indicating that there is no clear 211steady-state regime for the reaction under flow tube conditions.

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213CONCLUSIONS

215 Detailed simulations such as those presented here are essential to connect observations to **216** fundamental reactivity. We show evidence that internal mixing times in organic aerosols have a 217 substantial effect on the product distributions, going well beyond simple considerations of rates **218** under limiting regimes. We have used I_{RD} to connect quantitatively trends in reactivity with 219 diffusion coefficient D to reacto-diffusion lengths L using a single chemical mechanism. The 220 results show that specific elementary reaction pathways (within a network of possible elementary 221steps) have characteristic L and can become dominant under certain transport conditions, leading 222to substantial and nonlinear changes in overall aerosol chemistry with changes in diffusion. This 223means that measurements of uptake coefficients and extraction of effective rate constants for 224 various classes of chemicals are challenging to use directly to predict the oxidative evolution of 225average aerosol properties such as size, average carbon oxidation state, optical and cloud 226nucleation properties in very different environments such as the atmosphere. Construction of 227detailed models such as that reported here provides an effective tool for identifying dominant 228 factors controlling reactivity and creating realistic models for aerosol reactions in the 229troposphere.

230

231METHODS

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All simulations were performed using Kinetiscope, a stochastic chemical kinetics 234simulation software package.²² The initial aerosol diameter is chosen to be 200 nm, and is 235represented in the simulation by a stack of 200 13.17 nm \times 13.17 nm \times 0.5 nm compartments 236along the radius spanning the center to the outer surface of the particle. The compartment 237volumes are allowed to vary according to product densities and the extent of gas product 238volatilization in order to maintain accurate concentrations.

239

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251SUPPORTING INFORMATION. Reaction scheme for free radical reactions in alkanes 252initiated by OH reactions. Particle compositions as a function of time. Table of reactivity metrics 253for each simulation. Plot of apparent rate constants. This material is available free of charge via 254the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

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