The downward influence of uncertainty in the Northern Hemisphere wintertime stratospheric polar vortex response to climate change



Isla Simpson, NCAR

Peter Hitchcock (LMD), Richard Seager (LDEO), Yutian Wu (LDEO), Patrick Callaghan (NCAR) What role does the stratosphere play in contributing to the model spread in tropospheric circulation responses to climate change? Predictions of the polar vortex response to climate change in the CMIP5 models

Future = 2070 – 2099 of RCP8.5 Past = 1979 – 2005 of historical NH winter (DJF)

















Proposed reasons for this spread...

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What is the impact of this spread in stratospheric responses on the troposphere below?

MIRO



Significantly different from zero at the 5% level by equivalent sampling of the piControl simulation



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Journal of Geophysical Research: Atmospheres

RESEARCH ARTICLE

10.1002/2013JD021403

Key Points:

- Stratospheric easterly change is common feature in future climate projections
- Significant intermodel spread in stratospheric northern winter climate change
- Importance of stratospheric easterly

Northern winter climate change: Assessment of uncertainty in CMIP5 projections related to stratosphere-troposphere coupling

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Performed linear regressions, across models, of fields onto a measure of the change in the polar vortex (zonal mean zonal wind at 10hPa, 70N-80N).

After first regressing out contributions to inter-model spread from tropical upper tropospheric warming and Arctic amplification.





Regression of sea level pressure onto the index of the polar vortex response (x-1)

With a relative weakening of the polar vortex comes a relative increase in Arctic SLP and decrease to the South (negative NAO)

 Indications that there is a relationship between how a model's polar vortex response to climate change and the circulation in the troposphere → contributing to intermodel spread



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- Quantify the magnitude of this effect in a controlled model setting

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A simple linear relaxation of the zonal mean winds and temperature toward a specified climatological target state. Full nudging above 28hPa, linearly decreasing to zero nudging below 64hPa.

















STRONG: U,T,V =
$$U_{4x}$$
, T_{4x} , V_{4x} + 5 × β_u , β_T , β_v
WEAK: U,T,V = U_{4x} , T_{4x} , V_{4x} - 5 × β_u , β_T , β_v




WEAK4x – STRONG4x





Sea Level Pressure





CMIP5 multi-model mean Future - Past

Grey = not significantly different from zero at the 95% level



12 -6 0 6 PSL (hPa)



-6 -4 -2 0 2 4 6 PSL (hPa) CMIP5 regression onto Polar Vortex (x-10)



-12 -6 0 6 12 PSL (hPa)

6 -4 -2 0 2 4 6 PSL (hPa) With a relative weakening of the polar vortex comes a relative increase in Arctic SLP and decrease to the South

> CMIP5 regression onto Polar Vortex (x-10)



0 PSL (hPa) -12 -6 12 6



0 PSL (hPa) -2 2 6 -4 4 -6



2 0 PSL (hPa)

WEAK4x-STRONG4x





Two measures:

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VS

WEAK - STRONG



Regression onto Polar Vortex index



WEAK4x-STRONG4x





Regression onto Polar Vortex index



WEAK4x-STRONG4x









Regression onto Polar Vortex index

WEAK4x-STRONG4x



CMIP5 spread









Regression onto Polar Vortex index

WEAK4x-STRONG4x



CMIP5 spread





700hPa zonal wind





CMIP5 multi-model mean Future - Past

Grey = not significantly different from zero at the 95% level





-4 -2 0 2 4 U (m/s) CMIP5 regression onto Polar Vortex (x-10)



With a relative weakening of the polar vortex comes a reduced zonal wind localized over the North Atlantic/Europe

CMIP5 regression onto Polar Vortex (x-10)









-4	-2	0	2	4	
U (m/s)					



-4	-2	0	2	4
		U (m/s)		























Precipitation



CMIP5 multi-model mean Future - Past

Stippling = not significantly different from zero at the 95% level




CMIP5 regression onto Polar Vortex (x-10)















J.





















Precip (mm/day)



5 -0.25 0 0.25 Precip (mm/day)



%

Conclusions

- Models don't agree at all in how the NH stratospheric polar vortex will change in the future.
- Idealized experiments within one model have demonstrated that the downward influence of stratospheric change on the troposphere inferred from across-model regression, really is a downward influence.
- The contribution of stratospheric polar vortex uncertainty to the CMIP5 spread is, however, relatively small. Somewhere between 8-15% depending on what field you look at.
- But the difference between models on the extreme ends of the distribution can be large (up to 50% of the model spread for Arctic SLP and 10-15% of the model spread European precip).
- Confirms the need for an improved understanding of the reasons behind the spread on modelled polar vortex responses.















Extra Slides

Index	А	В	С	D	A	В	С	D	CESML46	CMIP5
	4σ				σ^2				4σ	4σ
\overline{u} , 60°N-65°N	8.8	10.1	12.6	11.4	16.8	17.6	23.7	19.7	23.1	$31.9_{11.3}^{53.4}$
u, 700hPa, UK box	7.9	7.9	9.9	9.4	15.1	14.5	18.7	17.2	19.4	$30.2_{1.0}^{57.9}$
psl, Arctic	10.0	9.7	10.6	12.8	18.8	16.7	19.8	21.5	27.3	$33.1_{3.7}^{60.4}$
pr, UK box	4.4	4.1	3.2	4.3	8.6	6.5	6.2	6.8	9.3	$22.1_0^{47.8}$
pr, Spain box	4.0	4.1	5.1	4.8	7.8	7.9	9.9	9.3	7.9	$21.1_0^{46.4}$

A = regressing fields onto U_pv and using 60N-75N, 10hPa

B = as A but with prior regression onto tropical upper tropospheric warming and arctic amplification.

C = as A but using 70N-80N, 10hPa

D = as B but using 70N-80N, 10hPa















(a) CMIP5, Future-Past



-1 -0.5 0 0.5 Precip (mm/day)

(d) CMIP5 $-\beta_{pr}x10$





(b) FREE4x-FREE1x





(e) WEAK4x-STRONG4x





(c) NUDG4x-NUDG1x





(f) Difference (e)-(d)









