

Commentary on
using equivalent
latitude

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Commentary on using equivalent latitude in the upper troposphere and lower stratosphere

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Abstract

We discuss the use of potential vorticity (PV) based equivalent latitude (EqLat) and potential temperature (θ) coordinates in the upper troposphere and lower stratosphere (UTLS) for chemical transport studies. The main objective is to provide a cautionary note on using EqLat– θ coordinates for aggregating chemical tracers in the UTLS. Several examples are used to show 3-D distributions of EqLat together with chemical constituents for a range of θ . We show that the use of PV– θ coordinates may not be suitable for several reasons when tropospheric processes are an important part of a study. Due to the different static stability structures between the stratosphere and troposphere, the use of θ as a vertical coordinate does not provide equal representations of the UT and LS. Since the θ surfaces are often quasi-vertical in the troposphere, the θ coordinate does not work well distinguishing the UT from the boundary layer. We further discuss the duality of PV/EqLat as a tracer versus as a coordinate variable. Using an example, we show that while PV/EqLat serves well as a transport tracer in the UTLS region, it may misrepresent the effect of transport when used as a coordinate to average chemical tracers. Overall, when choosing these coordinates, considerations need to be made not only based on the time scale of PV being a conservative tracer, but also the specific research questions to be addressed.

1 Introduction

Potential vorticity (PV) based equivalent latitude (EqLat) and potential temperature (θ) are widely used in the stratospheric chemistry and dynamics community as a set of Lagrangian coordinates (e.g., Butchart and Remsberg, 1986; Lait et al., 1990; Schoeberl et al., 1992; Randel et al., 1998; Manney et al., 1994, 1999; Pan et al., 2002; Kanzawa et al., 2003; Juckes, 2007). Because PV and θ are nearly conserved on the synoptic time scale, the “PV– θ ” view is effective in various dynamics and circulation studies (Hoskins, 1991). For example, the EqLat coordinate largely conceals

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reversible meridional transport caused by planetary and synoptic-scale waves, just as θ -coordinates conceal reversible (adiabatic) vertical motion. Their use eliminates many of the problems with computing zonal averages in conventional Eulerian coordinates. This set of coordinates has been especially effective in studies of polar stratospheric processes, because EqLat based chemical tracer analyses serve to separate dynamical variability from chemical processing, both of which contribute to the ozone budget in and around the polar vortex. The growing interest in the chemistry and dynamics of the upper troposphere and lower stratosphere (UTLS) has fostered the desire for similar Lagrangian coordinates for the tropopause region. PV based EqLat has been used in UTLS transport analyses (e.g., Haynes and Shuckburgh, 2000; Berthet et al., 2007), compiling trace gas climatologies from sparsely sampled data (e.g., Hoor et al., 2004; Hegglin et al., 2006) and to perform comparisons between models and observations (e.g., Strahan et al., 2007). Since PV is known as an effective tracer of stratospheric air mass, the PV based EqLat serves to obtain zonal average behavior of the region with the air mass grouped according to dynamical conditions.

Similar to the role of the polar vortex edge in the overworld (where the θ surfaces lie entirely in the stratosphere; Hoskins, 1991), the tropopause is a significant dynamical boundary that separates air masses of distinct chemical compositions in the middle-world (where the θ surfaces intersect the extratropical tropopause; Hoskins, 1991). The tropopause region, however, is significantly different from the polar vortex region in the behavior of both PV and θ . In the polar stratosphere, PV is a quasi-conservative dynamical variable both inside and outside of the polar vortex. This is not the case for the tropopause region when the upper troposphere is of significant interest. From the perspective of time scales involved, the dynamical variability in the polar stratosphere is largely dictated by isentropic processes with a synoptic time scale of a week to 10 days. In the UTLS region, convective process in the time scale of a few hours can play a significant role in redistributing chemical species and diabatically modifying PV. In addition, the PV based EqLat is derived in an isentropic coordinate system. In the polar stratosphere, isentropes are quasi-lateral and serve well as vertical coordinates.

In the UTLS, however, isentropes can be quasi-vertical. These are perhaps the most significant distinctions between the polar vortex edge and the tropopause.

Despite these distinctions, EqLat- θ may still be a preferred coordinate system for many UTLS applications. In this note, we discuss some potential problems of using EqLat in the UTLS for chemical tracer analyses. We examine EqLat as a 3-D variable, together with chemical tracers, and θ as a vertical coordinate variable in the UTLS region in contrast to latitude and pressure/altitude coordinates to make several points. These discussions may help recognize some unintended consequences of using EqLat- θ coordinates in aggregate chemical measurements. *It is not the goal of this discussion to address the general applicability of EqLat in the UTLS but rather to note that when considering these coordinates it is important to determine whether the use of these coordinates clarifies or obscures the issues of a particular research question.* The discussion should also help to consider EqLat- θ coordinates within a suite of complementary methods for aggregating data in the UTLS, including tropopause relative coordinates (Pan et al., 2004; Tilmes et al., 2010), jet stream based coordinates (Ray et al., 2004; Manney et al., 2011), and tropopause relative latitude coordinates (Kunz et al., 2011b).

One specific example is the use of PV/Eqlat as a tracer versus a boundary/coordinate for zonal averaging. This is a frequently encountered issue in stratosphere-troposphere exchange (STE) studies. On the one hand, we identify stratospheric contribution to the troposphere using high PV as a signature. On the other hand, we use PV-based EqLat to aggregate trace gas species, which in effect removes the contribution of exchanged air mass from the tropospheric average because of their high PV signature. Similar situations may occur in the other direction of STE where tropospheric intrusions are observed to be associated with low PV therefore low EqLat (Pan et al., 2009). We use an example to show that an EqLat based zonal average conceals these events. The example raises a general question that how well EqLat climatologically separates reversible (wave) from the presence of irreversible (wave breaking) transport.

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This question is particularly relevant to the on going studies of double tropopause phenomena. Increasing number of case studies have shown that double tropopause events in mid to high latitudes are often signatures of poleward Rossby wave breaking and are accompanied by chemical signatures of tropospheric air mass intruding into lower stratosphere above the subtropical jet and midlatitude tropopause (Randel et al., 2007; Pan et al., 2009, 2010, Homeyer et al., 2011). Statistics based on GPS satellite observations indicate that the maximum occurrence is in late winter and early spring (Randel et al., 2007; Peevey et al., 2011). In contrast, in a Lagrangian view of the tropopause using trajectory based statistical analyses, a ventilation layer, a layer similar to the secondary tropopause in the Eulerian view, is found to be more prevalent in summer in the EqLat– θ space (Berthet et al., 2007). Many factors may contribute to the apparent controversy in this case. We raise the question here whether and how much the use of EqLat versus the geographical latitude may have contributed to the differences.

We begin with a brief summary of the EqLat calculation, followed by a comparison of EqLat– θ between the overworld polar stratosphere and the UTLS region. Then, the morphology of EqLat and chemical tracers at the middleworld isentropes, and the compactness of tracers in EqLat versus geographical latitude for the UTLS region are shown. Finally, we use an example to contrast the use of EqLat as a tracer versus as a coordinate variable. Two trace gas species, ozone (O_3) and carbon monoxide (CO), are used to demonstrate the relationship between chemical trace gas and EqLat. These two chemical species are the most commonly used transport tracers in the UTLS region and one has its primary source in the stratosphere and the other in the troposphere. The chemical tracers are from the NCAR Whole Atmosphere Community Climate Model (WACCM).

2 Data, model and EqLat calculation

2.1 WACCM model and the specified dynamics run

For analysis of EqLat and trace gas distributions, we use global output from version 4 of the NCAR Whole Atmosphere Community Climate Model with Specified Dynamics (SD-WACCM4). WACCM uses a free-running dynamical core that is adopted from the NCAR Community Atmosphere Model (CAM) and a chemistry module that is an extension of version 3 of the Model of OZone and Related Tracers (MOZART3) (e.g., Neale et al., 2011; Kinnison et al., 2007). In a recent validation effort, WACCM was shown to perform very well in comparisons with many other chemistry-climate models (SPARC CCMVal, 2010). For the specified dynamics (SD) run, wind and temperature fields are nudged, at each model time step, using the Goddard Earth Observing System 5 (GEOS-5) analysis. The nudging in effect allows SD-WACCM4 to perform as a chemical transport model and facilitates the comparisons with observations. A description of the SD approach is described in Lamarque et al. (2011). In this study, SD-WACCM4 is nudged with 1 % of the GEOS-5 meteorological fields (e.g., temperature, zonal and meridional winds, and surface pressure) every 30 min. Analyses are available daily at a horizontal resolution of $1.9^\circ \times 2.5^\circ$ (lat \times lon), 72 pressure levels in the vertical from the surface to ~ 80 km, and a time resolution of 6 h. The vertical resolution in the model decreases with height and is $\sim 1\text{--}2$ km in the UTLS.

2.2 Calculation of EqLat

Equivalent latitude maps PV to latitude based on the area enclosed by the specific isopleth of PV. For each PV value, P_i , on a given isentrope, θ_j , there is a corresponding geographical latitude, ϕ , the area (of the polar cap) enclosed by which equals the area $A(P_i, \theta_j)$ covered by $P > P_i$. This corresponding latitude is defined as the equivalent latitude for P_i on isentrope θ_j , $\phi_e(P_i, \theta_j)$. The above description can be written as:

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$$\phi_e(P_i, \theta_j) = \sin^{-1} \left(1 - \frac{A(P_i, \theta_j)}{2\pi R^2} \right), \quad (1)$$

where R is the radius of Earth. In our calculation, the area enclosed by a given PV isopleth is calculated by summing the equivalent areas of each grid cell that has $P \geq P_i$.

To give an example of EqLat as an alternative representation of PV and how it compares to geographic latitude, we show in Fig. 1 areas enclosed by two selected PV contours on the 380 K θ surface on 15 February 2006. They are approximately 2 and 10 pvu, and correspond to 30° and 60° EqLat, respectively. In contrast to 30° and 60° geographic latitude circles, the EqLat field embodies the instantaneous PV field and provides a snapshot of the underlying conservative dynamics.

Figure 2 shows the one-to-one relationship between PV and EqLat at three middle-world θ -levels (320, 350 and 380 K). This figure highlights that the re-mapping of PV to EqLat is non-linear. On the two lowest middleworld isentropes, large gradients of PV as a function of EqLat are concentrated in the mid-equivalent latitudes, i.e. near the strongest jet stream. These regions of strong gradient are in fact the locations of the tropopause (Kunz et al., 2011a). Away from these regions, both equatorward and poleward, PV is nearly homogenous and is a weak function of EqLat. The implication of this behavior to chemical tracer averaging will be discussed in later examples.

3 EqLat in the polar stratosphere

Trace gas distributions in the winter stratosphere are strongly influenced by vortex dynamics, and consideration of the vortex is essential when aggregating trace gas data. Figures 3 and 4 demonstrate how EqLat can be used to produce dynamically consistent averages of trace gas distributions. Figure 3 shows EqLat and CO mixing ratio from the WACCM model in the Northern Hemisphere (NH) on the 600 K θ surface on 15 February 2006. In this case, following a major stratosphere sudden warming (Coy et al., 2009) the air mass associated with the polar vortex is fragmented into three

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pieces (green shading). The piece containing highest EqLat is located near 45° N and 90°–120° E. There are corresponding signatures in the CO field. This well known correlation is produced by the descent of polar vortex air that brings higher CO produced by CO₂ photolysis in the mesosphere and lower thermosphere into the stratosphere (Allen et al., 1999).

Figure 4 compares scatterplots and averages of CO mixing ratio using the geographical latitude with that using EqLat. In geographical latitude coordinates, the vortex fragment with high CO near 45° N is averaged with low-CO air from outside the vortex to produce a small peak in zonal-mean CO near 45° N. The zonal-mean CO across all latitudes is nearly flat at around 20 ppbv. Averaging in EqLat-coordinates produces a very different picture, with CO enhanced by up to 50 ppbv in the vortex (poleward of 75° N in EqLat). This example demonstrates the utility of EqLat-coordinates in the polar stratosphere: these coordinates highlight the association of large CO abundance with polar vortex air, which is lost when viewed as function of geographical latitude.

4 EqLat and θ in the UTLS

In contrast to the overworld, the representation of UTLS in the EqLat– θ coordinates requires some additional considerations. While isentropes are quasi-horizontal in the stratosphere, they are often quasi-vertical in the troposphere. From a slightly different perspective, the stratosphere is stable and stratified because of the large vertical gradient in θ , i.e., high static stability. The troposphere is relatively unstable and has near constant θ . These simple facts reflect the nature of these two atmospheric layers so named. As a consequence, in comparison to geometric or pressure coordinates, θ -coordinates expand the LS and compress the UT. This feature is illustrated in Figs. 5 and 6.

Figure 5 shows a vertical cross section of static stability for 15 February 2006 along 120° W longitude. Also shown are the lapse-rate tropopause, the jet positions and selected PV isopleths. The two panels contrast the representation of vertical range from

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the ground to 20 km or 450 K in log-pressure altitude (left) and potential temperature (right) vertical coordinates. The two scales represent a similar vertical range. The main message of the figure is that in altitude space, the tropopause divides the lower stratosphere and troposphere roughly equally in terms of the area in the cross section. In θ space, on the other hand, the asymmetry is quite obvious with the entire troposphere reduced to a narrow layer. The relevance of this information to UTLS studies is that often times when potential temperature is used as the vertical coordinate, a layer of 20–30 K above the tropopause is contrasted to a layer of 20–30 K below the tropopause. We want to point out here that, in the geophysical space, the former is a narrow layer of 1–2 km while the latter is often the entire troposphere. The asymmetry makes it less meaningful to compare the STE influence in these two layers.

Figure 6 shows a cross section of EqLat as a 3-D variable, together with the tropopause and the jet locations, in both Log-pressure altitude and potential temperature vertical coordinates. In addition to showing the asymmetry of representing UT versus LS, the comparison of the wind and EqLat distribution highlights the role of the jet streams in the UTLS EqLat distribution. In the subtropics, the quasi-vertical isolines of EqLat are approximately perpendicular to and increase with latitudes across the strong subtropical jet, an indication that EqLat here serves well as a latitudinal coordinate variable. It is evident in this example how the jet structure is dominating the latitudinal PV variation. The high PV and associated high EqLat around the jets is accompanied by lower EqLat away from the jets, where the PV isolines are quasi-lateral and largely parallel to the isentropes. This structure raises the question whether the behavior is consistent with the UTLS chemical distribution and what implications are when using the coordinates for averaging chemical tracers. This is the focus of the next section.

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5 EqLat and chemical tracers in the UTLS

Although it is well known that PV is not a conservative tracer in the troposphere, PV based EqLat is often used to create zonal averages for aircraft data including both stratosphere and troposphere where the studies are mainly focused on stratospheric processes (e.g., Hoor et al., 2004, Hegglin et al., 2006, Engel et al., 2006). With an on going community effort of enhancing the representation of stratosphere and troposphere chemistry in the new generation of chemistry climate models (CCMs), there is a need to identify an optimal method of aggregating research aircraft data, which often include both troposphere and lower stratosphere, for process oriented model evaluations. One question we consider here is to what extent EqLat- θ coordinates could serve the need and what would be unintended effects when both the stratosphere and the troposphere are all included.

To provide a perspective, we show O₃ and CO from the WACCM model for selected isentropes and in vertical cross sections. Note that these two species are the most commonly used stratospheric and tropospheric tracers, respectively, for transport studies in the UTLS region. They have very different relationships with EqLat. O₃, similar to PV, has strong stratospheric sources and is known to correlate with PV in the tropopause region (e.g., Danielsen, 1968; Browell et al., 1987; Pittman et al., 2009). CO on the other hand, has large anthropogenic origin and the surface value of CO has a strong relationship with geographical latitude (e.g., Novelli et al., 2003). Low CO air mass near the tropopause is often correlated with stratospheric influence. High CO air mass in the UT, on the other hand, may be an indication of convective transport or biomass burning, processes that are PV non-conservative. Figures 7–9 in this section aim to illustrate the behaviors of EqLat and tracers on several UTLS isentropes to shed light on the use of EqLat for aggregating tracer data in this region.

Figure 7 shows a Northern hemispheric view of EqLat and O₃ distributions on two selected isentropes (380 and 330 K). On the 380 K surface, the spatial patterns of EqLat and O₃ are largely consistent. This is especially true for high EqLat and high O₃ and

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the gradient change in the region of the jet stream. The 380 K level is largely strato-
spheric, as indicated by Figs. 5–6. This is no longer the case at 330 K, a level that
spans the middle troposphere in the tropics, the tropopause region in the midlatitudes
and the lower stratosphere in the high latitudes. At this level, the high (polar) EqLats
are shown to be strongly associated with the jet streams. The gradients of tracer dis-
tribution in the subtropics show a good consistency with the gradient of EqLat but lose
correlation at high latitudes. If the O_3 field is re-sampled using EqLat, the dynamical
variability in the subtropics and mid-latitudes will be mapped consistently with the dy-
namical field. However, the air mass immediately poleward of the subtropical jet will
be mapped to the polar region in EqLat. On the other hand, O_3 in the polar region will
be mapped into mid-equivalent latitudes. What produced this large difference between
the EqLat and O_3 in the polar latitudes is not entirely understood. We speculate that
this relationship may be dependent on the seasonality of static stability in the polar
UTLS, which reaches a minimum that is less than that in midlatitudes during winter in
each hemisphere (e.g., Tomikawa et al, 2009; Grise et al, 2010). The displacements
introduced here by the behavior, however, would create misrepresentation of transport.

Figure 8 provides a cross section view of EqLat and chemical tracers in the UTLS
region to complement the view on q -surfaces in the previous figure. Overall, the figure
highlights the strong vertical gradients in the tracer cross-section, and the role of the
tropopause in dictating the change in the tracer fields. In this particular cross section,
three upper tropospheric jet streams, the subtropical, the polar and the Arctic jets,
are clearly identifiable in the wind fields. In the region of the subtropical jet between 5–
15 km, the horizontal gradients of the tracers are consistent with the gradients of EqLat.
Away from the subtropical jet, the variable EqLat shows weakened latitudinal gradient,
which is consistent with the PV-EqLat relationship shown in Fig. 2. This figure suggests
that while EqLat maybe effective regionally, away from the subtropical jet tropopause
relative coordinates are more effective in representing the variability of the tracers.

Note in the tropics (equatorward of the subtropical jet), there is a region of strong
enhancement of CO, likely representing the influence of convective transport coupled

with local emission sources. This region is associated with negative EqLat, and will be mapped to the Southern Hemisphere undesirably in EqLat based zonal average.

Figure 9 shows scatterplots of O_3 as a function of latitude and EqLat and their respective zonal averages for the 330 and 290 K levels. The two levels are chosen to contrast LS and UT for mid to high latitudes. At the 330 K level, the compactness and zonal averages using the two latitude coordinates are significantly different. The large scatter of O_3 in latitude reflects the latitudinal variation of the tropopause. The distribution in the EqLat coordinate is much more compact especially in the tropopause region ($\sim 30^\circ$ N EqLat and 100–200 ppbv of ozone). In the polar latitudes, the correlation is no longer as compact, which is consistent with the discussion of the plane view shown in Fig. 7. Nevertheless the figure indicates that the EqLat based average provides a better consistency with the dynamical background. In contrast, at the 290 K level (largely in the troposphere) both tropospheric chemistry and STE influence the O_3 distribution. The low O_3 scatters in the tropics (the points below 50 ppbv for example) are mapped into high EqLat, likely due to the non-conservative nature of PV at this level. This figure suggests that if tropospheric source, sink and chemistry is an important part of a study, the EqLat is no longer a physically meaningful coordinates.

6 EqLat as a tracer versus as a coordinate variable

An important issue to consider when using EqLat is what scientific question we intend to address. Two scenarios we contrast in this section are using EqLat as a tracer to identify the transport origins versus as a coordinate for achieving a zonal average.

Similar to the polar stratospheric studies, EqLat has been shown as an effective transport tracer in the UTLS. For example, several recent studies have shown that PV based EqLat is effective at identifying poleward intrusions of tropospheric air mass into lower stratosphere above the subtropical jet core (Pan et al., 2009; Homeyer et al., 2011). We use an example here to illustrate what happens in a tropospheric intrusion case if EqLat is used as a coordinate variable. This example is an event of irreversible

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transport of tropospheric air into the lower stratosphere due to Rossby wave breaking, on 16 April 2008. A later stage of the event was sampled in situ by research aircraft during the START08 experiment (Pan et al., 2010). This wave breaking event and associated transport has been analyzed in detail (Homeyer et al., 2011). We illustrate the issues here using the SD-WACCM simulation of this time period.

Figure 10 shows 380 K NH EqLat and O₃ fields on 16 April 2008 from the SD-WACCM run. The 6 pvu PV contours are superimposed on each map. There are multiple contours but only the greater one of which (the one that encloses the pole) represents the dynamic tropopause for this isentrope, determined using the PV gradient based definition described in Kunz et al. (2011a). The tropospheric intrusion air mass is seen as a “blob” of low EqLat (~ 20°–30°) and low O₃ (~ 100–200 ppbv) air separated from the tropical reservoir near 60° N and 140° W. This air mass, enclosed by the smaller one of the 6 pvu contours, highlights the fact that this is a bulk of tropospheric air, both dynamically and chemically, irreversibly embedded in the stratospheric background. The high consistency of EqLat and O₃ indicates that the low O₃ is not produced chemically but a result of transport. The figure, therefore, speaks for the effective role of EqLat as a transport tracer. Since the low O₃ is in a cut-off air mass, despite the fact the correlation of O₃ and EqLat is still intact, the transport is irreversible. In this case the irreversibility is also confirmed by the in situ tracer measurement (Homeyer et al., 2011).

Figures 11–12 contrast the use of latitude and EqLat as the coordinate variable to do zonal average in this case, using data from the meridional section over the longitude range 110°–150° W. Figure 11 shows the O₃ distribution in an isentropic dynamical tropopause relative coordinate, both in latitude and EqLat, for the 380 K level. In both cases, the zero represents the latitude or EqLat location of the isentropic tropopause (the greater contour of 6 pvu in this case). In each case, the colored points are those to be mapped to the opposite side of the tropopause depending on using the relative latitude or EqLat.

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As shown in Fig. 11a,b, the O_3 –EqLat relationship is much more compact than O_3 –latitude, which reflects the strong correlation of O_3 and PV in this region and speaks to the role of transport in the ozone distribution at this θ level. The large scatter of blue points on the positive side of the O_3 –relative latitude relationship, however, highlights the fact that significant transport of low ozone air mass from troposphere to stratosphere are wrongly classified back to their transport origin if EqLat is used for zonal averaging. This issue is further highlighted in Fig. 12, where the sectional zonal mean for the region shows the low ozone air mass due to the transport when zonal average is done in latitude coordinate. On the other hand, this low ozone air mass is mapped back to the troposphere when EqLat is used to calculate the zonal mean.

This example makes the point that compactness may not be the best argument for an effective coordinate variable. It really depends on the scientific question of interest. In polar vortex studies, more often the interest is to identify the chemical loss of ozone. In that case, removing the transport influence by using EqLat serves the right purpose. For UTLS tracer studies, very often the goal is to quantify the transport due to STE. Using EqLat in this case will map the transported air mass away from the region of interest and defeat the purpose of quantifying the influence of transport, as shown in this example. This example also shows that, although the use of EqLat is often intended to filter out the reversible part of the transport, it may not always been able to do so under the wave breaking scenarios.

This example also has a specific implication in regard to the double tropopause statistics. As shown in the example, the wave breaking and associated double tropopause occurrence in this case will be concealed in the EqLat coordinate.

7 Summary

We have identified three areas of concerns for using EqLat– θ coordinates in the UTLS region. The first one concerns the representation of troposphere in the EqLat– θ space. The EqLat– θ coordinates are fundamentally stratosphere focused (Fig. 5) and do not represent UT and LS equally. This point is relevant when tropospheric sources, sinks,

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and processes are important to a particular study. In the subtropics, the quasi-vertical behavior of the isentropes makes it difficult to use θ as a vertical coordinate globally with a clear distinction between the upper troposphere and the boundary layer. While the chemical composition in the UT is strongly coupled dynamically to the LS, the vertical transport of tracers is also important. The tropospheric tracer distribution is therefore often strongly coupled to the surface source, which makes geographical latitude a more relevant coordinate variable.

The second area concerns the use of EqLat to aggregate chemical tracers in the region away from the jet stream. Using modeled tracers of O_3 and CO , we show examples of the polar region being mapped to middle EqLats (Fig. 6) and the possibility of convectively influenced tropical upper troposphere being mapped to the south of the Equator (Fig. 8).

Most importantly, in the third area, EqLat based zonal averages may conceal, in the presence of wave breaking, irreversible transport effect in the trace gas zonal mean, as shown in the last example (Figs. 10–12). Since PV (and EqLat) itself behaves as a tracer and is controlled by the dynamics and transport, using it as a coordinate, for the questions outlined in Sect. 6, will in effect obscure the transport and the dynamical variability of the trace gas. Whether the latitude or EqLat representation of wave breaking events has contributed to the differences in double tropopause studies should be examined in future work.

An important message that comes out of these examples is that the choice of coordinate for averaging data in this region depends on the specific scientific question. Different from the stratospheric polar vortex studies, where quantifying chemical processing in the polar vortex air is usually the goal, the focus of the UTLS region is most often to quantify transport and exchange. Using a tracer that itself is influenced by the transport as a coordinate often convolutes the problem. A general interest of aggregating UTLS observations is also to identify transport boundaries and pathways associated with the meteorological patterns. It is often more effective to examine the chemical and dynamical tracers in parallel (Kunz et al., 2011b).

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More investigations are desirable to identify the most effective coordinates for characterizing UTLS transport. Studies have shown that tropopause relative coordinates work well to bring out the sharp chemical discontinuity across the tropopause (Pan et al., 2004; Tilmes et al., 2010). This method, however, is a one-dimensional averaging in the vertical, i.e. altitudinal, space. A similar approach for the horizontal dimension uses jet core relative wind speed as a coordinate for averaging in situ measurements (Ray et al., 2004), and it has shown to be effective for data analyses around the jet stream. This method, however, is limited to the regional scale. An extension of this method to the global scale, as recently proposed by Manney et al. (2011), combines the jet core relative latitudes in the horizontal dimension and the tropopause relative altitude in the vertical dimension. In a recent study, isentropic chemical gradient and PV gradients are examined together. The results show that the PV gradient based tropopause captures the chemical change well in general, and a relative latitude coordinate, similar to the relative altitude coordinate in the vertical dimension, can be used for aggregating data and making zonal averages (Kunz et al., 2011b). Well designed case studies comparing these different approaches with the EqLat- θ based zonal averages may help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of these different methods.

Acknowledgements. The National Center for Atmospheric Research is sponsored by the National Science Foundation. The authors thank Kenneth Bowman, Eric Jensen and John Bergman for helpful suggestions.

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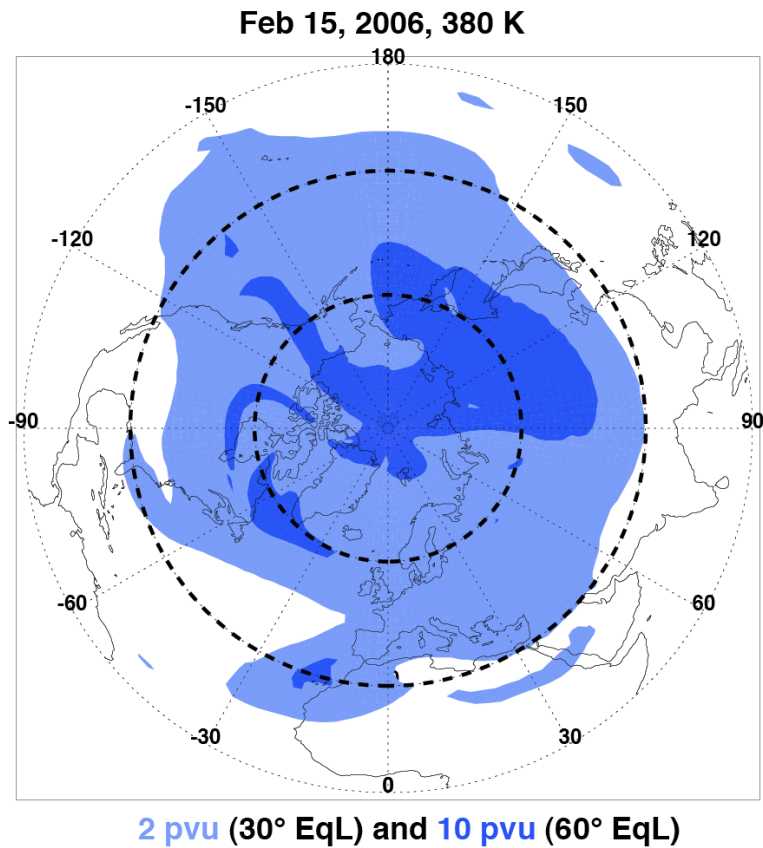


Fig. 1. In this example, contours of 30° and 60° EqLat are shown on the 380 K potential temperature surface for the 15 February 2006 00Z WACCM analysis. These two contours correspond to PV of 2 pvu and 10 pvu, respectively. For contrast, the geographical latitudes of 30° and 60° (dashed circles) are also given.

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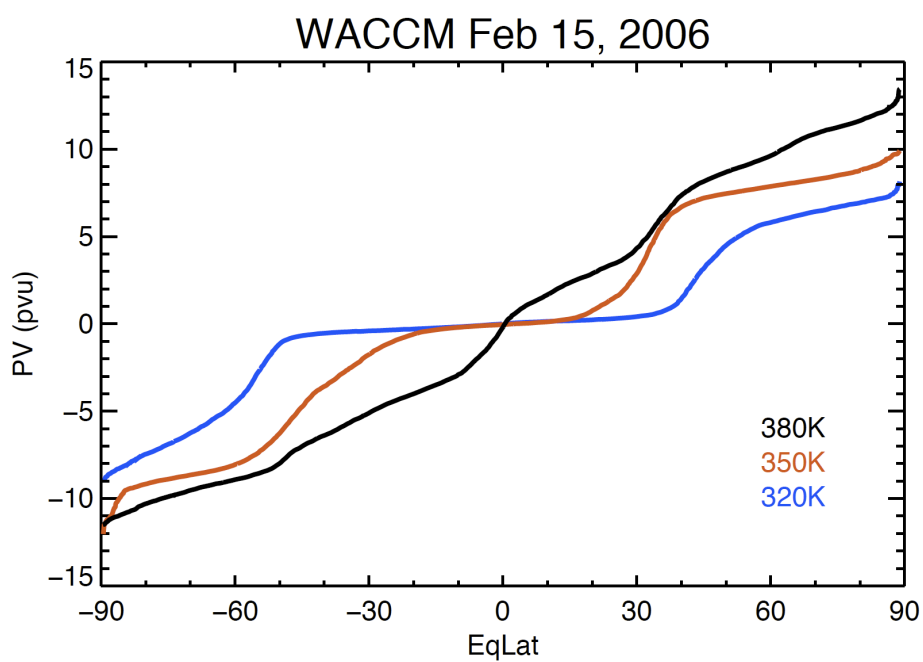


Fig. 2. The relationship of PV and EqLat for three middleworld isentropes on 15 February 2006.

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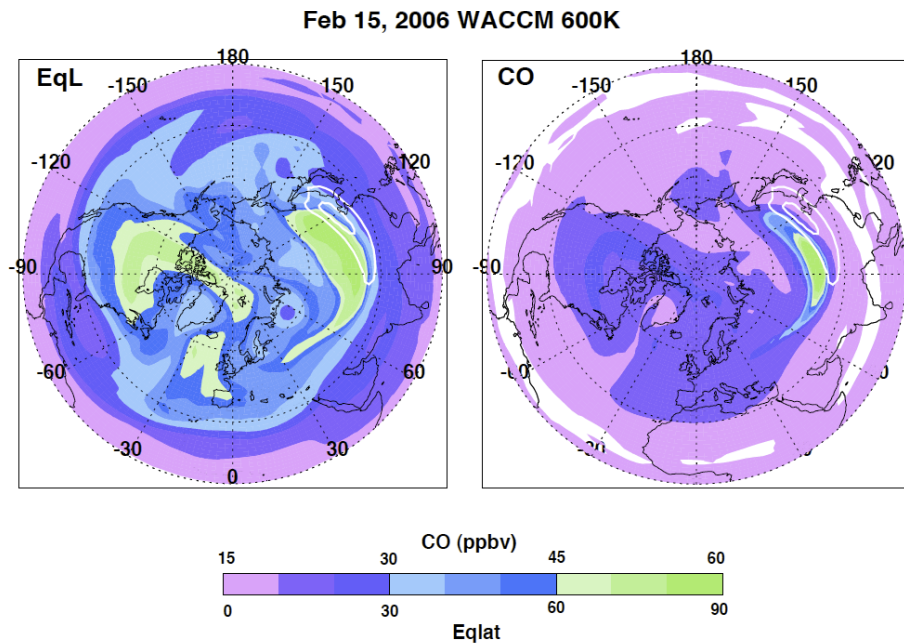


Fig. 3. Distribution of EqLat (left) and CO (right) on the 600K isentropic surface. The white contours represent 30 and 40 m s^{-1} wind speeds.

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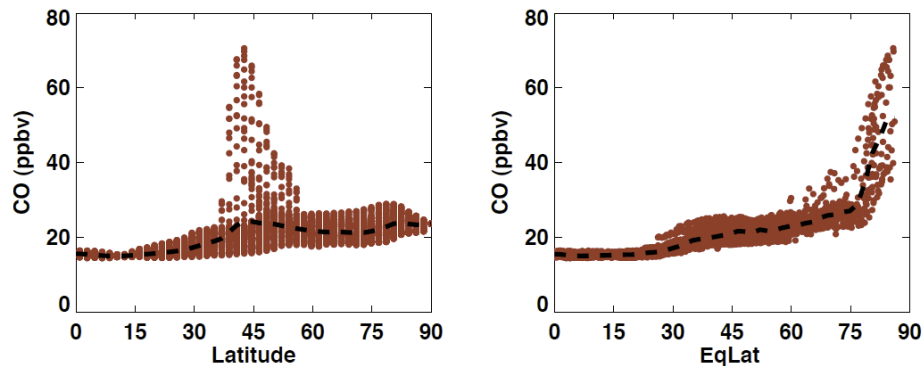


Fig. 4. Scatterplots of WACCM CO at 600 K as functions of latitude (left) and equivalent latitude (right). The black dashed lines represent the zonal means (calculated in 1.9° intervals) in latitude or EqLat coordinates, respectively.

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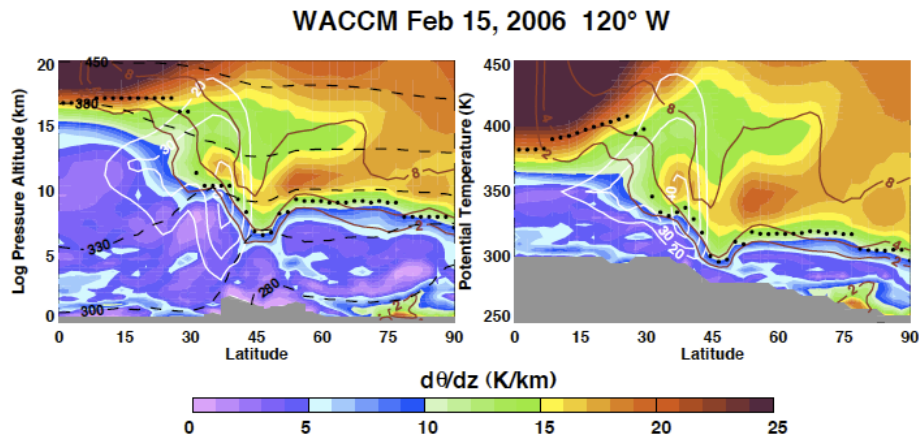


Fig. 5. An example of a latitude-height cross section in Log-pressure altitude (left) versus potential temperature (right) coordinates. Color images represent static stability (potential temperature lapse rate). Also shown are zonal wind speed (m s^{-1} , white lines), PV (red lines) and the thermal tropopause (black dots). The cross sections are along 120°W longitude. In the θ -coordinate the troposphere is a narrow layer, especially around the subtropical jet.

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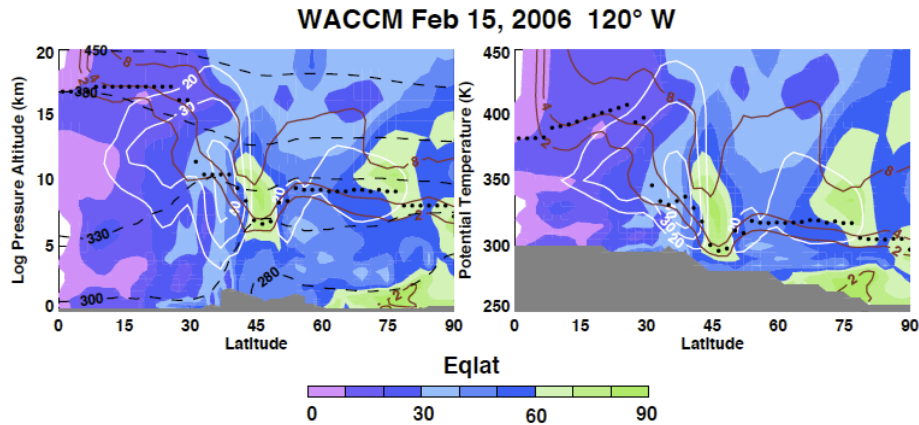


Fig. 6. As in Fig. 5 but for EqLat.

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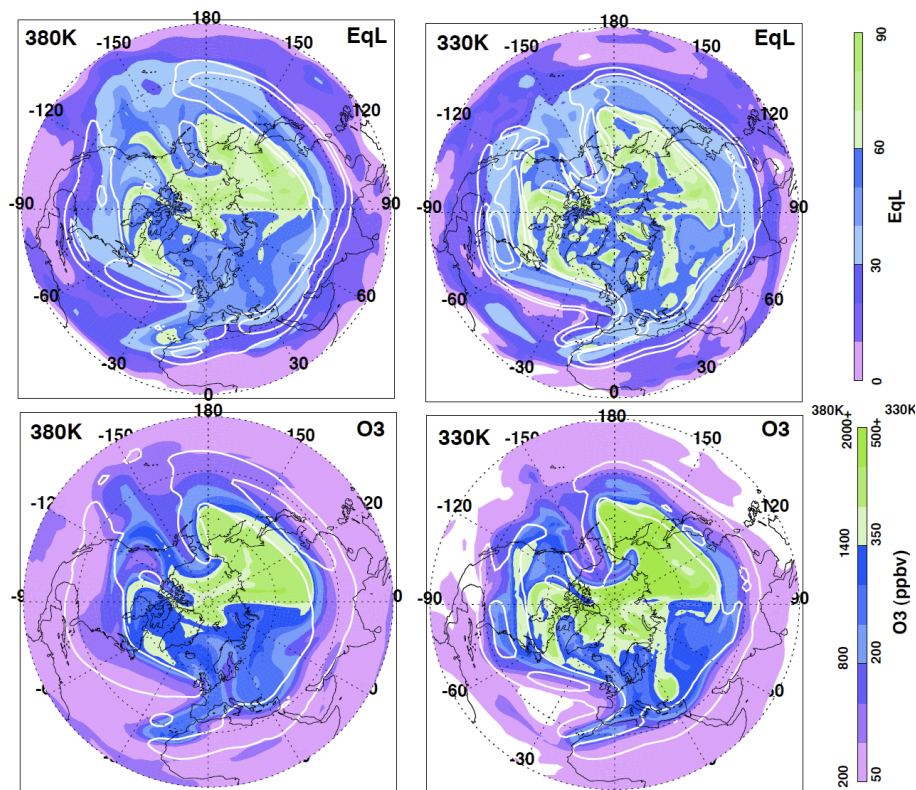


Fig. 7. WACCM EqLat and O_3 on the 380 K (left column) and 330 K (right column) θ -surfaces for 15 February 2006. The position of the jet is represented by white contours (wind speeds of 30 and 40 $m s^{-1}$).

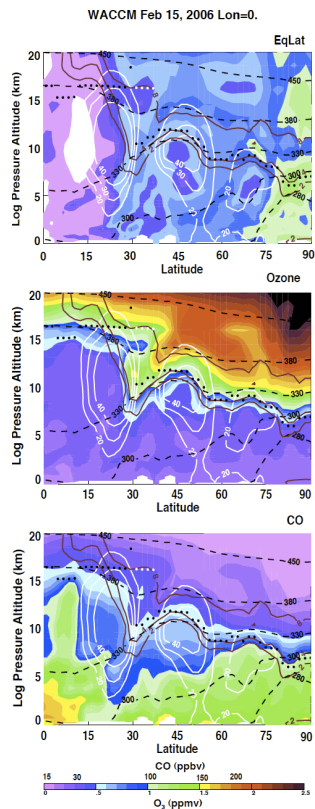


Fig. 8. WACCM NH meridional cross sections of EqLat (top), Ozone (middle) and CO (bottom) for 15 February 2006 along 0° longitude. In each panel, selected meteorological variables are also shown, including isentropes (black dash lines), wind speed (white lines), PV (red lines), and the thermal tropopause (black dots). White color-filled areas of EqLat represent negative values.

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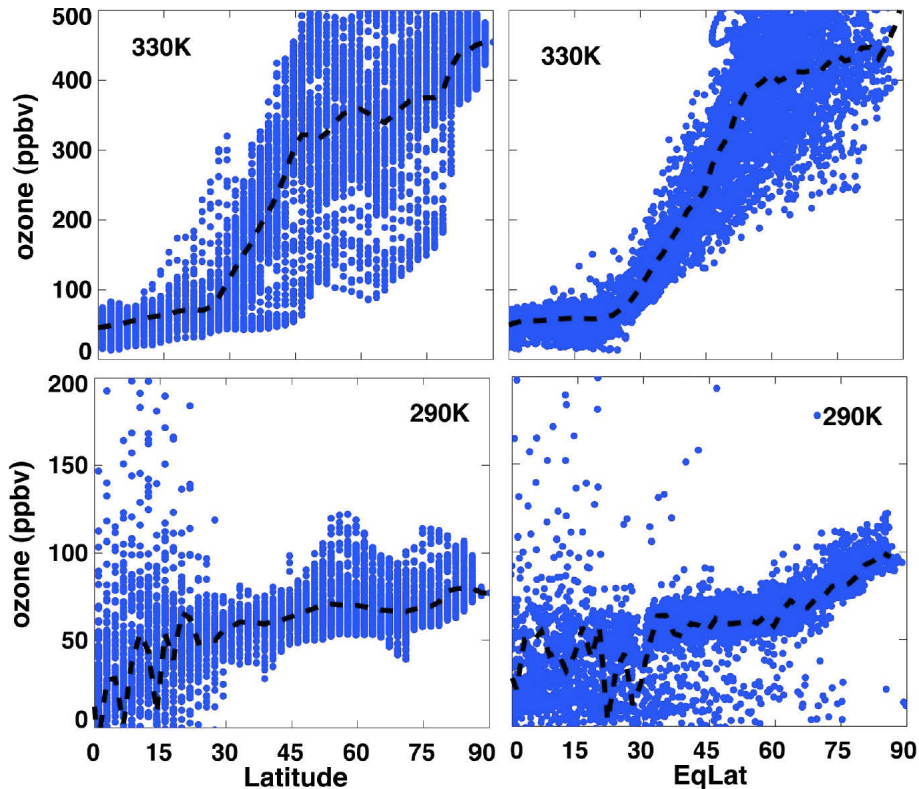


Fig. 9. WACCM NH ozone as a function of latitude (left) and EqLat (right) for the 330 K and 290 K potential temperature surfaces on 15 February 2006. The dashed line in each plot represents the zonal average in their respective coordinates.

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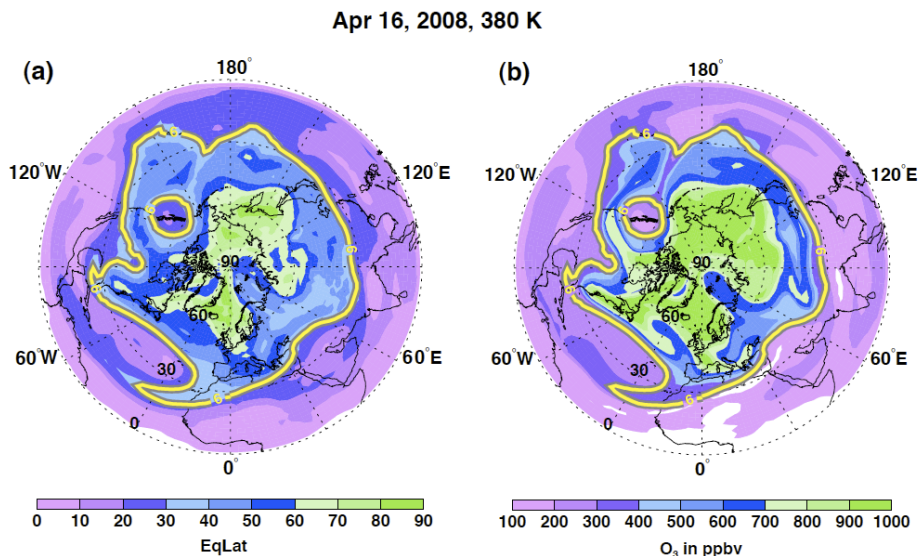


Fig. 10. Maps of (a) EqLat and (b) ozone from the SD-WACCM run for 16 April 2008 at the 380 K potential temperature surface. The 6 pVU PV contours are shown by the yellow lines. The dynamical tropopause is defined as the greater 6 pVU contour.

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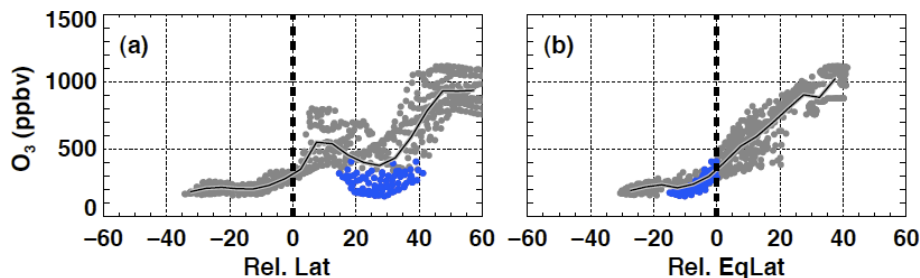


Fig. 11. Ozone at 380 K and from 110°–150° W in longitude on 16 April 2008, **(a)** as a function of relative latitude to the 380 K dynamical tropopause (6 pvu in Fig. 10), and **(b)** as a function of relative EqLat to the dynamical tropopause. The blue points highlight the parcels that are on different sides of the tropopause when using relative latitude versus relative EqLat.

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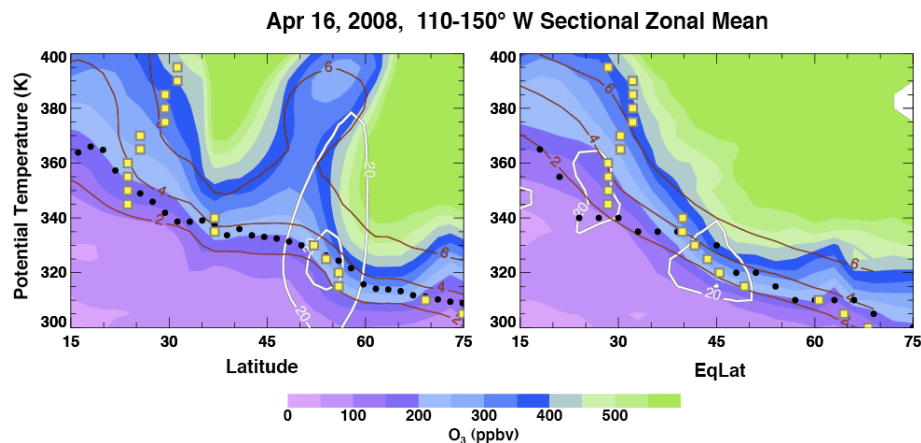


Fig. 12. Sectional zonal means of ozone for 110°–150° W in **(a)** latitude and **(b)** EqLat. Yellow squares represent the dynamical tropopause at each isentrope. Black dots represent the thermal tropopause. Also shown are PV in pvu (red contours) and zonal wind in m s^{-1} (white contours).

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