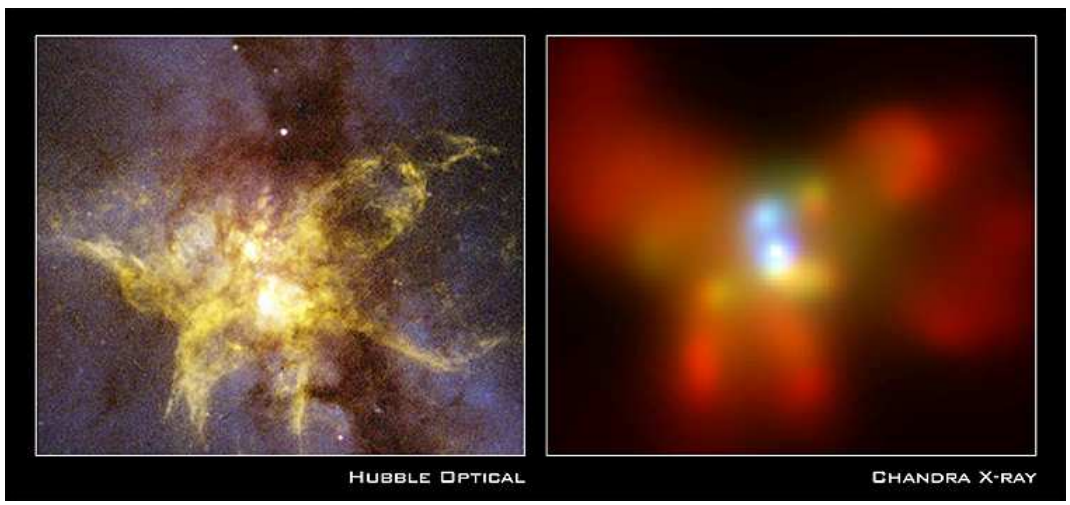
Comments On
"How to Win With Non-Gaussian Data: Poisson Imaging Version"
Alanna Connors

David A. van Dyk[a]

Department of Statistics
University of California, Irvine



[a]Joint Work with James Chaing and the California-Harvard Astrostatistical Collaboration

Automate, Formulate, and Evaluate

Three Goals for Low-Count Image Analysis

Automate: We would like to automate

1. *model fitting* to avoid subjective stopping rules used to control reconstruction quality, and
2. *the search for structure* to avoid choosing smoothing parameters to enhance supposed structure in the reconstruction.

Formulate: We would like to formulate low-count image analysis in the terms of well understood *statistical theory* in order to better understand the characteristics and properties of image analysis methods and results.

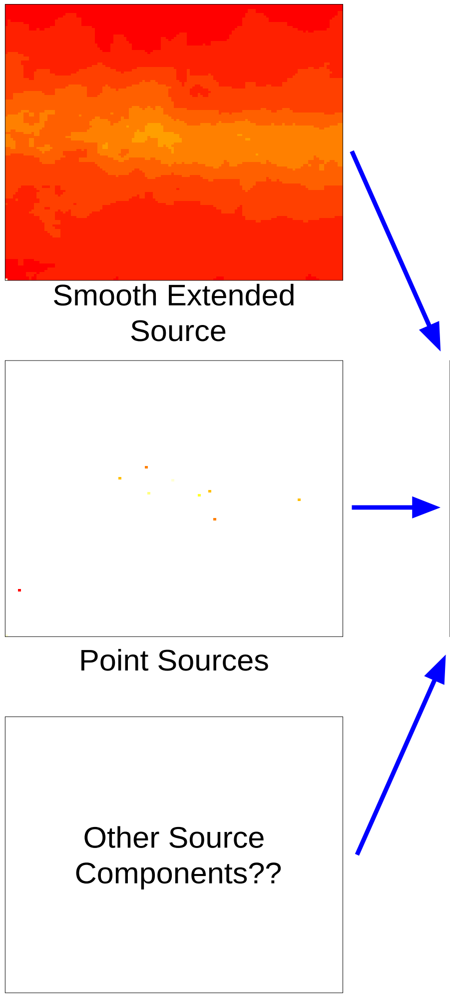
Evaluate: We would like to evaluate

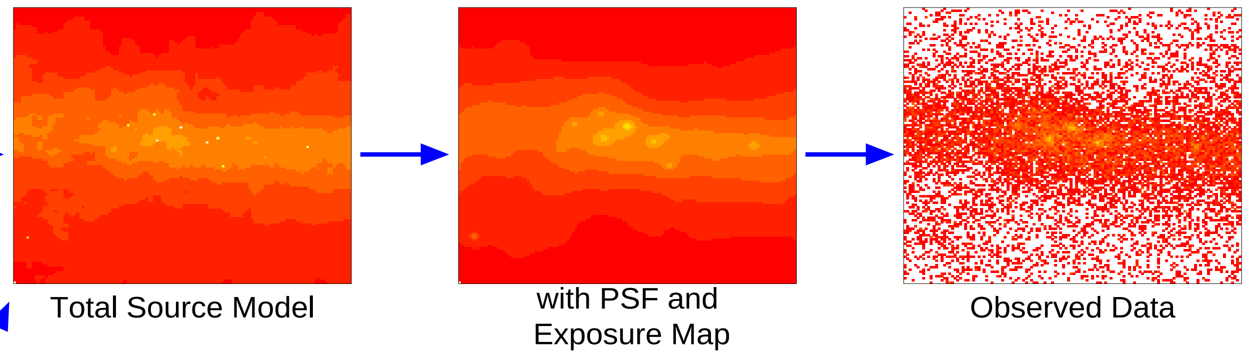
1. the *statistical error* in the fitted reconstruction under the assumed model,
2. the likelihood that supposed or proposed structures exist in the astronomical source, and
3. *the plausibility of the model assumptions.*

A Statistical Model for the Data Generation Process

Smooth Extended Source

- Requires a flexible non-parametric model, e.g., MRF or Multi-Scale





"Point" Sources

- Model the location, intensity, and perhaps extent and shape.
- POSTER #35!

The Advantages of A Model-Based Statistical Formulation

1. The use of well defined statistical estimates such as ML estimates, MAP estimates, or posterior means, eliminates the need for ad-hoc stopping rules (Esch et al., ApJ, 2004).

2. Statistical theory lends insight into the computation of statistical errors with Bayesian and/or frequency properties (Esch et al., ApJ, 2004).

3. Allow us incorporate knowledge from other data sources (Slide 5).

4. Principled methods for comparing and/or evaluating models (Slides 6 & 7).

5. Quantify evidence for supposed structure under flexible model (Slides 8 & 9).

Incorporating Outside Information

Outside information can be critical with low-count data. Lucky, such information is often forthcoming in the form of high-count high-resolution data for a different energy band (e.g., Optical or Radio).

Incorporating Information Through Model Components

Setting Model Parameters

- The number of and location of point sources.
- Smoothing parameters for extended source.
- A characterization of how smoothing parameters vary across source.

Incorporating Information Through Bayesian Prior Distributions

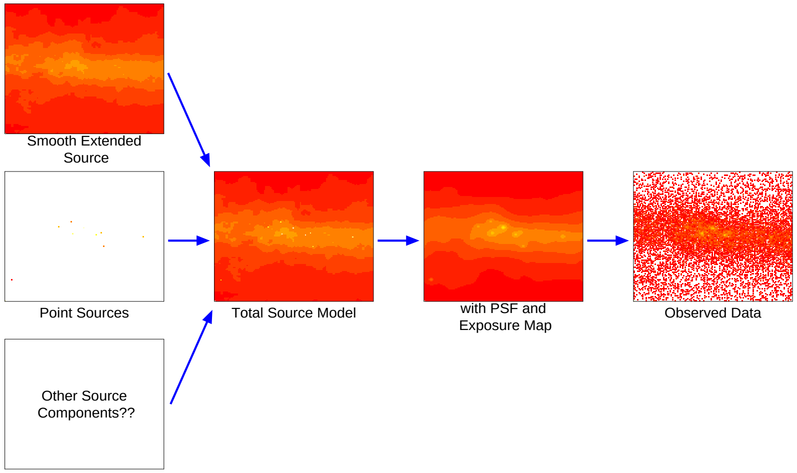
A More Flexible Approach

- Include a region where a point source is likely to exist.
- Encourage parameters to be *similar* to those obtained from better data.

Comparing/Evaluating Models I

Alanna's Question: Does one model component suffice, or are two necessary?

The difficult task of fitting the number of components in a *finite mixture model.*



Some Statistical Strategies

Confidence Intervals: Fit the full model, and, compute confidence intervals, e.g., for the total expected count from second component.

Residuals: Fit the smaller model, and, compute residuals around the fitted reconstruction along with their prediction intervals. Is there evidence that the residuals are too big or vary in an unexpected systematic way?

Significance Tests: Likelihood ratio and other tests can be used to compare one and two component models. Although the standard χ^2 distribution is not appropriate, the test can be calibrated using Monte Carlo (e.g., Protassov et al., 2002).

Comparing/Evaluating Models II

Using a Bayesian prior distribution to formulate a frequentist significance test.

A procedure:

1. Construct a prior distribution that favors a null hypothesis

   H_0: *object is a point source*

2. Compute the posterior distribution and evaluate the propensity of the alternative hypothesis

   H_A: *object is an extended source*

3. Using a test statistic, prior parameters can be used to set the level (and power) of the test.

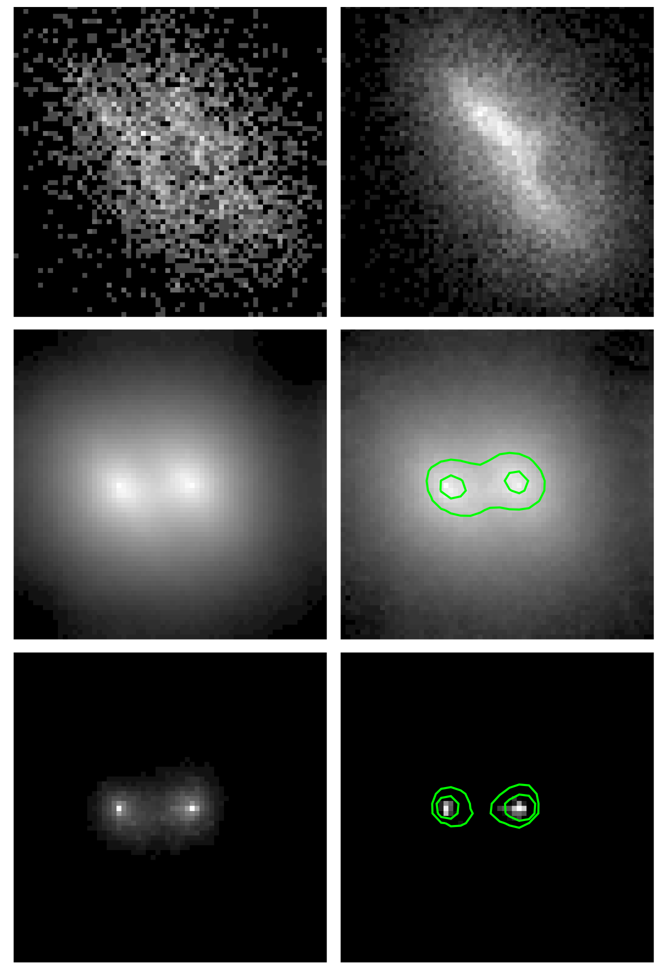
Simulation Results

data and PSF

result w/

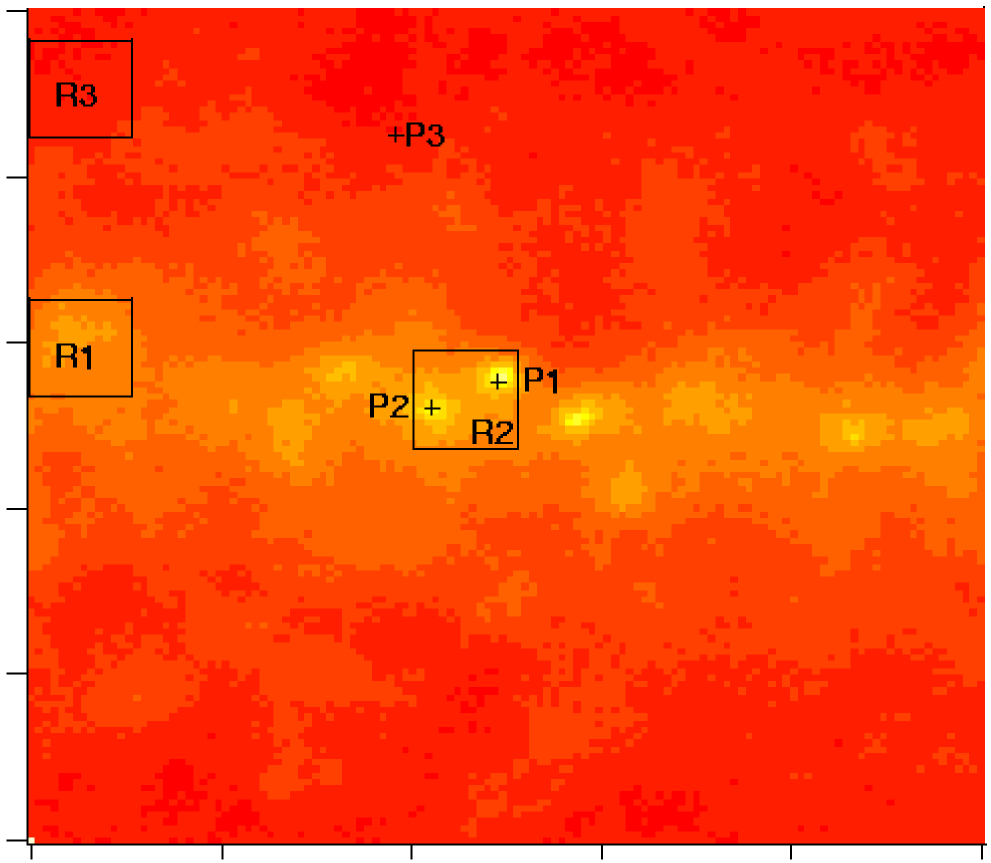
prior I

prior II



Looking for Structure

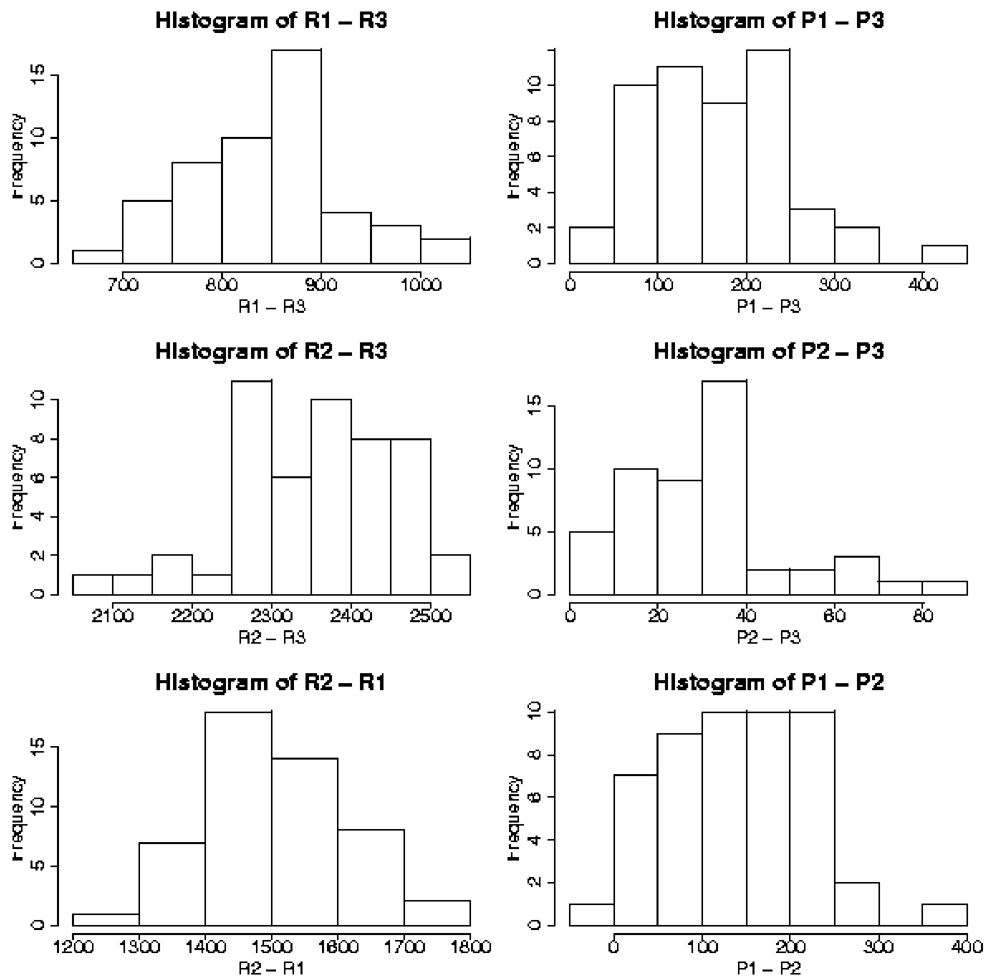
Once we have settled on a model, we can use statistical tools to investigate structure in the image.



Is the apparent local maximum in R1 real?

Is the P1 brighter than P2?

Some Posterior Probabilities



Monte Carlo Evaluation of Some Posterior Probabilities.

Challenges

Model Identifiability

- Point source vs. a glob in an extended source
- Requires outside information for smoothing parameters

Prior Specification

- Results can depend on choice of prior distribution
- Requires external evaluation of prior distribution and/or results

Model Specification

- For smooth extended source
- Joint Spatial-Spectral or Spatial-Spectral-Temporal models

Statistical Computation

- Subtle methods are required
- Expensive in CPU time (PSF can depend on energy, location, and time!)

Complex scientific questions require sophisticated statistical solutions
Model-based methods offer much promise, but challenges remain.