

# CLUSTER: An Unsupervised Algorithm for Modeling Gaussian Mixtures

*Charles A. Bouman*

School of Electrical Engineering

Purdue University

West Lafayette IN 47906

bouman@ecn.purdue.edu

(765) 494-0340

<http://www.ece.purdue.edu/~bouman>

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## Developed by:

Charles A. Bouman; School of ECE, Purdue University

Michael Shapiro; NCSA

Gregory W. Cook; School of ECE, Purdue University

C. Brian Atkins; School of ECE, Purdue University

Hui Cheng; School of ECE, Purdue University

Jennifer G. Dy; School of ECE, Purdue University

Sean Borman; Department of Electrical Engineering, University of Notre Dame

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# 1 Introduction

The Cluster software package is used to automatically estimate the parameters of a Gaussian mixture model from sample data. This process is essentially similar to conventional clustering except that it allows cluster parameters to be accurately estimated even when the clusters overlap substantially. The resulting mixture model is useful for a variety of applications including texture and multispectral image segmentation (see the SMAP segmentation package.)

The “clust” program applies the expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm together with an agglomerative clustering strategy to estimate the number of clusters which best fit the data. The estimation is based on the Rissanen order identification criteria known as minimum description length (MDL). This is equivalent to maximum-likelihood (ML) estimation when the number of clusters is fixed, but in addition it allows the number of clusters to be accurately estimated.

The package also includes two additional programs which make “clust” more useful. The program “classify” can be used to perform maximum likelihood classification from the parameter files generated by “clust”, and the program “SplitClasses” can be used along with “clust” and “classify” to perform unsupervised classification.

The software package is written in ANSI-C and is set up to compile on a wide variety of unix platforms. The main file directory contains the following subdirectories.

**documentation** - This subdirectory contains this manual and other documentation.

**example1** - Example showing how to run “clust” program. This subdirectory contains a shell script that runs a simple example showing how the “clust” program can be used to estimate the parameters of a Gaussian mixture model from training data.

**example2** - Example showing how to use the “cluster” and “classify” programs together to classify vectors. This subdirectory contains a shell script that first runs the “cluster” to estimate two Gaussian mixture models (GMM). It then runs the “classify” program to perform maximum likelihood classification of vectors from the two GMM distributions.

**example3** - Example showing how to use the “clust”, “classify”, and “SplitClasses” to perform unsupervised classification of data vectors. First “clust” forms a GMM. Next “SplitClasses” separates each component of the GMM into a separate class. Finally, “classify” is used to classify the original training vectors.

**Makefile** - This makefile constructs the compiled binaries. These makefiles have been tested for the gcc compiler under linux, but it should also work with little or no modification on other platforms supporting ANSI-C code.

**src** - This subdirectory contains the ANSI-C source code and header files required for the “clust” program and library.

## 2 Demo

The Cluster software package contains a number of simple demos which illustrate its use. To run these examples, simply execute the shell script “exampleN/Demo” where “N” corresponds to the demo number. If you are using MS Windows, then you can just read the contents of the demo files, and type in the commands manually. In some cases, the demo files contain matlab commands that are commented out. People with Matlab can use the included Matlab commands, and associated Matlab scripts, to perform additional functions; but everything in the package runs without Matlab.

### 2.1 example1 - GMM Parameter Estimation

This example shows how to use the program “clust” to cluster data vectors by estimating the parameters of a Gaussian mixture model. The program extracts mixture model parameters for the sample vectors contained in the file “data”. The demo runs four examples, and the GMM parameters resulting from these examples are stored in the four output files listed below:

**params** - This file is the default method which estimates the number of clusters using the MDL method and uses full covariance matrix for each cluster.

**params\_full5** - This method generates a user specified number of clusters (i.e. 5) and a full covariance matrix for each cluster.

**params\_diag** - This method estimates the number of clusters using the MDL method and uses a diagonal covariance matrix for each cluster. This option is useful when the amount of training data is limited.

**params\_diag5** - This method generates a user specified number of clusters (i.e. 5) and uses a diagonal covariance matrix for each cluster. This option is useful when the amount of training data is limited.

All parameter files are ASCII and human readable. The specific formate of the output files is discussed in section 5.

The demo can also generate new sample data using matlab. To do this, simply run the m-file “mk\_data.m”.

### 2.2 example2 - ML Classification using GMM Models

This example shows how the “classify” program can be used to classify test vectors into classes where each class is model with a GMM distribution. To do this, we first run “clust” to estimate the GMM parameters for two different training sets, e.g. one GMM model for each class. The parameters for each of the two GMM’s are stored in a single parameters file. By viewing the “params” file in a text editor, you can see that the parameters for each class are stored in a structure starting with the words “class” and ending with the words “endclass”.

Once the GMM parameters are estimated for each class, they are passed to the “classify” program. The “classify” program performs ML classification of test vectors using these two GMM classes. The “classify” program is easy to modify by any experienced C programmer, so you can incorporate the classifier into your own programs.

### 2.3 example3 - Unsupervised Clustering

This example shows how the Cluster package can be used to perform unsupervised clustering of data vectors. First, a GMM model is extracted from the data vectors using the “clust” algorithm. This produces a parameter file with a single class. However, this class typically contains a number of multivariate Gaussian components. Each of these components is designated in the parameter file by “subclass” and “endsubclass”. The “SplitClasses” program reads in the parameter file, separates each subclass into its own individual class, and stores the resulting parameter file. Once this is done, the “classify” program can be used to classify the vectors into each subcluster. This results in unsupervised clustering of the data vectors.

## 3 Clustering

The *clust* program is designed to process  $M$  distinct data sets in a single pass. The program will extract a mixture model for each data set and store the  $M$  mixture models in a signal parameter file. This is useful for applications such as segmentation when each mixture model represents one of  $M$  distinct classes that must be modeled.

In order to run the *clust* algorithm a data file must be created for each of the  $M$  data sets. Each data file contains a series of vectors in ASCII floating point format and on separate lines. Each vector should be a sample from the multivariate distribution of interest. The *clust* program will use these data vectors to estimate a Gaussian mixture model that best fits the sample data in the corresponding file. The Gaussian mixture model is formed by adding together multivariate Gaussian distributions each with different mean and covariance. Each of these component component distributions is a cluster (or subclass) of the distribution.

After a Gaussian mixture model has been extracted for each data set, the *clust* program will then generate a params file which contains all the parameters of all  $M$  Gaussian mixture distributions. Section 5 contains information on the contents of the parameter file.

The specifics of the algorithm are described in Appendix A; however, Fig. 1 illustrates the basic operations performed in the *clust* program. The algorithm is started by initializing with a set of cluster parameters and a user selected number of clusters. The cluster means are generated by selecting the appropriate number of samples from the training data, and the cluster covariances are set to all be equal to the covariance of the complete data set. After this initialization, the algorithm enters a loop in which clusters are combined (or eliminated when empty) until only one cluster remains.

Figs. 2 and 4 and Table 1 show the results of a simple experiment using the Cluster algorithm. (This experiment is included as an example with the package. You may run this example by executing the “example/Demo” file.) Figs. 2 shows a scatter plot of 500 samples from a two dimensional random vector. The random vector is chosen to have a distribution formed by the mixture of three bi-variate Gaussian distributions. Each component of the

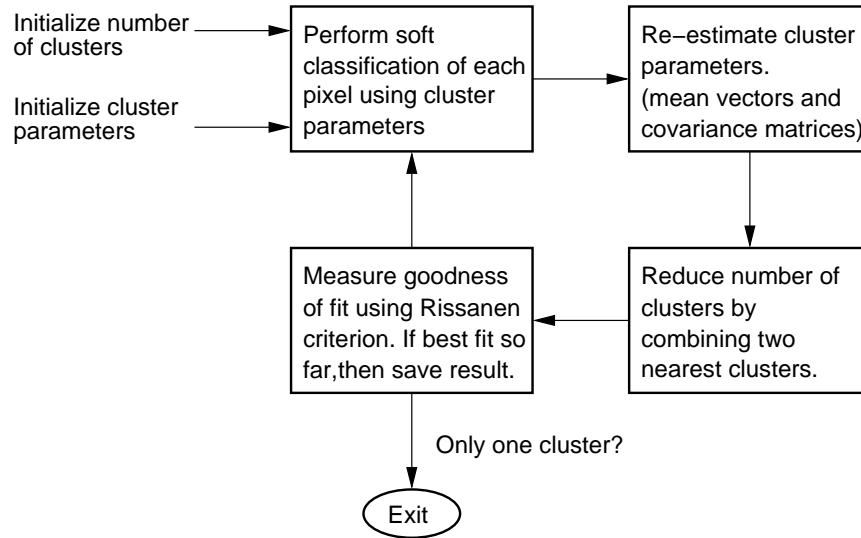


Figure 1: This figure shows the basic operations performed in the Cluster algorithm. At each step, the cluster parameters are saved if they are the best observed so far. The final answer is the clustering that minimizes the goodness-of-fit measure.

mixture distribution, or cluster, is parameterized by its relative proportion,  $\pi_i$ , its mean,  $\mu_i$ , and its covariance,  $R_i$ . The values used to generate the data are shown in Table 1. Notice, that the scatter plot has two distinct clusters, but the second and third clusters overlap and are less distinct.

The output of the Cluster program is shown in Fig. 4. After two clusters are combined, the parameters for the new set of clusters is estimated, and the final value of the MDL (Rissanen criteria) is printed. Notice that the minimum of the criteria occurs at 3, which, in this case, is the correct number clusters. The estimated cluster parameters are listed in Fig. 1 and the corresponding mixture pdf is shown in Fig. 3. Notice that for this data set, the match between the true and estimated parameters is reasonably close.

Refer to Appendix A for more details on how the *clust* algorithm works, and Section 4 for details on how to run the *clust* program.

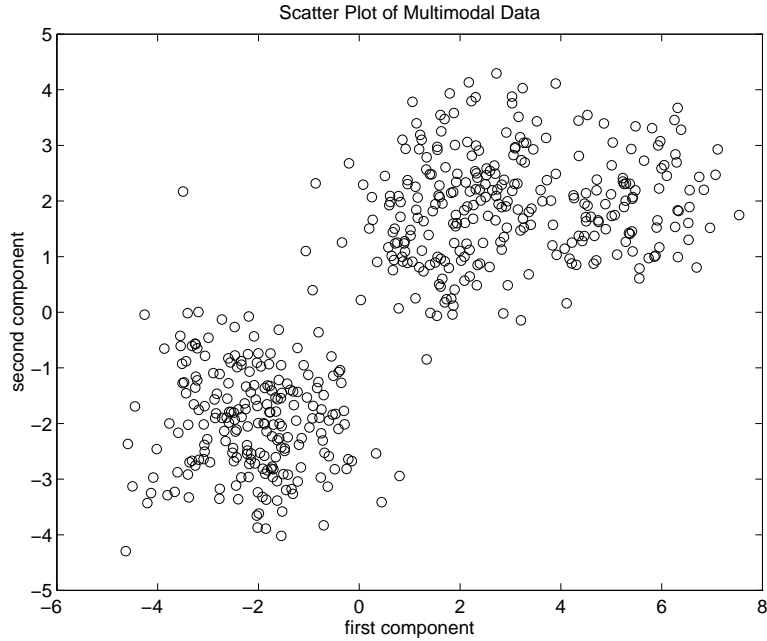


Figure 2: This figure shows a scatter plot generated using random samples from a mixture model. The parameters of the mixture model are shown in Table 1.

	parameter	true value	estimated value
Cluster 1	$\pi_1$	0.4	0.385141
	$\mu_1$	[2.0 2.0]	[1.968770 1.908531]
	$R_1$	$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0.1 \\ 0.1 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} 1.089314 & 0.291036 \\ 0.291036 & 1.034361 \end{bmatrix}$
Cluster 2	$\pi_2$	0.4	0.433581
	$\mu_2$	[-2.0 -2.0]	[-2.096070 -1.960741]
	$R_2$	$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & -0.1 \\ -0.1 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} 1.089534 & -0.091958 \\ -0.091958 & 0.928903 \end{bmatrix}$
Cluster 3	$\pi_3$	0.2	0.181277
	$\mu_3$	[5.5 2.0]	[5.333640 1.904941]
	$R_2$	$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0.2 \\ 0.2 & 0.5 \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} 0.870289 & 0.188515 \\ 0.188515 & 0.578056 \end{bmatrix}$

Table 1: Table showing the true and estimated parameters for the samples shown in Fig 2. Notice that the order of the model,  $L = 3$ , is correctly estimated. Each cluster is parameterized by its relative proportion,  $\pi_i$ , its mean,  $\mu_i$ , and its covariance,  $R_i$ .

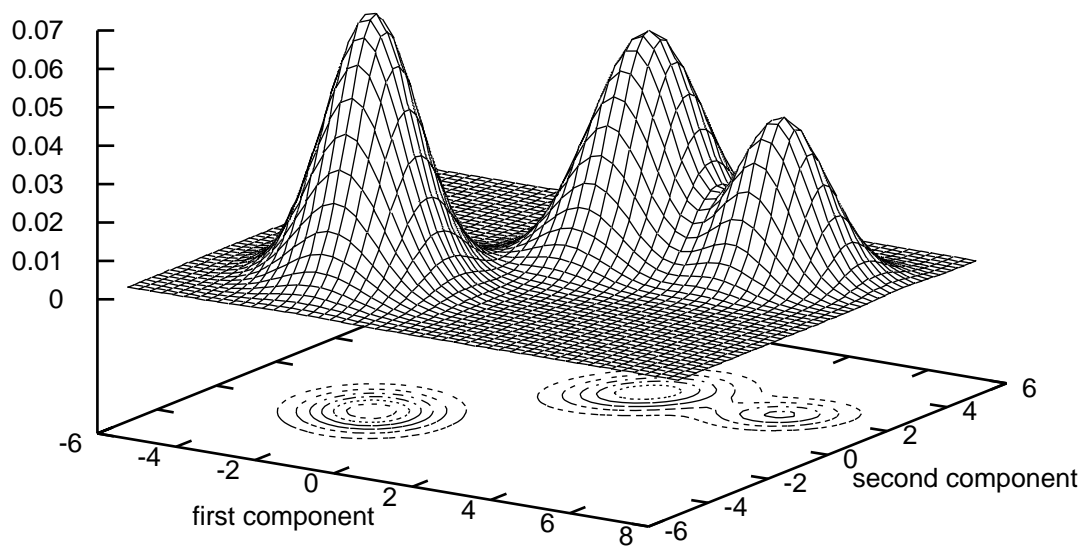


Figure 3: Estimated mixture probability density function.



```

Start clustering class 0
Warning: Removed a singular subsignature; number 13; 19 remain
Subclasses = 19; Rissanen = 2219.733222; Combining Subclasses (17,18)
Subclasses = 18; Rissanen = 2198.894739; Combining Subclasses (12,13)
Subclasses = 17; Rissanen = 2177.672102; Combining Subclasses (6,10)
Subclasses = 16; Rissanen = 2157.009854; Combining Subclasses (7,10)
Subclasses = 15; Rissanen = 2136.229106; Combining Subclasses (6,11)
Subclasses = 14; Rissanen = 2116.872794; Combining Subclasses (0,7)
Subclasses = 13; Rissanen = 2098.591172; Combining Subclasses (8,12)
Subclasses = 12; Rissanen = 2079.471212; Combining Subclasses (5,7)
Subclasses = 11; Rissanen = 2064.374351; Combining Subclasses (6,10)
Subclasses = 10; Rissanen = 2050.283018; Combining Subclasses (2,4)
Subclasses = 9; Rissanen = 2034.722833; Combining Subclasses (0,8)
Subclasses = 8; Rissanen = 2018.317428; Combining Subclasses (2,7)
Subclasses = 7; Rissanen = 2000.510965; Combining Subclasses (1,6)
Subclasses = 6; Rissanen = 1984.862735; Combining Subclasses (3,4)
Subclasses = 5; Rissanen = 1972.446690; Combining Subclasses (1,3)
Subclasses = 4; Rissanen = 1956.088972; Combining Subclasses (0,3)
Subclasses = 3; Rissanen = 1939.444535; Combining Subclasses (0,2)
Subclasses = 2; Rissanen = 1949.218131; Combining Subclasses (0,1)
Subclasses = 1; Rissanen = 2130.086314;

```

Figure 4: This figure shows output of the Cluster program for the example data set shown in Fig 2. Notice that the minimum of the Rissanen criteria occurs at the correct number of clusters (i.e. Subclasses = 3).

## 4 Program Manual Pages

### clust

This program is used to estimate the parameters of a Gaussian mixture model. It also estimates the number of clusters using the MDL criteria of Rissanen.

### SYNOPSIS

```
clust #_subclasses info_file output_params [option1 option2]
```

**#\_subclasses** - initial number of clusters for each class

**info\_file** - name of file which contains the following information:

<# of classes>

<data vector length>

<class 1 data file name> <# of data vectors in class 1>

<class 2 data file name> <# of data vectors in class 2>

· ·

· ·

· ·

<last class data file name> <# of data vectors in last class>

**output\_params** - name of file containing output cluster parameters

**option1** - (optional) controls clustering model

full - (default) use full covariance matrices

diag - use diagonal covariance matrices

**option2** - (optional) controls number of clusters

0 - (default) estimate number of clusters

n - use n clusters in mixture model with n<#\_subclasses

**#\_subclasses** - This is a number that specifies the initial number of subclasses used to cluster the data. The algorithm will automatically estimate the true number of subclasses for each class being modeled. However, it is good to start with an initial number of classes with is about 2-3 time the number of classes estimated by the algorithm.

**info\_file** - The program “clust” requires an “info\_file” that specifies a file name, <class k data file name>, for each of the classes being modeled. Each file <class k data file name> contains a list of <# of data vectors in class k> data vectors in ASCII floating point format. Each data vector is of length <data vector length> and is on a single line of the file. Each vector is represents the components of the vector valued image at a single pixel and from a single class k.

**output\_params\_file** - An ASCII file which contains the parameters for the Gaussian mixture model used for each class.

**option1** - An optional parameter value that controls the model used for the Gaussian mixture. If the option is set to “full” than a full covariance matrix is estimated for each subcluster. This is the default assumption if no option is specified. If the option is set to “diag” than a diagonal covariance matrix is estimated for each subcluster. This is equivalent to assuming that the components of each subcluster are independent with different variances.

**option2** - An optional parameter value that controls the number of final clusters. The default value of 0 indicates that the number of clusters should be automatically estimated.

## DESCRIPTION

The *clust* program is used to determine the parameters of a Gaussian mixture distribution. The parameters may be estimated from a series of data vectors corresponding to training samples for each class. The mixture class parameters are stored as a class signature which can be used for subsequent applications such as segmentation.

The *clust* program estimates both the number of distinct subclasses in each class, and the spectral mean and covariance for each subclass. The number of subclasses is estimated using Rissanen’s minimum description length (MDL) criteria [2]. This criteria attempts to determine the number of subclasses which “best” describe the data. The approximate maximum likelihood estimates of the mean and covariance of the subclasses are computed using the expectation maximization (EM) algorithm [9, 7]. Refer to Appendix A for a detailed derivation of the algorithm under the assumption that the “full” option is used. The “diag” option is a straightforward modification of this case.

## 5 Example Parameter File

Figure 5 is an annotated example of a parameter file which is output from the *clust* program. The subroutines *read\_sig.c* and *write\_sig.c* will read and write these parameters from the SigSet data structure defined in the file *sig.h*.

Below is an example of a parameter file. The original application for this clustering algorithm was multispectral image segmentation; so the terminology used in the parameter file reflects this application domain. Notice that data sets are referred to as classes, and components of the mixture distribution are referred to as subclasses.

For this example, there are mixture models generated for two sets of sample vectors. Each set contained two dimensional sample vectors. The first class is a simple multivariate Gaussian distribution with a single cluster or subclass. The second class is a second order mixture with two clusters or subclasses.

---

```

title: Data_set_name
nbands: 2      /* number of dimensions to sample vectors */
class:         /* begin specification for first data set*/
  classnum: 0  /* data set number 0 */
  classtitle: /* data set title (optional) */
  classtype: 0 /* data set type (optional) */
  npixels: 0   /* number of sample vectors (optional) */
  subclass:    /* begin subclass specification */
    pi: 1.0    /* relative weight of subclass component */
    means: 127.0 128.0 /* vector of mean values */
    covar:      /* covariance matrix */
      64.0 0.0
      0.0 32.0
  endsubclass: /* end subclass specification */
endclass:     /* end class specification */
class:        /* begin class specification */
  classnum: 1  /* data set number 1 */
  classtitle: /* data set title (optional) */
  classtype: 0 /* data set type (optional) */
  npixels: 0   /* number of sample vectors (optional) */
  subclass:    /* begin subclass specification */
    pi: 0.25   /* relative weight of subclass component */
    means: 32.0 32.0 /* vector of mean values */
    covar:      /* covariance matrix */
      100.0 2.0
      2.0 100.0
  endsubclass: /* end subclass specification */
subclass:     /* begin subclass specification */
  pi: 0.75    /* relative weight of subclass component */
  means: 64.0 64.0 /* vector of mean values */
  covar:      /* covariance matrix */
    50.0 0.0
    0.0 25.0
  endsubclass: /* end subclass specification */
endclass:     /* end subclass specification */

```

---

Figure 5: An example of a params file required to specify two Gaussian mixture models. Each mixture model is estimated from a distinct set of sample vectors.

# A Appendix: Parameter Estimation for Gaussian Mixture Models

It is often desirable to model distributions that are composed of distinct subclasses or clusters. For example, a pixel in a image might behave differently if it comes from an edge rather than a smooth region. Therefore the aggregate behavior is likely to be a mixture of the two distinct behaviors. The objective of mixture distributions is to form a probabilistic model composed of a number of component subclasses. Each subclass is than characterized by a set of parameters describing the mean and variation of the spectral components.

In order to estimate the parameters of a Gaussian mixture, it is necessary to determine the number of subclasses and the parameters of each subclasses. This can be done by using a representative sample of training data and estimating the number of subclasses and their parameters from this data.

Specifically, let  $Y$  be an  $M$  dimensional random vector to be modeled using a Gaussian mixture distribution. Let us assume that this model has  $K$  subclasses. The the following parameters are required to completely specify the  $k^{th}$  subclass.

$\pi_k$  - the probability that a pixel has subclass  $k$ .

$\mu_k$  - the  $M$  dimensional spectral mean vector for subclass  $k$ .

$R_k$  - the  $M \times M$  spectral covariance matrix for subclass  $k$ .

Furthermore, let  $K$  denote the number of subclasses, then we use the notation  $\pi$ ,  $\mu$ , and  $R$  to denote the parameter sets  $\{\pi_k\}_{k=1}^K$ ,  $\{\mu_k\}_{k=1}^K$ , and  $\{R_k\}_{k=1}^K$ . The complete set of parameters for the information class are then given by  $K$  and  $\theta = (\pi, \mu, R)$ . Notice that the parameters are constrained in a variety of ways. In particular,  $K$  must be an integer greater than 0,  $\pi_k \geq 0$  with  $\sum_k \pi_k = 1$ , and  $\det(R) \geq \epsilon$  where  $\epsilon$  may be chosen depending on the application. We will denote the set of admissible  $\theta$  for a  $K^{th}$  order model by  $\Omega^{(K)}$ .

Let  $Y_1, Y_2, \dots, Y_N$  be  $N$  multispectral pixels sampled from the information class of interest. Furthermore, assume that for each pixel  $Y_i$  the subclass of that pixel is given by the random variable  $X_n$ . Of course,  $X_n$  is usually not known, but it will be useful for analyzing the problem. Then assuming that each subclass has a multivariate Gaussian distribution, the probability density function for the pixel  $Y_n$  given that  $X_n = k$  is given by

$$p_{y_n|x_n}(y_n|k, \theta) = \frac{1}{(2\pi)^{M/2}} |R_k|^{-1/2} \exp \left\{ -\frac{1}{2} (y_n - \mu_k)^t R_k^{-1} (y_n - \mu_k) \right\} .$$

However, we do not know the subclass  $X_n$  of each sample, so to compute the density function of  $Y_n$  given the parameter  $\theta$  we must apply the definition of conditional probability and sum over  $k$ .

$$p_{y_n}(y_n|\theta) = \sum_{k=1}^K p_{y_n|x_n}(y_n|k, \theta) \pi_k$$

The log of the probability of the entire sequence  $Y = \{Y_n\}_{n=1}^N$  is then given by

$$\log p_y(y|K, \theta) = \sum_{n=1}^N \log \left( \sum_{k=1}^K p_{y_n|x_n}(y_n|k, \theta) \pi_k \right) . \quad (1)$$

The objective is then to estimate the parameters  $K$  and  $\theta \in \Omega^{(K)}$ . The maximum likelihood (ML) estimate is a commonly used estimate with many desirable properties. It is given by

$$\hat{\theta}_{ML} = \arg \max_{\theta \in \Omega^{(K)}} \log p_y(y|K, \theta)$$

Unfortunately, the ML estimate of  $K$  is not well defined because the likelihood may always be made better by choosing a large number of subclusters. Intuitively, the log likelihood may always be increased by adding more subclasses since more subclasses may be used to more accurately fit the data.

This problem of estimating the order of a model is known as order identification, and has been studied by a variety of researchers. Methods for estimating model order generally tend to require the addition of a penalty term in the log likelihood to account for the over-fitting of high order models. One of the earliest approaches to order identification was suggested by Akaike [1], and requires the minimization of the so called AIC information criteria. The AIC criterion is given by

$$AIC(K, \theta) = -2 \log p_y(y|K, \theta) + 2L$$

where  $L$  is the number of continuously valued real numbers required to specify the parameter  $\theta$ . In this application,

$$L = K \left( 1 + M + \frac{(M+1)M}{2} \right) - 1 .$$

However, an important disadvantage of the AIC criteria for a number of problems is that the AIC does not lead to a consistent estimator [3]. This means that as the number of observations tends to infinity, the estimated value for  $K$  does not converge to the true value.

Alternatively, another criterion was suggested by Rissanen [2] called the minimum description length (MDL) estimator. This estimator works by attempting to find the model order which minimizes the number of bits that would be required to code both the data samples  $y_n$  and the parameter vector  $\theta$ . While a direct implementation of the MDL estimator may depend on the particular coding method used, Rissanen develop an approximate expression for the estimate based on some assumptions and the minimization of the expression

$$MDL(K, \theta) = -\log p_y(y|K, \theta) + \frac{1}{2}L \log(NM) .$$

Notice that the major difference between the AIC and MDL criteria is the dependence of the penalty term on the total number of data values  $NM$ . In practice, this is important since otherwise more data will tend to result in over fitting of the model. In fact, it has been shown that for a large number of problems, the MDL criteria is a consistent estimator of model order [4, 5]. Unfortunately, the estimation of model order for mixture models does not fall into the class of problems for which the MDL criteria is known to be consistent. This is due to the fact that the solution to the mixture model problem always falls on a boundary of the constraint space, so the normal results on the asymptotic distribution of the ML estimate are no longer valid. An alternative method for order identification which is known to be consistent for mixture models is presented in [6]. However, this method is computationally expensive when the dimensionality of the data is high. Also see [7] for detailed proofs of convergence for the EM algorithm.

Our objective will be to minimize the MDL criterion given by

$$MDL(K, \theta) = - \sum_{n=1}^N \log \left( \sum_{i=1}^K p_{y_n|x_n}(y_n|k, \theta) \pi_k \right) + \frac{1}{2} L \log(NM) . \quad (2)$$

Direct minimization of  $MDL(\theta)$  is difficult for a number of reasons. First, the logarithm term makes direct optimization with  $\pi$ ,  $\mu$ , and  $R$  difficult. Second, minimization with respect to  $K$  is complex since for each value of  $K$  a complete minimization with respect to  $\pi$ ,  $\mu$ , and  $R$  is required. If the subclass of each pixel,  $X_n$ , were known, then the estimation of  $\pi$ ,  $\mu$ , and  $R$  would be quite simple. Unfortunately,  $X_n$  is not available. However, the expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm has been developed to address exactly this type of “incomplete” data problem [8, 9].

Intuitively, the EM algorithm works by first classifying the pixels  $Y_n$  according to their subclass, and then re-estimating the subclass parameters based on this approximate classification. An essential point is that instead of the membership to each subclass being deterministic, the membership is represented using a “soft” probability. The process is started by assuming the true parameter is given by  $\theta^{(i)}$ . We index  $\theta^{(i)}$  by  $i$  because ultimately the EM algorithm will result in an iterative procedure for improving the MDL criterion. The probability that pixel  $y_n$  belongs to subclass  $k$  may then be computed using Bayes rule.

$$p_{x_n|y_n}(k|y_n, \theta^{(i)}) = \frac{p_{y_n|x_n}(y_n|k, \theta^{(i)}) \pi_k}{\sum_{l=1}^K p_{y_n|x_n}(y_n|l, \theta^{(i)}) \pi_l} .$$

Then using these “soft” subclass memberships we will then compute new spectral mean and covariance estimates for each subclass. We will denote these new estimates by  $\bar{\pi}_k$ ,  $\bar{\mu}_k$  and  $\bar{R}_k$  where

$$\bar{N}_k = \sum_{n=1}^N p_{x_n|y_n}(k|y_n, \theta^{(i)}) \quad (3)$$

$$\bar{\pi}_k = \frac{\bar{N}_k}{N} \quad (4)$$

$$\bar{\mu}_k = \frac{1}{\bar{N}_k} \sum_{n=1}^N y_n p_{x_n|y_n}(k|y_n, \theta^{(i)}) \quad (5)$$

$$\bar{R}_k = \frac{1}{\bar{N}_k} \sum_{n=1}^N (y_n - \bar{\mu}_k)(y_n - \bar{\mu}_k)^t p_{x_n|y_n}(k|y_n, \theta^{(i)}) \quad (6)$$

In order to formally derive the EM algorithm update equations, we must first compute the following function

$$Q(\theta; \theta^{(i)}) = E \left[ \log p_{y,x}(y, X|\theta) | Y = y, \theta^{(i)} \right] - \frac{1}{2} L \log(NM)$$

where  $Y$  and  $X$  are the sets of random variables  $\{Y_n\}_{n=1}^N$  and  $\{X_n\}_{n=1}^N$  respectively, and  $y$  and  $x$  are realizations of these random objects. The fundamental result of the EM algorithm which is proven in [8] is that for all  $\theta$

$$MDL(K, \theta) - MDL(K, \theta^{(i)}) < Q(\theta^{(i)}; \theta^{(i)}) - Q(\theta; \theta^{(i)}) .$$



This results in a useful optimization method since any value of  $\theta$  that increases the value of  $Q(\theta; \theta^{(i)})$  is guaranteed to reduce the MDL criteria. The objective of the EM algorithm is therefore to iteratively optimize with respect to  $\theta$  until a local minimum of the MDL function is reached.

In order to derive expressions for the EM updates, we first compute a more explicit form for the function  $Q(\theta; \theta^{(i)})$ . The  $Q$  function may be expressed in the following form by substituting in for  $\log p_{y,x}(y, x|\theta)$  and simplifying.

$$Q(\theta; \theta^{(i)}) = \sum_{k=1}^K \bar{N}_k \left\{ -\frac{1}{2} \text{trace}[\bar{R}_k R_k^{-1}] - \frac{1}{2} (\bar{\mu}_k - \mu_k)^t R_k^{-1} (\bar{\mu}_k - \mu_k) - \frac{M}{2} \log(2\pi) - \frac{1}{2} \log(|R_k|) + \log(\pi_k) \right\} - \frac{1}{2} L \log(NM)$$

where  $\bar{N}_k$ ,  $\bar{\mu}_k$ , and  $\bar{R}_k$  are as given in (3), (4), and (5).

We will first consider the maximization of  $Q(\theta; \theta^{(i)})$  with respect to  $\theta \in \Omega^{(K)}$ . This maximization of  $Q$  may be done using Lagrange multipliers and results in the update equations

$$\begin{aligned} (\pi^{(i+1)}, \mu^{(i+1)}, R^{(i+1)}) &= \arg \max_{(\pi, \mu, R) \in \Omega^{(K)}} Q(\theta; \theta^{(i)}) \\ &= (\bar{\pi}, \bar{\mu}, \bar{R}) \end{aligned} \quad (7)$$

where  $(\bar{\pi}, \bar{\mu}, \bar{R})$  may be computed using (3), (4), (5), and (6).

While (7) shows how to update the parameter  $\theta$ , it does not show how to change the model order  $K$ . Our approach will be to start with a large number of clusters, and then sequentially decrement the value of  $K$ . For each value of  $K$ , we will apply the EM update of (7) until we converge to a local minimum of the MDL functional. After we have done this for each value of  $K$ , we may simply select the value of  $K$  and corresponding parameters that resulted in the smallest value of the MDL criteria.

The question remains of how to decrement the number of clusters from  $K$  to  $K - 1$ . We will do this by merging two clusters to form a single cluster. One way to effectively reduce the order of a model is to constrain the parameters of two subclasses to be equal. For example, two subclasses,  $l$  and  $m$ , may be effectively “merged” in a single subclass by constraining their mean and covariance parameters to be equal.

$$\begin{aligned} \mu_l &= \mu_m = \mu_{(l,m)} \\ R_l &= R_m = R_{(l,m)} \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

Here  $\mu_{(l,m)}$  and  $R_{(l,m)}$  denote the mean and covariance of the new subclass, and we assume that the values of  $\pi_l$  and  $\pi_m$  remain unchanged for the two clusters being merged. We denote this modified parameter vector by  $\theta_{(l,m)} \in \Omega^{(K)}$ . Notice that since  $\theta_{(l,m)}$  specifies the parameters for  $K$  clusters, it is a member of  $\Omega^{(K)}$ , but that two of these clusters (e.g. clusters  $l$  and  $m$ ) have identical cluster means and covariance. Alternatively, we use the notation  $\theta_{(l,m)-} \in \Omega^{(K-1)}$  to denote the parameters for the  $K - 1$  distinct clusters in  $\theta_{(l,m)}$ . More specifically, the two clusters  $l$  and  $m$  are specified as a single cluster  $(l, m)$  with mean and covariance as given in (8), and prior probability given by

$$\pi_{(l,m)} = \pi_l + \pi_m . \quad (9)$$

Using these definitions for  $\theta_{(l,m)}$  and  $\theta_{(l,m)-}$ , then the following relationship is results from inspection of (2).

$$MDL(K-1, \theta_{(l,m)-}) = MDL(K, \theta_{(l,m)}) + \frac{1}{2} \left( 1 + M + \frac{(M+1)M}{2} \right) \log(NM) .$$

The change in the MDL criteria is then given by

$$\begin{aligned} & MDL(K-1, \theta_{(l,m)-}) - MDL(K, \theta^{(i)}) \\ &= MDL(K-1, \theta_{(l,m)-}) - MDL(K, \theta_{(l,m)}) + MDL(K, \theta_{(l,m)}) - MDL(K, \theta^{(i)}) \\ &\leq -\frac{1}{2} \left( 1 + M + \frac{(M+1)M}{2} \right) \log(NM) + Q(\theta^{(i)}; \theta^{(i)}) - Q(\theta_{(l,m)}; \theta^{(i)}) \\ &\leq -\frac{1}{2} \left( 1 + M + \frac{(M+1)M}{2} \right) \log(NM) \\ &\quad + Q(\theta^{(i)}; \theta^{(i)}) - Q(\theta^*; \theta^{(i)}) + Q(\theta^*; \theta^{(i)}) - Q(\theta_{(l,m)}^*; \theta^{(i)}) . \end{aligned}$$

where  $\theta^*$  and  $\theta_{(l,m)}^*$  are the unconstrained and constrained optima respectively. The solution to the unconstrained optimization,  $\theta^*$ , is given in equation (7). We will assume that the EM algorithm has been run to convergence for a fixed order  $K$ , so that  $\theta^* = \theta^{(i)}$ . In this case,

$$Q(\theta^{(i)}; \theta^{(i)}) - Q(\theta^*; \theta^{(i)}) = 0 .$$

The value of  $\theta_{(l,m)}^*$  is obtained by maximizing  $Q(\theta_{(l,m)}; \theta^{(i)})$  as a function of  $\theta_{(l,m)}$  subject to the constraints of (8). This constrained optimization results in the same values of  $\pi_l^* = \bar{\pi}_l$  and  $\pi_m^* = \bar{\pi}_m$  as in the unconstrained case, but the following new mean and covariance values.

$$\begin{aligned} \mu_{(l,m)}^* &= \frac{\bar{\pi}_l \bar{\mu}_l + \bar{\pi}_m \bar{\mu}_m}{\bar{\pi}_l + \bar{\pi}_m} & (10) \\ R_{(l,m)}^* &= \frac{\bar{\pi}_l \left( \bar{R}_l + (\bar{\mu}_l - \mu_{(l,m)}) (\bar{\mu}_l - \mu_{(l,m)})^t \right) + \bar{\pi}_m \left( \bar{R}_m + (\bar{\mu}_m - \mu_{(l,m)}) (\bar{\mu}_m - \mu_{(l,m)})^t \right)}{\bar{\pi}_l + \bar{\pi}_m} & (11) \end{aligned}$$

Here the  $\bar{\pi}$ ,  $\bar{\mu}$ , and  $\bar{R}$  are given by (4), (5), and (6), and the remaining values of  $\pi_k$ ,  $\mu_k$ , and  $R_k$  are unchanged from the unconstrained result. Using (10) and (11), we may define a distance function with the form

$$\begin{aligned} d(l, m) &= Q(\theta^*; \theta^{(i)}) - Q(\theta_{(l,m)}^*; \theta^{(i)}) \\ &= N\bar{\pi}_l \left\{ -\frac{M}{2} (1 + \log(2\pi)) - \frac{1}{2} \log(|\bar{R}_l|) \right\} \\ &\quad + N\bar{\pi}_m \left\{ -\frac{M}{2} (1 + \log(2\pi)) - \frac{1}{2} \log(|\bar{R}_m|) \right\} \\ &\quad - N\pi_{(l,m)} \left\{ -\frac{M}{2} (1 + \log(2\pi)) - \frac{1}{2} \log(|R_{(l,m)}|) \right\} \\ &= \frac{N\bar{\pi}_l}{2} \log \left( \frac{|R_{(l,m)}|}{|\bar{R}_l|} \right) + \frac{N\bar{\pi}_m}{2} \log \left( \frac{|R_{(l,m)}|}{|\bar{R}_m|} \right) & (12) \end{aligned}$$

This distance function then serves as an upper bound on the change in the MDL criteria.

$$MDL(K-1, \theta_{(l,m)^-}) - MDL(K, \theta^{(i)}) \leq d(l, m) - \frac{1}{2} \left( 1 + M + \frac{(M+1)M}{2} \right) \log(NM) \quad (13)$$

A few comments are in order. The value of  $d(l, m)$  is always positive. This is clear from the form of (12). In fact, reducing the model order should only reduce the log likelihood of the observations since there are fewer parameters to fit the data. In general, this increase may be offset by the model order term in (13) which is always negative. However, since this term is independent of the choice of  $l$  and  $m$ , it does not play a role in selecting which clusters to merge.

With the function  $d(l, m)$  precisely defined, it is now possible to search over the set of all pairs,  $(l, m)$ , to find the cluster pair which minimizes  $d(l, m)$ , thereby minimizing an upper bound on the change in the MDL criteria.

$$(l^*, m^*) = \arg \min_{(l,m)} d(l, m) \quad (14)$$

These two clusters are then merged. The parameters of the merged cluster are computed using (9) and (10), and the resulting parameter set  $\theta_{l,m}^*$  is used as a initial condition for EM optimization with  $K-1$  clusters.

Before we can specify the final Cluster algorithm, we must specify the initial choice of the parameter  $\theta^{(1)}$  used with the largest number of clusters. The initial choice of  $\theta^{(1)}$  can be important since the EM is only guaranteed to converge to a local minimum. The initial number of clusters,  $K_o$ , is chosen by the user subject to the constraint that the total number of parameters,  $L < \frac{1}{2}MN$ . The initial subclass parameters are then chosen to be

$$\pi_k^{(1)} = \frac{1}{K_o} \quad (15)$$

$$\mu_k^{(1)} = y_n \text{ where } n = \lfloor (k-1)(N-1)/(K_o-1) \rfloor + 1 \quad (16)$$

$$R_k^{(1)} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{n=1}^N y_n y_n^t \quad (17)$$

where  $\lfloor \cdot \rfloor$  is the greatest smaller integer function.

The final Cluster algorithm is given in the following steps.

1. Initialize the class with a large number of subclasses,  $K_o$ .
2. Initialize  $\theta^{(1)}$  using (15), (16) and (17).
3. Apply the iterative EM algorithm (7) until the change in  $MDL(K, \theta)$  is less than  $\epsilon$ .
4. Record the parameter  $\theta^{(K, i_{final})}$ , and value  $MDL(K, \theta^{(K, i_{final})})$ .
5. If the number of subclasses is greater than 1, apply equation (14) to reduce the number of clusters, set  $K \leftarrow K-1$ , and go back to step 3.
6. Choose the value  $K^*$  and parameters  $\theta^{(K^*, i_{final})}$  which minimize the value of MDL.

In step 3, the value of  $\epsilon$  is chosen to be

$$\epsilon = \frac{1}{100} \left( 1 + M + \frac{(M+1)M}{2} \right) \log(NM) .$$

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