

Scalable Bayesian inference for 3G: Leveraging hardware acceleration and normalizing flows

Thibeau Wouters



Utrecht
University

Nikhef



Contents

① Introduction

② Methods

③ Applications

④ Outlook and conclusion

Parameter estimation in 3G

Parameter estimation is done with **Bayesian inference**:

$$\text{posterior} \propto \frac{\text{likelihood} \times \text{prior}}{\text{evidence}}$$

- Sample the posterior: MCMC or nested sampling
- $\mathcal{O}(10^6) - \mathcal{O}(10^8)$ likelihood evaluations per inference

Parameter estimation in 3G

Parameter estimation is done with **Bayesian inference**:

$$\text{posterior} \propto \frac{\text{likelihood} \times \text{prior}}{\text{evidence}}$$

- Sample the posterior: MCMC or nested sampling
- $\mathcal{O}(10^6) - \mathcal{O}(10^8)$ likelihood evaluations per inference

What about **3G** detectors?

- ET will observe $\mathcal{O}(10^5)$ events per year
- Signals will be longer and have higher SNRs

Parameter estimation in 3G

Parameter estimation is done with **Bayesian inference**:

$$\text{posterior} \propto \frac{\text{likelihood} \times \text{prior}}{\text{evidence}}$$

- Sample the posterior: MCMC or nested sampling
- $\mathcal{O}(10^6) - \mathcal{O}(10^8)$ likelihood evaluations per inference

What about **3G** detectors?

- ET will observe $\mathcal{O}(10^5)$ events per year
- Signals will be longer and have higher SNRs

Premise: Current software will not scale to 3G [1]

Contents

① Introduction

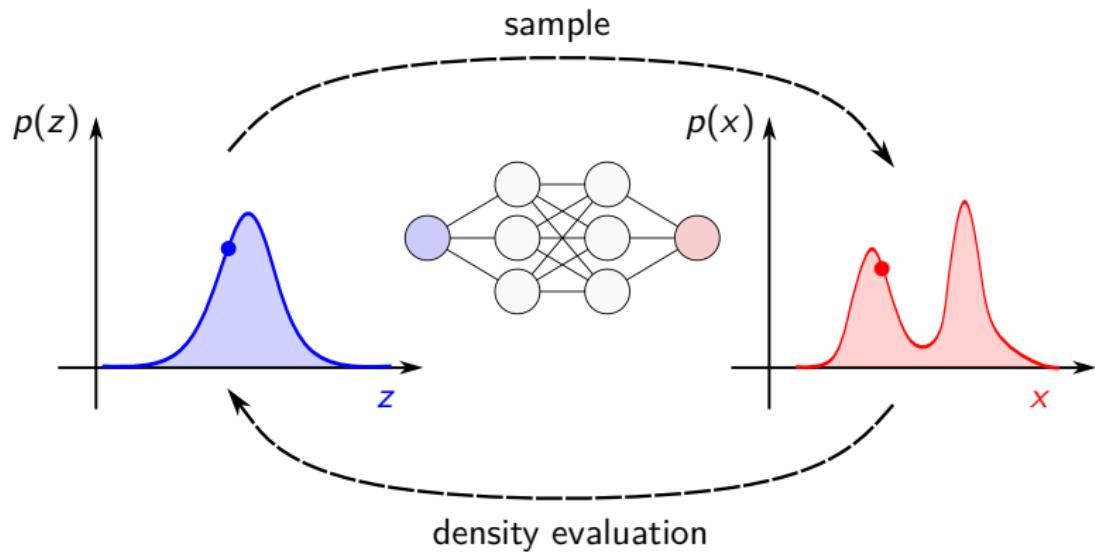
② Methods

③ Applications

④ Outlook and conclusion

Normalizing flows (NFs)

- Trainable bijection between **latent** and **data** spaces
- Sample and evaluate complicated densities
- Used as **proposal distribution**, trained from MCMC chains



JAX & FLOWMC

Accelerate Python with JAX :

- Use GPU accelerators
- Automatic differentiation → gradient-based samplers
- Just-in-time (JIT) compilation



JAX & FLOWMC

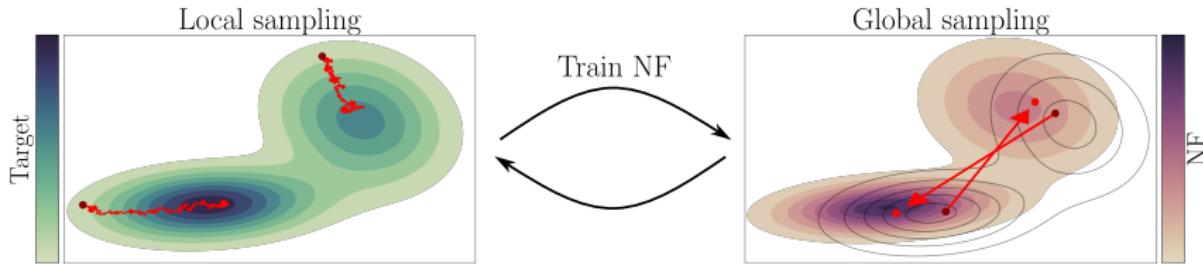
Accelerate Python with JAX :

- Use GPU accelerators
- Automatic differentiation → gradient-based samplers
- Just-in-time (JIT) compilation



FLOWMC [2, 3]: MCMC + normalizing flows in JAX

- MCMC chains as training data → no pre-training
- Also see NESSAI  [4, 5]



Contents

① Introduction

② Methods

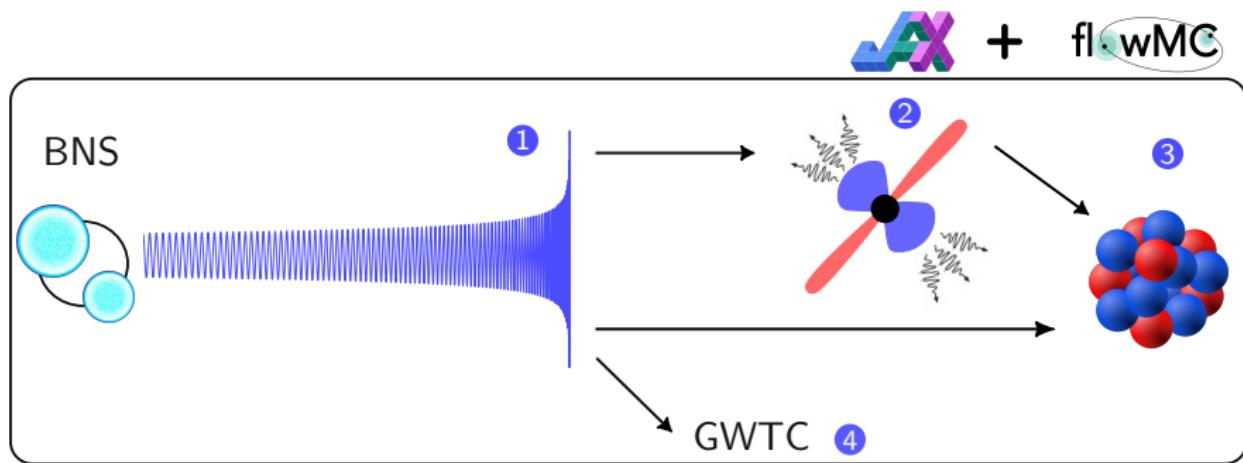
③ Applications

④ Outlook and conclusion

Overview

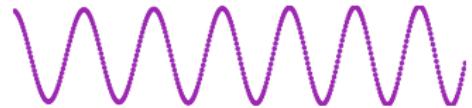
Analyzing a multi-messenger **binary neutron star** (BNS) signal:

- ① Gravitational waves
- ② Electromagnetic counterparts
- ③ Nuclear equation of state
- ④ Gravitational wave transient catalogue



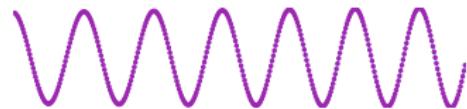
Gravitational waves

- Waveforms on GPU: $\mathcal{O}(10^3)$ faster
- From LALSUITE to JAX: RIPPLE  [6]



Gravitational waves

- Waveforms on GPU: $\mathcal{O}(10^3)$ faster
 - From LALSUITE to JAX: RIPPLE [6]
-



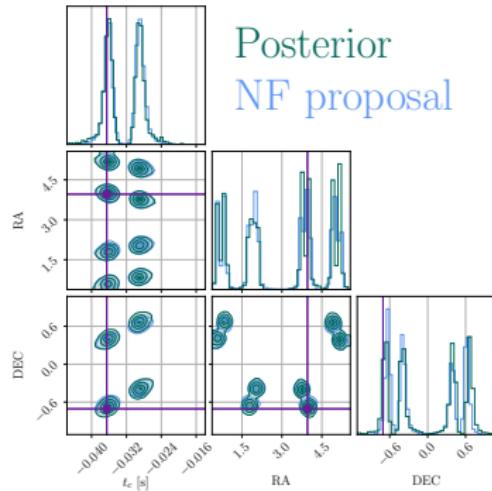
- Parameter estimation: JIM [7, 8]
- BNS in LVK analyzed in ~ 15 min

Gravitational waves

- Waveforms on GPU: $\mathcal{O}(10^3)$ faster
- From LALSUITE to JAX: RIPPLE [6]



- Parameter estimation: JIM [7, 8]
- BNS in LVK analyzed in ~ 15 min
- Ongoing work for ET – example:
 - BNS, $f_{\min} = 20$ Hz, SNR = 21
 - ET- Δ , IMRPhenomD_NRTidalv2
 - 30 mins on H100 GPU
- Evidence? HARMONIC [9]



Overlapping signals

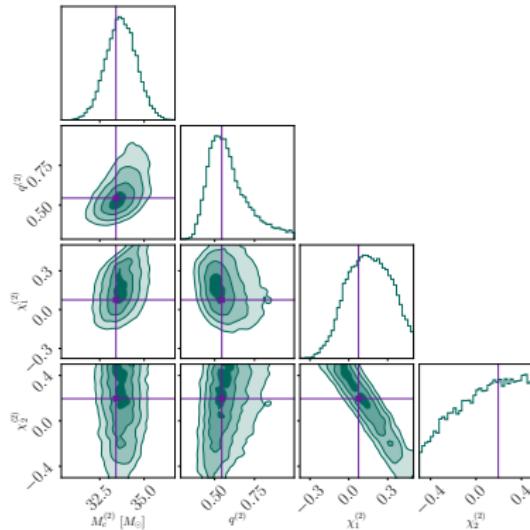
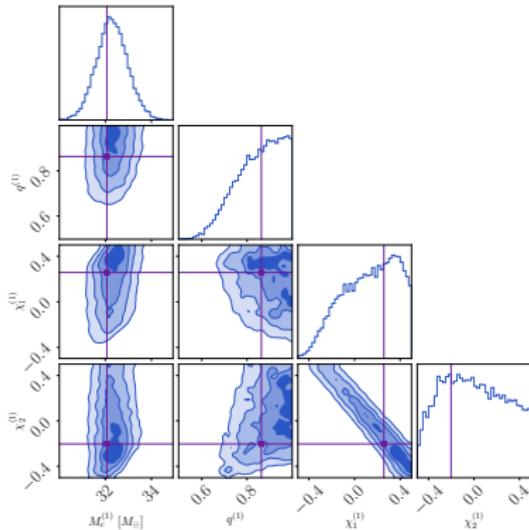
(Luca Negri, Justin Janquart, James Alvey, Uddipta Bhardwaj)

- Assess scaling of JIM: BBH+BBH in O5 with LVK
 - IMRPhenomD → 22 parameters (joint parameter estimation)
 - $M_c^{(1)} = 32M_\odot$, $M_c^{(2)} = 33M_\odot$, $\Delta t = 70$ ms
 - $\text{SNR}^{(1)} = 25.76$, $\text{SNR}^{(2)} = 25.24$

Overlapping signals

(Luca Negri, Justin Januart, James Alvey, Uddipta Bhardwaj)

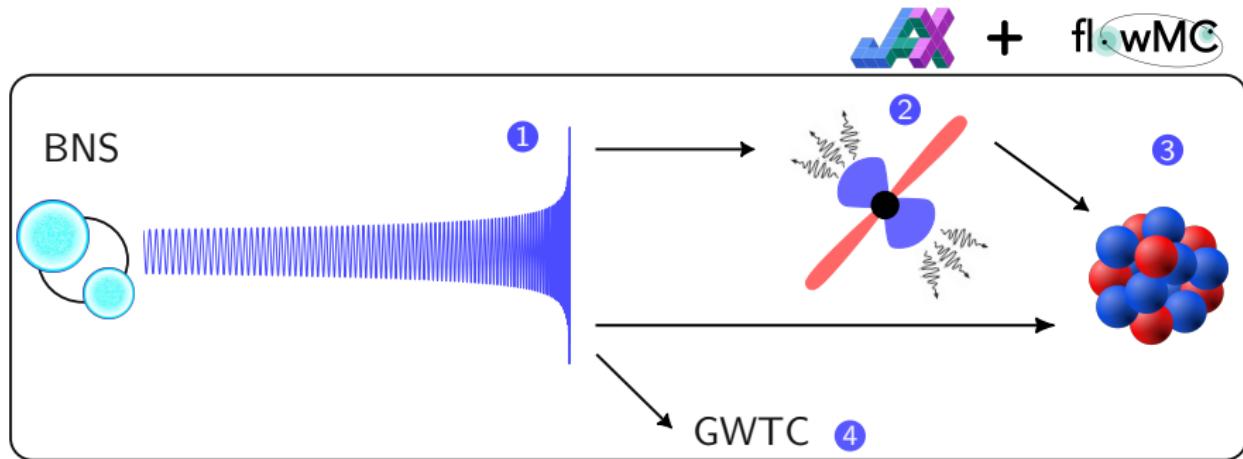
- Assess scaling of JIM: BBH+BBH in O5 with LVK
 - IMRPhenomD → 22 parameters (joint parameter estimation)
 - $M_c^{(1)} = 32M_\odot$, $M_c^{(2)} = 33M_\odot$, $\Delta t = 70$ ms
 - $\text{SNR}^{(1)} = 25.76$, $\text{SNR}^{(2)} = 25.24$
 - **1h28m** on H100 (vs 23 days on 16 CPUs [10])



Overview

Analyzing a multi-messenger **binary neutron star** (BNS) signal:

- ① Gravitational waves
- ② Electromagnetic counterparts
- ③ Nuclear equation of state
- ④ Gravitational wave transient catalogue

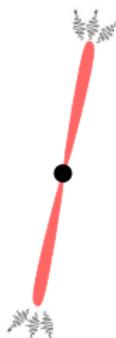


Electromagnetic counterparts (Hauke Koehn, Tim Dietrich)

- BNS mergers lead to kilonovae, **gamma-ray bursts (afterglows)**
- Numerical models are too expensive (e.g. AFTERGLOWPY [11])

Electromagnetic counterparts (Hauke Koehn, Tim Dietrich)

- BNS mergers lead to kilonovae, **gamma-ray bursts (afterglows)**
- Numerical models are too expensive (e.g. AFTERGLOWPY [11])
- Neural network surrogates for inference: FIESTA 

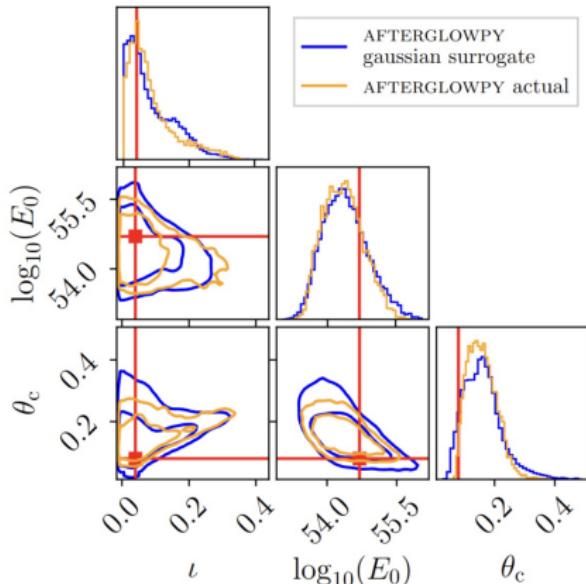


FIESTA

- 1m36s
- 1 H100 GPU

AFTERGLOWPY

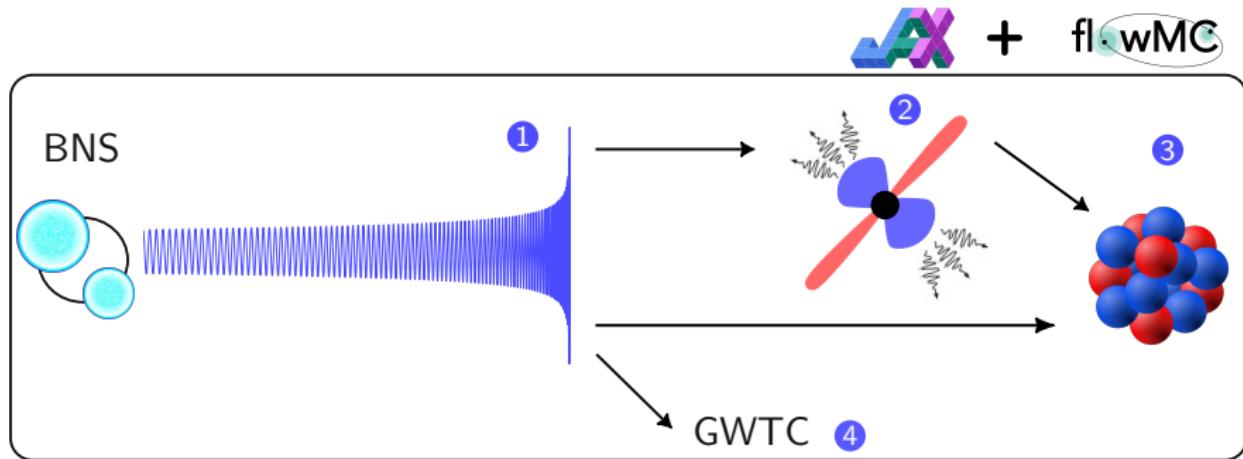
- 4 hours
- 30 CPUs



Overview

Analyzing a multi-messenger **binary neutron star** (BNS) signal:

- ① Gravitational waves
- ② Electromagnetic counterparts
- ③ Nuclear equation of state
- ④ Gravitational wave transient catalogue

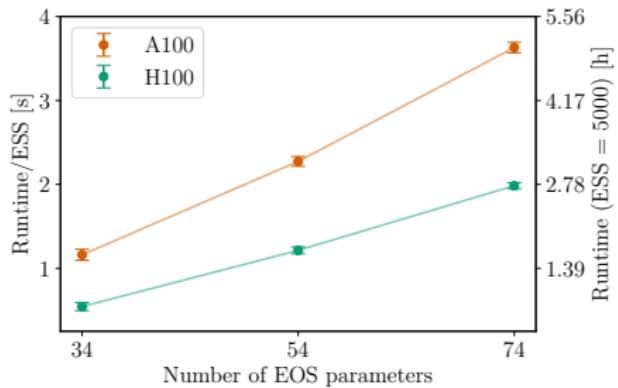


Equation of state inference (Peter T.H. Pang)

- Goal: infer nuclear equation of state (EOS) of neutron stars [12]
- Computational bottleneck: solve TOV equations

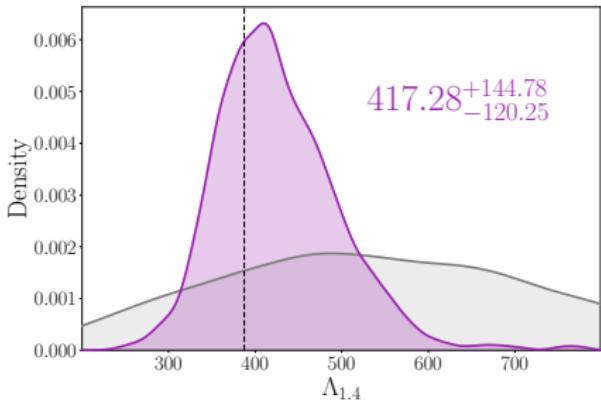
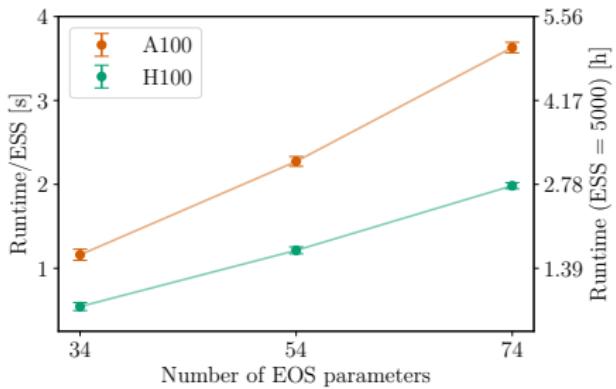
Equation of state inference (Peter T.H. Pang)

- Goal: infer nuclear equation of state (EOS) of neutron stars [12]
- Computational bottleneck: solve TOV equations
- JESTER  [13]: JAX-based TOV solver
 - Full inference in \sim hours
 - No need for machine learning surrogates



Equation of state inference (Peter T.H. Pang)

- Goal: infer nuclear equation of state (EOS) of neutron stars [12]
- Computational bottleneck: solve TOV equations
- JESTER  [13]: JAX-based TOV solver
 - Full inference in \sim hours
 - No need for machine learning surrogates
- End-to-end analysis: constrain EOS from 20 BNS in O5



Contents

① Introduction

② Methods

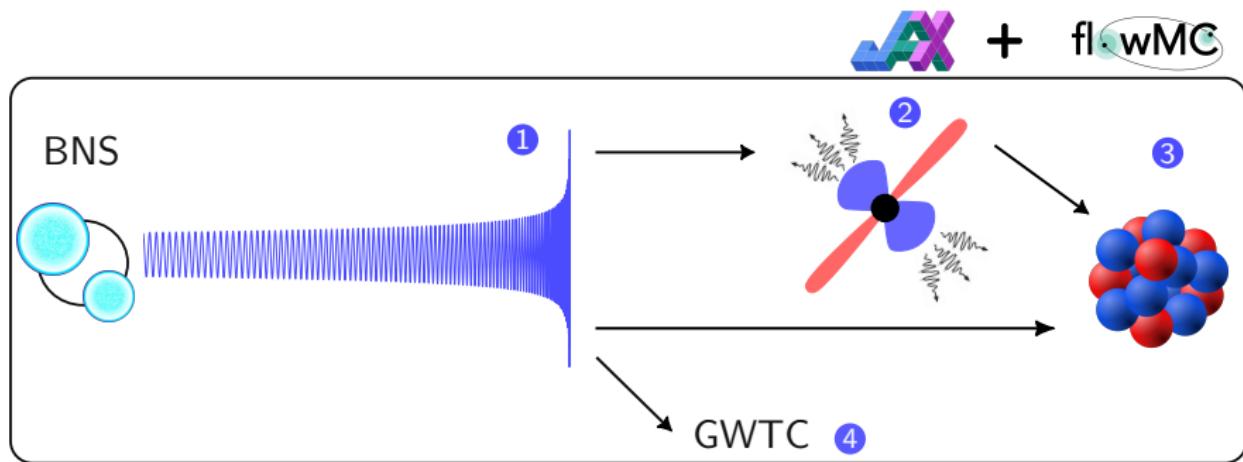
③ Applications

④ Outlook and conclusion

Overview

Analyzing a multi-messenger **binary neutron star** (BNS) signal:

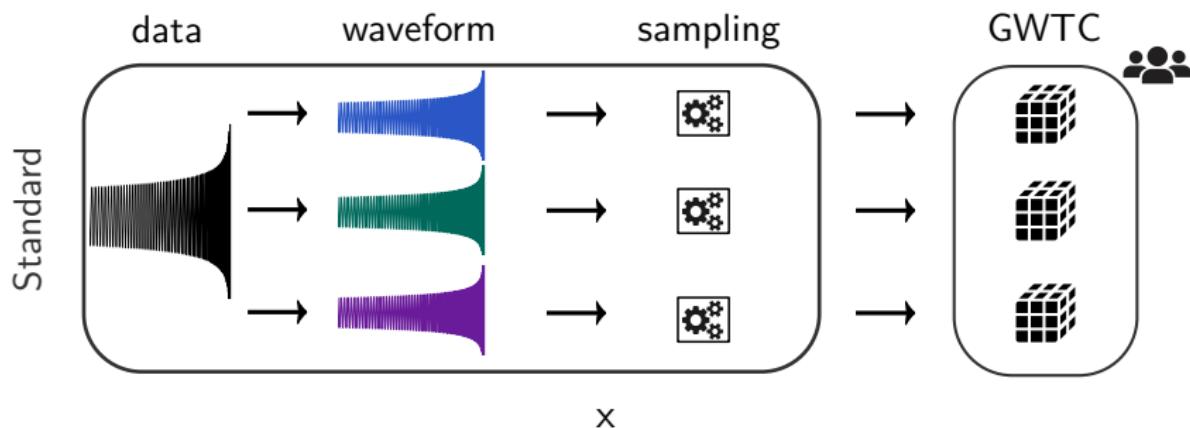
- ① Gravitational waves
- ② Electromagnetic counterparts
- ③ Nuclear equation of state
- ④ **Gravitational wave transient catalogue**



Constructing GWTCs (Thomas Ng, Kaze Wong)

GWTCs do not scale well in **memory**:

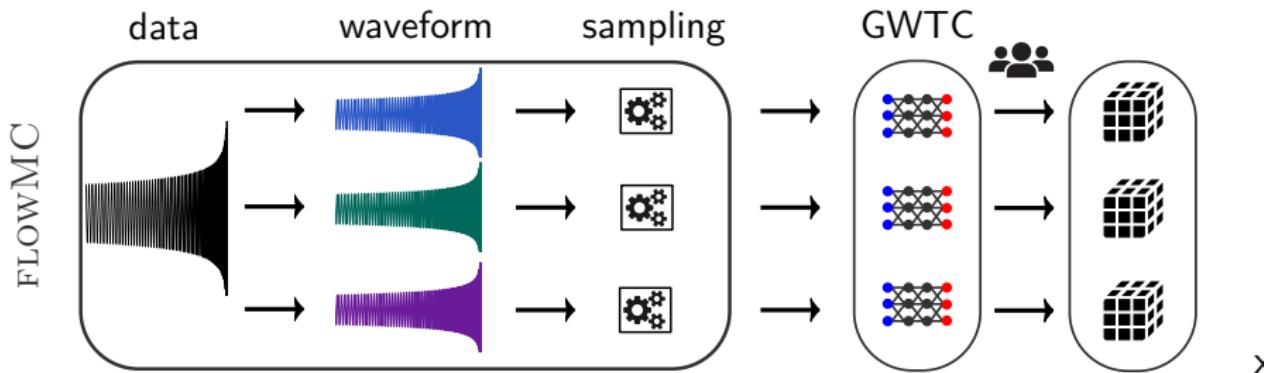
- GWTC stores several samples (different waveforms)
- Standard: fixed sample size, ~ 100 MB



Constructing GWTCs (Thomas Ng, Kaze Wong)

GWTCs do not scale well in **memory**:

- GWTC stores several samples (different waveforms)
- Standard: fixed sample size, ~ 100 MB
- FLOWMC: generate samples from normalizing flows, ~ 10 MB



Conclusion

- Progress on scalable Bayesian inference software for 3G, with minimal amount of pre-training
- Hybrid acceleration: GPUs + normalizing flow proposals
 - JAX/GPU: likelihoods faster
 - FLOWMC: sampling converges faster
- Goal: joint multimessenger analyses in \sim hours (NMMA [14] in JAX)
- To do
 - GW injection studies for ET
 - **More waveform models in JAX**
 - Equation of state study with ET data

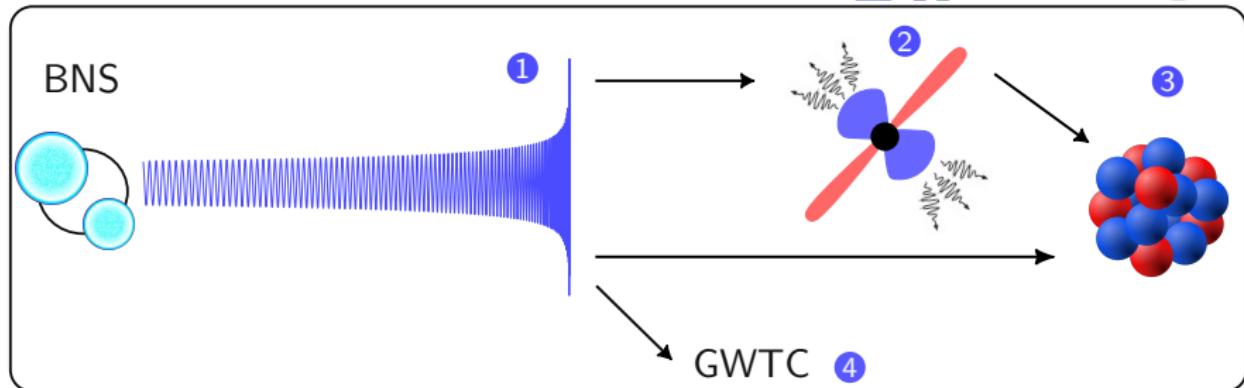
Let's talk!

Thank you for your attention!

Software written in JAX 🚀:

- FLOWMC 🚀 [2, 3]
- JIM 🚀 [7, 8] ① ② ④
- FIESTA 🚀 ②
- JESTER 🚀 [13] ③
- HARMONIC 🚀 [9, 15, 16]

JAX + flowMC



References I

- [1] Qian Hu and John Veitch. "Costs of Bayesian Parameter Estimation in Third-Generation Gravitational Wave Detectors: a Review of Acceleration Methods". In: (Dec. 2024). arXiv: [2412.02651 \[gr-qc\]](https://arxiv.org/abs/2412.02651).
- [2] Marylou Gabrié, Grant M. Rotskoff, and Eric Vanden-Eijnden. "Adaptive Monte Carlo augmented with normalizing flows". In: *Proc. Nat. Acad. Sci.* 119.10 (2022), e2109420119. DOI: [10.1073/pnas.2109420119](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2109420119). arXiv: [2105.12603 \[physics.data-an\]](https://arxiv.org/abs/2105.12603).
- [3] Kaze W. k. Wong, Marylou Gabrié, and Daniel Foreman-Mackey. "flowMC: Normalizing flow enhanced sampling package for probabilistic inference in JAX". In: *J. Open Source Softw.* 8.83 (2023), p. 5021. DOI: [10.21105/joss.05021](https://doi.org/10.21105/joss.05021). arXiv: [2211.06397 \[astro-ph.IM\]](https://arxiv.org/abs/2211.06397).
- [4] Michael J. Williams, John Veitch, and Chris Messenger. "Nested sampling with normalizing flows for gravitational-wave inference". In: *Phys. Rev. D* 103.10 (2021), p. 103006. DOI: [10.1103/PhysRevD.103.103006](https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevD.103.103006). arXiv: [2102.11056 \[gr-qc\]](https://arxiv.org/abs/2102.11056).
- [5] Michael J. Williams, John Veitch, and Chris Messenger. "Importance nested sampling with normalising flows". In: *Mach. Learn. Sci. Tech.* 4.3 (2023), p. 035011. DOI: [10.1088/2632-2153/acd5aa](https://doi.org/10.1088/2632-2153/acd5aa). arXiv: [2302.08526 \[astro-ph.IM\]](https://arxiv.org/abs/2302.08526).
- [6] Thomas D. P. Edwards et al. "Differentiable and hardware-accelerated waveforms for gravitational wave data analysis". In: *Phys. Rev. D* 110.6 (2024), p. 064028. DOI: [10.1103/PhysRevD.110.064028](https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevD.110.064028). arXiv: [2302.05329 \[astro-ph.IM\]](https://arxiv.org/abs/2302.05329).

References II

- [7] Kaze W. K. Wong, Maximiliano Isi, and Thomas D. P. Edwards. “Fast Gravitational-wave Parameter Estimation without Compromises”. In: *Astrophys. J.* 958.2 (2023), p. 129. DOI: [10.3847/1538-4357/acf5cd](https://doi.org/10.3847/1538-4357/acf5cd). arXiv: [2302.05333](https://arxiv.org/abs/2302.05333) [astro-ph.IM].
- [8] Thibeau Wouters et al. “Robust parameter estimation within minutes on gravitational wave signals from binary neutron star inspirals”. In: *Phys. Rev. D* 110.8 (2024), p. 083033. DOI: [10.1103/PhysRevD.110.083033](https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevD.110.083033). arXiv: [2404.11397](https://arxiv.org/abs/2404.11397) [astro-ph.IM].
- [9] Alicja Polanska et al. “Accelerated Bayesian parameter estimation and model selection for gravitational waves with normalizing flows”. In: *38th conference on Neural Information Processing Systems*. Oct. 2024. arXiv: [2410.21076](https://arxiv.org/abs/2410.21076) [astro-ph.IM].
- [10] Justin Janquart et al. “Analyses of overlapping gravitational wave signals using hierarchical subtraction and joint parameter estimation”. In: *Mon. Not. Roy. Astron. Soc.* 523.2 (2023), pp. 1699–1710. DOI: [10.1093/mnras/stad1542](https://doi.org/10.1093/mnras/stad1542). arXiv: [2211.01304](https://arxiv.org/abs/2211.01304) [gr-qc].
- [11] Geoffrey Ryan et al. “Gamma-Ray Burst Afterglows in the Multimessenger Era: Numerical Models and Closure Relations”. In: *Astrophys. J.* 896.2 (2020), p. 166. DOI: [10.3847/1538-4357/ab93cf](https://doi.org/10.3847/1538-4357/ab93cf). arXiv: [1909.11691](https://arxiv.org/abs/1909.11691) [astro-ph.HE].
- [12] Adrian Abac et al. “The Science of the Einstein Telescope”. In: (Mar. 2025). arXiv: [2503.12263](https://arxiv.org/abs/2503.12263) [gr-qc].

References III

- [13] Thibeau Wouters et al. "Leveraging differentiable programming in the inverse problem of neutron stars". In: (Apr. 2025). arXiv: 2504.15893 [astro-ph.HE].
- [14] Peter T. H. Pang et al. "An updated nuclear-physics and multi-messenger astrophysics framework for binary neutron star mergers". In: *Nature Commun.* 14.1 (2023). Available at <https://github.com/nuclear-multimessenger-astronomy/nmma>, p. 8352. DOI: 10.1038/s41467-023-43932-6. arXiv: 2205.08513 [astro-ph.HE].
- [15] Jason D. McEwen et al. *Machine learning assisted Bayesian model comparison: learnt harmonic mean estimator*. 2023. arXiv: 2111.12720 [stat.ME]. URL: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2111.12720>.
- [16] Alicja Polanska et al. *Learned harmonic mean estimation of the marginal likelihood with normalizing flows*. 2024. arXiv: 2307.00048 [stat.ME]. URL: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2307.00048>.
- [17] Kurzgesagt. *Figures taken from “Neutron Stars - The Most Extreme Things that are not Black Holes”*. Accessed on May 14, 2025. 2019. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udFxKZRyQt4>.
- [18] Hergé. *Cover figure created with ChatGPT using this input figure from the comic Destination Moon*. Accessed on May 14, 2025. 2019. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udFxKZRyQt4>.

Evidence calculation: HARMONIC I

Evidence Z can be computed from posterior samples with HARMONIC [15] with the **harmonic mean estimator**

$$\begin{aligned}\rho &\equiv \mathbb{E}_{P(\theta|d)} \left[\frac{1}{L(\theta)} \right] \\ &= \int d\theta \frac{1}{L(\theta)} P(\theta|d) \\ &= \int d\theta \frac{1}{L(\theta)} \frac{\mathcal{L}(\theta)\pi(\theta)}{Z} = \frac{1}{Z}\end{aligned}$$

Therefore, estimate ρ with posterior samples:

$$\hat{\rho} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \frac{1}{L(\theta_i)}, \quad \theta_i \sim P(\theta|d)$$

Evidence calculation: HARMONIC II

Can be interpreted as importance sampling

$$\rho = \int d\theta \frac{1}{Z} \frac{\pi(\theta)}{P(\theta|d)} P(\theta|d),$$

but with target = prior and sampling density = posterior. Therefore, importance sampling is inefficient – how to solve?

New proposal:

$$\begin{aligned}\rho &= \mathbb{E}_{P(\theta|d)} \left[\frac{\varphi(\theta)}{\mathcal{L}(\theta)\pi(\theta)} \right] \\ &= \int d\theta \frac{\varphi(\theta)}{\mathcal{L}(\theta)\pi(\theta)} P(\theta|d) \\ &= \int d\theta \frac{\varphi(\theta)}{\mathcal{L}(\theta)\pi(\theta)} \frac{\mathcal{L}(\theta)\pi(\theta)}{Z} = \frac{1}{Z}\end{aligned}$$

Evidence calculation: HARMONIC III

Use the following estimator:

$$\hat{\rho} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \frac{\varphi(\theta_i)}{\mathcal{L}(\theta_i)\pi(\theta_i)}, \quad \theta_i \sim P(\theta|d)$$

Replace the target distribution π with φ : only requirement is that it is normalized

In practice, this can be achieved with a normalizing flow [16].

This has been verified to give accurate evidences (similar values as nested sampling) when GW posteriors are used [9].

HARMONIC with JIM

Table 1: Total wall times to compute the evidence estimates for the examples discussed in the main text. We run BILBY on 16 CPU cores and JIM + harmonic on 1 GPU.

Example	Method	$\log(z)$	Sampling time	Evidence estimation time
4D	BILBY	390.33 ± 0.11	31.3 min	—
	JIM + harmonic	$390.360^{+0.006}_{-0.006}$	3.4 min	1.9 min
11D	BILBY	378.29 ± 0.15	3.5 h	—
	JIM + harmonic	$378.420^{+0.09}_{-0.08}$	11.8 min	2.4 min

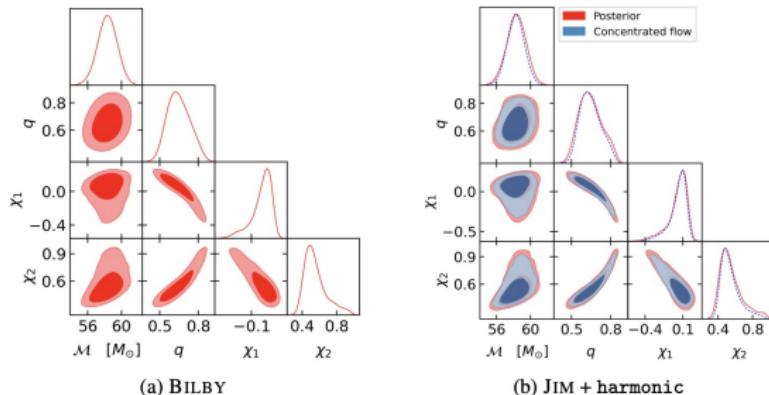
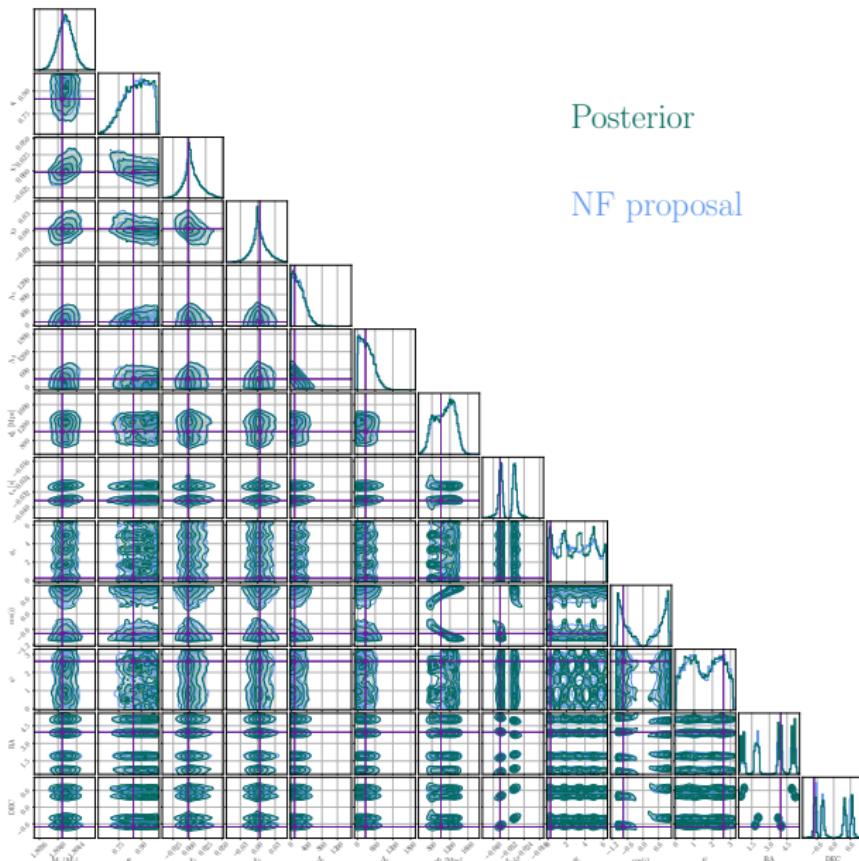
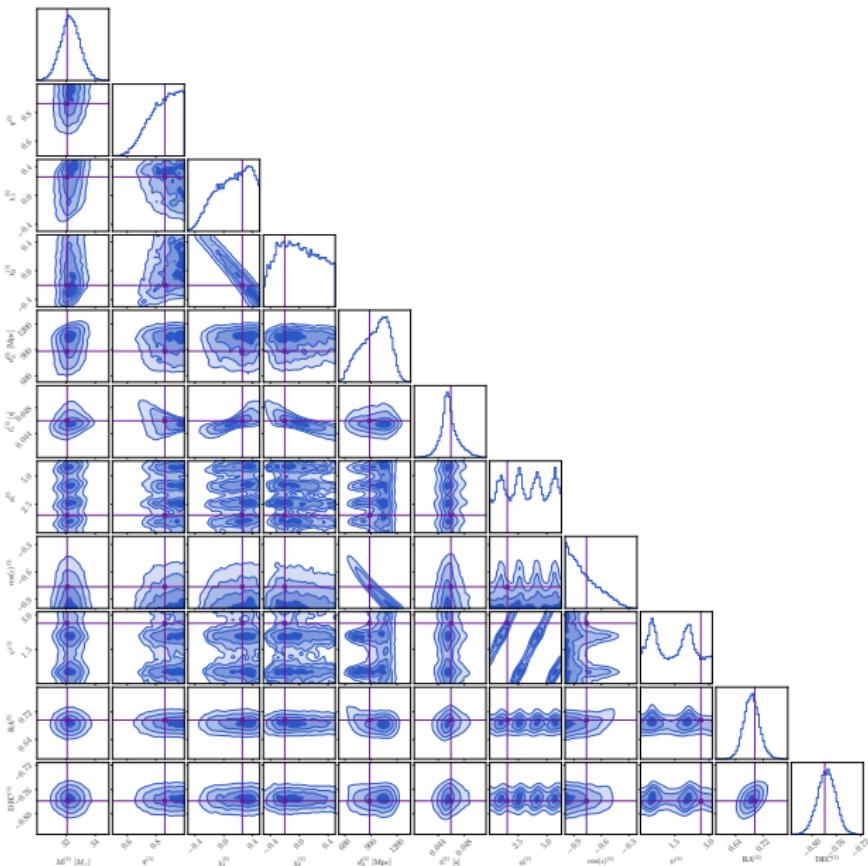


Figure 1: Corner plots for the 4-dimensional posterior samples from (a) BILBY and (b) JIM used for inference (solid red) alongside the concentrated flow at $T = 0.8$ used in the learned harmonic mean (dashed blue).

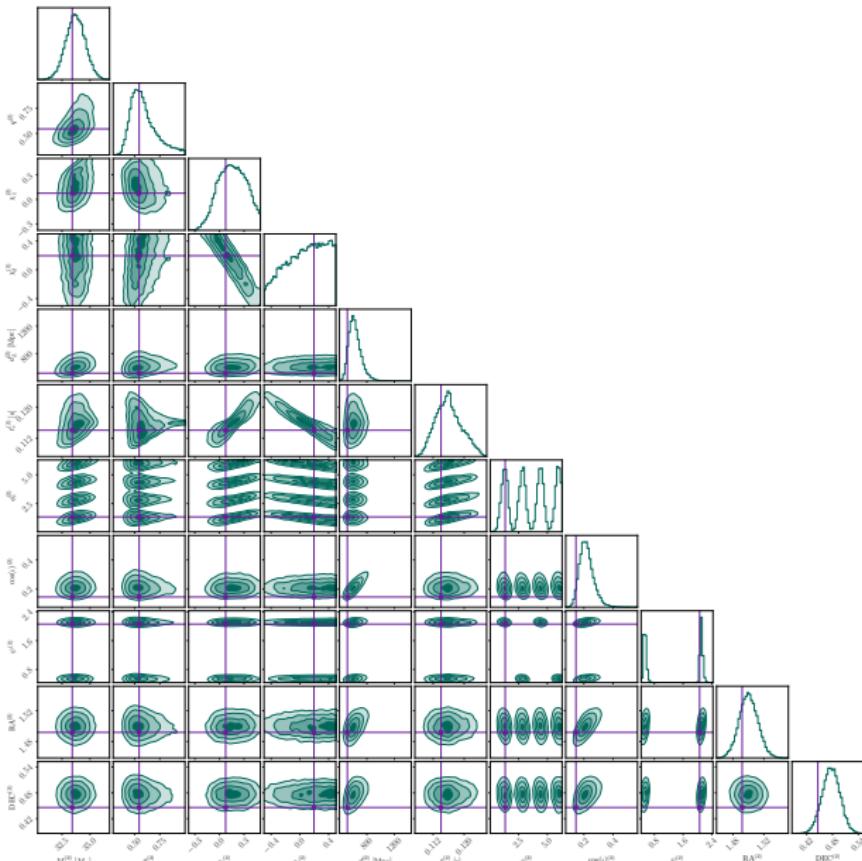
BNS in ET- Δ example: all parameters



Overlapping signals: all parameters signal A

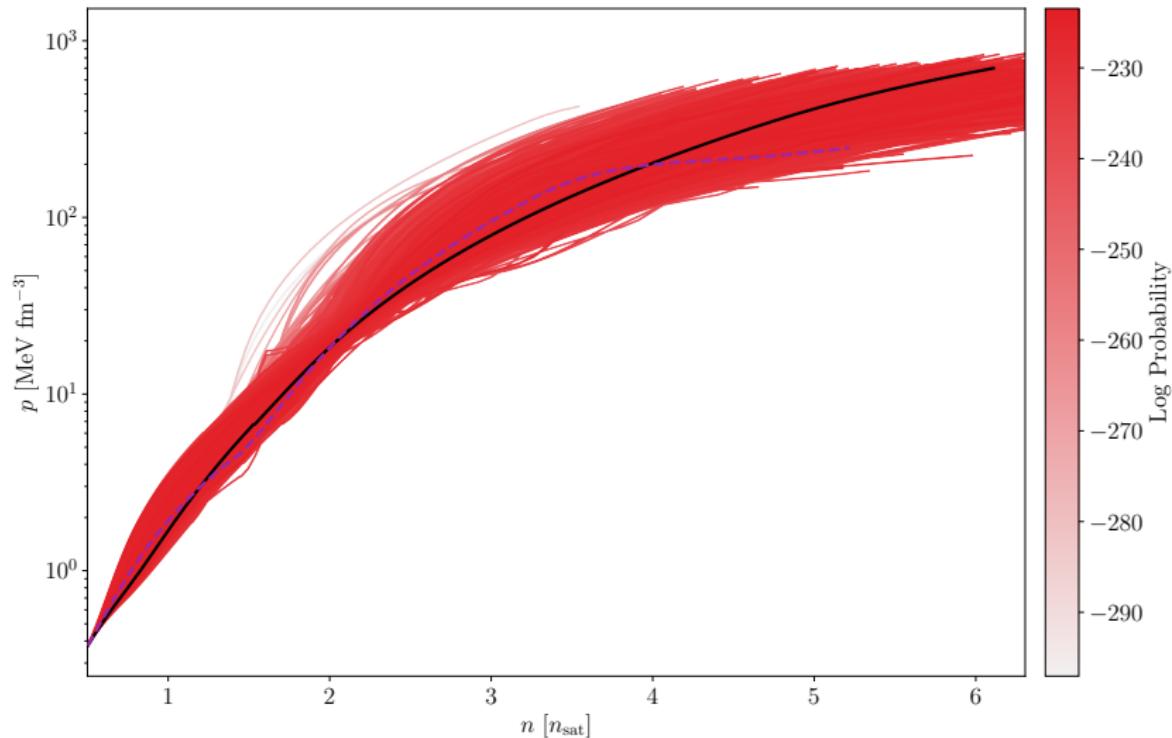


Overlapping signals: all parameters signal B



Equation of state O5 projection with 20 BNS: EOS

- **Purple:** target
- **Red:** posterior EOS samples (**black:** maximum log posterior)



Equation of state O5 projection with 20 BNS: NS

