

# THE FRB 121102 CAMPAIGN: A MULTI-TELESCOPE BURST DETECTION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FRB POPULATION

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## ABSTRACT

We present results of the coordinated observing campaign that made the first arcsecond localization of a Fast Radio Burst, FRB 121102. Of the nine bursts detected by the Very Large Array at 3 GHz, three had simultaneous observing coverage at other observatories, of which one was detected by the Arecibo Observatory at 1.4 GHz. We use multi-observatory detection and constraints with modeling of bursts only seen at 3 GHz to confirm earlier results showing that burst spectra are not well characterized by a power law. We characterize burst spectra with a  $\sim 500$  MHz envelope and apparent radio energy as high as  $10^{40}$  erg. The dispersion measure apparently changes significantly between bursts, which suggests that bursts have spectral structure that randomly biases the estimate of DM by as much as  $5 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$ . We use FRB 121102 as a prototype of the FRB class to estimate a volumetric birth rate of FRB sources  $R_{\text{FRB}} \approx 5 \times 10^{-5} \text{ Mpc}^{-3} \text{ yr}^{-1}$  for the cosmic volume out to redshift of 1. This rate is broadly consistent with models of FRBs from young magnetars or pulsars, if the typical FRB repeats on the order of  $10^3$  times in its life.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Fast Radio Bursts (FRBs) were discovered ten years ago with the detection of a millisecond-duration radio transient with an anomalously high dispersion measure (Lorimer et al. 2007). There are now 21 FRBs publicly known<sup>1</sup> with dispersion measures (DMs) as high as  $1600 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$  and intrinsic temporal widths of order 2 ms. The large measured DM implied that FRBs originated outside of our Galaxy, potentially at cosmological distances, and were orders of magnitude more luminous than any other millisecond radio transient (Thornton et al. 2013). Both their energetics and distance have inspired a wide variety of models and astrophysical applications (e.g., McQuinn 2014; Kulkarni et al. 2014; Fuller & Ott 2015; Connor et al. 2016b; Cordes & Wasserman 2016; Popov & Pshirkov 2016). However, that potential was limited by the lack of a definitive association of an FRB to an extragalactic host.

This paper is part of a series based on the first localization of an FRB and its unambiguous association to an extragalactic host (Chatterjee et al. 2017; Tendulkar et al. 2017; Marcote et al. 2017). FRB 121102, also known as the “repeating FRB”, was first detected in November 2012 by the Arecibo Observatory (Spitler et al. 2014). In mid 2015, new Arecibo observations revealed a series of bursts at the same DM ( $\sim 559 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$ ) and sky position that rules out cataclysmic models for this source (Spitler et al. 2016). Beginning in August of 2015 (MJD 57623), we made the first of nine detections of FRB 121102 with the Karl G. Jansky Very Large Array (VLA; Chatterjee et al. 2017) and localized it with a precision of  $0.1''$ . Deep optical observing with the Gemini Observatory associated the FRB with a host galaxy at  $z = 0.193$  (Tendulkar et al. 2017) and the European VLBI Network detected four more bursts to localize the source with a precision of  $0.01''$  (Marcote et al. 2017,  $\sim 40 \text{ pc}$ ).

FRB 121102 has now been localized four orders of magnitude better than any other FRB and placed at a cosmological distance. Its lookback and luminosity distances are 746 and 972 Mpc, assuming a concordance cosmology with parameters given by Planck Collaboration et al. (2016). This association means that FRB 121102 is orders of magnitude more luminous than any other millisecond transient and that its DM traces both the host and intergalactic medium (Tendulkar et al. 2017). If FRB 121102 is representative of all FRBs, then we should expect them to be useful as probes of the intergalactic medium and their host galaxies. Thus, the

confirmation of a cosmological distance for FRB 121102 has begun to fulfil the promise implied by the first FRB detection.

Several new models of FRB origin have been developed in response to the localization of FRB 121102 (Kashiyama & Murase 2017; Metzger et al. 2017; Zhang 2017; Dokuchaev & Eroshenko 2017; Beloborodov 2017; Thompson 2017). The association of FRB 121102 with a compact, persistent radio source is consistent with bursts coming from a young magnetar that powers a luminous pulsar wind nebula (Kashiyama & Murase 2017). At the same time, FRB 121102 is found in a low-metallicity dwarf galaxy (Tendulkar et al. 2017; Metzger et al. 2017), which is not a prediction of models that scale with stellar mass or star formation (Nicholl et al. 2017). These galaxies are the preferred environment for long GRBs and Type-I superluminous supernovae (LGRB and SLSN-I, respectively), which have been suggested are signatures of the magnetar birth (Modjaz et al. 2008; Lunnan et al. 2014).

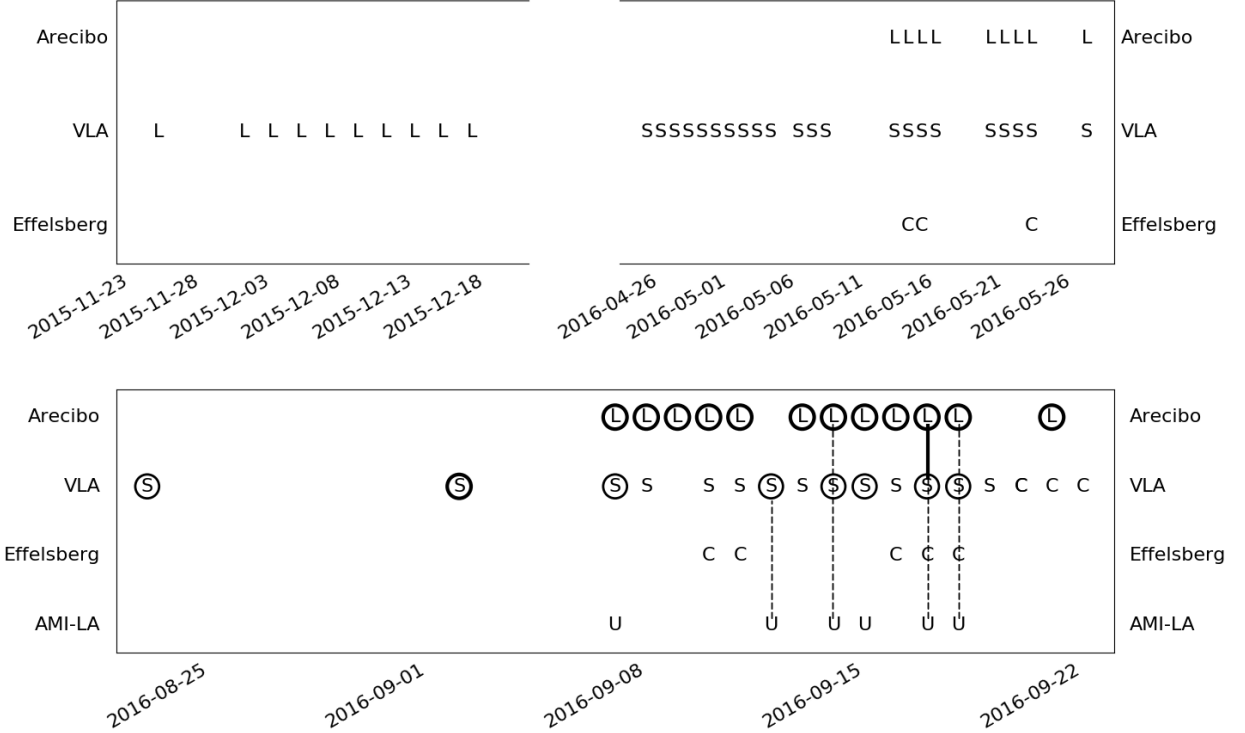
If we assume that FRB 121102 is representative of all FRBs, we use it to constrain the physical processes at play in the overall FRB population. More data is needed to determine if bursts trace intrinsic processes, such as coherent, pulsar-like emission (Katz 2014; Luan & Goldreich 2014; Cordes & Wasserman 2016) or if extrinsic effects also play a role (Macquart & Johnston 2015; Cordes et al. 2017). The paper presents an analysis of the spectral properties of VLA bursts implied by simultaneous observing at Effelsberg, GBT, AMI-LA, and Arecibo, including the first simultaneous detection of an FRB at two observatories. The repetition of FRB 121102 also has strong implications for calculations of their rate of occurrence (Connor et al. 2016a) and comparison to other classes of transient, such as superluminous supernovae (Tendulkar et al. 2017).

In Section 2, we describe the multi-telescope observing campaign and a refined analysis of the nine VLA bursts. Section 3 presents the first spectrum of an FRB simultaneously detected at multiple telescopes and show that burst spectra cannot be modeled with a single spectral index. We then model the dynamic spectra to characterize the burst spectra, energies, and dispersion properties. Section 4 discusses the properties of FRB 121102 bursts and its impact on inferences about the birth rate of FRB sources and strategies to find and/or localize new FRBs.

## 2. OBSERVATIONS

The data presented here were obtained from multiple programs and telescopes with a goal of interferometrically localizing FRB 121102 with the VLA. We

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.astronomy.swin.edu.au/pulsar/frbcat>.



**Figure 1.** The top and bottom panels summarize the observations and detections of FRB 121102 in the 2015 and 2016 campaigns. Circles highlight observations that detected bursts from FRB 121102 with multiple burst detections indicated with a heavy line. The black dashed lines show the VLA burst detections with simultaneous coverage at other telescopes and the solid line shows the simultaneous burst detection. Circled observations with no line indicate observations on the same day that did not overlap. Symbols show days with observations with letters L, S, C, U referring to radio frequencies of 1.4, 3, 4.5, and 12 GHz, respectively.

coordinated observing between the VLA, Arecibo, Effelsberg, and AMI-LA telescopes, as shown in Figure 1. Below, we summarize these observations, with a focus on those conducted simultaneously with VLA burst detections from FRB 121102.

Computational (Jupyter) notebooks to reproduce the transient detection, localization, and analysis presented here can be found at <https://github.com/caseyjlaw/FRB121102>. Time cut-out visibility data and calibration products are available at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/TLCKXG>. Original VLA visibility data are available under NRAO program codes 16A-459 and 16A-496 and can be downloaded at <http://archive.nrao.edu>.

### 2.1. VLA

The FRB 121102 observing campaign started in November 2015 with a 10 hr campaign ( $\sim 1$  hr per session) observed at 1.4 GHz in the compact D configuration. In April through May 2016, we conducted a 40 hr campaign ( $\sim 2$  hr per session) at 3 GHz in the C and CnB configurations in coordination with Arecibo (Scholz et al. 2016). We concluded with a 40 hr, co-

ordinated campaign ( $\sim 2$  hr per session) from August through September 2016 in the B configuration and during the move to the most extended A configuration. In the late-2016 campaign, the first 34 hours of VLA observations were made at 3 GHz, while the last 6 hours were observed at 6 GHz.

All VLA fast-sampled data were observed with 5 ms sampling, 256 channels, and dual-circular polarization (Law et al. 2015). The channel frequency width was set to maximize sensitivity to the known DM of FRB 121102 with the largest total bandwidth. The total bandwidth at L (1.4 GHz), S (3 GHz), and C (6 GHz) bands was 256 MHz, 1024 MHz, and 2048 MHz, respectively. The 3 GHz data were recorded data in eight spectral windows with 32 channels each and had sensitivity of 5 mJy in 5 ms ( $1\sigma$ ).

Observations in August and September were searched by a prototype version of *realfast*<sup>2</sup>. *realfast* is a real-time, fast imaging transient search system. The current

<sup>2</sup> See <http://realfast.io>.

prototype runs on CPU-based hardware that is normally dedicated to the VLA correlator; for this experiment, it runs the transient search pipeline software called *rt-pipe*<sup>3</sup>. Images were formed for each integration with DMs of 0, 546, 556.9, 560, and 565 pc cm<sup>-3</sup> and a time resampling grid of 5, 10, 20, 40, and 80 ms. This DM grid was chosen to maintain 90% sensitivity to the nominal DM range of 540–570 pc cm<sup>-3</sup>, which includes the known FRB 121102 DM of 559 pc cm<sup>-3</sup> (Scholz et al. 2016). Gain calibration was made from observations of J0555+3948 by an automated system (telcal), which uses phase-only calibration. A flux scale was calculated for each spectral window from an observation of 3C48 and applied to all burst spectra.

Burst detections and localizations were made within hours of data being recorded. The transient search starts when data are recorded and proceeds slower than real-time, so we refer to it as “quasi real-time”. For each trial DM, integration, and time scale, we form an image and calculate the S/N ratio for the peak pixel in the dirty image. We empirically identified S/N thresholds of 6.4 and 7.4 as useful to capture data quality statistics and candidates for inspection, respectively. The higher threshold is relatively unlikely to be triggered by thermal noise in this configuration, so *realfast* generates a more detailed (and computationally intensive) candidate visualization that includes an image and spectrum. All visibilities are recorded so detailed analysis, including improved calibration and localization, can be conducted offline.

## 2.2. Arecibo

During the late-2016 campaign, Arecibo observed with the L-wide receiver using the PUPPI pulsar backend. The observational frequency range was 1.15 to 1.73 GHz and frequency resolution was 1.5625 MHz, which has a typical sensitivity of 2 mJy in 2 ms (1 $\sigma$ ). We recorded total full Stokes polarization intensity spectra with a time resolution of 10.24  $\mu$ s. Each frequency channel was coherently dedispersed to 557 pc cm<sup>-3</sup>, thereby eliminating intra-channel dispersion smearing. The full width at half maximum (FWHM) beam size at band center is 3.3’.

In total, 11 Arecibo observations had some simultaneous coverage with the VLA. All of these observations were conducted while pointing at the location of FRB 121102 measured by the VLA. Three of those observations had simultaneous coverage of VLA bursts and one of those Arecibo observations detected the VLA

burst. Overall, there were many more bursts detected at Arecibo than with the VLA, including some Arecibo bursts with simultaneous VLA upper limits. A more detailed analysis of those bursts will be presented elsewhere (Michilli et al, in prep).

## 2.3. Effelsberg

Effelsberg observations were conducted with the S60mm receiver at an observing frequency of 4.6 to 5.1 GHz. Total intensity spectra were recorded by the PFFTS backend in pulsar search mode with a time resolution of 65.5  $\mu$ s and 128 frequency channels. The receiver has a system equivalent flux density is 18 Jy and a FWHM beam size of 2.4’ at 4.85 GHz.

Five Effelsberg observations were made pointing at the known location of FRB 121102 and had some simultaneous coverage with the VLA; two observations were simultaneous with VLA bursts. Unfortunately, due to a configuration error, a 100 MHz bandwidth filter centered at 4.85 GHz was in place for both of these sessions. The sensitivity was about 28 mJy in 2 ms (1 $\sigma$ ), which is two times worse than the nominal value. No burst was detected in either observation.

## 2.4. AMI-LA

We observed FRB 121102 with the Arcminute MicroKelvin Imager Large Array (AMI-LA; Zwart et al. 2008) for 3 hours each on four epochs starting at MJDs 57638, 57643, 57645, 57646, 57648, and 57649. Observations were made with the new digital correlator having 4096 channels across a 5 GHz bandwidth between 13–18 GHz with a 1 s integration time. The phase calibrator, J0518+3306, was observed every 12 minutes for about 1.5 minutes. The AMI-LA data were binned to eight 0.625 GHz channels and processed (RFI excision and calibration) with a fully-automated pipeline, AMI-REDUCE (e.g., Perrott et al. 2013). Daily measurements of 3C48 and 3C286 were used for the absolute flux calibration, which is good to about 10%.

We inspected the calibrated visibilities, and did not find any signal above 30 mJy in the 1s samples at and in the vicinity of the detected bursts. This corresponds to a sensitivity of 15 Jy for an assumed pulse width of 2 ms. Concatenating and imaging the 12 hours of calibrated data with the CASA tasks *concat* and *clean* also does not yield any significant detection at the FRB location. Although the statistical 3 $\sigma$  upper limit is 60  $\mu$ Jy, extended mJy-level sources in the field cause side-lobe confusion (the AMI-LA angular resolution is  $\sim$ 30’’), and the actual upper limit is larger. We introduced artificial point sources at the FRB location using the CASA *sm* tool, and found that these sources can be recovered at 3 $\sigma$  as long as their peak flux densities are

<sup>3</sup> See <https://github.com/caseyjlaw/rtpipe> and Law et al. (2015).

more than  $\sim 100\mu\text{Jy}$ . Hence, we place an upper limit of  $100 \pm 10\mu\text{Jy}$  on any quiescent or possible radio flaring on  $\sim\text{days}$  timescales from the FRB. This limit is similar to the flux density measured by the VLA at 12 GHz for the persistent source (Chatterjee et al. 2017).

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. Multi-Observatory Burst Spectrum

Four of the VLA bursts were observed simultaneously with either Arecibo, Effelsberg, or AMI-LA, and two were observed simultaneously with all four observatories (Figure 1). Of these bursts, only one VLA burst (on 17 Sep 2016) was simultaneously detected by another observatory (Arecibo).

Figure 2 shows a dynamic spectrum for this burst with both VLA and Arecibo data. The temporal resolution of the VLA data (5 ms) is much coarser than that of Arecibo, so data were resampled to the Arecibo temporal grid after correcting for barycentric and dispersion measure offsets. We assumed a DM of  $560.5 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$  (Hessels et al., in prep) to calculate a dispersion delay of 189 and 734 ms from the top of the VLA and Arecibo bands, respectively. We used PRESTO (Ransom 2001) to calculate a barycentric time offset of 3.8 ms between the VLA and Arecibo data.

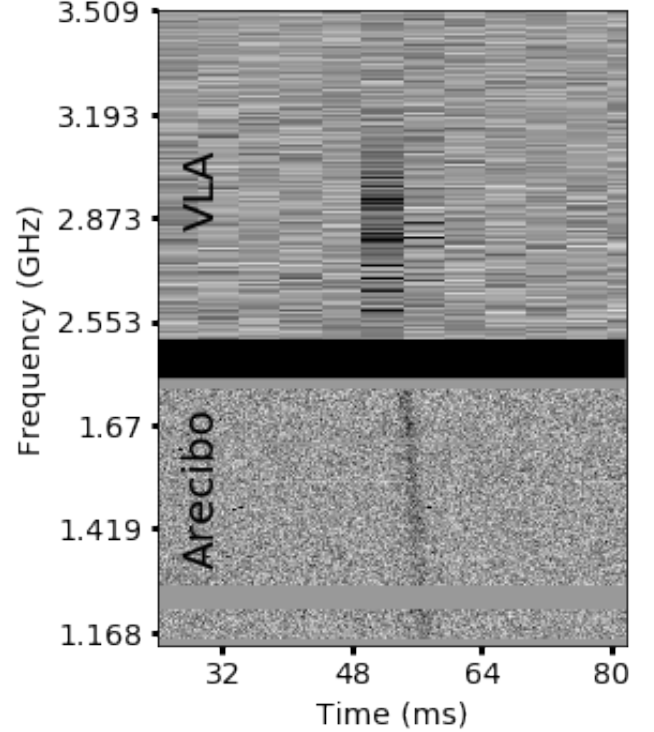
The regridded dynamic spectrum has an apparent DM error that is evident both as a frequency-dependent time drift within the Arecibo observation and as an offset between the Arecibo and VLA bursts. Both of these drifts are consistent with an apparent DM of  $\sim 565 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$ . More refined modeling of the VLA dynamic spectrum alone (§3.2.1 and Table 1) are consistent with this higher DM value.

\*\*integrated flux is assuming 5 ms width!\*\*

\*\*confirm arecibo integrated flux and sensitivity\*\*

Figure 3 shows spectra built from integrated flux densities measured (or limited) during three burst with multi-telescope observing coverage. The burst on 17 Sep 2016 was detected with VLA and Arecibo with significances of  $25\sigma$  and  $39\sigma$  with integrated flux densities of 111 mJy and 14 mJy at 3 and 1.4 GHz, respectively. The VLA integration time of 5 ms underresolves the pulse and the true integrated flux density would be 280 mJy for an assumed pulse width of 2 ms. Assuming a power law flux density model ( $S_\nu \propto \nu^\alpha$ ), we find a spectral index  $\alpha = 2.7$ . This is inconsistent with the spectral index limit implied by the Effelsberg nondetection at 4.5 GHz ( $\alpha < 0.6$  for a 2 ms burst and  $5\sigma$  limit).

Overall, the bursts with simultaneous observing coverage are not consistent with a power law model for the burst spectra. Two Arecibo nondetections and two Effelsberg nondetections of VLA bursts place mutually in-



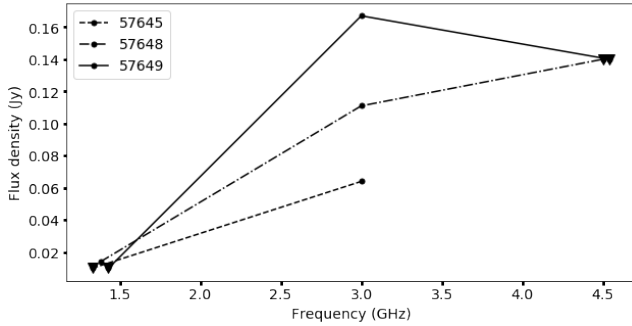
**Figure 2.** Composite dynamic spectrum for the burst from FRB 121102 on MJD 57648 with data from the VLA and Arecibo observatories. Both data sets have been barycentered and corrected for an assumed dispersion measure of  $560.5 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$ . The thick black line separates data from the VLA (2.5 to 3.5 GHz) and Arecibo (1.1 to 1.8 GHz) and flagged data is grey. The amplitude scale is normalized by assuming the Arecibo to VLA gain ratio is 10.

consistent lower and upper limits on the spectral index. The Arecibo upper limits at 1.4 GHz imply that burst spectral indices  $\alpha_{1.4/3} > +3.7$ , while at Effelsberg the flux limits require  $\alpha_{3/4.5} < -0.4$ . The strictest limits on  $\alpha_{1.4/3}$  and  $\alpha_{3/4.5}$  are both derived from the burst on 18 Sep 2016, which shows that a power law model is inappropriate even for a single burst.

#### 3.2. VLA Bursts

##### 3.2.1. Spectral Modeling

This paper refines the analysis of the nine VLA radio burst spectra described in Chatterjee et al. (2017) in a few ways. We use a better calibration scheme and have optimized the detection significance over a fine grid of DM ( $\Delta\text{DM} = 1 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$ ). After calibration and flagging, the visibility phases were rotated to the best-fit location (RA, Dec = 05h31m58.70s, +33d08m52.5s; Chatterjee et al. 2017) to extract a Stokes I spectrum that maximizes the image S/N for each burst.



**Figure 3.** Broadband spectra for three bursts of FRB 121102 with simultaneous multi-telescope observing coverage. Measurements are shown with dots and upper limits with triangles. Upper limits assume a pulse width of 2 ms and a  $5\sigma$  detection threshold. Overlapping points are offset by a few tens of MHz in frequency for visualization.

Table 1 summarizes the properties of all nine VLA bursts. Parameters such as integrated flux density, S/N, and Stokes V were measured from the burst properties integrated in frequency. Stokes V values estimated from the dual-circular feeds as  $(RR - LL)/(RR + LL) \approx 3\%$ , which is comparable to the systematic error induced by the primary beam<sup>4</sup>. Given that systematic effects dominate the apparent circular polarization, this observation limits the fractional circular polarization is less than 3%.

Figure 4 shows that the Stokes I spectra are generally characterized by a broad, Gaussian shape with inter-channel modulation as high as 100%. Diffractive scintillation from the Milky Way has a typical bandwidth of 7 MHz along this line of sight (Cordes & Lazio 2002), which is similar to the channel size of 4 MHz. The burst energy is calculated from the flux density in 5 ms and integrating over the optimal Gaussian spectral model.

To better understand the spectra, we used a Markov chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) method to model the dynamic radio spectra (time versus frequency). We used the Goodman and Weare affine invariant sampler (Goodman & Weare 2010) as implemented in *emcee* (Foreman-Mackey et al. 2013). The dynamic spectra were modeled with a broad Gaussian envelope (amplitude, center, width), a time delay according to the  $\nu^2$  dispersion law, and a square pulse of temporal width. We use a log likelihood function  $\ln \mathcal{L} = (-1/2) \sum_i (S_i - S_{i,\text{model}})^2 / \sigma_s^2$ , where  $S_i$  refers to the measured and modeled flux density in a single pixel of the dynamic spectrum and  $\sigma_s \approx 70 \mu\text{Jy}$  is the measured off-burst noise per 5 ms integration and 4 MHz

channel. A flat prior was used over all ranges with valid data with the requirement that the integrated signal must have a detection significance higher than  $8\sigma$ . The 6-dimensional models were sampled with 100 chains taking 700 steps; we ignored the first 200 steps to properly sample the posterior distributions.

**\*\*discuss goodness of fit\*\*** ... The inter-channel modulation was ignored in the model...

The parameters for the best model of the dynamic spectrum are given in Table 1 and the resulting Gaussian model overlaid on Figure 4. The typical burst has a spectral width FWHM of 500 MHz. All but two of the best-fit Gaussians are centered inside the 3 GHz band and some appear contained by the 1 GHz wide band. This is consistent with previous detections of FRB 121102 by Arecibo, which showed quasi-broadband structure (Scholz et al. 2016) and large variation in the implied spectral index (Spitler et al. 2014).

This analysis differs from traditional analysis in that it simultaneously models the spectral and temporal evolution of the burst. A typical FRB 121102 burst takes  $\sim 180$  ms or 36 integrations to cross the observing band from 2.5 to 3.5 GHz. The effect of a finite pulse width is visible as the burst moves from one integration to the next, even for widths narrower than the integration time of 5 ms. Table 1 shows that the typical burst width is measured as  $2 \pm 1$  ms (95% confidence interval); the inter-channel dispersion smearing ranges from 0.4 to 1.1 ms across this band. The brightest burst (57633.68) is modeled with a temporal width of  $2.05 \pm 0.02$  ms and its burst arrival time is measured with a precision of  $\sim 50 \mu\text{s}$ . Note that these errors are only accurate to the degree that the model represents the data. One potential bias in the model is that we do not model scintillation effects.

While most bursts are modeled with well-defined parameter probability distributions, one burst is an outlier. Figure 5 shows the scatter plot matrix (Foreman-Mackey 2016) for the MCMC run on burst 57646. Two clusters of samples are identified for this burst: one narrow, low-DM and one wide, high-DM. Assuming that the model is appropriate, this implies that the burst can be decomposed into two subbursts.

### 3.2.2. Dispersion

The initial VLA detections were made with a matched-filter approach that allowed inter-DM sensitivity losses up to roughly 10% ( $\Delta\text{DM} = 10 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$  Cordes & McLaughlin 2003). The MCMC modeling is more sophisticated in that it considers a wider range of parameters and models both data and observing effects (frequency-time pixel boundaries) simultaneously.

<sup>4</sup> See EVLA memo #195 at [https://library.nrao.edu/public/memos/evla/EVLAM\\_195.pdf](https://library.nrao.edu/public/memos/evla/EVLAM_195.pdf).

**Table 1.** Properties of Bursts from FRB 121102

Time		Observed properties			Modeled properties					
Calendar day (2016)	Burst time (MJD)	S/N (image)	$S_{1.5 \text{ ms}}$ (mJy)	$S_V$ (mJy)	DM ( $\text{pc cm}^{-3}$ )	dt (ms)	$S_{1,\text{peak}}$ (mJy)	Center (GHz)	FWHM (MHz)	$E_{\text{int}}$ ( $10^{38} \text{ erg}$ )
23 Aug	57623.74402686	38	194	+3	$567 \pm 2$	$2.0 \pm 0.2$	690	2.8	290	11
2 Sep	57633.67986367	179	1500	-35	$568.2 \pm 0.2$	$2.05 \pm 0.02$	3340	3.2	510	98
2 Sep <sup>c</sup>	57633.69515938	15	69	+2	$562^{+4}_{-6}$	$2.5^{+0.9}_{-0.6}$	>430	<2.5	<290	7
7 Sep	57638.49937435	12	55	+5	$567^{+7}_{-9}$	$1.3^{+1.4}_{-0.8}$	130	3.1	420	3
12 Sep <sup>a</sup>	57643.45730263	100	508	-5	$565.6^{+0.6}_{-0.5}$	$1.9 \pm 0.1$	1170	2.8	510	34
14 Sep <sup>a</sup>	57645.42958602	13	64	+3	$563^{+5}_{-4}$	$1.1 \pm 0.7$	170	2.8	380	4
15 Sep <sup>c</sup>	57646.46600650	20	87	+1	$569 \pm 5$	$2.5^{+0.9}_{-1.4}$	>420	<2.5	<430	10
17 Sep <sup>a,b</sup>	57648.43691490	25	111	+9	$564 \pm 2$	$1.4^{+0.3}_{-0.4}$	260	2.8	470	7
18 Sep <sup>a</sup>	57649.45175697	36	167	+1	$567 \pm 2$	$2.1 \pm 0.5$	290	3.0	690	12

<sup>a</sup>Simultaneously observed by either Arecibo, Effelsberg, or AMI-LA.

<sup>b</sup>Detected simultaneously with Arecibo.

<sup>c</sup>Best-fit Gaussian is not centered in 3 GHz band, so spectral parameters are limits.

The top panel of Figure 6 shows the 68% confidence intervals on the DM for all nine VLA bursts as a function of burst time. The burst DMs are not consistent with any single value and tend to be larger than the long-term average of  $560.5 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$ . The range and variance in DM observed by the VLA is similar to that reported for Arecibo observations of FRB 121102 in Scholz et al. (2016). As noted before, this is consistent with the idea that the DM measured at low temporal resolution (e.g., by the VLA or by single-dish observatories without coherent dedispersion) is determined by extrinsic (an electron column) dispersion and some spectrottemporal structure that changes between bursts. The VLA data demonstrate that the burst-dependent DM effect is visible at frequencies near 3 GHz. Assuming a “true” DM of  $560.5 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$ , the excess DM can be interpreted as a frequency-dependent delay that varies between bursts with a delay rate up to  $2 \text{ ms GHz}^{-1}$  or an effective DM of  $\sim 5 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$ .

The bottom panel of Figure 6 compares the DM to the modeled temporal width of the bursts. There is a weak correlation between burst width and apparent DM. A change in width of  $\sim 1 \text{ ms}$  correlates with a change in apparent DM of approximately  $5 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$ .

### 3.3. Temporal Statistics

The burst rate for FRB 121102 varied dramatically throughout the 2016 observing campaign (Figure 1). In the early-2016 campaign, we observed for 30 hours at S-band and no bursts were detected. In the late-2016 observing campaign, we observed for 27 hours at S-band and detected nine bursts. Overall, the data quality is

uniform and high, so the inhomogeneous burst distribution shows that the burst detection probability was not stationary.

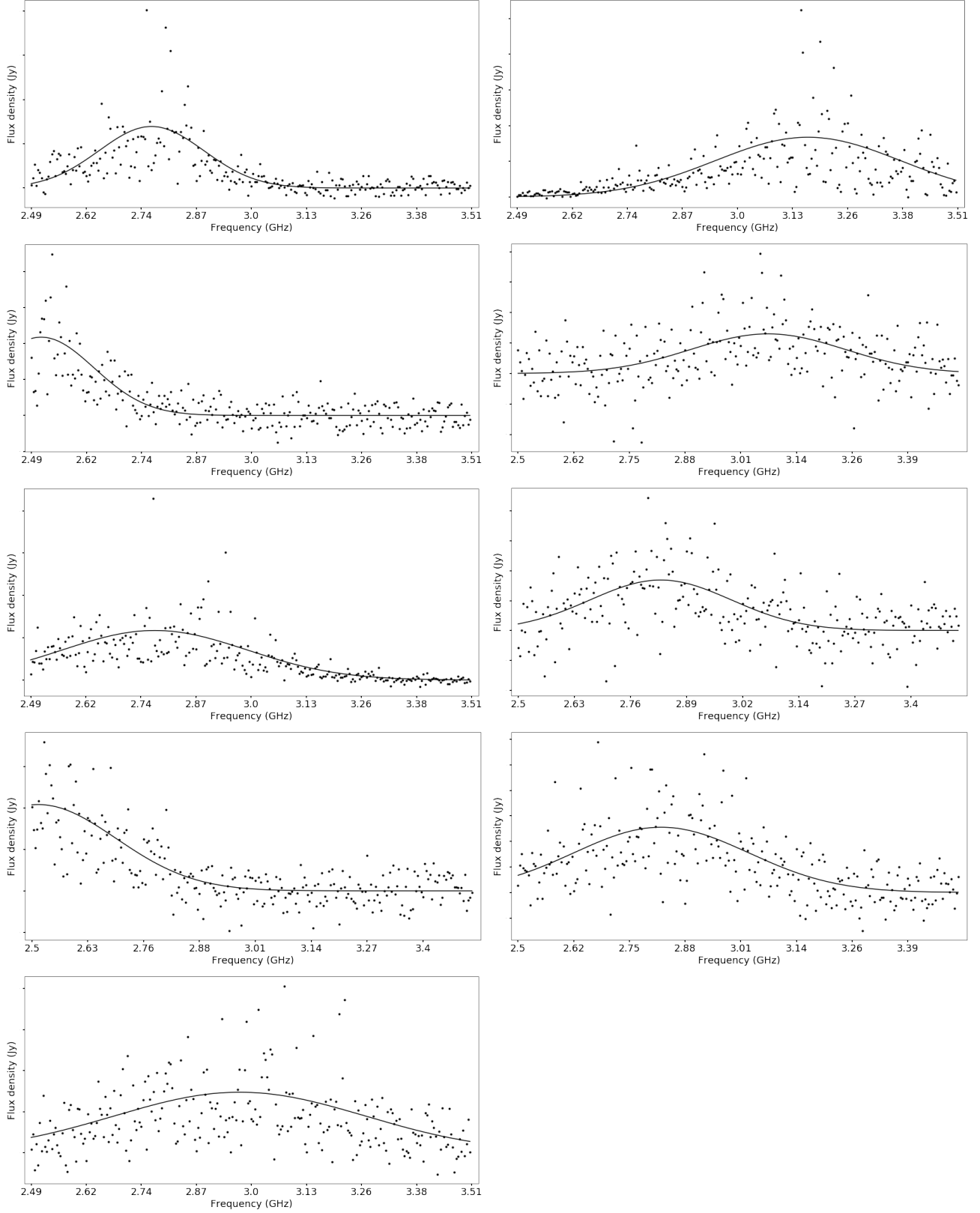
Assuming that the burst detection probability follows a Poisson distribution, the mean VLA burst rate is  $R = 0.16 \pm 0.05 \text{ hr}^{-1}$  above a fluence of  $0.2 \text{ Jy ms}$ . The nondetection in the first half of S-band limits the FRB rate to  $R < 0.1 \text{ hour}^{-1}$  (95% confidence limit). The S-band burst rate was much higher during the late-2016 campaign,  $R = 0.3 \pm 0.1 \text{ hour}^{-1}$ .

### 3.4. Energy and Brightness Distribution

Knowing the source distance, we calculate the burst energy by integrating flux in time and frequency (Table 1). Some VLA burst spectra seem to be contained by the 2.5 to 3.5 GHz band and most of them seem to have Gaussian envelopes that are well modeled by the emission within that band. Assuming that the Gaussian shape defines the emission window, the mean S-band flux density can be converted to a total energy with no further assumptions about their spectral properties.

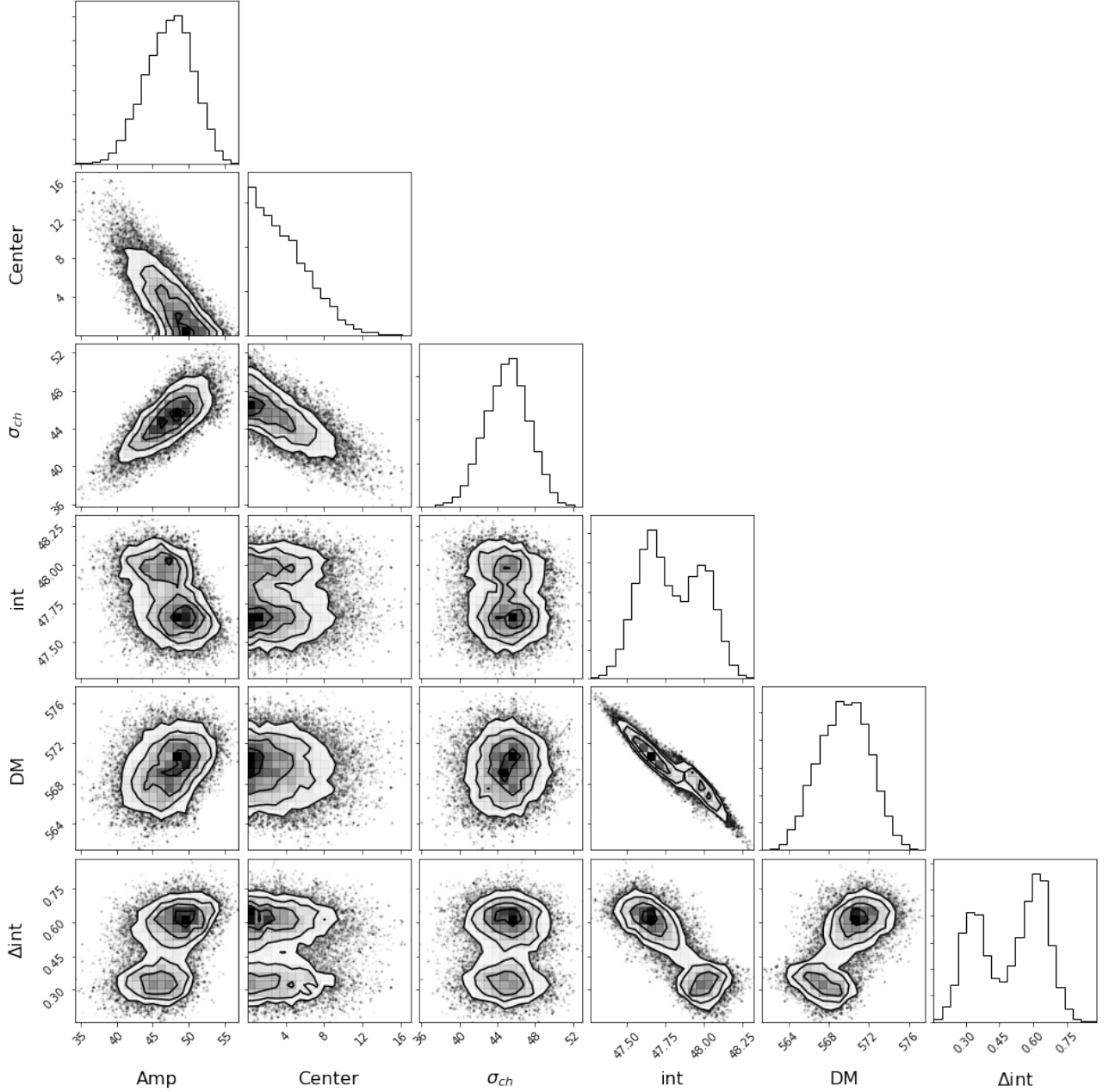
Figure 7 shows the FRB 121102 burst energy cumulative distribution as seen by the VLA and calculated from prior observations by Arecibo and the GBT (Spitler et al. 2016; Scholz et al. 2016). The latter two energy distributions are scaled from the fluence by assuming that all burst energy is included by the observation. This likely underestimates the burst energy for some bursts by a factor of a few, but should not affect the slope of the distribution.

Broadly, the range of energies shown in Figure 7 is defined by the sensitivity of the telescope and the duration



**Figure 4.** Spectra and best-fit model for nine bursts seen by the VLA from 2.5 to 3.5 GHz in the peak, dedispersed 5 ms integration. Starting at the top left (moving right and then down), they correspond to bursts on MJDs 57623, 57633.68, 57633.70, 57638, 57643, 57645, 57646, 57648, and 57649. The solid line is a best-fit Gaussian model found through modeling.



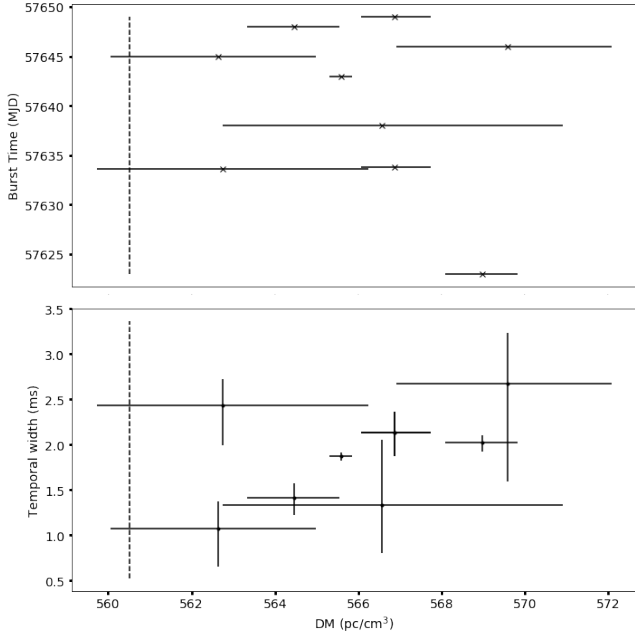


**Figure 5.** A scatterplot matrix that shows the correlation of every pair of parameters in the MCMC run for burst 57646. The equivalent plot for the other bursts show normally-distributed samples, but this burst shows significant structure in the samples. The parameters “Amp”, “Center”, and “ $\sigma_{ch}$ ” refer to the Gaussian spectral shape, while “DM”, “int”, and “ $\Delta int$ ” refer to the temporal shape. The parameters are given in units of channels (4 MHz) and integrations (5 ms).

of the observing campaign. The VLA distribution shown represents the 27-hour, late-2016 campaign, which is longer than the single-dish campaigns presented here. However, since the VLA observations have a relatively coarse time resolution, it is not as sensitive as Arecibo and the GBT, so no bursts were detected weaker than  $3 \times 10^{38}$  erg. The rate upper limit (95% confidence) from

the early-2016 VLA campaign shows that even identical observing campaigns have different detection rates.

We modeled the differential energy distribution,  $dN/d \log E$ , again using a Poisson detection probability with a rate function  $\lambda = AE^\alpha$ . Rather than trying to estimate a completeness limit for each energy distribution, we assume an effective detection limit of 0.9 times the weakest burst detected; the best-fit slope is weakly de-



**Figure 6.** (Top) Burst time versus DM for nine 3 GHz bursts detected by the VLA. The 68% confidence interval on DM is shown with a bar and the dashed line shows the best-fit  $DM = 560.5 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$  inferred for Arecibo observations at 1.4 GHz. (Bottom) Temporal width versus burst DM for the same nine VLA bursts.

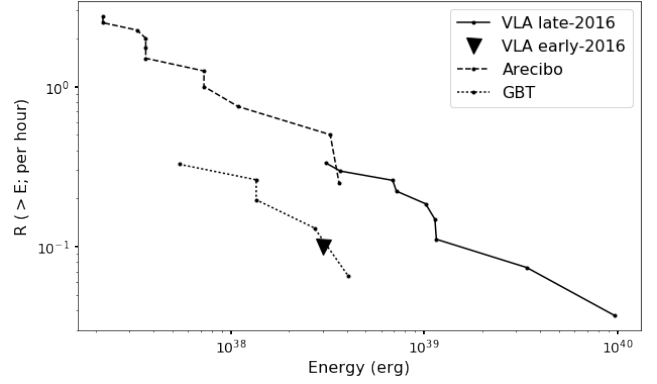
pendent on this, but general conclusions are robust. We directly sampled the likelihood distribution to estimate a best slope of  $\alpha_{\text{VLA}} = -0.7^{+0.3}_{-0.4}$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{Arecibo}} = -0.8^{+0.3}_{-0.5}$ , and  $\alpha_{\text{GBT}} = -0.8^{+0.4}_{-0.5}$  (68% confidence interval). Expressed as a power law function in  $dN/dE$ , the slope index is approximately  $-1.7$ .

## 4. DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Burst Spectra

We present the first simultaneous detection of an FRB with multiple telescopes and over frequencies from 1.2 to 3.5 GHz. The flux density of the Arecibo burst detected on MJD 57648 is an order of magnitude less than that seen by the VLA. At the same time, three other bursts from FRB 121102 had similar observing coverage but were not detected simultaneously. This is consistent with the spectral structure observed within the 3 GHz VLA band, which is typically limited to a Gaussian envelope with width of roughly 500 MHz. The center frequency of this envelope varies from burst to burst with no obvious pattern.

If FRB 121102 burst spectra are typical of the larger FRB population, then population models need to be generalized beyond the assumption of a spectral power law. Most obviously, FRB 121102 implies that future



**Figure 7.** The cumulative burst energy distributions for the VLA, Arecibo, and GBT are shown with dots connected by solid, dashed, and dotted lines, respectively. The Arecibo distribution is derived from the 11 1.4 GHz bursts reported in Spitler et al. (2016) and the GBT distribution is derived from the 5 1.4 GHz bursts reported in Scholz et al. (2016). An upper limit from the VLA nondetection in early 2016 is shown as a triangle.

multi-telescope searches for bursts are unlikely to simultaneously detect bursts in different bands. Second, since burst spectra have limited bands, the burst detection rate at one frequency may not represent that at another. That will require rate estimates for the FRB population to be made explicitly frequency-dependent. Finally, we note that the odds of detecting a burst will improve with bandwidth beyond the gain in sensitivity, since bandwidths wider than the FRB characteristic width can find otherwise undetectable bursts. However, this does require that FRB search algorithms search for bursts with a width equal to the characteristic width.

After correcting for barycentric and typical dispersion delays, the VLA/Arecibo burst spectrum shows a residual temporal drift. This drift can be interpreted as an excess DM of roughly  $5 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$ . We also measure a burst-to-burst variation in DM within the whole sample of VLA 3 GHz bursts of a similar scale. This variation had been noted in earlier 1.4 GHz Arecibo observations of FRB 121102 (Scholz et al. 2016), but the VLA bursts demonstrate that this burst-specific DM is seen up to 3 GHz. The simultaneous VLA/Arecibo burst also shows that this excess is evident in an individual burst at 1.2 to 3.5 GHz.

**\*\*How to use Hessels et al results on sub bursts and DM?\***

These features are generally consistent with intrinsic burst properties described in Hessels et al. (2017). That work uses bright, coherently-de-dispersed bursts to identify sub-bursts that preferentially drift to lower frequencies at later times. With high-resolution dynamic spec-

tra, one can define a heuristic that distinguishes between a burst-specific dispersion-like effect and a more stable (“true”) dispersion. Since the sub-bursts tend to drift to lower frequencies, they systematically bias DM measurements made with low-resolution data (like the VLA and earlier Arecibo and GBT observations). Interestingly, our modeling of the VLA burst dynamic spectra show a weak correlation between larger apparent DM and pulse width. This could be a signature of blending of many unresolved sub-bursts in a single VLA burst spectrum.

The burst-specific DM structure could be intrinsic to the emission mechanism or induced during propagation. Radio waves can be modified in a variety of ways (e.g., scintillation, scattering) and the duration of the emission in the source frame is not known (Cordes et al. 2016). Cordes et al. (2017) describe a model where plasma lensing near the source of an FRB can magnify radio emission by orders of magnitude. That model argues that the simultaneous appearance of a burst from 1.2 to 3.5 GHz requires a lens with the focal frequency be  $\gtrsim 3.5$  GHz. This gives a constraint on the combination

$$\frac{DM_0}{a_{AU}^2} \frac{d_{sl}d_{lo}/d_{so}}{1 \text{ kpc}} \gtrsim (3.5/39.1)^2$$

where  $DM_0$ ,  $a$ , and  $d_{sl,lo,so}$  are the electron column density of the lens, size of the lens, and lensing distances, respectively. A lens placed at  $d_{sl} \approx 1$  kpc is consistent with typical properties of the interstellar medium. Lenses that are influenced by the source would be much nearer to the source  $d \ll 1$  kpc, requiring large values of  $\frac{DM_0}{a_{AU}^2}$ .

#### 4.2. Energy Distribution

Our refined analysis shows that FRB 121102 has even higher isotropic energies than previously reported for FRB 121102, reaching energies  $E_{\text{max}} \approx 10^{40}$  erg. FRB 121102 has isotropic energies orders of magnitude higher than the strongest Crab giant pulses ( $\sim 10^{35}$  erg) and comparable brightness temperatures ( $T_{b,\text{Crab}} \sim 10^{41}$  K versus  $T_{b,\text{FRB121102}} \sim 10^{38}$  K; Hankins et al. 2003; Katz 2014).

In §3.4 we compare the energy distribution of the 9 VLA bursts to those reported earlier by Arecibo and the GBT. All three energy distributions can be characterized as a power law in  $dN/dE$  with slope  $\sim -1.7$ . This slope is seen even though the burst rate varies by almost an order of magnitude between observations and frequencies cover both 1.4 and 3 GHz bands. This suggests that the slope is related to the underlying physical process, rather than the burst detection rate at any given time. The value of the energy distribution slope is similar to that observed in magnetars (Göğüş et al.

2000; Scholz & Kaspi 2011). This similarity has been used to argue that bursts are driven by self-regulated critical phenomena (slope =  $-5/3$ ; Aschwanden 2011).

#### 4.3. Flux Distribution

While the surprising brightness of new FRB discoveries was once seen as a cause for concern (i.e., a sign of terrestrial interference), we may be able to use this to infer properties of the overall population (Lorimer et al. 2007; Ravi et al. 2016). When modeling the flux distribution as a power law, an isotropic distribution of sources will have a power law index,  $\alpha$ , of  $-1.5$  (the “Euclidean distribution”; CHIME Scientific Collaboration et al. 2017). Prior to the measurement of the first GRB redshift, deviations from the Euclidean distribution were used to infer their cosmological distribution (e.g., the  $V/V_{\text{max}}$  test; Mao & Paczynski 1992; Fenimore & Bloom 1995). Multiple studies have suggested that FRBs have a sub-Euclidean flux distribution ( $-0.5 < \alpha < -0.9$ ; Vedantham et al. 2016; Li et al. 2016; Lawrence et al. 2016). Others have noted that the flux distribution is not well modeled as a power law, such that  $\alpha$  is effectively sensitivity (and telescope) dependent (Oppermann et al. 2016; CHIME Scientific Collaboration et al. 2017).

We now know that FRB 121102 is detectable with the VLA out to  $z = 0.7$ , which suggests that cosmological effects are even more important for understanding properties of the FRB population. CHIME Scientific Collaboration et al. (2017) demonstrate how redshift space distortions, time dilation, and spectral index (“k-correction”) effects can flatten the flux distribution. To this complex scene, we add the fact that FRB 121102 burst spectra are not defined by a spectral index, which suggests that k-corrections are likely to be very difficult to calculate in practice. Rather than using wide band burst spectra to measure a single spectral index, we now must measure the burst rate as a function of frequency. These need to be measured at similar times to ensure they represent a similar state of the FRB.

\*\*how to include new result on freq-dependent burst rate?\*\*

If we assume FRB 121102 is representative of the FRB population, we can estimate this frequency-dependent burst rate. The VLA and Arecibo observed intensively in a coordinated fashion during the late-2016 campaign. A complete search for bursts from the Arecibo is ongoing, but early results suggest that the burst rate at a fixed energy is much higher at 1.4 GHz than at 3 GHz. This suggests that high-redshift FRBs will have an apparently lower rate that flattens the  $dN/dF$  distribution in a manner similar to a k-correction. We can only infer the presence of this effect for observations near 1.4 GHz,

since we have no estimate of the FRB 121102 burst rate outside the frequency range from 1.4 to 3 GHz in the observed frame. Propagation effects suggest that the rate will be lower at sub-GHz frequencies (Rajwade & Lorimer 2017; Chawla et al. 2017). If so, the tension between constraints on  $\alpha$  near 800 MHz and 1.4 GHz may be resolved by a frequency-dependent FRB rate that peaks near 1.4 GHz.

#### 4.4. Repetition

The chance of detecting a burst from FRB 121102 with the VLA changes substantially on day-month timescales. A major outstanding question is whether this time-variable rate is driven by an intrinsic process (Katz 2016) or extrinsic (propagation) effects in the host galaxy or intergalactic medium (Cordes et al. 2017). However, the temporal distribution of VLA detections alone shows that FRB 121102 burst rate is significantly correlated on short timescales. That is, detecting a burst predicts that you are more likely to find another burst soon thereafter and not detecting a burst predicts you will likely not detect another burst soon thereafter.

The burst time distribution is consistent with a “red spectrum” (Connor et al. 2016a), although the observations presented here are only sensitive to timescales of days (time between observations) and months (time between campaigns). As has been noted elsewhere, this statistical property would weaken previous constraints on repetition (Petroff et al. 2015; Law et al. 2015). If this statistical property describes other FRBs, then wide, shallow surveys are the preferred strategy for blind detection of FRBs. Also, since “bursts predict bursts”, many short observations are more likely to detect an FRB than a single long observation of the same total length and all new FRB detections should be immediately and intensively followed up.

#### 4.5. Volumetric Rate of FRB Sources

\*\*correct for time dilation?\*

Thornton et al. (2013) estimated an isotropic rate of FRB events of  $10^{-3}$  galaxy $^{-1}$  yr $^{-1}$  by calculating the number of Milky Way-type galaxies out to a distance implied by assuming all extragalactic DM originates in the IGM ( $z \approx 0.9$  for  $DM \approx z \times 900 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$ ; Ioka 2003; Inoue 2004). This rate is high (comparable to the rate of core-collapse supernovae; Diehl et al. 2006), which has been used to argue that FRBs are likely not associated with other classes of transient, such as LGRBs or rare subclasses of SNe (Woosley & Bloom 2006). However, since this rate depends on telescope sensitivity, it is not appropriate to compare to other estimates based on source counts.

Here, we reevaluate the FRB volumetric rate by assuming FRB 121102 is a prototype of the class and recasting it as a volumetric rate of FRB sources (i.e., a birth rate). The volumetric rate of FRB sources is  $R_{\text{FRB}} = R_p / (N_r \Omega_b V(z))$ , where  $R_p$  is the projected FRB rate,  $N_r$  is the number of bursts per source,  $\Omega_b$  is the beaming fraction, and  $V(z)$  is the comoving volume out to redshift  $z$ . The newest estimates of the projected FRB rate are lower by a factor of 5 ( $2 \times 10^3 \text{ sky}^{-1} \text{ day}^{-1}$  at high Galactic latitudes and flux densities brighter than 1 Jy ms; Lawrence et al. 2016; Champion et al. 2016; Rane et al. 2016). There is relatively little constraint on the beaming factor, but Galactic pulsars have values on the order of 10% (Tauris & Manchester 1998).

FRB 121102 has an absolute energy scale that can be used to convert the observation-dependent fluence limit into a FRB horizon scale. At the typical Parkes survey parameters (e.g., Champion et al. 2016), a survey with a fluence limit of 1 Jy ms can detect FRB 121102 at  $z \approx 1$ . The distance inferred from the largest DMs observed ( $\sim 1500 \text{ pc cm}^{-3}$ ; Champion et al. 2016) is somewhat higher, but that likely overestimates distance since DM is expected to have significant contributions from the host galaxy and intervening galaxies (Tendulkar et al. 2017; McQuinn 2014).

Using an assumed horizon redshift of 1, we estimate a rate of  $R_{\text{FRB}} \approx 5 \times 10^{-5} N_r^{-1} (0.1/\Omega_b) \text{ Mpc}^{-3} \text{ yr}^{-1}$ . This calculation ignores time dilation, which underestimates the burst rate by a factor of 2 at the redshift horizon. The narrow burst spectral structure seen for FRB 121102 also suggests that the FRB rate is understated by a factor of a few by ignoring bursts that fall outside the observing band. Finally, we note that this estimate assumes that propagation effects do not significantly affect the detectability of FRBs, although scintillation and scattering likely play significant roles (Macquart & Johnston 2015; Cordes et al. 2017).

Despite its many assumptions, this volumetric rate is more appropriate for comparison to rates used for other classes of transient. The LGRB and SLSN-I rates are  $10^{-7}$  and  $10^{-8} \text{ Mpc}^{-3} \text{ yr}^{-1}$ , respectively (Guetta & Della Valle 2007; Gal-Yam 2012). Comparing the FRB rate to these rates implies that FRB-emitting sources can be generated in LGRBs and SLSN-I if FRBs repeat  $5 \times 10^2$  and  $5 \times 10^3$  times, respectively (assuming burst energies of  $10^{40} \text{ erg}$ ). Metzger et al. (2017) use the young magnetar model for FRBs to calculate the maximum number of bursts that can be powered its magnetic field as  $\approx 300$ . Assuming this model for FRBs, LGRBs, and SLSN-I, the rate comparison suggests that the LGRB rate is most consistent with the FRB rate,

although there is significant room for adjustment in the models and rate estimate.

Nicholl et al. (2017) made a similar estimate as this...

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The recent precision localization of FRB 121102 has helped identify a host galaxy, measure its distance, and establish it as a member of a truly new class of astrophysical source. With its cosmological distance firmly established, FRB 121102 now serves as a new kind of standard by which FRBs are defined. That fact, combined with an abundance of data collected during its active state, allows us to apply this source to more general questions about the FRB population.

We presented the first multi-telescope detection (Arecibo and VLA) of an FRB. By detecting this burst from 1.2 to 3.5 GHz, we have demonstrated that some bursts have broad spectral structure. However, the energy of that burst was dominated by the VLA 3 GHz observing band and three other VLA bursts are undetected by Arecibo. This demonstrates the burst spectra are poorly described by a power law with a single spectral index. Independently, we modelled dynamic spectra within the VLA 3 GHz band and show that most bursts can be characterized by a Gaussian envelope of width  $\sim 500$  MHz. This modeling also shows that the apparent DM changes from burst to burst and that DM is biased above the long-term average measured at 1.4 GHz. This argues that bursts have intrinsic spectrottemporal structure that mimics DM, as seen in high-resolution Arecibo dynamic spectra (Hessels et al, in prep).

With a characteristic width of a spectrum, we can estimate total (apparent) radio energy per burst. The cumulative energy distribution is characterized by a power law in  $dN/dE$  with slope of  $\sim -1.7$ . The amplitude of this power law changes significantly between observational campaigns. The stochastic nature of the burst rate suggests that past constraints on FRB repetition are weaker than previously inferred. The relatively narrow spectral structure, flat energy distribution, and variable burst rate of FRB 121102 suggests that repeated observations, wide bandwidth, and large instantaneous field of view all improve the chance of making new FRB detections.

Assuming that FRB 121102 is representative of the FRB population, its burst energy distribution makes it possi-

ble to calculate the first volumetric FRB rate that does not depend on telescope sensitivity. We estimate a volumetric rate of FRB sources of  $R_{\text{FRB}} \approx 5 \times 10^{-5} (0.1/\Omega_b)$   $\text{Mpc}^{-3} \text{ yr}^{-1}$ , which is appropriate for FRB 121102-like energies of  $10^{40}$  erg that are detectable out to  $z = 1$ . This rate is broadly consistent with models of FRBs from young magnetars or pulsars if the typical FRB repeats on the order of  $10^3$  times in its life.

New, arcsecond-scale localizations will be critical to refining the picture presented here and constraining models of FRB origin. FRB 121102 was localized within hours by a prototype version of *realfast* and an expanded *realfast* system is now under construction. This platform will search a TB/hour data stream in real time in parallel with ongoing VLA observations, potentially detecting and localizing multiple FRBs per year.

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