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# Amortized Population Gibbs Samplers with Neural Sufficient Statistics

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**Hao Wu**

Northeastern University  
haowu@ccs.neu.edu

**Heiko Zimmermann**

Northeastern University  
hzimmermann@ccs.neu.edu

**Eli Sennesh**

Northeastern University  
esennesh@ccs.neu.edu

**Tuan Anh Le**

Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
tuananh@mit.edu

**Jan-Willem van de Meent**

Northeastern University  
jwvdm@ccs.neu.edu

## Abstract

We develop amortized population Gibbs samplers, a new class of autoencoding variational methods for deep probabilistic models. These methods construct high-quality proposals by iterating between updates to blocks of variables, which each approximate a conditional posterior by minimizing an inclusive Kullback-Leibler divergence. We develop a new parameterization in terms of neural sufficient statistics, resulting in quasi-conjugate variational approximations that appropriately account for the size of the input data. Experiments demonstrate that learned proposals converge to the known analytical conditional posterior in conjugate models, and that APG samplers can learn inference networks for highly structured deep generative models when the conditional posteriors are intractable. Here APG samplers offer a path toward scaling up stochastic variational methods to models in which standard autoencoding architectures fail to produce accurate samples.

## 1 Introduction

Deep probabilistic programming libraries such as Edward [1], Pyro [2], and Probabilistic Torch [3] extend deep learning frameworks with functionality for deep probabilistic models which combine a generative model with an inference model that approximates the Bayesian posterior. Both models are parameterized using neural networks, which are trained using stochastic gradient descent by optimize a lower

or upper bound on the log marginal likelihood. Training an inference network to perform amortized inference can be equivalently understood as a form of variational inference or adaptive importance sampling.

At present, deep probabilistic models most commonly have the form of standard variational autoencoders (VAEs) [4, 5]. In these architectures, the generative model combines an unstructured prior (e.g. a spherical Gaussian) with a likelihood that is parameterized by an expressive neural network, often referred to as a decoder. The inference network, known as an encoder, maps input data (e.g. an image or sentence) onto an embedding vector, also known as the latent code.

Deep probabilistic programming aims to enable more general designs that incorporate structured priors for tasks such as multiple object detection [6], language modeling [7], or object tracking [8]. In these domains, a prior can incorporate useful inductive biases, such as the requirement that object trajectories are smooth. These biases in turn can help guide a model to uncover patterns in the data in an unsupervised manner, and aid generalization in complex domains where the training data may not contain exemplars for all possible combinations of latent features.

However, training structured models also poses challenges that are not encountered in unstructured problems. To optimize a lower or an upper bound, we need to approximate the gradient of an expectation with a Monte Carlo estimate (see [9] for a recent review). Standard VAEs rely on reparameterized estimators that can often approximate the gradient with a single sample. Unfortunately, these estimators can have a high variance in models where latent variables are high-dimensional and/or strongly correlated. Owing to these limitations, models that are trained using standard VAE objectives often consider relatively small-scale problems, such as tracking  $\leq 2$  objects over the course of 10 frames [8], or assigning  $\leq 10$  sentences in a review to distinct aspects [7].

In this paper, we develop methods for amortized inference

that are designed to scale to structured models with 100s of latent variables. We are particularly interested in the frequently arising cases of models that are characterized by a combinations of *local variables*, such as the time-dependent position of an object, and *global variables*, such as the shape of the object. In this type of model, it is often the case that knowledge of the local variables can help us make predictions about global variables and vice versa; If we know the shape of an object, then it should be easier to identify its location in an image. Conversely, if we know the position of an object in each frame, then we can more readily infer its shape.

The methods that we develop in this paper are similar in spirit to work by Johnson et al. [10], who developed methods for conjugate-exponential models with a neural likelihood. In this setting, we can perform inference using variational expectation maximization (EM) algorithms [11–13] that exploit conjugacy and conditional independence to derive closed-form updates to blocks of variables. The advantage of these approaches is that they are highly computationally efficient; variational EM can often converge in a small number of iterations and easily scales to 100s of variables. Unfortunately, variational EM is also model-specific, difficult to implement, and only applicable to a restricted class of conjugate-exponential models.

To overcome the limitations imposed by conjugate-exponential family models, we here develop a more general approach. Rather than requiring exact EM updates we develop an importance sampling method that employs conditional proposals to iterate between updates to blocks of variables. To train these proposals, we define a a variational method that minimizes the inclusive KL divergence between the proposal update and the exact conditional posterior. We refer to the resulting class of methods as *amortized Gibbs* samplers, since the proposals approximate Gibbs updates.

The variational objective that we derive is not computable, since the exact Gibbs updates are in general intractable. However, we can nonetheless derive a Monte Carlo estimator for its gradient. Building on a recent body of work that employs importance samplers to train variational distributions [14–17], we develop a sequential Monte Carlo sampler [18] that combines approximate Gibbs updates with resampling steps in order to construct high quality proposals, which serve both to compute gradient estimates at train time and to perform inference at test time. We demonstrate correctness of the proposed sampler by proving that samples are properly weighted [19].

One of the challenges in designing networks that parameterize conditional proposals is network outputs need to appropriately account for the amount of data on which we are conditioning; The conditional posterior on the mean for a cluster with a large number of points is more tightly peaked than that of a cluster with a small number of points.

To address this difficulty, we propose a class of networks that we refer to as *neural sufficient statistics*, which define parameterizations of proposals in a manner that is additive in the local variables, much like the sufficient statistics in conjugate-exponential families.

Our experiments show that learned proposals converge to the true conditional posteriors in Gaussian mixture models, where the Gibbs updates can be computed in closed form. Moreover we establish that amortized Gibbs methods serve can a basis for scalable inference in structured deep generative models, including mixtures with neural likelihoods and unsupervised tracking models. Both of these tasks are representative of the current state-of-the art in unsupervised approaches for learning structured deep generative models.

## 2 Amortized Population Gibbs Samplers

We are interested in the task of jointly training a generative model  $p_\theta(x, z)$  by maximizing its marginal likelihood  $p_\theta(x)$  and learning an inference model  $q_\phi(z | x)$  that approximates the posterior  $p_\theta(z | x)$ . Like most amortized inference approaches, we assume that we can sample from a (possibly implicit) distribution  $\hat{p}(x)$  that either takes the form of an empirical distribution over training data or a data simulator.

As a means of generating high-quality samples in an incremental manner, we develop methods that are inspired by expectation maximization and classic Gibbs sampling strategies, which perform iterative updates to blocks of variables. Concretely, we will assume that the latent variables in the generative model decompose into blocks  $z = \{z_1, \dots, z_B\}$  and train proposals  $\log q_\phi(z_b | z_{-b}, x)$  that update the variables in a each block  $z_b$  conditioned on the variables in the remaining blocks  $z_{-b} = z \setminus \{z_b\}$ .

Starting with an initial sample  $q_\phi(z^1 | x)$  from a standard encoder we will generate a sequence of samples  $\{z^1, \dots, z^K\}$  by performing conditional updates to each block  $z_b$ , which we refer to as a *sweep*

$$q_\phi(z^k | x, z^{k-1}) = \prod_{b=1}^B q_\phi(z_b^k | x, z_{\prec b}^k, z_{\succ b}^{k-1}), \quad (1)$$

where  $z_{\prec b} = \{z_i \mid i < b\}$  and  $z_{\succ b} = \{z_i \mid i > b\}$ . Repeatedly applying sweep updates then yields a proposal

$$q_\phi(z^1, \dots, z^K | x) = q_\phi(z^1 | x) \prod_{k=2}^K q_\phi(z^k | x, z^{k-1}).$$

We want to train proposals that improve the quality of each sample  $z^k$  relative to that of the preceding sample  $z^{k-1}$ . There are two possible strategies for accomplishing this. One strategy is to define an objective that minimizes the discrepancy between the marginal  $q_\phi(z^K | x)$  for the final sample and the posterior  $p_\theta(z^K | x)$ . This corresponds to learning a sweep update  $q_\phi(z^k | x, z^{k-1})$  that transforms

the initial proposal to the posterior in exactly  $K$  sweeps. An example of this type of approach, albeit one that does not employ block updates, is the recent work on annealing variational objectives [20].

In this paper, we will pursue a different approach. Instead of transforming the initial proposal in exactly  $K$  steps, we learn a sweep update that leaves the target density *invariant*

$$p_\theta(z^k | x) = \int dz^{k-1} q_\phi(z^k | x, z^{k-1}) p_\theta(z^{k-1} | x). \quad (2)$$

When this condition is met, the proposal  $q_\phi(z^1, \dots, z^K | x)$  is a Markov Chain whose stationary distribution is the posterior. This means a sweep update learned at training time can be applied at test time to iteratively improve sample quality, without requiring a pre-specified number of updates  $K$ .

When we additionally require that each block update  $q_\phi(z'_b | x, z_{-b})$  also leaves the target density invariant,

$$\begin{aligned} p_\theta(z'_b, z_{-b} | x) &= \int dz_b q_\phi(z'_b | x, z_{-b}) p_\theta(z_b, z_{-b}), \quad (3) \\ &= q_\phi(z'_b | x, z_{-b}) p_\theta(z_{-b} | x), \end{aligned}$$

Then we see that a block update must equal the exact conditional posterior,  $q_\phi(z'_b | x, z_{-b}) = p_\theta(z'_b | x, z_{-b})$ . In other words, when the condition in Equation 3 is met, the proposal  $q_\phi(z^1, \dots, z^K | x)$  is a Gibbs sampler.

## 2.1 Variational Objective

To learn each of the block proposals  $q_\phi(z_b | x, z_{-b})$  we will minimize the inclusive KL divergence  $\mathcal{K}_b(\phi)$

$$\mathbb{E}_{\hat{p}(x)p_\theta(z_{-b}|x)} [\text{KL}(p_\theta(z_b|x, z_{-b}) || q_\phi(z_b|x, z_{-b}))]. \quad (4)$$

Unfortunately, this objective is intractable, since we are not able to evaluate the density of the true marginal  $p_\theta(z_{-b} | x)$ , nor that of the conditional  $p_\theta(z_b | x, z_{-b})$ . As we will discuss in Section 5, this has implications for the evaluation of learned proposals, since we cannot compute a lower or upper bound on the log marginal likelihood as in other variational methods. However, it nonetheless possible to approximate the gradient of the objective

$$-\nabla_\phi \mathcal{K}_b(\phi) = \mathbb{E}_{\hat{p}(x)p_\theta(z_b, z_{-b}|x)} [\nabla_\phi \log q_\phi(z_b | x, z_{-b})].$$

We can estimate this gradient using any Monte Carlo method that generates samples  $z \sim p_\theta(z | x)$  from the posterior. In the next section, we will use the learned proposals to define an importance sampler, which we then use to compute an self-normalized estimator of the gradient from weighted samples  $\{(w^l, z^l)\}_{l=1}^L$ ,

$$-\nabla_\phi \mathcal{K}_b(\phi) \simeq \sum_{l=1}^L \frac{w^l}{\sum_{l'} w^{l'}} \nabla_\phi \log q_\phi(z^l | x, z_{-b}). \quad (5)$$

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## Algorithm 1 SMC sampler

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1: for  $l = 1, \dots, L$  do
2:    $y_0^l \sim q_0(y_0)$ .                                      $\triangleright$  propose
3:    $w_0^l = \frac{\gamma_0(y_0^l)}{q_0(y_0^l)}$ .                   $\triangleright$  weigh
4: for  $b$  in  $1, \dots, B$  do
5:    $y_{b-1}^{1:L}, w_{b-1}^{1:L} = \text{RESAMPLE}(y_{b-1}^{1:L}, w_{b-1}^{1:L})$ .  $\triangleright$  resample
6:   for  $l = 1, \dots, L$  do
7:      $y_b^l \sim q_b(\cdot | y_{b-1}^l)$ .                          $\triangleright$  propose
8:      $w_b^l = \frac{\gamma_b(y_b^l)r_{b-1}(y_{b-1}^l | y_b^l)}{\gamma_{b-1}(y_{b-1}^l)q_b(y_b^l | y_{b-1}^l)} w_{b-1}^l$ .       $\triangleright$  weigh

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In problems where we would like to learn a deep generative model  $p_\theta(x, z)$ , we can apply a similar self-normalized gradient estimator of the form

$$\begin{aligned} \nabla_\theta \log p_\theta(x) &= \mathbb{E}_{p_\theta(z|x)} [\nabla_\theta \log p_\theta(x, z)] \quad (6) \\ &\simeq \sum_{l=1}^L \frac{w^l}{\sum_{l'} w^{l'}} \nabla_\theta \log p_\theta(x, z^l). \end{aligned}$$

This identity holds due to the standard property  $\mathbb{E}_{p_\theta(z|x)} [\nabla_\theta \log p_\theta(z|x)] = 0$  (see Appendix B for details).

The estimator in Equation 5 is similar to the self-normalized estimator in reweighted wake-sleep methods [21], which also minimizes an inclusive KL divergence. This estimator has a number of advantages over the estimator that is commonly used to train standard VAEs, which minimize an exclusive KL divergence [22]. Standard VAE objectives rely on reparameterization to compute gradient estimates. For discrete variables, reparameterization is not possible. This means that we need to compute likelihood-ratio estimators (also known as REINFORCE-style estimators [23]), which can have very high variance. A range of approaches for variance reduction have been put forward, including continuous relaxations that are amenable to reparameterization [24, 25], credit assignment techniques (see [26] for a review), and other control variates [27–29].

The estimator in Equation 5 sidesteps the need for these variance reduction techniques. To compute this gradient, we only require that the proposal *density* is differentiable, whereas reparameterized estimators require that the *sample* itself is differentiable. This is a milder condition, that holds for most distributions of interest, including those over discrete variables. Moreover, since this estimator minimizes the inclusive KL divergence, and not the exclusive KL divergence, there is smaller risk of learning a proposal that collapses to a single mode of a multi-modal posterior [22].

## 2.2 Generating High Quality Samples

Approximating the gradient presents a chicken-and-egg problem; we need samples from the posterior to compute a Monte Carlo estimate of the gradient, but generating these

samples is precisely what we are hoping to use learned proposals for in the first place. Self-normalized importance samplers are consistent, but they are not unbiased. During the early stages of training, we will have poor quality proposals, which means that the bias of the gradient estimators in Equations 5 and 6 can be high. In other words, we may not be able to compute high-quality gradient estimates until we have good proposals, but we will not be able to learn good proposals without high-quality gradient estimates.

Standard reweighted wake-sleep methods generate proposals from an encoder  $z \sim q_\phi(z | x)$  and compute weights  $w = p_\theta(x, z) / q_\phi(z | x)$ . A well-known limitation of this type of naive importance sampling strategy is that the computed weights will have a very high variance in models with high-dimensional and/or correlated latent variables, which in turn implies a high bias of the estimator. There is a very broad class of importance sampling strategies that can be employed to reduce the variance of importance weights. If we replace the naive importance sampler in reweighted wake-sleep with a more sophisticated sampling strategy, then this both improves the quality of gradient estimates at training, and the quality of inference results at test time.

Another sampling scheme is to perform sequential importance sampling (SIS) method. The hope is to improve the sample quality depending on the preceding sample. At step  $k = 1$ , we start with the standard reweighted wake-sleep method. Then at time  $k > 1$ , we update the sample from  $z^k \sim q_\phi(z^k | z^{k-1}, \cdot)$ . After  $K$  updates, the scheme defines a joint target distribution

$$p_\theta(z^1, \dots, z^K, x) = p_\theta(z^K, x) \prod_{k=2}^K r(z^{k-1} | x, z^k).$$

as well as a corresponding variational distribution

$$q_\phi(z^1, \dots, z^K | x) = q_\phi(z^1 | x) \prod_{k=2}^K q_\phi(z^k | x, z^{k-1}).$$

where  $r(z^{k-1} | x, z^k)$  is the backward kernel. We can rewrite the SIS scheme as

- For  $k = 1$ :

$$z^1 \sim q_\phi(z^1 | x), w^1 = \frac{p_\theta(z^1, x)}{q_\phi(z^1 | x)},$$

- For  $k > 1$ :

$$z^k \sim q_\phi(z^k | x, z^{k-1}),$$

$$w^k = \frac{p_\theta(z^k, x) r(z^{k-1} | x, z^k)}{p_\theta(z^{k-1}, x) q_\phi(z^k | x, z^{k-1})} w^{k-1}$$

To reduce the variance, the optimal backward kernel is

$$r(z^{k-1} | x, z^k) \propto \frac{p_\theta(z^{k-1}, x) q_\phi(z^k | x, z^{k-1})}{\int dz^{k-1} p_\theta(z^{k-1}, x) q_\phi(z^k | x, z^{k-1})} \quad (7)$$

In particular, we know that the Gibbs kernel is both an optimal forward and backward kernel.

Unfortunately the overall importance weight in SIS scheme has a high variance, because it depends on the entire sequence of the samples, i.e. the sample space has a much higher dimension than that of the standard reweighted wake-sleep method. As a result, the Monte Carlo estimation is terribly biased.

To overcome this problem, we use learned proposals to define a sequential Monte Carlo (SMC) sampler [18]. SMC methods reduce the variance of importance weights by decomposing a high-dimensional sampling problem into a sequence of lower-dimensional problems. SMC *samplers* (see in Algorithm 1) are a subclass of SMC methods that iteratively improve a batch of proposals by applying a transition kernel. By defining a SMC sampler in which each kernel  $q_\phi(z_b | x, z_{-b})$  is an approximate Gibbs update, we break the problem of generating a high-quality joint proposal into a sequence of sampling problems for individual blocks of variables, which each have a much lower dimensionality. We refer to this implementation of an SMC sampler as an amortized population Gibbs (APG) sampler (see in Algorithm 2).

In this scheme (Algorithm 2), we sample from an initial proposal (line 3), which is trained by RWS and jointly predicts all the blocks. Then we iterate over each block proposal (line 7), from which we perform block update (line 10) and accumulate the incremental weights (line 11). In addition, the APG sampler incorporates a resampling step (line 8) after every block update, including the initial proposal. This step constructs a set of equally weighted samples based on the incoming samples and importance weights  $\{(w^l, z_{1:B}^l)\}_{l=1}^L$ , which resolves the high variance problem discuss previously. In fact, the accumulated importance weights (without the resampling step) will not only depend on the sample quality of current block  $z_b$ , but also that of all the others  $z_{-b}$ . This implies that the negative influence from a bad proposal for  $z_{-b}$  will be carried on to the future steps and as a result that corresponding sequence of samples are assigned with low importance weight even if we actually get a good proposal for the current block  $z_b$ . As the number of block updates increases, the resampling step paves the way for efficiently assigning the credit to the samples and reducing the variance of gradient estimators.

We can interpret APG as an instance of the SMC sampler algorithm [18] to justify using  $\{(w^l, z_{1:B}^l)\}_{l=1}^L$  to approximate the posterior  $p_\theta(z_{1:B} | x)$  as is required to minimize the variational objective  $\mathcal{K}_b(\phi)$  in (4). SMC sampler (Algorithm 1) approximates a sequence of target distributions  $\pi_b(y_b)$  ( $b = 0, \dots, B$ ) for which we can only evaluate unnormalized densities  $\gamma_b(y_b) \propto \pi_b(y_b)$ . Given a set of forward kernels  $q_0(y_0)$ ,  $q_b(y_b | y_{b-1})$  and reverse kernels  $r_{b-1}(y_{b-1} | y_b)$  for  $b = 1, \dots, B$ , the algorithm proceeds

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**Algorithm 2** Amortized Population Gibbs Sampling

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1:  $g_\phi = 0, g_\theta = 0.$             $\triangleright$  initialize gradient estimators.
2: for  $l = 1, \dots, L$  do
3:    $z_{1:B}^l \sim q_\phi(\cdot | x).$             $\triangleright$  Propose
4:    $w^l = \frac{p_\theta(z_{1:B}^l | x)}{q_\phi(z_{1:B}^l | x)}.$             $\triangleright$  Weigh
5:    $g_\phi = g_\phi + \sum_{l=1}^L \frac{w^l}{\sum_{l'=1}^L w^{l'}} \nabla_\phi \log q_\phi(z_{1:B}^l | x).$ 
6:    $g_\theta = g_\theta + \sum_{l=1}^L \frac{w^l}{\sum_{l'=1}^L w^{l'}} \nabla_\theta \log p_\theta(x, z_{1:B}^l)$ 
7: for  $b = 1, \dots, B$  do
8:    $z_{1:B}^{1:L}, w^{1:L} = \text{RESAMPLE}(z_{1:B}^{1:L}, w^{1:L})$   $\triangleright$  Resample
9:   for  $l = 1, \dots, L$  do
10:     $z_b^{l'} \sim q_\phi(\cdot | z_{-b}^l, x).$             $\triangleright$  Propose
11:     $w^l = \frac{p_\theta(z_b^{l'}, z_{-b}^l, x) q_\phi(z_b^{l'} | z_{-b}^l, x)}{p_\theta(z_b^l, z_{-b}^l, x) q_\phi(z_b^l | z_{-b}^l, x)} w^l.$             $\triangleright$  Weigh
12:     $z_b^l = z_b^{l'}.$             $\triangleright$  Reassign
13:    $g_\phi = g_\phi + \sum_{l=1}^L \frac{w^l}{\sum_{l'=1}^L w^{l'}} \nabla_\phi \log q_\phi(z_b^l | z_{-b}^l, x)$ 
14:    $g_\theta = g_\theta + \sum_{l=1}^L \frac{w^l}{\sum_{l'=1}^L w^{l'}} \nabla_\theta \log p_\theta(x, z_{1:B}^l)$ 
return  $g_\phi, g_\theta$ 

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by iterating over a sequence of propose-weigh-resample steps. At each step  $b$ , the weighted set  $\{(w_b^l, y_b^l)\}_{l=1}^L$  can be used to estimate an expectation of test functions  $f$  under  $\pi_b$ .

Now consider  $y_b$  defined as all the blocks  $z_{1:B}$  in APG sampler (Algorithm 2). Then the unnormalized target densities  $\gamma_b(y_b) = p_\theta(z_{1:B}, x)$  which normalize as  $\pi_b(y_b) = p_\theta(z_{1:B} | x)$ . We propose  $y_b = z_{1:B}'$  by doing block update (line 10) and setting  $z_{-b} = z_{-b}$  (line 12), which recovers  $y_b = z_{1:B}$ . The weigh step of APG exactly corresponds to that in the SMC sampler. See Appendix C for a more detailed proof of the correctness of the algorithm.

In practice, we iteratively apply the APG updates (line 7 - line 14) for  $K$  times, given a batch of data  $x \sim \hat{p}(x)$  and take one gradient step based on the accumulated gradient estimations.

### 3 Neural Sufficient Statistics

Gibbs sampling strategies that sample from exact conditionals rely on conjugacy relationships. Typically, we assume a prior and likelihood that can both be expressed as exponential families

$$p(x | z) = h(x) \exp\{\eta(z)^\top T(x) - \log A(\eta(z))\},$$

$$p(z) = h(z) \exp\{\lambda^\top T(z) - \log A(\lambda)\}.$$

In these densities  $h(\cdot)$  is a base measure,  $T(\cdot)$  is a vector of sufficient statistics, and  $A(\cdot)$  is a log normalizer. The two densities are jointly conjugate when

$$T(z) = (\eta(z), -\log A(\eta(z)))$$

In this case, the posterior distribution lies in the same exponential family as the prior

$$p(z | x) \propto h(z) \exp\{(\lambda_1 + T(x))^\top T(z) - (\lambda_2 + 1) \log A(\eta(z))\}.$$

Typically, the prior  $p(z | \lambda)$  and likelihood  $p(x | z)$  are not jointly conjugate, but it is possible to identify conjugacy relationships at the level of individual blocks of variables,

$$p(z_b | z_{-b}, x) \propto h(z_b) \exp\{(\lambda_{b,1} + T(x, z_{-b}))^\top T(z_b) - (\lambda_{b,2} + 1) \log A(\eta(z_b))\}.$$

In the more general setting we consider here, these conjugacy relationships will typically not hold. However, we can still take inspiration to design variational distributions that make use of conditional independencies in a model. We will assume that each of the approximate Gibbs updates  $q_\phi(z_b | x, z_{-b})$  is an exponential family, whose parameters are computed from a vector of prior parameters  $\lambda$  and a vector of neural sufficient statistics  $T_\phi(x, z_{-b})$

$$q_\phi(z_b | x, z_{-b}) = p(z_b | \lambda + T_\phi(x, z_{-b})). \quad (8)$$

This parameterization has a number of desirable properties. Exponential families are the largest-entropy distributions that match the moments defined by the sufficient statistics (see e.g. [13]), which is helpful when minimizing the inclusive KL divergence. In exponential families it is also more straightforward to control the entropy of the variational distribution. In particular, we can initialize  $T_\phi(x, z_{-b})$  to output values close to zero in order to ensure that we initially propose from a prior and/or regularize  $T_\phi(x, z_{-b})$  to help avoid local optima.

A particularly useful case arises in models where the data  $x = \{x_1, \dots, x_N\}$  are independent conditioned on  $z$ . In these models it is often possible to partition the latent variables  $z = \{z^G, z^L\}$  into global and local variables  $z^G$  and local variables  $z^L$ . The dimensionality of global variables is typically constant, whereas local variables  $z^L = \{z_1^L, \dots, z_N^L\}$  have a dimensionality that increases with the data  $N$ . For models with this structure, the local variables are typically conditionally independent  $z_n^L \perp z_{-n}^L | x, z^G$ , which means that we can parameterize the sufficient statistics as

$$\tilde{\lambda}^G = \lambda^G + \sum_{n=1}^N T_\phi^G(x_n, z_n^L), \quad \tilde{\lambda}_n^L = \lambda_n^L + T_\phi^L(x_n, z^G).$$

The advantage of this parameterization is it allows us to train approximate Gibbs updates for global variables in a manner that scales dynamically with the size of the dataset, and appropriately adjusts the posterior variance according to the amount of available data.

## 4 Related Work

There are many works that consider the combination of ideas from MCMC and amortized inference. Li et al. [30] consider learning an inference network which is used for initializing an MCMC chain. They focus on a setting where the density of the inference network cannot be evaluated. Learning is also performed by targeting the inclusive KL. However, the posterior expectation is approximated using MCMC and, due to the inability to compute the density, the gradient is estimated adversarially. Like us, Wang et al. [31] considered the problem of learning block conditionals for performing Gibbs updates. In their case, the model parameters are not learned and hence the gradient of the inclusive KL divergence can be estimated by directly sampling from the generative model, akin to the sleep-phase of wake-sleep. They consider this in the context of meta-learning in which they learn a family of Gibbs conditionals amortizing inference in a family of models.

Our work can also be viewed as combining MCMC and variational inference. Salimans et al. [32] define a variational lower bound to learn the marginal  $q_\phi(z^K | x)$  to approximate the posterior by introducing auxiliary variables  $z^{1:K-1}$  in the generative model. This requires amortizing inference in an extended space as well as learning the auxiliary model distribution. Learning relies on the reparameterization trick which further limits the model family. This idea has also been studied in the context of deep generative modeling [33] and variational inference [34] where the goal is to increase the expressivity of the inference network. Like in our setting, it is hard to evaluate the quality of  $q_\phi(z^K | x)$  due to high-dimensional marginalization. Hoffman [35] uses MCMC as means for better estimation of the  $\theta$  gradient given in (6) while learning inference using the typical ELBO objective.

Our work can also be viewed as learning to refine a one-shot inference network. In this sense, it is similar to [36] which learns deterministic transformations of the inference network parameters by taking gradients through the optimization process. Huang et al. [20] also learn a sequence of transitions, however their goal is to improve explorability in the inference network and during test time, their inference network must be run for a fixed number of steps.

## 5 Experiments

We evaluate APG methods in 3 tasks. We begin by considering a Gaussian mixture model (GMM) as an exemplar of a model in the conjugate-exponential family. Here we verify that the learned block updates converge the analytical conditional posteriors as predicted by our analysis in Section 2. We next consider a deep generative mixture model (DGMM) that incorporates a neural likelihood to parameterize ring-shaped clusters. We show that we can train both the generative model and inference model in an end-to-end

manner using APG methods, and that inference scales to datasets containing up to 600 points. For both models we quantify performance in terms of the effective sample size (ESS) and the relative magnitude of the log joint. In our third experiment, we consider an unsupervised model for multiple bouncing MNIST data. We extend the task proposed by Srivastava et al. [37] to consider up to 5 individual digits, and learn both a deep generative model for videos and an inference model that performs tracking.

Results on each of these tasks constitute a significant advance relative to the state of the art. Standard VAEs perform poorly at Gaussian mixture modeling tasks, and to our knowledge there are no existing methods that scale to a problem of the complexity of the DGMM for rings. In the context of the unsupervised tracking model, APG easily scales beyond previously reported results for a specialized recurrent architecture [8]. APG is not only able to scale to models with higher complexity in these settings, but also provides a general framework for performing inference in models with global and local variables, which can be adapted to a variety of model classes with comparative ease.

### 5.1 Gaussian Mixture Model

To evaluate whether APG samplers can learn the exact Gibbs updates in conditionally conjugate models, we consider a Gaussian mixture model

$$\mu_i, \tau_i \sim \text{NormGamma}(\mu_0, \nu_0, \alpha_0, \beta_0), i = 1, 2, \dots, I \\ c_n \sim \text{Cat}(\pi), x_n | c_n = i \sim \text{Norm}(\mu_i, 1/\tau_i), n = 1, 2, \dots, N$$

In this model, the global variables  $z^G = \{\mu_{1:I}, \tau_{1:I}\}$  are the mean and precision for each mixture component, whereas the local variables are the cluster assignments  $z^L = \{c_{1:N}\}$ . Conditioned on cluster assignments, the Gaussian likelihood  $p(x_{1:N} | z_{1:N}, \mu_{1:I}, \tau_{1:I})$  is conjugate to a normal-gamma

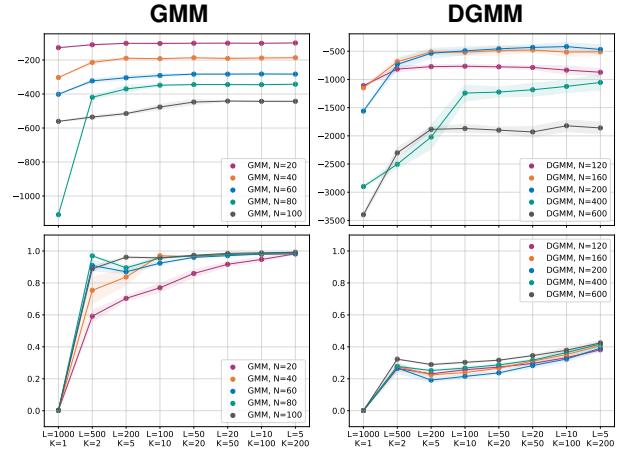


Figure 1: APG sampler performance as a function of number of sweeps  $K$  for a constant sample budget  $K \cdot L = 1000$ . **Top:** Log joint  $\log p_\theta(x, z)$ . **Bottom:** ESS / L.

Table 1: APG performance in the GMM and DGMM. The left column in each sub-table shows the change in log joint distribution, i.e. the difference between the log joint in the baseline and the log joint in other models. In the ESS/L column, this metric is computed w.r.t different variable blocks. With the case of GMM we report inclusive KL in equation 4 w.r.t. each block.

(a) GMM		(b) DGMM									
		$\Delta \log p_\theta(x, z)$		ESS/L		KL( $p_\theta    q_\phi$ )		$\Delta \log p_\theta(x, z)$		ESS/L	
		$\{\tau, \mu, c\}$	$\{\tau, \mu\}$	$\{c\}$	$\{\tau, \mu\}$	$\{c\}$			$\{\mu, c, \alpha\}$	$\{\mu\}$	$\{c, \alpha\}$
MLP-RWS	–	0.001	–	–	–	–	2538	0.001	–	–	
LSTM-RWS	202.2	0.104	–	–	–	–	–	0.001	–	–	
APG (K=5)	198.5	0.261	0.980	0.631	0.005	0.005	6201	0.002	0.013	0.422	
APG (K=10)	211.9	0.398	0.981	0.760	0.004	0.004	6293	0.002	0.019	0.454	
APG (K=15)	215.2	0.416	0.983	0.780	0.003	0.004	6310	0.003	0.025	0.488	

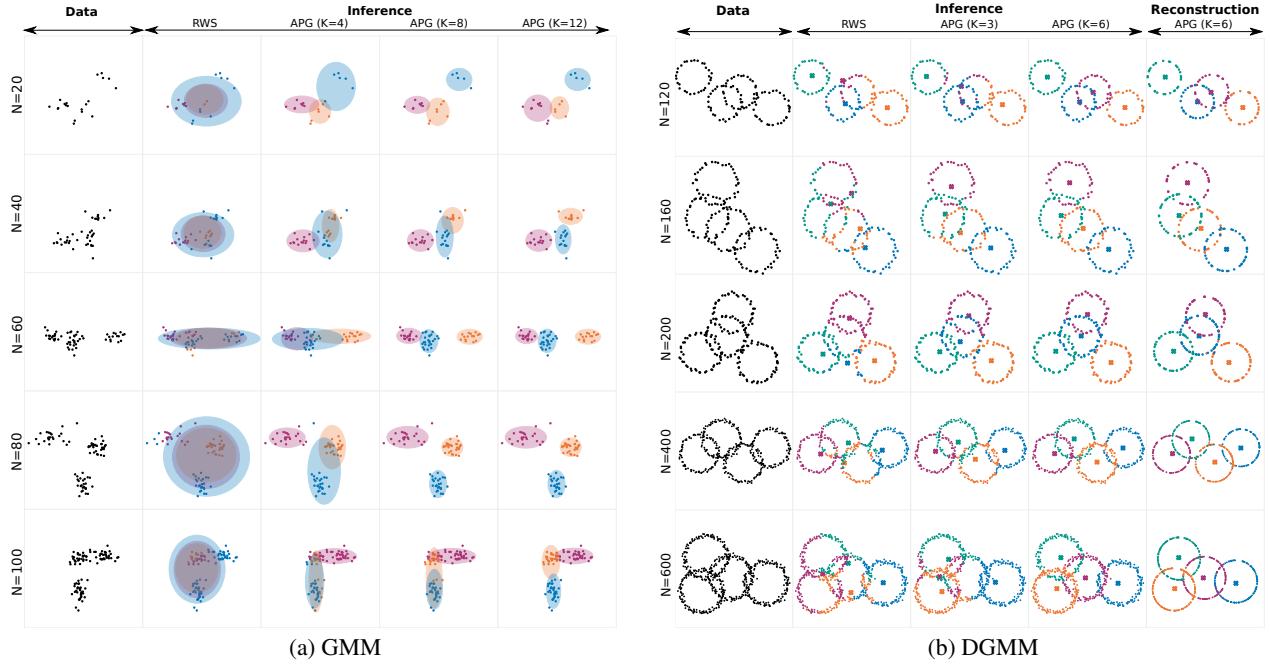


Figure 2: Samples from the GMM and the DGMM. (a) GMM, the left column shows 5 test datasets with different number of data points. The subsequent columns show inference results by RWS, followed by results after 4, 8 and 12 APG updates. (b) DGMM, the left column shows 5 test datasets with different number of data points. The subsequent columns show the inference results by RWS, followed by results after 3 and 6 APG updates. The right column shows reconstructions from the learned generative model.

prior  $p(\mu_{1:I}, \tau_{1:I})$  with sufficient statistics  $T(x_n, c_n)$

$$\left\{ \mathbb{I}[c_n = i], \mathbb{I}[c_n = i] x_n, \mathbb{I}[c_n = i] x_n^2 \mid i = 1, 2, \dots, I \right\},$$

where  $\mathbb{I}[z_n = i]$  is an indicator function that evaluates to 1 if the equality holds, and 0 otherwise.

We employ a variational distribution that updates the global variables  $q_\phi(\mu, \tau \mid x, c)$  and the local variables  $q_\phi(c \mid x, \mu, \tau)$ , using pointwise neural sufficient statistics modeled after the ones in the analytical updates (for details on these architecture see Appendix D).

We train our models on 20,000 unique datasets with  $I = 3$

clusters and  $N = 60$  data points with fixed hyperparameters ( $\mu_0 = 0, \nu_0 = 0.3, \alpha_0 = 2, \beta_0 = 2$ ). We use 20 GMM datasets per batch,  $K = 10$  sweeps,  $L = 10$  particles, and Adam ( $\text{lr} = 10^{-4}, \beta_1 = 0.9, \beta_2 = 0.99$ ) for 200,000 iterations.

We compare the APG sampler to samples from a standard encoder with MLP and LSTM architectures, which is trained using reweighted wake-sleep (RWS). Both architectures are parameterized using the same neural sufficient statistics as the APG sampler.

Figure 2a shows sequences of single samples from the vari-

ational distribution, where the first sample is drawn using RWS. Even when using a parameterization that employs neural sufficient statistics, the RWS encoder fails to propose reasonable clusters, whereas the APG sampler typically converges within 12 iterations across a range of dataset sizes.

Furthermore, we would like to quantify how similar learned proposals  $q_\phi(z_b | x, z_{-b})$  are to the conditional posteriors  $p_\theta(z_b | x, z_{-b})$ . With the case of GMM where the exact conditional posterior is tractable, we verify the convergence of the learned proposals by computing the inclusive KL divergence  $\mathcal{K}_b(\phi)$  defined in equation 4 (see in Table 1a). We can see that the APG samplers of the both  $\{\tau, \mu\}$  and  $\{c\}$  converge to the true conditional posterior.

## 5.2 Deep Generative Mixture Model

We next consider the task of training a deep generative model  $p_\theta(x, z)$  is jointly with the APG sampler. Our dataset consists of ring-shaped clusters. The true generative model (which we assume is unknown) takes the form

$$\begin{aligned}\mu_i &\sim \text{Norm}(0, \sigma_0^2 I), \quad i = 1, 2, \dots, I \\ c_n &\sim \text{Disc}(\pi), \quad \alpha_n \sim \text{Unif}[0, 2\pi], \\ x_n | c_n = i &\sim \text{Norm}(g_\theta(\alpha_n) + \mu_i, \Sigma_\epsilon).\end{aligned}$$

Here  $\mu_i$  is center of the  $i$ th ring. Given a cluster assignment  $c_n$  and an angle  $\alpha_n$  we define a position on a ring, from which We sample the datapoint  $x_n$  with 2D Gaussian noise.

We train our model on 20,000 datasets with  $N = 200$  data points and  $I = 4$  clusters with fixed hyperparameters ( $\sigma_0 = 3.5$ ,  $\Sigma_\epsilon = 0.2$ ). We use 20 datasets per batch,  $K = 10$  sweeps,  $L = 10$  particles, and Adam (lr =  $10^{-4}$ ,  $\beta_1 = 0.9$ ,  $\beta_2 = 0.99$ ) for 200,000 iterations (see Appendix D for model architecture).

Once again, we compare the APG sampler with the encoders using RWS. Figure 2b shows individual samples analogous to the ones in Figure 2a. The APG sampler scales to a large range of number of variables, whereas a standard encoder trained using RWS fails to produce reasonable proposals.

## 5.3 Sample Quality Evaluation

In both mixture models, we compute the log-joint distribution  $\log p_\theta(x, z)$  (see in Table 1) as a function of sweep iteration to measure the convergence and the effective sample size (see in Table 1) to assess proposal quality

$$\frac{\text{ESS}}{L} = \frac{(\sum_{l=1}^L w^{k,l})^2}{L \sum_{l=1}^L (w^{k,l})^2}. \quad (9)$$

**Log joint**  $\log p_\theta(x, z)$ . Because the marginal  $q_\phi(z^k | x)$  is intractable, it is difficult to compute an lower bound or upper bound at each sweep. Here we compute the log joint in each test dataset for both the APG sampler with different number

of sweeps and the RWS baselines and report the differences on average to see how much more is achieved by the APG sampler. In both models, the APG sampler gains a higher log joint compared with the encoder trained by RWS.

**ESS.** One advantage of the APG sampler that it decomposes a high dimensional sampling problem into a sequence of lower dimensional sampling problems. To show that, we compute the ESS when 1) we resample only after one sweep and 2) we resample after each block update. WE can see that the granular sampling strategy significantly improves the ESS in both cases.

## 5.4 Fixed Computation Budget Analysis

As a mean of comparing the performance of APG samplers for varying numbers of sweeps  $K$ , we perform an experiment in which the computation budget is fixed at  $K \cdot L = 1000$  samples. Figure 1 shows  $\log p_\theta(x, z)$  and ESS/L. The shaded area denotes the standard deviation over 10 runs that each comprise 5 datasets that were chosen at random. We can see that it in general, it is more effective to perform more APG sweeps  $K$  with a smaller number of particles  $L$ , that it is to increase the particle budget.

## 5.5 Time Series Model – Bouncing MNIST

Finally, we apply the APG sampler to a time series model that is trained with short timescales, and evaluate its performance with longer timescales and larger numbers of latent variables. The data  $x_{1:T}$  is a sequence of images of  $D$  moving MNIST digits. Our generative model consists of global variables  $z_{1:D}^{\text{what}}$  corresponding to digit latent variables and local variables  $z_{1:D,1:T}^{\text{where}}$  corresponding to the digit trajectories. The deep generative model is a state space model that factorizes across digits of the form

$$\begin{aligned}z_d^{\text{what}} &\sim \text{Norm}(0, I), \quad z_{d,1}^{\text{where}} \sim \text{Norm}(0, I), \\ z_{d,t}^{\text{where}} &\sim \text{Norm}(z_{d,t-1}^{\text{where}}, \sigma_0^2 I) \\ x_t &\sim \text{Bern}\left(\sigma\left(\sum_d \text{ST}(\mu_\theta(z_d^{\text{what}}), z_{d,t}^{\text{where}})\right)\right)\end{aligned}$$

Here, ST is a spatial transformer [38] that maps the output of a feedforward decoder  $\mu_\theta$  that maps logits for a  $28 \times 28$  MNIST image onto a  $96 \times 96$  canvas based on the location variable  $z_{d,t}^{\text{where}}$ .

Our amortized Gibbs updates employ  $T + 1$  blocks  $(z_{1:D}^{\text{what}}, z_{1:D,1}^{\text{where}}, z_{1:D,2}^{\text{where}}, \dots, z_{1:D,T}^{\text{where}})$ . Empirically this works better than splitting the latent variables into global and local variables, since resampling at each time step  $t$  helps disentangle the digit locations if they overlap.

We train our model on 60000 bouncing MNIST sequences, each of which contains  $D = 3$  digits and  $T = 10$  frame images. We use 10 sequences per batch,  $K = 5$  sweeps,  $L = 10$  particles, and Adam (lr =  $10^{-4}$ ,  $\beta_1 = 0.9$ ,  $\beta_2 =$

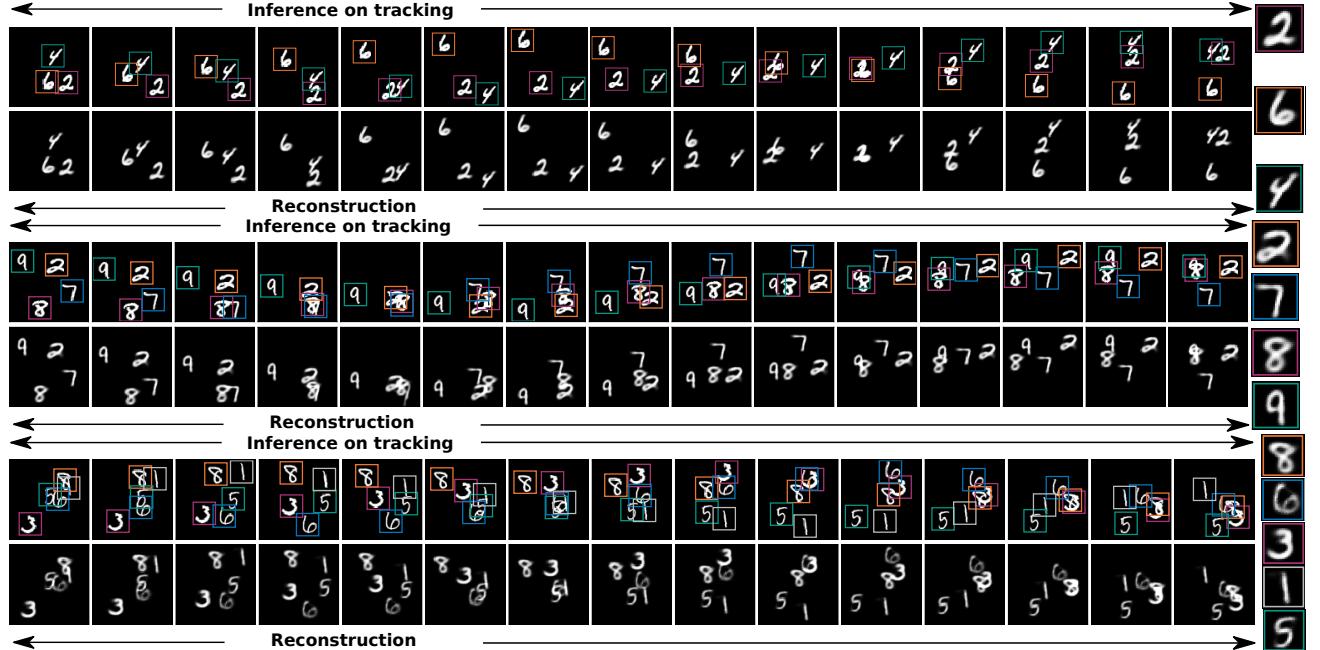


Figure 3: Inferred digit trajectories and reconstructions for (top)  $D = 3$  (middle)  $D = 4$  and (bottom)  $D = 5$  digits for  $T = 15$  for a model trained on  $D = 3$  and  $T = 10$ .

0.99) for 200,000 iterations (see Appendix D for model architecture).

We show that APG sampler can scale to larger number of variables by testing the model on datasets with  $T \in \{20, 100\}$  timesteps and  $D \in \{3, 4, 5\}$  digits. Figure 3 shows the inference and reconstruction using single samples from the variational distribution. (plots are truncated by the first 15 timesteps due to limited space, see Appendix E for more examples with full timesteps). Qualitatively, we see that the digit trajectories  $z_{1:D,1:T}^{\text{where}}$  and latent variables  $z_{1:D}^{\text{what}}$  are inferred well. In Figure 4, we show the mean squared error between the video and its reconstruction for different  $T$  and  $D$ . The results confirm that performance improves with increasing number of Gibbs sweeps  $K$ . In certain cases, a larger number of time points  $T$  in fact improves convergence as a function of the number of sweeps  $K$ .

## 6 Conclusion

We developed amortized Gibbs samplers that iterate between updates to global and local variables using neural proposals. These methods offer a path towards designing variational approximations to intractable posteriors in structured deep generative models. APG samplers have particular strengths in problems with global variables, but more generally make it possible to design amortized approaches that exploit conditional independence. This decomposes high-dimesional sampling problems into a sequence of lower-dimensional problems, hereby greatly reducing estimator variance. Moreover, our parameterization in terms of neural sufficient statis-

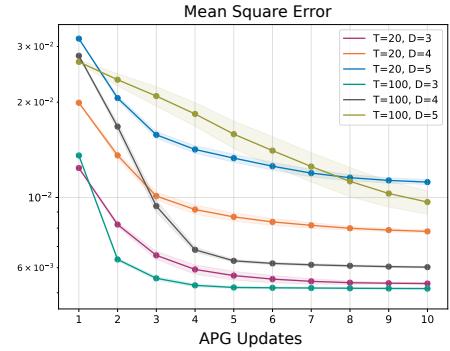


Figure 4: Mean squared error between video frames and reconstructions as a function of the number of APG sweeps.

tics makes it comparatively easy to design models that will generalize to datasets that vary in size.

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## A Derivation of Posterior Invariance

We can see that individual block updates leave the posterior invariant by proposing variables  $z_{\preceq b}^k$  from a partial kernel  $\kappa(z_{\preceq b}^k | x, z^{k-1})$  and then marginalize over the corresponding variables from the previous step  $z_{\preceq b}^{k-1}$ ,

$$\begin{aligned} \int dz_{\preceq b}^{k-1} p_\theta(z^{k-1} | x) \kappa(z_{\preceq b}^k | x, z^{k-1}) &= \int dz_{\preceq b}^{k-1} p_\theta(z^{k-1} | x) \int dz_{\succ b}^k \kappa(z^k | x, z^{k-1}) \\ &= \int dz_{\preceq b}^{k-1} p_\theta(z^{k-1} | x) \prod_{m=1}^b p_\theta(z_m^k | z_{\preceq m}^k, z_{\succ m}^{k-1}, x) \\ &= \int dz_{\preceq b}^{k-1} p_\theta(z^{k-1} | x) p_\theta(z_{\preceq b}^k | z_{\succ 1}^{k-1}, x) \\ &= p_\theta(z_{\preceq b}^k, z_{\succ b}^{k-1} | x). \end{aligned}$$

## B Gradient of the generative model

This is actually a known (although indeed not obvious) identity. Briefly, we can express the expected gradient of the log joint as

$$\mathbb{E}_{p_\theta(z|x)} [\nabla_\theta \log p_\theta(x, z)] = \mathbb{E}_{p_\theta(z|x)} [\nabla_\theta \log p_\theta(x) + \nabla_\theta \log p_\theta(z|x)] = \mathbb{E}_{p_\theta(z|x)} [\nabla_\theta \log p_\theta(x)] = \nabla_\theta \log p_\theta(x)$$

Here we make use of a standard identity that is also used in, e.g., likelihood-ratio estimators

$$\mathbb{E}_{p_\theta(z|x)} [\nabla_\theta \log p_\theta(z|x)] = \int p_\theta(z|x) \nabla_\theta \log p_\theta(z|x) dz = \int \nabla_\theta p_\theta(z|x) dz = \nabla_\theta \int p_\theta(z|x) dz = \nabla_\theta 1 = 0$$

Equation B then follows if we use self-normalized importance sampling to approximate  $\mathbb{E}_{p_\theta(z|x)} [\nabla_\theta \log p_\theta(x, z)]$ .

## C Proof of the amortized population Gibbs algorithm

Here, we provide an alternative proof of correctness of the APG algorithm given in Algorithm 2, based on the construction of proper weights [19] which was introduced after SMC samplers [18]. We first introduce proper weights, and then present several operations that preserve the proper weighting property and finally we apply these properties in proving correctness of APG.

### C.1 Proper weights

**Definition 1** (Proper weights). Given an unnormalized density  $\tilde{p}(z)$ , with corresponding normalizing constant  $Z_p := \int \tilde{p}(z) dz$  and normalized density  $p \equiv \tilde{p}/Z_p$ , the random variables  $z, w \sim P(z, w)$  are properly weighted with respect to  $\tilde{p}(z)$  if and only if for any measurable function  $f$

$$\mathbb{E}_{P(z,w)} [wf(z)] = Z_p \mathbb{E}_{p(z)} [f(z)]. \quad (10)$$

We will also denote this as

$$z, w \xrightarrow{\text{p.w.}} \tilde{p}.$$

**Using proper weights.** Given independent samples  $z_\ell, w_\ell \sim P$ , we can estimate  $Z_p$  by setting  $f \equiv 1$ :

$$Z_p \approx \frac{1}{L} \sum_{\ell=1}^L w_\ell.$$

This estimator is unbiased because it is a Monte Carlo estimator of the left hand side of (10). We can also estimate  $\mathbb{E}_{p(z)} [f(z)]$  as

$$\mathbb{E}_{p(z)} [f(z)] \approx \frac{\frac{1}{L} \sum_{\ell=1}^L w_\ell f(z_\ell)}{\frac{1}{L} \sum_{\ell=1}^L w_\ell}.$$

While the numerator and the denominator are unbiased estimators of  $Z_p \mathbb{E}_{p(z)}[f(z)]$  and  $Z_p$  respectively, their fraction is biased. We often write this estimator as

$$\mathbb{E}_{p(z)}[f(z)] \approx \sum_{\ell=1}^L \bar{w}_\ell f(z_\ell), \quad (11)$$

where  $\bar{w}_\ell := w_\ell / \sum_{\ell=1}^L w_\ell$  is the normalized weight.

## C.2 Operations that preserve proper weights

**Proposition 1** (Nested importance sampling). *Adapted from [19, Algorithm 1]. Given unnormalized densities  $\tilde{q}(z), \tilde{p}(z)$  with the normalizing constants  $Z_q, Z_p$  and normalized densities  $q(z), p(z)$ , if*

$$z, w \xrightarrow{p.w.} \tilde{q}, \quad (12)$$

then

$$z, \frac{w\tilde{p}(z)}{\tilde{q}(z)} \xrightarrow{p.w.} \tilde{p}.$$

*Proof.* First define the distribution of  $z, w$  as  $Q$ . For measurable  $f(z)$

$$\mathbb{E}_{Q(z,w)} \left[ \frac{w\tilde{p}(z)}{\tilde{q}(z)} f(z) \right] = Z_q \mathbb{E}_{q(z)} \left[ \frac{\tilde{p}(z)f(z)}{\tilde{q}(z)} \right] = Z_q \int q(z) \frac{\tilde{p}(z)f(z)}{\tilde{q}(z)} dz = \int \tilde{p}(z)f(z) dz = Z_p \mathbb{E}_{p(z)}[f(z)].$$

□

**Proposition 2** (Resampling). *Adapted from [19, Section 3.1]. Given an unnormalized density  $\tilde{p}(z)$  (normalizing constant  $Z_p$ , normalized density  $p(z)$ ), if*

$$z_\ell, w_\ell \xrightarrow{p.w.} \tilde{p}, \quad (13)$$

then

$$z_b, w' \xrightarrow{p.w.} \tilde{p},$$

where  $\mathbb{P}(b=i) = w_i / \sum_\ell w_\ell$  and  $w' := \frac{1}{L} \sum_{\ell=1}^L w_\ell$ .

*Proof.* Define the distribution of  $z_\ell, w_\ell$  as  $P$ . We show that for any  $f$ ,  $\mathbb{E}[f(z_b)w'] = Z_p \mathbb{E}_{p(z)}[f(z)]$ .

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E}_{(\prod_\ell P(z_\ell, w_\ell)) p(b|w_{1:L})} [f(z_b)w'] &= \mathbb{E}_{\prod_\ell P(z_\ell, w_\ell)} \left[ \sum_{i=1}^L f(z_i) w' \mathbb{P}(b=i) \right] \\ &= \mathbb{E}_{\prod_\ell P(z_\ell, w_\ell)} \left[ \sum_{i=1}^L f(z_i) w' \frac{w_i}{\sum_\ell w_\ell} \right] \\ &= \mathbb{E}_{\prod_\ell P(z_\ell, w_\ell)} \left[ \frac{1}{L} \sum_{i=1}^L f(z_i) w_i \right] \\ &= \frac{1}{L} \sum_{i=1}^L \mathbb{E}_{P(z_i, w_i)} [f(z_i) w_i] = \frac{1}{L} \sum_{i=1}^L Z_p \mathbb{E}_{p(z)}[f(z)] = Z_p \mathbb{E}_{p(z)}[f(z)]. \end{aligned}$$

□

We define the following resampling operation which we will use in the APG algorithm. Due to Proposition 2, if  $z_\ell, w_\ell \xrightarrow{p.w.} \tilde{p}(z)$  then  $z'_\ell, w'_\ell \xrightarrow{p.w.} \tilde{p}(z')$ .

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**Algorithm 3** RESAMPLE

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- 1: **Input:**  $z_{1:L}, w_{1:L}$
  - 2: **Output:**  $z'_{1:L}, w'_{1:L}$
  - 3: Sample ancestral indices  $a_{1:L}$  such that  $\mathbb{P}(a_\ell = i) = w_i / \sum_{\ell=1}^L w_\ell$ .
  - 4: Set  $z'_\ell = z_{a_\ell}$ .
  - 5: Set  $w'_\ell = \frac{1}{L} \sum_{\ell=1}^L w_\ell$
  - 6: **Return**  $z'_{1:L}, w'_{1:L}$ .
- 

**Proposition 3 (Move).** Given an unnormalized density  $\tilde{p}(z)$  (normalizing constant  $Z_p$ , normalized density  $p(z)$ ) and normalized conditional densities  $q(z'|z)$  and  $r(z|z')$ , if

$$z, w \xrightarrow{\text{p.w.}} \tilde{p}, \quad (14a)$$

$$z' \sim q(z'|z), \quad (14b)$$

$$w' = \frac{\tilde{p}(z')r(z|z')}{\tilde{p}(z)q(z'|z)} w, \quad (14c)$$

then

$$z', w' \xrightarrow{\text{p.w.}} \tilde{p}. \quad (15)$$

*Proof.* Define the distribution of  $z, w$  as  $P$ . Then, due to (14a), for any measurable  $f(z)$ , we have

$$\mathbb{E}_P[wf(z)] = Z_p E_p[f(z)].$$

To prove (15), we show  $\mathbb{E}_{P(z,w)q(z'|z)}[w'f(z')] = Z_p \mathbb{E}_{p(z')}[f(z')]$  for any  $f$  as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E}_{P(z,w)q(z'|z)}[w'f(z')] &= \mathbb{E}_{P(z,w)q(z'|z)} \left[ \frac{\tilde{p}(z')r(z|z')}{\tilde{p}(z)q(z'|z)} wf(z') \right] \\ &= \int P(z, w)q(z'|z) \frac{\tilde{p}(z')r(z|z')}{\tilde{p}(z)q(z'|z)} wf(z') dz dw dz' \\ &= \int P(z, w) \frac{\tilde{p}(z')r(z|z')}{\tilde{p}(z)} wf(z') dz dw dz' \\ &= \int \tilde{p}(z')f(z') \left( \int P(z, w)w \frac{r(z|z')}{\tilde{p}(z)} dz dw \right) dz' \\ &= \int \tilde{p}(z')f(z')Z_p \mathbb{E}_{p(z)} \left[ \frac{r(z|z')}{\tilde{p}(z)} \right] dz'. \end{aligned} \quad (16)$$

Using the fact that  $\mathbb{E}_{p(z)} \left[ \frac{r(z|z')}{\tilde{p}(z)} \right] = \int p(z) \frac{r(z|z')}{\tilde{p}(z)} dz = \int r(z|z') dz / Z_p = 1/Z_p$ . Equation (16) simplifies to

$$\int \tilde{p}(z')f(z') dz' = Z_p \mathbb{E}_{p(z')}[f(z')].$$

□

### C.3 Correctness of APG

The point of the APG algorithm (Algorithm 2) is to estimate the gradient of the loss

$$\mathcal{L}(\phi) := \mathbb{E}_{p(x)} \left[ \text{KL}(p_\theta(z_{1:B}|x) || q_\phi(z_{1:B}|x)) + \sum_{b=1}^B \mathbb{E}_{p_\theta(z_{-b}|x)} [\text{KL}(p_\theta(z_b|z_{-b}, x) || q_\phi(z_b|z_{-b}, x))] \right] \quad (17)$$

in order to minimize it using SGD. The first term is for learning the initial proposal  $q_\phi(z_{1:B}|x)$ . The second term (sum over  $B$  terms) is for learning the  $B$  conditionals  $q_\phi(z_b|z_{-b}, x)$ .

Lines ??–?? accumulate the standard wake- $\phi$  estimator in reweighted wake-sleep. After line ??,  $g_\phi$  estimates  $\nabla_\phi \mathbb{E}_{p(x)} [\text{KL}(p_\theta(z_{1:B}|x) || q_\phi(z_{1:B}|x))]$ .

Now, we wish to show that line ?? of every iteration  $b$  of the for loop (lines ??–??) accumulates an estimate of

$$g_\phi^b := \nabla_\phi \mathbb{E}_{p_\theta(z_{-b}|x)} [\text{KL}(p_\theta(z_b|z_{-b}, x)||q_\phi(z_b|z_{-b}, x))] = \mathbb{E}_{p_\theta(z_{1:B}|x)} [-\nabla_\phi \log q_\phi(z_b|z_{-b}, x)]. \quad (18)$$

Our strategy will be to show that we maintain the loop invariant

$$z_{1:B}^\ell, w_\ell \stackrel{\text{P.W.}}{\sim} p_\theta(z_{1:B}, x) \quad \text{for } \ell \in 1 : L. \quad (19)$$

Following (11), this property allows us to estimate (18) as the sum in line ??.

Initially (start of line ??), (19) is true because  $z_{1:B}^\ell$  and  $w_\ell$  are obtained through importance sampling where  $q_\phi(z_{1:B}|x)$  is the proposal density and  $p_\theta(z_{1:B}^\ell, x)$  is the unnormalized target density. After line ??, (19) remains true because resampling preserves proper weights (see Proposition 2).

To prove that lines ??–?? preserve (19), we use Proposition 3 in the following way. Dropping all  $\ell$  superscripts to avoid clutter, at the start of line ??, we have

$$z_{1:B}, w \stackrel{\text{P.W.}}{\sim} p_\theta(z_{1:B}, x). \quad (20)$$

This corresponds to (14a).

Next, we define the conditional distribution corresponding to  $q(z'|z)$  in (14b) as

$$z'_{1:B} \sim q_\phi(z'_b|z_{-b}, x) \delta_{z_{-b}}(z'_{-b}), \quad (21)$$

where the density of  $z'_{-b}$  is a delta mass on  $z_{-b}$  defined as  $\delta_{z_{-b}}(z'_{-b}) = 1$  if  $z_{-b} = z'_{-b}$  and 0 otherwise. Procedurally, we obtain a sample by just sampling  $z'_b$  as in line ?? and treating  $z_{-b}$  as  $z'_{-b}$ .

Next, we define the weight  $w'$  corresponding to the weight in (14c) as

$$w' = \frac{p_\theta(z'_b, z'_{-b}, x) r(z_b|z_{-b}, x) \delta_{z_{-b}}(z_{-b})}{p_\theta(z_b, z_{-b}, x) q_\phi(z'_b|z_{-b}, x) \delta_{z_{-b}}(z'_{-b})} w, \quad (22)$$

where the terms in blue are treated as densities (normalized or unnormalized) of  $z'_{1:B}$  and the terms in red are treated as densities of  $z_{1:B}$ . Since both delta mass densities evaluate to one, line ?? evaluates this weight and reassigns it to  $w_\ell$ .

Finally, applying the (15) from Proposition 3,  $z'_{1:B}, w' \stackrel{\text{P.W.}}{\sim} p_\theta(z'_{1:B}, x)$ . Since  $z_{-b} = z'_{-b}$  and  $z_b = z'_b$  due to the assignment in line ??, we recover the invariant (19).

## D Architecture of the Amortized Population Gibbs samplers

### GMM

Layer	$q_\phi(\mu, \tau x)$	
Input	Concat[ $x_n \in \mathbb{R}^2$ ]	
1	FC 2	FC 3 Softmax

Layer	$q_\phi(\mu, \tau x, c)$	
Input	Concat[ $x_n \in \mathbb{R}^2, c_n \in \mathbb{R}^3$ ]	
1	FC 2	FC 3 Softmax

### DGMM

Layer	$q_\phi(c x, \mu, \tau)$
Input	Concat[ $x_n \in \mathbb{R}^2, \mu_i \in \mathbb{R}^2$ ]
1	FC 32 Tanh
2	FC 1, Intermediate Variable $o_i \in \mathbb{R}$
3	Concat[ $o_i \in \mathbb{R}$ ], Softmax ( $c_n$ )

Layer	$q_\phi(\mu x)$	
Input	$x_n \in \mathbb{R}^2$	
1	FC 32 Tanh	FC 32 Tanh
2	FC 16 Tanh, $v_n \in \mathbb{R}$	FC 4 Softmax, $\gamma_n \in \mathbb{R}^3$
3	$T_n := \gamma_n \otimes v_n \in \mathbb{R}^{3 \times 16}$	
4	Concat[ $\sum_n^N T_n[i], \mu_0 \in \mathbb{R}^2, \text{Diag}(\sigma_0^2 I) \in \mathbb{R}^2$ ], $i = 1, 2, 3, 4$	
5	FC $2 \times 32$ Tanh	
6	FC $2 \times 8$ ( $\mu_{1:I}$ )	

Layer	$q_\phi(\mu z, c)$	
Input	Concat[ $x_n \in \mathbb{R}^2, c_n \in \mathbb{R}^3$ ]	
1	FC 32 Tanh	FC 32 Tanh
2	FC 16, $v_n \in \mathbb{R}$	FC 4 Softmax, $\gamma_n \in \mathbb{R}^3$
3	$T_n := \gamma_n \otimes v_n \in \mathbb{R}^{3 \times 16}$	
4	Concat[ $\sum_n^N T_n[i], \mu_0 \in \mathbb{R}^2, \text{Diag}(\sigma_0^2 I) \in \mathbb{R}^2$ ], $i = 1, 2, 3, 4$	
5	FC $2 \times 32$ Tanh	
6	FC $2 \times 2$ ( $\mu_i$ )	

Layer	$q_\phi(c z, \mu)$	
Input	Concat[ $x_n \in \mathbb{R}^2, \mu_i \in \mathbb{R}^2$ ]	
1	FC 32 Tanh	
2	FC 1, Intermediate Variable $o_i \in \mathbb{R}$	
3	Concat[ $o_i \in \mathbb{R}$ ], Softmax ( $c_n$ )	

Layer	$q_\phi(\alpha x, z, \mu)$	
Input	$x_n - \mu_i \in \mathbb{R}^2   z_n = i$	
1	FC 32 Tanh	
2	FC 1 Tanh	

Layer	$p_q(x \mu, c, \alpha)$	
Input	Concat[ $\alpha_n, c_n \in \mathbb{R}^5$ ]	
1	FC 32 Tanh	
2	FC 2 Tanh ( $\mu_n$ , fixed $\sigma_\epsilon$ )	

---

### Bouncing MNIST

Layer	$p_\theta(x z^{\text{what}}, z^{\text{where}})$
Input	$z_i^{\text{what}} \in \mathbb{R}^{10}$
1	FC 200 ReLU
2	FC 400 ReLU
3	digit $d_i \in \mathbb{R}^{784}$
4	$\text{ST}(d_i, z_{i,t}^{\text{where}}) \in \mathbb{R}^{9276}, i = 1..., i, t = 1..., T$

Layer	$q_\phi(z^{\text{what}} z^{\text{where}})$
Input	$x_t \in \mathbb{R}^{9276}, z_{i,t}^{\text{where}} \in \mathbb{R}^2, i = 1..., I, t = 1..., T$
1	$\text{ST}(x_t, z_{i,t}^{\text{where}}) \in \mathbb{R}^{784}, i = 1,.., I, t = 1,.., T$
2	FC 400 ReLU
3	FC 200 ReLU
4	$z_{i,t}^{\text{what}} \in \mathbb{R}^{10}, i = 1,.., I, t = 1,.., T$
5	Mean( $z_{1,t}^{\text{what}}, 1 : T$ ) $\in \mathbb{R}^{10}, i = 1,.., I$

Layer	$q_\phi(z^{\text{where}} z^{\text{what}})$
Input	$x_t \in \mathbb{R}^{9276}, z_{i,t}^{\text{what}}, i = 1,.., t = 1,.., T$
1	$\text{Conv2d}(x_t, z_{i,t}^{\text{what}}) \in \mathbb{R}^{4638}, i = 1,.., t = 1,.., T$
2	FC 400 Tanh
3	$2 \times \text{FC 200 Tanh}$
4	$2 \times 2 \text{Tanh}$

## E More Qualitative Results of Bouncing MNIST

The following are full reconstructions on test sets where timesteps  $T = 100$  and number of digits  $D = 3, 4, 5, 6$ , respectively. In each figure, the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th rows show the inference results, while the other rows show the reconstruction of the series above.

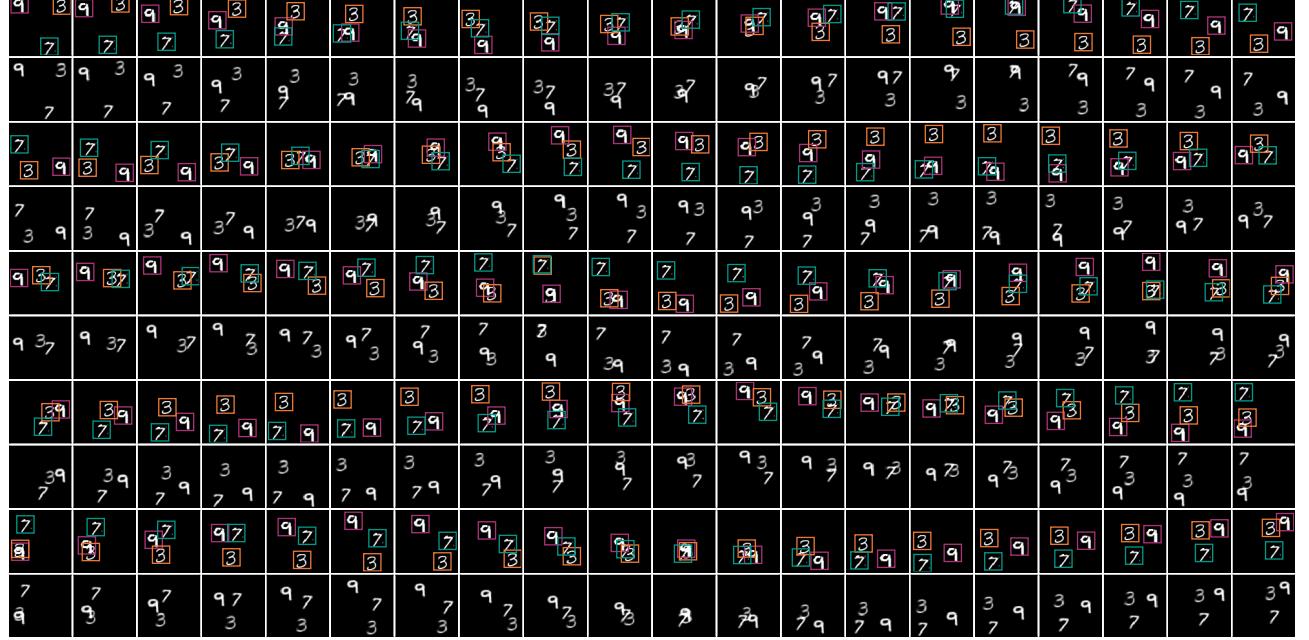


Figure 5: Full reconstruction for a video where  $T = 100, D = 3$ .



Figure 6: Full reconstruction for a video where  $T = 100, D = 4$ .



Figure 7: Full reconstruction for a video where  $T = 100, D = 5$ .

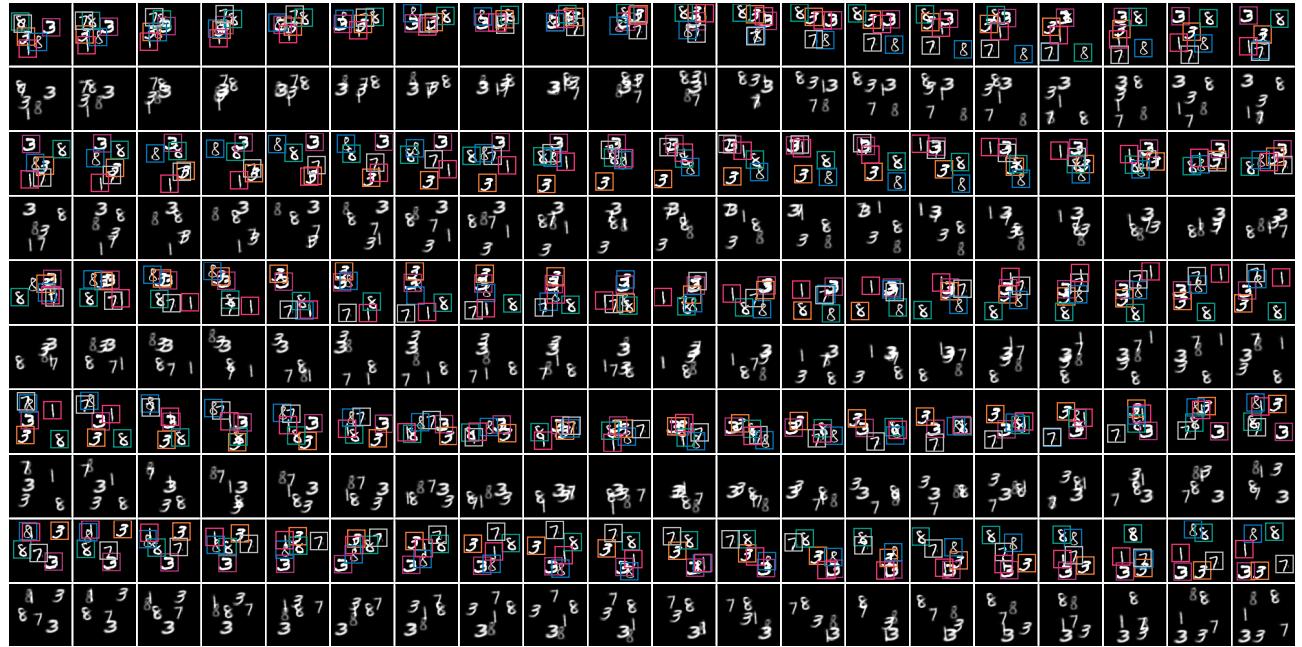


Figure 8: Full reconstruction for a video where  $T = 100, D = 6$ .