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# Label-Efficient Learning at Galaxy Zoo

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University of Toronto



UNIVERSITY OF  
TORONTO

MANCHESTER  
1824

The  
Alan Turing  
Institute



Live Demo

[bit.ly/decals\\_viz](https://bit.ly/decals_viz)

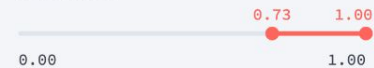


### Has spiral arms?

Answer

Yes

Posterior Mean

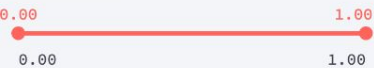


### Spiral arm count?

Answer

1

Posterior Mean

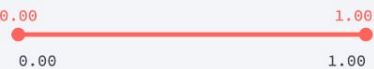


### Spiral winding?

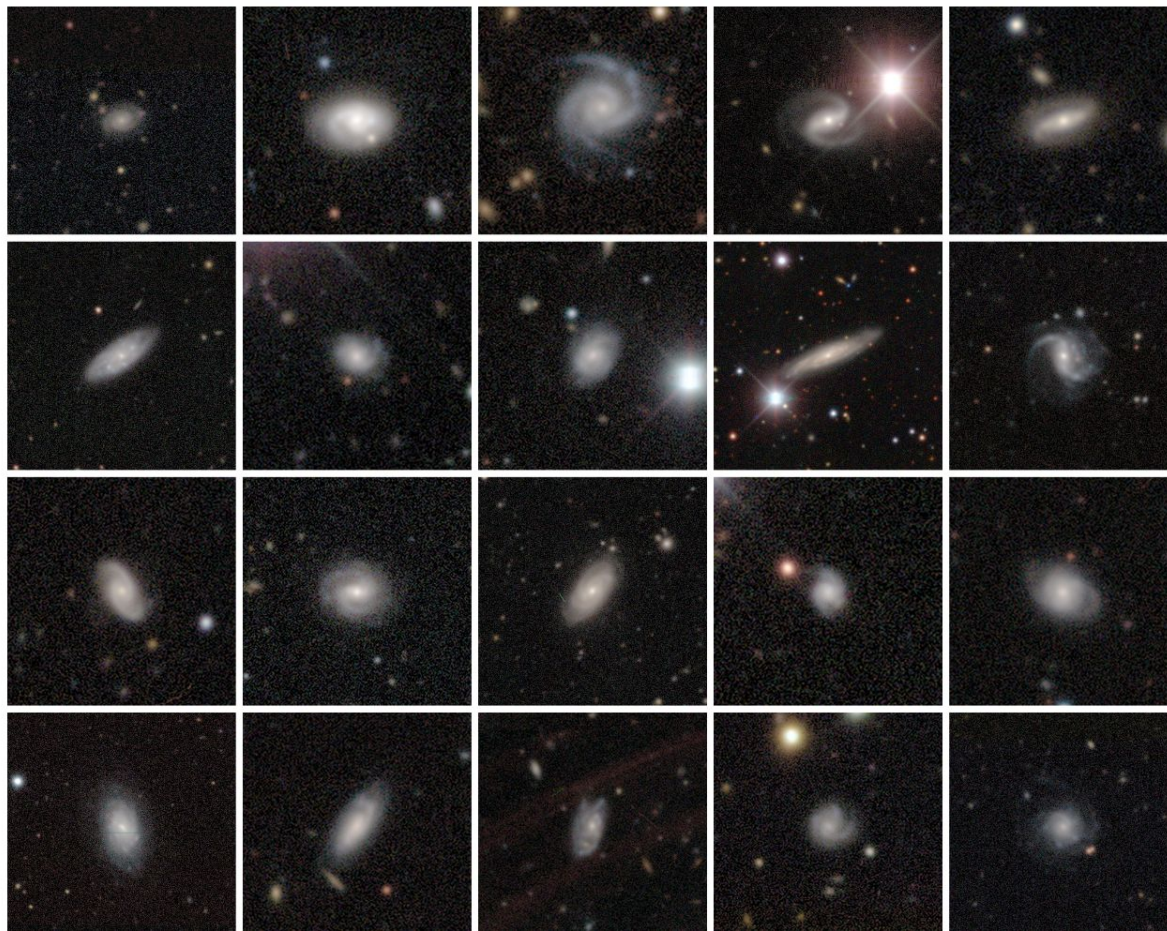
Answer

Tight

Posterior Mean



### Merging?





### Has spiral arms?

Answer

Yes

Posterior Mean

0.73 1.00

0.00

1.00

### Spiral arm count?

Answer

2

Posterior Mean

0.74 1.00

0.00

1.00

### Spiral winding?

Answer

Tight

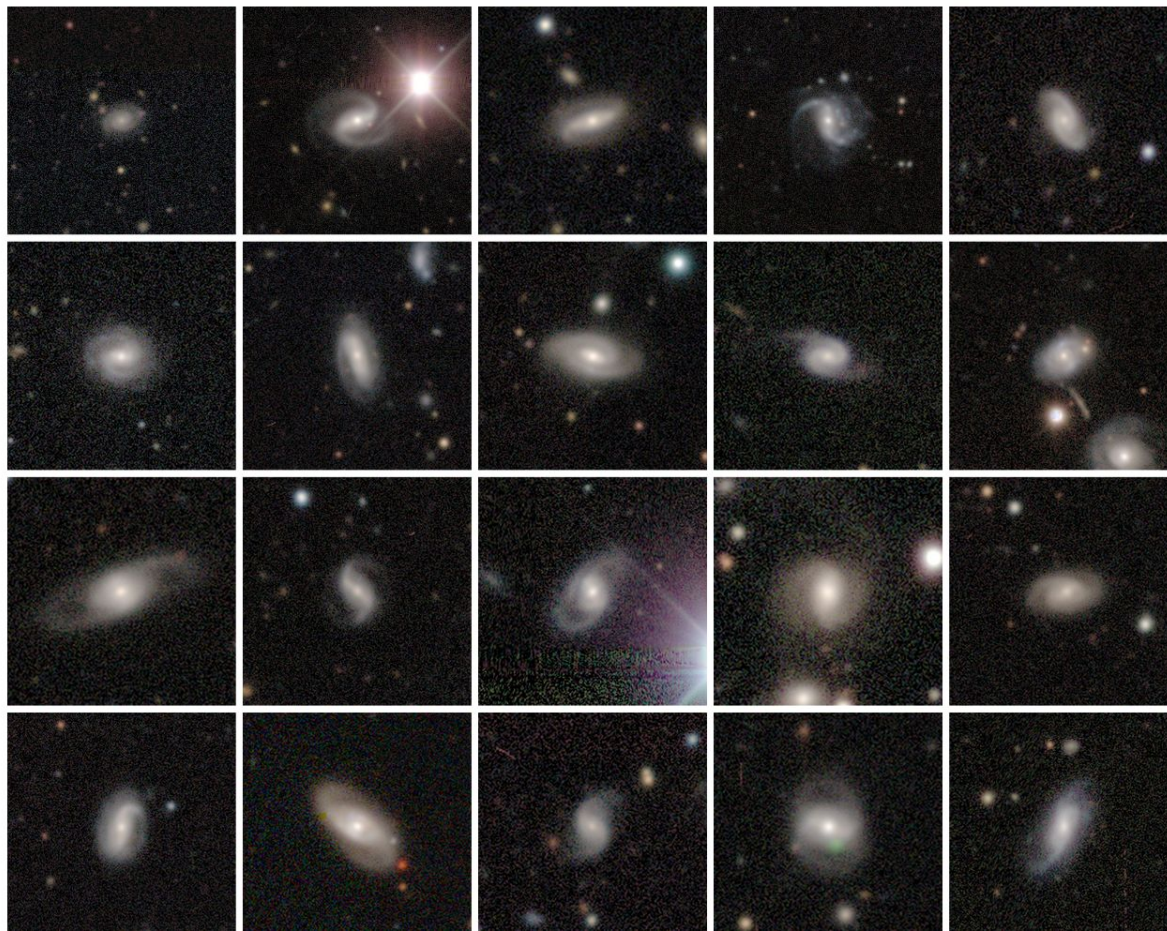
Posterior Mean

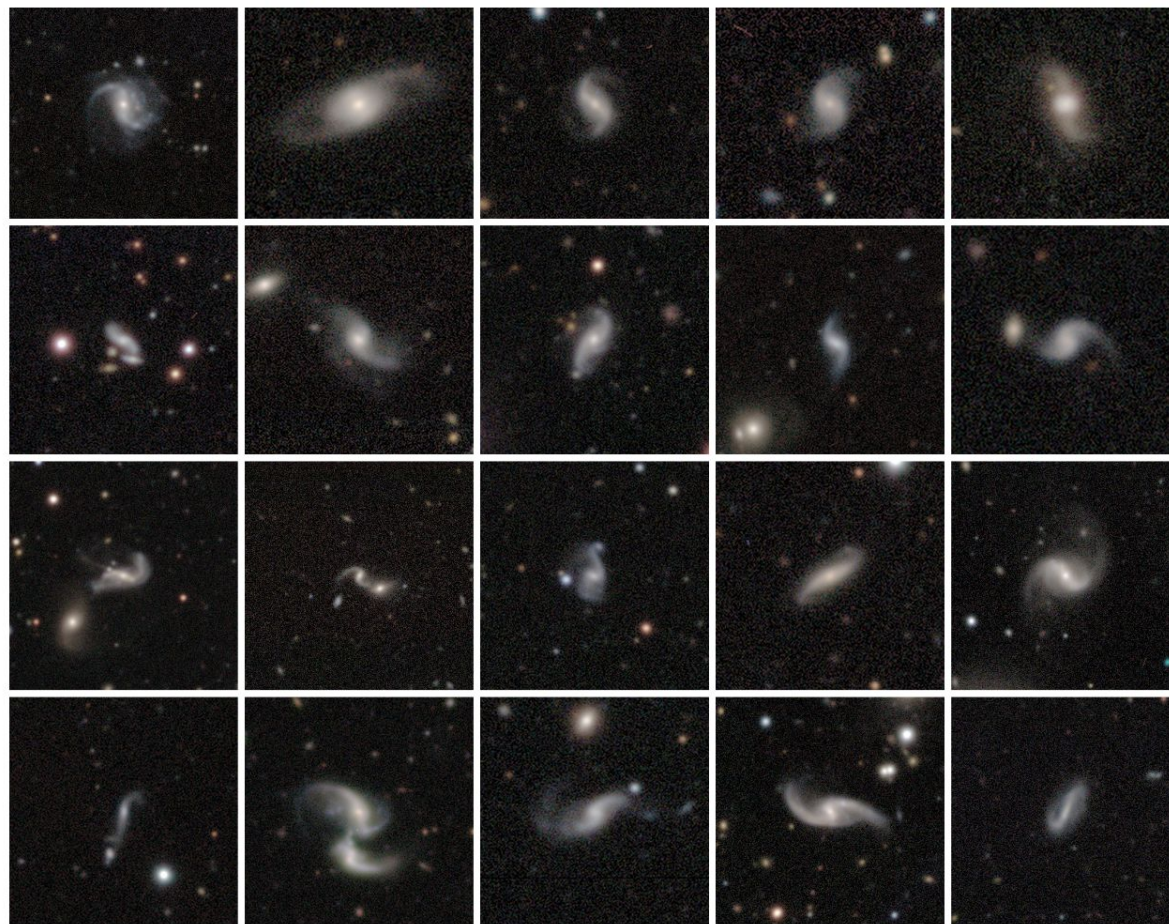
0.00 1.00

0.00

1.00

### Merging?



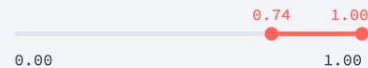


### Has spiral arms?

Answer

Yes

Posterior Mean

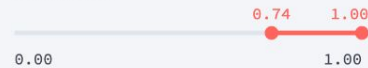


### Spiral arm count?

Answer

2

Posterior Mean

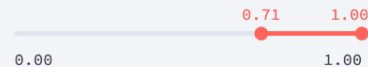


### Spiral winding?

Answer

Loose

Posterior Mean



### Merging?



1. Multi-task

*all GZ questions, all surveys*

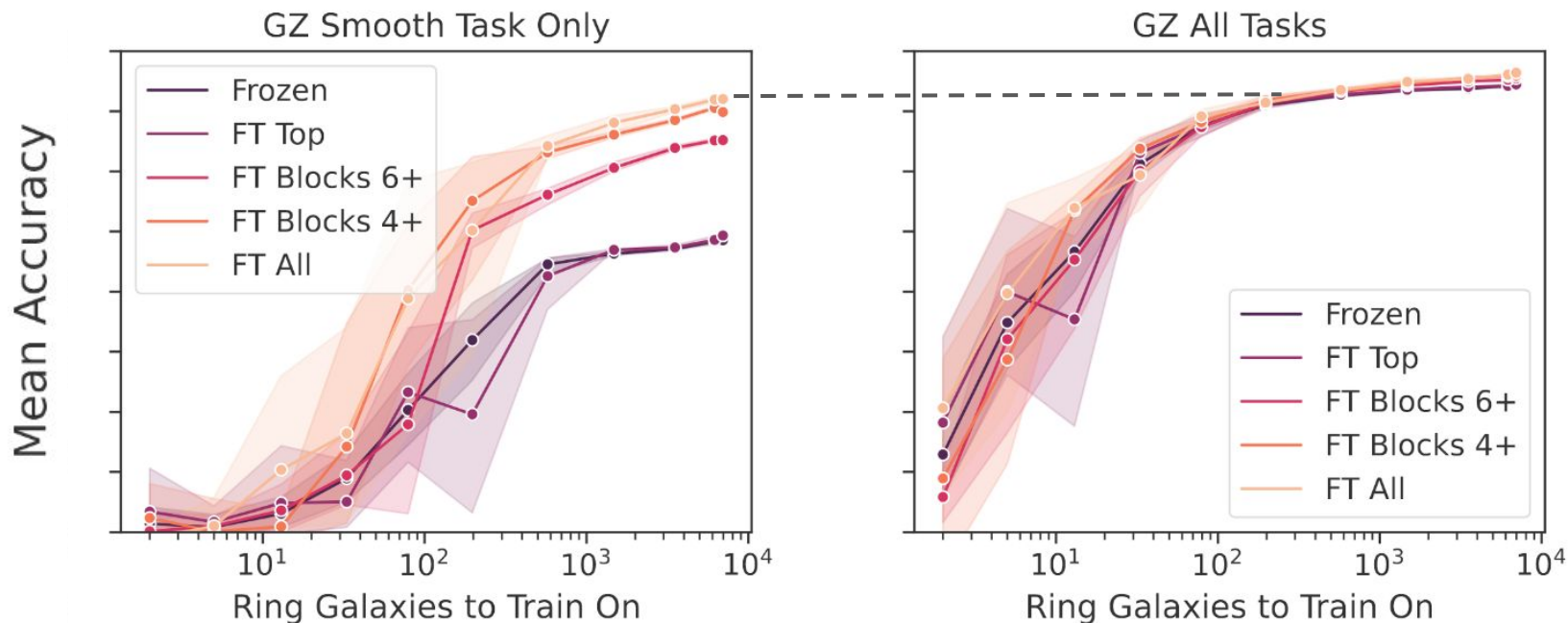
2. Pretraining

*contrastive + supervised*

3. Segmentation

*pixelwise labels & prediction*

# Many Questions = More General Representation





## Live Demo #2

[bit.ly/gz-explorer](https://bit.ly/gz-explorer)

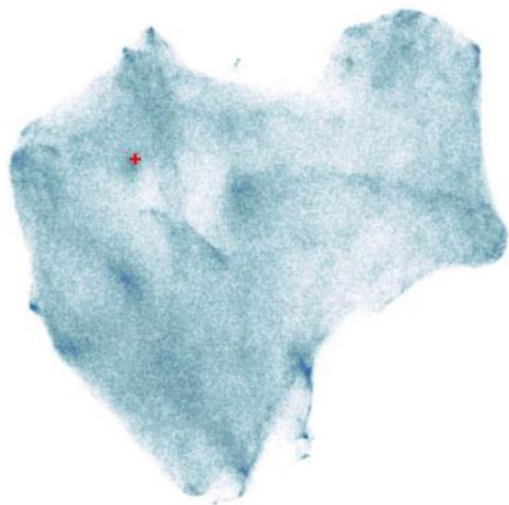


## Move Around

Click anywhere on the latent space to view galaxies.

Select Reduction

Featured v2



Location: (-0.109, 6.410)



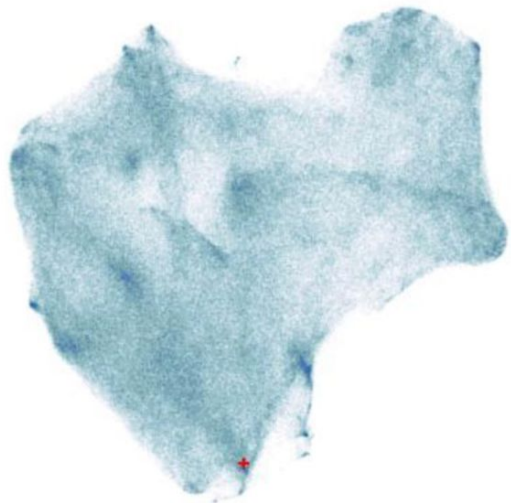
[Download CSV of the 1000 galaxies closest to your search](#)

## Move Around

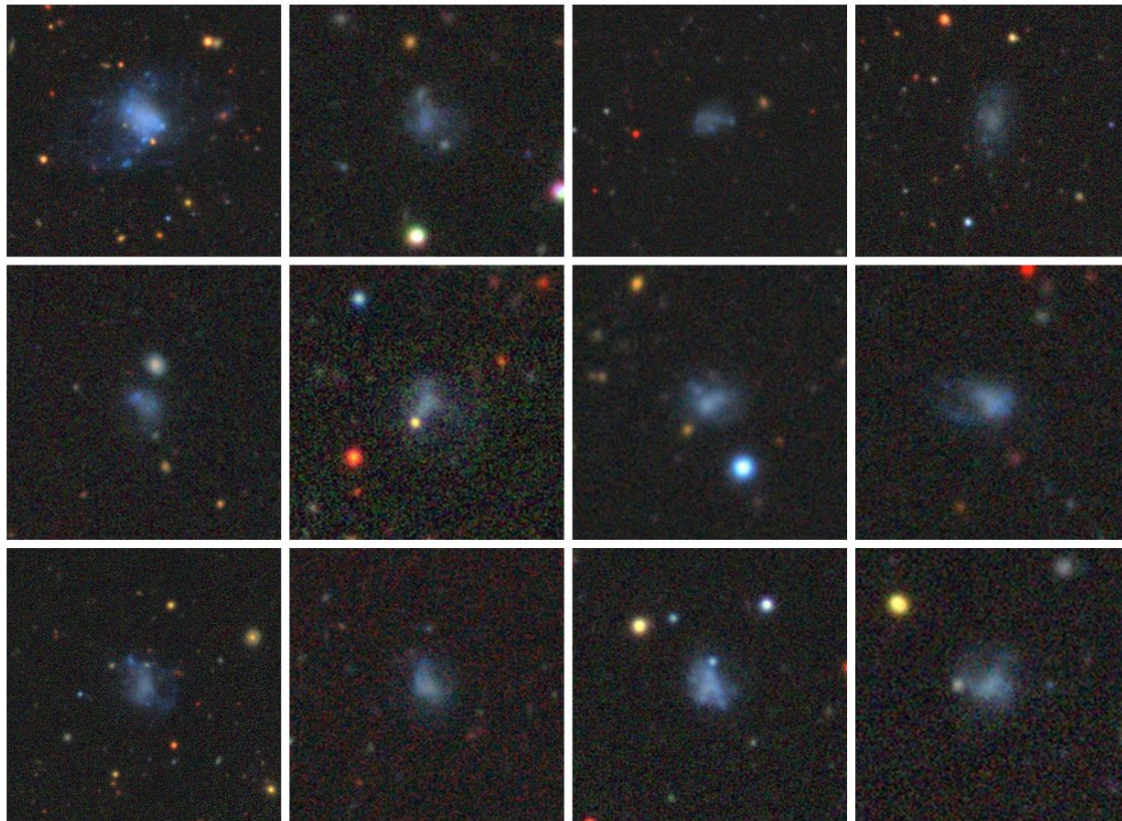
Click anywhere on the latent space to view galaxies.

Select Reduction

Featured v2



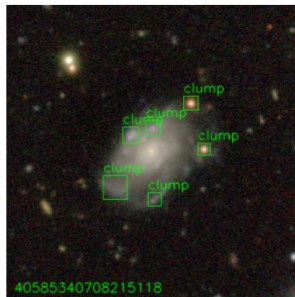
Location: (2.809, 0.812)



[Download CSV of the 1000 galaxies closest to your search](#)



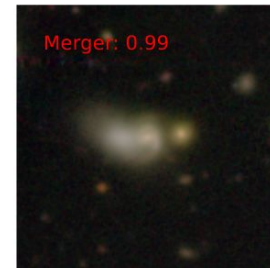
Scratch



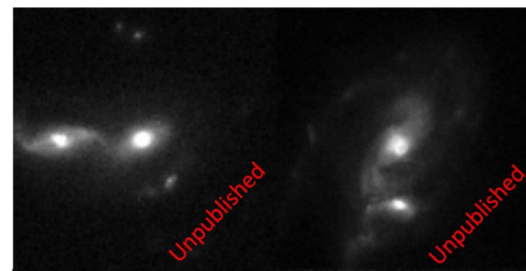
Zoobot

Jürgen Popp (prep.)

O’Ryan+23



Omori+23

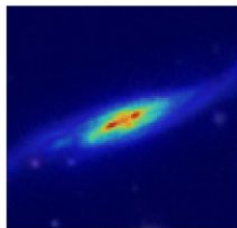
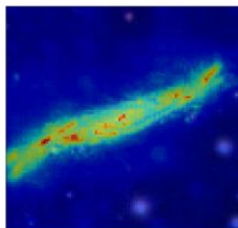


Input

Scratch

Scratch

Final mask



Bhambra+ 22

```
import pandas as pd
from galaxy_datasets.pytorch.galaxy_datamodule import GalaxyDataModule
from zoobot.pytorch.training import finetune

# csv with 'ring' column (0 or 1) and 'file_loc' column (path to image)
labelled_df = pd.read_csv('/your/path/some_labelled_galaxies.csv')

datamodule = GalaxyDataModule(
    label_cols=['ring'],
    catalog=labelled_df,
    batch_size=32
)

# load trained Zoobot model
model = finetune.FinetuneableZoobotClassifier(checkpoint_loc, num_classes=2)

# retrain to find rings
trainer = finetune.get_trainer(save_dir)
trainer.fit(model, datamodule)
```

Quickstart example from [github.com/mwalmsley/zoobot](https://github.com/mwalmsley/zoobot)

1. Multi-task

*all GZ questions, all surveys*

2. Pretraining

*contrastive + supervised*

3. Segmentation

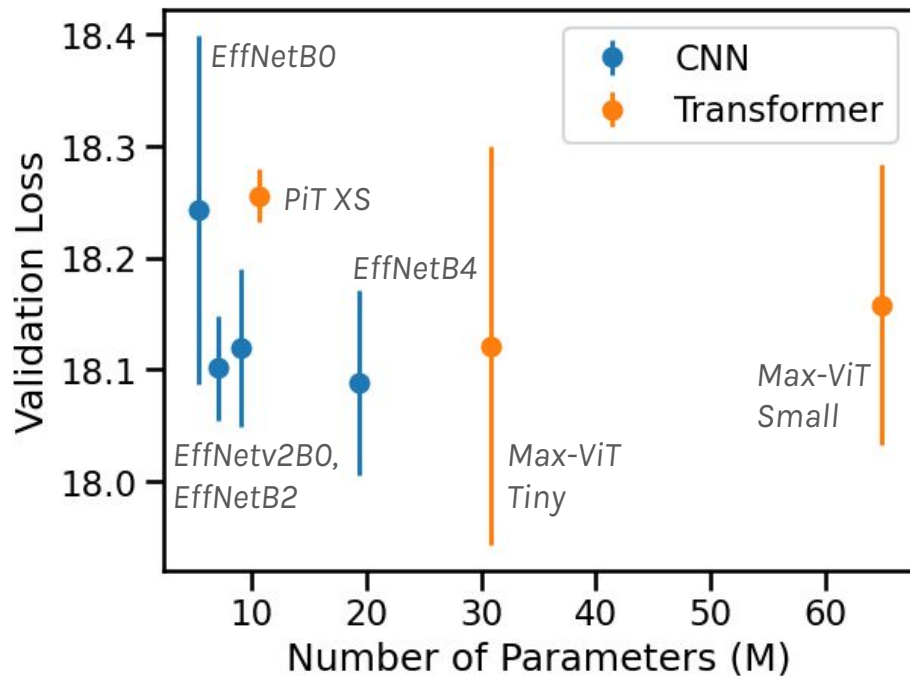
*pixelwise labels & prediction*

## Make it bigger?

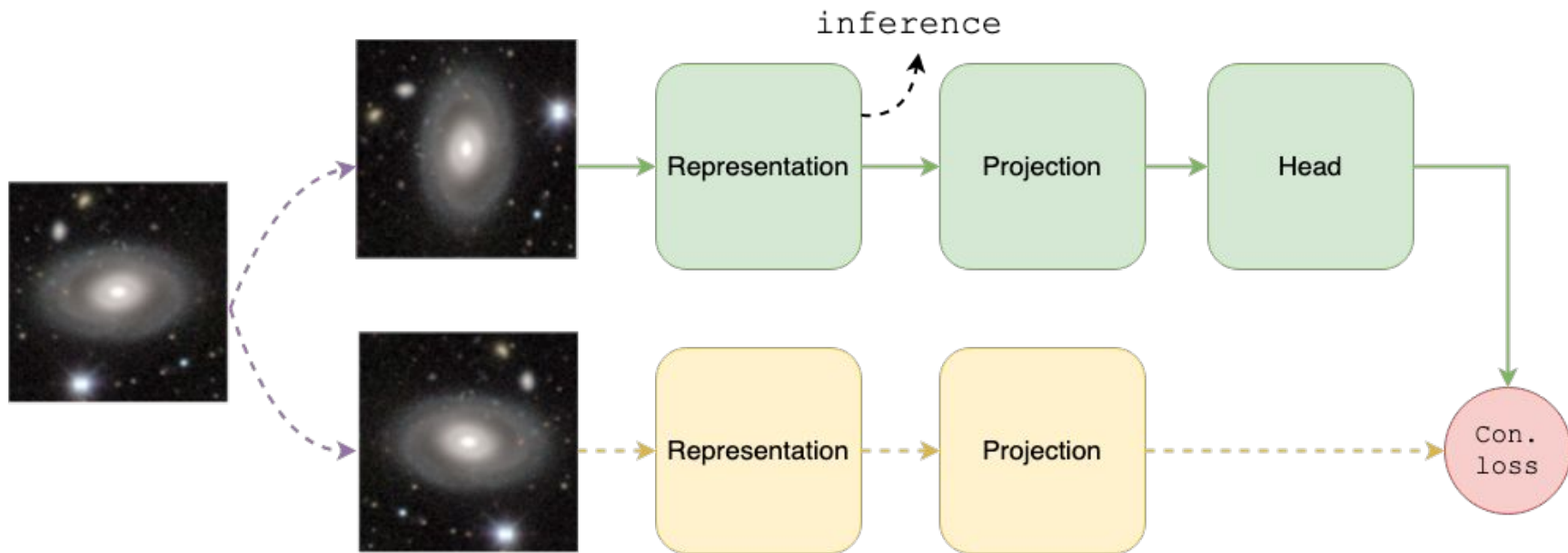
Foundation model 'scaling laws' also require data. But we're now

No evidence that larger models work better.

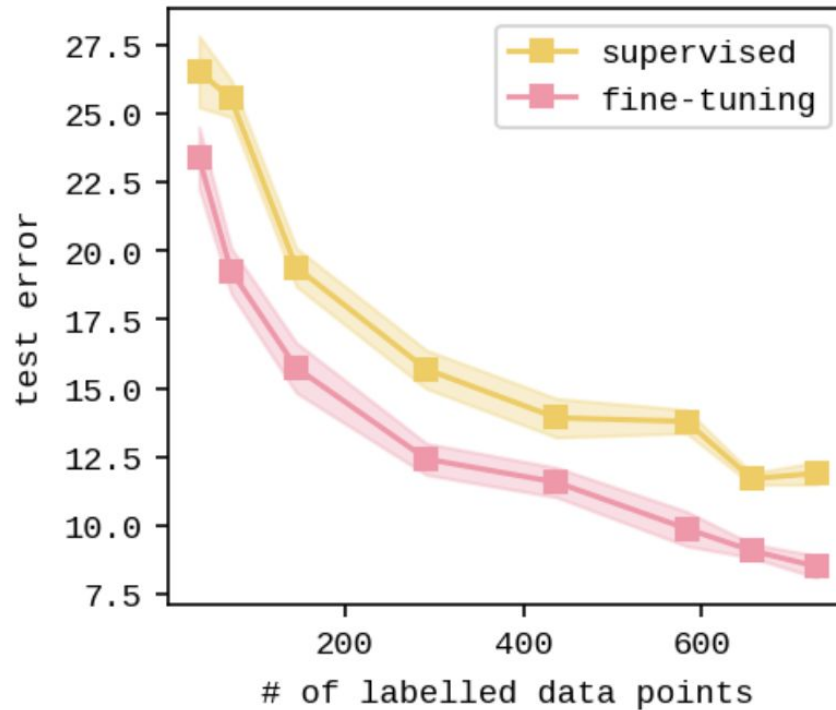
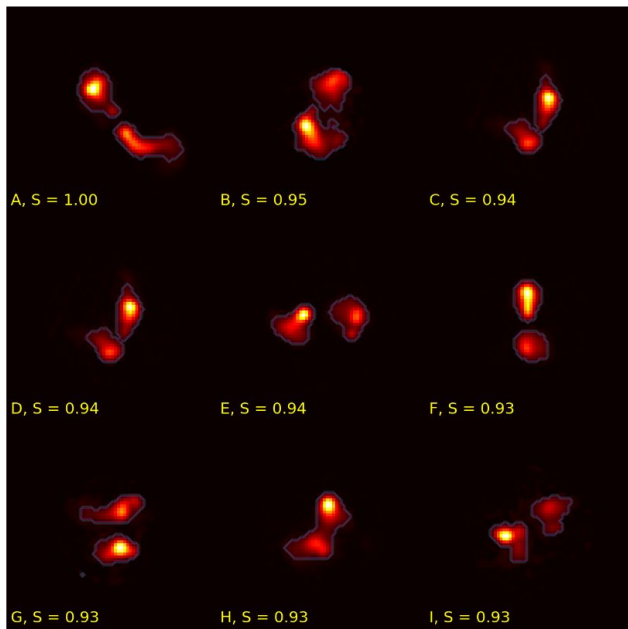
More GPUs are not all you need.



# Contrastive Learning with BYOL

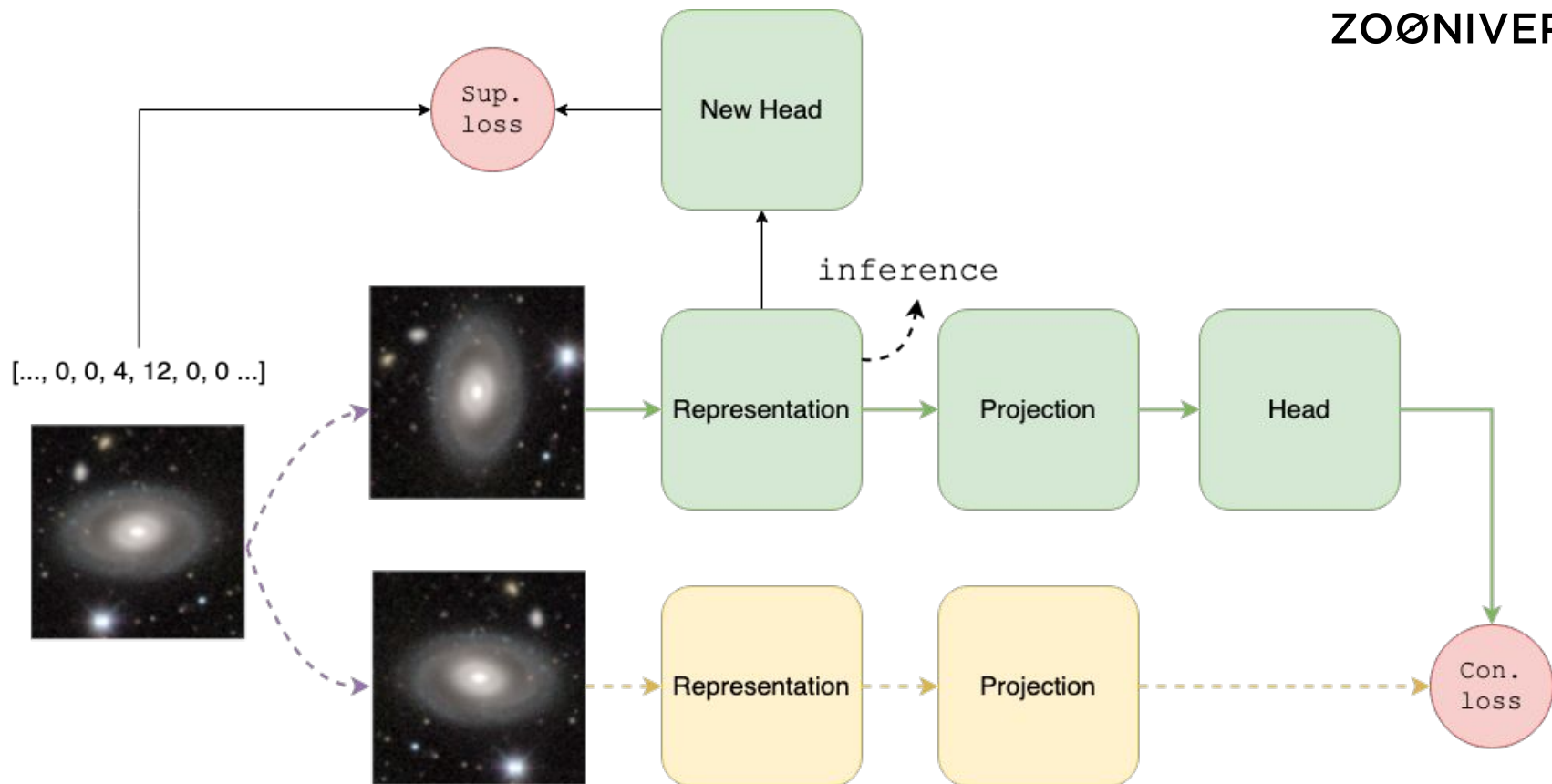


Introduced by Grill (2020)



For more, see Slijepcevic et. al. (2023)

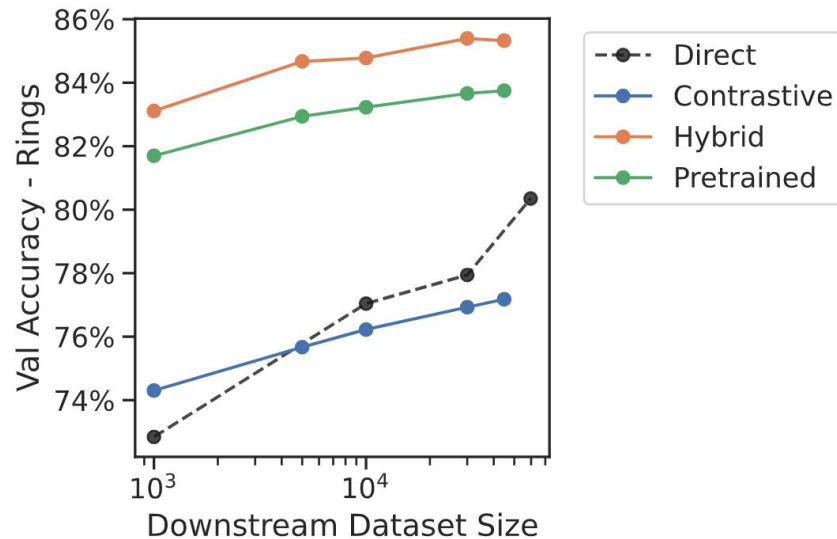




Adding a **new supervised head** to guide the contrastive representation

## Performance vs. Previous Best Methods

- **Contrastive learning** beats a few thousand labels
- **Large-scale pretraining** does better, even with ~50k labels
- **Hybrid learning** (both contrastive and pretraining) does best

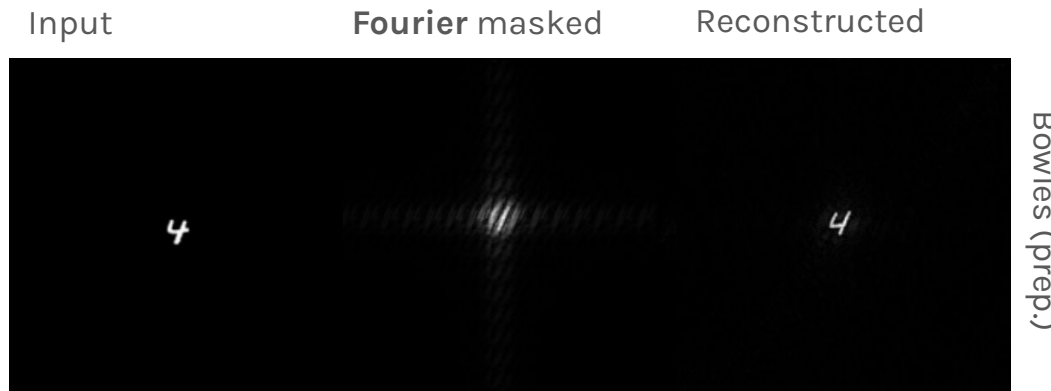


## Next - Masked AE

Work by Micah Bowles

**Pixel** masking is effective at large-scale pretraining on **dense** images

**Fourier** masking works better on **sparse** galaxy images



1. Multi-task

*all GZ questions, all surveys*

2. Pretraining

*contrastive + supervised*

3. Segmentation

*pixelwise labels & prediction*



**Input**



**Volunteers**

Masters+'21

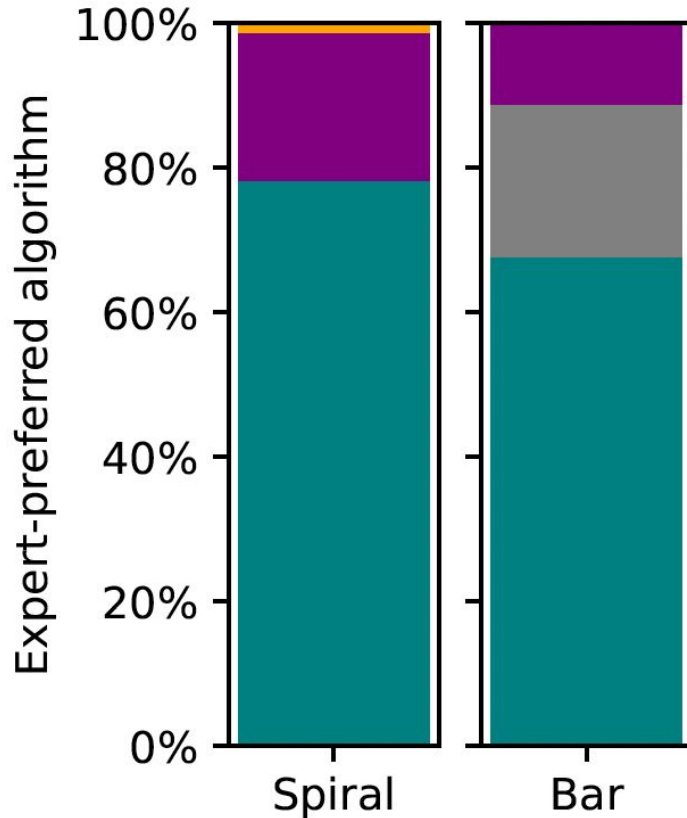


**sparcfire**

Davis+'14



**Walmsley &  
Spindler  
(submitted)**



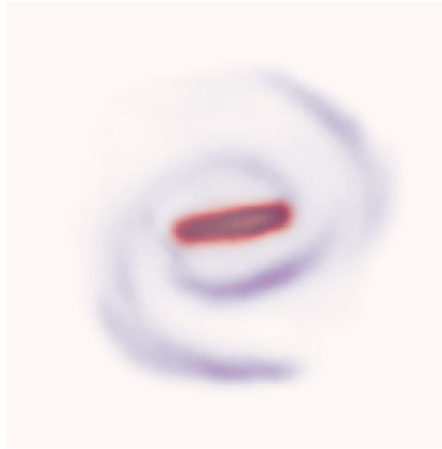
500 evaluations  
100 galaxies  
20 astronomers  
Blinded trial

[zooniverse.org/projects/  
mikewalmsley/galaxy-judges](https://zooniverse.org/projects/mikewalmsley/galaxy-judges)

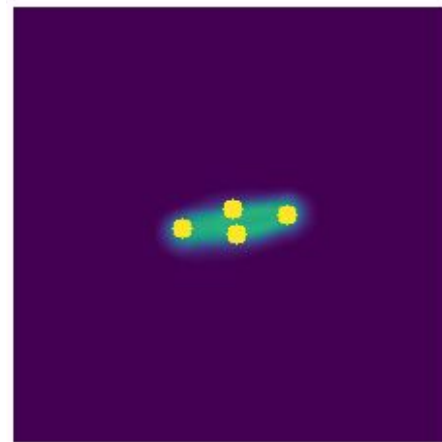
Image

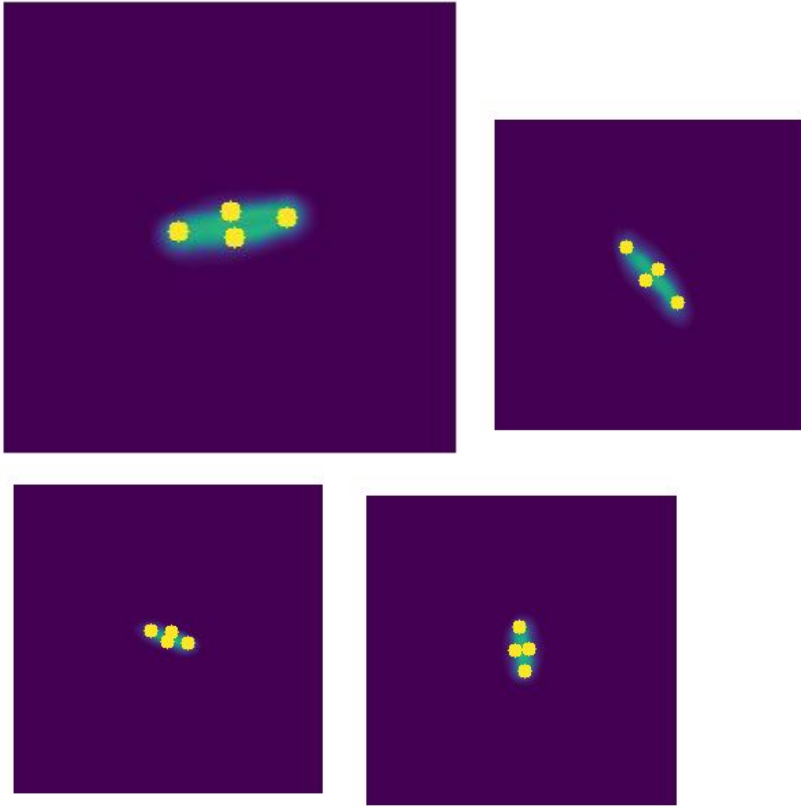


Prediction

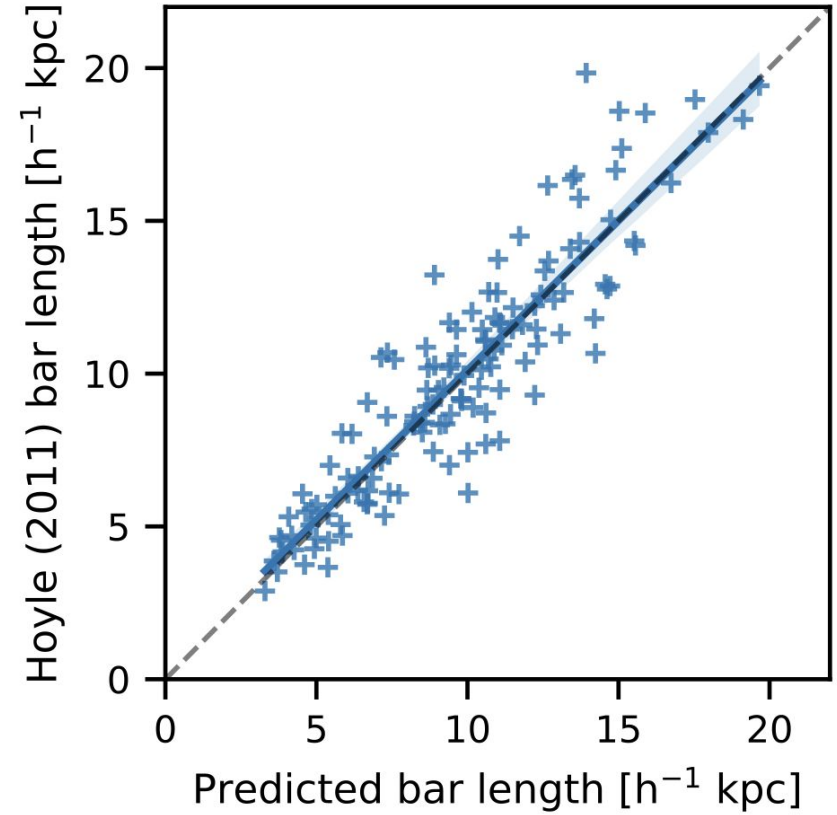


Bar extent

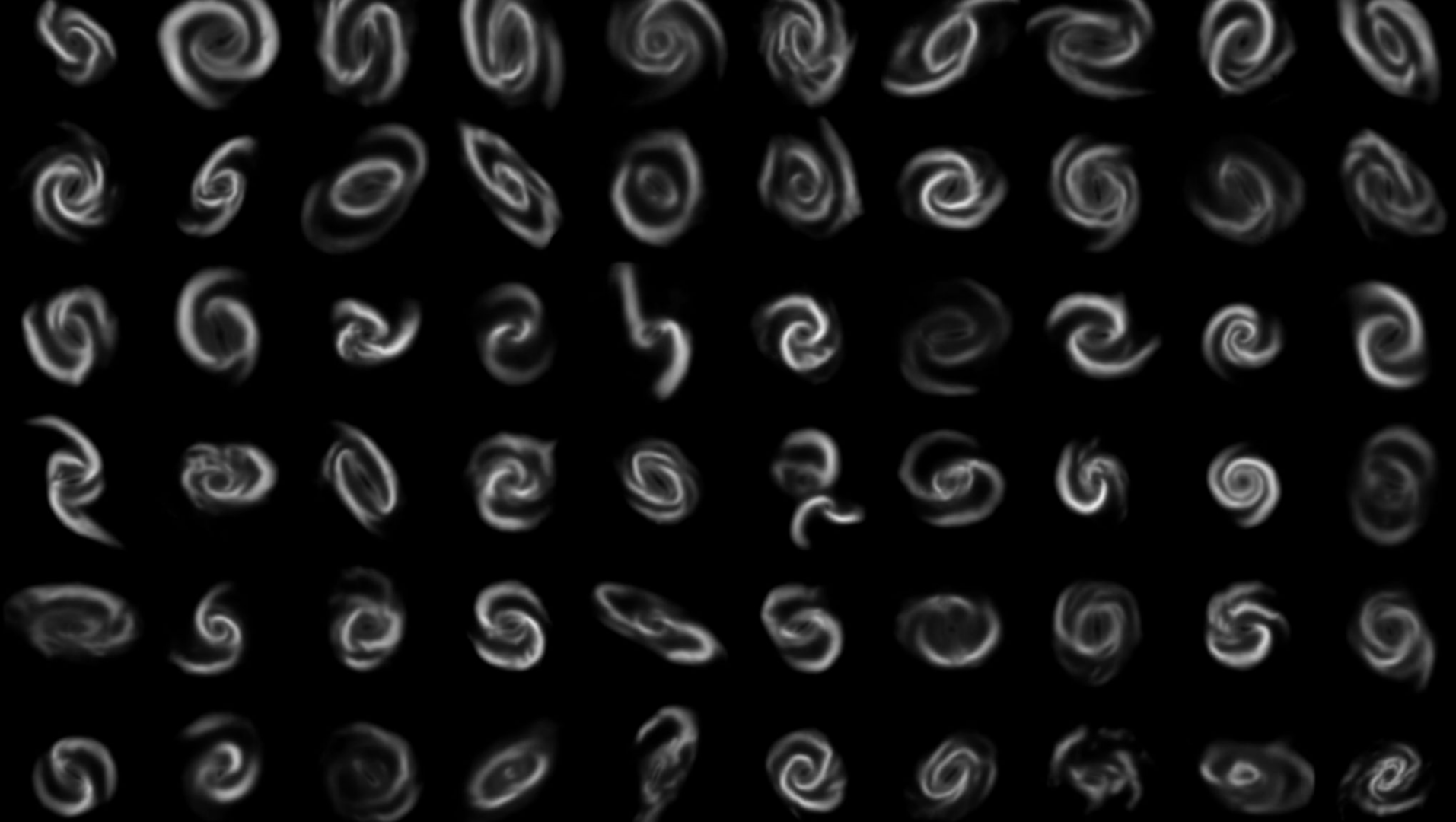




Repeat for many bars







1. Multi-task

*all GZ questions, all surveys*

2. Pretraining

*contrastive + supervised*

3. Segmentation

*pixelwise labels & prediction*

[github.com/mwalmsley/zoobot](https://github.com/mwalmsley/zoobot)

Zoobot: Adaptable Deep Learning Models for Galaxy Morphology

*Walmsley et. al. (2023), JOSS*

Towards Galaxy Foundation Models with Hybrid Contrastive Learning

*Walmsley et. al. (2022), ICML ML4Astro*

Building a Multi-Purpose Foundation Model for Radio Astronomy

*Slijepcevic et. al. (2023), RASTI*

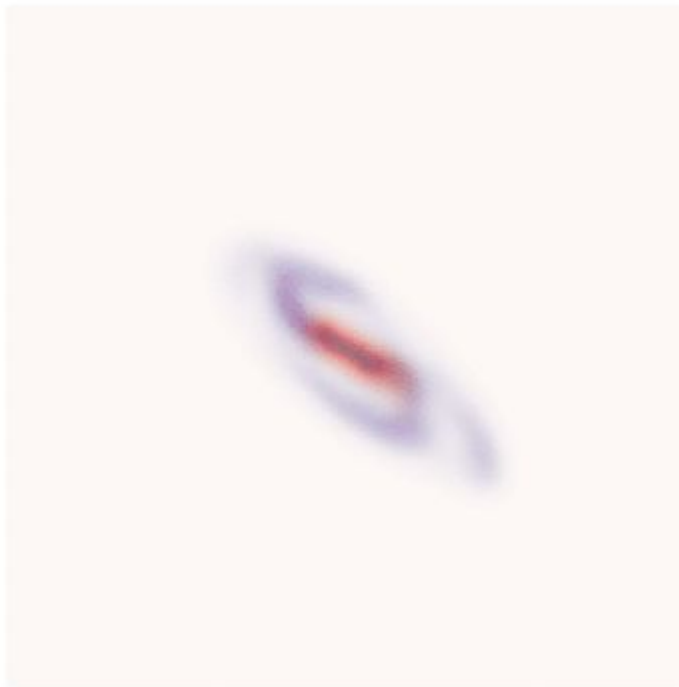
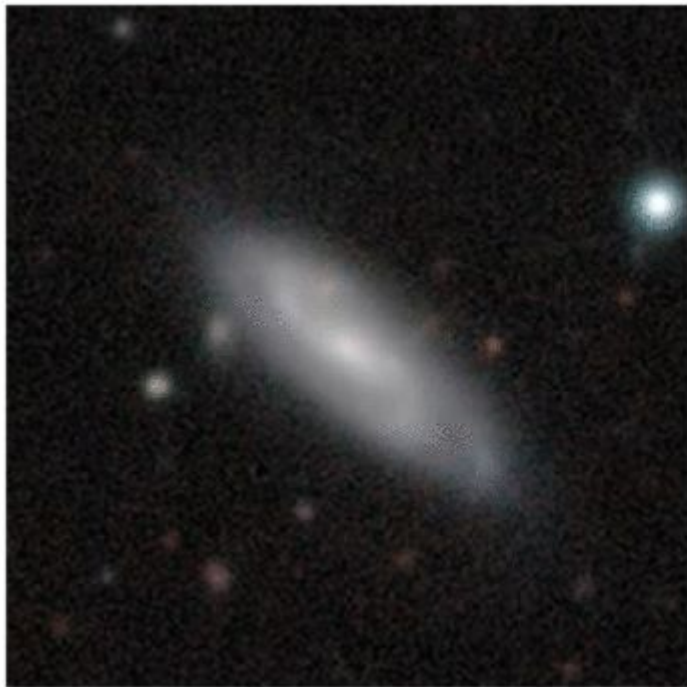
Neurips ML4Phys next week: (1) exploring latent space (2) segmentation

Adaptable models

Targeted labelling

SSL Pretraining





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## We are trying to answer the same kind of questions across every survey

*Does the galaxy image show {visual feature}*

Barred?

How many arms?

Tidal streams?

*Estimate {physical property} for this galaxy*

Most recent merger?

Bulge mass?

Gas mass?

## Let's build a shared tool

Your survey here

DECALS/DESI, HSC,  
EUCLID, RUBIN...  
(and that's just the  
major ones)



## Live Demo

[bit.ly/decals\\_viz](https://bit.ly/decals_viz)



Forum #tag

Query

Closest

“#starforming”



“#disturbed”



“#ring”



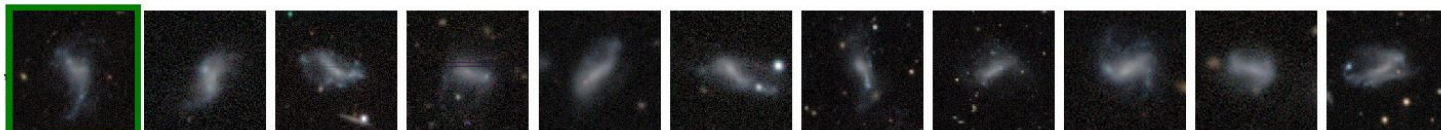
“#overlap”



“#dustlane”



“#irregular”





- 
1. Simple yet extensible foundation *software-like*
  2. Pre-trained to solve many tasks *AI-like*
  3. The more people use it, the more it learns *AI-like*



**GZ2**  
210k,  $z < 0.15$

Willett (2013)



**GZ DECaLS**  
230k,  $z < 0.15$

Walmsley  
(2022)

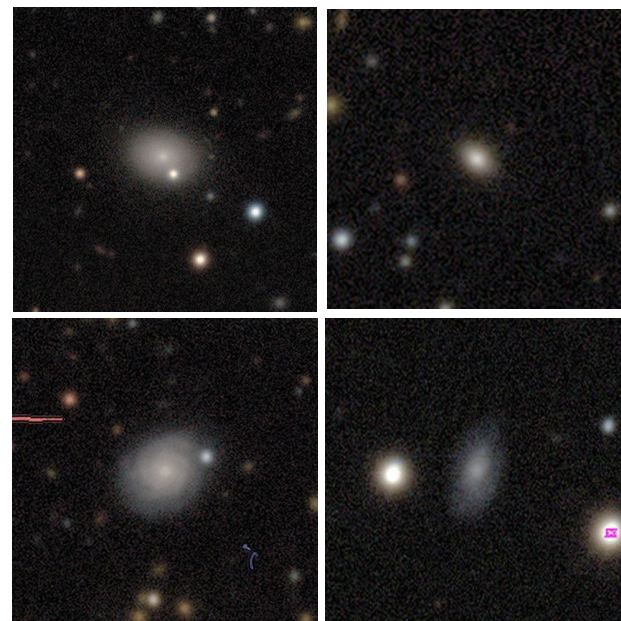


**GZ Hubble**  
106k,  $z < 1$

**GZ CANDELS**  
50k,  $1 < z < 3$


Willett (2017)  
Simmons (2017)

and



plus **1.3m unlabelled**  
from GZ DESI ( $z < 0.3$ )

Walmsley (submitted)

☰ README.md 

## galaxy-datasets

ML-friendly datasets for major Galaxy Zoo citizen science campaigns.

- PyTorch Datasets and PyTorch Lightning DataModules
- TensorFlow tf.data.Dataset's
- Framework-independent (i.e. TensorFlow-friendly) download and augmentation code

You may also be interested in [Galaxy MNIST](#) as a simple dataset for teaching/debugging.

Name	Method	PyTorch Dataset	Published	Downloadable	Galaxies
Galaxy Zoo 2	gz2	GZ2	☑	☑	~210k (main sample)
GZ Hubble*	gz_hubble	GZHubble	☑	☑	~106k (main sample)
GZ CANDELS	gz_candels	GZCandels	☑	☑	~50k
GZ DECaLS GZD-5	gz_decals_5	GZDecals5	☑	☑	~230k (GZD-5 only)
GZ Rings	gz_rings	GZRings	☒	☑	~93k
GZ DESI	gz_desi	GZDesi	☒	WIP	WIP
CFHT Tidal*	tidal	Tidal	☑	☑	1760 (expert)

## Shared Datasets

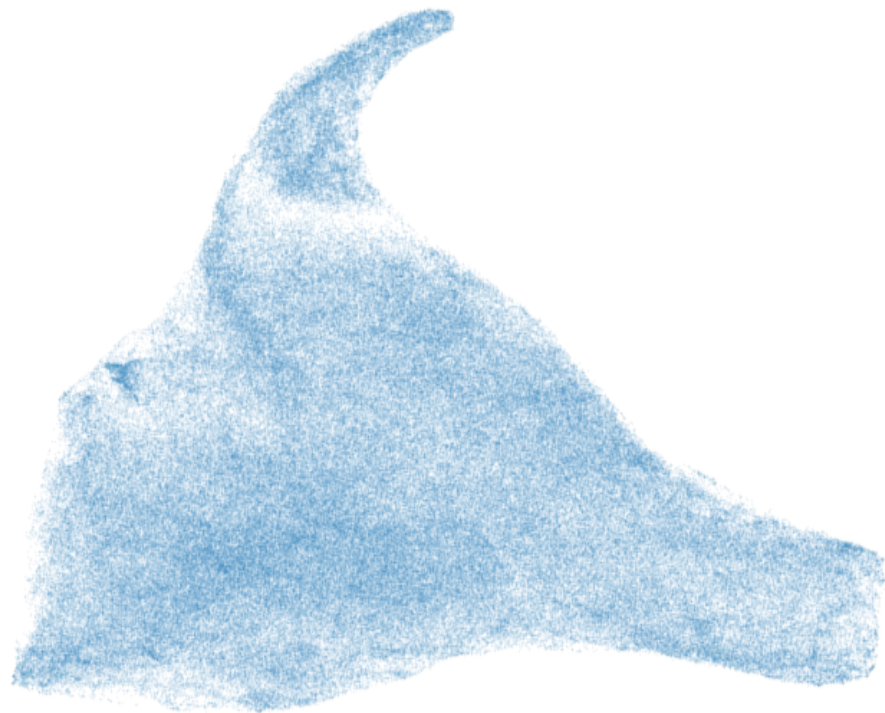
Convenient access to GZ images for ML practitioners

torch.Dataset,  
tf.data.Dataset,  
pl.DataModule

Self-downloading

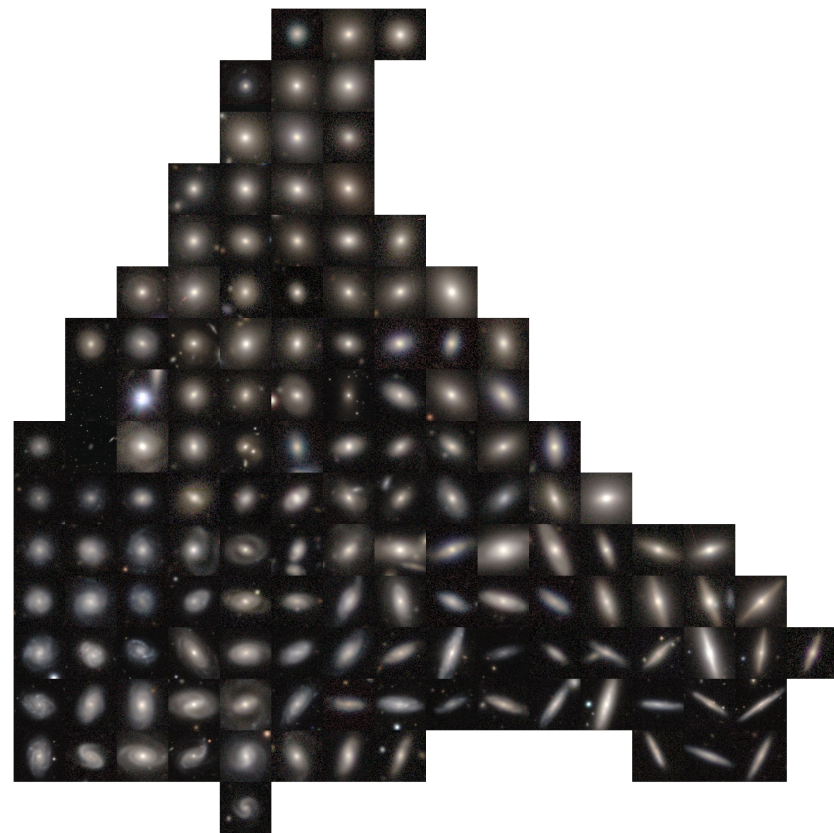
See also GalaxyMNIST

# Meaningful Internal Representation



Learned representation  
(features before dense layers, PCA+UMAP)

ZOO NIVERSE

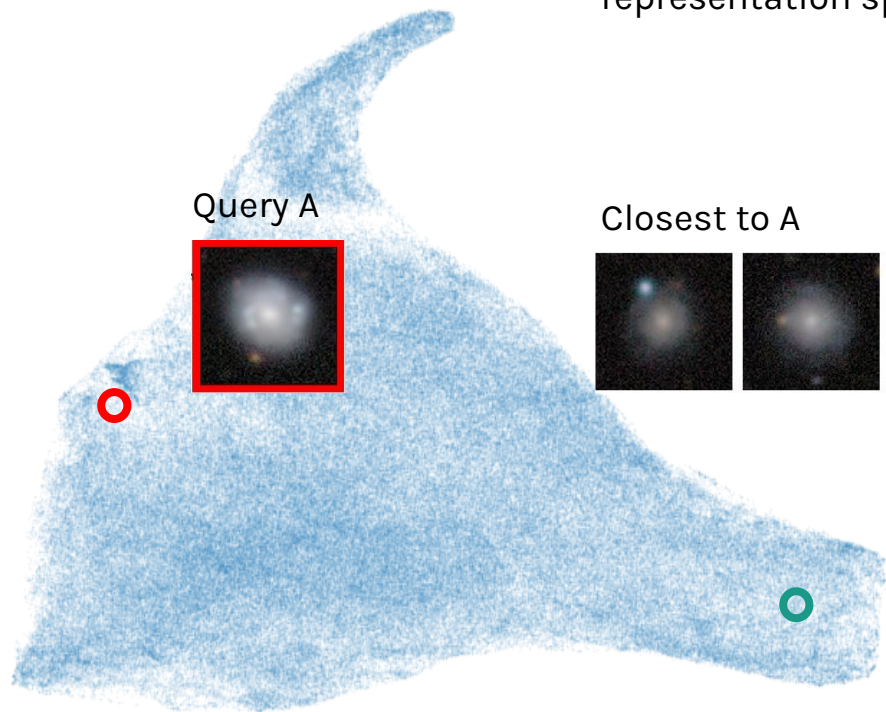


Galaxies arranged by representation

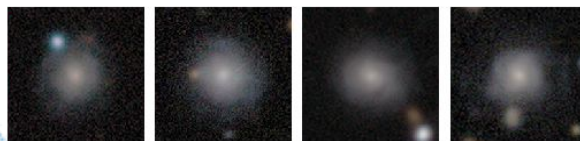
# Similarity Search

Pick a galaxy...

...show the closest galaxies in representation space



Closest to A



Closest to B

Closest to B

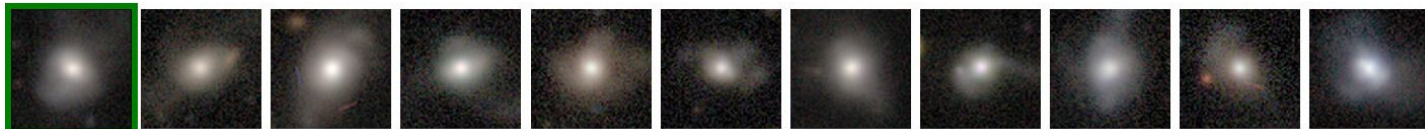


Forum #tag

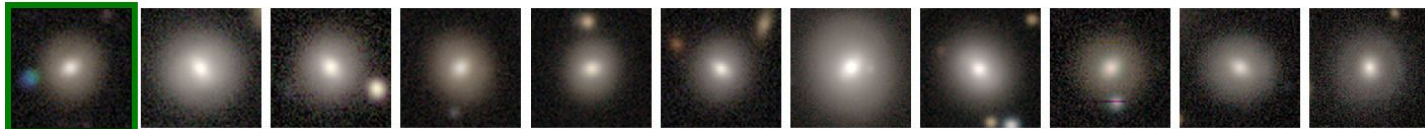
Query

Closest

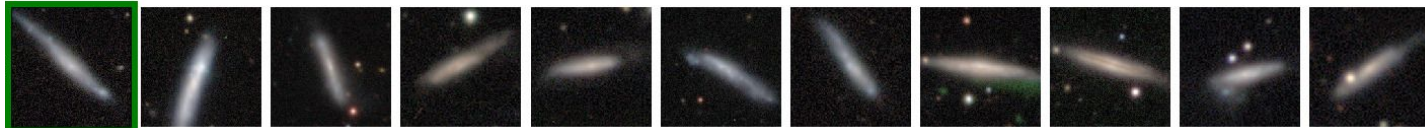
“#tidal”



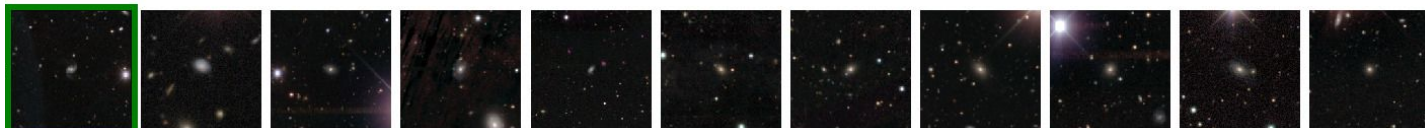
“#asteroid”



“#hot”



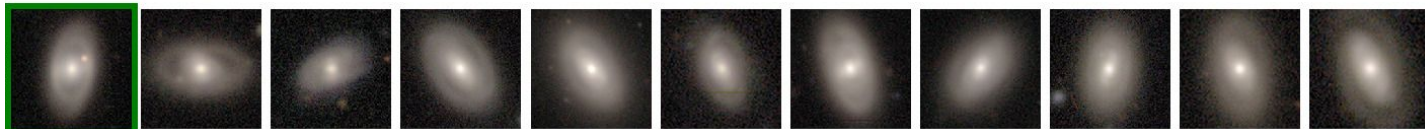
“#wrongsize”



“#interacting”



“#lenticular”







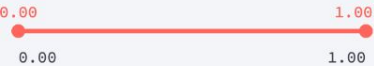
### Choose Your Galaxies

#### Bar?

Answer

Strong

Posterior Mean

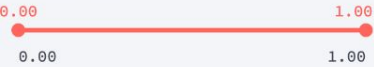


#### Has spiral arms?

Answer

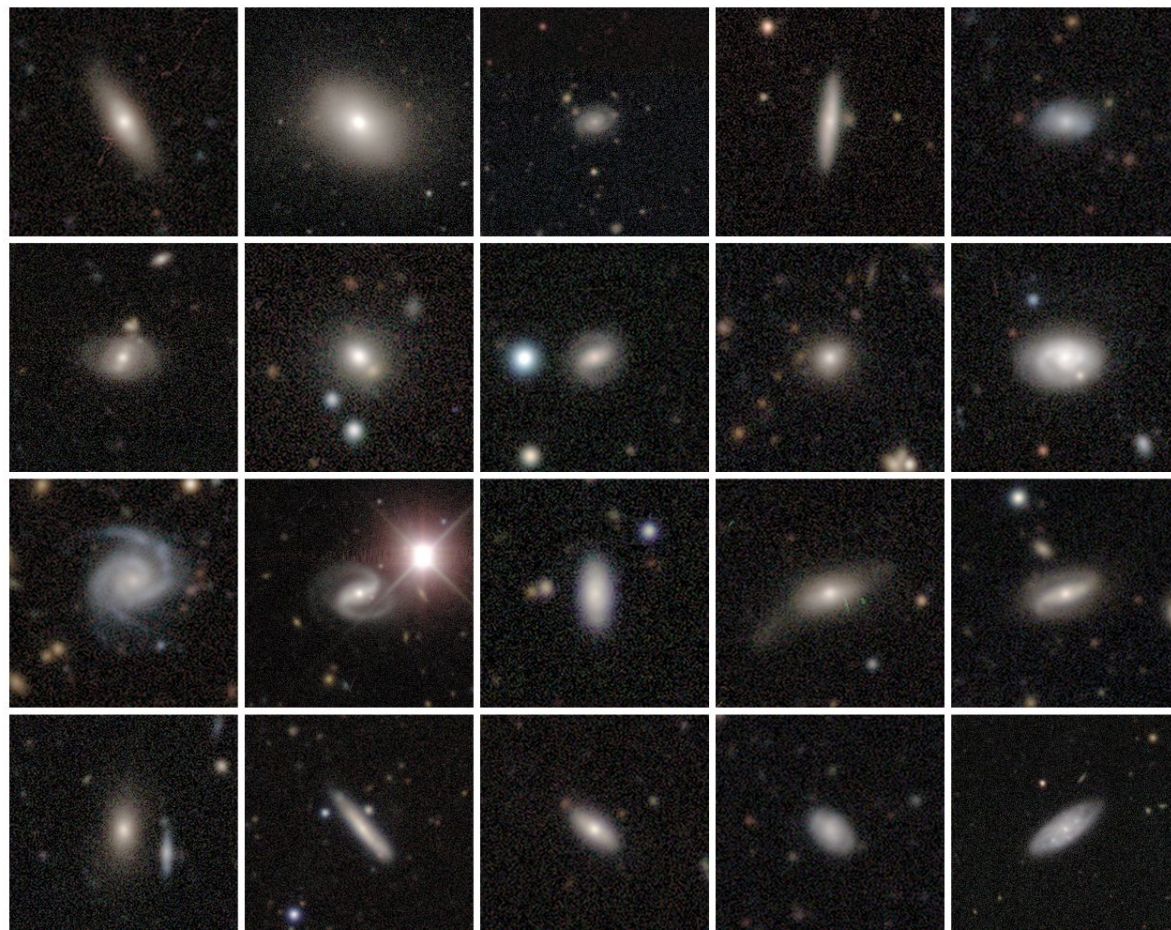
Yes

Posterior Mean



#### Spiral arm count?

To use this filter, set "Has Spiral Arms = Yes" to > 0.5

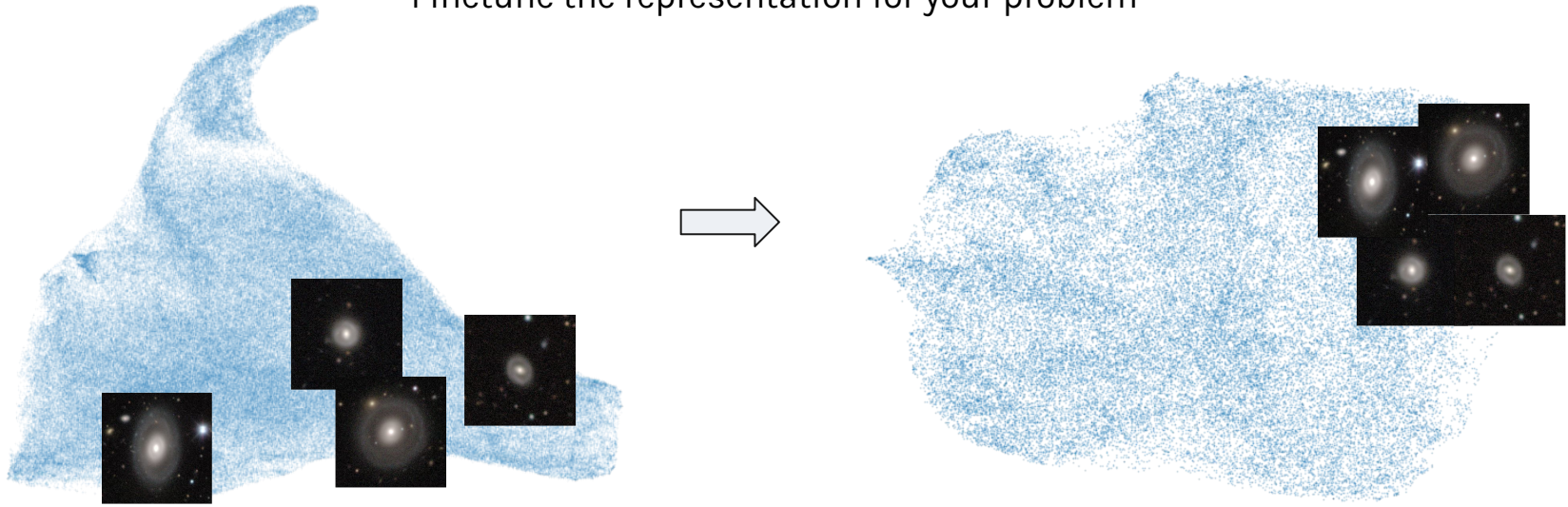


# Transfer Learning

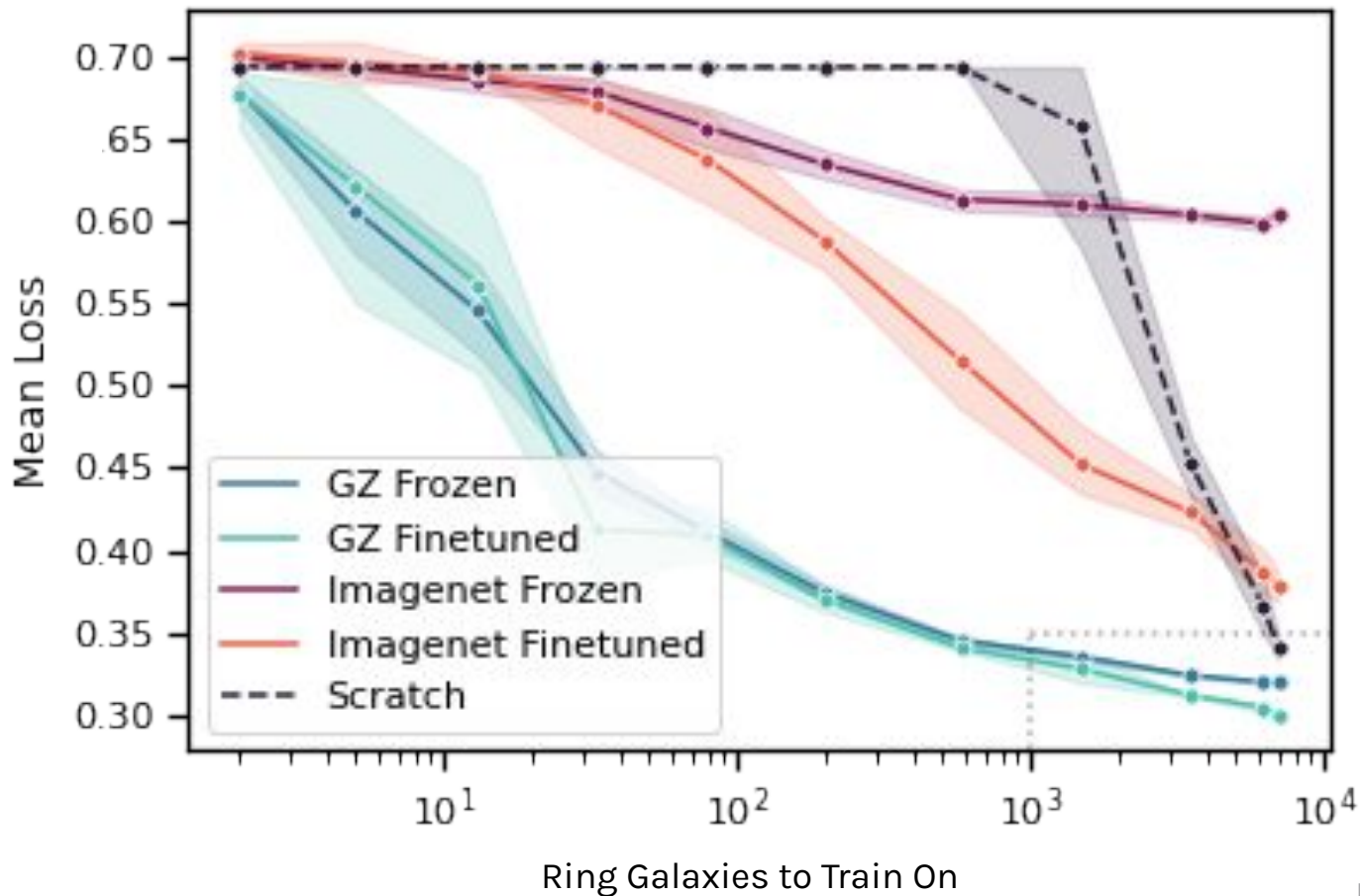
---

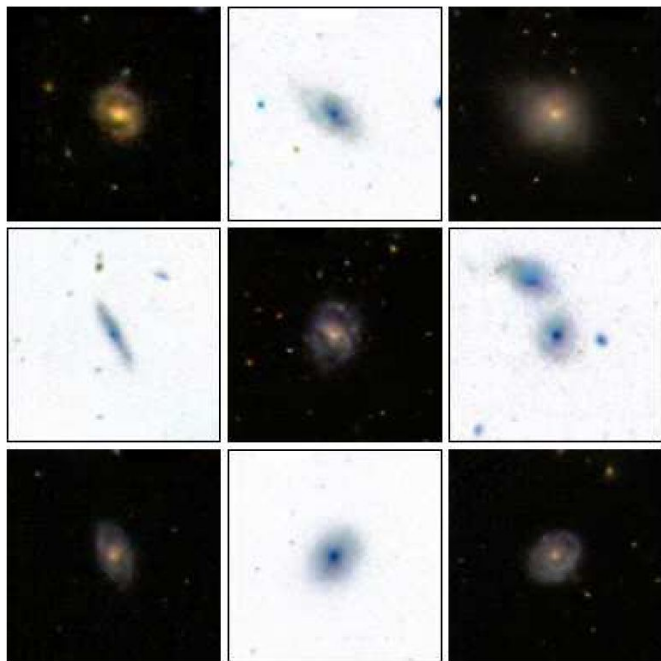
Start with a few hundred labelled examples

Finetune the representation for your problem



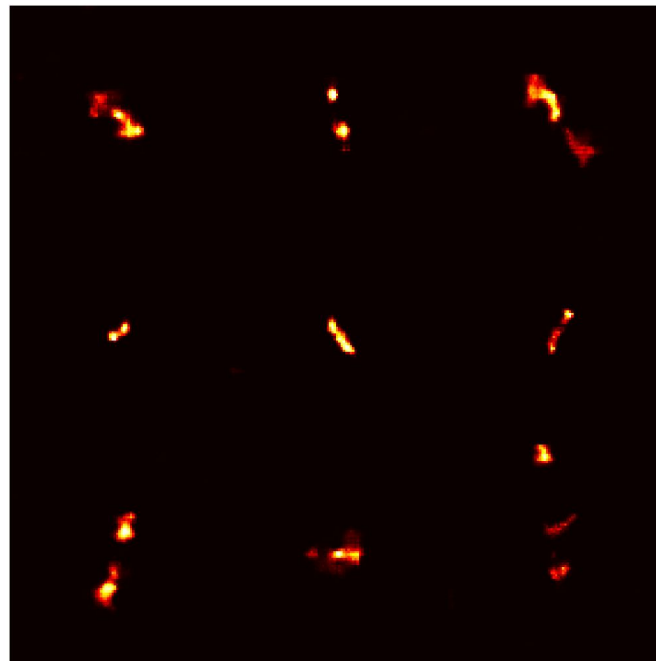
(illustrative figures only)





*GAN-created SDSS galaxies.  
Not real!*

**Fussell & Moews (2018)**



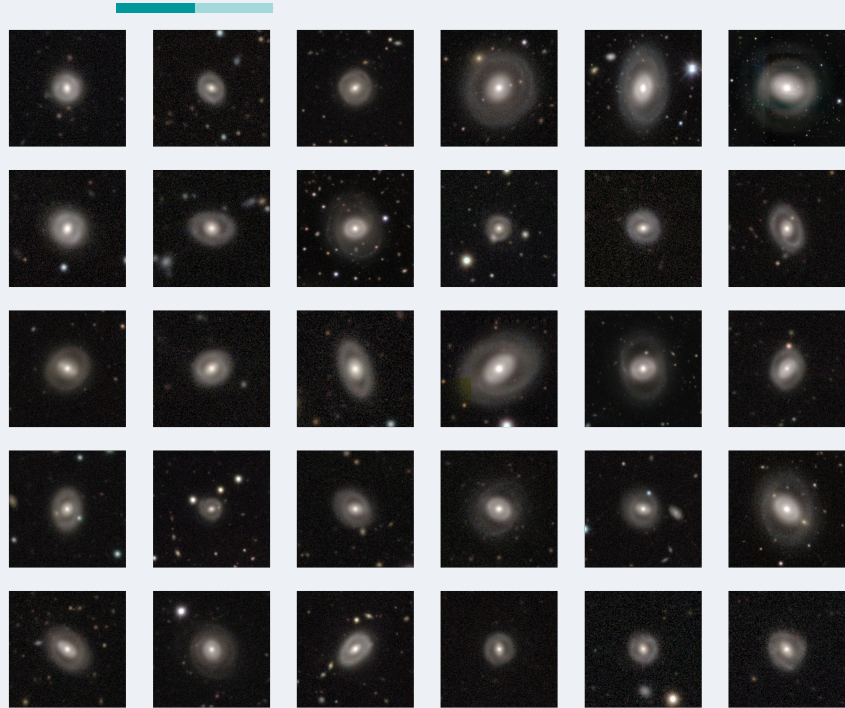
*GAN-created radio galaxies.  
Not real!*

**Inigo Val (in prep.)**

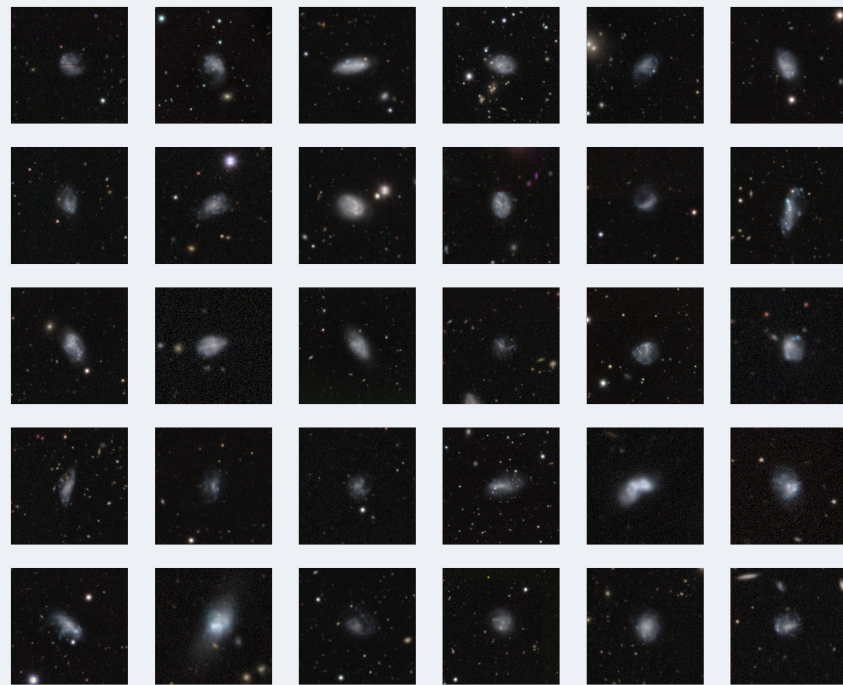
# Transfer Learning

Automatic selection cuts: featured  $> 0.6$ , face-on  $> 0.7$ , has spiral arms  $< 0.5$ .

Training set: 212 rings

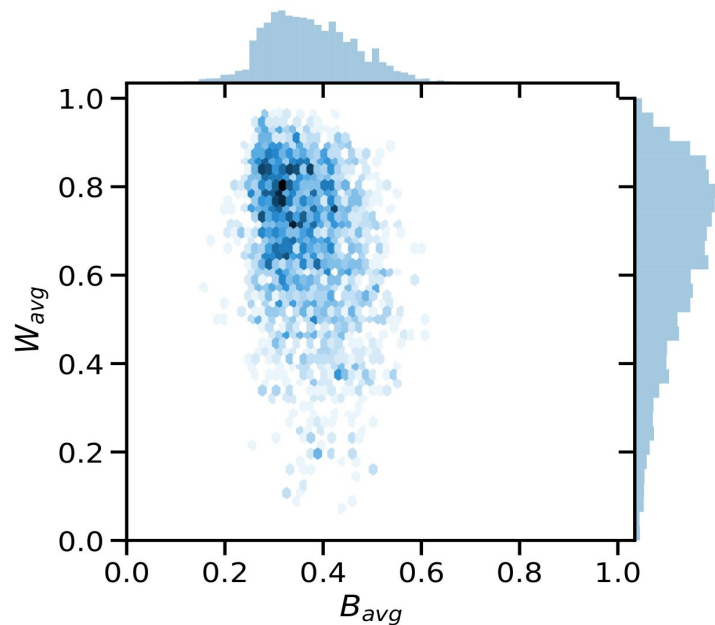


Max prob. "ring", validation set

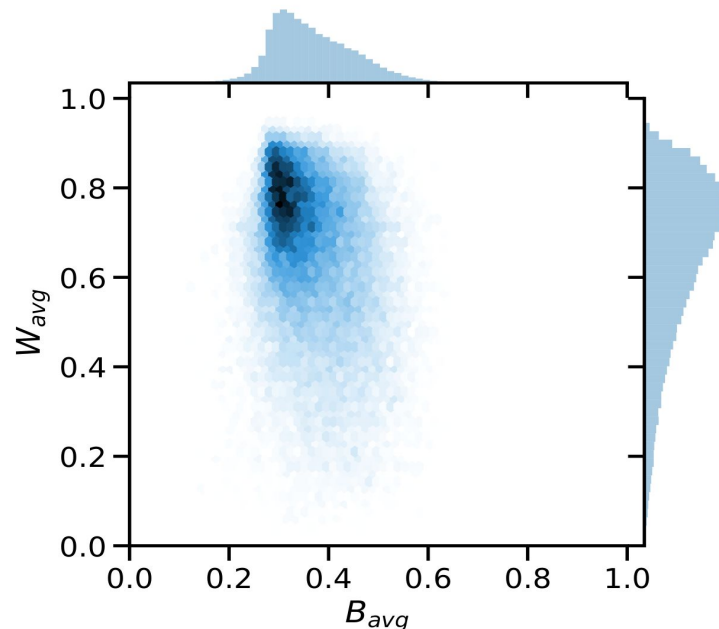


Min prob. "ring", validation set

Volunteers (N=5378)



Automated (N=43672)

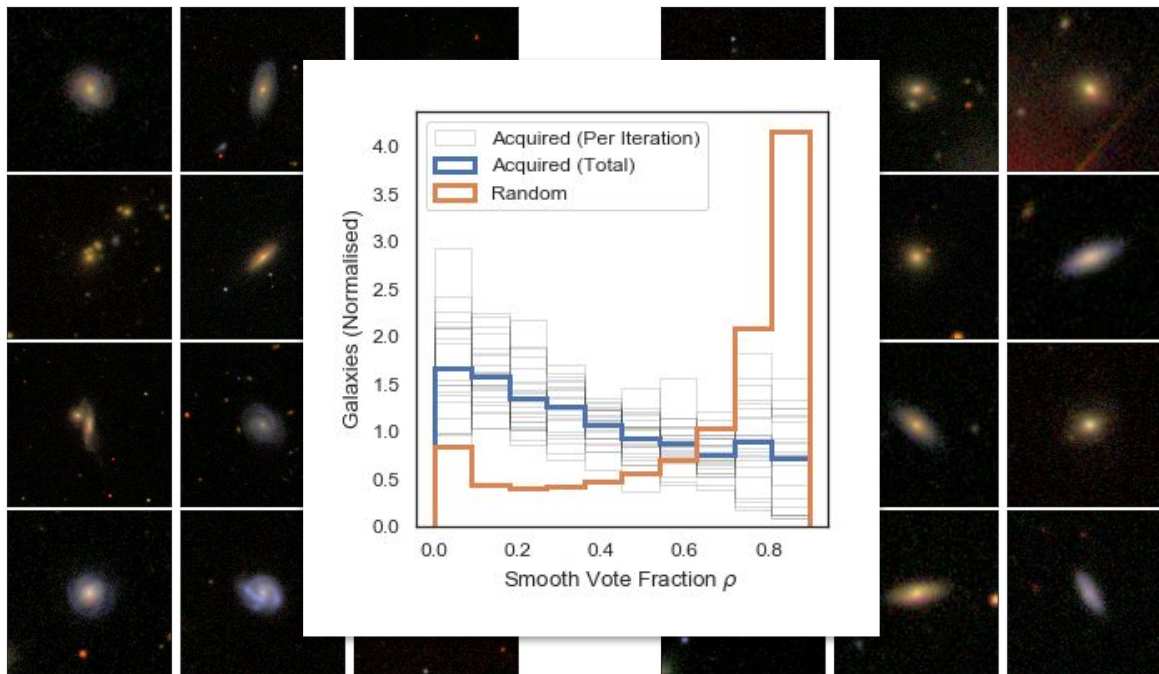


Winding angle vs. bulge size, measured by volunteers or deep learning

Dataset: [zenodo.org/record/4196267](https://zenodo.org/record/4196267)

- 
1. Need calibrated predictions from **noisy labels**
    - a. Active learning
  2. The **tasks keep changing**
    - a. Multi-task learning
  3. 99% of new data will remain **unlabelled**
    - a. Hybrid supervised-contrastive learning

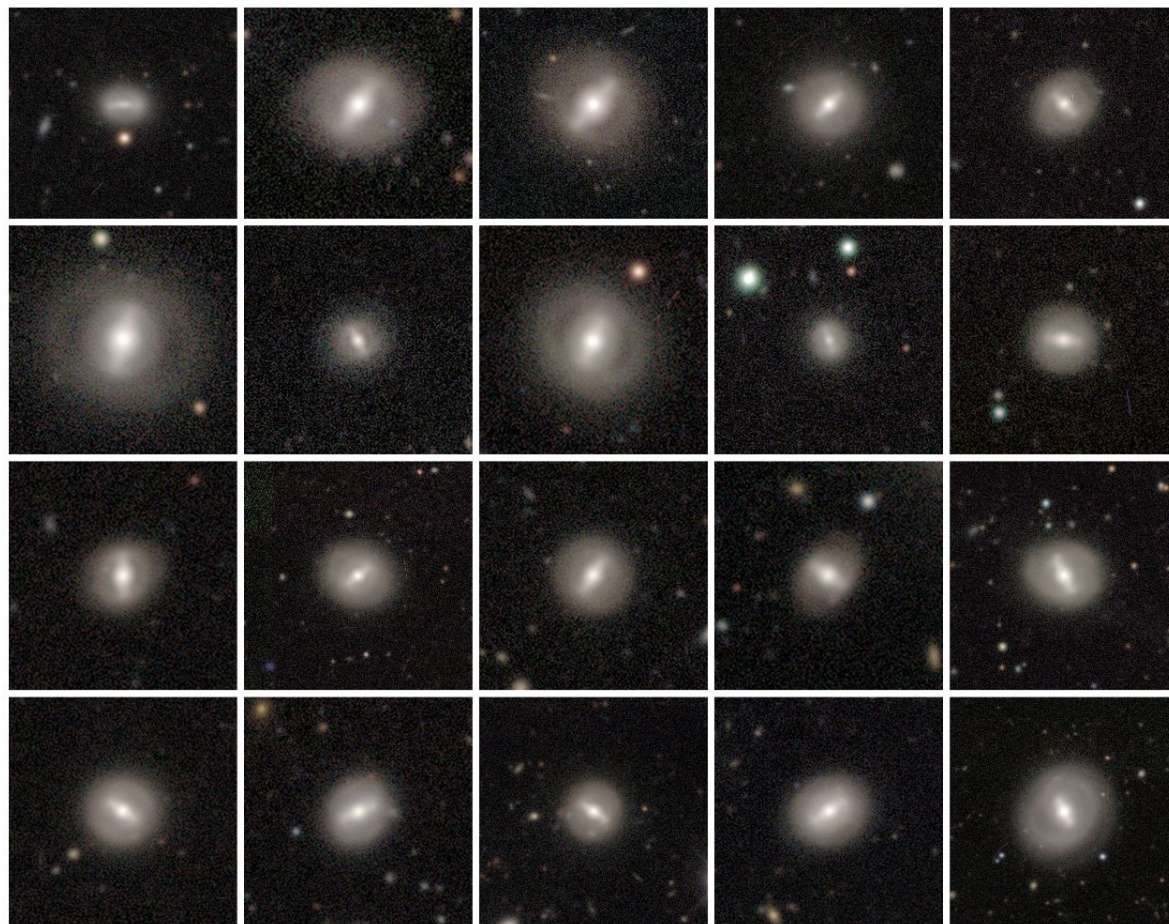
## Selected Galaxies for “Smooth?”



High mutual information

Low mutual information





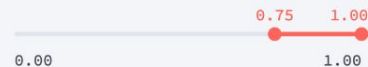
### Choose Your Galaxies

#### Bar?

Answer

Strong

Posterior Mean

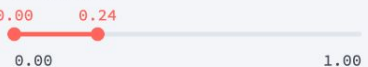


#### Has spiral arms?

Answer

Yes

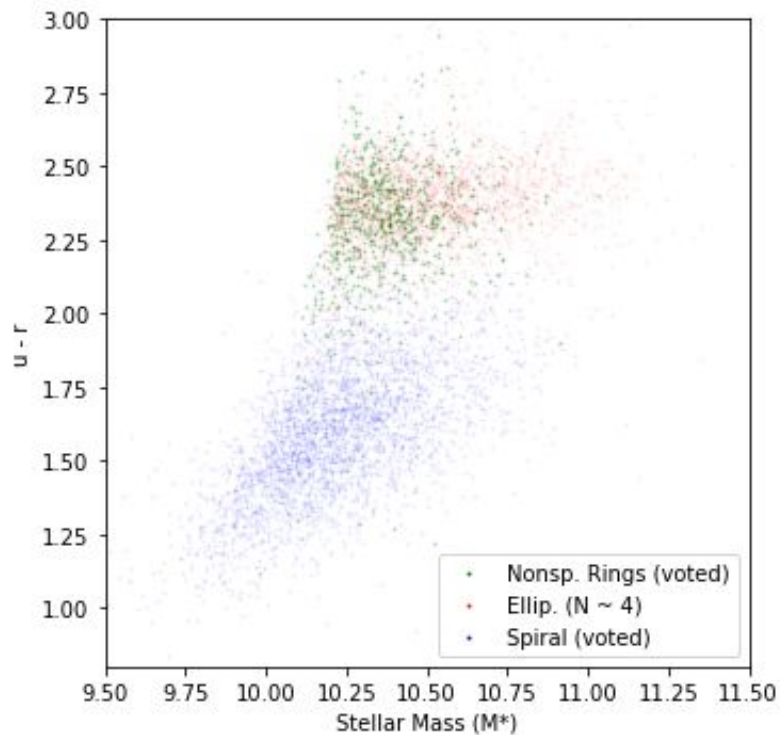
Posterior Mean



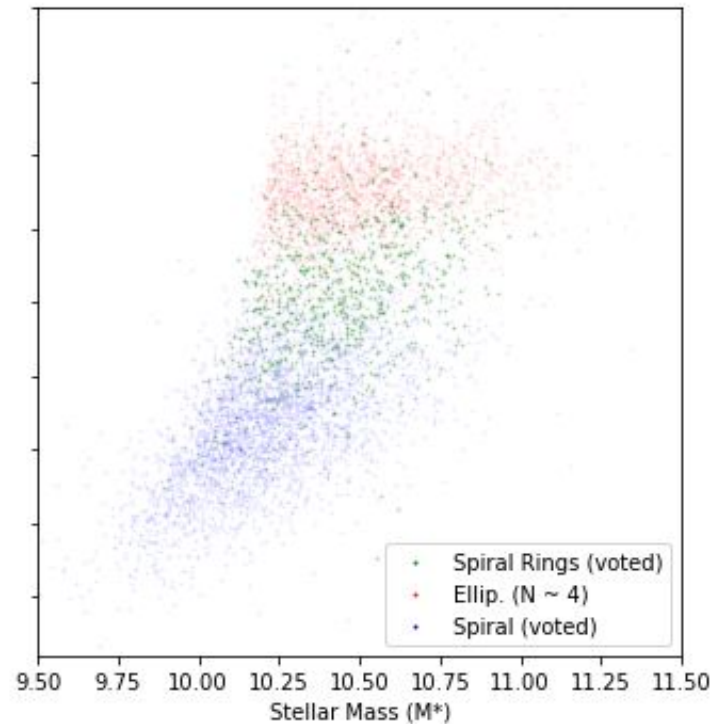
#### Spiral arm count?

To use this filter, set "Has Spiral Arms = Yes" to > 0.5





Non-spiral rings  
(green)



Spiral rings  
(also green)

## Use Symmetry

Helps constrain model parameters

More constraints = less training data needed



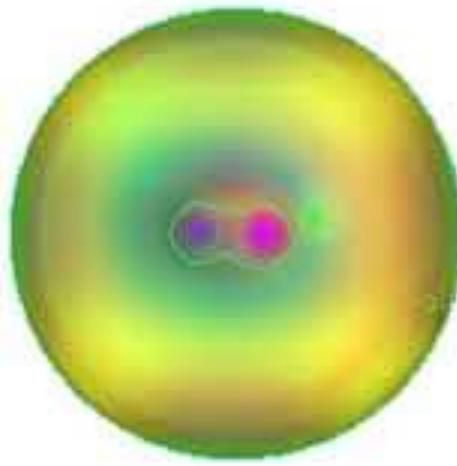
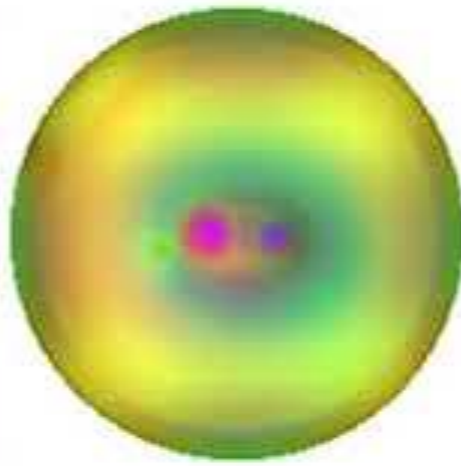
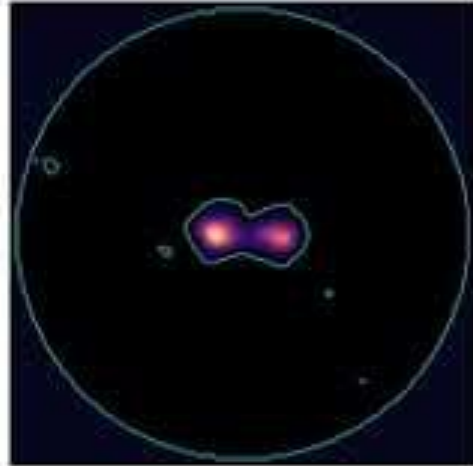
**Micah Bowles**

micah.bowles@  
postgrad.manchester  
.ac.uk

Input

Attention Map

Stabilized View



### Similarity Search

by Mike Walmsley (@mike\_walmsley\_)

RA (deg)

Dec (deg)

Important Notes

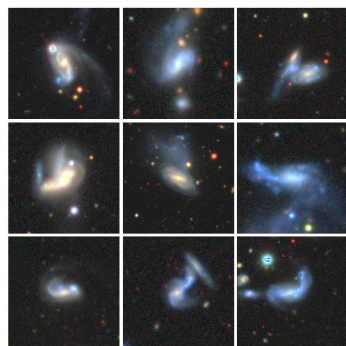
#### Closest Galaxy



RA: 184.67458, Dec: 11.73206, [Search Vizier](#)

#### Similar Galaxies

Show table



RA (deg)

Dec (deg)

Important Notes

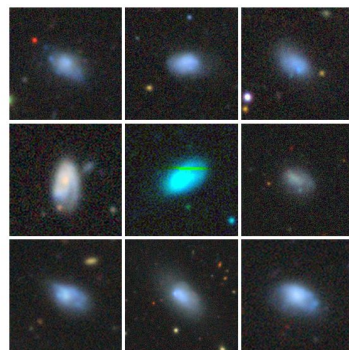
#### Closest Galaxy



RA: 190.97546, Dec: 16.54736, [Search Vizier](#)

#### Similar Galaxies

Show table



RA (deg)

Dec (deg)

Important Notes

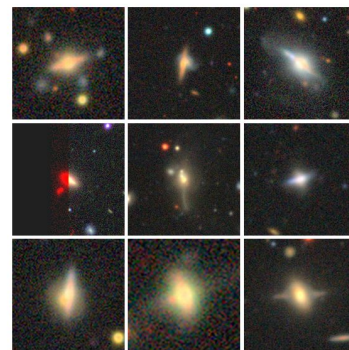
#### Closest Galaxy



RA: 124.41704, Dec: 4.49787, [Search Vizier](#)

#### Similar Galaxies

Show table



RA (deg)

Dec (deg)

Important Notes

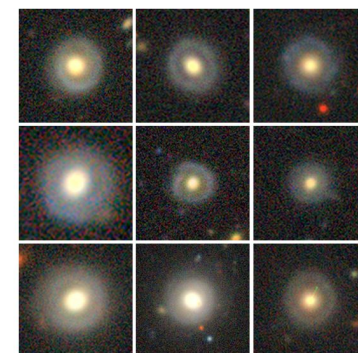
#### Closest Galaxy

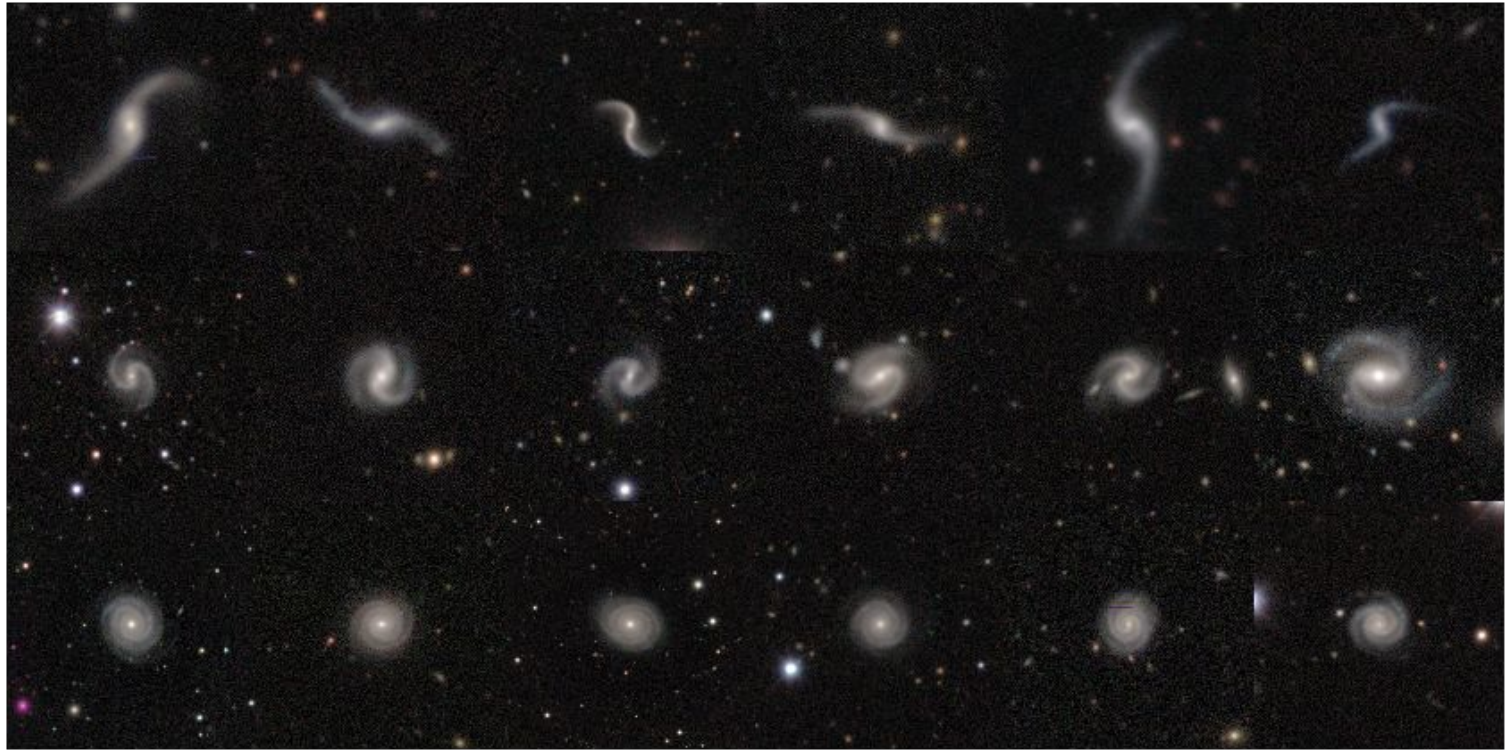


RA: 180.43112, Dec: 0.18313, [Search Vizier](#)

#### Similar Galaxies

Show table





Galaxies with **posteriors** for loose (upper), medium (centre) or tightly-wound (lower) spiral arms

---

# (Supervised) Deep Learning in One Slide

## Model

- Some function  $f(\text{image})$
- $f$  has learnable parameters aka “weights”
- **Optimise** the weights for **max performance** on **training images**

**What if I get stuck in a local minima?**

**How do we define max performance?  
(aka the “loss function”)**

## Convolutional Neural Network

- Specific type of **black box** model
- **Millions** of weights

**How do I know it learned what I want?**

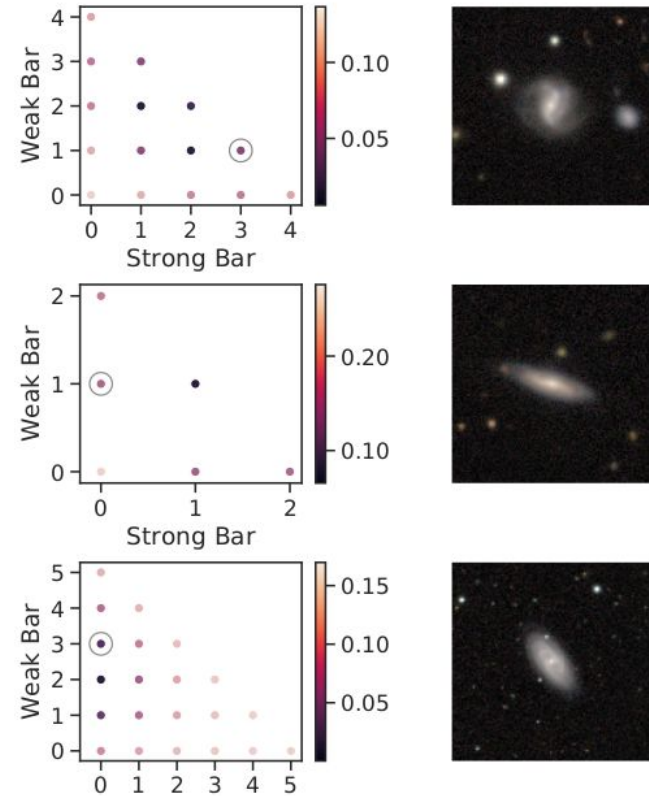
**How do I avoid learning spurious correlations?**

## Multiple Answers

$$\mathcal{L} = \int \text{Beta}(\rho | \alpha, \beta) \text{Bin}(k | \rho, N) d\alpha d\beta$$

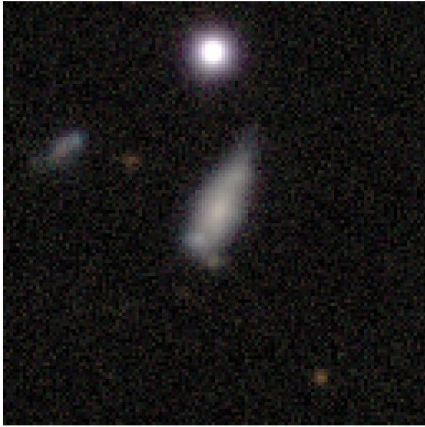
Add a few dimensions...

$$\mathcal{L}_q = \int \text{Dirichlet}(\vec{\rho} | \vec{\alpha}) \text{Multi}(\vec{k} | \vec{\rho}, N) d\vec{\alpha}$$



## CNN Representation + Astronomy UI (Lochner+ 21)

ANOMALY SCORING VISUALISATION



12  
Index

HOW INTERESTING IS THIS OBJECT?

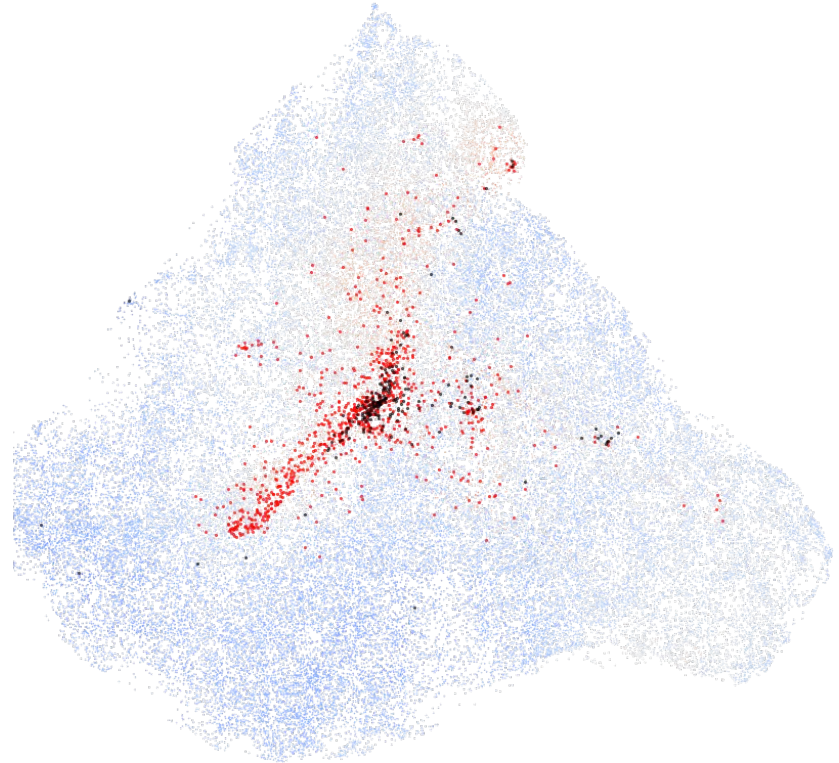
0 1 2 3 4 5

Raw anomaly score

Scoring method to sort by

RETRAIN

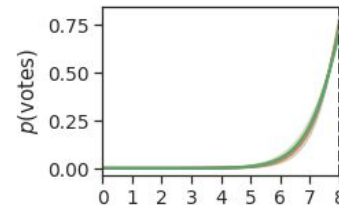
The interface shows a central astronomical image of a galaxy cluster. Above the image are two tabs: 'ANOMALY SCORING' (active) and 'VISUALISATION'. Below the image is a navigation bar with left and right arrows, a central '12' with 'Index' below it, and a small vertical slider. Below that is a horizontal scale from 0 to 5 with the text 'HOW INTERESTING IS THIS OBJECT?'. At the bottom left is a dropdown menu set to 'Raw anomaly score' with the text 'Scoring method to sort by' below it. At the bottom right is a blue 'RETRAIN' button.





## Loss for All Questions

$$\mathcal{L}_q = \int \text{Beta}(\rho | \alpha, \beta) \text{Bin}(k | \rho, N) d\alpha d\beta$$

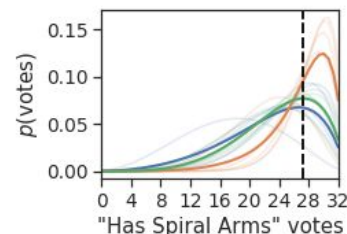
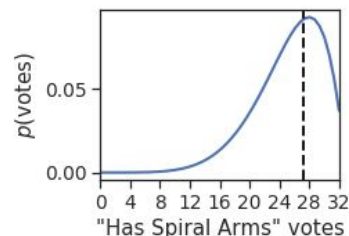
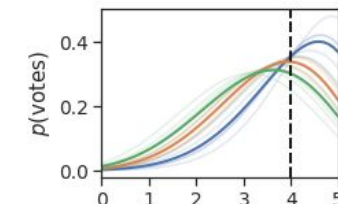
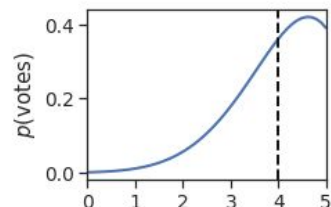
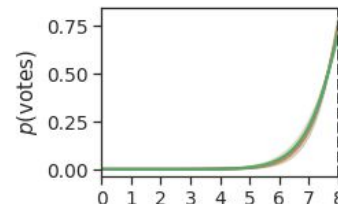
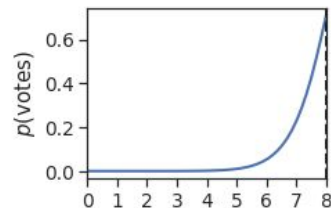


# Posteriors for Votes

- Our CNN can learn from uncertain labels and make probabilistic predictions  $p(k|w)$
- Marginalising over weights (BCNN) lets us predict votes over all CNN we might have trained

$$p(k|D) = \int p(k|w) p(w|D) dw$$

↑  
Train many models  
Dropout on each



1 Model

15 "Models" (BCNN)



# Deep Learning in One Slide

## Machine Learning Model

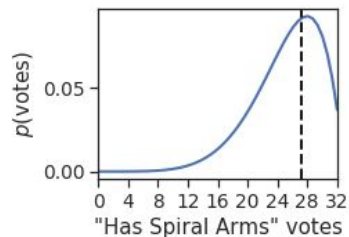
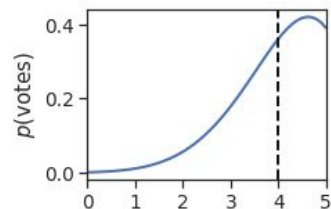
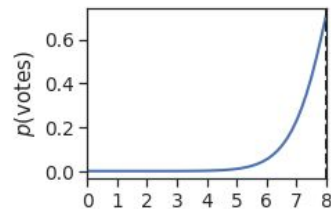
- Some function  $f(\text{image})$
- $f$  has learnable parameters aka weights
- **Optimise** the weights for **max performance** on training images

## Convolutional Neural Network (“CNN”)

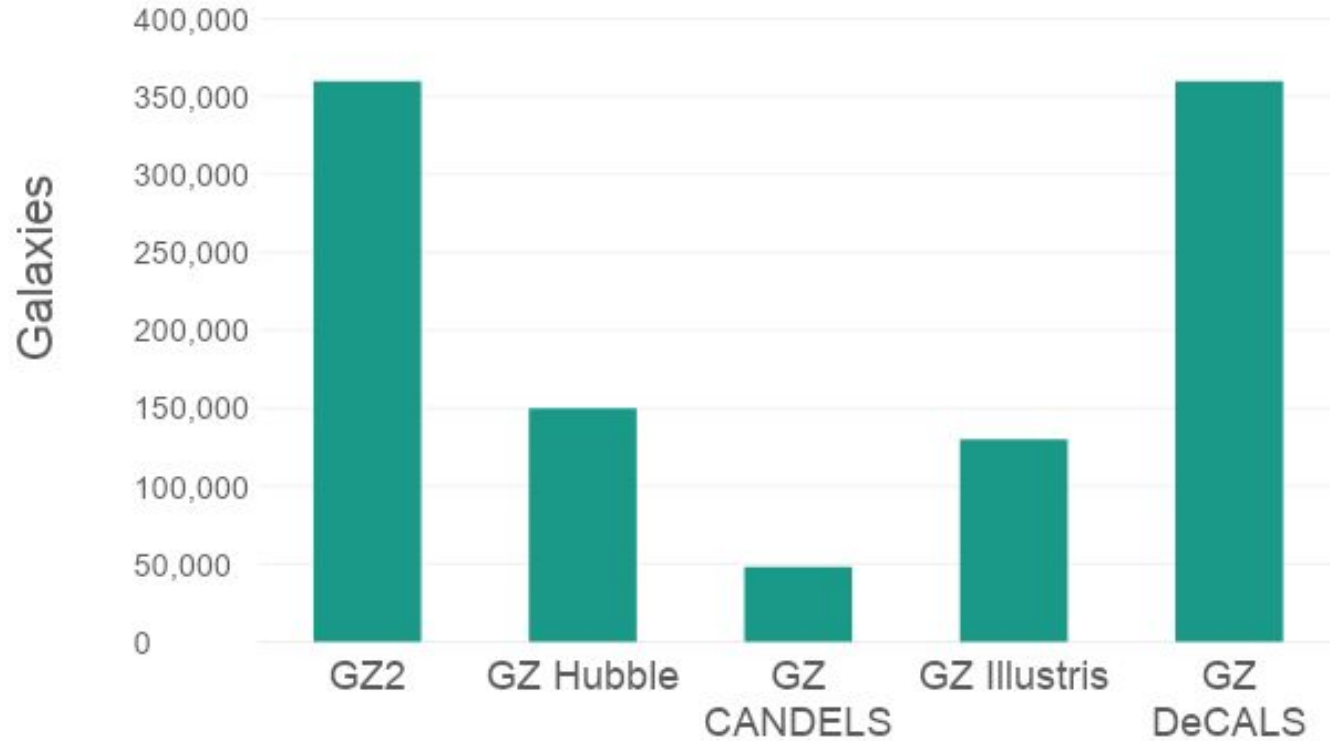
- Specific type of **black box** model
- **Millions** of weights (“deep”)

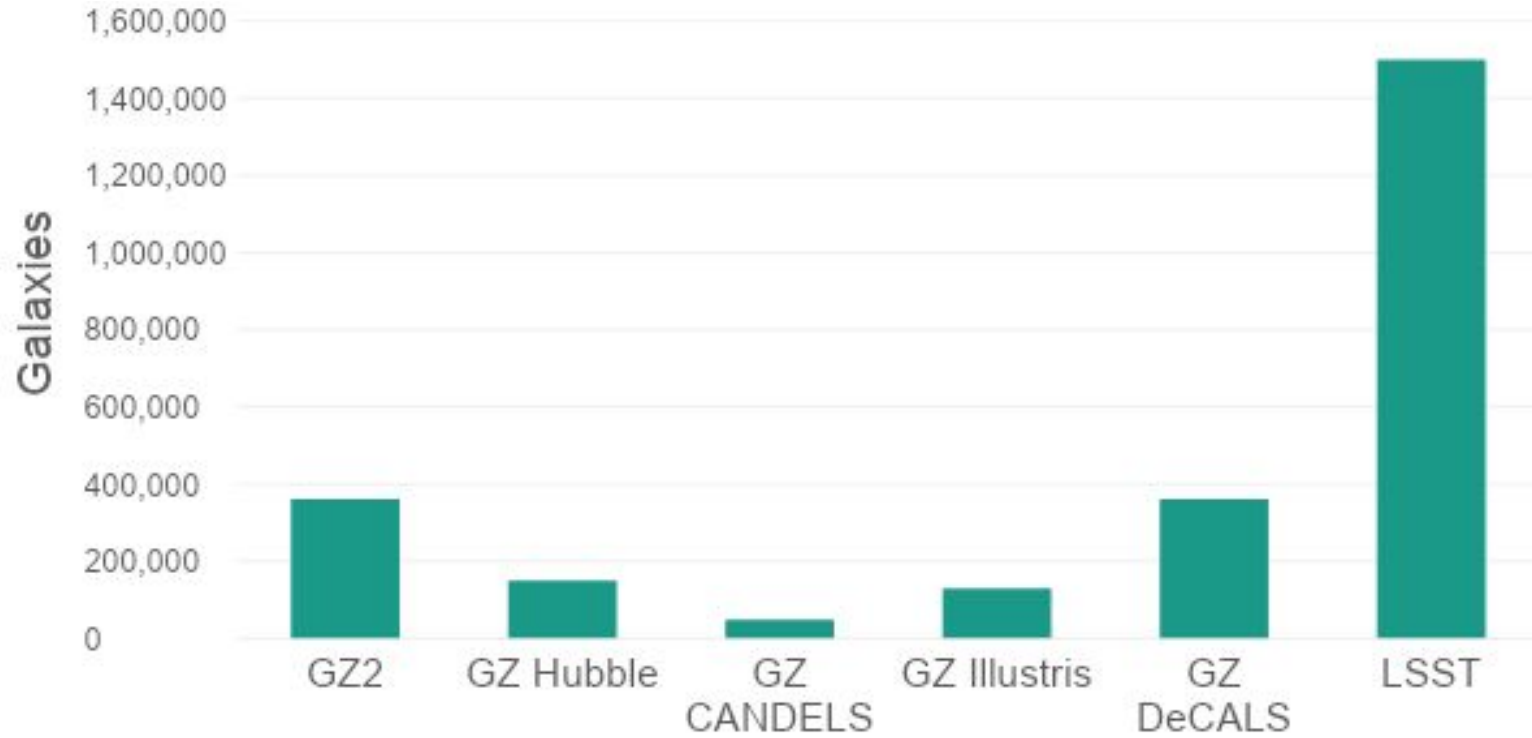
## Posteriors for Votes

- Our CNN can learn from uncertain labels and make probabilistic predictions  $p(k|w)$



1 Model







# Performance

~ 99% accurate on every question for galaxies where the volunteers are confident

Question	Count	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1
Smooth Or Featured	3495	0.9997	0.9997	0.9997	0.9997
Disk Edge On	3480	0.9980	0.9980	0.9980	0.9980
Has Spiral Arms	2024	0.9921	0.9933	0.9921	0.9924
Bar	543	0.9945	0.9964	0.9945	0.9951
Bulge Size	237	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
How Rounded	3774	0.9968	0.9968	0.9968	0.9968
Edge On Bulge	258	0.9961	0.9961	0.9961	0.9961
Spiral Winding	213	0.9906	1.0000	0.9906	0.9953
Spiral Arm Count	659	0.9863	0.9891	0.9863	0.9871
Merging	3108	0.9987	0.9987	0.9987	0.9987

Classification metrics on confident galaxies



Probabilistic to Bayesian CNN

What about the models we might have trained, but didn't?

$$p(y = c | x, D_{train}) = \int f^w(x) p(w | D_{train}) dw$$

Galaxy  $x$   
 CNN weights  $w$   
 Training data  $D_{train}$   
 CNN output  $f^w(x)$   
 Dropout dist.  $q_\theta^*$   
 Forward pass  $t$  of  $T$

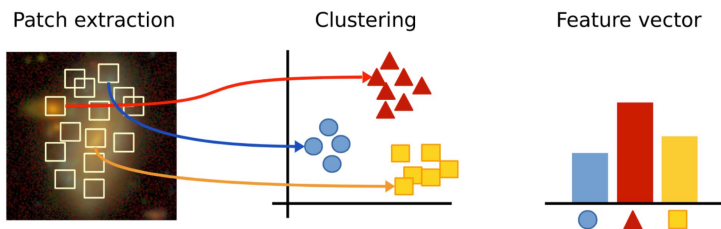
Unknown!

Approximate  $p(w | D_{train})$  with Dropout

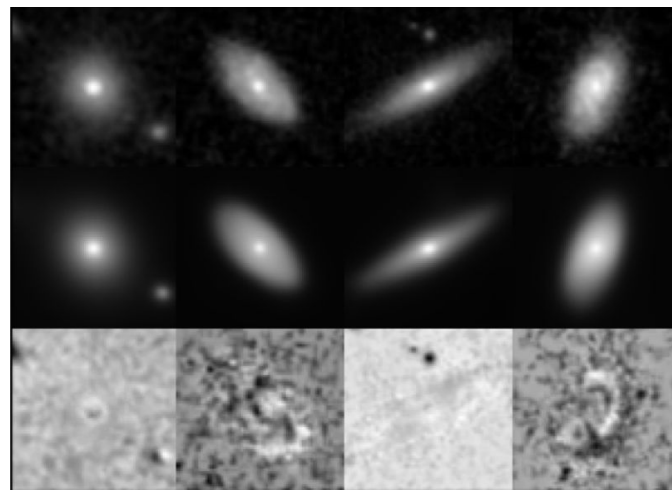
$$\approx \int q_\theta^*(w) dw$$

$$\approx \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T f^{w_t}(x)$$

## No Labels Needed?

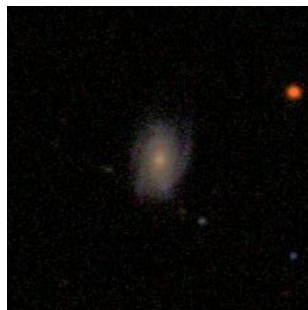


Clustering image patches  
 Martin (2020)  
 See also Hocking (2017)  
 See also Self-Organising Maps



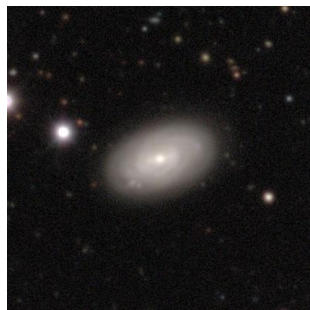
Learning to reconstruct images  
 Spindler (2020)  
 See also Gheller (2022)

# ZOO NIVERSE



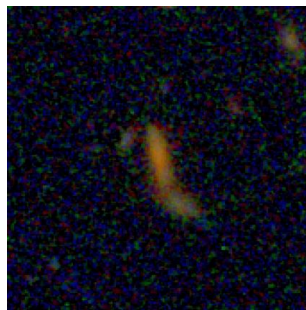
**GZ2**  
210k,  $z < 0.15$

Willett (2013)



**GZ DECaLS**  
230k,  $z < 0.15$

Walmsley  
(2022)

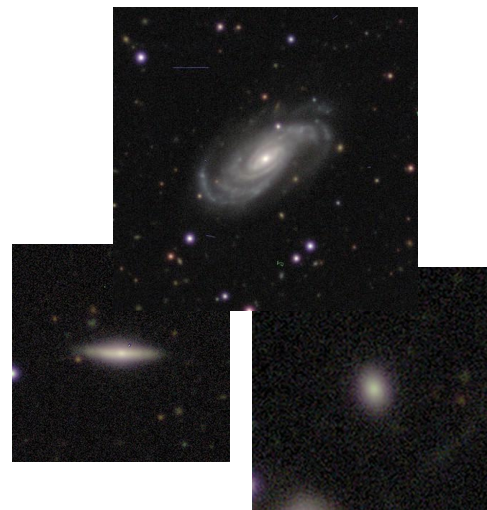


**GZ Hubble**  
106k,  $z < 1$

**GZ CANDELS**  
50k,  $1 < z < 3$

Willett (2017)  
Simmons (2017)

and



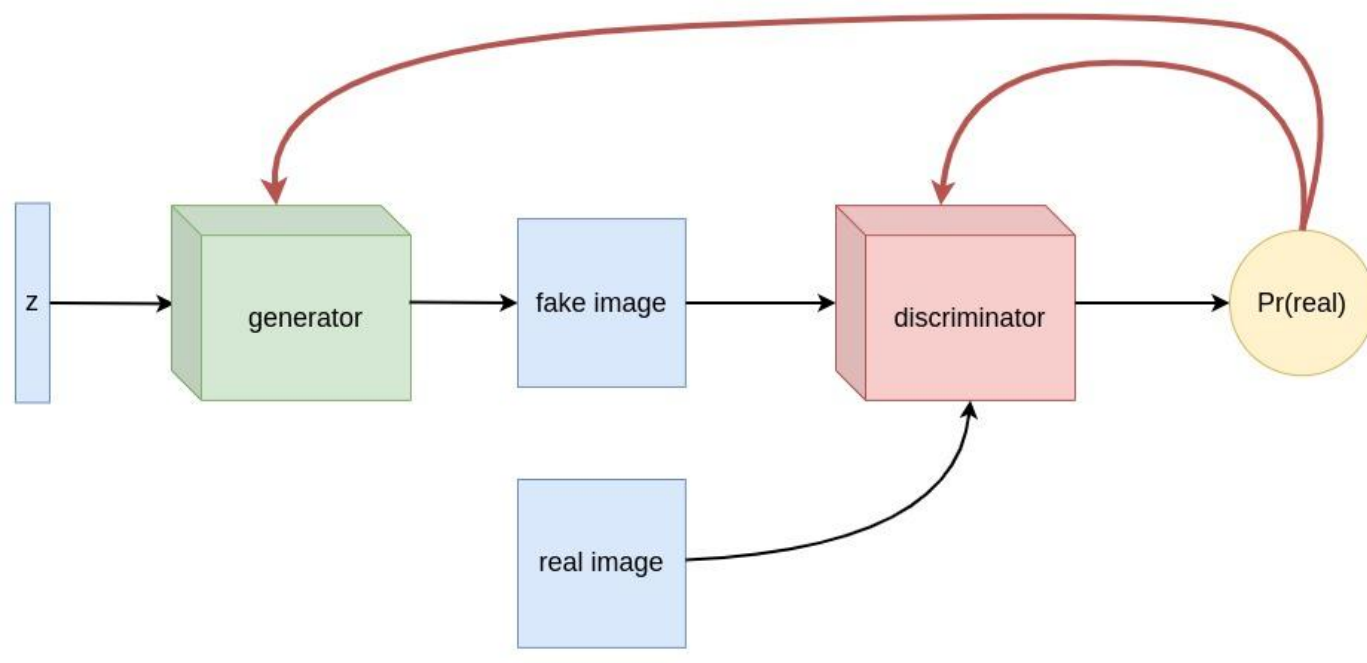
**GZ DESI**  
375k,  $z < 0.3$

plus **1.3m unlabelled**

Walmsley (in prep.)

- 
1. Build a Bayesian Galaxy Zoo model
  2. Mess around

## Diagram of a generative adversarial network (GAN)



- Generative adversarial networks (GANs) can generate semantically different yet realistic looking data.
- We can create pseudo-infinite number of realistic images by feeding in a different random vector.
- All we need to do is feed in the data we wish to imitate - no need for labels or physical parameters.