BioC 2010 Automated Gating and Metaclustering for Flow Cytometry Data

Greg Finak, Raphael Gottardo

July 29, 2010

Purpose of this Document

This document describes how to use the *flowClust* and *flowMerge* BioConductor packages to analyze flow cytometry data. It provides examples of running *flowClust* and *flowMerge* in a fully automated and semi-automated manner, and describes how to run *flowMerge* and *flowClust* in a parallel computing environment using the *snow* and *snowfall* package, as well as a single processor setup. The document provdes worked examples that demonstrate the effects of different*flowClust* parameters on flow cytometry gating results. The document also covers downstream analysis of *flowClust* and *flowMerge* gated data for *metaclustering* of gated cell populations across multiple samples. *Metaclustering* is the matching of corresponding cell populations across replicated or similar samples.

Hardware and Software Requirements

The analysis described here was run on an Intel–based Macbook pro running Mac OS X 10.6.4, with a 2.93 GHz core 2 duo processor and 8GB of RAM. It was run on BioConductor version 2.7, R 2.12.0, flowMerge 1.3.7 (development), flow-Clust 2.7.0 (development), and flowCore 1.15.1. The development versions of these packages are available at http://bioconductor.org/checkResults/2.7/bioc-LATEST/. The metaclustering examples presented at the end of the document require the *flowMetaClust* packgage, which is currently in development and not yet available.

Goals

After working through the examples in this document, you should be able to:

- Run flowClust and flowMerge in a fully automated manner
- Run flowClust and flowMerge in a semi-automated manner

- Run high throughput flowClust model fitting in parallel using snow and snowfall packages
- Understand the role of different model parameters and how changing them impacts gated cell pouplations
- Be able to manipulate and evaluate flowClust and flowMerge model objects in R
- Perform metaclustering of cell populations across samples using flowMeta-Cluster

Overview

Analyzing flow cytometry data within R and BioConductor can be quite challenging for new users of the BioConductor flow cytometry tools. This is particularly true little prior experience programming or using R and BioConductor. Manual analysis of flow data is inherently suited to a graphical user interface, so R's and BioConductor's command line environment can be counter-intuitive.

However, the size and complexity of flow cytometry data sets is growing, and manual gating approaches can be inefficient and error-prone for such data. The tools available through BioConductor are extremely powerful and flexible, allowing automated and semi-automated analysis of many samples in a high-throughput manner. Many of the flow packages include flexible functionality for visualizing flow cytometry data in a multitude of different ways. Many of these will have been covered during the other practical sessions.

Data Set

We will use the same data set you have encountered in the previous tutorials on FCM data analysis. This is a data set comparing two treatment protocols (Drug A vs Drug B). We will be gating and measuring the fraction of T-helper cells and cytotoxic T cells that express HLADr activation marker following different treatments. We will work through the gating steps using different sets of parameters, and we will explore different modeling assumptions, comparing the results. Some of the data analysis may be time consuming if run on a laptop, so we have included pre-analyzed data that can be loaded using data(). We note these points in the document, and the data are included in the data subdirectory in the supplied package.

Loading flow libraries

BioConductor is modular, with different functionality coming from different user–submitted packages. In order to utilize the functionality provided by a package, that package must first be loaded into R. Therefore, in order to analyze flow cytometry data in BioConductor, we need to load the appropriate packages and libraries.

```
require(flowMerge)
require(flowViz)
require(flowQ)
require(flowStats)
require(snowfall)
require(fpc)
require(flowTrack)
```

The require() function tells R that the package provided as an argument must be loaded in order to run the code which follows. R will therefore check whether the package is loaded, and if not, will load the package. If the package is not installed or does not load correctly, the function returns FALSE which can be tested inside other functions. Similar behaviour can be obtained with the library() function, except that library will quit if the library is not installed or fails to load correctly.

Loading the Data

The raw flow data are is located individual files in FCS (flow cytometry data standard) format, with one sample per file. The data are stored in the flowdata subdirectory. Additional annotation information about each sample is in a user-generated text file, annotation.txt. BioConductor provides data structures for storing and working with metadata about biological samples. The class Anno-tatedDataFrame, part of the Biobase core BioConductor package, is the object that handles storage and management of biological metadata for a variety of data types, including flow cytometry. More information about the Annotated-DataFrame or any other R command can be found by typing ? followed by the command name at the R command line (i.e. ?AnnotatedDataFrame.

To load the data we run:

The above command, read.flowSet is pretty self-explanatory. It reads in several fcs files into a flowSet object. The flowSet is an object that combines related flow cytometry samples. The samples must have the same number of dimensions and the same labels in order to be combined into a flowSet. Another way to view a flowSet is as a combination of flowFrames. A flowFrame is the BioConductor object that represents an individual flow cytometry sample. The read.flowSet() function takes a number of parameters. The first is the path, or directory where the fcs data files are located. The second, phenoData, is the name of an annotation file containing additiona metadata about each sample, including sample names, file names, and any treatment information associated with each sample. The annotation information is used to internally construct an AnnotatedDataFrame, which is the BioConductor data structure that keeps track of sample metadata relating to an experiment. This annotation information is attached to the flowSet. An alternate way to specify the file names is via the files argument (omitted above). This should be a character vector of file names. If files and phenoData arguments are both omitted, all files in path will be loaded. The transformation argument specifies how the data should be transformed upon loading (see ?read.FCS for more information).

Once the data are read into a flowSet, we can manipulate them. Each element of the flowSet can be extracted using R's list access notation (i.e. data[[1]] would extract the first flowFrame from the flowSet).

We can get additional information about the flowSet by entering the name of the flowSet at the R command line:

```
data
A flowSet with 14 experiments.
An object of class "AnnotatedDataFrame"
  rowNames: 01126211_NB8_I025.fcs, 01247181
  _NB06_I025.fcs, ..., 12015151_NB8_I025.fc
  s (14 total)
  varLabels and varMetadata description:
   PatientID:
   GroupID:
   ...: ...
   name: Filename
  (6 total)
  column names:
  FSC-A SSC-A FITC-A PE-A FL3-A PE-Cy7-A APC-A Time
```

We see it is composed of 14 sample (experiments), and we see some additional information about the AnnotatedDataFrame associated with the flowSet (we see file names, and that there are 6 pieces of metadata assocaited with each sample).

Similarly, by calling:

data[[1]]

flow	Frame obj	ect '0112621:	1_NB8_3	I025.fcs'		
with 4000 cells and 8 observables:						
	name	desc	range	minRange		
\$P1	FSC-A	<na></na>	1024	0		
\$P2	SSC-A	<na></na>	1024	0		
\$P3	FITC-A	CD8 FITC-A	1024	1		
\$P4	PE-A	CD69 PE-A	1024	1		
\$P5	FL3-A	CD4	1024	1		
\$P6]	PE-Cy7-A	CD3 PE-Cy7-A	1024	1		
\$P7	APC-A	HLADr APC-A	1024	1		
\$P8	Time	<na></na>	1024	0		
1	maxRange					
\$P1	1023					
\$P2	1023					
\$P3	1023					
\$P4	1023					
\$P5	1023					
\$P6	1023					
\$P7	1023					
\$P8	1023					
98 keywords are stored in the 'description' slot						

we get some additional information about the first flowFrame. We see it has 4000 events and 8 channels. It is named using its associated FCS file name. The channels are named by their associated dye ("names" column). The associated markers are in the "desc" column.

If we examine the default sample and marker names associated with the flowSet, we see that they are not very informative:

colnames(data)

[1] "FSC-A"	"SSC-A"	"FITC-A"
[4] "PE-A"	"FL3-A"	"РЕ-Су7-А"
[7] "APC-A"	"Time"	

sampleNames(data)

[1] "01126211_NB8_I025.fcs"
[2] "01247181_NB06_I025.fcs"

[3] "02276161_NB8_I025.fcs"
[4] "03157141_NB06_I025.fcs"
[5] "05107251_NB06_I025.fcs"
[6] "06226101_NB8_I025.fcs"
[7] "07115141_NB8_I025.fcs"
[8] "07215281_NB8_I025.fcs"
[9] "08045071_NB8_I025.fcs"
[10] "09225121_NB8_I025.fcs"
[11] "10175181_NB8_I025.fcs"
[12] "10276181_NB8_I025.fcs"
[13] "11145351_NB8_I025.fcs"
[14] "12015151_NB8_I025.fcs"

The default sample and channel names appear on any generated plots and graphics. We want to assign the more informative "PatientID" from the annotation metadata as sample names:

We can view the metadata via:

	PatientID	GroupID
01126211_NB8_I025.fcs	pid349	DRUG A
01247181_NB06_I025.fcs	pid300	DRUG B
02276161_NB8_I025.fcs	pid778	DRUG A
03157141_NB06_I025.fcs	pid291	DRUG B
05107251_NB06_I025.fcs	pid214	DRUG A
06226101_NB8_I025.fcs	pid867	DRUG B
07115141_NB8_I025.fcs	pid877	DRUG B
07215281_NB8_I025.fcs	pid409	DRUG A
08045071_NB8_I025.fcs	pid993	DRUG B
09225121_NB8_I025.fcs	pid847	DRUG A
10175181_NB8_I025.fcs	pid244	DRUG B
10276181_NB8_I025.fcs	pid149	DRUG B
11145351_NB8_I025.fcs	pid225	DRUG A
12015151_NB8_I025.fcs	pid333	DRUG A
	Technician	Project
01126211_NB8_I025.fcs	Jill	BIOC2009
01247181_NB06_I025.fcs	Jill	BIOC2009
02276161_NB8_I025.fcs	Jill	BIOC2009
03157141_NB06_I025.fcs	Peter	BIOC2009
05107251_NB06_I025.fcs	Peter	BIOC2009
06226101_NB8_I025.fcs	Jill	BIOC2009
07115141_NB8_I025.fcs	Jill	BIOC2009
07215281_NB8_I025.fcs	Jill	BIOC2009
08045071_NB8_I025.fcs	Jill	BIOC2009
09225121_NB8_I025.fcs	Mark	BIOC2009
10175181_NB8_I025.fcs	Mark	BIOC2009
10276181_NB8_I025.fcs	Mark	BIOC2009

11145351_NB8_I025.fcs	Mark BIOC2009
12015151_NB8_I025.fcs	Mark BIOC2009
	Stain
01126211_NB8_I025.fcs	CD8/CD69/CD4/CD3/HLADR
01247181_NB06_I025.fcs	CD8/CD69/CD4/CD3/HLADR
02276161_NB8_I025.fcs	CD8/CD69/CD4/CD3/HLADR
03157141_NB06_I025.fcs	CD8/CD69/CD4/CD3/HLADR
05107251_NB06_I025.fcs	CD8/CD69/CD4/CD3/HLADR
06226101_NB8_I025.fcs	CD8/CD69/CD4/CD3/HLADR
07115141_NB8_I025.fcs	CD8/CD69/CD4/CD3/HLADR
07215281_NB8_I025.fcs	CD8/CD69/CD4/CD3/HLADR
08045071_NB8_I025.fcs	CD8/CD69/CD4/CD3/HLADR
09225121_NB8_I025.fcs	CD8/CD69/CD4/CD3/HLADR
10175181_NB8_I025.fcs	CD8/CD69/CD4/CD3/HLADR
10276181_NB8_I025.fcs	CD8/CD69/CD4/CD3/HLADR
11145351_NB8_I025.fcs	CD8/CD69/CD4/CD3/HLADR
12015151_NB8_I025.fcs	CD8/CD69/CD4/CD3/HLADR
	name
01126211_NB8_I025.fcs	01126211_NB8_I025.fcs
01247181_NB06_I025.fcs	01247181_NB06_I025.fcs
02276161_NB8_I025.fcs	02276161_NB8_I025.fcs
03157141_NB06_I025.fcs	03157141_NB06_I025.fcs
05107251_NB06_I025.fcs	05107251_NB06_I025.fcs
06226101_NB8_I025.fcs	06226101_NB8_I025.fcs
07115141_NB8_I025.fcs	07115141_NB8_I025.fcs
07215281_NB8_I025.fcs	07215281_NB8_I025.fcs
08045071_NB8_I025.fcs	08045071_NB8_I025.fcs
09225121_NB8_I025.fcs	09225121_NB8_I025.fcs
10175181_NB8_I025.fcs	10175181_NB8_I025.fcs
10276181_NB8_I025.fcs	10276181_NB8_I025.fcs
11145351_NB8_I025.fcs	11145351_NB8_I025.fcs
12015151_NB8_I025.fcs	12015151_NB8_I025.fcs

Renaming Samples

The following code assigns the "PatientID" columns as the sample names:

Renaming Channels

In order to use the more informative marker names as the channel names, rather than the names of the dyes, we run the following:

```
"desc"] <- c("NA", "NA",
"CD8", "CD69", "CD4", "CD3",
"HLADr", "NA")
}
colnames(data) <- c("FSC", "SSC",
"CD8", "CD69", "CD4", "CD3",
"HLADr", "Time")
```

The for-loop iterates over each flowFrame in the flowSet and assigns the vector of simpler marker names to the channels. These names are used to access each channel when performing data transformations, for example. The last line of the code snippet renames the channel names that are used for plotting.

Transformation and Preprocessing

The data are now in a form that we can work with more easily. Before we can begin gating we need to perform some simple preprocessing steps. Let's begin by visualizing the data.

densityplot(~., data)



These density plots show that although the forward and side scatter data are well represented on the linear scale, the fluorescence channels need to be transformed to a log–like scale via an appropriate transformation. flowCore gives many to choose from, including the arcsinh, biexponential, logicle, and logarithm. We will choose the commonly applied logicle transformation.

Data Transformation

The above code transforms the data via the transform() function, which takes as input the flowSet to be transformed, and an object called a transformList, which takes a vector of dimensions to be transformed (in this case channels 3 through 7, excluding FSC and SSC), as well as a transformation function, (logicleTransform()). There are other ways to perform data transformation; please refer to the transform and transformList documentation for other examples.

We can now plot the transformed data for comparison.

densityplot(~., tData)



Looking at the CD3 and CD4 dimensions we can see that the different populations are readily visible. Let's also take a look at some scatterplots.

splom(tData[[2]][, c(1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7)], smooth = TRUE)



Scatter Plot Matrix

Again, we see the different populations are readily visualized in the different pairwise scatterplots following transformation. We need to also take care of boundary events in FSC and SSC by removing them. flowCore provides a variety of filtering functions for such purposes. Here we will be using boundaryFilter.

The above code constructs a boundary filter object via boundaryFilter(), taking the names of the channels to be filtered. Next, via filter() the filtering operation is performed on tData. Finally, the filtered data are extracted into a new flowFrame object via Subset(). Let's visualize some of the filtered data:

splom(tData.f[[2]][, c(1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7)], smooth = TRUE)

					HLADr
				CD3	
			CD4		
		CD8			
	SSC				
FSC	Acres 1				

Scatter Plot Matrix

Finally, we'll perform some normalization of the fluorescence channels so that corresponding populations line up across multiple samples. These functions come from the flowSet package.

Let's plot the normalized data, just to check.

densityplot(~., tData.n)



With the preprocessing completed, we move on to automated gating with flowClust and flowMerge.

Gating and Gating Strategy

For this data set, the general gating strategy is to identify lymphocytes in FSC vs SSC that are CD3+/CD4+ or CD3+/CD8+, and express activation marker HLADr. There are a number of ways to attack the problem using flowClust and flowMerge. One tempting approach would be to run flowClust on the entire data set, using all channels to cluster the data simultaneously. Unfortunately, such an "all–at–once" gating approach can sometimes lead to problems, specifically if the scatter and fluorescence channels are not on the same scale.

The reason for this is that flowClust can optionally transform the data using a Box–Cox transformation. FlowClust estimates a Box–Cox transformation parameter from the data that can either be cluster specific or common across all clusters. However, if different dimensions of a cluster are on radically different scales, then, it becomes difficult to identify a transformation that is truly optimal for that cluster. In practice, we can get around this issue by performing the gating in multiple stages, first gating the scatter dimensions, followed by gating the fluorescence dimensions. However, we will try both approaches and compare the results.

There are a number of other parameters associated with flowClust that can substantially impact the resulting model fit. The most important are: degrees of freedom, nu, how the degrees of freedom is estimated, nu.est={0,1,2}, and how the Box-Cox transformation parameter is estimated, trans={0,1,2}.

The degrees of freedom determines how robust the distribution used to model cell subpopulations will be to outliers. When the degrees of freedom is infinite (i.e. nu=Inf), then a Gaussian distribution is used to model the data. Gaussian distributions are not robust to outliers, and so the presence of these will affect the position and shape of the resulting clusters. This is in contrast to a t-distribution, which is used to model cell subpopulations when nu is between 1 and Infinity. The smaller the degrees of freedom, the more robust to outliers the t-distribution. However, a small degrees of freedom will make it more difficult for flowClust to detect and effectively model rare cell populations. Therefore, the choice of degrees of freedom is a tradeoff between robustness to outliers, and the ability to model rare cell populations (i.e. cell populations with small numbers of events).

The argument nu.est determines whether the degrees of freedom is be fixed (nu.est=0), or whether it is estimated during the model fitting procedure (nu.est=1 or nu.est=2). A value of nu.est=1, means that a common degrees of freedom will be estimated for all cell populations in the data. In contrast, a value of nu.est=2, tells flowClust to estimate the degrees of freedom independently for each cell subpopulation. The latter approach provides more flexibility to the model, and is useful if the data contains both rare and abundant cell subpopulations of interest.

The final parameter of interest to us is the transformation-related parameter trans, which determines whether, and how the Box-Cox transformation should be applied to the data. Setting trans=0, instructs flowClust not to transform the data, whereas setting trans=1 instructs flowClust to estimate a common transformation parameter for all clusters. Again, more model flexibility can be introduced by setting trans=2, instructing flowClust to estimate a distinct transformation parameter for each cluster. Applying a transformation is generally a good idea if the cell populations appear to be asymmetric, as they frequently are in the forward and side scatter dimensions. In the fluorescence channels, sometimes the populations of interest are relatively symmetric and spherical, in which case one may opt not to transform the data, in order to save time, and reduce the number of parameters in the model.

We will examine the effects of applying a common, distinct, and no transformation during flowClust fitting, as well as common and distinct degrees of freedom as we analyze the example data. Fraction of CD3+/CD4+ and CD3+/CD8+ T-cells that express activation marker HLADr following treatment with two different drugs.

- All-at-once gating (scatter + fluorescence dimensions)
- Sequential gating: scatter channels first, followed by fluorescence channels.
- Gaussian vs t-mixture models.
- With and without transformation.

We'll begin by comparing sequential vs all-at-once gating.

Sequential Gating

We begin by comparing the sequential vs all-at-once gating strategies on the first sample in the flowSet, using the following code:

Since this may take some time to compute, you can load pre–computed data with:

Note: these results can be loaded with:

data(flowMerge1)

We'll look at just the first sample for now. Compare sequential vs all-at-once gating, with and without transformation..

The first call to flowClust fits models containing from 1 through 10 clusters (specified by K) to all the dimensions of the data (specified by the varNames parameter). We applied the default parameter values for transformation and

degrees of freedom, specifically, common degrees of freedom, and common Box– Cox transformation parameter. The second call applies only to the scatter dimensions.

We can examine the BIC plots for each set of models and we can choose the model with the max BIC from each fitting procedure and then we can proceed to plot the best fitting models to get an idea how they differ.



Model selection can be automated, without examining the BIC plots.

```
fc.all <- fc.all[[which.max(BIC(fc.all))]]
fc.all.notrans <- fc.all.notrans[[which.max(BIC(fc.all.notrans))]]
fc.sequential.notrans <- fc.sequential.notrans[[which.max(BIC(fc.sequential.notrans))]]
fc.sequential <- fc.sequential[[which.max(BIC(fc.sequential))]]</pre>
```

The above code identifies the model with the maximum bayesian information criterion (BIC) value and selects it from the list of flowClust fitted models. To plot the models, we need to pass the flowClust fit and the data frame to the plot function, and specify which dimensions we want to plot. This is cumbersome. The flowMerge package provides another option. We can construct a flowObj object using the data and fitted model. This can be passed directly to the plot function which will plot all projections of the data.

flowClust generates multiple models for the same set of data. In order to keep track of which data set corresponds to which model, we can combine them in a flowObj object. Plotting flowClust models is also simplified for this type of object.

- flowObj combined model and data
- Memory efficient: keep only one copy of the data for multiple models
- Extract data via getData(object)

The flowObj function will combine the flowClust model and the flowFrame into a single object. This simplifies data manipulation later on since we won't have to keep track of which flowFrame goes with which model when we're analyzing multiple samples.





- All-at-once clustering with or without transformation doesn't identify the CD8/CD3+ cell population correctly.
- Optimal parameters for scatter dimensions and fluorescence dimensions are different.
- Could use gaussian mixtures, but it would affect the clustering of scatter dimensions.
- Best option is sequential gating of scatter followed by fluorescence dimensions.
- Single cell population modeled by three clusters in the scatter channels.
- flowMerge can help model it as distinct cell population.

We see that the model in the first panel (clustering all dimensions simultaneously) doesn't identify the CD8+/CD3+ cell subpopulation properly. Similarly, the second model (clustering all dimensions, no transformation) also doesn't pick up the CD8+/CD3+ populations. It is possible that the degrees of freedom is too low (set to nu=4, and estimated from the data). However, if we were to use a Gaussian distribution, this would impact gating of the populations in the scatter dimensions. We see that the sequential gating approach (FSC vs SSC with and without transformation) does a good job of fitting the cell populations in the scatter dimensions. Furthermore, visually, we don't see any substantial difference between the two models fit to the scatter data in this case. The only issue is that three clusters are required to model what is clearly a single population in the upper left of the FSC vs SSC plot. This is where the flowMerge package comes into play. FlowMerge makes some specific assumptions about the parameters passed used to fit the flowClust model. Specifically, flowMerge requires that a common degrees of freedom and a common transformation parameter have been used during model fitting, (i.e. (trans=1, nu.est=1)). This was the case above, so we can continue.

flowMerge Objects

```
getSlots("flowMerge")
```

merged	entropy
"numeric"	"numeric"
DATA	expName
"environment"	"character"
varNames	К
"character"	"numeric"
W	mu
"vector"	"matrix"
sigma	lambda
"array"	"numeric"
nu	z
"numeric"	"matrix"
u	label
"matrix"	"vector"
uncertainty	ruleOutliers
"vector"	"vector"
flagOutliers	rm.min
"vector"	"numeric"
rm.max	logLike
"numeric"	"numeric"
BIC	ICL
"numeric"	"numeric"

Merge overlapping clusters to model distinct cell populations.

flowMerge requires that each cluster is modeled with a common degrees of freedom and a common transformation parameter. Merging clusters is trivial, given the flowObj model object:

```
m1 <- merge(fc.sequential.notrans)
m2 <- merge(fc.sequential)</pre>
```

The code above merges clusters in the sequentially gated model, with and without transformation. The output is a list of merged models. The next step is to identify the optimal merged model.

FlowMerge iteratively merges the clusters in the flowClust model to generate distinct cell populations that are represented by single model components. Each merged model is evaluated based on the entropy of clustering. The change in entropy can be plotted as a function of the number of clusters, or as a function of the cumulative number of merged observations. The optimal merged model is the one where the slope of the entropy vs number of clusters or entropy vs number of merged observations plot changes.



ber of clusters is chosen to be either two or three, depending on which model and which model selection method we choose.

We can plot the different merged models to see how they differ.

par(mfrow = c(2, 2))
plot(m1[[3]])
plot(m2[[3]])
plot(m2[[2]])



In practice, any of these model fits seems to be acceptable. We'll choose to use the 3 cluster model based on sequential gating with transformation.

We can identify the optimal merged model from the model 2 series of fits using fitPiecewiseLinreg and then extract the gated populations:

The split() function extracts the cells within each of the gates that match the filtering criteria for outliers. By default the filtering criteria selects events that that are within the 90% quantile of the gate. We can change the filtering criteria using the ruleOutliers() function. Below, we change the quantile level for filtering events from 0.9 to 0.99. As a result, when we extract the data we have more events included in the gate.

We can modify the threshold for outlier detection when plotting or extracting a cell population. The ruleOutliers function modifies the outlier detection rule. Most commonly, we'll use a certain quantile of the distribution, beyond which events are considered outliers. The default is the 90% quantile. When we extract the population, we see the number of included events changes based on the outlier threshold.

Once populations have been gated and extracted in the scatter dimensions, we can proceed to gate populations in the fluorescence dimensions. It is interesting to plot the gated populations to have a look.

	Å				HLADr
۲ د د د د د د	Ø.			CD3	
			CD4	/#	
		CD8	and the second		
States and	SSC	Avser		.	
FSC	a start	h Priore			

Scatter Plot Matrix



Examining the previous plots, we see that population 1 contains CD3+, CD4+, and CD8+ cells. This is the population we will focus on. We will use flowClust to gate the CD4, CD8, and CD3 populations. Looking at the scatter plots, we see the positive cell populations we're interested appear to be somewhat rare. We will use Gaussian, rather than *t*-distributions to fit the data. We will also try fitting the data with and without transformation.

We run the second stage clustering on the CD3/CD4/CD8 fluorescence channels, using gaussian mixtures and t-mixtures. Populations are relatively symmetric in the fluorescence channels, so we opt for no transformation.

Again, the data has been pre-computed to save time. You can load it with:

data(flowMerge2)

Next we plot and choose the best fitting model, again by examining the BIC plots.



We see that the best fitting

model with or without transformation has four clusters. Also note that some of the models with no transformation failed to converge, returning a BIC value of NA. These are dealt with apporpriately within flowClust. How do the max BIC models compare?



It's interesting to note that the CD3+/CD8+ cell population identified in the model without transformation, and K=4 clusters picks up a couple of CD3+/CD8- events. This is due to the low density nature of this cell population and our use of t-mixtures for modeling. We could have a look at the K=5 solution (even though it doesn't have the highest BIC value) to see if we get further resolution of this cell population.

NULL





The CD3+/CD8+ and CD3+/CD4+ cell populations are now well defined. There are two additional populations that pick up some dim events in the CD4 and CD8 dimensions. This is acceptable. We modify the filter to pull in a few extra events when we look for HLADr+ cells in the CD3+/CD4+ and CD8+/CD3+ populations. In the end, we're using Gaussian distributions here, so it's acceptable. We can use the order() function to pull out the populations of interest, based on their mean fluorescence intensities.

We want the CD8+/CD3+ and CD4+/CD3+ subpopulations. We can make use of model parameters estimated by flowClust to select these programmatically.

```
fl.2 <- flowObj(fl.notrans[[5]],</pre>
             fl[[1]])
 ruleOutliers(f1.2) <- list(level = 0.99)</pre>
Rule of identifying outliers: 99% quantile
 order(fl.2@mu[, 1], fl.2@mu[, 3],
             decreasing = TRUE)[1]
```

[1] 2

[1] 3

- Raise the outlier threshold.
- Use order to sort populations on their CD8/CD3, and CD4/CD3 columns.
- The CD8+/CD3+ and CD4+/CD3+ populations are the first in the list returned by the above code.

The above code orders the mean fluorescence intensity of each population, in increasing order, by the CD8/CD3 (columns 1 and 3) and CD4/CD3 markers (columns 2 and 3). The first element of each of these are the indices of the CD8+/CD3+ population, and CD4+/CD3+ populations, respectively. We can pull these out using the split function again.



We see that the HLADr+ cells are really rare, so there's no point running flowClust on these. We'll use the rangeGate() function for one dimensional gating instead.

We find that 0.02 percent of the cells are CD3+/CD8+/HLADr activated, and 0.05 percent of the cells are CD4+/CD3+/HLADr activated. We have determined what the gating procedure should be for a single sample. Now we want to analyze the rest of the samples in the same manner. We would also like this to be analyzed quickly, and if we have multiple processors available, we can use the snowfall package to help us distribut the work.

Automated Gating with FlowClust in Parallel

In order to use the snow and snowfall package, you need to construct a snow cluster. Snowfall simplifies all this for you with a call to sfInit().

flowClust has support for parallel processing via the snow and snowfall packages.
We initialize snowfall by running:

```
sfInit(parallel = TRUE, cpus = 4)
```

sfInit constructs a snow cluster utilizing 2 cpus on the local machine. flow-Clust will detect that snowfall is in use and will utilize the snowfall package to distribute computations amongst the cluster nodes.

The following code performs the forward and side scatter gating on the full set of samples. fsApply cycles through the samples in the flowSet. We'll use the parameter settings we decided upon from the first run.

The data takes some time to process. A pre-computed version has been provided to save time:

data(flowMerge3)

Next we extract the max BIC solution for each sample, construct flowObj objects, and do the merging.

Essentially, we proceed as before, but wrapping calls in lapply, and sapply statements to loop through the different samples.

```
result <- lapply(result, function(x) x[[which.max(BIC(x))]])
result <- sapply(1:length(data),
            function(i) flowObj(result[[i]],
            tData.n[[i]]))
result <- lapply(result, function(x) {
            m <- merge(x)
            m[[fitPiecewiseLinreg(m)]]
        })</pre>
```

Semiautomated Gating

We now need to select the lymphocyte populations. These can vary from one instance of running the algorithm to another due to random initialization. The code below plots each FSC vs SSC gating and allows you to click with your mouse in the center of the lymphocyte cluster (usually the high density population around FSC 400, SSC 200).

```
indices <- unlist(lapply(result,
    function(x) {
        plot(x)
        z <- unlist(locator(n = 1))
        inc <- which.min(sapply(1:x@K,
            function(i) mahalanobis(box(z,
                 lambda = x@lambda),
                 x@mu[i, 1:2], x@sigma[i,
                      , ])))
        plot(x, include = inc)
        inc
    })))
```

We load the pre-gated data for this analysis. We then proceed to exract the populations of interest (see vignette for details), and run the next stage of clustering.

The code above will compute the mahalanobis distance between the location you select and each cell population on the transformed scale. The mahalanobis() function is provided by the stats package. The Box-Cox transformation box() is provided by flowClust, and takes the transformation parameter specific to the sample under consideration as an argument, as well as the data being transformed.

Again, we extract the populations of interest using split(), and run the next stage of clustering on the fluorescence channels.

Stage 2 Clustering

We'll run flowClust with cluster-specific transformation parameters. We won't be able to run flowMerge in this case, but it will give us more model flexibility.

```
sfInit(parallel = TRUE, cpus = 2)
result.fl <- lapply(result.split,
    function(x) flowClust(x, B.init = 100,
        K = 1:10, varNames = colnames(x)[c(3,
            5, 6)], nu = Inf, nu.est = 0,
        trans = 2))</pre>
```

sfStop()

And, again, we can load the pre-computed data to save time here:

data(flowMerge4)

We will extract the max BIC model for the fluorescence clustering, construct the flowObj object, and plot it to determine whether the fit is good. We can manually explore models with fewer or more clusters if the max BIC fit is not appropriate. Extract the max BIC model

Recall that the CD8+/CD3+ population is not well defined for sample 1. We manually select a model with five clusters rather than the model with 4 clusters.



Extract the CD4+/CD3+ and CD8+/CD3+ populations and look at the HLADr markers.

Finally, we can gate the HLADr positive populations using the rangeGate function again.

all.hladr.cd3.cd8 <- lapply(fl.split.cd8, function(x) Subset(x, rangeGate(x, stain = "HLADr", plot = FALSE, borderQuant = 0.5, alpha = 0.5, filterId = "CD3+CD8+HLAct"))) all.hladr.cd3.cd4 <- lapply(fl.split.cd4, function(x) Subset(x, rangeGate(x, stain = "HLADr", plot = FALSE, borderQuant = 0.5, alpha = 0.5, filterId = "CD3+CD4+HLAct")))

We can get the percentage of cells from the counts.



Metaclustering

Next we will examine how to match cell populations across multiple samples using the models output by flowClust and flowMerge. We will use a different data set for this example, consisting of nine lymph node samples from individuals with DLBCL, labelled with three different antibodies, in addition to forward and side-scatter.

require(flowMetaCluster)
require(snowfall)
data(lymphoma)

We load the lymphoma data above and run flowClust in parallel using the snowfall package. We'll run the clustering on the fluorescence dimensions only, since the forward and side scatter dimensions are pretty clean, as we can see below.

print(xyplot(FS ~ SS, lymph[[1]]))


The above plot is representative of the data distribution in the forward and side scatter dimensions of this data set. Therefore there is no need to run flow-Clust on FSC and SSC. We choose the default parameterization of an estimated transformation, and an estimated degrees of freedom, and fit models with one through ten components on the fluorescence channels.

We run flowClust on the data, followed by flowMerge.

With the merged results we can now metacluster the samples. We have two possible approaches. The first uses the flowMerge methodology to merge cell populations across samples using the entropy measure. The second method uses the pairwise mahalanobis distance between cell populations and their centers, with the additional constraints of allowing only a single cell population from each sample to belong to each metacluster. We provide examples using these methods below. The package included, flowMetaCluster is a development release for this workshop.

```
#Mahalanobis distance metaclustering
meta<-metaCluster(m);
#Entropy-based metaclustering
meta2<-metaClusterByMerging(m);</pre>
```

Two different data structures, meta and meta2 store information required to generate metacluster memberships for entropy—based metaclustering and metaclustering based on Mahalanobis distance between populations. The flowMeta-Cluser provides functionality for extracting and plotting the metaclustered cell populations using these structures. More information is provided in the Vignette.

flowMetaCluster Objects

Mahalanobis distance based metaclustering

```
getSlots("flowMetaCluster") #S4 object
                                 flow Indicator
"environment" "data.frame"
```

Entropy Based Metaclustering

names(meta2); #S3 object

```
[1] "z" "adjacency" "entropy"
```

The two function calls above perform metaclustering of the cell populations across samples using two different methods. The first metaCluster applies a Mahalanobis distance based approach to identify and cluster cell populations that are near each other. The algorithm applies an additional constraint that allows no more than one cell population from each sample to belong to a single metacluster (i.e. there is a one-to-one, rather than many-to-one mapping between samples and metaclusters). The second method makes use of cluster merging based on the entropy of overlapping clusters. We concatenate the individual flowFrames to be metaclustered, and evaluate each flowClust model against the entire data set. We then apply the merging algorithm used in flowMerge to combine overlapping cell populations, and look for the changepoint in the entropy vs cumulative number of merged observations plot.

The flowMetaCluster package provides implementations of both of these methods, together with functions for visualization of the metaclustered data. The mahalanobis-distance based metaclustering can be visualized by calling the plot() method.

```
print(plot(meta, by = "metacluster",
               KK = 1, main = "Metacluster 1"))
          FL1.LOG
       Metacluster 1
800
600
400
                                  FL2.LOG
200
0
       200 400 600
   0
       Metacluster 1
                                Metacluster 1
800
                        800
                  N=5
                                          N=5
600
                        600
400
                        400 -
                                                          FL4.LOG
200
                        200
                        0
 0
print(plot(meta, by = "metacluster",
```

```
KK = 2, main = "Metacluster 2"))
```





There are a number of helper methods for working with the metaclustered data.

```
# Return metacluster membership of each cell population.
metaClusterPopulations(meta)
# Return the transformed or untransformed means of the populations in each metacluster
getClassMeans(meta)
# Return the list of flowMerge objects being clustered
getFlow(meta)
#Return clustering statistics about each metacluster
getClusterStats(meta)
# Return the distance matrix used for clustering the data
getDist(meta)
```

These methods can be used to extract information about each metacluster for further analysis.

We can use the split method to extract individual cell populations within each metacluster. From the plots above, we we want to extract metaclusters two and four. flowMetaCluster implements the split method for this purpose.

and the second sec	FL4.LOG
FL2.LOG	
FL1.LOG	

Scatter Plot Matrix



Scatter Plot Matrix

We can also have a look at the entropy vs cumulative number of merged observations plot for the entropy based metaclustering.

screePlot(meta2)



Cumulative Number of Merged Observations

- The entropy vs cumulative number of merged observations identifies when sufficient populations have been merged across samples.
- Localization of the changepoint can be done automatically, as in flowMerge.

[1] 16

The screePlot function generates a plot of the entropy vs cumulative number of merged clusters, and returns the data that can be used as input to the find-ChangePoint function. The changepoint in this plot corresponds to the model where further merging of populations doesn't significantly decrease the entropy because the remaining populations do not significantly overlap. We can fit a two-component linear regression to this plot to automatically identify the location of the changpoint and plot the corresponding model.

The changepoint corresponds to the model with 16 populations. We can plot this model to see how it looks.

We can plot the populations identified by entropy based metaclustering. plot(meta2)



There are four major populations with the remaining 12 populations corresponding to various outlier points.

NULL





Ongoing Work

Work on the metaclustering package is ongoing. We hope to have development version ready for submission in the near future. We are in the process of developing greater depth and functionality for the package.

Feature Requests

- Integrate flowMerge more closely with workFlows.
- Add explicit parallelization support
- Expand plotting and graphing capabilities
- ...

flowMetaCluster

- Add support for user provided distance matrix.
- Add more robust support for labeling of cell populatons.
- Entropy-based merging: map metacluster labelled events back to original populations.

- Implement bayesian priors for rare cell populations.
- ...

Selected References

- Merging Mixture Components for Cell Population Identification in Flow Cytometry Greg Finak, Ali Bashashati, Ryan Brinkman, Raphael Gottardo. Adv. In Bioinformatics.
- Automated Gating of Flow Cytometry Data via Robust Model-Based Clustering Kenneth Lo, Ryan Brinkman, Raphael Gottardo. Cytometry A.

R Code

print(densityplot(~.,data));

```
##trans=1,nu=4,nu.est=1)
##trans=1,nu=4,nu.est=1)
```

- ## fc.sequential.notrans<-flowClust(tData.n[[1]],K=1:10,varNames=colnames(tData.n[[1]])</pre>

##[c(1,2)],trans=0,nu=4,nu.est=1)

fl[[1]]),pch=20,new=T,
main="Without Transformation, K=4")

```
fl.split.cd8<-sapply(1:length(result.fl.bic),function(i)
    split(x=result.split[[i]],f=as(result.fl.bic[[i]],"flowClust"),
    population=list(order(result.fl.bic[[i]]@mu[,1],result.fl.bic[[i]]@mu[,3],
    decreasing=TRUE)[1])))</pre>
```

```
fl.split.cd4<-sapply(1:length(result.fl.bic),function(i)
    split(x=result.split[[i]],f=as(result.fl.bic[[i]],"flowClust"),
    population=list(order(result.fl.bic[[i]]@mu[,2],result.fl.bic[[i]]@mu[,3],
    decreasing=TRUE)[1])))</pre>
```

- all.hladr.cd3.cd8<-lapply(fl.split.cd8,function(x)
 Subset(x,rangeGate(x, stain="HLADr", plot=FALSE,borderQuant=0.5,
 alpha=0.5, filterId="CD3+CD8+HLAct")))</pre>
- all.hladr.cd3.cd4<-lapply(fl.split.cd4,function(x)
 Subset(x,rangeGate(x, stain="HLADr", plot=FALSE,borderQuant=0.5,
 alpha=0.5, filterId="CD3+CD4+HLAct")))</pre>

```
*****
```

chunk number 67: hladrproportions

- CD4.hladr<-sapply(1:length(all.hladr.cd3.cd4), function(i)100*dim(all.hladr.cd3.cd4[[i]])[1]/dim(data[[i]])[1])
- CD8.hladr<-sapply(1:length(all.hladr.cd3.cd8), function(i)100*dim(all.hladr.cd3.cd8[[i]])[1]/dim(data[[i]])[1])

CHURK HUMDEL 00. DAICHAIC

chunk number 69: barchart2

print(barchart(reorder(PatientID, as.numeric(factor(GroupID)))~pr,data=data.frame(
pr=as.vector(CD8.hladr),pData(data)[,c("GroupID", "PatientID")]),groups=GroupID,auto.key=T))