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(Virtual) Space: the Final Frontier – Virtual-Reality-based Identification of Nearby, Young Stars in Gaia Data

M.S. Master of Science

in Astrophysical Sciences and Technology

Ryan W. Butler

School of Physics and Astronomy Rochester Institute of Technology Rochester, New York May 2024

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 Astrophysical Sciences
 And Technology

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER DEGREE Thesis

The Master's. Degree Thesis of Ryan Butler has been examined and approved by the thesis committee as satisfactory for the dissertation requirement for the Master of Science degree in Astrophysical Sciences and Technology.

Dr. Joel Kastner, Thesis Advisor

Dr. Jason Nordhaus, Committee Member

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Date $\qquad \qquad \qquad$

**RICOllege of Science

Astrophysical Sciences**
 and Technology

(Virtual) Space: the Final Frontier –Virtual-Reality-based Identification of Nearby, Young Stars in Gaia Data

By

Ryan Butler

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science. in Astrophysical Sciences & Technology

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Approved by:

Andrew Robinson, Ph.D Date Director, Astrophysical Sciences and Technology

Abstract

Nearby Young Moving Groups (NYMGSs) are loose kinematic associations of young (<150 Myr) stars in the solar neighborhood (distance \leq 140pc). These groups offer an excellent testbed for the study of pre-main sequence stellar evolution, protoplanetary and evolved disks, and recently formed (or forming) extrasolar systems. To further inform studies of these systems, we can expand the known membership of these NYMGs using the multi-dimensional spatial, kinematic, and photometric data from the Gaia mission. Using a new virtual reality tool known as StarGateVR, we search Gaia Data Release 3 for new candidates of 8 NYMGs and identify \sim 370 such candidates among 7 of the NYMGs investigated. We identify one probable disk-hosting candidate of interest, 2MASS J15460752-6258042, and reassess its age. Finally, the NYMGs are probed for any hot white dwarfs, which could indicate the recent demise of massive member stars.

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[\[4\] with the location of J1546 \(this work\) noted in red. Additionally plotted are](#page-44-0) [theoretical PARSEC isochrones at the approximate ages of the moving groups \[6\]](#page-44-0) 28

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Young stars and their disks

The canonical view of star formation [\[9\]](#page-82-2) posits a multi-stage process that begins in giant clouds of cold molecular gas, which are regions much denser than the surrounding interstellar medium (ISM). The clouds undergo gravitational collapse, resulting in a hot gaseous protostellar core, which forms a disk and accretes material from its environment. This core continues to contract under its own gravitation, converting potential energy into heat and increasing in temperature and pressure. Eventually, stars with enough mass will begin hydrogen burning (fusing hydrogen in their cores), providing a source of pressure that prevents further contraction. The point at which hydrogen burning becomes the dominant force against contraction is known as the zero-age main sequence, and indicates a star has arrived on the main sequence (MS), where it will remain for the bulk of its life.

The period of a star's life between when they have acquired the bulk of their mass from the initial formation cloud and beginning hydrogen burning is known as the pre-main sequence (pre-MS). The amount of time a star exists in the pre-MS phase is determined by its mass. Low mass stars can spend a great deal of time in this stage (an M star has pre MS lifetime of hundreds of millions of years). Intermediate mass stars such as the sun (a G star) have pre-MS lifetimes of tens of millions of years [\[10\]](#page-82-3). The most massive stars, O and B types have pre-MS lifetimes of a few thousand years (for the highest mass O stars) to a handful of million years.

Chapter 1. Introduction 1

Pre-MS stars are unique laboratories for understanding the early evolution of stars and the formation of planetary systems. By virtue of being (relatively) young, some pre-MS stars are observed to host circumstellar disks [\[11\]](#page-82-4), often identified by an excess of infra-red emission from the host star. In particularly young stars, these can be gas-rich protoplanetary disks, providing the raw material and gas leftover from the stars formation to give rise to planetary systems. As the star evolves, the gaseous component of this is quickly dispersed, however newly formed planetary systems are chaotic environments, and collisions between planetesimals may give rise to evolved, dusty so-called debris disks which are also observed around some pre-MS stars. The study of these protoplanetary and evolved disks is critical to the overall understanding of how solar systems such as our own arise.

1.2 Nearby Young Moving Groups

The majority of pre-MS stars reside in or around star-forming molecular clouds [\[12\]](#page-82-5). In some regards this makes their study difficult, as the clouds they form in create observational hurdles at many wavelengths (notably, optical and ultra-violet), limiting the diagnostic toolkit available to astronomers. Fortunately, discoveries in the last quarter century have lead to the understanding that there is a decent sampling of pre-MS stars closer to home.

Since the 1990s, it has been known that there are several loose groups of pre-MS stars moving together within \sim 120 pc of the sun [\[13\]](#page-82-6). These have come to be known as Nearby Young Moving Groups (NYMGs), and by virtue of being spatially and kinematically related, as well as having a common origin, members of a given NYMG share important fundamental properties such as age and metallicity. These NYMGs are very tenuously bound, unlike open clusters, and are not generally observed past ∼ 150 Myr in age. Formation mechanisms of these groups is an ongoing area of study - many of them are likely associated with the tidal tails of local open clusters [\[14\]](#page-82-7), and are old enough that little evidence of their birth nebulae remain.

The first NYMG was discovered in the late 1990's on the basis of strong X-ray emission (an indicator of coronala activity, and hence youth [\[15\]](#page-82-8)) from the star TW Hydrae and several

Figure 1.1: Figure 1 from [\[1\]](#page-81-0) showing all known nearby young moving groups and open clusters current as of its publication in 2018. At least 2 additional groups have been identified since that time [\[2,](#page-81-1) [3\]](#page-81-2).

of a star to ascertain, comes as a given if membership can be verified. As such, stars with respective associations with low-quality or inaccurate kineother interesting attributes such as circumstellar disks or exoplanets automatically have age α determinations for those as well, helping to inform the understanding of the timescales of such \mathcal{L} determinations for those as well, helping to inform the understanding of the timescales of such systems. \mathcal{L} other stars with close physical proximity [\[16\]](#page-82-9). Since that discovery, the number of known $\mathbf{1}_{4}$ 3589 $\mathbf{1}_{5}$ 369 $\mathbf{1}_{1}$ 3589 $\mathbf{1}_{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$ NYMGs has ballooned to something around 20, although the exact number is still under myestigation and the actual existence of some proposed groups is questionable. Figure investigation, and the actual existence of some proposed groups is questionable. Figure [1.1](#page-19-0) shows an overview of the NYMGs as of 2018. Because all stars of a given NYMG share the \sim 269–153 μ \sim 269–153 μ \sim 269–153 μ same age, identifying new members is valuable as the age, one of the more difficult properties

The proximity of NYM Gs is of great benefit to the observation of member stars. The aforethe gradual discovery of equations at the edge members at the edge stress at the edge str γ rides one of the best resolution observations of a protoplanetary \mathbf{r} is new moving groups (e.g., see Oh et al. 2017) will be \mathbf{r} nd proximity to the sun. NYMG stars also The proximity of NYMGs is of great benefit to the observation of member stars. The aforementioned TW Hydrae provides one of the best resolution observations of a protoplanetary T disk to date, due to its convenient inclination and proximity to the sun. NYMG stars also 16 exoplanets have been around stars within ∼150pc of the sun, the bulk of which are NYMG offer by far the best opportunities to directly image exoplanets. To date all directly imaged members. This is because pre-MS stars have planets that are still young enough to remain self-luminous in the thermal infrared, and by definition NYMG members tend to be close enough to make such observations possible.

The proximity of NYMGs is also what has made them historically difficult to identify. Because they are so close to the sun, in some cases (such as with the AB Doradus or β Pictoris moving groups) they can cover much of the celestial sphere. This makes them difficult to isolate on position alone in the same way that may be done for something like an open cluster. As such, the best way to obtain new NYMG members is via kinematics. Until the era of widely available 3-Dimensional kinematic data brought about by large radial velocity surveys [\[17\]](#page-83-0) and Gaia [\[18\]](#page-83-1), this was difficult. Because of the now much more readily available kinematic and positional data, we have many more avenues to identify candidate members of these NYMGs. Doing so will enhance our knowledge of the structure and composition of these unique systems, further aiding in the study of young stars and solar systems.

Because of their closeness and youth, NYMGs also offer prime targets for identifying recently formed white dwarfs, the stellar remnants left over after certain stars exit the main sequence. NYMGs are young enough that these may be formed from the higher mass (and shortest lived) members, which enter and exit the main sequence very rapidly compared to the majority of lower-mass stars.

1.3 White Dwarfs

Stars of masses $M_* < 8M_{\odot}$ eventually deplete through fusion the bulk of the hydrogen and helium that they were formed with. In the final stages of these star's nuclear burning portion of life, they tend to eject the majority of their atmosphere through intense stellar winds driven by various pulsations undergone. The brief phase in which a stars atmosphere is being evacuated is known as a planetary nebula [\[19\]](#page-86-0). What remains is an inert, hot core known as a white dwarf (WD).

More massive stars tend to evolve on faster timescales than their less massive counterparts. Additional interactions in multiple star systems can also expedite the formation timescales for WDs [\[20,](#page-86-1) [21\]](#page-87-0). WDs which have formed recently are hot (on the order of 100-200 kK) and cool off over time, as such new WDs tend to be brighter than older ones, although all are relatively faint due to their small radii $(R_{WD} \approx R_{\oplus}).$

Because massive stars have a shorter main sequence lifespan, recent WDs which have formed from them can only be found in areas where relatively young stars are present. NYMGs provide an excellent search in this regard, since they are young enough (in many cases too young) to have formed WDs from their most massive initial members which will still be hot, and they are close enough that at least some of these should be detectable. Additionally, if such WDs are detected, it is plausible to probe the surrounding ISM for evidence of the preceding planetary nebulae.

1.4 The Gaia Spacecraft

Gaia is a spacecraft launched by the European Space Agency (ESA) in 2013 with the mission of creating the largest three-dimensional map of the Milky Way galaxy to date by surveying some ∼1 billion stars, around 1% of the galaxies stellar population [\[18\]](#page-83-1). The primary research purpose of the spacecraft is to conduct astrometry, and as such it measures many related attributes such as position, parallax, proper motion, and radial velocity for sources in which it is viable. Trigonometric parallax, often simply referred to as the parallax, π , or ϖ is the apparent position change of a star seen with respect to the background (usually more distant stars). Because this shift in position is incredibly small it has been difficult to do for a large number of stars until recently. Measuring this parallax with extreme precision for many stars is the primary objective of Gaia. Gaia measures photometry in 3 bandpasses, G (320 nm \lesssim $\lambda \lesssim 1100 \text{ nm}$), G_{BP} (320 nm $\lesssim \lambda \lesssim 700 \text{ nm}$), and G_{RP} (700 nm $\lesssim \lambda \lesssim 1100 \text{ nm}$).

To date ESA has output 3 major public data releases (Data Releases 1, 2, and 3; DR1, DR2, and DR3) from the Gaia mission and one major preliminary release (early Data Release 3). The most recent to this work being DR3 in June 2022, which vastly improved the number of sources with radial velocity measurements [\[22\]](#page-87-1). The sheer scale and precision of the Gaia data allows for many new inroads into the search for kinematic and spatial overdensities in stars close to the sun.

1.5 StarGateVR

Virtual reality (VR) is an emergent technology that allows a user to wear a headset with 3D near-eye displays. At present it is largely employed for entertainment purposes, however it has gained some traction in scientific pursuits in recent years [\[23,](#page-89-0) [24,](#page-89-1) [25\]](#page-89-2). VR offers an underutilized way of engaging with multi-dimensional data, as found in astronomy.

The three-dimensional nature of Gaia data naturally lends itself to a three-dimensional view. VR provides a unique inroad in this regard. To date there have been several tools which have successfully applied Gaia data to VR systems [\[26,](#page-90-0) [27,](#page-90-1) [28\]](#page-90-2). While these tools provide useful visualizations, they lack some of the data analysis capability of desktop based applications (e.g. TOPCAT [\[29\]](#page-90-3)) or require attachment to a desktop computer to run.

Our collaboration, particularly Immersive Science LLC, has created a tool known as Star-GateVR (SGVR) that successfully overcomes the aforementioned hurdles. SGVR allows the user to view Gaia data on any three axes chosen, provided the data has been pulled from the Gaia archive. It is also of note that the tool naturally renders the data into the intuitive 3 dimensional heliocentric XYZ space for position and likewise UVW for kinematic information, when available. In addition to viewing Gaia data in three-dimensions, SGVR allows the user to select data for further study using a tool in the program known as a "gate", an adjustable ellipsoid which may be dragged through the star field to highlight (known as "gating") sources of interest, as seen in figure [1.2.](#page-23-0) Sources gated in one set of axes remain highlighted when the axes are changed. In this manner one may observe a star or group of stars in many different ways. The gating aspect of SGVR adds a unique analytical quality to the program not currently seen in other Gaia oriented VR tools.

In this work we apply the StarGateVR tool to the task of identifying NYMG candidate members from field stars in the Gaia DR3 data. We additionally estimate physical properties of these candidate member stars via spectral energy distribution fitting, and in doing so check for evidence of circumstellar disks. The StarGateVR tool is also used to attempt a search of recently formed white-dwarf stars amongst the NYMGs considered in this work.

Figure 1.2: Screenshots current to StarGateVR version 0.6.7. On the left, one can see a standard user view in the program, including many prominent user interface elements in the foreground such as the controllers and control panel. A three-dimensional rendered Gaia query is visible in the background. On the right panel the gating ellipsoid is shown prominently, with stars of the Hyades cluster in kinematic space highlighted in yellow.

Chapter 2

New Candidate Members of 7 NYMGs

There exists something of a Catch-22 in the world of NYMG membership. To identify new group members one must fully understand the spatial and kinematic extent of these NYMGs, however to fully understand the morphologies of such groups membership must be well constrained. In this work we approach the membership issue using what is already known about the spatial and kinematic positioning of NYMGs to identify new candidate members.

2.1 Overview of NYMGs Searched for New Candidates

While there exists an ever-changing list of NYMGs under observation, few have well constrained memberships. Perhaps the most complete understanding of NYMG today comes from the first, and particularly well studied, young TW Hydrae Association (TWA) discussed in section [1.2.](#page-18-0) Other well studied groups include the β Pictoris Moving Group (β PMG or BPMG), the AB Doradus Moving Group (ABDMG), and the Carina, Columba, and Tucana-Horologium Associations (CAR, COL, THA). More recently identified associations, such as the Argus Association (ARG) and 32 Orionis Group (THOR) have also had known membership bolstered within the last decade.

Figure 2.1: Right ascension and declination plot of all bona fide members considered in this work as determined by [\[4\]](#page-81-3).

2.1.1 Established Memberships

The last several years have seen an increased use in machine-learning methods to tackle data in astronomy [\[30\]](#page-90-4). Applications of machine learning to NYMG membership have yielded lists of high-probability group members based on spatio-kinematics in addition to age determinations notably in Lee & Song 2019 [\[4\]](#page-81-3), hence referred to as Lee+19. For the purpose of this work we consider the bona fide members from Lee+19 to compose the 8 aforementioned NYMGs investigated. A positional plot of the Lee+19 members is given in figure [2.1.](#page-26-3)

2.2 Membership selection

2.2.1 Gaia Search Criteria

Much of the prior work on membership for these NYMGs was conducted using spatial and kinematic data from Gaia Data Release 2 (DR2) or the later early Data Release 3 (eDR3). We conduct this work using the most recent full data release, Data Release 3 (DR3). Of particular importance is that DR3 contains radial velocities of some 33,812,183 stars, whereas eDR3 and DR2 only contain radial velocities for 7,224,631 stars [\[31\]](#page-90-5). This allows us to find many previously unnoticed NYMG candidates because they simply lacked the three-dimensional velocity information to be identified in previous data releases.

The initial search of stars was pulled from the Gaia archive, and encompasses a sphere of stars around the sun with parallax $\varpi > 7.1428571$, corresponding to a distance of 140pc. In theory, NYMGs should exist \leq 100pc from the sun, however in practice several of the groups extend well beyond that distance, so 140pc is taken to allow for maximum candidate consideration. These stars are further filtered on the basis of parallax errors. There are two sources of parallax error considered in this filtering of DR3 data: astrometric excess noise, ϵ_i , and the parallax over error, $\frac{\varpi}{\sigma_{\varpi}}$. ϵ_i measures the disagreement between observations and astrometric models of a given source, given as an angle. We implement a check of $\epsilon_i \leq 2$ to ensure sources in our selection are astrometrically well behaved. $\frac{\varpi}{\sigma_{\varpi}}$ considers the measured parallax with respect to its standard error. We additionally check that $\frac{\varpi}{\sigma_{\varpi}} \geq 20$. This insures that sources with parallax errors $> 5\%$, and hence imprecise three-dimensional positions, are not considered. The resultant cut leaves a sphere of 736,175 well behaved stars out to a distance of 140pc.

2.2.2 StarGateVR Filtering

2.2.2.1 Spatial and Kinematic Filters

Gaia provides precise RA, DEC, and parallax ϖ values for all stars in the sample. StarGateVR, when given a dataset with such values, automatically computes a heliocentric map of the stars positions, known as XYZ space, using code adapted from [\[32\]](#page-93-0). In this coordinate system, the X-axis indicates the direction from the sun to the galactic center, the Y-axis is perpendicular to the X-axis along the direction of solar motion through the galaxy, and the Z-axis is perpendicular to both. To maintain a right-handed coordinate system, StarGateVR maintains positive X values in the direction opposite the galactic center. As the system is heliocentric, the sun is located at coordinate $(0,0,0)$.

Gaia likewise provides precise 2-D motion on the sky, known as proper motion (PM), for

all stars in the sample. The Gaia proper motion is given as the linear change measured in milliarcseconds in both right ascension and declination per year. The third dimension of a star's motion, that in the radial line of sight (hence known as radial velocity; RV) is much more difficult to ascertain. RVs are generally obtained using Doppler shift, measuring the deviation of an observed spectral line from its expected "rest" position. The Gaia mission is equipped with a dedicated Radial Velocity Spectrometer, allowing it to acquire radial velocity measurements for stars with Gaia G-band magnitude < 14 [\[33\]](#page-93-1). Nearly half of the ∼ 700,000 stars in the initial sample lack RV measurements. For those stars which do have measured RVs, a 3-D kinematic analog to XYZ space may be defined, known as UVW space. In this system, U is velocity along the X-axis, V is velocity along the Y-axis, and W is velocity along the Z-axis.

Stars which exhibit similar UVW values implicitly have similar motion throughout the galaxy. This forms the co-moving component of NYMGs. Stars may be co-moving even if they do not occupy a tight locus in XYZ space, but XYZ positions may still indicate a spatial coordination among group members. Leveraging this, we implement a multi-stage filtering process in StarGateVR to identify candidate stars for each NYMG considered.

In addition to the initial 140pc sphere of stars pulled from Gaia DR3, a list of bona fide members of each NYMG determined by [\[4\]](#page-81-3) is also visualized in SGVR. These bona-fide members serve as "guideposts" for filtering the Gaia DR3 data. For each group, the ellipsoidal gating tool was adjusted and used to select all Gaia DR3 sources that occupied roughly the same spatial positions as the Lee+19 members. A subsequent gate was placed in UVW space, insuring that selected stars occupy not only the spatial region of known group members, but also share similar 3-D kinematics.

2.2.2.2 Color-Magnitude Diagram Filter

The photometric measurements of Gaia allow for the creation of Color-Magnitude Diagrams (CMDs), proxies for the familiar Hertzprung-Russel diagram. Stars of various masses but identical age form distinct tracks on CMDs, known as isochrones. In this way, plotting CMDs

Figure 2.2: Plot illustrating the result of each "gate" in StarGateVR, in addition to showing the bona fide membership used as guides. Note that most if not all bona fide members have Gaia DR3 counterparts which can give an illusion of double-counting on the plots. For simplicity we have shown only a 2-dimensional slice of each gate. The target group in this example is the 32 Orionis group.

of the LEE+19 bona-fide members generates traceable isochrones on the CMDs in SGVR. Using the gating tool in the program, a gate is drawn along the bona-fide members on the CMD, creating a roughcast isochronal filter on all candidate members. Thus, candidate stars of similar CMD positions, kinematics, and spatial locations are identified for all NYMGs. Figure [2.2](#page-29-1) shows the sequential results of this gating process on the 32 Orionis group.

2.3 New Candidate Members

The SGVR analysis allowed us to identify a total of 1075 stars between the eight NYMGs. We query the SIMBAD [\[34\]](#page-93-2) astronomical database for all stars in the sample by Gaia DR3 ID, noting any prior group attribution either in posted literature of the source or publication ingested into the VizieR database [\[35\]](#page-93-3). We warn some caution here as literature which has not been submitted to these databases will not be represented in this search. We find that of our SGVR filtered sample, 698 have obvious prior NYMG membership attributions. The remaining 376 candidates lack obvious membership attribution or appear in a different NYMG than identified in our filtering. We do caution that there may exist cases where membership attribution was not ingested into SIMBAD. These are dubbed "new candidates" for the purpose

Group	Total Candidates	New Candidates
ABDMG	322	144
\rm{ARG}	103	62
BPMG	202	46
CAR.	125	64
COL	168	50
THOR	23	3
THA	118	7
TWA	14	0
Total	1075	376

Table 2.1: Number of Recovered Candidates for Each NYMG. New Candidates Indicate Those Which Were Not Identified in Literature

of this work. A dedicated young star database (mocaDB) is due to come online later this year that will likely elucidate prior attribution to some of this sample, particularly for literature which was not input to the SIMBAD/VizieR databases. We report the entirety of these new candidates in table [A.1.](#page-60-0)

Seven of the eight investigated NYMGs appear in the pool of new candidates. The number of new candidates found by group is largely correlated to the group's known size, with the well populated AB Doradus moving group (ABDMG) yielding the most new candidates, and the well studied, low population TW Hydrae Association yielding none.

Of some interest is the location of new candidates in positional and kinematic space. Figure [2.3](#page-31-1) displays the XY, XZ, YZ, UV, UW, and VW positions of each newly identified candidate star. ABDMG occupies the largest overall spatial extent, covering a range of around 100 pc in the X direction, and a slightly larger range of \sim 130 pc in Y, and a negligibly smaller range of 90 pc in the Z direction. This is likely a feature of both the ABDMGs statistically larger sampling than that of the other observed NYMGs and more evolved age [\[36\]](#page-93-4). The other groups tend to occupy more constrained spatial bounds. In comparison to the positional locations of new candidates, the kinematics are much more constrained and less intermixed between groups, with the noted exception of Carina, Columba, and the Tucana-Horologium association. Although these groups are somewhat distinct in XYZ locations, they exhibit a general overlap in UVW space. Because of this general kinematic overlap as well as similar

Figure 2.3: Plot of heliocentric spatial and kinematic positions of the new candidate members for each NYMG considered in this work (see table [2.1\)](#page-30-0).

isochronal ages (figure [2.4\)](#page-32-0), these groups, along with the nearby young open cluster χ^1 Fornacis (not considered in this work) have recently been dubbed part of a larger "Austral Complex" [\[37\]](#page-94-0), although the entire interplay of these groups remains the subject of ongoing research, hence the necessity to better refine and understand the memberships.

2.4 Comparison to BANYAN Σ Membership Probabilities

The processes of converting "candidate" group members to "bona fide member" is a resource intensive process, usually relying on the 6-D spatial-kinematics of the candidate, in addition to independent signs of youth such as strong coronal X-ray emissions, a notable Li 670.7 nm absorption line where applicable, infrared or ulta-violet excess, and isochronal modeling to verify that the candidate matches the full spatial, kinematic, and temporal properties of the NYMG in question. In the event a large list of candidates is generated, as in this work, it is beneficial to compare the candidates to membership models prior to undertaking a full vetting

Figure 2.4: Gaia Color-Magnitude Diagrams comprised of new candidates for the 7 NYMGs which yield them in this work. The field stars shown are a randomly selected 12% of stars within 50 pc of the sun.

process.

One such model is BANYAN Σ [\[1\]](#page-81-0), a bayesian statistical tool which uses the 6-D spatiokinematics of a star to assess its probability of membership in 29 of the nearest known NYMGs and open clusters. All 7 of the candidate-yielding NYMGs observed in this work have been modelled by the BANYAN Σ tool, although the Argus association is a more recent addition [\[2\]](#page-81-1). BANYAN Σ creates its models based on small lists of established members for each group and cluster, and uses ellipsoidal models for both the positional and kinematic extent of groups. The version of the tool used in this analysis does not account for CMD positioning. As such, candidates that return low or even zero probabilities with the tool should not be discarded, as the true morphologies of these groups is still not fully understood. If groups have non-ellipsoidal shapes such as filaments or fans across any space investigated, the tool will not properly model that behavior. With that in mind, a high BANYAN Σ probability for a candidate is a good check that the membership selection process is sound.

All new candidates were run through the BANYAN Σ tool with their full spatial and kinematic values input, along with associated uncertainties. Fig [2.5](#page-34-0) provides positional plot of all candidates with color-coding to indicate final calculated probabilities of membership to each respective NYMG. There is a notable distribution on probability outputs by group. Some NYMGs, particularly the Argus association, AB Doradus moving group, and the Tucana-Horologium association yield many high-probability candidates. Others such as the β Pic moving group and the Carina and Columba associations yield a much lower number of highprobability candidate members. Because all candidates are selected with similar CMD placement in addition to XYZ and UVW location, this is not particularly concerning. The interplay between using statistical tools such as BANYAN Σ to identify NYMG candidates and needing to vet NYMG candidates to inform such statistical models provides further motivation for seeking to verify candidates independently, resource intensive as it may be. That said BANYAN Σ provides a useful indicator of which stars may be worth targeting with follow-up studies. If high probability candidates are vetted and found to share properties with known group members, it may indicate that lower probability sources from the candidate pool are

Figure 2.5: Plot of heliocentric spatial and kinematic positions of the new candidate members for each NYMG considered in this work.

also worth investigating.

2.5 Spectral Energy Distributions and Modelling the Physical Properties of New Candidate Stars

By aggregating various individual pass-band photometric measurements we may construct a spectral energy distribution (SED) for each new candidate star in this sample. These SEDs amount to a low resolution spectra of each star, and may be compared with synthetic stellar atmospheric models to estimate physical properties of the star, such as mass, temperature, and radius, that would otherwise prove difficult to ascertain.

We utilize near and far ultraviolet (NUV, FUV) photometry from the Galaxy Evolution Explorer (GALEX) [\[38\]](#page-94-1), optical photometry from Gaia DR3, and near/mid infrared (IR) photometry from the Two Micron All Sky Survey (2MASS) [\[39\]](#page-94-2) and the Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer (WISE) [\[40\]](#page-94-3) to construct SEDs for all sources. Gaia photometry is present for all sources, 7 sources are found to lack WISE measurements, 6 sources lack 2MASS measurements. GALEX measurements are the hardest to obtain, with 120 sources having NUV measurements and only 47 with FUV. As such, the bulk of candidates only have photometry in the Gaia, 2MASS, and WISE bands. Table [2.3](#page-38-0) outlines the wavelength of each photometric band used. Of all bands used, the WISE W4 band has the greatest uncertainty and is vulnerable to contamination from background galaxies and galactic dust. As such, in measurements where the W4 measurement has a large error, it is discarded. In this manner we construct SEDs with as many photometry measurements as possible from the selected catalogues for all candidates. Figure [2.6](#page-36-1) shows an example of an SED output with the full queried photometry available. We make use of the Virtual Observatory SED Analyser (VOSA) [\[41\]](#page-95-0) to compile these SEDs and subsequent model fits.

After SEDs are generated for each candidate using available photometry, a synthetic stellar atmosphere model is fitted to each spectrum. There are a number of such models to choose from, many of which tailor to specific spectral classes or physical regimes of stars. Because our candidates are located along much of the CMD, we opt for the BT-Settl (AGS2009) model

Figure 2.6: Spectral Energy Distribution (SED) composed of GALEX, Gaia, 2MASS, and WISE photometry for candidate Gaia DR3 1192813951126183808. This is a rare example of an SED that contains photometric measurements from all catalogues searched. Error bars are visible but generally smaller than the point size.

grid, which encompasses a wide array of stellar parameters $(400 < T_{eff} < 70,000, -4 <$ [Fe/H] < 0.5 , etc.). VOSA performs a χ^2 fit with the BT-Settl grid and outputs the best 10. For the purpose of this work we opt to select the top ranked "best" fit as given by VOSA, determined as the fit with the minimum χ^2 value. An example of this best fit over a generated SED is shown in figure [2.7.](#page-37-0) The best fit provides an estimate for the star's temperature, and radius. Using the temperature we also estimate the spectral type of each candidate using the method outlined in [\[8\]](#page-82-0) for Pre-MS stars, aiding in our growing understanding of the demographics of these NYMGs. The first 10 of these outputs are shown in table [2.2,](#page-37-1) while the rest are presented in table [A.1.](#page-60-0)

2.6 New Candidates with Infrared-Excess

Circumstellar disks containing dust are known to re-radiate absorbed photons in the mid-to far- IR potion of the spectrum [\[11\]](#page-82-1). Consequently, they may appear as larger-than-expected measurements for photometry in that region of the spectrum, particularly in the WISE bands. Identifying stars that host these disks allows for the assessment of an overall disk fraction of

Group	Gaia DR3 ID	RA	DEC	Teff	Rad	SpT
		deg)	(deg)	(K)	(R_\odot)	[8]
ABDMG	4899996487129314688	0.931	-65.78	3500	0.466	M2.5V
ABDMG	2741802191422290176	1.605	4.837	3200	0.371	M ₄ V
ABDMG	4904674604163917696	3.982	-61.631	3200	0.510	M4V
ABDMG	2792563894496829696	5.435	15.727	3200	0.355	M4V
ABDMG	524634348319029888	12.271	65.744	3900	0.440	K9V
ABDMG	4931809967022910976	13.965	-49.64	3000	0.333	M5V
ABDMG	2787564449484699264	19.21	21.052	6700	1.526	F4V
ABDMG	2564275967417666944	20.098	5.252	3800	0.525	M0.5V
ABDMG	292521529517332224	24.997	26.185	4100	0.426	K7V

Table 2.2: BT-Settl [\[7\]](#page-82-2) SED Model Fit Results for First 10 Stars in Sample. Continued in Table [A.1.](#page-60-0) SpT Estimates From [\[8\]](#page-82-0).

Figure 2.7: SED seen in figure [2.6](#page-36-0) with the best fit BT-Settl model overplotted. This particular model corresponds to a star with $\mathrm{T}_{eff} = 5900 \mathrm{K}.$

stars in a given NYMG. Because the ages of NYMGs are constrained, this contributes to the overall understanding of the lifespans of circumstellar disks both overall and among differing spectral types. VOSA issues a flag on any source that it detects such an excess in during SED generation. Circumstellar disks are not the only possible cause of IR excess however, as any foreground or background dust, in addition to background galaxies, may also lead to the unexpectedly large IR measurements. As noted previously, the WISE W4 band is particularly sensitive to these types of contamination. Additionally, the presence of a nearby, bright star in the same field may also lead to an excess. For these reasons, it is important to vet each IR-excess displaying candidate.

Of the 376 new candidates for which SEDs were created in section [2.5,](#page-35-0) 20 are identified as having IR-excess. The majority of these display an excess beginning in the WISE W1 band, with others beginning in longer-wavelength bandpasses. No candidates are identified with obvious excess from the 2MASS measurements. The WISE W1-4 band images were then reviewed for each of the IR-excess sources. Of the 20 sources, we identify only 8 that appear obviously in all WISE frames. The majority of those that do not are found to be binaries, or exhibit obvious dust contamination in the W3 and W4 images which likely lead to the IR excess seen in their SEDs.

Of the 8 candidates which are detected in all WISE bands, we note that at least two, Gaia DR3 4900997562402606208, and Gaia DR3 5298425111243573376 are binary systems, which may contribute to the IR excess. 4 others, Gaia DR3 5826466047245658240, Gaia DR3 5487374844438857728, Gaia DR3 123185851098826880, and Gaia DR3 4066318531598567424 are already known disk-hosts [\[42,](#page-95-0) [43,](#page-95-1) [44\]](#page-95-2). The final two sources, Gaia DR3 5301812603489357440 and Gaia DR3 5275773488076705024 have no noted literature references to disks.

Table 2.3: Approximate λ_{eff} Value For Each Bandpass Used in SED Generation

	GALEX	Gaia			2MASS			WISE				
FUV	NUV	G_{RP}	G	G_{BP}	G_{RVS}		Н	Κs	W1	W2.	W3	W4
nm	nm	nm	nm	nm	nm	$\,\rm\mu m$	μ m	μ m	μ m	μ m	$\,\rm\mu m$	μ m
152.8	231.0	503.6	582.2	762.0	857.8	1.235	1.662 2.159		3.368	4.618	12.082	22.194

Chapter 3

A Peter-Pan Disk Exits Neverland: Reevaluating the Age of Disk-Hosting Star 2MASS J15460752-6258042

Typically, gas-rich protoplanetary disks are battered by the stellar winds of the host star and are expected to dissipate on a timescale of a few Myr [\[11\]](#page-82-1), while dusty debris disks formed by colliding planetesimals may exist much longer into a star's evolution. Infrequently, a star is identified that displays evidence of hosting a gas-rich disk despite an age older much older than the expected evaporation timescale (> 10 Myr) [\[45,](#page-95-3) [46\]](#page-95-4). Known examples of stars with these long lived gas and dust disks include the ∼ 12 Myr binary V4046 Sagittarii [\[47\]](#page-96-0) and the dusty ∼ 30 − 50 Myr old RZ Piscium [\[48\]](#page-96-1). Because the exact intricacies of disk life-cycles remains an open question, it is important to identify these so called "peter-pan disks" and study them. It is likewise important to accurately assess the ages of these disks, to help paint a complete picture of the overall evolution and properties of these objects.

Figure 3.1: WISE W1-4 band images of J1546. Increased IR emission seen in the W3 and W4 images, compared to all other stars in the images, is evidence of the circumstellar disk thought to exist around the star.

3.1 Previous Studies of 2MASS J15460752-6258042

2MASS J15460752-6258042 (identified in the Gaia catalogue as Gaia DR3 5826466047245658240, known hereafter as J1546) is an understudied curiosity amongst circumstellar disk hosting stars. It was initially observed in the infrared by 2MASS and later WISE (figure [3.1\)](#page-40-0). It was identified as an H α emission line T-Tauri star in 2014 as part of a South African Large Telescope (SALT) spectroscopic follow-up to several $H\alpha$ sources [\[49\]](#page-96-2) identified in the AAO/UKST SuperCOSMOS H α Survey [\[50\]](#page-96-3), with aims of identifying symbiotic stars.

A mid-M dwarf with a prolonged accretion disc 65

Figure 3.2: Figure 4 from [\[5\]](#page-81-0) showing the line profiles of He I, [OI], and Li I. The variationm between observations is likely an effect of the ongoing accretion.

hosting stars, with the $H\alpha$ strong emission lines supporting this. α and 2010 further refined the H α detection A set of spectroscopic observations in 2018 and 2019 further refined the $H\alpha$ detection, $2M_1 + 1$ T is a borderline transition $P(X)$ showing an equivalent width in excess of 100 Å in both spectra. Lee+20 [\[5\]](#page-81-0) (Lee+20 hereafter) \mathbf{r} including from ALMA, are required before definitively de also identified other emission lines (Balmer series, HeI, [OI]) in addition to a prominent Li I lines from that work. The behavior seen in the Lee+20 spectra is consistent with other disk- $\mathcal{O}(\mathcal{O})$ parameters for constraining disc models is stellar agents in stellar agents is stellar agents in absorption line at 6708Å. Figure [3.2](#page-41-0) shows the spectrum of the notable emission and absorption

 $\frac{1}{2}$ line their mogeurements $\frac{1}{2}$ of $\frac{1}{2}$ identifies $\frac{11546}{2}$ as a spectral type M5 probable member of the Argus moving group. As Argus has a the distinct title of oldest mid-M star with an accretion disk identified current to that work. Using their measurements, Lee+20 identifies J1546 as a spectral type M5 probable member 2008). Although the absolute age scales from these moving groups of the Argus moving group. As Argus has as constrained age [\[2\]](#page-81-1) of \sim 55 Myr, this gives J1546

The best-fitting temperature (*T*star = 2940 K) is consistent with \sim 3.2 StarGateVR Recovery of \mathbf{P} by \mathbf{P} and \mathbf{P} and \mathbf{P} are a spectral type of M5. We can spectral type of M5. 3.2 StarGateVR Recovery of J1546 and BAMG 1 and 2; Gagne et al. ²014, 2014, 2014, 2014, 2014, 2014, 2014, 2014, 2014, 2014, 2014, 2014, 2014, 20

Using the processes outlined in sections 2 member for the much younger β Pictoris Moving Group (~ 20 Myr [\[51,](#page-96-4) [52\]](#page-96-5)). As it has not m_{been} formally designated a member of any J_{0} and J_{0} and accretion characteristics to the similar SED and acc $\frac{1}{2}$ have fide status) the stan entened a un need boha huc status) the star entered our poor of the spatial and kinematic Gaia DR3 parameters is given in table [3.1.](#page-42-0) Using the processes outlined in sections [2.2.1](#page-26-0) and [2.2.2,](#page-27-0) we recover J1546 as a candidate reason, we adopt membership probabilities from it over those from MG (wi been formally designated a member of any NYMG (with Lee+20 giving probabilities but no s_{max} condidates for the group. A complete list bona fide status) the star entered our pool of new candidates for the group. A complete list

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Table 3.1: Complete list of spatial and kinematic values from Gaia DR3 used in determining our position and velocity of J1546

3.3 Analysis

3.3.1 Spatio-Kinematics

We find the Gaia DR3 derived spatial and kinematic heliocentric positions paint a confusing picture of group membership for J1546. It is clear in figure [2.3](#page-31-0) that J1546 occupies a region of space which cannot be strongly attributed to either group. Despite the muddled position of J1546, the kinematics of the Gaia DR3 measurement indisputably favor a β PMG membership attribution. This is noted with the heavy caveat that the Gaia derived radial velocity is not in good agreement with that determined in $Lee+20$, and uncertainties are not large enough in either case to reconcile the positions. If this variation in RV over time is real, it may indicate the presence of a punitive companion not detected by Gaia.

A BANYAN Σ analysis of the Gaia DR3 kinematics additionally favors a β PMG membership, attributing it a 46.9% probability. The Argus moving group yields a 0% probability, while the Upper Centaurus Lupus (UCL) association, not considered in this work has a small 3.7% probability. BANYAN Σ also gives a 49.4% probability that J1546 is a field star.

3.3.2 Color-Magnitude Diagram

Figure [3.4](#page-44-0) shows that J1546 clearly occupies a transitional region of the CMD between the tracks formed by members of the Argus and β Pic moving groups. This position is further complicated because the disk inclination of J1546 is unknown. An edge-on or similarly obscuring view of the system that will "lower" the stars CMD position cannot be ruled out without further observation. The PARSEC isochrones should be interpreted with some caution as they only represent a solar metallicity regime, and theoretical isochrones have historically struggled to accurately model behavior of late-type pre-MS stars.

Figure 3.3: Spatial and kinematic positions of J1546 (this work) are shown in red with respect to bona fide members of the Argus and β Pictoris moving groups. Included are the UVW positions for J1546 as found in Lee+20. Error bars are smaller than point size in XYZ.

Figure 3.4: Gaia CMD of the bona fide members the Argus and β Pictoris moving groups [\[4\]](#page-81-2) with the location of J1546 (this work) noted in red. Additionally plotted are theoretical PARSEC isochrones at the approximate ages of the moving groups [\[6\]](#page-81-3)

Figure 3.5: Spectral energy distribution (SED) and best BT-Settl model fit for 2MASS J15460752-6258042. The best fit star yields a $T_{eff} = 2900$ K. Note the extreme deviation of the actual SED from the best fit in the infrared (particularly the WISE W3 and W4 bands), evidence for a circumstellar disk. Errors on photometry are smaller than point sizes, no GALEX data was available for this source and was thus not used in the SED or fit.

3.3.3 Spectral Type

As with all other candidate stars, an SED of J1546 was generated and modeled with the BT-Settl model grid as outlined in section [2.5.](#page-35-0) The resulting SED and subsequent fit are shown in figure [3.5,](#page-45-0) with the infrared excess that lead to a further interrogation of this object clearly visible. We find an effective temperature estimate of 2900 K, representative of an $M5/M5.5$ spectral type per $[8]$. This is in agreement with Lee+20, which gives an M5 spectral type and similar temperature.

3.4 On The Age of 2MASS J15460752-6258042

It is difficult to assign a NYMG membership to J1546 with high confidence. The spatial coordination, as is too often the case with NYMGs, is not extraordinarily insightful. The Gaia kinematics firmly associate the start with the β Pictoris moving group, a conclusion which is supported by the BANYAN Σ model. This lies in contrast to ground based radial velocities

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which favor an Argus membership, although those spectra have a slightly lower resolving power than that of Gaia's RVS ($R = 7,000$ vs. $R = 11,500$ [\[33\]](#page-93-0), although Gaia targets a very limited part of the spectrum). The CMD position also lends credence to Argus membership, but the extent of veiling and self-extinction due to system inclination are unknown. We also note that if there is indeed an undetected close companion, this would elevate the CMD position of V1546, putting it closer to the Argus association in actuality.

An additional clue to the age of this object is the Lithium 6708 Å equivalent width (EW). Lithium is rapidly depleted as stars evolve. While this rate depends on many physical parameters of a star, these may be amalgamated to determine (roughly) the expected equivalent widths of the Li 6707 Å line. Lee+20 reports EW measurements for the 6707 Li absorption line (figure [3.2\)](#page-41-0) of 430 and 600 mÅ, which is in line with previous measurements for mid-M stars in βPMG [\[53,](#page-96-6) [54,](#page-96-7) [55\]](#page-97-0). As they note however, the ongoing accretion may actively replenish Li in the atmosphere of J1546, leading to the different values for the time separated measurements. As such, this again does not yield distinct proof of either group attribution.

Because the group membership of J1546 remains uncertain, we recommend adopting a much wider age range in future discussion about the object, until clarifying observations are undertaken. As such, a liberal age range should be adopted when discussing J1546 between $\sim 20 - 55$ Myr, given current age constraints on both the β Pic moving group and Argus association [\[56,](#page-97-1) [2\]](#page-81-1). Even in the case where this object has an age revision down to the β PMG standard, it still amounts to an unusually long lived accretion disk, worthy of additional study. Follow up observations, particularly high resolution spectra would be beneficial in reaffirming the $H\alpha$ and other emission line defections indicating accretion. Additional measurements of RV are needed to properly assess the group membership of J1546 and, if the RV variability is real, put constraints on the physical parameters of a thus far unseen companion.

Chapter 4

Searching For White Dwarfs in NYMGs

4.1 Young WDs in the Solar Neighborhood

Identifying young white dwarfs in the solar neighborhood can help answer important questions in regards to the age of nearby young stellar associations and star clusters, and help to verify our understanding of the initial mass function for these systems and the galaxy at large [\[57\]](#page-97-2). Typically, these young, massive WDs are identified by association to known groups, particularly the nearest open clusters such as the Hyades (age $\sim 600 - 700$ Myr [\[58\]](#page-97-3)) and the Pleiades (age ∼ 120 Myr [\[59\]](#page-97-4)). Estimating the WD formation and cooling times also provide a valuable age estimate of these systems independent of other common methods such as the lithium depletion boundary or main-sequence isochrones [\[60\]](#page-97-5).

In 2018, the ultra-massive WD GD 50 was identified in association with the AB Dor moving group [\[60\]](#page-97-5) (age \sim 120 Myr [\[36\]](#page-93-1)). This denotes the first known WD in a NYMG, evolving from a progenitor with an initial mass very close to the 8 M_{\odot} threshold for WD formation. To date, no other NYMG WDs have been identified, and any that will be must have resulted from a similarly massive progenitor or evolve in non-single star systems.

4.2 Search Criteria

As with the initial search of NYMG candidates we utilize a joint approach of data and the StarGateVR tool to identify WDs that may be associated with NYMGs. The initial DR3 sample is the same as that described in section [2.2.1,](#page-26-0) and once again we utilize the bona fide candidates from [\[4\]](#page-81-2) in conjunction with those data.

Again using the SGVR tool, we initially select out all stars that share the approximate XYZ with the majority of bona fide members of a given NYMG. Unlike the previous selections however, we cannot utilize the heliocentric kinematic space to refine the search. This is because WDs are very faint, and the majority of those in the Gaia search lack radial velocity measurements. As such, we are limited to considering the 2-dimensional proper motions of the candidates. With SGVR, we select out the subset of stars which match both the XYZ positions and proper motions in the right ascension and declination. We are further inhibited from selecting similar CMD positions to bona fide NYMG members as none of the membership lists utilized contain WD members. As such, we impose a cutoff at $G_{BP} - G_{RP} \leq 0$, where G_{BP} and G_{RP} represent the Gaia blue and red photometric bands respectively, and select all sources of that disposition in the WD portion of the CMD which have also share similar positions and velocities with bona fide NYMG members.

An additional cutoff at $G_{BP} - G_{RP} \leq -0.15$ is applied to the data following the SGVR analysis, noting that GD 50, the WD member of the AB Doradus moving group has an $G_{BP} - G_{RP} \approx -0.5$ and it is unlikely that we will identify any candidates older than that, given that all NYMGs considered in this work are the same age or younger than the AB Dor moving group. It is possible that multiple star systems can yield WDs on an expedited timescale, but it is likely that any WD formed in that manner will be "washed out" by the companion and thus will not enter the WD part of the CMD.

4.3 WD Candidates

After filtering the sample in SGVR, we identify 47 candidate WDs among 6 of the 8 NYMGs considered, with 4 WDs being recovered in 2 NYMGs. No candidates are identified in the TW Hydrae association or the 32 Orinis group. The bulk of these (31) are found in association with the XYZ position and proper motion of the β Pictoris moving group. The β Pic moving group encompasses much of the sky, and consequently have a wide spread presence in proper motion space, as well as in positional space, so this effect is likely an artefact of a large filter rather than a true physical effect. The number of candidates recovered between the other groups is 7, 1, 1, 9, and 1 for the AB Doradus moving group, Argus association, Carina association, Columba association, and Tucana-Horologium association respectively. The aggregate CMD positions for all of the candidates is shown in figure [4.1.](#page-50-0)

4.4 BANYAN Σ Results

Because we are particularly limited in our set of observational diagnostics (i.e. no Gaia RVs or bona fide WD CMD tracks to trace) the BANYAN Σ tool is particularly insightful. We input all 51 sources. BANYAN Σ will natively query SIMBAD to pull values that are not input by the user if available. In this manner we are able to recover RV values for several of the candidates. BANYAN Σ returned a null NYMG probability for all but 8 candidates. Aside from one star, HZ 14 which is identified both by BANYAN and the literature as a Hyades cluster member [\[61\]](#page-97-6), the 7 of the remaining sources have BANYAN Σ probabilities exclusively with regard to the Argus association, although all were recovered in association with other NYMGs in SGVR. These stars, their SGVR recovered groups, and their Argus BANYAN Σ probabilities are given in table [4.1.](#page-51-0) It is noted that BANYAN Σ failed to identify known RVs for any of these sources and thus the probability is based only on position and proper motion. Figures [4.2](#page-50-1) and [4.3](#page-51-1) show the XYZ and proper motion positions of the BANYAN Σ identified WDs with Argus probability against the bona fide list used in this work.

Figure 4.1: SGVR recovered WDs on the Gaia CMD. Field stars are from a randomly selected 12% of the nearest 50 pc. Note that the most recently formed, hottest white dwarf candidates occupy the region left of $\mathrm{G}_{BP}-\mathrm{G}_{RP} = 0.4$

Figure 4.2: 3-D heliocentric positions of both the bona fide membership used as a guide for SGVR filtering and the WD candidates with non-zero BANYAN Σ Argus probabilities. Legend is the same as that in figure [4.3.](#page-51-1)

Figure 4.3: Proper motions in the right ascension and declination for both the bona fide membership and the WD candidates with non-zero BANYAN Σ Argus probabilities.

4.5 Discussion

It is unlikely that any of the recovered WDs are affiliated with the NYMGs considered in this work, given the extraordinary timescale required for such formation to occur for most stellar mass regimes capable of producing WDs through single-star evolution. At the high end of that regime ($\sim 8M_{\odot}$) the stars have a main-sequence lifetime on the order of 50 Myr, and nearly all of the observed NYMGs are younger than that. The BANYAN Σ derived probabilities of membership to the Argus association among many candidates poses an oddity but should not be outright dismissed, especially for the higher probability sources. The XYZ positions are not extraordinarily distant from those of bona fide members, and proper motion alone may not be a sufficient consideration of the velocity space. Radial velocities are needed for these sources to concretely rule on affiliation with the Argus association, particularly for the high probability candidate (based on position and proper motion) Gaia DR3 5129157117202633216.

Of additional interest is the population of WDs recovered with $G_{BP} - G_{RP} \le -0.4$. Regardless of NYMG association or lack thereof, these represent some of the hottest, most recently formed WDs in the solar neighborhood. This is especially true for the two candidates identified with $G_{BP} - G_{RP} \leq -0.5$, one of which is well studied while the other, Gaia DR3 5318772982658411008 is particularly understudied. By ascertaining the formation timescale of these WDs we may be able to probe the surrounding ISM for any evidence of their previous, short-lived planetary nebulae, something interesting irrespective of NYMG membership.

We also note that while this method does not recover droves of WDs in the NYMGs, it may be much more readily applied to more evolved associations of stars, such as nearby open clusters or stellar streams. The incidental recovery of a Hyades WD lends credence to this approach.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

5.1 Summary

In this work we have sought to identify expand the list of known nearby young stars to facilitate future studies of direct imaging studies of exoplanets, and the study of early stellar evolution after the stars have left their molecular clouds. We interrogate 8 NYMGs, the AB Doradus and β Pictoris moving groups, as well as the Argus, Carina, Columba, Tucana-Horologium, TW-Hydrae, and 32 Orionis associations. Using a new virtual reality tool, StarGateVR, we recovered over 1,000 candidate members between those 8 NYMGs, and found some ∼ 360 of those to be poorly identified in preexisting literature, not identified at all, or associated with a different group than determined in this work (although this may change with a new young star database coming online in the near future). We find 20 of these candidates exhibit infrared excesses and thus are possible hosts to circumstellar disks, although many of these can be ruled out upon further examination of the WISE images.

One of the identified IR-excess stars, 2MASS J15460752-6258042, has previously been identified as an extraordinarily long lived accreting disk host, given an age of ∼ 55 Myr based on prior assigment to the Argus association. Our work calls this age into question, recovering the star in association with the younger (age ~ 20 Myr) β Pictoris moving group, primarily based on Gaia DR3 derived kinematics. We note that further observations of the star must be undertaken to fully constrain its group membership and hence age, and recommend noting a

Chapter 5. Conclusions 37

wide age range ($\sim 20 - 55$ Myr) until this has been done. Regardless of the true age of J1546, evidence does suggest in either case it hosts a long-lived accretion disk and for this reason alone should be considered for future study.

We additionally attempt to use the SGVR to identify possible high-mass, recently formed WDs associated with the NYMGs considered in this work. While we do recover \sim 50 WDs, we note that these candidates lack DR3 radial velocities and thus have been selected on 3-D motion and proper motion, which is not ideal for accurately assessing membership. Additionally, the evolution timescale for even the most massive possible single stars to reach the WD stage is generally longer than the accepted age of groups considered, further adding to the likelihood that these candidates are not associated with any NYMGs in actuality. Despite this, the method for identifying WDs outlined is sound and may be applied to other, perhaps more evolved systems in the solar neighborhood.

5.2 Future Work

Virtual reality has proven to be a powerful tool for working with large sets of multidimensional data such as Gaia, something seen with increasing frequency in astronomy. Increasingly, astronomers have leaned on machine-learning techniques to probe such massive amounts of data. Virtual reality tools such as StarGateVR offer a way to check the work of machine learning algorithms, or to do similar work without the need to write such programs in the first place. We are currently still identifying the best ways to apply VR further, but a promising avenue lies in the world of citizen science. VR has already been successfully used in citizen science [\[27\]](#page-90-0) to detect disks around young stars. A citizen science based use of VR to recover NYMG members can provide a useful check on machine learning algorithms and statistical models such as BANYAN.

We also note that StarGateVR is still in very active development. We will continue to expand the scope of the tool and identify new applications. The methods outlines in this work can broadly apply to any other NYMG or nearby stellar association, and we will be investigating these groups as such in the future.

Additionally, we hope to further probe the solar neighborhood for very recently formed WDs. In addition to the NYMGs, there are also several older open clusters and large stellar streaming features [\[62\]](#page-97-7) yet to be investigated. Our ultimate aim is to probe the ISM surrounding some of these WDs for remnants of their dispersed planetary nebulae.

Appendices

Appendix A

Table of New NYMG Candidates

A.1 Table Note

Star identifiers are given as catalogue IDs. Values of all measurements are obtained from . Errors in parallax, RA, DEC, PMRA, and PMDEC are small but may be obtained from the Gaia archive if necessary. Temperature and radii are derived from BT-Settl model fits [\[7\]](#page-82-2) to each sources SED. Spectral types are estimated from [\[8\]](#page-82-0), and corresponding masses may be found there.

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A.50 Table Note

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