

Low-Mass Stars in an Outer Field in NGC 6397¹

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ABSTRACT. We have imaged a field 10' from the center of the globular cluster NGC 6397 in the visible and *I* bands with WFPC2 on the *HST*. At a level which is severely limited by counting statistics in the small area so far studied, this field is richer in dwarfs with $I > 21.5$ than the 4.6 radius parallel field discussed by Paresce and colleagues. This indicates that the dynamical process of mass segregation is occurring in the cluster.

1. INTRODUCTION

NGC 6397 is the closest globular cluster to the Sun in apparent distance modulus, located at a distance of about 2.2 kpc. It has low metallicity with $[Fe/H] = -1.9$ (Djorgovski 1994, Zinn 1985) and a low latitude ($b = -12^\circ$) and a reddening $E_{B-V} = 0.18$ mag. It is therefore ideal for studies of the Population II luminosity function (Mould 1996), and the most comprehensive such work to date is that of Drukier et al. (1993). These authors saw “some indication of mass segregation” between an 11' field and others in the radius range (4', 6.5') for stars with $M < 0.32 M_\odot$.

Paresce et al. (1995) have observed the cluster with WFPC2 and clearly show a plateau in the mass function between approximately 0.25 and 0.15 M_\odot . They note that such a mass function can arise either primordially or as a result of dynamical evolution. King et al. (1995) have observed a central field in NGC 6397 and find a deficiency of low-mass stars. In this paper we study a field further from the cluster center to begin to quantify the effects of mass segregation.

2. OBSERVATION, REDUCTIONS, PHOTOMETRY, AND CALIBRATION

Exposures of length 3×1200 s in F555W and 3×1200 s in F814W were obtained on 1994 September 19. A field 10' north of the cluster center was located on the apex of the pyramid at RA=17:40:41.5, Dec.=−53:30:25 (2000). Burrows (1995) and Trauger et al. (1994) describe the instrument in more detail. The images were reduced following Holtzman et al. (1995a) and Watson et al. (1994) and combined using a standard cosmic ray rejection algorithm.

A total of 700 stars were found in the combined images of the three WF chips. Aperture photometry was performed using a 0.2 radius aperture in each case. Appropriate aperture corrections ranging from 0.15 to 0.2 mag in the three chips were made to reach the 0.5 standard adopted by Holtzman et al. (1995b). This outer cluster field is not so crowded that point spread-function (PSF) fitting offers any gains in photometric precision. We saw no evidence that aperture corrections showed any field effects within individual chips, nor was there any evidence of nonlinearity for these long exposure times.

A $V-I$ color–magnitude diagram (CMD) of NGC 6397 is shown in Fig. 1. The most striking feature of the CMD is the main sequence. Photometry is recorded in Table 1. The (x, y) coordinates refer to the chip number identified in the columns headed “C” in this table. Table 1 can be downloaded from the first author’s home page at <http://msowwww.anu.edu.au>

3. THE LUMINOSITY FUNCTION

Following Paresce et al. the main-sequence luminosity function was determined from a series of color profiles at half-magnitude intervals from $I = 18.75$ to $I = 24.25$. These are shown in Fig. 2. The main-sequence count was derived from the excess over the baseline in two or three color bins in these histograms and is recorded in column (2) of Table 2. The uncertainty from counting statistics is given in column

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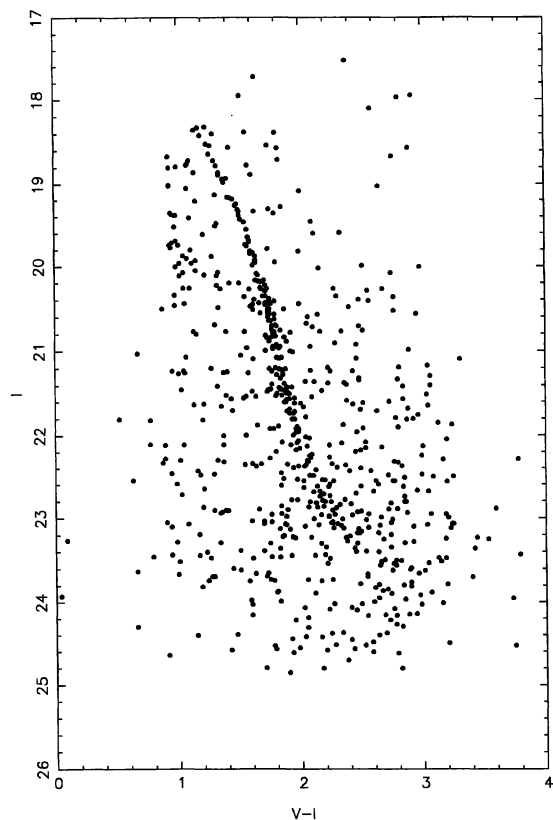


FIG. 1—Color-magnitude diagram for NGC 6397.

(3) and is simply the square root of the corresponding entry in column (2). The uncertainty in the baseline is not the dominant error in this determination. The background correction is well determined for $I < 23$ and small for $I < 22$. The luminosity function determination was repeated with the color bins shifted by 0.1 mag without significant change in the result. We emphasize that small number statistics are the primary limitation of this determination. This can only be improved by observation of larger fields at this cluster radius.

Figure 3 shows that the number of bright main-sequence stars in 10' field is close to expectations based on the 4.6' field when scaled according to the star counts published by Da Costa (1982). For main-sequence stars fainter than $I = 21.5$, we see an excess of stars in the 10' field. The excess is 50% in these last four bins and is significant at a level exceeding 2σ .

To verify this we have recounted stars in the Paresce field using the original data from the *HST* archive. We used the same photometric techniques on the archive data as in our 10' field. An even stronger effect is seen. Differences in Fig. 3 with the alternative 4.6' luminosity functions are within counting statistics, however, for individual bins. These are dominated by the 10' counts. If we collectively consider bins fainter than $I = 21.5$, the faint star excess in the outer field over our recounted inner field is a factor of 2.5 and is both highly significant and significantly larger than the estimate from Paresce's luminosity function of a factor of

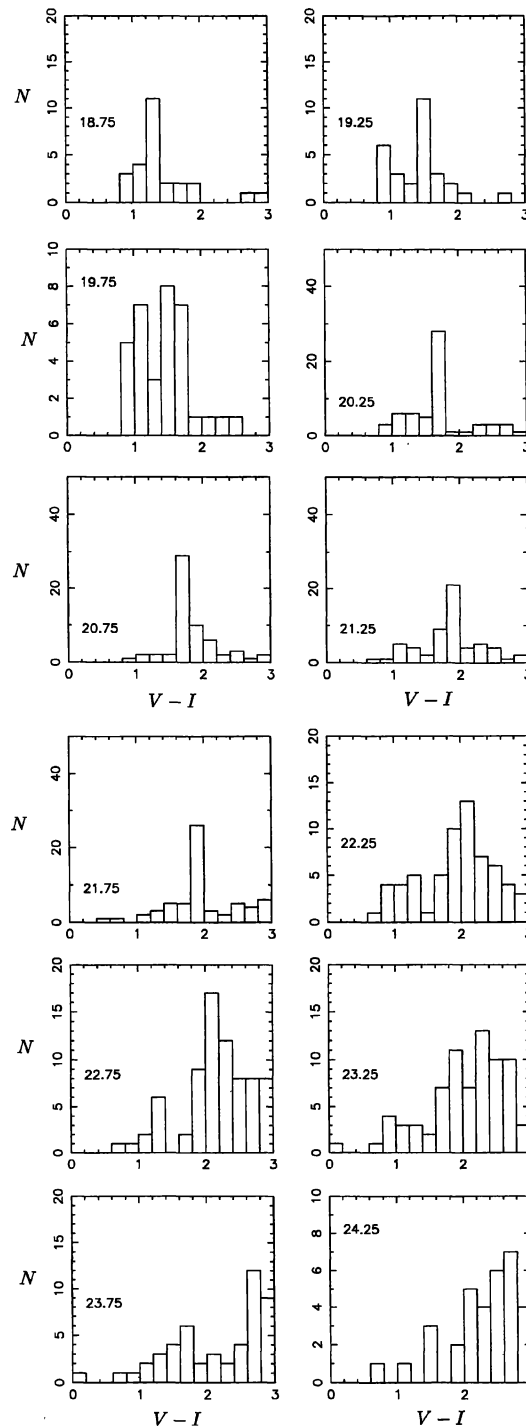


FIG. 2—Color distribution of stars at constant I magnitude. The I magnitude is shown on the left of each histogram.

1.5. In the 4.6' field background corrections are small for $I < 23$ and therefore probably not the sole source of this discrepancy.

Paresce et al. note that the S/N of images brighter than $I = 24$ is sufficiently high and the crowding in this field is sufficiently low that completeness corrections do not affect the luminosity function. To investigate this further, com-

TABLE 2
Luminosity Function

(1) I (mag)	(2) $n(10')$	(3) \pm	(4) $n(4'.6)$ (scaled)	(5) \pm	(6) $n(4'.6)$ (scaled) (recount)
18.75	7	3	8	1	*
19.25	6	2	10	1	13
19.75	10	3	13	1	14
20.25	27	5	22	2	23
20.75	26	5	25	2	22
21.25	18	4	19	2	16
21.75	26	5	13	1	11
22.25	11	3	10	1	6
22.75	12	3	8	1	4
23.25	10	3	6	1	2

models of the cluster predict an increase of a factor of approximately 1.7 between the turnoff mass and $0.12 M_{\odot}$ (Drukier 1995), which corresponds to the magnitude range (16, 23) in I . The precise prediction depends upon details of the model such as tidal radius, age, mass, and the character of the gravitational potential. The present statistics allow us to do no more than detect the trend and identify its likely physical basis.

4. SUMMARY

In a $10'$ radial field in NGC 6397 the lower main sequence can be traced down to $I=23$ mag. Beyond $I=23.5$ mag, statistics do not allow us to follow the main sequence, and a larger sample would be needed to set useful upper limits on the luminosity function. In this regard our results support those of Paresce et al. (1995) and differ from the

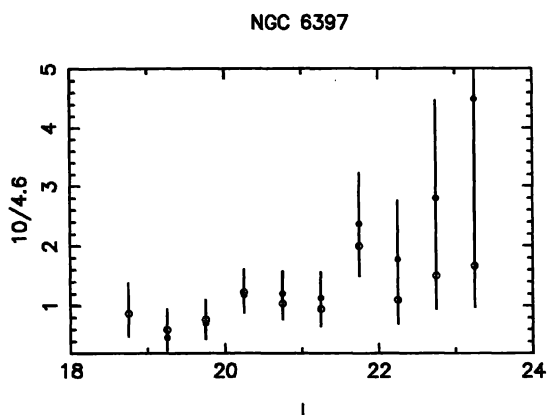


FIG. 3—The ratio of the luminosity functions in the $10'$ and $4'.6$ fields. The solid symbols are from column (4) and the open symbols from column (6) of Table 2.

Completeness simulation without mass segregation (triangles)

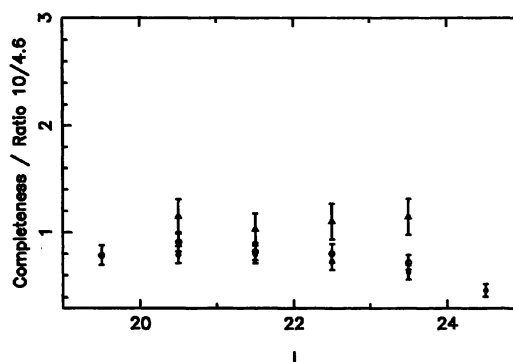


FIG. 4—Completeness in the $4'.6$ field (solid symbols) and the $10'$ field (open symbols). The expected ratio of star counts in the two fields as a result of completeness alone (i.e., in the absence of any mass segregation effects) is denoted by the triangles. The error bars are 1σ counting statistics.

low-mass dwarf-rich luminosity function of Fahlman et al. (1989). Evidence for mass segregation is seen in the ratio of the luminosity functions in the $10'$ field and a $4'.6$ radial field. Complete photometry of the cluster with WFPC2 would be useful in constraining detailed dynamical models of NGC 6397.

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