

A SYNOPTIC VIEW OF THE MAGELLANIC CLOUDS:
VMC, GAIA AND BEYOND

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**CaTastrophe in the SMC - star
clusters vs. field stars**

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We present results based on VLT and Gemini-S Ca Triplet (CaT) medium resolution spectroscopy of some 200 red giant members of 29 SMC intermediate - old age clusters. We derive mean cluster velocities to a few km/s and mean metallicities to 0.05 dex, as well as accurate velocities and metallicities for about 750 surrounding field giants. We investigate the metallicity distribution, age-metallicity relation and metallicity gradient in great detail for the SMC using this large and homogeneous database. We find some surprising differences between the clusters and fields. The clusters display a likely bimodal metallicity distribution while the field stars are unimodal. The clusters show no strong evidence of a metallicity gradient while the field stars show a strong negative gradient in the inner region of the galaxy that appears to reverse sign in the outer region. The age-metallicity relation of the clusters shows a significant intrinsic metallicity dispersion at all ages, and no satisfactory fit to any current chemical evolution model. We discuss these results and their implications for the formation and evolution of the SMC.