Psychophysiology, 36 (1999), 35–43. Cambridge University Press. Printed in the USA.

Automated face analysis by feature point tracking has high concurrent validity with manual FACS coding

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Abstract

The face is a rich source of information about human behavior. Available methods for coding facial displays, however, are human-observer dependent, labor intensive, and difficult to standardize. To enable rigorous and efficient quantitative measurement of facial displays, we have developed an automated method of facial display analysis. In this report, we compare the results with this automated system with those of manual FACS (Facial Action Coding System, Ekman & Friesen, 1978a) coding. One hundred university students were videotaped while performing a series of facial displays. The image sequences were coded from videotape by certified FACS coders. Fifteen action units and action unit combinations that occurred a minimum of 25 times were selected for automated analysis. Facial features were automatically tracked in digitized image sequences using a hierarchical algorithm for estimating optical flow. The measurements were normalized for variation in position, orientation, and scale. The image sequences were randomly divided into a training set and a cross-validation set, and discriminant function analyses were conducted on the feature point measurements. In the training set, average agreement with manual FACS coding was 92% or higher for action units in the brow, eye, and mouth regions. In the cross-validation set, average agreement was 91%, 88%, and 81% for action units in the brow, eye, and mouth regions, respectively. Automated face analysis by feature point tracking demonstrated high concurrent validity with manual FACS coding.

Descriptors: Facial expression, FACS, Computer vision, Optical flow

The face is a rich source of information about human behavior. Facial displays indicate emotion (Ekman, 1993; Russell, 1994) and pain (Craig, Hyde, & Patrick, 1991), regulate social behavior (Cohn & Elmore, 1988; DePaulo, 1992; Fridlund, 1994), reveal brain function (Ekman, Davidson, & Friesen, 1990; Fox & Davidson, 1988) and pathology (Katsikitis & Pilowsky, 1988; Rinn, 1984), and signal developmental transitions in infants (Campos, Bertenthal, & Kermoian, 1992; Emde, Gaensbauer, & Harmon, 1976). To make use of the information afforded by facial displays, reliable, valid, and efficient methods of measurement are critical.

Current methods, which require human observers, vary in their specificity, comprehensiveness, degree of objectivity, and ease of use. The anatomically based Facial Action Coding System (FACS: Ekman & Friesen, 1978a; Baby FACS: Oster & Rosenstein, 1993) is the most comprehensive method of coding facial displays. Using FACS and viewing videotaped facial behavior in slow motion, coders can manually code all possible facial displays, which are referred to as action units. More than 7,000 combinations have been observed (Ekman, 1982). Ekman and Friesen (1978b) proposed that specific combinations of FACS action units represent prototypic expressions of emotion (i.e., joy, sadness, anger, disgust, fear, and surprise). Emotion expressions, however, are not part of FACS; they are coded in a separate system known as EMFACS (Friesen & Ekman, 1984) or the more recent FACS Interpretive Dictionary (Friesen & Ekman, undated, cited by Oster, Hegley, & Nagel, 1992). FACS itself is purely descriptive and uses no emotion or other inferential labels.

Another anatomically based objective system, which also requires slow-motion viewing of videotape, is the Maximally Discriminative Facial Movement Coding System (MAX: Izard, 1983). Compared with FACS, MAX is less comprehensive and was intended to include only facial displays (referred to as movements) related to emotion. MAX does not discriminate among some anatomically distinct displays (e.g., inner- and outer-brow raises) and considers as autonomous some displays that are not anatomically distinct (Oster et al., 1992). Malatesta, Culver, Tesman, and Shephard (1989) added some displays in an effort to make MAX more comprehensive. Unlike FACS, MAX makes explicit claims that specific combinations of displays are expressions of emotion, and the goal of MAX coding is to identify these MAX-specified emotion expressions.

Portions of the data were presented at the Seventh European Conference on Facial Expression, Measurement, and Meaning in Salzburg, Austria, August 1997.

This research was supported by NIMH grant R01 MH51435 to Jeffrey F. Cohn and Takeo Kanade.

We thank Ginger Moore for help in FACS coding, and Simon Cohn for assistance in digitizing video sequences, and Yu-Te Wu and Peter Rander for technical assistance.

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Whereas FACS and MAX use objective, physically measurable criteria, other videotape viewing systems are based on subjective criteria for facial expressions of emotions (AFFEX: Izard, Dougherty, & Hembree, 1983) and other expressive modalities (e.g., monadic phases: Cohn & Tronick, 1988; Tronick, Als, & Brazelton, 1980). The expression codes in these systems are given emotion labels (e.g., joy) based on the problematic assumption that facial expression and emotion have an exact correspondence (Camras, 1992; Fridlund, 1994; Russell, 1994). Like FACS and MAX, these systems also require slow-motion viewing of videotaped facial behavior.

As used below, emotion expression refers to facial displays that have been given emotion labels. However, emotion expressions with the same label do not necessarily refer to the same facial displays. Systems such as MAX, AFFEX, and EMFACS can and do use the same terms when referring to different phenomena. For instance, Oster et al. (1992) found that MAX and the FACS Interpretive Dictionary gave different emotion labels to the same displays. The lack of standard meaning to specific emotion expressions and the implication that emotion expressions represent subjective experience of emotion are problems encountered when using emotion labels to refer to facial displays. The descriptive power of FACS, by contrast, has made it well suited to a broad range of substantive applications, including nonverbal behavior, pain research, neuropsychology, and computer graphics, in addition to emotion science (Ekman & Rosenberg, 1997; Parke & Waters, 1996; Rinn, 1984, 1991).

In daily life, expressions of emotion, whether defined by objective criteria (e.g., combinations of FACS action units or MAX movement codes) or by subjective criteria, occur infrequently. More often, emotion is communicated by small changes in facial features, such as furrowing of the brows to convey negative affect. Consequently, a system that describes only emotion expressions is of limited use. Only FACS, and to a lesser extent MAX, can produce the detailed descriptions of facial displays that are required to reveal components of emotion expressions (e.g., Carroll & Russell, 1997; Gosselin, Kirouac, & Dore, 1995). FACS action units are the smallest visibly discriminable changes in facial display, and combinations of FACS action units can be used to describe emotion expressions (Ekman, 1993; Ekman & Friesen, 1978b) and global distinctions between positive and negative expression (e.g., Moore, Cohn, & Campbell, 1997).

With extensive training, human observers can achieve acceptable levels of interobserver reliability in coding facial displays. Methods based on human observers (i.e., manual methods), however, are labor intensive, semi-quantitative, and with the possible exception of FACS, difficult to standardize across laboratories or over time. Training is time consuming (approximately 100 hr with the most objective methods), and coding criteria may drift with time (Bakeman & Gottman, 1986; Martin & Bateson, 1986). Implementing comprehensive systems is reported to take up to 10 hr of coding time per minute of behavior, depending upon the comprehensiveness of the system and the density of behavior changes (Ekman, 1982). Such extensive effort discourages standardized measurement and may encourage the use of less specific coding systems with unknown convergent validity (Matias, Cohn, & Ross, 1989). These problems tend to promote the use of smaller sample sizes (of subjects and behavior samples), prolong study completion times, and thus limit the generalizability of study findings.

To enable rigorous, efficient, and quantitative measurement of facial displays, we have used computer vision to develop an automated method of facial display analysis. Computer vision has been an active area of research for some 30 years (Duda & Hart, 1973); early work included attempts at automated face recognition (Kanade, 1973, 1977). More recently, there has been significant interest in automated facial display analysis by computer vision. One approach, initially developed for face recognition, uses a combination of principal components analysis (PCA) of digitized face images and artificial neural networks. High dimensional face images (e.g., 640 $\times$ 480 gray scale pixel arrays) are reduced to a lower dimensional set of eigenvectors, or *eigenfaces* (Turk & Pentland, 1991). The eigenfaces then are used as input to an artificial neural network or other classifier. A classifier developed by Padgett, Cottrell, and Adolphs (1996) discriminated 86% of six prototypic emotion expressions as defined by Ekman & Friesen (1976) (i.e., joy, sadness, anger, disgust, fear, and surprise). Another classifier developed by Bartlett et al. (1996) discriminated 89% of six upper face FACS action units.

Although promising, these systems have some limitations. First, because Padgett et al. (1996) and Bartlett et al. (1996) performed PCA on gray scale values, information about individual identity was encoded along with information about expression, which may impair discrimination. Some robust lower-level image processing may be required to produce more robust discrimination of facial displays. Second, eigenfaces appear to be highly sensitive to minor variation in image alignment for the task of face recognition (Phillips, 1996). Similar or even better precision in image alignment is probably required when eigenfaces are used to discriminate facial displays. The image alignment used by Padgett et al. and Bartlett et al. was limited to translation and scaling, which is insufficient to align face images across subjects with face rotation. Third, these methods have been tested only on rather limited image data sets. Padgett et al. (1996) analyzed photographs from Ekman and Friesen's (1976) Pictures of Facial Affect, which are considered prototypic expressions of emotion. Prototypic expressions differ from each other in many ways, which facilitates automated discrimination. Bartlett et al. (1996) analyzed images of subjects, many of whom were experts in recognizing and performing FACS action units, and observed that target action units occurred individually rather than being embedded within other facial displays. Fourth, Bartlett et al. performed manual time warping to produce a standard set of six preselected frames for each subject. Manual time warping is of variable reliability and is time consuming. Moreover, in many applications behavior samples are variable in duration, and therefore standardizing duration may omit critical information.

More recent research has incorporated approaches based on optical flow to discriminate facial displays. Such approaches are based on the assumption that muscle contraction causes deformation of overlying skin. In a digitized image sequence, algorithms for optical flow extract motion from the subtle texture changes in skin, and the pattern of such movement may be used to discriminate facial displays. Specifically, the velocity and direction of pixel movement across the entire face or within windows selected to cover certain facial regions are computed between successive frames. Using measures of optical flow, Essa, Pentland, and Mase (Essa & Pentland, 1994; Mase, 1991; Mase & Pentland, 1990) and Yacoob and Davis (1994) discriminated among emotion-specified displays (e.g., joy, surprise, fear). This level of analysis is comparable to the manual methods that are based on prototypic emotion expressions (e.g., AFFEX: Izard et al., 1983).

The work of Mase (1991), Mase and Pentland (1990), and Essa and Pentland (1994) suggested that more subtle changes in facial displays, as represented by FACS action units, could be detected from differential patterns of optical flow. Essa and Pentland (1994),

for instance, found increased flow associated with action units in the brow and mouth region. The specificity of optical flow to action unit discrimination, however, was not tested. Discrimination of facial displays remained at the level of emotion expressions rather than the finer and more objective level of FACS action units. Bartlett et al. (1996) discriminated between action units in the brow and eye regions in a small number of subjects.

A question about optical flow methods is whether they are sufficiently sensitive to subtle differences in facial displays, as represented in FACS action units. Work to date has incorporated aggregate measures of optical flow within relatively large facial regions (e.g., forehead or cheeks), including modal flow (Black & Yacoob, 1995; Rosenblum, Yacoob, & Davis, 1994; Yacoob & Davis, 1994) and mean flow within the region (Mase, 1991; Mase & Pentland, 1990). Black and Yacoob (1995) and Black, Yacoob, Jepson, and Fleet (1997) also disregarded subtle changes in flow that were below an assigned threshold. Information about small deviations is lost when the flow pattern is aggregated or thresholds are imposed. As a result, the accuracy for discriminating FACS action units may be reduced.

The objective of the present study was to implement the first version of our automated method of face analysis and to assess its concurrent validity with manual FACS coding. Unlike previous automated systems that analyzed aggregate flow within large feature windows, our system tracks the movement of closely spaced feature points within very small feature windows (currently 13 × 13 pixels) and imposes no arbitrary thresholds. The feature points to be tracked are selected based on two criteria: they are in regions of high texture and they represent underlying muscle activation of closely related action units. Discriminant function analyses are performed on the feature point measurements for action units in brow, eye, and mouth regions. The descriptive power of feature point marking is evaluated by comparing the results of a discriminant classifier based on feature point tracking with those of manual FACS coding.

Method

Image Acquisition

Subjects were 100 university students enrolled in introductory psychology classes. They ranged in age from 18 to 30 years. Sixty-five percent were female, 15% were African American, and 3% were Asian or Latino.

The observation room was equipped with a chair for the subject and two Panasonic WV3230 cameras, each connected to a Panasonic S-VHS AG-7500 video recorder with a Horita synchronized time-code generator. One of the cameras was located directly in front of the subject, and the other was positioned 30° to the right of the subject. Only image data from the frontal camera are included in this report.

Subjects were instructed by an experimenter to perform a series of 23 facial displays that included single action units (AUs) (e.g., AU 12 = lip corners pulled obliquely) and combinations of action units (e.g., AU 1+2 = inner and outer brows raised). Subjects began and ended each display from a neutral face. Before performing each display, an experimenter described and modeled the desired display. Six of the displays were based on descriptions of prototypic emotions (i.e., joy, surprise, anger, fear, disgust, and sadness). These six tasks and mouth opening in the absence of other action units were coded by one of us (A.Z.) who is certified in the use of FACS. Seventeen percent of the data were comparison coded by a second certified FACS coder. Interobserver agreement was quantified with coefficient kappa, which is the proportion of agreement above what would be expected to occur by chance (Cohen, 1960; Fleiss, 1981). The mean kappa for interobserver agreement was .86.

Action units that occurred a minimum of 25 times in the image data base were selected for analysis. This criterion ensured sufficient data for training and testing of the automated face analysis system. When an action unit occurred in combination with other action units that may modify its appearance, the combination rather than the single action unit was the unit of analysis. Figure 1 shows the action units and action unit combinations thus selected. The action units we analyzed in three facial regions (brows, eyes, and mouth) are key components of emotion and other paralinguistic displays and are common variables in emotions research. For instance, AU 4 is characteristic of negative emotion and mental effort, and AU 1+2 is a component of surprise. AU 6 differentiates felt (Duchenne) smiles (AU 6+12) from non-Duchenne smiles (AU 12) (Ekman et al., 1990). In all three facial regions, the action units chosen are relatively difficult to discriminate because they involve subtle differences in appearance (e.g., brow narrowing due to AU 1+4 vs. AU 4, eye narrowing due to AU 6 vs. AU 7, three separate action unit combinations involving AU 17, and mouth widening due to AU 12 vs. AU 20.). Unless otherwise noted, the term *action unit* as used here refers to both single action units and action unit combinations.

Image Processing and Analysis

Image sequences from neutral to target display (mean duration ~ 20 frames at 30 frames/s) were digitized automatically into 640 × 490 pixel arrays with 8-bit precision for gray scale values. Target displays represented a range of action unit intensities, including low, medium, and high intensity.

Image alignment. To remove the effects of spatial variation in face position, slight rotation, and facial proportions, images must be aligned and normalized prior to analysis. Three facial feature points were manually marked in the initial image: the medial canthus of both eyes and the uppermost point of the philtrum. Using an affine transformation, the images were then automatically mapped to a standard face model based on these feature points (Figure 2). By automatically controlling for face position, orientation, and magnification in this initial processing step, optical flows in each frame had exact geometric correspondence.

Feature point tracking. In the first frame, 37 features were manually marked using a computer mouse (leftmost image in Figure 3): 6 feature points around the contours of the brows, 8 around the eyes, 13 around the nose, and 10 around the mouth. The interobserver reliability of feature point marking was assessed by independently marking 33 of the initial frames. Mean interobserver error was 2.29 and 2.01 pixels in the horizontal and vertical dimensions, respectively. Mean interobserver reliability, quantified with Pearson correlation coefficients, was .97 and .93 in the horizontal and vertical dimensions, respectively.

The movement of feature points was automatically tracked in the image sequence using an optical flow algorithm (Lucas & Kanade, 1981). Given an $n \times n$ feature region R and a gray-scale image I, the algorithm solves for the displacement vector $\boldsymbol{d} = (d_x, d_y)$ of the original $n \times n$ feature region by minimizing the residual $E(\boldsymbol{d})$, which is defined as

$$E(\boldsymbol{d}) = \sum [I_{t+1}(\boldsymbol{x} + \boldsymbol{d}) - I_t(\boldsymbol{x})]^2, \ \boldsymbol{x} \in R,$$

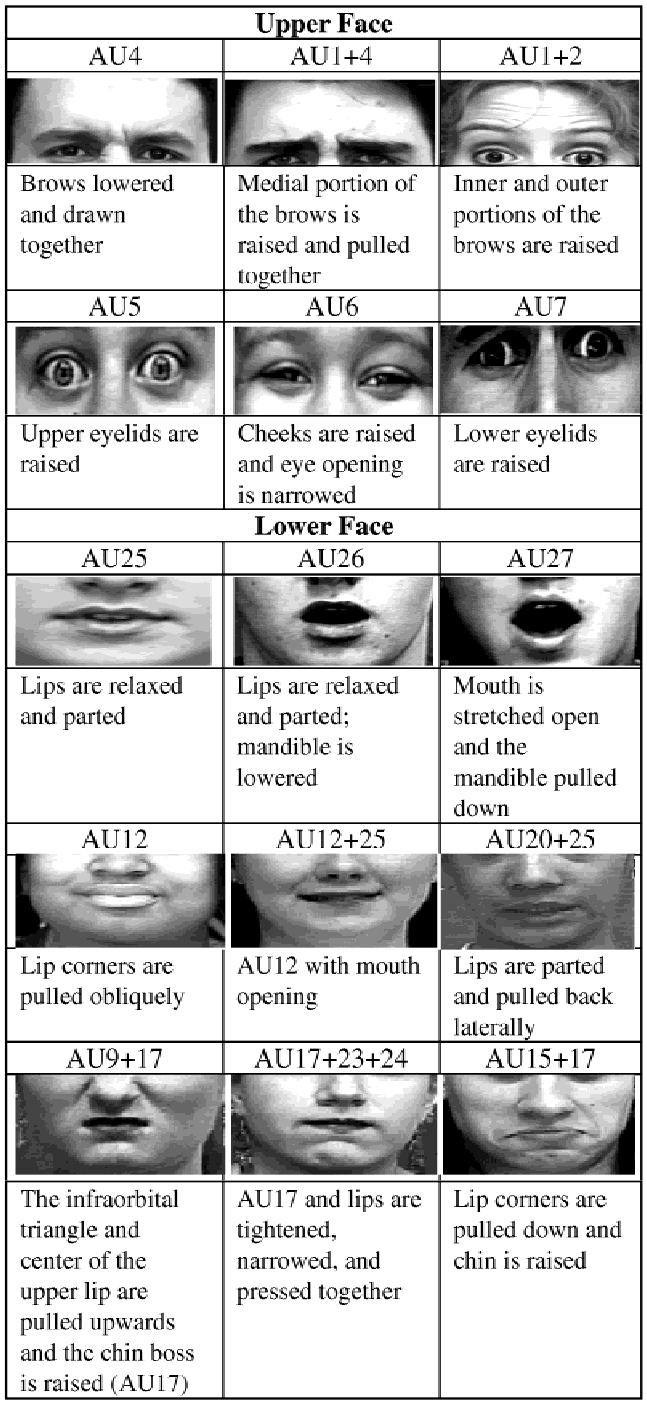

Figure 1. Facial displays studied for automated face analysis. Adapted from Ekman and Friesen (1978a).

where $\boldsymbol{x} = (x, y)$ is a vector of image coordinates. The Lucas-Kanade algorithm performs the minimization efficiently by using spatiotemporal gradients, and the displacements d_x and d_y are solved with subpixel accuracy. The region size used in the algorithm was 13×13 pixels. The algorithm was implemented by using an iterative, hierarchical 5-level image pyramid (Poelman, 1995), with which rapid and large displacements of up to 100 pixels (e.g., as found in sudden mouth opening) can be robustly tracked while maintaining sensitivity to subtle (subpixel) facial motion. On a dual-processor 300-MHz Pentium II computer with 128 megabytes of random access memory, processing time is approximately 1 s per frame.

The two images on the right in Figure 3 show an example of feature point tracking results. The subject's face changes from neutral (AU 0) to brow raise (AU 1+2), eye widening (AU 5), and jaw drop (AU 26), which is characteristic of surprise. The feature points are precisely tracked across the image sequence. Lines trailing from the feature points represent changes in their location during the image sequence. As the action units become more extreme, the feature point trajectory becomes longer.

Data Analysis and Action Unit Recognition

To evaluate the descriptive power of feature point tracking measurements, discriminant function analysis was used. Separate analyses were conducted on the measurement data for action units within each facial region. In the analyses of the brow region, the measurements consisted of the horizontal and vertical displacements of the six feature points around the brows. In the analyses of the eye region and of Duchenne versus non-Duchenne smiles, the measurements consisted of the horizontal and vertical displacements of the eight feature points around the eyes. In analyses of the mouth region, the measurements consisted of the horizontal and vertical displacements of the 10 feature points around the mouth and 4 points on either side of the nostrils, because of the relevance of the nose points to AU 9. Therefore, each measurement was represented by a $2p$ dimensional vector by concatenating p feature point displacements; that is $\boldsymbol{D} = (\boldsymbol{d}_1, \boldsymbol{d}_2, \ldots, \boldsymbol{d}_p) = (d_{1x}, d_{1y}, d_{2x}, d_{2y}, \ldots, d_{px}, d_{py})$.

The discrimination between action units was done by computing and comparing the a posteriori probabilities of action units, that is

$$\boldsymbol{D} \rightarrow \mathrm{AU}_k \quad \text{if } p(\mathrm{AU}_k|\boldsymbol{D}) > p(\mathrm{AU}_j|\boldsymbol{D}) \qquad j \neq k$$

where

$$p(\mathrm{AU}_i|\boldsymbol{D}) = \frac{p(\boldsymbol{D}|\mathrm{AU}_i)p(\mathrm{AU}_i)}{p(\boldsymbol{D})} = \frac{p(\boldsymbol{D}|\mathrm{AU}_i)p(\mathrm{AU}_i)}{\sum_{j=1}^{k} p(\boldsymbol{D}|\mathrm{AU}_j)p(\mathrm{AU}_j)}$$

The discriminant function between AU_i and AU_j is therefore the log-likelihood ratio

$$f_{ij}(\boldsymbol{D}) = \log \frac{p(\mathrm{AU}_i|\boldsymbol{D})}{p(\mathrm{AU}_j|\boldsymbol{D})} = \log \frac{p(\boldsymbol{D}|\mathrm{AU}_i)p(\mathrm{AU}_i)}{p(\boldsymbol{D}|\mathrm{AU}_j)p(\mathrm{AU}_j)}$$

The $p(\boldsymbol{D}|\mathrm{AU}_i)$ was assumed to be a multivariate Gaussian probability distribution $N(\boldsymbol{u}_i, \Sigma_i)$, where the mean $\boldsymbol{u}_i$ and the covariance matrix Σ_i were estimated by the sample means and sample covariance matrices of the training data. This discriminant function is a quadratic discriminant function in general; but if covariance matrices Σ_i and Σ_j are the same, it reduces to a linear discriminant function. Because we were interested in the descriptive power of the feature point displacement vector itself rather than relying on other information (e.g., relative frequencies of action units in our specific samples), a priori probabilities, $p(\mathrm{AU}_i)$, were assumed to be equal.

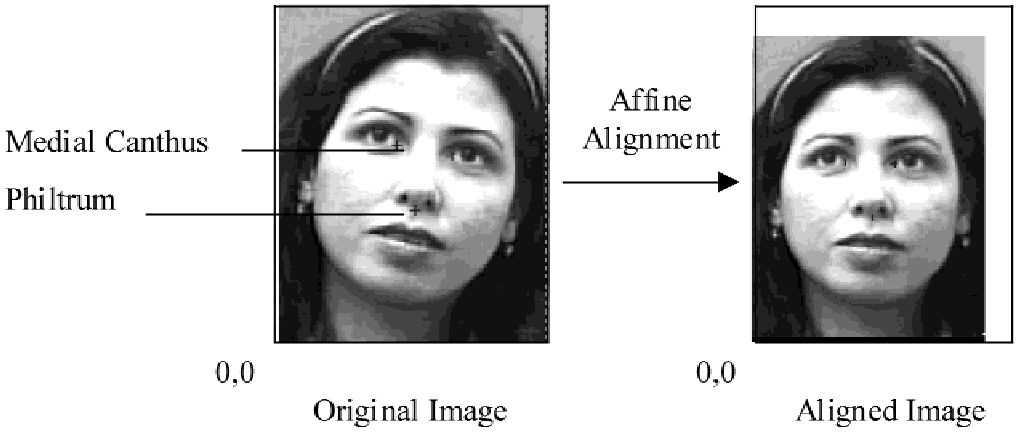

Figure 2. Image alignment by affine transformation, which includes translation, scaling, and rotation factors. The medial canthi and philtrum are used as reference points.

The analyses used 872 samples of 15 action units or action unit combinations that occurred 25 or more times in 504 image sequences of 100 subjects. The samples were randomly divided into a training and a cross-validation set. However, if an action unit occurred in more than one image sequence from the same subject, all of the samples of that action unit by that subject were assigned to the training set. Thus, for each action unit, samples from the same subject belonged exclusively either to the training or to the cross-validation set but not to both. This strict criterion ensured that the training and the cross-validation set were uncorrelated with respect to subjects for each action unit and thus that what was recognized was the action unit rather than the subject.

The agreement of action unit discrimination between manual FACS coding and automated face analysis by feature point tracking was quantified. We used coefficient kappa to measure the proportion of agreement above what would be expected to occur by chance (Cohen, 1960; Fleiss, 1981). In preliminary analyses, subjects' race and gender were unrelated to classification accuracy and therefore were not included as factors in the discriminant function analyses and classification results reported below.

Results

Brow Region

Three action units or action unit combinations (AU 1+2, AU 1+4, and AU 4) were analyzed in the brow region. Wilks lambda and two discriminant functions were highly significant ($\lambda = .07$, $p < .001$, canonical correlations = .93 and .68, $p < .001$). In the training set, 93% of the action units were correctly classified ($\kappa = .88$). In the cross-validation set (Table 1), 91% were correctly classified ($\kappa = 0.87$); accuracy ranged from 74% for AU 1+4 to 95% and 97% for AU 1+2 and AU 4, respectively.

Eye Region

Three action units (AU 5, AU 6, and AU 7) in the eye region were analyzed. Wilks lambda and two discriminant functions were highly significant ($\lambda = 0.09$, $p < .001$; canonical correlations = .91 and .67, $p < .001$). In the training set, 92% of action units were correctly classified ($\kappa = .88$). In the cross-validation set (Table 2), 88% were correctly classified ($\kappa = .82$). Disagreements that occurred were between AU 6 and AU 7.

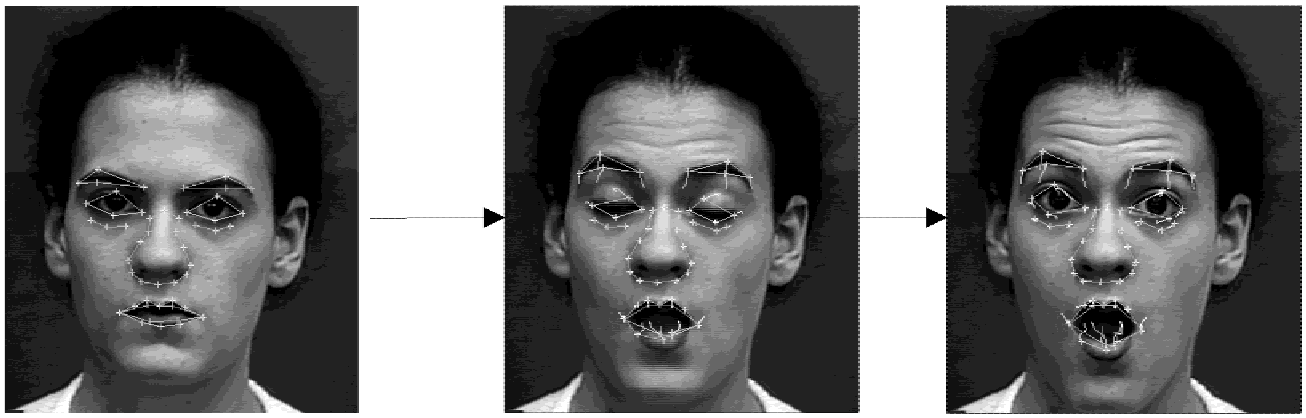

Figure 3. Example of manually located feature points (leftmost image) and results of automated feature point tracking (two images on the right). The subject's expression changes from neutral (AU 0) to surprise (AU 1+2+5+26).

Table 1. *Proportion of Agreement Between Automated Face Analysis and Manual Coding in Identifying Action Units in the Eyebrow Region*

Manual coding	No. samples	Automated face analysis		
		AU 1+2	AU 1+4	AU 4
Training set				
AU 1+2	42	.91	.10	.00
AU 1+4	25	.04	.88	.08
AU 4	84	.00	.05	.95
Cross-validation set				
AU 1+2	43	.95	.05	.00
AU 1+4	19	.00	.74	.26
AU 4	32	.00	.03	.97

Note: κ = .88 and .87 in the training and the cross-validation sets, respectively.

We also evaluated recognition accuracy for Duchenne versus non-Duchenne smiles; that is, a comparison of AU 6+12 with AU 12. Feature point data were restricted to the eye region. Wilks lambda and one discriminant function were significant ($\lambda = 0.45$, $p < .025$; canonical correlation = .74, $p < .05$). In the training set, classification accuracy was 83% ($\kappa = .67$). In the cross-validation set, accuracy was 82% ($\kappa = .63$) (see Table 3). Errors resulted from over classification of AU 12.

Mouth Region

Nine action units were analyzed in the mouth region. Wilks lambda and five discriminant functions were highly significant ($\lambda = 0.0006$, canonical correlations = .94, .93, .87, .76, and .63, $p < .001$). In the training set, 94% ($\kappa = .93$) were correctly classified. In the cross-validation set (Table 4), 81% were correctly classified ($\kappa = .79$). Accuracy was low for discriminating AU 26 from AUs 25 and 27, but accuracy for all other action units ranged from 73% to 100%.

Discussion

Facial displays are a rich source of information about human behavior, but that information has been difficult to obtain efficiently.

Table 2. *Proportion of Agreement Between Automated Face Analysis and Manual Coding in Identifying Action Units in the Eye Region*

Manual coding	No. samples	Automated face analysis		
		AU 5	AU 6	AU 7
Training set				
AU 5	41	1.00	.00	.00
AU 6	35	.00	.77	.23
AU 7	34	.00	.03	.97
Cross-validation set				
AU 5	28	.93	.00	.07
AU 6	33	.00	.82	.18
AU 7	14	.00	.07	.93

Note: κ = .88 and .82 in the training and the cross-validation sets, respectively.

Table 3. *Proportion of Agreement Between Automated Face Analysis and Manual Coding in Discriminating Between Non-Duchenne and Duchenne Smiles*

Manual coding	No. samples	Automated face analysis	
		Non-Duchenne	Duchenne
Training set			
Non-Duchenne	25	.88	.12
Duchenne	35	.20	.80
Cross-validation set			
Non-Duchenne	12	1.00	.00
Duchenne	33	.24	.76

Note: κ = .67 and .63 in the training and the cross-validation sets, respectively.

Manual methods are labor intensive, semiquantitative, difficult to standardize, and often subjective. Several recent studies have used computer-vision approaches to discriminate facial displays (Bartlett et al., 1996; Cottrell & Metcalfe, 1991; Essa & Pentland, 1994; Padgett et al., 1996; Yacoob & Davis, 1994). Except for a study by Bartlett et al. (1996), this work has focused on discriminating a small number of emotion expressions (e.g., joy, surprise, fear) that differ from each other in many facial regions, and the sample sizes used have been small, from 7 to 20 subjects. We have developed an automated face analysis method that discriminates FACS action units, which are the smallest visibly discriminable facial displays with well-established objective criteria. We tested automated face analysis with a large, varied data set.

To discriminate FACS action units, feature points in regions of moderate to high texture were automatically tracked in image sequences, and the effects of spatial variation were removed using an affine transformation of the feature point displacements. Using a discriminant classifier, average accuracy in the training set was above 90% for action units in the brow, eye, and mouth regions and was 83% for discriminating between Duchenne and non-Duchenne smiles. In the cross-validation set, average accuracy was 91%, 88%, and 81% in the brow, eye, and mouth regions, respectively, and accuracy for Duchenne versus non-Duchenne smiles was 82%.

Automated face analysis demonstrated high concurrent validity with manual coding for action units in each of the facial regions studied. The level of intermethod agreement for action units was comparable to the accepted standard in tests of interobserver agreement in FACS. The intermethod disagreements that did occur were generally the same ones that are common in FACS, such as the distinction between AU 25 and AU 26 and between AU 1+4 and AU 4.

This test of the concurrent validity of automated face analysis was performed with a larger, more heterogeneous data set than was previous work. The data set consisted of more than 500 image sequence samples with 15 action units and action-unit combinations of 100 subjects. The image sequences contained positional and rotational motions of the face, and the set of action units spanned those in three facial regions (both upper and lower face). An action unit could occur alone or could be embedded in others. Also, subjects included African American and Asian men and women, providing a more adequate test of how well action unit discrimination would generalize to image sequences in new subjects. Automated face analysis was comparable to the accepted standard for manual coding, FACS.

Table 4. *Proportion of Agreement Between Automated Face Analysis and Manual Coding in Identifying Action Units in the Mouth Region*

Manual coding	No. samples	Automated face analysis								
		AU 27	AU 26	AU 25	AU 12	AU 12+25	AU 20+25±16	AU 15+17	AU17+23+24	AU 9+17±25
Training set										
AU 27	28	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
AU 26	28	.05	.86	.09	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
AU 25	22	.00	.00	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
AU 12	15	.00	.00	.00	.94	.06	.00	.00	.00	.00
AU 12+25	37	.00	.00	.00	.05	.95	.03	.00	.00	.00
AU 20+25±16	31	.03	.00	.00	.03	.06	.88	.00	.00	.00
AU 15+17	34	.00	.00	.03	.00	.00	.00	.94	.03	.00
AU 17+23+24	14	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.07	.93	.00
AU 9+17±25	18	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	1.00
Cross-validation set										
AU 27	29	.79	.10	.03	.00	.00	.07	.00	.00	.00
AU 26	20	.30	.52	.18	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
AU 25	22	.00	.14	.73	.00	.00	.00	.14	.00	.00
AU 12	18	.00	.00	.00	.83	.17	.00	.00	.00	.00
AU 12+25	35	.00	.00	.03	.00	.81	.17	.00	.00	.00
AU 20+25±16	26	.00	.03	.00	.00	.08	.89	.00	.00	.00
AU 15+17	36	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.03	.92	.06	.00
AU 17+23+24	12	.00	.00	.00	.08	.00	.00	.00	.92	.00
AU 9+17±25	17	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	1.00

Note: κ = .93 and .79 in the training and the cross-validation sets, respectively.

In the present study, we used a restricted number of distinct features for action unit discrimination: feature points around the brows, eyes, nose, and mouth. We have not used other features in other regions, such as the forehead, glabella, infraorbital furrow, cheeks, and the chin boss. Manual FACS coding looks for many types of movement in all of these facial regions when coding the action units analyzed here. AU 6, for instance, produces skin movement across the cheeks, which is useful in discriminating AU 6 from AU 7. Feature point tracking in the cheek region would detect skin movement due to AU 6 and likely increase the accuracy of AU discrimination.

Many action units involve changes in transient features, such as lines or furrows, that may occur or vary across an image sequence. "Crow's-feet" wrinkles, for instance, form at the eye corners from contraction of the orbicularis oculi in AU 6, and increases in the sclera above the eyeball occur with AU 5. These features can be represented by intensity gradients in the image sequence and are quantified by the computer vision method of edge detection. For some action units, the use of edge detectors is essential. To discriminate between AU 25 and AU 26, FACS specifies a requisite distance between upper and lower teeth, which is readily detected by edge detectors but not by optical flow. By increasing the number of feature regions and supplementing feature point tracking and optical flow estimation with edge detection, further improvement in facial feature analysis can be achieved (Lien, Kanade, Zlochower, Cohn, & Li, 1998a; Lien, Zlochower, Cohn, & Kanade, 1998b).

In comparison with manual FACS coding, automated face analysis represents a substantial improvement in efficiency. Manual FACS coding requires lengthy training and is time intensive. The current automated face analysis requires feature point marking in a single frame of each image sequence, but it is fast and reliable with little training. It took us about 4 hr to mark manually the first frame in each of the 504 image sequences analyzed in the present study. After the initial reference points were marked, the facial features were tracked automatically in all subsequent images. On a 333 MHz Pentium II computer, the processing rate of automatic feature tracking was approximately 1 frame per second; processing of the 504 image sequences analyzed here required under 3 hr to complete. By contrast, manual FACS coding would require as much as 10 hr for each minute of image data (Ekman, 1982).

A major source of error in analyzing facial displays is global motion of the head across an image sequence. Movement toward, away from, or parallel to the image plane of the camera, as well as rotation in the image plane, is readily accommodated by automatically scaling, translating, and rotating the digitized images so that they are normalized with respect to the initial frame. When out-of-plane rotation varies within about ±5°, which was the case in the image sequences analyzed here, these normalizations were sufficient. In many applications, however, larger out-of-plane rotations may occur. Intermediate rotations can be normalized by using an eight-parameter planar model to warp images to match with the initial frame (Black & Yacoob, 1995; Wu, Kanade, Cohn, & Li, 1998). For larger rotations, however, higher degree motion models or multiple camera setups may be needed (Basu, Essa, & Pentland, 1996; DeCarlo & Metaxas, 1995; Narayanan, Rander, & Kanade, 1998; Vetter, 1995). Multiple camera setups already are common in observational research, so the necessary recording capability is present in many laboratories.

The present analyses focused on the concordance between automated face analysis and manual FACS coding in classifying action units and action unit combinations. Automated face analysis also provides a powerful tool with which to quantify the temporal dynamics of emotion displays. Ekman and Friesen (1982) theorized that false emotion expressions have a different temporal pattern than do genuine ones (e.g., latency to apex is faster in false emotion expressions and they are punctuated by the occurrence of rapid microdisplays). Until now, hypotheses such as these have

been difficult to test (see, e.g., Frank, Ekman, & Friesen, 1993). Human observers have difficulty locating precise changes in behavior and in estimating changes in intensity of expression. Interobserver agreement in locating the timing of action unit changes within a sequence is generally low (e.g., Ekman & Friesen, 1978b). Automated face analysis, by contrast, can precisely track quantitative changes on a frame-by-frame basis (Cohn, Zlochower, Lien, Wu, & Kanade, 1996). Small pixelwise changes from frame to frame may be measured, and the temporal dynamics of facial displays can be determined.

In summary, automated face analysis by feature point tracking demonstrated high concurrent validity with manual FACS coding. In the cross-validation set, which included subjects of mixed ethnicity, average recognition accuracy for 15 action units in the brow, eye, and mouth regions was 81–91%, which is comparable to the level of interobserver agreement achieved in manual FACS coding. We are extending automated face analysis to incorporate convergent methods of quantifying facial displays, increase the number of action units and action unit combinations that can be recognized, and increase the generalizability of the system to a wide range of image orientations. We also have begun to use automated face analysis to study emotion expression in infants (Zlochower, Cohn, Lien, & Kanade, 1998). With continued development, automated face analysis will greatly reduce or eliminate the need for manual coding, make feasible the use of larger, more representative data sets, and open new areas of investigation.

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(RECEIVED August 19, 1997; ACCEPTED May 19, 1998)