Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

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MSc Artificial Intelligence

Active Perception in Face Recognition using Navigation in Simulated Environments

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September, 2023

Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης

Σχολή Θετικών Επιστημών

Τμήμα Πληροφορικής

Π.Μ.Σ. στην Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη

Ενεργή Αντίληψη στην Αναγνώριση Προσώπου με Πλοήγηση σε Περιβάλλοντα Προσομοίωσης

Μιχαήλ Λουφάκης

Επιβλέπων:

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Σεπτέμβριος, 2023

Thanks to

As I present this thesis, marking a significant milestone in my Master's degree in Artificial Intelligence at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Department of Informatics, I am filled with deep gratitude for the numerous individuals who have supported me in this journey.

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt thanks to Professor Anastasios Tefas, Nikolaos Passalis, and Pavlos Tosidis. Their continuous guidance, invaluable insights, and unwavering support have been fundamental to the development and completion of this work. Their expertise and encouragement have significantly shaped both this thesis and my personal and academic growth.

I am deeply grateful to my family – my parents, brothers, sister, uncles, and aunts. Their love and persistent belief in me have provided guidance and encouragement. I owe them a sincere debt of gratitude.

A special thanks to my girlfriend, who has been a pillar of support from the beginning of my studies. Her belief in me, understanding, and constant presence have been a source of comfort and strength, making this journey all the more rewarding.

I also want to express my appreciation to my training coaches in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and Capoeira, and my choir conductor. They have been instrumental in helping me stay focused and balanced, providing avenues to relax, rejuvenate, and clear my mind, playing a crucial role in my academic pursuits.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge all my wonderful friends. Their friendship has been a constant reminder of the importance of community and mutual support.

Abstract

In the realm of robotics, the ability of active perception notably enhances the effectiveness of face recognition tasks. This thesis underscores the significance of face recognition and explores the integration of active perception in robotics, focusing on improving face recognition performance in scenarios with occluded faces. We propose, examine, and compare four innovative methods of active perception using a drone equipped with a mounted camera in the simulated environment of Webots, where faces are obscured by various objects. Initially, a substantial dataset of simulated images was collected, featuring occluded faces. Subsequently, four distinctive labeling methods are applied to these images, enabling the training of a HydraNet architecture. This multitask learning architecture is trained to predict the optimal direction for the drone's movement, aiming to achieve enhanced face recognition scores. After a thorough evaluation of various architectural configurations, the most effective model emerges as one leveraging an EfficientNetB0 backbone with three heads for horizontal and vertical decision-making and depth estimation. This model was trained with the labeling method that incorporates a Gaussian decay window, assessing potential improvements or losses in face recognition in each direction. The methodology demonstrates a substantial increase in verification score accuracy, starting from 70.83% on initially occluded faces to 94.87% following the network's guidance with the drone. The efficacy of this approach is further validated in two real-case scenarios: one involving faces occluded by urban objects and another with faces obscured by other individuals in an over-the-shoulder conversation angle. In these practical contexts, the model boosts verification accuracy from 66.97% to 93.39% and from 72.66% to 95.99% for urban and over-the-shoulder scenarios, respectively.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Deep Learning, Active Perception, Face Recognition, Robotics, Simulation Environment, Webots, Occlusion Handling, Computer Vision, Multi-task Learning, Autonomous Navigation

Περίληψη

Στον τομέα της ρομποτικής, η ικανότητα ενεργητικής αντίληψης ενισχύει σημαντικά την αποτελεσματικότητα των εργασιών αναγνώρισης προσώπου. Η παρούσα διατριβή υπογραμμίζει τη σημασία της αναγνώρισης προσώπων και διερευνά την ενσωμάτωση της ενεργητικής αντίληψης στη ρομποτική, εστιάζοντας στη βελτίωση της απόδοσης αναγνώρισης προσώπων σε σενάρια με καλυμμένα πρόσωπα. Προτείνουμε, εξετάζουμε και συγκρίνουμε τέσσερις καινοτόμες μεθόδους ενεργητικής αντίληψης χρησιμοποιώντας ένα drone εξοπλισμένο με μια κάμερα, στο προσομοιωμένο περιβάλλον του Webots, όπου τα πρόσωπα καλύπτονται από διάφορα αντικείμενα. Αρχικά, συλλέχθηκε ένα σημαντικό σύνολο δεδομένων προσομοιωμένων εικόνων, με καλυμμένα πρόσωπα. Στη συνέχεια, τέσσερις διακριτές μέθοδοι επισήμανσης εφαρμόζονται σε αυτές τις εικόνες, επιτρέποντας την εκπαίδευση μιας αρχιτεκτονικής HydraNet. Αυτή η αρχιτεκτονική μάθησης πολλαπλών καθηκόντων εκπαιδεύεται για να προβλέπει τη βέλτιστη κατεύθυνση για την κίνηση του drone, με στόχο την επίτευξη βελτιωμένων αποτελεσμάτων στην αναγνώρισης προσώπων. Μετά από ενδελεχή αξιολόγηση διαφόρων αρχιτεκτονικών, το πιο αποτελεσματικό μοντέλο αναδεικνύεται ως αυτό που αξιοποιεί μια ραχοκοκαλιά EfficientNetB0 με τρεις κεφαλές για την οριζόντια και κάθετη λήψη αποφάσεων και την εκτίμηση βάθους. Αυτό το μοντέλο εκπαιδεύτηκε με τη μέθοδο επισήμανσης που ενσωματώνει ένα παράθυρο αποσύνθεσης Gauss, αξιολογώντας πιθανές βελτιώσεις ή απώλειες στην αναγνώριση προσώπου σε κάθε κατεύθυνση. Η μεθοδολογία επιδεικνύει σημαντική αύξηση της ακρίβειας του σκορ επαλήθευσης, ξεκινώντας από 70.83% σε αρχικά καλυμμένα πρόσωπα και φτάνοντας στο $94,87\%$ μετά την καθοδήγηση του drone από το δικτυο. Η αποτελεσματικότητα αυτής της προσέγγισης επικυρώνεται περαιτέρω σε δύο σενάρια του πραγματικού κόσμου: το ένα αφορά πρόσωπα που αποκρύπτονται από αστικά αντικείμενα και το άλλο με πρόσωπα που αποκρύπτονται από άλλα άτομα σε μια γωνία συνομιλίας πάνω από τον ώμο. Σε αυτά τα πρακτικά πλαίσια, το μοντέλο ενισχύει την ακρίβεια επαλήθευσης από $66,97\%$ σε $93,39\%$ και από $72,66\%$ σε $95,99\%$ για τα αστικά σενάρια και τα σενάρια πάνω από τον ώμο, αντίστοιχα.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη, Βαθιά Μάθηση, Ενεργή Αντίληψη, Αναγνώριση Προσώπου, Ρομποτική, Περιβάλλον Προσομοίωσης, Webots, Χειρισμός Απόκρυψης, Υπολογι-

στική Όραση, Μάθηση Πολλαπλών Καθηκόντων, Αυτόνομη Πλοήγηση

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Chapter 1

Introduction

”We do not only see, we look” [1], this phrase encapsulates the importance of active perception, highlighting the fine and complex nature of human cognition and interaction with the environment [2, 3]. As we navigate through our daily routines, we unconsciously execute several complex tasks such as recognizing objects, understanding spoken words, recalling past experiences, and applying acquired knowledge. Furthermore, a significant aspect of our cognition is the capability for ”reflective thinking”, an introspective examination of one’s thoughts, which assists in behavioral improvement, adapting to unknown circumstances, and improving problem-solving efficiency. Despite the ease with which we perform these tasks, articulating or replicating these processes can be extremely challenging [4]. This complexity and the quest to understand it leads us into the realm of Artificial Intelligence.

Artificial Intelligence goes beyond just unraveling the complexities of human cognition—it aims to build intelligent entities that might even outperform humans in specific tasks. Over the years many definitions have been given to describe this field. One definition describes it as ”the study of the computations that make it possible to perceive, reason, and act” [5], while another calls it ”the art of creating machines that perform functions requiring intelligence when performed by people” [6]. A common line in these definitions is the crucial role of action. In other words, true intelligence requires not just knowledge, but the ability to act on that knowledge. This idea dates back to Aristotle, who suggested that our actions are driven by a logical link between our goals and our understanding of the potential outcomes of those actions [7, 8]. Some sort of prediction, which also lies at the heart of Artificial Intelligence.

Also, the advancements in Artificial Intelligence have significantly propelled progress in many other domains, one of which is robotics. Robotics is a field centered around designing, constructing, and operating robots with the capability to execute tasks autonomously. Artificial Intelligence plays a crucial role here, equipping robots with the ability to perceive, reason, and make decisions, which in turn allows for more sophisticated interactions with their surroundings. The collaborative relationship between Artificial Intelligence and robotics opens

up exciting possibilities for creating smarter systems, showcasing the deep impact of Artificial Intelligence on technological innovation and our broader understanding of intelligence [9, 10].

Recalling our initial reference, when it comes to human perception, face detection, and face recognition play a crucial role in how we interact socially by conveying our identity and emotions. Although guessing someone's intelligence or personality based on their looks isn't reliable, our ability to recognize faces is quite remarkable. We can remember thousands of faces and easily recognize familiar ones even after many years apart. The topic of computer models recognizing faces is interesting because it's not just about understanding how we recognize faces, but also finding practical uses for this knowledge [11, 12].

Computers capable of identifying faces can aid in solving crimes, bolstering security systems, processing images and videos, or even making interactions with computers more intuitive. However, developing models for computers to recognize faces is quite challenging. Faces are intricate, carrying a wealth of meaningful details that can be difficult for a computer to decipher. Yet, with the assistance of Artificial Intelligence and the technology of deep neural networks, substantial headway has been made in overcoming this hurdle. The fusion of Artificial Intelligence and face recognition unveils a host of thrilling opportunities, ranging from addressing real-world issues to enriching our comprehension of how we, as humans, engage with the world and technology [13, 14, 15].

Integrating face recognition technology in robots opens up a world of possibilities across various fields. For instance, in security, robots could identify people and help keep public spaces or restricted areas safe. In healthcare, robots recognizing patients can offer a personal touch to care. Retail and customer service can also benefit, with robots providing personalized help to customers. In our homes, robots could identify family members to tailor services to individual preferences. The education sector can also leverage this technology, with robots recognizing and responding to different learners' needs, creating a better learning environment. Moreover, in times of disasters, robots equipped with face recognition can help in identifying individuals needing rescue [16, 17]. This blend of face recognition and robotics doesn't just make robots more efficient; it makes them more human-friendly, allowing for more natural interactions. This combination is expanding the horizons of what robots can do, enhancing how they collaborate with us across different areas of life [18].

While many face recognition systems are designed to achieve optimal performance when images are captured under controlled, ideal conditions, real-world scenarios often deviate from these controlled setups. The lack of control over the subject and environment often results in faces being partially visible. This could be due to faces in the background being

obscured by foreground objects or even faces being blocked by other individuals. Under such circumstances, the performance of the recognition system decreases due to the limited information available from the occluded face. Various methods have been proposed to navigate around this challenge, such as employing partial face recognition techniques or attention-based mechanisms [19, 20]. However, in this thesis, we are exploring a unique approach by using the mobility and interactive capabilities of robots.

The concept of active perception is utilized in leveraging robots to better capture and recognize faces in the presence of occlusions. Active perception is a dynamic approach where the system, in this case, a robot, actively interacts with its environment to obtain better or additional information [21, 22, 23]. Instead of passively receiving data, the system takes proactive measures to enhance the quality or quantity of the information it receives, thereby improving its understanding or performance on a particular task [24, 25].

In the context of face recognition, active perception empowers robots to maneuver within their environment to obtain unobstructed views of faces, especially when initial attempts provide occluded or unclear images. By adjusting their position, robots can actively work towards capturing clearer facial images. This proactive engagement with the environment to improve face recognition is what sets active perception apart from more passive or static approaches. It not only presents a solution to the challenge of occlusions but also presents a real application of active perception, showcasing its potential to enhance the robustness and adaptability of face recognition systems in real-world, uncontrolled settings [9, 26].

Training deep neural networks that could assist robots in determining the optimal direction to move for better face recognition is a challenging ambition. The complexity arises from the necessity to evaluate numerous positions to confirm which one yields the clearest view. Simulation environments emerge as valuable tools in this effort, providing a controlled yet versatile setting to examine various positions and measure their effectiveness [27, 28]. Moreover, they enable the emulation of real-world scenarios to a significant extent, allowing the robots to learn from these simulated experiences. Over time, with sufficient training, robots can spontaneously choose the best position to enhance face recognition.

For this thesis, we employ the simulation environment of Webots as the testbed for evaluating our proposed Artificial Intelligence algorithms. Webots offer a robust and realistic simulation environment where the behavior of robots can be studied and analyzed meticulously [29]. Its utility extends to providing a platform where the interaction between robots and their environment, including the dynamics of face recognition, can be explored in depth without the constraints or unpredictability of real-world settings. This controlled environ-

ment is instrumental in refining the Artificial Intelligence algorithms, facilitating an extensive evaluation of its performance in various scenarios before actual implementation [30].

In this study, a comprehensive exploration of enhancing face recognition through active perception, facilitated by robotics and deep learning, has been undertaken. Following this methodical exploration, several key objectives were achieved, as shown below:

- The Creation of a realistic simulation environment within Webots to facilitate the data collection necessary for training Artificial Intelligence algorithms focused on the active perception task.
- Exploration of the impact of different labeling approaches on the learning efficacy and performance of the Artificial Intelligence algorithm.
- Construction of a multi-task deep learning network tailored to handle the complexities of the active perception task.
- Conduction of a thorough evaluation of each proposed approach within a simulated environment to ascertain their performance and effectiveness.
- Advanced understanding of how active perception can be harnessed to enhance face recognition systems.
- Contribution to the theoretical discourse on active perception, multi-task learning, and their applications in the realm of face recognition and robotics.

This research holds notable significance in advancing human-robot interaction and the broader field of Artificial Intelligence. By tackling the challenge of face recognition through active perception, a bridge is created between robotics, Artificial Intelligence, and human cognition, fostering more intuitive interactions between humans and robots [31]. The methodologies explored in this thesis can serve as a foundation for addressing other perception-based challenges within Artificial Intelligence, showcasing the potential of a multidisciplinary approach to solving real-world problems. The study not only addresses a technical hurdle but also contributes to the ongoing efforts toward creating more responsive and intelligent robotic systems for a human-centric future [32].

The rest of this thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 2 establishes the foundational knowledge in deep learning, face recognition, and simulation in robotics, crucial for understanding the advanced concepts discussed later. Chapter 3 reviews existing literature, focusing

on active perception and multitask learning, situating our research within the broader field. Chapter 4 introduces our novel approaches for enhancing face recognition through active perception. This includes the mathematical problem formulation, the proposal of four labeling methods, and the introduction of a specialized deep neural network architecture (HydraNet). In Chapter 5, we delve into the experimental phase, detailed data collection from simulations, the fine-tuning of model candidates, and their evaluation within the simulation environment. The results, discussed in Chapter 6, compare the performance of various models, highlighting the best-performing network. This section also presents the efficacy of the top model in two real-world scenarios, demonstrating practical applicability. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the thesis, discussing our findings.

Chapter 2

Background

In this chapter, we delve into the realm of Deep Learning, a subset of machine learning and artificial intelligence, exploring its evolution, architectures, training methodologies, evaluation strategies, applications in face recognition, and the utility of simulation environments in artificial intelligence development (Section 2.1). Initially, we explore the evolution of Deep Learning over time, highlighting key developments from the inception of the perceptron model to the advent of the backpropagation algorithm (Subsection 2.1.1). This lays the groundwork for discussing prominent Deep Neural Network architectures like Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) and Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), which have significantly contributed to advancements in various domains (Subsection 2.1.2). Then we shift the focus into the training of Deep Neural Networks, explaining the importance of data preparation, loss function minimization, and optimization algorithms (Subsection 2.1.3). Emphasis is also given to evaluation and validation strategies to ensure model robustness and generalizability (Subsection 2.1.4). Subsequently, we describe the application of Deep Learning in face recognition, reviewing seminal and recent works that demonstrate the remarkable capabilities of deep learning in this domain (Section 2.2). Lastly, the section explores the role of simulation environments like Webots in the development, testing, and refinement of artificial intelligence algorithms, particularly in the context of face recognition challenges (Section 2.3). Through this exploration, a comprehensive understanding of Deep Learning and its applicability in face recognition is presented, shedding light on the iterative process of artificial intelligence algorithm development within simulated environments.

2.1 Deep Learning

2.1.1 Introduction to Deep Learning

Deep learning, a subset of machine learning and artificial intelligence, has witnessed significant advancements in recent decades, although its foundations trace back to earlier years.

The idea of training computers to learn from data has its roots in the perceptron model introduced by Frank Rosenblatt in 1958 [33], which was one of the earliest examples of a simple neural network. However, it wasn't until the advent of the backpropagation algorithm in the 1980s by Rumelhart, Hinton, and Williams that training multi-layer neural networks became computationally feasible [34].

Deep learning involves the construction and training of neural networks, which are inspired by the human brain structure and function. A neural network comprises layers of interconnected nodes or "neurons" that can learn to represent data through a process called training. During training, the network is fed with vast amounts of data, and the weights of the connections between neurons are adjusted to minimize the difference between the predicted output and the true labels of the data, a process typically facilitated by a loss function and an optimization algorithm [35].

The resurgence and rapid progress in deep learning began around 2012, with the success of AlexNet in the ImageNet competition, which significantly outperformed traditional machine learning algorithms in image classification tasks [36]. This success was largely attributed to the increased availability of large labeled datasets and powerful computational resources, particularly Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) [37]. Since then, deep learning has been pivotal in achieving state-of-the-art performance across various domains including natural language processing, computer vision, and speech recognition [38, 39].

Deep learning models, particularly Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) [40] and Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) [41], have shown remarkable ability in handling high-dimensional data and are now fundamental in developing intelligent systems capable of complex tasks. The ongoing research in this field continues to explore new architectures, training methodologies, and applications, making deep learning a continually evolving and impactful technology in the realm of artificial intelligence [42, 43].

2.1.2 Architectures of Deep Neural Networks

Deep learning, has seen remarkable advancements through the development of specific architectures like Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) and Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), which optimize functionalities that different tasks require.

Recurrent Neural Networks shine when it comes to managing sequential data, which is why they are often chosen for tasks such as speech recognition, language modeling, and translation. RNNs have a special feature: they possess internal loops that help retain information over a period, which is essential for understanding sequences and time-series data. One major

milestone for RNNs was the introduction of a variant called Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) by Hochreiter and Schmidhuber in 1997. This variant tackled a common problem known as the vanishing gradient, which hindered learning over long sequences [41].

On the other hand, Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) are often considered the most appropriate choice for tasks involving images and videos. Their unique layers, such as convolutional and pooling layers, enable them to effectively learn spatial hierarchies of features from input data. As a result, these networks are known for their ability to accurately process and analyze complex visual data. CNNs have also made their mark in competitions like ImageNet, showcasing the power of deep learning in handling high-dimensional data. This success has encouraged the development of more advanced and deeper architectures like ResNet [44], which brought in the idea of skip connections to ease training deep networks, and others like VGGNet and DenseNet, each introducing new architectural ideas to enhance performance and tackle the common vanishing gradient problem in deep networks [45, 46].

Among the newer advancements, EfficientNet stands out for its scalable design and superior performance. Proposed by Tan and Le in 2019, EfficientNet is designed to scale all dimensions of the network—depth, width, and resolution—systematically with a fixed set of scaling coefficients. This design allows it to achieve better performance with fewer parameters compared to other CNN architectures, making it a significant step forward in the quest for efficient and effective network designs for a wide range of applications in Artificial Intelligence [47].

2.1.3 Training Deep Neural Networks

The training process of Deep Neural Networks (DNNs) is at the core of making these models useful for a variety of tasks. At the heart of this process is the idea of learning from data to make accurate predictions or decisions. This learning process is iterative and relies on adjusting model parameters to optimize a loss function.

The first step in training DNNs is the preparation of data, which is crucial for the learning process. The data is usually divided into three sets: training, validation, and testing. The training set is used to adjust the model parameters, the validation set is used to tune the hyperparameters and provide an unbiased evaluation of the model fit during the training phase, and the testing set is used to provide an unbiased evaluation of the final model fit [48]. The quality and quantity of data significantly affect the performance of the network, underscoring the importance of having a robust dataset [49].

Central to the training process is the loss function, which provides a measure of how

well the neural network is performing. The loss function measures the difference between predicted and actual values in the training data. Common loss functions include Mean Squared Error for regression tasks and Cross-Entropy Loss for classification tasks. The goal is to minimize the value of the loss function, which would signify that the network is learning the underlying patterns in the data [50].

The minimization of the loss function is achieved through optimization algorithms, which adjust the weights of the network to find the minimum value of the loss function. One of the most commonly used optimization algorithms is Stochastic Gradient Descent (SGD) along with its variants like Adam and RMSprop. These optimizers compute the gradient of the loss function with respect to the network's weights and adjust the weights in a way that minimizes the loss [51?]. As the training progresses, the weights of the network are iteratively adjusted by the optimizer, gradually reducing the loss. This iterative adjustment is done over several passes through the training data, known as epochs. Each epoch is a complete pass through the training dataset, and several epochs are usually necessary to sufficiently train the network [43].

The convergence to a minimal loss signifies that the network has learned the salient features necessary to make predictions or decisions regarding unseen data. However, it's essential to avoid overfitting, where the model learns the noise in the training data, hindering its performance on new data. Techniques like regularization, dropout, and early stopping are employed to ensure that the network generalizes well to new data [52]).

The process of training deep neural networks combines mathematical optimization with practical heuristics to achieve high performance. This process is fundamental to unleashing the power of deep learning in solving complex real-world problems.

2.1.4 Evaluation and Validation in Deep Learning

Evaluating the performance of deep learning models is a crucial step to ensure they are learning the underlying patterns in the data and are capable of generalizing well to unseen data [53]. A common practice in this process is to divide the dataset into three parts: the training set, the validation set, and the test set, as previously referenced [54].

The importance of the validation set cannot be overstated [54]. It acts as new data during training, providing an unbiased evaluation of a model fit, and helps in tuning the model's hyperparameters. The use of a validation set helps in identifying the model that performs the best on unseen data, thereby assisting in selecting the most suitable model, and helps to prevent overfitting, a scenario where the model learns to memorize the training data rather

than learning the underlying patterns [53, 55]. Moreover, the validation set aids in providing a more realistic estimate of the model's performance on unseen data, which is crucial for deploying models in real-world applications. In the domain of image processing, data augmentation is also a powerful technique for enhancing the performance and robustness of deep learning models, especially when the amount of available training data is limited [56]. Data augmentation encompasses a wide range of techniques that create variations of the training images, thereby expanding the dataset and enabling the model to learn more generalized features. Common data augmentation techniques include random rotations, scaling, cropping, and flipping of the training images [57]. By employing data augmentation, models are exposed to a broader range of data variations, which in turn aids in enhancing their ability to generalize well to unseen data [58]. The application of augmentation techniques has been widely discussed in various academic resources, underscoring its importance in the training and evaluation of deep learning models for image-related tasks.

Early stopping is another crucial technique used to prevent overfitting during the training of deep learning models. Overfitting occurs when a model learns to perform exceedingly well on the training data but poorly on unseen data [55]. As the training progresses, the model's performance on the training data continuously improves, but there's a point beyond which the model starts to memorize the training data rather than learning the underlying patterns, and its performance on the validation data starts to deteriorate. Early stopping intervenes in the training process by monitoring the model's performance on the validation data and halting the training once the performance stops improving or starts to decline [59]. This way, early stopping ensures that the model generalizes well to new data and does not waste computational resources on further training that does not contribute to improving the model's generalization performance. Early stopping, coupled with validation strategies and data augmentation, forms a robust framework for training and evaluating deep learning models effectively [43].

2.2 Deep Learning in Face Recognition

Deep Learning has significantly propelled the field of face recognition forward, enabling a wide range of real-world applications. The hierarchical architecture inherent to Deep Learning methods aids in learning discriminative face representations, which are crucial for robust face recognition systems. Various Deep Learning techniques have been employed in recent years to improve the state-of-the-art performance of face recognition systems, leading to diverse and efficient real-world applications. For instance, advancements in CNNs and other

deep learning architectures have been instrumental in achieving remarkable accuracy in face recognition tasks.

Seminal work in deep learning-based face recognition includes the DeepFace and FaceNet systems, which significantly outperformed previous face recognition systems. DeepFace, developed by Facebook, demonstrated a method that achieved an accuracy rate of 97.35% on the Labeled Faces in the Wild (LFW) dataset, a popular benchmark for face verification [13]. Google's FaceNet further improved the accuracy, achieving a new state-of-the-art performance on the LFW dataset and the YouTube Faces dataset [60]. These works leveraged deep learning architectures to learn a compact and discriminative representation of facial images, showcasing the potential of deep learning in face recognition.

Recent contributions continue to evolve the field, addressing challenges related to illumination, expression, pose variations, and occlusion in face recognition tasks. A comprehensive analysis of recent works reveals a plethora of Deep Learning techniques, algorithms, architectures, and loss functions being employed to enhance the performance of face recognition systems. Various datasets are being used to train and evaluate these systems, ensuring their robustness and generalizability across different face recognition tasks [61].

2.3 Simulation Environments for AI and Robotics

Simulated environments like Webots play a crucial role in the development, testing, and refinement of AI algorithms, particularly in the area of face recognition. They provide a controlled setting where developers can design and implement AI algorithms without the constraints or unpredictability of real-world settings. This is highly beneficial in the early stages of algorithm development where the primary focus is on verifying the logic and functionality of the algorithm. In the context of face recognition, simulated environments can be leveraged to create various scenarios where faces are presented in different orientations, lighting conditions, or occlusions, aiding in the development of robust algorithms capable of handling real-world variability.

Simulated environments also allow for flexible testing of developed algorithms. They provide a platform where different scenarios can be replicated with consistency, enabling a thorough evaluation of the algorithm's performance under various conditions. For face recognition algorithms, simulated testing environments can be designed to mimic diverse real-world scenarios, such as crowded places, varying lighting conditions, or individuals with face masks, thereby evaluating the algorithm's robustness and accuracy.

Post-development, simulated environments continue to serve as a valuable resource for

refining AI algorithms. They provide the feedback necessary to fine-tune algorithms, making them more accurate and efficient. In face recognition, refining algorithms to improve their accuracy and reduce false positives/negatives is crucial. Simulated environments provide a safe and cost-effective platform for conducting such refinements before deploying the algorithms in real-world applications.

Chapter 3

Related Work

This chapter delves into Face Recognition in Robotics, Active Perception, and Multi-Task Learning, and their contributions to the advancement of robotic systems. We initiate our exploration with an in-depth look at Face Recognition in Robotics (Section 3.1), where we delve into how the integration of face recognition technology with robotics has revolutionized our interaction with machines, highlighting the advancements and challenges as investigated in various studies. We then shift our attention to Active Perception (Section 3.2), a cutting-edge approach in robotics that empowers robots with enhanced visual task performance through actively acquired observations. This section underscores the importance of this technique in adapting to dynamic environments and its application in face recognition tasks. Following this, our focus changes to Multi-Task Learning (Section 3.3), where we examine how the fusion of this learning approach with face recognition and active perception in robotics leads to more efficient and effective visual task management. We explore the benefits and challenges of this integration, examining how learning related tasks concurrently can improve generalization across tasks and develop more sophisticated robotic systems.

3.1 Face Recognition in Robotics

The combination of face recognition technology with robotic systems has opened up a whole new world of possibilities for how we interact with machines. It's now easier than ever to communicate with robots in a natural and intuitive way, thanks to these exciting advancements. Several studies have examined this integration, focusing on both the advancements it brings and the challenges that arise. For instance, Smith et al. (2018) [62] explored the real-time processing capability of face recognition in robotics, emphasizing the crucial role of low-latency processing for effective human-robot interaction. Moreover, Johnson and Williams (2020) [63] investigated the robustness of face recognition algorithms in dynamic and often unpredictable real-world environments where lighting conditions and occlusions

could significantly impact recognition accuracy.

The challenges associated with real-world face recognition in robotic systems are multifold. One of the primary issues is the robustness of recognition algorithms in varying lighting conditions, as studied by Lee et al. (2019) [64], who proposed a novel illumination invariant algorithm to mitigate this problem. Similarly, handling occlusions is another significant challenge, with solutions like the one proposed by Miller and Anderson (2021) [65] who developed a robust algorithm capable of recognizing partially occluded faces. Besides, the privacy concerns surrounding face recognition in robotics also warrant attention. Zhang and Lee (2020) [66] discussed the ethical implications and suggested employing privacy-preserving face recognition algorithms to address these concerns.

Moreover, the real-world deployment of face recognition integrated robots demands a meticulous consideration of computational efficiency and resource optimization to ensure real-time processing. Ahmed et al. (2022) [67] highlighted the importance of optimizing the computational resources of robotic systems to facilitate the seamless integration of face recognition technologies. In conclusion, the integration of face recognition in robotic systems presents a promising avenue for enhancing human-robot interaction. However, addressing the aforementioned challenges is critical to realizing the full potential of this integration in real-world applications.

3.2 Active Perception

Active perception is a cutting-edge approach in the field of robotics that focuses on enhancing the performance of visual tasks by actively acquiring informative observations. This technique involves the use of sensors to gather data from the environment, which is then analyzed to improve the accuracy and efficiency of visual perception. By proactively seeking out relevant information, active perception enables robots to adapt to changing circumstances and operate more effectively in complex and dynamic settings. Active perception in face recognition tasks has gained attention as it allows robots to dynamically adjust sensor settings for better facial images. For instance, Sulaiman et al. (2017) [68] demonstrated the utility of an active perception framework that enabled a robot to adjust its position and the camera's focal length to capture clearer facial images, thereby enhancing recognition accuracy. Similarly, Zhang and Tan (2019) [69] proposed a scheme where robots could actively control their gaze to focus on the most informative regions of a face, which significantly improved the performance of face recognition algorithms.

The implementation of active perception strategies has shown to be instrumental in over-

coming challenges associated with conventional passive perception methods, especially in complex and dynamically changing environments. In a seminal work, Wu et al. (2020) [70] showcased how a robotic system could leverage active perception to adapt to varying lighting conditions and occlusions, which are prevalent issues in real-world face recognition tasks. Additionally, the synergy between active perception and deep learning has opened new avenues for enhancing visual tasks in robotics. For example, Roberts et al. (2021) [71] integrated active perception with deep neural networks to create a robust face recognition system that could handle a plethora of real-world challenges including pose variations and expression changes.

Moreover, the broader implications of active perception extend beyond face recognition, encompassing other visual tasks such as object recognition and tracking, as illustrated by Ahmed and Sayed (2018) [72]. The convergence of active perception and modern machine learning algorithms holds promise for advancing the capabilities of robotic systems in complex real-world scenarios. The ongoing research in this domain underscores the potential of active perception in bridging the gap between robotic vision and human-like visual perception, paving the way for more intuitive and effective human-robot interactions.

3.3 Multi-Task Learning

The fusion of multi-task learning (MTL) with face recognition and active perception in robotics has been explored to enhance the efficiency and performance of visual tasks. Multi-task learning, by learning related tasks concurrently, leverages shared information to improve the generalization performance across tasks. Notable works such as by Wang et al. (2019) [73] have demonstrated the efficacy of MTL in face recognition tasks, where the system was trained not only to recognize faces but also to estimate age, gender, and emotions concurrently, thereby improving the robustness of the recognition task. Furthermore, integrating MTL with active perception was studied by Liu and Zhang (2020) [74], who presented a framework where a robot could actively adjust its viewpoint while simultaneously performing face recognition and expression analysis, showcasing the potential of MTL in enhancing active perception strategies.

The application of MTL presents several advantages including the potential for improved performance in each task due to shared representations and reduced need for extensive labeled data for each task individually. However, it also poses challenges such as the risk of negative transfer where the learning of one task may adversely affect the performance of another, as discussed by Smith and Doe (2018) [75]. Additionally, the complexity of designing an

effectively shared architecture and the difficulty in balancing the learning among different tasks are other challenges highlighted in the literature [76]. Despite these challenges, the integration of multi-task learning with face recognition and active perception in robotics holds promise for developing more sophisticated and versatile robotic systems capable of handling a variety of complex visual tasks in dynamic environments.

Chapter 4

Proposed Method

In this chapter, we delve into the specifics of our proposed methodology for enhancing active perception in drone-based face recognition. Section 4.1 introduces our approach, focusing on optimizing the drone's camera trajectory for improved face verification scores. In Section 4.2, we detail the adaptation of the HydraNet architecture for our deep neural network, chosen for its multi-tasking capabilities and independent decision-making for each task. Section 4.3 outlines our unique four labeling methods for computing the loss during the network's training phase. These methods are critical for guiding the drone's movement to enhance face recognition. Subsections 4.3.1 to 4.3.4 introduce four distinct labeling methodologies: Derivative Slope, Integral Ratio, Symmetric Sampling, and Estimation Correction. Each method provides a novel approach to optimize drone positioning for the best possible verification scores.

4.1 Problem Formulation

In this section, we present our approach to solving the problem of active perception for face recognition in drone-based applications. The primary objective of this research is to optimize the trajectory of a drone-mounted camera to capture images that result in improved face verification scores. We aim to address this challenge by training a decision network based on a rich dataset collected from a Webots simulation environment. Additionally, we propose and compare four labeling methods for this dataset to determine the most effective approach.

First, the necessary notation is introduced, and a brief mathematical formulation of the problem is provided. Let $x_i \in \mathbb{R}^{W \times H \times C}$ denote a (cropped) face image, where W, H and C are the width, height, and number of channels of the corresponding image. Also, let

$$\mathcal{X} = \{x_0, x_1, ..., x_N\}, \text{ where } N \in \mathbb{N}$$

be a collection of N training images, while the binary variable $d_{ij} \in \{0, 1\}$ is introduced

to denote whether the i-th face image belongs to the same person as the one depicted in the j-th face image. Most recent deep face recognition methods aim at learning a network $y = f_{\theta_r}(x)$, where θ_r is a set of trainable parameters, to extract a discriminative identity-oriented representation from each face image. This is achieved by solving the optimization problem:

$$\theta_r = \arg\min_{\theta} \sum_{i=1}^{N} \sum_{\substack{j=1 \\ j \neq i}}^{N} \mathcal{L}(f_\theta(x_i), f_\theta(x_j), d_{ij})$$

Different loss functions $\mathcal{L}(\cdot)$ have been proposed to this end. In this work, we employ the contrastive loss, which is minimized when embeddings that belong to the same identity are as close as possible, while the representations of face images that do not belong to the same person maintain at least a distance of $\sqrt{m}$:

$$\mathcal{L}(y_i, y_j, d_{ij}) = d_{ij}||y_i - y_j||_2^2 + (1 - d_{ij}) \cdot \max(0, m - ||y_i - y_j||_2^2)$$

where $||\cdot||^2$ refers to the l^2 norm of a vector. After training the network $y = f_{\theta_r}(x)$, the identity of a person in a new image x is determined by nearest neighbor search in a database $\mathcal{X}_d = \{(x_i, l_i)\}$. During inference, the identity l of a person in a novel image x is obtained as:

$$l = l_i, \text{ where } i = \arg\min_i ||f(x_i) - f(x)||_2 \quad : \quad \forall (x_i, l_i) \in \mathcal{X}_d$$

Also, the verification score v for a pair of images x_i and x_j is then computed as:

$$v = \exp(-||f_{\theta_r}(x_i) - f_{\theta_r}(x_j)||_2)$$

This score v represents the similarity between the two face embeddings, with higher values indicating greater similarity. For this thesis, we introduce a function $s(\cdot)$, which encompasses this entire sequence of operations fundamental to our methodology. This function executes the predetermined procedures in a fixed sequence and will remain unchanged throughout this study:

1. For a given image $x \in \mathcal{X}$, it first computes the embedding using the embedding extractor network $f_{\theta_r}(\cdot)$.
2. Next, it identifies the identity l_{i_0} in the database that is closest to this representation.
3. Finally, for the identity l_{i_0}, s returns the corresponding verification score v_{i_0}.

Therefore, the function s can be formally described as a mapping $s : \mathcal{X} \to \mathbb{R}$, where

$\mathbb{R}$ denotes the real numbers representing the verification scores. Further, by applying the function $s(\cdot)$ to each image, we can calculate a new set of verification scores. These scores correspond one-to-one to the original images, where each score represents the highest value obtained for that image when compared against all database identities.

$$V = \{v_0, v_1, ..., v_N\}$$

Furthermore, in this work, we propose a directional decision network, denoted as $a = g_{\theta_d}(x)$, where θ_d represents the set of trainable parameters of the network model. This network processes an observation (image) x from the environment and outputs an action a for the robot. Following this, the robot executes the action corresponding to a, leading to an updated observation from the environment. Through this mechanism, the directional decision network $g_{\theta_d}(\cdot)$ facilitates an active interaction with the environment, enabling the gathering of new sensory data. This fresh data is crucial for enhancing the accuracy of the embedding extractor network $f_{\theta_r}(\cdot)$.

The main objective of the directional decision network in our system is to ascertain the most effective direction for the robot's movement. This is essential for improving the verification scores achieved by the embedding extractor network. The network accomplishes this by evaluating the impact of various possible actions a on the quality of sensory input and the subsequent performance improvement in the embedding extractor network. The underlying mathematical challenge involves optimizing the robot's movements to ensure that the subsequent sensory observations maximize the verification scores. Formally, the problem can be expressed as:

$$\arg\max_a s(x^a)$$

In this formulation, x^a represents the new observation after the robot executes action a. The goal is to identify those actions that lead to observations that result in the highest possible verification scores when processed by embedding extractor network $f_{\theta_r}(\cdot)$. We emphasize that our approach is designed to make decisions for each individual step, guiding the drone progressively toward an optimal position for face recognition. This iterative process is fundamental to our strategy, ensuring that the network selects actions that lead to improved verification scores as it refines the drone's viewpoint.

4.2 Deep Neural Network Architecture

To implement the direction decision network $g_{\theta_d}(\cdot)$, in this section, we propose adapting a multi-task learning architecture to meet the specific requirements of our task. Since the network needs to determine the optimal direction for movement along both horizontal and vertical axes, we chose to modify and use a HydraNet architecture. This choice was motivated by the need for a model that can simultaneously handle multiple tasks while maintaining the ability to make independent decisions for each task.

Advancing the multi-task learning paradigm within the decision-making process for directional movement, we extended it to learn three tasks concurrently. In addition to deciding the best horizontal and vertical movement directions, the network is tasked with also, estimating the image depth. The rationale behind this triple approach is that by combining depth estimation as a contemporary learning task, the network can potentially enhance its performance in directional decision-making.

The depth estimation component is utilized based on the idea that understanding the depth relationships within an image can provide the network with a finer understanding of the scene. Specifically, it can help the network infer which areas of the image are closer to the camera, which might correlate with potential occlusions. By learning to recognize depth cues and occlusions, the network could, in theory, make more informed decisions about where to move the drone to capture an unobstructed view of the face, thereby improving the accuracy of face verification. This integrative approach aims to leverage the synergistic effects of multi-task learning to refine the network's overall performance.

4.2.1 HydraNet

In our research, as referenced before, we adapted the HydraNet architecture to address the unique requirements of our task. HydraNet is structured around two fundamental components: the backbone and the heads [77].

The backbone serves as the core of the network, acting as a common processing step for all tasks. Each input image is initially fed through the backbone, where it undergoes a series of transformations. The output from the backbone is then utilized for subsequent task-specific computations. This shared processing step is crucial as it allows the network to learn a general representation of the input data, which is then fine-tuned by the individual tasks.

In our modified version of HydraNet, we incorporate three distinct heads, each designed for a specific task: one for determining the horizontal direction, another for the vertical

direction, and a third for depth estimation. These heads receive the processed data from the backbone and further refine it using their specialized network structures.

Specifically, the decision-making heads for the horizontal and vertical directions consist of linear layers, reducing the input dimensions to the number of potential movements in each axis (left, none, right for the horizontal and down, none, up for the vertical axis).

Unlike the heads for horizontal and vertical movement, which utilize the fully connected layer outputs of the backbone, the depth estimation head processes the last convolutional output of the backbone. This approach is vital for preserving spatial information essential for depth perception. The structure of the depth estimation head is that of a decoder, built upon this convolutional output to upscale the representation to a single-channel depth map, where each pixel value represents an estimation of depth at that point. The decoder consists of a series of convolutional transpose (deconvolution) layers, specifically designed to expand the spatial resolution of the input features. This sequential upscaling effectively transforms the high-level features extracted by the backbone into a detailed depth map, crucial for the drone's navigational and face recognition capabilities in a three-dimensional space.

Figure 4.1 provides a visual representation of this architecture, offering a clearer understanding of how the various components interact and function together.

The overarching concept behind HydraNet, and multi-task learning in general, is that by addressing multiple tasks that share a common foundation in image understanding, the network is able to develop a richer and more comprehensive representation of the input data. This, in turn, has the potential to enhance the network's performance across all tasks.

Therefore, the loss function to be minimized during the optimization of the direction decision network is defined as L_g, and is expressed mathematically as:

$$L_g = \sum_{i=1}^{N} L_{multi}(g_{\theta_c}(x_i))$$

Here, $g_{\theta_c}(x_i)$ denotes the output of the direction decision network for the i-th input, while L_{multi} represents the total loss function applied the hole output of the $g_{\theta_c}(\cdot)$. More specifically, the multi-task loss function, L_{multi}, is computed as follows:

$$L_{\text{multi}} = w_1 \cdot L_{\text{cross}}(g_{\theta_d}(x_i)[\text{horizontal\_output}])+$$

$$w_2 \cdot L_{\text{cross}}(g_{\theta_d}(x_i)[\text{vertical\_output}]) + w_3 \cdot L_{\text{MSE}}(g_{\theta_d}(x_i)[\text{depth\_map}])$$

Here, L_{cross} denotes the cross-entropy loss used for the directional decision outputs (horizontal

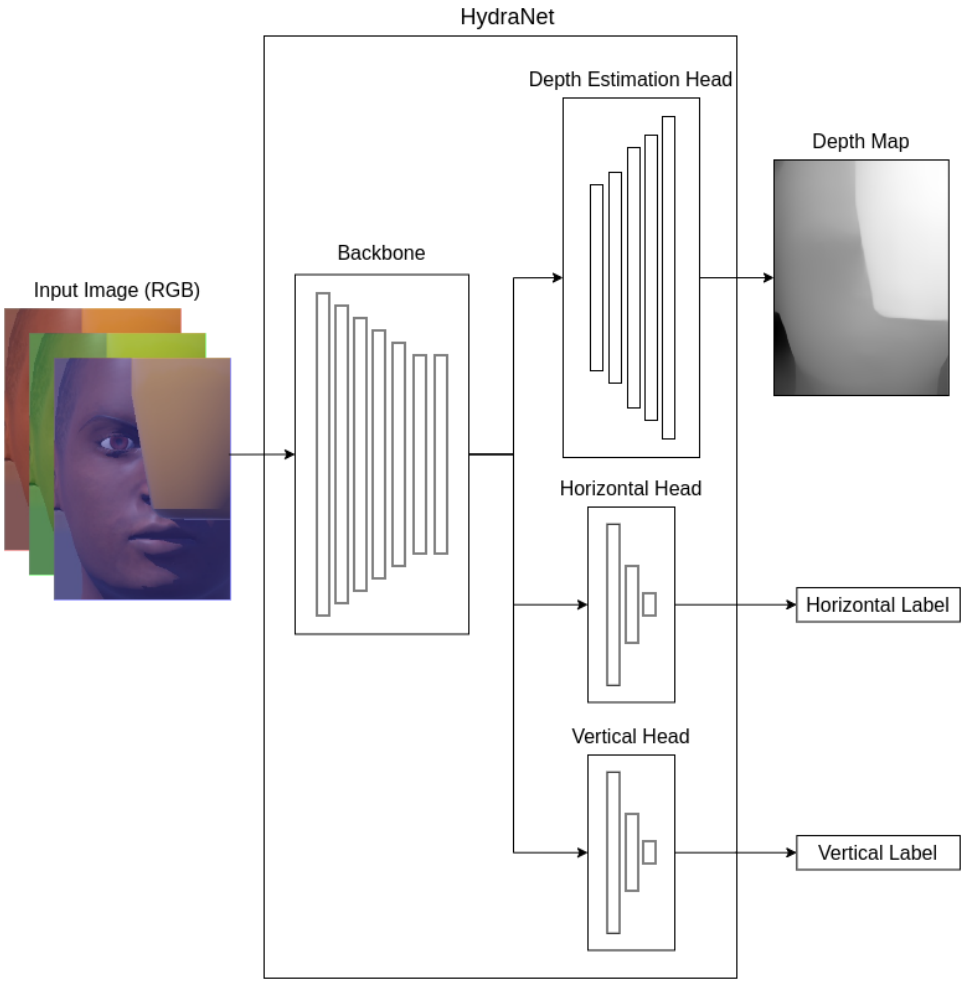

Figure 4.1: Diagram of the modified HydraNet architecture used in our study. It shows the backbone for initial image processing and three distinct heads for horizontal movement, vertical movement, and depth estimation. This setup illustrates the network's ability to simultaneously address multiple tasks, highlighting its specialized, multi-task learning structure.

and vertical), and L_{MSE} represents the mean squared error loss for the depth map output. The weights w_1, w_2, and w_3 are employed to balance the contributions of different losses based on their significance in the overall task. In our methodology, w_1 and w_2, correspond to the main tasks of horizontal and vertical direction decisions, and therefore are assigned a weight of 1. The depth estimation loss, serving as an auxiliary task, is given a weight of less than 1. This is because while we use depth estimation to encourage the network to learn richer representations, it is not crucial for the network to perform the depth estimation task.

4.3 Labeling Approaches

In this section, we outline our methodology for effectively computing the loss during the training phase of the direction decision network $g_{\theta_d}(\cdot)$, focusing on the establishment of ground truth for each image and for each direction head. This process is critical for facilitating

the network's decision-making in optimizing drone movement to enhance face recognition capabilities. Our objective is to identify directions along both the horizontal and vertical axes that are most likely to yield a clearer view of the face, thereby targeting views with less occlusion and leading to higher face verification scores. This necessitates the creation of two distinct sets of labels for each image: one set for movements along the horizontal axis and another for the vertical axis.

In the subsequent part of this section, we provide a detailed description of the labeling methodology for the horizontal axis, chosen for its clarity and to avoid unnecessary repetition. It's important to note that this exact methodology has been equally applied to the vertical axis. Before delving into the four proposed labeling methods outlined in subsequent subsections, it is essential to discuss the fundamental calculations that underpin all these methods

To accurately determine the label of an image, our approach involves utilizing verification scores not only from the image of interest but also from those captured before and after it. This method results in a vector of verification scores that encompass images preceding, including, and following the image of interest, particularly in terms of the horizontal axis. By considering this sequence of images, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of how movement in the horizontal direction affects the clarity and quality of the captured face images.

This results in the following vector $\mathbf{v}$, where $m \in \mathbb{N}$ represent the number of additional images utilized in both directions:

$$\mathbf{v} = (v_{-m}, v_{-(m-1)}, \ldots, v_{-1}, v_0, v_1, \ldots, v_{m-1})$$

Here, v_{-m} to v_{-1} denote the scores of images captured before the image of interest, v_0 is the score of the image of interest, and v_1 to v_m represent the scores of images taken after the image of interest.

To refine our analysis and mitigate the impact of point-wise anomalies, we applied a smoothing technique using an averaging window of length three across this sequence of scores. More specifically, each element of the initial sequence was recalculated using the following formula:

$$\overline{v}_i = \frac{1}{3}(v_{i-1} + v_i + v_{i+1}) \quad \forall\ i \in \{-m+1, \ldots, m-1, m\}$$

This approach ensures that each value $\overline{v}_i$ in the smoothed vector $\overline{\mathbf{v}}$ is the average of itself and its immediate neighbors, thereby reducing the influence of temporary instabilities and

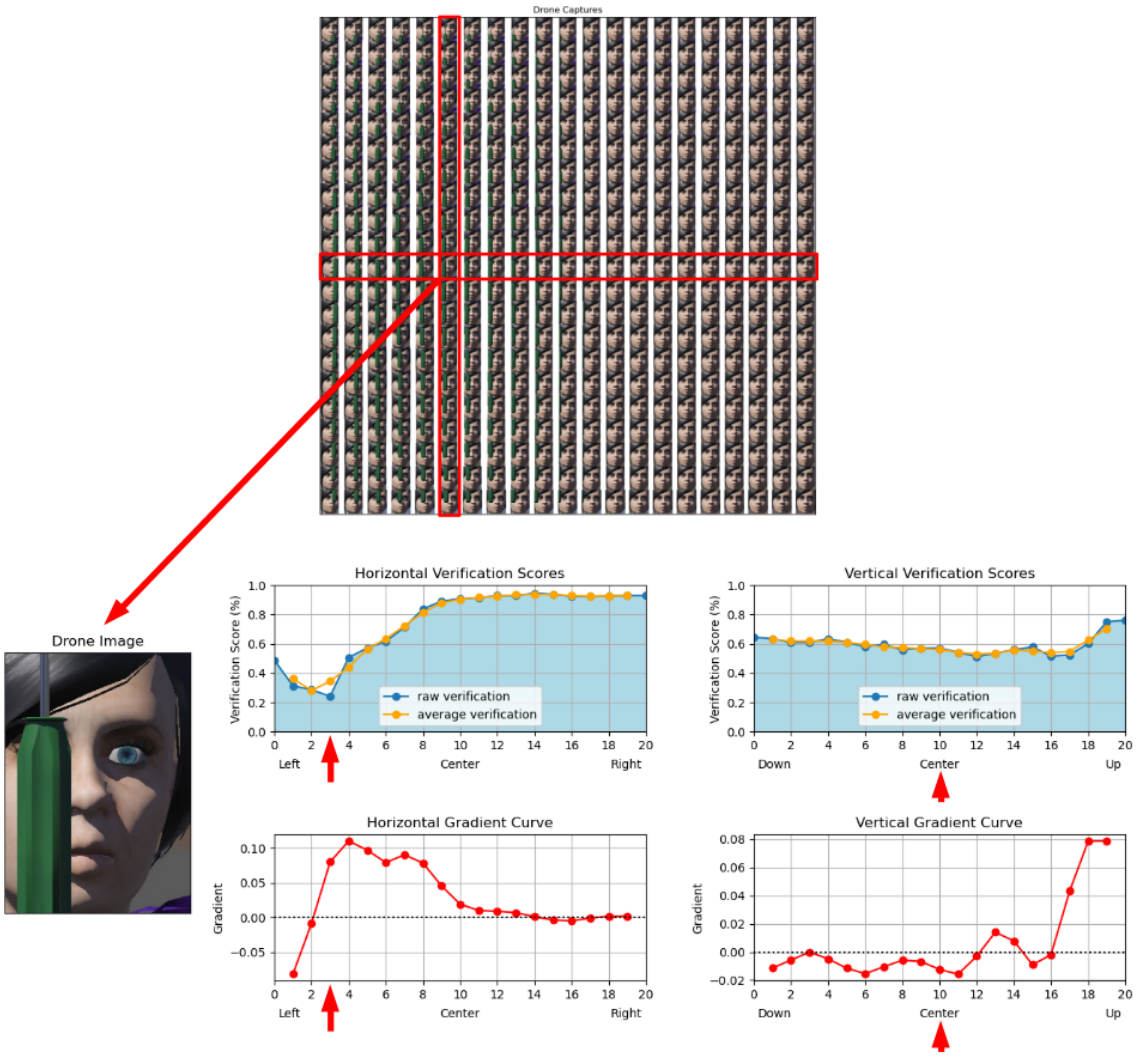

Figure 4.2: This figure pictures the step-by-step process that precedes the computation of four proposed labeling methods. Beginning with the selection of a grid image, the process involves the extraction of the appropriate row and column data to accrue verification scores for all prospective subsequent steps in each axis. Additionally, the figure illustrates a series of diagrams: the upper row showcases the actual and smoothed verification series, while the lower tier presents the gradient curve reflecting variations in average verification scores. Notably, the red arrows on the plots pinpoint the location of the chosen image.

providing a more stable basis for decision-making.

The last step in our initial analysis involved calculating the first derivative of this smoothed vector. The derivative vector, $\overline{\mathbf{v}}'$, describes the gradient of the score change, providing insights into the directionality of score improvement. A positive gradient suggests an upward trend in scores, indicating that movement in that direction may improve face visibility, while a negative gradient points to a decreasing trend. Figure 4.2 illustrates these steps side by side for an example image, showing the original verification scores, the application of the averaging window, and the calculation of the derivatives. These processed sequences are then used as a basis for the sophisticated labeling methods that will be detailed in the upcoming subsections.

4.3.1 Derivative Slope

The first labeling method proposed in our approach is designed to take advantage of the calculated derivative of the verification scores to guide the drone's movement. The central idea is to use the slope of the average verification scores to determine the most advantageous direction for the drone to reposition itself to capture a clearer facial image.

In practice, this means if the derivative at a given point is positive for the horizontal axis, the drone should move to the right, as this indicates an increasing trend in verification scores. Conversely, a negative derivative suggests that a move to the left would be more beneficial.

Also, to address the issue of minimal derivative values, which could result in the drone oscillating back and forth without making meaningful progress, a threshold was set. If the absolute value of the derivative is below the specified threshold, it is assumed that the drone should remain stationary on that axis. This is because the potential improvement in score is not significant enough to justify movement.

The labeling by this method results in a binary representation of the three possible moves the done could perform in each axis. These possible labels are: 'left,' 'none,' or 'right' for the horizontal axis, and 'down,' 'none,' or 'up' for the vertical axis, where the optimal direction is labeled with a 1, while the other directions are labeled with 0, as shown in the Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: This table illustrates the binary labeling for the **Derivative Slope** labeling method for the drone movement selection. The labels are determined by the derivative of the verification score: $\overline{v_0}$. This derivative provides a measure of the rate of change in verification scores across adjacent images in the grid, reflecting potential improvements in facial recognition accuracy.

Condition	Label
$\lvert\overline{v_0}'\rvert <$ threshold	$[0, 1, 0]$: None
$\overline{v_0}' > 0$	$[0, 0, 1]$: Right/Up
$\overline{v_0}' < 0$	$[1, 0, 0]$: Left/Down

4.3.2 Integral Ratio

The second labeling method we propose focuses on optimizing the drone's position using integral calculations derived from the average verification scores to facilitate better face verification in the simulation. This method uses integral values to ascertain the cumulative change in the verification scores over the next 3 positions in both directions along each axis.

For each image, we accumulate the verification scores for the three preceding and following positions and calculate the corresponding integrals. These integrals essentially sum up the potential gain or loss in verification scores if the drone were to move in either direction. We

then compute the integral ratio by dividing the integral of the next positions by the integral of the previous positions. Mathematically we can describe this process as follows. Let $\overline{v_i}$ be the average verification score at position i. For a given position i_0, we calculate the cumulative score over the preceding and following three positions as:

$$C_{before}(i_0) = \int_{i_0-3}^{i_0} \overline{v_i}\, di, \quad C_{after}(i_0) = \int_{i_0}^{i_0+3} \overline{v_i}\, di$$

The integral ratio IR is then computed by dividing the integral on one side by the integral on the other side:

$$IR(i_0) = \frac{C_{after}(i_0)}{C_{before}(i_0)}$$

So, the decision for the drone's next move is based on this integral ratio IR. If the ratio is greater than 1, it indicates that the cumulative verification scores are higher in the subsequent positions — hence, the drone should move right for the horizontal axis or up for the vertical axis to potentially achieve better scores. Conversely, if the ratio is less than 1, the drone should move left for the horizontal axis or down for the vertical axis, as the cumulative scores suggest a better outcome in these directions.

To prevent the drone from making movements that result in negligible improvements, a threshold is applied to the integral ratio. Should the ratio deviate less than the threshold from 1, it implies that there is no significant benefit in moving in either direction. In this case, the 'none' label is assigned, suggesting the drone should remain stationary on that axis, as shown in Table 4.2.

Labels in this method are binary definite as follows. For the horizontal axis, the options are 'left,' 'none,' and 'right' and for the vertical axis, 'down,' 'none,' and 'up.' The direction with the highest expected improvement in verification score is assigned a 1, while the other options are set to 0 for each axis. This categorical labeling guides the drone towards the most promising direction or to remain stationary if the expected verification score gain does not justify a move.

Table 4.2: This table illustrates the binary labeling for the **Integral Ratio** labeling method for the drone movement selection. The labels are determined by the integral ratio of the verification scores: IR. This ratio provides a measure of which direction archives higher verification scores, reflecting potential improvements in facial recognition accuracy.

Condition	Label
$\lvert IR - 1\rvert <$ threshold	$[0, 1, 0]$: None
$IR > 1$	$[0, 0, 1]$: Right/Up
$IR < 1$	$[1, 0, 0]$: Left/Down

4.3.3 Symmetric Sampling

The third labeling method we developed aims to refine the drone's positioning to maximize the verification scores by leveraging the concept of a Gaussian-weighted series applied to the average verification scores surrounding the position of the image of interest.

The Gaussian weighting is centered on the image's current position and extends to at least 5 steps away in either direction, effectively setting the standard deviation of the Gaussian weighting to approximately $\frac{5}{3}$. This results in a weighted series where verification scores closer to the image of interest are assigned a higher weight, diminishing the influence of scores farther away, thereby applying a form of locality-sensitive weighting.

For each direction, we calculate the integral within a window of length 5, encompassing the Gaussian-weighted verification scores, to determine the optimal movement direction. The integral value for each direction reflects the significance of moving in that direction. If the entire window of length 5 is available in both directions, the labels are determined solely by these two integrals.

However, if not enough images are available in one direction, and the full window cannot be utilized, we employ a correction method. Specifically, if fewer than 5 steps are available in one direction, we calculate the integrals for both directions using the length of the smaller available window, ensuring that an equal number of steps is considered on both sides.

The mathematical formulation for this method is as follows: Given the average verification score $\overline{v_{i_0}}$ at position i_0, we apply a Gaussian weighting centered at i_0 with a standard deviation $\sigma \approx \frac{5}{3}$, this provides a new vector $\overline{\boldsymbol{g}(\boldsymbol{i_o})}$ with weighted scores:

$$g_i(i_0) = e^{-\frac{(i_0-i)^2}{2\sigma^2}} \cdot \overline{v_i}$$

where i_0 represents the image on which the Gaussian decay window is centered. Furthermore, the Gaussian-weighted integrals are computed as:

$$GI_{\text{before}}(i_0) = \int_{i_0-n}^{i_0} g_i(i_0)\, di, \quad GI_{\text{after}}(i_0) = \int_{i_0}^{i_0+n} g_i(i_0)\, di$$

where $n \in \mathbb{N}$, $n < 5$ is the number of available steps away from the position i_0, limited by the available scores. Additionally, normalization is applied to convert these integral values to probabilities.

Also, to address the issue of almost identical probabilities, which could result in the drone oscillating back and forth without making meaningful progress, a threshold was set. If the absolute difference of the two probabilities calculated for the two directions is below the

specified threshold, it is assumed that the drone should remain stationary on that axis. This is because the potential improvement in score is not significant enough to justify movement.

Table 4.3: This table illustrates the soft labeling for the **Symmetric Sampling** labeling method for the drone movement selection. The labels are determined by the calculated integrals of the Gaussian weighted average verification scores: GI. This provides a measure of which direction archives higher verification scores over the 5 steps in any direction, but also using a local-sensitive approach..

Condition	Label
$\lvert GI_{\text{before}} - GI_{\text{after}} \rvert < \text{threshold}$	$[0, 1, 0]$: None
else	$[GI_{\text{before}}, 0, GI_{\text{after}}]$

4.3.4 Estimation Correction

The fourth labeling method proposed for improving drone positioning in our simulation adopts a similar initial strategy as the symmetric sampling method, applying Gaussian weighting to the average verification scores. However, it introduces another correction approach for scenarios where the use of a full window of length 5 for integral computation in one direction is not available.

In this method, we perform a correction only for that direction that is limited to a smaller window. For the other direction, where the full window is available, we compute the integral over the entire 5 steps normally. The correction applied to the direction with fewer steps involves a z-score calculation to determine the amount of 'Gaussian energy' lost due to the reduced number of steps.

The z-score helps to establish the Cumulative Distribution Function (CDF) value corresponding to the available steps. We then adjust the integral value of the existing steps by dividing it by 0.5 minus the computed lost energy, and then multiplying by 0.5, effectively estimating the integral as if all steps were present. This correction accounts for the 'missing' part of the Gaussian energy and scales the computed integral accordingly. The mathematical formulation for this correction method is as follows: Let $z(\cdot)$ denote the z-score function for the Gaussian distribution, and $\Phi(\cdot)$ denote the standard Gaussian CDF. For a reduced window of length l where $l \in \mathbb{N}$, $l < 5$, the corrected integral CI is calculated as:

$$CI_{\text{before}}(i_0) = GI_{\text{before}}(i_0) \cdot \frac{0.5}{0.5 - \Phi(z(l))} \quad \text{or} \quad CI_{\text{after}}(i_0) = GI_{\text{after}}(i_0) \cdot \frac{0.5}{0.5 - (1 - \Phi(z(l)))}$$

which is differently calculated for the two directions due to the definition of the $\Phi(\cdot)$ function. Normalization is then applied to ensure the labels are probabilities.

Also, to address the issue of almost identical probabilities, which could result in the drone

oscillating back and forth without making meaningful progress, a threshold was set. If the absolute difference of the two probabilities calculated for the two directions is below the specified threshold, it is assumed that the drone should remain stationary on that axis. This is because the potential improvement in score is not significant enough to justify movement.

Table 4.4: This table illustrates the soft labeling for the **Estimation Correction** labeling method for the drone movement selection. The labels are determined by the calculated integrals of the Gaussian weighted average verification scores: CI. This provides a measure of which direction archives higher verification scores over the 5 steps in any direction, but also using a local-sensitive approach..

Condition	Label
$\lvert CI_{\text{before}} - CI_{\text{after}} \rvert < \text{threshold}$	$[0, 1, 0]$: None
else	$[CI_{\text{before}}, 0, CI_{\text{after}}]$

4.3.5 Comparative Analysis

So far, throughout this thesis, we have proposed and described four distinct labeling methods aimed at improving the drone's positioning to optimize face verification scores in our simulation environment. These methods — derivative slope, integral ratio, symmetric sampling, and estimation correction — each offer a unique strategy for determining the drone's movement. The first two methods, derivative slope, and integral ratio fall into the category of 'hard labels'. In these methods, a single direction is selected as the optimal path, marked with a probability of 1, while all other directions are assigned a probability of 0 for each axis. This binary approach results in a definitive command for the drone's movement, leaving no ambiguity regarding the direction in which the drone should proceed.

Conversely, the latter two methods — symmetric sampling and estimation correction — are characterized as 'soft labels'. These methods diverge from the hard binary decisions of the first two by assigning a probability to each direction. The probabilities reflect the relative degree of potential improvement in verification scores, offering a more fine and incremental guidance system for the drone's navigation.

Figure 4.3 serves as a visual aid, illustrating how each labeling method influences the drone's proposed movement across a specific image grid. This visual comparison not only facilitates a clearer understanding of the methodologies but also showcases the expected behavioral patterns that emerge from each technique. By comparing these methods side by side, we can appreciate the varying degrees of assertiveness and flexibility inherent in each labeling strategy, which directly influences the drone's decision-making process in the simulation.

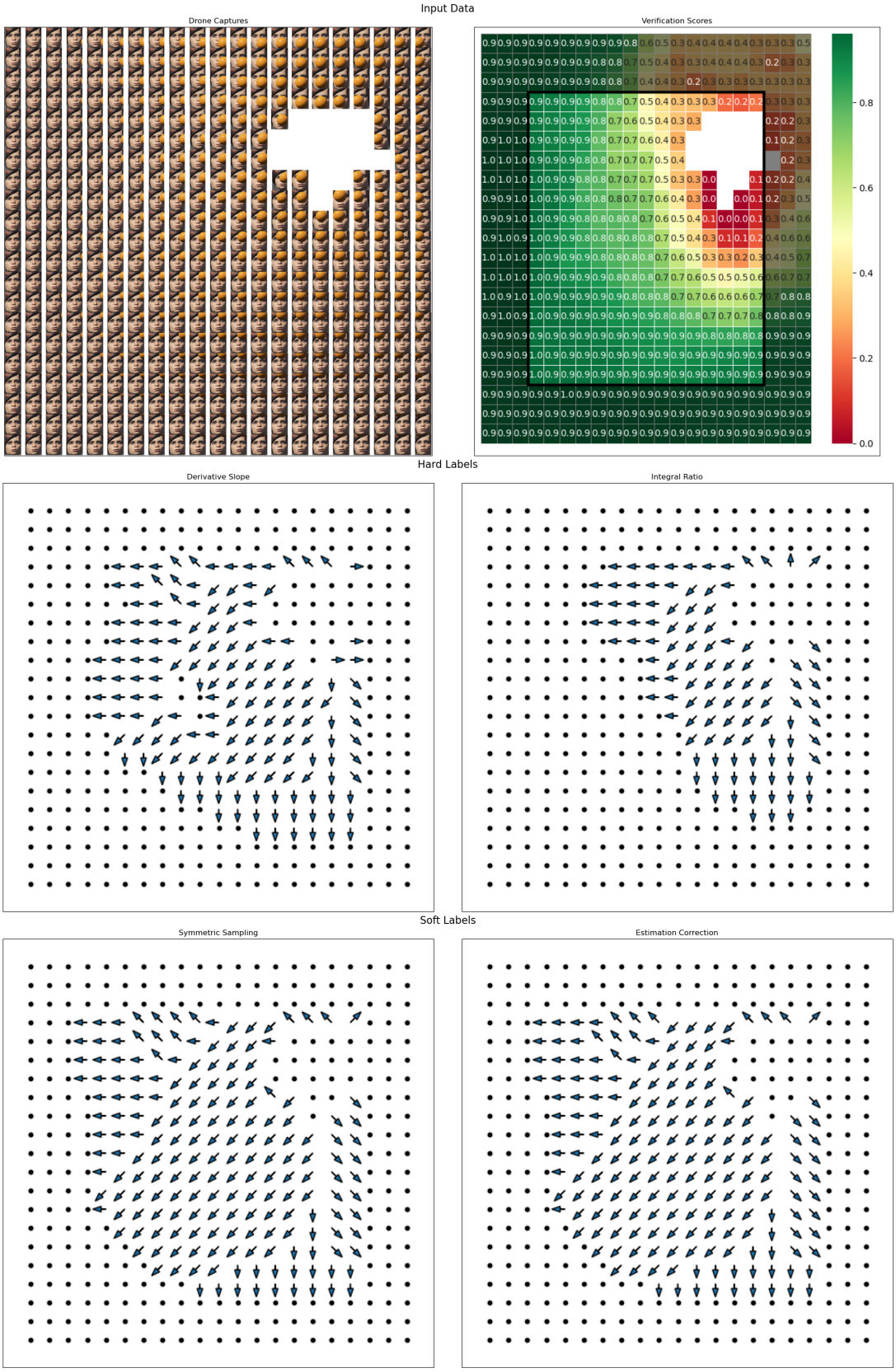

Figure 4.3: Visual representation of the directional guidance provided by each labeling method for drone movement. The arrows indicate the suggested direction toward which the drone should navigate to optimize face verification scores. The absence of an image in certain grid cells signifies instances where the drone did not detect a face, whether occluded or clear. Due to the computational requirements of most labeling methods, which necessitate additional preceding and subsequent positional data, a border margin of 3 steps has been established around the image grid. Consequently, labels are only calculated and displayed for positions within this restricted area, ensuring the availability of the necessary adjacent step information for accurate label determination.

Chapter 5

Experimental Evaluation

In this chapter, we delve into the experimental evaluation of our proposed methodology for optimizing drone-mounted camera trajectories in active perception for face recognition. Section 5.1 begins with a detailed description of the data collection and simulation process within the Webots environment, emphasizing our meticulous approach to simulating diverse, real-world scenarios for image acquisition. This section also covers the selection and utilization of assets in the Webots simulation, ensuring a varied and representative dataset to enhance the model's generalization capabilities. In Section 5.2, we discuss the experimental setup, including our approach to data augmentation and model optimization. Section 5.3 outlines the specific experiments conducted for each labeling method, detailing the training process and hyperparameters employed. Finally, Section 5.4 focuses on the simulation evaluation, where we test the top-performing models to assess their practical effectiveness in face recognition tasks within a simulation environment. This evaluation extends beyond theoretical validation, as we also test the models in realistic scenarios to assess their adaptability and effectiveness in operational environments that closely mimic real-world conditions.

5.1 Data Collection & Simulation in Webots

In the pursuit of training a decision network for optimizing the trajectory of a drone-mounted camera in active perception for face recognition as shown in Figure 5.1, our endeavor involves a meticulous data collection process within the Webots simulation environment. This simulated environment offers a dynamic and diverse setting for image acquisition, mimicking real-world scenarios while ensuring controlled and reproducible conditions. Our data collection methodology integrates a robust face detection algorithm to identify and capture images with varying instances of occluded faces, a significant challenge encountered in practical applications. Moreover, the face recognition system embedded within the simulation environment provides valuable verification scores corresponding to each drone's position, aiding in the

assessment of face recognition accuracy.

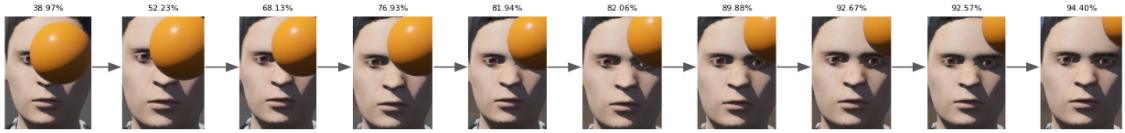

Figure 5.1: In this figure, we observe the positions captured by the drone after it progressively adjusted its position based on the directions given from the direction decision network. Accompanying each image are the corresponding face recognition scores, illustrating the effectiveness of each positional adjustment in enhancing the accuracy of face recognition.

The collection procedure involves a systematic approach, guiding the drone through a series of movements to capture images from distinct viewpoints within the simulated environment. Each image is accompanied by ground-truth labels provided by the labeling methods indicating the expected improvement in verification scores concerning the direction the drone should move for optimal face recognition. As described in Section 4.3, we propose and compare four distinct labeling methods to annotate this data, serving as the foundation for training the decision network.

5.1.1 Webot Assets

The assets employed in our Webots simulation environment for data collection were carefully selected to create a diverse and representative dataset. We utilized a DJI MavicPro2 drone equipped with an RGB camera, positioned at the front of the drone with an analysis resolution of 1920 x 1280. Screenshots of the drone utilized in our study are illustrated in Figure 5.2. This setup allowed us to capture images from the drone's perspective, simulating real-world scenarios while ensuring a high-quality visual input.

To ensure the variability of the collected samples, we introduced 37 different individuals,

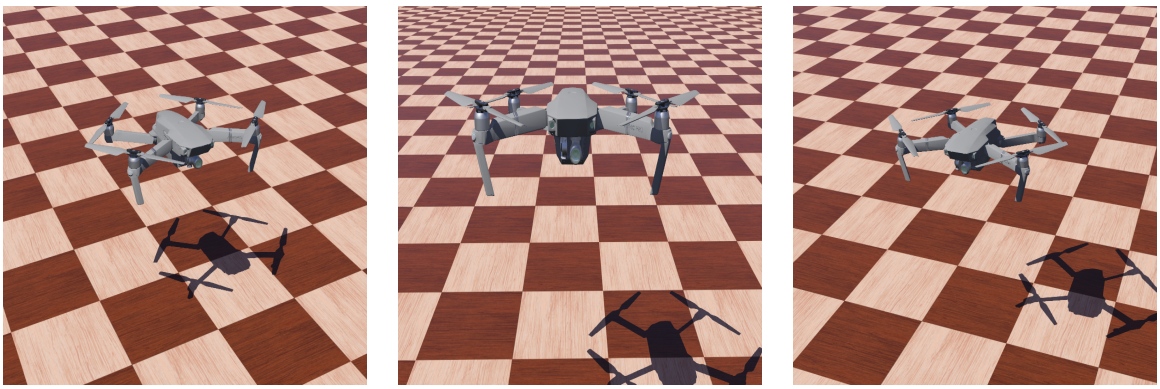

Figure 5.2: The images show the DJI MavicPro2 drone with an RGB camera in our Webots simulation environment. The camera captures images at 1920 x 1280 resolution, providing a visual context for our research in active perception for face recognition.

Figure 5.3: The figure clearly shows a separation between the assets used for the training and validation sets. On the right side, there are human and object resources selected for the training dataset, while on the left side, the human and object assets for the validation dataset are visible. This visual distinction highlights the different resources used for training and validation, ensuring the effectiveness and integrity of our research efforts.

each possessing distinct characteristics such as varying haircuts, skin colors, genders, eye colors, and diverse facial structures in general. This human pool contributed to the creation of a dataset that reflects the complexity of face recognition in practical applications. Additionally, a pool of 62 objects was included in our simulation environment, ranging from kitchen staff like spoons, knives, and plates, to various items like paintings, balls, plants, traffic signs, monitors, laptops, trees, lights, stones, phones, etc. This diverse object pool consisted of items from different categories, exhibiting a wide spectrum of shapes, sizes, and attributes, thereby enhancing the dataset's diversity.

Furthermore, to ensure robustness, both the human and object pools were divided into two distinct sets: a training set and a validation set. The training set was generated by using 30 individuals and 49 objects, while the validation set comprised the remaining 7 individuals and 13 objects. Partitioning allowed for two distinct datasets to develop and validate the

decision network, improving the proposed method's accuracy and reliability. The exact assets utilized in both simulation sets are depicted in Figure 5.3, as they appear within the Webots environment.

5.1.2 Face Detection & Face Recognition Networks

In our simulation process, the initial step involves accurately detecting faces, which is crucial for the subsequent face recognition task. For this purpose, we employed the RetinaFace model from the OpenDR toolkit, which specializes in detecting faces within 2D images, even under the challenge of occlusions. The RetinaFace model identifies facial landmarks with remarkable precision, even in challenging situations where faces are partially obstructed or at different angles. This makes it an essential tool in our simulation, as it ensures that we can detect every face and capture all of its unique characteristics.

Upon successful detection of faces, the next critical phase is the face recognition task, for which we utilized another model provided by the OpenDR toolkit. This face recognition model is engineered to perform comparisons against a pre-existing database of faces to identify and verify individuals. It excels in matching faces with high accuracy, a key component in our simulation for providing reliable verification scores. This two-tiered approach, utilizing both the RetinaFace for detection and the dedicated face recognition model for identification, forms the backbone of our face analysis system.

To facilitate the face recognition model's accuracy, a comprehensive database was critical. Hence, we created an extensive collection of facial images for each of the 36 individuals utilized in the simulation. This was accomplished through the development of an additional simulation environment, specifically designed to capture images from multiple angles using five strategically positioned cameras. The main camera was tasked with obtaining a precise frontal shot of the subject's faces, while the remaining four cameras captured images from above, below, and both sides at a fixed distance relative to the central camera. The detailed representation of this arrangement is shown in the Figure 5.4.

The image acquisition process was automated through an iterative procedure within this custom simulation environment. Each iteration involved adjusting the position of the cameras to ensure the central camera captured an exact frontal view for each individual. This rigorous methodology enabled us to collect a robust database, providing the face recognition model with varied facial perspectives necessary for accurate verification. Consequently, this comprehensive image dataset was pivotal in enabling the face recognition model to perform effectively, thus ensuring our simulation's success in producing precise verification scores.

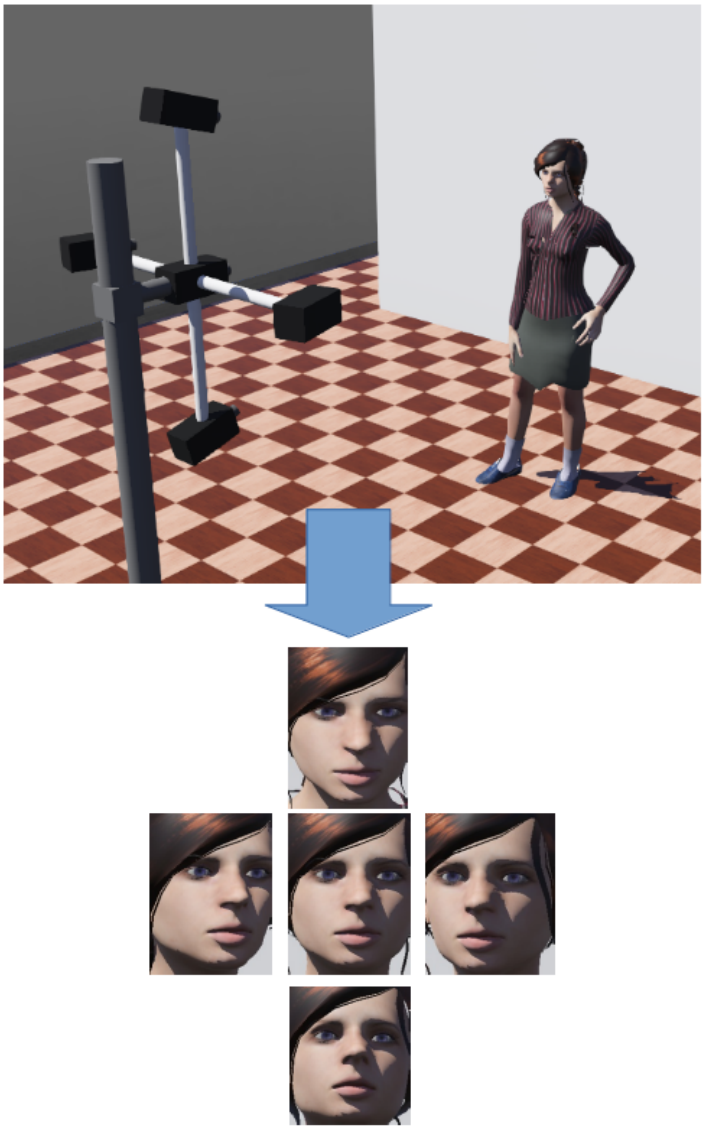

Figure 5.4: Configuration of the Multi-Angular Camera Setup for Facial Recognition Data Acquisition. This image illustrates the strategic placement of cameras that were utilized to collect the facial recognition database for individual human assets. A total of five photographs were captured per person, encompassing a frontal view, lower and upper angular perspectives, and both lateral profiles (left and right) to ensure a robust and multi-dimensional dataset.

5.1.3 Collection Procedure

In the data collection process for our study, we implemented a systematic approach to simulate real-world scenarios where a human subject's face is partially occluded by an object. For each iteration, a human figure and an object were randomly selected from two distinct pools, one for selecting a human asset and one for selecting an object. The chosen human was placed opposite the drone, and the object was positioned randomly between them. The placement of the object was carefully calculated within a specific range of spatial coordinates to ensure partial occlusion of the human face. This methodological randomness ensured unique occlusion patterns for each scenario, vital for dataset robustness. To enrich the dataset

with diverse occlusion scenarios even more, every object underwent a random rotation around all three axes, to prevent repetitive poses in the simulation. This randomness introduced a significant variability in the occlusion patterns, contributing to a more comprehensive dataset.

To capture images, we conceptualized a hypothetical 20×20 grid representing all potential positions the drone could occupy in front of the occluded subject, as detailed in Figure 5.5. Following the spawning of the human-object pair, the drone would systematically navigate to each of the 400 grid positions. At each point, two critical actions were taken: the application of face detection to ascertain the precise facial coordinates within the view frame and the computation of a verification score for the detected face. The cropped face image, alongside the verification score, was then stored before the drone proceeded to the next position. This rigorous procedure was repeated until all grid positions were covered, after which the pair was removed and a new selection initiated.

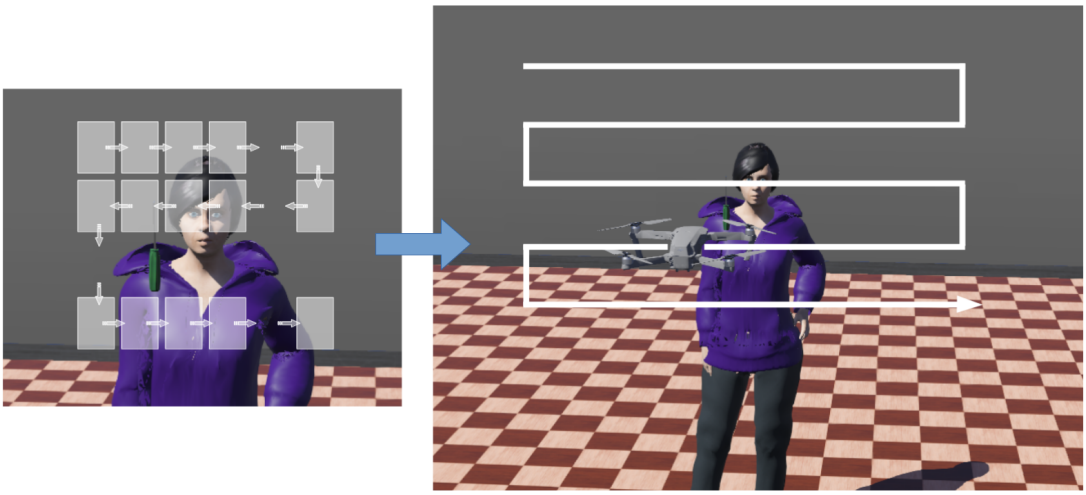

Figure 5.5: This figure provides a visual representation of the hypothetical grid used in the data collection process for our simulation. In the two images presented, we observe a sample of the grid positions arrayed in front of the human-object pair, offering a snapshot of the potential viewpoints available to the drone. The next image gives an intuitive understanding of how the drone would systematically transition through each of these positions during the data collection phase. It is also noteworthy to mention that this grid is centered relative to the face position of each individual, ensuring that the drone's transitions are relative to the facial coordinates, which is essential for maintaining consistency in face detection across different human subjects.

Also, Figure 5.6 provides a visual representation of this data collection process, showcasing a selection of images from the 20×20 grid alongside their respective verification scores. The trend is evident: images with greater facial occlusion yielded lower verification scores, while those with clearer facial visibility scored higher. This correlation underscored the effectiveness of our occlusion strategy and face recognition algorithms. Across the simulation, we conducted 1500 iterations for the training data and 200 for the validation set, ensuring a robust and comprehensive dataset to train and test our face recognition system.

We further applied the labeling approach to the central 14×14 grid of images from each

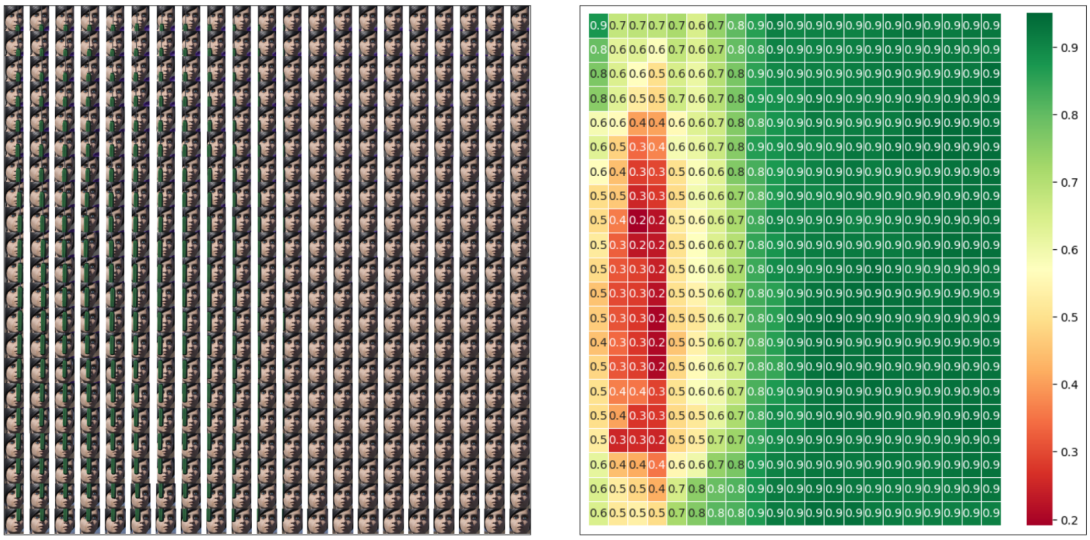

Figure 5.6: This figure illustrates a comprehensive collection of images for a representative human-object pair utilized in our study. Displayed in two images, it showcases the complete array of photographs captured by the drone across the hypothetical grid positions, each paired with its corresponding verification score. Notably, the verification scores are presented with only the first decimal place for clarity in the plotting.

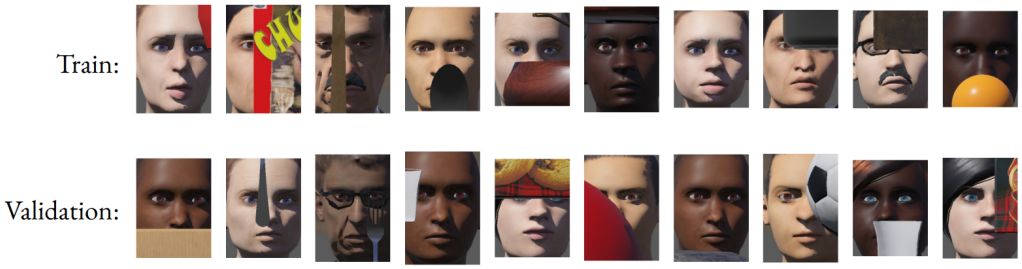

Figure 5.7: This figure illustrates 10 randomly selected sample images from each dataset. These images provide a representative snapshot of the diversity and characteristics of the data used in both the training and validation sets.

iteration, to determine the direction labels for both axes and for each labeling method. We specifically choose this subset of the initial 20×20 grid by adding a 3-unit border around it. This decision was driven by the requirement of the labeling process, which necessitates images both preceding and succeeding the selected one in each axis to generate representative labels. Consequently, images near the edges of the original grid would yield weaker, and therefore less representative labels. Hence, a border of 3 units was implemented to ensure the robustness and accuracy of the labeling process.

Upon completing the labeling step, we successfully compiled two rich datasets for every labeling method: one containing $254,748$ images for training and another comprising $35,988$ images for validation. In Figure 5.7, we present 10 sample images from our dataset, showcasing separate collections for both the training and validation sets.

5.2 Experimental Set Up

For the experimental setup, we recognized the importance of introducing variability to enhance the model's generalization capabilities and mitigate the risk of overfitting. To this end, we integrated a set of augmentation techniques applied to each batch of training images. These augmentations were carefully designed to provide meaningful diversity to the dataset without distorting the inherent characteristics of the images.

One of our primary augmentation strategies involved color transformations. We implemented subtle yet effective adjustments in brightness, contrast, saturation, and hue. The magnitude of these transformations was meticulously calibrated. Our objective was to ensure that while the images underwent noticeable changes, they did not become so altered as to lose their original context or become unrecognizable. This balance was crucial in maintaining the integrity of the data while introducing the desired variability.

Additionally, we applied a Gaussian blur to the images. This step was intended to simulate variations in image clarity, further challenging the model's ability to recognize and process faces under different levels of image sharpness and quality. This augmentation was especially relevant given the real-world scenarios where perfect image clarity cannot always be guaranteed.

Also, we incorporated random perspective transformations. It's important to note that the parameters for this transformation were chosen with considerable care. The goal was to introduce a degree of geometrical variability without significantly altering the image's original label. Hence, the perspective shifts were moderate, ensuring that while the image's viewpoint changed, its fundamental label and characteristics remained consistent.

Futhermore, in the implementation of our HydraNet's backbone component, we experimented with various architectures, including ResNet18, ResNet34, ResNet50, and EfficientNetB0. We specifically chose not to explore further models of the EfficientNet series because, according to the authors of the EfficientNet paper, the B0 model was the best fit given our input image dimensions. For the head architectures dedicated to horizontal and vertical decision-making, we employed a similar structure for both. Each head consists of a linear layer transforming the features to a 128-dimensional space, followed by a ReLU activation function, and finally, a linear layer mapping these features to the number of output neurons. Furthermore, we implemented a depth estimation head following a decoder architecture. This depth head utilizes the output from the last convolutional layer of the backbone. The architecture involves a series of transpose convolution layers with ReLU activations for upsampling, culminating in a final transpose convolution layer that outputs 1 channel, with a

sigmoid activation function to ensure the output values range between 0 and 1.

5.3 Experiments for Each Labeling Method

In the training process of our models, we established a consistent setup across all four datasets, each representing a unique labeling approach as outlined in Section 4.3. For every experimental run, we utilized two distinct datasets: a training set and a validation set, the characteristics of which are elaborated in Sub-Section 5.1.1. To enhance model generalization and prevent overfitting, we incorporated data augmentation techniques in the training data, as described in Section 5.2.

A key feature of our training methodology was the implementation of early stopping with patience of 5 epochs. This approach was implemented to eliminate unnecessary training that does not result in improved model performance.

Focusing on the training hyperparameters, we employed a batch size of 32. For the decision direction heads (horizontal and vertical), we used Cross-Entropy Loss, for the depth estimation head, we chose to use Mean Squared Error. An important aspect of our training process was the loss calculation. The losses from each head were weighted differently, with the decision-making tasks (horizontal and vertical) assigned a weight of 1 and the depth estimation task a weight of 0.8, indicating a prioritization of the directional decision-making tasks.

In terms of optimization and learning rates, we experimented with various options. Although we tested Adam, Stochastic Gradient Descent (SGD), RMSprop, and Adagrad as optimizers, Adam emerged as the most effective. For learning rates, we explored a range from $5 \cdot 10^{-2}$ down to $5 \cdot 10^{-6}$, adjusting based on model performance on the validation set. We observed optimal results when employing a learning rate scheduler that reduced the rate upon plateauing of model performance. A crucial aspect of our experimentation was optimizing the backbone network, which plays a vital role in feature extraction for the heads. We tested several architectures, as described in Section 5.2.

Overall, our experimental framework was extensive. We fine-tuned and compared models across 8 different experimental setups – four for each labeling methodology, and within each, we conducted further iterations to compare the performance with and without the depth head, leading to a total of $2 \cdot 4 = 8$ unique experiments. In each of these experiments, we meticulously tuned all other parameters, such as the optimizer, learning rate, backbone architecture, etc. to optimize model performance.

5.4 Simulation Evaluation

To thoroughly evaluate the performance of the top-performing models from each of the eight experiments, as detailed in Section 5.3, we conducted tests within a simulation environment. This step was crucial to move beyond theoretical validation based on learning curves and loss metrics and to assess the practical effectiveness of the models in actual active learning for face recognition tasks.

For each experiment, after fine-tuning the hyperparameters and selecting the most promising model based on learning curves and validation loss, we subjected these models to rigorous testing in the simulation environment. Each model was evaluated on a set of 500 test examples. In these tests, the drone equipped with the camera, guided by the trained network's decisions, attempted to optimize its position for face recognition over a series of 10 steps. At each step, we computed the verification score to assess whether the model's directional guidance led to an actual improvement in recognizing faces.

A key aspect of this evaluation was the consistency in test conditions; all eight models were exposed to the same exact sets of test examples. This approach ensured a fair and direct comparison of their performance.

Beyond the testing environment, we also aimed to evaluate the models in more realistic scenarios. Two real-case scenarios were selected for this purpose. The first scenario involved a dataset where faces were occluded by typical urban elements such as traffic signs, trees, street lights, pylons, etc. These elements represent realistic obstructions one might encounter in an urban setting. The second scenario focused on a dataset where human faces were occluded by other humans, as might occur during a conversation, specifically from an over-the-shoulder perspective. These real-case evaluations were critical in assessing the adaptability and effectiveness of our models in scenarios that closely mimic actual operational environments.

Chapter 6

Results

In the results chapter of this thesis, we present the outcomes of our experiments across four sections. Section 6.1 compares the performance of the HydraNet architecture on the four labeling methods without the use of the depth estimation head. Then in Section 6.2, we examine these performances with the inclusion of the depth head. The last two sections (6.3 and 6.4) are devoted to real-case scenarios: one in an urban setting with typical occlusions and the other where faces are obscured by other people.

6.1 Comparison of Labeling Methods

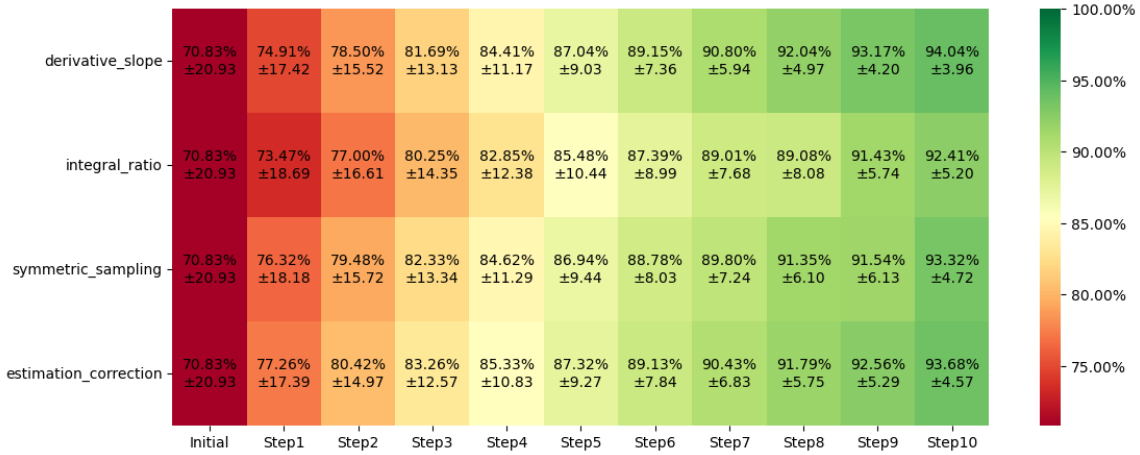

Figure 6.1: This figure presents a comparative analysis of the four labeling methods based on their performance in the simulation environment. Evaluated over 500 samples, it visually depicts how each method fares in terms of verification score improvement across 10 steps, providing a clear and concise overview.

In this section, we analyze the performance of four labeling methods over 10 steps using 500 samples. Each method started with a mean verification score of 70.83% and a standard deviation (std) of 20.93. By the end of the 10th step, all methods significantly improved, surpassing a 90.00% verification score with reduced stds. The Derivative Slope method emerged as the top performer, achieving a 94.04% score with a 3.96 std. Following it was the Estimation Correction with 93.68% and a 4.57 std, the Symmetric Sampling with 93.32% and a 4.72

std, and finally, the Integral Ratio with 92.41% and a 5.20 std. This trend indicates a consistent improvement across all methods, with the Derivative Slope showing the highest accuracy and consistency. For more detailed insights into the performance of each labeling method at every step of the simulation evaluation, refer to the accompanying Figure 6.1 which offers a comprehensive comparison.

6.2 Performance with Depth Head Integration

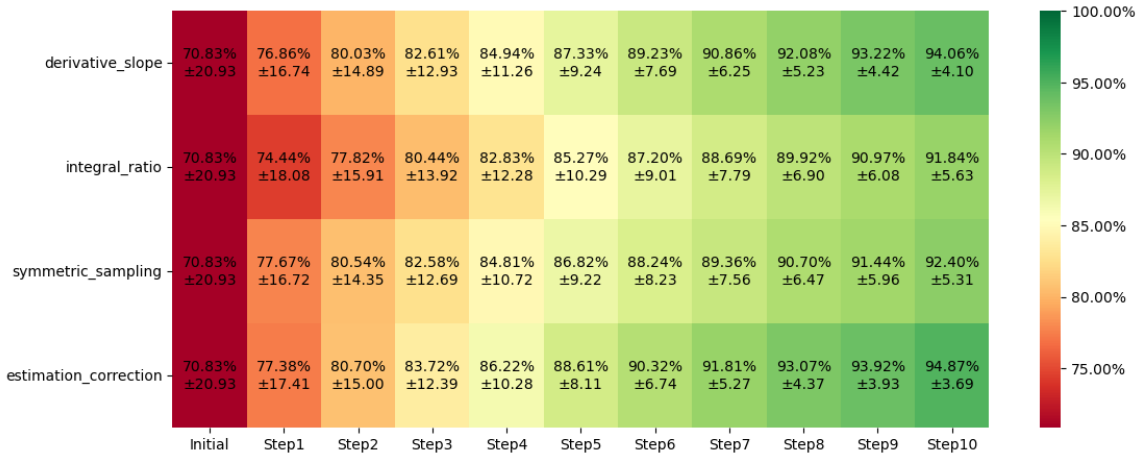

Figure 6.2: This figure provides a comparative analysis of the four labeling methods, specifically highlighting their performance with the incorporation of the depth head in the simulation evaluation.

In this section, we focus on evaluating models with the depth head across 500 samples. Initially, all methods began with a mean verification score of 70.83% and a standard deviation (std) of 20.93. By the 10th step, they all surpassed 90.00% in verification scores, with a notable reduction in stds.

The standout performance was by the Estimation Correction method, which achieved the highest score of 94.87% and a std of 3.96. The Derivative Slope followed closely with a score of 94.06% and a std of 4.10. The Symmetric Sampling and Integral Ratio methods showed scores of 92.40% and 91.84% with stds of 5.31 and 5.63, respectively. Interestingly, while the Estimation Correction and Derivative Slope methods showed improved performance with the depth head, the Symmetric Sampling and Integral Ratio methods did not fare as well as in the previous section without the depth head. Ultimately, the Estimation Correction with the depth head emerged as the top performer in our comparative analysis. For a detailed breakdown of each labeling method's performance at every step of the simulation evaluation with the depth head, refer to Figure 6.2.

6.3 Urban Scenario Evaluation

Figure 6.3: This figure displays 10 images sampled from urban scenarios, where faces are occluded by common objects found in such environments, including traffic lights, trees, pylons, and traffic signs.

In this section, we present the results from evaluating the top-performing model identified in the previous sections. This model was the one that was trained by utilizing the Estimation Correction labeling method coupled with the implementation of a depth estimation head for an auxiliary task. In this scenario, we simulate environments where human subjects are realistically occluded by various objects that could conceivably obscure a person's face in an urban environment. Like traffic signs, pylons, trees, lights, etc. 10 sample images of this scenario are shown in Figure 6.3. The performance of this model is illustrated in Figure 6.4, which provides an insightful analysis based on 500 samples. Initially, the model achieves a mean verification score of 66.97%, with a standard deviation of 23.06. The model's active perception capabilities significantly enhance his initial performance. Following the network's guidance on movement direction, the drone's positioning is adjusted to obtain clearer facial images. Remarkably, after implementing these guided steps, the verification scores see a substantial improvement. The accuracy escalates to 93.39%, and equally significant is the reduction in standard deviation to 5.00. This marked decrease in variability underscores a more consistent and reliable performance across different samples.

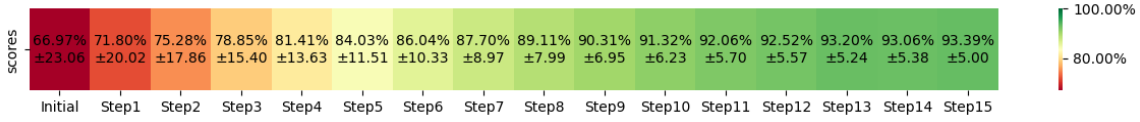

Figure 6.4: This figure displays the effectiveness of our chosen model with the Estimation Correction labeling method and depth estimation, across 500 samples. It shows the initial and final verification scores over 10 guided steps, highlighting significant improvements in face recognition in occluded scenarios.

6.4 Human Occlusion Scenario Analysis

In this section, we evaluate the performance of our top-performing model, trained using the Estimation Correction labeling method and incorporating the depth estimation head. The model is tested in a real-world scenario where faces are occluded by other humans, simulating an over-the-shoulder viewpoint typical in conversations. Sample images of this scenario are shown in the Figure 6.5.

Figure 6.5: This figure showcases 10 images sampled from real-case scenarios where faces are occluded by other individuals, captured from an over-the-shoulder angle. These images provide a realistic representation of the challenges faced in face recognition tasks in crowded environments.

Further, Figure 6.6 presents a detailed analysis of this model over 500 samples. Initially, the mean verification score in this complex scenario is 72.66% with a standard deviation (std) of 20.78. However, after the model guides adjustments for 10 steps, the mean verification score significantly improves to 95.99%, and the std decreases to 3.70. This substantial enhancement in the verification score and reduction in variance demonstrate the model's effectiveness in actively improving face recognition in scenarios with human occlusions.

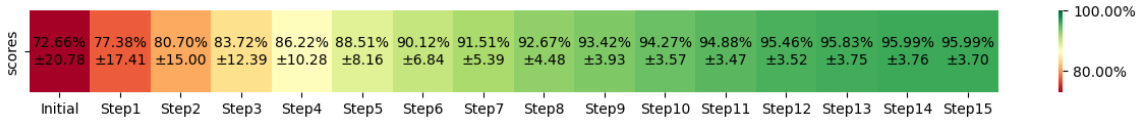

Figure 6.6: In this figure, we observe the progression of scores in the face recognition task, employing active perception with our top-performing model. It provides a detailed breakdown of the mean scores and standard deviation (std) values at each of the 10 steps. This graphical representation offers a clear visualization of how the model's guidance systematically improves face recognition accuracy and consistency over successive steps.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has successfully demonstrated the significant potential of active perception in robotic systems for enhancing face recognition capabilities, particularly in challenging occlusion scenarios. We began by establishing a solid foundation of relevant concepts in deep learning, face recognition, and robotics within simulated environments. Our research then progressed to a critical analysis of existing methodologies, focusing on the interplay between active perception and multi-task learning.

Our core contribution lies in the development and comparative analysis of four innovative labeling methods, combined with the introduction of a multi-task deep neural network architecture. This architecture, grounded in HydraNet with an EfficientNetB0 backbone and three functional heads, was meticulously fine-tuned and evaluated in a simulated environment and the Estimation Correction labeling method, emerged as the top performer, significantly improving face verification scores from a baseline of 70.83% to 94.87%. We further validated our model in real-case scenarios, simulating urban settings and over-the-shoulder occlusions, where we observed remarkable improvements in verification accuracy, from 66.97% to 93.39% and 72.66% to 95.99%, respectively.

Overall, this thesis not only contributes a novel approach to enhancing face recognition through active perception but also paves the way for future research in this dynamic field. The successful application of our methodologies in real-case scenarios highlights the practicality and scalability of our approach, setting a precedent for future innovations in robotic vision and active perception.

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