Efficient Multiple Instance Metric Learning using Weakly Supervised Data

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Abstract

We consider learning a distance metric in a weakly supervised setting where “bags” (or sets) of instances are labeled with “bags” of labels. A general approach is to formulate the problem as a Multiple Instance Learning (MIL) problem where the metric is learned so that the distances between instances inferred to be similar are smaller than the distances between instances inferred to be dissimilar. Classic approaches alternate the optimization over the learned metric and the assignment of similar instances. In this paper, we propose an efficient method that jointly learns the metric and the assignment of instances. In particular, our model is learned by solving an extension of kmeans for MIL problems where instances are assigned to categories depending on annotations provided at bag-level. Our learning algorithm is much faster than existing metric learning methods for MIL problems and obtains state-of-the-art recognition performance in automated image annotation and instance classification for face identification.

1. Introduction

Distance metric learning \cite{33} aims at learning a distance metric that satisfies some similarity relationships among objects in the training dataset. Depending on the context and the application task, the distance metric may be learned to get similar objects closer to each other than dissimilar objects \cite{20,33}, to optimize some \( k \) nearest neighbor criterion \cite{31} or to organize similar objects into the same clusters \cite{15,18}. Classic metric learning approaches \cite{15,16,17,18,20,31,33} usually consider that each object is represented by a single feature vector. In the face identification task, for instance, an object is the vector representation of an image containing one face; two images are considered similar if they represent the same person, and dissimilar otherwise.

Although these approaches are appropriate when each example of the dataset represents only one label, many visual benchmarks such as Labeled Yahoo! News \cite{2}, UCI Corel5K \cite{7} and Pascal VOC \cite{8} contain images that include multiple labels. We focus in this paper on such multi-label contexts which may differ significantly. In particular, the way in which labels are provided differs in the applications that we consider. To facilitate the presentation, Fig. 1 illustrates an example of the Labeled Yahoo! News dataset: the item is a document which contains one image representing four celebrities. Their presence in the image is extracted by a text detector applied on the caption related to the image in the document; the labels extracted from text indicate the presence of several persons in the image but do not indicate their exact locations, i.e., the correspondence between the labels and the faces in the image is unknown. In the Corel5K dataset, image labels are tags (e.g., water, sky, people) provided at the image level.

Some authors \cite{11,12} have proposed to learn a distance metric in such weakly supervised contexts where the labels (e.g., tags) are provided only at the image level. Inspired by a multiple instance learning (MIL) formulation \cite{6} where the objects to be compared are sets (called bags) that contain one or multiple instances, they learn a metric so that the distances between similar bags (i.e., bags that contain instances in the same category) are smaller than the distances between dissimilar bags (i.e., none of their instances are in the same category). In the context of Fig. 1, the instances of a bag are the feature vectors of the faces extracted in the image with a face detector \cite{28}. Two bags are considered similar if at least one person is labeled to be present in both images; they are dissimilar otherwise. In the context of im-

![Figure 1. Labeled Yahoo! News document with the automatically detected faces and labels on the right. The bag contains 4 instances and 3 labels; the name of Liv Tyler was not detected from text.](Image 311x519 to 387x568)
that the optimal value of how our model infers
an image and its instances are image regions extracted with
an image segmentation algorithm [25]. The similarity be-
tween bags also depends on the co-occurrence of at least
one tag provided at the image level.

Multiple Instance Metric Learning (MIML) approaches
[11, 12] decompose the problem into two steps: (1) they
first determine and select similar instances in the different
training bags, (2) and then solve a classic metric learning
problem over the selected instances. The optimization of
these two steps is done alternately, which is suboptimal, and
the metric learning approaches that they use in the second
step have high complexity and may thus not be scalable.

Contributions: In this paper, we propose a MIML
method that jointly learns a metric and the assignment
of instances in a MIL context by exploiting weakly supervised
labels. In particular, our approach jointly learns the two
steps of MIML approaches [11, 12] by formulating the set
of instances as a function of the learned metric. We also
present a nonlinear kernel extension of the model. Our
method obtains state-of-the-art performance for the stan-
dard tasks of weakly supervised face recognition and au-
mated image annotation. It also has better algorithmic
complexity than classic MIML approaches and is much faster.

2. Proposed Model

In this section, we present our approach that we call
Multiple Instance Metric Learning for Cluster Analysis
(MIMLCA) which learns a metric in weakly supervised
multi-label contexts. We first introduce our notation and
variables. We explain in Section 2.2 how our model infers
which instances in the dataset are similar when both the sets
of labels in the respective bags and the distance metric
to compare instances are known and fixed. Finally, we present
our distance metric learning algorithm in Section 2.3.

2.1. Preliminaries and notation

Notation: \( S^d_+ \) is the set of \( d \times d \) symmetric positive
semidefinite (PSD) matrices. We note \( \langle A, B \rangle := \text{tr}(AB^\top) \),
the Frobenius inner product where \( A \) and \( B \) are real-valued
matrices; and \( \|A\| := \sqrt{\text{tr}(AA^\top)} \), the Frobenius norm of
\( A \). \( 1 \) is the vector of all ones with appropriate dimensional-
ity and \( A^\dagger \) is the Moore-Penrose pseudoinverse of \( A \).

Model: As in most distance metric learning work [14],
we consider the Mahalanobis distance metric \( d_M \) that is pa-
rameterized by a \( d \times d \) symmetric PSD matrix
\( M = LL^\top \) and is defined for all \( a, b \in \mathbb{R}^d \) as:

\[
d_M(a, b) = \sqrt{(a - b)^\top M(a - b)} = \| (a - b)^\top L \| \tag{1}\]

Training data: We consider the setting where the train-
ing dataset is provided as \( m \) (weakly) labeled bags. In
detail, each bag \( X_i \in \mathbb{R}^{n_i \times d} \) contains \( n_i \) instances, each
of which is represented as a \( d \)-dimensional feature vector.
The whole training dataset can thus be assembled into a single
matrix \( X = [X_1^\top, \ldots, X_m^\top]^\top \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d} \) that
concatenates the \( m \) bags and where \( n = \sum_{i=1}^m n_i \) is the to-
tal number of instances. We assume that (a subset of)
the instances in \( X \) belong to (a subset of) \( k \) training cate-

gories. In the weakly supervised MIL setting that we con-
sider, we are provided with the bag label matrix
\( Y = [y_1, \ldots, y_m]^\top \in \{0, 1\}^{m \times k} \), where \( y_{id} \) (i.e., the \( c \)-th ele-
ment of \( y_i \in \{0, 1\}^k \)) is 1 if the \( c \)-th category is a candidate
category for the \( i \)-th bag (i.e., the \( c \)-th category is labeled as
being present in the \( i \)-th bag), and 0 otherwise. For instance,
the matrix \( Y \) is extracted from the image tags in the image
annotation task, and extracted from text in the Labeled Ya-
ahoo! News dataset (see Fig. 1).

Instance assignment: As the annotations in \( Y \) are pro-
vided at the image level (i.e., we do not know exactly the
labels of the instances in the bags), our method has to per-
fom inference to determine the categories of the instances
in \( X \). We then introduce the instance assignment matrix
\( H \in \{0, 1\}^{n \times k} \) which is not observed and that we want to infer.
In the following, we write our inference problem so that
\( H_{ic} = 1 \) if the \( j \)-th instance is inferred to be in cate-
gory \( c \), and 0 otherwise. We also assume that although a bag
can contain multiple categories, each instance is supposed
to belong to none or one of the \( k \) categories.

In many settings, as labels may be extracted automatic-
ically, some categories may be mistakenly labeled as present
in some bags, or they may be missing (see Fig. 1). Many in-
stances also belong to none of the \( k \) training categories and
should thus be left unassigned. Following [11] and [12], if
a bag is labeled as containing a specific category, we assign
at most one instance of the bag to the category; this makes
the model robust to the possible noise in annotations. In
the ideal case, all the candidate categories and training in-
stances can be assigned and we then have \( \forall i, y_i^\top 1 = n_i \).
However, in practice, due to uncertainty or detection errors,
it could happen that \( y_i^\top 1 < n_i \) (i.e., some instances in the
\( i \)-th bag are left unassigned) or \( y_i^\top 1 > n_i \) (i.e., some labels
in the \( i \)-th bag do not correspond to any instance).

Reference vectors: We also consider that each category
\( c \in \{1, \ldots, k\} \) has a representative vector \( z_c \in \mathbb{R}^d \) that we
call reference vector. Our goal is to learn both \( M \) and the
reference vectors so that all the instances inferred to be in a
category are closer to the reference vector of their respective
category than to any other reference vector (whether they
are representatives of candidate categories or not). In the
following, we concatenate all the reference vectors into a single
matrix \( Z = [z_1, \ldots, z_k]^\top \in \mathbb{R}^{k \times d} \). We show in
Section 2.2 that the optimal value of \( Z \) can be written as a
function of \( X, H \) and \( M \).

Before introducing our metric learning approach, we ex-
plain how inference is performed when \( d_M \) is fixed.
2.2. Weakly Supervised Multi-instance kmeans

We now explain how our method based on kmeans performs inference on a given set of bags $X$ in our weakly supervised setting. The goal is to assign the instances in $X$ to candidate categories by exploiting both the provided bag label matrix $Y$ and a (fixed) Mahalanobis distance metric $d_M$. We show in Eq. (7) that our kmeans problem can be reformulated as predicting a single clustering matrix.

To assign the instances in $X$ to the candidate categories (whose presence in the respective bags is known thanks to $Y$), one natural method is to assign each instance in $X$ to its closest reference vector $z_i$ belonging to a candidate category. Given the bags $X$ and the provided bag label matrix $Y = [y_1, \cdots, y_m]^T \in \{0,1\}^{m \times k}$, the goal of our method is then to infer both the instance assignment matrix $H$ and reference vector matrix $Z$ that satisfy the conditions mentioned in Section 2.1. Therefore, we constrain $H$ to belong to the following consistency set:

$$Q^V := \{H = [H_1^T, \cdots, H_m^T]^T : \forall i, H_i \in V_i\}$$ (2)

where $H_i$ is the assignment matrix of the $n_i$ instances in the $i$-th bag, and $V_i := \{0,1\}^{n_i \times k}$. The first condition $H_i 1 \leq 1$ implies that each instance is assigned to at most one category. The second condition $H_i^\top 1 \leq y_i$, together with the last condition $1^\top H_i 1 = p_i$, ensures that at most one instance in a bag is assigned to each candidate category (i.e., the categories $c$ satisfying $V_{ic} = 1$).

For a fixed metric $d_M$, our method finds the assignment matrix $H \in Q^V$ for the training bags $X \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times d}$ and the vectors $Z = [z_1, \ldots, z_k]^T \in \mathbb{R}^{k \times d}$ that minimize:

$$\min_{H \in Q^V, Z \in \mathbb{R}^{k \times d}} \sum_{j=1}^k \sum_{c=1}^d d_M(x_j, z_c)$$ (3)

$$= \min_{H \in Q^V, Z \in \mathbb{R}^{k \times d}} \| \text{diag}(H 1) X L - H Z L \|_2^2$$ (4)

where $x_j$ is the $j$-th instance (i.e., $x_j^T$ is the $j$-th row of $X$) and $d_M$ is the Mahalanobis distance defined in Eq. (1) with $M = LL^\top$. The goal of Eq. (3) is to assign the instances in $X$ to the closest reference vectors of candidate categories while satisfying the constraints defined in Eq. (2).

The details of the current paragraph can be found in the supp. material, Section A.1. Our goal is to rewrite problem (3) in a convenient way as a function of one variable. As $Z$ is unconstrained in Eq. (4), its minimizer can be found in closed-form: $Z = H^\top X L L^\top$ [34, Example 2]. From its formulation, we observe that $Z L = H^\top X L$ is the set of $k$ mean vectors (i.e., centroids) of the instances in $X$ assigned to the $k$ respective clusters and mapped by $L$. By plugging the closed-form expression of $Z$ into Eq. (4), the kmeans method in Eq. (4) is equivalent to the following problems:

$$\min_{H \in Q^V} \| \text{diag}(H 1) X L - H H^\top X L \|_2^2$$ (5)

$$\Rightarrow \max_{A \in P^V} \langle A, X M X^\top \rangle,$$ (6)

where we define $P^V$ as $P^V := \{I + H H^\top - \text{diag}(H 1) : H \in Q^V\}$ and $I$ is the identity matrix. Note that all the matrices in $P^V$ are orthogonal projection matrices (hence symmetric PSD). For a fixed Mahalanobis distance matrix $M$, we have reduced the weakly supervised multi-instance kmeans formulation (3) into optimizing a linear function over the set $P^V$ in Eq. (6). We then define the following prediction rule applied on the set of training bags $X$:

$$f_{M,p^V}(X) := \arg \max_{A \in P^V} \langle A, X M X^\top \rangle$$ (7)

which is the set of solutions of Eq. (6). We remark that our prediction rule in Eq. (7) assumes that the candidate categories for each bag are known (via $V_i$).

2.3. Multi-instance Metric Learning for Clustering

We now present how to learn $M$ so that the clustering obtained with $d_M$ is as robust as possible to the case where the candidate categories are unknown. We first write our problem as learning a distance metric so that the clustering predicted when knowing the candidate categories (i.e., Eq. (7)) is as similar as possible to the clustering predicted when the candidate categories are unknown. We then relax our problem and show that it can be solved efficiently.

Our goal is to learn $M$ so that the closest reference vector (among the $k$ categories) of any assigned instance is the reference vector of one of its candidate categories. In this way, an instance can be assigned even when its candidate categories are unknown, by finding its closest reference vector w.r.t. $d_M$. A good metric $d_M$ should then produce a sensible clustering (i.e., solution of Eq. (7)) even when the set of candidate categories is unknown. To achieve this goal, we consider the set of predicted assignment matrices $Q^G$ (instead of $Q^V$) which ignores $Y$ and where $G$ is defined as:

$$G_i := \{H_i \in \{0,1\}^{n_i \times k} : H_i 1 \leq 1, H_i^\top 1 = p_i\}$$ (8)

With $Q^G$, the $\hat{n} = 1^\top H 1$ assigned instances can be assigned to any of the $k$ training categories instead of only the candidate categories. We want to learn $M \in \mathbb{S}^d_+$ so that the clustering $f_{M,p^G}$ obtained under the non-informative signal $G$ is as similar as possible to the clustering $f_{M,p^V}$ under the weak supervision signal $V$. Our approach then aims at finding $M \in \mathbb{S}^d_+$ that maximizes the following problem:

$$\max_{M \in \mathbb{S}^d_+} \min_{C \in f_{M,p^G}(X)} \min_{\hat{C} \in f_{M,p^V}(X)} \langle C, \hat{C} \rangle$$ (9)

where $C$ and $\hat{C}$ are clusterings obtained with $d_M$ using different weak supervision signals $V$ and $G$. We note that the
similarity ⟨C, Ĉ⟩ is in [0, n] as C and Ĉ are both n × n orthogonal projection matrices. In the ideal case, Eq. (9) is maximized when the optimal Ĉ equals the optimal C. In this case, the closest reference vectors of assigned instances are reference vectors of candidate categories. Eq. (9) can actually be seen as a large margin problem as explained in the supp. material, Section A.2.

Since optimizing over $\mathcal{P}^B$ is difficult, we simplify the problem by using spectral relaxation [22, 32, 35]. Instead of constraining Ĉ to be in $f_{M, \mathcal{P}^B}(X)$, we replace $\mathcal{P}^B$ with its superset $\mathcal{N}$ defined as the set of $n \times n$ orthogonal projection matrices. In other words, we constrain Ĉ to be in $f_{M, \mathcal{N}}(X)$. The set $f_{M, \mathcal{N}}(X) := \arg \max_{A \in \mathcal{N}} \langle A, XX^\top \rangle$ is the set of orthogonal projectors onto the leading eigenvectors of $XX^\top$. In the ideal case, Eq. (9) is now constrained to be in the following relaxed set: $g_M(X) = \{ B : B \in f_{M, \mathcal{N}}(X), \text{rank}(B) \leq \text{rank}(XX^\top) \}$. Our relaxed version of problem (9) is then written:

$$\max_{M \in \mathbb{S}^d_+} \min_{C \in f_{M, \mathcal{P}^V}(X)} \min_{\hat{C} \in g_M(X)} \langle C, \hat{C} \rangle$$

(10)

**Theorem 2.1.** A global optimum matrix $C \in f_{M, \mathcal{P}^V}(X)$ in problem (10) is found by solving the following problem:

$$C \in \arg \max_{A \in \mathcal{P}^V} \langle A, XX^\top \rangle$$

(11)

The proof can be found in the supp. material, Section A.3. Finding $C$ in Eq. (11) corresponds to solving an adaptation of kmeans (see supp. material, Section A.4):

$$\min_{H \in \mathcal{Q}^V, Z = [z_1, \ldots, z_m]^\top} \sum_{j=1}^n \sum_{c=1}^k H_{jc} \cdot \| u_{j} - z_c \|^2,$$

(12)

where $u_j^\top$ is the $j$-th row of $U \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times s}$ which is a matrix with orthonormal columns such that $s := \text{rank}(X)$ and $XX^\top = UU^\top$. To solve Eq. (12), we use an adaptation of Lloyd’s algorithm [19] illustrated in Algorithm 1 where $U_i \in \mathbb{R}^{n_i \times s}$ is a submatrix of $U$ and represents the eigenvector of the bag $X_i \in \mathbb{R}^{n_i \times d}$. As explained in the supp. material, Algorithm 1 minimizes Eq. (12) by alternately optimizing over $Z$ and $H$. Convergence guarantees of Algorithm 1 are studied in the supp. material.

Once an optimal instance assignment matrix $H \in \mathcal{Q}^V$ has been inferred, we can use any type of classifier or metric learning approach to discriminate the different categories. We propose to use the approach in [18] which learns a metric $d_M$ in the context where each object is a bag that contains one instance and there is only one candidate category for each bag. It can be viewed as a special case of Eq. (10) where $\{ C \} = f_{M, \mathcal{P}^V}(X)$ is a singleton that does not depend on $M$ (i.e., the same matrix $C$ is returned for any value of $M$) and $\hat{C}$ is now constrained to be in the set: $\{ B : B \in f_{M, \mathcal{N}}(X), \text{rank}(B) = \text{rank}(C), C \in f_{M, \mathcal{P}^V}(X) \}$ as the rank of $C$ (and thus of $\hat{C}$) is now known. An optimal Mahalanobis matrix in this case is $M = X^\top C(X^\top)^\top$ [18].

In detail, Algorithm 1 first creates in step 1 the matrix $U$ whose columns are the left-singular vectors of the nonzero singular values of $X$. Next, Algorithm 1 alternates between computing the centroids $Z$ (step 5) and inferring the instance assignment matrix $H$ (steps 6-7). The latter step is decoupled among the $m$ bags; the function $\text{assign}(U_i, Z, Y)$ returns a solution of the following assignment problem:

$$H_i \in \arg \min_{G \in \mathcal{V}_i} \| \text{diag}(G1)U_i - GZ \|^2,$$  

(13)

which is solved exactly by the Hungarian algorithm [13] by exploiting the cost matrix that contains the squared Euclidean distances between the rows of $U_i$ and the centroids $z_c$, for which $Y_{ic} = 1$. Let us note $q_i := \max\{n_i, y_i^\top\}$, computing the cost matrix costs in practice $O(q_i^2 q_i)$ and the Hungarian algorithm costs in practice $O(p_i^2 q_i)$ [3]. It is efficient in our experiments as $q_i$ is small ($\forall i, p_i \leq q_i \leq 15$).

In conclusion, we have proposed an efficient metric learning algorithm that takes weak supervision into account. We explain below how to extend it to the nonlinear case.

**Nonlinear Kernel Extension:** We now briefly explain how to learn a nonlinear Mahalanobis metric by using kernels [24]. We first consider the case where each bag contains a single instance and has only one candidate category, this case corresponds to [18] (i.e., steps 10-11 of Algo 1).

Let $k$ be a kernel function whose feature map $\phi(\cdot)$ maps the instance $x_i$ to $\phi(x_i)$ in some reproducing kernel Hilbert space (RKHS) $\mathcal{H}$. Using the generalized representer theorem [23], we can write the Mahalanobis matrix $M$ (in the RKHS) as: $M = \Phi P \Phi^\top$, where $\Phi = \Phi^\top$.
\[ f(\Phi P^\top P \Phi^\top, P^\top V) = \arg\max_{A \in \mathcal{P}^\top V} \langle A, KP^\top PK \rangle \quad (14) \]

A solution of \[18, Eq. (13)\] is \( M = \Phi K^\dagger J(\Phi K^\dagger J)^\top \) where \( JJ^\top = HH^\top \) is the desired clustering matrix.\(^1\) We then replace Step 11 of Algo 1 by \( M \leftarrow \Phi K^\dagger J(\Phi K^\dagger J)^\top \).

To extend Eq. (11) to the nonlinear case in the MIL context, the matrix \( U \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times s} \) in step 1 can be formulated as \( UU^\top = KK^\dagger \) where \( s = \text{rank}(K) \). Note that \( XX^\dagger = XX^\top (XX^\top)^\dagger = KK^\dagger \) when \( \forall x, \phi(x) = x \).

The complexity of our method is \( O(nd \min\{d, n\}) \) in practice: it is linear in the number of instances \( n \) and quadratic in the dimensionality \( d \) as \( d < n \) in our experiments (see details in supp. material, Section A.5).

3. Related work

MIL was introduced in the context of drug activity prediction [6] to distinguish positive bags from negative bags. Most MIL problems [1, 4, 5, 10, 27, 36, 37] consider only 2 categories: bags are considered either positive or negative. In this paper, we focus on multi-label contexts (i.e., \( k \geq 2 \)) wherein MIIML approaches were proven successful.

MIIML: the Mahalanobis distance was already used [11, 12] in the weakly supervised context where the objects to be compared are bags containing multiple instances and the category membership labels of instances are provided at bag-level. Jin et al. [12] learn a distance metric optimized to group similar instances from different bags into common clusters. Their method decomposes their learning algorithm into three sets of variables which are: (1) the reference vectors (called centroids) of their categories, (2) an assignment matrix that determines instances that are closest to the centroids of their categories, (3) their Mahalanobis distance metric \( d_M \). They use an iterative algorithm that alternates the optimization over these three sets of variables and has high algorithmic complexity. Our approach also decomposes the problem into three variables, but our variables can all be written as a function of each other, which means that we only have to optimize the problem over one variable to get the formulation of the other variables. In this way, all the variables of our method are learned jointly, and optimizing over them has low computational complexity (i.e., the complexity of our method is \( O(nd^2) \)). Moreover, the method in [12] is not appropriate for nonlinear kernelized Mahalanobis distances as it explicitly formulates centroids and optimizes over them; this is problematic if the
codomains of the (kernel) feature map is infinite-dimensional (e.g., most RBF kernels) or even high-dimensional.

Guillaumin et al. [11] also consider weak supervision: their metric is learned so that distances between the closest instances of similar bags are smaller than distances between instances of dissimilar bags. As in [12], their method suffers from the decomposition of the similarity matching of instances and the learned metric as they depend on each other. Moreover, they only consider local matching between pairs of bags instead of global matching of the whole dataset to group similar instances into common clusters. Furthermore, as mentioned in [11, Section 5] and unlike our approach, their method does not scale linearly in \( n \).

Wang et al. [29] learn multiple metrics (one per category) in a MIL setting. For each category, their distance is the average distance between all the instances in bags that contain the category and their respective closest instance in a given bag. As all the instances in bags that contain a given category are taken into account, their Class-to-Bag (C2B) method is less robust to outlier instances than our method that assigns at most one instance per bag to a candidate category. Their method is then not appropriate for contexts such as face recognition where a small proportion of instances in the different bags is relevant to the category. Moreover, their method requires subsampling a large number of constraints to be scalable. Indeed, their complexity is linear in the number of instances \( n \) thanks to subsampling and the complexity of each iteration of their iterative algorithm is cubic in the dimensionality \( d \).

Closed-form training in the supervised setting: In the fully supervised context where each object can be seen as a bag that contains only one instance and where the label of each instance is provided without uncertainty, an efficient metric learning approach optimized to group a set of vectors into \( k \) desired clusters was proposed in [18]. The method assumes that the ground truth partition of the training set is known. It finds an optimal metric such that the partition obtained by applying kmeans with the metric is as close as possible to the ground truth partition. In contrast, our approach extends [18] to the weakly supervised case where the objects are multiple instance bags and the ground truth clustering assignment is unknown. A main difficulty is that the set of candidate assignment matrices \( Q^V \) in Eq. (2) that satisfy the provided weak annotations can be very large. Moreover, [18] did not provide a criterion to determine which matrix in \( Q^V \) is optimal in our context.

Our contribution wrt [18] includes: 1) the kmeans adaptation to optimize over weakly supervised bags (Section 2.2), 2) the derivation of the (relaxed) metric learning problem to learn a metric that is robust to the case where the bag labels are not provided, 3) the efficient algorithm (Algorithm 1) that returns the optimal assignment matrix, 4) a nonlinear kernel version.
4. Experiments

We evaluate our method called MIMLCA in the face identification and image annotation tasks where the dataset is labeled in a weakly supervised way. We implemented our method in Matlab and ran the experiments on a 2.6GHz machine with 4 cores and 16GB of RAM.

4.1. Weakly labeled face identification

We use the subset of the Labeled Yahoo! News dataset\(^2\) introduced in [2] and manually annotated by [11] for the context of face recognition with weak supervision. The dataset is composed of 20,071 documents containing a total of 31,147 faces detected with a Viola-Jones face detector [28]. The number of categories (i.e., identified persons) is \(k = 5,873\) (mostly politicians and athletes). An example document is illustrated in Fig. 1. Each document contains an image and some text, it also contains at least one detected face or name in the text. Each face is represented by a \(d\)-dimensional vector where \(d = 4,992\). 9,594 of the 31,147 detected faces are unknown persons (i.e., they belong to none of the \(k\) training categories), undetected names or not face images. As already explained, we consider documents as bags and detected faces as instances. See supp. material, Section A.7 for additional details on the dataset.

Setup: We randomly partition the dataset into 10 equal sized subsets to perform 10-fold cross-validation: each subset then contains 2,007 documents (except one that contains 2,008 documents). The training dataset of each split thus contains \(m \approx 18,064\) documents and \(n \approx 28,000\) faces.

Classification protocol: To compare the different methods, we consider two evaluation metrics: the average classification accuracy across all training categories and the precision (defined in [11] as the ratio of correctly named faces over the total number of faces in the test dataset). At test time, a face whose category membership is known is assigned to one of the \(k = 5,873\) categories. To avoid a strong bias of the evaluation metrics due to under-represented categories, we classify at test time only the instances in categories that contain at least 5 elements in the test dataset (this arbitrary threshold seemed sensible to us as it is small enough without being too small). This corresponds to selecting about 50 test categories (depending on the split). We note that test instances can be assigned to any of the \(k\) categories and not only to the 50 selected categories.

Scenarios/Settings: To train the different models, we consider the same three scenarios/settings as [11]:

(a) Instance-level ground truth. We know here for each training instance its actual category; it corresponds to a supervised single-instance context. In this setting, our method is equivalent to MLCA [18] and provides an upper bound on the performance of models learned with weak supervision.

(b) Bag-level ground truth. The presence of identified persons in an image is provided at bag-level by humans, which corresponds to a weakly supervised context.

(c) Bag-level automatic annotation. The presence of identified persons in an image is automatically extracted from text. This setting is unsupervised in the sense that it does not require human input and may be noisy. The label matrix \(Y\) is automatically extracted as described in Fig. 1.

Classification of test instances: In the task that we consider, we are given the vector representation of a face and the model has to determine which of the \(k\) training categories it belongs to. In the linear case, the category of a test instance \(x_t \in \mathbb{R}^d\) can be naturally determined by solving:

\[
\arg \min_{c \in \{1, \ldots, k\}} d_M^2(x_t, z_c)
\]

where \(z_c\) is the mean vector of the training instances assigned to category \(c\), and \(d_M\) is a learned metric.

In the case of MIMLCA, the learned metric (in step 11) can be written \(M = LL^\top\) where \(L = X^\top J\) and \(J\) is constructed as explained in Footnote 1. For any training instance \(x_j\) (inferred to be) in category \(c\), the matrix \(M\) is then learned so that the maximum element of the vector \((L^\top x_j)_c \in \mathbb{R}^k\) is its \(c\)-th element and all the other elements are zeros. We can then also use the prediction function:

\[
\arg \max_{c \in \{1, \ldots, k\}} x_t^\top J_c - \alpha \|L^\top z_c\|^2
\]

where \(J_c\) is the \(c\)-th column of \(J\), the value of \(x_t^\top J_c\) is the \(c\)-th element of \(L^\top x_t\), and \(\alpha \in \mathbb{R}\) is a parameter manually chosen (see experiments below). The term \(-\alpha \|L^\top z_c\|^2\) accounts for the fact that the metric is learned with clusters having different sizes. Note that \(\alpha\) is not used during training. See supp. material, Section A.6 for the nonlinear case.

Experimental results: Table 1 reports the average classification accuracy across categories and the precision scores obtained by the different baselines and our method in the linear case. Since we are interested in the weakly supervised settings (b) and (c), we cannot evaluate classic metric learning approaches, such as LMNN [31], that require instance-level annotations (i.e., scenario (a)). We reimplemented [12] as best as we could as the code is not available (see supp. material, Section A.10). The codes of the other baselines are publicly available (except [29] that we also reimplemented; see supp. material, Section A.11).

We do not cross-validate our method as it does not have hyperparameters. For all the other methods, to create the best possible baselines, we report the best scores that we obtained on the test set when tuning the hyperparameters. We tested different MIL baselines [1, 4, 5, 10, 29, 36, 37], most of them are optimized for MIL classification in the bi-class case (i.e., when there are 2 categories of bags which

\[^2\text{We use the features available at http://lear.inrialpes.fr/people/guillaumin/data.php}\]
are “positive” and “negative”); as proposed in [4], we apply for these baselines the one-against-the-rest heuristic to adapt them to the multi-label context. However, there are more than 5,000 training categories. Since most categories contain very few examples and these baselines learn classifiers independently, the scale of classification scores may differ. They then obtain less than 10% accuracy and precision in this task (see supp. material, Section A.8 for scores).

Table 1 reports the test performance of the different methods when assigning a test instance to the category with closest centroid w.r.t. the metric (i.e., using the prediction function in Eq. (15)). We use this evaluation because (M)MLCA and MIML [12] are learned to optimize this criterion. The set of centroids exploited by MIMLCA in settings (b) and (c) is determined in Algorithm 1. MIML also exploits the set of centroids that it learns. To evaluate MildML and the Euclidean distance, we exploit the ground truth instance centroids (i.e., the mean vectors of instances in the k categories in the context where we know the category of each instance) although these ground truth centroids are normally not available in settings (b) and (c) as annotations are provided at bag-level and not at instance-level.

In Table 2, a test instance is assigned to the category of the closest training instance w.r.t. the metric. We use this evaluation as MildML is optimized for this criterion although the category of the closest training instance is normally available only in setting (a). MildML then improves its precision scores compared to Table 1.

We see in Table 1 that our linear method MIMLCA learned in weakly supervised scenarios (b) and (c) performs almost as well as the fully supervised model MLCA [18] in setting (a). Our method can then be learned fully automatically in scenario (c) at the expense of a slight loss in accuracy. Moreover, our method learned with scenario (c) outperforms other MIL baselines learned with scenario (b).

Nonlinear model: Table 3 reports the recognition performances of (M)MLCA in the linear and nonlinear cases when we exploit the prediction function in Eq. (16) for different values of $\alpha$. In the nonlinear case, we choose the generalized radial basis function (RBF) $k_{X^2}^{\alpha}(a,b) = e^{-\frac{D^2_{X^2}(a,b)}{\ell_1}}$ where $a$ and $b$ are $\ell_1$-normalized and $D^2_{X^2}(a,b) = \sum_{i=1}^{d} (a_i - b_i)^2$. This kernel function is known to work well for face recognition [20]. With the RBF kernel, we reach 90% classification accuracy and precision. We observe a gain in accuracy of about 5% with the nonlinear version compared to the linear version when $\alpha \approx 0.25$.

Training times: Tables 1 to 3 report the wall-clock training time of the different methods. We assume that the matrices $X$ and $Y$ (and $K$ in the nonlinear case) are already loaded in memory. Both MLCA and MIMLCA are efficient as they are trained in less than 5 minutes. MIMLCA is 3 times slower than MLCA because it requires computing 2 (economy size) SVDs to compute $U$ and $X^1$ (steps 1 and 11 of Algo 1), each of them takes about 1 minute, whereas MLCA requires only one SVD. Moreover, besides the two SVDs already mentioned, MIMLCA performs an adapted $k$means (steps 3 to 8 of Algo 1) which takes less than 1

### Table 1. Test classification accuracies and precision scores (mean and standard deviation in %) on Labeled Yahoo! News

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Scenario/Setting (see text)</th>
<th>Accuracy (closest centroid)</th>
<th>Precision (closest centroid)</th>
<th>Training time (in seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linear MLCA [18]</td>
<td>(a) = Instance gt</td>
<td>87.8 ± 2.4</td>
<td>56.7 ± 2.9</td>
<td>No training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIML (our reimplementation of [12])</td>
<td>(b) = Bag gt</td>
<td>56.8 ± 1.2</td>
<td>77.7 ± 1.2</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MildML [11]</td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>54.9 ± 3.6</td>
<td>54.6 ± 3.3</td>
<td>7,520 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIMLCA (ours)</td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>65.3 ± 2.1</td>
<td>76.6 ± 2.1</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIML (our reimplementation of [12])</td>
<td>(c) = Bag auto</td>
<td>52.6 ± 13.0</td>
<td>52.2 ± 13.8</td>
<td>19,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MildML [11]</td>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>33.9 ± 3.0</td>
<td>31.2 ± 2.9</td>
<td>7,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIMLCA (ours)</td>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>63.2 ± 4.7</td>
<td>74.9 ± 3.0</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2. Test scores of MildML on Labeled Yahoo! News when assigning test instances to the category of their closest training instances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Scenario/Setting (see text)</th>
<th>Accuracy (closest centroid)</th>
<th>Precision (closest centroid)</th>
<th>Training time (in seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linear MLCA [18]</td>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>52.4 ± 4.7</td>
<td>62.2 ± 2.9</td>
<td>7,352 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIML (our reimplementation of [12])</td>
<td>(b) = Bag gt</td>
<td>52.6 ± 13.0</td>
<td>52.2 ± 13.8</td>
<td>19,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MildML [11]</td>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>55.7 ± 4.4</td>
<td>66.0 ± 2.1</td>
<td>7,520</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3. Test classification accuracies and precision scores in % of the linear and nonlinear models for the 10-fold cross-validation evaluation for different values of $\alpha$ in Eq. (16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Scenario/Setting (see text)</th>
<th>Evaluation metric</th>
<th>$\alpha = 0$</th>
<th>$\alpha = 0.2$</th>
<th>$\alpha = 0.25$</th>
<th>$\alpha = 0.5$</th>
<th>$\alpha = 1$</th>
<th>$\alpha = 1.2$</th>
<th>Training time (in seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linear MLCA</td>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>77.6 ± 3.1</td>
<td>88.0 ± 2.2</td>
<td>88.5 ± 2.1</td>
<td>89.5 ± 2.0</td>
<td>89.3 ± 1.8</td>
<td>88.9 ± 2.0</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Precision</td>
<td>78.0 ± 2.0</td>
<td>88.8 ± 1.3</td>
<td>89.4 ± 1.4</td>
<td>90.8 ± 1.1</td>
<td>91.5 ± 1.0</td>
<td>91.4 ± 1.0</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear MIMLCA</td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>74.2 ± 2.7</td>
<td>86.9 ± 2.1</td>
<td>86.9 ± 2.0</td>
<td>87.7 ± 1.9</td>
<td>87.4 ± 1.8</td>
<td>87.1 ± 2.0</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Precision</td>
<td>74.8 ± 1.8</td>
<td>87.0 ± 1.4</td>
<td>87.7 ± 1.3</td>
<td>89.3 ± 1.0</td>
<td>89.9 ± 1.2</td>
<td>90.0 ± 1.3</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>69.9 ± 2.5</td>
<td>81.2 ± 2.6</td>
<td>81.9 ± 2.5</td>
<td>83.6 ± 2.3</td>
<td>83.9 ± 2.1</td>
<td>83.7 ± 2.0</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Precision</td>
<td>71.7 ± 1.5</td>
<td>83.0 ± 1.4</td>
<td>83.8 ± 1.4</td>
<td>85.6 ± 1.4</td>
<td>86.9 ± 1.5</td>
<td>87.0 ± 1.5</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBF $X^2$ MLCA</td>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>77.2 ± 3.0</td>
<td>94.4 ± 1.6</td>
<td>94.5 ± 1.8</td>
<td>92.5 ± 2.0</td>
<td>87.1 ± 2.2</td>
<td>84.5 ± 2.9</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Precision</td>
<td>73.6 ± 1.8</td>
<td>95.3 ± 1.0</td>
<td>95.5 ± 1.2</td>
<td>94.9 ± 1.1</td>
<td>92.3 ± 1.4</td>
<td>91.0 ± 1.7</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBF $X^2$ MIMLCA</td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>74.0 ± 2.9</td>
<td>92.6 ± 1.8</td>
<td>92.8 ± 1.6</td>
<td>91.1 ± 2.0</td>
<td>84.5 ± 2.5</td>
<td>82.0 ± 2.6</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Precision</td>
<td>70.6 ± 1.8</td>
<td>93.6 ± 1.2</td>
<td>94.0 ± 1.0</td>
<td>93.7 ± 1.1</td>
<td>90.6 ± 1.5</td>
<td>89.4 ± 1.6</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>67.1 ± 2.9</td>
<td>88.2 ± 1.9</td>
<td>88.5 ± 2.1</td>
<td>87.2 ± 1.8</td>
<td>81.1 ± 3.3</td>
<td>78.6 ± 3.6</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Precision</td>
<td>63.7 ± 1.8</td>
<td>89.0 ± 1.3</td>
<td>89.7 ± 1.5</td>
<td>90.0 ± 1.3</td>
<td>87.5 ± 2.2</td>
<td>86.3 ± 2.4</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Annotation performance on the Corel5K dataset. ↓: the lower the metric, the better. ↑: the larger the metric, the better. OE: One-error, Cov.: Coverage. AP: Average Precision (see definitions in [12, Section 5.1]).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>OE (↓)</th>
<th>Cov. (↑)</th>
<th>AP (↑)</th>
<th>Training time (↑)</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>OE (↓)</th>
<th>Cov. (↑)</th>
<th>AP (↑)</th>
<th>Training time (↑)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MIMLCA (ours)</td>
<td>0.516</td>
<td>4.829</td>
<td>0.575</td>
<td>24 seconds</td>
<td>MILES [4]</td>
<td>0.722</td>
<td>7.626</td>
<td>0.412</td>
<td>511 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIML (best scores reported in [12])</td>
<td>0.565</td>
<td>5.507</td>
<td>0.535</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td>mSVM [1]</td>
<td>0.790</td>
<td>9.730</td>
<td>0.261</td>
<td>504 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIML (our reimplementation of [12])</td>
<td>0.673</td>
<td>6.405</td>
<td>0.462</td>
<td>884 seconds</td>
<td>MILBoost [36]</td>
<td>0.948</td>
<td>13.412</td>
<td>0.174</td>
<td>106 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MildML [11]</td>
<td>0.619</td>
<td>5.646</td>
<td>0.499</td>
<td>59 seconds</td>
<td>EM-DD [17]</td>
<td>0.892</td>
<td>10.527</td>
<td>0.239</td>
<td>38,724 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation-kNN [30] (Euclidean dist.)</td>
<td>0.595</td>
<td>5.559</td>
<td>0.513</td>
<td>No training</td>
<td>MinD [5] (meanmin)</td>
<td>0.759</td>
<td>8.246</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>103 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-C2B [29]</td>
<td>0.691</td>
<td>6.968</td>
<td>0.440</td>
<td>211 seconds</td>
<td>MinD [5] (minmax)</td>
<td>0.703</td>
<td>7.337</td>
<td>0.424</td>
<td>138 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimax MI-Kernel [10]</td>
<td>0.734</td>
<td>7.955</td>
<td>0.398</td>
<td>172 seconds</td>
<td>MinD [5] (maxim)</td>
<td>0.721</td>
<td>7.857</td>
<td>0.413</td>
<td>95 seconds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In conclusion, our weakly supervised method outperforms the current state-of-the-art MIML methods both in recognition accuracy and training time. It is worth noting that if we apply mean centering on the row vectors of the different bags: \( \hat{D}_{\text{min}}(X, Y) = D_{\text{min}}(X, Y) - \frac{1}{\|X\|_2} \sum_i X_i \frac{1}{\|Y\|_2} \sum_j Y_j \) where \( X \) and \( Y \) are instances of the bags \( E \) and \( F \), respectively. In [30], \( d_M \) is the Euclidean distance, we replace it by the different learned metrics of MIML approaches in the same way as [12].

Given a test bag \( E \), we define its references as the \( r \) nearest bags in the training set, and its citers as the training bags for which \( E \) is one of the \( c \) nearest neighbors. The class label of \( E \) is decided by a majority vote of the \( r \) reference bags and \( c \) citing bags. We follow the same exact protocol as [12] and use the same evaluation metrics (see definitions in [12, Section 5.1]). We report in Table 4 the results obtained with minimal Hausdorff distances since they obtained the best performances for all the metric learning methods. As in [12], we tested different values of \( c = r \in \{5, 10, 15, 20\} \) and report the results for \( c = r = 20 \) as they performed the best for all the methods.

We tuned all the baselines and report their best scores on the test set. Our method outperforms the other MIL approaches w.r.t. all the evaluation metrics and it is faster. Our method can then also be used for image annotation.

5. Conclusion

We have presented an efficient MIML approach optimized to perform clustering. Unlike classic MIL approaches, our method does not alternate the optimization over the learned metric and the assignment of instances. Our method only performs an adaptation of \( k\text{means} \) over the rows of the matrix \( U \) whose columns form an orthonormal basis of \( X \). Our method is much faster than classic approaches and obtains state-of-the-art performance in the face identification (in the weakly supervised and fully unsupervised cases) and automated image annotation tasks.

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References


