Stress Recognition
A Step Outside the Lab

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Abstract: Despite the potential for stress and emotion recognition outside the lab environment, very little work has been reported that is feasible for use in the real world and much less for activities involving physical activity. In this work, we move a step forward towards a stress recognition system that works on a close to real world data set and shows a significant improvement over classification only systems. Our method uses clustering to separate the data into physical exertion levels and later performs stress classification over the discovered clusters. We validate our approach on a physiological stress dataset from 20 participants who performed 3 different activities of varying intensity under 3 different types of stimuli intended to cause stress. The results show an f-measure improvement of 130% compared to using classification only.

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1 INTRODUCTION

A great deal of research has been undertaken in the area of stress recognition. However, most of this research has focused mainly on recognizing stress under very controlled scenarios. While these advances have helped identify new directions and features that are useful, to date, there are very few works that attempt to recognize stress in the wild or at least close to conditions outside of the laboratory environment.

The data collection process for most stress recognition systems in the literature consists of a person sitting while being exposed to a series of stressors. Meanwhile, a plethora of sensing devices captures various physiological signals from the subject and then stress recognition is later performed offline. This commonly-taken approach suffers from three problems: First, the equipment used to capture the physiological signals is usually unsuitable for daily use: the sensing apparatus is usually heavy, cumbersome, and expensive. Second, stressors are only administered while the subject is sitting; this limits the applications of the findings to scenarios in which the subject is not moving and physiological signals (like heart rate and breathing rate) are affected mostly by the stressor and not external factors like exercising. Third, it is very expensive computationally to detect stress; both, techniques and features are heavy to compute.

In this work, we present a method that focuses on addressing all of the aforementioned problems. We made use of off-the-shelf wearable technology, performed an experiment in which physical activity has an explicit role in the data collection process, and developed a method for recognizing stress which relies on simple features and standard machine learning techniques that make this system feasible to be run on a mobile computing device like a smartphone. This paper is organized in the following manner: first, we present related work on stress recognition and stress and physical activity. Then, we present a description of our data collection and experimental method. Next, we describe our data analysis, our pre-processing and feature selection steps. Later, we describe our clustering and classification approach and the results. Finally, we conclude with a discussion, limitations of our work and plans for future work.

2 RELATED WORK

2.1 Stress Recognition

Stress is one of the leading threats to people's health. It manifests as a complex mix of psychological and physiological responses (Sharma and Gedeon, 2012). For example, under stress, people exhibit changes in their heart rate (HR), blood pressure (BP), pupil diameter (PD), breathing rate (BR), and galvanic skin response (GSR). Thus,

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physiological measurements are the most common approach used to interpret stress levels and fluctuations.

In contrast to earlier work in psychology and affective computing that focused on understanding how a single modality (physiological signal) changes with stress level, more recent studies have exploited multiple modalities to improve stress recognition performance as well as to build automated stress recognition systems working in real-world situations (Stäger et al., 2007). For example, Healey and Picard collected data from four types of physiological sensors, including an electrocardiogram (ECG), electromyogram (EMG), skin conductivity (also known as GSR), and respiration while participants were performing real-world driving tasks to measure their stress levels (Healey and Picard, 2005). Nasoz (2010) and colleagues developed a multi-modal driving interface that modelled stress-related states such as panic/fear, frustration/anger and boredom/fatigue and used skin conductance, heart activity, respiration, muscle activity and finger pressure.

For the development of automated stress recognition systems, Liao et al. (2006) proposed a framework for a dynamic probabilistic decision-theoretic model that not only includes stress/fatigue recognition but also optimizes the feature set used in their model dynamically. They exploited four different types of inputs: physiological responses, physical appearance features, user performance and behavioural data, and found an optimal feature set to improve recognition performance. More recently, Sharma and Gedeon (2012) performed a survey of stress recognition and classification research to provide a broad overview of investigation efforts on a variety of physiological responses, including skin conductivity, heart activity, brain activity, and various computational techniques Giakoumis et al. (2012) presented an in-depth analysis of physiological features in stress detection and proposed, using subject-dependent features, to increase recognition accuracy. They extracted subject-dependent features from skin conductivity and ECG modalities and improved recognition performance over a multi-subject data set collected through an experiment using natural stress induction.

All the aforementioned work has introduced advanced techniques and systems, but most of them have focused on only stress as a factor of changing physiological responses. Since there are a number of potential factors that affect human physiology in natural environments, we still need further investigation about how to apply physiological stress recognition in natural environments and what are the effects of other factors on it, such as whether an individual is speaking or exercising. To make a stress recognition system that uses physiological responses work in practice, we must be able to detect stress even during other activities that may affect one's physiological responses. Since few studies have studied the impact of such real-world factors, our goal is to address the effect of physical activity, as an example of a daily common event, on physiological responses and stress recognition.

2.2 Stress and Activity Recognition

To the best of our knowledge, recognition of stress in the presence of physical activity has only been addressed in our previous work (Hong et al. 2012). There is some work, in the field of psychophysiology (Novak et al., 2011; Roth et al., 1990; Webb et al., 2008; Yao et al., 2008) that highlights the effect of stress while performing a physical activity. However, this work is limited to the understanding of the phenomena and not on creating and validating a system or method for stress recognition. Here, we use the same data set used in (Hong et al., 2012) which contained physiological measurements of stress with no stress, noise, cold water pressor, and verbal math as the stress inducers in the presence of different activities: sitting, walking and biking. However, in this work, we address the problem of stress recognition in a different way while generalizing on our previous approach.

The general assumption in our previous work was that different kinds of activity have a recognizable effect on the physiological responses. Hence, a stress recognition model will perform better if it is modelled for specific activities, but this means that this model must be *supervised* and that labels need to be provided. Here, we re-evaluate this hypothesis and find that those activities, even in very controlled scenarios do not have a stable or unimodal distribution across the different physiological responses recorded. Additionally, in our previous work, we constrained the activities to sitting, walking, and biking, these only cover a very small spectrum of all the possible activities that a person can perform regularly, narrowing the applicability of our previous work to a very unrealistic scenario. This does not mean classifying activity is not helpful, because we have demonstrated that it does provide an improvement over stress classification-only systems. However, it does mean that a more general approach is needed that does not necessarily rely on the explicit type of activity (walking, sitting, biking) but instead on the quantitative properties of the data. In this work, we present a method that creates stress models according to the distribution of the physiological responses, moving away from a supervised model that needs labels for different activities, to an unsupervised model (requiring no activity labels) that exploits the natural distribution of the data. By moving to an unsupervised approach, our stress recognition system should be able to recognize stress during any physical activity, not just for the ones that we have prior knowledge of.

In our previous work, we performed activity recognition and subsequently stress recognition. For this, a label was required indicating the activity for training the activity classifiers, but this label may not necessarily be the most appropriate. Different activities may require different effort levels, moreover, within an activity the effort level also varies. Take as an example when a person walks but changes speed from slow to very fast. The same occurs for many other physical activities like bicycling. While from an activity recognition perspective this effort level does not matter for stress recognition, it does matters as it elicits a different response in the physiological signals. Also, in (Hong et al., 2012), personalized models were built as a way to overcome individual differences in how stress presents itself. This approach however, does not take advantage of individuals with similar responses to physical activities or stress. The data set from this similar group of people could help in creating a richer model accounting for much more variance than a personalized model and in this way avoid overfitting. This kind of model is a middle ground in between a too general for-all population model and a personalized model.

3 METHOD

A total of 20 volunteers (10 males, 10 females) between 18 and 38 years of age were recruited. Ten participants were Caucasian, 7 Asian, 2 Afro-American and 1 White/Hispanic. The height of our participants ranged from 5’4” to 6’3”, and weighted between 90 and 175 pounds. A health screening questionnaire (American College of Sports Medicine, 2009) was administered prior to performing any physical activity to ensure participant’s safety by ruling out individuals with any risk of cerebrovascular, cardiac or pulmonary arrest. Body mass index (BMI) was also considered and only individuals with a BMI between 16 and 25 participated in our study. Also, during this process, maximal heart rate as described in (Robergs and Landwehr, 2002) was calculated for subsequent use during the experiment.

3.1 Materials and Setup

The experiment was performed in a closed laboratory with a controlled temperature. Upon arrival, we helped the participant wear two different commercial off-the-shelf devices: a Zephyr Bioharness BT and a Bodymedia ArmBand. The Bioharness records data every second from heart rate (HR), breathing rate (BR), skin temperature (ST) and acceleration (AC). To capture GSR, we included the ArmBand. GSR has shown good results for stress and affect recognition (Picard and Vyzas, 2001; Kim and André, 2008; Lisetti, 2004; Feldman et al., 2004; Hernandez and Morris, 2011), though the armband sampling rate of GSR is low (two samples per minute at best). While the technology was fairly robust, we asked participants to refrain from leaning against the back of the chair provided for the sitting activity, to avoid signal noise introduced into the Bioharness BR readings when the device is pressed against other objects. This was not an issue for the other activities. This counter measure helped to acquire a good BR signal.

After being outfitted with the two sensors, the participant sat down in a chair and the data recording session began. Each participant participated in four sessions separated by at least one week. The entire data set was collected in less than 3 months. The structure of a session can be seen in Figure 1a. It started with the recording of the baseline, followed by one of the three activities (sitting, walking biking), and a resting period. These two steps were performed a total of 3 times, once for each activity. The experiment was over with a final resting time. A warm up was required before walking and bicycling. No resting period was provided after sitting. Next, we describe the different parts of each session.

Activity: The general structure of an activity is depicted in Figure 1b. In this section the participant was asked to perform a physical activity (walking, bicycling or sitting) and at the same time a stressor was administered. Each stressor-activity pair lasted 3 minutes and afterwards, a stress measurement was performed. Once the participant completed the walking or bicycling activity, they rested by sitting for 10 minutes. After this rest period, they started performing the next activity. This sequence was repeated until all 3 activities were performed.

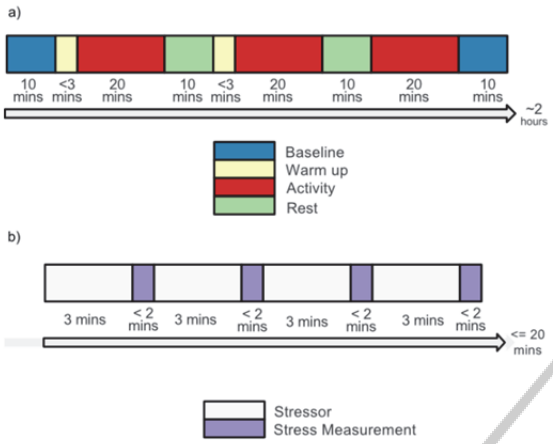

Figure 1: Session and activity structure. a) Session structure. b) Activity structure.

Stressors: Our stressors included: Random noises, cold water and a verbal mathematical test. The control stressor (none) was simply having the person perform the physical activity. The random noises were composed mainly of sounds like: People screaming, dogs barking and explosions. The math test asked participants to subtract continuously from a large number.

Baseline: During the baseline phase, the participant relaxed and was asked to forgo any posterior feelings and or thoughts. We used this as a way to enforce stabilization of the physiological signals.

Warm-up: In this phase, participant exertion was increased by augmenting the speed of the physical activity being performed, every 20 seconds until reaching a predetermined speed. This speed, was determined during the first session by asking the subject to perform the given activity until his/her heart rate level stabilized at about +/- 5% of 50% of the maximal heart rate for walking and a minimum of 60% of the maximal heart rate for bicycling. This was done to ensure the safety of our participants, minimize the risk of cardiac distress, and have similar conditions across sessions and across participants. Notice, however, that the maximal heart rate of the participants is not the same; hence, the speeds for each one were different. Despite this, the exertion level according to their maximal heart rate was similar. This phase lasted for 3 minutes.

The experimenter and the participant were the only people in the room. Conversation between the participant and the experimenter was kept to a minimum. The order of the activities across the study was determined using a counter-balanced Latin square method. The inner structure of the activities and general scheme did not change through the whole experiment. For stress measurement, we used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = calm state, 5 = most stressful) to obtain subjective assessments of stress by asking the participant. The scale was used immediately after each activity and stressor pair was administered. A total of 18 subjective stress levels were collected, 12 from activities (3 activities times 4 stressors) and 6 after resting periods, warm ups and the baselines.

4 DATA ANALYSIS

Our data set is composed of 336254 data points, from a total of 20 different participants, from about 160 hours of data collection. From it, we discarded the baseline data for the classification performance tests. From the remaining data set, 49% of the data had a reported stress level of 2 or higher (indicating some stress). All of the data for participant 10, session 3, and part of the data for participant 6, session 4 was discarded due to malfunctioning of the sensor system.

Before any pre-processing or classification, a data analysis was performed. Different insights were gathered through observation of the behavior of the participant's physiological signals during the different phases of this study:

- *Participant's physiological signals even during a calm state do not have a small variance.*
- *HR does not follow a unimodal distribution for any of the activities.*
- *Stressors impact on the physiological signals is not visible.*

In the next sections these insights are described.

4.1 Baseline

We believed that during the baseline, the participant would return quickly to their most calm state independent of previous activities. However, this calm state did *not* have a small variance for half of the participants across our study. One example of this behavior can be seen in Figure 2a where we have a participant with a relatively low variance in what looks like a bimodal distribution for HR across the study and another participant in Figure 2b with what also looks like a bimodal distribution but with a much higher variance for HR. The reasons for this high variance are hard to attribute but given that the highest variance was most often during the participants' last session, it is likely that it could have been an effect of the season change.

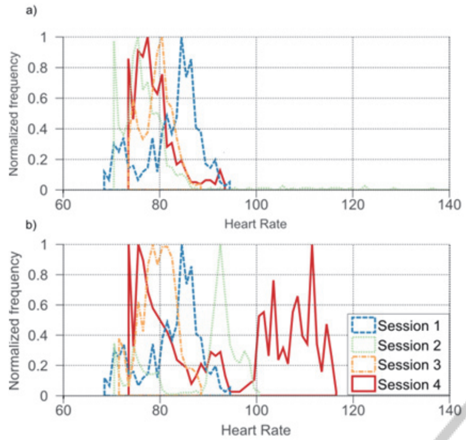

Figure 2: Histogram for the baseline heart rate for two participants across different sessions. (a) Low variance baseline for participant A. (b) High variance baseline for participant B.

This high variance, however, was only observed for the HR; the BR distribution had less variance and was unimodal. The distributions for all the signals in general can be summarized in the following manner: HR is 55% unimodal and 45% multimodal, BR is 100% unimodal, GSR is 60% multimodal and 40% unimodal, skin temperature is 100% multimodal. The percentages refer to the quantity of all the participant data; hence 100% represents all 20 participants.

4.2 Activities

To understand physical activity and its influence on the physiological responses across the study, histograms from all the physiological signals and participants were obtained. One interesting pattern found is shown in Figure 3, which corresponds to a participant's HR and BR during the entire study.

As expected the distribution of BR follows a unimodal distribution, however, the same does not hold true for HR, this was observed across all the population. Also, it can be seen in Figure 4 that across the entire population, HR had a multimodal distribution. This means that there are not only individual differences while performing the activities across individuals, but also, the variance within activities for each participant.

4.3 Stressors

In order to find out, in a descriptive way, whether stress was expressed through the physiological signals, we graphed the distribution of the HR for the entire population throughout the study as can be seen in Figure 5. A similar graph was produced also for BR but the qualitative results were the same.

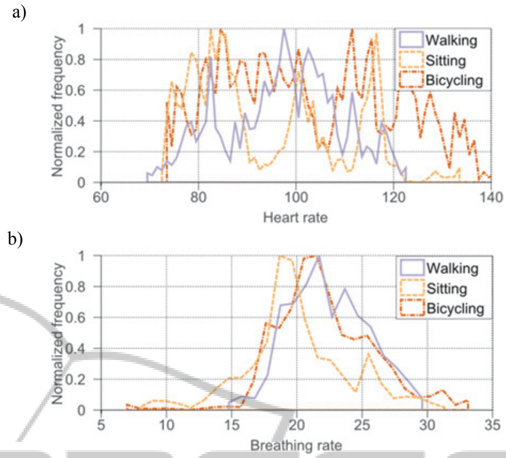

Figure 3: Histograms for Heart rate (a) and Breathing Rate (b), from a single participant's data across the four sessions.

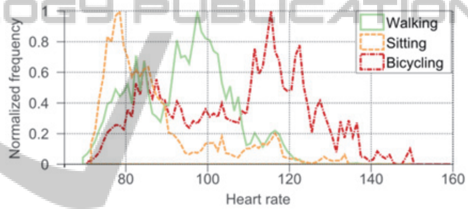

Figure 4: Heart rate histogram for all the population. Variance across the different activities is so high that they overlap each other making it harder to discern from single values the activity performed.

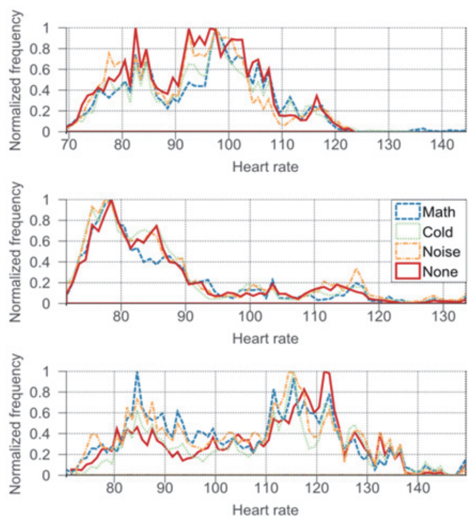

Figure 5: Histogram for the heart rate of all the population throughout the entire study for different activities. At the top is the distribution for walking, middle for sitting and bicycling is at the bottom.

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The distributions are quite similar, though there are differences, which may be caused by random errors from the measurement devices or from the effects of the stressors. Still, this indicates that the different stimuli used to exert stress did not play a strong role in the variance of the physiological signals. This finding shows that even in the absence of physical activity, stressors do not visibly influence physiological responses. Measurement of the difference of the distributions by means of correlation or other quantitative methods was not conducted given the high visual resemblance among the distributions.

5 PREPROCESSING AND FEATURES

Next, we discuss how we pre-processed our data and extracted features for the stress recognition task.

5.1 Labeling

For classification purposes the Likert scale values were transformed to a binary class label: stress or calm. The stress label corresponds to a Likert scale of 2 or higher and the calm state corresponds to 1. This means that our stress class covers from low stress levels to high stress levels, while the calm state covers only no stress. The labels were assigned for the activity stressor pair. This means that if the participant reported a Likert scale level of 3, for the walking activity while the noise stressor was administered, then all the data recorded during that time was labeled as stress.

5.2 Preprocessing

The Bioharness is a high quality and recognized commercial physiological signals recorder, however for the HR measurement, this device relies on a conductive fabric to be in contact with the participant's skin and on the participant to be perspiring to acquire a high quality signal. The conductive fabric pad of the Bioharness can slide over the skin causing erroneous measurements to be recorded or the signal to be lost for a short period of time. This problem was minimized by asking the participants to wear the band as tight as possible without causing discomfort, but even after this precaution, there was noise in the ECG signal caused by sudden movements of the participants and initial low perspiration levels. To address this problem, a noise classifier was implemented and samples classified as noise removed. For this task, different algorithms were tried: Hidden Markov Models, Naïve Bayes, Support vector machines and Logistic regression using a ridge penalization. The models were evaluated using a 10-fold cross validation test and manually labeled data composed of 24 hours of clean signals and 2 hours of noise from 6 different subjects and 18 different sessions. The best noise classifier was logistic regression and with 96% accuracy.

5.3 Features

Research has shown that features based on the QRS signal do a good job in affect recognition, but they require costly and bulky sensor devices to get a good quality signal. For that reason, in our work QRS derived features were excluded and all of the physiological signals came from a Zephyr Bioharness and a Bodymedia Armband. Preprocessing and extraction of further features was limited to those approaches requiring low memory and computing. The set of features can be seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Sets of features used.

A basic feature, namely a physiological signal recorded by the Bioharness or the ArmBand, was preprocessed by extracting simple statistics with window sizes of 5, 10, 30 and 60 seconds. The statistics used were: Mean, Maximum, Minimum and the Standard deviation. The first set of features called regular features is composed from basic features and subsequent extraction of a particular statistic. Feature set number two was created to counteract variance across sessions by normalizing each feature using the baseline data from that session. These features were called the normalized – per session features. For the third set of additional features, the objective was to measure the divergence between BR and HR. last, set number 4 shows the acceleration-based features, which were used only for clustering.

5.4 Feature Selection

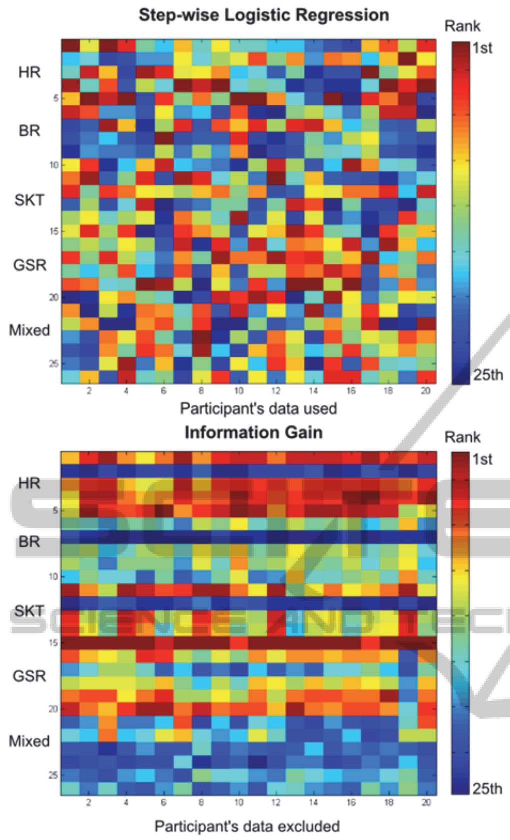

Figure 7: Feature selection results. Features are listed on the left of the heat maps, there are five different groups of five features and the mixed features presented earlier. Among the individual groups the features are organized in the next manner: mean; standard deviation; max; min and normalized per session feature. For the group of mixed features the order is HR_mean/BR_mean then its normalized version, HR_Sd/BR_Sd followed by its normalized and last the (HR_max – HR_min)/BR_mean and its normalized version.

In order to find out how many of the features proposed significantly contributed to the stress recognition task, we performed feature selection. This was done using two different methods. In the first, a leave-one-out cross-validation scheme (Bishop, 2006) was used in conjunction with information gain (Mitchell, 1997); the data for all but one of the participants was used for evaluating. Information gain was chosen because it is fast to execute compared with other methods. The second scheme used was greedy stepwise logistic regression; for this, the data from every participant was evaluated separately. Here, we wanted to find out if there were features that would be the best for all the participants while evaluating them individually.

Results for a window of 5 seconds for information gain and logistic regression can be seen in Figure 7. We conclude that for scheme number one, the effect on the population of removing one participant's data was not significant. For scheme number two, there is no visual pattern. This means that there is not a single best set of features that work for all people; instead there are subsets of features that are good for some of the participants. While the conclusions may seem contradictory, they are, in fact, supportive of each other. Despite there not being a single feature that is good across the entire population, there are features that, on average, have a high value for the stress recognition task.

Using the information from these two experiments, we ranked the features, as shown in Table I. The results show that all the features are in general good, meaning there are not terrible features that should be discarded. For example, the worst feature had about half the ranking score of the best feature.

Table 1: Features Ranking, The numbers denote the feature while its position on the table denotes the rank. The final rank is an average score created using the scores generated for each of the single feature rankings from the information gain and step-wise logistic regression.

Information Gain			Step-wise logistic regression			Final rank	Feature name
5 secs	60 secs	Final	5 secs	60 secs	Final		
15	3	15	17	12	12	15	ST_normal_mean
1	1	3	5	4	5	5	HR_normal_mean
4	8	1	12	5	17	4	HR_min
5	4	4	19	15	19	1	HR_mean
3	9	5	16	17	4	3	HR_max
20	15	20	15	19	15	20	GSR_normal_mean
11	20	11	1	21	16	19	GSR_min
19	5	16	4	22	21	16	GSR_mean
13	11	8	24	2	7	11	ST_mean
16	16	9	7	8	18	8	BR_max
14	19	19	3	18	2	18	GSR_max
18	13	13	18	7	1	9	BR_min
8	14	14	23	20	20	17	GSR_sd
9	18	18	26	1	24	14	ST_min
6	6	6	2	16	22	13	ST_max
10	17	10	20	10	3	10	BR_normal_mean
22	10	22	21	9	10	6	BR_mean
17	22	17	11	3	26	22	HR_BR_normal_mean
21	21	21	10	24	25	21	HR_BR_mean
25	25	25	25	6	6	12	ST_sd
26	26	26	6	25	11	26	MMR_normal_mean
23	12	23	14	26	8	25	MMR_mean
24	23	24	22	14	23	24	HR_sd_BR_normal_mean
12	24	12	13	11	14	2	HR_sd
2	2	2	8	23	9	23	HR_sd_BR_mean
7	7	7	9	13	13	7	BR_sd

6 STRESS RECOGNITION

In this section we explain the two steps used for the training and testing of our stress recognition models. Our method is a middle ground between classification using a population model and personalized models. This scheme separates the population data according to their similarity into subsets and for each of the subsets generated, creates a stress model. The key difference between this

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approach and previous research is that we do not cluster based on activity labels, which are likely not to be available in real-world settings.

The recognition task is performed in a similar fashion: First, the incoming data is recognized as being part of one of the found subsets; then, the corresponding stress model is used to perform the stress recognition (see Figure 8). We used clustering to find the subsets, and Naïve Bayes and Logistic Regression to perform the stress recognition task. All of our experiments were performed using Weka (Mark et al., 2009) from within Matlab. For clustering was used the Matlab K-means function, for classification, we used the Naïve Bayes function from Matlab and Logistic regression from Weka.

Figure 8: General structure of the clustering and classification process. For training this scheme shows how the data is used for creating the models. For testing, this scheme shows how the data is clustered and used.

6.1 Clustering

Physical activity classification has shown good results in the stress recognition task (Hong et al., 2012). However, the human labels given to each of the data points may not be the best descriptors of the activities, or may not be available in real-world settings given the huge number of activities that people perform, nor are they the best way to separate the data. During our data analysis, we concluded that despite the measures taken to control the exertion level, the HR was not following a unimodal distribution within activities. This may be an indicator of varying physical activity exertion level, but it may also be a consequence of the stressor administered during the activity. Independent of the cause, this means there is a varying effort for the heart to execute the activity. Hence, separating our data based on activity, in order to create better stress recognition models will not work since this variability is not taken into account. Instead, if the data is separated into low and high activity/exertion levels, we accomplish the goal of dividing the data according to the physiological signals' behavior, which in this case corresponds to separating the data according to its quantitative properties. By performing this separation, as we will see in the results section, the stress recognition models improve their performance.

Separating the data into low and high activity levels is difficult; there are no labels from our experiments or a clear way to measure the levels. However, making use of K-means, we were able to obtain a good separation of the data set. There are many good clustering algorithms, but very often many of them rely on an affinity matrix like hierarchical clustering (Friedman et al., 2009) or spectral methods (Ng et al., 2001), yet those methods are not usable with our data set as their memory use makes them prohibitive to run on a single personal computer and the computation time can last up to months. There exist methods to approximate this affinity matrix, among them the Nÿstrom approximation (Yan et al., 2009; Fowlkes et al., 2004), however, for this data set, it did not produce good results. These difficulties limited our clustering methods to K-means. In our case we made use of the K-means++ (Arthur and Vassilvitskii, 2007) algorithm that tries to maximize the distance between the initial centroids of the desired clusters, leading to better clusters in the exploration part of K-means. Although limited to use K-means, the results obtained show clusters that clearly separate from high and low exertion levels. An example of the average distribution of data among 2 clusters, found by K-means for a 5-second can be seen in Figure 9. The distribution of data for the 60-seconds window is very similar to that shown in Figure 9. This graph was created by averaging the cluster contents from a 20-fold leave-one subject-out cross-validation. The data set left out for testing corresponds to a participant's complete data set. To determine the equivalence between the different clusters found across the folds, we used the correlation of the clusters' contents.

Based on the correlation, the clusters were grouped in two sets, and the average contents for each set were calculated. Looking at the distribution of data inside the clusters, we can see how the data was divided into one cluster composed mainly of bicycling and walking (*i.e.*, high level of activity), and another which contained walking, bicycling and almost all the sitting, resting and baseline data (*i.e.*, low level of activity).

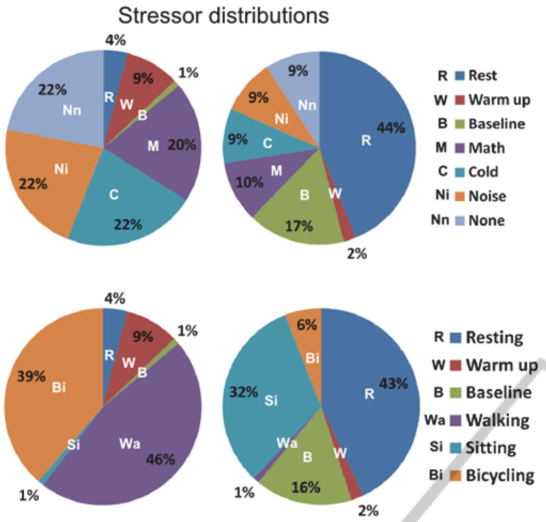

Figure 9: Average data distributions for two clusters and a 5 seconds window. Clusters on the left correspond to high exertion level. On top: Average distribution for the two clusters found and different stressors; looking at the distribution, we can see the even allocation among stressors indicating that these did not play a strong role in the clustering. Bottom: Average distribution for the two clusters found and different activities.

This natural separation of the data created by K-means confirms our hypothesis that a better separation of the data is achievable by using clustering instead of classification. More experiments were performed using a higher number of clusters, however, for those the meaning of the clustering becomes harder to interpret. Moreover, there was no significant improvement in the classification rate of stress by increasing the number of clusters, making the additional computational and memory burden unjustified.

6.2 Classification

For stress classification, Logistic regression was the first model considered, since BR and HR are correlated (they both increase while exercising) we used the Ridge Penalization. The second model used was Naive Bayes. In theory, this model does not work with dependent features, however in practice it has been shown to do a good job. The data used to train the classification models is the data from the clusters found by K-means.

6.3 Results

In order to measure the performance of the models we used leave one out cross validation, where the data set left aside comes entirely from one of the participants. We had a total of 20 different classification models and each was tested using entirely unseen data by the models tested.

As a classification baseline, we used the scores obtained from performing classification directly on the data set without pre-clustering the data set. To obtain the scores, the same cross-validation used with the clustering + classification scheme was used again. Results for classification only, show that the classifiers do a good job in recognizing the calm state (up to 0.76 f-measure), but their performance is poor in recognizing stress (at best 0.29 f-measure). A summary of the best results from the different window sizes (5, 10, 30 and 60 seconds) can be seen in Figure 10.

Our clustering and classification models were tested using varying window sizes and different sets of features: the window sizes used were: 5, 10, 30 and 60 seconds; the sets of features used for classification are comprised of all-features (all) and normalized-features (N); all-features are the regular features, mixed features and normalized features. For clustering, we used either all-features or only the acceleration (Accel). By using only acceleration, we were trying to see whether acceleration data was sufficient to accomplish the clustering task. All the data was standardized using the statistics from the entire training data set, the same statistics that were later used to standardize the testing data set. As a performance metric in this work, we used accuracy and the f-measure for each class: stress and calm state. The reason for using the f-measure is to overcome any imbalance in the ratio of the stress and calm state data, caused by the clustering step. This imbalance can cause accuracy to be an overoptimistic measurement or completely misleading as it could be indicating only the performance of the classifier for recognizing the biggest class. A total of 128 experiments were performed using: 2, 3, 4 and 5 clusters; 5, 10, 30 and 60 seconds windows; 4 different sets of features (classification used sets 1,2 and 3, clustering used 1, 2, and 3 as a single set and 4); two classification algorithms Logistic regression and Naïve Bayes. However, here we only report the results for the extremes of the experiments, which summarize the conclusions that can be derived from these experiments. Results for logistic regression and two clusters (Figure 12) for stress and a window of 5 seconds vary from 0.63 to 0.68 f-measure, across the different sets of features. For a 60-second window the f-measure varies from 0.6 to 0.68 (Figure 11). The results for logistic regression and 5 clusters have similar results as the 2 clusters model.

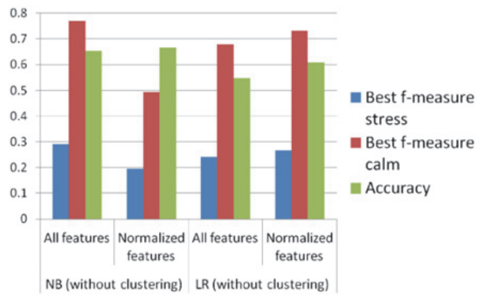

Figure 10: Baseline results for Logistic Regression and Naïve Bayes without clustering.

The f-measure results for Naïve Bayes for two clusters and 5 seconds (Figure 12) vary between 0.65 and 0.69. For the 60 second window, it varies between 0.4 and 0.68 (Figure 12). For 5 clusters and a 5 second window, the f-measure varies between 0.65 and 0.69. For 5 clusters and a 60 second window, the f-measure varies between 0.42 and 0.62. All of the cluster-based results for f-measure for stress (Figures 11 and 12) outperform the models generated without clustering (Figure 10).

7 DISCUSSION

State of the art stress recognition systems have shown accuracies of up to 90% (Ertin et al. 2011; Plarre et al. n.d.) and emotion recognition systems have shown accuracies ranging from 71.6% to 96.59% (Picard and Vyzas, 2001; Kim and André, 2008; Wagner et al., 2005; Kim et al., 2004; Rainville et al., 2006; Lisetti, 2004). However, these systems rely on very controlled settings and often cannot work outside the lab. With respect to stress with physical activity, none of the systems other than our own previous work addresses this problem. At best, one of these systems avoids measuring stress when physical activity is detected (Plarre et al., n.d.).

Our baseline comparison, which used Naïve Bayes and Logistic regression, ignoring the activity context, produces at most 65% accuracy. Our previous work (Hong et al., 2012) which is the only work tackling the problem of stress recognition while performing a physical activity obtained an accuracy of 87%. However, it relied on a set of three activity labels which makes it impractical to implement for real life stress recognition. Also, in all of the aforementioned systems accuracy is the performance measure, which can be overoptimistic, as can be seen for our baseline results in Figure 10. For this reason, we have relied on the f-measure for both the stress and the calm state instead.

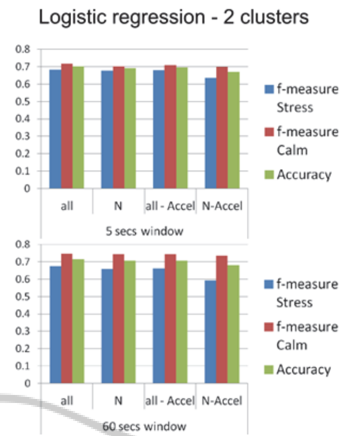

Figure 11: Results for 2 clusters and Logistic regression.

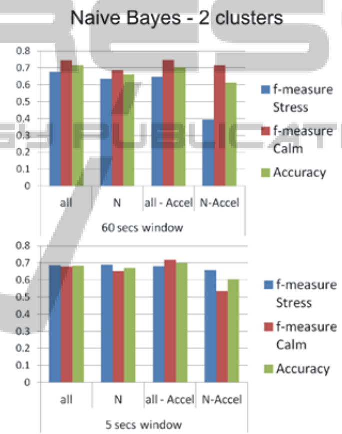

Figure 12: Results for 2 clusters and Naïve Bayes.

The method presented in this paper is a middle ground in between state of the art approaches or ideal systems, including our own previous work which relies on prior knowledge about the data collection, and a crude baseline, which could be either chance (49% in our data set), or the results obtained from using a bare classifier as shown in Figure 10. We expect our system to perform better than other systems under real life conditions because it overcomes the following problems:

- *Laboratory defined activities are different from field activities*: We were limited to the activities that the participants performed during the study (walking-running, biking, and sitting). However, these activities, while common, do not cover the whole spectrum of activities outside the lab like: commuting, carrying objects, sitting in different positions and surfaces, considering the weather. To consider these, the data collection efforts would increase by a factor of 4 for just this small set of

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activities. In this work, we have presented a method that models the natural distribution of the data and creates stress models on top instead of relying on an activity label.

- *The activity label is not the best way to classify the context of the user*: Even having a perfect activity classifier, there is a broken assumption: that the activity is generating some given spectrum of physiological responses or that the physiological responses across an activity, is somehow stable or unimodal. We observed this is not the case in our data set, which was collected on an already constrained and controlled environment. This problem can be expected to arise very often on an outside of the lab deployment.

- *Idiosyncrasies make activity recognition even more challenging:* From our own experience (Hong et al., 2012) and others on (Ravi et al., 2005) how people really walk, sit, and in general perform activities, occurs in very different ways. This causes activity recognition models to perform poorly (46%-75% accuracy) on unseen or new data. Therefore, it is even more unrealistic to expect to have activity labels and to expect them to perform well in a big field deployment where it may not be feasible to build personalized models.

The method presented here boosts the classification rate for stress compared to using only the classifiers without any clustering. Even in the worst case scenario there is a 33% improvement in the f-measure for stress. At best, our scheme can achieve up to a 130% improvement in f-measure for the stress recognition task.

Despite our effort on including physical activity in our experiment, many challenges still remain. For example, our data set was small. Also it only contains people between 18 to 38 years old with good BMIs, which constitute a fairly healthy population. In fact, only 6.4% of this age group is reported to have a poor health status as compared with 18.5% reported for those 45 years and over (Schiller et al., 2012). Food ingestion, digestion and metabolism play an important role in the stress recognition. In our case, participants were asked to refrain from consuming food 3 hours before coming to the study and drinks or food containing caffeine one day before every session. It has been shown that caffeine increases the blood pressure (France and Ditto, 1992) and hence it has a direct effect on the heart responses. Also caffeine accrues with the negative impact of stress on the immune system (Feldman et al., 2004) and general health status. However, it remains as an open question and an interesting challenge, to determine whether recognition of stress is possible while eating and its impact on the stress recognition task. Of course, another important future goal is to finally move out of the lab environment and deploy stress recognition for usage by people in their daily lives

8 CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

In this work, we have designed and developed an approach that is more realistic than any other previous work. Our approach does not rely on intrusive or costly sensors, works in the presence of physical activity and does not require activity labels to work.

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