Denoising Multi-Similarity Formulation: A Self-Paced Curriculum-Driven Approach for Robust Metric Learning

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Abstract

Deep Metric Learning (DML) is a group of techniques that aim to measure the similarity between objects through the neural network. Although the number of DML methods has rapidly increased in recent years, most previous studies cannot effectively handle noisy data, which commonly exists in practical applications and often leads to serious performance deterioration. To overcome this limitation, in this paper, we build a connection between noisy samples and hard samples in the framework of self-paced learning, and propose a Balanced Self-Paced Metric Learning (BSPML) algorithm with a denoising multi-similarity formulation, where noisy samples are treated as extremely hard samples and adaptively excluded from the model training by sample weighting. Especially, due to the pairwise relationship and a new balance regularization term, the sub-problem w.r.t. sample weights is a nonconvex quadratic function. To efficiently solve this nonconvex quadratic problem, we propose a doubly stochastic projection coordinate gradient algorithm. Importantly, we theoretically prove the convergence not only for the doubly stochastic projection coordinate gradient algorithm but also for our BSPML algorithm. Experimental results on several standard data sets demonstrate that our BSPML algorithm has better generalization ability and robustness than the state-of-the-art robust DML approaches.

Introduction

DML aims to learn an embedding space in which similar samples are pulled closer while dissimilar samples are encouraged to stay away from each other (Xing et al. 2002; Wang, Peng, and Lin 2021; Wang et al. 2022). Compared with traditional metric learning methods, which may not capture the nonlinear nature of data, DML utilizes the neural network to obtain representative and discriminative feature embeddings. Thus, DML has attracted increasing attention and been applied to various tasks, including visual tracking (Leal-Taixé, Canton-Ferrer, and Schindler 2016; Tao, Gavves, and Smulders 2016), face recognition (Wen et al. 2018a) and zero-shot learning (Zhang and Saligrama 2016; Yelamarthi et al. 2018; Bucher, Herbin, and Jurie 2016).

The superior performance of machine learning greatly depends on a large number of labeled data sets (Shi et al. 2021), and the performance of DML is no exception. However, manually generating clean data set would involve domain experts evaluating the quality of collected data and thus is very expensive and time-consuming (Frénay and Verleysen 2013). To address this issue, some researchers utilize the online key search engine method (Yu et al. 2018b) and the crowdsourcing method (Li et al. 2017) to gain required data sets at a low cost, but it is possible to introduce noisy samples that represent mislabeled ones (Wu et al. 2021; Yao et al. 2021; Zhai et al. 2020). As far as we know, most existing DML approaches are sensitive to noisy samples since they directly utilize sample labels to learn the similarity information between samples.

Constructing robust DML models against noisy samples is a challenging task, and some researchers have paid attention to this problem. Specifically, Wang et al. proposed a novel objective using the $\ell_1$-norm distance (Wang, Nie, and Huang 2014), and Al-Obaidi et al. utilized the rescaled hinge loss, which was a general form of the common hinge loss, to formulate the DML problem (Al-Obaidi, Zabihzadeh, and Hajiabadi 2020). Moreover, Kim et al. proposed the Proxy-Anchor loss that was robust against noisy labels and outliers because of the use of proxies (Kim et al. 2020). Different from the above technical routes, Yuan et al. proposed a robust distance metric based on the Signal-to-Noise Ratio (SNR) (Yuan et al. 2019).

Different from mislabeled noisy samples, hard samples are correctly labeled ones that are difficult to distinguish by the model (Nguyen et al. 2019; Zhu et al. 2021). In the image data set, hard samples can be anything from cats that look like dogs to images with slightly blurred resolution. Evidently, noisy samples and hard samples have different roles. Noisy samples are harmful because they would mislead the training direction. However, hard samples could force the model to learn more representative features, and thus properly training these hard samples could improve the model generalization ability (Zhu et al. 2021; Chen et al. 2020). Although noisy samples and hard samples are different, we would build the connection between them in the perspective of Self-Paced Learning (SPL) (Kumar, Packer, and Koller

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SPL methods utilize the alternative optimization strategy based on two key sub-problems w.r.t. model parameters $\theta$ and sample weights $w$ respectively. Especially, for the classic SPL formulation, the closed-form solution of the subproblem w.r.t. $w$ can be obtained easily:

\[
\begin{align*}
\begin{cases}
w_i = 1, & L_{\text{point}}(x_i, y_i, \theta) \leq \lambda \\
w_i = 0, & L_{\text{point}}(x_i, y_i, \theta) > \lambda
\end{cases}
\end{align*}
\]

The above solution implies that if the loss value of a sample is less than $\lambda$, the sample will be assigned the weight of 1 and thus be selected to join the training. Otherwise, the sample will be excluded from the training process by reducing its weight to 0. In this case, with increased $\lambda$, hard samples with larger loss values will join the training. Thus, the age parameter $\lambda$ controls the learning pace in SPL.

To better understand the mechanism of SPL and the roles of hard samples and noisy samples, we provide an example of the self-paced classification problem in Fig. 1. According to Eq. (2), when we set $\lambda$ to a small value $\lambda_1$, only easy samples are selected to join the training in Fig. 1.(a). As $\lambda$ increases to $\lambda_2$, hard samples with larger loss are also taken into consideration as shown in Fig. 1.(b). These hard samples could force the model to learn more representative features, and thus properly training these hard samples could improve the generalization ability. However, when $\lambda$ increases to $\lambda_3$, noisy samples with extremely excessive losses are considered and lead to the degeneration of the generalization ability as shown in Fig. 1.(c).

Multi-Similarity Loss

Let $f_\theta(x_i)$ be an embedding vector of the sample $x_i$ where $f_\theta : \mathbb{R}^M \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^m$ means the model with parameters $\theta$. For the training stability, embedding vectors have been normalized. Formally, we define the similarity between two samples as $S_{x_i, x_j} = \langle f_\theta(x_i), f_\theta(x_j) \rangle$, where $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ denotes dot product. A high similarity between two samples implies that these two samples are close to each other in the embedding space. Besides, in DML, a positive pair means a pair of samples from the same class and a negative pair represents a pair of samples from different classes.

Similar to contrastive loss (Bromley et al. 1993) and triplet loss (Hermans, Beyer, and Leibe 2017), Multi-Similarity (MS) loss (Wang et al. 2019) is one pair-based DML loss, which pays attention to the distance information between pairs of samples. Specifically, the MS objective is formulated as:

\[
L_{\text{MS}}(\theta) = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{c=1}^{C} \sum_{a=1}^{N_c} \left[ e^{-\alpha(S_{x_a^c, x_a^c} - \rho)} + e^{-\beta(S_{x_a^c, x_a^c} - \rho)} \right],
\]

where $S_{x_a^c, x_a^c} = \langle f_\theta(x_a^c), f_\theta(x_a^c) \rangle$, $\alpha$ and $\beta$ are fixed hyper-parameters, $x_a^c$ means the $a$-th sample in class $c \in [C]$, $N_c$ is the number of samples in class $c$.
We select informative pairs from a negative pair method is also proposed. For an anchor sample \( x^c_i \), if a negative pair \( \{x^c_i, x^k_j\} \), \( k \in [C] \), \( k \neq c \), \( n \in [N^k] \) satisfies the following condition:

\[
S_{x^c_i, x^k_j} < \min_{p \in [N^c]} S_{x^c_i, x^c_p} - \epsilon,
\]

where \( \epsilon \) is a given margin, the negative pair can be considered as an informative negative pair. And an informative positive pair \( \{x^c_i, x^p_j\} \), \( p \neq c \) should satisfy:

\[
S_{x^c_i, x^p_j} > \max_{n \in [N^k]} S_{x^c_i, x^c_n} + \epsilon.
\]

Proposed Algorithm

In this section, we provide our balanced self-paced metric learning algorithm followed by its objective function.

Objective Function

Inspired by the classic SPL formulation, we propose the new denoising multi-similarity formulation:

\[
\mathcal{L}(\theta, w; \lambda) = \frac{1}{C} \sum_{c=1}^{C} \sum_{i=1}^{N^c} w^c_i \left( \frac{\zeta(c) - w^c_i}{N^c} \xi^c_{\theta}(x^c_i) + \frac{\sum_{k \in [C], k \neq c} \zeta(k)}{C - 1} \xi^c_{\theta}(x^c_i) \right)
- \lambda \sum_{c=1}^{C} \frac{\zeta(c)}{N^c} + \frac{\mu}{C - 1} \sum_{c=1}^{C} \sum_{k=c+1}^{C} \left( \frac{\zeta(c)}{N^c} - \frac{\zeta(k)}{N^k} \right)^2
\]

s.t. \( w^c_i \in [0, 1], \forall c \in [C], a \in [N^c] \)

where \( \lambda \) is the age parameter that controls the learning pace in SPL and \( \zeta(c) = \sum_{i=1}^{N^c} w^c_i \) means the sum of sample weights in class \( c \). Importantly, the last term in Eq. (6) is our new balance regularization term. Specifically, DML problems usually focus on a large number of classes. Thus, we have to face the challenge of the unbalanced average sample weights among classes, e.g., all samples in some classes are assigned the weights of value 1, while all samples in other classes are assigned the weights of value 0. To overcome this challenge, we propose our balance regularization term, which punishes the absolute difference between the average sample weights of different classes.

Balanced Self-Paced Metric Learning

Following the traditional SPL practice, our BSPML utilizes the alternative optimization strategy based on two key sub-problems w.r.t. \( \theta \) and \( w \) as shown in Algorithm 1, where \( \epsilon \) is the multiplier of \( \lambda \) and \( \lambda_\infty \) is the maximum value of \( \lambda \). In the following, we present Algorithms 2 and 3 used for solving the two key sub-problems w.r.t. \( \theta \) and \( w \) respectively.

Mini-Batch Gradient Algorithm for Weighted Multi-Similarity Loss

When we fix \( w \) to optimize \( \theta \), our objective function degenerates into a weighted multi-similarity formulation that can be optimized by the common practice in DML.

Stochastic sampling: We first stochastically sample \( P \) classes and then stochastically sample \( K \) samples per class. Informative pair mining: We select informative pairs from these \( PK \) samples according to Eqs. (4) and (5). In fact, when we use the original MS formulation, we inevitably utilize noisy pairs that would produce noisy gradients as Fig. 2.(a) shows. However, in our BSPML algorithm, we exclude noisy samples by reducing these weights under the guidance of the loss value and thus obtain an embedding space with satisfactory performance, where there exists enough distance between samples from different classes as shown in Fig. 2.(d).

Weighted informative batch loss: For an anchor sample \( x_i \), we define \( \hat{P}_{x_i} \) as the index set of informative positive pairs and \( \hat{N}_{x_i} \) as the index set of informative negative pairs. Then, the weighted informative batch loss is formed as:

\[
L_{WIBL}(\theta) = \frac{1}{PK} \sum_{i=1}^{PK} w_i \left( \sum_{p \in \hat{P}_{x_i}} \frac{w_p}{|\hat{P}_{x_i}|} \log \left[ 1 + \sum_{p \in \hat{P}_{x_i}} e^{-\alpha(S_{x_i, x_p} - \rho)} \right] + \sum_{n \in \hat{N}_{x_i}} \frac{w_n}{|\hat{N}_{x_i}|} \log \left[ 1 + \sum_{n \in \hat{N}_{x_i}} e^{\beta(S_{x_i, x_n} - \rho)} \right] \right).
\]

Finally, we summarize the above procedures in Algorithm 2, where the gradient-based method means the optimization method utilizing the gradient information such as stochastic
Algorithm 1: Balanced Self-Paced Metric Learning

Input: Maximum iteration $T$, initial age parameter $\lambda^0$, multiplier $c$ and maximum age parameter $\lambda_\infty$.
Output: The optimal $\theta$.
1: Initialize $\mathbf{w}^0 = \mathbf{1}_N$.
2: for $t = 1, \cdots, T$ do
3:   Fix $\mathbf{w}$ to optimize $\theta$ through Algorithm 2.
4:   Fix $\theta$ to optimize $\mathbf{w}$ through Algorithm 3.
5:   $\lambda^t = \min(c\lambda^{t-1}, \lambda_\infty)$.
6: end for

Algorithm 2: Mini-Batch Gradient Algorithm for Weighted Multi-Similarity Loss

Input: Maximum iteration $T$, initial model parameter matrix $\theta^0$, class batch size $P$ and sample batch size $K$.
Output: The optimal $\theta$.
1: for $t = 1, \cdots, T$ do
2:     Sample $P$ classes stochastically and then sample $K$ samples per class stochastically.
3:     Select informative pair index sets $\tilde{P}$ and $\tilde{N}$ according to Eqs. (4) and (5).
4:     Update $\theta$ using gradient-based method with the loss $L_{WBL}$, i.e., Eq. (7).
5: end for

Algorithm 3: Doubly Stochastic Projection Coordinate Gradient Method

Input: Maximum iteration $T$, initial sample weight vector $\mathbf{w}^0$, learning rate $\gamma$, class batch size $P$ and weight batch size $K$.
Output: The optimal $\mathbf{w}$.
1: for $t = 1, \cdots, T$ do
2:     Sample one weight $w_a^c$, $c \in [C]$, $a \in [N^c]$ stochastically.
3:     Sample $K$ weights different from $w_a^c$ in class $c$ stochastically, sample $P$ classes different from class $c$ and $K$ weights per class stochastically.
4:     Calculate the stochastic gradient $G(w_a^c)$.
5:     Update $\mathbf{w}^t = \mathbb{P}_{[0,1]^N}(\mathbf{w}^{t-1} - \gamma t G(w_a^c)e_a^c)$.
6: end for

doubly stochastic gradient $G(w_a^c)$ regarding to a particular coordinate $w_a^c$ as follows:

\[
G(w_a^c) = \frac{1}{N^c} (G_p(w_a^c) + G_n(w_a^c) + G_b(w_a^c) - \lambda),
\]

\[
G_p(w_a^c) = \frac{1}{K} \sum_{p=1}^{K} w_a^c (\xi_p^c(\mathbf{x}_p^a) + \xi_p^c(\mathbf{x}_n^c)),
\]

\[
G_n(w_a^c) = \frac{1}{P} \sum_{k=1}^{P} \frac{1}{K} \sum_{i=1}^{K} w_a^c (\xi_n^k(\mathbf{x}_n^a) + \xi_n^k(\mathbf{x}_n^c)),
\]

\[
G_b(w_a^c) = 2\mu \left( \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N^c} w_a^c}{N^c} - \frac{1}{C-1} \sum_{k \in [C], k \neq c} \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N^k} w_k^c}{N^k} \right).
\]

The gradient $G$ in Eq. (8) is composed of four terms. Both $G_p$ and $G_n$ are related to the similarity between samples, and they imply that if one sample owns the high similarity to samples from different classes and the low similarity to samples from the same class, our algorithm would exclude this sample from the training by gradually reducing its weight. Moreover, the $G_b$ is generated by our proposed balance regularization term. As we expected, a sample will be assigned a larger weight if the average sample weight $\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N^c} w_a^c}{N^c}$ of its class is low, or the average sample weight $\frac{1}{C-1} \sum_{k \in [C], k \neq c} \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N^k} w_k^c}{N^k}$ of all other classes is high. Finally, the last term of Eq. (8) is the age parameter $\lambda$, which controls the learning pace in SPL. With increased $\lambda$, our algorithm tends to assign samples larger weights.

The doubly stochastic projection coordinate gradient method is summarized in Algorithm 3, where $\gamma$ means the learning rate, $\mathbb{P}_S$ is the projection operation to the set $S$ and $e_a^c$ is one unit vector where the coordinate with the same index as $w_a^c$ holds the value of 1.
Theoretical Analysis

In this section, we prove the convergence of Algorithms 3 and 1. All the proof details are available in Appendix.

**Convergence of Algorithm 3:** For Algorithm 3, let \( w_{j(t)} \) mean the coordinate selected in \( t \)-iteration and \( B(t) \) mean the mini-batch sampled in \( t \)-iteration. Then, we define
\[
\nabla_{j(t)} \mathcal{L}(w^t; \theta, \lambda) = \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}(w^t; \theta, \lambda)}{\partial w_{j(t)}}.
\]

Next, we introduce the necessary assumption and the definition of the projected gradient.

**Assumption 1.** For any \( t \in \mathbb{N} \), we have
\[
\mathbb{E}_{B(t)} \left[ |G(w_{j(t)}) - \nabla_{j(t)} \mathcal{L}(w^t; \theta, \lambda)|^2 \right] \leq (\sigma^t)^2,
\]
where \( \sigma^t > 0 \) is some constant.

**Definition 1 (Projected gradient (Ghadimi, Lan, and Zhang 2016)).** Let \( S \) be a closed convex set with dimension \( N \) and the projected gradient is defined as:
\[
G_S(w, g, \gamma) = \frac{1}{\gamma}(w - P_S(w - \gamma g)),
\]
where \( w \in S \), \( g \in \mathbb{R}^N \) and \( \gamma \in \mathbb{R} \).

Assumption 1 is a common assumption in stochastic optimization (Gu, Huo, and Huang 2019), which bounds the error between the stochastic gradient and the full gradient. Besides, based on Definition 1, we have that
\[
G_{[0,1]^N}(w^t, G(w_{j(t)})) = \frac{w^t - w^{t+1}}{\gamma^t} := \hat{D}^t
\]
means the projected gradient generated in \( t \)-iteration, where \( e_i \) is one unit vector with \( i \)-th coordinate holding the value of 1. Based on these, we provide the convergence of Algorithm 3 in Theorem 1.

**Theorem 1.** When Assumption 1 holds and we use Algorithm 3 to optimize \( w \), \( \alpha_{\text{max}} > 0 \) is the maximum lipschitz constant of sub-problems w.r.t. single coordinate \( w_i, i \in [N] \), stepizes \( \gamma^t \) satisfy \( 0 < \gamma^t \leq \gamma^t_{\text{max}} \) and
\[
\sum_{t=1}^{\infty} \gamma^t = +\infty, \quad \sum_{t=1}^{\infty} \gamma^t(\sigma^t)^2 < \infty,
\]
then there exists an index sub-sequence \( K \) such that
\[
\lim_{t \to \infty} \mathbb{E}_i ||\hat{D}^t||_2 = 0.
\]

**Remark 1.** The above theorem shows that Algorithm 3 approaches to a stationary point of the sub-problem w.r.t. sample weights. It indicates that our algorithm can assign appropriate sample weights to guide the model training.

**Convergence of Algorithm 1:** Before providing the convergence of our BSPML algorithm, i.e., Algorithm 1, we introduce the following assumption:

**Assumption 2.** If we call the gradient-based algorithm to minimize \( F(X) \) with an initial solution \( X^0 \), we have that \( F(X^0) \geq F(X^t) \) when the iteration number \( t \) is large enough.

It is easy to verify that Assumption 2 is a basic requirement for a gradient-based optimizer no matter whether the optimization objective is convex or not. At this time, we give the convergence of our BSPML as follows.

**Theorem 2.** If Assumption 2 holds, the objective function sequence \( \{\mathcal{L}(\theta^t, w^t; \lambda^t)\}_{t=1}^{\infty} \) generated by the BSPML algorithm converges with the following property:
\[
\lim_{t \to \infty} ||\mathcal{L}(\theta^t, w^t; \lambda^t) - \mathcal{L}(\theta^{t-1}, w^{t-1}; \lambda^{t-1})|| = 0.
\]

**Remark 2.** The above theorem shows that when the iteration number is large enough, our objective function can converge to a fixed value by using our BSPML algorithm.

**Experiments**

In this section, we present experimental results to demonstrate the superiority of our BSPML algorithm.

**Experimental Setup**

**Data Sets:** We conduct experiments on four standard data sets: CUB200, Cars-196, In-Shop and Stanford Online Products (SOP). For all data sets, we use half of the classes for training and the rest for testing. In addition, to test the robustness of all methods, we construct artificial noisy data sets. Specifically, we stochastically select samples from each class in the training set and change their labels to other classes. Since there are only a few samples in most classes of the SOP data set, making it noisy would seriously break the nature of this data set. Thus, we did not conduct experiments on the noisy SOP data set.

**Compared Algorithms:** We compare our algorithm with classic DML algorithms, i.e., contrastive loss (Hadsell, Chopra, and LeCun 2006) and triplet loss (Hermans, Beyer, and Leibe 2017), state-of-the-art DML algorithms, i.e., margin loss (Wu et al. 2017), FastAP loss (Cakir et al. 2019) and MS loss (Wang et al. 2019), and robust DML algorithms, i.e., RDML loss (Al-Obaidi, Zabihzadeh, and Hajiabadi 2020), Proxy-Anchor loss (Kim et al. 2020) and SNR loss (Yuan et al. 2019).

**Design of Experiments:** All algorithms are implemented based on the open PyTorch package (Musgrave, Belongie, and Lim 2020) using the same network structure with the embedding size 512. All the network parameters are optimized by SGD with the learning rate 5e-6 and the batch size 64. Specifically, one batch is constructed by first sampling \( P = 16 \) classes, and then sampling \( K = 4 \) images for each class. For contrastive loss and SNR loss, the positive margin is set to 1 and the negative margin is set to 0. As original paper shows, we set \( \alpha = 0.2, \beta^{(0)} = 1.2 \) and \( \beta^{(class)} = \beta^{(img)} = 0 \) for margin loss. For FastAP loss, the number of soft histogram bins is set to 10 recommended by the authors. \( \eta \) is selected from \{0.5, 1, 2, 3, 4\} for RDML loss. For Proxy-Anchor loss, \( \alpha = 32, \delta = 0.1 \) and all proxies are initialized using a normal distribution. For MS loss and our BSPML, \( \epsilon \) is set to 0.1 and \( \alpha = 2, \beta = 1, \beta = 50 \).

Considering hyper-parameters \( \mu \) and \( \lambda \), we design experiments to analyze their roles. Note that we introduce the
| NR | Contrastive | Triplet smooth | Margin | FastAP | MS | RDML | Proxy-Anchor | SNR | BSPML |
|----|-------------|----------------|--------|--------|----|-------|--------------|-----|-------|
|    | CUB         |                |        |        |    |       |              |     |       |
| 10%| 48.26±0.21  | 39.69±0.17     | 37.72±0.18 | 41.57±0.13 | 48.46±0.16 | 41.59±0.15 | 48.31±0.12 | 45.95±0.19 | 50.08±0.18 |
| 20%| 47.79±0.19  | 36.25±0.17     | 35.06±0.20 | 38.80±0.15 | 47.68±0.16 | 39.63±0.16 | 47.62±0.14 | 45.16±0.17 | 49.38±0.20 |
| 30%| 46.25±0.24  | 33.92±0.20     | 32.36±0.18 | 37.10±0.15 | 46.25±0.14 | 37.57±0.16 | 46.66±0.15 | 44.43±0.21 | 48.74±0.19 |

|    | SOP         |                |        |        |    |       |              |     |       |
| 10%| 55.24±0.20  | 36.58±0.18     | 40.24±0.18 | 33.11±0.12 | 57.11±0.15 | 37.09±0.16 | 57.84±0.15 | 55.04±0.17 | 58.78±0.18 |
| 20%| 54.55±0.24  | 35.76±0.17     | 38.49±0.21 | 31.68±0.10 | 56.37±0.17 | 36.32±0.15 | 57.18±0.15 | 53.49±0.18 | 58.24±0.16 |
| 30%| 52.94±0.22  | 34.81±0.19     | 37.67±0.17 | 31.04±0.10 | 55.14±0.18 | 35.55±0.15 | 56.06±0.16 | 51.51±0.20 | 57.38±0.19 |

|    | In-shop     |                |        |        |    |       |              |     |       |
| 10%| 69.59±0.29  | 59.69±0.21     | 50.33±0.20 | 56.28±0.18 | 70.33±0.25 | 62.50±0.22 | 70.51±0.17 | 67.24±0.25 | 71.44±0.23 |
| 20%| 63.34±0.27  | 53.20±0.18     | 45.74±0.21 | 52.03±0.13 | 65.68±0.20 | 57.73±0.20 | 66.38±0.17 | 60.36±0.23 | 67.91±0.25 |
| 30%| 56.76±0.22  | 48.35±0.17     | 43.16±0.15 | 49.37±0.13 | 58.85±0.24 | 53.97±0.21 | 60.25±0.15 | 53.62±0.23 | 62.04±0.23 |

**Table 1:** Retrieval and clustering performance (%) on original data sets.

**Table 2:** Recall@1 results (%) with the corresponding standard deviation on noisy data sets with different Noise Ratios (NR).

Mean of Average Weights of classes (MAW) and the Standard Deviation of Average Weights of classes (SDAW):

$$\text{MAW} = \frac{1}{C} \sum_{c=1}^{C} \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N_c} w_{i,c}^c}{N_c},$$

$$\text{SDAW} = \left( \frac{1}{C} \sum_{c=1}^{C} \left( \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N_c} w_{i,c}^c}{N_c} - \text{MAW} \right)^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{2}}.$$

MAW represents the average weight of all samples and SDAW implies the balance degree between the average sample weights of classes. The smaller the value of SDAW, the more balanced the average sample weights of classes. Moreover, to verify the feasibility of each part of our BSPML, we carry out ablation experiments with varying embedding sizes \{64, 128, 256, 512\} on noisy data sets.

For the retrieval task, all algorithms are evaluated by the standard metric Recall@K. To calculate Recall@K, each testing sample first retrieves K nearest neighbors from the test set and receives a score 1 if a sample of the same class is retrieved among the K nearest neighbors. Considering the clustering performance, we utilize the normalized mutual information (NMI) score: $\text{NMI}(\Omega, C) = \frac{H(\Omega) + H(C)}{H(\Omega + C)}$, where $\Omega$ denotes the real clustering result and $C$ denotes the set of clusters obtained by K-means. Here, $H(\cdot)$ represents the mutual information and $H(\cdot)$ represents the entropy.

**Results and Discussion**

Table 1 presents Recall@K and NMI performance on four standard data sets. Benefiting from the SPL strategy, our BSPML avoids getting stuck into one bad local optimal solution and thus achieves better generalization ability than MS loss that is the non-SPL version of our BSPML. Meanwhile, compared with other state-of-the-art DML algorithms, our BSPML also obtains better performance.

Table 2 shows Recall@1 performance on three noisy data sets with different noise ratios (from 10% to 30%). These results show that our BSPML obviously achieves better performance than non-robust DML algorithms. Compared with robust DML algorithms, our BSPML also has sufficient advantages. Specifically, while SNR loss seems to be helpful against the noisy feature, it has limited robustness against the noisy label that is a much trickier challenge. Proxy-Anchor loss and RDML loss attempt to reduce the influence of noisy samples, but they are still sensitive to large noise ratios. Our BSPML is able to exclude noisy samples from the training...
process directly and thus has better robustness.

Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 show the effect of $\lambda$ and $\mu$ on the sample weight. Note that MAW (14) represents the average weight of all samples and SDAW (14) implies the balance degree between the average sample weights of classes. Fig. 3 clearly reveals that with the increase of $\lambda$, our BSPML tends to assign samples larger weights and thus allows hard samples with larger losses to join the training. Obviously, this phenomenon is consistent with the classic SPL strategy. Moreover, as shown in Fig. 4, the average sample weights of classes are balanced as much as possible when $\mu$ is set to a large value. This phenomenon shows the critical role of our balance regularization term.

Fig. 5 shows the Recall@1 performance of ablation experiments with varying embedding sizes {64, 128, 256, 512} on the data sets with 20% noisy samples, where the SPMS is generated by introducing SPL strategy into MS loss without the balance regularization term. Compared with the original MS loss, the performance of SPMS is improved regardless of the embedding size. However, SPMS still faces the challenge of the unbalanced average sample weights among classes. Benefiting from the balance regularization term, our BSPML achieves the best performance.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, we build a connection between noisy samples and hard samples in the framework of self-paced learning and propose a Balanced Self-Paced Metric Learning (BSPML) algorithm with a novel denoising multi-similarity formulation to deal with noisy data in DML effectively. Specifically, our BSPML algorithm treats noisy samples as extremely hard samples and adaptively excludes them from the model training by sample weighting. Experimental results demonstrate that our BSPML algorithm has better robustness than the state-of-the-art robust DML approaches.
Acknowledgments
Bin Gu was partially supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (No:61573191).

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