Virtual Interpersonal Touch: Expressing and Recognizing Emotions through Haptic Devices

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Abstract

The current work examines the phenomenon of Virtual Interpersonal Touch (VIT), people touching one another via force-feedback haptic devices. As collaborative virtual environments become utilized more effectively, it is only natural that interactants will have the ability to touch one another. In the current work, we used relatively basic devices to begin to explore the expression of emotion through VIT. In Experiment 1, participants utilized a 2 DOF force-feedback joystick to express seven emotions. We examined various dimensions of the forces generated and subjective ratings of the difficulty of expressing those emotions. In Experiment 2, a separate group of participants attempted to recognize the recordings of emotions generated in Experiment 1. In Experiment 3, pairs of participants attempted to communicate the seven emotions using physical handshakes. Results indicated that humans were above chance when recognizing emotions via VIT, but not as accurate as people expressing emotions through non-mediated handshakes. We discuss a theoretical framework for understanding emotions expressed through touch as well as the implications of the current findings for the utilization of VIT in human computer interaction.

Virtual Interpersonal Touch: Expressing and Recognizing Emotions through Haptic Devices

There are many reasons to support the development of collaborative virtual environments (Lanier, 2001). One major criticism of collaborative virtual environments, however, is that they do not provide emotional warmth and nonverbal intimacy (Mehrabian, 1967; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986). In the current work, we empirically explore the augmentation of collaborative virtual environments with simple networked haptic devices to allow for the transmission of emotion through *virtual interpersonal touch* (VIT).

EMOTION IN SOCIAL INTERACTION

Interpersonal communication is largely non-verbal (Argyle, 1988), and one of the primary purposes of nonverbal behavior is to communicate subtleties of emotional states between individuals. Clearly, if social interaction mediated by virtual reality and other digital communication systems is to be successful, it will be necessary to allow for a full range of emotional expressions via a number of communication channels. In face-to-face communication, we express emotion primarily through facial expressions, voice, and through touch. While emotion is also communicated through other nonverbal gestures such as posture and hand signals (Cassell & Thorisson, in press; Collier, 1985), in the current review we focus on emotions transmitted via face, voice and touch.

In a review of the emotion literature, Ortony and Turner (1990) discuss the concept of basic emotions. These fundamental emotions (e.g., fear) are the building blocks of other more complex emotions (e.g., jealousy). Furthermore, many people argue that these emotions are innate and universal across cultures (Plutchik, 2001). In terms of defining the set of basic emotions, previous work has provided very disparate sets of such emotions.

For example, Watson (1930) has limited his list to “hardwired” emotions such as fear, love, and rage. On the other hand, Ekman & Friesen (1975) have limited their list to those discernable through facial movements such as anger, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, and surprise.

The psychophysiology literature adds to our understanding of emotions by suggesting a fundamental biphasic model (Bradley, 2000). In other words, emotions can be thought of as variations on two axes - hedonic valence and intensity. Pleasurable emotions have high hedonic valences, while negative emotions have low hedonic valences. This line of research suggests that while emotions may appear complex, much of the variation may nonetheless be mapped onto a two-dimensional scale. This notion also dovetails with research in embodied cognition that has shown that human language is spatially organized (Richardson, Spivey, Edelman, & Naples, 2001). For example, certain words are judged to be more “horizontal” while other words are judged to be more “vertical”.

In the current work, we were not concerned predominantly with what constitutes a basic or universal emotion. Instead, we attempted to identify emotions that could be transmitted through virtual touch, and provide an initial framework for classifying and interpreting those digital haptic emotions. To this end, we reviewed theoretical frameworks that have attempted to accomplish this goal with other nonverbal behaviors—most notably facial expressions and paralinguistics.

Facial Expressions

Research in facial expressions has received much attention from social scientists for the past fifty years. Some researchers argue that the face is a portal to one’s internal mental state (Ekman & Friesen 1978; Izard, 1971). These scholars argue that when an emotion occurs, a series of biological events follow that produce changes in a person—one of those manifestations is movement in facial muscles. Moreover, these changes in facial expressions are also correlated with other physiological changes such as heart rate or blood pressure (Ekman & Friesen, 1976). Alternatively, other researchers argue that the correspondence of facial expressions to actual emotion is not as high as many think. For example, Fridland (1994) believes that people use facial expressions as a tool to strategically elicit behaviors from others or to accomplish social goals in interaction. Similarly, other researchers argue that not all emotions have corresponding facial expressions (Cacioppo et al., 1997). Nonetheless, most scholars would agree that there is some value to examining facial expressions of another if one's goal is to gain an understanding of that person's current mental state.

Ekman's groundbreaking work on emotions has provided tools to begin forming dimensions on which to classify his set of six basic emotions (Ekman & Friesen, 1975). Figure 1 provides a framework for the facial classifications developed by those scholars.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

There has recently been a great surge of work to develop automatic algorithms to identify emotional states from a video image of facial movements. Early work developed a facial action coding system (FACS) in which coders manually identified anchor points on the face in static images (Ekman & Friesen 1978). Similarly, computer scientists have developed vision algorithms that automatically find similar anchor points with varying amounts of success (see Essa & Pentland, 1994 for an early example). As computer vision algorithms and perceptual interfaces become more elegant (see Turk & Kölsch, 2004, for a review), it is becoming possible to measure the emotional state of people in real-time, based on algorithms that automatically detect facial anchor points and then categorize those points into emotions that have been previously identified using some type of learning algorithm. These systems sometimes attempt to recognize specific emotions (Michel & El Kaliouby, 2003) or alternatively attempt to gauge binary states such as general affect (Picard & Bryant Daily, 2005). In the current work we attempt to accomplish a similar goal with expression of emotions through touch.

Voice

Nass and Brave (2005) provide a thorough review of the literature on voice and emotion. In terms of inferring aspects of emotions from vocal communication, arousal is the most readily discernible feature, but voice can also provide indications of valence and specific emotions through acoustic properties such as pitch range, rhythm, and amplitude or duration changes (Ball & Breese, 2000; Scherer, 1989). A bored or sad user, for example, will typically exhibit slower, lower-pitched speech, with little high-frequency energy, while a user experiencing fear, anger, or joy will speak faster and louder, with strong high-frequency energy and more explicit enunciation (Picard, 1997). Murray and Arnott (1993) provide a detailed account of the vocal effects associated with several basic emotions.

Virtual Interpersonal Touch

In virtual reality, voice expression of emotion is easy through digitized audio streams. Facial expression is more challenging, but certainly possible given recent advances in the computer vision tracking algorithms discussed above. However, person-to-person haptic interaction, both due to the difficulty of constructing large force-feedback devices as well as the dearth of research in psychology on touching behavior (compared to other nonverbal behavior—see Argyle, 1988 for a review), has received less attention than face and voice.

We know that in general, touch tends to increase trust. For example, waiters who briefly touch their customers receive higher tips than those who do not (Crusco & Wetzel, 1984). In face-to face communication, people use touch to add sincerity/establish trust (valence), to add weight/urgency, mark significance (arousal), and to adhere to formalized greetings and parting gestures such as handshakes. However, touch is not used as often as facial expressions and voice intonation changes. Some reasons for this discrepancy are that touch is one-to-one only, not one-to-many as the other cues are. In other words, touch is inefficient. Furthermore, touch can be inconvenient, and requires close distance and physical coupling (restriction of movement). Finally, touch may be overly intimate or socially inappropriate for many interactions (Burgoon & Walther, 1990), as touch is one of the most definitive markers of intimacy in social interaction.

While handshaking is the most common social interaction that involves touch, very little empirical research has been done with regards to how handshaking relates to other variables, such as emotion. A notable exception is a study that investigated how variations in handshaking relate to personality and gender (Chaplin, Phillips, Brown, Clanton, and Stein, 2000). In that study, research assistants were trained to initiate a handshake with participants and rate the handshakes on a set of measures - completeness of grip, temperature, dryness, strength, duration, vigor, texture, and eye contact. Participants then filled out personality inventories. Substantial correlations among the handshaking measures led the researchers to create a composite which they termed “firm handshake”. Male participants were found to have firmer handshakes than female participants, and firmer handshakes were positively correlated with Extraversion and Openness to Experience on the Big-5 personality measures. One of the key contributions of the study was in demonstrating the link between personality and behavior and how personality might in fact be inferred from behavior. The goal of the current studies is to demonstrate the ability to infer specific emotions from haptic behavior.

Previous work on virtual haptic communication and force-feedback has been largely used to simulate physical interaction between a human being and an inanimate object. However, there have been some projects designed to explore virtual interpersonal touch. One of the first attempts at multi-user force-feedback interaction, *Telephonic Arm Wrestling* (White & Back, 1986), provided a basic mechanism to simulate the feeling of arm wresting over a telephone line. Later on, Fogg, Cutler, Arnold, and Eisback (1998) described *HandJive,* a pair of linked hand-held objects for playing haptic games. Similarly, *InTouch* (Brave, Ishii, & Dahley, 1998) is a desktop device that employs force-feedback to create the illusion of a shared physical object over distance, enabling simultaneous physical manipulation and interaction. Recently, Kim and colleagues (Kim et al., 2004) have developed haptic interaction platforms that allow multiple users to experience VIT without network delay. There have been other notable examples of projects geared towards allowing VIT (Chang, O’Modrain, Gunther, Jacob, & Ishii, 2002; Clynes, 1977; Goldberg & Wallace, 1993; Noma & Miyasato, 1997; Oakley, Brewster, & Gray, 2000; Strong & Gaver, 1996). Many of these projects report positive reactions from users based on informal user testing.

While there has been some work on the design side of VIT, very little is known about the psychological effects of haptic communication, although some research has begun to explore this issue. Basdogan, Ho, Slater, Durlach, and Shrinivasan (1998), ran a series of studies in which participants used haptic devices to perform a collaborative task, and could feel the digital avatars of one another while performing the task. Their results demonstrated that adding VIT to a visual interaction improved performance on a spatial task and increased subjective ratings of "togetherness" (see also Sallnas, Rassmus-Grohn, & Sjostrom, 2000). A study by Brave, Nass and Sirinian (2001) presented participants with a screen based maze. Participants were either trying to compete or cooperate with an alleged other player, and they either received haptic feedback or visual feedback from the other alleged player. Their results demonstrated that VIT caused changes in trust among the players; in competitive tasks, VIT increased subjective ratings of trust while in cooperative tasks VIT decreased ratings of trust.

The results from these two studies examining VIT in user studies are extremely encouraging. VIT substantially changes an interaction, both in terms of task performance as well as subjective emotions towards other participants. Haptic communication has potential because we know that the phenomenon of touching another human being is powerful, but largely unused in virtual environments. VIT is uniquely compelling because we can use VIT to accomplish transformed social interaction (Bailenson, Beall, Loomis, Blascovich, & Turk, 2004). Transformed Social Interaction allows people in immersive virtual environments to accomplish nonverbal behaviors, appearances, and other interaction skills that are not possible in the physical world by allowing a strategic decoupling between rendered and performed behaviors.

In other words, with VIT we can create transformed haptic communication scenarios that are not possible in the physical world. For example, we can scale up or down aspects of the force behind VIT in order to accomplish interaction goals that are more appropriate to a given social context. Moreover, we can accomplish one-to-many interactions, allowing for a haptic gesture to be received by dozens of people at once. Finally, communication of emotion in virtual reality does not necessarily have to copy the real world; instead it can be abstracted (Brewster & Brown, 2004). We have the opportunity to explore alternate channels of emotional communication (e.g., avatars that change color when touched or using the facial expressions of Person A to regulate the degree to which Person B receives haptic feedback in a handshake).

As pointed out by a number of researchers (Durlach & Slater, 2000; Hanson & Skogg, 2001; Pantic & Rothkrantz, 2003; Rovers & Essen, 2004), it is essential to begin to develop a framework for understanding emotions communicated through haptic devices. For example, it has been shown that gesture recognition over video streams enhances remote collaboration (Fussell et al., 2004). Building haptic devices that recognize and could generate emotions would further enhance this remote collaboration paradigm. The goal of the current work is to provide a set of studies that begins to test such a framework.

Deliberately Expressed Emotions versus Automatic Leakage

One theme discussed above in regards to facial expressions is the distinction between actively creating an emotional behavior for a strategic goal (deliberate), compared to an uncontrollable response to an emotion that is expressed without the person being able to control the behavior that controls the emotion (automatic). For example, there is research by Paul Ekman and colleagues on “The Duchenne Smile” (Ekman, Davidson, &

Friesen, 1990), which is a specific and automatic type of smile that correlates with other physiological and behavioral predictors of actual enjoyment. Smiles which are more deliberate are qualitatively different than the automatic smiles, and tend to have mouth movements that are similar to genuine smiles but fewer eye movements. In sum, some emotional facial expressions are deliberate, while others are automatic, and in terms of facial expressions and voice, it is possible to reliably differentiate the two. Indeed, there is a huge amount of research attempting to detect deception through facial and vocal cues (see Ekman, 2001, for a review).

As Nass and Brave (2005) point out, much research studying emotion in human-computer interaction is problematic because it tends to examine photographs, voices, and other behaviors which are deliberately performed by actors as opposed to naturally occurring emotions experienced automatically by participants. However, there is little discussion available on the topic of the automatic or deliberate use of haptic behavior for emotion. In general, the use of touch is more regulated than other emotions (Argyle, 1988). For example, it may be extremely difficult for to prevent oneself from smiling during a funny movie, though not as difficult to prevent oneself from touching another human that one feels an affinity towards. In this sense, it could be the case that the use of touch to express emotion is more of a deliberate process than an automatic process. On the other hand, forcing oneself to touch someone for whom one has extremely negative behaviors may be extremely difficult—in this sense, using touch to deliberately override certain automatic emotions may be problematic. While it is out of the scope of the current work to fully resolve this distinction, we focus on the use of touch to deliberately express emotions.

OVERVIEW OF EXPERIMENTS

The current set of studies attempts to understand how much emotion can possibly be transmitted from one person to another using a simple, force-feedback haptic device. Given that today's haptic devices are somewhat limited and it is quite difficult to create forces, surfaces, and dynamic movements similar to human touch, it is essential to investigate whether or not simple devices that are not analogs to human touch organs are capable of transmitting emotion.

In Experiment 1, 16 participants each generated seven different emotions (anger, disgust, joy, fear, interest, sadness, and surprise) by moving a two degree of freedom force-feedback joystick for ten seconds for each emotion. We analyzed the quantitative aspects of the force utilized in the different emotions.

In Experiment 2, 16 additional participants each interacted via VIT with the recordings of the previous participants and attempted to recognize each emotion. We analyzed the accuracy of the different emotions and compared human performance to a Support Vector Machine (SVM), a learning algorithm similar to a neural network that learned to automatically classify the seven emotions. The purpose of including the SVM was to determine how well an optimal classifier performed. By comparing the learning algorithm which is designed parse the emotions generated on any vector that separates the categories to human classification performance, we potentially gain insight concerning whether the any shortcomings in recognizing the emotions are due to generating the movements versus recognizing the movements.

In Experiment 3, 16 pairs of participants interacted in vivo, attempting to communicate the seven emotions to one another via a 10 second handshake. We use this data as a baseline for the haptic interaction as well as to further understand the communication of emotion through touch.

It is important to note the current set of experiments is a preliminary exploration in the phenomenon of VIT. Our experiments have small sample sizes and the nature of the design is to be exploratory, more of a guide for directing future work as opposed to proving specific hypotheses.

EXPERIMENT 1: EMOTION GENERATION

Method

Design

In this study we sought to collect data on people's ability to represent various mental states and emotions using a force-feedback joystick. We manipulated a single variable within participants: emotion generated (anger, disgust, fear, interest, joy, sadness, surprise).

Materials and Apparatus

We used an Immersion Impulse Engine 2000 force feedback joystick as the haptic device. The device provides movement along two degrees of freedom and is capable of outputting a maximum force of 2 lbs. (8.9 N). We placed the device on its side so that the handle faced toward the participant rather than toward the ceiling. One may call this position the "handshake position" since interacting with the device in this position is analogous to doing a handshaking motion. The joystick was secured to a table using clamps, and its height adjusted so that participants could interact with the joystick in a natural manner. Figure 2 shows the experimental setup.

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Participants

16 Stanford University undergraduates (9 males, 7 females) were paid for their participation in this study.

Procedure

In this study, we first acquainted participants with the joystick in a practice trial so that they had an idea of how interacting with the joystick would feel. For the practice trials, we instructed participants to interact with the joystick for ten seconds and then played back that same ten-second recording to them. Participants then used the joystick for two more practice handshakes. The researcher then explained the real trials of the study. Participants were told that they would be expressing seven different emotions via the joystick. These seven emotions were based on Ekman & Friesen's (1975) work. Specifically, participants were asked to "do your best to communicate the exact mental state to someone else who may use the joystick to attempt to identify your specific mental states from the movement at a later date". We then began recording participants' attempts to convey emotions using the joystick. The order in which participants conveyed each of these emotions was randomized for each participant.

Participants were told that they would have up to ten seconds to express each emotion. For each trial, the researcher would verbally tell the participant the designated emotion. In all trials, a computer monitor counted up from one to ten so that participants always knew how much time they had remaining to record. We allowed participants to record less than the entire ten seconds in order to avoid situations in which participants felt that they had conveyed the emotion well in two seconds, for example, and then simply filled the rest of the ten seconds with motions that were not as focused on conveying the given mental state. We recorded data from the haptic joystick based on the x-y coordinates of the joystick every 5 milliseconds during the trials. The joystick allowed participants to move freely, i.e., it did not provide any resistance to their movements.

After each trial we asked participants to rate, on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being extremely likely and 7 being extremely unlikely, how likely they felt that another person would be able to recognize the specific mental state or emotion they had just generated. We also asked participants to rate on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being extremely well and 7 being extremely poor, how well they felt that they were able to express the given mental state or emotion using the joystick. At the end of the study, we also asked participants to write about what they thought about the task and whether they used any strategies to express the emotions via the haptic device.

Derived Measures

We computed a number of quantitative metrics from the recorded movements to analyze the data from the emotions. We describe each of these measures in turn.

Distance. This metric is the total distance traversed by the tip of the joystick. A low score would mean that the participant barely moved the joystick while a high score would mean that a lot of movement occurred.

Mean speed. This metric is the average speed at which the participant moved the joystick. A low score would mean that the participant moved the joystick slowly while a high score would mean that the participant moved the joystick very fast.

Standard deviation of speed. This metric is the standard deviation of a participant's movement. A low score would mean a steady movement while a high score would mean jerky movement.

Mean acceleration. This metric is the average acceleration of a participant's movement. A low score would mean the participant was decelerating while a high score would mean the participant was accelerating.

Standard deviation of acceleration. This metric is the standard deviation of the acceleration of a participant's movement. The lower the score, the less change there was during the trial. The higher the score, the more the participant was speeding up and slowing down throughout the trial.

Angle. This metric is the average angle of the major axis of the handshake from 0 to 180 degrees. A score of zero degrees indicates a horizontal movement, ninety is straight up and down, and the angle moves counterclockwise as the score goes up.

Standard deviation of position. This metric is the standard deviation of the joystick position on an x-y plane. A low score would mean staying close to a small area of the plane while a high score would mean moving across many different areas of the plane.

Standard deviation of the major axis. The major axis is the axis along which the average angle was made. The standard deviation of the major axis is a measure of the deviation in position along the major axis. A low score would mean moving only very slightly along the major axis while a high score would mean moving a great deal along the major axis.

Standard deviation of the minor axis. The minor axis is the complement of the major axis. The standard deviation of the minor axis is a measure of the deviation in position along the minor axis. A low score would mean moving only very slightly along the minor axis while a high score would mean moving a great deal along the minor axis.

Percent of major axis. This metric is the ratio between the standard deviation of the major axis and the minor axis. A low score would mean comparable distances moved along both axes and thus an overall square or circular pattern. A high score would mean significantly more movement along one of the axes and thus an overall rectangular or oval pattern.

Results

Derived Measures

Figure 3 depicts plots of the seven emotions generated by the participants. We normalized scores (M = 0, SD =1) on all of our derived measures before examining the differences between the seven emotions. To test whether different emotions produced significantly different scores on the derived measures, we ran a series of repeated measure ANOVAs. Because we had seven emotions, a full post-hoc pair-wise comparison would have required us to calculate a family-wise error-rate that took into account the fact that 21 comparisons were being made. Such a full comparison would require a test so conservative as to yield no significant pair-wise comparisons in our small sample. In the results below, we list the overall significance for each repeated measure analyses and then describe the pair-wise differences using a less conservative comparison of their 95% confidence intervals.

FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

We ran a series of repeated measure ANOVAs using emotion as the independent factor and each of the derived measures as a dependent variable. The significance of each ANOVA is listed in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE

The 95% confidence interval plots for each derived measure are shown in Figure 5. With regards to distance, participants moved more when expressing Joy and Anger than most of the other emotions. On the other hand, participants moved noticeably less when expressing Sadness. The same pattern was repeated with average speed, standard deviation of speed, mean acceleration, and standard deviation of acceleration. Participants had a shorter major axis when expressing Fear than when expressing most other emotions. On the other hand, participants had a shorter minor axis when expressing Sadness and a longer minor axis when expressing Joy. And finally, participants had a more rectangular shape overall when expressing Sadness and more square shapes overall when expressing Joy and Fear. A summary of the differences is described in Figure 6.

FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE

FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE

Confidence Ratings

Participants were asked to give confidence ratings to each of their handshakes – “How difficult was it to generate this emotion?” and “How easily do you think someone else can recognize this emotion?" Because the average correlation between the two items was high (.79), we used their average as a composite confidence rating, with lower numbers indicating higher confidence. We performed an ANOVA to detect whether Emotion had an effect on the confidence ratings. The effect was not significant, $F(6, 90) = 1.76$, $p = .12$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$. The average confidence ratings are listed in Appendix A.

Discussion

The data from the emotion generation study suggests that there were indeed variances in handshaking behavior when different emotions were being expressed and that these variances can be quantified in meaningful ways. For example, sadness was expressed in slow, steady, and short movements while joy was expressed in long, jerky, and fast movements. Given that different emotions were indeed expressed in measurably different ways, our next study explored how well participants could recognize emotions from these recorded handshakes as played back on haptic devices.

EXPERIMENT 2: HUMAN EMOTION RECOGNITION FROM HAPTIC DEVICES

Method

Design

In the second study, we sought to test people's ability to recognize others' attempts to convey mental states using the haptic joystick as well as their confidence in that recognition. The actual motions used to represent each mental state or emotion were those recorded in Experiment 1. Each participant received all of the recordings from a randomly selected previous participant from Experiment 1, such that all of the recordings were used exactly once.

Participants

16 Stanford University undergraduates (9 males, 7 females) were paid for their participation in this study.

Procedure

We first acquainted participants with the joystick by playing them all the same recorded handshake motion on the joystick created as a template by the experimenters. We then informed participants that they would be played a series of recordings and that, after each playing, they would be asked to try to identify which of the seven emotions was being conveyed. Participants were asked specifically to "do your best to determine the exact mental state that someone else was attempting to transmit". These seven emotions were listed on a sheet of paper and visible to the participant throughout the trials.

Participants received the same sequence of the seven emotions twice. In the first sequence, they were instructed to feel each recording and to think about what it may be. In the second sequence, after feeling each recording, participants were required to choose an emotion and indicate how confident they were in their choice on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being extremely confident and 7 being extremely unconfident. Participants were only allowed to respond with a given emotion a single time. In other words, once they had used "joy" they were not allowed to use that emotion again. At the end of the trials, we asked participants to write about the task and what strategies they used to detect the mental states.

Results

On average, participants were correct on 33.04 % of trials. This was significantly above chance (14.29 %), $t(6)=5.03$, $p<.002$. Figure 7 shows the responses and error rates by emotion. The percentage of hits and false alarms for each emotion is shown in Figure 8.

We ran a one way, repeated measures ANOVA with emotion as the independent factor and accuracy as the dependent variable. There was no significant difference between emotions, $F(6,90) = .80$, $p<.58$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$.

FIGURE 7 ABOUT HERE

FIGURE 8 ABOUT HERE

We also examined participants' confidence ratings in their recognition of the emotions. We ran a one way, repeated measures ANOVA with emotion as the independent factor and confidence ratings as the dependent variable. There was no significant difference between emotions, $F(6,90) = .65$, $p<.69$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. The average confidence ratings for each emotion is listed in Appendix A.

In order to test the ability to differentiate the generated emotions, we used a standard learning algorithm used to classify categorical data, the Torch3 Support Vector Machine (SVM) module with a RBF kernel (see Doniger, Hofmall, & Yeh, 2002 for a similar use). We trained seven SVMs: one that separated "joy" from all other emotions, one that separated "sadness" from all other emotions, and so on. To classify a handshake, we then tested it against all seven SVMs, and chose the best match. The parameters c and σ were tuned by dividing the participants into a 70% training group and 30% testing group, and then using a gradient-ascent algorithm to determine which parameters trained the SVM to best match the test group. After attempting an exhaustive sampling of parameters, the best results occurred near c = 100 and gamma = .00016. The SVM was then tested by training on a random 70% of the participants, and then classifying the remaining 30%. We repeated this train/test paradigm 1000 times, choosing different combinations of participants each time. Across iterations, the SVM classified the handshake correctly 36.31% of the time, similarly to human participants.

Discussion

Our findings demonstrated that people were indeed able to recognize the emotions expressed via handshakes with accuracy approximately twice what would be expected by chance. It is interesting to note that for all of the seven emotions except for interest and surprise (which participants confused for one another), participants guessed the appropriate emotion more often than any of the incorrect alternatives. This pattern makes sense, as many of the frameworks of emotions do not include both interest and surprise as independent basic emotions (see Ortony & Turner, 1990, for a review).

In sum, participants were relatively astute at recognizing the emotions. In fact, a learning algorithm SVM designed purely to segment the seven emotions on any vector which separated the categories was only slightly more successful than the group of human participants. Consequently, it is most likely the case that the reason for error in detecting the emotions in Experiment 2 stemmed from the difficulty in generating an emotion through the haptic device in Experiment 1. In other words, given that the learning algorithm could not outperform a group of humans, there was most likely limited amounts of reliable information present in the digital motions that could be used to differentiate the emotions. Given the reduction of cues as compared with a real handshake – such as temperature and grip – we wanted to explore whether emotion recognition would improve when handshakes could be generated in a more naturalistic fashion with a wider range of emotional cues. Thus, in the third study, we repeated the study using two participants who shook hands in person.

EXPERIMENT 3: HUMAN EMOTION RECOGNITION FROM OTHER HUMANS

Method

Design

In the third study, we sought to test people's ability to recognize others' attempts to convey mental states through touch only while holding hands, as well as their confidence in that recognition.

Participants

32 Stanford University undergraduates (16 males, 16 females) were paid for their participation in this study.

Procedure

Sixteen pairs of two participants engaged in a handshake through a doorway covered by a curtain, with each one on his or her own side of the curtain such that the only visual information received was about the hand and forearm. Each participant was monitored by a separate experimenter, who showed that participant specific instructions. In order to give the instructions silently to prevent the other participant from knowing the specific emotion, the experimenter pointed to areas of text while the participant read it to herself.

We then informed one participant that he or she would be doing his or her best to generate emotions through the handshake. We informed the other participant that he or she would be asked to try to identify which of the seven mental states or emotions was trying to be conveyed. Participants received a randomized sequence of the seven emotions twice, each in the same random order. In the first sequence, they were instructed to generate and evaluate each emotion for the purpose of practice and to think about how to convey the emotions via touch. In the second sequence, after feeling each recording the participants performed the same confidence ratings as participants in Experiment 2. After the trials, the participants were asked to write about their subjective reactions to the task.

Results

Results demonstrated that people were quite good at recognizing the seven emotions through a handshake. The overall accuracy rate was 50.77 percent. This was significantly above chance (14.29 %), $t(6)=14.42$, $p<.001$. We ran a one way, repeated measures ANOVA with emotion as the independent factor and accuracy as the dependent variable. There was no significant difference between emotions, $F(6,90) = .42$, $p<.86$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Figure 9 shows the responses and error rates by emotion. We next performed an ANOVA to detect whether Emotion had an effect on the confidence ratings of detection. The effect was not significant, $F(6, 90) = .38$, $p = .89$, $\eta^2 = .02$. The average confidence rating for each emotion is listed in Appendix A. The number of hits and false alarms for each emotion are listed in Figure 10.

FIGURE 9 ABOUT HERE

FIGURE 10 ABOUT HERE

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Summary of Results

In the current study, we examined the ability of humans to transmit emotions via touch, both hand-to-hand and digitally mediated with VIT. When people were asked to express emotions via haptic devices, we found reliable, predictable differences in measures that quantified different aspects of the movements (Experiment 1). Moreover, these differences were strong enough to allow other participants to interpret the emotional content of another person's handshake via haptic devices (Experiment 2) above chance. On the other hand, the reduction of physical cues in haptic devices as compared with in vivo handshakes – such as temperature and grip – lowered the accuracy of emotion detection (as seen in Experiment 3). Overall, our studies illustrate the ability of haptic devices to convey various emotions via a short interaction such as a handshake.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are a number of limitations to the current work. First, we only utilized a simple two degree of freedom haptic device. In future work we plan to examine more elaborate devices that allow for more advanced transmission of the typical nonverbal cues and nuances that occur in interpersonal touch (Chaplin et al., 2000). Our choice of using a simple 2DOF device as opposed to a Phantom device that allowed more elegant movements was largely driven by the strategic goal of starting with an extremely simple device. However, using a more versatile haptic device to explore the generation and recognition of emotions is crucial for future work.

Furthermore, the task used in the current study was not naturalistic. Instead of forcing people to generate deliberate emotions "on demand", just for the purpose of transmitting them, future studies should actually have participants experience the various emotions, for example by having them watching emotional film clips (Rottenberg, Ray, &

Gross, in press), and then feature the transmission and reception of those actually experienced emotions via a haptic device. In other words, one criticism of the current work is that we may not be studying actual, automatic emotions, but only idealized, artificially constructed emotions. This distinction may be why our recognition rate (33 percent) was relatively low overall using the haptic device. However, these emotions generated "on demand" are still quite worthy of studying, as they may be the type that is utilized mostly during human computer interaction (not unlike the use of standard emoticons in textual chat). Similarly, future work should also compare being able to generate novel emotional movements during VIT to choosing among preset movements designed to convey specific expressions.

One shortcoming of the current work is that it only examined VIT "in a vacuum". There is much reason to suspect that nonverbal and verbal behaviors are inextricably tied (Kendon, 1970; Ekman, 1997). It would be worthwhile to examine how the use of VIT to transmit emotions changes when accompanied by cues from other modes, such as voice, facial expressions, and other gestures.

Finally, there was some evidence that the current data support the idea of using a two-dimensional space to map emotions—hedonic valence and intensity. First, Table 1 which portrays how various emotions were characterized by specific movements indicate that intensity and direction of movement were highly diagnostic of emotions, especially in differentiating sadness from other emotions (intensity) as well as differentiating anger from joy (horizontal movement). The anecdotal responses given by our participants on more than one occasion indicated that people used one or both of these dimensions in creating or recognizing the emotions, as can be seen in the Appendix. For example, one participant noted, “Strategies I used included speed of up/down motion, length of hand shake and then force/strength.” Consequently, future work should explore this mapping of emotions via haptic devices, perhaps by giving participants explicit instructions about strategies before generating the emotions.

Implications

This study has a number of implications for various aspects of human computer interaction. First, it indicates that even with cues that are extremely degraded—for example, stripping a handshake of grip, temperature, dryness, texture, and other nonverbal cues, virtual interfaces can be effective at transmitting emotion. In other words, limited-degree of freedom force-feedback devices can be used to add emotional content – such as warmth or intimacy – to virtual environments. This also opens to possibility of using haptic devices for the purpose of social influence such as, for example, using confident or cheerful handshakes to greet users. Also, previous research on emotion in user interface systems has shown that matching the mood of a car’s warning voice to that of the mood of the car’s driver (i.e., cheerful or sad) decreases the accident rate compared to when there is a mismatch (Nass & Brave, 2005). Perhaps haptic devices used to connect a user to an interface system can match the mood of users accordingly to enhance efficiency and productivity.

More importantly, the computer-mediated aspect of VIT means that touch communication can be altered and exploited in ways that are not possible in the real world. The ability of virtual environments in allowing non-veridical representation and interaction has been previously described as transformed social interaction (Bailenson et al., 2004). In non-mediated environments, we can only shake hands with one person at a time; using

VIT, a user's handshake can be pre-recorded and used for multiple greetings. Moreover, that handshake can be automatically tailored for the interactant. For example, one's handshake can be made firmer if another interactant prefers a firmer handshake. Given the social advantage that can be leveraged via mimicry (see Bailenson & Yee, 2005; Chartrand & Bargh, 1999), it would also make sense to strategically clone another person's handshake for future greetings with that person.

The current findings have demonstrated that humans touching one another virtually can transmit and receive emotional cues far above chance, and not too far off from what is possible in normal, face-to-face interaction. Furthermore, the current data shed light on the development of haptic devices. By providing a quantitative framework for isolating aspects of different types of hand movements, the current work assists other researchers in exploring the utility and theoretical possibilities of various types of virtual interfaces. Given the research in developing social robots for collaboration (Hinds, Roberts, & Jones, 2004) and education (Kanda, Hirano, Eaton, Ishiguro, 2004), it is important to understand how haptic devices can be used to generate emotional content in other contexts as well, such as online gaming, training exercises, and chatrooms designed for the sole purpose of social interaction.

In sum, the current work demonstrates that humans can express a range of emotions through hand-to-hand touch, whether that touch is computer mediated or not. Consequently, the use of VIT via haptic devices in all forms of computer mediated communication should be strongly considered as the development of collaborative tools evolves. Given the power of touch in the physical world, and the unique ability to amplify, multiply, and transform this power, it is inevitable that the theoretical underpinnings and applications of VIT receive attention.

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Figure Captions

Figure 1. Characteristics of six emotions discernable through facial expressions.

Figure 2. A user interacting with the VIT device from the current study.

Figure 3. Plots of the 16 participants' movements for the seven emotions. The outline around each box represents the limits of potential movements along the two dimensions. The maximum range in physical space for each dimension was approximately 28 cm.

Figure 4. Significance tests from repeated measure ANOVAs of all derived measures.

Figure 5. The mean and 95% Confidence Intervals of the seven emotions across nine different metrics. Bars denoted by solid arrows are significantly higher or lower than other bars.

Figure 6. Summary of differences in derived measures for the seven emotions. A label occurs for a given emotion on a measure when that emotion behaves in an extreme manner compared to the other emotions in terms of 95% Confidence Intervals.

Figure 7. Average responses across sixteen participants for the seven emotions.

Figure 8. Percentages of hits (percentage of responding with the correct emotion given the occurrence of the emotion) and false alarms (percentage of responding with the correct emotion given the non-occurrence of the emotion) for each emotion.

Figure 9. Average responses across sixteen pairs of participants for the seven emotions.

Figure 10. Percentages of hits and false alarms for each emotion.

Figure 1

• *Surprise*: brows raised, eyelids opened and more of the white of the eye is visible, jaw drops open without tension or stretching of the mouth
• *Fear*: brows raised and drawn together, forehead wrinkles drawn to the center, mouth is open, lips are slightly tense or stretched and drawn back
• *Disgust*: upper lip is raised, lower lip is raised and pushed up to upper lip or it is lowered, nose is wrinkled, cheeks are raised, lines below the lower lid, brows are lowered
• *Anger*: brows lowered and drawn together, vertical lines appear between brows, lower lid is tensed and may or may not be raised, upper lid is tense and may or may not be lowered due to brows' action, eyes have a hard stare and may have a bulging appearance, lips are either pressed firmly together with corners straight or down or, open, tensed in a squarish shape, nostrils may be dilated (could occur in sadness too) unambiguous only if registered in all three facial areas
• *Joy*: corners of lips are drawn back and up, mouth may or may not be parted with teeth exposed or not, a wrinkle runs down from the nose to the outer edge beyond lip corners, cheeks are raised, lower eyelid shows wrinkles below it, and may be raised but not tense, crow's-feet wrinkles go outward from the outer corners of the eyes.
• *Sadness*: inner corners of eyebrows are drawn up, skin below the eyebrow is triangulated, with inner corner up upper lid inner corner is raised, corners of the lips are drawn or lip is trembling

Figure 2

Figure 3

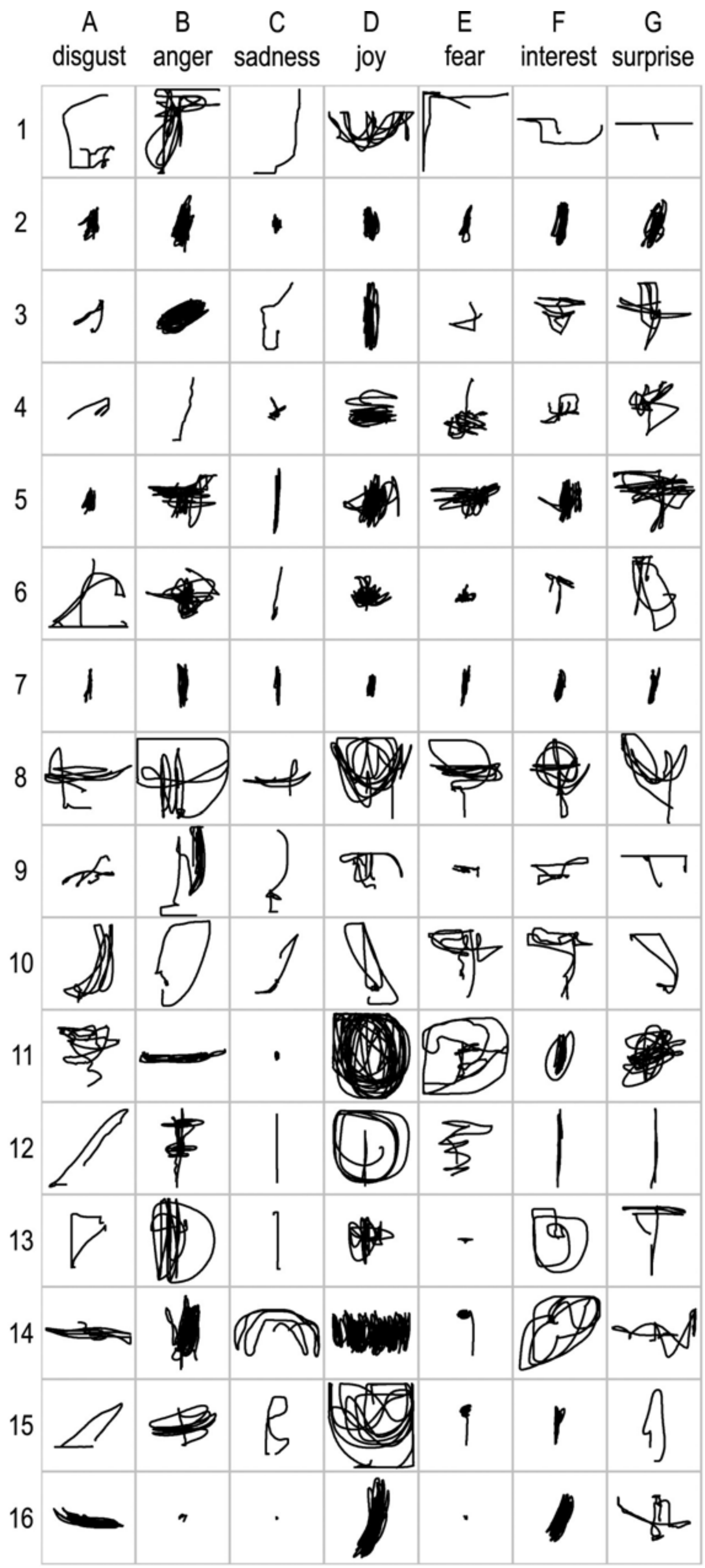
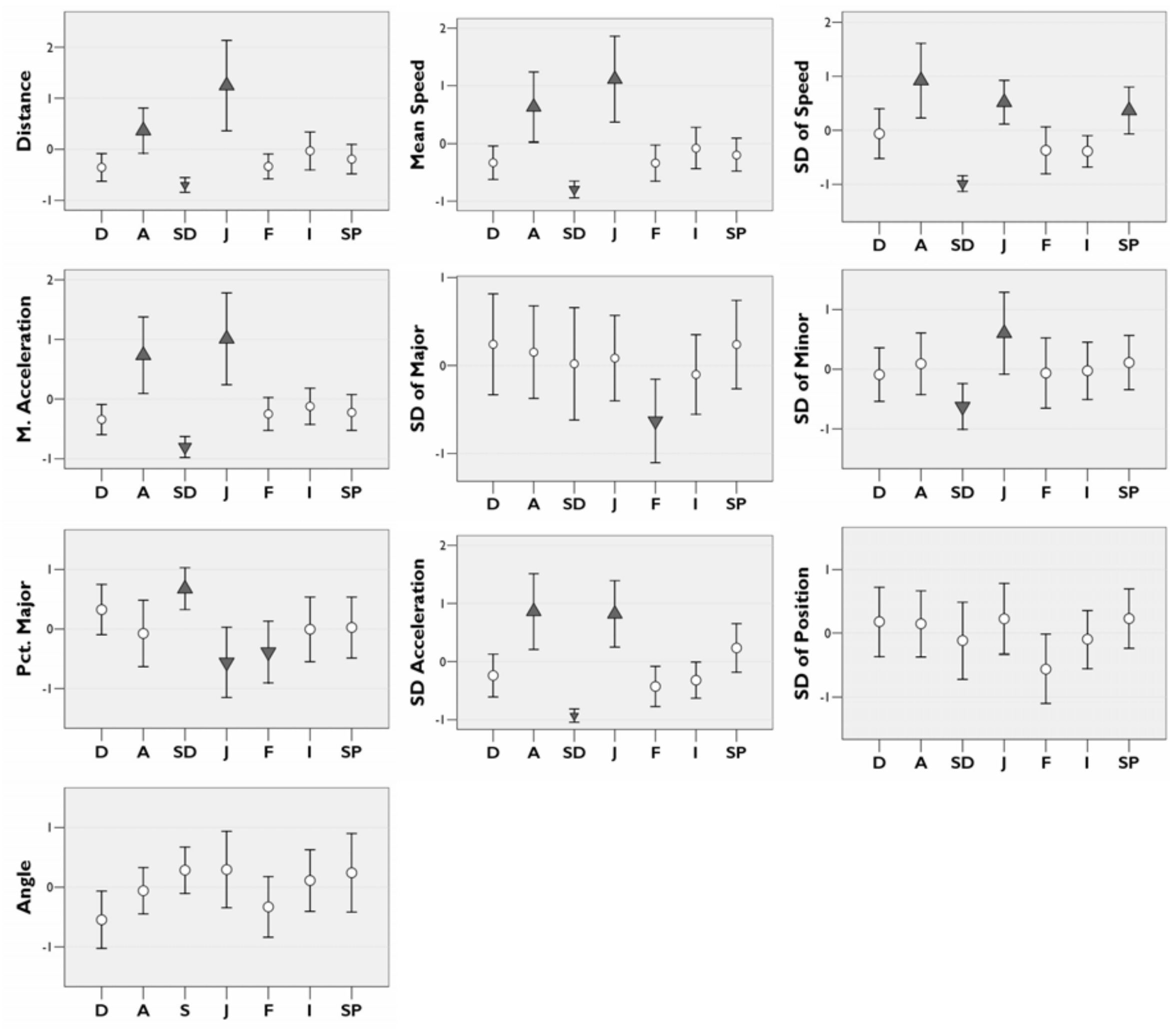

A
disgust
B
anger
C
sadness
D
joy
E
fear
F
interest
G
surprise
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16

Figure 4.

Measure	F	p	η_p^2
Distance	11.78	< .001	.44
M. Speed	13.10	< .001	.47
SD. Speed	15.70	< .001	.51
M. Acceleration	15.70	< .001	.45
SD. Acceleration	15.68	< .001	.51
Angle	2.14	.06	.13
SD. Position	2.11	.06	.13
SD Major Axis	2.35	.04	.13
SD of Minor Axis	2.90	.01	.16
Pct. Major Axis	3.47	.004	.18

Figure 5



Distance
Mean Speed
SD of Speed
M. Acceleration
SD of Major
SD of Minor
Pct. Major
SD Acceleration
SD of Position
Angle
D A SD J F I SP
D A S J F I SP
2
1
0
-1

Figure 6

Emotion	Disgust	Anger	Sadness	Joy	Fear	Interest	Surprise
Distance	Short	Long	Short	Long	Short		
Mean Speed		Fast	Slow	Fast			
SD of Speed		Jerky	Steady	Jerky			Jerky
Mean Acc.		Faster	Slower	Faster			
SD of Acc.		High	Low	High			
Angle							
SD of Position							
SD of Major					Short		
SD of Minor			Narrow	Wide			
Pct. Major	Square		Rectangular	Square	Square		

Figure 7

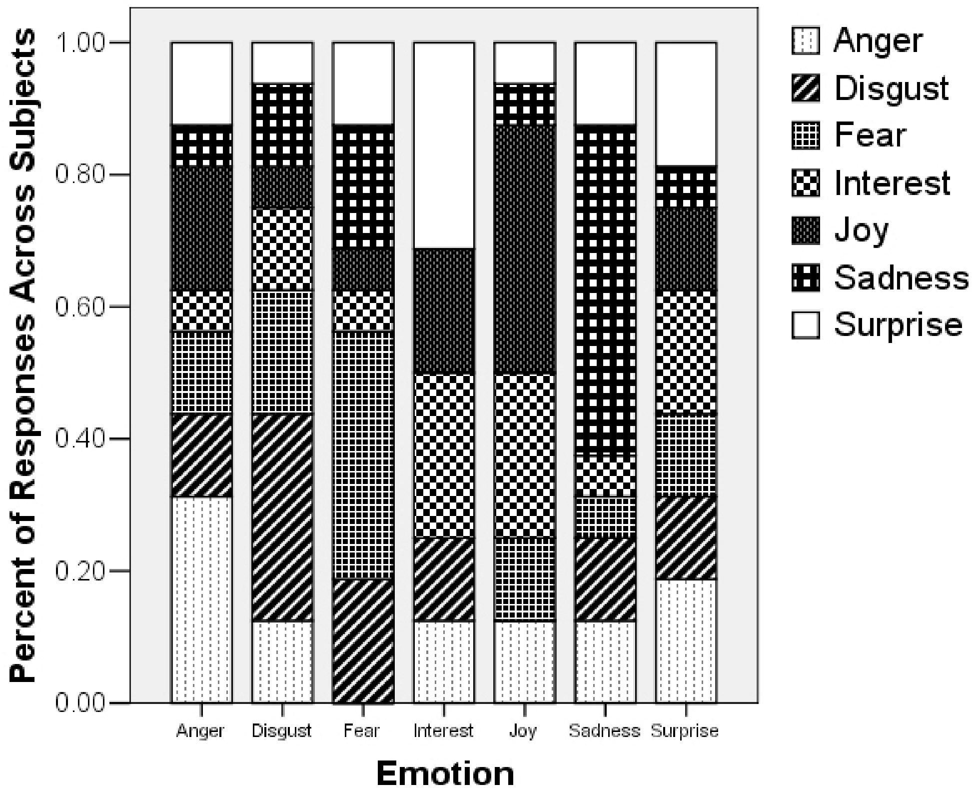

Percent of Responses Across Subjects
1.00
0.80
0.60
0.40
0.20
0.00
Anger
Disgust
Fear
Interest
Joy
Sadness
Surprise
Emotion
Anger
Disgust
Fear
Interest
Joy
Sadness
Surprise

Figure 8.

	Hits	False Alarm	Difference
Disgust	31.3%	11.5%	19.8%
Anger	31.3%	11.5%	19.8%
Sadness	50.0%	8.3%	41.7%
Joy	37.5%	10.4%	27.1%
Fear	37.5%	10.4%	27.1%
Interest	25.0%	12.5%	12.5%
Surprise	18.8%	13.5%	5.2%

Figure 9

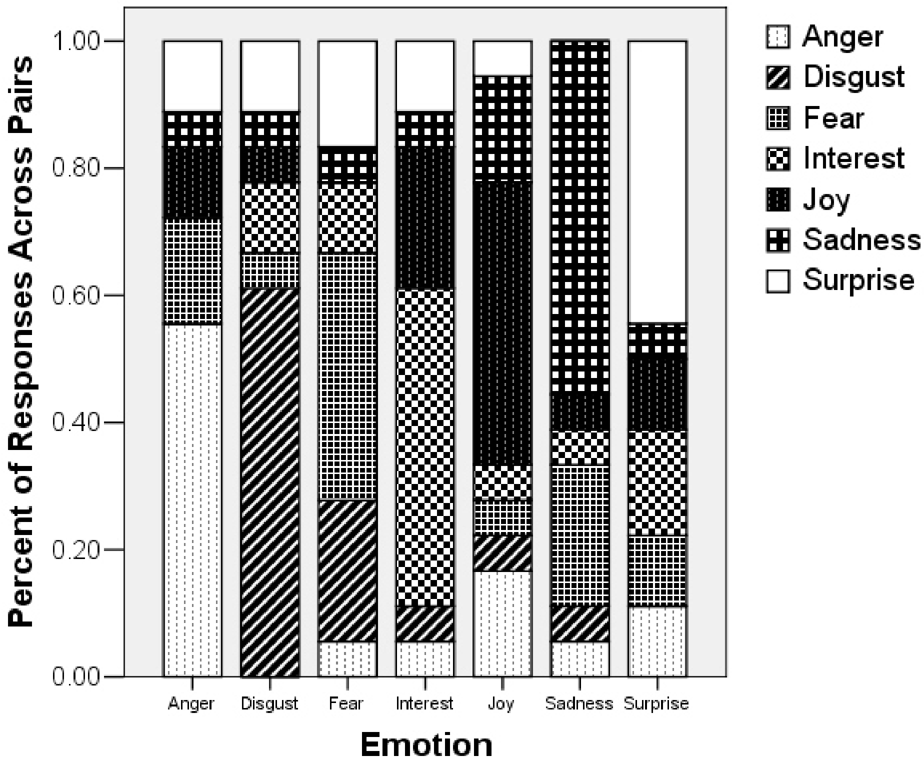

1.00
0.80
0.60
0.40
0.20
0.00
Percent of Responses Across Pairs
Anger
Disgust
Fear
Interest
Joy
Sadness
Surprise
Emotion
Anger
Disgust
Fear
Interest
Joy
Sadness
Surprise

Figure 10

	Hits	False Alarm	Difference
Disgust	55.6%	7.4%	48.1%
Anger	61.1%	6.5%	54.6%
Sadness	38.9%	10.2%	28.7%
Joy	50.0%	8.3%	41.7%
Fear	44.4%	8.3%	36.1%
Interest	55.6%	7.4%	48.1%
Surprise	44.4%	8.3%	36.1%

Appendix A.

Means and standard deviations of confidence scores across studies. Lower scores indicate higher confidence.

	Exp. 1 Generation	Exp. 2 Detection	Exp. 3 Detection
Disgust	4.84 (1.99)	4.75 (1.61)	2.94 (1.52)
Anger	3.89 (1.44)	4.50 (2.10)	3.35 (2.32)
Sadness	4.58 (1.77)	4.13 (1.82)	2.82 (1.81)
Joy	4.53 (1.58)	4.00 (2.22)	3.18 (1.74)
Fear	4.53 (1.62)	4.50 (2.00)	3.18 (1.85)
Interest	5.11 (1.50)	4.44 (2.16)	3.12 (2.15)
Surprise	5.00 (1.27)	4.56 (2.03)	3.53 (1.70)

Appendix B

Selected Anecdotal Responses from Experiment 1

Strategies I used included speed of up/down motion, length of hand shake and then force/strength.

A lot was subject to interpretation though, since I don't usually move my hands to convey mental states.

I used strategies like trying to feel my assigned emotion in order to convey my mental state.

Some were particularly difficult to distinguish (i.e., anger vs disgust) - I found myself making the actual emotion faces while moving my hand in order to make the task easier.

The hardest part was thinking of the context for the device and it made it hard to convey emotion to it cause it didn't have any convincing physical presence to me.

It was hard to depict the distinction between different mental states because the handshake machine gave no resistance and also because it was unable to record the grip or firmness of how tight I was holding the "hand".

Selected Anecdotal Responses from Experiment 2

Not having a sense for group attained by clasping fingers made it difficult to be entirely sure of an emotion.

Are short, sharp motions angry or surprised or what?

Most mental states aren't expressed through hand movements, so it was difficult to ascribe arbitrary motions to specific emotions.

It was easy to notice intensity on each shake. It was hard to imagine feeling without facial expression or language.