Choosing the Unit of a Video Identity Score

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Abstract

Identity can be scored at the frame, interval, clip, subject, or task level, and those choices assign different importance to the same observations. This article studies the interpretation of aggregation in reference-conditioned video evaluation. ARGUS motivates a setting where a subject must remain recognizable through changing views. No clips are scored. The proposed analysis preserves the observation hierarchy and contrasts several declared summaries. Its central result is conceptual: a score's denominator is part of the capability claim, not merely a reporting convenience.

1. A frame is not a subject

A long clip contributes more frames than a short one. A heavily represented subject contributes more clips than a sparsely represented subject. If every frame receives equal weight, those differences influence the final result even when the study intends to compare performance across people. The resulting average can be mathematically correct while answering a different question from the one described in the article. Clear evaluation begins by naming the population unit that the average represents.

ARGUS seeks subject preservation through organized reference information (Meng et al., 2026b). That objective makes temporal persistence relevant, but it does not dictate a unique aggregation rule. This article proposes a measurement analysis rather than a new test of ARGUS. It asks how choices about frames, intervals, clips, and subjects alter the interpretation of a future result and which records would allow readers to reconstruct those choices from the underlying observations.

A reference collection can grow in several ways: more identities, more images of existing identities, or more comparisons among the same images. The LFW protocol makes these units distinguishable (Huang et al., 2008), while its official loader documentation preserves the difference among development and assessment files (Pedregosa et al., 2011). Datasheets provide a framework for explaining why those objects were collected and which uses they support (Gebru et al., 2021). A subject-generation study should apply the same discipline to reference mosaics and output trajectories. The number of reference tiles is not automatically the number of independent observations, and the number of scored frames is not automatically the number of subjects. Recording the hierarchy permits appropriate weighting and uncertainty calculations later. Where a study uses only a public pair list, its conclusions should remain about that list and its protocol. They cannot supply observations of appearance, motion, or recognition errors that were never processed.

2. Preserving the hierarchy before averaging

A proposed score table would link each measured frame to a clip, subject, instruction, sample, and reference set. It would also retain the reason for an unavailable measurement. A frame-level mean would describe the observed frame population under the chosen sampling rule. A clip-level mean with equal clip weighting would describe a different population. Equal subject weighting would answer another question again, particularly when the number of available clips differs substantially among people.

Temporal summaries require additional decisions. An average can dilute a short identity substitution, while the minimum score can be driven by a single unreliable observation. An event-based endpoint could require sustained evidence over a declared interval. That rule needs to be selected before final comparison and justified by the intended use. It should not be chosen after inspecting which temporal summary produces the largest difference between methods.

The study could report a primary estimand and a limited set of sensitivity summaries. Each would have an explicit denominator and missing-measurement policy. Confidence intervals should preserve dependence among frames sharing a clip and clips sharing a subject where the design requires it. Resampling individual frames as though they were independent would not create new subjects. The inferential procedure must reflect the evidence actually collected rather than the numerical size of the flattened table.

Precision and identification are separate properties of a result. A narrow interval can surround an association whose scientific target is unclear. Robust covariance calculations allow particular departures from simple error assumptions, including unequal variance (White, 1980) and dependence within declared clusters (Cameron and Miller, 2015). Their role is to improve uncertainty calculations under those assumptions. They do not establish a causal assignment, guarantee a correct measurement, or expand coverage to conditions missing from the data. The analyst should therefore explain both the averaging population and the source of replication. An evaluation repeated many times on one history may provide information about stochastic variability while supplying little evidence about transfer to another history. Those two sources of uncertainty should remain distinguishable in the final interpretation.

The recognition literature provides both scoring methods and warnings about incomplete evaluation populations. FaceNet's learned embedding (Schroff et al., 2015), ArcFace's angular-margin formulation (Deng et al., 2018), and CosFace's margin-based discrimination (Wang et al., 2018) are alternative measurement foundations rather than interchangeable proof of personal identity. VGGFace2 introduces substantial pose and age variation (Cao et al., 2017), MegaFace studies recognition at large scale (Kemelmacher-Shlizerman et al., 2015), and FairFace emphasizes representation in annotated face datasets (Kärkkäinen and Joo, 2019). An identity-preserving generator should be assessed with the relevant dimensions recorded separately. A result from familiar frontal images cannot establish reliability under a missing viewpoint. Nor can a frequency-balanced set establish demographic balance without the required labels. The evaluation should retain failures of detection or measurement, identify what threshold was used, and explain whether the endpoint concerns verification, identification among distractors, or human recognizability over a moving sequence.

The protected assessment population should be defined before investigators inspect detailed failures. Once a collection of cases guides repeated revisions, it has become development information even if its filenames still carry an evaluation label. Cross-validation for dependent data treats the grouping of observations as a substantive design decision (Roberts et al., 2017). Research on model selection likewise shows why tuning and final error estimation should not reuse the same information (Varma and Simon, 2006). A practical record therefore distinguishes fitting data, diagnostic examples, validation data, and the final external assessment. Where only a fixed public table is available, a descriptive analysis remains legitimate, but it should not be renamed a held-out prediction experiment without generating and assessing predictions under a protected split.

3. Comparing methods when observation counts differ

Generators can produce different durations or numbers of assessable frames for the same request. Restricting both outputs to a common window may improve comparability, but it also changes the capability being measured. Allowing variable durations requires a declared treatment of completion and coverage. A method should not receive an invisible advantage because it generates fewer difficult frames or because its longest easy clips dominate a pooled mean.

The analysis should retain subject-level and task-level distributions alongside the overall result. Two methods with the same mean can differ in whether failure is concentrated in a few subjects or distributed thinly across many clips. These patterns imply different follow-up studies. Their interpretation should

remain descriptive unless subjects or conditions were sampled under a design that supports broader inference. A convenience collection does not become population representative through equal weighting alone.

A reproducible report would publish the aggregation definition, relevant identifiers, and sufficient intermediate summaries to reproduce its totals. It should also state whether uncertain frames are excluded, deferred, or represented through a separate coverage outcome. These decisions can change rankings without any change in generated content. Retaining them makes a ranking disagreement analyzable and prevents a difference in arithmetic emphasis from being mistaken for a contradictory observation about the same scientific population.

The reference path and the scoring path should be distinguishable in an experiment. DreamBooth (Ruiz et al., 2022) and IP-Adapter (Ye et al., 2023) illustrate different ways to make subject or image evidence influence generation. CLIP (Radford et al., 2021) and DINO (Caron et al., 2021) illustrate representations that can be used to compare visual content for other purposes. Reusing the same representation for conditioning and evaluation may create shared sensitivities that deserve examination. It is not proof of invalidity, but it strengthens the case for an independent human or task endpoint. A comparison should report which information enters each path and retain reference-specific artifacts as potential confounds. The generator's ability to reproduce a background, camera style, or distinctive clothing can be useful while remaining different from preserving identity under a requested change. A careful evaluation makes that difference observable.

Describing a contrast accurately can be more valuable than giving it an unjustified mechanistic name. A causal interpretation needs assumptions about how exposure and outcome arose, including selection into the analyzed sample. Causal diagrams provide a language for those assumptions (Greenland et al., 1999). If several alternative metrics or partitions are examined, the investigator should also account for the freedom to select whichever result appears strongest. False-discovery control is relevant to explicit collections of statistical tests (Benjamini and Hochberg, 1995), while a descriptive sensitivity analysis should be presented as such. A model can fit the observed rows well and still leave the principal explanation unresolved. Reporting that boundary preserves the value of the observation without overstating what adjustment or a significance threshold has established.

A score is useful only relative to the question it is supposed to answer. Correlation measures a relationship between varying quantities, whereas agreement concerns the discrepancies produced when one procedure substitutes for another (Bland and Altman, 1986). Confidence estimates add a further question about calibration (Guo et al., 2017). These distinctions matter when a learned evaluator becomes the principal source of evidence about another learned system. The evaluation should preserve examples with conflicting scores and obtain independent target judgments where feasible. Numerical ranges and normalization choices should also be documented. An apparently small difference may have a different practical meaning near a decision threshold than in an unimportant part of the scale. Reporting the intended consequence gives those comparisons an interpretable purpose.

4. Scope, uncertainty, and independent assessment

Subject preservation is one dimension of a larger video-generation task. VBench explicitly motivates separating evaluation dimensions (Huang et al., 2023), and the visual literature offers structural (Wang et al., 2004), perceptual (Zhang et al., 2018), and temporal-distribution measurements (Unterthiner et al., 2018). A study should choose among them according to the claim and available reference information. When identity, motion, and visual quality move in different directions, the disagreement should be analyzed rather than automatically resolved by a weighted total. The weighting itself expresses a preference that may differ across applications. Preserving per-frame and per-clip records allows alternative interpretations to be evaluated later. It also makes coverage visible when some poses or occlusions prevent valid scoring. A generator can demonstrate a useful, limited preservation capability without having established universal reliability across all subjects, durations, and visual conditions.

Difficult cases can disappear at several stages: data eligibility, generation, measurement, and final scoring. Each exclusion changes the population represented by the reported result. Coverage-aware evaluation makes those decisions visible (Geifman and El-Yaniv, 2017). A confidence score should also be checked when the input distribution changes, because uncertainty under shift is an empirical property rather than a guarantee of the model interface (Ovadia et al., 2019). An informative record preserves failures to produce an output and failures to obtain a valid measurement. Treating either as absent data without explanation can inflate apparent reliability. A proposed method should state its unsupported conditions and test the boundary between accepted and rejected cases as carefully as the quality of its successful outputs.

An evaluation remains comparable only if its inputs and transformations can be identified. The FAIR principles emphasize persistent identification and reusable scientific metadata (Wilkinson et al., 2016). Work on machine-learning technical debt highlights how dependencies and hidden couplings accumulate in a pipeline (Sculley et al., 2015). In this setting, a score should be linked to the exact references, generation settings, evaluator version, and aggregation rule that produced it. A replacement checkpoint or a revised eligibility filter may change the scientific question even when the output column keeps the same name. Preserving such changes in a release record permits later comparisons to be interpreted honestly. The objective is not maximum documentation volume, but a recoverable account of the decisions that affect the result.

5. Conclusion

The unit of a video identity score determines whose observations and which temporal events receive weight. This article proposes preserving the hierarchy and reporting a primary estimand with transparent sensitivity summaries. No performance ranking is calculated. A useful preservation claim should identify its frames, clips, subjects, missing observations, and aggregation rule so that the final number can be read as evidence about a defined population rather than as an unexplained average.

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