

Introductory Tutorial on Coevolution

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Outline

- Early work
- Notable results
- Canonical coevolutionary algorithms
- Pathologies, Monitoring Progress, Remedies
- What are we really looking for?
- Looking forward

Early Work:

- Samuel 1959, 1967
 - learning checkers through self-play
- Barricelli 1963, Barricelli et al. 1967
 - TacTix (game similar to Nim)
- Axelrod 1987
 - iterated prisoner's dilemma

Some Notable Results

- Several good results have been obtained through the use of self-play in general and coevolution in particular
- Below we sample some of these results
- (Not an exhaustive list!)

Sorting Networks: Hillis 1990

- Learner-teacher paradigm
- Coevolves sorting networks against inputs
- Obtains 61-comparator network (just one more comparator than best known for 16-input problem)

Virtual Creatures: Sims 1994

- Virtual creatures in simulated physics environment
- Pair-wise competitions to gain control over a cube in the middle of the arena
- Coevolution of agent morphology and control
- Variety of interesting body plans and behaviors obtained

Backgammon: Tesauro 1995

- Neural network trained to evaluate board positions; achieves “strong master” level
- Temporal Difference learning used—not coevolution
- But, a compelling demonstration of learning through self-play
- Follow-up work by Pollack & Blair 1998 that uses coevolution

Intertwined Spirals: Juillé & Pollack '96

- Difficult classification problem motivated by study of neural networks
- 194 data points to classify
- Coevolves genetic-program classifiers, where payoff to Player i is:
- $G(i, j) = \# \text{points “covered” by Player } i \text{ that are not covered by Player } j$
- Found modular solutions to problem

CA Rules: Juillé & Pollack 1998

- Density classification task in CA:
 - if $\#1 > \#0$ in initial condition, \Rightarrow all 1
 - otherwise, \Rightarrow all 0
- No perfect rule exists [Land & Belew 1995]
- Previous best known performance: 82.4% [Andre et al. 1996]
- Discovered rule with performance: 86.3%

HIV Resistance: Rosin et al. '98, '99

- Coevolves (in simulation) HIV-1 virus against anti-virals
- Finds highly resistant forms of HIV-1 protease
- Finds effective protease inhibitors

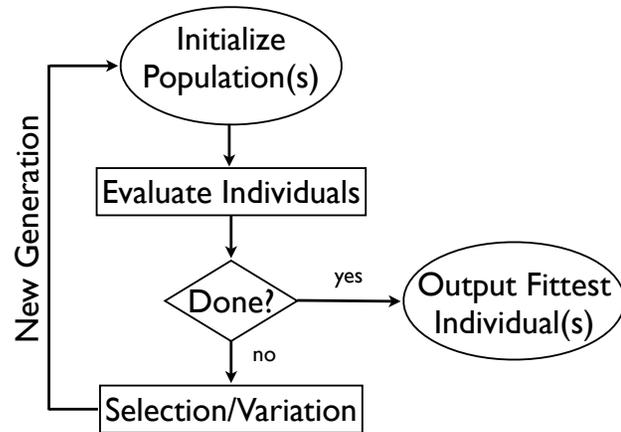
Checkers: Chellapilla & Fogel '99, '00

- Coevolves weights of neural network used to evaluate game boards
- Combined with four-ply lookahead
- Initial work achieved “Class-A” designation
- Subsequent work produced “Expert” level
- (Just below Master and Grand Master)

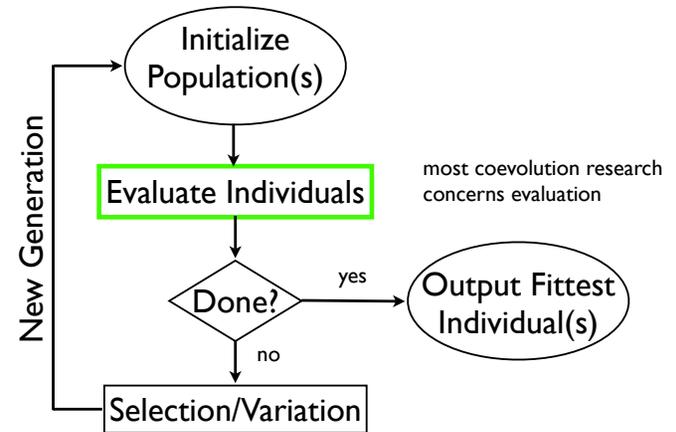
Coevolutionary Algorithms

- “Competitive coevolution”
- “Cooperative coevolution” \Rightarrow “Compositional coevolution”
- Game theory provides some common ground

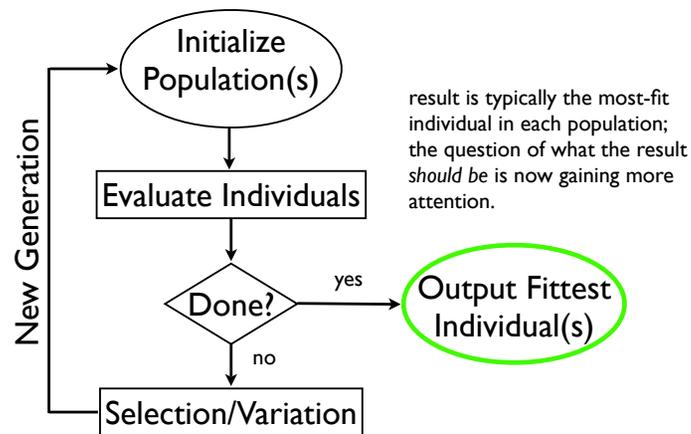
Conventional Coevolution



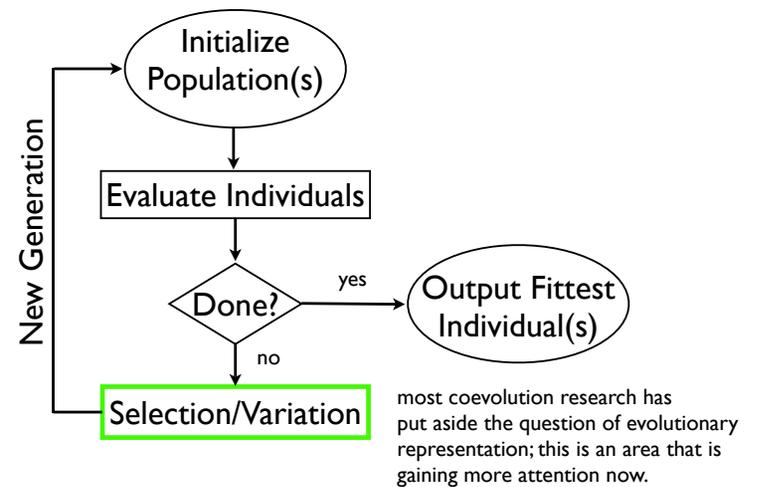
Conventional Coevolution



Conventional Coevolution

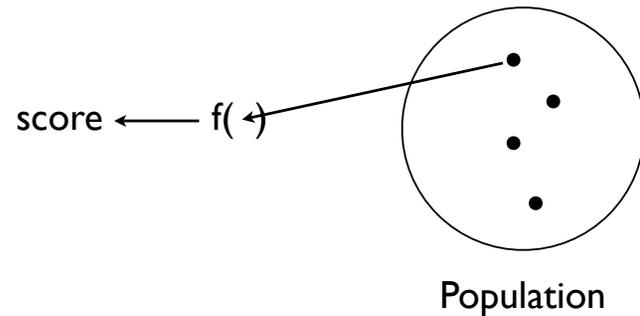


Conventional Coevolution



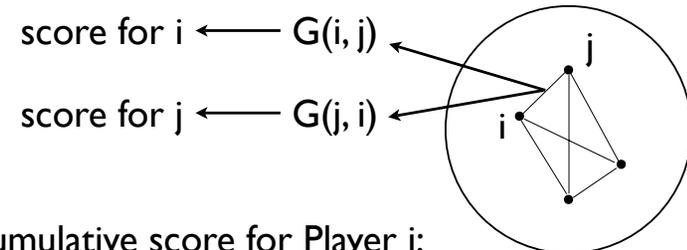
Standard Evolutionary Algorithm

- Evaluation uses a fixed objective function



Conventional Coevolution

- Individuals are evaluated by having them interact with each other



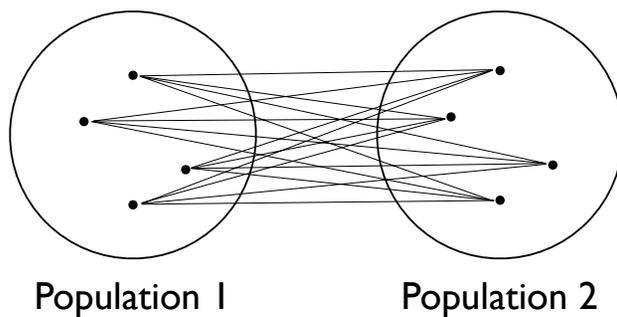
Cumulative score for Player i:

$$S_i = \sum_{j=1, N} G(i, j)$$

Population

Conventional Coevolution

- In asymmetric games, each member of Pop. 1 interacts with each member of Pop. 2

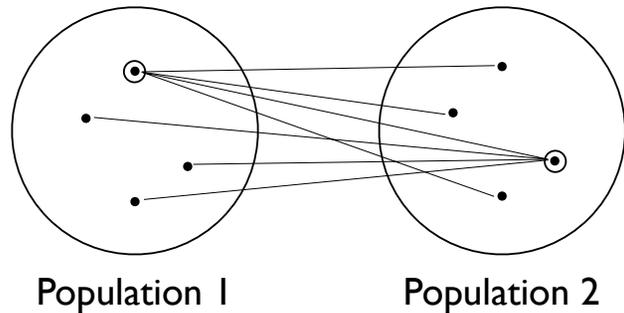


Interaction Patterns

- All vs. all is “canonical” but expensive
- All vs. previous-best
- Tournament
- See Angeline & Pollack 1993, Sims 1994
- Shared sampling [Rosin & Belew 1997]

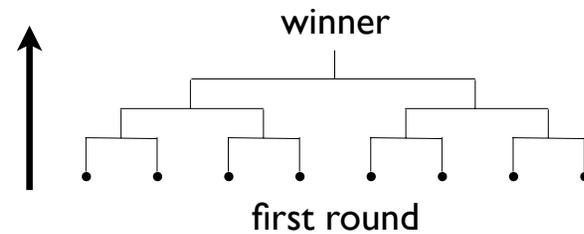
All vs. Best

- Individuals interact with “best” individual(s) from previous generation
- Feasible for one or more populations



Tournament Evaluation

- Pairwise interactions in single-elimination tournament (single-population)
- Each individual's score determined by how far individual progresses in tournament

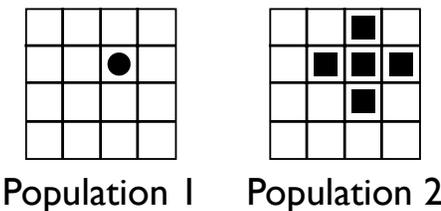


Shared Sampling: Rosin 1997

- Purpose to enhance diversity in evaluation
- Based on their Competitive Fitness Sharing method (discussed below)
- Bias sampling of individuals with whom interaction (during evaluation) takes place
- Sample “redundant” individuals less (relative to uniform); “rare” individuals more
- “Redundant” and “rare” determined by similarity in performance

Spatial Coevolution: Hillis 1990, Pagie & Hogeweg 1997

- Individuals spatially arranged on a lattice
- Individuals interact only with neighbors
- In two-population system, interact with individuals in corresponding neighborhood of other population



Spatial Coevolution: Hillis 1990, Pagie & Hogeweg 1997

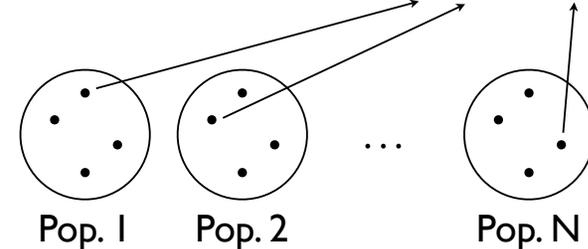
- Spatial structure used to determine who interacts with whom (local neighborhoods)
- Spatial structure also used to control selection; e.g., each individual X is replaced by best individual in the local neighborhood
- Local neighborhood structure helps maintain population diversity; thus can provide help against various pathologies (discussed below)

Cooperative Coevolution

Potter and De Jong 1994

- Decompose problem into simpler sub-tasks that are easier to solve
- Combine sub-solutions to form solution to original problem

score for $s_1 = s_2 = \dots = s_N \leftarrow G(s_1, s_2, \dots, s_N)$

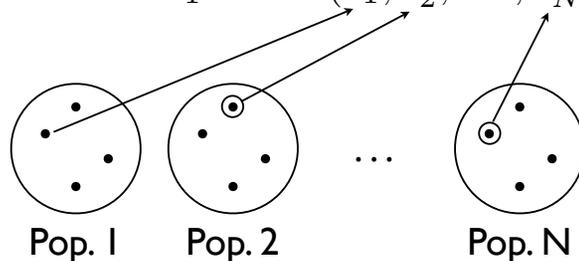


Cooperative Coevolution

Potter and De Jong 1994

- Exhaustive mixing (all vs. all) too expensive
- Sampling is more feasible; cheapest to interact with “best” from each population

score for $s_1 \leftarrow G(s_1, s_2^*, \dots, s_N^*)$



Game Theory and Coevolution

- “Competitive” coevolution epitomized by two-player zero-sum game, e.g., checkers
- “Cooperative” coevolution epitomized by N-player variable-sum coordination game:
 - all players obtain payoff when they play a certain *joint strategy profile*; otherwise they obtain no (or poor) payoff

Pathologies, Monitoring, Remedies

- Early results sparked interest in coevolution, but various pathologies quickly became evident
- Why coevolution fails to produce desired results is often unclear
- We discuss these pathologies and outline several attempts to remedy them

Concept: Gradient

- The evaluation of individuals depends on other, coevolving individuals.
- *Gradient* refers to the evaluational information provided by those coevolving individuals, particularly to the ability to distinguish individuals on the basis of their interactions with coevolving individuals.
- Roughly, gradient allows an algorithm to tell which individuals appear better.

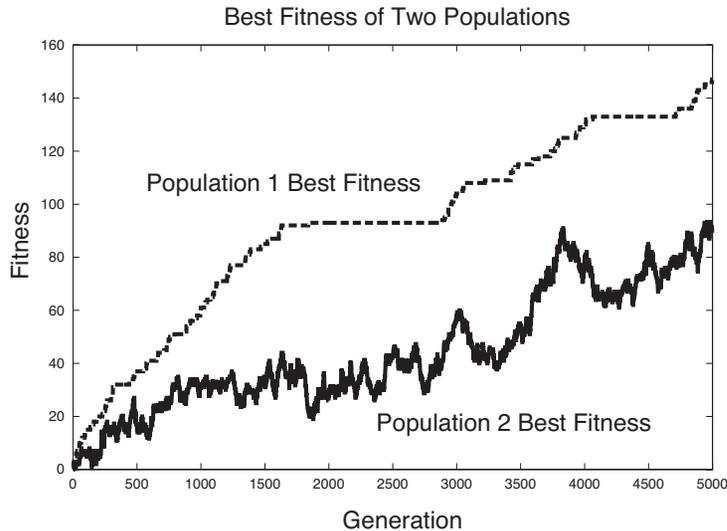
Disengagement

- The event that gradient is lost; i.e., individuals can no longer be distinguished.
- Typically, the algorithm *stalls* or *drifts*, as it can no longer tell which individuals are better.
- Imagine a school with grade inflation. All students receive an A. Then grades can no longer be used to distinguish the better students. The students and the curriculum are disengaged.

Stalling/Drift

- When lack of gradient persists over evolutionary time, *stalling* or *drift* can occur.
- If the algorithm only replaces individuals with strictly better ones (e.g., a hillclimber), it will stall. The population stops changing.
- Otherwise, the algorithm will essentially perform a random walk.

Disengagement, Stalling, and Drift

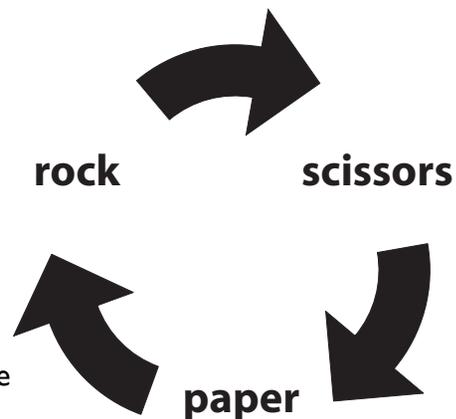


Cycling/Intransitivity

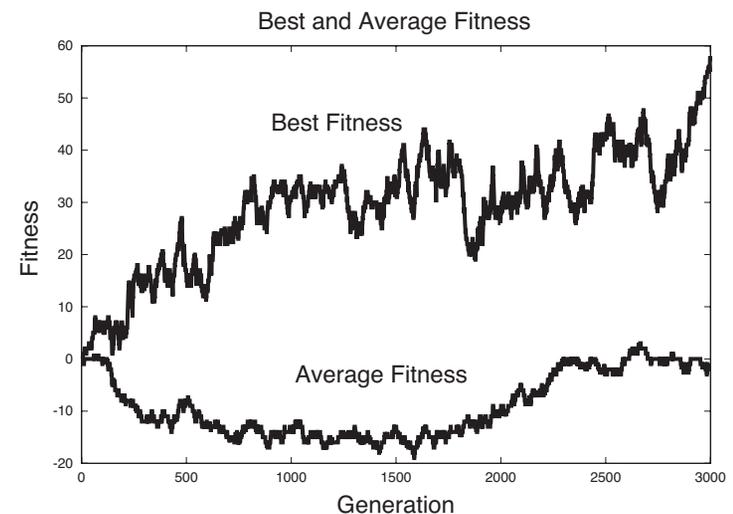
- *Cycling* typically refers to an oscillation in some metric of algorithm performance.
- If there is an offline metric of performance, we may observe the performance of coevolved individuals going up and down through evolutionary time.
- Or, we may observe that present individuals beat some past individuals but lose to others.

Cycling/Intransitivity

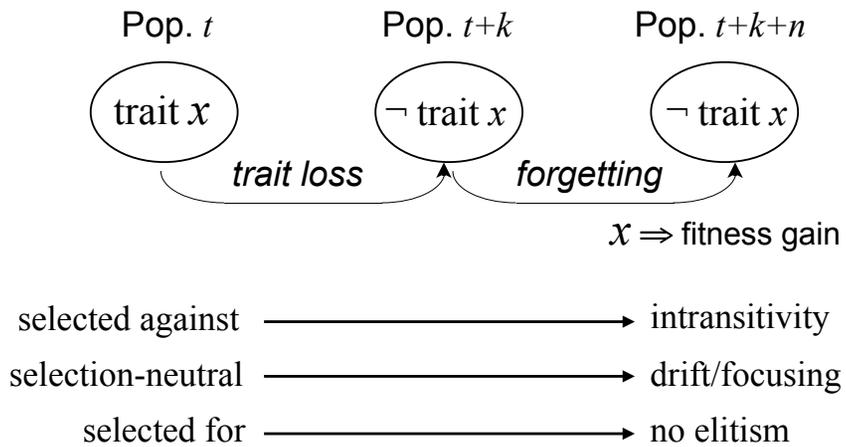
- *Intransitivity* is a characteristic of a problem domain.
- Rock-paper-scissors is a canonical example of an intransitive domain.
- Coevolutionary algorithms have been observed to cycle on intransitive domains, but may cycle on any domain.



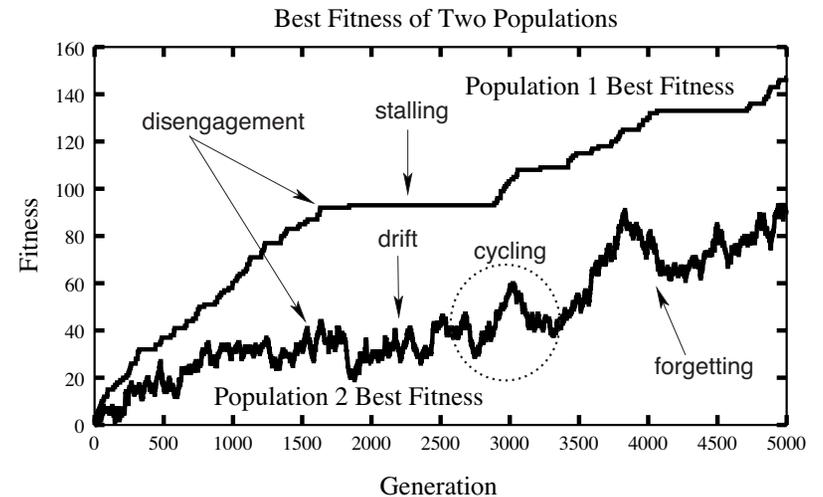
Cycling/Intransitivity



Evolutionary Forgetting

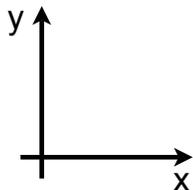


Synopsis



Concept: Underlying Objectives

- Multiobjective algorithms simultaneously optimize several different objective functions.
- Consider “capabilities” as objectives.
- Similarly, coevolutionary domains might have a set of *underlying objectives* that must be optimized to produce good individuals.

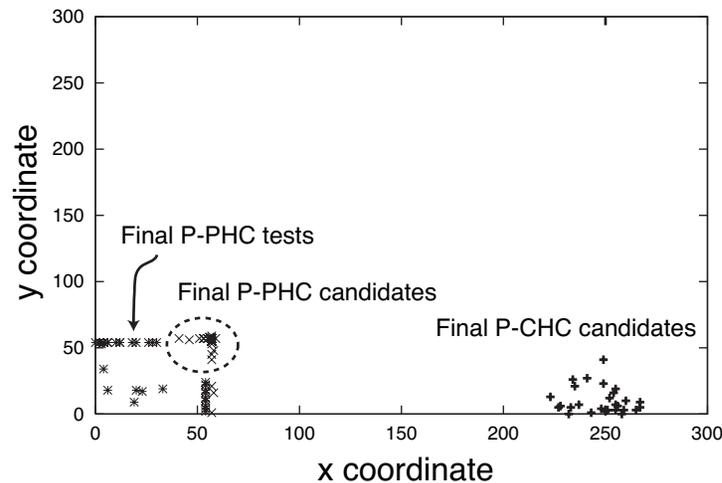


Overspecialization/Focusing

- When individuals improve on some underlying objectives at the expense of others.
- For instance, coevolving game players may *focus* on defeating certain (types of) opponents and not evolve to defeat others.

Overspecialization/Focusing

Final Candidates from Typical Runs
of P-CHC and P-PHC



The Red-Queen Effect:

van Valen 1973

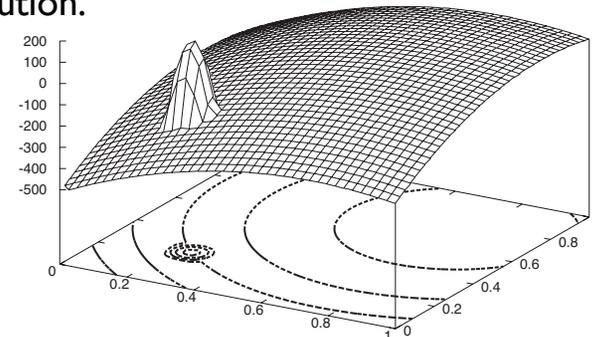
- In biological coevolution, the observation that despite constant genetic change, the extinction probability of a species does not change because of changes in the environment.
- In evolutionary computation, the observation that changes which improve the quality of an individual do not increase its selection probability because of changes to other coevolving individuals.

The Red-Queen Effect

- Most troubling is that the Red-Queen Effect prevents us from distinguishing improvement from stall/drift when monitoring an algorithm online. New individuals appear as capable as previous ones relative to the present context.

Relative Overgeneralization

- The phenomenon in Cooperative Coevolution where components that perform well with a large number of other individuals are favored over components that are part of an optimal solution.



Relationships: Gradient

- *Disengagement* is a loss of gradient.
- *Stalling* or *drifting* can result from a lack of gradient which persists through evolutionary time.
- *Forgetting* or *overspecialization* may result from drift.

Relationships: Underlying Objectives

- *Overspecialization* is focusing on one underlying objective at the expense of others.
- *Cycling* may result from oscillating between two underlying objectives.
- *Relative overgeneralization* has been argued to result from the loss of an underlying objective in Cooperative Coevolution.

About Remedies

- *Forgetting* remedies are typically about distinguishing individuals.
 - If individuals cannot be distinguished, some might be lost to drift and forgetting may occur.
- *Disengagement* remedies have traditionally kept suboptimal individuals in the population.
 - Empirically, greedy algorithms which consolidate around present best tend to disengage.
 - Suboptimal individuals may provide gradient.

Cycling

Ways to address cycling include:

- Fitness sharing
- Memory mechanisms
- Enrich the environment
- Multiple populations

Cycling: Bullock 1995

- “True” coevolution is direct reciprocal evolution between two populations
- “Diffuse” coevolution entails evolutionary change in response to traits in several other populations
- Diffuse coevolution leads to more robust strategies
- Follow-up by Hornby & Mirtich 1999

Cycling: Rosin & Belew 1995

- Zero-sum games (symmetric or asymmetric)
- Competitive fitness sharing
- Score you get against an opponent is divided by sum of all scores obtained against that opponent

Cycling: Rosin & Belew 1995

Standard fitness calculation:

	A	B	C	D	
W	1	1	1	0	$1 + 1 + 1 + 0 = 3$
X	1	1	0	0	$1 + 1 + 0 + 0 = 2$
Y	1	0	0	0	$1 + 0 + 0 + 0 = 1$
Z	0	0	1	1	$0 + 0 + 1 + 1 = 2$

Cycling: Rosin & Belew 1995

Competitive fitness sharing:

	A	B	C	D	
W	1	1	1	0	$1/3 + 1/2 + 1/2 + 0 = 4/3$
X	1	1	0	0	$1/3 + 1/2 + 0 + 0 = 5/6$
Y	1	0	0	0	$1/3 + 0 + 0 + 0 = 1/3$
Z	0	0	1	1	$0 + 0 + 1/2 + 1 = 3/2$
	3	2	2	1	

Cycling: Juillé & Pollack 1996

- Fitness based on unique “covering”
- Individuals in Population 1 interact with opponents in Population 2
- Fitness of an individual determined by comparing performance with other individuals in *same* population
- Points for beating opponents that others do not beat

Cycling: Juillé & Pollack 1996

Standard fitness calculation:

	A	B	C	D	
W	1	1	1	0	1 + 1 + 1 + 0 = 3
X	1	1	0	0	1 + 1 + 0 + 0 = 2
Y	1	0	0	0	1 + 0 + 0 + 0 = 1
Z	0	0	1	1	0 + 0 + 1 + 1 = 2

Cycling: Juillé & Pollack 1996

Covering calculation:

	A	B	C	D	
W	1	1	1	0	
X	1	1	0	0	
Y	1	0	0	0	
Z	0	0	1	1	

	W	X	Y	Z	
W	0	1	2	2	
X	0	0	1	2	
Y	0	0	0	1	
Z	1	2	2	0	

Cycling: Juillé & Pollack 1996

Covering calculation:

	W	X	Y	Z	
W	0	1	2	2	0 + 1 + 2 + 2 = 5
X	0	0	1	2	0 + 0 + 1 + 2 = 3
Y	0	0	0	1	0 + 0 + 0 + 1 = 1
Z	1	2	2	0	1 + 2 + 2 + 0 = 5

Cycling: Equilibria & Dynamics

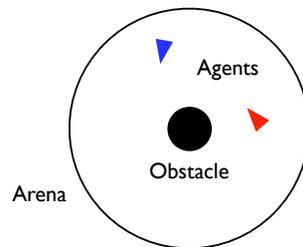
- Rosin & Belew 1997 prove that any fitness equilibrium without fitness sharing is also a fitness equilibrium with fitness sharing (in zero-sum game)
- Juillé & Pollack 1996 show that their “covering” method can lead to stable *polymorphisms*

Cycling: Nolfi & Floreano 1998

- Robotic pursuit and evasion
- Observe cyclic dynamics
- Hypothesize that a more complex environment may dampen cyclic dynamic
- Added obstacles and walls
- Found to provide significant performance boost in some runs
- On average, though, delays onset of cycling

Cycling: Hornby & Mirtich '99

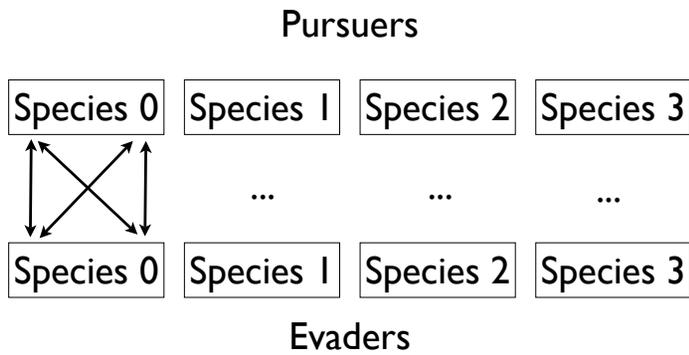
- Virtual pursuit and evasion with simulated physics of wheeled car-like agents
- Round arena with large obstacle in center



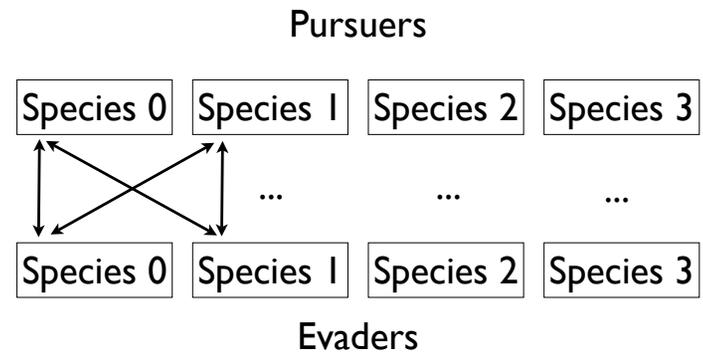
Cycling: Hornby & Mirtich '99

- Use multiple populations for each role of the game (c.f. Bullock 1995)
- Pursuers and evaders obtained under “diffuse” coevolution were more effective than those obtained from “direct” coevolution

Cycling: Hornby & Mirtich '99



Cycling: Hornby & Mirtich '99

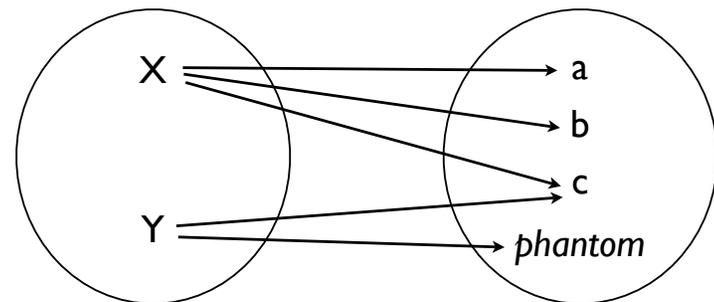


Cycling: Hornby & Mirtich '99

- Runs using direct coevolution exhibit cyclic behavior and disengagement
- Runs using diffuse coevolution stay close to 50% wins for pursuers and evaders

Disengagement: Rosin & Belew '97

- “Phantom parasite” used with competitive fitness sharing to handle disengagement

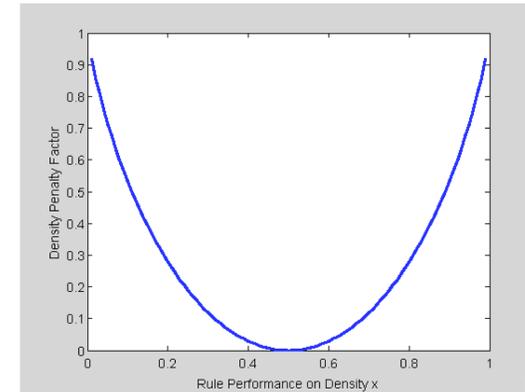


Disengagement: Juillé & Pollack '98

- Density classification task in CA
- Purely competitive evaluation \Rightarrow cycling
- Competitive fitness sharing \Rightarrow disengage
- Penalize initial conditions with densities that cause rules to perform near random
- Should be applicable to other domains, e.g., sorting networks

Disengagement: Juillé & Pollack '98

$$f(\text{IC}_j) = \sum_{i=1}^{n_R} W(R'_i) \times E(R_i, \rho(\text{IC}_j)) \times \overline{\text{covered}}(R_i, \text{IC}_j)$$

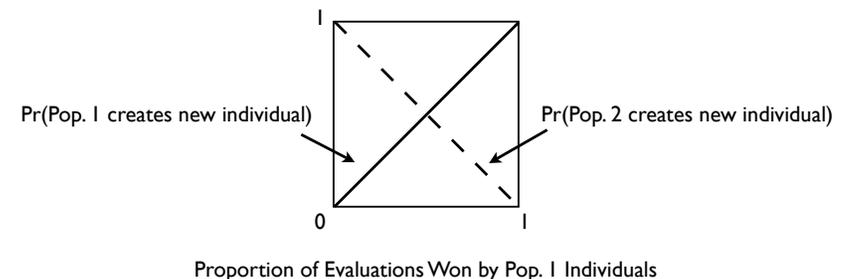


Disengagement: Olsson '98

- Asymmetric zero-sum games
- Evolve only one population, leaving the other population fixed
- Evolve Pop. 1 until individual found that beats all individuals in Pop. 2
- Then evolve Pop. 2 until individual found that beats all individuals in Pop. 1

Disengagement: Paredis '99

- Asymmetric zero-sum games
- Steady-state algorithm
- “X-method” to decide which population gets a new individual

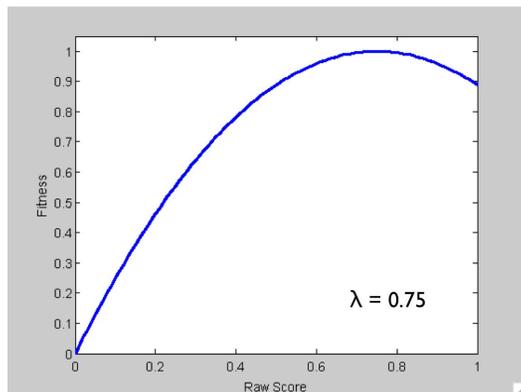


Disengagement: Cartlidge & Bullock '02

- Moderating “parasite virulence”
- Non-monotonic function of performance

$$f(x, \lambda) = \frac{2x}{\lambda} - \frac{x^2}{\lambda^2}$$

f' indicates peak fitness at λ



Forgetting: Boyd 1989

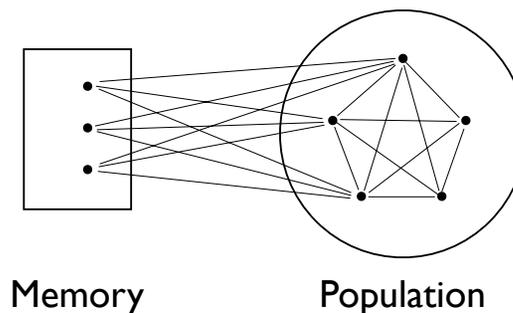
- Studies IPD where players can make mistakes
- Tit-For-Tat enters mutual retaliation
- Contrite Tit-For-Tat is resistant to invasion
- All-Cooperate cannot invade via drift
- Noise distinguishes CTFT from All-C

Forgetting: Pollack & Blair '98

- Backgammon naturally resists forgetting
- All aspects of skill are continuously needed
- A simple hill-climber is thus able to achieve fairly impressive performance
- Estimated to achieve skill comparable to TD-Gammon rev. 1992

Forgetting: Memory Mechanisms

- Augment evaluation by interacting with individuals stored in the memory



Forgetting: Memory Mechanisms

- Best-of-Generation (BOG) methods
- Most-fit individual from the m most recent generations retained in memory
- Sample n of the m individuals with replacement to augment evaluation of population

Forgetting: Memory Mechanisms

- Sims 1994, Cliff & Miller 1995: $m = 1, n = 1$
- Potter & De Jong 1994: $m = 1, n = 1$
- Rosin & Belew 1997: $m = \infty, n = 25 \text{ \& } 50$
- Nolfi & Floreano 1998a: $m = 10, n = 10$

Forgetting: Memory Mechanisms

- BOG memory is shown to help
- Broadens selection pressure
- Stabilize algorithm behavior
- Alleviate forgetting

Monitoring: Best Elite Opponent Sims 1994

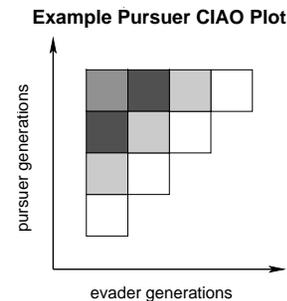
- Introduces Best Elite Opponent, the model for most subsequent monitoring techniques.
 - individuals of population 1 all compete against most-fit of previous generation from population 2 (best elite).
 - “The most ‘interesting’ results occurred when the all vs. best competition pattern was used.”
- While this is used as a competition pattern, it can be used to monitor progress: track the outcome of each generation's competitions.

Monitoring: CIAO Plots Cliff and Miller 1995

- Introduce *Current Individual vs. Ancestral Opponents* (CIAO) plots.
- Pursuers chase evaders in a 2-D simulated world.
- Two-population coevolutionary algorithm: one of pursuers, the other of evaders.
- “We use the term *fitness ambiguities* to refer to such cases where qualitative trends in time-series of instantaneous fitness measures could feasibly be interpreted as either continuing progress or as a breakdown of the co-evolutionary process.”

Monitoring: CIAO Plots Cliff and Miller 1995

- Play current elites against elite opponents from all previous generations.
- Display outcomes in a bitmap image.
- Used as a monitor of progress: if progress has occurred, present elites should be able to defeat elite opponents from previous generations.



Monitoring: Master Tournament Floreano and Nolfi 1997

- Also a predator/prey robot experiment.
- Two populations, one of predators, one of prey.
- Introduce *Masters Tournament*: all best predators compete against all best prey.
- Masters Tournament reveals more than CIAO plots:
 - shows at which generation the overall best of each population occurred
 - shows at which generation the most ‘interesting’ tournaments occur

Monitoring: Hall of Fame Rosin and Belew 1997

- “To ensure progress, we may want to save individuals for an arbitrarily long time and continue testing against them.”
- Introduces *Hall of Fame*
 - stores best of each generation
 - new individuals are tested against a sample of Hall of Fame members.
- While this is used as a memory mechanism, it can also function as a monitor: track performance of new individuals by testing against the members of the hall of fame.

Summary

- Outlined early work and notable results.
- Discussed work on pathological algorithm behavior and proposed remedies
- Raised the question: what do we really want coevolution to do?

What Do We Want Coevolutionary Algorithms To Be Doing?

- **Creating Arms Races** (Ficici & Pollack 1998).
“The key to successful coevolutionary learning is a *competitive arms race* between opposed participants.”
- **Optimizing Robustness** (Wiegand 2003).
“CCEAs...are adaptive optimizers of robustness.”

What Do We Want Coevolutionary Algorithms To Be Doing?

- **Complexifying** (Stanley & Miikkulainen 2004). “Complexification encourages continuing innovation by elaborating on existing solutions.”
- **Implementing Solution Concepts** (Ficici 2004). “We assert that pathologies in coevolutionary optimization arise when algorithms fail to implement the required (or desired) solution concepts.”

Looking Forward

- Solution Concepts
 - Addresses question of what a coevolutionary algorithm should output
- Pareto Coevolution
 - Treats evaluational issues
- Cooperative Coevolution and Robustness
 - Treats composing evolved subparts into wholes
- NEAT and Complexification
 - Treats issues of representation

Looking Forward: Solution Concepts

- Formally specifies which individuals are part of solutions
- Fundamental questions:
 - Are common/intuitive notions of solution reasonable?
 - What solution concepts do we know, and how can we find new ones?
 - Given a solution concept, how do we know if an algorithm actually approximates it?

Looking Forward: Pareto Coevolution

- Focuses on discriminating among and evaluating candidate solutions.
- Fundamental questions:
 - Which individuals are “good,” and why?
 - How do we turn the Pareto Optimal Set into a working solution?
 - How can we deal with the “curse of dimensionality”?
 - Are memory or archive mechanisms necessary?

Looking Forward: Cooperative Coevolution

- Evolving populations of parts which can be assembled into capable wholes.
- Fundamental questions:
 - What makes a good subpart?
 - What makes a good whole?
 - Does CCEA find global optima?
 - Should CCEA be producing “robust” individuals?

Looking Forward: NEAT and Complexification

- Focuses on representing complicated objects in open-ended domains.
- Fundamental questions:
 - Can we remedy pathologies by elaborating on/complexifying present solutions, versus simply altering them?
 - Can continuous, open-ended progress be achieved?

Introductory Tutorial on Coevolution—References¹

0.1 Early Work

[Samuel, 1959], [Barricelli, 1963], [Reed et al., 1967], [Samuel, 1967], [Axelrod, 1987]

Notes: The papers by Samuel are available on-line from IBM at <http://www.research.ibm.com/journal/>. The remaining papers are reprinted in [Fogel, 1998].

0.2 Notable Results

[Hillis, 1990], [Angeline and Pollack, 1993], [Sims, 1994], [Tesauro, 1995], [Juillé and Pollack, 1996], [Moriarty and Miikkulainen, 1997], [Eriksson and Olsson, 1997], [Pagie and Hogeweg, 1997], [Rosin and Belew, 1997], [Juillé and Pollack, 1998], [Pollack and Blair, 1998], [Rosin et al., 1998], [Rosin et al., 1999], [Chellapilla and Fogel, 1999], [Chellapilla and Fogel, 2000], [Juillé and Pollack, 2000], [Potter and Jong, 2000], [Pagie and Hogeweg, 2000], [Ficici and Pollack, 2001]

0.3 Pathologies, Monitoring Progress

0.3.1 Cycling, Red-Queen Effect

[Reed et al., 1967], [van Valen, 1973], [Bullock, 1995], [Cliff and Miller, 1995], [Cliff and Miller, 1996], [Floreano and Nolfi, 1997a], [Floreano and Nolfi, 1997b], [Floreano et al., 1998], [Nolfi and Floreano, 1998b], [Nolfi and Floreano, 1998a], [Ficici and Pollack, 1998], [Hornby and Mirtich, 1999], [Watson and Pollack, 2001], [Floreano et al., 2001]

0.3.2 Evolutionary Forgetting

[Boyd, 1989], [Hillis, 1990], [Bullock, 1995], [Floreano and Nolfi, 1997a], [Floreano and Nolfi, 1997b], [Floreano et al., 1998], [Nolfi and Floreano, 1998b], [Nolfi and Floreano, 1998a], [Pollack and Blair, 1998], [Ficici and Pollack, 1998], [Hornby and Mirtich, 1999], [Eriksson and Lindgren, 2001], [Floreano et al., 2001], [Stanley and Miikkulainen, 2002]

0.3.3 Disengagement

[Bullock, 1995], [Rosin and Belew, 1996], [Rosin and Belew, 1997], [Floreano and Nolfi, 1997a], [Floreano and Nolfi, 1997b], [Floreano et al., 1998], [Nolfi and Floreano, 1998b], [Nolfi and Floreano, 1998a], [Ficici and Pollack, 1998], [Olsson, 1998], [Hornby and Mirtich, 1999], [Paredis, 1999], [Paredis, 2000], [Olsson, 2000], [Watson and Pollack, 2001], [Floreano et al., 2001], [Cartlidge and Bullock, 2002]

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0.3.4 Overspecialization

[Angeline and Pollack, 1993], [Epstein, 1994], [Pagie and Hogeweg, 1997], [Pagie and Hogeweg, 2000], [Darwen and Yao, 1996], [Watson and Pollack, 2001]

0.3.5 Monitoring Progress

[Reynolds, 1994], [Cliff and Miller, 1995], [Cliff and Miller, 1996], [Ficici and Pollack, 1998], [Floreano and Nolfi, 1997a], [Floreano and Nolfi, 1997b], [Floreano et al., 1998], [Nolfi and Floreano, 1998b], [Nolfi and Floreano, 1998a], [Floreano et al., 2001], [Stanley and Miikkulainen, 2002]

0.4 Methodologies

0.4.1 Competitive Coevolution

[Angeline and Pollack, 1993], [Sims, 1994], [Rosin and Belew, 1995], [Rosin and Belew, 1996], [Rosin and Belew, 1997]

0.4.2 Cooperative Coevolution

[Potter and Jong, 1994], [Moriarty and Miikkulainen, 1997], [Potter and Jong, 2000], [Bull, 2001]

0.4.3 Pareto Coevolution

[Watson and Pollack, 2000], [Ficici and Pollack, 2000], [Ficici and Pollack, 2001], [Noble and Watson, 2001]

0.5 ALife Simulation

[Ray, 1994], [Hraber et al., 1997], [Lenski et al., 1999], [Taylor, 2001]

0.6 No Free Lunch

[Wolpert and Macready, 1997], [Wolpert and Macready, 2005]

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