Evolutionary Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma

An approach for finding good strategies
Version 0.2

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About this document

This document provides information about the evolutionary approach to Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma.

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EvoIPD version 0.2

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Prisoner's dilemma is a classical game-theoretic model of cooperative decision-making. It is very interesting from the viewpoint of sociobiology, psychology, economics, politics, and many other fields of science. Many books and hundreds of articles have been written about it since 1970s. In sociobiology, it has been used in the research of evolution of cooperative behavior.

The game is very simple. Two suspects have been arrested for possession of stolen goods and they are suspected of burglary. Each is proposed with a deal: confess the burglary (*defect* your partner) and walk away free, while your partner will get five years. However, if you don't confess (you *cooperate* with your partner), and your partner defects, you will get five years and your partner gets freed. If neither confesses (both cooperate), both get two years in prison (for possession of stolen goods) and if both confess (defect), both get three years.

Below is a "reward" matrix for the game:

		Partner's decision	
		COOPERATE	DEFECT
Your decision	COOPERATE	Both get 1 year	You get: 5 years Partner gets: nothing
	DEFECT	You get: nothing Partner gets: 5 years	Both get 3 years

If the game is played only once, it is statistically better to defect, as the partner's decision can not be predicted in any way. Things get more interesting in an iterated version of prisoner's dilemma (IPD), where the game is played for several rounds and the players can make their choice according to the previous choices made by the partner. For example, if your partner defected in the first round, you might think he will defect also in the next round. In our version of the IPD, the players remember the choices made in three previous rounds.

Players (prisoners) can choose various strategies. For example, they can choose to always defect or cooperate. Tit-for-tat is a well-known strategy where player cooperates on the first round, and then mimics the choice made by the other player. Tit-for-tat is the optimal strategy for playing against a partner playing tit-for-tat, and it's good against an always-defecting strategy, but it's not optimal against an always-

cooperating strategy, nor a completely random strategy. In a tournament of different strategies, the optimal strategy always depends on the set of other strategies.

Using evolutionary algorithms for finding strategies for IPD has been done by many people and this approach is just one. Some studies have competed the population of evolved solutions against each other and used variable length of memory of previous moves. In this implementation, we evolve a solution that competes against a fixed set of trivial strategies. The implementation uses a fixed memory length of three previous rounds, because it is easy to implement with a fixed length genome, and doesn't require any complex recombination techniques.

EvoIPD uses the NeHeP evolutionary algorithm library, which uses the MagiC++ base class library for C++. Both EvoIPD and NeHeP are provided in MagiC++ source package. EvoIPD is provided as a "project" application for NeHeP in the `libnhp/projects/prisoners` subdirectory of the MagiC++ source tree.

1.1. System requirements

MagiCBuild has the following system requirements:

- GNU/Linux operating system
- GNU Make 3.79.1 or newer
- Doxygen (optional)

Platforms

The following Linux distributions have been tested:

Distribution	
Red Hat Linux 9	
Mandrake 9.1	MagiC++ does not compile, problem with va_list.
Debian 2.2 + upgrades	MagiC++ does not compile, problem with va_list.

1.2. Licensing

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Chapter 2   Installing

This chapter provides instructions for configuring, building, and actually installing EvoIPD and its required libraries.

EvoIPD is provided as a part of the MagiC++ library package, which includes also the NeHeP library. The EvoIPD is a "project" application for NeHeP.

The installation instructions for the software package would probably be very much like the instructions in this chapter.

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2.1.   Opening the source package

The source code is normally provided as a GNU Tar package compressed with `bz2`. You can unpack it with the following shell command:

```
tar jxf magic++-1.3beta1.tar.bz2
```

This will unpack the source code into an appropriate subdirectory under the current directory.

2.2.   Configuring

To configure the source code for compilation, change to the source directory and run the `configure` script as follows:

```
cd magic++-1.3beta1
./configure
```

Optionally, if you wish to later install the package (headers and library) to some other than the default directory, you need to set the installation path with the `--prefix` attribute:

```
./configure --prefix=/opt/magic++
```

The default path for *root* user is `/usr/local`, and for other users their home directory.

No other configuration flags are currently supported.

2.3.   Compiling

Include dependencies have to be determined before actual compiling, with the following command:

```
make deps
```

This may produce some errors, which are usually not relevant. Making dependencies is important if you intend to recompile the sources after making changes to them.

The package is compiled with the following simple command:

```
make
```

2.3.1.   Compilation output

The output binaries as well as any intermediate files of the compilation will be located in an output directory tree separate from the source tree.

The build framework does the compilation output in separate directory, determined by the configuration script. The default output directory is located in:

```
/tmp/$USER/build/<architecture>/release
```

where `$USER` is the user name and *architecture* is the operating system and processor architecture, for example, `Linux-i686`.

For example, binaries are found under the `bin` subdirectory:

```
cd /tmp/$USER/build/Linux-i686/release/bin
./evoipd
```

Yoy can clean the output with the following command in the top-level source directory:

```
make clean
```

You do not normally need to clean the output.

2.4.   Installing

After compiling, you can be install the package under the configured installation directory (see above) by issuing the following command in the source directory:

```
make install
```

This will copy the output library binaries and header files to appropriate

subdirectories under the installation directory.

Directory	*Description*
`<instdir>/lib`	Libraries
`<instdir>/bin`	Binaries
`<instdir>/include`	Header files

2.5. Uninstalling

You can remove the installation by giving the following command in the source directory:

```
make uninstall
```

This removes the installed files and directories only if the installation path has not been changed with `configure` script after installing.

Chapter 3 Software architecture

3.1. NeHeP evolutionary library

NeHep is a highly object oriented general-purpose evolutionary algorithm library for C++. It is based on the MagiC++ base class library for C++.

In conventional genetic algorithms, the genetic code is typically just a bit string or array of real values. The bit string is decoded by some procedure and then evaluated using a fitness function. NeHeP uses approach where the genetic code is potentially a very complex data structure. For all elements of that structure, there must be an implementation of the basic genetic operators, recombination and mutation. When such operators are applied to the top-level container (a genome), they are recursively applied to all lower-level genetic structures, and any parameters (such as mutation rates) can be modified by the specific implementations of the operators at each structural level. Another, a rather agent-oriented, feature is that, although the genetic code can be read as usual by a "decoding function", the genetic structures (genes and genetic containers) can be sent a message that "activates" them and they build the phenotype of their host individual just by themselves, possibly by activating other genes. Genotypic features can be designed in a modular manner, and then just "thrown in" in the genome, and the individual's ontogenetic procedure will take care of the "growth process".

3.2. EvoIPD architectural overview

EvoIPD implements two classes required by NeHeP's programming framework: an evolution environment and a genetic container that contains the genes to be evolved.

The EvoIPD evolution environment, **PrisonEAEnv**, is an application-specific implementation of the abstract **EAEnvironment** class, which describes the actual problem for which the evolutionary algorithm tries to find solutions. It has two tasks. First, it has to initialize the genome of the individuals in the population with problem-specific genetic structure. Second, it provides an evaluation function for evaluating the fitness of a given genome, or individual, in the environment (problem).

The ***PrisonerGene*** is a genetic container (***Gentainer***) that contains the genetic material that represents an "encoded" solution. The ***PrisonEAEnv*** initializes the decoding of the genome by sending it the identifier of the ***PrisonerGene***, "PS". When the gene receives this message, it decodes itself as a phenotypic feature of the individual. The phenotype is actually a rule string for the IPD game, which the gene sets as an attribute for the individual. ***PrisonEAEnv*** reads this attribute, uses it to create a ***PDStrategy*** instance, and plays the IPD game with it against all the other strategies. The evaluation function returns (reverse of) the game score as the fitness of the individual. The evolutionary algorithm uses this value to guide the evolution.

Figure 1 below illustrates the class relationships in EvoIPD.
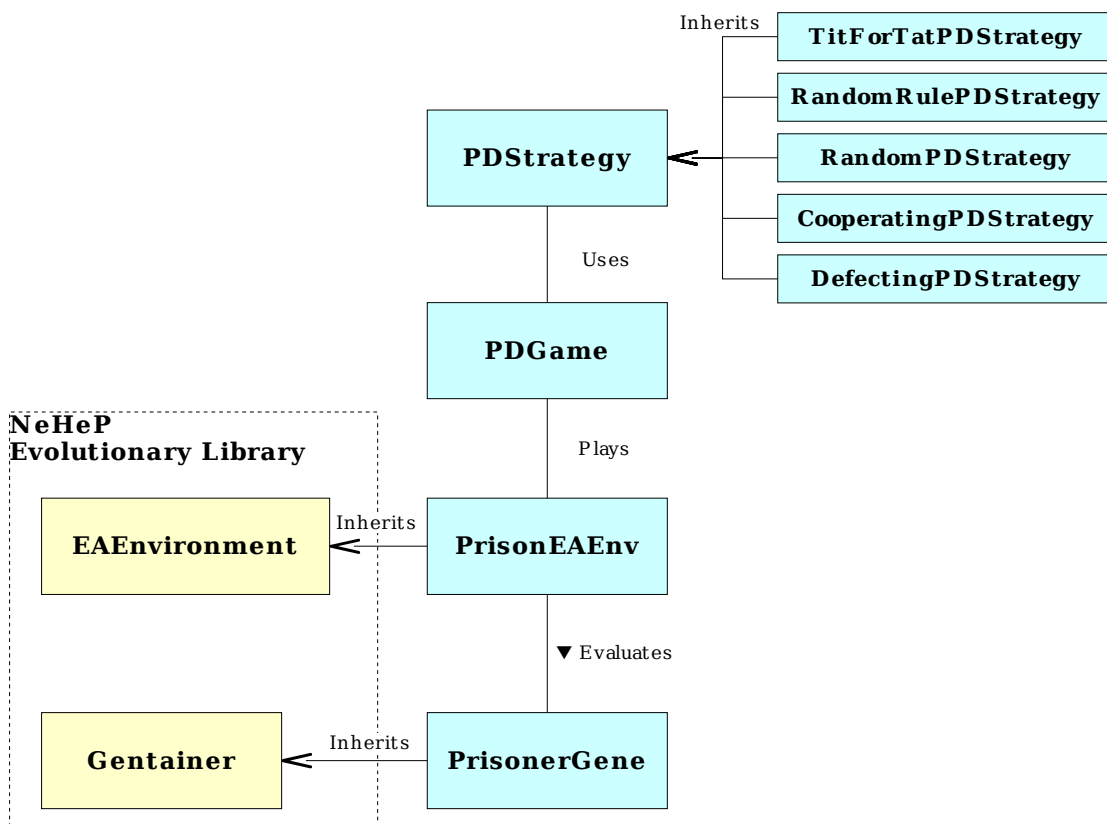

Figure 1: Class relationship diagram for EvoIPD

3.3.   Competing strategies

The hand-made strategies are as follows:

Cooperating   A "dumb" strategy that always cooperates disregarding whatever wrongs the partner has done previously. It performs quite nicely against cooperating and tit-for-tat partners, but is completely at mercy of the Defecting strategy.

Defecting   A greedy and untrusting strategy that always defects disregarding whatever the partner does. This strategy is best for non-iterated prisoner's dilemma, but not for iterated. While it can, of course, abuse the unsuspecting Cooperating strategy, and does optimally against random strategies, it does very badly against tit-for-tat.

TitForTat   A clever strategy that does very well against most strategies. On first round, it cooperates, and on successive rounds, it does what the partner did in the previous round. Tit-for-tat was first proposed in 1970s by Axelrod for a competition of human-designed game strategies. It won all the more complex strategies. However, it does not do very well against random strategies, and it can not abuse the dumb cooperating strategy.

Random   A nut strategy that makes every decision randomly. As it is hard to predict its move, it has (exactly) average success against any strategies that try to predict it. Only determinedly defecting strategies do somewhat well against it.

RandomRule   As Random above, except that the rules are set randomly in the beginning of the game. A learning strategy could, in principle, learn to abuse the RandomRule strategy. However, the strategy is currently re-initialized in the beginning of each game, so the strategy is completely random from the viewpoint of the evolutionary algorithm, which can therefore not learn to play against it.

Hundreds of other human-designed strategies exist for the iterated prisoner's dilemma. One very annoying strategy is one that first cooperates, and cooperates if the partner does, but avenges any defection by defecting indefinitely. While some clever strategies could "test" other strategies to see how gullible they are, and thus surpass Tit-for-tat, the existence of vengeful strategies in a tournament quickly turns the tables against such naughty strategies.

3.3.1. Representation of strategies

The *PDStrategy* class allows the representation of a strategy as a rule table. The rule table has six parameter columns: two for each step of "memory" in the past rounds. The two columns are for the decisions made by self and the partner. These six columns can have 64 possible binary combinations of "defect" and "cooperate".

In addition, each strategy has six "hypothetical" or "prehistorical" items, which represent imaginary choices made by both players before the game actually begun. Without these items, we would need to have separate rules for the beginning of game.

An example of a rule table evolved by the algorithm can be seen below in Section 4.2 *Results*.

Chapter 4 Experiments

4.1. Parameters

Population size of 20 individuals was used. Auto-adaptation of mutation rates was used with initial mutation rate of p=0.1 and lower bound of p=0.01 for binary genes. Recombination frequency of p=0.5 was used.

4.2. Results

The evolutionary algorithm was run for 200 generations and the fittest individual was picked for final testing. Table below presents the score matrix of the different strategies.

	EvoIPD	*Tit4Tat*	*RandomRule*	*XRandom*	*Cooping*	*Defecting*	*Avg*
EvoIPD	$1.00 \backslash 1.00$	$1.00 \backslash 1.00$	$1.41 \backslash 3.5$	$1.53 \backslash 3.93$	$1.00 \backslash 1.00$	$3.02 \backslash 2.97$	*1.492*
Tit4Tat	$1.00 \backslash 1.00$	$1.00 \backslash 1.00$	$2.24 \backslash 2.22$	$2.26 \backslash 2.24$	$1.00 \backslash 1.00$	$3.02 \backslash 2.97$	*1.753*
RandomRule	$3.89 \backslash 1.46$	$2.19 \backslash 2.21$	$2.24 \backslash 2.24$	$2.26 \backslash 2.46$	$0.52 \backslash 2.92$	$4.02 \backslash 1.47$	*2.520*
Xrandom	$3.94 \backslash 1.52$	$2.23 \backslash 2.26$	$2.25 \backslash 2.26$	$2.26 \backslash 2.26$	$0.51 \backslash 2.97$	$3.99 \backslash 1.51$	*2.530*
Cooping	$1.00 \backslash 1.00$	$1.00 \backslash 1.00$	$3.07 \backslash 0.48$	$3.00 \backslash 0.50$	$1.00 \backslash 1.00$	$5.00 \backslash 0.00$	*2.346*
Defecting	$2.97 \backslash 3.02$	$2.97 \backslash 3.02$	$1.51 \backslash 4.00$	$1.52 \backslash 3.99$	$0.00 \backslash 5.00$	$3.00 \backslash 3.00$	*1.993*

The evolved solution clearly performed best, also better than Tit4Tat. Looking at the results more closely we can analyze the benefits of the evolved solution more clearly. It performed equally well against Cooperating and Defecting strategies as Tit4Tat did, but it performed much better against the random strategies. The optimal strategy against a random strategy would be to always defect, the same as in a single-round prisoner's dilemma, as having experience about previous moves does not help at all. As we can see from the table, the average score of the defecting strategy against both versions of random strategy is 1.5, as we can predict with (0+3)/2=1.5. We can therefore say that the evolved solution has learned to recognize random strategies very well.

The genotype of the best individual in the above experiment is given below:

```
Genome {PS=PrisonerGene
{001100010101110010101101010011011011011111001111111111101000111
01000000 Px=0.50 RM=1 Nx=1 } Px=0.50 RM=1 Nx=1 }
```

The semantics of the genotype are more clear in tabular format:

	Round								Round					
	-3		-2		-1				-3		-2		-1		
	Other	Me	Other	Me	Other	Me	Decision		Other	Me	Other	Me	Other	Me	Decison
0	Coop	Coop	Coop	Coop	Coop	Coop	0: Coop	32	Defect	Coop	Coop	Coop	Coop	Coop	1: Defect
1	Coop	Coop	Coop	Coop	Coop	Defect	0: Coop	33	Defect	Coop	Coop	Coop	Coop	Defect	0: Coop
2	Coop	Coop	Coop	Coop	**Defect**	Coop	**1: Defect**	34	Defect	Coop	Coop	Coop	**Defect**	Coop	**1: Defect**
3	Coop	Coop	Coop	Coop	**Defect**	Defect	**1: Defect**	35	Defect	Coop	Coop	Coop	**Defect**	Defect	**1: Defect**
4	Coop	Coop	Coop	Defect	Coop	Coop	0: Coop	36	Defect	Coop	Coop	Defect	Coop	Coop	0: Coop
5	Coop	Coop	Coop	Defect	Coop	Defect	0: Coop	37	Defect	Coop	Coop	Defect	Coop	Defect	1: Defect
6	Coop	Coop	Coop	Defect	**Defect**	Coop	**0: Coop**	38	Defect	Coop	Coop	Defect	**Defect**	Coop	**1: Defect**
7	Coop	Coop	Coop	Defect	**Defect**	Defect	**1: Defect**	39	Defect	Coop	Coop	Defect	**Defect**	Defect	**1: Defect**
8	Coop	Coop	Defect	Coop	Coop	Coop	0: Coop	40	Defect	Coop	Defect	Coop	Coop	Coop	1: Defect
9	Coop	Coop	Defect	Coop	Coop	Defect	1: Defect	41	Defect	Coop	Defect	Coop	Coop	Defect	1: Defect
10	Coop	Coop	Defect	Coop	**Defect**	Coop	**0: Coop**	42	Defect	Coop	Defect	Coop	**Defect**	Coop	**0: Coop**
11	Coop	Coop	Defect	Coop	**Defect**	Defect	**1: Defect**	43	Defect	Coop	Defect	Coop	**Defect**	Defect	**0: Coop**
12	Coop	Coop	Defect	Defect	Coop	Coop	1: Defect	44	Defect	Coop	Defect	Defect	Coop	Coop	1: Defect
13	Coop	Coop	Defect	Defect	Coop	Defect	1: Defect	45	Defect	Coop	Defect	Defect	Coop	Defect	1: Defect
14	Coop	Coop	Defect	Defect	**Defect**	Coop	**0: Coop**	46	Defect	Coop	Defect	Defect	**Defect**	Coop	**1: Defect**
15	Coop	Coop	Defect	Defect	**Defect**	Defect	**0: Coop**	47	Defect	Coop	Defect	Defect	**Defect**	Defect	**1: Defect**
16	Coop	Defect	Coop	Coop	Coop	Coop	1: Defect	48	Defect	Defect	Coop	Coop	Coop	Coop	1: Defect
17	Coop	Defect	Coop	Coop	Coop	Defect	0: Coop	49	Defect	Defect	Coop	Coop	Coop	Defect	1: Defect
18	Coop	Defect	Coop	Coop	**Defect**	Coop	**1: Defect**	50	Defect	Defect	Coop	Coop	**Defect**	Coop	**1: Defect**
19	Coop	Defect	Coop	Coop	**Defect**	Defect	**0: Coop**	51	Defect	Defect	Coop	Coop	**Defect**	Defect	**1: Defect**
20	Coop	Defect	Coop	Defect	Coop	Coop	1: Defect	52	Defect	Defect	Coop	Defect	Coop	Coop	1: Defect
21	Coop	Defect	Coop	Defect	Coop	Defect	1: Defect	53	Defect	Defect	Coop	Defect	Coop	Defect	1: Defect
22	Coop	Defect	Coop	Defect	**Defect**	Coop	**0: Coop**	54	Defect	Defect	Coop	Defect	**Defect**	Coop	**0: Coop**
23	Coop	Defect	Coop	Defect	**Defect**	Defect	**1: Defect**	55	Defect	Defect	Coop	Defect	**Defect**	Defect	**1: Defect**
24	Coop	Defect	Defect	Coop	Coop	Coop	0: Coop	56	Defect	Defect	Defect	Coop	Coop	Coop	0: Coop
25	Coop	Defect	Defect	Coop	Coop	Defect	1: Defect	57	Defect	Defect	Defect	Coop	Coop	Defect	0: Coop
26	Coop	Defect	Defect	Coop	**Defect**	Coop	**0: Coop**	58	Defect	Defect	Defect	Coop	**Defect**	Coop	**0: Coop**
27	Coop	Defect	Defect	Coop	**Defect**	Defect	**0: Coop**	59	Defect	Defect	Defect	Coop	**Defect**	Defect	**1: Defect**
28	Coop	Defect	Defect	Defect	Coop	Coop	1: Defect	60	Defect	Defect	Defect	Defect	Coop	Coop	1: Defect
29	Coop	Defect	Defect	Defect	Coop	Defect	1: Defect	61	Defect	Defect	Defect	Defect	Coop	Defect	1: Defect
30	Coop	Defect	Defect	Defect	**Defect**	Coop	**0: Coop**	62	Defect	Defect	Defect	Defect	**Defect**	Coop	**0: Coop**
31	Coop	Defect	Defect	Defect	**Defect**	Defect	**1: Defect**	63	Defect	Defect	Defect	Defect	**Defect**	Defect	**1: Defect**

Extracting the logic of the solution from the decision table is not trivial and I will not do it here. We can, however, try to analyze the strategy with some simple statistics of the decisions.

38 (59%) of 64 decisions are defecting, which makes the strategy more likely to defect than to cooperate for a given random history. The cases where the partner defected on previous round are emphasized in bold face; 18 (56%) of 32 such decisions are defecting, so the strategy does not resemble Tit4Tat (which would always defect in such cases) very much. In fact, the strategy seems to favor its own previous decision more often, in 39 (61%) of 64 cases.

If we average the number of defective decision in history for each defective decision, for example "I defected because: (I defected (1) + I defected (1) + I

cooped (0))/3 = 2/3", we get total sums of 64/3 (56%) own defections of 38 and 56/3 (49%) other's defections of 38 defective decisions. This is comparable with the above ratio for the previous round.

While it is interesting to notice that the strategy doesn't resemble Tit4Tat much, it is difficult to say what these statistics might indicate. Closer analysis of the decision logic would be required.

As the last six values in the genotype are zeros, the strategy assumes that any hypothetical (prehistorical) decisions were cooperative.

4.2.1. Other experiments

The results above were from a single run, but it may.

In some other runs, the evolved strategy learned to abuse the cooperating strategy and got score 0.01 against it. In doing so, it however suffered slightly against all the other strategies, and the average score was roughly par with the score for the experiment presented above. It obviously had to defect once to distinguish between the cooperating and Tit4Tat strategies, and cooperate once to recognize the defecting strategy. As these detections take much of the complexity allowed by the rule table, it probably could not learn to recognize the random strategies so well.

4.2.2. Effectiveness of evolution

All experiments for studying the usefulness of evolution for problem-solving should be validated against random search. The evolution is supposed to sample the search space in a correlated manner, using the previously found solutions as a starting point for finding even better solutions. An evolutionary algorithm with a population of 20 and evolution length of 200 generations samples 4,000 points from the search space. A random search of 4,000 samples should not do better than that. The random samples must be selected with the same distribution, that is, with the same algorithm as the initial population for the evolutionary algorithm.

I validated the effectiveness of the evolutionary algorithm by setting the population size to 4,000 and running the "evolution" for one generation. The best found random strategy was actually quite good, with average score of 1.582, just slightly worse than for the evolved strategy. The best random strategy was an abuser that abused the cooperating strategy, while playing rather nicely with Tit4Tat and appropriately defecting the defecting strategy. The average score of all random strategies was 2.222 and the score for the worst strategy was 2.747.

4.3.   Summary of the results

The evolved solution performed better than any of the predefined strategies. Other evolved solutions showed remarkable ability to recognize the other strategies by

deliberately defecting and cooperating to see their response.

The results were not very reliable, as the experiment was run only once. The validity of the effectiveness of the algorithm is not quite certain, as the random search produced a rather good solution. The search space was sampled randomly only once; we do not know if the best found random solution was exceptionally good or bad for our sample size.

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