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FairBranch: Mitigating Bias Transfer in Fair Multi-task Learning

MAMMOth

EU HORIZON-RIA Project ID:101070285





Outline

- ❖ Introduction and Motivation
- ❖ Problem Definition
- ❖ FairBranch
- ❖ Experiments
- ❖ Discussion and Conclusion



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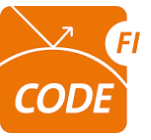




Introduction and Motivation



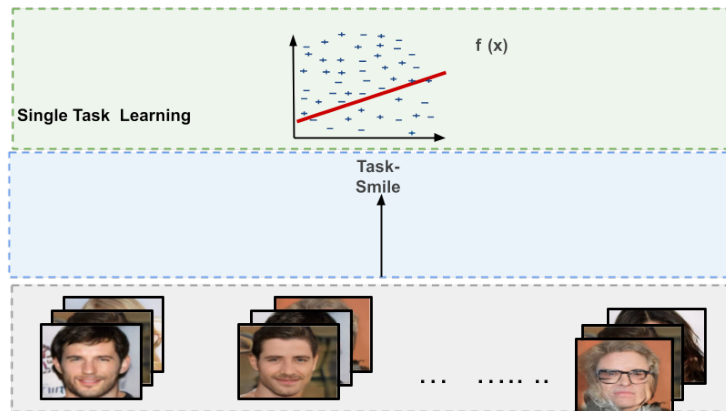
Single vs Multi-task Learning



STL

MTL

STL

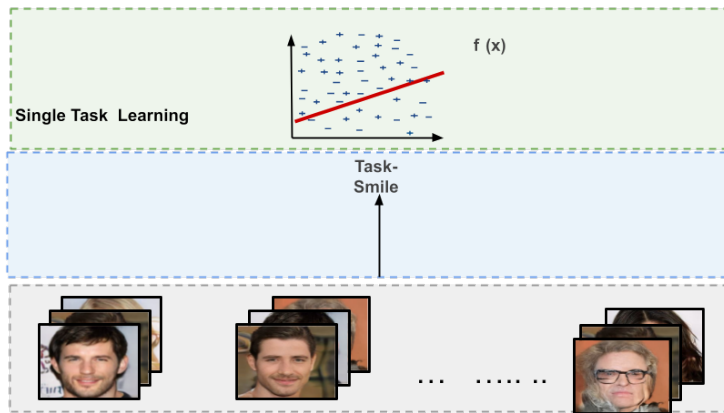


MTL

- learn a single supervised prediction tasks (STL).

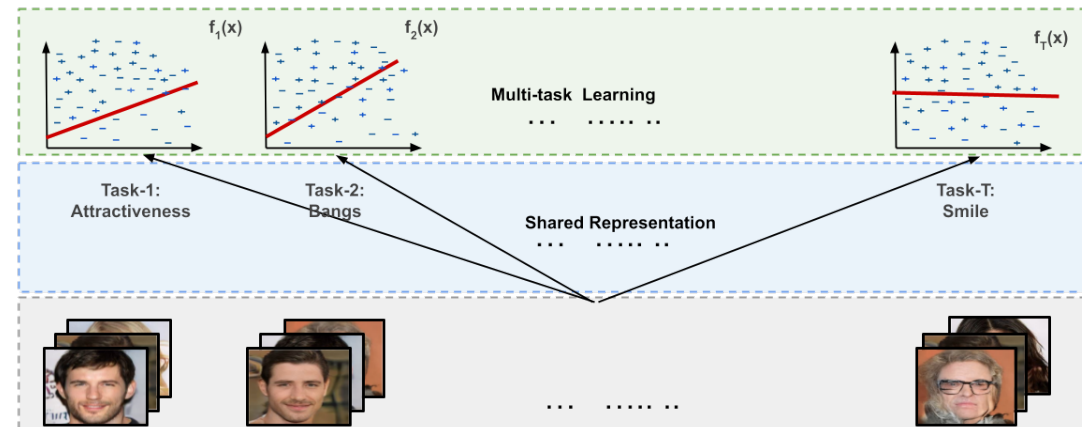
Single vs Multi-task Learning

STL



- learn a single supervised prediction tasks (STL).

MTL



- Learn multiple supervised prediction tasks concurrently (MTL).
- Utilize a shared optimization space to enhance generalization across the tasks.

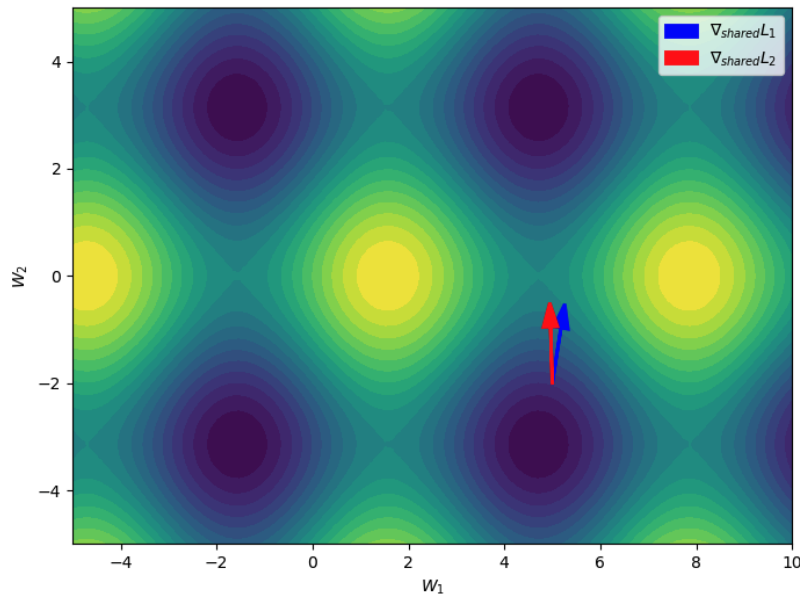


The Conflicting Gradient Problem



Hypothetical loss surface of the shared parameter space jointly trained with two task losses L_1 and L_2

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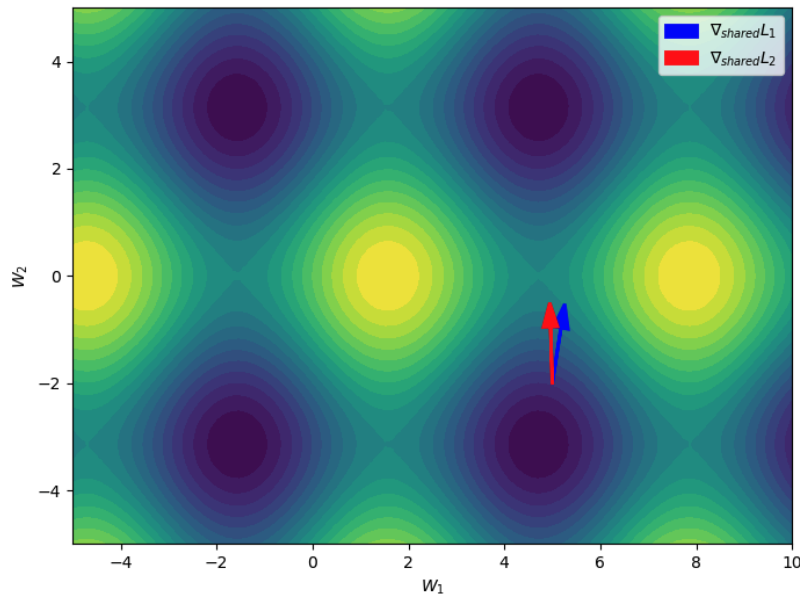


Two task t1 (blue arrow), and t2 (red arrow) moving together:

- in the same optimization direction

$$\nabla_{\text{shared}} L_1 \cdot \nabla_{\text{shared}} L_2 \geq 0$$

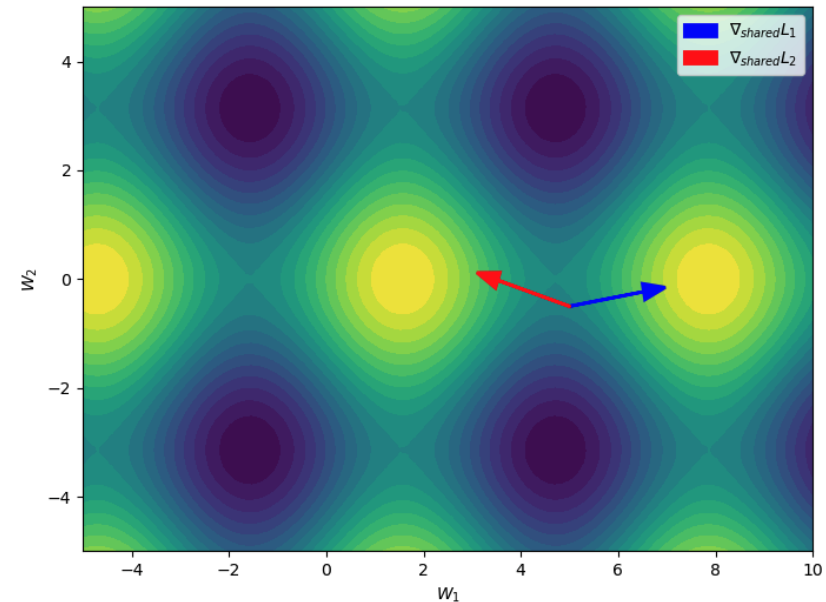
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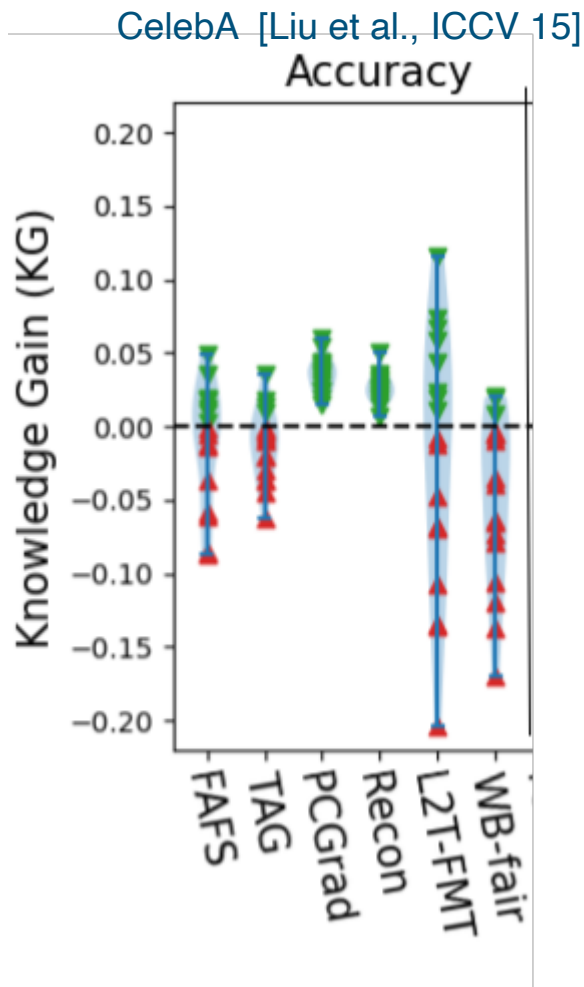
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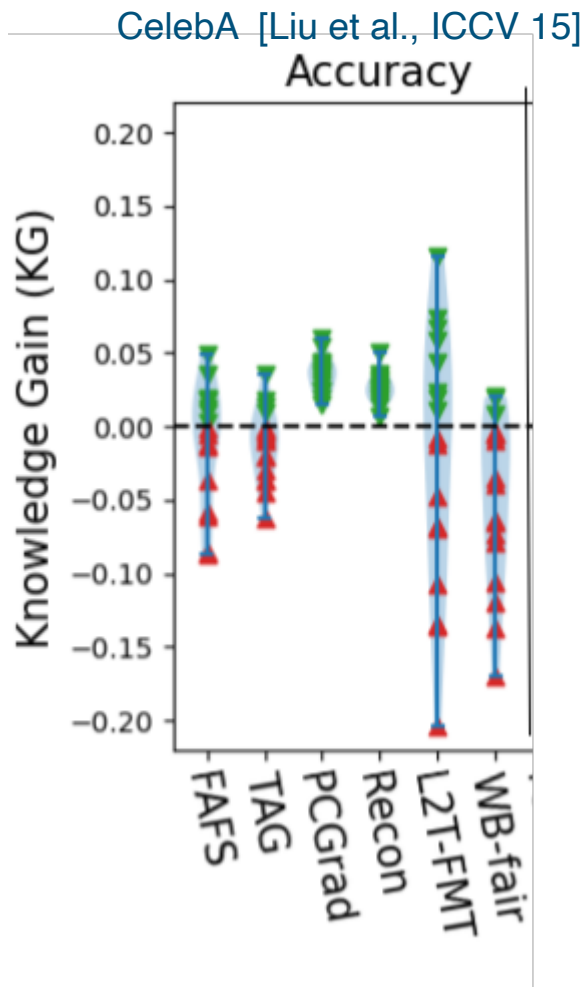


Two task t1 (blue arrow), and t2 (red arrow) moving towards:

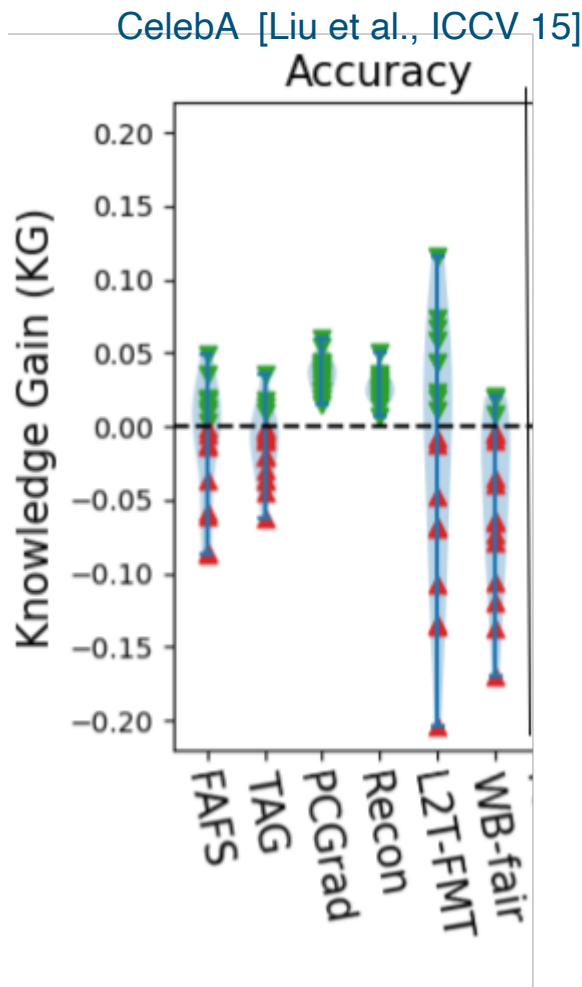
- respective local minima in conflicting direction

$$\nabla_{shared} L_1 \cdot \nabla_{shared} L_2 < 0$$



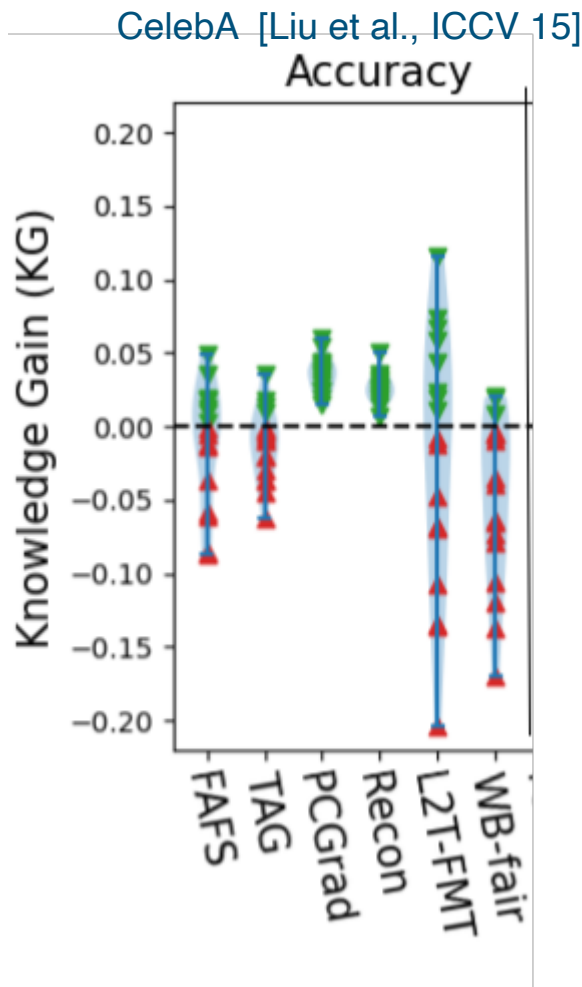


$$KG(t) : P(\mathcal{M}^t(X) = Y_t) - P(\mathcal{H}(X) = Y_t)$$



Knowledge Gain (KG): difference in accuracy between MTL (\mathcal{M}) and STL (\mathcal{H}) trained on t :

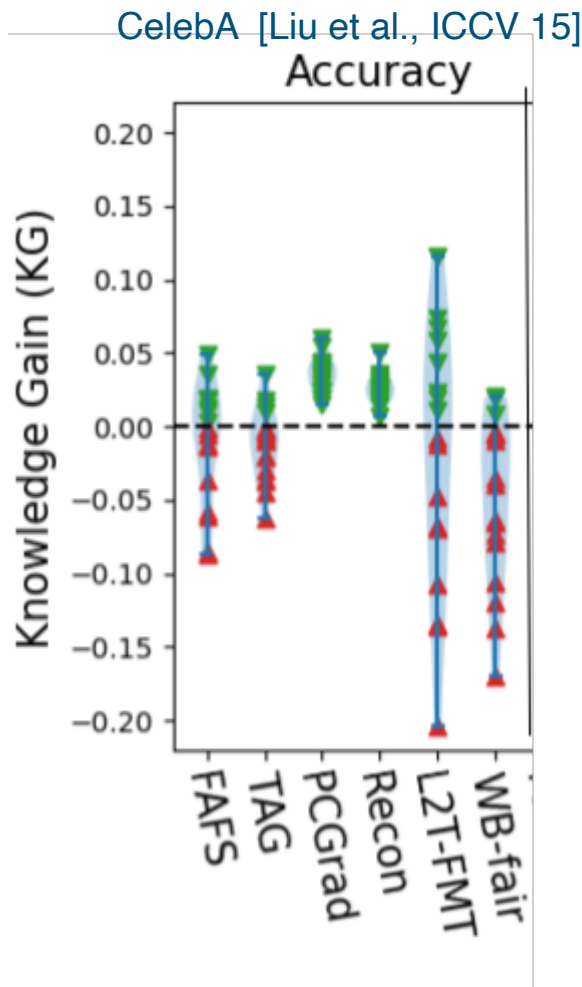
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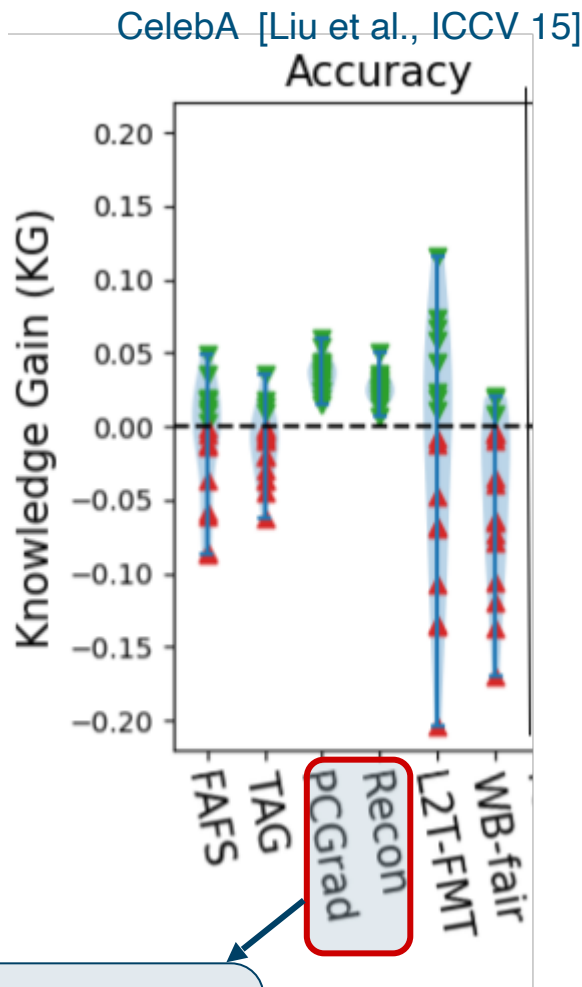


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Root Cause: Research identified accuracy conflict as origin. [Guangyuan et al., ICLR 22; Yu et al., NeurIPS 20; Du et al., ContLearn 18] .

**Tackle
accuracy
conflicts**



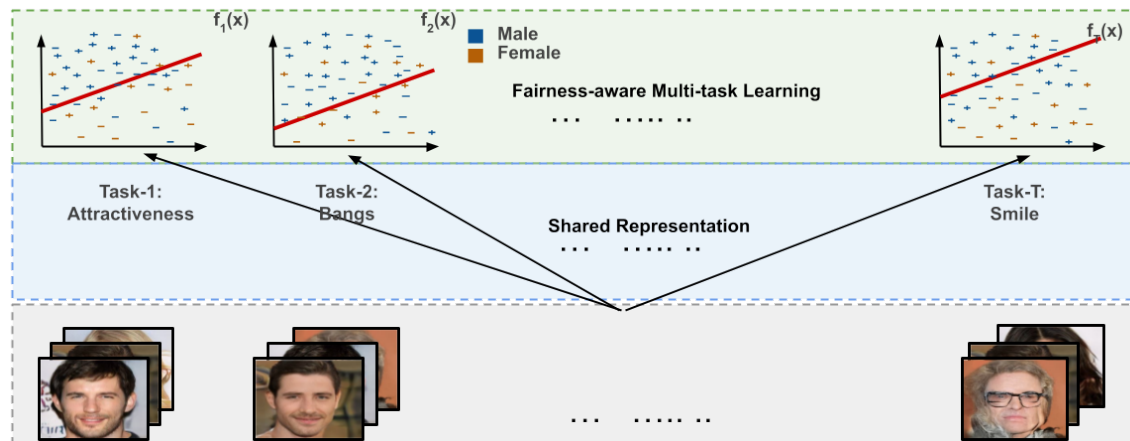
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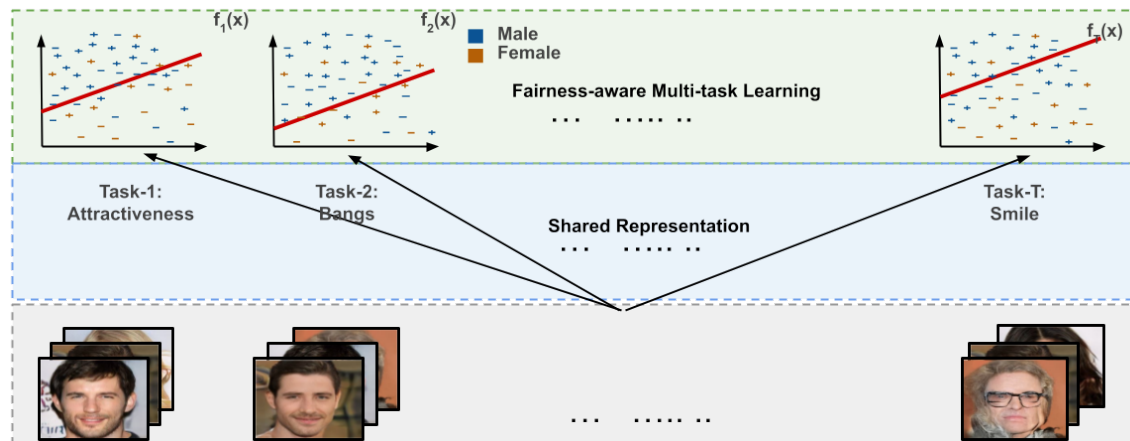


Problem Definition

What is Fairness-aware MTL aka fair-MTL?



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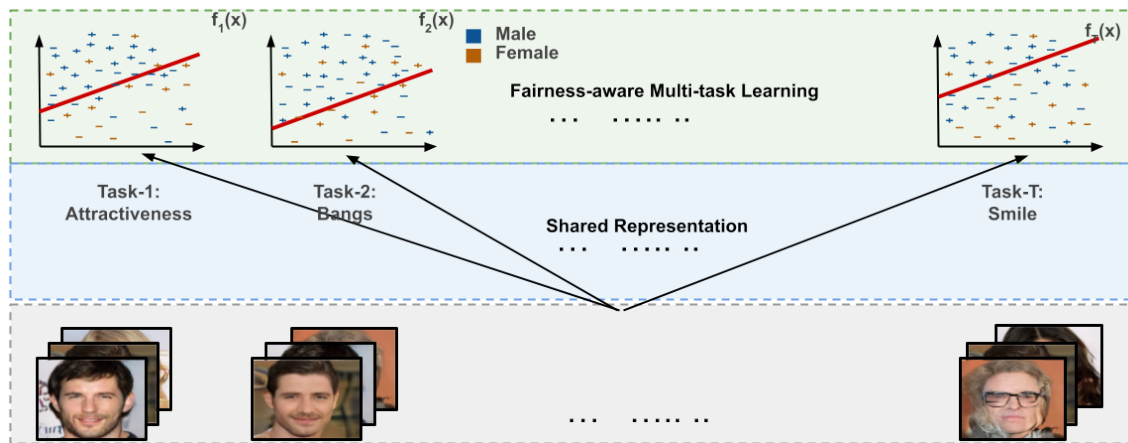


- learn multiple supervised prediction tasks without discrimination

$$F_{viol}^{(t)}(\mathcal{M}) = \sum_{c \in \mathcal{C}} |P(\mathcal{M}^t(X)|S = g, c) - P(\mathcal{M}^t(X)|S = \bar{g}, c)| \cong 0$$

g and \bar{g} represents groups like “male”, and “female”.

What is Fairness-aware MTL aka fair-MTL?



$$\operatorname{argmin}_{\theta} \sum_t w_t \left(\mathcal{L}_t(\theta, U) + \lambda_t \mathcal{F}_t(\theta, S) \right)$$

Requires to optimize minimum two losses [Roy et al., ECMLPKDD 22] per task t

- accuracy loss L_t and
- fairness loss F_t .

λ sets accuracy and fairness trade-off, ω sets the inter-task trade-off

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Exaggerated Conflict Gradient Problem in fair-MTL

Hypothetical loss surface of the shared parameter space jointly trained with two accuracy L_1 and L_2 , and two fairness F_1 and F_2 losses

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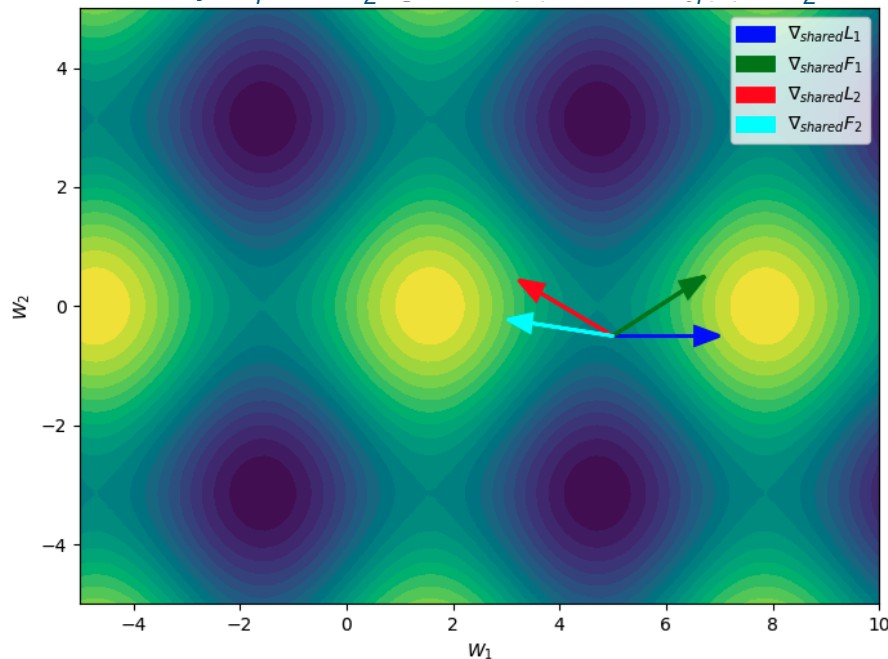
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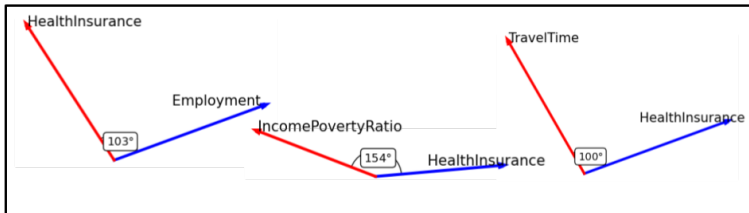
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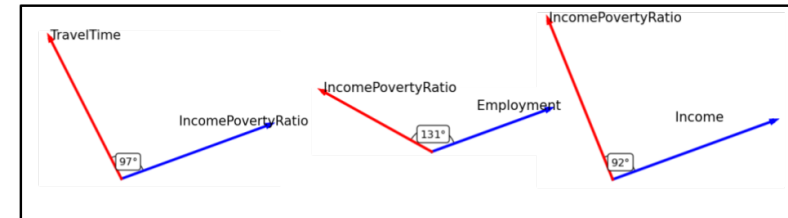
More conflicts to deal with

Introduces the fairness conflict problem

$$\nabla_{shared} F_1 \cdot \nabla_{shared} F_2 < 0$$



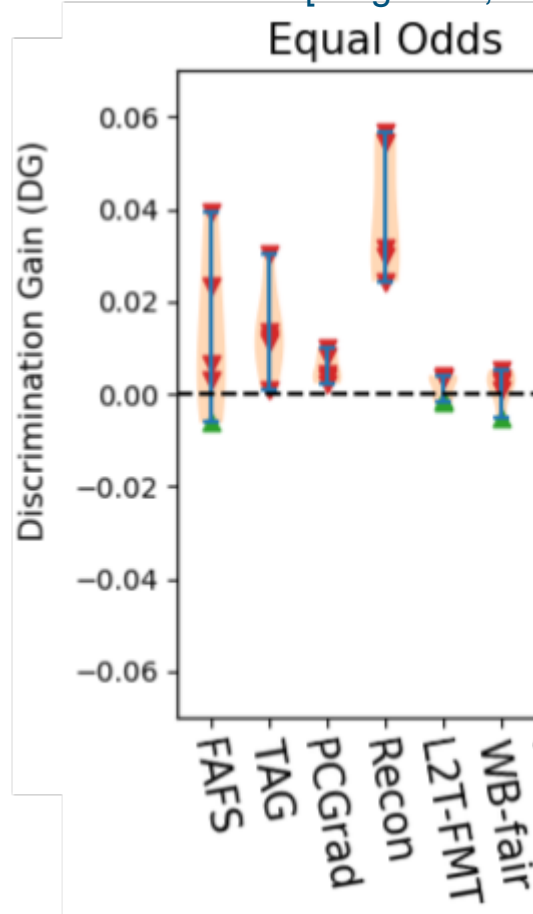
Recon [Guangyuan et al., ICLR 22]



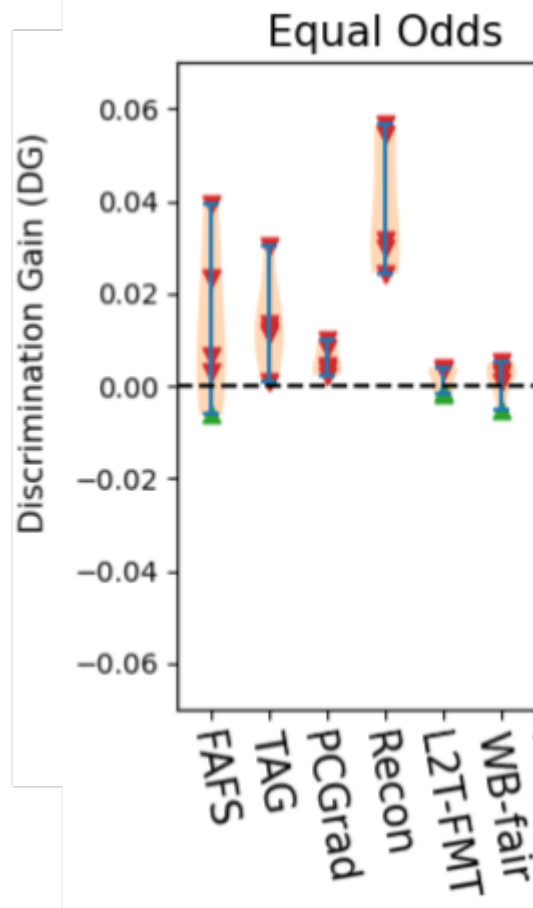
TAG [Fifty et al., NeurIPS 21]

- Fairness conflict observed in SOTA MTL methods when trained on real world census data [Ding et al., NeurIPS 21].

ACS-PUMS [Ding et al., NeurIPS 21]

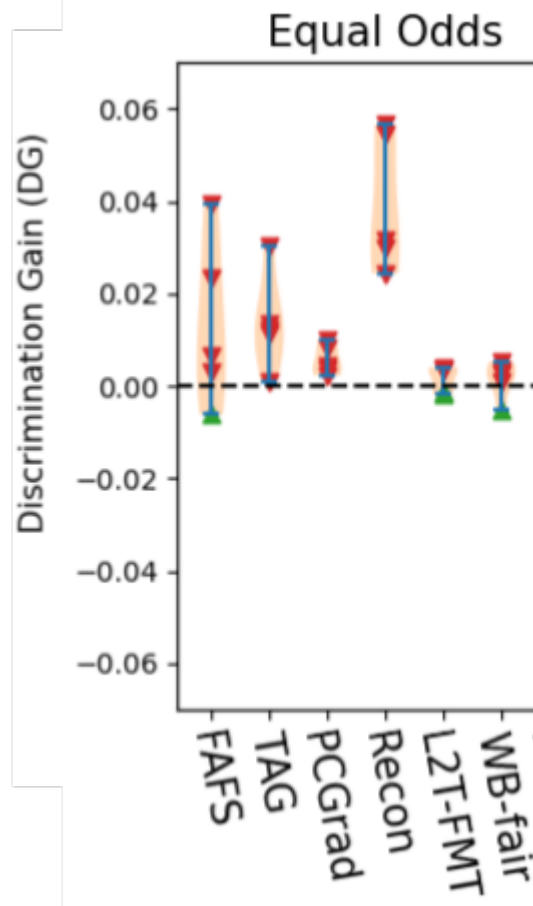


ACS-PUMS [Ding et al., NeurIPS 21]



$$DG(t) : F_{viol}^{(t)}(\mathcal{M}) - F_{viol}^{(t)}(\mathcal{H})$$

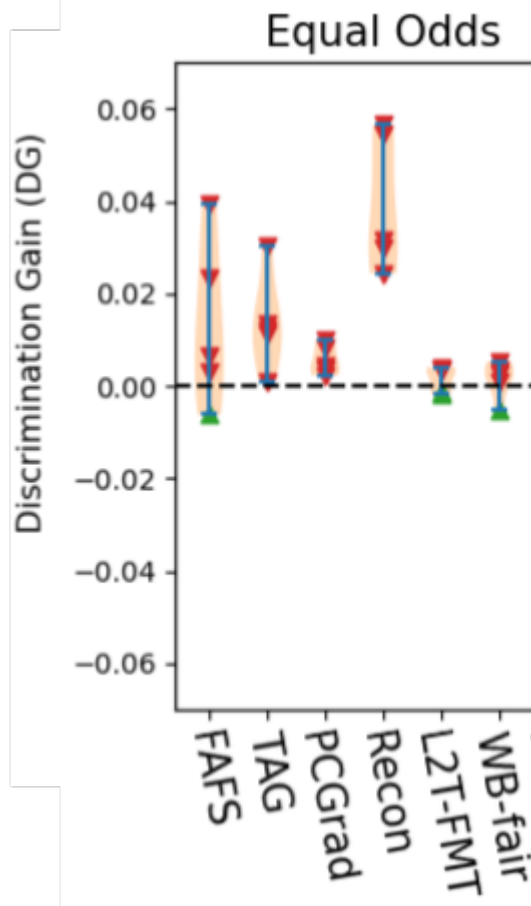
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Discrimination Gain (DG): difference in fairness violation between MTL (\mathcal{M}) and STL (\mathcal{H}) trained on t :

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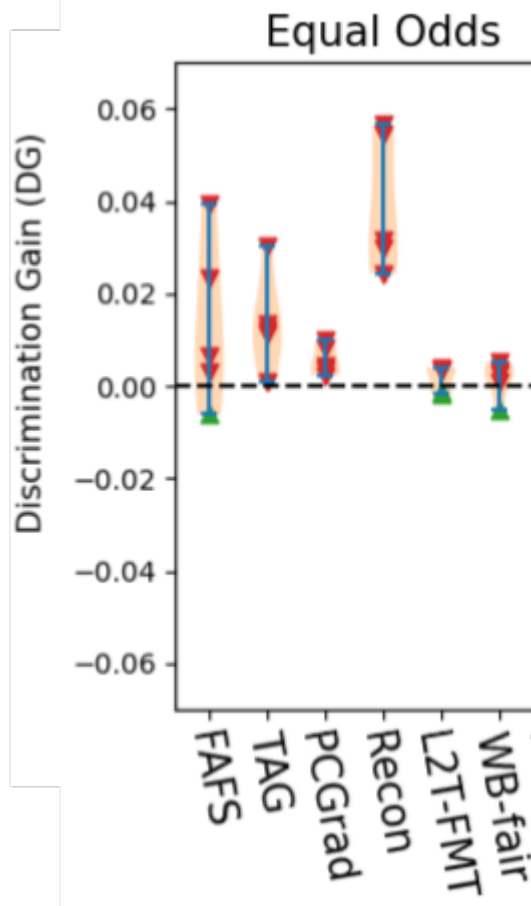


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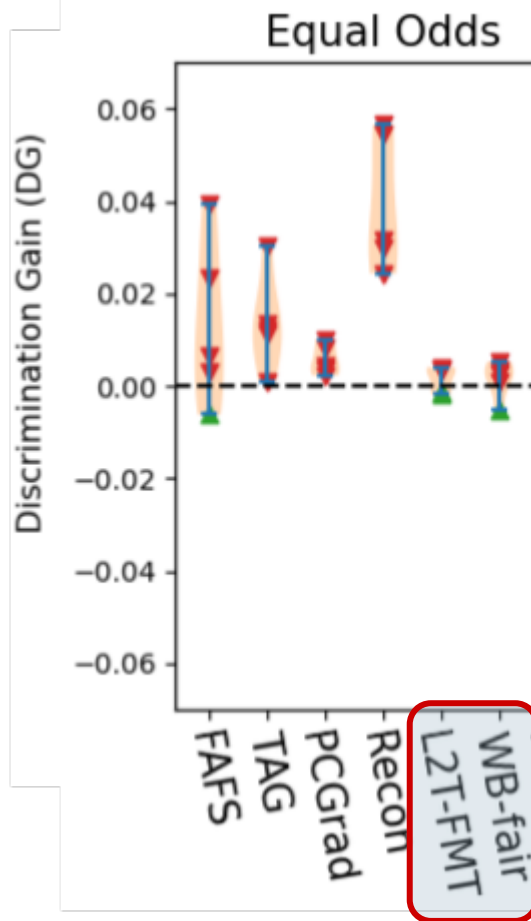
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fair-MTLs

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Root Cause: we hypothesize bias transfer originates from fairness conflict.



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FairBranch

Desiderata from SOTA MTL

Methods	Negative Transfer	Fairness	Dynamic Architecture
FAFS [Lu et al., CVPR 17]	✓	-	✓
TAG [Fifty et al., NeurIPS 21]	✓	-	-
PCGrad [Yu et al., NeurIPS 20]	✓	-	-
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L2TFMT [Roy et al., ECML 22]	-	✓	-
WB-fair [Hu et al., ECML 23]	-	✓	-

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**Tackle accuracy
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**Tackle
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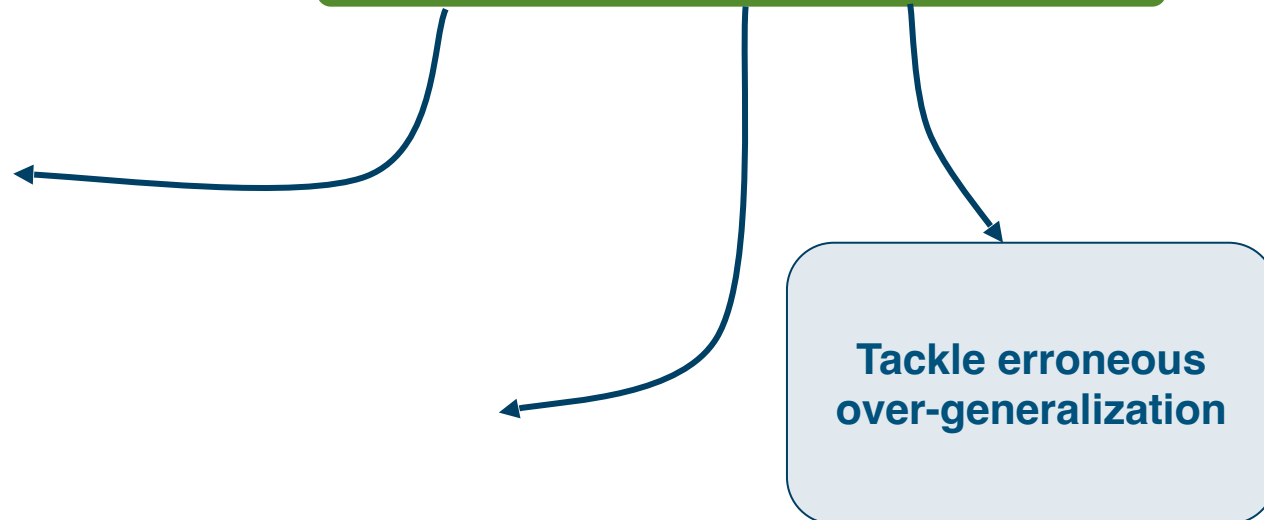
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**Tackle erroneous
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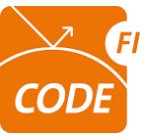
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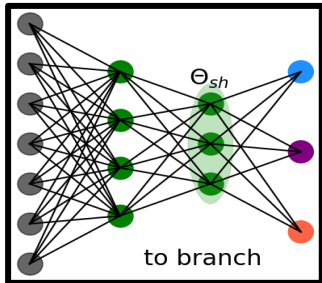
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<i>FairBranch</i>	✓	✓	✓





Mitigating Conflicts for fair-MTL

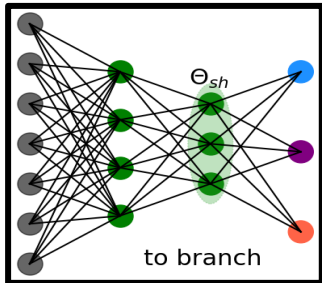




Groups Tasks on Parameter Similarity [Kornblith et al., ICML 19]:

- Intuition - strong parameter similarity ensures similar direction of minima.
- Expectation - move together without any conflict.

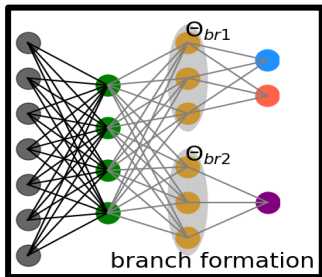
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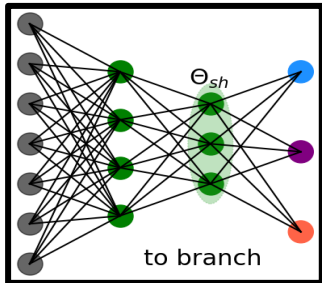
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Branch Task Groups:

- Intuition - similar tasks benefits from sharing more knowledge.
- Expectation: sharing less with dissimilar tasks reduces over-generalization.

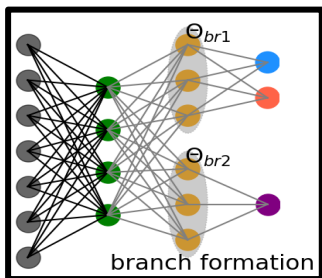
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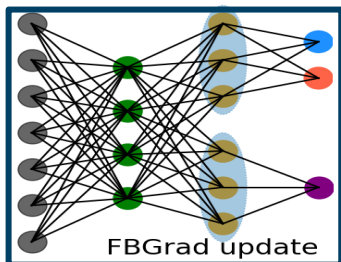
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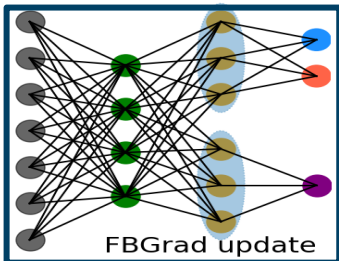
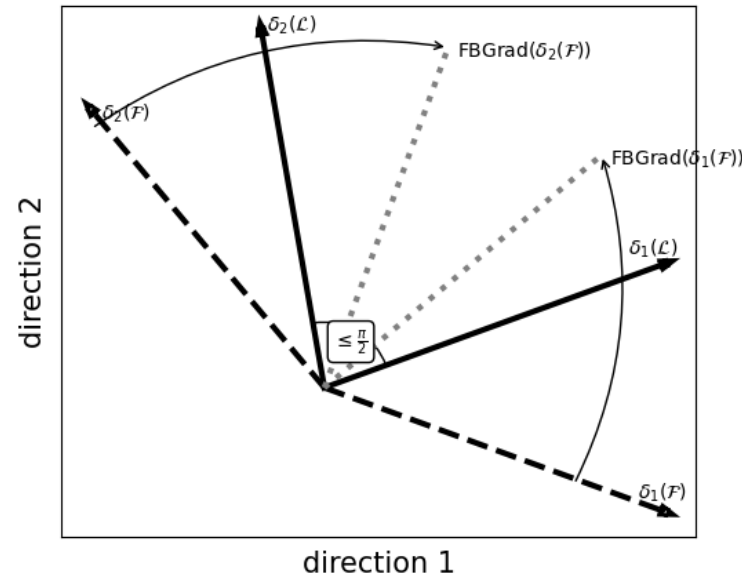


Conflict-free Fairness Correction:

- Intuition - correcting the fairness conflict between task gradients within tasks groups ensures fair-MTL without Bias Transfer.

Addressing Bias Transfer

Hypothetical example of Fairness Gradient Conflict correction



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Addressing Bias Transfer



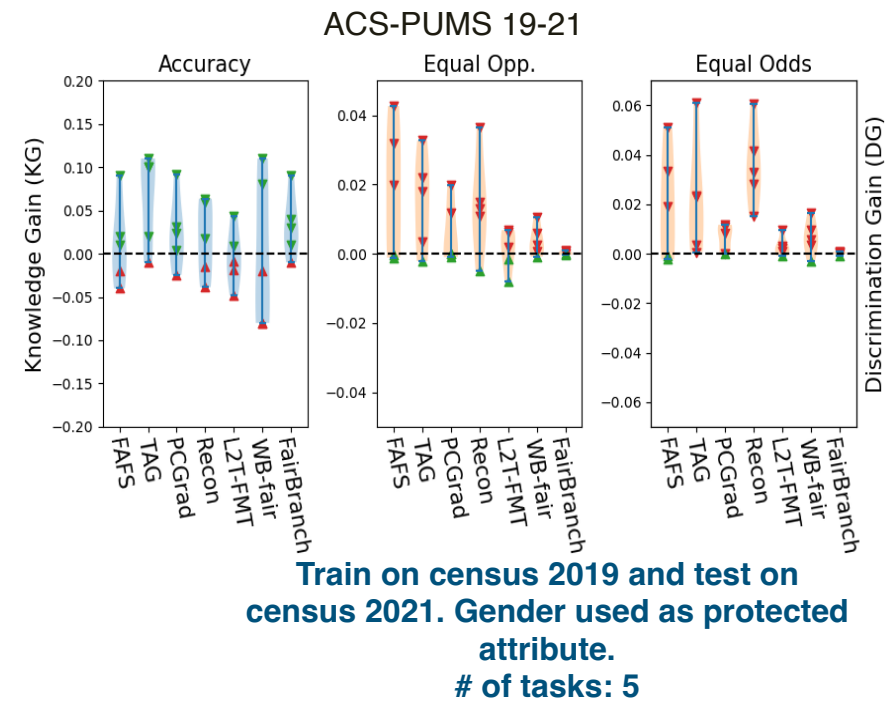
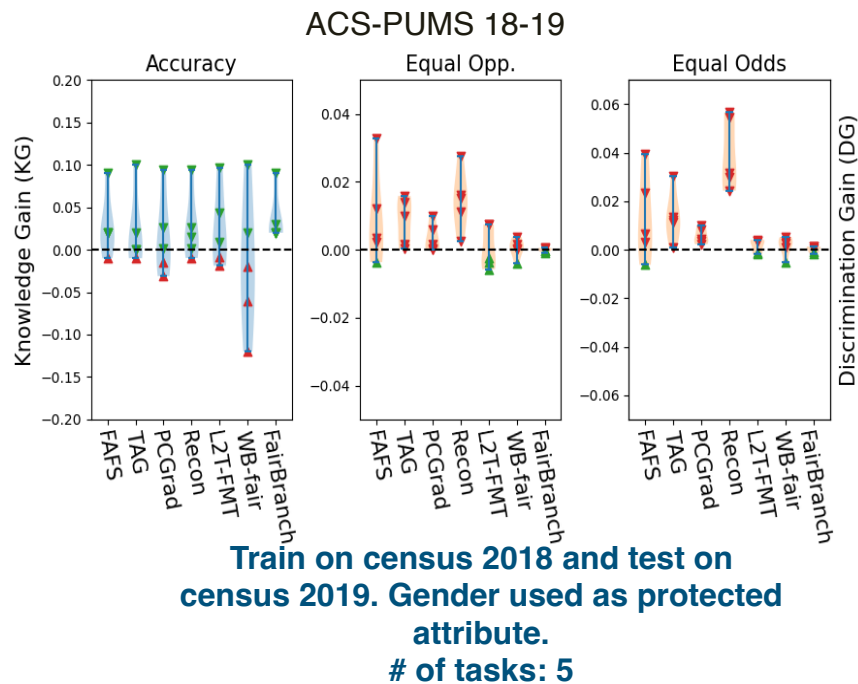
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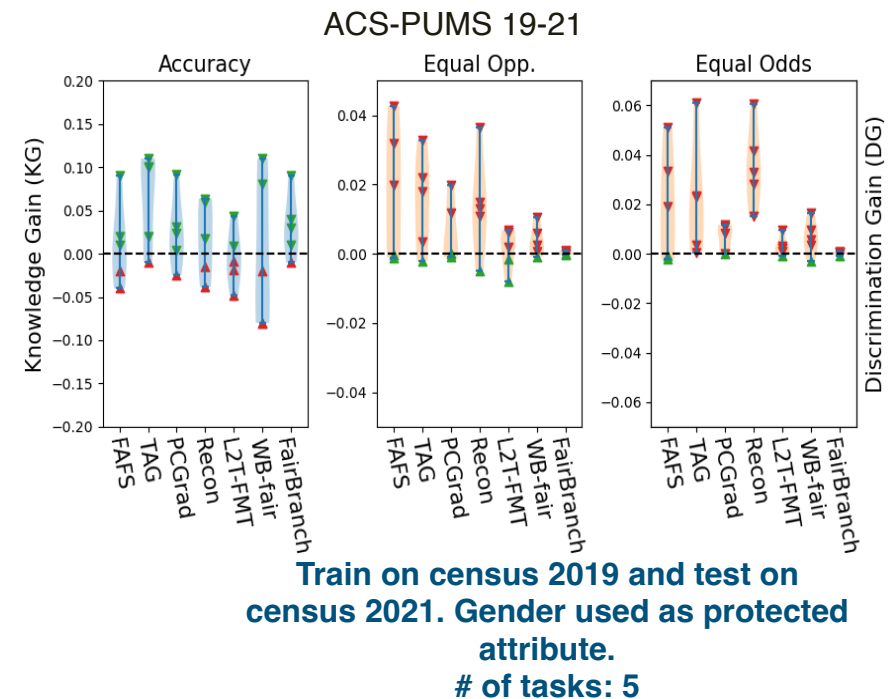
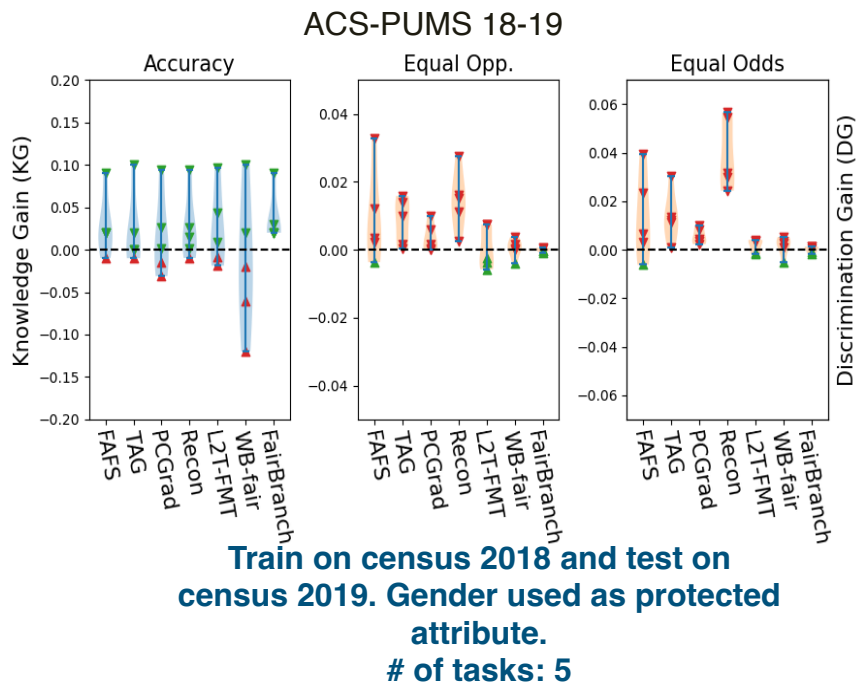


Experiments

Tabular Data: ACS-PUMS Census Data [Ding et al., NeurIPS 21]

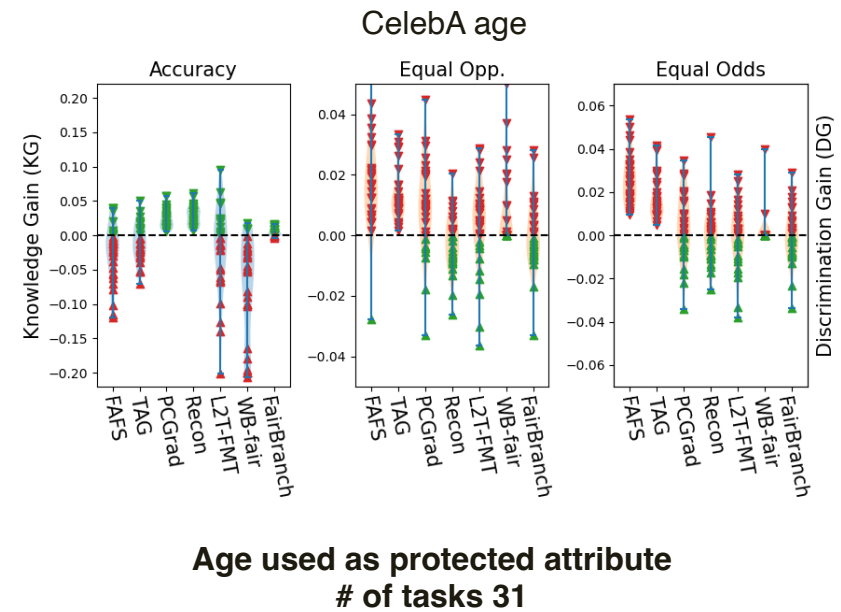
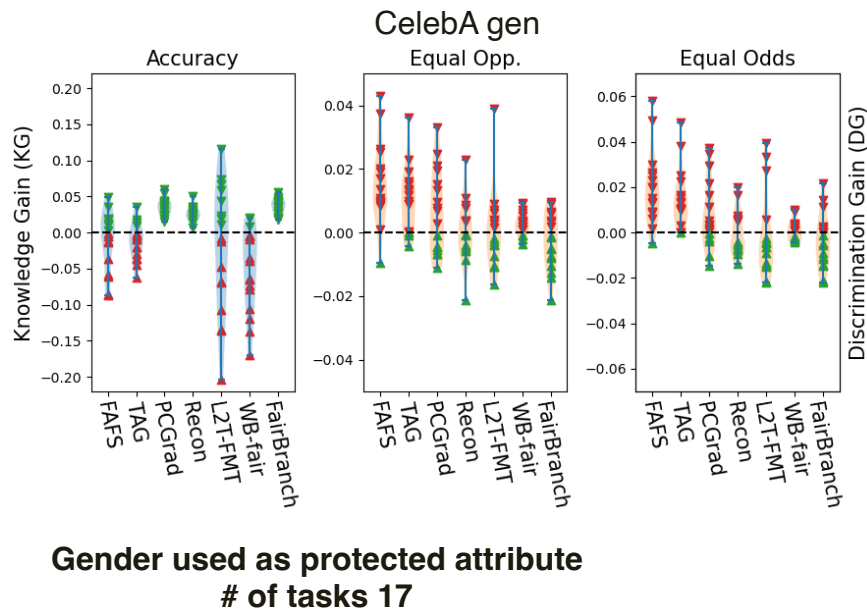


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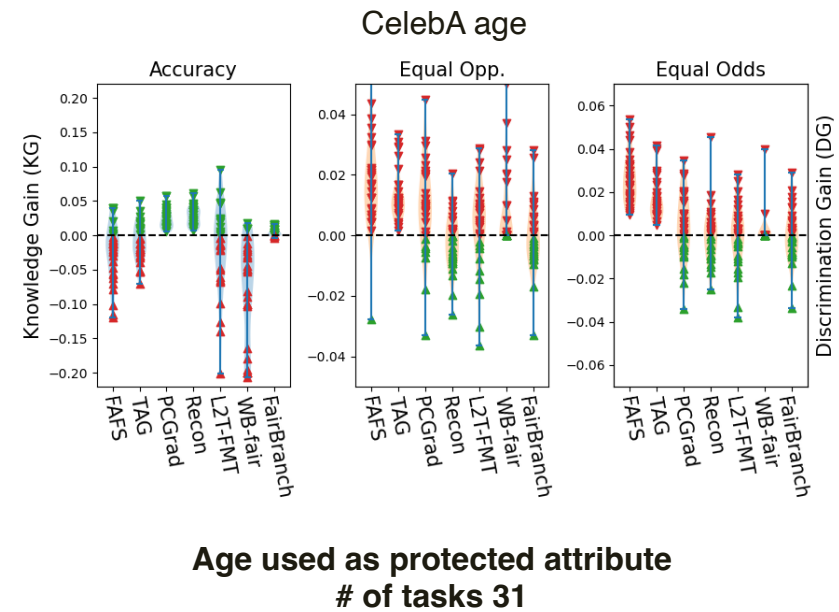
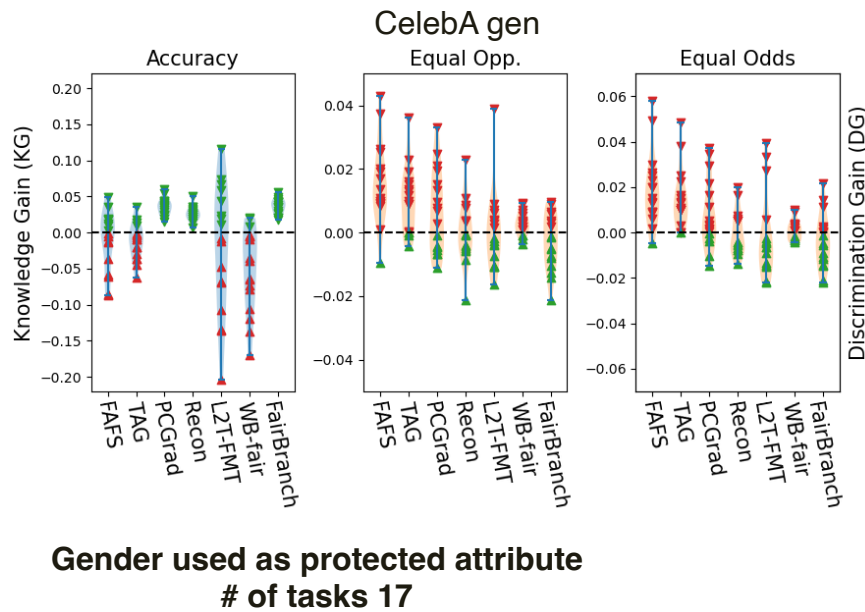


- **FairBranch effectively tackles both negative transfer** (non-negative KG) and **bias transfer** (non-positive DG).
- Among competitors, conflict correction on parameter space (PCGrad, Recon) outperform other on negative transfer.

Visual Data: CelebA Data [Liu et al., ICCV 15]



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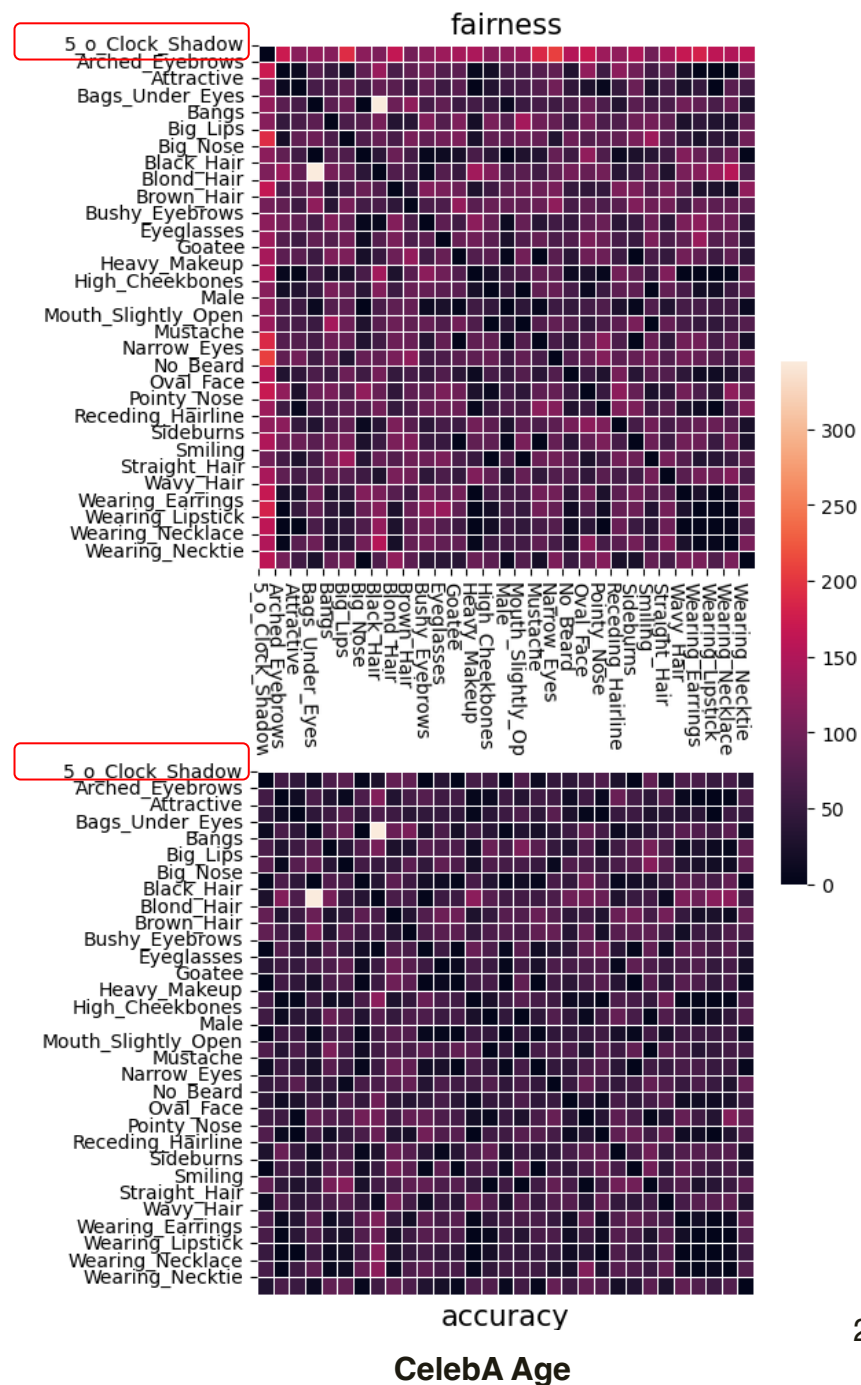
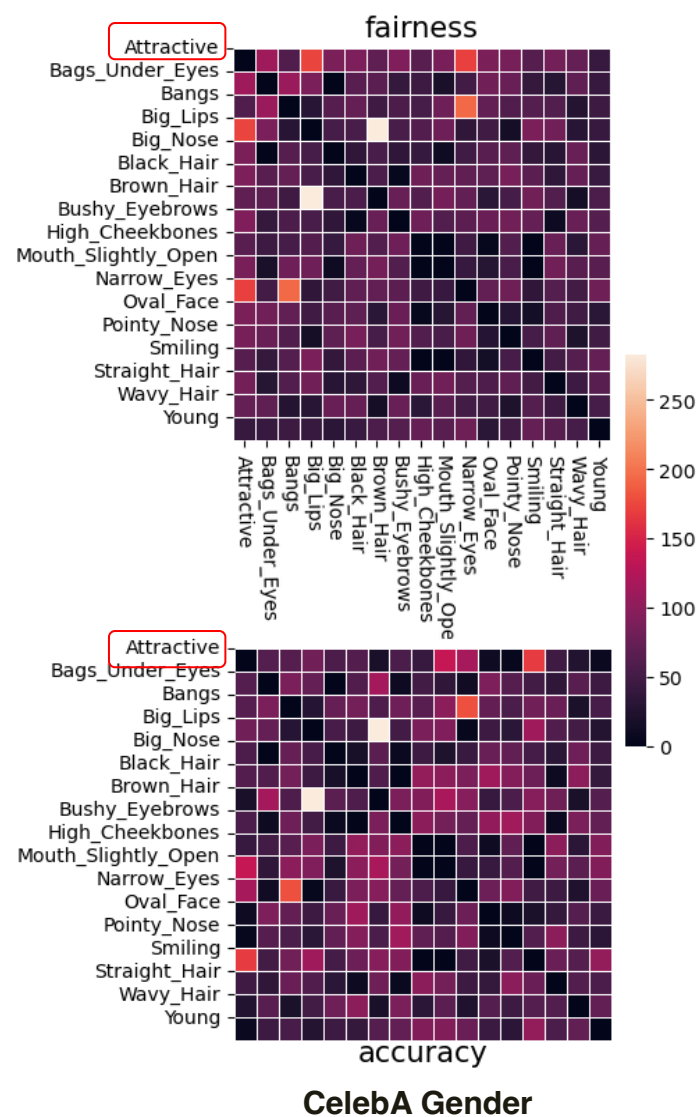


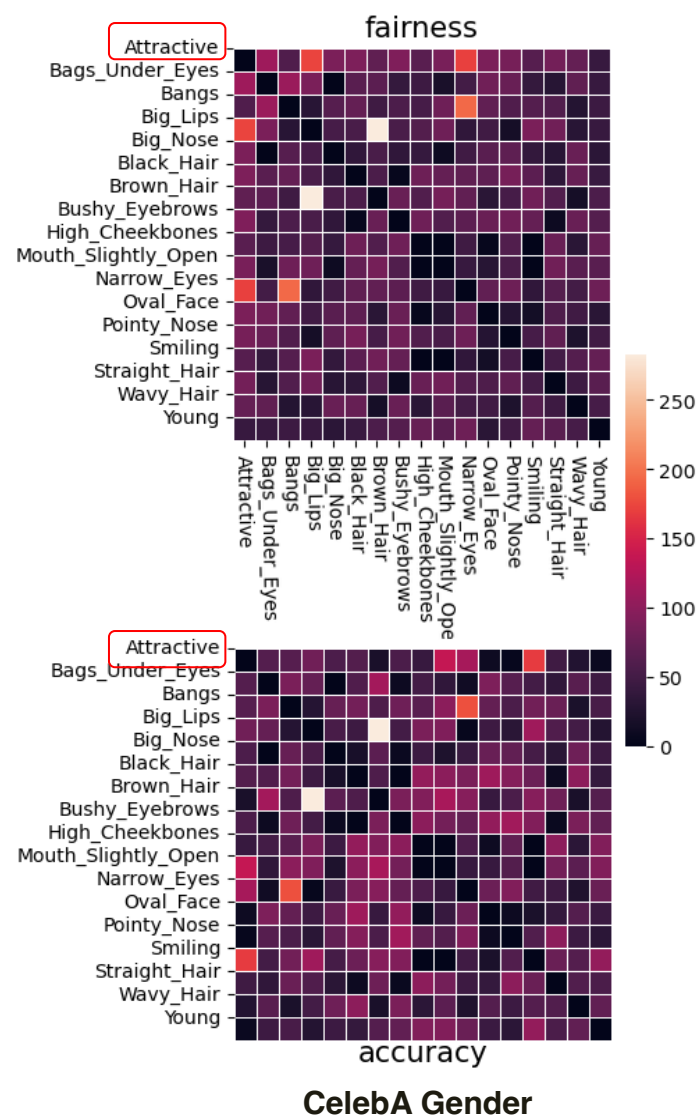
- **FairBranch effectively tackles negative transfer** (non-negative KG), but suffers from **bias transfer** (positive DG) in some tasks.
- Among competitors, conflict correction on parameter space (PCGrad, Recon) outperform other on negative transfer.

Reporting on the average Knowledge Gain (\bar{KG}) and average Discrimination Gain (\bar{DG}) :

Model		Metric		ACS-PUMS		CelebA	
				18-19	19-21	gen	age
Task-grouping	FAFS	\bar{KG}		0.028	0.012	-0.011	-0.024
		\bar{DG}	EP	0.009	0.019	0.015	0.017
			EO	0.013	0.020	0.019	0.026
	TAG	\bar{KG}		0.022	0.064	-0.012	-0.010
		\bar{DG}	EP	0.008	0.015	0.015	0.013
			EO	0.014	0.022	0.010	0.017
Conflict aware	PCGrad	\bar{KG}		0.015	0.025	<u>0.035</u>	<u>0.025</u>
		\bar{DG}	EP	0.004	0.006	0.007	0.009
			EO	0.006	0.006	0.008	0.004
	Recon	\bar{KG}		0.025	0.017	0.026	0.028
		\bar{DG}	EP	0.015	0.014	-0.001	0.005
			EO	0.040	0.036	<u>0.001</u>	0.009
Fairness aware	L2TFMT	\bar{KG}		0.024	-0.005	-0.022	-0.020
		\bar{DG}	EP	<u>0.001</u>	<u>0.001</u>	<u>-0.002</u>	<u>0.0</u>
			EO	<u>0.002</u>	<u>0.003</u>	<u>0.001</u>	<u>0.003</u>
	WB-fair	\bar{KG}		-0.016	0.002	-0.051	-0.080
		\bar{DG}	EP	<u>0.001</u>	0.004	0.001	0.002
			EO	<u>0.002</u>	0.006	0.003	0.007
Our	FairBranch	\bar{KG}		0.036	<u>0.032</u>	0.036	0.006
		\bar{DG}	EP	-0.001	0.0	-0.004	-0.001
			EO	0.0	0.0	-0.003	0.0

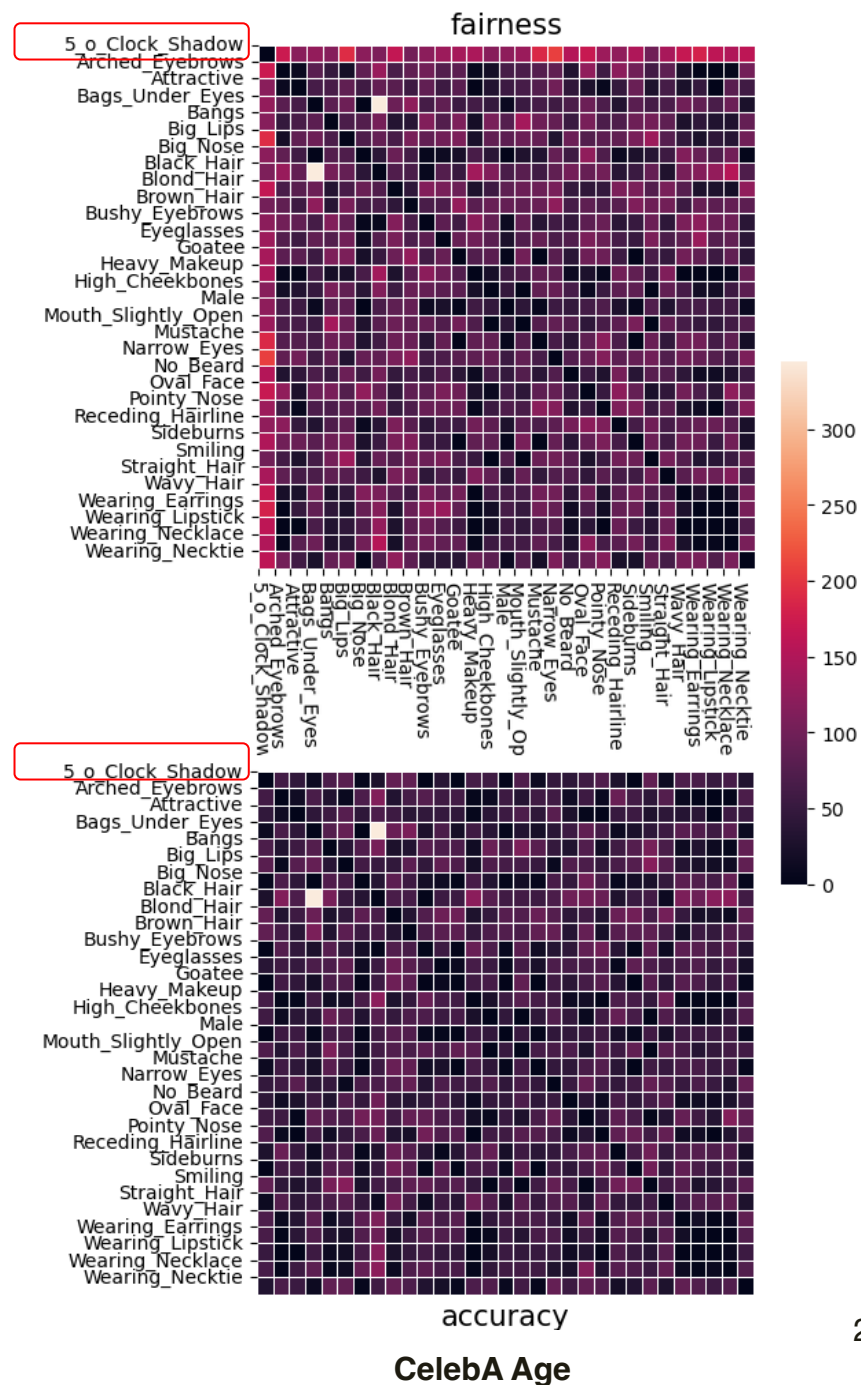
- **FairBranch outperforms all the competitors on 10 out of 12** evaluation report.
- In all experiment FairBranch have average Knowledge Gain > 0 , and average Discrimination Gain ≤ 0 .
- In visual data even under large # of tasks, SOTA MTLs like TAG, FAFS fails, FairBranch consistently positive on Knowledge Gain.
- Similar findings for fairness against SOTA fair-MTL observed with L2TFMT, WB-fair on Discrimination Gain.





Conflict Heatmaps :

- tasks like 'Attractive' and '5 o Clock shadow' have fewer accuracy conflicts but many fairness conflicts across all tasks.





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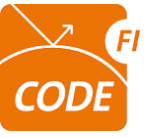




Discussion and Conclusion

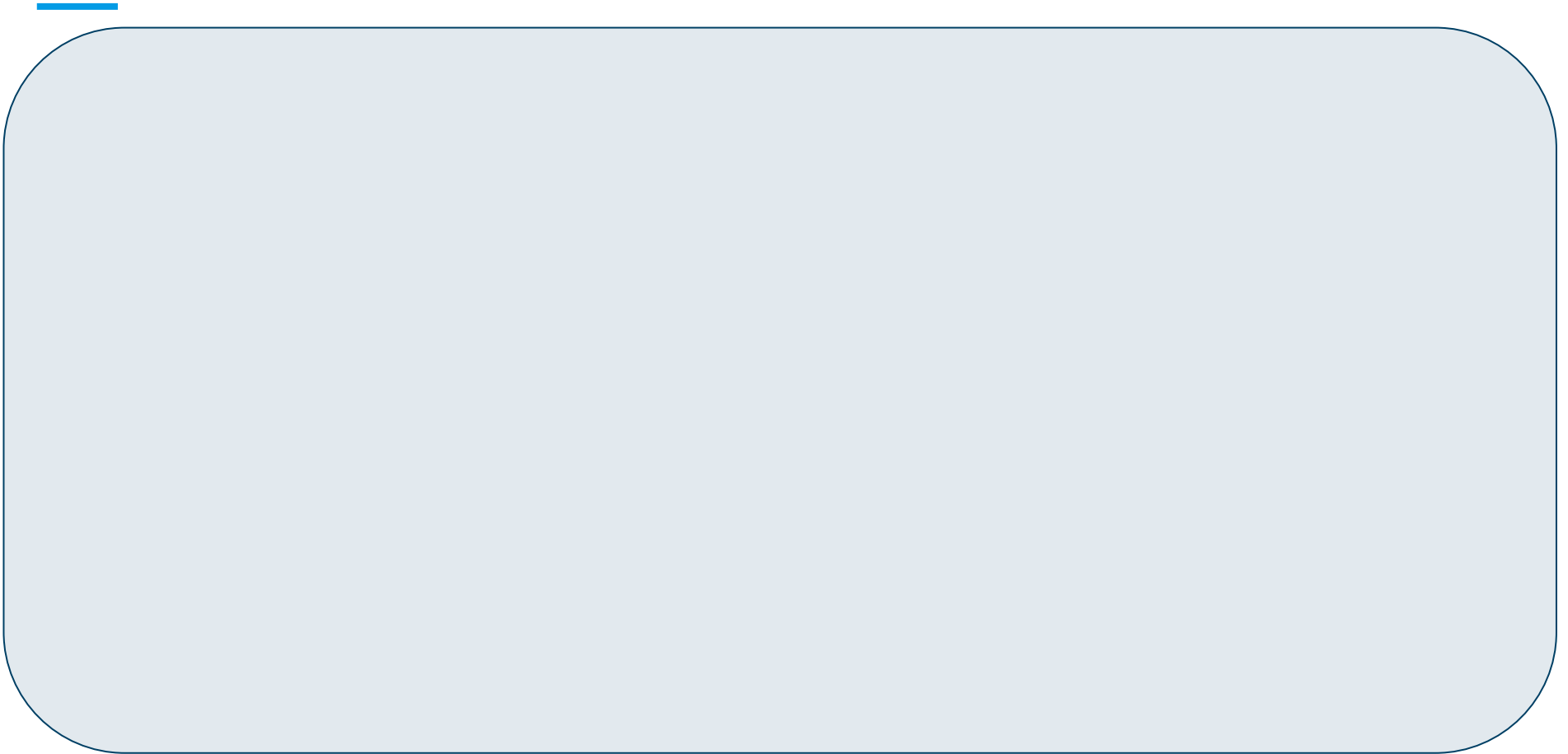
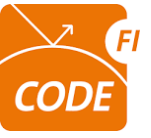


Key Takeaways





Key Takeaways





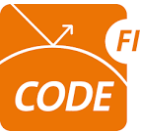
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- FairBranch outperforms the competitors on average knowledge and discrimination gain.
- Tackling negative transfer on parameter space is advantageous over on output (loss) space.
- Learning fair multi-task learning (MTL) is challenging due to the complex decisions required, as certain tasks contribute positively to accuracy knowledge transfer while hindering fairness knowledge transfer.

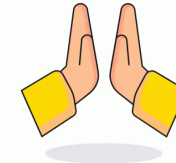
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Question??

Thank you for your attention



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For more details about FairBranch:



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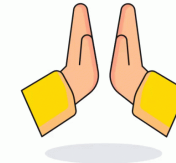


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