

Diverse Cotraining Makes Strong Semi-Supervised Segmentor

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Abstract

Deep co-training has been introduced to semi-supervised segmentation and achieves impressive results, yet few studies have explored the working mechanism behind it. In this work, we revisit the core assumption that supports co-training: multiple compatible and conditionally independent views. By theoretically deriving the generalization upper bound, we prove the prediction similarity between two models negatively impacts the model’s generalization ability. However, most current co-training models are tightly coupled together and violate this assumption. Such coupling leads to the homogenization of networks and confirmation bias which consequently limits the performance. To this end, we explore different dimensions of co-training and systematically increase the diversity from the aspects of input domains, different augmentations and model architectures to counteract homogenization. Our Diverse Co-training outperforms the state-of-the-art (SOTA) methods by a large margin across different evaluation protocols on the Pascal and Cityscapes. For example, we achieve the best mIoU of 76.2%, 77.7% and 80.2% on Pascal with only 92, 183 and 366 labeled images, surpassing the previous best results by more than 5%.

1. Introduction

Deep learning has demonstrated impressive success in various applications [41, 32, 66, 35, 92, 93]. However, such SOTA performance heavily depends on supervised learning which requires expensive annotations. Particularly, labeling images for semantic segmentation is much more laborsome and time-consuming compared with that of image classification [13]. Therefore, how to leverage the unlabeled images available in much larger quantities to improve the segmentation performance becomes crucial. Semi-supervised segmentation is thus proposed to alleviate the expensive annotation and is attracting growing attention [68].

One line of research in semi-supervised segmentation is

co-training, which was first proposed by [5] with two compatible and independent views to guarantee the theoretical learnability [57]. It was first introduced to semi-supervised segmentation for cross pseudo supervision (CPS) [12]. Since most computer vision tasks provide only one view (RGB image) for each sample, CPS adopts two networks with identical architectures and different initializations to provide different opinions. Later researchers improve upon CPS through one or multiple extra networks [20], additional consistent constraints [38], multiple heads with a shared backbone [19, 60] and EMA teachers [83]. Despite these new variants of co-training, few studies have discussed the working mechanism behind the remarkable performance of co-training in semi-supervised segmentation. In this paper, we revisit the assumptions behind co-training: *two or multiple independent views compatible with the target function*. By deriving the generalization upper bound of Co-training, we theoretically show that the homogenization of networks accounts for the generalization error of Co-training methods. Empirically, we examine the existing co-training architectures and discover that they provide insufficient diversity (only by different initialization). We argue that similar decision boundaries or predictions will further lead to confirmation biases [1, 59] as no additional information or correction is induced. Given this problem, a natural question emerges, *how to create two or multiple views that are mutually independent?* To answer this question, we systematically explore different dimensions of the Co-training process to increase diversity. Specifically, both RGB and frequency domain are adopted as two inputs that cater to different properties of an image. Different augmentations of the same image first provide distinct views for each model. Different architectures including CNN and Transformer-based networks are then demonstrated to be quite effective in co-training due to the diverse inductive biases. Combining these findings, we propose our holistic approach: *Diverse Co-training. Diverse Co-training*. To summarize, we make the following contributions:

- We theoretically prove that the homogenization of networks accounts for the generalization error of Co-training and discover the lack of diversity in current co-training methods that violate the assumptions.

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- We comprehensively explore the different dimensions of co-training to promote diversity including the input domains, augmentations and architectures and demonstrate the significance of diversity in co-training.
- We propose a holistic framework combining the above three techniques to increase diversity and discuss two variants with high empirical performances.

2. Related Work

Semi-supervised Learning. Early works introduce self-training to tackle semi-supervised learning with an iterative EM algorithm [58, 14, 76]. Instead of labeling the unlabeled data before training, consistency regularization typically enforce invariance to perturbations on the unlabeled data in an online manner [65, 44, 85, 4, 55, 3, 67, 81]. Along this line of studies, researchers notice the significance of strong data augmentation. Combining with EMA Teacher [72], the "Teacher-Student" paradigm emerges. However, this framework suffers from the coupling problem since the teacher comes from the aggregation of student parameters [39], which fails to transfer meaningful knowledge and further leads to confirmation biases [72, 59]. We refer to [39] for detailed analysis. To this end, Deep Co-training is proposed [63, 39]. Initially, co-training is proposed to solve the semi text classification problem with two models and two views [5]. The author proves the learning ability with PAC framework [75] with the assumption that two views are compatible and independent given the class [57]. Unfortunately, most tasks in computer vision provides only single view for each sample (*i.e.* RGB image) [48, 15, 45, 13]. To simulate the condition required by co-training, [101, 39] propose to use different initialization while Tri-training [16] creates diverse training sets by injecting noise to true labels. Deep Co-training proposes a novel view difference constraint and adversarial examples as an additional pseudo view [63]. Other methods such as resampling [2], bagging [71] or bootstrapping [22] is also used to generate pseudo views. Deep Co-training is closely related to our work. Despite the two views increases diversity, adversarial examples are generated from the original sample leading to large dependence. Moreover, models trained with adversarial examples suffers from a degraded performance [74, 70] resulting to unequal roles where the original model serves as teacher and the model trained on adversarial examples the student (since original model is better with higher performance).

Semi-supervised Segmentation evolves from the early GAN-based methods [24, 68, 36, 54] which leverage the discriminator [25] to provide an auxiliary supervision for unlabeled images to simpler training paradigms of consistency regularization [23, 38, 40, 34, 82, 61, 103] and entropy minimization [37, 33, 94, 91]. CPS first introduces

co-training to provide cross supervision by using two identical networks with different initialization [12]. n-CPS builds upon CPS and propose to add additional models with different initialization [20] while [83] leverages the EMA of each model to teach the other model acting as teacher. Another variant [19, 60] of Co-training is the form of shared backbone and two heads, which is parameter and computation efficient. The co-training between CNN and transformer is also explored [98, 53] but focuses mainly on the powerful representation ability brought by the transformer. [98] propose to distill the feature maps between the CNN and transformer models leading to more coupled networks. Our work, on the contrary, explores the diversity presented in different architectures and demonstrate that such diversity along can achieve the SOTA performance.

Dense Vision Transformer. Recent works starting with ViT [17] prove the transformer's adaptability in CV. Later works such as Swin Transformer [52, 51] and PVT [78, 79] proves its superiority over CNN with different inductive biases trained [28, 30, 95, 73]. Recent work also demonstrates that transformer outperforms traditional CNN on dense predictions tasks such as object detection [6, 102, 9, 47] and semantic segmentation [69, 96, 84, 97]. SETR first introduce transformer to extract feature for segmentation [97]. Segmenter [69] leverages mask transformer to dynamically generate class masks while SegFormer [84] designs a novel transformer backbone with pyramid structures and simple multi-layer perceptron (MLP) head for aggregation of the multi-scale features.

3. Theoretical Analysis and Motivation

In this section, we first provide preliminary knowledge on co-training. Then a theoretical analysis on Co-training is provided to show the relation between homogenization and generalization bound. Thirdly, we conduct a thorough investigation of the existing variants of co-training and discover that they suffer significantly from the homogenization problem, which is mainly caused by a lack of two independent views. These findings further motivate our work: *how to approximate these assumptions by introducing more diversity into co-training?*

3.1. Preliminary

We describe Co-training in the context of segmentation. Segmentation network typically possesses an encoder f and a decoder head h . As aforementioned, co-training in semi-supervised segmentation generally utilizes two segmentation networks $f_i(\cdot, \theta_i^e)$, $h_i(\cdot, \theta_i^d)$ parameterized by θ_i^e , θ_i^d , $i = 1, 2$. Co-training simultaneously trains two models and the confident prediction from one model is used to supervise the other in sense of mutual teaching. Specifically, each network generates pseudo segmentation confidence map p_i after softmax operation and then the one-

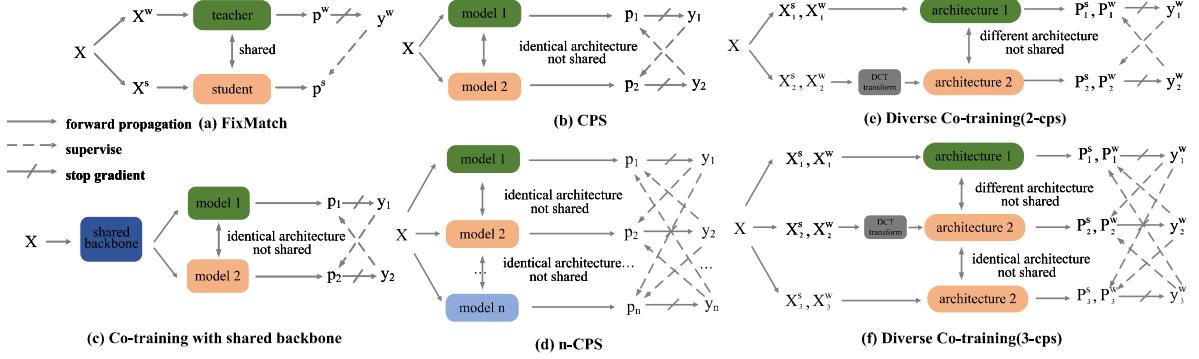


Figure 1. Illustrating the architectures for (a) FixMatch [67, 90], (b) CPS [12], (c) cross heads with shared backbone [19, 60] (d) n-CPS [20], (e) *Diverse Co-training* (2-cps) and (f) *Diverse Co-training* (3-cps).

hot pseudo maps y_i by argmax for each unlabeled data x : $p_i = h_i(f_i(x, \theta_i^e), \theta_i^d)$. The generated pseudo maps are used to supervise the other network on unlabeled data.

$$L^u = \frac{1}{|D_u|} \sum_{x \in D_u} \frac{1}{W \times H} \sum_{k=0}^{W \times H} CE(p_{1k}, y_{2k}) + CE(p_{2k}, y_{1k})$$

where D_u denotes the unlabeled data set, W and H denotes the size of input image and k denotes the k^{th} pixel. Cross entropy loss CE is adopted here and for the rest of the paper. For labeled data, each network is trained in a standard fully supervised manner:

$$L^s = \frac{1}{|D_l|} \sum_{x \in D_l} \frac{1}{W \times H} \sum_{k=0}^{W \times H} CE(p_{1k}, y_k^*) + CE(p_{2k}, y_k^*)$$

where D_l denotes the labeled data set and y_k^* is the ground truth label for pixel k . Then, the overall objective function is a combination of the above two losses with a balance term λ : $L = L^s + \lambda L^u$

3.2. Theoretical Analysis

We provide a generalization bound in the PAC learning framework following [5] on the Co-training method with two models. We first give the definition of homogenization. We simplify notations from above and denote the model f_i^j , $i = 1, 2$ as the i th model of j th iteration and the optimal model as f^* .

Definition 1 We define homogenization as the similarity between two networks, which can be approximated by the percentage of the agreement (agree rate) of all pixels.

$$H = Pr_{x \in D} [f_1(x) = f_2(x)] = \frac{1}{HW} \sum_{i=1}^{HW} \mathbb{1}(p_{1i} = p_{2i})$$

With different architectures, direct measures in parameter space are meaningless, we thus consider target space to quantify homogenization. Diversity is exactly the opposite

$d(f_1, f_2) = Pr_{x \in D} [f_1(x) \neq f_2(x)]$, which can be used to quantify the difference between any model. For instance, we can compute the generalization error with $d(f, f^*)$. We simplify the Co-training pipelines for easy theoretical derivation.

Assumption 1 At each step of optimization, pseudo labels of all unlabeled data are updated prior to optimization instead of online pseudo labeling.

Assumption 2 At each step of optimization, all unlabeled data is used except for the first step where only labeled data is used to get the initial model f_1^0, f_2^0 .

With the PAC learning framework and the two assumptions, we can extend the generalization bound of [80] to iterative Co-training instead of one-step optimization and obtain the following.

Theorem 1 Given hypothesis class \mathcal{H} and labeled data set D_l of size l that are sufficient to learn an initial segmentor f_i^0 with an upper bound of the generalization error of b_i^0 with probability δ (i.e. $l \geq \max\{\frac{1}{b_i^0} \ln \frac{|\mathcal{H}|}{\delta}\}$), we use empirical risk minimization to train f_i^0 on the combination of labeled and unlabeled set σ^i where pseudo label are provided by the other model f_{3-i}^0 . Then we have

$$Pr[d(f_i^k, f^*) \geq b_i^k] \leq \delta$$

if $lb_i^0 \leq e^{\sqrt[M]{M!}} - M$, where $M = ub_{3-i}^0$ and $b_i^k = \max\{\frac{lb_i^0 + ub_{3-i}^0 - ud(f_{3-i}^{k-1}, f_i^k)}{l}, 0\}$.

Theorem 1 shows that the bigger the difference between the two models f_{3-i}^{k-1} and f_i^k , the smaller the upper bound of the generalization error. Thus from Theorem 1 and Definition 1, we can conclude.

Remark 1 Homogenization negatively impacts the generalization ability of the Co-training method leading to sub-optimal performance.

With the condition that the difference between the two models is large enough $d(f_{3-i}^{k-1}, f_i^k) \geq b_{3-i}^0$, we can see that the larger the u the smaller the upper bound of the generalization error. Then we have Remark 2.

Remark 2 *Given a large difference between the two models, more unlabeled data decreases the generalization error of Co-training.*

This remark is consistent with empirical results that more unlabeled data leads to better performance. Further, with this remark, we provide theoretical guarantees for strong augmentations used in our method.

3.3. Homogenization in Co-training

Given the statement that homogenization negatively impacts performance, we now investigate the existing Co-training methods. Other than CPS ((b) of Figure 1), we summarize two co-training paradigms. co-training with cross heads and shared backbone is widely adopted in previous works [19, 60], as shown in (c) of Figure 1. n-CPS [20] leverages multiple models to perform co-training, which can be seen as a generalized CPS ((d) of Figure 1). We also display the paradigms used in FixMatch in (a) of Figure 1. Co-training is first introduced for its merit of providing decoupled models for cross-supervision, which can alleviate confirmation biases and generate additional information for its counterpart [39]. We demonstrate the superiority of co-training over FixMatch in Figure 2, from which co-training outperforms FixMatch consistently on all partitions and thresholds.

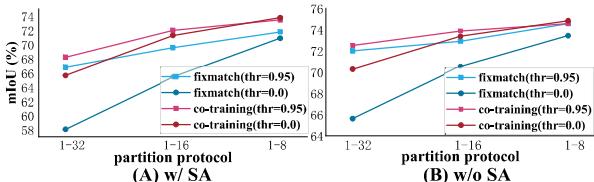


Figure 2. Comparison between FixMatch and co-training under different partition protocols and thresholds (a) with or (b) without strong augmentation (SA). Best viewed in color.

Despite the benefit, current deep co-training strongly violates the second assumption of co-training, as discussed in Section 1, since only a single view is used. The second assumption can weekly fulfilled through different initializations but it contributes too little difference for the two models to learn distinct decision boundaries. As shown in Figure 3, we can observe that all three paradigms have a severer homogenization issue. We also provide rigorous analysis in logits and prediction space with L2 distance and KL Divergence demonstrating similar phenomena in Appendix B.

Specifically, we find that co-training with a shared backbone has the most severe homogenization as the shared

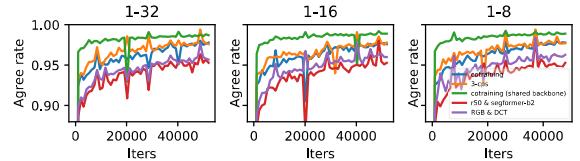


Figure 3. Homogenization problem (measured by agree rate) with different partitions. 3-cps refers to n-cps when $n = 3$.

backbone delivers the same features for each head. n-CPS also suffers from a severer homogenization problem than CPS because cross-supervision of a stack of models further enforces these models to predict similarly. We emphasize that agree rate alone is not sufficient to judge the effectiveness of a co-training method, as we cannot simply say a method is worse because they provide similar predictions. Thus, we empirically show in Table 1 that **less similar models bring performance benefits** (*i.e.* co-training outperforms the other two consistently over all settings). On the other hand, co-training with diverse input domains or different architectures achieves a much lower prediction similarity providing much more information to complement the counterpart. We show in Section 4 and evaluate in Section 5.2 that they both bring significant empirical benefits and thus can be viewed as two relatively more independent views compatible with the target function.

4. Diverse Co-training

After analyzing the limitation of current co-training paradigms, we provide a comprehensive investigation of co-training to i) promote the diversity between models and ii) provide a relatively more independent pseudo view that better fits the assumption in the PAC framework. We first introduce a better co-training baseline by adopting the strong-weak augmentation. Then, we propose and analyze three techniques to better increase the diversity between models.

Method	1/32 (331)	1/16 (662)	1/8 (1323)
Sup Baseline	61.2	67.3	70.8
Co-training	65.66	71.28	73.77
w/o SA	58.97	65.94	71.25
shared backbone	<u>65.41</u>	<u>70.81</u>	<u>72.84</u>
Co-training	70.28(+4.62)	73.36(+2.08)	74.82(+1.05)
w/ SA	69.48	70.16	73.47
shared backbone	<u>69.68</u>	<u>71.83</u>	74.36

Table 1. Co-training methods on ResNet50 with or without strong augmentation (SA).

Strong-Weak Augmentation. Strong-weak augmentation paradigm supervises a strongly perturbed unlabeled image x^s with the pseudo label provided by its corresponding weakly perturbed version x^w . A better pseudo label can be obtained with x^w while more efficient learning can be

conducted on x^s since x^s expands the knowledge [86, 90], alleviates confirmation biases [1] and enforce models with a decision boundary in the low-density regions [59]. Theoretically, we can also see the positive effect of strong augmentations through Remark 2 by showing that strong augmentations can potentially increase the size of unlabeled data. We argue that the improvements brought by strong augmentation are orthogonal to that of co-training with mutual benefits. In light of this statement, we combine the strong-weak augmentation with co-training to provide a better baseline for semi-supervised segmentation. Formally, we denote the weak augmentation O^w sampled from weak augmentation space S^w (*i.e.* random cropping and flipping) and strong augmentation O^s from S^w (detailed in Appendix G). For each image x , we obtain the strongly augmented image $x^s = O^s(O^w(x))$ and the weakly perturbed $x^w = O^w(x)$. To combine co-training with strong-weak augmentation, each model is fed with both x^w and x^s and predicts on x^w to supervise the other model as illustrated by (e) of Figure 1. This can be formulated by replacing the L^u with L_{st}^u , where the subscript *st* stands for "strong-weak".

$$L_{st}^u = \frac{1}{|D_u|} \sum_{x \in D_u} \frac{1}{W \times H} \sum_{i=0}^{W \times H} CE(p_{1i}^s, y_{2i}^w) + CE(p_{2i}^s, y_{1i}^w)$$

where $p_1^s = h_1(f_1(x^s, \theta_1^s), \theta_1^d)$, $p_1^w = h_1(f_1(x^w, \theta_1^s), \theta_1^d)$. p_2^s and p_2^w are similar and thus omitted. We empirically evaluate the effectiveness of strong-weak augmentation in combination with different co-training methods in Table 1. The improvement is significant and consistent on all co-training frameworks, demonstrating our argument that co-training and strong augmentation takes effect orthogonally and complements each other. We strongly suggest taking the improved co-training as the baseline for future studies.

Diverse Input Domains as Pseudo Views. Co-training methods build upon two independent views while most vision tasks provide only a single view. To relax the condition, the objective is to create pseudo views with the property of i) compatibility with the target function and ii) independent with the RGB view. To this end, we propose to learn two models from different input domains. We leverage the discrete cosine transform (DCT) coefficients to generate the frequency domain input, as illustrated in Figure 4. We refer to Appendix E for more details. The frequency domain, in its appearance, is extraordinarily different from the RGB domain. The compression and quantization process renders the DCT relatively more independent with the RGB image than, say, an image with augmentation or adversarial perturbations. The compressed representations in the frequency domain also contain rich patterns distinct from RGB domains [99, 89, 27] which not only provides additional information to the training process but also introduce additional inductive biases in data for different perspectives in the Co-training.

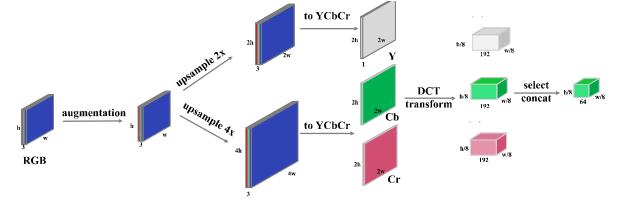


Figure 4. Illustration of the DCT transform process.

Different Augmentation Provides Different Views.

Given a single view (*i.e.* RGB image), augmentation is the most straightforward way to generate pseudo views [31, 11, 26, 10]. With different strong augmentation applied to the same image, distinct views can be generated so that predictions of the two models are not too similar. Particularly, random cropping has been proven effective to produce different views [8]. By randomly cropping images to different view crops, we inject view differences into the input data and Co-training is performed only on overlapping regions. Besides, random augmentations such as color jitter and greyscale also help prevent homogenization. We provide the details of augmentations used in Appendix G. Besides the diversity concern, different augmentations for each model also potentially increase the unlabeled data, which we show in Remark 2 can provide a better upper bound for generalization error.

Diverse Architecture Provides Different Inductive Biases. Due to the lack of two views, deep co-training utilizes different initialization to relax the condition. By taking one more step, we propose to utilize models instantiated from different architectures, *i.e.* $f_1 \neq f_2$. In addition to different weights, diverse architectures provide different inductive biases to model the input. For the independence assumption, we provide an intuitive explanation to demonstrate why diverse architecture provides diverse views. Given the model as a function f parameterized by θ , it's essentially a composite function with each layer l as a function $z^l = f^l(\cdot, \theta^l)$ with input from the previous layer z^{l-1} . By freezing the layers below some i^{th} layer $f^l(\cdot, \theta^l), l = i-1, i-2, \dots, 1$, we can view the i^{th} layers and above as a trainable function that maps the output of the $i-1^{th}$ layer to the target class. Intuitively, the output of the two models from the $i-1^{th}$ layer is different and less dependent compared with the input (*i.e.* same image) as different architectures or initialization are used. This intuitively explains why different initialization can relax the requirement of two independent views for co-training. It also explains why different architectures are better: due to the different inductive biases by different architectures, the output of every layer i is much more different compared with that of different initialization, thus better fulfilling the assumption. Practically, one can leverage different CNN architectures to instantiate the two models (*e.g.* ResNet and

ResNeXT [87]). But to promote diversity, the co-training of CNN and transformer can provide a distinct set of inductive biases that benefit each other (*i.e.* CNN with local modeling and transformer with the long-range dependence [17, 62, 64, 77, 46]).

Holistic Approach: Diverse Co-training. Following the spirit of the above sections, we combine the three proposed techniques to promote a holistic framework for diverse co-training. We provide two variants of *Diverse Co-training*, termed by 2-cps and 3-cps following [20], which leverage two models and three models to co-training respectively. Concretely, we leverage CNN and transformer as the two different architectures to maximize the discrepancy with one model trained on RGB and the other on DCT domain, as illustrated in (e) and (f) of Figure 1. The semi-supervised nature of co-training brings noise into pseudo labels for unlabeled data [67, 59, 90], thus we also provide confidence thresholding following FixMatch to filter out noisy pseudo labels in which the model has low confidence. Intuitively, each model should supervise the other model with the pseudo labels it's most confident in. We introduce n ($n = 2, 3$) additional scalar hyperparameters τ_i ($i = 1, 2, \dots, n$) denoting the threshold above which we retain a pseudo-label. Formally, we reformulate the unlabeled term as followed. We omit the sum over $H \times W$ for simplicity.

$$L_{st}^u = \frac{1}{|D_u|} \sum_{x \in D_u} \mathbb{1}(\max(p_{2i}^w) > \tau_2) l_{ce}(p_{1i}^s, y_{2i}^w) + \\ \mathbb{1}(\max(p_{1i}^w) > \tau_1) l_{ce}(p_{2i}^s, y_{1i}^w)$$

Unlike other methods [19, 94, 98] which either inserts modules or utilize the output of intermediate layers, we emphasize that our holistic approach leverages off-the-shelf segmentation networks without changing or probing its inside components, which can be quickly incorporated with any new SOTA segmentation methods and even be easily adapted to other fields such as semi-supervised classification and object detection.

		1/32 (331)	1/16 (662)
w/o SA	RGB	65.66	71.28
	DCT	65.33	67.37
	RGB & DCT	69.45 / 69.03	72.46 / 72.03
	RGB & HSV	69.65 / 67.05	71.74 / 69.89
w/ SA	RGB	70.28	73.36
	DCT	70.65	73.26
	RGB & DCT	71.88 / 72.00	74.10 / 73.94
	RGB & HSV	70.40 / 68.30	72.64 / 70.91

Table 2. Performance of co-training with different domains. For cells with two numbers, the left one is the result of RGB model.

5. Experiment

We conduct experiments in this section. The objective is to i) demonstrate our argument that diversity plays a crucial role in co-training ii) by illustrating that the three proposed techniques can effectively improve the performance and prevent the model from being tightly coupled with each other and iii) demonstrate the effectiveness by comparing with other state-of-the-arts.

5.1. Experiment Setup

Datasets. We leverage two datasets for evaluating the effectiveness of our idea. *PASCAL VOC 2012* [29] is constructed by a combination of the Pascal dataset [18] with high-quality train and validation images and the coarsely annotated SBD dataset [29], resulting in a total of 10582 training images. Following prior arts, we randomly sample labeled images from i) the original high-quality training images, and ii) the mixed 10582 images. *Cityscapes* [13] is an urban scene dataset with 19 classes and a total of 2975 high-resolution (2048×1024) training images as well as 500 validation images. We follow prior arts and divide the dataset by randomly sub-sampling 1/4, 1/8 and 1/30 of the total training images as labeled set and the rest as the unlabeled set. We crop each image to 769x769 during training.

Evaluation. We evaluate the segmentation performance with the mean Intersection-over-Union (mIoU) metric. For all partition protocols, we report the results on the *PASCAL VOC val* set with single scale testing on origin resolution and *Cityscapes val* set with single scale sliding window evaluation with crop size of 769 following [90, 82].

Implementation Details. For fair comparisons, we leverage the widely adopted DeepLabv3+ with ResNet as CNN and the SegFormer as the transformer architecture. The backbones of both architectures are pre-trained on ImageNet 1K. We utilize the pre-trained weights on ImageNet 1K for frequency domain from [89]. During training, we leverage a batch size of 16 for Pascal and 8 for Cityscapes with a labeled-unlabeled ratio of 1. We train Pascal and Cityscapes for 80 and 240 epochs with an initial learning rate of 0.001 and 0.005 respectively and polynomial learning rate decay following [12].

5.2. Analysis on How to Promote Diversity

We empirically analyze the three techniques proposed with ResNet50. All experiments and figures in Section 3.3 and this sections are conducted on *PASCAL VOC* with partition protocol 1/32 and 1/16.

Different Input Domains provides two views that are relatively independent of each other. We demonstrate that the DCT domain better fulfills the two assumptions of co-training. Firstly, we show in Table 2 that training only on the DCT domain achieves similar accuracy as the RGB domain, demonstrating that the DCT view is compatible with

	Backbone	1/32 (331)	1/16 (662)
w/o SA	R50	65.66	71.28
	mit-b2	71.01	74.53
	R50 & mit-b2	71.58 / 71.03	74.94 / 74.84
w/ SA	R50	70.28	73.36
	mit-b2	74.51	<u>75.29</u>
	R50 & mit-b2	<u>74.85 / 74.87</u>	<u>75.12 / 75.85</u>
	ResNeSt50	70.92	<u>75.58</u>
	ResNeXt50	71.18	72.77
R50 & ResNeST50	R50 & ResNeST50	<u>72.70 / 73.56</u>	<u>73.41 / 75.65</u>
	R50 & ResNeXT50	72.15 / 72.39	74.41 / 74.56

Table 3. Performance of co-training with different architectures. We refer ResNet50 as R50 and SegFormer-b2 as mit-b2 [84]. For cells with two numbers, the left one is the result of ResNet50.

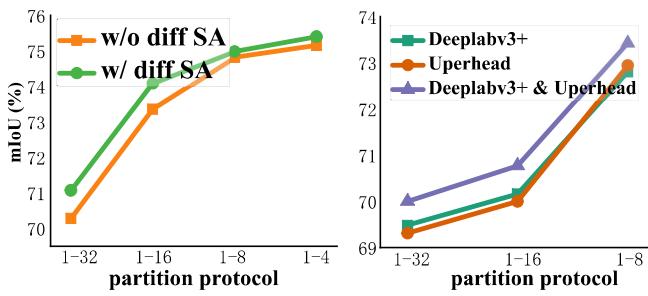


Figure 5. (a) Empirical evaluation of co-training with or without different strong augmentation (SA); (b) Empirical evaluation of co-training with different head structures.

the target function of the RGB domain and sufficient to train a quality segmentor. As per Figure 3, co-training with different domains significantly lowers the similarity between models, illustrating that different domains increase the diversity of the two models. We further evaluate empirically on *VOC PASCAL* where the RGB & DCT outperforms the baselines with single view consistently on all settings. Notice that both models of RGB & DCT obtain a significant improvement, demonstrating that diversity benefits two models mutually instead of a unidirectional teacher-student one. We also conduct experiments on HSV, a color space different from RGB and also observe similar but fewer improvements over baseline compared with DCT. We hypothesize this is due to the discrepancy between DCT and RGB being larger than that of HSV and RGB. **Different Augmentation** further promotes diversity in co-training. We empirically show in (a) of Figure 5 that different augmentations for each model are effective and show consistent improvement over the baseline.

Different Architectures provides different inductive biases and thus better independent views as discussed in Section 4. From Figure 3, we already demonstrate that less similar decision boundaries can be obtained with different architectures. We here empirically evaluate the performance

Method	Resolution	92	183	366	732	1464
ResNet50						
Sup Baseline	513x513	39.1	51.3	60.3	65.9	71.0
PseudoSeg [103]	512x512	54.9	61.9	64.9	70.4	-
PC ² Seg [100]	512x512	56.9	64.6	67.6	70.9	-
Ours (2-cps)	513x513	<u>71.8</u>	<u>74.5</u>	77.6	<u>78.6</u>	<u>79.8</u>
Ours (3-cps)	513x513	73.1	74.7	<u>77.1</u>	78.8	80.2
ResNet101						
Sup Baseline	321x321	44.4	54.0	63.4	67.2	71.8
ReCo [49]	321x321	64.8	72.0	73.1	74.7	-
ST++ [91]	321x321	65.2	71.0	74.6	77.3	79.1
ours (2-cps)	321x321	<u>74.8</u>	77.6	<u>79.5</u>	<u>80.3</u>	81.7
ours (3-cps)	321x321	75.4	<u>76.8</u>	79.6	80.4	<u>81.6</u>
Sup Baseline	512x512	42.3	56.6	64.2	68.1	72.0
MT [72]	512x512	48.7	55.8	63.0	69.16	-
CPS[12]	512x512	64.1	67.4	71.7	75.9	-
U ² PL [82]	512x512	68.0	69.2	73.7	76.2	79.5
PS-MT [50]	512x512	65.8	69.6	76.6	78.4	80.0
ours (2-cps)	513x513	76.2	<u>76.6</u>	80.2	80.8	81.9
ours (3-cps)	513x513	<u>75.7</u>	<u>77.7</u>	<u>80.1</u>	80.9	82.0

Table 4. Comparison with state-of-the-art methods on the *Pascal* dataset. Labeled images are from the high-quality training set.

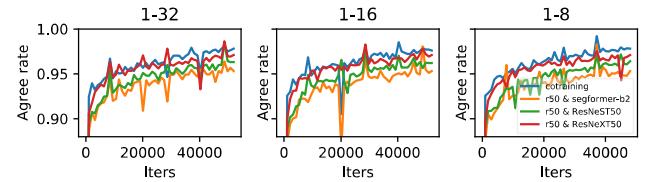


Figure 6. Homogenization (measured by agree rate) with different architectures.

of co-training with different architectures, as presented in Table 3. Both R50 and mit-b2 can be further improved through co-training compared with their corresponding individual baseline. For instance, we observe a remarkable improvement of ResNet50 over single R50 co-training (*e.g.* 5.37% and 3.56% on 1/32 and 1/16 w/o SA), which can be attributed to the high performance of mit-b2. However, ResNet50 of R50 & mit-b2 even surpasses the individual mit-b2 demonstrating that the cross-supervision between different architectures provides additional information other than the pseudo labels from mit-b2. We also provide co-training with different CNN architectures and illustrate in Figure 6 that different CNNs are more coupled compared with CNN and transformer. Empirically, despite baseline ResNeSt50 obtaining better performance than baseline mit-b2, R50 & mit-b2 outperforms R50 & ResNeSt50 in all settings. We also notice the improvement of ResNet50 in co-training with different CNN architectures is less than that of R50 & mit-b2, which further illustrates our point. To further prove the concept, we additionally conduct experiments on co-training with shared backbone and leverage different

decoder head structures, as shown in (b) of Figure 5. Co-training with DeepLabv3+ head [7] and UPerHead [88] is better than any baselines with single-head architecture consistently.

Method	Resolution	1/32 (331)	1/16 (662)	1/8 (1323)	1/4 (2646)
Sup Baseline	321x321	55.8	60.3	66.8	71.3
CAC[43]	320x320	-	70.1	72.4	74.0
ST++[91]	321x321	-	72.6	74.4	75.4
Ours (2-cps)	321x321	75.2	76.0	76.2	76.5
Ours (3-cps)	321x321	74.9	76.4	76.3	76.6
Sup Baseline	513x513	54.1	60.7	67.7	71.9
CPS[12]	512x512	-	72.0	73.7	74.9
3-CPS [20]	512x512	-	72.0	74.2	75.9
ELN [42]	512x512	-	-	73.2	74.6
PS-MT [50]	512x512	-	72.8	75.7	76.4
U ² PL* [82]	513x513	-	72.0	75.1	76.2
Ours (2-cps)	513x513	75.2	76.2	77.0	77.5
Ours (3-cps)	513x513	74.7	76.3	77.2	77.7

Table 5. Comparison with state-of-the-art methods with ResNet50 on the *Pascal VOC 2012* dataset. Labeled images are sampled from the blended training set. The result of U^2PL is reproduced with the same setting as ours.

5.3. Comparison with State-of-the-arts

Pascal VOC 2012. We only compare the most recent SOTA models due to limited space and a full comparison can be found in Appendix J. We first compare the performance of *Diverse Co-training* with SOTA on *PASCAL VOC* on two groups of data partition protocols described in 5.1. To ensure a fair comparison, we conduct training with resolutions of 321 and 513, which is reported with the results. On the first partition protocol, our *Diverse Co-training* outperforms the prior methods by a remarkable margin, as displayed in Table 4. For instance, we obtain an improvement of over 10% on ResNet50 compared with the PC²Seg on 92, 183 and 366 partitions. With ResNet101, our method surpasses the up-to-date SOTA (*i.e.* PS-MT) by a margin as large as 9% under scarce label conditions such as 92 and 183, and outperforms all prior arts consistently on other settings. On the second protocol, as indicated by Table 5, our method also gains remarkable improvements over most up-to-date studies. We emphasize that our performance on 1/32 (*i.e.* 75.2%) already outperforms other SOTA with 1/16 (around 72%) by 3%, which shows the effectiveness of our approach. We further report the comparison on ResNet101 and SegFormer-b3 in Appendix D. **Cityscapes.** We compare the SOTA with our method in Table 6. We report results on both ResNet50 & SegFormer-b2 and ResNet101 & SegFormer-b3. We can see that our method outperforms the current SOTA (*i.e.* U²PL) by more than 3% on 1/30 and 1/8 and 1.6% on 1/4 with ResNet50 & SegFormer-b2. Similar

trends can also be observed on ResNet101, where we contribute an improvement of 0.5% and 1.1% over PS-MT on 1/8 and 1/4 protocol.

Method	ResNet50			Method	ResNet101		
	1/30 (100)	1/8 (372)	1/4 (744)		1/16 (186)	1/8 (372)	1/4 (744)
Sup Baseline	54.8	70.2	73.6	Sup Baseline	66.8	72.5	76.4
CAC [43]	-	69.7	72.7	CutMix [23]	67.9	73.5	75.4
CPS [12]	-	74.4	76.9	CPS [12]	70.5	75.7	77.4
ST++ [91]	61.4	72.7	73.8	U ² PL [82]	74.9	76.5	78.5
U ² PL* [82]	59.8	73.0	76.3	PS-MT [50]	-	76.9	77.6
Ours (2-cps)	64.5	76.3	77.1	Ours (2-cps)	75.0	77.3	78.7
Ours (3-cps)	65.5	76.5	77.9	Ours (3-cps)	75.7	77.4	78.5

Table 6. Comparison with state-of-the-art methods on the Cityscapes dataset. Result of U^2PL on ResNet50 (marked with *) is from [90] which is reproduced with the same setting as ours.

5.4. Ablation Study and Analysis

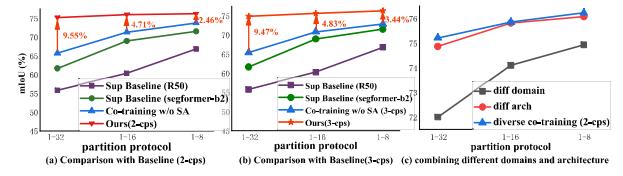


Figure 7. Comparison with baseline model with (a) *Diverse Co-training* (2-cps) (b) *Diverse Co-training* (3-cps); (c) Ablation study of combining different domains and architecture.

Comparison with Baseline. We compare our methods with baseline in Figure with ResNet50 and SegFormer-b2 on *PASCAL VOC*. We compare both variants of our method, *i.e.* 2-cps and 3-cps, to each corresponding baseline (*i.e.* CPS and n-CPS) and the labeled-only baseline. As per Figure 7, we achieve an improvement 9.55%, 4.71%, 2.46% and 9.47%, 4.83%, 3.44% over their corresponding baseline respectively. The improvement over the supervised baseline is larger. It's worth mentioning that the n-CPS baseline with single architecture suffers from homogenization which consequently limits the performance compared with the CPS baseline (shown in Table 1). With the diversity boosted, *Diverse Co-training* (3-cps) now outperforms both baselines by a large margin, further demonstrating that diversity is crucial in co-training. Co-training is similar to knowledge distillation (KD) in the sense that they both possess a teaching process, the difference lies in that the teacher in KD is usually fixed and teaching is unidirectional. We provide a KD baseline comparison in Appendix F. **Combining Diverse domains and Different Architectures** renders model less coupled further increasing the diversity and encouraging the exploration at early stage of training. Empirically, we also demonstrate a improvement of the combination over the each individual, as shown in (c) of Figure 7. We

also provide a more complete ablation study on each one of the component and their combinations in Appendix K. **Confidence Threshold τ and Unlabeled Weight λ .** As proposed in Section 4, our holistic *Diverse Co-training* leverages confidence threshold τ to retrain confident samples as pseudo label and balance the losses on unlabeled data with weight λ . To be as simple as possible, we set the threshold $\tau = 0.0$ and $\lambda = 1.0$ as default for the experiments reported in this paper. But we also report the performance of different values in Figure 8. We emphasize that a better performance can be obtained if optimal hyperparameters are thoroughly searched on each setting as in [50], which is omitted due to computation reason. **Number of parameters.** We report the parameters of all backbones used in Section 5.2 in Appendix H. We also provide a rigorous analysis to show that our improvement is not trivial by adding more parameters.

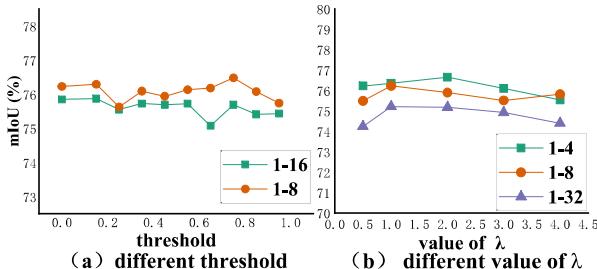


Figure 8. Performance on (a) different confidence thresholds τ and (b) different weight λ .

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we revisit the two core assumptions behind the deep co-training methods in semi-supervised segmentation and provide a theoretical upper bound over the generalization error that links with the homogenization of the two networks. We discover that the existing co-training paradigms suffer from severe homogenization problems and by exploring different dimensions of co-training and systematically increasing the diversity from three aspects, we propose a holistic framework: *Diverse Co-training* which achieves remarkable improvement over previous best results on all partitions of the *Pascal* and *Cityscapes* benchmarks.

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