

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 <i>The Constraint Satisfaction Problem</i>	2
1.2 <i>Solving Constraint Satisfaction Problems</i>	4
1.3 <i>Constraint Satisfaction Problem Formulations</i>	6
1.3.1 Problem Formulation	6
1.3.2 Approaches to Generating ZDC Formulations	8
1.3.3 Comparing ZDC Formulations	9
1.3.4 An Opportunity	11
1.4 <i>Overview of this Thesis</i>	11
2. ON THE PROPERTIES OF CONSTRAINT SATISFACTION PROBLEMS	13
2.1 <i>Properties Relating to Variables and Domains</i>	14
2.1.1 Search Space Complexity	14
2.2 <i>Properties Relating to Constraints</i>	17
2.2.1 Redundancy and the Level of Constraint Based Information	18
2.2.2 Topological Properties	23
2.3 <i>Properties Relating to the Number of Solutions</i>	24
2.3.1 Tightness	25
2.3.2 T-Factor	26
2.3.3 Kappa	26
2.3.4 A Note on the Limitations of Solution-Based Properties.....	27
2.4 <i>Discussion</i>	29
2.5 <i>Summary</i>	30

3. A CONTEXT FOR THE HEURISTIC SELECTION OF <i>ZDC</i> FORMULATIONS	31
3.1 <i>The Space of Possible ZDC Formulations</i>	32
3.1.1 The SENDMORY Puzzle: an Example <i>ZDC</i> Formulation Space	33
3.2 <i>The Task of ZDC Formulation Selection</i>	34
3.2.1 The Task Defined.....	35
3.2.2 Expectations	36
3.2.3 The Approach in this Thesis	37
3.3 <i>A Context for Selection</i>	38
3.3.1 Move Operators and Transformation Algorithms.....	38
3.3.2 Suggestion Heuristics.....	40
3.3.3 Evaluation Heuristics	41
3.4 <i>Discussion</i>	43
3.5 <i>Summary</i>	45
4. THEORY BASED ESTIMATES FOR <i>ZDC</i> FORMULATION EVALUATION HEURISTICS	46
4.1 <i>Probability Models for Constraint Satisfaction Problems</i>	47
4.2 <i>Nadel's Complexity Equations</i>	51
4.2.1 Working Assumptions.....	52
4.2.2 Application to the Standard Backtracking Algorithm.....	52
4.2.3 Application to the Forward Checking Algorithm	54
4.2.4 The Expected Number of Solutions for Standard Backtracking and Forward Checking	57
4.3 <i>Extensions to Backjumping</i>	57
4.3.1 The Effects of Backjumping	60
4.3.2 Extending Theoretical Complexity Estimates to Backjumping	60
4.4 <i>The Accuracy Of Theoretical Estimates</i>	64
4.4.1 Accuracy Within a Problem Class.....	65
4.4.2 General Estimation Accuracy	69
4.4.3 Conclusions on the Accuracy of Theoretical Estimates for Predicting Search Costs ..	75
4.5 <i>Applying Theoretical Estimates as ZDC Formulation Evaluation Heuristics</i>	76
4.5.1 Randomly Generated Binary CSPs	76
4.5.2 Graph Colouring Problems.....	79
4.5.3 The <i>n</i> -Queens Problem.....	81

4.6 Discussion.....	84
4.6.1 The Concept of Constancy	85
4.7 Summary.....	86
5. EVALUATION HEURISTICS FOR VARIABLE AGGREGATION.....	87
5.1 The Variable Aggregation Transformation.....	88
5.2 Analysis of the Effects of Variable Aggregation	91
5.2.1 Gains for Standard Backtracking.....	92
5.2.2 Losses for Standard Backtracking	93
5.2.3 Gains for Forward Checking	96
5.2.4 Losses for Forward Checking.....	97
5.2.5 Gains and Losses for Backjumping.....	97
5.2.6 Other Losses	99
5.3 Theoretical Complexity Based Evaluation Heuristics for Variable Aggregation.....	100
5.3.1 Evaluation Heuristic αI_{bt}	101
5.3.2 Evaluation Heuristic αI_{fc}	101
5.3.3 Evaluation Heuristic αI_{bj}	102
5.3.4 Effectiveness of Evaluation Heuristics αI_{bt} , αI_{bj} and αI_{fc}	102
5.4 Knowledge Based Evaluation Heuristics	108
5.4.1 Standard Backtracking.....	110
5.4.2 Forward Checking	112
5.4.3 Backjumping.....	115
5.4.4 Effectiveness of Evaluation Heuristics $\alpha 2_{bt}$, $\alpha 2_{bj}$ and $\alpha 2_{fc}$	117
5.5 Discussion.....	121
5.5.1 Robustness of Variable Aggregation	122
5.5.2 Improved Mean Performance	122
5.5.3 Exceptionally Hard Problems	122
5.5.4 Theoretical Complexity Model for Backjumping	123
5.5.5 Applicability to Cycle Cutset Method.....	123
5.6 Summary.....	123

6. EVALUATION HEURISTICS FOR REDUNDANT CONSTRAINTS	125
6.1 <i>Redundant Constraints</i>	126
6.1.1 Solving the Edge-Numbering Problem.....	127
6.2 <i>Generating Redundant Constraints</i>	129
6.3 <i>Redundant Composition Constraints</i>	130
6.3.1 Redundant Constraints Under a Search Ordering.....	130
6.3.2 Characteristics of Redundant Composition Constraints.....	132
6.4 <i>Evaluation Heuristics for Redundant Composition Constraints</i>	140
6.4.1 An Evaluation Heuristic for Standard Backtracking, ρ_{bt}	141
6.4.2 An Evaluation Heuristic for Forward Checking, ρ_{fc}	142
6.4.3 An Evaluation Heuristic for Backjumping, ρ_{bj}	146
6.5 <i>Evaluation of the ρ Heuristics</i>	149
6.5.1 Experimental Method.....	149
6.5.2 Results.....	151
6.5.3 Quantitative Performance.....	156
6.6 <i>Discussion</i>	158
6.6.1 Sensitivity to Class Variations	158
6.6.2 Accuracy with Low Density Constraint Graphs	158
6.6.3 Searching for a Single Solution	158
6.6.4 Exceptionally Hard Problems	159
6.6.5 Effective Evaluation Heuristics for Constant Solution Density	159
6.6.6 Extension to of Measure Vector.....	159
6.7 <i>Summary</i>	160
7. CONCLUSIONS.....	161
7.1 <i>Contributions</i>	161
7.1.1 A Context for ZDC Formulation Comparison.....	161
7.1.2 Extension of Nadel's Theoretical Complexity Work	162
7.1.3 Evaluation Heuristics for Variable Aggregation.....	162
7.1.4 Evaluation Heuristics for Redundant Composition Constraints	163
7.2 <i>Future Work</i>	163
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	165

