Service Differentiation and QoS in WLANs (802.11e)

Renato Lo Cigno
www.disi.unitn.it/locigno/didattica/NC/

...Copyright

What's the Problem in PCF

- PCF designed to provide QoS to real-time traffic
- What makes QoS in 802.11 difficult?
  1. Unpredictable beacon delay
     - A WSTA stops all timers at TBTT thus it does not initiate a transmission after TBTT; however, it continues on-going transmissions, hence beacon may be delayed
     - The larger the frame size, the longer the delay (up to 4.9 ms)
  2. Unknown transmission duration
  3. Static Polling List

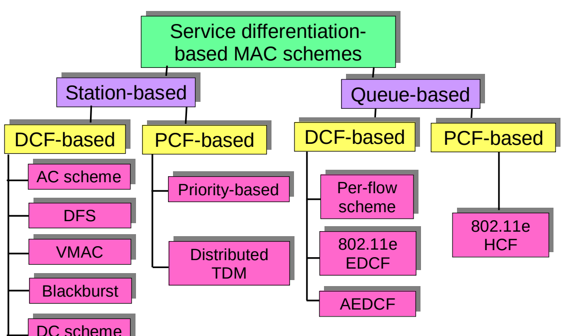
Quality-of-Service Provisioning: Some Terminology

- Definition: A **flow** is a packet stream from a source to a destination, belonging to the same application
- Definition: **QoS** is a set of service requirements to be met by the network while transporting a flow
- Typical QoS metrics include: available bandwidth, packet loss rate, estimated delay, packet jitter, hop count and path reliability

QoS in Wireless Networks

- QoS schemes in wired networks are NOT suitable for wireless networks
  - e.g., current wired-QoS routing algorithms require accurate link state and topology information
  - time-varying capacity of wireless links, limited resources and node mobility make maintaining accurate information difficult
- Supporting QoS in wireless networks is an even more difficult challenge

Service Differentiation MAC Schemes that lead to 802.11e



A QoS Standard for WLANs: IEEE 802.11e

- The IEEE 802.11 TG E was formed in 1999
- The Project Authorization Request (PAR) was approved in March 2000
- **Scopes of the IEEE 802.11 Task Group E**
  - Enhance the current 802.11 MAC to improve and manage QoS
  - Consider efficiency enhancements in the areas of DCF and PCF
  - Provide different classes of service (8 TCs)

802.11e Standard

- Released last autumn
- PHY unchanged (use a/b/g)
- MAC Enhanced: Goals
  - Traffic Differentiation and Guarantee
  - TSPEC and CAC
  - Interoperation with legacy 802.11

802.11e: QSTA, QAP, QBSS, HCF

- A station using 802.11e is called *QoS Enhanced Station* (QSTA)
- An AP using 802.11e is called *QoS Access Point* (QAP)
- QSTA e QAP works within a *QoS Basic Service Set* (QBSS)
- The two coordination functions DCF e PCF are substituted by a single *Hybrid Coordination Function (HCF)*

TXOPs

- TXOP: Transmission Opportunity
  - Time interval during which a QSTA has the right to transmit
  - It is characterized by a starting time and a maximum duration (TXOP_Limit)
  - Used in both CP and CFP

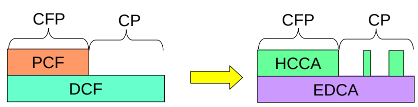
802.11e Coordination Function

- Hybrid Coordination Function, alternates:
  - EDCA (Enhanced Distributed Channel Access), contention based, conceived to support legacy stations and provide some *stochastic* level of differentiation
  - HCCA (HCF Coordinated Channel Access), polling based, provides collision free periods with guaranteed assignment and *deterministic* differentiation

802.11e QoS Mechanisms

802.11e proposes a new access scheme: Hybrid Coordination Function (HCF), composed of two coordination functions

- Enhanced Distributed Channel Access (EDCA)
  - A basis layer of 802.11e; operates in CP
- HCF Controlled Channel Access (HCCA)
  - HCCA operates in CFP



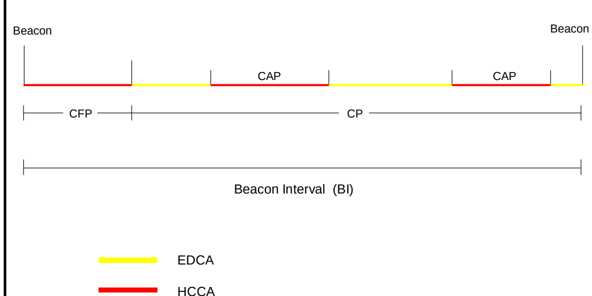
802.11e QoS Mechanisms

- MAC-level FEC (Hybrid I and II)
- Ad hoc features:
  - Direct Communication / Side Traffic
  - WARP: Wireless Address Resolution Protocol
  - AP mobility

802.11e: Hybrid Coordinator

- Within a QBSS a centralized controller is needed to coordinated all QSTAs. This is the *Hybrid Coordinator* (HC), normally implemented within a QAP
- An HC has the role of splitting the transmission superframe in two phases continuously altrernating:
  - *Contention Period* (CP), where QSTAs content for the channel using EDCA
  - *Contention-Free Period* (CFP), where HC defines who is going to use the channel and for what time with a collision free polling protocol

MAC 802.11e: HCCA



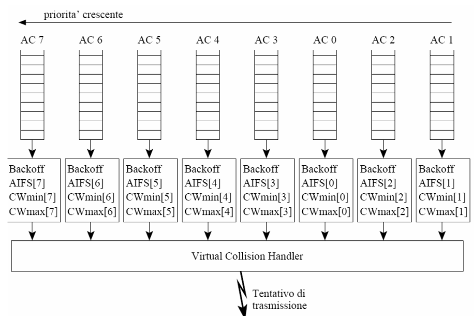
802.11e: EDCF

- The *Enhanced Distributed Coordination Function* (EDCF) define a differentiated access scheme based on an improved (yet complex) contention scheme
- It is an evolution of CSMA/CA DCF, with the add-on of traffic classes to support QoS and differentiate traffic
- EDCF is designed to support frames with the same 8 priority levels of 802.1d, but mapping them on only 4 access categories
- Every frame passed to the MAC layer from above, must have a priority identifier (from 0 to 7), called *Traffic Category Identification* (TCId)

802.11e: EDCF

- TCId is written in one header field of the MAC frame
- Each 802.11e QSTA & QAP MUST have four separated AC queues
- Each AC queue is FIFO and behaves independently from the others as far as the CSMA/CA MAC protocol is concerned

802.11e: EDCF



802.11e: EDCF

- ACs are differentiated based on their CSMA parameters:
  - **IFS**
  - **CWmin**
  - **CWmax**
  - **Backoff exponent**

802.11e: EDCF

- Higher priority ACs are assigned parameters that result in shorter CWs so that a statistical advantage is gained in accessing the channel
- Protocol parameters become vectors
  - CWmin[AC]
  - CWmax[AC]
  - AIFS[AC]
  - bck[AC]

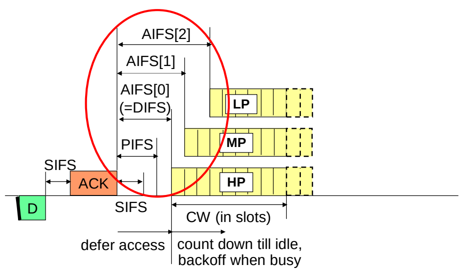
  - CW[AC,t] is derived with the usual CSMA/CA rules

802.11e: EDCF

- Arbitration InterFrame Space (AIFS) substitute the common DIFS
- Each AIFS is at least DIFS long

- Befor entering the backoff procedure each *Virtual Station* will have to wait AIFS[AC], instead of DIFS

Arbitraration IFS (AIFS)



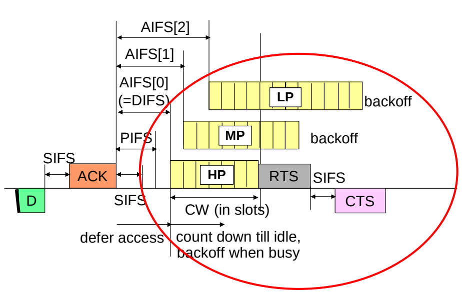
802.11a: slot=9 µs, SIFS=6 µs, PIFS=15 µs, DIFS=24 µs, AIFS ≥34 µs

Contention Window

- $CW_{min}[AC]$ and $CW_{max}[AC]$
- Contention Window update:

$$CW_{new}[AC] = (CW_{old}[AC]+1)\cdot bck - 1$$

Backoff



802.11a: slot=9 µs, SIFS=16 µs, PIFS=25 µs, DIFS=34 µs, AIFS ≥34 µs

Virtual Stations

- Each AC queue behaves like a different virtual station (independent sensing and backoff)
- If the backoff counters of two or more parallel ACs in the same QSTA reach 0 at the same time, a scheduler inside the QSTA avoids virtual collision by granting the TXOP to the AC with the highest UP
- The lowest priority colliding behaves as if there were an external collision

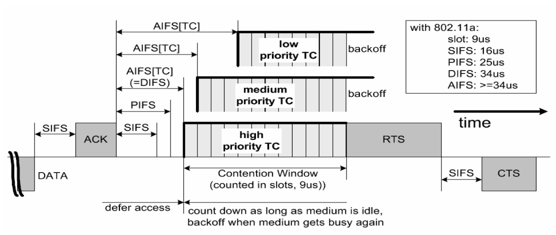
802.11e: EDCF – Beacon Frames

- Values of AIFS[AC], CWmin[AC] e CWmax[AC] are determined by the QAP and transmitted within beacon frames (normally every 100 msec)
- QSTAs must abide to the received parameters
- QSTAs may use these parameters to chose the QAP the prefer to connect to (estimate of the expected performance)

802.11e: EDCF – Virtual Collisions

- Every AC within a QSTA behaves as if it were an independent station, with its own MAC parameters AIFS[AC] e CW[AC]
- So Virtual Stations (AC queues) within a QSTA contend for the channel
- Internal collisions between different ACs are solved virtually, without loss of resources
- The TXOP goes to the highest priority AC and the others behave as if there was a real collision

802.11e: EDCF – Virtual Collisions



802.11e: TXOP

- TXOP is the time interval in which a STA may use the channel
- It's an initial time plus a duration, indeed the negotiation is no more for a PDU, but can be for many aggregated PDUs (this part is not well defined in the standard)
- CW[AC] is managed with usual rules of increment (after collisions/failures) and devrement (during idle cahnnel):

NewCW[AC] = ((OldCW[AC] + 1) * 2) - 1

802.11e: EDCF

- Sample allocation of TCId to ACs:

TCID	CA	Traffic description
0	0	Best Effort
1	0	Best Effort
2	0	Best Effort
3	1	Video Probe
4	2	Video
5	2	Video
6	3	Voice
7	3	Voice

EDCA Bursting

- Once the station has gained access to the medium, it can be allowed to send more than one frame without contending again
- The station cannot transmit longer than TXOP_Limit
- ACK frame by frame or Burst ACK
- SIFS is used between packets (to avoid collisions)

EDCA Bursting: Pros / Cons

- **Pros**
  - Reduces network overhead
  - Increases throughput (SIFS and burst ACKs)
  - Better fairness among the same priority queues: independently of the frame size, a QSTA gets a TXOP every time it wins a contention
    - E.g., STA A uses 500 B frame; STA B uses 1K B frame. Thus B would get higher throughput in 802.11, while in 802.11e both can get approximately same throughput

EDCA Bursting: Pros / Cons

- **Cons**
  - Possible increasing of delay jitter
  - TXOP_Limit should not be longer than the time required for transmitting the largest data frame
- In any case EDCA does not solve the downlink/uplink unfairness problem

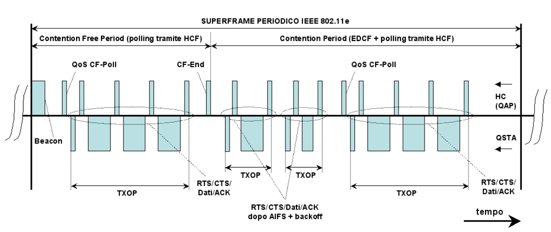
802.11e: HCF

- HC may allocate TXOPs to himself (QAP) or to other QSTAs
- Self allocation is done to transmit MSDUs, allocation of resources may solve the uplink/downlink unfairness
- Allocation to AP can be done after a Point coordination InterFrame Space (PIFS) con PIFS < DIFS
- HC (QAP) has priority over other stations and may interrupt a CP to start a CFP transmitting a Poll frame

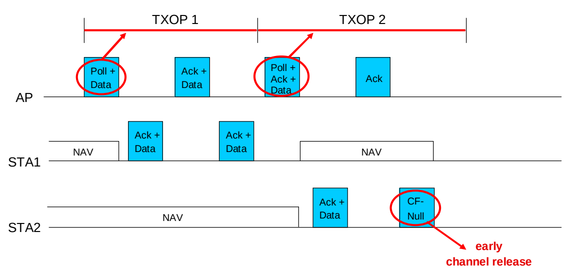
802.11e: HCF

- Time is diveded between contention free periods (CFP) and contention periods (CP), that are alternated roughly cyclically
- A sequence CFP + CP defines a Periodic Superfame of 802.11e
- The CP can be interrpted by other contention free periods called CAPs

802.11e: HCF



MAC 802.11e: HCCA



802.11e: HCF – QoS CFPoll Frame

- Within a CP, TXOP is determined either:
  - Through EDCF rules (free channel + AIFS + BO + TXtime)
  - Through a poll frame, called QoS CFPoll, sent by HC to a station
- QoS CFPoll is sent after PIFS, so with priority wrt any other traffic
- Indeed there is not a big difference between a CFP and CAPs as defined above.

802.11e: HCF – QoS CFPoll Frame

- During CFP, TXOPs are again determined by HC and QoS CFPoll can be piggybacked with data and ACKs if needed
- Stations not polled set NAV and cannot access the channel
- The CFP must terminate within a time specified within the beacons and it is terminated by the CF-End frame sent by HC

802.11e: HCF – QoS CFPoll Frame

- QoS CF-Poll frame was introduced with the 802.11e amendment, for backward compatibility it contains a NAV field the legacy stations can use to avoid interfering
- NAV specify the whole TXOP duration
- Legacy stations in HCF can only use the CP period

802.11e: HCF – Controlled Content.

- Is a mix between polling and contention based
- Should guarrantee better eperformances than contention during congetions periods
- The *Controlled Contention* mechanism is mandatory for QAP an optional for QSTA:
  - QSTA notify QAP some allocation requests, QAP sill allocate the necessary TXOPs via polling
  - DIfferent from standard polling, because it'

802.11e: HCF – Controlled Content.

- QAP defines if there are resources to satisfy requests:
  - If available schedules the channel (IEEE 802.11e does not specify scheduling algorithms, these are open for research and competitive implementation)
  - The answer to stations can be acceptance, rejections or a proposal to use resources with a lower priority

HCCA

- HCCA effectively provides policing and deterministic channel access by controlling the channel through the HC
- It is backward compatible with basic DCF/PCF
- Based on polling of QSTAs by the HC

HCCA

Crucial features of HCCA

- HCCA operates in CP and CFP
- Uses TXOPs which are granted through HC (in HCCA!)
  - HC allocates TXOPs by using QoS CF-Poll frames
  - In CPs, the time interval during which TXOPs are polled by HC is called CAP (Controlled Access Period)
  - 8 Traffic Categories (TCs)

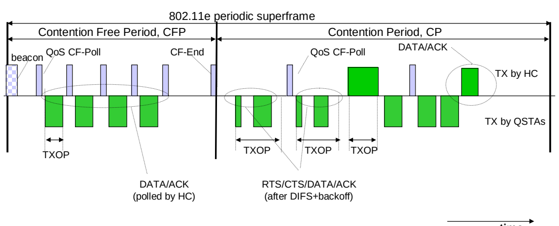
HC Behavior in HCCA

- According to HCCA:
  - HC may allocate TXOPs to itself to transmit MSDUs whenever it wants, however only after having sensed the channel idle for PIFS
  - In CP, the HC can send the CF-Poll frame after a PIFS idle period, thus starting a CAP
  - In CFP, only the HC can grant TXOPs to QSTAs by sending the CF-Poll frame
  - The CFP ends after the time announced by HC in the beacon frame or by the CF-End frame from HC

QSTA Behavior in HCCA

- *A QSTA behaves as follows*
  - In CP QSTAs can gain a TXOP thanks to a CF-Poll frame issued by HC during CAPs, otherwise they can use EDCA
  - In CFP, QSTAs do not attempt accessing the channel on their own but wait for a CF-Poll frame from the HC
- The HC indicates the TXOP duration to be used in the CF-Poll frame (QoS-control field)
  - Legacy stations kept silent by NAV whenever they detect a CF-Poll frame

802.11e Superframe



During the CP, a TXOP may begin because:

- The medium is determined to be available under EDCA rules (EDCA-TXOP)
- The STA receives a special polling frame from HC (polled-TXOP)

Polling in HCCA

- Polling list is a crucial key in HCCA
  - Traffic scheduling (i.e., how QSTAs are polled) is not specified
  - QSTAs can send updates to the HC on their queue size as well as on the desired TXOP, (through the QoS control field in data frames)
  - QSTAs can send ADDTS requests to initiate a new traffic stream

Traffic Signaling

- Two types of signaling traffic are supported:
  - Connectionless queue state indicator
    - E.g., Arrival rate measurement: notification and not negotiation between peer entities is used
  - TSPEC (Traffic Specification) between HC and QSTAs
    - E.g., service negotiation and resource reservation

Traffic Signaling

- TSPEC are the base for *CAC*
- QoS without *CAC* is impossible
- QoS is granted to flows not to packets
- Flows are persistent (normally)
- Flows can be predicted (sometimes)

Resource Scheduling

- Not essential to backward compatibility
  - The standard has just a reference impl. (SS)
- HCF is implemented in the AP
  - HCCA scheduling is a function of HCF
- Requirements of traffic flows are contained in the *Traffic Specifications* (TSPEC):
  - Maximum, minimum and mean datarate
  - Maximum and nominal size of the MSDUs
  - Maximum Service Interval and ***Delay Bound***
  - Inactivity Interval
  - …

EDCA Differentiation
HCCF Scheduling

Renato Lo Cigno
www.disi.unitn.it/locigno/didattica/NC/

...Copyright

Thanks & Disclaimer

- These slides and results are based on the following paper
  - "Performance Evaluation of Differentiated Access Mechanisms Effectiveness in 802.11 Networks", IleniaTinnirello , Giuseppe Bianchi , Luca Scalia, IEEE Globecomm 2004.
- As such they must be considered examples of the possible performances and tradeoffs
- Thanks to Bianchi and all the other authors for providing copy of the papers graphics and slides

EDCA or HCCA?

- How does EDCA support differentiation?
- Is this enough for standard purposes?
- Are parameters easy to tune and universal?

- How can HCCA polling-based sceduling be implemented?
- Do we need to use the feedback from the STA?
- How can the traffic be described?

Performance Evaluation of Differentiated Access Mechanisms Effectiveness in 802.11 Networks

G. Bianchi, I. Tinnirello, L. Scalia

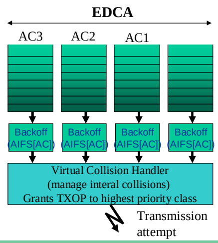
presented @ Globecom 2004

QoS Support issues in legacy 802.11

- DCF is long term fair
  - Equal channel access probability among the stations
  - Averagely, the same channel holding time (for homogeneous packet sizes)
    - Solution: differentiate packet sizes?
    - Solution: differentiate channel holding times?
- NO WAY! QoS is not a matter of how long I hold the channel
  - It means more…
    - Need to manage access delay problems for real-time apps!!!
    - Need to modify 802.11 channel access fairness!!!

QoS @ IEEE 802.11 MAC

- 802.11e defines different traffic classes onto map data flows
- Each traffic class behaves as an independent MAC entity
- Differentiated access priority is provided by:
  - Giving probabilistically lower backoff counters (**CWmin, CWmax**, **PF**)
  - Giving deterministically lower inter-frame spaces and backoff de-freezing times. (**AIFSN**)



Different MAC Access Parameters @ each class to differentiate channel access probability

Backoff based parameters: **CWmin, CWmax, PF**
Channel monitoring based parameters: **AIFS**

EDCA Performance Evaluation

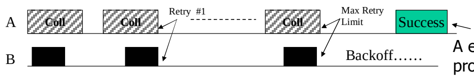
- Performance Evaluation: answers we try to give…
  - Homogeneous sources
    - Performance effectiveness of each differentiation MAC parameter, individually taken
    - How each differentiation parameter reacts to different load conditions?
  - Hetrogenous sources
    - What are the most effective settings to manage high-priority delay requirements?

EDCA Performance Evaluation

- Simulations
  - Same number of HP and LP stations
  - Same packet size (1024 bytes)
- Homogeneous sources scenario
  - Saturation conditions for HP and LP stations
    - Queues never empty
    - Data rate = Phy rate = 1 Mbps
- Heterogeneous sources scenario
  - 3 pkts/sec. for HP traffic
  - Saturation conditions for LP traffic
    - Data rate = Phy rate = 1 Mbps

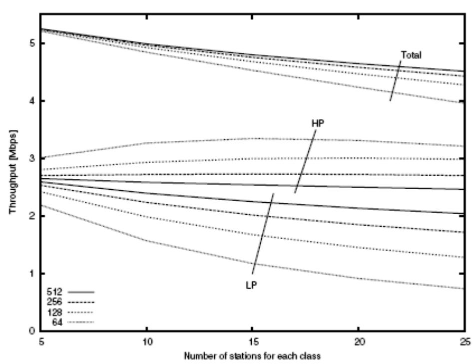
CWmax Differentiation (1)

- CWmax(A)<CWmax(B)
  - Once reached CWmax (repetead collisions), A gets access priority over B

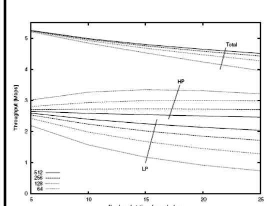


A extracts probablistically a lower backoff value due to its lower CWmax

CWmax Differentiation (2)



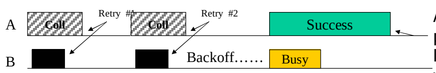
CWmax Differentiation (3)



- Low throughput differentiation
  - Only with CWmax=64 effective
  - @ low loads poor performance
    - Few collisions
- Inefficient channel usage
  - Consecutive Collisions are needed for the differentiation effect
  - Overall throughput suffers @ high loads

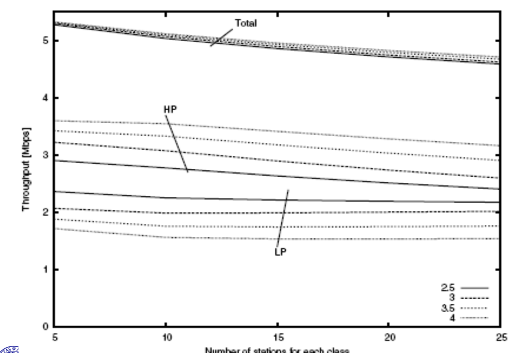
PF Differentiation (1)

- PF(A)<PF(B)
  - once a collision occurs, station A has probabilistically an higher chance to extract a lower backoff value, thus it may retransmits first.

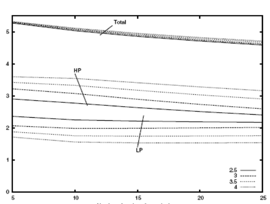


A extracts probablistically a lower backoff value due to its lower CW

PF Differentiation (2)



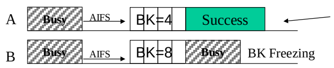
PF Differentiation (3)



- PF is greater than 2 for LP stations.
- CW_new = PF * CW_old
- It is sufficient a single collision to begin the differentiation process.
- Impossible to force LP traffic to zero!
  - After a packet successful transmission, the PF effect is no more present

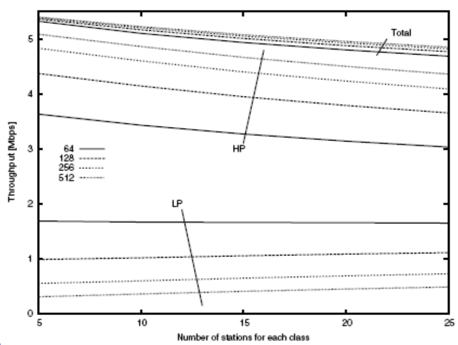
CWmin Differentiation (1)

- CWmin(A)<CWmin(B)
  - In average, station A has a lower backoff than B

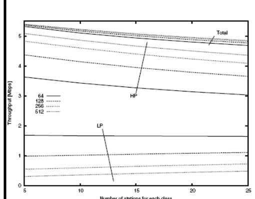


Thanks to its lower CWmin, A extracts probablistically a lower backoff value

CWmin Differentiation (2)



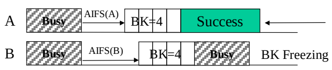
CWmin Differentiation (3)



- Very High differentiation performance
- @ low loads peformance is good
  - Collision effects among HPs not significant
- @ high loads collisions mainly involve HP stations (because of their small CW)
  - Degradations regard HP traffic -> bad!
  - LP traffic not affected
    - Collision effects un-altered

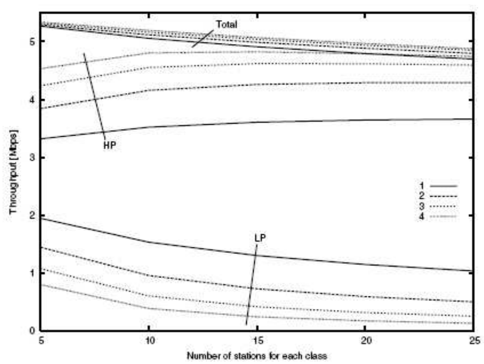
AIFS Differentiation (1)

- AIFS(A)<AIFS(B)
  - station A decrements its backoff timer before than station B

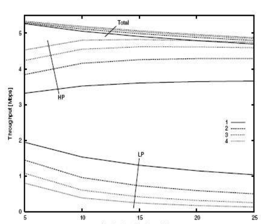


Thanks to its lower AIFS, A starts decrementing its backoff value before than B either after busy channel or idle channel conditions

AIFS Differentiation (2)



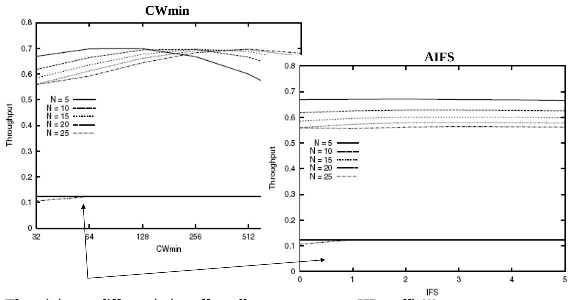
AIFS Differentiation (3)



- Very High differentiation performance
  - Complementary to CWmin case
- @ low loads differentiation performance suffers
  - Collision are few ->
- @ high loads collisions mainly involve LP stations, since HP stations access first
  - Degradations regard LP traffic -> good!
  - HP traffic not affected

Heterogeneous Sources: Throughput

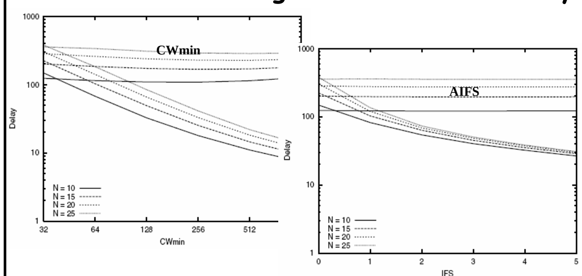
- Focus on AIFS and CWmin differentiation, seen to be most effective



The minimum differentiation effect allows to guarantee HP traffic!!!

Renato.LoCigno@dit.unitn.it
Thanks: TLC Networks Group – Politecnico di Torino
Nomadic Communications: 802.111e 73

Heterogeneous Sources: Delay



1) CWmin more effective to manage delay behaviour than AIFS (see slopes)

2) AIFS differentiation slightly sensitive to load in terms of delay

3) Joint use: delay requirements satisfied with AIFS, throughput managed via CWmin (because of the maxima)

Renato.LoCigno@dit.unitn.it
Thanks: TLC Networks Group – Politecnico di Torino
Nomadic Communications: 802.111e 74

Conclusions

- Cwmin and AIFS differentiation perform better than PF and CWmax differentiation
  - PF and CWmax differentiation operations allowed only by collisions
- CWmin and AIFS show a complementary behaviour
  - CWmin performance degrades @ high loads
  - AIFS performance degrades @ low loads
- Joint use of CWmin and AIFS
  - AIFS to meet delay requirements
  - CWmin to manage thoughput performance
- Complex parameter setting
- Behavior hardly predictable

Renato.LoCigno@dit.unitn.it
Thanks: TLC Networks Group – Politecnico di Torino
Nomadic Communications: 802.111e 75