

MPI and OpenMP



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Overview

- Motivation
- Potential advantages of MPI + OpenMP
- Problems with MPI + OpenMP
- Styles of MPI + OpenMP programming
 - MPI's thread interface

Motivation

- With the ubiquity of multicore chips, almost all current CPU systems are *clustered architectures*
- Distributed memory systems, where each node consist of a shared memory multiprocessor (SMP).
- Single address space within each node, but separate nodes have separate address spaces.

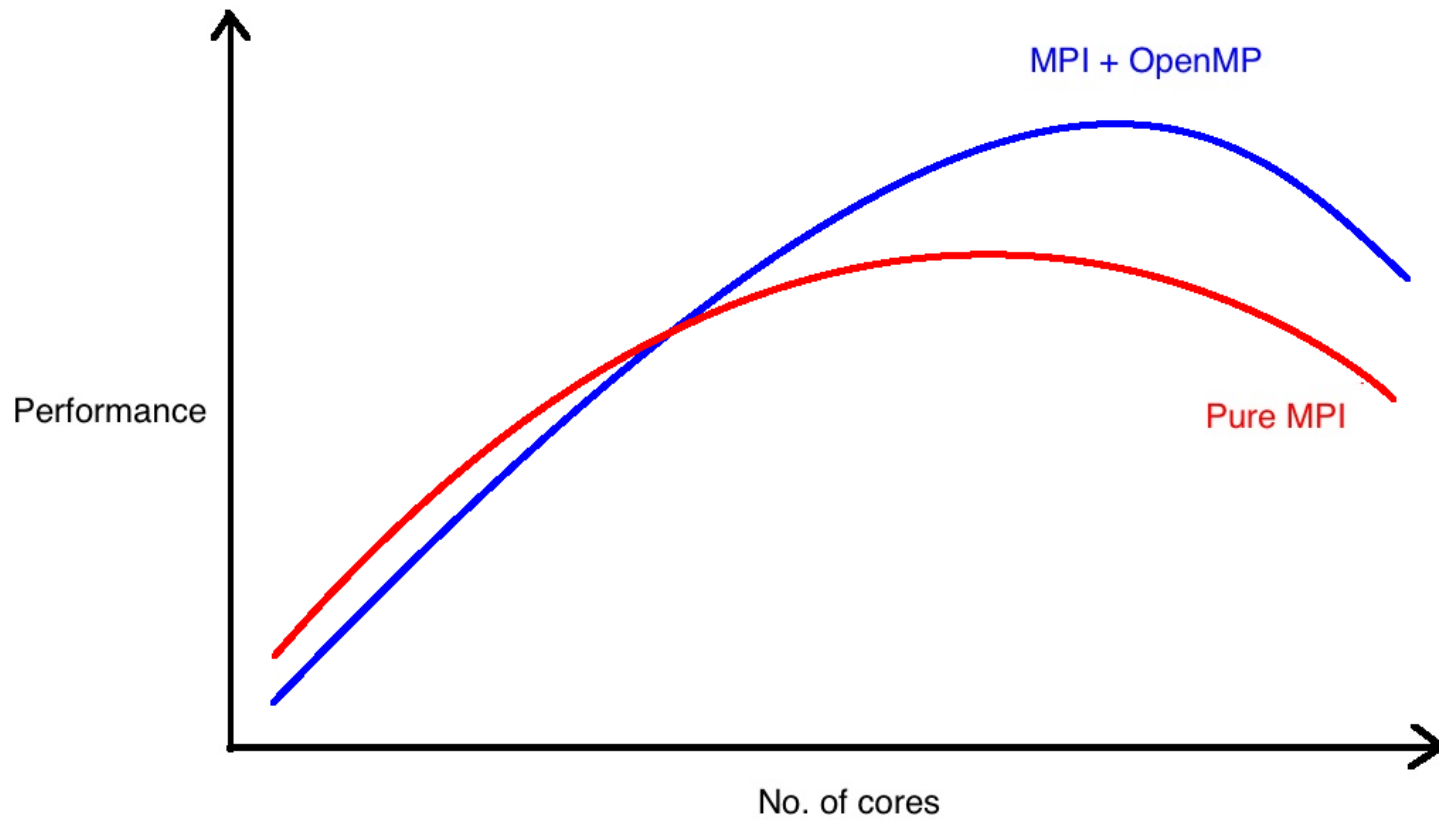
Programming clusters

- How should we program such a machine?
- Could use MPI across whole system
- Cannot (in general) use OpenMP/threads across whole system
 - requires support for single address space
 - this is possible in software, but inefficient
 - also possible in hardware, but expensive
- Could use OpenMP/threads within a node and MPI between nodes
 - is there any advantage to this?

Expectations

- In general, MPI + OpenMP does not improve performance (and may be worse!) in the regime where the MPI application is scaling well.
- Benefits come when MPI scalability (either in time or memory) starts to run out
- MPI + OpenMP *may* extend scalability to larger core counts

Typical performance curves



Potential advantages of MPI + OpenMP

- Reducing memory usage
- Exploiting additional levels of parallelism
- Reducing load imbalance
- Reducing communication costs

Reducing memory usage

- Some MPI codes use a replicated data strategy
 - all processes have a copy of a major data structure
- Classical domain decomposition codes have replication in halos
- MPI internal message buffers can consume significant amounts of memory
- A pure MPI code needs one copy per process/core.
- A mixed code would only require one copy per node
 - data structure can be shared by multiple threads within a process
 - MPI buffers for intra-node messages no longer required
- Will be increasingly important
 - amount of memory per core is not likely to increase in future

Effect of domain size on halo storage

- Typically, using more processors implies a smaller domain size per processor
 - unless the problem can genuinely weak scale
- Although the amount of halo data does decrease as the local domain size decreases, it eventually starts to occupy a significant amount fraction of the storage
 - even worse with deep halos or >3 dimensions

Local domain size	Halos	% of data in halos
$50^3 = 125000$	$52^3 - 50^3 = 15608$	11%
$20^3 = 8000$	$22^3 - 20^3 = 2648$	25%
$10^3 = 1000$	$12^3 - 10^3 = 728$	42%

Exploiting additional levels of parallelism

- Some MPI codes do not scale beyond a certain core count because they run out of available parallelism at the top level.
- However, there may be additional lower levels of parallelism that can be exploited.
- In principle, this could also be done using MPI.
- In practice this can be hard
 - The lower level parallelism may be hard to load balance, or have irregular (or runtime determined) communication patterns.
 - May be hard to work around design decisions in the original MPI version.

- It may, for practical reasons, be easier to exploit the additional level(s) of parallelism using OpenMP threads.
- Can take an incremental (e.g. loop by loop) approach to adding OpenMP
 - maybe not performance optimal, but keeps development cost/time to a minimum.
- Obviously OpenMP parallelism cannot extend beyond a single node, but this may be enough
 - future systems seem likely to have more cores per nodes, rather than many more nodes

Reducing load imbalance

- Load balancing between MPI processes can be hard
 - need to transfer both computational tasks and data from overloaded to underloaded processes
 - transferring small tasks may not be beneficial
 - having a global view of loads may not scale well
 - may need to restrict to transferring loads only between neighbours
- Load balancing between threads is much easier
 - only need to transfer tasks, not data
 - overheads are lower, so fine grained balancing is possible
 - easier to have a global view
- For applications with load balance problems, keeping the number of MPI processes small can be an advantage

Reducing communication costs

- It is natural to suppose that communicating data inside a node is faster between OpenMP threads than between MPI processes.
 - no copying into buffers, no library call overheads
- True, but there are lots of caveats – see later.
- This is rarely the bottleneck in MPI codes.
- In some cases, MPI codes actually communicate more data than is actually required
 - where actual data dependencies may be irregular and/or data-dependent
 - makes implementation easier

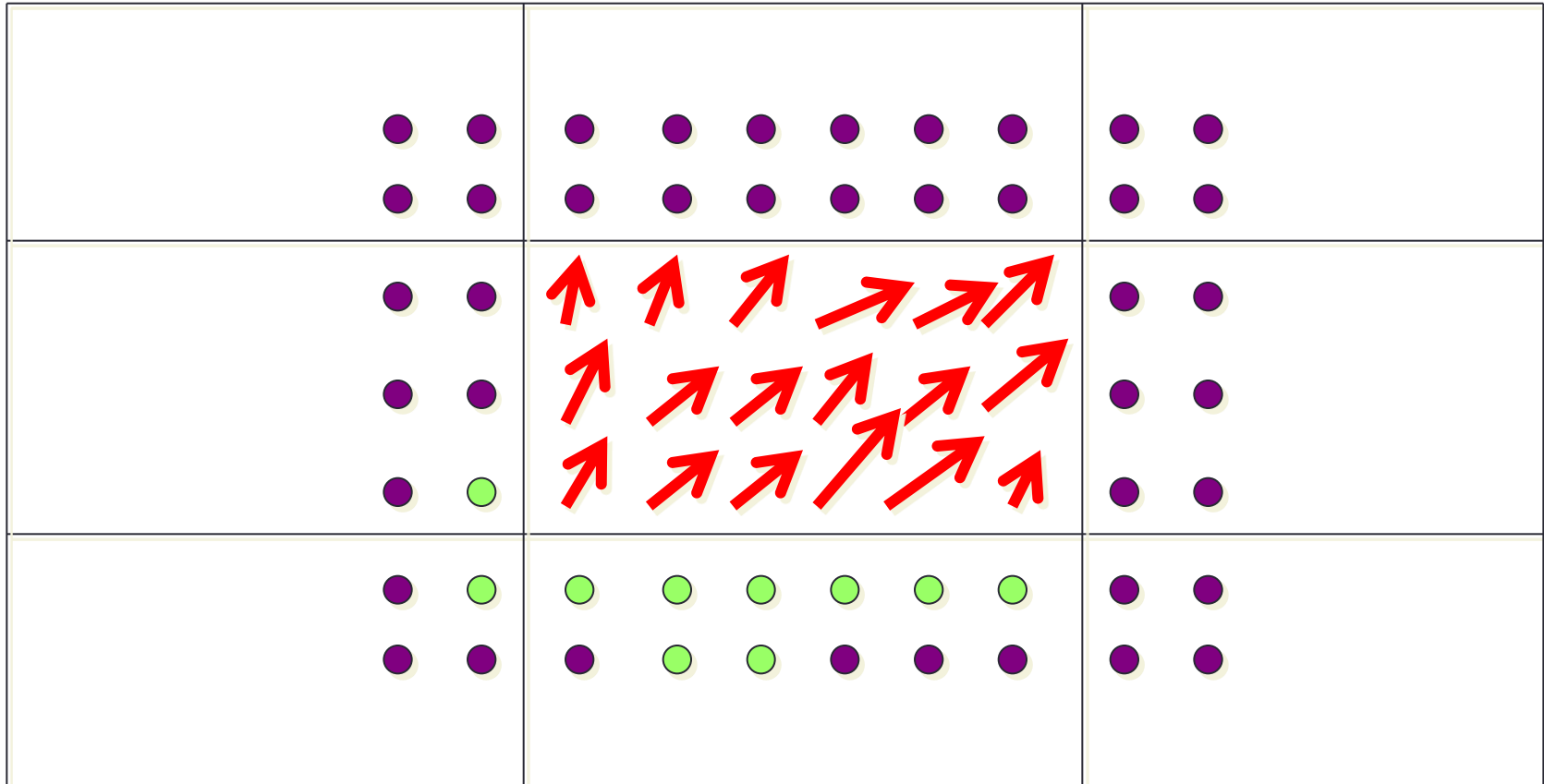
Collective communication

- In some circumstances, collective communications can be improved by using MPI + OpenMP
 - e.g. AllReduce, AlltoAll
- In principle, the MPI implementation ought to be well optimised for clustered architectures, but this isn't always the case.
 - hard to do for AlltoAllv, for example
- Can be cases where MPI + OpenMP transfers less data
 - e.g. AllReduce where every thread contributes to the sum, but only the master threads use the result

Example

- ECMWF IFS weather forecasting code
- Semi-Lagrangian advection: require data from neighbouring grid cells only in an upwind direction.
- MPI solution – communicate all the data to neighbouring processors that *could possibly* be needed.
- MPI + OpenMP solution – within a node, only read data from other threads' grid point if it is actually required
 - Significant reduction in communication costs
 - Significant reduction in memory usage

IFS example



Problems with MPI + OpenMP

- Development/maintenance costs
- Portability
- Libraries
- Performance pitfalls

Development / maintenance costs

- In most cases, development and maintenance will be harder than for a pure MPI code.
- OpenMP programming is easier than MPI (in general), but it's still parallel programming, and therefore hard!
 - application developers need yet another skill set
- OpenMP (as with all threaded programming) is subject to subtle race conditions and non-deterministic bugs
 - correctness testing can be hard

Portability

- Both OpenMP and MPI are themselves highly portable (but not perfect).
- Combined MPI/OpenMP is less so
 - main issue is thread safety of MPI
 - if maximum thread safety is assumed, portability will be reduced
- Desirable to make sure code functions correctly (maybe with conditional compilation) as stand-alone MPI code (and as stand-alone OpenMP code?)

Libraries

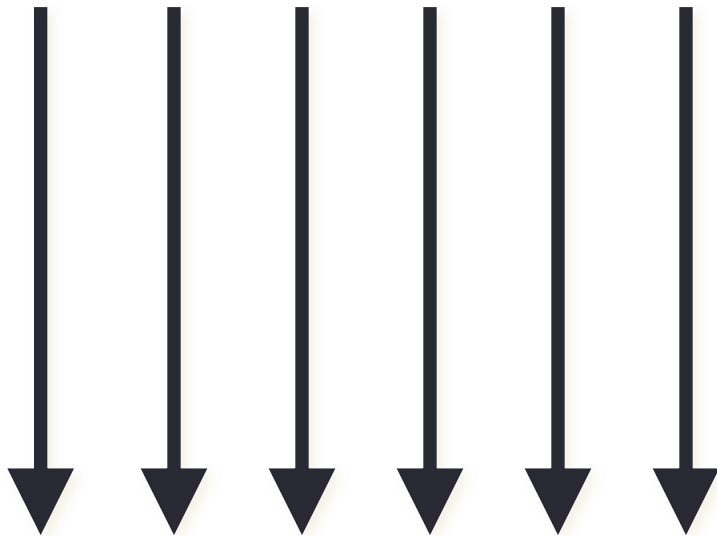
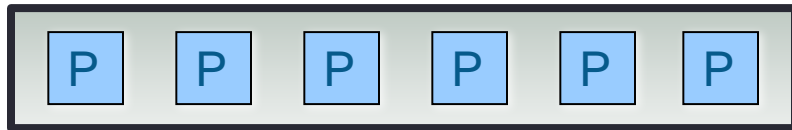
- If the pure MPI code uses a distributed-memory library, need to replace this with a hybrid version.
- If the pure MPI code uses a sequential library, need to replace this with either a threaded version called from the master thread, or a thread-safe version called inside parallel regions.
- If thread/hybrid library versions use something other than OpenMP threads internally, can get problems with oversubscription.
 - Both the application and the library may create threads that might not idle nicely when not being used

Performance pitfalls

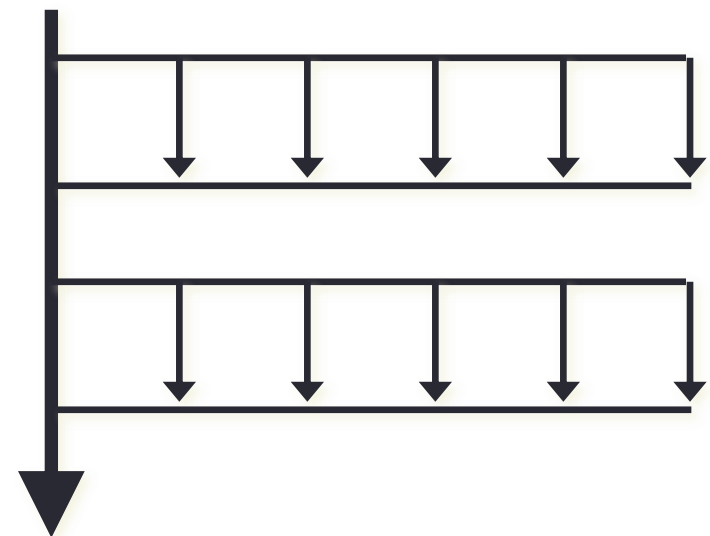
- Adding OpenMP may introduce additional overheads not present in the MPI code
 - e.g. synchronisation, false sharing, sequential sections, NUMA effects).
- Adding OpenMP introduces a tunable parameter – the number of threads per MPI process
 - optimal value depends on hardware, compiler, input data
 - hard to guess the right value without experiments
- Placement of MPI processes and their associated OpenMP threads within a node can have performance consequences.

- An incremental, loop by loop approach to OpenMP is easy to do, but it can be hard to get sufficient parallel coverage
 - just Amdahl's law applied inside the node

MPI



MPI + OpenMP



More pitfalls...

- Mixed implementation may require more synchronisation than pure OpenMP, if non-thread-safety of MPI is assumed.
- Implicit point-to-point synchronisation via messages may be replaced by (more expensive) barriers.
 - Loose thread to thread synchronisation is hard to do in OpenMP
- In the pure MPI code, the intra-node messages will often be naturally overlapped with inter-node messages
 - harder to overlap inter-thread comms with inter-node messages
- OpenMP codes can suffer from false sharing
 - cache-to-cache transfers caused by multiple threads accessing different words in the same cache block; MPI naturally avoids this.

NUMA effects

- Nodes which have multiple sockets are NUMA
 - each socket (CPU) has its own block of RAM.
- OS allocates virtual memory pages to physical memory
 - has to choose a socket for every page
- Common policy (default in Linux) is first touch – allocate on socket where the first read/write comes from
 - right thing for MPI
 - worst possible for OpenMP if data initialisation is not parallelised
 - all data goes onto one socket
- NUMA effects can limit the scalability of OpenMP
 - it may be advantageous to run one MPI process per NUMA domain, rather than one MPI process per node.

Process/thread placement

- On NUMA nodes need to make sure that:
 - MPI processes are spread out across sockets
 - OpenMP threads are on the same socket as their parent process
- Not all batch systems do a good job of this....
 - can be hard to fix this as a user
 - gets even more complicated if SMT (e.g. Hyperthreads) is used.

Styles of MPI + OpenMP programming

- Can identify 4 different styles of MPI + OpenMP programming, depending on when/how OpenMP threads are permitted to make MPI library calls
- Each has its advantages and disadvantages
- MPI has a threading interface which allow the programmer to request and query the level of thread support

The 4 styles

- Master-only
 - all MPI communication takes place in the sequential part of the OpenMP program (no MPI in parallel regions)
- Funneled
 - all MPI communication takes place through the same (master) thread
 - can be inside parallel regions
- Serialized
 - only one thread makes MPI calls at any one time
 - distinguish sending/receiving threads via MPI tags or communicators
 - be very careful about race conditions on send/recv buffers etc.
- Multiple
 - MPI communication simultaneously in more than one thread
 - some MPI implementations don't support this
 - ...and those which do mostly don't perform well

OpenMP Master-only

Fortran

```
!$OMP parallel
  work...
!$OMP end parallel

call MPI_Send(...)

!$OMP parallel
  work...
!$OMP end parallel
```

C

```
#pragma omp parallel
{
    work...
}

ierror=MPI_Send(...);

#pragma omp parallel
{
    work...
}
```

OpenMP Funneled

Fortran

```
!$OMP parallel
... work
!$OMP barrier
!$OMP master
    call MPI_Send(...)
!$OMP end master
!$OMP barrier
.. work
!$OMP end parallel
```

C

```
#pragma omp parallel
{
    ... work
    #pragma omp barrier
    #pragma omp master
    {
        ierror=MPI_Send(...);
    }
    #pragma omp barrier
    ... work
}
```

OpenMP Serialized

Fortran

```
!$OMP parallel
... work
!$OMP critical
  call MPI_Send(...)
!$OMP end critical
... work
!$OMP end parallel
```

C

```
#pragma omp parallel
{
  ... work
  #pragma omp critical
  {
    ierror=MPI_Send(...);
  }
  ... work
}
```

OpenMP Multiple

Fortran

```
!$OMP parallel  
... work  
call MPI_Send(...)  
... work  
!$OMP end parallel
```

C

```
#pragma omp parallel  
{  
    ... work  
    ierror=MPI_Send(...);  
    ... work  
}
```


Thread Safety

- Making MPI libraries thread-safe is difficult
 - lock access to data structures
 - multiple data structures: one per thread
 - ...
- Adds significant overheads
 - which may hamper standard (single-threaded) codes
- MPI defines various classes of thread usage
 - library can supply an appropriate implementation

MPI_Init_thread

- MPI_Init_thread works in a similar way to MPI_Init by initialising MPI on the main thread.
- It has two integer arguments:
 - Required ([in] Level of desired thread support)
 - Provided ([out] Level of provided thread support
- C syntax

```
int MPI_Init_thread(int *argc, char *((*argv) []), int  
    required, int *provided);
```

- Fortran syntax

```
MPI_INIT_THREAD(REQUIRED, PROVIDED, IERROR)  
    INTEGER REQUIRED, PROVIDED, IERROR
```

MPI_Init_thread

- MPI_THREAD_SINGLE
 - Only one thread will execute.
- MPI_THREAD_FUNNELED
 - The process may be multi-threaded, but only the main thread will make MPI calls (all MPI calls are funneled to the main thread).
- MPI_THREAD_SERIALIZED
 - The process may be multi-threaded, and multiple threads may make MPI calls, but only one at a time: MPI calls are not made concurrently from two distinct threads (all MPI calls are serialized).
- MPI_THREAD_MULTIPLE
 - Multiple threads may call MPI, with no restrictions.

MPI_Init_thread

- These integer values are monotonic; i.e.,
 - `MPI_THREAD_SINGLE` < `MPI_THREAD_FUNNELED` < `MPI_THREAD_SERIALIZED` < `MPI_THREAD_MULTIPLE`
- Note that these values do not strictly map on to the four MPI/OpenMP Mixed-mode styles as they are more general (i.e. deal with Posix threads where we don't have “parallel regions”, etc.)
 - e.g. no distinction here between Master-only and Funneled
 - see MPI standard for full details

MPI_Query_thread()

- MPI_Query_thread() returns the current level of thread support
 - Has one integer argument: provided [in] as defined for MPI_Init_thread()
- C syntax

```
int MPI_query_thread(int *provided);
```

- Fortran syntax

```
MPI_QUERY_THREAD (PROVIDED, IERROR)  
    INTEGER PROVIDED, IERROR
```

- Need to compare the output manually, i.e.

```
if (provided < requested) {  
    printf("Not a high enough level of thread support!\n");  
    MPI_Abort(MPI_COMM_WORLD,1)  
    ...etc.  
}
```

Master-only

- Advantages

- simple to write and maintain
- clear separation between outer (MPI) and inner (OpenMP) levels of parallelism
- no concerns about synchronising threads before/after sending messages

- Disadvantages

- threads other than the master are idle during MPI calls
- all communicated data passes through the cache where the master thread is executing.
- inter-process and inter-thread communication do not overlap.
- only way to synchronise threads before and after message transfers is by parallel regions which have a relatively high overhead.
- packing/unpacking of derived datatypes is sequential.

Example

```
!$omp parallel do
  DO I=1,N * nthreads
    A(I) = B(I) + C(I)
  END DO
```

Implicit barrier added here

```
CALL MPI_BSEND(A(N),1,.....)
CALL MPI_RECV(A(0),1,.....)
```

Intra-node messages overlapped with inter-node

```
!$omp parallel do
  DO I = 1,N * nthreads
    D(I) = A(I-1) + A(I)
  END DO
```

Inter-thread communication occurs here

Funneled

- Advantages

- relatively simple to write and maintain
- cheaper ways to synchronise threads before and after message transfers
- possible for other threads to compute while master is in an MPI call

- Disadvantages

- less clear separation between outer (MPI) and inner (OpenMP) levels of parallelism
- all communicated data still passes through the cache where the master thread is executing.
- inter-process and inter-thread communication still do not overlap.

OpenMP Funneled with overlapping (1)

```
#pragma omp parallel
{
    ... work
    #pragma omp barrier
    if (omp_get_thread_num() == 0) {
        ierror=MPI_Send(...);
    }
    else {
        do some computation
    }
    #pragma omp barrier
    ... work
}
```

Can't using
worksharing here!

OpenMP Funneled with overlapping (2)

```
#pragma omp parallel num_threads(2)
{
if (omp_get_thread_num() == 0) {
    ierror=MPI_Send(...);
}
else {
#pragma omp parallel
    {
        do some computation
    }
}
}
```

Higher overheads and
harder to synchronise
between teams

Serialised

- Advantages

- easier for other threads to compute while one is in an MPI call
- can arrange for threads to communicate only their “own” data (i.e. the data they read and write).

- Disadvantages

- getting harder to write/maintain
- more, smaller messages are sent, incurring additional latency overheads
- need to use tags or communicators to distinguish between messages from or to different threads in the same MPI process.

Distinguishing between threads

- By default, a call to MPI_Recv by any thread in an MPI process will match an incoming message from the sender.
- To distinguish between messages intended for different threads, we can use MPI tags
 - if tags are already in use for other purposes, this gets messy
- Alternatively, different threads can use different MPI communicators
 - OK for simple patterns, e.g. where thread N in one process only ever communicates with thread N in other processes
 - more complex patterns also get messy

Multiple

- Advantages

- Messages from different threads can (in theory) overlap
 - many MPI implementations serialise them internally.
- Natural for threads to communicate only their “own” data
- Fewer concerns about synchronising threads (responsibility passed to the MPI library)

- Disadvantages

- Hard to write/maintain
- Not all MPI implementations support this – loss of portability
- Most MPI implementations don’t perform well like this
 - Thread safety implemented crudely using global locks.

Summary

- Think carefully before embarking on a mixed MPI + OpenMP solution
 - why do you expect it to go faster?
- Remember Amdahl's law!
 - just because kernel goes faster doesn't mean your whole code will!
- Code design may make this easier
 - introducing OpenMP at a high level may be straightforward
 - incremental loop-by-loop parallelisation may be challenging
- Even given a good hybrid MPI + OpenMP solution, achieving optimal performance can require a huge amount of messy experimentation
 - often using system-specific flags and settings