

Static Analysis: Overview, Data-Flow

<http://d3s.mff.cuni.cz>

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Static analysis

- Purpose
 - Gather information about run-time behavior of programs without executing them
- Information
 - Does the variable x have a constant value?
 - Is the value of the variable x always positive?
 - May the pointer p be null at a code location?
 - What are possible values of the variable y ?

Static analysis: characteristics

- Target model of program behavior
 - some kind of **Control Flow Graph (CFG)**
- Provides **approximate** answers
 - Decision problems: yes / no / don't know
 - Collecting some values: superset / subset
- Information valid for all possible runs
- Summarizing different execution paths
 - branches of the `if-else` statement, loop iterations
- Does not know run-time values (inputs)

Comparison

Static analysis

control-flow graph

summarizes information
from different paths

approximation

scalability

Model checking

program state space

reasons about execution
paths independently

path-sensitivity

precision

Static analysis in practice

- Optimizing compilers
 - Detect superfluous evaluations of the same expression
 - Detect unused local variables or dead code fragments
- Program verification
 - Search for possible runtime errors
 - Example: null pointer dereference, unsynchronized access
 - Constructing abstraction for model checking
 - Slicing: identify statements irrelevant for a given property

Approximation



Q: What important restrictions there are?

Restrictions

- Approximation must be safe
 - That precisely means “imprecise on the safe side”
- Target domain: **optimizing compilers**
 - Under-approximation
 - Optimization performed on the basis of analysis results must not violate semantics of a given program
 - Example: constant propagation
 - Sound analysis identifies a program variable as a constant only when it is really certain (100%)

Restrictions

- Approximation must be safe
 - That precisely means “imprecise on the safe side”
- Target domain: **search for errors**
 - Over-approximation
 - Safe analysis reports all real errors and also some spurious errors (false positives)
 - Example: possible null dereferences
 - We want to know about all of them so we can add runtime checks (`if (v != null) ...`)

Basic concepts (theory and examples)



Running example

- Program

```
int factorial(int n) {  
    int r;  
    if (n == 0) r = 0;  
    int f = 1;  
    while (n > 0) {  
        f = f * n;  
        n = n - 1;  
        if (n == 0) r = f;  
    }  
    return r;  
}
```

- Static analysis: **possibly uninitialized variables**

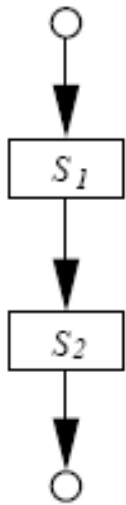
Control flow graph (CFG)

- Directed graph with labels
- Nodes: program points (statements)
- Edges: possible flow of control
 - $pred(n)$ and $succ(n)$ for each node n in a CFG
- Single point of entry
- Single point of exit

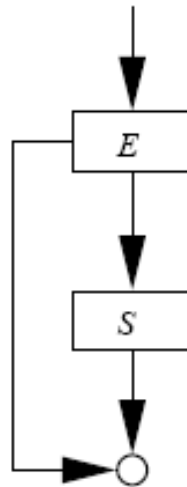
CFG: modeling control structures

sequence

$S_1; S_2$

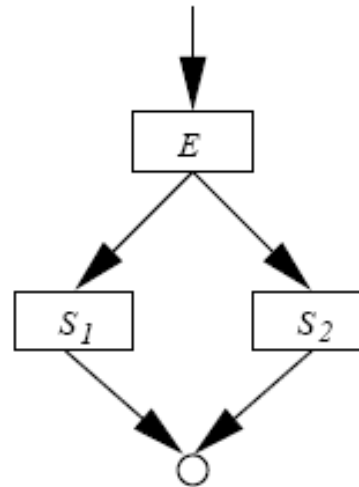


if (E) {S}

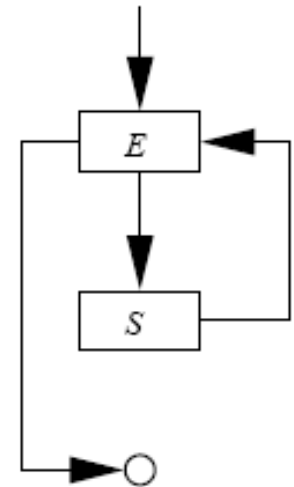


if (E) {S1}

else {S2}



while (E) {S}



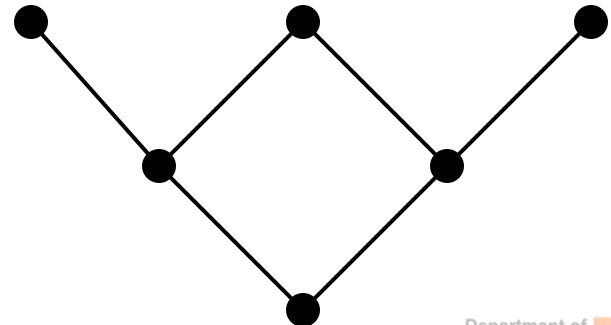
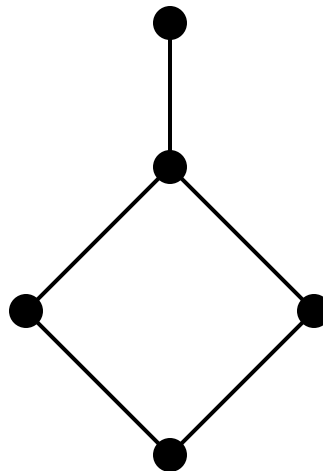
Analysis domain

- Set of possible values (facts)
- Finite lattice over the set

Partial order

- Mathematical structure $L = (S, \sqsubseteq)$
 - S is a set of values (e.g., analysis facts)
 - \sqsubseteq is a binary relation (e.g., is-subset)
 - Reflexivity: $\forall x \in S : x \sqsubseteq x$
 - Transitivity: $\forall x, y, z \in S : x \sqsubseteq y \wedge y \sqsubseteq z \Rightarrow x \sqsubseteq z$
 - Anti-symmetry: $\forall x, y \in S : x \sqsubseteq y \wedge y \sqsubseteq x \Rightarrow x = y$

- Examples



Bounds

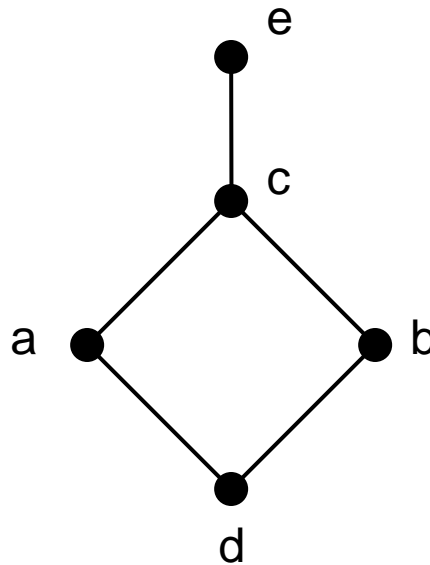
Lets have a partial order $L = (S, \sqsubseteq)$ and $X \subseteq S$

- Upper bound
 - $y \in S$ is an upper bound for X , i.e. $X \sqsubseteq y$, if $\forall x \in X : x \sqsubseteq y$
- Lower bound
 - $y \in S$ is a lower bound for X , i.e. $y \sqsubseteq X$, if $\forall x \in X : y \sqsubseteq x$
- Least upper bound of X , denoted as $\sqcup X$
 - $X \sqsubseteq \sqcup X \wedge \forall y \in S : X \sqsubseteq y \Rightarrow \sqcup X \sqsubseteq y$
- Greatest lower bound of X , denoted as $\sqcap X$
 - $\sqcap X \sqsubseteq X \wedge \forall y \in S : y \sqsubseteq X \Rightarrow y \sqsubseteq \sqcap X$

Bounds: example 1

Lets have a partial order $L = (S, \sqsubseteq)$ and the set $S = \{a, b, c, d, e\}$

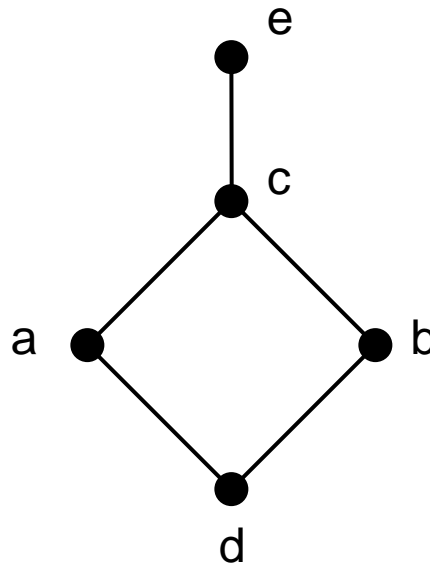
The upper bounds of $X = \{a, b\}$ are the elements $\{c, e\}$



Bounds: example 2

Lets have a partial order $L = (S, \sqsubseteq)$ and the set $S = \{a, b, c, d, e\}$

The greatest lower bound of $X = \{b, e\}$ is the element b



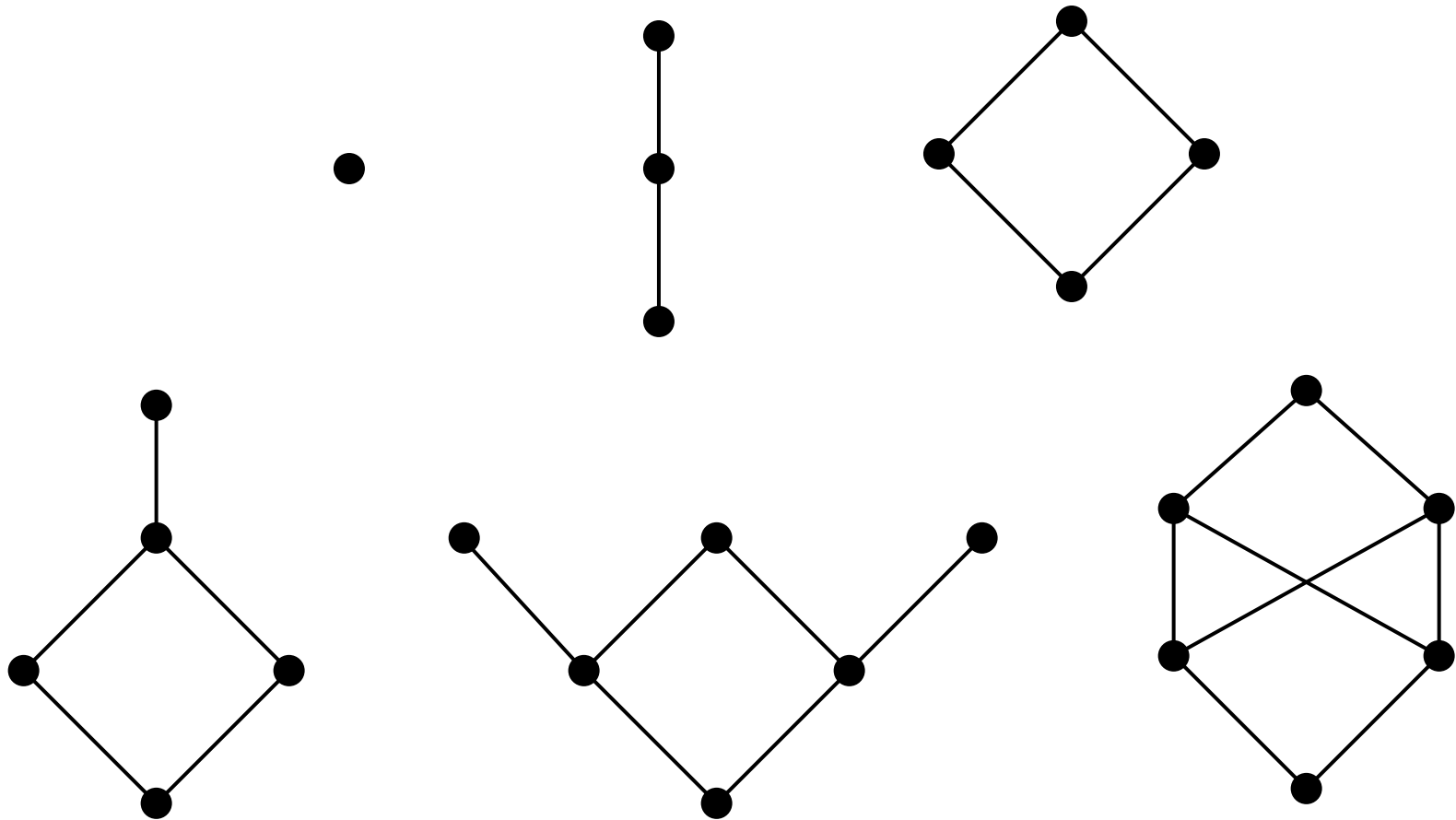
Lattice

- Partial order $L = (S, \sqsubseteq)$ such that
 - $\sqcup X$ and $\sqcap X$ exist for $\forall X \subseteq S$
 - Unique greatest element $\top = \sqcup S = \sqcap \emptyset$
 - Unique least element $\perp = \sqcap S = \sqcup \emptyset$
- Height of a lattice
 - Length of the longest path from \perp to \top

Finite lattice

- Partial order $L = (S, \sqsubseteq)$ such that
 - $\forall x, y \in S$ there is
 - Least upper bound $x \sqcup y$
 - Greatest lower bound $x \sqcap y$

Lattice: examples



Using finite lattices in static analysis

- Lattice $L = (S, \sqsubseteq)$
 - Set S of analysis facts (units of information)
 - Relation \sqsubseteq defines an ordering with respect to precision of the abstraction
 - $x \sqsubseteq y \Rightarrow x$ is more precise than y
 - $x \sqsubseteq y \Rightarrow y$ approximates x
 - Example
 - Sign abstraction: $x = \{ \text{POS} \}, y = \{ \text{POS}, \text{ZERO} \}$

How to construct lattices

- Finite set R induces a lattice $(2^R, \sqsubseteq)$

- $\perp = \sqcup \emptyset$

- No information available

- $\top = R$

- Any possible value

- $x \sqcup y = x \cup y$

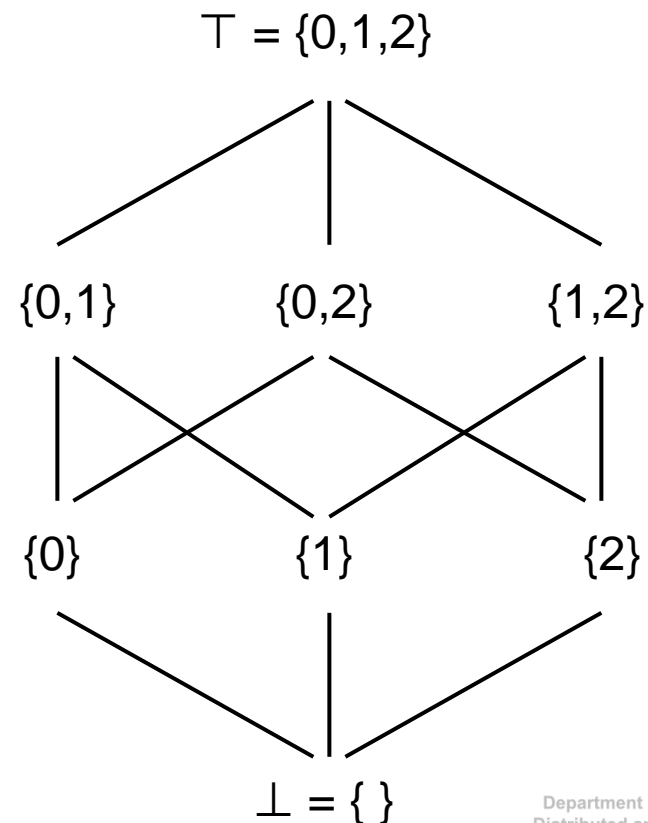
- $x \sqcap y = x \cap y$

- Height $|R|$

- Example

- Set $R = \{0, 1, 2\}$

- Height = 3



Running example

- Program

```
int factorial(int n) {  
    int r;  
    if (n == 0) r = 0;  
    int f = 1;  
    while (n > 0) {  
        f = f * n;  
        n = n - 1;  
        if (n == 0) r = f;  
    }  
    return r;  
}
```

- Static analysis: possibly uninitialized variables

Encoding program statements

- Data for each node in the CFG
 - IN: valid before the program statement
 - OUT: valid after the program statement
- Merge operator \sqcup
 - CFG nodes with multiple predecessors
 - Typical approach: union or intersection
- Transfer functions

Transfer functions

- For each node in CFG (statement), we must define a transfer function

$$\text{OUT} = (\text{IN} \setminus \text{kill}) \cup \text{gen}$$

- Examples
 - Statement `int r;`
 $\text{kill} = \{\}, \text{gen} = \{ r \}$
 - Statement `r = f;`
 $\text{kill} = \{ r \}, \text{gen} = \{\}$

Monotone functions

- Function $f : S \rightarrow S$ is **monotone** if
 - $\forall x, y \in S : x \sqsubseteq y \Rightarrow f(x) \sqsubseteq f(y)$
- Examples
 - Constant functions
 - **Operators \sqcap and \sqcup**
 - Their compositions

Computing static analysis

- Input
 - Control flow graph of the given program
 - Initial value for each CFG node (\perp or \emptyset)
 - Value is the set of known analysis facts (information)
 - Merge operator defined as the set union
 - Transfer functions F_i for each node in CFG
- Approach: **compute fixed points**
 - Information associated with the CFG nodes

Duality

(S, \sqsubseteq) is a lattice $\Leftrightarrow (S, \sqsupseteq)$ is a lattice

$$\bigsqcup_{(S, \sqsubseteq)} = \bigsqcap_{(S, \sqsupseteq)}$$

$$\top_{(S, \sqsubseteq)} = \perp_{(S, \sqsupseteq)}$$

$$\bigsqcap_{(S, \sqsubseteq)} = \bigsqcup_{(S, \sqsupseteq)}$$

$$\perp_{(S, \sqsubseteq)} = \top_{(S, \sqsupseteq)}$$

- We focus just on \sqsubseteq and initial values \perp

Computing fixed points

- Motto: *“walk up the lattice starting at \perp , until you reach a fixed point”*
 - In the worst case, \top is the fixed point (if exists)
- Three algorithms
 - Naive (brute force)
 - Chaotic iteration
 - **Worklist algorithm**

Worklist algorithm

```
 $u_1 = \perp; \dots, u_n = \perp;$   
 $q = [1, \dots, n];$   
while ( $q \neq []$ ) {  
     $i = \text{head}(q);$   
     $v_{\text{IN}} = \text{merge}(\text{pred}(i));$   
     $v_{\text{OUT}} = F_i(v_{\text{IN}});$   
     $q = \text{tail}(q);$   
    if ( $v_{\text{OUT}} \neq u_i$ ) {  
        append( $q, \text{succ}(i)$ );  
         $u_i = v_{\text{OUT}};$   
    }  
}
```

Classification



Static analysis categories

- Data-flow analysis
- Call graph construction
- Pointer analysis (aliasing)
- Escape analysis (threads)
- Side effect analysis

Data-flow analysis

- Available expressions
- Reaching definitions
- Live variables (values)

Available expressions

```
var x, y, a, b;  
y = a - b;  
while (y < a + b) {  
    a = a - 1;  
    x = a + b;  
}
```



```
var x, y, a, b, t;  
y = a - b;  
t = a + b;  
while (y < t) {  
    a = a - 1;  
    t = a + b;  
    x = t;  
}
```

Direction

- Forward analysis
 - Computes information about the past behavior
 - Starts at the entry node (CFG) and goes forward
- Backward analysis
 - Computes information about the future behavior
 - Starts at the exit CFG node and moves backwards

Approximation level



- May analysis
 - Computes information that **may be true** (over-approximation)
 - Information for P that is true at least for one path coming into P
 - Merge operator: set union
- Must analysis
 - Computes information that **must be true** (under-approximation)
 - Information for P that is true for all execution paths coming into P
 - Merge operator: set intersection

Flow sensitivity

- Flow-sensitive analysis
 - Considers the program's control flow (CFG) and the order of individual statements
 - Example: available expressions
- Flow-insensitive analysis
 - Program seen as an unordered collection of statements
 - Results are valid for any order of program statements
 - $S1 ; S2$ versus $S2 ; S1$
 - Example: type analysis (inference)

Scope

- Intra-procedural
 - Every single **procedure analyzed separately**
 - Maximally pessimistic assumptions about side effects of procedure calls
- Inter-procedural
 - **Whole program analyzed together**
 - Sometimes without libraries (huge)

Context sensitivity

- Context-sensitive analysis
 - Call site: source code location for the call
 - Call stack: procedure calls and returns
 - Receiver objects for method calls (“this”)
 - Analysis results for the method M depend on the specific caller of M
- Context-insensitive analysis
 - Same analysis results for every call site of M

Tools

- WALA
 - Java, JavaScript, JVM (bytecode)
 - <http://wala.sourceforge.net/>
- Soot
 - Java, JVM-based languages (bytecode)
 - <http://sable.github.io/soot/>
- CIL
 - Only for programs written in C
 - <http://www.cs.berkeley.edu/~necula/cil/>
 - <https://github.com/cil-project/cil>
- LLVM
 - C, C++, Objective-C
 - Clang static analyzer
 - <http://llvm.org/>

Further reading

- M. Schwartzbach. **Lecture Notes on Static Analysis**. Department of CS, Aarhus University
- F. Nielson, H. R. Nielson, and Chris Hankin. **Principles of Program Analysis**. Springer, 2005