

# Static and dynamic analysis: synergy and duality

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# Goals

## Theme:

- Static and dynamic analyses are more similar than many people believe
- One person's view of their relationship

## Goals:

- Encourage blending of the techniques and communities
- Start productive discussions

# Outline

Review of static and dynamic analysis

Synergy: combining static and dynamic analysis

- Aggregation
- Analogies
- Hybrids

Duality: subsets of behavior

Conclusion

# Static analysis

Examples: compiler optimizations, program verifiers

Examine program text (no execution)

Build a model of program state

- An abstraction of the run-time state

Reason over possible behaviors

- E.g., “run” the program over the abstract state

# Abstract interpretation

Typically implemented via dataflow analysis

Each program statement's *transfer function* indicates how it transforms state

Example: What is the transfer function for

**$y = x++;$**

?

# Selecting an abstract domain

$\langle x \text{ is odd}; y \text{ is odd} \rangle$

$y = x++;$

$\langle x \text{ is even}; y \text{ is odd} \rangle$

$\langle x \text{ is prime}; y \text{ is prime} \rangle$

$y = x++;$

$\langle x \text{ is anything}; y \text{ is prime} \rangle$

$\langle x = \{ 3, 5, 7 \}; y = \{ 9, 11, 13 \} \rangle$

$y = x++;$

$\langle x = \{ 4, 6, 8 \}; y = \{ 3, 5, 7 \} \rangle$

$\langle x=3, y=11 \rangle, \langle x=5, y=9 \rangle, \langle x=7, y=13 \rangle$

$y = x++;$

$\langle x=4, y=3 \rangle, \langle x=6, y=5 \rangle, \langle x=8, y=7 \rangle$

$\langle x_n = f(a_{n-1}, \dots, z_{n-1}); y_n = f(a_{n-1}, \dots, z_{n-1}) \rangle$

$y = x++;$

$\langle x_{n+1} = x_n + 1; y_{n+1} = x_n \rangle$

# Research challenge: Choose good abstractions

The abstraction determines the expense (in time and space)

The abstraction determines the accuracy (what information is lost)

- Less accurate results are poor for applications that require precision
- Cannot conclude all true properties in the grammar

# Static analysis recap

- Slow to analyze large models of state, so use abstraction
- Conservative: account for abstracted-away state
- Sound: (weak) properties are guaranteed to be true
  - \*Some static analyses are not sound



# Dynamic analysis

Examples: profiling, testing

Execute program (over some inputs)

- The compiler provides the semantics

Observe executions

- Requires instrumentation infrastructure

Must choose what to measure, and what test runs

# Research challenge: What to measure?

Coverage or frequency

- Statements, branches, paths, procedure calls, types, method dispatch

Values computed

- Parameters, array indices

Run time, memory usage

Test oracle results

Similarities among runs [Podgurski 99, Reps 97]

Like abstraction, determines what is reported

# Research challenge: Choose good tests

The test suite determines the expense (in time and space)

The test suite determines the accuracy (what executions are never seen)

- Less accurate results are poor for applications that require correctness
- Many domains do not require correctness!

\*What information is being collected also matters

# Dynamic analysis recap

- Can be as fast as execution (over a test suite, and allowing for data collection)
  - Example: aliasing
- Precise: no abstraction or approximation
- Unsound: results may not generalize to future executions
  - Describes execution environment or test suite

# Static analysis

Abstract domain  
slow if precise

Conservative

due to abstraction

**Sound**

due to conservatism

# Dynamic analysis

Concrete execution  
slow if exhaustive

**Precise**

no approximation

Unsound

does not generalize

# Outline

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⇒ Synergy: combining static and dynamic analysis

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# Combining static and dynamic analysis

1. Aggregation:  
Pre- or post-processing
2. Inspiring analogous analyses:  
Same problem, different domain
3. Hybrid analyses:  
Blend both approaches

# 1. Aggregation: Pre- or post-processing

Use output of one analysis as input to another

Dynamic then static

- Profile-directed compilation: unroll loops, inline, reorder dispatch, ...
- Verify properties observed at run time

Static then dynamic

- Reduce instrumentation requirements
  - Efficient branch/path profiling
  - Discharge obligations statically (type/array checks)
- Type checking (e.g., Java, including generics)
- Indicate suspicious code to test more thoroughly



## 2. Analogous analyses: Same problem, different domain

Any analysis problem can be solved in either domain

- Type safety: no memory corruption or operations on wrong types of values
  - Static type-checking
  - Dynamic type-checking
- Slicing: what computations could affect a value
  - Static: reachability over dependence graph
  - Dynamic: tracing

# Memory checking

Goal: find array bound violations, uses of uninit. memory

Purify [Hastings 92]: run-time instrumentation

- Tagged memory: 2 bits (allocated, initialized) per byte
- Each instruction checks/updates the tags
  - Allocate: set “A” bit, clear “I” bit
  - Write: require “A” bit, set “I” bit
  - Read: require “I” bit
  - Deallocate: clear “A” bit

LCLint [Evans 96]: compile-time dataflow analysis

- Abstract state contains allocated and initialized bits
- Each transfer function checks/updates the state

Identical analyses!

Another example: atomicity checking [Flanagan 2003]

# Specifications

- Specification checking
  - Statically: theorem-proving
  - Dynamically: **assert** statement
- Specification generation
  - Statically: by hand or abstract interpretation [Cousot 77]
  - Dynamically: by invariant detection [Ernst 99], reporting unfalsified properties

# Your analogous analyses here

Look for gaps with no analogous analyses!

Try using the same analysis

- But be open to completely different approaches

There is still low-hanging fruit to be harvested

# 3. Hybrid analyses: Blending static and dynamic

Combine static and dynamic analyses

- Not mere aggregation, but a new analysis
- Disciplined trade-off between precision and soundness: find the sweet spot between them

# Possible starting points

Analyses that trade off run-time and precision

- Different abstractions (at different program points)
- Switch between static and dynamic at analysis time

Ignore some available information

- Examine only some paths [Evans 94, Detlefs 98, Bush 00]

Merge based on observation that both examine only a subset of executions (next section of talk)

- Problem: optimistic vs. pessimistic treatment

More examples: (bounded) model checking, security analyses, delta debugging [Zeller 99], etc.

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Precise

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**Unsound**

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# Sound dynamic analysis

Observe every possible execution!

Problem: infinite number of executions

Solution: test case selection and generation

- Efficiency tweaks to an algorithm that works perfectly in theory but exhausts resources in practice

# Precise static analysis

Reason over full program state!

Problem: infinite number of executions

Solution: data or execution abstraction

- Efficiency tweaks to an algorithm that works perfectly in theory [Cousot 77] but exhausts resources in practice

# Dynamic analysis focuses on a subset of executions

The executions in the test suite

- Easy to enumerate
- Characterizes program use

Typically optimistic for other executions

# Static analysis focuses on a subset of data structures

More precise for data or control described by the abstraction

- Concise logical description
- Typically conservative elsewhere (safety net)

Example: *k*-limiting [Jones 81]

- Represents each object reachable by  $\leq k$  pointers
- Groups together (approximates) more distant objects

# Dual views of subsets

Execution and data subsets are views on the same space

Every execution subset corresponds to a data subset

- Executions induce data structures and control flow

Every data subset corresponds to an execution subset

- A set of objects represents the executions that generate them

Subset description may be concise in one domain but complex in the other

- What if the test suite was generated from a specification?

Any analysis may be conservative over other behaviors

# Differences between the approaches

Static and dynamic analysis communities work with different subsets

- Each subset and characterization is better for certain uses

What subsets have a concise description in both domains?

- Augment a test suite to fill out the data structures that it creates, making the data structure description a smaller logical formula

# A hybrid view of subsets

Bring together static and dynamic analysis by unifying their subset descriptions

- Find subsets with small descriptions with respect to both data structures and executions
- Find a new, smaller description

Advantages of this approach

- Directly compare previous disparate analyses
- Directly apply analyses to other domain
- Switch between the approaches
- Obtain insight in order to devise and optimize analyses

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# Potential pitfalls

## Analogies between analyses

- What applications tolerate unsoundness/imprecision?
- Any more low-hanging fruit?
- Most static and dynamic approaches differ

## Hybrid analyses

- How to measure and trade off precision and soundness
  - What is “partial soundness”? What is in between?
- Not all static analyses are abstract interpretation
- Optimistic vs. pessimistic treatment of unseen executions

## Subset characterization

- Find the unified characterization of behavior

# Conclusion

Static and dynamic analysis share many similarities

- Communities should be closer

Create analogous analyses

- Many successes so far

Hybrid approach holds great promise

- Analyses increasingly look like points in this continuum
- Unified theory of subsets of executions/data is key

(Our) future work: explore this space