Static and dynamic analysis: synergy and duality

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Lecture 2
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

\[ \langle x = \{3, 5, 7\}; y = \{9, 11, 13\} \rangle \]
\[ y = x++; \]
\[ \langle x = \{4, 6, 8\}; y = \{3, 5, 7\} \rangle \]

\[ \langle x=3, y=11 \rangle, \langle x=5, y=9 \rangle, \langle x=7, y=13 \rangle \]
\[ y = x++; \]
\[ \langle x=4, y=3 \rangle, \langle x=6, y=5 \rangle, \langle x=8, y=7 \rangle \]

\[ \langle x_n = f(a_{n-1}, \ldots, z_{n-1}); y_n = f(a_{n-1}, \ldots, z_{n-1}) \rangle \]
\[ y = x++; \]
\[ \langle x_{n+1} = x_n + 1; y_{n+1} = x_n \rangle \]
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: testing, profiling

Execute program (over some inputs)
  • The compiler provides the semantics

Observe executions
  • Requires instrumentation infrastructure

2 research challenges:
  • what to measure
  • what test runs
Research challenge: What to measure?

Test oracle results

Coverage or frequency
  - Statements, branches, paths, procedure calls, types, method dispatch

Values computed
  - Parameters, array indices

Run time, memory usage

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

*Use both!*
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: \texttt{assert} statement

• Specification generation
  • Statically: by hand or abstract interpretation [Cousot 77]
  • Dynamically: by invariant detection [Ernst 99], reporting unfalsified properties
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
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