S2E: A Platform for In-Vivo Multi-Path Analysis of Software Systems

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Abstract

This paper presents S^{2}E, a platform for analyzing the properties and behavior of software systems. We demonstrate S^{2}E's use in developing practical tools for comprehensive performance profiling, reverse engineering of proprietary software, and bug finding for both kernel-mode and user-mode binaries. Building these tools on top of S^{2}E took less than 770 LOC and 40 person-hours each.

S^{2}E's novelty consists of its ability to scale to large real systems, such as a full Windows stack. S^{2}E is based on two new ideas: *selective symbolic execution*, a way to automatically minimize the amount of code that has to be executed symbolically given a target analysis, and relaxed *execution consistency models*, a way to make principled performance/precision trade-offs in complex analyses. These techniques give S^{2}E three key abilities: to simultaneously analyze entire families of execution paths, instead of just one execution at a time; to perform the analyses in-vivo within a real software stack—user programs, libraries, kernel, drivers, etc.—instead of using abstract models of these layers; and to operate directly on binaries, thus being able to analyze even proprietary software.

Conceptually, S^{2}E is an automated path explorer with modular path analyzers: the explorer drives the target system down all execution paths of interest, while analyzers check properties of each such path (e.g., to look for bugs) or simply collect information (e.g., count page faults). Desired paths can be specified in multiple ways, and one can either combine existing analyzers to build a custom analysis tool, or write new analyzers using the S^{2}E API.

Categories and Subject Descriptors D.2.4 [*Software/Program Verification*]

General Terms Reliability, Verification, Performance, Security

1. Introduction

System developers routinely need to analyze the behavior of what they build. One basic analysis is to *understand observed behavior*, such as why a given web server is slow on a SPECweb benchmark. More sophisticated analyses aim to *characterize future behavior* in previously unseen circumstances, such as what will a web server's maximum latency and minimum throughput be, once deployed at a customer site. Ideally, system designers would also like to be able to do quick *what-if analyses*, such as determining whether aligning a certain data structure on a page boundary will avoid all cache misses and thus increase performance. For small programs, experienced developers can often reason through some of these questions based on code alone. The goal of our work is to make it feasible to answer such questions for large, complex, real systems.

We introduce in this paper a platform that enables easy construction of analysis tools (like oprofile, valgrind, bug finders, reverse engineering tools) while simultaneously offering the following three properties: (1) efficiently analyze entire families of execution paths; (2) maximize realism by running the analyses within a real software stack; and (3) ability to handle binaries. We explain these properties below.

First, predictive analyses often must reason about entire *families of paths* through the target system, not just one path. For example, security analyses must check that there exist no corner cases that could violate a desired security policy; recent work has employed model checking [28] and symbolic execution [11] to find bugs in real systems—these are all multi-path analyses. One of our case studies demonstrates multi-path analysis of performance properties: instead of profiling solely one execution path, we derive performance envelopes that characterize the performance of entire families of paths. Such analyses can check real-time requirements (e.g., that an interrupt handler will never exceed a given bound on execution time), or can help with capacity planning (e.g., determine how many web servers to provision for a web farm). In the end, properties shown to hold for *all* paths constitute proofs, which are in essence the ultimate prediction of a system's behavior.

Second, an accurate estimate of program behavior often requires taking into account the *whole environment* surrounding the analyzed program: libraries, kernel, drivers, even CPU architecture—in other words, it requires in-vivo[1] analysis. Even small programs interact with their environment (e.g., to read/write files or send/receive network packets), so understanding program behavior requires understanding the nature of these interactions. Some tool execute the real environment, but allow calls from different execution paths to interfere inconsistently with each other [12, 18]. Most approaches abstract away the environment behind a model [2, 11], but writing abstract models is labor-intensive (taking in some cases multiple person-years [2]), they are rarely 100% accurate, and they

ASPLOS'11, March 5–11, 2011, Newport Beach, California, USA.

[1] *In vivo* is Latin for "within the living" and refers to experimenting using a whole live system; *in vitro* uses a synthetic or partial system. In life sciences, in vivo testing—animal testing or clinical trials—is often preferred, because, when organisms or tissues are disrupted (as in the case of in vitro settings), results can be substantially less representative. Analogously, in-vivo program analysis captures all interactions of the analyzed code with its surrounding system, not just with a simplified abstraction of that system.

tend to lose accuracy as the modeled system evolves. It is therefore preferable that analyzed programs interact directly with their real environment in a way that is consistent with multi-path analysis.

Third, real systems are made up of many components from various vendors; access to all corresponding source code is rarely feasible and, even when source code is available, building the code exactly as in the shipped software product is difficult [5]. Thus, in order to be practical, analyses ought to operate *directly on binaries*.

Scalability is the key challenge of performing analyses that are in-vivo, multi-path, and operate on binaries. Going from single-path analysis to multi-path analysis turns a linear problem into an exponential one, because the number of paths through a program increases exponentially in the number of branches—the "path explosion" problem [7]. It is therefore not feasible today to execute fully symbolically an entire software stack (programs, libraries, OS kernel, drivers, etc.) as would be necessary if we wanted consistent in-vivo multi-path analysis.

We describe in this paper S^{2}E, a general platform for developing multi-path in-vivo analysis tools that are practical even for large, complex systems, such as an entire Windows software stack. First, S^{2}E simultaneously exercises entire families of execution paths in a scalable manner by using *selective* symbolic execution and *relaxed* execution consistency models. Second, S^{2}E employs virtualization to perform the desired analyses in vivo; this removes the need for the stubs or abstract models required by most state-of-the-art symbolic execution engines and model checkers [3, 11, 18, 28, 35]. Third, S^{2}E uses dynamic binary translation to directly interpret x86 machine code, so it can analyze a wide range of software, including proprietary systems, even if self-modifying or JITed, as well as obfuscated and packed binaries.

The S^{2}E platform offers an automated path exploration mechanism and modular path analyzers. The explorer drives in parallel the target system down all execution paths of interest, while analyzers check properties of each such path (e.g., to look for bugs) or simply collect information (e.g., count page faults). An analysis tool built on top of S^{2}E glues together path selectors with path analyzers. *Selectors* guide S^{2}E's path explorer by specifying the paths of interest: all paths that touch a specific memory object, paths influenced by a specific parameter, paths inside a target code module, etc. *Analyzers* can be pieced together from S^{2}E-provided analyzers, or can be written from scratch using the S^{2}E API.

S^{2}E comes with ready-made selectors and analyzers that provide a wide range of analyses out-of-the-box. The typical S^{2}E user only needs to define in a configuration file the desired selector(s) and analyzer(s) along with the corresponding parameters, start up the desired software stack inside the S^{2}E virtual machine, and run the S^{2}E launcher in the guest OS, which starts the desired application and communicates with the S^{2}E VM underneath. For example, one may want to verify the code that handles license keys in a proprietary program, such as Adobe Photoshop. The user installs the program in the S^{2}E Windows VM and launches the program using *s2e.exe C:\Program Files\Adobe\Photoshop*. From inside the guest OS, the *s2e.exe* launcher communicates with S^{2}E via custom opcodes (described in §4). In the S^{2}E configuration file, the tester may choose a memory checker analyzer along with a path selector that returns a symbolic string whenever Photoshop reads *HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Photoshop\LicenseKey* from the Windows registry. S^{2}E then automatically explores the code paths in Photoshop that are influenced by the value of the license key and looks for memory safety errors along those paths.

Developing a new analysis tool with S^{2}E takes on the order of 20-40 person-hours and a few hundred LOC. To illustrate S^{2}E's generality, we present here three very different tools built using S^{2}E: a multi-path in-vivo performance profiler, a reverse engineering tool, and a tool for automatically testing proprietary software.

This paper makes the following four contributions:

- ***Selective symbolic execution***, a new technique for automatic bidirectional symbolic–concrete state conversion that enables execution to seamlessly and correctly weave back and forth between symbolic and concrete mode;
- ***Execution consistency models***, a systematic way to reason about the trade-offs involved in the approximation of paths in analyses that employ mixed concrete/symbolic execution;
- A ***general platform*** for performing diverse in-vivo multi-path analyses in a way that scales to large real systems;
- The first use of ***symbolic execution in performance analysis***.

In the rest of the paper, we describe selective symbolic execution (§2), present the execution consistency models (§3), the use of S^{2}E for developing analysis tools (§4), the S^{2}E prototype (§5), evaluation (§6), related work (§7), and conclusions (§8).

2. Selective Symbolic Execution

In devising a way to efficiently exercise entire families of paths, we were inspired by the successful use of symbolic execution [21] in automated software testing [11, 18]. The idea is to treat a program as a superposition of possible execution paths. For example, a program that is all linear code except for one conditional statement *if* $(x > 0)$ *then ... else ...* can be viewed as a superposition of two possible paths: one for $x > 0$ and another one for $x \leq 0$. To exercise all paths, it is not necessary to try all possible values of x, but rather just one value greater than 0 and one value less than 0.

We unfurl this superposition of paths into a *symbolic execution tree*, in which each possible execution corresponds to a path from the root of the tree to a leaf corresponding to a terminal state. The mechanics of doing so consist of marking variables as symbolic at the beginning of the program, i.e., instead of allowing a variable x to take on a concrete value 5, it is viewed as a superposition λ of all possible values x could take. Then, any time a branch instruction conditioned on predicate p depends (directly or indirectly) on x, execution is split into two executions E_i and E_k, two copies of the program's state are created, and E_i's path remembers that the variables involved in p must be constrained to make p true, while E_j's path remembers that p must be false.

The process repeats recursively: E_i may further split into E_{i_i} and E_{i_k}, and so on. Every execution of a branch statement creates a new set of children, and thus what would normally be a linear execution (if concrete values were used) now turns into a tree of executions (since symbolic values are used). A node s in the tree represents a program state (a set of variables with formulae constraining the variables' values), and an edge $s_i \rightarrow s_j$ indicates that s_j is s_i's successor on any path satisfying the constraints in s_j. Paths in the tree can be pursued simultaneously, as the tree unfurls; since program state is copied, the paths can be explored independently. Copy-on-write is used to make this process efficient.

S^{2}E is based on the key observation that often *only some* families of paths are of interest. For example, one may want to exhaustively explore all paths through a small program, but not care about all paths through the libraries it uses or the OS kernel. This means that, when entering that program, S^{2}E should split executions to explore the various paths, but whenever it calls into some other part of the system, such as a library, multi-path execution can cease and execution can revert to single-path. Then, when execution returns to the program, multi-path execution must be resumed.

Multi-path execution corresponds to *expanding* a family of paths by exploring the various side branches as they appear; switching to single-path mode is like *corseting* the family of paths. When multi-path exploration is on, the tree grows in width and depth;

when off, the tree only grows in depth. It is for this reason that we think of S^{2}E's multi-path exploration as being *elastic*. S^{2}E turns multi-path off whenever possible, to trim the execution tree so as to only include paths that are of interest for the target analysis.

S^{2}E's elasticity of multi-path exploration is key in being able to perform in-vivo multi-path exploration of programs inside complex systems, like Windows. By combining elasticity with virtualization, S^{2}E offers the illusion of symbolically executing a full software stack, while actually executing symbolically only select components. In particular, by concretely (i.e., non-symbolically) executing libraries and the OS kernel, S^{2}E allows a program's paths to be explored efficiently without having to model its surrounding environment. We refer to this as *selective symbolic execution*.

Interleaving of symbolic execution phases with concrete phases must be done carefully, to preserve the meaningfulness of the explored execution. For example, say we wish to analyze a program P in multi-path (symbolic) mode, but none of its libraries L_i are to be explored symbolically. If P has a symbolic variable n and calls `strncpy(dst,src,n)` in L_k, S^{2}E must convert n to some concrete value and invoke `strncpy` with that value. This is straightforward: solve the current path constraints with a constraint solver and get some legal value for n (say n=5) and call `strncpy`. But what happens to n after `strncpy` returns? Variable *dst* will contain n=5 bytes, whereas n prior to the call was symbolic—can n still be treated symbolically? The answer is yes, if done carefully.

In S^{2}E, when a symbolic value is converted to concrete ($n : \lambda \rightarrow 5$), the family of executions is corseted. When a concrete value is converted to symbolic ($n : 5 \rightarrow \lambda$), the execution family is allowed to expand. The process of doing this back and forth is governed by the rules of an execution consistency model (§3). For the above example, one might require that n be constrained to value 5 in all executions following the return from `strncpy`. However, doing so may exclude a large number of paths from the analysis. In §3, we describe systematic and safe relaxations of execution consistency.

We now describe the mechanics of switching back and forth between multi-path (symbolic) and single-path (concrete) execution in a way that execution stays consistent. We know of no symbolic execution engine that has the machinery for efficiently and flexibly crossing the symbolic/concrete boundary both back and forth.

Fig. 1 provides a simplified example of using S^{2}E: an application *app* uses a library *lib* on top of an OS *kernel*. The target analysis requires to symbolically execute *lib*, but not *app* or *kernel*. Function *appFn* in the application calls a library function *libFn*, which eventually invokes a system call *sysFn*. Once *sysFn* returns, *libFn* does some further processing and returns to *appFn*. When execution crosses into the symbolic domain (shaded) from the concrete domain (white), the execution tree (right side of Fig. 1) expands. When execution returns to the concrete domain, the execution tree is corseted and does not add any new paths, until execution returns to the symbolic domain. Some paths may terminate earlier than others (e.g., due to a crash or a successful return) and not split further.

We now describe the two directions in which execution can cross the concrete/symbolic boundary.

2.1 Concrete → Symbolic Transition

When *appFn* calls *libFn*, it does so by using concrete arguments; the simplest conversion is to use an S^{2}E selector to change the concrete arguments into symbolic ones, e.g., instead of *libFn(10)* call *libFn(λ)*. One can additionally opt to constrain λ, e.g., $\lambda \leq 15$.

Once this transition occurs, S^{2}E executes *libFn* symbolically using the (potentially constrained) argument(s) and simultaneously executes *libFn* with the original concrete argument(s) as well. Once exploration of *libFn* completes, S^{2}E returns to *appFn* the concrete return value resulting from the concrete execution, but *libFn* will have been explored symbolically as well. In this way, the execution

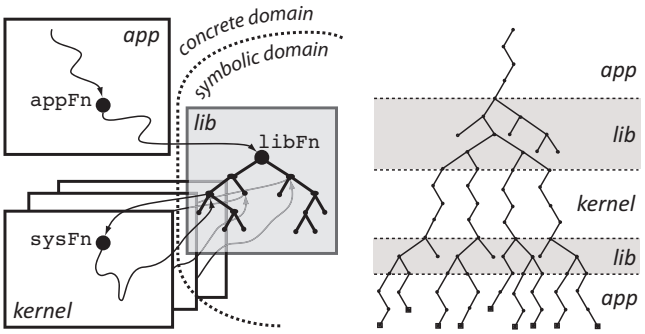


Figure 1: Multi-path/single-path execution: three different modules (left) and the resulting execution tree (right). Shaded areas represent the multi-path (symbolic) execution domain, while the white areas are single-path.

of *app* is consistent, while at the same time S^{2}E exposes to the analyzer plugins those paths in *lib* that are rooted at *libFn*. The concrete domain is unaware of *libFn* being executed in multi-path mode. All paths execute independently, and it is up to the S^{2}E analyzer plugins to decide whether, besides observing the concrete path, to also look at the symbolic paths.

2.2 Symbolic → Concrete Transition

Dealing with the *libFn→sysFn* call is more complicated. Say *libFn* has the code shown in Fig. 2, and was called with an unconstrained symbolic value $x \in (-\infty, +\infty)$. At the first *if* branch instruction, execution forks into one path along which $x \in (-\infty, 5)$ and another path where $x \in [5, +\infty)$. These are referred to as *path constraints*, as they constrain the values that x can take on that path. Along the then-branch, a call to *sysFn(x)* must be made. This requires x to be concretized, since *sysFn* is in the concrete domain. Thus, S^{2}E chooses a value, say $x = 4$, that is consistent with the $x \in (-\infty, 5)$ constraint and performs the *sysFn(4)* call.

```
int  M=...;
void libFn(int x) {
  if (x<5) {
    buf=sysFn(x);
    if (x<0)
      M=M/2;
  }
}
```

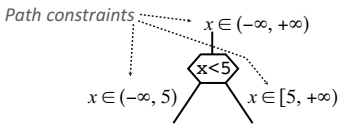


Figure 2: The *libFn* function makes a system call *sysFn*.

Note that S^{2}E actually employs *lazy concretization*: it converts the value of x from symbolic to concrete on-demand, only when the concretely running code *branches* on x. This is an important optimization when doing in-vivo symbolic execution, because much data can be carried through the layers of the software stack without conversion. For example, when a program writes a buffer of symbolic data to the filesystem, there are usually no branches in the kernel or the disk device driver that depend on this data, so the buffer can pass through unconcretized and be written in symbolic form to the virtual disk, from where it will eventually be read back in its symbolic form. For the sake of clarity, we will assume in the remainder of this section eager (non-lazy) concretization.

Once *sysFn* completes, execution returns to *libFn* in the symbolic domain, and the path constraints must be updated to reflect that now $x = 4$. This is not only because x has been concretized, but also because *sysFn*'s return value is correct only under this constraint (i.e., all computation in *sysFn* was done assuming $x = 4$). Furthermore, *sysFn* may also have had side effects that are equally intimately tied to the $x = 4$ constraint. With this constraint, execution of *libFn* can continue, and correctness is fully preserved.

The problem, however, is that this constraint corsets the family of *future* paths that can be explored from this point on: x can no longer take all values in $(-\infty, 5)$ so, if subsequently there is a branch of the form *if* $(x < 0)$ ..., the then-branch will no longer be feasible due to the added $x = 4$ constraint. This is referred to as "overconstraining": the constraint is not introduced by features of *libFn*'s code, but rather as a result of concretizing x to call into the concrete domain. We think of $x = 4$ as a soft constraint imposed by the symbolic/concrete boundary, while $x \in (-\infty, 5)$ is a hard constraint imposed by *libFn*'s code. Whenever a branch in the symbolic domain is disabled because of a soft constraint, it is possible to go back in the execution tree and pick another value for the soft constraint that would enable that branch. As will be explained later, S^{2}E can track branch conditions in the concrete domain, which helps redo the call in a way that re-enables subsequent branches.

The "overconstraining" problem has two components: (a) the loss of paths that results directly from the concretization of x, and (b) the loss of paths that results indirectly via the constrained return value and side effects. Due to the fact that S^{2}E implements VM state in a way that is shared between the concrete and symbolic domain (more details in §5), return values and side effects can be treated using identical mechanisms. We now discuss how the constraints are handled under different consistency models.

3. Execution Consistency Models

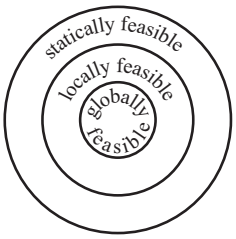
The traditional assumption about system execution is that the state at any point in time is consistent, i.e., there exists a feasible path from the start state to the current state. However, there are many analyses for which this assumption is unnecessarily strong, and the cost of providing such consistency during multi-path exploration is often prohibitively high. E.g., when doing unit testing, one typically exercises the unit in ways that are consistent with the unit's interface, without regard to whether all those paths are indeed feasible in the integrated system. This is both because testing the entire system in a way that exercises all paths through the unit is too expensive, and because exercising the unit as described above offers higher confidence in its correctness in the face of future use.

S^{2}E aims to be a general platform for system analyses, so it provides several levels of execution consistency, to enable users to make the right trade-offs. In this section, we take a first step toward systematically defining alternate execution consistency models (§3.1), after which we explain how these different models dictate the conversions applied upon transition between the analyzed unit and environment (§3.2). In §3.3 we survey some of the ways in which consistency models are implemented in other analysis tools.

3.1 Model Definitions

The key distinction between execution consistency models is which execution paths are admissible under that model. Choosing an appropriate consistency model is a trade-off between how "realistic" the admitted paths are vs. the cost of enforcing the required model. The appropriateness of the trade-off is determined by the nature of the analysis, i.e., by how the feasibility of different paths affects completeness and soundness of the analysis.

In this section we use the term *system* to denote the complete software system under analysis, including the application programs, libraries, and the operating system. We use the term *unit* to denote the part of the system that is to be analyzed. A unit could encompass different parts of multiple programs, libraries, or even parts the operating system itself. We use the term *environment* to denote everything in the system except the unit. Informally, the system is the union of the environment and the target unit of interest.



When defining a model, we think in terms of which paths it included vs. excludes. Following the circle diagram on the right, an execution path can be *statically feasible*, in the sense that there exists a path in the control flow graph (CFG) corresponding to the execution in question. A subset of the statically feasible paths are *locally feasible* in the unit, in the sense that the execution is consistent with both the CFG and with the restrictions on control flow imposed by the data-related constraints within the unit. Finally, a subset of locally feasible paths is *globally feasible*, in the sense that their execution is additionally consistent with control flow restrictions imposed by data-related constraints in the environment. Observing only the code executing in the unit, with no knowledge of code in the environment, it is impossible to tell apart locally feasible from globally feasible paths.

We say that a model is *complete* if every path through the unit, that corresponds to some globally feasible path through the system, will eventually be discovered by exploration done under that model. A model is *consistent* if, for every path through the unit admissible by the model, there exists a corresponding globally-feasible path through the system (i.e., the system can run concretely that way).

We now define several points that we consider of particular interest in the space of possible consistency models, progressing from strongest to weakest consistency. They are summarized in Fig. 3 using a "feasibility circles" representation. Their completeness and consistency are summarized in Table 1. We invite the reader to follow Fig. 3 while reading this section.

Model	Consistency	Completeness	Use Case
SC-CE	consistent	incomplete	Single-path profiling/testing of units having a limited number of paths
SC-UE	consistent	incomplete	Analysis of units that generate hard-to-solve constraints (e.g., cryptography)
SC-SE	consistent	complete	Sound and complete verification without false positives/negatives, testing of tightly-coupled systems with fuzzy unit boundaries.
LC	locally consistent	incomplete	Testing and profiling while avoiding false positives in the unit
RC-OC	inconsistent	complete	Reverse engineering: extract consistent path segments
RC-CC	inconsistent	complete	Quick traversal of the CFG for dynamic disassembly of a binary

Table 1: S^{2}E consistency models: completeness, consistency and use cases. Each use case is assigned to the weakest model it can be accomplished with.

3.1.1 Strict Consistency (SC)

The strongest form of consistency is one that admits only the globally consistent paths. For example, the concrete execution of a program always obeys the strict consistency (SC) model. Moreover, every path admitted under the SC model can be mapped to a certain concrete execution of the system starting with certain concrete inputs. Sound analyses produce no false positives under SC.

We define three subcategories of SC based on what information is taken into account when exploring new paths.

Strictly-Consistent Concrete Execution (SC-CE) Under the SC-CE model, the entire system is treated as a black box: no internal information is used to explore new paths. The only explored paths are the paths that the system follows when executed with the sample input provided by the analysis. New paths can only be explored by blindly guessing new inputs. Classic fuzzing (random input testing) falls under this model.

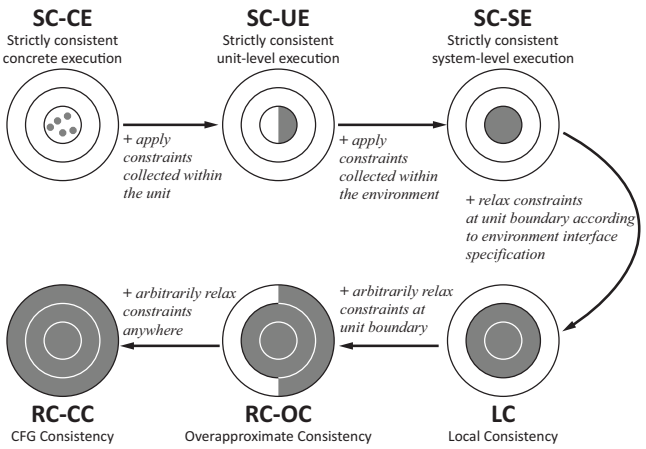


Figure 3: Different execution consistency models cover different sets of feasible paths. The SC-CE model corresponds to the concrete execution. The SC-UE and SC-SE models are obtained from the previous ones by using increasingly more information about the system execution to explore new states. The LC, RC-OC and RC-CC models are obtained through progressive relaxation of constraints.

Strictly-Consistent Unit-level Execution (SC-UE) Under the SC-UE model, an exploration engine is allowed to gather and use information internal to the unit (e.g., by collecting path constraints while executing the unit). The environment is still treated as a black box, i.e., path constraints generated by environment code are not tracked. Not every globally feasible path can be found with such partial information (e.g., paths that are enabled by branches in the environment can be missed). However, the exploration engine saves time by not having to analyze the environment, which is typically orders of magnitude larger than the unit.

This model is widely used by symbolic and concolic execution tools [11, 12, 18]. Such tools usually instrument only the program but not the operating system code (sometimes such tools replace parts of the OS by models, effectively adding a simplified version of it as a part of the program). Whenever such tools see a call to the OS, they execute the call uninstrumented, selecting some concrete arguments for the call. Such "blind" selection of concrete arguments might cause some paths through the unit to be missed (e.g., paths that are enabled only be specific values of the arguments).

Strictly-Consistent System-level Execution (SC-SE) Under the SC-SE model, an exploration engine gathers and uses information about all parts of the system, to explore new paths through the unit. Such exploration is not only sound but also complete, provided that the engine can solve all constraints it encounters. In other words, every path through the unit that is possible under a concrete execution of the system will be eventually found by SC-SE exploration, making SC-SE the only model that is both strict and complete.

However, the implementation of SC-SE is limited by the path explosion problem: the number of globally feasible paths is roughly exponential in the size of the whole system. As the environment is typically orders of magnitude larger than the unit, including its code in the analysis offers an unfavorable trade-off given today's technology.

3.1.2 Local Consistency (LC)

The local consistency (LC) model aims to combine the performance advantages of the SC-UE model with the completeness advantages of the SC-SE model. The idea behind LC is to replace the results of executing selected parts of the environment with symbolic values that represent any possible valid result of the execution.

For example, when a program calls the `write(fd, buf, count)` function of a POSIX OS, the function can return any integer value between -1 and `count`, depending on the state of the system. The exploration engine can discard the actual value returned by the system and treat it as a symbolic integer between -1 and `count`. This allows exploring all paths through the program, enabled by different return values of the `write` function, without having to find concrete inputs to the overall system that would enable those paths. This however introduces global inconsistency into the system, because in no concrete execution is it possible, for instance, that `count` bytes be written to the file yet the `write` function return 0. However, unless the program explicitly checks the file (e.g., by reading its content), this inconsistency can never lead to any locally infeasible paths.

More precisely, the LC model allows the exploration engine to introduce inconsistencies into the environment, while keeping the state of the unit internally consistent. However, the exploration engine must track the propagation of the inconsistencies inside the environment and abort a path as soon as these inconsistencies influence the internal state of the unit on that path.

This keeps the internal state of the unit internally consistent on all explored paths: for each explored path, there exists some concrete execution of the system that would lead to exactly the same internal state of the unit along that path—except the engine does not need to incur the cost of actually finding that path. Consequently, any sound analysis that takes into account only the internal state of the unit produces no false positives under the LC model. For this reason, we call the LC model "locally consistent".

The set of paths explored by such a strategy corresponds to the set of locally feasible paths, as defined earlier. However, some paths could be aborted before completion, or even be missed completely, due to the propagation of inconsistency. This means that the LC model is not complete. In practice, the less coupled the unit is to the environment, the fewer paths are aborted or missed.

Technically speaking, the LC model is inconsistent, thus it ought to be a sub-model of the RC model, described next. However, since the LC model is equivalent to a SC model for a large class of analyses, we devoted to it an independent category.

3.1.3 Relaxed Consistency (RC)

Admitting locally infeasible paths in the analysis (or, equivalently, allowing the internal state of the unit to be inconsistent) makes most analyses prone to false positives because some of the paths they operate on are globally infeasible. This might be acceptable if the analysis is itself unsound anyway, or if the analysis only relies on a subset of the state that could be kept consistent (similar to the LC model, but here the subset of the state can be different from the state of the unit).

We loosely define relaxed consistency (RC) to admit every path through the program, even those that are not allowed by the SC and LC models. The RC model is therefore inconsistent by definition.

In theory, as the RC model enables more paths, it should slow down the exploration. This can be mitigated, however, by decreasing the precision of the analysis. Another possibility is to limit the impact of this problem by enabling only certain infeasible paths and aborting these paths early on. These infeasible paths allow the engine to effectively bypass large parts of the system that would otherwise be difficult to analyze, letting the engine to reach specific code of interest much faster.

We distinguish two subcategories of the RC model that we found useful in practice.

Overapproximate Consistency (RC-OC) In the RC-OC model, the exploration engine is allowed to ignore both the values produced by selected parts of the environment and the constraints that are always imposed on these values by the environment. Whenever the

unit invokes these parts, the engine discards the actual return values and treats them as being completely arbitrary, even if this breaks the API contracts between the environment and the unit. Being strictly weaker than the SC-SE model, though using the same information to explore new paths, the RC-OC model is complete, but obviously not consistent.

The RC-OC model is useful, for example, for reverse engineering. It explores and allows to reverse engineer all the behaviors of the unit that are possible under a valid environment, plus some extra behaviors that are possible only when the environment behaves unexpectedly. For instance, if reverse engineering a device driver, the RC-OC model allows the hardware to return symbolic values; in this way, the resulting reverse engineered paths include some of those that correspond to allegedly impossible hardware behaviors. This makes the reverse engineering only more precise as it also reverse engineers the reactions of the original code to the unexpected behavior of the environment [13].

CFG Consistency (RC-CC) In the RC-CC model, the exploration engine is allowed to change any part of the system state as long as the explored paths remain feasible in the control flow graph of the unit. This roughly corresponds to the consistency provided by static program analyzers that are dataflow-insensitive and analyze completely unconstrained paths. Being strictly weaker than the SC-SE model, though using the same information to explore new paths, the RC-CC model is complete.

The RC-CC model is useful for disassembly of obfuscated and/or encrypted code: the engine can let the code decrypt itself while running in LC mode, in order to ensure the correctness of decryption. Then, the engine switches to the RC-CC model to reach high coverage of the decrypted code and disassemble as much of it as possible.

3.2 Implementing Consistency Models

We now explain how the consistency models can be implemented by a selective symbolic execution engine (SSE), namely the specifics of symbolic $\leftrightarrow$ concrete conversion as execution goes from the unit to the environment and then back again.

We illustrate the different implementations with the case of a kernel-mode device driver (Fig. 4). The driver reads and writes from/to hardware I/O ports and calls the `write_usb` function, which is implemented in a kernel-mode USB library, as well as `alloc`, implemented by the kernel itself.

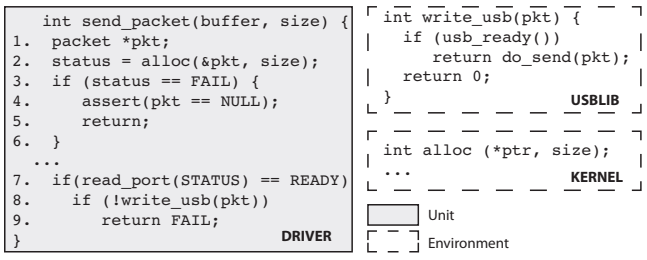


Figure 4: Example of a "unit" (device driver) interacting with the "environment" (kernel-mode library and OS kernel itself).

3.2.1 Implementing Strict Consistency (SC)

Strictly-Consistent Concrete Execution (SC-CE) For this model, an SSE allows only concrete input to enter the system. This leads to executing a single path through the unit and the environment. The SSE can execute the whole system natively without having to track or solve any constraints, because there is no symbolic data.

Strictly-Consistent Unit-level Execution (SC-UE) To implement this model, the SSE converts all symbolic data to concrete values when the unit calls the environment. The conversion is consistent with the current set of path constraints. No other conversion is performed. The environment is treated as a black box, and no symbolic data can flow into it.

In the example of Fig. 4, the SSE concretizes the content of packet `pkt` when calling `write_usb` and, from there on, this soft constraint (see §2.2) is treated as a hard constraint on the content of `pkt`. The resulting paths trough the driver are globally feasible paths, but exploration is not complete, because treating the constraint as hard can curtail globally feasible paths during the exploration of the driver (e.g., paths that depend on the packet type).

Strictly-Consistent System-level Execution (SC-SE) Under SC-SE, the SSE lets symbolic data cross the unit/environment boundary. As a result, the entire system is executed symbolically, while preserving global execution consistency.

Consider the `write_usb` function: This function gets its input from the USB host controller. Under strict consistency, the USB host controller (being "outside the system") can return a symbolic value, which in turn propagates through the USB library, eventually causing `usb_ready` to return a symbolic value as well.

State explosion caused by large environments can make SC-SE hard to use in practice. The paths that go through the environment can outnumber those that go through the unit of interest, possibly delaying useful exploration. An SSE can heuristically prioritize the paths to explore, or employ *incremental symbolic execution*, which executes parts of the environment as much as necessary to discover interesting paths in the unit quicker. We describe this next.

The execution of `write_usb` proceeds as if it was executed symbolically, but only one globally feasible path is pursued in a depth-first manner, while all other the forked paths are stored in a wait list. This simulates a concrete, single-path execution through a symbolically executing environment. After returning to `send_packet`, the path being executed carries the constraints that were accumulated in the environment, and symbolic execution continues in `send_packet` as if `write_usb` had executed symbolically. The return value x of `write_usb` is constrained according to the depth-first path pursued in the USB library, and so are the side effects. If, while executing `send_packet`, a branch that depends on x becomes infeasible due to the constraints imposed by the call to `write_usb`, the SSE returns to the wait list and resumes execution of a wait-listed path that, e.g., is likely to eventually execute line 9.

3.2.2 Implementing Local Consistency (LC)

In this model, an SSE converts concrete values generated at interface boundaries inside the environment to properly-constrained symbolic data that conforms to the interface specifications. To satisfy the definition of LC, the SSE tracks the propagation of the converted data through the system, to detect violations of LC. For this, the SSE monitors the execution of each path and signals a violation whenever any converted data is read again by the system.

For the driver in Fig. 4, SSE turns the concrete `alloc`'s return value v into a symbolic value s constrained to equal v or to equal `FAIL`. The SSE also constrains `pkt` to be null in case v is `FAIL`, to respect the OS API contract.

For the driver, the global state can be inconsistent, since the driver explores a failure path when no failure occurred. However, this inconsistency has no effect on the execution, as long as the OS does not make assumptions about whether or not buffers are still allocated after the driver's failure. LC would have been violated had the OS read the symbolic value of `pkt`, e.g., if the driver stored it in an OS-specific structure.

3.2.3 Implementing Relaxed Consistency (RC)

Overapproximate Consistency (RC-OC) In this model, the SSE converts concrete values at interface boundaries to unconstrained symbolic values, regardless of the interface contract. E.g., when returning from `alloc`, both `pkt` and `status` are marked symbolic.

This model brings completeness at the expense of substantial overapproximation. No feasible paths are ever excluded from the symbolic execution of `send_packet`, but since `pkt` and `status` are completely unconstrained, there could be many locally infeasible paths when exploring `send_packet` after the call to `alloc`.

For example, the `assert` on line 4 would fail, which is normally impossible, because `alloc` is guaranteed to set `pkt` to null whenever it returns `FAIL`. The assertion failure occurs because `status` is unconstrained on line 3, enabling the execution of line 4. On line 4, `pkt` is also unconstrained, which triggers the exploration of both outcomes of the `assert` statement. Under stronger consistency models, `pkt` must be null if `status==FAIL` holds.

CFG Consistency (RC-CC) Finally, SSE can implement RC-CC by further allowing the unconstraining of branch conditions. This enables an SSE to follow all the edges of the unit's control flow graph. This is useful in the case of a dynamic disassembler: running with stronger consistency models may leave uncovered (i.e., non-disassembled) code. Instead, RC-CC forces the disassembly of the missing code. Implementing RC-CC requires program-specific knowledge to avoid exploring non-existing edges, as in the case of an indirect jump pointing to an unconstrained memory location.

3.3 Consistency Models in Existing Tools

We illustrate now the consistency models by surveying some existing tools that implement similar levels of consistency.

Most dynamic analysis tools use the SC-CE model. Examples include Valgrind [37], PIN [26], and Eraser [32]. These tools execute and analyze programs along a single path, generated by user-specified concrete input values. Being significantly faster than multi-path exploration, analyses performed by such tools are, for instance, useful to characterize or explain program behavior on a small set of developer-specified paths (i.e., test cases). However, such tools cannot provide any confidence that results of the analyses extend beyond the concretely explored paths.

Dynamic test case generation tools usually employ either the SC-UE or the SC-SE models. For example, DART [18] uses the SC-UE model. It executes the program concretely (starting with random inputs) but instruments the code to collect path constraints on each execution. DART uses these constraints to produce new concrete inputs that would drive the program along a different path on the next run. However, DART does not instrument the environment and hence cannot use information from it when generating new concrete inputs, thus missing feasible paths as indicated by SC-UE.

As another example, KLEE [11] uses either the SC-SE or a form of the SC-UE model, depending on whether the environment is modeled or not. In the former case, both the unit and the model of the environment are executed symbolically. In the latter case, whenever the unit calls the environment, KLEE executes the environment with concrete arguments. However, KLEE does not track the side effects of the environment, allowing them to propagate across otherwise independent execution paths, thus making the corresponding program states inconsistent. Because of this limitation, the implementation of the SC-UE model in KLEE is not exact.

Static analysis tools usually implement some forms of the RC model. For example, SDV [2] converts a program into a boolean form, which is an over-approximation of the original program. Consequently, every path that is feasible in the original program would be found by SDV, but it also finds additional infeasible paths.

4. System Analysis with S^{2}E

S^{2}E is a platform for rapid prototyping of custom system analyses. It offers two key interfaces: the *selection* interface, used to guide the exploration of execution paths (and thus implement arbitrary consistency models), and the *analysis* interface, used to collect events or check properties of execution paths. Both interfaces accept modular selection and analysis plugins. Underneath the covers, S^{2}E consists of a customized virtual machine, a dynamic binary translator (DBT), and an embedded symbolic execution engine, as shown in Fig. 5. The DBT decides which guest machine instructions to execute natively on the physical CPU vs. which ones to execute symbolically using the embedded symbolic execution engine.

S^{2}E provides many plugins out of the box for building custom analysis tools—we describe these plugins in §4.1. One can also extend S^{2}E with new plugins, using S^{2}E's developer API (§4.2).

4.1 User Interface

Path Selection: The first step in using S^{2}E is deciding on a policy for which part of a program to execute in multi-path (symbolic) mode vs. single-path (concrete) mode; this policy is encoded in a selector. S^{2}E provides a default set of selectors for the most common types of selection. They fall into three categories:

Data-based selection provides a way to expand an execution path into a multi-path execution by introducing symbolic values into the system—any time S^{2}E encounters a branch predicate involving a symbolic value, it will fork the execution. Symbolic data can enter the program from various sources, and S^{2}E provides a selector for each: *CommandLine* for symbolic command-line arguments, *Environment* for environment variables, *MSWinRegistry* for Microsoft Windows-specific registry entries, etc.

Often it is useful to introduce a symbolic value at an internal interface. For example, say a server program calls a library function `libFn`(x) almost always with $x = 10$, but may call it with $x < 10$ in strange corner cases that are hard to induce via external workloads. The developer might therefore be interested in exploring the behavior of `libFn` for all values $0 \leq x \leq 10$. For such analyses, we provide an *Annotation* plugin, which allows direct injection of custom-constrained symbolic values anywhere they are needed.

Code-based selection enables/disables multi-path execution depending on whether the program counter is or not within a target code area; e.g., one might focus cache profiling on a web browser's SSL code, to see if it is vulnerable to side channel attacks. The *CodeSelector* plugin takes the name of the target program, library, driver, etc. and a list of program counter ranges. Each such range can be an inclusion or an exclusion range, indicating that code within that range should be explored in multi-path mode or single-path mode, respectively. *CodeSelector* is typically used in conjunction with data-based selectors to constrain the data-selected multi-path execution to within only code of interest.

Priority-based selection is used to define the order in which paths are explored within the family of paths defined with data-based and code-based selectors. S^{2}E includes some obvious choices, such as *Random*, *DepthFirst*, and *BreadthFirst*. The *MaxCoverage* selector works in conjunction with coverage analyzers to heuristically select paths that maximize coverage. The *PathKiller* selector monitors the executed program and deletes paths that are determined to no longer be of interest to the analysis. For example, paths can be killed if a fixed sequence of program counters repeats more than n times; this avoids getting stuck in polling loops.

Path Analysis: Once the selectors define a family of paths, S^{2}E executes these paths and exposes each one of them to the analyzer plugins. One class of analyzers are bug finders, such as *DataRaceDetector* and *MemoryChecker*, which look for the corresponding bug conditions and output an executable execution trace

onInstrTranslation	DBT is about to translate a machine instruction
onInstrExecution	VM is about to execute an instruction
onExecutionFork	S^{2}E is about to fork execution
onException	The VM interrupt pin has been asserted
onMemoryAccess	VM is about to execute a memory access

Table 2: Core events exported by the S^{2}E platform.

multiPathOn/Off()	turn on/off multi-path execution
readMem(*addr*)	read contents of memory at address *addr*
writeReg(*reg, val*)	write *val* (symbolic or concrete) to *reg*
getCurTransBlock()	currently executing code block from DBT
raiseInterrupt(*irq*)	assert the interrupt line for *irq*

Table 3: Subset of the *ExecState* object's interface.

every time they encounter a bug. Another type of analyzer is *ExecutionTracer*, which selectively records the instructions executed along a path, along with the memory accesses, register values, and hardware I/O. It can be used to measure coverage with offline tools. Finally, the *PerformanceProfile* analyzer counts cache misses, TLB misses, and page faults incurred along each path—this can be used to obtain a performance envelope of an application, and we describe it in more detail in the evaluation section (§6).

While most plugins are OS-agnostic, S^{2}E comes with a set of analyzers that expose Windows-specific events using undocumented interfaces or other hacks. For example, the *WinDriverMon* analyzer parses OS-private data structures and notifies other plugins when the Windows kernel loads a driver. The *WinBugCheck* plugin catches "blue screen of death" events and kernel hangs.

4.2 Developer Interface

We now describe the interface that can be used to write new plugins or to extend the default plugins described above. Both selectors and analyzers use the same interface; the only distinction between selectors and analyzers is that selectors influence the execution of the program, whereas analyzers are passive observers. S^{2}E also allows writing of plugins that arbitrarily modify the execution state.

S^{2}E has a modular plugin architecture, in which plugins communicate via events in a publish/subscribe fashion. S^{2}E events are generated either by the S^{2}E platform or by other plugins. To register for a class of events, a plugin invokes *onEventX(callbackPtr)*. An event callback is invoked every time *EventX* occurs. Callbacks have different parameters, depending on the type of event.

Table 2 shows the *core events* exported by S^{2}E that arise from regular code translation and execution. We chose these core events because they correspond to the lowest possible level of abstraction of execution: instruction translation, execution, memory accesses, and state forking. It is possible to build any state manipulation and analysis on top of them, as we will show in the evaluation.

The ExecState object captures the current state of the entire virtual machine *along a specific path*. It is the first parameter of every event callback. *ExecState* gives plugins read/write access to the entire VM state, including the processor, VM physical memory, and virtual devices. Plugins can also toggle multi-path execution and read/write VM memory and registers (see Table 3 for a short list of API functions). A plugin can obtain the PID of the running process from the page directory base register, can read/write page tables and physical memory, can change the control flow by modifying the program counter, and so on.

For each path being explored, there exists a distinct *ExecState* object instance; when execution forks, each child execution receives its own private copy of the parent *ExecState*. Aggressive use of copy-on-write reduces the memory overhead substantially (§5).

Plugins partition their own state into per-path state (e.g., number of cache misses along a path) and global state (e.g., total number of basic blocks touched). The per-path state is stored in a *PluginState* object, which hangs off of the *ExecState* object. *PluginState* must implement a *clone* method, so that it can be cloned together with *ExecState* whenever S^{2}E forks execution. Global plugin state can live in the plugin's own heap.

The dynamic binary translator (DBT) turns blocks of guest code into corresponding host code; for each block of code this is typically done only once. During the translation process, a plugin may be interested in marking certain instructions (e.g., function calls) for subsequent notification. It registers for *onInstrTranslation* and, when notified, it inspects the *ExecState* to see which instruction is about to be translated; if it is of interest (e.g., a `CALL` instruction), the plugin marks it. Whenever the VM executes a marked instruction, it raises the *onInstrExecution* event, which notifies the registered plugin. For example, the *CodeSelector* plugin is implemented as a subscriber to *onInstrTranslation* events; upon receiving an event, it marks the instruction depending on whether it is or not an entry/exit point for a code range of interest. Having the *onInstrTranslation* and *onInstrExecution* events separate leverages the fact that each instruction gets translated once, but may get executed millions of times, as in the body of a loop. For most analyses, *onInstrTranslation* ends up being raised so rarely that using it introduces no runtime overhead (e.g., catching the kernel panic handler requires instrumenting only the first instruction of that handler).

S^{2}E opcodes are custom guest machine instructions that are directly interpreted by S^{2}E, and they provide a communication channel that circumvents all plugins. S^{2}E has an extensible set of opcodes for creating symbolic values (`S2SYM`), enabling/disabling multi-path execution (`S2ENA` and `S2DIS`) and logging debug information (`S2OUT`). These give developers even finer grain control over multi-path execution and analysis; they can be injected into the target programs using tools like PIN [26]. In practice, opcodes are the easiest way to mark data symbolic and get started with S^{2}E.

The interface presented here was sufficient for all the multi-path analyses we attempted with S^{2}E. Selectors can enable or disable multi-path execution based on arbitrary criteria and can manipulate machine state. Analyzers can collect information about low-level hardware events all the way up to program-level events, they can probe memory to extract any information they need, and so on.

5. S^{2}E Prototype

The S^{2}E platform prototype (Fig. 5) reuses parts of the QEMU virtual machine [4], the KLEE symbolic execution engine [11], and the LLVM tool chain [24]. To these, we added 23 KLOC of C++ code written from scratch, not including third party libraries[2]. We added 1 KLOC of new code to KLEE and modified 1.5 KLOC; in QEMU, we added 1.5 KLOC of new code and modified 3.5 KLOC of existing code. S^{2}E currently runs on MacOS X, Windows, and Linux, it can execute any guest OS that runs on x86, and can be easily extended to other CPU architectures, like ARM or PowerPC. S^{2}E can be downloaded from `http://s2e.epfl.ch`.

S^{2}E explores paths by running the target system in a virtual machine and selectively executing small parts of it symbolically. Depending on which paths are desired, some of the system's machine instructions are dynamically translated within the VM into an intermediate representation suitable for symbolic execution, while the rest are translated to the host instruction set. Underneath the covers, S^{2}E transparently converts data back and forth as execution weaves between the symbolic and concrete domains, so as to offer the illusion that the full system (OS, libraries, applications, etc.) is executing in multi-path mode.

S^{2}E mixes concrete with symbolic execution in the same path by using a representation of machine state that is shared between the VM and the embedded symbolic execution engine. S^{2}E shares the

[2] All reported LOC measurements were obtained with SLOCCount [38].

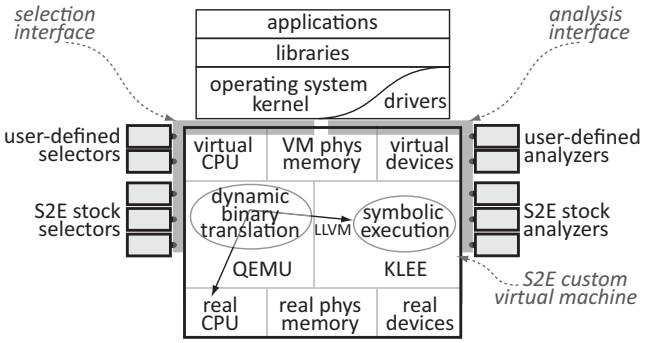


Figure 5: S^{2}E architecture.

state by redirecting reads and writes from QEMU and KLEE to the common machine state—VM physical memory, virtual CPU state, and virtual device state. In this way, S^{2}E provides distinct copies of the entire machine state to distinct paths and can transparently convert data between concrete and symbolic. S^{2}E reduces the memory footprint of all these states using copy-on-write optimizations.

In order to achieve transparent interleaving of symbolic and concrete execution, we modified QEMU's DBT to translate the instructions that depend on symbolic data to LLVM and dispatch them to KLEE. Most instructions, however, run natively; this is the case even in the symbolic domain, because most instructions do not operate on symbolic state. We wrote an x86-to-LLVM back-end for QEMU, so neither the guest OS nor KLEE are aware of the x86 to LLVM translation. S^{2}E redirects all guest physical memory accesses, including MMIO devices, to the KLEE memory state object.

Besides VM physical memory, S^{2}E must also manage the internal state of the virtual devices when switching between execution paths. We use QEMU's snapshot mechanism to automatically save and restore virtual devices and CPU states when switching execution states. The shared representation of memory and device state between the concrete and symbolic domains enables S^{2}E to do on-demand concretization of data that is stored as symbolic. A snapshot can range from hundreds of MBs to GBs; we use aggressive copy-on-write to transparently share common state between snapshots of physical memory and disks. Some state need not be saved—for example, we do not snapshot video memory, so all paths share the same framebuffer. As an aside, this makes for intriguing visual effects on screen: multiple erratic mouse cursors and BSODs blend chaotically, providing free entertainment to the S^{2}E user.

Interleaved concrete/symbolic execution and copy-on-write are transparent to the guest OS, so all guest OSes can run out of the box. Sharing state between QEMU and KLEE allows the guest to have a view of the system that is consistent with the chosen execution consistency model. It also makes it easy to replay execution paths of interest, e.g., to replay a bug found by a bug-detection analyzer.

Conversion from x86 to LLVM gives rise to complex symbolic expressions. S^{2}E sees a much lower level representation of the programs than what would be obtained by compiling source code to LLVM (as done in KLEE): it actually sees the code that simulates the execution of the original program on the target CPU architecture. Such code typically contains many bitfield operations (e.g., `and`, `or`, `shift`, masking to extract or set bits in the `eflags` register).

We therefore implemented a bitfield-theory expression simplifier to optimize these expressions. The simplifier relies on the observation that, if parts of symbolic variables are masked away by bit operations, there is an opportunity to simplify the corresponding expressions. First, the simplifier starts from the bottom of the expression (represented as a tree) and propagates information about individual bits whose value is known. If an expression has all bits known, we replace it with the constant result. Second, the simplifier propagates top-down information about bits that are ignored by the upper part of the expression—when an operator modifies only bits that are ignored later, the simplifier removes that entire operation.

Symbolic expressions can also appear in pointers (e.g., as array indices or jump tables generated by compilers for switch statements). When a memory access with a symbolic pointer occurs, S^{2}E determines the pages referenced by the pointer, before passing their contents to the constraint solver. Alas, large page sizes can lead to exponential complexity that bottlenecks the solver, so S^{2}E splits the memory into small pages of configurable size (e.g., 128 bytes), so that the constraint solver need not reason about large areas. In §6.2 we show how much this helps in practice.

Finally, S^{2}E must carefully handle time. Each system state has its own virtual time, which freezes when that state is not being run (i.e., is not in an actively explored path). Since running code symbolically is slower than native, S^{2}E slows down the virtual clock when symbolically executing a state. If it didn't do this, the (relatively) frequent VM timer interrupts would overwhelm execution and prevent progress. S^{2}E also offers an opcode to completely disable interrupts for a section of code to further reduce the overhead.

6. Evaluation

We now answer three key questions: Is S^{2}E truly a general platform for running diverse analysis tools (§6.1)? Does S^{2}E perform these analyses with reasonable performance (§6.2)? What are the measured trade-offs involved in choosing different execution consistency models on both kernel-mode and user-mode binaries (§6.3)? Unless otherwise specified, the reported results were obtained on a 2×4-core Intel Xeon E5405 2GHz machine with 20 GB of RAM.

6.1 Three Use Cases

First, we used S^{2}E to build three vastly different tools: an automated tester for proprietary drivers (§6.1.1), a reverse engineering tool for binary drivers (§6.1.2), and a multi-path in-vivo performance profiler (§6.1.3). The first two use cases are complete rewrites of two systems that were built previously in an ad-hoc manner: RevNIC [13] and DDT [22]. The third use case is brand new.

One of S^{2}E's main goals is to enable rapid prototyping of useful analysis tools. Before looking at the individual use cases, we show in Table 4 the substantial productivity advantage of using S^{2}E compared to writing these tools from scratch. For the tools we built, S^{2}E engendered two orders of magnitude improvement in both development time and resulting code volume. This justifies our efforts to create general abstractions for multi-path in-vivo analyses, and to centralize them into one platform.

Use Case	Development Time [person-hours]		Tool Complexity [lines of code]	
	from scratch	*with S^{2}E*	*from scratch*	*with S^{2}E*
Testing of proprietary device drivers	2,400	38	47,000	720
Reverse engineering of closed-source drivers	3,000	40	57,000	580
Multi-path in-vivo performance profiling	n/a	20	n/a	767

Table 4: Comparative productivity when building analysis tools from scratch (i.e., without S^{2}E) vs. using S^{2}E. Reported LOC include only new code written or modified; any code that was reused from QEMU, KLEE, or other sources is not included. For reverse engineering, 10 KLOC of offline analysis code is used in both versions. For performance profiling, we do not know of any equivalent non-S^{2}E tool, hence the lack of comparison.

6.1.1 Automated Testing of Proprietary Device Drivers

We used S^{2}E to build DDT$^+$, a tool for testing closed-source Windows device drivers. This is a reimplementation of DDT [22], an ad-

hoc combination of changes to QEMU and KLEE, along with hand-written interface annotations: 35 KLOC added to QEMU, 3 KLOC added to KLEE, 2 KLOC modified in KLEE, and 7 KLOC modified in QEMU. By contrast, DDT+ has 720 LOC of C++ code, which glues together several exploration and analysis plugins, and provides the necessary kernel/driver interface annotations.

DDT+ combines several plugins: the *CodeSelector* plugin restricts multi-path exploration to the target driver, while the *MemoryCheck*, *DataRaceDetector*, and *WinBugCheck* analyzers look for bugs. To collect additional information about the quality of testing (e.g., coverage), we use the *ExecutionTracer* analyzer plugin. Additional checkers can be easily added. DDT+ implements local consistency (LC) via interface annotations that specify where to inject symbolic values while respecting local consistency—examples of annotations appear in [22]. In the absence of annotations, DDT+ reverts to strict consistency (SC-SE), where the only symbolic input comes from hardware. None of the reported bugs are false positives, indicating the appropriateness of local consistency for bug finding.

We run DDT+ on two Windows network drivers, RTL8029 and AMD PCnet. DDT+ finds the same 7 bugs reported in [22], including memory leaks, segmentation faults, race conditions, and memory corruption. Of these bugs, 2 can be found when operating under SC-SE consistency; relaxation to local consistency (via annotations) helps find 5 additional bugs. DDT+ takes $<$20 minutes to complete testing of each driver and explores thousands of paths in each one.

For each bug found, DDT+ outputs a crash dump, an instruction trace, a memory trace, a set of concrete inputs (e.g., registry values and hardware input) and values that where injected according to the LC model that trigger the buggy execution path.

As DDT+ uses the LC model, the traces may are globally infeasible. Indeed, while it is always possible to produce concrete inputs for the system that would lead it to the same local state (i.e., to reproduce the bug) along a globally feasible path, the exploration engine does not do it in a LC model. Consequently, replaying execution traces provided by DDT+ requires replaying the injection into the system that was made in accordance to the LC model. Such replaying could be done in S2E itself. Despite being only locally consistent, the replay is still useful for debugging: the execution of the driver during the replay is valid and consistant, injected correspond to the values that the kernel could have passed to the driver under different conditions.

S2E generates crash dumps readable by Microsoft WinDbg. Developers can thus inspect the crashes using their existing tools, scripts, and extensions for WinDbg. They can also compare crash dumps from different execution paths to better understand the bugs.

6.1.2 Reverse Engineering of Closed-Source Drivers

We also built REV+, a tool for reverse engineering binary Windows device drivers; it is a reimplementation of RevNIC [13]. REV+ takes a closed-source binary driver, traces its execution, and then feeds the traces to an offline component that reverse engineers the driver's logic and produces new device driver code that implements the exact same hardware protocol as the original driver. In principle, REV+ can synthesize drivers for any OS, making it easy to port device drivers, without any vendor documentation or source code.

Adopting the S2E perspective, we cast reverse engineering as a type of behavior analysis. As in DDT+, the *CodeSelector* plugin restricts the symbolic domain to the driver's code segment. The *ExecutionTracer* plugin is configured to log the driver's executed instructions, memory and register accesses, hardware I/O, and writes them to a file. The existing RevNIC's offline analysis tool processes these traces to synthesize a new driver.

REV+ uses overapproximate consistency (RC-OC). The main goal of the tracer is to merely see each basic block execute, in order to extract its logic—full path consistency is not necessary. The trace interpreter only needs fragments of paths in order to reconstruct the original control flow graph—details appear in [13]. By using RC-OC, REV+ sacrifices consistency in favor of obtaining coverage fast.

	RevNIC	REV+	Improvement
PCnet	59%	66%	+7%
RTL8029	82%	87%	+5%
91C111	84%	87%	+3%
RTL8139	84%	86%	+2%

Table 5: REV+ obtains better coverage than RevNIC.

We run REV+ on the same drivers reported in [13], and REV+ reverse engineers them with better coverage than RevNIC (see Table 5) in less than an hour. Fig. 6 shows how coverage evolves over time during reverse engineering. By inspecting the covered basic blocks, we found the resulting drivers to be equivalent to those generated by RevNIC.

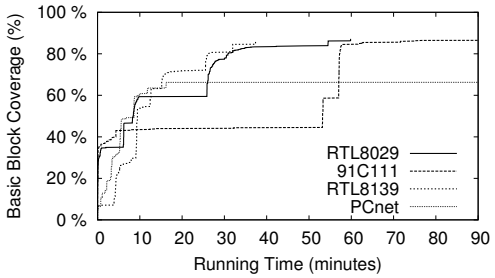


Figure 6: Basic block coverage over time for REV+.

6.1.3 Multi-Path In-Vivo Performance Profiling

To further illustrate S2E's generality, we used it to develop PROFS, a multi-path in-vivo performance profiler and debugger. To our knowledge, such a tool does not exist today, and this use case is the first in the literature to employ symbolic execution for performance analysis. In this section, we show through several examples how PROFS can be used to predict performance for certain classes of inputs. To obtain realistic profiles, performance analysis can be done under local consistency or any stricter consistency models.

PROFS allows users to measure instruction count, cache misses, TLB misses, and page faults for arbitrary memory hierarchies, with flexibility to combine any number of cache levels, size, associativity, line sizes, etc. This is a superset of the cache profiling functionality found in Valgrind [37], which can only simulate L1 and L2 caches, and can only measure cache misses.

To build PROFS, we developed the *PerformanceProfile* plugin. It counts the number of instructions along each path and, for read and write operations, it simulates the behavior of the desired cache hierarchy and counts hits and misses. This plugin is a generalization of the logic contained in Valgrind. The path exploration in PROFS is tunable, allowing the user to choose any execution consistency model. We configured PROFS with 64 KB I1 and D1 caches with 64-byte cache lines and associativity 2. We also configured a 1 MB L2 cache with 64-byte cache lines and associativity 4.

The first PROFS experiment analyzes the distribution of instruction counts and cache misses for Apache's URL parser. In particular, we were interested to see whether there is any opportunity for a denial-of-service attack on the Apache web server via carefully constructed URLs. The analysis ran under local consistency for 9.5 hours and explored 5,515 different paths through the code. Of the 9.5 hours, 2.5 hours were spent in the constraint solver and 6 hours were spent running concrete code. In this experiment, the analysis carries high overhead, because it simulates a TLB and 3 caches.

We found each path involved in parsing a URL to take on the order of 4.3×10^6 instructions, with one interesting feature: for every additional "/" character present in the URL, there are 10 extra instructions being executed. We found no upper bound on the execution of URL parsing: a URL containing $n + k$ "/" characters will take $10 \times k$ more instructions to parse than a URL with n "/" characters. The total number of cache misses on each path was predictable at $15,984 \pm 20$. These are examples of behavioral insights one can obtain with a multi-path performance profiler. Such insights can help developers fine-tune their code or make it more secure (e.g., by checking that password processing time does not depend on the password itself, to avoid side channel attacks).

We also set out to measure the page fault rate experienced by the Microsoft IIS web server inside its SSL modules while serving a static page workload over HTTPS. Our goal was to check the distribution of page faults in the cryptographic algorithms, to see if there is any opportunity for side channel attacks. We found no page faults in the SSL code along any of the paths, and only a small number of them in gzip.dll. This suggests that counting page faults should not be the first choice if trying to break IIS's SSL encryption.

Next, we aimed to establish a performance envelope in terms of instructions executed, cache misses, and page faults for the ubiquitous `ping` program. This program has on the order of 1.3 KLOC. The performance analysis ran under local consistency LC, explored 1,250 different paths, and ran for 5.9 hours. Unlike the URL parsing case, almost 5.8 hours of the analysis were spent in the constraint solver—the first 1,000 paths were explored during the first 3 hours, after which the exploration rate slowed down.

The analysis did not find a bound on execution time, and pointed to a path that could go around a loop without bound. This happens when the reply packet to `ping`'s initial packet has the record route (RR) flag set and the option length is 3 bytes, leaving no room to store the IP address list. `ping` finds that the list of addresses is empty and, instead of `break`-ing out of the loop, it does `continue` without updating the loop counter. This is an example where performance analysis can identify a performance bug that some may consider a security bug. Once we patched `ping`, we found the performance envelope to consist of a minimum of 1,645 and a maximum of 129,086 instructions executed. When the bug was still present, the maximum had reached 1.5×10^6 and continued growing.

PROF$_S$ can also find inputs for which we get best-case performance, without enumerating all paths. For this, we modify slightly the *PerformanceProfile* plugin to keep track of the current lower bound (for instructions, page faults, etc.) across all paths being explored at the moment; any time a path exceeds this minimum, its exploration is automatically abandoned. This modification makes use of the *PathKiller* selector, described in §4. This type of functionality can be used, e.g., to efficiently and automatically determine workloads that make a system perform at its best; it is an example of something that can only be done using multi-path analysis.

We wanted to compare our results to what a combination of existing tools could achieve: run KLEE to obtain inputs for paths through the program, then run each such test case in Valgrind (for multi-path analysis) and with Oprofile (for in-vivo analysis). This is not possible for `ping`, because KLEE's networking model does not support ICMP packets. It is not possible for binary drivers either, because KLEE cannot fork kernel state and requires source code. These difficulties illustrate the benefits of having a platform like S^{2}E that does not require models and can automatically cross back and forth the boundary between symbolic and concrete domains.

To conclude, we used S^{2}E to build a thorough multi-path in-vivo performance profiler that achieves better path coverage (and therefore more precise results) than classic profilers. Valgrind [37] is thorough, but only single-path and not in-vivo. Unlike Valgrind-type tools, PROF$_S$ performs its analyses along multiple paths at a time, not just one, and can measure the effects of the OS kernel on the program's cache behavior and vice versa, not just the program in isolation. Although tools like Oprofile [29] can perform in-vivo measurements, but not multi-path, they are based on sampling, so they lack the precision of PROF$_S$—it is impossible, for instance, to count the exact number of cache misses in an execution. Such improvements over state-of-the-art tools come "for free" with S^{2}E.

6.1.4 Other Uses of S^{2}E

S^{2}E can be used for pretty much any type of system-wide analysis. We describe here four additional ideas: energy profiling, hardware validation, certification of binaries, and privacy analysis.

First, S^{2}E could be used to profile energy use of embedded applications: given a power consumption model, S^{2}E could find energy-hogging paths and help the developer optimize them. Second, S^{2}E could serve as a hardware model validator: S^{2}E can symbolically execute a SystemC-based model together with the real driver and OS; when there is enough confidence in the correctness of the hardware model, the chip can be synthesized. Third, S^{2}E could perform end-to-end certification of binaries—S^{2}E alleviates the need to trust a compiler, since it performs all analysis on the final binary. For instance, S^{2}E could check that memory safety holds along all critical paths. Finally, S^{2}E could be used to analyze binaries for privacy leaks: by monitoring the flow of symbolic input values (e.g., credit card numbers) through the software stack, S^{2}E could tell whether any of the data leaks outside the system.

6.2 Implementation Overhead

S2E introduces ~6× runtime overhead over vanilla QEMU when running in concrete mode, and ~78× in symbolic mode. Concrete-mode overhead is mainly due to checks for accesses to symbolic memory (for lazy concretization), while the overhead in symbolic mode is due to interpretation and handling of symbolic expressions.

The overhead of symbolic execution is mitigated in practice by the fact that the symbolic domain is much smaller than the concrete domain. All the system code (e.g., page fault handler, timer interrupt, system calls) that is called frequently, as well as all the software that is running (e.g., services and daemons) are in concrete mode. Furthermore, S^{2}E can distinguish inside the symbolic domain instructions that can execute concretely (e.g., when they do not touch symbolic data) and run them natively. For instance, for the `ping` experiments, S^{2}E executed 3×10^4 times more x86 instructions concretely than it did symbolically. These 4 orders of magnitude provide a *lower* bound on the amount of savings selective symbolic execution brings over classic symbolic execution: by executing concretely those paths that would otherwise run symbolically, S^{2}E saves the overhead of further forking (e.g., on branches inside the concrete domain) paths that are ultimately not of interest.

Another source of overhead comes from symbolic pointers. We compared the performance of symbolically executing the `unlink` utility's x86 binary in S^{2}E vs. symbolically executing its LLVM version in KLEE. Since KLEE recognizes all memory allocations performed by the program, it can pass to the constraint solver memory arrays of exactly the right size; in contrast, S^{2}E must pass entire memory pages. In 1 hour, with a 256-byte page size, S^{2}E explores 7,082 paths, compared to 7,886 paths in KLEE. Average constraint solving time is 0.06 sec for both. With 4 KB pages, though, S^{2}E explores only 2,000 states and averages 0.15 sec per constraint.

We plan to reduce this overhead in two ways: First, we can instrument the LLVM bitcode generated by S2E with calls to the symbolic execution engine, before JITing it into native machine code, to avoid the overhead of interpreting each instruction in KLEE. This is similar in spirit to what QEMU does vis-a-vis the Bochs [6] emulator: while the latter interprets instructions in one giant switch

Consistency	91C111 Driver	PCnet Driver	Lua
RC-OC	1,400	3,300	1,103
LC	1,600	3,200	1,114
SC-SE	1,700	1,300	1,148
SC-UE	5	7	-

Table 6: Time (in sec) under different consistencies: overapproximate (RC-OC), local (LC), system-level strict (SC-SE), and unit-level strict (SC-UE).

statement, the former JITs them to native code, which results in a significant speedup. Second, we plan to add support for directly executing native LLVM binaries inside S^{2}E, which would reduce significantly the blowup resulting from x86-to-LLVM translation and would reduce the overhead of symbolic pointers.

6.3 Execution Consistency Model Trade-Offs

Having seen the ability of S^{2}E to serve as a platform for building powerful analysis tools, we now experimentally evaluate the tradeoffs involved in the use of different execution consistency models. In particular, we measure how total running time, memory usage, and path coverage efficiency are influenced by the choice of models. We illustrate the tradeoffs using both kernel-mode binaries—the SMSC 91C111 and AMD PCnet network drivers—and a user-mode binary—the interpreter for the Lua embedded scripting language [25]. The 91C111 closed-source driver binary has 19 KB, PCnet has 35 KB; the symbolic domain consists of the driver, and the concrete domain is everything else. Lua has 12.7 KLOC; the concrete domain consists of the lexer+parser (2 KLOC) and the environment, while the symbolic domain is the remaining code (e.g., the interpreter). Parsers are the bane of symbolic execution engines, because they have many possible execution paths, of which only a small fraction are paths that pass the parsing/lexing stage [19]. The ease of separating the Lua interpreter from its parser in S^{2}E illustrates the benefit of selective symbolic execution.

We use a script in the guest OS to call the entry points of the drivers. Execution proceeds until all paths have reached the `unload` entry point. We configure a selector plugin to exercise the entry points in steps. If S^{2}E has not discovered any new basic block for some time (60 sec), this plugin kills all paths but one at random. The plugin chooses the remaining path so that execution can proceed to the next entry point.

The selector plugin also discards redundant subtrees when entry points return and makes it possible to exercise entire drivers. Without path selection, drivers would remain stuck in the early initialization phase, because of the state explosion problem. E.g., the tree rooted at the initialization entry point may have several thousand leaves (paths) when its exploration completes. Yet, calling the next entry point in the context of these execution states will mostly exercise the same paths, because these states have few differences.

For Lua, we provided a symbolic string as the input program in the Lua language, under SC-SE consistency. Under local consistency, the input is concrete, and we insert a suitably constrained symbolic Lua opcode after the parser stage. Finally, in RC-OC mode, we make the opcode completely unconstrained. We average results over 10 runs for each consistency model on a 4×6-core AMD Opteron 8435 machine, 2.6 GHz, 96GB of RAM. Table 6 shows running times for different execution consistencies.

Weaker (more relaxed) consistency models help achieve higher basic block coverage, as shown in Fig. 7. For PCnet, coverage varies from 14% to 66%, while 91C111 ranges from 10% to 88%. The stricter the model, the fewer sources of symbolic values, hence the fewer explorable paths and discoverable basic blocks in a given amount of time. In the case of our Windows drivers, system-level strict consistency (SC-SE) keeps all registry inputs concrete, which prevents several configuration-dependent parts from being explored. In unit-level strict consistency (SC-UE), concretizing symbolic inputs to arbitrary values prevents the driver from loading, thus yielding poor coverage.

In the case of Lua, the local consistency model allows bypassing the lexer component, which is especially difficult to symbolically execute due to its loops and complex string manipulations. RC-OC exceptionally yielded less coverage because execution got stuck in complex crash paths reached due to incorrect Lua opcodes.

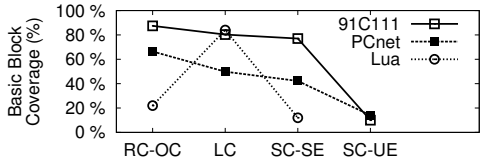


Figure 7: Effect of consistency models on coverage.

Path selection together with adequate consistency models optimize memory usage (Fig. 8). In local consistency, the PCnet driver spends 4 minutes in the initialization method, exploring ~7,000 paths and using 8 GB of memory. In contrast, it spends only 2 minutes (~2,500 paths) and 4 GB under RC-OC consistency. Under LC consistency, the `CardType` registry setting is symbolic, causing the initialization entry point to call in parallel several functions that look for different card types. Under LC consistency, S^{2}E explores these functions slower than under RC-OC consistency, where we liberally inject symbolic values to help these functions finish quicker. Slower exploration leads to less frequent timeout reset, hence longer exploration, more paths, and more memory consumption. Under SC-SE and SC-UE consistency, registry settings are concrete, exploring only functions for one card type.

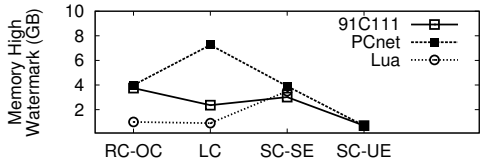


Figure 8: Effect of consistency models on memory usage.

Finally, consistency models affect constraint solving time (Fig. 9). The relationship between consistency model and constraint solving often depends on the structure of the system being analyzed—generally, the deeper a path, the more complex the corresponding path constraints. We observe that, for our targets, solving time decreases with stricter consistency, because stricter models restrict the amount of symbolic data. For 91C111, switching from local to overapproximate consistency increases solving time by 10×. This is mostly due to the unconstrained symbolic inputs passed to the `QueryInformationHandler` and `SetInformationHandler` entry points, which results in complex expressions being generated by switch statements. In Lua, the structure of the constraints causes S^{2}E to spend most of its time in the constraint solver.

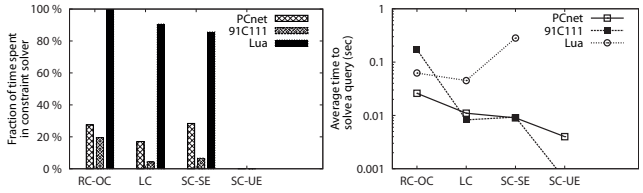


Figure 9: Impact of consistency models on the constraint solver

As in §6.1.3, we wished to include in these results a comparison to vanilla KLEE. Besides the problems faced in the case of

drivers, we expected that the Lua interpreter, being completely in user-mode and not having any complex interactions with the environment, could be handled by KLEE. However, KLEE does not model some operations. For example, the Lua interpreter makes use of `setjmp` and `longjmp`, which become calls into `libc` that manipulate the PC and other registers in a way that confuses KLEE. Unlike S^{2}E, engines like KLEE do not have a unified representation of the hardware, so all these details must be explicitly coded for (e.g., detect that `setjmp` / `longjmp` is being used, and ensure that KLEE's view of the execution state is appropriately adjusted). In S^{2}E, this comes "for free," because the CPU registers, memory, I/O devices, etc. are shared between the concrete and symbolic domain.

7. Related Work

We are not aware of any platform that can offer the level of generality in terms of dynamic analyses and execution consistency models that S^{2}E offers. Nevertheless, a subset of the ideas behind S^{2}E did appear in various forms in earlier work.

BitBlaze [36] is the closest dynamic analysis framework to S^{2}E. It combines virtualization and symbolic execution for malware analysis and offers a form of local consistency to introduce symbolic values into API calls. In contrast, S^{2}E brings four additional consistency models and different generic path selectors that trade accuracy for exponentially improved performance in more flexible ways. To our knowledge, S^{2}E is the first to handle all aspects of hardware communication, which consists of I/O, MMIO, DMA, and interrupts. This enables symbolic execution across the entire software stack, down to hardware, resulting in richer analyses.

One way to tackle the state explosion problem is to use models and/or relax execution consistency. File system models have allowed, for instance, KLEE to test UNIX utilities without involving the real filesystem. However, based on our own experience writing models for KLEE, doing so is labor-intensive and error-prone. Writing and maintaining a model for the kernel/driver interface of a modern OS takes several person-years [2].

Other bodies of work have chosen to execute the "outside world" concretely, with various levels of consistency that were appropriate for the specific analysis in question, most commonly bug finding. For instance, CUTE [35] can run concrete code consistently (unlike KLEE) without modeling, but it is limited to strict consistency and code-based selection. SJPF [31] can switch from concrete to symbolic domains, but does not track constraints when switching back, so it cannot preserve consistency.

Another approach to tackle state explosion is compositional symbolic execution [17]. This approach aims to save the result of exploration of parts of the program and reuse them when those parts are called again in a different context. We are investigating how to implement this approach in S^{2}E, to further improve scalability.

Non-VM based approaches cannot control the environment outside the analyzed program. E.g., both KLEE and EXE allow a symbolically executing program to call into the concrete domain (e.g., perform a system call), but they cannot fork the global system state. As a result, different paths clobber each other's concrete domain, with unpredictable consequences. Concolic execution [34] runs everything concretely and scales to full systems (and is not affected by state clobbering), but may result in lost paths when execution crosses program boundaries. Likewise, CUTE, KLEE, and others cannot track the branch conditions in the concrete code (unlike S^{2}E), and thus cannot determine how to redo calls in order to enable overconstrained but feasible paths.

In-situ model checkers [16, 20, 28, 34, 39, 40] can directly check programs written in a common programming language, usually with some simplifications such as data-range reduction, without requiring the creation of a model. Since S^{2}E directly executes the target binary, one could say it is an in-situ tool. However, S^{2}E goes further and provides a consistent separation between the "outside world" (whose symbolic execution is not necessary) and the target code to be tested (which is typically orders of magnitude smaller than the rest)—this is what we call in-vivo in S^{2}E: analyzing the target code in-situ, while transparently facilitating its interaction with that code's unmodified, real environment. Murphy et al. propose a technique [27] to inject test suites with concrete inputs in a forked version of a process to preserve the consistency of the original run. Our definition differs from theirs, where in-vivo stands for executing tests in *production* environments.

Several static analysis frameworks have been proposed. Saturn [14] and `bddbddb` [23] prove the presence or absence of bugs using a path-sensitive analysis engine to decrease the number of false positives. Saturn uses function summaries to scale to larger programs and looks for bugs described in a logic programming language. `bddbddb` stores programs in a database as relations that can be searched for buggy patterns using Datalog. Besides detecting bugs, `bddbddb` helped optimizing locks in multi-threaded programs. Static analysis tools rely on source code for accurate type information and cannot easily verify run-time properties and reason about the entire system. Both `bddbddb` and Saturn require to learn a new language.

Dynamic analysis frameworks alleviate the limitations of static analysis tools. In particular, they allow the analysis of binary software. Theoretically, one could statically convert an x86 binary to, say, LLVM and run it in a system like KLEE, but this faces the classic undecidable problems of disassembly and decompilation [33]: disambiguating code from data, determining the targets of indirect jumps, unpacking code, etc.

S^{2}E adds multi-path analysis abilities to all single-path dynamic tools, while not limiting the types of analysis. PTLsim [41] is a VM-based cycle-accurate x86 simulator that selectively limits profiling to user-specified code ranges to improve scalability. Valgrind [37] is a framework best known for cache profiling tools, memory leak detectors, and call graph generators. PinOS [9] can instrument operating systems and unify user/kernel-mode tracers. However, PinOS relies on Xen and a paravirtualized guest OS, unlike S^{2}E. PTLsim, PinOS, and Valgrind implement cache simulators that model multi-level data and code cache hierarchies. S^{2}E allowed us to implement an equivalent *multi-path* simulator with little effort.

S^{2}E complements classic single-path, non VM-based, profiling and tracing tools. For instance, DTrace [15] is a framework for troubleshooting kernels and applications on production systems in real time. DTrace, and other techniques for efficient profiling, such as continuous profiling [1], sampling-based profiling [10], and data type profiling [30] trade accuracy for low overhead. They are useful in settings where the overhead of precise instrumentation is prohibitive. Other projects have also leveraged virtualization to achieve goals that were previously prohibitively expensive. These tools could be improved with S^{2}E by allowing them to witness multi-path executions.

Finally, S^{2}E reuses mixed-mode execution as an optimization, to increase efficiency. This idea first appeared in DART [18], CUTE [35], and EXE [12], and later in Bitscope [8]. However, automatic bidirectional data conversions across the symbolic-concrete boundary did not exist in previous work, and is key to S^{2}E's scalability.

To summarize, S^{2}E embodies numerous ideas that were fully or partially explored in earlier work. What is unique in S^{2}E is its generality for writing various analyses, the availability of multiple user-selectable (as well as definable) consistency models, automatic bidirectional conversion of data between the symbolic and concrete domains, and its ability to operate without any modeling or modification of the (concretely running) environment.

8. Conclusions

This paper described S^{2}E, a new platform for *in-vivo multi-path analysis* of systems, which scales even to large, proprietary, real-world software stacks, like Microsoft Windows. It is the first time virtualization, dynamic binary translation, and symbolic execution are combined for the purpose of generic behavior analysis. S^{2}E simultaneously analyzes entire *families of paths*, operates directly on *binaries*, and operates *in vivo*, i.e., includes in its analyses the entire software stack: user programs, libraries, kernel, drivers, and hardware. S^{2}E uses automatic bidirectional symbolic–concrete data conversions and relaxed execution consistency models to achieve scalability. We showed that S^{2}E enables rapid prototyping of a variety of system behavior analysis tools with little effort. S^{2}E can be downloaded from `http://s2e.epfl.ch/`.

Acknowledgments

We thank Jim Larus, our shepherd, and Andrea Arpaci-Dusseau, Herbert Bos, Miguel Castro, Byung-Gon Chun, Petros Maniatis, Raimondas Sasnauskas, Willy Zwaenepoel, Johannes Kinder, the S^{2}E user community, and the anonymous reviewers for their help in improving our paper. We are grateful to Microsoft Research for supporting this work through a PhD Fellowship starting in 2011.

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