

# Lecture 17: Grey-box Fuzzing and Mutation Analysis

17-355/17-665/17-819: Program Analysis

Rohan Padhye

November 6, 2025

\* Course materials developed with Jonathan Aldrich and Claire Le Goues

# Puzzle: Find $x$ such $p1(x)$ returns True

```
def p1(x):  
    if x * x - 10 == 15:  
        return True  
    return False
```

# Puzzle: Find $x$ such $p2(x)$ returns True

```
def p2(x):  
    if x > 0 and x < 1000:  
        if ((x - 32) * 5/9 == 100):  
            return True  
    return False
```

# Puzzle: Find $x$ such $p3(x)$ returns True

```
def p3(x):  
    if x > 3 and x < 100:  
        z = x - 2  
        c = 0  
        while z >= 2:  
            if z ** (x - 1) % x == 1:  
                c = c + 1  
                z = z - 1  
        if c == x - 3:  
            return True  
    return False
```



# Fuzz Testing

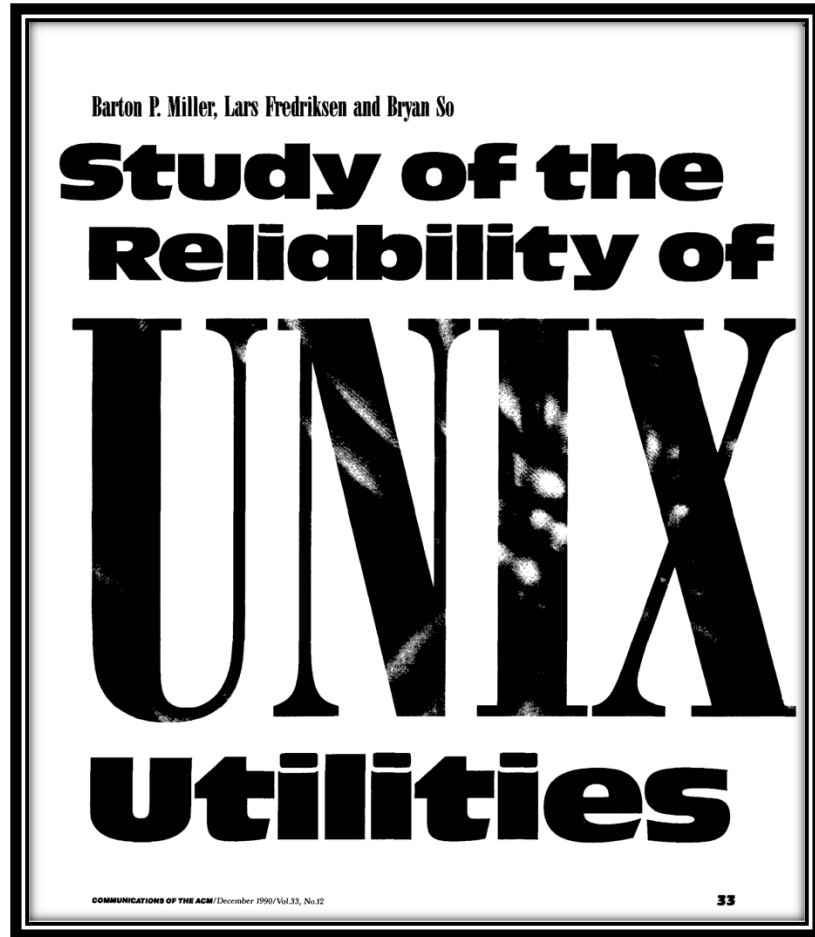
*Goal:*

To find program inputs that reveal a bug

*Approach:*

Generate inputs randomly until program crashes

# Fuzz Testing



Communications of the ACM (1990)

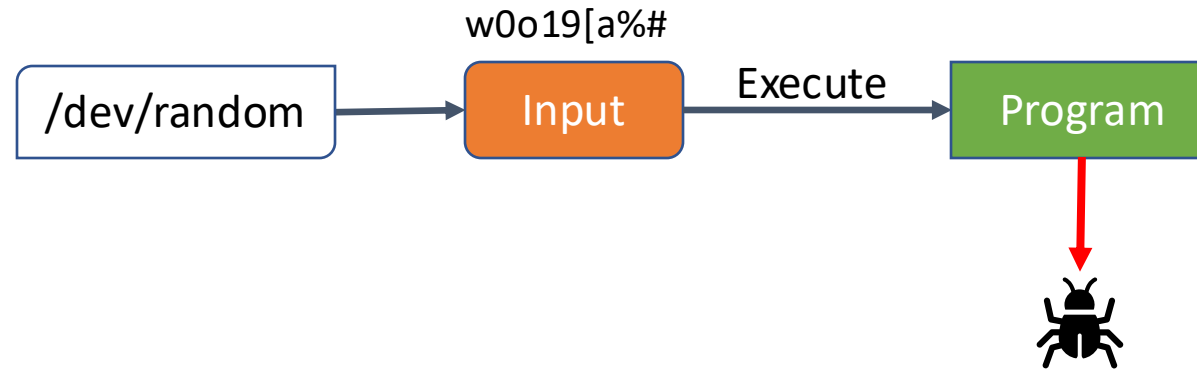
“

On a dark and stormy night one of the authors was logged on to his workstation on a dial-up line from home and the rain had affected the phone lines; there were frequent spurious characters on the line. The author had to race to see if he could type a sensible sequence of characters before the noise scrambled the command. This line noise was not surprising; but we were surprised that these spurious characters were causing programs to crash.

”

1990s

# Fuzz Testing 101



1990 study found crashes in:  
*adb, as, bc, cb, col, diction, emacs, eqn, ftp, indent, lex, look, m4, make, nroff, plot, prolog, ptx, refer!, spell, style, tsort, uniq, vgrind, vi*



Why do programs **crash**?

# Common Fuzzer-Found Bugs

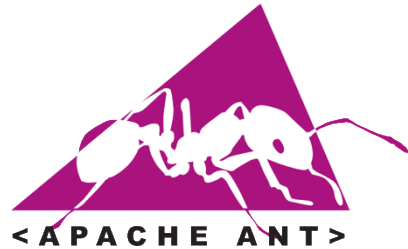
Causes: incorrect arg validation, incorrect type casting, executing untrusted code, etc.

Effects: buffer-overflows, memory leak, division-by-zero, use-after-free, assertion violation, etc. ("crash")

Impact: security, reliability, performance, correctness

What are the **benefits, challenges, & limitations** of this approach?

# Generate inputs randomly



\$ ant -f build.xml

```
<project default="dist">
  <target name="init">
    <mkdir dir="${build}"/>
  </target>
  ...

```

\$ ant -f /dev/random

```
1rha3wn5p0w3uz;54 p0a23
rw3i 50a20 5a2y58a2p
y3wry3p285
q@P"uer9zparu9apur9qa3802
y5o2y 392r523a90wesu

```

Purely random data is not a very interesting input!!

# Generate inputs randomly via mutation



\$ ant -f build.xml

```
<project default="dist">
  <target name="init">
    <mkdir dir="${build}"/>
  </target>
  ...
```

\$ ant -f build.xml.mut

```
<project default="dist">
  <taWget name="init">
    <madir dir="2{build}"/@
  </tar?get>
  ...
```

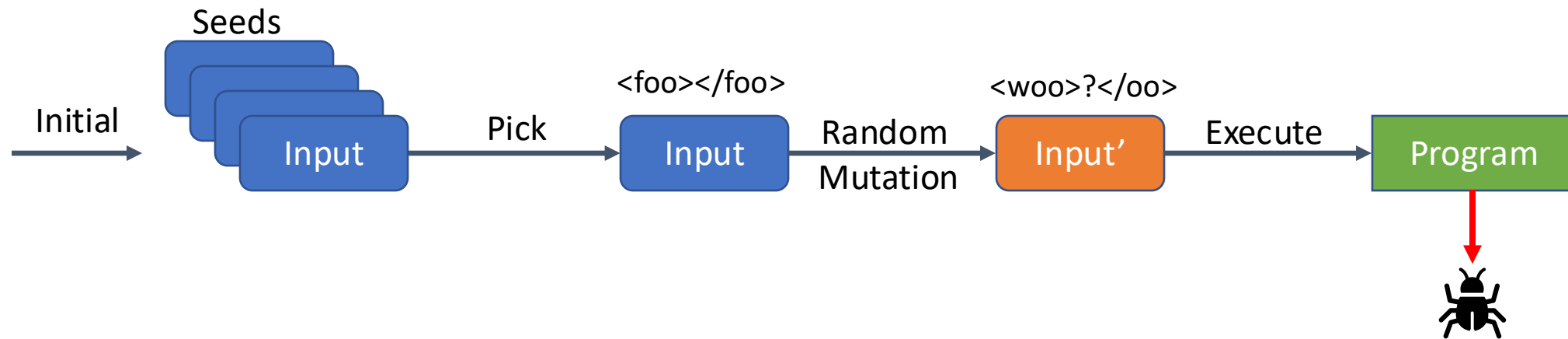
What are some good mutations?

# Mutation Heuristics

- Binary input
  - Bit flips, byte flips
  - Change random bytes
  - Insert random byte chunks
  - Delete random byte chunks
  - Set randomly chosen byte chunks to *interesting* values e.g. INT\_MAX, INT\_MIN, 0, 1, -1, ...
  - Other suggestions?
- Text input
  - Insert random symbols or keywords from a dictionary
  - Other suggestions?

2000s

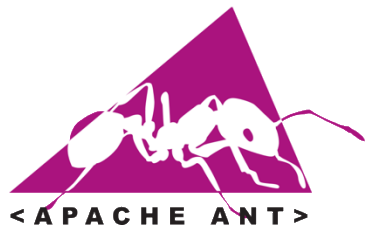
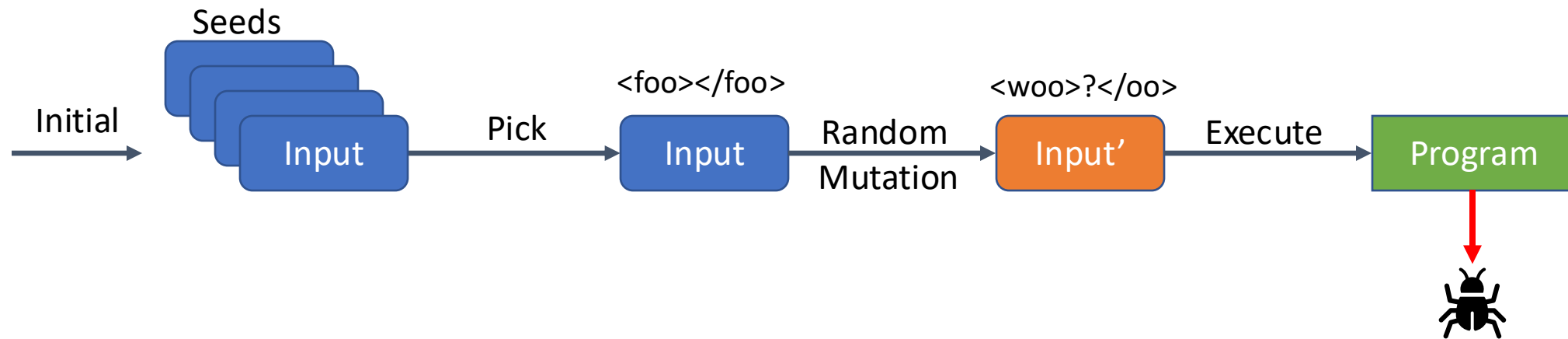
# Mutation-Based Fuzzing (e.g. Radamsa, zzuf)





2000s

# Mutation-Based Fuzzing (e.g. Radamsa, zzuf)



Valid Seed Input (build.xml)

```
<project default="dist">
  <target name="init">
    <mkdir dir="${build}"/>
  </target>
  ...
```

New Input (Mutated from Seed)

```
<project default="dist">
  <taWget name="init">
    <madir dir="2{build}"/@
  </tar?get>
  ...
```

What are the **benefits, challenges, & limitations** of this approach?

How do you know if you are making progress?  
Can you think of some stopping criteria?

# Code Coverage

## LCOV - code coverage report

Current view: [top level](#) - test

Test: coverage.info

Date: 2018-02-07 13:06:43

	Hit	Total	Coverage
Lines:	6092	7293	83.5 %
Functions:	481	518	92.9 %

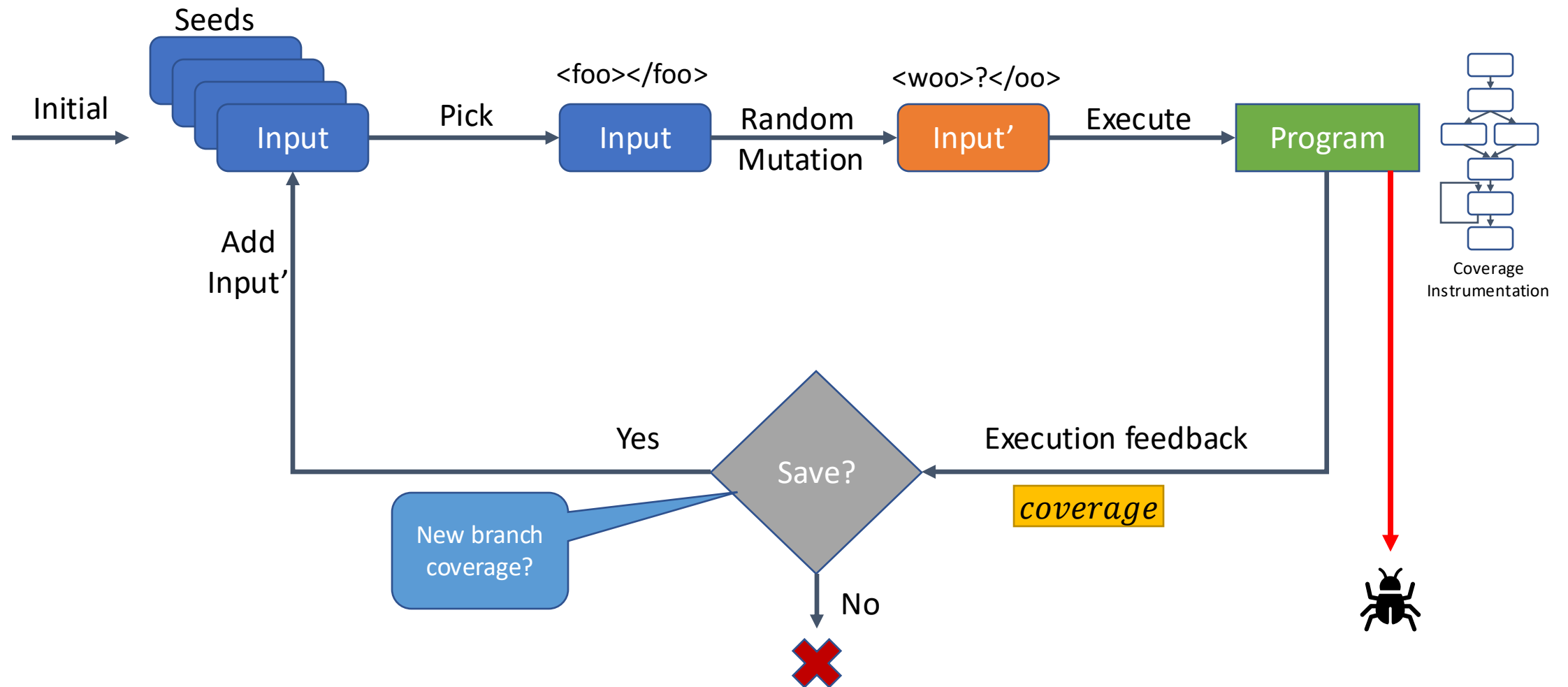
Filename	Line Coverage	Functions
asn1_string_table_test.c	58.8 % 20 / 34	100.0 % 2 / 2
asn1_time_test.c	72.0 % 72 / 100	100.0 % 7 / 7
bad_dtls_test.c	97.6 % 163 / 167	100.0 % 9 / 9
bftest.c	65.3 % 64 / 98	87.5 % 7 / 8
bio_enc_test.c	78.7 % 74 / 94	100.0 % 9 / 9
bntest.c	97.7 % 1038 / 1062	100.0 % 45 / 45
chacha_internal_test.c	83.3 % 10 / 12	100.0 % 2 / 2
ciphername_test.c	60.4 % 32 / 53	100.0 % 2 / 2
crltest.c	100.0 % 90 / 90	100.0 % 12 / 12
ct_test.c	95.5 % 212 / 222	100.0 % 20 / 20
d2i_test.c	72.9 % 35 / 48	100.0 % 2 / 2
dane_test.c	75.5 % 123 / 163	100.0 % 10 / 10
dhtest.c	84.6 % 88 / 104	100.0 % 4 / 4
drbgtest.c	69.8 % 157 / 225	92.9 % 13 / 14
dtls_mtu_test.c	86.8 % 59 / 68	100.0 % 5 / 5
dtlstest.c	97.1 % 34 / 35	100.0 % 4 / 4
dtlsv1listentest.c	94.9 % 37 / 39	100.0 % 4 / 4
ecdsatest.c	94.0 % 140 / 149	100.0 % 7 / 7
enginetest.c	92.8 % 141 / 152	100.0 % 7 / 7
evp_extra_test.c	100.0 % 112 / 112	100.0 % 10 / 10
fatalerrtest.c	89.3 % 25 / 28	100.0 % 2 / 2
handshake_helper.c	84.7 % 494 / 583	97.4 % 38 / 39
hmac_test.c	100.0 % 71 / 71	100.0 % 7 / 7
ideatest.c	100.0 % 30 / 30	100.0 % 4 / 4
igetest.c	87.9 % 109 / 124	100.0 % 11 / 11
lhash_test.c	78.6 % 66 / 84	100.0 % 8 / 8
mdc2_internal_test.c	81.8 % 9 / 11	100.0 % 2 / 2
mdc2test.c	100.0 % 18 / 18	100.0 % 2 / 2
ocspapitest.c	95.5 % 64 / 67	100.0 % 4 / 4
packettest.c	100.0 % 248 / 248	100.0 % 24 / 24

```
97 1 / 1: if ((err = SSLHashMD5.final(&hashCtx, &hashOut)) != 0)
98 0 / 1: goto fail;
99 :
100 : else {
101 : /* DSA, ECDSA - just use the SHA1 hash */
102 0 / 1: dataToSign = &hashes[SSL_MD5_DIGEST_LEN];
103 0 / 1: dataToSignLen = SSL_SHA1_DIGEST_LEN;
104 : }
105 :
106 1 / 1: hashOut.data = hashes + SSL_MD5_DIGEST_LEN;
107 1 / 1: hashOut.length = SSL_SHA1_DIGEST_LEN;
108 1 / 1: if ((err = SSLFreeBuffer(&hashCtx)) != 0)
109 0 / 1: goto fail;
110 :
111 1 / 1: if ((err = ReadyHash(&SSLHashSHA1, &hashCtx)) != 0)
112 0 / 1: goto fail;
113 1 / 1: if ((err = SSLHashSHA1.update(&hashCtx, &clientRandom)) != 0)
114 0 / 1: goto fail;
115 1 / 1: if ((err = SSLHashSHA1.update(&hashCtx, &serverRandom)) != 0)
116 0 / 1: goto fail;
117 1 / 1: if ((err = SSLHashSHA1.update(&hashCtx, &signedParams)) != 0)
118 0 / 1: goto fail;
119 1 / 1: goto fail;
120 : if ((err = SSLHashSHA1.final(&hashCtx, &hashOut)) != 0)
121 : goto fail;
122 :
123 : err = sslRawVerify(ctx,
124 : ctx->peerPubKey,
125 : dataToSign, /* plaintext */
126 : dataToSignLen, /* plaintext l
127 : signature,
128 : signatureLen);
129 : if(err) {
130 : sslErrorLog("SSLDecodeSignedServerKeyExchange: sslRawVerify "
131 : "returned %d\n", (int)err);
132 : goto fail;
133 : }
134 :
135 : fail:
136 1 / 1: SSLFreeBuffer(&signedHashes);
137 1 / 1: SSLFreeBuffer(&hashCtx);
138 1 / 1: return err;
139 :
140 1 / 1: }
141 :
```

# Exercise: How to collect coverage?

```
if (x && y) {  
    s1;  
    s2;  
} else {  
    while(b) {  
        s3;  
    }  
}
```

# Coverage-Guided Fuzzing with AFL



2014+

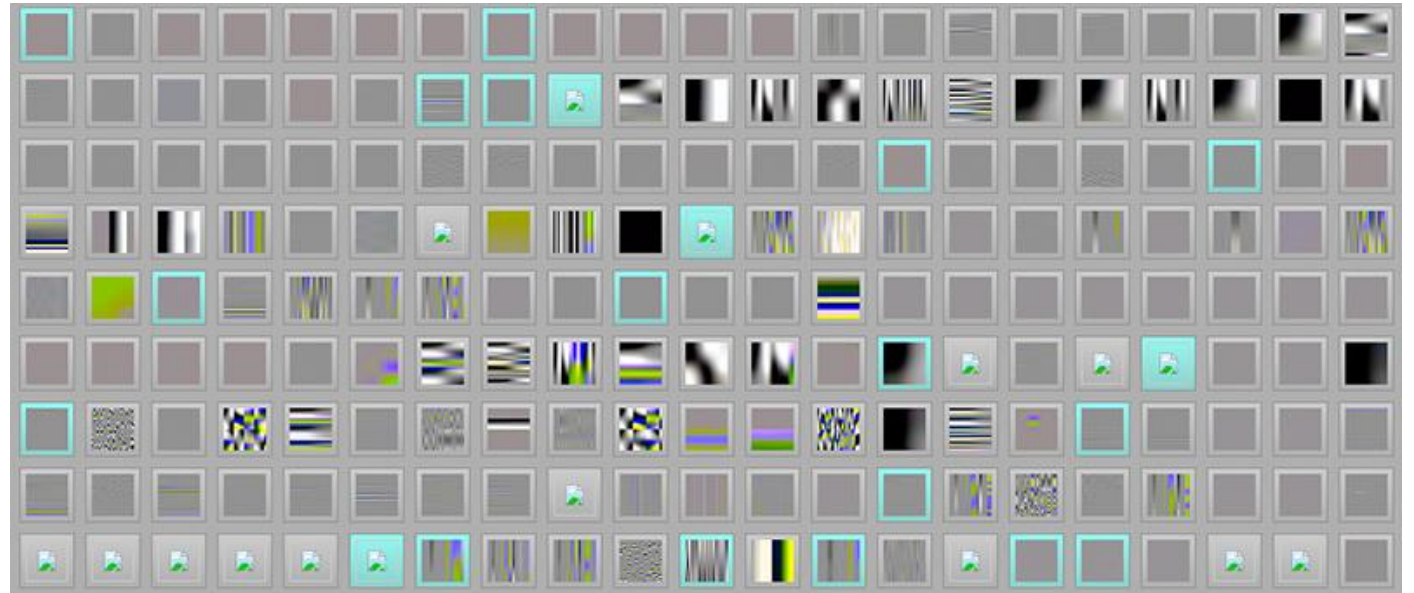
# Coverage-Guided Fuzzing with AFL

November 07, 2014

## Pulling JPEGs out of thin air

This is an interesting demonstration of the capabilities of [afl](#); I was actually pretty surprised that it worked!

```
$ mkdir in_dir  
$ echo 'hello' >in_dir/hello  
$ ./afl-fuzz -i in_dir -o out_dir ./jpeg-9a/djpeg
```



2014+

# Coverage-Guided Fuzzing with AFL

## The bug-o-rama trophy case

<http://lcamtuf.coredump.cx/afl/>

IJG jpeg <sup>1</sup>	libjpeg-turbo <sup>1 2</sup>	libpng <sup>1</sup>
libtiff <sup>1 2 3 4 5</sup>	mozjpeg <sup>1</sup>	PHP <sup>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8</sup>
Mozilla Firefox <sup>1 2 3 4</sup>	Internet Explorer <sup>1 2 3 4</sup>	Apple Safari <sup>1</sup>
Adobe Flash / PCRE <sup>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</sup>	sqlite <sup>1 2 3 4...</sup>	OpenSSL <sup>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</sup>
LibreOffice <sup>1 2 3 4</sup>	poppler <sup>1 2...</sup>	freetype <sup>1 2</sup>
GnuTLS <sup>1</sup>	GnuPG <sup>1 2 3 4</sup>	OpenSSH <sup>1 2 3 4 5</sup>
PuTTY <sup>1 2</sup>	ntpd <sup>1 2</sup>	nginx <sup>1 2 3</sup>
bash (post-Shellshock) <sup>1 2</sup>	tcpdump <sup>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9</sup>	JavaScriptCore <sup>1 2 3 4</sup>
pdfium <sup>1 2</sup>	ffmpeg <sup>1 2 3 4 5</sup>	libmatroska <sup>1</sup>
libarchive <sup>1 2 3 4 5 6 ...</sup>	wireshark <sup>1 2 3</sup>	ImageMagick <sup>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 ...</sup>
BIND <sup>1 2 3 ...</sup>	QEMU <sup>1 2</sup>	lcms <sup>1</sup>



# ClusterFuzz @ Chromium

bugs chromium New issue All issues label:ClusterFuzz -status:Duplicate

1 - 100 of 25423 Next List

ID	Pri	M	Stars	ReleaseBlock	Component	Status	Owner
1133812	1	---	2	---	Blink>GetUserMedia>Webcam	Untriaged	---
1133763	1	---	1	---	---	Untriaged	---
1133701	1	---	1	---	Blink>JavaScript	Untriaged	---
1133254	1	---	2	---	---	Untriaged	---
1133124	1	---	1	---	---	Untriaged	---
1133024	2	---	3	---	Internals>Network	Started	dmcardle@ch
1132958	1	---	2	---	UI>Accessibility, Blink>Accessibility	Assigned	sin...@chromi
1132907	2	---	2	---	Blink>JavaScript>GC	Assigned	dinfuehr@chr

# Challenging Problems

- Fuzzing heuristics
  - Mutation: Which input to mutate? How many times? Which mutations?
  - Feedback: What to instrument? How to keep overhead low?
- Oracles
  - What is a bug? Crash? Silent overflow? Infinite loop? Race condition? Undefined behavior? How do we know when we have found a bug?
- Debugging
  - Reproducibility
  - Crash triaging
  - Input minimization
- Fuzzing roadblocks
  - Magic bytes, checksums (see PNG, SSL)
  - Dependencies in binary inputs (e.g. length of chunks, indexes into tables – see PNG)
  - Inputs with complex syntax and semantics (e.g. XML, JSON, C++)
  - Stateful applications

# Oracles: Sanitizers

- Address Sanitizer (ASAN) \*\*\*
- LeakSanitizer (comes with ASAN)
- Thread Sanitizer (TSAN)
- Undefined-behavior Sanitizer (UBSAN)

<https://github.com/google/sanitizers>

# AddressSanitizer <https://github.com/google/sanitizers/wiki/AddressSanitizer>

Compile with ``clang -fsanitize=address``

Asan is a memory error detector for C/C++. It finds:

- Use after free (dangling pointer dereference)
- Heap buffer overflow
- Stack buffer overflow
- Global buffer overflow
- Use after return
- Use after scope
- Initialization order bugs
- Memory leaks

# AddressSanitizer

```
int get_element(int* a, int i) {  
    return a[i];  
}
```

```
int get_element(int* a, int i) {  
    if (a == NULL) abort();  
    return a[i];  
}
```

```
int get_element(int* a, int i) {  
    if (a == NULL) abort();  
    region = get_allocation(a);  
    if (in_stack(region)) {  
        if (popped(region)) abort();  
        ...  
    }  
    if (in_heap(region)) { ... }  
    return a[i];  
}
```

```
int get_element(int* a, int i) {  
    if (a == NULL) abort();  
    region = get_allocation(a);  
    if (in_heap(region)) {  
        low, high = get_bounds(region);  
        if ((a + i) < low || (a + i) > high) {  
            abort();  
        }  
    }  
    return a[i];  
}
```

Can we go beyond coverage and crashes?  
(recent-ish research results)

# Is code coverage a good measure for test-suite effectiveness?

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a * 2;  
    return x == b;  
}
```

```
void test_even() {  
    assert(is_even(4) == true);  
}
```

✓ 100% coverage (line, stmt, branch, path, etc.)

# *Mutation testing* measures test effectiveness on artificial bugs

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a * 2;  
    return x == b;  
}
```

```
void test_even() {  
    assert(is_even(4) == true);  
}
```

Kills mutant 1 & 3 but not 2

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a * 2;  
    return x != b;  
}
```

Mutant 1

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a * 2;  
    return b == b;  
}
```

Mutant 2

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a * 2;  
    return x == a;  
}
```

Mutant 3



# *Mutation testing* measures test effectiveness on artificial bugs

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a * 2;  
    return x == b;  
}
```

```
void test_even() {  
    assert(is_even(4) == true);  
    assert(is_even(1) == false);  
}
```

Kills mutants 1--3

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a * 2;  
    return x != b;  
}
```

Mutant 1

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a * 2;  
    return b == b;  
}
```

Mutant 2

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a * 2;  
    return x == a;  
}
```

Mutant 3

# *Mutation testing* measures test effectiveness on artificial bugs

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a * 2;  
    return x == b;  
}
```

```
void test_even() {  
    assert(is_even(4) == true);  
    assert(is_even(1) == false);  
}
```

Does not kill mutant 4!

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a + 2;  
    return x == b;  
}
```

Mutant 4

# *Mutation testing* measures test effectiveness on artificial bugs

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a * 2;  
    return x == b;  
}
```

```
void test_even() {  
    assert(is_even(4) == true);  
    assert(is_even(1) == false);  
    assert(is_even(2) == true);  
}
```

Kills mutants 1--4

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a + 2;  
    return x == b;  
}
```

Mutant 4

# *Mutation testing* measures test effectiveness on artificial bugs

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a * 2;  
    return x == b;  
}
```

```
void test_even() {  
    assert(is_even(4) == true);  
    assert(is_even(1) == false);  
    assert(is_even(2) == true);  
}
```

Does not kill mutant 5

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a + 2;  
    return x == b;  
}
```

Mutant 4

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a + a;  
    return x == b;  
}
```

Mutant 5

# *Mutation testing* measures test effectiveness on artificial bugs

```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a * 2;  
    return x == b;  
}
```

**Impossible to kill mutant 5!!!**

(Mutant 5 is equivalent to original program)

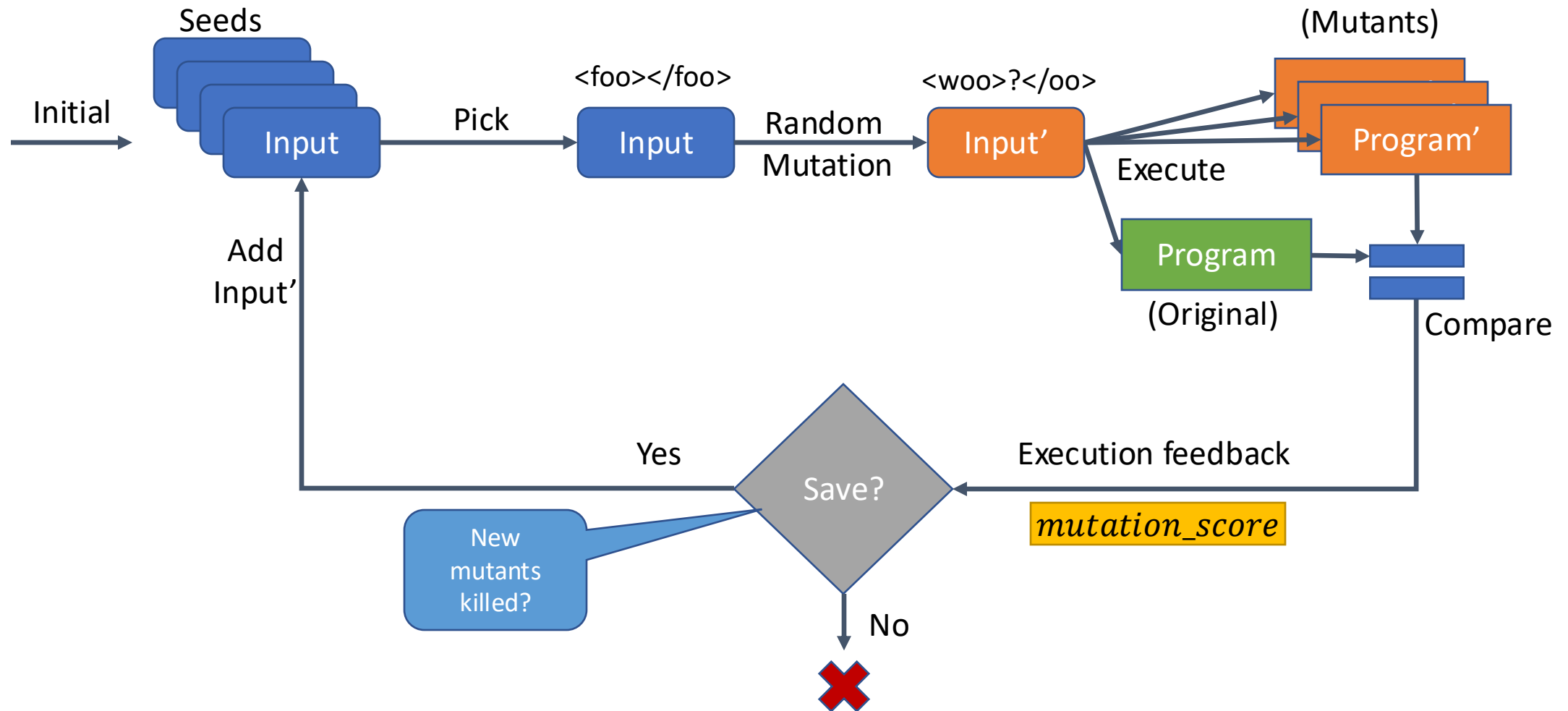
```
bool is_even(int x) {  
    int a = x / 2;  
    int b = a + a;  
    return x == b;  
}
```

Mutant 5

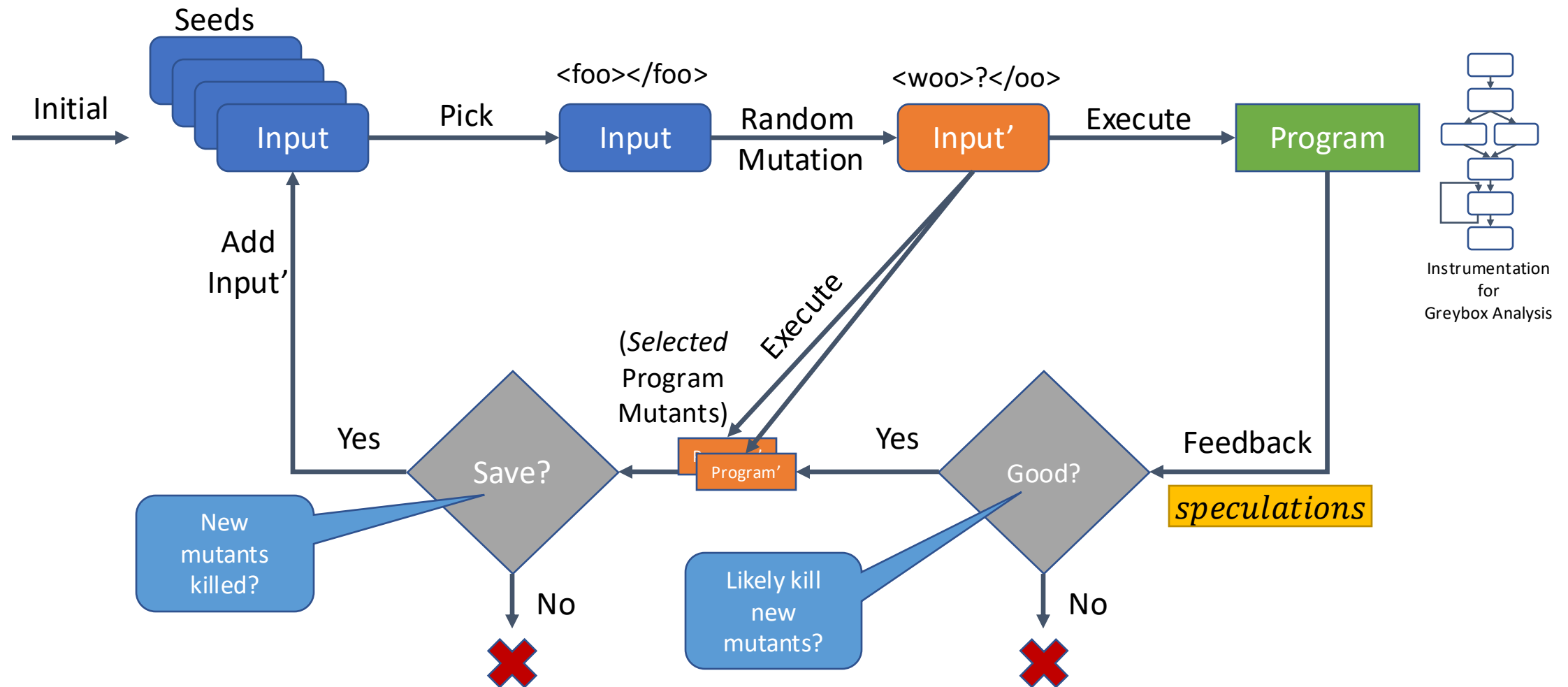
# New Idea for Fuzz Testing: Mu2 – Mutation-based Mutation-guided Grey-box Fuzzing

Mutates *both* the inputs and the program

# Mutation-analysis guided fuzzing



# Speculative mutation analysis





# Speculative mutation analysis (PIE model)

- Let  $P$  be a program such that its output is  $P(X) = Y$
- Let mutant  $P'$  be “change ``z := a + b`` to ``z := a - b`` at Line 42”
- For a given fuzzer-generated input  $X$ ,
  - If  $X$  does not cover line 42, the mutant cannot be killed [Execution]
  - If  $X$  executes line 42 but in all cases ``a + b == a - b`` (e.g., say ``b=0``) then the mutant cannot be killed [Infection]
  - If  $X$  executes line 42 but in all cases the way ``z`` is used does not change (e.g., the program only checks if ``z > k`` and ``b > 0``) then the mutant cannot be killed [Propagation]
- If either of P-I-E analyses tell us mutant is unkillable, skip it!
- Great savings in fuzzing efficiency! (see ISSTA'23 paper for details)