Bjarne Steensgaard

Points-to Analysis in Almost Linear Time

Presented by Abdul Dakkak

Overview

- * Definitions
- Algorithm Overview
- Language Overview
- Algorithm Details
- * Results
- * Conclusion

Definitions

Definitions

- * A variable *p points-to* a value *v* if *p*'s value may contain the address of *v*
- * Two values p and q alias if they may point-to the same variable (if $pts(p) \cap pts(q) \neq \{\}$)
- * The *points-to set* for p contains the set of variables which p may point-to ($v \in pts(p)$ iff p may point-to v)

Definitions

- * An analysis is *flow sensitive* if it performs the analysis at each program point and follows the instruction flow (keeps track of branches, definition kills, ...)
- * An analysis is *context sensitive* if keeps flow along different call paths separate (considers calling context when performing the analysis)
- * An analysis if *field sensitive* if it distinguishes between elements in a field (**struct** in C)

Unification

- * A unification algorithm finds a set of replacement rules that make two terms equal
 - * e.x. if f(g) = f(a) then $g \rightarrow a$ is a substitution that makes the two terms equal
- * For Steensgard, unification means union

Pointer Analysis Uses

- * Pointer analysis facilitates compiler optimizations
- * Useful only when you know that two variables *must not* alias

CSE: If *p aliases a or b then we cannot replace the recomputation of a+b with r.

```
add $r, $a, $b
sw $r, ($p)
add $g, $a, $b
```

Constant Propagation: If p aliases x then we cannot propagate the value of x via r.

Steensgaard's Algorithm

- * Flow insensitive, interprocedural, context insensitive unification based pointer analysis
- Performs pointer analysis in near linear time
- * Traverse the instructions from top to bottom in a single pass

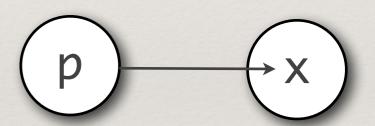
- Perform the analysis instruction by instruction
- * If p = &x then p points-to x
- * If p = q, then $pts(p) = pts(q) = ptsold(p) \cup ptsold(q)$

$$p = &x$$

$$q = &y$$

$$p = q$$

$$s = &p$$



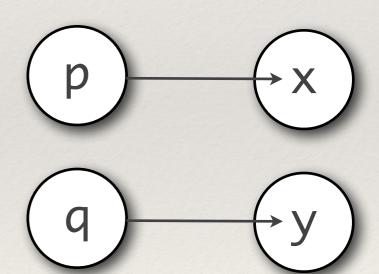
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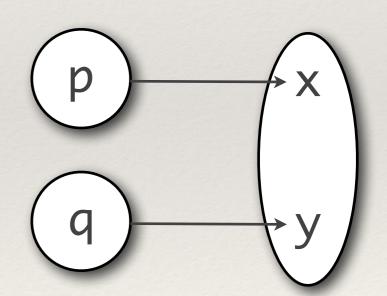
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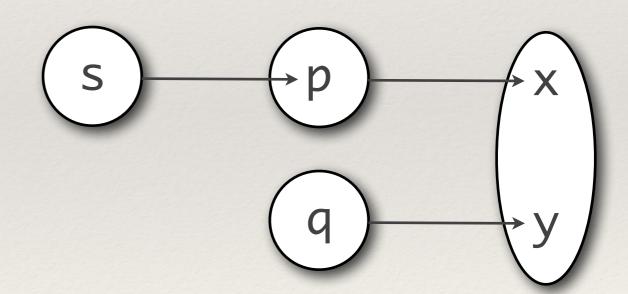
- * Perform the analysis instruction by instruction
- * If p = &x then p points-to x
- * If p = q, then $pts(p) = pts(q) = pts_{old}(p) \cup pts_{old}(q)$

$$p = &x$$

$$q = &y$$

$$p = q$$

$$s = &p$$



Steensgaard's Language

Steensgaard's Language

- Represent C programs as values and operations on addresses of these values
- Function can have multiple return values
- Distinction between function calls and function operations on addresses

Translating into Steensgaard's Language

Variables within a function scope have unique names

```
int addNumbers(int a, int b) {
  int res = a + b;
  return res;
}
```

```
addNumbers = fun(a0, b0) -> (res0)
res0 = a0 + b0;
```

Translating into Steensgaard's Language

Structures and their accessors are collapsed

```
struct Point_t {
    int x, y;
};
...
struct Point_t pt;
pt.x = 3;
pt.y = 4;
```

```
pt = 3
pt = 4
```

Translating into Steensgaard's Language

Pointer operations are normalized by introducing temporary variables or function calls

```
p = **a;
q = p + 1;
```

```
p0 = *a

p = *p0

q = add(p, 1)
```

Algorithm Details

Steensgaard's Algorithm

- * Flow insensitive, interprocedural, context insensitive unification based pointer analysis
- * Performs pointer analysis in near linear time
- * Traverse the instructions from top to bottom in a single pass

Modeling Values

- * Model values as pointers to locations or functions
 - * Value: $\alpha = \tau \times \lambda$
 - * Pointer/Address data type: $\tau = ref(\alpha) \mid \bot$
 - * Pointer to function: $\lambda = lam(\alpha_1,...)(\alpha_k,...) \mid \bot$
- * Each location in the program either contains a function or data
- * Keeps space usage to O(n) using this representation
- * Impose partial order on memory locations

Partial Ordering

- - $(t_1 \leq t_2) \Leftrightarrow (t_1 = \bot) \lor (t_1 = t_2)$
 - $(t_1 \times t_2) \trianglelefteq (t_3 \times t_4) \Leftrightarrow (t_1 \trianglelefteq t_3) \wedge (t_2 \trianglelefteq t_4)$
- * Type type of each type variable is initially assumed to be $ref(\bot \times \bot)$

Why Partial Ordering Matters

```
A \vdash x : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha)
A \vdash y : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha)
A \vdash welltyped(x = y)
```

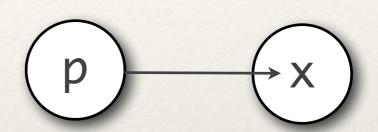


Would incorrectly alias x and y

```
p = &x
q = &y
p = q
s = &p
```

* Values are initialized to $ref(\bot \times \bot)$

x : t0 t : t1



$$A \vdash x : \mathbf{ref}(\tau \times \underline{\hspace{0.1cm}})$$

$$A \vdash y : \tau$$

$$A \vdash welltyped(x = \&y)$$

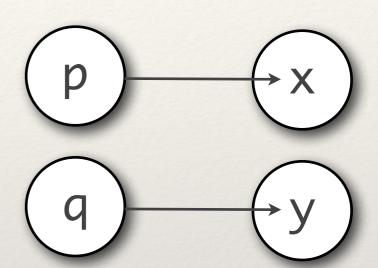
$$x : t0 = ref(\bot x \bot)$$

 $t : t1 = ref(\bot x \bot)$
 $p : t2 = ref(t0 x \bot)$

$$A \vdash x : \mathbf{ref}(\tau \times \underline{\hspace{0.1cm}})$$

$$A \vdash y : \tau$$

$$A \vdash welltyped(x = \&y)$$



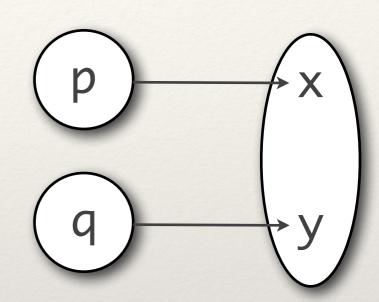
$$x : t0 = ref(\bot \times \bot)$$
 $t : t1 = ref(\bot \times \bot)$
 $p : t2 = ref(t0 \times \bot)$
 $q : t3 = ref(t1 \times \bot)$

$$A \vdash x : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha_1)$$

$$A \vdash y : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha_2)$$

$$\alpha_2 \trianglelefteq \alpha_1$$

$$A \vdash welltyped(x = y)$$

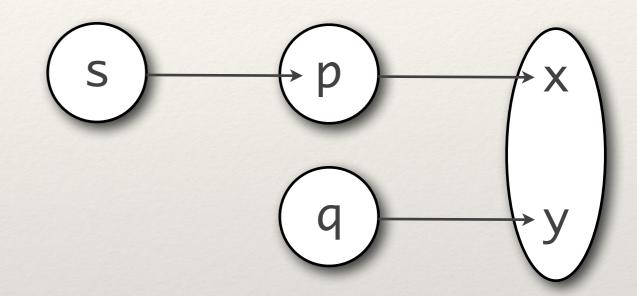


```
x : t0 = ref(\bot \times \bot)

t : t0 = ref(\bot \times \bot)

p : t2 = ref(t0 \times \bot)

q : t3 = ref(t0 \times \bot)
```



$$A \vdash x : \mathbf{ref}(\tau \times \underline{\hspace{0.1cm}})$$

$$A \vdash y : \tau$$

$$A \vdash welltyped(x = \&y)$$

x :
$$t0 = ref(\bot x \bot)$$

t : $t0 = ref(\bot x \bot)$
p : $t2 = ref(t0 x \bot)$
q : $t3 = ref(t0 x \bot)$
s : $t4 = ref(t2 x \bot)$

Typing Functions

```
p = &x
q = &y
id = fun(a) -> (r)
    r = a
x = id(p)
y = id(q)
```

```
x: t0 = ref(\bot \times \bot)

y: t1 = ref(\bot \times \bot)

p: t2 = ref(t0 \times \bot)

q: t3 = ref(t1 \times \bot)

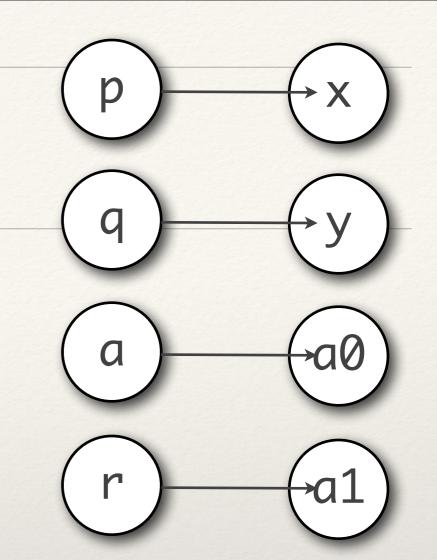
a0: t4 = ref(\bot \times \bot)

a1: t5 = ref(\bot \times \bot)

id: t6 = ref(\bot \times \bot)

a : t7 = ref(t4)

r : t8 = ref(t5)
```



$$A \vdash \mathsf{x} : \mathbf{ref}(_ \times \mathbf{lam}(\alpha_1 \dots \alpha_n)(\alpha_{n+1} \dots \alpha_{n+m}))$$

$$A \vdash \mathsf{f}_i : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha_i)$$

$$A \vdash \mathsf{r}_j : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha_{n+j})$$

$$\forall s \in S^* : A \vdash welltyped(s)$$

$$A \vdash welltyped(\mathsf{x} = \mathsf{fun}(\mathsf{f}_1 \dots \mathsf{f}_n) \rightarrow (\mathsf{r}_1 \dots \mathsf{r}_m) S^*)$$

Typing Functions

```
p = &x
q = &y
id = fun(a) -> (r)
    r = a
x = id(p)
y = id(q)
```

```
x: t0 = ref(\bot \times \bot)

y: t1 = ref(\bot \times \bot)

p: t2 = ref(t0 \times \bot)

q: t3 = ref(t1 \times \bot)

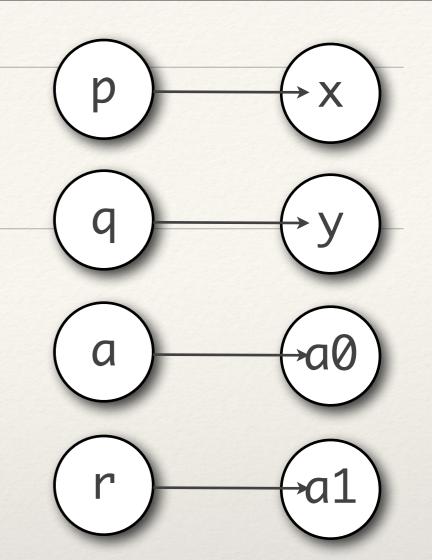
a0: t4 = ref(\bot \times \bot)

a1: t5 = ref(\bot \times \bot)

id: t6 = ref(\bot \times \bot)

id: t6 = ref(\bot \times \bot)

r: t8 = ref(t4)
```



```
A \vdash \mathsf{x}_{j} : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha'_{n+j})
A \vdash \mathsf{p} : \mathbf{ref}(\_ \times \mathbf{lam}(\alpha_{1} \dots \alpha_{n})(\alpha_{n+1} \dots \alpha_{n+m}))
A \vdash \mathsf{y}_{i} : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha'_{i})
\forall i \in [1 \dots n] : \alpha'_{i} \trianglelefteq \alpha_{i}
\forall j \in [1 \dots m] : \alpha_{n+j} \trianglelefteq \alpha'_{n+j}
A \vdash welltyped(\mathsf{x}_{1} \dots \mathsf{x}_{m} = \mathsf{p}(\mathsf{y}_{1} \dots \mathsf{y}_{n}))
```

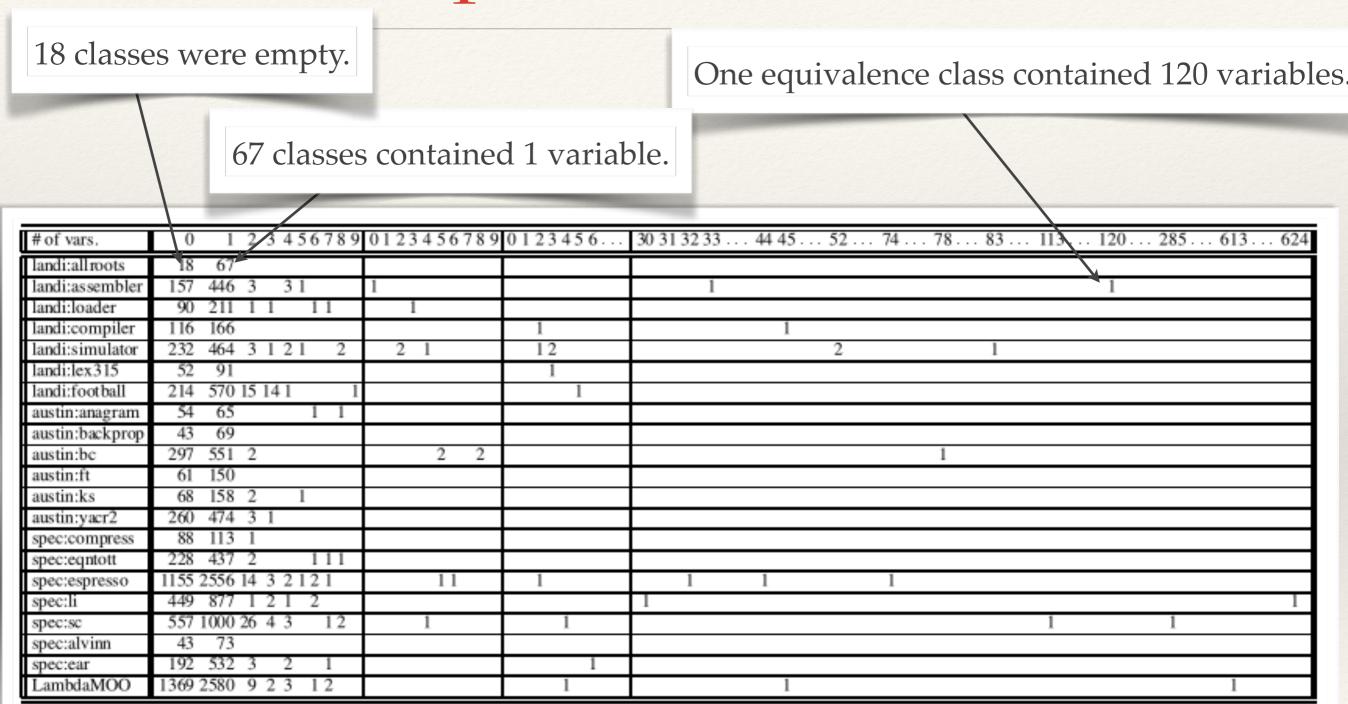
Steensgaard Unifies Function Arguments

- * If $t_1 \leq C$ and $t_2 \leq C$ then $t_1 = t_2$
 - * Recall $(t \le C) \Leftrightarrow (t = \bot) \lor (t = C)$
- * This means that if we call a function with different arguments, then we will unify the arguments
- * When run on real programs most pointers will alias each other.

```
memset(s, 0, sz);
memset(k, 0, sz);
strcmp(p, q);
free(s);
```

Results

Unoptimized Results



Conclusion

Author's Conclusions

- * First algorithm to scale to 100kLOC (previous methods only scaled to 10kLOC)
- Uses very little memory and performs the analysis in a reasonable amount of time

Conclusion

- * First algorithm to scale beyond 10kLOC
- * Previous state of the art pointer analysis was O(n^3)
- * Can be used as a first pass for pointer analysis, more precise algorithms can be used on the refined subset
- * SSA provides some flow sensitivity for pointer analysis
- Not used in practice because it unifies function arguments

Questions

Thank You

Backup Slides

```
A \vdash x : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha_1)
                     A \vdash y : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha_2)
             \alpha_2 \leq \alpha_1
A \vdash welltyped(x = y)
                 A \vdash x : \mathbf{ref}(\tau \times \_)
                           A \vdash \mathbf{y} : \tau
            A \vdash welltyped(x = \&y)
                    A \vdash x : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha_1)
          A \vdash y : \mathbf{ref}(\mathbf{ref}(\alpha_2) \times \_)
            \alpha_2 \leq \alpha_1
A \vdash welltyped(X = *Y)
                      A \vdash x : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha)
                    A \vdash y_i : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha_i)
\forall i \in [1 \dots n] : \alpha_i \leq \alpha

A \vdash welltyped(x = op(y_1 \dots y_n))
```

$$A \vdash \mathsf{x} : \mathbf{ref}(\mathbf{ref}(_) \times _)$$

$$A \vdash \mathsf{welltyped}(\mathsf{x} = \mathsf{allocate}(\mathsf{y}))$$

$$A \vdash \mathsf{x} : \mathbf{ref}(\mathbf{ref}(\alpha_1) \times _)$$

$$A \vdash \mathsf{y} : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha_2)$$

$$\alpha_2 \leq \alpha_1$$

$$A \vdash \mathsf{welltyped}(*\mathsf{x} = \mathsf{y})$$

$$A \vdash \mathsf{x} : \mathbf{ref}(_ \times \mathbf{lam}(\alpha_1 \dots \alpha_n)(\alpha_{n+1} \dots \alpha_{n+m}))$$

$$A \vdash \mathsf{f}_i : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha_i)$$

$$A \vdash \mathsf{f}_i : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha_i)$$

$$A \vdash \mathsf{r}_j : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha_{n+j})$$

$$\forall s \in S^* : A \vdash \mathsf{welltyped}(s)$$

$$A \vdash \mathsf{welltyped}(\mathsf{x} = \mathsf{fun}(\mathsf{f}_1 \dots \mathsf{f}_n) \rightarrow (\mathsf{r}_1 \dots \mathsf{r}_m) S^*)$$

$$A \vdash \mathsf{x}_j : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha'_{n+j})$$

$$A \vdash \mathsf{y}_i : \mathbf{ref}(\alpha'_i)$$

$$\forall i \in [1 \dots n] : \alpha'_i \leq \alpha_i$$

$$\forall j \in [1 \dots m] : \alpha_{n+j} \leq \alpha'_{n+j}$$

$$A \vdash \mathsf{welltyped}(\mathsf{x}_1 \dots \mathsf{x}_m = \mathsf{p}(\mathsf{y}_1 \dots \mathsf{y}_n))$$

Type Rules

Implementation

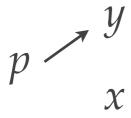
```
X = Y:
                                                                                           x = \text{fun}(f_1 \dots f_n) \rightarrow (r_1 \dots r_m) S^*:
    let ref(\tau_1 \times \lambda_1) = type(ecr(x))
                                                                                               let \mathbf{ref}(\_ \times \lambda) = \mathbf{type}(\mathbf{ecr}(\mathsf{x}))
         ref(\tau_2 \times \lambda_2) = type(ecr(y)) in
                                                                                                  if type(\lambda) = \bot then
       if \tau_1 \neq \tau_2 then cjoin(\tau_1, \tau_2)
                                                                                                      settype(\lambda, lam(\alpha_1 \dots \alpha_n)(\alpha_{n+1} \dots \alpha_{n+m}))
       if \lambda_1 \neq \lambda_2 then cjoin(\lambda_1, \lambda_2)
                                                                                                           ref(\alpha_i) = type(ecr(f_i)), for i \le n
x = &v:
                                                                                                           ref(\alpha_i) = type(ecr(r_{i-n})), for i > n
    let ref(\tau_1 \times \underline{\hspace{0.1cm}}) = type(ecr(x))
         \tau_2 = \mathbf{ecr}(y) in
                                                                                                      let lam(\alpha_1 \dots \alpha_n)(\alpha_{n+1} \dots \alpha_{n+m}) = type(\lambda) in
       if \tau_1 \neq \tau_2 then join(\tau_1, \tau_2)
                                                                                                         for i \in [1 \dots n] do
X = *Y:
                                                                                                            let \tau_1 \times \lambda_1 = \alpha_i
    let ref(\tau_1 \times \lambda_1) = type(ecr(x))
                                                                                                                  ref(\tau_2 \times \lambda_2) = type(ecr(f_i)) in
         ref(\tau_2 \times \underline{\hspace{0.1cm}}) = type(ecr(y)) in
                                                                                                               if \tau_1 \neq \tau_2 then join(\tau_2, \tau_1)
       if type(\tau_2) = \bot then
                                                                                                               if \lambda_1 \neq \lambda_2 then join(\lambda_2, \lambda_1)
           settype(\tau_2, ref(\tau_1 \times \lambda_1))
                                                                                                         for i \in [1 \dots m] do
       else
                                                                                                            let \tau_1 \times \lambda_1 = \alpha_{n+i}
          let ref(\tau_3 \times \lambda_3) = type(\tau_2) in
                                                                                                                  ref(\tau_2 \times \lambda_2) = type(ecr(r_i)) in
             if \tau_1 \neq \tau_3 then cjoin(\tau_1, \tau_3)
                                                                                                               if \tau_1 \neq \tau_2 then join(\tau_1, \tau_2)
             if \lambda_1 \neq \lambda_3 then cjoin(\lambda_1, \lambda_3)
                                                                                                               if \lambda_1 \neq \lambda_2 then join(\lambda_1, \lambda_2)
X = op(y_1 \dots y_n):
                                                                                           x_1 \dots x_m = p(y_1 \dots y_n):
    for i \in [1 \dots n] do
                                                                                               let ref(_\times \lambda) = type(ecr(p)) in
       let ref(\tau_1 \times \lambda_1) = type(ecr(x))
                                                                                                  if type(\lambda) = \bot then
            ref(\tau_2 \times \lambda_2) = type(ecr(y_i)) in
                                                                                                      settype(\lambda, lam(\alpha_1 \dots \alpha_n)(\alpha_{n+1} \dots \alpha_{n+m}))
          if \tau_1 \neq \tau_2 then cjoin(\tau_1, \tau_2)
                                                                                                      where
          if \lambda_1 \neq \lambda_2 then cjoin(\lambda_1, \lambda_2)
                                                                                                           \alpha_i = \tau_i \times \lambda_i
                                                                                                            [\tau_i, \lambda_i] = MakeECR(2)
x = allocate(y):
                                                                                                  let lam(\alpha_1 \dots \alpha_n)(\alpha_{n+1} \dots \alpha_{n+m}) = type(\lambda) in
   let ref(\tau \times \underline{\ }) = type(ecr(x)) in
                                                                                                     for i \in [1 \dots n] do
       if type(\tau) = \bot then
                                                                                                        let \tau_1 \times \lambda_1 = \alpha_i
          let [e_1, e_2] = MakeECR(2) in
                                                                                                              ref(\tau_2 \times \lambda_2) = type(ecr(y_i)) in
             settype(\tau, ref(e_1 \times e_2))
                                                                                                            if \tau_1 \neq \tau_2 then cjoin(\tau_1, \tau_2)
*X = Y:
                                                                                                            if \lambda_1 \neq \lambda_2 then cjoin(\lambda_1, \lambda_2)
    let ref(\tau_1 \times \underline{\hspace{0.1cm}}) = type(ecr(x))
                                                                                                     for i \in [1 \dots m] do
         ref(\tau_2 \times \lambda_2) = type(ecr(y))
                                                                                                         let \tau_1 \times \lambda_1 = \alpha_{n+1}
       if type(\tau_1) = \bot then
                                                                                                              \operatorname{ref}(\tau_2 \times \lambda_2) = \operatorname{type}(\operatorname{ecr}(\mathsf{x}_i)) in
           settype(\tau_1, ref(\tau_2 \times \lambda_2))
                                                                                                            if \tau_1 \neq \tau_2 then cjoin(\tau_2, \tau_1)
       else
                                                                                                            if \lambda_1 \neq \lambda_2 then cjoin(\lambda_2, \lambda_1)
           let ref(\tau_3 \times \lambda_3) = type(\tau_1) in
             if \tau_2 \neq \tau_3 then cjoin(\tau_3, \tau_2)
             if \lambda_2 \neq \lambda_3 then cjoin(\lambda_3, \lambda_2)
```

```
settype(e, t):
                                                                                                                    join(e_1, e_2):
    type(e) \leftarrow t
                                                                                                                        let t_1 = type(e_1)
    for x \in \mathbf{pending}(e) do \mathbf{join}(e, x)
                                                                                                                             t_2 = \mathbf{type}(e_2)
                                                                                                                             e = \operatorname{ecr-union}(e_1, e_2) in
                                                                                                                           if t_1 = \bot then
cjoin(e_1, e_2):
                                                                                                                               type(e) \leftarrow t_2
    if type(e_2) = \bot then
                                                                                                                              if t_2 = \bot then
       pending(e_2) \leftarrow \{e_1\} \cup pending(e_2)
                                                                                                                                  pending(e) \leftarrow pending(e_1) \cup
    else
                                                                                                                                                           pending(e_2)
       \mathbf{join}(e_1, e_2)
                                                                                                                               else
                                                                                                                                  for x \in \mathbf{pending}(e_1) do \mathbf{join}(e, x)
unify(ref(\tau_1 \times \lambda_1), ref(\tau_2 \times \lambda_2)):
                                                                                                                           else
    if \tau_1 \neq \tau_2 then join(\tau_1, \tau_2)
                                                                                                                               type(e) \leftarrow t_1
    if \lambda_1 \neq \lambda_2 then join(\lambda_1, \lambda_2)
                                                                                                                              if t_2 = \bot then
                                                                                                                                  for x \in \mathbf{pending}(e_2) do \mathbf{join}(e, x)
unify(lam(\alpha_1 \dots \alpha_n)(\alpha_{n+1} \dots \alpha_{n+m}),
lam(\alpha'_1 \dots \alpha'_n)(\alpha'_{n+1} \dots \alpha'_{n+m}))
                                                                                                                               else
                                                                                                                                  \mathbf{unify}(t_1, t_2)
    for i \in [1 \dots (n+m)] do
    let \tau_1 \times \lambda_1 = \alpha_i
         \tau_2 \times \lambda_2 = \alpha_i' in
       if \tau_1 \neq \tau_2 then join(\tau_1, \tau_2)
       if \lambda_1 \neq \lambda_2 then join(\lambda_1, \lambda_2)
```

Unification

Flow Sensitive vs Insensitive Analysis

Flow Sensitive: Pointer analysis follows the CFG. Computes the points-to set at all program points.



Flow Insensitive: Pointer analysis ignores the order of statements in the program.

$$p < \frac{y}{x}$$

```
x = 1;
y = 2;
p = &x;
p = &y;
```

SSA Remedies Some Flow Insensitivity

Flow Sensitive: Pointer analysis follows the CFG. Computes the points-to set at all program points.

$$p1 \longrightarrow y$$

$$p0 \longrightarrow x$$

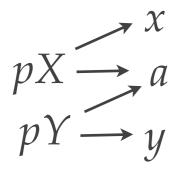
Flow Insensitive: Pointer analysis ignores the order of statements in the program.

$$p1 \longrightarrow y$$
$$p0 \longrightarrow x$$

```
x = 1;
y = 2;
p0 = &x;
p1 = &y;
```

Context Sensitive vs Insensitive Analysis

Context Sensitive: Considers calling context when performing *points-to* analysis.



Context Insensitive: Produces spurious aliases.

```
pX \xrightarrow{x} a
pY \xrightarrow{y} y
```

```
void * id(void * a) {
   return a;
void fa() {
   int x = 1;
   void * pX = &x;
   pX = id(pX);
void fb() {
   int y = 1;
   void * pY = &y;
   pY = id(pY);
```