

Code Deobfuscation using Neural Program Learning Models

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Code deobfuscation has gained attention in research for its wide applicability in forgery detection, privacy, and security. Several approaches have been proposed in past research that focus on identifier name recovery from a minified code or extracting information from obfuscated code. Most of them, use an statistical approach to deobfuscate code and get a good performance. In this research, we study neural networks and more specific neural program learning models on this task. We focus on Neural Turing Machine as a model that has been proven to work well on remembering information using its memory. We build the network using NTM, prepare an existing data set, and evaluate the network with various parameters against the data set.

CCS Concepts: • **Computer systems organization** → **Embedded systems**; *Redundancy*; Robotics; • **Networks** → Network reliability.

Additional Key Words and Phrases: datasets, neural networks, gaze detection, text tagging

1 INTRODUCTION

One of the trending methods for improving software security and hiding program codes from users is code obfuscation. Some codes are meant to run on the browsers and are widely used to create dynamic content in web-pages. Many content providers try to hide the code from the user to improve their security and obscure the real function of code. Using a simple obfuscation technique, the providers make their program secure against attackers and are able to inject malicious code that can help advertisement, tracking the user, collecting user information, cross-site scripting attack, etc.

Obfuscation targets changing the code in a way that makes it hard for the human to understand what the code is actually doing by methods like changing variable/function names, altering execution order, loop unrolling, character encoding, etc. In contrast, code deobfuscation methods try to gain as much information from obfuscated codes and extract the program from unreadable code.

Using an NPL model for solving this problem and how it performs can be an interesting study. NPL models use neural networks which are trained to learn and replicate code behavior, produce code from input/outputs, or complete previously written code. Code deobfuscation is an application that can be extended to a program learning task. Specifically, we can treat obfuscated identifier names as unknown holes in a program and try to recover them using an NPL model.

In this research, we use neural program learning methods to recover identifier (variables and functions) names from obfuscated program code. We study some currently used obfuscation and deobfuscation methods and how much identifier names the current approaches to deobfuscation can predict. Then, we use Neural Turing Machine as our program learning model and train it using available data sets. Finally, we evaluate our work and try to optimize the network by altering and tuning parameters to improve the performance.

The main contributions of this work are:

- Application of neural program learning models on code deobfuscation task.
- Creating a neural activation data set usable in neural networks based on existing code data sets.

- Evaluating and comparing neural program learning models against traditional models and previous research for this task.
- Extending an existing Neural Turing Machine implementation[] to work with our model¹.

Outline In the remainder of this report, we discuss basic background knowledge required for studying this work in section 2. Then, we review and analyze the attacks which are possible to be launched against SGX enclave using side-channel information in section 3. In section 4, we introduce several defenses proposed by past research works, and in section 5 we analyze and compare the effectiveness of these defense methods in terms of security and performance. Finally, we conclude the research in section 6.

2 RELATED WORK

Research on code deobfuscation has been a topic of interest during the recent years. Jiang et al. have proposed a method using Convolutional Neural Networks for detecting obfuscated JavaScript code [?]. Raychev et al. have developed a statistical model for recovering program properties (variable and function names) from obfuscated JavaScript code [?] and have implemented a currently online website named JSNice [?] which can predict the correct names for 63% of identifiers from obfuscated code for their test data. They also have designed Nice2Predict [?] which extracts statistical info out of obfuscated JavaScript code and is a base for JSNice. Raychev et al. also have done research on code completion and program synthesis [?] which is relevant to our problem. Bichsel et. al. have developed and tested a statistical method for deobfuscating Android applications [?] with 79.1% success in recovering program identifier names. Another relevant research is [?] which studies filling program missing code slots using the behavior trained from the program input/output data. Lin et al. have done relevant research on translating natural language templates to program templates using Recurrent Neural Networks [?].

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 Neural Program Learning

from slides: Neural networks that can be taught programmatic behavior, to perform computations more typically associated with conventional computers

3.2 Code Deobfuscation

3.3 Neural Turing Machine

The idea behind Neural Turing Machines is to use an external memory to extend the capabilities of recurrent neural networks. The external memory and the network can then interact with attentional processes.

As shown in Fig. 1, NTM is composed of two main components: the network controller and a memory bank which is basically a matrix used to store and retrieve information. In each time step, the network gets an input and produces an output. But NTM is also capable to perform read and write operations and alter the memory matrix. Like traditional Turing machines, NTM uses the term "head" to refer to a specific memory location.

For network training it is preferred to use backpropagation and an optimizer like stochastic gradient decent (SGD) or Adam. For this purpose, NTM controller uses "blurry" reads and writes to interact with the memory, leading to the network being differentiable. That means,

¹<https://github.com/aminfallahi/Code-Deobfuscation-using-NTM>

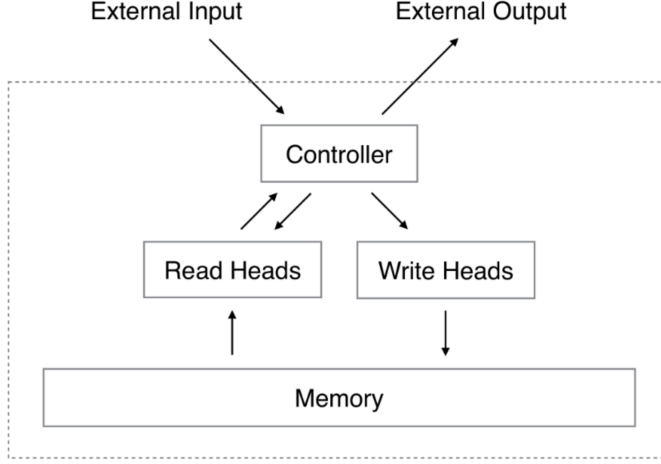


Fig. 1. Neural Turing Machine architecture.

the controller uses a greater or lesser degree to read the whole memory instead of addressing and accessing each single element in memory. This is possible using an attention vector to focus on a part of memory and ignore the rest.

3.3.1 Memory. A memory M_t is a $N \times M$ two dimensional matrix at time t , where N indicates the number of memory locations, each storing a vector of size M .

3.3.2 Read. NTM uses a weighted sum of the memory for reading, where w_t is a weight vector of size N at time t :

$$r_t \leftarrow \sum_i w_t(i) M_t(i) \quad (1)$$

3.3.3 Write. A write operation is composed of an erase and an add operation. A vector e_t of size N is used for erasing and another vector a_t is used for the add operation. Let \tilde{M}_t be the intermediate memory after erase operation on M_{t-1} and $\mathbf{1}$ be a vector of ones:

$$\tilde{M}_t(i) \leftarrow M_{t-1}(i)[1 - w_t(i)e_t] \quad (2)$$

Then, if both w_t and e_t at location i are one, the memory location will reset to zero and if both are zero the memory will not be touched.

Finally, the add vector a_t is used to perform the add operation on the intermediate memory state and produce the final memory matrix:

$$M_t(i) \leftarrow \tilde{M}_t(i) + w_t(i)a_t \quad (3)$$

3.3.4 Addressing. NTM produces the weighting vectors for read and write operations by combining content-based and location-based addressing mechanisms.

The content-based addressing compares a key vector k_t with each $M_t(i)$ vector using cosine similarity measure and produces a normalized weight vector w_t^c based on the similarity and a key strength vector β_t which is used for increasing or decreasing focus precision:

$$w_t^c(i) \leftarrow \frac{\exp(\beta_t K[k_t, M_t(i)])}{\sum_j \exp(\beta_t K[k_t, M_t(j)])} \quad (4)$$

Where using cosine similarity:

$$K[u, v] = \frac{u \cdot v}{\|u\| \cdot \|v\|} \quad (5)$$

For location-based addressing a scalar parameter $g_t \in (0, 1)$ is introduced which is called interpolation gate and is used to mix w_t^c and w_{t-1} to produce the gated weighting w_t^g . This lets the controller know when to use which kind of memory addressing:

$$w_t^g \leftarrow g_t w_t^c + (1 - g_t) w_{t-1} \quad (6)$$

NTM controller uses circular convolutional shift with all index arithmetic computed modulo N with a shift vector s_t to change the focus to another memory location and produce the shifted weight vector $\tilde{w}_t(i)$:

$$\tilde{w}_t(i) \leftarrow \sum_{j=0}^{N-1} w_t^g(j) s_t(i - j) \quad (7)$$

Finally, a scalar γ is used for sharpening the final weighting and preventing it from blurring:

$$w_t(i) \leftarrow \frac{\tilde{w}_t(i)^{\gamma_t}}{\sum_j \tilde{w}_t(j)^{\gamma_t}} \quad (8)$$

Figure 2 shows the flow of addressing mechanism.

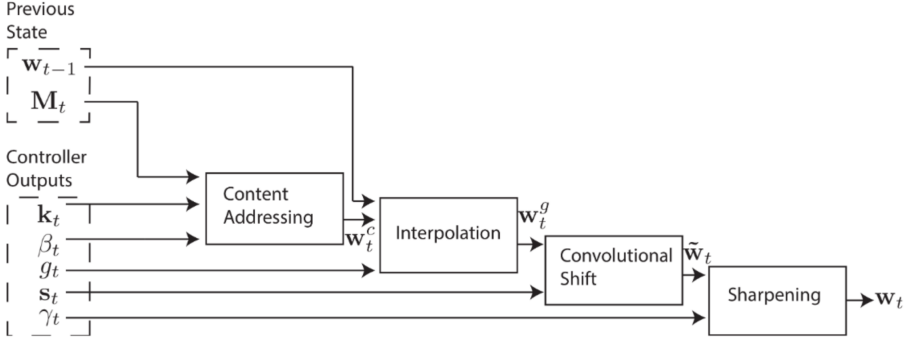


Fig. 2. Flow diagram of Neural Turing Machine addressing mechanism.

4 DATASET PREPARATION

5 IMPLEMENTATION

6 EVALUATION

7 DISCUSSION

8 FUTURE WORK

9 CONCLUSION

10 TEMPLATE OVERVIEW

As noted in the introduction, the “acmart” document class can be used to prepare many different kinds of documentation — a double-blind initial submission of a full-length technical paper, a two-page SIGGRAPH Emerging Technologies abstract, a “camera-ready” journal

article, a SIGCHI Extended Abstract, and more — all by selecting the appropriate *template style* and *template parameters*.

This document will explain the major features of the document class. For further information, the *L^AT_EX User’s Guide* is available from <https://www.acm.org/publications/proceedings-template>.

10.1 Template Styles

The primary parameter given to the “acmart” document class is the *template style* which corresponds to the kind of publication or SIG publishing the work. This parameter is enclosed in square brackets and is a part of the `\documentclass` command:

```
\documentclass[STYLE]{acmart}
```

Journals use one of three template styles. All but three ACM journals use the `acmsmall` template style:

- `acmsmall`: The default journal template style.
- `acmlarge`: Used by JOCCH and TAP.
- `acmtog`: Used by TOG.

The majority of conference proceedings documentation will use the `acmconf` template style.

- `acmconf`: The default proceedings template style.
- `sigchi`: Used for SIGCHI conference articles.
- `sigchi-a`: Used for SIGCHI “Extended Abstract” articles.
- `sigplan`: Used for SIGPLAN conference articles.

10.2 Template Parameters

In addition to specifying the *template style* to be used in formatting your work, there are a number of *template parameters* which modify some part of the applied template style. A complete list of these parameters can be found in the *L^AT_EX User’s Guide*.

Frequently-used parameters, or combinations of parameters, include:

- `anonymous,review`: Suitable for a “double-blind” conference submission. Anonymizes the work and includes line numbers. Use with the `\acmSubmissionID` command to print the submission’s unique ID on each page of the work.
- `authorversion`: Produces a version of the work suitable for posting by the author.
- `screen`: Produces colored hyperlinks.

This document uses the following string as the first command in the source file: `\documentclass[acmsmall]{acmart}`

11 MODIFICATIONS

Modifying the template — including but not limited to: adjusting margins, typeface sizes, line spacing, paragraph and list definitions, and the use of the `\vspace` command to manually adjust the vertical spacing between elements of your work — is not allowed.

Your document will be returned to you for revision if modifications are discovered.

12 TYPEFACES

The “acmart” document class requires the use of the “Libertine” typeface family. Your T_EX installation should include this set of packages. Please do not substitute other typefaces.

The “`lmodern`” and “`ltimes`” packages should not be used, as they will override the built-in typeface families.

13 TITLE INFORMATION

The title of your work should use capital letters appropriately - <https://capitalizemytitle.com/> has useful rules for capitalization. Use the `title` command to define the title of your work. If your work has a subtitle, define it with the `subtitle` command. Do not insert line breaks in your title.

If your title is lengthy, you must define a short version to be used in the page headers, to prevent overlapping text. The `title` command has a “short title” parameter:

```
\title[short title]{full title}
```

14 AUTHORS AND AFFILIATIONS

Each author must be defined separately for accurate metadata identification. Multiple authors may share one affiliation. Authors’ names should not be abbreviated; use full first names wherever possible. Include authors’ e-mail addresses whenever possible.

Grouping authors’ names or e-mail addresses, or providing an “e-mail alias,” as shown below, is not acceptable:

```
\author{Brooke Aster, David Mehldau}
\email{dave,judy,steve@university.edu}
\email{firstname.lastname@phillips.org}
```

The `authornote` and `authornotemark` commands allow a note to apply to multiple authors — for example, if the first two authors of an article contributed equally to the work.

If your author list is lengthy, you must define a shortened version of the list of authors to be used in the page headers, to prevent overlapping text. The following command should be placed just after the last `\author{}` definition:

```
\renewcommand{\shortauthors}{McCartney, et al.}
```

Omitting this command will force the use of a concatenated list of all of the authors’ names, which may result in overlapping text in the page headers.

The article template’s documentation, available at <https://www.acm.org/publications/proceedings-template>, has a complete explanation of these commands and tips for their effective use.

15 RIGHTS INFORMATION

Authors of any work published by ACM will need to complete a rights form. Depending on the kind of work, and the rights management choice made by the author, this may be copyright transfer, permission, license, or an OA (open access) agreement.

Regardless of the rights management choice, the author will receive a copy of the completed rights form once it has been submitted. This form contains L^AT_EX commands that must be copied into the source document. When the document source is compiled, these commands and their parameters add formatted text to several areas of the final document:

- the “ACM Reference Format” text on the first page.
- the “rights management” text on the first page.
- the conference information in the page header(s).

Rights information is unique to the work; if you are preparing several works for an event, make sure to use the correct set of commands with each of the works.

Table 1. Frequency of Special Characters

Non-English or Math	Frequency	Comments
\emptyset	1 in 1,000	For Swedish names
π	1 in 5	Common in math
$\$$	4 in 5	Used in business
Ψ_1^2	1 in 40,000	Unexplained usage

16 CCS CONCEPTS AND USER-DEFINED KEYWORDS

Two elements of the “acmart” document class provide powerful taxonomic tools for you to help readers find your work in an online search.

The ACM Computing Classification System — <https://www.acm.org/publications/class-2012> — is a set of classifiers and concepts that describe the computing discipline. Authors can select entries from this classification system, via <https://dl.acm.org/ccs/ccs.cfm>, and generate the commands to be included in the \LaTeX source.

User-defined keywords are a comma-separated list of words and phrases of the authors’ choosing, providing a more flexible way of describing the research being presented.

CCS concepts and user-defined keywords are required for all short- and full-length articles, and optional for two-page abstracts.

17 SECTIONING COMMANDS

Your work should use standard \LaTeX sectioning commands: `section`, `subsection`, `subsubsection`, and `paragraph`. They should be numbered; do not remove the numbering from the commands.

Simulating a sectioning command by setting the first word or words of a paragraph in boldface or italicized text is **not allowed**.

18 TABLES

The “acmart” document class includes the “booktabs” package — <https://ctan.org/pkg/booktabs> — for preparing high-quality tables.

Table captions are placed *above* the table.

Because tables cannot be split across pages, the best placement for them is typically the top of the page nearest their initial cite. To ensure this proper “floating” placement of tables, use the environment `table` to enclose the table’s contents and the table caption. The contents of the table itself must go in the `tabular` environment, to be aligned properly in rows and columns, with the desired horizontal and vertical rules. Again, detailed instructions on `tabular` material are found in the *\LaTeX User’s Guide*.

Immediately following this sentence is the point at which Table 1 is included in the input file; compare the placement of the table here with the table in the printed output of this document.

To set a wider table, which takes up the whole width of the page’s live area, use the environment `table*` to enclose the table’s contents and the table caption. As with a single-column table, this wide table will “float” to a location deemed more desirable. Immediately following this sentence is the point at which Table 2 is included in the input file; again, it is instructive to compare the placement of the table here with the table in the printed output of this document.

Table 2. Some Typical Commands

Command	A Number	Comments
<code>\author</code>	100	Author
<code>\table</code>	300	For tables
<code>\table*</code>	400	For wider tables

19 MATH EQUATIONS

You may want to display math equations in three distinct styles: inline, numbered or non-numbered display. Each of the three are discussed in the next sections.

19.1 Inline (In-text) Equations

A formula that appears in the running text is called an inline or in-text formula. It is produced by the **math** environment, which can be invoked with the usual `\begin ... \end` construction or with the short form `$... $`. You can use any of the symbols and structures, from α to ω , available in L^AT_EX [?]; this section will simply show a few examples of in-text equations in context. Notice how this equation: $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} x = 0$, set here in in-line math style, looks slightly different when set in display style. (See next section).

19.2 Display Equations

A numbered display equation—one set off by vertical space from the text and centered horizontally—is produced by the **equation** environment. An unnumbered display equation is produced by the **displaymath** environment.

Again, in either environment, you can use any of the symbols and structures available in L^AT_EX; this section will just give a couple of examples of display equations in context. First, consider the equation, shown as an inline equation above:

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} x = 0$$

(9)

Notice how it is formatted somewhat differently in the **displaymath** environment. Now, we'll enter an unnumbered equation:

$$\sum_{i=0}^{\infty} x + 1$$

and follow it with another numbered equation:

$$\sum_{i=0}^{\infty} x_i = \int_0^{\pi+2} f$$

(10)

just to demonstrate L^AT_EX's able handling of numbering.

20 FIGURES

The “**figure**” environment should be used for figures. One or more images can be placed within a figure. If your figure contains third-party material, you must clearly identify it as such, as shown in the example below.

Your figures should contain a caption which describes the figure to the reader. Figure captions go below the figure. Your figures should **also** include a description suitable for screen readers, to assist the visually-challenged to better understand your work.



Fig. 3. 1907 Franklin Model D roadster. Photograph by Harris & Ewing, Inc. [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons. (<https://goo.gl/VLCRBB>).

Figure captions are placed *below* the figure.

20.1 The “Teaser Figure”

A “teaser figure” is an image, or set of images in one figure, that are placed after all author and affiliation information, and before the body of the article, spanning the page. If you wish to have such a figure in your article, place the command immediately before the `\maketitle` command:

```
\begin{teaserfigure}  
  \includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{sampleteaser}  
  \caption{figure caption}  
  \Description{figure description}  
\end{teaserfigure}
```

21 CITATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES

The use of `\LaTeX` for the preparation and formatting of one’s references is strongly recommended. Authors’ names should be complete — use full first names (“Donald E. Knuth”) not initials

(“D. E. Knuth”) — and the salient identifying features of a reference should be included: title, year, volume, number, pages, article DOI, etc.

The bibliography is included in your source document with these two commands, placed just before the `\end{document}` command:

```
\bibliographystyle{ACM-Reference-Format}
\bibliography{bibfile}
```

where “**bibfile**” is the name, without the “.bib” suffix, of the \LaTeX file.

Citations and references are numbered by default. A small number of ACM publications have citations and references formatted in the “author year” style; for these exceptions, please include this command in the **preamble** (before “`\begin{document}`”) of your \LaTeX source:

```
\citestyle{acmauthoryear}
```

Some examples. A paginated journal article [?], an enumerated journal article [?], a reference to an entire issue [?], a monograph (whole book) [?], a monograph/whole book in a series (see 2a in spec. document) [?], a divisible-book such as an anthology or compilation [?] followed by the same example, however we only output the series if the volume number is given [?] (so Editor00a’s series should NOT be present since it has no vol. no.), a chapter in a divisible book [?], a chapter in a divisible book in a series [?], a multi-volume work as book [?], an article in a proceedings (of a conference, symposium, workshop for example) (paginated proceedings article) [?], a proceedings article with all possible elements [?], an example of an enumerated proceedings article [?], an informally published work [?], a doctoral dissertation [?], a master’s thesis: [?], an online document / world wide web resource [? ? ?], a video game (Case 1) [?] and (Case 2) [?] and [?] and (Case 3) a patent [?], work accepted for publication [?], ‘YYYYb’-test for prolific author [?] and [?]. Other cites might contain ‘duplicate’ DOI and URLs (some SIAM articles) [?]. Boris / Barbara Beeton: multi-volume works as books [?] and [?]. A couple of citations with DOIs: [? ?]. Online citations: [? ? ?].

22 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Identification of funding sources and other support, and thanks to individuals and groups that assisted in the research and the preparation of the work should be included in an acknowledgment section, which is placed just before the reference section in your document.

This section has a special environment:

```
\begin{acks}
...
\end{acks}
```

so that the information contained therein can be more easily collected during the article metadata extraction phase, and to ensure consistency in the spelling of the section heading.

Authors should not prepare this section as a numbered or unnumbered `\section`; please use the “acks” environment.

23 APPENDICES

If your work needs an appendix, add it before the “`\end{document}`” command at the conclusion of your source document.

Start the appendix with the “`appendix`” command:

```
\appendix
```

and note that in the appendix, sections are lettered, not numbered. This document has two appendices, demonstrating the section and subsection identification method.

24 SIGCHI EXTENDED ABSTRACTS

The “`sigchi-a`” template style (available only in L^AT_EX and not in Word) produces a landscape-orientation formatted article, with a wide left margin. Three environments are available for use with the “`sigchi-a`” template style, and produce formatted output in the margin:

- `sidebar`: Place formatted text in the margin.
- `marginfigure`: Place a figure in the margin.
- `marginable`: Place a table in the margin.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Robert, for the bagels and explaining CMYK and color spaces.

REFERENCES

A RESEARCH METHODS

A.1 Part One

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Morbi malesuada, quam in pulvinar varius, metus nunc fermentum urna, id sollicitudin purus odio sit amet enim. Aliquam ullamcorper eu ipsum vel mollis. Curabitur quis dictum nisl. Phasellus vel semper risus, et lacinia dolor. Integer ultricies commodo sem nec semper.

A.2 Part Two

Etiam commodo feugiat nisl pulvinar pellentesque. Etiam auctor sodales ligula, non varius nibh pulvinar semper. Suspendisse nec lectus non ipsum convallis congue hendrerit vitae sapien. Donec at laoreet eros. Vivamus non purus placerat, scelerisque diam eu, cursus ante. Etiam aliquam tortor auctor efficitur mattis.

B ONLINE RESOURCES

Nam id fermentum dui. Suspendisse sagittis tortor a nulla mollis, in pulvinar ex pretium. Sed interdum orci quis metus euismod, et sagittis enim maximus. Vestibulum gravida massa ut felis suscipit congue. Quisque mattis elit a risus ultrices commodo venenatis eget dui. Etiam sagittis eleifend elementum.

Nam interdum magna at lectus dignissim, ac dignissim lorem rhoncus. Maecenas eu arcu ac neque placerat aliquam. Nunc pulvinar massa et mattis lacinia.