Implementation and Evaluation of a Static Backwards Data Flow Analysis in FLOWDROID

Implementierung und Evaluation einer statischen rückwärtsgerichteten Datenflussanalyse in FlowDroid

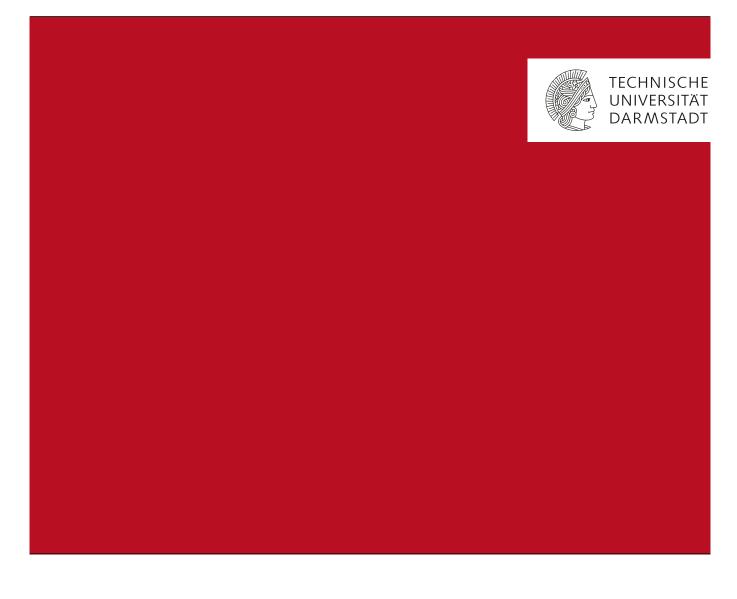
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Contents

1.	Intro	oduction	5				
2.	Background						
	2.1.	Static Data Flow Analysis	6				
		IFDS					
		2.2.1. Original Definition	8				
		2.2.2. Practical Extensions					
	2.3.	Access Paths	12				
	2.4.	Intermediate Representations	13				
		FlowDroid	14				
3.	Theory 16						
		Flow Functions	16				
		3.1.1. Normal Flow					
		3.1.2. Call Flow	18				
		3.1.3. Return Flow					
		3.1.4. CallToReturn Flow					
	3.2.	Runtime of the Data Flow Analysis	21				
4.	Implementation 25						
	•	Integration	25				
		Flow-Sensitive Alias Analysis					
		Rules					
		4.3.1. Source & Sink Propagation Rule	28				
		4.3.2. Backwards Array Propagation Rule					
		4.3.3. Backwards Exception Propagation Rule					
		4.3.4. Backwards Wrapper Propagation Rule					
		4.3.5. Backwards Implicit Propagation Rule					
		4.3.6. Backwards Strong Update Rule					

A.	App	endix	81	
Bibliography				
8.	Con	clusion	77	
7.	Rela	ated Work	74	
	0.3.	x	71	
	()	6.2.3. Memory Evaluation		
		6.2.2. Time Evaluation	60	
	6.2.	Real World Apps	55 55	
		6.1.3. Using A More Precise Taint Wrapper		
		6.1.2. Result Explanation		
	0.1.	6.1.1. Results		
6.		Formance Evaluation DroidBench	46	
		5.2.4. Improvements From The Summary Taint Wrapper	44	
		5.2.3. Results Explanation	43 44	
		5.2.2. Results		
		5.2.1. Configuration		
	5.2.	DroidBench	37	
5.		dation Unit Tests	37 37	
		•		
		4.4.2. Native Call Handler		
		4.4.1. Taint Wrappers		
	4.4.	Other Components	34	
		4.3.8. Other Rules		
		4.3.7. Backwards Clinit Rule	32	

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1	T. Lange	

1. Introduction

2. Background

In this chapter, we introduce the necessary background. In section 2.1, we explain the term static data flow analysis. We introduce concepts used to solve data flow problems precisely in section 2.2 and section 2.3. We reason the need for a more manageable code representation in section 2.4. Finally, we introduce FlowDroid, the tool our work is based on, in section 2.5.

2.1. Static Data Flow Analysis

In the field of compilers, there is a distinction between static and dynamic. Static generally refers to something that is decided at compile-time, while dynamic refers to runtime decisions [1]. The same distinction is also present for analyses. Dynamic analysis observes the program's runtime behavior, while static analysis works on a representation of the code. Both have different tradeoffs. Achieving good code coverage is a challenge in dynamic analysis. In contrast, a static analysis often can not infer runtime values and conditions, hence follows paths never taken at runtime, also called *infeasible paths* [3]. Thus the dynamic analysis is an underapproximation and static analysis is an overapproximation. In the following, we only consider static analysis.

Data flow analysis is a broad term for analyses that try to identify data flows through a program. Khedker [12] defines data flow analysis as follows:

Data flow analysis is a process of deriving information about the run time behavior of a program.

Data flow analyses are used in many different ways. Compilers use it to apply optimizations, others use it for software verification and it is also used for reverse-engineering [12]. A special kind of data flow analysis is taint analysis, which concepts might be familiar from code reviews. In taint analysis, the goal is to determine whether a particular variables'

information contents flow through the program to another variable. Variables that contain valuable information are *tainted*. This valuable information has to come from somewhere, the so-called *sources*. Sources can be any expression but are often methods. Values produced from sources are considered tainted. On the other end, *sinks* leak valuable information. A data flow between a source and a sink is called a *leak* [3]. For example, to detect apps tracking the user using taint analysis, sources could be methods returning a unique identifier and sinks could be methods that sent out data to the internet. When finding a leak, we know the receiving server can identify the device.

There is also a categorization for data flow analyses. Sensitivities describe whether an analysis is capable of considering an aspect. There are five common sensitivities [12, 3]:

- Flow Sensitivity: A flow-sensitive analysis can determine if a fact holds at a particular statement.
- **Context Sensitivity**: An interprocedural analysis can distinguish the context of a called method, e.g., knows the original call site at a return statement.
- Object Sensitivity: An analysis can distinguish field accesses on different objects.
- **Field Sensitivity**: An analysis can distinguish different field accesses on the same object.
- Path Sensitivity: An analysis takes conditional branches into account, e.g., the condition holds after the branch.

We also need a representation for the information the analysis gathered: the data flow fact. A *data flow fact* is a logical assertion that is either true or false at a statement. Now, there are two different kinds of facts: may and must. For a must analysis, the fact must hold on all paths to this statement, while a may analysis only guarantees the fact holds on one path. The decision of which kind fits depends on the type of data flow analysis. Taint analyses like FlowDroid are based on the may analysis [3].

The analysis direction of a data flow analysis is also decided by the problem to be solved. A live variables analysis computes whether a variable is read before written in the future to pontentially eliminate dead assignments. The problem is naturally solved by a backward pass. On the other hand, a reaching definitions analysis finds out if a definition reaches a statement without a intermediate assignment which is certainly solved by a forward pass. Additionally, there are also data flow analyses such as program slicing¹ and taint analysis for the direction is a design-choice.

¹Program slicing identifies a slice, a subset of the programs statements, which influence a statement

2.2. IFDS

2.2.1. Original Definition

Interprocedural finite distributive subset (IFDS) problems are a special class of a data flow analysis problem. Generally, the solution to a data flow problem is the meet-over-all-paths (MOP) solution, which is undecidable [21]. However, all problems adhering to IFDS can be transformed into a graph-reachability problem and consequently, the solution is computable in polynomial time. It is context-sensitive and flow-sensitive by default [20].

IFDS operates on a so-called exploded supergraph. Every node in the exploded supergraph is a tuple $\langle s,d\rangle$ of a statement s in the interprocedural control-flow graph and a data flow fact d. The domain is typically the set of variables in the program. Edges between two nodes $\langle s,d\rangle$ and $\langle s',d'\rangle$ exist if d propagated over s yields d' and s' is a successor of s. Propagating facts along the control-flow graph already ensures flow-sensitivity.

```
matched \rightarrow (_i matched )_i matched | \epsilon valid \rightarrow valid (_i matched | matched
```

Figure 2.1.: Context-Free Grammar proposed by Reps et al.[20]

To achieve context-sensitivity, Reps et al. proposed a context-free grammar (c.f. Figure 2.1). Each call site gets a unique index, outgoing call edges are labeled with (i) and incoming return edges is taken and (i) and incoming valid models a partially balanced path, e.g., after a call for which the return is still pending. A path between two nodes is called (i) and (i) an

To propagate facts over statements, we need to define rules on how the data flow changes when observing a statement. These rules are called flow functions. There are four types of flow functions: [20]

⁽backward pass) or are influenced by a statement (forward pass).

```
void foo(){
   int i = 0;
   int j = bar(i);
   int k = bar(j);
   return p + 42;
   return k;
}
```

Figure 2.2.: Context-Sensitivity using a Context-Free Language

- **Call Flow**: Edges from call statement into a method. The flow function maps the facts visible in the callee into it.
- **Return Flow**: Edges returning from a method. The flow function maps the facts visible in the caller out of the callee.
- **Call To Return Flow**: Edges over a call statement. The flow function maps the facts not visible in the callee over the call statement.
- **Normal Flow**: The default case. Handles edges over every other statement, for example, assignments.

The incoming set of facts is all predecessors' outgoing facts merged using a merge operator □:

$$in(s) := \prod_{p \in Preds(s)} out(p)$$

Now, we also want to introduce new facts. For that reason, the domain contains a zero fact and all nodes with $d=\mathbf{0}$ are always reachable; thus, the zero fact is a tautology. Whenever we want to introduce a fact, we can model this in the flow function by deriving such facts from the zero fact [20]. For example, in taint analysis, the flow functions map zero facts at sources to a tainted variable.

IFDS also utilizes summaries. After returning from a method, the algorithm solved a subproblem for which it remembers the results to be applied later. So, the proposed tabulation algorithm for solving the realizable path problem is a dynamic algorithm [20].

Eventually, there are no facts to propagate anymore and the analysis will terminate. There are two ways for a fact to be not propagated further. Either a flow function killed the fact or the same fact was already observed at a statement, meaning the IFDS analysis reached a fixpoint [20].

However, we already started this section, hinting not all problems can be formulated in the IFDS framework. The restrictions the problems have to abide by are eponymous in IFDS and explained in the following paragraphs.

Distributive The flow function must be distributive over the merge operator. Formally, $f(x \sqcap y) = f(x) \sqcap f(y)$ must hold at any time. Informally speaking, it does not matter whether facts get merged before or after applying the flow functions. Distributiveness is essential for the correctness of IFDS, because only if the flow functions are distributive the maximum fixed point (MFP) equals MOP and MFP is computable in polynomial time [12, 20].

Finite Another restriction is that the set of data flow facts has to be finite. Let us go by a counterexample of what IFDS is not capable of: Answering "Which value is stored in variable x at statement s?". Now the data flow fact is a tuple of the variable together with the stored value $\langle x,v\rangle$. Consider Figure 2.3. x is initialized to an empty string and in every loop iteration, "a" gets appended to the string. The value of x changes every time and never repeats itself. In theory, the algorithm will never observe a taint twice in line 4. Because the algorithm can not reach a fixpoint, it will not terminate. In practice, every data type is bounded either by the heap or stack size, but the domain is cubic in the time-complexity $O(|E| \cdot |D|^3)$ making IFDS infeasible for large domains [20].

Figure 2.3.: Finiteness example

Subset Data flow frameworks need to deal with merging the outcoming sets to a single incoming set. Essentially, to formalize the approximation and satisfy ordering constraints, data flow frameworks rely on lattices [12]. IFDS also defines an underlying lattice on the powerset of the domain. The lattice ordering must be set inclusion. Therefore, the merge operator is set union or set intersect. Now recall may and must from the last subsection. Here we can see the connection between the merge operator and may or must. The paper by Reps et al. later decides on set union due to the duality of must and may not [20]. This decision is also efficient in practice, as discussed in the following subsection.

2.2.2. Practical Extensions

The original definition is inefficient in practice. Among others, Naeem et al. proposed practical extensions to the IFDS framework to perform better in practice [18].

The original algorithm demands a fully built exploded supergraph. Even in moderate programs, the domain can get quite large. As the nodes in the exploded supergraph are the cross-product of the domain and interprocedural call-graph nodes, it is infeasible to generate the full graph beforehand. Because there is no way to know before which part of the supergraph the analysis demands, they propose to generate it ad-hoc. That also removes the restriction on a small domain. Now IFDS is also feasible if the domain's encountered subset is small enough [18]. The restrictions on the domain set can be loosened even more. Bodden suggests in-practice, the domain can be infinite. Only the observed facts must adhere to the ascending-chain condition over the flow functions when using the on-demand supergraph [7].

Also, the original IFDS definition ignores the type structure of the programming language. Type information can be used to kill facts due to impossible casts. Also, facts with the same variable but different types can be merged with the superclass as its new type [18].

Furthermore, the original definition starts the IFDS algorithm at the entry point of the interprocedural call-graph. As described in subsection 2.2.1, a flow function can derive an initial fact from the zero fact whenever needed. If the methods where initial facts will be introduced are known a priori, the supergraph can be traversed without applying flow functions until such a method is found on the path. This optimization introduces unbalanced problems where a method returns but no corresponding call site is found, which can be solved by a small extension to the tabulation algorithm. Lerch et al. first described the extension [16] and it is also present in FLOWDROID [3].

Another optimization is possible if the merge operator is set union thanks to the $A\subseteq A\cup B$ property of set union. There is no need to wait for other predecessors to finish as a set is always a subset of a union with itself and another set. Hence, the IFDS solver can skip the in-set construction and immediately propagate the outcoming facts as singleton sets, sometimes referred to as point-wise propagation. Especially parallelized IFDS implementations benefit from point-wise propagation [22].

2.3. Access Paths

We have already seen IFDS fulfills context- and flow-sensitivity by default. Now, a precise analysis for Java also needs object- and field-sensitivity. Thus, we also need to model the heap.

Access paths are one possible heap model. They consist of a list of field dereferences linked to a tainted variable of a reference type [12]. Note, this increases the domain size because now not only "object o is tainted" is a data flow fact, but also all of its fields can be tainted. Especially when encountering recursive data structures with loops such as doubly linked lists, this gets problematical. Consider Figure 2.4, the loop would let the observed domain grow indefinitely and never reach a fixpoint. As a solution, access paths are limited in length, which is also called k-limiting, whereas the constant k is the maximum access path length. If an access path passes this length, it is cut off and the entire last reference is considered tainted. This cut-off comes with a loss of precision [11]. Consider again Figure 2.4. With k=2 the analysis would reach the fixpoint lst.next.prev.* after two iterations.

Figure 2.4.: Infinite Access Path

Although with k-limiting, the algorithm terminates, it does have another problem. After a loop like in Figure 2.4, the access path is polluted with a dereference chain to its base object even though the next.prev dereference could be omitted without precision loss. As

a solution, Deutsch proposed symbolic access paths, which try to eliminate loops in access paths [9]. In practice, Deutsch's approach needs some adaptions as he only considered fields but not base objects and he defines loops simply by type [3]. With symbolic access paths k-limiting is theoretically obsolete but still often applied in practice to speed-up the analysis.

2.4. Intermediate Representations

Most compilers these days use intermediate representations (IRs). IRs are an equivalent representation of the source code but are much simpler and more regular and are typically not architecture-dependent. They are often in an interchangeable format and can be saved as text to be used by various tools [25]. Such an IR allows compilers to apply machine-independent optimizations to the code without worrying about complex expressions in the source code or reimplementing the optimization for each architecture.

The Java Virtual Machine (JVM) also operates on an IR called Java bytecode. The JVM is mostly stack-based and so is the Java bytecode. In Figure 2.5 is an example of a simple code snippet translated to Java bytecode. Simple expressions such as c = a + b translate into multiple statements and there is no fixed length of an expression in the bytecode. The analysis would also have to reconstruct the expressions ad-hoc. Furthermore, Java bytecode has over 200 possible instructions², which need to be considered and only knows primitive types and references. Concluding, stack-based IRs are suitable for just-in-time interpretation but inconvenient for data flow analysis [29].

A more convenient representation for static analysis is three-address codes. Each statement consists of up to three operands and is either an assignment or a control-flow statement. Operands are represented by variables instead of registers or stacks. Such a representation fixes the expression length to be better suited for static analysis than assembly. It also reduces the possible combinations to a manageable amount compared to the source code written by a human [1].

Jimple is a three-address intermediate representation and can be constructed from the Java and Dalvik bytecode, the IR used for Android apps. It is a high-level representation and its syntax is close to Java. Complex statements are split up into multiple statements. For example, there can be only one field reference per statement and arguments are always

²https://docs.oracle.com/javase/specs/jvms/se8/html/

```
1 bipush 21 // push 21
2 istore_1 // store in register 1
3 bipush 21 // push 21
4 istore_2 // store in register 2
5 iload_1 // push a
1 int a = 21;
6 iload_2 // push b
2 int b = 21;
7 iadd // pop a & b and push a + b
3 int c = a + b;
8 istore_3 // store in register 3
(a) Java code
(b) Java bytecode
```

Figure 2.5.: Java bytecode example

local variables or constants [29]. This groundwork dramatically reduces the possible cases the data flow analysis needs to consider and eases the analysis.

2.5. FlowDroid

FLOWDROID is a precise context-, flow-, object- and field-sensitive static taint analysis tool for Android apps[6]. Since its initial release in 2014, it is actively maintained and gained traction in research and academia³. It is based on Soot, a Java optimization framework, which later has been extended for static analysis [14]. Soot provides the call graph and the conversion from Java and Dalvik bytecode to Jimple, the intermediate representation of choice for FLOWDROID [3].

Androids activity-lifecycle concept does not have a single entry point; instead, multiple callbacks are a possible entry point. Also, an Android app can contain multiple components and register callbacks in various of Android's standard libraries. FlowDroid models the entire Android lifecycle to be precise and generates a dummy main method to provide a single entry point for the call graph generation. [6].

FLOWDROID inherits flow- and context-sensitivity from IFDS and the object- and field-sensitivity from symbolic access paths. To provide precise results even with aliases in use, FLOWDROID comprises an alais analysis. The alias analysis is encoded as another

³https://github.com/secure-software-engineering/FlowDroid

⁴Taken from https://developer.android.com/guide/components/activities/activity-lifecycle.

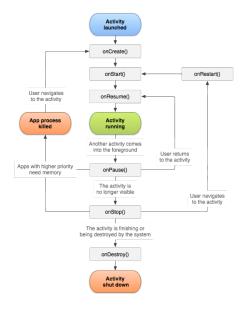


Figure 2.6.: Activity Lifecycle⁴

IFDS problem and resolves all encountered aliases on-demand. The two IFDS analyses are intertwined to maintain flow- and context-sensitivity between both analyses[6].

The implementation of FlowDroid is modular, easily extensible and offers many additional features. Two of them are noteworthy for this work: native call handler and taint wrappers. As both Java and Android allow calling native methods, FlowDroid also needs to model those cases. It currently does not support the analysis of those methods but contains rules for essential methods. The second feature is taint wrappers. They allow defining rules for methods, e.g., from a commonly used feature such as StringBuilder, which allows the taint analysis to skip the method and apply a summary [6]. StubDroid, an extension to FlowDroid by Arzt et al., allows precomputing summaries using FlowDroid and serializes them in an XML format for tool-independent use. These summaries are handy for real-world applications where third-party libraries are often used [5].

3. Theory

In the first part of this chapter, we define the flow functions for the IFDS analysis. In the second part, we discuss taint analysis's runtime, highlighting possible differences between forward and backward analysis.

3.1. Flow Functions

We describe the flow functions' behavior based on the Jimple language and define semiformal rules analogous to the publication[3] on FlowDroid. These rules only focus on the basic language constructs. We describe flows for additional language features such as arrays and exceptions later and more informal in section 4.3.

3.1.1. Normal Flow

Normal flow functions handle every statement that does not contain an InvokeExpr. For the base cases in normal flow, new taints are only produced at assignments. Assignments are always explicit in Jimple and are either AssignStmt's or IdentityStmt's. The IdentityStmt's are at the top of a method¹ and assign special values to locals, e.g., parameters and the this reference. We perform the identity function over those because we want to keep those taints alive to reach the return edge. Then the Return Flow function takes care of mapping all parameters back into the caller². So in the following, we only consider AssignStmt's.

¹With the exception of local_name := @caughtexception, which is outside of the base cases.

²Note that traversing the interprocedural control-flow graph backward means call edges are now return edges and vice versa.

Now, let us consider an AssignStmt. The left side is either a field reference or a local and the right side is an expression. In the following, we assume the right side is always a variable. The assignment has the structure $x.f^n \leftarrow y.g^m$ with $n,m \in \{0,1\}$ modeling a possible field reference. As taints may have an access path of an arbitrary length, we denote this as $h^k.^3$ Jimple also ensures only one field dereference per statement, which Arzt chose not to represent in the semi-formal definitions and neither did we.

In the first case, we look at exact matches. Either we have an assignment with a local (n=0) or a field dereference (n=1). For both, the base variable needs to match. For the latter, also the first field of the access path has to match the field dereference. The first field dereference is removed from the taint and the remaining access path is copied to the newly created taint. The incoming taint is killed because, thinking forward, it received the taint at this statement.

Rule 1: An incoming taint $T = x.f^n.h^k$ with $k \ge 0$ produces the outflowing taint set $\{y.g^m.h^k\}$.

Next, we need a rule for the case the field dereference f is included in a cut-off approximation. Recall section 2.3, symbolic access paths can also be k-limited to speedup the analysis and are k=5-limited in FlowDroid by default. Thus, we might encounter a taint with no field dereferences and a wildcard * appended. In this case, just the base needs to match. However, this time, the left side is kept alive because we can not reason which field is tainted due to the cut-off approximation.

Rule 2: An incoming taint T = x.* with $k \ge 0$ produces the outflowing taint set $\{y.g^m.*, T\}$.

Lastly, we could also observe a taint on the right side. In this case, we apply the identity, so propagate the taint over the statement. This case is necessary later when we consider aliasing in section 4.2.

Rule 3: An incoming taint $T = y.g^m.h^k$ with $k \ge 0$ produces the outflowing taint set $\{T\}$.

Rule 4: An incoming taint T = y.* produces the outflowing taint set $\{T\}$.

Whenever a taint neither matches on the left nor the right side, we also perform the identity as the statement does not touch the tainted variable's contents.

 $^{^3}h^k$ is a k-length chain of field dereferences, not k-times the same field dereference

3.1.2. Call Flow

The Call Flow function and subsequently Return and Call To Return Flow function apply whenever a statement contains an InvokeExpr. For call statements without an assignment, we have statements of the structure $o.m(a_0,...,a_n)$ with $n \in \mathbb{N}$. a_i denotes the i-th argument, p_i the i-th parameter and c the class instance of the callee's base object.

When we encounter a tainted argument in the caller, the taint needs to go through the callee. Java uses pass-by-value, so the arguments are copied into the callee. Thus, for primitives, the value is copied and pushed on the stack. For reference types, the pointer to the object is pushed on the stack. In the second case, if only the base reference is tainted but nothing more (k=0 and no wildcard), the callee can only access and overwrite the reference saved in the parameter on the stack but is not able to change the reference in the callee. We know an update that tainted the primitive or reference without field dereferences can not be inside the callee due to the backward direction. This property becomes apparent when we get specific to Java's types. Primitives do not have fields and strings are immutable⁴. Consider the example in Figure 3.1. On the left, we use the built-in String type. In line 2, str is copied into callee. After this statement, both str hold the value 42 but point to another memory location⁵. Thus, main carries on with the original value of str no matter what callee writes to str. In contrast, on the right, the callee can update the field on the heap. Therefore, the taint needs to be propagated into the callee to find the leak. Conclusively, k needs to be greater than 0.

Rule 1: An incoming taint $T = a_i.h^k$ with $k > 0 \land 0 \le i \le n$ produces the outflowing taint set $\{p_i.h^k\}$.

Rule 2: An incoming taint $T = a_i$ * with $0 \le i \le n$ produces the outflowing taint set $\{p_i$ * *}.

A non-static callee can also access instance fields of the base object. When we observe a tainted base object, the taint also needs to flow through the callee. The tainted object transforms into a *this* reference. In Java, this references the current instance the method operates on.

⁴The special handling of strings results in transparent fields, e.g. we can treat strings as if they were primitives in this case.

⁵The JVM might only set a copy-on-write flag on str in callee and point it to the identical location as str in main to save memory. At least right before the update happens, it is guaranteed that the variable points to a different location.

```
1
                                        void main() {
   void main() {
                                     2
1
                                             SomeObject o = new
2
       String str = "42";
                                                 → SomeObject();
3
       callee(str);
                                     3
                                             callee(o);
4
       sink(str); // no leak
                                     4
                                             sink(o.str); // leak
5
   }
                                     5
                                        }
6
   void callee(String str) {
                                     7
                                        void callee(SomeObject o) {
8
                                     8
       str = source();
                                             o.str = source();
9 }
                                     9 }
      (a) Taint Without Fields
                                                   (b) Taint With Fields
```

Figure 3.1.: Call Flow Example

Rule 3: An incoming taint $T = o.h^k$ with $k \ge 0$ produces the outflowing taint set $\{this_c.h^k\}$.

Rule 4: An incoming taint T = o.* produces the outflowing taint set $\{this_c.*\}$.

Static fields form a special case. Their scope extends over the whole program and thus, tainted static fields always have to go through the callee. The taint is untouched as the access path to those is the same everywhere.

Rule 5: An incoming taint $T = S.f.h^k$ with $k \ge 0$ produces the outflowing taint set $\{T\}$.

In Jimple, AssignStmt's can also consist of an InvokeExpr on the right side. The structure of the statement is in this case $x \leftarrow o.m(a_0,...,a_n)$. r_i denotes a return value. m is the number of return statements in the callee. If we observe such a statement and the left side is tainted, we need to map the returned value back into the callee. Now, methods can have multiple return statements and as we traverse the reversed interprocedural control-flow graph, there are multiple outgoing edges. We can not reason which return statement is the right one, so we need to taint every return statement's operand in the callee.

Rule 6: An incoming taint $T = x.h^k$ with $k \ge 0$ produces the outflowing taint set $\{r_i.h^k \mid 0 \le i < m\}$.

Unlike at normal flows, we kill all taints not matching any of the rules. In the case of a taint being out of the callee's scope, the Call To Return flow function propagates the taint over the statement.

3.1.3. Return Flow

Taints reaching the end of a method need to be mapped back into the caller. The statement we consider is of the structure $o.m(a_0,...,a_n)$ with $n \in \mathbb{N}$. Again, a_i denotes the *i*-th argument, p_i the *i*-th parameter and c the class instance.

The first rule is the counterpart rule 1 and 2 of Call Flow⁶ and map all parameters back into the caller. In contrast to the Call Flow, we also map primitives and strings back into the caller. Thus, the taints are also visible in the caller.

Rule 1: An incoming taint $T = p_i . h^k$ with $k \ge 0 \land 0 \le i \le n$ produces the outflowing taint set $\{a_i . h^k\}$.

The *this* reference also needs to be mapped back into the caller.

Rule 2: An incoming taint $T = this_c.h^k$ with $k \ge 0$ produces the outflowing taint set $\{o.h^k\}$.

Rule 3: An incoming taint $T = this_c$ with $k \ge 0$ produces the outflowing taint set $\{o,*\}$.

Tainted static fields are also mapped back untouched. This rule is the same as rule 5 of the Call Flow.

Rule 4: An incoming taint $T = S.h^k$ with $k \ge 0$ produces the outflowing taint set $\{T\}$.

Again, taints not matching any rule are killed. For example, this kills taints, which are not in the caller's scope, when returning from a method.

3.1.4. CallToReturn Flow

The statement structure is $o.m(a_0,...,a_n)$ with $n \in \mathbb{N}$. a_i denotes the *i*-th argument.

A taint is not in the callee's scope if it is not static and neither matches an argument nor the base object the method is called on. Such a taint is not matched inside Call Flow and needs to be propagated over the call statement.

Rule 1: An incoming taint $x.h^k$ with $k \ge 0 \land (\forall i \in [0, n] \cap \mathbb{N} : a_i \ne x) \land x \ne o \land x \notin Static Variables produces the outflowing taint set <math>\{T\}$.

⁶Note that if k can be 0, the wildcard also works.

Consider again the left side of Figure 3.1. In line 3, the taint is in the kill set of Call Flow. As we want to preserve the taint after the call, we need to propagate the taint over the call statement in such cases.

Rule 2: An incoming taint $T = a_i$ with $0 \le i \le n$ produces the outflowing taint set $\{T\}$.

Like in Call and Return Flow, we also kill taints that do not match any of these rules.

3.2. Runtime of the Data Flow Analysis

IFDS has a worst-case time complexity of $O(|E|\cdot|D|^3)$. |E| is the number of observed edges in the control-flow graph and |D| is the number of tainted variables observed by the IFDS analysis. Concluding, the complexity highly depends on the choice of sources and sinks and the analyzed app. Therefore it is not possible to make a general statement about a better analysis direction. Nevertheless, what we can do is discuss certain cases where one direction is favorable. We decide favorably based on the number of taint propagations, i.e. the exploded supergraph's observed edges. They correlate to the runtime and depend on two factors: taints' lifetime and the number of taints. In the following paragraphs, we show examples where the analysis direction influences both factors. After that, we discuss clues suitable for an apriori decision on the direction.

```
String returnParam(int i, String s1, String s2, String s3) {
 2
        if (i == 1)
 3
            return s1;
 4
        else if (i == 2)
 5
            return s2;
 6
        else if (i == 3)
 7
            return s3;
 8
        else
 9
            return "default";
10 }
```

Figure 3.2.: Branching Factor Example

First, we take a look at the is the branching factor. The branching factor describes the number of outgoing edges from a node. A smaller branching factor is favorable. Consider

a binary operator expression such as int c = a + b;, backward we can not argue which operand is responsible for the tainted output and thus proceed with both operands tainted. The same restriction is present in rule 6 of Call Flow which describes how the returned value is mapped back into the callee. This time the branching factor can be even larger. For example, in Figure 3.2 is a method which conditionally returns one of its parameters and is part of the leak path. Let us assume the returned value of a call to returnParam() is tainted. Backward, every returned operand is tainted and later on mapped according to Return Flow rule 2 back into the caller. The effect gets apparent when looking at the method summary. The IFDS algorithm ends up with a summary $retVal \rightarrow \{s1, s2, s3\}$. Forwards, a tainted parameter is mapped into the callee and later on returned to the caller resulting in three possible summaries $s1 \rightarrow \{retVal, s1\}$, $s2 \rightarrow \{retVal, s2\}$ or $s3 \rightarrow \{retVal, s3\}$. Such cases favor forward analysis.

In contrast, a strict right-to-left flow favors backward analysis as taints are killed more often due to a stricter overwrite rule. In Figure 3.3 is such a right-to-left flow displayed. Forward, the right-hand side is always kept alive because it still holds the tainted value below the statement and could be leaked. When traversing a right-to-left flow backward, the left side is always killed. A visited statement is the update responsible for tainting, leading to a branching factor of 1 and a shorter lifetime per taint.

A prominent real-world example of an right-to-left order are Java's StringBuilder. The implementations of append() and insert() return the base object to allow for easy chaining of multiple calls. Soot does not reuse the local variables when translating JVM bytecode to Jimple. As the Java compiler internally optimizes every string concatenation into a StringBuilder, this advantage is present in nearly every program. Also, programs with serialization to a text-based format such as JSON should heavily favor the backward analysis.

We already briefly mentioned the global scope of static field taints in the last section. Hence, unless the static taint is overwritten, it traverses the whole interprocedural control-flow graph. FlowDroid already applies an optimization and looks ahead to skip methods in which the static field is not used. Still, the longer lifetime stays an issue [3].

We discussed the complexity based on the taint propagations. However, they are only known after the analysis. Now, it would be beneficial to decide which direction is the best before analyzing an app. An obvious choice for a clue would be the ratio of sources and sinks. If one is much less than the other, we could argue less taints to start with should also lower the taint propagations. Sadly, it is not as easy to generalize the statement to less starting taints means less runtime. Arzt's evaluation of FLOWDROID has shown no correlation between the number of sources and the runtime in FLOWDROID[3]. This result

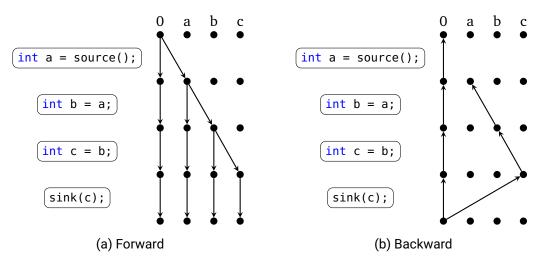


Figure 3.3.: Right-to-Left Order

is probably owed to the unpredictable taint's lifetime balancing out the initial advantage. As a part of this work, we evaluate whether it is possible to decide the favorable analysis direction in FLOWDROID on the same app in section 6.2.

Even though the starting taints possibly do not correlate with the runtime, whenever there is a tiny number of sinks but hundreds of sources, the backward analysis should perform better. Likewise, Lerch et al. claim in their work that a magnificent smaller amount of sinks than sources are advantageous for a backward-directed search [15].

In general, we can not predict the lifetime of taints before actually analyzing the app. However, in special cases of application, this might be naturally given. Think of a case where sanitization methods⁷ are in use. Depending on the use case, it might be possible to deduce the proximity between sanitization methods and sources or sinks. Whenever this is possible, there should be a clear favorite for one direction due to the taints' lower lifetime.

Summarized, we discussed cases where one direction seems favorable, but no generalized statement can be made on which analysis direction is better. Further, most of the influencing factors depend on the app and thus, at most, a favorable direction can be determined for a single app.

⁷Sanitization methods are run against user input to ensure the input is safe to be processed.

```
1 StringBuilder sb = new StringBuilder();
2 sb = sb.append("DeviceID: ").append(id).append("\n IMEI: ")
3
       .append(imei).append("\n ISMI: ").append(imsi);
                                         (a) Java
1 $stack9 = new java.lang.StringBuilder;
2 specialinvoke $stack9.<java.lang.StringBuilder: void <init>()>();
3 $stack10 = virtualinvoke $stack9.<java.lang.StringBuilder:</pre>

    java.lang.StringBuilder append(java.lang.String)>("My device id is ");
4 $stack11 = virtualinvoke $stack10.<java.lang.StringBuilder:

    java.lang.StringBuilder append(java.lang.String)>($stack6);

5 $stack12 = virtualinvoke $stack11.<java.lang.StringBuilder:</pre>

    java.lang.StringBuilder append(java.lang.String)>(",my IMEI is ");

6 $stack13 = virtualinvoke $stack12.<java.lang.StringBuilder:</pre>

    java.lang.StringBuilder append(int)>($stack7);
7 $stack14 = virtualinvoke $stack13.<java.lang.StringBuilder:</pre>
       \hookrightarrow java.lang.StringBuilder append(java.lang.String)>(" and my IMSI is ");
8 $stack15 = virtualinvoke $stack14.<java.lang.StringBuilder:</pre>

    java.lang.StringBuilder append(int)>($stack8);
                                        (b) Jimple
```

Figure 3.4.: StringBuilder example

4. Implementation

This chapter describes the details of our backward-directed implementation and how we integrated it into FLowDroid.

4.1. Integration

FLOWDROID is built to be extensible from to ground up. We wanted to reuse as many components of FLOWDROID as possible.

First, we needed a backward interprocedural control-flow graph. FLOWDROID already contained one for the on-demand aliasing, which only missed the notifyMethodChanged() method. Next, we need to introduce unconditional taints at sinks and check for the matching access paths at sources. The methods for retrieving sources and sinks from a Source Sink Manager have different signatures because, in the forward analysis, access paths only have to match at sinks. We added the interface IReversibleSourceSinkManager extending the ISourceSinkManager. It enforces two additional methods:

- SourceInfo getInverseSinkInfo(Stmt sCallSite, InfoflowManager manager)
- SinkInfo getInverseSourceInfo(Stmt sCallSite, InfoflowManager manager, AccessPath ap)

getInverseSinkInfo returns the necessary information for introducing unconditional taints at sinks, while getInverseSourceInfo also matches the access paths at sources. All source sink managers needed for the data flow analysis now implement the corresponding interface. Note that reversible source sink managers currently do not support the one-source-at-a-time mode.

For the core flow functions, we created two new classes implementing IInfoflowProblem. BackwardsInfoflowProblem implements the flow functions described in section 3.1. We also refer to this as the main analysis. Additional language features are sourced out into rules which are informally described in section 4.3. The second class is BackwardsAliasProblem which is responsible for the on-demand forward alias analysis. We describe the on-demand aliasing in greater detail in section 4.2.

After the analysis, the path builder constructs a path out of the leaked taint and its predecessors. Because the path builder expects a forward-built taint, the path ends up being the wrong way round. To hide the fact that we internally searched backward, we also created a BackwardsInfoflowResults extending InfoflowResults. The implementation is quite simple. It overwrites only the addResult implementations to swap the start and end. If full path reconstruction is enabled, it also reverses the path in between.

4.2. Flow-Sensitive Alias Analysis

FLOWDROID offers multiple aliasing strategies. In this work, we focus on flow-sensitive alias analysis. The analysis is another IFDS problem. However, this time, it is a forward-directed IFDS analysis using flow function with aliasing rules. The main analysis invokes the alias analysis on-demand when it discovers an alias. The alias analysis runs independent from the main analysis and later injects found aliases back into the main analysis.

Note that pointer analysis itself is a non-distributive problem [3, 23]. Nonetheless, the alias analysis is encoded in IFDS and we just accept the possibly imprecise results due to the overapproximation. Not using the intertwined alias analysis is too imprecise and the cases of overapproximation are rare in practice [3].

```
1
   void aliasRule1() {
                                              1
                                                void aliasRule3() {
                                             2
2
       A a = b;
                                                     A a = b;
3
                                             3
       b.str = source();
                                                     a.str = source();
4
       sink(a.str);
                                             4
                                                     sink(b.str);
                                              5
5
  }
                                                }
```

- (a) Example for alias analysis initiated by rule 1
- (b) Example for alias analysis initiated by rule 3

Figure 4.1.: Normal flow Aliasing examples

Handover between the analyses The main analysis discovers aliases at assignments. Consider Figure 4.1 where two different cases are displayed. On the left is a normal flow according to rule 1. In line 2, the in taint a.str produces the outcoming taint b.str. Because the assignment type is a heap type, the backward analysis now recognizes that it possibly missed updates to b.str below of line 2. It invokes the alias analysis with b.str. On the right is a normal flow according to rule 3. This time the assignment in line 2 is swapped. The main analysis leaves the incoming taint b.str untouched but notices a aliases b below line 2, hence invoking the alias analysis with a.str.

The alias analysis searches for missed updates. If the analysis found an update, e.g., the taint is on the left side of the assignment, the analysis injects an edge to the statement with the taint into the main analysis' worklist. Consider again Figure 4.1a. In line 3, the alias analysis encounters the tainted b.str on the left side. At this point, b.str gets handed back to the main analysis, following the missed update to find a possible leak. In this case, the leak happens right away.

```
1  void turnStmtNeeded() {
2     A a = b;
3     String str = b.str;
4     a.str = source();
5     sink(str);
6 }
```

Figure 4.2.: Aliasing example with turn unit

Maintaining Flow Sensitivity Arzt solved this in the existing forward implementation using an activation unit. This statement marks the update at which the alias gets tainted and can leak at sinks. This concept does not work for our backward implementation as the alias analysis traverses forward where a write to a variable means a leak. Thus we introduce the turn unit. The turn unit holds the last non-aliasing assignment. When a taint reaches its turn unit in the aliasing analysis, the analysis kills the taint. Consider Figure 4.2. The introduced taint str in line 6 also has line 6 as a turn unit. In line 4, a non-aliasing assignment happens. In line 2, the alias analysis starts for a.str. Without the turn unit, the taint would pass line 3. Further in line 5, the taint is handed to the main analysis. The main analysis then reports a leak. With the turn unit, the alias analysis kills the taint in line 4, preventing the false positive.

The turn unit is a new field in the Abstraction class, which is representing a taint. A

Figure 4.3.: Summaries with Turn Units

possible drawback of the backward analysis could be the reusability of the IFDS summaries. Because the turn unit is part of the taint, IFDS treats equal taints with different turn units as if they have a different context. Consider Figure 4.3. strl and strl are equal taints, but one has the turn unit at line 7 while the other one has the turn unit set to line 4. Let us assume IFDS already traversed the call to bar(someObject2); in line 6 and created a summary from it. Later, it observes the same callee but with someObject1 as an argument. Though, because the turn units differ, IFDS can not apply the already existing summary. In this case, applying the summary would not be harmful. However, if the turn unit is inside the callee or the transitive callees, we would effectively lose the flow sensitivity as the turn unit is ignored.

4.3. Rules

Flow functions can get quite large, complicated to understand and hard to maintain [16]. To counteract this, FLOWDROID outsources certain features into rules. These rules also implement the four flow functions and are applied in the main analysis's corresponding flow function. In this section, we describe our implementation and informally state the rule behavior.

4.3.1. Source & Sink Propagation Rule

In backward analysis, sources act like sinks and vice versa. Thus, the Source Propagation Rule records taints flowing into sources and the Sink Propagation Rule unconditionally introduces taints at sinks requiring an IReversibleSourceSinkManager.

Notably, the DefaultSourceSinkManager assumes the return value to be tainted. Only if the return value is ignored or the method has no return value, the base object is assumed to be tainted while at sinks base object and parameters are leaked [3]. Thus, starting at sinks results in more taints per statement than in forwards analysis. Recall section 3.2, Arzt's evaluation has shown that the initial source count does not correlate with the runtime, which implies that this should be is insignificant on real-world apps.

4.3.2. Backwards Array Propagation Rule

In FlowDroid, array taints are overapproximated by only distinguishing contents and length but not elements. Meaning if one element of an array is tainted, FlowDroid considers all elements tainted. Indices are often computed at runtime and thus not available for a static analysis without applying another analysis beforehand. So, the approximation is not as severe because we could only track constant indices regardless. Furthermore, distinguishing elements would increase the domain even more, subsequently increasing the runtime [3].

The Array Propagation Rule handles ArrayNewExpr, LengthExpr and ArrayRef on the right-hand side.

- **Array Rule 1**: If the left side's length is tainted and the right side is an ArrayNewExpr, the outcoming taint is the size local of the ArrayNewExpr.
- **Array Rule 2**: If the left side is tainted and the right side is a LengthExpr, the outcoming taint is the operand of the LengthExpr with only its length tainted.
- Array Rule 3: If the left side is tainted and the right side is an ArrayRef, the outcoming taint is the array base with only its content tainted.

The overapproximation of arrays also implies that array taints can not be killed if the left side is an ArrayRef.

4.3.3. Backwards Exception Propagation Rule

The backwards analysi first finds a catched exception in the form of \$someVar := @caughtexception. Then it sets an exception flag at the taint and propagates the taint onwards. The subsequent propagation then finds the corresponding throw statement.

- Exception Rule 1: On a caught exception expression, derive a new taint with an exception flag set.
- Exception Rule 2: If a taint with the exception flag set occurs at a ThrowStmt, derive taint the operand of the ThrowStmt.

The second rule is present in Call and Normal Flow because the throw statement can be inside the same method or in a callee.

4.3.4. Backwards Wrapper Propagation Rule

The implementation of this rule is similar to the existing implementation. A tainted returned value also needs to be passed into the taint wrapper because of the backward direction. The rule calls <code>getInverseTaints()</code> and thus requires the taint wrapper to implement the <code>IReversibleTaintWrapper</code> interface .

Additionally, we added an optimization to the taint wrapper rule. Recall section 3.2 where we explained our backward implementation benefits from a right-to-left order. However, the StringBuilder can alias and the alias search offsets the advantage. We use the observation that Jimple does not reuse the local variables when compiled from Java bytecode and all locals pointing to the same StringBuilder except one are not reused either. Thus, we apply a preanalysis searching for base object uses below. Only if the preanalysis finds an use, the alias analysis is used. The preanalysis is cheaper than the alias analysis and based on our observations, it should rarely find an use.

4.3.5. Backwards Implicit Propagation Rule

Flows which are influenced by a condition are called implicit flows. A common example is a password check. Such a method could return a boolean signifying the password is correct or not. Without implicit flows, the taint analysis would be unable to find the path between the password input and the output action. The semantics of implicit flows in FlowDroid are that every update flowing into a sink or a sink call inside a conditional branch, even in transitive callees, are considered as a leak.

The existing forward-directed implementation derives a wildcard and propagates it until the conditional branch is left again at the postdominator. This behavior does not scale well because the semantics demand tainting every update and following every call in conditionals leading to many unneccessary taints never reaching a sink.

```
1
   void foo() {
2
        int tainted = source();
 3
        if (tainted == 42) {
 4
            x = 0;
 5
            transitiveSink();
 6
        }
7
    }
8
9
   void transitiveSink() {
10
        sink();
11 }
```

Figure 4.4.: Implicit Flow Challenges

Backward, the branching factor of a conditional should be lower. However, it is not that easy to reconstruct the conditional branches while traversing the exploded supergraph. Consider the code in Figure 4.4. We expect from the analysis to find the path from line 2 to line 10. First of all, starting at the sink it is unknown whether a conditional influenced the call to the transitiveSink() method. Also, assuming we created a taint representing the sink call, consider the return edge into foo(). The edge is already inside a conditional branch, thus the dominator is per-definition line 4. We are unable to use the dominator as a indication whether a taint enters a conditional in such cases. Both of those challenges are not a data-flow problem but rather a control-flow graph reachability problem. We extended the backward interprocedural control-flow graph with two methods:

- List<Unit> getConditionalBranchesInterprocedural(Unit unit)
- Unit getConditionalBranchIntraprocedural(Unit unit)

The first one is used for sink calls. It traverses the interprocedural graph using a worklist algorithm to find all possible reachable conditional statements. We then use those found conditionals to derive sink taints with the correct conditional dominator. The second one is used at return edges and returns the conditional statement if the call site is inside a conditional else null.

4.3.6. Backwards Strong Update Rule

Until now, we always assumed that a taint is only affected if the variable occurs in a statement. However, with aliasing, this gets quite more complicated. A taint could not match the left side and, thus, is propagated over the statement according to the default rule of normal flow, but the taint is an alias of the left side and should have been killed. Also, we can not just link aliases to taints for such strong updates because that would violate the flow functions' distributiveness property.

In this case, FLOWDROID falls back to Soot's must-aliasing analysis. However, the must-aliasing analysis is only intraprocedural. Thus, strong updates split over methods are not detected and produce a false positive.

Backward, the first observed update is the correct one. We treat a must-alias like a regular match:

• **Strong Update Rule**: If the incoming taint must-aliases the left side, then apply the normal flow rules just as if the left side was tainted.

4.3.7. Backwards Clinit Rule

<clinit> is a special method in the JVM and stands for class loader init. The compiler generates the method and calls it implicitly. Examples of statements that get compiled into clinit are in Figure 4.5. The invokation is implicit at the class's initialization phase and is executed at most once for each class¹. SPARK, which default call graph algorithm in FlowDroid, overapproximates the <clinit> behavior. It adds an edge to <clinit> at each statement containing a StaticFieldRef, StaticInvokeExpr or NewExpr².

The need for this rule is rooted in the IFDS solver of FLOWDROID. The solver decides whether to use Normal Flow or Call Flow by calling isCallStmt(Unit u) on the interprocedural control-flow graph generated by Soot. Internally, this method calls containsInvokeExpr() on the Unit object. containsInvokeExpr() for AssignStmt only returns true if the right-hand side is an instance of InvokeExpr. Consequently, the calls to <clinit> from AssignStmts with NewExpr or StaticFieldRef on the right side are missed.

https://docs.oracle.com/javase/specs/jvms/se8/html/jvms-2.html#jvms-2.9

²https://github.com/soot-oss/soot/blob/59931576784b910a7d38f81910b7313aa2feafea/src/main/java/ soot/jimple/toolkits/callgraph/OnFlyCallGraphBuilder.java#L969

Figure 4.5.: Examples of statements being in <clinit>

The Backwards Clinit Rule manually injects an edge to the <clinit> method in the infoflow solver when appropriate during the analysis. Also, it lessens the overapproximation of SPARK by carefully choosing whether to inject the edge. The rule works as follows:

- Clinit Rule 1: If the tainted static variable is a field of the methods class, do not inject because we will at least encounter a NewExpr of the same class further in the call graph.
- Clinit Rule 2: Else if the tainted static variable matches the StaticFieldRef on the right hand side: Inject the edge because we can not be sure whether we see another edge to <clinit>.
- Clinit Rule 3: Else if the class of the tainted static variable matches the class of the NewExpr: Inject the edge because we can not be sure whether we see another edge to <clinit>.

The behavior is still an overapproximation, of course. A more precise solution would require bookkeeping of every class's last observation equal to the first occurrence in the code.

In the existing implementation, there is no such explicit. As taints are introduced at sources, if the source statement is a static initialization as shown in Figure 4.5a, the propagation starts inside the <clinit> method. The solver has a followReturnsPastSeeds feature which propagates return flows for unbalanced problems, for example when the taint was introduced inside a method and therefore there was no incoming flow. This allows the forward analysis to detect leaks originated from static variable initializations but misses leaks inside static blocks as shown in Figure 4.5b.

4.3.8. Other Rules

Skip System Class Rule and Stop After First K Flows Rule are not direction-dependent. Both are shared with the forwards search and therefore use the existing implementation in FlowDroid.

4.4. Other Components

4.4.1. Taint Wrappers

FLOWDROID already has an interface IReversibleTaintWrapper for taint wrappers providing inversed summaries. The SummaryTaintWrapper using StubDroid's summaries already implemented this interface. For the EasyTaintWrapper, we contributed the inverse implementation. Its implementation follows simple rules which cover most cases[3]. The rules are inverted to:

- If the return value is tainted, taint the object and the parameters.
- If the base object is tainted, taint all parameters.

```
1 char[] tainted = source();
2 StringBuilder sb = new StringBuilder();
3 sb.append(tainted, offset, len);
4 sb.append("untainted");
5 sink(sb.toString());
```

Figure 4.6.: Easy Taint Wrapper Example

Note that these simple rules are disadvantageous for the backward direction the more parameters a method has. Consider the code snippet in Figure 4.6, especially line 3. Forwards, tainted is the incoming taint and the EasyTaintWrapper produces the taint set {tainted, sb}. Backward, the incoming taint is sb and the taint wrapper produces four taints {sb, tainted, offset, len}. Luckily, most methods supported by the EasyTaintWrapper have less than three arguments.

4.4.2. Native Call Handler

The native call handler of FLOWDROID handles two methods: System#arraycopy and reflect.Array#newArray. The handling of System#arraycopy is direction-dependent. Thus, we adapted the existing implementation and reversed the logic of System#arraycopy to reflect the analysis direction.

4.4.3. Code Optimizer: AddNOPStmts

Before starting the analysis, FLOWDROID applies code optimization to the interprocedural call graph. By default, dead code elimination and within constant value propagation is performed. Those are also applied before backward analysis, but we needed another code optimizer to handle an edge case in backward analysis.

First, consider the static2Test test case in the StatictTestCode class of FLowDroid in Figure 4.7. The method is also the entry point for the analysis, is static and does not have any parameters. The same is true for the source TelephonyManager#getDeviceId. Due to the first condition, static2Test has no identity statements and because of the second condition, there are also no assign statements before the source statement in Jimple. Therefore the source statement is the first statement in the graph. Next, a detail of FLowDroid's IFDS solver is important. The Return and CallToReturn flow function is only applied if a return site is available. When traversing backward, the source statement is the last and thus has no return sites. Now, the taints flowing into source methods are registered in the Call To Return flow function. Altogether, leaks are missed if the source statement is the first statement.

Moving the detection of incoming taints flows into sources from the CallToReturn to the Call flow function was not an option because by default source methods are not visited and changing this would require multiple changes in the existing implementation and also ours. Our solution is to add a NOP statement in such cases before the analysis. Due to the entry points being known beforehand, the overhead is nearly zero.

```
1 public static void static2Test() {
 2
        String tainted = TelephonyManager.getDeviceId();
 3
        ClassWithStatic static1 = new ClassWithStatic();
 4
        static1.setTitle(tainted);
 5
        ClassWithStatic static2 = new ClassWithStatic();
 6
        String alsoTainted = static2.getTitle();
 7
 8
        ConnectionManager cm = new ConnectionManager();
 9
        cm.publish(alsoTainted);
10 }
                                          (a) Java
 1 public static void static2Test() {
        tainted = staticinvoke
            \hookrightarrow <soot.jimple.infoflow.test.android.TelephonyManager:
            \hookrightarrow java.lang.String getDeviceId()>(); // Line 2 in (a)
 3
 4
        // [...]
 6
        virtualinvoke cm.<soot.jimple.infoflow.test.android.ConnectionManager:</pre>
            ⇔ void publish(java.lang.String)>(alsoTainted); // Line 9 in (a)
 7
 8
        return;
 9 }
```

Figure 4.7.: static2Test Code

(b) Jimple

5. Validation

5.1. Unit Tests

FLOWDROID already contains 519 unit tests for the core component. We also validated the backward analysis with these tests. In the following, we briefly explain why tests were left out or did not return the same results.

EasyTaintWrapperTests equalsTest and hashCodeTest are expected to return one leak, but the backward analysis does report no leaks. This difference is related to the EasyTaintWrapper implementation. equals() and hashCode() are exclusive in the EasyTaintWrapper, which means the analysis can skip these methods because the taint wrapper provides a summary for them. The exclusive check happens in the Call Flow function. In both tests, the source is in an exclusive method. The IFDS solver behaves as already observed with <clinit> in subsection 4.3.7 and creates a return flow for an unbalanced problem; while going backward, the exclusive check kills the taint in the Call Flow function and applies the summary unaware of the override. We marked those two tests forwards-specific and created two equivalent backward-specific tests with sinks inside the equals() or hashCode() method with one expected leak.

HeapTestPtsAliasing We focused in this work on flow-sensitive aliasing, which is the default aliasing strategy of FLOWDROID. Other aliasing strategies are left for future work.

ImplicitFlowTests + Set contains. Not implemented.

implement later

5.2. DroidBench

DROIDBENCH is a test suite to evaluate data flow analysis tools targeting the Android ecosystem. It originated from the initial work on FLOWDROID to assess it in comparison to

other tools [6]. The latest development version 3 includes 190 test cases¹. We used the newest commit on develop at the time of writing² to validate our implementation. We aim to achieve similar results as FLOWDROID's existing forward implementation.

5.2.1. Configuration

For the validation, we ran FlowDroid with the Android module's default configuration using the EasyTaintWrapper as the taint wrapper. The configuration summary is in Table 5.1.

Option	Value
Array Size Tainting	disabled
Inspect Sources & Sinks	disabled
Static Field Tracking	enabled
Ignore Flows in System Packages	enabled
Exclude Soot Library Classes	enabled
Timeout	-
Taint Wrapper	EasyTaintWrapper

Table 5.1.: Real World Apps Configuration

We only used a subset of Droidbench's tests to validate our results. Dynamic Code Loading, Self Modification, Unreachable Code and Native Code are all not supported by FlowDroid. The first three are all call-graph related and the latter is not supported because FlowDroid has no Android native call handler for now. Also, Inter Component Communication (ICC), Reflection Inter Component Communication and Inter App Communication were left out because the ICC module is - at the time of this work - not maintained anymore. All of the tests stated above are flow function independent. If FlowDroid gets support for those features in the future, they should also work in backward analysis.

5.2.2. Results

The complete overview of the results is in Table 5.2. ★ denotes true positive, ★ false positive and () false negative. If a row is empty, the test expects no leaks and also none

¹https://github.com/secure-software-engineering/DroidBench/

²6th March 2021, Commit ddbd50c

were found.

Our backward-directed implementation yields nearly the same result as the existing forward implementation, with one missed leak more than the baseline. We achieve a F1 measure of 0.89 equally to the baseline.

App Name	Forwards	Backwards
Aliasin	g	
FlowSensitivity1		
Merge1	*	*
SimpleAliasing1	*	*
StrongUpdate1		
Arrays and	Lists	
ArrayAccess1	*	*
ArrayAccess2	*	*
ArrayAccess3	★	*
ArrayAccess4		
ArrayAccess5		
ArrayCopy1	*	*
ArrayToString1	★	*
HashMapAccess1	*	*
ListAccess1	*	*
MultidimensionalArray1	*	*
Callbac	ks	
AnonymousClass1	★	\otimes
Button1	★	\otimes
Button2	***	★★★
Button3	**	*
Button4	★	\otimes
Button5	★	\otimes
LocationLeak1	★★★★	* * **
LocationLeak2	(*)(*)	*
LocationLeak3	*	*** ** **
MethodOverride1	★	\otimes
MultiHandlers1		
Ordering1		
RegisterGlobal1	*	*
RegisterGlobal2	*	\otimes

App Name	Forwards	Backwards
Unregister1	*	*
Emulator De	tection	
Battery1	*	*
Bluetooth1	€	*
Build1	\star	*
Contacts1		$\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$
ContentProvider1	**	$\otimes \otimes$
DeviceId1	\star	*
File1	★	*
IMEI1	$\otimes \otimes$	$\otimes \otimes$
IP1	★	*
PI1	\star	*
PlayStore1	$\otimes \otimes$	$\otimes \otimes$
PlayStore2	★	*
Sensors1	\bullet	*
SubscriberId1	\bullet	*
VoiceMail1		*
Field and Object	Sensitivity	
FieldSensitivity1		
FieldSensitivity2		
FieldSensitivity3	\bullet	*
FieldSensitivity4		
InheritedObjects1	\bullet	*
ObjectSensitivity1		
ObjectSensitivity2		
Lifecyc	le	
ActivityEventSequence1	*	*
ActivityEventSequence2	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
ActivityEventSequence3	\bigcirc	\bigcirc
ActivityLifecycle1	\bullet	*
ActivityLifecycle2	\bullet	*
ActivityLifecycle3	\bullet	*
ActivityLifecycle4	\bullet	*
ActivitySavedState1	\bullet	\otimes
ApplicationLifecycle1	$\begin{array}{c c} & \\ \hline \\$	$\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$
ApplicationLifecycle2	$\mid \otimes \mid$	*

App Name	Forwards	Backwards
ApplicationLifecycle3	*	€
AsynchronousEventOrdering1	*	€
BroadcastReceiverLifecycle1	*	 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
BroadcastReceiverLifecycle2	★ ★	★ ★
BroadcastReceiverLifecycle3	*	*
EventOrdering1	*	€
FragmentLifecycle1	*	€
FragmentLifecycle2		
ServiceEventSequence1		
ServiceEventSequence2		
ServiceEventSequence3		
ServiceLifecycle1	*	*
ServiceLifecycle2	*	*
SharedPreferenceChanged1	 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 	★ ★
General J	Java	
Clone1	*	*
Exceptions1	★	*
Exceptions2	★	*
Exceptions3	*	*
Exceptions4	 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 	 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Exceptions5	*	*
Exceptions6	*	€
Exceptions7		
FactoryMethods1	$\otimes \otimes$	$\otimes \otimes$
Loop1	*	*
Loop2	*	*
Serialization1		
SourceCodeSpecific1	€	*
StartProcessWithSecret1	*	*
StaticInitialization1		*
StaticInitialization2	*	*
StaticInitialization3		
StringFormatter1		
StringPatternMatching1	*	*
StringToCharArray1	$\overline{\bullet}$	*
StringToOutputStream1	★★★★★★	 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

App Name	Forwards	Backwards
UnreachableCode		
VirtualDispatch1	★ ★	★ ★
VirtualDispatch2	★ ★	★ ★
VirtualDispatch3	*	*
VirtualDispatch4		
Implicit F	lows	
ImplicitFlow1	*	*
ImplicitFlow2	**	$\otimes \otimes$
ImplicitFlow3	**	$\otimes \otimes$
ImplicitFlow4		
ImplicitFlow5		
Miscellaneous And	roid-Specific	
ApplicationModeling1	*	*
DirectLeak1	★	*
InactiveActivity		
Library2	*	*
LogNoLeak		
Obfuscation1	*	*
Parcel1	*	*
PrivateDataLeak1	(★)	*
PrivateDataLeak2	(★)	*
PrivateDataLeak3	⊛○	⊛○
PublicAPIField1	*	*
PublicAPIField2	*	★ ★
View1	(★)	*
Reflecti		
Reflection1	*	*
Reflection2	★	*
Reflection3	*	*
Reflection4	€	★
Reflection5	★	*
	\rightarrow	*
Reflection6		
Reflection6 Reflection7		
	★ ○ ★	⊗

App Name	Forwards	Backwards
AsyncTask1	*	⊛
Executor1	★	€
JavaThread1	*	*
JavaThread2	*	*
Looper1	*	*
TimerTask1	*	*
*	108	109
*	14	14
\bigcirc	13	12
Precision	88.52%	88.62%
Recall	89.26%	90.08%
F1 measure	0.89	0.89

Table 5.2.: DroidBench Validation Results

5.2.3. Results Explanation

In greater detail, we miss both leaks in EmulatorDetectionTests#IMEI1, whereas in StaticTests#StaticInitialization1 we do not miss the leak. We explain why below.

IMEI1 Implicit flows not implement atm

TODO: implement

General Java

As all StaticInitialization tests depend on the <clinit> behavior modeling, we decided to explain all three even though only StaticInitialization1 is different.

StaticInitialization1 differs between forward and backward analysis. Backward reports one leak due to the explicit modeling of <clinit> edges instead of relying on SPARK. Recall subsection 4.3.7, leaks inside static blocks are missed in the forward analysis. This test case is quite similar to Figure 4.5b, and therefore, only the backward analysis reports the leak. The Clinit Rule could also be ported to the forward analysis but a larger overapproximation because, unlike backward, there is no guarantee that there will be another edge to <clinit> if the statement is in the same class as the <clinit> method.

StaticInitialization2 yields the same result but because of different reasons. The test assigns a tainted value to a static field in the static initializer. Again, recall subsection 4.3.7. Backward, the clinit rule takes care of visiting the <clinit> edge while forwards the followReturnsPastSeeds option of the IFDS solver is responsible.

StaticInitialization3's leak is missed despite the explicit modeling of clinit. The code is provided in Figure 5.1. The MainActivity is using the singleton pattern and thus has a static field v referring to its instance. The source statement is inside the Test class's static block using the singleton to access the instance field s. The taint is now introduced at the sink and refers to the field through the this instance. When we visit line 13, the <clinit> edge is not taken due to the taint being an instance field. Line 12 kills the taint and stops the analysis as there is no taint to propagate anymore. We never get to see the statement where the static field v aliases this. This is a limitiation of the alias handling.

5.2.4. Improvements From The Summary Taint Wrapper

We briefly explained the simple but not always precise rules of the EasyTaintWrapper in subsection 4.4.1. Using StubDroid's more precise summaries yields even better results for both directions. The false positives in the test cases BroadcastReceiverLifecycle2 and SharedPreferenceChanged1 are gone and the leak in Serialization1 is found.

```
1 \quad \hbox{public class MainActivity extends Activity } \{
 2
         public static MainActivity v;
 3
        public String s;
 4
 5
        @Override
 6
        protected void onCreate(Bundle savedInstanceState) {
 7
             v = this;
 8
 9
             super.onCreate(savedInstanceState);
10
             setContentView(R.layout.activity_main);
11
12
             s = ""; // T={}
13
             Test t = new Test(); // T={this.s}
14
             Log.i("DroidBench", s); // T={this.s}
15
        }
16 }
17
18 class Test {
19
        static {
20
             TelephonyManager mgr = (TelephonyManager)
                 \hookrightarrow \texttt{MainActivity.v.getSystemService}(\texttt{Activity.TELEPHONY\_SERVICE});
21
             MainActivity.v.s = mgr.getDeviceId(); // source
22
        }
23 }
```

Figure 5.1.: StaticInitialization3 code

6. Performance Evaluation

In the last chapter, we have shown that our implementation has the necessary soundness to be viable and yields the expected results. We now evaluate our implementation against the existing implementation in FLOWDROID.

6.1. DroidBench

We already introduced Droidench in section 5.2 to validate the soundness of our backward-directed implementation. In this section, we focus on the performance in comparison to the existing forward-directed implementation in FlowDroid.

DroidBench has the advantage that all apps are crafted explicitly for benchmarking taint analysis. So, most tests only contain a single-figure number of sources and sinks. Also, the number of sources and sinks are often equal or differ by one to test whether the tool can differentiate something. These simplify the comparison between both analysis directions as neither one has an initial disadvantage.

Most test cases are small enough to be analyzed in sub-two seconds on an average four-core desktop CPU from 2012. Our test environment is not isolated, so background tasks and the process scheduler can affect the runtime. The short runtime, together with the variance of the unisolated testing environment, render the runtime unusable as a comparison point. In contrast, edge propagations are deterministic¹ and correlate with the runtime. Thus, we only use the number of propagations to compare both implementations.

The configuration is the same as described in subsection 5.2.1.

¹This is only true if there are enough resources. FLowDROID tries to gracefully terminate when running low on memory. Also, timeouts result in a non-reproducible number of edge propagations.

6.1.1. Results

We compare all test cases where both implementations yield the same result. When rows only contain hyphens, either the result of the test case differed between the two analyses or the IFDS analysis did not start, e.g., because no sink is in the reachable code. #I denotes the number of edge propagations inside the infoflow analysis and #A the number of edge propagations inside the alias analysis. We calculated the absolute difference as $Result_B - Result_F$. The relative difference calculates as follows: $\frac{TotalDifference}{|\#I_F + \#A_F|}$. Hence, negative values signify the backward analysis performed better. The full results are in Table 6.1.

On average, our implementation needs more edge propagations to finish the analysis. If we look at it on a per test basis, there are not many test cases where both perform identically. Instead, dependent on the specific test case, the relative difference is between -1 and 1. So, the expected behavior from section 3.2 occurred: it highly depends on the analyzed app. However, we did not expect cases that let the backward edge propagations explode up to a factor of 10000%, as seen in LifecycleTest#BroadcastReceiverLifecycle3 and others. In contrast, the existing forward implementation only at most a relative difference of 100%.

Ann Nama	Forw	ards	Backw	ards	Difference					
App Name	#I	#A	#I	#A	#I	#A	Total	Relative		
AliasingTest										
FlowSensitivity1	175	72	39	4	-136	-68	-204	-0.83		
Merge1	137	65	89	47	-48	-18	-66	-0.33		
SimpleAliasing1	35	13	20	3	-15	-10	-25	-0.52		
StrongUpdate1	30	13	11	3	-19	-10	-29	-0.67		
		Andro	idSpecific'	Test						
ApplicationModeling1	212	96	851	1208	639	1112	1751	5.69		
DirectLeak1	3	0	4	0	1	0	1	0.33		
InactiveActivity	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_		
Library2	5	0	6	0	1	0	1	0.2		
LogNoLeak	_	-	_	_	_	_	_	_		
Obfuscation1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0		
Parcel1	144	15	86	93	-58	78	20	0.13		
PrivateDataLeak1	410	110	608	766	198	656	854	1.64		
PrivateDataLeak2	15	0	5	3	-10	3	-7	-0.47		
PrivateDataLeak3	17	2	210	140	193	138	331	17.42		
runPublicAPIField1	89	1	43	0	-46	-1	-47	-0.52		
runPublicAPIField2	5	0	11	0	6	0	6	1.2		
runView1	71	50	69	0	-2	-50	-52	-0.43		
		Array	AndListTe	est						

Ann Name	Forw	Forwards		Backwards		Differenc		
App Name	#I	#A	#I	#A	#I	#A	Total	Relative
ArrayAccess1	77	34	51	100	-26	66	40	0.36
ArrayAccess2	16	4	12	0	-4	-4	-8	-0.4
ArrayAccess3	77	34	51	100	-26	66	40	0.36
ArrayAccess4	164	84	42	21	-122	-63	-185	-0.75
ArrayAccess5	75	5	34	23	-41	18	-23	-0.29
ArrayCopy1	18	2	9	2	- 9	0	-9	-0.45
ArrayToString1	10	1	6	0	-4	-1	-5	-0.45
HashMapAccess1	22	5	15	1	-7	-4	-11	-0.41
ListAccess1	85	9	60	97	-25	88	63	0.67
MultidimensionalArray1	29	3	16	23	-13	20	7	0.22
·		Cal	lbackTest					
AnonymousClass1	152	0	208	0	56	0	56	0.37
Button1	58	39	43	0	-15	-39	-54	-0.56
Button2	444	66	155	254	-289	188	-101	-0.2
Button3	360	89	109	408	-251	319	68	0.15
Button4	58	39	43	0	-15	-39	-54	-0.56
Button5	80	40	6	3	-74	-37	-111	-0.93
LocationLeak1	617	222	260	298	-357	76	-281	-0.33
LocationLeak2	212	121	152	0	-60	-121	-181	-0.54
LocationLeak3	220	73	104	115	-116	42	-74	-0.25
MethodOverride1	3	0	2	0	-1	0	-1	-0.33
MultiHandlers1	17	0	145	149	128	149	277	16.29
Ordering1	456	151	44	0	-412	-151	-563	-0.93
RegisterGlobal1	291	162	49	0	-242	-162	-404	-0.89
RegisterGlobal2	52	37	43	0	- 9	-37	-46	-0.52
Unregister1	11	0	9	0	-2	0	-2	-0.18
		Emulato	rDetection	nTest				
Battery1	7	0	39	15	32	15	47	6.7
Bluetooth1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0
Build1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0
Contacts1	53	0	200	19	147	19	166	3.13
ContentProvider1	13	0	8	0	-5	0	-5	-0.38
DeviceId1	15	0	6	0	- 9	0	-9	-0.6
File1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0
IMEI1	137	0	422	1	285	1	286	2.09
IP1	4	0	29	0	25	0	25	6.25
PI1	6	0	4	0	-2	0	-2	-0.33
PlayStore1	158	0	8	0	-150	0	-150	-0.95
PlayStore2	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0
Sensors1	5	0	4	0	-1	0	-1	-0.2
SubscriberId1	29	0	4	0	-25	0	-25	-0.86
VoiceMail1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0
	I	_	jectSensit		-			
FieldSensitivity1	98	50	25	3	-73	-47	-120	-0.81

A 11	Forw	ards	Backw	ards	Difference			
App Name	#I	#A	#I	#A	#I	#A	Total	Relative
FieldSensitivity2	35	15	19	0	-16	-15	-31	-0.62
FieldSensitivity3	38	15	16	0	-22	-15	-37	-0.7
FieldSensitivity4	14	6	8	0	-6	-6	-12	-0.6
InheritedObjects1	4	0	6	0	2	0	2	0.5
ObjectSensitivity1	19	7	14	1	-5	-6	-11	-0.42
ObjectSensitivity2	15	8	10	0	-5	-8	-13	-0.57
, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,			ralJavaTe	st				
Clone1	23	2	12	4	-11	2	-9	-0.36
Exceptions1	16	0	13	0	-3	0	-3	-0.19
Exceptions2	22	0	13	0	- 9	0	-9	-0.41
Exceptions3	18	0	11	0	-7	0	-7	-0.39
Exceptions4	21	1	22	0	1	-1	0	0.0
Exceptions5	13	1	16	0	3	-1	2	0.14
Exceptions6	78	12	23	0	-55	-12	-67	-0.74
Exceptions7	71	12	6	0	-65	-12	-77	-0.93
FactoryMethods1	40	0	14	0	-26	0	-26	-0.65
Loop1	93	2	51	0	-42	-2	-44	-0.46
Loop2	123	2	79	0	-44	-2	-46	-0.37
Serialization1	50	4	22	29	-28	25	-3	-0.06
SourceCodeSpecific1	16	0	45	7	29	7	36	2.25
StartProcessWithSecret1	29	8	17	3	-12	-5	-17	-0.46
StaticInitialization1	26	27	9	0	-17	-27	-44	-0.83
StaticInitialization2	57	29	86	0	29	-29	0	0.0
StaticInitialization3	35	9	5	0	-30	-9	-39	-0.89
StringFormatter1	16	1	10	0	-6	-1	-7	-0.41
StringPatternMatching1	23	1	8	4	-15	3	-12	-0.5
StringToCharArray1	91	4	47	0	-44	-4	-48	-0.51
StringToOutputStream1	26	3	25	1	-1	-2	-3	-0.1
UnreachableCode	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	-
VirtualDispatch1	128	31	88	28	-40	-3	-43	-0.27
VirtualDispatch2	7	0	12	0	-40 5	0	5	-0.21 0.71
VirtualDispatch3	8	0	6	0	-2	0	-2	-0.25
VirtualDispatch4	0	U	U	_	- <u>z</u>	_		-0.25
VII tuaiDispatcii4	_	Impli	citFlowTe					
ImplicitFlow1	1823	144	3315	11	1492	-133	1359	0.69
ImplicitFlow2	146	63	991	3	845	-60	785	3.76
ImplicitFlow3	148	50	1023	20	875	-30	845	4.27
ImplicitFlow4	67	0	1864	12	1797	-30 12	1809	27.0
ImplicitFlow6	18	0	112	0	94	0	94	5.22
Impliciti lowo	10	_	ecycleTest	~	34	U	34	0.22
ActivityEventSequence1	58	35	72	0	14	-35	-21	-0.23
ActivityEventSequence2	32	24	77	0	45	-35 -24	-21 21	-0.23 0.38
ActivityEventSequence3	209	116	156	0	-53	-24 -116	-169	-0.52
ActivityLifecycle1	99	72	156	7	-35 57	-65	-109 -8	-0.02 -0.05
ACTIVITYEMECYCIET	99	12	190	1	91	-05	o	-0.03

	Forw	ards	Backw	ards		Difference		
App Name	#I	#A	#I	#A	#I	#A	Total	Relative
ActivityLifecycle2	47	34	33	0	-14	-34	-48	-0.59
ActivityLifecycle3	65	31	28	0	-37	-31	-68	-0.71
ActivityLifecycle4	49	33	14	0	-35	-33	-68	-0.83
ActivitySavedState1	20	0	7	0	-13	0	-13	-0.65
ApplicationLifecycle1	37	10	82	0	45	-10	35	0.74
ApplicationLifecycle2	86	17	94	155	8	138	146	1.42
ApplicationLifecycle3	32	12	21	0	-11	-12	-23	-0.52
AsynchronousEventOrdering1	58	31	16	0	-42	-31	-73	-0.82
BroadcastReceiverLifecycle1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0
BroadcastReceiverLifecycle2	109	44	248	114	139	70	209	1.37
BroadcastReceiverLifecycle3	3	0	195	110	192	110	302	100.67
EventOrdering1	61	29	30	0	-31	-29	-60	-0.67
FragmentLifecycle1	187	127	90	0	-97	-127	-224	-0.71
FragmentLifecycle2	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
ServiceEventSequence1	53	20	124	34	71	14	85	1.16
ServiceEventSequence2	105	49	389	220	284	171	455	2.95
ServiceEventSequence3	46	12	275	151	229	139	368	6.34
ServiceLifecycle1	119	44	42	0	-77	-44	-121	-0.74
ServiceLifecycle2	68	20	89	21	21	1	22	0.25
SharedPreferenceChanged1	13	0	11	0	-2	0	-2	-0.15
		Ref	lectionTes	t				
Reflection1	15	5	8	0	-7	-5	-12	-0.6
Reflection2	21	5	11	0	-10	-5	-15	-0.58
Reflection3	42	9	62	25	20	16	36	0.71
Reflection4	9	0	8	0	-1	0	-1	-0.11
Reflection5	16	1	11	0	-5	-1	-6	-0.35
Reflection6	7	0	134	51	127	51	178	25.43
Reflection7	15	5	15	11	0	6	6	0.3
Reflection8	35	7	14	0	-21	-7	-28	-0.67
Reflection9	42	7	21	0	-21	-7	-28	-0.57
		Thr	eadingTes	t				
AsyncTask1	22	2	11	1	-11	-1	-12	-0.5
Executor1	34	7	17	0	-17	-7	-24	-0.59
JavaThread1	34	7	17	0	-17	-7	-24	-0.59
JavaThread2	62	10	31	8	-31	-2	-33	-0.46
Looper1	49	3	20	16	-29	13	-16	-0.31
TimerTask1	203	28	32	33	-171	5	-166	-0.72
∅ Propagations	85.46	23.41	117.64	38.6	32.19	15.19	47.37	1.61
∅ without Implicit	70.61	22.46	60.56	40.1	-10.05	17.63	7.59	1.34

Table 6.1.: DroidBench Performance Evaluation Results

6.1.2. Result Explanation

We define tests with a relative difference greater than 10 as worth investigating. In the following, we explain why our implementation performed worse than expected.

PrivateDataLeak3 This test contains two sinks and one source. The tainted data is written to a file, later read from the file and then leaked. FlowDroid does not support tracking taints over files, so it only finds a leak from source to file write but misses the leak from file read to send SMS. Due to EasyTaintWrapper's simplicity, overtainting happens in the backward direction. When FileInputStream fis = openFileInput("out.txt"); is called with fis tainted, EasyTaintWrapper also taints the base object - the MainActivity in this case. As the MainActivity has an enormous scope, the taint has a long lifetime and many other taints could derive from this taint. This taint explains the relative difference of 17.68. Using the more precise SummaryTaintWrapper, the edges reduce to (51,16) and a relative difference of 2.53, which is more reasonable. It is still higher because of the second sink.

MultiHandlers1 Two LocationListeners are registered in different activities. In both activities, an instance field is a parameter of a sink. So there are two possible paths where something could be leaked. The LocationListener does not call any source on the first path, while the second path has an empty setter method killing the taint. For the first path, the backward analysis has to propagate the taint into the LocationListener to notice that this is a dead-end while the forward's search does not even start there. For the second path, the backward analysis seems to suffer because it starts at an instance field taint with a larger scope than a local variable.

BroadcastReceiverLifecycle3 The test contains five sinks but only one source. If we only consider the leak path, both implementations perform equally. The four other sinks are responsible for the overhead on edge propagations.

Reflection6 The reflective call site has multiple callees in the interprocedural controlflow graph. Backward all of these callees are visited, of which only one contains a source statement. Forward, the taint is introduced in the callee at the source and just one return site needs to be processed. Summarized, our implementation suffers mostly from additional sinks.

6.1.3. Using A More Precise Taint Wrapper

We noticed the overtainting in PrivateDataLeak3 is caused by the EasyTaintWrapper. Thus we now compare how using the SummaryTaintWrapper lowers the edge propagations. The full results are in Table 6.2. In the table, we compare the EasyTaintWrapper with the SummaryTaintWrapper on our implementation.

As we already described, PrivateDataLeak3 benefits from the more precise taint wrapper. Similarly, many other test cases also benefit. In the end, the average difference does not reflect this because the more precise taint wrapper also produces taints the EasyTaintWrapper missed. The best example is Serialization1, where the leak is found only with the SummaryTaintWrapper. Altogether, the SummaryTaintWrapper should be the default choice for real-world applications because it is more precise without compromising the average edge propagations.

App Name	EasyTW		SummaryTW		Difference			
	#I	#A	#I	#A	#I	#A	Total	Relative
AliasingTest								
FlowSensitivity1	39	4	71	13	32	9	41	0.95
Merge1	61	9	109	91	48	82	130	1.86
SimpleAliasing1	20	3	20	3	0	0	0	0.0
StrongUpdate1	11	3	11	3	0	0	0	0.0
		Andro	idSpecifi	cTest				
ApplicationModeling1	851	1208	427	792	-424	-416	-840	-0.41
DirectLeak1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0
InactiveActivity	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
Library2	6	0	6	0	0	0	0	0.0
LogNoLeak	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
Obfuscation1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0
Parcel1	66	68	87	76	21	8	29	0.22
PrivateDataLeak1	599	835	576	835	-23	0	-23	-0.02
PrivateDataLeak2	5	6	5	6	0	0	0	0.0
PrivateDataLeak3	212	143	41	16	-171	-127	-298	-0.84
runPublicAPIField1	62	31	55	16	-7	-15	-22	-0.24
runPublicAPIField2	11	1	14	1	3	0	3	0.25
runView1	69	0	69	0	0	0	0	0.0
		Array	/AndList	Гest				
ArrayAccess1	51	100	51	100	0	0	0	0.0
ArrayAccess2	12	0	12	0	0	0	0	0.0
ArrayAccess3	51	100	51	100	0	0	0	0.0

	EasyTW			SummaryTW			Difference			
App Name	#I	#A	#I	#A	#I	#A	Total	Relative		
ArrayAccess4	42	21	42	21	0	0	0	0.0		
ArrayAccess5	67	63	67	63	0	0	0	0.0		
ArrayCopy1	9	2	9	2	0	0	0	0.0		
ArrayToString1	6	1	6	1	0	0	0	0.0		
HashMapAccess1	15	1	15	1	0	0	0	0.0		
ListAccess1	60	97	77	118	17	21	38	0.24		
MultidimensionalArray1	16	23	16	23	0	0	0	0.0		
CallbackTest										
AnonymousClass1	208	1	208	1	0	0	0	0.0		
Button1	43	0	43	0	0	0	0	0.0		
Button2	155	257	184	275	29	18	47	0.11		
Button3	109	408	120	357	11	-51	-40	-0.08		
Button4	43	0	43	0	0	0	0	0.0		
Button5	6	6	7	7	1	1	2	0.17		
LocationLeak1	260	300	286	316	26	16	42	0.07		
LocationLeak2	152	2	152	2	0	0	0	0.0		
LocationLeak3	104	117	107	117	3	0	3	0.01		
MethodOverride1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0.0		
MultiHandlers1	145	151	148	151	3	0	3	0.01		
Ordering1	44	2	44	2	0	0	0	0.0		
RegisterGlobal1	49	0	49	0	0	0	0	0.0		
RegisterGlobal2	43	0	43	0	0	0	0	0.0		
Unregister1	9	1	9	1	0	0	0	0.0		
		Emulato	orDetecti	onTest						
Battery1	43	15	39	15	-4	0	-4	-0.07		
Bluetooth1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0		
Build1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0		
Contacts1	210	19	167	4	-43	-15	-58	-0.25		
ContentProvider1	8	0	8	0	0	0	0	0.0		
DeviceId1	6	0	6	0	0	0	0	0.0		
File1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0		
IMEI1	140	34	111	74	-29	40	11	0.06		
IP1	29	1	54	6	25	5	30	1.0		
PI1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0		
PlayStore1	8	0	8	0	0	0	0	0.0		
PlayStore2	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0		
Sensors1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0		
SubscriberId1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0		
VoiceMail1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0		
	Fiel	dAndOl	ojectSens	itivityTe	st					
FieldSensitivity1	25	3	25	3	0	0	0	0.0		
FieldSensitivity2	19	0	19	0	0	0	0	0.0		
FieldSensitivity3	16	0	16	0	0	0	0	0.0		
FieldSensitivity4	8	0	8	0	0	0	0	0.0		

A N	Easy	TW	Summ	aryTW		Diffe	erence	
App Name	#I	#A	#I	#A	#I	#A	Total	Relative
InheritedObjects1	6	0	6	0	0	0	0	0.0
ObjectSensitivity1	14	1	14	1	0	0	0	0.0
ObjectSensitivity2	10	0	10	0	0	0	0	0.0
GeneralJavaTest								
Clone1	12	4	19	10	7	6	13	0.81
Exceptions1	13	0	13	0	0	0	0	0.0
Exceptions2	13	0	13	0	0	0	0	0.0
Exceptions3	11	0	11	0	0	0	0	0.0
Exceptions4	22	1	53	26	31	25	56	2.43
Exceptions5	16	1	29	6	13	5	18	1.06
Exceptions6	23	0	23	0	0	0	0	0.0
Exceptions7	6	0	6	0	0	0	0	0.0
FactoryMethods1	14	2	14	2	0	0	0	0.0
Loop1	46	7	46	7	0	0	0	0.0
Loop2	74	14	74	14	0	0	0	0.0
Serialization1	22	29	332	547	310	518	828	16.24
SourceCodeSpecific1	45	7	45	7	0	0	0	0.0
StartProcessWithSecret1	17	3	18	4	1	1	2	0.1
StaticInitialization1	9	0	9	0	0	0	0	0.0
StaticInitialization2	86	0	85	0	-1	0	-1	-0.01
StaticInitialization3	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0.0
StringFormatter1	10	1	10	1	0	0	0	0.0
StringPatternMatching1	8	6	7	1	-1	-5	-6	-0.43
StringToCharArray1	42	6	42	6	0	0	0	0.0
StringToOutputStream1	30	3	26	3	-4	0	-4	-0.12
UnreachableCode	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
VirtualDispatch1	88	28	110	88	22	60	82	0.71
VirtualDispatch2	12	0	12	0	0	0	0	0.0
VirtualDispatch3	6	0	6	0	0	0	0	0.0
VirtualDispatch4	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
		Life	ecycleTes	st				
ActivityEventSequence1	73	0	73	0	0	0	0	0.0
ActivityEventSequence2	77	0	77	0	0	0	0	0.0
ActivityEventSequence3	156	1	156	1	0	0	0	0.0
ActivityLifecycle1	156	7	156	7	0	0	0	0.0
ActivityLifecycle2	33	0	33	0	0	0	0	0.0
ActivityLifecycle3	28	0	28	0	0	0	0	0.0
ActivityLifecycle4	14	0	14	0	0	0	0	0.0
ActivitySavedState1	7	1	7	1	0	0	0	0.0
ApplicationLifecycle1	82	0	82	0	0	0	0	0.0
ApplicationLifecycle2	94	155	94	155	0	0	0	0.0
ApplicationLifecycle3	21	0	21	0	0	0	0	0.0
AsynchronousEventOrdering1	16	0	16	0	0	0	0	0.0
BroadcastReceiverLifecycle1	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0.0

Ann Nome	Easy	TW	Summ	aryTW		Diffe	erence	
App Name	#I	#A	#I	#A	#I	#A	Total	Relative
BroadcastReceiverLifecycle2	248	114	208	98	-40	-16	-56	-0.15
BroadcastReceiverLifecycle3	195	110	144	82	-51	-28	-79	-0.26
EventOrdering1	30	0	30	0	0	0	0	0.0
FragmentLifecycle1	90	0	90	0	0	0	0	0.0
FragmentLifecycle2	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
ServiceEventSequence1	152	34	122	38	-30	4	-26	-0.14
ServiceEventSequence2	389	220	315	176	-74	-44	-118	-0.19
ServiceEventSequence3	275	151	232	110	-43	-41	-84	-0.2
ServiceLifecycle1	42	0	42	0	0	0	0	0.0
ServiceLifecycle2	89	21	89	21	0	0	0	0.0
SharedPreferenceChanged1	20	1	8	0	-12	-1	-13	-0.62
	ReflectionTest							
Reflection1	8	0	8	0	0	0	0	0.0
Reflection2	11	0	11	0	0	0	0	0.0
Reflection3	62	25	49	0	-13	-25	-38	-0.44
Reflection4	8	0	8	0	0	0	0	0.0
Reflection5	11	0	11	0	0	0	0	0.0
Reflection6	134	51	122	31	-12	-20	-32	-0.17
Reflection7	15	11	3	0	-12	-11	-23	-0.88
Reflection8	14	0	14	0	0	0	0	0.0
Reflection9	21	0	21	0	0	0	0	0.0
		Thr	eadingTe	est				
AsyncTask1	11	1	11	1	0	0	0	0.0
Executor1	17	0	17	0	0	0	0	0.0
JavaThread1	17	0	17	0	0	0	0	0.0
JavaThread2	31	8	28	8	-3	0	-3	-0.08
Looper1	20	16	20	16	0	0	0	0.0
TimerTask1	32	33	45	37	13	4	17	0.26
Ø Propagations	61.52	41.2	58.44	41.27	-3.07	0.06	-3.01	0.17
∅ without Serialization1	61.84	41.3	56.22	37.15	-5.62	-4.15	-9.76	0.04

Table 6.2.: DROIDBENCH Evaluation with Summary Taint Wrapper

6.2. Real World Apps

6.2.1. Configuration

Our test machine is equipped with four Intel Xeon E5-4650 and 1 TB of RAM. We limited the JVM to 50 GB RAM and FlowDroid on 16 threads per instance. We ran at most four instances in parallel to ensure a one-to-one mapping between CPU threads and

FLOWDROID threads. Note that the test machine is a shared system, but we made sure there are always enough resources for our evaluation available. Still, background services might influence the performance of a single run. To stamp out this factor, we ran each app three times with a distance of time². If there were outliers³, we repeated the runs.

We also measured the memory usage of both implementations. Using the memory amount reported by the JVM is not precise because the JVM prefers to take up free memory before running the garbage collector [3]. We borrowed the memory evaluation tool from CleanDroid, which internally depends on a memory calculation tool from Twitter⁴. The memory evaluation tool measures the size of the exploded supergraph in 15 seconds intervals [4]. Because we do not want to pollute the measured data flow time with the memory evaluation tool's latency, the memory measuring runs were run independently of the time measuring runs. The memory sampling also takes up memory and because our test system has enough memory available, we bumped the maximum heap size up to 100GB, effectively eliminating memory timeouts.

For this evaluation, we chose to use a non-default configuration of FLOWDROID. First, we disabled static field tracking due to the global scope as described in section 3.2. Next, instead of the EasyTaintWrapper, we use the SummaryTaintWrapper, which utilizes StubDroid. We set the timeout for the data flow analysis to 10 minutes⁵. The call graph generation was limited to 180 seconds and the call-graphs were serialized before, so every run was on the same call-graph. The configuration summary is in Table 6.3.

We did not use the full sources and sinks list included in FlowDroid because such would result in hundreds of sources and sinks per app and probably a long runtime. Instead, we chose to analyze which sensitive and possibly user-identifying data is sent out to the internet. As we want to compare the forwards and backward implementation, it is also essential to not put one at a disadvantage. We opted for a 2:1 ratio of sources to sinks. This decision is based on the results of SuSi, to find sources and sinks in the Android framework automatically [19]. Their extracted list of sources and sinks contains roughly 2.17 times more sources than sinks. The list of sources and sinks used in this evaluation is in Table 6.5 and Table 6.4.

²The time distance between each run is at least the elapsed time from the analysis of the remaining 199 apps.

 $^{^3}$ Outliers are runs with at least 25% difference to the median run and a minimum of 5 seconds absolute difference.

⁴https://mvnrepository.com/artifact/com.twitter.common/objectsize

⁵ A timeout in FlowDroid prevents processing new edges but lets the solver finish the current edge propagation. Thus, some apps may have a data flow time of above 600 seconds.

Option	Value
Array Size Tainting	disabled
Inspect Sources & Sinks	disabled
Static Field Tracking	disabled
Ignore Flows in System Packages	enabled
Exclude Soot Library Classes	enabled
Timeout	10 minutes
Taint Wrapper	SummaryTaintWrapper

Table 6.3.: Real World Apps Configuration

Class	Method
java.net.URL	set()
	openConnection()
java.net.URLConnection	connect()
	setRequestProperty()
android.net.http.HttpsConnection	openConnection()
android.net.http.Headers	setEtag()
	setContentType()
	setLastModified()
	setLocation()
android.net.http.AndroidHttpClientConnection	sendRequestHeader()
android.net.http.RequestQueue	queueRequest()

Table 6.4.: Sinks for Real World Apps Evaluation

We used FlowDroid's forward implementation on the to that date latest upstream commit⁶ from the develop branch for the point of comparison. The backward implementation ran on our latest commit with all changes merged from the upstream.

We chose 200 apps randomly out of a Google Playstore dump from 2021 containing over 6000 apps for our evaluation set. Out of 200 apps, 60 apps do not have any sources or sinks and thus, the analysis did not start. For six apps, the analysis aborted with errors on at least one run. All thrown exceptions happened outside of FlowDroid. We are left with 131 apps for which both implementations completed all runs without errors. The full list is appended to this work in Table A.1.

⁶The latest upstream commit was at that time b436733fc4a5130dfe4ce8ddb3f76fd374e9a487.

Class	Method
android.location.Location	getLatitude()
	getLongitude()
android.location.LocationManager	getLastKnownLocation()
android.telephony.TelephonyManager	getDeviceId()
	getSubscriberId()
	getSimSerialNumber()
	getLine1Number()
	getImei()
	getMeid()
android.bluetooth.BluetoothAdapter	getAddress()
android.net.wifi.WifiInfo	getMacAddress()
	getSSID()
	getIpAddress()
java.net.InetAddress	getHostAddress()
android.telephony.gsm.GsmCellLocation	getCid()
	getLac()
android.content.pm.PackageManager	getInstalledApplications()
	getInstalledPackages()
	queryIntentActivities()
	queryIntentServices()
	queryBroadcastReceivers()
android.content.SharedPreferences	getDefaultSharedPreferences()
android.provider.Browser	getAllBookmarks()
	getAllVisitedUrls

Table 6.5.: Sources for Real World Apps Evaluation

6.2.2. Time Evaluation

In general, the individual apps' runtimes were far apart from each other. We had many apps with a single-digit analysis time and on the other side, we also found many apps that triggered a timeout or were close to triggering one. In between those extrema are only a few apps. It is essential to keep this in mind when interpreting the results.

We first begin with an overview of the results. Table 6.6 shows the results, including timeouts. Notably, the backward analysis had 8% less time timeouts than the forward analysis. In return, it seems to be more memory-hungry with 3.63% more memory timeouts. We cover the memory consumption in the next subsection and focus on the time for now. Interestingly, the propagated edges along the same interprocedural call-graph are of the same order of magnitude. Also, the 85^{th} percentile runtime is nearly equal and the median is equal. However, claims based on the runtime and edges with timeouts are only possible to a limited extent because the timeout highly influences both values.

	Forward			
Metric	Avg	Median	P_{85}	
Data Flow Time	518.93s	600.00s	605.10s	
Edge Propagations Infoflow	34555326.97	41743088.00	52163969.60	
Edge Propagations Alias	12562479.07	14598571.50	18638900.10	
Total Edge Propagations	47117806.04	57697027.00	70602469.30	
Memory Timeouts			2.99%	
Time Timeouts			60.45%	

		Backward	
Metric	Avg	Median	P_{85}
Data Flow Time	413.19s	600.00s	606.00s
Edge Propagations Infoflow	13826566.90	14981108.50	23712802.00
Edge Propagations Alias	33567561.46	43444060.00	56773141.00
Total Edge Propagations	47394128.36	60855935.50	79405729.00
Memory Timeouts			6.62%
Time Timeouts			52.21%

Table 6.6.: Results With Timeouts

Next, we only consider the runs without any timeouts in Table 6.7. This time we can still observe a relation between backward infoflow edges and forward alias edges even though

to a lesser extent. More significant, backward needed way less forward propagations either fewer aliases were on the path or the alias analysis could be stopped earlier due to a near turn unit. The runtimes also represent this fact. In the 85th percentile, both analyses are more close than the average suggest, with the backward analysis needing 2.25 seconds less. The median here renders useless as a comparison point because of the huge variance in the data set.

	Forward			
Metric	Avg	Median	P_{85}	
Data Flow Time	364.00s	596.00s	599.00s	
Edge Propagations Infoflow	21179450.04	17131840.00	47411443.20	
Edge Propagations Alias	7613696.10	6557951.00	16530488.80	
Total Edge Propagations	28793146.14	22416842.00	63123292.80	
		,		

		Backward	
Metric	Avg	Median	P_{85}
Data Flow Time	135.75s	1.50s	596.75s
Edge Propagations Infoflow	5186970.23	192787.00	14438463.25
Edge Propagations Alias	11459343.68	258834.50	33860441.50
Total Edge Propagations	16646313.91	451621.50	62000571.75

Table 6.7.: Results without Timeouts

Now, let us look at it in greater detail. We now compare the analysis on a per-app basis. The histogram is in Figure 6.1. We compiled the delta data flow time of the analyses per app, calculated as in the last section with the forward implementation being the reference: $t_{Backward} - t_{Forward}$. Hence, negative values represent that our implementation performed better. The delta on the x-axis is given in seconds and the frequency on the y-axis in number of apps. The bins always span over 50 seconds. The graph shows a large number of apps around 0 with a slight bias towards the forward implementation. Equivalent to the distribution of the data flow times, there are only few deltas in the range from ± 100 to ± 500 . More interestingly, there are significantly more apps around -600 than around 600. Recall, the timeout is set to 600. So, our implementation terminates nearly instantaneous in some cases on which the forward analysis times out. Concluding, as expected, there is no general advantage for a direction. Instead, we only observe a per-app advantage in around 60% of the test set, while for the rest, the performance is similar. In the direction-advantageous apps, we surprisingly observed a non-negligible amount of apps at the maximum possible delta.

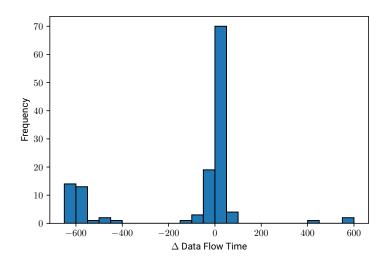


Figure 6.1.: Histogram of the Delta Data Flow Time

To take advantage of the direction choice, we now investigate the correlating conditions for the advantageous direction. Most straightforward would be a correlation between the difference of source and sink count and the data flow time. In Figure 6.3c are two graphs with the ratio of sources and sinks (Sinks - Sources) on the x-axis and the data flow time in seconds on the y-axis. The left graph is always the forward implementation and the right graph is our implementation. Blue dots represent apps without a timeout, orange a time timeout and red a memory timeout. Intuitively, a negative ratio should put our implementation at a disadvantage. The graphs show no correlation between the ratio and the runtime, neither forward nor backward. We also included the data flow time by sources and sinks in Figure 6.3a and Figure 6.3b. Forward, the number of sinks and backward, the number of sources should not influence the runtime and as expected, they do not. We can confirm Arzt's evaluation[3] as there is no correlation between sources and the forward runtime in our app set. Also, red from this observation, justifiably, we did not expect a correlation between sinks and backward runtime either.

Even though Arzt's evaluation also showed no correlation between the code size [3], we do for completeness also compare the runtime to the number of statements, methods and classes. Note that these refer to the Jimple intermediate representation and not Java. Figure 6.4 includes all the graphs. The arrangement and notation are the same as before, with the x-axis swapped out. All graphs look similar with the majority of dots are in the

left half of the graph. As per initial observation, the dots can be divided into two groups: those that are close to the ten minute mark and those which terminate nearly instantly. The distribution of the dots inside the groups is approximately the same. Again, we can not observe a correlation.

Finally, we compare the number of edges in the exploded supergraph, referred to as taint propagations in section 3.2. The graphs in Figure 6.2 show the edge count in comparison to the runtime. In both graphs, the correlation between taint propagations and runtime is visible, especially in the right graph between 0 and $3 \cdot 10^7$. The timeouts start in the backward graph after roughly $3 \cdot 10^7$ propagations. Forward, the threshold for timeouts is around $2 \cdot 10^7$ edge propagations, earlier than backward.

To conclude, our backward analysis is efficient enough to be an alternative to the existing implementation. We even found that it performed slightly better on our app set. Our evaluation confirms that there is no correlation between an apriori known parameter and the runtime of FLowDroid - even in the backward direction. Furthermore, we did not find any apriori known parameter to decide the favorable direction either. The only parameter which correlates with the runtime is the edges in the exploded supergraph. The edge propagations have shown that our implementation can analyze roughly 10^7 more edges than the existing implementation in ten minutes. Though, the sample size of 200 apps is too small to generalize statements.

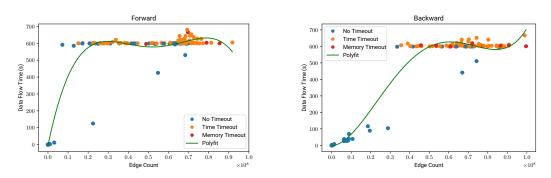


Figure 6.2.: Data Flow Time in Comparison to Edge Count

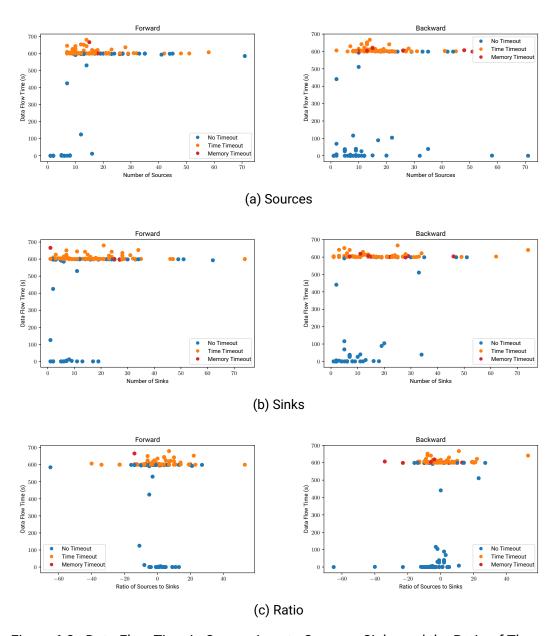


Figure 6.3.: Data Flow Time in Comparison to Sources, Sinks and the Ratio of Those

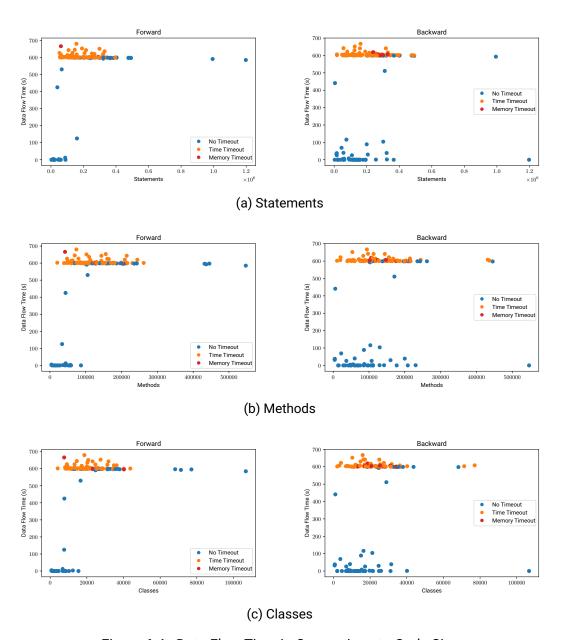


Figure 6.4.: Data Flow Time in Comparison to Code Size

6.2.3. Memory Evaluation

	Forward			
Metric	Avg	Median	P_{85}	
Maximum Memory Consumption	10005.68MB	10459.48MB	15482.98MB	
Maximum Memory Consumption	7168 50M R	8000 01 <i>M R</i>	13544 03 M B	
Without Timeouts				

	Backward			
Metric	Avg	Median	P_{85}	
Maximum Memory Consumption	8326.27MB	10008.52MB	14539.64MB	
Maximum Memory Consumption	2504 34M R	27 30M R	8786 18 M B	
Without Timeouts				

Table 6.8.: Memory Results

Note that we only measured the memory usage of the edges in the exploded supergraph and not of the full program. Table 6.8 shows an overview of the results from the memory evaluation. The measurements show an advantage for our implementation in all values. In total, the backward analysis needs about 1GB less memory on average in the 85^{th} percentile. Without timeouts, the difference grows to over 4GB.

In the time evaluation, we observed that our implementation has more memory timeouts, but the result overview showed the backward analysis needs less memory on average. A manual look at those runs which had a memory timeout only backward revealed a larger exploded supergraph. We argue that the memory timeouts are connected with the 10^7 more propagations in ten minutes. If the forward analysis had more time to run, it would also trigger the memory timeout.

Next, we look at the memory consumption difference per app in Figure 6.5. The x-axis shows the delta maximum memory consumption in MB and the y-axis the frequency. Each bin is 1GB wide. The delta is calculated with forward as the refrence: $m_{Backward} - m_{Forward}$. Again, we see a gathering around 0. Otherwise, the histogram has a more uniform distribution than its time counterpart. Still, there is a slight bias towards the backward analysis. Because we only measured the exploded supergraph, there is a linear correlation between edges and memory usage (c.f. Figure 6.6). Likewise, we observed a correlation between time and edges. Thus, this bias could be related to the faster backward analysis on the app set. We looked at this by comparing the sign of the delta data flow time with

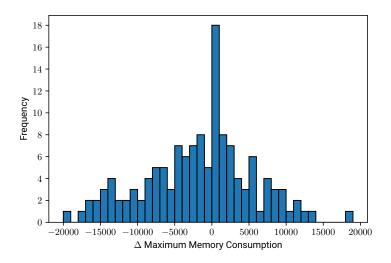


Figure 6.5.: Histogram of the Delta Maximum Memory Consumption

the sign of the delta memory consumption. 48 apps had different signs, with 23 being negligibly close to 0. Hence, the claim is true for 109 of 134 apps.

Also beneficial for the real-world usage of FLOWDROID would be to estimate the memory consumption to utilize the available resources efficiently. In Figure 6.7, we contrast the memory consumption with the number of sources, sinks and the ratio of both. Figure 6.8 shows the memory consumption in contrast to the statement, method and class count. The arrangement and legend are the same as in the time evaluation. Unlike in the time evaluation, there is only one cluster of dots: those terminating nearly instantaneous. Otherwise, the dots seem to be randomly distributed. All graphs indicate no correlation.

To conclude, our backward analysis performed a bit better in the time evaluation, which is also reflected in the memory consumption. Again, the results show that the observed edges are way more important for memory consumption than the code size or the sources and sinks. It is not possible to estimate the memory consumption prior nor which analysis direction will use less memory.

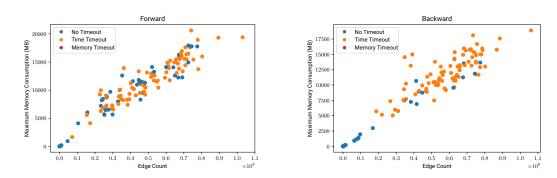


Figure 6.6.: Maximum Memory Consumption in comparison to the Edge Count

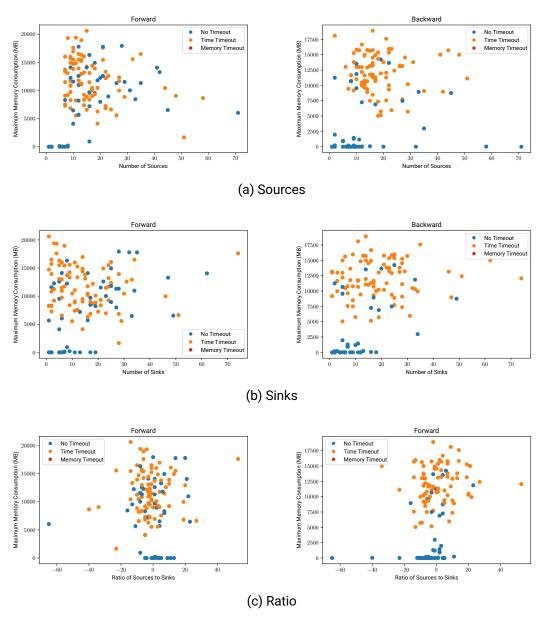


Figure 6.7.: Maximum Memory Consumption in Comparison to Source, Sink and Edge Count

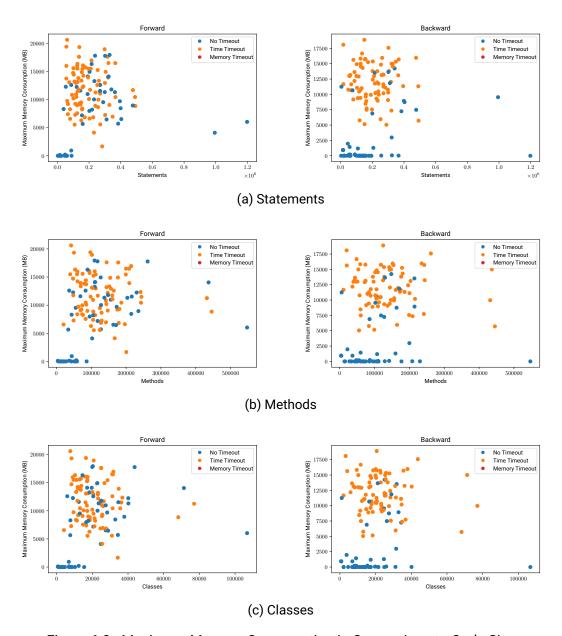


Figure 6.8.: Maximum Memory Consumption in Comparison to Code Size

6.3. x

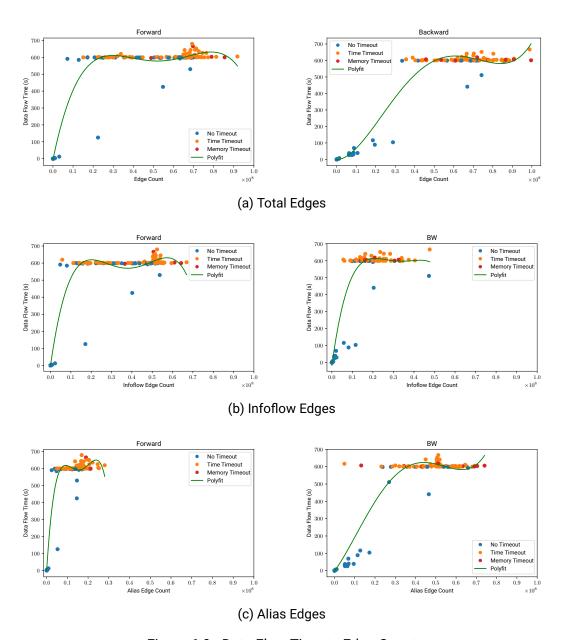
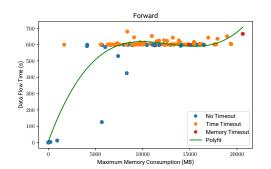
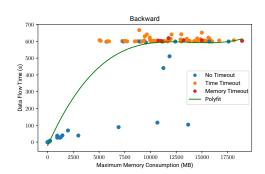


Figure 6.9.: Data Flow Time to Edge Count





(a) Max Mem to Runtime

7. Related Work

Starting with a taint analysis based on point-to analysis [17] in 2005, taint analyses made huge progress and gained traction in the last decade. TAJ[28] uses a context-sensitive forward thin-slice¹ for local variables and a context-insensitive points-to analysis for the heap. Other taint analyses utilize slicing, either as a preprocessing step [] or standalone using a chop, a combination of a forward and backward slice [26]. Andromeda[27] was the first data flow analysis to incorporate a on-demand intertwined alias analysis. FlowDroid[6] then ported this concept to IFDS and also introduced a novel approach for modelling the Android lifecycle.

Most taint analyses we found used at least one forward pass. Still, there are also tools which have a main backward pass similar to our approach. We take a more details look at them in the following paragraphs.

Lerch et al.[15] contributed FlowTwist, a static taint analysis tool based on IFDS to detect confused deputy problems² in libraries. They identify the cause of such as a combination of an integrity and confidentiality problem. For the integrity part, the sinks perform sensitive operations and the sources are attacker-controlled. In the confidentiality part, an attacker can read the sinks and sources provide sensitive data. A combination of both naturally gives a centered statement. Now, the integrity sources and confidentiality sinks are way more frequent. Thus they propose to solve the integrity part backward and the confidentiality part forward. In contrast to FlowDroid, FlowTwist focuses on a specific taint analysis case and the applicability is relatively narrow.

Allen et al.[2] present another taint analysis based on IFDS for Java used internally at Oracle. They also rely on access paths as a heap model and chose a backward-directed analysis. They reason their direction choice with the use case of detecting web vulnerabilities where sinks are less frequent based on their intuition. Also, they have made good

¹Thin-slices only include statements responsible for the explicit flow from or to a seed.

²A confused deputy is a legitimate program with more privileges tricked into misusing its authority by a malicious program.

experiences with a backward analysis in the Parfait[30] project. Orthogonal to our work, they intentionally go without alias analysis and cut-off the access paths at k=5 without appending a wildcard. Both are trade-offs to precision in favor of scalability. The taint analysis is compared to another non-public tool at Oracle on three benchmarks³ and on a not further specified Oracle product. Also, the choice of sources and sinks remain unclear and only a short summary of the results is provided. Because both tools in the comparison are not public and the results are not detailed, we neither can comprehend the weak points of their analysis besides the missing alias resolving nor score the given runtimes. We are skeptical that their analysis is capable of finding non-trivial data flows because aliasing is ubiquitously in Java and access paths of k=13 are observed in real-world applications [24].

Yan et al.[31] proposed a vulnerability detection tool for PHP with a focus on web applications. They aim to detect typical web application vulnerabilities such as cross-site scripting and SQL injections using backward taint analysis. Instead of relying on nesting the problem in proven data flow frameworks, they seemingly define their own data flow algorithm. The proposed algorithm traverses the basic blocks backward and copies the taints left after traversing a basic block to its predecessors. They do not try to reach a fixpoint; instead, they do not follow circular paths in the control-flow graph. They also emphasize their concept of "cleans": a predefined list of sanitization methods that kill the incoming taints. In FlowDroid, the same is possible using taint wrappers and both shipped implementations support such a concept. A rationale for traversing backward, which is why we included it as related work, is not provided. Generally speaking, we doubt their tool is precise enough to be useful in practice.

FLOWDROID, FlowTwist and also Allen et al's tool are based on IFDS. Even though IFDS seems to be the most prominent choice for a taint analysis, there are also other frameworks capable to formulate a taint analysis.

Synchronized pushdown systems (SPDS) by Späth et al. [24] are an alternative to IFDS with access paths for modeling a precise context-, flow- and field-sensitive data flow analysis. Similar to IFDS, a context-free grammar ensures the context-sensitivity. In addition, another context-free grammar model the field-sensitivity. Contrary to access paths, this does not increase the domain and needs no k-limiting to be fast enough in practice. Then it computes the acceptance state of both pushdown automata to combine context- and field-sensitivity. Now, in general, an automaton with two stacks is undecidable. The separation of the problems into two reachability problems and later combining the results is decidable. However, if both automata are in an acceptance state via different paths, the

³Securibench, WebGoat and OWASP.

algorithm overapproximates the solution. Their results look promising with a performance close to access paths with k=1. Also, they could not observe the overapproximation in practice when performing typestate analysis.

CogniCrypt [13] finds misuses of cryptographic APIs based on rules written in a domain-specific language. Internally, it also consists of a taint analysis and is based on SPDS. CodeShield⁴ is a propietary taint analysis for cloud applications to detect vulnerabilities and is also based on IFDS. The only open-source general purpose taint analysis based on SPDS we found is SWAN⁵. It is targeted at the SWIFT programming language but still in heavy development.

Doop [8] is a framework initially for pointer analysis. In contrast to others, it uses a declarative approach. Doop's frontend depends on Soot to create facts and encodes them in tables. The analyses are a declarative rule set written in Datalog. These rule sets are then fed into the datalog solver Soufflé⁶. P/Taint [10] extends Doop with a taint analysis. Doop is flow-insensitive and, thus, P/Taint as well.

⁴https://codeshield.io/

⁵https://github.com/themaplelab/swan

⁶https://souffle-lang.github.io/

8. Conclusion

In this thesis, we extended FlowDroid to feature a backward-directed static data flow analysis as an alternative to the existing forward implementation. The alternative analysis is equally precise and sound. Just like FlowDroid, our extensions are open-source and possibly will be integrated into FlowDroid in the future. To our knowledge, it is novel for a taint analysis to offer two distinct general purpose analysis directions. Moreover, our work broadens the applicability of FlowDroid for real-world applications with a amount of sources much greater than the amount of sinks.

Furthermore, we evaluated our implementation against the existing one in FlowDroid. We confirmed the assumption that the runtime and also the favorable direction highly depends on the analyzed app. Both analyses put up similar numbers. In the app set we used for evaluation we even had a statistically significant smaller runtime on our implementation. To fully utilize the benefits from a favorable direction, we investigated whether apriori known parameters can be used to predict which direction performes better. Our experiments included naturally known parameters such as code size, source and sink count, but also a fast preanalysis. None of which showed a correlation toward the runtime.

As the prediction of runtime remains unsolved, further research should continue on clues to choose the favorable direction beforehand. For example, it is still an open question whether there are certain taint analysis applications (e.g. to find SQL injections) that favor one direction. Also, further work could evaluate the impact of commonly used third-party libraries on the analysis time. Additionally, our work focused on the most-common context-sensitive alias analysis. Other aliasing strategies were not implemented for the backward analysis.

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A. Appendix

App Name kr.co.smartstudy.cartown android googlemarket.apk org.mopria.scan.application.apk com.groplay.tutalfonsaberg.apl jp.co.canon.oip.android.opal.apk com.binibambini.minidancing.apk com.amazon.dee.app.apk com.musicplayer.player.mp3player.white.apk com.rvappstudios.sight.words.phonics.reading.kids.games.apk com.nhn.android.navertv.apk ru.beeline.services.apk com.fsn.nds.apk org.familysearch.mobile.apk com.radio.fmradio.apk com.edokicademy.montessoriacademy.apkcom.fivory.prod.apk com.tocaboca.tocahairsalon4.apk com.speeddating.ad.pro.apk com.mufumbo.android.recipe.search.apk fr.tisseo.android.apk com.kedronic.cbndinosaursfree.apk com.labs.merlinbirdid.app.apk com.tacobell.ordering.apk kidzooly.fivelittle.apk com.backgrounderaser.cutout.photoeditor.apk com.newspaperdirect.pressreader.android.apk com.khorasannews.akharinkhabar.apk com.microsoft.office.officehubrow.apk com.cabs.apk com.hasbro.tf360appstore.apk com.budgestudios.MissHollywood2.apk com.amazon.mShop.android.shopping.apk com.romwe.apk com.nonwe.apx au.com.parrotfish.phonemic.lite.apk com.budgestudios.googleplay.StrawberryShortcakeIceCreamIsland.apk com.autoscout24.apk de.number26.android.apk com.bplus.vtpay.apk hr.palamida.apk com.kinky.fetlifestyle.apk com.indianexpress.android.apk com.fabernovel.ratp.apk cz.seznam.novinky.apk com.dywx.larkplayer.apk com.euronews.express.apk cn.wps.pdf.fillsign.apk com.citymobil.apk com.starfall.StarfallABCs.apk com.apartmentlist.mobile.apk tw.com.ctitv.ctitvnews.apk nineNewsAlerts.nine.com.apk com.grabtaxi.passenger.apk com.hk01.news_app.apk mnn.Android.apk com.ubieva.cura.userapp.droid.apk

SHA256 Checksum

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com.google.android.apps.seekh.apk com.murphy.driverewards.apk com.pjmasks.heroacademy.apk com.aspiro.tidal.apk com.skyhealth.glucosebuddyfree.apk com.vuclip.viu.apk air.com.pepiplay.pepigarage.apk com.google.toontastic.apk com.touchtype.swiftkey.apl com.croquis.zigzag.apk com.yoox.apk com.application.zomato.apk com.rcmbusiness.apk com.zoho.show.app.apk com.streema.simpleradio.apk com.google.android.apps.docs.editors.sheets.apk com.orange.kidspiano.music.songs.apk com.storytoys.sesame.elmolovesyou.free.android.googleplay.apk com.creditkarma.mobile.apk com.originatorkids.EndlessWordplay.apk vivino.web.app.apk com.playtoddlers.sweethomestories.free.apk com.nbaimd.gametime.nba2011.apk com.flur.apk com.budgestudios.googleplay.ThomasAndFriendsMinis.apk com.lezhin.comics.apk HinKhoj.Dictionary.apk com.videocall.randomfriendvideo.apk com.cupidmedia.wrapper.filipinocupid.apk com.xfinity.cloudtvr.apk dbx.taiwantaxi.apk com.socialnetwork.hookupsapp.apk com.bilgapp.mydevs.mathapp.apk com.clusterdev.hindikeyboard.apk document.scanner.scan.pdf.image.text.apk com.splendapps.voicerec.apk air.com.turner.boomerangmakeandrace.apk app.habitaclia2.apk com.FDGEntertainment.Oceanhorn.gp.apk sweet.selfie.lite.apk fr.anuman.HomeDesign3D.apk com.espn.score_center.apk mobi.ka.gp.wrkshts.app.apk com.fineapp.yogiyo.apk com.thredup.android.apk kr.co.smartstudy.dinoworld_android_googlemarket.apk com.opera.touch.apk com.calmid.learnandplay.launcher.apk com.astepanov.mobile.mathforkids.apk com.microsoft.math.apk com.citi.citimobile.apk com.yy.hiyo.apk com.kedronic.cbnvehiclesfree.apk de.etecture.ekz.onleihe.apl com.urbanclap.urbanclap.apk com.niksoftware.snapseed.apk com.kevinbradford.games.pklg2.apk ua.insomnia.kenya.newsi.apk com.microsoft.amp.apps.bingnews.apk $com.rvapp studios.abc_kids_toddler_tracing_phonics.apk\\ com.budge studios.CrayolaNailParty.apk$ com.bimiboo.puzzles.apk org.pbskids.video.apk com.rvappstudios.shapes.colors.toddler.apk com.curse.dndbeyond.apk com.money91.apk com.foofoo.tracing.apk com.cisco.wx2.android.apk com.adpdigital.mbs.ayande.apk kz.kkb.homebank.apk com.aol.mobile.aolapp.apl

com.simplepractice.video.apk

SHA256 Checksum

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SHA256 Checksum

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App Name	SHA256 Checksum
police.scanner.radio.broadcastify.citizen.apk	ba23252a676054d0f9f02a2a72a670ad943b7d68aec1536721906b6f53c6ac9

Table A.1.: App Set