# Verifying Data-Oriented Gadgets in Binary Programs to Build Data-Only Exploits

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### Motivation

- ► Data-only attacks: manipulate program's data plane
- ► Data-oriented programming: expressive data-only attacks; chain together instructions to simulate computation

#### Problem Statement

- ➤ This thesis explores the feasibility of constructing data-oriented programming exploits in binary programs without source code.
- Specifically: Classifying data-oriented gadgets and their properties.
- ► Why?
  - ▶ No current binary-based classification
  - ► For defense and security analysis (source not always available)

#### Contributions

- A methodology for formally classifying data-oriented gadgets in binary programs without source code.
- ▶ A prototype implementation that shows prevalence of gadgets in binaries and demonstrates how data-only exploits can be crafted without source code.

### Outline

- Background: Data-only attacks, Data-oriented Programming
- Methodology and Implementation
- Evaluation and Results
- Conclusions

## Background

### Memory corruption vulnerabilities

- Buffer overflows, integer overflows, format string errors
- Attacks: Hijack control flow (overwrite return addresses, function pointers); execute malicious code
- ▶ Defenses: ASLR, DEP, Control-flow Integrity

## Background

## Data-only attacks [Chen et al., 2005]

- Manipulate data pointers (preserve control flow)
- Corrupt logic and decision-making routines

## Data-only Attack Example

```
struct passwd { uid_t pw_uid; ... } *pw;

int uid = getuid();

pw->pw_uid = uid;

printf(...); // format string vulnerability

...

seteuid(0); // set root id

setsockopt(...);

...

seteuid(pw->pw_uid); // set unprivileged user id

...
```

Listing 1: Vulnerable code snippet in wu-ftpd.

## Background

## Data-oriented Programming (DOP) [Hu et al., 2016]

- Expressive (Turing-complete) data-only attacks
- Data-oriented "gadgets": simulate micro-operations
- ▶ Dispatchers: chains gadgets to perform arbitrary computation
- Still respects control flow
- Examples: SSL private key leak; bypass DEP and CFI

## Research Objectives

### Contributions

- ► A methodology for formally classifying data-oriented gadgets in binary programs without source code.
- A prototype implementation that shows prevalence of gadgets in binaries and demonstrates how data-only exploits can be crafted without source code.

### Questions

- How does gadget classification differ between source and binary-based analysis?
- How does the compiler affect the type and frequency of gadgets?

### Overview

- 1. Identify potential data-oriented gadgets in a binary
- 2. Formally verify their semantics
- 3. Determine reachability of gadgets to vulnerable function

## Data-oriented gadgets

- 1. Ends with a Store instruction
- 2. At least one Load instruction
- 3. Gadget "body": semantics between Load and Store

### Data-oriented gadgets

```
*p += *q; /* p, q are (int*) type */

mov eax, DWORD PTR [ebp-0xC] ;load p to eax

mov edx, DWORD PTR [eax] ;load *p to edx

mov eax, DWORD PTR [ebp-0x10] ;load q to eax

mov eax, DWORD PTR [eax] ;load *q to eax

add edx, eax ;add *q to *p

mov eax, DWORD PTR [ebp-0xC] ;load p to eax

mov DWORD PTR [eax], edx ;store edx in *p
```

Figure 1: Example showing a snippet of C code and the corresponding X86 assembly instructions.

## Identifying Data-oriented Gadgets

- 1. Lift to Intermediate Representation (IR)
- 2. Backward static program slicing to find gadget instructions

### Identifying Data-oriented Gadgets

- 1. Lift to Intermediate Representation (IR)
  - ▶ VEX-IR through angr framework
  - SSA
  - Abstracts architectural differences
- 2. Backward static program slicing to find gadget instructions

### Backward Static Program Slicing

Given a program P, a backward program slice at program point p with set of variables V contains only those preceding statements in P that affect the variables in V at p [Weiser, 1981].

```
t55 = LD1e:I32(0x080499a8)
   PUT(offset=68) = 0x08048597
_3 t56 = LDle:I32(0x080499a8)
   PUT(offset=68) = 0x0804859d
5 	 t57 = LDle:I32(t56)
   PUT(offset=12) = t57
   PUT(offset=68) = 0x0804859f
   t58 = LDle:I32(0x080499ac)
   PUT(offset=68) = 0x080485a5
   t59 = LD1e: I32(t58)
10
   t24 = Add32(t59, t57)
11
   PUT(offset=40) = 0x00000003
12
   PUT(offset=44) = t59
13
   PUT(offset=48) = t57
14
15
   PUT(offset=52) = 0x00000000
   PUT(offset=16) = t24
16
   PUT(offset=68) = 0x080485a9
17
   STle(t55) = t24
18
```

```
t55 = LDle: I32(0x080499a8)
   PUT(offset=68) = 0x08048597
_3 t56 = LDle:I32(0x080499a8)
   PUT(offset=68) = 0x0804859d
5 	 t57 = LDle:I32(t56)
   PUT(offset=12) = t57
   PUT(offset=68) = 0x0804859f
   t58 = LDle:I32(0x080499ac)
   PUT(offset=68) = 0x080485a5
   t59 = LDle:I32(t58)
10
   t24 = Add32(t59, t57)
11
   PUT(offset=40) = 0x00000003
12
   PUT(offset=44) = t59
13
   PUT(offset=48) = t57
14
15
   PUT(offset=52) = 0x00000000
   PUT(offset=16) = t24
16
   PUT(offset=68) = 0x080485a9
17
   STle(t55) = t24
18
```

## Backward Static Program Slicing

```
1 t55 = LDle:I32(0x080499a8)

2 t56 = LDle:I32(0x080499a8)

3 t57 = LDle:I32(t56)

4 t58 = LDle:I32(0x080499ac)

5 t59 = LDle:I32(t58)

6 t24 = Add32(t59,t57)

7 STle(t55) = t24
```

- ▶ t55 is the *address* parameter for Store
- ▶ t24 is the *data* parameter for Store

### Overview

- 1. Identify potential data-oriented gadgets in a binary
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## Program Verification for Gadget Semantics

- ► For a program *S*, If a gadget is of type described by *Q*, a first-order predicate, then after executing the statements in *S* the program is in a state satisfying *Q*.
- ▶ The Weakest Precondition, wp(S, Q), is a predicate that characterizes all initial states of S such that it terminates in a final state satisfying Q [Dijkstra, 1976].

## Deriving Weakest Preconditions from Gadgets

$$\overline{wp(x := e, Q) : Q[e/x]} \text{WP-Assign}$$
 
$$\overline{wp(\text{assume } e, Q) : e \Rightarrow Q} \text{WP-Assume}$$
 
$$\begin{array}{cccc} & & & & & \\ \hline wp(\text{assume } e, Q) : e \Rightarrow Q \\ & & & & \\ & s ; s \\ & & & \\ & & & \\ & & & \\ & & & \\ & & & \\ & & & \\ & & & \\ & & & \\ & & \\ & & & \\ &$$

Figure 2: Dijkstra's Guarded Command Language (GCL) and Predicate Transformers.

## **Characterizing Semantics**

Name	Parameters	Postcondition
Move	Out, In	Out = In
Load	Out, In	$Out = \mathcal{M}[In]$
Store	Out, In	$\mathcal{M}[Out] = In$
ARITHMETIC	Out, x, y	Out = $x \diamond_a y$
Logical	<b>Out</b> , <i>x</i> , <i>y</i>	$\mathbf{Out} = x \diamond_{\ell} y$
CONDITIONAL	Out, x, y	$((x \diamond_c y) \Rightarrow \mathbf{Out} = 1) \land$
		$(\neg(x\diamond_c y)\Rightarrow\mathbf{Out}=0)$

Table 1: Postconditions for verifying data-oriented gadget semantics.  $\diamond_a$  is an arithmetic binary operator;  $\diamond_\ell$  is a logical binary operator; and  $\diamond_c$  is a comparison operator.

### Finding Gadget Parameters

```
t33 = GET:I32(offset=28) # 28 is EBP

t35 = Add32(t33, Oxffffffe0)

t37 = LDle:I32(t35)

t38 = LDle:I32(t37)

t34 = LDle:I32(0x805c7e8)

STle(t34) = t38
```

Listing 2: VEX-IR example program slice demonstrating two examples of variable scope inference in VEX-IR. t34 is a global variable, and t38 is a local variable.

#### Overview

- 1. Identify potential data-oriented gadgets in a binary
- 2. Formally verify their semantics
- 3. Determine reachability of gadgets to vulnerable function
  - ▶ Dynamic function trace in presence of vulnerability (Intel PIN)

### Implementation

- python
- angr binary analysis framework
- ► Z3 SMT solver

### Limitation

Simple vs complex gadgets

### **Evaluation**

### Setup

- Compare results with source-based analysis by [Hu et al., 2016]
- ▶ Intel x86 32-bit, Debian 8.10 on Linux kernel version 3.16.
- ▶ Programs compiled with GCC 4.9.2 and Clang 3.5.0
- Selected programs: curl, imlib2, libtiff, nginx, optipng, sudo, unzip

### Classification Results

A II + I	Version	D:/C	C:1	Dispatchers	Assign			Deref			Arith				Logic			Cond		
Application		Binary/Source	Compiler		G	Н	L	G	Н	L	G	Н	L	G	Н	L	G	Н	L	
		В	GCC	71	99	143	27	62	25	559	36	303	16	5	0	0	1	0	(	
curl 7.41.0	7.41.0	В	Clang	76	349	311	1	87	27	53	16	318	1	6	2	0	3	0	0	
		S	Clang	11	0	2	15	0	2	26	2	0	5	1	2	17	0	0	4	
imlib2 1.4.7		В	GCC	734	440	275	0	220	101	633	1208	256	137	65	19	15	4	4	(	
	1.4.7	В	Clang	835	934	721	3	180	86	65	262	223	22	33	29	9	0	0	- (	
		S	Clang	152	1	5	55	25	183	94	12	96	390	3	219	411	3	1		
libtiff 2.5.6		В	GCC	358	264	309	7	226	99	578	328	161	52	6	16	19	0	2	-	
	2.5.6	В	Clang	374	451	290	35	87	175	5	148	179	5	15	11	1	1	0	- (	
		S	Clang	116	2	9	83	0	62	333	1	79	243	0	35	183	0	5	- 2	
nginx 1.4.0		В	GCC	499	1316	526	1	333	190	87	276	440	9	97	2	4	3	0	- (	
	1.4.0	В	Clang	496	1104	497	11	378	328	114	225	426	14	83	11	3	4	0	- (	
		S	Clang	206	12	55	74	32	40	958	12	26	156	28	7	290	3	7	- 2	
optipng 0.7.6		В	GCC	219	167	165	4	45	76	208	183	260	45	24	5	1	3	2	-	
	0.7.6	В	Clang	249	244	114	13	19	42	38	144	235	8	23	1	1	1	0	- (	
		S	Clang	63	35	35	73	10	1	245	11	35	283	17	25	146	4	4	- (	
sudo 1.8.3p1		В	GCC	91	129	123	127	10	45	92	21	317	101	11	0	9	3	0	- (	
	1.8.3p1	В	Clang	65	103	44	1	13	15	12	14	239	0	12	0	0	3	0	-	
		S	Clang	16	11	0	9	11	5	8	3	0	9	5	2	0	3	0	-	
unzip		В	GCC	209	133	204	32	68	43	136	194	218	13	16	12	2	1	0	-	
	6.0	В	Clang	182	215	32	0	21	11	12	161	139	2	8	0	3	1	0	- (	
		S	Clang	28	45	14	4	146	6	1	147	4	7	72	2	0	34	2		

Table 2: For gadget scopes, 'G' is Global, 'H' is Hybrid (mixed between global and local), and 'L' is Local.

## Reachability Results

Application	CVE	Compiler	Dispatchers	Assign			Deref			Arith			L	ogic		Cond			
Аррисаціон			Dispatchers	G	Н	L	G	Н	L	G	Н	L	G	Н	L	G	Н	L	
curl	2015-3144 <sup>1</sup>	GCC	5	0	4	0	0	1	1	0	52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
		Clang	8	0	4	0	0	0	2	0	56	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
imlib2	2016-3994 <sup>2</sup>	GCC	12	7	6	0	7	3	17	3	36	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	
		Clang	14	18	7	0	0	6	6	1	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
libtiff	2017-9935 <sup>3</sup>	GCC	16	13	26	0	13	0	48	5	36	11	1	0	1	0	0	0	
		Clang	14	16	9	0	5	3	2	7	9	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	
nginx	2013-20284	GCC	69	370	136	1	54	49	19	71	49	0	50	0	0	2	0	0	
		Clang	77	297	110	0	80	51	18	44	44	0	28	3	1	1	0	0	
optipng	2016-3982 <sup>5</sup>	GCC	3	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
		Clang	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
sudo	2012-0809 <sup>6</sup>	GCC	5	23	4	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
		Clang	9	20	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	
unzip	2015-7696 <sup>7</sup>	GCC	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
		Clang	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

Table 3: Data-oriented gadget reachability results with respect to a vulnerable function trace through a reported vulnerability from the CVE database. For gadget scopes, 'G' is Global, 'H' is Hybrid, and 'L' is Local.

## nginx Exploit

Listing 3: Vulnerable code snippet in the function ngx\_http\_discard\_request\_body\_filter in "nginx."

## nginx Exploit

- Send chunked HTTP request (≥1024 bytes) to set rc to NGX\_AGAIN.
  - (This also sets rb->chunked->length to a large number.)
- The data-oriented gadgets execute in line 6. (r->headers\_in.content\_length\_n becomes negative.)
- ngx\_http\_parse\_chunked executes a second time.
   Send ≥4096 bytes, overflowing a vulnerable buffer on the stack.

### Conclusions

#### The Problem

- Classify data-oriented gadgets in binary
- Feasibility of constructing DOP exploits without source

### Findings, Limitations, Implications

- Classification differs between source and binary-based analysis
- How compilers emit code also affects gadget discovery
- Prototype supports classification for binaries under any compiler
- For security, expands the range of software that can be analyzed

### Conclusions

### **Future Work**

- Complex gadget classification
- Formally verify gadget properties
- ▶ Automating DOP exploit construction

# Thank you

Questions

### References I



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Non-control-data attacks are realistic threats.

In Proceedings of the 14th Conference on USENIX Security Symposium - Volume 14, SSYM'05, pages 1–15, Berkeley, CA, USA. USENIX Association.



Dijkstra, E. W. (1976).

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Hu, H., Shinde, S., Adrian, S., Chua, Z. L., Saxena, P., and Liang, Z. (2016).

Data-oriented programming: On the expressiveness of non-control data attacks.

In 2016 IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy (SP), pages 969-986.

### References II



Weiser, M. (1981).

Program slicing.

In *Proceedings of the 5th international conference on Software engineering*, pages 439–449. IEEE Press.

```
function: SetRelevantVariables (B, relevantVariables)
input: B, basic block; relevantVariables, maps a statement to a set of variables
output: relevantVariables

foreach statement i and successor statement j in B:

if i.LHS in relevantVariable[i] then:

// add all variables used by i to the relevant variables of i relevantVariables[i].add(i.variables)

else:

// add that variable to the relevant variables of j relevantVariables[j].add(i.LHS)
```

```
\begin{tabular}{ll} \textbf{function}: BackwardProgramSlice($B$, $relevantVariables$) \\ \textbf{input}: $B$, basic block; $relevantVariables$, maps a statement to a set of variables \\ \textbf{output}: program slice, set of statements \\ \hline $relevantVariables$ $\leftarrow$ SetRelevantVariables($B$, $relevantVariables$) \\ \textbf{foreach} statement $i$ and successor statement $j$ in $B$: \\ \hline & \textbf{if} $i$.LHS in $relevantVariables[j]$ then: \\ \hline & add $j$ to the program slice \\ \hline \end{tabular}
```

```
function: BDFA(v, slice, istack)
input: v, target variable; slice, program slice
output: istack, instruction stack tracing v
if slice is empty then:
    return
i \leftarrow slice.pop()
if i is Assignment Instruction then:
    if i.1 \, HS = v then:
         istack.push(i)
         rhs \leftarrow GetVariables(i.RHS)
         foreach variable t in rhs:
             BDFA(t, slice, istack)
else:
    BDFA(v, slice, istack)
```

```
function: GetGadget(store, B)
input: store, a Store Instruction; B, basic block
output: a pair of instruction stacks
relevantVariables \leftarrow \emptyset
addrInstr \leftarrow \emptyset
dataInstr \leftarrow \emptyset
relevantVariables[store].add(store.addr)
relevantVariables[store].add(store.data)
progSlice \leftarrow BackwardProgramSlice(B, relevantVariables)
addrInstr \leftarrow BDFA(store.addr, progSlice, addrInstr)
dataInstr \leftarrow BDFA(store.data, progSlice, dataInstr)
// Potential gadgets must have at least one Load instruction
if Load Instruction in addrlnstr or dataInstr then:
    return (addrlnstr, datalnstr)
```

```
function: GetPotentialGadgets(prog)
input: prog, program in VEX-IR
output: potentialGadgets, a list of pairs of instruction stacks
foreach func in prog:
    foreach loop in func:
         foreach basic block B in loop:
             foreach stmt in B:
                  if stmt is Store Instruction then:
                      g \leftarrow \text{getGadget}(stmt, B)
                       potentialGadgets.add(g)
                  if stmt is Call Instruction then:
                       target \leftarrow followCallGraph(stmt)
                       foreach stmt in target:
                           if stmt is Store Instruction then:
                                g \leftarrow \text{getGadget}(stmt, target)
                                potentialGadgets.add(g)
```

```
t5 = LD1e:I32(0x0805c7e8)
t1 = Add32(t5,0x00000002)
STle(0x0805c7e8) = t1
```

Listing 4: VEX-IR example program slice demonstrating an arithmetic ADD gadget.

$$\mathcal{T}[5] := \mathcal{M}[0x805c7e8];$$
  $\mathcal{T}[1] := \mathcal{T}[5] + 2;$   $\mathcal{M}[0x805c7e8] := \mathcal{T}[1]$  (1)

$$\begin{split} wp(s_1;s_2,wp(s_3,Q)) &= wp(s_1;s_2,\mathcal{T}[1] = \mathcal{T}[5] + 2) \\ &= wp(s_1,wp(s_2,\mathcal{T}[1] = \mathcal{T}[5] + 2)) \\ &= wp(s_1,\mathcal{T}[5] + 2 = \mathcal{T}[5] + 2) \\ &= (\mathcal{M}[0x805c7e8] + 2 = \mathcal{M}[0x805c7e8] + 2) \end{split}$$

Figure 3: Application of weakest precondition derivation rules. The initial value of Q is  $(\mathcal{M}[0x805c7e8] = \mathcal{T}[5] + 2)$ .

Application	Compiler	Gadget Length				Gadget Parameters			Gadgets per Function			Gadgets per Dispatcher					
		Mean	Median	Min	Max	Mean	Median	Min	Max	Mean	Median	Min	Max	Mean	Median	Min	Max
curl	GCC	7	7	3	18	2	2	2	4	9	1	4	553	27	4	1	672
	Clang	5	5	2	17	2	2	2	4	9	4	1	495	27	5	1	592
imlib2	GCC	7	7	4	29	2	2	2	5	11	4	1	223	12	7	1	527
	Clang	6	6	4	17	2	2	2	4	7	2	1	104	9	2	1	673
libtiff	GCC	8	7	4	23	2	2	2	5	7	3	1	257	9	3	1	539
	Clang	7	6	4	18	2	2	2	6	8	4	1	185	7	2	1	124
nginx	GCC	6	6	3	26	2	2	2	6	7	4	1	93	10	4	1	471
	Clang	6	6	3	26	2	2	2	6	7	4	1	107	9	3	1	448
optipng	GCC	7	7	4	33	3	2	2	9	7	4	1	96	11	3	1	254
	Clang	6	6	3	31	2	2	2	10	8	4	1	69	6	2	1	122
sudo	GCC	6	5	2	18	2	2	2	4	7	4	1	75	14	4	1	126
	Clang	5	5	2	14	3	3	2	4	5	4	1	48	11	5	1	58
unzip	GCC	7	6	4	28	2	2	2	7	10	4	1	81	12	2	1	296
	Clang	5	4	2	27	2	2	2	7	8	4	1	109	10	2	1	112

Table 4: Data-oriented gadget statistics.

Application	Compiler	Registers	Stack	Constant	
curl	GCC	2519	485	0	
Curi	Clang	1525	1207	16	
imlib2	GCC	9005	8319	0	
IIIIIDZ	Clang	8216	8742	0	
libtiff	GCC	4203	2797	0	
прип	Clang	2993	2940	0	
nginy	GCC	5176	3559	93	
nginx	Clang	4904	3629	93	
ontinna	GCC	3558	1560	0	
optipng	Clang	2236	1076	34	
sudo	GCC	1208	1266	102	
Sudo	Clang	948	271	62	
unzin	GCC	2348	1373	0	
unzip	Clang	828	497	367	

Table 5: Comparison of parameter-loading strategies for gadgets in each program compiled under GCC and Clang.

Application	Compiler	Verified Gad-	Potential Com-	Potential	Verified	Complex
		get Count	plex Gadget	Gadget Total	Gadget	Gadget
			Count		Proportion	Proportion
curl	GCC	1276	14	1298	98%	1%
	Clang	1174	13	1197	98%	1%
imlib2	GCC	3377	1516	5048	67%	30%
	Clang	2567	1976	4717	54%	42%
libtiff	GCC	2067	410	2572	80%	16%
	Clang	1403	479	1985	71%	24%
nginx	GCC	3284	285	3697	89%	8%
	Clang	3198	259	3615	88%	7%
optipng	GCC	1188	288	1582	75%	18%
	Clang	883	193	1125	78%	17%
sudo	GCC	988	49	1056	94%	5%
	Clang	456	22	486	94%	5%
unzip	GCC	1072	228	1350	79%	17%
	Clang	605	100	722	84%	14%

Table 6: Comparison of verified data-oriented gadget totals and potential complex gadgets that are omitted. "Potential Gadget Total" includes all instruction sequences considered for classification.

```
# Binary; compiled with GCC
t9 = GET:I32(offset=28)
t8 = Add32(t9,0xffffffec)
t10 = LDle:I32(t8)
t11 = Add32(t10,0x000000004)
t13 = LDle:I32(t11)
t15 = Add32(t9,0xfffffff4)
t3 = LDle:I32(t15)
t2 = Add32(t13,t3)
t17 = Add32(t9,0xffffffec)
t19 = LDle:I32(t17)
t20 = Add32(t19,0x00000004)
STle(t20) = t2
```

Figure 4.2: Dereferenced arithmetic gadgets in the perform\_io function in "sudo".

```
# Binary; compiled with GCC
t15 = GET:I32(offset=24)
t14 = Add32(t15,0x00000084)
t16 = LDle:I32(t14)
t5 = LDle:I32(t16)
t3 = Add32(t5,0x00000001)
STle(t16) = t3
```

```
# Binary; compiled with Clang
t4 = LDle:I32(0x0813c298)
t5 = Add32(t4,0x00000001)
STle(0x0813c298) = t5
```

Figure 4.4: Arithmetic gadgets in "unzip".

```
# Gadget 1

t9 = GET:I32(offset=32)

t8 = Add32(t9,0x0000001c)

t10 = LDle:I32(t8)

t11 = Add32(t10,0x000000010)

t13 = LDle:I32(t11)

t18 = GET:I32(offset=36)

t17 = Add32(t18,0x000000000)

STle(t17) = t13
```

```
# Gadget 2
t9 = GET:I32(offset=32)
t8 = Add32(t9,0x0000001c)
t10 = LD1e:I32(t8)
t14 = Add32(t10,0x0000000c)
t16 = LD1e:I32(t14)
t18 = GET:I32(offset=36)
t20 = Add32(t18,0x000000dc)
STle(t20) = t16
```

Figure 4.5: Two dereferenced assignment gadgets in "nginx."