

Toward Automated Forensic Analysis of Obfuscated Malware

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Where Innovation Is Tradition

April 24, 2015

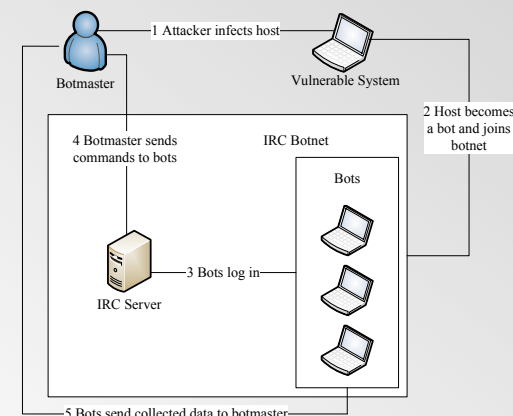
Overview

- The Need for Forensics
- Forensics Problems and Our Contribution
- Background
- Problem Model
- Challenges and Solutions
- Empirical Evaluation
- Conclusion

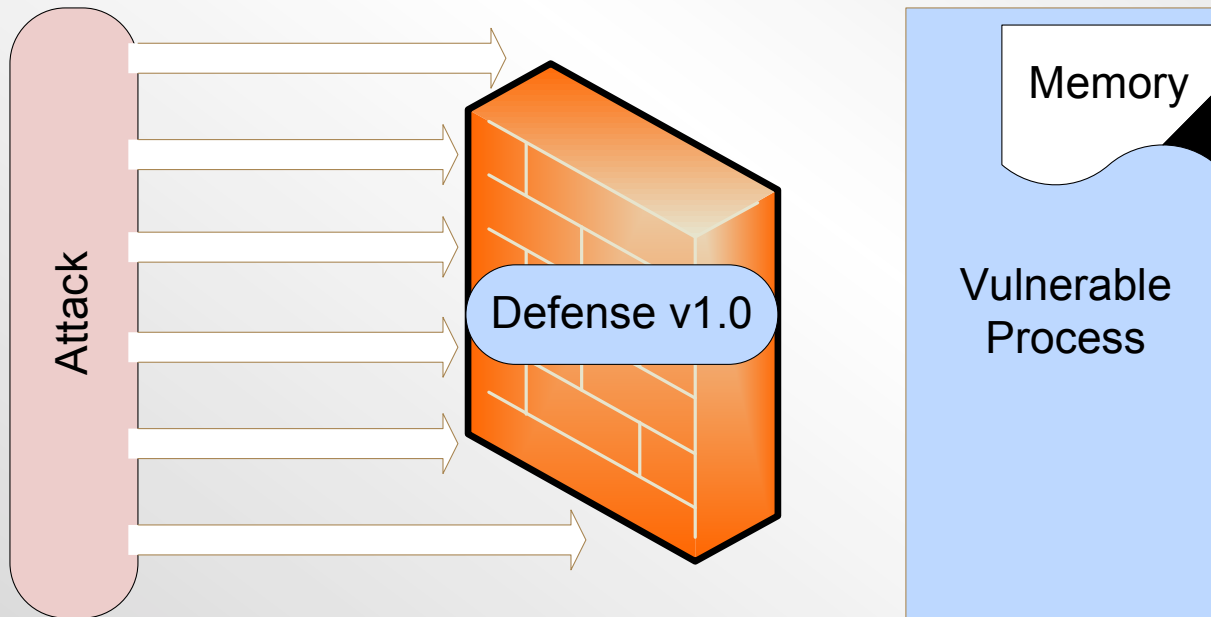
The Need for Forensics

Why?

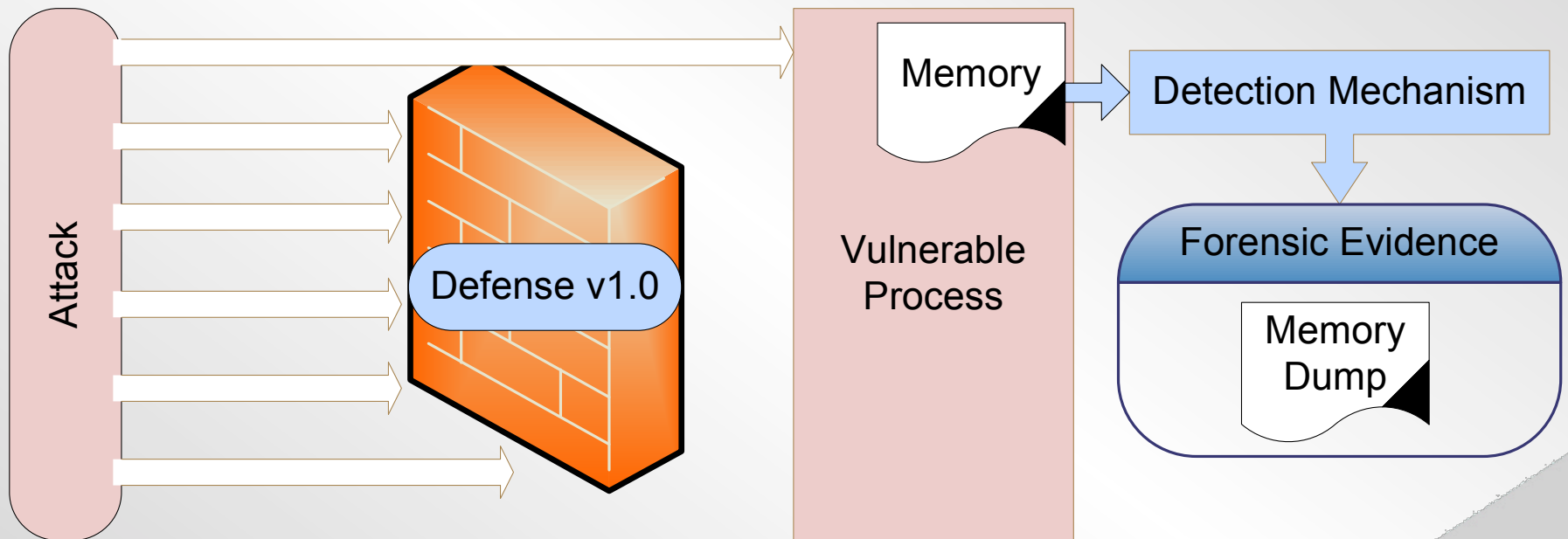
- Malware is a serious threat
 - Internet of [Insecure] Things
 - Stuxnet, Regin
 - Christmas holiday tradition
 - Compromise is an eventuality
- Forensics seeks to understand the *how*
 - Embrace the ownage
 - Collect evidence, Analyze, Extrapolate
- Enables us to build better defenses



Scenario: Vulnerable Web Server

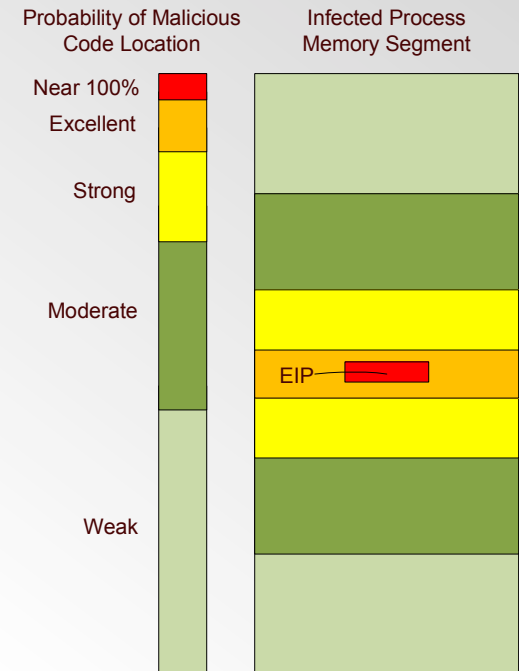


Scenario: Exploit, What Now?

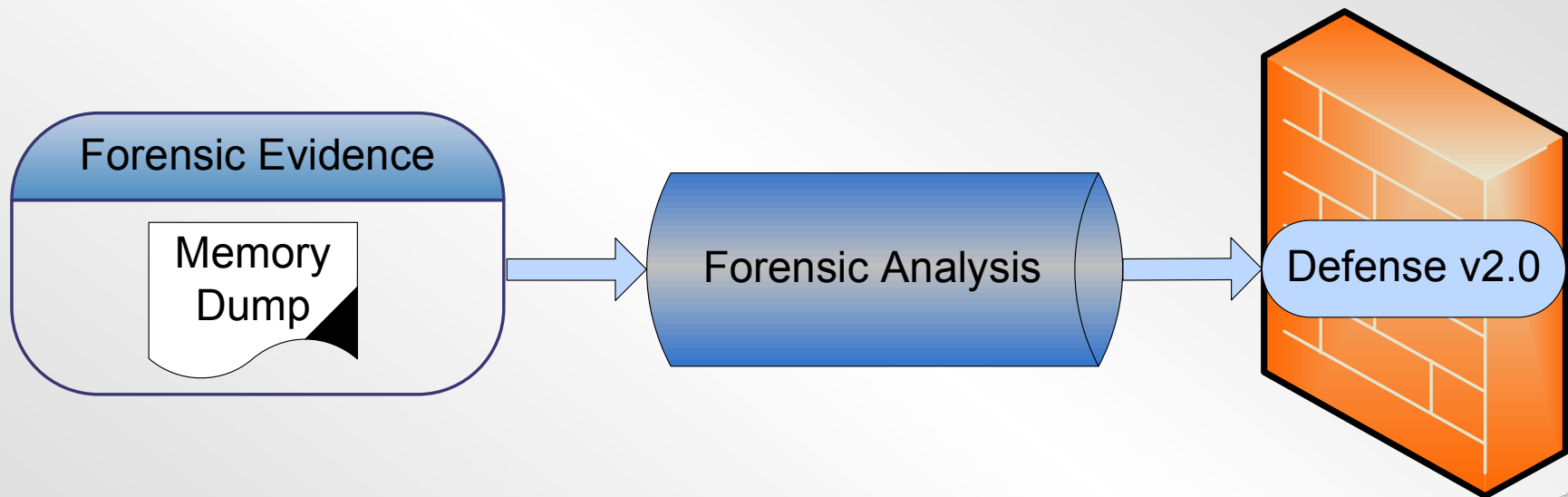


Scenario: What Now?

- Upon first non-self system call
 - Attack code fragments remain in memory
- Packing, self-modification, armoring
 - Staged C2
 - Can the fragments reveal clues?
 - Robust system needed to generically model execution



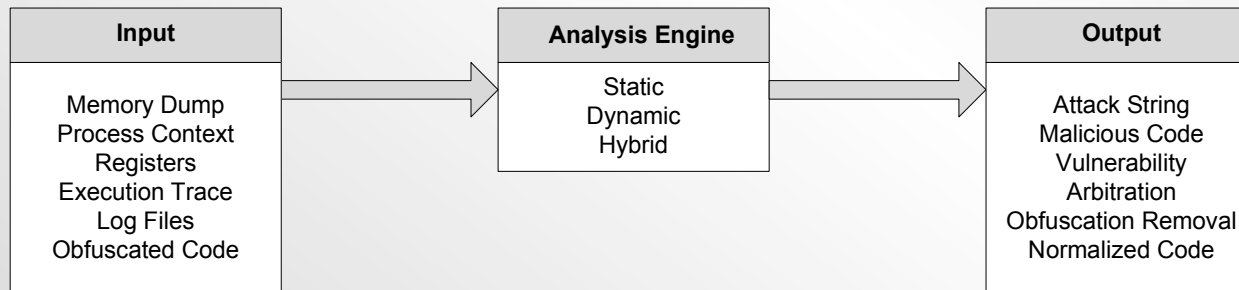
Scenario: Build Better Defense



Forensics Problems and Our Contribution

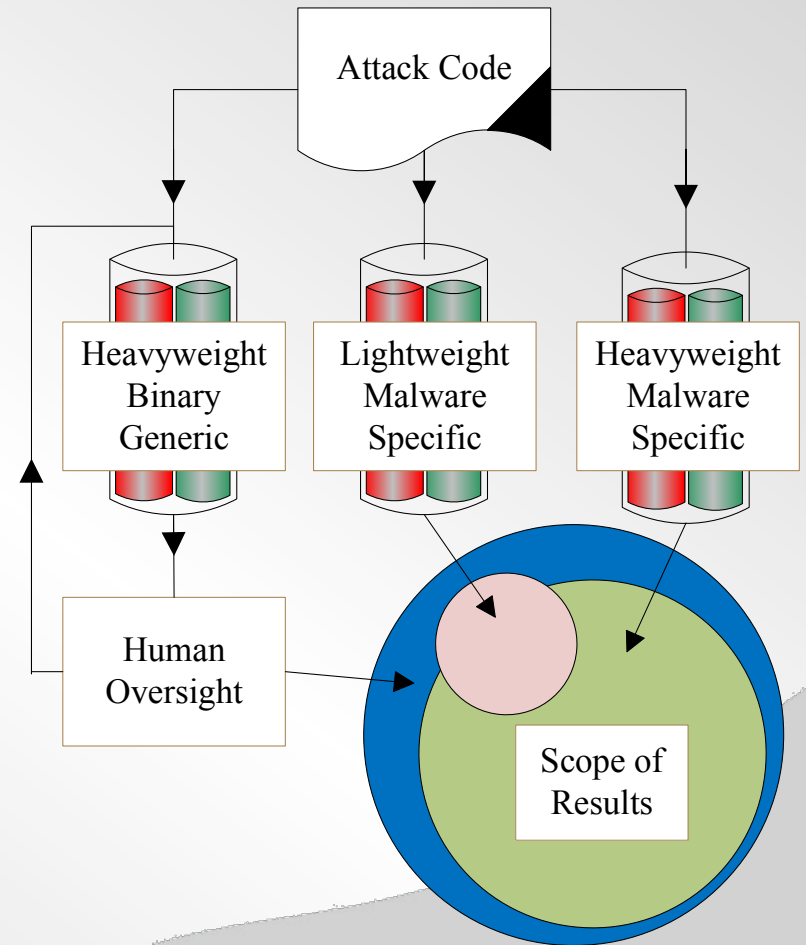
Problem

- Need to automate forensic response upon detection in memory
 - Avoid substantial manual effort
 - Automatically recover malware
 - Extract/unpack/recover attack code
 - Memory dump, transient artifacts



Problem

- Human oversight is costly
- Trade-off between
 - Generic binary
 - Malware specific
- Need
 - Automated generic malware tool that approaches detail from generic binary tools

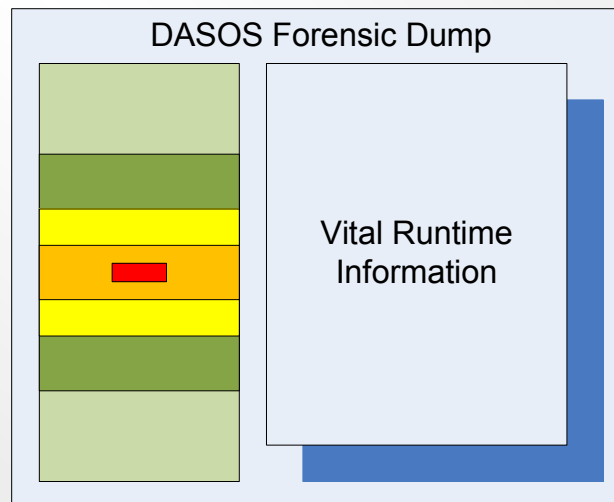


Motivation, Existing Tools

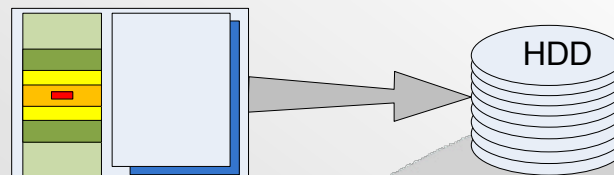
- Only work within known boundaries
 - Typically exclude support for code fragments
 - e.g., shellcode
 - Things get messy without given boundaries
 - e.g., arbitrary byte streams
- Do not generically handle:
 - Malformed, Misaligned
 - Obfuscated, Armored
 - Too specific or too abstracted

Solution: CodeXt

- Discovers executable code within memory dump
 - Upon real-time detection

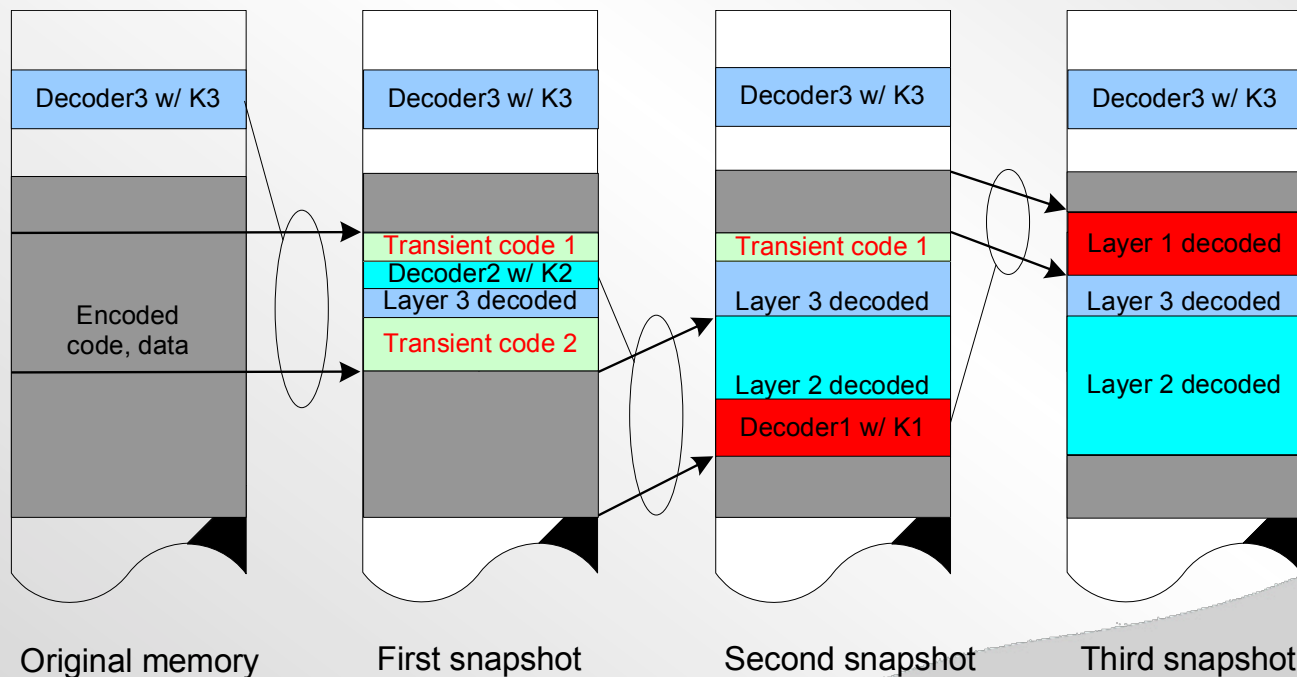


Upon Detection Write Dump to Disk



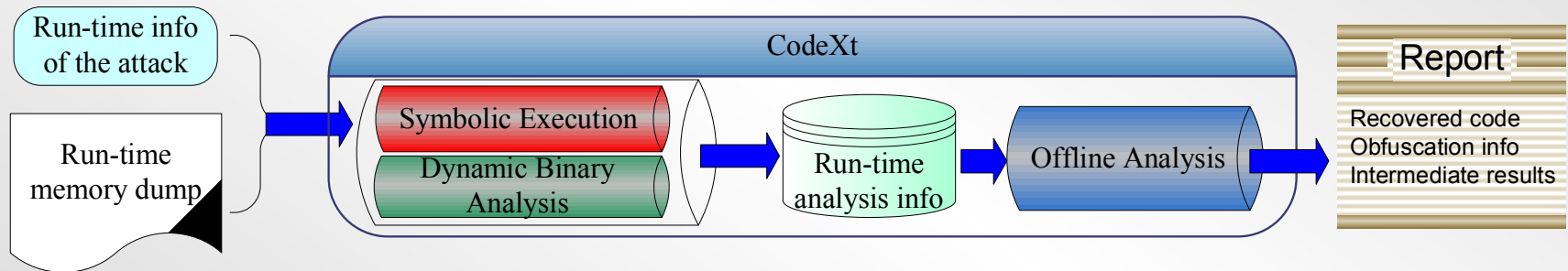
Solution: CodeXt

- Extracts packed or obfuscated malware
 - First to generically handle Incremental and Shikata-Ga-Nai



Solution: CodeXt

- Uses data-flow analysis (taint tracking)
 - Finds attack string within network traffic
- Models both shellcode and full executables



- Framework built upon S2E
 - Selective means QEMU vs. KLEE (LLVM)

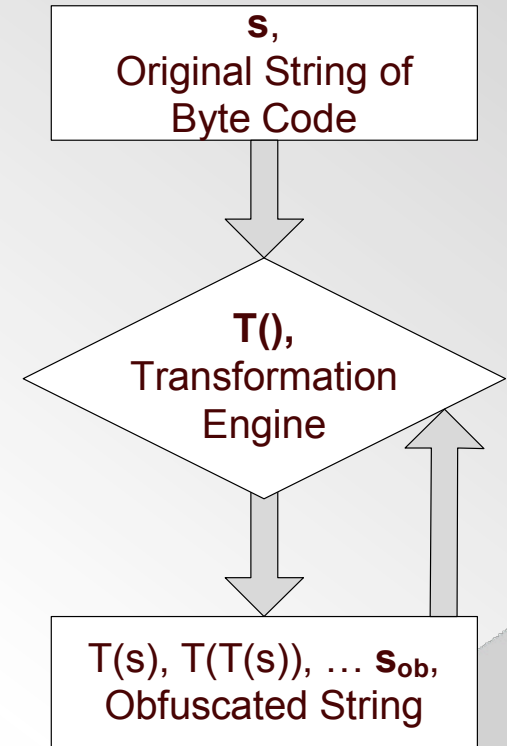
Background

Background

- S2E, Selective Symbolic Execution
 - KLEE for symbolic
 - QEMU for concrete
 - We extended QEMU to detect system calls
- KLEE
 - Expressive IR allows low level operations
 - Down to the bit
 - States = Shadow Memory + Constraints
 - Memory = Expressions
 - Even concrete values are expressions

Attack Code vs. Attack String

- Attack string:
 - Crafted input to the process
 - May include non-code
- Attack code:
 - Executed within process
 - May include immediate values (data)
- Removing layers of obfuscation
 - How many, and by what function?
 - What about self-destructive code?



Framing the Problem

- Assumptions
 - All malicious code exists within dump
 - Malicious code has not overwritten itself destructively
- Requirements
 - No code semantics known
 - Coding conventions irrelevant
 - Capable of accuracy with self-modifying code
 - Capable of modeling network-based server applications

CodeXt Output

- Instruction Trace of executed instructions
 - Grouping of fragments into chunks
 - Reveals original and unpacked malcode
 - Assisted by a translation trace
- Data Trace of memory writes
 - Intelligent memory update clustering
 - Multi-layer snapshots
- Call Trace of system calls
 - With CPU context

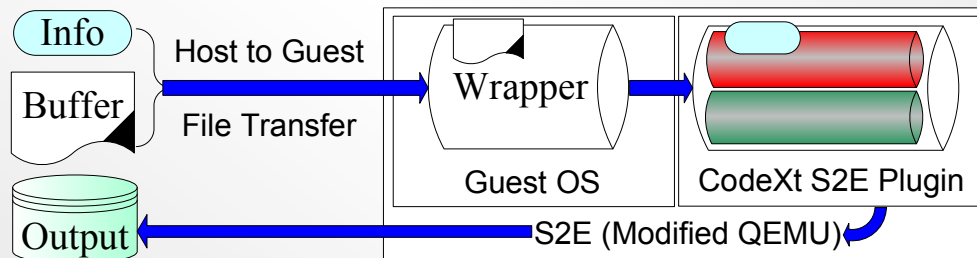
Data-flow Analysis Output

- For each labeled byte
 - Follow propagation
 - Generate trace
 - Generate memory map
- Add events that qualify as success
 - EIP contains tainted values

Problems + Challenges + Solutions

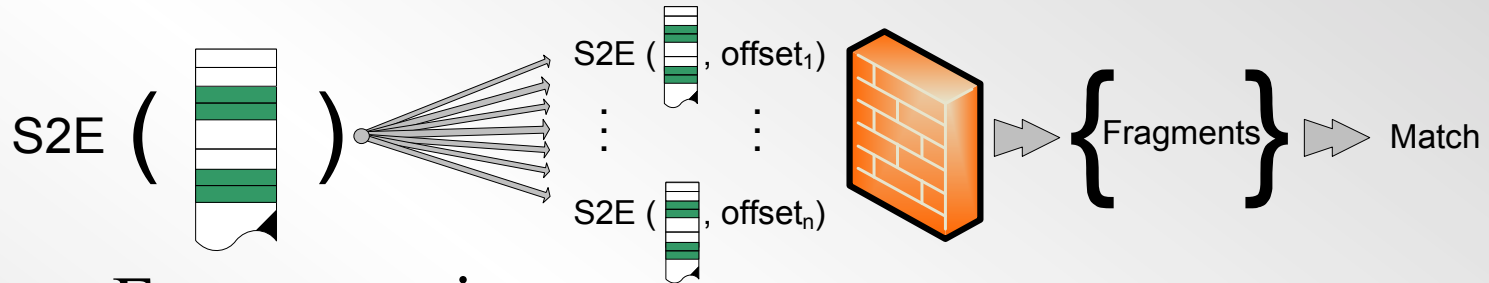
Handling Byte Streams

- S2E expects well structured binaries
 - We wrap the binary for execution



- S2E uses basic block granularity
 - Our modified QEMU translation returns more info
 - We leverage translation and execution hooks to verify

Code Fragments



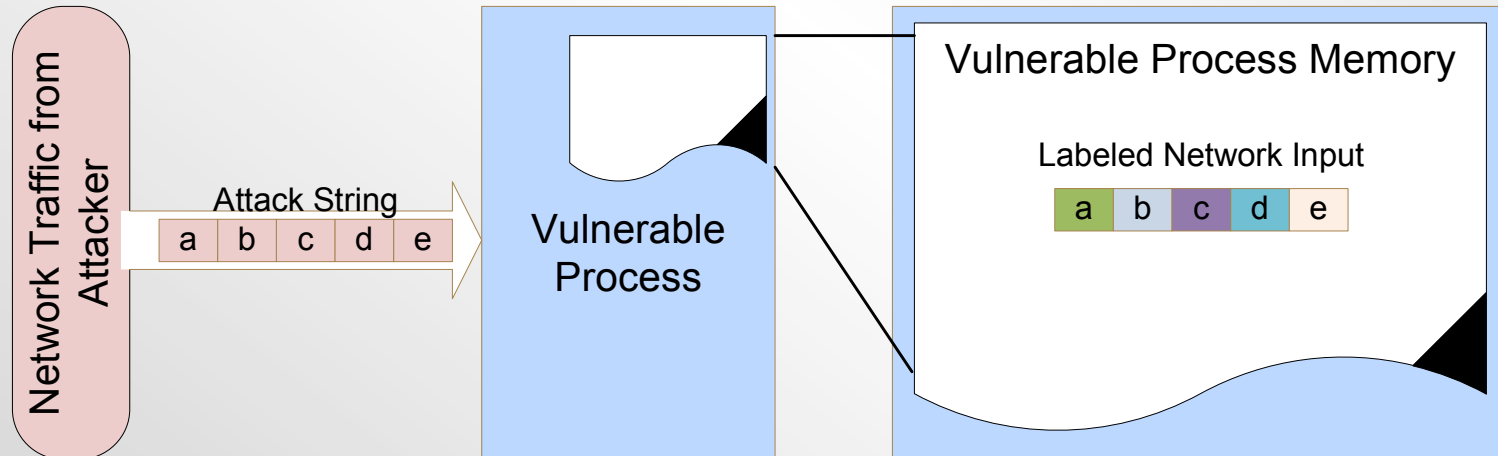
- Fragmentation
 - Clustering into Chunks, adjacency, execution trace
- Density
 - Usage: Executed/Range
 - Overlay: Unique executed/Range over snapshots
- Enclosure
 - Continuous executable bytes adjacent to end

Defeating Obfuscation

- FPU instructions, fnstenv
 - Added small change to QEMU to comply
- Intra-basic block self-modification
 - We know address range of each translated block
 - During execution we track writes
 - If any write is to same block we retranslate block
- Emulator detection
 - Tested for a set of obscure instructions used as canaries

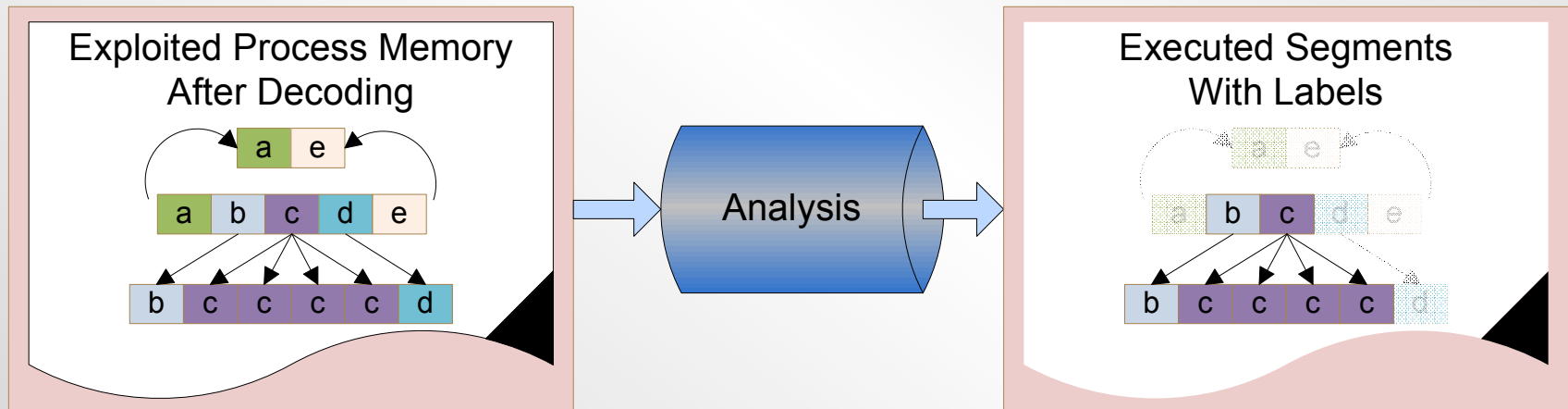
Multipath, Arbitrary Bytes

- Multipath Execution
 - Existing trace tool manages path merging
 - KLEE manages state forking and resources
- Mark Arbitrary Bytes as Symbolic



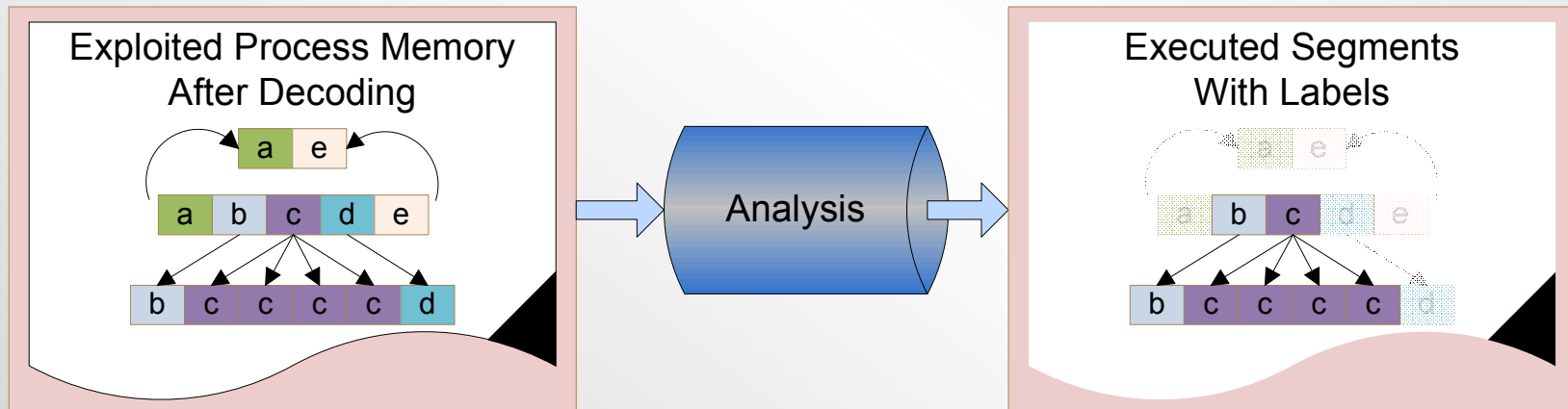
Executing Symbolic Code

- Taint labels can be search upon events
 - KLEE prefers constraints over solving
 - Constraint cleanup
 - Silent concretization



Executing Symbolic Code, con't

- Data-flow validity, intermingled code
 - Symbolic EIP
 - Periodic or triggered custom simplifier
 - Inheritance enforcer
 - Bit-wise and mov



Executable Modeling

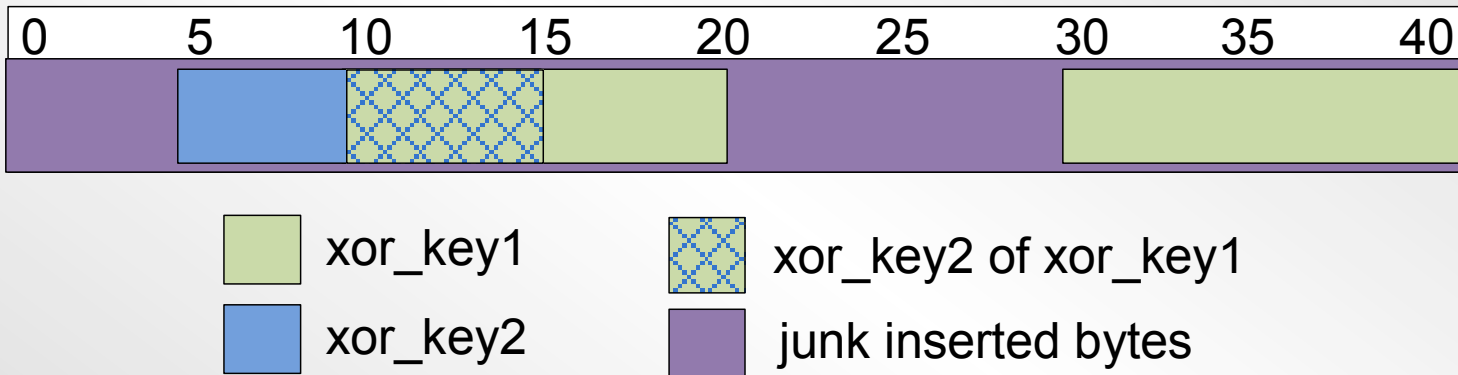
- OS introspection
 - Snag CR3 as PID
- Load and link overhead
 - 95,000 instructions to ignore
 - Canary
- Real-time attacks
 - Buffer overflow
 - Sockets
 - SSL

Empirical Evaluation

Experiments, Part 1

- Hidden code search
 - 1KB to 100KB buffers, 40B to 80B shellcodes
 - Filled with either null, live-capture, or random bytes
 - Varied assistance data: EIP, EAX, both, neither
- Accuracy
 - De-obfuscation, Anti-emulation detection
 - Various packers mentioned in previous research
 - In-shop: Junk code insertion, Ranged xor, Incremental
- Symbolic Branching

Multi-Layered Encoders



Publicly Available and Advanced

| Technique | Extracted? | Technical Challenge |
|---|------------|--|
| Junk code insertion | Yes | None |
| Ranged XOR | Yes | None |
| Multi-layer combinations of above | Yes | Multi-layer encoding |
| Incremental | Yes | Live annotation required Block based feedback key |
| ADMmutate | Yes | Complicated code combinations |
| Clet | Yes | Polymorphism |
| Alpha2 | Yes | None |
| MSF call+4 dword XOR | Yes | Instruction misalignment |
| MSF Single-byte XOR Countdown | Yes | Changing key |
| MSF Variable-length fnstenv/mov XOR | Yes | FPU handling |
| MSF jmp/call XOR Additive Feedback Encoder | Yes | Additive feedback key Canary to end loop |
| MSF BloXor | Yes | Metamorphic block based XOR |
| MSF Shikata-Ga-Nai | Yes | Same block polymorphic Additive feedback key |

Table 4.2: Encoding Techniques Tested.

Shikata-Ga-Nai, Techniques

| Offset | Bytecode | Mnemonic | ; Comment | Offset | Bytecode | Mnemonic | ; Comment |
|--------|------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 0000 | DAD4 | fcmovbe st4 | ; fpu stores PC | 0000 | DAD4 | fcmovbe st4 | |
| 0002 | B892BA1E5C | mov eax,0x5c1eba92 | ; the key | 0002 | B892BA1E5C | mov eax,0x5c1eba92 | |
| 0007 | D97424F4 | fnstenv [esp-0xc] | ; push 0x0s addr | 0007 | D97424F4 | fnstenv [esp-0xc] | |
| 000B | 5B | pop ebx | ; ebx = 0x0s addr | 000B | 5B | pop ebx | |
| 000C | 29C9 | sub ecx,ecx | | 000C | 29C9 | sub ecx,ecx | |
| 000E | B10B | mov cl,0xb | ; words to decode | 000E | B10B | mov cl,0xb | |
| 0010 | 83C304 | add ebx,0x4 | ; inc target | 0010 | 83C304 | add ebx,0x4 | ; inc target |
| 0013 | 314314 | xor [ebx+0x14],eax | ; update [0x18] | 0013 | 314314 | xor [ebx+0x14],eax | ; decode target |
| 0016 | 034386 | add eax, [ebx-0x7a] | ; 0x18 is encoded | 0016 | 034314 | add eax,[ebx+0x14] | ; modify key |
| 0019 | 58 | pop eax | ; part of decoder | 0019 | E2F5 | loop 0x10 | ; jmp 0x10, ecx-- |
| 001A | EBB7 | jmp 0xd3 | ; part of decoder | 001B | <deobfuscated 1st byte of shellcode> | | |
| 001C | B5C5 | mov ch,0xc5 | | 001C | <obfuscated shellcode> | | |

Table 4.3: Anti-emulation Techniques Tested.

| Technique | Evaded? |
|--|---------|
| FPU instruction <code>fpstenv</code> | Yes |
| Same block modification | Yes |
| Repeated string instruction <code>rep stosb</code> | Yes |
| Obscure instructions <code>sal</code> | Yes |
| Alternate encodings <code>test</code> | Yes |
| Undocumented opcodes <code>salc</code> | Yes |

Incremental Encoder

```
>> Printing the Data_trace memory map (8 snapshots)
```

```
>> Printing snapshot 0
```

```
      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 a b c d e f
0xbfd7cf50                7200873d ca3c872f
0xbfd7cf60 ab57d0be a98db797 f96e5730 7b6e4a6d
0xbfd7cf70 6ba626bc baa6f76d baa6266d ba77266d
0xbfd7cf80 6b772614 76184902
```

```
>> Printing snapshot 1
```

```
      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 a b c d e f
0xbfd7cf50                89e731c0 31db31d2
0xbfd7cf60 50b06643 526a016a 0289e1cd 8089fc90
0xbfd7cf70 90419041 41414190 41419090 41909090
0xbfd7cf80 909090e9 8dffffff
```

```
>> Printing snapshot 2
```

```
      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 a b c d e f
0xbfd7cf50                0d28d966 37cc80c2
0xbfd7cf60 84cfe9db ece8f8db 3acde8db d2460ad7
0xbfd7cf70 949db80d e2460970 04976141 148ea9fc
0xbfd7cf80 145f7854 09301742
```

```
>> Printing snapshot 3
```

```
      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 a b c d e f
0xbfd7cf50                89e731db b303687f
0xbfd7cf60 00000166 68271066 be020066 5689e26a
0xbfd7cf70 105250b0 6689e1cd 805889fc 90414141
0xbfd7cf80 909090e9 8dffffff
```

```
>> Printing snapshot 4
```

```
      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 a b c d e f
0xbfd7cf50                3c7e935a 3c77aaa6
0xbfd7cf60 bcb7d719 bd88ab98 c0378ad8 4cf65b09
0xbfd7cf70 9d275bd8 4cf68ad8 4c275bd8 4c278ad8
0xbfd7cf80 9d278a70 8048e566
```

```
>> Printing snapshot 5
```

```
      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 a b c d e f
0xbfd7cf50                31c989c3 31c0b03f
0xbfd7cf60 b100cd80 b03fb101 cd809041 41414190
0xbfd7cf70 90904141 41419041 41904141 41909041
0xbfd7cf80 909090e9 8dffffff
```

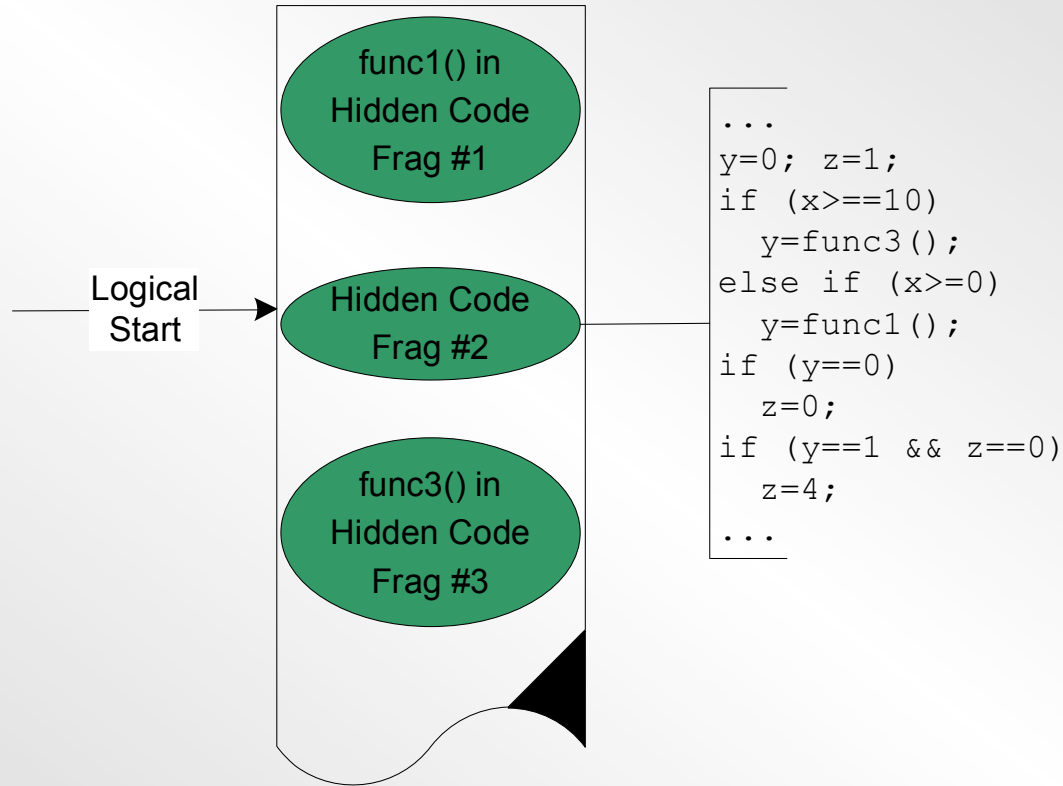
```
>> Printing snapshot 6
```

```
      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 a b c d e f
0xbfd7cf50                0f49f534 11afd734
0xbfd7cf60 56afc635 50b164ec 3509470d b762f7d5
0xbfd7cf70 df4d24cc 7fc1e51d ae10e51d 7fc1e5cc
0xbfd7cf80 ae1034b5 b37f5ba3
```

```
>> Printing snapshot 7
```

```
      0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 a b c d e f
0xbfd7cf50                31c95168 2f2f7368
0xbfd7cf60 682f6269 6e31c0b0 0b89e351 89e25389
0xbfd7cf70 e1cd8090 41414141 90904141 41414190
0xbfd7cf80 909090e9 8dffffff
```

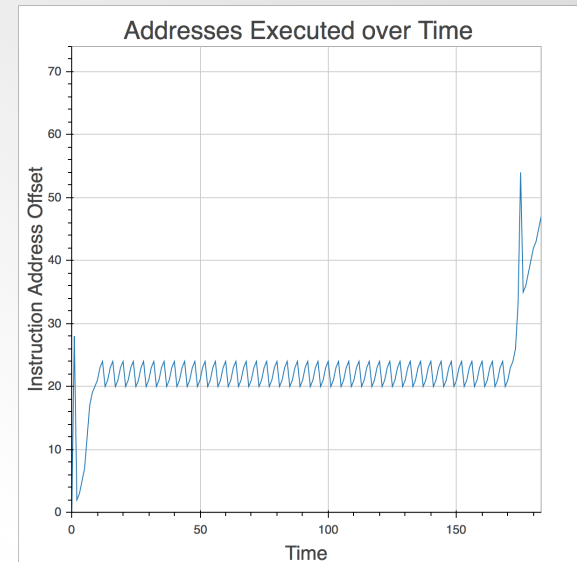
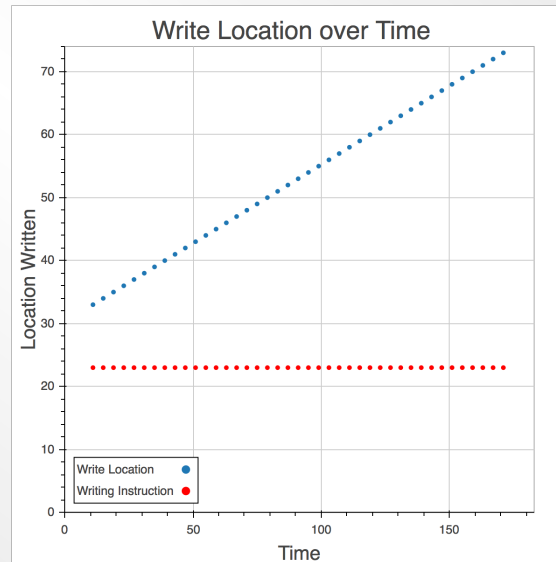
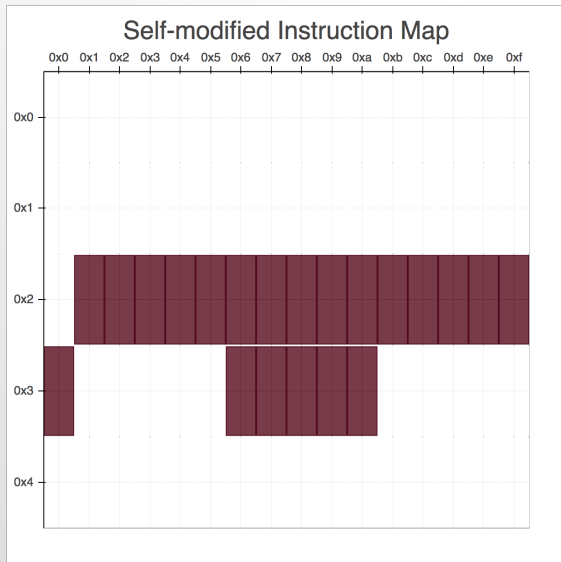
Symbolic Conditionals



Experiments, Part 2

- Extrapolating malicious behavior
 - Detecting self-modifying code
- Test data-flow analysis robustness
 - Key identification
 - Network servers
 - Including SSL sockets
 - No source-code modifications
 - Full executable

Detecting Write-then-Execute



Call +4 Dword, Key Identification

```
>> Printing the memory map "code_Key0000" (1 snapshot)
      0 1 2 3  4 5 6 7  8 9 a b  c d e f  ASCII
0x09e13170                e5                .
0x09e13180 ----- eb----- c0----- .....
0x09e13190 db----- b2----- b0----- 80----- .....
0x09e131a0 ff----- 6c----- 20----- 6c----- ....1... ..1...

>> Printing the memory map "code_Key0001" (1 snapshot)
      0 1 2 3  4 5 6 7  8 9 a b  c d e f  ASCII
0x09e13180 c2----- --13---- --b0---- .....
0x09e13190 --43---- --0f---- --01---- --e8---- .C.....
0x09e131a0 --ff---- --6c---- --77---- --64      ....1...w...d

>> Printing the memory map "code_Key0002" (1 snapshot)
      0 1 2 3  4 5 6 7  8 9 a b  c d e f  ASCII
0x09e13180 5e---- ----59-- ----04-- ^.....Y.....
0x09e13190 ---31-- ----cd-- ----4b-- ----e8-- ..1.....K.....
0x09e131a0 ---48-- ----6f-- ----6f-- ----21  ..H...o...o...!

>> Printing the memory map "code_Key0003" (1 snapshot)
      0 1 2 3  4 5 6 7  8 9 a b  c d e f  ASCII
0x09e13180 9b-- ----31 ----31 .....1...1
0x09e13190 -----d2 -----80 -----cd -----ff .....
0x09e131a0 -----65 -----2c -----72 -----0a ...e...,...r....
```

Monitoring Full Executables

- Network server
 - Standard socket and SSL versions

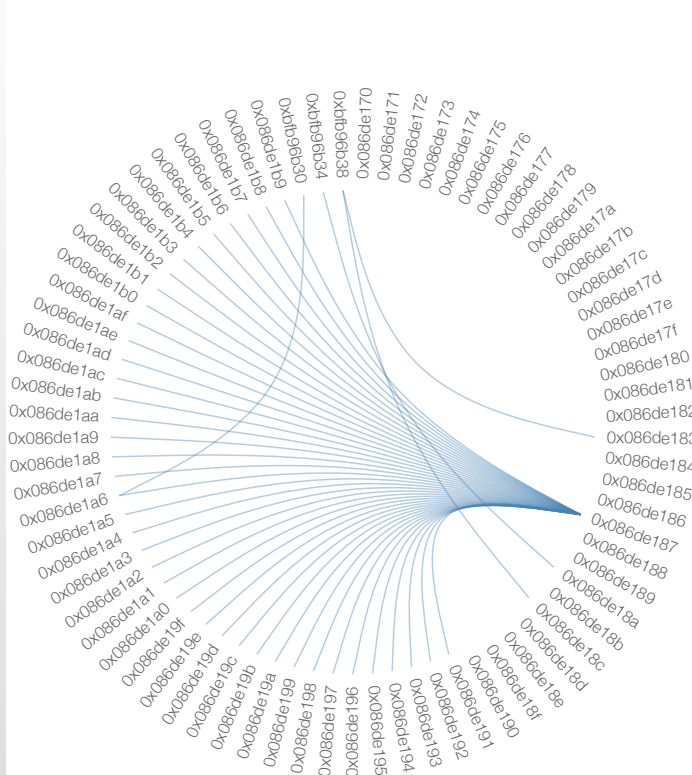
Table 5.1: Outcome following monitored execution of standard network vs. SSL socket servers when exploited with different shellcode types.

| Server | Shellcode | Control-flow (CodeXt) | Data-flow (Taint) |
|----------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Standard | Unpacked | Success | Success |
| | Ranged XOR | Success | Success |
| | Shikata-Ga-Nai | Success | Success |
| SSL | Unpacked | Success | S2E Failure |
| | Ranged XOR | Success | S2E Failure |
| | Shikata-Ga-Nai | Success | S2E Failure |

- With Data-flow enabled, S2E forked excessive states
 - SSL_accept function

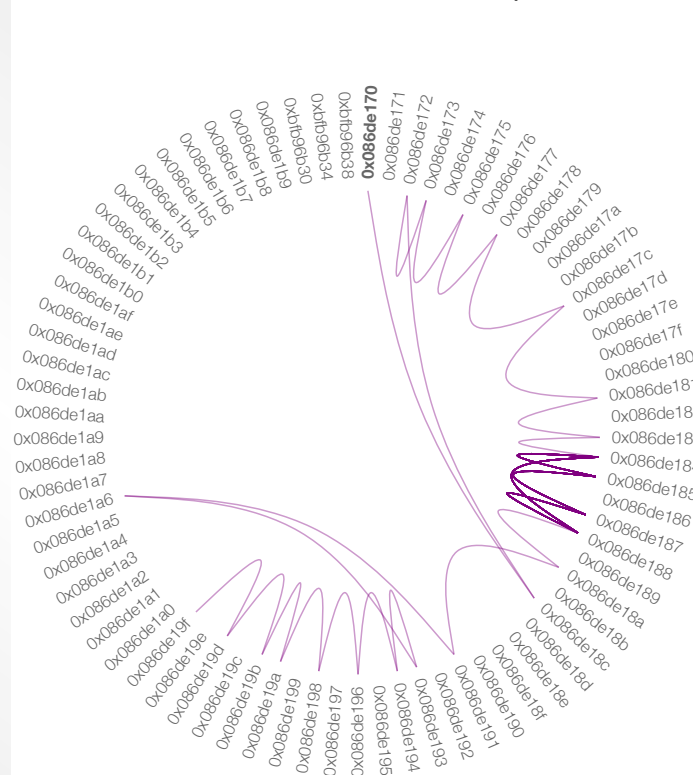
Data and Execution Traces

Data Flow Map (Writes per Instruction)



(a) Edges indicate data influence.

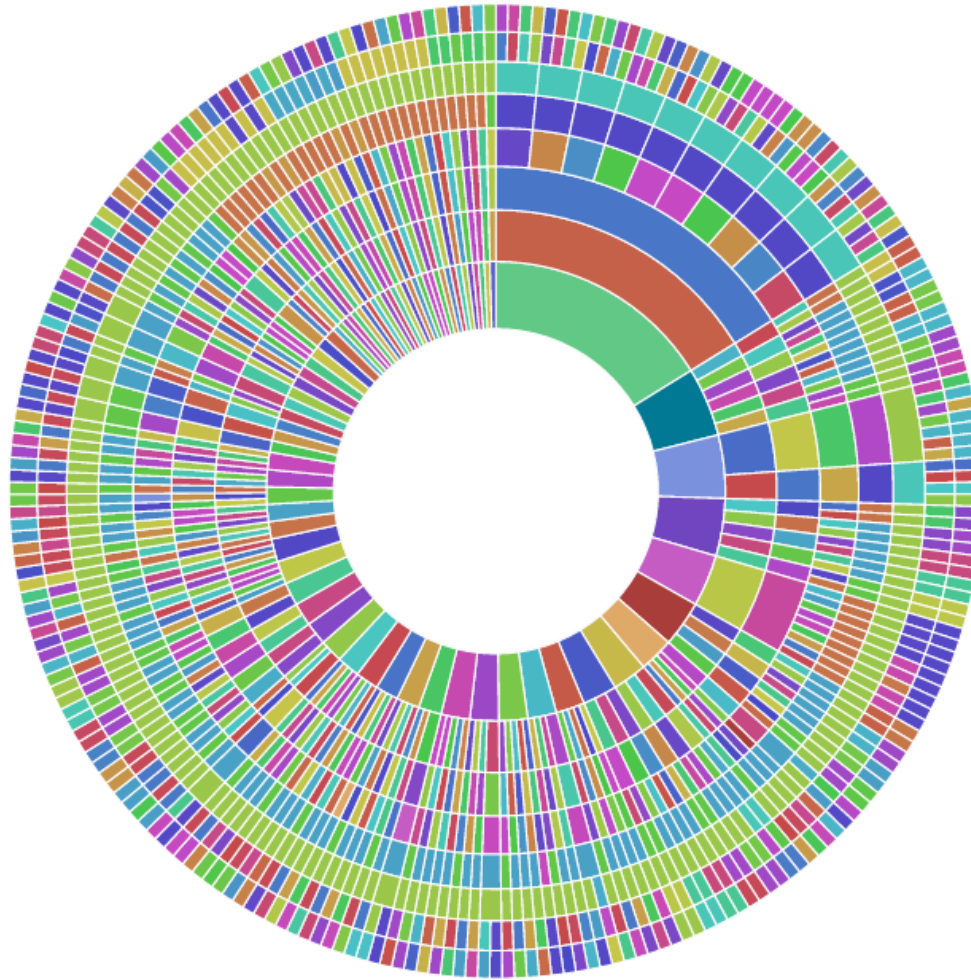
Execution Flow Map



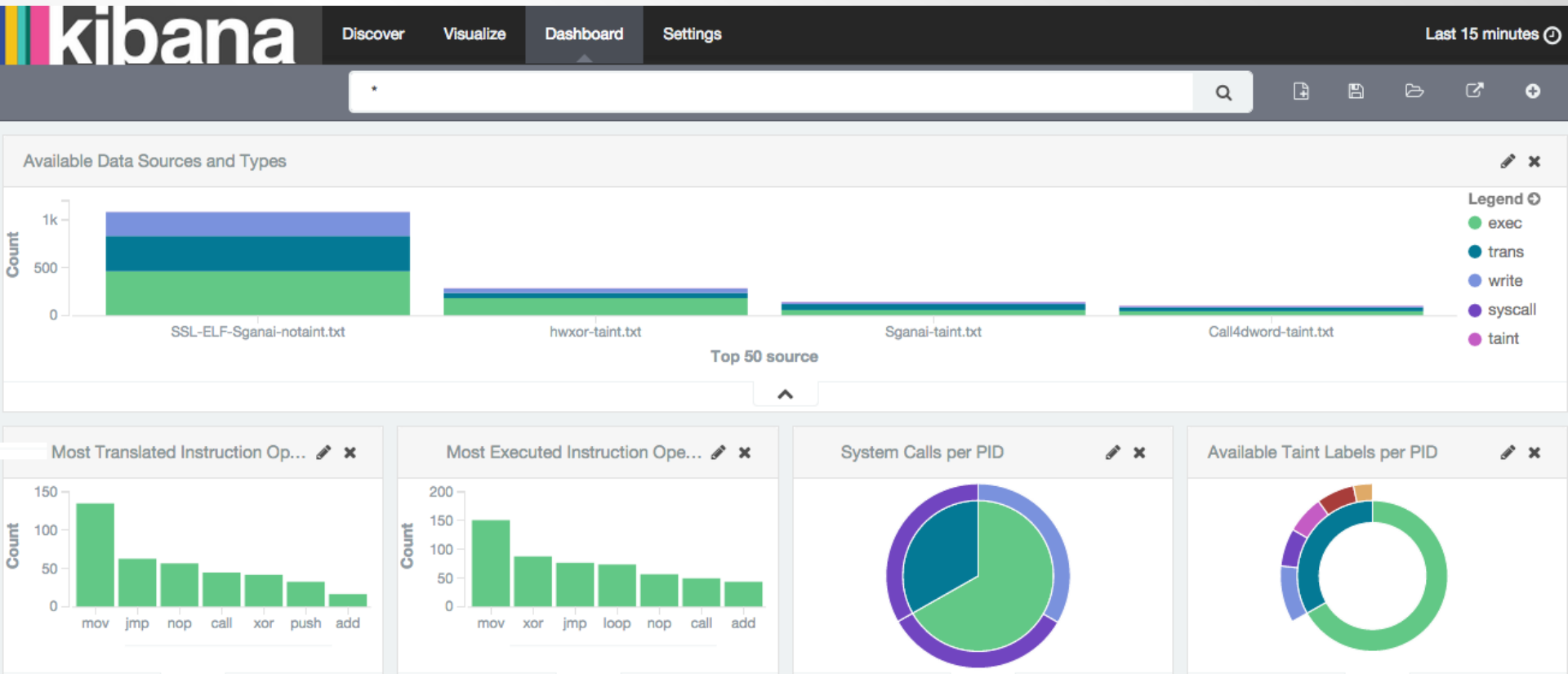
(b) Edges indication consecutive execution.

Figure 4.12: Interactive D3 based visualization output from single byte XOR decoding.

SSL Server Execution Trace



Analytics



Conclusion

Conclusion

- Although emulation is heavyweight, it is:
 - Accurate and enables anti-anti-sandbox techniques
 - OS independent
- Symbolic analysis engine opens avenues
 - Taint propagation and analysis
 - Fuller branch exploration and pruning heuristics
- Our Framework
 - CodeXt accurately pinpoints and models even highly obfuscated code in adverse conditions
 - Executable extensions enable black-box analysis

Summary

- Gaps exist in current malware forensics
 - Obfuscated shellcode
 - Solutions for advanced samples are not generic
 - Code fragments vs. portable binaries
 - No framework to handle deep analysis in both
 - Disconnect between real-time detection and low level analysis
 - Tool pipeline is not seamless
 - No system in place for aggregated analytics

Future Development

- Coordination with Open Source projects
 - Already on Github
 - Needs cleaner repository
 - Merge contributions into QEMU/S2E
 - Create new KLEE Expr type for taint labels
 - Cuckoo sandbox
- Better analytics
 - Integrate knowledge for anomaly detection

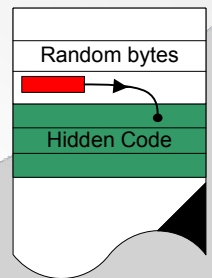
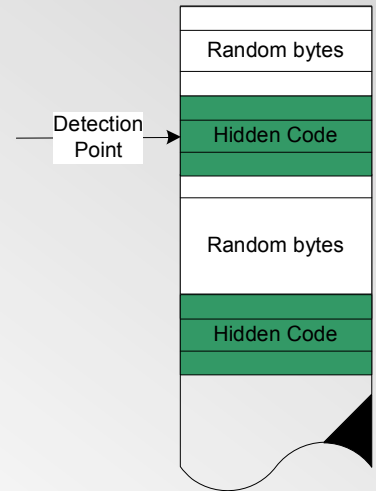
Thank you for your time

- Any questions?

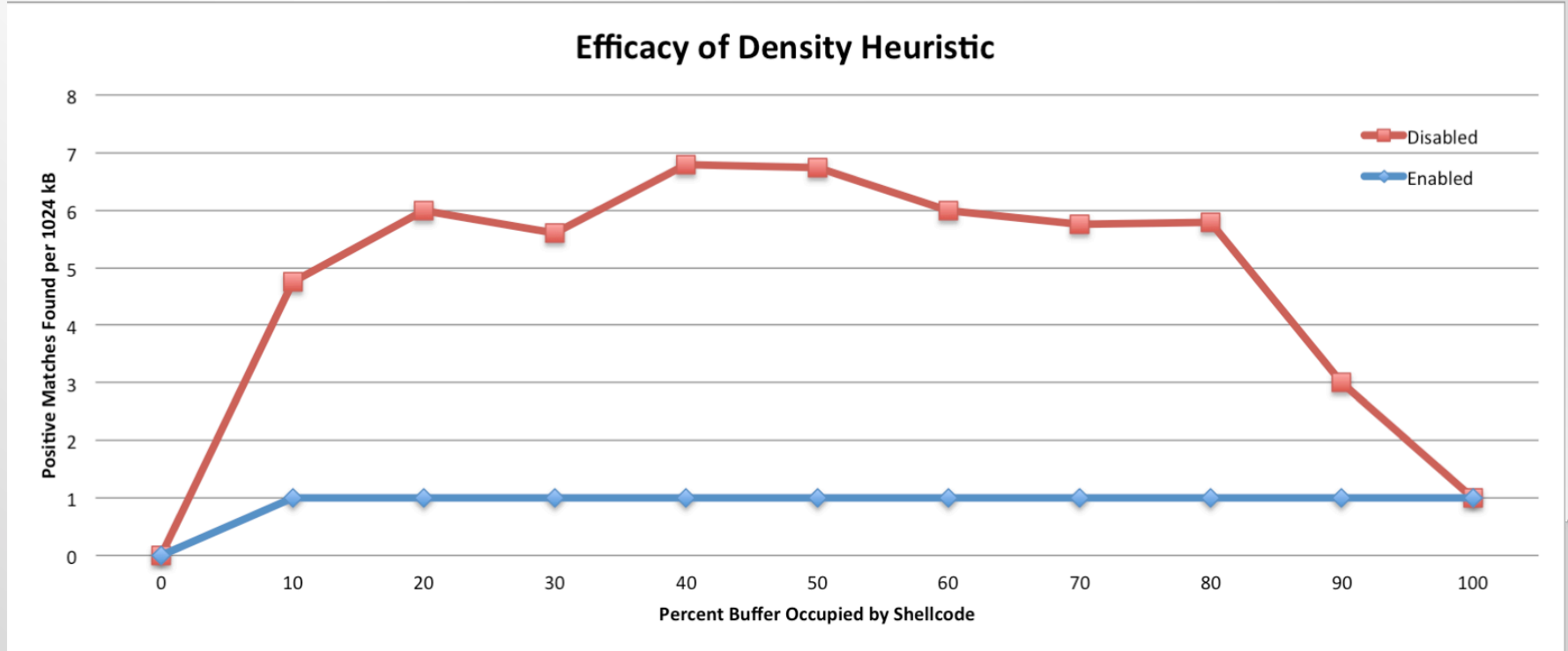
Spare Slides

Recognizing Code

- Avoiding the Halting Problem
 - No infinite loops
 - Caps on executed instructions
 - Different types: target, non-target, system
- False cognates
 - Illegal first instructions
 - False jumps into suffix
- Many substrings
 - Matched code fragment: ends on system call, EAX within range



Density Heuristic



Concrete Execution Challenges

- Handling Byte Streams
 - Wrapper
 - QEMU translator returns more instruction information
- Dealing with Code Fragments
 - Chunk creation
 - Density and Enclosure
- Defeating Obfuscation
 - FPU handler
 - Intra-basic block monitoring
 - Obscure instructions

Symbolic Execution Challenges

- Multipath Execution
- Mark Arbitrary Bytes as Symbolic
 - Detect system call semantics
- Pruning Label Propagation
 - Periodic garbage cleanup
- Executing Symbolic Code
 - Intercept on SilentConcretize

S2E

- Selective symbolic execution engine
 - KLEE for symbolic
 - QEMU for concrete
 - Decision made on the basic block level
 - Sub-basic block interaction allowed
 - Emits pre- and post-instruction signals
 - Extended QEMU to detect system calls

S2E Plugins

- Hooks establish events
 - S2E direct or pass through to KLEE
- Compiled into S2E
 - A fork of QEMU
- Major hooks we use:
 - onExecuteInstruction
 - onDataMemoryAccess
 - onPrivilegeChange

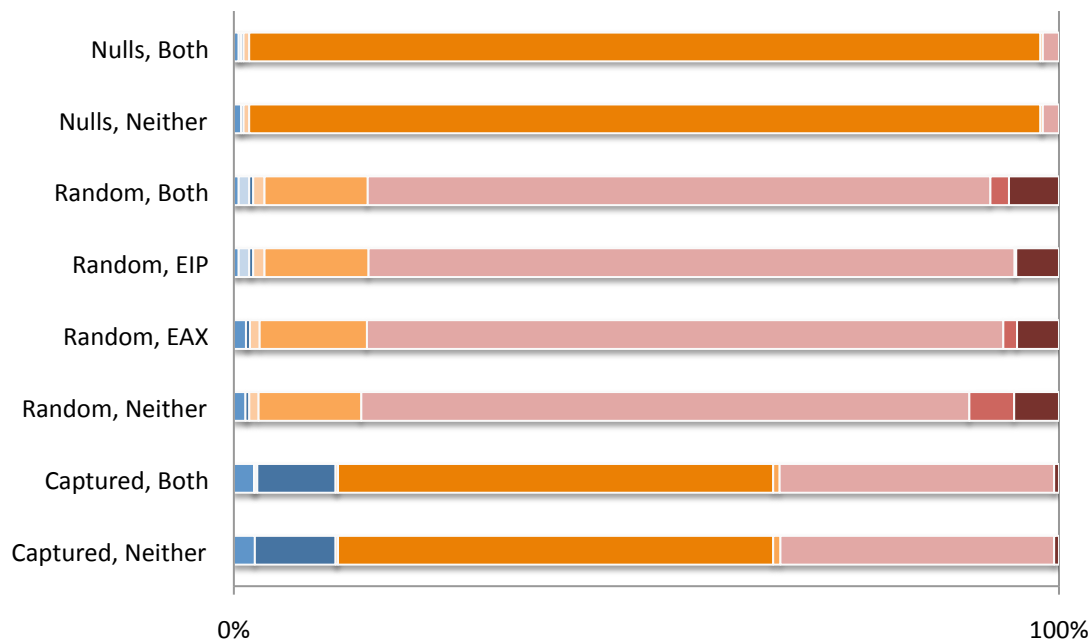
KLEE Expressions

```
(Extract w8 0 (Xor w32 (w32 3085654150)
  (Concat w32 (Add w8 (w8 92) (Read w8 0 v5_prop_code_Key0003_5))
    (Concat w24 (Add w8 (w8 30) (Read w8 0 v6_prop_code_Key0002_6))
      (Concat w16 (Add w8 (w8 186) (Read w8 0 v7_prop_code_Key0001_7))
        (Add w8 (w8 146) (Read w8 0 v8_prop_code_Key0000_8)))))))
```

Extract 8b at offset 0 of 308565150¹⁴⁶

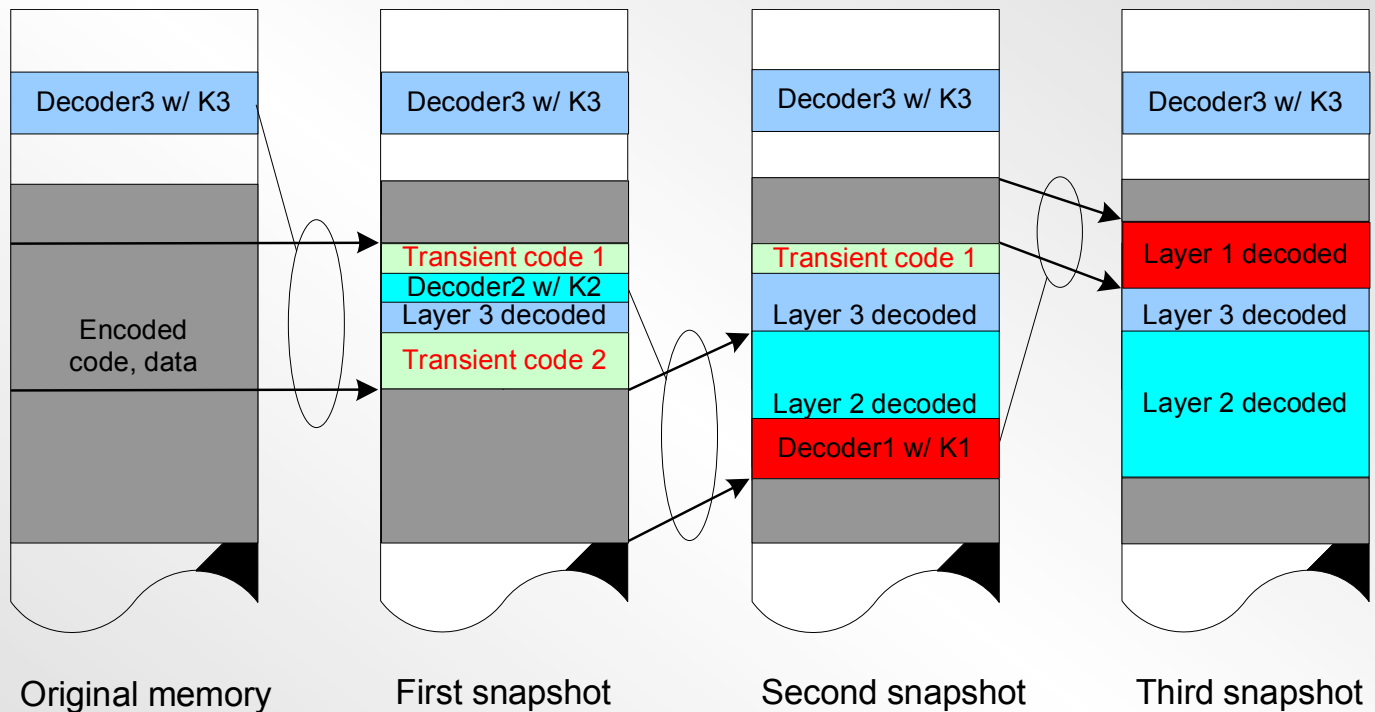
```
(Add w8 (w8 (NO) (Read w8 0 v8_prop_code_Key0000_8))
```


Negative Match Reasons



| | Captured , Neither | Captured , Both | Random, Neither | Random, EAX | Random, EIP | Random, Both | Nulls, Neither | Nulls, Both |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| ■ FP Irregular EAX | 26 | 25 | 15 | 15 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 6 |
| ■ FP Wrong EAX | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| ■ FP Wrong EIP | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 13 | 0 | 3 |
| ■ FP Subset | 100 | 97 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 3 |
| ■ Fatal Signal OS | 3 | 3 | 12 | 12 | 14 | 14 | 7 | 7 |
| ■ Invalid First Insn | 539 | 539 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 981 | 981 |
| ■ Invalid OOB Jump | 9 | 8 | 133 | 133 | 129 | 128 | 3 | 3 |
| ■ Unexpected OOB Jump | 339 | 340 | 787 | 789 | 801 | 772 | 20 | 20 |
| ■ Runaway Kernel | 0 | 0 | 58 | 17 | 2 | 23 | 0 | 0 |
| ■ Runaway Other | 6 | 6 | 58 | 52 | 53 | 62 | 0 | 0 |

Incremental Encoder



Executable Trace

