Dataflow analysis

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Dataflow analysis: what is it?

- A common framework for expressing algorithms that compute information about a program
- Why is such a framework useful?

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Dataflow analysis: what is it?

- A common framework for expressing algorithms that compute information about a program
- Why is such a framework useful?
- Provides a common language, which makes it easier to:
  - communicate your analysis to others
  - compare analyses
  - adapt techniques from one analysis to another
  - reuse implementations (eg: dataflow analysis frameworks)

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Control Flow Graphs

- For now, we will use a Control Flow Graph representation of programs
  - each statement becomes a node
  - edges between nodes represent control flow
- Later we will see other program representations
  - variations on the CFG (eg CFG with basic blocks)
  - other graph based representations

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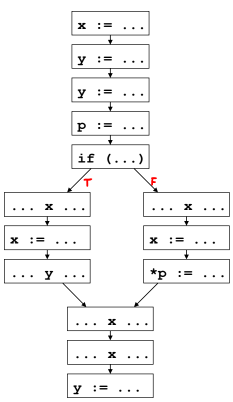
Example CFG

```
x := ...
y := ...
y := ...
p := ...
if (...) {
    ... x ...
    x := ...
    ... y ...
}
else {
    ... x ...
    x := ...
    *p := ...
}
... x ...
... y ...
y := ...
```



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An example DFA: reaching definitions

- For each use of a variable, determine what assignments could have set the value being read from the variable
- Information useful for:
  - performing constant and copy prop
  - detecting references to undefined variables
  - presenting “def/use chains” to the programmer
  - building other representations, like the DFG
- Let’s try this out on an example

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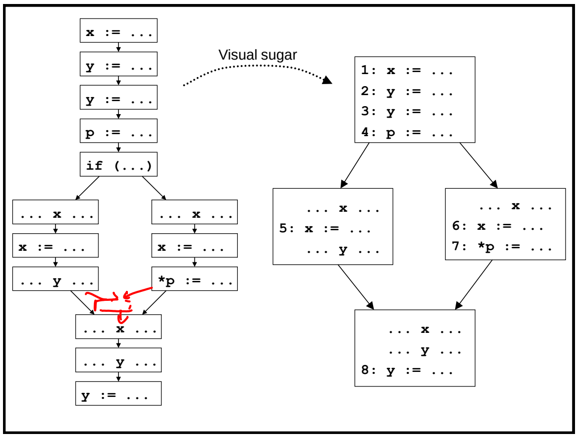

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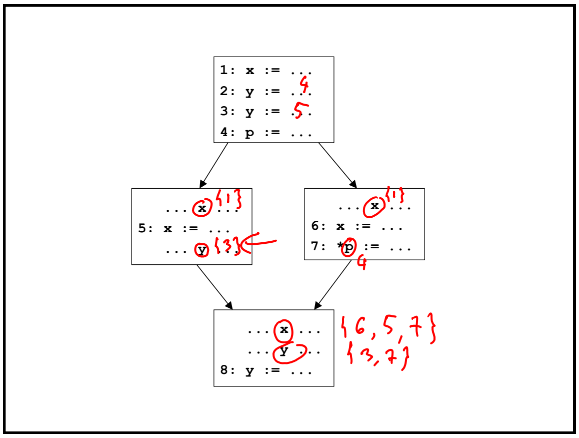

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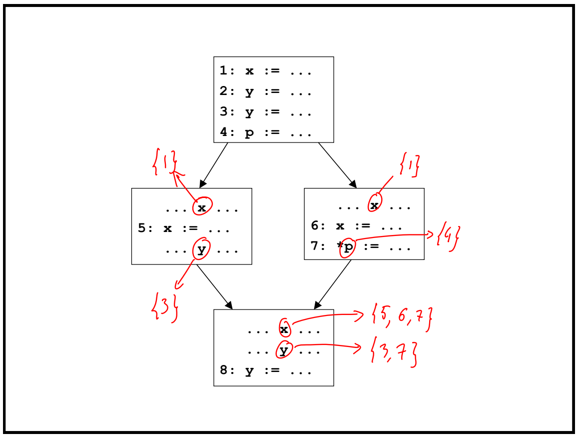

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Safety

- When is computed info safe?
- Recall intended use of this info:
  - performing constant and copy prop
  - detecting references to undefined variables
  - presenting "def/use chains" to the programmer
  - building other representations, like the DFG
- Safety:
  - can have more bindings than the "true" answer, but can't miss any

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Reaching definitions generalized

- DFA framework geared to computing information at each program point (edge) in the CFG
  - So generalize problem by stating what should be computed at each program point
- For each program point in the CFG, compute the set of definitions (statements) that may reach that point
- Notion of safety remains the same

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Reaching definitions generalized

- Computed information at a program point is a set of var → stmt bindings
  - eg: $\{ x \rightarrow s_1, x \rightarrow s_2, y \rightarrow s_3 \}$
- How do we get the previous info we wanted?
  - if a var *x* is used in a stmt whose incoming info is *in*, then:

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Reaching definitions generalized

- Computed information at a program point is a set of var → stmt bindings
  - eg: { x → s_1, x → s_2, y → s_3 }
- How do we get the previous info we wanted?
  - if a var *x* is used in a stmt whose incoming info is *in*, then: { *s* | (*x* → *s*) ∈ *in* }
- This is a common pattern
  - generalize the problem to define what information should be computed at each program point
  - use the computed information at the program points to get the original info we wanted

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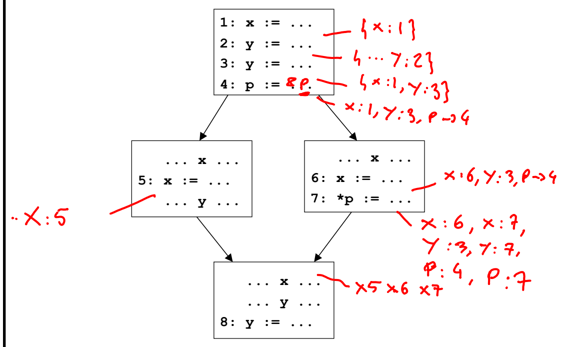

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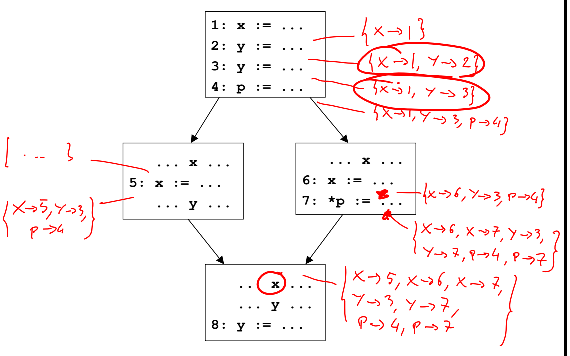

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Using constraints to formalize DFA

- Now that we've gone through some examples, let's try to precisely express the algorithms for computing dataflow information
- We'll model DFA as solving a system of constraints
- Each node in the CFG will impose constraints relating information at predecessor and successor points
- Solution to constraints is result of analysis

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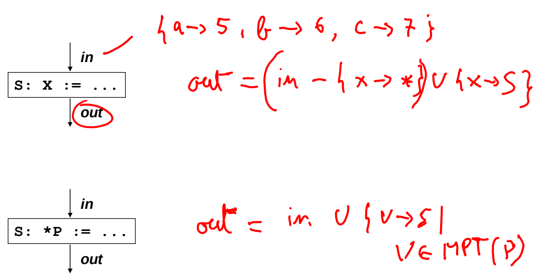
Constraints for reaching definitions



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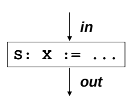
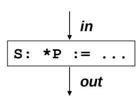
Constraints for reaching definitions



out = in – { X → S' | S' ∈ stmts } ∪ { X → S }



- Using may-point-to information:

  out = in ∪ { X → S | X ∈ may-point-to(P) }

- Using must-point-to aswell:

  out = in – { X → S' | X ∈ must-point-to(P) ∧ S' ∈ stmts }
  ∪ { X → S | X ∈ may-point-to(P) }

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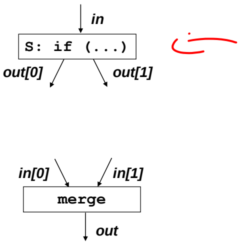
Constraints for reaching definitions



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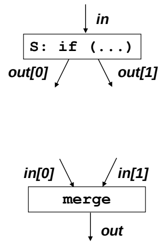
Constraints for reaching definitions



out [0] = *in* ∧
out [1] = *in*

more generally: $\forall\, i$. *out* [*i*] = *in*

out = *in* [0] ∪ *in* [1]

more generally: *out* = $\bigcup_i$ *in* [*i*]

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Flow functions

- The constraint for a statement kind s often have the form: out = F_s(in)
- F_s is called a flow function
  - other names for it: dataflow function, transfer function
- Given information *in* before statement s, F_s(*in*) returns information after statement s
- Other formulations have the statement s as an explicit parameter to F: given a statement *s* and some information *in*, F(*s*,*in*) returns the outgoing information after statement s

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Flow functions, some issues

- Issue: what does one do when there are multiple input edges to a node?
- Issue: what does one do when there are multiple outgoing edges to a node?

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Flow functions, some issues

- Issue: what does one do when there are multiple input edges to a node?
  - the flow functions takes as input a tuple of values, one value for each incoming edge
- Issue: what does one do when there are multiple outgoing edges to a node?
  - the flow function returns a tuple of values, one value for each outgoing edge
  - can also have one flow function per outgoing edge

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Flow functions

- Flow functions are a central component of a dataflow analysis
- They state constraints on the information flowing into and out of a statement
- This version of the flow functions is local
  - it applies to a particular statement kind
  - we'll see global flow functions shortly...

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Summary of flow functions

- Flow functions: Given information *in* before statement s, $F_s(in)$ returns information after statement s
- Flow functions are a central component of a dataflow analysis
- They state constraints on the information flowing into and out of a statement

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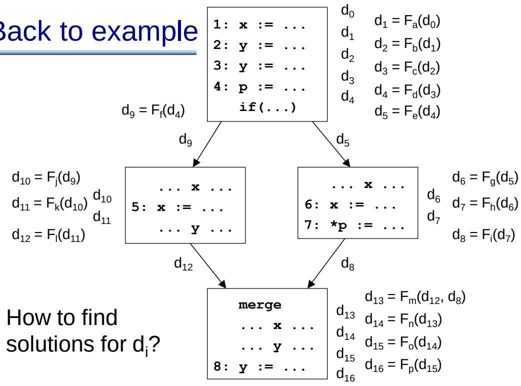
Back to example



How to find solutions for d_i?

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How to find solutions for d_i?

- This is a forward problem
  - given information flowing ***in*** to a node, can determine using the flow function the info flow ***out*** of the node
- To solve, simply propagate information forward through the control flow graph, using the flow functions
- What are the problems with this approach?

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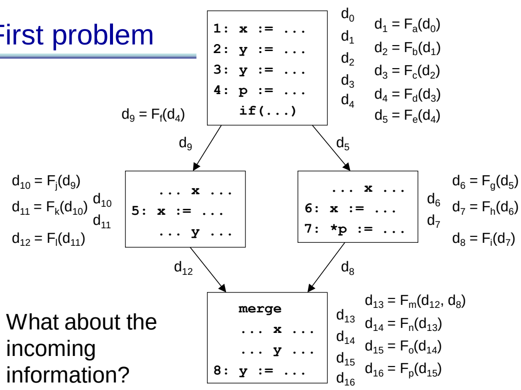
First problem



What about the incoming information?

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First problem

- What about the incoming information?
  - d_0 is not constrained
  - so where do we start?
- Need to constrain d_0
- Two options:
  - explicitly state entry information
  - have an entry node whose flow function sets the information on entry (doesn't matter if entry node has an incoming edge, its flow function ignores any input)

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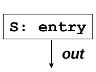
Entry node



out = $\{ X \to S \mid X \in \text{Formals} \}$

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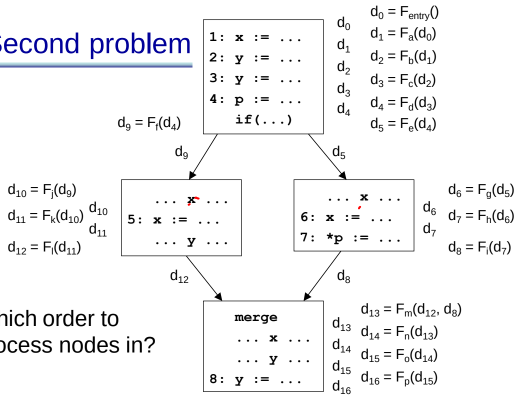
Second problem



Which order to process nodes in?

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Second problem

- Which order to process nodes in?
- Sort nodes in topological order
  - each node appears in the order after all of its predecessors
- Just run the flow functions for each of the nodes in the topological order
- What's the problem now?

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Second problem, prime

- When there are loops, there is no topological order!
- What to do?
- Let's try and see what we can do

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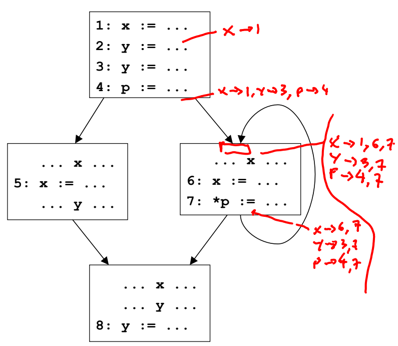

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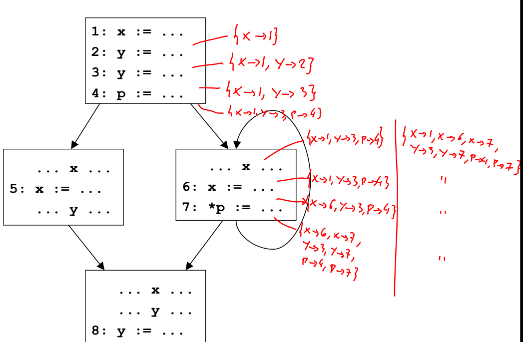

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Worklist algorithm

- Initialize all d_i to the empty set
- Store all nodes onto a worklist
- while worklist is not empty:
  - remove node n from worklist
  - apply flow function for node n
  - update the appropriate d_i, and add nodes whose inputs have changed back onto worklist

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Worklist algorithm

```
let m: map from edge to computed value at edge
let worklist: work list of nodes

for each edge e in CFG do
   m(e) := ∅

for each node n do
   worklist.add(n)

while (worklist.empty.not) do
   let n := worklist.remove_any;
   let info_in := m(n.incoming_edges);
   let info_out := F(n, info_in);
   for i := 0 .. info_out.length-1 do
      if (m(n.outgoing_edges[i]) ≠ info_out[i])
         m(n.outgoing_edges[i]) := info_out[i];
         worklist.add(n.outgoing_edges[i].dst);
```

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Issues with worklist algorithm

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Two issues with worklist algorithm

- Ordering
  - In what order should the original nodes be added to the worklist?
  - What order should nodes be removed from the worklist?
- Does this algorithm terminate?

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Order of nodes

- Topological order assuming back-edges have been removed
- Reverse depth-first post-order
- Use an ordered worklist

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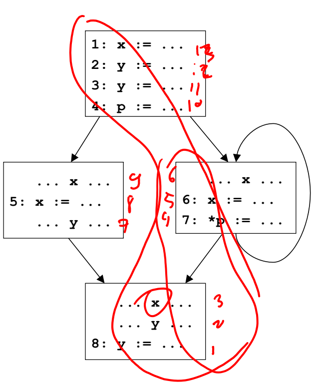

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Termination

- Why is termination important?
- Can we stop the algorithm in the middle and just say we're done...
- No: we need to run it to completion, otherwise the results are not safe...

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Termination

- Assuming we're doing reaching defs, let's try to guarantee that the worklist loop terminates, regardless of what the flow function F does

```
while (worklist.empty.not) do
   let n := worklist.remove_any;
   let info_in := m(n.incoming_edges);
   let info_out := F(n, info_in);
   for i := 0 .. info_out.length-1 do
      if (m(n.outgoing_edges[i]) ≠ info_out[i])
         m(n.outgoing_edges[i]) := info_out[i];
         worklist.add(n.outgoing_edges[i].dst);
```

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Termination

- Assuming we're doing reaching defs, let's try to guarantee that the worklist loop terminates, regardless of what the flow function F does

```
while (worklist.empty.not) do
   let n := worklist.remove_any;
   let info_in := m(n.incoming_edges);
   let info_out := F(n, info_in);
   for i := 0 .. info_out.length-1 do
      let new_info := m(n.outgoing_edges[i]) ∪
                      info_out[i];
      if (m(n.outgoing_edges[i]) ≠ new_info])
         m(n.outgoing_edges[i]) := new_info;
         worklist.add(n.outgoing_edges[i].dst);
```

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Structure of the domain

- We're using the structure of the domain outside of the flow functions
- In general, it's useful to have a framework that formalizes this structure
- We will use lattices

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