

# Locating Software Faults Based on Control Flow and Data Dependence

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**Abstract**—Debugging software is a difficult and time-consuming work. Fault localization techniques are becoming extremely important. Coverage Based Fault Localization (CBFL) is very commonly used in fault location technique. Tarantula is a typical one. It uses the coverage statistics of failed execution paths and passed execution paths to calculate the suspiciousness in the software. However, since this technique ignores the data dependency, it is hard to find the bugs which are not in the suspicious code area but have data dependence with it. In order to improve the efficiency of fault locating, we combine control flow coverage information and data dependence from program slicing. We validate our approach experimentally using Siemens benchmark programs. The experimental results show that our approach is more effective than Tarantula.

**Index Terms**—Fault location, Control flow, Program slicing, Data dependence

## I. INTRODUCTION

As the scope and complexity of software become increasingly tremendous, it is an increasingly challenging task to locate software faults. Debugging is the main method to locate fault in software, however, it is time-consuming [1]. At present program slicing and program spectrum-based methods are currently the main fault location techniques. Mark Weiser recommended program slicing of error variable to exclude uncorrelated statements [2]. Program slicing is a well-known analysis technique that extracts all statements that affect variables of interest in the program [3][4][5][6]. An execution slice-based technique as reported in [7] can be effective in locating the faults. Coverage based fault location (CBFL) techniques [8][9][10][11][12] (such as Tarantula, SBI) have been used to support software debugging, these methods use well designed test cases to get the program coverage information, then the program spectra of passed and failed executions [13] is contrasted to calculate the suspiciousness [9] of individual program

entities. Finally, software developers check the program entities according to the statements ranking in terms of their fault suspiciousness. However, there are still some cases such as available approaches make unsatisfactory results, because the coverage statistics of program entities are calculated separately. Several studies [14][15] have put forward that such calculation ignores the propagation of infected program states among them, which may cause that located entity is not the really fault. Lei Zhao proposed a context-aware fault localization approach FP via control flow analysis [14]. Eric Wong proposed a novel approach using execution slices and inter-block data dependence to effectively locate the faults to overcome these problems [16].

In order to further improve the efficiency of fault location and decrease the rate of code inspection, we combine control flow edge coverage with data dependence based slice technique, and calculate the control flow edge suspiciousness, then rank the basic blocks in descending order of their suspiciousness. Although the bug may not be in the suspicious code area, it is likely to have relationships with those codes that have data dependence with the suspicious code area. We continue to use the data dependence to locate the fault. Finally, we conduct experiments to validate the effectiveness of our approach using benchmarks. The experiment results show that our method is more effective in locating a program bug by examining less code before finding the really faulty statement than the CBFL technique Tarantula in general.

The paper is organized as follows: In Section II we introduce a simple example with Tarantula technique. Section III discusses our method. In Section IV, we evaluate our method with experiments. Section V concludes the paper and discusses the future work.

## II. AN EXAMPLE

In this section, we take a simple example to calculate the code inspection percentage using the CBFL technique Tarantula. The program is used to calculate the addition and subtraction of two values; it has a fault in the 7th line,

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as we can see from the Fig. 1. According to past studies [2][10][17][18][19], first, we use some designed test cases to run the program and get the information whether the program will pass the test or not. We also get the coverage information of the program code lines, if a statement is covered by a test case, we will record the statement as 1, conversely record it as 0. If a statement is covered by more failed test cases, the statement is more likely to contain the fault. Next, we calculate the suspiciousness of each statement, the formula is as below:

$$suspiciousness(s) = \frac{\frac{failed(s)}{totalfailed}}{\frac{passed(s)}{totalpassed} + \frac{failed(s)}{totalfailed}}$$

The passed(s) represents the number of succeed test cases cover the statement s; failed(s) represents the number of failed test cases cover the statements; totalfailed represents the number of failed test cases; totalpassed represents the number of succeed test cases.

Then we rank them in descending order and examine the statement until the fault is found. Finally we get the percentage of code inspection; the result is about 13.3%. Next, we recommend our method though this example in the next section.

```

1  # include <stdio.h>
2  double add (int x, int y) {
3      double s=0;
4      if(x>0 && y>0) {
5          s=x+y;
6      }
7      return 2*s;//正确为 return s;
8  }
9  double sub (int x, int y) {
10     double s=0;
11     if(x-y>0) {
12         s=x-y;
13     }
14     return s;
15 }
16 double calculate (int x, int y, char op)
17 {
18     double s=0;
19     switch (op) {
20     case '+': s=add(x, y); break;
21     case '-': s=sub(x, y); break;
22     }
23     return s;
24 }
25 int main (int argc, char *args []) {
26     FILE *fp;
27     if (args [1] ==NULL) {
28         fp=stdin;
29     }
30     else {
31         fp=fopen (args [1],"r");
32     }
33     if (fp==NULL) {
34         fprintf (stout, "error\n");

```

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35     exit (0);
36 }
37 int x, y;
38 char op [10];
39 fscanf (fp,"%d", &x);
40 fscanf (fp,"%d", &y);
41 fscanf (fp,"%s", op);
42 fclose (fp);
43 double s=calculate(x, y, op [0]);
44 fprintf (stdout,"%f\n", s);
45 return 0;
46 }

```

Figure 1: The source code of program

### III. METHODOLOGY

In this section, we introduce the basic definitions and related techniques firstly, and then explain our method. Besides, we also take the above example described in Fig. 1 to illustrate the procedure of our method and compare the efficiency of fault location.

#### A. The Fault Location Based on Control Flow Edge

We first introduce some definitions, A Control Flow Graph (CFG) is an execution graph  $G = (B, E)$ ,  $B = \{b_1, b_2 \dots b_m\}$  represents the basic blocks, which are consecutive statements or expressions containing no transfer of control except at the end.  $E = \{e_1, e_2 \dots e_k\}$  represents the control flow edges that go from one block to the other. Besides, we define  $Path = \{p_1, p_2 \dots p_n\}$ ,  $e(b_i, b_j)$  represents the edge that goes from block  $b_i$  to  $b_j$ ,  $e(*, b_j)$  represents all the edges that go to  $b_j$  and  $e(b_i, *)$  represents all the edges that start from  $b_i$ .

#### B. The Fault Location Based on Program Slicing Technique

Program slicing technique is used for decomposition of a program [20]. It is one of fault location methods originally proposed by Mark Weiser [21]. A slice contains a set of statements that might influence the value of a variable  $v$  at point  $s$ , which is based on dependence analysis. Data dependence means that a variable is depended on another statement, or vice versa.

#### C. Calculate the Suspiciousness of the Basic Block

##### 1) The theory and method

We recommend the fault location technique based on control flow edge [14] according to a simple example.

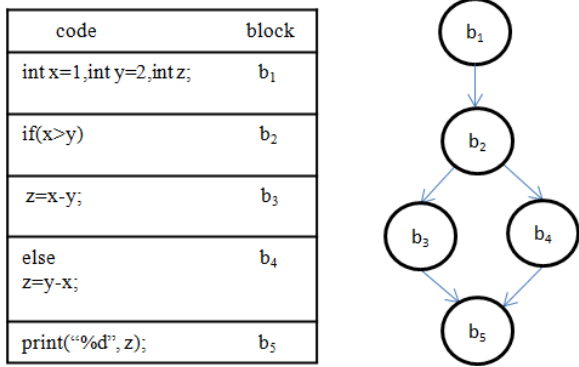


Figure 2: The program and control flow graph

This basic block is  $B = \{b_1, b_2, b_3, b_4, b_5\}$ , the control flow edge is  $E = \{e(b_1, b_2), e(b_2, b_3), e(b_2, b_4), e(b_3, b_5), e(b_4, b_5)\}$ , the execution path is  $Path = \{b_1 \rightarrow b_2 \rightarrow b_3 \rightarrow b_4, b_1 \rightarrow b_2 \rightarrow b_4 \rightarrow b_5\}$ . The formula of edge suspiciousness calculation is

$$\theta(e_i) = \frac{failed(e_i)}{passed(e_i) + failed(e_i)} \quad (1)$$

failed ( $e_i$ ) and passed ( $e_i$ ) respectively represent the number of failed executions and passed executions that cover  $e_i$ . In this example,  $prob_{in}(e(s,d))$  represents the proportion of  $\theta(e(s,d))$  to  $\theta(e(*,d))$ , that is the start suspiciousness of  $e(s,d)$ .  $prob_{out}(e(s,d))$  represents the proportion of  $\theta(e(s,d))$  to  $\theta(e(s,*))$ , it represents the destination suspiciousness of  $e(s,d)$

$$prob_{in}(e(s,d)) = \frac{\sum_{\forall e(*,d)} \times \theta(e(s,d))}{\sum_{\forall e(*,d)} [\theta(e(*,d))]} \quad (2) \quad prob_{out}(e(s,d)) = \frac{\sum_{\forall e(s,*)} \times \theta(e(s,d))}{\sum_{\forall e(s,*)} [\theta(e(s,*))]} \quad (3)$$

In this example, we suppose that all the executions that cover  $e(b_3, b_5)$  succeed and those cover  $e(b_4, b_5)$  failed. According to (1), we can calculate the proneness of  $b_4$  and  $b_5$ , which means the probability of a block containing faults.

$$prone(ss(b_4)) = prob_{in}(e(b_4, b_5)) = \frac{2 \times \theta(e(b_4, b_5))}{\theta(e(b_4, b_5)) + \theta(e(b_3, b_5))} = 2$$

$$prone(ss(b_5)) = prob_{out}(e(b_4, b_5)) = \frac{\theta(e(b_4, b_5))}{\theta(e(b_4, b_5))} = 1$$

According to the fail execution path =  $\{b_1, b_2 \dots b_n\}$ ,  $b_{i-1}$  represents the predecessor block of  $b_i$ ,  $b_{i+1}$  represents the successor block of  $b_i$ .

$$prone(ss(b_{i-1})) : prone(ss(b_i)) = \frac{prob_{in}(e(b_{i-1}, b_i))}{prob_{out}(e(b_{i-1}, b_i))}$$

Next, in this way we can get the ratio of fault proneness of blocks from  $b_1$  to  $b_n$ .

$$prone(ss(b_1)) : prone(ss(b_2)) : \dots : prone(ss(b_n)) = 1 : \frac{prob_{out}(b_1, b_2)}{prob_{in}(b_1, b_2)} : \dots : \frac{\prod_{i=1}^{i=n-1} prob_{out}(b_i, b_{i+1})}{\prod_{i=1}^{i=n-1} prob_{in}(b_i, b_{i+1})}$$

This ratio of proneness is corresponding to a failed execution, considering the entire program, we add all the fault proneness values which cover the same block, and then the sum of fault proneness represents the block suspiciousness, which is shown in below formula.

$$suspiciousness(b) = \sum (prone(ss_i(b) | failed(path_i) > 0 \& \& b \in path_i)$$

In fact, the structure of a program is often very complex when the program contains circulations, so the construction of CFG will be more complex. Lei Zhao's paper didn't mention this case especially. In our paper, we make the following treatment. 1) If the basic block occurs firstly in the execution, we calculate its suspiciousness. 2) If the basic block doesn't occur firstly in the execution, we don't make any changes for the suspiciousness.

2) The method implementation

First, we need to record the code coverage information; we use the gcov tool which GNU gcc compiler comes with to acquire the coverage information. Meanwhile we can get the .gcno file which records the basic block and arc information, though which we can construct the control flow graph. Next, we can get the execution path of a test case by the code lines coverage information combining with the code lines the basic block corresponding to. Finally we can calculate the suspiciousness of the basic block.

D. Construct the Program Slice Based on Data Dependence

We get the ranking of the suspiciousness of basic blocks according to the control flow edge coverage information, make use of variable data dependence relation and then choose the block which suspiciousness is the biggest as the slice defined as  $D^{(1)}$ .  $E_f$  and  $E_p$  respectively represent the code set that failed test cases and the succeed test cases cover,  $E_{all}$  means all code sets. Next, we examine whether  $D^{(1)}$  contains fault or not. If it does, we can locate the fault directly, if it doesn't contain the fault, we expand the code. W.Eric Wong presents an augmentation method to include additional code [16], in his method, the slice  $D^{(1)} = E_f - E_p$ ,  $\theta = E_f - D^{(1)}$ , which means the code area to examine additionally. In our paper,  $D^{(1)}$  represents the basic block which suspiciousness is the biggest. Besides, we defined  $\theta = E_{all} - D^{(1)}$ , considering more data dependency. We also define the data dependence relation as @, if and only if  $\alpha$  defines a variable  $i$  used in  $D^{(1)}$  or  $\alpha$  uses a variable  $j$  defined in  $D^{(1)}$ , that is,  $\alpha$  and  $D^{(1)}$  have the data dependence relation, which is defined as  $\alpha @ D^{(1)}$ . The process is introduced as follows:

- Step1: Define the slice  $S^{(1)}$ , which is the first code segment examined,  $S^{(1)} = \{a | a \in \theta \& (\alpha @ D^{(1)})\}$ .
- Step2: Set  $i = 1$ .
- Step3: Examine the  $S^{(i)}$  to see whether it contains the fault.
- Step4: If true, that is, the fault is located in the slice, then stop.
- Step5: Set  $i = i+1$ .
- Step6: Define the slice  $S^{(i)} = S^{(i-1)} \cup \{a | a \in \theta \& (\alpha @ S^{(i-1)})\}$ ,

$S^{(i)}$  is the code segment of the  $i$ th iteration.

Step7: If  $S^{(i)} = S^{(i-1)}$ , that is, no new code segment can be included to the slice, then stop.

Step8: Go back to Step3.

In this process, we utilize the data dependence to construct the  $S^{(i)}$ , we can see that  $S^{(1)} \subset S^{(2)} \subset S^{(3)} \dots$

By using the method described in the above part, we calculate the suspiciousness of basic block in the Fig. 1. The result is shown in TABLE I.

TABLE I  
THE SUSPICIOUSNESS OF BASIC BLOCK

Function	Basic block	Code line	Suspiciousness
main	block1	25,27	0
main	block2	28	1
main	block3	31	0
main	block4	33	0.5
main	block5	34	0
main	block6	35	0
main	block7	39	1
main	block8	40	2
main	block9	41	4
main	block10	42	8
main	block11	43	6.4
main	block12	44	12.8
main	block13	45	25.6
main	block14	virtual block	2.5
calculate	block15	16,18,19	0
calculate	block16	20	80
calculate	block17	21	0
calculate	block18	23	32
calculate	block19	virtual block	0.2
sub	block20	9,10,11	0
sub	block21	12	0
sub	block22	14	0
sub	block23	virtual block	0
add	block24	2,3,4	80
add	block25	5	160
add	block26	7	80
add	block27	virtual block	1.33

Next, we select the biggest suspiciousness of basic block as the slice  $D^{(1)}$  and examine the statements in it, as we can see in the Table II. Although the fault may not be in the suspicious code area, it is likely to have relationships with those codes that have data dependence with it. So if the bug is not in  $D^{(1)}$ , then we need to examine the additional code in  $S^{(1)}$ ,  $S^{(2)}$ , etc. Finally, we calculate the percentage of code inspection.

TABLE II  
THE SLICE  $D^{(1)}$

Function	Basic block	Code line	Code
add	block25	5 to 5	$s=x+y;$

We don't find the bug by examining the slice  $D^{(1)}$ , so we expand the code and get the slice  $S^{(1)}$  after 1th iteration, as we can see from the Table III. After examining the slice  $S^{(1)}$ , we don't find the fault still, so we continue to expand the code. The result is shown in Table IV.

We find the fault in the function add by examining the slice  $S^{(2)}$ , we locate the fault successfully after examine 5 lines code. We can calculate the percentage of code inspection, which is about 10.87%. By contrast, we use

TABLE III  
THE SLICE  $S^{(1)}$

Function	Basic block	Code line	Code
add	block25	5 to 5	$s=x+y;$
add	block24	2 to 4	int x,int y double s=0;

TABLE IV  
THE SLICE  $S^{(2)}$

Function	Basic block	Code line	Code
add	block25	5 to 5	$s=x+y;$
add	block24	2 to 4	int x,int y double s=0;

Tarantula which is the traditional fault location method based on coverage information to get the location effect. From the section II, we can know the percentage of code inspection is about 13.3% with Tarantula. By this simple example, we can see that the effect of our method is better. In order to further validate our method, we conclude a serial of experiments in next section.

TABLE V  
STATICS OF SUBJECT PROGRAMS

Program	Faulty Versions	Loc	Test Cases
print_tokens	7	472	4056
print_tokens2	10	399	4071
replace	32	512	5542
schedule	9	292	2650
schedule2	10	301	2680
tcas	41	141	1578
tot_info	23	440	1054

#### IV. THE EXPERIMENTAL EVALUATION

In this section we conduct the experiments to evaluate the effect of our method.

##### A. Experimental Setup

In this study, we use the Siemens suite [22] as the subject programs, which is the most common test suite used to evaluate the effect of fault localization techniques. An overall description of Siemens suite is presented in Table V. Take the print\_tokens for example, it has seven faulty versions, and each of them has exactly one fault. The line of codes are 472, the number of test cases are 4056. There are 132 faulty versions of the seven subject programs in total. We select Tarantula [17] which is a typical CBFL technique to compare with our method. In our experiments, we all select 115 faulty versions to conduct the experiments in accordance with the paper. We only consider the single error in this experiment, so we exclude the version1 of "pint\_tokens", versions2 and 7, version21 of "replace", version3, 10, 11, 15, 31, 32, 33 and 40 of "tcas". The errors in version4 and 6 of "print\_tokens" occur only in the header files, we also exclude them. Version 10 of "print\_tokens2", version9 of "schedule2" and version 32 of "replace" have no test cases fail, so they are not considered by our experiments. We could collect the coverage information. The experiment environment we use is Ubuntu 12.04 and the

compiler is gcc4.6.1, we use gcov to collect the coverage information.

*B. Evaluation Metric*

At present, the evaluation metric of fault location adopted frequently is the score method represented by Jones [17]. In this paper we also use the score as the evaluation metric, which means the percentage of statements have to be examined until the fault is found. First, we calculate the suspiciousness of the basic block and rank them in a descending order. Code with a higher suspiciousness should be examined before that with a lower suspiciousness. The score is defined that  $(s / S) * 100\%$ ,  $s$  represents the number of statements we should examine until finding the fault and  $S$  represents the number of executable statements. In our experiments, considering that the codes we need to examine contain executed and partial non-executed statements,  $S$  represents the size of program.

*C. The Result Analysis*

We denote our method based on control flow and data dependence by CFDD. In this experiment, we select the CBFL technique such as Tarantula to compare with our method CFDD. As we can see from the Fig. 3, the x-axis represents the serial numbers of faults, and we select a part of fault numbers which is 115 in total, which reflects the overall condition. The partial fault numbers is shown in the following figure. The y-axis indicates the percentage of code that need to be examined to locate a fault, i.e the percentage of code inspection. If the length of the bar is longer, the corresponding fault location technique is less effective. For example, when the serial numbers of faults is 2, the percentage of code inspection is about 21% with the Tarantula method while our method is about 12.4%, which represents that CFDD is more effective clearly. By the Fig. 3, we can also find that the CFDD does not always perform well for every fault; sometimes the code inspection is a little higher than Tarantula technique.

In order to illustrate the issue, we calculate the average code inspection percentage on the seven programs of the Siemens suite. It is shown in the Table VI. As we can see from the Table VI, CFDD method performs better than Tarantula on most of the seven programs, while the effect of CFDD is lower than Tarantula on two versions. By analyzing the experiment results, we find that when the code inspection percentage is low with Tarantula, our method performs slightly worse than Tarantula. We can also find similar phenomenon mentioned in Lei Zhao’s paper. If fault location is the place where the failures

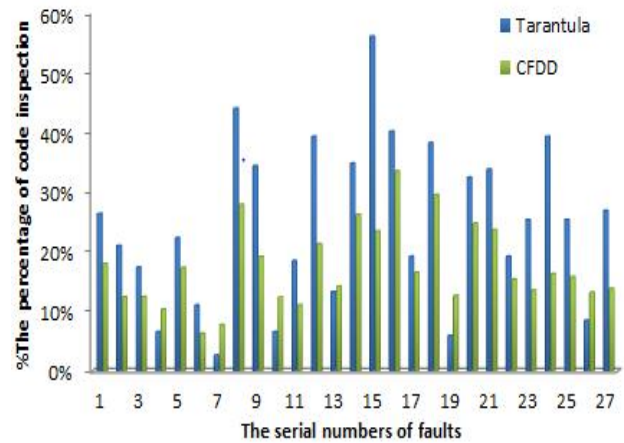


Figure 3: The comparison of code inspection percentage among Tarantula and our method

TABLE VI  
THE COMPARISON OF CODE INSPECTION PERCENTAGE BETWEEN TARANTULA AND OUR METHOD ON THE SIEMENS SUITE

version		print_tokens	print_tokens2	replace	schedule	schedule2	tcas	totalinfo
Average	Tarantula	12.6	34.9	12.4	29.8	36.5	38.8	41.6
	CFDD	14.3	28.6	16.2	24.3	31.3	24.5	26.6

occur, and then the Tarantula is skilful in locating this type of errors. When the code inspection percentage with Tarantula technique is high, our method tends to perform better. Because our method is based on the control flow coverage information, it is good at locating some complex faults that appear in branch condition. Our method is also based on data dependence; it can locate the type of error such as the variable definition and the missing code line. In Fig. 4, we illustrate the cumulative distribution of effectiveness scores per analysis method where the x-axis indicates the percentage of code that needs to be examined. The y-axis represents the percentage of the fault version that fault has been located account for all the fault versions. For example, if the value of horizontal axis is 30, the responding value of y-axis is 71.3, which means if we examine 30% code, we can find the errors of 71.3% fault versions. From the Fig. 4 we can find that although our method does not perform well in all types of faults, our method is very promising in the fault location. When the code inspection percentage is above 15% approximately, our method can examine more faulty versions than Tarantula technique. We consider the past studies, such as the FP method based on control flow analysis, Lei Zhao combines the FP with Tarantula, first uses the Tarantula technique to locate errors, if the error is not found until the percentage of code inspection is up to some value, use the FP instead. The results show that it is more effective clearly.

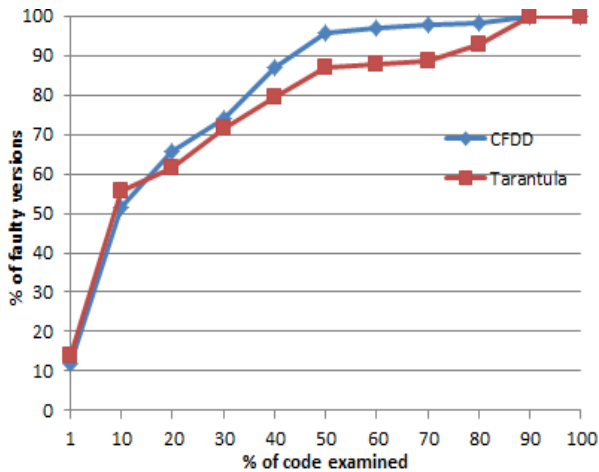


Figure 4: Cumulative comparison with Tarantula on the Siemens suite

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

In this paper, we introduce the fault location technique based on control flow information and data dependency. We use the control flow paths to analyze the program and calculate the block suspiciousness, then we use variable data dependence relation to choose the biggest suspicious block, then increase the search domain to locate the really fault. Finally, we calculate the percentage of code inspection. Experimental results show that our approach could find bugs with lower code inspection by programmers. Our method performs better than the Tarantula.

In the future, we plan to study what effect different types of faults and different test cases have on our fault location method. We are also trying to integrating with Tarantula further and see if we can get better results. Besides, the program in Siemens suite only contains one error, what if the program contains multiple faults; this problem is worthy to study further.

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