

Cross-checking Semantic Correctness: The Case of Finding File System Bugs

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Two promising approaches to make bug-free software

- Formal proof → require “proof”
 - Guarantee high-level invariants (e.g., functional correctness)
- Model checking → require “model”
 - Check if code fits with domain model (e.g., locking rules)

Two promising approaches to make bug-free software

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 - Guarantee high-level invariants (e.g., functional correctness)
- Model checking → require “model”
 - Check if code fits with domain model (e.g., locking rules)

In practice, many software are (already) built without such theories

There exist many similar implementations of a program

- File systems: >50 implementations in Linux
- JavaScript: ECMAScript, V8, SpiderMonkey, etc
- POSIX C Library: Gnu Libc, FreeBSD, eLibc, etc

**Without proof or model,
can we leverage
these existing implementations?**

There exist many similar implementations of a program

- File systems: >50 implementations in Linux
- JavaScript: ECMAScript, V8, SpiderMonkey, etc
- POSIX C Library: Gnu Libc, FreeBSD, eLibc, etc

**Without proof or model,
can we leverage
these existing implementations?**

File system bugs are critical



Ubuntu
linux package

2013-01-07

Overview Code **Bugs** Blueprints Translations Answers

Risk of filesystem corruption with ext3 in lucid

Bug #1097042 reported by lemonsqueeze on 2013-01-07

This bug affects 1 person

Affects	Status	Importance	Assigned to
linux (Ubuntu)	Expired	Medium	Unassigned

Also affects project Also affects distribution/package Nominate for series

Bug Description

On my system, a default ext3 mount (no fstab entry) results in:

```
$ cat /proc/mounts
/dev/sda6 /media/space ext3 rw,nosuid,nodev,relatime,errors=continue,
user_xattr,acl,data=ordered 0 0
```

We can see the "barrier=1" option is missing by default, which can cause severe filesystem corruption in case of power failure (i've been hit recently). Quoting mount(1):

File system bugs are critical



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Overview Code **Bugs** Blueprints Translations Answers

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Bug #1097042 report

This bug affects 1



Ubuntu
linux package

2014-10-17

Overview Code **Bugs** Blueprints Translations Answers

Affects

▶ linux (U

+ Also affects pr

Bug Descripti

On my syste
\$ cat /proc
/dev/sda6 /
user_xattr,

We can see
severe file
recently).

XFS: memory allocation deadlock in kmem_alloc (mode:0x8250)

Bug #1382333 reported by Rafael David Tinoco on 2014-10-17

This bug affects 3 people

Affects	Status	Importance	Assigned to	Milestone
▶ linux (Ubuntu)	Fix Released	Undecided	Unassigned	
▶ Trusty	Fix Released	Undecided	Rafael David Tinoco	
▶ Utopic	Fix Released	Undecided	Unassigned	

+ Also affects project ? + Also affects distribution/package Nominate for series

Bug Description

=== SRU Justification ===

Impact: xfs can hang on lack of contiguous memory page to be allocated.

Fix: upstream patch (b3f03bac8132207a20286d5602eda64500c19724).

Testcase:

- buddyinfo showing lack of contiguous blocks to be allocated (fragmented memory)

File system bugs are critical



Ubuntu
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Bug Descripti

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Bug Descrip

=== SRU J

Impact: x

Fix: upst

Testcase:

- buddy
memory)

Bug #1382333 rep

This bug affects

phoronix

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[X]

2015-03-19

The Linux 4.0 Kernel Currently Has An EXT4 Corruption Issue

Written by [Michael Larabel](#) in [Linux Kernel](#) on 19 May 2015 at 08:34 PM EDT. [45 Comments](#)

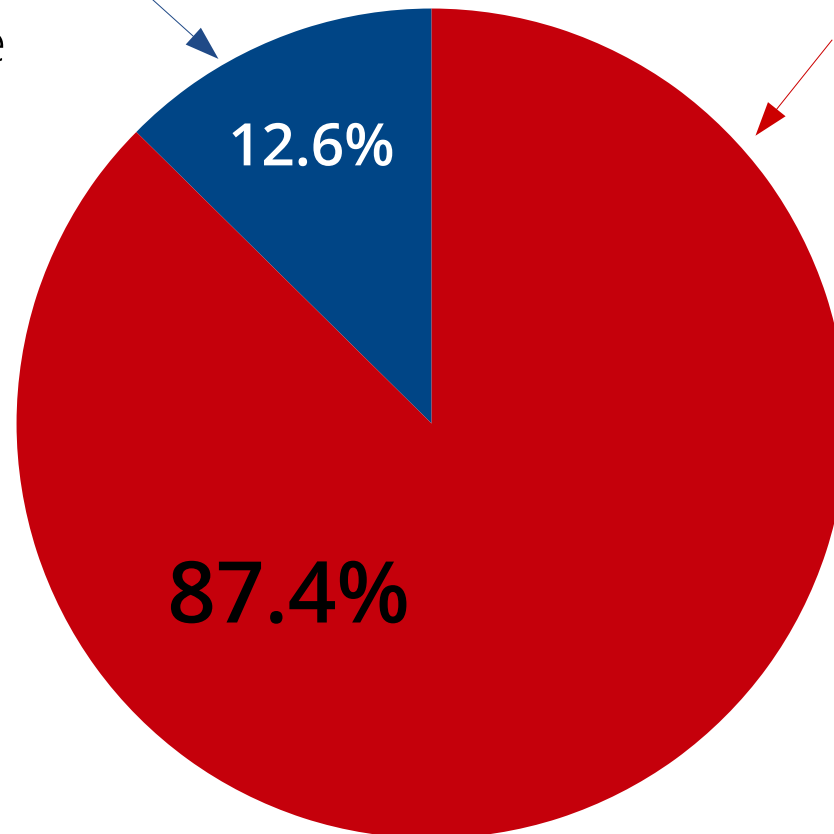


It appears that the current Linux 4.0.x kernel is plagued by an EXT4 file-system corruption issue. If there's any positive note out of the situation, it seems to mostly affect EXT4 Linux RAID users.

A majority of bugs in file systems are hard to detect

Memory bugs:

NULL dereference
Use-after-free
...



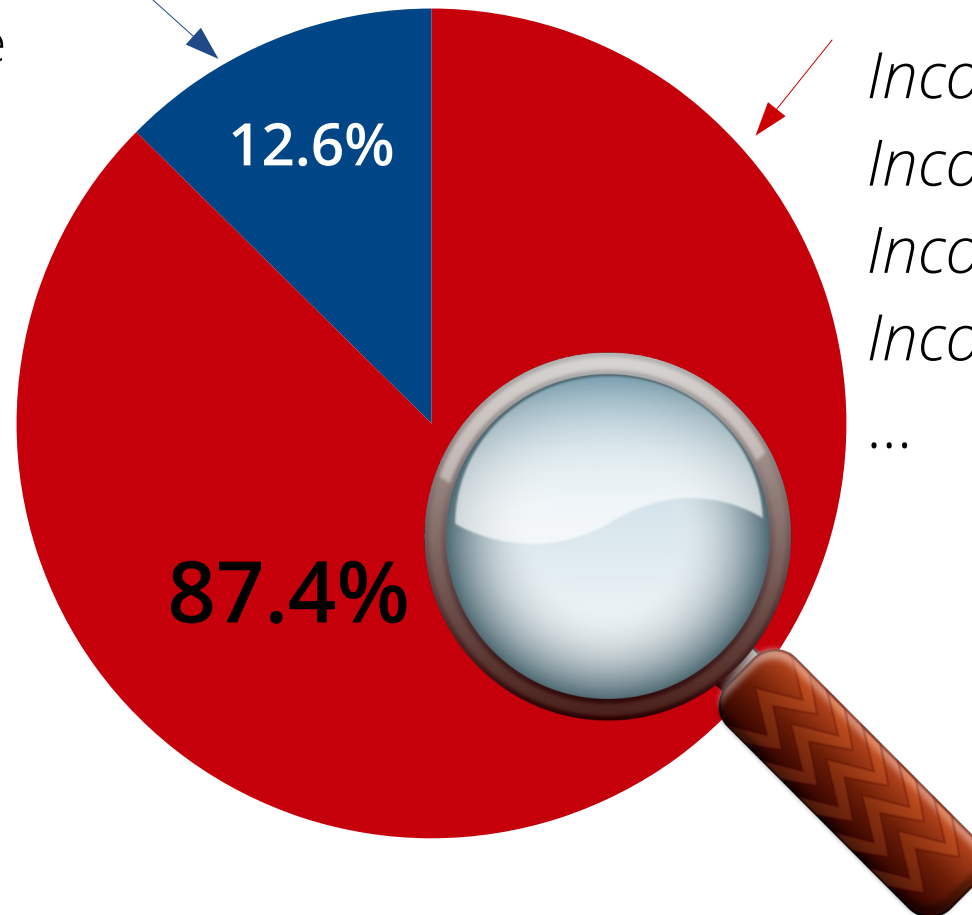
Semantic bugs:

Incorrect condition check
Incorrect statue update
Incorrect argument
Incorrect error code
...

A majority of bugs in file systems are hard to detect

Memory bugs:

NULL dereference
Use-after-free
...



Semantic bugs:

Incorrect condition check
Incorrect statue update
Incorrect argument
Incorrect error code
...

Example of semantic bug: Missing capability check in OCFS2

ocfs2: trusted xattr missing CAP_SYS_ADMIN check

Signed-off-by: Sanidhya Kashyap <sanidhya@gatech.edu>

...

@@ static size_t **ocfs2_xattr_trusted_list**

```
+  if (!capable(CAP_SYS_ADMIN))  
+      return 0;
```

Example of semantic bug: Missing capability check in OCFS2

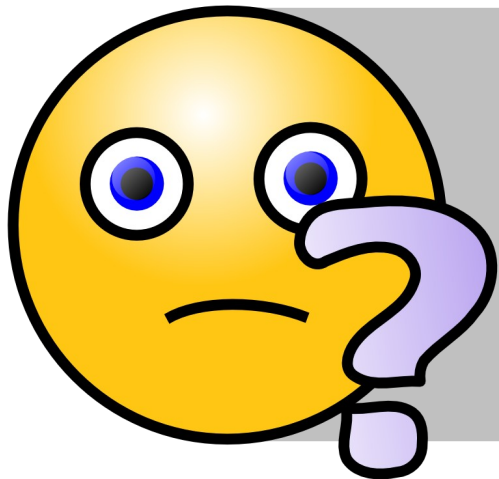
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Can we find this bug
by leveraging
other implementations?

A majority of file system already implemented capability check

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...

@@ static size_t **ocfs2_xattr_trusted_list**

```
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- **ext2**

```
static size_t ext2_xattr_trusted_list()  
    if (!capable(CAP_SYS_ADMIN))  
        return 0;
```

- **ext4**

```
static size_t ext4_xattr_trusted_list()  
    if (!capable(CAP_SYS_ADMIN))  
        return 0;
```

- **XFS**

```
static size_t xfs_xattr_put_listent()  
    if ((flags & XFS_ATTR_ROOT) &&  
        !capable(CAP_SYS_ADMIN))  
        return 0;
```

...

A majority of file system already implemented capability check

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...

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**Deviant implementation
→ potential bugs?**

- **ext2**

```
static size_t ext2_xattr_trusted_list()  
    if (!capable(CAP_SYS_ADMIN))  
        return 0;
```

- **ext4**

```
static size_t ext4_xattr_trusted_list()  
    if (!capable(CAP_SYS_ADMIN))  
        return 0;
```

- **XFS**

```
static size_t xfs_xattr_put_listent()  
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```
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```

Deviant implementation
→ potential bugs?

A new bug we found
It has been hidden for 6 years

- **ext2**

```
static size_t ext2_xattr_trusted_list()  
    if (!capable(CAP_SYS_ADMIN))  
        return 0;
```

- **ext4**

```
static size_t ext4_xattr_trusted_list()  
    if (!capable(CAP_SYS_ADMIN))  
        return 0;
```

- **XFS**

```
static size_t xfs_xattr_put_listent()  
    if ((flags & XFS_ATTR_ROOT) &&  
        !capable(CAP_SYS_ADMIN))  
        return 0;
```

...

Case study: Write a page

- Each file system defines how to write a page
- Semantic of writepage()
 - Success → return locked page
 - Failure → return unlocked page
- Document/filesystems/vfs.txt specifies such rule
 - Hard to detect without domain knowledge

**What if 99% file systems follow above pattern,
but not one file system? bug?**

Our approach can reveal such bugs without domain specific knowledge

- 52 file systems follow the locking rules
- But 2 file systems don't (Ceph and AFFS)

----- **fs/ceph/addr.c** -----

index fd5599d..e723482 100644

@@ static int **ceph_write_begin**

```
+   if (r < 0)
+       page_cache_release(page);
+   else
+       *pagep = page;
```

Our approach can reveal such bugs without domain specific knowledge

- 52 file systems follow the locking rules
- But 2 file systems don't (Ceph and AFFS)

----- fs/ceph/addr.c -----

index fd5599d..e723482 100644

@@ static int **ceph_write_begin**

```
+   if (r < 0)
+       page_cache_release(page);
+   else
+       *pagep = page;
```

**We found 3 bugs in 2 file systems
Hidden for over 5 years**

Our approach in finding bugs



Intuition:

Bugs are rare

Majority of implementations is correct



Idea:

Find deviant ones as potential bugs

Our approach is promising in finding semantic bugs (Example: file systems)

- New semantics bugs
 - 118 new bugs in 54 file systems
- Critical bugs
 - System crash, data corruption, deadlock, etc
- Bugs difficult to find
 - Bugs were hidden for 6.2 years on average
- Various kinds of bugs
 - Condition check, argument use, return value, locking, etc

Technical challenges

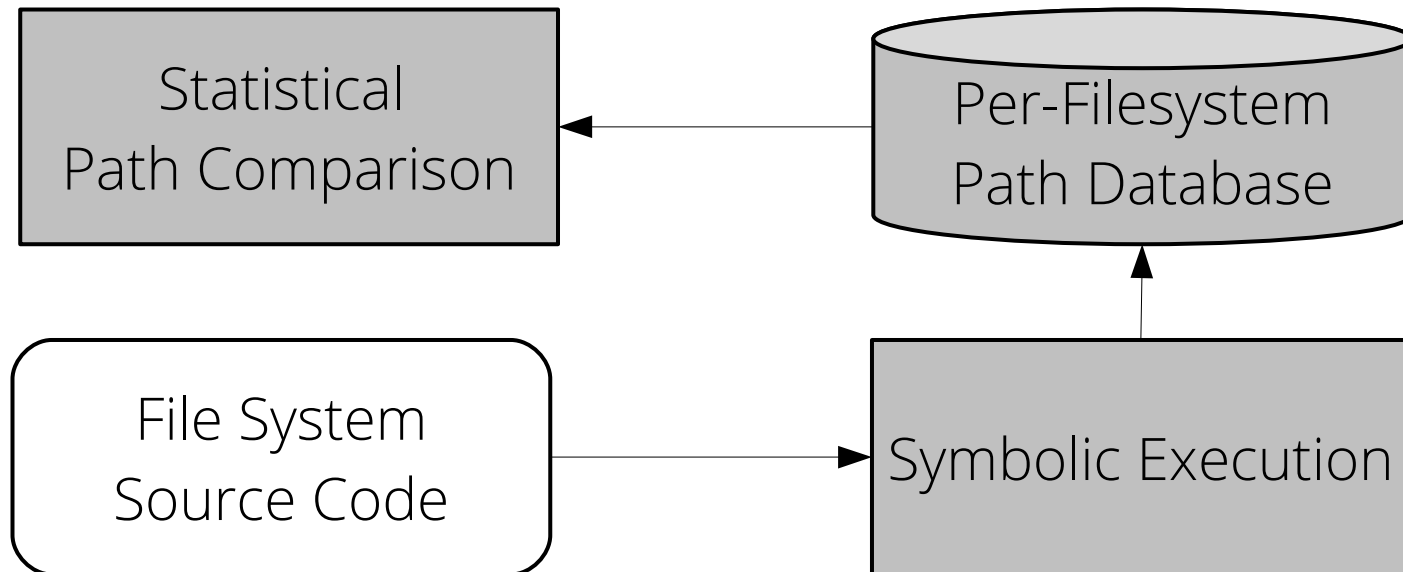
- All software are different one way or another
 - e.g., disk layout in file system
- How to compare different implementation?
 - **Q1:** Where to start?
 - **Q2:** What to compare?
 - **Q3:** How to compare?

Juxta: the case of file system

- All file systems should follow VFS API in Linux
 - e.g., `vfs_rename()` in each file system
- How to compare different file systems?
 - **Q1:** Where to start? → VFS entries in file system
 - **Q2:** What to compare? → symbolic environment
 - **Q3:** How to compare? → statistical comparison

Juxta overview

Juxta



Juxta overview

7 Checkers

Path Condition
Checker

Argument
Checker

...

Juxta

Statistical
Path Comparison

Per-Filesystem
Path Database

File System
Source Code

Symbolic Execution

Comparing multiple file systems

- Q1: Where to start?
 - Identifying semantically similar entry points
- Q2: What to compare?
 - Building per-path symbolic environment
- Q3: How to compare?
 - Statistically comparing each path

Comparing multiple file systems

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Identifying semantically similar entry points

- Linux Virtual File System (VFS)
 - Use common data structures and behavior (e.g., inode and page cache)
 - Define filesystem-specific interfaces (e.g., open, rename)

Example:

inode_operations→rename()

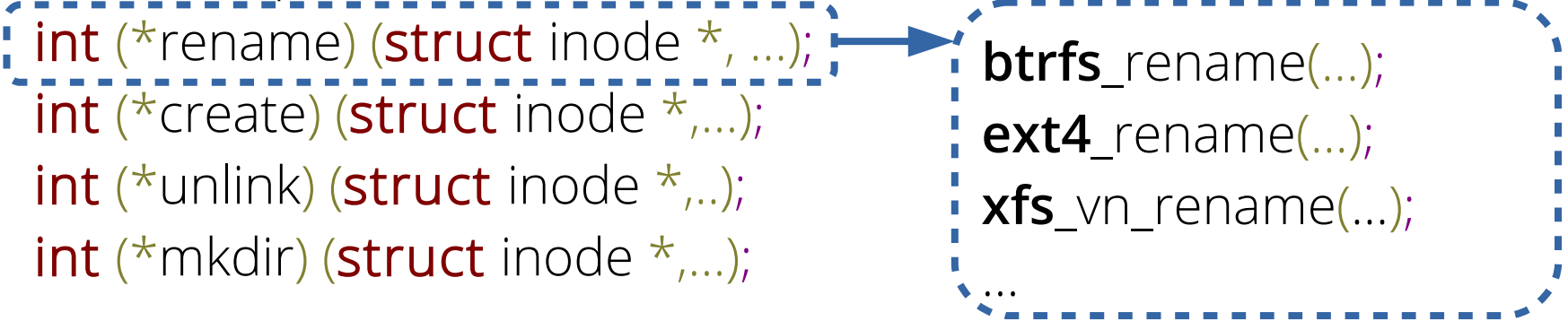
```
struct inode_operations {  
    int (*rename) (struct inode *, ...);  
    int (*create) (struct inode *,...);  
    int (*unlink) (struct inode *,..);  
    int (*mkdir) (struct inode *,...);  
};
```

Compare ***_rename()**
to find deviant **rename()** implementations.

Example:

inode_operations→rename()

```
struct inode_operations {  
    int (*rename) (struct inode *, ...);  
    int (*create) (struct inode *, ...);  
    int (*unlink) (struct inode *, ...);  
    int (*mkdir) (struct inode *, ...);  
};
```



The diagram illustrates the mapping from the `rename` pointer in the `inode_operations` struct to its implementation in the filesystem's `rename` function. A blue dashed box highlights the `int (*rename) (struct inode *, ...);` line in the struct definition. A blue arrow points from this line to a blue dashed box on the right, which contains the implementations for different filesystems: `btrfs_rename(...);`, `ext4_rename(...);`, `xfs_vn_rename(...);`, and `...`.

Compare ***_rename()**
to find deviant **rename()** implementations.

Comparing multiple file systems

- Q1: Where to start?
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Building per-path symbolic environment

- Context/flow-sensitive symbolic execution
 - C language level
 - Build symbolic environment per path
(e.g., path cond, return values, side-effect, function calls)
- Key idea: return-oriented comparison
 - Error codes represent per-path semantics
(e.g., comparing all paths returning EACCES in rename() implementations)

Example: Per-path symbolic environment

```
int foo_rename(int flag) {
    if (flag == RO)
        return -EACCES;

    inode->flag = flag;
    kmalloc(..., GFP_NOFS)
    return SUCCESS;
}
```

Execution Path Information	

Example: Per-path symbolic environment

```
int foo_rename(int flag) {  
▶ if (flag == RO)  
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inode→flag = flag;  
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Execution Path Information

Example: Per-path symbolic environment

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Execution Path Information

Condition	flag: !RO

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Execution Path Information

Condition	flag: !RO
Side-effect	inode→flag = flag

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Execution Path Information

Condition	flag: !RO
Side-effect Call	inode→flag = flag kmalloc(..., GFP_NOFS)

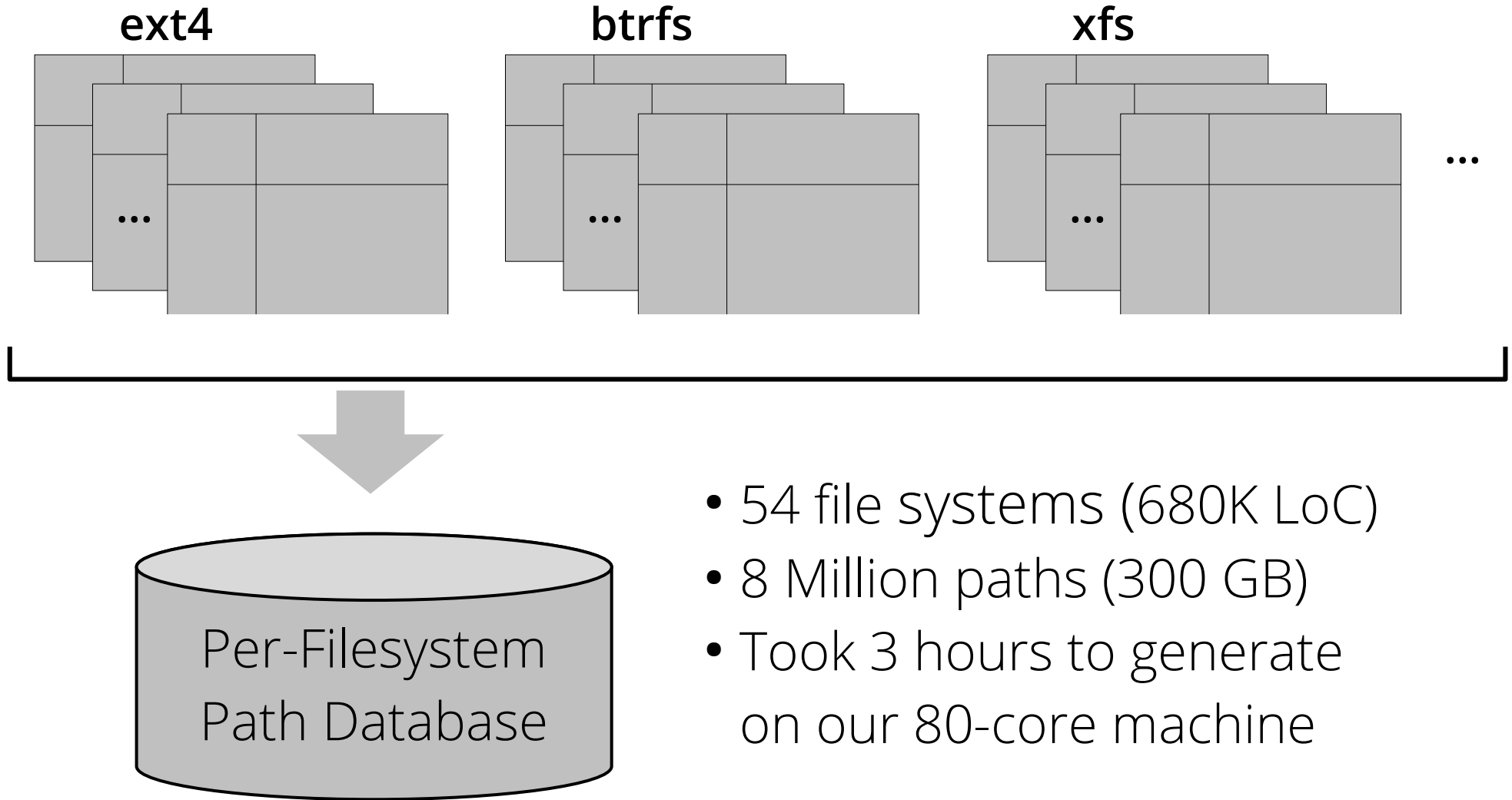
Example: Per-path symbolic environment

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}
```

Execution Path Information

Condition	flag: !RO
Side-effect	inode→flag = flag
Call	kmalloc(..., GFP_NOFS)
Return	SUCCESS

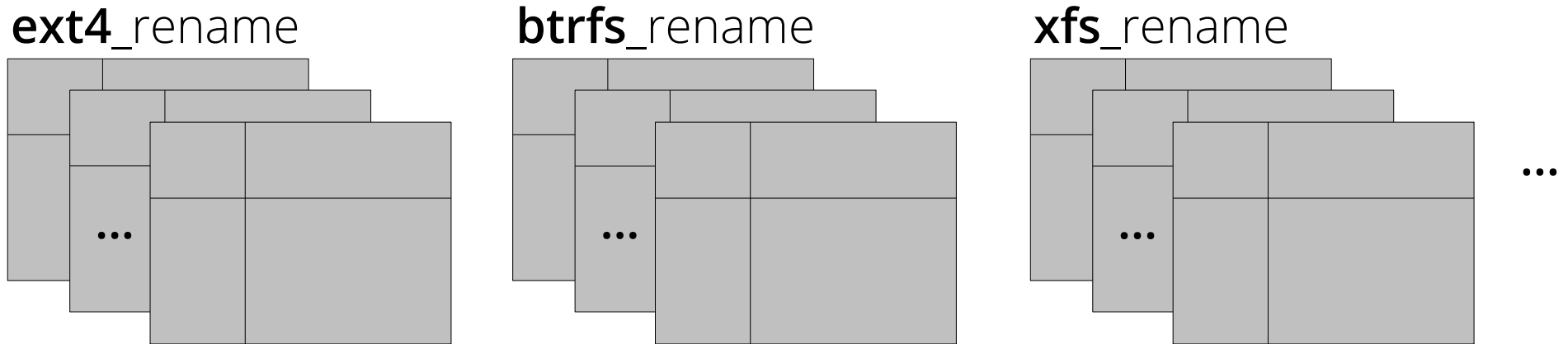
Constructing path database



Comparing multiple file systems

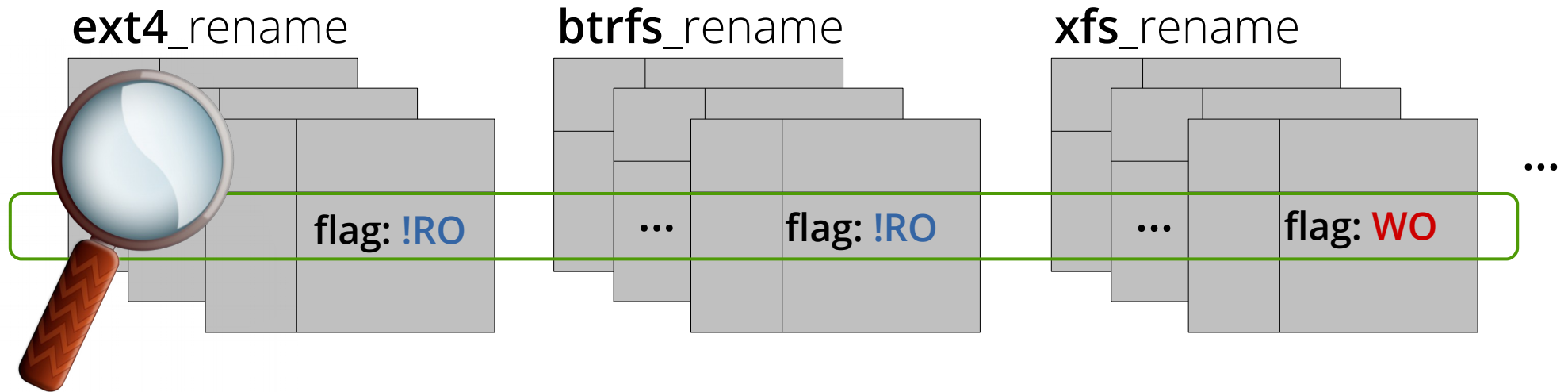
- Q1: Where to start?
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Two types of per-path symbolic data



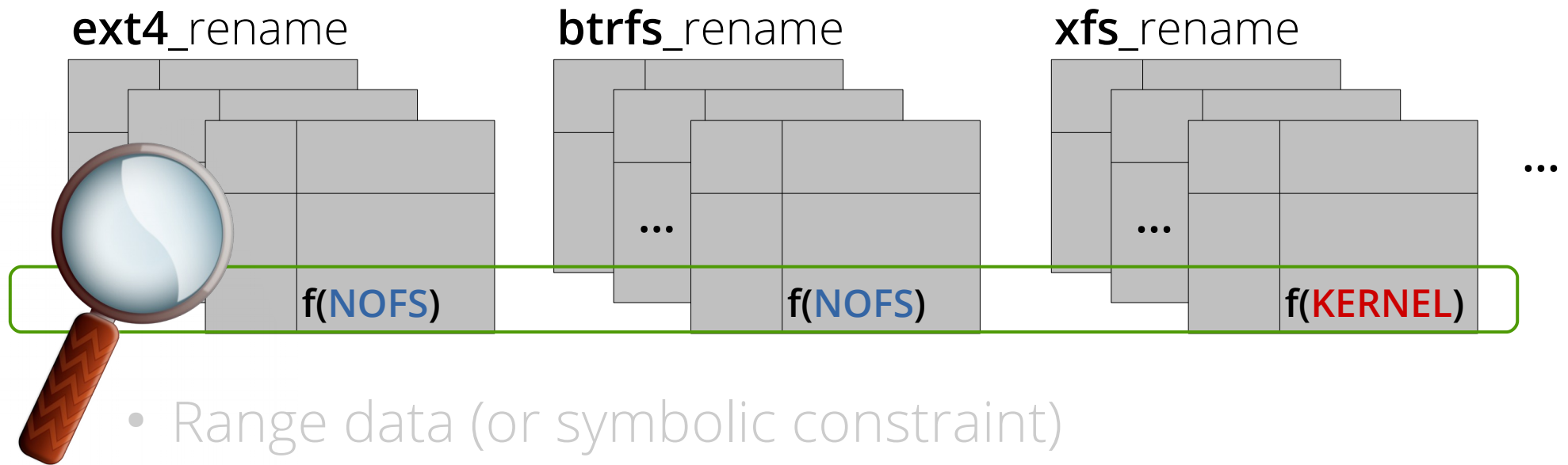
- Range data (or symbolic constraint)
 - What is the **range of argument** for this execution path?
e.g., path condition, return value, etc.
- Occurrences
 - **How many times a particular API flag** is used?
e.g., API argument usage, error handling, etc.

Two types of per-path symbolic data



- Range data (or symbolic constraint)
 - What is the **range of argument** for this execution path?
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Two types of per-path symbolic data



- Range data (or symbolic constraint)
 - What is the *range of argument* for this execution path?
e.g., path condition, return value, etc.
- Occurrences
 - **How many times a particular API flag is used?**
e.g., API argument usage, error handling, etc.

Two statistical comparison methods

- For range data → Histogram-based comparison
 - Compare range data and find deviant sub-ranges
- For occurrences → Entropy-based comparison
 - Find deviation in event occurrences

Histogram-based comparison

1. Represent range data → histogram (see our paper)
2. Build a representative histogram → average histograms
 - High rank frequently used common patterns (e.g., VFS)
 - Low rank specific implementations of file systems
3. Measure distance between histograms
 - Sum up the sizes of non-overlapping area

Example: Path condition checker

foo **int** foo_rename(flag) {
 if (flag == RO)
 return -EACCES;
 }

bar **int** bar_rename(flag) {
 if (flag == RO)
 return -EACCES;
 }

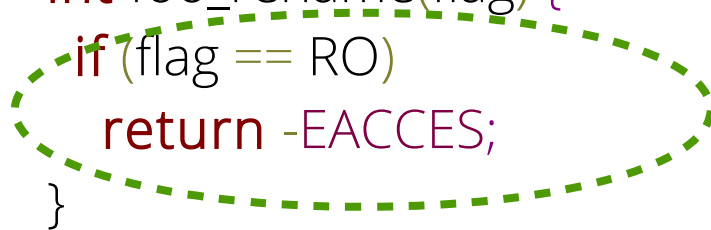
cad **int** cad_rename(flag) {
 if (flag == WO)
 return -EACCES;
 }1

Let's compare ***_rename()**
on **-EACCES** path

Example: Path condition checker

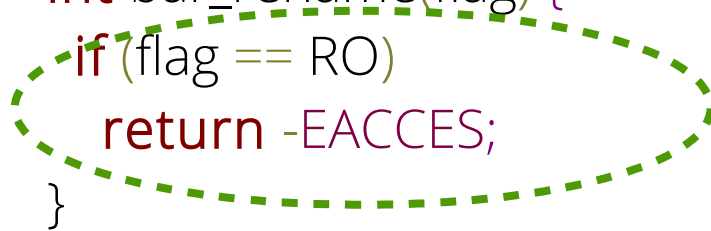
foo

```
int foo_rename(flag) {  
    if (flag == RO)  
        return -EACCES;  
}
```



bar

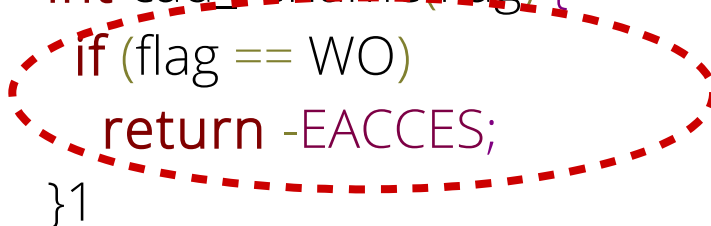
```
int bar_rename(flag) {  
    if (flag == RO)  
        return -EACCES;  
}
```



Let's compare ***_rename()**
on **-EACCES** path

cad

```
int cad_rename(flag) {  
    if (flag == WO)  
        return -EACCES;  
}1
```



Represent range data → histogram

foo

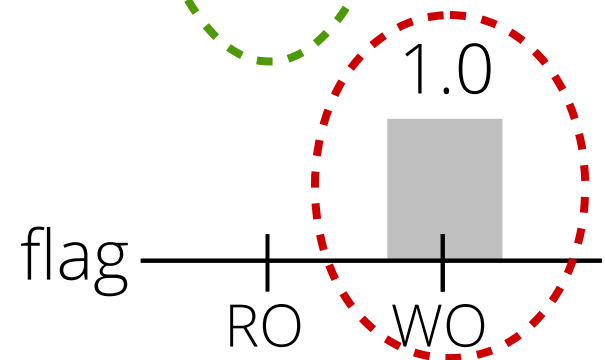
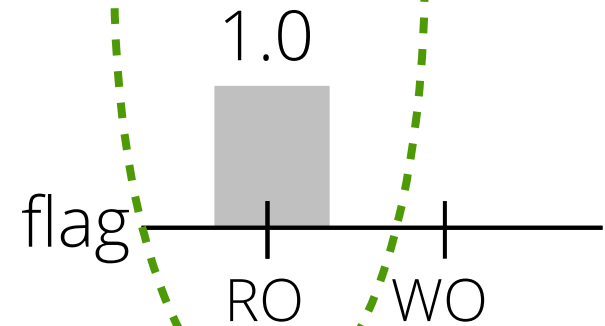
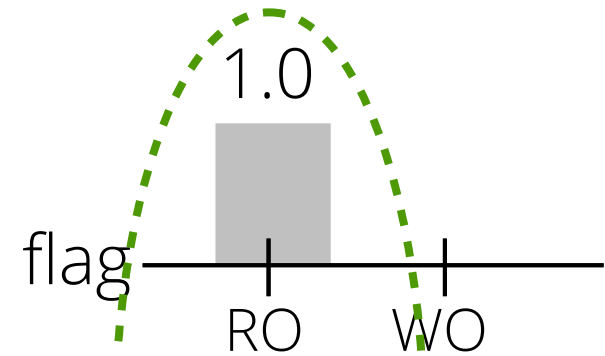
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int foo_rename(flag) {  
    if (flag == RO)  
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}
```

bar

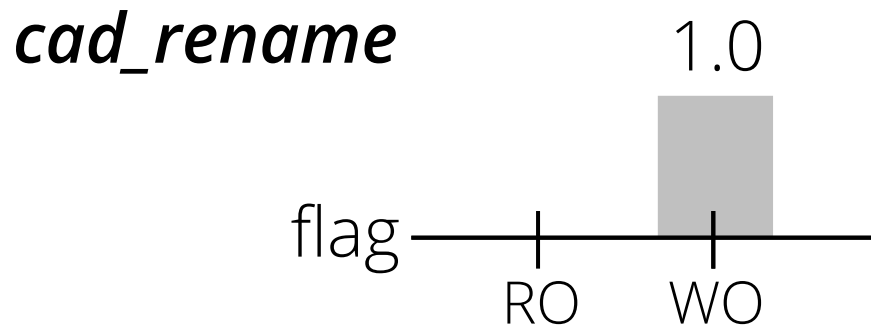
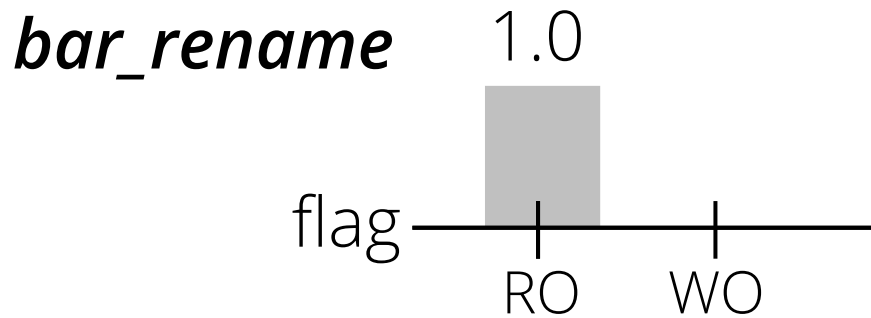
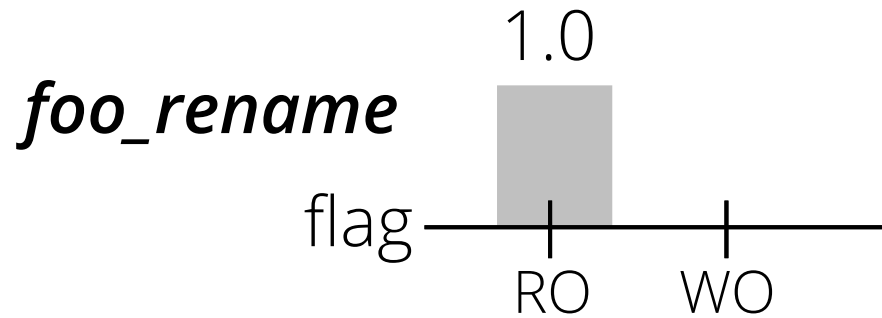
```
int bar_rename(flag) {  
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}
```

cad

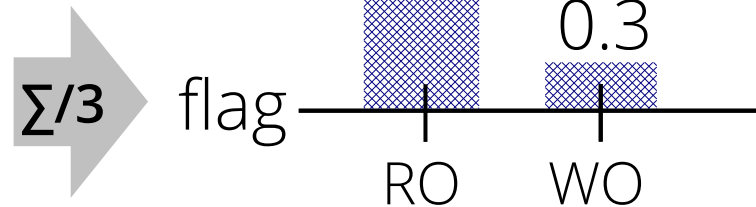
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int cad_rename(flag) {  
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}
```



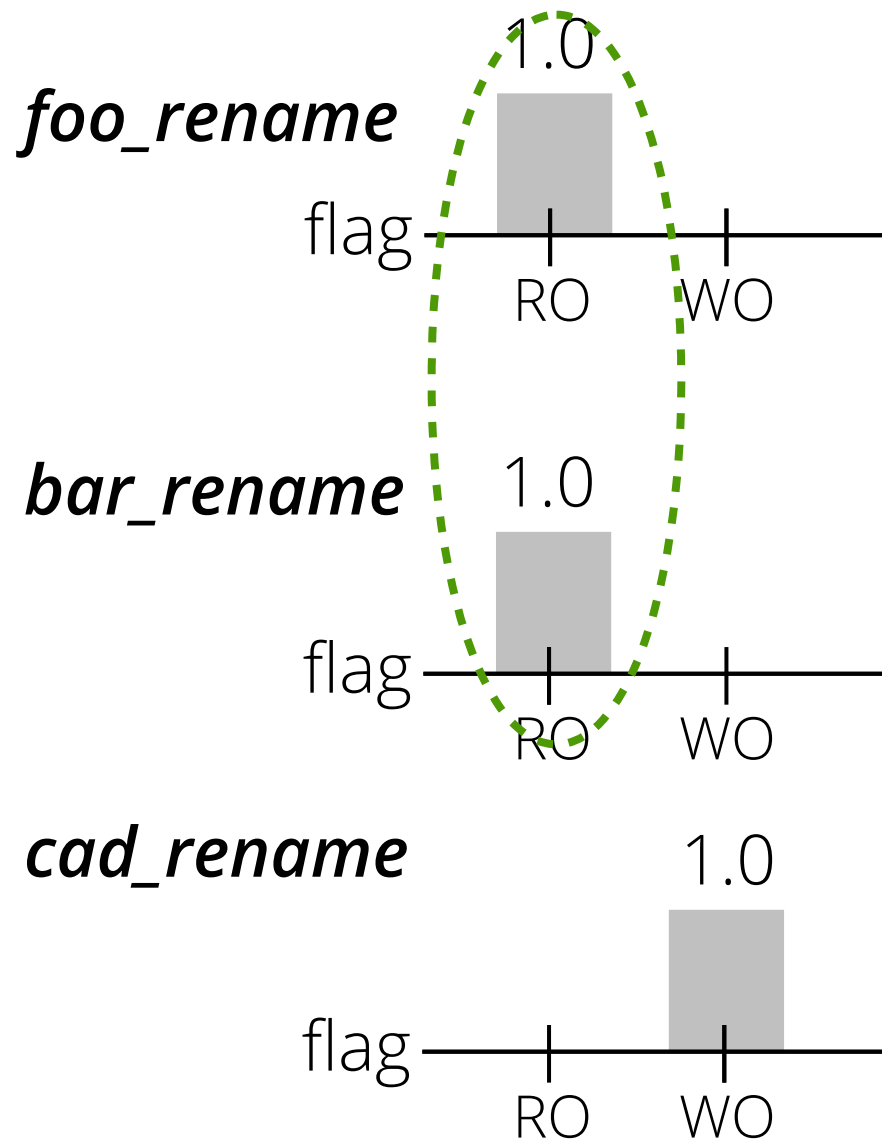
Build a representative histogram



VFS Histogram: *vfs_rename*

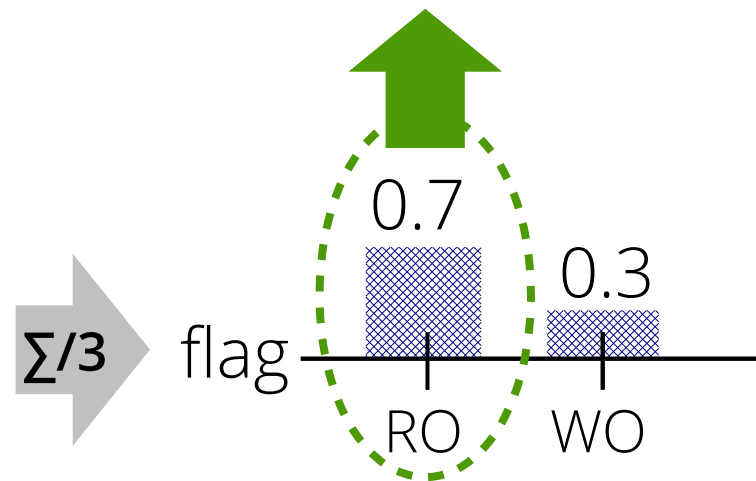


Build a representative histogram

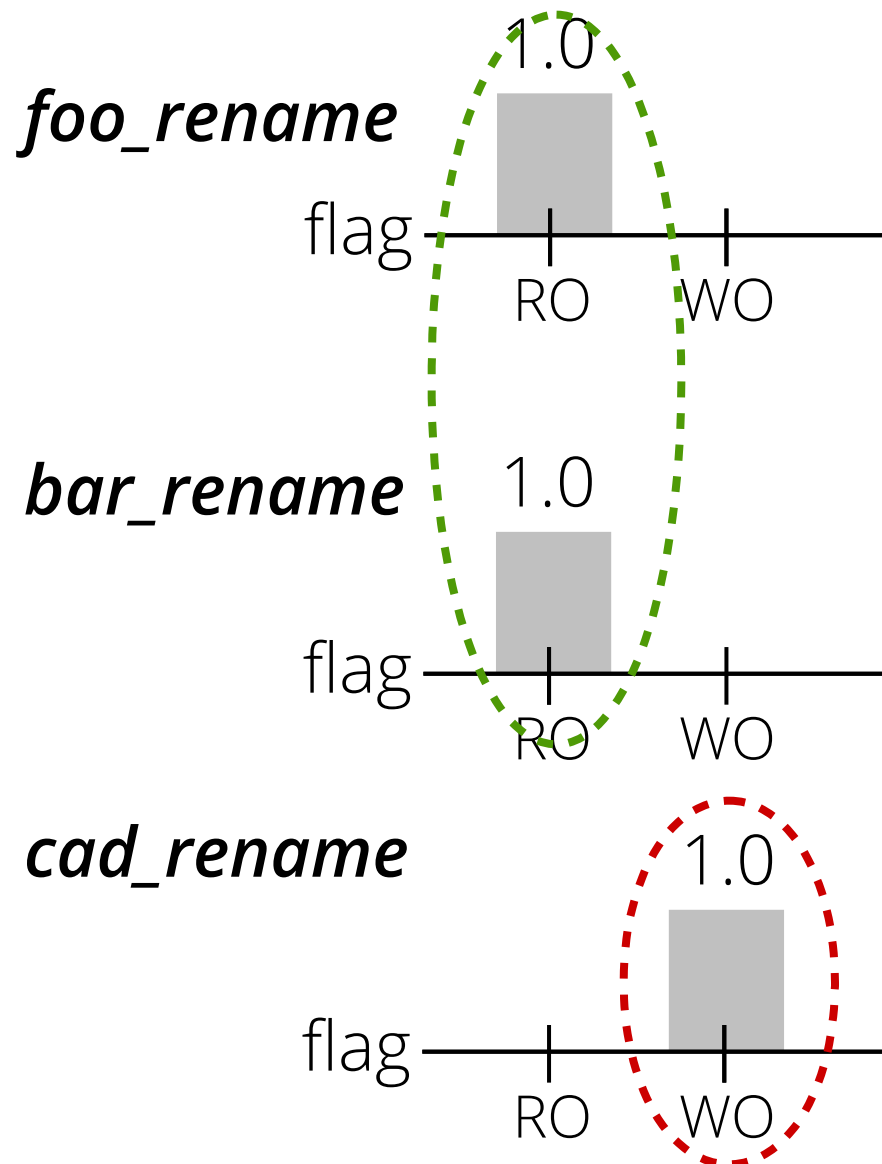


VFS Histogram: *vfs_rename*

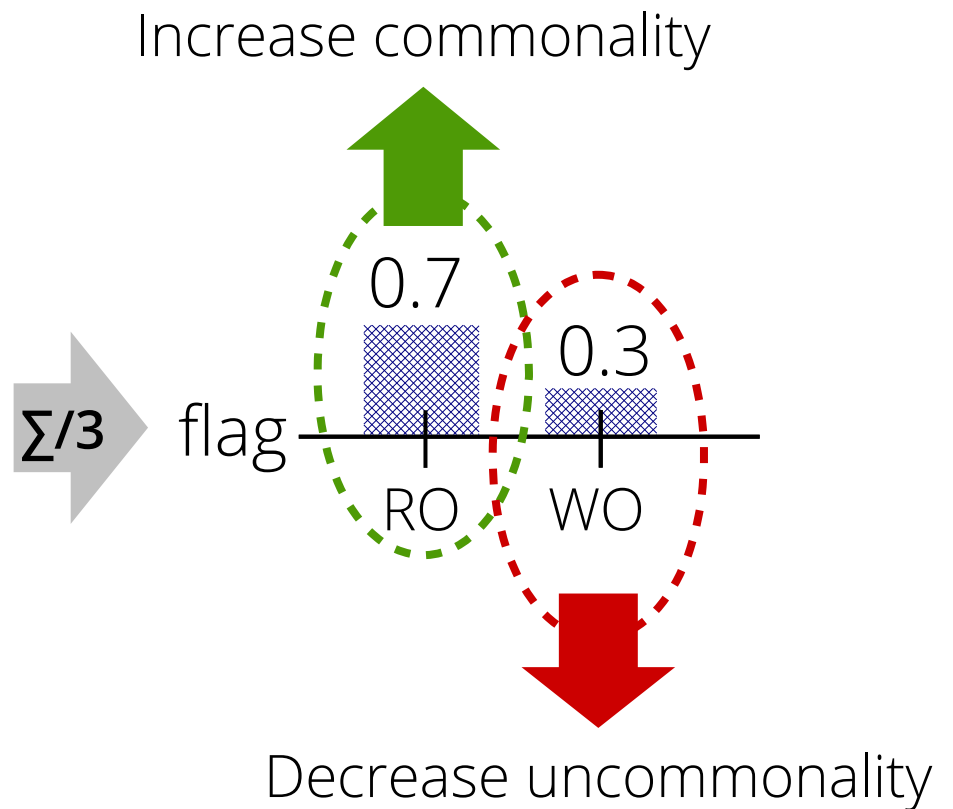
Increase commonality



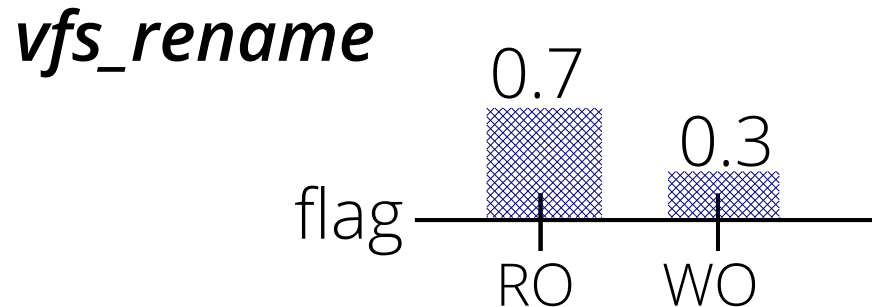
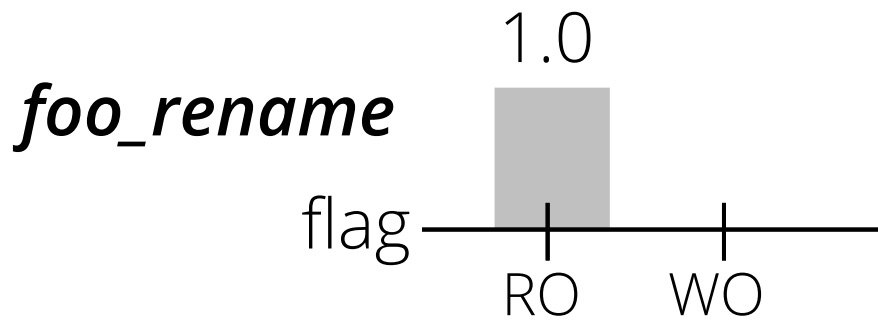
Build a representative histogram



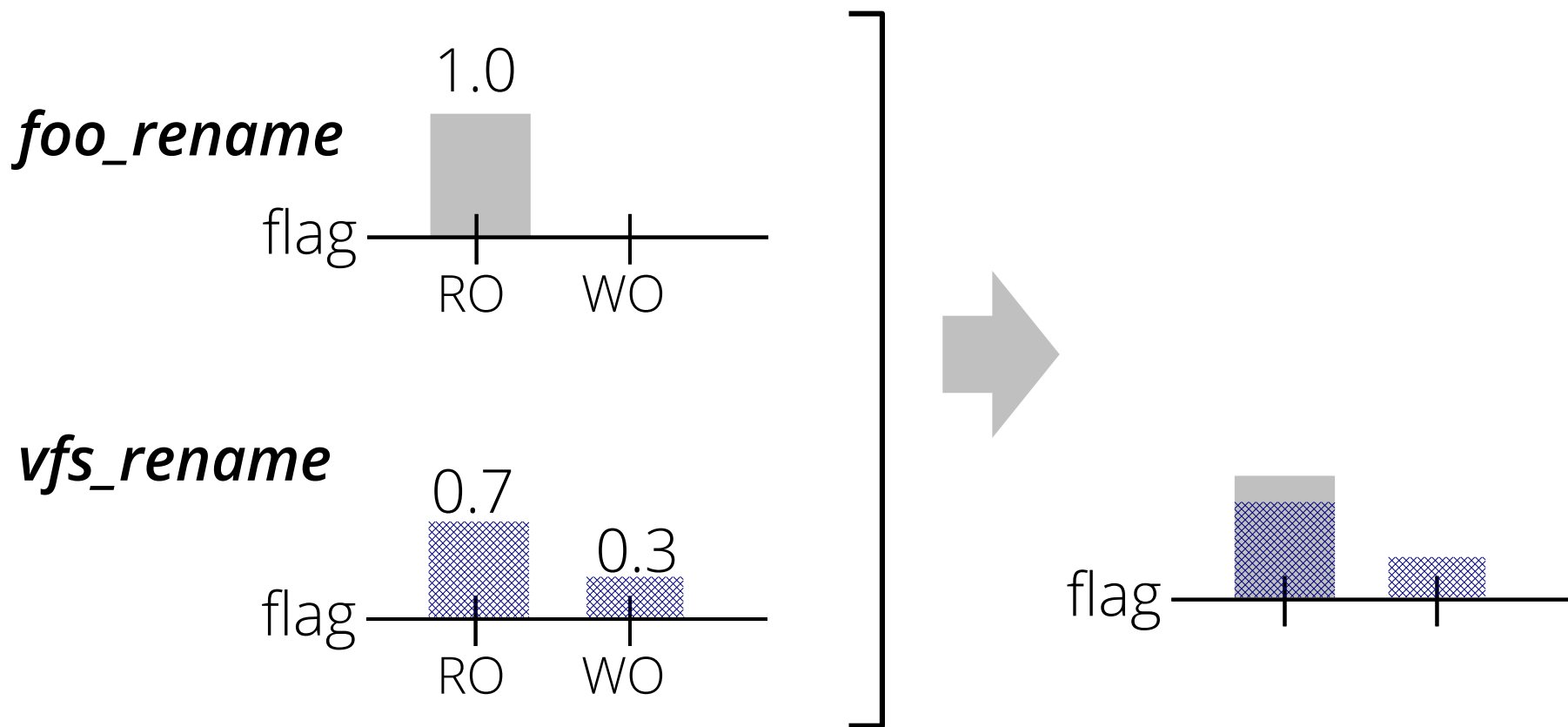
VFS Histogram: *vfs_rename*



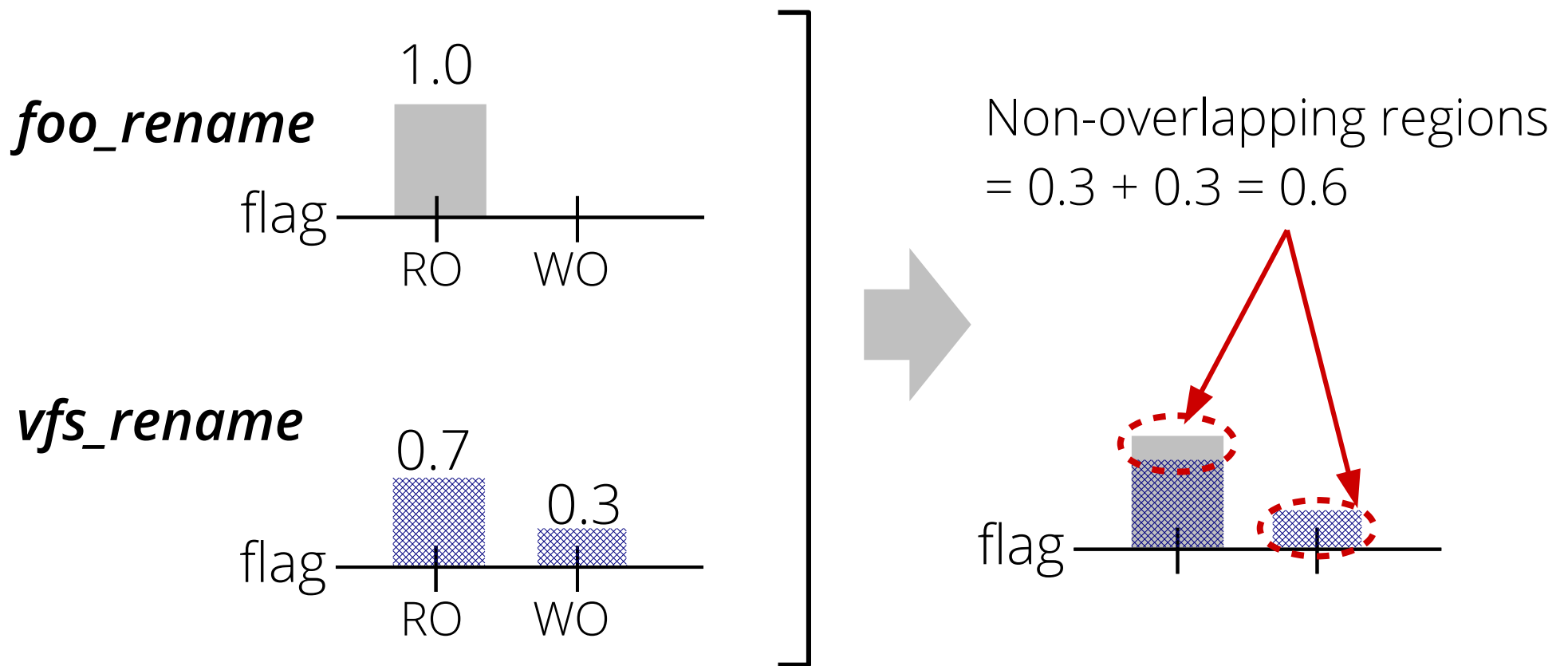
Measure distance between histograms



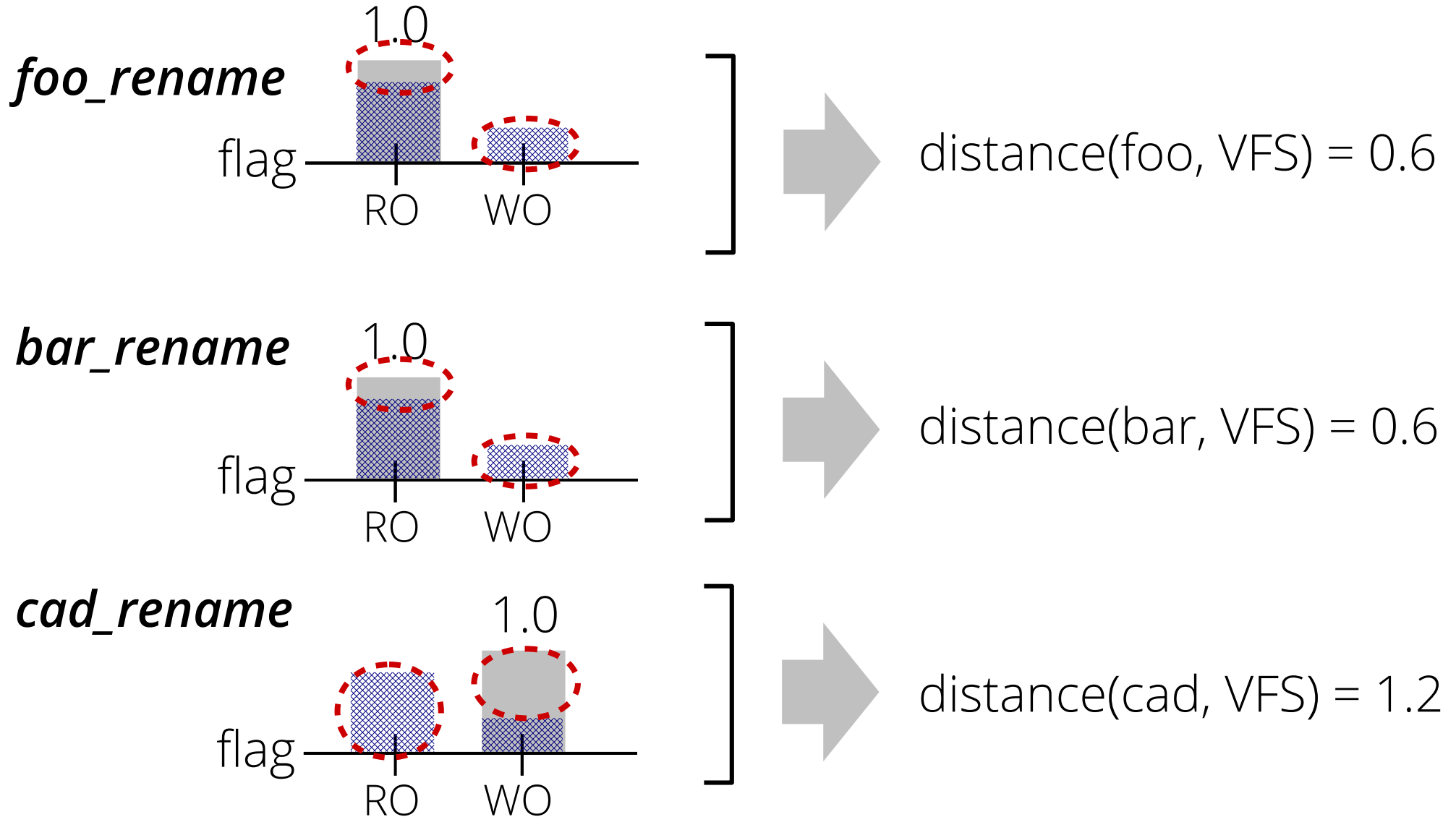
Measure distance between histograms



Measure distance between histograms



Histogram distance



Ranking based on distance

Distance

Reason

cad

```
int foo_rename(flag) {  
    if (flag == RO)  
        return -EACCES;  
}
```

1.2

foo

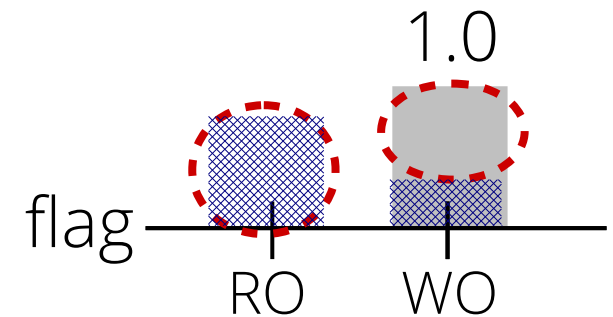
```
int bar_rename(flag) {  
    if (flag == RO)  
        return -EACCES;  
}
```

0.6

bar

```
int cad_rename(flag) {  
    if (flag == WO)  
        return -EACCES;  
}
```

0.6



Missing check: flag == RO

Ranking based on distance

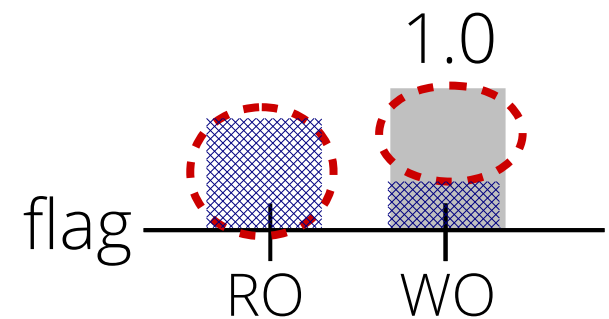
Distance

Reason

cad

```
int foo_rename(flag) {  
    if (flag == RO)  
        return -EACCES;  
}
```

1.2



foo

```
int bar_rename(flag) {  
    if (flag == RO)  
        return -EACCES;  
}
```

0.6

Missing check: flag == RO

Larger distance → more deviant

bar

```
int cad_rename(flag) {  
    if (flag == WO)  
        return -EACCES;  
}
```

0.6



Ranking based on distance

Distance

Reason

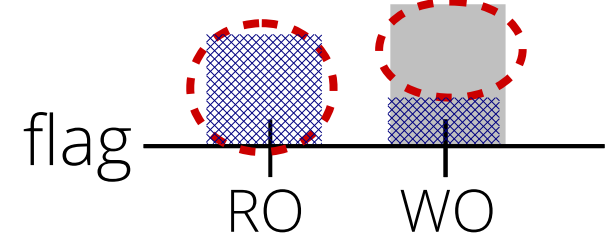
cad

```
int foo_rename(flag) {  
    if (flag == RO)  
        return -EACCES;  
}
```

1.2



1.0



foo

```
int bar_rename(flag) {  
    if (flag == RO)  
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}
```

0.6

Missing check: flag == RO

Larger distance → more deviant

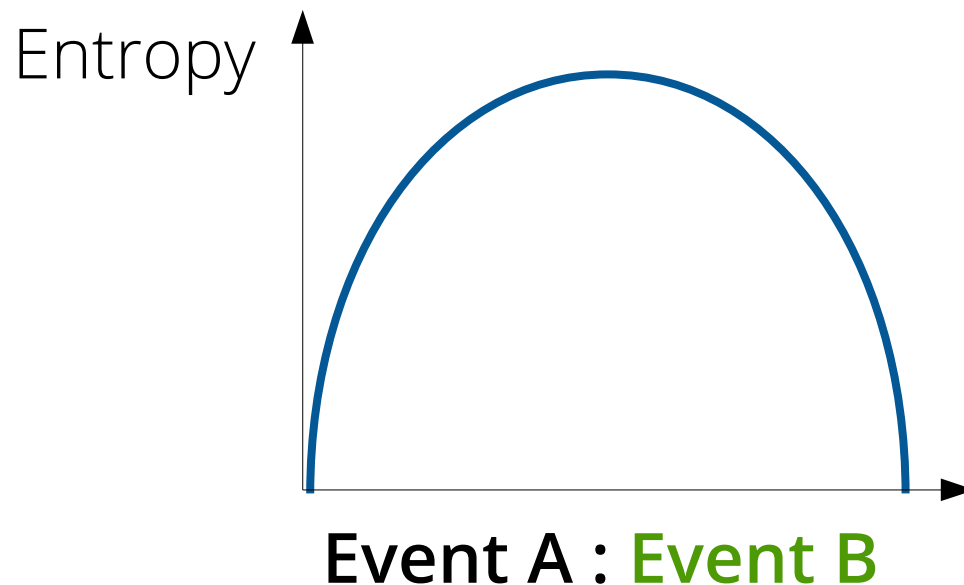
We found 59 new semantic bugs
using histogram-based comparison

Two statistical comparison methods

- For range data → Histogram-based comparison
 - Compare range data and find deviant sub-ranges
- For occurrences → Entropy-based comparison
 - Find deviation in event occurrences

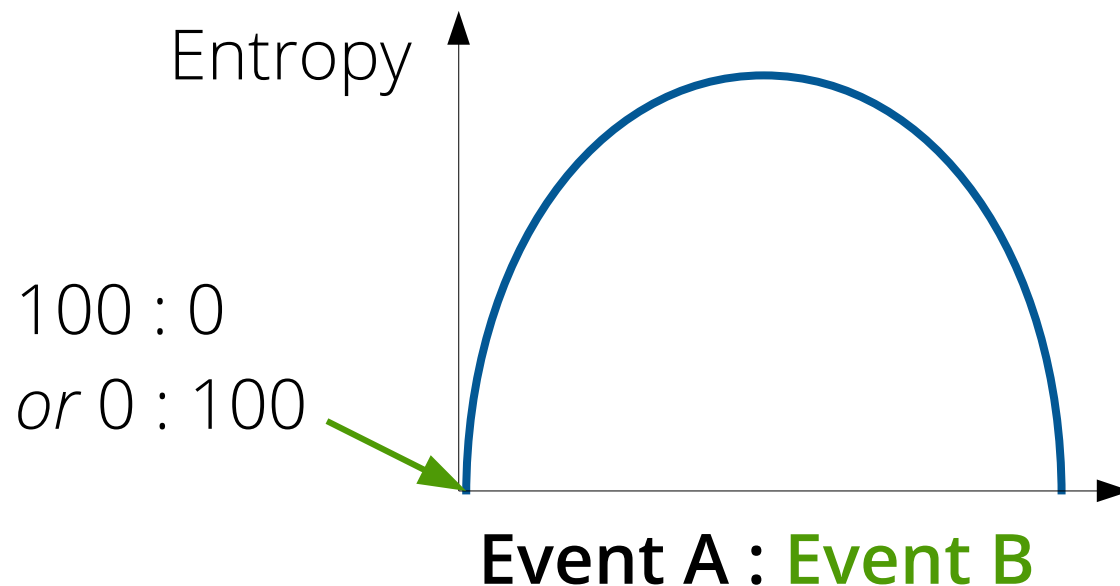
Entropy-based comparison

- Find deviation in event occurrence
 - Function argument, return value handling, etc.
- Shannon Entropy



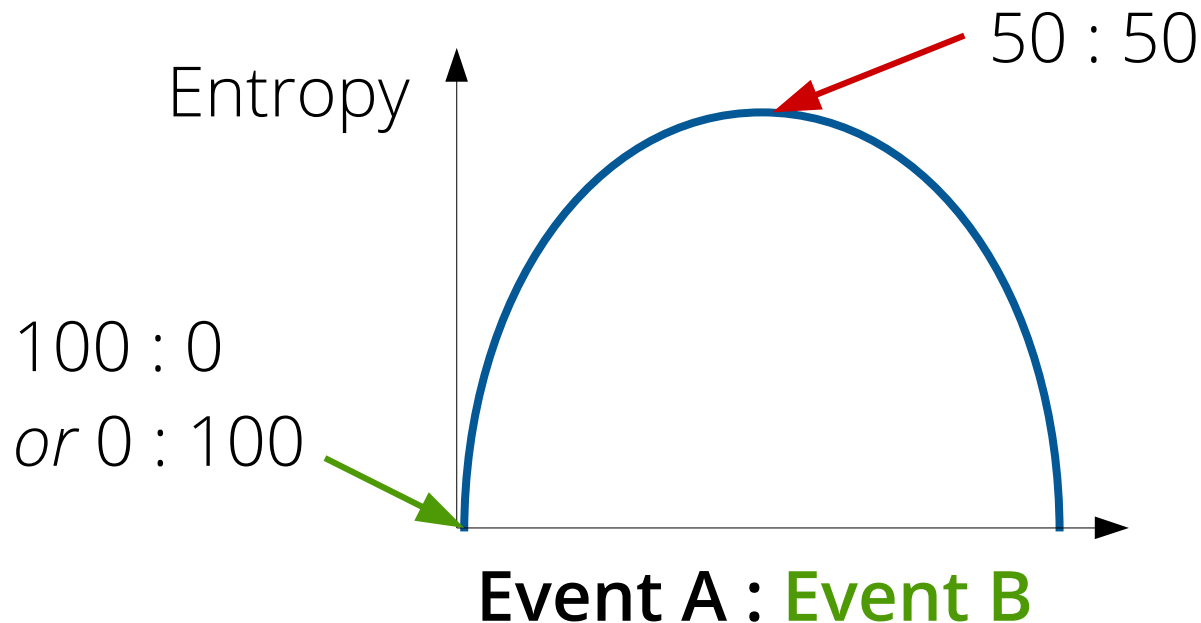
Entropy-based comparison

- Find deviation in event occurrence
 - Function argument, return value handling, etc.
- Shannon Entropy



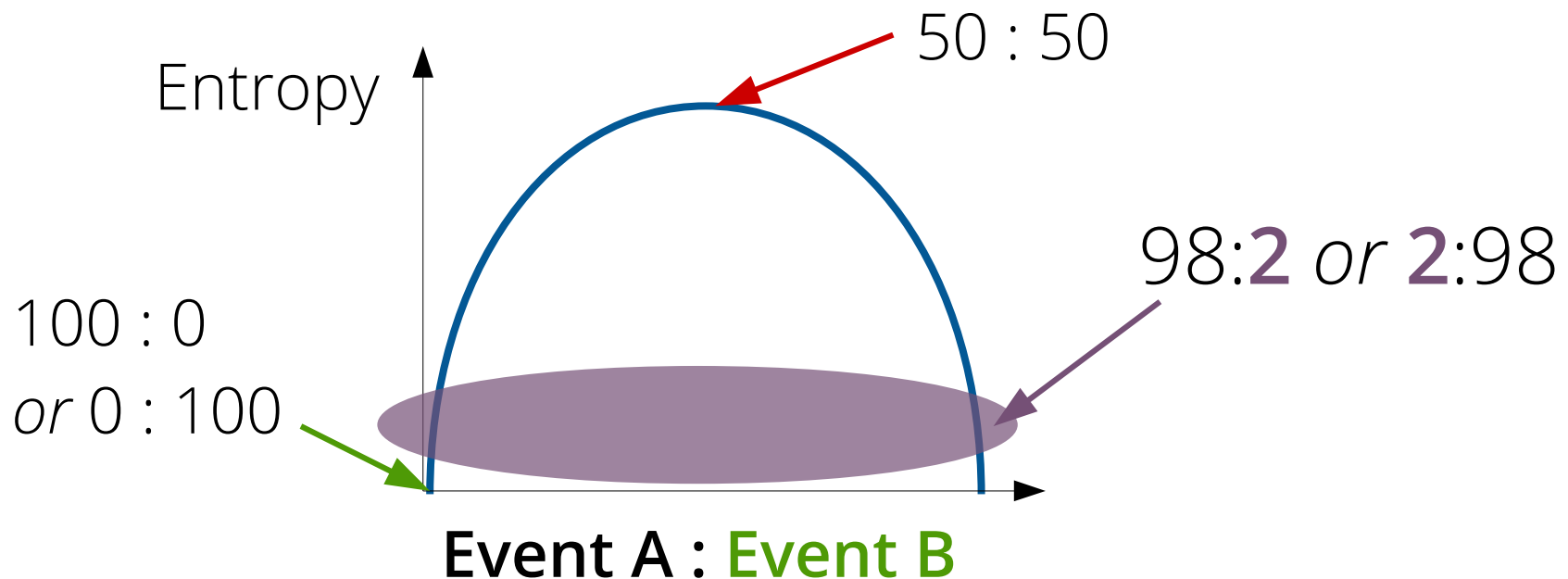
Entropy-based comparison

- Find deviation in event occurrence
 - Function argument, return value handling, etc.
- Shannon Entropy



Entropy-based comparison

- Find deviation in event occurrence
 - Function argument, return value handling, etc.
- Shannon Entropy



Example: Argument checker

- Inferring API usage patterns
 - e.g., **kmalloc()** in file system
 - **GFP_NOFS** to avoid deadlock
- Without any special knowledge, the argument checker can statically identify incorrect uses of API flags in file systems

Calculating entropy of GFP flag usages in file systems

VFS entry	GFP_KERNEL	GFP_NOFS	Entropy
inode→set_acl()	60	40	0.97
file→read()	40	60	0.97
file→write()	2	98	0.14

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Ranking based on entropy

VFS entry	GFP_KERNEL	GFP_NOFS	Entropy
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file→write()	2	98	0.14
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Smaller entropy → more deviant

file→read()	40	60	0.97
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Ranking based on entropy

VFS entry	GFP_KERNEL	GFP_NOFS	Entropy
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file→write()	2	98	0.14
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We found 59 new semantic bugs
using entropy-based comparison

Specialized Checkers for Specific Types of Semantic Bugs

7 Checkers

Histogram-based

Path Condition
Checker

Return Code
Checker

Function Call
Checker

Side-effect
Checker

Entropy-based

Argument
Checker

Lock
Checker

Error Handling
Checker

Spec.
Generator

Juxta

Statistical
Path Comparison

Per-Filesystem
Path Database

Implementation of **Juxta**

- 12K LoC in total
 - Symbolic path explorer → 6K lines of C/C++ (Clang 3.6)
 - Tools and library → 3K lines of Python
 - Checkers → 3K lines of Python
- VFS entry database → Linux kernel 4.0-rc2

Evaluation questions

- How effective is Juxta in finding new bugs?
- What types of semantic bugs can Juxta find?
- How complete is Juxta's approach?
- How effective is Juxta's ranking scheme?

Juxta found 118 bugs in 54 file systems

Checker	# reports	# manually verified reports	New bugs
Return code	573	150	2
Side-effect	389	150	6
Function call	521	100	5
Path condition	470	150	46
Argument	56	10	4
Error handling	242	100	47
Lock	131	50	8
Total	2,382	710	118

Juxta found

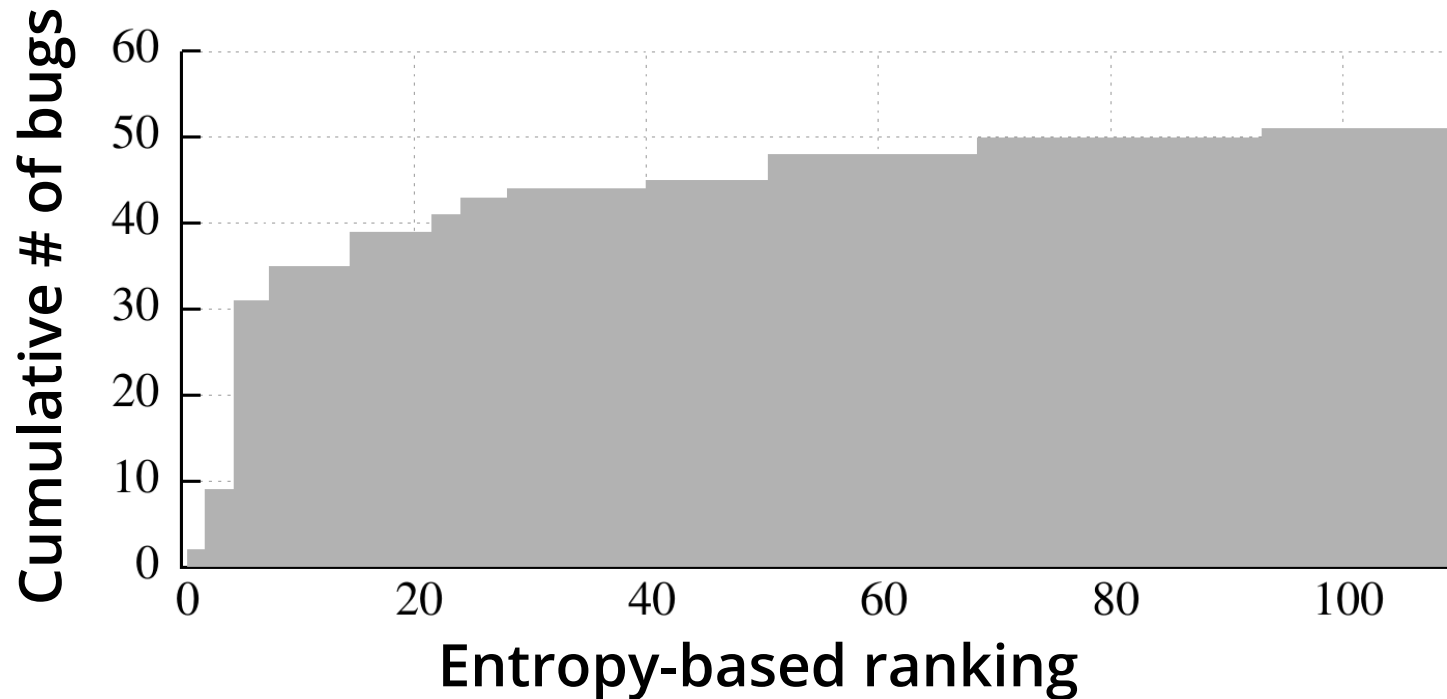
7 types of new semantic bugs

Checker	# reports	# manually verified reports	New bugs
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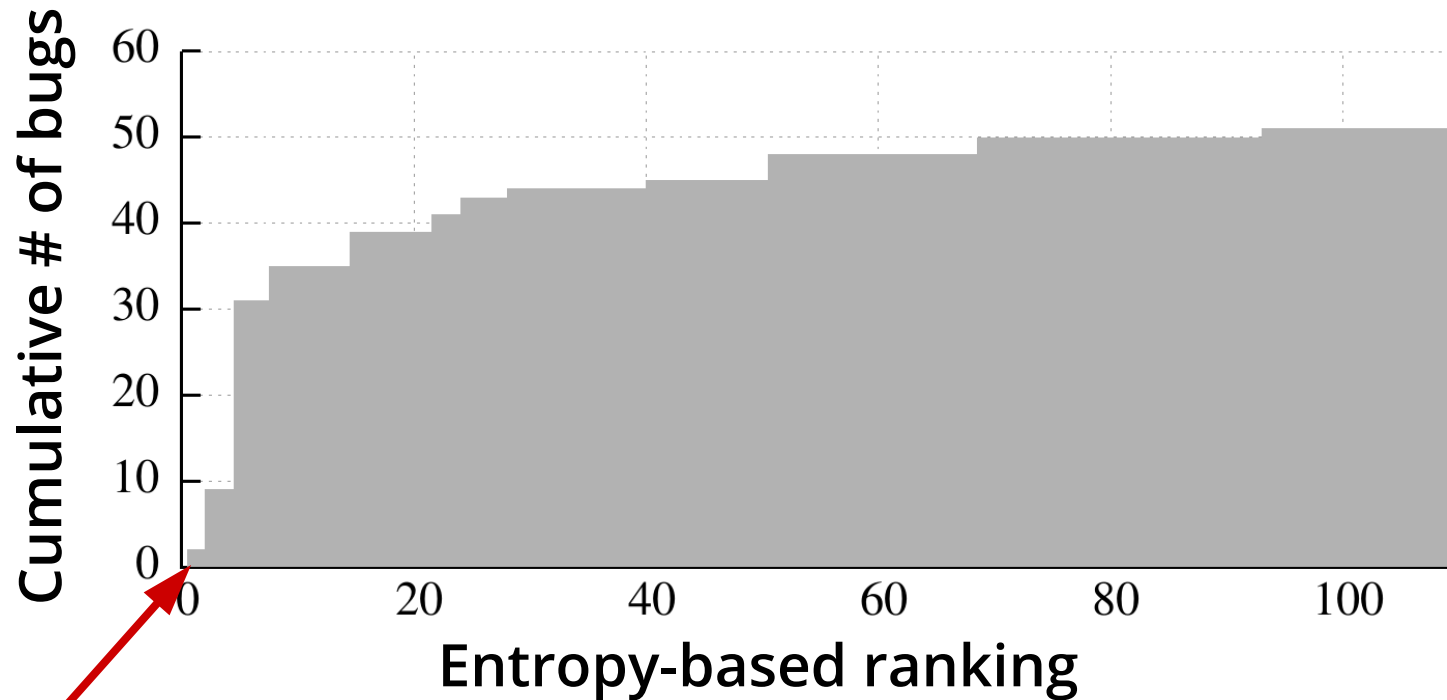
Juxta found most known bugs

- Test case
 - 21 known file system semantic bugs from PatchDB [Lu:FAST12]
 - Synthesize them to the Linux Kernel 4.0-rc2
- Juxta found 19 out of 21 bugs
- 2 missing bugs ← incomplete symbolic execution
 - state explosion
 - limited inter-procedural analysis

Juxta's ranking scheme is effective

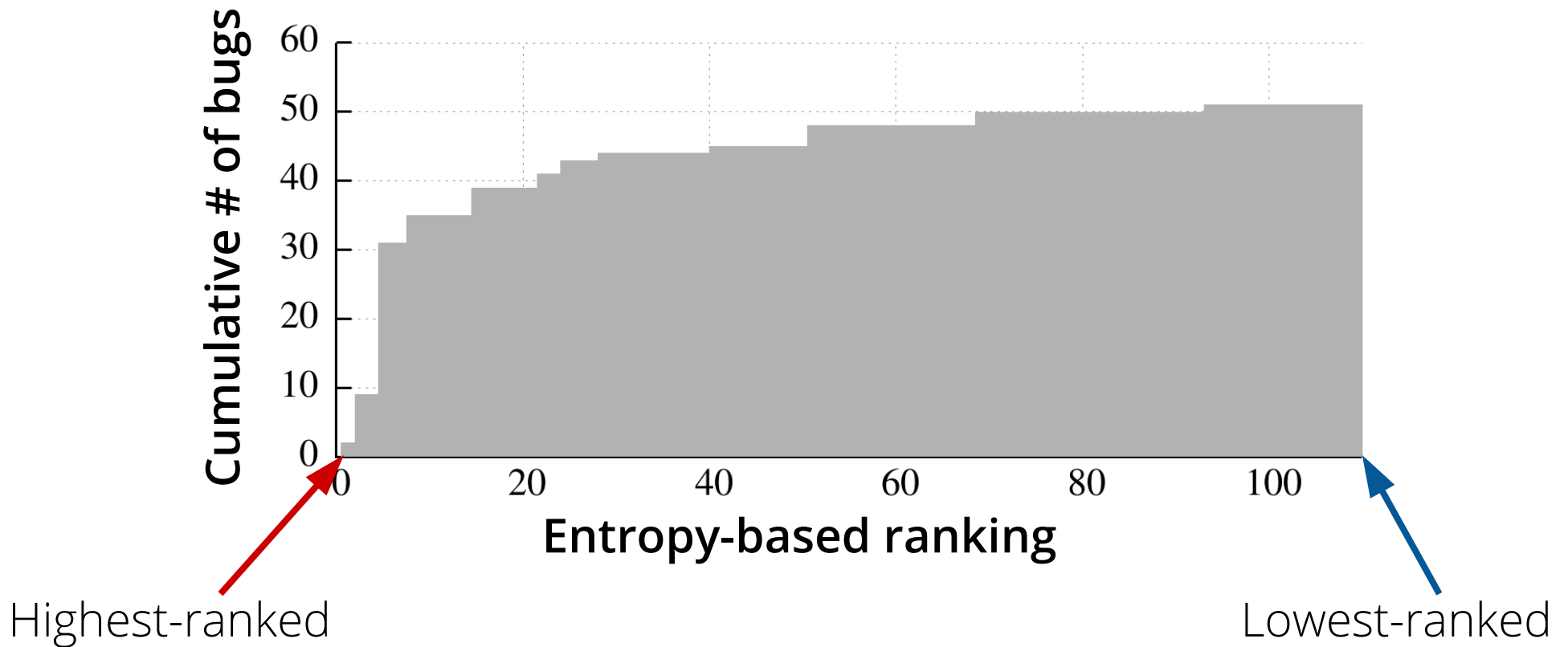


Juxta's ranking scheme is effective

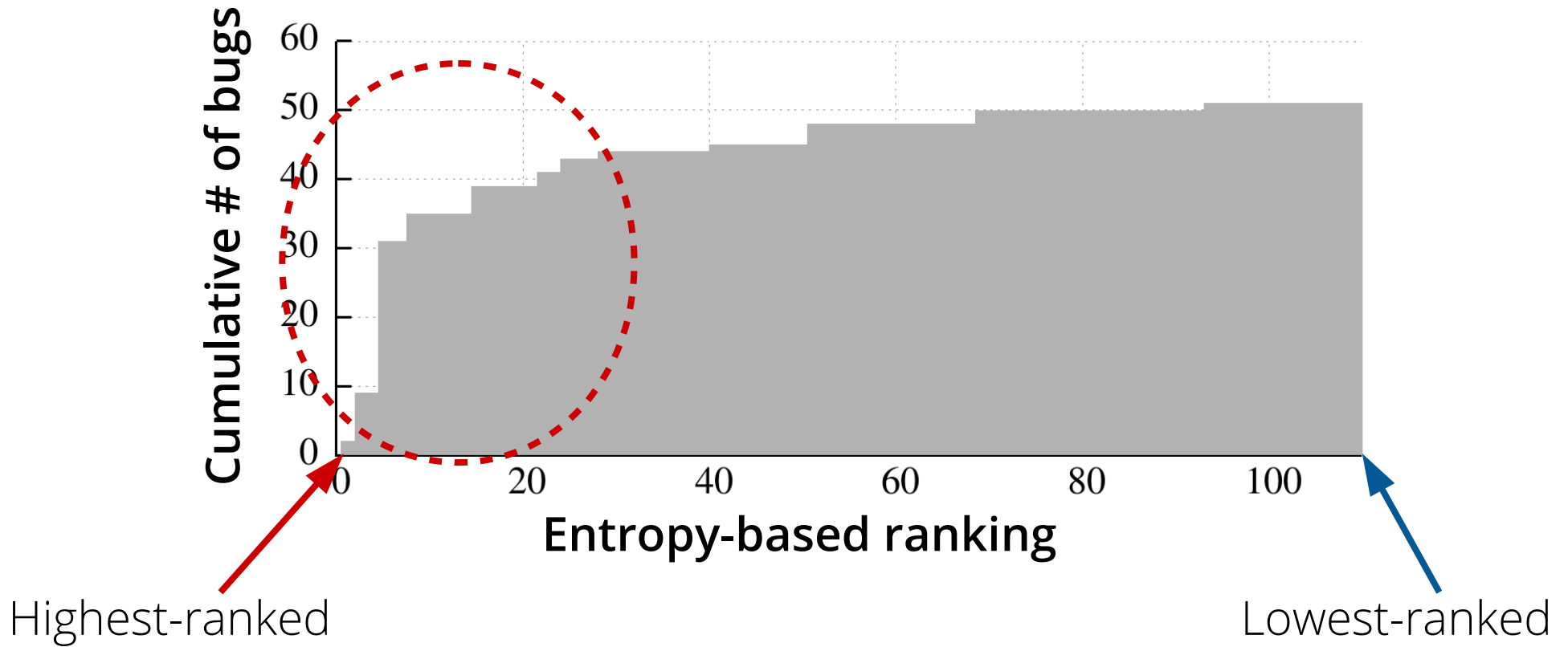


Highest-ranked

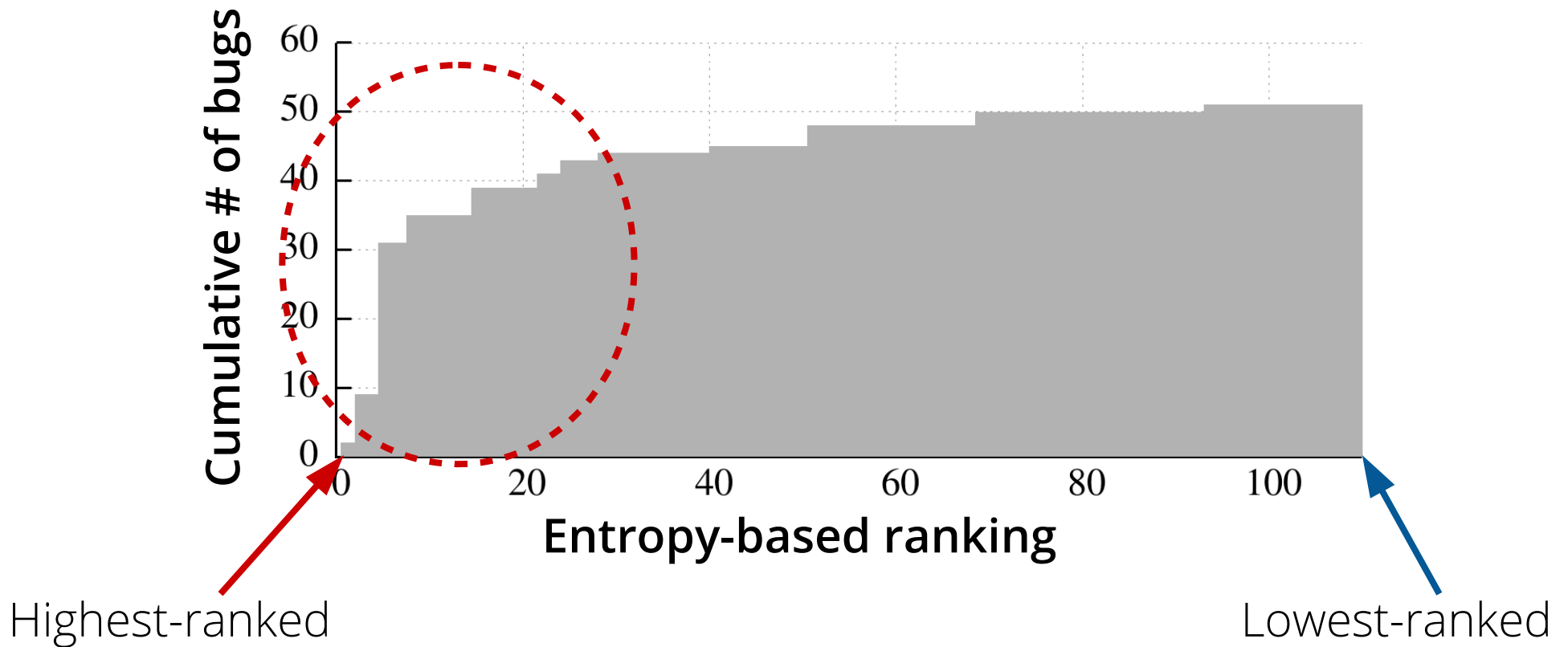
Juxta's ranking scheme is effective



Juxta's ranking scheme is effective



Juxta's ranking scheme is effective



> 50% of real bugs were found in top 100

Limitation

- Deviations do not always mean bugs
 - e.g., 24 patches are rejected after developers' review
- Not universally applicable
 - e.g., requirement: multiple existing implementations
- Symbolic execution is not complete
 - e.g., state explosion, limited inter-procedural analysis

Discussion

- Self-regression
 - e.g., comparing between subsequent versions
- Cross-layer refactoring
 - promoting common code to VFS in Linux file systems
 - e.g., if all file systems need the same capability check, shall we move such check to the VFS?
- Potential programs to be checked
 - e.g., C libs, SCSI device drivers, JavaScript engines, etc.

Conclusion

- Cross-checking semantic correctness by comparing and contrasting multiple implementations
- Juxta: a static tool to find bugs in file systems
 - Seven specialized checkers were developed
 - 118 new semantic bugs found (e.g., ext4, XFS, Ceph, etc.)
- Our code and database will be released soon

Thank you!

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Chengyu Song, Taesoo Kim



*Georgia Institute of Technology
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Questions?

Case study: Rename a file

- Rename() has complex semantics
 - e.g., rename(old_dir/a, new_dir/b) requires 3x3x3x3 combinations for update (e.g., mtime of dir and file)
- POSIX specification defines subset of such combinations
 - e.g., **ctime** and **mtime** of **old_dir** and **new_dir**

Compare rename() of existing file systems in Linux

- **Majority follows the POSIX spec**
 - Found 6 incorrect implementation (e.g., HPFS)
- Found inconsistency of undocumented combinations
 - Found 6 potential bugs (e.g., HFS)

Hidden Spec. →

	Attribute	# Updated FS	# Not updated FS
old_dir	ctime	53	1
	mtime	53	1
new_dir	ctime	52	2
	mtime	52	2
file	ctime	48	6

→ Bugs