

Security Concern Refactoring: Increasing and Assessing the Security Level of Existing Software

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Background

Software security is ever-increasingly becoming a serious issue since software comes to play an essential role in the real world and our lives much depend on software (Viega and McGraw, 2001)

Nevertheless,

- There are **an enormous number of vulnerable software programs** with unnecessary privileges, known flaws, or weak access control settings on resources
- Security characteristics of well-designed software programs will **deteriorate due to recurring modifications**
- Security vulnerabilities are easily inserted **while on software modification**

Approaches to Software Security

To remove risks posed by attacks which try to exploit security vulnerabilities:

- Secure software will be created from scratch
 - ✓ Hard to in advance design and implement secure software
- Existing software will be directly changed into secure one by partially modifying its design or code
 - ✓ Not perfectly remove security vulnerability from a large number of running programs in the world
 - ✓ Can decrease the likelihood of threats
- Design or code of existing software will be improved without assessing its security level
 - ✓ Not eliminate all kinds of interfusion of vulnerabilities resulting from improvement
 - ✓ Can know of decreasing of security level while improving

Security Concern Refactoring

Most modification of software affects (increases or decreases) its security characteristics

+

Refactoring is a special pattern of software modification, which changes the internal structure of existing code **without changing its external behavior by applying a series of behavior-preservation transformations**



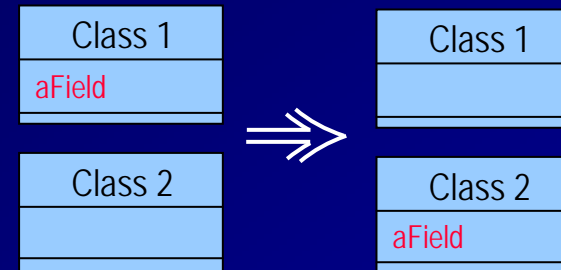
- **Secure refactoring** which increases the security level of existing code by its transformations
- **Security-aware refactoring** which assess the effects of the security level of existing code in its transformations

Remove and/or reveal inadvertent security flaws in programs that could be accidentally or intentionally exploited to damage assets

Refactoring Examples

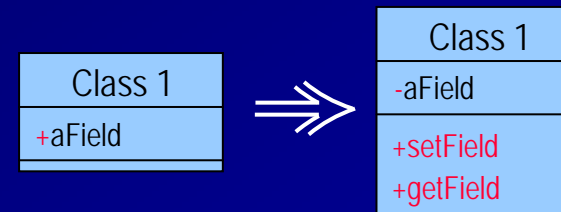
Move Filed

Moves a field in the class on which it is defined to another class that frequently uses the field



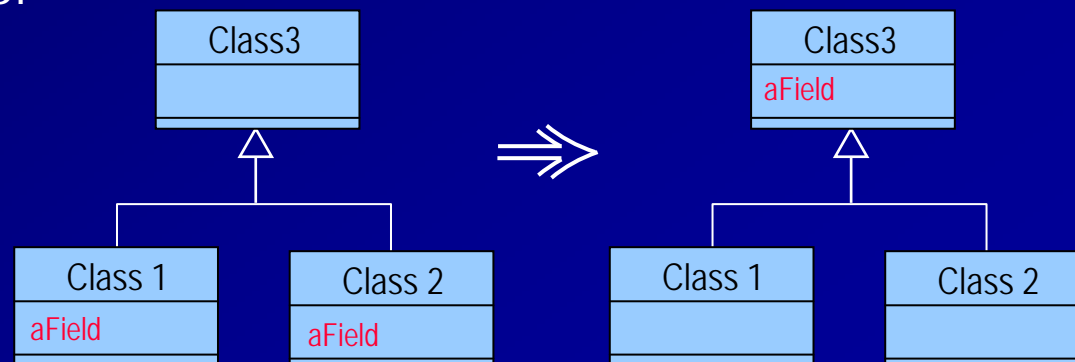
Encapsulate Field

Makes a public field private and provides its accessors

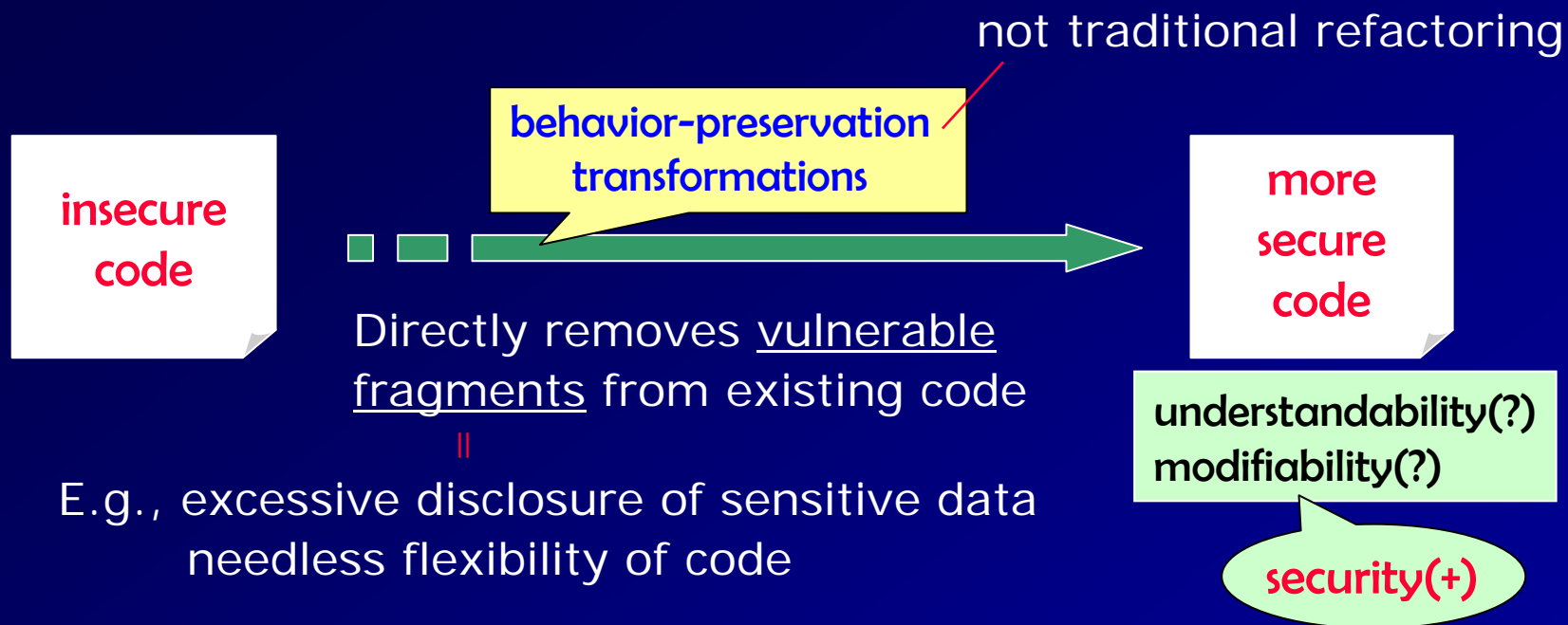


Pull Up Field

Moves the same field of sibling classes to their common superclass



Secure Refactoring

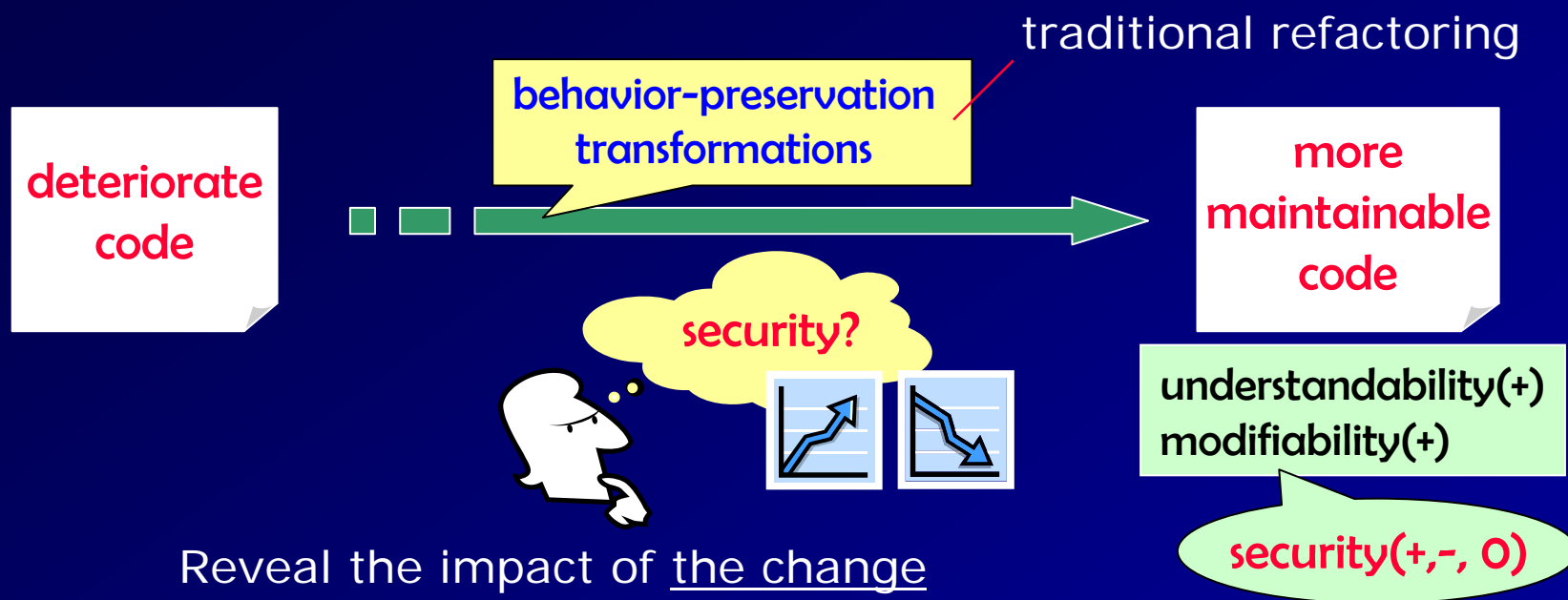


A change made to the internal structure of software
~~to make it easier to understand and cheaper to modify~~
 without changing its observable behavior (Fowler, 1999)



A change made to the internal structure of software
 to **make it more secure** without changing its observable
 behavior

Security-Aware Refactoring



Reveal the impact of the change
on the security level of existing code

E.g., change of accessibility setting of sensitive data

A change made to the internal structure of software to make it easier to understand and cheaper to modify without both changing its observable behavior and **missing unexpected changes of its security level.**

Definitions (in this work)

Security = **Protection of assets** (e.g., sensitive information)

Classification of protection measures:

- **Prevention**
 - ✓ prevents assets from being damaged
- Detection
- Reaction

Deal with two of several security aspects:

- **Confidentiality**
 - ✓ Prevention of unauthorized disclosure of sensitive data
- **Integrity**
 - ✓ Prevention of unauthorized modification of sensitive data

The security level of software is measured based on **the potential existence of vulnerable code (inadvertent code flaws) which might violate the confidentiality and integrity**

Java Security

- A **Sandbox model** which is responsible for protecting resources according to user-defined security policy
 - ✓ However, it cannot block violation by inadvertent code
- **Four possible access levels** specified by access modifiers
 - ✓ **private**: accessible from only inside the class defining the construct
 - ✓ **(default)**: accessible from any class in the same package as the class defining the construct
 - ✓ **protected**: accessible from the class defining the construct, classes within the same package as the defining class, or subclasses of the defining class
 - ✓ **public**: accessible from any class
- The **final modifier** so as that any program code cannot accidentally change the state of an element
 - ✓ A final variable can be set only once
 - ✓ A final field can be set only once by a constructor
 - ✓ A final method cannot be neither overridden nor hidden
 - ✓ No subclass can be derived from a final class

Secure Refactoring

Secure Refactoring Transformations

(1) Introduce Immutable Field

- ✓ Protects internal data stored in a field from modification
- ✓ The field must be declared final and its data is assigned only once in a constructor of the class defining the field

(2) Replace Reference with Copy

- ✓ Protects internal data stored in an immutable but mutable-typed field from modification
- ✓ Passes a copy of the original data instead of a reference to an instance storing the data

(3) Prohibit Overriding

- ✓ Removes excessive use of polymorphic calls by subclassing
- ✓ The method or class must be declared final so that it is not intended to be overridden or inherited

(4) Clear Sensitive Value Explicitly

- ✓ Prevents an adversary from stealing internal data stored in the memory
- ✓ The original data must be replaced with dummy as early as possible if the data will not be used in the future

Motivating Code: Prohibit Overriding (1/3)

```
// before refactoring (insecure)
class Member {
    public String getInfo(Password pw) {
        if (pw.check()) {
            return "Secret Info";
        } else {
            return "No Info";
        }
    }
}

class Password {
    private final String secretPasswd;
    private final String passwd;
    public Password(String passwd) {
        this.passwd = passwd;
    }
    public boolean check() {
        return passwd.equals(secretPasswd);
    }
}
```

Code before
refactoring

```
// attacking code
class FakePassword extends Password {
    ...
    public boolean check() {
        return true;
    }
}
```

```
Member member;
Password fake = new FakePassword("X");
System.out.println(member.getInfo(fake));
```

Security Smell: Prohibit Overriding (2/3)

Target class *C*

Instance *i* which is given by external code

```
class Member {  
    public String getInfo(Password pw) {  
        if (pw.check()) {  
            ...  
        }  
    }  
}
```

Call to a method *m* of a class *C_i* for *i*

Security smell:

In a target class *C*, there is a call to a method *m* of a class *C_i* for an instance *i* which is given by external (possibly malicious) code, and any class can be derived from *C_i*

Situation in which the refactoring should be applied

Concise Procedure: Prohibit Overriding (3/3)

1. Find all subclasses of *Ci* and check to see if respective methods of the subclasses override *m*.
⇒ *If overriding methods exist, consider applying the "Replace Inheritance with Delegation (352)" to replace them with delegation methods. If some of them remain, cancel this refactoring.*
2. Add the keyword **final** to *m* in its declaration. If there is no subclass of *Ci*, make *Ci* final.

```
// after refactoring (more secure)
final class Password {
    private final String secretPasswd = "SECRET";
    private final String passwd;
    public Password(String pw) { ... }
    public final boolean check() {
        return passwd.equals(secretPasswd);
    }
}
```

Class *Ci*

Method *m*

Code after
refactoring

Security Smell: Clear Sensitive Value (1/4)

Target class *C*

Local variable (parameter) *v*

```
// before refactoring (insecure)
class Member {
    public void printMessage(int score) {
        if (score < 60) {
            print(score);
            printMessage();
        }
    }
}
```

Code before
refactoring

The value of *score* will not be used in the future
but still remains in the memory

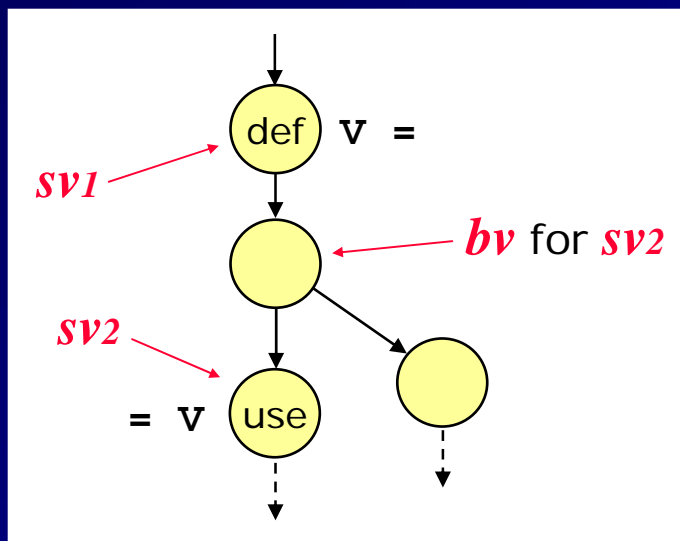
A stealer might be able to observe
the value of *score* through memory

Security smell:

In a target class *C*, there is a method *m* which keeps the sensitive value of a local variable *v* until the execution of *m* is terminated

Concise Procedure: Clear Sensitive Value (2/4)

1. Check to see if the value of v is stored in an immutable instance.
 ⇒ *If an immutable instance is used, replace it with the use of a mutable instance.*
2. Find final-use statements for v by **using control flow and data flow analysis**.
3. Insert new statements that update each value of v with the dummy value.



sv: a statement either writing or reading the value of v

bv: a conditional statement a branch of which includes *sv* (*bv* dangles *sv*)

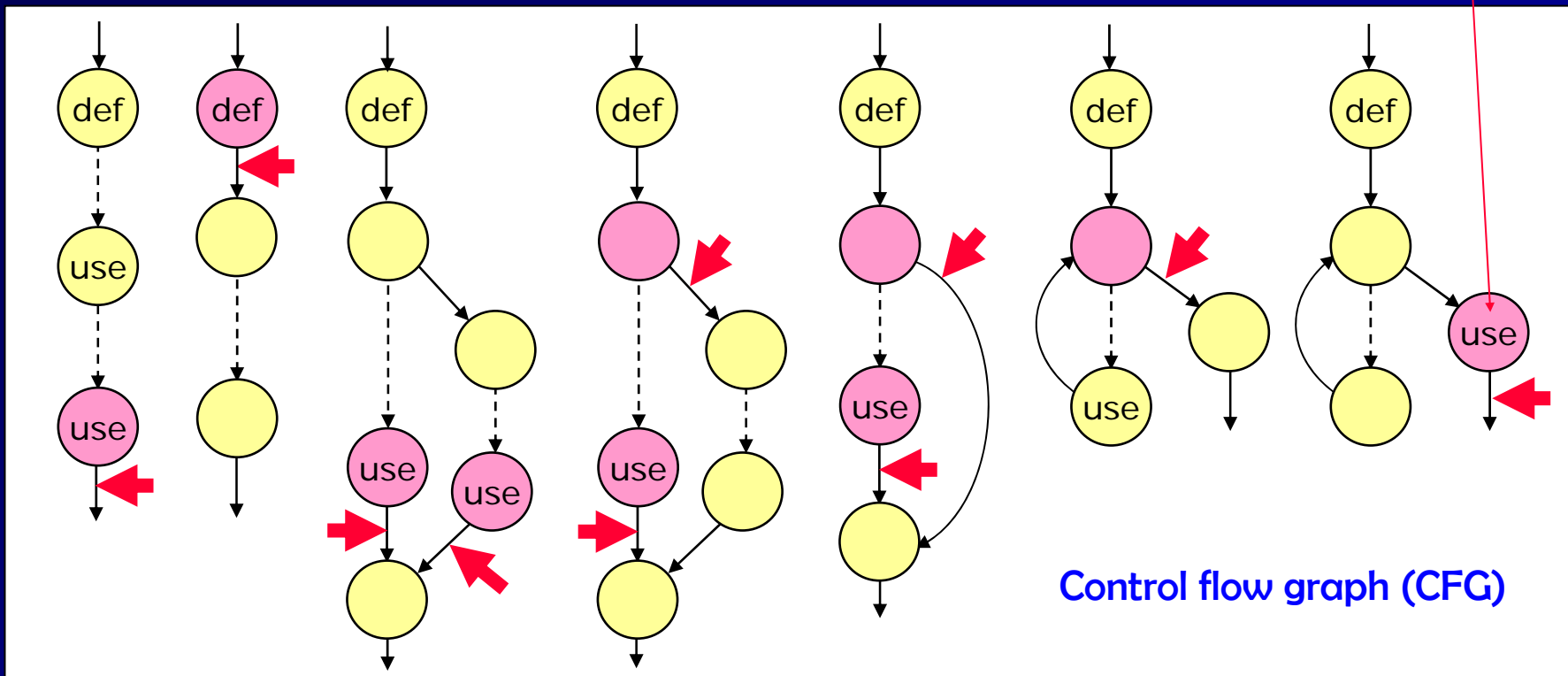
P(nv): a reachable path from a node which is one of nodes executed immediately after *nv* (= *sv* or *bv*) on control flow graph (CFG)

Final-Use Nodes: Clear Sensitive Value (3/4)

nv is defined as a **final-use node** for v if there is at least one $P(nv)$ which does not include any nodes which correspond to statements using (writing or reading) the value of v .

Roughly, All reachable nodes from nv do not use v .

Final-use node



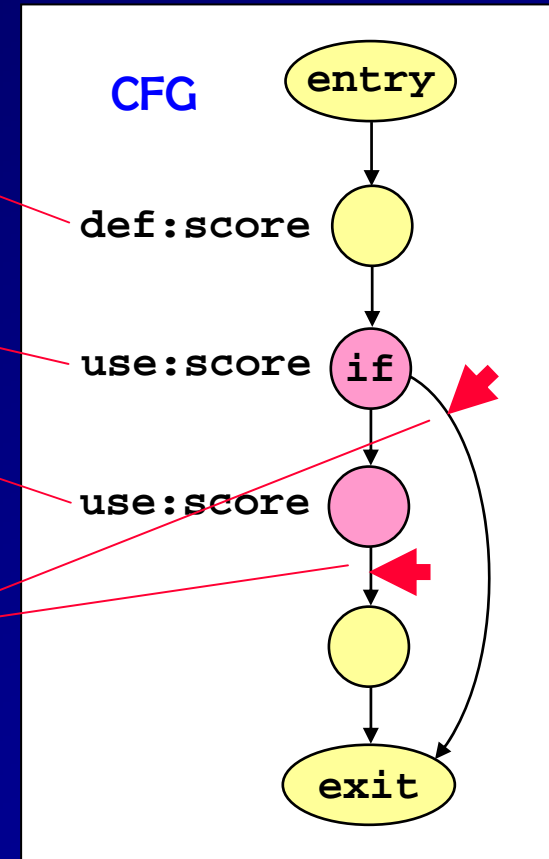
Final-Use Nodes: Clear Sensitive Value (4/4)

```
// before refactoring (insecure)
class Member {
    public void printMessage(int score) {
        if (score < 60) {
            print(score);
            printMessage();
        }
    }
}
```

```
// after refactoring (more secure)
class Member {
    public void printMessage(int score) {
        if (score < 60) {
            print(score);
            score = -1;
            printMessage();
        } else {
            score = -1;
        }
    }
}
```

Insert a statement clearing the value of `score`

The value of `score` cannot be observed



Secure-Aware Refactoring

Criteria for Security-Aware Refactoring

(1) Accessibility settings specified in code

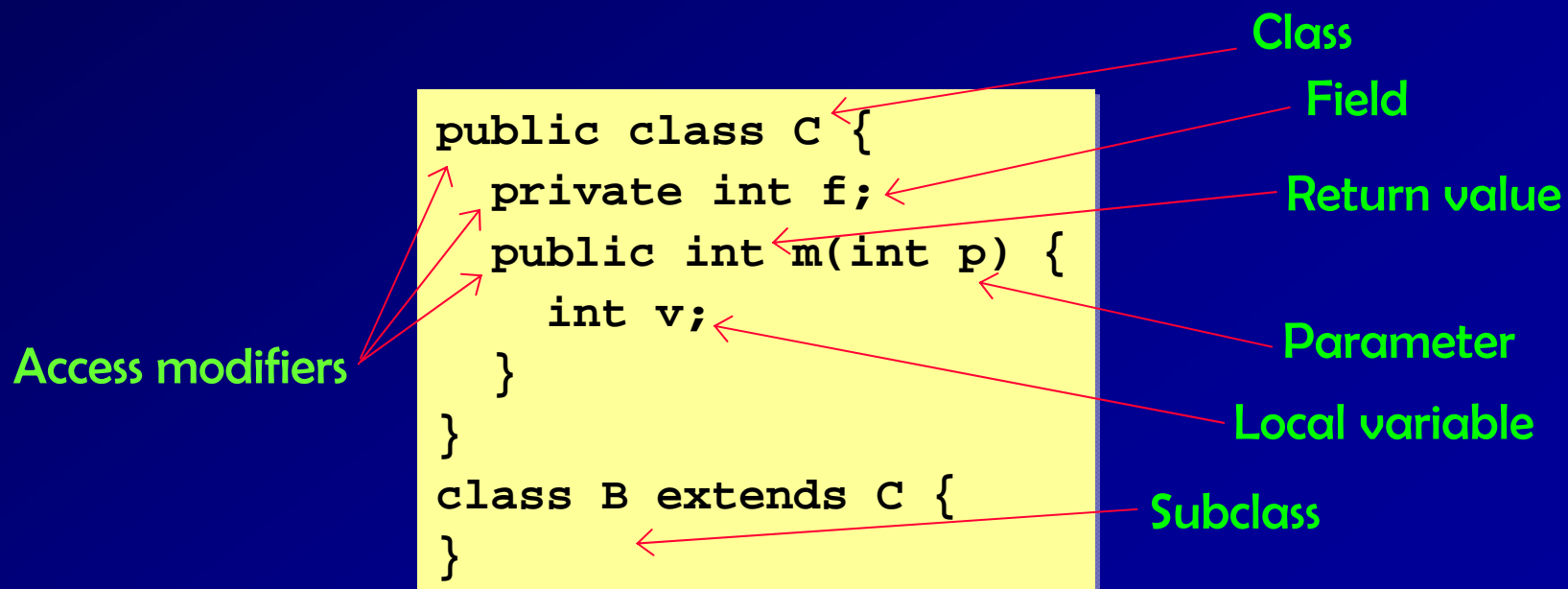
- Lattice of access settings for classes, methods, and fields

(2) Location where internal data is stored or observed

- Lattice of residence for fields, local variables, parameters, and return values

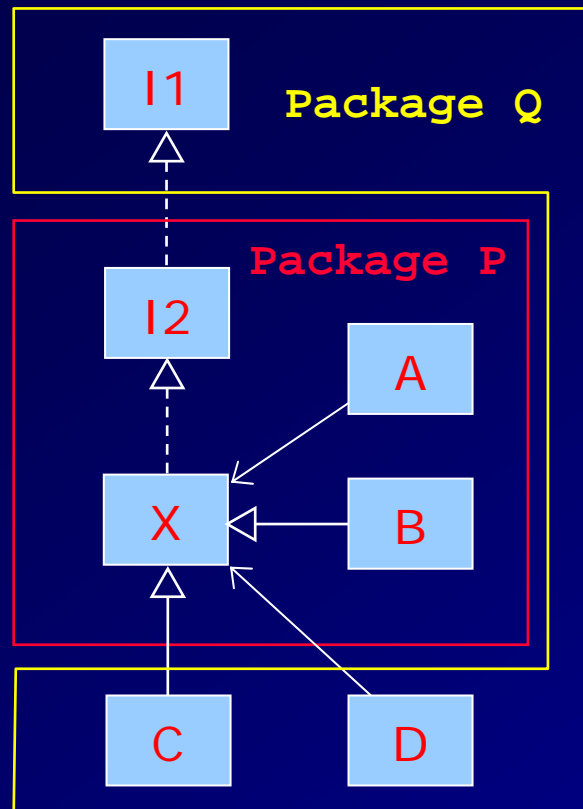
(3) Possibility of Subclassing

- Can we create subclasses or overridden methods?



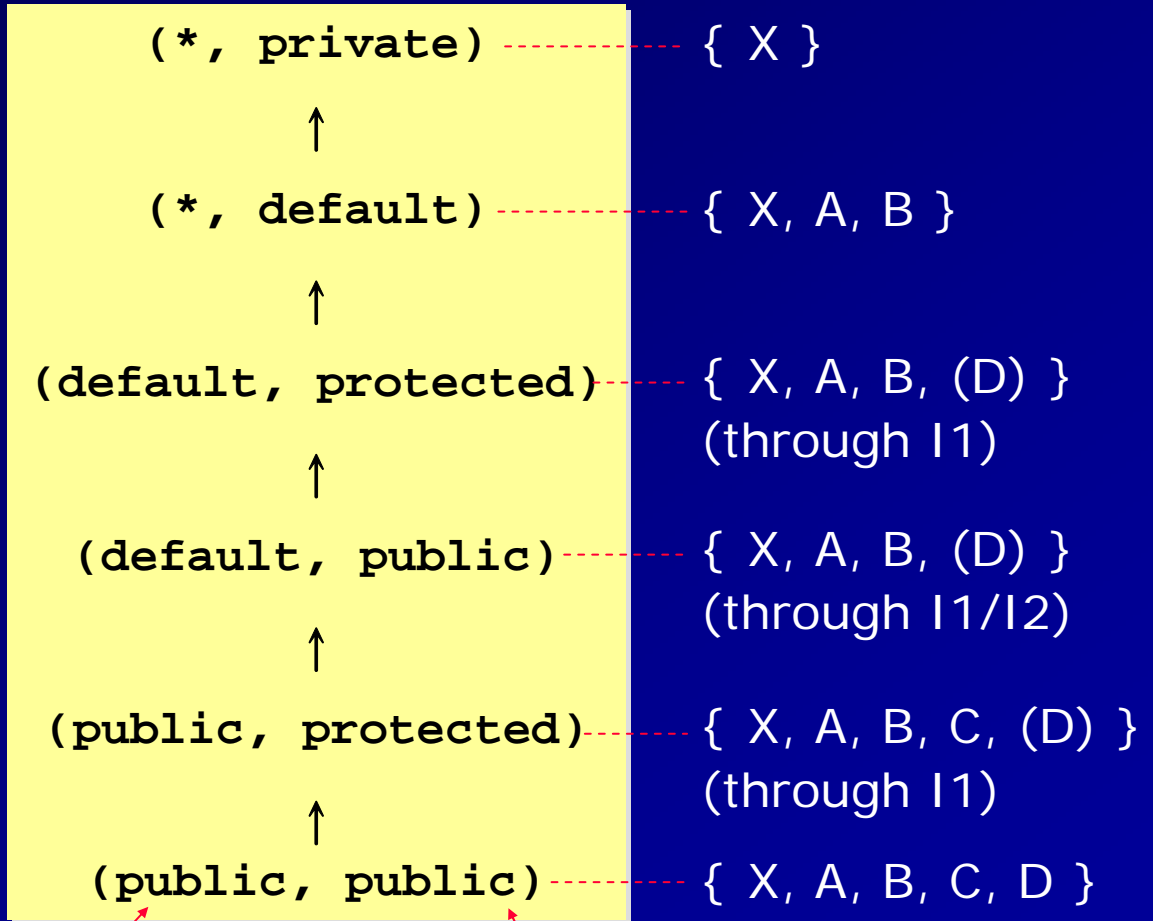
Criterion of Access Level

Class diagram



X: target class
A, B, C, D: related class
I1, I2: interface

High

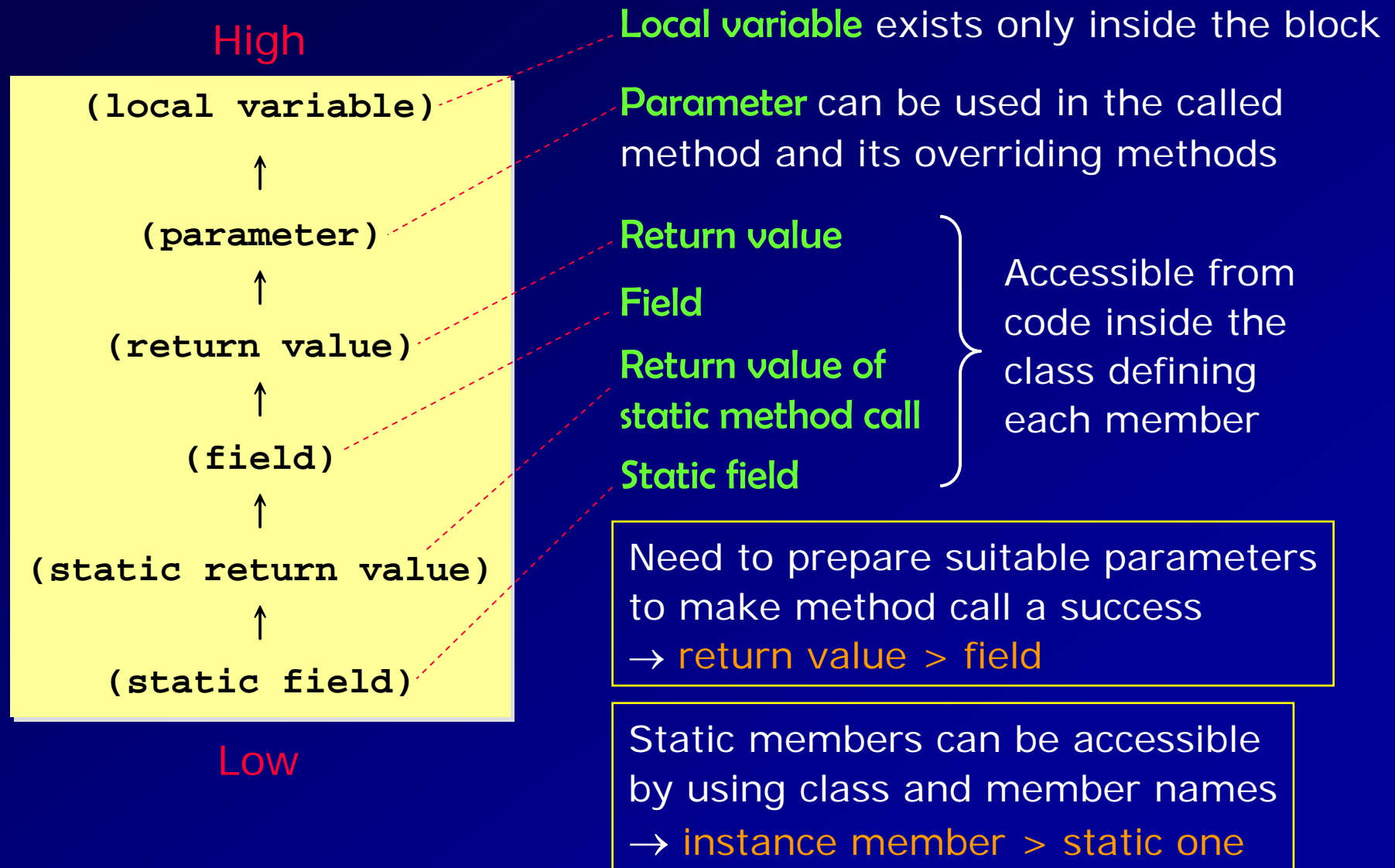


Low

Settings for a class

Settings for a field/method

Criterion of Locality



Preliminary Study

- Used Fowler's catalog (Fowler, 1999)
- Examined transformations of all the 72 refactorings
- Operations of the transformations were classified into 7 primitive modifications:
Create/Delete/Move/Extract/Inline/Encapsulate/Attribute change

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
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Refactorings

Effects

Perspectives

Findings

Readable level indicates if external code can directly or indirectly internal data (**Confidentiality**)

Writable level indicates if external code can directly or indirectly modify Internal data (**Integrity**)

Refactorings

4

4

5

3

7

7

total 30

Table 1. The effects on the security level by the application of refactorings

Refactoring (page number in Fowler's catalog)	Readable level	Writable level	Locality	Subclassing
Extract Method (110) Inline Method (117) Replace Temp with Query (120) Replace Method with Method Object (135)			↘ (p_extract, r_extract) ↗ (p_delete, r_delete) ↓ (r_extract) ↓ (f_extract)	
Move Method (142) Move Field (146) Extract Class (149) Inline Class (154)	↘ (m_move) ↘ (f_move) ↘ (c_extract) ↑ (c_inline)	↘ (m_move) ↘ (f_move) ↘ (c_extract) ↑ (c_inline)		
Encapsulate Field (206) Encapsulate Collection (208) Replace Type Code with Subclass (223) Replace Type Code with State/Strategy (227) Replace Subclass with Field (232)		↑ (m_delete)	↑ (f_encapsulate) ↑ (f_encapsulate)	↓ (c_create) ↓ (c_create) ↑ (c_delete)
Decompose Conditional (238) Replace Conditional with Polymorphism (255) Introduce Null Object (260)	↘ (c_create)	↘ (c_create)	↘ (p_extract, r_extract)	↓ (c_create) ↓ (c_create)
Add Parameter (275) Remove Parameter (277) Parameterize Method (283) Preserve Whole Object (288) Introduce Parameter Object (295) Remove Setting Method (300) Hide Method (303)	↑ (m_attr_change)	↑ (m_delete) ↑ (m_attr_change)	↓ (p_create) ↑ (p_delete) ↓ (p_create) ↓ (p_create) ↓ (p_create)	↑ (c_create)
Pull Up Field (320) Pull Up Method (322) Push Down Method (328) Push Down Field (329) Extract Subclass (330) Extract Superclass (336) Collapse Hierarchy (344)	↓ (f_move) ↘ (m_move) ↘ (m_move) ↑ (f_move) ↘ (m_move) ↘ (f_move, m_move) ↗ (f_move, m_move)	↓ (f_move) ↘ (m_move) ↘ (m_move) ↑ (f_move) ↘ (m_move) ↘ (f_move, m_move) ↗ (f_move, m_move)		↓ (c_create) ↓ (c_create) ↑ (c_delete)

↑ : surely increase, ↓ : surely decrease, ↗ : conditionally increase, ↘ : conditionally decrease
c_ope : operation for a class, m_ope : operation for a method, f_ope : operation for a field
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Operations

Impact

Table 1. The effects on the security level by the application of refactorings

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Move Method (142)	↘ (m_move)	↘ (m_move)		
<p>Remove Setting Method: deletes all methods which can modify a specified field Access levels of the deleted method: public → (non-existence) (No code can modify the value of the field related to the deleted methods)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Readable level: no change ✓ Writable level: increased ✓ Locality: no change 				
Parameterize Method (269)			↓ (p_create)	
Preserve Whole Object (288)			↓ (p_create)	
Introduce Parameter Object (295)			↓ (p_create)	
Remove Setting Method (300)		↑ (m_delete)		
Hide Method (303)	↑ (m_attr_change)	↑ (m_attr_change)		
Pull Up Field (320)	↓ (f_move)	↓ (f_move)		
Pull Up Method (322)	↘ (m_move)	↘ (m_move)		
Push Down Method (328)	↘ (m_move)	↘ (m_move)		
Push Down Field (329)	↑ (f_move)	↑ (f_move)		
Extract Subclass (330)	↘ (m_move)	↘ (m_move)		↓ (c_create)
Extract Superclass (336)	↘ (f_move, m_move)	↘ (f_move, m_move)		↓ (c_create)
Collapse Hierarchy (344)	↗ (f_move, m_move)	↗ (f_move, m_move)		↑ (c_delete)

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Inline Method (117)			/ (p_delete, r_delete)	
Replace Temp with Query (120)			↓ (r_extract)	
Replace Method with Method Object (135)			↓ (f_extract)	
Preserve Whole Object (288)			↓ (p_create)	
Introduce Parameter Object (295)			↓ (p_create)	
Remove Setting Method (300)		↑ (m_delete)		
Hide Method (303)	↑ (m_attr_change)	↑ (m_attr_change)		
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Pull Up Method (322)	\ (m_move)	\ (m_move)		
Push Down Method (328)	\ (m_move)	\ (m_move)		
Push Down Field (329)	↑ (f_move)	↑ (f_move)		
Extract Subclass (330)	\ (m_move)	\ (m_move)		↓ (c_create)
Extract Superclass (336)	\ (f_move, m_move)	\ (f_move, m_move)		↓ (c_create)
Collapse Hierarchy (344)	/ (f_move, m_move)	/ (f_move, m_move)		↑ (c_delete)

Extract Method: extracts collective code fragments from an existing method and creates a new method including the extracted fragments

Locality of the variable: **local variable** → **parameter**
 (A new parameter might be extracted)

Locality of the variable: **local variable** → **return value**
 (A new return value might extracted)

Readable level: **no change**

✓ Writable level: **no change**

✓ Locality: **conditionally decreased**

↑ : surely increase, ↓ : surely decrease, / : conditionally increase, \ : conditionally decrease

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Move Field (146)	↘ (f_move)	↘ (f_move)		
Extract Class (149) Inline Class (154)	↘ (c_extract) ↑ (c_inline)	↘ (c_extract) ↑ (c_inline)		
Remove Setting Method (300) Hide Method (303)	↑ (m_attr_change)	↑ (m_attr_change)		
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Move Method: moves a specified method in the class defining it to another class that frequently uses the method
 Access levels of the moved method: **default/protected** → **public**
 (The moved method might be used by the source class existing in the package not including the target class)
 ✓ Readable level: **conditionally decreased**
 ✓ Writable level: **conditionally decreased**
 ✓ Locality: **no change**

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Conclusions

- **Secure refactoring** directly increases the security levels of existing code
 - ✓ Easily obtain more secure programs with the same behavior as before
- **Security-Aware Refactoring** reveals the impact of changes of existing code on security
 - ✓ Avoid unknowingly distributing dangerous code

Remaining issues:

- Complete the implementation of the procedure of each secure refactoring
- Formalize secure refactorings so that they never alter the behavior of existing code
- Explore many or more complex criteria for measuring the effects of the application of refactorings
 - ✓ Tried to introduce the concept of information flow

Thank you for your kind attention!

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Any question and comment?

Preliminary Experiment & Findings

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