Memory Consistency

after Advi & Gharachorloo

Program A

```
int flag1, flag2;

void p1 () {
  flag1 = 1;
  if (!flag2) { /* critical section */ }
}

void p2 () {
  flag2 = 1;
  if (!flag1) { /* critical section */ }
}
```

Program B

```
int data, ready;

void p1 () {
  data = 2000;
  ready = 1;
}

void p2 () {
  while (!ready)
    ;
  use (data);
}
```

Program C

```
int a, b;

void p1 () { a = 1; }

void p2 () {
  if (a == 1)
    b = 1;
}

void p3 () {
  if (b == 1)
    use (a);
}
```

Sequential Consistency

- *Sequential consistency*: The result of execution is as if all operations were executed in some sequential order, and the operations of each processor occurred in the order specified by the program. [Lamport]
- Boils down to two requirements:
  1. Maintaining *program order* on individual processors
  2. Ensuring *write atomicity*

S.C. thwarts hardware optimizations

- **Write buffers**
- **Overlapping write operations**
  - Coalescing writes to same cache line
- **Non-blocking reads**
- **Cache coherence**
  - Write completion only after invalidation/update
  - Can't have overlapping updates (Program C)

S.C. thwarts compiler optimizations

- **Code motion**
- **Caching value in register**
  - E.g., ready flag in Program B
- **Common subexpression elimination**
- **Loop blocking**
- **Software pipelining**

Possible optimizations

- **"Prefetch" writes**
  - Invalidate memory in other CPU's caches while waiting for previous reads to complete
- **Speculatively execute reads (optimistically)**
  - If program order violated, roll back state

Relaxed Consistency Models

- **Relax program order**
  - Relax Write to Read order
  - Relax Write to Write order
  - Relax Read to Read and Read to Write order
- **Relax write atomicity**
  - Read others' writes early
- **Relax both**
  - Read own writes early (in conjunction with other relaxation)

Weak ordering

- **Define two classes of memory operation**
  - data
  - synchronization
- **System can reorder any operations between sync references**
- **Easy to implement:**
  - Processor keeps counter of outstanding operations

How to classify memory accesses?

- **Find variables that *race* under S.C.:**
  - Two operations access variable
  - At least one is a write
  - No intervening references (in S.C.)
- **E.g., in Prog B,** `ready` **races, not** `data`

Release consistency

- **4 types of memory operation:**
  - ordinary, nsync, acquire, release
- **Preserve the following orderings [RCsc]:**
  - acquire $\rightarrow$ all
  - all $\rightarrow$ release
  - {release, nsync} $\rightarrow$ {acquire, nsync}
- **Perfect for data protected by mutexes**