

# Static Task Partitioning for Locked Caches in Multi-Core Real-Time Systems \*

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## ABSTRACT

Locking cache lines in hard real-time systems is a common means to ensure timing predictability of data references and to lower bounds on worst-case execution time, especially in a multi-tasking environment. Growing processing demand on multi-tasking real-time systems can be met by employing scalable multi-core architectures, like the recently introduced tile-based architectures. This paper studies the use of cache locking on massive multi-core architectures with private caches in the context of hard real-time systems. In shared cache architectures, a single resource is shared among *all* the tasks. However, in scalable cache architectures with private caches, conflicts exist only among the tasks scheduled on one core. This calls for a cache-aware allocation of tasks onto cores. Our work extends the cache-unaware First Fit Decreasing (FFD) algorithm with a Naive locked First Fit Decreasing (NFFD) policy. We further propose two cache-aware static scheduling schemes: (1) Greedy First Fit Decreasing (GFFD) and (2) Colored First Fit Decreasing (CoFFD). This work contributes an adaptation of these algorithms for conflict resolution of partially locked regions. Experiments indicate that NFFD is capable of scheduling high utilization task sets that FFD cannot schedule. Experiments also show that CoFFD consistently outperforms GFFD resulting in lower number of cores and lower system utilization. CoFFD reduces the number of core requirements from 30% to 60% compared to NFFD. With partial locking, the number of cores in some cases is reduced by almost 50% with an increase in system utilization of 10%. Overall, this work is unique in considering the challenges of future multi-core architectures for real-time systems and provides key insights into task partitioning with locked caches for architectures with private caches.

## Categories and Subject Descriptors

D.4.7 [Operating Systems]: Organization and Design—*real-time systems and embedded systems*; D.4.1 [Operating Systems]: Process Management—*scheduling*; B.3.2 [Memory Structures]: Design Styles—*cache memories*

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## General Terms

Design, Experimentation.

## Keywords

Real-Time Systems, Multi-Core Architectures, Timing Analysis.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Multi-core architectures have become prevalent in embedded system design. This is evident from the variety of multi-core processors available today, such as the 4-core MPCores and Cortex processors from ARM, the 8-core P4080 PowerPC from Freescale and the 64-core TilePro64 from Tiler [1], which find applications in power control systems, satellites and network packet processing. However, hard real-time system designers have been skeptical in adopting these architectures. Unpredictability of multi-core caches have been a significant contributing factor to this skepticism.

Research on cache contention has primarily considered shared caches. This simplifies the problem as all tasks are considered to be contending for the shared cache space. Most contemporary research aims at optimizing the analysis on aforementioned systems [6, 9]. Such schemes become inapplicable to scalable multi-cores, such as shown in Figure 1.

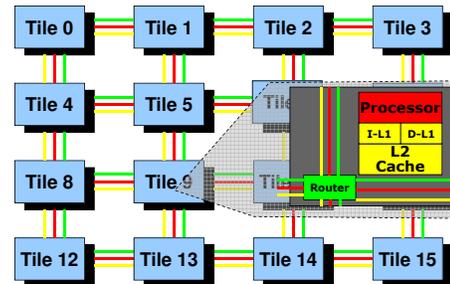


Figure 1: Tile-based Architecture

These architectures use private L1+L2 caches. Any task allocation algorithm on such architectures requires prior knowledge of each task's Worst Case Execution Time (WCET). However, the WCET of a task obtained by static cache analysis depends on cache analysis of all other tasks on a particular core. In this work, it is assumed that private L2 caches are large enough with high associativity (16-32 ways) to hold the data space and instructions of hard real-time tasks. This simplifies the analysis of L2 caches as any access to the L2 cache is a hit after a compulsory miss on warm-up. Thus, a tighter upper bound on the Worst Case Execution Time (WCET) can be established by modeling references resolved at the L2 level as hits after the warm-up phase of the first job execution in a periodic task system. Still, the access latency of L2 caches is an order of magnitude higher than that of L1 caches so that bounds on WCET are not as tight

as they could be. To further tighten WCET bounds, cache locking of selected lines in L1 can be employed on scalable multi-core platforms.

In general, cache locking techniques provide predictability to a task’s cache access behavior. Cache locking can be realized at various granularities. Studies on uni-processor cache locking have assumed the entire L1 cache to be locked [16, 17]. Another study on cache locking for shared caches has assumed locking individual cache lines [19]. Locked caches on uni-processors identify sets within a single cache way for a given task set to improve predictability and, indirectly, utilization/response time of tasks while ensuring schedulability on a single core. In contrast, our work extends to scalable multi-core architectures where tasks are statically partitioned. Our work focuses on distributing tasks over disjoint cores while considering their locked state. A real-time system developer may choose to lock a set of cache lines to tighten WCET bound. This work uses these tightened WCET bounds to statically allocate tasks on a disjoint set of cores.

Prior literature on uni-processor locking techniques focuses on filling a single cache way while reducing the overall utilization of a core. Reduction of the system utilization can be achieved by placing all tasks with conflicting locked cache regions on different cores on scalable architectures. However, such a scheme would consume a large number of cores and result in under-utilization of computing resources. Also, multiple cache ways per L1 cache can be dedicated to locking. Hence, the objective of allocating tasks on scalable multi-cores has to be balanced between the following objectives:

1. Reduction of the number of cores; and
2. Reduction of the overall system utilization.

Static task partitioning has been considered as a viable scheduling option for real-time tasks on multiple cores. Such scheduling schemes aim at minimizing the number of cores for a set of tasks with given worst-case execution time (WCET). However, partitioning tasks with locked cache regions involves resolving the conflicts between locked regions of different tasks.

One of the most commonly used partitioning algorithm is the First Fit Decreasing (FFD) algorithm. First, we extend this algorithm with an approach called Naive Locked FFD (NFFD). Prior to allocation, NFFD decides to use cache locking for tasks that have prohibitively high utilization without locking. It avoids conflict analysis among locked regions by placing each locked task on a different core before allocating unlocked tasks using FFD. We call this algorithm cache-unaware as it avoids any form of analysis on locked cache regions. Then, we develop and evaluate two cache-aware partitioning algorithms: (1) Greedy First Fit Decreasing (GFFD), and (2) Colored First Fit Decreasing (CoFFD). GFFD tries to allocate tasks onto a minimum number of cores [3]. This scheme lacks prior information on the number of cores of a concrete processor but rather reasons abstractly about the minimum number of cores of a hypothetical processor design. CoFFD, a more sophisticated scheme, exhibits a novel approach based on graph coloring that delivers task partitioning. In contrast to GFFD, CoFFD initially assumes a given number of cores for an architecture. The algorithm then tries to allocate a given task-set onto the fixed number of cores. In case of failure,

the number of cores is incremented and the attempt to allocate tasks to cores is repeated. If the objective is to achieve minimum utilization, tasks should be allocated with all candidate regions locked as this lowers their WCET.

Table 1 depicts a comparison of the number of allocated cores for different task sets of 32 tasks using FFD, NFFD, GFFD and CoFFD on an architecture that uses system parameters shown in Table 2. We consider two utilizations for each task: one with locking for all the regions specified by the developer ( $u_{locked}$ ) and another without locking any of those regions ( $u_{unlocked}$ ). A task is termed to be of high, medium and low utilization when ( $0.55 > u_{locked} \geq 0.40$ ), ( $0.40 > u_{locked} \geq 0.25$ ) and ( $0.25 > u_{locked} \geq 0.15$ ), respectively. The first column depicts the number of tasks in the task sets. The remaining columns show the number of cores consumed by the task set under FFD, NFFD, GFFD and CoFFD, respectively. We observe that FFD fails to allocate high utilization task sets as  $u_{unlocked}$  exceeds the utilization bound of 1 for such tasks. This is because it forces regions to be unlocked while the other policies allow locking. NFFD performs better than FFD for low utilization tasks as well. The table shows that the number of cores allocated by cache-aware schemes is significantly lower than the allocations performed by cache-unaware schemes. As the objective is to minimize the number of cores, the two algorithms are adapted to consider both  $u_{locked}$  and  $u_{unlocked}$  during allocation. The algorithms select one of these versions to avoid lock conflicts while ensuring that utilization constraints are met. We observe that CoFFD consistently results in allocating fewer cores than GFFD. Task sets composed of high utilization tasks allocate fewer cores under CoFFD with at most 3% higher system utilization than GFFD. For low utilization task sets, CoFFD allocates fewer cores and lowers system utilization by up to 40% over GFFD.

**Table 1: Locking and Conflict Analysis for 32 Tasks**

Number of Tasks	Number of Cores Required			
	FFD	NFFD	GFFD	CoFFD
High util.	Failed	32	22	20
Med. util.	31	31	21	20
Low. Util.	23	22	14	12

We also propose a mechanism to resize locked regions so that they become partially unlocked. This scheme is applicable when the programmer can provide the maximum number of references to a locked cache line. The two algorithms, GFFD and CoFFD, were adapted to exploit this per-line reference frequency information, based on which they choose whether to retain the lock of a line or unlock it due to lock conflicts of lines between disjoint tasks. We observe that such a mechanism can further reduce the number of allocated cores. It may even allow GFFD to perform at par with CoFFD. Overall, we provide key insights into task partitioning with locked caches for large-scale multi-core architectures with private caches.

**Summary of contributions:** This research makes the following contributions in the context of hard real-time systems with cache locking:

1. This work is the first to employ locked caches on massive multi-core architectures for hard real-time systems.
2. We propose GFFD, an allocation scheme that partitions a given set of tasks with conflicts in their locked cache regions so that the number of allocated cores is kept low. This algorithm is further adapted to resolve

conflicts by (i) unlocking entire task or (ii) resizing locked regions.

3. We propose Colored First Fit Decreasing (CoFFD) that (i) derives task allocations for a given number of cores resulting in a feasible schedule, (ii) enhances a coloring algorithm to deliver balanced allocation and (iii) reduces the number of cores relative to Greedy First Fit Decreasing (GFFD).
4. We propose a novel mechanism that allows tasks to resolve conflicts by partially unlocking the locked regions and inflating their WCETs accordingly. This method aims at improving the schedulability of task sets on a given number of cores when resolution of conflicts by partial unlocking result in lower system utilization than unlocking an entire task.

## 2. RELATED WORK

In the past decade, there has been considerable research promoting locked caches in the context of multi-tasking real-time systems. Static and dynamic cache locking algorithms for instruction caches have been proposed to improve system utilization in [16, 15]. Several methods have been developed to lock program data that is hard to analyze statically [20]. Further techniques have been developed for cache locking that provide performance comparable to that obtained with scratchpad allocation [17]. Recently, cache locking has also been proposed for multi-core systems that use shared L2 caches [19]. This trend is a strong proponent of cache locking as a viable solution in future real-time system designs on multi-cores.

Choffnes *et al.* have proposed migration policies for multicore fair-share scheduling [7]. Their technique strives to minimize migration costs while ensuring fairness among the tasks by maintaining balanced scheduling queues as new tasks are activated. Calandrino *et al.* propose scheduling techniques that account for co-schedulability of tasks with respect to cache behavior [2, 4]. Their approach is based on organizing tasks with the same period into groups of cooperating tasks. All these methods improve cache performance in soft real-time systems. Li *et al.* discuss migration policies that facilitate efficient operating system scheduling in asymmetric multicore architectures [11, 12]. Their work focuses on fault-and-migrate techniques to handle resource-related faults in heterogeneous cores and does not operate in the context of real-time systems. Eisler *et al.* [8] develop a cache capacity increasing scheme for multicores that scavenges unused neighboring cache lines.

Paolieri *et al.* [14] have proposed TDMA-based bus and L2 cache access to improve predictability on multi-core architectures. Their work focuses on supporting hard real-time applications on multi-cores but assumes shared L2 caches with contention due to accesses by different tasks. Ouyang *et al.* [13] have proposed extending Quality of Service support to mesh-based interconnects but their study is limited to the on-chip network traffic.

## 3. SYSTEM DESIGN

In this section, we describe our system architecture and assumptions to WCET analysis for this study. The objective of this work is to best utilize a private cache architecture. This corresponds to the current trend in potentially mesh or tile-based multi-core designs. Tile-based architectures consist of a large number tile processors (cores). Each

tile consists of an in-order processor, a private L1, a private L2 cache and a router (see Figure 1). Each tile acts as a node on a mesh interconnect. Recent work has added Quality-of-Service (QoS) policies to mesh-interconnects [13]. We have identified these trends as the driving force for the simplification of our system. We assume an architecture that has private caches and has a QoS-based interconnect. We assume that the first level of cache allows a certain number of ways of the associative cache to be locked as shown in Figure 2. We also assume that the L2 caches are large enough with high associativity so that the address space of allocated hard real-time tasks on a core fit within the L2 cache. Thus, we assume that the off-chip references occur only while accessing sensory data, which accounts for a very small fraction of the total references. Also, these systems can have inclusive or non-inclusive L2 caches. With inclusive caches, the locked regions in L1 need to be locked in L2 as well.

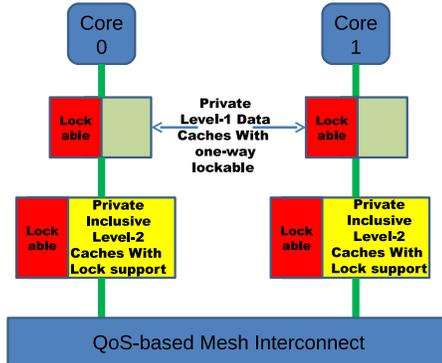


Figure 2: A Lock-based Architecture

Our algorithms are applicable to a system considering both data and instruction caches. However, for the simplicity of analysis we assume that instruction references for hard real-time tasks are all hits at the first level of cache. We also assume that loads to the lines that have not been locked in the L1 cache bypass the L1 cache (as in a previous research work [10]). This allows cores with lower core utilization to co-schedule non-real-time tasks along with hard real-time tasks without affecting the deterministic behavior of the latter. Such hybrid execution of application tasks has been considered in recent research [14]. We assume that a hard real-time task can only lock one cache line per set. Thus, for a 8KB L1 cache with an associativity of two, a hard real-time task can lock up to 4KB of cache content.

We assume that all hard real-time tasks are periodic. Each task's deadline is the same as its period, i.e., an invocation of a task's job has to finish before its next invocation. We further assume that the system runs a scheduler per core. Each of these schedulers independently schedules the tasks allocated to this core. We assume them to utilize Earliest Deadline First (EDF) scheduling. EDF optimally schedules tasks for uni-processor, i.e., the utilization bound for each core is defined by the following equation:  $\sum_{i=1}^n \frac{C_i}{P_i} \leq 1$ , where  $C_i$  and  $P_i$  are the WCET and the period of the  $i^{th}$  task, respectively. Deadlines are assumed to be the same as the periods.

For the algorithms, each task needs to provide the following information:  $\langle list_{locked-sets}, WCET_{locked}, WCET_{unlocked} \rangle$ .  $list_{locked-sets}$  is the list of sets where the programmer intends to lock a cache line for the task.  $WCET_{locked}$  and  $WCET_{unlocked}$  are the WCETs of a task

when all the lines of  $list_{locked-sets}$  are locked and unlocked, respectively.  $WCET_{locked}$  does not include the overhead of loading the contents of a task because it is a one-time cost incurred at system start-up.

We also assume that the real-time tasks are pairwise independent. Hence, these tasks do not cause any coherence traffic on the interconnect.

## 4. TASK PARTITION ALGORITHMS

### 4.1 Cache-Unaware Schemes

Static task partitioning algorithms for multi-core architectures have been widely studied. Most of these approaches consistently aim at minimizing the number of cores utilized [3]. They use bin-packing schemes considering a single utilization value per task. These algorithms for distributed systems are cache unaware. In the following section, we present two cache-unaware schemes, namely FFD and NFFD.

#### 4.1.1 First Fit Decreasing (FFD)

FFD is a commonly used algorithm for allocating tasks on distributed cores. This implementation assumes that the tasks are unlocked, i.e., we consider all tasks with a utilization of  $u_{unlocked}$  using  $WCET_{unlocked}$ . This algorithm takes task ( $i$ ), already allocated set of cores  $N_{procs}$  and a flag that decides whether task to be allocated in a locked state or unlocked state if it adds a new core to  $N_{procs}$ . The FFD algorithm picks tasks in decreasing order of their  $u_{unlocked}$  and allocates them using Algorithm 1. Line 1 sorts the cores in  $N_{proc}$  in decreasing order of core utilization. Lines 3-8 iterate over the cores until the task is allocated or until all cores have been considered and task could not be allocated. A task is allocated to a core if a core's utilization does not exceed 1 (utilization bound for EDF). If a task could not be allocated to any core in  $N_{procs}$ , lines 9-13 add a new core to  $N_{procs}$  and the task is allocated to it in an unlocked state.

**Input:**  $i$  : task,  $N_{procs}$  : processors,  $isLock$ : boolean

**Output:**  $N_{procs}$  number of processors

```

1  $N_{procs}$ .sort(decreasing utilization) ;
2 foreach  $N_{procs}$   $j$  do
3   if  $Success = false$  then
4     if  $i.u_{unlocked} \leq 1 - j.u$  then
5       allocate task  $i$  to core  $j$ ;
6        $j.u = j.u + i.u_{unlocked}$ ;
7        $Success := true$  ;
8       break;
9   end
10 end
11 if  $Success = false$  then
12   allocate  $New_{proc}$ ;
13    $N_{procs} := N_{procs} \cup New_{proc}$ ;
14   allocate task  $i$  to  $New_{proc}$ ;
15   if  $isLock = true$  then
16      $New_{proc}.u := i.u_{locked}$ ;
17   end
18   else
19      $New_{proc}.u := i.u_{unlocked}$ ;
20   end
21 end

```

**Algorithm 1:** FFD Task Allocation (baseFFD)

#### 4.1.2 Naive Locked FFD (NFFD)

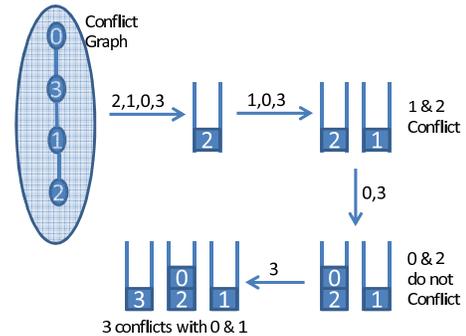
We extend FFD with a simple approach of using locked caches. Tasks are defined to be locked or unlocked prior to their allocation. Thus, all the tasks have a single WCET before allocation, which is  $WCET_{locked}$  for a locked task or  $WCET_{unlocked}$  otherwise. Bin packing has difficulties to co-locate multiple tasks with high utilization. Any task whose utilization is greater than 1 is deemed to be locked. Each of these locked tasks is allocated to a separate core as the algorithm is cache-unaware. The algorithm proceeds to allocate the set of unlocked tasks with an initial value of  $N_{procs}$ , the number of cores assigned to locked tasks.

### 4.2 Cache-Aware Task Partitioning

We next present two cache-aware mechanisms. Initially, our algorithms consider two values,  $WCET_{locked}$  and  $WCET_{unlocked}$ . In Section 4.2.4, we discuss a mechanism with the objective of reducing the impact of conflicts. The  $list_{locked-sets}$  item is used to deduce a conflict matrix  $M_{conf}$  for locked tasks. A conflict among the locked sets indicates the existence of common locked cache set(s). Each empty entry in  $M_{conf}(i, j)$  signifies the absence of conflicts between tasks  $i$  and  $j$  while every filled entry signifies existence of a conflict.

#### 4.2.1 Greedy First Fit Decreasing (GFFD)

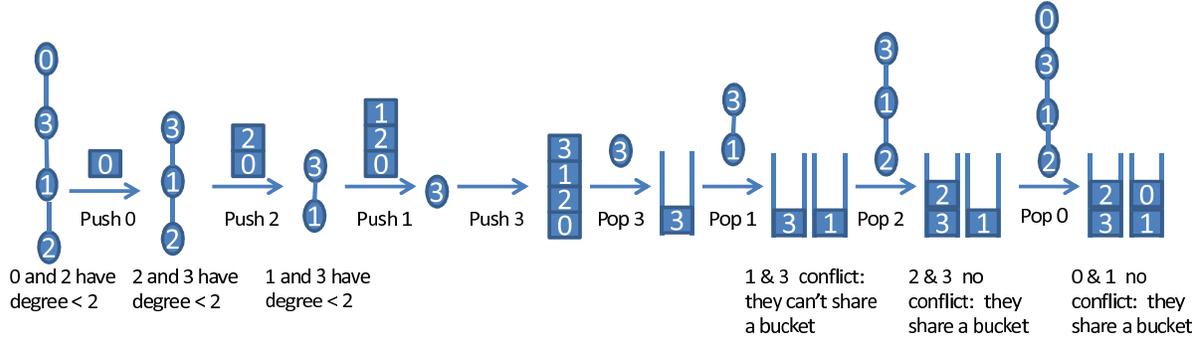
We first illustrate GFFD by example using a conflict graph. An undirected conflict graph of four nodes/vertices is depicted in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** Greedy First Fit Decreasing in Operation

A conflict graph in the context of task partitioning is a graph  $G = (V; E)$ , where every vertex/node  $v \in V$  corresponds uniquely to a task and an  $edge(i; j) \in E$  indicates that tasks  $i$  and  $j$  are in conflict and cannot be allocated onto the same core. The objective is to map nodes into buckets while keeping the number of buckets low. The FFD algorithm arranges nodes in traversal order via heuristics before allocating them. In this example, the algorithm establishes an allocation order of nodes 2, 1, 0 and 3. At each step, the node in question checks if it can be placed within any of the existing buckets. A node can be allocated to a bucket if the bucket does not contain any node that conflicts with it. In the example, node 0 gets allocated to a bucket that contains node 2, which does not conflict with 0. In case all buckets conflict, a new bucket is created, e.g., during the allocation of nodes 1 and 3.

We developed a modified version of the FFD algorithm. We call this Greedy First Fit Decreasing (GFFD). Algorithm 2 presents the details of the algorithm. This algorithm takes a task set, the number of locked ways per cache and a conflict matrix  $M_{conf}$  as an input. If the number of



**Figure 4: Chaitin's Coloring in Operation with 2 Colors**

tasks is  $N$ , then  $M_{conf}$  is a  $N \times N$  matrix with each entry representing a conflict between two tasks. A value of 1 represents a cache conflict among locked regions of tasks, while a 0 represents otherwise. The idea is to incrementally add cores to the schedule starting with an initial number of cores,  $N_{procs}$ , of 1. Lines 3-13 proceed to allocate tasks in FFD fashion using  $u_{locked}$ . Line 8 uses a procedure `IsAllocatable()` that returns the cache way that is still unassigned to any locked lines of tasks that conflict with any locked lines of task  $i$ . In case a valid cache way is found and the allocation of the task with the locked region passes the schedulability test, the task is allocated to the core. If, however, all the lockable cache-ways of the core's L1 are in conflict or the schedulability test fails, the algorithm tries to allocate the task to another core until it runs out of cores in  $N_{procs}$ . If the task remains unallocated, line 15 uses Algorithm 1 to allocate the task. The value of `true` for the third parameter to `baseFFD` forces the task to be allocated in locked state when a new core is added to  $N_{procs}$ .

**Input:**  $M$  : Set of Tasks,  $Assoc$  : Number of locked ways per cache,  $M_{conf}$  : conflict Matrix

**Output:**  $N_{procs}$  number of processors

```

1  $N_{procs} := 1$  ;
2  $M.sort(decreasing\ u_{locked})$ ;
3 while  $M$  is not empty do
4    $Success := false$  ;
5    $N_{procs}.sort(decreasing\ utilization)$  ;
6    $i := M.front$ ;
7   foreach  $N_{procs}$   $j$  do
8     if  $k := IsAllocatable(j, i, Assoc, M_{conf}) \neq -1$ 
9       then
10        if  $i.u_{locked} \leq 1 - j.u$  then
11          allocate task  $i$  to core  $j$  in  $k$ th way;
12           $j.u = j.u + i.u_{locked}$ ;
13           $Success := true$  ;
14          break ;
15        end
16      end
17    end
18  end
19  if  $Success = false$  then
20     $N_{procs} := baseFFD(i, N_{procs}, true)$ ;
21  end
22 end

```

**Algorithm 2: Greedy First Fit Decreasing (GFFD)**

#### 4.2.2 Colored First Fit Decreasing (CoFFD)

GFFD identifies task conflicts only after a task has been

committed for allocation, even though a conflict matrix is already present. The algorithm does not have a prior notion of the number of cores available within the system. Furthermore, the order in which tasks are assigned to cores is still based on task utilization. We can do better. When tasks contend for cache regions, analysis of the cache conflict graph yields superior, conflict-guided allocations. Such analysis considers tasks in a conflict-conscious order that ensures they can co-exist with each other for a given number of cores. To this end, we adapted a graph coloring approach by Chaitin [5] that is widely used in register allocation, which is based on the following theorem:

**CHAITIN'S THEOREM 1.** *Let  $G$  be a graph and  $v \in V(G)$  such that  $deg(v) < k$ , where  $deg(v)$  denotes the number of edges of vertex  $v$ . A graph  $G$  is  $k$ -colorable if and only if  $G - v$  is  $k$ -colorable.*

This theorem provides the basis for graph decomposition by repeatedly deleting vertices with degree less than  $k$  until either the graph is empty or only vertices with degree greater than or equal to  $k$  are left. In the latter case, the graph cannot be colored. However, by removing a task from a conflict graph using some heuristic, a new coloring attempt can be made for the remaining of the graph. Figure 4 shows how Chaitin's theorem can be used in practice. In this example, the conflict graph is the same as in the FFD example in Figure 3. This new example shows how Chaitin's approach allocates the set of nodes to two buckets/colors. At first, the algorithm fills up a stack removing one node at a time. A node is a viable candidate for being pushed onto the stack if and only if the degree is less than 2. When a node is removed, it reduces the degree of its neighbor in the remainder of the graph. Since all nodes can be pushed onto the stack, the graph is two-colorable (cf. Chaitin's theorem). During the following steps, nodes are popped off the stack and associated with a color/bucket. In our example, Chaitin's algorithm successfully allocates nodes to two buckets. In contrast, three buckets were required by the FFD algorithm.

Algorithm 3 shows the task coloring mechanism, which is responsible for finding non-conflicting tasks that can be grouped together in a given number of colors. The number of colors is equal to the number of locked cache ways that can be filled within a given number of cores. Lines 4-13 fill up two data-structures, `colorStack` and `spilledList`. Every iteration of this loop finds a task that can be placed on either of these stacks. Line 5 searches through the list of unallocated tasks and finds the task with lowest degree. A task with minimum degree is pushed onto `colorStack` if and only if its degree is less than `NumOfColors`. Otherwise,

the algorithm finds a task using a heuristic that focuses on minimizing a metric. For example, in algorithm 3 the metric  $u_{locked}/degree$  is minimized at line 10. The objective of this heuristic is to decrease the conflict degrees of as many tasks as possible and, at the same time, to pick a task that causes the minimum increase in the system utilization while remaining unlocked ( $u_{unlocked}$ ). This task is then added to the *spilledList*. While removing the tasks from  $M$ , we decrease the conflict *degree* of neighbors.

**Input:**  $M$  : Set of Tasks,  $NumOfColors$  : Number of Cores  $\times$  Number of locked ways per cache,  $M_{conf}$  : conflict Matrix  
**Output:** *colorList* , *spilledList*, *rejectedTaskList*

```

1 colorStack := empty;
2 spilledList := empty;
3 colorList := empty;
4 while  $M$  is not empty do
5    $t$  := lowest degree task by linear search of  $M$  ;
6   if  $t.degree < NumOfColors$  then
7     push  $t$  onto colorStack ;
8     remove  $t$  from  $M$  and  $M_{conf}$  ;
9   end
10  else
11     $t$  := task with minimum ( $u_{unlocked}/degree$ ) ;
12    push  $t$  onto spilledList ;
13    remove  $t$  from  $M$  and  $M_{conf}$  ;
14  end
15 end
16  $aveCoreUtil = \frac{colorStack.u}{NumOfColors}$ ;
17 while colorStack is not empty do
18    $t$  := Pop colorStack ;
19   repopulate  $M_{conf}$  ;
20    $curColor := 0$ ;
21   for  $curColor = 0 \rightarrow NumOfColors - 1$  do
22     if None of the neighbors has this color then
23        $curCore := curColor \bmod \text{number Of Cores}$  ;
24       if  $curCore.u < aveCoreUtil$  and  $curCore.u + t.u \leq 1$  then
25          $t.color := curColor$  ;
26          $colorList[curColor] := t$  ;
27         Add  $t.u$  to  $curCore.u$  ;
28         break ;
29       end
30     end
31   end
32 end
33 if  $t.color$  is not a valid Color then
34   push  $t$  onto rejectedTaskList ;
35 end
36 end

```

**Algorithm 3:** Task Coloring Algorithm

Once all tasks have been distributed among either of the stacks, lines 13-27 put the tasks in *colorStack* into different *colorLists*. Assigning a task from *colorStack* to a *colorList* is equivalent to allocating the task to a core as each color corresponds to a lockable cache way. The *colorLists* are associated with cores in a round robin manner, i.e., if the number of lockable cache ways per task is equal to two and the number of cores is three, then there are a total of six *colorLists*. The first, second and third *colorLists* are as-

sociated with the first cache way on cores one, two and three, respectively. The fourth, fifth and sixth *colorLists* are associated with the second cache way on cores one, two and three. Lines 15-16 pop a task from the *colorStack* and re-populate the conflict edges in the graph with the tasks that have already been colored. The algorithm then loops through all the colors until it finds a color that has not been allocated to any of its neighbors in the graph. Line 20 picks the core associated with that color. For a task to be assigned a color, the task has to pass the EDF schedulability test.

Furthermore, the current utilization of the core has to be less than *aveCoreUtil*, where *aveCoreUtil* is computed at line 14. These conditions prevent *colorLists* from becoming unbalanced. Chaitin's algorithm in its purest form is

- unaware of the tasks in the *spilledList* and
- unable to deliver a balanced *colorList*.

E.g., if none of the tasks are conflicting then all tasks can be given the same color. Conditions at line 21 allow the tasks to be evenly distributed across cores. If either of the conditions fail, then the algorithm moves on to the next color until all the colors have been tried. If a task cannot be assigned a valid color, it is moved to *rejectedTaskList*.

**Input:** *rejectedTaskList*,  $Assoc$  : Number of locked ways per cache,  $M_{conf}$  : conflict Matrix,  $N_{procs}$  : number of cores

```

1 rejectedTaskList.sort(decreasing  $u_{locked}$ );
2 foreach rejectedTaskList  $i$  do
3    $N_{procs.sort}$ (decreasing  $u$ );  $Success = false$ ;
4   foreach  $N_{procs}$   $j$  do
5     foreach  $Assoc$   $k$  do
6       if  $IsAllocatable(j,i,Assoc,M_{conf}) \neq -1$ 
7         then
8           allocate task  $i$  to core  $j$  in  $kth$ 
9           associativity;
10           $j.u = j.u + i.u_{locked}$ ;
11           $Success = true$ ;
12          goto line 11;
13        end
14      end
15    end
16  end
17 if  $Success == false$  then
18   put task  $i$  on spilledList ;
19 end
20 end
21 spilledList.sort(decreasing  $u_{unlocked}$ );
22 foreach SpilledList  $i$  do
23   if  $N_{procs} \neq baseFFD(i,N_{procs},false)$  then
24     return Failed Allocation;
25   end
26 end
27 return Successful Allocation;

```

**Algorithm 4:** Colored First Fit Decreasing (CoFFD)—Uncolored Lists

The task coloring stage outputs partially filled cores and a list of tasks in *rejectedTaskList* and *spilledStack*. These are subsequently used by the second part of the allocation shown in Algorithm 4. Algorithm 4 first tries to allocate tasks from the *rejectedTaskList*. It sorts the tasks of *rejectedTaskList* in decreasing order of their  $u_{locked}$ . Each

iteration of the loop starting at line 2 then picks a task in order and tries to allocate it in FFD fashion on  $N_{procs}$ . If a task cannot be allocated to a core, it is moved to the *spilledList*. Once the *rejectedTaskList* is empty, all the tasks in *spilledList* are allocated using *baseFFD*. If all the tasks in *spilledList* are allocated, the task set is deemed to be schedulable on a given number of  $N_{procs}$  cores. Otherwise,  $N_{procs}$  is incremented by the caller of CoFFD. This process repeats until a schedule has been found.

Figure 5 depicts a step-by-step working example:

- Tasks are grouped in a conflict graph. Our example has five tasks with  $u_{locked}$  utilizations of 0.5, 0.3, 0.4, 0.2 and 0.2. Each task conflicts with its neighboring task. Therefore, tasks form a chain of conflicts in the graph.
- Our graph coloring algorithm is applied to split the tasks in *ColorLists*. The task set is split into two colors alternating between adjacent tasks in the same *colorList*.
- We assume a multi-core system with single-way locking in the L1 cache. Since the aggregate utilization is 1.6,  $N_{procs}$  is initialized with the ceiling of system utilization, which is 2. The tasks in each *colorList* are sorted in decreasing order of  $u_{locked}$ . The cores are filled in a round-robin fashion. The green *colorList* fits within core zero. Tasks in the red *colorList* are allocated to core one. Tasks with higher utilization (0.5 and 0.4) are allocated to core one while the task with utilization 0.2 is moved to the *rejectedTaskList* as it exceeds the utilization bound of 1.
- The algorithm now tries to allocate the task from *rejectedTaskList* to core zero. It fails due to task conflicts with an already allocated task and due to the availability of only one cache way for locking.
- At this stage, the task is moved to the *spilledList*. The task's utilization is increased to  $u_{unlocked}$  because the previous steps show that the task cannot be allocated on given cores without unlocking its locked regions. This changes its utilization from 0.2 to 0.4.
- The task is allocated on core 0 with this inflated utilization because such allocation does not violate the utilization bound on core 0.

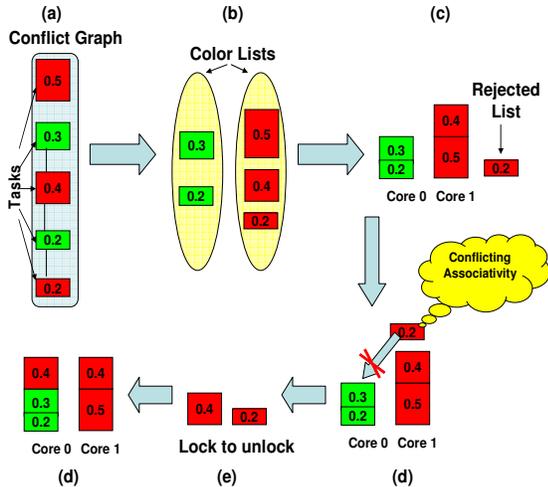


Figure 5: Task Coloring in Operation

### 4.2.3 Algorithmic Complexity

Bin packing is known to be NP-hard. Any known optimal solution is exponential in complexity. Besides experimental evaluations, it is important to assess the complexity of sub-optimal, heuristic approaches to assess their scalability in terms of number of tasks and cores. In the following, the algorithmic complexity of GFFD and CoFFD are assessed.

For the purpose of complexity analysis, let the number of tasks be  $X$  and the number of cores be  $Y$ . Let  $t$  be the task to be allocated next.

**Algorithmic Complexity of GFFD:** The outer loop in algorithm 2 iterates over all tasks. The inner loop from 8-13 iterates over all cores. The function *IsAllocatable* iterates over the task task conflict set,  $M_{conf}$ , bounded by the number of tasks, to detect if  $t$  conflicts with any of the tasks allocated to a core, i.e., *IsAllocatable* has an algorithmic complexity of  $O(X)$ . Thus, the combined algorithmic complexity of GFFD is  $O(YX^2)$ .

**Algorithmic Complexity of CoFFD:** CoFFD consists of algorithms 3 and 4. The former algorithm colors the tasks while allocating them to cores. It has two loops. The first loop between lines 4 and 12 iterates over all tasks. The nested computations of linear search at line 5, reduction of number of conflicts for tasks conflicting with  $t$  at line 8 and 12, and linear search at line 10 are bounded by the number of tasks, i.e., they have an algorithmic complexity of  $O(X)$  for a combined complexity of  $O(X^2)$  for the first loop. The second loop between lines 14 and 27 iterates over all tasks while pushing them onto a stack. The nested loop within iterates over the set of colors, which is bounded by the number of cores,  $Y$ . The nested conditional at line 19 iterates over the set of neighboring nodes in the repopulated graph whose cardinality is bounded by the number of tasks,  $X$ . This implies an algorithmic complexity of  $O(YX^2)$  for the second loop, which dominates the complexity of the first loop, i.e., is the overall algorithmic complexity of algorithm 3. The algorithmic complexity of algorithm 4, sequentially invoked next, is  $O(YX^2)$  following the same argument as for GFFD since their algorithmic structure are equivalent in terms of loop iterators, i.e., the rejected task list is bounded by the number of cores. The loop iterating over the spilled list is bounded by the number of tasks but its complexity is dominated by the previous loop. Thus, the algorithmic complexity of CoFFD is  $O(YX^2)$ .

Thus, both the cache-aware algorithms deliver us the task partitioning with algorithmic complexity of  $O(YX^2)$ .

### 4.2.4 Optimized Region Resizing for Multi-cores

So far, we have assumed that conflicting tasks can only share a resource either by locking all specified regions or keeping all of them unlocked. This is useful when locked regions should remain transparent to the programmer. We can improve on our results if programmers can accurately estimate the upper bound on the number of references to each locked cache line (e.g., based on upper loop bounds), which we later demonstrate by showing the effect of region resizing in the evaluation section. This requires the specification of the number of references ( $N_{refs}$ ) for each locked cache line in *list\_locked\_set*. We can then compute the reference frequency,  $R_f$ , of a locked cache line for task  $t$  as

$$R_f = \frac{N_{refs}}{Period_t}$$

When the allocation of a task with  $WCET_{locked}$  has failed, we need not inflate the WCET of the task directly from

$WCET_{locked}$  to  $WCET_{unlocked}$ . Instead, we can resolve conflicts at a much finer granularity. If a task C has a conflict with another task A at set  $m$ , and if  $R_f$  for set  $m$  of task C is higher than  $R_f$  for set  $m$  of task A, then task C will retain its locked line while task A will lose one. If multiple cache ways are lockable, the locked cache line with the minimum  $R_f$  is replaced. This increases the utilization of the task with the newly locked line.

**Optimization-induced changes to task allocation algorithms:** Since a task will lock multiple cache lines, allocation of a task to a core may affect different tasks on different cache sets. Hence, the schedulability test has to use the temporary WCETs of all the affected tasks before making permanent changes. The *IsAllocatable* procedure performs a locked cache analysis and delivers the temporary WCETs along with a list of cache resizing specifications if the schedulability test succeeds. In case the test fails, the list of updates is rejected and no permanent changes are made to the WCETs. In Algorithm 3, the heuristic for selecting spilled tasks will change since partial locking of cache lines affects multiple tasks instead of dilating the WCET of just one. Thus, we spill the task whose (*Number\_of\_conflicting\_cache\_lines/degree*) is minimal.

We can use the algorithms presented above in several ways. If tasks can meet their deadlines only under locking with  $WCET_{locked}$ , then these algorithms will allocate them with  $WCET_{locked}$ . If  $WCET_{locked}$  and  $WCET_{unlocked}$  are provided, then both fully locked and fully unlocked scenarios can be assessed by the algorithms. Dealing with execution times at coarser levels seems more attractive to the developers. This allows them to select lockable lines with rough estimate of the access patterns. Also, it may not be possible to deduce an accurate number of references or the estimates can be highly pessimistic, especially when data regions are being accessed sparsely. Conversely, if data regions are being frequently referenced and references are uniformly dense around locked regions, then the region resizing can be used in conjunction with GFFD and CoFFD.

## 5. TASK-SET GENERATION

Due to the unavailability of a full blown real-time application for massive multi-core architectures, we decided to utilize synthetic task sets in our experiments. This allows us to vary various parameters like the size of locked regions, number of tasks, and conflicts, which in turn test corner cases of our algorithms. The impetus towards massive multi-core architectures will allow such applications to be prevalent in the future. We assume that static analysis tools such as [18] deliver the  $WCET_{locked}$ ,  $WCET_{unlocked}$  and  $R_f$ , which is beyond the scope of this paper. Table 2 shows the architectural and task-set parameters of our experimental framework.

We generated the synthetic task-set values (period, locked execution time and unlocked execution time) as follows:

1. Task sets with varying number of locked sets were generated with 1 to 4 locked regions. Each locked region is given a random number of references. Every cache line is subjected to a uniform number of references to model spatial locality effects.
2. The total number of references were derived by aggregating the number of references incurred within the locked regions of the task. Since the programmer will be locking the regions in L1 (highest utilization benefit), we assume that these locked lines consume 80%

**Table 2: System Parameters**

Parameter	Value
Processor Model	in-order
Cache Line Size	32B
L1 Cache Size/Associativity	8KB/2-way
Lockable associativity	1/2
L1 Access latency	1 cycle
L2 Access Latency	10 cycles
External Memory Latency	100 cycles
Max. sets locked by a task	114/128
Min. sets locked by a task	8/128
Max. size of locked region	57 sets
Min. size of locked region	8 sets
Max. size of task sets	42
total tasks generated	126
Max. locked regions by a task	4
Min. locked regions by a task	1

of the total data loads. Out of the remaining 20%, we assume 18% are hits in the L2 cache and 2% are references to sensory data that goes off chip. We also assume that every 5th instruction is a load. This lets us infer number of instruction fetches that incur L1 cache hits (see Section 3). These assumptions allow us to derive a  $WCET_{locked}$  for a task.

3. To derive the  $WCET_{unlocked}$ , we assume unlocked regions to hit in L2 cache. If two locked regions are accessed by two different paths, then the increase in WCET is due to just one region (the one that dominates the references), not both. Thus, we randomly select tasks to accommodate such behavior. This also results in varied increases in execution time between  $WCET_{locked}$  and  $WCET_{unlocked}$  across tasks.
4. Next, we assign periods to each task  $i$  to group them into different utilization categories: high utilization ( $0.55 > u_i > 0.40$ ), medium utilization ( $0.40 > u_i > 0.25$ ), and low utilization ( $0.25 > u_i > 0.15$ ).
5. We assume that the tasks do not have any inter-task dependencies.
6. We assume a task utilization equal to a task's density, i.e., a task's deadline is equal to its period.

We present our experimental results for a system that supports single locked cache ways. Such a scheme is also applicable when considering horizontal cache partitioning, where all the lockable ways in each set are dedicated to a task.

**Cache-unaware vs. Cache-aware:** First, we compare the cache-unaware schemes (FFD, NFFD) against cache-aware ones (GFFD, CoFFD). Table 3 shows the best allocations produced by schemes within the two categories, i.e., NFFD (cache-unaware) and CoFFD (cache-aware). On average, the number of cores used by cache-aware schemes is 40% less than that of contemporary allocation schemes applicable for distributed core mechanisms. We also observe that the contemporary FFD fails to allocate high utilization task sets. It performs worse than NFFD for low utilization task sets as shown earlier in Table 1.

**Allocations while retaining locked state:** Table 4 depicts the results of our algorithms when tasks are allocated in locked state, i.e., with an execution time of  $WCET_{locked}$ . The first column shows the number of tasks in the task-set. The second and third columns show the number of cores allocated by GFFD and CoFFD, respectively, when a task-set is composed of high utilization tasks only. The fourth

**Table 3: Allocated Cores: Cache-aware/-unaware**

# of tasks	high util.		med. util.		low util.	
	unaware	aware	unaware	aware	unaware	aware
4	4	<b>3</b>	4	<b>2</b>	3	<b>2</b>
8	8	<b>5</b>	8	<b>4</b>	5	<b>3</b>
12	12	<b>8</b>	12	<b>5</b>	8	<b>4</b>
16	16	<b>10</b>	16	<b>8</b>	12	<b>6</b>
20	20	<b>13</b>	20	<b>11</b>	16	<b>8</b>
24	24	<b>15</b>	23	<b>15</b>	19	<b>10</b>
28	28	<b>19</b>	27	<b>19</b>	21	<b>11</b>
32	32	<b>20</b>	31	<b>21</b>	22	<b>12</b>
36	36	<b>21</b>	35	<b>22</b>	23	<b>15</b>
42	42	<b>25</b>	41	<b>24</b>	24	<b>17</b>

and fifth columns represent the same for medium utilization tasks, and the sixth and seventh columns for lower utilization tasks. Lower core allocations are depicted in bold font. In all cases, CoFFD results in fewer cores allocated than GFFD, especially as the number of tasks increases. As more tasks are added to the system, the conflict graph becomes denser. CoFFD avoids conflicts strategically due to its coloring scheme while the greedy scheme results in a less conflict-conscious allocation.

**Table 4: Allocated Cores: CoFFD/GFFD, All Tasks Locked**

# of tasks	high util.		med. util.		low util.	
	GFFD	CoFFD	GFFD	CoFFD	GFFD	CoFFD
4	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	3	<b>2</b>	3	<b>2</b>
8	6	<b>5</b>	5	<b>4</b>	4	<b>4</b>
12	9	<b>8</b>	6	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
16	11	<b>10</b>	9	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
20	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	12	<b>11</b>	12	<b>11</b>
24	16	<b>15</b>	16	<b>15</b>	16	<b>15</b>
28	20	<b>19</b>	20	<b>19</b>	20	<b>19</b>
32	22	<b>20</b>	22	<b>21</b>	22	<b>21</b>
36	24	<b>21</b>	24	<b>22</b>	23	<b>22</b>
42	27	<b>25</b>	25	<b>24</b>	24	<b>23</b>

**Allocations with all or none:** This experiment allows allocation of tasks either with locking of all regions or while leaving all of them unlocked. After a locked allocation with  $WCET_{locked}$  is attempted, algorithms can fall back to an unlocked allocation with  $WCET_{unlocked}$  for a given task in case conflicts have prevented the allocation on a given core. Table 5 depicts the results with best results in bold face. The first column shows the number of tasks in the task-set. The second and the third columns show the number of cores allocated by GFFD and CoFFD, respectively. Sets with higher/medium utilization tasks result in similar allocations. This is because it is difficult for the higher utilization tasks to be allocated under the inflated execution budget of  $WCET_{unlocked}$ . However, tasks with lower utilizations can be allocate tasks with  $WCET_{unlocked}$ . The fourth and the fifth columns depict the system utilization delivered under the allocations of the algorithms. The last column shows the decrease in system utilization achieved by CoFFD over GFFD. The results indicate that CoFFD beats GFFD not only in terms of allocating fewer cores but also in improving system utilization by over 18% for task-sets with large numbers of tasks. This is because GFFD inflates the execution budget of tasks that cannot be allocated to cores under locking. In addition, conflict analysis prior to allocation allows the algorithm to apply heuristics to reduce the number of tasks that remain unlocked. The results of CoFFD are due to combined heuristics for selecting spilled tasks. Heuristic 1 selects the task with the least  $\frac{WCET_{unlocked}}{degreeofConflicts}$  value,

which emphasizes the task’s degree. This prevents the number of cores to be increased when non-conflict placements are still feasible. Algorithmically, CoFFD avoids spills of tasks onto the stack (see Algorithm 4). Heuristic 2 selects the task with the least  $WCET_{unlocked}$  value. Of the two heuristics, CoFFD selects the one that results in the allocation of fewer cores. For example, most task sets in Table 5 resulted in the allocation of fewer cores under heuristic 1, but the last task set would have resulted in the allocation of 18 cores whereas heuristic 2 reduced this allocation to 17. This behavior was also observed while allocating tasks with locked region resizing (see below).

**Table 5: CoFFD vs. GFFD: Selected Tasks Unlocked**

# of tasks	GFFD	CoFFD	GFFD Util.	CoFFD Util.	Util. decreased by CoFFD
4	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	1.48	0.88	<b>40.54 %</b>
8	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	2.05	2.027	<b>0.88 %</b>
12	5	<b>4</b>	3.77	3.06	<b>18.83 %</b>
16	7	<b>6</b>	5.07	4.13	<b>18.54 %</b>
20	9	<b>8</b>	7.33	5.86	<b>19.64 %</b>
24	11	<b>10</b>	8.6	7.04	<b>18.13 %</b>
28	12	<b>11</b>	10.2	8.65	<b>15.19 %</b>
32	14	<b>12</b>	11.57	9.7	<b>16.16 %</b>
36	15	<b>15</b>	12.67	10.27	<b>18.94 %</b>
42	17	<b>17</b>	14.04	11.87	<b>20.37 %</b>

**Region Resized Locking:** The next experiment assessed the optimization of resizing locked regions for conflicted tasks. We observed that sets with high utilization tasks result in dilation of WCET when locking fails, which reduces their chances of being allocated. In Table 6, we show the results for task-sets with low utilization tasks as they benefited the most from region resizing. The first column shows the number of tasks in the task-sets. The second and the third columns show the number of cores allocated when partial locking is used by GFFD and CoFFD, respectively. The fourth and fifth columns show the number of allocated cores when tasks are not allowed to unlock any of their regions. The results indicate that for higher number of tasks, partial locking after resizing reduces the number of required cores by 50%. It is interesting to note that the greedy algorithm performed as well as CoFFD with combined heuristics 1 and 2. This is due to the fine-grained arbitration of conflict regions under resizing. For task-sets with medium utilization tasks, CoFFD and GFFD allocate a similar number of cores for all task-sets. Yet, CoFFD results in 1%-14% reduced system utilization.

**Table 6: Region Resizing**

Number of Tasks	GFFD w/ Partial Locking	CoFFD w/ Partial Locking	GFFD w/ locks only	CoFFD w/ locks only
4	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	3	<b>2</b>
8	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	4	<b>4</b>
12	4	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
16	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
20	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	12	<b>11</b>
24	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	16	<b>15</b>
28	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	20	<b>19</b>
32	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	22	<b>21</b>
36	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	23	<b>22</b>
42	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	24	<b>23</b>

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The use of multi-core architectures is not yet prevalent in real-time systems since guaranteeing predictability of hard real-time tasks on such architectures remains a challenge.

Cache locking is a technique that is commonly employed to improve the predictability of real-time task execution. This work is the first to study allocation of real-time tasks with locked caches on distributed cache systems. Contemporary static scheduling schemes may not use locked caches. However, this renders certain high utilization tasks unschedulable as their unlocked WCET is prohibitively high. A simplistic solution would be to allowing locking of such tasks and placing locked tasks onto different cores. We call this Naive locked FFD (NFFD) as it locks certain tasks with high utilizations and is cache-unaware.

This paper proposes two cache-aware algorithms for task allocation in a multi-core environment where tasks are allowed to lock cache lines in a specified subset of cache ways in each core's private L1 cache. The first algorithm, GFFD, is an enhanced version of the First Fit Decreasing (FFD) algorithm. The second, CoFFD, is based on a graph coloring method. Our best scheme, CoFFD, reduces the number of core requirements from 25% to 60% compared to NFFD with an average reduction of 40%. CoFFD consistently performs better than GFFD as it lowers both the number of cores and system utilization.

We also propose a mechanism that allows locked regions to be resized. This scheme is applicable when the programmer can accurately provide the number of references to a locked cache line, yet does not want to be concerned with fine-grained locking decisions. The two algorithms were further adapted to use task and reference information to choose whether to retain a line in locked or unlocked state for conflicting regions. With such partial locking, the number of cores in some cases is reduced by almost 50% with an increase in system utilization of 10%. Overall, this work is unique in considering the challenges of future multi-core architectures for real-time systems and provides key insights into task partitioning with locked caches for architectures with private caches.

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