

SALSA: Scalable and Low Synchronization NUMA-aware Algorithm for Producer-Consumer Pools

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Abstract

We present a highly-scalable non-blocking producer-consumer task pool, designed with a special emphasis on lightweight synchronization and data locality. The core building block of our pool is *SALSA*, *Scalable And Low Synchronization Algorithm* for a single-consumer container with task stealing support. Each consumer operates on its own SALSA container, stealing tasks from other containers if necessary. We implement an elegant self-tuning policy for task insertion, which does not push tasks to overloaded SALSA containers, thus decreasing the likelihood of stealing.

SALSA manages large chunks of tasks, which improves locality and facilitates stealing. SALSA uses a novel approach for coordination among consumers, without strong atomic operations or memory barriers in the fast path. It invokes only two CAS operations during a chunk steal.

Our evaluation demonstrates that a pool built using SALSA containers scales *linearly* with the number of threads and significantly outperforms other FIFO and non-FIFO alternatives.

1 Introduction

Emerging computer architectures pose many new challenges for software development. First, as the number of computing elements constantly increases, the importance of *scalability* of parallel programs becomes paramount. Second, accessing memory has become the principal bottleneck, while multi-CPU systems are based on NUMA architectures, where memory access from different chips is asymmetric. Therefore, it is instrumental to design software with *local data access*, *cache-friendliness*, and *reduced contention* on shared memory locations, especially across chips. Furthermore, as systems get larger, their behavior becomes less predictable, underscoring the importance of *robust* programs that can overcome unexpected thread stalls.

Our overarching goal is to devise a methodology for developing parallel algorithms addressing these challenges. In this paper we focus on one of the fundamental building blocks of highly parallel software, namely a producer-consumer task pool. Specifically, we present a scalable and highly-efficient non-blocking pool, with lightweight synchronization-free operations in the common case. Its data allocation scheme is cache-friendly and highly suitable for NUMA environments. Moreover, our pool is robust in the face of imbalanced loads and unexpected thread stalls.

Our system is composed of two independent logical entities: 1) *SALSA, Scalable and Low Synchronization Algorithm*, a single-consumer pool that exports a stealing operation, and 2) a work stealing framework implementing a management policy that operates multiple SALSA pools.

In order to improve locality and facilitate stealing, SALSA keeps tasks in chunks, organized in per-producer chunk lists. Only the producer mapped to a given list can insert tasks to chunks in this list, which eliminates the need for synchronization among producers.

Though each consumer has its own task pool, inter-consumer synchronization is required in order to allow stealing. The challenge is to do so without resorting to costly atomic operations (such as CAS or memory fences) upon each task retrieval. We address this challenge via a novel chunk-based stealing algorithm that allows consume operations to be synchronization-free in the common case, when no stealing occurs, which we call the *fast path*. Moreover, SALSA reduces the stealing rate by moving entire chunks of tasks in one steal operation, which requires only two CAS (compare-and-swap) operations.

In order to achieve locality of memory access on a NUMA architecture, SALSA chunks are kept in the consumer's local memory. The management policy matches producers and consumers according to their proximity, which allows most task transfers to occur within a NUMA node.

In many-core machines running multiple applications, system behavior becomes less predictable. Unexpected thread stalls may lead to an asymmetric load on consumers, which may in turn lead to high stealing rates, hampering performance. SALSA employs a novel auto-balancing mechanism that has producers insert tasks to less loaded consumers, and is thus robust to spurious load fluctuations.

We have implemented SALSA in C++, and tested its performance on a 32-core NUMA machine. Our experiments show that the SALSA-based work stealing pool *scales linearly* with the number of threads; it is 20 times faster than other work-stealing alternatives, and shows a significant improvement over state-of-the-art non-FIFO alternatives. SALSA-based pools scale well even in unbalanced scenarios.

This paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 describes related work. We give the system overview in Section 4. The model and problem definitions are presented in Section 3. The SALSA single-consumer algorithm is described in Section 5. We discuss our implementation and experimental results in Section 6, and the correctness of our system in Section 7. And finally we present our conclusions in Section 8.

2 Related Work

Task pools. Consumer-producer pools are often implemented as FIFO queues. A widely used state-of-the-art FIFO queue is Micheal and Scott’s queue [21]. This queue is implemented by a linked-list with *head* and *tail* references. The put operation adds a new node to the list and then updates the tail reference. This is done by two CAS operations; one for adding the new node and one for updating the tail reference. The get operation removes a node by moving the head reference to point to the next node. This approach is not scalable under high contention as only one contending operation may succeed.

Moir et al. [22] suggest using elimination to reduce the contention on the queue. Whereby put and get operations can eliminate each other during the back-off after an unsuccessful operation. However, due to the FIFO property, those eliminations can only be done when the queue is empty, making this approach useful only when the queue is close to empty.

Hoffman et al. [17] try to reduce the contention of the put operation by allowing concurrent put operations to add tasks to the same “basket”. This is done by detecting contention on the tail, which is indicated by a failed CAS operation when trying to update the tail. This reduces the contention on the tail, but not on adding the node to the “basket”, which still requires a CAS operation. Therefore, this approach, while more efficient than Micheal and Scott’s queue, is still not scalable under high contention.

Gidenstam et al. [13] use a similar approach to Micheal and Scott’s, but, in order to improve locality and decrease the contention on the head and tail, the data is stored in chunks, and the head and tail points to a chunk rather than single nodes. This allows updating these references only once per-chunk rather than on every operation. However, this solution still requires at least one CAS per operation, rendering it non-scalable under high contention.

A number of previous works have recognized this limitation of FIFO queues, and observed that strict FIFO order is seldom needed in multi-core systems.

Afek et al. [2] implemented a non-FIFO pool using diffraction trees with elimination (ED-pools). An ED-pool is a tree of queues, which contains elimination arrays that help reduce contention. While ED-pools scale better than FIFO based solutions, they do not scale on multi-chip architectures [6].

Basin et al. [7] suggest a wait-free task-pool that allows relaxing FIFO. This pool is more scalable than previous solutions, but, since it still has some ordering (fairness) requirements, there is contention among both producers and consumers.

The closest non-FIFO pool to our work is the Concurrent Bags of Sundell et al. [24], which, like SALSA, uses per-producer chunk lists. This work is optimized for the case that the same threads are both consumers and producers, and typically consume from themselves, while SALSA improves the performance of such a task pool in NUMA environments where producers and consumers are separate threads. Unlike our pool, the Concurrent Bags algorithm uses strong atomic operations upon each consume. In addition, steals are performed in the granularity of single tasks and not whole chunks as in SALSA. Overall, their throughput does not scale linearly with the number of participating threads, as shown in [24] and in Section 6.

To the best of our knowledge, all previous solutions use strong atomic operations (like CAS), at least in every consume operation. Moreover, most of them [2, 3, 7] do not partition the pool among processors, and therefore do not achieve good locality and cache-friendliness, which has been shown to limit their scalability on NUMA systems [6].

Techniques. Variations of techniques we employ were previously used in various contexts. Work stealing [9] is a standard way to reduce contention by using individual per-consumer pools, where tasks may be stolen from one pool to another. We improve the efficiency of stealing by transferring a chunk of tasks upon every steal operation. Hendler et al. [15] have proposed stealing of multiple items by copying a range

of tasks from one dequeue to another, but this approach requires costly CAS operations on the fast-path and introduces non-negligible overhead for item copying. In contrast, our approach of chunk-based stealing coincides with our synchronization-free fast-path, and steals whole chunks in $O(1)$ steps. Furthermore, our use of page-size chunks allows for data migration in NUMA architectures to improve locality, as done in [8].

The principle of keeping NUMA-local data structures was previously used by Dice et al. for constructing scalable NUMA locks [12]. Similarly to their work, our algorithm’s data allocation scheme is designed to reduce inter-chip communication.

The concept of a synchronization-free fast-path previously appeared in works on scheduling queues, e.g., [4, 14]. However, these works assume that the same process is both the producer and the consumer, and hence the synchronization-free fast-path is actually used only when a process transfers data to *itself*. Moreover, those work assume a sequentially consistent shared-memory multiprocessor system, which requires insertion of some memory barrier instructions to the code when implemented on machine providing a weaker memory model [5]. On the other hand, our pool is synchronization-free even when tasks are transferred among multiple threads; our synchronization-free fast-path is used also when multiple producers produce data for a single consumer. We do not know of any other work that supports synchronization-free data transfer among different threads.

The idea of organizing data in chunks to preserve locality in dynamically-sized data structures was previously used in [10, 13, 14, 24]. SALSA extends on the idea of chunk-based data structures by using chunks also for efficient stealing.

3 Model and Problem Definitions

The problem we solve in this work is implementing a lock-free linearizable task-pool. In Section 3.1 we describe the model and runtime environment. Then, in Section 3.2, we define the linearizability criterion for concurrent data structures. In Section 3.3, we introduce a sequential specification for task pools. Finally, in Section 3.4, define our progress guarantee, namely lock-freedom.

3.1 Implementation Environment

We consider a shared memory environment where execution threads have a shared heap, shared read only code, and separate stack memory spaces. The scheduler can suspend a thread, for an arbitrary duration of time, at any moment after termination of a basic processor instruction (read, write, CAS). Threads cannot be suspended in the middle of a basic instruction. In modern architectures read and write operations may be reordered unless explicitly using a fence operation. However, in our model we assume sequential execution of instruction per-thread. The reordering problems are solved by using implicit fences when using CAS, or by the technique explained in 6.1.

3.2 Concurrent Objects, Linearizability

Formally, a task pool is a *concurrent object* [16], which resides in a memory shared among multiple threads. As a concurrent object, it has some state and supports a set of operations. Multiple threads can simultaneously perform operations on the same object. Such operations may update the state of the object. Operations take time and have a moment of *invocation* and a moment of *response*. When threads concurrently perform operations on concurrent objects, they generate a *history* [16], which is an ordered list of invocation and response events of concurrent object operations. The order of events is according to the time line in which they occurred. An operation invocation event is represented by the record $O.method_T(args)$, where O is

the concurrent object, method is the invoked operation, args are the invocation arguments and T is the thread that started the invocation. An operation response event is represented by the record $O.method_T(args)$ returns $result$, where $result$ is the operation's result. In a given history, we say that a response matches a prior invocation if it has the same object O and thread T , and no other events of T on object O appear between them. A *sequential history* is a history that has the following properties: 1) the first event in the history is an invocation; 2) each invocation, except possibly the last, is immediately followed by a matching response.

A sequential specification defines which sequential histories of an object are legal.

For defining the correctness of concurrent objects we consider the following definitions. An invocation is pending in history H if no matching response follows the invocation. An extension of history H is a history constructed by appending zero or more responses matching the pending invocations of H . $Complete(H)$ is the sub-sequence of H created by removing all pending invocations of H . $H|T$ is a history consisting of exactly the events of thread T in history H . Two histories H and H' are equivalent if for each thread T , $H|T = H'|T$.

Given a sequential specification of a concurrent object, the *linearizability* [16] correctness criterion is defined as follows: A history H is *linearizable* if it has an extension H' and there is a sequential history S such that:

1. S is legal according to the sequential specification of the object.
2. $Complete(H')$ is equivalent to S .
3. If method response m' precedes method invocation m in H , then the same is true in S .

Concurrent objects that have only linearizable histories are called *linearizable* or *atomic*. Intuitively, concurrent object is linearizable if it requires each concurrent run of its method calls to be equivalent in some sense to a correct serial run.

3.3 Task Pool Sequential Specification

A task pool supports $put(T)$ and $get()$ returns T operations, where T is a task or \perp .

we assume that tasks inserted into the pool are unique. That is, if $put(T)$, and $put(T')$ are two different invocations on a task pool, then $t \neq t'$. This assumption is made to simplify the definitions, and could be easily enforced in practice by tagging tasks with process ids and sequence numbers. The sequential specification of a task pool is as follows:

$put(T)$ operation adds task T to the pool. $get()$ returns and removes a task T from the pool or \perp if the pool is empty.

3.4 Lock-freedom

Threads may invoke a concurrent object's operations simultaneously. A concurrent object implementation is *lock-free* if there is guaranteed system-wide progress, i.e., at least one thread always makes progress in its operation execution, regardless of the execution speeds or failures of other threads. In this work, we implement a *lock-free* shared object.

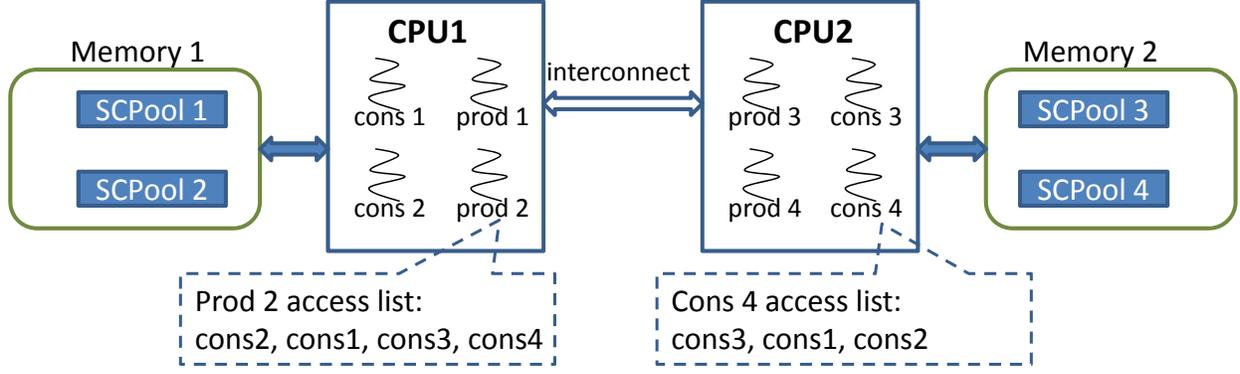


Figure 1: Producer-consumer framework overview. In this example, there are two processors connected to two memory banks (NUMA architecture). Two producers and two consumers running on each processor, and the data of each consumer is allocated at the closest physical memory. A producer (consumer) has a sorted access list of consumers for task insertion (respectively stealing).

4 System Overview

In the current section we present our framework for scalable and NUMA-aware producer-consumer data exchange. Our system follows the principle of separating mechanism and policy. We therefore consider two independent logical entities:

1. A *single consumer pool (SCPool)* mechanism manages the tasks arriving to a given consumer and allows tasks stealing by other consumers.
2. A management policy operates SCPools: it routes producer requests to the appropriate consumers and initiates stealing between the pools. This way, the policy controls the system's behavior according to considerations of load-distribution, throughput, fairness, locality, etc. We are especially interested in a management policy suitable for NUMA architectures (see Figure 1), where each CPU has its own memory, and memories of other CPUs are accessed over an interconnect. As a high rate of remote memory accesses can decrease the performance, it is desirable for the SCPool of a consumer to reside close to its own CPU.

Algorithm 1 API for a Single Consumer Pool with stealing support.

- 1: boolean: produce(Task, SCPool) ▷ Tries to insert the task to the pool, returns false if no space is available.
 - 2: void: produceForce(Task, SCPool) ▷ Insert the task to the pool, expanding the pool if necessary.
 - 3: {Task $\cup \perp$ }: consume() ▷ Retrieve a task from the pool, returns \perp if no tasks in the pool are detected.
 - 4: {Task $\cup \perp$ }: steal(SCPool from) ▷ Try to steal a number of tasks from the given pool and move them to the current pool. Return some stolen task or \perp .
 - 5: boolean: isEmpty() ▷ Returns true if the SCPool contains tasks
 - 6: void: setIndicator(SCPool p, int consumerId) ▷ sets indicator in pool p of consumer $consumerId$
 - 7: boolean: checkIndicator(SCPool p, int consumerId) ▷ returns the state of the indicator in pool p of consumer $consumerId$
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SCPool abstraction. The SCPool API provides the abstraction of a single consumer task pool with stealing support, see Algorithm 1. A producer invokes two operations: **produce()**, which attempts to insert a

task to the given pool and fails if the pool is full, and **produceForce()**, which always succeeds by expanding the pool on demand. There are also two ways to retrieve a task from the pool: the owner of the pool (only) can call the **consume()** function; while any other thread can invoke **steal()**, which tries to transfer a number of tasks between two pools and return one of the stolen tasks. The other function are used for checking emptiness and will be explained in

A straightforward way to implement the above API is using dynamic-size multi-producer multi-consumer FIFO queue (e.g., Michael-Scott queue [21]). In this case, **produce()** enqueues a new task, while **consume()** and **steal()** dequeue a task. In the next section we present SALSA, a much more efficient SCPool.

Algorithm 2 Work stealing framework pseudo-code.

<pre> 8: Local variables: 9: SCPool myPool ▷ The consumer's pool 10: SCPool[] accessList ▷ The consumer's or producer's access list 11: Function get(): 12: while(true) 13: ▷ First try to get a task from the local pool 14: t ← myPool.consume() 15: if (t ≠ ⊥) return t 16: ▷ Failed to get a task from the local pool – steal 17: foreach SCPool p in accessList in order do: 18: t ← p.steal() 19: if (t ≠ ⊥) return t 20: ▷ No tasks found – validate emptiness 21: if (checkEmpty()) return ⊥ </pre>	<pre> 22: Function put(Task t): 23: ▷ Produce to the pools by the order of the access list 24: foreach SCPool p in accessList in order do: 25: if (p.produce(t)) return 26: firstp ← the first entry in accessList 27: ▷ If all pools are full, expand the closest pool 28: produceForce(t,firstp) 29: return 30: Function checkEmpty(): 31: for i in {1.. consumers } do: 32: foreach SCPool p do: 33: if (i = 1) p.setIndicator(myId) 34: if (!p.isEmpty()) return false 35: if (!p.checkIndicator(myId)) return false 36: return true </pre>
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Management policy. A management policy defines the way in which: 1) a producer chooses an SCPool for task insertion; and 2) a consumer decides when to retrieve a task from its own pool or steal from other pools. Note that the policy is independent of the underlying SCPool implementation. We believe that the policy is a subject for engineering optimizations, based on specific workloads and demands.

In the current work, we present a NUMA-aware policy. If the individual SCPools themselves are lock-free, then our policy preserves lock-freedom at the system level. Our policy is as follows:

- **Access lists.** Each process in the system (producer or consumer) is provided with an *access list*, an ordered list of all the consumers in the system, sorted according to their distance from that process (see Figure 1). Intuitively, our intention is to have a producer mostly interact with the closest consumer, while stealing mainly happens inside the same processor node.
- **Producer's policy.** The producer policy is implemented in the **put()** function in Algorithm 2. The operation first calls the **produce()** of the first SCPool in its access list. Note that this operation might fail if the pool is full, (which can be seen as evidence of that the corresponding consumer is overloaded). In this case, the producer tries to insert the task into other pools, in the order defined by its access list. If all insertions fail, the producer invokes **produceForce()** on the closest SCPool, which always succeeds (expanding the pool if needed).
- **Consumer's policy.** The consumer policy is implemented in the **get()** function in Algorithm 2. A consumer takes tasks from its own SCPool. If its SCPool is empty, then the consumer tries to steal tasks from other pools in the order defined by its access list. The **checkEmpty()** operation handles the issue of when a consumer gives up and returns \perp . This is subtle issue, and we discuss it in Section 5.5. Stealing serves two purposes: first, it is important for distributing the load among all

available consumers. Second, it ensures that tasks are not lost in case they are inserted into the SCPool of a crashed (or very slow) consumer.

5 Algorithm Description

In the current section we present the SALSA SCPool. We first show the data structures of SALSA in Section 5.1, and then present the basic algorithm without stealing support in Section 5.2. The stealing procedure is described in Section 5.3, finally, the role of chunk pools is presented in Section 5.4. For the simplicity of presentation, in this section we assume that the the memory accesses satisfy sequential consistency [19], we describe the ways to solve memory reordering issues in Section 6.1.

5.1 SALSA Structure

Algorithm 3 SALSA implementation of SCPool: Data Structures.

37: Chunk type	44: SALSA per consumer data structure:
38: Task[CHUNK_SIZE] tasks	45: int consumerId
39: int owner ▷ owner's consumer id	46: List(Node)[] chunkLists ▷ one list per producer + extra list for stealing (every list is single-writer multi-reader)
40: Node type	47: Queue(Chunk) chunkPool ▷ pool of spare chunks
41: Chunk c; initially ⊥	48: Node currentNode, initially ⊥ ▷ current node to work with
42: int idx; initially -1	
43: Node next;	

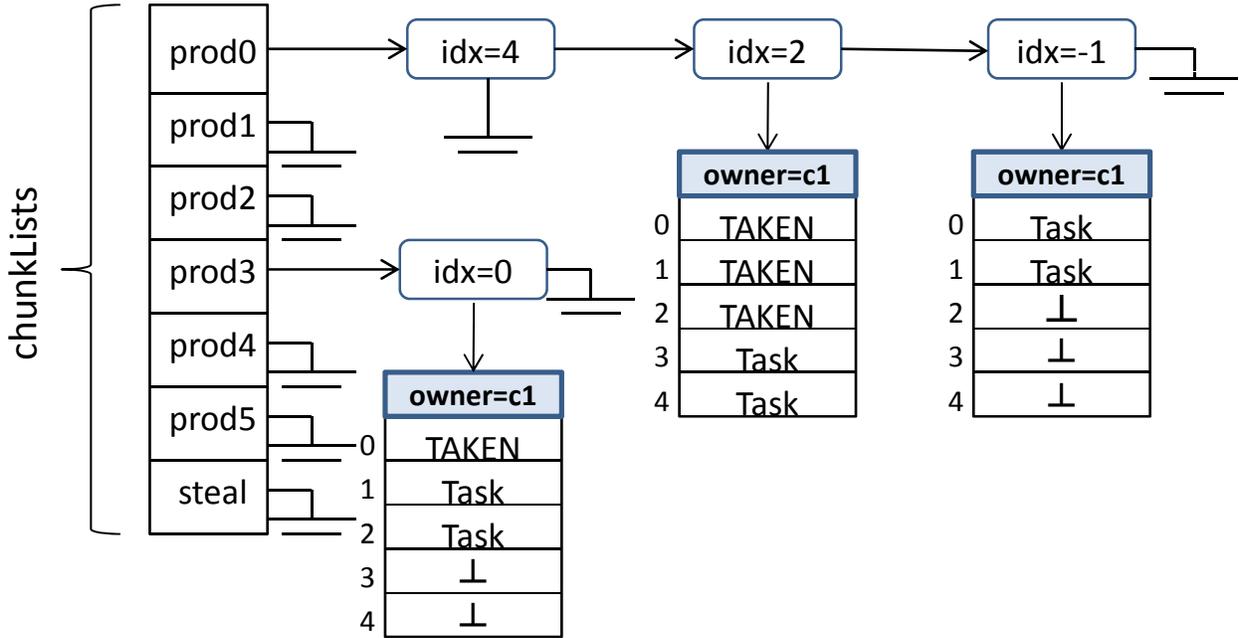


Figure 2: Chunk lists in SALSA single consumer pool implementation. Tasks are kept in chunks, which are organized in per-producer lists; an additional list is reserved for stealing. Each list can be modified by the corresponding producer only. The only process that is allowed to retrieve tasks from a chunk is the owner of that chunk (defined by the ownership flag). A Node's index corresponds to the latest task taken from the chunk or the task that is about to be taken by the current chunk owner.

The SALSA data structure of a consumer c_i is described in Algorithm 3 and partially depicted in Figure 2. The tasks inserted to SALSA are kept in chunks, which are organized in per-producer chunk lists.

Only the producer mapped to a given list can insert a task to any chunk in that list. Every chunk is owned by a single consumer whose id is kept in the *owner* field of the chunk. The owner is the only process that is allowed to take tasks from the chunk; if another process wants to take a task from the chunk, it should first steal the chunk and change its ownership. A task entry in a chunk is used at most once. Its value is \perp before the task is inserted, and TAKEN after it has been consumed.

The per-producer chunk lists are kept in the array *chunkLists* (see Figure 2), where *chunkLists[j]* keeps a list of chunks with tasks inserted by producer p_j . In addition, the array has a special entry *chunkLists[steal]*, holding chunks stolen by c_i . Every list has a single writer who can modify the list structure (add or remove nodes): *chunkLists[j]*'s modifier is the producer p_j , while *chunkLists[steal]*'s modifier is the SCPool's owner. The nodes of the used chunks are lazily reclaimed and removed by the list's owner. For brevity, we omit the linked list manipulation functions from the pseudo-code bellow. Our single-writer lists can be implemented without synchronization primitives, similarly to the single-writer linked-list in [20]. In addition to holding the chunk, a node keeps the index of the latest taken task in that chunk, this index is then used for chunk stealing as we show in Section 5.3.

Safe memory reclamation is provided by using hazard pointers [20] both for nodes and for chunks. The free (reclaimed) chunks in SALSA are kept at per-consumer *chunkPools* implemented by lock-free Michael-Scott queues [21]. As we show in Section 5.4, the chunk pools serve two purposes: 1) efficient memory reuse and 2) producer-based load balancing.

5.2 Basic Algorithm

5.2.1 SALSA producer

Algorithm 4 SALSA implementation of SCPool: Producer Functions.

<pre> 49: Producer local variables: 50: int producerId 51: Chunk chunk; initially \perp ▷ the chunk to insert to 52: int prodIdx; initially 0 ▷ the prefix of inserted tasks 53: Function produce(Task t): 54: return insert(t, this, false) 55: Function insert(Task t, SCPool scPool, bool force): 56: if (chunk = \perp) then ▷ allocate new chunk 57: if (getChunk(scPool, force) = false) then return false 58: chunk.tasks[prodIdx] \leftarrow t; prodIdx++ 59: if(prodIdx = CHUNK_SIZE) then 60: chunk \leftarrow \perp ▷ the chunk is full 61: return true </pre>	<pre> 62: Function produceForce(Task t): 63: insert(t, this, true) 64: Function getChunk(SALSA scPool, bool force) 65: newChunk \leftarrow dequeue chunk from scPool.chunkPool 66: if (chunk = \perp) ▷ no available chunks in this pool 67: if (force = false) then return false 68: newChunk \leftarrow allocate a new chunk 69: newChunk.owner \leftarrow scPool.consumerId 70: node \leftarrow new node with idx = -1 and c = newChunk 71: scPool.chunkLists[producerId].append(node) 72: chunk \leftarrow newChunk; prodIdx \leftarrow 0 73: return true </pre>
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The description of SALSA producer functions is presented in Algorithm 4. The insertion of a new task consists of two stages: 1) finding a chunk for task insertion (if necessary), and 2) adding a task to the chunk.

Finding a chunk The chunk for task insertions is kept in the local producer variable *chunk* (line 51 in Algorithm 4). Once a producer starts working with a chunk c , it continues inserting tasks to c until c is full – the producer is oblivious to chunk stealing. If the *chunk*'s value is \perp , then the producer should start a new chunk (function *getChunk*). In this case, it tries to retrieve a chunk from the chunk pool and to append it to the appropriate chunk list. If the chunk pool is empty then the producer either returns \perp (if force=false), or allocates a new chunk by itself (otherwise) (lines 66–68).

Inserting a task to the chunk As previously described in Section 5.1, different producers insert tasks to different chunks, which removes the need for synchronization among producers. The producer local variable *prodIdx* indicates the next free slot in the chunk. All that is left for the insertion function to do, is to put a task in that slot and to increment *prodIdx* (line 58). Once the index reaches the maximal value, the *chunk* variable is set to \perp , indicating that the next insertion operation should start a new chunk.

5.2.2 SALSA consumer without stealing

Algorithm 5 SALSA implementation of SCPool: Consumer Functions.

<pre> 74: Function consume(): 75: if (currentNode \neq \perp) then \triangleright common case 76: t \leftarrow takeTask(currentNode) 77: if (t \neq \perp) then return t 78: foreach Node n in ChunkLists do: \triangleright fair traversal of chunkLists 79: if (n.c \neq \perp \wedge n.c.owner = consumerId) then 80: t \leftarrow takeTask(n) 81: if (t \neq \perp) then currentNode \leftarrow n; return t 82: currentNode \leftarrow \perp; return \perp 83: Function takeTask(Node n): 84: chunk \leftarrow n.c 85: if (chunk = \perp) then return \perp \triangleright this chunk has been stolen 86: task \leftarrow chunk.tasks[n.idx + 1] 87: if (task = \perp) then return \perp \triangleright no inserted tasks 88: if (chunk.owner \neq consumerId) 89: return \perp 90: n.idx++ \triangleright tell the world you're going to take a task from idx 91: if (chunk.owner = consumerId) then \triangleright common case 92: chunk.tasks[n.idx] \leftarrow TAKEN 93: checkLast(n) 94: return task 95: \triangleright the chunk has been stolen, CAS the last task and go away 96: success \leftarrow (task \neq TAKEN \wedge 97: CAS(chunk.tasks[n.idx], task, TAKEN)) 98: if(success) then checkLast(n) 99: currentNode \leftarrow \perp 100: return (success) ? task : \perp 99: Function checkLast(Nconsumerode n): 100: if(n.idx + 1 = CHUNK_SIZE) then \triangleright finished the chunk 101: n.c \leftarrow \perp; return chunk to chunkPool 102: currentNode \leftarrow \perp 103: Function isEmpty(): 104: foreach Node n in chunkLists do: 105: if (n.c has tasks in slots greater than n.idx) 106: return true 107: return false </pre>	<pre> 108: Function steal(SCPool p): 109: prevNode \leftarrow a node holding tasks, whose owner is p, from 110: some list in p's pool \triangleright different policies possible 111: if (prevNode = \perp) return \perp \triangleright No Chunk found 112: c \leftarrow prevNode.c; if (c = \perp) then return \perp 113: prevIdx \leftarrow prevNode.idx 114: if (prevIdx+1 = CHUNK_SIZE \vee c.tasks[prevIdx+1] = \perp) 115: return \perp 116: chunkLists[steal].append(prevNode) \triangleright make it stealable 117: if (CAS(c.owner, p.consumerId, consumerId) = false) 118: return \perp \triangleright failed to steal 119: idx \leftarrow prevNode.idx 120: if (idx+1 = CHUNK_SIZE) \triangleright Chunk is empty 121: chunkLists[steal].remove(prevNode) 122: return \perp 123: task \leftarrow c.tasks[idx+1] 124: if (task \neq \perp) \triangleright Found task to take 125: if (c.owner \neq consumerId \wedge idx \neq prevIdx) 126: chunkLists[steal].remove(prevNode) 127: return \perp 128: idx++ 129: newNode \leftarrow copy of prevNode 130: newNode.idx = idx 131: replace prevNode with newNode in chunkLists[steal] 132: prevNode.c \leftarrow \perp \triangleright remove chunk from consumer's list 133: \triangleright done stealing the chunk, take one task from it 134: if (task = \perp) then return \perp \triangleright still no task at idx 135: if (task = TAKEN \vee 136: !CAS(c.tasks[idx], task, TAKEN)) then 137: task \leftarrow \perp 138: checkLast(newNode) 139: if (c.owner = consumerId) currentNode \leftarrow newNode 140: return task </pre>
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The consumer's algorithm without stealing is given in the left column of Algorithm 5. The consumer first finds a nonempty chunk it owns and then invokes **takeTask()** to retrieve a task.

Unlike producers, which have exclusive access to insertions in a given chunk, a consumer must take into account the possibility of stealing. Therefore, it should notify other processes which task it is about to take.

To this end, each node in the chunk list keeps an index of the taken prefix of its chunk in the *idx* variable, which is initiated to -1 . A consumer that wants to take a task *T*, first increments the index, then checks the chunk's ownership, and finally changes the chunk entry from *T* to *TAKEN* (lines 90–92). By doing so, a consumer guarantees that *idx* always points to the last taken task or to a task that is about to be taken. Hence,

a process that is stealing a chunk from a node with $idx = i$ can assume that the tasks in the range $[0 \dots i)$ have already been taken. The logic for dealing with stolen chunks is described in the next section.

5.3 Stealing

The stealing algorithm is given in the function **steal()** in Algorithm 5. We refer to the stealing consumer as c_s , the victim process whose chunk is being stolen as c_v , and the stolen chunk as C .

The idea is to turn c_s in the exclusive owner of C , so that c_s will be able to take tasks from the chunk without synchronization. In order to do that, c_s first adds the chunk to its list (line 115) then changes the ownership of C from c_v to c_s using CAS (line 116) and removes the chunk from c_v 's list (line 132). Once c_v notices the change in the ownership it can take at most one more task from C (lines 95–98) after failing the second check of ownership in line 91 having passed the one in line 88.

When the **steal()** operation of c_s occurs simultaneously with the **takeTask()** operation of c_v , both c_s and c_v might try to retrieve the same task. We now explain why this might happen. Recall that c_v notifies potential stealers of the task it is about to take by incrementing the idx value in C 's node (line 90). This value is copied by c_s in line 129 when creating a copy of C 's node for its steal list.

Consider, for example, a scenario in which the idx is incremented by c_v from 10 to 11. If c_v checks C 's ownership before it is changed by c_s , then c_v takes the task at index 11 *without synchronization* (line 92). Therefore, c_s cannot be allowed to take the task pointed by idx at all. Hence, c_v has to take the task at index 11 even if it does observe the ownership change. After stealing the chunk, c_s will eventually try to take the task pointed by $idx + 1$. However, if c_s copies the node before idx is incremented by c_v , c_s might think that the value of $idx + 1$ is 11. In this case, both c_s and c_v will try to retrieve the task at index 11. To ensure that the task is not retrieved twice, both functions invoke CAS in order to retrieve this task (line 134 for c_s , line 95 for c_v).

The above schematic algorithm works correctly as long as the stealing consumer can observe the node with the updated index value. This might not be the case in case the same chunk is concurrently stolen by another consumer, rendering the idx of the original node obsolete. In order to prevent this situation, stealing a chunk from the pool of consumer c_v is allowed only if c_v is the owner of this chunk (line 116). This approach is prone to the ABA problem: consider a scenario where consumer c_a is trying to steal from c_b , but before the execution of the CAS in line 116, the chunk is stolen by c_c and then stolen back by c_b . In this case, c_a 's CAS succeeds but c_a has an old value of idx . To prevent this ABA problem, the owner field contains a tag, which is incremented on every CAS operation. For brevity, tags are omitted from the pseudo-code.

A naïve way for c_s to steal the chunk from c_v would be first to change the ownership and then to move the chunk to the steal list. However, this approach may cause the chunk to disappear when c_s stalls, because the chunk is not yet accessible via the lists of c_s and yet c_s is its owner. Therefore, SALSA first adds the original node to the steal list of c_s , then changes the ownership, and only then replaces the original node with a new one (lines 115–132).

An additional problem may occur if c_s steals a chunk that does not contain tasks. This may happen if the chunk is emptied after c_s chooses it in line 109. In this case, c_s may notice that the chunk does not contain a task and return \perp in line 133. However, another task may be added later and then taken by c_v , which may have already started taking a task before the chunk was stolen. In this case, c_v will take this task using a CAS operation, while c_s may try to take the same task later without using a CAS operation, and therefore the task may be taken twice. To avoid this problem, we make sure that if a chunk is stolen, c_v will not take a task that c_s might have missed because it was added after c_s tried to read it. This is done by adding an ownership check after c_v reads the task on line 86 and before committing to take it by incrementing idx in line 90. This makes sure that c_v can only take tasks that existed before the chunk was stolen. For the same reason, the ownership check is added in line 125. In this case however c_v also checks if the idx has changed

since before it changed ownership. This is done by comparing the idx read before the ownership change in line 112 to the idx read after the ownership change in line 119. If the idx hasn't changed, it means that c_s is guaranteed to see the task pointed by idx , because due to the check in line 113 we know that task existed before c_v changed ownership, and therefore existed before c_s changed ownership. In this case c_v may safely increase idx and take the task. Note that returning the task is necessary to avoid livelock.

Another issue we need to address is making sure that the idx value in nodes pointing to a given chunk increases monotonically. To this end, we make sure that when c_s creates a new node, this node's idx is greater than or equal to the idx of c_v 's node. As noted before, c_v may increase the idx at most once after its chunk is stolen. Also, thanks to the ownerships checks that are done after the task was read and before the idx is incremented, we know that the idx field of c_v increases only if there is a task in the next slot after the ownership change. To ensure that idx does not decrease in this case, c_s sets the idx of the new node to be the idx of c_v plus one if the next task is not \perp (line 128).

5.4 Chunk Pools

As described in Section 5.1, each consumer keeps a pool of free chunks. When a producer needs a new chunk for adding a task to consumer c_i , it tries to get a chunk from c_i 's chunk pool – if no free chunks are available, the **produce()** operation fails.

As described in Section 4, our system-wide policy defines that if an insertion operation fails, then the producer tries to insert a task to other pools. Thus, the producer avoids adding tasks to overloaded consumers, which in turn decreases the amount of costly steal operations. We further refer to this technique as producer-based balancing.

Another SALSA property is that a chunk is returned to the pool of a consumer that retrieves the latest task of this chunk. Therefore, the size of the chunk pool of consumer c_i is proportional to the rate of c_i 's task consumption. This property is especially appealing for heterogeneous systems – a faster consumer c_i , (e.g., one running on a stronger or less loaded core), will have a larger chunk pool, and so more **produce()** operations will insert tasks to c_i , automatically balancing the overall system load.

5.5 Checking Emptiness

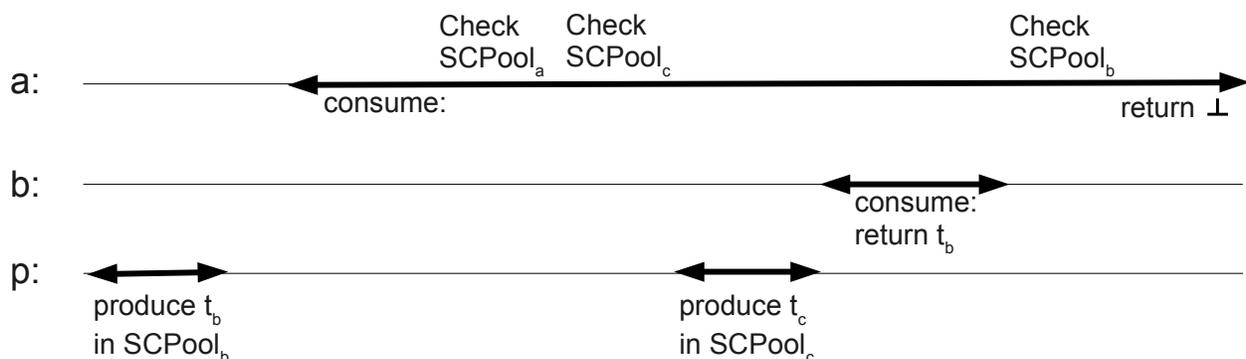


Figure 3: An example where a single traversal may violate linearizability: consumer a is trying to get a task. It fails to take a task from its own pool, and starts looking for chunks to steal in other pools. At this time there is a single non-empty chunk in the system, which is in b 's pool; a checks c 's pool and finds it empty. At this point, a producer adds a task to c 's pool and then b takes the last task from its pool before a checks it. Thus, a finds b 's pool empty, and returns \perp . There is no way to linearize this execution, because throughout the execution of a 's operation, the system contains at least one task.

For our system to be linearizable, we must ensure that it returns \perp only if it is empty (i.e., contains no tasks) at some point during the `get()` operation. We describe a policy for doing so in a lock-free manner.

Let us examine why a naïve approach, of simply traversing all task pools and returning \perp if no task is found, violates correctness. First, a consumer might “miss” one task added during its traversal, and another removed during the same traversal, as illustrated in Figure 3. In this case, a single traversal would have returned \perp although the pool was not empty at any point during the `get()` operation. Second, a consumer may miss a task that is moved from one pool to another due to stealing. In order to identify these two cases, we add to each pool a special *emptyIndicator*, a bit array with a bit per-consumer, which is cleared every time the pool *may* become empty. In SALSA, this occurs when the last task in a chunk is taken or when a chunk is stolen. In addition, we implement a new function, `checkEmpty()`, which is called by the framework whenever a consumer fails to retrieve tasks from its pool and all other pools. This function returns true only if there is a time during its execution when there are no tasks in the system. If `checkEmpty()` returns false, the consumer simply restarts its operation.

Denote by n the number of consumers in the system. The `checkEmpty()` function works as follows: the consumer traverses all SCPools, to make sure that no tasks are present. After checking a pool for the first time, the consumer sets its bit in *emptyIndicator* using CAS. The consumer repeats this traversal n times, where in all traversals, it checks that its bit in *emptyIndicator* is set, i.e., that no chunks were emptied or removed during the traversal. The n traversals are needed in order to account for the case that other consumers have already stolen or removed tasks, but did not yet update *emptyIndicator*, and thus their operations were not detected by the consumer. Since up to $n - 1$ pending operations by other consumers may empty pools before any *emptyIndicator* changes, it is guaranteed that among n traversals in which no chunks were seen and the *emptyIndicator* did not change, there is one during which the system indeed contains no tasks, and therefore it is safe to return \perp . This method is similar to the one used in Concurrent Bags [24].

Algorithm 6 SALSA extensions for supporting `checkEmpty()`

<pre> 139: Per consumer local: 140: boolean[] emptyIndicator ▷ one entry per consumer ▷ replacement for the checkLast() function 141: Function checkLast(Node n, Task next): 142: if(n.idx + 1 = CHUNK_SIZE) then ▷ finished the chunk 143: n.c ← \perp; return chunk to chunkPool 144: currentNode ← \perp 145: clearIndicator() 146: if(next = \perp) then ▷ took last task 147: clearIndicator() </pre>	<pre> 148: Function clearIndicator(): 149: foreach(boolean b in emptyIndicator) do: 150: b ← false 151: Function setIndicator(SCPool p, int consumerId): 152: emptyIndicator[consumerId] ← true 153: Function checkIndicator(SCPool p, int consumerId): 154: return emptyIndicator[consumerId] </pre>
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We now describe the extensions to the SALSA pool which are needed so that `checkEmpty()` will work. Specifically, we need to make sure that operations that may cause a pool to become empty will clear *emptyIndicator*.

We note that a pool may become empty in two cases: (1) When a chunk is stolen from a pool and this is the only chunk that contains tasks, and (2) when a task is taken and that was the last task in the pool.

We alter the consumer code so it will clear it in those cases:

1. In case of a successful steal - the consumer clear the indicator before line 119.
2. If the task returned may be the last task in the chunk, the consumer clears *emptyIndicator* in the `checkLast()` function. The updated function is described in Algorithm 6.

In the second case, the consumer checks that this is the last task by reading the next slot before changing the current slot to TAKEN, and then checking if the next slot contained \perp .

6 Implementation and Evaluation

In this section we evaluate the performance of our work-stealing framework built on SALSA pools. We first present the implementation details on dealing with memory reordering issues in Section 6.1. The experiment setup is described in Section 6.2, we show the overall system performance in Section 6.3, study the influence of various SALSA techniques in Section 6.4 and check the impact of memory placement and thread scheduling in Section 6.5.

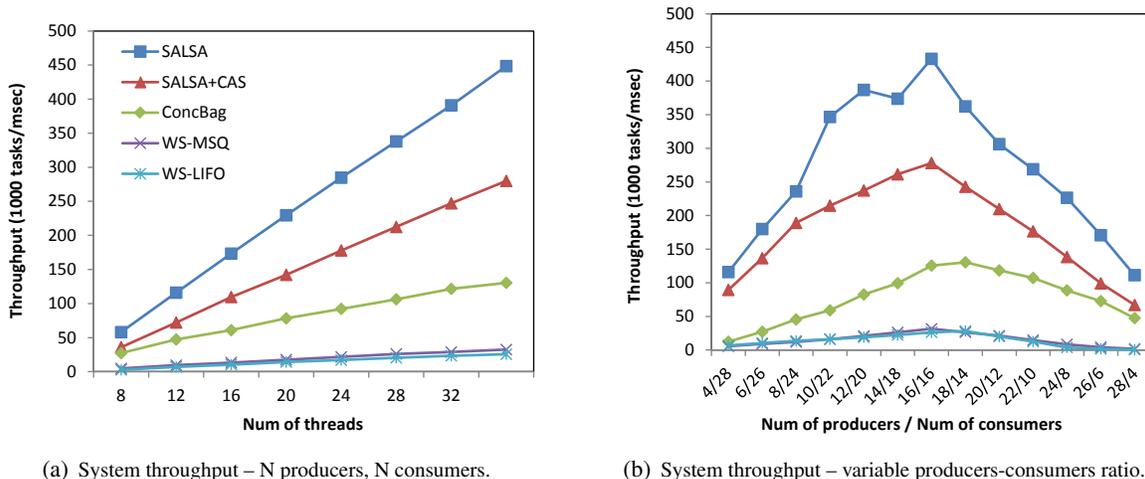


Figure 4: System throughput for various ratios of producers and consumers. SALSA scales linearly with the number of threads – in the 16/16 workload, it is $\times 20$ faster than WS-MSQ and WS-LIFO, and $\times 3.5$ faster than Concurrent Bags. In tests with equal numbers of producers and consumers, the differences among work-stealing alternatives are mainly explained by the consume operation efficiency, since stealing rate is low and hardly influences performance.

6.1 Dealing with Memory Reordering

The presentation of the SALSA algorithm in Section 5 assumes sequential consistency [19] as the memory model. However, most existing systems relax sequential consistency to achieve better performance. Specifically, according to x86-TSO [23], memory loads can be reordered with respect to older stores to different locations. As shown by Attiya et al. [5], it is impossible to avoid both RAW and AWAR in work stealing structures, which requires using a synchronization operation, such as a fence or CAS, to ensure correctness. In SALSA, this reordering can cause an index increment to occur after the ownership validation (lines 90, 91 in Algorithm 5), which violates correctness as it may cause the same task to be taken twice, by both the original consumer and the stealing thread.

The conventional way to ensure a correct execution in such cases is to use memory fences to force a specific memory ordering. For example, adding an `mfence` instruction between lines 90 and 91 guarantees SALSA’s correctness. However, memory fences are costly and their use in the common path degrades performance. Therefore, we prefer to employ a synchronization technique that does not add substantial overhead to the frequently used `takeTask()` operation. One example for such a technique is location-based memory fences, recently proposed by Ladan-Mozes et al. [18], which is unfortunately not implemented in current hardware.

In our implementation, we adopt the synchronization technique described by Dice et al. [11], where the slow thread (namely, the stealer) binds directly to the processor on which the fast thread (namely, the consumer) is currently running, preempting it from the processor, and then returns to run on its own processor.

Thread displacement serves as a full memory fence, hence, a stealer that invokes the displacement binding right after updating the ownership (before line 119 in Algorithm 5) observes the updated consumer’s index. On the other hand, the steal-free fast path is not affected by this change.

6.2 Experiment Setup

The implementation of the work-stealing framework used in our evaluation does not include the linearizability mechanism described in 5.5. We believe that this mechanism has negligible effect on performance; moreover, in our experiment they would not have been invoked because the pool is never empty. We compare the following task pool implementations:

- **SALSA** – our work-stealing framework with SCPools implemented by SALSA.
- **SALSA+CAS** – our work-stealing framework with SCPools implemented by a simplistic SALSA variation, in which every `consume()` and `steal()` operation tries to take a single task using CAS. In essence, SALSA+CAS removes the effects of SALSA’s low-synchronization fast-path and per-chunk stealing. Note that disabling per-chunk stealing in SALSA annuls the idea of chunk ownership, hence, disables its low-synchronization fast-path as well.
- **ConcBag** – an algorithm similar to the lock-free Concurrent Bags algorithm [24]. It is worth noting that the original algorithm was optimized for the scenario where the same process is both a producer and a consumer (in essence producing tasks to itself), which we do not consider in this work; in our system no thread acts as both a producer and a consumer, therefore every consume operation steals a task from some producer. We did not have access to the original code, and therefore reimplemented the algorithm in our framework. Our implementation is faithful to the algorithm in the paper, except in using a simpler and faster underlined linked list algorithm. All engineering decisions were made to maximize performance.
- **WS-MSQ** – our work-stealing framework with SCPools implemented by Michael-Scott non-blocking queue [21]. Both `consume()` and `steal()` operations invoke the `dequeue()` function.
- **WS-LIFO** – our work-stealing framework with SCPool implemented by Michael’s LIFO stack [20].

We did not experiment with additional FIFO and LIFO queue implementations, because, as shown in [24], their performance is of the same order of magnitude as the Michael-Scott queue. Similarly, we did not evaluate CAFÉ [7] pools because their performance is similar to that of WS-MSQ [6], or ED-Pools [2], which have been shown to scale poorly in multi-processor architectures [6, 24].

All the pools are implemented in C++ and compiled with `-O2` optimization level. In order to minimize scalability issues related to allocations, we use `jemalloc` allocator, which has been shown to be highly scalable in multi-threaded environments [1]. Chunks of SALSA and SALSA+CAS contain 1000 tasks, and chunks of ConcBag contain 128 tasks, which were the respective optimal values for each algorithm (see Section 6.6).

We use a synthetic benchmark where 1) each producer works in a loop of inserting dummy items; 2) each consumer works in a loop of retrieving dummy items. Each data point shown is an average of 5 runs, each with a duration of 20 seconds. The tests are run on a dedicated shared memory NUMA server with 8 Quad Core AMD 2.3GHz processors and 16GB of memory attached to each processor.

6.3 System Throughput

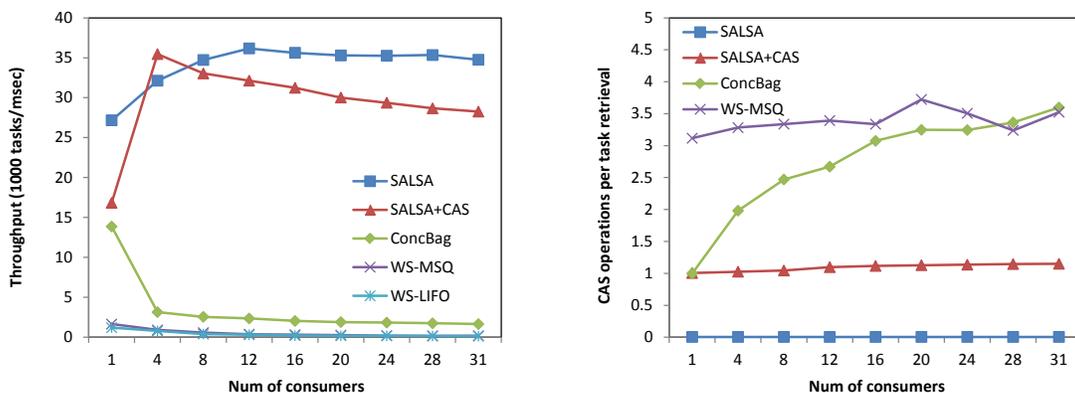
Figure 4(a) shows system throughput for workloads with equal number of producers and consumers. SALSA *scales linearly* as the number of threads grows to 32 (the number of physical cores in the system), and it clearly outperforms all other competitors. In the 16/16 workload, SALSA is $\times 20$ faster than WS-MSQ and WS-LIFO, and more than $\times 3.5$ faster than Concurrent Bags.

We note that the performance trend of ConcBags in our measurements differs from the results presented by Sundell et al. [24]. While in the original paper, their throughput *drops* by a factor of 3 when the number of threads increases from 4 to 24, in our tests, the performance of ConcBags *increases* with the number of threads. The reasons for the better scalability of our implementation can be related to the use of different memory allocators, hardware architectures, and engineering optimizations.

All systems implemented by our work-stealing framework scale linearly because of the low contention between consumers. Their performance differences are therefore due to the efficiency of the `consume()` operation – for example, SALSA is $\times 1.7$ faster than SALSA+CAS thanks to its fast-path consumption technique.

In contrast, in ConcBags, which is not based on per-consumer pools, every `consume()` operation implies stealing, which causes contention among consumers, leading to sub-linear scalability. The stealing policy of ConcBags algorithm plays an important role. The stealing policy described in the original paper [24] proposes to iterate over the lists using round robin. We found out that the approach in which each stealer initiates stealing attempts from the predefined consumer improves ConcBags’ results by 53% in a balanced workload.

Figure 4(b) shows system throughput of the algorithms for various ratios of producers and consumers. SALSA outperforms other alternatives in all scenarios, achieving its maximal throughput with equal number of producers and consumers, because neither of them is a system bottleneck.



(a) System throughput – 1 Producer, N consumers.

(b) CAS operations per task retrieval – 1 Producer, N consumers.

Figure 5: System behavior in workloads with a single producer and multiple consumers. Both SALSA and SALSA+CAS efficiency balance the load in this scenario. The throughput of other algorithms drops by a factor of 10 due to increased contention among consumers trying to steal tasks from the same pool.

We next evaluate the behavior of the pools in scenarios with a single producer and multiple consumers. Figure 5(a) shows that the performance of both SALSA and SALSA+CAS does not drop as more consumers are added, while the throughput of other algorithms degrades by the factor of 10. The degradation can be explained by high contention among stealing consumers, as evident from Figure 5(b), which shows the average number of CAS operations per task transfer.

6.4 Evaluating SALSA techniques

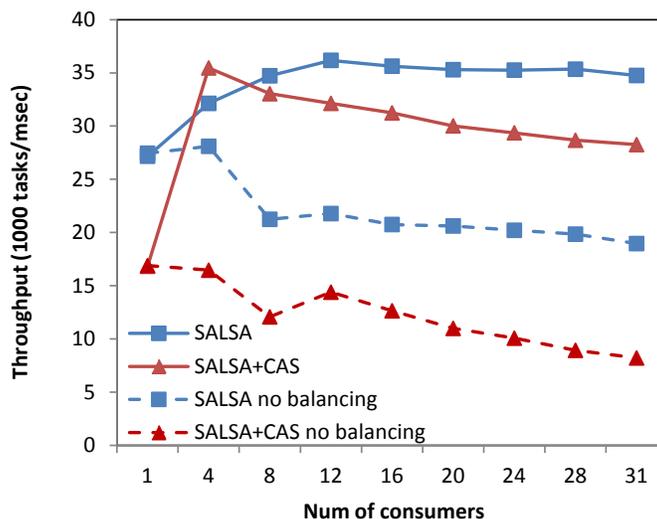


Figure 6: System throughput – 1 Producer, N consumers. Producer-based balancing contributes to the robustness of the framework by reducing stealing. With no balancing, chunk-based stealing becomes important.

In this section we study the influence of two of the techniques used in SALSA: 1) chunk-based-stealing with a low-synchronization fast path (Section 5.3), and 2) producer-based balancing (Section 5.4). To this end, we compare SALSA and SALSA+CAS both with and without producer-based balancing (in the latter a producer always inserts tasks to the same consumer’s pool).

Figure 6 depicts the behavior of the four alternatives in single producer / multiple consumers workloads. We see that producer-based balancing is instrumental in redistributing the load: neither SALSA nor SALSA+CAS suffers any degradation as the load increases. When producer-based balancing is disabled, stealing becomes prevalent, and hence the stealing granularity becomes more important: SALSA’s chunk based stealing clearly outperforms the naïve task-based approach of SALSA+CAS.

6.5 Impact of Scheduling and Allocation

We now evaluate the impact of scheduling and allocation in our NUMA system. To this end, we compare the following three alternatives: 1) the original SALSA algorithm; 2) SALSA with no affinity enforcement for the threads s.t. producers do not necessarily work with the closest consumers; 3) SALSA with all the memory pools preallocated on a single NUMA node.

Figure 7 depicts the behavior of all the variants in the balanced workload. The performance of SALSA with no predefined affinities is almost identical to the performance of the standard SALSA, while the central allocation alternative loses its scalability after 12 threads.

The main reason for performance degradation in NUMA systems is bandwidth saturation of the interconnect. If all chunks are placed on a single node, every remote memory access is transferred via the interconnect of that node, which causes severe performance degradation. In case of random affinities, remote memory accesses are distributed among different memory nodes, hence their rate remains below the maximum available bandwidth of each individual channel, and the program does not reach the scalability limit.

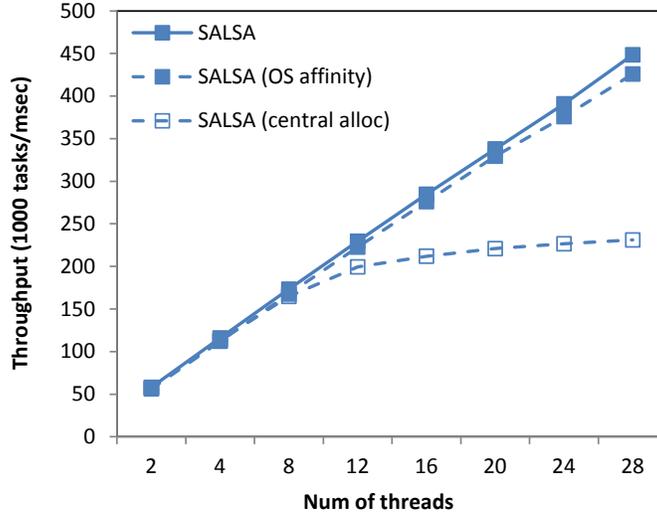


Figure 7: Impact of scheduling and allocation (equal number of producers and consumers). Performance decreases once the interconnect becomes saturated.

6.6 Chunk size influence

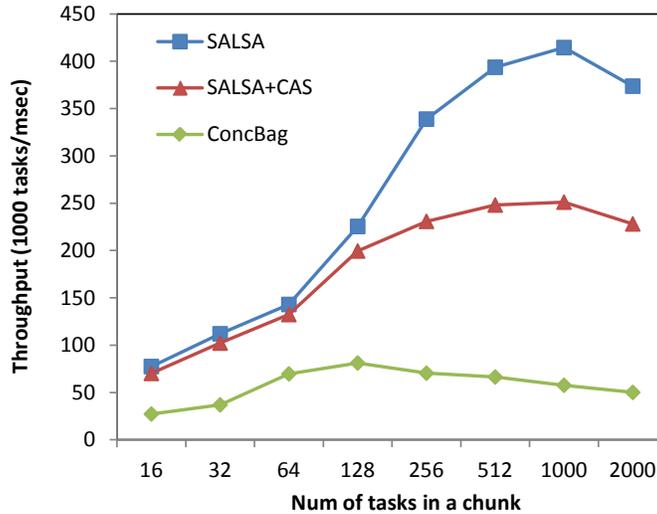


Figure 8: System throughput as a function of the chunk size.

Figure 8 shows the influence of chunk size on system throughput for the chunk-based algorithms SALSA, SALSA+CAS and ConcBags in a 16/16 workload. SALSA variations achieve their best throughput for large chunks with 1000 tasks ($\sim 8\text{KB}$ size in 64-bit architectures). The optimal chunk for ConcBags includes 128 tasks. We believe that ConcBags is ineffective with large chunk sizes since its consumers linearly scan a chunk when seeking a task to steal. In contrast, SALSA keeps the index of the latest consumed task in the chunk node, and therefore its consume operations terminate in $O(1)$ steps for every chunk size. In our evaluation in section 6 we used optimal chunk sizes for each algorithm.

7 SALSA correctness

7.1 Definitions

First we define constants and definitions that are used in the section.

- A — The system as describe in Section 4, when using SALSA pools as the SCPool.
- n — The number of consumers in A .

Definition 1. (Referring Node) *A node is the referring node of chunk C if that node points to C , and is in a chunk list of C 's owner.*

We now define what we shall call the *commit points* of A :

Definition 2. *The commit points of A are as follows:*

1. For a **put()** operation, the commit point is the assignment in line 58 of the **put()**.
2. For a **get()** operation that returns a task, the commit point is the point where the *idx* of the referring node is increased to include the returned task. More specifically:
 - If the task T is returned by **consume()**, the commit point is line 90 of the **consume()** if the chunk containing T is owned by the consumer executing this **consume()** operation, and otherwise, it is line 131 executed by a stealing consumer before it removes the chunk from the current consumer's node in line 132
 - If the task is returned by **steal()** and the new node added to the list has a higher *idx* than the node it replaces, then the commit point is line 131.
 - If the task is returned by **steal()** and the new node added to the list has the same *idx* as the node it replaces in line 131, it means that the *idx* of the replaced node has been incremented between lines 119 and 131. In this case then the commit point is at the time the *idx* was increased to its current value. This may be either in line 90 or line 131, depending on the operation (**consume()** or **steal()**) executed by the consumer that increments it.

Definition 3. (taken) *A task T is taken at a given time if the *idx* of the referring node of the chunk containing T is greater than or equal to the slot of this task.*

Note that if a task T is returned, then the commit point of the **get()** operation that returns T is the point where the task is *taken*.

Definition 4. (empty) *A task pool is empty at a given time t , if all tasks that were added to the pool by **put()** operations that passed their commit point before time t are taken at time t .*

Definition 5. *Let c be the consumer owning a SALSA SCPool, then c 's SCPool is non-empty if there is a chunk owned by c that contains tasks which are not taken.*

7.2 Lock-freedom

For the purpose of the proof, we refer to the first part of the **steal()** operation (lines 109 to 118) as *part I* of the operation and to the second part (lines 119 to 138) as *part II* of the operation.

From Definition 5, Definition 4 and the fact the each chunk is owned by a consumer we can reach the following observation:

Observation 1. *If the task pool is not empty, then at least one SALSA SCPool is non-empty.*

Lemma 1. *If a chunk owned by a consumer c contains a task, then that chunk is accessible from one of the lists in c 's SCPool.*

Proof. If c is the first owner of this chunk than that chunk was inserted to c 's pool by a producer in line 71. Otherwise, c stole this chunk, and before the changing ownership in line 116, c pointed to this chunk in line 115 and later replaced to node pointing to that chunk in line 131. Therefore, this chunk is accessible via c 's SCPool during the time c is the chunk's owner. \square

Lemma 2. *If a consumer successfully finishes part I of the **steal()** operation (i.e., succeeds in the CAS in line 116) and later finishes the operation, then in the duration of this **steal()** operation, a task becomes taken.*

Proof. First we note that before the consumer finishes *part I*, it first checks that there is a task in the current chunk, and stores the index of that task in $prevIdx$ (line 113). If the idx as read in line 119 is bigger than $prevIdx$, a task was taken in the duration of this operation and we are done. Otherwise, idx as read in line 119 is equal to $prevIdx$ and therefore the consumer will reach line 128. In this case the new node replacing the old node will have idx greater than $prevIdx$, and so the task in $prevIdx$ is taken and we are done. \square

Lemma 3. *If a consumer fails to finish part I of the **steal()** operation (i.e., fails the CAS in line 116) on a SCPool that is non-empty when the operation begins n times, then there is another consumer that takes a task from the task pool during the time interval spanning those n failed attempts.*

Proof. Since we assume the SCPool is not empty when the operation begins, then by Lemma 1 there is a list containing an non-empty chunk owner by the victim in the victim's SCPool. Therefore if no chunk is found in line 109 then either a concurrent **consume()** operation took a task in which case we are done, or a another **steal()** operation successfully stole a chunk from this SCPool.

Otherwise a chunk is found and the consumer may fail to finish *part I* of the **steal()** operation on a non-empty SCPool in the following cases:

1. The **if** statement in line 113 is true because the chunk does not contain a task. However since, a chunk containing task was chosen in line 109, at least one task was taken from this chunk after it was chosen, and we are done.
2. The **if** statement in line 111 is true. In this case, a stealable chunk was found, but another **steal()** operation successfully stole the chunk before the chunk was read.
3. The **if** statement in line 116 is true. In this case, the **steal()** operation fails because another consumer stole this chunk.

If a task was taken in the period spanning the n operations, we are done. Otherwise, there are n operations by other consumers that successfully stole a chunk, i.e., there are n operations that finished *part I*. Since there are only $n - 1$ consumers other than the consumer that failed, we conclude that there is at least one consumer that completed *part II*. Therefore, by Lemma 2, some task was taken during this time. \square

Lemma 4. *If a consumer returns \perp in n **steal()** operations on a non-empty SALSA SCPool, then there is a consumer that takes a task from the task pool during that time interval.*

Proof. If the consumer returns \perp because it fails to finish *part I* n times, then by Lemma 3, a task was taken during that time period. Otherwise, at least one of its n steal operations successfully finishes *part I* of the **steal()** and returns \perp in *part II*. By Lemma 2, a tasks was taken by some consumer. \square

Lemma 5. *If a consumer returns \perp in n **consume()** operations on a non-empty SALSA SCPool, then there is a consumer that takes a task from the task pool during that time interval.*

Proof. A **consume()** operation may return \perp in two cases:

1. No chunk with a task was found and \perp was returned in line 82. In this case, no task was found in the SCPool, but since we assume that there was a task in the SCPool when the operation started, we know that the chunk containing this task was stolen by some other consumer.
2. If a chunk with a task was found, and **takeTask()** returned \perp . This may happen only if another consumer stole the chunk.

In both cases there was some other consumer that stole a chunk. If this occurs n times, then we know that there are n operations that finished *part I*. Since there are only $n - 1$ consumers other than this consumer, we conclude that there is at least one consumer that finishes *part II*, i.e. returns from its **steal()** operation. Therefore, by Lemma 2, there is a consumer that takes a task. \square

Lemma 6. *If **checkEmpty()** returns false because the if in line 35 is true $2n$ times, then there is a consumer that takes a task during that time interval.*

Proof. If **checkEmpty()** returns false because of the if in line 35, then some consumer has cleared *emptyIndicator* during the execution of **checkEmpty()**. This can happen only when a consumer successfully steals a chunk or takes a task from a chunk. By Lemma 4, if the first case occurs more than $n - 1$ times, a task is taken and we are done. Otherwise, there are at least n operations that take a task and clear *emptyIndicator*. At most $n - 1$ of these operations were invoked before **checkEmpty()** began. Therefore, at least one of the n operations that take tasks began after the **checkEmpty()** operation began and cleared *emptyIndicator* before it ended. Since this operation takes the task before it clears *emptyIndicator*, it takes the task before **checkEmpty()** ends, and the lemma follows. \square

Claim 1. *If a **get()** operation runs for $5n$ iterations in A , then a task is taken by some consumer in the system during those iterations.*

Proof. The **get()** operation is a loop. In every iteration of the while loop in lines 13-21 it calls **consume()** on the local SCPool, then **steal()** $n - 1$ on the other pools, and finally **checkEmpty()**. When **consume()** or **steal()** return a task, this task is returned by the **get()** operation. If **checkEmpty()** returns true, then the **get()** operation returns \perp .

Consider a **get()** operation that does not return after $5n$ loop iterations. At the end of each iteration, **checkEmpty()** returns false. If it returns false $2n$ times because of the if in line 35, then by Lemma 6 a task is taken and we are done. Otherwise, there are at least $3n$ iterations in which the task pool contained a task when **checkEmpty()** was called. In each of those iterations, there are three cases: (1) the consumer found the task pool non-empty during its corresponding **steal()** or **consume()**, (2) the task was taken from this task pool by another consumer, (3) the chunk that included that task was stolen. If case (2) happens we are done. Therefore, assume that all $3n$ iterations fall in cases (1) or (3). If (3) happens n times, then at least one of the consumers finishes the **steal()** operation, and by Lemma 2, a task was taken and we are done. Otherwise, then there are at least $2n$ iterations where the task pool is not empty, and therefore by Observation 1 in those iterations there is at least one non-empty SCPool. Thus, in every iteration the consumer performs **consume()** or **steal()** on a non-empty SALSA SCPool, and since at least n of those operations are of the same type, then by Lemmas 5 and 4 a task will be taken by this consumer or by another consumer during that time. \square

We now show the if $(n + 1)^2$ tasks are *taken* from the pool a task is returned during that time. Note that while it is possible to show a tighter bound on the number of *taken* tasks, we chose to use a higher value for proof clarity.

Lemma 7. *If $(n + 1)^2$ tasks are taken from the task pool in a certain time interval, then in the duration of this interval a task is returned by some consumer.*

Proof. First we show that if $n + 1$ tasks are *taken*, then at least one slot is changed to TAKEN during that time. By Definition 3, a task is *taken* after the *idx* pointing to the chunk containing that task is increased to include this task. This may occur in line 90 or 131. After either of these lines is executed, the consumer always reaches a line that changes the slot to TAKEN if it wasn't already changed (lines 92 and 95 in `takeTask()` and line 134 in `steal()`). The slot is not changed to TAKEN before the task is *taken*, since it is only changed after incrementing of *idx*. Therefore, after a task is *taken* when the consumer incrementing the *idx* pointing to this chunk finishes its `takeTask()` or `steal()` operation, the slot of this task is changed to TAKEN. Since there are n consumers in the system, if $n + 1$ tasks are taken, then at least one consumer finished `takeTask()` or `steal()` after executing line 92, 95, or 134, and therefore during the time when $n + 1$ tasks are *taken* a task is changed to TAKEN.

Therefore when $(n + 1)^2$ tasks are *taken* from the pool, we know that $n + 1$ slots are changed to TAKEN. We now note that when a slot is changed to TAKEN by a consumer, that consumer returns that task when it completes its `get()` operation. Since we know that $n + 1$ slots were changed to TAKEN, and since there are only n consumers in the system, we know that at least one consumer finished its `get()` operation after changing a slot to taken, and therefore returns that task. \square

Theorem 1. *A is lock-free.*

Proof. According to Claim 1, if a `get()` operation runs for $5n$ iterations without taking a task, then a task is *taken* by some consumer in the system. By Lemma 7 if $(n + 1)^2$ tasks are *taken* a task is returned. Therefore after $(n + 1)^2 \times 5n$ iterations of `get()` a task is returned. Therefore, the `get()` operation is lock-free. The `put()` operation is trivially wait-free. \square

7.3 Linearizability

Lemma 8. *Let C be a task chunk and idx_{t_1}, idx_{t_2} be the *idx* of the referring node of C at times t_1, t_2 respectively, s.t. $t_1 < t_2$. Then $idx_{t_1} \leq idx_{t_2}$*

Proof. First we note that an *idx* field of a node may only increase after it is created (line 90). It therefore remains to consider the case that the new *referring node* pointing to C replaces an old *referring node*. When the *referring node* pointing to C is replaced by a new *referring node* (line 131) the node is created with the previous node's *idx* or with its $idx + 1$ if the $idx + 1$ 'th slot in C is not \perp . However, the previous node's owner may increase its *idx* after it is read by other consumers. Note that this may occur only if this chunk did not contain \perp in the *idx*'th slot before the chunk changed ownership, since the consumer checks that the next slot in the chunk is not \perp and that it is the owner before incrementing *idx* (lines 87 and 88 in `takeTask()` and lines 124 and 125 in `steal()`). Therefore, we get that if the previous owner may have increased its *idx*, then a consumer stealing the chunk will create a new node with $idx + 1$. And since after a chunk is stolen the previous owner may increase the *idx* at most once before it notices that it was stolen and leaves this chunk, the lemma follows. \square

We will now prove that A is linearizable. First we show that the *commit points* defined in Section 7.1 are well-defined and therefore can be used as the linearization points of A .

Claim 2. *There is exactly one commit points in the duration of any **put()** operation or **get()** operation that returns a task.*

Proof. For a **put()** operation, it is easy to see that the function always reaches line 58.

For a **get()** that returns a task, the following cases are possible:

- If the task is taken by **consume()**, then line 90 is always executed before the task is returned. However, this line may be executed after the chunk is stolen. In this case a concurrent **steal()** operation might have removed the chunk from the consumer's list (line 132) and before that, pointed to the chunk with a new node that has higher *idx* (line 131). If this is the case, then the *commit point* is the time of the node replacement in line 131. Note that the other consumer executed this line during the execution of the **consume()** operation - before line 90 and after the chunk is selected in line 86
- If the task taken by **steal()**, by Lemma 8 there are two options:
 - The new node added to the list in line 131 has a higher *idx* than the node it replaces. In this case, it is obvious that line 131 is executed before the task is returned.
 - The new node added to the list has the same *idx* as the node it replaces. This may occur only if the *idx* of the original node is increased after the stealing consumer reads its value in line 119 and before the stealing consumer replaces the node in line 131. Therefore the incrementation of *idx* is performed in the course of the stealer's **steal()** call.

□

We will show that *commit points* as described above are valid linearization points for **put()** operations, and for **get()** operations that return a task. For **get()** operations that returns \perp , we will show that such a linearization point exist without explicitly specifying it.

The following observation follows immediately from the code in Algorithm 6.

Observation 2. *If a consumer operation that takes the last task in a pool returns a task, this operation clears the *emptyIndicator* of this pool after taking the task and before starting a new operation.*

Claim 3. *If **checkEmpty()** returns true then there is a time between its invocation and its response when the task pool is empty.*

Proof. In every iteration of the loop in line 32 of **checkEmpty()**, the consumer checks that its bit in *emptyIndicator* is set (line 35). If **checkEmpty()** returns true then the *emptyIndicator* was not reset by any consumer after it was set in the first iteration. Note that an operation may take the last task in the pool and then stall before clearing *emptyIndicator*. Since there are $n - 1$ consumers other than the consumer running **checkEmpty()**, there may be up to $n - 1$ such operations. Since only $n - 1$ consumers may take the last task from a pool without clearing the *emptyIndicator* of that pool (by Observation 2), we can conclude that there is at least one iteration during which no pool changes from non-empty to empty. During this iteration, **checkEmpty()** does not find a task in line 106. Therefore, when that iteration began, the pool was empty and the claim follows. □

Lemma 9. *Let σ be a run and t a time in σ such that all the pending operations that started before time t complete in σ and, assume a consumer c increments the *idx* field of a node at time t . Then the task pointed by this *idx* will be returned either by that consumer or another consumer running a concurrent **get()** operation that started before c incremented the *idx* field.*

Proof. First we note that operations that start after idx is incremented do not take the task pointed by that idx , since they read the up-to-date idx , which by Lemma 8 never decreases. Therefore, if an operation takes the task pointed by idx after it is incremented, it must be an operation that started before c 's operation.

The idx field can be incremented in the `takeTask()` or `steal()` functions.

If the idx was incremented in the `taskTask()` function in line 90 then there are three possible cases:

1. If c is still the owner of the chunk when it reaches line 91, then c will return this task in line 94.
2. Otherwise, if the chunk is stolen before c executes line 91, then c tries to CAS the slot from the task to TAKEN in line 95, and if the CAS is successful, c returns it in line 98.
3. Otherwise, some other consumer c' succeeds in changing the slot to TAKEN in line 134, and returns this task in line 138.

If the idx field is incremented in `steal()` in line 131 by replacing the old node with a node with higher idx , then c created this node with a higher idx and therefore must have executed line 128, which means that the if in line 124 was true, and the slot did not contain \perp . Therefore, c will reach line 134, and will try to CAS the slot from the task to TAKEN. If it is successful it returns the task, and otherwise, some other consumer succeeds, and that consumer returns the task. □

Claim 4. *Let σ be a run and t a time in σ such that all the pending operations that started before time t complete in σ and the system is empty at time t . Then every task that was added to the pool by a `put()` operation that passed its commit point before time t is returned by some `get()` operation whose commit point is before time t .*

Proof. If the system is empty, then by Definitions 4 and 3 the idx of every node is greater than or equal to the the index of the last task in that chunk. By Lemma 9, if the idx is increased then the task in that idx is either returned, or is about to be returned by an active `get()` operation. By the definition of the *commit point* of `get()`, that operation has passed its commit point, since the idx of the node was increased. The claim follows. □

Claim 5. *If a consumer c returns a task T , then there is a `put(T)` operation that passes its commit point before c 's `get()` operation passes its commit point.*

Proof. Before a consumer returns a task, the idx field of the node pointing to the task is incremented. Since both `takeTask()` and `steal()` verify that the task is not \perp before incrementing idx , we know that the `put()` operation already passed its commit point before the idx is incremented, and by the definition of the `get()` commit points, the claim follows. □

Lemma 10. *If a consumer c_s steals a chunk from a consumer c_v and this chunk's referring node's idx value is i when c_s reads it in line 119. Then (1) c_v does not take tasks from indexes greater than $i + 1$ in this chunk unless c_v re-steals the chunk. And (2) If c_v attempts to take a task from slot $i + 1$ in this chunk it does so using CAS.*

Proof. First we note that in `consume()`, after a consumer increments the value of a node's idx , it then checks that it is still the owner of the chunk pointed by that node. If the consumer notices that it is not the case it leaves it (line 97). Therefore, after a successful `steal()`, the previous consumer of the chunk can increase the idx field by at most one. In `consume()`, the consumer takes tasks from the idx 'th slot of the chunk (lines 92 and 95), and therefore it does not take tasks from slots larger than $i + 1$.

Since c_s reads the idx of c_v 's node after changing ownership (line 119), if c_v increases the idx in line 90 after c_s steals the node, c_v notices the ownership change (line 91) and therefore attempts to take the task using a CAS operation in line 95.

If c_v is executing `steal()`, c_v either takes the $i + 1$ 'st task if idx is read by c_s before c_v increments it in line 131 or it takes the i 'th task if c_s reads it after it is increased. In both cases, c_v used CAS to take the task. Moreover, since the ownership has changed, c_v does not try to take tasks from this chunk before re-stealing it, since this chunk is not chosen by this consumer if it is not the owner (line 79). \square

Lemma 11. *Let c_s be a consumer stealing a chunk from consumer c_v , and let the idx value of the referring node of that chunk be i when c_s reads it in line 119. Then (1) c_s only takes tasks from indexes greater than i ; and (2) if another consumer tries to take a task from index $i + 1$, then c_s attempts to take that task using CAS.*

Proof. The first task c_s attempts to take is the task at index $i + 1$ (line 134). This is done by a CAS operation if there is a task in that slot when c_s reads the contents of the slot in line 123. If the slot is \perp when c_s reads it, c_s may later take this task without a CAS operation if the chunk is not stolen. In the later case, other consumers do not try to take this task unless they steal the chunk, since they may only see this task after c_s changes the ownership, and since after reading a slot, ownership is checked (lines 88 and 125). An exception is in line 125 where the task might be taken in case the ownership changed. However, this is done only if the task was there before the ownership change and therefore c_s is guaranteed to also notice this task. If the chunk is stolen from c_s , then by Lemma 10 c_s takes the $i + 1$ 'st task using CAS.

After c_s takes the first task, it increments idx in line 131 or line 90, and since subsequent `consume()` operations will take tasks from slots $i + 1$ and higher, the lemma follows. \square

Lemma 12. *A task in A may be only returned once.*

Proof. Consider a consumer c_s that takes a task. If c_s stole the chunk from another consumer c_v , then by Lemma 10 and Lemma 11, c_s and c_v do not take tasks from the same slot, and if they do, they use CAS. Since only one consumer may succeed in a CAS operation we conclude that a task will be returned by at most one consumer, and since a consumer will not attempt to take the same task twice, as it always takes tasks from $idx + 1$ and always increases idx , a task can be returned only once. \square

Theorem 2. *A is linearizable.*

Proof. We will now show that it is possible to choose the linearization points to be the commit point as defined above. We only show correctness for complete histories. However, since our algorithm is lock-free it is possible to complete pending operations of partial histories so they will be complete. Therefore our proof also holds for partial histories.

From Claim 5 we know that the linearization point of a consumer executing `get()` that returns T always follows the linearization point of `put(T)`. From Claim 12 we know that for each `put(T)` operation, at most one `get()` returns T . From Claim 3 we know that if a `get()` operation returns \perp , then there is a point during its execution in which the pool is empty. From Claim 4 we know that each `put(T)` operation that preceded a point in which the pool was empty there is a `get()`, which stats after he linearization point of `put(T)` that returns T . \square

8 Conclusions

We presented a highly-scalable task pool framework, built upon our novel SALSA single-consumer pools and work stealing. Our work has employed a number of novel techniques for improving performance: 1) lightweight and synchronization-free produce and consume operations in the common case; 2) NUMA-aware memory management, which keeps most data accesses inside NUMA nodes; 3) a chunk-based stealing approach that decreases the stealing cost and suits NUMA migration schemes; and 4) elegant producer-based balancing for decreasing the likelihood of stealing.

We have shown that our solution scales linearly with the number of threads. It outperforms other work-stealing techniques by a factor of 20, and state-of-the-art non-FIFO pools by a factor of 3.5. We have further shown that it is highly robust to imbalances and unexpected thread stalls.

We believe that our general approach of partitioning data structures among threads, along with chunk-based migration and an efficient synchronization-free fast-path, can be of benefit in building additional scalable high-performance services in the future.

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