Power Efficient Cache Coherence

Craig Saldanha
Dept. of Electrical and Computer Engineering
University of Wisconsin
1415 Engineering Drive
Madison, WI 53706
saldanha@cae.wisc.edu

Mikko Lipasti
Dept. of Electrical and Computer Engineering
University of Wisconsin
1415 Engineering Drive
Madison, WI 53706
mikko@engr.wisc.edu

Abstract

Snoop-based cache coherence implementations employ various forms of speculation to reduce cache miss latency and improve performance. This paper examines the effects of reduced speculation on both performance and power consumption in a scalable snoop-based design. We find that significant potential exists for reducing energy consumption by using serial snooping for load misses. We report only a minor 6.25% increase for average cache miss latency for a set of commercial workloads while finding substantial reductions in snoop-related activity.

1. Introduction

In the recent past, researchers in both academia and industry have paid a great deal of attention to power consumption in computing systems. Much of this attention has focused on architectural and circuit techniques for reducing on-chip processor power and energy consumption via techniques such as clock-gating [5], memory subsystem storage structure optimizations [1,3,8,9,10,11,12,13,14], system bus optimizations [6,15], pipeline speculation gating [34], and main memory access [17]. Recently, a study by Moshovos et al. examined the potential for filtering remote snoop requests by checking them against a small *Jetty* table to avoid tag lookups and reduce on-chip power consumption induced by remote cache misses [1]. We believe that approaches such as these, as well as many others not mentioned here, will help alleviate power consumption problems in future processor chips.

At the same time, the incessant market pressure for improved performance--particularly for large server systems--is driving designers to build shared memory systems with large numbers of processors in them. The complexity and frequency of the processor interconnect that provides cache coherence to the software running on these systems is increasing rapidly and thereby the power consumed by the interconnect. Drivers for interchip busses account for as much as 15-20% of total chip power [35].There are several techniques that target coding and information compression as a means to reduce switching activity and thereby reduce power. However, given that the energy to send a packet over a processor-to-processor interconnect is a function of the interconnect length, capacitance, and bus frequency, it is constant for a given system and circuit technology. Therefore the issue of power[1] consumption in the interconnect of a multiprocessor system must be dealt with at the architectural level by eliminating unnecessary activity. This is the primary focus of our investigation.Various forms of speculation are routinely employed to reduce the latency of cache misses and overlap data fetch and transmission latency with checking for cache coherence. This paper presents a case study of a hypothetical shared-memory system that is similar to two recent high-end server systems: the IBM S80 [31] and the SunFire 6800 [29]. We find that opportunities exist for reducing speculation in the cache coherence implementation of such a system while sacrificing very little performance (as measured by effective cache miss latency). The mechanisms we propose reduce the number of address transactions (or snoop commands), data fetches, and data transmissions that occur in the system.

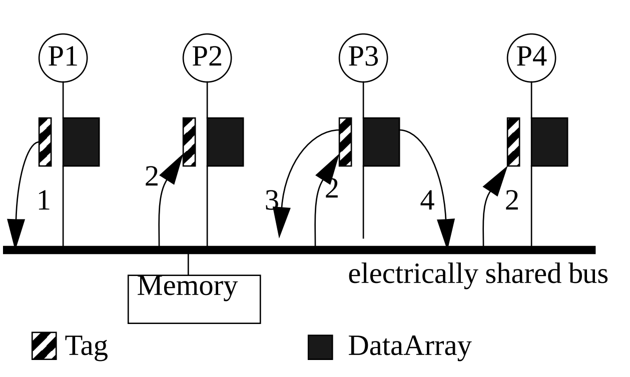


FIGURE 1. Snoop-based coherence protocol.

2. Snoop based coherence protocols

2.1. Snooping Mechanism

In this section we explain the principles of snoop-based cache coherence protocols and the architectural trade-offs involved in the transmission of snoop packets and the subsequent tag-array accesses and data fetch and transmission.

In a snoop-based coherence protocol where the nodes are connected by a shared bus (a single set of

[1] Throughout this paper, we use the terms power and energy interchangeably, since we do not vary the time base (i.e. bus frequency) needed to convert from one to the other.

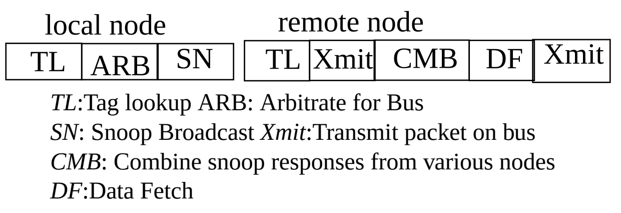

local node
remote node
TL
ARB
SN
TL
Xmit
CMB
DF
Xmit
TL:Tag lookup ARB: Arbitrate for Bus
SN: Snoop Broadcast Xmit:Transmit packet on bus
CMB: Combine snoop responses from various nodes
DF:Data Fetch

FIGURE 2. Operations of a snoop transaction.

wires connecting a number of devices or a network that is logically equivalent) every node can observe all transactions on the bus. Coherence is then maintained by having all the cache controllers “snoop” on the bus and monitor the transactions. Using the MOESI coherence protocol as an example, we will explain the sequence of events that occur in response to a load miss in P1 that is present in modified(M) state in P3.

As shown in Figure 1, as soon as P1 sees that it is unable to satisfy the request, it arbitrates for the bus and places a snoop packet on the bus (1). The snoop packet has the appropriate address information that will be used for remote tag lookups. The presence of the snoop packets on the shared bus prompts all of the remote cache controllers to perform tag array lookups (2) to determine if they have a copy of the requested data and what state it is in. P2 and P4 determine that they do not have a copy of the requested data and the current transaction completes for these nodes at this point. P3 determines that it has a copy of the requested line in modified state(M) and it sends out a snoop response, informing memory and other nodes in the system that it will supply the data (3). P3 now performs a cache data array lookup to retrieve the appropriate data and then transmits this data back to P1 (4).

The preceding example shows that we can divide every load miss into a series of individual operations that must occur before the request for data by a node is satisfied.

Figure 2 shows the individual operations that combine to make up a snoop transaction as soon as a processor at any node makes a request for data. The first operation that occurs is a *local tag look up* (TL). Only if the node determines that it cannot satisfy a request for data locally, will it attempt to satisfy the request from a remote node or memory. If the request misses in the local cache, the node must send a snoop on the bus. The node arbitrates for the shared bus and as soon as it is made the bus master the node transmits a snoop command to satisfy the miss in its local cache. Hence the second and third operations that occur as a result of a load miss are *Arbitration*(ARB) for the electrically shared bus and *broadcast of the snoop packet* (SN).

The next set of operations that occur as a result of a load miss take place at the remote node. On receipt of the snoop packet the cache controller at the remote node performs a *tag array lookup* (TL) to determine if it has a copy of the requested data. The remote node must convey the results of the snoop by *transmitting* the response to the other nodes (Xmit) in the system. The combining logic will *combine* (CMB) the snoop responses and identify the node that will supply the data or will determine that none of the nodes in the system have the data cached and that the data request must be satisfied from memory. Once it has been determined which node will supply the data, the appropriate node must do a *data fetch* (DF) from its cache to retrieve the data and then *transmit* (Xmit) this data to the node that started the request.

2.2. Architectural Trade-offs

The three distinct stages that occur when a data request cannot be satisfied locally are:

1)Snooping

2)Data Fetch (from remote node or memory)

3)Data Transmit (from remote node or memory)

There is an opportunity for speculation at each of the three stages and the degree of speculation at each stage enables an architectural trade-off between performance and power consumption.

Snooping: Architectures based on snoop-based protocols transmit snoop packets over a broadcast mechanism to allow all nodes in the system to see the snoop packet at the same time. This is obviously in the best interest of performance since the arrival of the snoop at all the nodes at the same time implies that the tag-array lookups will occur in parallel (an ordered interconnect also eases the implementation of shared memory consistency models). This also means that the requesting node will see only a single tag-array access latency while determining which nodes have a copy of the requested data and which do not. All these tag-array look ups are speculative and occur in parallel because the remote nodes have no way of determining whether they have a copy of the requested data until the lookup has occurred. Our simulations for a 4-way SMP with 4-way set associative 8MB L2-caches indicate that 32% of all load miss generated snoops miss in all remote caches, and an average 57% hit in a single remote cache and only about 3.5% find data in all the other caches.These results differ from those reported by Moshovos et al. [1] due to larger caches and different workloads studied, but nevertheless indicate an opportunity for substantial power savings. Every time a snoop is sent to a node that does not contain the requested data, energy is wasted, both for the tag-array access and to transmit the snoop packet across the bus. Thus, from a power saving perspective, a useful alternative would

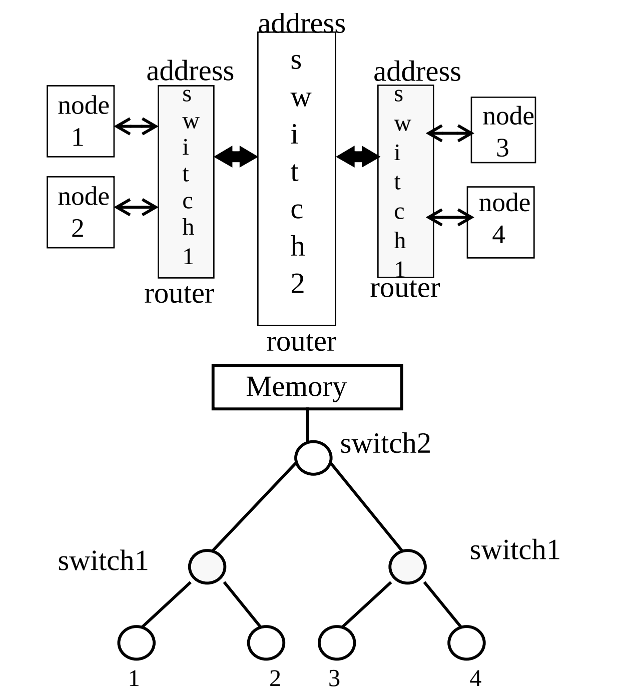


FIGURE 3. Physical and Logical Address Interconnect.

be to serialize the transmission of snoops. That is, begin with the node closest to the requestor, and then propagate the snoop to the next successive node in the path only if previous nodes in the path have failed to satisfy the request. Depending on which node (or memory if all nodes miss) satisfies the request there is the possibility for performance degradation since the requesting node now sees additional latency for each access that occurs serially. The total latency to satisfy the data request is no longer independent of which node will supply the data but is instead a function of how far (with respect to when it receives the snoop) the supplier of the data is from the requestor. The details of power savings and performance degradation associated with serial snooping are discussed in detail in Section 3.4.

Data Fetch: DRAM access latency constitutes the significant portion of total latency to satisfy a load miss from memory. By allowing the memory controller to start its DRAM access before the snoop responses from the remote nodes arrive, some of this latency can be overlapped with the remote node tag-array acceses.Though this is advantageous from the point of view of maximizing performance, it contributes significantly to power consumption, since the power associated with DRAM access can be on the order of 300 mw [17]. This power is wasted every time a load miss is satisfied from one of the remote caches. Hence, from a power-saving standpoint, accessing DRAM non-speculatively after all the snoop responses have been combined is the best solution.

The speculative fetching of data can also be applied to caches at the remote nodes.There is an opportunity to improve performance by allowing the data array look-up to occur in parallel with the tag array look-up.This allows the data fetch latency to be overlapped with the tag-array access latency expediting the transmission of data in the event of a hit. Speculative fetching of the data prior to determining a tag-array hit or miss can also consume excess energy when a miss occurs. This is nevertheless a viable trade-off when performance is at a premium, as is evident from the fact that speculative data fetching techniques are employed in the IBM S-80 [26,31] and Sun Sunfire6800 [29] servers. The case can also be made for doing serial tag and data array accesses in commercial servers. Servers based on both the Intel Xeon II [2] and the Alpha 21164 [4] fetch data serially with the tag accesses which leads to some power savings.

Data Transmit: Even with a speculative data fetch in parallel with the tag-array lookup, the requesting node must still tolerate the latency of the combining logic which combines the snoop responses to determine which node will supply the data as well as the latency of the actual transmission of the data from the source node to the requesting node. To hide this latency it is possible to speculatively transmit the data before the snoop response combining has taken place. We are unaware of a snoop-based coherence protocol that speculatively transmits fetched data but the SGI Origin2000 which implements a directory based protocol speculatively transmits data to the requestor if it finds that the directory state of the requested line is exclusive [27]. Therefore, when minimizing the latency to satisfy a load miss is of primary importance, speculative transmission of data can be effective. The cost of doing so is the increased bus power and bandwidth consumption caused by the unnecessary transmission of data packets. For the purpose of our initial evaluation of performance and power we will assume a sufficiently large bus bandwidth so that contention between nodes to transmit data can be ignored.

3. Methodology

In this section we will describe the interconnect architecture that will form the basis of the power and performance discussions for our various schemes.

3.1. Memory Subsystem Architecture

3.1.1. Address Interconnect

For simplicity of discussion and simulation we have modelled a 4-way SMP with a single processor per node. The proposed schemes, however, are easily scalable and can be applied to architectures with multiple processors per node as well as additional nodes.

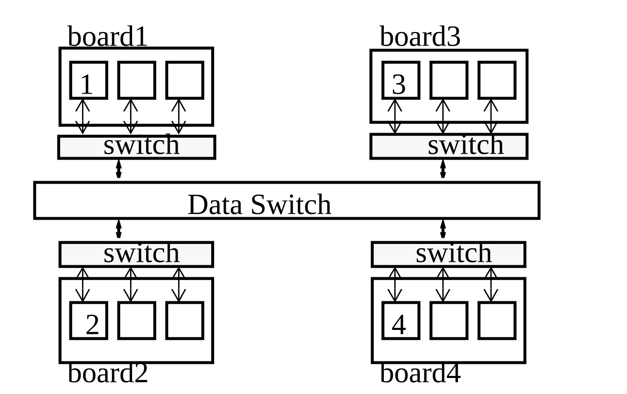


FIGURE 4. Structure of Data Interconnect.

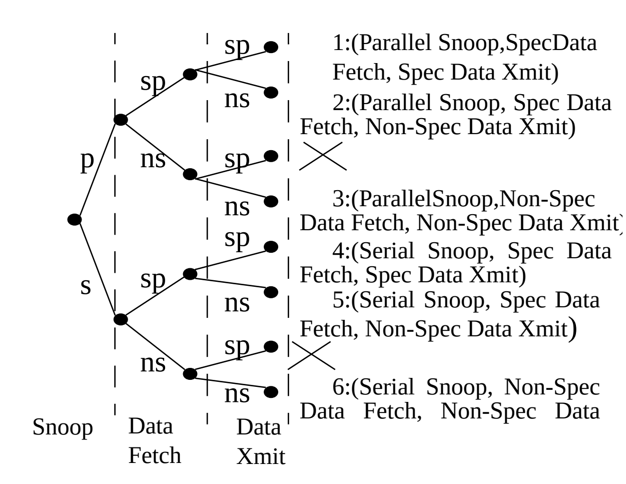
The architecture we are modelling has separate data and address interconnects. We assume that each processor is mounted on a separate board (in practical systems there would be more than one processor per board). These boards are then attached via the address and data interconnects through the backplane.

The address interconnect of our system is based on the interconnect of the SunFire6800 system's memory subsystem [29]. The interconnect forms a tree of point-to-point connections and is logically equivalent to a broadcast bus. In order to broadcast a snoop, the snoop packet must travel to the root node before it is reflected down to all of the leaf nodes. This is consistent with our assumption that all nodes see a snoop in the same cycle. Each transaction on the address interconnect needs to pass through two levels of switches to get from the source node to the destination node. The physical and logical address interconnect structure is shown in Figure 3. Our system models the memory controller at the root node, which is similar to the IBM S80 design [26] rather than connected to the leaf nodes like the SunFire6800 [29].

Each link represents the delay to go from one block (either a node or a switch) to another. We assume the link delay equal to a single bus cycle of 7ns. We also assume a single bus cycle to transmit a packet across a switch chip. These assumptions are roughly equivalent to the design assumptions of the SunFire6800 [29].

3.1.2. Data Interconnect

The data interconnect also forms a tree of point-to-point links. Each board has a board-level switch that links each processor on board to the backplane switch. The backplane switch connects the individual boards. In our model each board has only a single processor and so a board-level switch may seem unnecessary. However, in an attempt to model a large-scale system we include a board-level switch in our latency and power calculations since in larger commercial systems there will be more than a single processor per board. The data interconnect is illustrated in Figure 4.


p
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1:(Parallel Snoop,SpecData Fetch, Spec Data Xmit)
2:(Parallel Snoop, Spec Data Fetch, Non-Spec Data Xmit)
3:(ParallelSnoop,Non-Spec Data Fetch, Non-Spec Data Xmit)
4:(Serial Snoop, Spec Data Fetch, Spec Data Xmit)
5:(Serial Snoop, Spec Data Fetch, Non-Spec Data Xmit)
6:(Serial Snoop, Non-Spec Data Fetch, Non-Spec Data
Snoop
Data Fetch
Data Xmit

FIGURE 5. Degrees of Speculation on Snooping, Data Fetch & Data Transmit.

Like the address interconnect, we assume a single bus cycle (7ns) link latency and a single bus cycle to be switched across a board or backplane level switch.

3.2. Types of Speculation

Our discussion on the architectural trade-offs involved in snoop-based coherence protocols implies three degrees of freedom in their design: Snooping, data fetch and data transmission. Snooping can be done either serially or in parallel. Parallel snooping is straightforward and simply implies that the snoop packets are broadcast thereby arriving at every node in the system at the same time. In serial snooping, the snoop packet is sent to a single node at a time serially, starting with the node nearest to the requestor and proceeding until the request is satisfied or until all the nodes have been snooped. This is advantageous because the node closest to the requestor supplies the data when available but more importantly power is never wasted, from either speculative tag and data array look-ups or to transmit unnecessary snoop response packets and data. As discussed in Section 2.2, non-speculative data fetch is done by a node only after the supplier of the data is determined by combining the snoop responses while speculative data fetch involves performing the data array lookup in parallel with the tag-array lookup. Lastly, speculative transmission of data allows the transmission of data to the requestor even before the results of the snoop responses have been determined by the combining network while serial data transmission disallows this. Note that we consider serial snooping only for read operations. Serial snooping of write-related commands has consistency model implications that are beyond the scope of this paper [28]. Serial snooping of reads does not violate weak consistency models like the PowerPC consistency model [30]. By speculating or serializing these operations to different degrees we will get varying results for power and performance. Figure 5 summarizes the various design choices. Each upward branch indicates that an operation is performed speculatively or in parallel, while a downward branch indicates that the operation is performed serially. Configurations marked with an 'X' are not interesting for our study, since a non-speculative data fetch implies a non-speculative data transmission. Figure 5 indicates several interesting cases that use varying degrees of speculation in the snoop, data fetch and data transmission stages.The most aggressive approach is to perform all of the operations speculatively: i.e. parallel snoop, speculative fetch and speculative data transmit while the most conservative is to complete each operation non-speculatively. Cases 4 and 5 are special cases of the most conservative approach (case 6) where only the memory controller (and not the other processors) speculatively fetches and transmits data.

3.3. Parallel Snoop Protocols

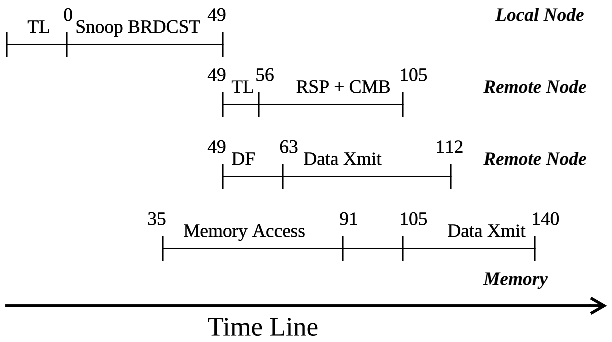
We will now present a detailed analysis of each of these configurations highlighting the power and performance trade-offs in each case.

3.3.1. Parallel Snoop, Speculative Data Fetch, Speculative Data Transmit (PS/SF/ST)

This is the most aggressive implementation of the snoop based coherence protocol. Snoop packets are broadcast to all nodes so that the tag-array lookups for every node occur in parallel. Nodes access their tag and data arrays simultaneously so that in the event of a hit the data is ready for transmission to the requestor. The latencies involved to satisfy a data request that misses in the local cache can be explained with the help of Figure 6. The diagram uses a timeline to indicate the latencies involved in completing various operations and also shows the operations that occur serially and in parallel.

To explain the parallel snoop, speculative data fetch and speculative transmit configuration, consider a read by P1 that missed in its local cache and is found in M state in P3.

We assume the start of the snoop transaction as time 0 since we are interested in knowing the latency between the time the snoop is sent out by the requestor and the time when it is satisfied either by a remote node or memory. At time 0 P1 sends its snoop packet out on the address interconnect. Since the interconnect is logically equivalent to a broadcast bus, the snoop request must travel to the root node before being reflected down to all of the branches. Figure 6 shows that the packet passes through 2 switches and 3 links to get to the memory controller, while it must pass through 3 switches and 4 links to get to each remote node. Since each link as well as each switch has a single bus cycle latency, the snoop request is available at the memory controller at 35ns (5 cycles) and at the remote node after 49ns (7cycles).



0: Data request misses in the local cache and a snoop is initiated.
35: Snoop packet reaches memory controller.
49: Snoop packet arrives simultaneously at all remote nodes.
Each node begins tag-array look-up and data access in parallel
56:Tag check completed.Snoop response available at remote node.
63:Data fetch complete. Data available in case of a hit.
91:Results of combining snoop responses available to memory controller.
105:Results of combining snoop responses available to remote nodes.Memory access also completes
112:Data from remote nodes available to requestor.
140:Data from memory available to requestor.
154:Data from remote node available to requestor.

FIGURE 6. PS/SF/ST Coherence protocol.

As soon as the snoop request is available, the memory controller begins the DRAM access which has a 70 ns latency (we assume a slightly more conservative access latency than [17]). Similarly when the snoop reaches the remote nodes, the tag-array look-up and the data-array access are started simultaneously. We assume a single bus cycle for a tag-look up and a 2-cycle latency for a data-fetch operation to complete. At 56 ns the snoop responses are available at each remote node and they must be sent to the combining logic. The combining of the snoop responses is done at the root node and the process of combining incurs one bus cycle. The combining logic decides which node will supply the requested data or whether it will come from the memory. Since it takes 3 bus cycles to send responses from the remote nodes to the root node and a cycle to perform the combining, the result of the snoops is available at 84ns. They take an additional cycle to be transmitted back to the memory controller and 3 additional cycles to be sent back to the remote nodes. Therefore after 105 ns the results of the snoops are available at all the nodes. This is similar to the snoop response latency of 100ns reported for the SunFire 6800 [29] which is consistent with the fact that the address interconnect structures in both systems are very similar.

Reviewing our data interconnect structure defined in Section 3.1, the data needs to traverse 4 links and 3 switches to travel from the source to the requestor. The data transmit is also done speculatively. Hence, 7 cycles later, at 112ns, data from the remote nodes reaches P1. Note that if multiple nodes attempt to transmit data in parallel there will be contention on the bus. For the purpose of this study we are assuming a sufficiently large bus bandwidth so that contention issues can be ignored. Also note that when cache line sizes are larger than the width of the data bus interconnects then multiple data packets must be sent in response to a single snoop request. To simplify our analysis, all our discussions on latency and power account only for the critical packet from a remote node or memory to be transferred to the requestor in order to satisfy the load miss. The remaining data packets will be transferred non-speculatively and thought they will contribute to the overall power consumption, their contribution will be the same for all of the schemes. Since we are performing a comparative study between different versions of the snoop-based coherence protocol rather than trying to estimate absolute values of power, these non-critical words can be excluded without affecting our relative comparisons.

Since the results of the snoop reach P1 at 105ns it knows in advance that it will accept data from P3 and discard data from other nodes. Figure 6 shows that if the requested data is present in any of the remote nodes then the snoop request can be satisfied in 112ns. If no remote node has a copy of the data then it takes an additional 28ns to satisfy the request from memory. It is important to note that memory speculatively fetches its data but it is never required to speculatively transmit its data. This is because the results of the snoop are available to the memory controller at 91ns, before the DRAM access completes at 105ns. This scheme offers the best performance but also consumes the most power because of the high degree of speculation involved.

To look at the overall power consumption of this configuration we examine scenarios that will yield the worst case power consumption.The power consumption of the various operations that are performed during a snoop transaction are represented by the following symbols:

P_{link}: Power consumed to send a packet across a link in the address or data interconnect.

P_{sw}: Power consumed to route packets across a switch

P_{tag}: Power consumed to do a tag-array lookup

P_{cache}: Power consumed to fetch a block from cache

P_{mem}: Power consumed to access DRAM

The power consumption of this configuration is as follows:

Xmit Snoop: $8 P_{link} + 4P_{sw}$

Remote node Tag access+Snoop response Xmit:

$$3*(P_{tag} + 2P_{link} + P_{sw}) + 3P_{link} + 2P_{sw}$$

Remote node Data Fetch and Xmit:

$$3*(P_{cache} + 4P_{link} + 3\ P_{sw})$$

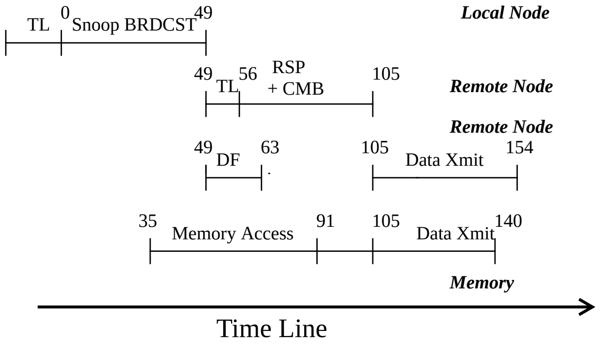
Memory access: P_{mem}

If a remote processor node supplies the data:

P_{total}: $29P_{link} + 18P_{sw} + 3P_{tag} + 3P_{cache} + P_{mem}$

If a memory supplies the data:

P_{total}: $20P_{link} + 11P_{sw} + 3P_{tag} + 3P_{cache} + P_{mem}$



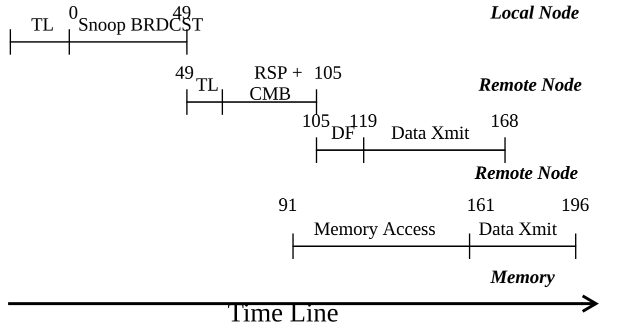
0: Data request misses in the local cache and a snoop is initiated
35: Snoop packet reaches memory controller
49: Snoop packet arrives simultaneously at all remote nodes.
Each node begins tag-array look-up and data access in parallel.
56:Tag check completed.Snoop response available at remote node.
63:Data fetch complete.
91:Results of combining snoop responses available to memory controller.
105:Results of combining snoop responses available to remote nodes and chosen node begins to transmit data.Memory access also completes.
140:Data from memory available to requestor.

FIGURE 7. PS/SF/NT Coherence Protocol.

3.3.2. Parallel Snoop, Speculative Data Fetch, Non-Speculative Data Transmit (PS/SF/NT)

This configuration differs from the first (PS/SF/ST) in that remote nodes speculatively fetch data in parallel with the tag-lookup but they do not transmit data until the snoop responses have been combined and it is known which node will supply the data. By transmitting data non-speculatively the latency to satisfy a request from a remote node is increased by 42ns but if the request is satisfied from memory there is no performance loss. This is intuitive since the memory controller receives the results of the snoop combining before it completes its DRAM access and therefore it does not have to speculatively transmit data even in the most aggressive configuration (PS/SF/ST).

Figure 7 indicates that if this configuration is employed it is prudent to satisfy requests found in the S state from memory rather than through a cache-to-cache transfer from a remote node. This configuration is more power efficient because it does not speculatively transmit data, and therefore there is no power wasted to transmit useless data packets over the data interconnect.



0: Data request misses in the local cache and a snoop is initiated
35: Snoop packet reaches memory controller but DRAM access does not begin.
49: Snoop packet arrives simultaneously at all remote nodes.
Each node begins tag-array look-up.
56:Tag check completed.Snoop response available at remote node.
91:Results of combining snoop responses available to memory control-
r.DRAM access begins.
105:Results of combining snoop responses available to remote nodes and cho-
n node begins Data Fetch.
119:Data fetch completes.Data available at remote node.
168:Data from remote node available at requestor.
196:Data from memory available to requestor.

FIGURE 8. PS/NF/NT Coherence Protocol.

The power consumption for this configuration is:

Xmit Snoop: $8P_{link} + 4P_{sw}$

Remote node Tag access+Snoop response Xmit:

$$3*(P_{tag} + 2P_{link} + P_{sw}) + 3P_{link} + 2P_{sw}$$

Remote node Data Fetch and Xmit:

$$3*(P_{cache}) + 4P_{link} + 3\,P_{sw}$$

Memory access: P_{mem}

If a remote processor node supplies the data:

P_{total}: $21P_{link} + 12P_{sw} + 3P_{tag} + 3P_{cache} + P_{mem}$

If a memory supplies the data:

P_{total}: $20P_{link} + 11P_{sw} + 3P_{tag} + 3P_{cache} + P_{mem}$

3.3.3. Parallel Snoop, Non-Speculative Data Fetch, Non-Speculative Data Transmit.(PS/NF/NT)

This scheme is less aggressive than the previous two schemes since it disables speculative access from memory and data cache. Data fetch occurs only after snoop responses have been combined and the node that will satisfy the request has been identified. The result of the reduced parallelism is an increased latency for both requests satisfied by remote node cache-cache transfers (168ns) as well as those satisfied from memory (196ns). The reduced speculation leads to significant power savings. This is because there is no power wasted by nodes that will not supply data to perform data cache accesses.

The power consumption for this configuration is as follows:

Xmit Snoop: $8\,P_{link} + 4P_{sw}$

Remote node Tag access+Snoop response Xmit:

$$3*(P_{tag} + 2P_{link} + P_{sw}) + 3P_{link} + 2P_{sw}$$

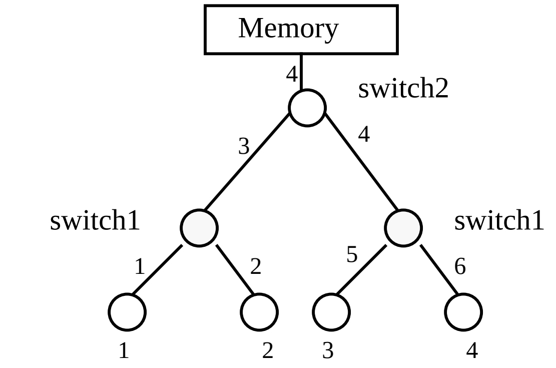


FIGURE 9. Serial Snoop Mechanism.

Remote node Data Fetch and Xmit:

$$P_{cache} + 4P_{link} + 3\,P_{sw}$$

Memory access: P_{mem}

If a remote processor node supplies the data:

P_{total}: $21P_{link} + 12P_{sw} + 3P_{tag} + P_{cache}$

If a memory supplies the data:

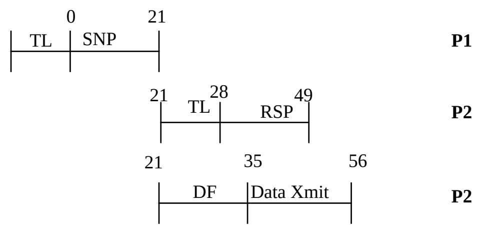
P_{total}: $20P_{link} + 11P_{sw} + 3P_{tag} + P_{mem}$

3.4. Serial Snoop Protocols

In all the configurations we have presented so far we have assumed that snoops are broadcast on the address interconnect. With this broadcast technique snoop packets are transmitted on every link since all nodes must see the snoop packet simultaneously. A more ‘power-aware’ methodology for snoop-based coherence protocols is serial snooping. The basic idea is to prevent wasting power unnecessarily by transmitting snoop packets to nodes that either do not have a copy of the data or nodes that have a copy but are not responsible for sourcing the data as the result of a snoop.

Serial snooping works by initially transmitting a snoop packet only to the nearest node. This node then does a tag comparison and if it finds the requested block in M, S or E state it sources the data to the requestor and snoop transaction ends without either the memory or any of the other remote nodes seeing the transaction. On the other hand, if the ‘nearest neighbor’ is unable to satisfy the request, it forwards the request to the next level in the tree hierachy. Figure 9 shows the sequence in which a snoop initiated by P1 travels through the address interconnect. It is first sent to P2 (1,2) which forwards the snoop to switch1 and subsequently to the root node (3). The snoop is then sent simultaneously to the memory controller and to switch1 of the other sub-tree (4). The next node to receive the snoop is 3 (5) and in the event of a miss the snoop is sent back to switch1 and on to P4 (6).l

This snooping methodology makes the assumption



0: Data request misses in the local cache and a snoop is initiated
21: Snoop packet reaches P2.Data fetch begins at P2
28: Tag array look-up completes at P2
35:Data is non-speculatively transmitted to P1
49:Snoop response reaches P1
56:P1's request is satisfied

FIGURE 10. Serial Snoop: Load miss satisfied in P2.

that the switches in the data interconnect are slightly more intelligent and are able to forward snoops to the appropriate nodes. Note again, that we consider serial snooping only for read operations which does not violate the rules of the PowerPC consistency mode.

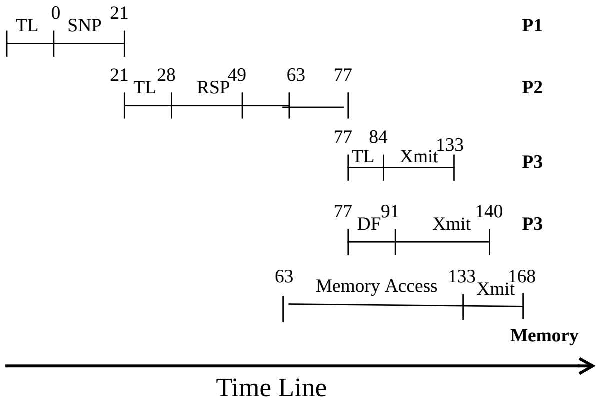
There are three serial snooping configurations that are more conservative in terms of speculation but offer significant opportunities for power saving. The configurations are serial snoop/speculative data fetch/speculative transmit (SS/SF/ST), speculative fetch/nonspeculative transmit (SS/SF/NT, and nonspeculative fetch and transmit (SS/NF/NT). We will discuss the latency and power issues for a snoop initiated by a local miss in P1 and satisfied by P2 (Section 3.4.13.4.1.), P3 (Section 3.4.2), P4 (Section 3.4.3), and Memory (Section 3.4.4).

3.4.1. Requested data is sourced by P2

The snoop initiated by P1 takes three cycles to traverse two links and a switch to get to P2. The tag access completes and the results are available in the same cycle so that the data access can begin. Hence, in spite of the fact that the tag-check and data access occur serially, they appear to be taking place in parallel in Figure 10. The results of the snoop reach P1 in 49 ns and the data which is non-speculatively fetched and transmitted reaches P1 in 56ns. The snoop never reaches the root node and therefore memory is never accessed. Thus, if a snoop request is satisfied within the same subtree by the nearest neighbor, there is a performance gain as well as power savings.

The power consumption for this configuration is:

Xmit Snoop: $2P_{link} + P_{sw}$
P2 Tag access+Snoop response Xmit:
$P_{tag} + 2P_{link} + P_{sw}$
P2 Data Fetch and Xmit:
$P_{cache} + 2P_{link} + P_{sw}$
P_{total}: $6P_{link} + 3P_{sw} + P_{tag} + P_{cache}$



0: Data request misses in the local cache and a snoop is initiated
21: Snoop packet reaches P2.
28: Tag array look-up completes at P2
49:Snoop response reaches switch1 and is forwarded to root node.
63:Snoop response reaches root node and is forwarded to memory controller and to switch 1 of the opposite subtree. Memory controller begins DRAM access.
77:Snoop reaches P3, It begins tag-array access
84:Tag-check completed.Response sent back to P1
91:Data access completed. Data is non-speculatively transmitted to P1
133:Snoop response arrives at P1.DRAM access completes.
140:Data arrives at P1
168:Data from Memory reaches P1

FIGURE 11. Serial Snooping: Load Miss satisfied in P3.

3.4.2. Requested data is sourced by P3

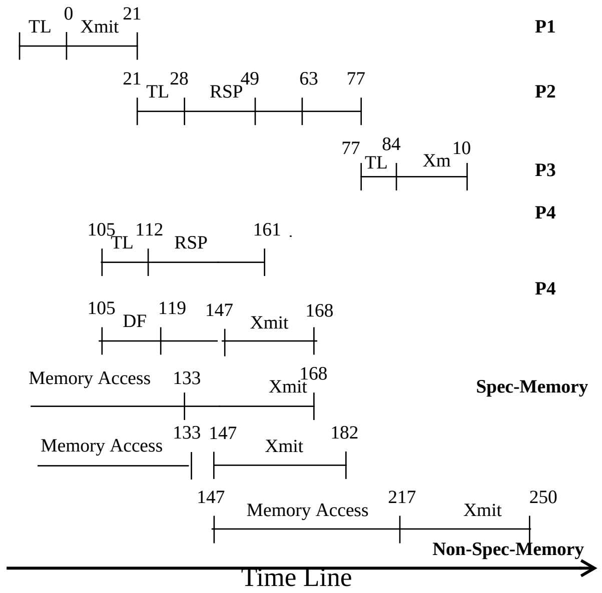
This example describes the scenario of what happens when P2 is unable to satisfy the request from P1.

P2 forwards the request to switch1 which routes it to the root node and from there to memory and back down the tree to P3. P3 receives the snoop 8 bus cycles after it reached P2 which is the latency for P2 to do a look up and re-transmit the snoop. P3 determines that it has a copy of the requested data and transmits the snoop response and the data back to P1 at 140ns. The snoop reaches the memory controller 2 cycles after it reaches the root node (63ns after the transaction began). In this example we have assumed that the memory does a speculative access to avoid the significant latency penalty if the data is not found in any of the caches. In Section 3.4.4 we present a scenario where the memory access is done serially after all the remote nodes have failed to source the requested data.

This configuration obviously expends more power than the configuration of Section 3.4.1 because the snoop request travels to more nodes but it is still significantly more power-efficient than the parallel snoop configurations

The power consumption of this configuration is as follows:

Xmit Snoop: $6P_{link} + 4P_{sw}$
P2 and P3 Tag accesses and Xmit snoop resp:
$2P_{tag} + 6P_{link} + 3P_{sw}$



0: Data request misses in the local cache and a snoop is initiated

21: Snoop packet reaches P2.

28: Tag array look-up completes at P2

49:Snoop response reaches switch1 and is forwarded to root node.

63:Snoop response reaches root node and is forwarded to memory controller and to switch 1 of the opposite subtree. Memory controller begins DRAM access.(speculative case)

77:Snoop reaches P3, It begins tag-array access

84:Tag-check completed.Request forwarded to switch1

105:Request forwarded to P4.Tag look up begins

112:Tag check completed.Response transmitted to P1.

119:Data fetch completes.Data transmitted to P1

133:Memory access completes (speculative case)

147:Snoop response available to memory controller.Data transmitted to memory if required.If memory is fetching data non-speculatively then memory access begins

168:Data from P4 reaches P1.

178:Data would reach P1 if speculatively transmitted by memory.

182:Data from memory reaches P1 if it was fetched speculatively

217:Non-speculative fetching of data from memory completes

250:Data fetched and transmitted non-speculatively from memory arrives at P1.

FIGURE 12. Serial Snooping: Load Miss satisfied in P4.

P3 Data Fetch and Xmit:

$P_{cache} + 4P_{link} + 3P_{sw}$

Memory: P_{mem}

If Memory does not speculatively fetch the data:

P_{total}*: 16*$P_{link} + 10P_{sw} + 2P_{tag} + P_{cache}$

If Memory fetches data speculatively:

P_{total}*: 16*$P_{link} + 10P_{sw} + 2P_{tag} + P_{cache} + P_{mem}$

3.4.3. Requested data is sourced by P4

Figure 12 describes a scenario where the load miss by P1 is satisfied by P4 or memory. Only after P2 and P3 have determined that they do not have a copy of the requested data does the snoop request reach P4. Therefore, 15 cycles (105 ns) after the snoop request originated from P1, P4 performs a tag look-up to determine if it has a copy of the requested data. P4 then transmits the data to P1. Data from P4 arrives at the requestor 168ns after the transaction started. This is the maximum latency to satisfy a load miss from a remote cache. If the snoop request misses in all of the remote nodes then it must be satisfied from memory.

3.4.4. Requested data is sourced from Memory

The latency to satisfy a load miss from memory depends on the degree of speculation used by the memory controller. If the memory controller fetches data speculatively it begins its DRAM access at 63ns even before P3 has determined whether it experienced a hit or a miss. If the memory controller also transmits its data speculatively then the latency to satisfy the load miss is 168ns,. which is the same as the latency for data obtained from P4. The drawback of this scheme is that the power to perform the DRAM access as well as to transmit the data packet on the bus is wasted if either P3 or P4 experiences a hit. If the memory controller only performs a speculative data fetch but does not transmit the data speculatively, no power or bus bandwidth is wasted to transmit unnecessary packets but the load miss is satisfied in 182ns.If the focus of the design is on conserving power then the memory controller would not perform its DRAM access until it has determined that the snoop missed in all 4 remote nodes. In this case the load miss latency is 250ns.

The power consumption for these cases(Section 3.4.3 &Section 3.4.4) is:

Xmit Snoop: $9P_{link} + 5P_{sw}$

P2 ,P3 and P4 Tag accesses and Xmit snoop resp:

$3P_{tag} + 5P_{link} + 3P_{sw}$

P3 Data Fetch and Xmit:

$P_{cache} + 4P_{link} + 3P_{sw}$

Memory: P_{mem}

If Memory does not speculatively fetch the data:

P_{total}*: 18*$P_{link} + 11P_{sw} + 3P_{tag} + P_{cache}$

If Memory fetches data speculatively:

P_{total}*: 18*$P_{link} + 11P_{sw} + 3P_{tag} + P_{cache} + P_{mem}$

If Memory fetches and transmits data speculatively:

P_{total}*: 21*$P_{link} + 13P_{sw} + 3P_{tag} + P_{cache} + P_{mem}$

If the snoop misses in all remote nodes and memory supplies the data:

P_{total}*: 17*$P_{link} + 10P_{sw} + 3P_{tag} + P_{mem}$

4. Simulation Results

We use an augmented version of the SimOS-PPC [32] full system simulator--which is a PowerPC/AIX port of the SimOS simulator [33]--to collect statistics on load misses. We studied the behavior of load misses in four benchmarks: raytrace from the Splash-2 Benchmark suite[25], specweb99 [19], specjbb2000 [19] and tpc-w[18] on a 4-way SMP with a 4-way set associative 8MB L2 cache with 128 byte lines.

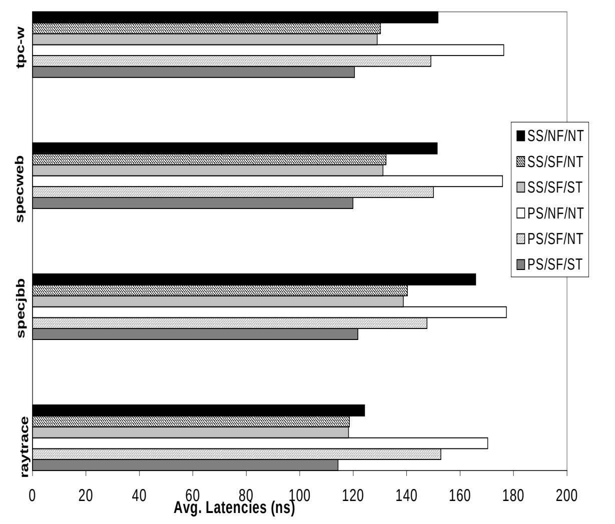


FIGURE 13. Average Latency to satisfy Load Misses.

Figure 13 shows a plot of average latencies to satisfy a load miss for the six configurations described in the paper starting with the most aggressive (Parallel Snoop,Speculative Fetch, Speculative Transmit or PS/SF/ST) and ending with the most conservative (Serial Snoop, Non-speculative Fetch, Non-Speculative Transmit or SS/NF/NT).

Figure 13 shows that the most aggressive configuration has the lowest latency to satisfy a load miss but the most conservative configuration does not have the worst performance. This is because the effectiveness of the serial snoop depends upon how many times a load miss can be satisfied by its nearest neighbor. When this is the case the latency to satisfy the load miss is 56ns as compared to 112ns in the most aggressive case (PS/SF/ST) and 168ns in the most conservative case with parallel snoop (PS/NF/NT). Even when the snoop request is satisfied by the next best node using the serial snooping technique, the latency to satisfy a node miss is 140ns which is still less than the latencies for both parallel snoop cases with less than maximum speculation (i.e. PS/SF/NT and PS/NF/NT).

The latencies of serial snoop configurations depend on the location where the load miss is satisfied. Figure 14 shows that on average 31% of load misses are satisfied by the node nearest the requestor, 21% are satisfied by the next nearest node, 20% are satisfied by the farthest node, and 26% of all load misses are satisfied by memory.

In larger systems with more processors we envision serial snooping being performed by forwarding snoop packets between sub-trees connected to the same board-level switch rather than individual processors and therefore we expect our results to scale in a similar fashion even for a large number of nodes. Of course, whether or not our results scale can only be determined by simulation of systems with a large number of processors. We leave this effort to future work. Figure 13 gives a clear indication that serial snoop performs worse than only the most speculative configuration and the latency penalty is on average 6.25% with the best case being only 2.6% in raytrace. The performance penalty for the most conservative configuration (SS/NF/NT) which would yield maximum power savings is on average 23% and in the best case 8.7% (also in raytrace). This indicates that serial snooping configurations provide opportunities for power savings and still perform better than some parallel snoop configurations.

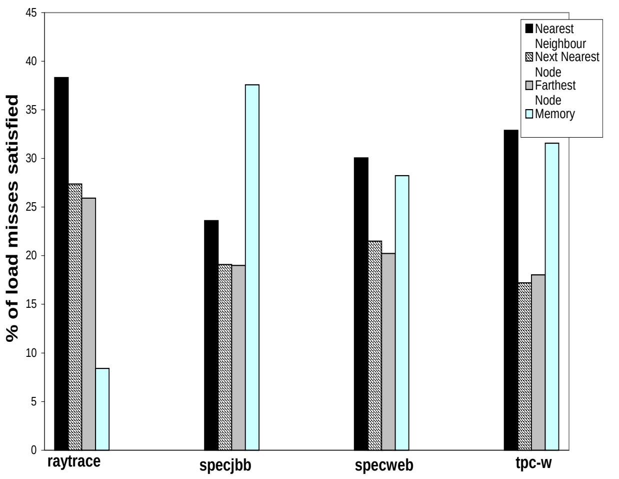


FIGURE 14. Load Miss Distribution.

It is intuitive that the power savings will increase as the degree of speculation is reduced. We quantify the power savings in terms of the reduction in activity; activity is represented by symbolic terms that correspond to the different types of activities that are included in the equations presented in Section 3. We are currently unable to substitute actual energy measures for the symbolic terms due to the unavailability of empirical measurements for some of the activities (e.g. P_{link}, P_{sw}). The power consumed for each of the six configurations is based on statistics from our execution-driven simulation and is shown as a weighted sum of each of the different types of activities. The weights are determined according to the load miss distributions presented in Figure 14.

It is clear that there is opportunity for significant savings in power consumption. Accurately modelling multiprocessor interconnect power dissipation and switch and driver power dissipation are the focus of ongoing and future research. To establish power savings we will compare each of the suggested configurations with the most speculative configuration which consumes the most power.

The following equations summarize the total power for each of the six cases as well as the savings relative to the baseline case (PS/SF/ST):

PS/SF/ST: P_{total}: $26.5P_{link} + 16.1P_{sw} + 3P_{tag} + 3P_{cache} + P_{mem}$

PS/SF/NT:

P_{total}: $20.7P_{link} + 11.7P_{sw} + 3P_{tag} + 3P_{cache} + P_{mem}$

P_{save}: $5.8P_{link} + 4.4P_{sw}$

PS/NF/NT:

P_{total}: $20.7P_{link} + 11.7P_{sw} + 3P_{tag} + 0.732P_{cache} + 0.264P_{mem}$

P_{save}: $5.8P_{link} + 4.4P_{sw} + 2.26P_{cache} + 0.736P_{mem}$

SS/SF/ST:

P_{total}: $14.2P_{link} + 8.41P_{sw} + 2.16P_{tag} + 0.74P_{cache} + 0.69P_{mem}$

P_{save}: $12.9P_{link} + 7.69P_{sw} + 0.84P_{tag} + 2.26P_{cache} + 0.31P_{mem}$

SS/SF/NT:

P_{total}: $13.51P_{link} + 7.73P_{sw} + 2.16P_{tag} + 0.74P_{cache} + 0.69P_{mem}$

P_{save}:$12.9P_{link} + 8.37P_{sw} + 0.84P_{tag} + 2.26P_{cache} + 0.31P_{mem}$

SS/NF/NT:

P_{total}: $13.51P_{link} + 7.73P_{sw} + 2.16P_{tag} + 0.74P_{cache} + 0.26P_{mem}$

P_{save}:$12.9P_{link} + 8.37P_{sw} + 0.84P_{tag} + 2.26P_{cache} + 0.74P_{mem}$

Figure 15 also shows the contribution of the various activities to the overall power consumption for each of the six configurations presented in the paper. The power consumption of each activity is based on the weights of the corresponding activity in the power equations presented above and normalized with respect to the PS/SF/ST configuration which consumes the most power.The relative power consumption due to P_{link},P_{sw},P_{tag} and P_{cache} decrease significantly as the degree of speculation decreases from parallel snooping configurations to serial snooping configurations. It is worthwhile to note the opportunity for power savings achieved by checking the nearest neighbor before forwarding a request to memory as is evident by the drop in P_{mem} in Figure 15. It is obvious from Figure 15 that maximum power savings are achieved with no speculation in snooping, data fetch and data transmit. However, it is more interesting to note that these savings are only slightly more than the savings obtained by using serial snooping with full speculation for memory. This technique is a clear winner with substantial power savings and minimal performance degradation.

5. Conclusions and Future Work

The use of speculation to reduce latency is an important architectural consideration while designing coherency protocols for modern SMP systems. We have conducted a preliminary performance and power analysis for varying degrees of speculation in a scalable snoop-based coherency protocol modeled after the IBM S80 and SunFire 6800 systems. We conclude that there is significant potential for power savings without severe performance degradation by reducing the degree of speculation in certain operations. Specifically, we find that employing serial snooping for read commands with speculative data fetch and transmit from memory provides substantial reduction in power consumption without significant performance overhead (only 6.25% latency increase) for the set of workloads studied.

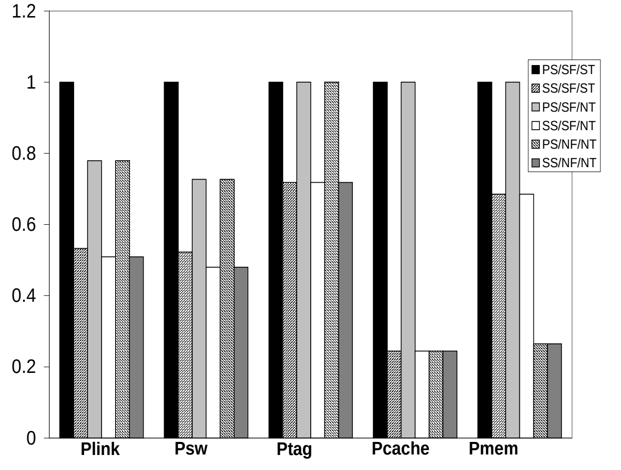


FIGURE 15. Power contribution of various activities.

We plan to develop a detailed, execution-driven power model that accounts for all events in a coherence protocol and is empirically validated against real designs. Such a model will allow us to conduct detailed tradeoff analysis for power-aware cache coherence mechanisms, including additional address and data topologies beyond the ones described here, more advanced coherence protocols, as well as adaptive mechanisms that adjust protocol policy based on load criticality or other measures.

6. Acknowledgments

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