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# Modeling the Dropbox Client Behavior

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**Abstract**—Cloud storage systems are currently very popular, generating a large amount of traffic. Indeed, many companies offer this kind of service, including worldwide providers such as Dropbox, Microsoft and Google. These companies, as well as new providers entering the market, could greatly benefit from knowing typical workload patterns that their services have to face in order to develop more cost-effective solutions. However, despite recent analyses of typical usage patterns and possible performance bottlenecks, no previous work investigated the underlying client processes that generate workload to the system. In this context, this paper proposes a hierarchical two-layer model for representing the Dropbox client behavior. We characterize the statistical parameters of the model using passive measurements gathered in 3 different network vantage points. Our contributions can be applied to support the design of realistic synthetic workloads, thus helping in the development and evaluation of new, well-performing personal cloud storage services.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Cloud computing [1] currently attracts a large interest from both industry and academia, serving as architectural platform for various services. In particular, cloud storage services [2] are gaining popularity among domestic and enterprise users as a simple, practical and safe mechanism to store data. Such popularity continues to increase with the recent entrance of big players, such as Google and Microsoft, to the cloud storage market. As consequence, the volume of traffic generated by these applications is growing at a fast rate. For example, Dropbox, currently the most popular cloud storage provider, claims to serve 1 billion files upload in a daily basis.<sup>1</sup>

Both established providers and new players entering the cloud storage market need a deep understanding of the typical workload patterns that cloud storage services have to face in order to develop cost-effective solutions. However, several aspects make the analysis of cloud storage services a challenge. As the stored content is private and synchronization protocols are mostly proprietary, the knowledge of how these applications work is limited. Moreover, the use of encryption for both data and control messages makes the analysis of such services a hard task. Thus, despite their high popularity, only recent works have started analyzing characteristics of cloud storage services [3], [4], focusing either on architectural design aspects [5], data security and privacy related issues [6], or benchmark-driven performance studies [7], [8], [9]. Although the typical usage and possible performance bottlenecks of Dropbox have been investigated in [2], a characterization of underlying client processes that generate workload to the system is still lacking. Such knowledge is key to drive future system optimizations as well as the design of similar services.

This paper proposes a two-layer hierarchical model that represents the behavior of clients in successive Dropbox sessions (Section III). The higher *session layer* captures the multiple Dropbox sessions that a client may have in a given period, whereas the lower *data transmission layer* captures the client interactions with Dropbox servers while it stores or retrieves files during a session. We then characterize a list of statistical parameters for the model at each layer (Section IV), including: (i) session durations and inter-session times; (ii) the number of data transfers per client session; (iii) data transfer durations (i.e., *On* times); (iv) the time between consecutive transfers within a single session (i.e., *Off* times); (v) the number of data flows per transfer; and (vi) flow durations and transfer volume. Model parameters are determined from the analyses of Dropbox traffic collected in three different university campuses, which also reveal relevant workload patterns. Key observations from our analyses are:

- Most Dropbox sessions are under a few tens of minutes and can be well modeled by Weibull distributions.
- The number of sessions with no data transfer is very large in all three campuses, reaching 85% in one of them.
- Users who leave Dropbox and later reconnect tend to do it within a short period of time. For example, at least 27% of the measured inter-session times are under 5 minutes.

The proposed model and our characterization results are valuable to support the future generation of realistic synthetic workloads, which, in turn, can drive the evaluation of existing cloud storage services and the design of new applications.

## II. RELATED WORK

In this work, we study the *underlying client processes* that generate workload in personal cloud storage services, complementing various recent related efforts. For example, Drago et al. [2] present an extensive characterization of Dropbox, describing typical usage, traffic patterns, and possible performance bottlenecks. Our work relies on the methodology of [2] to collect data about Dropbox usage, and to understand its client. However, unlike [2], we propose a model of client behavior, characterizing model parameters from passive measurements, and shedding light on the statistical distributions governing the workload of cloud storage systems.

Other previous efforts analyze specific cloud storage solutions [3] or compare alternative providers [8], focusing on aspects related to performance, security and privacy of cloud storage. For example, Drago et al. [7] evaluate system architecture and synchronization performance of 5 popular services, while Hu *et al.* [10] study the backup performance

<sup>1</sup><https://www.dropbox.com/news/company-info>

as well as privacy related issues of 4 cloud storage services. Gracia-Tinedo *et al.* [4] present an active measurement study of 3 different systems, providing statistical distributions that model various performance aspects, such as transfer speed and failure rate. None of these prior studies characterize client behavior and how it affects the workload on the system.

Finally, some other related studies [11], [12] note the existence of performance bottlenecks in cloud storage services, and propose new mechanisms to overcome such limitations. Our work provides new elements that can be used to develop realistic synthetic workloads, thus contributing to the efforts to develop new, well-performing cloud storage services.

### III. BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

In this section, we first briefly review the background on Dropbox (Section III-A). We then present the hierarchical model we propose to characterize its client behavior (Section III-B). Finally, we present the methodology adopted to collect our datasets of Dropbox usage, which are used to learn the parameters of our model (Section III-C).

#### A. Dropbox Background

Dropbox is currently one of the major players in the cloud storage market. According to the Google Trends,<sup>2</sup> the volume of searches for Dropbox has surpassed the search for other similar services since 2010, suggesting that Dropbox is currently the most widely used cloud storage service. The volume of traffic generated by the application is also increasing at a fast rate. For example, as reported in [2], Dropbox already accounts for about 4% of the total traffic in some networks (i.e., around one third of the YouTube traffic). Given its current importance, we here focus on Dropbox only in our analyses.

Two major components can be identified in the Dropbox architecture: (i) *control* servers, which are controlled by Dropbox; and (ii) *data storage* servers, which are outsourced to Amazon. Hence, Dropbox stores client files always in the Amazon cloud. In both cases, sub-domains of `dropbox.com` are used to identify the different parts of the service offering a specific functionality.

Files transferred between Dropbox clients and servers are compressed on the client side in order to reduce transfer time [10]. Similarly, only the difference between 2 consecutive versions of the same file is exchanged, and duplicated files are transferred only once. Finally, all transfers are encrypted with TLS/SSL. We refer to [2], [7] for more information about the Dropbox protocol as well as for an analysis of capabilities found in the Dropbox client.

#### B. Hierarchical Model of Client Behavior

In order to characterize the Dropbox client synchronization behavior, we propose a two-layer hierarchical model to deconstruct the observed workload into a collection of sessions, further breaking each of them into a sequence of data flows. Figure 1 provides a graphical view of our proposed client behavior model.

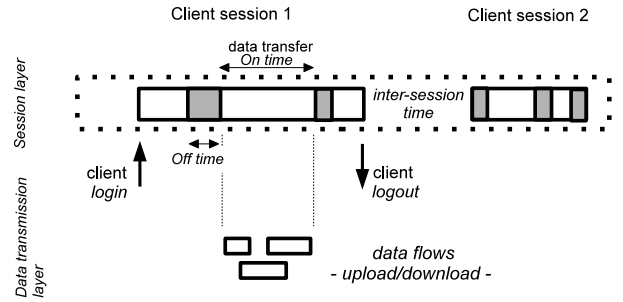


Fig. 1. Dropbox client behavior model.

A client session starts with the *login* action from a particular device, identified by an IP address,<sup>3</sup> and ends with the *logout* action. We refer to the time between 2 consecutive sessions from the same IP address as *inter-session time*. A Dropbox client keeps a TCP connection to a notification server (e.g., `notify1.dropbox.com`) continuously opened, which is used for receiving information about changes performed elsewhere. Moreover, clients start *data transfers* always over another TCP connection. Hence, IP addresses of notification servers can be used to identify the client presence in the network.

During a session, the client alternates between data transfers and idle times. Data transfers start with the client contacting a specific Dropbox sub-domain to open the file synchronization process. A data transfer is further broken into multiple data flows that start within a very short time interval after the file synchronization startup. Furthermore, idle data flows are kept open waiting for possible new files for a short time interval (i.e., 60 seconds). Thus, we here define a minimum time threshold between consecutive data flows to identify different data transfers within the same client session: consecutive flows from the same IP address within a time interval below 60 seconds are grouped into a single data transfer. The total synchronization time during a data transfer is referred to as *On time*, whereas the time interval between consecutive data transfers within the same session is referred to as *intra-session time* (or *Off time*).

In sum, our client behavior model has several components. At the (higher) session layer, client behavior is characterized in terms of session duration, inter-session time, number of data transfers as well as *On* and *Off* times. At the (lower) data transmission layer, the number of flows per data transfer as well as flow duration and volume are the key parameters. Next, we discuss how we collect datasets of Dropbox traffic and use them to infer the parameters of our model.

#### C. Datasets

Our data collection methodology follows the one proposed in [2]. Specifically, we rely on passive measurements to analyze the behavior of the Dropbox client. We use the open source Tstat tool [13], installed on different vantage points, to monitor and collect information regarding all TCP connections in the network, including client and server IP addresses and

<sup>2</sup><http://www.google.com/trends/>

<sup>3</sup>Note that, in presence of Network Address Translation (NAT), we are not able to distinguish sessions from different devices sharing the same IP address.

TABLE I. DATASET OVERVIEW.

Campus	Total traffic	Dropbox traffic	Period
1	526.297 TB	12.193 TB	Mar 6 <sup>th</sup> - May 9 <sup>th</sup> 2013
2	38.864 TB	1.296 TB	Fev 19 <sup>th</sup> - Mar 14 <sup>th</sup> 2013
3	30.839 TB	0.655 TB	Mar 6 <sup>th</sup> - May 6 <sup>th</sup> 2013

TABLE II. TOTAL DROPBOX TRAFFIC.

Campus	# Unique IPs	# Sessions	# Data Flows	Volume of Data Flows
1	17,457	718,631	1,752,516	10.804 TB
2	4,637	98,789	132,672	1.077 TB
3	155	10,823	74,558	0.564 TB

the volume of exchanged data. We apply the same heuristics of [2] to identify and classify Dropbox traffic. For example, we use both the string `*.dropbox.com` found in TLS/SSL certificates and the Fully Qualified Domain Name (FQDN) that clients request to DNS servers to classify Dropbox traffic among the different Dropbox functionalities (i.e., control, data storage, etc). A complete list of domain names used by Dropbox as well as further details about the methodology to isolate and classify Dropbox traffic can be found in [2].<sup>4</sup>

We run Tstat on border routers of 3 large university campuses, here referred to as Campus 1, Campus 2 and Campus 3. The Campus 1 dataset consists of all traffic generated in a European university, with an official population of around 13 thousand people, including students, faculty and staff. Campus 2 and Campus 3 datasets include the incoming and outgoing traffics of 2 Brazilian universities, with populations of 57 and 20 thousand people, respectively. All 3 datasets include traffic generated by wired workstations in research and administrative offices as well as wireless access points, whereas the Campus 1 dataset also includes traffic from/to student houses. We note that none of the campuses impose any bandwidth constraints on Dropbox traffic, which could impact the traffic. We also do not expect users in the campuses to limit the bandwidth on their Dropbox clients. Table I summarizes our datasets, showing the total collected traffic, the Dropbox traffic, and the collection period.

As mentioned, we apply heuristics to filter out data that are not related to Dropbox. Driven by our client behavior model, we restrict our focus to data and notification flows, i.e., flows related to *data transfers* and *sessions* in our model. Traffic related to other Dropbox user interfaces, such as the Dropbox Web interface, are discarded. This decision is justified by the vast majority of Dropbox traffic being produced by the client application [2], which we could also confirm in our datasets. Finally, we discarded flows with duration under 2 seconds or volume below 5 kB, as they mostly reflect communication problems in the monitored networks (e.g., failed TCP connection attempts).

We group multiple flows into the same client session, according to our model, by evaluating the client IP address and the start and end times associated with sessions and flows. Flow  $f$  is considered part of session  $s$  if the client IP addresses of both  $f$  and  $s$  are the same,  $start(f) \geq start(s)$ , and  $end(f) \leq end(s)$ .

However, we notice some exceptions, such as a session starting before the previous one from the same IP address has ended. In such cases of overlap between sessions, we cannot assign data flows occurring during the overlap to a unique session. Such overlaps might be due to (i) the use of NAT, which makes sessions and data flows originated from multiple clients appear with a single source IP address; or (ii) communication failures between Dropbox clients and servers, which make the Dropbox client open a new session before the previous one is terminated. In the latter case, we expect that the overlap between successive sessions is shorter.

Thus, we employ the following heuristic to deal with overlaps between sessions from the same IP address. Since it is known that Campus 1 does not have NAT in its sub-networks, all overlaps in this dataset are likely caused by communication failures. Yet, overlaps are observed in 42% of the Dropbox sessions in this campus. By analyzing the distribution of overlap durations, we can see a clear knee at around 140 seconds – thus, this value is used as a threshold to identify overlaps caused by communication failures. In all 3 datasets, sessions with overlaps lasting for up to 140 seconds are combined into a single one. This merge operation was performed in 37%, 38% and 50% of the sessions collected in campuses 1, 2 and 3, respectively. Sessions with longer overlaps are discarded, as we are not able to uniquely assign data flows to them. In total, 5%, 15% and 45% of the sessions collected in campuses 1, 2 and 3 were discarded. We note the larger fractions of discarded sessions in the datasets collected in campuses 2 and 3, where NAT is widely deployed.

Table II summarizes some characteristics of the 3 datasets *after* the aforementioned filters have been applied. It presents the numbers of unique client IP addresses, sessions, data flows and the total traffic volume in data flows.

#### IV. CLIENT BEHAVIOR CHARACTERIZATION

We now characterize the Dropbox client behavior according to our two-layer model, presenting, for each model component, the statistical distribution that best fits the measured data. The best-fitted distribution is determined by comparing the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic [14] (for continuous distributions) and the least square errors (LSE) [15] (for discrete distributions) of the best-fitted curves for a number of commonly used distribution models. The Maximum-Likelihood Estimation (MLE) method [16] is used to estimate model parameters. We visually compare the fittings both at the body (small values) and at the tail (large values) of the measured data to support our fitting decisions.

We have considered the following distribution models as candidates for best fit: Normal, Log-Normal, Exponential, Cauchy, Gamma, Logistic, Beta, Uniform, Weibull, Pareto (continuous variables) and Poisson, Binomial, Negative Binomial, Geometric and Hypergeometric (discrete variables).

##### A. Session Layer

We first investigate the client *session duration*. Recall that a Dropbox client keeps an open TCP connection with the server during the entire session. Thus, depending on the number of simultaneous clients and their session durations, servers may

<sup>4</sup>See also [http://www.simpleweb.org/wiki/Dropbox\\_Traces](http://www.simpleweb.org/wiki/Dropbox_Traces)

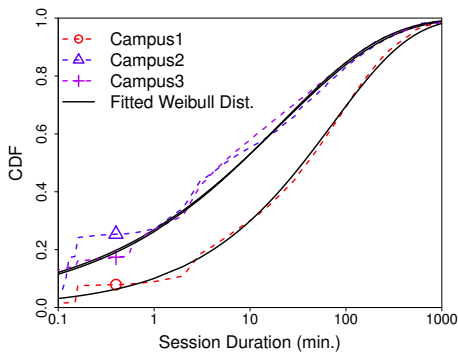


Fig. 2. Distributions of session durations. The probability density function (PDF) of Weibull distribution is  $p_X(x) = \frac{\alpha}{\beta} (\frac{x}{\beta})^{\alpha-1} e^{-(x/\beta)^\alpha}$ . Parameter values of best fit for campuses 1, 2 and 3 are: ( $\alpha = 0.525$ ;  $\beta = 71.788$ ); ( $\alpha = 0.383$ ;  $\beta = 20.776$ ); and ( $\alpha = 0.395$ ;  $\beta = 20.366$ ).

have to manage a large number of simultaneous connections, compromising their processing and network resources.

Figure 2 shows the Cumulative Distribution Functions (CDFs) of session durations in the 3 datasets. To make visual inspection clearer, we plot this figure in log scale. In general, client sessions tend to be short, although clearly longer in Campus 1. For instance, the fraction of sessions longer than 200 minutes is 17% in Campus 1, but only 8% in the other two. Similarly, the average session durations are 144, 85, and 94 minutes for campuses 1, 2 and 3, respectively, although the distributions present high variability, with coefficients of variation (CV)<sup>5</sup> ranging from 3.9 to 4.8. Recall that NAT is often used in campuses 2 and 3. Moreover, both campuses, particularly Campus 3, experienced some degree of network instability during the monitored period. In Campus 1, instead, users are connected to more stable networks with public IP addresses, and clients may remain connected to a Dropbox server throughout the period the device is turned on. In the other two campuses, users may often change their IP addresses (due to NAT) or turn their devices off, when their Dropbox clients are disconnected. Despite these differences, Figure 2 shows that the measured data in all three campuses is best-fitted by a Weibull distribution, with parameter values (see caption) depending on the dataset. This is a statistical distribution that has been used to model client active periods in other systems (e.g., Peer-to-Peer live streaming systems [17]).

During a session, Dropbox clients may alternate between active (*On*) and inactive (*Off*) periods. During an *On* period, clients upload/download data to/from Dropbox storage servers. Figure 3 presents the CDFs of the number of data transfers (*On times*) during a single Dropbox client session in the 3 datasets. We find a large fraction of sessions without any data transfer in all 3 campuses, but particularly in campuses 2 and 3 (85% of the sessions). In those cases, clients connect to Dropbox servers, synchronize their account information but do not transfer any file. As observed for session durations, we clearly note that users in Campus 1 tend to perform more data transfers: as clients remain connected for longer, they have more opportunities to transmit data. On average, clients perform 1.3, 0.56 and 0.47 data transfers per session in campuses 1, 2 and 3, respectively, whereas corresponding

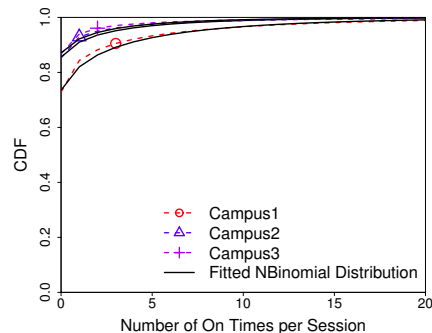


Fig. 3. Distributions of the number of data transfers (*On times*) per session. The probability density function (PDF) of Negative Binomial distribution is  $p_X(x) = \frac{\Gamma(x+r)}{\Gamma(r)x!} p^r (1-p)^x$  for the probability  $p$  and Gamma function  $\Gamma$ . Parameter values of best fit for campuses 1, 2 and 3 are: ( $r = 0.125$ ;  $p = 0.086$ ); ( $r = 0.071$ ;  $p = 0.112$ ) and ( $r = 0.066$ ;  $p = 0.124$ ).

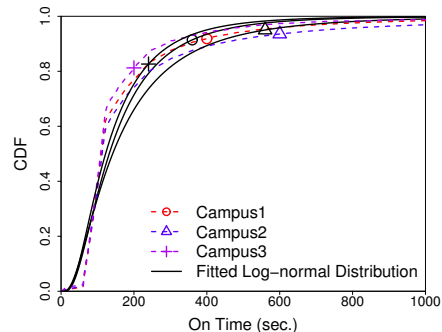


Fig. 4. Distributions of *On times*. The probability density function (PDF) of Log-normal distribution is  $p_X(x) = \frac{1}{x\sigma\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-\frac{(\ln(x)-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}$ . Parameter values of best fit for campuses 1, 2 and 3 are: ( $\mu = 4.889$ ;  $\sigma = 0.712$ ); ( $\mu = 4.953$ ;  $\sigma = 0.835$ ) and ( $\mu = 4.805$ ;  $\sigma = 0.719$ ).

CVs are 3.7, 5.5, 6.1, indicating high variability. Despite differences, we find that the same distribution model - Negative Binomial - is the best fit for the 3 campuses.

Next, we look at the durations of the data transfers. As shown in Figure 4, all 3 campuses present very similar distributions of *On times*, with most transfers occurring within very short intervals. For example, at least 74% of the data transfers last at most 200 seconds. We note the knee in the curves around 60 seconds, and conjecture that it might be a default value for transmission timeout applied by Dropbox (corroborating the results in [2]). On average, data transfers last for 192, 247 and 179 seconds in campuses 1, 2 and 3, with CVs falling around 2.5-3.7. Moreover, the data measured in all 3 campuses are well fitted by Log-Normal distributions, which have also been used to model transfer durations (*On times*) in other contexts, such as in Web live streaming [18].

Figure 5 shows the distributions of periods of client inactivity (*Off times*). On average, a client remains idle for 29, 39 and 81 minutes between consecutive data transfers in campuses 1, 2 and 3, with CVs ranging from 3.3 to 6.5. As expected, *Off times* are much longer than *On times*, as users spend much more time on their local tasks (file creation and editing) than transferring file updates from/to servers. Moreover, some users may temporarily disable the client synchronization option to avoid transferring all file updates. One key reason for a larger *Off time* in Campus 3 is the large

<sup>5</sup>Ratio of standard deviation to the average.

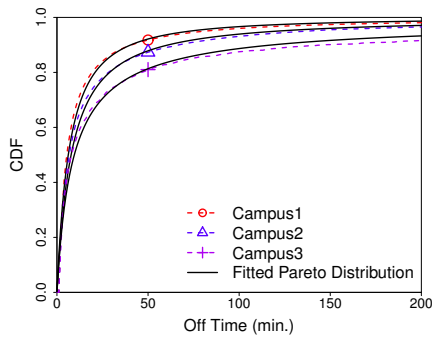


Fig. 5. Distributions of Off times. The probability density function (PDF) of Pareto distribution is  $p_X(x) = \frac{\alpha \kappa^\alpha}{(x+\kappa)^{\alpha+1}}$ . Parameter values of best fit for campuses 1, 2 and 3 are:  $(\alpha = 1.382; \kappa = 9.624)$ ;  $(\alpha = 1.131; \kappa = 9.179)$  and  $(\alpha = 0.790; \kappa = 6.781)$ .

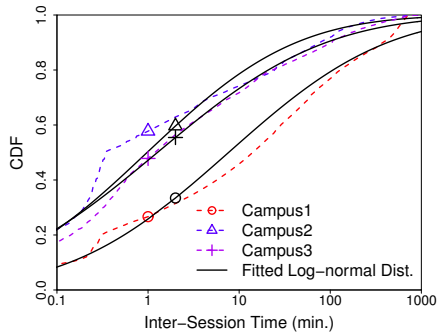


Fig. 6. Inter-session time distribution. The probability density function (PDF) of Log-normal distribution is  $p_X(x) = \frac{1}{x\sigma\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-\frac{(\ln(x)-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}$ . Parameter values of best fit for campuses 1, 2 and 3 are:  $(\mu = 2.035; \sigma = 3.137)$ ;  $(\mu = -0.025; \sigma = 2.942)$  and  $(\mu = 0.237; \sigma = 3.328)$ .

number of clients under NAT and dynamic IP addresses, which makes it harder to identify consecutive sessions from the same user (defined by an IP address). Despite the differences in the data measured in the 3 campuses, Pareto distributions fit well all curves.

Finally, we turn to the last component of the session layer, the inter-session times. We found that no single distribution provided a good fit for the data, in any dataset. Thus, we opted for breaking the measured data into ranges, and determining the best fit for each range. Figure 6 shows the empirical distributions and best fits for measured times under 720 minutes, which are the majority of all measurements (69%, 81% and 79% in campuses 1, 2 and 3). Once again, note the x-axis in log scale. Inter-session times tend to be short, implying that users who leave the Dropbox service and later reconnect tend to do it quickly. This occurs more often in campuses 2 and 3 where the use of NAT and more unstable networks cause disconnections more often. For example, 52% (campuses 2 and 3) and 27% (Campus 1) of the inter-session times are under 5 minutes. We find that Log-Normal distributions are the best fits for all 3 campuses for this range of measured inter-session times as well as for the other considered ranges<sup>6</sup> (omitted due to space constraints).

<sup>6</sup>In campuses 2 and 3, around 12% of the inter-session times are between 720 and 2,000 minutes, leaving a fraction of 8% and 9% for the third range (above 2,000 minutes). In Campus 1, 14% of the measured times are between 720 and 2,000 minutes, and 17% of them are above 2,000 minutes.

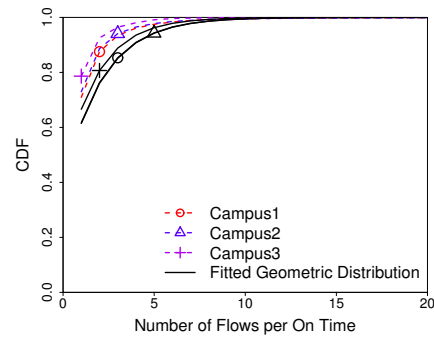


Fig. 7. Number of flows per On time. The probability density function (PDF) of Geometric distribution is  $p_X(x) = p(1-p)^x$  for the probability  $p$ . Parameter values of best fit for campuses 1, 2 and 3 are:  $(p = 0.382)$ ;  $(p = 0.379)$  and  $(p = 0.422)$ .

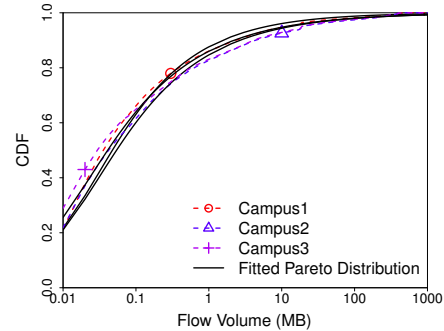


Fig. 8. Data flow volume. The probability density function (PDF) of Pareto distribution is  $p_X(x) = \frac{\alpha \kappa^\alpha}{(x+\kappa)^{\alpha+1}}$ . Parameter values of best fit for campuses 1, 2 and 3 are:  $(\alpha = 0.504; \kappa = 0.016)$ ;  $(\alpha = 0.438; \kappa = 0.014)$  and  $(\alpha = 0.426; \kappa = 0.010)$ .

## B. Data Transmission Layer

The data transmission layer regards the multiple data flows that a data transfer (*On time*) may have. In this layer, we characterize the number of flows per data transfer as well as flow duration and volume.

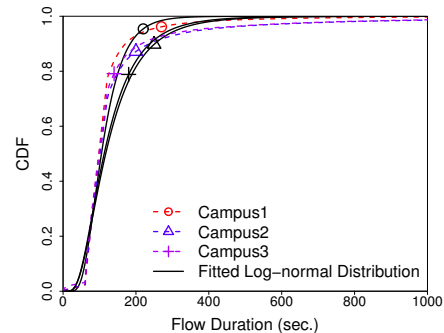


Fig. 9. Data flows duration. The probability density function (PDF) of Log-normal distribution is  $p_X(x) = \frac{1}{x\sigma\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-\frac{(\ln(x)-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}$ . Parameter values of best fit for campuses 1, 2 and 3 are:  $(\sigma = 4.629; \mu = 0.501)$ ;  $(\sigma = 4.717; \mu = 0.673)$  and  $(\sigma = 4.646; \mu = 0.753)$ .

Figure 7 shows that the distributions of number of flows per data transfer are very similar in all 3 campuses, with the vast majority (at least 71%) of the data transfers containing

only 1 flow. On average this number is 1.62, 1.64, 1.36 in campuses 1, 2 and 3, respectively. Thus, in most transfers, a single data flow carries all the data required to synchronize the Dropbox folder. The Geometric distribution was the best fit, among all tested distributions, in the 3 datasets, although it does somewhat overestimates the number of flows per transfer. However, we note that to drive performance studies (e.g., capacity management and planning efforts) it is preferable to overestimate the number of data flows to underestimate it, as the former may lead to more conservative decisions.

As shown in Figure 8, all 3 campuses present very similar distributions of flow volume. Although around 50% of the flows carry less than 0.05 MB, at least 5% of them have more than 10 MB. On average, flow volume is about 6 MB, 9 MB and 8 MB for campuses 1, 2 and 3, but the variability is very high (CVs equal to 6.2, 5.2 and 5.3). The empirical distributions are clearly heavy tailed (note the log scale on the x-axis), being well fitted by Pareto distributions.

Finally, Figure 9 shows the distributions of flow durations. Since most data transfers consist of a single flow, the distributions of flow durations are similar to those of *On times* (Figure 4), being also well fitted by Log-Normal distributions.

## V. SUMMARY AND FUTURE WORK

We have presented a characterization of the Dropbox client behavior using data collected from 3 campuses. Our characterization was driven by a hierarchical model that captures client behavior at both session and data transmission layers. For each component of our model, we provided best-fitted statistical distributions, which can be used to support the generation of realistic synthetic workloads. A summary of our results is presented in Table III.

Based on our findings, we make the following observations. First, we found close agreement across all monitored campuses for each component of our model. Indeed, the same distributions (with different parameters) provide reasonably good fits for all of them. Second, in all 3 campuses, there are a large number of users with short sessions as well as a large fraction of session with no data transmission. In this case, users usually start their Dropbox clients, check for updates, and close the application. This behavior suggests that the use of client-side caching during sessions might be of limited benefit. Finally, some components of our client behavior model, notably session durations and data transfer times, present similarities, in terms of distribution models, with other multimedia and Web systems [17], [18]. However, the parameter values are very different. While clients of most Web systems interact for a few seconds and transmit a few kBytes, Dropbox client sessions tend to be much longer (a few tens of minutes) and transfer much more data (on the order of MBytes). These characteristics may deeply impact capacity planning and management decisions.

Future work includes extending the characterization to consider new datasets and other workload aspects, such as characteristics of the stored contents. We also plan to compare Dropbox traffic with the traffic of other file storage mechanisms (e.g., FTP and distributed file systems), and build a synthetic workload generator for cloud storage applications.

TABLE III. HIERARCHICAL MODEL OF DROPBOX CLIENT BEHAVIOR: SUMMARY.

Hierarchy Layer	Model Component	Distribution
Session Layer	Session Duration	Weibull
	# On Times per Session	Neg. Binomial
	On Time	Log-normal
	Off Time	Pareto
	Inter-Session	Log-normal
Data Transmission Layer	# Flows per On Time	Geometric
	Flow Volume	Pareto
	Flow Duration	Log-normal

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