

Security Models

Computer Security Lecture 15

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¹Based on original lecture notes by David Aspinall

Outline

Access and information flow

Access control mechanisms

Security levels

The BLP security model

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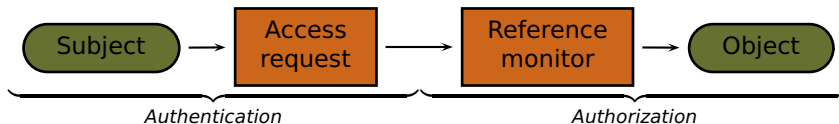
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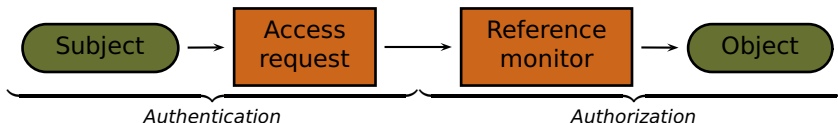
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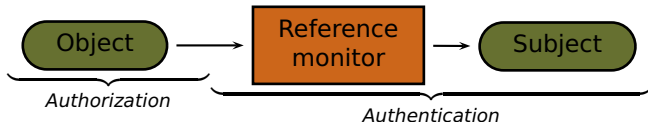
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- ▶ **information flow control**: dual notion sometimes used when confidentiality is the primary concern. A guard controls whether information may flow from a resource to a principal.



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	exec	read	append	write
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- ▶ Profiles and names of rights differ between systems, or even for different subject kinds. E.g., sometimes have a **delete**. In Unix, **exec** for directories indicates ability to read the directory.

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- ▶ The **identity** of subjects is also flexible: e.g., *identity changes* during operations (**SUID programs in Unix**). Again, this doesn't fit BLP.

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- ▶ Example matrix for $S = \{\text{Alice, Bob}\}$ and three objects:

	bob.doc	edit.exe	fun.com
Alice	{ }	{exec}	{exec, read}
Bob	{read, write}	{exec}	{exec, read, write}

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- ▶ An **access control list** (ACL) stores the access rights to an object with the object itself. Pros: good fit with object-biased OSes. Cons: difficult to revoke, or find out, permissions of a particular subject (must search all ACLs).

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- ▶ Ordering can express policies like “no write-down” which means that a high-level subject cannot write down to a low-level object. (A user with confidential clearance cannot write an unclassified file: it might contain confidential information read earlier.)
- ▶ In practice, we need more flexibility. We may want *categorizations* as well, for example, describing departments or divisions in an organization. Then individual levels may not be comparable...

Security lattices

- ▶ A *lattice* is a set L equipped with a partial ordering \leq such every two elements $a, b \in L$ has a *least upper bound* $a \vee b$ and a *greatest lower bound* $a \wedge b$.
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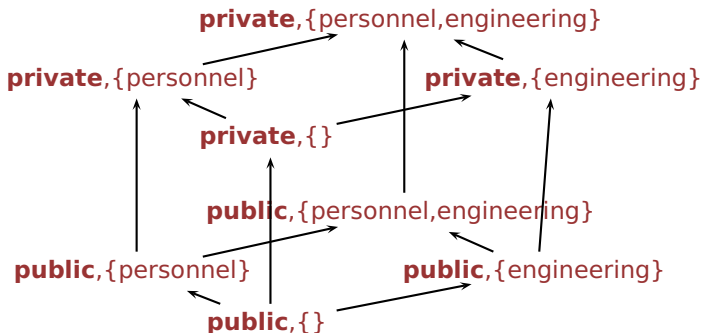
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A Lattice Construction [Gollmann]

- ▶ take a set of *classifications* H and linear ordering \leq_H
- ▶ take a set C of categories; *compartments* are subsets of C
- ▶ *security levels* are pairs (h, c) with $h \in H$ and $c \subseteq C$
- ▶ ordering $(h_1, c_1) \leq (h_2, c_2) \iff h_1 \leq h_2, c_1 \subseteq c_2$ gives a lattice.



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- ▶ A BLP state is a triple (b, M, f) .

BLP state set

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- ▶ $f_O: O \rightarrow L$ gives the **classification** of all objects.

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Simple security property

The **ss-property** states for each access $(s, o, a) \in b$ where $a \in \{\text{read}, \text{write}\}$, then $f_o(o) \leq f_s(s)$ (*no read-up*).

Star property

The ***-property** states for each access $(s, o, a) \in b$ where $a \in \{\text{append}, \text{write}\}$, then $f_c(s) \leq f_o(o)$ (*no write-down*) and moreover, we must have $f_o(o') \leq f_o(o)$ for all o' with $(s, o', a') \in b$ and $a' \in \{\text{read}, \text{write}\}$ (*o must dominate any other object s can read*).

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Together these form the *mandatory access control* policy for BLP.

BLP Discretionary Control and Security

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- ▶ **Definition of Security:** The state (b, M, f) is **secure** if the three properties above are satisfied.

Notice that BLP's notion of security is entirely captured in the current state.

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- ▶ When subjects are people with high-level clearances, approach 2 works: we trust someone to violate the property in the model, e.g., by publishing part of a secret document.

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(NB: this follows immediately by induction, it has nothing to do with the properties of BLP!)

- ▶ The point: we can reduce checking the system for all possible inputs to checking that each kind of possible state transition preserves security. Of course, to do this we need a concrete instance of the model which describes possible transitions.

References

See Ch 3–5 of Gollmann, Ch 7–9 of Anderson and Parts 2–3 of Bishop.

-  Ross Anderson. *Security Engineering: A Comprehensive Guide to Building Dependable Distributed Systems*. Wiley & Sons, 2001.
-  Matt Bishop. *Computer Security: Art and Science*. Addison-Wesley, 2003.
-  Dieter Gollmann. *Computer Security*. John Wiley & Sons, second edition, 2006.

Recommended Reading

Sections 4.1, 4.2, 7.1-7.3 of Anderson (1st edition).