Security Policy & Mechanisms

- Policy decides what kinds of entities can perform operations on what kinds of objects
  - Deals with users, processes, students, files, printers, managers
    - Example: Students can’t use the colour printer

- Protection mechanisms are used to represent and enforce security policy
  - Example: reference monitor looks up a table representing a policy and decided yes/no.
Protection Mechanisms

• Protection system deals with
  – **Objects**
    • Set of ‘things’ in the system that can be operated on
      – Files, devices, sockets, etc…
  – **Rights**
    • The permission to perform one of the operations possible on an object
      – Example: Possessing permission to read an object is termed possessing a *read right* to the object.
  – **Domains**
    • A set of (object, right) pairs which together represent the set of possible operations on objects.
    • Each process has a domain associated with it.
Protection Domains

Examples of three protection domains
Protection Domain Example

- UNIX
  - The UID and GID of a process determines the *domain* the process executes within
    - Determines exactly what rights the process has to objects (files) in the system
  - Another process with the same UID, GID lies with the same domain
    - Has exactly the same set of access rights to objects
  - Process can change domains to gain access rights via SETUID or SETGUID
Representing Protection Domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>File1</th>
<th>File2</th>
<th>File3</th>
<th>File4</th>
<th>File5</th>
<th>File6</th>
<th>Printer1</th>
<th>Plotter2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Read Write</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Write</td>
<td>Write</td>
<td>Write</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Write</td>
<td>Write</td>
<td>Write</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Represent access rights using a protection matrix
## Protection Domains

A protection matrix with domains as objects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>File1</th>
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<th>File4</th>
<th>File5</th>
<th>File6</th>
<th>Printer1</th>
<th>Plotter2</th>
<th>Domain1</th>
<th>Domain2</th>
<th>Domain3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Read</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Write</td>
<td>Write</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Read</td>
<td>Write</td>
<td>Write</td>
<td>Execute</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Access Matrix Issue

- Most domains have access to a subset of all objects in the system
  ⇒ Matrix is sparsely populated
  ⇒ Wastes space
- Idea
  - Store populated entries by column (object)
    • List of domains and operation that can operate on the object
  - Store populated entries by rows (domain)
    • List of objects and operations domain can perform
    • Note: Domains are sometimes termed *subject*, or *principal*. 
### Columns: Access Control Lists
### Rows: Capabilities

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<td>Read</td>
<td>Write</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>
Access Control Lists

Use of access control lists of manage file access
Access Control Lists

• List stored with meta-data of object
  – Example: stored in the inode of the file
• Easy to revoke access to the object
• Easy to determine who has (direct) rights to the file
  – ‘direct’ meaning ignoring transitive rights changes
    • Example: A writes B, B writes C ⇒ A writes C
Capabilities

Each process has a capability list
Capabilities

- Capability list stored with the subject (e.g. the process)
- Set of capabilities forms the protection of domain of the subject
  - Easy to determine the protection domain of the process
  - Easier to apply *principle of least authority*
- Hard to determine who has (direct) access to a particular object
  - Capabilities can be stored many places (with each process, each user, etc.)
  - Have to examine them all for one referring to the object
- Revocation is more difficult (especially selective)
  - Have to remove all capabilities to an object
Summary

• Protections mechanisms deal with domains, objects, access rights
• Can use a protection matrix to represent a security policy
• Protection matrix can be represented by ACLs or Capabilities
Building Secure Systems

- Sometimes called *Trusted Systems*
- Consist on users/processes running on *Trusted Computing Base (TCB)*
- Idea
  - TCB has a small, understandable, verifiable, security model
  - Enables statements/reasoning about security properties
    - “Bob can never read file X”
    - “Alice can only run the word processor”
    - “The program can only modify file Z”
  - All operations are authorised via the TCB.
Trusted Systems
Trusted Computing Base

All system calls go through the reference monitor for security checking.

A reference monitor
(a) An authorized state
(b) An unauthorized state (Robert can read Henry’s mailbox)
Given a set of authorized and unauthorized states, and the TCB’s security model, can we prove that starting at (a), (b) can never happen??
Access Control Policy

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*Discretionary Access Control*
  – Allow users to determine who can read and write their files
  – Policy not enough to control information flow
  – Example: UNIX

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*Mandatory Access Control*
  – System determines (and enforced) who can read and write individual files
  – Example policies: Bell-La Padula and Biba
Bell-La Padula Multilevel Security

• Designed to keep secrets
  – Simple security property
    • A process at level $k$ read objects at it’s level or lower
      – Lieutenant can read sergeants files, but not vice versa
      – Can read down
  – The * property
    • A process can write files to it’s level or above
      – Sergeants can write information to Lieutenants, who can write to Generals.
      – Can write up

• Issue
  – Generals can’t write to Lieutenants, etc.
    • Can’t write down
  – Privates can write to generals potentially false information
Multilevel Security

The Bell-La Padula multilevel security model
Multilevel Security
The Biba Model

• Principles to guarantee integrity of data

1. Simple integrity principle
   • process can write only objects at its security level or lower

2. The integrity * property
   • process can read only objects at its security level or higher
Multilevel Security

The Biba Model

- Managers can write the files of employees
- Employees cannot write the files of managers
- Employees read (trust) files of managers
- Managers cannot read (trust) the files of employees

Note: Biba and Bell-La Padula are in direct conflict with each other
- Developing and formalising a realistic and practical security policy is hard
Covert Channels

(a) Client, server and collaborator processes
   We’d like to confine the server so as to not pass on client’s info

(b) Encapsulated server can still leak to collaborator via covert channels
   Example: CPU modulation
Covert Channels

A covert channel using file locking
(Assuming a common read-only file)
Covert Channels

- Can be created using any shared resource whose behaviour can be monitored
  - Network Bandwidth
  - CPU time
  - Disk Response time
  - Disk Bandwidth