Chapter 4

Access Control

Access Control Principles

RFC 4949 defines computer security as:

"Measures that implement and assure security services in a computer system, particularly those that assure access control service."

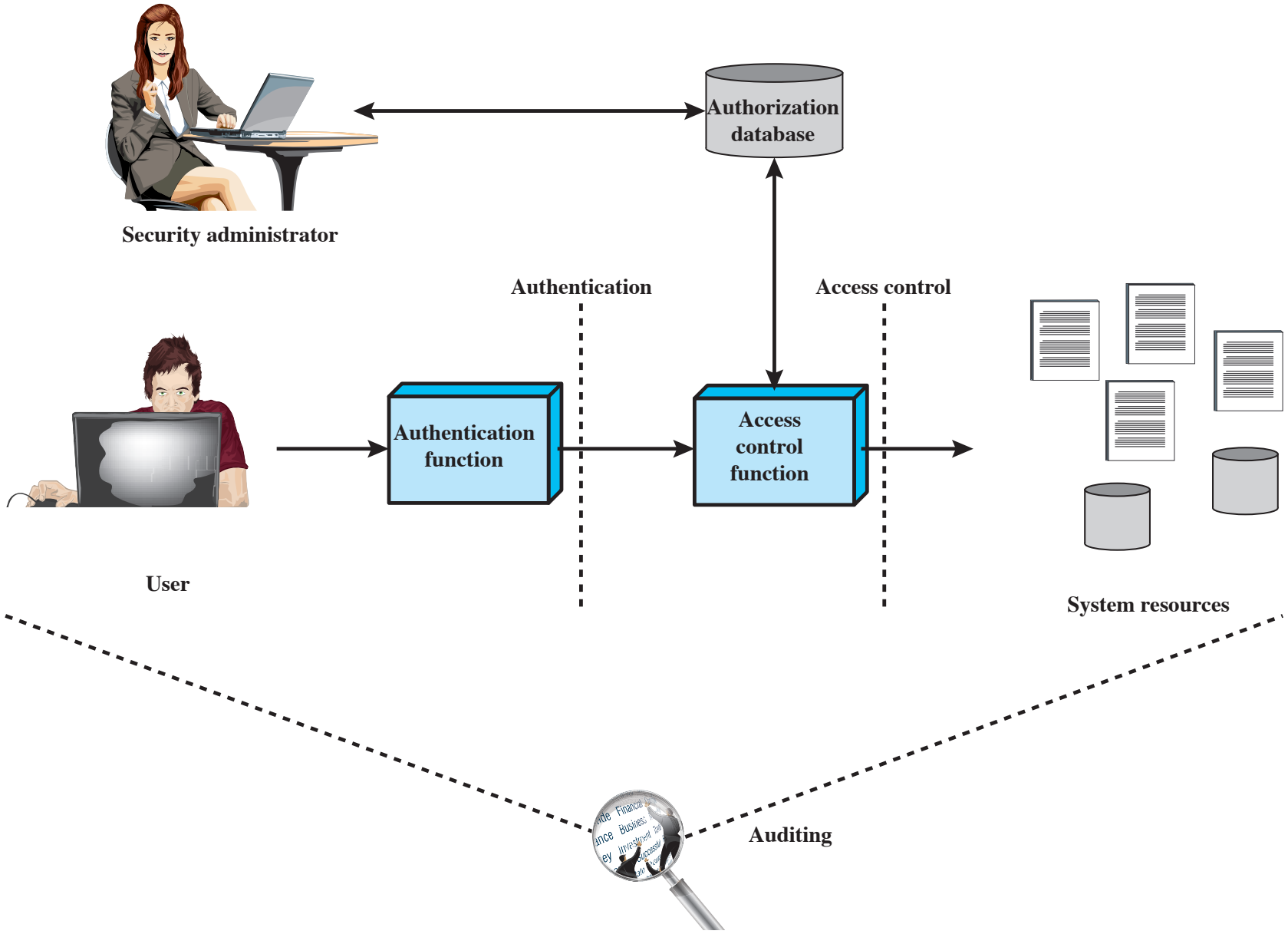


Figure 4.1 Relationship Among Access Control and Other Security Functions

Access Control Policies

- Discretionary access control (DAC)
  - Controls access based on the identity of the requestor and on access rules (authorizations) stating what requestors are (or are not) allowed to do
- Mandatory access control (MAC)
  - Controls access based on comparing security labels with security clearances
- Role-based access control (RBAC)
  - Controls access based on the roles that users have within the system and on rules stating what accesses are allowed to users in given roles
- Attribute-based access control (ABAC)
  - Controls access based on attributes of the user, the resource to be accessed, and current environmental conditions

Subjects, Objects, and Access Rights

Subject

An entity capable of accessing objects

Three classes
- Owner
- Group
- World

Object

A resource to which access is controlled

Entity used to contain and/or receive information

Access right

Describes the way in which a subject may access an object

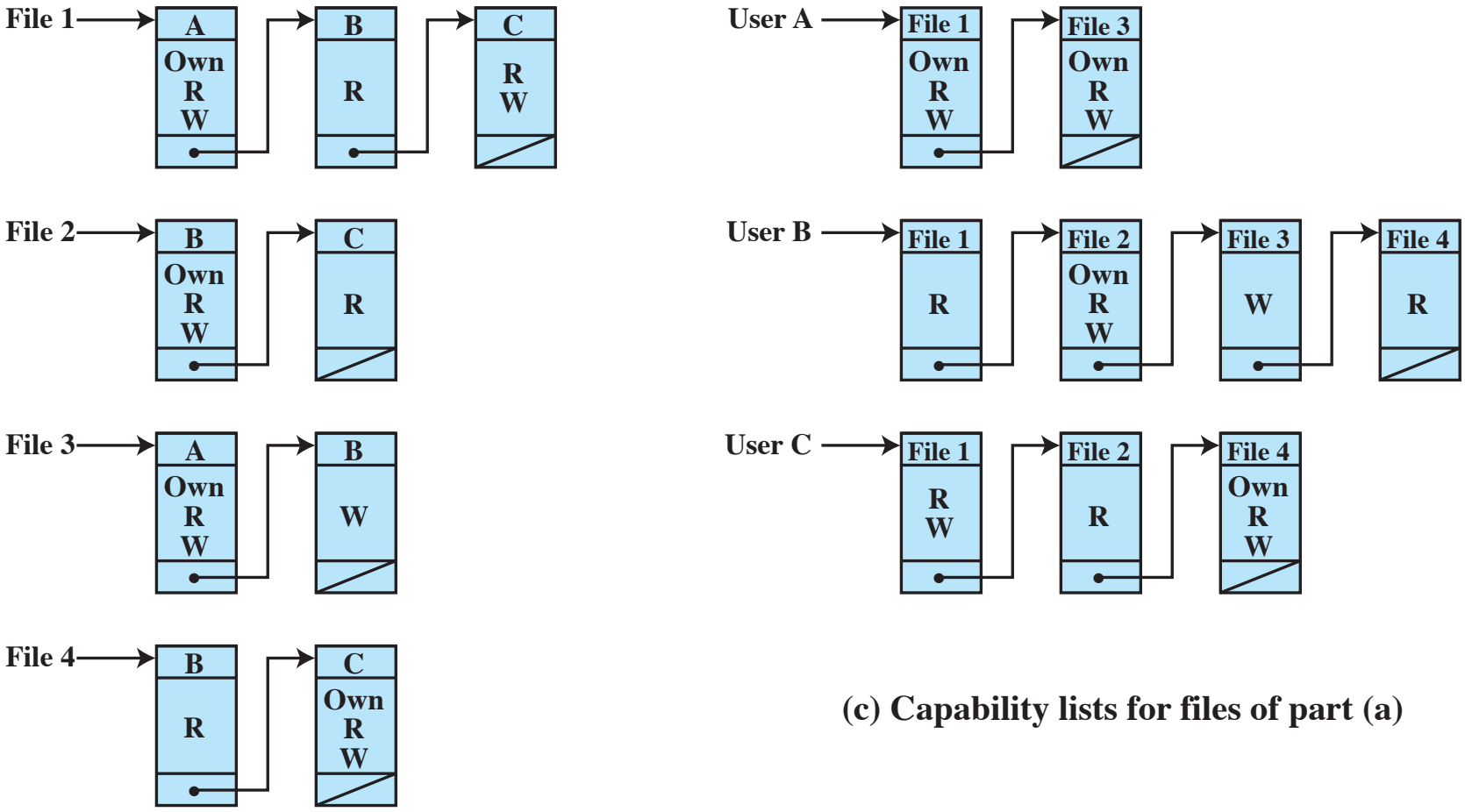
Could include:
- Read
- Write
- Execute
- Delete
- Create
- Search

Discretionary Access Control (DAC)

- Scheme in which an entity may enable another entity to access some resource
- Often provided using an access matrix
  - One dimension consists of identified subjects that may attempt data access to the resources
  - The other dimension lists the objects that may be accessed
- Each entry in the matrix indicates the access rights of a particular subject for a particular object

		OBJECTS			
		File 1	File 2	File 3	File 4
SUBJECTS	User A	Own Read Write		Own Read Write	
	User B	Read	Own Read Write	Write	Read
	User C	Read Write	Read		Own Read Write

(a) Access matrix



(b) Access control lists for files of part (a)

(c) Capability lists for files of part (a)

Figure 4.2 Example of Access Control Structures

Table 4.1

Authorization Table for Files in Figure 4.2

Subject	Access Mode	Object
A	Own	File 1
A	Read	File 1
A	Write	File 1
A	Own	File 3
A	Read	File 3
A	Write	File 3
B	Read	File 1
B	Own	File 2
B	Read	File 2
B	Write	File 2
B	Write	File 3
B	Read	File 4
C	Read	File 1
C	Write	File 1
C	Read	File 2
C	Own	File 4
C	Read	File 4
C	Write	File 4

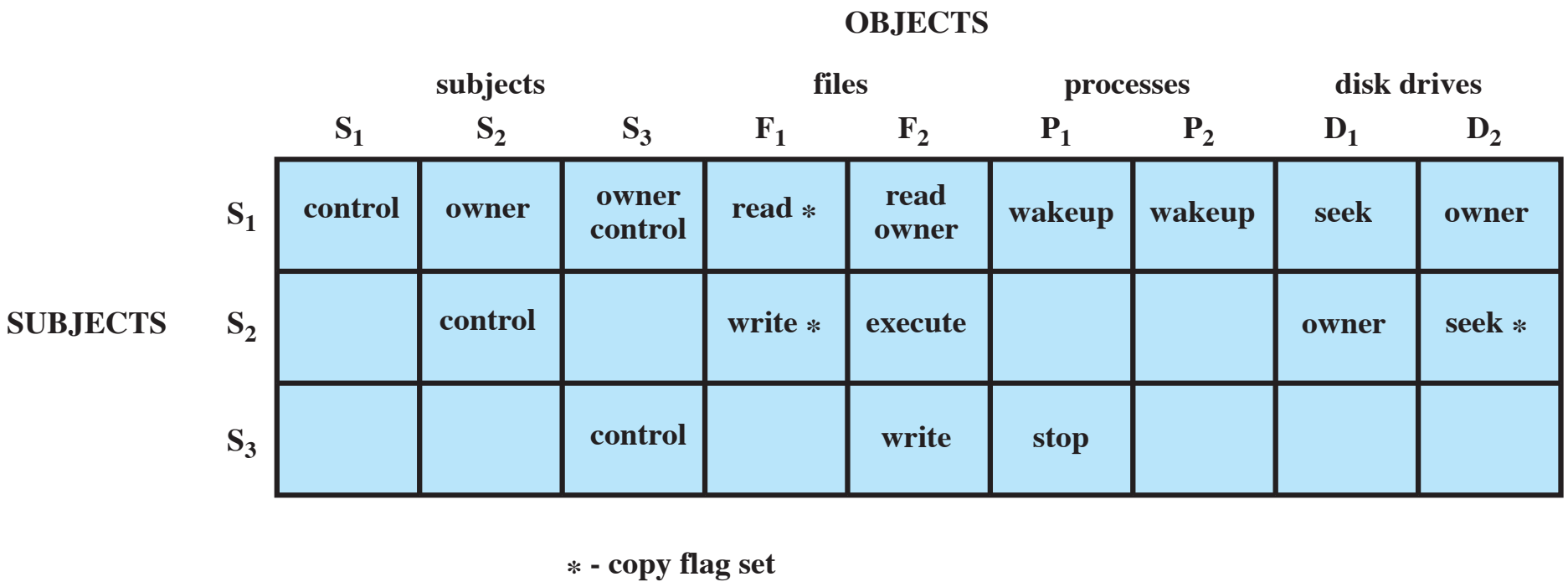


Figure 4.3 Extended Access Control Matrix

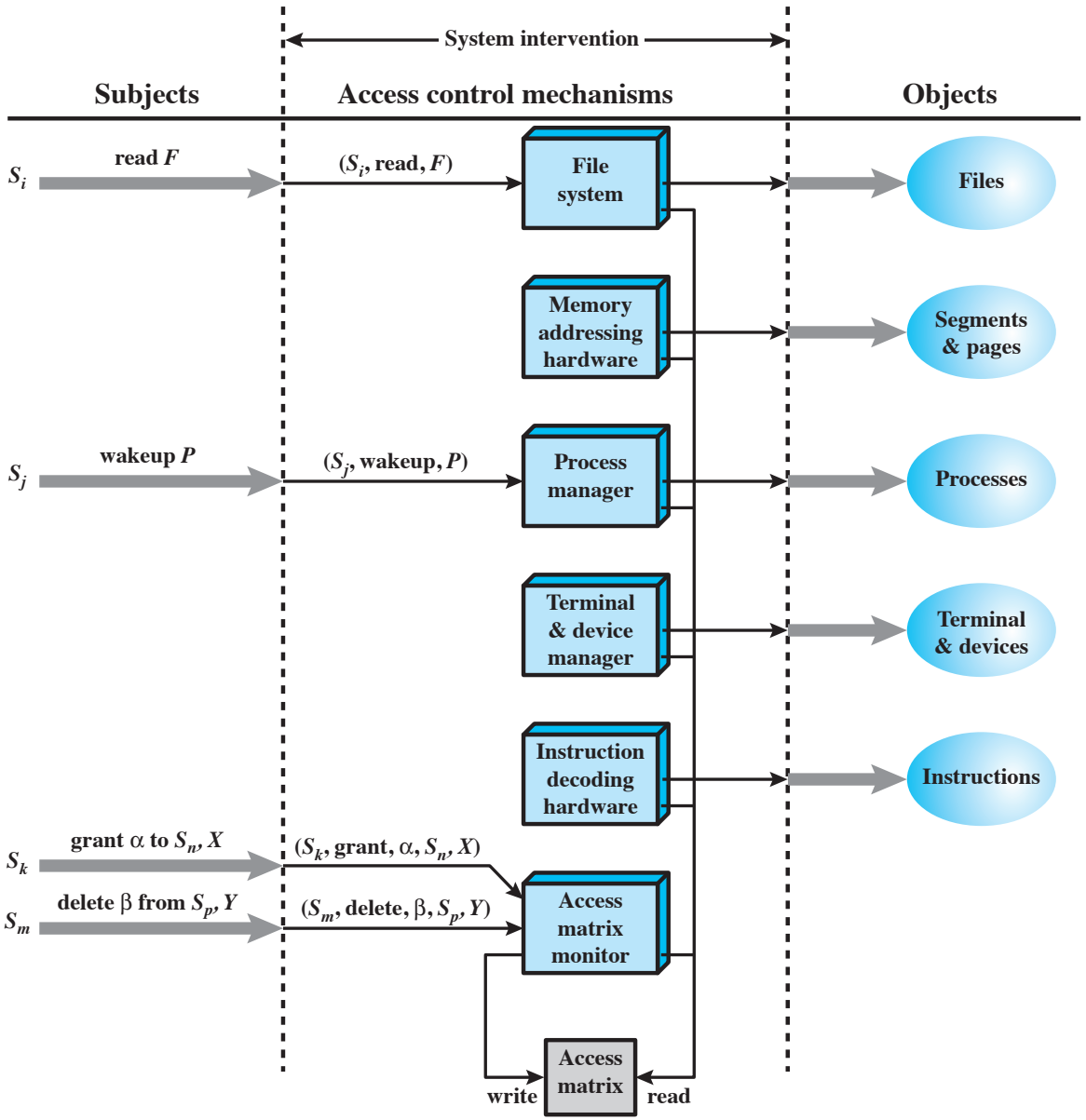


Figure 4.4 An Organization of the Access Control Function

Rule	Command (by S_o)	Authorization	Operation
R1	**transfer** $\left\{\begin{matrix}\alpha* \\ \alpha\end{matrix}\right\}$ **to** S, X	'α*' in $A[S_o, X]$	store $\left\{\begin{matrix}\alpha* \\ \alpha\end{matrix}\right\}$ in $A[S, X]$
R2	**grant** $\left\{\begin{matrix}\alpha* \\ \alpha\end{matrix}\right\}$ **to** S, X	'owner' in $A[S_o, X]$	store $\left\{\begin{matrix}\alpha* \\ \alpha\end{matrix}\right\}$ in $A[S, X]$
R3	**delete** α **from** S, X	'control' in $A[S_o, S]$ or 'owner' in $A[S_o, X]$	delete α from $A[S, X]$
R4	$w \leftarrow$ **read** S, X	'control' in $A[S_o, S]$ or 'owner' in $A[S_o, X]$	copy $A[S, X]$ into w
R5	**create object** X	None	add column for X to A; store 'owner' in $A[S_o, X]$
R6	**destroy object** X	'owner' in $A[S_o, X]$	delete column for X from A
R7	**create subject** S	none	add row for S to A; execute **create object** S; store 'control' in $A[S, S]$
R8	**destroy subject** S	'owner' in $A[S_o, S]$	delete row for S from A; execute **destroy object** S

Table 4.2

Access Control System Commands

Protection Domains

- Set of objects together with access rights to those objects
- More flexibility when associating capabilities with protection domains
- In terms of the access matrix, a row defines a protection domain
- User can spawn processes with a subset of the access rights of the user
- Association between a process and a domain can be static or dynamic
- In user mode certain areas of memory are protected from use and certain instructions may not be executed
- In kernel mode privileged instructions may be executed and protected areas of memory may be accessed

UNIX File Access Control

UNIX files are administered using inodes (index nodes)

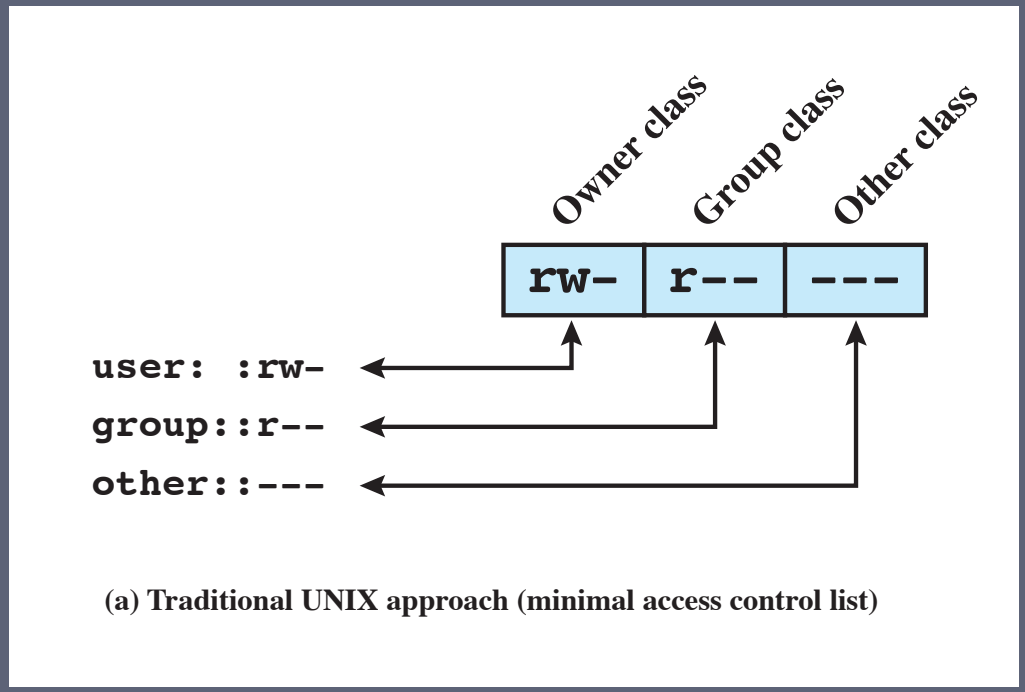
- Control structures with key information needed for a particular file
- Several file names may be associated with a single inode
- An active inode is associated with exactly one file
- File attributes, permissions and control information are sorted in the inode
- On the disk there is an inode table, or inode list, that contains the inodes of all the files in the file system
- When a file is opened its inode is brought into main memory and stored in a memory resident inode table

Directories are structured in a hierarchical tree

- May contain files and/or other directories
- Contains file names plus pointers to associated inodes

UNIX
File Access Control

- Unique user identification number (user ID)
- Member of a primary group identified by a group ID
- Belongs to a specific group
- 12 protection bits
  - Specify read, write, and execute permission for the owner of the file, members of the group and all other users
- The owner ID, group ID, and protection bits are part of the file's inode



(a) Traditional UNIX approach (minimal access control list)

Traditional UNIX File Access Control

- "Set user ID"(SetUID)
- "Set group ID"(SetGID)
  - System temporarily uses rights of the file owner/group in addition to the real user's rights when making access control decisions
  - Enables privileged programs to access files/resources not generally accessible
- Sticky bit
  - When applied to a directory it specifies that only the owner of any file in the directory can rename, move, or delete that file
- Superuser
  - Is exempt from usual access control restrictions
  - Has system-wide access

Access Control Lists (ACLs) in UNIX

Modern UNIX systems support ACLs

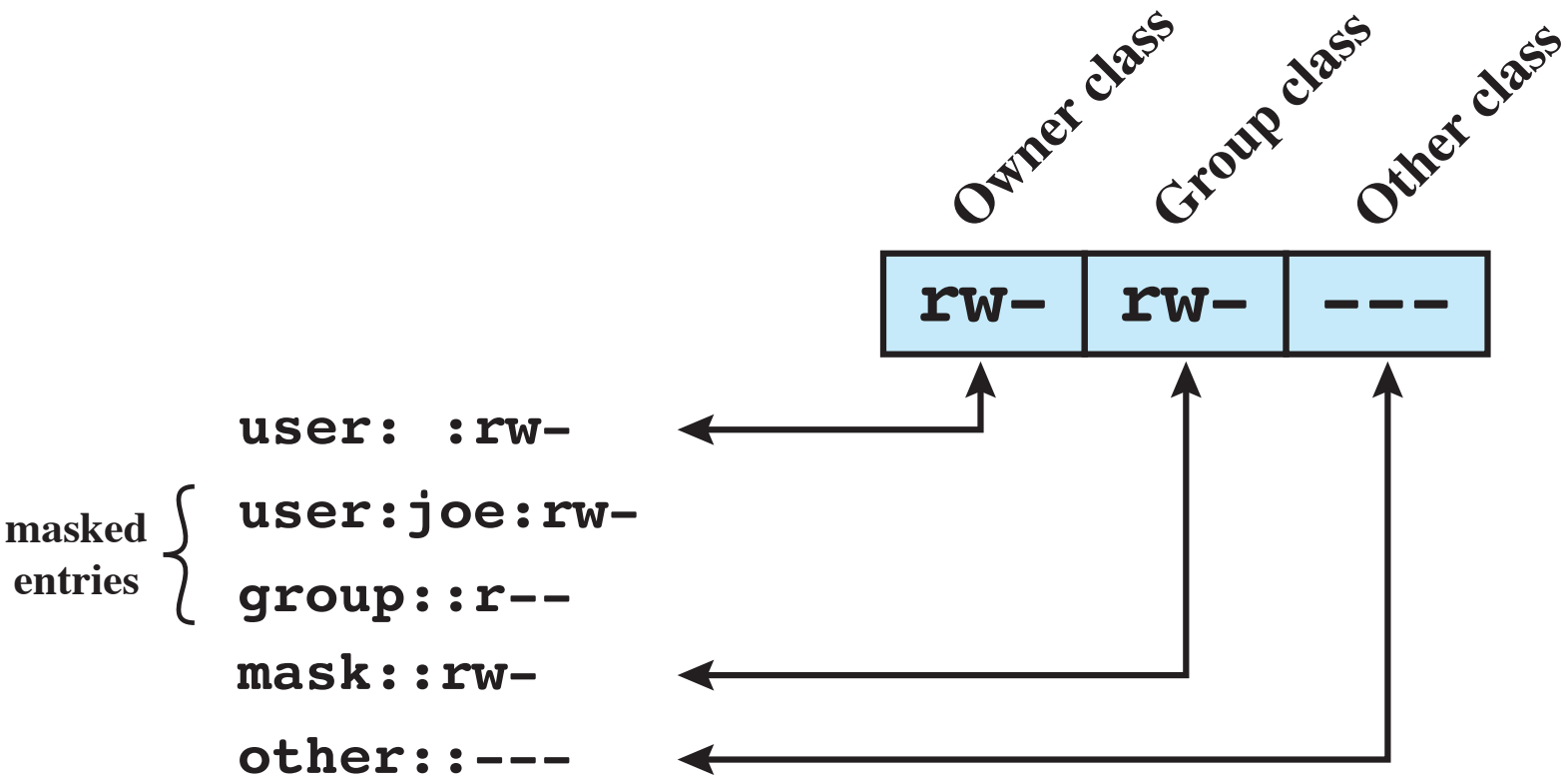
- FreeBSD, OpenBSD, Linux, Solaris

FreeBSD

- Setfacl command assigns a list of UNIX user IDs and groups
- Any number of users and groups can be associated with a file
- Read, write, execute protection bits
- A file does not need to have an ACL
- Includes an additional protection bit that indicates whether the file has an extended ACL

When a process requests access to a file system object two steps are performed:

- Step 1 selects the most appropriate ACL
- Step 2 checks if the matching entry contains sufficient permissions



(b) Extended access control list

Figure 4.5 UNIX File Access Control

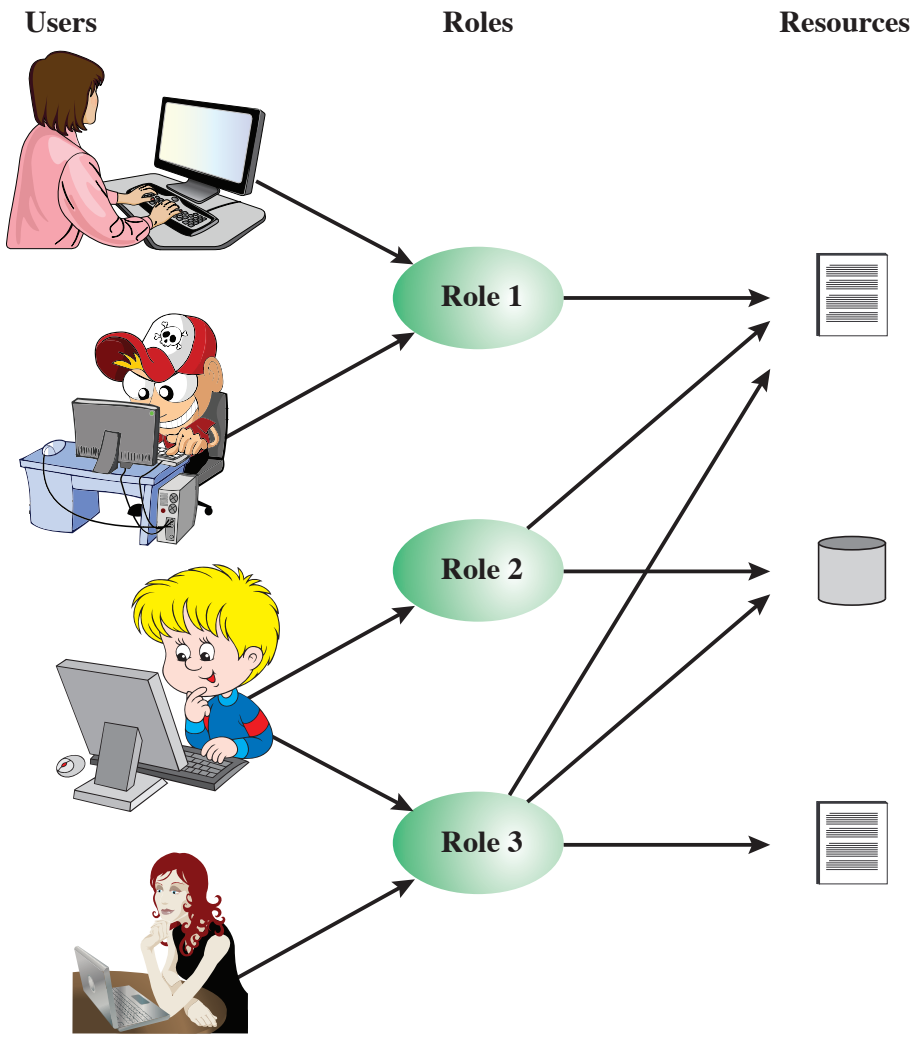
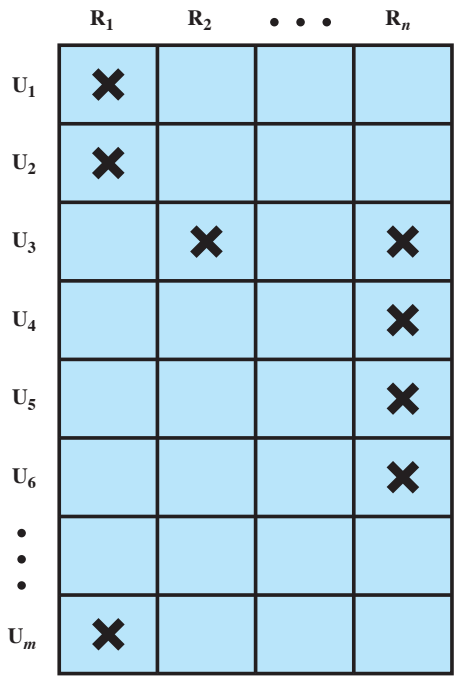


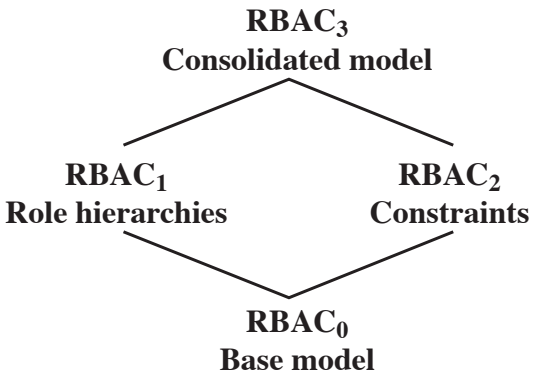
Figure 4.6 Users, Roles, and Resources



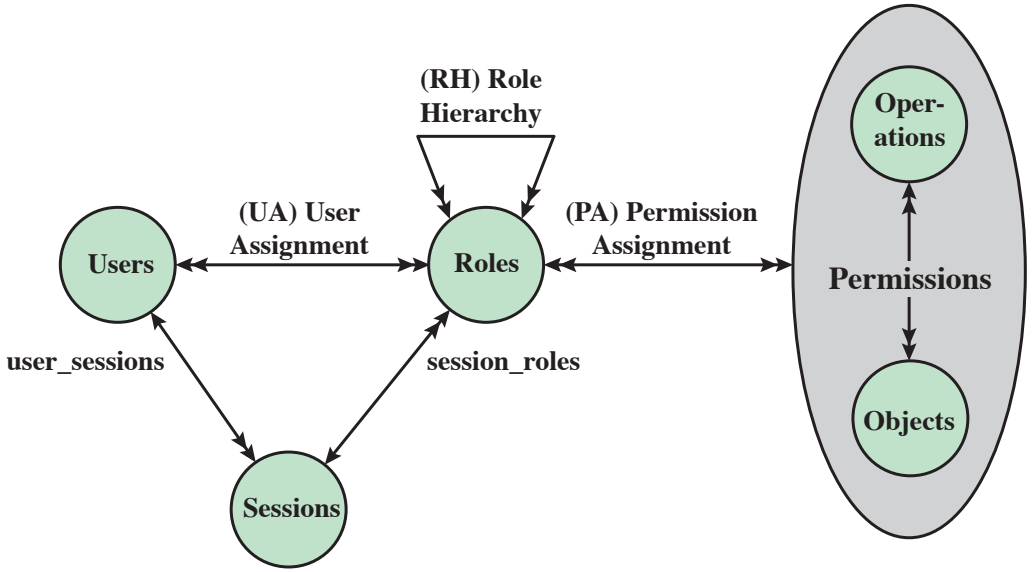
OBJECTS

ROLES	R_1	R_2	R_n	F_1	F_1	P_1	P_2	D_1	D_2
R_1	control	owner	owner control	read *	read owner	wakeup	wakeup	seek	owner
R_2		control		write *	execute			owner	seek *
• • •									
R_n			control		write	stop			

Figure 4.7 Access Control Matrix Representation of RBAC



(a) Relationship among RBAC models



(b) RBAC models

Figure 4.8 A Family of Role-Based Access Control Models.

Table 4.3
Scope RBAC Models

Models	Hierarchies	Constraints
$RBAC_0$	No	No
$RBAC_1$	Yes	No
$RBAC_2$	No	Yes
$RBAC_3$	Yes	Yes

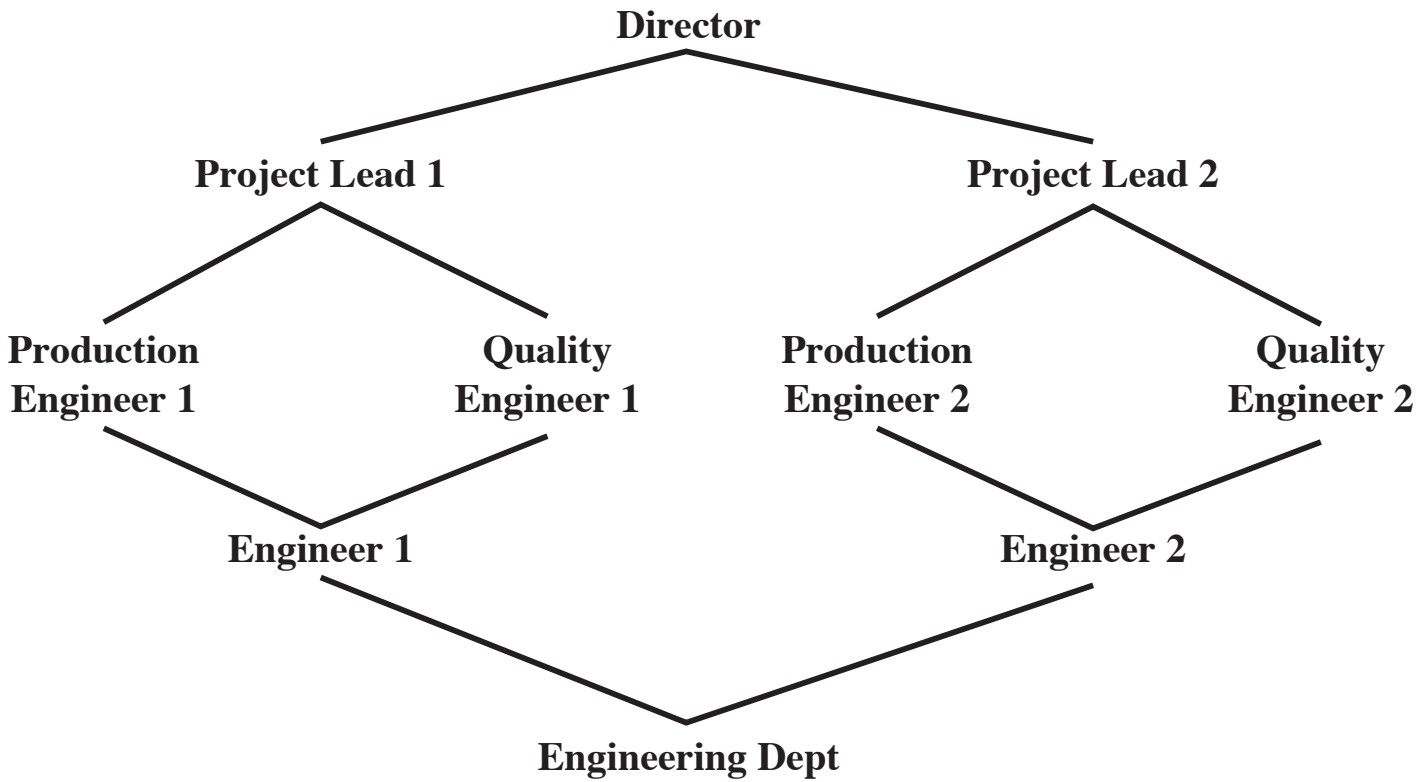


Figure 4.9 Example of Role Hierarchy

Constraints - RBAC

- Provide a means of adapting RBAC to the specifics of administrative and security policies of an organization
- A defined relationship among roles or a condition related to roles
- Types:

Mutually exclusive roles	Cardinality	Prerequisite roles
• A user can only be assigned to one role in the set (either during a session or statically) • Any permission (access right) can be granted to only one role in the set	• Setting a maximum number with respect to roles	• Dictates that a user can only be assigned to a particular role if it is already assigned to some other specified role

Attribute-Based Access Control (ABAC)

- Can define authorizations that express conditions on properties of both the resource and the subject
- Strength is its flexibility and expressive power
- Main obstacle to its adoption in real systems has been concern about the performance impact of evaluating predicates on both resource and user properties for each access
- Web services have been pioneering technologies through the introduction of the eXtensible Access Control Markup Language (XAMCL)
- There is considerable interest in applying the model to cloud services

ABAC Model: Attributes

Subject attributes

- A subject is an active entity that causes information to flow among objects or changes the system state
- Attributes define the identity and characteristics of the subject

Object attributes

- An object (or resource) is a passive information system-related entity containing or receiving information
- Objects have attributes that can be leverages to make access control decisions

Environment attributes

- Describe the operational, technical, and even situational environment or context in which the information access occurs
- These attributes have so far been largely ignored in most access control policies

ABAC


Distinguishable because it controls access to objects by evaluating rules against the attributes of entities, operations, and the environment relevant to a request
Relies upon the evaluation of attributes of the subject, attributes of the object, and a formal relationship or access control rule defining the allowable operations for subject-object attribute combinations in a given environment
Systems are capable of enforcing DAC, RBAC, and MAC concepts
Allows an unlimited number of attributes to be combined to satisfy any access control rule

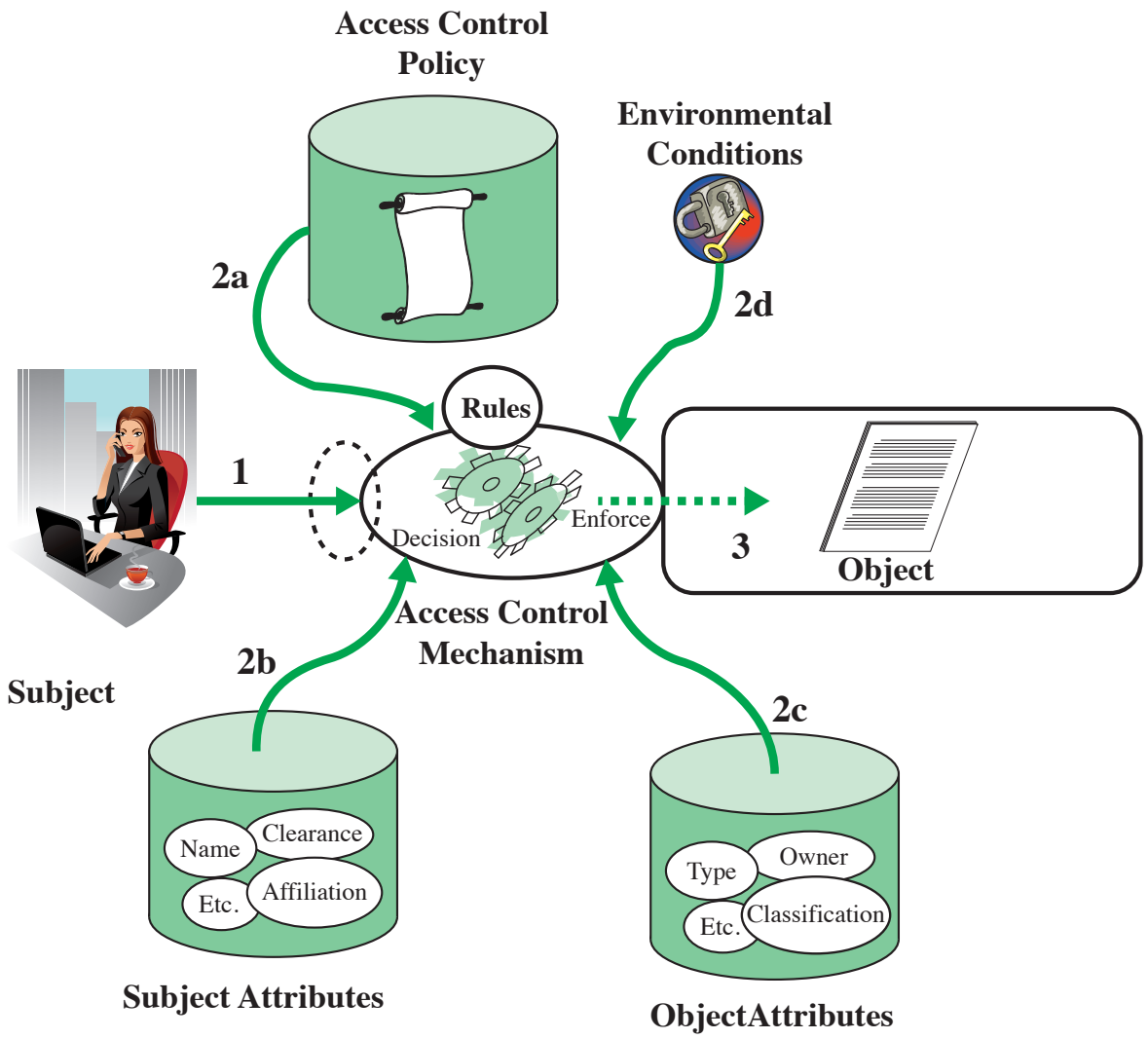
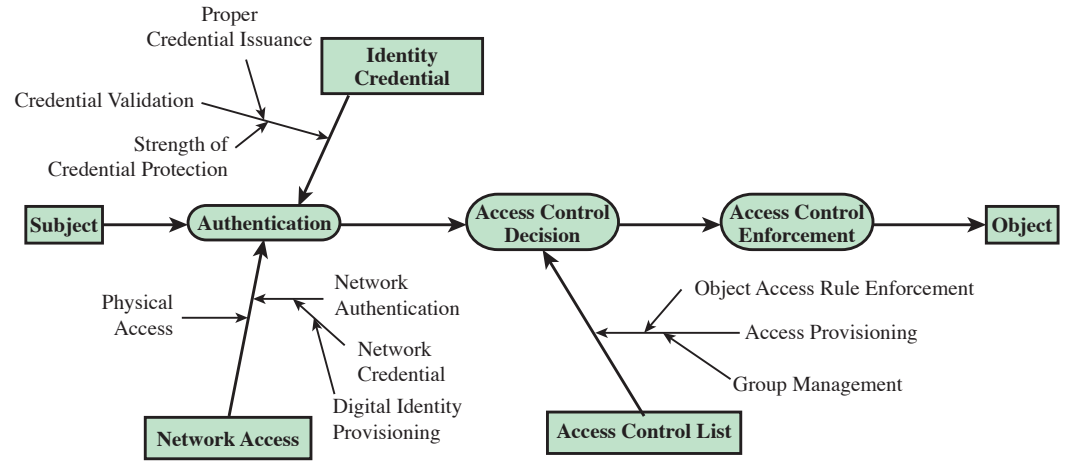
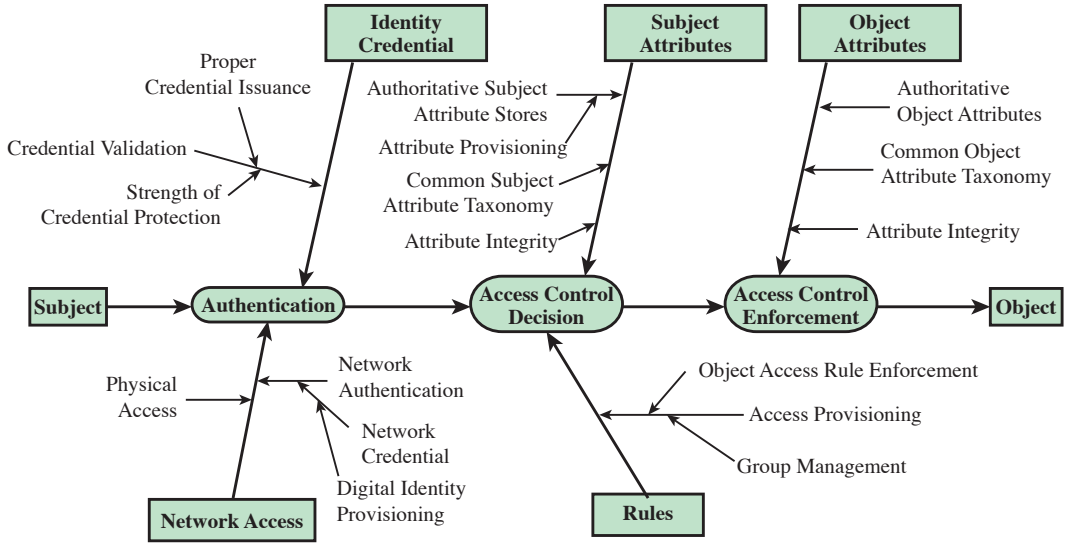


Figure 4.10 Simple ABAC Scenario



(a) ACL Trust Chain



(b) ABAC Trust Chain

Figure 4.11 ACL and ABAC Trust Relationships

ABAC Policies

A policy is a set of rules and relationships that govern allowable behavior within an organization, based on the privileges of subjects and how resources or objects are to be protected under which environment conditions

Typically written from the perspective of the object that needs protecting and the privileges available to subjects

Privileges represent the authorized behavior of a subject and are defined by an authority and embodied in a policy

Other terms commonly used instead of privileges are: rights, authorizations, and entitlements

Summary

- Access control principles
  - Access control context
  - Access control policies
- Subjects, objects, and access rights
- Discretionary access control
  - Access control model
  - Protection domains
- UNIX file access control
  - Traditional UNIX file access control
  - Access control lists in UNIX
- Role-based access control
  - RBAC reference models

- Attribute-based access control
  - Attributes
  - ABAC logical architecture
  - ABAC policies