

# Verifying filesystems in ACL2

Towards verifying file recovery tools

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# Outline

Motivation and related work

Our approach

Progress so far

Future work

# Why we need a verified filesystem

- ▶ Filesystems are everywhere, even as operating systems move towards making them invisible.
- ▶ In the absence of a clear specification of filesystems, users (and sysadmins in particular) are underserved.
- ▶ Modern filesystems have become increasingly complex, and so have the tools to analyse and recover data from them.
- ▶ It would be worthwhile to specify and formally verify, in the ACL2 theorem prover, the guarantees claimed by filesystems and tools.

## Related work

- ▶ In Haogang Chen's 2016 dissertation, the author uses Coq to build a filesystem (named FSCQ) which is proven safe against crashes in a new logical framework named Crash Hoare Logic. His (exported) Haskell implementation performs comparably to ext4.
- ▶ Hyperkernel (Nelson et al., SOSP '17) is a "push-button" verification effort, but approximates by changing POSIX system calls for ease of verification.
- ▶ In our work, we instead aim to model an existing filesystem (FAT32) faithfully and match the resulting disk image byte-to-byte.

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# Choosing an initial model

- ▶ Our goal here is to verify the FAT32 filesystem, but we need a simpler model to begin with.
- ▶ Our filesystem's operations should suffice for running a workload.
- ▶ Yet, parsimony and avoidance of redundancy are helpful for theorem proving.
- ▶ What's a necessary and sufficient set of operations?

# Minimal set of operations?

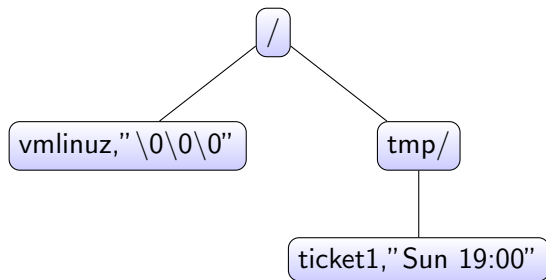
- ▶ The Google filesystem suggests a minimal set of operations:
  - ▶ create
  - ▶ delete
  - ▶ open
  - ▶ close
  - ▶ read
  - ▶ write
- ▶ Of these, open and close require the maintenance of file descriptor state - so they can wait.
- ▶ However, they are essential when describing concurrency and multiprogramming behaviour.
- ▶ Thus, we can start modelling a filesystem, and several refinements thereof.

# Quick overview of models

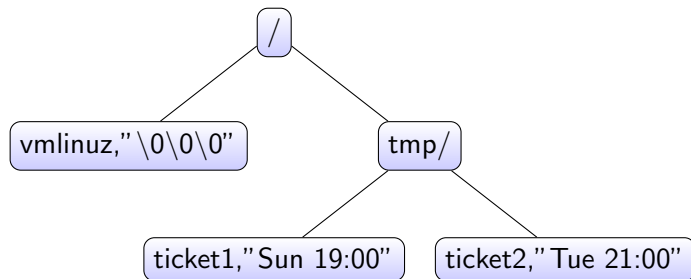
- ▶ What follows is a sequence of **increasingly refined** models.
- ▶ Model 1: Tree representation of directory structure with unbounded file size and unbounded filesystem size.
- ▶ Model 2: Model 1 with file length as metadata.
- ▶ Model 3: Tree representation of directory structure with file contents stored in a "disk" (unbounded in length).
- ▶ Model 4: Model 3 with bounded filesystem size and garbage collection.
- ▶ In our running example, we'll observe file creation, deletion, and overwriting in each of these models in turn.



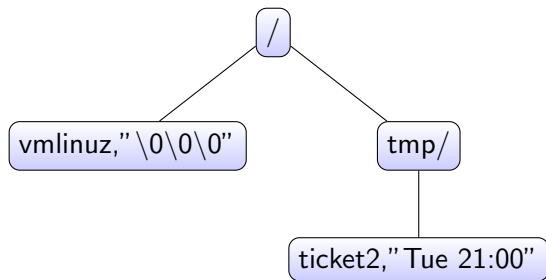
# Model 1



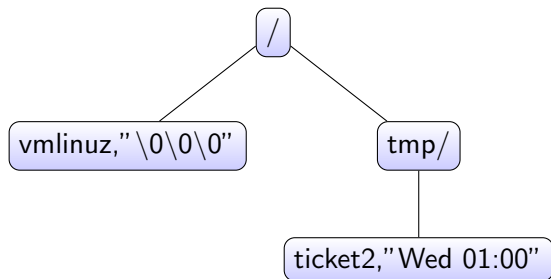
# Model 1



# Model 1



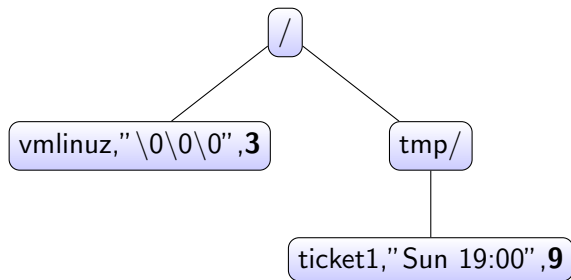
# Model 1



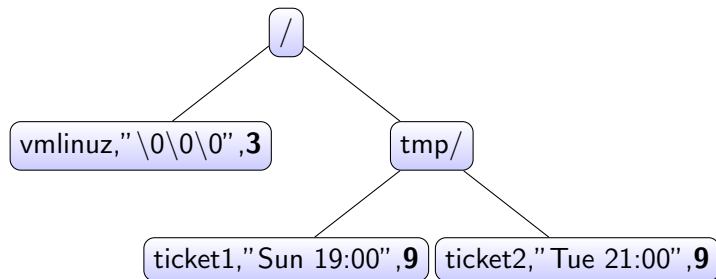
## Model 2

- ▶ Model 1 supports nested directory structures, unbounded file size and unbounded filesystem size.
- ▶ However, there's no metadata, either to provide additional information or to validate the contents of the file.
- ▶ With an extra field for length, we can create a simple version of fsck that checks file contents for consistency.
- ▶ Further, we can verify that create, write, delete etc preserve this notion of consistency.

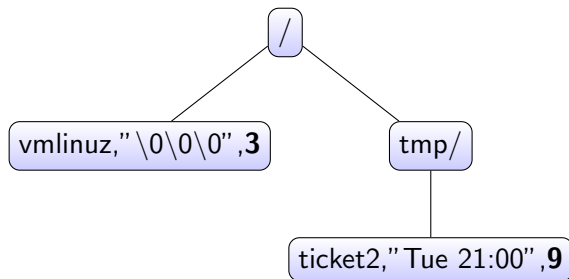
## Model 2



## Model 2

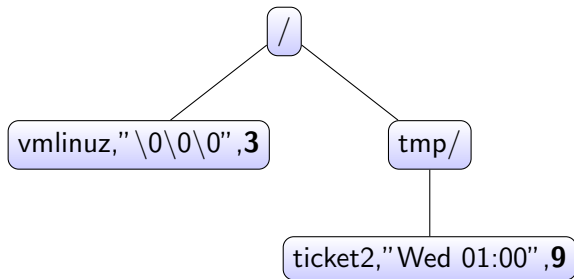


## Model 2





## Model 2



## Model 3

- ▶ As the next step, we focus on externalising the storage of file contents.
- ▶ We also choose to break up file contents into "blocks" of a constant length (8.)
  - ▶ Note: this would mean storing file length is no longer optional, to avoid reading garbage past end of file at the end of a block.

## Model 3

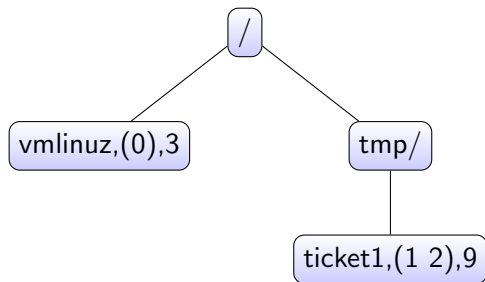


Table: Disk

\0\0\0
Sun 19:0
0

## Model 3

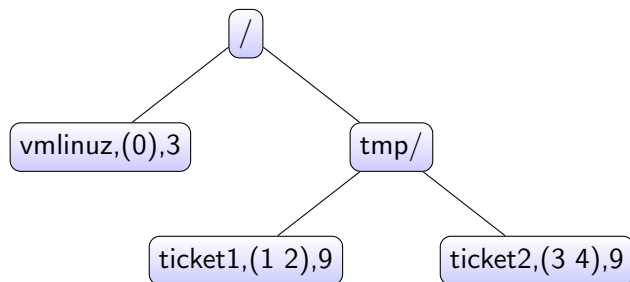


Table: Disk

\0\0\0
Sun 19:0
0
Tue 21:0
0

## Model 3

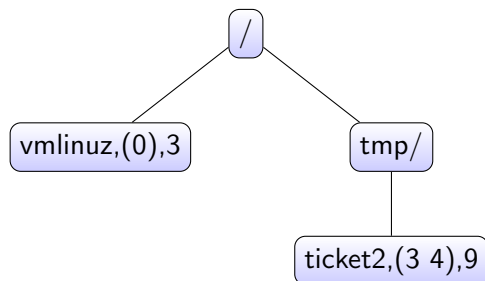


Table: Disk

\0\0\0
Sun 19:0
0
Tue 21:0
0

## Model 3

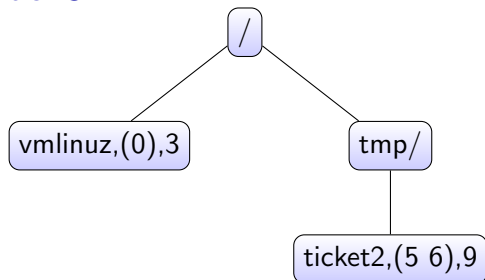


Table: Disk

\0\0\0
Sun 19:0
0
Tue 21:0
0
Wed 01:0
0

## Model 4

- ▶ In the fourth model, we attempt to implement garbage collection in the form of an allocation vector.
- ▶ The allocation vector tracks whether blocks in the filesystem are in use by a file. This allows us to reuse unused blocks.

## Model 4

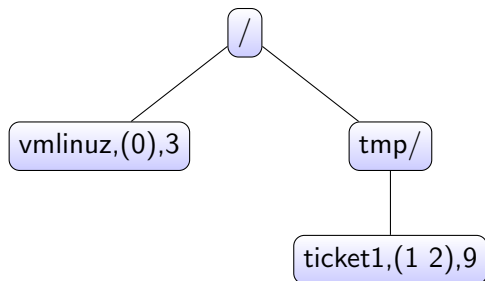


Table: Disk

\0\0\0	true
Sun 19:0	true
0	true
	false
	false
	false



## Model 4

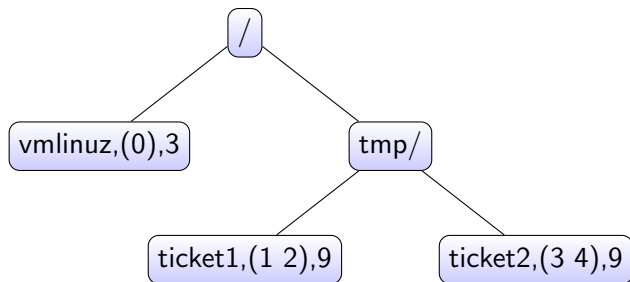


Table: Disk

\0\0\0	true
Sun 19:0	true
0	true
Tue 21:0	true
0	true
	false

## Model 4

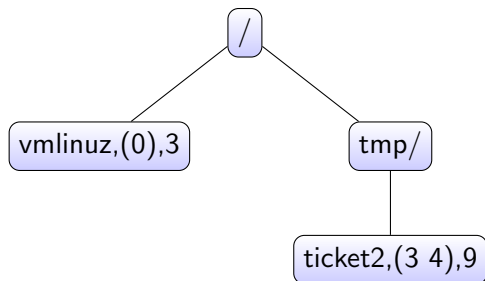


Table: Disk

\0\0\0	true
Sun 19:0	false
0	false
Tue 21:0	true
0	true
	false

## Model 4

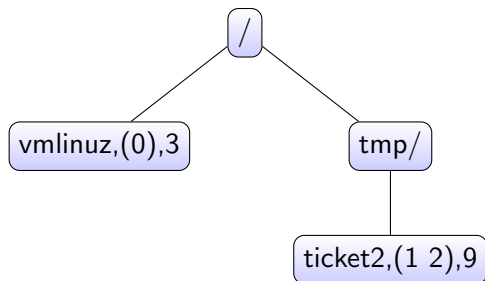


Table: Disk

\0\0\0	true
Wed 01:0	true
0	true
Tue 21:0	false
0	false
	false

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# Proof approaches and techniques

- ▶ There are many properties that could be considered for correctness, but we choose to focus on the read-over-write theorems from the first-order theory of arrays.
- ▶ Read  $n$  characters starting at position  $start$  in the file at path  $hns$  in filesystem  $fs$ :  
`l1-rdchs(hns, fs, start, n)`
- ▶ Write string  $text$  characters starting at position  $start$  in the file at path  $hns$  in filesystem  $fs$ :  
`l1-wrchs(hns, fs, start, text)`

# Proof approaches and techniques

- ▶ First read-over-write theorem: reading from a location after writing to the same location should yield the data that was written. Formally, assuming  $n = \text{length}(\text{text})$  and suitable "type" hypotheses (omitted here):

```
l1-rdchs(hns, l1-wrchs(hns, fs, start, text),  
start, n)  
=  
text
```

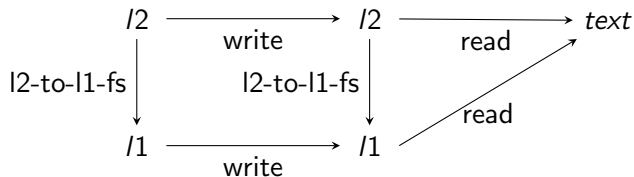
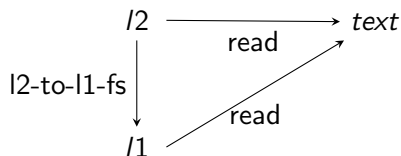
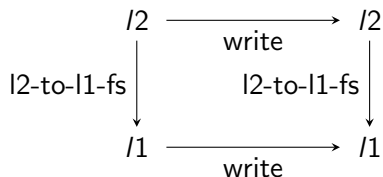
- ▶ Second read-over-write-theorem: Reading from a location after writing to a different location should yield the same result as reading before writing. Formally, assuming  $\text{hns1} \neq \text{hns2}$  and suitable "type" hypotheses (omitted here):

```
l1-rdchs(hns1, l1-wrchs(hns2, fs, start2, text2),  
start1, n1)  
=  
l1-rdchs(hns1, fs, start1, n1)
```

# Proof approaches and techniques

- ▶ For each of the models 1, 2, 3 and 4, we have proofs of correctness of the two read-after-write properties, making use of the proofs of equivalence between models and their successors.
- ▶ Model 4 presented some unique challenges - proving the read-after-write properties required proving an equivalence between model 4 and model 2, rather than model 3.

# Proof approaches and techniques





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## Future work

- ▶ Model and verify file permissions.
- ▶ Linearise the tree, leaving only the disk.
- ▶ Add the system call open and close with the introduction of file descriptors.  
*This would be a step towards the study of concurrent FS operations.*
- ▶ Eventually emulate the FAT32 filesystem as a convincing proof of concept, and move on to fsck and file recovery tools.