Server Side Verification of Client Behavior in Online Games

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Outline

1. Symbolic Execution
2. Constraints
   - Generation
   - Accumulation
   - Pruning
3. Scalability
   - Server
   - Client
4. Experiment
   - XPilot
   - Cap-Man
   - Results
Authoritative State is the amount of control or weight carried by a server or client. Used for the ultimate goal of protecting against client misbehavior.
Client-side Behavior Verification

- Constructs model of proper client execution using source code
Client-side Behavior Verification

- Constructs model of proper client execution using source code
- Exploits event loop process
Client-side Behavior Verification

- Constructs model of proper client execution using source code
- Exploits event loop process
- Symbolic execution
Client-side Behavior Verification

- Constructs model of proper client execution using source code
- Exploits event loop process
- Symbolic execution
- Reasons if client input is possible
Another Approach

Audit Server

- Probabilistic
- Maintains committed state
- Client periodically sends hash
- Server challenge results in full state to be transmitted
Why ours is Better

Symbolic Execution
- Generate vulnerability signatures
- Generate inputs that will induce error conditions
- Automating mimicry attacks
- Optimizing privacy-preserving computations
- many more...
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Symbolic Execution is the exploration of all path during the execution of a program.

i.e. to find bugs within programs
Initialization

Initial inputs are allowed to be "anything" and their memory locations are marked as symbolic. Conditional branches including a symbolic variable will create constraints and fork the execution.
Symbolic Values and Constraints

When a, b and c are marked as symbolic a logical constraint is added on a that it should be equal to the sum of b and c

\[ a \leftarrow b + c \]
Every possible path has a set of constraints that must hold true along that path of execution. A constraint solver (such as KLEE) then provides concrete values for bad input.
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Simple Example

100: \( loc \leftarrow 0; \)
101: 
102: \textbf{while} true \textbf{do} 
103: \quad \textbf{key} \leftarrow \text{readkey}(); 
104: \quad \textbf{if} \text{ key } = \text{ ESC} \textbf{then} 
105: \quad \quad \text{endgame}(); 
106: \quad \textbf{else if} \text{ key } = \text{ '↑'} \textbf{then} 
107: \quad \quad \text{loc} \leftarrow \text{ loc } + 1; 
108: \quad \textbf{else if} \text{ key } = \text{ '↓'} \textbf{then} 
109: \quad \quad \text{loc} \leftarrow \text{ loc } - 1; 
110: \quad \textbf{end if} 
111: \quad \text{sendlocation(loc);} 
112: \quad \textbf{end while} 

(b) ... instrumented to run symbolically

(a) A toy game client ...
Round Constraint

\[(\text{loc} = \text{prev\_loc} + 1) \lor (\text{loc} = \text{prev\_loc} - 1) \lor (\text{loc} = \text{prev\_loc})\]
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An **Accumulated Constraint** is a conjunction of round constraints that represents a sequence of possible paths taken over multiple client loops.
Accumulation Example

\[ G(j) = \begin{cases} 
  loc_j = loc_{j-1} + 1, \\
  loc_j = loc_{j-1} - 1, \\
  loc_j = loc_{j-1} 
\end{cases} \]
Accumulation Example

\[ \text{loc}_2 = 9 \land \text{loc}_2 = \text{loc}_1 + 1 \]
\[ \text{loc}_2 = 9 \land \text{loc}_2 = \text{loc}_1 - 1 \]
\[ \text{loc}_2 = 9 \land \text{loc}_2 = \text{loc}_1 \]
Accumulation Example

\[ loc_1 = 8 \land [loc_2 = 9 \land loc_2 = loc_1 + 1] \]
\[ loc_1 = 8 \land [loc_2 = 9 \land loc_2 = loc_1 - 1] \]
\[ loc_1 = 8 \land [loc_2 = 9 \land loc_2 = loc_1] \]
Accumulation Example

\[ C_2 = \{ loc_1 = 8 \land [loc_2 = 9 \land loc_2 = loc_1 + 1] \} \]
\[ = \{ loc_1 = 8 \land loc_2 = 9 \} \]
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Pruning

Removes duplicate and insignificant constraints from round constraints before accumulation.
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Round constraints also result from server messages sent to the client.

1. Eager
2. Lazy
Eager Round Constraints

Every server message results in a constraint regardless of whether the client processes it.

- decoupled from verification and pre-computed
Lazy Round Constraints

Only client processed server messages result in constraints for the round.

- tightly coupled and model must be built by accessing client logs for viable server messages
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Neither eager or lazy approach is fast enough to be implemented on the critical path for thousands of users.
Game operators already perform detailed logging. A log structure provides readability for GMs and allows for offline verification.
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The Game

- 150,000 lines of C code
- Similar to Asteroids
  1. multi-player modes (death match, CTF, racing)
  2. better physics (fuel weight, acceleration)
- latest port in 2009 to iPhone
Client Cheating

Independent keystrokes should never result in KEYFIREDSHOT and KEYSHIELD being sent to the server simultaneously.
Modifications

- add UDP acknowledgment
- add floating point constraint library
- remove trivial client information
  1. "reliable" UDP information
  2. graphical user modification
  3. external graphics references
Lazy Verification

2000 rounds or about 1 min of gameplay

90% avg = 26ms 5% avg = 3.4s 5% avg = 14.9s
Eager Manual Tuning

\[(p = \text{PKT\_START}) \land (\text{constraints\_for(PKT\_START)})\]
\[(p = \text{PKT\_FUEL}) \land (\text{constraints\_for(PKT\_FUEL)})\]
\[(p = \text{PKT\_TIME\_LEFT}) \land (\text{constraints\_for(PKT\_TIME\_LEFT)})\]
\[(p = \text{PKT\_END}) \land (\text{constraints\_for(PKT\_END)})\]

multiple breaks in frame transmission and user keybind configuration.
Eager Verification

2000 rounds or about 1 min of gameplay

90% avg = 1.6s 10% avg = 11.4s
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The Game

- gives client more authoritative state
- about 1000 lines of C code
- simple Pac-Man clone
Cap-Man Cheating

With the client having most of the authoritative state it can simply tell the server an updated coord of movement regardless of making a valid move.
Cap-Man Verification

2000 rounds or about 7 min of gameplay

814 ms 260 ms
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This method of server side verification allows increased security with less bandwidth, regardless of how much authoritative state the server maintains.
Questions