A Programming Language Perspective on Transactional Memory Consistency

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ABSTRACT

Transactional memory (TM) has been hailed as a paradigm for simplifying concurrent programming. While several consistency conditions have been suggested for TM, they fall short of formalizing the intuitive semantics of atomic blocks, the interface through which a TM is used in a programming language.

To close this gap, we formalize the intuitive expectations of a programmer as observational refinement between TM implementations: a concrete TM observationally refines an abstract one if every user-observable behavior of a program using the former can be reproduced if the program uses the latter. This allows the programmer to reason about the behavior of a program using the intuitive semantics formalized by the abstract TM; the observational refinement relation implies that the conclusions will carry over to the case when the program uses the concrete TM. We show that, for a particular programming language and notions of observable behavior, a variant of the well-known consistency condition of opacity is sufficient for observational refinement, and its restriction to complete histories is furthermore necessary.

Our results suggest a new approach to evaluating and comparing TM consistency conditions. They can also reduce the effort of proving that a TM implements its programming language interface correctly, by only requiring its developer to show that it satisfies the corresponding consistency condition.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

D.1.3 [Programming Techniques]: Concurrent Programming; D.2.4 [Software Engineering]: Software/Program Verification

Keywords

Transactional memory; atomic blocks; observational refinement

1. INTRODUCTION

Transactional memory (TM) eases the task of writing concurrent applications by letting the programmer designate certain code blocks as atomic. TM allows designing a program and reasoning about its correctness as if each atomic block executed as a transaction—in one step and without interleaving with others. As an example, Figure 1 shows how atomic blocks yield simple code for pushing an element onto a stack represented as a singly-linked list: in this case it is possible to read the top-of-the-stack pointer, point the new element to it, and change the top-of-the-stack pointer, all at once. Many TM implementations have been proposed [9], using a myriad of design approaches that, for efficiency, may execute transactions concurrently, yet aim to provide the programmer with an illusion that they are executed atomically. This illusion is not always perfect—for example, as evident from Figure 1, transactions can abort due to conflicts with concurrently running ones and need to be restarted.

How can we be sure that a TM indeed implements atomic blocks correctly? So far, researchers have tried to achieve this through a consistency condition that restricts the possible TM executions. Several such conditions have been proposed, including opacity [7, 8], virtual world consistency [15], TMS [4, 17] and DU-opacity [2]. Opacity is the best-known of them; roughly speaking, it requires that for any sequence of interactions between the program and the TM, dubbed a history, there exist another history where:

(i) the interactions of every separate thread are the same as in the original history;
(ii) the order of non-overlapping transactions present in the original history is preserved; and
(iii) each transaction executes atomically.

Unfortunately, this definition is given from the TM’s point of view, as a restriction on the set of histories it can produce, and is not connected to the semantics of a programming language. The situation for other TM consistency conditions is the same and, in fact, it is not clear which of them provide the programmer with behaviors that correspond to the intuitive notion of atomic blocks, and which of them puts the minimal restrictions on TM implementations needed to achieve this.

In this paper, we aim to bridge this gap by formalizing the intuitive expectations of a programmer as observational refinement [12, 13] between TM implementations. Consider two TM implementations—a concrete one, such as an efficient TM, and an
abstract one, such as a TM executing every atomic block atomically. Informally, the concrete TM observationally refines the abstract one if every behavior a user can observe of a program P linked with the concrete TM can also be observed when P is linked with the abstract TM instead. This allows the programmer to reason about the behavior of P using the intuitive semantics formalized by the abstract TM; the observational refinement relation implies that the conclusions will carry over to the case when P uses the concrete TM.

We show that one TM implementation observationally refines another if they are in an opacity relation. The relation requires that every history of the concrete TM have a matching history of the abstract TM satisfying the conditions (i) and (ii) above. By instantiating it with an abstract TM implementation that executes transactions atomically, we obtain the existing notion of opacity. However, our definition also allows comparing two TM implementations that execute transactions concurrently, such as a more and a less optimized one. Furthermore, we show that observational refinement between two TM implementations implies the opacity relation between their restriction to complete histories, i.e., ones in which every transaction either commits or aborts.

We note that the formalization of observational refinement, and thus our results, depend on the particular choices of programming language and the notion of observations. In this first treatment of this topic, we consider a basic programming language and particular forms of observations. The features of the language are as follows:

- Threads can access shared global variables outside transactions, but not inside them. However, thread-local variables (such as node in Figure 1) can be accessed in both cases.
- An aborted transaction is not restarted automatically and modifications to thread-local variables that it may have performed are not rolled back.
- A program cannot explicitly ask the TM to abort a transaction.
- Nesting of atomic blocks is not allowed.

As observable behaviors of a program, our result allows one to take either the set of its reachable states or the set of all sequences of actions performed by its finite computations. This allows a programmer to reason about safety, but not about liveness properties.

It is likely that for other programming languages or notions of observations, other consistency criteria will be necessary or sufficient for observational refinement, resulting in different trade-offs between the efficiency of TM implementations and the flexibility of their programming interfaces (see Section 8 for discussion). We hope that the link between TM consistency conditions and programming language abstractions we establish in this paper will enable TM implementors and language designers to make informed decisions about such trade-offs. Our approach can also reduce the effort of proving that a TM implements its programming interface correctly, by only requiring its developer to show that it satisfies the corresponding consistency condition.

2. PROGRAMMING LANGUAGE

We develop our results for a simple concurrent programming language with programs consisting of a fixed, but arbitrary, number m of threads, identified by ThreadID = {1,...,m}. Every thread t ∈ ThreadID has a private set of local variables LVar = {x, y,...}, and all threads share access to a set of global variables GVar = {g,...}. For simplicity, we assume that all variables are of type integer. Let Var = GVar ∪ ∪_{i=1}^{m} LVar_i be the set of all program variables (where ∪ denotes disjoint union). In addition to variables, threads can access software or hardware transactional memory, which from now on we refer to as the transactional system. The system manages a fixed collection of transactional objects Obj = {o,...}, each having a set of methods Method = {f,...} that threads can call. For simplicity, we assume that each method takes one integer parameter and returns an integer value, and that all objects have the same set of methods.

The syntax of the language is as follows:

\[
C ::= c \mid C;C \mid \text{if} \,(b) \; \text{then} \, C \; \text{else} \, C \mid \text{while} \,(b) \; \text{do} \; C \mid x := \text{atomic}\{C\} \mid x := o.f(e) \\
P ::= C_1 \parallel \ldots \parallel C_m
\]

where b and e denote Boolean and integer expressions over local variables, left unspecified. A program P is a parallel composition of sequential commands C_1,...,C_m, which can include primitive commands c from a set Pcomm, sequential compositions, conditionals, loops, atomic blocks and object method invocations.

Primitive commands are meant to execute atomically. We do not fix their set Pcomm, but assume that it at least includes assignments to local and global variables: e.g., g := x. We partition the set Pcomm into 2m classes: Pcomm = {Pcomm_0, Pcomm_1, Pcomm_2, Pcomm_3}, the intention is that commands from Pcomm_0 can access only the local variables of thread t (LVar_t); commands from Pcomm_1 can additionally access global variables (LVar ∪ GVar). We formalize these restrictions in Section 4. We forbid a thread t from accessing local variables of other threads. Thus, the thread cannot mention such variables in the conditions of if and while commands and can only use primitive commands from Pcomm_2, Pcomm_3.

An atomic block \( x := \text{atomic}\{C\} \) executes the command C as a transaction, which the transactional system can decide to commit or abort. The system's decision is returned in the local variable x, which gets assigned distinguished values committed or aborted. We forbid nested atomic blocks and, hence, nested transactions. Inside an atomic block (and only there), the program can invoke methods on transactional objects, as in \( x := o.f(e) \). Here the expression e gives the value of the method parameter, and x gets assigned the return value after the method terminates. The transactional system may decide to abort a transaction initiated by \( x := \text{atomic}\{C\} \) not only upon reaching the end of the atomic block, but also during the execution of a method on a transactional object. Once this happens, the execution of C terminates. We do not allow programs in our language to abort a transaction explicitly. A typical pattern of using the transactional system is to execute a transaction repeatedly until it commits, as shown in Figure 1.

We forbid accessing global variables inside atomic blocks; thus, a thread t can use primitive commands from GPcomm only outside them. A transaction can use local variables of the current thread; if the transaction is aborted, these variables are not rolled back to their initial values, and the values written to them by the transaction can thus be observed by the following non-transactional code. We note that, whereas transactional objects are managed by the transactional system, global variables are not. Thus, threads can communicate via the transactional system inside atomic blocks, and directly via global variables outside them. We also note that the transactional system is not part of a program, but is a library used by it. Hence, the state of the transactional system is separate from the variables in Var to which the program has access.

A correct transactional system implementation has to ensure that the program behaves as though atomic blocks indeed execute atomically, i.e., without interleaving with actions of other threads, and that operations invoked on transactional objects in aborted transactions have no effect. This does not require the implementation to execute atomic blocks like this internally; it only has to
provide the illusion of their atomicity to the rest of the program. In the rest of the paper, we prove that a variant of a well-known criterion of transactional system correctness, opacity, is sufficient and necessary to validate this illusion for our programming language.

3. THE OPACITY RELATION

Histories

In this section we formalize the notion of opacity in our setting, and along the way, show how to make it more flexible. To this end, we introduce the notion of a history, which records all the interactions a program in the language of Section 2 has with the transactional system in one of its executions. A history, ranged over by $H$ and $S$, is a finite\(^1\) sequence of interface actions, defined as follows.

**Definition 1.** An interface action $\psi$ is an expression of one of the following forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request actions</th>
<th>Response actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$(t, \text{txbegin})$</td>
<td>$(t, \text{OK})$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$(t, \text{txcommit})$</td>
<td>$(t, \text{committed})$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$(t, \text{call } f(n))$</td>
<td>$(t, \text{ret } f(n) o.f)$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

where $t \in \text{ThreadID}$, $o \in \text{Obj}$, $f \in \text{Method}$ and $n, n' \in \mathbb{Z}$.

Interface actions denote the control flow crossing the boundary between the program and the transactional system: request actions correspond to the control being transferred from the program to the transactional system, and response actions correspond to the control being transferred the other way around. A $(t, \text{txbegin})$ action denotes a thread $t$ requesting the transactional system to start executing a transaction; this action is generated upon entering an atomic block. An OK action is the only possible response by the transactional system. A txcommit action is issued when a transaction tries to commit upon exiting an atomic block. The transactional system responds with a committed or aborted action, depending on the result. Actions call and ret denote a call to and a return from an invocation of a method on a transactional object; they are annotated with the parameter or the return value. As we noted in Section 2, the transactional system may also decide to abort a transaction while executing a method on a transactional object. In such cases, the corresponding call action is followed by an aborted action instead of a ret one.

We use the following notation: $\varepsilon$ is the empty history; $H(i)$ is the $i$-th element of a history $H$; $H|_{<t}$ is the projection of $H$ onto actions of thread $t$; $H|_{i,t}$ is the projection of $H$ onto actions of threads other than $t$; $H|_o$ is the projection of $H$ onto call and ret actions on object $o$; $|H|$ is the length of $H$; $H|^i_o$ is the prefix of $H$ containing $i$ actions; $H_1 \otimes H_2$ is the concatenation of $H_1$ and $H_2$. We denote by $\_\_\_\_$ an expression that is irrelevant and implicitly existentially quantified.

The interactions of programs in the language of Section 2 with the transactional system are not arbitrary; they are recorded by histories that satisfy certain well-formedness properties, summarized in the following definition.

**Definition 2.** A history $H$ is well-formed if

- request and response actions are properly matched: for every thread $t$, $H|_{<t}$ consists of alternating request and corresponding response actions, starting from a request action;
- actions denoting beginning and end of transactions are properly matched: for every thread $t$, in the projection of $H|_{<t}$ to txbegin, committed and aborted actions, txbegin alternates with committed or aborted, starting from txbegin; and
- call and ret actions occur only inside transactions: for every thread $t$, if $H|_t = H_1 \otimes H_2$ for a call or ret action $\psi$, then $H_1 = H'_1 \psi H'_2$ for some txbegin action $\psi'$, and histories $H'_1$ and $H'_2$ such that $H'_2$ does not contain txbegin, txcommit, committed or aborted actions.

Program executions that run until completion are described by complete histories, in which every transaction either aborts or commits. This class of histories is of a particular importance to us because our necessity result holds only for this class.

**Definition 3.** A well-formed history $H$ is complete if all actions in it have completed: if $H = H_1 (t, \text{txbegin}) H_2$, then $H_2$ contains a $(t, \text{committed})$ or $(t, \text{aborted})$ action.

We specify the behavior of a transactional system implementation by the set of possible interactions it can have with its clients—its history set $\mathcal{H}$, which is a prefix-closed set of well-formed histories. For our purposes, this specifies the behavior of a transactional system completely; thus, in the following, we often conflate the notion of a transactional system and its history set.

We denote the complete subset of a history set $\mathcal{H}$ by

$$\mathcal{H}_{\text{complete}} = \{ H \mid H \in \mathcal{H} \wedge (H \text{ is complete}) \}.$$ 

The definition of the opacity relation

We define the notion of opacity in a slightly more flexible way than the original one [7, 8], inspired by the approach taken when defining the correctness of concurrent libraries via linearizability [14]. Namely, we define the correctness of a transactional system implementation by relating its history set to that of an abstract implementation, whose behavior it has to simulate; in this context, we call the original implementation concrete. The abstract implementation is typically one in which atomic blocks actually execute atomically and methods called by aborted transactions have no effect. As we show below, we can obtain the original definition of opacity by instantiating ours with such an abstract implementation; however, our definition can also be used to compare two arbitrary implementations. To disambiguate, in the following we refer to our notion as the opacity relation, instead of just opacity.

According to the following definition, a concrete transactional system $\mathcal{H}_C$ is in the opacity relation with an abstract transactional system $\mathcal{H}_A$, if every history $H$ from $\mathcal{H}_C$ can be matched by a history $S$ from $\mathcal{H}_A$ that “looks similar” to $H$ from the perspective of the program. The similarity is formalized by a relation $H \sqsubseteq S$, which requires $S$ to be a permutation of $H$ preserving the order of actions within a thread and that of non-overlapping transactions (whether committed or aborted). Here the duration of a transaction is defined by the interval from its txbegin action to the corresponding committed or aborted action (or to the end of the history if there is none).

**Definition 4.** A well-formed history $H$ is in the opacity relation with a well-formed history $S$, denoted $H \sqsubseteq S$, if there is a bijection $\theta : \{1, \ldots, |H|\} \rightarrow \{1, \ldots, |S|\}$ such that $\forall i. H(i) = S(\theta(i))$ and

\[
\forall i, j. i < j \land (\exists t. (H(i) = (t,_) \wedge H(j) = (t,_))) \lor
(H(i) \in \{(_, \text{committed}), (_, \text{aborted})\} \land
H(j) = (\_, \text{txbegin}))
\Rightarrow \theta(i) < \theta(j).
\]
A transactional system $\mathcal{H}_C$ is in the opacity relation with a transactional system $\mathcal{H}_A$, denoted $\mathcal{H}_C \sqsubseteq \mathcal{H}_A$, if

\[
\forall H \in \mathcal{H}_C. \exists S \in \mathcal{H}_A. H \sqsubseteq S.
\]

In the following, for $i < j$ we say that the actions $H(i)$ and $H(j)$ are in the per-thread order in $H$ when they are on the same thread and in the real-time order when $H(i) = (\_\text{committed})$ or $H(i) = (\_\text{aborted})$ and $H(j) = (t.\text{txbegin})$. Thus, $H \sqsubseteq S$ requires that the per-thread and real-time orders between actions in $H$ be preserved in $S$. We now make some comments concerning the choices taken in this definition.

- As we show in Section 7, preserving the real-time order in Definition 4 is necessary to validate observational refinement due to the fact that, in our programming language, threads can access global variables outside transactions and, hence, can notice the order of non-overlapping transactions.
- Definition 4 treats committed and aborted transactions uniformly. This is a characteristic feature of opacity: it ensures that the results returned by methods of transactional objects inside aborted transactions are as consistent as those returned inside committed transactions (we return to this point in Sections 7 and 8).
- The abstract history $S$ in Definition 4 is not required to be sequential, i.e., it may have overlapping executions of transactions. This allows the definition to compare behaviors of two realistic transactional system implementations that actually execute transactions concurrently. We also allow $H$ to contain uncompleted transactions (without a final committed or aborted action) arising, e.g., because the corresponding thread has been preempted. In this case, we require the same behavior to be reproduced in the matching history $S$, which is possible because the latter does not have to be sequential [6].

Comparison with the original opacity definition

We now show how the original notion of opacity [7, 8] can be obtained from ours by instantiating Definition 4 with an abstract transactional system $\mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}}$ in which atomic blocks execute atomically and methods called by aborted transactions have no effect. We first introduce the ingredients needed to define this system. We start by defining a special class of non-interleaved histories.

**Definition 5.** A well-formed history $H$ is non-interleaved if actions by any two transactions do not overlap: if $H = H_1(t.\text{txbegin}) H_2(t'.\text{txbegin}) H_3$, where $H_2$ does not contain $t\text{commit}$ actions, then either $H_2$ contains a $(t,\text{committed})$ or a $(t,\text{aborted})$ action, or there are no actions by thread $t$ in $H_2$.

Note that a non-interleaved history does not have to be complete. In fact, the history set $\mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}}$ we are about to define contains only non-interleaved histories, but some of them are incomplete. This is because a concrete transactional system may produce histories with incomplete transactions, and our opacity relation requires these transactions to stay incomplete in the matching history of the abstract system. To check whether an incomplete history should be included into $\mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}}$, we first complete it with the aid of the operation defined below, which aborts every transaction that has not tried to commit yet and commits or aborts every transaction that has tried to commit (as witnessed by a $\text{txcommit}$ action), but has not yet got a response.

**Definition 6.** A history $H$ is a completing history for an interface action $\psi$, if the following holds:

- if $\psi = (t,\text{call } o.f(n))$, then $H = (t,\text{aborted})$;
- if $\psi = (t,\text{txbegin})$, then $H = (t,\text{txcommit})(t,\text{aborted})$;
- if $\psi \in \{(t,\text{ret}(n)) o.f\}, (t,\text{OK})$, then $H = (t,\text{txcommit})(t,\text{aborted})$;
- if $\psi = (t,\text{txcommit})$, then $H = (t,\text{committed})$ or $H = (t,\text{aborted})$;
- otherwise, $H = \varepsilon$.

**Definition 7.** A history $H_c$ is a non-interleaved completion of a non-interleaved history $H$, if $H_c$ is a non-interleaved complete history that can be constructed from $H$ by adding a completing history for the last action of every thread right after this action. We denote the set of non-interleaved completions of $H$ by $\text{nicomp}(H)$.

To define $\mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}}$, we also need to know the intended semantics of operations on transactional objects. We describe the semantics for an object $o \in \text{Obj}$ by fixing all sequences of actions on $o$ that are considered correct when executed by a sequential program. More precisely, a sequential specification of an object $o$ is a set of histories $[o]$ such that:

- $[o]$ is prefix-closed;
- each $H \in [o]$ consists of alternating call and ret actions on $o$, starting from a call action, where every ret is by the same thread as the preceding call; and
- $[o]$ is insensitive to thread identifiers: for any $H \in [o]$, changing the thread identifier in call-ret pair of adjacent actions in $H$ yields a history in $[o]$.

For example, $[o]$ for a register object $o$ would consist of histories where each read method invocation returns the value written by the latest preceding write method invocation (or the default value if there is none).

Using sequential specifications for all objects, we now define when a complete and non-interleaved history $H$ respects the object semantics. Let $H(i)$ be a call or ret action on an object $o$. We say that $H(i)$ is legal in $H$ if $H'|_o \in [o]$, where $H'$ is the history obtained from $H$ by projecting $H|_t$ on all actions by committed transactions and the transaction containing $H(i)$. A complete and non-interleaved history $H$ is legal if all call and ret actions in $H$ are legal. We now let $\mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}}$ to be the set of all non-interleaved histories that can be completed to a legal history: $\mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}} = \{H \mid H$ is non-interleaved and $\exists$ legal $H_c \in \text{nicomp}(H)\}$.

Thus, we can say that a transactional system $\mathcal{H}_C$ establishes the illusion of atomicity for transactions if $\mathcal{H}_C \sqsubseteq \mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}}$. Note that, since we require the history set of a transactional system to be prefix-closed, this criterion checks every prefix of any history produced by $\mathcal{H}_C$, just like opacity as formulated in [8]. However, in other aspects this definition is of a different form than opacity, which we can formulate in our setting as follows.

**Definition 8.** A history $H_c$ is a suffix completion of a history $H$, if it is a complete history, $H$ is a prefix of $H_c$, and $H_c$ can be constructed from $H$ by appending to it a completing history for the last action of every thread. We denote the set of suffix-completions of $H$ by $\text{scomp}(H)$.

**Definition 9.** A transactional system $\mathcal{H}_C$ is opaque if for every history $H \in \mathcal{H}_C$, there exists a history $H_c \in \text{scomp}(H)$ and a complete, non-interleaved and legal history $S_c$, such that $H_c \sqsubseteq S_c$.

The main difference is that Definition 9 first completes a history from $\mathcal{H}_C$ and then finds its match according to the opacity relation;
our criterion $\mathcal{H}_C \subseteq \mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}}$ first finds the match and then completes the matching history. For technical reasons, Definition 9 also uses a slightly different completion, putting completing histories at the end to avoid creating new real-time orderings.

Fortunately, completion and matching commute, and thus the two formulations of opacity are equivalent.

**Proposition 10.** A transactional system $\mathcal{H}_C$ is opaque if and only if $\mathcal{H}_C \subseteq \mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}}$.

We propose the proposition in Appendix A. The formulation $\mathcal{H}_C \subseteq \mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}}$ is more convenient for us, since the statement of observational refinement we give in Section 5 below requires us to leave the histories of the concrete transactional system intact. Stating transactional system consistency in this way also avoids the need to bake in completions (Definition 7) into the definition of the opacity relation (Definition 4); the treatment of incomplete transactions can be deferred to the choice of the abstract transactional system.

### 4. PROGRAMMING LANGUAGE SEMANTICS

Our goal is to establish a connection between conditions on transactional system implementations, such as the opacity relation from Section 3, and the behavior of programs that use these systems, such as those in the language of Section 2. To this end, in this section we define the semantics of our programming language, i.e., what kinds of computations can result when a program executes with a particular transactional system.

A program computation is captured by a *trace* $\tau$, which is a finite sequence of *actions*, each describing a single computation step.

**Definition 11.** An *action* $\varphi$ is an expression of one of the following forms: $\varphi ::= \psi | (t, c)$, where $t \in \text{ThreadID}$ and $c \in \text{Pcomm}$. We denote that set of all actions by $\text{Action}$.

In addition to interface actions, we have actions of the form $(t, c)$, which denote the execution of a primitive command by thread $t$. To denote the evaluation of conditions in if and while statements, we assume that the sets $\text{LPComm}$ contain special primitive commands $\text{assume}(b)$, where $b$ is a Boolean expression over local variables of thread $t$, defining the condition. We state their semantics formally below; informally, $\text{assume}(b)$ does nothing if $b$ holds in the current program state, and stops the computation otherwise. Thus, it allows the computation to proceed only if $b$ holds. The assume commands are only used in defining the semantics of the programming language; hence, we forbid threads from using them directly.

We denote by $\text{history}(\tau)$ the history obtained by projecting a trace $\tau$ to interface actions. We use various operations on histories defined in Section 3 for traces as well. As is the case for histories, programs in the language of Section 2 do not generate arbitrary traces, but only those satisfying certain conditions summarized in the following definition.

**Definition 12.** A trace $\tau$ is well-formed if

- the history $\text{history}(\tau)$ is well-formed;
- thread $t$ does not access local variables of other threads: if $\tau = \tau_1 (t, c) \tau_2$, then $c \in \text{LPcomm}$ or $\text{GPcomm}$; and
- commands in $\tau$ do not access global variables inside a transaction: if $\tau = \tau_1 (t, c) \tau_2$ for $c \in \text{GPcomm}$, then it is not the case that $\tau_1 = \tau'_1 (t, \text{txbegin}) \tau''_1$, where $\tau''_1$ does not contain committed or aborted actions.

We denote the set of well-formed traces by $\text{WTrace}$. We use two additional operations on traces. For a trace $\tau$, we define $\text{trans} (\tau)$ and $\text{nontrans} (\tau)$ as the subsequences of actions in $\tau$ executed inside transactions (including $\text{txbegin}$, committed and aborted actions), respectively, outside them (excluding $\text{txbegin}$, committed and aborted actions). Formally, we include an action $\varphi = (t, \_)$ such that $\tau | = \tau_1 \varphi \tau_2$ into $\text{trans} (\tau)$ if:

- $\varphi$ is a $\text{txbegin}$, committed or aborted action; or
- $\tau_1 = \tau'_1 (t, \text{txbegin}) \tau''_1$, where $\tau''_1$ does not contain committed or aborted actions.

All other actions form $\text{nontrans} (\tau)$. Actions in $\tau$ that are in $\text{trans} (\tau)$ are *transactional* and all others are *non-transactional*.

A state of a program records the values of all its variables: $s \in \text{State} = \text{Var} \to \mathbb{Z}$. The semantics of a program $P = C_1 \parallel \cdots \parallel C_m$ is given by the set of traces $[P](s, \mathcal{H}) \in \text{P(WTrace)}$ that produces when run with a transactional system $\mathcal{H}$ from an initial state $s$. We define this set in two stages. First, we define the set $[P](s) \in \text{P(WTrace)}$ that a program produces when run from $s$ with the behaviors of the transactional system unrestricted. We then compute the set of traces produced by $P$ when run with a given transactional system $\mathcal{H}$ by selecting those traces that interact with the transactional system in a way consistent with $\mathcal{H}$:

$$[P](s, \mathcal{H}) = \{ \tau | \tau \in [P](s) \wedge \text{history}(\tau) \in \mathcal{H} \}.$$  

The set $[P](s)$ is itself computed in two stages. First, we compute a trace set $A(s) \in \text{P(WTrace)}$ that resolves all issues regarding sequential control flow and interleaving. Intuitively, if one thinks of each sequential command $C_i$ in $P$ as a control-flow graph, then $A(s)$ contains all possible interleavings of paths in the control-flow graph of all the commands $C_i$ starting from their source nodes. The set $A(s)$ is a superset of all the traces that can actually be executed: e.g., if a thread executes the command

$$x := 1; \text{if } (x = 1) \text{ then } y := 2 \text{ else } y := 2$$

where $x$ is a local variable, then $A(s)$ will contain a trace where $y := 2$ is executed instead of $y := 1$. To filter out such nonsensical traces, we evaluate every trace to determine whether its control flow is consistent with the expected behavior of its actions. This is formalized by a function eval : $\text{State} \times \text{WTrace} \to \text{P(\text{State})}$ that, given an initial state and a trace, produces the set of states resulting from executing the actions in the trace, or an empty set if the trace is infeasible. Then we let

$$A(s) = \{ \tau | \tau \in A(s) \wedge \text{eval}(s, \tau) \neq \emptyset \}.$$  

The rest of this section defines the trace set $A(P)$ and the evaluation function formally. The definitions follow the intuitive semantics of our programming language and can be skipped on first reading (they are only used in the proofs of Lemmas 18 and 20 in Section 6 and in the detailed proof of Theorem 24 in Appendix B).

**Trace set $A(P)$**

The function $A(\cdot)$ in Figure 2 maps commands and programs to the set of their possible traces. $A(C) t$ gives the set of traces produced by a command $C$ when it is executed by thread $t$. To define $A(P)$, we first compute the set of all the interleavings of traces produced by the threads constituting $P$. Formally, $\tau \in \text{interleave}(\tau_1, \ldots, \tau_m)$ if and only if every action in $\tau$ is performed by some thread $t \in \{1, \ldots, m\}$, and $\tau_{1 |} = \tau_{1 t}$ for every thread $t \in \{1, \ldots, m\}$. We then let $A(P)$ be the set of all prefixes of the resulting traces, as denoted by the prefix operator. We take prefix

\[2\text{Here we define the set } [P](s) \text{ in a denotational style; a definition using structural operational semantics would also be appropriate.}\]
closure here to account for incomplete program computations as well as those in which the scheduler preempts a thread forever. 

$A(c) \tau = \{(t, c)\}$ returns a singleton set with the action corresponding to the primitive command $c$ (recall that primitive commands execute atomically). $A(C_1; C_2) \tau$ concatenates all possible traces corresponding to $C_1$ with those corresponding to $C_2$. The set of traces for a conditional considers cases where either branch is taken. We record the decision using an if-then-else operator that defines how the program state is transformed by executing $c$, that is, $c$ is allowed to access unmodified. For example, if $c$ is a non-deterministic. For example, an assignment command $x := \text{atom}ic(C)$ yields the set of their valuations that can be obtained by executing $c$ from a state with variable values $q$. Note that this allows $c$ to be non-deterministic. For example, an assignment command $x := g$ has the following semantics:

$$[x := g](q) = q[x \mapsto q(g)],$$

where $q[x \mapsto q(g)]$ is the function that has the same value as $q$ everywhere, except for $x$, where it has the value $q(g)$. We define the semantics of assume commands following the informal explanation given at the beginning of this section: for example,

$$[\text{assume}(x = n)](q) = \begin{cases} \{q\}, & \text{if } q(x) = n; \\ \emptyset, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

(4)

Thus, when the condition in assume does not hold of $q$, the command stops the computation by not producing any output states. We lift functions $[c]$ to full states by keeping the variables that $c$ is not allowed to access unmodified. For example, if $c \in \mathcal{P} comm$, then for all $u \in \mathcal{V}$ we let

$$[c](u) = \begin{cases} [c](s)|_{\mathcal{V}}(u), & \text{if } u \in \mathcal{V}; \\ s(u), & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

where $s|_{\mathcal{V}}$ is the restriction of $s$ to variables in $\mathcal{V}$.

**Trace evaluation**

Using the semantics of primitive commands, we first define the evaluation of a single action on a given state:

$$\text{eval} : \text{State} \times \text{Action} \rightarrow \mathcal{P}(\text{State})$$

$$\text{eval}(s, (t, c)) = [c](s);$$

$$\text{eval}(s, \varphi) = \{s\} \text{ for all other actions } \varphi.$$

Note that this does not change the state $s$ as a result of interface actions, since their return values are assigned to local variables by separate actions introduced when generating $A(P)$. We then lift eval to traces as follows:

$$\text{eval} : \text{State} \times \mathcal{W} \text{Trace} \rightarrow \mathcal{P}(\text{State})$$

$$\text{eval}(s, e) = \{s\};$$

$$\text{eval}(s, \tau \varphi) = \{s'' \mid \exists s', s'' \in \text{eval}(s, \tau) \land s'' \in \text{eval}(s', \varphi)\}.$$
5. OBSERVATIONAL REFINEMENT

Informally, a concrete transactional system $\mathcal{H}_C$ observationally refines an abstract transactional system $\mathcal{H}_A$, if replacing $\mathcal{H}_C$ by $\mathcal{H}_A$ in a program leaves all its observable behaviors reproducible. The formal definition depends on which aspects of program behavior we consider observable. One possibility is to allow the user to observe the values of all variables during the program execution. The corresponding notion of observational refinement is stated as follows.

**Definition 14.** A transactional system $\mathcal{H}_C$ observationally refines a transactional system $\mathcal{H}_A$ with respect to states, denoted by $\mathcal{H}_C \preceq_{\text{state}} \mathcal{H}_A$, if

$$\forall P, \forall s, \forall \tau \in [P](s, \mathcal{H}_C), \exists \tau' \in [P](s, \mathcal{H}_A), \text{ such that } \operatorname{eval}(s, \tau) = \operatorname{eval}(s, \tau').$$

Note that, since the semantics of a program $P$ includes traces corresponding to its incomplete computations (see the use of prefix-closure in Figure 2), we allow observing intermediate program states as well as final ones. Definition 14 implies that, if a program using the abstract transactional system $\mathcal{H}_A$ satisfies a correctness property stated in terms of such states, then it will still satisfy the property if it uses the concrete transactional system $\mathcal{H}_C$ instead.

In some situations, we may also be interested in observing separate program actions and the order between them, rather than the set of all reachable program states. In particular, this is desirable for checking the validity of linear-time temporal properties over program traces. We formulate the corresponding notion of observational refinement as follows.

**Definition 15.** Well-formed traces $\tau$ and $\tau'$ are observationally equivalent, written $\tau \sim \tau'$, if

$$\forall t \in \text{ThreadID. } \tau_i = \tau'_i \wedge (\text{nontrans}(\tau) = \text{nontrans}(\tau')).$$

A transactional system $\mathcal{H}_C$ observationally refines a transactional system $\mathcal{H}_A$ with respect to traces, denoted by $\mathcal{H}_C \preceq_{\text{trace}} \mathcal{H}_A$, if

$$\forall P, \forall s, \forall \tau \in [P](s, \mathcal{H}_C), \exists \tau' \in [P](s, \mathcal{H}_A), \tau \sim \tau'.$$

Traces related by $\sim$ are thus considered indistinguishable to the user, and, hence, the user can observe which equivalence class over $\sim$ the trace executed by the program belongs to.

We are now in a position to state our main result.

**Theorem 16.**

$$\mathcal{H}_C \subseteq \mathcal{H}_A \implies \mathcal{H}_C \preceq_{\text{trace}} \mathcal{H}_A \implies \mathcal{H}_C \preceq_{\text{state}} \mathcal{H}_A \implies \mathcal{H}_C|_{\text{complete}} \subseteq \mathcal{H}_A|_{\text{complete}}.$$

Thus, for our programming language, the opacity relation implies observational refinement with respect to traces or states, and either of these implies that the complete subsets of the transactional systems are in the opacity relation.

The first and the second implications from Theorem 16 are proved in Section 6, and the third one, in Section 7.

6. SUFFICIENCY OF THE OPACITY RELATION

Our goal in this section is to show that the opacity relation implies observational refinement with respect to traces. The next lemma (proved below) is key in establishing this: it shows that a trace $\tau_H$ with a history $H$ can be transformed into an equivalent trace $\tau_S$ with a history $S$ that is in the opacity relation with $H$.

**Lemma 17 (Rearrangement).** For any well-formed histories $H$ and $S$:

$$H \subseteq S \implies (\exists \text{well-formed } \tau_H. \text{ history}(\tau_H) = H \implies \exists \text{well-formed } \tau_S. \text{ history}(\tau_S) = S \land \tau_H \sim \tau_S).$$

We also rely on the following lemma, which straightforwardly implies that observational refinement with respect to traces implies that with respect to states. The proof of the lemma (given below) relies on the restrictions on accesses to variables in Definition 12.

**Lemma 18.** For all well-formed traces $\tau_H$ and $\tau_S$,

$$\tau_H \sim \tau_S \land \text{eval}(s, \tau_H) \neq \emptyset \implies \forall s. \text{eval}(s, \tau_H) = \text{eval}(s, \tau_S).$$

**Corollary 19.** $\mathcal{H}_C \preceq_{\text{trace}} \mathcal{H}_A \implies \mathcal{H}_C \preceq_{\text{state}} \mathcal{H}_A$.

Lemma 18 also allows us to conclude that the trace $\tau_S$ resulting from the transformation in Lemma 17 can be produced by a program $P$ if so can the original trace $\tau_H$.

**Lemma 20.** If $\tau_H \in [P](s)$ and $\tau_H \sim \tau_S$, then $\tau_S \in [P](s)$.

**Proof.** Let $P = C_1 \parallel \ldots \parallel C_m$. Consider $s, \tau_H$ and $\tau_S$ such that $\tau_H \in [P](s)$ and $\tau_H \sim \tau_S$. Then for some $\tau'$ we have $\tau_H \sim \tau'$ $\in A(P)$ and $\text{eval}(s, \tau_H) \neq \emptyset$. This implies $\{\tau' \tau\}|t_i \in (C_i|t)$ for any thread $t_i$. Since $\tau_H \sim \tau_S$, we have that, $s|_{t_i} = \tau_H|_{t_i}$. Then $\{\tau' \tau\}|t_i \in (C_i|t)$ and by the definition of $A(P)$ in Figure 2 we get $\tau_S \in [P](s)$. Furthermore, by Lemma 18, $\text{eval}(s, \tau_S) \neq \emptyset$, so that $\tau_S \in [P](s)$.

**Theorem 21.** $\mathcal{H}_C \subseteq \mathcal{H}_A \implies \mathcal{H}_C \preceq_{\text{trace}} \mathcal{H}_A$.

**Proof.** Assume $\mathcal{H}_C \subseteq \mathcal{H}_A$ and consider a program $P$, a state $s$ and a trace $\tau_H \in [P](s, \mathcal{H}_C)$. Let $\text{history}(\tau_H) = H$; then $\tau_H \in [P](s)$ and $H \in \mathcal{H}_C$. Since $\mathcal{H}_C \subseteq \mathcal{H}_A$, there exists a history $S \in \mathcal{H}_A$ such that $H \subseteq S$. Since $H$ and $S$ are well-formed, Lemma 17 implies that there is a well-formed trace $\tau_S$ such that $\tau_H \sim \tau_S$ and $\text{history}(\tau_S) = S$. Then by Lemma 20 we have $\tau_S \in [P](s)$, since $\tau_S \in [P](s, \mathcal{H}_A)$. Hence, $\mathcal{H}_C \preceq_{\text{trace}} \mathcal{H}_A$.

**Proof of Lemma 17 (Rearrangement)**

Consider $H$, $S$ and $\tau_H$ such that $H \subseteq S$ and $\text{history}(\tau_H) = H$. Note that $|H| = |S|$. To obtain the desired trace $\tau_S$, we inductively construct a sequence of well-formed traces $\tau^i$, $i = 0..|S|$ with well-formed histories $H^i = \text{history}(\tau^i)$ such that

$$H^i\|_{i+1} = S|_{i+1}; \quad H^i\|_{i} \subseteq S; \quad \tau_H \sim \tau^i.$$

(5)

We then let $\tau_S = \tau^{|S|}$, so that $\tau_H \sim \tau^{|S|}$, and

$$\text{history}(\tau^{|S|}) = H^{|S|} = H^{|S|}\|_{|S|} = S|_{|S|} = S,$$

as required. Note that the condition $H^i \subseteq S$ in (5) is not used to establish the required properties of $\tau_S$; we add it so that the induction goes through.

We start the construction of the sequence of traces $\tau^i$ with $\tau^0 = \tau_H$, so that $H^0 = H$ and all the requirements in (5) hold trivially.

Assume a trace $\tau^i$ satisfying (5) was constructed; we get $\tau^{i+1}$ from $\tau^i$ by applying the following lemma. Since $\sim$ is transitive, the conclusion of the lemma implies the desired properties of $\tau^{i+1}$.
Lemma 22. Assume well-formed histories $H'$ and $S$ and a well-formed trace $\tau'$ such that

\[ \text{history}(\tau') = H'; \quad H'|_i = S|_i; \quad H' \subseteq S. \]

Then there exist some well-formed history $H'^{i+1}$ and a well-formed trace $\tau'^{i+1}$ such that

\[ \text{history}(\tau'^{i+1}) = H'^{i+1}; \quad H'^{i+1}|_{i+1} = S|_{i+1}; \quad H'^{i+1} \subseteq S; \quad \tau'^i \sim \tau'^{i+1}. \]

Proof. Let $S = S_1 \psi S_2$, where $|S_1| = i$. By assumption, $\text{history}(\tau')|_i = H'|_i = S|_i = S$. Thus, for some traces $\tau_1$ and $\tau_2$, we have $\tau' = \tau_1 \tau_2$, where $\tau_1$ is the minimal prefix of $\tau'$ such that $\text{history}(\tau_1) = S_1$. We also have $H' \subseteq S$, and, hence, there exists a bijection $\theta : \{1, \ldots, |H'|\} \to \{1, \ldots, |S|\}$ satisfying the conditions of Definition 4. Since $\theta$ preserves the per-thread order of actions and $\text{history}(\tau_1) = S_1$, we can assume that $\theta$ maps actions in $\text{history}(\tau_1)$ to the corresponding actions in $S_1$. Hence, for some traces $\tau_3$ and $\tau_4$, we have

\[ \text{history}(\psi) = \psi, \quad \tau_2 = \tau_3 \psi \tau_4, \quad \tau' = \tau_1 \tau_2 = \tau_1 \tau_3 \psi \tau_4. \]

and $\theta$ maps the $\psi$ in $\text{history}(\tau')$ to $\psi$ in $S$, i.e., $\theta(\text{history}(\tau_1)) + 1 = |S_1| + 1$; see Figure 3(a).

Let $\psi = (t, \text{txbegin})$. We note that, since $\theta$ preserves the per-thread order of actions and $\text{history}(\tau_1) = S_1$, we have $\text{history}(\tau_1) = \varepsilon$. We proceed by case analysis on the kind of $\psi$.

Case I: $\psi \neq (t, \text{txbegin})$. Let $\tau'^{i+1} = \tau_1(\tau_3i) (\psi (\tau_3|_{i-1}) \tau_4)^{\varepsilon}$ and $H'^{i+1} = \text{history}(\tau'^{i+1})$; see Figure 3(b). Intuitively, $\tau'^{i+1}$ is obtained from $\tau^i = \tau_1 \tau_3 \psi \tau_4$ by moving all the actions in $\tau_1$ performed by thread $t$, together with $\psi$, to the position right after $\tau_1$.

Since $\text{history}(\tau_3|_i) = \varepsilon$, history($\tau_1$) = $S_1$ and $|S_1| = i$, we get:

\[ H'^{i+1}|_{i+1} = (\text{history}(\tau_1 \tau_3 \psi \tau_4))|_{i+1} = S_1 \psi = S|_{i+1}, \]

as required. We also have:

\[ \tau'^{i+1}|_t = (\tau_1(\tau_3|_i) \psi (\tau_3|_{i-1}) \tau_4)|_t = (\tau_1|_t) (\tau_3|_i) \psi (\tau_4|_t) = (\tau_1 \tau_3 \psi \tau_4)|_t = \tau'|_t; \]

\[ \tau'^{i+1}|_{-t} = (\tau_1(\tau_3|_i) \psi (\tau_3|_{i-1}) \tau_4)|_{-t} = (\tau_1|_{-t}) (\tau_3|_i) (\tau_4|_{-t}) = (\tau_1 \tau_3 \psi \tau_4)|_{-t} = \tau'|_{-t}. \]

Hence, for any thread $t'$, we have $\tau'|_{t'} = \tau'^{i+1}|_{t'}$ and $H'^{i+1}|_{t'} = H'|_{t'} = S|_{t'}$. Any real-time order between two actions that exists in $H'^{i+1}$, but not in $H'$, also exists between the actions in $S$ corresponding to them according to $\theta$. Thus, $H'^{i+1} \subseteq S$.

Since $\psi \neq (t, \text{txbegin})$ and $\text{history}(\tau_3|_i) = \varepsilon$, all the actions performed by $t$ in the subtrace $\tau_3$ of $\tau'$ are transactional. Hence,

\[ \text{nontrans}(\tau'^{i+1}) = \text{nontrans}(\tau_1(\tau_3|_i) \psi (\tau_3|_{i-1}) \tau_4) = \text{nontrans}(\tau_1 \tau_3 \psi \tau_4) = \text{nontrans}(\tau') \]

and therefore $\tau'^i \sim \tau'^{i+1}$.

Case II: $\psi = (t, \text{txbegin})$. Note that the subtrace $\tau_3$ of $\tau'$ does not contain any committed or aborted actions $\psi'$. Indeed, assume otherwise. Since $\text{history}(\tau_1) = S_1$, the action in $S$ corresponding to $\psi'$ according to $\theta$ would be in $S_2$. This would mean that the real-time order between $\psi'$ and $\psi$ in $H'$ is not preserved in $S$, contradicting our assumption that $H' \subseteq S$. Thus, for any thread $t' \neq t$, $\tau_3|_{t'}$ consists of some number of non-transactional actions followed by some number of transactional ones, and $\tau_3|_{t'}$ does not contain any transactional actions. Motivated by these observations, we let

\[ \tau'^{i+1} = \tau_1 \text{nontrans}(\tau_3) \psi \text{trans}(\tau_3) \tau_4 \]

and $H'^{i+1} = \text{history}(\tau'^{i+1})$; see Figure 3(c). Intuitively, $\tau'^{i+1}$ is obtained from $\tau^i = \tau_1 \tau_3 \psi \tau_4$ by moving all transactional actions in $\tau_3$ to the position right before $\tau_4$.

Since $\text{history}($nontrans$(\tau_3)) = \varepsilon$, history($\tau_1$) = $S_1$ and $|S_1| = i$, we get:

\[ H'^{i+1}|_{i+1} = (\text{history}(\tau_1 \text{nontrans}(\tau_3) \psi \text{trans}(\tau_3) \tau_4))|_{i+1} = S_1 \psi = S|_{i+1}, \]

as required.

Since for every thread $t' \neq t$, $\tau_3|_{t'}$ consists of non-transactional actions followed by transactional ones,

\[ (\text{nontrans}(\tau_3) \psi \text{trans}(\tau_3))|_{t'} = (\tau_3 \psi)|_{t'}. \]

Since $\tau_3|_t$ does not contain any transactional actions, $\tau_3 = \text{nontrans}(\tau_3)$ and, hence,

\[ (\text{nontrans}(\tau_3) \psi \text{trans}(\tau_3))|_{t} = (\tau_3 \psi)|_{t}. \]

Thus, for any $t'$ we have

\[ \tau'^{i+1}|_{t'} = (\tau_1 \text{nontrans}(\tau_3) \psi \text{trans}(\tau_3) \tau_4)|_{t'} = (\tau_1 \tau_3 \psi \tau_4)|_{t'} = \tau'^{i+1}|_{t'} \]

1Here we are applying nontrans to a part $\tau_3$ of a well-formed trace $\tau'$. Note that, in the absence of txbegin actions in $\tau_3$, the definition of nontrans given in Section 4 considers all actions in $\tau_3$ non-transactional.
The restrictions on accesses to variables by commands from nontrans-actions by thread $t$.

Let $s, \tau_1$ and $\tau_2$ be actions by different threads $t$.

First note that $\tau_1^t \neq \tau_2^t$ for any thread $t$ since $\tau_2^t$ does not contain any actions by thread $t$. Next, consider the case when the action $\varphi$ in $\tau_2^t$ is non-transactional. Since $\tau_1^t \neq \tau_2^t$, we have $\varphi \neq \varphi'$. Assume that some action $\varphi' = (t', \zeta)$ in the subtrace $\tau_2'$ of $\tau_2$ is non-transactional as well, where $t' \neq t$. Let $\varphi'$ be the $j$-th action by thread $t'$ in $\tau_2'$.

Then for $i = |\tau_2|$, we get $\tau_i^t = \tau_2^t$, which implies the required.

To construct the sequence of traces $\tau^t$, we let $\tau_i^t = \tau_2^t$, so that all the requirements in (6) (hold) trivially. Assume now that a trace $\tau^t$ satisfying (6) has been constructed. Let $\tau_2^t = \tau_1^t \varphi \tau_2''$, where $\tau_2''$ does not contain any actions by thread $t$. Let

\[
\tau_i^t = \tau_1^t \varphi \tau_2''
\]

where $\tau_2''$ does not contain any actions by thread $t$. Let

\[
\tau_i^t = \tau_1^t \varphi \tau_2''
\]

then $\tau_i^t |_{t+1} = \tau_2''$. We now show that $\tau_i^t \sim \tau_i^t$ and eval($s, \tau_i^t$) = eval($s, \tau_i^t$) which implies the required.

First note that $\tau_i^t |_{t+1} = \tau_2''$. For any thread $t'$ since $\tau_2'$ does not contain any actions by thread $t$. Next, consider the case when the action $\varphi$ in $\tau_2'$ is non-transactional. Since $\tau_2'$ is non-transactional, we get $\varphi \neq \varphi'$. Assume that some action $\varphi' = (t', \zeta)$ in the subtrace $\tau_2'$ of $\tau_2$ is non-transactional as well, where $t' \neq t$. Let $\varphi'$ be the $j$-th action by thread $t'$ in $\tau_2'$.

Then for $i = |\tau_2|$, we get $\tau_i^t = \tau_2^t$, which implies the required.

To construct the sequence of traces $\tau^t$, we let $\tau_i^t = \tau_2^t$, so that all the requirements in (6) (hold) trivially. Assume now that a trace $\tau^t$ satisfying (6) has been constructed. Let $\tau_2^t = \tau_1^t \varphi \tau_2''$, where $\tau_2''$ does not contain any actions by thread $t$. Let

\[
\tau_i^t = \tau_1^t \varphi \tau_2''
\]

where $\tau_2''$ does not contain any actions by thread $t$. Let

\[
\tau_i^t = \tau_1^t \varphi \tau_2''
\]
8. RELATED WORK AND DISCUSSION

Previous work has studied transactional memory consistency by:

- investigating the semantics of different programming languages with atomic blocks and the feasibility of their efficient implementation [1, 10, 18]; or
- defining consistency conditions for TM [2, 4, 7, 8, 17] and proving that particular TM implementations validate them [3, 8].

Thus, previous work has tended to address the issue from the perspective of either programming languages or TM implementations and has not tried to relate these two levels in a formal manner. An exception is the work by Harris et al. [11], which proved that a specific TM implementation, Bartok-STM, validates a particular semantics of atomic blocks in a programming language.

This paper tries to fill in the gap in existing studies by relating the semantics of a programming language with atomic blocks to that of a TM system implementing them. Our work is complementary to previous proofs that certain TM systems satisfy opacity [3], as it lifts such results to the language level. Our work is also more general than that of Harris et al. [11], since our results allow establishing observational refinement for any TM implementation satisfying opacity. However, some of the above-mentioned papers [1, 18] investigated advanced language interfaces that we do not consider, such as nested transactions and access to shared data both inside and outside transactions.

This paper employs a well-known technique from the theory of programming languages, observational refinement [12, 13], to explore the most appropriate way to specify TM consistency. Observational refinement has previously been used to characterize correctness criteria for libraries of concurrent data structures. Thus, Filipovic et al. [5] proved that, in this setting sequential consistency [16] is necessary and sufficient for observational refinement, and so is linearizability [14] when client programs can interact via shared global variables. Gotsman and Yang [6] adjusted linearizability to account for infinite computations and showed its sufficiency for observational refinement in the case when the client can observe the validity of liveness properties. Our work takes this approach from the simpler setting of concurrent libraries to the more elaborate setup of transactional memory. Since we allow the abstract transactional system to have incomplete transactions, we hope that in the future we can generalize our consistency condition to specify liveness properties, along the lines of [6].

Opacity requires the TM behavior observed by aborted transactions to be as consistent as that observed by committed ones. Other proposed consistency conditions tried to relax this requirement. For example, virtual world consistency (VWC) [15] requires the behavior observed by an individual aborted transaction to be consistent only with the committed transactions from which it reads and those previously committed by the same thread. Our necessity result implies that VWC does not imply observational refinement for our programming language. However, this does not rule out the viability of VWC and related notions as a consistency condition for TM. VWC may well imply observational refinement for a programming language in which aborted transactions do not affect the rest of the computation (in particular, their modifications to local variables are rolled back) and a weaker notion of observations. This paper establishes an approach for evaluating and comparing TM consistency conditions, and in future work, we hope to apply it to VWC and other conditions, such as TMS [4, 17] and DU-opacity [2]. We also intend to investigate the behavior of incomplete histories with respect to observational refinement, whose treatment by the opacity relation causes our result to fall short of the strict equivalence between the relation and the observational refinement.

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9. REFERENCES

APPENDIX

A. PROOF OF PROPOSITION 10

Only if. Assume that $H_C$ is an opaque transactional system and let $H \in \mathcal{H}_C$. By the definition of opacity, there is a complete history $H_e \in \text{scomp}(H)$ and a complete, non-interleaved and legal history $S_e$ such that $H_e \subseteq S_e$.

Let $S$ be the history produced by removing all the actions in $S_e$ added while completing $H$ to $H_e$. It is easy to see that $S$ is non-interleaved and that $H_1 = S_1$ for every thread $t$. Hence, the last action of every thread $t$ in $H$ is the same as its last action in $S$. Furthermore, the actions used to suffix-complete $H$ to $H_e$ can be used to show that $S_e$ is a non-interleaved completion of $S$. Hence, $S_e \in \text{nicomp}(S)$.

Since $S_e$ is legal, we have $S \in \mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}}$. Furthermore, the real-time order between actions in $H_e$ is preserved in $S_e$, and hence, the real-time order in $H$ is preserved in $S$, so that $H \subseteq S$. The history $H \in \mathcal{H}_C$ was chosen arbitrarily. Thus, from $S \in \mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}}$ and $H \subseteq S$ it follows that $H_C \subseteq \mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}}$.

If. Assume $H_C \subseteq \mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}}$ and let $H \in \mathcal{H}_C$. By the definition of the opacity relation, there exists a history $S \in \mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}}$ such that $H \subseteq S$. Since $S \in \mathcal{H}_{\text{atomic}}$, it is non-interleaved and there exists a complete, non-interleaved and legal history $C$, $S_e \in \text{nicomp}(S)$.

Since $H \subseteq S$, for every thread $t$ we have $H_1 = S_1$, and, hence, the last action of every thread $t$ in $H$ is the same as its last action in $S$. Therefore, the same actions used to create $S_e$ as a non-interleaved completion of $S$ can be used to suffix-complete $H$ to a history $H_C \in \text{scomp}(H)$.

It is easy to see that $H_1 = S_1$ for every thread $t$. Note that no $\text{txbegin}$ actions are added to $H$ to produce $H_e$ and aborted or committed actions are added to the end of the history. Hence, no new real-time orders are introduced when suffix-completing $H$ to $H_e$. Since the real-time order in $H$ is preserved in $S$ and the real-time order in $S$ is preserved in $S_e$, we get that the real-time order in $H_e$ is preserved in $S_e$. Hence, $H_e \subseteq S_e$. The history $H \in \mathcal{H}_C$ was chosen arbitrarily. Thus, from $H_1 \in \text{scomp}(H)$ and $H_e \subseteq S_e$ it follows that $H_C$ is opaque. □

B. PROOF OF THEOREM 24

Consider a complete history $H \in \mathcal{H}_C^{\text{complete}}$. We construct a program $P_H$ that records the interaction of every thread $t$ with the transactional system and monitors whether the real-time order includes that in $H$.

Let us chose an integer value $\nu \neq 1$ which does not appear in $H$. We use the following shorthands:

- We denote by $m_t$ the number of threads that have an action in $H$. For simplicity, we assume that the identifiers of these threads are $\{1, \ldots, m\}$.
- We denote by $k'$ the number of transactions started by thread $t$ in $H$, i.e., the number of $(t, \text{txbegin})$ actions in $H$.
- We partition $H'_1$ into $k'$ subsequences: $H'_1 = H'_1 \ldots H'_k$, where $H'_1$ is comprised of the actions in the $i$-th transaction of $t$. Specifically, $H'_1(1) = (t, \text{txbegin})$.
- We let $c'_t$ be the outcome of the $i$-th transaction of thread $t$, i.e., $c'_t$ is committed or $c'_t$ is aborted. Specifically, $H'_1([H'_1]) = (t, c'_t)$. $c'_t$ is well defined as $H$ is complete.
- We denote by $q'_i$ the number of call actions of thread $t$ in its $i$-th transaction, i.e., in $H'_1$.
- We let $(t, \text{call} \langle o'_{i,j}, f'_{i,j}, (n'_i) \rangle)$ be the $j$-th call action of thread $t$ in its $i$-th transaction.
- We let $(t, \text{return} \langle r'_i, j, o'_{j}, f'_{j}, (n'_j) \rangle)$ be the $j$-th ret action of thread $t$ in its $i$-th transaction. $r'_i$ is well defined as $H$ is complete.
- We denote by $\text{lasttx}(t, i, t')$ the number of transactions of thread $t'$ in $H$ that either committed or aborted before the $i$-th transaction of thread $t$ started, i.e., the number of $(t', \text{committed})$ and $(t', \text{aborted})$ actions preceding the $i$-th transaction of thread $t$.

For every thread $t = 1..m$ we construct a straight-line command

$$C'_H = CP'_1 | CP'_2 | \ldots | CP'_{k'}; e' := 1.$$  

$CP'_i$ is a sequence of commands constructed according to the $i$-th transaction of $H$ as follows:

$$CP'_i = \begin{cases} 
 z_{i,1}' := g_{t,1}(t, i, 1); & \ldots; \\
 z_{i,m}' := g_{t,1}(t, i, m); & \ldots; \\
 w'_i := \text{atomic} \{ y'_{i,1} := o'_{i,1}, f'_{i,1}(n'_i); \\
 & \ldots; \\
 y'_{1,0} := o'_{i,0}, f'_{i,0}(n'_i) \}; 
\end{cases}$$

Here the $g$ variables are global and all others are local. The $g$ and $z$ variables are used to monitor the real-time order. The variable $z_{i,0}'$ is written only by thread $t$ and is used to signal that the $i$-th transaction of thread $t$ ended: $g_{t,0}'$ is set to $1$ only after $t$'s $i$-th transaction either committed or aborted. The variable $z_{i,m}'$ is local to thread $t$. It is used to record if the last $\text{txtx}(t, i, t')$-th transaction of thread $t'$ signaled that it had ended before the $i$-th transaction of thread $t$ started. As $\text{lasttx}(t, i, t')$ might be $0$, we add a dummy variable $g_{0}'$ for every thread $t$. The variable $w'_i$ records whether the $i$-th transaction of thread $t$ committed or aborted. The variables $y'_{i,0}$ record the return value of the $j$-th object method invocation in the $i$-th transaction of thread $t$. Variable $e'$ is local to thread $t$ and is set to $1$ right before $t$ reaches its final state.

Thus, the command $C'_H$ begins by reading the signals of the last transaction of every thread that, according to $H$, should end before the $i$-th transaction of thread $t$ starts. It then performs an atomic block in which it invokes the sequence of object method invocations induced by $H'_1$. After the atomic block ends, $CP'_i$ signals the end of the transaction. The desired program $P_H$ is the parallel composition of the straight-line commands of the different threads:

$$P_H = C'_H \parallel \ldots \parallel C'_m.$$

We now construct a particular trace $\tau$ of $P_H$. We build $\tau$ by first constructing a trace $\tau'$ for every sequential command $C'_H$ and then interleaving the traces $\tau'_1, \ldots, \tau'_m$ in a particular way.

Consider the set of traces $A(C'_H)|t$ of the sequential command $C'_H$, and let $\tau' \in A(C'_H)|t$ be the (only) trace such that $H_1|t = \text{history}(\tau'_1)$.

The trace $\tau'$ exists, since by construction of $C'_H$ and the definition of the trace set of a sequential command (Figure 2), there is a trace in $A(C'_H)|t$ for every possible parameter and return value of object method invocations and atomic blocks in $C'_H$; in particular, $A(C'_H)|t$ contains a trace where the parameters and return values of object method invocations and the return values of transactions are as in $H_1|t$.

We now partition every $\tau'$ into $|H_1|t| + 1$ subsequences that we later interleave to create $\tau$:

$$\tau = \tau'_1 \ldots \tau'_i | H_1|t| + 1.$$  

Formally, for every $i = 1..|H_1|t|$ there is exactly one interface action $\varphi_i'$ in $\tau'_i$ and

$$\tau'_i = \begin{cases} \varphi_i', & \text{if } \varphi_i' \notin \{(t, \text{committed}),(t, \text{aborted})\}; \\
- \varphi_i' & \text{otherwise.} 
\end{cases}$$
Note that this defines $\tau^t_i$, $i = 1..|H|$, uniquely; then $\tau^{|H|+1}_i$ is also defined uniquely as containing the rest of the actions in the trace. The fact that each subsequence $\tau^t_i$, except possibly the last one, includes exactly one interface action allows us in the following to interleave the subsequences in the order induced by $H$. The above definition also ensures that, if $\tau^t_i$ ends with $\varphi_{t,i} = (t, txbegin)$, then it contains all the actions that are used to read the global signaling variables that precede $\varphi_{t,i}$ in $\tau^t$. Furthermore, if $\tau^t_i$ contains a committed or aborted action, then it ends with the interface action that signals the end of the corresponding transaction.

The desired trace is constructed by interleaving the subsequences of the traces $\tau^1, \ldots, \tau^m$ according to the order induced by $H$, and appending the suffixes of every trace in which the $e^t$ variables are set to 1. Formally,

$$\tau = \tau^1_{j_1} \cdots \tau^{|H|}_{j_{|H|}} \tau^{|H|+1}_{j_{|H|+1}} \cdots \tau^m_{j_{|H|+1}}$$

where $H(i) = (t_{i, \_\_})$ and $j_i = |H|_{i\_\_}$. Then $\text{history}(\tau) = H$.

Since $\tau^t \in A(C^t_H)\forall t$, we have $\tau \in A(P_H)$. Let $s$ be the state where all the local variables are set to $u$ and for all $t$, $g^t_i = 0$ for $i \neq 0$ and $g^t_0 = 1$. By the construction of $\tau$ we have $\text{eval}(s, \tau) = \{s^t\}$ for some state $s^t$. Then, since $\text{history}(\tau) = H \in H_C$, we have $\tau \in [P_H]_H(s, H_C)$.

It is easy to check that $s^t(x^t_{i,j}) = n^t_{i,j}$, $s^t(y^t_{i,j}) = r^t_{i,j}$ and $s^t(w^t_{i}) = c^t$. By the construction of $\tau$, when the evaluation of $\tau$ from $s$ reaches the $i$-th transaction of thread $t$, all the transactions that preceded that transaction in $H$ have signaled that they ended. Furthermore, the non-interface actions of thread $t$ that read these signals (i.e., the assignments to variables $z^t_{i,t^'}$) are evaluated right before the $i$-th ($t, txbegin$) action; thus, we have $s^t(z^t_{i,t^'}) = 1$. Finally, every thread in $\tau$ assigned 1 to its $e^t$ variable. Thus we have that $s^t(e^t) = 1$ for every $t = 1..m$.

Since $\tau \in [P_H]_H(s, H_C)$ and $H_C \subseteq H_A$, by Definition 14 there exists a trace $\tau^t \in [P_H]_H(s, H_A)$ such that $\text{eval}(s, \tau^t) = \{s^t\}$. Then $\tau^t \in A(P_H)$ and $S = \text{history}(\tau^t) \in H_A$. Recall that the values of $x^t_{i,j}, y^t_{i,j}$ and $w^t_{i,j}$ for every $t = 1..m, i = 1..k^t$ and $j = 1..q^t_i$ record the interaction of threads with the transactional system. Since $s^t(e^t) = 1$ for every $t = 1..m$, the code of each thread executes in $\tau'$ until completion. As a result, $S$ is complete, which implies that $H|t_i = S|t_i$ for any $t$.

We also have $s^t(z^t_{i,t^'}) = 1$ for $t = 1..m, t^' = 1..m$. Hence, in $S$, the lasttx($t, i, t^'$)-th transaction of thread $t^'$ (i.e., the last transaction of $t^'$ that terminated before the $i$-th transaction of thread $t$ begins in $H$) also terminated before the $i$-th transaction of thread $t$. This suffices to show that $S$ respects the real-time order in $H$. As $H \in H_C|\text{complete}$ was chosen arbitrarily, we get that $H_C|\text{complete} \subseteq H_A|\text{complete}$. □