



The Logic of Verification

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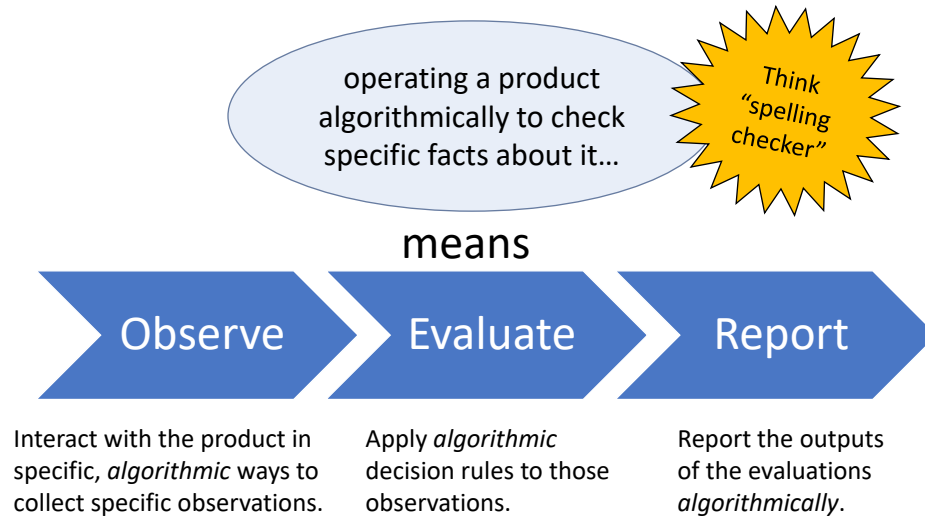
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The Big Ideas

- There is a logical basis to verification. The logic of verification is often misunderstood or ignored.
- Verification is a kind of tool. As with any useful and powerful tool, we must understand its capabilities and its limits to use it effectively.
- *Excellent* verification is *part* of a testing process.
- Testing includes not only questioning of the product, but also questioning of the ways in which we check it and test it.

Call this “Checking”, not Testing



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A check can be performed...



by a machine
that *can't* think
(but that is quick and precise)



by a human
who has been told *not* to think
(and who is slow and variable)

Notice that “quick” and “slow” refer only to the speed of observable behaviours and algorithmic evaluations.
The machine is *infinitely* slow at recognizing unanticipated trouble.

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Testing Is *More Than* Checking

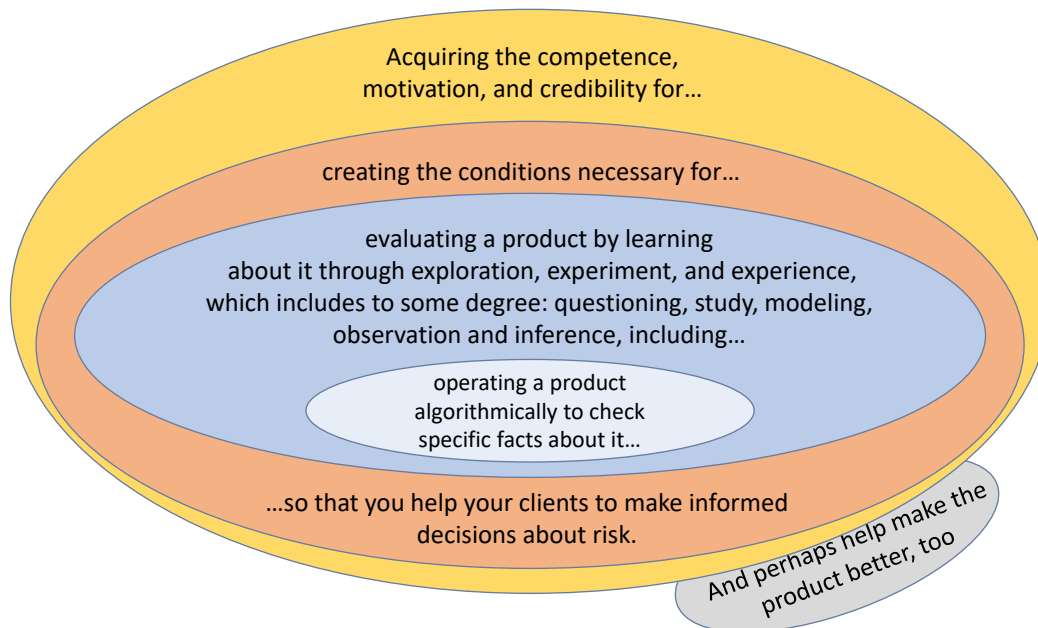
- *Checking* is okay, but it is mostly focused on demonstration, confirming what we know or hope to be true.
- To escape problems with verification and to find bugs that matter to people, we must do more than checking; we must *test*.
- And that makes sense, because checking is always embedded in testing!

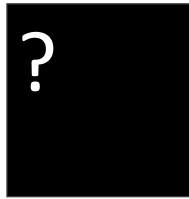


See <http://www.developsense.com/2009/08/testing-vs-checking.html>

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Testing is...

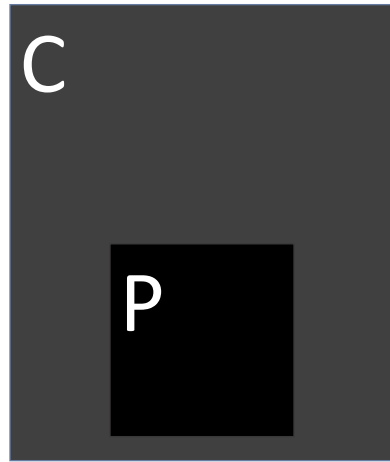




We have a product of uncertain quality.

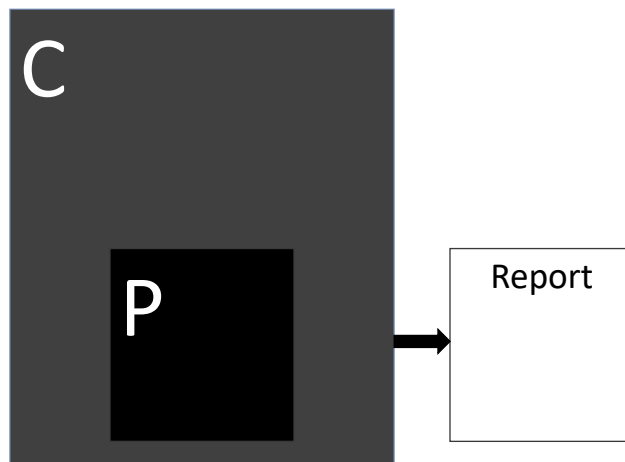


Let's call it Product P.



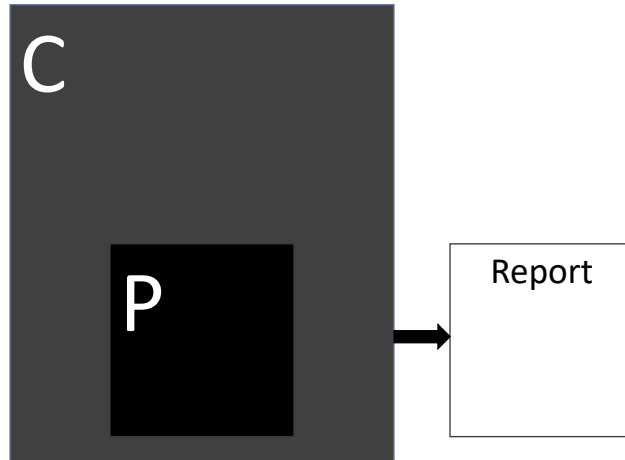
One way to evaluate P is to put it inside another system. We'll call that C (for "Checks").

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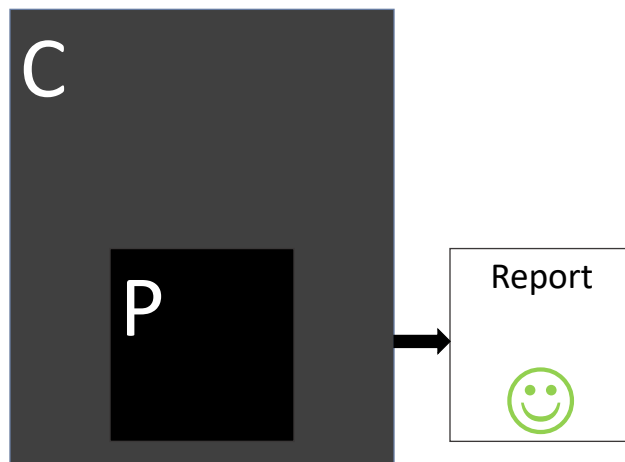
We design C to provide input to P; to operate it; to observe it; to compare the output to a specified result, and to report on the outcome of the comparison.

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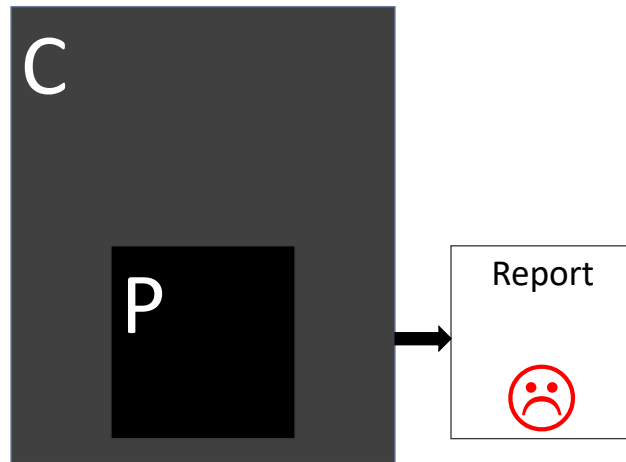
After this process, some people might be tempted to think this way:

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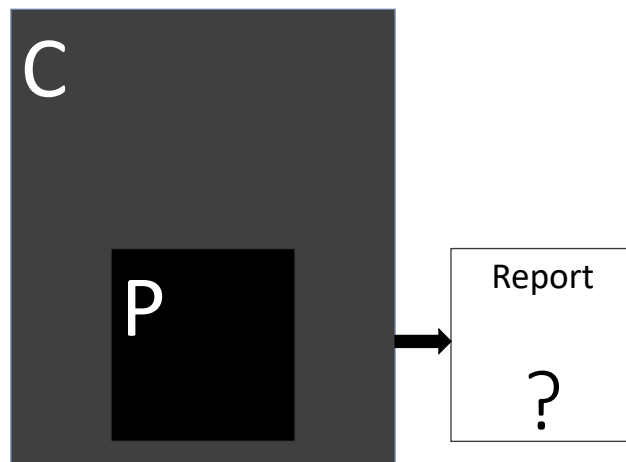


“If C reports no problems,
we have verified that P is a good product.”

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“If C reports problems,
we have verified that P is a bad product.”



But what is *really* going on here?

Verify (n.)

- To ascertain, confirm, check, or test the truth or accuracy of
- To assert or prove to be true
- To testify to the truth of, support (a statement, law)
- To check (items of data input) for accuracy eg by having the same data keyed twice, by two separate operators and then checked by computer for discrepancies (computing)



—*Chambers Dictionary*

Verification (in the RST namespace)

Verification (n.)

1. The process of establishing the truth of a proposition (this is universal, rather than specific to software)
2. In regulated software development, the process of comparing a product to its immediate specification

Verification is distinct from “validation”. We say this:

Validation (n.)

the process of assessing a product against how well it fulfills its ultimate purposes

What IS Verification?

- Something exists.
- Some of what exists can be known.
- Some of *that* can be described in words.
- Some of *that* can be expressed as propositions (statements with truth values) which are either true or false.



Verification is the process of establishing the truth or falsehood of a proposition.

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Verification isn't a feeling.

Verification is reasoning via a logical process, within a logical system.

- $X + Y = 10$ has a **truth value** and **can be verified** as true or false **if** the values of X and Y are known, **and if** they are numbers, **and if** the conventions of arithmetic apply.
- $X + Y = 10$ may have a **truth value** that **cannot be verified** **if** the conventions of arithmetic apply, **and if** X and Y are numbers, **but** the value of X or of Y is not known.
- $X + ☯ = 10$ **does not have a verifiable truth value** **if** the conventions of mathematics apply.

(We chose the ☯ symbol because it looks nice, and yin/yang starts with Y, but the symbol doesn't stand for anything in particular here.)

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DID work is not DOES work; CAN work is not WILL work.

In a system with a non-trivial state space, $X + Y = 10$ **may be true** ten times in a row, yet **may be false on the next iteration**.

- If you find $X + Y = 10$ to be true even once, then you have verified that it **CAN** be true.
- From that, you *could* make an inference that it will **PROBABLY** be true next time.
- But unless you check **EVERY POSSIBLE** state of the system, *including possible states that you don't even know are possible*, you cannot verify that $X + Y = 10$ will **CERTAINLY** be true.

Key questions: What assumptions are supporting your inferences? What could change that would cause your inferences to change?

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Verifying Statements About The Future



- Obtain a time machine, and go to a set point in the future.
- Ask *all* customers and stakeholders “Were you satisfied with it?”
- Come back and report success! Huzzah!
- But even then, you can’t verify that people would *remain* satisfied *after* you asked them.

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Infinite Leap: situated fact → abstract speculation

What I can observe is
knowable here and now:

“The product does not currently
appear to be in a crashed state.”

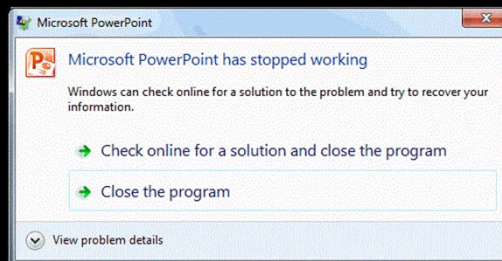
...but the fact that this is true does not mean
that the product

- didn't crash without visible manifestations
- won't crash with different data
- won't crash right now if I move the mouse
or type the wrong key
- won't crash five minutes from now

But what I care about may be
timeless and universal:

“The product shall not crash.”

This cannot be verified empirically.



Infinite Leap: situated fact → abstract speculation

What I can observe is
knowable here and now:

**"I am able to read all the buttons on
this screen."**

... but the fact that this is true does not mean
that it will be true

- for all buttons in the product
- at all times
- on all browsers, in every state
- for every kind of person
- under all lighting conditions

But what I care about may be
timeless and universal:

**"The product shall be reasonably
easy to use."**

This cannot be verified empirically.

Infinite Leap: situated fact → abstract speculation

What I can observe is
knowable here and now:

**"I recognize the login prompt and see
nothing wrong."**

... but the fact that this is true does not mean
that it will be true

- for every situation where the login
prompt should be displayed
- that it is compatible with every browser
- that all the client-side JavaScript and all
the PHP on the server do all the right
things

But what I care about may be
timeless and universal:

**"The system shall always be in the
appropriate state after logging in."**

This cannot be verified empirically.

What I have learned from conferences, books, blogs, articles, and testing forums

The most thoroughly tested part of any application!

And thanks to GEMPUB, machines can log in hundreds of times a minute.

And people will say “Lo! There be testing!”

```
describe("Navigate to browser", function(){

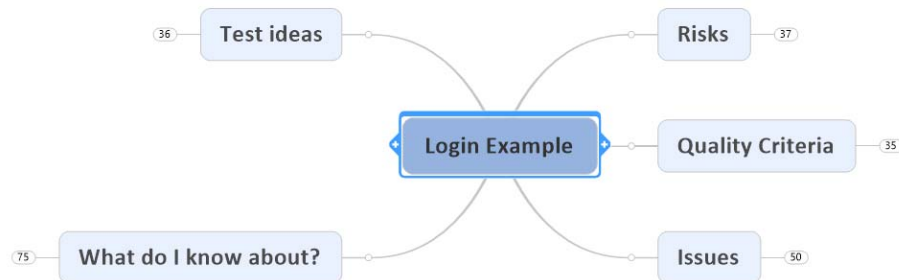
  var fnAuthentication = require('../../src/function/authentication.js');
  var fnLoading = require('../../src/function/loading.js');
  var dt = require("../../../../testData/data.js");
  var objfnAuthentication = new fnAuthentication;
  var objfnLoading = new fnLoading;
  var objdt = new dt;

  it('Load URL',function() {
    |
    objfnLoading.loadUrl();
  });

  using(dt.Datadriven, function(data,description)
  {
    it('Verify user can login to the system',function() {
      objfnAuthentication.login(data.email, data.password);
    });
  });
});
});
});
```

The Secret Life of Automation.pdf - 40

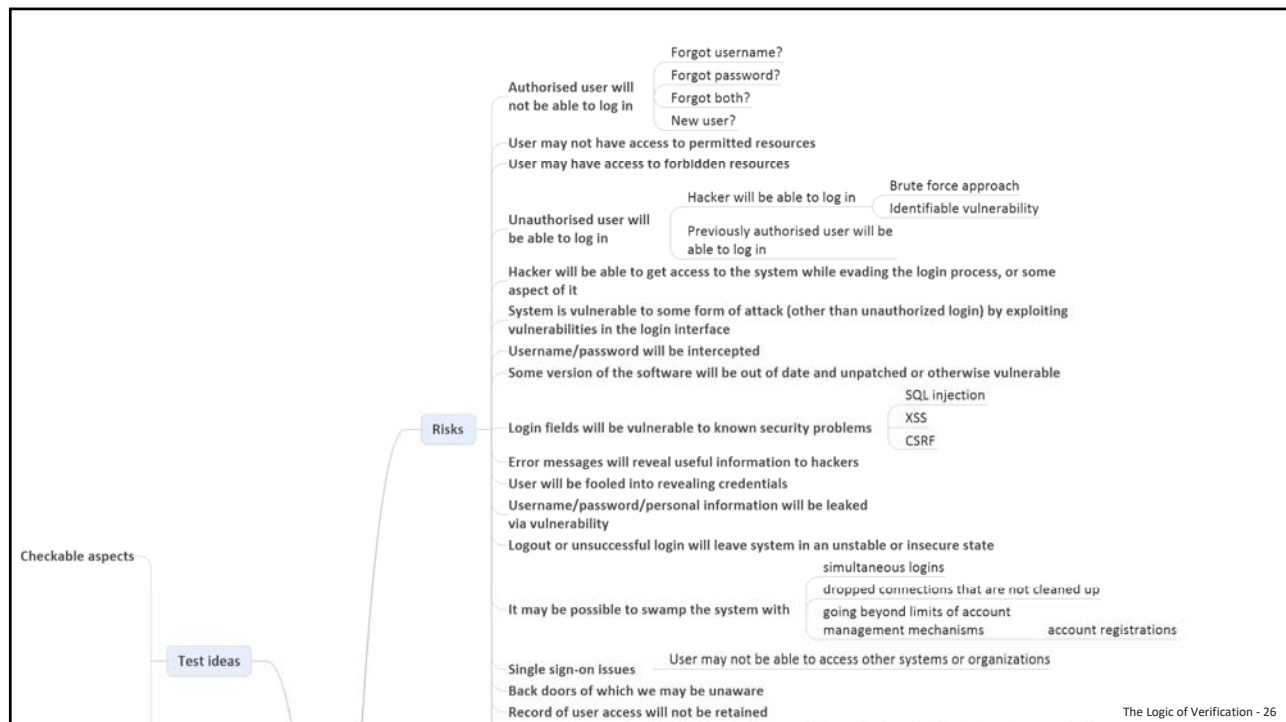
Login Stuff We MIGHT Want To Test



The Secret Life of Automation.pdf - 41

The Logic of Verification

Michael Bolton and James Bach



Test ideas for login functionality after one hour of brainstorming and research.



Asymmetries: What We Can (and Can't) Verify

Verifiable	Not Verifiable
that there is a problem for some person	that there will be no problem for that person
that we are not aware of a problem for some person	that there is no problem for any person
that the product did something under specific conditions that we have observed	that the product will do the same thing under conditions that we have not yet observed
that the product DID do something	that the product DOES do something
that the product CAN do something	that the product WILL do something
that we were aware of certain conditions we believed to be relevant to the test	that we were aware of all of the conditions relevant to the test
that a product does not meet a requirement	that a product does meet a requirement
that the product <i>appears</i> to meet a requirement to some degree	that the product definitely meets a requirement
that the product has not crashed	that the product will not crash
that we have not observed a problem in a feature so far	that there is no problem in a feature
that someone is currently satisfied with the product, based on what they know at the moment	that someone will continue to be satisfied when new knowledge is revealed
facts that might influence decisions about quality	the product's quality

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Verification isn't exactly testing.

To say "This product is very good" is often like saying
"This product is very 🧘 based on known variables X and Y,
plus all our assumptions about unknown variables $V_1, V_2, V_3 \dots, V_{10000} \dots$ etc."

This is **unverifiable**, but it may be **testable**.

To **test** the idea that the product is very good means to examine it and **challenge the assumption** that it's good. So: to test is to developing an understanding of the product, and to look for problems.

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Problems?

Management wants an answer to these questions:

Are there problems that threaten the value of the product to people who matter?

Are there problems that threaten the on-time, successful completion of our work?

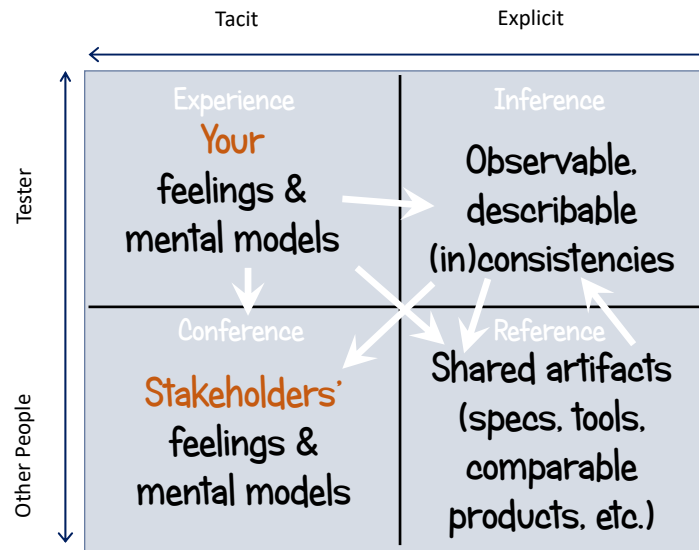
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Heuristics and Oracles

- A **heuristic** is a way of solving a problem that can work and that might fail.
- An **oracle** is a heuristic for solving the problem “how do I recognize a bug when I encounter one?”
- A **trigger heuristic** is a means of becoming aware that a situation requires your attention.
- A **radiator heuristic** is a means of conveying or representing information that you need to solve a problem.
- A **decider heuristic** is a means of deciding what to do to solve a problem.
- Thus there are **trigger oracles** and **radiator oracles** and **decider oracles**.

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Oracles from the Inside Out



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Inconsistency (“this disagrees with that”)

Heuristics for recognizing problems

- **Acceptability:** The product *is inconsistent* with how good it can reasonably be (not just good; good enough).
- **Familiarity:** The system *is consistent* with the pattern of any familiar problem.
- **Explainability:** The system *is inconsistent* with our ability to describe it clearly.
- **World:** The system is *inconsistent* with things or patterns that we recognize in the world.
- **History:** The present version of the system is *inconsistent* with past versions of it.
- **Image:** The system is *inconsistent* with an image that the organization wants to project.
- **Comparable Products:** The system is *inconsistent* with aspects of comparable systems, algorithms, etc.
- **Claims:** The system is *inconsistent* with what important people say it’s supposed to be.
- **Users’ Desires:** The system is *inconsistent* with what users want.
- **Product:** Each element of the system is *inconsistent* with comparable elements in the same system.
- **Purpose:** The system is *inconsistent* with its purposes, both explicit and implicit.
- **Standards:** The system is *inconsistent* with applicable laws, or relevant implicit or explicit standards.

Inconsistency heuristics rely on the quality of your models of the product and its context.

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Verifications Can Be Good Triggers But Are Poor Deciders

- A failing check definitely tells you that you have work to do. You must investigate. That's a **trigger heuristic**.
- Failing checks always never **decide** that the software is bad, because our first question is "Why did it fail? Could it be broken?"

A **trigger heuristic** is a means of becoming aware that a situation requires your attention.

A **decider heuristic** is a means of deciding what to do next.

A **radiator heuristic** is a means of conveying or representing information that you need to solve a problem.

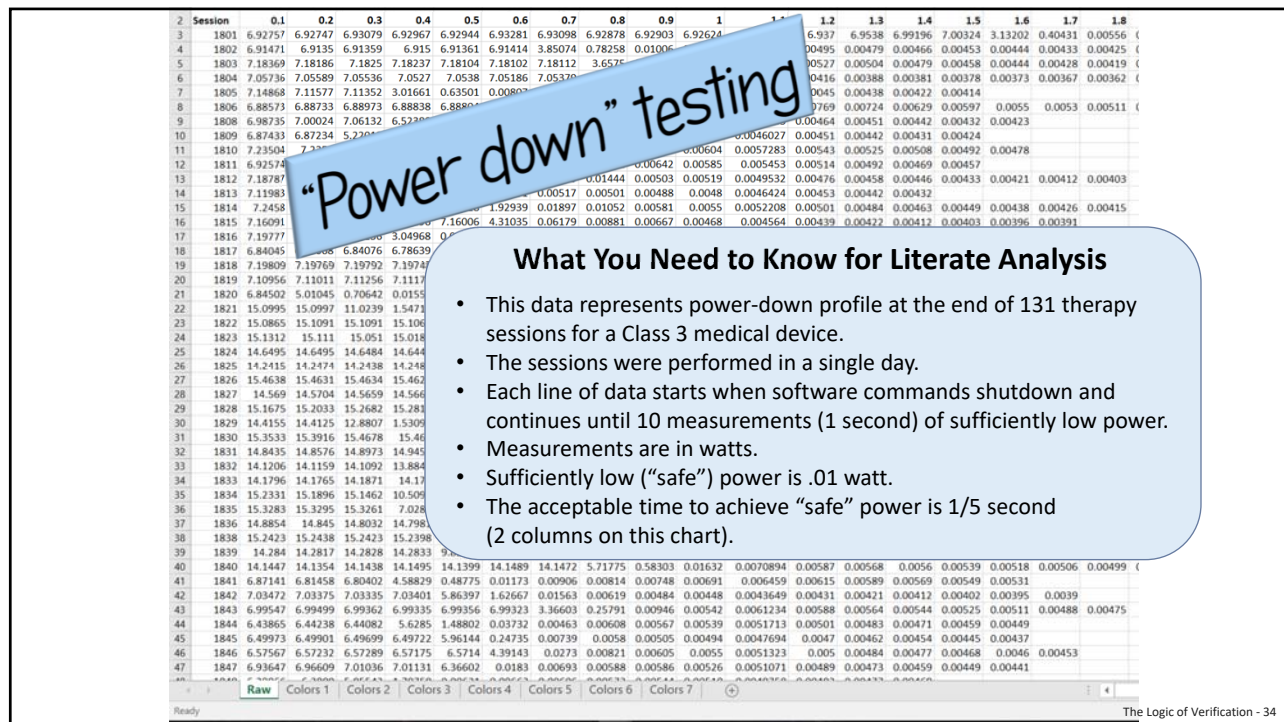
A **heuristic** is a way of solving a problem that can work and that might fail.

- **Triggers** combined with **radiators** make for especially powerful oracles.

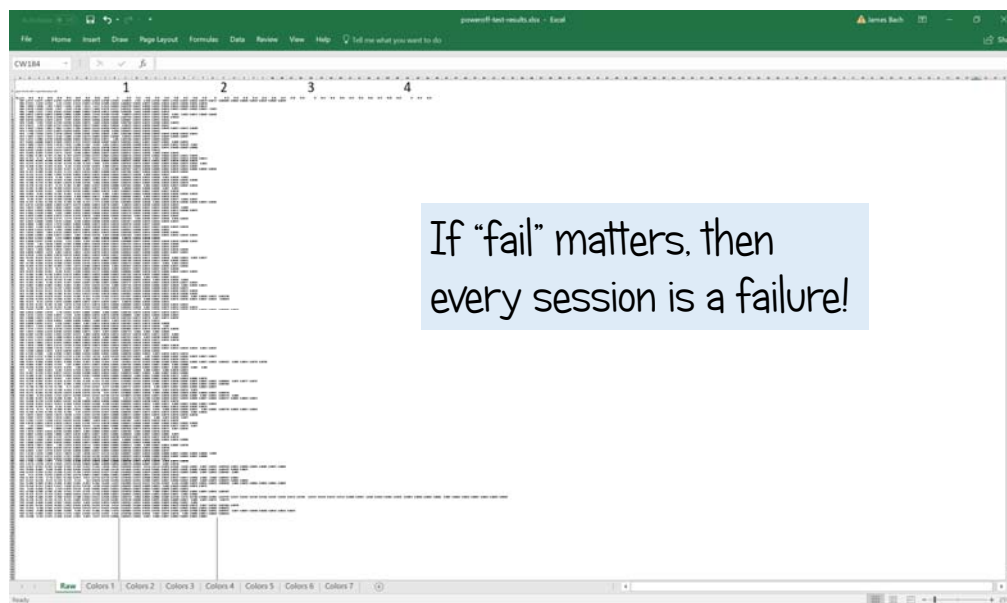
An oracle is a **heuristic** by which we recognize a problem — a bug — when we encounter one in testing.

Verifications Can Be Good Triggers But Are Poor Deciders or Radiators

- A failing check definitely tells you that you have work to do. You must investigate. That's a **trigger**.
- Failing checks never **decide** that the software is bad, because our first question is "Why did it fail? Could it be broken?" **HUMANS, not checks, decide.**
- Log files, screens, and data displays are **radiators**. They are not subject to "pass/fail" but rather must be absorbed, interpreted, pondered, in loops.
- **Triggers** combined with **radiators** make for especially powerful oracles.

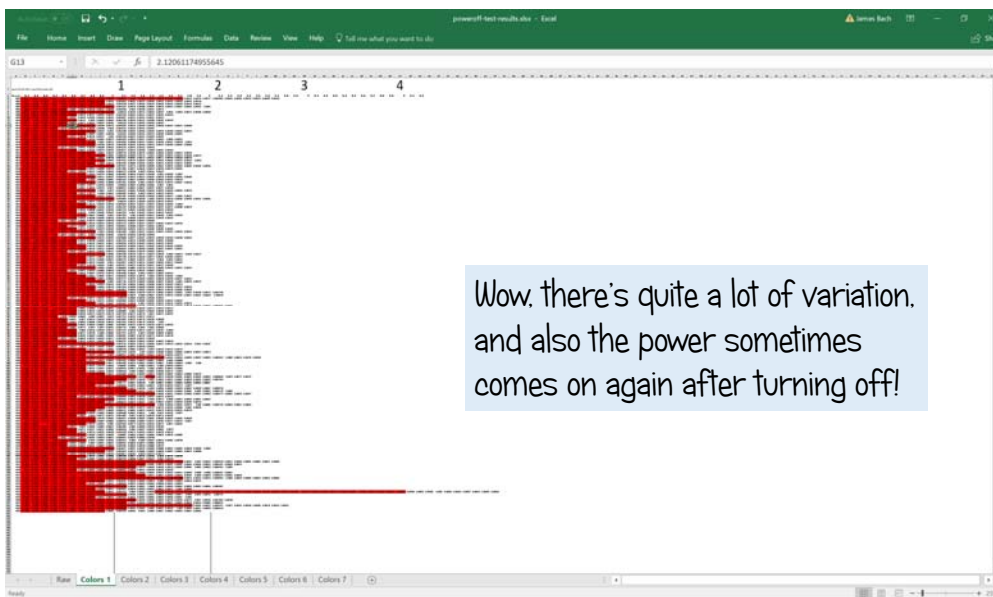


A "zoom blink" radiator oracle



>.01w

<=.01w

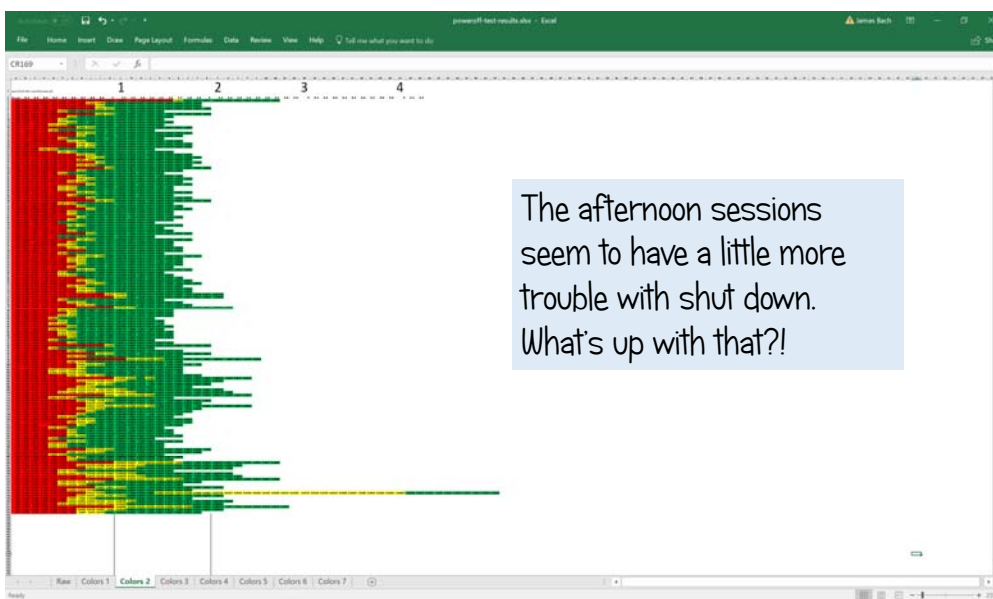


Wow, there's quite a lot of variation.
and also the power sometimes
comes on again after turning off!

>=1w

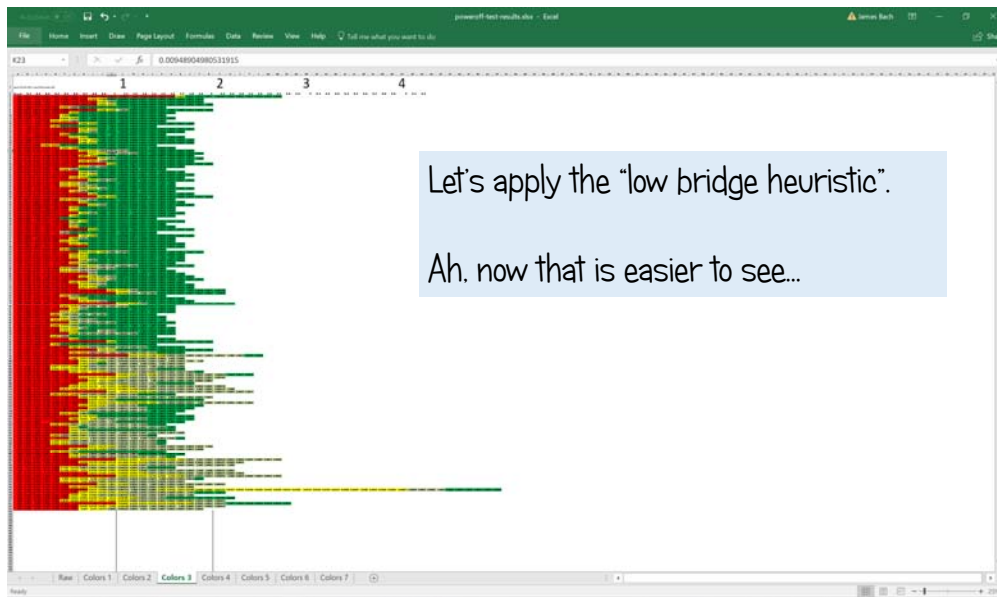
<1w & >.01w

<= .01w



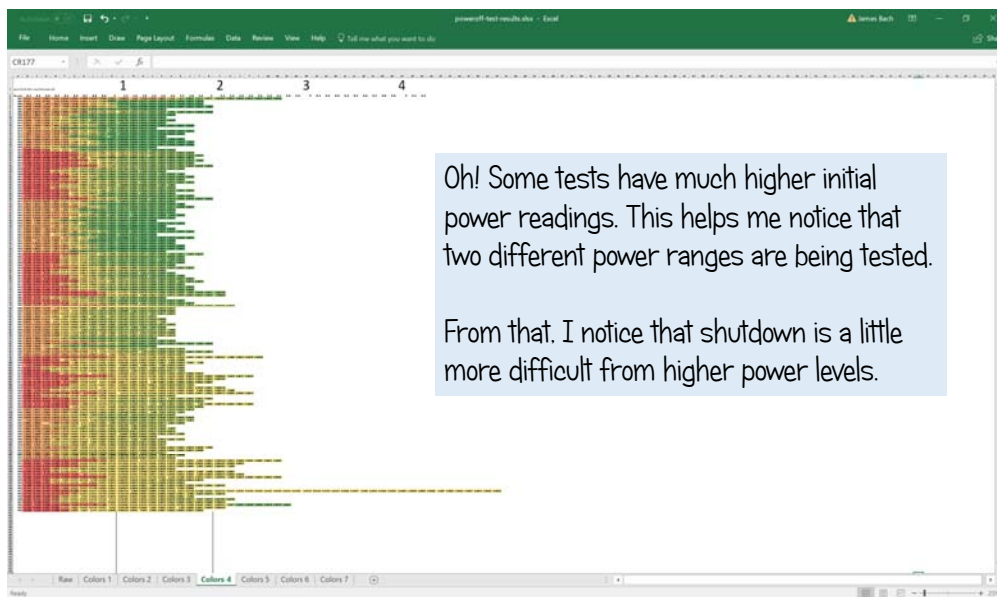
The afternoon sessions
seem to have a little more
trouble with shut down.
What's up with that?!

$\geq 1w$ $< 1w \ \& \ > .1w$ $= < .1w \ \& \ > .01w$ $\leq .01w$



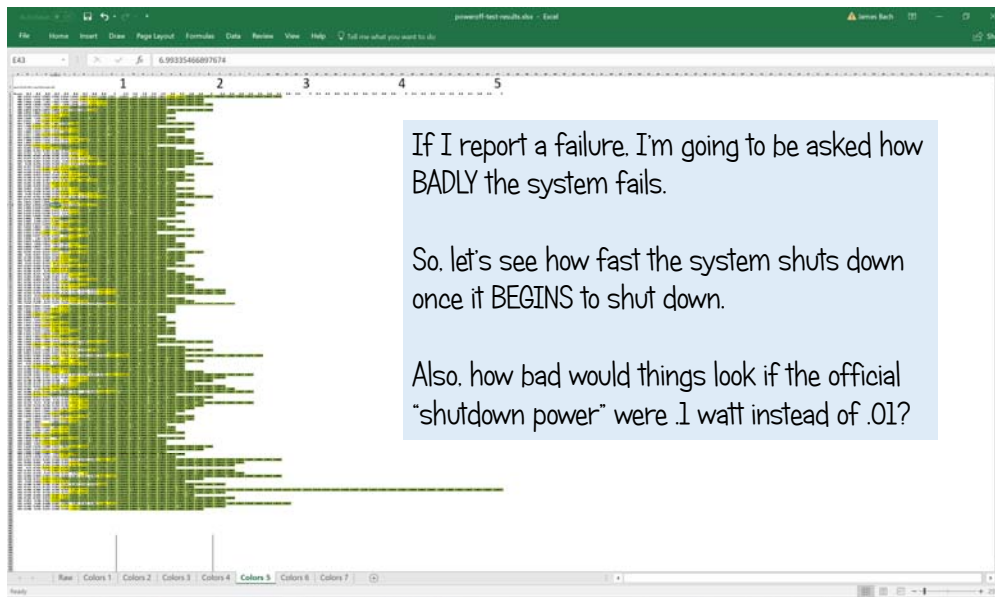
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Defocusing: let Excel choose the coloring



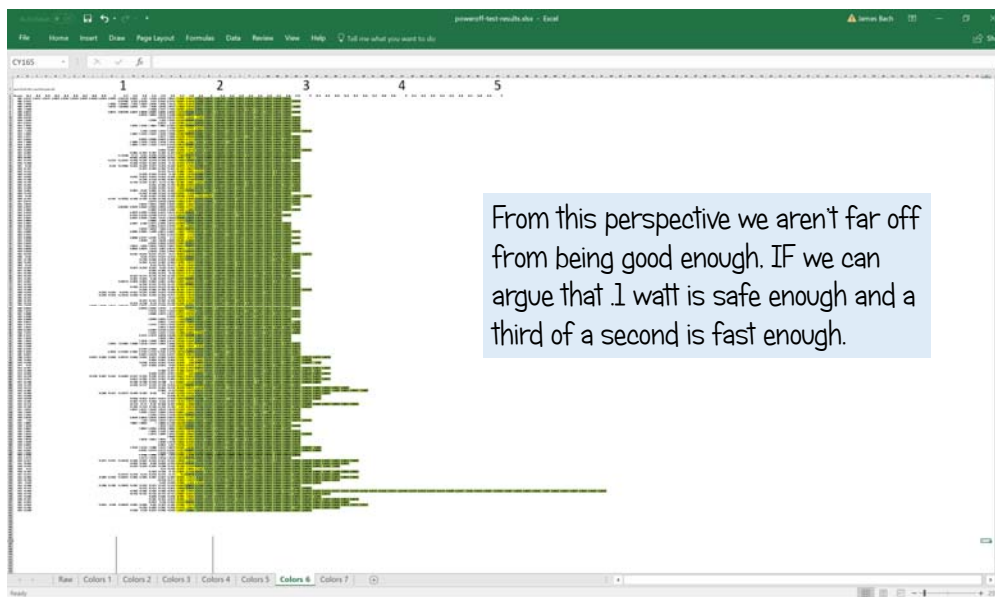
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initial power $\leq 90\%$ of initial power $\geq 0.1w$



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Centered on first $\leq 90\%$ measurement



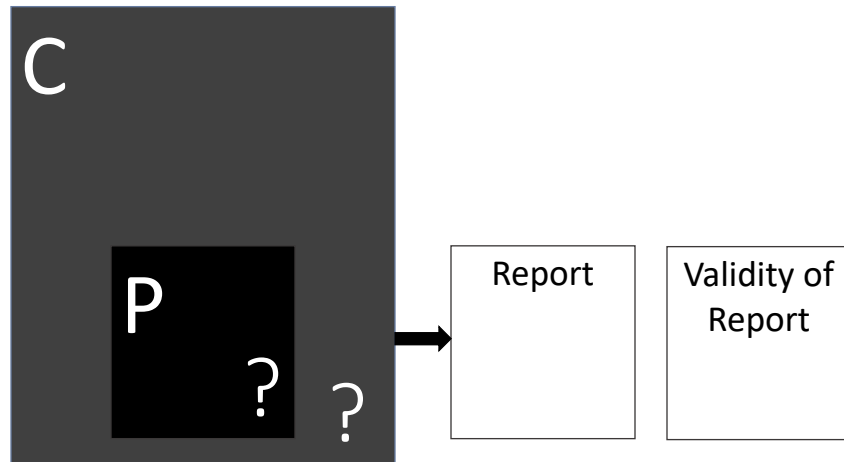
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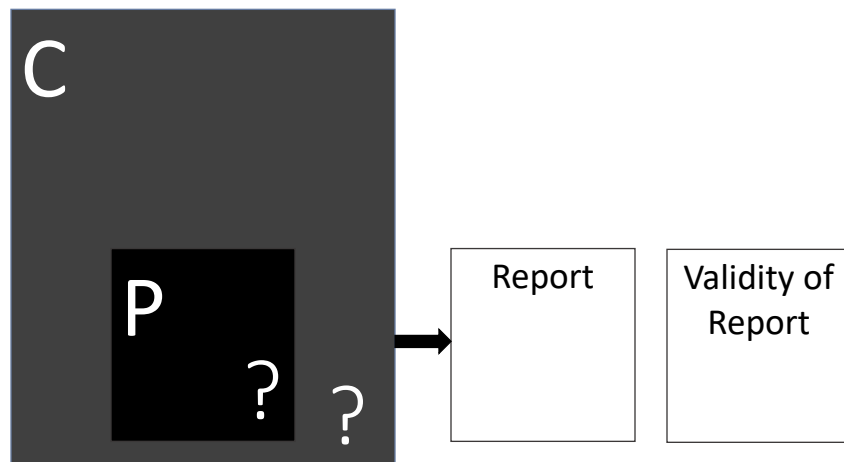
C reports that P is good. If and *only if* C is **good**
AND P is **good** too, that report is **valid**



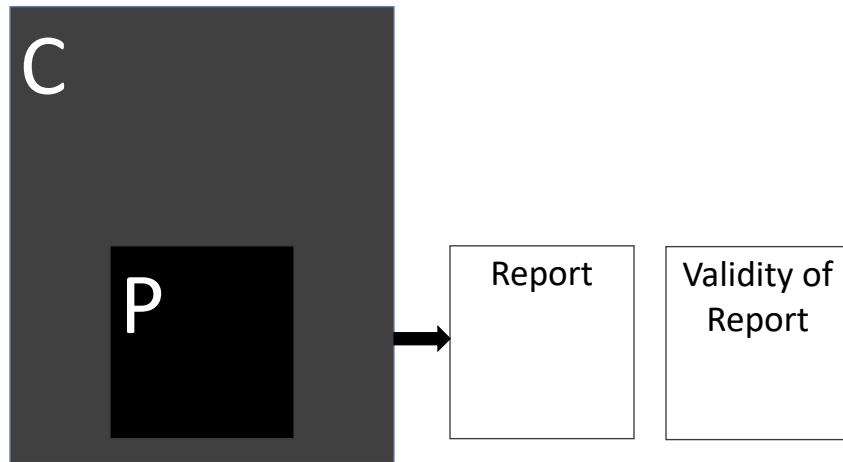
If C is **good**, it will **correctly** report that P is **bad** when
P's quality is **bad**; C's report will be **valid**.



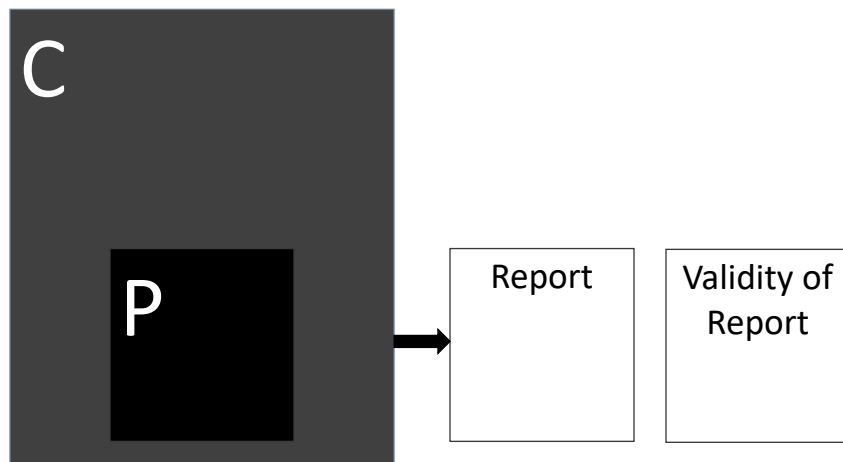
Code is often written quickly, or under pressure, or both—whether it's product code or check code.



It is tempting to believe that product code is more important than check code. Customers don't see check code.



But conclusions we might make about P are risky, because the quality of *both P and C* is uncertain.



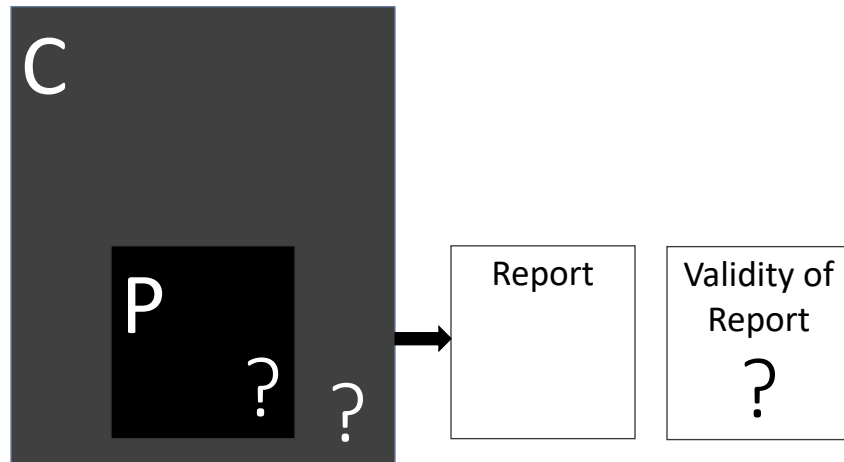
Conclusions we might make about P are even more risky when C is not developed carefully and skillfully.



If C is **not good**, C will **incorrectly** report that P is good. It may be that P's quality is **bad**.

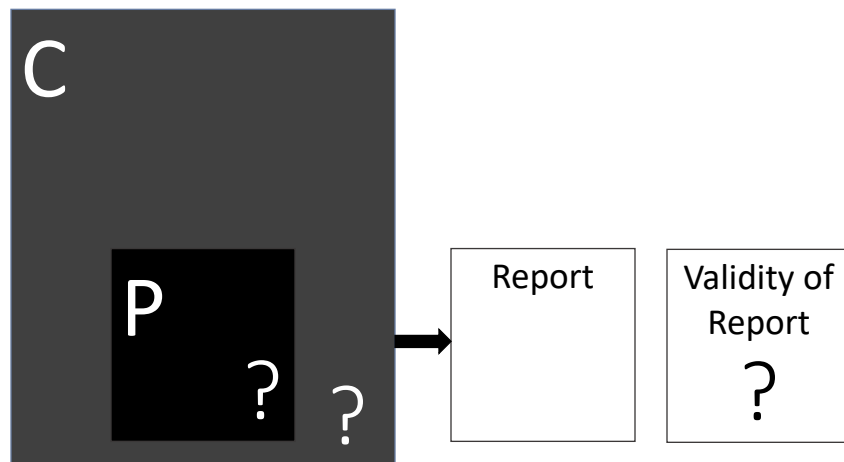


If C is **not good**, C may **incorrectly** report that P is bad, even when P's quality is good.



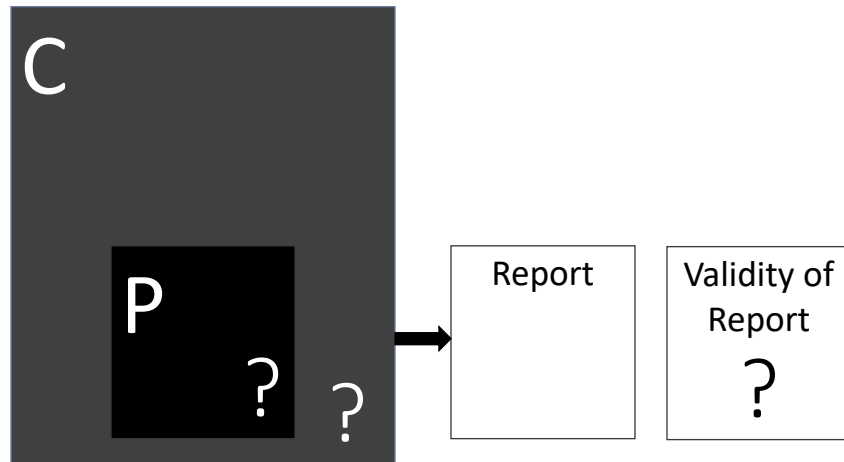
That is: unless we *know* C to be good,
we can't be sure about the validity of the report!

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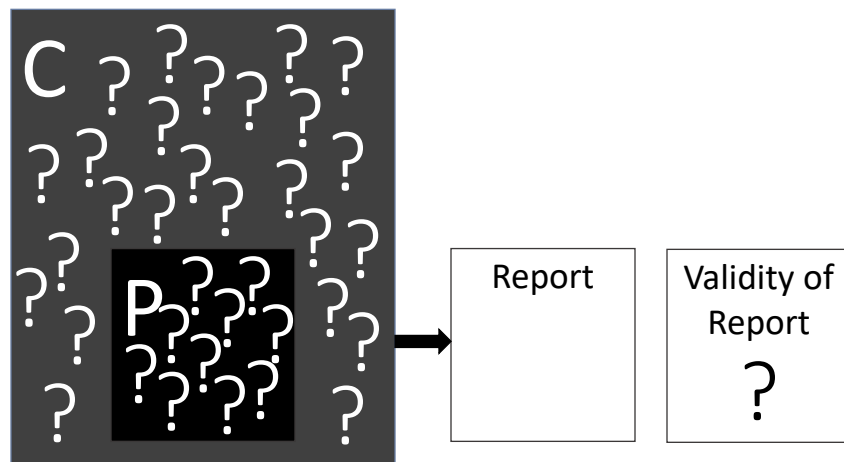
In other words: without investigation and analysis,
we can't be sure of the quality of *either* C or P.

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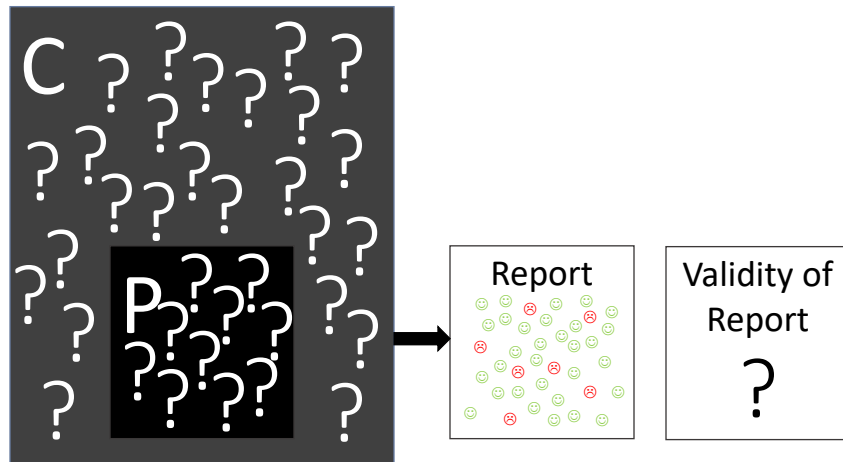
If you think that's bad,
our troubles are only beginning.

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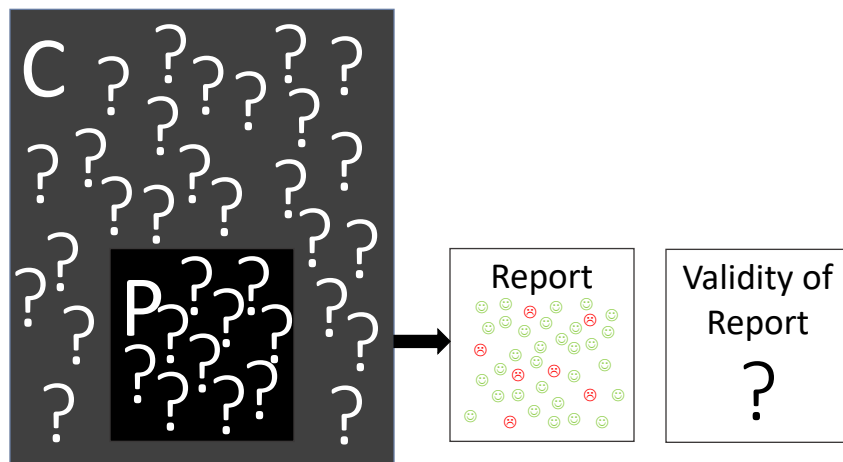


C reports not just a single bit, but on a collection of
hundreds or thousands of individual check results.

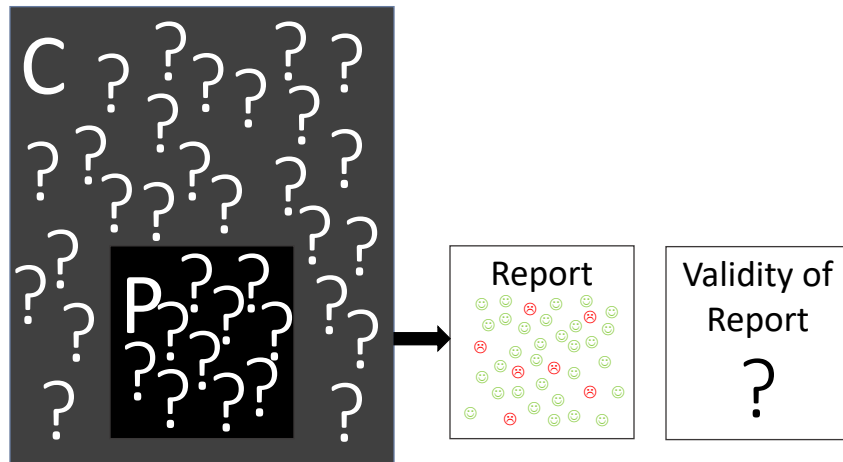
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C reports not just a single bit, but on a collection of hundreds or thousands of individual check results.

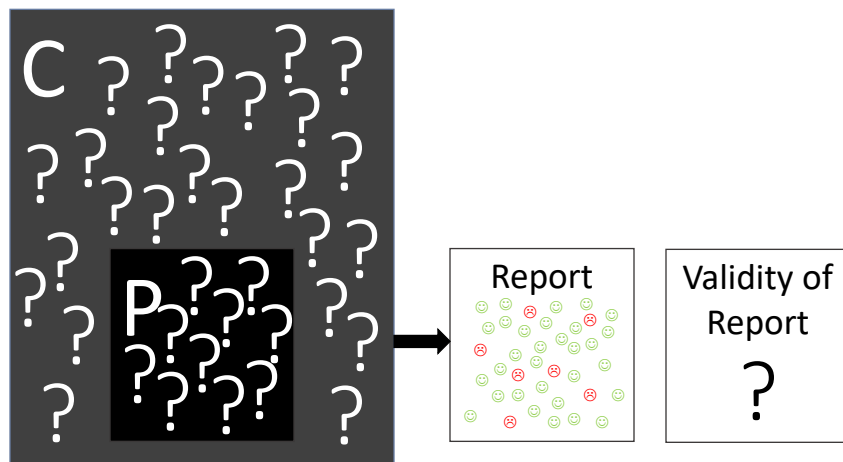


When a set of checks reports a failure, a responsible tester will not immediately report a bug.



Instead, the tester must investigate and ask if this is a real problem in the product, or a problem with C.

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But we've already seen that neither
"failing" checks *nor* "passing" ones are always valid.

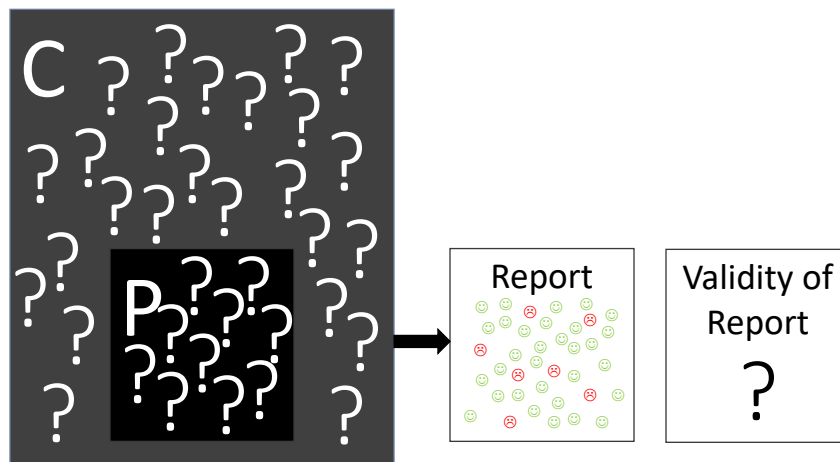
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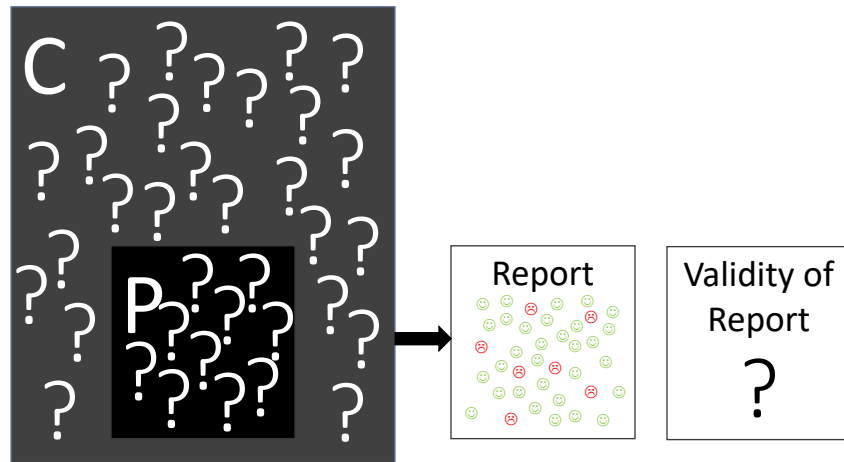
1. A bad product gets categorized as bad because our checks detect problems.
2. A good product gets categorized as not-known-to-be-bad because no problems were found.
3. A good product gets categorized as bad because one or more of our checks is wrong. (Type I error)
4. A bad product gets categorized as not-known-to-be-bad because none of our checks were good enough to detect its particular badness. (Type II Error)

We will probably consider our checks good if...

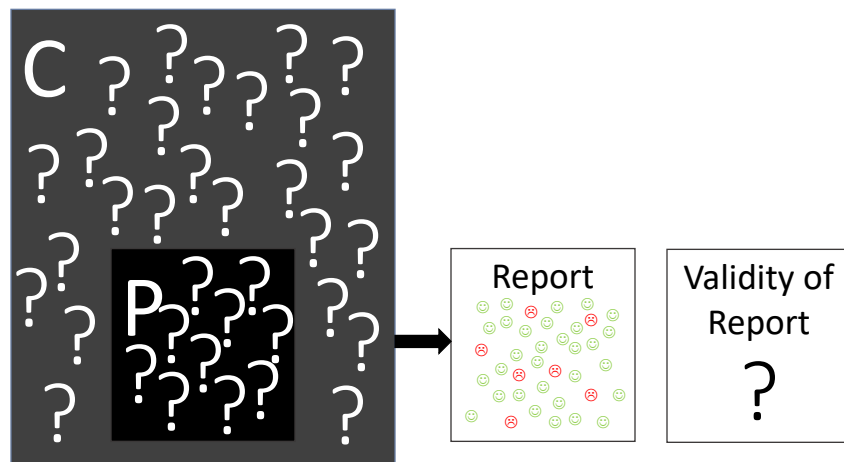
- A. We believe 1 and 2 are likely (validity);
- B. We believe 3 and 4 are *unlikely* (reliability); AND
- C. The checks don't cost too much. (utility)



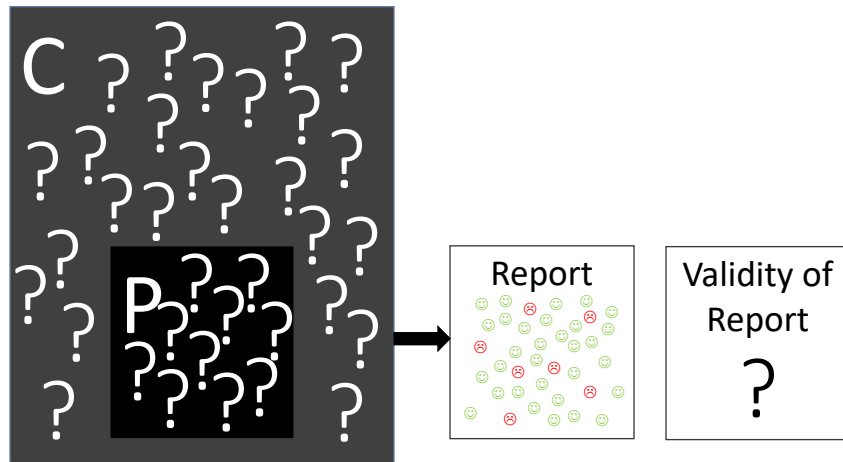
Some people dismiss checks that intermittently report failures as “flaky checks”.



How do we know that “flaky checks” are not problems in the product? Have we tested that idea?

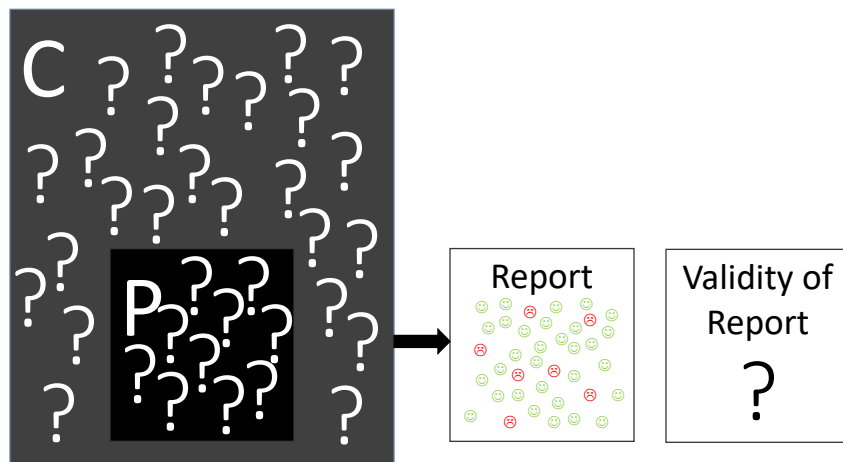


And if checks are consistently “flaky”, why run them at all?



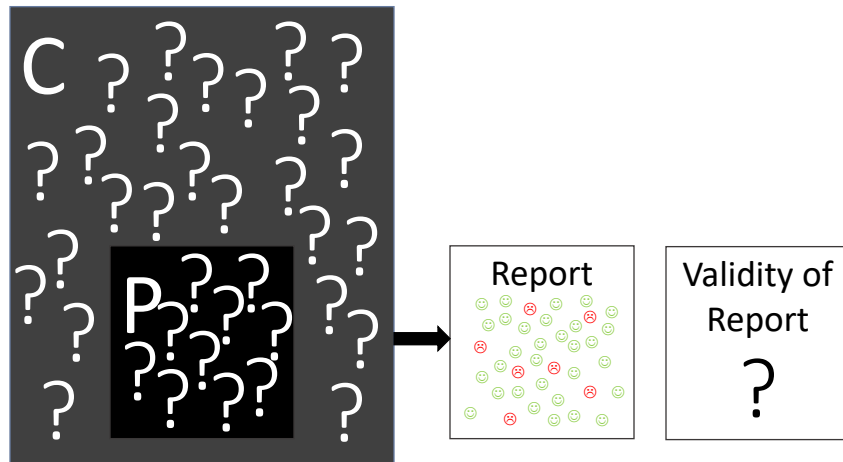
If we think that tests can fail What are we doing to test the idea that reports of “passing” checks are valid?

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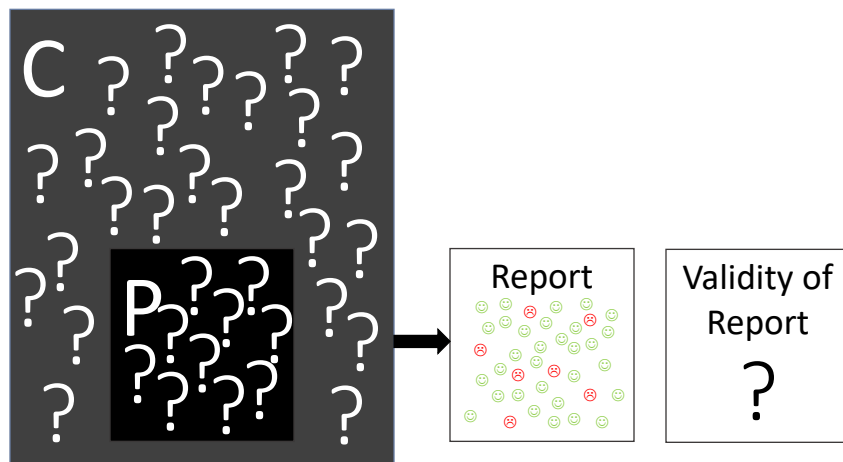


What are we doing to use checks more powerfully—
to check more broadly and deeply?

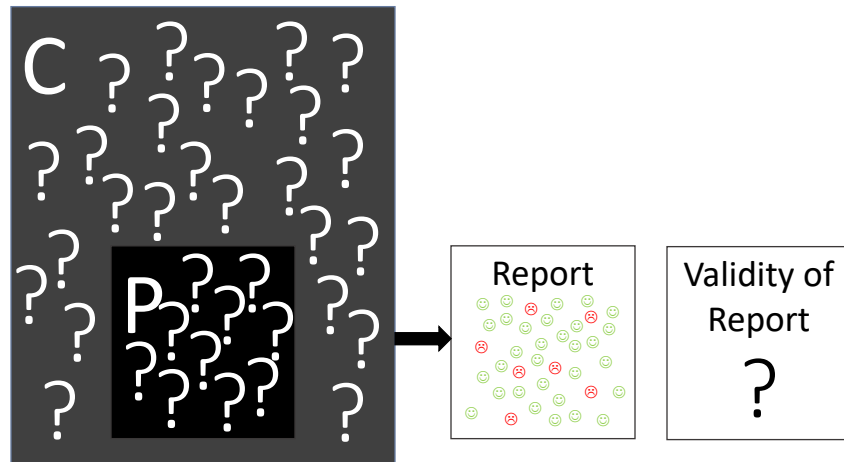
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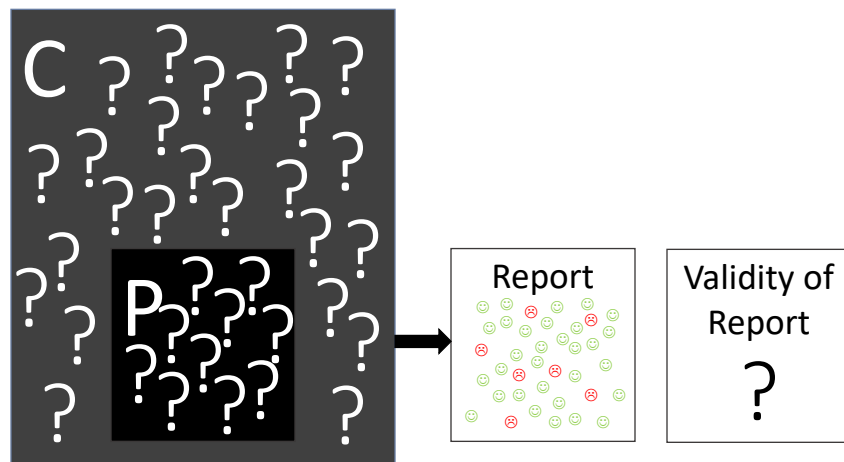
There are many quality criteria that cannot be checked easily: testability, maintainability...



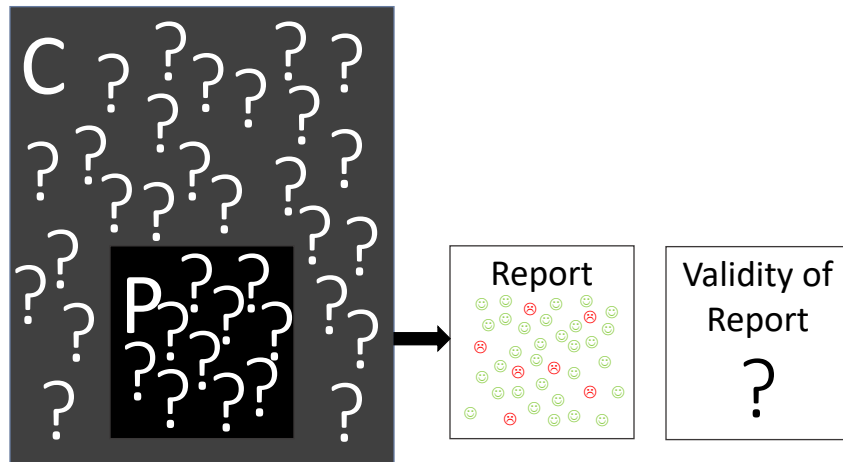
What are we doing to find problems that are not found by automated checking?



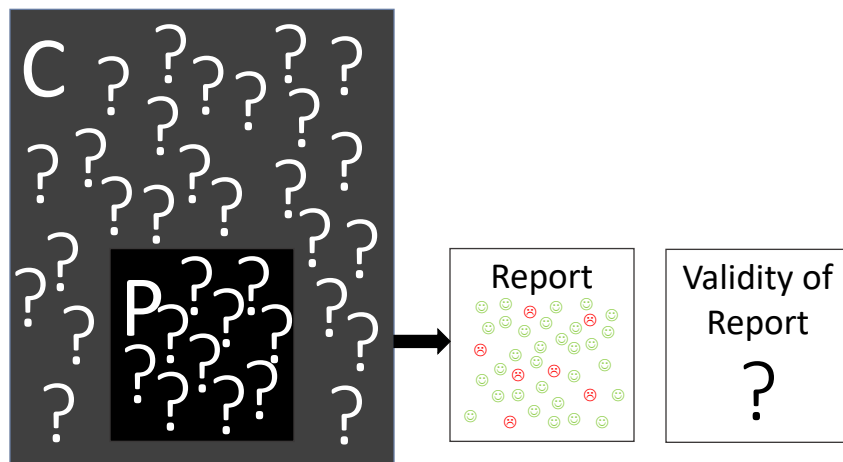
Many people say automated checking allows more time for “exploratory” testing. Is that true?



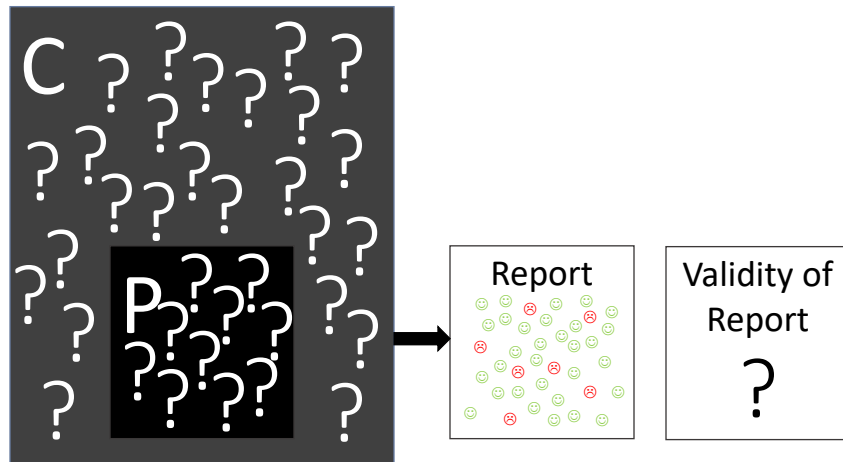
We MIGHT have more time for “exploratory” testing if checks are inexpensive to develop, quick to run, and easy to interpret and analyze.



We MIGHT have more time for “exploratory” testing
if we are not investigating too many “failing” checks.



But we might have fewer “failing” checks if we do
more “exploratory” testing earlier!

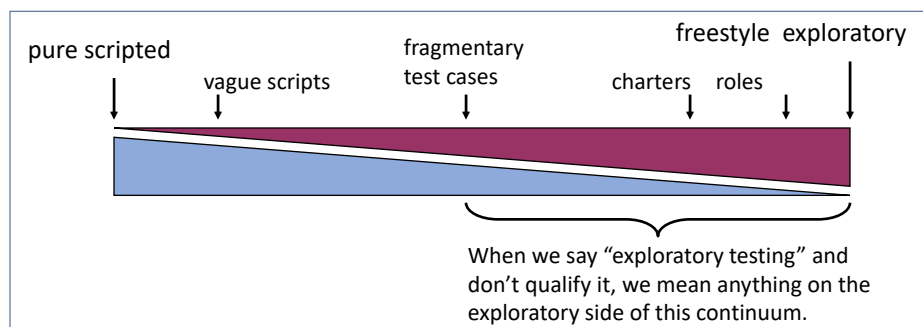


To understand how to do “exploratory” testing before checking, we must learn what testing really is.

The Logic of Verification - 70

The Scripted/Exploratory Continuum, 2003

- When James Bach was describing testing in 2003, he put scripted testing on the left and exploratory testing on the right.
- Turns out there was a huge bug in this idea that we didn't notice *for years*.
- It looks like scripted testing comes first! But it doesn't!



James Bach: The Scripted/Exploratory Continuum from 2003

The Logic of Verification - 71



The Logic of Verification - 72

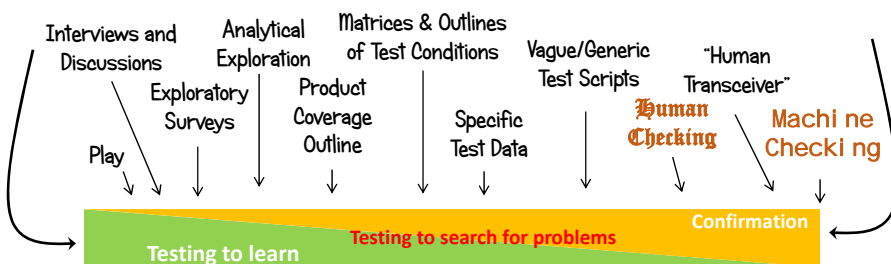
The *Formality* Continuum, 2014

INFORMAL

Not done in any specific way, nor to verify specific facts.

FORMAL

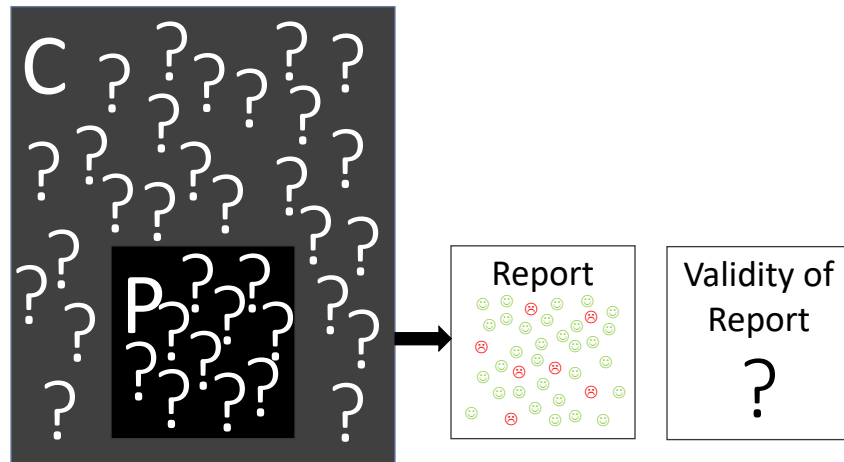
Done in a specific way, or to verify specific facts.



Loops of testing start with informal, exploratory work. If you want to do excellent formal testing (like automated checking), it must begin with excellent informal work.

Bug fix: formality tends to intensify over time. Showing informality on the left and formality on the right makes more sense.

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Now we can talk about what
“doing exploratory testing earlier” means.

The Logic of Verification - 74

Exploratory testing includes...

In other words...

Exploratory testing is *testing*.

Verification is more like
demonstration.

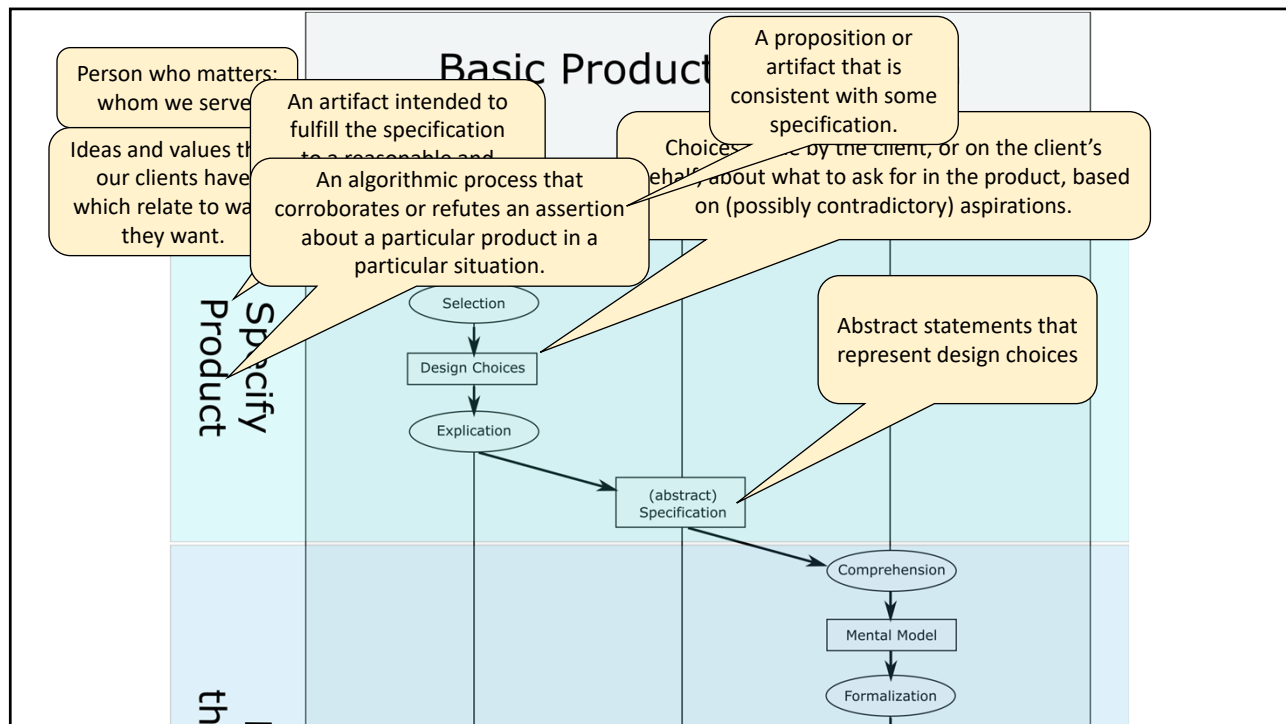
You need to do excellent
exploratory work *before* you can
do excellent verification *and*
afterwards too.

Review
and evaluation
and learning
and sensemaking
and modeling
and studying of the specs
and risk analysis
and recruiting of supporting testers
and observation of the product
and inference-drawing
and questioning
and task prioritization
and coverage analysis
and pattern recognition
and pair development
and decision making
and testability advocacy
and design of the test lab
and preparation of the test lab
and test code development
and tool selection
and making test notes
and preparing simulations
and experimentation
and interacting with developers
and triage
and bug advocacy
and relationship building
and product configuration
and application of oracles
and designing visualizations
and spontaneous playful interaction with the product
and discovery of new information
and preparation of reports for management
and recording of problems
and investigation of problems and working out puzzling situations
and building the test team
and analyzing competitors
and resolving conflicting information
and benchmarking and...

The Logic of Verification - 75

The Logic of Verification

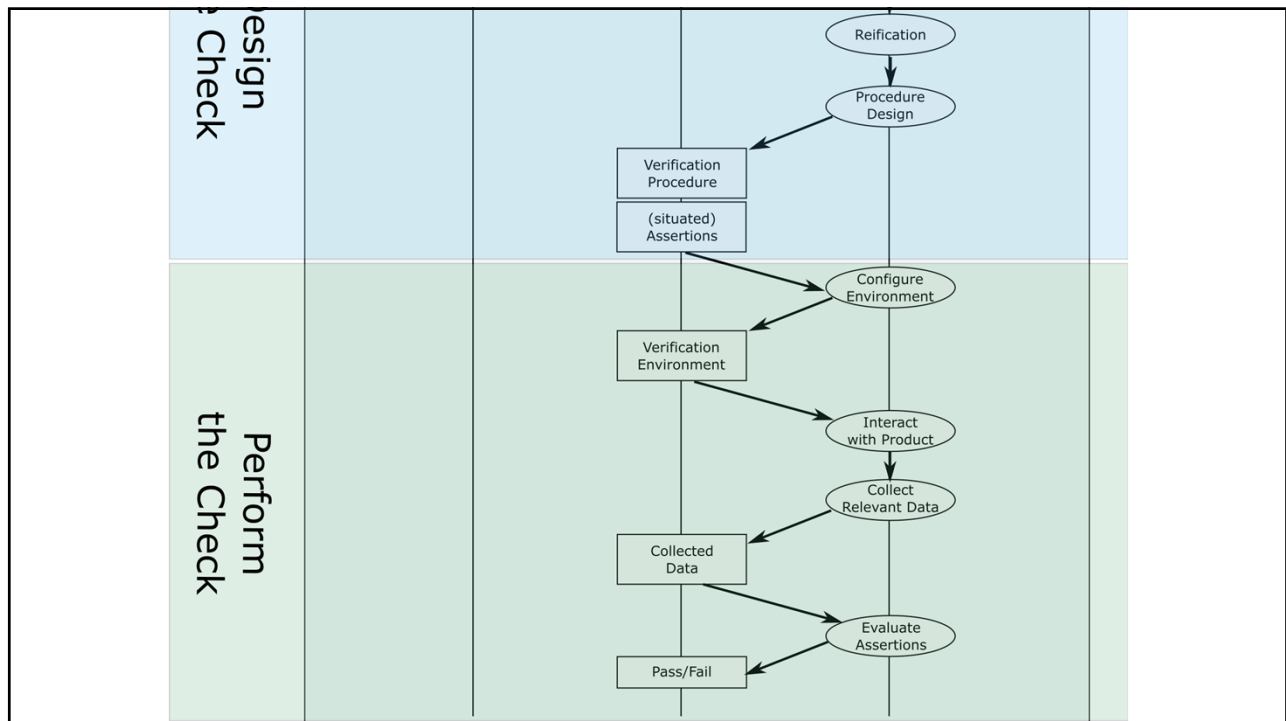
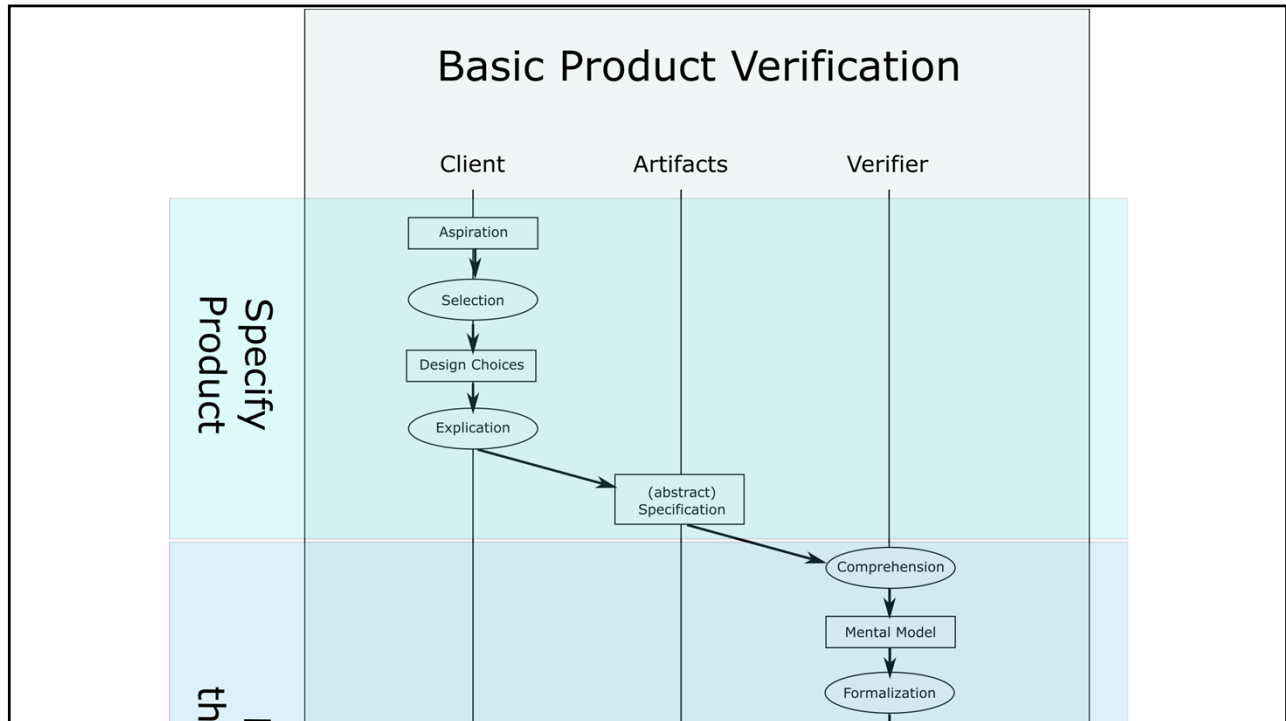
Michael Bolton and James Bach

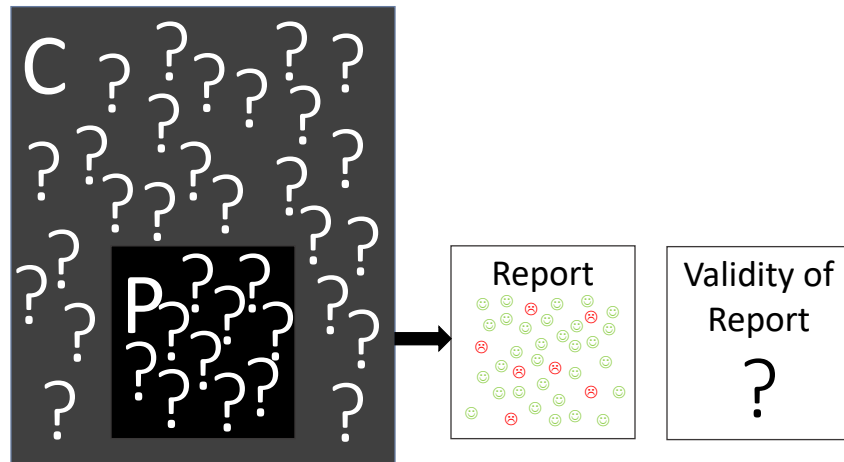


Entity	Definition
Client	Person who matters; whom we serve.
Aspirations	Ideas and values within our clients which relate to what they want.
Design Choices	Choices made by the client, or on the client's behalf, about what to ask for in the product, based on (possibly contradictory) aspirations.
Specification	Abstract statements that represent design choices
Assertion/Example	Situated proposition or artifact that is consistent with some specification.
Product	An artifact intended to fulfill the specification to a reasonable and acceptable degree.
Check (verification)	An algorithmic process that corroborates or refutes an assertion about a particular product in a particular situation.

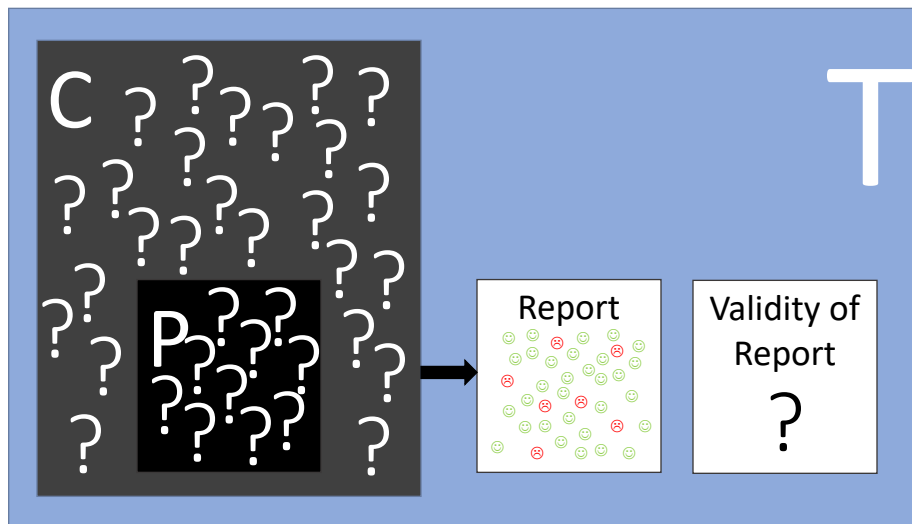
The Logic of Verification

Michael Bolton and James Bach

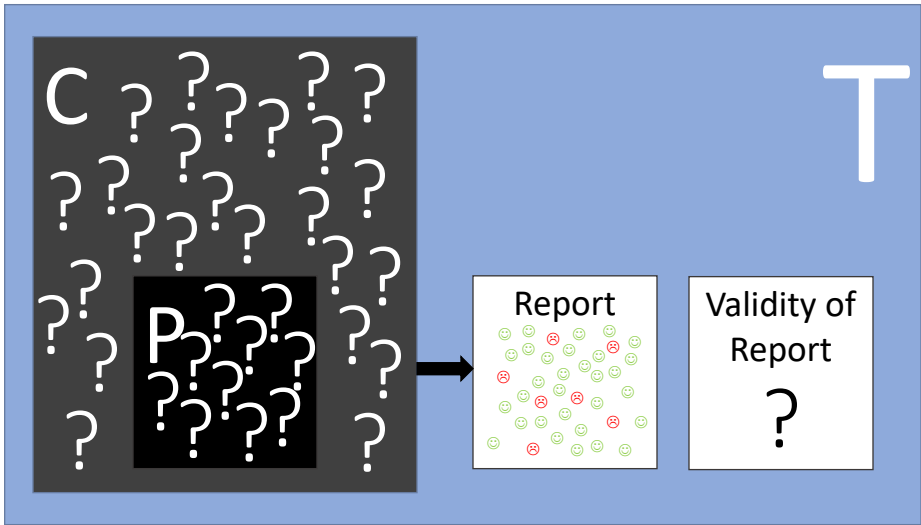




How do we come to a better understanding of the status of the product and the quality of our checks?



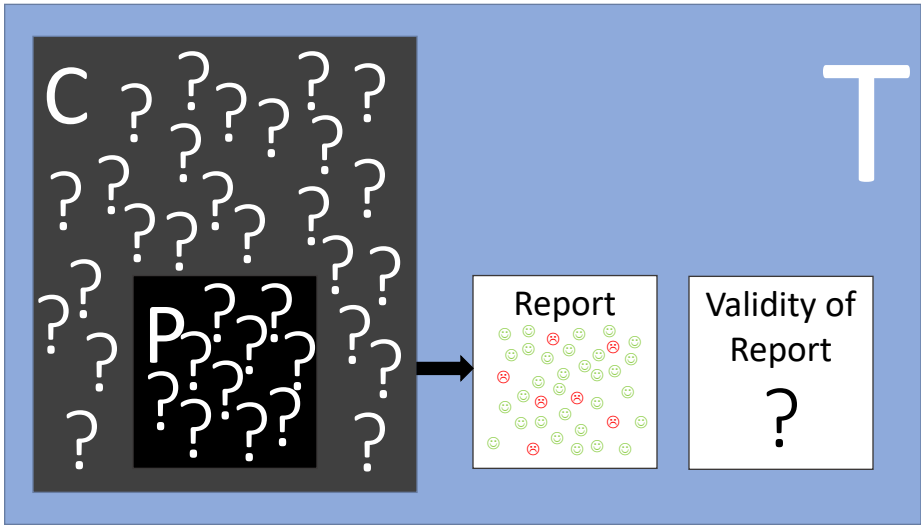
If automated checking is to be valid, reliable, and cost-effective, it **MUST** be embedded in TESTING.



The diagram is set within a light blue rectangular frame. In the top right corner of the frame is a large white letter 'T'. On the left side, there is a dark grey square containing a white letter 'C' at the top left and a white letter 'P' in the center. Both 'C' and 'P' are surrounded by numerous white question marks. An arrow points from the 'P' area to a white box labeled 'Report'. This box contains a collection of small green smiley faces and red sad face icons. To the right of the 'Report' box is another white box labeled 'Validity of Report' with a large question mark below it. Below the diagram, the text reads: 'Excellent checking STARTS with exploratory work, and is informed by exploratory work all the way along.'

Excellent checking STARTS with exploratory work, and is informed by exploratory work all the way along.

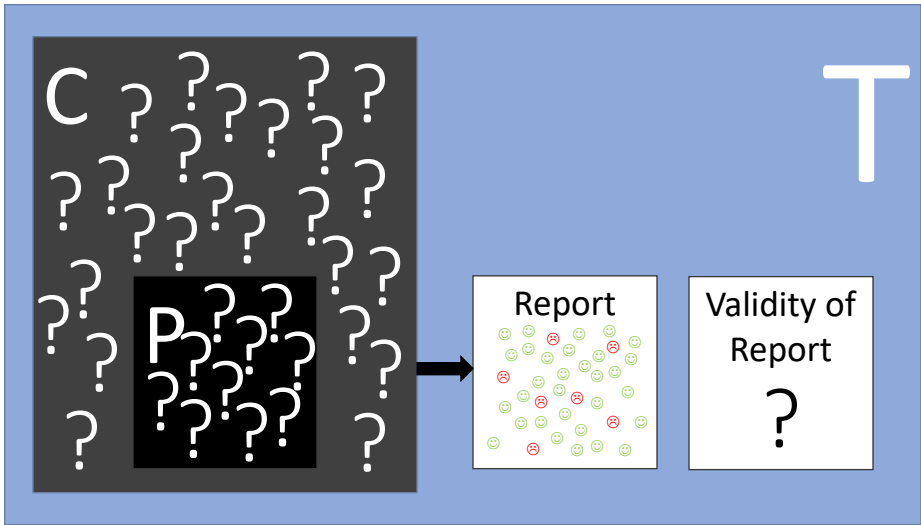
The Logic of Verification - 82



This diagram is identical to the one on the previous slide, featuring a light blue frame, a large 'T' in the top right, a dark grey box with 'C' and 'P' and question marks on the left, an arrow pointing to a 'Report' box with smiley faces, and a 'Validity of Report' box with a question mark.

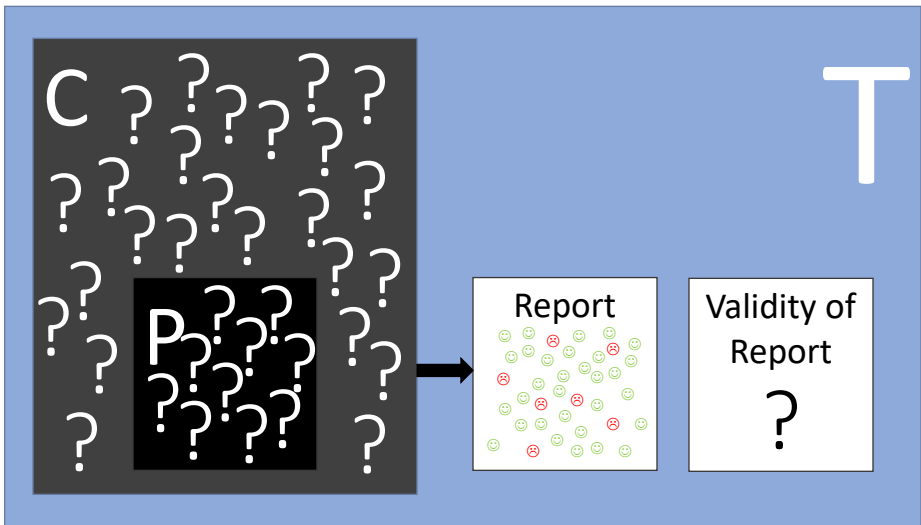
When the product fails a check, excellent testing is required to investigate and pinpoint the failure.

The Logic of Verification - 83



Excellent testing is required to continuously evaluate and maintain checks for accuracy and relevance.

The Logic of Verification - 84



We must question, study, investigate, observe, diversify and challenge our models, checks, and reports, *and* our ideas about them.

The Logic of Verification - 85

Verifications Form a Web



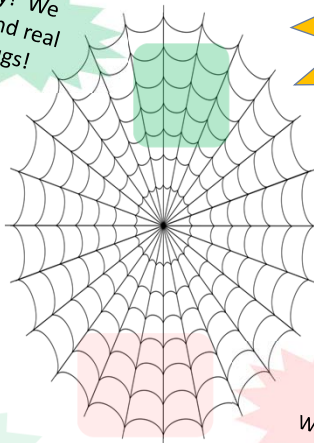
The Logic of Verification - 86

An Imperfect Web



Yay! We
found real
bugs!

Yay...? No
problems...
that CHECKS
can find.



The tester is
the spider
in the web!

Yay, but
Dang!
We wasted
some time!

Dang!
Our checks
missed real
bugs!

The Logic of Verification - 87



“Researchers are increasingly coming to realise that social spiders also sort themselves according to their individual personalities...”

“By paying close attention to individual spiders, [researchers] have discovered that certain spiders are more likely to spend their days attacking predators, while others are more likely to repair the webs, help keep parasites away, clean the web, rear the young, and so on.”

<http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20160122-meet-the-spiders-that-have-formed-armies-50000-strong>

The Logic of Verification - 88



Way More Than Verification! Testers are the Spiders in the Web



- Testers prepare, supervise, interpret, and maintain **checks and tests**.
- Testers **explore and play and learn** and build mental models of the product and its risks.
- Testers explain and justify their **strategy and status**.
- Testers seek and remove **blinds spots** in test strategy.
- Testers look for ways to refresh and improve the **value of the testing** over time.
- Testers adapt test strategy to the best current knowledge of **product risk**.
- Testers adapt test strategy to the **project context**.

The Logic of Verification - 89

**Fixation on verification can lead to inadequate coverage:
poor sampling, low diversity and weak oracles.**



The Logic of Verification - 90

Workarounds to the Limits of Verification

- Instead of verification, consider *falsification*.
 - We CAN'T verify the hypothesis that the product is okay, but we CAN falsify that hypothesis.
 - When we look for problems *diligently* and don't find them, we can make a better inference that the product is okay.
- Instead of validation, consider *assessment*
 - To assess something is to develop opinions on it.
 - You can have opinions about all kinds of things that cannot be verified
 - Our goal is to develop an *informed* opinion of the product.
- Apply safety language
 - "We have not seen any bugs so far."
 - "We are not aware of any problems yet."

The Logic of Verification - 91

Conclusions

- *Excellent* verification is *part* of a testing process that includes not only questioning of the product, but also questioning of the ways in which we check it and test it.
- Verification (in the form of automated checks, formally scripted checks performed by humans, or other forms of fact checking) may be useful, but it falls short of *testing*.
- To test is not only to verify, but to *investigate* and to *challenge*.
- Automating checks reduce execution time, but at some cost in development, maintenance, and interpretation. How big a cost?
- Automated checks can be used to test more broadly and more deeply. Consider diversifying the focus of your checks.
- Many things can't be checked. Excellent testing focuses on exploring and investigating many kinds of risk. Doing this requires many kinds of coverage—not only functional coverage.

The Logic of Verification - 92



The Logic of Verification

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A Word from Our Sponsor (Me)



- Rapid Software Testing is a course, a mind-set, and a skill set about how to do **excellent software testing** in a way that is very **fast, inexpensive, credible**, and **accountable**. I co-author RST with James Bach.
- I teach RST in classes for testers, developers, managers, business analysts, documenters, DevOps people, tech support...
- I also offer advice and consulting on testing and development to managers and executives.

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