

CIFellows 2020-2021

Computing Innovation Fellows



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Type systems, logics, and modeling languages are powerful tools for writing formal specifications. Specifications can help programmers validate their designs and synthesize components — provided that the specifications are correct. But specifications may not model the intended behavior.

PROBLEM: Specifications can be wrong.

To address this general problem, we need to study faulty specifications and develop actionable plans.

Q1: In what ways?

Q2: What can we do about it?

I have been studying these questions in several contexts using a variety of research methods.

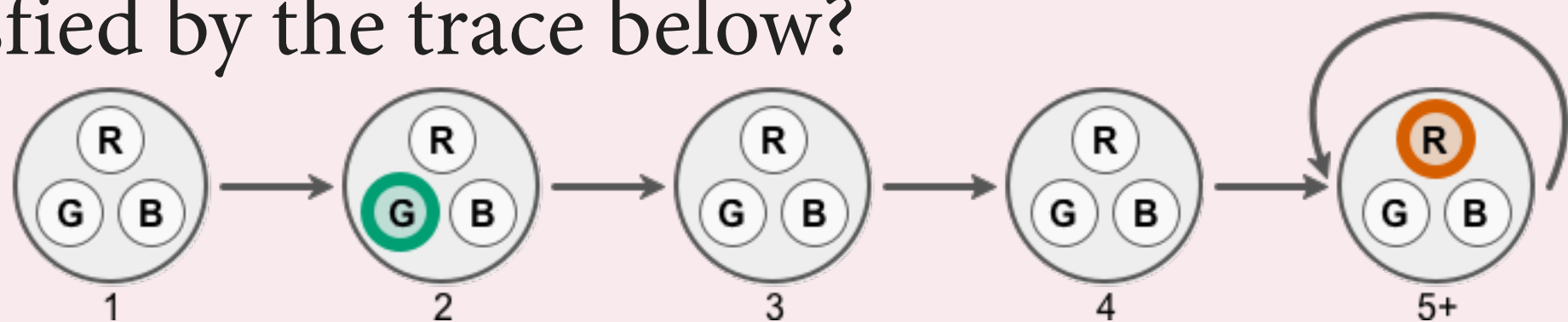
LTL Formulas

RQ. Do users understand linear temporal logic?



Surveys, Talk-alouds, Crowdsourcing

Q. Is the formula eventually Red and eventually Green satisfied by the trace below?



A. Yes — because and is commutative

+ Test instruments, Code book of errors

Alloy Models

RQ. What misconceptions do programmers face?



File snapshots, Grounded theory



Language levels: functional, relational, temporal

Algebraic Properties

RQ. Can learners write correct instances?



Wheat and Chaff specifications

Incorrect Example:
transitivity vs. reachability

```
A = a + b + c
r = a->a + b->b + c->c
+ a->b + b->c + c->a
```

+ Data-driven chaffs

Type Interfaces

RQ. How well do languages help debug wrong types?



Mutation analysis, Experiment design
"The Rational Programmer"

+ TRP method, Evidence for design choices



Thanks to the CIFellows program, I have gained experience with a broad set of research methods that I can use throughout my career.

