

A THEORY OF VALIDATION FOR DERIVATIVE SPECIFICATIONS AND CHECK LISTS¹

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PART I. RESEARCH PRODUCTS WHICH MAY BE CLASSIFIED AS DERIVATIVE SPECIFICATIONS AND CHECK LISTS

Meaning of Specification

In specification something is assigned a specific character. The something to be thus assigned a specific character may be called the *specificandum*. The specific character assigned to the *specificandum*, or (as a second meaning) the act of so doing, may be called the specification.

A proposition is the smallest unit in which it is possible to embody a complete thought and is ordinarily represented by a single sentence. In specification the characterization may be confined to a single proposition or it may be extended to include an indefinitely large number of propositions. So a specification may be embodied in a sentence, a paragraph, a chapter, or a whole book. No matter how far it is extended it will never give complete determination, as our knowledge cannot be made exhaustive or our control be given an absolute precision.

In view of the meaning assigned to specification it is evident that very many books and monographs could in this sense be classified as specifications.

Meaning of Derivative Specification

There is a type of specification (book or monograph) which is developed by deriving it from a group or class of specifications which already exist. This class may be a total class of all such specifications, or a group of those accepted as authoritative, or a group of those taken to be representative. A specification derived in this manner may be called a derivative specification. As an example we could take almost any first-class work by a present-day historian; by historians it would be called "secondary" because it is based on study of pre-existent documents called "primary sources."

Meaning of Check List

The act of *deriving* a product from a pre-existent set of documents may, as we have seen, take the form of a derivative specification, embracing an as-

¹ This paper is an amplification of a report made in the statistical section of the American Educational Research Association at its meeting in February, 1931.