

# ADVANCED REACTIVITY

# OUTLINE

- Reactivity catalog
- Reactivity review
- Checking preconditions
- Time as a reactive source
- Limiting rate

# Reactivity catalog

# REACTIVITY CATALOG

- Store values: `reactiveValues` / `input` / `makeReactiveBinding`
- Calculate values: `reactive` / `eventReactive`
- Execute tasks: `observe` / `observeEvent`
- Preventing reactivity: `isolate`
- Checking preconditions: `req`
- Time (as a reactive source): `invalidateLater` / ~~`reactiveTimer`~~ (`invalidateLater` is a safer and simpler alternative)
- Rate-limiting: `debounce` / `throttle`
- Live data: `reactiveFileReader` / `reactivePoll`

(Pretty sure this is just the beginning...)



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(Pretty sure this is just the beginning...)

Highlighted functions are fundamental, all others are built on top.

# Reactivity

## review

# REVIEW: REACTIVE EXPRESSIONS

- ▶ Use to calculate new values based on reactive values and other reactive expressions.
- ▶ Caches its return value, until notified of reactive dependencies being out-of-date.
- ▶ Lazily executes — Shiny wants to avoid running these whenever possible. For this reason, meaningful side effects are prohibited from reactive expressions.
- ▶ Call it like a function when you want to read its value.

# REVIEW: REACTIVE EXPRESSIONS

```
# Declare
movies_subset <- reactive({
  movies %>% filter(title_type %in% input$type)
})

# Read
output$scatterplot <- renderPlot({
  ggplot(movies_subset(), aes(...)) + geom_point()
})
```



# REVIEW: OBSERVERS

- ▶ Use to execute actions based on changing reactive values and other reactive expressions.
- ▶ Doesn't return a value. So performing side effects is usually the only reason you'd want to create one of these.
- ▶ Eagerly executed by Shiny.

```
observe({  
  print(paste("The value of x is", input$x))  
})
```

```
## [1] The value of x is 10  
## [1] The value of x is 16  
## [1] The value of x is 9
```

# REACTIVE EXPRESSIONS VS. OBSERVERS

reactive()	observer()
Callable	Not callable
Returns a value	No return value
Lazy	Eager
Cached	N/A
No side effects	Only for side effects

# REACTIVE EXPRESSIONS VS. OBSERVERS VS. FUNCTIONS

reactive()	observer()	function()
Callable	Not callable	Callable
Returns a value	No return value	Returns a value
Lazy	Eager	Lazy
Cached	N/A	Not cached
No side effects	Only for side effects	Side effects optional

# OBSERVEEVENT VS. EVENTREACTIVE

- Every reactive expression or reactive value read by a `reactive()` or `observe()` block automatically becomes a reactive dependency of that reactive expression/observer.
- `observeEvent` and `eventReactive` give us finer control.

```
observeEvent(input$save_button, {  
  write.csv(movies_subset(), "movies.csv")  
})
```

"When the `save_button` button is clicked, write the value of `movie_subset` to disk." (Don't write to disk automatically when `movie_subset` changes.)

# OBSERVEEVENT AND EVENTREACTIVE

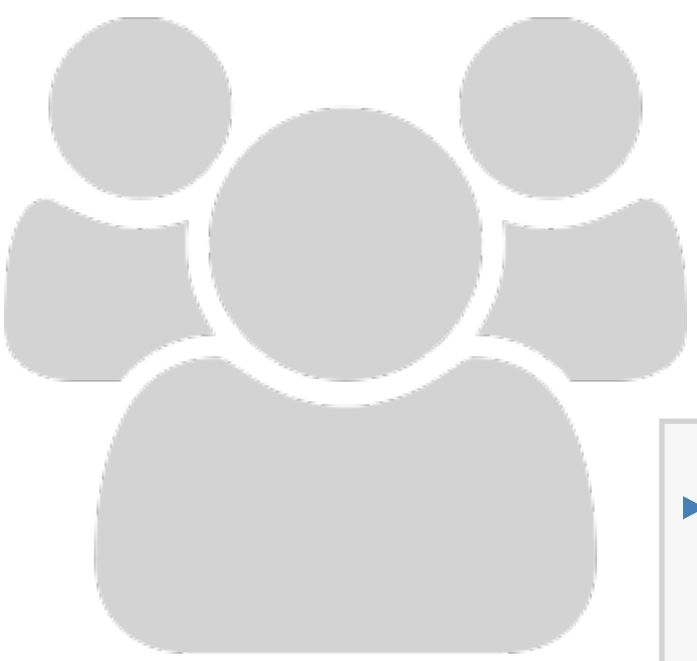
- `observeEvent` is for event handling
- `eventReactive` is for delayed computation

```
observeEvent(when_this_changes, {  
  do_this  
})  
  
r <- eventReactive(when_this_changes, {  
  recalculate_this  
})
```

Use these functions when you want to explicitly name your reactive dependencies, as opposed to letting `reactive`/`observe` implicitly depend on anything they read.



# EXERCISE



- ▶ Open `apps/adv-reactivity/cranlogs.R` and run it. This app has several problems:
  - ▶ We get an error right off the bat — the plot is running before the user has specified any packages.
  - ▶ Unless you're a very fast typist, typing package names will cause the `cranlogs` server to be queried with many incomplete queries.
  - ▶ Add an "Update" `actionButton` to the UI, and make sure nothing happens until it's clicked.

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# SOLUTION

See `cranlogs-solution.R`

```
packages <- reactive({  
  strsplit(input$packages, " *, *")[[1]]  
})
```

```
packages <- eventReactive(input$update, {  
  strsplit(input$packages, " *, *")[[1]]  
})
```

# REVIEW: REACTIVE VALUES

- Read/write versions of input.
- Try not to use this to store calculated values. But in some cases, it's unavoidable.

```
# Create  
rv <- reactiveValues(x = 10)  
  
# Read  
rv$x  
  
# Write  
rv$x <- 20
```

# EXERCISE



- ▶ Open the file `apps/adv-reactivity/counter.R`. It has three action buttons:
  - ▶ Increment: Increase the value by 1
  - ▶ Decrement: Decrease the value by 1
  - ▶ Reset: Set the value to 0
- ▶ Unfortunately, it doesn't work. See if you can implement the server side.

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# SOLUTION

See counter-solution.R

```
rv <- reactiveValues(count = 0)

observeEvent(input$increment, {
  rv$count <- rv$count + 1
})
observeEvent(input$decrement, {
  rv$count <- rv$count - 1
})
observeEvent(input$reset, {
  rv$count <- 0
})

output$value <- renderText({
  rv$count
})
```



# WHEN TO USE REACTIVEVALUES

- Don't use `reactiveValues` when you're calculating a value based on other values and calculations that are already available to you.
- Do use `reactiveValues` to store state that otherwise would be lost from your graph of reactive objects.

# REACTIVEVALUES EXAMPLE 1

(1) A calculation over the history of something reactive:

```
observeEvent(input$add, {  
  rv$total <- rv$total + input$x  
})
```

(Or a more elegant way to do the same, using [hadley/shinySignals](#):.)

```
total <- shinySignals::reducePast(reactive(input$x), `+`, 0)
```

# REACTIVEVALUES EXAMPLE 2

(2) Tracking which of several events happened most recently:

```
observeEvent(input$editMode, {  
  rv$mode <- "edit"  
})  
  
observeEvent(input$previewMode, {  
  rv$mode <- "preview"  
})  
  
output$page <- renderUI({  
  if (rv$mode == "edit") {  
    ...  
  } else if (rv$mode == "preview") {  
    ...  
  }  
})
```

# REACTIVEVALUES EXAMPLE 3

(3) To change rules of reactivity:

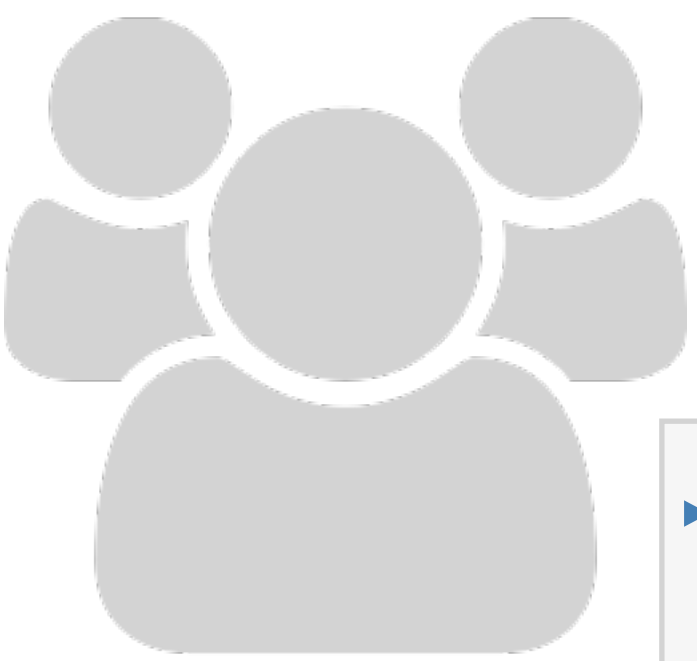
- Normally, as soon as reactive expressions are invalidated (before they have recalculated) they invalidate everyone downstream who depends on them.
- But sometimes recalculating will end up giving us the same value as the previous anyway, and any downstream recalculations might have been wasted work.

```
dedupeReactive <- function(rexpr, priority = 10) {  
  rv <- reactiveValues(value = NULL)  
  
  observe({  
    rv$value <- rexpr() # TODO: Handle errors  
  }, priority = priority)  
  
  reactive(rv$value)  
}
```

# PREVENTING REACTIVITY WITH ISOLATE

- ▶ Use `isolate` from inside a reactive expression or observer, to ignore the implicit reactivity of a piece of code.
- ▶ Wrap it around expressions or a whole code block.





# EXERCISE

- ▶ Determine when r1, r2, and r3 update:

```
r1 <- reactive({  
  input$x * input$y  
})
```

```
r2 <- reactive({  
  input$x * isolate({ input$y })  
})
```

```
r3 <- reactive({  
  isolate({ input$x * input$y })  
})
```



# SOLUTION

# Updates every time input\$x or input\$y change

```
r1 <- reactive({  
  input$x * input$y  
})
```

# Updates only when input\$x changes

```
r2 <- reactive({  
  input$x * isolate({ input$y })  
})
```

# Never updates; it will always have its original value

```
r3 <- reactive({  
  isolate({ input$x * input$y })  
})
```

# Checking preconditions

# CHECKING PRECONDITIONS WITH REQ

- ▶ Cancel the current output (or observer) if a condition isn't met.
  - ▶ `req(input$text)`: Ensure the user has provided a value for the "text" input
  - ▶ `req(input$button)`: Ensure the button has been pressed at least once
  - ▶ `req(x %% 2 == 0)`: Ensure that x is an even number
  - ▶ `req(FALSE)`: Unconditionally cancel the current reactive, observer, or output

# CHECKING PRECONDITIONS WITH REQ

- `req(cond)` is similar to:
  - `stopifnot(cond)`
  - `if (!cond) stop()`
  - `assertthat::assert_that(cond)`
- but with these differences:
  - Errors during output rendering show up with bold red text in the UI; `req` just makes the output blank
  - Rather than verifying that `cond` is true, `req` verifies that `cond` is truthy (see `?isTruthy`)
    - Feels unnatural to be so arbitrary and nebulous, but this definition is just too practical for UI programming
  - Most importantly, `req` is like an error in that it "infects" the downstream elements of the reactive graph (if a reactive throws an error, then any other reactive/observer/output that tries to access it will also throw an error)




# EXERCISE



- ▶ Open `dynamic.R` and run it.
- ▶ It has lots of errors in the browser and the R console — ignore those for the moment.
- ▶ From the app, upload the `diamonds.csv` file found in the same directory. Now everything looks good.
- ▶ See if you can figure out why these errors appear when the app first comes up, and how you can get them to go away (first without `req`, and then, if you have time and can figure out how, using `req`).

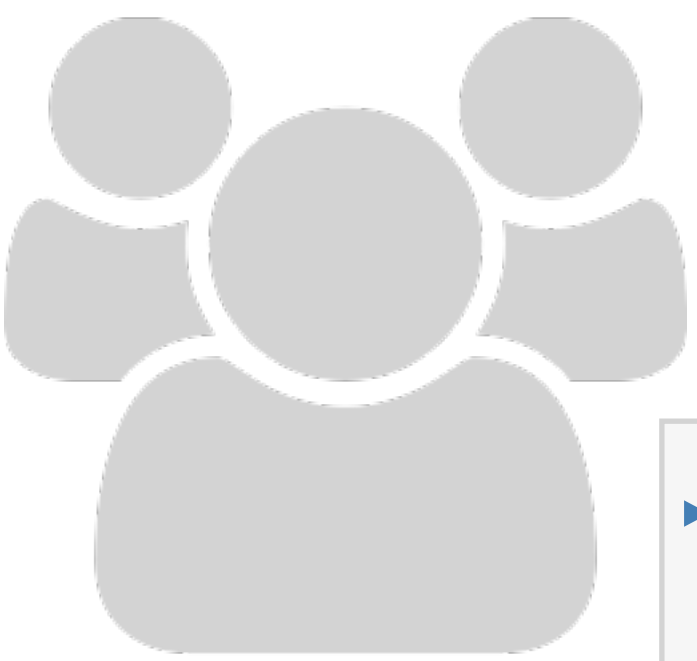
5<sub>m</sub> 00<sub>s</sub>

# SOLUTION

- 
- ▶ `Antisolution:dynamic-antisolution.R`.
    - ▶ This is how you used to have to do it: check for missing values yourself, and `return(NULL)`.
    - ▶ You had to do this in every reactive, observer, or output that could have a missing value, plus all of the reactivities, observers, and outputs that are downstream!
  - ▶ `Solution: dynamic-solution.R`.
    - ▶ Now you can use `req` in the reactivities, observers, and outputs that directly use potentially-missing inputs, and everything downstream can just not worry about it.

Time as a  
reactive source

# EXERCISE



- What will this produce?

```
ui <- basicPage( verbatimTextOutput("text") )

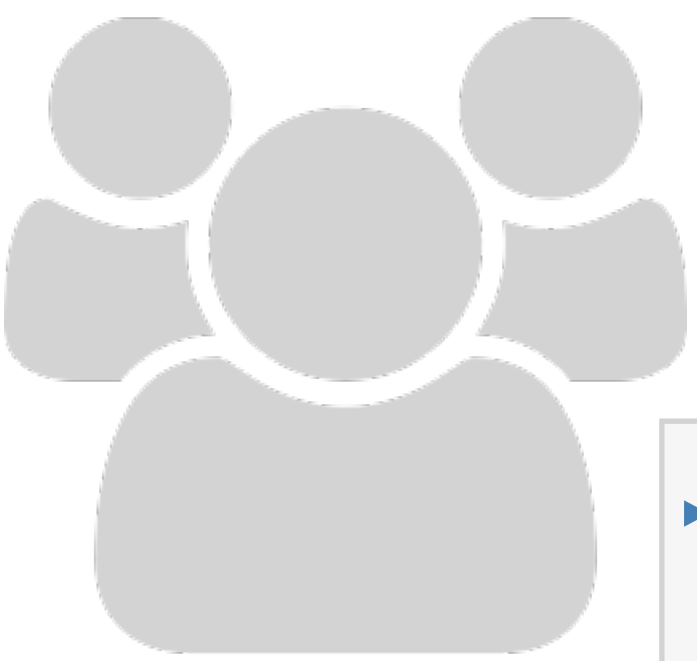
server <- function(input, output){

  r <- reactive({ Sys.time() })
  output$text <- renderPrint({ r() })

}

shinyApp(ui, server)
```

An app that reports Sys.time() at the time of first launch, and then doesn't update it



# EXERCISE

- ▶ What will this produce?

```
ui <- basicPage( verbatimTextOutput("text") )

server <- function(input, output){

  r <- reactive({
    invalidateLater(1000)
    Sys.time()
  })
  output$text <- renderPrint({ r() })

}

shinyApp(ui, server)
```

An app updates reported  
Sys.time() every second

Limiting  
rate



# DEBOUNCE AND THROTTLE

- If a reactive value or expression changes too fast for downstream calculations to keep up, you can end up with a bad user experience (laggy experience, wasted work).
  - `debounce` and `throttle` take a reactive expression object as input, and return a rate-limited version of that reactive expression.

```
# A reactive that updates as often as every 50 milliseconds
fast_reactive <- reactive({ ... })

# A reactive that updates no more often than every 2000 milliseconds
throttled_reactive <- throttle(fast_reactive, 2000)

# A reactive that doesn't update until fast_reactive has stopped
# changing for at least 1000 milliseconds
debounced_reactive <- debounce(fast_reactive, 1000)
```

# EXERCISE



- ▶ Open and run `points.R`. Click on the plot a few times to create points. Notice the annoying laggy behavior — this is due to a (simulated) expensive summary output.
- ▶ Use `debounce` or `throttle` to prevent the summary output from running so often.

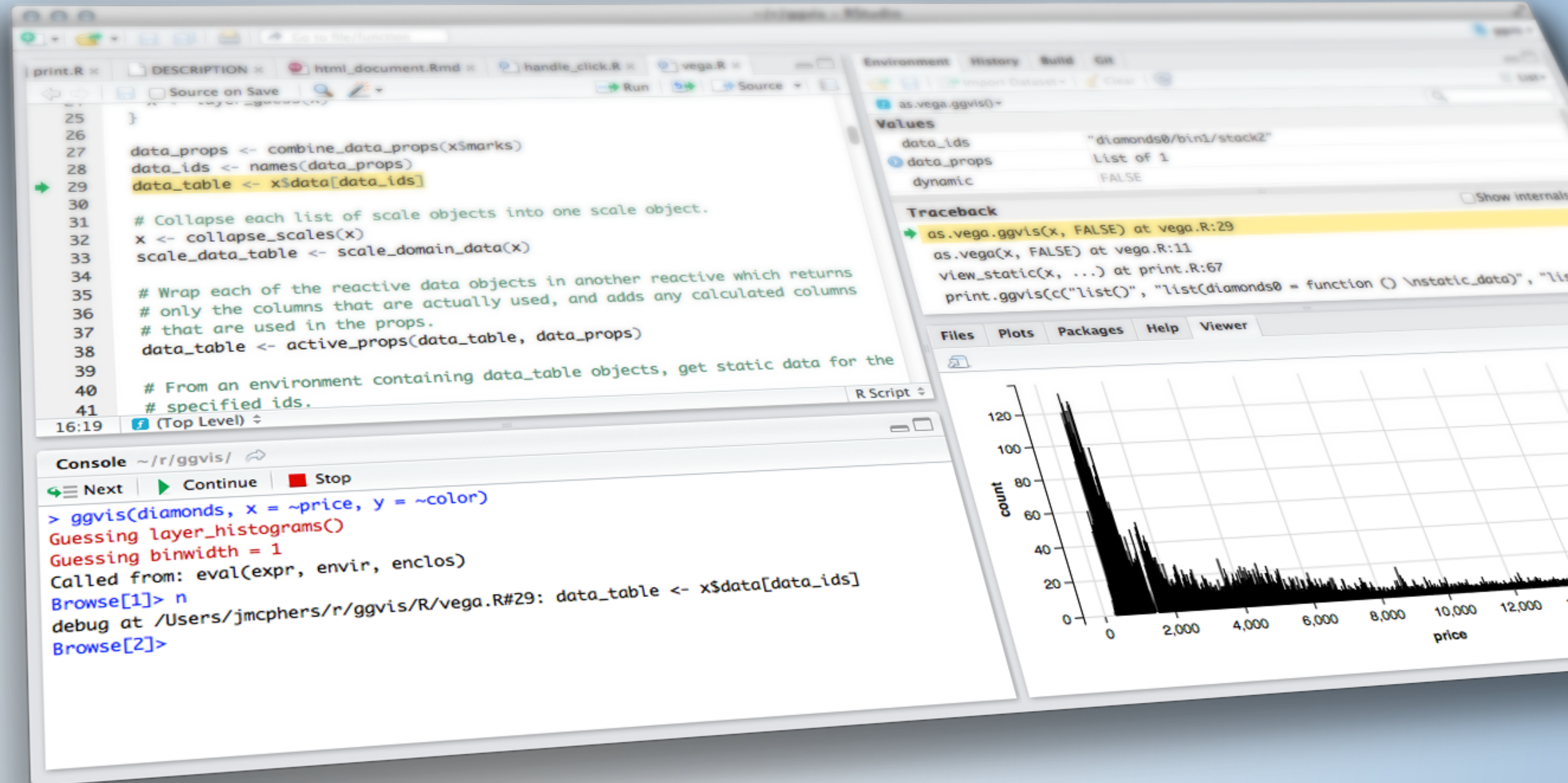
5<sub>m</sub> 00<sub>s</sub>



# SOLUTION

See `points-solution.R`





# ADVANCED REACTIVITY