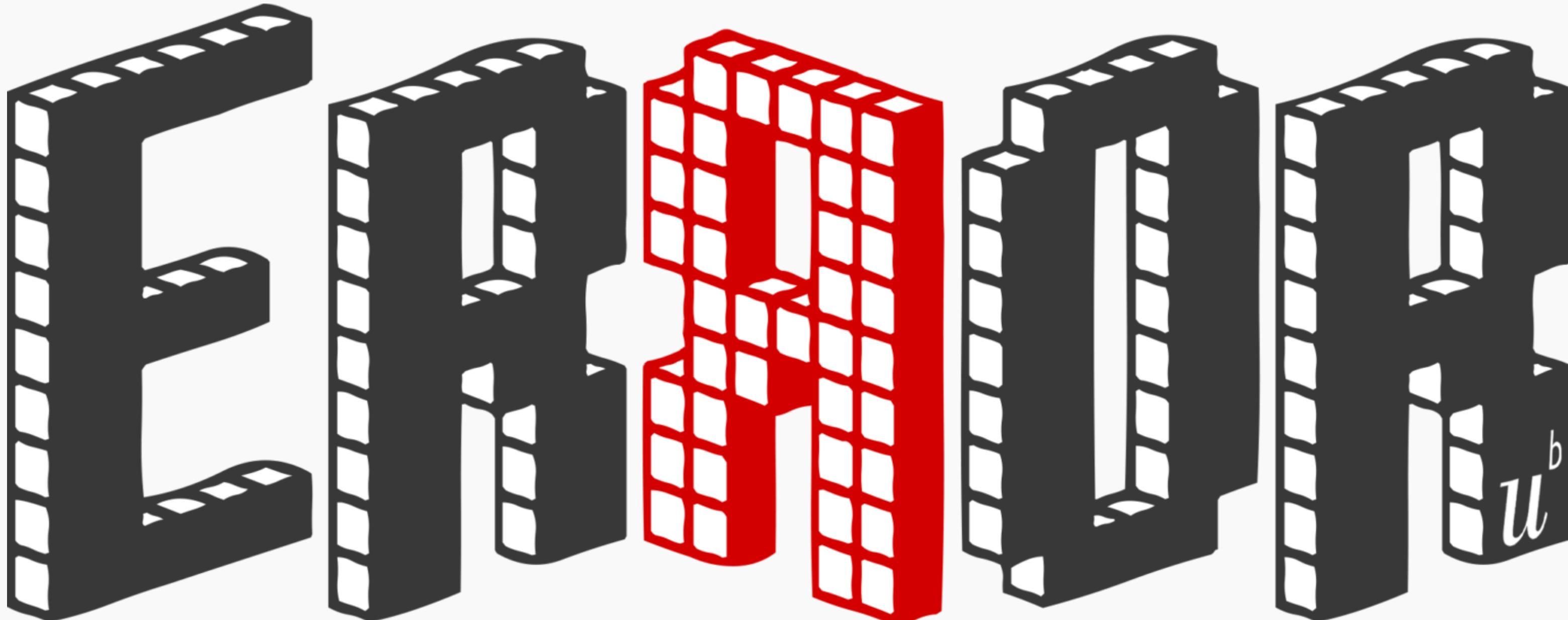


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A three-pronged effort to improve
post-publication critique & error detection

Ian Hussey

PRI~~I~~CIPAL INVESTIGATORS



Malte Elson

University of Bern



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CHIEF RECOMMENDER



Ian Hussey

University of Bern

RECOMMENDER



Jamie Cummins

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ADVISORY BOARD



Dorothy Bishop
University of Oxford



Nick Brown
Linnaeus University



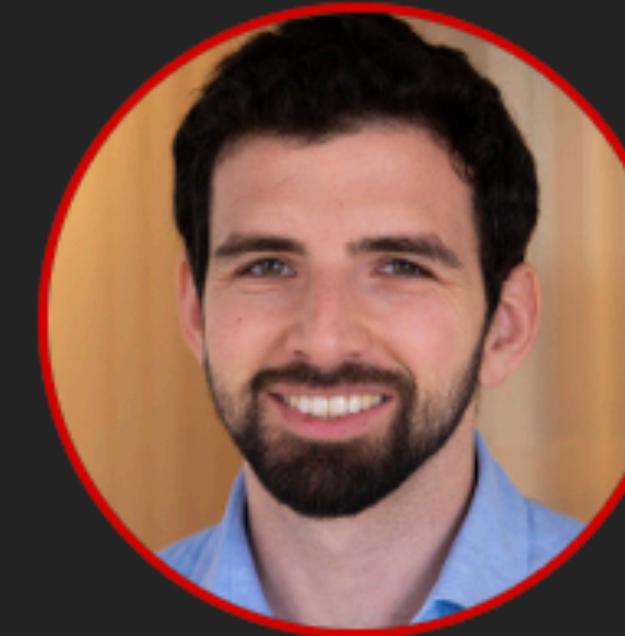
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Center for Open Science



Michèle Nuijten
Tilburg University



Simine Vazire
University of Melbourne



We ask too much of peer-review

- X One-shot, little redundancy
Despite imperfect reliability & evolving knowledge
- X Generally non-technical
- X Surprising little **error** checking
for an industry built on discovering truth

Errors are broadly conceived

‘An act that through ignorance, deficiency,
or accident departs from or fails to achieve
what should be done’

Errors are broadly conceived

- e Includes both provable & probable errors
- e Goes beyond computational reproducibility
- e Hard to check errors and not also scrutinize more generally,
eg flexibility, robustness, measurement

Who can help carry this burden?

**Need for parallel systems
of scientific verification**

Who can help carry this burden?



A clone-army of Nick Browns

Who can help carry this burden?

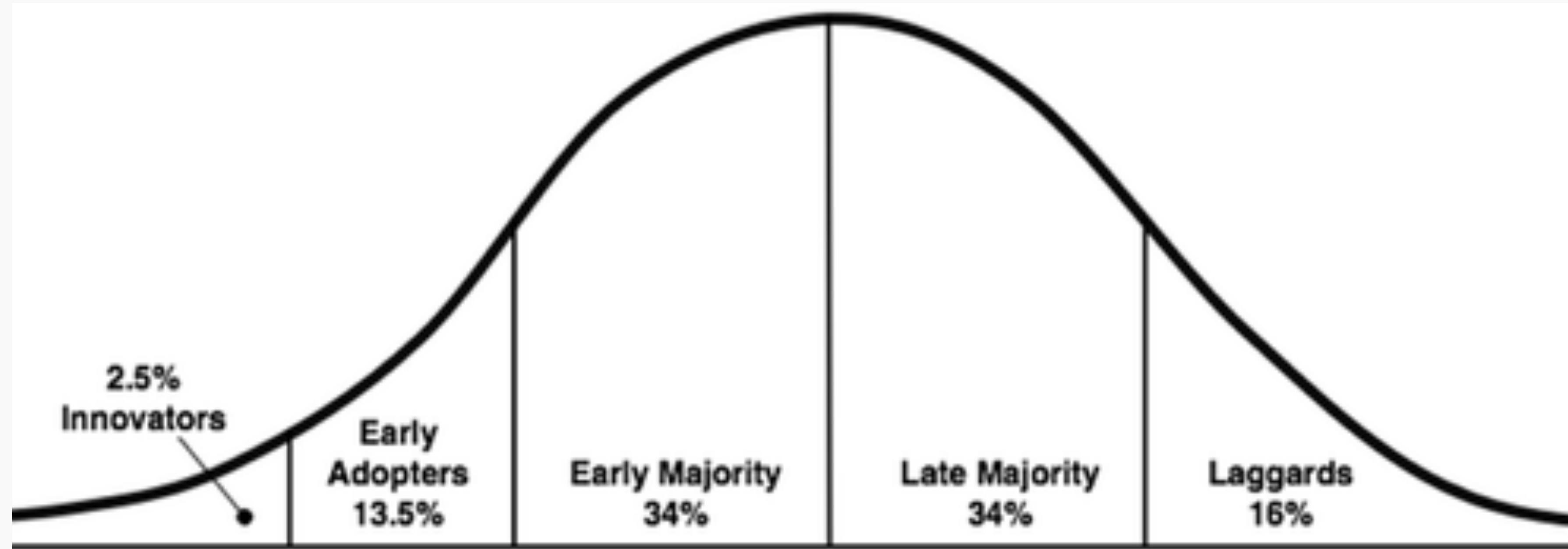
“A few outsiders and weirdos saw the giant lie at the heart of [science], and they saw it by doing something the rest never thought to do:
They looked.”



Lessons from the Open Science/methods reform movement

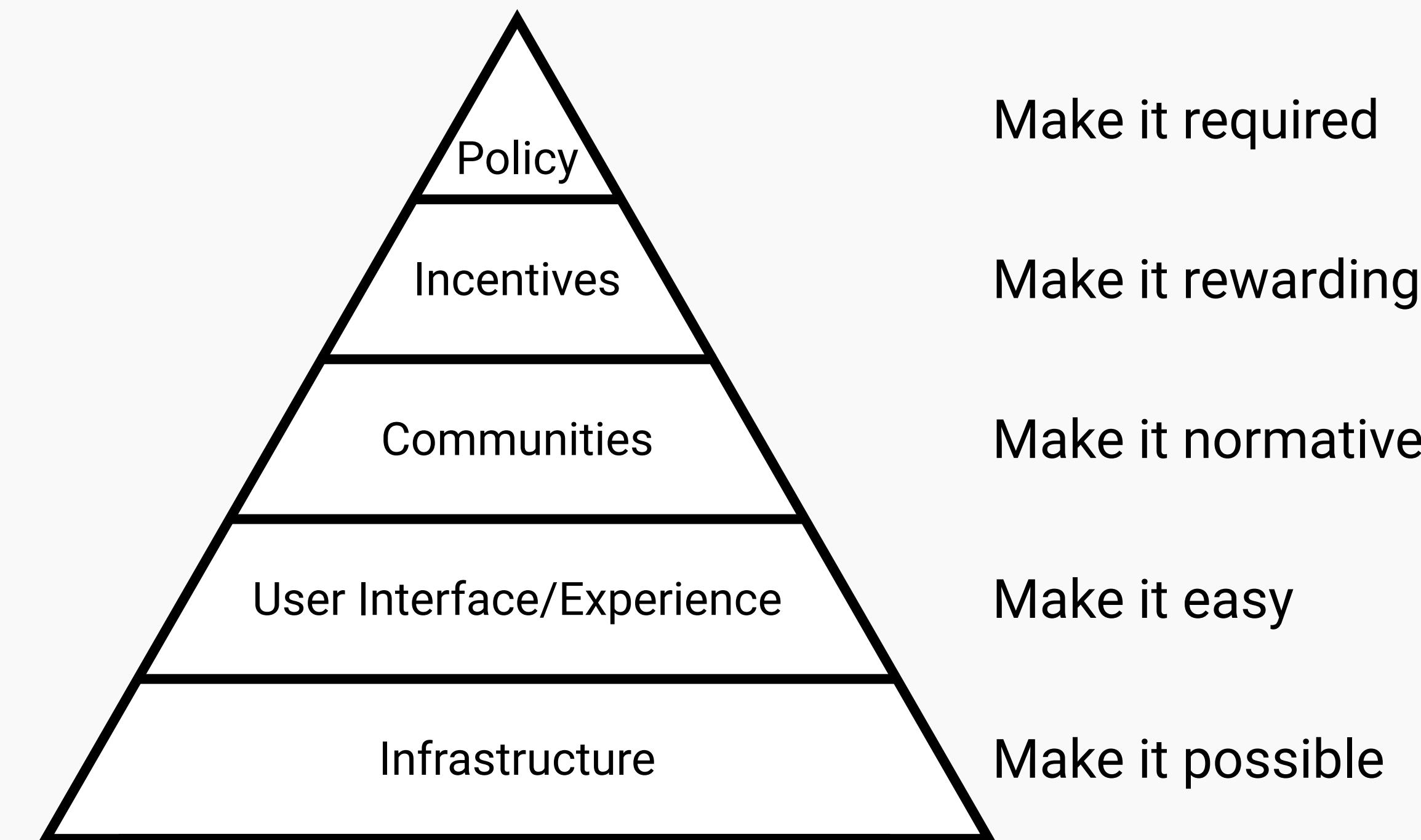
- Thought leaders and experts are important
- But reliance on a few diligent experts isn't scalable
- You also need a grassroots, ECR-driven movement
- And probably a stack of money too

Centre for Open Science's strategy to increase preregistration & data sharing



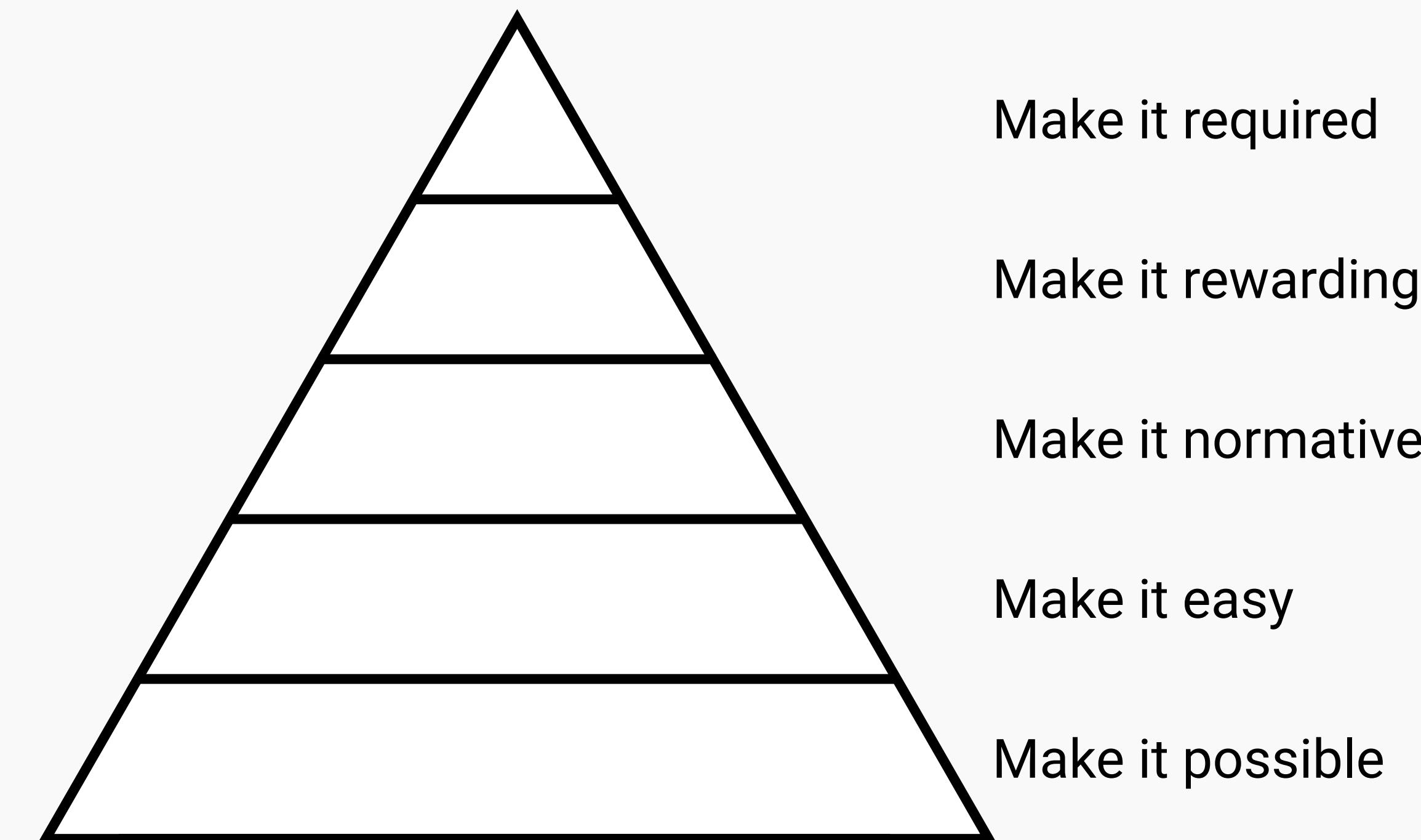
Nosek (2019)

Centre for Open Science's strategy to increase preregistration & data sharing

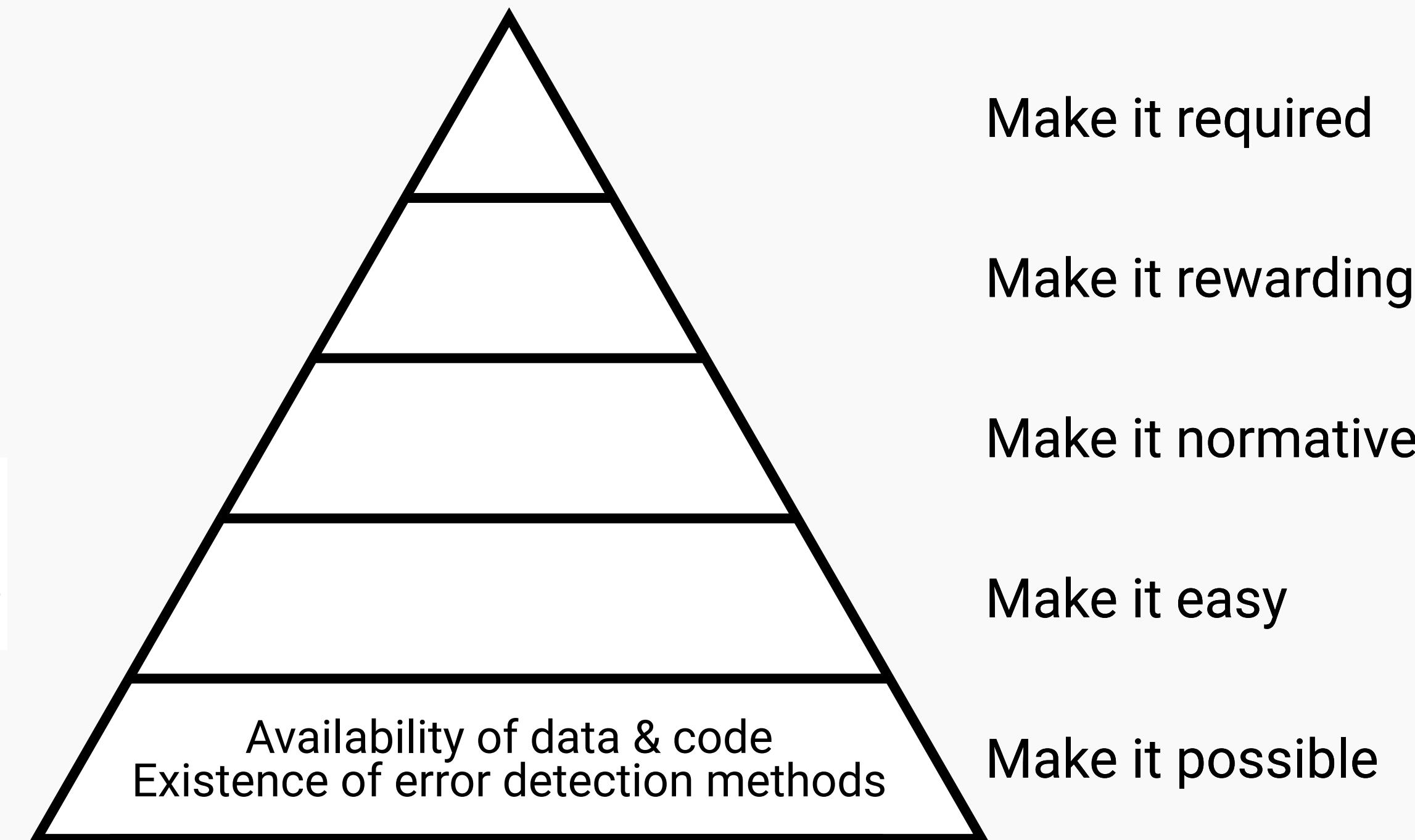


Nosek (2019)

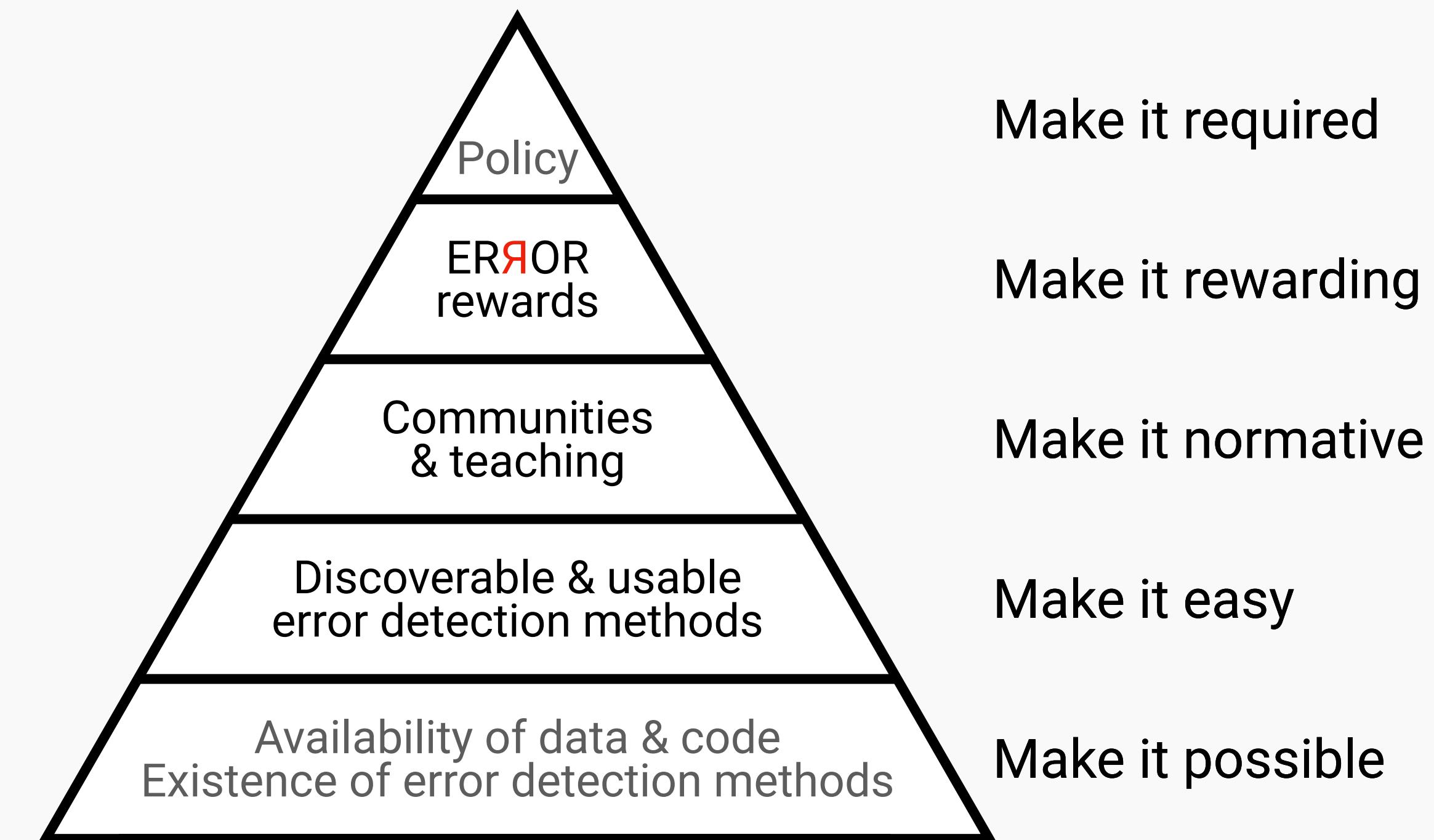
Our strategy to increase error checking, reporting, & correction



Our strategy to increase error checking, reporting, & correction



Our strategy to increase error checking, reporting, & correction



-
- 01.
 - 02.
 - 03.

Make it easy

Increasing the discoverability & usability
of error detection methods

Make it normative

A master's degree course in error detection

Make it rewarding

ERROR: A bug bounty program for science

Increasing the discoverability & usability of error detection methods

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

01.

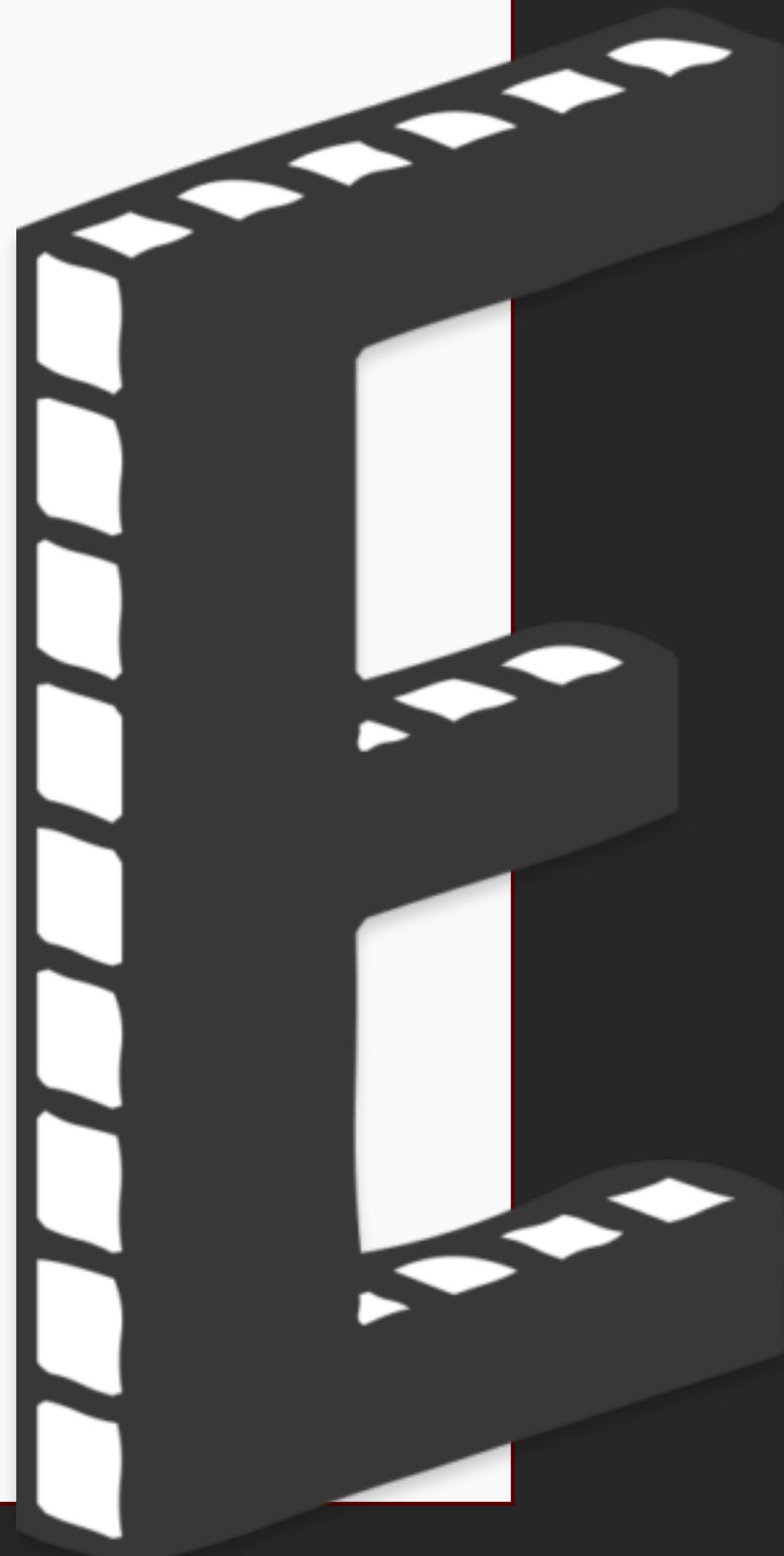
An ecosystem of error checking methods

Methods to scrutinise the article, data, code, or the relationships among them

Smoke vs fire methods

Often

- Very simple math
- Exploiting overlooked details & repetition
- Established principles redeployed for error detection





‘The scientific article’ is a well-defined genre

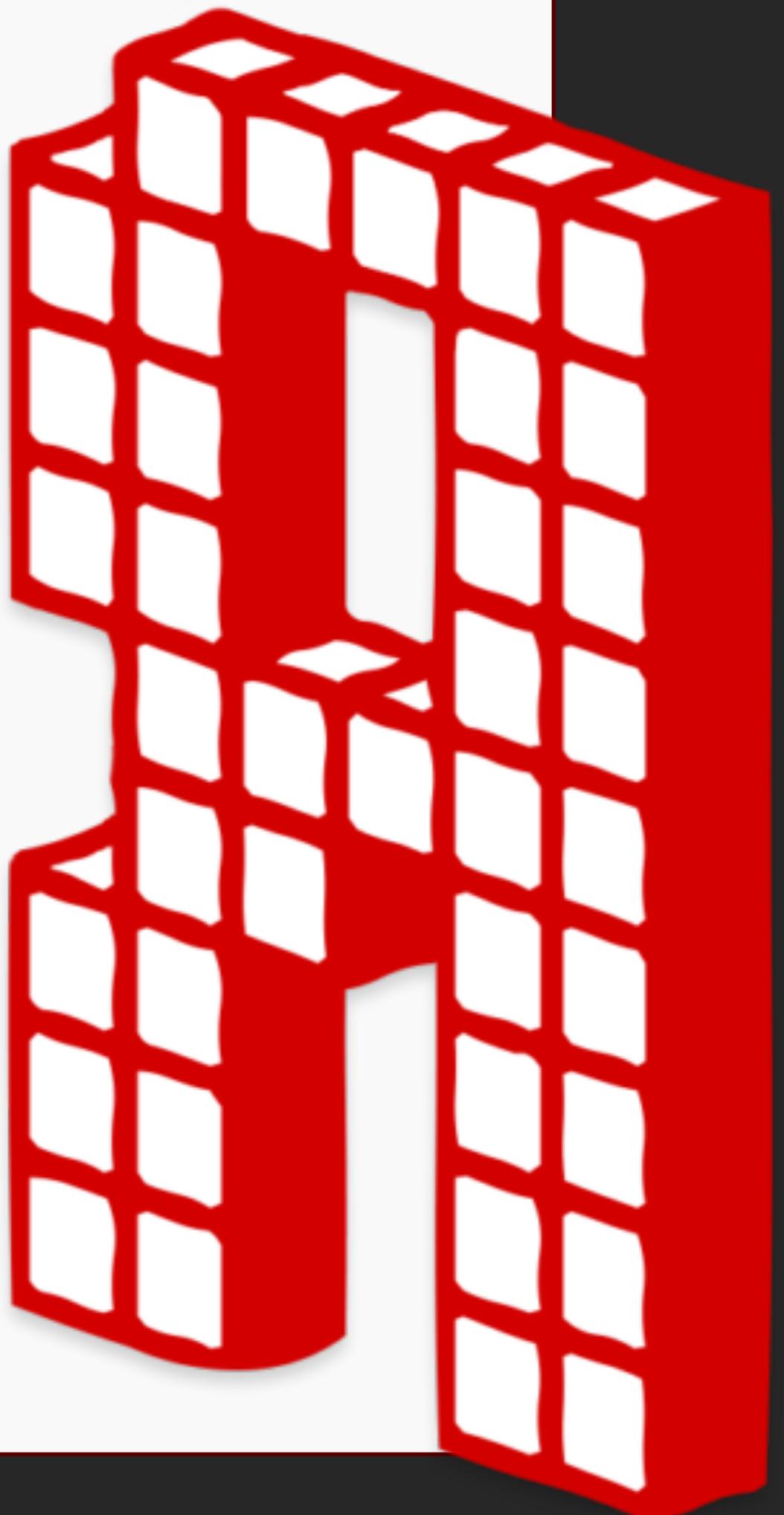
“No handbooks exist for writing replies”
(Hyman, 1995)

...maybe we need to write one

Repetition & recalculation methods

- StatCheck

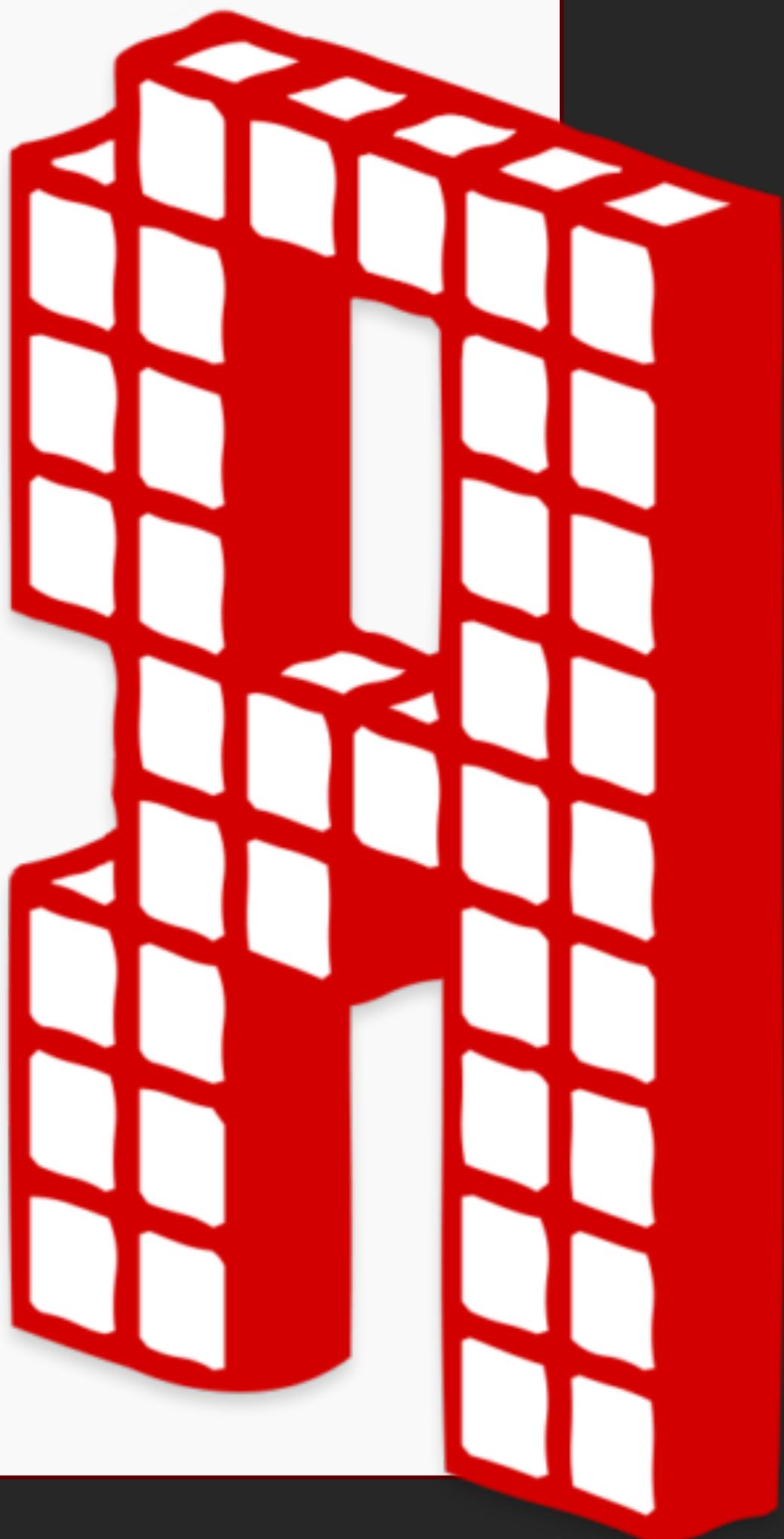
“ $t(58) = 1.46, p = .03$ ”



Repetition & recalculation methods

- StatCheck

“ $t(58) = 1.46, p = .03$ ” → $p = .19$

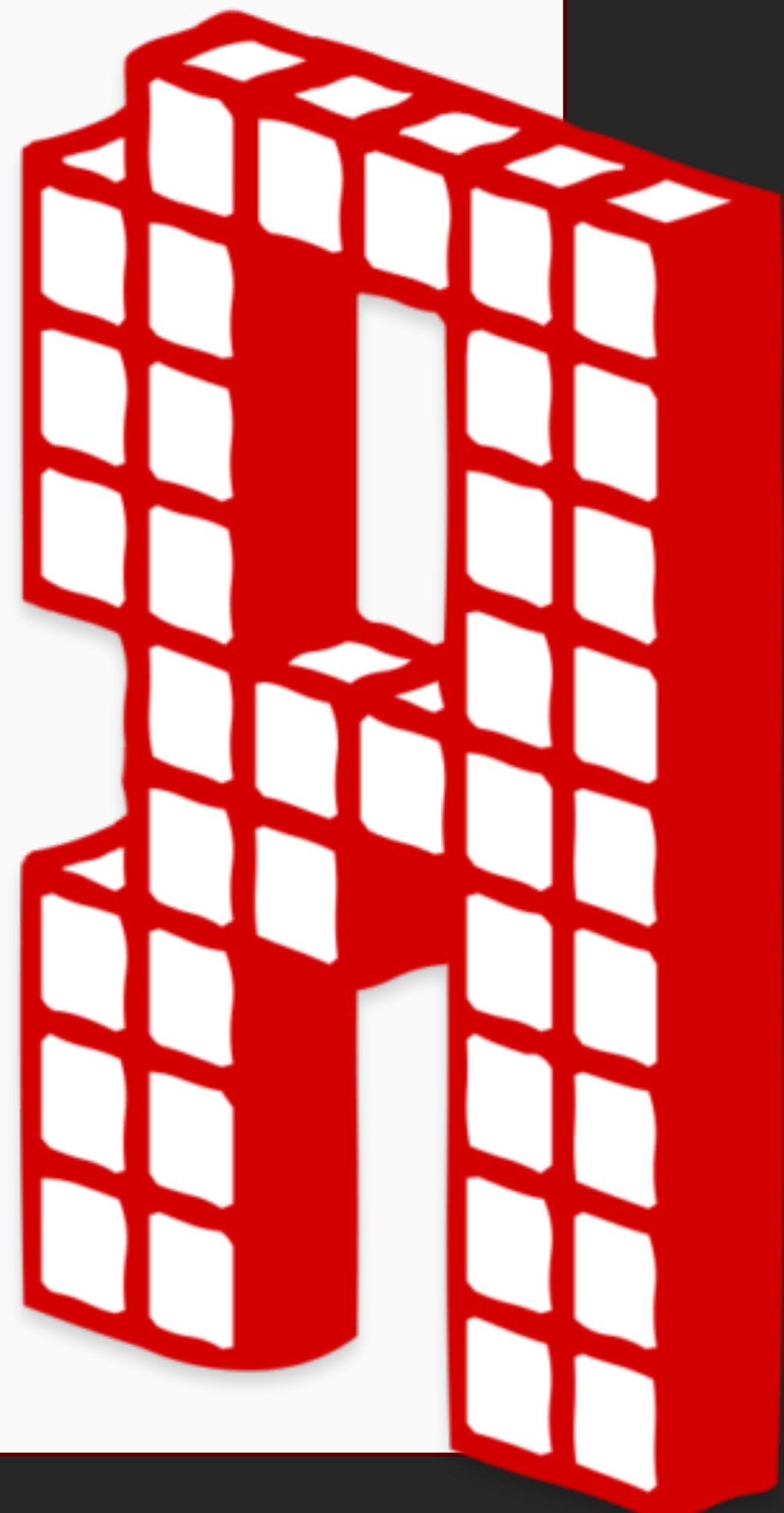


Repetition & recalculation methods

- StatCheck
- GRIM

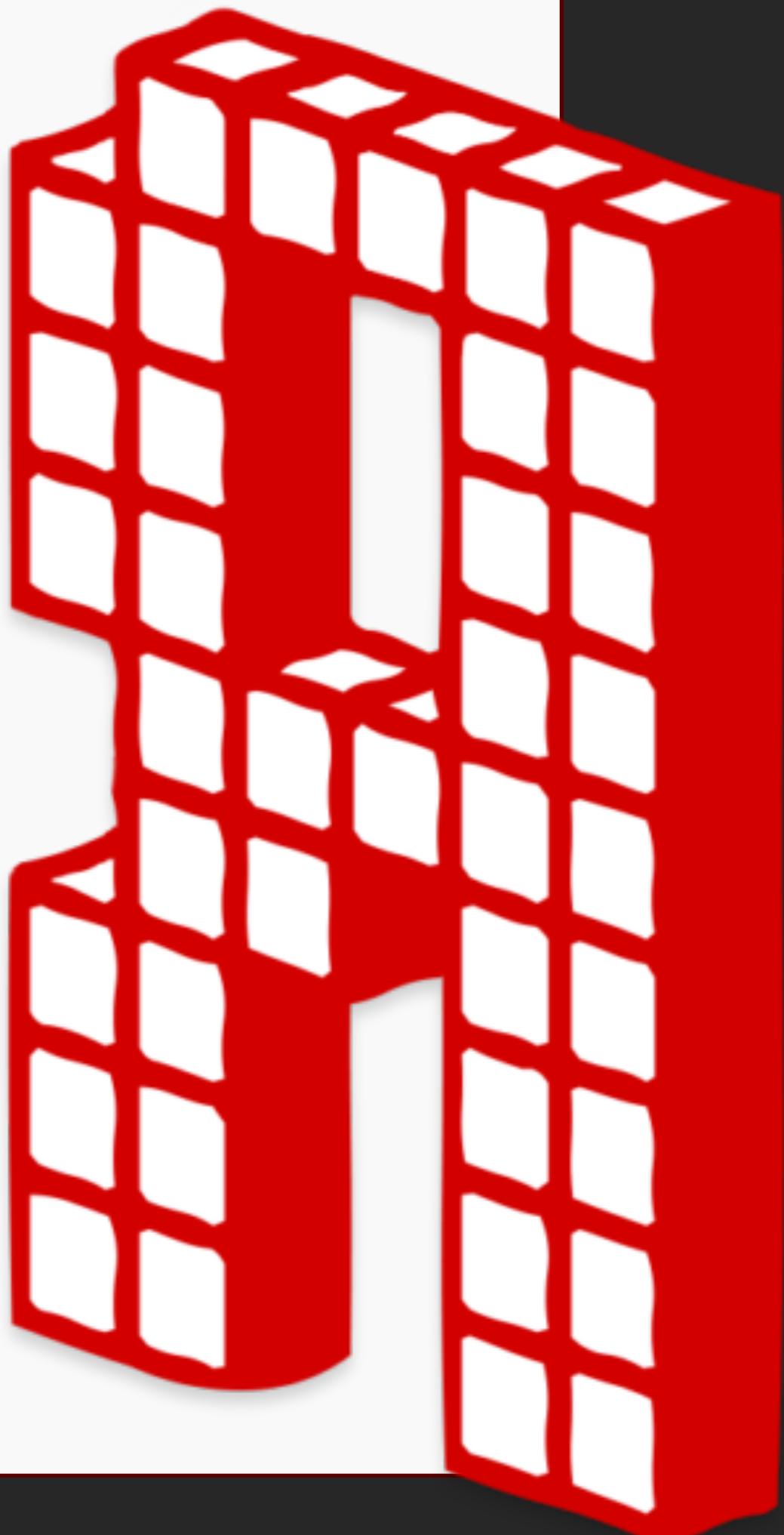
“two people rated the statement’s believability on a 1-5 scale (mean = 2.7)”

→ *mean must end in .0 or .5*



Repetition & recalculation methods

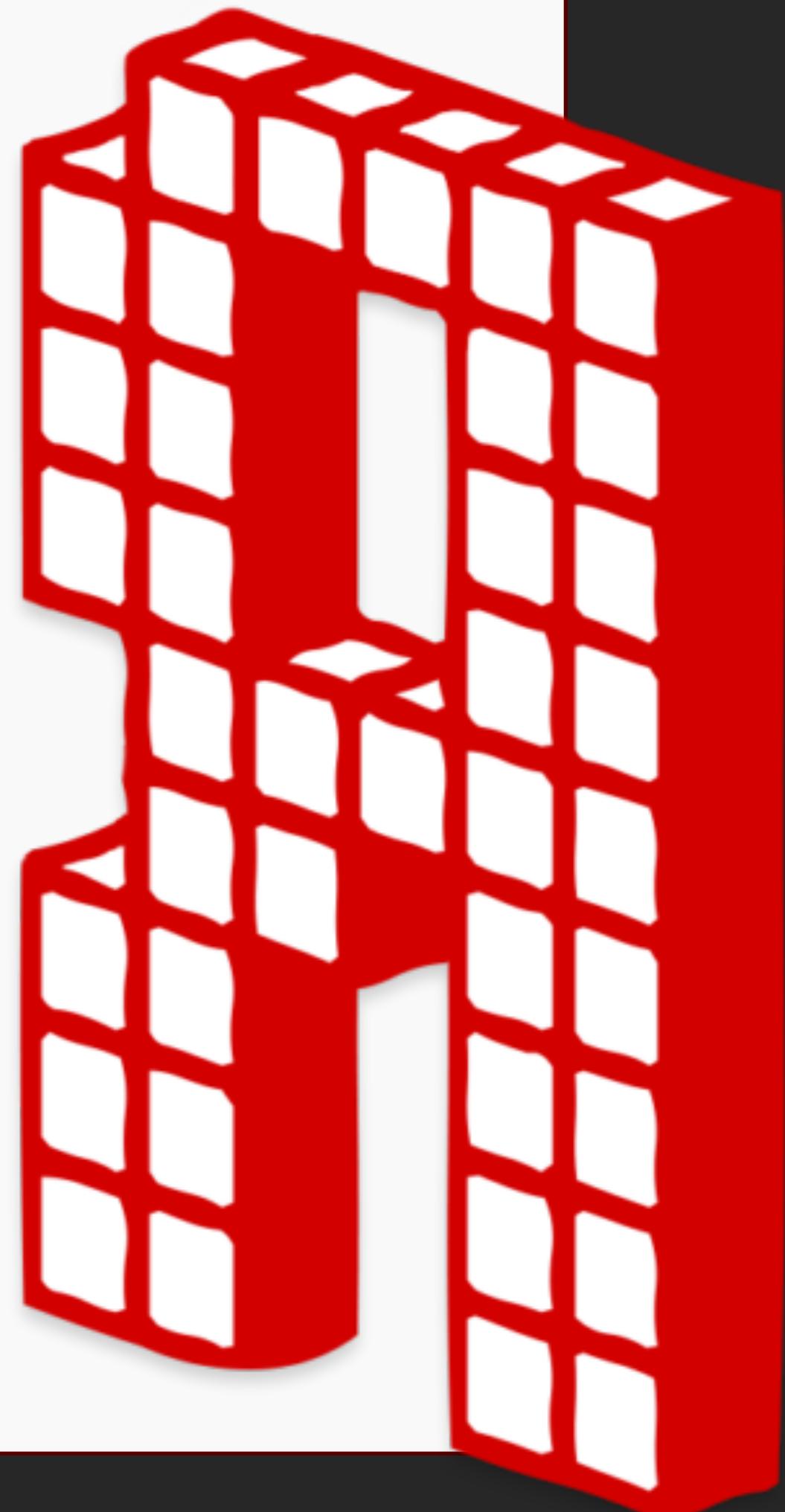
- StatCheck
- GRIM / GRIMMER / GRIMMEST
- SPRITE



Repetition & recalculation methods

- StatCheck
- GRIM / GRIMMER / GRIMMEST
- SPRITE
- RIVETS
- DEBIT
- Reproduce effect-sizes & test statistics from summary statistics
- ...

R packages, vignettes, how-to guides, blogs, & examples needed!

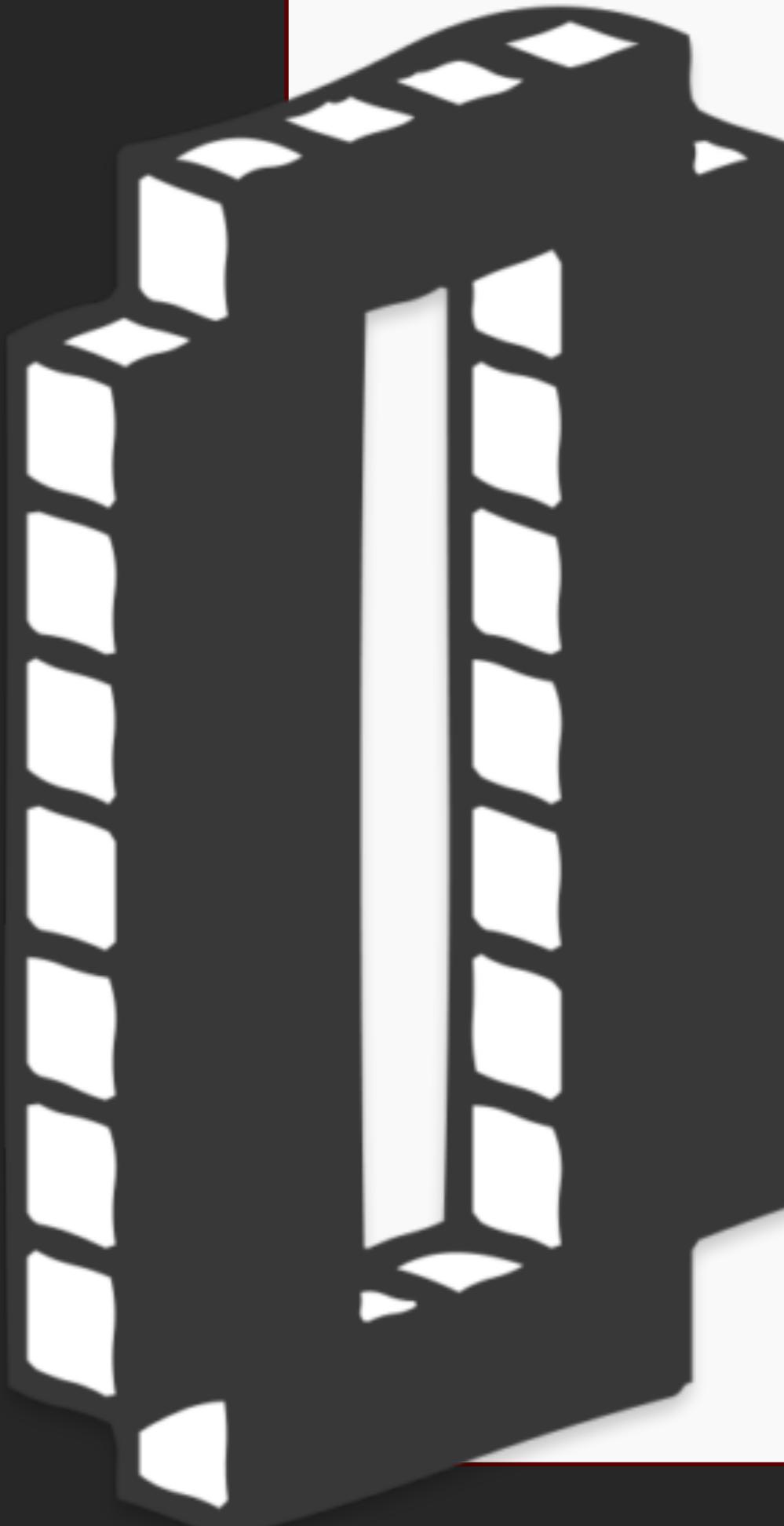


‘Shoe-Leather’ error checking

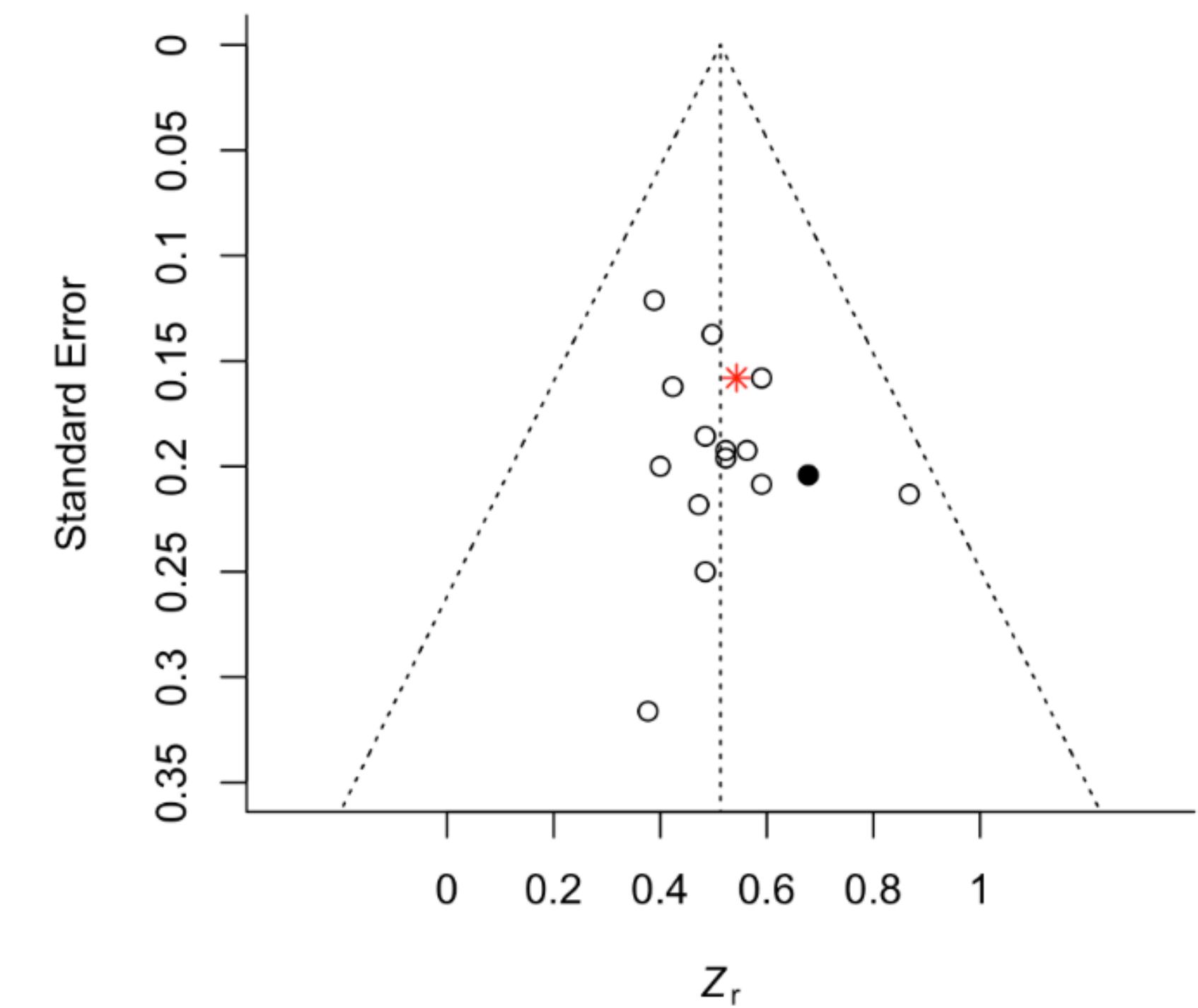
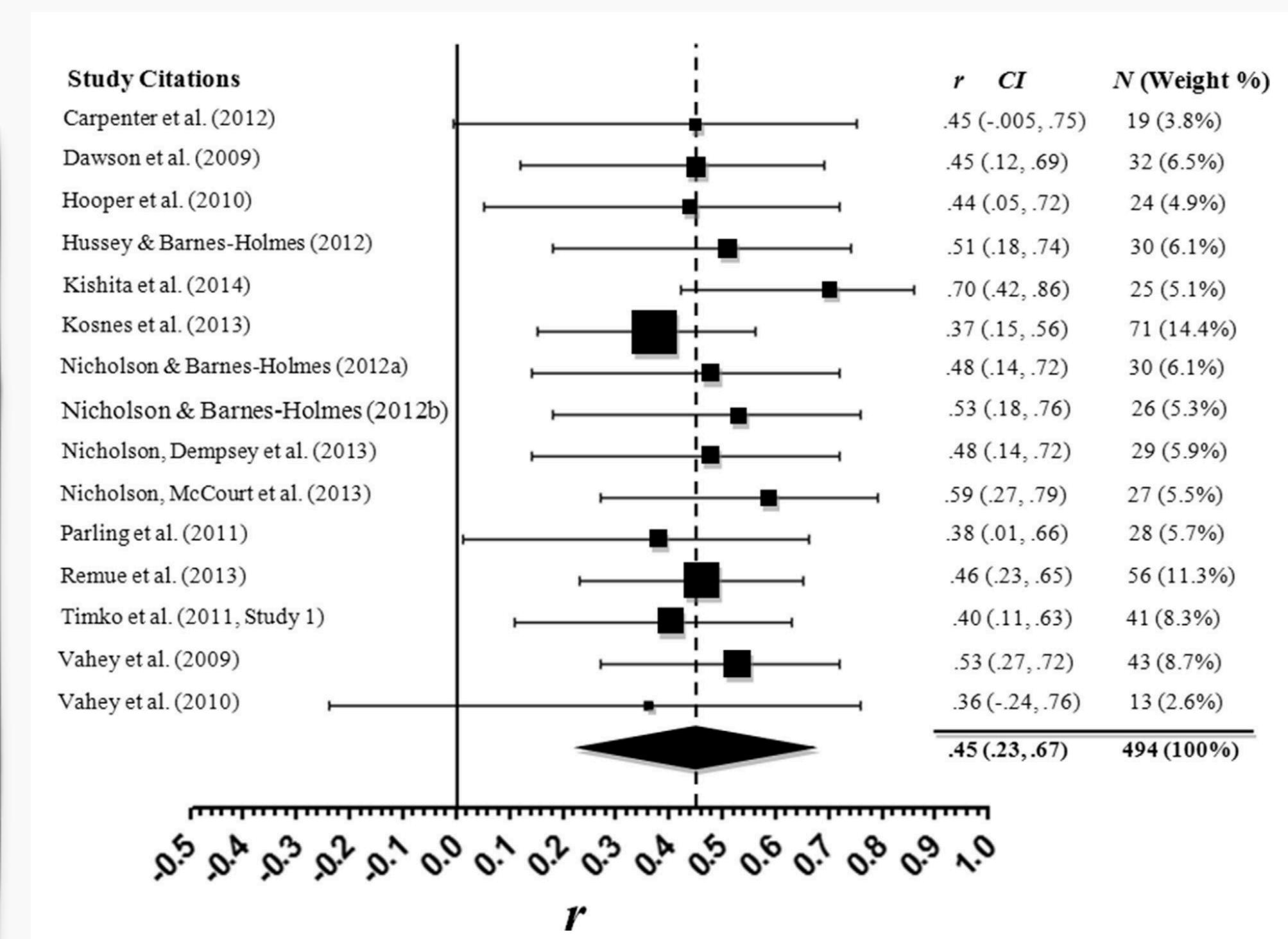
Unfortunate lack of acronyms!

- Full sample - exclusions = analytic sample size?
- Means inside scale range?
 - “Sum scores on the five-item scale (response options 1-7) ...
Mean = 38.1” → [5, 35]
- Point estimates inside the confidence intervals?
 - “ $\beta = .11$, 95% CI [.27, .53]”
 - ...

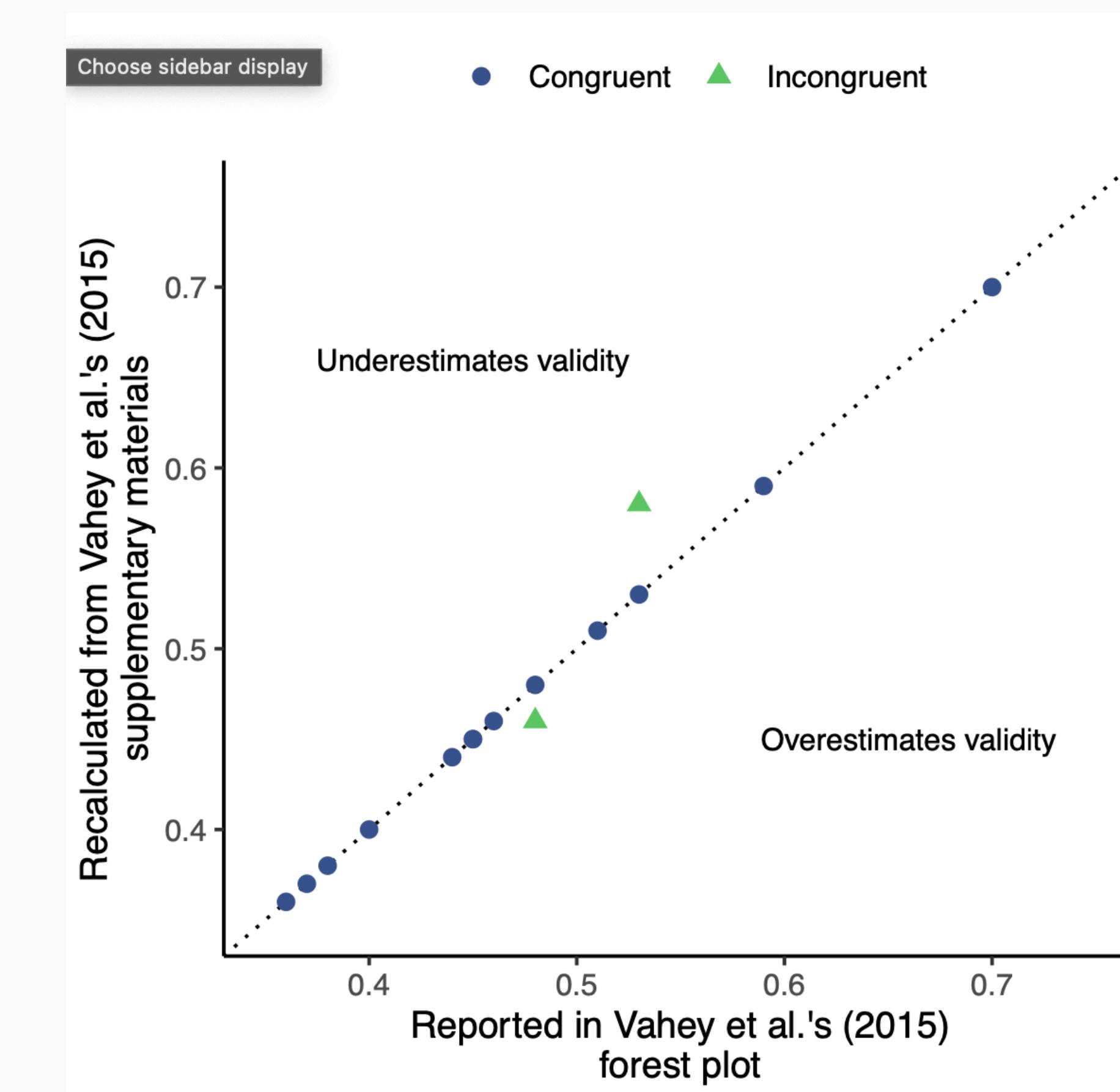
Nick Brown is king of this - but there are no training materials



- Forest plot = funnel plot?
- From Vahey et al. (2015)



- Meta-analysis effect sizes = effect sizes in original paper?
 - See Maassen et al. (2020)



Inferential & argumentation errors

- Citation errors
 - 9% completely mischaracterised (Cobb et al, 2023)
- Difference between signif. & non-signif. is not itself significant (Gelman, 2006)
- Reverse causality
 - Suicide literature: current depression “predicts” historic suicide attempt
 - Confusing DV/IV (Fried & Kievit, 2015)
- ...



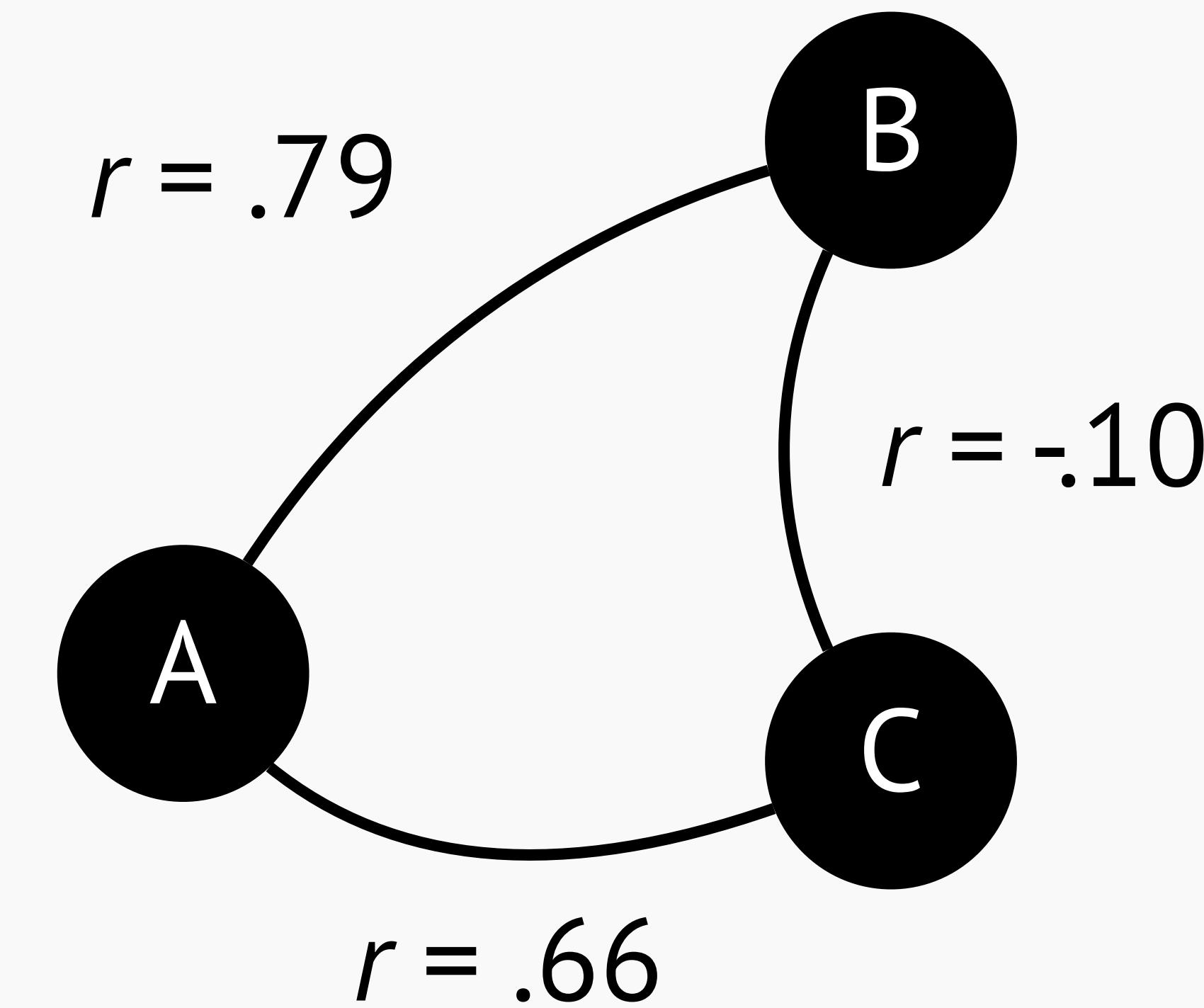
A foreseeable output:

A handbook for error detection

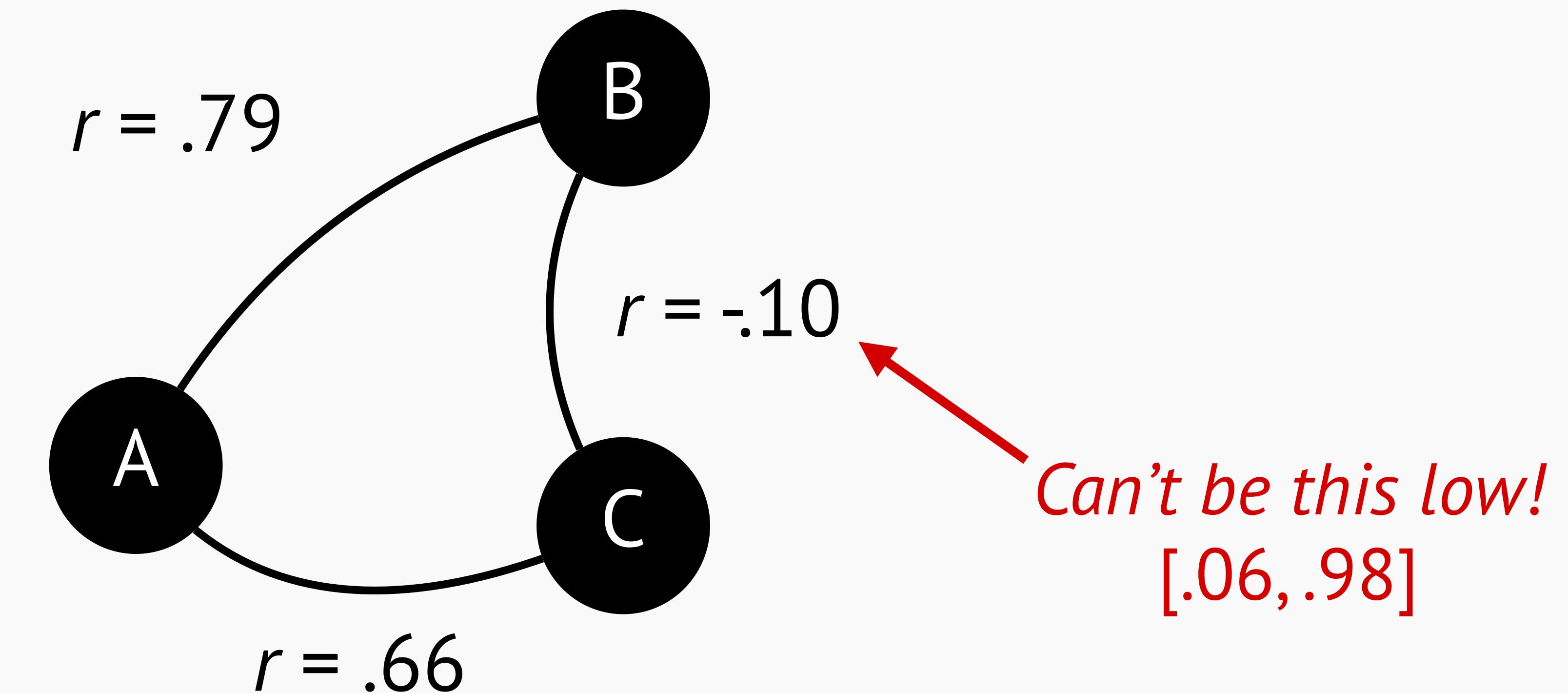
- What do you have?
 - Article, measures, data, code, the original authors' good-will?
- How can you get more?
 - Extracting additional data (plots, tables, summary statistics, asking)
- What could you check?
- How to prioritise?
 - What are the authors' claims? (Scheel, 2022)
- How to ensure reproducibility of checks?
- How to effectively communicate error checks

01.

What's wrong with these correlations?



What's wrong with these correlations?



Restrictions on correlations (Stanley & Wang, 1969)

01.

Which correlation table contains an error?

Hard to spot by eye; easier with code

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6
V1		0.32	0.34	-0.09	0.21	0.30
V2			0.45	-0.54	0.54	0.64
V3				-0.26	0.32	0.34
V4					-0.52	-0.49
V5						0.50
V6						

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6
V1		0.32	0.34	-0.09	0.21	-0.90
V2			0.45	-0.54	0.54	0.64
V3				-0.26	0.32	0.34
V4					-0.52	-0.49
V5						0.50
V6						

Reusing Correlations for Validation and Regression (RECOVAR)

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6
V1	0.32	0.34	-0.09	0.21	0.30	
V2		0.45	-0.54	0.54	0.64	
V3			-0.26	0.32	0.34	
V4				-0.52	-0.49	
V5					0.50	
V6						

Positive-definite

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6
V1	0.32	0.34	-0.09	0.21	-0.90	
V2		0.45	-0.54	0.54	0.64	
V3			-0.26	0.32	0.34	
V4				-0.52	-0.49	
V5					0.50	
V6						

Non-positive-definite

Reusing Correlations for Validation and Regression (RECOVAR)

Method development

- Statistical power?
- Corrections for rounding?
- Triangulation of problematic correlations?

Application

- Estimate prevalence of errors in correlation tables using the MetaBUS dataset (>16k publications)
- Bosco et al. (2015)

Reusing Correlations for Validation and Regression (RECOVAR)

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6
V1		0.32	0.34	-0.09	0.21	0.30
V2			0.45	-0.54	0.54	0.64
V3				-0.26	0.32	0.34
V4					-0.52	-0.49
V5						0.50
V6						

Fit regressions using correlation tables rather than data

- Reproducibility
- Robustness
- Probe researchers' implicit causal assumptions

$$V1 \sim V2 + V3 + V4$$

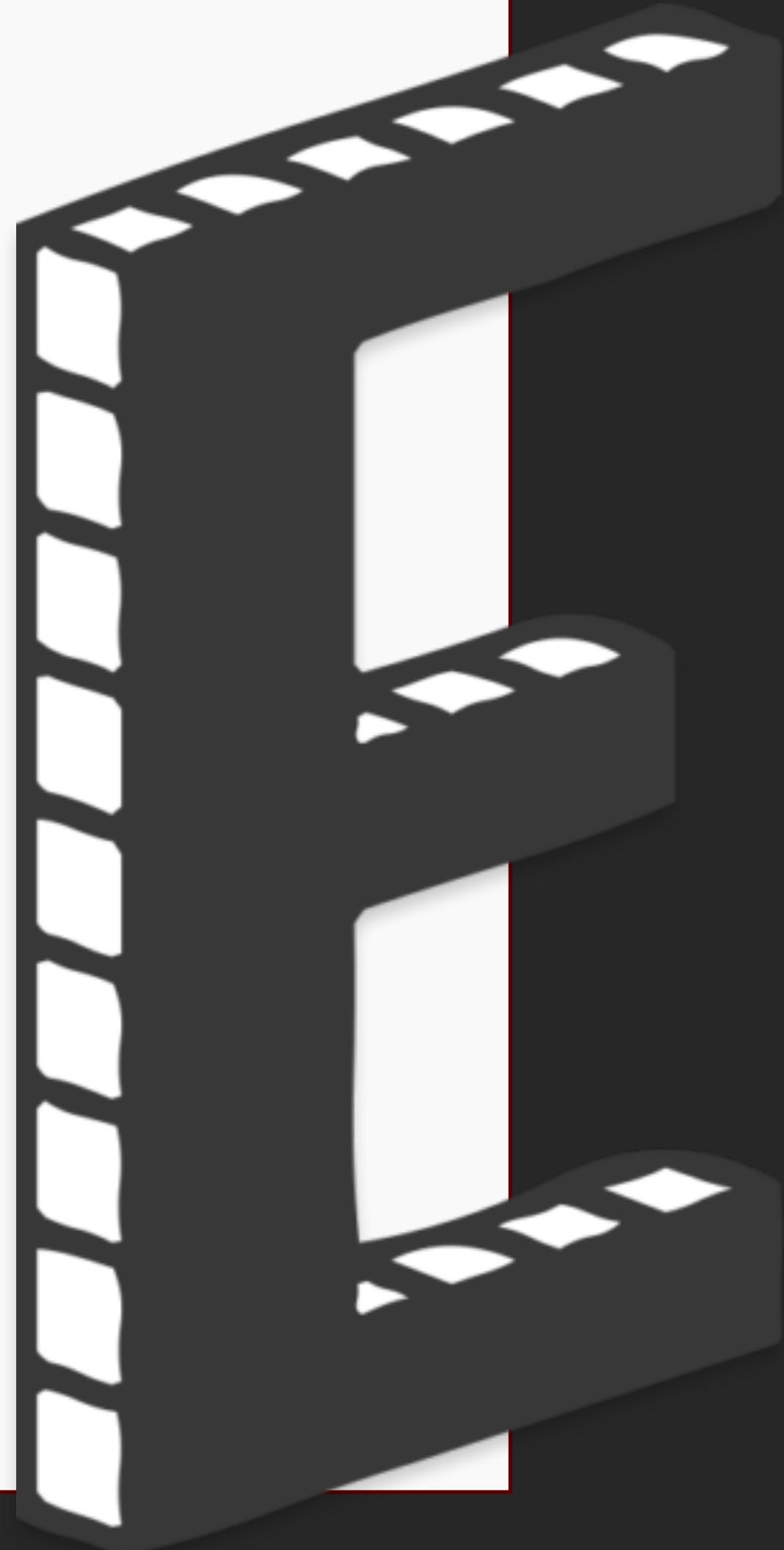
A master's degree course in error detection

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02.

Conspicuous absence of error detection in the curriculum

Defence against the dark arts:
a proposal for a new MSc course
(Bishop, 2023)



‘Normalise’ is a verb

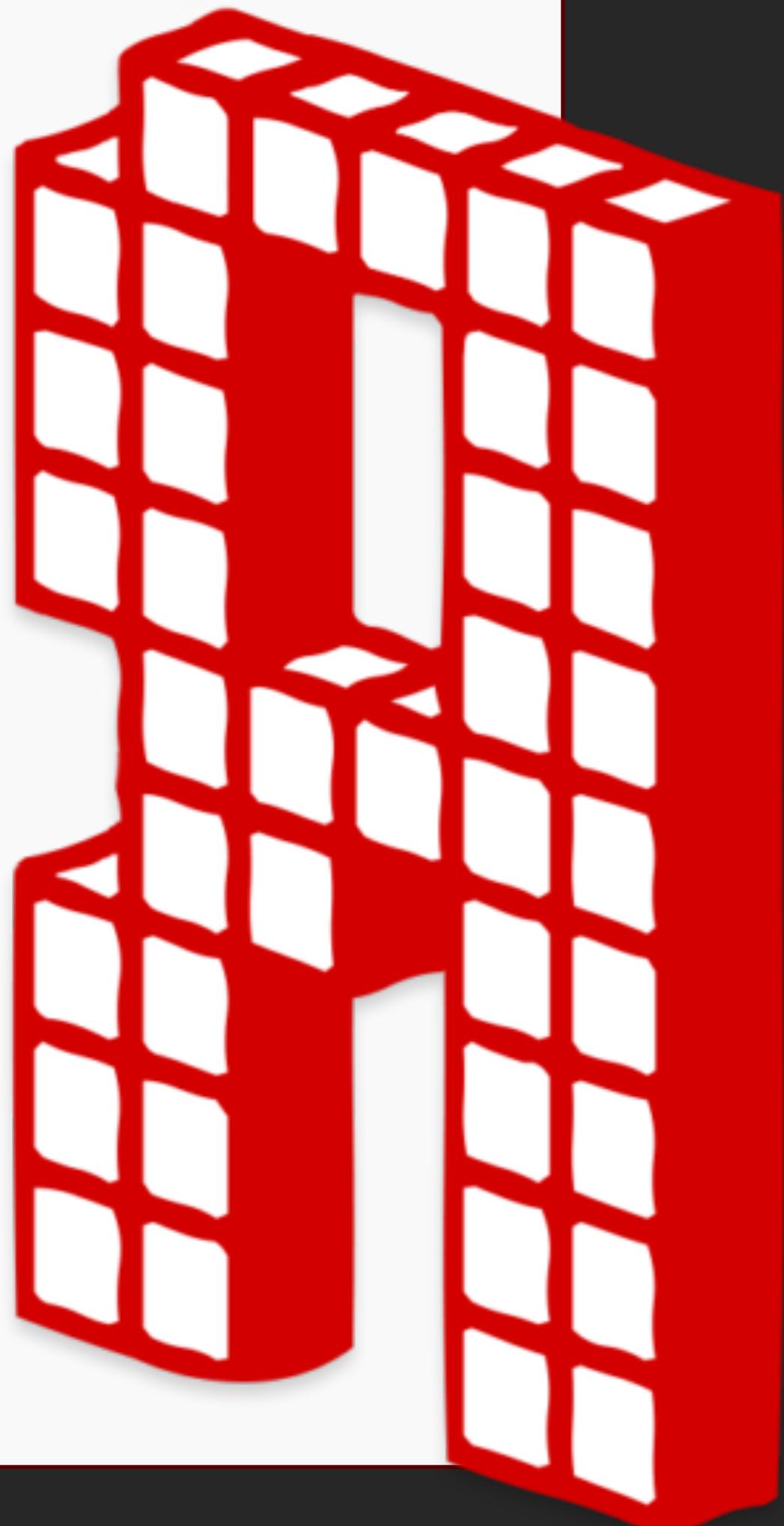
Masters course:

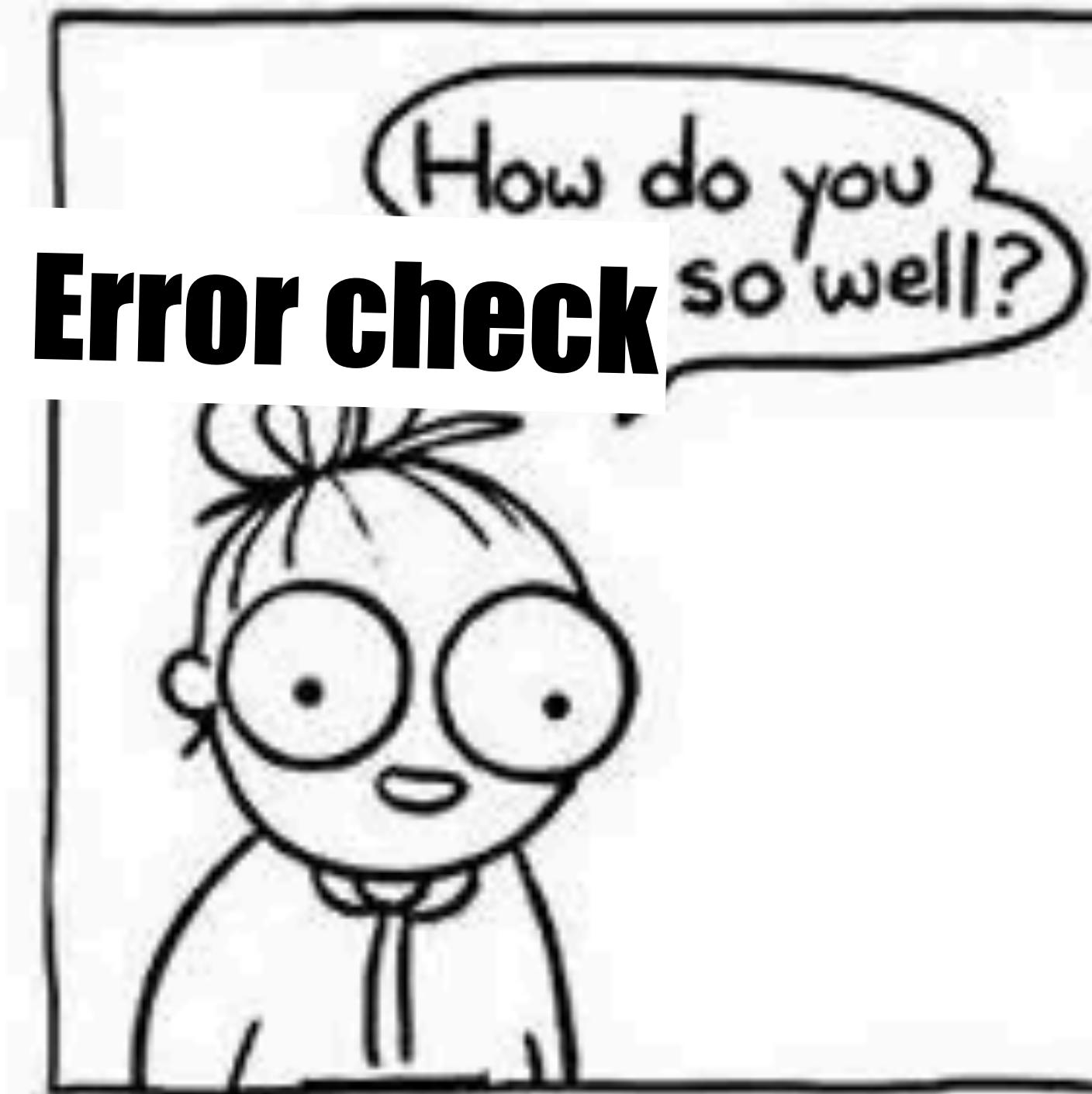
“Estimating the credibility of past research”

(@UniBe from Fall '23)

Science as an intensely human & fallible activity

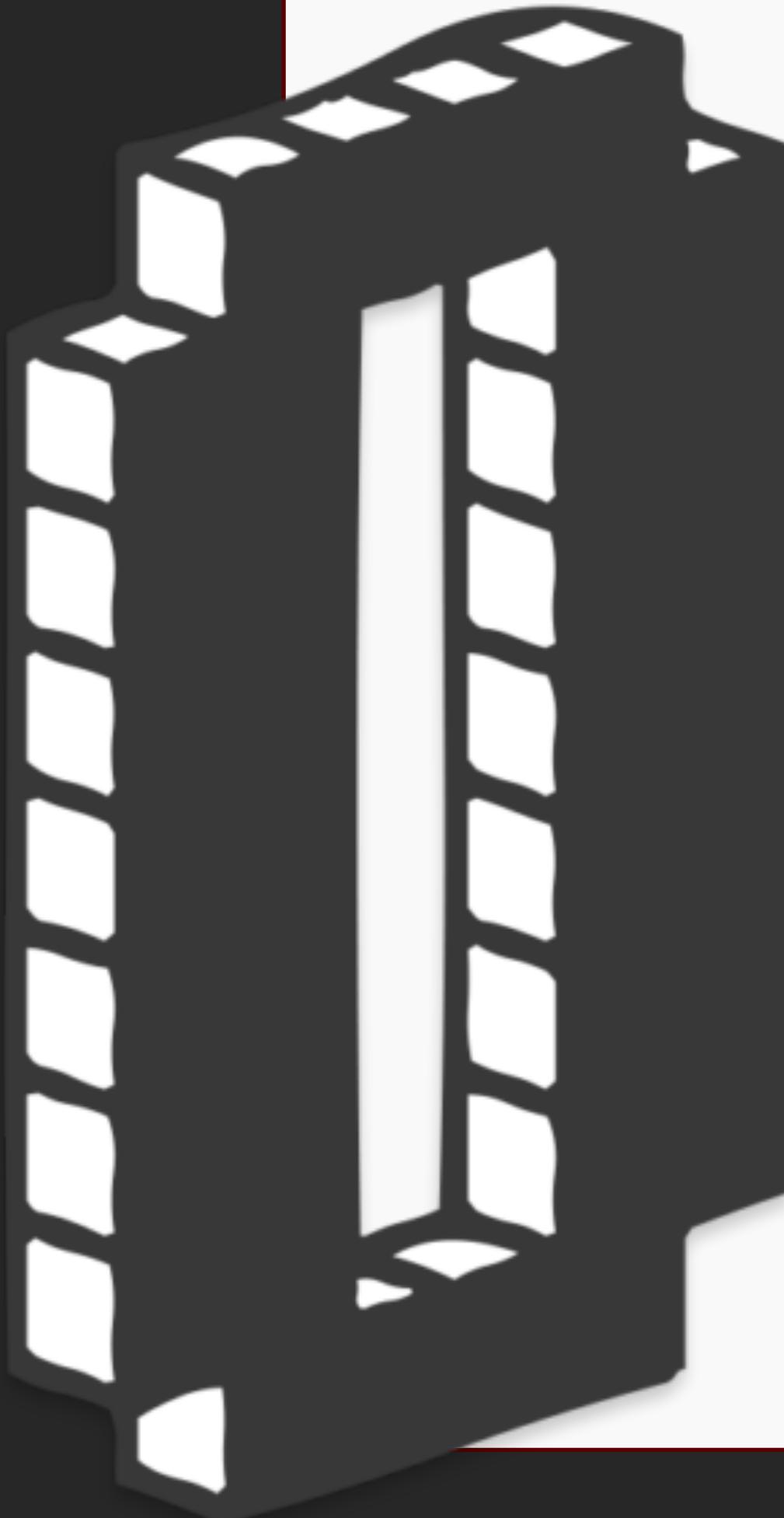
Organised skepticism





Error check





Syllabus

- Functions of science other than truth discovery
- *p*-curve, StatCheck, GRIM, GRIMMER, SPRITE, RECOVAR
- Recomputing results from summary statistics
- Effect size plausibility
 - Reliability corrections
- Meta-analysis bias detection & its failures
- (Missing) causal language
- Construct validity evidence
- Spotting nominative/jingle/jangle fallacies
- Obtaining & extracting data
- Communicating errors + examples of critique

*Not merely information, **practice!***

Problems encountered

Permission to critique

xxxxxxxxxx

Language of critique

Exposure & Practice!



ERROR

A bug bounty program for science

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

03.

250,000 CHF
(€260k, \$285k)
fund

Check
100
published articles
for errors

Pay authors & reviewers
+ **bonus reward**
contingent on errors found

	Base	Bonus reward
Author	CHF 250	Up to 250 CHF
Reviewer	c.250 – 1,000 CHF Depending on expected effort	Up to 2,500 CHF

* *Indicative ranges; will be scaled for regional differences*

Goals



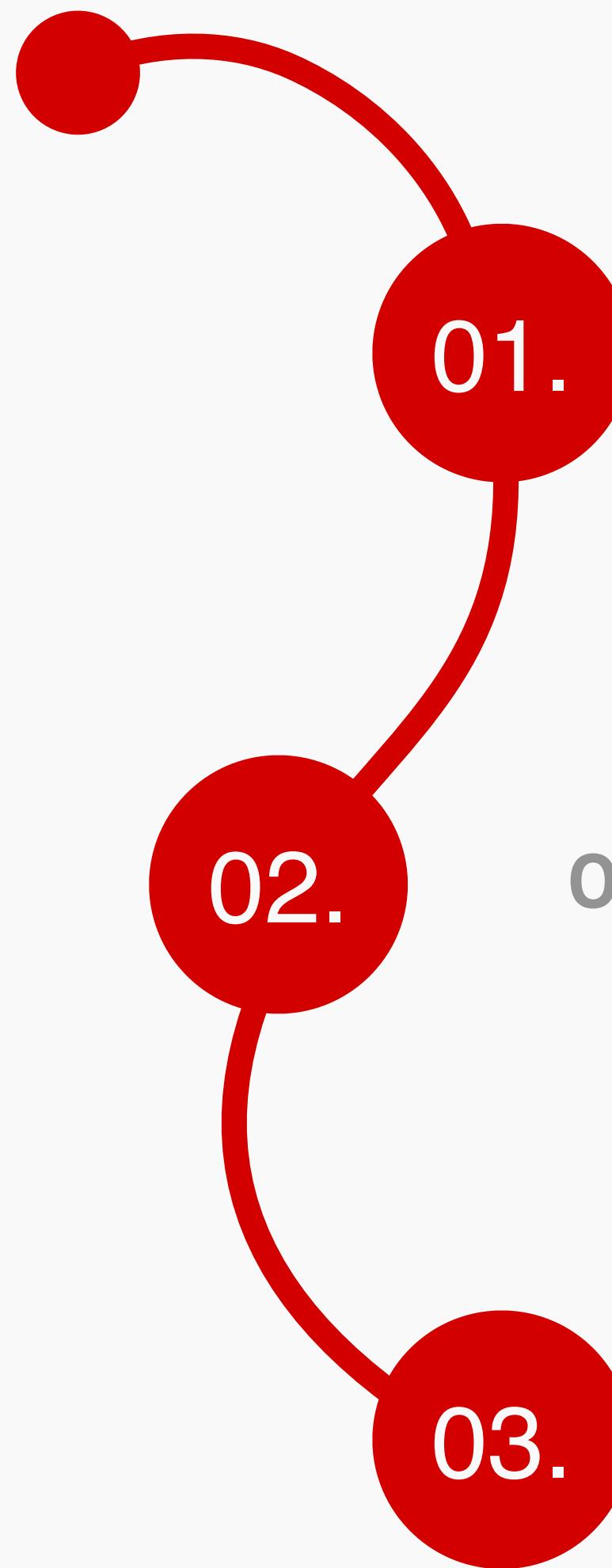
Explore and test **practical challenges** in the implementation of an error checking system



Estimating a **benefit-cost ratio** of an error detection system relative to **not detecting** these errors

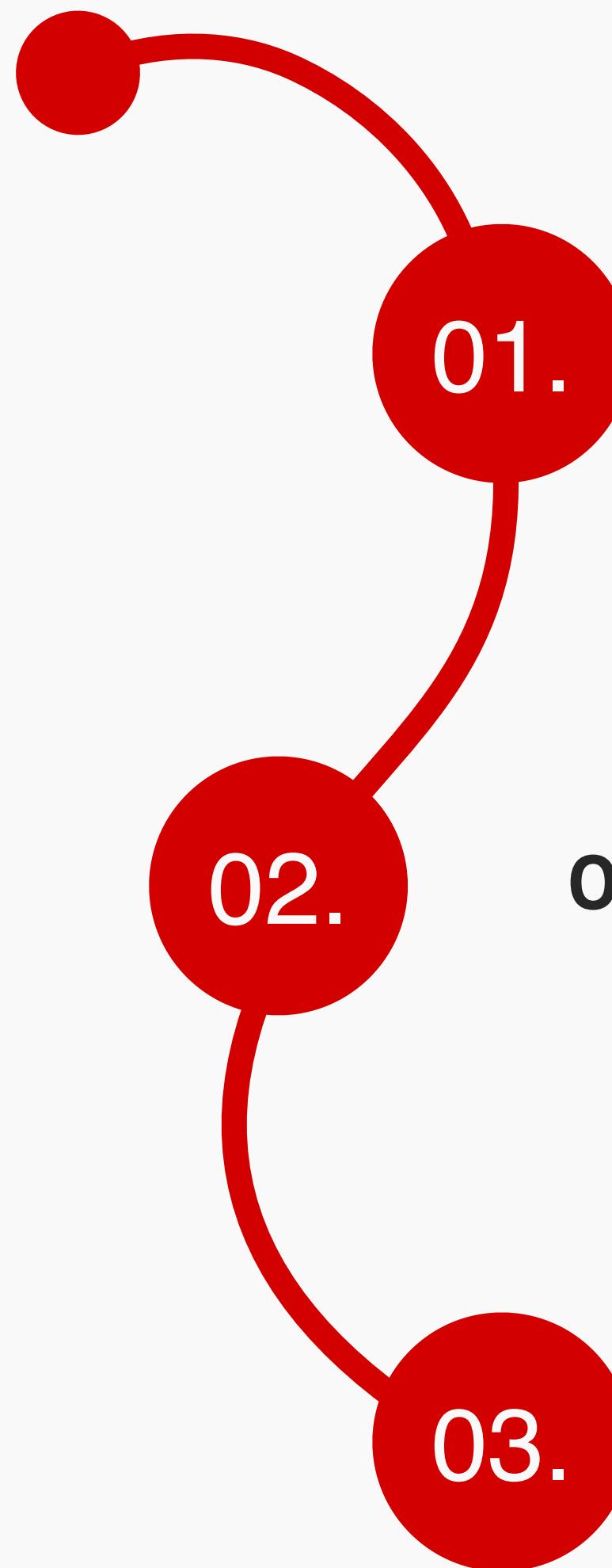


Obtaining empirical estimates of the **types** of errors & their **prevalence**



Candidate articles

- Selected for ‘importance’: Would matter if it contained errors
- Recent (c.10 years)
- Suggestions welcome
- Especially self-nominations
- Not randomly sampled
- Attention paid to gender balance etc.

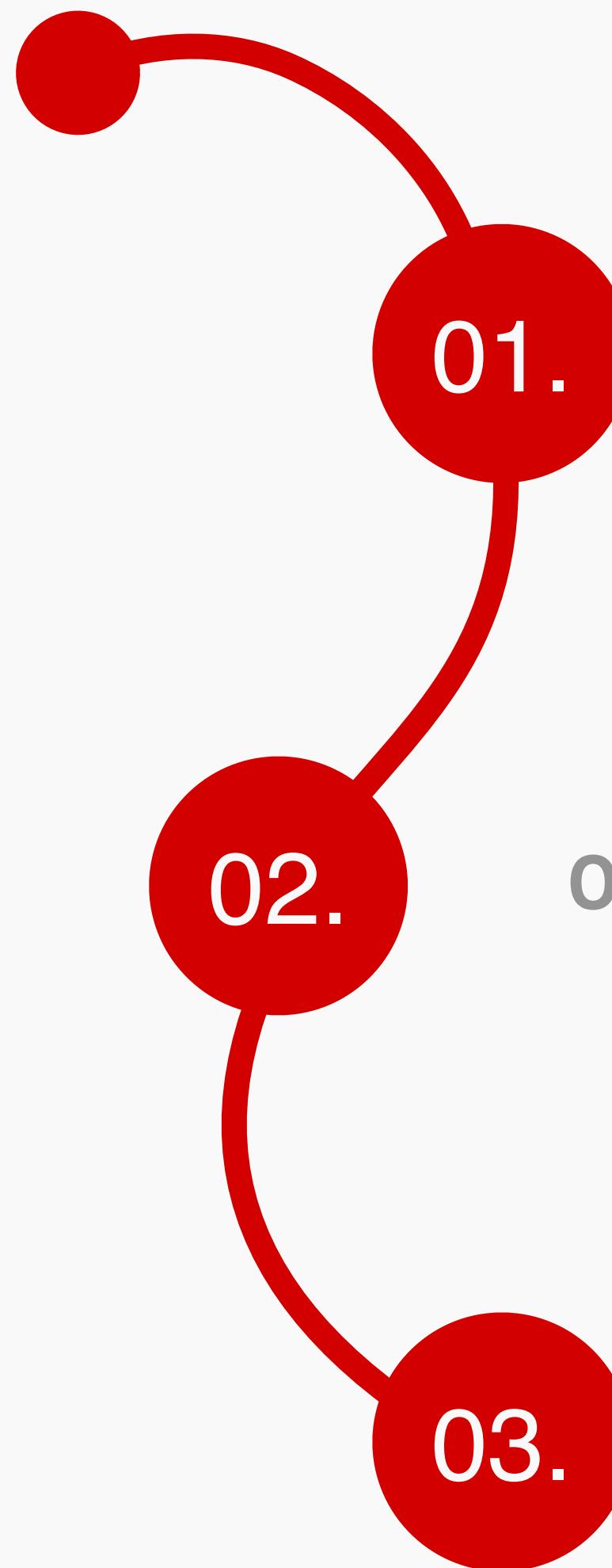


Candidate articles

Obtain author consent

Match with reviewer

- Consent to have their publicly available scientific output scrutinised by peers
+ get paid for it
- Pre-commit to:
 - Sharing materials
 - Answering reasonable questions
 - Professional conduct
 - Acting on any recommendations

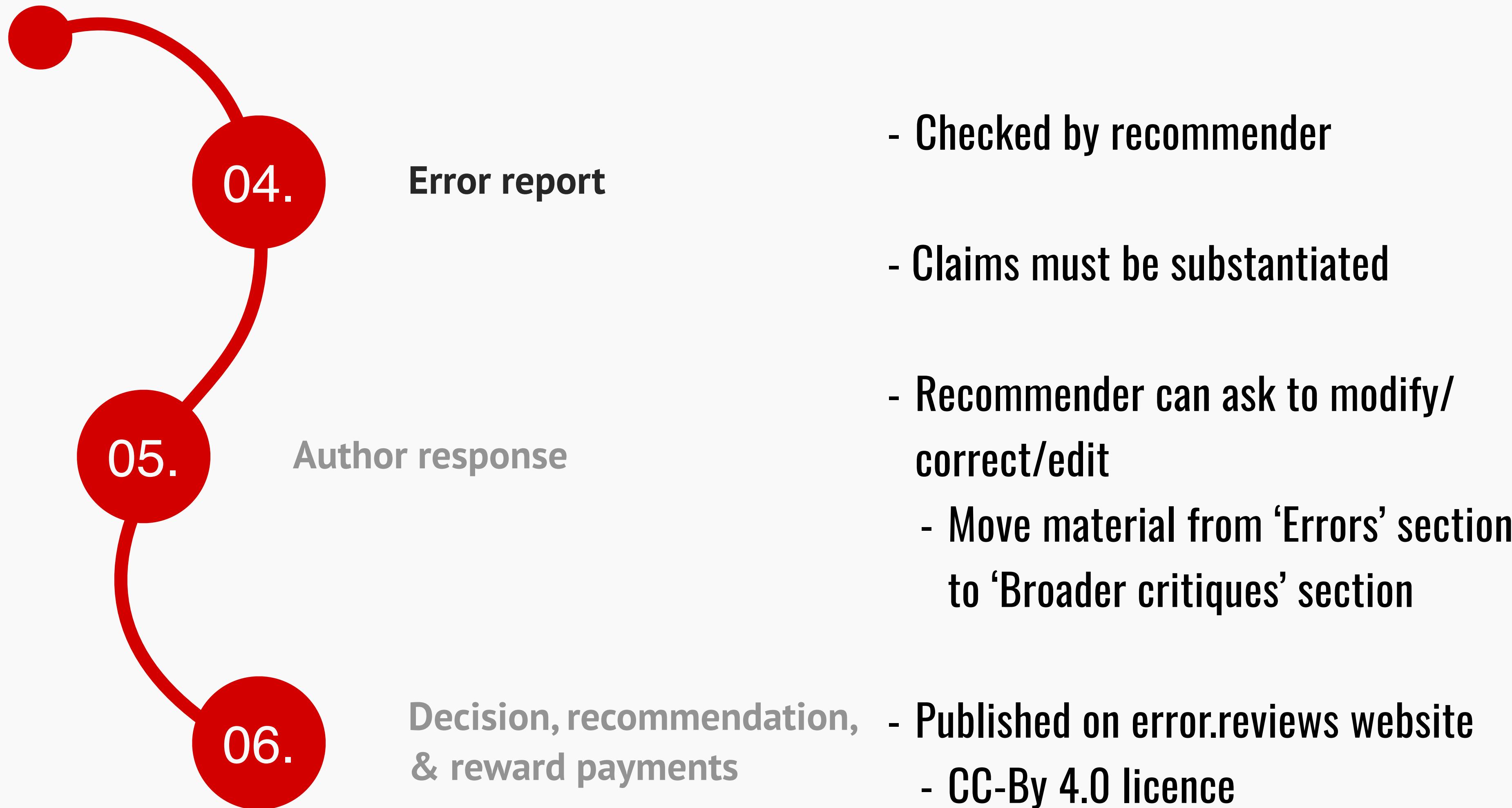


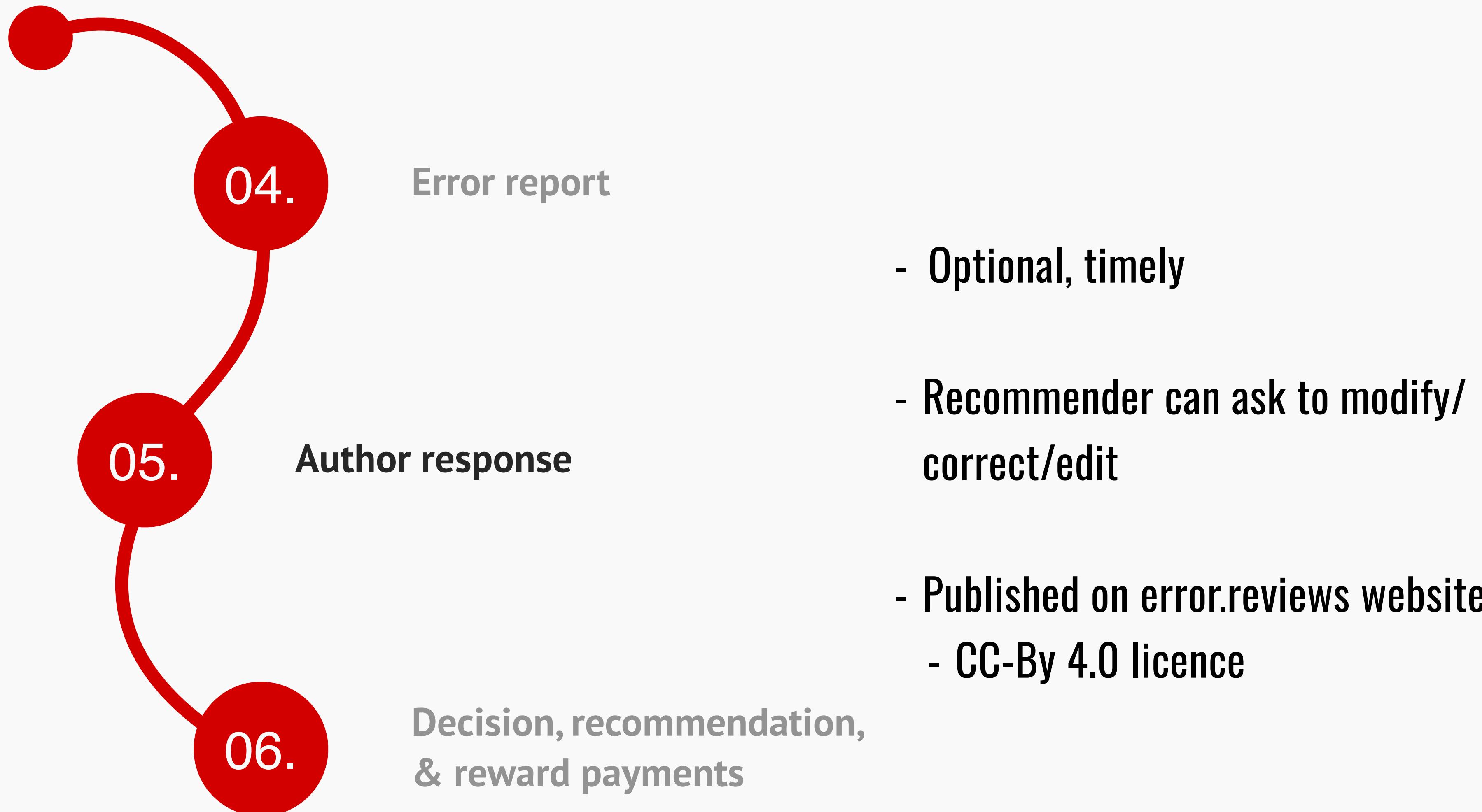
Candidate articles

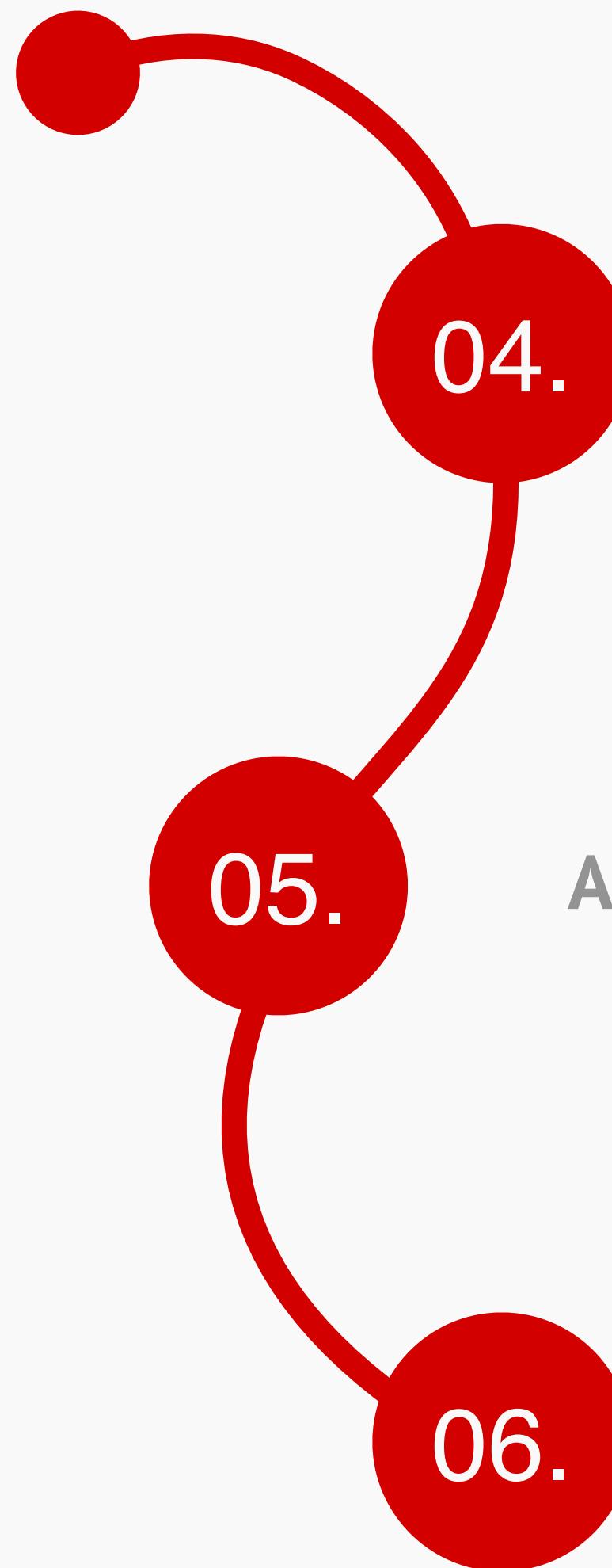
Obtain author consent

Match with reviewer

- **Volunteers welcome!**
- **Non-anonymous**
- **Can ask author reasonable questions to aid their work**
- **Pre-commit to professional conduct**







Error report

05.

Author response

06.

Decision, recommendation,
& reward payments

- Recommender makes a decision & any associated recommendation
- Possibly in conjunction with the advisory board

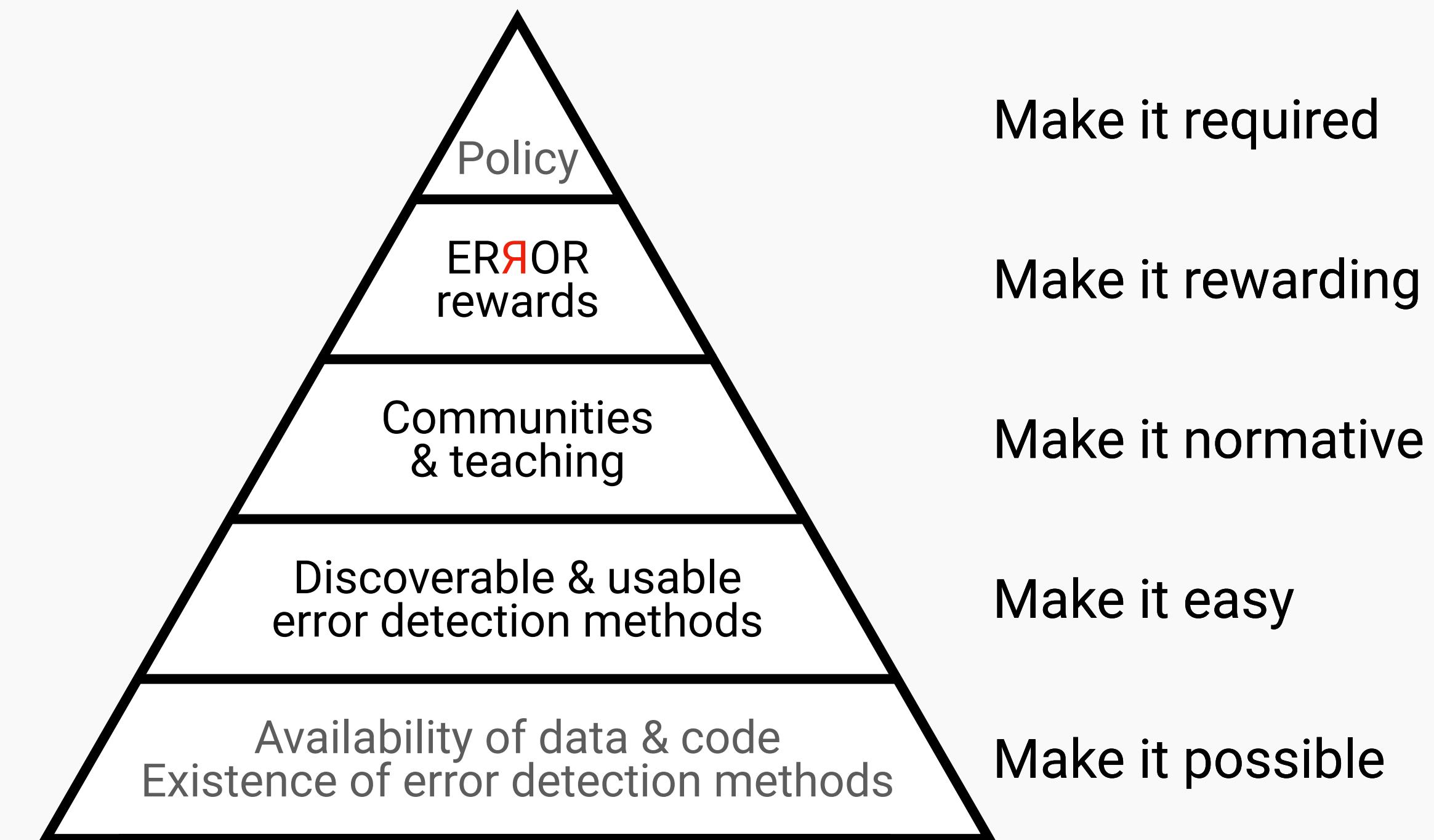
Recommendations

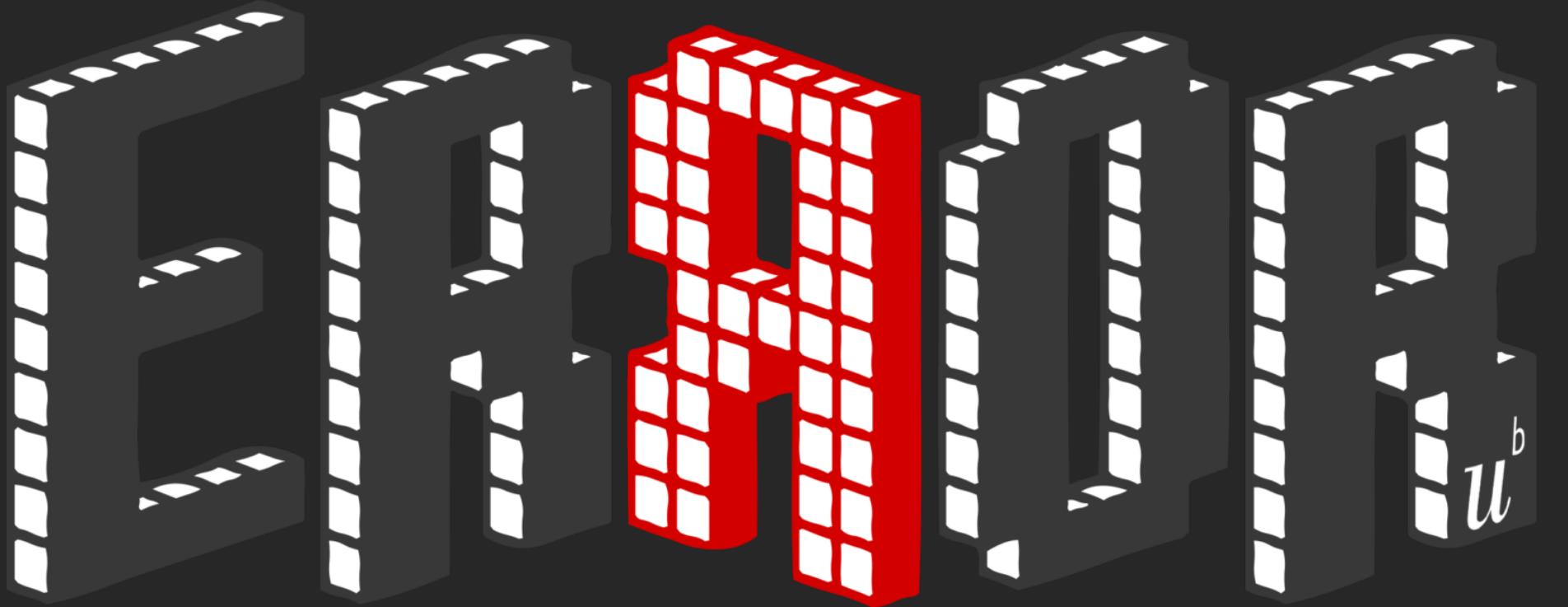
Decision	Recommendation
No errors	No additional action beyond publication of error report on the error.reviews website.
Minor errors	Authors to appropriately recognise these errors in future discussions of the article. <i>Probably most research!</i>
Indeterminable errors	No determination could be made re the presence or absence of important potential errors. <i>Less desirable than verifiably minor errors!</i> Authors to appropriately recognise this lack of verifiability in future discussions of the article.
Moderate errors	Correction notice (minor)
Major errors	Correction notice (major) / may warrant an expression of concern
Severe errors	Retraction

Bonus rewards

Decision	Recommendation	Bonus reward (indicative)
No errors	No additional action beyond publication of error report on the error.reviews website.	250 CHF to the author
Minor errors	Authors to appropriately recognise these errors in future discussions of the article. <i>Probably most research!</i>	250 CHF to both the author & reviewer
Indeterminable errors	No determination could be made re the presence or absence of important potential errors. <i>Less desirable than verifiably minor errors!</i> Authors to appropriately recognise this lack of verifiability in future discussions of the article.	250 CHF to the reviewer
Moderate errors	Correction notice (minor)	500 CHF to the reviewer
Major errors	Correction notice (major) / may warrant an expression of concern	1000 CHF to the reviewer
Severe errors	Retraction	2500 CHF to the reviewer

Our strategy to increase error checking, reporting, & correction





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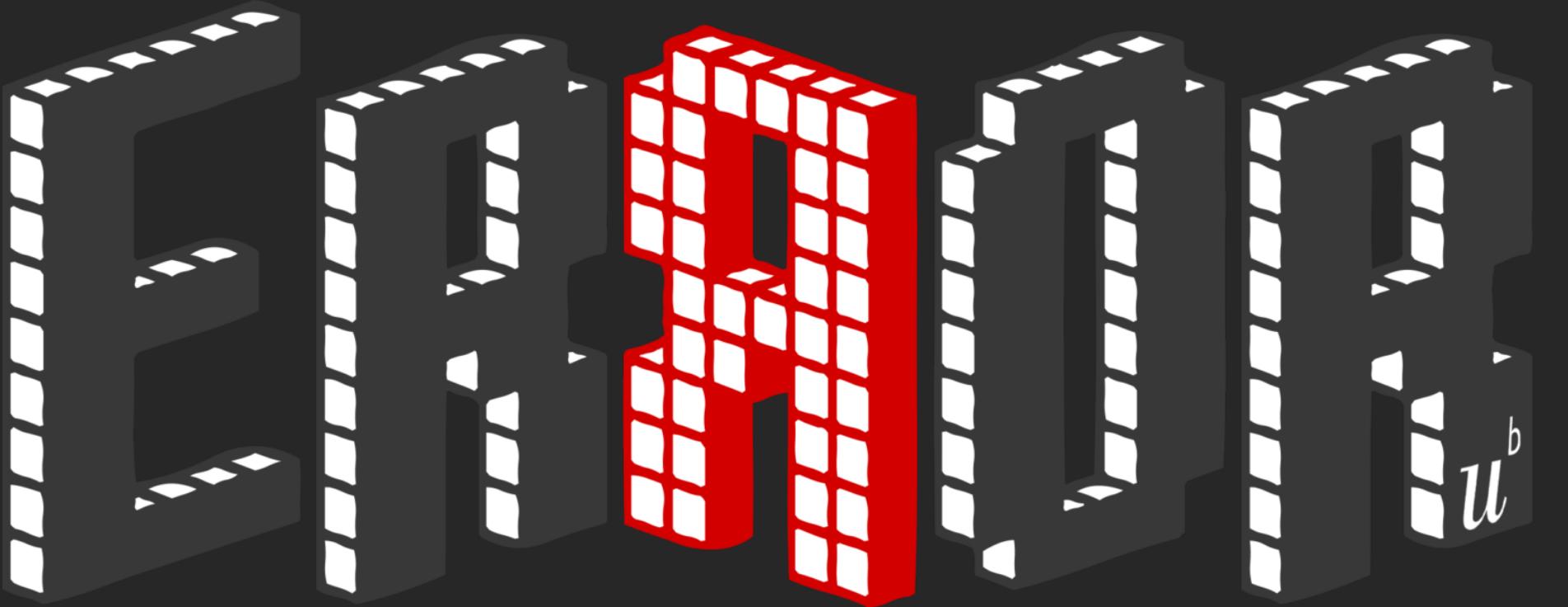
/ 250'000 CHF

Reviews Completed /
Pending

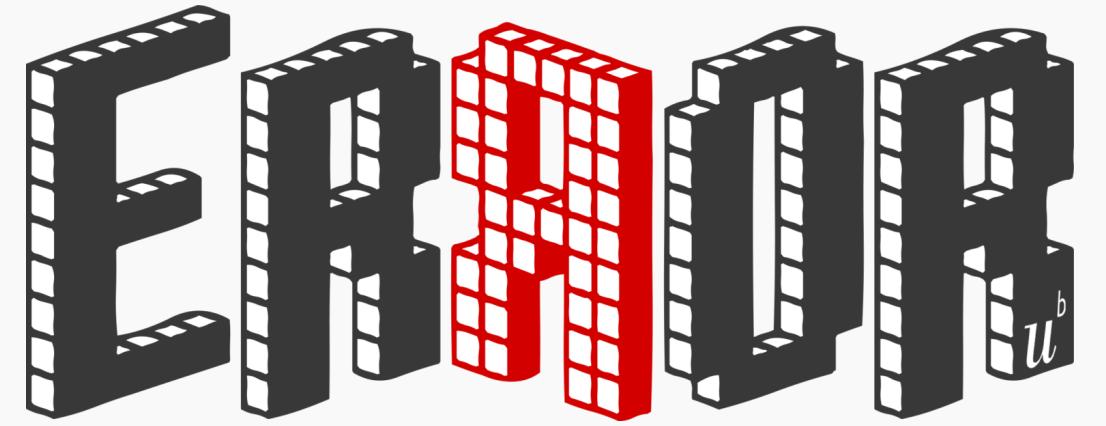
Invited
Papers

Papers
with Errors

Total
Payouts



error.reviews



Contact

ian.hussey@unibe.ch

Twitter: @ianhussey

<https://error.reviews>

error-reviews.psy@unibe.ch

Twitter: @error_reviews

u^b

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

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- Malte Elson
- Ruben Arslan
- Frank Bosco
- Beth Clarke
- Alex Holcombe
- Imran Kadolkar

ERROR authors & reviewers to date

- Dale Barr
- Lisa DeBruine
- Emma Henderson
- Gordon Pennycook and colleagues
- Daniel Simons
- Jan Wessel

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Other normalisation efforts:
“Commentaries don’t get cited”

	Citations of target article	Citations of commentary	Within-pair proportion
Mean	106	5	25%
Median	80	10	15%
Minimum	2	1	1%
Maximum	490	53	150%

$N = 36$ commentaries published in Psychological Science
between 2007-2021