

# Rumors and Corrections

Paul Resnick

Michael D. Cohen Collegiate Professor  
Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Affairs  
October 5, 2017



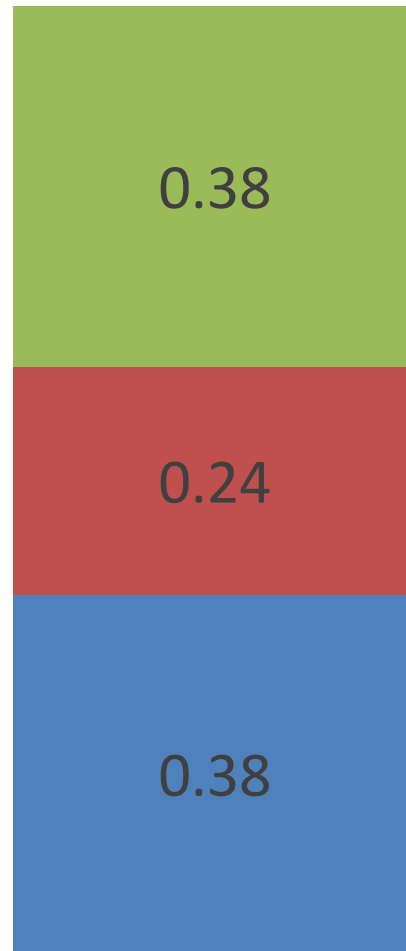
# One Example



- 3,941 rumor tweets and retweets
- 3,971,895 followers

- 2,998 correction tweets and retweets
- 3,990,462 followers



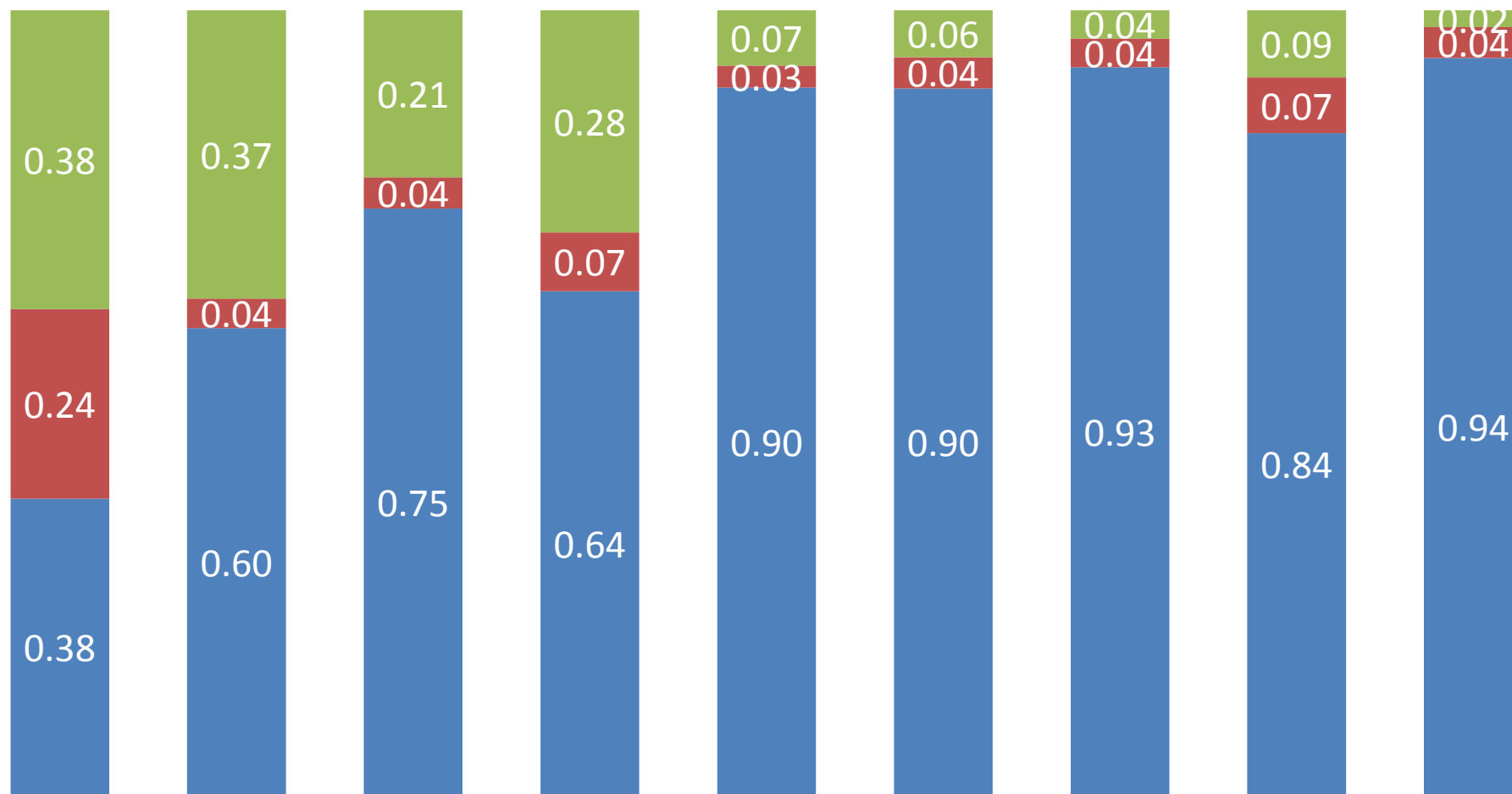


- Correction only
- Both
- Rumor only

# Some Other Rumors

- *JayZ is dead (inside)*
- *Russian meteor*
- *Sandy Hook dead were really actors*
- *Boston Marathon finish line proposal*
- *Man on Roof at Boston Marathon*
- *Facebook memorial pages before the tragedy*
- ...

■ Rumor only   ■ Both   ■ Correction only



# THE IMPACT OF CORRECTIONS

More Bad News

# Potential Problems

- Correction may not reduce false belief
  - (Lewandovsky et al, 2012)
- Potential backfire effects
  - Illusion of truth from familiarity
    - (Schwartz et al 2007)
  - Entrench beliefs
    - (Nyhan and Reifler, 2010; Nyhan et al 2013)
  - Distrust the corrector

# **SOME DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS**



# Don't Correct

- Be the trusted source
- Let others correct
  - ...using your facts
  - ...linking to you
- They will be attacked; you less so

# Enable Authenticity Checking

- Make it easy to link to official site
  - E.g., French GDP grew by 1.1% in 2016
  - (Inspiration: Twitter oembed)

• Em



The screenshot shows a tweet from Tom Finholt (@tfinholt) dated Sep 25. The tweet text is: "Sick of the state of online public discourse? Apply to lead our Center for Social Media Responsibility [bit.ly/2fu4l05](http://bit.ly/2fu4l05) @umsi @umich". Below the text are icons for replies, retweets (10), likes (6), and a direct message icon. The tweet includes a horizontal bar chart showing data for World, Euro Area, United States, Japan, and China. A QR code is also present. A dropdown menu is open on the right side of the tweet, with the "Embed Tweet" option highlighted in red.

Region	Value (approx.)
World	3.5
Euro Area	2.0
United States	1.5
Japan	1.0
China	6.5

Source: OECD Interim Economic Outlook

# Summary

- Corrections and rumors may reach different audiences
- Corrections can backfire
- Protect your brand as a trusted source of facts
  - Make factual claims point back to official site