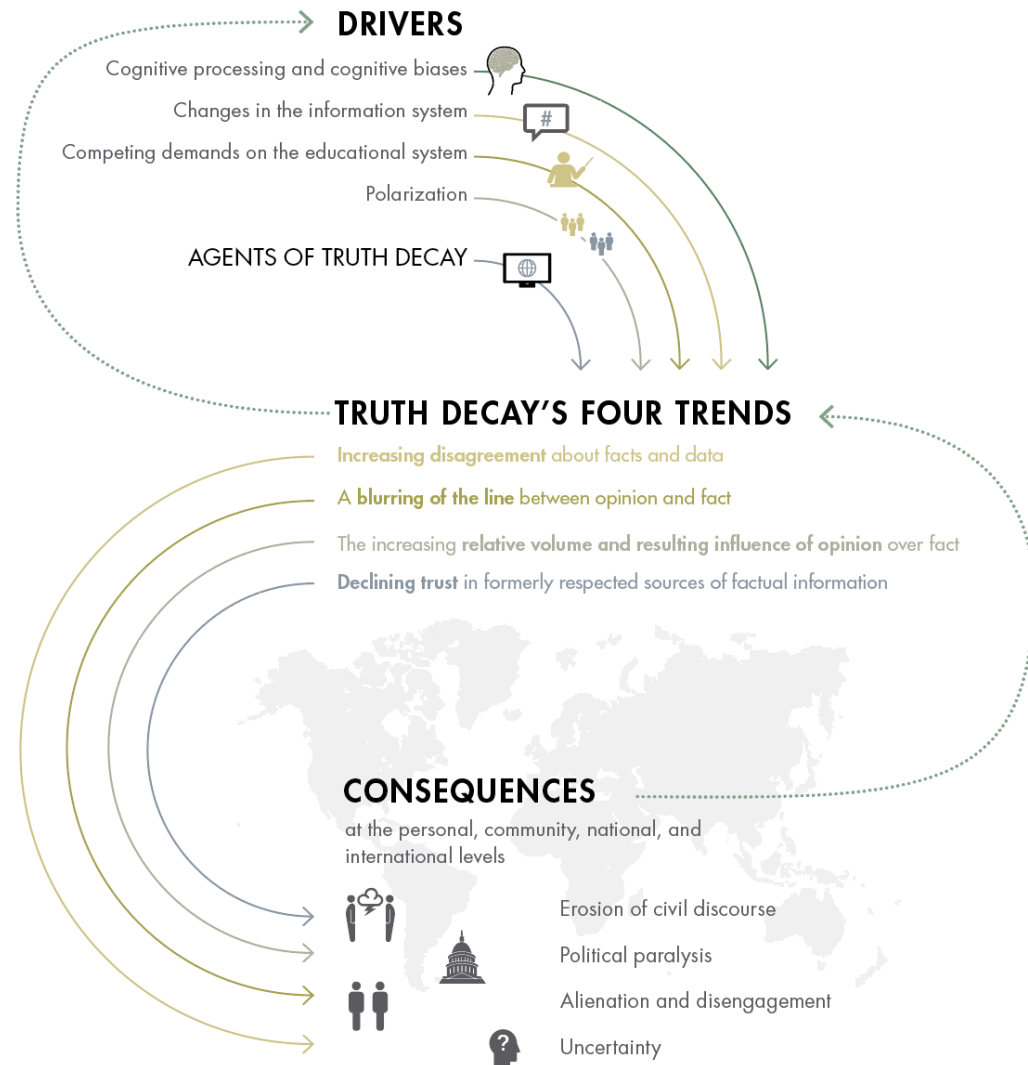


The image features a close-up of an American flag that appears to be painted on or applied to a weathered wooden surface. The paint is heavily cracked, chipped, and peeling, revealing the underlying wood in several places. The stars and stripes are visible but show significant signs of decay and wear. Overlaid on the right side of the flag is the text "TRUTH DECAY".

**TRUTH  
DECAY**

# Truth Decay as a system





## TRUTH DECAY'S FOUR TRENDS



**Increasing disagreement** about facts and data



A **blurring of the line** between opinion and fact



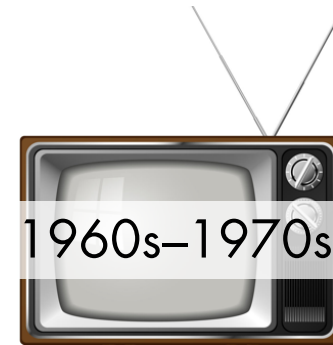
The increasing **relative volume** and resulting influence of **opinion** over fact



**Declining trust** in formerly respected sources of factual information



# Is Truth Decay new?



Increasing disagreement  
over basic facts and data

No evidence

No evidence

No evidence



Blurring of the line  
between fact and opinion



Expanding relative volume  
of opinion compared to fact



Declining trust in formerly  
respected sources of factual  
information

No evidence





## DRIVERS

Cognitive processing and cognitive biases



Changes in the information system



Competing demands on the educational system



Polarization



AGENTS OF TRUTH DECAY



TRUTH DECAY'S FOUR TRENDS



## → DRIVERS

Cognitive processing and cognitive biases

Changes in the information system

Competing demands on the educational system

Polarization

AGENTS OF TRUTH DECAY



TRUTH DECAY'S FOUR TRENDS ←



We compared media content, past and present



Existing research



Selected media

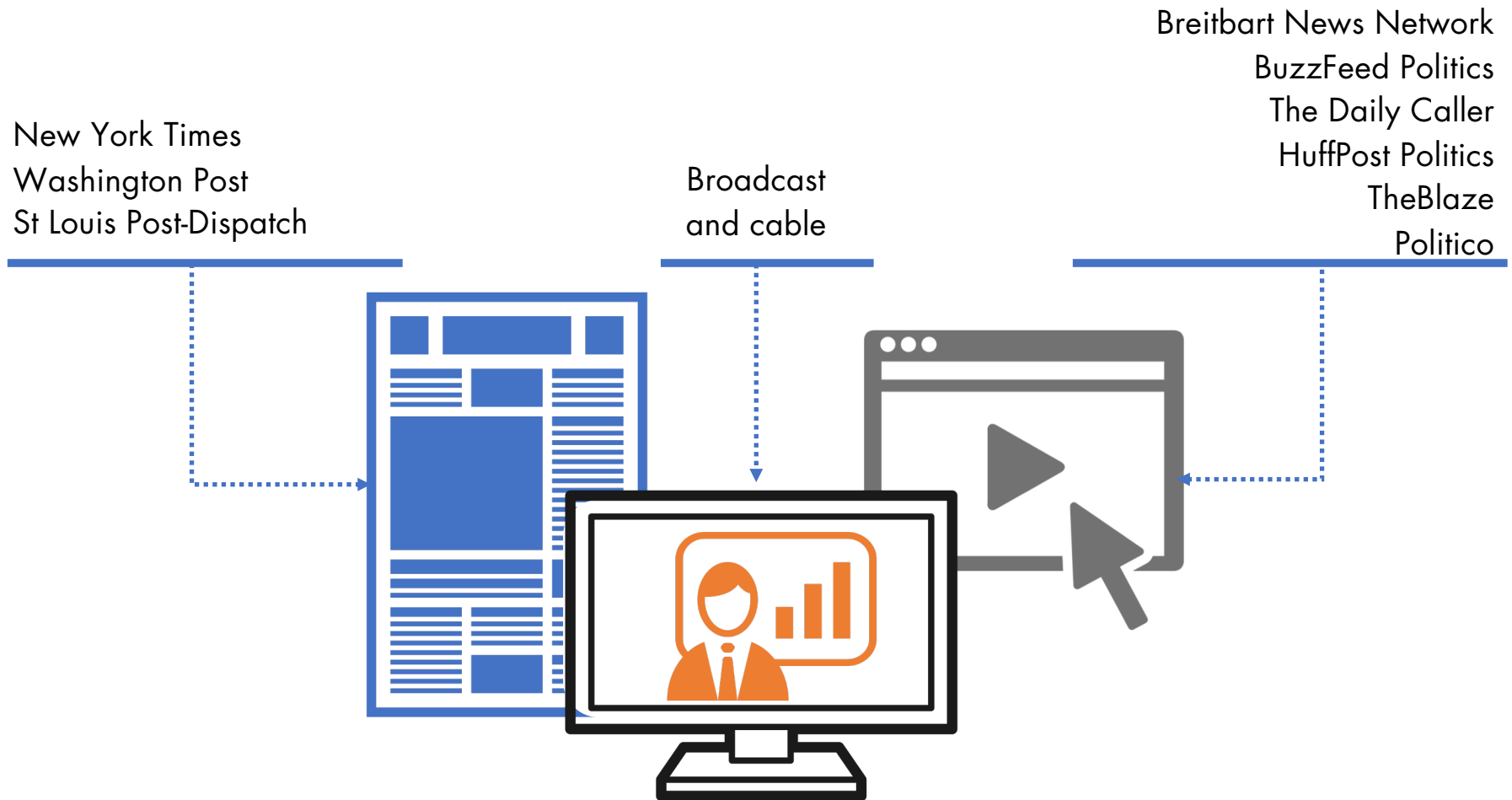


Content analysis



RAND-Lex comparisons

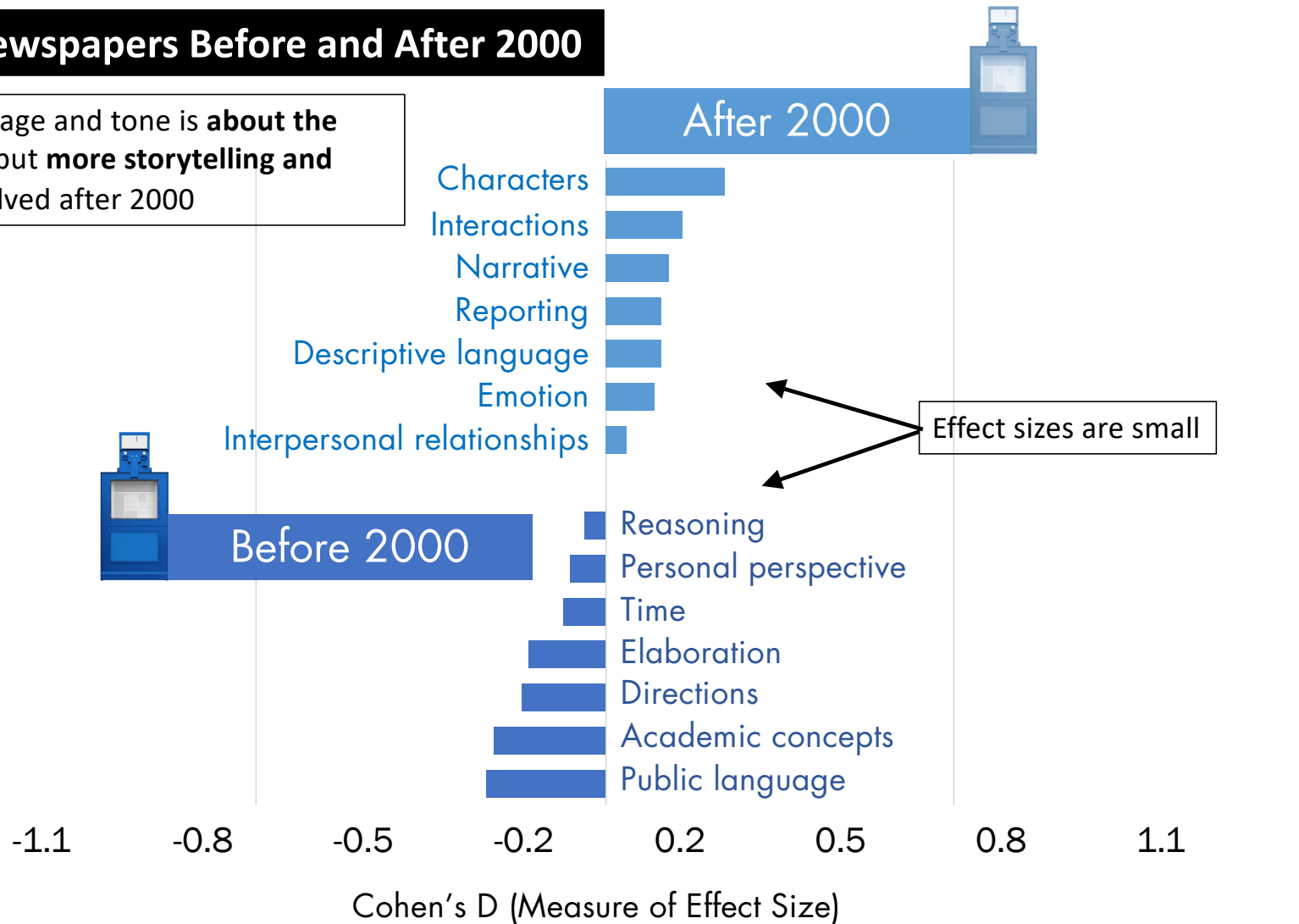
# We explored a diverse set of news sources





## Comparing Newspapers Before and After 2000

Newspaper language and tone is **about the same over time**, but **more storytelling and emotion** are involved after 2000



## Comparing Cable and Broadcast Television

Cable news includes more **personal perspective, dialogue, interactions, and argumentation** than broadcast news.



Cable

Broadcast



Descriptive language

Emotion

Time

Academic concepts

Elaboration

Characters

Narrative

Public language

Public values

Interpersonal relationships

Reporting

Personal perspective

Reasoning

Directions

Interactions

Effect sizes are moderate

-1.1

-0.8

-0.5

-0.2

0.2

0.5

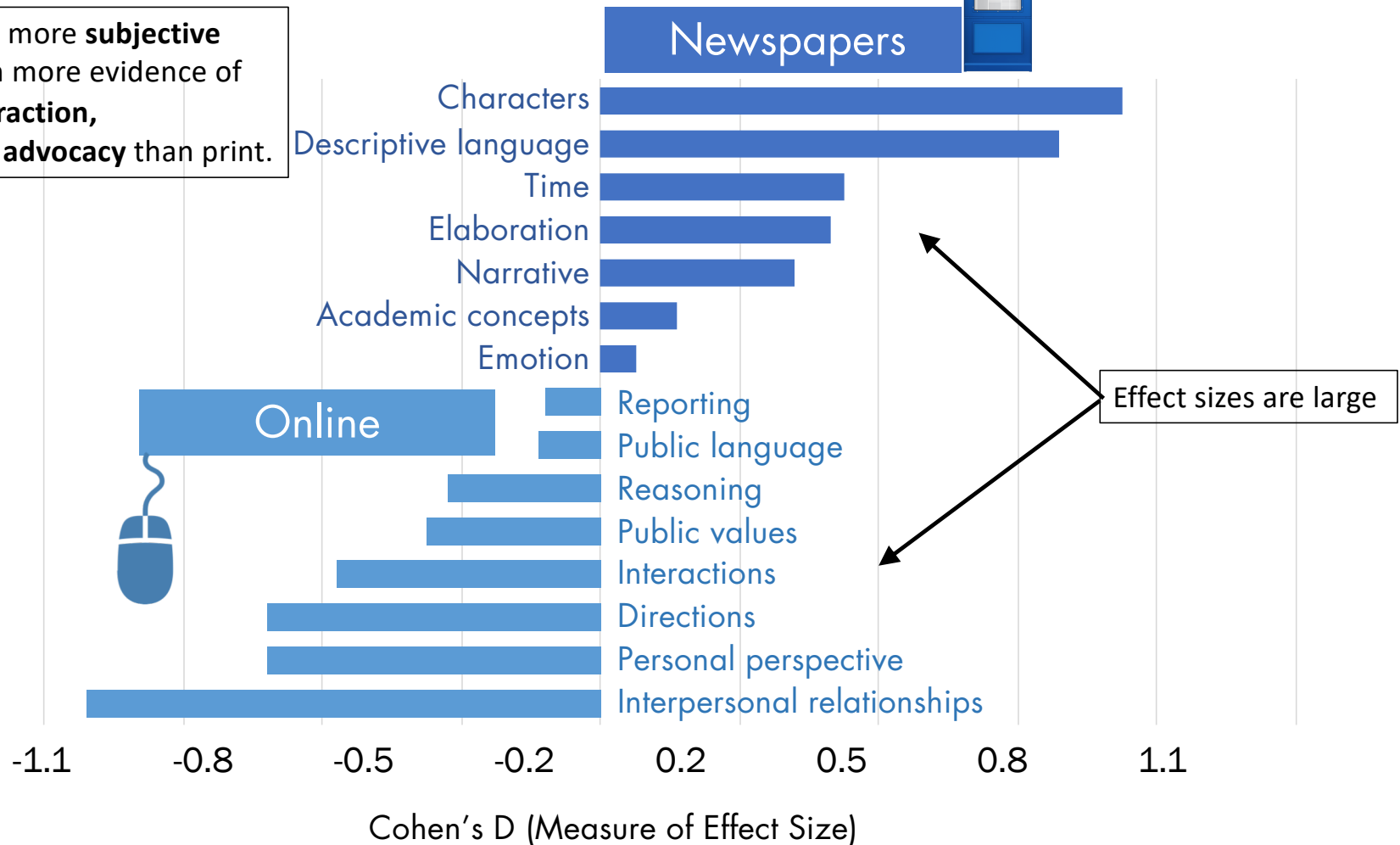
0.8

1.1

Cohen's D (Measure of Effect Size)

## Comparing Print Newspapers and Selected Online Only Sources

Online sources are more **subjective** and **personal**, with more evidence of **interpersonal interaction, relationships, and advocacy** than print.



# CONSEQUENCES

at the personal, community, national, and international levels



Erosion of civil discourse



Political paralysis



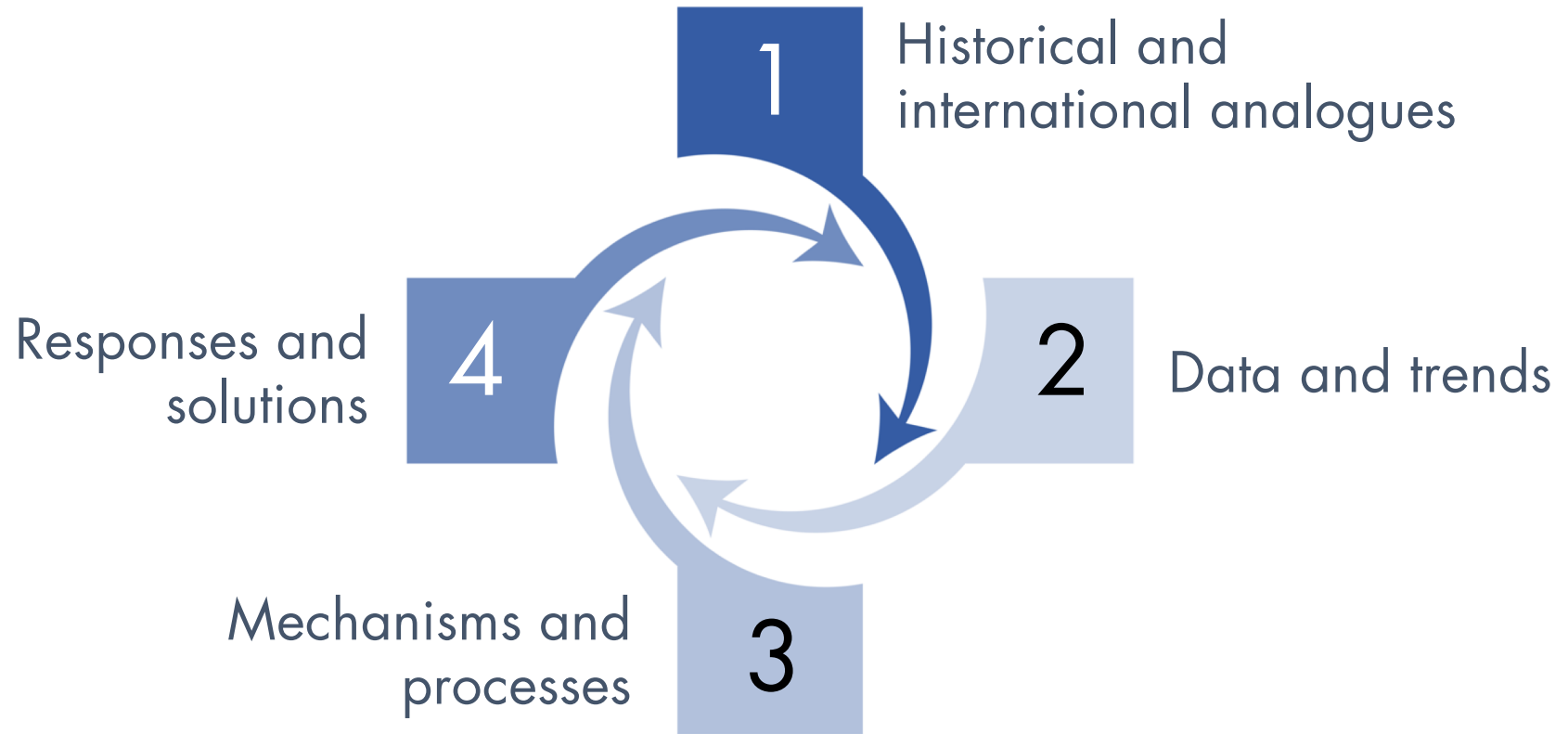
Alienation and disengagement



Uncertainty



# How Do We Counter Truth Decay?





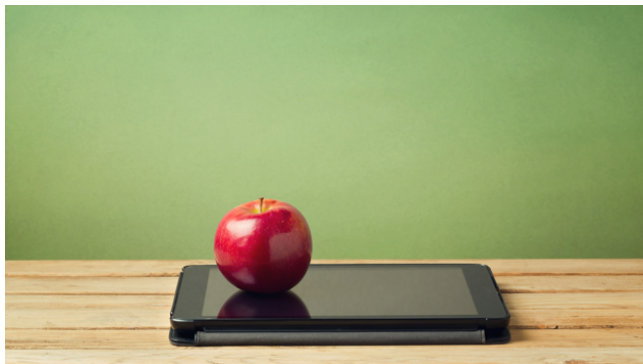
Identifying Tools to Counter  
Online Disinformation



Information Consumption  
and Reliability



Understanding Public Trust  
in Institutions



A Framework for Evaluating  
Media Literacy Programs



Expanded Historical Analysis  
of Truth Decay



More . . .



# Identifying Tools to Counter Online Disinformation

# Fighting Disinformation Online: A Database of Web Tools

## Project has Three Main Objectives:

1. Identify and collect in one place a set of resources that can help users combat the challenge of disinformation and gain greater awareness of the media ecosystem
2. Inform funders and developers about the set of tools currently under development, tools in need of funding, and areas where additional development would be beneficial
3. Provide a map of ongoing projects and developed tools that could serve as an input to efforts to build a field around the study of disinformation and its remedies.

**Search for tools that fight disinformation by name, type, or keyword:**

SEARCH

examples: Snopes, bot detection, fact-checking



# Tools to Counter Online Disinformation

- Identified and characterized online tools developed by **nonprofits and civil society orgs that target online disinformation**
- Includes tools aimed at **consumers, researchers, journalists, teachers**
- **Grouped tools into categories** (verification, bot detection, credibility scoring, disinformation tracking, whitelisting)
- **Classified by methodology** (machine learning, crowdsourcing, blockchain)
- For each tool we also capture information on: **maturity** (level of development), **cost, theory of change, degree of automation, funders, tool focus** (content or process)

## Iffy Quotient

Website: [Iffy Quotient](#) 

Founded in 2016

The Iffy Quotient is a web-based tool that uses NewsWhip to query Facebook and Twitter and identify URLs that are known to be biased or to be frequent reporters of false information. The tool then calculates the percentage of URLs on each site that are "iffy," or known for reporting false or misleading information.

Tool type: **Disinformation tracking**

Status: **Fully operational**

Intended users: **General public, Researchers**

Cost: **Free**

Tool focus: **This tool is content-focused. It directly evaluates information, such as the authenticity of a photo.**

Method or technology: **Machine learning and AI**

Is the tool automated? **Yes**

Founding organization: **University of Michigan**

Founder/primary contact: **Paul Resnick**

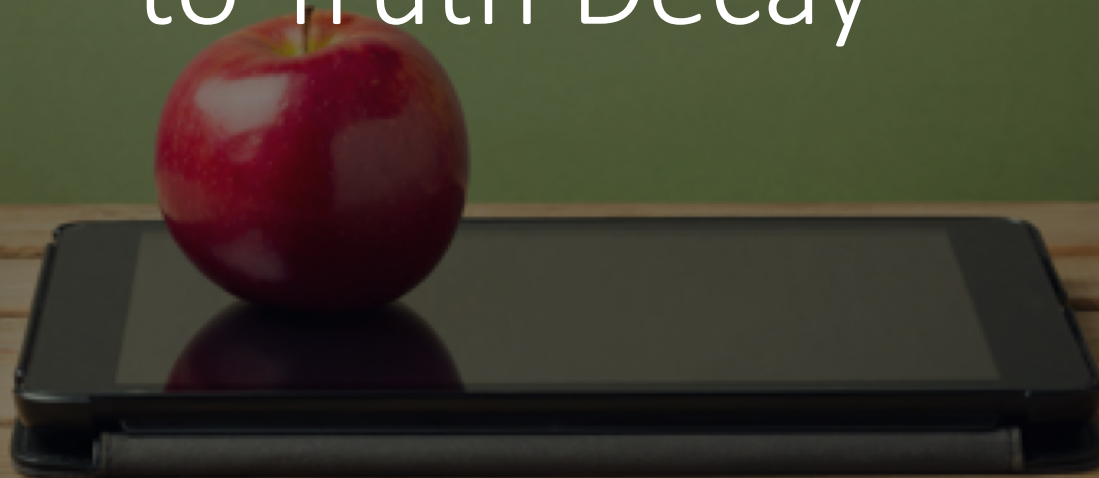
## How is this tool working to address disinformation?

The tool aims to fight disinformation by alerting users and social media platforms to the prevalence of false or misleading information on these channels. By making this public, developers of the tool hope that it will both make users more savvy and hold social media executives accountable.

The image features a close-up of an American flag that appears to be painted on or applied to a weathered wooden surface. The paint is heavily cracked, chipped, and peeling, revealing the underlying wood in several places. The stars and stripes are visible but show significant signs of decay and wear. Overlaid on the right side of the flag is the text "TRUTH DECAY" in a bold, sans-serif font. "TRUTH" is white with a dark outline, and "DECAY" is a solid dark purple. The text is positioned over the stripes of the flag.

**TRUTH  
DECAY**

# Media Literacy as a Counter to Truth Decay





# EXPLORING MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR MITIGATING TRUTH DECAY



ALICE HUGUET | JENNIFER KAVANAGH

GARRETT BAKER | MARJORY S. BLUMENTHAL

- The term *media literacy* can refer to many different fields and competencies
  - Information literacy, news literacy, digital literacy, science literacy, visual literacy, and others
  - Includes a range of competencies, e.g., the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate media messages
- ML can influence information consumption and creation behaviors, but causal research is lacking
  - Past research has identified some evidence that ML increases participant resiliency to disinformation and is able to change the way participants consume, create, and share information
- More research needed to identify measures that best assess complex ML competencies and how, when, and what types of ML education are most effective