**Framing Analysis Project**

**Newspaper Framing of the Opioid Crisis since Trump Declares it a Public Health Emergency**

**Assignment purpose**

The purpose of this assignment is to (1) engage you in completing some original research using a big data set to (2) determine what news frames were used in high circulating U.S. newspapers at the national level and the local level to report on the opioid crisis since Trump declares it a public health emergency, as (3) an application of framing theory.

You will write up your research in a formal paper that uses appropriate visuals. You will be working in a group for part of this assignment, but each student should write her/his own paper.

**Background Overview**

The opioid crisis has received a lot of attention ever since the [spike of overdose cases in the 1990s](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/04/14/upshot/drug-overdose-epidemic-you-draw-it.html). Despite the media attention and public concern, [CDC’s (2018)](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2018/p0329-drug-overdose-deaths.html) most recent report comparing 2015-2016 data continues to show the overdose rate from synthetic opioids to have more than doubled.

On Oct. 26, 2017, President Trump declared the opioid crisis a “[public health emergency](http://www.governing.com/topics/health-human-services/gov-opioid-emergency-declaration-trump.html).” Since then, due to the nature of such order (only lasts 90 days but can be renewed every 90 days until no longer deemed necessary, [Newman, 2017](https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2017-10-26/donald-trump-officially-declares-opioid-crisis-a-public-health-emergency)), the declaration has been extended twice.

Labeling the crisis as a “public health” emergency continues to illustrate the shift of the public discourse on drug epidemic this time around as compared to the rise of crack use in the mid-1980s. While crack was framed mainly as a Black drug, the opioid epidemic has been characterized mainly as a middle-class and White drug ([Tiger, 2017](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1536504217742391); [Netherland & Hansen, 2017](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5501419/)). The dominant narrative lately seems to rest on treatment and a health crisis as opposed to punishment and a criminal justice concern ([Dunne, 2017](https://www.elon.edu/u/academics/communications/journal/wp-content/uploads/sites/153/2017/12/03_Epidemic_Dunne.pdf)).

Recent studies on the framing of the opioid crisis have identified various frames used by the newspaper when constructing the story (see [McGinty et al., 2016](http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/pdf/10.1176/appi.ps.201500065)). With the soaring opioid drug overdose deaths and the lasting commitment at the federal level, though not without criticisms, the purpose of this assignment is to examine how national and local newspapers framed this on-going story since Oct. 26, 2017, until now.

**Research Questions**

RQ1: What are the three dominant frames found in *The New York Times*, *USA Today and Washington Post* when reporting on the opioid crisis from October 2017 to September 2018?

RQ2: What are the two dominant frames used in the state-level publications (Massachusetts, Ohio, or Maryland) when reporting on the opioid crisis from October 2017 to September 2018?

RQ3: How do the national news frames compare with the local news frames?

**Assignment description/ outline**

1. Introduce **your project.**
   1. Provide an overview of the opioid crisis. Consider using relevant visuals from existing sources.
   2. Discuss the significance of conducting a framing analysis on this particular news.
   3. Clarify the purpose of the project.

*\*\*\*See Framing Exercise 1 and this project’s background/RQs to use as resources for this section.*

1. Review **past theory and studies.** 
   1. Explain what frame building is.
   2. Review what framing analysis studies have found so far on the coverage of the opioid news.
   3. Incorporate other sources to help develop this portion of the paper.

***\*\*\**** *Cite credible academic sources such as McGinty et al. (2016), Bryant et al.’s (2014) chapter 7, and this* [*web resource*](http://www.bmsg.org/resources/framing-101)*.*

1. Analyze **the national level data.** 
   1. Describe where your data is from.
   2. Describe your overall observation and the three dominant frame you’ve identified for this level of analysis.
   3. Detail your deductive method by referencing the existing frames identified in McGinty et al.’s (2016) study and the alternative frames identified in these articles:
      1. [Photos reveal media’s softer tone on opioid crisis](https://www.cjr.org/criticism/opioid-crisis-photos.php) (Shaw, 2017, July 26)
      2. [What the media gets wrong about opioids](https://www.cjr.org/criticism/opioid-crisis-photos.php) (Szalavitz, 2018, August 15)
      3. [Race, class, and the framing of drug epidemic (Tiger, 2017)](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1536504217742391)
   4. Introduce and discuss each frame (provide a label for each perspective of storytelling) in-depth by providing supporting evidence. Be sure to incorporate the following as your supporting materials

**Big-data Quantitative Evidence**

* + Visualization generated from mediacloud.org
  + One Cirrus visualization (upper-left hand panel in Voyant) with the list of stop-words you entered as part of the image’s caption.
  + At least two Trend analysis visualization (upper-right hand panel in Voyant) to discuss how the three publication varies among the three frames.

**Close-read Qualitative Evidence**

* Utilize the Context panel (bottom-right in Voyant) to explore the more nuanced details that build up the frames and find relevant evidence for further discussion.
* See Framing Exercise 2 but you most likely will need to do more. The goal is to examine the context in which the dominant frames are used and pull representative headlines, quotes, phrases, or sources to further describe the frame.

\*\*\*A word on labeling your frames: As discussed in class, news stories are narratives that have to be told with some kind of assumptions about what matters, why it matters, who’s responsible, and what might the solution be. Hence frames are storytelling devices rather than biases. They demonstrate a viewpoint or an angle when reporting on a story. The goal of your paper is to identify the assumptions and give that frame a label.

1. Analyze **the local level data.** 
   1. Describe where your data is from.
   2. Describe your overall observation and the three dominant frames you’ve identified for this level of analysis.

**Big-data Quantitative Evidence**

* + One Cirrus visualization (upper-left hand panel in Voyant) with the list of stop-words you entered as part of the image’s caption.
  + At least one Trend analysis visualization (upper-right hand panel in Voyant) to discuss how the national level data compare with the local level data.

**Close-read Qualitative Evidence**

* + Utilize the Context panel (bottom-right in Voyant) to explore the more nuanced details that build up the frames and find relevant evidence for further discussion.
  + Mimic what you did for Framing Exercise 2. The goal is to examine the context in which the dominant frames are used and pull representative headlines, quotes, phrases, or sources to further describe the frame.

1. Conclude **by comparing the national level frames with the local level frames.** 
   1. Summarize the similarity and differences.
   2. Connect back to your understanding of the framing theory. Specifically, how might these frames shape the public’s perception on why the issue matters, who is responsible, and what should be done? How does this play a role in policy making?

Other requirements

* For citation, include the URL of the Voyant analysis underneath the image. Also include a clear caption that explains what the visual is trying to illustrate. For Cirrus, include the list of stop-words used to generate the visual. For Trend, identify the keyword used to make the comparison across publications.
* Aside from the cirrus and trends output, include two other images such as the official images found from your news sources, infographics, report data, etc. to further supplement your paper. Be creative but thoughtful. Choose intentionally, so the visuals enhance the comprehension of your paper rather than simply for the sake of using visuals.
* Submit with a clear title that has two parts. Start with a creative and catchy title that captures the spirit of your paper and end with an academic title that is straightforward and uses scholarly jargon. For example: *Whose business is it anyway?: The news framing of the opioid crisis.*
* The total length of this paper should be **at least 6 pages but no more than 7**. The page length excludes the visuals, cover, and reference page (needs to be formatted in APA style). The paper should be in Times New Roman and font size 12.
* Please write in the academic tone of voice by avoiding the use of the first person and informal/casual language.
* Follow APA style citation (see Purdue OWL) for both the in-text citation and the reference page.

**Grading Rubric**

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| **Introduction.**  Provided an overview of the issue. Demonstrated the significance of focusing on the analysis of the opioid news. Has a clear purpose/thesis statement for the paper. (10pts) | **Local Level Analysis: Empirical and Qualitative**  Used evidence appropriately to identify, introduce, illustrate, elaborate, and justify the dominant frames. Utilize quotes from the news stories to support the frames. (10pts) |
| **Theoretical framework of Framing.**  Well researched. Sources past academic sources and credible sources to establish the author's understanding of what Framing research is. (15pts) | **National Level Analysis: Quantitative Evidence from Voyant.**  Thoughtfully, insightfully, and appropriately (as opposed to superficially) incorporate the Voyant visuals and the media cloud visuals into the discussion of the frames as the supporting evidence. (15pts) |
| **National Level Analysis: Qualitative evidence**  Used evidence appropriately to identify, introduce, illustrate, elaborate, and justify the dominant frames. Utilize quotes from the news stories to support the frames. (10pts) | **Overall structure.**  Has an interesting title. Evidence in relations to the frames was logically organized with clear transitions. Has a clear conclusion. Thoughtful choice of images and/or graphs to supplement and enhance the write-up. This should be in addition to the Voyant visualizations. Clear captions for the visuals to show relevance. (15pts) |
| **National Level Analysis: Quantitative Evidence from Voyant.**  Thoughtfully, insightfully, and appropriately (as opposed to superficially) incorporate the Voyant visuals and the media cloud visuals into the discussion of the frames as the supporting evidence. (15pts) | **Mechanics.**  Followed APA citation and formatting style. Free of typos, spelling and grammatical errors. Met the page requirement. (10pts) |