**CMM306 Framing project: Newspaper framing of separation of families at the United States border from April 2018-August 2018**

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 to report on the separation of families at the United States border between the months of April 2018 and August 2018, as a (3) 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.

Assignment preparation **(this should be completed by Thursday, October 4th)**:

The separation of migrant families at the United States border has been happening for over a year, but increased public awareness of, and response to, this policy began in the late spring of 2018. This assignment asks you to examine how newspapers framed this story from April 2018 until the present. You will be analyzing news story frames from high circulating US newspapers’ coverage of the migrant family separation. Your analysis will be informed by our course materials and discussions about news framing and framing theory. We will be using Voyant to analyze this data; in class Voyant workshops are incorporated into our course schedule.

Full text articles from the following top circulating newspapers in the United States (per 2017 data) are available using Lexus Nexus Academic:

1. *USA Today*
2. *The New York Times*
3. *The Washington Post*
4. *[San Jose]* *Mercury News*
5. *Tampa Bay Times*
6. *The Los Angeles Times*
7. *The Star Tribune*
8. *The New York Post*

Ideally, you will work in a group of four students. Your group will choose four of these newspapers (the group of 3 should choose 3 newspapers). Each student will be responsible for retrieving, cleaning and sharing data from one newspaper with other group members.

For each newspaper, 10 stories per month (April 2018 – August 2018) should be collected. If there are fewer than 10 stories in any given month, gather the maximum number available. This means that over this five month period, each student will be collecting 50 stories. If you are working in a group of four, your group will collectively gather 200 stories to complete a framing analysis on.

**Building your data set:**

Lexus Nexus Academic allows for easy selection and download of txt files (articles need to be in txt format in order for Voyant to use them) of full text articles. Please follow the steps below to retrieve and properly organize and clean your data for analysis.

1. Determine what newspaper you are going to retrieve articles from and navigate to Lexus Nexus Academic from our library’s database page.
2. At the top of the Lexus Nexus page you will see a bar that says ‘Source Directory.’ Click “Find” and enter the title of your newspaper in the Keyword Box. Click “find sources” on the right of the page.
3. Click on your newspaper when the results appear and click “okay, continue” on the right of the page. You are now ready to search within your publication.
4. Search within your publication using key words and phrases such as “separation of migrant families United States border.”
5. Your search will yield many results. You can sort these results, “newest to oldest.”
6. Select a batch of stories that ran in August of 2018. Ideally, you will be selecting 2-3 stories that ran each week. Each article is numbered. You need to click on the title of each article to confirm it is a news story, not an editorial or opinion column. Once you’ve screened each article and determined its suitability, check the boxes next to the ten chosen articles for August and click on the disc icon in the upper right of your screen (it will say ‘download documents’ when you scroll over it).
7. Select “text” as the type of format and download.
8. After you download, save this file as a text file on your computer and label it with the publication name and month (e.g. Mercury News August).
9. Repeat steps 6-8 for July, June, May, and April.
10. Clean your data. Open each file that you’ve saved and save it as a new file with a new label, e.g. Mercury News August Cleaned. Then clean your data by eliminating any information other than the title of the article, the author of the article and the text of the article. You will need to delete things like the database numbers and retrieval dates.

Share your cleaned data with the other members of your group. At the end of these steps a group of four should have 200 “cleaned” articles, in 20 separate files, ready for upload to Voyant. We will discuss how to use Voyant for analysis and interpretation in class.

Assignment description:

*Introduction*

All papers should begin with a brief introduction to the enforced, and now rescinded, United States policy of separating children from their families at the United States border and where the situation stands at present.

*Methodology*

Please review what framing theory and framing analysis are by citing credible academic sources. Please refer to course materials, readings and notes from in class discussions. You should also detail the methodological approaches taken in this specific analysis. The four newspapers used should be explicitly stated.

* Every student should analyze the data in two ways. First, all students should complete a framing analysis of the entire data set, with the goal of determining what three dominant frames are used to report on this story across the four chosen newspapers selected by your group. You may work on this analysis using Voyant in a group, discussing your findings and determining possible interpretations. However, each student should organically write her/his own paper.
* Second, you should choose another way to look at your data set and complete an additional analysis. Perhaps you want to see if there is a difference in news framing between all of the April articles and all of the August articles? Perhaps you want to determine if one newspaper uses different frames from another newspaper? We can discuss further ideas in class/conferences. This analysis should be completed individually.

Your write up of the methodology should briefly describe each of these analysis approaches.

*Analysis*

Your analysis should review and discuss, using supporting evidence, of three dominate frames used to report on this story. News stories are narratives that have to be told with some level of assumptions about what matters, why it matters, who is responsible, and what possible solutions might be. News frames are storytelling devices rather than biases. They demonstrate an angle when reporting on a story. What are three dominant frames used to report on the separation of families at the United States border?

This analysis should be supported by at least three visuals of your choice. Visuals of these analyses should be integrated into the paper. You should also support your identification of the dominant frames by referring to some qualitative data (quotes from the articles), and discussing this data in context. This part of the analysis asks you to demonstrate, using your evidence, how frames are constructed in these news stories. What words are used? Sources? Connections to social contexts?

Your analysis should also report on the results of your chosen way to look at elements of your data set. At least two Voyant analyses should be discussed in this section of the paper, inclusive of an appropriate visuals.

*Conclusion*

In your conclusion, you should restate your findings from both of your analysis approaches and briefly address the “so what” of this research. What might be possible implications of these frames? How might these frames relate to shaping public opinion? How might these frames overpower other ways of reporting this story?

*Reflection*

In about 250 words, please reflect on this research experience. Feel free to address any component of the project in detail but be sure to answer the question: what did I learn?

*Paper logistics*

The word length of this paper should be about 1500 - 2000 words. Page length will vary from paper to paper given individual choices students make around what visuals are included.

Papers should be written formally and adhere to APA style.

Grading rubric:

**Introduction/ 10 points**:

* A level: The introduction skillfully sets the context for the research at hand by overviewing the news story and stating where the situation stands at present.
* B level: The introduction provides a summary of the news story and begins to connect it to the research at hand.
* C level: The introduction is too narrowly or too broadly discussed to set up the research at hand.
* D level or lower: Does not meet expectations.

**Methodology/15 points**:

* A level: All elements of the methodology and theoretical framework are skillfully developed. Appropriate information about the author’s methodological processes is clearly summarized.
* B level: Critical elements of the methodology and theoretical framework are appropriately developed, however some elements are not as detailed as they might be.
* C level: Some elements of the methodology and theoretical framework are missing, incorrectly developed or unfocused.
* D level or lower: Does not meet expectations.

**Evidence and Analysis/25 points:**

* A level: Information/data are generated/drawn from sources and Voyant with enough interpretation and evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis.
* B level: Information/data are generated/drawn from sources and Voyant with enough interpretation and evaluation to develop a coherent analysis.
* C level: Information/data are generated/drawn from sources and Voyant with some interpretation and evaluation but not enough to develop a comprehensive analysis.
* D level or lower: Does not meet expectations.

**Representation/Visualization/10 points:**

* A level: Skillfully converts relevant data into a visualization that contributes to the analysis.
* B level: Competently converts relevant data into a visualization that contributes to the analysis.
* C level: Converts relevant data into a visualization that may partially contribute to the analysis.
* D level or lower: Does not meet expectations.

**Conclusion/15 points:**

* A level: States a conclusion that is a logical and insightful extrapolation from the inquiry findings.
* B level: States a conclusion focused solely on the inquiry findings.
* C level: States a general conclusion that, because it is so general, also applies beyond the scope of the findings.
* D level or lower: Does not meet expectations.

**Mechanics/20 points:**

* A level: Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free. APA style is correct.
* B level: Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors. APA style may contain minor errors.
* C level: Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage. APA style may be incorrect.
* D level or lower: Does not meet expectations.

**Reflection/5 points:** A personal reflection is included.