**Framing Analysis Project: Newspaper Framing of the Opioid Crisis**

**Assignment purpose**

The purpose of this assignment is to (1) engage you in completing an original research using selected news articles to (2) determine what distinct news frames were used in New York Times 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 can work in a group for the analysis 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)).

In response to what seems to be the over-emphasis of such a narrative, commentators and researchers have called for the media to direct attention to the struggles faced in the black and poorer communities ([Shihipar, 2019](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/26/opinion/opioid-crisis-drug-users.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage); Tiger, 2017).

While various commentaries and opinion pieces have criticized how the opioid crisis has been portrayed in the media (e.g.Tiger, 2017; Shihipar, 2019; Szalavitz, 2018), only one empirical studied the framing of the opioid crisis among the highly circulated newspapers (see [McGinty et al., 2016](http://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/pdf/10.1176/appi.ps.201500065)). Since the study only analyzed stories up until 2012, 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 human interest stories of the opioid crisis are framed as this issue continues to develop since 2013.

**Research Questions**

RQ1: What frames do the New York Times use to report the humanities of opioid users since 2013?

RQ2: What frames do the New York Times use to report the causes of opioid addiction?

RQ3: Do frames used in the reporting of white and nonwhite communities or users differ?