

Framing Marijuana: A Study of How US Newspapers Frame Marijuana Legalization Stories in the United States and Framing Effects of Marijuana Stories

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation was initially designed to look at how the issue of marijuana legalization was presented in newspapers and how news frames could influence the audiences' attitudes or behavioral intentions. To investigate these questions, two different types of research methods were employed: content analysis and experiment. Using framing theory as a theoretical framework, this study found that marijuana legalization has been largely described as a *legislation* issue or a *law enforcement* issue, and *medical benefit* and *medical risk* were most frequently mentioned attributes to support and oppose marijuana legalization. Findings indicated that news frame could influence the public's attitudes toward marijuana legalization. Also, this study found as a two-sided frame effect, respondents who read a mixed frame showed the middle ground between those who read a support frame and those who read an opposition frame. Using the mediation model, this study showed that significant indirect effects on behavioral intention to use medical and non-medical marijuana and support for medical and non-medical marijuana through two each mediating path: via attitudes and via attitudes and risk perceptions.