CONSTRUCTING THE END: 
FRAMING AND AGENDA-SETTING OF PHYSICIAN-ASSISTED SUICIDE

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A Dissertation 
Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green 
State University in partial fulfillment of 
the requirements for the degree of 

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY 

August, 2011 

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ABSTRACT

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Physician-assisted suicide (PAS) is a controversial and important social issue, yet it is not well understood by the US public. This is problematic, for previous research shows public opinion for legalizing PAS has grown more approving in recent decades. News salience and positive portrayals of the issue in news coverage have also increased. Despite increased positive opinion and news discussion, however, few members of the public have a full understanding of PAS. The basic purpose of this study was to examine how PAS is presented in news coverage and understood by members of the public. Specifically, the study examined people’s opinions of PAS to discover if their personal characteristics and/or characteristics of PAS news coverage predicted those opinions. As such, the study examined agenda-setting and framing as they occur in (a) the news media, (b) the public, and (c) external sources.

To achieve these objectives, the study was divided into two method phases. The first method phase was a content analysis of 43 press releases, 198 newspaper stories, and 38 news Web site and Weblog postings from June 2005 to June 2009 to determine their level of salience and frames for PAS. PAS was not especially salient in news coverage and press releases during the time of study, although there were peaks in time when the issue did become salient. Further, the media types studied here (press releases, newspapers, and news Web sites and Weblogs) each used the legal frame most often to describe PAS and there was no significant difference in the overall frames the media types used to discuss the issue.

The second method phase was a survey of 452 faculty and staff members at Bowling Green State University (a response rate of 17.01%) regarding their salience, frames, and opinions for PAS. Respondents overall had a slightly positive opinion of PAS, and these opinions could
be explained by respondents’ marital status (non-married respondents had more negative opinions than married respondents), race (non-White respondents had more negative opinions than White respondents), support for abortion (increased support for abortion predicted more positive opinions of PAS), health status (better health predicted more negative opinions of PAS), personal salience for PAS (increased salience predicted more positive opinions of PAS), personal interest in PAS as a news item (increase interest predicted more positive opinions of PAS), and personal frame for PAS (respondents who used a personal autonomy frame had more positive opinions than respondents who used any other personal frame). Further, respondents did not consider PAS to be especially personally salient, and overwhelmingly used a personal autonomy frame when considering the issue.

This study is among very few in communication research to have examined, at once, agenda-setting and framing as they occur in the media, the public, and external sources. The results contradict previous research that has found media agenda-setting and media framing predict people’s opinions of social issues. Respondents’ opinions of PAS were predicted by their personal salience and personal frames, but not by the salience and frames utilized by the news sources they use to find information about PAS. In the case of a highly controversial, highly personal issue like PAS, it is possible people are less affected by the news media than they would be with more established social issues. It is also possible that low news attention to PAS minimizes the effects that could occur from exposure to news content. This study suggests that news media effects are contingent on audience members’ own personal qualities and experiences, and on the attention given to specific issues by the news media.
DEDICATIONS

Dedicated to my wife, for keeping me loved, strong, smart, and happy, and for leading me toward Christ.
Lesley Denise Holody

Dedicated to my parents, for teaching me to be the best I can be.
Timothy J. Holody and Becki Holody

Dedicated to my other parents, for teaching me that I can be better and for giving me their blessing.
Dennis Goodman and Deborah Goodman

Dedicated to my grandparents, for teaching me the strengths found in kindness, in family, in fortitude, and in being Polish and German.
Joseph T. Holody and Anne Marie Holody
and
Carl Biehler and Joyce Ione Biehler

Dedicated to my family, for teaching me to be strong and for being wonderful examples.
Heidi McClintic, Stephen McClintic, Ryan Holody, Tonya Holody, Skyler Rogers, Dalton Holody, and Candie Rogers

Dedicated to my niece and nephew, to my aunts and uncles, to my cousins, and to my extended families-in-law, for all their love and support over the years, for the warmth they provide, and for being too numerous to mention by name. Thanks especially to Bari Lynn Biehler for some extra help just when I needed it.

Dedicated to our friends, for blessing my life in many ways, for some amazing and wonderful memories, and for being there during the difficult times.

Dedicated to the family I have lost:

Babka
For your love, affection, and amazing strength.

Uncle Dick
For your laugh, brilliance, and kindness, and for being a magnificent example to live up to.

Debbie
You taught me to be proud without being prideful. You inspired me to be a good man, a good husband, and a follower of Christ. And you raised a wonderful daughter, for which I will be forever in your debt. I couldn’t have done this without you.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the following people,

- To my advisor, Dr. Srinivas Melkote, for being brilliant, funny, warm, tenacious, and honest about my strengths and weaknesses;
- To Dr. Sung-Yeon Park, for her humor, for her intelligence, for trusting in my abilities, and for constantly reminding me I deserved this, for good or for bad;
- To Dr. Gi Woong Yun, for his infectious kindness, his enthusiasm for life and knowledge, and his reassuring words;
- To Dr. DeMaris, for being kind, warm, and welcoming, for pushing me to improve, for encouraging my potential, and for being a fellow Hokie;
- To Dr. Michael Weber, for insisting I produce the best work possible and for reminding me the power in knowing limitations;
- To my fellow members of the Media Research Lab, who helped me with many important parts of this dissertation and graciously listened to my ramblings;
- To Dr. William Knight, for his helpful advice and generous kindness;
- To the outstanding Faculty and Staff of the School of Media and Communication, for being wonderful teachers, examples, and friends;
- To Barb Peck and my GradSTEP co-workers, for trusting in my abilities and providing a great place to work;
- To Dr. Stephen Croucher, Dr. Tom Mascaro, and to all my teachers at BGSU, for helping me to move beyond my own little world and to take chances;
- To my students, who taught me so much and made teaching an exhilarating experience;
- To my fellow graduate students, especially Veronica, Kisung, Samara, and my fellow research group members, for making my time here much more manageable and enjoyable;
- To Chris, Nikki, and Connor, for being far kinder to me than any person deserves;
- To Kevin, Liz, and Paige Jackson, for blessing us with many favors and many years of wonderful friendship;
- To all of our family at First Baptist Church Perrysburg, for encouraging us, welcoming us, and giving us the chance to teach our Sunday School Youth and to serve Christ;
- To Jeff, Huong, Patrick, Chris, Lisa, Carrie, Jake, Josh, and the rest of our Virginia family, for being better friends than I could have ever imagined;
- To Dr. Andrew Paul Williams, Dr. Ashli Quesinberry Stokes, and to Dr. John C. Tedesco for getting me started in the right direction;
- To my fellow Hokies, for their inspiring actions and for the wonderful memories;
- To the 33 people who died on April 16, 2007 and to their families, for showing grace and strength during the most difficult of times, for exemplifying what it means to be a hero, and for demonstrating the power and need for forgiveness;
- To Jesus Christ and to God, for forgiving my sins.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 2004, Pollock and Yulis identified a need in the field of communication for more research focusing on physician-assisted suicide (PAS) and other end-of-life issues. Despite the issue being “one of the most important and controversial issues of our time” (Dworkin, Frey, & Bok, 1998; Weir, 1989, preface; Yount, 2000), only a relatively small amount of research about PAS has been conducted, both before and since Pollock and Yulis’s (2004) call. Exploration of other controversial social issues exists—see, for example, Condit (1990; Railsback, 1984) for discussion of abortion from a communication standpoint—yet issues related to death and/or dying remain an important open opportunity for research. This study was an exploration of whether PAS is on the agenda for various news media, advocacy groups, and members of the public. In addition, this study was an exploration of how PAS is framed by these media and groups. Finally, this study was an exploration to determine if the salience and frames different media have for PAS relate to people’s opinions of the issue. These explorations provide an important step toward a better understanding of the issue overall, and more specifically a better understanding of how the issue relates to various aspects of mass communication and public opinion. Although study of agenda-setting and framing in general is quite important, so too is research, like the present study, that relates these theories to specific social issues.

The term physician-assisted suicide refers to a situation when a medical doctor provides patients with means to end their own lives (Emanuel, 1994). The term PAS is a slight misnomer, for physicians only assist patients in the procurement of a lethal dose of medicine; the patients must physically take that medicine without physical assistance for the act to remain legally defined as PAS. In other words, patients commit suicide by their actions alone, but are assisted in the act by medicine or technology provided to them by medical doctors. In the United States,
only Washington and Oregon have laws granting physicians the legal right to write a prescription for a lethal dose of medicine. Further, the laws in Washington and Oregon specify that the patient for whom a prescription is written must have been diagnosed as having less than six months left to live, must have made separate verbal and written requests for the medicine, and must have been determined to be of sound mind; if one of these requirements is not met, the act of writing a prescription for the patient remains illegal. These PAS laws are primarily concerned with protecting physicians from prosecution for manslaughter or medical maltreatment in cases where they choose to provide suicide assistance (Dworkin, Frey, & Bok, 1998; Ertelt, 2009), and are not necessarily concerned with protecting patients’ rights to PAS. Physicians in Washington and Oregon are not required to assist in a suicide, but if they choose to do so and if all legal steps are completed correctly, the PAS laws protect them from being held responsible for a patient’s death.

Although Pollock and Yulis (2004) were correct that PAS remains an under-explored area of research in communication, previous scholarship has looked at PAS. For example, in her qualitative study, Atwood-Gailey (2003) identified three major framing stages through which US news coverage of PAS moved in the late twentieth century. The first stage was characterized by concern over passive euthanasia, wherein medical treatments and life-support systems are refused or withdrawn from patients to “let nature take its course” (Emanuel, 1994). News media coverage and public discussion during this first stage was primarily concerned with patients foregoing treatment rather than with patients who were actively seeking death (Atwood-Gailey, 2003); the concern was over patients having a say over what medical treatments were or were not used on their bodies, not with them having the right to die. The second stage was still characterized by news media coverage and public debate over passive euthanasia, but focused on
the withdrawal of nutrition and hydration rather than on respirators, as it had been in the first stage. The concern was still over patients having a say over how their health was maintained or, possibly, ended, but still did not focus on a basic right to choose death.

Finally, the third stage was focused on PAS and active euthanasia, which is similar to passive euthanasia except that the intent of removing or refusing medical treatment is to facilitate death, rather than letting nature take its course. In passive euthanasia, death is likely but not assured. In active euthanasia, life-support systems are removed or treatment is ended with the intent of helping a patient to die. This third stage was also characterized by a preoccupation with Jack Kevorkian, the Michigan pathologist who became famous for helping over 150 people medically commit suicide (Yount, 2000). As discussed in greater detail later, Atwood-Gailey (2003) argued these stages resulted from distinct framing eruptions representing times when media and audience frames were suddenly reconsidered, times when external sources attempted to establish new understanding of the issue, and times when new policy considerations were made.

The present research study examined media coverage and public opinion of PAS after several new news events and frames were introduced to the debate. Since Atwood-Gailey’s original 2003 study, many news events related to PAS have occurred, including the many trials dealing with the life and death of Terri Schiavo, legalization of PAS in Washington and Montana, denouncements against PAS and euthanasia made by Pope Benedict XVI, the idea of “death panels,” and the arrest of several members of the pro-PAS Final Exit Network for assisting with suicides in Georgia. Emanuel’s (1994) research showed PAS is considered a highly controversial subject amongst the US public. The issue raises questions about human rights, medical responsibility, morality, legality, and the sanctity religions assign to life; further,
the very discussion of PAS forces people to consider their own mortality (Yount, 2000).

Identification of the salience people assign to the issue and the frames they use to discuss it are needed for a fuller understanding how their opinions of PAS form, but so too is identifying the salience and frames used in the media people use when learning about the issue. Because the issue is essential, complicated, and highly controversial, it is necessary for researchers to understand what influences the development of a person’s opinion of PAS, especially whether or not the news media and advocacy groups that provide information about the issue to the public play a part in the development of that opinion.

Utilizing two research methods, this study examined agenda-setting and framing as they occurred in three different locations (the news media, individuals, and external sources) identified by McCombs (2004) and Entman (1993). The first method phase examined the content of elite newspapers and news Web sites and Weblogs to determine what frames are used and presented in news coverage of PAS, and to determine how salient PAS is in that coverage. The content of press releases produced by two groups associated with the PAS movement—one group in favor of and one group against legalizing PAS—was also examined to determine how the issue is presented by organizations attempting to steer public discussion and government policy. The first stage was therefore concerned with agenda-setting and framing in the news media and external sources locations. The second method phase featured a survey designed to measure respondents’ frames for PAS, the issue’s salience on their personal agendas, and their demographic and psychographic characteristics. The second phase was therefore concerned with agenda-setting and framing in the individuals location. The data from the two phases were then analyzed to identify variables that explain or predict respondents’ opinions of PAS. Although media frames have been shown to affect public opinion on a variety of topics (e.g., Berinsky &
Kinder, 2006; Callaghan & Schnell, 2000; Entman, 2004; Iyengar, 1991; Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; Nelson & Kinder, 1996; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997; Schuck & de Vreese, 2006), this study represents the first examination into whether or not the presentation of PAS by news media and advocacy groups is related to people’s opinions of the issue. In other words, it is among the first studies to examine agenda-setting and framing in all three locations, and is the first to examine if agenda-setting and framing have an effect on people’s opinions about PAS.

Based on the methods here, one cannot determine if media frames cause audience frames, if advocacy group frames cause media frames, or if the direction of causality flows in any other direction. However, as Zhou and Moy (2007) argued, the combination of content-analytic and survey data has been used in previous studies to replicate experimental findings in natural settings, allowing researchers to conclude that media frames do, in practice, shape public opinion (e.g., Allen, O’Loughlin, Jasperson, & Sullivan, 1994; Jasperson, Shah, Watts, Faber, & Fan, 1998). In other words, while analyzing media content and opinion data does not justify making causal claims, studies that have found strong correlations between the two suggest that the framing effects found in experimental research (e.g., Iyengar, 1991) can also be found ‘in the real world.’ The findings of the present study can suggest if media content—specifically the salience and frames with which the issue is discussed—indeed has an influence on people’s opinions of PAS.

Understanding the influence advocacy groups may have on public opinion was also an important objective of this study. The press releases of two advocacy groups were analyzed. Several groups exist that are concerned with PAS as their primary issue, but the Death with Dignity National Center (DDNC) and California Coalition for Compassionate Care (CCCC) represent the two extreme sides of the ideological scale. The DDNC is in favor of legalized
PAS, and takes credit for the passing of legislation allowing it in both Oregon and Washington (http://www.deathwithdignity.org/). The group’s primary purpose is to influence legislation and judicial debates about PAS, but its members also interact with the media and the public in order to sway public opinion. CCCC is against the legalization of PAS and instead favors the promotion of high-quality palliative and end-of-life care. Like the DDNC, CCCC focuses much of its attention on PAS legislation, but its resources and efforts instead go toward preventing PAS from being a legal right in California and other states. Also like the DDNC, CCCC interacts with both the news media and the public with the intent of influencing opinion.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

This study was built upon two theoretical frameworks. First, the agenda-setting function of media suggests that the more important the news media present a particular issue as being—or, how salient their coverage of the issue is—the more important that issue becomes for media consumers. Second, the framing theory suggests that how the news media present a particular issue, rather than simply that it is presented, has the effect of influencing people’s understanding of it (McCombs, 1994). In this case, the theories would suggest that a large amount of news coverage related to PAS could result in media consumers considering the issue quite important (agenda-setting), and that consumers’ understanding of PAS could be influenced by the way information about the issue was presented to them in news coverage (framing). The study examined whether agenda-setting and/or framing have explanatory power regarding people’s opinions of PAS, while also accounting for the fact that people’s individual differences also influence how they feel about a given issue (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2001; Lecheler, de Vreese, & Slothuus, 2009; Van Gorp, 2007).
**Agenda-Setting**

Agenda-setting researchers hypothesize that when issues are salient in news coverage, those same issues become salient to the general public. Because the news media give us access beyond what we directly experience, the ways they present the world determines our cognitive maps of that world (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002). By actively searching for and sharing important news stories, the news media are able to spare the public the trouble of finding what issues need attention the most. For this reason, whatever information the news media decide to share about given news stories is likely to be the only information audiences receive, and whatever stories the news media emphasize are likely to be the stories to which the audiences give most of their attention. This study explored agenda-setting as it occurred in all three locations identified by McCombs (2004): the media, the individual/audience, and external sources of influence.

**Media agenda.** A *media agenda* is basically a list of five to seven issues that are presented by the news media as most important at a given time. While more than this small number of issues is covered by the overall news media at any given point, most of the time, energy, and resources available to news organizations tend to be focused toward only five to seven issues. Just as journalists and editors tend to choose a small number of important issues to which they devote most of their resources, however, that agenda of issues is also presented to media audiences as being important by means of the salience the news organizations give it. In other words, the news organizations focus on a small number of issues—oftentimes these issues are chosen idiosyncratically or by happenstance, and vary regularly—and emphasize those issues in the way they present news stories (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002). By publishing multiple, lengthy news stories on a specific issue, a news organization suggests to its audiences that they
should consider the issue important. By featuring these stories prominently, making the focusing of their resources visible to audiences, and prioritizing the stories to their top journalists, the news organizations emphasize further that the stories should be considered important. This process describes the most basic agenda-setting idea: media salience of issue leads to the issue’s salience among audiences (McCombs, 1994).

**Audience agenda.** A public or *audience agenda* is the list of five to seven issues that overall audience members consider to be most important at a given time. Just as news organizations cover more than five to seven issues at a time, audience members also think about a greater number of stories on a regular basis. However, the agenda-setting hypothesis suggests that individual people tend to focus on five to seven issues, considering them as most important and most worthy of their attention, opinion, or action (McCombs, 2004). The public agenda consists of the five to seven issues that the overall public considers most important, even if individuals’ agendas vary. News coverage of the day’s events rank orders important newsmakers and issues, and this ranking in turn aids members of the public as they develop their cognitive mindset for those newsmakers and issues (Melkote, 2009). In fact, McCombs and Shaw (1972) and McCombs (2004) indicated the five to seven issues on the media issue at a given time tend to match the issues on the public agenda, even if the ranking of issues is slightly different. For example, the news media could emphasize medical reform over the economy, while the public considers economy more important; even if the ranking of importance is different, both parties still focus on the same few issues.

Zucker (1978) further suggested that if someone has little direct experience with an issue, the likelihood that news coverage will influence the person’s perceptions of that issue increases because he or she has no other method for gaining knowledge about it. For issues like PAS, with
which very few people have direct experience, the level of salience given to the issue by news media can have a strong influence on how important a person thinks it is. However, news is “a reconstruction of reality, a deliberately constructed product that reflects the world views of the news producers themselves” (Dunwoody & Shields, 1986, p. 43), meaning audience members may perceive PAS to be important based on the amount of coverage there is about the issue rather than how important the issue truly is. The media agenda affects the opinions people have for various social issues, primarily by giving people a reason to form an opinion. For example, if PAS suddenly becomes salient on the media agenda, it is likely that people will soon begin to form or reconsider their opinions of the issue.

**External sources.** The agenda of *external sources* plays an important role in overall agenda-setting. Because agenda-setting can be so influential, scholars have argued for research acknowledging the strong influence external sources have on both the media and public agendas (McCombs & Bell, 1996; McCombs & Shaw, 1993). For example, public relations materials play a significant role in determining what issues are high on the media agenda. The process of *agenda-building* acknowledges that the list of five to seven issues presented as most important by the news media may be influenced by people with vested interests. Advocacy groups interested in either side of the abortion debate struggle to get their issue on the media agenda, just as do environmental or medical reform groups. If any such advocacy group is successful at increasing the salience given to an issue by the news media, it is also likely that the group’s influence indirectly extends to the public agenda and public opinion overall (Miller, 2010). It is therefore highly important that research like the present study examine advocacy groups as external sources wishing to influence media and public agendas, in the pursuit of understanding what can explain or predict public opinion. This study was thus interested in determining issue
salience that occurred in the *media, audience,* and *external sources* locations identified by McCombs (2004), specifically to determine how strongly PAS salience influences people’s opinions of the issue.

**Framing**

Although many definitions for framing exist (e.g., Entman, 1993; Iyengar, 1991), one of the most widely used and understood (Matthes & Kohring, 2008) is Gamson and Modigliani’s (1989) notion that a *frame* is a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events. Frames are structures of thought people cognitively use to understand what is happening in the world around them; rather than considering every bit of information, people use frames to get to what is the ‘heart of the matter’ in any given situation. Using frames, people are able to package and position particular issues so that those issues convey meanings more relative to their own experiences (Entman, 1993; Iyengar, 1991; Ryan, 1991). Frames, in this sense, are links to previously learned information we are able to access when presented with new ideas or experiences. People can extrapolate causal relationships between new concepts or consider them from a familiar perspective based on how similar they are to the frames of reference we have already (D. Scheufele, 2000). People discuss the world around them using frames, making both the frames they use and the external influences on those frames—for example, the content of news media, the arguments of advocacy groups, our religious beliefs, or our own experience with an issue—important topics worthy of study.

According to Lecheler, de Vreese, and Slothuus (2009), framing is a process, consisting of frame-building (how frames emerge) and frame-setting (the interplay between media frames and audience predispositions). The media present new information in particular ways, and audience members understand that new information based on their own particular perspectives.
This study explored framing as it occurred in all three locations identified by Entman (1993): the media, the individual/audience, and external sources of influence.

**Media frames.** The first location where framing occurs is in the news media. The term *frame* was first used by separate scholars, Tuchman (1978) and Gitlin (1980), to study the nature and influence of news coverage (Huang, 1996). Entman (1993) conceptualizes the presentations the news media use for issues as *media frames*. Any given news story can be presented from a variety of perspectives. Each of those potential story perspectives is a frame, and the ones ultimately presented to audiences are considered media frames. These frames can be influenced in a variety of ways, such as by journalists’ own frames for the issues they cover, the practices common to journalism in general, corporate interests, or public opinion. It is important to understand how media frames come to be, but it is also important to acknowledge that whatever frames for a particular story are ultimately presented to news audiences are a few among many potential frames for the story. In other words, multiple potential frames exist for a given issue, but only a few are ever used as media frames. As utilized here, media frames can be conceptualized as being *thematic central, thematic non-central, episodic central*, or *episodic non-central*. These types of media frames are mutually exclusive (e.g., a conflict frame could be used thematically and centrally in a news story, or episodically and non-centrally, but not both), and are described below.

Iyengar (1991, 2009) developed the notion that media frames can be either thematic or episodic. *Thematic* frames place emphasis on contextual information, such as general trends, matters of public policy, and the background of events (Huang, 1996). If a news story presents PAS via a thematic frame, the story would consider past events, public opinion numbers, social or moral ideas related to death, etc., as these ideas relate to a specific event being covered.
Episodic frames, on the other hand, focus on concrete acts or particular incidents at the expense of contextual information. If a news story presents PAS via an episodic frame, the story would treat the event being covered as if it exists on its own terms, rather than through its relation to past events or ideas. News stories with thematic frames indicate to their potential audiences that responsibility for an issue can be attributed to the government or to society in general, whereas episodic frames suggest to audiences that responsibility belongs to individuals or particular circumstances (Iyengar, 1991).

A. P. Williams and Kaid (2006) suggested media frames vary in their levels of substance, or the credence to which journalists assign the frames they use. A frame’s level of substance is conceptualized in the present study as the *centrality* with which it is used. A substantive or *central* frame is detailed and informative, offering meaningful information leading toward in-depth understanding of an issue. A journalist using a frame centrally would use it prominently and throughout the overall length of a story. In contrast, an ambiguous or *non-central* frame is less distinct, providing basic context to a story but lacking clear information. A journalist using a frame non-centrally would use it sparingly or in conjunction with other perspectives. For example, a journalist could decide to present PAS through a conflict frame. If this frame is used centrally, then the journalist would mention conflict throughout the entire story and primarily use this perspective when presenting the issue. Alternatively, a journalist could primarily discuss PAS from the perspective of the medical community, yet briefly mention a conflict that exists between two groups of physicians. In this case, the conflict frame is present in the news story but—because it is not the primary perspective from which the issue is considered and because it is not used at length—the frame is non-centrally used (Van Gorp, 2007).

**Individual frames.** The second location Entman (1993) identified is the *individual*
frame, or the “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals’ processing of information” (p. 53). These frames are the ways different people consider a given issue. The framing theory, as used in communication research, supposes that individual frames are influenced by the frames presented by the news media. While media frames have been shown to affect public opinion on a variety of topics (e.g., Callaghan & Schnell, 2000; Entman, 2004; Iyengar, 1991; Nelson & Kinder, 1996; Schuck & de Vreese, 2006), scholars have only recently begun to examine which individual and contextual variables can enhance or limit framing effects (e.g., Druckman, 2001; Lecheler, de Vreese, & Slothuus; 2009). A variety of life experiences or influences may lead to a person’s individual frame. As McCombs and Bell (1996) suggested, however, while the news media are not all-powerful in controlling how a person understands a complex social issue, they are often the only source for information people have on which to base understanding. For this reason, the frames individual people have often share similar characteristics with the frames held by others, even if each person’s particular frame is essentially unique. As an example, every perspective on abortion is unique, simply because each person is unique, yet the issue is generally considered as a pro-life/pro-choice argument (Condit, 1990; Railsback, 1984). Even if one person has unique reasons for being pro-choice, his or her frame for the issue shares characteristics with a more general pro-choice frame held by other people and presented in news coverage. This is especially true if people have little direct experience with a particular topic (Zucker, 1978).

When explored in the aggregate, individual frames are treated as audience frames, a term which describes the way an issue is considered by people in general (e.g., the pro-choice frame for abortion). As Atwood-Gailey (2003) noted, most Americans learn about PAS through the news media. For this reason, there tend to be very few audience frames for the issue. An
important note, however, is that although a cause and effect relationship is generally understood to exist between the media and their audiences in regards to how issues are framed (Constantinescu & Tedesco, 2007), audience members may adopt media frames for a news story or they can maintain their own previously held ideas. In other words, media are influential but not all-powerful. It must be acknowledged that, although a person’s individual frame may be influenced by the news media, every person has the ability to reject outside influence or change their own previous frames of reference. Frames are not static, nor are individuals entirely reactive to the messages presented to them by the media.

**External sources.** The third location Entman (1993) identified is the influence of external sources, such as political actors, interest and advocacy groups, academics, moral leaders, or celebrities (Fishman, 1980; D. Scheufele, 1999). This framing location is tied to the idea of frame-building, wherein people with vested interests actively attempt to change the way issues are understood by the media and the public (Andsager, 2000; Wasserman, Stack, & Reeves, 1994). Frame-building is present whenever journalists or editors convey their own opinions through their reporting, and is thus a part of media framing. However, other sources of intentional framing also exist. Often the news sources journalists go to for information covertly offer their own preferred ways of framing the issue being covered. In fact, public relations practitioners are hired by advocacy groups, corporations, and political figures specifically to influence news media coverage and sway public opinion (Andsager, 2000; Andsager & Smiley, 1998; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Price & Tewksbury, 1997; D. Scheufele, 2000).

Duncan and Parmeelee (2006) argued that recent positive changes in attitudes among the US public toward euthanasia and PAS are indicative of the success of a strong social movement, one that is both highly visible and vigorous in its deliberate actions intended to shape public
opinion and public policy. These scholars suggested advocacy groups not only purposefully try to influence media coverage and public opinion; these groups have been entirely successful in achieving that influence. The current study was thus interested in determining what frames occurred in the *media*, *individual*, and *external sources* locations suggested by Entman (1993), specifically to determine how strong correlations between the three may be.

**Objectives of the Study**

An important objective of this study was to determine (a) if PAS was salient in advocacy groups’ press releases, (b) if PAS was salient in coverage by different news media, and (c) if PAS was salient to members of the public. A second, related objective of this study was to determine (a) what frames were used to describe PAS in advocacy groups’ press releases, (b) what frames were used to describe PAS in coverage by different news media, (c) what frames were used to describe PAS by members of the public, and (d) if there were any correlations between the frames used by these groups.

To address these objectives, the study was divided into two method phases. The first phase was a content analysis and the second a survey. In the first phase of this study, a content analysis examined the salience given to PAS by two advocacy groups—the Death with Dignity National Center (DDNC) and California Coalition for Compassionate Care (CCCC)—and what frames the groups used in their press releases regarding PAS. The phase also examined the types of frames used in news media coverage of the issue, across newspapers and news Web sites and Weblogs, as well as the salience given to the issue. A literature review revealed that there have been very few quantitative studies related to setting the agenda for or the framing of PAS (Holody, 2008). Therefore, the following research questions were posited.

RQ1 through RQ8 concerned agenda-setting, and question (a) how much coverage was
given to PAS and (b) the salience afforded to PAS in coverage in news stories and press releases. Questions of (a) how much coverage is given to PAS are related to overall coverage trends for each medium, the number of news stories each medium published about PAS, and the overall length of news stories about PAS for each medium. Questions of (b) the salience of coverage are related to the authorship of news stories (i.e., a newspaper story written by a staff writer or editor may represent the view of the newspaper better than a wire story printed in the publication), story type (i.e., did the media most often offer news coverage of the issue, or their opinions of the issue?), the mention of advocacy groups (i.e., were the DDNC or CCCC ever mentioned in news coverage?), whether PAS was treated as a central issue (i.e., if the issue was not the central issue of a news story, it is not very salient in that news coverage), the types of sources used (e.g., did news stories about PAS tend to contain more quotes from doctors or patients?), and the types of evidence used (e.g., did news stories about PAS tend to contain more facts or personal anecdotes?).

**RQ1.** Are there noticeable trends regarding when news stories (in newspapers and on news Web sites and Weblogs) and press releases (created by the DDNC and CCCC) about PAS were originally published?

**RQ2.** Are there differences in the total number of stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

b. Are there differences in the mean lengths of stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

**RQ3.** Are there differences between authorship types (staff writers, editorial, wire service/syndicated, reader/letter to editor, or other) used for news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?
RQ4. Are there differences between type of stories (news or opinion/editorial) about PAS used across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

RQ5. Is there a tendency across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases) to mention CCCC or the DDNC in news stories and press releases about PAS?

RQ6. Are there differences between how PAS is treated (either as a central or non-central issue) in news stories across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

RQ7. Are there differences between the types of sources cited or quoted in news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, and press releases)?

RQ8. Are there differences between the type of evidence used (data-based, non-data-based, or court case) in news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

RQ9 and RQ10 concerned the framing of PAS, and question the overall tone of PAS coverage (positive, negative, or neutral) for each medium, what frames and frame characteristics were used in overall media coverage, and what single frame was most often used by each medium (e.g., which frame represented overall coverage of PAS by The New York Times?).

RQ9. Are there differences between the position toward PAS (in favor of, against, or neutral toward) used in news stories across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

RQ10. Are there differences between the frames used in news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?
b. What single frame is used most often for each media type (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

The survey in the second phase of the study examined how high PAS was on respondents’ personal agendas and what frames respondents used when considering PAS. Additionally, the survey examined if respondents’ frames for PAS were related to their opinions of the issue, for Entman (1993) suggested that one’s opinion of a social issue is determined by or related to the frame one has for the issue. Most previous studies of public opinion related to PAS (e.g., Emanuel, 1994) have been exploratory, rather than stemming from specific theoretical underpinnings. In other words, a person’s opinion of PAS has been found to be related to certain demographic characteristics, but the studies from which these findings were drawn were based on blind explorations of relationships rather than theoretically-based research questions or hypotheses. Because no studies have examined the relationship that may exist between framing, agenda-setting, and opinion of PAS, this study addressed this question while controlling for the several demographic and psychographic variables found in previous studies to be associated with support for (or against) PAS among individuals.

Only a few empirical studies (e.g., Gamson, 1992; Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992) have compared news media frames to audience frames, with even fewer exploring the framing of PAS. By comparing framing and salience between different media types and survey respondents, it is possible to identify what perspectives regarding PAS are emphasized and which are excluded (Huang, 1996). The following research questions built on this idea, and connected the findings of the two method phases utilized in this study. The broad research objectives of the present study were to determine if there are connections between the presentations or considerations for PAS from news media, advocacy groups, and individuals, and
if these influenced individuals’ opinions of PAS. With these objectives in mind, the following
research questions were posited:

**RQ11.** What are respondents’ opinions of PAS?

**RQ12.** Which news source do respondents use most often when seeking information about PAS?

**RQ13.** Which frames do respondents use most often when considering PAS?

**RQ14.** Are the frames for PAS used most often by the different media types (newspapers, news
Web sites and Weblogs, and press releases) and survey respondents similar or different from
one another?

**RQ15.** How high do respondents rank PAS on their personal agenda of important social issues
(if at all)?

b. How salient is PAS in respondents’ personal agenda of important social issues?

A careful review of literature showed that the following characteristics have a positive
relationship with support for PAS: being Caucasian rather than African-American (Hamil-Luker
Singh, 1979; Ward, 1980), being married (Emanuel, 1995), supporting the death penalty (Green
& Jarvis, 2007), supporting abortion rights (Finlay, 1985; Green & Jarvis, 2007), supporting
individual autonomy or freedom of expression (Seidlitz, Duberstein, Cox, & Conwell, 1995;
Singh, 1979; Weiss, 1996), having a higher level of education (Jorgenson & Neubecker, 1981;
Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2002; O’Neill, Feenan, Hughes, & McAllister, 2003; Ward, 1980), and
having a higher income (Ostheimer, 1980).

On the other hand, the following characteristics have been found to be related to
opposition to PAS: being able to access higher quality health care or having a better self-
identified health status (Emanuel, 2002; Seidlitz et al., 1995), being older (Hamil-Luker &
Smith, 1998; Jorgenson & Neubecker, 1981; Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2002; O’Neill et al., 2003; Seidlitz et al., 1995; Ward, 1980), having a higher level of religiosity (Emanuel, 1995; Hamil-
Luker & Smith, 1998; Jorgenson & Neubecker, 1981; Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2002; Singh, 1979; Ward, 1980; Weiss, 1996; Worthern & Yeatts, 2000), being female rather than male (Jorgenson & Neubecker, 1981; Ward, 1980), and being more conservative (Finlay, 1985; Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2002; Ostheimer, 1980). Based on these previous research findings, the follow research questions were posited:

*RQ16.* Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the salience given to PAS by respondents explain or predict their opinion of PAS?

*RQ17.* Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the frame for PAS used most often by respondents explain or predict their opinion of PAS?

*RQ18.* Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the salience given to PAS by respondents’ preferred news media type for information about PAS explain or predict their opinion of PAS?

*RQ19.* Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the frame for PAS used most often by respondents’ preferred news media type for information about PAS explain or predict their opinion of PAS?

**Explanation of Key Concepts and Terms**

The following definitions demonstrate how key ideas in the study were conceptualized. Operational definitions for other key terms are provided in the Chapter 3 description of research methods.

**Physician-Assisted Suicide**

This concept is defined here as any occurrence wherein a doctor or medical figure assists
in the death of a person who is terminally ill or has requested the right to die. There are legal and medical differences in how PAS, euthanasia, and other end-of-life treatment choices are defined, yet journalists (Atwood-Gailey, 2003) and the US public (Emanuel, 2002) are generally unaware of any such distinctions. For this reason, while in some instances I may refer to euthanasia or PAS in direct, specific ways, in general this study uses physician-assisted suicide as a catchall term for any occurrence of a patient’s death brought about through medical means. The aim of this study was to understand what people’s opinions of PAS were and what can explain those opinions. If the public is unaware of how PAS is unique and different from euthanasia, it likely does little good to consider the issues as separate. The differences are addressed later, but the different types of physician-related deaths discussed by survey respondents, in news coverage, or in press releases were all treated as equal for the purposes of this study.

**Opinion/Support**

This variable was defined broadly, representing both a continuum of acceptance of the general notion of PAS (e.g., acknowledging that a person may have the basic human right to die if desired) or support for the actual legalization of PAS. This definition acknowledges that a person (or news content) may express support for PAS in general, yet not express a desire to take part in the act. Similarly, a person may support other people’s right to PAS yet be unwilling to take action toward its legalization. In other words, support for PAS was defined as tending to have a high, positive attitude toward the issue and/or its supporters. Likewise, support for abortion, the death penalty, and individual autonomy were defined as having a high, positive attitude toward the issues, regardless of respondents’ actual behavior. This definition applied both to news content and survey respondent data, and acknowledges that opposition to is the conceptual opposite of support for. In other words, I defined high opinion of PAS as agreement
with or support for the notion of PAS (either as a concept or a legal right) and low opinion of PAS as opposition to or disagreeing with the notion of PAS.

**Organization of Dissertation**

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the theoretical frameworks that guided the direction of this study, as well as a comprehensive review of literature on several relevant subjects and contexts.

Chapter 3 describes the two method phases of the study, including the populations, samples, sampling frameworks, data collection instruments, and the processes and procedures used in data collection and analyses.

Chapter 4 describes and reports results from the analysis techniques used to answer the research questions related to both the content analysis and survey.

Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the results described in Chapter 4, as well as a summary of conclusions to be drawn from the study. This chapter also includes discussion of the importance, implications, and limitations of the study.
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND CONTEXT

Theoretical Frameworks

This study was built upon two theoretical frameworks. First, the agenda-setting function of media suggests that the level of importance, or salience, of coverage given to a particular issue by the news media has the effect of making that issue seem more important in the minds of media audiences. Second, the framing theory suggests that how a particular issue is presented—rather than simply that it is presented—has the effect of changing people’s understanding of it (McCombs, 1994). Both agenda-setting and framing have been shown to influence public opinion about various topics (e.g., Allen et al., 1994; Callaghan & Schnell, 2000; Entman, 2004; Jasperson et al., 1998; Miller, 2010), so it is important to determine if the same holds true for the PAS issue.

According to Bennett and Iyengar (2008), recent increases in the availability and variety of news content to media audiences have weakened social group ties that have previously linked people together. Because of this, the current media environment offers highly individualized media effects rather than more general effects that can be measured in a wide population of media consumers. The authors argued that in the past, people’s opinions and understandings of the world were primarily influenced by social and interpersonal interactions with others. Today, the news media have become the primary source people have for new information. Despite the power now afforded to news media to affect individuals, often strongly, Bennett and Iyengar suggested a new era of minimal effects may soon return. At present, media research considers media effects in the aggregate; this may no longer be proper because both news content and news consumption patterns are growing more and more varied. As such, while individuals can be affected strongly by the news content they experience, it possible those effects will not be
evident when multiple individuals are considered at once.

Individuals’ media consumption habits will soon become so distinct, it may become impossible to identify the ways media affect a wide group of people in any measurable way. Effects on *individuals* may be quite powerful, contingent on their personal characteristics or situations, but studies of the effects on groups or populations will likely produce limited or difficult to predict results (Van Gorp, 2007). In other words, a greater number of individuals may be affected more strongly than ever before, but the effects themselves will be so individualized that measurements taken of groups of people may reveal only minimal changes.

Audience members are, theoretically, no longer inadvertently exposed to news content. Exposure is self-selected, intentional, and highly individualized. It is important to study news content in the present media environment, for traditional notions of agenda-setting and framing may no longer apply. By exploring only a single issue in the current study, it was possible to determine if PAS was even on the news agenda for both traditional (newspapers) and interactive (news Web sites and news Weblogs) news media. Further, it was possible to explore if the issue’s presence on the news agenda, and/or the frames used to describe the issue, had an effect on people’s opinions of PAS.

Traditional agenda-setting research (e.g., McCombs & Shaw, 1972) has assumed that the content available to news consumers will inevitably reach those consumers. In today’s media environment, however, even if PAS is present on the media agenda for some news organizations, this does not guarantee that all news content presents it with the same salience. More important, the presence of PAS on the media agenda also does not guarantee the public is certain to be exposed to content about the issue. If a person can pick and choose precisely what news content he or she wishes to read or watch, it may be unlikely that person will ever see news stories about
PAS without specifically choosing to do so. As such, the current study examined the issue using agenda-setting and framing to determine if these elements of media do have an effect on people’s understanding of PAS.

**Agenda-Setting**

Agenda-setting is one of the most studied concepts in media effects research (McCombs, 1994). Unlike much previous media research, the agenda-setting hypothesis concerns cognition rather than attitude change. Tests of the hypothesis indicate that mass media generally have strong impact on what issues audience members think about, even if their attitudes toward those issues do not change directly from exposure to media content. In other words, news content may not always change a person’s existing opinion, but it does influence the person to consider that issue worthy of attention. Movement toward one issue in the public agenda represents movement away from others, making the implications of agenda-setting significant (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002).

Agenda-setting researchers hypothesize that when issues are salient in news content those same issues become salient to news consumers, regardless of how important or widespread the issues are in the real world (McCombs, 1997; Severin & Tankard, 2001). This notion can be traced back to Lippmann (1922), who first suggested that the media are responsible for the “pictures in our heads” (p. 3). Because the news media give us access beyond what we directly experience, how they present the world determines our cognitive maps of that world, especially in regards to the issues or ideas to which we devote most of our cognitive processing. The public agenda often consists of no more than five to seven issues at a time (McCombs & Bell, 1996), and by actively searching for and sharing important news stories, the news media spare the public the trouble of determining what five to seven issues most deserve attention. Except in
cases when a member of the public has some expertise or personal experience with the issues of the day, it is likely that whatever information the news media share about those issues will be the only information the public ever receives. If an issue becomes salient to the public after news media present it with more salience than others, the public is responding not to reality but instead to the pseudo-environment constructed by the news media (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002). In other words, the agenda-setting hypothesis suggests people are influenced by news coverage to consider certain issues as important, even if those issues are not in reality particularly or especially more important than others are.

Long (1958) stated that “the newspaper is the prime mover in setting the territorial agenda… determining what most people will be talking about, what most people will think the facts are, and what most people will regard as the way problems are to be dealt with” (p. 260), meaning mass media such as newspapers influence public opinion by being the only source through which people learn of new ideas or issues. The mass media “are constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about, have feelings about” (Lang & Lang, 1959, p. 232). Cohen (1963) notably observed that the press is not always successful in telling audiences what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling audiences what to think about. Agenda-setting researchers suggest news content does not sway people in one direction or another regarding their opinions of an issue, but does suggest to those people that the issue is worthy of them developing an opinion.

Despite these important theoretical underpinnings, agenda-setting remained an unnamed theoretical idea until McCombs and Shaw’s (1972) classic study exploring the role news media played in Chapel Hill, North Carolina during the 1968 presidential election. The researchers wondered if the issues that news media chose to cover and emphasize influenced audience
members’ perceptions of the world around them (Rogers, 1997). Statistical correlations between the results of a content analysis of media in Chapel Hill and a survey of the opinions of undecided voters in the region indicated that media did play an important role in determining what media audiences considered to be the most important issues of the day. Zucker (1978) further refined the agenda-setting hypothesis by suggesting that if someone has little direct experience with an issue, the likelihood that news content influences that person’s perceptions of the issue increases because he or she has no other method for gaining knowledge about it. In other words, the extent of influence from media content on a person is contingent on the particular qualities of that person.

Agenda-setting research is best explained as a critical reaction to the notion that media content has little effect on its audiences. The idea that mass media could have limited influence “seemed counterintuitive to many researchers, especially to those (such as McCombs and Shaw) who had previous mass media experience” (Rogers, Dearing, & Bregman, 1993, p. 73). Researchers began to consider the possibility that they might have been looking for effects in the wrong places, having focused on attitudinal and behavioral changes. Or, as Kuhn (1996) argues, they began to reevaluate the legitimacy of previous facts. Agenda-setting researchers posited that the research model of limited effects was missing the important first step of cognition, arguing that media content informs as well as persuades (Rogers, 1997). Although changes in attitude and behavior attributable to mass media are quite important, the mass media must first influence an increase in an issue’s salience in the minds of media audiences before higher level effects are possible (McCombs & Bell, 1996).

**The agenda-setting process.** Despite the long history of agenda-setting research, there remains little understanding of how the process works; the fact that measurable media effects
occur does not explain what exactly takes place when an issue’s salience transfers from news media to the public (McCombs, 1981; Severin & Tankard, 2001). The development of agenda-setting in media effects research coincided with similar changes in the field of psychology; these changes may offer some enlightenment into the process of agenda-setting. The changes occurred when cognitive psychology emerged as a rival to the dominant behaviorism approach.

Researchers within the newer psychology paradigm see people as purposeful seekers of knowledge who function in the world by utilizing the knowledge they actively obtain (Neisser, 1967). This notion concerns the representations of the world people build in their heads, making it compatible with the agenda-setting hypothesis (Severin & Tankard, 2001).

McCombs developed the *need for orientation* hypothesis based on the compatibility between his media effects research and the new developments in psychology, suggesting that people naturally feel a need to be oriented to their environment. Need for orientation offers a psychological explanation for people’s susceptibility to the agenda-setting influences of the news media and why the influences are not universal (McCombs & Bell, 1996). The hypothesis is based on the psychological theory of cognitive mapping, which suggests that people form maps in their minds to help navigate through their external environment (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002). Because most people do not have direct familiarity with most issues covered in the news, many audience members are susceptible to agenda-setting from the media content they experience. Quantitative evidence suggests that there is a positive correlation between a person’s need for orientation and how readily he or she accepts media agendas (Weaver, 1977), meaning agenda-setting is more likely to occur with people who actively seek to understand something with which they have little experience. While most people do not have direct familiarity, some members of the media audience may have more than average knowledge of an issue and may
thus be less susceptible to agenda-setting. Other audience members may have less than average knowledge, or have a personal stake in gaining more knowledge than they already have, and may thus be more susceptible to agenda-setting. Thus, while evidence shows agenda-setting does occur and often affects a majority of people, one’s personal need for orientation plays an important role in determining the extent that agenda-setting affects one’s view of the world.

The communication model used in agenda-setting research can best be described as contingent on the relevance of a communicative message to a person and on the uncertainty that person feels toward the message. For individuals who perceive a topic to be highly relevant, their level of uncertainty about the topic influences how much their cognitive map for it will be based on mass mediated content (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002). Because of this, Yagade and Dozier (1990) suggested news media may not set individuals’ agendas for issues with which people have direct experience. It is during times of uncertainty that people are most susceptible to the agenda-setting function of mass media about the topics they deem to be important. A recent addition to the theory, agenda-melding, which integrates aspects of Uses and Gratifications theory to focus on the public’s motivations for adopting agendas, helps to explain how the process of setting agendas works. Rather than focusing on the effects of media use, agenda-melding research looks at what people do with media (Weaver, McCombs, & Shaw, 2004). This underpinning argues that, although agenda-setting exists, the extent and type of transfer of salience that occurs is contingent on many factors. In other words, agenda-setting works by making issues salient in individuals’ minds, to an extent determined by why and under what circumstances the individuals experienced news content about those issues.

**Criticism of agenda-setting.** Uncertainty about the cognitive processes involved with agenda-setting is only one of several criticisms of the hypothesis. Another important criticism is
that agenda-setting effects are often assumed to exist by researchers who used correlational analysis to determine causality. In other words, while causality can only appropriately be determined in experimental studies, much of agenda-setting research has claimed to find a causal direction from media to public agendas based on findings from other research designs. In their classic study, McCombs and Shaw (1972) acknowledged that the existence of agenda-setting is not proved by correlations alone, “but the evidence is in line with the conditions that must exist if agenda-setting by the mass media does occur” (p. 184). The researchers admitted that while their methodology did not allow them to make causal judgments, their evidence was strong enough to consider causality likely.

Critics of the agenda-setting hypothesis suggest that, while it is indeed possible the media agenda influences the public agenda, it is also at least plausible the public agenda influences the media’s (Severin & Tankard, 2001). McCombs and Shaw (1972) argued this is unlikely, however, as such arguments assume audience members have alternative means for gaining knowledge about new or complex ideas. As findings indicate media agendas consistently correlate almost perfectly with public agendas, it is unlikely members of the public would all know about and agree on what the most important issues are at a given point in time (Rogers, 1997). Agenda-setting researchers argue it is more likely the mass media could form an agenda than it is that all members of the public could consider the same issues important. This assumption that it is very likely a causal direction flows from mass media to audiences, rather than the reverse, allows agenda-setting researchers to feel comfortable making causality arguments based on correlational evidence. Consistent, strong correlations—paired with additional experimental evidence (e.g., Behr & Iyengar, 1985)—have made agenda-setting researchers comfortable with making causal assumptions about the direction of salience transfer.
In other words, research suggests that media agendas do tend to influence public and individual agendas.

If it is true that media do indeed affect audiences’ perceptions of the world, then how they perceive reality is secondhand, created by news organizations. The aspects of the world members of the public understands as being important or most worthy of consideration are suggested by what issues the news media focus on, meaning the public may never understand the topics news media do not cover. This is problematic, as there is no guarantee that the reality presented by the media accurately depicts our world (McCombs & Bell, 1996; Weaver, 1984). In fact, studies show there is often little correspondence between news coverage and statistical indicators of reality (e.g., Funkhouser, 1973) and that public concern with various issues rises and falls with news coverage (e.g., Winter & Eyal, 1981) rather than reality. Funkhouser argues, the “news media are believed by many people (including many policymakers) to be reliable information sources, but the data… indicate that this is not necessarily the case” (1973, p. 75). It is of concern that public opinion can change based on how issues are covered in the media, rather than on what occurs in reality. If public opinion in turn becomes public behavior, like voting or protest, then people base these actions on what they perceive of the world—by way of their media consumption—rather than on what is truly there.

**Locations of agenda-setting.** Agenda-setting can occur in multiple locations. Initially researchers were concerned with the media and the public, asking, “Who sets the public agenda—and under what conditions?” The answer to this question is, generally, the mass media agenda sets (or influences) the public agenda, especially when issues on the agenda are new or unfamiliar to the public. More recently, however, agenda-setting research has treated the media agenda as a dependent variable, to answer, “Who sets the media agenda?” This type of research,
called *media agenda-setting* or *agenda-building*, looks at the various influences on news media agendas, such as news sources, public relations efforts, public opinion, and other media (McCombs & Bell, 1996; McCombs & Shaw, 1993). The present study was concerned with studying agenda-setting in all three locations: the *media* and *public* of traditional agenda-setting, and the *external sources* of agenda-building.

If the media are not discussing an issue, audience members without direct experience with the issue likely have little reason to consider it as highly relevant or important. Like with the media agenda, the public agenda generally consists of no more than five to seven issues (McCombs & Bell, 1996). Too many events occur within a given day for the average audience member to attend to each one. Because they lack direct contact with the events of the world, members of the public rely on the news media for information to understand what has happened. If public agendas in general coincide with media agendas, this means news media have the ability to influence about which what people do and do *not* think. Gilberg, Eya, McCombs, and Nicholas (1980) further suggested that the news agenda can influence politicians and public figures, even as figures as powerful as the US president. This indicates a need in research to understand how strongly the media agenda, the public agenda, and external sources correlate. It is likely that recent changes in public opinion of PAS are influenced not by people’s personal experiences or better understanding of PAS, but rather by their exposure to news content and information external sources. PAS is an important, controversial issue; it is potentially problematic if the opinions members of the public have for the issue are influenced not on their own personal salience but rather on the salience they perceive from the media and external sources.
Framing

Entman (1993) characterized framing as a “fractured” paradigm, in that it lacks clear conceptual definitions by which to guide research. In his systematic overview of the framing theory within communication scholarship, D. Scheufele (1999) noted that, because little discussion has taken place between the different fields of research that utilize the broad framing concept, the term framing has been used to label many similar but distinctly different ideas. The result is that there is no clear agreement about what a frame is or how it can be identified (Fisher, 1997). Iyengar (2009) argues current research has done itself a disservice by identifying all messages as frames, robbing the concept of its intricacies. He argues the definition of framing in current scholarship has been reduced to the vague ‘presenting information in a particular manner.’ While he is correct that definitions in practical research can be too broad, his view that this is completely detrimental may be too pessimistic.

Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem’s (1991) definition of a media frame—as the central organizing idea for news content that supplies context and suggests what an issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration—is useful for framing research, for it can be used generally in a number of contexts but is also specific enough to bring coherence to an under-defined concept. Its specificity allows researchers to study distinct issues with great depth, while its generality allows researchers to compare their findings to those of previous scholarship. The broadly used and defined framing theory, although it appears “fractured” because of inconsistent operationalizations, is already coherent, in that there is heuristic understanding of its findings. The power of framing is that it is broadly defined, yet easily understood. Just as Sillars (1980) suggested it is not necessary to have a distinct definition across all scholarship of what a social movement is known to be, as long as scholars offer
working definitions for the concept within each study, framing research may need to proceed with the same intention. If a researcher defines frames in a way that is unique to a particular subject matter, but does so based on theory, using identifiable operationalizations and repeatable methods, and in ways that are useful to future scholarship, that definition should be seen as valid. The heuristic value of framing can only be hurt by dissecting the concept into specific parts. Nevertheless, it is important in any research project studying frames to establish what is meant by the concept and how it is operationalized.

A frame is defined by Gamson and Modigliani (1989) as being “a central organizing idea… for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue” (p. 3). In any story, there is a manifest message with specific content, but there are also frames indicating how the message should be interpreted (Van Gorp, 2007). This definition implies that, while an issue or idea can be presented in any number of ways by individuals or by the media, framing an idea one way means other ways of framing it are—intentionally or for the sake of convenience—cast aside (Andsager, 2000; Kuypers, 2002). Joslyn and Haider-Markel (2006) described frames as the ways we organize our thinking on an issue; they work by weaving various threads of content and context into a coherent storyline. Goffman (1974) suggested people cannot fully comprehend the entirety of the world around them, so they classify and interpret their life experiences to make some sense of it all, to which Kahneman and Tversky (1979) suggested that framing operates by providing the contextual cues that guide the decision-making of and inferences made by message audiences. In this sense, frames are cognitive structures that guide the representation and our perceptions of reality. We use frames we learn from the media to link new ideas with what we already understand.

An important assumption in framing research is, “however dependent the audience may
be on media discourse, they actively use it to construct meaning and are not simply a passive object on which the media work their magic” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 10). It remains true “audiences are active rather than passive consumers of media” (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000, p. 22). Media frames have significant influence on people’s individual frames, but those individual frames are influenced by other sources. This assumption argues that individuals’ frames develop and are reinforced by the information they receive throughout all areas of their lives; the media are collectively only one source of influence on our individual frames.

However, while individuals may have any number of different personal experiences, many people in the US experience the same or similar media content. While framing theory does not dismiss other frame sources, the mass media are considered a particularly important location of framing because their content is so pervasive.

Framing theory says we learn about the world through news media and other sources, and the information we gain structures our interpretation and discussion of public events (Tuchman, 1978). The news media, through their use of frames, provide the contexts through which audiences see the world. As such, Gitlin (1980) defines frames as “principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens, and what matters” (p. 6). The frames we use in our understanding of the world are established and familiar patterns that can be applied to new ideas. Rather than considering every micro and macroscopic aspect of a new or complex idea, people use frames to simplify the idea into an easily understood context. Frames provide clues individuals use to understand incoming information and do so by limiting or defining the information’s meaning in ways that shape the inferences the individuals may make about it.

Framing works through selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a
perceived reality and make them more salient in a communications text. Doing this promotes a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation for the item being considered (Entman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). These combine into a series of plot-points or storylines that give coherence to otherwise discrete pieces of information (Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997), thereby presenting new or complex ideas in manageable ways. As mentioned above, Entman identifies three primary locations where framing occurs. One location is the media frame, which serves to organize the world for the people who create news content and their audiences, but is largely unspoken and unacknowledged by both producers and users of the news media (Gitlin, 1980). News stories are written to guide how readers should interpret events, as well as how they should incorporate new knowledge into their general understanding of the social world (Fishman, 1980). For example, media frames are made up of the visual images, metaphors, caricatures, and catchphrases that journalists use when presenting a story (Gamson & Lasch, 1983). These elements combine to suggest a particular way of understanding whatever issue a news story is about, rather than considering that story from some other point of reference. In practice, news stories have particular frames or storylines that help journalists write the stories and audiences read them. Frames are present in nearly every news story, and the creators and audiences of each news story rarely acknowledge that other interpretations of the facts in the story exist.

By providing a context through which an issue could be seen, media frames allow both journalists and audiences to organize and make sense out of an almost infinite universe of information without starting anew each time there is new information (Karlber, 1997). Because audiences have gotten used to reading news stories told through, say, a conflict frame, they can easily apply knowledge they already have about conflict as they attempt to understand something
new. As an example, if a military coup occurs in a country with which most people in the US are not familiar, journalists might need to provide great amounts of highly detailed information to help their audiences understand the particulars of the situation. However, journalists can also use a “military coup” or “conflict” frame as a sort of shortcut to explain basic elements of the story. It is more efficient to report on a news event by filling in the gaps of an established pattern (i.e., the frame) rather than including all information available about the event. Similarly, because news audiences are already familiar with frames for military coups and conflict, these media frames can serve as a shortcut for audience members because they suggest how this particular military coup or conflict is similar to ones that have previously occurred. Even if those audience members are not aware of the particular details of this newest conflict, they have at least a basic understanding on which to add more knowledge.

Entman (1993) argued that, when used in a news story, a frame serves to make a particular piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences. Media frames are simply attributes of the news itself, used to facilitate efficiency. Entman then differentiated media frames from individual frames, which are people’s information-processing schema for perceiving and understanding the world. Although individual frames are subject to change, they are part of a person’s mindset. Entman’s definition of individual frames as “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals’ processing of information” (p. 53) is an extension of the psychological conceptualization of framing, which argues frames that are actual structures in our memory that are activated when we are exposed to new information (D. Scheufele, 2000). They package new ideas with existing, associated ideas to help guide our attention, comprehension, storage, and understanding.

Media frames link or weave various threads of content and context into a coherent
storyline in our minds (Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2006). Because of this, although media and individual frames are distinct concepts, media frames still wield a great deal of influence over how individuals frame complex issues. Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1992) and Van Gorp (2007) found that most news media and the public tend to use similar frames when considering most social issues, but the frequencies and types of frames used do not correlate perfectly. For example, even if the news media present a military coup using “coup” and “conflict” frames respectively most often, audience members may be more likely to use the conflict frame. This is because audience members’ individual frames are not entirely dependent on what they experience through the media. McCombs, Einsiedel, and Weaver (1991) suggest, however, that while people do actively form their own perspectives about social issues based on a variety of factors, individual frames are still based primarily on the information people gain through the mass media.

Atwood-Gailey (2003) said this is problematic, for news outlets across all media tend to present complex issues in similar, simple ways—meaning audience members’ views of the world are deficient because, regardless of the audience members’ news consumption, the mass media ultimately present very few frames to them (Van Gorp, 2007). Andsager (2000) agrees this is detrimental, for framing impacts public understanding and, in turn, policy decisions. When people hear new or complex information, they try to understand it based on the frames they already have, which were suggested and influenced by media coverage. Because the news media tend to depend on a few or similar frames and use them repeatedly, our frames of reference for complex issues can often be incomplete.

To use the time available to them for efficiently gathering and presenting information to the public, journalists inevitably have to resort to existing narrative conventions and news frames
when writing news stories (Bird & Dardenne, 1988). Because journalists are under considerable
time constraints, public relations practitioners intentionally send out press releases that make use
of such narrative conventions and frames. Public relations work fundamentally involves the
construction of social reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Tuchman, 1978), so the organizations
and advocacy groups identified by Entman (1993) as external sources purposefully attempt to
influence both media and individual frames to control how issues are thought about. In 1973,
Sigal found that press releases, press conferences, and other information subsidies were the
primary source for nearly half of all front-page news stories in The New York Times and The
Washington Post from 1949 to 1969. Sigal also found that few stories during this time were
gathered through reporter enterprise and initiatives, meaning most stories were heavily
influenced by people or organizations with strong interests in controlling how the public sees
particular issues.

Gamson and Modigliani (1987) argue that the formation of media frames involves the
interaction between interest groups’ influences and journalists’ norms and practices. In other
words, journalists are not the only decision-makers when it comes to what media frames they
use. External sources, especially social movements, are successful at influencing media
coverage of issues or events (Callaghan & Schnell, 2001; Van Gorp, 2007). The frames we
experience, as well as the frames we do not experience, offer incomplete views of the world
because interest groups successfully influence what issues we consider and how we think about
them. Frames used by the news media are merely imprints of power indicating which actors or
interest groups were able to beat out other competing forces. After news stories are repeatedly
presented using the same media frames, those frames eventually become “common sense” ways
both journalists and their audiences make meaning (Bird & Dardenne, 1988). External sources
are concerned with directing the perceptions and the frame selections of journalists as they report on an event (Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Van Gorp, 2007). If outside organizations’ preferred frames are eventually considered merely common-sense, then a view of the world is adopted by audience members that is entirely built around the needs or wants of such organizations.

Iyengar (1991) argued that because frames represent the quickest or most efficient way of understanding complex ideas, people tend to use them to try to make sense of issues in the news by reducing them to questions of responsibility. Matthes (2007) hypothesizes that framing may be heuristic in nature, especially in cases where media consumers are not particularly motivated to process information. Media frames affect attitudes, beliefs, and the level of cognitive complexity with which people think about social topics, and audiences generally do not actively control their frame of reference for new information. If persuasive messages (or those that are intentionally created to emphasize particular frames) are presented in the news media and accepted by audience members, then an outside party’s preferred interpretation of information has influenced the audience’s methods of understanding (Igartua & Cheng, 2009). In other words, advocacy groups can potentially change the very thought processes individual people use when considering social issues. If external sources can influence the presentation of media frames, they can suggest to media audiences who or what is responsible for social issues or problems. Such influence is powerful, for people often make policy decisions (e.g., voting) based on their frames of reference, and on who or what they think is responsible for social issues.

**Constructs within framing.** Several important constructs have developed within the framing theory since it was first conceived. The developments below describe elements of media frames, help explain how the framing process occurs, and/or indicate why an individual would adopt some frames rather than others.
Episodic/thematic frames. Iyengar (2009; Iyengar & Simon, 1993) developed the idea that media frames can be episodic or thematic. These typologies are important, for how frames are utilized by news media—episodically or thematically—can affect the way audiences assign responsibility for social issues. One way journalists can use frames is episodically, by depicting issues in terms of concrete instances or specific events. Rather than explaining how a new event fits into a broader understanding, an episodic frame encourages people to consider the event on its own terms by presenting a narrow view of the issues being discussed. On the other hand, a thematic news frame places issues in some general or abstract context. This frame type presents new events in a way that acknowledges their similarities to other, previous events, and draws conclusions based on those past events.

These two frame types demonstrate the different ways people use media frames when developing their own perspectives on issues. After exposure to episodic framing, for example, news audiences tend to attribute responsibility for national problems to the actions of particular individuals or groups (Iyengar & Simon, 1993). Conversely, after exposure to thematic framing, news audiences tend to assign responsibility for national problems to more abstract, societal factors, such as cultural norms, economic conditions, or the actions or inaction of political officials. Because whether a media frame is presented episodically or thematically can affect the development of audience members’ individual frames, the concepts represent an important addition to framing theory.

Frame centrality. Another important addition to the framing literature posits that media frames can be employed to a varying extent. A. P. Williams and Kaid (2006) suggested media frames vary in levels of substance, or the credence with which a journalist assigns one frame or another. A frame’s level of substance is conceptualized in the present study as the centrality
with which it is used. A substantive or central frame is detailed and informative, offering meaningful information to lead audiences toward strong understanding of an issue. A central legality frame, for example, suggests to an audience member that it is best to consider an issue by way of its relation to the legal system. The journalist using the frame centrally would utilize it prominently and throughout the overall length of a story. However, it is possible for a frame not to occupy a central position in a text but be merely fleetingly present (Van Gorp, 2007). Such an ambiguous or non-central frame is less distinct, providing context to a story but lacking clear information. A non-central legality frame acknowledges only that an issue might be a matter of policy or legal precedent, but does not exposit into further detail.

This concept adds to framing literature by acknowledging many frames may be present in a news story but not all are used in the same way or given the same accord. A complex issue, such as PAS, is likely presented using a variety of frames. However, it is not likely all of those frames will be used equally. Rather than relying on frame presence alone, researchers can gain a much richer understanding of the way a complex issue is framed by studying how the different frames to describe it are actually used.

**Framing stages.** The frames used to present social issues in media coverage tend to change over time, likely because events regularly occur that encourage new considerations of those issues. These events, called frame eruptions or pegs, represent breaks in the normal stream of news coverage that are initiated by the unexpected introduction of a sensational or unusual news story. These pegs disrupt how the news media frame a given issue, but also presage, foreshadow, or even suggest frames to be used in future coverage (Atwood-Gailey, 2003). Gamson and Modigliani (1989) explained that for ongoing issues like abortion or nuclear power, within-topic pegs provide an opportunity to explore the issue anew. If a prominent politician
changes his position about abortion, journalists are likely to bring up past, related stories when explaining the new event. It is just as likely, however, that the peg will signify a change in frames of reference. The politician’s change of heart may change the present media frame for abortion from *morality* (if, say, the last peg was a statement from the Pope) to *political consequences* for the politician in an upcoming election campaign.

These frame eruptions provide excellent opportunities for framing researchers to identify when a shift in framing stages occurs (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). For example, Condit’s (1990; Railsback, 1984) analysis of the rhetoric used within the US abortion debate provided a detailed description of the way legal and cultural consensus of the issue was negotiated over time and identified distinct stages wherein public discussion of abortion moved from narrative accounting of abortions to legal, human rights, feminist, and racial arguments regarding the issue. Kalwinsky (1998) suggested these changes in discourse were influenced by active agents who sought to control how abortion was discussed by the media and in public debate. Events occurred bringing abortion back to media attention, and interested parties used those events as opportunities to change current frames for the issue. Because the frames news media and individuals use do not remain static over time, it is important to study both framing eruptions and the subsequent stages that emphasize certain frames over others. The present study was undertaken at a point in time during which several major PAS-related news stories occurred, and offered an opportunity to study media and individual frames that may have developed after these pegs.

**Frame-building and frame-setting.** The process of how frames are developed by external sources to be used by the news media is called frame-building (B. Scheufele, 2004a). *Frame-building* is the intentional creation of a perspective from which an issue is to be
considered and *frame-setting* is the process through which that perspective is accepted by individual people (Zhou & Moy, 2007). When studied together, frame-building and frame-setting allow researchers to study media frames, individual frames, and external sources, as well as any interrelationships that exist between these locations. News media and journalists are often the only means through which members of the public know of certain issues and events; thus, media frames strongly impact public understanding of those issues and events (Gans, 1979, 1983; Hallahan, 1999; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Tuchman, 1978). As discussed above, individual frames are often strongly influenced by media frames. This control over not only what the public thinks about, but how the public thinks gives the media a considerable amount of power (Entman, 1993; Gitlin, 1980; Rosen, 1994). Media frames are often strongly influenced by external sources, however. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that, by influencing media, external sources are able to control in some part how and what citizens know about particular issues, as well as their opinions of those issues (Curtin, 1999).

D. Scheufele (1999) argues there are at least three potential sources of influence regarding how frames are built for media content. The first source includes journalist-centered influences, including normal newsgathering practices and the notion of newsworthiness. The second source includes factors like organizational structures, media type, or the political orientation of a publication, meaning, for example, conservative news magazines may frame a news story differently than, say, liberal television programs. The third source includes external sources of information, such as advocacy groups, political actors, or the public relations workers they hire, who suggest frames for journalists to incorporate into their coverage of an issue or event (Gans, 1979). This third location is where active frame-building takes place. People with vested interests actively attempt to change the way issues are understood by the media and the
public (Andsager, 2000; Wasserman, Stack, & Reeves, 1994). When advocacy organizations act as sources to journalists, they often also covertly offer their preferred way of framing whatever issue is being covered (Andsager, 2000; Andsager & Smiley, 1998; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Price & Tewksbury, 1997; D. Scheufele, 2000).

Frame-building in traditional media occurs when public relations practitioners or advocacy group representatives provide information to journalists, but do so with a particular spin on the information. Research concerned with frame-building tries to identify which political actors can successfully place their frames in media content (B. Scheufele, 2004b). While journalists are certainly not passive in deciding how to present issues in news coverage (Callaghan & Schnell, 2001), virtually all public debate over social issues involves competition between contending parties to establish meaning and interpretation (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

Each news story we read is the result of many organizations or social elites trying, successfully or not, to control how issues are presented. Journalists may decide on select frames for a variety of reasons, but just as the public tends to rely solely on media frames for most controversial issues, journalists also tend to use the frames presented to them by their sources (D. Scheufele & Nisbet, 2007; Tewksbury & D. Scheufele, 2009).

As Reese (1991) argues, it should be of great concern that news producers do not have complete control over the information about issues and events that form the raw materials for their product. Rather, journalists depend, often entirely, on self-interested external sources for that material. This is problematic, because how journalists and producers package news stories about events and issues can fundamentally affect the way audiences understand them (Gamson, 1992). Mass media construct social reality when they frame images of reality in a predictable and patterned way (McQuail, 1994); these images of reality become reality for news audiences.
Once a frame for a topic is adopted by the media or by the public, it can be very difficult for that frame to be changed (Linsky, 1986; Schön & Rein, 1994). How events and issues are packaged and presented by journalists can fundamentally affect how the public understands them (Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997).

Frame-building often lead to frame-setting, meaning the two concepts can be considered as the two ends of the framing process. In frame-building, potential news sources vie for their preferred framing to be featured in news coverage (Hallahan, 1999). These potential sources are hoping to succeed in frame-setting, wherein a frame is accepted and used by the news media and potentially shapes the perspectives through which members of the public see the world. Whichever external source “wins” the frame-building battle convinces the news media to use their preferred framing of an issue (Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Knight, 1999; Ryan, Carragee, & Meinhofer, 2001). This means that when frames—offered by actors with vested interest in influencing how and what the media present to the public—are “set” into news coverage, those actors are entirely successful at exercising their influence.

**Public relations, framing, and interactive media.** The frames offered in news coverage are influenced by journalists’ personal experiences, culture, everyday practices, and the like. Importantly, however, news sources and advocacy groups also try to influence media frames. With traditional media (e.g., newspapers), public relations practitioners or advocacy groups deal directly with journalists to attempt to influence which frames are presented in news coverage because those frames have the potential to become pervasive and powerful (Pan & Kosicki, 1993; D. Scheufele, 1999). By influencing which frames the media use, public relations practitioners can eventually influence how members of the public and policymakers consider an issue (Andsager, 2000; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, 1989; Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2004; Price
A new dimension added to the framing process is the development of new and interactive media that allow both journalists and external sources to communicate with their audiences directly. Because this study was in part concerned with differences in how PAS was framed across different media types, it is important to briefly discuss (a) how public relations materials are developed with the intent to influence and (b) how this process has changed with the advent of new interactive technologies.

Previous research demonstrates the potential for frame-building with interactive media. Ku, Kaid, and Pfau (2003) showed that the frames political candidates used on their Web sites during an election tended to be used in subsequent media coverage about the election. The Web sites were public relations materials, in that they featured information about the candidates, such as their stances on issues or their upcoming speaking appearances, while also suggesting frames to highlight particular characteristics of the politicians or their platforms. In other words, the Web sites provided information to news organizations and to members of the public, but did so in ways that highlighted the candidates’ best qualities. These materials that framed the candidates positively were successful at influencing media coverage, but were also intended to affect the public directly. With traditional media, public relations materials (defined broadly here to include all outside materials created to influence the framing process) are indirectly presented to audiences. Through interactive media, public relations practitioners can present the materials directly to the individuals they wish to reach. The interactive qualities of the Web sites also allow for the customization of the material and frames that meet the needs of each audience member. Further, users of candidate Web sites feel involved with the political process, because of the sites’ interactive characteristics, and may perhaps be more likely to adopt the candidates’ frames as a result.
Advocacy groups attempt to influence media frames for a variety of reasons. First, “people are cognitive misers… they do not necessarily conduct exhaustive searches for all appropriate constructs before forming their evaluations or action plans. Rather, they tend to accept as adequate those constructs that are most accessible” (Price & Tewksbury, 1997, p. 187). If public relations practitioners or advocacy groups are able to influence media frames used at the national level, they will reach a wide audience of people who, depending on what issue at hand is, will likely not seek out additional information and will therefore adopt the groups’ preferred frames. Second, because many news media rely on the same sources, or even serve as information sources for one another, audiences are exposed to only a few select frames for any given topic (Van Gorp, 2007). “Framing scholars have found negligible differences in the way television, newspapers, and news magazines frame major news stories… Although the wide variety of news sources available in the United States may initially suggest a rich diversity of voices, viewpoints, readership, and content, scholars have found the mainstream media in reality tend to speak univocally” (Atwood-Gailey, 2003, p. 139). This enhances the persuasive power of the frames, because the media appear to address their audiences with a single voice. If an advocacy group is able to influence how an issue is discussed in the mass media, as well as interact directly with members of the public, it will likely be the only source of information—and interpretations of that information—audience members ever encounter.

Interactive media allow public relations practitioners or members of advocacy groups to reach individuals directly much more efficiently than in the past, and to adapt frames to the specific needs of those select people. By emphasizing identity and relationships, interactive media offer advocacy groups the opportunity to reach people based on their personal uses and needs. Individuals are now subject to continuous framing from a variety of media, but also from
external sources of information with vested interests (Iyengar, 2009). In a review of relevant literature, Lee (2007) found that much previous research suggested online news sources not tied to traditional media (e.g., independent Weblogs rather than CNN.com) are still heavily dependent on traditional media for information, meaning their agendas and frames are heavily influenced by the traditional media. In other words, even as people depend more on new and interactive news media, they are receiving the same basic information and frames they get from the traditional news media.

Lee (2007) worried about the trend of Weblogs relying on traditional news media for information, especially considering that Weblogs with similar political leanings tend to link together in a networked community (e.g., liberal Weblogs connect to other liberal Weblogs). “If Weblogs have similar issue priorities as the mainstream media, it is also probable that liberal and conservative Weblogs have agendas similar to each other, regardless of their differing opinions about those issues” (p. 749). In other words, the agenda of salient issues found in traditional news media will likely be found on Weblogs as well. Regardless of their political ideology, Weblog producers and users are likely to be exposed to the same social issues and frames they would experience from using traditional news media. Weblog users interact with these newer, more interactive media to discover information in ways that conform to their existing belief systems. If a liberal reader uses a liberal Weblog, his or her use of the Weblog provides information but also reaffirms that liberal political beliefs are an important part of his or her own identity. Lee’s findings suggest that the information the reader obtains is not much different from the information found in more traditional news content or even from the information found on conservative Weblogs. Readers may be more likely to take on frames offered to them by their preferred media, regardless of whether they are aware that these same
frames are also found in the content published by most other types of news media. In other words, rather than allowing news audiences access to new and different perspectives on issues, Weblogs may actually reduce the total number of frames available to audience members while also increasing the likelihood that those audiences members will adopt the existing frames.

Lee, Lacendorfer, and Lee (2005) found that newspapers and Internet bulletin boards, regardless of political disposition, tend to influence each other in terms of the frames they use to discuss different issues. In the interconnected network of news media (Barabási, 2002), which spreads and legitimizes the frames suggested by external sources, blogs and other interactive media are contributing partners (Lee, 2007). The frame-building model can be used to explain if and how third-party sources are influential in contributing to how controversial issues are framed in all forms of news media, both traditional and new. More importantly, it can also explore how those once external sources are now suggesting frames directly to news audiences and reinforcing those frames through interactivity. Public relations materials, such as the DDNC’s and CCCC’s Web sites, are intended to position an organization favorably and to generate positive responses from diverse audiences (Callaghan & Schnell, 2001; Gandy, 1982). The materials involve the construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Hallahan, 1999; Tuchman, 1978), in that advocacy groups try to present their own particular view of an issue in hopes that this view will become salient to the public. If successful at influencing the public to view an issue in a particular way, these groups are able to gain ground toward reaching their goals. Best (2005) argued the Internet has been very useful for advocacy groups because it offers them the ability to create and use networked activism by way of mesomobilization, or non-hierarchical modes of organizing. It has also significantly altered the media landscape of protest, giving activists access to a mass medium that they themselves control and granting them more
power to shape their own media image, particularly as more people turn to Web sites for information (Owens & Palmer, 2003).

Bucy (2003) defines credibility as “perceptions of a news channel’s believability, as distinct from individual sources, media organizations, or the content of the news itself” (p. 248). Druckman (2001) found that the effects of framing messages can be limited if source credibility is questionable, so taking this variable into account can help explain in greater detail the process by which frames are adopted or dismissed. If a blog is obviously biased toward one view over others, or if it is evident the blog’s content comes directly from public relations materials, then audiences may not consider it as highly credible. While in general research shows people tend to judge their preferred media as most credible (Bucy, 2003; Johnson & Kaye, 2000), this tendency may not sustain for media that audiences perceive to be intentionally persuasive.

In Jo’s (2005) experimental study, participants considered the content provided by a newspaper as more credible than the content found in online organizational press releases, despite the fact that the actual content was identical in both media. In other words, the medium or source of information mattered as much as the information itself. While framing was not specifically tested by Jo, these results have important implications for the study of framing and interactive media. Bucy (2003) argues that, in a time “of rapid technological change and format experimentation, credibility remains central to understanding public perceptions of network news as well as encouraging acceptance of the Internet as a trusted source of news and information” (p. 250). Audiences who attend to news content via interactive media do so because of the freedom of expression it allows. All stories may be covered, regardless of how wide the interest base for an issue may be, and multiple points of view can be expressed. Freedom from the gatekeeping function of traditional media allows public relations practitioners or social
movement organizations to interact directly with audiences and to cover a wide variety of issues. However, that freedom may come at a cost if audiences perceive the information provided by these groups to be biased (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2004; Jo, 2005).

New social movements, like the one concerned with PAS, have evolved from only being concerned with behavioral changes. Now, their primary concern now is with the formation of identity. If members of the public identify with a group’s cause, they are more likely to adopt the group’s frames as their own, and do so with vigor. However, it is all too easy for users to simply leave an Internet-based movement once their interest has waned (Best, 2005; Warnick, 2001). Interactive media is convenient to use, but it is also convenient to move away from, on to new and different areas of interest. For this reason, identification with advocacy groups on the part of their members is imperative for the groups’ survival. Because interactive media are ideal venues for the development of identification, the credibility people attach to message content is of concern. In the adoption of frames through development of identity, trust is crucial (Jo, 2005). The notion of credibility is therefore an important addition to framing research, which is why it was integrated into the present study. Because people tend to consider their preferred medium (e.g., newspapers, Web sites, etc.) as most credible (Kiousis, 2001), the present study conceptualized credibility according to audience members’ preferred medium for gathering information about PAS. In other words, the present study considered whether people’s preferred news media, along with many other variables, influenced their opinions of PAS.

**Distinguishing between Agenda-Setting and Framing**

According to Lang and Lang (1959), the mass media constantly present issues in ways that suggest what the public should think about, know about, and care about. With the goal of constructing a more comprehensive theoretical model, Weaver, McCombs, and Shaw (2004)
suggested that framing and the priming theory be integrated into agenda-setting as theoretical explanations for Lang and Lang’s assertion. The researchers suggested framing can more accurately be described as *second-level agenda-setting*. Whereas the original agenda-setting research was concerned with issue salience, second-level agenda-setting suggests that attributes of those issues can also become salient, meaning that particular aspects of a given issue can be given more salience while other attributes are not. Some researchers suggest the second level is affective, rather than cognitive as in first-level agenda-setting, for it pertains to the news media’s role in framing issues in people’s minds (McCombs, 2005; McCombs & Bell, 1996; Melkote, 2009; Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). According to McCombs and Shaw (1993), framing is a natural fit within agenda-setting because both are concerned with the transfer of salience, of objects and their attributes.

Several scholars (e.g., Iyengar, 2009; Iyengar & Simon, 2003; D. Scheufele, 1999; Van Gorp, 2007) disagree with the notion that framing is simply the second stage of an existing theory. Entman (1993) suggested that although frames presented by the news media are often similar to the frames individuals have, media frames are in fact conceptually different from individual frames. While media frames represent how issues are presented in news content, individual frames represent an internal structure of the mind that helps individuals to give order and bring meaning to the information they learn about issues and events (Huang, 1996; Kinder & Sanders, 1990). Therefore, rather than being based solely on frame salience in news coverage, individual frames actually stem from a complicated interaction of several social influences and cognitive structures and cannot be completely explained by the mechanisms of agenda-setting.

Assuming a variety of frames are available to make sense of a news event, the news media give more weight to certain frames and provide ready perspectives by which their
audiences may interpret the event (Huang, 1996). This, in turn, increases the cognitive accessibility members of the audience have for the individual frames they have that correlate with the media frames. If one reads a news story that relies on a conflict frame, this increases the likelihood that one’s own version of a conflict frame will become more readily accessible in one’s mind. When people consider an issue like PAS, they utilize their life experiences, knowledge base, moral code, media frames, and other referents to establish their own individual frames. These individual frames are the ways in which people consider an idea.

Second-level agenda-setting suggests that when certain attributes of a news story are emphasized in news content, those characteristics will become salient among news audiences. Entman (1993) and D. Scheufele (1999), however, argue that individual framing is much more complicated than the simple transfer of salient characteristics. Because a person’s individual frames are influenced by media frames among a variety of other influences, it is unclear whether the framing theory can truly be categorized within agenda-setting. The present study adopted D. Scheufele’s (1999) position and treated the theories as separate yet related perspectives from which media effects can be considered. Agenda-setting and framing, when used together in this manner, offer much to the exploration and clarification of controversial issues like PAS.

**Context: Physician-Assisted Suicide in America**

To discuss the context of this study, an important distinction must again be made about what constitutes PAS. Specifically, it is important to distinguish between PAS and the different types of euthanasia. In each, a patients’ death occurs. The terms to describe the circumstances of that death are distinguished on the basis of the intention of the physician involved, the nature of the critical action leading to death, and the consent of the patient (Emanuel, 1994).
Legal Distinctions of PAS

_Euthanasia_ describes when a patient’s death is brought about by the (medical) actions of another. For example, a doctor who injects a patient with a deadly amount of medicine is practicing euthanasia. If this doctor had only prescribed the medicine, which was then taken by the patient with no physical assistance from the doctor, then the doctor took part in _assisted suicide_. Although there are several types of euthanasia described below, all euthanasia is characterized by a physician taking direct action that, regardless of the intentions of the parties involved, results in the death of a patient (Dworkin, Frey, & Bok, 1998; Yount, 2000).

Euthanasia is typically labeled _passive_ when it is confined to withholding or withdrawing life-prolonging and life-sustaining technologies. Even though the doctor in this case is in essence facilitating a patient’s death, the death itself is brought about by the patient giving into his or her own confliction (Hyde, 1993). Legal rulings in almost all states and by the Supreme Court permit passive euthanasia, at least under certain circumstances (Emanuel, 1994). As Emanuel explains, the difference between passive euthanasia and _active_ euthanasia is the intention of the physician taking part. In passive euthanasia, a doctor removes medical equipment in order ‘to let nature take its course.’ The intent is not for the person to die, but rather to let the person live without the burden of medical intervention—although this often _does_ result in the person dying. In active euthanasia, the intent of the doctor is for the patient to die. Active euthanasia is illegal in the US, although many doctors have anonymously admitted to directly helping their terminally ill or suffering patients to die (Young, 2000).

Both active and passive euthanasia can be distinguished further according to whether the actions taken are voluntary or nonvoluntary on the part of the patient. If the patient in euthanasia is legally considered mentally incapable of consenting to the removal of medical technologies,
their death would be considered nonvoluntary. This may describe patients in persistent vegetative states who did not previously make a formal declaration of their end-of-life preferences, patients who had only informally declared their preferences, patients who have never had the capacity to make informed decisions, or, in extreme cases, patients who do not wish to die at all. In voluntary euthanasia, patients are capable of consenting to the removal of medical technologies and do so, either at the time of removal or beforehand by way of a living will (Emanuel, 1994). The four categories of euthanasia are thus voluntary active (physician takes action to end the life of a compliant patient), voluntary passive (physician takes action that may end the life of a compliant patient), nonvoluntary active (physician takes action to end the life of a non-compliant or non-communicative patient), and nonvoluntary passive (physician takes action that may end the life of a non-compliant or non-communicative patient).

The most important point distinguishing euthanasia from PAS is who actually administers the deadly medication or intervention. As stated, in euthanasia a physician takes some action that results in the death of a patient. In physician-assisted suicide, physicians only provide the means for patients to end their own lives (Emanuel, 1994). Only Washington and Oregon have passed laws making PAS legal in the US, and physicians in both states may only prescribe lethal doses of medication to their patients; the patients must administer the drug themselves, without the aid of any other person for their suicide to remain protected under the law. As such, the only people who are protected by the Oregon and Washington laws are patients and physicians. Assisted suicide or euthanasia involving friends, loved ones, or anyone else who is not a licensed physician is illegal in all cases (Yount, 2000).

As should be clear, the distinctions between each of these terms are primarily legal in nature. Although patients do have a constitutionally protected right to opt for passive euthanasia
(Gustaitis, 1988), the intentional termination of a patient’s life by a physician is not protected (Thomasma & Graber, 1990). In other words, physicians can still be found culpable for their patients’ deaths, even if those patients wished to die. The laws in Washington and Oregon specify that the patient for whom a prescription is written must have been diagnosed as having less than six months left to live, made separate verbal and written requests for the medicine, and been determined to be of sound mind; if one of these requirements is not met, the act of writing a prescription remains illegal. The laws primarily protect physicians who participate or choose not to participate in PAS (Dworkin, Frey, & Bok, 1998; Ertelt, 2009). Physicians in Washington and Oregon are not required to assist in a suicide, but—if they choose to do so and if all legal steps are completed correctly—the PAS laws protect them from being held responsible for a patient’s death. If those steps were not completed, then it is those physicians who are most vulnerable to legal prosecution.

The final note regarding the distinctions mentioned here is that, while medical ethicists, philosophers, lawyers, and others have spent much time debating whether euthanasia is fundamentally different from PAS and what the different types of euthanasia are (Dworkin, Frey, & Bok, 1998; Emanuel, 1994), the US public is not concerned with such distinctions (Emanuel, 2002). In other words, while there are categorical differences between PAS and the different euthanasia types, the average person does not know these—indeed, the average person may not be aware that the distinctions even exist, let alone be able to articulate what those are. In some instances in the discussion below, I may refer to euthanasia or PAS specifically, if needed, but otherwise I use PAS as a general term for all end-of-life choices. The aim of the study was to understand what people’s opinions of PAS were and how those opinions come to be. If the public is unaware of how PAS is unique and apart from euthanasia, it likely does little good here
to consider the issues as distinct from one another.

**History of PAS in America**

The controversy over PAS has grown more and more salient in media coverage and public debate in recent decades, in step with advances in medical technology that have contributed to a growing number of individuals who can now be kept alive “beyond the point which even they themselves would desire” (Marty & Hamel, 1991; Ostheimer, 1980, p. 123). To proponents of PAS, the act is seen as simply helping patients to end their lives in a more expedient, easier, and more humane manner than allowed by life-support systems (Fletcher, 1979). To opponents, the act is equivalent to murder. Several events in the relatively recent past have influenced public discussion and understanding of the issue (for a detailed history of PAS in the US and other countries, see Yount, 2000).

In 1976, the New Jersey State Supreme Court voted to allow the parents of a comatose woman named Karen Ann Quinlan to remove the respirator keeping her alive. This case marked the first time that a state had publicly supported the right for a medical patient to die. Quinlan had expressed earlier in her life her desire to not live in a persistent vegetative state. The state court’s decision was that Quinlan’s choice to die was protected because her death ultimately resulted from malnutrition. Had a doctor administered a fatal prescription to her, that physician’s actions would not have been protected (Halloran, 2005). After Quinlan’s case was presented through the news media, millions of people filled out living wills and advance directives outlining the specific scenarios during which they would or would not want medical attention (Curiel, 2005; Yount, 2000), demonstrating the influence media discussion of the issue can have. This case also demonstrates the difference, in terms of legal definitions, between PAS and the different categories of euthanasia. Quinlan’s life-support was removed with the intent to let her
die naturally. This is an example of voluntary passive euthanasia, which the New Jersey court deemed to be legal. PAS was not a consideration in this case, for no physician took action with the intent to kill Quinlan; her death was the result of her medical condition.

Ten years later, a Californian woman named Elizabeth Bouvia made news when she was granted legal permission to refuse being force-fed nutrients needed to keep her alive. Bouvia never took advantage of her legal right to let herself die (Humphry, 2010), but her case further cemented the notion that patients have a legal right to some control over their own medical treatment. Around this same time, the New Jersey State Supreme Court ruled that a competent person has the right to refuse medical treatment and should retain that right even if he or she becomes incompetent (Yount, 2000). Soon afterwards, the Journal of the American Medical Association published a 1988 letter sent to its editor entitled “It’s over, Debbie.” The letter spelled out in detail the manner in which its author, an anonymous gynecological medical resident, assisted in the suicide of a suffering patient with whom he was previously unfamiliar (Larson, 2000). In 1991, a then-internist named Timothy Quill wrote a letter to the New England Journal of Medicine justifying why he had written a fatal prescription for one his patients so that she could kill herself. These letters, and subsequent discussion of their implications, once again increased the salience assigned to PAS and end-of-life issues in news coverage at the time.

Around the same time these letters were published, a 1989 panel of medical ethicists agreed that it is acceptable for doctors to help terminal patients commit suicide, as long as the patients have less than six months to live (Wanzer et al., 1989). A separate panel later further suggested patients with incurable diseases and acute suffering should also be allowed to request PAS, even if their diseases are not terminal (Miller et al., 1994). Although limited PAS was deemed acceptable in both cases, these panels had no actual authority to decide the issue’s
legality. Although the issue was brought to the media and public agendas by these letters and panels, legal debate over the issue at the national level did not occur for several more years.

In subsequent federal Supreme Court cases—*Cruzan v. Director, Missouri Department of Health* (1990); *Washington v. Glucksberg* (1997); and *Vacco v. Quill* (1997)—the high court ruled that although passive euthanasia is a constitutional right, the intentional termination of a life by a physician is not (Gustaitis, 1988; Thomasma & Graber, 1990). In the first case, over the fate of a woman named Nancy Beth Cruzan who fell into a persistent vegetative state after nearly drowning during a car accident, the high court ruled US citizens have a constitutional right to refuse nutrition and hydration. This is true even if they are currently incompetent, as Cruzan was as a result of her accident, as long as they had expressed such a wish while competent (Yount, 2000). Thus, the Supreme Court agreed with the high court in New Jersey that patients have some say over their medical care, even if they are currently unable to express their preferences.

As with the Quinlan case, Cruzan’s fate inspired many people across the US to plan explicit advance directives regarding their wishes for end-of-life care. Although the Supreme Court ruled Cruzan’s life support systems could be removed, it did not declare PAS to be constitutionally protected. In each of the three Supreme Court cases mentioned above, the high court did not rule on the legality of PAS itself. Instead, the court ruled only that the Constitution did not protect the act as it does some forms of euthanasia. Rather than deeming PAS illegal, the high court left the decision of the issue’s legality up to each individual state’s government (Hyde & Rufo, 2000; Raymond, 1999; Yount, 2000). This state-level jurisdiction remains at present but has been tested in recent years.

For example, a legal battle occurred in 2005 over the fate of Terri Schiavo, a woman who had been living in a persistent vegetative state until her husband successfully petitioned for the
removal of the feeding tube keeping her alive. Schiavo’s husband had the right to do this under Florida law, but media coverage of the case intensified when both houses of the United States Congress and President George W. Bush approved a case-specific provision to make removal of Schiavo’s feeding tube illegal (Halloran, 2005). Although this provision occurred after Schiavo’s parents had petitioned several state and federal courts to prevent her husband from removing her life support—and ultimately collecting her life insurance—the US Supreme Court eventually deemed the provision unconstitutional because it made illegal an act considered legal by the state of Florida (Atwood-Gailey, 2003; Death with Dignity National Center, 2009). Schiavo died later, soon after her husband acted upon his renewed right to request that her life support systems be removed.

During the years of court battles involving the Schiavo case, a separate legal battle was waged between the federal government and the state of Oregon. Despite its refusal to allow Congress to supersede Florida’s legal authority in the Schiavo case, the US Supreme Court agreed near the end of 2005 to deliberate over the legality of Oregon’s controversial Death with Dignity Act. The law allows an adult of sound mind suffering from a terminal illness and with less than six months to live to request a prescription for a lethal dose of medication. Doctors may write the prescription but only the patient has the legal right to administer it (Halloran, 2005). Former Attorney General John Ashcroft, and later his successor Alberto Gonzalez, had attempted to use the federal Controlled Substances Act (CSA) to punish Oregon doctors found to have written such prescriptions. The Attorneys’ General argument was that while writing prescriptions for lethal doses may be legal in Oregon, those prescriptions constitute an illegal use of substances protected by the federal government. In other words, they argued Oregon made the act legal but did not have legal authority over the substances used to carry out that act.
(Richey & Feldman, 2006). The federal government, according to Ashcroft, could prosecute physicians or strip them of their medical licenses under the authority offered by the CSA. The Supreme Court ruled, however, that the federal government could not punish doctors who had prescribed lethal doses of medication, at least under the authority of the CSA. The Court again left the actual legality of PAS up to individual states to decide (Colburn, 2006).

Of note, the Oregon Death with Dignity law does not use the words *euthanasia*, *killing*, or *suicide* when discussing physician-assisted death. As McInerney (2000) argues, this language use demonstrates the power of framing the legislation in a benign fashion. The authors of the law were attempting to control how people thought about the law by controlling how it could be discussed. In other words, they limited certain frames of reference for the law by writing it with carefully designed language. This example serves as further evidence for why framing is an appropriate perspective from which to study PAS in particular.

The issue was even more recently brought into the media spotlight when, in November of 2008, citizens in the state of Washington voted to allow PAS as a legal option for end-of-life care (Ertelt, 2009). This marked the second time that citizens of a US state had voted to legalize PAS. A few weeks after the law passed in Washington, a judge in the state of Montana ruled that her state’s constitution does not allow lawmakers to restrict terminally ill people from seeking to end their lives (Gouras, 2010), essentially making PAS a state constitutionally-protected right. No laws exist in Montana that lay out the rules for legal PAS, however, so the judge’s decision paradoxically protects people’s right to PAS but does not grant them the legal ability to practice that right. In response to these instances, Pope Benedict XVI declared that the Catholic Church is firmly against the practice of PAS. This declaration was included in the pope’s ongoing crusade against euthanasia and PAS, a part of his struggle against the “culture of
death” seen as gaining popularity in the world (Pope Benedict XVI, 2008). As Yount (2000) points out, the current pope’s opposition to euthanasia and PAS actually contradict edicts made by popes in previous decades.

Another example of media focus on PAS began in June of 2008, when four members of the pro-PAS group Final Exit Network (FEN), including the group’s co-founder, allegedly assisted in the suicide of John Celmer of Georgia. The Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) determined in early 2009 that the four suspects were present at the time of Celmer’s death and physically facilitated his death. The GBI further determined that members of the FEN also were present when an Arizona woman named Jana Van Voorhis committed suicide in 2007, and that neither Celmer nor Van Voorhis were terminally ill at the times of their deaths—instead Celmer had been embarrassed by a facial disfigurement and Van Voorhis had been determined mentally unstable (Cook & Boone, 2009). The four members accused of assisting in Celmer’s suicide, as well as other official representatives of the FEN, all claimed the suspects were only present at Celmer’s death in order to provide support to the patient, just as the group had with over 200 other suicides, not to physically assist his suicide (Brown, 2009). The GBI claims the suspects were directly involved in Celmer’s death. The case has yet to go to trial, but its outcome could help determine future legal distinctions about what constitutes “assisting” in a suicide (McGreal, 2010).

Unlike the DDNC, which is concerned with changing laws to make PAS a legal option, the FEN ministers directly to people considering suicide (Brown, 2009). The group was founded in 2003 by Thomas Goodwin, one of the suspects in the Celmer case, and Derek Humphry, who had previously founded the pro-suicide Hemlock Society, wrote the bestselling *Final Exit* suicide manual, and been informally accused of assisting in the suicides of two ex-wives (Hendershott,
Like Jack Kevorkian, who realized his personal interest in death would seem more palatable if he framed his actions as being about the relief of suffering (Kenny, 2000), the founding members of the FEN realized its actions should be framed in socially acceptable ways. The four people accused of assisting in Celmer’s death are part of the FEN’s “Caring Friends” initiative, which provides the suicidal with manuals and advice about how to commit suicide in the most painless ways possible. Further, the FEN is actually a renamed version of Humphry’s Hemlock Society, formed after members of the group decided it needed more far-reaching mainstream acceptance and “access to the halls of government in the states and in Washington, D.C.—access that the name Hemlock” denied them (Hendershott, 2010, para. 10). The Caring Friends initiative and the FEN’s new name are all part of an ongoing effort by the group to reframe its image, demonstrating that advocacy groups are aware of the power framing potentially has over media coverage and public debate.

A final example of PAS and end-of-life issues becoming salient in news coverage is when Governor Palin falsely described part of President Obama’s 2009 health care plan as including “death panels” of physicians and authority figures who suggest to patients whether they should die or continue using public money for their personal health care (MacGillis, 2009). According to Scherer (2010), the governor’s use of the phrase death panel sidetracked debate of health care for several months and confused many US citizens about the contents of the president’s plan. Each of these instances demonstrates that PAS is a complex and controversial issue. Because only two states legally allow PAS, very few people in the US have direct experience with the issue. At the same time, the complexity and controversy of the issue encourages media coverage. Public debate is therefore likely influenced by that media coverage, for members of the public have few other resources for information about the issue. It is thus
very important to understand how PAS is presented and framed in media coverage because this can influence people’s opinions and understanding of the issue.

PAS Social Movement Groups

Griffin first introduced the idea of social movements into rhetorical study in 1952. He suggested scholars move away from studying only a single speaker or a single speech, and instead study speakers and speeches in the plural. His point was that scholars interested in studying social movements (which he initially identified as “rhetorical movements”) need to be concerned with the full range of discourse used to further a group’s purpose. This is similar to Lucas’s (1980) suggestion that a social movement is not a single material object set in a given place and time, but rather a progression. This study focused on two different advocacy groups in the PAS social movement: the Death with Dignity National Center (DDNC), a group in favor of legalized PAS, and the California Coalition of Compassionate Care (CCCC), a group against the legalization of PAS. These two groups are not the only social movement organizations associated with PAS, but they are both active in their attempts to control the issue’s legality and in attempts to interact with both news media and audiences.

The Death with Dignity National Center. The DDNC takes responsibility for having developed the original Death with Dignity Act in Oregon and for influencing the passage of the 2009 act in Washington. After these successes, the group is now focused on being “the lead strategist in the political, legal and social defense and promotion of the law, working closely with citizens in other states to propose similar death with dignity legislation” (http://www.deathwithdignity.org/). The DDNC has, in its own words, led the movement for making PAS legal in each state, as well as for keeping that decision at the state level. To gain and maintain legitimacy, the PAS movement must develop and disseminate the notion that the
scope of end-of-life choices right now is unfit, and that this can and should be remedied (Lofland, 1996). Rather than staging protests or other potentially-dichotomizing image events (DeLuca, 1999), the DDNC offers discourse and factual information. By doing so, the group attempts to avoid being seen as illegitimate or radical, for the organization being seen as outside the mainstream could be linked with the notion that PAS itself is abnormal. The DDNC can be described as part of an *innovational movement* in that it is designed to achieve reform rather than revolution (Griffin, 1980), especially through the use of adjustive tactics (Kowal, 2000). MacDonald (1998) identifies proponents of PAS in Oregon as leaders of social movement organizations, an idea reaffirmed in McInerney’s (2000) argument that PAS is a legitimate new social movement, for it is concerned with redefining identity.

**California Coalition for Compassionate Care.** Unlike the DDNC, CCCC is an advocacy group that is *against* the legalization of PAS. Like the DDNC, however, the group is primarily concerned with keeping PAS within state legal systems rather than allowing it to move to federal jurisdiction. The group’s mission statement is “to promote high-quality, compassionate end-of-life care for all Californians” (http://coalitionccc.org/). While several similar “coalitions” exist throughout the country, CCCC is one of the largest and most established, primarily because bills attempting to legalize PAS have been submitted several times to the California state legislature (Humphry, 2005). CCCC represents a large group of organizations united to prevent the legalization of PAS, with an emphasis on instead advancing palliative medicine and end-of-life care. Also like the DDNC, CCCC is concerned with making the end of someone’s life as dignified and painless as possible. The primary difference between the groups is that members of CCCC consider ending one’s life via PAS to be immoral. While the two groups seek the advancement of medical care for all terminally ill or dying medical
patients, CCCC does so to allow patients to die naturally rather than through intentional action.

**Research about PAS**

Although Pollock and Yulis (2004) found very little communication research about PAS, the research that does exist about the issue is important, varied, and enlightening. For example, Hyde (1993) and Rufo (Hyde & Rufo, 2000) have used the issue as a context for case studies exploring rhetorical interruptions and calls of conscience. Kenny’s work (2000) demonstrated the rhetoric produced by Jack Kevorkian, the pathologist convicted of murder for assisting in suicides in Michigan, about PAS was quite different from media coverage of the suicides with which he assisted. Kevorkian admitted that helping end patients’ suffering was never his motivation for aiding in their deaths; rather, he was more interested in examining what happens pathologically to the human body at the moment of death. Even though Kevorkian emphasized the fact that the organs of the patients he helped to die could be harvested, he also admitted that this was “a kind of bait, it represents the only force of argument they [the public] understand and appreciate” (quoted in Kenny, 2000, p. 390). Even though he did not even truly agree with his own statements, Kevorkian used framing to persuade the news media and the public that his first concern was with relieving pain.

Haller and Ralph (2001) found that, because of the controversial nature of Jack Kevorkian, the news media tended to focus more on the man himself, rather than the issue, when covering PAS. Their qualitative content analysis found newspaper coverage tended to focus primarily on Kevorkian and how PAS offers patients an escape from unbearable suffering, rather than on facts pertaining to the issue. Yount (2000) similarly argued that many US citizens consider Kevorkian synonymous with PAS. Pollock and Yulis (2004) conducted content analysis to determine how PAS is framed in US news coverage. Their findings indicated the
issue is covered favorably if framed alongside access to health care but unfavorably if linked to advancing age. Although the issue has been explored in a variety of ways, the controversy surrounding it and the important impact it can have on people’s lives make it deserving of more robust exploration.

**Salience and Framing of PAS**

Before discussing news coverage of PAS, it should be noted again that most news coverage does not distinguish between euthanasia and PAS (Emanuel, 1994). For this reason, while the terms have specific meanings, they are used interchangeably in the discussion below. This is not because the distinctions are unimportant, but rather because the terms are inconsistently used in the news coverage described here.

Because news coverage is inherently concerned with newsworthy events, a brief discussion of the history of PAS is again offered here. Although the issue never really disappears from news coverage, the history of PAS in America is marked by waves of news salience (Emanuel, 1994; Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2004). Between major news stories, the issue remains present but rarely high on the media agenda. Beginning in the early twentieth century and continuing to the present, bills and court cases concerned with the issue have regularly occurred at the state and federal levels in America, but news coverage of PAS was virtually non-existent until the 1976 Quinlan case (Green & Jarvis, 2007). Railsback’s (née Condit, 1984) exploration of abortion discourse revealed a very similar trend; the issue was avoided unless a specific event brought attention to it.

Atwood-Gailey (2003) identified three major framing stages through which euthanasia coverage evolved in late twentieth century America. In 1975, Karen Ann Quinlan slipped into an irreversible coma after overdosing on drugs and alcohol. One year later, her parents sought
the legal right to remove her breathing tube in order to allow her to breathe on her own or pass away naturally. Although Quinlan’s parents were not actually seeking to hasten her death (Emanuel, 1994), Atwood-Gailey (2003) argues supporters of PAS still latched onto her case as a need for the ‘right to die.’ The supporters borrowed civil rights language heard in previous decades and began trying to influence media coverage about euthanasia and PAS (Yount, 2000). This first stage of media coverage took place before the *Quinlan* case reached the Supreme Court and was characterized by concern over passive euthanasia, but did not include any notions of human rights.

After the *Quinlan* case, however, a second stage began. This stage was also characterized by concern over passive euthanasia, but it was during this time that PAS truly became a conflict between two points of view: respect for individual autonomy on the one hand and the sanctity of life on the other (O’Neill et al., 2003). This change was marked when Elizabeth Bouvia was granted the right by the US Supreme Court to have her feeding tube removed, even though this would likely kill her. This set a legal precedent that US citizens do have a limited constitutional right to refuse medical treatment, even if doing so results in their death (Atwood-Gailey, 2003). Similarly, in the Supreme Court case over the fate of Nancy Beth Cruzan, who fell into a persistent vegetative state after a car accident, the Justices decided US citizens have a constitutional right to refuse nutrition and hydration as long as they expressed such a wish while competent (Yount, 2000). During this second stage, supporters of PAS made explicit arguments that choosing one’s time of death is a basic human right.

The third stage was characterized by a preoccupation with PAS, active euthanasia, and Jack Kevorkian (Atwood-Gailey, 2003). During this stage, the US Supreme Court ruled in two concurrent court cases that US citizens do not have an overriding constitutional right to die, but
admitted the act is also not *forbidden* by the Constitution. Because of this, the high court left the responsibility of deciding the legality of PAS and euthanasia to state governments (Emanuel, 2002). Later during this framing stage, the people of Oregon adopted a Death with Dignity Act into law in 1994 (and again in 1997 after a protracted legal battle; O’Neill et al., 2003) and Kevorkian was convicted of murdering one of the people he had helped commit suicide.

Supporters of PAS continued arguing that the right to die is in fact a basic human right, but also began making arguments about the possibly benefits to society that come with legalizing PAS and some types of euthanasia, such as decreasing medical cost and respecting personal autonomy.

From the perspective of framing, two characteristics of news coverage of Kevorkian are interesting. First, media coverage of him went through several framing stages, separate from those tied to PAS in general. While overall media coverage in all three stages was consistently pro-PAS, coverage of Kevorkian himself first framed him as a strange oddball, then began to support his cause, and finally returned to framing him negatively as his trial began (Haller & Ralph, 1991; Kalwinsky, 1998). Thus, even while news frames promoted PAS the issue, they denigrated one of the issue’s key spokespeople. Second, Kevorkian himself was aware of the powerful potential of news frames. He admitted to choosing his patients intentionally, hoping to make news by helping people for whom the US public would feel empathy, and even lied about his reasons for assisting in suicides as a tactic to gain support (Kalwinsky, 1998).

Atwood-Gailey (2003) found in all three frame stages that the news media almost exclusively utilized two frames for PAS: medical and legal. This dichotomy represents the debate between the responsibility of doctors to keep patients alive and individuals’ human right to autonomy; pro- and anti-PAS groups also utilized these frames throughout the stages. Within
the medical category of frames, the author found *medicine out of control; medical autonomy; PAS criminalizes doctors; MD’s are already practicing euthanasia; proceed with caution; standards needed; PAS contaminates medicine; medical alternatives exist; PAS causes worse suffering; and PAS allows doctors to play God.* Within the legal category of frames, the author found *PAS undermines the law; PAS criminalizes families; right to die; euthanasia is a crime; and legal safeguards.* These categories included both supportive and oppositional frames, although as noted the latter were rarely used. The author also found other, less frequently used frames, which all seemed intent to intensify or modify existing attitudes. These included *humane treatment, economic/pragmatic, divine authority, sanctity of life, murder is a sin, suffering is positive,* and *slippery slope.* Atwood-Gailey also found that nearly all news coverage of the issue was supportive of legalizing PAS, throughout all three stages and regardless of what frames were used. Thus, media coverage in general tended to favor heavily one position over the other, and tended to present very few frames about PAS when doing so.

In their analysis of disability news coverage, Haller and Ralph (2001) found news content only frames PAS as being about the medical industry or Jack Kevorkian. Specific terminally ill patients or the disabled were rarely mentioned, even though these groups are the most likely to be affected by the issue. However, while news media once tended to present all disability issues, medical or otherwise, with a medical frame, Haller (2000) argues that the disability rights movement has been able to break apart previous frames by suggesting disability issues like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) be considered as economic and legal concerns. Rather than telling taxpayers they must pay for ADA accommodations for the handicapped, groups within this movement were able to convince the government and news media to frame the ADA as allowing disabled Americans to contribute to society by holding jobs and paying taxes.
Although coverage of disability rights issues has been similar to news coverage of PAS, in that it moved through various stages and was overwhelmingly presented through a medical frame, the stages it developed through ended quite differently because advocacy groups successfully influenced media coverage and public opinion of the issue.

The studies conducted by Atwood-Gailey (2003), Haller and Ralph (2001), and Pollock and Yulis (2004) represent important steps toward understanding more fully how the news media and the public frame PAS. Similarly, Duncan and Parmelee (2009), among many other researchers, examined what variables may influence a person’s opinion of the issue. This study was built up on these scholars’ work to examine the issue in all three locations identified by Entman (1993) and McCombs (2004), with the specific goal of understanding the many various variables—from the news media, advocacy groups, and individuals’ own characteristics—which may influence people’s opinions of PAS.

Atwood-Gailey (2003) identified several types of frames used in media coverage of PAS. Other scholars have also explored the framing of PAS (or related issues like euthanasia or Dr. Jack Kevorkian), but this research is overwhelmingly qualitative or rhetorical in nature and thus cannot be subjected to statistical analysis. The frames which have emerged from these analyses include death, desire to die, hastening the dying process, the meaning of human life, human nature, the severely disabled, physicians, pain management, government, the truth of God’s Word, the future of US medicine, the individual’s right of choice, the communal and moral welfare of society, empowerment, dignity, choosing sides over Kevorkian, Kevorkian defining the issue, PAS is an ambiguous legal or religious issue, disability issues are medicalized, better dead than disabled, assisted death different from euthanasia, and sanctity-of-life (Haller & Ralph, 2001; Hendin, 1995; Hyde, 1993; Mitchell, 2007; Strate, Zalman, & Hunter, 2005). If placed
into loose categories, these frames describe the two basic arguments in the historical debate over PAS: *respect for individual autonomy* on the one hand and *sanctity of life* on the other (Dworkin, Frey, & Bok, 1998; Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2004; O’Neill et al., 2003).

Previous research utilizing the framing theory suggests that there may be generic frames that are applicable to a wide variety of news events. For example, conflict, economic consequences, human impact, and morality frames may be used in news coverage for any number of social issues or events (de Vreese, Peter, & Semetko, 2001; Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992; Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1997; Valkenburg, Semetko, & de Vreese, 1999; Zillmann, Chen, Knobloch, & Callison, 2004). Additionally, there may be issue-specific frames that only apply to unique topics like PAS (e.g., Bantimaroudis & Ban, 2001; Davis, 1995; Hertog & McLeod, 2001; Mitchell, 2007; Zhou & Moy, 2007). Based on this review of literature, and in addition to examining the salience given to PAS in news coverage and public opinion, the content analysis described below included the following frames: *conflict, medical, legal, morality/religion, autonomy/patient rights, big government/state rights, economic consequences, and politics*.  


CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Restatement of Objectives of Study

During the first phase of this study, a content analysis examined the frames and salience for PAS used by two interest groups—the Death with Dignity National Center (DDNC) and California Coalition for Compassionate Care (CCCC)—in their press releases regarding PAS. The method was also used to examine the types of frames and salience for PAS used in news media coverage of the issue, across traditional newspapers, news Web sites, and news Weblogs. Based on a review of literature and noting that there have been very few quantitative studies related to news coverage of PAS, the following research questions were posited:

*RQ1.* Are there noticeable trends regarding when news stories (in newspapers and on news Web sites and Weblogs) and press releases (created by the DDNC and CCCC) about PAS were originally published?

*RQ2.* Are there differences in the total number of stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

c. Are there differences in the mean lengths of stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

*RQ3.* Are there differences between authorship types (staff writers, editorial, wire service/syndicated, reader/letter to editor, or other) used for news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

*RQ4.* Are there differences between type of stories (news or opinion/editorial) about PAS used across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

*RQ5.* Is there a tendency across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases) to mention CCCC or the DDNC in news stories and press
releases about PAS?

RQ6. Are there differences between how PAS is treated (either as a central or non-central issue) in news stories across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

RQ7. Are there differences between the types of sources cited or quoted in news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, and press releases)?

RQ8. Are there differences between the type of evidence used (data-based, non-data-based, or court case) in news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

RQ9. Are there differences between the position toward PAS (in favor of, against, or neutral toward) used in news stories across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

RQ10. Are there differences between the frames used in news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

b. What single frame is used most often for each media type (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

In the second phase of this study, a survey examined the frames and salience respondents used when considering PAS. The survey was also designed to collect data for examination of respondents’ various demographic, psychographic, and behavioral characteristics, to determine what explained or predicted respondents’ opinions of PAS. A main research objective of the present study was to determine if the salience and frames used to describe PAS by news media, advocacy groups, and individuals correlated with one another. To accomplish this objective, the
following questions were posited:

**RQ11.** What are respondents’ opinions of PAS?

**RQ12.** Which news source do respondents use most often when seeking information about PAS?

**RQ13.** Which frames do respondents use most often when considering PAS?

**RQ14.** Are the frames for PAS used most often by the different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, and press releases) and survey respondents similar or different from one another?

**RQ15.** How high do respondents rank PAS on their personal agenda of important social issues (if at all)?
   
   b. How salient is PAS in respondents’ personal agenda of important social issues?

**RQ16.** Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the salience given to PAS by respondents explain or predict their opinion of PAS?

**RQ17.** Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the frame for PAS used most often by respondents explain or predict their opinion of PAS?

**RQ18.** Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the salience given to PAS by respondents’ preferred news media type for information about PAS explain or predict their opinion of PAS?

**RQ19.** Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the frame for PAS used most often by respondents’ preferred news media type for information about PAS explain or predict their opinion of PAS?

**Research Design**

To answer the research questions, two research phases were used. The first was a content analysis of news stories (newspaper articles, and stories and posts from news Web sites and
Weblogs) and of press releases (distributed by the DDNC and CCCC). The second research phase was a survey seeking information about individuals’ frames and salience for PAS, their support for (or against) PAS, and demographic and psychographic characteristics.

**Content Analysis**

The first phase was a content analysis of news stories and press releases about PAS. Content analysis is an efficient way to measure variables in communication messages in a quantitative, objective, and systematic manner, and maximizes the correspondence between what coders analyze and what readers actually encounter (Pollock & Yulis, 2004). A codesheet and codebook designed for this phase are included in Appendix A and B, respectively. Key elements of the coding instruments and the procedures used for sampling and coding units of analysis are described below.

**Population and sampling.** The present study was concerned only with news stories and press releases published between June 1, 2005 and June 30, 2009. Individual newspaper stories and press releases were the units of analysis (Callaghan & Schnell, 2001; Yang, 2003). A news story was defined as any news report, letter to the editor, or editorial published as a story in a newspaper, as an article on a news Web site, or as a posting on a news Weblog. Editorial cartoons, pictures, and captions were not analyzed. A press release was defined as the materials created by the DDNC and CCCC to influence news coverage and public opinion of PAS and end-of-life care. This definition for press release included all materials sent out to news organizations and the public, including traditional press releases and newsletters. As described below, I analyzed the entire population of press releases and sampled from the populations of news stories published during the period of interest for this study.

After collecting units of analysis via the methods described below, the news story
samples were reduced in three ways. First, all stories unrelated to this study were removed. For example, a news story may have discussed euthanasia as it relates to pet care. This was not the focus of the present study, so such articles were removed from the final sample. Second, repeat stories or those published in more than one edition of a newspaper were removed. Third, because of the large number of news stories published during the time period of interest, an additional time-based caveat was assigned to reduce the total number of these news stories. A strong criterion for why press releases are utilized by news journalists is their timeliness. Press releases tend to be used very soon after or before an event has occurred. Because of this, only news stories published one week after the publication of each DDNC or CCCC press release were analyzed (Minnis & Pratt, 1995; Morton, 1986; Turk 1985, 1986; D. Williams, 1994). For example, if the DDNC distributed a press release on June 1, 2005, only news stories published between June 1 and June 8 were analyzed—and so on for each date a press release was distributed. This sample design was intended to make the final study more manageable, but also ensured the focus of the study was on the news stories most likely affected by the press releases. Thus, the content analysis examined (a) samples from the news media and (b) populations of press releases from June 1, 2005 to June 30, 2009.

Newspapers. The first population from which news stories were sampled was elite newspaper stories. Harry (2001) suggested that for most major news stories, journalists at small- and medium-sized news media tend to follow the example of the elite/national news media like The New York Times, The Washington Post, and USA Today, so these newspapers were included in the content analysis. While the prestigious newspapers above tend to influence coverage of other news organizations (Gans, 1979), it is possible that newspapers within the states of Oregon and Washington, where PAS is legal, have more or different news events to cover than news
media at the national level. With the goal of having the widest breadth possible, the content of the most widely circulated newspapers in these two states (The Oregonian and The Seattle Times, respectively) were also analyzed. Strömbäck and Kiousis (2010) argued agenda-setting effects occur based on overall consumption of media, rather than the consumption of specific media outlets. Further, Kuypers (2002) found very little difference between how national and regional US news media cover controversial issues. Thus, the PAS news stories were sampled from the largest newspapers in the states where PAS is legal (The Oregonian and The Seattle Times) and elite newspapers that are likely to influence news coverage by other media (The New York Times, The Washington Post, and USA Today).

To access these newspaper stories, I searched the online Lexis-Nexis database to find stories using the key phrases assisted suicide, euthanasia, death with dignity, and right to die. This sampling technique resulted in 198 newspaper stories: 48 from The New York Times, 28 from The Washington Post, 27 from USA Today, and 95 from The Oregonian. Because no stories were found in The Seattle Times, it was not included in subsequent analyses.

News Web sites and Weblogs. The second population from which news stories were drawn was news Web site articles. According to Editor & Publisher (2009), the most popular news Web sites for June 2009 included CNN.com, MSNBC.com, and FOXNews.com (http://www.editorandpublisher.com/). Thus, these three news Web sites were included in the content analysis. Lee, Lacendorfer, and Lee (2005) found that interactive and traditional media tend to utilize the same frames when discussing complex issues. This is similar to Harry’s (2001) suggestion that news coverage overall tends to follow the trends set by elite newspapers; together, these findings suggest that smaller news organizations tend to follow the trends set forth by more established, more popular organizations. As such, I am confident having analyzed
the content of the most popular news Web sites, for these are in the best position to influence overall coverage of PAS on the Internet and thus be similar to what respondents would read online about PAS. News Web site articles were found by entering the key phrases assisted suicide, euthanasia, death with dignity, and right to die into each of the sites’ search functions.

The third population from which news stories were drawn was news Weblog postings. Because the sampling method used in this study did not find many postings from news Weblogs, these units were included in a category combining news Web site articles and Weblog postings. According to the blog-tracking site Alexa.com, the three most popular news Weblogs in June of 2009 were HuffingtonPost.com, Metafilter.com, and MichelleMalkin.com (Alexa Top Sites by Category, 2009). However, Metafilter.com was not included because it is an aggregator of news stories from other Web sites and offers very little original content. The remaining two Weblogs were included in the content analysis. They happened to represent the two prominent political ideologies—HuffingtonPost.com presents postings from an explicitly liberal perspective and MichelleMalkin.com presents postings from an explicitly conservative perspective.

HuffingtonPost.com was founded by Arianna Huffington, a popular liberal media figure (Schofield, 2008), and even features a section devoted entirely to death and dying (i.e., http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/death). MichelleMalkin.com is run by Michelle Malkin, a popular conservative media figure (Malkin, n.d.), and also features a section devoted to end of life care (i.e., http://michellemalkin.com/category/end-of-life-issues/).

As with Web sites, I am confident having analyzed the content of the two most popular news Weblogs, for research by Lee, Lacendorfer, and Lee (2005) and Harry (2001) show these are in the best position to influence overall coverage of PAS on the Internet and thus be similar to what respondents would read online about PAS. Even if respondents involved in this study do
not regularly read these two Weblogs, the content they do experience is likely influenced or similar to the content of HuffingtonPost.com and MichelleMalkin.com.

Although HuffingtonPost.com and MichelleMalkin.com have integrated search engines, I discovered while planning this study that the results offered by searching these Weblogs were overwhelming and inconsistent. A popular alternative method used by Weblog creators for indexing articles is *tagging*, wherein every posting includes specifically worded hyperlinks that lead to other, similar postings. This method produces more purposeful and easily understood search results, so I utilized the practice instead of using traditional search engines. Of note, however, is that tagging is an idiosyncratic process, meaning there are no universal rules for what words and phrases will link postings together. Postings related to PAS on HuffingtonPost.com are tagged with the phrases *assisted suicide*, *right to die*, *euthanasia*, and *death with dignity*, so these phrases were utilized when sampling that Weblog. Postings related to PAS on MichelleMalkin.com are tagged with the phrases *end of life* and *Schiavo memo*, so these phrases were utilized.¹

These sampling techniques resulted in 33 news Web site articles and 5 news Weblog postings: 21 from CNN.com, 12 from FOXNews.com, 3 from HuffingtonPost.com, and 2 from MichelleMalkin.com. Because no stories were found on MSNBC.com, it was not included in subsequent analyses.

**Press releases.** The final two populations included in the content analysis were press releases created by the Death with Dignity National Center (DDNC) and press releases created by California Coalition for Compassionate Care (CCCC). The two groups have made available many press releases on their respective Web sites (deathwithdignity.org; finalchoices.org) for

¹ The differing keywords used by these two Weblogs can themselves be seen as part of an intentional frame-building process and may indicate how opposing sides of the PAS debate try to drive discussion of the issue.
several years—for example, the DDNC has press releases dating back to 1997. However, because CCCC has only produced and distributed materials since 2005, the content of the entire population of press releases the two organizations produced between June 2005 and June 2009 was analyzed. This collection technique resulted in 43 press releases: 24 from the DDNC and 19 from CCCC.

**Intercoder reliability.** Five people with substantial media research experience volunteered as coders. After completing multiple training sessions, each person separately coded the same 10% of the total number of news stories and press releases to establish intercoder reliability (ICR). ICR was measured using Krippendorff’s α (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007; Krippendorff, 2004) because this formulation allows for more than two coders, can account for agreement by chance, and can determine agreement of both nominal and ratio variables. After overall ICR was found to be .92 for ratio-level variables and .80 for nominal variables, the five coders separately coded the remaining news stories and press releases.

**Content categories.** The coding instruments for this study can be found in Appendices A and B, including detailed operationalizations of each content category discussed here.

**Article number.** Each unit of analysis was marked with a specific number, used to index data in this study.

**Coder initials.** For every news story or press release coded, coders marked their two- or three-letter initials (e.g., ABC).

**Publication date.** Coders marked the original publication date stated within each news story or press release.

**Original publication.** Coders marked the publication (e.g., The New York Times) from which each news story or press release was drawn.
**Authorship type.** Authorship was determined based on the information provided in each news story or press release. For example, if no name or identification was provided in a news story, coders marked ‘no authorship stated’. In cases where an author’s name was given with no further information, coders treated this author as a ‘staff writer’ representing that organization (e.g., “John Smith, staff writer” or “Jane Smith”) and the news story was marked as such. In cases where a news story was identified as an editorial, the author was assumed to be an editor unless otherwise noted. This was true of news stories designated as “editorial” that included an author’s name but no title. For data analysis purposes, the nine initial authorship types coded were collapsed to include Staff Writer (which included the ‘no authorship stated’, ‘staff writer’, ‘on-air transcript’, and ‘other’ authorship types), Editorial (which included the coded ‘Editor’, ‘Columnist’, and ‘Blogger’ authorship types), Wire Service/Syndicated, and Reader/Letter to Editor. See Appendices A and B for more specific details about this coding category, including a list of the nine initial coded authorship types.

**First word of headline.** Coders marked the first word of the main headline of each news story or press release. Compound words, such as physician-assisted, were treated as a single word for this coding category.

**Story length.** Coders marked each news story or press release for its story length, measured in total number of words.

**Story classification.** Coders marked each news story or press release according to whether it was news or opinion/editorial. News was defined as a news story or press release wherein the facts reported about a news event could be independently verified and that contained no inferences or judgments by the author (Hayakawa, 1972). For example, a news story would mention the outcome of a recent trial involving Dr. Jack Kevorkian, but contain only facts about
what occurred without speculating or offering opinions about those facts. *Opinion/editorial* was defined as a news story or press release containing inferences or judgments made by the author about the facts related to a news event. Inferences include statements about the unknown. Judgments include expressions of an author’s approval or disapproval (Hayakawa, 1972). For example, an opinion story would mention the outcome of a recent trial involving Dr. Jack Kevorkian, as well as speculation on what the results of the trial may mean for other doctors who participate in PAS.

*Mention of an advocacy group.* Coders marked each news story or press releases according to the number of times it used a group’s name (i.e., Death with Dignity National Center; California Coalition for Compassionate Care) or initials (i.e., DDNC; CCCC).

*Position on PAS.* Coders marked each news story or press release on a seven-point scale according to its position on PAS. The scale ranged from 1 (negative position toward PAS) to 7 (positive position toward PAS). When using this scale to categorize a news story or press release, coders did not rely on subjective judgments but on identifiable characteristics.

A unit coded 1 would contain explicit, extreme language showing disapproval of PAS (e.g., “Those who would make physician-assisted suicide legal are worse than murderers”). A unit coded 2 would contain explicit language showing disapproval of PAS (e.g., “We do not support the legalization of PAS”). A unit coded 3 would contain implicit language showing disapproval of PAS (e.g., if a news story’s author writes, “The overwhelming majority of Catholics disapprove of PAS” but offers no statistics about those who approve of the issue). A unit coded 4 would contain completely neutral language about PAS, or equal amounts of pro- and anti-PAS language (e.g., “Physician-assisted suicide is legal in Oregon and Washington” or “Many people approve of physician-assisted suicide, while others do not support its
legalization”). A unit coded 5 would contain implicit language showing approval of PAS (e.g., if a news story’s author writes, “The overwhelming majority of mainline Protestants approve of PAS” but offers no statistics about those who disapprove of the issue). A unit coded 6 would contain explicit language showing approval of PAS (e.g., “We support the legalization of PAS”). A unit coded 7 would contain explicit, extreme language showing approval of PAS (e.g., “Those who would make physician-assisted suicide illegal should be killed”).

**Centrality of PAS.** Coders marked each news story or press release according to the importance it afforded to the PAS issue. *PAS as a central issue* was defined as any news story or press release that focused primarily on PAS, rather than one that mentioned the issue only briefly or in passing. For example, a news story may be entirely about a politician’s recent decision to support PAS legislation. *PAS as a non-central issue* was defined as any news story or press release that mentioned the issue briefly or in passing, meaning it did not focus on PAS. For example, a news story about a politician’s political beliefs may briefly mention the politician’s support for the legalization of PAS, along with his or her support for several other issues. At this point, if a news story or press release was coded ‘no’, coders stopped coding that particular unit of analysis and moved on to the next.

**Types of sources.** Coders marked each news story or press release according to what kinds of sources were quoted about PAS, and also coded how many times each type of source was used. For example, if a celebrity was quoted about the issue, that news story or press release would be marked “1” under the Celebrity category. If two physicians were quoted, the news story or press release would be coded as “2” under the Medical Authority category. See Appendices A and B for an example and further explanation of all eleven original, coded source types.
**Types of evidence.** Coders marked each news story or press release according to what type of evidence it used, and also coded how many times those types were used. *Data-based evidence* was defined as any numerical information within a news story or press release meant to explain further the issue of PAS (e.g., information about the number of suicides in a year, or financial costs or benefits related to the issue). Coders marked each instance of data-based evidence, even if multiple pieces of information came from the same source. Data-based evidence from a court case was *not* included in this category. *Non-data-based evidence* was defined as any non-numerical information within a news story or press release meant to explain further the issue of PAS (e.g., anecdotes about specific patients or doctors). Coders marked each instance of non-data-based evidence, even if multiple pieces of information came from the same source. Non-data-based evidence from a court case was *not* included in this category. *Court case evidence* was defined as any information within a news story or press release that came from a specific court case (e.g., the trial of Jack Kevorkian) or person involved in a specific court case (e.g., the published opinion of a Supreme Court justice). Coders marked each instance of court case evidence, even if multiple pieces of information came from the same case. Court case evidence could have included both data-based and non-data-based evidence, as long as the information was related to a specific case.

**Frames.** Finally, coders marked each news story or press release according to the frames and frame characteristics it utilized. Frames were conceptualized in this study as different possible characteristics of the news story or press release, rather than as a single category into which the unit must be assigned; each news story or press release potentially contained one or more separate frames. Even if both the first and last paragraph of a news story utilized a legal frame, for example, that news story would only be coded as having one legal frame. If that news
story also briefly utilized a medical frame, it would be coded as having a legal frame and a medical frame. Based on a review of literature, I identified the following frames as related to PAS: conflict, medical, legal, morality/religion, autonomy/patient rights, big government/state rights, economic consequences, and politics. Operational definitions for these frames are provided below (see Appendix B for specific coding instructions). Coders marked only the frames related to PAS in each news story and press release.

**Conflict frame.** This frame was identified by any mention of dispute between groups or individuals, opposing viewpoints, or violence.

**Medical frame.** This frame was identified by any mention of physicians, nurses, terminal illness, palliative care, medicine, prescriptions, or the discussion of PAS as a medical practice.

**Legal frame.** This frame was identified by any focus on the legality of steps intended to legalize or criminalize PAS, on constitutional law, or on legal punishments. A mere mention of the Death with Dignity Act by name did not warrant the presence of this frame.

**Morality/religion frame.** This frame was identified by any focus on moral or religious beliefs dealing with PAS, whether in favor of or opposed to the issue.

**Autonomy/patient rights frame.** This frame was identified by any focus on the rights and choices available to patients in end-of-life care. For example, such a focus might have been on a terminal patient who chose to die quickly rather than to continue suffering, or might have described a disabled person who chose to live through any setbacks presented by his or her disability. The focus may have also been on other options not associated with PAS, such as hospice care or increased pain medication.

**Big government/state rights frame.** This frame was identified by any focus on keeping federal and state jurisdictions separate, or bringing them together. For example, a news story
could have focused on how a new federal law about PAS could negate Oregon and Washington state laws.

*Economic consequences frame.* This frame was identified by any mention of the costs or benefits of medical care, legal cases, insurance, or inheritances. The consequences may have been positive or negative, short-term or long-term, and may have been for an individual (e.g., a politician; physician) or a group (e.g., the DDNC).

*Politics.* This frame was identified by any mention of elections, political capital, or public opinion specifically related to politics, as pertaining to PAS.

*Frame characteristics.* If a frame was present in a news story or press release, coders also categorized it as *episodic central, episodic non-central, thematic central,* or *thematic non-central.*

*Episodic vs. thematic frames.* Each frame was defined according to how it related specific news events to the broader PAS issue. Episodic frames treated each news event on its own terms, with no reference to history or context (e.g., “Violence broke out during a recent protest against the legalization of physician-assisted suicide”). Thematic frames acknowledged the broader PAS issue and provided some historical or contextual information (e.g., “The conflict between pro- and anti-physician-assisted suicide protestors is long standing in this country”).

*Centrally used vs. non-centrally used frames.* Each frame was defined according to how central it was in the presentation of a news story about PAS. Centrally used frames dominated, in quantity or quality, a particular news story or press release (e.g., a conflict frame was central if it was on what a news story or press release focused). Non-centrally used frames were present but not dominant, in quantity or quality, in a news story or press release (e.g., economic consequences were mentioned in a news story, but the story was primarily focused on a conflict
between two groups).

Survey

The second research phase was a survey seeking information about individuals’ demographic and psychographic characteristics, their media behavior, their opinions of PAS, and the frames and salience they have for the issue. The questions in the survey were in part drawn from the National Opinion Research Center’s General Social Survey (GSS; Davis, Smith, & Marsden, 2007), as well as previous research cited in the literature review (e.g., Green & Jarvis, 2007; Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2002; Ostheimer, 1980; Weiss, 1996; Worthern & Yeatts, 2000). The GSS is considered a reliable indicator of public opinion because it addresses a wide array of topics. It utilizes a sampling frame that is fairly representative of the US population and is conducted often enough to track opinions over time. Because the questions in this survey were similar to those asked in other studies and the GSS, the results can be compared directly in statistical analysis. This was not the primary purpose of the present study, but makes the results all the more useful.

Data Collection. The proposal for this research project, a draft of the final survey questions, and the information sheet describing the study and their rights to respondents were submitted for review and approval to the Bowling Green State University (BGSU) Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). Once HSRB approval was received, the survey was recreated on the Web site SurveyMonkey.com. SurveyMonkey.com allows for automated email messages and data collection. The online version of the survey was checked again for spelling and grammar errors and all relevant corrections were made. The information sheet describing the study and respondents’ rights was included as the first Web page of the survey and, by clicking a link at the bottom of this first Web page, respondents agreed to participate in the study. The data
of any respondent who began the survey but later requested not to participate were removed before analysis began.

A list of email addresses for all BGSU faculty and staff members, provided by the university’s Office of Institutional Research, was uploaded into the SurveyMonkey.com system and three email messages requesting participation in the study were scheduled. The first message was sent immediately to the entire population of faculty and staff members, each of whom was given the options of filling out the survey, partially or in full, or abstaining from participation. The email addresses from members of the population who declined to participate were removed from the SurveyMonkey.com database and were not contacted again. There was one exception to this, wherein because of a technical problem one participant was contacted multiple times despite wishing to abstain. This participant’s data were removed before final analysis began. A second email message was sent five days after the first, to all participants who did not abstain from participation and had not begun filling out the survey. A third and final email message was sent five days after the second, to the remaining participants who did not abstain from participation and had not begun filling out the survey. After an appropriate response rate was obtained, the survey was closed on the SurveyMonkey.com Web site and data were cleaned for analysis using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS). All variables were named and given descriptive labels for analysis.

**Population and sampling.** The target population for the survey was 2,567, including all faculty (N = 1,250) and staff (N = 1,407) at BGSU. The total number of responses was 452, comprised of 278 faculty and 174 staff, generating a 17.01% response rate (22.24% for faculty and 12.37% for staff). Studies by Visser, Krosnick, Marquette, and Curtin (1996) and by Keeter, Kennedy, Dimock, Best, and Craighill (2006) demonstrated that surveys with this level of
response rate do not suffer from validity issues when compared to those with higher response rates. Because of the sensitive issues addressed in the survey, some respondents did not provide answers to all questions asked. Their answers to completed questions were included in data analysis unless they chose to opt out of the research project. Any identifying characteristics that could possibly be linked to respondents’ answers were removed from the data and destroyed prior to analysis.

**Questionnaire design.** The questions listed below made up the survey instrument. The survey was designed so that questions near the beginning of the survey would not influence respondents’ answers to questions that came nearer the end. The questions presented here are out of their original position in the final survey design. Their order here instead reflects the research questions each survey question helped answer. See Appendix C for the actual question order.

**PAS issue salience.** Four questions in the survey were based on the agenda-setting theory. The first was the standard question used in agenda-setting research (e.g., McCombs & Shaw, 1972), which is utilized to measure what social issues survey respondents are currently concerned about. The question was open-ended to allow respondents to answer without feeling compelled toward specific answers. The second question—actually placed at survey question (SQ) 20 to avoid influencing respondents’ answers to other questions—specifically asked respondents to rate how important they think PAS is overall. SQ21 and SQ22 were asked to discover if respondents had any interest in PAS as a news topic and how much attention they had given to news stories about PAS. Finally, SQ23 asked how often respondents experienced news content on a regular basis.

1. What are you most concerned about these days? That is, regardless of what politicians say, what are the two or three main things which you think the government should concentrate
on doing something about?

20. How important do you consider the issue of physician-assisted suicide to be in today’s society?
   ( ) Extremely unimportant ( ) Unimportant ( ) Somewhat unimportant
   ( ) Neutral ( ) Somewhat important ( ) Important ( ) Extremely Important

21. How much are you interested in news about physician-assisted suicide?
   ( ) Not at all interested ( ) A little interested ( ) Somewhat interested
   ( ) Very interested ( ) Extremely interested

22. When you encounter news about physician-assisted suicide in the media, how much attention do you pay to it?
   ( ) No attention at all ( ) A little attention ( ) Some attention
   ( ) A lot of attention ( ) Full attention

23. How often do you read or watch the news, in any form?
   ( ) Never ( ) Rarely ( ) Once a month ( ) Once a week
   ( ) Once a day ( ) Throughout the day

Knowledge of and frames for PAS. A second type of questions was based on the framing theory, and aimed to discover if survey respondents had knowledge of the PAS issue (e.g., if they were even aware of what the term physician-assisted suicide means) or had a frame of reference for the issue. These were divided into two sections. The first set of questions, SQ2 through SQ5, were open-ended and gave participants the opportunity to describe or discuss PAS in their own words without feeling compelled to choose from the answers provided. The content of these answers served to verify quantitative measures from the second set of questions. This second set consisted of close-ended questions to facilitate data analysis and to determine if the frames found in a review of literature were also respondents’ frames of reference for PAS. For SQ11 through SQ18, respondents checked the single, best answer for how much they agreed with each of the following statements—strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, or strongly agree. For SQ19, respondents checked the single, best answer for what they considered their frame for PAS.
2. What does the term “physician-assisted suicide” mean? How would you describe it to a friend?

3. When you think about physician-assisted suicide in general, what comes to mind?

4. If you can, please explain how physician-assisted suicide differs from other types of euthanasia. If you’re not sure, what would you guess?

5. Who would you say is responsible for solving the debate over physician-assisted suicide?

11. The issue of physician-assisted suicide is really about the conflict between opposing sides.

12. The issue of physician-assisted suicide should be considered from a medical perspective.

13. If physician-assisted suicide has been voted into law (e.g., in Oregon and Washington), then it should really be considered from a legal perspective.

14. Physician-assisted suicide should be thought of as a moral or religious issue.

15. The issue of physician-assisted suicide is really about a person’s autonomy or his/her rights as a patient.

16. When one considers physician-assisted suicide, one should think about states’ rights to control end-of-life decisions.

17. People should consider the potential economic costs and/or benefits of the physician-assisted suicide issue.

18. Physician-assisted suicide should be considered as a political issue.

19. Which of these perspectives would you say is most similar to how you think of physician-assisted suicide? If you are not sure, please see questions 11 through 18 above for examples.

   ( ) Conflict                     ( ) Medicine or the medical community
   ( ) Legality                    ( ) Morality or religion
   ( ) Personal autonomy or patients’ rights ( ) “Big government” or states’ rights
   ( ) Economic consequences or benefits ( ) Politics

**Opinion of PAS and other issues.** The following questions were used to determine if respondents supported (or were against) PAS, as well as their opinions for other social issues.

As several scholars (Emanuel, 1995; MacDonald, 1998; R. Williams, 1989) have noted, surveys and experiments related to PAS suffer from methodological inconsistencies. In general,
questions tend to be about one of four ways of considering PAS: the type of assistance (e.g., there is greater support for passive euthanasia than for PAS); the type of assistant (e.g., doctors or family members); the type of illness (e.g., there is greater support for allowing PAS or euthanasia for those in pain than for the terminally ill); and the age of the patient (e.g., there is less support for allowing PAS or euthanasia for younger patients). The first few questions below, SQ6 through SQ10, were designed with these considerations in mind, and were used to create an Opinion of PAS scale ranging from 5 (negative opinion) to 25 (positive opinion). The remaining questions, SQ27 through SQ29, were based on the above review of literature showing that people’s opinions of other social issues are often related to their opinions of PAS. For each of these questions, respondents checked the single, best answer for how much they agree with each of the following statements—strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, or strongly agree.

6. If I were suffering a slow and painful death, I would consider seeking help to end my life.

7. If a person has a terminal illness, that person should be allowed to take action to end his or her own life.

8. If a person has a terminal illness, that person should have the right to have all life-sustaining devices removed.

9. If the patient or his/her family requests it, medical doctors should have the authority to painlessly end the life of a patient who is terminally ill.

10. If a terminally ill patient wishes to die, a medical doctor should be able to write a prescription for a lethal dose of medication for him/her.

27. I support the death penalty.

28. I support the legal right for a woman to end her pregnancy.

29. My individual autonomy / personal freedom is important to me.

*Primary news medium.* To discover if survey respondents accessed the media included in the content analysis phase of the present study, the following close-ended questions related to
respondents’ media use, SQ24 through SQ26, were included in the survey. The answer choices for all three questions included: Newspapers (e.g., *The Toledo Blade* or *The New York Times*); News Web sites (e.g., FOXNews.com or CNN.com); News Weblogs (e.g., MichelleMalkin.com or HuffingtonPost.com); Advocacy groups’ Web sites (e.g., DeathWithDignity.org or FinalChoices.org); Other news media (e.g., television or news magazines); and Other (please explain) ________.

24. Which would you say is your primary source for general news information?

25. Which would you say is the most credible source for general news information?

26. Which one type of news source would you most likely use to find information about physician-assisted suicide?

**Demographic and psychographic variables.** Based on a review of literature revealing demographic and psychographic variables are related to positive or negative opinions of PAS, the following questions, SQ30 through SQ42, were included in the survey. With the exception of the age and level of education questions, each was close-ended. Respondents’ answers to items such as access to health care or current health statuses were based on their self-reports. In other words, the survey did not capture the objective measurement of respondents’ health statuses, so subsequent analyses were based on the health status that each person perceived himself or herself to have. Similarly, access to quality health care, level of conservatism, religiosity, and other demographic and psychographic variables were measured based on respondents’ self-reports.

30. What is your current marital status? Please check (✓) only the best answer:
   - ( ) Married
   - ( ) Widowed
   - ( ) Divorced
   - ( ) Separated
   - ( ) Never Married

31. In general, how would you consider yourself politically?
   - ( ) Extremely Liberal
   - ( ) Liberal
   - ( ) Somewhat Liberal
   - ( ) Somewhat Conservative
   - ( ) Conservative
   - ( ) Extremely Conservative
32. What is your race/ethnicity? Please check (✓) only the best answer:
( ) White ( ) African-American (Black) ( ) Hispanic ( ) Asian
( ) Native American ( ) Other ____________

33. How important is religion in your life?
( ) Extremely unimportant ( ) Unimportant ( ) Somewhat unimportant
( ) Neutral
( ) Somewhat important ( ) Important ( ) Extremely Important

34. What is a rough estimate of your annual household income?
( ) $10,000 or below ( ) $10,001 to $25,000 ( ) $25,001 to $50,000
( ) $50,001 to $75,000 ( ) $75,001 to $100,000 ( ) $100,001 to $150,000
( ) $150,001 or more

35. How would you describe your current health status, in general?
( ) Excellent ( ) Good ( ) Fair ( ) Poor

36. How would you describe your current health care?
( ) Excellent ( ) Good ( ) Fair ( ) Poor

37. Have you ever or do you currently know anyone with a terminal illness?
( ) Yes ( ) No

38. Have you ever or do you currently care for anyone with a terminal illness?
( ) Yes ( ) No

39. Do you currently have a terminal illness?
( ) Yes ( ) No

40. Please provide the last two digits of your birth year.

41. What is your sex?
( ) Female ( ) Male

42. How many years of formal education have you completed (consider finishing high school as having completed 12 years of formal education)?

Analysis

All data were entered into SPSS, and the following statistical analyses were conducted to answer the research questions. Statistical significance for appropriate research questions were tested at $p \leq .05$.

RQ1 asked, “Are there noticeable trends regarding when news stories (in newspapers and
on news Web sites and Weblogs) and press releases (created by the DDNC and CCCC) about PAS were originally published?” To answer this question, the frequency of news stories and press releases about PAS published within six-month time intervals during the period of study was traced.

RQ2a asked, “Are there differences in the total number of stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” Because this research question compared the observed frequencies of a single-category variable across values of a categorical variable, a $\chi^2$ Goodness of Fit test was conducted.

RQ2b asked, “Are there differences in the mean lengths of stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” Because this research question compared the mean values of a continuous variable across values of a categorical variable, an ANOVA was conducted with the different media types as the independent variable and mean lengths of stories as the dependent variable.

RQ3 asked, “Are there differences between authorship types (staff writers, editorial, wire service/syndicated, reader/letter to editor, or other) used for news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” RQ4 asked, “Are there differences between type of stories (news or opinion/editorial) about PAS used across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” RQ5 asked, “Is there a tendency across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases) to mention CCCC or the DDNC in news stories and press releases about PAS?” RQ6 asked, “Are there differences between how PAS is treated (either as a central or non-central issue) in news stories across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” RQ7 asked, “Are there differences between the types of
sources cited or quoted in news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, and press releases)?” RQ8 asked, “Are there differences between the type of evidence used (data-based, non-data-based, or court case) in news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” RQ9 asked, “Are there differences between the position toward PAS (in favor of, against, or neutral toward) used in news stories across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” RQ10a asked, “Are there differences between the frames used in news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” Because each of these research questions compared the frequencies of a categorical variable (i.e., authorship type, story type, mention of DDNC and CCCC, treatment of PAS as central issue, sources cited, evidence types used, position for PAS, and frames and frame characteristics used) across values of another categorical variable (media type), $\chi^2$ Tests for Independence were conducted to reveal if there were significant differences regarding each of these variables by each media type.

RQ10b asked, “What single frame is used most often for each media type (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” This research question was answered by conducting multiple $\chi^2$ Goodness of Fit tests to reveal what one frame was used most often by each media type.

Of note, while RQ10a and RQ10b were concerned with differences between media types according to their frames and frame characteristics, these research questions were also concerned with differences between frames overall according to their frame characteristics. In other words, did frames overall tend to be episodic or thematic, regardless of media type? Did frames overall tend to be used centrally or non-centrally, regardless of media type? Multiple $\chi^2$ Tests for
Independence were conducted to reveal if there were significant differences regarding frame characteristics in overall frame use.

*RQ11* asked, “What are respondents’ opinions of PAS?” To answer this and all questions related to respondents’ opinions of PAS, a scale was created using the answers from SQ6 through SQ10—with scores ranging from 5 for having a negative opinion of PAS and 25 for having a positive opinion of PAS. The scale was then tested for consistency using Cronbach’s $\alpha = .875$. Descriptive statistics revealed the mean of respondents’ scores for PAS.

*RQ12* asked, “Which news source do respondents use most often when seeking information about PAS?” *RQ13* asked, “Which frames do respondents use most often when considering PAS?” Because each of these research questions compared the observed frequencies of a single-category variable (i.e., media type, frames) across values of a categorical variable (i.e., most often used by respondents), $\chi^2$ Goodness of Fit tests were conducted to reveal if there were significant differences regarding which media type and frame was used most often by respondents when considering PAS.

*RQ14* asked, “Are the frames for PAS used most often by the different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, and press releases) and survey respondents similar or different from one another?” Because this research question concerned correlations between rank-ordered lists of the frames used by different media types regarding the frequency with which they use various frames for PAS, Spearman’s $\rho$ was computed.

*RQ15a* asked, “How high do respondents rank PAS on their personal agenda of important social issues (if at all)?” *RQ15b* asked, “How salient is PAS in respondents’ personal agenda of important social issues?” To answer *RQ15a*, the descriptive results of an open-ended question revealed how highly respondents rank PAS on the personal agenda of important issues. Because
RQ15b compared the observed frequencies of a single-category variable across values of a categorical variable, a $\chi^2$ Goodness of Fit test was conducted to reveal if there were significant differences in the salience given to PAS by respondents.

RQ16 asked, “Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the salience given to PAS by respondents explain or predict their opinion of PAS?” RQ17 asked, “Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the frame for PAS used most often by respondents explain or predict their opinion of PAS?” RQ18 asked, “Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the salience given to PAS by respondents’ preferred news media type for information about PAS explain or predict their opinion of PAS?” RQ19 asked, “Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the frame for PAS used most often by respondents’ preferred news media type for information about PAS explain or predict their opinion of PAS?” A model of regression, including and/or controlling for the multiple variables included in each of these research questions, was created to show what predicted or explained respondents’ opinions of PAS.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This study was divided into two method phases. The first was a content analysis of news stories and press releases; the second was a survey of staff and faculty members at Bowling Green State University. The following section describes the statistical analyses techniques and tests used to answer the study’s research questions, as well as the results of those tests. Statistical significance for appropriate research questions were tested at $p \leq .05$.

Content Analysis

The total number of press releases collected and analyzed was 43 (24 from the DDNC, 19 from CCCC). The total number of news stories sampled and analyzed was 236, with 198 newspaper stories (48 from The New York Times, 28 from The Washington Post, 27 from USA Today, 95 from The Oregonian) and 38 news Web site articles and Weblog postings (21 from CNN.com, 12 from FOXNews.com, 3 from HuffingtonPost.com, 2 from MichelleMalkin.com). This technique found no ($n = 0$) news stories on MSNBC.com or in The Toledo Blade or The Seattle Times, so these publications were not included in the analyses described below. These units of analysis ($n = 279$) were used to answer the following research questions:

Agenda-Setting of PAS

RQ1 asked, “Are there noticeable trends regarding when news stories (in newspapers and on news Web sites and Weblogs) and press releases (created by the DDNC and CCCC) about PAS were originally published?” Figure 1 depicts the frequency of news stories and press releases published within six month time intervals of June 1, 2005 to June 30, 2009. With a few notable exceptions, such as when a peak occurred for newspaper articles very early in 2006 and in late 2008, all three publication types peaked at similar times in regards to the number of news stories or press releases they published during the period of this study. For example, many
stories were featured in newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, and press releases around the latter half of 2005, and between the latter half of 2007 and the first half of 2008.

Figure 1

Frequencies of News Stories/Press Releases by Time Intervals

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Type</th>
<th>Observed Frequencies</th>
<th>Expected Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Press Releases</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web sites &amp; Weblogs</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = 177.96$, $p < .001$

RQ2a asked, “Are there differences in the total number of stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” As Table 1 demonstrates, a $\chi^2$ Goodness of Fit Test revealed significant difference regarding the number of articles published by each medium, $\chi^2(2, n = 279) = 177.96$, $p \leq .001$. Specifically, newspapers featured the most number of stories, followed by press releases, then news Web sites and
Weblogs.

Figure 2

_Difference by Mean Number of Words among Media Types_

![Graph showing the mean number of words published by each media type.](image)

_Note. F = 1.32, p = .268_

*RQ2b* asked, “Are there differences in the mean lengths of stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” Figure 2 shows the mean number of words published by each media type. Results of an ANOVA revealed there was no significant difference between media types based on their mean story lengths measured in words, $F(2, 276) = 1.32, p = .268$.

Table 2

_Difference Regarding Types of Authorship Used among Media Types_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Type</th>
<th>Staff Writer</th>
<th>Editorial</th>
<th>Wire Service / Syndicated</th>
<th>Reader / Letter to Editor</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Press Releases</td>
<td>42 (97.7%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>1 (2.3%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>43 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>135 (68.2%)</td>
<td>23 (11.5%)</td>
<td>10 (5.1%)</td>
<td>30 (15.2%)</td>
<td>198 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Sites &amp; Weblogs</td>
<td>34 (89.5%)</td>
<td>3 (7.9%)</td>
<td>1 (2.6%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>38 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>211 (75.6%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>26 (9.3%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>12 (4.3%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>30 (10.8%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>279 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Note. $\chi^2 = 23.57, p = .001$_
RQ3 asked, “Are there differences between authorship types (staff writers, editorial, wire service/syndicated, or reader/letter to editor) used for news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” As Table 2 demonstrates, a $\chi^2$ Test for Independence revealed, overall, media tended to publish more stories about PAS written by Staff Writers than with any other type of authorship, $\chi^2(6, n = 279) = 23.57, p = .001$, Cramer’s $V = .291$. Each individual media type tended to publish more Staff Writer-authored stories than stories with any other type of authorship. These findings should be interpreted with some caution because some categories had cells with expected frequencies fewer than five.

RQ4 asked, “Are there differences between type of stories (news or opinion/editorial) about PAS used across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” As Table 3 demonstrates, a $\chi^2$ Test for Independence revealed, overall, media tended to utilize more News than Opinion/Editorial stories about PAS, $\chi^2(2, n = 277) = 9.71, p = .008$, Cramer’s $V = .187$. Each individual media type tended to utilize more News than Opinion/Editorial stories about PAS.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Type</th>
<th>News</th>
<th>Opinion/Editorial</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Press Releases</td>
<td>34 (81.0%)</td>
<td>8 (19.0%)</td>
<td>42 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>111 (56.3%)</td>
<td>86 (43.7%)</td>
<td>197 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Sites &amp; Weblogs</td>
<td>26 (68.4%)</td>
<td>12 (31.6%)</td>
<td>38 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>171 (61.7%)</td>
<td>106 (38.3%)</td>
<td>277 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $\chi^2 = 9.71, p = .008$

RQ5 asked, “Is there a tendency across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases) to mention CCCC or the DDNC in news stories and press releases about PAS?” As Table 4 demonstrates, a $\chi^2$ Test for Independence revealed, overall,
media tended to mention neither of the advocacy groups rather than mentioning either one or both, $\chi^2(6, n = 279) = 131.91, p \leq .001$, Cramer’s $V = .486$. Newspapers tended to mention neither of the groups, news Web sites and Weblogs tended to mention neither of the groups, and press releases tended to mention the CCCC. Of note, the DDNC produced all 11 press releases that mentioned the DDNC and CCCC produced all 17 press releases that mentioned CCCC.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Type</th>
<th>Mention DDNC</th>
<th>Mention CCC</th>
<th>Mention Both</th>
<th>Mention Neither</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Press Releases</td>
<td>11 (25.6%)</td>
<td>17 (39.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>15 (34.9%)</td>
<td>43 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>5 (3.5%)</td>
<td>2 (1.0%)</td>
<td>2 (1.0%)</td>
<td>189 (95.5%)</td>
<td>198 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Sites &amp; Weblogs</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>38 (100.0%)</td>
<td>38 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15 (5.7%)</td>
<td>19 (6.8%)</td>
<td>2 (0.7%)</td>
<td>242 (86.7%)</td>
<td>279 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = 131.91, p \leq .001$

RQ6 asked, “Are there differences between how PAS is treated (either as a central or non-central issue) in news stories across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” As Table 5 demonstrates, a $\chi^2$ Test for Independence revealed there was no significant difference across all media regarding whether PAS was treated as a central or non-central story topic, $\chi^2(2, n = 279) = 2.34, p = .311$, Cramer’s $V = .091$.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Type</th>
<th>Issue Central</th>
<th>Issue Not Central</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Press Releases</td>
<td>19 (44.2%)</td>
<td>24 (55.8%)</td>
<td>43 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>108 (54.5%)</td>
<td>90 (45.5%)</td>
<td>198 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Sites &amp; Weblogs</td>
<td>23 (60.5%)</td>
<td>15 (39.5%)</td>
<td>38 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>150 (53.8%)</td>
<td>129 (46.2%)</td>
<td>279 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = 2.34, p = .311$

RQ7 asked, “Are there differences between the types of sources cited or quoted in news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, and
press releases)?” As Table 6 demonstrates, a $\chi^2$ Test for Independence revealed there was significant difference regarding the types of sources used across the different media types, $\chi^2(20, n = 197) = 58.38, p \leq .001$, Cramer’s $V = .385$. Overall, the media used reports/scholars/researchers most often. Press releases used CCCC representatives and reports/scholars/researchers most often; newspapers used reports/scholars/researchers most often; and news Web sites and Weblogs used patients/friends/family, journalists/media, and other advocacy groups most often. Celebrities were never used as sources by any of the media types. These findings should be interpreted with some caution because some categories had cells with expected frequencies fewer than five.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Type</th>
<th>Press Releases</th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Web sites &amp; Weblogs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patients/Friends/Family</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>18 (11.9%)</td>
<td>6 (17.6%)</td>
<td>24 (12.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists/Media</td>
<td>2 (16.7%)</td>
<td>10 (6.6%)</td>
<td>6 (17.6%)</td>
<td>18 (9.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDNC Representatives</td>
<td>2 (16.7%)</td>
<td>5 (3.3%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>7 (3.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCCC Representatives</td>
<td>3 (25.0%)</td>
<td>2 (1.3%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>5 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Advocacy Groups</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>28 (18.5%)</td>
<td>6 (17.6%)</td>
<td>34 (17.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports/Scholars/Researchers</td>
<td>3 (25.0%)</td>
<td>32 (21.2%)</td>
<td>2 (5.9%)</td>
<td>37 (18.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Officials</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>26 (17.2%)</td>
<td>2 (5.9%)</td>
<td>28 (14.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Authorities</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>7 (4.6%)</td>
<td>3 (8.8%)</td>
<td>10 (5.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Experts</td>
<td>2 (16.7%)</td>
<td>16 (10.6%)</td>
<td>5 (14.7%)</td>
<td>23 (11.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous Sources</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>1 (2.9%)</td>
<td>1 (0.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Sources</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>7 (4.6%)</td>
<td>3 (8.8%)</td>
<td>10 (5.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12 (100%)</td>
<td>151 (100%)</td>
<td>34 (100%)</td>
<td>197 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = 58.38, p \leq .001$

RQ8 asked, “Are there differences between the type of evidence used (data-based, non-data-based, or court case) in news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” As Table 7 demonstrates, a $\chi^2$ Test for Independence reveals there was significant difference across all media types regarding the types
of evidence they used, $\chi^2(6, n = 279) = 28.29, p \leq .001$, Cramer’s $V = .225$. The media overall, and each individual media type, tended to use ‘no evidence’ more often than using particular types of evidence in news stories and press releases about PAS.

Table 7

**Difference in Types of Evidence Used among Media Types**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence Type</th>
<th>Press Releases</th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Web sites &amp; Weblogs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data-Based Evidence</td>
<td>4 (9.3%)</td>
<td>35 (17.7%)</td>
<td>2 (5.3%)</td>
<td>41 (14.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Data-Based Evidence</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>32 (16.2%)</td>
<td>9 (23.6%)</td>
<td>41 (14.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court Case-Based Evidence</td>
<td>4 (9.3%)</td>
<td>42 (21.2%)</td>
<td>12 (31.6%)</td>
<td>59 (20.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Evidence</td>
<td>35 (81.4%)</td>
<td>89 (44.9%)</td>
<td>15 (39.5%)</td>
<td>139 (49.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43 (100%)</td>
<td>198 (100%)</td>
<td>38 (100%)</td>
<td>279 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $\chi^2 = 28.29, p \leq .001$*

**Framing of PAS**

*RQ9* asked, “Are there differences between the position toward PAS (in favor of, against, or neutral toward) used in news stories across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” To answer this question, an initial $\chi^2$ Test for Independence was run revealing most news stories and press releases tended to have a neutral position toward PAS, $\chi^2(12, n = 279) = 54.89, p \leq .001$, Cramer’s $V = .314$. Newspapers and news Web sites and Weblogs tended to present news stories using a neutral position toward PAS, while press releases tended to have an extreme explicit positive position toward the issue. After this initial test, the positions news stories and press releases had for PAS were reduced into three categories. The first category, ‘negative’, included all news stories or press releases identified as having a *negative explicit extreme* or *negative explicit* position toward PAS. The second category, ‘neutral’, included all news stories or press releases identified as having a *negative implicit*, *neutral*, or *positive implicit position* toward PAS. The third category, ‘positive’, contained all news stories or press releases identified as having a *positive explicit* or *positive explicit extreme*
position toward PAS. As Table 8 demonstrates, a $\chi^2$ Test for Independence revealed, overall, media tended to demonstrate a neutral position toward PAS, $\chi^2(4, n = 279) = 29.83, p < .001$, Cramer’s $V = .231$. Newspapers and news Web sites and Weblogs tended to present news stories using a neutral position toward PAS, while press releases tended to have a positive position toward the issue.

Table 8

**Difference in Position on PAS among Media Types**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position on PAS</th>
<th>Press Releases</th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Web sites &amp; Weblogs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>17 (8.6%)</td>
<td>3 (7.9%)</td>
<td>20 (7.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>20 (46.5%)</td>
<td>138 (69.7%)</td>
<td>33 (86.8%)</td>
<td>191 (68.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>23 (53.5%)</td>
<td>43 (21.7%)</td>
<td>2 (5.3%)</td>
<td>68 (24.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>43 (100%)</td>
<td>198 (100%)</td>
<td>38 (100%)</td>
<td>279 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $\chi^2 = 29.83, p \leq .001$*

Table 9

**Difference in Frame Use among Media Types**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Press Releases</th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Web sites &amp; Weblogs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>5 (12.5%)</td>
<td>62 (16.8%)</td>
<td>17 (20.2%)</td>
<td>84 (17.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>6 (15.0%)</td>
<td>49 (13.3%)</td>
<td>17 (20.2%)</td>
<td>72 (14.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>14 (35.0%)</td>
<td>76 (20.6%)</td>
<td>22 (26.2%)</td>
<td>112 (22.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality/Religion</td>
<td>2 (5.0%)</td>
<td>54 (14.6%)</td>
<td>8 (9.5%)</td>
<td>64 (13.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>7 (17.5%)</td>
<td>42 (11.4%)</td>
<td>10 (11.9%)</td>
<td>59 (12.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Government</td>
<td>4 (10.0%)</td>
<td>49 (13.3%)</td>
<td>6 (7.1%)</td>
<td>59 (12.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Consequences</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>3 (0.8%)</td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
<td>4 (0.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>2 (5.0%)</td>
<td>34 (9.2%)</td>
<td>3 (3.6%)</td>
<td>39 (7.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>40 (100%)</td>
<td>369 (100%)</td>
<td>84 (100%)</td>
<td>493 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $\chi^2 = 17.74, p = .219$

*RQ10a* asked, “Are there differences between the frames used in news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?”

This research question was tested across several characteristics to determine if frames were present in news stories and press releases, whether they were episodic or thematic, and whether
they were centrally or non-centrally used (see Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12). In addition to examining differences in the frames used by the media types, frames were also examined according to how they were used overall, regardless of media type (see Tables 13, 14, 15, and 16).

As Table 9 demonstrates, a $\chi^2$ Test for Independence revealed there was no significant difference in the frames used to discuss PAS between the different media, $\chi^2(14, n = 493) = 17.74, p = .219$, Cramer’s $V = .134$. The media overall tended to use the *legal* frame, but not at a significant level.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame Type</th>
<th>Press Releases</th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Web sites &amp; Weblogs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Episodic</td>
<td>13 (32.5%)</td>
<td>102 (27.6%)</td>
<td>37 (44.0%)</td>
<td>152 (30.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic</td>
<td>27 (67.5%)</td>
<td>267 (72.4%)</td>
<td>47 (56.0%)</td>
<td>341 (69.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40 (100%)</td>
<td>369 (100%)</td>
<td>84 (100%)</td>
<td>493 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $\chi^2 = 8.69, p = .013$

As Table 10 demonstrates, a $\chi^2$ Test for Independence revealed there was significant difference in the use of episodic and thematic frames between the different media types, $\chi^2(2, n = 493) = 8.69, p = .013$, Cramer’s $V = .133$. The frames used by the media types overall tended to be thematic. Each individual media type tended to use *thematic* frames more often than they used episodic frames.

As Table 11 demonstrates, a $\chi^2$ Test for Independence revealed there was no significant difference in the use of central and non-central frames between the different media types, $\chi^2(2, n = 493) = 4.84, p = .106$, Cramer’s $V = .095$. The frames used by the media types overall tended to be used centrally, but not at a significant level.
Table 11

**Difference in Frame Central/Non-Central Use among Media Types**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame Use</th>
<th>Press Releases</th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Web sites &amp; Weblogs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>29 (72.5%)</td>
<td>252 (68.3%)</td>
<td>48 (57.1%)</td>
<td>329 (66.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Central</td>
<td>11 (27.5%)</td>
<td>117 (31.7%)</td>
<td>36 (42.9%)</td>
<td>164 (33.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>40 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>369 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>84 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>493 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. \( \chi^2 = 4.84, p = .106 \)*

As Table 12 demonstrates, a \( \chi^2 \) Test for Independence revealed there was significant difference in the use of general frame characteristics between the different media types, \( \chi^2(6, n = 493) = 16.37, p = .012 \), Cramer’s \( V = .129 \). The frames used by the media types overall tended to be **thematic central**. Each individual media type tended to use thematic central frames.

Table 12

**Difference in Frame Characteristics among Media Types**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frame Characteristics</th>
<th>Press Releases</th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Web sites &amp; Weblogs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Episodic Central</td>
<td>11 (27.5%)</td>
<td>56 (15.2%)</td>
<td>19 (22.6%)</td>
<td>86 (17.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episodic Non-Central</td>
<td>2 (5.0%)</td>
<td>46 (12.5%)</td>
<td>18 (21.4%)</td>
<td>66 (13.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Central</td>
<td>18 (45.0%)</td>
<td>196 (53.1%)</td>
<td>29 (34.6%)</td>
<td>243 (49.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Non-Central</td>
<td>9 (22.5%)</td>
<td>71 (19.2%)</td>
<td>18 (21.4%)</td>
<td>98 (19.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>40 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>369 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>84 (100%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>493 (100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. \( \chi^2 = 16.37, p = .012 \)*

As Table 13 demonstrates, a \( \chi^2 \) Test for Independence revealed there was significant difference in whether all frames across all media types were presented as episodic or thematic, \( \chi^2(7, n = 493) = 28.91, p \leq .001 \), Cramer’s \( V = .242 \). Frames overall tended to be **thematic**. With the exception of economic consequences, each individual frame also tended to be presented as thematic.
Table 13

*Difference in Episodic/Thematic Frame Types across All Media Frames*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Episodic</th>
<th>Thematic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>18 (21.4%)</td>
<td>66 (78.6%)</td>
<td>84 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>31 (43.1%)</td>
<td>41 (56.9%)</td>
<td>72 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>31 (27.7%)</td>
<td>81 (72.3%)</td>
<td>112 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality / Religion</td>
<td>26 (40.6%)</td>
<td>38 (59.4%)</td>
<td>64 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>26 (44.1%)</td>
<td>33 (55.9%)</td>
<td>59 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Government</td>
<td>11 (18.6%)</td>
<td>48 (81.4%)</td>
<td>59 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Consequences</td>
<td>3 (75.0%)</td>
<td>1 (25.0%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>6 (15.4%)</td>
<td>33 (84.6%)</td>
<td>39 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>152 (30.8%)</td>
<td>341 (69.2%)</td>
<td>493 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. χ² = 28.91, p ≤ .001*

As Table 14 demonstrates, a χ² Test for Independence revealed there was significant difference in whether all frames across all media types were used centrally or non-centrally, χ²(7, n = 493) = 37.54, p ≤ .001, Cramer’s V = .276. Frames overall tended to be used centrally. With the exception of the medical and economic consequences frames, each individual frame also tended to be used centrally.

Table 14

*Difference in Frame Central/Non-Central Use across All Media Frames*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Central</th>
<th>Non-Central</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>56 (66.7%)</td>
<td>28 (33.3%)</td>
<td>84 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>33 (45.8%)</td>
<td>39 (54.2%)</td>
<td>72 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>89 (79.5%)</td>
<td>23 (20.5%)</td>
<td>112 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality / Religion</td>
<td>38 (59.4%)</td>
<td>26 (40.6%)</td>
<td>64 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>37 (62.7%)</td>
<td>22 (37.3%)</td>
<td>59 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Government</td>
<td>46 (78.0%)</td>
<td>13 (22.0%)</td>
<td>59 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Consequences</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>4 (100.0%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>30 (76.9%)</td>
<td>9 (23.1%)</td>
<td>39 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>329 (66.7%)</td>
<td>164 (33.3%)</td>
<td>493 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. χ² = 37.54, p ≤ .001*

As Table 15 demonstrates, a χ² Test for Independence revealed there was significant difference in the use of general frame characteristics across all frames across all media types,
\(\chi^2(21, n = 493) = 73.11, p \leq .001\), Cramer’s \(V = .222\). Frames overall tended to be thematic central. With the exception of the medical and economic consequences frames, each individual frame also tended to be thematic central.

Table 15

**Difference in Frame Characteristics across All Media Frames**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Episodic Central</th>
<th>Episodic Non-Central</th>
<th>Thematic Central</th>
<th>Thematic Non-Central</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>8 (9.5%)</td>
<td>10 (11.9%)</td>
<td>48 (57.1%)</td>
<td>18 (21.5%)</td>
<td>84 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>13 (18.1%)</td>
<td>18 (25.0%)</td>
<td>20 (27.8%)</td>
<td>21 (29.1%)</td>
<td>72 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>23 (20.5%)</td>
<td>8 (7.2%)</td>
<td>66 (58.9%)</td>
<td>15 (13.4%)</td>
<td>112 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality / Religion</td>
<td>16 (25.0%)</td>
<td>10 (15.6%)</td>
<td>22 (34.4%)</td>
<td>16 (25.0%)</td>
<td>64 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>17 (28.8%)</td>
<td>9 (15.3%)</td>
<td>20 (33.9%)</td>
<td>13 (22.0%)</td>
<td>59 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Government</td>
<td>7 (11.9%)</td>
<td>4 (6.7%)</td>
<td>39 (66.1%)</td>
<td>9 (15.3%)</td>
<td>59 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Cons.</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>3 (75.0%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>1 (25.0%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>2 (5.1%)</td>
<td>4 (10.3%)</td>
<td>28 (71.8%)</td>
<td>5 (12.8%)</td>
<td>39 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>86 (17.4%)</td>
<td>66 (13.4%)</td>
<td>243 (49.3%)</td>
<td>98 (19.9%)</td>
<td>493 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. \(\chi^2 = 73.11, p \leq .001\)*

As Table 16 demonstrates, a \(\chi^2\) Test for Independence test revealed there was no significant difference in the position media coverage had for PAS regarding the frames used in that coverage, \(\chi^2(14, n = 493) = 19.02, p = .164\), Cramer’s \(V = .139\). Overall, frames tended to be presented along with a neutral position toward PAS, but not at a significant level.

Table 16

**Difference in Frame Use by Position on PAS, for Overall Media Frames**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>7 (8.3%)</td>
<td>52 (61.9%)</td>
<td>25 (29.8%)</td>
<td>84 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>6 (8.3%)</td>
<td>48 (66.7%)</td>
<td>18 (25.0%)</td>
<td>72 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>11 (9.8%)</td>
<td>69 (61.6%)</td>
<td>32 (28.6%)</td>
<td>112 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality / Religion</td>
<td>10 (15.6%)</td>
<td>33 (51.6%)</td>
<td>21 (32.8%)</td>
<td>64 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>3 (5.0%)</td>
<td>28 (47.5%)</td>
<td>28 (47.5%)</td>
<td>59 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Government</td>
<td>8 (13.5%)</td>
<td>29 (49.2%)</td>
<td>22 (37.3%)</td>
<td>59 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Cons.</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>4 (100.0%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>4 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>2 (5.1%)</td>
<td>24 (61.6%)</td>
<td>13 (33.3%)</td>
<td>39 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>47 (9.5%)</td>
<td>287 (58.2%)</td>
<td>159 (32.3%)</td>
<td>493 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes. \(\chi^2 = 19.02, p = .164\)*
RQ10b asked, “What single frame is used most often for each media type (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?” Three $\chi^2$ Goodness of Fit Tests revealed significant differences regarding the types of frames used by each individual media type. As Table 17 demonstrates, the legal frame was used most frequently in press releases, $\chi^2(7, n = 40) = 26.00, p < .001$.

Table 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames in Press Releases</th>
<th>Observed Frequencies</th>
<th>Expected Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality / Religion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Government</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Consequences</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = 26.00, p < .001$

As Table 18 demonstrates, the legal frame was used most frequently in newspaper stories, $\chi^2(7, n = 379) = 71.60, p < .001$.

Table 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames in Newspapers</th>
<th>Observed Frequencies</th>
<th>Expected Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>47.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>47.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>47.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality / Religion</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>47.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>47.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Government</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>47.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Consequences</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>47.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>379</strong></td>
<td><strong>379</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\chi^2 = 71.60, p < .001$
As Table 19 demonstrates, the legal frame was used most frequently in news Web site and Weblog articles and postings, $\chi^2(7, n = 82) = 35.85, p < .001$.

Table 19

**Difference in Frame Use in News Web Site Articles and Weblog Postings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames on News Web sites and Weblogs</th>
<th>Observed Frequencies</th>
<th>Expected Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality / Religion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Government</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Consequences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>82</strong></td>
<td><strong>82</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $\chi^2 = 35.85, p < .001$*

**Survey**

The target population for the survey was 2,567, including all faculty (N = 1,250) and staff (N = 1,407) at BGSU. The entire population was contacted by email with a request to fill out the survey on SurveyMonkey.com. The total number of responses was 452, comprised of 278 faculty and 174 staff, generating a 17.01% response rate (22.24% for faculty and 12.37% for staff). The following section provides a profile of survey respondents, describes regression models used to answer research questions, and provides answers to all remaining research questions.

**Profile of Survey Respondents**

The profile of respondents to the survey used in the present study is described below. This profile is similar to that of respondents to the 2010 General Social Survey (Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2011) across a number of variables. The sex, age, religiosity, opinion of the death penalty, and opinion of PAS characteristics of respondents to both surveys were similar. The
respondents to the present survey were more likely to have higher levels of education, to have higher household income, to be more liberal, to be married, to be White, to be more supportive of abortion rights, and have better health than respondents to the 2010 GSS. Other variables, such as respondents’ opinions of personal autonomy, their access to health care, and their experiences with terminal illness, were not measured in the 2010 GSS.

As seen in Figure 3, of the respondents \( n = 412 \), 38.8\( \% \) \( n = 160 \) were male and 61.2\( \% \) \( n = 252 \) female.

**Figure 3**

*Sex of Respondents*

![Sex of Respondents](image)

**Table 20**

*Ages of Respondents in Years*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age in Years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in Table 20 and Figure 4, respondents’ \((n = 403)\) ages ranged from 22 to 87.
years, with a mean age of 46.88 years ($SD = 10.948$).

Figure 4

*Ages of Respondents in Years*

As seen in Figure 5 and Table 21, respondents’ ($n = 413$) years of formal education ranged from 5 to 36 years, with a mean of 18.88 years ($SD = 3.312$).

Figure 5

*Years of Education among Respondents*
Table 21

**Years of Education among Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>70.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>79.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>89.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>96.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>98.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>99.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>99.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>99.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>413</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 22

**Household Income among Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≤ $10,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,001-$25,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,001-$50,000</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,001-$75,000</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75,001-$100,000</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,001-$150,000</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>92.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ $150,001</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>404</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 22 and Figure 6, respondents \( n = 404 \) fit into categories of income ranging from ‘$10,000 or less’ to ‘$150,001 or more’. The largest category of household income
identified by respondents was the range $50,001 to $75,000 ($n = 111$).

Figure 6

*Household Income among Respondents*

As seen in Figure 7 and Table 23, of the respondents ($n = 420$), 69.3% ($n = 291$) were married and the remaining 30.7% ($n = 129$) were widowed, divorced, separated or had never married.

Figure 7

*Marital Status of Respondents*
Table 23

**Marital Status of Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>82.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>84.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Married</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>420</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8

**Race of Respondents**

As seen in Figure 8 and Table 24, of the respondents ($n = 414$), 91.1% ($n = 377$) were...
White, 2.9% \((n = 12)\) were Black/African-American, and 6.0% \((n = 25)\) were of another race.

As seen in Table 25 and Figure 9, respondents \((n = 419)\) fit into categories of how important they consider religion in their own lives, ranging from ‘extremely unimportant’ to ‘extremely important’. The largest category of religiosity identified by respondents was \textit{important} \((n = 99)\).

Table 25

\textit{Personal Importance of Religion (Religiosity) of Respondents}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religiosity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Unimportant</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unimportant</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly Unimportant</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly Important</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>58.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9

\textit{Personal Importance of Religion (Religiosity) of Respondents}

As seen in Figure 10 and Table 26, respondents \((n = 415)\) fit into categories of political ideology, ranging from ‘extremely liberal’ to ‘extremely conservative’. The largest category of
political ideology identified by respondents was *liberal* (*n* = 129).

Figure 10

*Political Ideology of Respondents*

![Political Ideology of Respondents](image)

Table 26

*Political Ideology of Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Ideology</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Liberal</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Liberal</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>64.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Conservative</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>90.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>98.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Conservative</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>415</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Figure 11 and Table 27, respondents (*n* = 418) fit into categories according to how much they agreed with the statement, “I support the death penalty”, ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. The largest category was ‘agree’ (*n* = 112).
Figure 11

*Opinion of Death Penalty among Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Death Penalty Opinion</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28

*Opinion of Abortion among Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abortion Opinion</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>27.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in Table 28 and Figure 12, respondents \( (n = 418) \) fit into categories according to how much they agreed with the statement, “I support the legal right for a woman to end her pregnancy”, ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. The largest category was ‘strongly agree’ \( (n = 190) \).

As seen in Table 29 and Figure 13, respondents \( (n = 418) \) fit into categories according to how much they agreed with the statement, “My individual autonomy / personal freedom is important to me”, ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’. The largest category was ‘strongly agree’ \( (n = 281) \).
Figure 13

**Opinion of Personal Autonomy among Respondents**

As seen in Figure 14 and Table 30, respondents \( n = 415 \) fit into categories according to the level of their personal health, ranging from ‘poor’ to ‘excellent’. The largest category was ‘good’ \( n = 232 \).

Figure 14

**Level of Health among Respondents**
Table 30

Level of Health among Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Health</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>55.9</td>
<td>65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15

Quality of Health Care among Respondents

As seen in Figure 15 and Table 31, respondents ($n = 407$) fit into categories according to
the quality of their health care, ranging from ‘poor’ to ‘excellent’. The largest category was ‘good’ ($n = 233$).

As seen in Figure 16, of the respondents ($n = 417$), 91.8% ($n = 383$) did know someone with a terminal illness and 8.2% ($n = 34$) did not.

Figure 16

*Number of Respondents Who Knew Someone with a Terminal Illness*

![Figure 16](image1.png)

Figure 17

*Number of Respondents Who Cared for Someone with a Terminal Illness*

![Figure 17](image2.png)
As seen in Figure 17, of the respondents \((n = 416)\), 62.5\% \((n = 260)\) did care for someone with a terminal illness and 37.5\% \((n = 156)\) did not.

As seen in Figure 18, of the respondents \((n = 415)\), 1.7\% \((n = 7)\) did have a terminal illness and 98.3\% \((n = 408)\) did not.

**Figure 18**

*Number of Respondents Who Had with a Terminal Illness*

---

**Research Question Results**

*RQ11* asked, “What are respondents’ opinions of PAS?” To determine respondents’ opinions of PAS, respondents’ answers to five survey questions were combined into a single summative *Opinion of PAS* scale \((\text{Cronbach’s } \alpha = .875)\). Table 32 provides the mean scores and standard deviations for answers to these survey questions. Possible scores for the overall scale ranged from 5 for a negative opinion of PAS to 25 for a positive opinion of PAS. As Figure 19 demonstrates, respondents’ \((n = 422)\) scores on the scale had a negative skew, indicating that a large number of scores tended to be higher on the scale. The mean score on the scale was 19.26 \((SD = 4.764)\), indicating a moderate to strong positive opinion of PAS.
Table 32

*Items in Opinion of PAS Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>Mean Score for Original Item (Standard Deviation)</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I were suffering a slow and painful death, I would consider seeking help to end my life.</td>
<td>3.50 (SD = 1.317)</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a person has a terminal illness, that person should be allowed to take action to end his or her own life.</td>
<td>3.97 (SD = 1.156)</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a person has a terminal illness, that person should have the right to have all life-sustaining devices removed.</td>
<td>4.50 (SD = 0.783)</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the patient or his/her family requests it, medical doctors should have the authority to painlessly end the life of a patient who is terminally ill.</td>
<td>3.64 (SD = 1.227)</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a terminally ill patient wishes to die, a medical doctor should be able to write a prescription for a lethal dose of medication for him/her.</td>
<td>3.62 (SD = 1.309)</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Answers to survey questions ranged from 1 for Strongly Disagree to 5 for Strongly Agree.

*RQ12* asked, “Which news source do respondents use most often when seeking information about PAS?” As Table 33 demonstrates, a $\chi^2$ Goodness of Fit Test revealed there was significant difference regarding the news sources respondents used most often for seeking information about PAS, $\chi^2(5, n = 420) = 121.94, p \leq .001$. *News Web sites and advocacy groups’*
**Web sites** were the most popular. A second $\chi^2$ Goodness of Fit Test was also run, which revealed there was significant difference regarding the news sources respondents used most often for general news consumption, rather than for information about only PAS, $\chi^2(5, n = 240) = 301.63$, $p \leq .001$. The most popular general news sources were *other news media* ($n = 142$), *news Web sites* ($n = 138$), and *newspapers* ($n = 107$).

Table 33

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Type Most Likely Used by Respondents for Information about PAS</th>
<th>Observed Frequencies</th>
<th>Expected Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Web Sites</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News Weblogs</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Groups’ Web Sites</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other News Media</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Sources</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>420</strong></td>
<td><strong>420</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $\chi^2 = 121.94$, $p \leq .001$*

Table 34

Frames for PAS Used Most Often by Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames Used by Respondents</th>
<th>Observed Frequencies</th>
<th>Expected Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>52.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>52.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>52.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality / Religion</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>52.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy / Patients’ Rights</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>52.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Government / States’ Rights</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>52.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Consequences</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>52.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>52.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>423</strong></td>
<td><strong>423</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $\chi^2 = 1,389.48$, $p \leq .001$*

**RQ13** asked, “Which frames do respondents use most often when considering PAS?” As Table 34 demonstrates, a $\chi^2$ Goodness of Fit Test revealed there was significant difference regarding the frames used by respondents when considering PAS, $\chi^2(7, n = 423) = 1,389.48$, $p \leq$
.001. Overwhelmingly, the primary frame used by respondents was autonomy/patients’ rights.

Table 35

Correlations in Frame Use between Media Types and Survey Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of Frames</th>
<th>Survey Respondents</th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Web Sites &amp; Weblogs</th>
<th>Press Releases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey Respondents</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.813**</td>
<td>.908**</td>
<td>.872**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>.769**</td>
<td>^</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Sites &amp; Weblogs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.859**</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Releases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^ Cannot be computed because at least one of the variables is constant.

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table 36

Use of Frames by Media Types and Survey Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Survey Respondents</th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Web sites &amp; Weblogs</th>
<th>Press Releases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>15 (3.4%)</td>
<td>62 (16.8%)</td>
<td>17 (20.2%)</td>
<td>5 (12.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>18 (4.3%)</td>
<td>49 (13.3%)</td>
<td>17 (20.2%)</td>
<td>6 (15.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>10 (2.4%)</td>
<td>76 (20.6%)</td>
<td>22 (26.2%)</td>
<td>14 (35.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality/Religion</td>
<td>76 (18.0%)</td>
<td>54 (14.6%)</td>
<td>8 (9.5%)</td>
<td>2 (5.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>299 (70.7%)</td>
<td>42 (11.4%)</td>
<td>10 (11.9%)</td>
<td>7 (17.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Government</td>
<td>1 (0.2%)</td>
<td>49 (13.3%)</td>
<td>6 (7.1%)</td>
<td>4 (10.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Cons.</td>
<td>2 (0.5%)</td>
<td>3 (0.8%)</td>
<td>1 (1.2%)</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>2 (0.5%)</td>
<td>34 (9.2%)</td>
<td>3 (3.6%)</td>
<td>2 (5.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>423 (100%)</td>
<td>369 (100%)</td>
<td>84 (100%)</td>
<td>40 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RQ14 asked, “Are the frames for PAS used most often by the different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, and press releases) and survey respondents similar or different from one another?” To answer this research question, data collected from survey respondents, newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, and press releases were entered into SPSS (see Table 36 for a frequency distribution of all frames used by the media types and survey respondents). SPSS then rank-ordered the data from the media types and respondents into lists.

---

2 SPSS computes the rank-ordered lists used in Spearman’s ρ automatically. Table 36 thus does not present the data as they were used to compute the Spearman’s ρ rank-ordered correlations but rather presents the frequency distributions on which the rank-ordering and computation were based.
according to their uses of frames and tested these lists for correlations. As Table 35 indicates, Spearman’s $\rho$ correlations were found to be significant. Respondents’ use of frames correlated with newspapers’ ($\rho = .813, p \leq .01$), news Web sites and Weblogs’ ($\rho = .908, p \leq .01$), and press releases’ ($\rho = .872, p \leq .01$). Newspapers’ use of frames correlated with news Web sites and Weblogs’ ($\rho = .769, p \leq .01$). News Web sites and Weblogs’ use of frames correlated with press releases’ ($\rho = .859, p \leq .01$). With the exception of newspapers and press releases, all media types’ and respondents’ uses of frames significantly correlated.

$RQ15a$ asked, “How high do respondents rank PAS on their personal agenda of important social issues (if at all)?” and $RQ15b$ asked, “How salient is PAS in respondents’ personal agenda of important social issues?” When presented with an open-ended question asking them to list the three social issues they consider most important, no ($n = 0$) survey respondents listed PAS. Respondents were also asked to score their personal salience for PAS in a close-ended question, with a score of 7 indicating they consider the issue extremely important. As Table 37 demonstrates, a $\chi^2$ Goodness of Fit Test revealed significant differences regarding the salience with which respondents assign PAS in their personal agenda, $\chi^2(6, n = 425) = 261.21, p \leq .001$.

Respondents most often identified PAS as being slightly important to their person lives.

Table 37

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal PAS Salience</th>
<th>Observed Frequencies</th>
<th>Expected Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Unimportant</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unimportant</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>60.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly Unimportant</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>60.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>60.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly Important</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>60.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>60.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely Important</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>60.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>425</strong></td>
<td><strong>425</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $\chi^2 = 261.21, p \leq .001$*
Regression Models

**Description of final model.** In each of the regression models presented in Table 38, *Opinion of PAS* was the response variable and was measured using the Opinion of PAS scale developed for this study. Scores on this scale ranged from 5 for a negative opinion of PAS to 25 for a positive opinion of PAS.

*Sex* was dummy coded as 1 = female, 0 = male. *Age* and *years of formal education* were ratio-level variables, while *household income* was an ordinal measure ranging from 1 for ‘$10,000 or less’ to 7 for ‘$150,001 or more’. The total number of categories for *marital status* was reduced to match coding schemes used in previous research, and was dummy coded as 1 = not married, 0 = married. The total number of categories for *race* was reduced to match coding schemes used in previous research, and was dummy coded as 1 = Black/African-American, 0 = White; 1 = other race, 0 = White. *Religiosity*, or personal importance for religion held by respondents, was an ordinal measure ranging from 1 for ‘extremely unimportant’ to 7 for ‘extremely important’. *Political ideology* was treated as an ordinal measure of conservatism, ranging from 1 for ‘extremely liberal’ to 7 for ‘extremely conservative’. *Support for the death penalty*, *support for abortion*, and *support for personal autonomy* were ordinal measures of respondents’ opinions of those issues, each ranging from 1 for ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 for ‘strongly agree’. *Health status* and *available health care* were ordinal measures, each ranging from 1 for ‘poor’ to 4 for ‘excellent’. *Knowing someone with a terminal illness* and *caring for someone with a terminal illness* were each dummy coded in the regression models below as 1 = yes, 0 = no. *Having a terminal illness* was also dummy coded as 1 = yes, 0 = no, but did not have enough cases in the ‘no’ category to be included in any regression model.

Because an overwhelming majority of respondents identified personal autonomy as their
personal frame for PAS, the total number of categories was reduced and dummy coded as 1 = personal autonomy, 0 = all other personal frames. Multiple versions of this dummy coding scheme were analyzed using ΔF tests, and the scheme ultimately used provided the most explanatory power.

Personal salience for PAS was an ordinal measure ranging from 1 for ‘extremely unimportant’ to 7 for ‘extremely important’. Personal interest in PAS was an ordinal measure ranging from 1 for ‘not at all interested’ to 5 for ‘extremely interested’. Personal attention to PAS was an ordinal measure ranging from 1 for ‘no attention at all’ to 5 for ‘full attention’. News consumption frequency was an ordinal measure ranging from 1 for ‘never’ to 6 for ‘throughout the day’. PAS news source and general news source were dummy coded as 1 = news Web sites, 0 = newspapers; 1 = news Weblogs, 0 = newspapers; 1 = advocacy Web sites, 0 = newspapers; 1 = other news media, 0 = newspapers; 1 = other sources, 0 = newspapers.

Six more variables were also included in the regression models. These include (a) the position on PAS held, (b) the frame for PAS used, and (c) the salience given to PAS by respondents’ PAS medium and primary medium. Using data collected during the content analysis phase of the study, I determined the position toward PAS (negative, neutral, or positive) for each media type. I then created a new variable combining the content analysis data and survey data, identifying the position for PAS held by the media types respondents used to find information about PAS and for general news consumption. As an example, if a respondent indicated his or her primary media type was newspapers, that respondent was given the value 2 (‘neutral’ on the ordinal scale ranging from 1 for ‘negative’ to 3 for ‘positive’) because neutral was the value most often found for newspapers in the content analysis. Because newspapers primarily used the legal frame, that same respondent was dummy coded as 1 = legal, 0 = all other frames. Finally,
PAS salience for each media type was calculated by multiplying the total number of stories (e.g., newspapers had 198 stories) by the total number of words (e.g., newspapers had 154,293 words in those stories) afforded to content about PAS, then creating a $z$-score from the results. Through this process, newspapers were given a $z$-score of 1.50, news Web sites were given -0.48, news Weblogs were given -0.55, and press releases were given -0.47. As such, the respondent in the current example was assigned the $z$-score 1.50 for the variables respondents’ PAS medium’s PAS salience and respondents’ primary medium’s PAS salience.

Of note, several variables included in the regression models (such as whether or not respondents currently had a terminal illness) did not contain enough cases or variability to be included in final analysis; these are still included in Table 38 identified with a symbol (~) to maintain transparency of the research process. Additionally, only the legal frame was utilized most often by respondents’ primary PAS and general news media types, so these media frame variables were dummy coded in the regression models below as 1 = legal, 0 = all other frames.

**Model explanatory power.** To answer the remaining research questions, the four regression models presented in Table 38 were run. The first model included only the demographic and social issue opinion variables found in previous research to be significantly positive or negative predictors of opinion of PAS. This model was significant, $F = 7.640, p \leq .001, R^2 \text{ adj.} = .365$. A second model included respondents’ news consumption, respondents’ interest in, attention to, and salience for PAS, and characteristics of the news sources respondents would utilize when seeking information about PAS. This second model was found to be significant, $F = 7.207, p \leq .001, R^2 \text{ adj.} = .436$, with a significant increase in explanatory power over the first model, $\Delta F = 4.027, p \leq .001$. A third model further included respondents’ personal frames for PAS. This third model was found to be significant, $F = 8.425, p \leq .001, R^2 \text{ adj.} = \ldots$
.491, with a significant increase in explanatory power over the second model, $\Delta F = 18.525, p \leq .001$. The fourth, most comprehensive model included characteristics of the news sources respondents utilize when seeking general news information (as opposed to seeking information specifically about PAS). This model was found to be significant, $F = 7.570, p \leq .001, R^2 \text{adj.} = .489$, but did not represent a significant increase in explanatory power over the third model, $\Delta F = .877, p = .454$. However, because it included variables that were theoretically significant, the fourth model was used to determine all results described below.

**Significant predictor variables.** Table 38 demonstrates that few variables in regression model 3 significantly predicted respondents’ opinions of PAS. Lower scores on the Opinion of PAS scale developed for this study represent a negative opinion of the issue and higher scores represent a positive, more supportive opinion. Respondents who are not married had a lower opinion of PAS than did respondents who are married, $b = -1.453, p = .023$. Respondents who are of an ‘other’ race had a lower opinion of respondents than did White respondents, $b = -3.426, p = .002$. An increase in respondents’ support of abortion predicted an increase in their support of PAS, $b = .925, p = .001$. An increase in respondents’ current health status predicted a decrease in their support of PAS, $b = -1.023, p = .032$. An increase in respondents’ personal salience for PAS predicted an increase in their opinion of PAS, $b = .709, p = .005$. An increase in respondents’ personal interest in PAS as a news topic predicted an increase in their opinion of PAS, $b = 1.001, p = .047$. Respondents whose personal frame was personal autonomy had higher, more positive opinions of PAS than respondents with any other personal frame, $b = 2.885, p \leq .001$. 
### Table 38

**Regression Models for Respondents’ Opinion of PAS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regressor</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>15.785***</td>
<td>15.857**</td>
<td>16.138***</td>
<td>20.398**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (Female)</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>-.087</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Income</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>-.174</td>
<td>-.402</td>
<td>-.401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Education</td>
<td>-.039</td>
<td>-.086</td>
<td>-.041</td>
<td>-.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status (Not Married)</td>
<td>-.763</td>
<td>-1.065</td>
<td>-1.468*</td>
<td>-1.453*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (Black / African-American)</td>
<td>.850</td>
<td>.148</td>
<td>-.447</td>
<td>-.512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race (Other)</td>
<td>-2.896*</td>
<td>-3.574**</td>
<td>-3.396**</td>
<td>-3.426**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>-.286</td>
<td>-.247</td>
<td>-.131</td>
<td>-.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>-.354</td>
<td>-.411</td>
<td>-.291</td>
<td>-.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for Death Penalty</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>.309</td>
<td>.175</td>
<td>.227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for Abortion</td>
<td>1.488***</td>
<td>1.213***</td>
<td>.948**</td>
<td>.925**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for Personal Autonomy</td>
<td>.645</td>
<td>.414</td>
<td>-.040</td>
<td>-.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Health Status</td>
<td>-.931</td>
<td>-1.009*</td>
<td>-.899</td>
<td>-1.023*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Health Care</td>
<td>-.388</td>
<td>-.514</td>
<td>-.502</td>
<td>-.532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminal Illness (Know Someone)</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.766</td>
<td>.434</td>
<td>.556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminal Illness (Care for Someone)</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>-.751</td>
<td>-.224</td>
<td>-.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminal Illness (Currently Have)</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ Personal PAS Salience</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ Interest in PAS</td>
<td>.732***</td>
<td>.689**</td>
<td>.709**</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ Attention to PAS</td>
<td>.796</td>
<td>.858</td>
<td>1.001*</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ News Consumption Frequency</td>
<td>-.091</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>-.188</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ PAS Medium (News Web sites)</td>
<td>-.034</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ PAS Medium (News Weblogs)</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ PAS Medium (Advocacy Web sites)</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ PAS Medium (Other News Media)</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ PAS Medium (Other Sources)</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ PAS Medium’s Position on PAS</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ PAS Medium’s PAS Salience</td>
<td>- .152</td>
<td>- .191</td>
<td>- .324</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ PAS Medium’s PAS Frame (Legal)</td>
<td>1.388</td>
<td>1.782</td>
<td>1.573</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ PAS Frame (Personal Autonomy)</td>
<td>2.887***</td>
<td>2.885***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ Primary Medium (News Web sites)</td>
<td>~</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ Primary Medium (News Weblogs)</td>
<td>~</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ Primary Medium (Advocacy Web sites)</td>
<td>~</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ Primary Medium (Other News Media)</td>
<td>~</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ Primary Medium (Other Sources)</td>
<td>~</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ Primary Medium’s Position on PAS</td>
<td>-.918</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ Primary Medium’s PAS Salience</td>
<td>.387</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ Primary Medium’s PAS Frame (Legal)</td>
<td>1.123</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| $F$ | 7.640*** | 7.207*** | 8.425*** | 7.570*** |
| $\Delta F$ | 4.027*** | 18.525*** | .877 |
| $R^2$ | .420 | .506 | .557 | .564 |
| $R^2$ adj. | .365 | .436 | .491 | .489 |

Notes. Higher values for ordinal and ratio level variables indicate an increase in that particular characteristic (e.g., a higher religiosity value is indicative of a respondent with higher levels of religiosity and a higher conservatism value is indicative of a more conservative respondent).

$n = 186$

~ Predictor did not include enough cases or variability to be included in final analysis.

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$
Research Question Results

RQ16 asked, “Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the salience given to PAS by respondents explain or predict their opinion of PAS?” As seen in Table 38, respondents’ personal salience for PAS was found to be a significant, positive predictor of a person’s opinion of PAS, $b = .709, p = .005$. As noted, higher scores in the Opinion of PAS scale indicate a more positive opinion of the issue. The more important respondents considered the issue to be, the more positive their opinion of PAS was.

RQ17 asked, “Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the frame for PAS used most often by respondents explain or predict their opinion of PAS?” As seen in Table 38, the personal autonomy personal frame was found to be a significant predictor of respondents’ opinions of PAS, $b = 2.885, p < .001$. Because this frame variable was dummy coded against all other frame variables, the results indicate that respondents who had a personal autonomy personal frame for PAS had a higher, more positive opinion of PAS than respondents who had any other personal frames.

RQ18 asked, “Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the salience given to PAS by respondents’ preferred news media type for information about PAS explain or predict their opinion of PAS?” As seen in Table 38, the salience for PAS in respondents’ preferred medium for information about PAS was not a significant predictor of their opinion for PAS, $b = -.324, p = .395$. In other words, when seeking information about PAS, respondents’ opinions of the issue were not influenced by the salience given to the issue by the medium they most likely utilized.

RQ19 asked, “Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the frame for PAS used most often by respondents’ preferred news media type for information about PAS
explain or predict their opinion of PAS?” As seen in Table 38, the legal media frame was not found to be a significant predictor of respondents’ opinions of PAS, $b = 1.573, p = .227$. Because this frame variable was dummy coded against all other frame variables, the results indicate that respondents whose primary source for PAS information used a legal frame were not significantly different from respondents whose primary source for PAS information used any other type of frame. As an example, if one respondent’s preferred media type for PAS information tended to utilize a legal frame and another respondent’s preferred media type tended to utilize another frame—controlling for all other variables—it was not possible to predict a difference in opinion between those respondents. Therefore, the frames for PAS used by respondents’ preferred medium for information about PAS did not predict their opinion of the issue.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Purpose and Conceptual Frameworks of the Study

The broad research objectives of this study were to determine if there were associations between how PAS was presented/considered by news media, advocacy groups, and individuals, and to examine what influenced individuals’ opinions of PAS. Agenda-setting suggests that the level of salience given to a particular issue by the news media has the effect of making that issue seem more important to the public. Agenda-setting also acknowledges that external sources, such as advocacy groups, purposefully try to alter the level of salience the news media and the public give to particular issues. Framing suggests that when certain characteristics of a particular issue are emphasized by the news media, public understanding of the issue changes (McCombs, 1994). Framing also acknowledges that external sources purposefully try to alter the presentation of particular issues by the news media and the understanding members of the public have of those issues.

The following research questions were concerned with (a) the agenda-setting and framing of PAS as they occurred in the three locations identified by McCombs (2004) and Entman (1993)—the media, the public, and external sources—and (b) the influence agenda-setting and framing have on people’s opinions of PAS:

*RQ1*: Are there noticeable trends regarding when news stories (in newspapers and on news Web sites and Weblogs) and press releases (created by the DDNC and CCCC) about PAS were originally published?

*RQ2a*: Are there differences in the total number of stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

*RQ2b*: Are there differences in the mean lengths of stories about PAS across different media
types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

*RQ3:* Are there differences between authorship types (staff writers, editorial, wire service/syndicated, reader/letter to editor, or other) used for news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

*RQ4:* Are there differences between type of stories (news or opinion/editorial) about PAS used across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

*RQ5:* Is there a tendency across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases) to mention CCCC or the DDNC in news stories and press releases about PAS?

*RQ6:* Are there differences between how PAS is treated (either as a central or non-central issue) in news stories across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

*RQ7:* Are there differences between the types of sources cited or quoted in news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, and press releases)?

*RQ8:* Are there differences between the type of evidence used (data-based, non-data-based, or court case) in news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

*RQ9:* Are there differences between the position toward PAS (in favor of, against, or neutral toward) used in news stories across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?
RQ10a: Are there differences between the frames used in news stories about PAS across different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

RQ10b: What single frame is used most often for each media type (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, or press releases)?

RQ11: What are respondents’ opinions of PAS?

RQ12: Which news source do respondents use most often when seeking information about PAS?

RQ13: Which frames do respondents use most often when considering PAS?

RQ14: Are the frames for PAS used most often by the different media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, and press releases) and survey respondents similar or different from one another?

RQ15a: How high do respondents rank PAS on their personal agenda of important social issues (if at all)?

RQ15b: How salient is PAS in respondents’ personal agenda of important social issues?

RQ16: Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the salience given to PAS by respondents explain or predict their opinion of PAS?

RQ17: Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the frame for PAS used most often by respondents explain or predict their opinion of PAS?

RQ18: Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the salience given to PAS by respondents’ preferred news media type for information about PAS explain or predict their opinion of PAS?

RQ19: Controlling for demographic and psychographic variables, does the frame for PAS used most often by respondents’ preferred news media type for information about PAS explain or predict their opinion of PAS?
Overview of the Research Process

To answer these research questions, the study included two method phases. The first phase was a content analysis of news stories and press releases related to PAS \((n = 279)\). The second phase was a survey of a sample of faculty and staff employees of Bowling Green State University \((n = 452)\).

Content Analysis

To determine the way news media and advocacy groups present PAS to their audiences, a content analysis was conducted. The entire population of 43 press releases produced by CCCC \((N = 19)\) and the DDNC \((N = 24)\) between June 1, 2005 and June 30, 2009 was included in the content analysis. A sample of news stories published in newspapers and on news Web sites or Weblogs from June 1, 2005 to June 30, 2009 was also included in the content analysis. The sampling technique for news stories resulted in 198 newspaper stories \((48 \text{ from } The\ New\ York\ Times, \ 28 \text{ from } The\ Washington\ Post, \ 27 \text{ from } USA\ Today, \ 95 \text{ from } The\ Oregonian)\) and 38 news Web site articles or Weblog postings \((21 \text{ from } CNN.com, \ 12 \text{ from } FOXNews.com, \ 3 \text{ from } HuffingtonPost.com, \ 2 \text{ from } MichelleMalkin.com)\). Newspaper stories about PAS from The Seattle Times and The Toledo Blade, as well as Web site articles about PAS from MSNBC.com were also sought for the content analysis, but none were found; these publications were thus not included in the study.

A codesheet and codebook were designed for the content analysis to categorize news stories and press releases according to a variety of characteristics. These characteristics included those related to agenda-setting, such as the number of words in each story, whether PAS was treated as a central or non-central issue, what types of sources were quoted, and when each story was originally published. Coders also used these instruments to categorize news stories and
press releases according to their framing characteristics, such as whether a story presented a positive, neutral, or negative position for PAS and what frames were used to discuss PAS. Five coders were trained on how to use the coding instruments and after their overall intercoder reliability scores were found to be at acceptable levels (Krippendorff’s $\alpha$ of .92 for ratio variables, .80 for nominal variables), coding was conducted.

**Survey**

To examine individuals’ salience, frames, and opinions for PAS, a survey was conducted. The survey included questions drawn from previous literature and/or designed to examine respondents’ demographic characteristics, media habits, and opinions of PAS. The survey also included questions designed to examine respondents’ personal salience and frames for PAS. The target population for the survey was all faculty and staff at Bowling Green State University, $N = 2,657$ (1,250 faculty and 1,407 staff). This population was contacted by email with a request to fill out the survey on SurveyMonkey.com. The total number of responses was 452 (278 faculty and 174 staff), with a response rate of 17.01% (22.24% for faculty and 12.37% for staff).

In regard to respondents’ demographic characteristics, 38.8% were male and 61.2% female. Their ages ranged from 22 to 87 years, with a mean age of 46.88 years ($SD = 10.948$). The most prevalent (27.4%) range of income among respondents was $50,001 to $75,000. Respondents’ years of formal education ranged from 5 to 36 years, with a mean number of years of 18.88 ($SD = 3.312$). Of the respondents, 69.3% were married and 30.7% were not married; 91.0% were White, 3.0% were Black/African-American, and 6.0% were of another race. Among the respondents, 23.6% considered religion as important in their lives, 31.1% stated that they were liberal in their political orientation, 26.8% agreed with the death penalty, 45.5% strongly agreed with women’s right to end pregnancies, and 67.2% strongly agreed with
protecting an individual’s right to personal autonomy. Among the respondents, 55.9% reported that their health status was *good* and 57.2% reported that their quality of health care was *good*. Of the respondents, 91.8% knew someone with a terminal illness, 62.5% had cared for someone with a terminal illness, and 98.3% did not have a terminal illness. To measure respondents’ opinions of PAS, a single summative *Opinion of PAS* scale was created based on respondents’ answers to five survey questions. Scores on the scale ranged from 5 for a negative opinion of PAS to 25 for a positive opinion of PAS (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .875$). Respondents’ mean score on this scale was 19.26 ($SD = 4.764$), which indicated having a moderate to strong positive opinion of PAS.

**Statistical Analyses**

Once the data collection for both research phases was completed, the data were cleaned for errors and entered in SPSS. Multiple analyses techniques were used to answer research questions, including descriptive statistics, $\chi^2$ Goodness of Fit tests, ANOVA, $\chi^2$ Tests for Independence, Spearman’s $\rho$, and linear regression. Statistical significance for appropriate research questions was tested at $p \leq .05$.

**Summary and Discussion of Results**

The study was designed to address open opportunities for research in the field of communication. First, this study was conceptualized in response to Pollock and Yulis’s (2004) call for more research focusing on PAS and end-of-life issues. Although it has been identified as “one of the most important and controversial issues of our time” (Weir, 1989, preface) and a concern for all Americans affected by health or human rights (Dworkin, Frey, & Bok, 1998), PAS has been the focus of relatively few research studies. This study was thus conceptualized to further overall understanding of an understudied, yet profoundly significant issue affecting a
large segment of the US population.

Second, the study was conceptualized to advance two different theories of media effects by linking together the findings of two separate research methods. There have been relatively few research studies that explore agenda-setting and/or framing as they occur in all three locations identified by McCombs (2004) and Entman (1993). Content analyses identifying issue salience and media frames do little good if their findings are never linked to news content audiences. The first method phase utilized agenda-setting and framing to describe and categorize news stories and press releases, and the second method phase used the theories to help predict respondents’ opinions of PAS.

**Content Analysis**

The content analysis phase of this study examined agenda-setting and framing related to PAS as they occurred in news stories and press releases, and was thus concerned with two of the three locations identified by McCombs (2004) and Entman (1993): the news media and external sources.

Previous research suggests that PAS is sporadically salient in news coverage and public discussion (Emanuel, 1994; Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2004). While the issue is consistently discussed in the news and by the public, especially as advances in health care make the issue more and more relevant, that discussion is marked by peaks of salience rather than maintained high levels of salience. Atwood-Gailey (2003) found news coverage of PAS has been especially pronounced in the last few decades, with that coverage having moved through three distinct stages marked by waves of salience on the news agenda and by different frames used to describe the issue. Atwood-Gailey suggested these stages resulted from distinct frame eruptions, wherein new events in history forced reconsideration of the issue by the news media and public. In other
words, the issue’s salience increased at particular points in history and the frames used to discuss
the issue subsequently changed after each point. The first stage was characterized by concern
over passive euthanasia. A second stage was also characterized by concern over passive
euthanasia, but the introduction of a human rights frame caused the debate over end-of-life issues
to dichotomize between *respect for individual autonomy* and *the sanctity of life* arguments
(O’Neill et al., 2003). The third and final stage identified by Atwood-Gailey (2003) was
characterized by a preoccupation with PAS, active euthanasia, and Jack Kevorkian. With each
new stage, external sources (e.g., advocacy groups) attempted to establish new ways of
understanding the issue in order to influence both news coverage and public debate. The present
study was undertaken after Atwood-Gailey’s (2003) original study, but also after several major
PAS-related news stories occurred. This offered the opportunity to examine if new media and
individual frames developed from these pegs (i.e., do the frames found in this study differ from
those found by Atwood-Gailey?) and if the issue’s salience has changed.

As Goffman (1974) suggested, people cannot fully understand the world without
classifying and interpreting their life experiences to make some sense of it all. By categorizing
the information they receive throughout their daily lives, people can focus on and conceptualize
what is most pertinent to them at present. Because people compartmentalize the world in such
ways, Zucker (1978) suggested that people who have little direct experience with the issues they
learn about in news coverage are most likely to be influenced by that coverage, for they have no
other method for gaining knowledge. Both agenda-setting and framing are contingent on the
relevance and uncertainty people feel toward the information they experience. It is unlikely that
people will be affected or influenced by news coverage about PAS if they have direct experience
with the issue, for “however dependent the audience may be on media discourse, they actively
use it to construct meaning and are not simply a passive object on which the media work their magic” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989, p. 10).

While the media may not set the agenda or frames for issues with which people have direct experience, it is has been found the two phenomena do affect public opinion (e.g., Allen et al., 1994; Callaghan & Schnell, 2000; Entman, 2004; Jasperson et al., 1998; Miller, 2010). This may be especially true for issues like PAS that are highly relevant but little understood by the general public (Duncan & Parmelee, 2006; Emanuel, 1994). Understanding media coverage of PAS is therefore important, for while individuals may have any number of different personal experiences, most people in the US learn about complicated issues solely through the mass media. Further, most coverage of such issues tends to be quite similar even across different media types (Atwood-Gailey, 2003; Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Maier, 2010; Van Gorp, 2007). In other words, the mass media, as well as the advocacy groups who attempt to influence media coverage, can affect public opinion by being the only sources through which people learn about PAS.

**Agenda-setting of PAS.** Salience for PAS in news stories and press releases was operationalized using a variety of characteristics. In most agenda-setting research, scholars examine the number of stories and/or words used by the news media to discuss an issue to determine how salient the issue is on the media agenda (McCombs, 2005). By publishing multiple, lengthy news stories on a specific issue, the news media suggest to their audiences that they should consider the issue important. This study also examined additional characteristics of PAS coverage to further determine the importance the media types assigned to the issue. By treating an issue as central, by featuring stories about the issue prominently, by focusing their resources and attention on stories, and by prioritizing stories to their top journalists, news
organizations further emphasize that an issue should be considered important.

The findings described below together suggest that PAS was not especially salient in news coverage during the period of study, but that when the media types did cover the issue, there was no difference in the salience assigned to PAS within the articles published by each media type. When an issue is not discussed or emphasized in news coverage, it is unlikely that members of the public use much of their cognitive capacity to consider the issue, especially when the issue is as little understood as PAS (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002). Based on these findings, I argue that while the news coverage examined here might influence audience members to think about PAS more often than they would have otherwise, it is unlikely to make the issue seem personally salient for general audience members or to influence their opinions of it. Public support for PAS has grown more and more positive in recent decades, influenced by advocacy groups who intentionally try to limit the ways the issue can be considered (Duncan & Parmelee, 2006). This growth in positive support does not seem to have occurred along with increased opportunities for audiences to learn more about the issue. Thus, people’s opinions may be based on their personal beliefs about PAS, but not necessarily on a complete understanding of the issue.

*RQ1*: The first research question concerned identifying trends regarding when news stories and press releases were originally published. With a few notable exceptions when newspapers published several articles about PAS when the other media types did not, all three media types (newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, and press releases) tended to peak in the number of stories they published about PAS at similar times during the period of this study. It is not possible using this study’s methods to determine if any of the media types influenced when the other types published articles about PAS, but it is
clear that the issue became salient for all three media types at similar times.

**RQ2a**: The second research questions concerned the salience given to PAS by the different media types in terms of the total number of stories they each produced about the issue and the mean number of words included in those stories. By publishing multiple, lengthy articles about the issue, the different media types suggest to their audiences that the issue should be considered important. There was difference regarding the number of articles published by each medium, with newspapers producing the highest number of stories, followed by press releases, and then news Web sites and Weblogs.

**RQ2b**: There was no significant difference in regards to the mean length of articles about PAS, measured in words, produced by each media type. In other words, while newspapers produced many more articles about the issue than did the other media types (see RQ2a), there was no difference in how the three media types treated the issue within news stories, in terms of the number of words each used.

**RQ3**: The third research question concerned determining what type of authorship was associated with news stories and press releases about PAS. Overall, the media types tended to utilize more *staff writer*-authored stories about PAS than stories with any other type of authorship. Additionally, newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, and press releases individually tended to utilize more *staff writer*-authored stories than stories with any other type of authorship.

The news media suggest what issues are most important when they assign a greater amount of their resources to covering particular issues. If most newspaper articles about PAS are written by members of the publication’s editorial staff, who have a more influential position in the newspaper’s gatekeeping function than, say, staff writers, then
readers could assume the issue is quite important. This finding is difficult to interpret, however, because while key gatekeepers in the news media (and advocacy groups) were not the main contributors to information about PAS, staff writers in news organizations often write more hard news stories than other types of authors. As such, these results could be interpreted as meaning each media type considered PAS so important that balanced coverage was more necessary than editorial commentary. On other hand, each media type could also consider the issue too unimportant for full editorial attention.

**RQ4:** The fourth research question builds upon the third, and was concerned with identifying whether there tended to be more news or editorial articles about PAS. Overall, the media types tended to write more news than opinion/editorial stories about PAS, and each individual media type tended to utilize more news than opinion/editorial stories about PAS.

Like with RQ3, these results can be interpreted in a variety of ways. It could be that each media type considered PAS to be such an important issue that they wanted to convey only facts and hard news to their audiences. Conversely, it could be that the producers of each media type did not consider the issue important enough to be given space on editorial pages, and it was thus relegated to simpler stories about events and facts. It could also be that the media types considered the issue complicated or poorly understood by their audiences, so they tended to present more news-based stories in order to provide necessary factual information.

Whatever the case may be, the results for RQ3 and RQ4 show that all three media types tended to assign the same level of importance to PAS, as evidenced by their similarities in authorship (RQ3) and story types (RQ4) used to present stories about the
RQ5: The fifth research question concerned identifying whether the DDNC or CCCC were present in news stories about PAS. The overall trend across all media was to not mention either the DDNC or CCCC. The DDNC and CCCC did mention their own organization in many of the press releases they released, but it does not appear that either group is associated with PAS in news coverage of the issue. It is not possible in the present study to identify if the advocacy groups were influencing media coverage, or if the news media influenced the advocacy groups’ press releases, but this evidence suggests, at the very least, media coverage of PAS did not include coverage of these PAS groups.

RQ6: The sixth research question concerned identifying whether PAS was treated as a central or non-central story in news coverage of the issue. There was no significant difference across all media types regarding the centrality with which PAS was treated. In an article where PAS was central, the issue would be the driving focus of discussion. In an article where PAS was non-central, the issue would provide only basic context to another story. As an example, an article treating PAS as central could be about a politician who has recently announced being officially in favor of legalizing PAS. Conversely, an article treating PAS as non-central could be about a politician running for office who, among many other qualities, happens to be in favor of legalizing PAS.

That there was no significant difference in the centrality with which the issue was treated implies the issue is not especially salient in news coverage. In other words, these findings suggest that PAS was not treated as central any more or less often as it was treated as non-central. This implies that while PAS is at least interesting enough to be mentioned in news stories and press releases, it is not always considered important
enough to be considered at length on its own.

*RQ7:* The seventh research question concerned identifying what types of sources were quoted or cited in articles about PAS, for determining what sources were utilized helps identify the salience given to the issue by the media. The media types overall used *reports/scholars/researchers* as sources most often, and this result was statistically significant.

Though tests of significance were not run for differences within the media types, it is possible to conclude the individual media types tended to use a greater variety of sources most often than they did when considered overall. Press releases most often featured *CCCC representatives* and *reports/scholars/researchers* as sources. Newspapers most often featured *reports/scholars/researchers* as sources. News Web sites and Weblogs featured *patients/friends/family*, *journalists/media*, and *other advocacy groups* most often. These findings show that a variety of sources are quoted or cited in news stories and press releases about PAS. This suggests that the issue is given some salience by the media types, in that a variety of resources is given to procuring information about the topic. Interestingly, even though the media types used different sources, they all still tended to treat PAS with similar salience (see RQ9) and present the issue using similar frames (see RQ10). Further analysis is needed, but this perhaps suggests PAS is discussed in only a small number of ways, regardless of who is discussing the issue.

*RQ8:* The eighth research question concerned the types of evidence used in articles about PAS. There was a significant difference in the use of evidence across the media types; namely, the media types overall and each individual media type tended to use ‘no evidence’ when
writing stories about PAS, as opposed to using data-based, non-data-based, or court case evidence. In other words, most news stories and press releases about PAS tended not to use any of the evidence types coded for in the present study when reporting on PAS. Of note, however, the results of RQ7 show all three media types cited or quoted a variety of external sources. The results of RQ7 and RQ8 therefore suggest media coverage of PAS tended to include quotes and citations from sources, but not facts, statistics, anecdotal stories, or evidence from other resources.

**Framing of PAS.** Entman (1999) suggested that people’s opinions of social issues are determined by or related to the individual frames they have for the issues. Media frames have been shown to affect the beliefs and level of cognitive complexity with which people think about social topics (Igartua & Cheng, 2009) and to affect public opinion (Berinsky & Kinder, 2006; Callaghan & Schnell, 2000; Entman, 2004; Iyengar, 1991; Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; Nelson & Kinder, 1996; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997; Schuck & de Vreese, 2006). Both Iyengar and Simon (2003) and A. P. Williams and Kaid (2006) demonstrated that frames have particular characteristics that can influence people’s understanding of an issue. Based on these characteristics, news audiences are encouraged to think in particular, specific ways about an issue, not just through general framed perspectives. Individuals’ frames for social issues represent the perspectives from which they see the issues. Importantly, individuals’ frames are heavily reliant on and tend to be quite similar to the media frames and frame characteristics they experience in news content.

The findings of this study confirmed results found in previous research, but also suggested a change may be occurring in how PAS is covered by the news media. Haller and Ralph (2001) found news content only framed PAS as being about the medical industry or Jack
Kevorkian. Atwood-Gailey (2003) found that the news media have tended to utilize the medical and legal frames almost exclusively, and other research suggests PAS is presented as being only about respect for individual autonomy and/or the sanctity of life (Dworkin, Frey, & Bok, 1998; Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2004; O’Neill et al., 2003). This study confirms that the *legal* frame is still used regularly in news stories and press releases about PAS; at the same time, however several of the other seven frames included in this study were also used with regularity by the media types. This suggests that while PAS is still presented using relatively few frames, media presentations of the issue may be changing beyond a simple dichotomy. However, there was no significant difference between the overall uses of frames by the media types. Even though a wider variety of frames were found in the present study that in previous research, there would be no significant difference in the frames a person would be exposed to when looking for information about PAS, even if that person used a variety of sources. In other words, although there is a wider selection of frames available, there is no difference across media types in how those frames are used.

Further evidence that news coverage of PAS may be changing is that most news stories analyzed in this study were neutral in their position toward the issue. Whereas Pollock and Yulis (2004) found news coverage of PAS tends to be favorable if the issue is framed as linked to health care and unfavorable when the issue is linked to advancing age, the present study found no difference in how positively or negatively the issue was presented according to the use of frames. In other words, most news stories tended to discuss PAS neutrally, and valenced positions toward the issue were not associated with any particular frame. Press releases did tend to treat the issue with positive valence, but the results here go against previous findings that news coverage has tended to treat PAS very favorably or unfavorably depending on how it was
framed. The news media discussed PAS favorably in all three stages identified by Atwood-Gailey (2003), using relatively few frames. This difference in results may stem from the fact that different method approaches were used to study framing of PAS—Atwood-Gailey used qualitative methods and the present study used quantitative methods—and thus different criteria were used for obtaining data. However, the results of this study also suggest an alternative explanation; that a new framing stage has developed. News coverage within this current stage tends to be more news-oriented, with less opinionated coverage of PAS. This could indicate that PAS is now more often on the news agenda, rather than being presented as important solely by advocacy groups. In other words, previous news coverage of PAS suggested positive opinions of and few frames for PAS, which is in line with the practice of frame-building by advocacy groups. The more recent trend of neutral news coverage featuring multiple frames suggests that the PAS issue is perhaps discussed by the news media in more sophisticated ways and via more traditional journalistic practices.

Although the content analyzed here featured a wider variety of frames and less valence, the newspapers, news Web sites and Weblogs, and press releases all still tended to use the same few frames, and used them in similar ways. Regardless of media types, overall frames tended to be thematic, suggesting to readers that PAS was best considered a societal-level issue, and central, suggesting to readers that PAS should be given more than a cursory consideration. This study therefore suggests that there tended to be few media frames for PAS, and that the different media types tended to use those frames in similar ways. Thus, even if news audience members consider PAS thoughtfully and contemplate its societal-level implications, they are still presented with very few perspectives for the issue. There are more frames being used in news stories about PAS than in recent history, and I believe this marks the development of a new framing
stage; this new stage, however, has not moved beyond the limitations of those that came before it. Members of the public must still base their considerations of a very complex issue on a relatively small number of perspectives.

Interestingly, only 55.8% of press releases created by the DDNC or CCCC treated PAS as central subject matter (see RQ6). Further, the press releases featured no personal anecdotes (see RQ8) and primarily used a legal frame to present information about PAS (see RQ10b). This suggests the advocacy groups want their audiences not to think about PAS itself, but rather to think about their legal right to PAS. The groups focus on the rights to PAS, rather than practices or practitioners, to avoid forcing their audiences to think about death or moral concerns. It is not surprising that both the DDNC and CCCC tended to use a legal frame, for both groups are very concerned with the legislative status of PAS in the US. Their supporters should also be glad to hear that most news coverage also tended to use a legal frame. Despite the similarities in how the advocacy groups and the news media types framed PAS, however, neither group was ever mentioned in news coverage of the issue (see RQ5). In other words, although the issue is framed in ways that benefit the two advocacy groups, the groups themselves are not associated with the issue that drives their very reasons for being.

**RQ9:** The ninth research question concerned the position toward PAS presented in news stories and press releases. Unlike Atwood-Gailey’s (2003) study that found news coverage tends to be overwhelmingly in favor of PAS, the results of this study found the media overall tended to demonstrate a neutral position toward PAS and that this was a statistically significant finding. Though statistical tests were not run for the individual media, the data showed the news sources—newspapers, and news Web sites and Weblogs—tended to present stories about PAS using a neutral position toward the issue.
Although the difference in results may stem from the difference in research methods used, media coverage in the previous framing stages identified by Atwood-Gailey tended to provide suggestions to readers about how to affectively consider PAS, but the more recent overall coverage analyzed here presented the issue without valence. The press releases tended to utilize a positive position, but news coverage tended to be neutral.

**RQ10a:** The tenth research questions concerned what frames and frame characteristics the media types used when discussing PAS. The questions were tested by comparing differences between media types and differences in media frames overall.

First, the different media types were compared according to (a) the frequencies with which they used eight PAS frames; (b) their use of thematic or episodic frames; (c) their central or non-central use of frames; and (d) their use of either thematic central, thematic non-central, episodic central, or episodic non-central frames. There was no significant difference regarding the frequency with which the media types used PAS frames. In other words, there was no difference in how the different media types framed the issue. The media types overall tended to use *thematic* (as opposed to episodic) frames. There was no significant difference when comparing media types for their central or non-central use of frames. When these frame characteristics were examined together, however, it was found most frames tended to be *thematic central*.

Next, overall frames were compared, regardless of media types, according to (a) whether they were thematic or episodic; (b) whether they were used centrally or non-centrally; and (c) whether they tended to be associated with a negative, neutral, or positive positions toward PAS. When one ignores differences in media type and examines media frames overall, the frames significantly tended to be *thematic* (as
opposed to episodic) and central (as opposed to non-central). When these frame characteristics were examined together, most frames tended to be thematic central. Further, unlike the findings of Pollock and Yulis (2004) and Atwood-Gailey (2003), although the media frames in the current study overall were associated with a neutral valence for PAS, this was not a significant finding. That is, frames overall did not tend to be associated with any particular position toward PAS.

RQ10b: The results of the tenth research questions also revealed that, when examining within the individual media types, all three tended to use the legal frame significantly more often than any other frames. Unlike in previous research, PAS was not divided equally between the legal and medical frames (Atwood-Gailey, 2003). Also unlike the findings of previous research, the issue does not seem to be evenly framed in the media as either respect for individual autonomy on the one hand and the sanctity of life on the other (Dworkin, Frey, & Bok, 1998; Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2004; O’Neill et al., 2003).

Survey

The survey phase of this study examined respondents’ opinions of PAS, as well as identified variables that could predict or explain those opinions. The following research questions concerned respondents’ salience and framing for PAS, and was thus concerned with the remaining location identified by McCombs (2004) and Entman (1993): individuals. Importantly, however, the remaining research questions also linked the findings of the content analysis phase with those of the survey phase. The regression model used to answer these questions included data from the content analysis phase to determine if characteristics of the media and external sources influenced the opinions of PAS held by individuals.

Chong and Druckman (2007) argued that virtually all public debates involve competition
between parties seeking to establish particular interpretations of the issues at hand. In other words, if they are able to define what an issue is, parties with vested interests successfully control how the issue can be discussed and understood. Neuman, Just, and Crigler (1992) found that the news media and the public tend to use similar frames when considering most social issues. This is problematic, for the parties discussed by Chong and Druckman (2007) tend to be entirely successful at controlling news coverage of social issues, and thus eventually public debate. These parties include politicians, newsmakers, and advocacy groups, all of whom participate in frame-building to intentionally create a perspective from which an issue should be considered (Zhou & Moy, 2007). Groups like the DDNC and CCCC create frames for PAS that emphasize the characteristics or parts of the issue that most benefit their cause. Both groups are concerned with PAS legality, so their press releases tended to feature the legal frame.

Regardless of whether the press releases influenced the media coverage, or vice versa, the groups’ preferred frame for PAS were present in all mediated discussion of the issue analyzed here.

Just as press releases and news stories represent a competition between parties with vested interests in how PAS is framed (Entman, 1993), respondents’ opinions of the issue are influenced by the competition between their own personal experiences and the news content they experience. Frame-setting is the process through which the frames presented by external sources are accepted by the news media and through which the frames presented by the news media are accepted by the public (D. Scheufele & Nisbet, 2007; Tewksbury & D. Scheufele, 2009). Once a frame for presenting a topic is adopted, it can be very difficult to view that topic in any other way (Linsky, 1986; Schön & Rein, 1994). In the present study, respondents tended to think PAS was slightly important. However, they also overwhelmingly tended to use one frame,
autonomy/patients’ rights, when considering the issue. Regardless of agenda-setting’s or framing’s effect on public opinion of PAS, the news media tended to present the issue through a legal frame and respondents’ tended to think of the issue as being about personal rights. It is unlikely that either the news frames or the audience frames for the issue will change in the near future, even if the current framing stage for PAS does seem to be somewhat transitional.

To answer some of the remaining research questions, multiple linear regression models were created using a variety of different variables. The first model contained demographic variables that have been associated with opinion of PAS in previous literature and had significant explanatory power for respondents’ opinions of the issue. A second model, adding variables related to respondents’ news consumption; respondents’ interest in, attention to, and salience for PAS; and characteristics of the news sources respondents utilize when seeking information about PAS, also had significant explanatory power for respondents’ opinions of PAS and provided a significant increase in explanatory power over the first model. A third model, adding respondents’ personal frames for PAS, also had significant explanatory power for respondents’ opinions of PAS and provided a significant increase in explanatory power over the second model. A fourth model, adding variables related to the news sources respondents use for general news consumption, also had significant explanatory power for respondents’ opinions of PAS. Although this fourth model did not provide a significant increase in explanatory power over the third model; as a result, it was used when appropriate to answer the remaining research questions because it contained theoretically significant variables.

**Opinion of PAS.** The results of the fourth regression model indicate that respondents’ marital status, race, support for abortion, health status, personal salience for PAS, personal interest in PAS as a news item, and personal frame for PAS were the only significant predictors
of their opinion of PAS. Non-married respondents, respondents who are members of an “other” race (as compared to Whites), and respondents with higher personal health statuses had lower, more negative opinions of PAS. Respondents who had higher support for abortion, higher personal salience for PAS, and higher personal interest in PAS as a news item had higher, more positive opinions of PAS. Finally, respondents who had the personal PAS frame *personal autonomy* had higher, more positive opinions of PAS than respondents who had any other type of personal frame. The few significantly predictive variables were all personal characteristics; none were related to respondents’ media use or to media content, aside from their general interest in the issue as a news item.

Americans in general tend to be in favor of PAS, although respondents who are healthier or able to access higher quality health care (Emanuel, 2002; Seidlitz et al., 1995), or are more religious (Emanuel, 1995; Hamil-Luker & Smith, 1998; Jorgenson & Neubecker, 1981; Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2002; Singh, 1979; Ward, 1980; Weiss, 1996; Worthern & Yeatts, 2000) tend to have more negative opinions of the issue. Older (Hamil-Luker & Smith, 1998; Jorgenson & Neubecker, 1981; Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2002; O’Neill et al., 2003; Seidlitz et al., 1995; Ward, 1980), female (Jorgenson & Neubecker, 1981; Ward, 1980), unmarried (Emanuel, 1995), African-American rather than White (Hamil-Luker & Smith, 1998; Jorgenson & Neubecker, 1981; Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2002; Ostheimer, 1980; Singh, 1979; Ward, 1980), and more conservative (Finlay, 1985; Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2002; Ostheimer, 1980) members of the public have also been found to be less favorable toward PAS. In the present study, however, only being unmarried, being a member of an “other” race (as opposed to being White), or having a higher personal health status (i.e., being healthier) confirmed previous findings and significantly predicted respondents’ negative opinions of the issue.
Previous research has found that having a higher level of education (Jorgenson & Neubecker, 1981; Joslyn & Haider-Markel, 2002; O’Neill et al., 2003; Ward, 1980) and having a higher income (Ostheimer, 1980) are associated with respondents having a more positive opinion of PAS. Similarly, members of the public who support the death penalty (Green & Jarvis, 2007), abortion rights (Finlay, 1985; Green & Jarvis, 2007), and individual autonomy or freedom of expression (Seidlitz et al., 1995; Singh, 1979; Weiss, 1996) also tend to have a more favorable opinion of PAS. In the present study, however, support for abortion rights was the only previously proven characteristic that significantly predicted respondents’ higher opinion of the issue. This is interesting, considering most respondents used a personal autonomy frame when considering PAS and this personal frame predicted positive opinions of the issue. Despite this, however, respondents’ actual support for protecting individual autonomy was not a significant predictor of their opinions of PAS.

Previous research exploring opinion of PAS has tended to examine how significantly that opinion correlates with or is predicted by people’s individual characteristics, rather than considering those characteristics together. For example, age and sex have been shown to individually correlate with opinion of PAS, but the variables have rarely been studied together. The present study considered a variety of respondent characteristics at once, allowing one to examine how much a single characteristic predicts PAS opinion while holding other characteristics constant. For example, age was examined while holding the sex variable constant, sex was examined while holding age constant, and both were held constant to examine, among many other characteristics, personal PAS salience. The results showed that, when holding all other characteristics constant, very few of respondents’ personal characteristics significantly explain their opinions of PAS. This suggests that respondents’ opinions are highly
complex, drawing from their experiences as a whole rather than on specific life experiences or media coverage. Alternatively, these findings, combined with the fact that respondents considered PAS as only slightly important, suggest that respondents’ opinions of PAS did not develop from complex cognitive processing and can therefore not easily be predicted or explained (Matthes, 2007; Van Gorp, 2007). In other words, if PAS is not highly salient to respondents, it is unlikely they afford much thought to the issue. Their opinion of PAS could therefore be superficial and less ingrained than their opinions of other, more salient social issues and may thus be more difficult to predict.

Importantly, however, this study revealed that respondents’ personal salience and frames for PAS were significant predictors of their opinion. The more salient the issue was for respondents, the higher and more positive their opinion was likely to be. Respondents who had a personal autonomy frame for the issue were more likely to have a higher, more positive opinion of PAS than those who did not. Because personal salience and frames but not media salience or frames were found to be significant predictors, it seems media coverage had little effect on people’s opinion of PAS. Unlike previous work suggesting media salience (e.g., Jasperson et al., 1998; Miller, 2010) and framing (e.g., Allen et al., 1994; Callaghan & Schnell, 2000; Duncan & Parmelee, 2006; Entman, 2004; Iyengar, 1991; Nelson & Kinder, 1996; Schuck & de Vreese, 2006) can affect public opinion, the findings of the present study suggest that this tendency does not hold true for PAS when one controls for a variety of other characteristics. Many researchers (e.g., Druckman, 2001; Lecheler, de Vreese, & Slothuus, 2009; D. Scheufele, 2000; Van Gorp, 2007) have suggested media framing effects are influenced by a variety of life experiences. This can make it very difficult to explain or predict what frames a person will adopt and, subsequently, if those frames will affect their opinions about social issues. This may be
especially true for issues like PAS, which are difficult to understand, highly personal, controversial, and unlikely to affect members of the public in their everyday lives.

_RQ11:_ The eleventh research question concerned respondents’ opinions of PAS. As noted above, this opinion was measured based on how respondents responded to five statements regarding PAS, with possible responses to each statement ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Each of these statements were drawn from previous research that had measured opinions of PAS, and an _Opinion of PAS_ scale summing respondents’ responses to the five statements was determined to be reliable (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .875$). Respondents’ mean score on this scale (19.26, $SD = 4.764$) indicated they held a moderate to strong positive opinion of PAS.

_RQ12:_ The twelfth research question concerned the media type respondents would most likely use when seeking information about PAS. Overall, 30.2% of respondents identified _news Web sites_ and 25.5% identified _advocacy groups’ Web sites_ as being their primary sources for information about PAS. This research question allowed me to connect the two research phases of the study, for I could combine respondent’s answers to it with data from the content analysis data I gathered about different media types. For example, if a respondent identified newspapers as their primary source for information about PAS, I could then draw data from the content analysis to identify that respondent as using a media type with a neutral position on PAS (see RQ9) and the tendency to use the _legal_ frame (see RQ10b) to discuss the issue.

_RQ13:_ The thirteenth research question concerned the personal frames respondents had for PAS. Overwhelmingly, respondents’ tended to use the _autonomy/patients’ rights_ frame when considering PAS. As Atwood-Gailey (2003) found previously, the survey respondents
had only a select few personal frames for PAS.

**RQ14**: The fourteenth research question concerned similarities in the use of frames by the different media types and survey respondents. The frequencies with which the media types and survey respondents used each frame were rank ordered, and these rank-ordered lists were tested for correlations. In other words, I tested to see if survey respondents’ frames were similar to newspapers, to news Web sites and Weblogs, and to press releases in how they framed PAS. The results showed that survey respondents’ frames were significantly similar to all three media types in their use of PAS frames. The results further showed that newspapers were similar to news Web and Weblogs, and that the news Web sites and Weblogs were similar to press releases in how they framed PAS.

Similar to findings in previous research (Atwood-Gailey, 2003; Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2004; Haller & Ralph, 2001; O’Neill et al., 2003; Pollock & Yulis, 2004), the media tended to use very few frames when discussing PAS and those frames tended to be very similar to the frames used by members of the public. These findings lend support to Atwood-Gailey’s (2003) argument that there are very few frames utilized in media coverage or personal discussion of PAS, and that the issue tends to be presented and thought about in a limited number of ways.

**RQ15a**: The fifteenth research questions concerned the personal salience respondents had for PAS. When presented with an open-ended question asking them to list the three social issues they consider most important, no survey respondents listed PAS. This indicates that respondents did not consider PAS to be especially important, or at least not among the most important issues of the day.

**RQ15b**: When respondents were asked to score their personal salience for PAS in a close-ended
question, 37.4% of respondents considered the issue as *slightly important*. By measuring personal salience using both the open- and close-ended questions of RQ15a and RQ15b, respectively, I was able to measure more accurately how important respondents considered the issue. Had the respondents mentioned PAS as very important in the open-ended question but not in the close-ended, or vice versa, this would have indicated respondents were inconsistent in how important they considered the issue. Using the methods here, however, the findings for RQ15a and RQ15b suggest respondents did not consider PAS to be an especially important issue in their personal lives, but still one important enough to be somewhat worthy of their consideration.

*RQ16:* The sixteenth research question concerned identifying how much respondents’ personal salience for PAS explained their opinions of the issue, controlling for demographic and psychographic variables. The findings indicated that personal salience for the issue was a significant positive predictor of opinion of PAS, meaning the more important respondents considered the issue to be, the more positive their opinion of PAS was.

*RQ17:* The seventeenth research question concerned identifying how much respondents’ personal frames for PAS explained their opinions of the issue, controlling for demographic and psychographic variables. After multiple tests designed to examine which dummy coding scheme provided the most explanatory power in the fourth regression model, *personal autonomy* was dummy coded against all other personal frames. This frame was a significant predictor of a higher, more positive opinion of PAS. In other words, respondents who had a personal autonomy frame for PAS had a higher, more positive opinion of PAS compared to respondents who considered the issue through any other frame.
**RQ18**: The eighteenth research question concerned identifying how much the salience given to PAS by respondents’ primary medium for PAS information explained the respondents’ opinions of the issue, controlling for demographic and psychographic variables. The salience for PAS in respondents’ preferred PAS medium was not a significant predictor of their opinion for PAS. Media agenda-setting has been shown in previous literature to influence public opinion about various topics (e.g., Jasperson et al., 1998; Miller, 2010), but it seems respondents’ opinions of PAS are only influenced by how important they personally consider the issue to be.

**RQ19**: The nineteenth research question concerned identifying how much the frames for PAS used by respondents’ primary medium for PAS information explained the respondents’ opinions of the issue, controlling for demographic and psychographic variables. The *legal* frame was dummy coded against all other media frames was not found to be a significant predictor. In other words, respondents whose preferred media type for information about PAS used a legal frame were not significantly different in their opinion of the issue from other respondents. Media frames have been shown in previous literature to influence public opinion about various topics (e.g., Allen et al., 1994; Callaghan & Schnell, 2000; Entman, 2004; Iyengar, 1991; Nelson & Kinder, 1996; Schuck & de Vreese, 2006), but it seems respondents’ opinions of PAS are influenced by their personal frames but not the frames the encounter in news coverage.

**Implications of Results**

Bennett and Iyengar (2009) hypothesized that a new era of minimal effects may soon return in mass communication research. The authors were suggesting that, because media audiences can now choose from a wide variety of news sources to find the exact information they
seek, it may be difficult to measure changes to people’s knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in the aggregate. Traditional agenda-setting and framing research has assumed that mass communication messages, such as news content, are effective at reaching their intended audiences. This may no longer be true, or those messages may no longer be the sole pieces of information from which audience members gain knowledge. This study provides evidence that the new era of minimal aggregate effects may indeed be present. Despite news stories and press releases most often utilizing a legal frame to discuss PAS, survey respondents overwhelmingly used a personal autonomy frame to consider the issue. Although there were positive correlations in how PAS was framed by the news media, advocacy groups, and survey respondents, very few personal or media characteristics predicted respondents’ opinions of PAS. As Van Gorp (2007) suggested, framing effects—and possibly media effects in general—may be difficult to predict when one accounts for all the many potential influences on how people see the world around them.

This study was designed in response to Pollock and Yulis’s (2004) call for more research focusing on end-of-life issues, and has contributed significantly to understanding of PAS. By linking data from a content analysis and a survey together, this study conceptually linked salience and framing for PAS as they occur in three different locations. News stories and press releases tended not to treat PAS as especially salient and to use a relatively small number of frames to discuss the issue. Survey respondents also tended not to consider PAS as an especially important issue, and used relatively few frames—albeit somewhat different from those used in news stories press releases—when considering the issue. Finally, in determining that few respondent or media characteristics predict opinion of PAS, this study suggests media agenda-setting and framing may have less influence over the public than previously thought.
Although research has suggested news coverage is especially influential about topics with which people have very little experience (Zucker, 1978), this may not hold true for issues that are especially complicated, controversial, or highly personal in nature. The overwhelming tendency was for survey respondents to frame PAS as about personal autonomy. Because of recent changes in the American health care system and discussion of ‘death panels’, it is likely citizens of the US are now considering PAS again or for the very first time. Their opinions of the issue are affected, not by the media they use, but by how they think about the issue and how important it is to them personally. Individual survey respondents may have been affected greatly by the media, but, taken in the aggregate, their opinions of PAS were much more difficult to predict than previous research would suggest. Alternatively, it could be that the lack of consistent media attention toward PAS, or the presence of alternative social issues on the media agenda, may have influenced the effect of agenda-setting and framing on respondents’ opinions.

On D. Scheufele’s (1999) suggestion, this study examined agenda-setting and framing as individual theories that can be utilized together well. Because this study examined both agenda-setting and framing as they separately occur in three locations, and because of Entman’s (1993) argument that individual frames are built on much more than the transfer of attribute salience, it was important that the theories be treated here as distinct from one another. However, future research may reconsider this position and instead examine PAS only through agenda-setting, only through framing, or by treating the theories as one on McCombs, Einsiedel, and Weaver’s (1991) suggestion that framing is actually second-level agenda-setting.

The main findings of this study are: (a) PAS is not especially salient in news coverage or among members of the public, despite being an especially important issue; (b) a relatively small number of frames are used to discuss PAS, thus limiting understanding of a very complicated
issue; and (c) people’s opinions of the issue are explained by a relatively small number of personal characteristics. Together, these findings indicate that research about PAS still has room to grow, and that the conceptual frameworks under which agenda-setting and framing have traditionally operated may need to be reconsidered. We may very well be in a new era of minimal effects; not that individuals are unaffected by media content, but rather those individuals are affected in unique and idiosyncratic ways depending on their media practices, personal experiences and beliefs, and the topics they consider most important. Even if an overall media type is used by a large group of people (i.e., news Web sites and advocacy group Web sites were the most frequently used sources for information about PAS), individuals have access to a wide variety of specific news sources within that overall media type. Further, individuals’ experiences within that media type can now be entirely distinct from the experiences of other audience members.

The study of media effects, and specifically the agenda-setting and framing theories, must take into account the new methods audience members have for gathering knowledge, as well as the fact that the issues and frames presented in today’s media environment can be uniquely meaningful to different members of the news audience. People are no long passive in their media consumption and can often be quite active; depending on their topics of interest, the effects of mass media messages must therefore be studied in newer, deeper, and more meaningful ways.

The results of this study indicate not only that a change may be needed in the research of media effects, but also a need for change in the practice of public relations by PAS advocacy groups. As Best (2005) suggested, the Internet affords advocacy groups the opportunity to create and use networked activism and to maintain relationships with individual group members. It
also allows advocacy groups more chances to establish new relationships with members of the public who are not yet group members. An advocacy group in a new social movement like the one concerned with PAS is inherently concerned with how strongly its members identify with the group’s cause and with how their issues of concern are defined. Advocacy groups thus try to frame social issues and influence their members to identify with their preferred frames. If members identify with a group’s cause, they are more likely to adopt the group’s frames as their own.

In the past, advocacy groups tried to influence the public indirectly by first directly influencing the way traditional news media (e.g., newspapers) frame their issues of concern (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). The groups worked with the news media because accessing individual members of the public, or even their own individual group members, was a costly and inefficient process. By influencing the news media, the groups could eventually influence how members of the public and policymakers consider an issue (Andsager, 2000; Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, 1989; Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2004; Price & Tewksbury, 1997). However, a risk for advocacy groups in working with the news media is that the groups did not have control over how the information they provided was ultimately used. Even if a group provided information to a newspaper about PAS and framed that information with its own preferred perspective, the group had no control over how the newspaper used the information or from what perspective it was presented to news audiences. Even more importantly, the group had no control over whether the information they provided to the news media was ever even used.

However, the development of new and interactive media allows both journalists and external sources like advocacy groups to communicate with their audiences directly. Rather than relying on the news media to convey their information and frames for PAS, advocacy groups can
now use interactive media to address the public efficiently and directly. In the past, advocacy groups would have had to shoulder the burden of developing, producing, and distributing physical copies of their messages to the public in order to avoid the gatekeeping function of the news media. Interactive media allow the advocacy groups to publish their own materials, which audience members can then attend to and experience at their own leisure. The groups can also easily change these materials and quickly adapt information and frames to the specific needs of the public. This newfound ability of advocacy groups to reach their audiences directly has significantly altered the media landscape of protest, giving activists access to a mass medium that they themselves control and granting them power to shape their own image (Owens & Palmer, 2003). This is especially true in the modern media environment as more people turn to Web sites for news and for information about specific social issues.

As stated, the results of this study indicate a need for change in how PAS advocacy groups attempt to influence public opinion and understanding of PAS. While it is not known if the DDNC and CCCC used the legal frame in a successful attempt to control news coverage of PAS or if the groups used the frame as a reaction to existing coverage, the end result is that their use of frames coincided more with news frames than with audience frames. It is likely that the advocacy groups created public relations materials (such as press releases or newsletters) with the intent of influencing news coverage directly so that they could indirectly influence the public. However, because the groups both have Web sites and mailing lists of their own, the DDNC and CCCC can communicate and interact with their audiences without the additional step of obtaining and controlling news coverage. Through their use of the legal frame, the groups appear to be focused on matching or altering what the various news media say about PAS. By changing their focus to the personal autonomy frame, the groups can instead directly address the
concerns and needs of the audience with whom they are ultimately concerned. Further, if members of the public change their frames for the issue as they become more aware of and confident in what PAS is, the groups can immediately and directly address the new needs of their audiences without having to rely on or wait for the news media to cover the issue.

**Limitations**

As in all research, there were limitations to the present study. Because no coding categories or survey instruments can capture the full intricacies of the content and subjects they are meant to represent, the results of this study should be considered with some caution. Based on the review of literature above, however, I am confident that my theoretical frameworks and method phases, as well as the operationalizations for the concepts examined, were as strong and valid as possible.

**Subjectivity of Content Analysis**

As Holsti (1969) stated, “One of the most general criticisms of content analysis is that undue emphasis is placed on precision at the cost of problem significance” (p. 10). Researchers can focus too much on pinpointing an operationalization for an idea rather than examining the idea in full. The raw data of news content must be transformed and aggregated in order to describe relevant characteristics. This process inherently involves subjective decisions, such as when researchers choose what populations, samples, and units of analysis to examine; what operationalizations will best represent various concepts; and which statistical tests are most appropriate.

Two characteristics of high quality content analysis research help to alleviate concerns about the validity of results. First, all conceptualizations, operationalizations, and procedures should be based on established theoretical underpinnings. “Without a theory, however
rudimentary, to inform the analyst, he is without any guides for his coding decisions. In short, unless he can state explicitly why he is analyzing documents, he cannot intelligently work out a plan on how to do it” (Holsti, 1969, p. 94). Second, proper content analysis involves intercoder reliability (ICR). Although agreement among a group of people that a concept is present in media content (e.g., if multiple people can identify a conflict frame within a news story) does not necessarily mean the concept is truly there, it is likely that the results of a content analysis are valid if multiple coders using the same coding instruments can reliably produce the same results. Using Krippendorff’s (2004) method for determining ICR, as well as his recommendations for acceptable minimum reliability scores, the results of this study can be seen as reliable and likely valid.

**Position for PAS in News Stories**

Just as content analysis results may not represent the full experience of reading a news story, it is specifically difficult to operationalize the position a news story has for PAS. The present study examined news stories and press releases to determine if they were generally in favor of, opposed to, or neutral toward PAS. A story’s position was conceptualized as the overall perception that can be read from a story using precise instruments, rather being truly representative of its authors’ original intent. Previous researchers (e.g., Pollock & Yulis, 2004) have also examined news content for position on PAS, so I am comfortable, based on my review of literature and operationalizations, having categorized content in a similar manner. However, I acknowledge that the results of any portion of this study including the *story position* variable should be interpreted with some caution.

**Correlation Rather than Causation**

It is not possible to determine if true causality occurs based on comparing the results of
content analysis and survey data. However, strong correlations could be seen as prerequisites for causation. It is unlikely that the public agenda or public frames influence how the media present stories about PAS (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Therefore, it is safe to assume that media salience and media frames at least have explanatory or predictive power in regards to individuals’ frames for, salience given to, and opinions of PAS, rather than causality flowing from the public to the news media and advocacy groups. Previous studies (e.g., Allen et al., 1994; Jasperson et al., 1998) have shown that experimental results (found by testing subjects’ opinions before and after exposure to media content) are replicated when treating content analysis and survey data as ‘natural settings’ for causality. In other words, researchers have shown that the results found through experimentation (that media agenda-setting and framing can affect public opinion) hold true when examining news content and survey results. Based on these results, Zhou and Moy (2007) argued the combination of content-analytic and survey data may be appropriate when examining explanatory or predictive variables for public opinion. Therefore, I am comfortable speaking of theoretically explaining respondents’ opinion of PAS based on the methods used here, but also acknowledge any causal results that stem from these methods should be interpreted with some caution.

A related limitation of this study was that the content analyzed in the first phase was not necessarily content that the survey respondents from the second phase would have experienced. This also demonstrates that it is inappropriate to assume true causality from the content to respondents’ opinions. As Strömbäck and Kiousis (2010) demonstrated, however, agenda-setting effects tend to occur based on overall consumption of news rather than on the consumption of specific content. In other words, it is likely that the same results would occur regardless of whether respondents directly experienced the content analyzed. Additionally, as
Harry (2001) noted, the newspapers included in the content analysis portion of this study are most likely to influence news coverage throughout the US. Future research should link survey respondents or experiment participants directly to specific content, but because agenda-setting occurs regardless of specific content, because the newspapers examined here most likely influence other sources for news, and because all news media tend to use the same few frames as members of the public (Atwood-Gailey, 2003; Maier, 2010; Van Gorp, 2007), I am comfortable having looked for connections between traditional and online media content and survey respondent data. Although the respondents may not necessarily have experienced the news content against which they were compared, previous research suggests it is likely that the prerequisites for causality examined in this study would hold true in an experimental environment.

Another related limitation of this study is that only some types of news content were analyzed, meaning news content from television, magazines, and other sources was not included. In line with Strömbäck and Kiousis’s (2010) argument that it is overall news consumption that most affects agenda-setting, McCombs (2004) has concluded that “as a broad empirical generalization, about half the time there is no discernible difference in the agenda-setting roles of newspapers and television news. The other half of the time, it appears that newspapers have the edge by a ratio of about 2:1” (p. 49). In other words, although content from television and magazines makes up a significant portion of the news people experience, it is likely their explanatory or predictive power would be no greater, smaller, or different from the content analyzed in the present study. Further, previous scholarship suggests that news media like The New York Times and The Washington Post tend to influence the media coverage provided by other media types (Gans, 1979; Harry, 2001). Thus, news content from other media is likely to
be quite similar to the content found here. However, I acknowledge that the possibility the content analyzed in the current study is an incomplete sampling of the news content respondents have access to means the results of this study should be interpreted with some caution.

**Self-Report Measurements**

A final limitation of the methods utilized in this study was the use of self-report measurements. Communication researchers regularly use self-report instruments (Oetzel, 1998) but it is important to acknowledge that respondents may answer questions despite not knowing for certain what is actually a correct choice or in order to make themselves appear more favorable (Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, Singer, & Tourangeau, 2004). Because respondents’ answers to some items, such as their current health statuses, were based only on their own self-identified statuses, it is not possible know if respondents’ reported health statuses were equivalent to their *actual* health statuses. It is therefore not possible to know if the respondents’ true characteristics (as opposed to their reported characteristics) were related to their opinions of PAS. I argue it is important to know if respondents’ self-identified health statuses relate to their opinions of PAS, perhaps even as important as knowing if their actual health statuses relate to their opinions. However, I also acknowledge that the use of self-report measures means any results that stem from these methods should be interpreted with some caution.

**Areas for Future Research**

This study examined PAS in an attempt to bring a clearer understanding of the issue. The results indicate many opportunities still exist to provide more clarification. Because this study utilized content analysis and survey methods, it is not possible to determine true causal direction regarding agenda- and frame-setting. Although previous research (e.g., Iyengar, 1991) has
shown agenda-setting and framing do indeed influence public opinion of news topics, the findings of this study suggest that this may not hold true for controversial or complicated issues. Experimental studies could clarify if people are affected by news coverage, interpersonal communication, or a combination of factors, when considering this important issue.

Further, the present study was generally concerned with overall salience and framing for PAS across a number of years, not with examining what specific news events may have affected coverage or understanding. Future research should examine if the salience and frames for PAS, among news media and the public, have changed in identifiable ways over time or in conjunction with specific news events and if coverage of PAS was affected by news coverage of other social issues or news events during period of study. In other words, are people affected by specific news events or overall coverage? Did other social issues or news events influence the amount of coverage or salience the news media assigned to PAS? The results of this study run counter to Atwood-Gailey’s (2003), which suggested that PAS tends to be presented in a positive light and with relatively few frames. The more neutral coverage of PAS and greater variety of frames used to describe the PAS found in this study may indicate that it is a more established social issue in the US than it has been in the past. As Condit (1990) tracked abortion’s acceptance into mainstream political and public discussion, PAS as an issue may now be seen as more acceptable and worthy of discussion among political leaders or members of the public. If so, the issue may be in the process of becoming more politicized, allowing for a greater variety of voices to be heard and inspiring a greater number of interested parties to try to frame and define how the issue is discussed. Future research should continue examining how salient the issue is and how it is discussed, for stronger patterns of agenda- and frame-building may soon emerge.

This study was concerned only with identifying frame characteristics among the media
types, but future research should also examine in more specific ways if framing characteristics influence members’ of the public opinions of PAS or other social issues. In other words, do differences in the use of episodic and thematic frames, or central and non-central frames, influence people’s opinions of PAS? Additionally, because the results of this study suggest positive opinions of PAS are predicted by increased personal salience and some personal frames for the issue, future research should examine more precisely how much people’s different personal experiences and the cognitive resources they use to consider the issue affect their opinions. For example, do people who consider PAS highly salient in their personal lives utilize different news media than people who do not consider it as personally salient?

It is of note that RQ7 found newspapers tended to quote other advocacy groups, but not the ones included in this study. In other words, news content was potentially affected by other advocacy groups, if not by the DDNC and CCCC. Considering there were no significant differences in how the media types framed PAS and considering how highly the different media types correlated in terms of their rank-ordered lists of frames for the issue, it is important for future research to examine what those other advocacy groups are. If the DDNC and CCCC are not present in news content, they are likely not influencing that content; if they are not, what groups are able to influence how PAS is presented to news audiences? Finally, future research should examine the salience and framing decisions made by news journalists, advocacy groups, and members of the public through qualitative interviews and observations. Content analyses and surveys do not allow researchers to interpret the intentional creation of frames and issue salience, so a fuller understanding of these processes can only occur through alternative methods.
REFERENCES


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doi:10.1080/00909880009365551


doi:10.1177/009365093020003002


NY: Continuum.


## APPENDIX A: EXAMPLE CODESHEET FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article Number</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(First Two Letters-Number)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Coder Initials (e.g., ABC) |   |   |

| Publication Date (MM / DD / YYYY) |   |   |

| Original Publication (1 - 12; see codebook) |   |   |

| Authorship (0 - 9; see codebook) |   |   |

| First Word of Headline |   |   |

| Number of Words (count if not available) |   |   |

| Story Classification 1 = News / 2 = Op/Ed |   |   |

| # Mentions of DDNC name or initials |   |   |

| # Mentions of CCCC name or initials |   |   |

| Story’s Position on PAS explicit (-) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | (+) explicit |   |   |

| Is PAS Central? |   |   |

| 1 = Yes |   |   |

| 2 = No (stop here) |   |   |

| # of Patients/Friends/Family Sources |   |   |

| # of Celebrities Sources |   |   |

| # of Journalists/Media Sources |   |   |

| # of DDNC Representatives Sources |   |   |

| # of CCCC Representatives Sources |   |   |

| # of other Advocacy Groups Sources |   |   |

| # of Reports/Documents/Polls Sources |   |   |

| # of Scholars/Researchers Sources |   |   |

| # of Government Officials Sources |   |   |

| # of Medical Authorities Sources |   |   |

| # of Anonymous Sources |   |   |

| # of Other Sources |   |   |

| Number of Anecdotes |   |   |

| Number of Court Cases |   |   |

| Number of Statistics |   |   |

**CONFLICT**

Episodic Central = 1
Episodic Non-Central = 2
Thematic Central = 3
Thematic Non-Central = 4
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Episodic Central</th>
<th>Episodic Non-Central</th>
<th>Thematic Central</th>
<th>Thematic Non-Central</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEDICAL</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEGAL</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MORALITY / RELIGION</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AUTONOMY / PATIENTS’ RIGHTS</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BIG GOVERNMENT / STATES’ RIGHTS</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POLITICS</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B: CODEBOOK FOR CONTENT ANALYSIS

Note: The unit of analysis for this content analysis is each individual news story or press release.

**Article Number (first two letters of publication - story number)**
- Mark the first two letters of the publication from which each press release or news story comes (e.g., CNN.com = CN). Additionally, during the collection of units of analysis, each news story and press release will be marked with a number. Coders should include this number after the letters and a dash (e.g., CN-103).

**Coder Initials**
- Provide initials for each part of your name (e.g., first, middle, and surname).

**Publication Date (MM/DD/YYYY)**
- Mark the original publication or release date for each news story or press release, using the scheme above.

**Original Publication**
- Mark the number for the category in which each news story or press release belongs (e.g., a DDNC press release would be marked as “1”).

**Press Releases**
- (1) Death with Dignity National Center
- (2) California Coalition for Compassionate Care

**Newspapers**
- (3) *The New York Times*
- (4) *The Washington Post*
- (5) *USA Today*
- (6) *The Oregonian*
- (7) *The Seattle Times*
- (8) *The Toledo Blade*

**News Web Sites**
- (9) CNN.com
- (10) MSNBC.com
- (11) FOXNews.com

**News Weblogs**
- (12) HuffingtonPost.com
- (13) MichelleMalkin.com

**Authorship**
- For a news story or press release with a stated byline, mark the category, 1-7, to which the news story or press release belongs. If a unit has no byline, mark it as “0”.
- In cases where a name is provided but no title, mark the news story or press release as “1”, meaning it is considered to be written by a staff writer for whatever publication from which the unit comes (except in the case of HuffingtonPost.com and MichelleMalkin.com). For example, if “John Smith” is attributed, but it is not clear whether this person is a staff writer or an editor, coders should assume that he is a staff writer.
- If attribution is given to a wire service (such as The Associated Press), a writer for a wire service, or if a unit is written by a syndicated columnist, mark the news story or press release as “4”.
- In cases where a name is provided, but no title, on HuffingtonPost.com and MichelleMalkin.com (e.g., if Michelle Malkin is given attribution as the author of a blog posting), coders should categorize the posting as “6”. This is the one exception to marking units of analysis as “1” when an author’s is provided without a clear title.
- For a news story or press release which quotes from television or radio programs, mark it as “7”.
- For television transcripts with no single, stated author, consider every person who speaks as the author of the piece and categorize the unit as “8”.

(0) No authorship stated
(1) Staff Writer (if writer is identified only by name, mark this)
(2) Editor
(3) Columnist (if identified as such in byline)
(4) Wire Service / Syndicated Columnist
(5) Reader / Letter to Editor
(6) Blogger
(7) On-Air Personalities
(8) On-Air Transcripts
(9) Other ______

First Word of Headline
- Mark the first word of the main headline of the story. Compound words (e.g., physician-assisted) should also be included

Number of words (if provided)
- Lexis-Nexis provides word counts for some news stories. If these are provided, mark the number on the codesheet. Number of words for other news stories and press releases will be provided.

Story Classification
- News stories and press releases report facts that may be independently verified, and do so without inferences or judgments. Quotations within the unit can contain opinion as long as the statement of opinion is treated as “news” (e.g., a Supreme Court Justice’s remarks can be opinionated, but a story about them is news). Mark news stories and press releases as “1”.
- Editorial/opinion stories and press releases do contain inferences or judgments about the facts of a news event. Mark letters to the editor, stated editorials, and the like as “2”.

(1) News
(2) Editorial / Opinion

# of Times Advocacy Groups are Mentioned
- Mark the total number of times the name or initials of the DDNC, or a person or group representing the DDNC, is mentioned.
- Mark the total number of times the name or initials of CCCC, or a person or group representing CCCC, is mentioned.
Story’s Position on PAS

- Mark a news story or press release’s position on PAS on a seven-point scale, ranging from 1 (extreme explicit negative) and 7 (extreme explicit positive).
- When using this scale to categorize a unit of analysis, coders should not rely on subjective judgments but rather on identifiable characteristics.

- **Negative**
  - A unit coded 1 would contain explicit, extreme language showing disapproval of PAS (e.g., “Those who would make physician-assisted suicide legal are worse than murderers”).
  - A unit coded 2 would contain explicit language showing disapproval of PAS (e.g., “We do not support the legalization of PAS”).

- **Neutral**
  - A unit coded 3 would contain implicit language showing disapproval of PAS (e.g., if a news story’s author writes, “The overwhelming majority of Catholics disapprove of PAS” but offers no statistics about those who approve of the issue).
  - A unit coded 4 would contain completely neutral language about PAS, or equal amounts of pro- and anti-PAS language (e.g., “Physician-assisted suicide is legal in Oregon and Washington” or “Many people approve of physician-assisted suicide, while others do not support its legalization”).
  - A unit coded 5 would contain implicit language showing approval of PAS (e.g., if a news story’s author writes, “The overwhelming majority of mainline Protestants approve of PAS” but offers no statistics about those who disapprove of the issue).

- **Positive**
  - A unit coded 6 would contain explicit language showing approval of PAS (e.g., “We support the legalization of PAS”).
  - A unit coded 7 would contain explicit, extreme language showing approval of PAS (e.g., “Those who would make physician-assisted suicide illegal should be killed”).

(1 explicit)      (2 explicit)      (3 implied -)     (4)     (5 implied +)     (6 explicit)      (7 explicit) 
Negative Coverage Neutral Coverage Positive Coverage

Is PAS a central issue of the story?

- A news story or press release with PAS as a central issue is primarily about PAS, rather than mentioning it only briefly or in passing (e.g., a news story may be entirely about a politician’s recent decision to support PAS legislation). Coders would mark this news story as “1”.
- A news story or press release with PAS as a non-central issue mentions it only briefly or in passing, meaning it is not really about PAS (e.g., a news story about a politician’s political beliefs may briefly mention the politician’s support for the legalization of PAS, along with his or her support for several other issues). Coders would mark this news story as “2”.

(1) Yes
(2) No

If PAS is not the central issue of a unit of analysis, stop coding here and begin coding the next news story or press release.
**External sources Used (mark number of times used)**

- For each news story or press release, mark the type of sources used and the number of times each type is used. The source types below are treated as twelve separate coding categories.

- If a unit of analysis features numerous quotes from the same physician, write “1” for the category “Medical Authorities”. Even though there are multiple quotes from that category, they are all from the same person. If three doctors are quoted in a story, write “3” for the category “Medical Authorities”. No matter how many times each doctor is actually cited in the unit of analysis, only mark each person once.

- Note: Court cases should not be considered external sources. Instead, mark any mention of course cases in a separate coding category below.

**Patient / Friends / Family**

- any person who has personal experience with PAS, whether considering it him or herself, or from knowing someone who has considered it—except for sources that fit into a different category (e.g., doctors would be Medical Authorities)

- patients with terminal illnesses, or their friends and/or family

- neighbors of patients, family, or friends—however, neighbors of doctors or pharmacists who are associated with PAS should be marked as “Other” instead

- if a person with a terminal illness or some other characteristic associated with this category is also part of an organization, that person should instead be marked according to the organization type

**Celebrity**

- any person or organization that has reached any level of fame or infamy but who is not considered an expert on PAS

- such celebrities could be comedians, music artists, actors, etc.

**Journalists / Media**

- any person or organization considered to be a member of the journalism profession

- such people or organizations may be members of the print, television, radio, or Internet media, including any services such as The Associated Press or Reuters

- on-air personalities should also be coded as “Journalists/Media” unless their expertise or profession is identified otherwise (e.g., a medical doctor who works as a news correspondent should be marked according to the first profession identified in the article—if a person is identified as “Jane Smith, FOX News correspondent and medical doctor” that source should be considered a member of the media)

**DDNC Representatives**

- any person or subgroup specifically mentioned as being part of the DDNC

**CCCC Representatives**

- any person or subgroup specifically mentioned as being part of CCCC

**Other Advocacy Groups**

- any other advocacy groups, or their representatives, that focus on PAS
**Report / Document / Polling Data / Scholars / Researchers**
- any resource, including groups or persons, from which numerical data related to PAS was found
- may include government documents, internal and external polling, published scholarly material, academic or professional scholars, although professional researchers should only be marked if not representing a larger company fitting into another coding category

**Government Officials**
- any person representing the federal government, the government of other countries, or the governments of individual US states
- this category also includes government bodies or agencies, such as the Supreme Court or the Attorney General’s office
- in cases where more than one official from the same agency is quoted, code based on the agency (i.e., even if two Justices from the Supreme Court are cited, mark that news story or press release as citing the Court only once)

**Medical Authorities**
- any doctor, nurse, or other person associated with the medical field
- hospital administrators, representatives of pharmaceutical companies, or other medical scientists are included here

**Anonymous**
- any unnamed source, such as one that has chosen to avoid attribution
- mark each anonymous source separately, unless it is stated they represent the same group or organization (e.g., a news story or press release citing two anonymous sources, both from the same organization, would be marked as “2” for this category)

**Other**
- any other source type or category not mentioned above should be marked here
- Note: briefly describe each Other source type
- mark each Other source separately, unless it is stated they represent the same group or organization (e.g., a news story or press release citing two sources from the same organization that does not fit in any category above would be marked as “2” for this category)

**Number of Court Cases related to PAS**
- Any direct explanation of court cases at the local, state, or national level in the US, or in international contexts
- Code each instance of court cases evidence, even if multiple pieces of information come from the same source (e.g., a news story about the recent conviction of a doctor found guilty of PAS might mention one of the doctor’s previous court trials. In this case, the news story would be coded as having “2” pieces of court case evidence)
- Court case evidence can include both data-based and non-data-based evidence, as long as the information is explicitly related to a specific case
Number of Non-Data-Based Pieces of evidence related to PAS
- Information which is not numerical that is meant to explain further the issue of PAS
- These can be anecdotal and contain a story with an obvious plotline, such as in a biographical news article
- Coders will code each instance of non-data-based evidence, even if multiple pieces of information come from the same source
- Non-data-based evidence explicitly from court cases should not be coded in this category

Number of Data-Based pieces of evidence related to PAS
- The use of numbers to describe PAS or issues related to PAS, such as polling data about public opinion or a report about the total number of physician-assisted suicides that occurred in a given year
- Code each instance of data-based evidence, even if multiple pieces of information come from the same source
- Data-based evidence explicitly from court cases should not be coded in this category

Frames
- Each unit of analysis should be coded for its use of frames
- The present study is concerned only with how PAS is framed; if, for example, a story or press release mentions a conflict not related to PAS, this should not be coded as having a conflict frame—other issues may be mentioned or framed in news story or press release, but only categorize frames related to PAS
- A frame is a central organizing idea, or a perspective from which to consider an issue (i.e., PAS)
- Each unit of analysis can have more than one frame, but each frame can only be used once (e.g., a single news story might have both “conflict” and “medical” frames—even if the story uses “conflict” more than once, mark each frame only once)
- Coders will mark each frame depending on its characteristics, discussed below; in cases where a frame is not present the coders do not have to mark anything
  - If a frame is present, it must be marked as episodic central, episodic non-central, thematic central, or thematic non-central

Conflict
- Mention of any dispute between groups or individuals, opposing viewpoints, or violence

Medical
- Mention of any physicians, nurses, terminal illness, palliative care, medicine, or prescription, or the discussion of PAS as a medical practice

Legal
- Mention of any steps intended to legalize or criminalize PAS, constitutional law, legal steps or procedures, prison, or laws
- Note: The mention of the Death with Dignity Act by name does not necessarily represent this frame if the law is merely discussed as existing—discussion of the law’s legality or implications would be within the “legal” frame
**Morality / Religion**
- Mention of any moral or religious beliefs dealing with PAS
- Moral or religious arguments may be positive (for PAS) or negative (against PAS)

**Autonomy / Patient Rights**
- Mention of the rights and choices available to patients in end-of-life care (e.g., a terminal patient who chooses to die quickly rather than to continue suffering, or a disabled person who chooses to live through any setbacks presented by his or her disability)
- The frame may also mention other options not associated with PAS, such as hospice care or increased pain medication, as long as PAS is the focus of the frame

**Big Government / State Rights**
- Mention of keeping federal and state jurisdictions separate, or bringing them together (e.g., federal laws could negate Oregon and Washington state laws)

**Economic Consequences**
- Mention of any short or long-term economic consequences (or benefits) of PAS for an individual (e.g., a politician; physician) or group (e.g., the DDNC), including the cost of medical care, the cost of legal cases, insurance, or inheritance

**Politics**
- Mention of any short or long-term political consequences (or benefits) of PAS for an individual (e.g., a politician; physician) or a group (e.g., the DDNC), including elections, political capital, or public opinion specifically related to politics

**Episodic or Thematic**
- An *episodic* frame treats each news event on its own terms, with no reference to history or context (e.g., a news story or press release has frames about a recent suicide but does not reference any other instances)
- A *thematic* frame acknowledges the broader issue of what the news story is about, and provides some historical or contextual information (e.g., a news story or press release has frames about a recent suicide, and also references how the suicide is different or similar to other instances)

**Central / Non-Central**
- A *central* frame is dominant in a news story or press release, in quality or quantity of argument (i.e., if the frame is used extensively or adds great detail)
- A *non-central* frame is not dominant in a news story or press release (e.g., if a news story briefly mentions conflict but is overall about economic consequences, the conflict frame would be “non-central”
APPENDIX C: SURVEY

1. What are you most concerned about these days? That is, regardless of what politicians say, what are the two or three main things which you think the government should concentrate on doing something about?
   (1) ________________________________________________________________
   (2) ________________________________________________________________
   (3) ________________________________________________________________

2. What does the term “physician-assisted suicide” mean? How would you describe it to a friend?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

3. When you think about physician-assisted suicide in general, what comes to mind?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

4. If you can, please explain how physician-assisted suicide differs from other types of euthanasia. If you’re not sure, what would you guess?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

5. Who would you say is responsible for solving the debate over physician-assisted suicide?
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please check the single, best answer for how much you agree with each of the following statements:</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. If I were suffering a slow and painful death, I would consider seeking help to end my life.</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>If a person has a terminal illness, that person should be allowed to take action to end his or her own life.</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>If a person has a terminal illness, that person should have the right to have all life-sustaining devices removed.</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>If the patient or his/her family requests it, medical doctors should have the authority to painlessly end the life of a patient who is terminally ill.</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>If a terminally ill patient wishes to die, a medical doctor should be able to write a prescription for a lethal dose of medication for him/her.</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>The issue of physician-assisted suicide is really about the conflict between opposing sides.</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>The issue of physician-assisted suicide should be considered from a medical perspective.</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>If physician-assisted suicide has been voted into law (e.g., in Oregon and Washington), then it should really be considered from a legal perspective.</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Physician-assisted suicide should be thought of as a moral or religious issue.</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. The issue of physician-assisted suicide is really about a person’s autonomy or his/her rights as a patient.

16. When one considers physician-assisted suicide, one should think about states’ rights to control end-of-life decisions.

17. People should consider the potential economic costs and/or benefits of the physician-assisted suicide issue.

18. Physician-assisted suicide should be considered as a political issue.

19. Which of these perspectives would you say is most similar to how you think of physician-assisted suicide? If you are not sure, please see questions 11 through 18 above for examples.

   ( ) Conflict  ( ) Medical  ( ) Legal  ( ) Politics
   ( ) Personal autonomy / Patients’ rights  ( ) Big government / States’ rights  ( ) Economic consequences  ( ) Morality / Religion

20. How important do you consider the issue of physician-assisted suicide to be in today’s society?

   ( ) Extremely unimportant  ( ) Unimportant  ( ) Somewhat unimportant  ( ) Neutral

   ( ) Somewhat important  ( ) Important  ( ) Extremely important

21. How much are you interested in news about physician-assisted suicide?

   ( ) Not at all interested  ( ) A little interested  ( ) Somewhat interested  ( ) Very interested  ( ) Extremely interested
22. When you encounter news about physician-assisted suicide in the media, how much attention do you pay to it?

( ) No attention at all
( ) A little attention
( ) Some attention
( ) A lot of attention
( ) Full attention

23. How often do you read or watch the news, in any form?

( ) Never
( ) Rarely
( ) Once a month
( ) Once a week
( ) Once a day
( ) Throughout the day

24. Which would you say is your primary source for general news information?

( ) Newspapers (e.g., The Toledo Blade or The New York Times)
( ) News Web sites (e.g., FOXNews.com or CNN.com)
( ) News Weblogs (e.g., MichelleMalkin.com or HuffingtonPost.com)
( ) Advocacy groups’ Web sites (e.g., DeathWithDignity.org or FinalChoices.org)
( ) Other news media (e.g., television or news magazines)
( ) Other (please explain) ________________________________

25. Which would you say is the most credible source for general news information?

( ) Newspapers (e.g., The Toledo Blade or The New York Times)
( ) News Web sites (e.g., FOXNews.com or CNN.com)
( ) News Weblogs (e.g., MichelleMalkin.com or HuffingtonPost.com)
( ) Advocacy groups’ Web sites (e.g., DeathWithDignity.org or FinalChoices.org)
( ) Other news media (e.g., television or news magazines)
( ) Other (please explain) ________________________________

26. Which one type of news source would you most likely use to find information about physician-assisted suicide?

( ) Newspapers (e.g., The Toledo Blade or The New York Times)
( ) News Web sites (e.g., FOXNews.com or CNN.com)
( ) News Weblogs (e.g., MichelleMalkin.com or HuffingtonPost.com)
( ) Advocacy groups’ Web sites (e.g., DeathWithDignity.org or FinalChoices.org)
( ) Other news media (e.g., television or news magazines)
( ) Other

27. I support the death penalty.

Please check the single, best answer for how much you agree with the following statement:

Strongly Agree ( )
Agree ( )
Neutral ( )
Disagree ( )
Strongly Disagree ( )
Please check the single, best answer for how much you agree with each of the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28. I support the legal right for a woman to end her pregnancy.</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. My individual autonomy / personal freedom is important to me.</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
<td>( )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30. What is your current marital status?
   - ( ) Married
   - ( ) Widowed
   - ( ) Divorced
   - ( ) Separated
   - ( ) Never Married

31. In general, how would you consider yourself politically?
   - ( ) Extremely liberal
   - ( ) Liberal
   - ( ) Somewhat liberal
   - ( ) Neutral
   - ( ) Somewhat conservative
   - ( ) Conservative
   - ( ) Extremely conservative

32. What is your race/ethnicity?
   - ( ) White
   - ( ) African-American (Black)
   - ( ) Hispanic
   - ( ) Asian
   - ( ) Native American
   - ( ) Other

33. How important is religion in your life?
   - ( ) Extremely unimportant
   - ( ) Unimportant
   - ( ) Somewhat unimportant
   - ( ) Neutral
   - ( ) Somewhat important
   - ( ) Important
   - ( ) Extremely important

34. What is a rough estimate of your annual household income?
   - ( ) $10,000 or below
   - ( ) $10,001 - $25,000
   - ( ) $25,001 - $50,000
   - ( ) $50,001 - $75,000
   - ( ) $75,001 - $100,000
   - ( ) $100,001 - $150,000
   - ( ) $150,001 or more

35. How would you describe your current health status, in general?
   - ( ) Poor
   - ( ) Fair
   - ( ) Good
   - ( ) Excellent
36. How would you describe your current health care?  
   ( ) Poor   ( ) Fair   ( ) Good   ( ) Excellent

37. Have you ever or do you currently know anyone with a terminal illness?  
   ( ) No   ( ) Yes

38. Have you ever or do you currently care for anyone with a terminal illness?  
   ( ) No   ( ) Yes

39. Do you currently have a terminal illness?  
   ( ) No   ( ) Yes

40. Please provide the last two digits of your birth year.  
   ______ ______

41. What is your sex?  
   ( ) Female   ( ) Male

42. How many years of formal education have you completed  
   (consider finishing high school as having completed 12 years of formal education)?  
   ________ years
APPENDIX D: HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

September 15, 2010

TO: Kyle Holody
COMS

FROM: Hillary Harms, Ph.D.
HSRB Administrator

RE: HSRB Project #: H10D363GX2

TITLE: Constructing the End: Setting the Agenda and Frames for Physician-Assisted Suicide

The Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) has reviewed the requested modifications you submitted for your project involving human subjects. Effective September 14, 2010, the following modifications have been approved:

Use SurveyMonkey.com to distribute the survey instead of SNAP. Modified consent.

You may proceed with subject recruitment and data collection.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is attached. The consent document(s) bearing the HSRB approval/expiration date stamp is the only valid version and, if it is a revision to previously approved document(s), supersedes those versions. Copies of the dated document(s) must be used in obtaining consent from research subjects.

If you seek to make any additional changes in your project activities, complete the Request for Modifications/Addendum application and submit it to the HSRB via this office. Please notify me in writing upon completion of your project (fax: 419-372-6916 or email: hsrb@bgusu.edu).

Good luck with your work. Let me know if this office or the HSRB can be of assistance as your project proceeds.

COMMENTS:
Please add text equivalent to the HSRB approval/expiration date stamp to the “footer” area of the electronic informed consent (see attached for specific text).

C: Dr. Melkote
Greetings,

My name is Kyle J. Holody and I am a doctoral student in the School of Media and Communication here at Bowling Green State University (BGSU). As part of my dissertation, I am interested in observing relationships between people’s media usage, their opinions of various social issues, and their demographic characteristics. To study any such relationships, I have contacted by email all faculty and administrative staff members here at the university. I received your email address from BGSU’s Office of Institutional Research.

The purpose of this research project is to determine if a person’s demographic characteristics (e.g., sex, marital status, etc.) are related to what media he/she uses, and to determine if both of these variable sets (i.e., demographics and media use) are related to a person’s opinion of different social issues. There is no monetary award or potential prize for filling out the attached survey, so there may be no direct, specific benefit to you. However, this research will benefit society by identifying what aspects of our lives may influence how we consider the world around us. With recent increases in individualized media consumption among the US public, the benefits of this research may be great indeed.

Your participation will involve completing a web-based survey, which I estimate will take no longer than ten minutes. The anticipated risks to you for completing the survey are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life. Because the survey is web-based, you can simply fill it out and submit it, with no further work asked of you. If you do not complete the survey within five days of this first contact, I will send a reminder asking you to do so. I will repeat this procedure (waiting five days, then contacting you again) once, meaning you may be contacted up to three times total. At any point, you can opt out of participating in the survey at all by contacting me at kho@bgsu.edu; I will remove your name from the database of potential respondents.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you can refrain from answering any questions without penalty or explanation. You are free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time. If you decide to participate and change your mind later, you may withdraw your consent and stop your participation without penalty or explanation. You may decide to skip questions in the survey or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Deciding to participate, or not, will not affect your job or relationship with Bowling Green State University.

All answers you provide to survey questions will be kept confidential. Information you provide will remain confidential and your identity will not be revealed. The survey has been designed using SurveyMonkey.com, which collects data and stores it without providing me access to your specific identifying characteristics. The website automatically contacts non-respondents based on a pre-determined schedule. I will therefore not know who has not completed the survey.
(unless someone specifically asks me to remove them from the database), nor will I be able to match people’s names with their answers. All identifying information collected from you will be collected and used by SurveyMonkey.com only for data collection period. After all potential respondents have been contacted up to three times, I will remove all names and email addresses from my database and have only answers to the survey questions. I will have no way of determining who provided those answers. I will be the only person with access to the database during and after the data collection stage.

Because you are filling out an electronic survey, it is important that you know that some employers may use tracking software. If you do not want to risk the potential of sharing personal information with this tracking software, you should take the survey at home or at a public computer. You should not leave the survey open if taken on a public computer and you should also clear your browser cache and page history after completing the survey in order to protect any information you do not wish to be made public.

As I said, the anticipated risks to you for completing the survey are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life. You will not be asked for specific demographic information that can be used to identify you. However, if there are any questions you do not wish to answer in order to protect your confidentiality, you are free to skip them. Additionally, there are survey questions that ask your opinion of various social issues, some of which may be uncomfortable or controversial. If you do not feel comfortable answering these questions, you are also free to skip them. I ask that you please complete the survey as fully as possible, but do so only to the extent that you are confident and comfortable. As a final note, this survey is intended only for people who are at least eighteen years old. If you are not yet eighteen years old, I ask that you please not participate. Additionally, please email me and I will remove your address from my database of potential respondents.

If you have any questions or comments about this study, you can contact me (Kyle J. Holody) at 540-998-5666 or kholody@bgsu.edu. You may alternatively contact my project advisor, Dr. Srinivas Melkote, at 419-372-9324 or melkote@bgsu.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu, if you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kyle J. Holody

Note: By completing this survey and submitting it, you are indicating that you voluntarily consent to participate in this research investigation.
APPENDIX E: WEB VERSION OF FINAL SURVEY DESIGN

Media Usage Study (Kyle J. Holody)

1.

Greetings,

My name is Kyle J. Holody and I am a doctoral student in the School of Media and Communication here at Bowling Green State University (BGSU). As part of my dissertation, I am interested in observing relationships between people’s media usage, their opinions of various social issues, and their demographic characteristics. To study any such relationships, I have contacted by email all faculty and administrative staff members here at the university. I received your email address from BGSU’s Office of Institutional Research.

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Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you can refrain from answering any questions without penalty or explanation. You are free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time. If you decide to participate and change your mind later, you may withdraw your consent and stop your participation without penalty or explanation. You may decide to skip questions in the survey or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Deciding to participate, or not, will not affect your job or relationship with Bowling Green State University.

All answers you provide to survey questions will be kept confidential. Information you provide will remain confidential and your identity will not be revealed. The survey has been designed using SurveyMonkey.com, which collects data and stores it without providing me access to your specific identifying characteristics. The website automatically contacts non-respondents based on a pre-determined schedule. I will therefore not know who has not completed the survey (unless someone specifically asks me to remove them from the database), nor will I be able to match people’s names with their answers. All identifying information collected from you will be collected and used by SurveyMonkey.com only for data collection period. After all potential respondents have been contacted up to three times, I will remove all names and email addresses from my database and have only answers to the survey questions. I will have no way of determining who provided those answers. I will be the only person with access to the database during and after the data collection stage.
Media Usage Study (Kyle J. Holody)

Because you are filling out an electronic survey, it is important that you know that some employers may use tracking software. If you do not want to risk the potential of sharing personal information with this tracking software, you should take the survey at home or at a public computer. You should not leave the survey open if taken on a public computer and you should also clear your browser cache and page history after completing the survey in order to protect any information you do not wish to be made public.

As I said, the anticipated risks to you for completing the survey are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life. You will not be asked for specific demographic information that can be used to identify you. However, if there are any questions you do not wish to answer in order to protect your confidentiality, you are free to skip them. Additionally, there are survey questions that ask your opinion of various social issues, some of which may be uncomfortable or controversial. If you do not feel comfortable answering these questions, you are also free to skip them. I ask that you please complete the survey as fully as possible, but do so only to the extent that you are confident and comfortable. As a final note, this survey is intended only for people who are at least eighteen years old. If you are not yet eighteen years old, I ask that you please not participate. Additionally, please email me and I will remove your address from my database of potential respondents.

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Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kyle J. Holody

Note. By completing this survey and submitting it, you are indicating that you voluntarily consent to participate in this research investigation.

The Human Subjects Review Board number for this project is H100363X2. If you have any further questions or would like evidence of HSRB protocol, please feel free to contact me or the HSRB office using the information listed above.

2.

1. What are you most concerned about these days? That is, regardless of what politicians say, what are the two or three main things which you think the government should concentrate on doing something about?

   (1) 
   (2) 
   (3) 

2. What does the term “physician-assisted suicide” mean? How would you describe it to a friend?

   

3. When you think about physician-assisted suicide in general, what comes to mind?

   

Page 2
Media Usage Study (Kyle J. Holody)

4. If you can, please explain how physician-assisted suicide differs from other types of euthanasia. If you’re not sure, what would you guess?

5. Who would you say is responsible for solving the debate over physician-assisted suicide?

3.

6. Please choose the single, best answer for how much you agree with each of the following statements:

| If I were suffering a slow and painful death, I would consider seeking help to end my life. | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly agree |
| If a person has a terminal illness, that person should be allowed to take action to end his or her own life. | | | | | |
| If a person has a terminal illness, that person should have the right to have all life-sustaining devices removed. | | | | | |
| If the patient or his/her family requests it, medical doctors should have the authority to painlessly end the life of a patient who is terminally ill. | | | | | |
| If a terminally ill patient wishes to die, a medical doctor should be able to write a prescription for a lethal dose of medication for him/her. | | | | | |
### Media Usage Study (Kyle J. Holody)

7. Please choose the single, best answer for how much you agree with each of the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If physician-assisted suicide has been voted into law (e.g., in Oregon and Washington), then it should really be considered from a legal perspective.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician-assisted suicide should be thought of as a moral or religious issue.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The issue of physician-assisted suicide is really about a person’s autonomy or his/her rights as a patient.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When one considers physician-assisted suicide, one should think about states’ rights to control end-of-life decisions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People should consider the potential economic costs and/or benefits of the physician-assisted suicide issue.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician-assisted suicide should be considered as a political issue.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Which of these perspectives would you say is most similar to how you think of physician-assisted suicide? If you are not sure, please see question 7 above for examples. Please choose only the best answer:

- Conflict
- Morality or religion
- Economic consequences or benefits
- Medicine or the medical community
- Personal autonomy or patients’ rights
- Politics
- Legality
- "Big government" or states’ rights
### Media Usage Study (Kyle J. Holody)

#### 9. Please choose the single, best answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely unimportant</th>
<th>Unimportant</th>
<th>Somewhat unimportant</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Extremely important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How important do you consider the issue of physician-assisted suicide to be in today's society?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 10. Please choose the single, best answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all interested</th>
<th>A little interested</th>
<th>Somewhat interested</th>
<th>Very interested</th>
<th>Extremely interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much are you interested in news about physician-assisted suicide?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 11. Please choose the single, best answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No attention at all</th>
<th>A little attention</th>
<th>Some attention</th>
<th>A lot of attention</th>
<th>Full attention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When you encounter news about physician-assisted suicide in the media, how much attention do you pay to it?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 12. Please choose the single, best answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Once a month</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>Once a day</th>
<th>Throughout the day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you read or watch the news, in any form?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 13. Which would you say is your primary source for general news information? Please choose only the best answer:

- Newspapers (e.g., The Toledo Blade or The New York Times)
- News Web sites (e.g., FoxNews.com or CNN.com)
- News Weblogs (e.g., MichelleMalikin.com or HuffingtonPost.com)
- Advocacy groups’ Web sites (e.g., DeathWithDignity.org or FinalChoices.org)
- Other news media (e.g., television or news magazines)
- Other (please explain)
14. Which would you say is the most credible source for general news information? Please choose only the best answer:

- Newspapers (e.g., The Toledo Blade or The New York Times)
- News Web sites (e.g., FoxNews.com or CNN.com)
- News Weblogs (e.g., MichelleMalkin.com or HuffingtonPost.com)
- Advocacy groups’ Web sites (e.g., DeathWithDignity.org or FinalChoices.org)
- Other news media (e.g., television or news magazines)
- Other (please explain)

15. Which one type of news source would you most likely use to find information about physician-assisted suicide? Please choose only the best answer:

- Newspapers (e.g., The Toledo Blade or The New York Times)
- News Web sites (e.g., FoxNews.com or CNN.com)
- News Weblogs (e.g., MichelleMalkin.com or HuffingtonPost.com)
- Advocacy groups’ Web sites (e.g., DeathWithDignity.org or FinalChoices.org)
- Other news media (e.g., television or news magazines)
- Other (please explain)

16. Please choose the single, best answer for how much you agree with each of the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I support the death penalty.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I support the legal right for a woman to end her pregnancy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My individual autonomy / personal freedom is important to me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. What is your current marital status? Please choose only the best answer:

- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed
- Separated
- Never married

18. Please choose the single, best answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Position</th>
<th>Extremely liberal</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Somewhat liberal</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat conservative</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Extremely conservative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In general, how would you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consider yourself politically?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Media Usage Study (Kyle J. Holody)

19. What is your race/ethnicity? Please choose only the best answer:

- [ ] White
- [ ] Hispanic
- [ ] Native American
- [ ] African-American (Black)
- [ ] Asian
- [ ] Other (please specify)

20. Please choose the single, best answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is religion in your life?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. Please choose only the best answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is a rough estimate of your annual household income?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$10,000 or below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. Please choose only the best answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you describe your current health status, in general?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you describe your current health care?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23. Please choose only the best answer:

- [ ] Have you ever or do you currently know anyone with a terminal illness?
- [ ] Have you ever or do you currently care for anyone with a terminal illness?
- [ ] Do you currently have a terminal illness?

24. Please provide the last two digits of your birth year.

25. Please choose only the best answer:

- [ ] Female
- [ ] Male

What is your sex?
Media Usage Study (Kyle J. Holody)

26. How many years of formal education have you completed (consider finishing high school as having completed 12 years of formal education)?
APPENDIX F: DIAGRAM OF PREDICTED REGRESSION MODELS

Figure 20

Diagram of Predicted Regression Analyses

Model 1: Social Issues:
- Support for Individual Autonomy
- Support for Abortion Rights
- Support for Death Penalty

Model 1: Demographics:
- Marriage Status (Married)
- Race (White)
- Income
- Education

Model 2: Individual:
- PAS Salience
- PAS Frame
- Interest in PAS
- Attention to PAS
- Media Use

Model 2: Individual’s Medium for PAS Information:
- PAS Salience
- PAS Frame
- Position on PAS

Model 3: Individual:
- PAS Frame

Model 4: Individual’s Primary News Medium:
- PAS Salience
- PAS Frame
- Position on PAS

Model 1: Ideology:
- Religiosity
- Conservatism

Model 1: Ostreamness:
- Quality of Health Care
- Personal Health
- Age

ε

Opinion of PAS

Model 1: Demographic:
- Sex (Female)