

Exploring Cultural Narratives

COVID 19 continues to ravage disparate populations, but it also is seen as a national security threat. A recent report and webinar by the Atlantic Council, through its Digital Forensic Lab, explored these issues and connected them to narratives which can be explored by analyzing (sometimes) millions of digital documents through online research. Understanding how these narratives originate and are driven, often through social media but also through traditional media, by key players who have a definitive purpose. This is a key to understanding today's news cycles and the human agency involved in perpetuating and amplifying various issues.

Weaponized: Understanding the COVID-19 Narrative Arms Race is the Atlantic Council's explanation of these narratives; the report and webinar can be found here: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/event/covid-narrative-arms-race/>

Today, these narratives – just like a single image or advertisement – can be subjected to a media literacy interrogation. Who created the narrative? Who's behind it? Who benefits? How? Why? Who can be left behind? How? Why? What values, lifestyles and points of view does the narrative represent? What is omitted? What techniques are being used to attract attention?

AHA! When I continue to hear that certain countries are our enemies or our friends, I am apt to agree.

Ages: 16-18+

Key Question #4: What values, lifestyles or points of view are included in – or omitted from – this message?

Core Concept: Media have embedded values and points of view.

Materials: Web Access <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/event/covid-narrative-arms-race/>

Nexis NewsDesk Live Tracker: What Does Media Monitoring Tells Us About the Coronavirus?

What if you were able to track the impact that the Coronavirus is having by looking at charts that capture thousands – even millions – of news articles that cover COVID-19 globally? With the Global Media and News Tracker from Nexis NewsDesk, you are able to do just that, with updates being provided every 15 minutes. The power of machine learning is becoming exponential, and it is fascinating to get a glimpse, on a mass scale, of measures of news coverage on COVID-19. Through the Nexis NewsDesk (at <https://bis.lexisnexis.com/COVID-19>) detailed charts provide data – for free – on:

- The number of COVID-19 cases, the news coverage and the relationship of such coverage to the S&P 500
- The main topics that people are talking about through the news
- The amount of coverage given to COVID-19 over time
- The country or State locations where the most coverage is coming from
- How COVID-19 is impacting behavior such as panic buying or quarantine
- Top COVID-19 news stories
- The number of articles, by global region, covering COVID-19

AHA! When we combine coverage results from many different sources, we may get a different “picture” of the news than if we just rely on one source.

Ages: 14-18+

Key Question #2: What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

MediaLit Moments

Written by Beth Thornton

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Core Concept #2: Media have embedded values and points of view or omitted from – this message?

Key Question #4: What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in –with its own rules.

Core Concept #2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language

Materials: Web access and smartboard, if available (Nexis News Desk Media Monitor: <https://bis.lexisnexis.com/COVID-19>)

ACTIVITY:

Divide class into groups, and assign each group one of the 7 charts provided on the Nexis COVID-19 Tracker page: <https://bis.lexisnexis.com/COVID-19>

Ask each group to review and discuss the chart they are assigned. What does the chart track? What does the chart tell them, what “story” does the chart convey? Why do they think so? What data is cited? What does this say? Give the groups about 5 minutes to discuss together.

Have each group share their chart and their findings. Have each group take questions and cite the evidence for their findings – why do they think so?

Then, have the same groups discuss the two media literacy questions, #2 and #4. What mathematical “techniques” might be used? What computer science “techniques” might be used? Why do they think so? What impact on lifestyles, values and points of view does this data have? What does it mean to individuals? To society?

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Again, have each group share their chart and their discussion/findings. Depending upon the time a teacher wants to devote to this activity, it could take 20 minutes or it could take a week!