

Religion in the Media

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Religion and Culture: Meeting the Challenge of Pluralism

Media Analysis

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COMMUNICATIONS FOR CHANGE

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Overview

This media analysis is the third in a series to analyze how the American media presented religious topics to the public, and thus contributed to shaping Americans' perceptions of religious institutions and practices. The two prior media analyses were undertaken in 2001 and 2005, allowing for an understanding of changes, similarities and trends in the media coverage of religious topics. Though the current analysis mainly looks at traditional print media – as a source of information for most Americans – a snapshot of online new media sources covering religion is also included.

All three analyses have sought to determine:

- The extent of media coverage of religion in relation to social issues;
- Which messages are being communicated through the media coverage;
- Which spokespeople are identified and quoted in the stories;
- Which reporters and outlets are covering religious topics.

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 generated a large volume of religiously themed articles that, six years later, continue to shape media coverage. Since 2001, reporters have increasingly focused on the relationship between religion and public policy – particularly in relation to their coverage of Islam and international affairs.

In the current sample, news coverage of the Iraq war set the tone for commentary on Islam, terrorism, religious and political conflicts and Muslim immigrant communities in the U.S. and Europe. Creating a national identity around religion was a theme that ran across article topics. In the U.S., this debate over national identity was seen as a response to growing religious diversity and a visible Muslim community assimilating and its perceived threat to the country's Judeo-Christian tradition. Overseas, growing Islamic militancy in regions where it was never associated before – such as Thailand – indicated a unifying sentiment among Muslims in the post-9/11 and Iraq War era. There were several stories of Muslims striving to debunk myths about Islam and counteract the skewed, militant version being preached by fundamentalists, both in the U.S. and abroad.

In the U.S., the convergence of politics and faith has been one of the most popular topics for the media. For example, how much and how often presidential candidates pray has become a recurring theme in some debates. In addition, the powerful evangelical lobby has emerged as a major player in the American political process, mobilizing around major policy issues ranging from immigration to pro-Israel campaigns.

Major Findings

The largest publications are the ones writing on religion – many of those that are not in the top five national publications decreased their religion coverage. The top producers of religion-related news came from national and major regional publications, like the *Associated Press*, *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, which have larger staffs with two or more religion reporters, allowing them to pursue more in-depth coverage and a broader range of issues. In contrast, regional publications in cities across the country are minimizing their staff and relying more frequently on the *Associated Press* for international or national stories.

Religion is becoming more of a news issue and less of a feature story. Since the last media analysis in 2005, the issue of religion has leapt out of the features section and on to news pages as reporters discuss religious strife overseas, political campaigning in the U.S., and the changing role of religion in public life. News stories have increased by 36% since 2005 and 67% since 2001.

The atheism movement garnered considerable media attention as a growing movement in the U.S. and Western Europe. In response to Muslim and Christian fundamentalism, non-believers are becoming vocal on the convergence of faith and politics.

The idea that religion can be a positive force for building a truly pluralistic society in the twenty-first century has been increasingly popular. The community-building frame comprised 34 articles or 20% of the sample (the second highest) that looked at interfaith initiatives and faith-based social activism benefiting communities in need.

A high degree of interest in Islam continues, and the percentage of stories on Christianity has increased due to the ever-growing presence of evangelicals in the country's political landscape. The interest in Islam can be attributed to the growing Muslim immigrant population in countries in Western Europe and the Sunni-Shiite power struggle in Iraq. The powerful evangelical lobby in this country continues to be of interest to reporters, especially as a voting bloc for the Republican presidential candidates.

Male spokespeople were three times more likely to be quoted than women. Male spokespeople were quoted 469 times throughout, or in 75% of the 169 article sample. This stands in stark contrast to the 135 references by female spokespeople, who contributed to 22% of the citations.

Men were more than twice as likely to report on a story as women, largely regardless of type or subject. Eighty percent of the reporters covering Islamic militancy or terrorism were men. Other important topics, such as Iraq; the presidential campaign; or religion, culture and U.S. policy; were almost 70% more likely to be covered by a male reporter than a female one.

Issues related to Islam, Islamic militancy, and democracy building comprised a significant number of international news articles. With the ongoing Iraq War, the increasing visibility of Muslim immigrant communities in America and Western Europe, and Islamic extremism rearing its head in Africa and South East Asia, it is not surprising that foreign coverage of these issues was substantial.

Major findings online:

The online landscape of religious discussions is as varied and broad as the topic itself.

- In 2005, eight million U.S. adults had created a blog, and 10% to 20% of U.S. blogs were related to religion.
- Of the top 100 blogs visited each day, not one is specifically focused on religion.
- Several prominent blogs and bloggers feature religious topics, stories, and conversation on their Web sites.
- Notable online and traditional media sources are talking about how religion is a major focus of the 2008 Presidential race.
- Many writers are talking about the “religion gap.”
- Although the most popular social networking sites lack a strong religious contingent, religious dating sites and offshoots of popular social networking sites are common.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Reporters need to examine how their coverage reinforces the notion that religion does not belong in modern society. Reporters should be educated on the importance of framing a story, and how quoting certain spokespeople leads to religion being portrayed as a negative, exclusionary, and even potentially violent force in the world.

Advocates and scholars should make a greater effort to come up with a positive message about the productive role of religion in the 21st century. Though the positive message has seen an increase in the current sample, religious advocates and scholars could be doing more to develop messages that reinforce the “community-building” frame – or the notion that religion can be a key building block in creating a truly diverse, pluralistic society in the future. Stories about religious people helping to make both their immediate and larger communities better places to live without the underlying motive of conversion would be of great interest.

The media needs more voices that can bridge the gap in intercultural understanding. As religion can be a significant divisive issue, it is important to include spokespeople or voices that can comprehend and draw similarities among different social groups.

More diverse spokespeople are still needed to comment on religious issues and the religious dimension of current events and developments. Men are quoted in far greater number than women. Women need to be seen as resource persons across fields when looking for social, political, and cultural commentary.

Individuals who can speak to religion’s growing political and social role, especially Islam, would be of great value to reporters. The media sample reflects the extent to which the public – both on a national and international front – tend to look to religion to comprehend the world around them. As Islam continues to receive coverage, we also see how the religion plays a political and social role.

Opportunities exist for increased coverage in major issue-oriented news magazines. While magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* covered religion (and these tend to be their best-selling issues), there was comparatively little coverage in more in-depth, issue-oriented publications such as *The New Yorker* and *The Progressive* (though we did see increased coverage in *The Nation*).

Journalists should be encouraged to cover a wide array of alternative and less popular religions to underscore the message that religious pluralism is a reality in present day America. As in the previous samples, most of the articles focused on one or more of the three major religions – Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

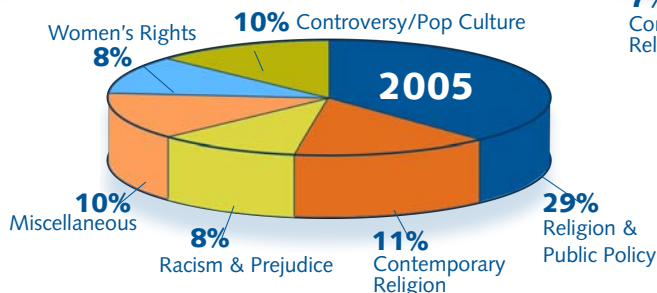
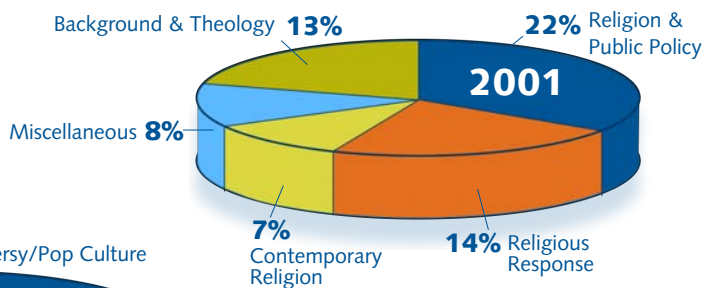
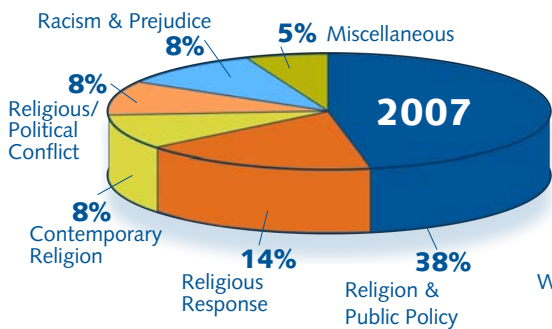
Journalists should be encouraged to cover a diversity of ideas and opinions. Reporters need to move from their bias of religion as a fixed institutional construct with strict definitions of right and wrong toward a more nuanced examination of religion as a cultural force.

As we see from this analysis, the most popular story topic, the intersection of religion and public policy, affords a tremendous “hook” on which to hang – and bridge to – progressive commentary on religion, culture and society.

Story Subjects

To ascertain the way in which religion is covered in the media, we tallied the articles according to topical areas. The following list is a numerical breakdown of all the stories in the sample, according to category. While sometimes a story mentioned more than one issue, they were broken down into categories according to the principal subject of each story. Each story topic was further divided into subtopics to reflect the multiple facets within each article. The last topic, “religious/political conflict,” was introduced in this analysis, so no comparative data to the previous years can be made for this category. Any data points below the 10% margin are not discussed in detail, as there is not substantial coverage of those topics.

Topical Breakdown					
Topic	No. of articles	Pct. in 2007	Pct. In 2005	Pct. in 2001	Pct Change (2005 to 2007)
Religion & public policy	65	38%	29%	22%	+31%
Religious response	24	14%	3%	14%	+366%
Contemporary religion	14	8%	11%	7%	-27%
Religious/political conflict	13	8%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Racism & prejudice	13	8%	8%	4%	none
Miscellaneous	8	5%	10%	8%	-50%
Women’s rights	7	4%	8%	6%	-50%
Interfaith	7	4%	4%	6%	none
Holidays	7	4%	4%	2%	none
Gay rights	5	3%	5%	4%	-40%
Schisms	2	1%	7%	2%	-86%
Background & theology	2	1%	3%	13%	-66%
Controversy/pop culture	2	1%	10%	5%	-90%
Total	169 articles				



Charts represent the most written-about topics.

As in 2001 and 2005, the intersection of religion and public policy remained the most popular story topic. The number of articles devoted to this topic rose by almost one-third (31%) between the two samples – reflecting a broader range of issues related to religion that fell under this umbrella in 2006-2007.

Articles on religious responses to politics and culture increased by 366% between the story samples, suggesting that religious groups are increasingly mobilizing themselves to being heard on an array of contemporary political, social and cultural issues.

While the topics of racism, interfaith issues, and holidays remained the same as in the 2005 sample, seven of the thirteen topics listed above highlighted decreases. Contemporary religion, controversy, miscellaneous, women’s rights, schisms, gay rights, and background and theology were the areas that showed a sharp decrease. Given that coverage of contemporary religion, schisms, and gay rights did not experience much of a drop from 2001, one may assume that the decrease since the 2005 analysis is due to the significant coverage of the conflict within the worldwide Anglican Communion following the consecration of a gay Episcopal bishop in New Hampshire in 2004.

Detailed Topic Analysis

Religion & public policy – 65 articles (38% of sample, 29% of 2005 sample)

As was the case with the 2005 story sample, the 2007 sample contained more stories about the intersection of religion and public policy than any other topic. Given the volume of articles in this category, we broke the section down further into the following subcategories:

- The presidential campaign
- Religion, culture and U.S. policy
- Religion and international cultures
- The Iraq war

Of the 65 religion and public policy stories found in the 2007 sample, 23 articles or 34%, focused on the 2008 presidential campaign.

The next most popular topic within this group pertained to religion, culture, and U.S. policy. Thirteen out of the 65, or 20%, included articles on the separation of church and state or the evangelical lobby's stance on policy issues like immigration.

Following in popularity was the sub-topic of religion and international cultures, which accounted for twelve out of the 65 (18%) articles. Many of these articles depict the influx of Muslim immigrants to Western Europe and countries' "knee-jerk" immigration policy responses.

Ten out of the 65 (15%) focused on the Iraq war, specifically looking at the country's sluggish and turbulent transition to democracy riddled with ongoing Shiite and Sunni clashes.

Sub-topic: Presidential Campaign

With the impending 2008 presidential election, it is not surprising to see extensive coverage on the candidates' campaigns, yet public curiosity and the media speculation surrounding candidates' religious beliefs as a measure of their political competency has been an interesting departure from the standard political reporting seen in the past.

Most of these articles focused on Republican candidates and their courtship of the religious right or "values voters." In addition, it examined evangelicals' divided opinion of Republican candidates, Focus on Family's James Dobson withholding his support of Fred Thompson, Mitt Romney's Mormon faith, and Giuliani's pro-Israel stance.

An October 22, 2007 *U.S. News & World Report* article aptly summarized the startling divide among evangelicals on “hot button” issues such as abortion and gay rights, viewing it “as just one manifestation of the deepening struggle within the wider evangelical community over who speaks, both morally and politically, for the nation’s estimated 60 million born-again Christians.”¹

Sub-topic: Religion, Culture and U.S. Policy

Reporters also covered the intersection of religion and public policy at home – in stories on religious differences and their impact on debates over U.S. foreign, national and local policy.

Articles on U.S. foreign policy focused on the anti-Israel lobby and the Armenian genocide resolution. A scathing critique of Jimmy Carter, Stephen Walt, and John Mearscheimer’s position on the pro-Israel lobby in the U.S. as “anti-Jewish bias” appeared in a September 7, 2007 *Wall Street Journal* article.²

Articles covering national issues included the lobbying of Jewish groups around domestic concerns; religion and the Bible in public schools and public realms; and an examination of the Bush administration’s reaction to the use of the Wiccan symbol on tombstones in U.S. military burial grounds. Articles on religion in public schools and the public realm included the proposal to install foot baths in public schools and universities, as well as the purging of select religious texts from libraries in federal prisons. In the debate of separation of church and state, a piece in *USA Today* on September 17, 2007 said a proposal to construct foot baths for Muslim students in schools was inappropriate if the purposes were to “promote Islamic prayers, or to entice Muslims to contribute money to the school, or to respond to pressure by Muslims to accommodate their practices.”³

Local issues often clung to coverage of communities, immigration, and minority cultures, such as suspicion of terrorist activity among a group of imams at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport or the lawsuit filed by the Orthodox Jewish Westchester Day School when denied approval by the local zoning board to construct a classroom building. In the October 21, 2007 *New York Times* article, Peter Applebome focuses on community tension surrounding land use issues, citing the Congressional Act known as Rluipa, passed in 2000, that said, “Governments could not impose any land use regulations that placed a substantial burden on religious activity unless there was a ‘compelling governmental interest.’”⁴

Sub-topic: Religion and International Cultures

Much like in the U.S., media coverage of religion and international cultures dealt with changing communities, national identity and ethnic or religious pluralism. In Europe, religion-related articles dealt with French president Nicholas Sarkozy's push for a diverse cabinet with the nomination of Muslim and African women to reflect the country's religious and ethnic diversity; the induction of an orthodox Christian political party in the Netherlands to institute traditional values - denouncing the bohemian image of the country; the Russian Orthodox Church making its presence known in public schools in Russia two decades after the collapse of Communism; and the acceptance of the large Muslim community in Lakemba, Australia.

Articles on policies in Asian countries included examinations of China's persecution of a human rights activist opposing the country's treatment of its Muslim minority; the release of the South Korean missionaries from Afghanistan; and the outlawed ancient practice of Sati (women burning themselves alive on their husband's funeral pyres) that continues to divide rural and urban India.

Sub-topic: Iraq war

Much of the recent war coverage has focused on Iraq's sectarian violence. While the violence is often targeted among Sunni (Iraq's Muslim minority) and Shiite (Iraq's Muslim majority) sects, the violence has extended to other religious groups and even turned inward. A December 25, 2006, *Los Angeles Times* article provides an account of the lawlessness in southern Iraq as a result of fighting among members within the Shiite majority: "The violence in Samawah underscores the difficulty that Prime Minister Nouri Maliki and other Shiite leaders have had in maintaining order among members of their sect in a country where people's loyalties are divided among political parties, religious groupings and tribes."⁵

In addition, the killing of two Iraqi Christian women by Western private security guards created much scrutiny around the unchecked power of mercenaries in the war, as well as the vulnerability of this religious minority in Iraq.

Religious response to current events – 24 articles (14% of sample, 3% of 2005 sample)

In contrast to the four articles that were found in 2005, 24 articles in the latest sample focused on the religious response to current events.

Sub-topic: Islam & Terrorism/ Islamic Militancy

A September 8, 2007 *Los Angeles Times* article focuses on Osama Bin Laden's appearance in a new video urging Americans to renounce their capitalist ways and embrace Islam to end the Iraq War: "In that missive, Bin Laden also made a veiled threat to the American people, saying that they could save themselves from violence by not supporting a crackdown on his Al Qaeda network."⁶

Sub-topic: Evangelical Christianity & Public Policy

In a September 25, 2007 *Atlanta Journal Constitution* op-ed, Sean McKenzie, a Methodist and high school teacher, calls for collective "moral leadership" on undocumented workers: "In particular, support of conservative evangelical churches such as the Southern Baptists could be a tipping point toward compassionate, comprehensive immigration reform."⁷

Contemporary religion - 14 articles (8% of sample, 11% of 2005 sample)

Among the articles exploring current religious groups or spiritual practices, the growing atheism movement happening across America and Europe received the most coverage. This movement was often in response to Christian and Muslim fundamentalism, as seen in the April 12, 2007 *Associated Press* article on the zealous fervor of atheists in Europe that has resulted in a "combative brand of atheism, one that confronts rather than merely ignores religion."⁸

Religious/political conflict - 13 articles (8% of sample, n/a to 2005 sample)

Articles on this topic examined the continuing Israel-Palestine conflict, the Myanmar struggle involving Buddhist monks, Hindu-Muslim clashes in India, and the political tensions in Pakistan with Pervez Musharaff's military rule and the return of Benazir Bhutto.

Racism and Prejudice - 13 articles (8% of sample, 8% of 2005 sample)

Most of the articles focused on Muslim Americans dispelling myths and debunking stereotypes about their faith. Articles ranged from an innovative ad campaign posted on college campuses across Virginia to the production of comic books involving Islamic superheroes to the surprising popularity of a Pakistani drag queen TV personality challenging cultural norms.

Miscellaneous - 8 articles (5% of sample, 10% of 2005 sample)

Most of the articles within the miscellaneous topic were religion-related book reviews. For example, a June 2, 2007 *Wall Street Journal* article critiqued "Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America," a biopic on a lesser-known pioneer of the born-again movement in America: "the first religious celebrity of the mass media era, ...embracing radio, print, and film for use in her evangelical mission."⁹

Women's rights – 7 articles (4% of sample, 8% of 2005 sample)

Among the articles relating to women's rights, the sample included the controversy over the donning of the hijab in Canada, Iran's Prime Minister Ahmadinejad's crackdown on female activists, a Dutch playwright's examination of Muslim women's sexuality, and the entrance of a Muslim woman into the male-dominated realm of Koran recitation.

Interfaith – 7 articles (4% of articles, 4% of 2005 sample)

Articles in this category dealt with inter-religious understanding and included the reconciliation among Jewish and Muslim leaders regarding a new mosque in Boston; the Dalai Lama's visit to Emory University and his emphasis on interfaith dialogue; a multi-faith women's group in Detroit united by community service; and the friendship of Tibetan Buddhist monks and Catholic Trappist monks.

Holidays – 7 articles (4% of sample, 4% of 2005 sample)

Out of the holidays covered in the latest sample -- Christmas, Hanukah, Easter and Ramadan -- the majority of articles focused on Easter. Coverage ranged from soft pieces on community church celebrations to the "holy fire" ritual conducted by Orthodox Christians at a revered holy shrine in Jerusalem to the significance of Easter falling on the same date this year for Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestants to celebrate together.

Gay rights – 5 articles (3% of sample, 5% of 2005 sample)

Coverage of the gay rights movement ranged from stories set in America's heartland to the cultural and political oppression of homosexuals in the Arab world. There was also coverage of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007, the legislation to protect gay individuals in the U.S.

Schisms – 2 articles (1% of sample, 7% of 2005 sample)

Articles in this category included one on the United Methodist Church leadership's new challenge (a transgender priest) and a piece on the Episcopal Church clergy embracing the prospects of leading the faithful in developing countries.

Background and theology – 2 articles (1% of sample, 3% of 2005 sample)

Articles included a review of a PBS documentary on Mormonism in America as well as a feature on a mosque in existence for over 50 years as the epicenter of the Nation of Islam movement in this country.

Controversy/Pop Culture – 2 articles (1% of sample, 10% of 2005 sample)

The current sample did not have anything equivalent to a “Passion of the Christ” or “The DaVinci Code” to create a media buzz similar to those in the 2005 sample. However, a couple of religious-themed films and TV shows were produced for mainstream viewing. Articles included commentary on “Persepolis”, the animated film chronicling life during the Islamic revolution in Iran, and a new television sitcom featuring a Muslim boy from Pakistan assimilating to American culture as an exchange student.

Story Frames

For this media analysis, Douglas Gould and Company chose to employ a strategic frame analysis -- an approach to communications research that identifies the public's deeply held worldviews and widely held assumptions.

As defined by the FrameWorks Institute, "framing refers to the subtle selection of certain aspects of an issue in order to cue a specific response...[H]ow an issue is framed is a trigger to these shared and durable cultural models that help us make sense of our world. When a frame ignites a cultural model, or calls it into play in the interpretation, the whole model is operative. This allows people to reason about an issue, to make inferences, to fill in the blanks for missing information by referring to the robustness of the model, not the sketchy frame."

In other words, individuals are hard-wired to process and comprehend information through the filter of pre-existing concepts of meaning and understanding. These frameworks are triggered – most often through the media – by immediately recognizable symbols, messengers and metaphors. By identifying the frames used in each story analyzed in the sample, one can determine some of the underlying messages about religion, culture and society that the media may be inadvertently (or advertently) sending.

Douglas Gould and Company tallied the articles according to the following nine story frames. A detailed description and analysis of these frames follow this chart. As the frames have been reconfigured since the 2005 analysis, comparative data is not available.

Story frame	Articles	Pct. of total
Religion and Politics	67	40 %
Community-Building	34	20 %
Fundamentalism	16	9 %
Orthodoxy	14	8 %
Secularism	11	7 %
Comparativism	10	6 %
Corruption	10	6 %
Spirituality	6	4 %
Other	1	1 %

Detailed Frame Analysis

Religion and politics (67 articles, 40% of sample)

The religion and politics frame generally encompasses news stories that pertain to just that: religion and politics. This was the most common story frame for stories relating to the presidential campaign or Iraq War.

An October 5, 2007 *Boston Globe* article describes Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney's earnest efforts to garner evangelical support after, "James Dobson said that he and other social conservatives had agreed to support a 'minor party' candidate if the Republicans choose a presidential nominee who is not conservative enough."¹⁰

Community-building (34 articles, 20% of sample)

The community-building frame tends to include positive stories or depictions of a religious or ethnic community, group, or issue. In this media sample, this frame tended to highlight religion's role as a building block to a pluralistic society and its positive impact within a community.

An example of this can be seen in a September 12, 2007 *Chicago Tribune* article focusing on the "greening of the American religion" by depicting a young woman leading a movement called "eco-kosher" that "combines traditional Jewish dietary laws with new concerns about industrial agriculture, global warming and fair treatment of workers."¹¹

Fundamentalism (16 articles, 9% of sample)

The religious fundamentalism frame is largely depicted by attempts at political and social control. Articles portraying political or religious agents using violent, oppressive means to control others, under the guise of defending a strict interpretation of religious law, tend to fall within this frame.

An April 23, 2007 *Washington Post* article uncovered a vicious attack by Muslim extremists in northern Iraq against members of the country's tiny religious sect, the Yazidi, as an act of revenge against the interfaith love between a Muslim woman and a Yazidi man who eloped. "The mass killing was the latest attack on religious minorities in Iraq, where human rights groups say Christians, Jews and members of other, smaller sects are often killed, persecuted or forced to convert by Muslim extremists."¹²

Orthodoxy (14 articles, 8% of sample)

The orthodoxy frame often pertains to articles highlighting attempts by religious authorities to enforce one dogmatic view (a traditional and confined reading of religious text) to followers of a certain faith. Religion was often portrayed in these stories as an exclusionary force or belief system – limited to and practiced only by “true believers.”

A June 3, 2007 *Associated Press* article revealed a nursing school in Pakistan that was closed and its Christian principal and a handful of Christian students who were “accused of desecrating verses from the Quran.” According to the article, “The action by the management...of the main hospital in Islamabad came two weeks after Muslim nurses protested that verses from Islam’s holy book regarding proper manners in drinking water have been erased from a wall.”¹³

Secularism (11 articles, 7% of sample)

This frame specifically identified religion and politics as two separate entities. With the increasing atheism movement happening across this country and in others, as well as the ongoing debate on the separation of church and state, there is a growing belief in the need to monitor religious practice in the public domain.

A September 3, 2007 *Newsweek* article looks at the changing of the religious guard in Turkey. As a staunch secular republic for some 80 years, “Turkey’s Islamists have become mainstream, and the consequences could prove enormous... The traditional split in Turkish politics [has] transformed from a secular-fundamentalist divide to a secular-Muslim one.”¹⁴

Comparativism (10 articles, 6% of sample)

This frame looks at drawing comparisons among different faiths. Sometimes these comparisons are drawn to illustrate the similarities across belief systems in the spirit of tolerance and understanding. Other articles make these comparisons to examine the “many faces” of a particular faith to debunk stereotypes or a one-dimensional representation of it.

A *New York Times* article dated December 10, 2006 looked at the way Islam is practiced in Saudia Arabia (desert Islam) versus in South East Asian countries like Brunei (coastal Islam). “Women here [in Brunei] drive, fill senior of fices in government and the private sector, serve as ambassadors and are pilots for the national airline.”¹⁵

Corruption (10 articles, 6% of sample)

Organized religion has undergone extreme scrutiny in the past decade or so for its acts of hypocrisy. The corruption frame examines how public faith is being manipulated by the supposed champions of God.

An October 5, 2007 *Wall Street Journal* article investigated the military dictatorship in Burma and “its members seiz[ing] every chance to depict themselves as Buddhism’s true guardians... [it] has funded lavish new temples and the regilding of the famous golden pagodas” amidst the country’s abject poverty. Yet, there is no reverence for Buddhism’s tenets including not killing and stealing.¹⁶

Spirituality (6 articles, 4% of sample)

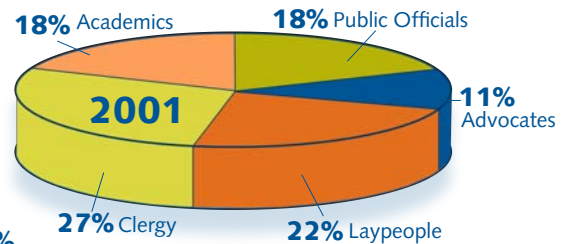
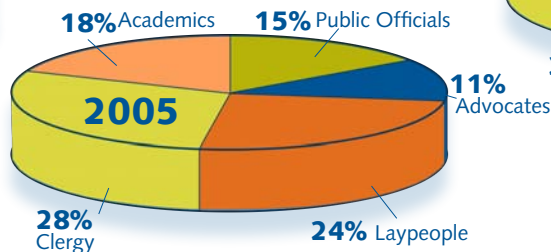
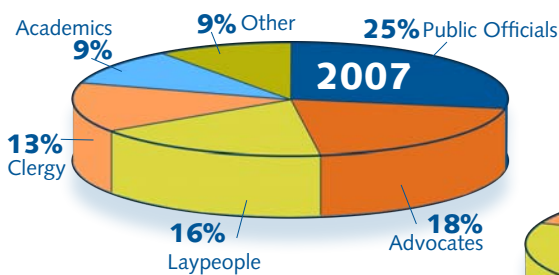
With the intensified public mistrust of religious institutions and authorities in this country, this frame looks at people creating à-la-carte religions by incorporating elements from different faiths and customizing them to their individual beliefs.

A June 16, 2007 article in the *Washington Post* focused on spiritual experiences in the virtual realm made available by a three-dimensional, online game called Second Life. “[In this] online virtual universe that is attracting 3.7 million users, you can light virtual candles for Shabbat, teleport to Buddhist temple or consult the oracle for some divine guidance.”¹⁷

Spokesperson Analysis

The messenger in any story can be as important as the message, as the story frame is often presented solely through them. In order to get a better idea of who was quoted in the sample and what they said, Douglas Gould and Company tallied the quotes from the articles we examined, yielding the following results:

Spokespeople	Articles quoted in	% of total quotes	% of quoted from 2005	% of quoted from 2001	Pct change (2007 – 2005)
Public officials	160	25 %	15%	18%	+67%
Advocates	115	18 %	11%	11%	+7%
Laypeople	101	16 %	24%	22%	-33%
Clergy	79	13 %	28%	27%	-46%
Academics	59	9 %	18%	18%	-50%
Other	58	9 %	n/a	n/a	n/a
Authors	26	4 %	n/a	n/a	n/a
Journalists	20	3 %	1%	2%	+200%
Corporate/business	11	2 %	2%	2%	none
Theologians	2	0 %	1%	1%	-100%



Public officials were the most quoted group in the story sample, receiving citations in 160 articles -- an increase of 67% from 2005. To report on the Iraq War and the presidential debate, journalists turned to public officials, like those in the Iraqi Interior Ministry or presidential candidate Mitt Romney, to detail current events or issues and comprehend their impact. For example, public officials accounted for 70% of those cited in coverage of the Iraq war and 35% of those cited in stories about the presidential campaigns.

Advocates increased in popularity to become the second most quoted spokespeople in the 2007 story sample, appearing in 115 articles, or 18% of the sample; this is a 7% increase from 2005 and 2001. Advocates comprised 33% of the spokespeople for articles on the presidential campaign, often speaking on behalf of a certain religiously-oriented policy or political group. Advocates as spokespeople were closely followed by laypeople, who were cited in 101 articles or 16%. Journalists often relied on laypeople to ascertain public opinion of a specific political figure or candidate, a social issue like immigration or homosexuality, or the situation in Iraq.

Unlike 2005, references to clergy and academics decreased substantially, by 46% and 50% respectively. In the past, clergy members were relied upon by reporters to explain the “official” perspective of a particular denomination or to provide religious perspectives on current events and major stories, such as the polemical consecration of a gay Episcopal bishop or Mel Gibson’s contentious film “Passion of the Christ.” While this is still the case to some degree, clergy members were more often called to comment on the presidential campaign and/or evangelical Christianity and public policy issues.

Academics tended to be called upon to discuss social prejudices and ethnic stereotyping, as well as to provide background information or insight in relation to religion and cultural issues impacting U.S. policies and international policies, such as the presidential campaign or Islamic militancy.

In addition to the role of spokespeople, their sex also has the ability to subtly impact an issue and perspective.

Spokesperson Gender

Gender	# Qtd	Pct Qtd
Male	469	75%
Female	135	22%
Not determined	22	3%

It is important to note that male spokespeople were quoted 469 times throughout, or in 75% of, the 169 article sample. This stands in stark contrast to the 135 references by female spokespeople, who contributed 22% of the citations. In other words, men were three times as likely to serve as the spokesperson as women. While there is no specific explanation for this outcome, one may attribute the overwhelming quantity of male spokesmen to the dominance of men in senior positions in public office and to society’s unconscious bias in favor of men.

The gender of the reporter also has the ability to influence the spokesperson selection and article orientation.

Journalist Gender

Gender*	# Qtd	Pct Qtd
Male	102	62%
Female	53	32%

**Some articles either did not have a byline or the gender could not be determined.*

Just as men were quoted more frequently than women, men were also more likely to write the article, largely regardless of type or subject. Sixty-two percent of the journalists in this sample were men; this number rose to 80% when one looks at articles covering Islamic militancy or terrorism. Reporters for other important topics, such as Iraq; the presidential campaign; or religion, culture and U.S. policy, were almost 70% more likely to be male.

Interestingly enough, according to the American Society of Newspaper Editors’ annual employment census, 2007 findings revealed that 60.4% of reporters are male and 39.6% are female. There is a significant parallel between the gender of religion reporters examined in our sample of articles to that of the larger pool of reporters working in traditional print media.

Classifying the Coverage

Article Type					
Type	No. of articles	% of total	% in 2005	% in 2001	% change (2007-2005)
News	76	45%	33%	27%	+36%
Feature	55	33%	43%	57%	-23%
Op-Ed/ Editorial/Letters to the Editor	38	22%	24%	15%	-8%

Since the last media analysis in 2005, the issue of religion has leapt out of the features section and on to the news pages as reporters discuss religious strife overseas, political campaigning in the U.S., and the changing role of religion in public life. Religious groups or issues were referenced in 76 news articles, comprising 45% of the total articles reviewed. This increase represents a trend, as news stories have increased by 36% since 2005 and by 67% since 2001. This trend indicates that hard news hooks involving religion, culture and society have continued to grow, as religion and/or religious constituencies played a major role in political conflicts, like Iraq, Israel/Palestine, and Myanmar, as well political debates, like the presidential election and immigration reform.

Feature stories on religious trends or issues constituted 55 articles or 33% of the story sample, a 23% decrease from the sample in 2005. While this may be due, in part, to the increase in news articles, the decrease also appears to follow a trend, as the overall volume of feature articles dropped by almost one-quarter (25%) between the 2005 and 2001 media analyses and 42% between 2007 and 2001. Some features provided in-depth reporting on the presidential campaign or religion and U.S. policy. Other features explored issues like racism and prejudice (specifically towards Muslims), building interfaith understanding, and trends in contemporary religion or spirituality (like the growing atheist movement).

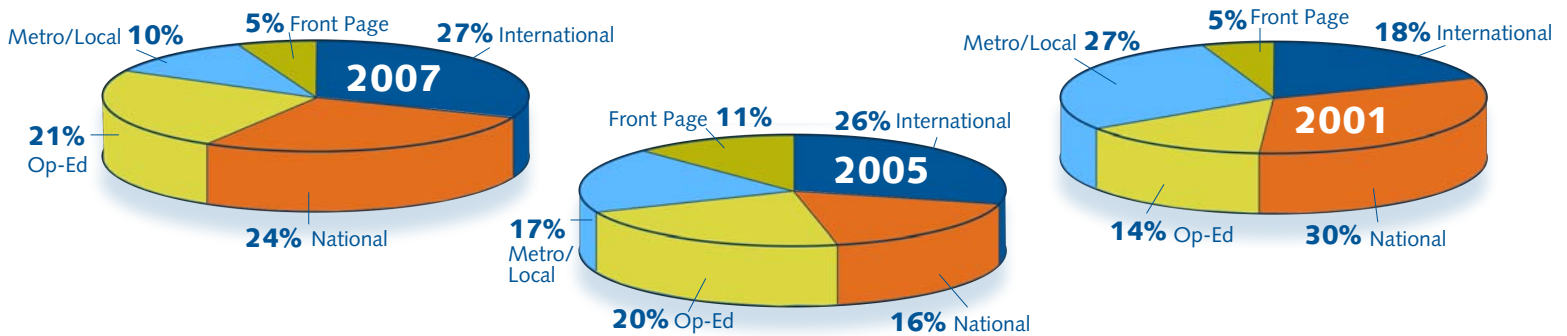
The op-ed category, which combined the topics of editorial, op-ed and letters to the editor decreased only slightly from 2005, but increased by 47% from 2001. Readers, columnists and editorial writers wrote in mass to comment on or react to news coverage of national and international controversies, conflicts and debates, such as public attitudes towards different religious or social issues and/or groups (Muslims, gays, Jews, etc.).

Where did the articles run?

A look at the location breakdown shows that religion was largely an international or national story during 2007, with the number of opinion pieces trailing news coverage.

Breakdown of Articles by Section

Section	No. of articles	% of total	% of total in 2005	% of total in 2001	% change (2005-2007)
International	45	27 %	26%	18%	+4%
National	41	24 %	16%	30%	+50%
Op-Ed	35	21 %	20%	14%	+5%
Metro/Local	17	10 %	17%	27%	-41%
Front Page	9	5 %	11%	1%	-55%
Arts	6	4 %	2%	2%	+100%
Lifestyles	6	4 %	4%	4%	no change
Religion	4	2 %	2%	5%	no change
Special Section	4	2 %	2%	0%	no change
Other	2	1%	n/a	n/a	n/a



As in the 2005 media analysis, more articles referencing religion appeared in the international section than any other section of the newspaper. The media sample included 45 articles on international issues, constituting 27% of the media sample; while this is only a 4% increase from 2005, it is a 50% increase from 2001. International stories tended to cover issues relating to the war and increasing Muslim factionism in Iraq, terrorism and Islamic militancy around world, and Islam in international public policies and cultures.

Unlike in 2005, however, national stories closely followed international coverage, constituting 24% of the media sample. National news stories increased 50% since 2005; although there was a 20% decrease when compared to the 2001 level, when media coverage focused heavily on the 9/11 terrorist attacks and their aftermath. In 2007, national news articles generally covered the presidential elections and the “values vote,” public responses to foreign cultures and immigration reform, as well as other U.S. policies.

While front page coverage decreased 55% from 2005 in the absence of significant religious controversies, it still represented a 400% increase from 2001.

Which outlets ran the most articles?

According to the analysis, coverage of religion, culture and society was dominated by the *Associated Press* wire service and urban outlets in major cities like New York and Washington D.C.

Breakdown of Articles by Outlet

Outlet	No. of articles*	Pct. of total	Pct. in 2005	Pct. in 2001	% change
<i>Associated Press</i>	38	22%	18 %	11 %	+22%
<i>New York Times</i>	29	17%	15 %	18 %	+13%
<i>Washington Post</i>	22	13%	7 %	8 %	+86%
<i>Los Angeles Times</i>	17	10%	10 %	17 %	no change
<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	11	7%	8 %	7 %	-13%
<i>Boston Globe</i>	9	5%	6 %	6 %	-17%
<i>USA Today</i>	8	5%	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Atlanta Journal-Constitution</i>	7	4%	8 %	5 %	-50%
<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	6	4%	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Dallas Morning News</i>	6	4%	9 %	8 %	-56%
<i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>	5	3%	5 %	8 %	-40%
<i>Time</i>	4	2%	2 %	2 %	no change
<i>The Nation</i>	4	2%	1 %	1 %	+100%
<i>Newsweek</i>	3	2%	2 %	2 %	no change
<i>Philadelphia Inquirer</i>	3	2%	5 %	5 %	-60%
<i>U.S. News & World Report</i>	2	1%	2 %	1 %	-100%
<i>The New Republic</i>	1	1%	0 %	1 %	+100%
<i>Atlantic Monthly</i>	1	1%	0 %	0 %	+100%
<i>The New Yorker</i>	0	0%	1 %	0 %	-100%
<i>Detroit Free Press</i>	0	0%	3 %	1 %	-100%
<i>Harper's</i>	0	0%	0 %	0 %	no change
<i>The Progressive</i>	0	0%	0 %	0 %	no change

*Several of these articles ran in more than one paper and have been counted more than once.

As in the 2005 and 2001 analysis, the *Associated Press* wire service and the *New York Times* dominated the coverage of religion, constituting 22% and 17% of the coverage respectively. The *Washington Post's* religious coverage rose by 86% to replace the *Los Angeles Times* in its religion coverage, with 22 related articles compared to the *Los Angeles Times's* 17. Together, the *Associated Press*, *New York Times* and *Washington Post* accounted for over half (52%) of the articles that were read and analyzed.

The prominence of *Washington Post* articles in this sample makes sense when one considers that the most reported religious issues over the last year focused heavily on political and policy-oriented topics, like the presidential election and Iraq; these articles befit the policy-oriented *Washington Post*. Furthermore, the *Associated Press*, *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have large staffs with two religion reporters, which stands in contrast to publications in other cities across the country, which are minimizing their staff and relying more frequently on the *Associated Press* for international or national stories.

When did the articles run?

Breakdown of Articles by Month					
Month	Articles	Pct. of total	Pct. in 2005	Pct. In 2001	% change (2007-2005)
December 2006	42	25%	24 %	11 %	+ 4 %
October 2007	37	22%	32 %	30 %	-31%
June 2007	31	18%	9 %	12 %	+100%
September 2007	30	18%	18 %	36 %	no change
April 2007	29	17%	17 %	11 %	no change

Given the multiple religious holidays occurring in December, it is not surprising that the greatest number of religion-related stories occurred during this month. December religion coverage ranged from a portrait of Christmas in the war-ravaged biblical town of Bethlehem to a feature on pagan ideology.

June experienced a 100% increase in religion-related news from 2005 and a 50% increase from 2001. Some of this can be attributed to the immigration legislation debated in Congress. There was also additional activity on the international front focusing on the mounting Israeli-Palestinian discord over Hamas's control of the Gaza Strip and the Taliban's release of South Korean hostages.

While October featured numerous articles on faith and presidential candidates, there was not the splash of events and controversies as there were in 2005, like the controversial consecration of an openly gay Episcopal bishop in New Hampshire, a Pentagon investigation into anti-Muslim remarks made by Gen. William Boykin and the Nobel Prize being awarded to Shirin Ebadi, a human rights activist and lawyer from Iran. This past September and October also differed from those in 2001, when the media honed in on the events of September 11th.

Which faiths did the media focus on?

As noted below, media references to specific denominations, such as Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism, did not experience significant changes between the 2005 story sample and the 2007 story sample.

BREAKDOWN OF ARTICLES BY DENOMINATIONAL REFERENCES

Denomination	No. of articles	Pct.	Pct. in 2005	Pct. in 2001	Pct. Change (2005-2007)
Christianity /					
Christians	102	60%	60 %	17 %	no change
Islam / Muslims	94	56%	53 %	54 %	+6%
Judaism / Jews	42	25%	37 %	8 %	-32%
Buddhism /					
Buddhists	14	8%	8 %	1 %	no change
Hinduism / Hindus	9	5%	7 %	0 %	-29%
Other	8	5%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Interfaith	5	3%	3 %	5 %	no change
Nondenominational	1	0%	2 %	3 %	-100%
Multifaith	1	0%	1 %	11 %	-100%
Bah'ai	1	0%	1 %	0 %	-100%
Zoroastrianism /					
Zoroastrians	1	0%	1 %	0 %	-100%
Sikhism / Sikhs	0	0%	1 %	0 %	-100%
Taoism / Taoists	0	0%	2 %	1 %	-100%

**Most of these articles referred to more than one denomination.*

Stories that included references to Christianity – which increased by a drastic 250% between 2001 to 2005 – remained the same. Approximately one third of the Christian references were evangelical. The media remained very much interested in Islam and increased their coverage of the denomination slightly, by 6%.

Stories referencing Judaism comprised 25% of the articles in the sample, showing a 32% decrease from the story sample in 2005. That said, the coverage of Judaism in 2007 was still greater than it was in 2001, when it constituted only 8% of the religious coverage.

Among the religions included in the “other” category were three references to atheism, as well as references to Wiccans, Pagans and the Uighurs and Yazidi, smaller ethnic sects located in sections of the far and mid-east. Additional religions, such as Taoism, Hinduism, and Sikhism experienced minimal coverage, but not a significant drop considering the small coverage received in the past.

Online New Media

The Bush Administration's focus on religious conservative values made a significant impact on American and global culture in the past seven years. The influence of religious and conservative values on global policy trickles down to various aspects of American public life as confirmed by today's 2008 Presidential election campaigns. Notable online and traditional media sources are talking about how religion is a major focus of this Presidential campaign, a topic area not previously discussed in such detail in American politics.

With the growing popularity of the World Wide Web as a social medium, and advances in technology that provide easier access to the Internet, the intersection of religion and public life has become an increasingly popular and accessible topic for personal and communal discussion.

The online landscape of religious discussions is as varied and broad as the topic itself. From politics and social welfare, to the rights of women and the world's disadvantaged, the ways in which religion permeates public life are discussed on Web sites, social networking sites, and in the blogosphere. Religion and religious beliefs are deeply personal and sensitive issues. The Internet, providing absolute anonymity if one chooses, is a protective shield of beliefs and criticisms – offering a free medium of self expression never before available to the average Joe. An online user can choose to reflect and debate religion as an anonymous member of the online community.

Web site features like daily or weekly e-alert subscriptions, as well as technologies like Real Simple Syndication (a kind of Web feed used to publish updated content and news to the end user) offer an avenue for users to receive real-time information from various outlets. Online users are never too far from the latest news story or blog posts accessible from their personal or work computer or mobile phone. Access to the Internet for most in the developed world has never been easier.

Methodology

In order to understand the general landscape of religious discussion in today's online world, we analyzed various Web sites (those of traditional media outlets such as CNN were not analyzed) and blogs including:

- BeliefNet: <http://www.beliefnet.com/>
- AlterNet: <http://www.alternet.org/>
- Street Prophets: <http://www.streetprophets.com/>
- Sojourner's: <http://www.sojo.org/>
- PEW Forum: <http://pewforum.org/>
- RNS: <http://www.religionnews.com/>
- Speaking of Faith: <http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/>

In addition, we reviewed various articles that provide the latest Internet statistics available:

- *The Blogosphere by the Numbers*: <http://www.clickz.com/showPage.html?page=3438891>;
- *Blog Statistics and Demographics*: <http://www.caslon.com.au/weblogprofile1.htm#demographics>;
- *World Wide Blog Count for May, Now Over 60 Million*: <http://www.blogherald.com/2005/05/25/world-wide-blog-count-for-may-now-over-60-million-blogs/>.

We cannot analyze online communications in the same way that we analyze traditional print and broadcast media because of the changing nature of online content – what’s present in a blog today maybe gone (or substantially less prevalent) tomorrow. Moreover, the tools available to search traditional media (e.g. Lexis-Nexis) are far superior to Technorati.com – an online service that tracks more than 112 million blogs and 250 million pieces of tagged social media. Lee Rainie of the Pew Internet & American Life Project claimed in 2005 that eight million U.S. adults had created a blog, and 10% to 20% of US blogs were “related to religion.” (<http://www.caslon.com.au/weblogprofile1.htm#demographics>). This is the most recent statistic indicating how many blogs focus on religion.

We also reviewed popular pages and profiles on social networking sites such as *MySpace*, *Facebook*, *Change* and *YouTube*, searching by keywords and reviewing the most popular profiles. We wanted to assess if religion permeates these sites and to what degree. We also looked at religion-specific social networking sites. Our findings follow.

Blogosphere

A blog, or Weblog, is a regularly updated journal published on the World Wide Web. While some blogs function as a personal online diary, others are organized around a particular subject. Moreover, some blogs are intended for a small audience, others compete for readership with national newspapers and online news sites. A look at the most trafficked (i.e. popular) blogs online at *Technorati.com* (an online service which tracks more than 112 million blogs and 250 million pieces of tagged social media), reveals that although religion is an important part of life for many global citizens, the blogosphere has yet to catch up. Of the top 100 blogs visited each day, not one is specifically focused on religion. Blog statistics indicate that celebrities and consumer goods attract more readers as *gizmodo.com* and *justjared.buzznet.com* are often the top two daily blogs.

However, several prominent blogs and bloggers (or columnists), such as the *dailykos.com* and the *huffingtonpost.com*, feature religious topics, stories and conversation on their Web sites. A recent search on *Alexa.com*, reveals that *huffingtonpost.com* is the 2nd highest viewed blog on the Internet, while *technorati.com* lists the *dailykos.com* as the 11th most popular blog (<http://www.alexa.com/browse/general/?&CategoryID=329623&mode=general&Start=1&SortBy=Popularity>, and <http://truthlaidbear.com/TrafficRanking.php>).

The bloggers featured on these two sites are all of the liberal persuasion, leftist and mostly secular antitheists. These blogs and bloggers are among the most frequently read opinions and commentaries online each day. Blog posts offer opinions and critiques about religion in public life – whether a commentary on growing up as a moderate Muslim or religion’s infusion in politics – an online audience has the option to comment on the blogs, either agreeing or disagreeing with the opinions stated.

The number of specific conversations about religion featured on general blogs such as those aforementioned is not surprisingly a small percentage of the overall discussions featured. Therefore, with regard to religious conversations online, several blogs and Web sites have emerged as notable sources of religious conversation. Most prominent of the liberal, pluralist sites are: *beliefnet.com*, *streetprophets.com* (a sister site to the *dailykos.com*), and *sojourners.com*.

There also is a very active conservative side to religious conversations online. The Christian Right and Religious Right are well represented in the online world and attract moderate Catholics and Protestants as well as Evangelists, Fundamentalists and Pentecostals. Religiosity in America often comes in waves. In recent years, the global community witnessed a resurgence of conservative and fundamentalist values that are pervasive online. A cursory review of any top news site or blog reveals that many writers are talking about the “religion gap” - shorthand for the religious differences between Republican and Democratic voters.

It is difficult to measure the affect of religious conversations online within the global online community. One can count (but rarely predict) the number of comments a specific article receives. However, the reach and scope of the blogosphere is immeasurable and multiplicative, not unlike other forms of media, whereby stories and commentary affect many more people than those who actually read the article.

Yet, the Internet is widely viewed as a form of entertainment and a resource to gather *factual* information. Using the Internet to share personal opinions and connect with others is a relatively new, albeit growing, phenomenon.

Social Networks

Social networking Web sites are increasingly popular among youth and young adults. The purpose of social networking sites is to build an online community around shared interests and values. While the popularity of such social networking sites as *MySpace.com* and *Facebook.com* grows rapidly, these sites are not yet attracting religious groups, organizations or denominations en masse. For example, a search for “religion” on MySpace points to information

and music selections of the punk rock band “Bad Religion.” Where as a search for “religion” on Facebook reveals two applications which users can download to their individual profiles: “religion and Beliefs” and “My Religion” respectively. Neither application is popular among the average Facebook user with fewer than 100 downloads out of the 54 million estimated Facebook profiles. However, religious constituencies are certainly present in the online social network boom and are widely popular as dating and matchmaking sites, such as *ChristianSingles.com*, *Jdate.com*, and *Naseeb.com*.

The occurrence of a religious offshoot of a general Web site is very common. For example:

- From MySpace, which began as a social networking site for rock bands, sprung *xiznz.com*, a social networking site for Christian rock musicians.
- Another example is *GodTube.com*, an Evangelical Christian offshoot of *YouTube.com*, the popular video-sharing Web site where users upload and share video clips.
- *GodTube.com*, “the Christian answer to YouTube,” features videos that proselytize and evangelize Christian theology and doctrine. In stark contrast, a search on *YouTube.com* for “religion” or “Christianity” returns user-generated video that features antitheist doctrine refuting all claims of God and cites all believers as delusional. Also popular on YouTube are videos that specifically attack one or more religions, such as fundamentalist Islam.

Navigating Search Engines

When performing a search on the top search engines, Google, Yahoo! and MSN, results return the expected array of informational resources. For example, on each search engine tested, when searching by keyword “religion” – the first result returned is the extensive and comprehensive *wikipedia.com* definition for religion (wikipedia is itself a Web site for online user-generated content). Other results in the first and second page views for a search on religion included several directories of definitions and articles, notable online news sites (*LA Times*, *Dallas Morning News*, NPR and ABC online), and university-based Web sites and information.

Studies show that roughly 11% of the adult population read blogs (<http://www.clickz.com/showPage.html?page=3438891>). That 11% however, is scattered across millions of active blogs. Given that blogs make up a small percentage of the Internet, and that a small percentage of the adult population actually goes to and reads blogs, it’s not surprising that traditional search engines are not an effective way of finding blogs and their featured online discussions.

The Future of E-conversations on Religion

As online communities continue to develop and expand, we most certainly will see an increase in religious conversations. The Internet is an expansion of traditional media, as well as a unique vehicle for communication – it does lay claim to the unique qualities of anonymity and massive reach. As such, we can expect online discussions and debates to develop in a different manner in which traditional media hosts such conversations. As the blogosphere becomes more popular, individuals will feel more comfortable about asserting their own views and beliefs online and the debate of religion in public and social life will take a decidedly more interesting turn.

APPENDIX A: Methodology

As we did for the 2005 analysis, Douglas Gould and Company researched media coverage of religious topics by performing an electronic search using Nexis.com and Factiva.com. Douglas Gould and Company searched a total of 22 media outlets for five month-long periods. We chose two separate months that contain religious holidays -- December 2006 and April 2007 -- in addition to a summer month, June 2007. Douglas Gould and Company also looked at coverage from September 2007 and October 2007 to include coverage around the 9/11 anniversary.

The sample consisted of the top 12 daily newspapers in the country, three national news magazines, six progressive opinion and feature magazines, and the *Associated Press* wire service. The outlets searched largely remained the same as in the 2005 sample with the exception of two additional newspapers – *The Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*.

The press outlets included in the analysis:

<i>The New York Times</i>	<i>Time</i>
<i>The Los Angeles Times</i>	<i>Newsweek</i>
<i>The Boston Globe</i>	<i>U.S. News & World Report</i>
<i>The Washington Post</i>	<i>Atlantic Monthly</i>
<i>The Chicago Tribune</i>	<i>The New Yorker</i>
<i>The Atlanta Journal-Constitution</i>	<i>Harper's</i>
<i>The San Francisco Chronicle</i>	<i>The Nation</i>
<i>The Philadelphia Inquirer</i>	<i>The Progressive</i>
<i>The Dallas Morning News</i>	<i>The New Republic</i>
<i>The Detroit Free Press</i>	<i>Associated Press</i>
<i>The Wall Street Journal</i>	<i>USA Today</i>

Parameters of the search

Using the electronic search engine, the following criteria were used as the parameters of the search:

- The story needed to focus on a religious topic.
- The story had to appear in one of the time periods specified above.
- Combinations of the terms listed below needed to appear in the story.

Since religion is such a broad topic, the focus required narrowing. Douglas Gould and Company used the original list of search terms as in 2005 and then added terms (noted by asterisks) to reflect the current discourse on religion, helping us to focus on articles on a wide variety of social issues. These terms corresponded to many of the social issues, concerns and work of grantees of the Ford Foundation’s Religion and Culture: Meeting the Challenge of Pluralism project.

The search terms also reflected the six major religious traditions in the world, resulting in two separate lists of terms:

Search Terms for Articles on Religion

<u>Religion</u>	<u>Topics</u>		
Buddhism/Buddhist	Diversity	Pluralism	Sexual abuse*
Christianity/Christian	Gays	Poverty	Immigration
Hinduism/Hindu	Gender Equity	Racism	Christian conservatives*
Islam/Muslim	Homosexuals	Sexism	Presidential election*
Judaism/Jewish	Human rights	Gnosticism*	Gospel of Mary*
Taoism	Interfaith	Tolerance	Global warming*
	Minorities	Women	Middle East peace*
	Stem cell research*		Sanctuary movement*
	Faith-based initiative*		Alternative health*
	Hijab*		Baptist*
	Christian capitalism*		Homeless shelters*
	War on Christmas*		Megachurches*
	New religious left*		Minimum wage*
	Slavery*		Same sex union*
	Sexual discrimination		Religion in schools*
	Mitt Romney*		Affordable housing*
	Barack Obama*		Social thought*
	Hillary Clinton*		Atheism*
	John Edwards*		Iraq War*
	Clergy abuse*		Street Religion*
	Evangelical*		Christian Zionism*
	Evangelical environmentalism*		
	Creation care*		

Armed with these two lists, Douglas Gould and Company then electronically searched for articles that contained at least one of the religion-related terms listed above coupled with at least one of the topics listed above. We refined the search to ensure that the above search terms appeared in the body of the article in close relation to one another to maintain the intended context for the search, while appearing in the specific months requested.

These search terms were entered in two batches since Nexis.com can only accommodate a certain number of characters and can only produce a certain number of results for a specific search. These had to be merged with separate searches on the websites of publications for which Lexis did not have current and/or full-length articles: *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Nation*. *Wall Street Journal* articles were obtained through searches on Factiva.com.

This amalgamated search netted an initial pool of 2,470 articles, compared to 1,947 articles in 2005.

Some of these articles, however, did not match what we were looking for. As a result, Douglas Gould and Company went through the retrieved story list, publication by publication. When Douglas Gould and Company eliminated those that did not match the criteria outlined above, there were 1,383 articles that appeared in the five-month period, compared to 402 articles in 2005. This was due to a changed methodology used in 2007 with expanded search terms and additional outlets, and does not represent an increase in the volume of coverage on religion.

The methodology called for Douglas Gould and Company to read and analyze between 160 and 200 articles. Douglas Gould and Company drew a sample of every eighth article in the retrieved sample. This netted a total of 169 articles over the five-month period.

APPENDIX B: List of Reporters and Writers Covering Religion

Associated Press

Munir Ahmad
Matthew Barakat
Jenny Barchfield
Mike Corder
Phil Couvrette
Kristen Gelineau
Eric Gorski
Kirsten Grieshaber
Kristen Gelineau
Andrew Higgins
Glen Johnson
Dennis Junius
Bradley S. Klapper
Tariq Panja
Rungrawee C. Pinyorat
Daniela Petroff
Nancy DeWolf Smith
Toby Sterling
Tim Sullivan
Lindsay Toler
Nicole Winfield
Cheryl Wittenauer
Thomas Wagner
Qassim Abdul-Zahra

Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Rosalind Bentley
Jim Galloway and Bob Kemper
Jan Love
Sean McKenzie
Rachel Pomerance

Boston Globe

Rich Barlow
Jake Halpern
Robert Knox
Stacey Kors
Michael Kranish
Erica Noonan
Michael Paulson
Omar Sacirbey

Chicago Tribune

Kim Barker
Alan Cooperman
Sam Enriquez

John M. Glionna
Ron Grossman
Tom Hundley
Gregg Krupa
Jo Napolitano
Russell Working

Dallas Morning News

William McKenzie
Wayne Slater

Los Angeles Times

Mark Z. Barabak
Christian Berthelsen
Michael Finnegan
Michael Joseph Gross
James Gerstenzang
Josh Getlin
Joel Havemann
Molly Hennessy-Fiske
Jonathan Kirsch
Josh Meyer
Sebastian Rotella
Stephanie Simon

New York Times

Negar Azimi
Peter Abblebome
Ginnia Bellafante
Neela Banerjee
Ellen Barry
Michael Cooper
Kevin Coyne Demetrios
(archbishop of U.S. Greek Orthodox Church)
Manohla Dargis
Maureen Dowd
James C. Dobson
Steven Erlanger
Ian Fisher
Laurie Goodstein
Nicholas Kristof
David D. Kirkpatrick
Mark Landler
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