

LASTING LEGACIES: A FRAMING ANALYSIS OF RELIGION NEWS ONLINE AND IN LEGACY MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

This work examined 514 stories published at religion news niche websites, and the websites of legacy media in the U.S. to determine how stories about religion were framed online. Ten websites, chosen for their history of news coverage, geographic location and religion vertical, were analyzed for the study. Using the categories, or topoi, created by Mark Silk in his 1995 work “Unsecular Media,” this research examined how religion news stories were framed online, which expands earlier research that explored frames as they appear in print. This work also built on the research of additional frames, or topoi as Silk writes, created to examine news framing at Catholic blogs and found that religion news niche websites made more use of these new categories than did legacy news outlets.

Results showed that during the study period the frame or topos of tolerance was the most widely used in religion reporting, regardless of news outlet. This study concludes by discussing how the continuation of journalistic norms, particularly the use of conflict as a frame, perpetuates the criticisms of how religion news is reported.