

Public Abstract

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The Catholic Church is portrayed by the media in many different ways. Identifying these portrayals, help discover audience perceptions of the Catholic Church in the United States. Guided by the communication theories of social construction of reality and framing, this study explores the question: What are the media frames used to portray the Catholic Church in The New York Times? This mixed qualitative methods research study narrows the focus and examines The New York Times coverage of the Catholic Church from October 2006 to October 2011. Through a qualitative content analysis of 55 articles, this research revealed three frames portraying the Catholic Church: The Catholic Church is divided, the Catholic Church suffers a loss of membership and the Catholic Church is irrelevant. This research provides a foundation for further research studying the possible salience transfer of the frames presented to various audiences about the Catholic Church. It is also important for the Catholic Church media relations, as well as for the relationship between the church and its members.