

Public Abstract

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Title:Christian Media Framing of Gay Marriage

This mixed methods study explores Christian media's framing of gay marriage from 2010 to 2015, looking at a sample of articles on Christianity Today's website before and after gay marriage became legal. Using mixed methods, the researcher looked at these articles and identified what frames were used from 2010 to 2015, how those frames have changed over time, how those frames relate to the public opinion of each time period, and how those frames compare to existing research about framing of same-sex marriage in mainstream media. By looking at a Christian magazine's framing of gay marriage and using it as a lens through which to view culture, this study sheds light on how the relationship between Christians and the gay community has changed, offering explanation and perspective on an issue that might not be so clear-cut as media make it out to be.

This study answers the research questions of how framing changed over time, how framing relates to public opinion, and how framing compares to existing research of framing in mainstream media. First, the study found that according to Christianity Today's coverage, evangelicals' perspectives on gay marriage haven't changed drastically but have slightly shifted, nonetheless. In time, evangelicals became more interested in maintaining their legal rights in the midst of a sexual revolution, rather than stopping gay rights altogether. Next, the study found that Christianity Today's coverage didn't exactly line up with public perception found in Pew Research data, with more gay-friendly Christians existing than Christianity Today shows. Finally, the study showed that framing of gay marriage in the mainstream medium of The New York Times is quite different than framing of gay marriage in a Christian publication like Christianity Today. Sources in The New York Times fell into more law-related themes, while sources in Christianity Today fell into frames related to morality.

This research is the first of its kind, a look at how the evangelical Christian community covers the LGBT community. Literature on Christian media is already scarce, so literature on Christian framing is practically non-existent. This study has sociological impact, showing how two groups in society interact, but it also has impact in the field of communications, showing the gaps and strengths in Christian coverage.