

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: THE MAINSTREAM OUTSIDER: NEWS MEDIA
PORTRAYALS OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE
MITT ROMNEY AND HIS MORMONISM, 2006-2008.

Lane Daniel Williams, Doctor of Philosophy, 2011

Dissertation directed by: Professor Katherine C. McAdams
Philip Merrill College of Journalism

This study examines how news media framed former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney and his Mormonism during his unsuccessful quest for the 2008 Republican presidential nomination. The study's central finding is that, in the aggregate, news accounts framed Mormonism as outside the American religious and cultural mainstream. This framing emerged as part of campaign's "horse-race" coverage, which focused on who was ahead in the nomination race, who was behind and why. That coverage naturally highlighted aspects of Mormonism that caused Romney electoral problems. Journalists zeroed in on the church's history of polygamy, on whether the church is a Christian faith and on current church beliefs that may appear outside the mainstream. Basic beliefs that Mormons share with other American faiths, such as helping the poor, were mentioned, but less frequently. Romney himself was framed as a generally mainstream candidate whose central problem was his faith. This dissertation also describes how news media relied heavily on an analogy between Romney's struggle to overcome his "Mormon problem" and presidential candidate John F. Kennedy's struggle to overcome anti-Catholic sentiments in 1960. Implications of these conclusions are discussed for candidates of other minority religions and further research is suggested. The study proposes a "horse-race influence model" that highlights a candidate's weaknesses, providing voters with reasons to vote against a candidate, which is reflected in the next set of horse-race coverage polls. Horse-race coverage, therefore, may create a feedback loop that increasingly harms a candidate's chances. Quantitative findings are based on a content analysis of 205 news articles that appeared in eight prominent American news outlets between January 2006 and Romney's withdrawal from the race in February 2008. Articles in the sample mentioned Mormonism at least four times and Romney at least once. The content analysis obtained a mean intercoder reliability of .84.

THE MAINSTREAM OUTSIDER: NEWS MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE MITT ROMNEY AND HIS
MORMONISM, 2006-2008.

by

Lane Daniel Williams

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Advisory Committee:

Associate Professor Katherine C. McAdams, Chair
Professor Emerita Maurine H. Beasley
Professor Carl Sessions Stepp
Professor Christopher Foreman
Dr. John Thomas

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Dedication

To my children, Ethan, Sophie, Isaac, and Adam:

May this be an example of how to work and of how to show faith.

To Laurie:

You are the reason being Mormon means so much to me.

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A study like this cannot be done without the help of scores of people. They need thanks here. I mention by name only a few. I start with the dedicated perseverance of my first adviser, Dr. Christopher Hanson at the University of Maryland, who stuck with me through false starts and mixed methods and took me under his wing when others were unable to do so. He helped me avoid this study being an apologetic. His comments were helpful and generous.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and background.

1.1 Introduction: The problem and its scope.

This study examines the news media coverage of the minority religious beliefs of a mainstream presidential candidate, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, who emerged as a strong contender for the Republican nomination when he ran for president in 2007.¹ Mitt Romney is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He is a Mormon, and he ran at a time when as many as one in five voters (depending on the survey) said they would be less likely to vote for a candidate who practiced Mormonism.² Such attitudes provided difficult challenges for both Romney and for reporters writing about the campaign. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has had a long and often painful relationship with the news media over its 180-year history. Stereotyping and misunderstanding dominated media portrayals of the Mormons for much of the church's early history, when coverage often included an on-going focus on the practice of polygamy, which the church abandoned more than a century ago.³ Today, Mormons comprise roughly 6 million Americans, fewer than one in 50, many of whom live in the American West.⁴ The Romney campaign brought the coverage of the Mormon

¹ See, for example, Sridhar Pappu, "The Holy Cow Candidate," *Atlantic Monthly*, September 2005, at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200509/pappu>, accessed May 11, 2009; John J. Miller, "Matinee Mitt. The governor of Massachusetts may soon be appearing in a (political) theater near you," *National Review* online, December 14, 2005, under John J. Miller, NR National Political Reporter, at <http://old.nationalreview.com/miller/miller200512141539.asp>, accessed September 2, 2010.

² See chapter 2 for a discussion about the surveys.

³ See Appendix J for an overview of Mormons' relationship with the news media including detailed notes.

⁴ Interview with Dr. John Thomas, August 31, 2011.

faith into renewed focus. This study's central purpose is seeing how reporters met the challenge of presenting fair and balanced coverage of a candidate's religion.

Romney launched his campaign in an era when religion played an important and controversial role in the U.S. and in its politics and also during a time when questions of religion and politics face renewed scrutiny. This study comes during an era when political reporters were said to carry the important task of helping voters sort out presidential candidates' qualifications and character.⁵

That perhaps one in five voters wouldn't vote for a Mormon constituted a legitimate reason to write about Mitt Romney's religion in the campaign, but there were others. Mormonism has a complex theology that remains controversial in some circles. Mormon theology is difficult to convey simply to an audience, many of whom say they depend upon the news media for their ideas about Mormonism.⁶ In covering Romney's faith, news reporters faced an important religious controversy: Evangelical Christians, an important voting bloc in Republican primaries, and Mormons disagree on the meaning of Christianity and on many other points of doctrine.

This study looks at how reporters met the challenge of covering Mormonism and other obstacles facing this otherwise mainstream candidate. How did reporters frame Romney's chances? Was he seen as succeeding or suffering setbacks? What traits of his Mormonism were used to describe his religion? Did reporters revert to old stereotypes

⁵ For a further discussion of this issue, see chapter 2, especially of Thomas E. Patterson, *Out of Order: An incisive and boldly original critique of the news media's domination of America's political process*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1993).

⁶ Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life; Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. "Public Expresses Mixed Views of Islam, Mormonism," survey, September 25, 2007, question 33, 48, 56 survey conducted by Schulman, Ronca, & Bucuvalas, under publications at <http://pewforum.org/surveys/religionviews07/>, accessed March 9, 2009.

such as the long-abandoned practice of polygamy in describing his faith? What facets of his character and personality were highlighted? Was he seen as a candidate holding mainstream political views? Was his religion seen as mainstream? To whom did reporters compare Romney in evaluating his chances of dealing with religion in the campaign? Were there important differences between opinion and news coverage? These questions inspired the present study.

This study aims to provide a clearer understanding of how reporters dealt with this challenge of covering the minority faith and the election chances of a generally mainstream candidate during an election. It used a content analysis of more than 200 articles from eight leading news outlets with national and regional scope that appeared from Jan. 1, 2006, through Feb. 10, 2008. Each article mentioned the word “Mormon” or something similar, like “Mormonism” at least four times and Romney at least once. The central research question was: What frames were evident in the coverage of Mitt Romney and his religion during the 2008 campaign?

An important reason to look at the Romney campaign was to try to understand how the traditional framing of political reporting as a horse race shaped the coverage of a minority religion. In an era where scholars at Pew and elsewhere suggest that horse-race framing is growing in political journalism, an understanding of some of the potential consequences of that framing is useful.⁷ Horse-race journalism, the idea goes, focuses on the ups and downs of politics, the winners and losers, and the polls rather than on the issues surrounding governance and proposed policies. The study asks how a minority

⁷ Katherine Q. Seelye, “2008 coverage focuses on the horserace,” *New York Times*, October 29, 2007, under The Caucus Blog, at <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/29/2008-coverage-focuses-on-the-horse-race/>, accessed September 21, 2010.

religion might interact with a focus on horse-race polling and coverage. Perhaps, in a horse-race setting, decreased rankings or success may have suggested wide discomfort with a religion, prompting reporters to explain what it is about that religion that makes it idiosyncratic. This study is a first of its kind in bringing the factor of religion into the discussion of horse-race journalism and its influence on political campaigns. In an era of growing religious diversity in the United States, Mitt Romney will not be the last person from a minority religion to seek the presidency, suggesting that this study will be of great interest to those who might seek the presidency in the future.

A second reason for the study is its timeliness. At the time of this writing in 2011, Mitt Romney was running again for the 2012 nomination, so a review of how the news media covered him and his religion can provide insight for those interested in the 2012 campaign. In addition, there is a second Mormon, former Utah governor Jon Huntsman, who is also widely considered a top-tier potential Republican candidate for the 2012 nomination. Political commentator Glenn Beck and Senate Majority leader Harry Reid also share Romney's faith, so regardless of the outcome of the 2012 elections, Mormons appear likely to remain prominent in the national dialogue for many years to come. A study that helps reporters understand Mormon beliefs and how they figure in the mix of politics and journalism is timely and important.

For those interested more in Mormonism itself, the Romney campaign coverage also comprised one of the longest sustained media discussions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in at least a century since Mormon apostle Reed Smoot faced three years of Congressional hearings about Mormon influence before being allowed to

take his seat in the U.S. Senate.⁸ The campaign coverage presented a unique opportunity to gauge how Mormonism itself is framed during the first decade of the 21st century in contrast with the historic framing of the faith.⁹ How does recent coverage frame Mormonism in terms of a religious mainstream? How does Mormonism appear to fit into the national discourse today? Given that at least one study has shown that religious doctrine is rarely discussed in the news media, how do reporters handle the tough intellectual world of doctrinal difference?¹⁰ How do they provide insight into the coverage of religion generally?

This study also brings an analysis of the historical framing of other presidential campaigns into the analysis of contemporary campaign coverage. The study asks an important question: to whose campaign should Mitt Romney's campaign be compared? The role that historical campaigns play in the framing of a presidential candidate in the news media is also an important question and a new line of inquiry introduced by this study.

Three of the most powerful forces in American politics converged in the candidacy of Mitt Romney in 2007 and 2008 – the forces of presidential elections, of the news media and of religion. Romney's religion provided a unique way of understanding

⁸ See Appendix J for a discussion with references to this issue. See also the discussion of Mormonism in the campaign of George Romney in 1968 and other Mormon candidates in Appendix I.

⁹ 2008 marked an important year for Mormon coverage. Not only was Mitt Romney's faith a major news story, a raid on a polygamist compound run by a break-off of Mormonism in Texas dominated headlines a few months later and Mormon church members officials proved influential in the passage of California's gay marriage Proposition 8.

¹⁰ Center for Media and Public Affairs *Media Monitor*, "The Media Get Religion. National Media Coverage of Religion in America 1969-1998," May/June 2000, 3, at http://www.cmpa.com/files/media_monitor/00mayjun.pdf, accessed August 8, 2011.

how these forces interact in early 21st century America. On Dec. 6, 2007, Romney delivered one of the most important speeches of the entire campaign season, “Faith in America,¹¹” a speech widely compared with John F. Kennedy’s 1960 speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association. Romney’s speech and the coverage it produced generated a national dialogue about the role of religion in politics and of America’s relationship to religion. Assessing some of the media’s response to that discussion, as this study does, is also important.

1.2. Background: Romney’s Campaign

Willard Mitt Romney’s campaign for the presidency formally began on Feb. 13, 2007, less than a month after he left office as governor of Massachusetts. Dressed conservatively in a blue suit, white shirt and blue tie, he took to a podium in the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Mich. A white Nash Rambler – made famous by his late father’s work at American Motors – and a Ford Hybrid SUV bracketed him as he formally announced his campaign for the presidency in 2008. Romney’s father served as president of American Motors and later as the popular Republican governor of the state, so it was natural that Mitt Romney started his campaign in Dearborn. The setting highlighted Romney’s personal success story. “Throughout my life, I have pursued innovation and transformation,” he told the audience.¹²

The announcement speech formally began an intense presidential run that ended in

¹¹ See Appendix C for a full text of the article. (Nearly a quarter of the coverage in the study’s story population focused on this speech.)

¹² Chris Cillizza, “Analyzing Mitt Romney’s Announcement Speech,” *Washingtonpost.com* The Fix blog, under “The Fix,” <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/thefix/eye-on-2008/analyzing-mitt-romneys-announc.html>, accessed August 11, 2010.

failure 360 days later. The Romney campaign seemed for a time to have a serious chance at victory in the Republican primaries, but the candidate fell short in the first rounds of caucus and primary contests across the country in the winter of 2008. John McCain, the Arizona senator, captured the hotly contested nomination.

Thousands of articles appeared that mentioned Mitt Romney and his Mormon religion. Between January 2006 and February 2008, nearly 1,600 articles mentioned Romney and Mormonism as determined by searches of the Lexis-Nexis database for major news sources. Nearly 1,000 appeared in the Associated Press, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Time* and *Newsweek* coverage of that time period. Google searches for the search string “Romney and Mormon” have resulted in more than 1 million hits.¹³ A Pew study suggested that 50 percent of all stories involving religion in the presidential campaign during 2007 were about Mitt Romney’s Mormonism.¹⁴

1.2.a Romney’s Qualifications and Background.

Before serving as governor of Massachusetts, Romney had a long record of personal, business and political achievement. He graduated from Harvard with both a law degree and an MBA. He worked for Bain Management in Boston, where he became CEO. He founded Bain Capital, an investment firm and became a multimillionaire. It

¹³ Michael Tackett, “Mormon Mission,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 22, 2007, 24.

¹⁴ The controversy and speech involving Obama’s pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, may have received more coverage during 2008. See *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, “Running on Faith. Study finds media coverage of religion in the primary campaign rivaled the coverage of race and gender combined,” analysis July 10, 2008, under politics and elections, at <http://pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/Running-on-Faith.aspx>, accessed September 2, 2010. This study uses a different methodology than the Pew study, so its numbers aren’t in perfect agreement, though its trends are the same.

was with this image of a successful innovator that he hoped to take to the White House.

Evaluations of Romney's time as governor were mixed, but he succeeded in resolving the state's budget woes without income tax increases, in passing a healthcare bill and in dealing with the scandal- and accident-plagued Big Dig tunnel project in Boston.¹⁵ When the Massachusetts Supreme Court came out in favor of same-sex marriage during his tenure, Romney became one of the nation's leading opponents of same-sex marriage, working to overturn and to limit the ruling's scope. He was also "the rare Massachusetts pol to act correctly in one of the state's worst political scandals," by forcing Billy Bulger out as president of the University of Massachusetts.¹⁶ One facet of Romney's record was that during his years as governor, he had changed positions on important issues such as abortion and gay rights, critics said. These changes were to become an important part of the coverage of Mitt Romney during the presidential campaign. In a front-page article in the *Washington Post*, political reporters Dan Balz and Shalaigh Murray wrote,

As he prepares for a 2008 presidential campaign, Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney (R) has championed the conservative principles that guided President Ronald Reagan, become an outspoken opponent of same-sex marriage and supported overturning the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion.

It was not always so. Twelve years ago, Romney boasted that he would be more effective in fighting discrimination against gay men and

¹⁵ Christine McConville and Hillary Chabot, "Brother: Matt Amorello's fall linked to Mitt Romney's gall," *Boston Herald*, under local coverage at http://www.bostonherald.com/news/regional/view/20100811brother_matt_amorellos_fall_linked_to_mitt_romneys_gall/srvc=home&position=also, accessed August 11, 2010.

¹⁶ Whitey Bulger, an organized crime figure, and his brother Billy, the long-time president of the Massachusetts Senate, comprise one of the biggest on-going scandals in Massachusetts history that allegedly included protection of organized crime figures and sending the wrong people to jail. See, Debra Saunders, "Whitey, Billy and Mitt," *Creator's Syndicate*, <http://www.creators.com/conservative/debra-saunders/whitey-billy-and-mitt.html>, accessed August 11, 2010.

lesbians than Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), distanced himself from some conservative policies of the Reagan administration, and proudly recalled his family's record in support of abortion rights.

The apparent gulf between the candidate who ran for the Senate in 1994 and the one getting ready to run for president has raised questions as to who is the real Mitt Romney. Is he the self-described moderate who unsuccessfully challenged Kennedy in the year of the Republican landslide, the self-described conservative now ready to bid for the Republican presidential nomination in 2008, or merely an ambitious and adaptable politician? The answer could be crucial to Romney's presidential ambitions.¹⁷

Before leaving office, pundits began touting Romney as a potential Republican candidate for the presidency. Columnist George F. Will seems to have been the first to publicly recognize Romney's potential as a presidential candidate when he highlighted Romney in a 2004 column, just after George W. Bush won re-election.¹⁸ Quickly, Romney's Mormonism became a primary concern for writers and pundits speculating on Romney's potential bid. In 2005, Amy Sullivan, a writer for *Washington Monthly*, explained why Mormonism was a major news story, asserting that many evangelical Christians, a major bloc in the Republican Party, disliked Romney's Mormon faith, thinking it was outside the religious mainstream. She wrote,

Some of this anti-Mormonism is a fairly fuzzy sort of bias, based mostly on rumors and unfamiliarity and the vague feeling that Mormons are kind of weird.

... The first time I ever heard about Mormons was in fifth grade, sitting in a basement classroom of my Baptist church, watching a filmstrip about cults. Our Sunday school class was covering a special month-long unit on false religions; in the mail-order curriculum, Mormonism came

¹⁷ Dan Balz and Shalaigh Murray, "Mass. Governor's Rightward Shift Raises Questions," *Washington Post*, December 21, 2006, under Political Browser at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/12/20/AR2006122002046.html>, accessed December 23, 2010.

¹⁸ George Will, "Mitt Romney for President?" December 16, 2004, at the *Pittsburgh Tribune*, http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/s_283684.html, accessed August 10, 2009. Will mentioned Romney's Mormonism, but only in the sense of calling him devout.

somewhere between devil worshippers and Jim Jones. Although most of the particulars are lost to me now, one of the images remains in my mind: a cartoon of human figures floating in outer space (an apparent reference to the Mormon doctrine of ‘eternal progression’) that appeared on the screen next to our pull-down map of Israel. Even at age 10, the take-away message was clear. Mormons were not like us. They were not Christian.¹⁹

Other articles, including a profile of Romney in the *Atlantic* in 2005, portrayed him as presidential material – with Mormonism being his biggest potential liability.²⁰ On June 6, 2005, the *Weekly Standard*, a leading, agenda-setting conservative magazine, wrote a detailed piece about Mitt Romney and his Mormon faith called, “In 2008, Will it Be Mormon in America?”²¹

1.2.b Polls

Numerous polls suggested that Romney would have a hard time winning based upon his Mormon beliefs. The numbers varied but were consistent in showing that overcoming perceptions of Mormonism would be a challenge for Romney:²²

- An ABC News/Washington Post poll in June 2007 found that nearly 50 percent said there was no chance they would vote for a Mormon for president.²³

¹⁹ Amy Sullivan, “Mitt Romney’s Evangelical Problem,” *Washington Monthly*, September 2005, at <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2005/0509.sullivan1.html>, accessed May 11, 2009.

²⁰ Sridhar Pappu, “The Holy Cow Candidate,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 2005, at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200509/pappu>, accessed May 11, 2009.

²¹ Terry Eastland, “In 2008? Will it Be Mormon in America?” *The Weekly Standard*, June 6, 2005, at <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/005/672kwvro.asp?pg=1>, accessed August 10, 2009.

²² For another example of this variability, see sidebar in Howard Burkes, “Faith Could be a Hurdle in Romney’s White House Bid,” NPR.org, under Election 2008, at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7245768>, accessed March 16, 2011.

- A second ABC poll in July showed that 34 percent of Americans were at least somewhat uncomfortable with a Mormon running for president.²⁴
- A CNN survey in October 2007 showed that 19 percent of voters would be less likely to vote for a Mormon and 3 percent said it would make them more likely.²⁵
- Working for Fox News, Opinion Dynamics asked respondents if they thought Americans generally – not themselves specifically – would be comfortable with a Mormon as president, and 50 percent said No.²⁶ Another Opinion Dynamics poll for Fox showed that only 39 percent knew that Romney was Mormon, however.²⁷
- *New York Times* writer Laurie Goodstein suggested that about one in four voters wouldn't vote for a Mormon and one in three Republicans wouldn't do so.²⁸

It is hard to know exactly why the data diverged so markedly; although question-wording and the timing of the polls could be reasons for some of the inconsistency. Also, at points in the campaign, people may have known Romney was Mormon and equated their opposition to voting against a Mormon with their opposition to Romney. However, given the polling data, it is no surprise that Mormonism and worries about it became central to the national discussion of Mitt Romney's 2008 presidential campaign. The conversation was so frequent online that a Google search more than a year after Romney dropped out of the campaign showed that the search string Romney and Mormon brought

²³ ABC News poll June 2007.

²⁴ ABC News poll July 2007.

²⁵ Opinion Research Center survey

²⁶ Opinion Dynamics survey October 11, 2007

²⁷ Opinion Dynamics survey May 17, 2007

²⁸ Laurie Goodstein, "A Mormon's Ultimate Doorbell," *The New York Times*, December 9, 2007, Section 4, 1.

back nearly 600,000 hits.²⁹ One news report suggested that, at one point, more than 1.2 million hits returned on a Google search for that search string.³⁰ Among the leading national news outlets that comprise part of this study – The Associated Press, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Time* and *Newsweek* – the words “Romney” and “Mormon” appeared in nearly 800 total articles between January 2006 and early 2008, when Romney dropped out of the race.³¹ Introductory campaign biographies in these and other news outlets made Mormonism a primary way of framing Mitt Romney and his campaign challenges, setting up continuing coverage of “the Mormon issue” for the campaign.³² So, by the time Romney formally announced in Michigan in February 2007, it was clear that the media would write about his religion among other campaign topics.

1.2.c Early campaign coverage

Despite early horse-race polling showing that Romney had little name recognition nationally and that he faced concerns about his Mormonism, he quietly began achieving success. He spent heavily on advertising in Iowa and New Hampshire, gaining traction there. On March 4, he won the Conservative Political Action Committee’s straw poll, outpolling New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, the national frontrunner at the time, 21

²⁹ Search conducted May 11, 2009

³⁰ Michael Tackett, “Mormon Mission,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 22, 2007, 24.

³¹ This was from a series of searches of Lexis/Nexis and Proquest using AP’s state and regional wire and these other national media sources..

³² Important news outlets with articles on the topic include *American Spectator*, *Boston Globe*, *Slate*, *New Republic*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *USA Today*, *Wall Street Journal*, *NPR*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Christian Science Monitor* and *Real Clear Politics*.

percent to 17 percent.³³ He demonstrated immediate success in raising money. The first quarter of 2007, he was the leading Republican fundraiser, raising more than \$20 million, but the coverage included frequent mentions of Romney's reliance on a network of wealthy Mormons and Utahans for some of his fund-raising success.³⁴ Shortly thereafter, a much-discussed two-part PBS documentary on Mormonism kept the Romney-Mormon connection alive.³⁵ And, in the *New York Times* that April, Ken Woodward (whose coverage of religion for *Newsweek* since 1964 makes him an influential religion reporter) wrote an op-ed that laid groundwork for much of the coverage that followed. Throughout his campaign, Mitt Romney had chosen to say little about his Mormon beliefs – a practice he began in 1994 during his run for the U.S. Senate. But, in his op-ed piece, Woodward said Romney needed to speak out:

Although with 5.6 million adherents Mormonism is the nation's fourth-largest denomination, 57 percent of respondents to a recent CBS poll said they know little or nothing about Mormon beliefs and practices. Mr. Romney needs to be their teacher, whether he likes that role or not.³⁶

As Romney's campaign for the nomination gathered speed, many pundits said his biggest challenge would be to win the allegiance of conservative evangelicals who play a powerful role in Republican presidential nominating contests, and who sometimes regard Mormonism with suspicion or as outright heresy. Romney began an intense effort to

³³ Michael D. Shear, "Romney Wins Conservatives' Straw Poll. Giuliani, Brownback Next in CPAC Vote," *Washington Post*, March 4, 2007.

³⁴ Jim Kuhnenn, "Romney helps tap new donors using Mormon, business connections," *Associated Press*, April 18, 2007.

³⁵ Neil Genzlinger, "Modern-Day Look at History of the Latter-day Saints," *New York Times*, April 30, 2007.

³⁶ Kenneth Woodward, "The Presidency's Mormon Moment," *New York Times*, April 9, 2007, A17.

cultivate the evangelicals and convince them he shared their essential values. For instance, on May 5, 2007, Romney gave the commencement address at Regent University, the school founded by the evangelical Rev. Pat Robertson. It was his second visit to the school in four months. He gave a speech about the breakdown of the family and about the evils of pornography and violence.³⁷ Some coverage of the speech led with the fact that Romney “did not discuss his Mormon faith,” emphasizing his silence about his Mormonism.³⁸ Several news outlets reported that Romney’s visit caused such a stir within the campus community that Robertson met with student leaders uncomfortable with a Mormon speaking on campus.³⁹

On May 7, 2007, the Rev. Al Sharpton, while debating atheist Christopher Hitchens at the New York Public Library about the existence of God, said, “As for the one Mormon running for office, those who really believe in God will defeat him anyways, so don’t worry about that; that’s a temporary situation.”⁴⁰ Two days later, Romney issued a statement saying Sharpton’s comments could be construed as bigoted. By choosing to pick a fight with Sharpton, whose own complaints of bigotry had recently

³⁷ Perry Bacon Jr., “Romney Reaches to the Christian Right. In a Conservative Crowd, Candidate Talks About Marriage, Child-Rearing,” *Washington Post*, May 6, 2007.

³⁸ In his op/ed, Woodward specifically suggested Romney use the platform of the Regent University speech to describe Mormonism. See also, Bacon, “Romney Reaches to the Christian Right.”

³⁹ Scott Helman, “Romney’s visit stirs debate at Christian university,” *Boston Globe*, May 6, 2007.

⁴⁰ Jennifer Dobner, “Sharpton tours Mormon HQ in Utah after comment about Romney,” *Associated Press*, May 22, 2007. See also, Michael D. Shear, “Romney and Sharpton Clash Over Mormonism,” *Washington Post*, May 10, 2007, A08; Michael Luo, “Romney Accuses Sharpton of a Bigoted Remark,” *New York Times*, May 10, 2007, A29.

forced radio talk-show host Don Imus off his nationally syndicated show,⁴¹ Romney quickly turned a discussion of his Mormonism into one about bigotry. Sharpton responded that he had been misinterpreted and that he had no beef with Mormons. Sharpton visited Salt Lake City on May 21 and met with church officials. Sharpton toured church facilities that provide welfare assistance to the poor, thereby providing an opportunity for the church to get some positive coverage of its commitment to good works.⁴²

Evangelical critics occasionally made news by attacking Romney's religion during the summer of 2007, but he dismissed them as bigots. Florida televangelist Bill Keller, for instance, told his audience of more than 2 million in June that:

... having Romney as president is no different than having a Muslim or Scientologist as president. I'll stay home and not vote before I will vote for Satan, since if you vote for Romney, you are voting for Satan!⁴³

The Romney campaign responded that "it shows that bigotry from time to time still

⁴¹ In April 2007, Imus called the women of the Rutgers' Women's basketball team "Nappy-headed hos." The racially charged remark led to Sharpton and the Rev. Jesse Jackson and others meeting with Imus employer, CBS. One week after his comment, Imus was fired by CBS. See, Judy Taber "CBS fires Don Imus over racial slur," April 12, 2007, CBS News, under New York, at <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/04/12/national/main2675273.shtml>, accessed March 14, 2011.

⁴² Romney's decision to accuse Sharpton of a bigoted remark suggested some savvy or cynicism. Christopher Hitchens often argued against Mormonism with more vigor than Sharpton, but in making Sharpton the subject of his attacks, Romney was able to make the discussion about bigotry – after Sharpton's attacks on other political commentators in 2007. If he had picked Hitchens, Hitchens' strident anti-Mormonism may have gained greater attention. A bigotry frame seemed to be the best counter-frame to deal with attacks on Romney's religion.

⁴³ Mitch Stacy, "Florida evangelist criticized for anti-Romney rants," *Associated Press*, June 7, 2007.

rears its ugly head in society.”⁴⁴

A restaurant patron drew headlines on May 29, 2007, when he refused to shake Romney’s hand because of his Mormonism.⁴⁵ Romney made no response.

In June 2007, Romney complained that operatives in other campaigns were stirring up anti-Mormon sentiments. One example of this was when a volunteer with the McCain campaign named Chad Workman allegedly questioned whether Mormons were Christian. In an anonymous report of a campaign meeting, Workman was said to have referenced an article that said Mormons supported the militant group Hamas, and that associated their treatment of women with the Taliban. When questioned by the AP, Workman declined comment. McCain’s campaign apologized for the alleged remark on June 22, 2007.⁴⁶

At the time, Romney appeared to be effectively brushing off these attacks. Contributions rolled in, his organizations in key primary and caucus states grew and looked formidable, advertisements filled the airways, and his standing in the polls began to rise. The *Washington Post*’s Dan Balz said polls had him leading in New Hampshire, and his success in Iowa forced national rivals John McCain and Rudolph Giuliani out of early tests of campaign strength there so they would avoid embarrassing defeats. On

⁴⁴ Ibid. The Associated Press reported on June 6, 2007, that the secular, liberal Americans United for the Separation of Church and State asked the Internal Revenue Service to investigate Keller’s tax-exempt status. The Romney campaign made no comments on the proposed investigation, but news outlets reported in June 2008 that Keller ultimately came under investigation; see Laurie Goodstein, “Challenging the I.R.S.,” *The New York Times Caucus Blog*, June 23, 2008, under The Caucus, at <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/06/23/challenging-the-irs/>, accessed March 14, 2011. It is unclear what the results of this investigation were.

⁴⁵ Associated Press, “Restaurant patron criticizes Romney over Mormon faith,” May 29, 2007.

⁴⁶ Brock Vergakis, “Romney: Repeated campaign attacks on Mormon religion troubling,” *Associated Press*, June 23, 2007; Amy Lorentzen, “McCain apologizes after alleged criticism of Mormon faith,” *Associated Press*, June 22, 2007.

June 25, Balz wrote that Romney looked strong.⁴⁷

Romney was looking strong in part because Arizona Sen. John McCain's campaign appeared to be in serious trouble., Long considered one of the likely front-runners, McCain, who finished second to George W. Bush in 2000, had led a long, controversial, and ultimately unsuccessful effort to enact immigration reform, which had drained his time and energy and set back his campaign fund-raising. McCain was so strapped for cash that he decided to minimize efforts in Iowa, focusing instead on the New Hampshire primary. By July 3, 2007, McCain was acknowledging his weakness and lack of funds. He laid off dozens of campaign staff and rumors began swirling that he might be forced to drop out of the race.⁴⁸

Emerging as the GOP leader in national opinion polls was former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, still remembered as the stalwart face of a city under attack on 9/11.⁴⁹ But his national popularity was almost irrelevant, given the socially conservative voters he had to court in GOP primaries. Giuliani's pro-choice abortion views and his messy divorce made it unlikely that he would appeal to conservative Republicans in early states. Giuliani focused his strategy on winning the seventh contest, the Florida primary, where many transplanted New Yorkers might give him an edge. He hoped a victory in Florida would provide momentum for victory in following primaries and caucuses on

⁴⁷ Dan Balz, "Romney Gains Credibility In Early Primary States. Push in Iowa, N.H. Puts Him in Top Tier," *Washington Post* June 25, 2007.

⁴⁸ Carl Hulse and Adam Nagourney, "Short on Money, McCain campaign dismisses dozens," *New York Times*, July 3, 2007.

⁴⁹ Luo, Michael, "God '08: Whose, and how much, will voters accept?" *New York Times*, July 22, 2007, Section 4, 4; Michael Cooper and Meghan Thee, "McCain defeats Romney in Florida Vote," *The New York Times*, January 30, 2008, under Politics, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/30/us/politics/30florida.html>, accessed March 21, 2011.

“Super Tuesday,” a week later, when 19 states would hold primaries or caucuses. In other words, Giuliani would have just seven days to raise money and mount campaigns all over the country. His chances seemed slim.

It seemed Romney would be tough to beat. His strategy was to roll over Giuliani in the early primaries and slug it out with McCain. Glen Johnson of the Associated Press wrote a story quoting Republican operatives saying Romney had positioned himself as the Republican front-runner with a well-thought-out strategy in the key early states.⁵⁰

However, he overlooked former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, a candidate who had raised little money and did not seem like a serious national player. But Huckabee was focusing on Iowa, quietly playing his guitar in small settings, talking about his proposals for a fair tax, and building an organization of evangelical Christians determined to stop Mitt Romney. Huckabee’s biggest natural advantage for capturing the Iowa caucuses was his religion. Huckabee was (and is) an evangelical Southern Baptist, former television minister and former president of the Arkansas State Baptist Association.⁵¹ The Iowa caucuses had an unusually large number of evangelical participants.⁵² Huckabee built his organization under the radar of national news media, which continued to treat him as a minor player through much of the summer. That changed on Aug. 11 with the Ames Straw Poll, a quadrennial, non-binding vote and fundraiser at the Hilton Coliseum at the campus of Iowa State University in Ames. More than

⁵⁰ Glen Johnson, “Romney uses early electioneering in early voting states,” *Associated Press*, June 17, 2007.

⁵¹ <http://www.mikehuckabee.com/about-mike-huckabee>, accessed August 12, 2010.

⁵² New York Times analysis of the election at <http://politics.nytimes.com/election-guide/2008/results/states/IA.html>, accessed August 12, 2010.

14,000 participants, many bused from around the state by candidates' organizations, descended on the coliseum to cast their ballots.⁵³

1.2.d Ames straw poll

It was a hot, sunny Saturday in Ames. Voters poured into the coliseum. Romney supporters handed out yellow T-shirts and red foam baseball "Mitts."⁵⁴ Huckabee's people gave out water bottles,⁵⁵ while their candidate played rock 'n roll with a powder blue-clad Elvis impersonator.⁵⁶ "You are witnessing a miracle. The dead has risen," Huckabee said. Pundits expected Romney to win easily, in part because McCain and Giuliani were effectively skipping the event.⁵⁷ In fact, Romney did win twice as many votes as the second-place finisher, Huckabee, who gained a great deal of favorable publicity. The *New York Times* reporter Adam Nagourney wrote that Huckabee was now seen as successful. One reputable Iowa blogger at iowapolitics.com wrote that it was more of a "sigh of relief than a victory shout" for Romney.⁵⁸ The big winner was

⁵³ "Detailed Results," Iowa politics blog: Ames Straw Poll blog," August 11, 2007, under August 11, 2007 at <http://strawpoll.iowapolitics.com/>, accessed August 17, 2010.

⁵⁴ Adam Nagourney, "Romney praises Bush, sort of," *New York Times* Caucus Blog, August 11, 2007 under The Caucus, at <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/08/11/romney-praises-bush-sort-of/>, accessed August 17, 2010.

⁵⁵ "Straw poll pics," Iowa politics blog: Ames Straw Poll blog," under August 14, 2007, <http://strawpoll.iowapolitics.com/> August 14, 2007, accessed August 12, 2010.

⁵⁶ Michael Luo, "Rock 'n Roll Huckabee," *New York Times* Caucus Blog, August 11, 2007 under The Caucus, at <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/08/11/rock-n-roll-huckabee/>, accessed August 17, 2007.

⁵⁷ Adam Nagourney and Michael Luo, "Romney Pushed on Conservative credentials," *The New York Times*, August 10, 2009, under politics, at http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/10/us/politics/10romney.html?_r=1, accessed March 14, 2011.

⁵⁸ "Instant Analysis," Iowa politics blog: Ames Straw Poll blog," August 11, 2007, under August 11, 2007, <http://strawpoll.iowapolitics.com/>, accessed August 12, 2010.

Huckabee, whose surprise showing allowed him to begin raising the money he needed to compete. Evangelical Christians, who polls showed were slow to warm to Romney, McCain and Giuliani, would no longer move to Romney as their default candidate, as Romney's strategy hoped they would. Instead, they could support Mike Huckabee, a like-minded evangelical to support.

Romney continued building his campaign that summer, and Mormon stories percolated into fall 2007. Not long after the Ames Straw Poll, writers asked about the influence a movie would have on campaign coverage, perhaps because the Romney campaign coincided with the 150th anniversary of one of the darkest chapters in Mormon history – the Mountain Meadows Massacre. The massacre occurred in southwest Utah on Sept. 11, 1857, where Mormon settlers brutally massacred 120 unarmed immigrants. A low-profile movie recounting the incident called *September Dawn* came out in August 2007. Starring Jon Voight, the movie was linked to the Romney campaign. Both the *L.A. Times* and the *Washington Post* ran features about the film and the event. The *Post*, relying on the Religion News Service, said of the film, “The depictions stand to forge new impressions of a controversial religious minority that has known both violent persecution and substantial influence across its tumultuous 180-year history.”⁵⁹

The AP reported briefly that Romney had no plans to see the movie.⁶⁰ The movie got a rare zero out of four stars from leading critic Roger Ebert whose website, rogerebert.com, called it a “strange, confused, unpleasant movie.” The movie received

⁵⁹ G. Jeffrey MacDonald, “Debating History: Did Brigham Young Order a Massacre?” Religion News Service in *Washington Post*, April 28, 2007, B9.

⁶⁰ Brendan Riley, “Romney won’t see new movie about dark chapter in Mormon history,” *Associated Press*, August 23, 2007.

other poor reviews,⁶¹ did poorly and was generally forgotten. It dropped from coverage quickly.

In October 2007, Romney received the endorsement of Bob Jones III, the chancellor of evangelical Bob Jones University, named for the chancellor's grandfather. Jones made it clear, however, that he opposed the Mormon religion.⁶² Then on Nov. 9, 2007, John McCain's 95-year-old mother said Mormons were to blame for the 2002 Olympics scandal. She said, "As far as the Salt Lake City thing, he's a Mormon and the Mormons of Salt Lake City had caused that scandal." Romney's campaign accused the McCain camp of disparaging Romney's faith. John McCain said his mother's views and his weren't necessarily the same.⁶³ Later that month, in New Hampshire and Iowa, journalists reported that voters there received anti-Romney "push-polling" phone calls that brought unusual Mormon beliefs into the coverage:

The survey asked "whether a resident knew that Romney was a Mormon, that he received military deferments when he served as a Mormon missionary in France, that his five sons did not serve in the military, that Romney's faith did not accept blacks as bishops into the 1970s and that Mormons believe the Book of Mormon is superior to the Bible."⁶⁴

⁶¹ These assertions are based largely upon a quick perusal of the Internet Movie database and Wikipedia, which linked to Ebert's quote. Wikipedia also links, since broken, to a Robert Novak column, who evidently speculated that *September Dawn* was an attempt by Hollywood to influence the election, an assertion denied by its director. Rottentomatoes gave it a 13 percent rating with its consensus being that it had "jarring editing, a dull love story and silly dialogue" that made for a banal movie.

⁶² Glen Johnson, "Romney embraces Jones endorsement despite anti-Mormon views," *Associated Press*, October 25, 2007.

⁶³ *Associated Press*, "McCain's mom says Mormons to blame for the Salt Lake City scandal," November 9, 2007.

⁶⁴ Philip Elliott, "NH, Iowa voters get anti-Romney calls," *Associated Press*, November 16, 2007.

Coverage of the polling continued for several days. The calls seemed to ask questions about McCain that cast him in a favorable light, but the McCain camp denounced the survey and asked for an attorney general investigation. News outlets reported that Western Wats, a Utah-based polling firm, was behind the poll and campaign finance disclosures suggested that Western Wats was working for Rudy Giuliani. The company ultimately denied the claim, saying it never does push-polling but sometimes engages in legitimate message-testing surveys.⁶⁵

1.2.e Mike Huckabee's surge

The facts in Iowa were changing as Mike Huckabee quietly built on his perceived success at the Ames Straw Poll. The race changed most markedly after Huckabee began running a new advertisement in Iowa on Nov. 26. In it, Huckabee sits wearing no tie casually smiling, looking into the camera with a breezy, sunny picture of the rich farm countryside behind him. He tells the audience that he doesn't have to wake up every day deciding what he believes in. The ad was clearly directed at Mitt Romney's reputation for changing positions. The ad showed Huckabee walking along with a farmer as the words "Christian Leader" appeared on the screen.⁶⁶

Two days later, Michael Luo of the *New York Times*, reported Romney's lead was dwindling in Iowa: "The religious divide over Mitt Romney's Mormon faith that his supporters had long feared would occur is emerging in Iowa as he is being challenged in state polls by Mike Huckabee, a former Baptist pastor who has played up his faith in his

⁶⁵ See, for example, Michael Finnegan, "N.H. probe targets poll on Romney: At issue is whether the survey tried to plant negative information. McCain and other rivals deny involvement," *Los Angeles Times*, November 17, 2007, A14.

⁶⁶ "Believe," Mike Huckabee campaign commercial, under explorehuckabee, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjtGgfhKIvo>, accessed October 11, 2010.

bid for the Republican presidential nomination.”⁶⁷

On Dec. 1, Luo further highlighted the religion issue when he described a debate exchange for Romney where someone asked him if he believed the Bible, every word, and Romney seemed to hesitate before saying he did. Mormonism believes the Bible to be the word of God but only insofar as the translation is correct, a position rejected by other religions.⁶⁸ Late the next day following months of intermittent speculation, Romney made the biggest decision of his campaign – to give a speech on religion.⁶⁹

1.2.f The “Faith in America” speech.

On Dec. 6, 2007, George H.W. Bush rose to podium, told the audience that he wasn’t endorsing Romney, told them of his respect for Romney’s father and then introduced the former governor. Romney, wearing a blue tie, spoke for about 20 minutes on live television; delivering a speech he called “Faith in America.”⁷⁰ His speech carved out a conservative view of the role religion plays in American politics – that religion is necessary for successful democracy. He also built the speech around the idea of a public

⁶⁷ Michael Luo, “In Iowa, Mormon Issue Is Benefiting Huckabee,” *New York Times*, November 28, 2007.

⁶⁸ Michael Luo, “Mormons and Bible, Every Word,” *New York Times*, December 1, 2007.

⁶⁹ Two examples of his decision process from the Associated Press include: Glen Johnson, “Romney says he will address his religion if he goes national,” *Associated Press*, May 3, 2006. Eight months before he began his campaign, Johnson writes that Romney envisioned delivering a Kennedy-esque speech to explain the natural curiosity surrounding his faith. A second example is Philip Elliott, “Romney says advisers oppose him giving a speech on Mormon faith,” *Associated Press*, November 10, 2007. In the article, Romney said, “I’m happy to answer questions about my faith and do so pretty regularly. ... Is there going to be a special speech at some point? Perhaps. I sort of like the idea myself. The political advisers tell me no, no, no. It draws too much attention to that issue alone.”

⁷⁰ For a full text of the speech, see appendix C.

religion that includes all Americans without regard to specific creeds. He assured Americans that he would neither take direction from any religious authority nor renounce his faith: “I believe in my Mormon faith and I endeavor to live by it. My faith is the faith of my fathers – I will be true to them and to my beliefs. Some believe that such a confession of my faith will sink my candidacy. If they are right, so be it.”

Romney told his audience that he believed Jesus Christ was his savior but went no further, saying that to discuss his faith “would enable the very religious test the founders prohibited in the Constitution. No candidate should become the spokesman for his faith. For if he becomes President he will need the prayers of the people of all faiths.” Romney praised religious diversity – America’s “symphony of faith,” and suggested that all religions share a similar moral code that should guide the country’s actions. Media compared Romney’s speech to Presidential candidate John Kennedy’s 1960 address, which had been aimed at putting to rest anti-papist sentiments, including the notion that Kennedy, as a Catholic, would be answerable to the Pope. Kennedy’s speech argued in favor of a tight separation of church and state. Romney’s view was more circumscribed, suggesting that religion needs a place in the public arena while still maintaining some sort of separation.

He next struck out a position in America’s culture war, saying essentially that secularism has replaced religion in some quarters:

We separate church and state affairs in this country, and for good reason. No religion should dictate to the state nor should the state interfere with the free practice of religion. But in recent years, the notion of the separation of church and state has been taken by some well beyond its original meaning. They seek to remove from the public domain any acknowledgment of God. Religion is seen as merely a private affair with no place in public life. It is as if they are intent on establishing a new religion in America – the religion of secularism. They are wrong.

The founders proscribed the establishment of a state religion, but they did not countenance the elimination of religion from the public square. We are a nation “Under God” and in God, we do indeed trust.

We should acknowledge the Creator as did the Founders – in ceremony and word. He should remain on our currency, in our pledge, in the teaching of our history, and during the holiday season, nativity scenes and menorahs should be welcome in our public places. Our greatness would not long endure without judges who respect the foundation of faith upon which our Constitution rests. I will take care to separate the affairs of government from any religion, but I will not separate us from “the God who gave us liberty.”

Romney continued, praising the ideal of shared religious liberty, noting times when religious liberty was not preserved in America, including the story of his own Mormon pioneers. He quoted scriptural injunctions to care for the poor and needy and said it is a principle that guides his life and his family.

He added to his praise of diversity with this thought:

I’m not sure that we fully appreciate the profound implications of our tradition of religious liberty. I have visited many of the magnificent cathedrals in Europe. They are so inspired ... so grand ... so empty. Raised up over generations, long ago, so many of the cathedrals now stand as the postcard backdrop to societies just too busy or too “enlightened” to venture inside and kneel in prayer. The establishment of state religions in Europe did no favor to Europe’s churches. And though you will find many people of strong faith there, the churches themselves seem to be withering away.

He condemned religious theocracy and religious violence, then concluded with a story of the Continental Congress coming together to pray as a symbol of national unity. Romney made an argument in a time of uncertainty about the role of religion in American politics and culture, themes that underline this study. Romney’s speech fit well within the long tradition of American public religion and of Alexis de Tocqueville’s view

that religion helps serve as a necessary check on morals in society.⁷¹ Its argument that freedom requires religion was especially striking.

Immediately after the speech, commentators of all sorts weighed in. Some, like conservative former speechwriter Peggy Noonan, praised the speech:

Mr. Romney gave the speech Thursday morning. How did he do? Very, very well. He made himself some history. The words he said will likely have a real and positive impact on his fortunes. The speech's main and immediate achievement is that foes of his faith will now have to defend their thinking, in public. But what can they say to counter his high-minded arguments? "Mormons have cooties?"⁷²

Others criticized the speech. Steven Chapman, a libertarian, of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote:

Mitt Romney is worried about religious intolerance. He fears religious and nonreligious people will unite to punish him because of his Mormon faith. He thinks it would be much more in keeping with America's noblest traditions if Mormons and other believers joined together to punish people of no faith.

On Thursday, Romney showed up at the George H.W. Bush Library in College Station, Texas, to announce that even if it costs him the White House, his Mormonism is non-negotiable. That came as a relief to those who suspected he would defuse the issue by undergoing a Methodist baptism.⁷³

The speech also brought unusually detailed explanations of Romney's faith into the

⁷¹ His work seemed influenced by Jon Meacham's book, *American Gospel*. Jon Meacham, *American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation*. (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006). See also, Elizabeth Holmes, "Romney to Take on Issue of Faith – Vaguely; Speech Aims to Ease Uncertainty Over Mormonism and to Sway Evangelicals," *Wall Street Journal*, December 6, 2007.

⁷² Peggy Noonan, "Declarations: Mormon in America," *Wall Street Journal*, December 8, 2007, W13.

⁷³ Steve Chapman, "Romney flunks a Religious Test," *Chicago Tribune*, December 9, 2007, 11.

news. Jennifer Dobner's AP story tried to explain Mormon doctrine to her readers.⁷⁴

Although the reaction to the speech's content was mixed, the reaction to the strategic success of the speech appears to have been guarded at best. In some ways, reporters at national papers seemed to avoid the underlying question of whether it changed opinions about Mormonism. Articles, for example, were rare that mentioned the Dec. 11 Gallup Poll saying that the percentage who wouldn't vote for a Mormon hadn't moved.⁷⁵ David Broder wrote, "Whether Romney has been able to diffuse the suspicion of his Mormonism among the fairly large number of Americans who apparently regard it as a cult that is alien to their own religious background is beyond my capacity to judge."⁷⁶

In a blog posting, Dan Balz of *The Washington Post*, also wrote guardedly:

His advisers argued that he [Romney] had taken a big subject (and an obvious political problem) and dealt with both in a ways that spoke broadly to the country. In that sense, the Romney team saw the speech as mission accomplished and they now await the verdict. Whether he has overcome the doubters or the skeptics will not be clear until voters in Iowa and South Carolina and other states begin to weigh in next month.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Jennifer Dobner, "Theology, doctrine, at root of evangelical-Mormon divide," *Associated Press*, December 6, 2007.

⁷⁵ Lydia Saad, "Percentage Unwilling to Vote for a Mormon Holds Steady. 18% of Republicans would not support a Mormon presidential nominee," Gallup news service, December 11, 2007, under Gallup, at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/103150/percentage-unwilling-vote-mormon-holds-steady.aspx>, accessed March 15, 2011.

⁷⁶ Broder, "Like father, Like son. How the Romneys handled the religion question," *Washington Post*, December 9, 2007, B07.

⁷⁷ Dan Balz, "DAN BALZ'S TAKE. With His Message Delivered, Romney Awaits Verdict," blog posting, *Washington Post*, under The Trail, at http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2007/12/06/post_229.html, accessed March 15, 2011.

Two regional newspapers said directly that the speech had failed strategically. Dahleen Glanton and Margaret Ramirez of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote on December 9: “Though Romney’s speech was intended to win the trust of evangelicals, most leaders said their attitudes about Mormonism were unlikely to change.”⁷⁸

Miguel Bustillo, Stephanie Simon, Mark Z. Barabak of the *Los Angeles Times* made a similar assessment in a front-page article:

The glowing reviews began tumbling in at once: Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney’s speech on faith was powerful and convincing, analysts said – sincere, effective, hit all the right notes. But will it help Romney, a Mormon, win over the key voting bloc of conservative Christians? The broad consensus: probably not.⁷⁹

1.2.g Huckabee’s Question

A new controversy about Mormonism emerged a few days later. On Dec. 16, 2007, the *New York Times Magazine* published a profile of Mike Huckabee and his growing success as candidate. In it, author Zev Chafets said he was asking Huckabee whether he thought Mormonism was a cult or a religion and Huckabee said it was a religion. Then, Chafets said, “I was about to jot down this piece of boilerplate when Huckabee surprised me with a question of his own: ‘Don’t Mormons,’ he asked in an innocent voice, ‘believe that Jesus and the devil are brothers?’”⁸⁰ The question became the subject of columns, sometimes critical of Huckabee. Romney criticized Huckabee, and Huckabee apologized

⁷⁸ Dahleen Glanton, Margaret Ramirez, “Romney a hard sell for evangelicals,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 9, 2007, 16.

⁷⁹ Miguel Bustillo, Stephanie Simon, Mark Z. Barabak, “Evangelicals may never take Romney on faith; A defense of religious liberty may not quell doubts about his beliefs,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 7, 2007, 1.

⁸⁰ Zev Chafets, “The Huckabee Factor,” *New York Times Magazine*, December 12, 2007, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/12/magazine/16huckabee.html?pagewanted=print>, accessed August 11, 2009.

a couple of days later personally to Romney, thereby keeping the story alive for a few more days.⁸¹

Huckabee next ran an ad beginning on Dec. 17. In it, he said Merry Christmas to Iowans. He smiled warmly, sat in a red sweater as Christmas lights twinkled behind him. A window frame behind to the right was lighted in a way reminiscent of a Christian cross.⁸²

1.2.h The Iowa Caucuses.

As the Iowa caucuses approached, polling suggested a very tight race between Romney and Huckabee. Romney invested heavily in Iowa, blanketing the state with commercials attacking Huckabee's record on crime and taxes, preparing for this first-in-the-nation voting – the Iowa caucuses. Huckabee blasted back, saying Romney was “dishonest” and that Huckabee's policy concerns were taken out of context.⁸³

The Iowa caucuses occurred in schools and meeting places around the state on Jan. 3, 2008. What Romney hoped would be a major springboard for his campaign, instead became a crushing loss for the former Massachusetts governor's campaign. Despite polls showing a close race, Mike Huckabee carried Iowa amid heavy turnout. He

⁸¹ Huckabee quite possibly knew that he was uttering what Mormons can understand to be a distortion of their belief. That Huckabee headed up the Arkansas State Baptist Convention, he likely understood much about the religious dispute between the two faiths and might well have been familiar with the distortion. His question led to a full response in *New York Times* by Laurie Goodstein, saying the Huckabee wasn't alone in his understanding of Mormonism – it forced another detailed discussion about Mormon beliefs. See Laurie Goodstein, “Huckabee Is Not Alone In Ignorance on Mormonism,” *New York Times*, December 14, 2007, 37.

⁸² “What really matters,” Mike Huckabee campaign commercial, under explorehuckabee, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xn7uSHtkuA>, accessed August 12, 2010.

⁸³ “Candidates show claws as Iowa caucuses loom,” CNN.com, under politics, at <http://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/12/30/2008.iowa/index.html>, accessed August 11, 2010.

carried rural counties while Romney generally carried more urban ones. Huckabee received four votes for every three Romney received amid heavy evangelical voting and won by more than 10,000 caucus ballots, the *New York Times* reported.⁸⁴

The result proved devastating for Romney. The evangelical bloc that distrusted his faith played a big role in his defeat. The *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* credited Huckabee's success to evangelicals. Neither defined the victory of Huckabee as a loss for Romney because of his Mormonism; neither mentioned Mormonism at all. The *Washington Post's* Michael D. Shear and Perry Bacon said,

After spending nine months near the bottom of the pack, Huckabee surged to become the front-runner in Iowa in December and never relinquished the position, despite a barrage of negative ads from Romney's methodically built and well-financed operation.

But Huckabee now heads to New Hampshire, where voting takes place Tuesday, with little support in the polls and only a ragtag organization to mount a second come-from-behind victory. To succeed, he will have to broaden his message, which has largely been designed to appeal to the Christian conservatives who helped him win Thursday night. New Hampshire voters tend to be less focused on social issues and more concerned with lowering taxes and reducing the size of government.⁸⁵

The *New York Times's* Adam Nagourney put it this way:

On the Republican side, Mike Huckabee, the former governor of Arkansas who was barely a blip on the national scene just two months ago, defeated Mitt Romney, a former Massachusetts governor, delivering a serious setback to Mr. Romney's high-spending campaign and putting pressure on Mr. Romney to win in New Hampshire next Tuesday.

Mr. Huckabee, a Baptist minister, was carried in large part by evangelical voters, who helped him withstand extensive spending by Mr. Romney on television advertising and a get-out-the-vote effort.

⁸⁴ "Iowa Caucus Results," *The New York Times*, at <http://politics.nytimes.com/election-guide/2008/results/states/IA.html>, accessed March 15, 2011.

⁸⁵ Michael D. Shear and Perry Bacon Jr., "Huckabee Wins Iowa's Republican Caucuses. Evangelicals Fuel Victory Over Romney," *Washington Post*, January 4, 2008, under 2008 politics, at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/01/03/AR2008010303824.html?sid=ST2008010304585>, accessed March 15, 2011.

“Tonight we proved that American politics is still in the hands of ordinary folks like you,” said Mr. Huckabee, who ran on a platform that combined economic populism with an appeal to social conservatives.⁸⁶

At this point, Mike Huckabee’s relative lack of funds bedeviled him, due to the high cost and fast pace of coming primaries. Starting in the late 1960s, the number of presidential primaries proliferated. States that wanted to increase their influence on the nominating process scheduled them earlier and earlier, many holding elections on the same days. Convention delegates were generally bound by the choices of primary election voters, meaning nominees were effectively selected well before the national party conventions. Not since the 1972 Democratic primary in Miami, which nominated George McGovern, has a nomination been settled on the convention floor of either party. In 2008, the election season started earlier than ever. New Hampshire and a handful of other states were to vote in January. On Feb. 5, “Super Tuesday,” 19 states voted on the same day. It was likely the party nomination would be sewn up by March. Faced with these realities, Huckabee would have to raise vast sums of money almost immediately for TV ads in mass-market states. He would have to build up campaign organizations in states across the country almost overnight. And at the same time, he would have to score well in New Hampshire, which had fewer evangelical voters than did Iowa.

Romney, by contrast, had far more money than Huckabee, and he was far better organized in many more states.⁸⁷ And, as the former governor of Massachusetts, he had

⁸⁶ Adam Nagourney, “Obama Takes Iowa as Clinton Falters; Huckabee Victor,” *The New York Times*, January 4, 2008, under US Politics, at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/04/us/politics/04elect.html?_r=1, accessed March 15, 2011.

⁸⁷ See, for example, Glen Johnson, “Romney uses early electioneering in early voting states,” *Associated Press*, June 17, 2007.

strong name-familiarity in neighboring New Hampshire, many of whose residents had seen him regularly on Boston television.

1.2.i The New Hampshire Primary

New Hampshire was, of course, the first primary and had helped catapult Iowa losers to nominations in the past. In New Hampshire, John McCain appeared to be rebounding. In the months following his near-meltdown in July, McCain gradually built new strength. Rather than spend much time in Iowa, he decided to invest his energy in New Hampshire. In New Hampshire, polls showed another tight race, this time between Romney and McCain, but the retired naval officer and former POW pulled ahead to defeat Romney by more than 13,000 votes, CNN reported. For Romney, the old Olympic boss, it was a second silver medal. Huckabee finished a distant third.⁸⁸

Mormonism played into the coverage of New Hampshire in November, when the Associated Press and other news outlets wrote about the push-poll that seemed to have an anti-Mormon undertone and its subsequent attorney general investigation,⁸⁹ but neither the *New York Times* nor the *Washington Post* mentioned Mormonism at all in the stories about McCain's important victory in New Hampshire. Mormonism was less of an issue in New Hampshire than it was in Iowa, polls and exit polls suggested. Eighty-eight percent of respondents told pollsters that Mormonism would not matter, and 14 percent

⁸⁸ The data for all of the vote counts comes from CNN Election Center at CNN.com, under Election Center, at <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/primaries/results/dates/index.html#20080205>, accessed August 12, 2010.

⁸⁹ Elliott, "NH, Iowa voters get anti-Romney calls," Finnegan, "N.H. probe targets poll on Romney: At issue is whether the survey tried to plant negative information. McCain and other rivals deny involvement."

said that it was “very important” to them to line up with a candidate’s views, and Romney competed well among those voters.⁹⁰

Romney won the lightly contested, delegate-poor Wyoming Caucuses on Jan. 5, 2008, but that was hardly evidence that he could recover and defeat John McCain. Fortunately for Romney, the next primary state in the election cycle was delegate-rich Michigan, the state where he was born. McCain had won the Michigan primary in 2000, and it seemed he might be able to use his New Hampshire momentum to effectively end Romney’s campaign with a native-state defeat. Instead, on Jan. 15, one week after New Hampshire, Romney won Michigan by more than 80,000 votes. Romney became the national frontrunner in delegates with 48 delegates compared to McCain’s 13 and Huckabee’s 19.⁹¹

1.2.j South Carolina and Nevada

Romney’s weakness among evangelicals was highlighted again as he suspended campaigning in South Carolina before voting began there, even though he invested significant campaign resources to the state early in the campaign. He ended with a fourth-place finish there Jan. 19, finishing with fewer than half the votes that McCain, the winner, received.⁹² Associated Press articles showed that Romney made many visits to South Carolina early in the campaign season, lining up the important endorsements of

⁹⁰ Jon Cohen, “Data retreat: Can a Mormon win?” *Behind the Numbers* blog post, Washingtonpost.com, posted January 31, 2011, under Behind the Numbers, at http://voices.washingtonpost.com/behind-the-numbers/2011/01/data_retread_can_a_mormon_win.html, accessed March 21, 2011.

⁹¹ This is calculated by wikipedia’s running tally at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Results_of_the_2008_Republican_Party_presidential_primaries, accessed August 8, 2011.

⁹² Adam Nagourney and Michael Luo, “Romney leaves S. Carolina to focus on Nevada Caucus,” *New York Times*, January 18, 2008, 16

Sen. Jim DeMint,⁹³ and also of Paul Thurmond, the son of former Sen. Strom Thurmond.⁹⁴ The Associated Press's South Carolina statehouse reporter Jim Davenport pointed out that Romney traveled to South Carolina in February 2007 before he traveled to New Hampshire as an official candidate, showing how important Romney thought South Carolina to be.⁹⁵ Romney spent considerably on advertising in South Carolina. His idea was to win Iowa, New Hampshire, and Michigan, by then becoming the default conservative candidate, and then deal a knockout blow to McCain in the first-in-the-South primary. It didn't turn out that way. In South Carolina, Romney trailed even Fred Thompson, the former Tennessee senator who ran a short-lived campaign. Apparently, Romney had been unable to overcome his "Mormon" problem in much of the South where evangelical Christians made up a large portion of the population. According to the *New York Times*, Romney's staff attributed his failure there to suspicion among evangelical voters.⁹⁶ CNN exit polling data showed that the most frequent church goers – those who attended church more than once a week – strongly preferred Huckabee. Those who didn't attend church regularly voted for the eventual winner, John McCain.⁹⁷ Romney won in Nevada easily, however, a state with a large Mormon population, the same day.

⁹³ *Associated Press*, "Romney stops in Columbia," January 30, 2007.

⁹⁴ Jim Davenport, "Romney begins South Carolina campaign leg," *Associated Press*, February 14, 2007.

⁹⁵ Jim Davenport, "Romney heading to vote-rich S.C. before New Hampshire," *Associated Press*, February 8, 2007.

⁹⁶ Nagourney and Luo, "Romney leaves S. Carolina to focus on Nevada Caucus."

⁹⁷ CNN election central.

1.2.k The Death of Gordon B. Hinckley and Florida

Media focused less on Mormonism after the primary voting began, especially when compared with the coverage before Romney's speech. However, one event brought Mormonism back as a major story just days before the Florida primary. On Jan. 27, the president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Gordon B. Hinckley, died and Romney issued press statements and interrupted his campaign to attend the funeral on Feb. 2. One analysis suggested that the funeral again made Mormonism central to the Romney campaign, suggesting changing campaign dynamics:

The death of Mormon church President Gordon B. Hinckley renews attention on Mitt Romney's little-known religion yet rather than being reluctant to discuss it, he's making a public embrace that shows some shifting political attitudes.

Two months ago, questions about Mormonism had grown so distracting that Romney went to the George Bush Presidential Library in Texas to outline his views about politics and religion in U.S. history and today's society. Even then, he uttered the word "Mormon" only once during his speech.

Two months later, with some state wins behind him and evangelicals less of a force in more populous states the former Massachusetts governor has focused on the country's ailing economy and his business background, which he argues makes him the most qualified to occupy the White House.

The death of Hinckley, and Romney's decision to attend his funeral on Saturday, underscores his connection to and stature within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at a pivotal time for him: He is reaching out to conservatives for their support after a series of high-profile wins and endorsements have boosted rival John McCain's campaign.

The difference now is that Romney approaches both his ongoing campaign and the funeral rites with less tension over his religion. Contests in Iowa and South Carolina, which both have significant evangelical voting blocs, are behind him.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Glen Johnson, "Analysis: Mormon leader's death renews focus on Romney's faith," *Associated Press*, February 1, 2008.

Insofar as the Mormon issue was a problem for Mitt Romney, Hinckley's death reinforced the issue of Mormonism in people's minds and also took Romney away from some campaign swings.

Leading up to the Florida primary on Jan. 29, 2008, polls showed a tight contest between Romney and McCain, with Giuliani trailing badly, his Florida strategy a clear failure. McCain received important endorsements from Gov. Charlie Crist and Sen. Mel Martinez.⁹⁹ Romney lost to McCain by just fewer than 100,000 votes.¹⁰⁰ Huckabee and Giuliani trailed far behind, which effectively ended Giuliani's campaign. The *New York Times's* exit polling in Florida suggested that Romney, McCain and Huckabee split the evangelical Christian vote evenly, a departure from earlier states. McCain did better with voters who attended church infrequently.¹⁰¹ The *New York Times* credited the endorsements for McCain's success and found much in McCain's positions on the war and on the economy as explanations for his success.¹⁰²

According to pundits, the momentum had now clearly shifted to John McCain, and they gave little attention to Romney's Feb. 2 win in the Maine caucuses, where McCain made little effort.

⁹⁹ Jonathan Martin, McCain's one-two punch," *Politico.com*, January 27, 2008, under 2010, at <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0108/8137.html>, accessed March 21, 2011; *Associated Press*, "Romney, McCain trade barbs ahead of Florida. Debate over leadership credentials, Iraq in advance of Tuesday's primary," January 26, 2008.

¹⁰⁰ CNN Election Center.

¹⁰¹ "Profile of Florida primary voters, based on questionnaires filled out by voters as they exited the polls," under Election 2008, at <http://politics.nytimes.com/election-guide/2008/results/vote-polls/FL.html>, accessed March 21, 2011.

¹⁰² Cooper and Thee, "McCain defeats Romney in Florida Vote."

1.2.1 Super Tuesday

The next campaign stop was the multi-state Super Tuesday primary on Feb. 5, which included important, delegate-rich states. Romney competed heavily, spending money in California and elsewhere on advertising in what was effectively the nation's largest quasi-national primary in history. McCain received the endorsement of California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, and his momentum continued. The Associated Press said Romney's chances had come down to a narrow strategy: Romney needed to rely on Mormons to win: "With his opportunity for scoring the nomination dwindling, Romney's strategy calls for seeking votes in states with heavy concentrations of Romney's fellow Mormons: California, Arizona, and Utah, seat of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints."¹⁰³

How widely shared this analysis is remains unclear, but regardless, it suggested how thin Romney's chances had become, some pundits said. When Super Tuesday results were tallied, Huckabee won five states across the South: Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, his home state of Arkansas, and the West Virginia caucuses, where McCain's people gave all their support to Huckabee to deny Romney a win. Huckabee won, again with the help of evangelical voters who distrusted Mormonism.¹⁰⁴ Romney won seven states, including his home state of Massachusetts, Mormon-dominated Utah, Minnesota, North Dakota, Alaska, Montana and Colorado. Only two states, Massachusetts and Utah, were primary states. The rest were caucus states where Romney's excellent organization

¹⁰³ *Associated Press*, "Romney, McCain up ante on Super Tuesday ads. Both campaigns had earlier said they wouldn't spend heavily in those states," January 31, 2008.

¹⁰⁴ Michael Luo, "Huckabee wins West Virginia contest," *New York Times The Caucus Blog*, under The Caucus, <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/02/05/huckabee-wins-west-virginia-contest/>, accessed August 12, 2010.

proved significant in capturing those delegates. McCain won the important states, taking California, New York, Illinois and New Jersey easily. By the end of the night on Super Tuesday, McCain had amassed 514 delegates compared to 177 for Romney. There seemed little chance Romney could come back to win the nomination. Two days later on Feb. 7, Romney went before the Conservative Political Action Committee and withdrew. He endorsed McCain shortly thereafter.

1.2.m Campaign post-mortems.

Campaign post-mortems sometimes looked at Mormonism as a factor in Romney's defeat, but sometimes included little detail. The *Wall Street Journal* ran a front-page article about how big of a surprise the headwinds were to Mormons. It talked of how a leading LDS official was calling on Mormons to speak out.¹⁰⁵ The *Washington Post* took a lighter treatment of the topic:

“Mormons were chased out of the Midwest in the 1840s, and ever since then they've been looking to America for approval,” says Bengt Washburn, a Mormon who is also a full-time comedian. (There aren't a lot of those, by the way. In case you were wondering.) Washburn says Mormons he knows will constantly list examples of mainstream Mormons to outsiders. Gladys Knight is a Mormon! Steve Young is a Mormon! Donny! Marie!

It's as if to say, “See? Mormons aren't weird,” Washburn says. “Well, yeah, we're weird.”¹⁰⁶

What is lost in all this is how strong Romney's campaign could have been if he

¹⁰⁵ Suzanne Sataline, “Tabernacle on Trial,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 8, 2008, A1. This article brought up the other most direct broadsides against the Mormon religion – Lawrence O'Donnell's tirade on the McLaughlin Group that Romney comes from a “religion founded by a criminal who was anti-American, pro-slavery, and a rapist. And he comes from that lineage and says, “I respect this religion fully.” . . . He's got to answer.” (As quoted in Sataline, “Tabernacle on Trial.”)

¹⁰⁶ Libby Copeland, “Did Mormons Get a Bounce from Mitt?” *Washington Post*, February 8, 2009, C1.

had detected the Huckabee challenge. As it was, Romney won 33 percent of all votes cast in the primaries and caucuses in which he competed. So, in one sense, Mitt Romney's campaign seemed to show how far Mormons had come in the United States. Still, it can't be denied that perceptions of Mormonism were significant factors in Romney's defeat. If anything, journalists downplayed the Mormonism angle at the end of the campaign. The *Wall Street Journal's* post-mortem on the campaign said:

There were many other factors that may have contributed to his failed campaign. He didn't gain sufficient traction among the social conservatives influential to his party. Opponents attacked him, saying he changed his moderate stances to more conservative ones to attract votes, including his position on abortion.

Some observers play down religious bias as a factor. Ken Jennings, a Mormon who was a "Jeopardy!" champion, says anti-Mormon attacks "contributed" to Mr. Romney's problems, but weren't the only obstacle. "I suspect there were bigger forces in play than the religion," such as perceptions that Mr. Romney had shifted his positions, says Mr. Jennings, of Seattle. "There were principled reasons to say, 'I like McCain over Romney.'"

Religion "wasn't a factor in the governor's decision to step aside," says Eric Fehrstrom, a campaign spokesman. "There was a lot more focus on religion early on in the race, but as people learned more about Gov. Romney, his success as a businessman and as leader of the Olympics, it receded as an issue into the background."

Nevertheless, Mr. Romney's campaign exposed a surprisingly virulent strain of anti-Mormonism that had been largely hidden to the general public.¹⁰⁷

Similarly, the BBC's Steve Schifferes argued that Mormonism was part of the reason Romney lost, but not the only one:

Mr. Romney had a big credibility problem among Republican primary voters, who were not convinced by his conversion from a liberal Massachusetts governor to a conservative candidate for national office.

His "flip-flop" on a universal health care mandate, which he had introduced in Massachusetts but repudiated nationally, was one commonly cited example.

Conservatives were also suspicious about his changed views on

¹⁰⁷ Sataline, "Tabernacle on Trial."

social issues like abortion.

This served to alienate him from the Christian right, a key group within the Republican Party, which was already suspicious of his Mormon religion.

In the primary elections on Tuesday, most Christian evangelicals backed Mike Huckabee, taking enough votes away from Mr. Romney to give victory to John McCain in key states like California and New York.”¹⁰⁸

The BBC, perhaps because it was an outsider media source, focused on Mormonism as one of many factors in explaining Romney’s defeat. The present study explores the nature and influence of this one factor in much greater detail: Mormonism.

1.3 Mormonism and the study

Mormonism in the coverage of Mitt Romney’s campaign was frequent and heavy. A Lexis-Nexis and Proquest search for the amount of coverage Romney received suggest that 13 percent of all the articles that mentioned Romney included the fact that he was a Mormon.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, Romney’s Mormonism was mentioned with greater frequency than that of other candidates during the time Romney was in the campaign.¹¹⁰

Therefore, as is apparent Mitt Romney’s campaign, a study that looked only at

¹⁰⁸ Steve Schifferes, “Why Mitt Romney quit the Race,” BBC News, February 7, 2008, under analysis, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7233528.stm>, accessed January 15, 2011.

¹⁰⁹ Search conducted in March 2011 of the number of articles that mentioned the words “Mitt Romney and NOT Mormon,” and the words “Mitt Romney and Mormon” in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Newsweek* and the Associated Press. Of the 7,327 articles that mentioned Mitt Romney between Jan. 1, 2006 and Feb. 10. 2008, 928 of them included at least one mention of the word “Mormon.”

¹¹⁰ See Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. “Running on Faith. Study finds media coverage of religion in the primary campaign rivaled the coverage of race and gender combined,” analysis July 10, 2008, under politics and elections, at <http://pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/Running-on-Faith.aspx>, accessed September 2, 2010. This was supported by a Lexis-Nexis tally conducted by the study’s author.

political communication aspects of Romney’s campaign would miss many of its most important dynamics that involved religion. In September 2007, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press released a survey of more than 3,000 American adults that suggested that 27 percent of Americans have an unfavorable opinion of Mormons and 53 percent have a favorable view of the faith. Twenty percent of the respondents said that the primary sources of information on Mormons were media sources in contrast with 29 percent who say personal experience was their primary source of information about Mormons. Even though Mormons consider themselves Christian, only 52 percent of Americans agreed and 40 percent of evangelical Christians thought so. A slight plurality said they knew little or not much about Mormonism – 51 percent. Sixty-two percent said Mormonism was very different from their own religion. When Pew’s researchers asked for a one-word impression of Mormonism – of the 1,461 who provided a response, 75 mentioned the long-abandoned practice of polygamy, the most frequent response; 74 percent mentioned Mormonism’s support for family and family values. Another 57 said Mormonism is a cult. Other common responses included that Mormons are different, good, faithful, strict and devoted. A slight plurality used an unfavorable term to explain Mormonism over what Pew called a favorable term.¹¹¹

Mormonism has a long, painful history with the United States. After its founding in upstate New York in 1830, its early members left New York, Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois under intense persecution until finally finding a home in the Rocky Mountains of Utah. Non-Mormon scholar Jan Shipps said the nation’s press viewed Mormonism with

¹¹¹ Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life; Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “Public Expresses Mixed Views of Islam, Mormonism,” Survey, September 25, 2007, survey conducted by Schulman, Ronca, & Bucuvalas, under publications <http://pewforum.org/surveys/religionviews07/>, accessed March 9, 2009.

disquiet for many years – longer than any other religious group in American history.¹¹² According to Shipps and to Mormon scholar Terryl Givens, Mormons faced years of stereotype and unfavorable portrayals in the press during the 19th century and into the early 20th century in both the popular press and in fiction.¹¹³ In the middle decades of the 20th century, however, Mormonism became portrayed in ways that were much more favorable and which largely downplayed Mormonism’s unique beliefs in contrast with other faiths. Some argued Mormonism had entered the American mainstream while others wondered if Mormons still languished outside that mainstream.¹¹⁴ Though Mormons make up a small minority of Americans, Mormonism has grown to some 6 million adherents in the United States.¹¹⁵ In the months following the Mitt Romney campaign, Mormons played a significant role in the passage of Proposition 8 in California, and a Mormon break-off group that practiced polygamy in Texas was raided by authorities fearing child abuse, keeping “Mormonism” in the news.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Jan Shipps, “From Satyr to Saint: American Perceptions of the Mormons, 1860-1960,” in *Sojourner in the Promised Land, Forty Years among the Mormons*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 51-97.

¹¹³ Terryl Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth. Mormons: Myths, and the Construction of Heresy*. (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 1997).

¹¹⁴ See chapter 2.

¹¹⁵ Walter Kirn, “Mormons Rock,” *Newsweek*, June 5, 2011, under <http://www.newsweek.com/2011/06/05/mormons-rock.html>, accessed June 11, 2011.

¹¹⁶ Matthai Kuruvila, “Mormons face flak for backing prop 8,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 27, 2008, under prop 8, at http://articles.sfgate.com/2008-10-27/bay-area/17137948_1_mormons-salt-lake-city-based-church-ballot-measure, accessed August 15, 2010; Wendy Koch, “401 children taken in Texas polygamist raid,” *USA Today*, April 27, 2008, at http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-04-07-Polygamy_N.htm, accessed August 19, 2009.

The central research question of this study is this: what frames were evident in the coverage of Mitt Romney and his religion during the 2008 campaign?

Related questions emerge from this focus: How does horse race framing of politics influence the framing of a minority religion? Was Mitt Romney's Mormonism portrayed as in the mainstream of American religious thought? Did presidential campaigns from history merit frequent comparison to Mitt Romney?

This study is neither intended to be an apologetic for Mormonism nor meant to be a criticism of political journalism. Its purpose is to provide insight. In an era of declining news budgets and of cuts in religious reporting staffs, understanding the dynamics in the nexus of politics, elections, journalism and religion is an important reason for this dissertation. Insight from this study may improve journalism and the discourse of religion and politics in journalism. It may help journalism educators know some of the pitfalls in framing religion, especially in framing religion and politics. It may help reporters understand Mormonism and other minority perspectives better. Candidates from lesser-known religions may understand more about how their faith may be framed as they run for office and to be prepared as the unusual features of their faith face scrutiny.

What follows in chapter 2 is an overview of the academic literature covering the forces that came together in the campaign of Mitt Romney – the forces of the news media, of electoral politics, of religion and of Mormonism itself. The literature review that follows starts with a review of the history of presidential elections and religion and of the role of religion in politics. It concludes with a discussion of the academic literature of two important areas of the literature – the idea of the horserace of media coverage of

presidential elections and the idea of the model minority discourse in the coverage of the Mormon religion.

Chapter 3 describes how this study was conducted using its content analysis. Chapter 4 covers the findings in detail. The fifth and final chapter makes conclusions, discussions and suggests further research.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

2.1 Historical Church and State Background

Two issues sit at the heart of this study. The first is the relationship between religion and the news media and the second is the relationship between religion and America's presidential elections.

Scholars such as John Durham Peters and Doug Underwood point out that media spring from religious roots.¹¹⁷ The term media is a spiritualist one – a medium is someone who helps connect others with the dead. The earliest journalists were sometimes called Mercurists, the messengers of the Gods.¹¹⁸ The leader of the 19th century mass press or “penny press,” James Gordon Bennett, said he could save souls through his media.¹¹⁹ Religious overtones often illuminated the journalism of the muckrakers.¹²⁰ Walter Williams chose a religious term, “creed,” for journalism's first ethical statement.¹²¹ Today, as Underwood observes, new technology has taken on an almost religious significance. He writes, “Humankind has long been prone to believe that the latest tools of communication will lead to a wonderful, new spiritual revolution.”¹²²

¹¹⁷John Durham Peters, *Speaking into the Air, A History of the Idea of Communication*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Doug Underwood, *From Yahweh to Yahoo!, The Religious Roots of a Secular Press*, (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

¹¹⁸ See Oxford English Dictionary entry under journalists.

¹¹⁹ Underwood, *From Yahweh to Yahoo!*, 23.

¹²⁰ Mark Feldstein, “A Muckraking Model: Investigative Reporting Cycles in American History,” *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 11, no. 2, (2006) 105-120.

¹²¹ Walter Williams, Journalist's Creed, University of Missouri School of Journalism website, under about, <http://journalism.missouri.edu/about/creed.html>, accessed August 15, 2010.

¹²² Underwood, *From Yahweh to Yahoo!*, 207.

Spiritual kinship, however, doesn't mean the media and religion have avoided conflict. If anything, scholars and historians say, the opposite is true. Media and religion scholar Mark Silk argues that American journalism's beginnings are tied in with "giving offense to religion."¹²³ The *New England Courant* – published by James Franklin – was the first newspaper not controlled by political authorities; among the first things it did was take on the established clerics, including Cotton Mather.¹²⁴ Similarly, Bennett, the father of the American Penny Press, built his empire by taking printing techniques first developed for religious publications and applying them to a mass press that focused on scandal, often writing about and even mocking the religious establishment. In the 20th century, the influential writer and journalist H.L. Mencken often used his columns to attack the "Puritanism" of religious believers. A fear of religious traditionalism was his central philosophy. His witty remark that Puritanism is the "haunting fear that someone, somewhere may be happy" exemplifies the scorn he held for organized religion. His writings against William Jennings Bryan – who opposed the teaching of evolution during the Scopes trial – are among his most famous.¹²⁵ It appears that similar conflict continues today as a secular media struggles to get an appropriate take on religion.

In the area of religion and politics, former Columbia historian Richard Bushman has said that America has two founding documents that have been difficult to reconcile: the Constitution and the Bible. He says, "One makes the people the voice of God, the

¹²³ Mark Silk, *Unsecular Media: Making News of Religion in America*. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998),15.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*,16.

¹²⁵ See <http://www.quotationspage.com/quote/117.html>, accessed January 26, 2010; S.T. Joshi, "Introduction," in *Mencken's America*, by H.L. Mencken, edited by S.T. Joshi, vii-xviii, (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004).

other the prophets.”¹²⁶ At the heart of American politics is a nation at once deeply religious and also deeply conflicted about religion. *Newsweek* Managing Editor Jon Meacham, a writer Mitt Romney consulted while preparing his “Faith in America” speech, shows in his book *American Gospel* how religion has been part of the fabric of American discourse since the beginning, citing numerous examples of faith woven into the fabric of the country – things such as Lincoln’s second inaugural address.¹²⁷ French political observer Alexis de Tocqueville said America was deeply religious with numerous sects. When he visited the country in the 19th century, he noted that religion and politics were kept separate. The diversity and, especially, separation of church and state (meaning the lack of a state-sponsored religion), explained the success of religion in America, he said.¹²⁸

Of the industrialized nations, the United States is, by far, the most religious country. Researchers have noted that economic growth corresponds with a lower interest in religion, a trend known as the secularism hypothesis. The U. S. is a statistical outlier,

¹²⁶ Millennial Star editors, “M* Interviews: Richard Lyman Bushman,” *millennialstar.org*, November 14, 2005, under http://www.millennialstar.org/index.php/2005/11/14/m_interviews_richard_lyman_bushman, accessed October 22, 2007.

¹²⁷ ABC News *Political Radar*, “Romney; I’m not giving a JFK speech.” <http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalradar/2007/12/romney-im-not-g.html>, December 3, 2007, accessed January 26, 2010; Jon Meacham, *American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation*. (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006).

¹²⁸ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1899 translation by Henry Reeve, electronic version created by the University of Virginia American Studies Program, June 1, 1997, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/%7Ehyper/detoc/>, accessed January 26, 2010, Chapter 17, http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/1_ch17.htm, accessed January 21, 2010.

however, showing a high interest in religion despite relatively high economic growth.¹²⁹ Economist Robert Fogel said religious interest in the United States is so great today the country may be said to be entering a fourth “great awakening.” Awakenings, Fogel explains, are religious revivals that, as they mature, first change religions from the inside and then produce legislative and other reforms through political realignments.¹³⁰ On the other hand, British scholar Steven Bruce argues that American religious affiliation, especially its Christianity, may look more like secular Europe in a few decades.¹³¹ Still other scholars write that the most striking trend in the American religious landscape is that it has grown more diverse, both within traditional Christian churches and their types of worship, and also outside of Christianity, where new faiths are prospering and new kinds of non-creedal spiritualism are emerging.¹³² Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, for example, are making strong inroads.¹³³

Just as the United States remains a uniquely religious, industrialized country, it is also a deeply conflicted one. University of Virginia religious studies professor James Davidson Hunter calls this conflict a culture war, a rift that divides not just along secular lines but also along partisan lines as conservative, religiously oriented traditionalists

¹²⁹ Kenneth D. Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 5th Edition. (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 9.

¹³⁰ William Fogel, *The Fourth Great Awakening and the Future of Egalitarianism*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1-31.

¹³¹ Steve Bruce, *God is Dead, Secularization and the West*. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 204-228.

¹³² Charles H. Lippy, *Pluralism Comes of Age: American Religious Culture in the 20th Century*, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 1-17.

¹³³ Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America: How A “Christian Country” Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation*. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 1-26, 80-293.

become increasingly Republican and more liberal, secular voters become more Democratic.¹³⁴ Issues that touch on religious morality, including homosexual rights, prayer in schools, evolution, abortion and other issues have become this cultural divide's touchstones.¹³⁵ Notre Dame scholar Geoffrey Layman and Indiana University's Edward Carmines said that this "religion-based cultural cleavage" seems to be growing in electoral and partisan politics.¹³⁶ This "great divide," as Layman calls it, also pits religious traditionalists against those whose religion is more secular.¹³⁷

As the divide grows, there's renewed debate about what the role of religion should be in American politics. Two basic views dominate the conversation, dividing along the lines of the culture war. There are those who argue that religion's role in American politics should be strongly limited. Writing in the 1990s, UNLV political scientist Ted Jelen argued that religion, because it conflicts with democracy for loyalty, can be dangerous. He says religious believers are much less likely to support free speech than those who claim to have no religion. As controversies grow, he noted, the decisions people make in politics may cause believers to make personal compromises that render "unto Caesar that which is God's."¹³⁸ He says government can contaminate religion.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Control the Family, Art, Education, Law and Politics in America*. (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

¹³⁵ Geoffrey Layman and Edward G. Carmines "Cultural Conflict in American Politics, Religious Traditionalism, Postmaterialism and U.S. Political Behavior." *The Journal of Politics*, 59 no.3, (August 1997): 751-777, 751.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 769.

¹³⁷ Geoffrey Layman, *The Great Divide*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹³⁹ Ted G. Jelen, "In Defense of Religious Minimalism," in *A Wall of Separation? Debating the public role of religion*, edited by Mary C. Segers and Ted Jelen. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998), 33-40.

The idea of a strong sense of separation between religion and government comes first from Roger Williams, who founded the Rhode Island colony. Williams' views about separation came from his view that the mix of church and politics had deeply contaminated religion, citing as his example the direct mix of church and state during the reign of emperor Constantine.¹⁴⁰ The theme of separation became deeper in the U.S. tradition with Thomas Jefferson's famous letter to a Connecticut Baptist congregation, where he talked of a wall of separation between religious practice and the government.¹⁴¹ This line of thinking was important in 1960 when John F. Kennedy picked up the theme in a famous speech to the Houston Ministerial Association. He told his audience that religion should not influence his decisions, and that he would leave his Catholic faith rather than go against what he thought was right for the country.¹⁴²

This concept of the separation of church and state can make it a challenge for journalists to cover religion because religion is seen as not part of political dialogue and protected uniquely under the First Amendment.

There is an opposing view of the role of religion in the Republic – a view religion has a role that should be encouraged and that the effects of religion on government are necessary and largely salutary. This line of thinking may be traced to George Washington and the American founding. Washington argued in his farewell address that religion was vital to democracy:

¹⁴⁰ Meacham, *An American Gospel*, 54-55.

¹⁴¹ Thomas Jefferson, Reply to the Danbury Baptist Association of Connecticut, January 1, 1802, as printed in Meacham, *An American Gospel*, 264.

¹⁴² Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President 1960*. (New York: Atheneum House, 1961), 260-263; 391-393.

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. ... And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule indeed extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?¹⁴³

De Tocqueville, a devout Catholic, also thought that religion was necessary to maintain a strong republic. In essence, he said that religion provides controls on behavior and that moral behavior is necessary to the rule of law and democratic governance. He wrote in *Democracy in America*:

There is no religion that does not place the object of man's desires above and beyond the treasures of earth and that does not naturally raise his soul to regions far above those of the senses. Nor is there any which does not impose on man some duties towards his kind and thus draw him at times from the contemplation of himself. ...

Religious nations are therefore naturally strong on the very point on which democratic nations are weak; this shows of what importance it is for men to preserve their religion as their conditions become more equal. When the religion of a people is destroyed, doubt gets hold of the higher powers of the intellect and half paralyzes all the others.¹⁴⁴

According to Meacham, the founders resolved the tension between these views of the religion's role in the public square and the tensions inherent in differing religious beliefs, in part, by developing a public religion, a creedless non-denominational

¹⁴³ George Washington, *Farewell Address*, 1796, at Yale University's Avalon Project, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp, accessed January 26, 2010.

¹⁴⁴ De Tocqueville, Chapter V, http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/detoc/ch1_05.htm

discourse. In this functional, public religion, there is a god, Nature's God, whose interest is the nation and its destiny, whose judgments hang over the country and whose bounteous blessings include a rich land and civil rights and liberty. He writes, "In the public business of the nation ... it was important to the Founders to speak of God in a way that was unifying, not divisive. 'Nature's God' was the path they chose, and it has served the country admirably."¹⁴⁵ He added:

Public religion is not a substitute for private religion, nor is it a Trojan horse filled with evangelicals threatening the walls of secular America. It is rather a habit of mind and of heart that enables Americans to be at once tolerant and reverent – two virtues of relevance to all, for the Founders' public religion is consummately democratic. When a President says "God bless America" or when we sing "America! America! God shed his grace on thee," each American is free to define God in whatever way he chooses.¹⁴⁶

Public religion focuses on areas of agreement and avoids an imposed orthodoxy. For a candidate such as Mitt Romney, whose religion has comparatively few believers compared with the national population, an adhered-to public religion provided a rationale to keep the narrow specifics of his faith out of public discussion. However, voter concerns about the religion of American presidential candidates date back to the 1800 campaign of Thomas Jefferson and continue today. These campaigns often highlighted the tension between the different views of the role of religion in the public square. The historical literature and contemporary news accounts of past campaigns show news media helped shape discourse about religion in these campaigns.¹⁴⁷

In 1800, Dutch Reformed minister William Linn published a pamphlet about

¹⁴⁵ Meacham, *An American Gospel*, 22-23.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ For a deeper discussion of these campaigns, please see Appendix H.

Jefferson, a deist, saying “on account of his disbelief of the Holy Scripture, and his attempts to discredit them, he ought to be rejected from the Presidency.”¹⁴⁸ Purdue history professor Frank Lambert argues that Jefferson’s victory was important in confirming the lack of a religious test in American politics.

The first Mormon to run for president was Joseph Smith, the church’s founder, in 1844, the year James K. Polk was ultimately elected. Smith was shot and killed by a mob in Carthage, Illinois, before the election, becoming the first candidate or American president to be assassinated. His platform received national media attention, some hugely negative and some favorable.¹⁴⁹

A major test of the role of religion in presidential politics was the watershed election of 1928 that pitted New York’s Democratic governor, Al Smith, a Catholic, against protestant Herbert Hoover. Smith was the first major Catholic nominee for president. According to St. John’s University’s Michael Hostetler, Smith wished to avoid the religious question altogether, even though he wrote one important essay on the topic in *Atlantic* magazine.¹⁵⁰ Smith never fully overcame the religious issue, and he lost in a landslide.

The next major discussion of the religion of a candidate in American presidential politics came with the campaign of John F. Kennedy, another Irish Catholic. Kennedy’s

¹⁴⁸ Frank Lambert, “God—and a religious president ... [or] Jefferson and the No Campaigning for a voter-imposed religious test in 1800,” *Journal of Church & State*, 39, No. 4, (Autumn 1997), 769.

¹⁴⁹ Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig Foster, *The Mormon Quest for the Presidency*. (Ann Arbor, MI: John Whitmer Books, 2008), 30-32; 269-281.

¹⁵⁰ Michael J. Hostetler, “Gov. Al Smith Confronts the Catholic Question: The Rhetorical Legacy of the 1928 Campaign,” *Communication Quarterly*, 46, No 1, (Winter 1998), 12-23.

Catholic faith was a dominant theme of the 1960 presidential campaign. Kennedy began laying the groundwork on the issue in 1959 in the press. The press tracked the issue closely, but it may have been the press that helped turn the tide in Kennedy's favor later in the campaign by isolating those against Kennedy, framing opposition to Catholicism as bigotry.¹⁵¹ On Sept. 12, 1960, Kennedy spoke to 600 people at the Rice Hotel in Houston at the Greater Houston Ministerial Association.¹⁵² Journalist Theodore White said no one could be certain the effect of Kennedy's speech, but it received frequent attention and marked the end of much of the open discussion about JFK's religion during the campaign.¹⁵³

Writer Timothy Crouse says that political reporting changed following that 1960 campaign because of the surprise success of a book about it: *The Making of the President – 1960* by Theodore White. Before 1960, campaign coverage was formulaic, Crouse says, describing reporters as “interchangeable drones who wrote the same simple formula stories day after day.”¹⁵⁴ After 1960, political reporters began to use the colorful details in candidates' campaigns, not for a White-like retrospective after an election, but during day-to-day coverage, “exposing flaws and inconsistencies in the candidate that could ruin his chances before he even reached the primaries.”¹⁵⁵ The coverage became more focused on the narrative of the campaign. And a new kind of media onslaught or media pack emerged, Crouse argued.

¹⁵¹ White, *The Making of the President 1960*, 97.

¹⁵² White, *The Making of the President 1960*, 260-263; 391-393.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Crouse, *Boys on the Bus*, 30.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 37.

One of the first major candidates to face this new media strategy was the second major Mormon candidate – George Romney, who ran for the Republican presidential nomination in 1968. Romney was Mitt Romney’s father, and a former Michigan governor, who at one time in 1966 led both Lyndon Johnson and Robert F. Kennedy in opinion polls before fading.¹⁵⁶ Media followed Romney’s early campaign trips closely, but after several prominent gaffes, including one in which he said he had been brainwashed about Vietnam, his standing tumbled.¹⁵⁷ He withdrew before the New Hampshire primary. White said that Romney’s campaign became a laughing-stock, but

There was nothing comic in the performance itself – only in the mirror of the media and the press through which the nation saw the performance. And the story of the Romney campaign is less one of politics than of the influence of the media in modern America.¹⁵⁸

The media didn’t understand the moral views of the candidate, White said.¹⁵⁹

The campaign of Southern Baptist Jimmy Carter in 1976 also had important religious overtones that ultimately involved Mormonism. During Carter’s campaign, several articles appeared about his sister’s deeply held mystical beliefs and how she had guided him to a religious conversion.¹⁶⁰ Carter also delivered a speech about his religion and about the misperceptions of his faith.¹⁶¹ John Siegenthaler wrote that Carter’s born-

¹⁵⁶ Associated Press, “President Trails Romney 46% to 54, in Harris Poll,” *New York Times*, November 21, 1966, 22.

¹⁵⁷ White, *The Making of the President 1968*, 66-69.

¹⁵⁸ White, *The Making of the President 1968*, 61.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁶⁰ Martin Gardner, “The Gift of Inner Healing,” *New York Times*, August 22, 1976, 194; *New York Times*, “Poll Finds 34% Share ‘Born Again’ Feeling,” September 26, 1976.

¹⁶¹ Charles Mohr, “Carter Gets an Ovation After Assuring Jews in Jersey on His Religious Views,” *New York Times*, June 7, 1976.

again Christianity was news for a week, but then faded quickly.¹⁶²

Arizona Congressman Morris Udall opposed Carter in 1976 during the Democratic nomination primaries, and religion again became an issue. Udall disavowed his Mormon religion at a young age because of the church's belief at the time that men of African descent could not receive the Mormon priesthood at the time. Near the end of the campaign, Detroit Mayor Coleman Young, an African-American, encouraged Democrats to vote against Udall because of his Mormon roots. It was widely reported that Young told a group of black ministers that they should not vote for "a man from Arizona, whose church won't even let you in the back door."¹⁶³ One report suggested that Udall's loss could be attributed in part to Mayor Young's connections to Carter.¹⁶⁴

The 1988 presidential campaign included significant focus on two ministers running for office, the Rev. Jesse Jackson and the Rev. Pat Robertson. While neither had held a political office, both generated significant grassroots support. Robertson placed second in the Iowa caucuses, ahead of eventual Republican nominee George Bush, and won the Washington state caucus during the campaign. Jackson received the second-most convention delegates behind eventual Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis.¹⁶⁵

The fourth Mormon – if Udall is included as a Mormon – to make a major run for president was Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch, who had little success in the late 1990s generating

¹⁶² John Siegenthaler, "Introduction," in *Bridging the Gap: Religion and the News Media*, by John Dart and Jimmy Allen. (Nashville, TN: Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center, 2000), at <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/PDF/bridgingthegap.PDF>, accessed November 30, 2007, 19.

¹⁶³ "Udall asks apology by Detroit Mayor." *New York Times*, May 16, 1976, 31.

¹⁶⁴ Robert Reinhold, "Polls Links Udall Strength to Low Vote in Michigan." *New York Times*, May 20, 1976, 1.

¹⁶⁵ This overview of the campaign comes from wikipedia's detailed listing of the election results.

enthusiasm for his candidacy and left the race early in 2000 as George W. Bush's charged to victory. Historians Newell Bringhurst and Craig Foster write that Hatch's unsuccessful campaign brought Mormonism into the coverage "as a significant, sustained issue."¹⁶⁶ In 2000, George W. Bush took a controversial trip to Bob Jones University¹⁶⁷ during the campaign, described Jesus as his favorite philosopher, and used his religious conversion as a way of explaining how he had gone from being an irresolute young man to a successful business leader and politician.¹⁶⁸ Religion re-emerged as a topic that fall when Al Gore selected Joe Lieberman, a Jewish senator from Connecticut, as his running mate. Some studies suggested that Lieberman's religion was enough to convince at least a few voters to vote against the ticket – an important few, given the narrow margin of the Bush-Cheney victory in 2000.¹⁶⁹

Historic candidacies provide useful templates and heuristics with which to compare contemporary candidates. It seems likely that comparisons to a candidate like Kennedy would legitimize a candidate, while a framing comparison to candidatea like Al Smith or Morris Udall might harm the perceptions of that candidate; however, no studies

¹⁶⁶ Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig Foster, *The Mormon Quest for the Presidency*. (Ann Arbor, MI: John Whitmer Books, 2008), 118. For more detail on this issue, please see Appendix I.

¹⁶⁷ Glen Johnson, "Bush Saddled With 'Bob Jones' Label," *Associated Press*, February 24, 2000; at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/aponline/20000224/aponline143324_000.htm

¹⁶⁸ Darren K Carlson, "Keeping the Faith: George W. Bush and Religion," Gallup News Service, at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/6061/Keeping-Faith-George-Bush-Religion.aspx>, accessed May 9, 2011.

¹⁶⁹ James G. Kane, Stephen C. Craig, and Kenneth D. Wald, "Religion and Presidential Politics in Florida: A List Experiment," *Social Science Quarterly*, 85, no. 2, (June 2004), 281; Adam J. Berensky and Tali Mendelberg. "The Indirect Effects of Discredited Stereotypes in Judgments of Jewish Leaders," *American Journal of Political Science*, 49, no. 4, (October 2005): 845-864.

have been done examining the framing of contemporary candidates through the historical lens of past campaigns.

At the same time, many observers believe that religion's influence on politics in recent years has grown. Pollster Andrew Kohut and his colleagues write that religious issues have become more central to American politics since Jimmy Carter's presidency.¹⁷⁰ Communication scholars Kevin Coe and David Domke noted that references to God in presidential speeches have grown since Ronald Reagan assumed the presidency, with such mentions having special emphasis during the presidencies of Ronald Reagan and of George W. Bush.¹⁷¹

2.2 Framing Presidential Politics, Media and Religion.

This study is based upon two ideas that are repeated themes in the academic literature: the first theme is that the news media face criticisms and challenges in the way they have framed presidential elections, especially their framing those elections as horse races. The second theme is that the secular news media in the United States struggle to frame religion well, especially in its nexus with politics and elections. For the coverage of minority religions, as Mormonism arguably is, the struggle is even more challenging. The purpose of this literature review is to trace these themes in the literature and to examine the arguments surrounding those issues.

¹⁷⁰ Andrew Kohut, John C. Green, Scott Keeter, and Robert C. Toth, *Diminishing Divide: Religion's Changing Role in American Politics*. (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 1-3.

¹⁷¹ Kevin Coe and David Domke "Petitioners or Prophets? Presidential Discourse, God, and the Ascendancy of Religious Conservatives," *Journal of Communication*, 56 (2006): 317.

The concept of framing gained much of its explanatory power through the work of Princeton psychologist Daniel Kahneman, a Nobel laureate who wrote with the late Amos Tversky during the 1980s and 1990s. These scholars demonstrated that, as they changed the wording of answers to either-or questions in experiments, people chose answers with vastly differing frequencies, depending on how those answers were worded, even when the difference between the two choices was mathematically inconsequential.¹⁷² Many experiments have shown the power of word choice – of verbal framing – in real life.¹⁷³

Framing, to use George Washington University's Robert Entman's words, is an unavoidable choice, necessary in writing:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.¹⁷⁴

Later, he added:

¹⁷² Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky "Choices, Values, and Frames," in *Choices, Values and Frames*, ed. Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, 1-16. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2000), 5. For example, they found that something as minimally different in perceived value as a \$10 bill and a \$10 ticket could have a significant influence upon whether a person will choose to make a purchase. They also found that if their questions provided a choice between risk and saving life or between risk and preventing death – the same thing really – respondents would nevertheless choose strikingly different answers to either-or questions. Kahnemann and Tversky said their results were "... both pervasive and robust."

¹⁷³ Shanto Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 12-13.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," in *McQuail's Reader in Mass Communication Theory*, ed. Denis McQuail. (London: Sage, 2002), 391.

A standard definition of framing: selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretations, evaluation, and/or solution.¹⁷⁵

Framing analysis asks which dimensions of a person, an organization or an issue are raised in a text. Framing theory suggests that when writers select certain frames, these frames create and activate pre-existing knowledge networks within the brains of readers called schema. These networks interpret new information and fill in gaps in knowledge. Stanford communication scholar Shanto Iyengar says framing works through what is called the “accessibility bias.”¹⁷⁶ Accessibility bias works like this: People can’t weed through piles of information to make decisions, so they use shortcuts, heuristics and stereotypes instead. They rely on what is available. By measuring the frequency of frames, scholars learn a lot. They measure what facts are made available to readers so that certain schema can become frames.

Among the most common framing choices of political journalism is the framing of horse-race journalism. The term horse-race journalism entered the lexicon in 1980 when political scientist C. Anthony Broh¹⁷⁷ wrote about the focus on polling in the 1976 presidential campaign and the increasing influence of polling on news coverage. Such coverage puts the focus on winners and losers, on polls, and on strategies, he said.

Discussion of issues and public policies get a short shrift. Writer Brian Montopoli

¹⁷⁵ Robert M. Entman, *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy*, (Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 2003), 5.

¹⁷⁶ Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible?*, 130-136.

¹⁷⁷ C. Anthony Broh, “Horse-Race Journalism: Reporting the Polls in the 1976 Presidential Election,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 44, no. 4, (Winter, 1980), 514-529; Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2748469>.

captured the general tenor of criticism in an article in the *Columbia Journalism Review* when he said,

The sad truth is that the daily horserace mania that afflicts the political press — the poll obsession, the theories about bounces, the inside baseball — reduces campaign coverage to just one more form of entertainment. The fourth estate still too often seems content to couch the election of the leader of the free world in the language of SportsCenter.¹⁷⁸

Broh said,

Where in all this is Rousseau's informed and committed participant in the events that shape his life? The horse-race image can encourage voters to focus on exciting but ultimately irrelevant aspects of the campaign ... Issues which are complex, but not hotly debated, but more significant, may be passed over in the search for excitement.¹⁷⁹

Scholars Stephen Farnsworth and S. Robert Lichter added more recently:

Simply put, coverage that focuses on the horserace shortchanges candidates trying to talk about issues, and voters who are trying to think about issues. The questions voters ask of candidates are about a lot more than who is gaining or losing ground in the latest poll.¹⁸⁰

Many studies mention horse-race journalism and discuss its potential impact on elections. Scholars including Thomas Patterson,¹⁸¹ Kathleen Hall Jamieson, James

¹⁷⁸ Brian Montopoli, "The Horse Race Mentality," *Columbia Journalism Review* politics column, November 12, 2004, under *CJR Daily* at http://www.cjr.org/politics/the_horse_race_mentality.php?page=2, accessed October 12, 2007.

¹⁷⁹ Broh, "Horse-Race journalism."

¹⁸⁰ Farnsworth, Stephen, and Lichter, S. Robert. "The Nightly News Nightmare Revisited: Network News and the 2004 Presidential Election," *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, DC*, September 01, 2005; 29, at http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p41614_index.html, accessed May 7, 2011.

¹⁸¹ Thomas Patterson, *Out of Order: An incisive and boldly original critique of the news media's domination of America's political process*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1993), 53-134.

Capella,¹⁸² and Robert Entman¹⁸³ say that the American press focuses much more on the “game” of politics than the substance of issues. While some of these scholars use different terms for similar concepts including concepts outside of elections themselves, there has been a general agreement among them that this focus has a negative influence on American democracy. In a 2005 article analyzing the use of polls in campaign coverage for *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Bradlee Professor of Politics and Government at Harvard Thomas Patterson wrote,

The Gallup organization first asked voters their satisfaction with the presidential nominees in 1936. Through the 1960s the only nominee who, on balance, was perceived unfavorably at the end of the campaign was Barry Goldwater in 1964. Since then – that is, during the period of hyper-polling – more than a third of the nominees have wound up with an unfavorable image. Several factors account for the trend, but the tendency of the press to cast the candidates as strategic actors, whose every move is driven by a determination to win, is surely among them.

Nor should it occasion surprise that Americans have soured on campaigns. Elections have become negative affairs filled with horse-race commentary and analysis. A Vanishing Voter Project survey at the end of the 2000 campaign found that twice as many respondents felt the campaign was “depressing, that it hasn’t been nearly as good as a campaign should be” as felt the campaign was “uplifting that it made [you] feel better about elections.” The same survey found that nearly two-thirds of Americans agree with the statement “political campaigns today seem like theater or entertainment rather than like something to be taken seriously.”¹⁸⁴

New York University Journalism professor Jay Rosen argues the reason horse-race journalism is so prevalent is that it meets the personal and professional needs of journalists. On the progressive website Altnet, he wrote:

¹⁸² James Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Spiral of Cynicism. The Press and the Public Good*. (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 1997).

¹⁸³ Entman, *Projections of Power*, 5.

¹⁸⁴ Thomas E. Patterson, “Of Polls, Mountains: U.S. Journalists and Their Use of Election Surveys,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 69, no. 5, (2005), 716-724; stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3521570>

The biggest advantage of horse-race journalism is that it permits reporters and pundits to “play up their detachment.” Focusing on the race advertises the political innocence of the press because “who’s gonna win?” is not an ideological question. By asking it you reaffirm that yours is not an ideological profession.¹⁸⁵

Patterson says horse-race coverage has been a growing trend. In the 1960 campaign, fewer than half of all articles focused on the horse race, but by 1992, about 80 percent of them did.¹⁸⁶ The Project for Excellence in Journalism’s detailed 2008 study showed horse-race coverage was the dominant frame in 2008.¹⁸⁷ As horse-race journalism focuses on who is winning in polls, a natural question that reporters ask is: why? For example, when a poll suggests certain traits, such as a candidate’s religion, hinder a candidate’s chances of winning an election, then elements of that hindrance would logically be explored and ways the candidate might deal with those hindrances would receive attention. It is interesting to note that pollsters asked only one or two questions about Mormonism and George Romney’s beliefs in the 1968, whereas polls were frequent about Mormonism in the 2008 campaign. Coverage of Mormonism was also much more extensive in the 2008 campaign than 40 years earlier.

Some scholars say the concern over the horse race is overstated. Political communication scholar Doris Graber says studies of news in recent years suggest “there is more issue coverage, albeit unsystematic, than scholars have acknowledged in the past.” Graber said many content analysis studies have missed issue coverage in news

¹⁸⁵ Jay Rosen, “Why Horse Race Journalism Works for Journalists But Fails Us,” *Alternet*, January 22, 2008, at <http://www.alternet.org/media/74488?page=1>, accessed May 7, 2011.

¹⁸⁶ Patterson, *Out of Order*, 74.

¹⁸⁷ Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism, PEJ Campaign Coverage Index: October 20 - 26, 2008, “As the Candidates Head Down the Stretch, Horse Race Dominates.” at <http://www.journalism.org/node/13391>, accessed January 28, 2010.

stories because they tend to force individual news stories into one category or another for the sake of the research – counting a story as being about the horse race or as being about the issues, for example, when it may include elements of both. With the use of such categorization, researchers may miss issues imbedded inside stories labeled as horse-race stories. Audiences or scholars may overlook much of this issue coverage, she says, but the issues are there. Graber’s research shows 25 major issues and themes received intermittent, but regular, coverage in the printed press – as did about 20 on television – during recent campaigns.¹⁸⁸

The late political reporter and columnist David Broder argues the criticism of the horse-race approach is excessive: “I am not convinced that horse-race journalism blinds us – or the voters – to the importance of issues in the election,” he said. “Elections are contests between individuals, not between philosophies. Voters choose between Candidate A and Candidate B, not between liberalism and conservatism, high or low taxes, permissive or restrictive abortion policies.”¹⁸⁹

He gives numerous examples of presidents who changed their course in the midst of their presidencies, despite positions and promises to the contrary, showing how character is – and should be – the defining issue.¹⁹⁰ Broder said, “Voters use issues to weigh the capabilities of the candidates and to refine their own feelings about the

¹⁸⁸ Doris Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, 7th Edition. (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2006), 234-236.

¹⁸⁹ David Broder, *Behind the Front Page: A Candid Look at How News is Made*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 259.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

candidates' personalities and character. But the presidency is ultimately a test of character," Broder concluded.¹⁹¹

The debate over horse-race journalism is of no small concern. News media, some scholars say, are taking a more important role in winnowing the field of candidates, especially in the primary season. This role is one for which the press is poorly suited, they say. Stanford's Shanto Iyengar says:

As the postindustrial era has progressed, the role of grass roots political organization and traditional partisan infrastructure has waned, whereas the candidates turned to the electronic media as the chief means of communication with the electorate. In the process, the role of the ordinary citizen diminished from that occasional foot soldier and activist to passive spectator.¹⁹²

Harvard's Thomas Patterson argues America's election system is in danger of losing its legitimacy.¹⁹³ Patterson's central argument is that our present system of news-mediated elections happened because of changes in the election system designed by the parties themselves. Their goal was to increase the number of primaries, diminishing the role of central committees. The system was designed so "rank-and-file voters would be the kingmakers in the new system,"¹⁹⁴ a claim, he said, that was "naïve." He added,

The new structure was plebiscite-like, but much too complex to enable the public to understand its choices without guidance. The system did not pose a yes-no vote on a single issue of policy or leadership. Rather, it asked voters to make a complex decision that is difficult even

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 260. For more, see Michael Janeway, *Republic of Denial: Press, Politics, and Public Life*. (New Haven CN: Yale University Press, 1999), 104.

¹⁹² Shanto Iyengar, "Overview," in *Do the Media Govern? Politicians, Voters, and Reporters in America*, edited by Shanto Iyengar and Richard Reeves. (Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage, 1997), 144.

¹⁹³ Patterson, *Out of Order*, 21-24

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 33.

for seasoned party professionals operating in the context of a deliberative national convention.¹⁹⁵

He writes evidence the system has broken is clear in the system's immense unpredictability.¹⁹⁶

Doris Graber seems to disagree with arguments that voters can't make coherent decisions in today's news-mediated election environment. Her summary of political communication says that although citizens may not be able to recall specific facts, such as the length of a term or the name of a public policy, "when interviewers probe for understanding, rather than for specific facts, they often discover considerable political insight."¹⁹⁷ Over a lifetime, voters gain awareness of "an impressive array of politically important topics the media have covered," she said. Graber's take is that despite sketchiness in coverage, despite weakness in coverage of most minor candidacies, despite inadequate policy analysis and despite a focus on the negative, voters are "generally satisfied with the amount of election information they receive."¹⁹⁸ In three recent presidential elections before 2008, three in four felt satisfied with election coverage – and that percentage grew to nearly 86 percent in 2004. She added that in the Internet age, voters can find a wide variety of information on candidates if they choose to do so.

There seem to be no studies that examine how horse-race journalism operates when religion becomes involved in a presidential campaign or when polls suggest that a candidate's religion will hinder the candidate's election chances. There also seems to be no research on how historical framing plays out in the coverage of presidential

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 33-34.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 38-42.

¹⁹⁷ Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, 200.

¹⁹⁸ Graber, *Mass Media and American Politics*, 238.

campaigns. Clearly, however, some campaign comparisons are more favorable than others and some are more likely to prime different images in voters' minds. There is a large array of literature on the challenges journalists face in religion and politics. The literature about the mix of the two issues that make up this study – presidential elections and their relationship to the news media and the thorny issues of media and religion suggests that when horse-race journalism includes issues raised by a minority religion like Mormonism, many challenges arise, as the next section shows.

2.2.a The Role of Religion in Presidential Politics.

Even though the U.S. Constitution prohibits a religious test for public office, it is clear that voters consider the religions of candidates.¹⁹⁹ Because voters take religion into consideration, it is natural for journalists to include descriptions of voter preferences and to discuss religion in their coverage.

Polls have made it clear repeatedly that a candidate's religion matters to voters. First, religious devotion and a belief in religion seem necessary to be successful in American presidential politics, polls show. Public opinion surveys show a strong majority of Americans would feel uncomfortable voting for an atheist for president. Polls also show some voters would choose to vote against candidates because those candidates professed religious beliefs. A February 2007 Gallup Poll showed 4 percent of Americans would not vote for a Catholic, 7 percent a Jew, and 24 percent a Mormon.²⁰⁰ A Fox poll

¹⁹⁹ U.S. Constitution, Article VI, section 3.

²⁰⁰ Jeffrey M. Jones, "Some Americans Reluctant to Vote for Mormon, 72-Year-Old Presidential Candidates; Strong support for black, women, Catholic candidates," *Gallup News Service*, February 20, 2007, at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/26611/Some-Americans-Reluctant-Vote-Mormon-72YearOld-Presidential-Candidates.aspx>, accessed January 28, 2010.

showed 32 percent of voters said they would be less likely to vote for a presidential candidate who is Mormon, 45 percent less likely to vote for a Muslim and 53 percent less likely to vote for a Scientologist.²⁰¹

Many surveys over the years have shown Mormonism to be a problem for a candidate. A Lexis-Nexis search found 52 separate questions in nearly as many surveys about the Mormonism of a hypothetical presidential candidate.²⁰² The answers to the surveys have varied widely, depending on question wording, but the trends suggest Mitt Romney's Mormonism was a significant hurdle for many voters in 2008. Gallup and Harris first asked a question about a Mormon candidate in 1967 during the campaign of George Romney. Gallup asked if people would vote for a well-qualified man for president and he happened to be a Mormon, would you vote for him. Seventy-five percent said yes and 17 percent said no.²⁰³ Years later, a 1999 Gallup survey during the run of Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch said 17 percent of Americans wouldn't vote for their party's nominee if the nominee were Mormon.²⁰⁴

Why are some people are less likely to vote for a candidate with certain religious beliefs? Part of the reason may be rooted in interpersonal experiences or in the history of interactions among religious faiths, but polls also show that people often have a better

²⁰¹ "Poll Recap: Mormon a Better Choice for President Than Muslim, Atheist or Scientologist," *Foxnews.com*, February 13, 2007, at <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,251802,00.html>, accessed March 7, 2009.

²⁰² Search conducted on December 1, 2007.

²⁰³ Gallup Survey April 24, 1967

²⁰⁴ Gallup Survey March 10, 1999.

opinion of a religion when they know a person who practices that faith than when their knowledge of the religion is more abstract.²⁰⁵

Where do people get their impressions of different faiths when they have little or no interpersonal experience? An inescapable conclusion for some scholars is that media have that influence. In 2007, CUNY political scientists Louis Bolce and Gerald De Maio said that media portrayals of evangelical Christians as “intolerant” influenced voters. The pair argued that evangelicals – and the Republican Party – were hindered in the public debate through these media portrayals. The researchers said both sides of the cultural wars were “equally culpable in expressing intolerance toward one another,” but the news media framed most of its reporting on the intolerance of those on the more traditional, more religious, side of the cultural divide.

The assessment of Bolce and De Maio was that public opinion surveys showed a deepening anti-fundamentalist bias, not just among the elite but also among the electorate. They said, “It is our view that antifundamentalism is much more likely to be an artifact of images conveyed about the group in political and cultural media than engendered by encounters with group members.”²⁰⁶

That the same kind of media influence would be true of the public perception of Mormonism seems likely. Mormonism, as a religion, is smaller in number than evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity. Portrayals of Mormonism historically have

²⁰⁵ Louis Bolce and Gerald De Maio, “A Prejudice for the Thinking Classes: Media Exposure, Political Sophistication, and the Anti-Christian Fundamentalist,” *American Politics Research* 36 No. 2 (2008); originally published online November 29, 2007 at <http://apr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/36/2/155>, accessed March 7, 2009. 160- 162.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 160-162.

included a focus on its idiosyncrasies, including on the historical practice of polygamy and on its supposed secrecy.²⁰⁷

In 2000, the Center for Media and Public Affairs in Washington, working on a grant from Pew, said coverage of religion grew between 1969 and 1999, doubling in the 1990s.²⁰⁸ The study said the most frequent topic of religious coverage involved the relationship of religion to politics. Internal controversies were the second most frequent story. Only 7 percent of the stories in the Center’s study mentioned religious beliefs – there was little explanation of theology or doctrine. One example cited was news a controversy involving George W. Bush’s visit to Bob Jones University during the 2000 campaign. The university’s policies on interracial contact were discussed, but the Biblical arguments relating to the policies were not. “This widespread absence of references to theology or spirituality in daily journalism may marginalize the role of faith in public discourse about religion,” the study said.²⁰⁹

Scholars and pundits have found many reasons to criticize religious coverage for many years, saying journalists tend to be more secular than the religious people they cover. Potential weakness in the day-to-day of religious coverage may be tempered by journalism’s professional norms of fairness and objectivity, but studies show that reporters as a group have a different worldview than the religious people they cover.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ See Appendix J for a fuller discussion of the coverage of Mormonism historically.

²⁰⁸ The Center for Media and Public Affairs, “The Media Get Religion: National Media Coverage of Religion, 1969-1998,” in *Media Monitor*, XIV, no. 3, May/June 2000, at http://www.cmpa.com/files/media_monitor/00mayjun.pdf.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹⁰ In two unpublished pilot studies looking for dissertation topics, I researched which major influence groups received coverage in the major U.S. news media. In a list of more than 50 groups and a population of more than 6,000 stories, I found news articles

In their study of journalists in the 1980s, Lichter, Rothman and Lichter found journalists were much less likely to be churchgoers than Americans at large.²¹¹ In 2004, Pew reported finding a contrast between the personal beliefs of average Americans and journalists. About 60 percent of Americans in the Pew study felt a belief in God is necessary to be moral, but only one in 10 national journalists agreed. Nearly 90 percent of journalists working at the national level said they were accepting of homosexuality while only about half the population reported feeling that way.²¹²

In 1987, the late political reporter David Broder wrote that “secularism” is a blinder for journalists – one they needed to adjust.²¹³ Broder said:

I am not suggesting that we “get religion.” But we certainly should not let the secularism that pervades the journalistic culture keep us from dealing intelligently and sensitively – without cynicism – with the many leaders and citizens in this nation who draw strength and motivation from

that mentioned these groups. These were common groups, such as the Sierra Club, Brookings Institution, the NAACP, and the National Rifle Association. The group that, by far, received the most coverage – more than 20 percent of the total of these more than 50 groups – was the American Civil Liberties Union, the great supporter of the separation of church and state, the archetype of a secular America during the Scopes trial and since. My second preliminary study was an unfinished, unpublished framing analysis – using grounded theory – of the admission by Congressman Pete Stark that he was an atheist. In the 30 or so articles that covered this issue, Stark was covered very favorably – as a courageous supporter of diversity and the Constitutional rights of all people to believe what they will. Both studies seemed to support the idea of a secular press.

²¹¹ Stanley Lichter, S. Rothman, and Linda Lichter, *The Media Elite: America's New Power-brokers*. (Bethesda, MD: Adler & Adler, 1986), 21-53, as cited in “How the Media Vote,” Media Research Center, under Media Bias Basics, at <http://www.mrc.org/biasbasics/biasbasics3.asp>, accessed August 5, 2010, and as cited in Underwood, *From Yahweh to Yahoo!*, *The Religious Roots of a Secular Press*, 296-297.

²¹² Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, “Press Coverage now hurt by bottom-line coverage, Press going too easy on Bush, Part IV, Values and the Press,” May 23, 2004, <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?PageID=829>, accessed November 30, 2007.

²¹³ Broder, *Behind the Front Page*, 334-335.

their religious beliefs.²¹⁴

Gal Beckerman wrote in the *Columbia Journalism Review* in 2004:

However central belief and faith might be to the American populace, our news media seldom puncture the surface in their reporting on religion. The various institutions are scrutinized, sometimes with great rigor, as a former cardinal in Boston might confirm. But it generally takes scandal or spectacle to get even the large denominations on the front page... The journalist glances at religious community as if staring through the glass of an ant farm, remarking on what the strange creatures are doing.²¹⁵

In 2006, Tom Kunkel commented in the *American Journalism Review* that journalism's issues with religion were brought into focus for him by the success of Mel Gibson's movie, *The Passion of the Christ*:

For a generation the mainstream media often ignored these people – their readers and viewers, mind you – and even now there remains an undercurrent of derision from some reporters toward the faith-based views millions hold on such important issues as abortion and evolution.²¹⁶

Asbury College professor Peter A. Kerr showed that fundamentalist Christians were framed in a generally unfavorable light by the network news between 1980 and 2000: “Fundamentalists are reported in a consistent, mildly negative manner. ... Although often portrayed as being somewhat intolerant, racist, violent, and prone to

²¹⁴ Ibid., 335.

²¹⁵ Gal Beckerman, “Across the Great Divide, Why Don’t Journalists Get Religion, A Tenuous Bridge to Believers,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, May/June 2004. <http://cjrarchives.org/issues/2004/3/beckerman-faith.asp>, accessed November 30, 2007.

²¹⁶ Tom Kunkel, “Have a Little Faith: At last the Mainstream Media Get Religion.” *American Journalism Review*, Jun/Jul 2006, 4. <http://www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=4122>, accessed January 26, 2010. He argued, nevertheless, that things were improving.

impose their views on others, fundamentalists are also depicted as being somewhat patriotic.”²¹⁷

Kerr and his colleague Patricia Moy found similar results in an analysis of newspapers – a study of 2,243 newspaper articles published between 1980 and 2000.²¹⁸ The pair found that coverage of fundamentalists had grown significantly over the years from about a dozen articles a year in 1980 to more than 200 a year in 2000. They found coverage of fundamentalists to be somewhat unbalanced and somewhat unfavorable. When they used a 1-to-5 Likert scale to measure the balance with which journalists covered fundamentalists – with 5 being the most balanced and 1 least — the mean was 2.45 – somewhat less than balanced overall. The study also used a 1-100 “thermometer rating” to measure how warmly fundamentalist Christians were portrayed by the articles overall, with 100 being the warmest possible impression and 1 the coldest, and the mean rating in the study was 41.8 – somewhat cool. When they used a 1-5 Likert-type scale with 5 being the most tolerant and 1 the least tolerant, the scholars found that media coverage portrayed fundamentalists as “somewhat intolerant,” at 1.96 on their Likert-type scale. When they used a similar scale to measure how law-abiding fundamentalists were with 5 being the most law abiding and 1 the least, they found that media portrayed fundamentalists as “somewhat criminal-minded,” 2.16 on their 1-5 scale. When Kerr and Moy used a 1-to-4 Likert-type scale to measure the degree to which coverage portrayed fundamentalists as imposing their views on others, with 1 being the least

²¹⁷ Peter A. Kerr, “The Framing of Fundamentalist Christians 1980-2000,” *Journal of Media and Religion*, 2, no. 4, (2003), 203.

²¹⁸ Peter A. Kerr and Patricia Moy, “Newspaper Coverage of Fundamentalist Christians, 1980-2000,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*; 79, no. 1, (Spring 2002), 54-55; 59.

forceful and 4 the most forceful, the authors' mean was 2.84 or "somewhat forceful in imposing its views on others." The pair also found that news coverage portrayed fundamentalists as "somewhat involved in politics" (3.10 on a 1-to-4 scale with 4 being the most involved) and portrayed fundamentalists as "somewhat violent" (2.78 on a 1-to-4 scale with 4 being the most violent).

Opinion journalists were less favorable than news journalists were in the coverage, they said. Overall, the scholars said, newspapers were "slightly cool but not cold" toward fundamentalist Christians.

Despite the preponderance of commentary that news media are secular and struggle in the coverage of religion, there is a conflicting view saying coverage has grown too accepting of religious belief. This view does not suggest the news media share the same worldview and values as religious people, but the media, nevertheless, show too much tolerance for religion.²¹⁹ Reporter Chris Mooney, author of *The Republican War on Science*, and The Ohio State University media scholar Matthew Nisbet in a cover story in *CJR*, said that when reporters use the journalistic norm of balance to describe some controversies involving religion and science, distortion can result. Here's how: when an issue like intelligent design conflicts with essential scientific consensus, distortion results when that issue is presented as a debate between two equal points of view. Such efforts to be "balanced" distorts because the two sides aren't deserving of equal treatment and coverage because the scientific, intellectual arguments don't carry equal weight, and

²¹⁹ Michael Kinsley, "The Lord and Richard Scrushy," *Washington Post*, Sunday, July 3, 2007, B07, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/01/AR2005070101819.html>, accessed November 30, 2007.

readers might assume the two points of view are equal.²²⁰

Similarly, Mark Silk, a media and religion scholar and former journalist, says the U.S. news media are “unsecular.” He says many of the stories about religion are about the good works of people who believe in religion. Whether it is girls in their fine Easter dresses or stories of Christmas charity, religious stories “presuppose” religion is a good thing.²²¹ He says the framing of religion through common templates, which he calls “topoi,” excludes some religions from the religious mainstream and charts the range of appropriate religious discourse.²²² His argument and discourse analysis suggest a conservative status quo may benefit from religious portrayals that set the tone of appropriate religious practice, and, at the same time, hinder smaller or newer religions.

At least one recent study has supported parts of this view. Harvey Hill, John Hickman and Joel McLendon of Berry College completed a detailed content analysis of the coverage of religious groups and their expectations of the coming of the millennium in 1999 and 2000.²²³ The researchers found that the terms reporters used to describe smaller groups, such as the Falun Gong in China, included terms such as “cult,” while the terms used to describe more established groups, including evangelicals, were more likely to be neutral terms such as “church.” They found that as mainstream groups talked of their idiosyncratic millennial expectations, those expectations received less coverage than

²²⁰ Chris Mooney and Matthew Nisbet, “Undoing Darwin,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, September/October 2005, <http://cjrarchives.org/issues/2005/5/mooney.asp>, accessed December 1, 2007.

²²¹ Silk, *Unsecular Media*, 57.

²²² Silk uses Mormonism as an example of how his topoi of religion excluded Mormons from the mainstream in the 19th century.

²²³ Harvey Hill, John Hickman, and Joel McLendon, “Cults and Sects and Doomsday Groups, Oh My: Media Treatment of Religion on the Eve of the Millennium,” *Review of Religious Research*, 43, no. 1, (2001): 24-38.

smaller religious groups' expectations, and also that the coverage of the so-called "cults" millennial beliefs was less favorable.²²⁴ The researchers said this unfavorable coverage of small, emergent religious groups can have grave consequences because these religious groups can develop a sense of being besieged – a sense that can increase the chance for violence or for a spiral of misunderstanding.²²⁵ Their results suggested that:

... more mainstream religious groups are typically described in neutral or favorable terms, while new religious movements are consistently described in pejorative language. This bias against new religious movements is troubling because the media can have a profoundly negative influence on the perception of religious group members by outsiders.²²⁶

Mormonism is cited as an outsider religion by Silk – that is, not part of the mainstream. He uses 19th century coverage of Mormon polygamy to show that reporters establish a realm of acceptable religious belief.²²⁷ One of the central takeaways from Silk's work for the purposes of this study, therefore, is that when journalists focus on the good works of a religious organization, the group is seen as mainstream. When what is odd in belief becomes the focus of coverage, the group is excluded from the mainstream.

Some researchers have found the gap between journalists' beliefs and those of the people they cover may not be as wide as some conservative believers suspect, a report from the First Amendment Center said. However, the report said journalists and editors did say they believed in religion and were less secular personally than was expected, and these writers harbored less animus toward traditional believers than was previously

²²⁴ Ibid., 31.

²²⁵ Ibid., 35.

²²⁶ Ibid., 24.

²²⁷ Silk, *Unsecular Media*, 91-105.

understood.²²⁸ The study's authors, John Dart, a former religion reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*, and Jimmy Allen, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, found much of the problem with the relationship with the press and religion was simple misunderstanding:

Americans who practice religion and Americans who practice journalism often perceive each other as perplexing and troublesome, an ironic situation since the activities of both are sheltered under the same constitutional amendment. It's almost as if the two groups were separated by wind-blown waters as difficult to cross as the Red Sea.²²⁹

The study showed conflict about what was expected of the national press – religious believers thought the press ought to inspire, but the press thought its job was to portray the facts.²³⁰ A 2000 update to that study indicated that the press had made some strides in improving the coverage of religion.²³¹

Doug Underwood's *From Yahweh to Yahoo!* acknowledges a secular bent among journalists but shows, using both historical methods and survey analysis, that reporting's culture actually comes from religious roots, and that many values held by individual journalists spring from religious traditions.²³² The Center for Media and Public Policy's 2000 study said journalists' attendance at church doubled in the 1990s, though it still trailed the public at large.²³³ Though there is a secular bent to modern journalism, such

²²⁸ John Dart and Jimmy Allen, *Bridging the Gap: Religion and the News Media*, (Nashville:Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center, 2000), at <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/PDF/bridgingthegap.PDF>, accessed November 30, 2007.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, ii.

²³² Underwood, *From Yahweh to Yahoo!*, 117-216.

²³³ Center for Media and Public Policy, "The Media Get Religion," 6.

studies suggest it is not fair to say journalism sits in strident opposition to religion or to religious believers.

2.2.b Journalistic Challenges in Covering Religion

Three important reasons why professional norms may make it something of a challenge for journalists to cover religion are found in the literature.

First, journalists follow conflict. Standard lists of news values include conflict as a key way decisions about news coverage get made.²³⁴ When reporters focus on conflict, they focus on scandal within churches, as in the clergy abuse scandals; on doctrinal schism, as in the decision to ordain women or gay pastors; on controversies between faiths, as in when Jewish groups who complained to Mormons of their practice of baptizing people for the dead; and on legal controversies involving churches, as in the decision to build a mosque overlooking ground zero or in court controversies touching on intelligent design. All of these were legitimate news stories, but by focusing on conflict as the leading news value, journalists may have missed the nuance and faith at the heart of the religious experience. One study shows how overemphasis on conflict might play out. Missouri State University journalism professor Mark Paxton evaluated the coverage of a flag controversy in Missouri in which a small town put a fish symbol, seen as a symbol of Christianity, on the town flag. The press focused on the controversy, framing the controversy as trivial or as a “Holy War” – as a fight between outsiders and insiders. In doing so, the coverage “may have marginalized a significant dispute involving

²³⁴ See, for example, Melvin Mencher’s list from his text, as posted at <http://www.uamont.edu/facultyweb/sitton/lrx/values.html>, under news values, accessed August 5, 2010.

separation of church and state.”²³⁵

The second way journalists struggle when they try to cover religion is the emphasis on the news value of unusualness, sometimes referred to as “oddity.” As with conflict, oddity – as in when a man bites a dog – is a long-established news value.²³⁶ Unusualness and oddity always imply a comparison: “Unusual to whom?” “As compared to what?” Secular journalists, therefore, might be expected to pick out the unconventional and idiosyncratic characteristics of religions, especially those outside of a generally accepted religious mainstream. St. John’s University history professor Nerina Rustomji showed in her research how this has happened with Islam. Rustomji studied media portrayals of the Houri – the doctrinal, Islamic idea that beautiful maidens await righteous men in the afterlife, sometimes referred to as the 72-virgins. She writes that journalists presented the doctrine in ways that portrayed Muslims as “less than rational.”²³⁷ Similarly, in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, Katia Bachko, wrote late in the 2008 campaign about Republican vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin’s Pentecostal faith. Bachko complained that CNN focused too much on the seemingly unusual Pentecostal practice of speaking in tongues:

I’m not an expert on the group, but I imagine that its core beliefs also have something to do with Christianity and good works and all that, and not just an easily ridiculed spiritual experience. By treating the topic with condescension, they alienate viewers and play into the hands of those

²³⁵ Mark Paxton, “Gone Fishin’: A Framing Analysis of a Small Towns City Seal,” *Journal of Media and Religion*. 3 no. 1 (February 2004), 53.

²³⁶ Ronald Sitton, “News Values,” University of Arkansas, Monticello, under News Values <http://www.uamont.edu/facultyweb/sitton/lrx/values.html>, accessed August 15, 2010. Mencher, Melvin, *Melvin Mencher’s News Reporting and Writing*, 10th edition, Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill, 2005.

²³⁷ Nerina Rustomji, “American Visions of the Houri,” *The Muslim World*, 97:1 (January 2007), 79-92.

who rail against the media's purported liberal bias.²³⁸

Secular journalism struggles particularly with the other-worldly claims put forward by religious believers – the claims of visions, of inspiration and of heavenly angels – something important in Mormonism, as well as other religions. In his book *From Yahweh to Yahoo!*, Doug Underwood asks his audience to imagine journalism mixing with the early Christian church. He cites the early Gnostic Gospel of Mary and describes a purported encounter between Mary Magdalene and the early apostles. In it, Mary has supposedly seen the risen Lord who has taught her the gospel that should be taught. According to Underwood, Mary's story was undercut, and the doctrine she espoused defeated, in the politics of the early church. Underwood wondered how a modern journalist would have covered this important event.²³⁹ He writes,

Whether or not one takes seriously the possibility that a person (journalist or otherwise) could experience supernatural phenomena, it is clear there is little place in modern “objective” newspaper methodology for such a report. (I would suggest that such an account would even have trouble getting printed in the typical letters-to-the-editor section.)²⁴⁰

Journalistic methodology – where a claim is presented and rebuttals given – is one that Underwood says “ultimately presents journalists as throwing up their hands and saying to readers, ‘You decide.’ This is held up as a good thing.” Underwood argues that journalists would not try to verify Mary's account, but would merely report both sides of

²³⁸ Katia Bachko, “Tongue tied on religion. CNN Takes on Pentecostalism,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, CJR.org, September 9, 2008, under campaign desk, at http://www.cjr.org/campaign_desk/tongue_tied_on_religion.php, accessed August 5, 2010.

²³⁹ To be sure, Mormons are no Gnostics and do not hold the Gospel of Mary to be canonical. The point here is that the thought experiment in some ways mirrors the problem journalists have in dealing with Mormonism's extra-worldly claims.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 241.

this religious controversy – including her attributed claims of the supernatural – and frame it through the lens of existing conflict and politics.²⁴¹

Mormonism, with its history of golden plates and prophets and religious journeys and temples, contains beliefs that are both other-worldly and different from other branches of Christianity. Hence, it could be easy to make Mormonism appear unusual when focusing on those beliefs and practices, which can be termed as unusual in contrast with other faiths. The trouble for journalists is sometimes those differences can matter politically. If one group of believers finds the doctrine of another group troubling, such concerns affect voting. These concerns with oddity drive news and elucidate politics.

A third important way the more secular culture of journalism and the culture of religion seem to differ is in the meaning and dilemma of silence. Journalists are suspicious of silence and of concepts that defy explanation, while such mysteries can be essential to most religions. The culture of journalism is a culture of openness that trumpets an aversion to secrecy.²⁴² The evidence of journalism's culture of openness, of its aversion to secrecy, is clear from the fact that journalism, which rarely lobbies for bills on most issues, lobbied strongly in favor of the original Freedom of Information Act.²⁴³ Journalists tout the principles of openness by sponsoring Sunshine Week,²⁴⁴ and

²⁴¹ Ibid., 242-243.

²⁴² To be sure, this analysis is somewhat simplistic. Journalism sometimes finds heroes among those who keep secrets – when an investigative reporter suffers jail rather than give up a source. And Mormon religion, among others, also includes warnings about “secret combinations.”

²⁴³ Blanton, Thomas, editor, National Security Archive, “Freedom of Information at 40, LBJ Refused Ceremony, Undercut Bill with Signing Statement,” at the National Security Archive at George Washington University, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB194/index.htm>, accessed June 1, 2009.

in arguing for the people's "right to know." The American Society of Newspaper Editors makes openness an ethical obligation when it says, "Journalists must be constantly alert to see that the public's business is conducted in public."²⁴⁵ Furthermore, modern, secular culture – of which journalism seems a part – embraces an ideal where "nothing is misunderstood, hearts are open, and expression is uninhibited."²⁴⁶ Much of Western, secular society and journalism see silence as a spiral that controls debate and eliminates dissent;²⁴⁷ it sees silence as "an abyss or lack that inhibits one's ability to make meaning."²⁴⁸

On the other hand, religion, including Mormonism, sometimes embraces silence as essential or sacred. For example, communication historian John Durham Peters notes that ritual has long been considered a form of communication.²⁴⁹ Eastern religions place a high value on silent meditation. Silence becomes, "a condition of emptiness that is, paradoxically, full."²⁵⁰ Jewish and Christian traditions cite the Psalms injunction of being

²⁴⁴ See <http://www.sunshineweek.org>. This site is sponsored and run by the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

²⁴⁵ American Society of Newspaper Editors, "ASNE Statement of Principles," at http://www.asne.org/article_view/articleid/325/asnes-statement-of-principles-325.aspx, accessed January 27, 2010.

²⁴⁶ Peters, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1999), 2.

²⁴⁷ Elihu Katz, "Publicity and pluralistic ignorance: notes on the 'Spiral of Silence,'" in *McQuail's Reader in Mass Communication Theory*, 379-389, edited by Denis McQuail, (London: Sage, 2002); See also Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann, "Spiral of Silence, A Theory of Public Opinion," *Journal of Communication*, 24 (1974), 43-51, As cited in Katz, 388.

²⁴⁸ George Kalamaras, *Reclaiming the Tacit Dimension: Symbolic Form in the Rhetoric of Silence*. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), 1.

²⁴⁹ John Durham Peters, "Communication," in *Encyclopedia of Religion, Communication, and Media*, ed. Daniel A. Stout. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 83-86.

²⁵⁰ Kalamaras ,1 and 1- 12.

still and knowing God.²⁵¹ Furthermore, recent published writings from Mother Teresa suggest silence was at the core of her religious journey. The famous nun developed in her later career a personal perception of long estrangement from God's love, and she felt only stone silence from heaven when she prayed. God's silence in her heart caused suffering, which led, in the end, to a painful journey to a communion and closeness to Christ.

How? As her suffering grew, she became closer to and more understanding of Christ because she understood his burden better. So, in silence, there was ultimate coming-together – there was communication.²⁵² The point here is to suggest that a religious embrace of silence clashes with the culture of openness in the more secular world.

One stereotype of Mormonism is that it is secretive. Indeed, one of the top pejoratives American voters say when thinking of Mormons is that they are “secretive” and “deceptive.”²⁵³ Mormons believe in sacred silence about facets of their worship. At a forum for journalists during the campaign, Mormon scholar Richard Bushman explained it this way:

This goes along with this “secret life” of Mormons. ... What do they do when it comes down to it? Do they shun people and beat them up and so on? That has always been part of the story of Mormonism - you know, the “hidden horrors” of Mormonism - these advanced doctrines, and then the temple, because Mormons insist on saying it's sacred, not secret - but it is secret.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Ps. 46:10.

²⁵² Brian Kolodiejchuk, *Mother Teresa, Come Be My Light. The Private Writings of the 'Saint of Calcutta'*, (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 149-340.

²⁵³ Pew 2007.

²⁵⁴ Richard Bushman, “Mormonism and Politics: Are they compatible?” Pew Forum's biannual Faith Angle Conference, May 14, 2007, under event transcript,

In addition to secrecy and its potential unusualness, Mormonism poses other unique challenges for journalists that will be discussed in the next section of this study.

2.2.c The Challenge of Writing about Mormonism

Mormonism is a faith with a deep, detailed, varied doctrine and a long history of persecution and misunderstanding in America. It is a challenge to simply describe the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Is it a sect of Christianity? Is it a “cult?” What of polygamy? Confusion persists: For example, a central finding of a detailed study done after the Mitt Romney campaign by pollster Gary Lawrence found most people don’t understand Mormonism.²⁵⁵ Pew has found similar results.²⁵⁶

In a 2007 *New York Times* essay, Harvard law professor and adjunct senior fellow of the Council on Foreign Relations, non-Mormon Noah Feldman suggested that Mormonism’s misunderstanding problem is ultimately imbedded in a paradox:

Mormonism’s political problem arises, in large part, from the disconcerting split between its public and private faces. The church’s most inviting public symbols – pairs of clean-cut missionaries in well-pressed white shirts – evoke the wholesome success of an all-American denomination with an idealistic commitment to clean living. Yet at the same time, secret, sacred temple rites and garments call to mind the church’s murky past, including its embrace of polygamy, which has not been the doctrine or practice of the mainstream Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or LDS, for a century. Mormonism, it seems, **is extreme in both respects: in its exaggerated normalcy and its exaggerated**

<http://pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/Mormonism-and-Politics-Are-They-Compatible.aspx>, accessed August 10, 2010.

²⁵⁵ Gary C. Lawrence., *How Americans View Mormonism, Seven Steps to Improve Our Public Image*, (Orange, CA: Parameter Foundation, 2008), 5.

²⁵⁶ Scott Keeter, “How the Public Perceives Romney, Mormons, Candidate Recently Discussed Role of Religion in Public Life,” *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, December 4, 2007, at <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=267>, accessed August 19, 2009.

oddity. The marriage of these opposites leaves outsiders uncomfortable, wondering what Mormonism really is.²⁵⁷

In the early stages of the Romney campaign, Richard Bushman, a Mormon and leading historian, made a similar point in speaking to a gathering of journalists held by Pew in Key West:

It is a little bit difficult to talk about Mormonism and its relationship to Romney because it's so unclear what Mormonism is. We have divided views of Mormons. On the one hand, Mormonism and Mormons are suspect, they are forbidding, and under the nice exterior there is something menacing. On the other hand, Mormonism is the archetypical American religion. Mormons are ideal model citizens, and they are very nice people.²⁵⁸

Getting at the essence of Mormonism therefore is a unique challenge for reporters.²⁵⁹ Four reasons within the literature seem central to this challenge in covering Mormonism, one of the nation's fastest-growing religions.²⁶⁰ First is the dilemma of how much space journalists have in which to explain Mormonism or any religious system. Second is a challenge of knowing how to deal with the faith's paradox of being in the American mainstream or not; third is in knowing how to deal with Mormonism's history of polygamy; and fourth is in knowing how to fit Mormonism into broader parts of the Christian world.

First, journalists lack space to write complicated explanations of belief. This is an axiomatic statement. Journalists face tight deadlines and short spaces and many

²⁵⁷ Noah Feldman, "What is it About Mormonism?" *New York Times*, January 6, 2008, emphasis added.

²⁵⁸ Pew forum, "Mormonism and Politics: Are they compatible?"

²⁵⁹ See appendix K for a detailed discussion of central Mormon beliefs.

²⁶⁰ Rodney Stark, "The basis of Mormon Success: a Theoretical Application," in *Mormons and Mormonism: An Introduction to An American World Religion*, edited by Eric Eliason. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 207.

competitive and market pressures that hinder detailed treatments of faith. Michael Luo of the *New York Times*, quoted leading Mormon scholar Jan Shipps as saying: “Mormonism is very complicated. It can sound elegant when the tenets are taken together ... but bizarre when considered in parts.”²⁶¹

In Pew’s 2007 survey, 5 percent of responders used a word like “different” or “weird” or “unusual” to describe Mormonism in one word. Mormonism is perceived as so unusual that many commentators and evangelical Christians call it a “cult.”²⁶² Google searches generate hundreds of thousands of hits for a joint search of the terms “Mormon” and “cult.”²⁶³ During the campaign, atheist Christopher Hitchens called Mormonism the “mad cult.”²⁶⁴ Add words such as “cult” into Pew’s study, and Mormonism’s being perceived as unusual rises to more than 10 percent of all the answers respondents gave in their one-word descriptions of Mormonism.²⁶⁵ To be sure, definitions of the word “cult” vary. This study relies on a common-sense, dictionary definition of cult – “a relatively small group of people having religious beliefs or practices regarded by others as strange or sinister.”²⁶⁶

²⁶¹ Michael Luo, “Crucial Test for Romney in Speech on His Religion,” *New York Times*, December 6, 2007.

²⁶² Examples include Mormoncult.org and Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry, <http://carm.org/religious-movements/-about-cults/list-cults-and-non-christian-groups>, accessed October 8, 2010.

²⁶³ Search conducted October 8, 2010.

²⁶⁴ Christopher Hitchens, “Mitt The Mormon. Why Romney has to talk about his faith,” *Slate*, November 26, 2007, under Fighting Words: A Wartime Lexicon, at <http://www.slate.com/id/2178568/>, accessed October 8, 2010.

²⁶⁵ Pew Research Center, “People expressed Mixed Views of Mormonism, Islam.”

²⁶⁶ Macintosh dictionary.

Second, as Feldman emphasized, Mormonism's public face can seem paradoxical. In his talk to journalists, Bushman said, "Someone has said that Mormon doctrine should best be described as a set of dilemmas - as contradictory goods posed against one another."²⁶⁷ One paradox is Mormonism's relationship to the mainstream of American life: Mormons overcame persecution, hardship and trial over decades to find their way toward a promised land of American acceptance and tolerance – toward the mainstream and toward success. In 2007, for example, PBS' *Frontline* and *American Experience* collaborated to produce a documentary on the faith. This quest story is implicit in the show's introduction:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is one of America's fastest-growing religions and, relative to its size, one of the richest. Church membership, now at over 12 million and growing, sweeps the globe. But from the moment of its founding in 1830, the church has been controversial. Within a month, it had 40 converts and almost as many enemies. In the early years, Mormons were hated, ridiculed, persecuted and feared. *Yet in the past several decades, the Mormon church has transformed itself from a fringe sect into a thriving religion that embraces mainstream American values.*²⁶⁸

To be sure, the definition of mainstream is socially constructed. This study relies on a common-sense definition of the term that mainstream means what is "regarded as normal or conventional; ... the dominant trend"²⁶⁹ In religious circles, conventional can generally mean Protestant Christianity or Christianity more broadly.

The scholarly literature suggests this quest story has been on the minds of scholars: As the non-Mormon scholar of Mormonism Jan Shipps has noted, media

²⁶⁷ Pew forum, "Mormonism and Politics: Are they compatible?"

²⁶⁸ "Introduction," *The Mormons*, PBS documentary, synopsis. <http://www.pbs.org/mormons/etc/synopsis.html>, accessed March 4, 2009, emphasis added. See also Rachel Zoll, "Hard Lessons for Mormon church in Romney's presidential campaign," February 9, 2008. *Associated Press*.

²⁶⁹ See Macintosh dictionary.

coverage has made Mormons appear more mainstream over the course of its 180-year history. In the 19th century, Mormonism was almost always portrayed negatively in the American press, and there was no other American religion held in such “disquiet” for such a long time, she writes.²⁷⁰ The early media stereotypes tended to include a dark danger of deception and secretiveness and sometimes portrayals of sexual deviants and of violent extremism. Early 20th Century portrayals continued these themes while adding others about perceived Mormon influence and power, including muckracking exposes that suggested the nation’s leaders were giving obeisance to Mormon leaders.²⁷¹ By the mid-20th Century, however, portrayals of Mormons had changed and were very favorable.²⁷² The coverage of Mormonism has remained somewhat favorable since that time, studies show. Therefore, the overall arc of the coverage may suggest to some that the coverage of Mormonism has become more mainstream.

Beginning in the 1990s, many scholars, especially observers who weren’t Mormon, began to suggest that Mormonism seemed to represent a set of traditional, mainstream American values. “The situation was such that it became not at all uncommon to hear, in academic presentations at American studies meetings, that Mormons are ‘more American than the Americans,’” Shipps said.²⁷³ A leading advocate for that view was Mario De Pillis, a UM Amherst scholar who studied Mormonism throughout much of his professional life as a non-Mormon. He wrote that “something has changed” in the

²⁷⁰ Shipps, “From Satyr to Saint,” 51-97.

²⁷¹ For a full discussion of these issues and related footnotes, see Appendix J.

²⁷² For a detailed discussion of Mormon portrayals in the news media and the sourcing on this section, please see Appendices I and J.

²⁷³ Jan Shipps, “Surveying the Mormon Image Since 1960,” in *Sojourner in the Promised Land, Forty Years among the Mormons*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 100.

relationship of Mormonism to society since 1945. “The Latter-day Saints now have both political and social influence through their committed members and will, therefore, participate in the redefining of America.”²⁷⁴ Mormonism, he said, has also come to represent traditionally conservative American values.

The past image of Mormons as polygamists made them into immoral cartoon types outside America’s mainstream. Now the social myth of Mormonism has become more positive: The Tabernacle Choir, clean-cut teams of missionaries, domination of Rocky Mountain corporations, numerous employees among the FBI, the CIA and the Boy Scouts and intact, father-headed families. Mormonism’s new and positive image enhances its mythic status as a national American icon, a set of symbolic meanings against which both rarefied intellectuals and ordinary folks who admire Mormon family morality can measure the meaning of America.²⁷⁵

Others, especially Latter-day Saints, took a different view. One Latter-day Saint scholar, Chiung Hwang Chen, suggested the national discourse shows that Mormons are still minorities, not part of the mainstream. She said that while many 20th century news

²⁷⁴ Mario S. De Pillis, “The Emergence of Mormon Power since 1945,” *Journal of Mormon History*, 22, No. 1(1995), 3.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 5. Mormonism’s importance, in De Pillis’s view, was also shown in that it was central to Tony Kushner’s landmark play, *Angels in America*. De Pillis says Mormonism becomes the symbol of the American heartland in the play. This Mormonism, conceals a “hollow, sweet center” in the play. “Mormonism becomes the plays real antagonist, while suffering gay America is the protagonist.” De Pillis says that Kushner chose Mormonism “because it represents—not only to him but also to his audience—a constellation of conservative, deeply held American beliefs.” De Pillis added, “It is not going too far to say that, for Kushner and his very large audience, traditional America *is* Mormonism.” Kushner’s play’s title is a reference to Mormonism’s Angel Moroni. Some of the faith’s central tenants are ridiculed during the play even as some Mormon characters are admirable. In the play, sexual ecstasy is the redemptive metaphor for human beings, and a repressed Mormon character is redeemed during the play. *Ibid.*, 5-8. Terry Givens, the Mormon literary critic, sees irony in Kushner’s play. For more than a century, Mormons were dangerous threats because they were sexual latches through the practice of polygamy. Then, in the portrayals of Mormonism in the late 20th century, Mormons became dangerous because they were sexually repressed. See Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth*, 164.

stories portrayed Mormons as having mainstream American values, those same portrayals showed that Mormons themselves weren't mainstream through a continued focus on topics such as Mormon polygamy, Mormon treatment of blacks and women, and Mormon underwear. Chen says despite a certain "American vision" of family-orientation, hard work, and patriotism, "the discourse abundantly signals that Mormons remain a not-completely-assimilable minority."²⁷⁶ In her doctoral dissertation at the University of Iowa, a subsequent book for the Edwin Mellen Press, and a pair of scholarly papers, Chen relied on a theory derived from the Asian-American studies literature called the "model minority" discourse. Chen's suggests the "model" characteristics of minorities in the discourse serve an ideological purpose by reinforcing a conservative status quo. Writing with her husband, Ethan Yorgason, she defined the discourse, its definition and the process of identifying model minority groups:

Each term of the phrase "model minority discourse" is important. It glorifies certain culturally dominant values and practices. And it positions a group of people as representative of, but not full participants in the social life of the majority.²⁷⁷ ... Might not [the discourses] actually reinscribe a more sophisticated form of marginalization upon Mormons in America? Other groups have found themselves damned by profuse praise. The pedestal restricted white women's social power, and Asian-American scholars argue that setting up Asian-Americans as an example of American success has deeply troubling implications both for Asian-Americans themselves and other minorities.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ Chuing Hwang Chen, *Mormon and Asian American Model Minority Discourses in News and Popular Magazines*, (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 67-131. Note, also, the use of wealth in the opening introduction to the PBS series on the faith.

²⁷⁷ Chiung Hwang Chen and Ethan Yorgason, "The Media's Construction of Mormons as Model Minorities," *Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 32 No.2 (Summer 1999), 108.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

Asian-American scholar Keith Okajima said the model minority discourse appeared in the Civil Rights movement and became a model for understanding how all ethnic groups could succeed.²⁷⁹ “Asian Americans, we were told, were able to make it on their own. Welfare programs were unnecessary.”²⁸⁰ The discourse diffused the Black Power movement, he writes, because it seemed to show that America wasn’t a “fundamentally racist society.” Instead, it was a merit-based society, and it “placed the blame for inequality,” not on society or culture, but on minorities themselves. In short, this narrative caused problems for the minorities themselves and became a way to maintain traditional power relationships. What interests might a “model minority” portrayal of Mormonism have served? Chen, quoting other scholars as well as making her own conclusions, showed how Mormonism in the 1930s created a self-sufficient rebuke to the New Deal and therefore supported a conservative worldview. In the 1960s, the portrayal of Mormonism served as a rebuke to the counterculture hippie movement and seemingly served as a model of traditional American success, a celebration of so-called “traditional” values such as hard work and thrift, Chen argued.

Beyond the “model minority” discourse, another way of looking at the idea that Mormons wish to enter the mainstream and are successfully doing so is that the quest narrative is useful to a majority – the mainstream – because insofar as Mormons have overcome the odds through effort to achieve this successful quest for mainstream acceptance, this quest story validates the myth of diversity acceptance for all. The story

²⁷⁹ Keith Okajima, “Asian Americans as the Model Minority,” in *Reflections on Shattered Windows: Promises and Prospects for Asian American Studies*, ed. G.Y. Okihiro, S. Hune, A.A. Hansen, and J.M. Liu, (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press), 165-174.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 167.

becomes an emblem of how American values of tolerance and thrift and self-reliance work well, thereby supporting these “mainstream” values. This quest story provides an element of redemption: Americans were bad in the past in their persecutions of Mormons, but now as Mormons have reached the mainstream and have overcome this past, the non-minority sin of persecution is justified and erased.

The price for this redemption must be paid by the suffering of “the Other.” Mormons, or any minority group, validate the mainstream in this narrative because their quest is to be part of that existing mainstream. The minority’s suffering redeems the mainstream because these groups chose to come there. The quest story, therefore, scapegoats the minority, letting the pre-existing “mainstream” off the hook. In such a narrative, a powerful group or majority defines what the mainstream is and what steps must be followed to attain the quest. This common narrative form, therefore, can ultimately be used as a narrative of power, exclusion and hegemony for all minority groups, including Mormons.

The quest narrative also misses another important point: Mormons or other minorities may not wish to be fully in the mainstream. There is much in Mormon doctrine, language and practice to suggest Mormons have other quests. Mormon ordinances “set apart” Mormons as a people.²⁸¹ Mormonism talks of fleeing from “Babylon” and gathering to “Zion,” and oft-quoted scriptures talk of how believers should be “peculiar.”²⁸² About the time scholars were most frequently discussing whether Mormons had entered the mainstream, a leading church authority publicly quoted Peter’s

²⁸¹ 1 Nephi, 20:20; D & C 101: 70; D & C 68:14, 19, 22.

²⁸² 1 Peter 2:9.

injunction to be a peculiar people, saying that if pathologies were the American mainstream, he wanted nothing of it.²⁸³

Mark Silk's *Unsecular Media* suggests and implies one way of seeing if a religion is mainstream: Simply examine whether the idiosyncratic elements in a faith are obscured, and whether generally unobjectionable traits – such as service to the poor, American values, or love for families – merit more attention. Looking at various doctrinal explanations of Mormonism, doctrinal frames can be seen as a measure of whether the Mormon faith is portrayed as mainstream.

A third challenge for reporters covering Mormonism is deciding when and how much to write about polygamy. Though polygamy was not a founding doctrine of Mormonism, it emerged publicly in 1852, shortly after Mormons arrived in Utah and within 25 years of the church's founding. It became central to the U.S. interaction with Mormonism and of portrayals of the faith in the 19th century. Republican politicians pushed tough legislation in the Reconstruction era that led to numerous convictions for Mormons in the late 1880s. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints formally abandoned the practice in 1890, and Utah obtained statehood shortly thereafter.²⁸⁴

Polygamy remains newsworthy.²⁸⁵ Mormon polygamy has remained in the public imagination. When a Pew survey asked for free association terms about Mormonism,

²⁸³ See Gordon B. Hinckley, "A Chosen Generation," *Ensign*, May 1992, 69, at http://www.lds.org/ldsorg/v/index.jsp?vnextoid=2354fccf2b7db010VgnVCM1000004d82620aRCRD&locale=0&sourceId=291294bf3938b010VgnVCM1000004d82620a_____&hideNav=1, accessed March 6, 2009.

²⁸⁴ Richard D. Poll, "The Legislative Anti-polygamy campaign," *Brigham Young University Studies*, 26:4, Fall 1986, 107-121.

²⁸⁵ See, for example, Wendy Koch, "2nd arrest made at Texas polygamist compound," *USA Today*, April 9, 2008, under Nation, at http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-04-07-polygamist-compound_N.htm

polygamy was at the top of American responses.²⁸⁶ Shipps said that in the years after Mormon statehood and the ending of polygamy, mentions of polygamy in the news media increased. Perhaps such mentions were a way of delegitimizing Mormonism, to show that it was a flawed religious system in the nation's eyes, she said.²⁸⁷ Given this history, it makes sense to look for the frequency of mentions of polygamy in the coverage of Mitt Romney's Mormonism. These mentions constitute another way of detecting if the faith is portrayed as in the mainstream or not.

A fourth challenge for political reporters is to deal with the question of where Mormonism fits in the realm of Christianity. Should Mormonism be called a Christian denomination? Should it be called something else? Many parts of Mormonism suggest that Mormons believe themselves to be Christian. For example, the official name of the Church is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but accusations coming from Christian groups that Mormons aren't Christian persist. Only about half of Americans think Mormons are Christian, polls have shown.²⁸⁸ Some religious groups don't call Mormons Christian in part because Mormons also choose not to embrace the Nicene Creed or other traditional Christian creeds.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ Pew 2007, "Public expresses mixed view of Islam, Mormonism."

²⁸⁷ Shipps, *From Satyr to Saint*, 67.

²⁸⁸ Jennifer Dobner, "Theology, doctrine at the root of evangelical-Mormon divide," *Associated Press*, December 5, 2007.

²⁸⁹ Nate Nielson, "Are Mormons Christian?" blog posting at newsroom.lds.org, posted April 19, 2010, at <http://newsroom.lds.org/blog/are-mormons-christian>, accessed May 7, 2011. See also, Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1991), *vii-viii*

2.3 Questions for the present study.

Literature in the preceding pages suggest distinct questions to ask about the coverage of Mitt Romney's Mormonism in his presidential campaign:

How did reporters frame Romney's chances? Was he seen as succeeding or suffering setbacks? What traits of his Mormonism were used to describe his religion? Did reporters revert to using old stereotypes such as the long-abandoned practice of polygamy in describing his faith? What facets of his character and personality were highlighted? Was he seen as a candidate holding mainstream political views? Was his religion seen as mainstream? To whom did reporters compare Romney in evaluating his chances of dealing with religion in the campaign? Were there important differences between opinion and news coverage?

In essence, the study that follows asks how reporters met the challenge of covering Mormonism and other obstacles facing this otherwise mainstream candidate. The following study examines how Mitt Romney and his religion were framed through news coverage. Frequency tallies of 12 dimensions of Mormonism and 12 dimension of Romney allow insight into how the horse-race frame related to the coverage of religion and of Mormonism and whether the coverage framed Mormonism and Romney as mainstream. Tallies of comparisons to other campaigns provide additional insight. Chapter 3 reiterates the research questions shaping this study and then lays out the methods of this content analysis. Chapter 4 describes the findings and answers to the study questions. Chapter 5 uses indices, running means, examples and other means to draw conclusions, to discuss the meaning of the study and to suggest topics for further research.

Chapter 3. Design for the Present Study.

The purpose of this study is to see how a largely secular news media rose to the challenge of covering the out-of-the-mainstream religious beliefs and chances of a credible presidential candidate. The study measures the frequency of certain frames used in the coverage of Mitt Romney and his Mormon faith. This study centered upon this general question: What frames were evident in the coverage of Mitt Romney and his religion during the 2008 campaign?

This question led to these specific sets of questions:

1. Which factors in the campaign did the news media say were helping Mitt Romney's election chances? Which of these factors were mentioned most frequently?
2. Which factors in the campaign did the news media say were hindering Mitt Romney's election chances? Which of these factors were most frequently mentioned?
3. Did the news media more frequently cite factors that were helping Romney or factors that were hindering his chances?
4. How frequently was Romney portrayed in the coverage to be succeeding or suffering setbacks in his campaign? In what circumstances was he most frequently seen as suffering setbacks?
5. Which elements of his Mormon faith were most frequently used to explain Mormonism? Was the discarded Mormon practice of polygamy still prevalent in the coverage?

6. Did the news media portray Mormonism as a faith in the religious mainstream? Were Romney's views on issues portrayed as in the mainstream?
7. To which historical campaigns was Mitt Romney's candidacy most frequently compared?
8. Was Romney's faith framed differently in opinion writing than in hard news coverage?

The concept of framing implies that it is impossible to write a news story without some type of framing. As a story is written, it is unavoidable that some dimensions of an object, issue or person will be evaluated, made "salient," while others are ignored. Framing, to paraphrase Entman's words, is an unavoidable choice, necessary in writing. Writers select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, interpretation, moral evaluation, or other recommendation.²⁹⁰ Therefore, the first step in understanding the framing of an issue is to understand what frames reporters chose – to understand what elements were made salient by counting them. This study set out to do that – to describe the coverage of Mitt Romney and his Mormonism in the 2008 campaign through quantitative content analysis by counting the frequencies with which various dimensions of Mormonism, of the campaign and of Mitt Romney as a candidate were mentioned. Further analysis was conducted through examining how the frequency of frames varied over time.

The study's purposive sample consisted of 205 articles selected from a combination of regional newspapers, national newspapers, a wire service and national

²⁹⁰ Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," 391.

news magazines. There were three newspapers with national scope in the study: The *New York Times*, (31 articles) The *Washington Post*, (27 articles) and the *Wall Street Journal* (14 articles). The *Post* and *Times* were searched using Lexis/Nexis. The *Journal* was searched through ProQuest. Two regional newspapers were searched: The *Chicago Tribune* (18 stories) and the *Los Angeles Times* (31 stories). Both were searched through Proquest. Two national magazines were sampled: *Time* (2 stories) and *Newsweek* (6 stories). Both were searched using Lexis/Nexis. The Associated Press State & Regional Wire was also selected and searched through Lexis/Nexis, with duplicates eliminated (76 stories).²⁹¹

The 205 stories in the study were published starting Jan. 1, 2006, just as Romney was being broadly introduced to the nation as a prospective candidate, and ending Feb. 10, 2008, just after Romney suspended his campaign. The articles in this study included

²⁹¹ AP's State & Regional wire rather than National wire was selected because it cast a slightly larger, and therefore more national, net about Mormonism and Romney. The intent was to give the population of stories a broader national flavor. Anyone who has spent much time with Lexis and the Associated Press knows how difficult it can be to select stories from the AP. Identical, duplicate stories often appear in the database. The challenge is knowing when to eliminate near-duplicates. This study went through a multi-step process to eliminate wire service duplicates. It was a hands-on process. First, duplicates with the same headline and identical word count were eliminated in Lexis-Nexis' index screen without further evaluation. Second, stories that had identical headlines but differing word counts, the longer and later story was selected if the leads were largely the same. Third, if articles had differing word counts and similar headlines but differed in sequence (for example, "a man will visit," "a man is visiting" and "a man visited") each of these sequential, but otherwise similar, articles all merited inclusion because they weren't just longer versions of the same story. The most significant times this approach to sorting AP resulted in a greater frequency of stories was during Mitt Romney's Faith in America speech and during the time of the death of Mormon president Gordon B. Hinckley. At times, entire articles were read when the headlines alone made it unclear if there was such a sequence. Sometimes these sequencing decisions were made by looking at the headline, date and word count only. No significant moments in the campaign were excluded. AP, even after eliminating duplicates, makes up the largest portion of this story population.

those that discussed Romney's Mormonism at some depth, not just mentioning obliquely that Romney was a Mormon.²⁹² Each article in this study mentioned Mormon or a derivation of that word at least four times, and Mitt Romney at least once. The design of the sample is such that the Romney campaign may not have been the topic of some of the articles in the study.²⁹³

Each article was evaluated in .pdf format and coded for 42 separate variables. See Appendix A for the full codebook. Each coded variable was entered into an Excel spreadsheet relying upon the codebook in Appendix A.

Seven variables provided descriptive data on the article itself, including date, source, numbering and type of story, and whether the article came from an opinion or news section.²⁹⁴ Three variables tallied how often Romney's name was mentioned: if he were in the headline, whether he was in the lead paragraph, and the total number of Romney mentions in the story, including captions and graphics accompanying a story.

²⁹² In Lexis/Nexis, I used the search function "atleast4(Mormon) and Romney." This search found articles where the word Mormon was mentioned at least four times plus the word Romney. No articles had mentions of other Romneys without mentioning Mitt Romney. Sometimes Mitt Romney was mentioned as few as one time. In Proquest, I downloaded every article that mentioned Romney and Mormon. Then I used the search function in Macintosh's Preview program to find four mentions of Mormon within those stories. Proquest has significantly longer article abstracts than does Lexis/Nexis, meaning that Mormon may appear more times for the same type of article than in Lexis. I nevertheless included those that returned only four Mormon references in the article as downloaded, even if Mormon was in the abstract of the article. No more than two stories were included through Proquest's search functioning that MAY not have been included in my Lexis' search method.

²⁹³ This search method yielded a few stories (as few as three and as many as 28, depending on definitions) that may not have been occasioned by dynamics of the campaign itself, but rather were features or news stories about Mormonism that mentioned Mitt Romney during the course of the campaign.

²⁹⁴ None of these seven variables were subject to intercoder reliability as they were in the wording of the descriptive material of Lexis/Nexis and Proquest itself.

These variables were summed to see how often Romney was mentioned. Two or fewer mentions of Romney were interpreted to mean the article was focused on The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in general or a related topic with Romney being brought up in passing.²⁹⁵ More than two mentions of Romney meant the article focused on him or his campaign.

A pair of variables tallied the number of specific evaluations of Romney's success in the campaign. The first looked at whether the text indicated he was succeeding and the second at whether he was suffering setbacks. A total was indicated of how many specific, sentence-level assessments occurred in each story.²⁹⁶ These totals could be compared to show whether an article, on balance, showed that Romney was succeeding or suffering setbacks in his campaign.

The study also measured which dimensions of Mormonism were discussed in each article; which characteristics of Romney and his campaign were said to be helping his chances of winning; which characteristics of Romney and his campaign were said to be hindering his chances of winning; whether Romney's views and his Mormonism were portrayed as being in the mainstream in each story; and which previous presidential campaigns, if any, were compared to Mitt Romney's in 2008.

²⁹⁵ I summed these variables and then used Excel's IF function to calculate a new variable to see whether an article was focused on Romney. The function was =IF(A3>2, "Romney focus", "Not Romney focus"). I calculated the intercoder reliability on this summation and it was 100 percent reliable.

²⁹⁶ I aggregated these findings mathematically and used Excel's "if" function to show if the result showed more setbacks or more successes or neither as assessed within the article. The calculation in Excel worked like this: =IF(Q3>0, "succeeding", IF(Q3=0, "neither", "suffering setbacks")). This allowed me to show that an article, on balance, said Romney was either succeeding or suffering setbacks.

Seven variables were created to check for specific characteristics of Romney or his campaign the articles said were helping his nomination prospects (such as whether his campaign strategy and tactics or his religion was helping him); five variables were created to check for characteristics of Romney or his campaign that the articles said were hindering his chances (such as his supposed flip-flopping on issues or his religion was hindering his chances).²⁹⁷ Twelve variables checked for characteristics of Mormonism in each sampled story. All 24 of these variables were coded as 1s or 0s, 1 for yes or 0 for no. These variables may be seen in Appendix A.

Two variables used a 1-to-5 Likert scale to measure the coders' impression of the degree to which Mormonism was portrayed as being within the religious mainstream in each news articles and a second variable asked coders to judge the degree to which Romney's stands on political issues were portrayed as being within the mainstream. Four variables looked for occurrences of mentions of pre-2008 campaigns to which Mitt Romney's presidential campaign may have been compared. The variables coded for articles that compared Romney's campaign to earlier presidential campaigns, what past campaign was mentioned and whether religion was a factor in the coverage.²⁹⁸

The selection of these variables emerged after careful examination of scholarly literature, from perusal of hundreds of articles about Mitt Romney, and from careful evaluation of exactly what might coded to address each research question. Four scholarly

²⁹⁷ Given that the story population is focused on Mormonism primarily, the generalizability of these Romney dimensions to external campaign coverage where Mormonism is not mentioned is somewhat unclear and, therefore, findings about Romney and what hindered and helped him alone without the context of Mormonism should be recognized as a limitation of this study.

²⁹⁸ Again, given that this story population was focused heavily on Mormonism, the generalizability of these variables to the overall coverage outside this study may be limited.

works were especially instrumental, Lichter, Amundson and Licher's analysis²⁹⁹ of media coverage of the Catholic church; Peter Kerr's evaluations of the coverage of evangelical Christians;³⁰⁰ Jan Shipps' studies of Mormonism and the media,³⁰¹ and Mark Silk's book *Unsecular Media*.³⁰² Pew's 2007 study of American perceptions of Mormons was also useful.³⁰³

The 12 variables this study used to measure the portrayal of Mormonism emerged from the literature and other analyses of Mormon-related news coverage. For example, the code for "Mormons are unusually secretive, dangerous, deceptive or insular" emerged from the literature and from Pew's 2007 study, particularly the one-word responses frequently used to describe Mormonism by those who responded to the Pew survey. That Mormons allegedly discriminate against women and people of color was a variable that emerged from a study of Mitt Romney's 1994 campaign and George Romney's 1968 campaign. That Mormons believe in polygamy emerged from Pew's study and from the history of the coverage of Mormonism as undertaken by Jan Shipps. The idea that Mormons believe in good works emerged from Mark Silk's research, which suggested that religion is mainstreamed by a framing focus on favorable traits like helping the poor. In short, the 12 dimensions of Mormonism in this study were based upon the academic

²⁹⁹ S. Robert Lichter, Daniel Amundson, Daniel, and Linda Lichter, Linda. *Media Coverage of the Catholic Church*. (New Haven, CN: The Center for Media and Public Affairs, The Knights of Columbus, The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, 1991).

Lichter, Amundson and Lichter, 1991.

³⁰⁰ Kerr 2003; Kerr and Moy, 2002.

³⁰¹ Shipps, "From Satyr to Saint" and "Surveying the Mormon Image," 2000.

³⁰² Silk, 1998.

³⁰³ Pew, "Public expresses mixed view of Islam, Mormonism."

literature. Beyond that, a detailed, preliminary analysis of 75 percent of the articles in this study found 60 narrow descriptions of Mormonism's history, people and beliefs in the news articles. These 60 dimensions and others suggested by the literature and coverage of earlier campaigns were sorted into the 12 more general categories selected for this study. This study is based on the presence or absence of manifest content rather than Likert score evaluation by coders of each dimension of Mormonism or of Romney. This approach minimized, to the extent possible, researcher bias.

After coding, many of the variables were evaluated in Excel to see how they varied over date of coverage and in what combinations. Excel demonstrated graphically when in the campaign particular dimensions appeared with greater frequency.³⁰⁴ The study has a strong intercoder reliability of just more than 84 percent on average.

Appendix B includes the analysis of intercoder reliability.³⁰⁵

A final methodological step was to conduct two word searches were also done to find the frequency of certain terms in the sample population. Those terms included: the frequency of the word "cult," and the frequency of nine synonymous words to the term "unusual."

³⁰⁴ The idea of a running mean worked like this: If one article had a particular variable, then a 1 would be entered into Excel. This variable was averaged with the same variables in the next nine articles in sequence. If a mean for a given article was 1, that meant that all 10 articles in sequence had a particular dimension. A zero meant none of them did. This calculation was then performed for each article in sequence so a trend line could be created. These presentations showed trends and narrative arcs and times when certain ways of thinking about Mormonism and Mitt Romney occurred. It suggested how the story played out and if favorability changed over time.

³⁰⁵ As Appendix B shows, the study's author coded all of the stories. Two additional coders evaluated a random sample of the study's 205 articles as part of determining intercoder reliability.

The study's design allows for detection of the frames in the study and the frequency with which they appear. The method provides several ways to gauge what frames were present in the coverage of Mitt Romney and his Mormonism. Creating indices, means, and frequencies allows for more thorough analysis, which sheds some light on the questions that prompted this research about how Mormonism is framed and how the horse-race frame plays out when religion is involved. This approach also allowed a detailed analysis of how favorably – and unfavorably --Mormonism was framed and how the mainstream and model minority discourses of Mormonism may have played out in the coverage overall.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study. Chapter 5 draws some conclusions, discusses those conclusions and makes recommendations for further research.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.1 Data Summary.

This section describes the data collection efforts and the resulting databases that were used for further analysis. As shown in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, more than one-third of the articles in the sampled stories came from the Associated Press. Another third of the articles analyzed came from three national newspapers, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*. Four percent of the articles analyzed came from two national news magazines, *Time* and *Newsweek*. The rest came from two regional newspapers, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*.

Table 4.1: Number of articles by source type. N=205

Source Type	Number of articles	Percentage of population
National Magazine	8	4 %
National Paper	72	35 %
Regional Paper	49	24 %
Wire Service	76	37 %
Total	205	100 %

Table 4.2: Number of articles by source. N=205

Source	Percentage of population	Number of articles
Associated Press	37 %	76
Newsweek	3 %	6
New York Times	15 %	31
Washington Post	13 %	27
Time	1 %	2
Wall Street Journal	7 %	14
Chicago Tribune	9 %	18
Los Angeles Times	15 %	31
Total	100 %	205

As shown in Table 4.3, more than 8 in 10 articles in the study mentioned Romney more than two times – meaning for the purposes of this study that the article had a “Romney focus.” The rest were articles in which Romney or his campaign were

mentioned two or fewer times. These articles lacked a Romney focus and, instead, were more about Romney’s Mormon faith. All articles were part of subsequent analyses.

Table 4.3: Number of articles with Romney focus. N=205.

Focus of article	Number of articles	Percentage of story population
Not Romney focus: Mentioned Romney two or fewer times.	33	16 %
Romney focus: Mentioned Romney more than two times	172	84 %
Total	205	100%

As Table 4.4 shows, nearly three in four of the articles in the study were news articles rather than opinion articles.

Table 4.4: Number of opinion or news articles by category. N=205.

Type of story	National Magazine	National Paper	Regional Paper	Wire Service	Total
News	4	46	30	70	150
Opinion	4	26	19	6	55
Total	8	72	49	76	205

As Table 4.5 shows, certain topics dominated the coverage. About 26 percent of the overall coverage was on Romney’s “Faith in America” speech. This included articles early in the campaign cycle that described Romney’s decision-making about whether he needed to give a speech about his religion, and evaluations of the speech after he delivered it. The death, funeral and aftermath of Mormon prophet Gordon B. Hinckley comprised 6 percent of the stories. This event was retained in the study because Romney attended the funeral and because it put Romney’s faith in the spotlight again near the end of his 2008 campaign. Features on Mormonism, articles discussing Romney’s Mormonism, and articles about campaign events comprised about 36 percent of the remaining stories among them.

Table 4.5: Number of articles by story topic. N=205.

Topic	Total	Percentage of population
Campaign event	22	11 %
Romney feature profile	16	8 %
Fundraising	7	4 %
Huckabee's question	8	4 %
Mountain Meadows	3	2 %
Mormon overview	4	2 %
Mormon prophet death	13	6 %
Other	2	1 %
Other Mormon feature	29	14 %
Poll controversy	9	4 %
Polling other	8	4 %
Sharpton controversy	7	3 %
The speech	54	26 %
The Mormon issue	23	11 %
Total	205	100 %

Table 4.6 shows the articles were scattered throughout the two-year period of the study, but special attention to Mormonism came during December 2007 when Mitt Romney delivered his speech “Faith in America” and when Mike Huckabee asked an interviewer whether Jesus and Satan were brothers according to Mormon doctrine.

Table 4.6: Number of articles by month.

Month	2006	2007	2008
January		2	16
February	1	5	18
March	1		
April		11	
May	1	14	
June	2	7	
July	4	9	
August		3	
September		4	
October	3	14	
November	1	13	
December	5	71	
Totals	18	153	34

4.2 Study Questions and Findings

The findings in these data were centered upon the study questions.

Question 1: Which factors in the campaign did the news media say were helping Mitt Romney's election chances? Which of these factors were mentioned the most frequently?

Finding 1: As Figure 4.1 shows, seven dimensions were regularly portrayed as helping Romney's chances at winning. The most frequent of these was Romney's campaign organization and strategy.

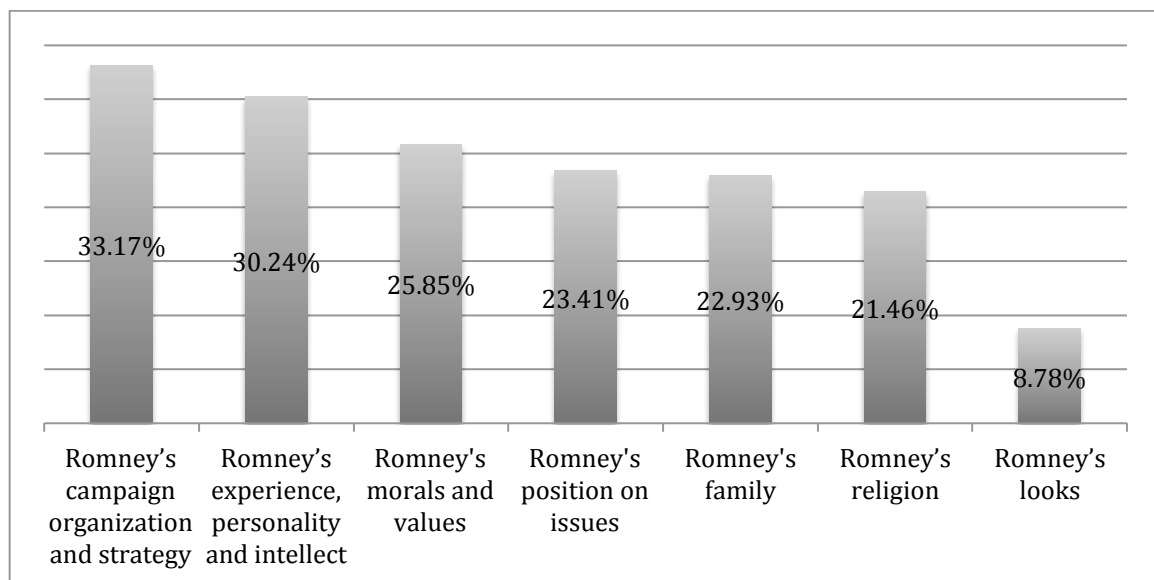


Figure 4.1: Percentage of stories with dimensions that were helping Romney's chances of winning. N=205.

As Figure 4.1 shows, Romney's campaign strategy and organization was the most frequent factor that journalists and editorialists said was helping Romney. This dimension was cited in 33.17 percent of the articles in this study. Articles citing Romney's experience, intellect and personality comprised 30.24 percent of the stories. The least frequent factor helping him was his looks, although this factor was mentioned in 8.78 percent of the stories. Romney's religion was cited as helping him in 21.46 percent of the stories in this study. In 23.41 percent of the stories, Romney's position on the issues was said to be helping his chances. His morals and values were cited as

helping him in 25.85 percent of the stories. His family was also seen as an asset in 22.93 percent of the articles.

As Figure 4.2 shows, 60 percent of the stories included at least one of these dimensions that were seen to help Romney. As Figure 4.3 shows, among stories in which Mormonism was not counted as a dimension helping Romney, 56 percent of the stories contained at least one of the other six dimensions listed as helping Romney.

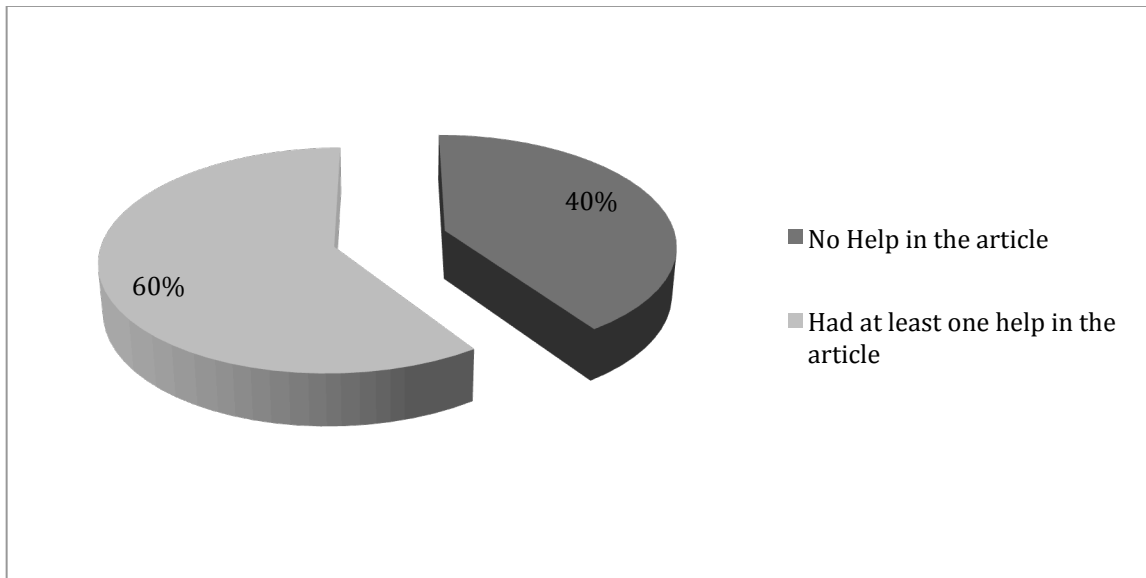


Figure 4.2: Percentage of stories that had at least one dimension that was helping Romney to win. N=205.

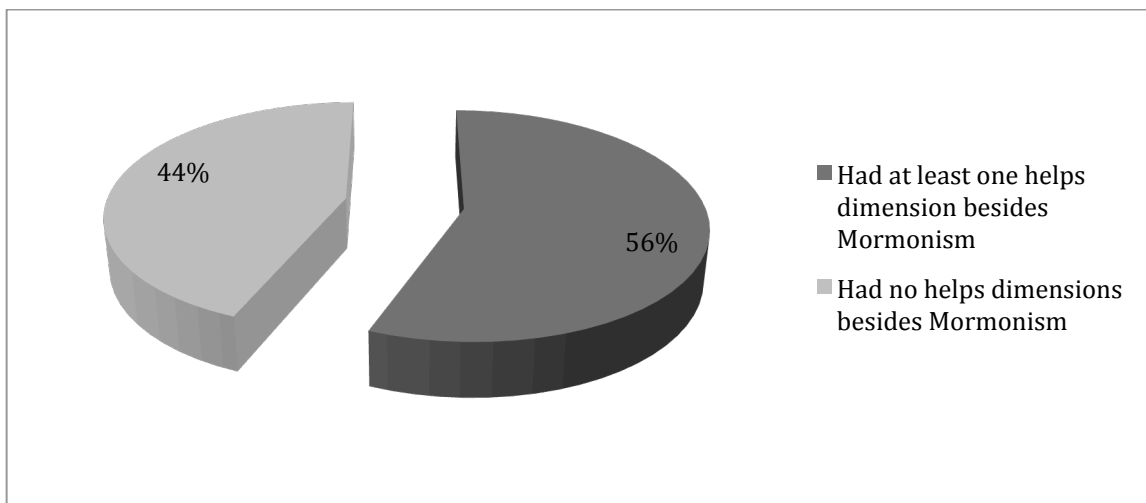


Figure 4.3: Percentage of stories that contained at least one dimension that was viewed as helping Romney to win – besides Mormonism. N=205.

Table 4.7 shows these variables by story source. Note that the *Wall Street Journal* was generally the most likely to include the dimensions helping Romney.

Table 4.7: Percentage of articles with helps dimensions by source. N=205.

	AP (n=76)	News- week (n=6)	NYT (n=31)	WP (n=27)	Time (n=2)	WSJ (n=14)	CT (n=18)	LAT (n=31)
Romney's morals and values.	18.42%	33.33%	41.94%	29.63%	0.00%	42.86%	22.22%	19.35%
Romney's experience, personality and intellect.	23.68%	50.00%	22.58%	44.44%	50.00%	57.14%	22.22%	29.03%
Romney's religion.	17.11%	33.33%	29.03%	37.04%	0.00%	35.71%	0.00%	16.13%
Romney's looks.	3.95%	16.67%	16.13%	14.81%	0.00%	14.29%	11.11%	3.23%
Romney's campaign organization and strategy.	26.32%	50.00%	35.48%	40.74%	100.00%	50.00%	33.33%	25.81%
Romney's position on issues.	22.37%	33.33%	16.13%	25.93%	0.00%	42.86%	27.78%	19.35%
Romney's family.	18.42%	50.00%	22.58%	18.52%	0.00%	28.57%	16.67%	35.48%

Question 2: Which factors in the campaign did the news media say were hindering Mitt Romney's election chances? Which of these factors were most frequently mentioned?

Finding 2: As Figure 4.4 shows, five dimensions of news coverage in this study were regularly seen to be hindering his chances. The most frequent of those was his religion. The second most frequent was his supposed lack of authenticity, evidenced in part by his supposed flip-flops on issues.

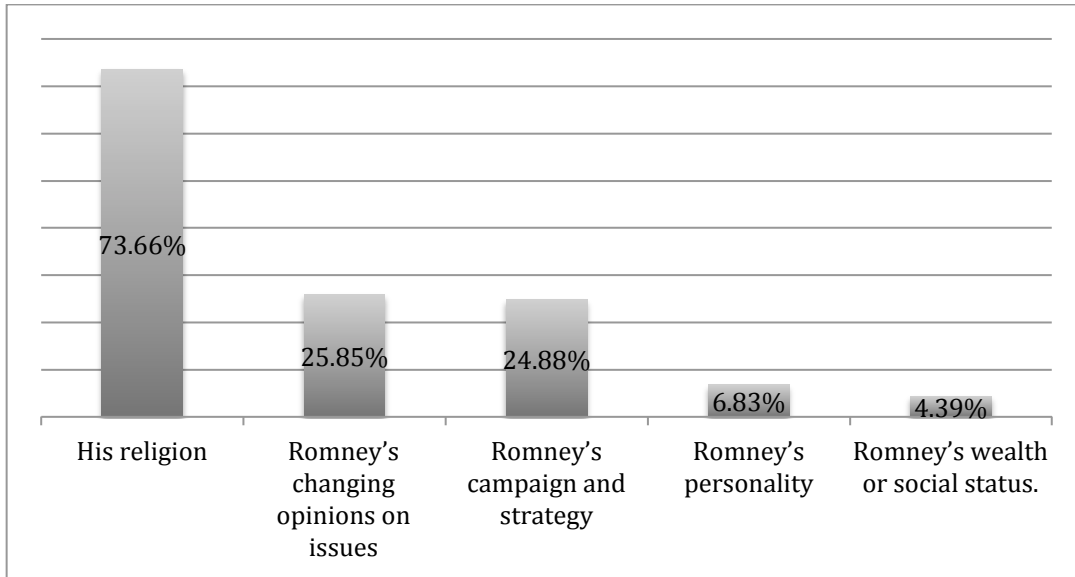


Figure 4.4: Percentage of stories with specific dimensions hindering Romney's chances of winning. N=205.

Figure 4.4 shows that, by far, Romney's Mormon religion was said to be the most common dimension hindering his chances of winning the Republican nomination. His religion hindering his chances was mentioned in nearly three in four stories – 73.66 percent of the time, or three times as frequently as Mormonism was cited as helping the candidate. One clear example of how this appeared in the campaign was a *Wall Street Journal* editorial following Romney's "Faith In America" speech:

Mr. Romney mentioned the word "Mormon" only once, and he was right to steer clear of formal theology or specific practices. Some denominations are leery of – or openly hostile to – the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, considering it un-Christian, or even a cult. Surveys indicate that many voters oppose Mr. Romney for this reason, and his speech probably won't do much to convince them otherwise.³⁰⁶

The concept of Romney's wealth and his social status hindering his chances was present in 4.39 percent of the sample stories and was the least frequent hindering dimension. An example of that came from an article in the *Washington Post* that spoke

³⁰⁶ "The Book of Romney," editorial, *Wall Street Journal*, December 7, 2007, A16.

about Romney's Massachusetts home being near New Hampshire, site of the important first-in-the-nation primary:

To many residents of the Lakes Region, Romney is simply another of the well-to-do people who flock to the area in the summertime. They recall the fuss after he was elected governor and the Massachusetts State Police set out buoys declaring the waters near the Romney house off-limits. "That didn't last too long. He took a lot of abuse," said David Hughey, a Massachusetts investment adviser who retired in the area.³⁰⁷

Romney's supposed lack of authenticity – what critics sometimes called his changing position on issues was mentioned as a political liability in 25.85 percent of the stories, the most frequent hindrance to his campaign besides Mormonism. It might be argued this specific evaluation comprises an evaluation of Romney's character and is, therefore, the most specific and frequent evaluation of Romney's character in the sample campaign coverage. The *Wall Street Journal* editorial made this point explicitly:

Once a cultural moderate, Mr. Romney has converted to conservative social positions on abortion, and so on. Rudy Giuliani recently needled him about his "sanctuary mansion" for illegal immigrants, so this week he fired his gardeners. He boasted about his HillaryCare Lite reform in Massachusetts, then had his free-market advisers rewrite it for the primary campaign. Despite yesterday's laudable speech, we suspect Mr. Romney will rise or fall as a candidate based on how well he can sell his worldly record.³⁰⁸

Romney's campaign organization and strategy was also cited as a hindrance in 24.88 percent of the stories in the campaign. In an article in the *Chicago Tribune* following Romney's speech, Manya Brachear wrote,

³⁰⁷ Alec McGillis, "Romney Seeks a Neighborly Reception; Ex-Massachusetts Governor's New Hampshire Ties Could Be a Blessing or a Curse," *Washington Post*, December 12, 2007, A06.

³⁰⁸ "The Book of Romney."

Some scholars say Romney missed an opportunity to prove how distinct doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have helped shape his personal values of equality, family and service to others – moral principles that he said Mormons share with every person of faith. Though he wouldn't have won over religious conservatives with Mormon apologetics, he didn't silence them by trying to gloss over fine points of theology.³⁰⁹

His personality was a hindrance in 6.83 percent of the stories. A *Chicago Tribune* campaign profile talked of that personality:

His is a remarkable story of perseverance and success, with tendencies to perfectionism. Romney is smooth and polished, almost to a fault. His perfectly slicked hair will be someone's idea of a metaphor. Where George W. Bush was embraced as folksy and genuine, Romney – especially on TV – can come across as programmed. At a time when a lot of Americans like their presidents to be someone they could envision sitting with and having a drink, the best you could hope for with Mitt Romney is belting down a decaffeinated vanilla Coke.³¹⁰

As Figure 4.5 shows, 79 percent of the articles contained at least one of these five dimensions that writers said hindered Romney's chances.

Similarly, as Figure 4.6 shows, 41 percent of the articles mentioned at least one of the other four dimensions said to be hindering Romney's chances – not including Mormonism. Only 10 of these 84 articles didn't mention that Mormonism was also hindering Romney's chances.

³⁰⁹ Manya A. Brachear, "Hope seen for Mormon candidacy; But to some, Romney missed opportunity," *Chicago Tribune*, December 7, 2007, 13.

³¹⁰ Tim Jones, "Smartest guy in the Room; He's a perfectly packaged overachiever with all the answers, but one question remains: Who is the real Mitt Romney?" *Chicago Tribune*, October 9, 2007, 1.

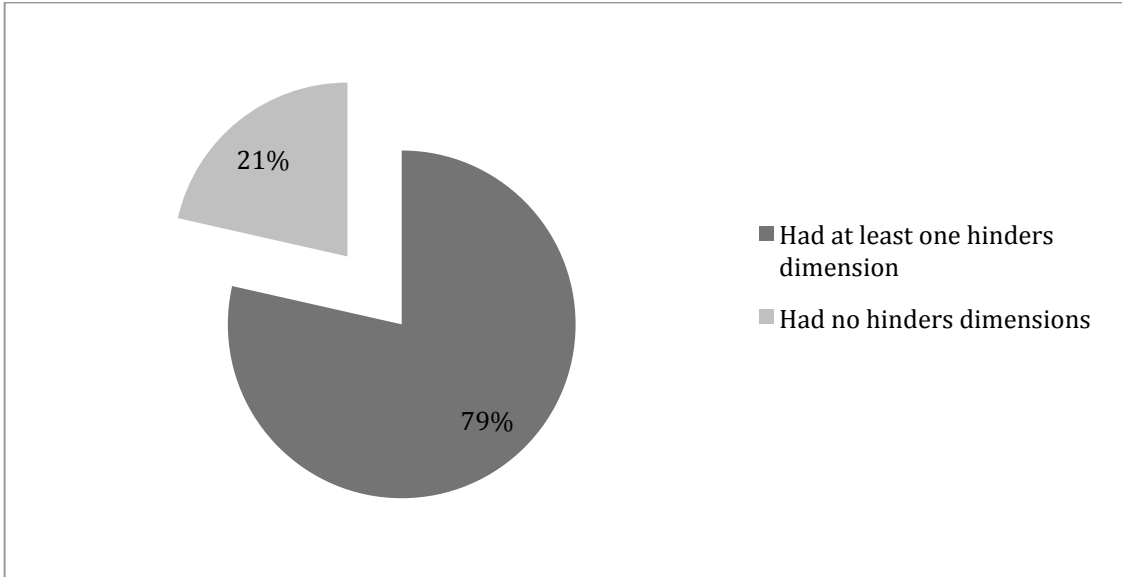


Figure 4.5: Percentage of stories with any dimensions hindering Romney's chances of winning. N=205.

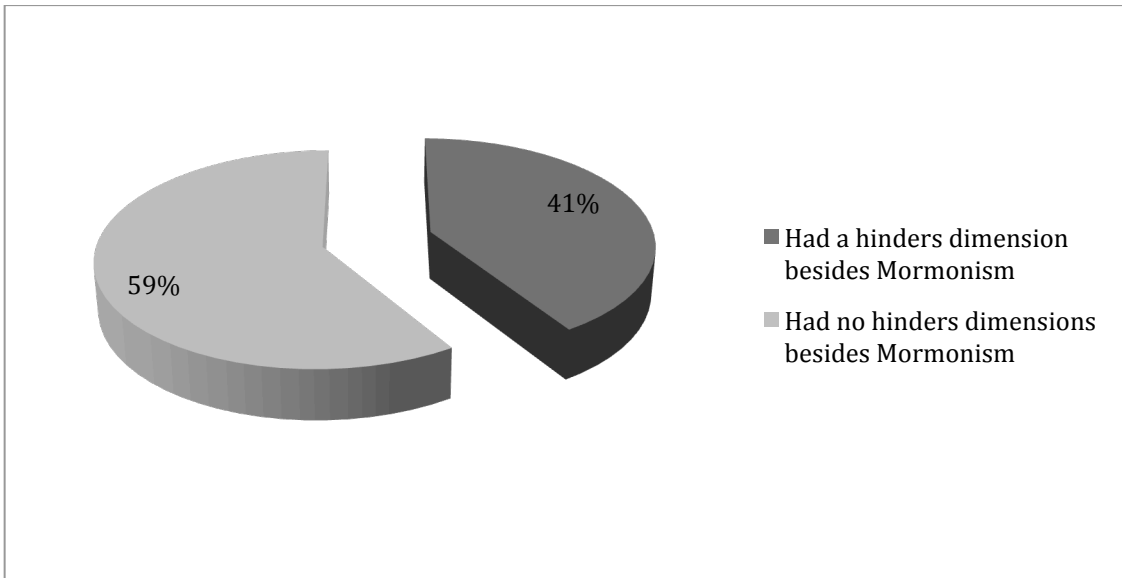


Figure 4.6: Percentage of stories with specific dimensions hindering Romney's chances of winning – not including Mormonism. N=205.

Table 4.8 shows these dimensions by the source of the article. Of note, the *Chicago Tribune* and *Time* magazine were most likely to say his religion was hindering his chances. The Associated Press was least likely to say that Romney's changing positions on issues was hindering his chances.

Table 4.8: Percentage of articles with hinders dimensions by source. N=205.

	AP (n=76)	News- week (n=6)	NYT (n=31)	WP (n=27)	Time (n=2)	WSJ (n=14)	CT (n=18)	LAT (n=31)
His religion	63.16%	66.67%	67.74%	70.37%	100.00%	85.71%	100.00%	87.10%
Romney's changing opinions on issues	15.79%	50.00%	29.03%	37.04%	50.00%	35.71%	27.78%	25.81%
Romney's personality	2.63%	33.33%	3.23%	11.11%	0.00%	14.29%	11.11%	6.45%
Romney's wealth or Social status.	1.32%	0.00%	3.23%	14.81%	0.00%	14.29%	0.00%	3.23%
Romney's campaign and strategy	14.47%	33.33%	35.48%	14.81%	50.00%	35.71%	27.78%	38.71%

As Figure 4.7 shows, the frequency with which Romney's religion was seen as a hindrance varied over time. Three spikes occurred in April, October and December 2007. In April, campaign fundraising totals came out for the first quarter and Romney emerged as a viable contender because he had raised more money than any other GOP candidate. Features articles began to look at his strengths and weaknesses as a candidate and that he had to rely on his network of Mormons for some of his money, suggesting he had yet to reach across religious boundaries. In October, a variety of stories emerged about Romney, especially new feature articles about the candidate as voting was nearing in the early primary states. The third spike in December corresponds with Romney's Faith in America speech.

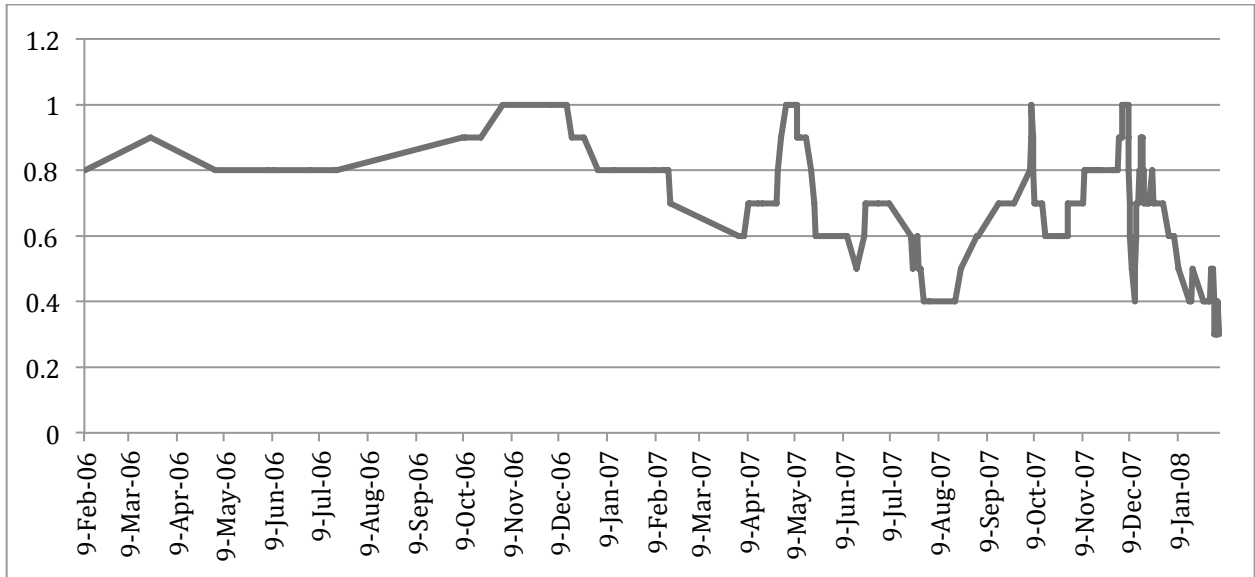


Figure 4.7: Mormonism as a hindrance, over time. N=196.

Question 3: Did the news media more frequently cite factors that were helping Romney or factors that were hindering his chances?

Finding 3: Aside from Mormonism, more dimensions were seen as helping Romney than hindering him.

As Figures 4.3 and 4.6 showed previously, 41 percent of the stories had at least one dimension saying Romney’s campaign faced hindrances besides Mormonism, whereas 56 percent of the stories included a dimension that was helping Romney’s chances besides Mormonism. Similarly, Table 4.9 shows that more dimensions of coverage were shown to be helping Romney’s chances than hindering them.

Table 4.9: Total frequency of dimensions helping and hindering Romney’s chances. N=205 stories.

Total number of dimensions	Total
Total number of helping dimensions, including Mormonism	349
Total number of helping dimensions, not including Mormonism	296
Total number of hindering dimensions, including Mormonism	278
Total number of hindering dimensions, not including Mormonism	127
Total number of dimensions mentioned in all the articles	627

Table 4.10 shows when Mormonism was included in the tallies, the number of articles with a preponderance of hindering dimensions was approximately equal to the number with a greater frequency of helping dimensions.

Table 4.10: Frequency of stories with preponderance of helping or hindering dimensions, Mormonism included. N=205.

Type of preponderance	Total
More helping dimensions	73
More hindering dimensions	72
Neither more helping nor more hindering dimensions	60

Table 4.11 and Figure 4.8 show that the number of articles that showed more dimensions helping Romney than hindering him when Mormonism was excluded.

Table 4.11: Frequency of stories with preponderance of helping of hindering dimensions, Mormonism not included. N=205.

Type of preponderance	Total
More helping dimensions excluding Mormonism	96
More hindering dimensions excluding Mormonism	25
Neither more helping nor more hindering dimensions	84

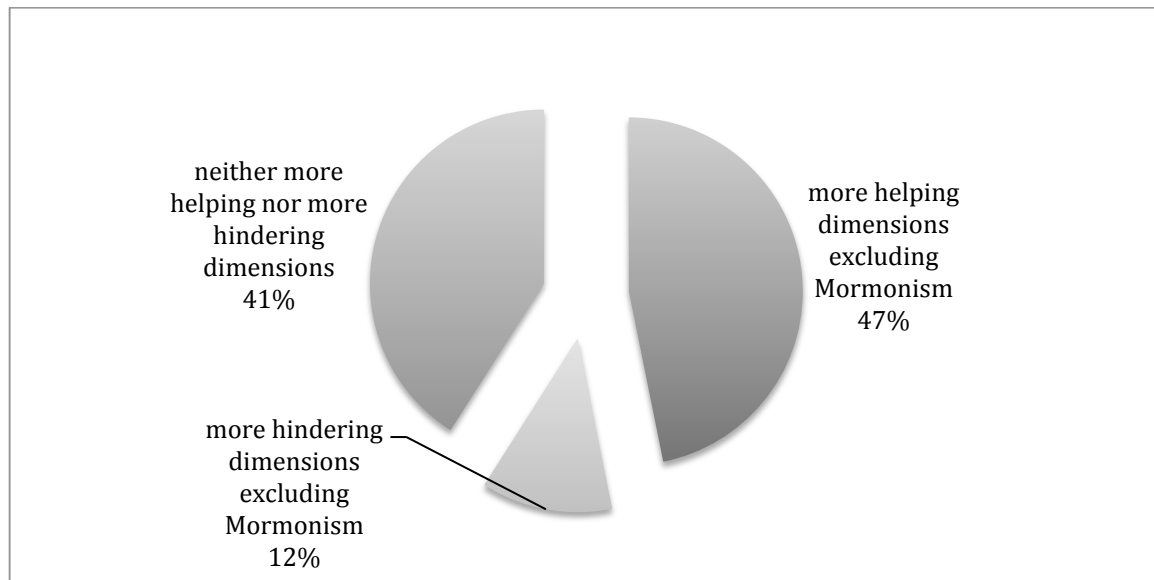


Figure 4.8: Percentage of stories with more helping or hindering dimensions or neither, excluding Mormonism. N=205

Question 4: How frequently was Romney portrayed in the coverage to be succeeding or suffering setbacks in his campaign? In what circumstances was he most frequently seen as suffering setbacks?

Finding 4: As Figure 4.9 shows, Romney was most often shown as neither succeeding nor suffering setbacks.

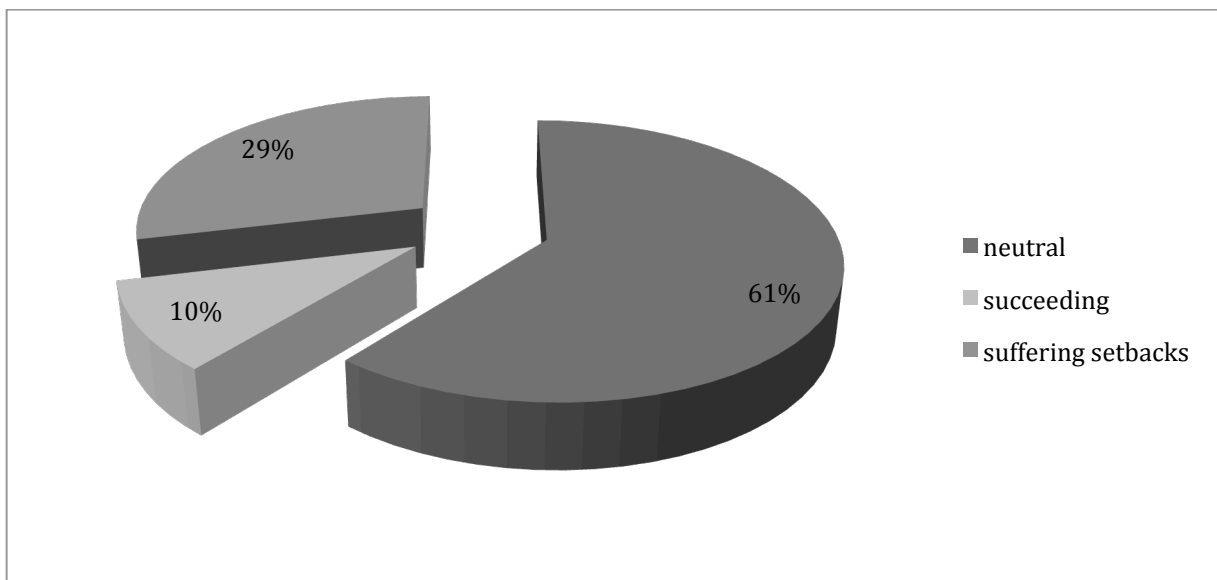


Figure 4.9: Percentage of articles showing whether Romney was succeeding, was suffering setbacks, or was “neutral,” neither suffering setbacks nor succeeding on balance. N=205.

The most frequent assessment – found in 61 percent of the articles – of whether Romney was succeeding or suffering setbacks was that, on balance, Romney was neither succeeding nor suffering setbacks. Most of those articles had no assessment of success or suffering setbacks – 60 percent of the total had no assessment. Only 1 percent of articles contained an equal assessment of setbacks and successes. There were nearly three times as many articles (29 percent and 10 percent of the total respectively) that said Romney was suffering setbacks as said he was succeeding on balance.

As Figure 4.10 shows, the overall assessment of success and failure varied through the course of the campaign. The high point of Romney’s success appeared to come in October 2007, about the time Romney received the endorsement of Bob Jones

III. The low point was when writers analyzed Romney’s decision to give his “Faith in America” speech in early December 2007. The mean for each calendar date in this figure and others figures like it was calculated by putting the articles in sequence and calculating a mean presence (on a scale of 0 to 2) of whether a variable was coded as present in the coverage over 10 consecutive articles.

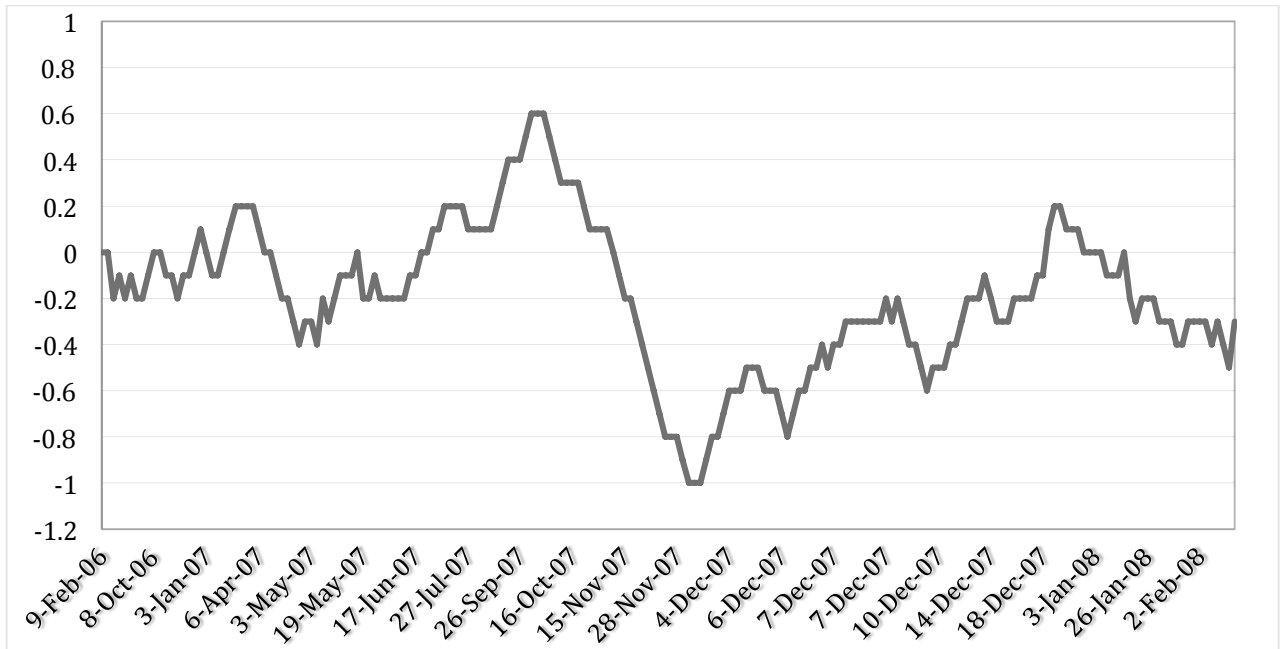


Figure 4.10: Running average over time of whether Romney is succeeding or suffering setbacks. 1 is neutral: neither succeeding or suffering setbacks, 2 is succeeding, and 0 is suffering setbacks. The X-axis of this graph is the sequence of articles arranged over time. N=196.

This finding led to the following ancillary finding:

Ancillary finding 4.1: When Romney decided to give his Faith in America speech, most articles framed the decision through the lens that he was suffering setbacks.

Table 4.12 shows the clear dominance of “setbacks” in the coverage around Dec. 3, 2007. In the days after Romney announced his “Faith in America” speech late on Dec. 2, 2007, through the day he delivered it, Dec. 6, 2007, analysis of individual articles about the speech showed that these articles were framed through the lens of Romney

suffering setbacks in the polls. In essence, Romney’s decision to give his speech was framed that the fact that he was suffering setbacks led to his decision.

In fact, nearly 45 percent of the “suffering setbacks” stories in the overall study sample were somehow related to Romney’s speech, the data show. Table 4.13 shows how setbacks was a much more common framing than success in any coverage of the speech throughout the entire campaign.

Table 4.12: Number of stories saying Romney was suffering setbacks between Dec. 2 and Dec. 6, 2007 in the coverage that focused on Romney speech. N=23.

Articles evaluation of Romney’s chances in the speech coverage	Number of articles
Neutral or no assessment	6
Suffering setbacks	17

Table 4.13: Number of stories saying Romney was suffering setbacks in the coverage that focused on Romney speech during the entire scope of the study. N=54.

Articles evaluation of Romney’s chances in the speech coverage	Number of articles
Neutral or no assessment	24
Succeeding	4
Suffering setbacks	26

Question 5: Which dimensions of Romney’s Mormon faith were most frequently used to explain his Mormonism? Was the discarded Mormon practice of polygamy still prevalent in the coverage as it has been historically?

Finding 5: Many dimensions of Mormonism were present in the coverage. The most frequently mentioned dimension was whether Mormons are Christian. The least frequent dimension was that Mormons are caring people. Polygamy was present in more than one in four stories in the study sample.

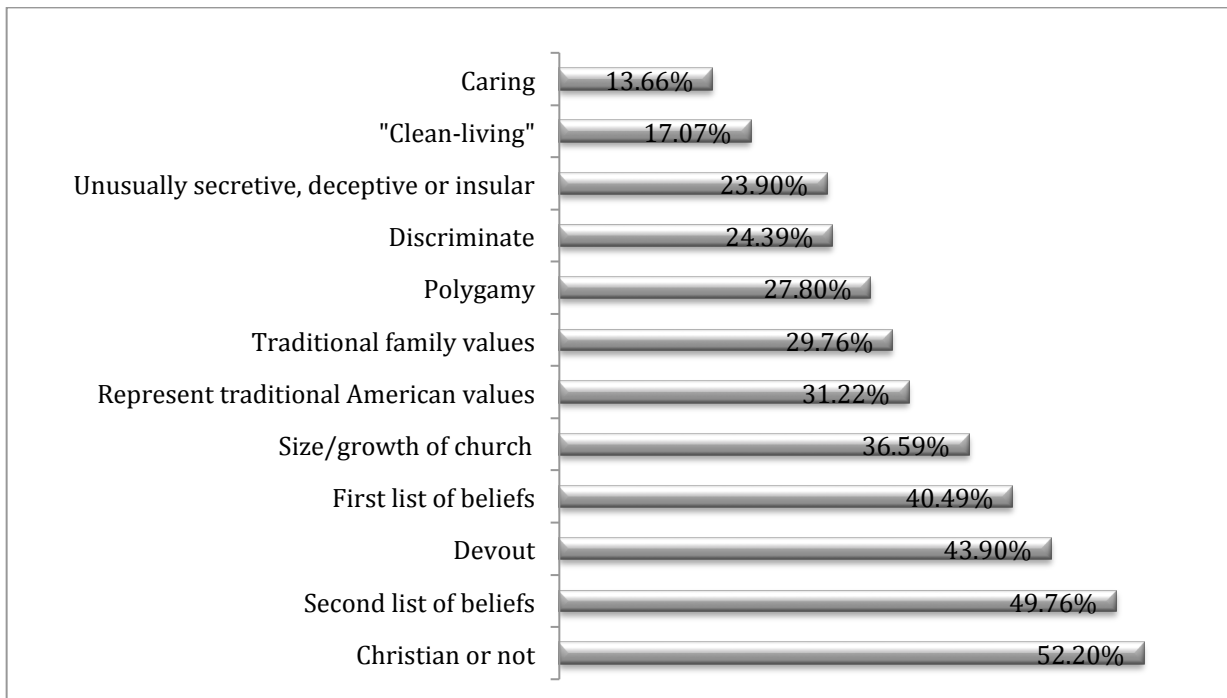


Figure 4.11: Percentage of stories with various Mormon dimensions. N=205.

As Figure 4.11 shows, 12 dimensions of Mormonism were explored in this study. The most common dimension that articles in this study mentioned involved Mormonism’s relationship to Christianity. This dimension was identified in 52.2 percent of the stories. That is to say that these articles contained assertions or statements about the whether Mormons are Christian, believe in Jesus Christ or are members of some heretical, non-Christian religion. The second most-frequent dimension found in the coverage was all or part the discrete list of Mormon beliefs that Mormon leaders through their first missionary discussion have described as basic doctrines that differentiate it from other churches and denominations. In this study, I have termed these the “second list” of Mormon beliefs.³¹¹ A simple mention of any one of these beliefs merited inclusion of this variable. This study dimension was in 49.76 percent of the stories. The third-most-frequent dimension “Mormons are devout people” was in more than 43.9

³¹¹ The exact definition of this variable is in Appendix A.

percent of stories. The fourth most-frequent dimension was whether the articles mentioned any of a list of Mormon beliefs that I have termed these terms the “first list” of Mormon beliefs. If any article mentioned one or more of these beliefs, it was included in the tally. Articles that labeled Mormonism as “unusual” or something similar were also included in this dimension. This dimension occurred in 40.49 percent of the stories.³¹² The fifth most prevalent dimension reporters dealt with the growth and size of the Church as a way of explaining Mormonism. This dimension was identified in 36.59 percent of the stories in the study sample. The sixth most prevalent dimension, defined here as “Mormonism and Mormons represent traditional American values,” was found in 31.22 percent of the stories.³¹³ Mormon belief in the traditional family was in 29.76 percent of the stories. Polygamy was mentioned in 27.8 percent of the stories. The allegation that Mormons discriminate against people of color and against women, including mentions of the fact that Mormonism changed its doctrine on priesthood in 1978 to allow blacks to be ordained, was in 24.39 percent of the stories.³¹⁴ The notion that “Mormons are secretive, dangerous, deceptive or unusually insular” was found in 23.9 percent of the stories. The least common dimension of Mormonism presented in the study was that Mormons are caring people – 13.66 percent of the stories included this variable. The second-least common dimension of Mormonism in the study was that Mormons believe in clean-living – 17.07 percent of the stories contained this variable.

³¹² See Appendix A for an exact definition of this variable. The idea behind this variable was to take beliefs that especially when taken out of context, could make the religion appear particularly idiosyncratic to non-Mormons.

³¹³ See Appendix A for an exact definition of this variable.

³¹⁴ Mormons don’t accept the notion that they are deceptive, unusually secretive or that they discriminate.

The news coverage reveals in the aggregate a rich, detailed, inconsistent portrayal of Mormonism. Table 4.14 shows the dimensions of Mormonism found in each story source. (*Time* has only two articles in its population, so its numbers should be taken advisedly.) The AP, for example, was less likely to mention polygamy when compared to other sources, while nearly half of the *Wall Street Journal* articles mentioned it along with nearly 40 percent of the *New York Times* articles. Similarly, the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* almost never mentioned the dimension that Mormons are caring people. The *New York Times* was also more likely than average to include the second list of Mormon beliefs, as well as the dimension that Mormons are secretive and the variable questioning Mormonism’s place in Christianity.

Table 4.14: Percentage of stories where various Mormon dimensions appeared by source. N=205.

Mormon dimension	AP (n=76)	News- week (n=6)	NYT (n=31)	WP (n=27)	Time (n=2)	WSJ (n=14)	CT (n=18)	LAT (n=31)	Total (n=205)
Polygamy	17.1%	33.3%	38.7%	29.6%	100.0%	42.9%	33.3%	25.8%	27.8%
Mormons discriminate against women and people of color.	23.7%	33.3%	25.8%	33.3%	50.0%	21.4%	16.7%	19.4%	24.4%
Mormons are socially conservative or believe in “clean-living.”	10.5%	66.7%	22.6%	25.9%	100.0%	28.6%	5.6%	6.5%	17.1%
Mormons are devout.	40.8%	50.0%	48.4%	63.0%	0.0%	50.0%	44.4%	29.0%	43.9%
Mormons are caring people.	14.5%	16.7%	3.2%	25.9%	0.0%	21.4%	22.2%	3.2%	13.7%
Second list of beliefs.	40.8%	83.3%	32.3%	37.0%	100.0%	28.6%	27.8%	51.6%	40.5%
First list of beliefs.	44.7%	50.0%	58.1%	59.3%	100.0%	64.3%	55.6%	32.3%	49.8%
Mormons are unusually secretive, dangerous, deceptive, or insular.	17.1%	33.3%	32.3%	33.3%	100.0%	28.6%	33.3%	9.7%	23.9%

Mormons represent traditional American values.	31.6%	50.0%	35.5%	33.3%	100.0%	50.0%	11.1%	19.4%	31.2%
Mormons believe in what are often called traditional family values.	25.0%	50.0%	35.5%	37.0%	50.0%	42.9%	27.8%	19.4%	29.8%
The Mormon Church is large and growing rapidly.	32.9%	33.3%	41.9%	55.6%	50.0%	50.0%	22.2%	25.8%	36.6%
Disagreement on whether Mormons are Christian.	34.2%	50.0%	61.3%	55.6%	100.0%	57.1%	66.7%	71.0%	52.2%

Table 4.15 includes these dimensions by whether the story focused on Romney or not – that is based on whether the articles had more than two mentions of Romney’s name or not. Many more favorable dimensions, such as Mormons being caring people and Mormons being devout, appeared in those articles without a Romney focus. More unfavorable dimensions, such as Mormons’ alleged discrimination of women and people with color and the disagreement over whether Mormons are Christian or not, were more common in these Romney-focused stories. The dimensions of secrecy, clean-living and polygamy appeared with approximately the same frequency, regardless of story focus. These characteristics of Mormon portrayals are relatively consistent regardless of the focus of stories. The relatively unfavorable tenor of the dimensions of Mormonism linked with Romney suggests a focus on the horse race may have led reporters to mention dimensions of Mormonism that were more controversial – and therefore more newsworthy and less favorable. This will be discussed more fully later.

Table 4.15: Percentage of stories where various Mormon dimensions appeared by article focus. N=205.

Mormon Dimension	Not Romney focus (n=33)	Romney focus (n=172)	Total (n=205)
Polygamy	24.2%	28.5%	27.8%

Mormons discriminate against women and people of color.	15.2%	26.2%	24.4%
Mormons are socially conservative or believe in “clean-living.”	18.2%	16.9%	17.1%
Mormons are devout.	66.7%	39.5%	43.9%
Mormons are caring people.	27.3%	11.0%	13.7%
First list of Mormon beliefs.	33.3%	41.9%	40.5%
Second list of Mormon beliefs.	72.7%	45.3%	49.8%
Mormons are unusually secretive, dangerous, deceptive, or insular.	24.2%	23.8%	23.9%
Mormons represent traditional American values.	54.5%	26.7%	31.2%
Mormons believe in what are often called traditional family values.	36.4%	28.5%	29.8%
The Mormon Church is large and growing rapidly.	54.5%	33.1%	36.6%
Disagreement on whether Mormons are Christian.	30.3%	56.4%	52.2%

The most frequent dimension of Mormonism in the sample study, whether or not Mormonism is a Christian religion, varied over time in the sample study, but as Figure 4.12 shows, this dimension spiked in early December 2007, during the time Romney was preparing, announcing and delivering his Faith in America speech. These data suggest that reporters used this dimension as a way explaining Mitt Romney’s problem and that Romney himself mentioned his relationship to Christianity during the speech as a way of reassuring voters he was Christian, a fact that reporters thought was newsworthy.

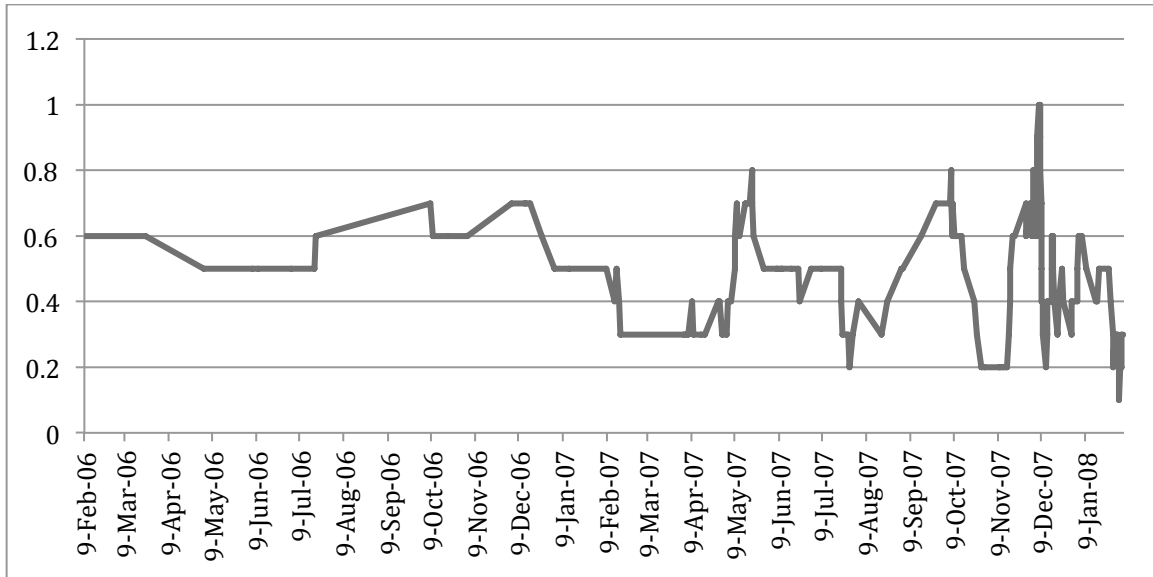


Figure 4.12: Presence of dimension: Mormons may or may not be Christian over time.³¹⁵ N=196

This finding points to two additional ancillary findings from this study:

Ancillary finding 5.1: As Table 4.16 shows, Mitt Romney’s Mormonism was often referred to in connection with the word “cult.”

More than 28 percent of the articles in this sample contained the word “cult” in connection with Mormonism, as Table 4.16 shows.³¹⁶

Table 4.16: Number and percentage of articles that contained the word “cult” in connection with Mormonism. N=205.

Didn't use the word “cult” in connection with Mormonism	147	71.7%
Used the word “cult” in connection with Mormonism	58	28.3%

Ancillary finding 5.2: Even though polygamy was still frequently mentioned in the coverage of Mormonism in the campaign, as it has been historically, reporters moved away from mentioning polygamy as the coverage went on.

³¹⁵ In interpreting this figure, it is important to note that the time sequence compresses the data at the right of the chart because Mormonism was a much more frequent topic in the news than it was earlier in the campaign.

³¹⁶ This was found using a computerized word search within each article and not subject to intercoder reliability. The context of these words was usually not direct statements that Mormons were cult members but, instead, that evangelical Christians sometimes think Mormonism is a cult.

Polygamy was in 27 percent of the sampled stories, but, as Figure 4.13 shows, the frequency with which polygamy was mentioned generally declined as the campaign coverage continued. The x-axis is the sequence of articles over time. The chart shows that polygamy was mentioned early in the campaign, suggesting that as reporters were introducing Romney to the nation in early 2006 and his “Mormon” problem, they often used polygamy as one way of describing what it is about Mormonism that offends some people.

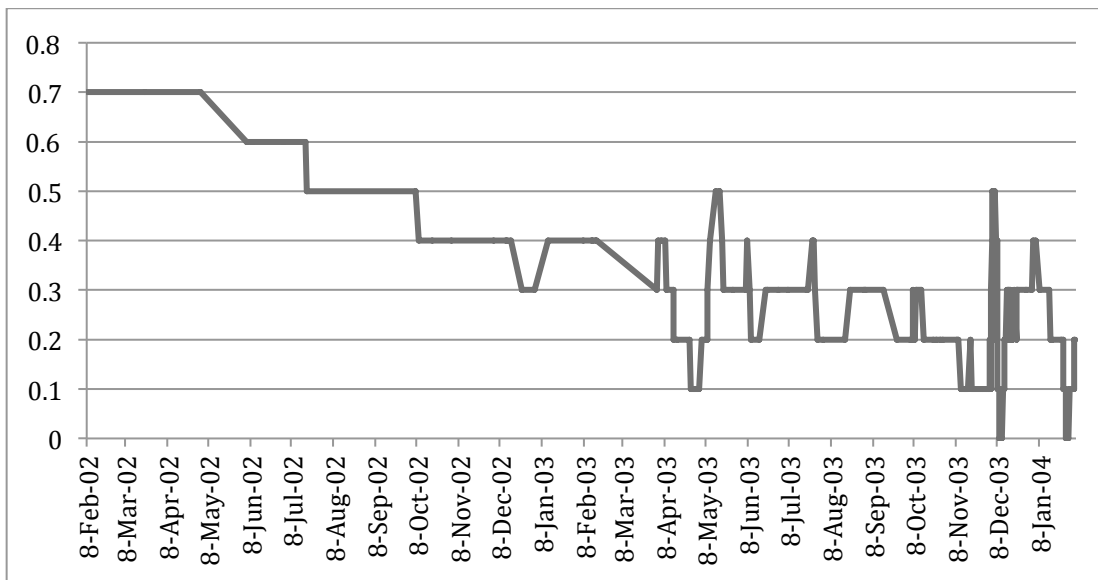


Figure 4.13: Frequency of mentions of whether a story mentioned polygamy or not in the coverage of Mitt Romney. The x-axis is the sequence of stories over the two years of this study. For the y-axis, if 10 stories in sequence mentioned polygamy, then the data would be a 1.0 at that point. If none did, then the data point would be at 0. N=196

Question 6: Did the news media portray Mormonism as a faith in the religious mainstream? Were Romney’s views on issues portrayed as in the mainstream?

Finding 6: Romney’s views were seen as somewhat in the mainstream while his Mormonism was conveyed as somewhat out of the mainstream.

As Table 4.17 shows, the average 1-to-5 Likert score for Romney’s views being in the mainstream was 3.27, meaning his views were perceived by coders as slightly more in the mainstream than out of it.

Table 4.17: Mean of articles' Likert score assessments of Romney's views being in the political mainstream. The Likert scale was 1 to 5 with 1 being most out of the mainstream and 5 being most fully in the mainstream. N=205.

Mean Likert score
Romney's views being in the mainstream.
3.27

On the other hand, Romney's Mormonism was conveyed as somewhat out of the mainstream, as Table 4.18 shows. The mean scoring by coders was 2.34 on a 1-to-5 Likert scale.³¹⁷

Table 4.18: Mean of articles' Likert score of Mormonism being in the religious mainstream. The Likert scale was 1 to 5 with 1 being most out of the mainstream and 5 being most fully in the mainstream. N=205.

Average Likert score
Mean Likert score of Mormonism being in the religious mainstream.
2.34

Question 7: To which historical campaigns was Mitt Romney's candidacy most frequently compared?

Finding 7: As Tables 4.19 and Figure 4.14 show, the Mitt Romney campaign was compared to many campaigns where religion was a factor and to some where religion was not mentioned. The most common comparisons where religion was a factor were to John F. Kennedy's 1960 campaign and to George Romney's 1968 campaign.

Articles in the study compared Mitt Romney's campaign to campaigns in which religion was raised and to campaigns in which religion was not raised as an issue. More than two dozen campaigns were compared to Mitt Romney's campaign in the study. Mitt Romney's campaign was most often compared to John F. Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign. Such comparisons occurred in 35 percent of the stories of this study.

³¹⁷ See Appendix B for a deeper understanding of intercoder reliability of this.

Romney’s campaign was compared to his father’s 1967-1968 presidential campaign in about 10 percent of the stories.³¹⁸

Table 4.19: Comparisons to Mitt Romney’s Presidential campaign where religion was mentioned. This table totals more than 205 articles because some articles mentioned more than one campaign. N for each line = 205

Candidate where religion is mentioned	Number articles with mentions	Percentage of stories
No candidates mentioned	112	54.6%
John F. Kennedy	73	35.6%
George Romney	27	13.2%
Orrin Hatch	8	3.9%
Morris Udall	6	2.9%
Al Smith	9	4.4%
George W. Bush	4	2.0%
Joseph Smith	7	3.4%
Joe Lieberman	7	3.4%
Jimmy Carter	3	1.5%
John Kerry	3	1.5%

Figure 4.14 shows campaigns to which Romney’s campaign was compared when the religion of the candidate was not mentioned.

³¹⁸ Careful readers could have learned a great deal about religion in presidential politics. In addition to these comparisons, the coverage included many other candidates for whom religion was an issue – but only mentioned them once. These included John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, William Jennings Bryan, John C. Fremont, William Howard Taft, Robert F. Kennedy, Dennis Kucinich, Arlen Specter, Pat Buchanan, Ed Muskie, Wesley Clark, Al Sharpton and Milton Shapp. Of note, the prominent religious candidacies of the Rev. Jesse Jackson and the Rev. Pat Robertson in 1988 were not mentioned as points of comparison to Romney.

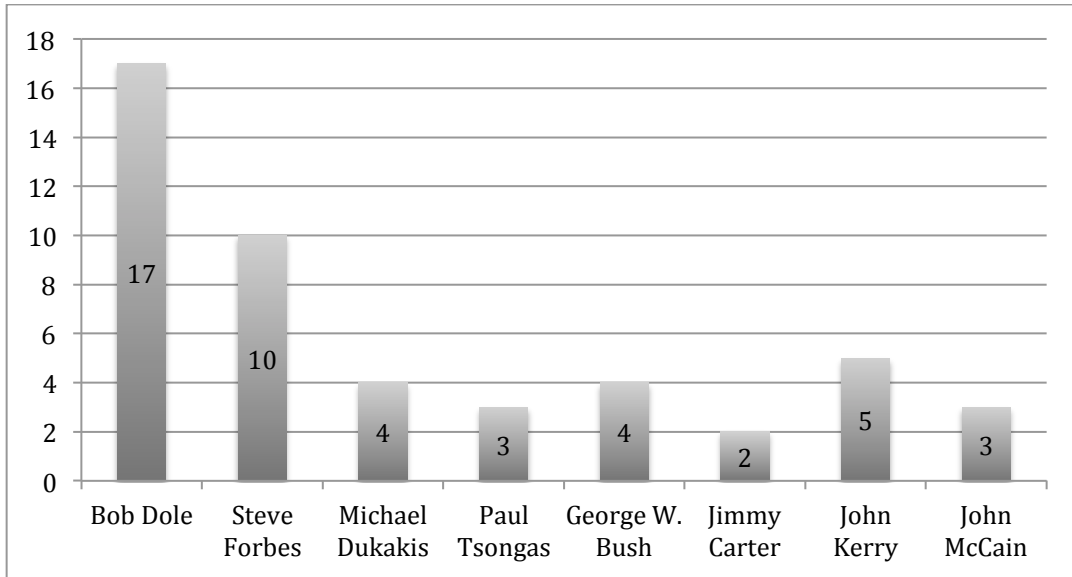


Figure 4.14: Number of mentions of candidates before 2008 for whom religion wasn't mentioned but whose candidacy was compared with Mitt Romney's 2008 campaign. N=205.

Question 8: Was Romney's campaign framed differently in opinion writing than in hard news coverage?

Finding 8: Opinion articles were less favorable about Mormonism, covered Mormonism more extensively, and were more likely to suggest Romney was succeeding than hard news stories were.

As Tables 4.20 through 4.25 show, opinion stories generally covered both Romney's chances and Mormonism more in depth than news stories. At the same time, opinion articles, on average, viewed Mormonism less favorably than the news articles and highlighted the elements of the campaign hindering Romney's chances more extensively. Furthermore, opinion articles cited polygamy more frequently; cited the issue of whether Mormons are Christian more frequently; and cited Mormonism as a barrier to Romney's election chances more frequently than news articles did. Moreover, opinion articles cited favorable dimensions of Mormonism less frequently than the news articles.

Table 4.20 shows that news stories had fewer mainstream/favorable dimensions than opinion stories did and fewer unfavorable/idiosyncratic stories.

Table 4.20: Average number of favorable/mainstream dimensions of Mormonism and average number of unfavorable/idiosyncratic dimensions of Mormonism per story by story type. N=205

	Average number of favorable/mainstream Mormon dimensions per article by story type.	Average number of unfavorable/idiosyncratic story dimensions by story type.
News (n=150)	1.67	2
Opinion (n=55)	1.85	2.67

Table 4.21 compares the percentages of whether an article had more dimensions that were helping Mitt Romney be elected than hindering him. What emerges from this table is that opinion writers were significantly more likely to use more dimensions that were seen as hindering Romney’s chances than news writers did.

Table 4.21: Frequency of articles with greater proportions of helping dimensions, hindering dimensions, or neither by story type. N=205.

	News (n=150)	Opinion (n=55)
More helps than hindrances	42.67%	30.1%
More hindrances than helps	29.33%	65.45%
Neither more helps than hindrances.	18.00%	5.45%

Table 4.22 suggests that opinion writers were more detailed than news writers in assessing Romney’s chances and sometimes were more favorable in their assessment of Romney’s chances of being elected; Table 4.23 suggests there were a greater number of neutral overall assessments of Romney’s chances in opinion journalism than in hard news journalism.

Table 4.22: Average number of dimensions seen helping Romney’s chances or hindering his chances at election by story type, NOT including Mormonism. N=205.

	News (n=150)	Opinion (n=55)
Average number of helping dimensions	1.77	1.49
Average number of hindering dimensions	.53	.85

Table 4.23: Percentage of articles with overall assessment of Romney’s campaign success, by story type. N=205.

	News (N=150)	Opinion (N=55)
Neutral	58.00%	69.09%
Succeeding	10.00%	10.91%
Suffering setbacks	32.00%	20.00%

Table 4.24 shows which dimensions of the campaign were seen as either hindering or helping Romney’s campaign. This table suggests that dimensions seen as helping Romney’s chances were found less frequently than those hindering his chances. Mormonism was seen as a far more frequent hindrance to Romney’s chances in opinion stories than news stories. His campaign strategy was also seen as a bigger hindrance in these stories. Table 4.24 also suggests how often commentators thought about Romney’s Mormonism as an issue in the campaign, 68.67 percent of the news articles saw his religion as a hindrance and 87.27 percent of opinion articles saw his religion as a hindrance.

Table 4.24: Percentage of articles with study dimensions by story type. N=205.

	News (n=150)	Opinion (n=55)
Helps Dimension 1: Romney's morals and values	27.33%	21.82%
Helps Dimension 2: Romney’s experience, personality and intellect	32.00%	25.45%
Helps Dimension 3: Romney’s religion	21.33%	21.82%
Helps Dimension 4: Romney’s looks	8.67%	9.09%
Helps Dimension 5: Romney’s campaign organization and strategy	34.00%	30.91%
Helps Dimension 6: Romney's position on issues	26.67%	14.55%
Helps Dimension 7: Romney's family	23.33%	21.82%
Hinders Dimension 1: His religion	68.67%	87.27%

Hinders Dimension 2: Romney’s changing opinions on issues	24.67%	29.09%
Hinders Dimension 3: Romney’s personality	5.33%	10.91%
Hinders Dimension 4: Romney’s wealth or Social status.	2.00%	10.91%
Hinders Dimension 5: Romney’s campaign and strategy	21.33%	34.55%

Opinion journalists were noticeably more likely to cite Mormon polygamy, less likely to cite Mormon devotion, more likely to cite the size of the church, and more likely to discuss Mormonism’s relationship to Christianity, as Table 4.25 makes clear.

Table 4.25: Percentage of Mormon dimensions by story type. N=205.

Percentage of stories containing various study dimensions about Mormonism by story type	News (n=150)	Opinion (n=55)
Mormon Dimension 1. Polygamy	21.33%	45.45%
Mormon Dimension 2: Mormons discriminate against women and people of color.	22.67%	29.09%
Mormon Dimension 3. Mormons are socially conservative or believe in “clean-living.”	15.33%	21.82%
Mormon Dimension 4. Mormons are devout	47.33%	34.55%
Mormon Dimension 5 Mormons are caring people.	14.00%	12.73%
Mormon Dimension 6: List of Mormon beliefs.	38.00%	47.27%
Mormon Dimension 7. Second list of Mormon beliefs:	50.91%	49.09%
Mormon Dimension 8: Mormons are unusually secretive, dangerous, deceptive, or insular.	22.00%	29.09%
Mormon Dimension 9: Mormons represent traditional American values	27.33%	41.82%
Mormon Dimension 10. Mormons believe in what are often called traditional family values. Family commitment is central to their belief.	29.33%	30.91%
Mormon Dimension 11. The Mormon Church is large and growing rapidly.	34.00%	43.64%
Mormon Dimension 12. Disagreement on whether Mormons are Christian.	46.67%	67.27%
Contained the word “cult” in connection with Mormonism	26.67%	32.73%

Part of the differences between these sets of numbers may be explained by the fact that a higher percentage of the news stories lacked a Romney focus than the opinion stories did – 28 percent to 18 percent. That is, opinion stories were more likely more narrowly focused on the campaign and its issues.

Chapter five of this study includes four conclusions and discusses horserace coverage and religion and the framing of Mormonism.

Chapter 5. Discussions and Suggestions

5.1 Responses to the Study's Central Questions.

This was a study of how reporters met the challenge of covering a presidential candidate characterized by religious difference. How did reporters frame Romney's chances? When was he seen as succeeding or suffering setbacks? What traits of his Mormonism were emphasized? Was his religion portrayed as mainstream? Did reporters use old stereotypes of Mormonism such as the long-abandoned practice of polygamy in describing his faith? What facets of Romney's character and personality were highlighted? Was he seen as a candidate holding mainstream political views? To which historical candidates did reporters compare Mitt Romney's campaign in dealing with the religion issue? Were there important differences between opinion and news coverage? These questions inspired the study. Data provided useful answers that will be discussed here.

Romney was seen as a mainstream candidate with the biggest hindrance shown to be his religion by the sample coverage. Analysis also suggested Romney was seen more often as suffering setbacks. His "Faith in America" speech was framed in the context of suffering setbacks in the polls. Data also indicated Romney's views were largely mainstream and conservative – though he was seen as a candidate who might change his views. At the same time, more unfavorable/idiosyncratic traits were used to describe his religion than favorable/mainstream ones, but a rich, diverse portrayal of the Mormon faith, if an inconsistent one, emerged. His Mormonism was, overall, portrayed as out of the mainstream. He was most frequently compared with John F. Kennedy, even more so than he was compared to his father, but Romney's campaign was compared with many

candidacies. Opinion coverage in general was less favorable to Mormonism but was less concerned with the horse-race than was hard news.

Items of conclusion and discussion follow. First are four major conclusions, and second are lengthy discussions of horse-race coverage's influence on portrayals of religion and of the portrayal of Mitt Romney's Mormonism in the coverage. A discussion of the Kennedy narrative and of how the Romney campaign coverage provides lessons for candidates of other minority religions follows.

5.2 Study Conclusions

The study data suggest four important conclusions.

Conclusion 1: Mormonism was seen as the most frequently cited hindrance to Romney's campaign in the story sample. Aside from Mormonism, news media largely framed Mitt Romney as a competent, mainstream, if inauthentic, candidate and those attributes seen as helping his election chances were cited with a greater frequency than those attributes seen as hindering his chances.

Romney was seen as a mainstream candidate – there were more things helping him than hindering him – in this study.

Among helping dimensions, Romney's campaign strategy and organization was the most frequent factor journalists and editorialists described as helping Romney. This dimension was cited in 33.17 percent of the articles in this study. Articles citing Romney's experience, intellect and personality comprised 30.24 percent of the stories. The least frequent asset cited was his looks, present in 8.78 percent of the stories. In 23.41 percent of the stories, Romney's position on issues was said to be helping his chances. His morals and values were cited as helping him in 25.85 percent of the stories. His family was also in 22.93 percent of the articles. His Mormonism was seen as helping him in 21.46 percent of the stories.

As for hindering dimensions, his Mormonism was seen as a hindrance in 73.66 percent of the sample stories. Romney's wealth and his social status was seen as hindering his chances in 4.39 percent of the stories, the least frequent hindering dimension. Romney's supposed lack of authenticity – what critics sometimes called his changing position on issues – was mentioned as a political liability in 25.85 percent of the stories, the most frequent hindrance to his campaign besides Mormonism and most frequent specific evaluation of his character. His personality was seen a hindrance in 6.83 percent of the stories. Romney's campaign organization and strategy was seen as constraining in 24.88 percent of the stories.

When Romney's religion was not included in these data, the frequency of dimensions that were helping Romney's chances was greater than hindering his chances. Romney was framed as a mainstream candidate with Mormonism being his main hindrance, judging by the data in this study. The stories examined in the study overall mentioned more positive facets of Romney's campaign and personality than facets that hindered him.

The findings also showed that Romney's Mormonism was described as hindering him in 73.66 percent of the articles studied and as helping him in 21.5 percent of them. Mormonism was seen as the most frequent challenge he had to overcome, and it was viewed as far more hurtful to his chances than helping his chances, the data of this study suggest.

Conclusion 2: The coverage overall portrayed Romney's Mormonism in an unfavorable light.

A central conclusion of this study is that the coverage in the aggregate gave an overall unfavorable, out-of-the-mainstream portrayal of Mormonism. In general,

Mormonism’s idiosyncrasies were found in the analysis to be highlighted in such a way so as to distort and so as to make the faith appear out of the mainstream, according to the data analysis.

Figure 5.1 shows that 51 percent of the articles had more unfavorable dimensions than unfavorable ones, while only 26 percent had more favorable dimensions. More than half the articles, therefore, left an out-of-the-mainstream, idiosyncratic, or unfavorable impression because they contained a greater frequency of these unfavorable/idiosyncratic dimensions. Table 5.1 shows the favorable/unfavorable dimensions used in this calculation.

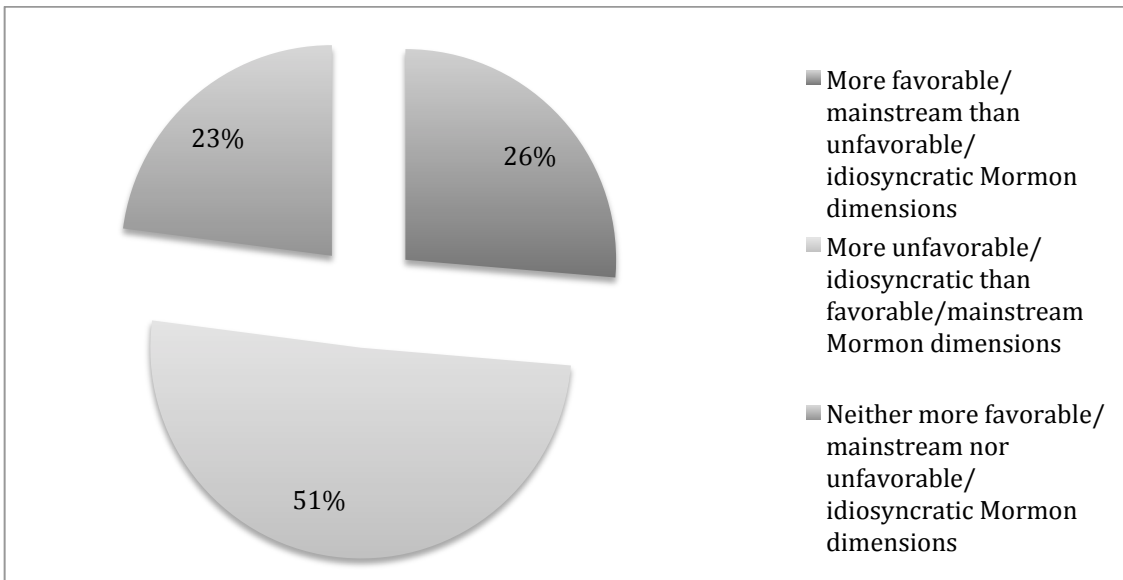


Figure 5.1: Percentage of articles where there were more favorable/mainstream, more unfavorable/idiosyncratic dimensions or an equal number of those dimensions. N=205

Table 5.1: Favorable/mainstream and Unfavorable/idiosyncratic dimensions of Mormonism used in calculating whether stories had more favorable/mainstream dimensions or more unfavorable/idiosyncratic beliefs.

Favorable/mainstream dimensions	Unfavorable/idiosyncratic dimensions
Mormons are caring	First list of Mormon beliefs.
Mormons are devout	Mormons once practiced polygamy
The Mormon Church is growing and successful.	Mormons discriminate
Mormons represent traditional American values	Mormons are deceptive, secretive, or insular
Mormons believe in family	Mormons may or may not believe in Christ
Mormons believe in clean-living	Second list of Mormon beliefs.

Other elements of the study support the impression that coverage of Mormonism was unfavorable. More than 50 percent of the articles mentioned the question of whether Mormonism is a Christian denomination. Because the nation is predominantly Christian, framing Mormonism as outside Christianity puts it outside the religious mainstream, even though many non-Mormon scholars have described the central values of the church as traditional and middle American.³¹⁹ Furthermore, traditionally Christian traits such as serving the poor and needy and helping people in a crisis – what this study called “Mormons are caring people,” was the least frequently mentioned of all of the study dimensions. Reporters rarely discussed the ways Mormons helped the poor and needy.

Writers used the frame that Mormons are mysterious, vague, secretive or deceptive in 23.9 percent of the stories.³²⁰ This is an old Mormon stereotype, as is discussed in Appendix J; Similarly 28.3 percent of the articles included Mormonism in connection with the word “cult.”³²¹ Both of these frames – “cult” and secrecy – make two unfavorable concepts psychologically available to readers.

That having been said, it is important to say that many favorable traits of Mormonism were nevertheless included in the coverage. Using four dimensions of Mormonism from this study, an index “Mormons are good people” was created. This index included the study variables: “Mormons are caring people,” “Mormons believe in

³¹⁹ De Pillis, “The Emergence of Mormon Power Since 1945.”

³²⁰ As will be discussed in Appendix E, secrecy and silence seemed to be a stronger theme in the coverage than just 23 percent, the data show. This is a qualitative assessment, however, not meant to be a support for this conclusion. It may be useful to other researchers.

³²¹ This was not reporters saying directly that Mormonism is a “cult” but, instead, reporting that some people or religions, often evangelicals, think Mormonism is a “cult.”

traditional family values,”³²² “Mormons are devout” and “Mormons are socially conservative and believe in clean-living.”

As Figure 5.2 shows, 58 percent of the articles in this study had at least one element of this index in the articles – contained at least one thing that suggested that Mormons are good people.

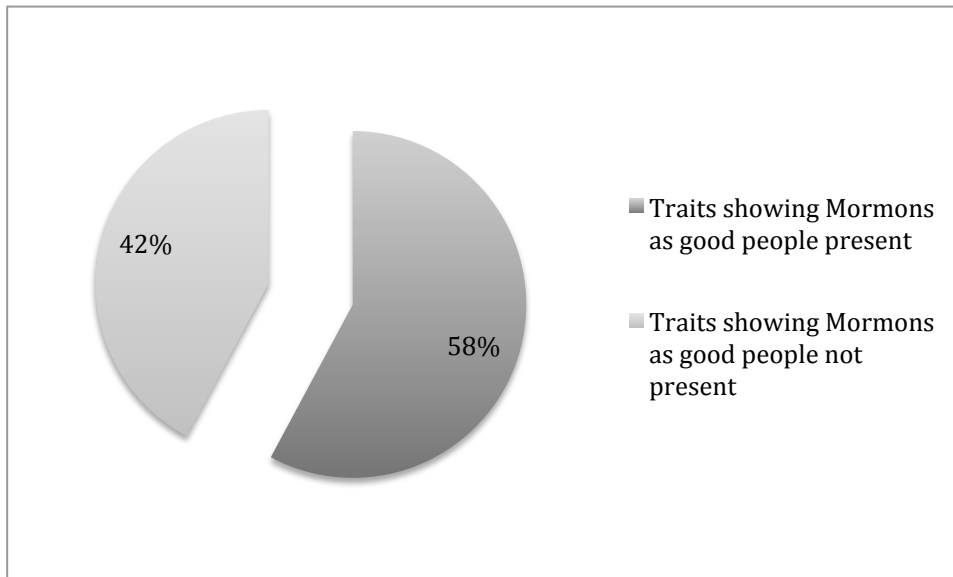


Figure 5.2: Percentage of articles that have the any part of the index “Mormons are good people.” N=205.

When the focus was on Mitt Romney, as Table 5.2 shows, the dimensions of this index were present with less frequency. When Romney was mentioned two or fewer times, 76 percent of the articles included something from the index that Mormons are good people.

³²² A limitation of this index is one portion of this dimension about Mormon belief in traditional families. This dimension includes Mormonism’s opposition to gay marriage. To be sure, someone who thinks that gay marriage is a good idea would not think that Mormons are “good people” for opposing gay marriage. Similarly, someone who thought that traditional definitions of family were too limiting might also quibble with the idea that Mormonism’s support for traditional families made them “good people.” This limitation does not change the overall point of this conclusion – that reporters included favorable portrayals of Mormons. What it might do is lower the frequency of those portrayals – something, again, consistent with the overall sense of the data that these favorable portrayals were less common than unfavorable ones.

Table 5.2: Percentage of stories that contained any part of the index “Mormons are good people” by story focus.
N=205

Story focus	Had at least one dimension of the index “Mormons are good people.”	Did not have a dimension of Mormonism of the index “Mormons are good people.”	Total
Not Romney focus (n=33)	25 (76 %)	8 (24 %)	33
Romney focus (n=172)	94 (55 %)	78 (45 %)	172
Total	119 (58 %)	86 (42 %)	205

Furthermore, readers often had to read deeply to find the favorable dimensions of Mormonism in the coverage. As Table 5.3 shows, only 13 percent of the articles in this study had more than two of the dimensions of this index in their articles.

Table 5.3: Number and percentage with dimension of the index “Mormons are good people.” N=205

Number of the dimensions of the index “Mormons are good people” in articles.	Total articles
No dimensions of the index “Mormons are good people” were present	86 (42 %)
One of the four dimensions in the index was present	61 (30 %)
Two of the four dimensions of the index were present	30 (15 %)
Three of the four dimensions of the index were present	19 (9 %)
All of the dimensions of the index were present.	9 (4 %)

Conclusion 3: Mormon polygamy remained an important way of describing Mormonism during the campaign even though polygamy was not an issue during the campaign.

The descriptions of Mormonism in the studied stories included frequent emphasis on Mormonism’s history of polygamy. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have not practiced polygamy in more than 100 years, and it is true that reporters often acknowledged that fact. However, given that polygamy as an issue played virtually no role in the 2008 campaign – for example, Romney nor any candidate

proposed legalizing polygamy – the use of polygamy clearly elicited less favorable framing of Mormonism.

Polygamy was referenced twice as often – 27.7 percent versus 13.3 percent – as the study dimension that “Mormons are caring people” and nearly twice as often as the dimension that “Mormons believe in clean-living,” which was found in 17.07 percent of the stories in this study.

Conclusion 4: The horse-race frame was paired with unfavorable portrayals of Mormonism.

Unfavorable portrayals of Mormonism were correlated with horse-race framing, the data of this study suggest. Given that polls showed that Mormonism was an important issue hindering Mitt Romney’s prospects, reporters would naturally be drawn to explanations that made Romney unacceptable to many American voters, citing Mormonism’s more unfavorable traits as ways of explaining why the candidate might fall behind in the race.

Consider, for example, this analysis from longtime *Newsweek* religion editor Kenneth Woodward who wrote an editorial in *The New York Times*, “The Presidency’s Mormon Moment:”

More Americans, polls show, are willing to accept a woman or an African-American as president than a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

It isn’t just evangelical Christians in the Republican base who find Mr. Romney’s religion a stumbling block. Among those who identify themselves as liberal, almost half say they would not support a Mormon for president. Although with 5.6 million adherents Mormonism is the nation’s fourth-largest denomination, 57 percent of respondents to a recent CBS poll said they know little or nothing about Mormon beliefs and practices. Mr. Romney needs to be their teacher, whether he likes that role or not.

Among the reasons Americans distrust the Mormon church is Mormon clannishness. Because every worthy Mormon male is expected to

be a lay priest in voluntary service to the church, the demands on his time often leave little opportunity to cultivate close friendships with non-Mormon neighbors. A good Mormon is a busy Mormon. Those – like Mr. Romney – who serve as bishops (pastors of congregations) often find it difficult to schedule evenings at home with their own families.

To many Americans, Mormonism is a church with the soul of a corporation. Successful Mormon males can expect to be called, at some time in their lives, to assume full-time duties in the church's missions, in its vast administrative offices in Salt Lake City or in one of many church-owned businesses. Mormons like to hire other Mormons, and those who lose their jobs can count on the church networks to find them openings elsewhere. Mr. Romney put those same networks to effective use in raising part of his \$23 million in campaign contributions.

Moreover, Mormons are perceived to be unusually secretive.³²³

A major suggestion of the correlation between horse-race coverage and unfavorable portrayals of Mormonism is that news coverage that framed Romney's religion as a hindrance came in flurries, with intense coverage linked to specific events and controversies on the campaign trail, followed by periods when news media mentioned the "religion problem" less often.³²⁴ See Figure 5.3 that follows. A score of "1" on this graph means that Mormonism as a hindrance was mentioned in each of 10 successive articles in the story sample, whereas a score of zero means that none of the 10 articles in succession mentioned Mormonism as a hindrance. Figure 5.3 shows that at six points in Romney's campaign, Mormonism as a hindrance spiked above 0.8:

- The first two spikes at the beginning of the campaign coverage during 2006 were largely because of Romney's entry into the field – biographies and polls about him and his campaign introduced Mormon issue and Romney to the nation.

³²³ Woodward, "The Presidency's Mormon Moment."

³²⁴ It should be noted that the variable "Mormonism is hindering Romney's chances," had a relatively low intercoder reliability.

- The third spike came in early May 2007. That spike can largely be attributed to Al Sharpton’s criticism of Mormonism, Romney’s response and Sharpton’s subsequent visit to Salt Lake City.
- The fourth spike in October 2007 coincided with a few less dramatic events – Mormon general conference, a few campaign features about Romney and the on-going Mormon issue, and Romney’s effort to reach out to evangelicals.
- The fifth and most major spike in the coverage corresponded with Romney’s “Faith in America” speech.
- The last spike included several issues, such as another round of campaign features, but most prominently was a push poll in New Hampshire that mentioned unflattering and distorted features of Mormon belief. The chart also shows the Mormon issue faded after Romney’s speech in the sample coverage, especially after the Iowa caucuses. Reporters, perhaps, began to see Romney’s chances fading after he lost in Iowa and began downplaying his Mormonism as an issue.

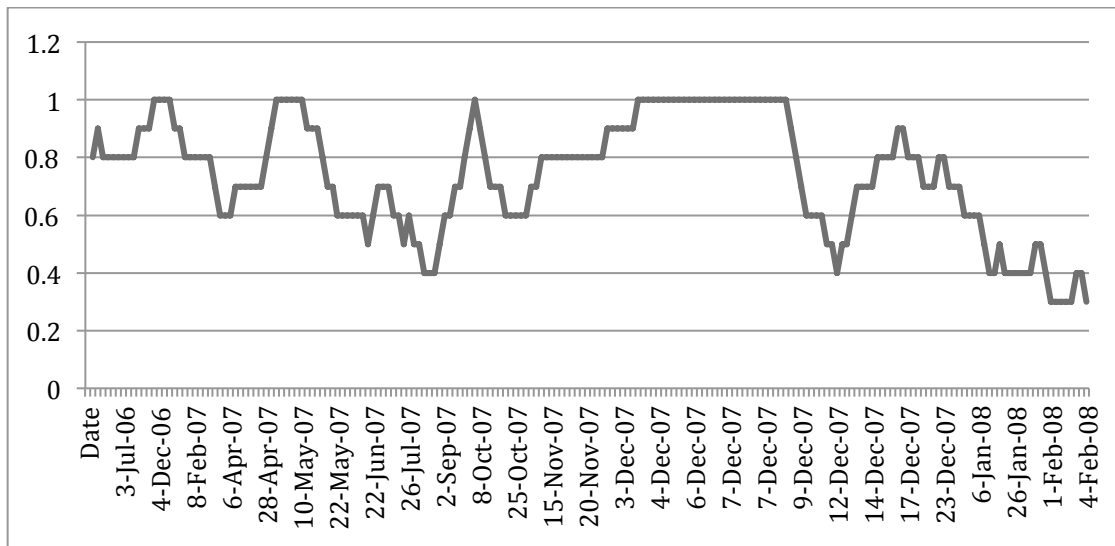


Figure 5.3: Time sequence of when Mormonism was described as a hindrance for Mitt Romney in the coverage. The x-axis is the sequence of stories over the two years of this study. For the y-axis, if 10 successive stories mentioned Romney’s Mormonism as a hindrance, then the data would be a 1.0 at that point. If none did, then the data point would be at zero. (N=196)

Furthermore, the number of stories as determined by the study's sampling – four mentions of Mormonism and one of Romney – faded after the Iowa defeat. This fact is another example of a connection between horse-race journalism and Mormonism. The horse race moved onto other issues and candidates. Mormonism became less of an issue after the Iowa caucuses so there were fewer articles to study.

Articles discussing Mitt Romney and his Mormonism included detailed discussions of Mormon beliefs and practices. Rather than avoiding doctrinal discussion, these data showed – depending on how a scholar might count – that roughly 85 percent of the articles in this study included some discussion of Mormon doctrine or the faith's beliefs and practices. This compares with earlier research that suggests that reporters only discuss doctrine in 7 percent of all religious stories.³²⁵ This comparison suggests that horse-race coverage of Romney was linked to more detailed discussions of religious doctrine and belief than is the usual norm among reporters.

5.3 Religion and Horse-race Coverage.

To no one's surprise, the news media coverage of the 2008 election was framed largely as a horse race, just as the news media have framed elections for years. A Pew study said as many as nine in 10 articles in the primary season were framed as a horserace – more than any other campaign in history.³²⁶ Despite repeated calls over the years to focus more on the issues and less on who is ahead in the race, reporters still

³²⁵ Center for Media and Public Affairs, "The Media Get Religion," 3.

³²⁶ Katherine Q. Seelye, "2008 coverage focuses on the horserace," *New York Times*, October 29, 2007, under The Caucus Blog, at <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/29/2008-coverage-focuses-on-the-horse-race/>, accessed September 21, 2010.

made the horse race central to the 2008 campaign coverage. The central criticism of horse-race coverage remains – that it often provides voters with insufficient information to truly evaluate a candidate. This study’s data supported Pew’s analysis of the coverage.

The news media’s preoccupation with the horse-race is crucial in explaining why reporters characterized Mormonism in the campaign, which was, in the aggregate, an unfavorable portrayal, dotted with occasional distortions such as frequent references to polygamy. Reporters who are focused primarily on who is winning (and who is losing) tend to put a candidate’s beliefs, policy positions and qualifications into that narrow frame of reference. Therefore, journalists in 2008 were preoccupied with how Mormonism might affect Romney’s chances of winning the horse race and less interested in explaining the details of Mormonism and how it might influence Romney’s worldview, his policy positions or even his judgment. In the search for explanations for who was ahead or behind, reporter’s logic seems to have often worked like this: Polls or similar facts showed Romney had a problem because of his Mormonism. The reason that Mormonism was a problem was because his beliefs were seen as beyond the pale or heretical to certain important groups of non-Mormon Republican primary voters. Reporters then often followed with a list of some of those beliefs or religious attributes that these critics had singled out. Reporters made Romney’s Mormonism into an issue because of real-world facts. Polls, experts, and voters themselves often said that Romney’s Mormonism was a problem, and writers were focusing on a genuine electoral challenge, so journalists had to write about the issue, but the frequent failure to avoid some stereotypes and other distortions raises questions of fairness.

That the horse race was prominent in the coverage of Mitt Romney and his Mormonism is clear. First, at least 86 percent of the stories an element of horse-race coverage – the articles had either an assessment of things helping or hindering Romney’s chances or had an assessment of whether Romney was succeeding or suffering setbacks. Second, the coverage of Mitt Romney’s “Faith in America” speech, the clear highpoint of coverage about Mormonism in the campaign, was framed through the lens of Romney suffering setbacks, as the data show, so Romney’s decision to deliver the “Faith in America” speech was framed as a horse-race story.

This study teases the possibility that horse-race coverage could have a direct effect on elections because of how frames influence voters. This study, therefore, proposes a horse-race influence model that suggests that after a poll is conducted showing a candidate suffering setbacks or reporters suggesting that a candidate is facing obstacles, reporters need to explain those setbacks or obstacles. Those explanations, which can be based on conjecture, naturally highlight the weaknesses of a candidate or detailed facets of a challenge. For those from minority religions, as Romney is, such horse-race coverage seems to lead to a focus on what is unusual in the religion as a way of explaining how the religion might pose electoral challenges. Those weaknesses and idiosyncrasies, framing theory stipulates, may bring negative impressions of a candidate – or of a candidate’s religion – into a voter’s mind influencing voter choice. This negative impression would be reflected in the next round of polling, sometimes creating a feedback loop that could hinder the electability of a candidate. A visual version of this proposed model comprises Figure 5.4.

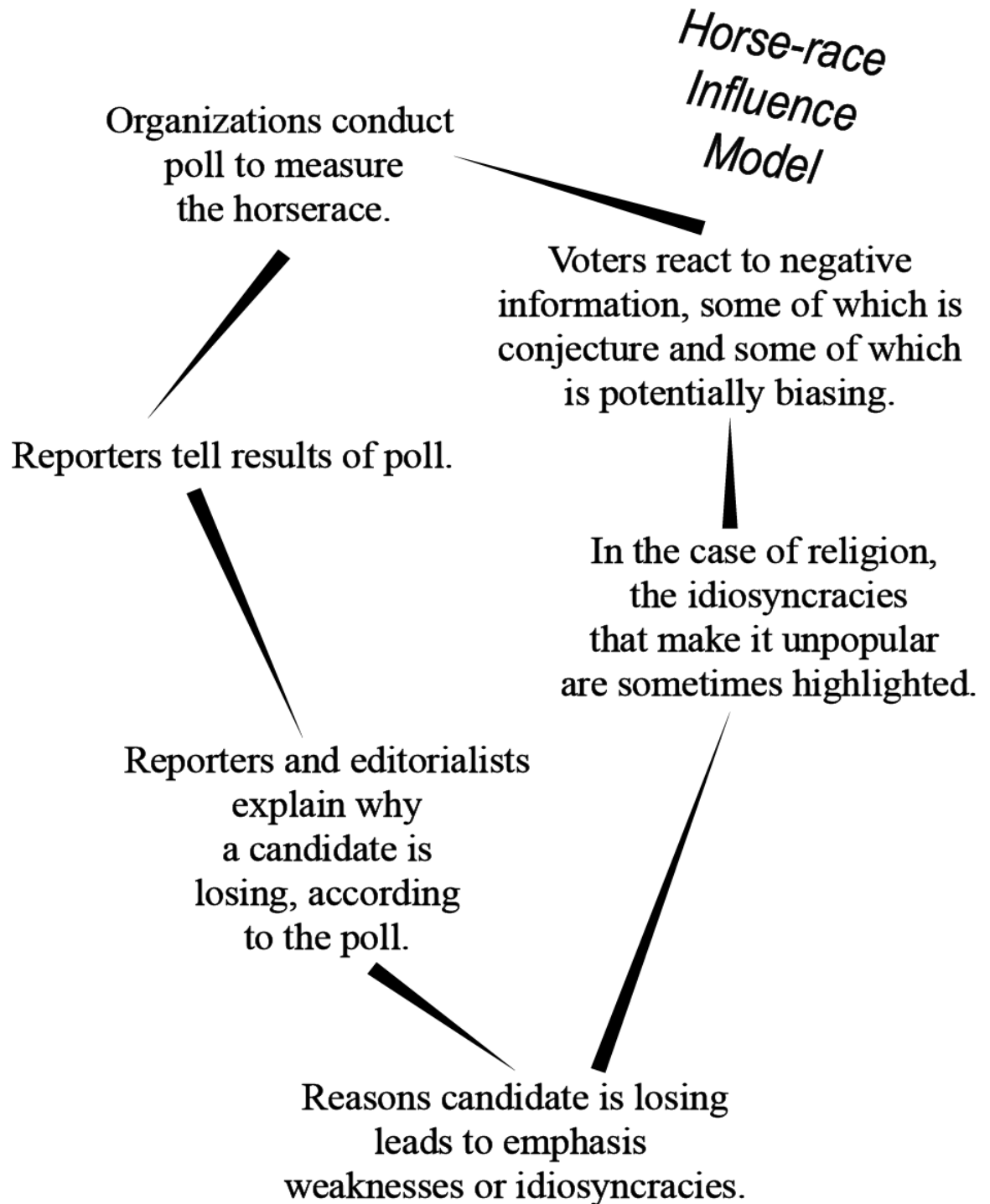


Figure 5.4: Horse-race influence model.

To be sure, much work needs to be done to confirm this model including framing effects studies on voters themselves, but should this theory hold true, it would provide yet

another reason for reporters to reduce the amount of horse-race coverage they use during an election campaign.

With its focus on conflict, horse-race coverage is naturally prone to play up religious differences between candidates and voting blocs. Thus, in the 2008 Republican nomination race, news audiences heard a great deal about what separated Mormonism from other American religions, and a good deal less about what it has in common with other American religions. So, in 2008, the focus on horse-race coverage thus ran contrary to the ideal of “public religion,” the notion that Americans should agree to disagree over those religious differences that cannot be bridged and instead focus on shared values and beliefs.

Given this horse-race coverage influence model, one has to wonder if the horse-race coverage of Mitt Romney’s Mormonism influenced perceptions about the Mormon religion as well.³²⁷ As Appendix D shows, public opinion polls suggested that Mormonism remained broadly misunderstood following the campaign and, if anything, Americans perceived Mormonism less favorably following the campaign.

Did coverage of Romney’s campaign and polls about his religion also contribute to an anti-bandwagon effect that weakened his chances? A 2006 study suggests that when the media frame a candidate as winning, this framing enhances the public perception of the candidate’s electability. A sort of band-wagon effect emerges, gathering voters and helping the candidate build success, according to political scientist Stephen Farnsworth

³²⁷ See Appendix D for further assessment of the potential influence of the Romney coverage on Mormonism and on Romney’s chances.

and communication scholar S. Robert Lichter.³²⁸ The theoretical framework set out by Farnsworth and Lichter therefore suggests the possibility of an ‘anti-bandwagon’ effect as well. Did the constant reporting upon Romney’s “Mormon problem” and eventually upon his eroding support influence undecided voters to move to other candidates?

Some horse-race coverage is probably inevitable. “You can no more divorce ‘horseracism’ ... from campaign coverage than you can divorce horseracism from the coverage of horse races,” as Slate media critic Jack Shafer put it.

During an actual horse race, nobody wants to hear the announcer drone on about the ponies’ dietary regimes. They want to know who’s winning, who’s gaining, who’s in the thick of it, and who can be written off. Are the front-runners burning themselves out and letting a back marker take the prize? That which cannot be compressed into an announcer’s play-by-play ends up in the learned pages of the Daily Racing Form. But for immediacy, nothing rivals a great horse-race take.³²⁹

But what happens to the political process when the focus of coverage is on the ins and outs and stops and starts of winning and losing? Are voters getting sufficient information to deliberate intelligently on candidates and their policies? In the Romney 2008 coverage, news media, responding to the polls, may have stressed the sensational and misled voters about Romney’s religion. Did the coverage of Mormonism that followed polls create an anti-Mormonism effect?³³⁰

³²⁸ Stephen J. Farnsworth and S. Robert Lichter, “The 2004 Democratic Primary and Network News,” *The Harvard International Journal of Press Politics*, (Winter 2006), 11:1; 53-63.

³²⁹ Jack Shafer, “In Praise of Horse-Race Coverage. If campaigns are contests, then why not obsess on who’s winning?” *Slate.com*, posted Thursday, January 24, 2008, under Press Box, media criticism, at <http://www.slate.com/id/2182751/>, accessed February 8, 2011.

³³⁰ Did it also create an anti-Mormon effect as has been suggested has happened over time about evangelicals? See Bolce and De Maio, “A Prejudice for the Thinking classes.”

It appears that religion is used to frame the horse race of a campaign. How is religion used to frame the ideology and policy views of a presidential candidate? Or does horse-race coverage neglect the issue positions of candidates despite religion? Scholar Doug Underwood has said political reporting neglects how religion shapes the views and personalities of politicians and often ignores how religion shapes character. Given the role religion played in the 2008 campaign, Underwood's study deserves broader consideration here. Underwood's historical example was Richard Nixon, a Quaker. Underwood writes that reporters used Nixon's Quakerism to show that he was a hypocrite: His moralistic public attitude contrasted an observed darkness in his personal character.

But this is a simplistic caricature, particularly in the presentation of Quakerism as a pious religion that could have produced a Nixon only if he proved to be a wayward product of the faith in which he was raised. ... Journalists often have a limited and superficial understanding of presidents' religious beliefs and the role that denominational differences play in their theological and political outlook.³³¹

Underwood explains the details of a schism within American Quakerism as it confronted modernity. One part of Quakerism, the one Nixon followed, became strongly evangelical. Another part of Quakerism maintained a more anti-war and also secular outlook. The painful schism in Quakerism and Nixon's evangelical conversion could go a long way in explaining his conflicted personality, Underwood said.

Where Nixon may have been blinded by overweening ambition, the press's blindness to the nuances of religious life in the United States deprived its audience of the fullest possible understanding of the religious

³³¹ Underwood, *From Yahweh to Yahoo!*, 193

wellsprings of Nixon's inner nature and the way these translated into his political actions.³³²

Underwood's point seems to be the news media abdicate their responsibility when they fail to help people understand the nuanced way religion influences candidates and instead limit their framing of a candidate's religion.³³³

As Underwood suggests, Mormonism might have been demystified or made more comprehensible to the non-Mormon news audience if reporters had put energy into examining how Mormonism might shape the policies, action and philosophy of a President Romney. Reporters thereby missed an opportunity to link religion more closely to the electoral process in meaningful ways.

Even though it is true that Romney chose not to address the specifics of his faith, it is hard to conceive that a president of faith would not be influenced by religious beliefs as he or she set the tone and formulated policies of his or her administration. George W. Bush, for example, said his personal faith guided his life and presidency. "I love the fact that people pray for me and my family all around the country. Somebody once asked me one time, how do you know? I just feel it," he said.³³⁴ A 2007 paper by Alexandra Kougentakis at the University of Pennsylvania argued that Bush's evangelical belief shaped his compassionate conservative public policy and his acceptance of neo-

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid., 192-205.

³³⁴ "George W. Bush on Faith," Beliefnet.com, under On His Personal Faith, at <http://www.beliefnet.com/News/Politics/2004/07/George-W-Bush-On-Faith.aspx>, accessed March 24, 2011.

Conservatism in foreign policy because both were in accord with evangelical and Christian fundamentalist beliefs.³³⁵

In 1968, David Broder and Stephen Hess reported on how George Romney's Mormonism was central to his worldview and to his ideas of governance. Their coverage provides a rough template of how a reporter ideally might have reported on his son's campaign. For example, they wrote: "Economic Romneyism probably is an amalgam of his Mormon experience (where the church organization – wards and stakes – grows by addition and subtraction [and his experience in business.])"³³⁶ They wrote,

In order to bring George Romney into focus it is necessary to examine the Church of the Latter-day Saints. It is almost certainly the literal truth to say that Romney would not be a presidential contender were it not for his religious faith; nothing else seems likely to have armed him with the burning sense of mission that has carried him this far in the battle.

What is this church that produced him? What is there in it that evokes the peculiar sort of energetic evangelism, the righteousness and self-righteousness that underlie Romney's unique political appeal and at the same time cause so many of his political problems?

More than being merely American, Mormon doctrine is patriotically American, reflecting a kind of romantic nationalism peculiar to the 19th century. As a devout Mormon, Romney firmly believes that both church and country have a manifest destiny. Addressing a 1966 Lincoln Day dinner in Boston, he said: "I believe that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are divinely-inspired documents, written by men especially raised up by their Creator for that purpose. I believe God has made and presented to us a nation for a purpose—to bring freedom to all the people of the world." This is purest Mormon teaching ... but exotic fare for the average American Republican contributor.³³⁷

³³⁵ Alexandra Kougentakis, "How the Influence of Religion Makes the Foreign Policy of the Bush Administration Revolutionary, and How This Has Affected Our Relations with European Allies," March 28, 2007, at <http://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1081&context=curej&sei-redir=1#search=%22Alexandra+Kougentakis+paper+bush%22>, accessed July 27, 2011.

³³⁶ Stephen Hess and David Broder, "George Romney: Candidate Whose Problem is Words," *Washington Post, Times-Herald* November 30, 1967, F1.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

Broder and Hess next brought up the somewhat common idea that Mormons are a paradox between “typicality and peculiarity.”³³⁸ They used this idea to gain insight into

George Romney’s governance:

Partly because they had been a highly disciplined and persecuted minority, the Mormons brought a history of cooperative action to Utah, where Romney spent most of his boyhood. The tradition was further developed there by the need for communal water control. Thus, they added to the existing image of the Western pioneer as an attractive, if somewhat contradictory fellow: Part rugged individualist, part communitarian; self-sufficient, yet quick to meet common problems with cooperative efforts. Sometimes the two strains did not quite mesh. In the Mormons, a social idealism seemed to be warring with a political-economic conservatism. During the depression of the 1930s, for example, their leaders could set up a most elaborate public welfare program while being, at the same time, pungently hostile to the New Deal. Perhaps it is the Western-Mormon ambivalence that makes Romney’s views so hard to pigeonhole. Nelson Rockefeller calls him a progressive while Barry Goldwater says he “makes as conservative a speech as I’ll ever make in my life.” Both are right.³³⁹

In the same vein, Bushman, the Mormon scholar, used Mormon history to tell of two important ways Mormonism might influence Mitt Romney’s approach to issues. At a Pew Forum for journalists in 2007 he said,

Mormonism gave up on its radicalism because the United States government beat it out of them. They were forced to the point of extinction and then realized it all had to be abandoned to preserve their existence as Mormons. As a result, everything became secular. Mormons, in reaction to this treatment, turned to *laissez faire* liberalism, having no confidence in the government. Their history gave them no reason to trust the United States government as an agency of the people.

...How does all of this bear on Romney? I think the obvious question is, How far will he trust government when his Mormon heritage teaches him to be distrustful of government? His instincts will be skeptical.³⁴⁰

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Pew forum, “Mormonism and Politics: Are they compatible?”

Bushman said Mormonism also has had a populist and idealistic streak. Joseph Smith's 1844 campaign developed a proposal for eliminating slavery. Smith fought for prison reform and the rights of seamen. This civic idealism is part of Mormonism's story, he said:

How, then, does all that apply to Mitt Romney's candidacy? The question in my mind is, Can he tap into this vein of civic idealism in American culture? His 19th-century Mormon heritage gives him plenty to work with. And I can assure you, from what I know of him, it's his natural bent to seek to be a good president in the moral sense.

Bushman applied this strain in Mormonism's history to the debate over healthcare.

His organization of healthcare in Massachusetts - though I gather it's falling on hard times now, being more expensive than anticipated - was a hopeful sign, not just because Romney tried to solve a big problem, but because he approached it as a pastoral problem. "How do you care for the children of the commonwealth?" And he did it in a Mormon way. The idea of talking personally to all of the politicians, trying to get some kind of a consensus, is very much the way Mormon congregations work. There is never a vote or a power struggle. The people strive for mutual consent. It struck me as promising for Romney to work that way in the state.

So I leave that as a question . . . : How will he use the nation's government to solve the nation's problem?³⁴¹

Research for this dissertation found no depth reporting of the kind Bushman encouraged nor of the kind modeled by Broder and Hess, and this seems to be a failure of the coverage generally. An example of how the connection between Romney's religion and his campaign was missed was the mention of the "breakdown of the family" in Mitt Romney's "Faith in America" speech and in other parts of his campaign.³⁴² Mormonism,

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² See also, Bacon, "Romney Reaches to the Christian Right. In a Conservative Crowd, Candidate Talks About Marriage, Child-Rearing."

especially in recent years, has made family and family-related issues central to its teaching and political action. Romney may not have been voicing his church's teaching word for word, but what he said was fully consistent with it, and reporters might have pointed that out. A 1995 document from church leaders often studied in Mormon homes concluded:

We warn that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

We call upon responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.³⁴³

Romney likely wouldn't wish to discuss the warnings Mormon leaders are making, but thoughtful analysis of family breakdown and Mormonism's views on it could provide useful insight into Mitt Romney's policies, just as Broder and Hess's discussion of Mormon economic views provided insight into George Romney. Reporters might have tried to determine if Romney was being guided by the strong call within his religion for government officials to adopt pro-family policies. Another example of an issue connected closely with his religion is that of pornography, an important issue to the Mormon Church and to Romney, as shown by his speech at Regent University.³⁴⁴ Romney did not advocate government censorship nor a strong government policy, but news media neglected lengthy discussions of this conservative issue during the campaign.

³⁴³ The Family: A Proclamation to the World.

³⁴⁴ On the pornography issue, see, for example, the church's website combattingpornography.org. See CNN.com, "Romney blasts pornography, drugs violence in new ad," under [politicalticker](http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2007/07/16/romney-blasts-pornography-drugs-violence-in-new-ad/), <http://politicalticker.blogs.cnn.com/2007/07/16/romney-blasts-pornography-drugs-violence-in-new-ad/>, accessed March 24, 2011.

These two prominent issues –pornography and the breakdown of the family – failed to become central parts of the national agenda during the campaign.

One important exception to these criticisms was how reporters discussed Mormonism’s 1978 decision to remove its restriction from men of African descent to its priesthood. While it is true that this discarded policy can make Romney or his Mormonism appear racist, writers occasionally used Romney’s response to the issue as a way of looking at his views on race relations. A *New York Times* article on the young Mitt Romney included this:

A handful of students and prominent Mormons – including the Arizona congressman Morris K. Udall and his brother Stewart, then secretary of the interior – called for an end to the doctrine. Some Mormons hoped the pressure would persuade the church to abandon its exclusion of blacks, just as it had stopped endorsing polygamy.

Mitt Romney had walked in civil rights marches with his father and said he shared his concern for racial equality. But neither publicly questioned the church’s teachings.

“I hoped that the time would come when the leaders of the church would receive the inspiration to change the policy,” Mr. Romney said. When he heard over a car radio in 1978 that the church would offer blacks full membership, he said, he pulled over and cried.

But until then, he deferred to church leaders, he said. “The way things are achieved in my church, as I believe in other great faiths, is through inspiration from God and not through protests and letters to the editor.”³⁴⁵

Research for this study found no evidence that mainstream news organizations attempted to assess in depth and detail how the Book of Mormon, Mormonism’s companion scripture to the Bible, might influence the thinking of a devout Mormon such as Romney. Mormons believe that the Book of Mormon was hidden to come forth as a

³⁴⁵ David D. Kirkpatrick, “In ‘60s, Romney, Searching and Earnest, set his path,” *New York Times*, November 15, 2007, 1.

work of prophecy for a modern day.³⁴⁶ Therefore, a Mormon leader might likely look at its stories of wars and terrorism as important analogies for modern problems. Without discussing it too deeply here – see Appendix K for more detail – Mormons believe the Book of Mormon is the story of three civilizations in the New World, two of which were entirely destroyed due to wickedness. The book includes numerous stories of leaders dealing with war and what might be seen as terrorist organizations the Book of Mormon calls “secret combinations.” These “combinations” led to the destruction of these civilizations. One so informed might expect to see a candidate like Romney take an uncompromising stand against terror groups, for example. The Book’s teachings might be seen as uniquely important to a Mormon, regardless of how a non-Mormon might perceive the writing. A Mormon candidate could be reasonably expected to look to the Book of Mormon for guidance, and research for this study found no articles discussing its teachings in detail.³⁴⁷ Even if Romney refused to answer questions about belief, it is surely important for non-Mormons to understand more fully what the Book of Mormon teaches insofar as it might influence a leader. Reporters or editorialists could have written about this topic. Numerous metaphors and threads can be found on important topics in Mormon scripture, including potentially intriguing views on poverty, on environmentalism, on pre-emptive war, and on the notion of American exceptionalism.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁶ Lesson 1: “The Keystone of our religion,” Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Under Book of Mormon: Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual, at <http://lds.org/manual/book-of-mormon-gospel-doctrine-teachers-manual/lesson-1-the-keystone-of-our-religion?lang=eng&query=%22for+our+day%22>, accessed March 12, 2011.

³⁴⁷ Helaman 6:38.

³⁴⁸ See Appendix K.

To be sure, Mormon teaching can produce public figures as diverse as conservative talk-show host Glenn Beck and moderately liberal Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, but as Broder and Hess showed in their writing about George Romney, reporters can provide insights into policies a candidate may embrace as president by explicating a candidate's religious views.

The present study suggests a need for issue-based reporting and for a greater focus on understanding all aspects of a candidate who might assume the most powerful office in the land. There were legitimate reasons to write about what people didn't like about Romney's beliefs. However, that coverage would have been more informative if reporters had worked to understand more fully and then to convey more of the faith that shapes Mitt Romney's worldview.

The most frequent assessment of Romney's character found in the stories of this study was that it lacked authenticity: Romney was a flip-flopper and his true agenda was elusive. Are there links between Mormonism and this framing of Romney's personality? To be sure, a lack of authenticity is a common accusation leveled at many politicians. However, did the fact that Romney's religion was sometimes framed as secretive and that his reluctance to talk in detail about its tenets contribute to his image of being seen as "inauthentic" in press coverage? An emerging line of research in political science suggests that Romney's supposed lack of authenticity may have had some links to his Mormonism.³⁴⁹ A pair of researchers at MIT and Princeton suggested that respondents to polls may hide deep-rooted religious bias in their answers to poll questions, wishing to

³⁴⁹ See, for example, James G. Kane, Stephen C. Craig, and Kenneth D. Wald, "Religion and Presidential Politics in Florida: A List Experiment," *Social Science Quarterly*, 85, no. 2, (June 2004), 281.

avoid being perceived as bigoted. The researchers, Adam Berinsky and Tali Mendelberg, said people mask an “unacceptable” stereotype they are unwilling to admit to behind an “acceptable” stereotype because the acceptable stereotype carries a neutral label. In their study, people replaced an unacceptable stereotype – that Jews are greedy or shady – with an “acceptable” one – that Jews are too liberal – in their responses to questions. People in the study were significantly less likely to vote for a hypothetical Jewish liberal than a hypothetical non-Jewish liberal, even if these hypothetical candidates held identical views.³⁵⁰

Might this phenomenon have been in play with Mitt Romney? Did some people use the seemingly acceptable label of an inauthentic flip-flopper as a way to hide that what they really opposed was Mormonism? A study conducted at Vanderbilt University suggests this may have been the case, at least sometimes. Vanderbilt political scientist John Geer, working with Brett Benson and Jennifer Merolla, used a series of Internet poll questions and determined the “flip-flopper” tag stuck to Mitt Romney in ways that it didn’t affect his opponents because of Mormonism. Geer told the Vanderbilt News Service that “many admit it is Mormonism and not his flip-flopping” that was the real issue.³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ Adam J. Berensky and Tali Mendelberg, “The Indirect Effects of Discredited Stereotypes in Judgments of Jewish Leaders,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 49, no. 4, (October 2005): 845-864.

³⁵¹ Ann Marie Deer Owens, *Vanderbilt News Service*, “Vanderbilt poll explains why Romney’s flip-flopper label sticks; Political scientist says anti-Mormon bias finds cover,” under VU Cast, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/news/releases/2008/1/18/vanderbilt-poll-explains-why-romneys-flip-flopper-label-sticks-political-scientist-says-anti-mormon-bias-finds-cover>, accessed April 12, 2010. See also, Brett Benson, John G. Geer, and Jennifer L. Merolla, “Using Cover Issues to Express Bias in the 2008 Presidential Campaign,” A Paper prepared for the 2009 Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association.

Did Romney himself elicit old stereotypes of the supposed secretive nature of Mormonism? Was this old stereotype part of the reason that Romney was framed as an elusive politician? It could be argued that the framing of Mitt Romney as a handsome, articulate man with a hidden agenda echoed classic Mormon stereotypes from the 19th century. It could also be argued that Romney's choices played into those old stereotypes. What best explains the way Romney was framed? Was it those latent stereotypes? Was it Romney's personal choices that led to the framing? These are media effects questions, beyond the scope of this study, that merit attention.

The frame of elusiveness, mystery or secrecy in these data seems to go beyond what the quantitative data of this study indicate. Appendix E comprises a simple, qualitative analysis that suggests that 57 articles in this study seemed to have some reference to secrecy, to mystery or to hiding something by Mormons or by a presidential candidate in the context of the Romney campaign. Those 57 comprise nearly 28 percent of the articles in this study. Combining these 57 articles with the articles that contained the formal study's dimension of "Mormons are unusually secretive, dangerous or unusually insular" into an index, and 90 articles in this study – 44 percent of the articles – had at least one of these two components of the secrecy theme in them. Now, it is important not to make too much of this index and this linkage because of the qualitative nature of this observation. Nevertheless, the data and examples taken together do seem to suggest that the old Mormon stereotype of secrecy was a frequent element in the coverage. The data in this study also suggest that the issue of secrecy was important in other ways – noteworthy given journalistic culture of openness and fighting secrecy.

One of the intriguing contrasts between the coverage of Mitt Romney’s campaign and his father’s campaign in 1968 is the fact George Romney was not widely characterized in the news media as a flip-flopper the way his son was. This is the case even though George Romney changed his views on the leading issue of his day, the conflict in Viet Nam, coming out against the war and saying his earlier support had been due in part to “brainwashing” by American military officers who briefed him. That statement hurt him, but not because he afterward was portrayed as a flip-flopper, but because the media trumpeted his brainwashing comment, making him look indecisive, incompetent and naïve. George’s political opponents, notably the AFL-CIO (working against Romney with a detailed political pamphlet), did try to cast the Michigan governor as a flip-flopper.³⁵² But news media chose to frame his position changes as as imprecise and inarticulate – as a “candidate whose problem is words,” to use Broder’s phrase.³⁵³ Why didn’t the flip-flopper label stick to George Romney in the historical record and become a larger part of the 1968 campaign, even though some of his political adversaries tried? And why did the label stick to Mitt Romney?

In the context of contemporary campaign reporting, Mitt Romney’s strategy of silence about his Mormon beliefs can be seen as a public relations blunder. He picked a course far different from that of his father in terms of religion. George Romney regularly talked to reporters about his faith. He spoke in Mormon churches and responded to questions about his faith in public forums.³⁵⁴ In announcing his presidential

³⁵² Michigan AFL-CIO. *Who is the Real George Romney?* A pamphlet prepared about Governor George Romney during his run for the presidency.

³⁵³ For a fuller discussion of the media and the George Romney campaign with footnotes, see Appendix I.

³⁵⁴ See appendix F for a complete, detailed discussion of the George Romney campaign.

candidacy, George Romney said he had fasted and prayed for guidance from God.³⁵⁵ But given the recent rise of the Protestant evangelical ‘religious right’ in GOP presidential nomination politics and given the evangelicals’ distrust of Mormonism, Mitt Romney decided to say as little as possible about the specific tenets of his faith.³⁵⁶ This approach was sometimes framed by reporters as being hesitant, if not evasive.³⁵⁷ It is interesting to speculate about how press and public would have responded if Romney had openly discussed his faith and cast it as an example of a broad, uplifting American story: pioneers going west to stake out a life of their own, free to worship as they saw fit. Finding the right rhetoric to construct such a frame might not have been easy, as the Mormon historian Richard Bushman said in a discussion with journalists sponsored by Pew during the campaign.³⁵⁸

Romney’s “Faith in America” speech missed the opportunity to use Mormon history and culture – seeking religious freedom, overcoming persecution, caring for the poor, building amid daunting challenge on the Western frontier, volunteering in disproportionate numbers to serve in the American military – to explain himself, his family and his faith and to link them to American traditions.³⁵⁹

However, that Romney’s Mormonism was also seen as a help to his chances in about one in five stories is significant. This finding underscores the fact that the coverage

³⁵⁵ David D. Kirkpatrick, “For Romney, A Course Set Long Ago,” *New York Times*, December 18, 2007, 1.

³⁵⁶ Steve LeBlanc, “Romney says he’s religious, but won’t discuss Mormon doctrine,” *Associated Press*, June 6, 2006.

³⁵⁷ See, for example, Luo, “Mormons and the Bible, Every Word.”

³⁵⁸ Pew Forum, “Mormonism and politics. Are they compatible?”

³⁵⁹ This makes Romney similar to Gov. Al Smith in 1928. See Hostetler, “Gov. Al Smith Confronts the Catholic Question,” 12-24.

of Mitt Romney's Mormonism sometimes highlighted benefits and favorable attributes of Mormonism, even though in more texts Mormonism was seen as a hindrance and portrayed as out of the mainstream.

5.4 Depictions of Mormonism.

Two things must be said up front about the coverage of Mitt Romney's Mormonism in the campaign coverage of 2008. First, the study strongly suggests that the coverage was no repeat of the 19th century coverage, which filled with invective and the stereotyping of Mormons as villains. It might be said the 2008 Romney coverage demonstrates how far the relationship between Mormons and other Americans has come.

Second, study findings indicate that thorough, careful readers could learn a great deal about Mormonism if they read enough of the coverage – central doctrines as well as obscure ones mixed with important details about the history of the faith. The coverage of Mitt Romney's Mormonism was rich and detailed.

Nevertheless, a central conclusion this study supports is that the coverage in the aggregate gave an overall unfavorable, out-of-the-mainstream depiction of Mormonism. There were lots of reasons for this characterization, but, in general, Mormonism's idiosyncrasies were highlighted in such a way so as to distort and so as to make the faith appear out of the mainstream. One might add that aspects of other candidate's faiths might also appear strange to many voters if highlighted in similar ways. Religious details such as transubstantiation or the virgin birth or the miracles of Jesus or the Prophet Mohammad could have been scrutinized, yet these beliefs were not raised in the news texts nor did they become issues in the race. It is difficult to describe how doctrinal differences affect a political campaign, but it is clear that describing religious doctrine

accurately in context becomes essential to solid news reporting. Such reporting was sometimes a challenge for reporters during the Romney campaign. Given that Mormonism has no organized catechism, and given that reporters have limited space with which to describe a faith, especially as Shipps has said, when it is considered in parts, Mormonism can sound unusual.³⁶⁰ Consider some examples of distortion that appeared in the coverage:

- First, the continued emphasis on polygamy was a distortion of modern Mormon belief. Mormons have not practiced polygamy in more than 100 years, and comparing Mormonism to something it abandoned more than a century ago is akin to consistently discussing the Democratic party's support of Jim Crow laws 100 years ago.³⁶¹

- A second example of distortion is that writers focused on Mormon garments – the underwear that Mormons wear as a reminder of their faith. A focus on Mormon underwear, even if infrequent, titillates and does little to elucidate belief. *Newsweek's* cover story on Mitt Romney mentioned these garments; and Sridhar Pappu's questioned Romney about Mormon garments for an early campaign feature in *The Atlantic*. Pappu's article, not part of this study's official story population, was mentioned in *Time* magazine's profile on Romney, which was.³⁶²

³⁶⁰ Luo, "Crucial Test for Romney on Speech on His Religion."

³⁶¹ This is also no call to remove all references to polygamy. Sometimes polygamy was newsworthy. Romney's campaign jokes about only having one wife seemed part of his way of showing his credibility as a pro-family candidate and may have been legitimate reasons to bring up polygamy. The HBO show *Big Love* also occurred during the campaign. See Rachel Zoll, "Latter-day Saints, A Look at the Mormon Church," *Associated Press*, December 13, 2006.

³⁶² Mike Allen, "Can a Mormon be president?" *Time*, December 4, 2006, 50. In fairness to journalists, this comparison was rare and some of those mentioning it were critical of those who brought it up.

• A third example of how Mormonism was sometimes mischaracterized was how the media handled issues raised by Mike Huckabee. In asking whether Jesus and Satan were brothers – a simplistic presentation of Mormon belief on the origin of the devil – Huckabee set up reporters to discuss the issue for a few days. The *New York Times* religion reporter Laurie Goodstein devoted an article to Mormon belief as a direct result of the Huckabee’s question.³⁶³

• A fourth example of distortion and how the media focused on the unusual was the occasional mention – found about five times in the sampled stories – of the belief Mormons hold that Jesus Christ will return to Missouri and preside from there during a 1,000-year period of peace. While this idea is accurate in a technical sense, the presentation of this doctrine was distorted by the amount of space journalists had with which to explain the scriptural basis for this complex Mormon belief.³⁶⁴ For example, Richard Ostling’s *Washington Post* op-ed primer on Mormon belief in the early stages of Romney’s campaign said this: “[Joseph] Smith had further revelations, which Mormons treat as scripture alongside the Bible, including that Jesus would eventually return and reign from Missouri.” The Doctrine and Covenants to which Ostling seems to refer comprises 138 sections and more than 200 pages. To make these teachings simply about Christ in Missouri is a distortion.³⁶⁵ Suzanne Sataline in *The Wall Street Journal’s* front-

³⁶³ Laurie Goodstein, “Huckabee Is Not Alone in Ignorance about Mormonism,” *New York Times*, December 14, 2007, 37. Worthy of note, this study found no references to the idea that journalists never questioned whether Huckabee was as innocent in this remark as the headline to Goodstein’s article asserts. Huckabee’s background as a prominent Baptist preacher makes it possible he knew of this distortion of Mormon belief and whether Huckabee actually knew this distortion was a natural question to ask given Huckabee’s background. Reporters neglected that question.

³⁶⁴ See Articles of Faith 1:10, Ether 12 and 13; D & C 42, 45 and 84.

³⁶⁵ Richard Ostling, “What is Mormonism?” *Washington Post*, February 18, 2007, B3.

page post-mortem on the Romney campaign made the Christ in Missouri idea a central takeaway of her description of the Book of Mormon, a work in excess of 500 pages:

Mormonism began in 1830 after Joseph Smith, a farmer in upstate New York, said an angel led him to some golden plates that contained a “New World gospel” – the Book of Mormon. The book describes a visit to America by Jesus, and his promise to return to rule from Missouri.³⁶⁶

Both of these descriptions of Mormon scripture are also arguably inaccurate.

- A fifth type of distortion was the overemphasis of perceived racism. It has been more than a quarter century since Mormons ended their ban on men of African descent receiving its priesthood. The end of this restriction happened in the life of Mitt Romney and is, therefore, relevant to his approach to civil rights and in the coverage of Mitt Romney’s religion. The frequent focus on this restriction and Mormonism’s beliefs about and treatment of women and minorities appears to have added to unfavorable impressions in the framing of Mormonism.

Mormonism was often described as “unusual” or with a related word. Table 5.4 shows the frequency of “unusual” and various synonyms of this word in the sample coverage.³⁶⁷

Table 5.4: Frequency of articles using synonyms of unusual to describe Mormons or Mormonism by article source. N=205.

	weird	odd	strange	unusual	idiosyncratic	different	peculiar	bizarre	alien	totals
AP	0	2	0	0	0	6	1	0	0	9
LAT	1	0	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	7
WP	1	1	3	2	1	3	1	0	1	13
NYT	2	1	0	4	1	3	0	1	1	13
N-week	0	2	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	11

³⁶⁶ Sataline, “Tabernacle on Trial.”

³⁶⁷ This was done through a word search in the study’s .pdf formatted articles and was not subject to intercoder reliability analysis. There was some overlap among articles with these terms. Nor were the terms necessarily used as pejoratives.

Time	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
WSJ	0	0	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	6
CT	0	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	5
Totals	4	6	19	10	2	19	3	1	2	66

On the other hand, a careful reader could learn much that was very favorable from Romney’s life as a Mormon. The articles in this study talked about Mormon programs of helping the poor, of Mormon traditions of prayer, of paying tithing, of avoiding smoking and drinking, and of performing forms of devotion, including volunteer missionary service. They talked of Mormon devotion to family. More than half of the articles contained some dimension of Mormon belief that could be considered admirable.

Specific anecdotes in the coverage showed how Romney could be a kind, devout man. The *Chicago Tribune’s* front-page campaign profile of Mitt Romney’s life included one of these anecdotes:

Romney’s personal wealth, now estimated at up to \$250 million, soared on the wings of his success. But what set him apart from other business whizzes featured in friendly profiles of glossy magazines was the decision Romney made in summer 1996. The 14-year-old daughter of a Bain partner was missing in New York City. In an extraordinary move for the easy money days of the mid-‘90s, Bain shut down for a week while Romney and dozens of other employees flew to New York to walk the streets in search of the girl. They set up a command center in a hotel. They didn’t find her, but she turned up a week later, safe in New Jersey.³⁶⁸

Sridhar Pappu’s *Washington Post* Style section front in December 2007 discussing the Mormon Temple that Romney helped build outside Boston included this vignette of personal kindness shaped by Romney’s role as a lay minister:

It was also his job to reinvigorate those who served alongside him.

³⁶⁸ Tim Jones, “Smartest guy in the room; He’s a perfectly packaged overachiever with all the answers, but one question remains: Who is the real Mitt Romney?” *Chicago Tribune*, October 9, 2007, 1. Note here how the headline captures a plastic sense of Romney that he is somehow unknowable.

Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen remembers a period during Romney's tenure as bishop when both Christensen and his wife, Christine, were emotionally drained by their religious obligations. One evening the couple sat at their kitchen table feeling depleted when someone knocked on the door. In came Romney, on his way home from work.

"I needed to come here and tell you that God loves you. He's been trying to tell you directly, and it doesn't seem like you're hearing him," Christensen recalls Romney saying. "The Lord must have given me the message so that you could hear it for yourselves." The Christensens both broke down crying.³⁶⁹

Reporters also often got at what this study tentatively defined as the "core beliefs" of Mormonism. Mormons have no one agreed-upon set of catechisms that every Latter-day Saint would call "core" in every circumstance, as explained in chapter two of this study. That having been said, this study proposed one definition of "core" beliefs and proposed a way of looking at how well journalists represented those beliefs. One of the study's dimensions, called in the study the "second list of Mormon beliefs" comes from a set of beliefs Mormon missionaries first use to present the faith to those interested in learning more about the church.³⁷⁰ The study data shows that at least one of these beliefs was mentioned in 49.8 percent of the articles. This is limited but important evidence that journalists captured some of Mormonism's core beliefs. Following is one example of how this was done that comes from an article about a Mormon conference held during Romney's campaign:

Many of the weekend's speakers defended the faith as a Christian church despite the differences between Mormon theology and other faiths. The Mormon church disavows the Christian tradition of the Trinity the belief that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are one body instead believing the three were individuals united in a divine purpose. Mormons also believe in the principle of continuing revelation, leaving their scriptural

³⁶⁹ Sridhar Pappu, "In Mitt Romney's Neighborhood, A Mormon Temple Casts a Long Shadow," *Washington Post*, December 15, 2007, C1.

³⁷⁰ See Appendix A.

canon open.

Christians also break with Mormons over the faith's central text, The Book of Mormon, which is said to be a testimony of Christ's work in the ancient Americas. Mormons believe the text was translated by church founder Joseph Smith from a set of gold plates found buried near Palmyra, N.Y., where the church was founded in 1830.

Smith's translated Book of Mormon formed the foundation for what Mormons call the "restored" church as intended by God.³⁷¹

It should also be noted that some reporting on Mormonism provided in-depth information, placing doctrines in the context of how they change the lives of believers. A front-page *Washington Post* article that ran about two weeks before Romney's "Faith in America" speech described the church and its growth in Nigeria, as well as details of the church's uses of technology in spreading its message. The article included discussions of many Mormon programs and doctrines that members believed helped their lives. It described a Mormon meeting where members stood up in turn and described their experiences with the faith:

[Joshua Matthews] Ebiloma nodded and smiled as fellow Mormons told their stories. One woman described the joy of having her family sealed, a ritual that Mormons believe helps families stay together beyond death. Another said tithing – the Mormon practice of giving one-tenth of their income to the church – "would bring great blessings to the church."

A third woman praised Gordon B. Hinckley, the 97-year-old church president in Salt Lake City, who followers believe receives revelation. "I know President Hinckley is the living prophet," she said.³⁷²

In short, many foundational dimensions of Mormonism, at least as this study defined them, were included in the coverage.

³⁷¹ Jennifer Dobner, "Eyring Remembers predecessor kindly during LDS conference," *Associated Press*, October 7, 2007.

³⁷² Mary Jordan, "The New Face of Global Mormonism; Tech-savvy Missionary Church Thrives as Far Afield as Africa," *Washington Post*, November 19, 2007, A1.

The coverage of the Romney campaign also raised interesting observations about the “model minority discourse.” According to the discourse, model characteristics of a minority are those most acceptable to and in sync with the surrounding society’s traditional values.³⁷³ In the case of Mormons, such “model” characteristics include focus on the family, hard work, capitalism tempered by compassion for the needy, and other ideals. According to the model minority concept, the attention the news media and other outside observers focus on a minority group’s model characteristics serves to bolster some conservative status quo. At the same time, other portions of the discourse keep the minority at arms length, not fully assimilated, as when reporters focus on things like polygamy, Christ returning to Missouri or Mormon underwear.³⁷⁴

The present study demonstrates that Mormonism’s idiosyncrasies were very much on display in the news coverage of Romney’s campaign, while traits that may have “normalized” Mormons were harder to find. It appears that the model minority discourse supposedly so prevalent in the framing of Mormonism before the Romney campaign, faded during the campaign. The ideological purposes that a model minority discourse would supposedly serve didn’t apply to the Romney coverage.

Mormonism presented challenges to journalists because the horse-race coverage led to an emphasis on the out-of-the-mainstream elements of Mormon belief because of a need to explain the reason for Romney’s struggles in the horse race and in the polls. Framing theory suggests that these unfavorable portrayals might have activated latent, unfavorable schema about Mormonism in readers. One example that merits a little further discussion is that Mormonism co-existed with the word “cult” in about a quarter

³⁷³ Chen and Yorgason, “Those Amazing Mormons.”

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

of the stories. Reporters weren't saying, "Mormonism is a cult." Rather, they chose shorthand explanations as to why some fundamentalists and evangelicals dislike Mormonism, as in, "some evangelicals think Mormonism is a cult." Framing theory suggests that the word "cult" can activate stored mental schema in readers about cults by mentioning the word or by mentioning words that convey a cult-like image to readers, regardless of the context. If readers hold the mental schema that cult groups hold unusual beliefs, then mentioning Mormonism's belief about the believed second coming of Jesus Christ in Missouri, its history of polygamy or its supposed secrecy might activate the idea that Mormons are members of a cult whether or not the word "cult" was ever used in the discussion. It is likely that journalistic portrayals and frames activated schema that helped readers see Mormonism as a cult.

What to make of the fact that opinion coverage was less favorable in general than harder news coverage towards Mormonism? Opinion journalists were largely doing their job. Writers such as Maureen Dowd made impassioned, even mocking, arguments that made Mormonism appear in unfavorable ways.³⁷⁵ Though opinion journalists shouldn't deliberately distort facts any more than hard news journalists should, writing with passion and persuasiveness are the marks of good opinion journalism. Perhaps Mormonism incited powerful passions that are evident in the sampled coverage and in the opinion writing. It should be noted that some of the most favorable coverage of Mormonism

³⁷⁵ Maureen Dowd, "Mitt's No J.F.K.," *New York Times*, December 9, 2007, 11. Among Dowd's comments: "When I was a kid, we used to drive on the Beltway past the big Mormon temple outside Washington. The spires rose up like a white Oz, and some wag had spray-painted the message on a bridge beneath: 'Surrender Dorothy!' It did seem like an alien world, an impression that was enhanced when we took a tour of the temple and saw all the women wearing white outfits and light pink lipstick."

appeared in opinion pieces. Columns by David Broder and Naomi Schaeffer Riley portrayed Mormonism favorably.³⁷⁶

Especially striking is how much more frequently news reporters framed Romney's campaign as suffering setbacks. This suggests the idea that news reporters were more highly preoccupied with the horse race than were opinion journalists. The hard news journalists might also be criticized because they were less detailed in their portrayals of Mormonism overall, including fewer dimensions of the faith in their coverage.

5.5 The Kennedy analogy.

This study shows that news media often relied on an analogy between candidate John F. Kennedy's "Catholic problem" in the 1960 presidential campaign and Mitt Romney's "Mormon problem" in 2008. Was this analogy valid in helping to explain Romney's challenge and how it might be addressed? The Kennedy analogy fit better than analogies to other campaigns in which religion became an issue. In Jimmy Carter's 1976 race, the candidate's born-again Christianity may have reinforced his claim to be a decent, moral man, a departure from the scandal-plagued Nixon years.³⁷⁷ In 2000, George W. Bush "born again" epiphany might have explained his transformation from a dissolute drinker to a plausible candidate. In those cases, the candidate's religion may

³⁷⁶ Naomi Schaeffer Riley, "What Iowans Should Know About Mormons," *Wall Street Journal*, December 7, 2007, W13; David S. Broder, "Like Father, Like Son; How the Romneys Tackled the Question of Faith," *Washington Post*, December 9, 2007, B7.

³⁷⁷ Religion, media and the Carter campaign are worthy of another study. As is shown in Appendix H, religion might have been framed as an issue to be overcome – especially his sister's mystical conversion experiences – in ways similar to how Romney's religion was framed. His speech on the Jewish issue might have been a larger story than it was.

have well helped them win, whereas Kennedy's Catholicism and Romney's Mormonism are viewed as clear handicaps.

Furthermore, analogies comparing Romney to Pat Robertson, Morris Udall, Orrin Hatch and Al Smith could be inappropriate because these candidates lost in part as a result of religion. Such analogies could therefore delegitimize Romney's chances. So the John F. Kennedy analogy seems the best fit, at least up to a point. Romney's religion, like Kennedy's, was a political disadvantage to overcome – a point that Romney himself advanced. Romney established this frame himself by telling reporters he might someday give a “JFK speech” during the 2008 campaign.³⁷⁸ This narrative suggested that Romney's campaign, like Kennedy's, was a test of religious tolerance and that a Romney victory would help put one more prejudice to rest.

The analogy, however, was complicated and not perfectly suited to Romney's election. To begin with, Kennedy's speech was delivered after his nomination. At that point in the campaign, Kennedy needed to send his message to a diverse general electorate. Romney, in contrast, gave his speech before any of the 2008 primaries and caucuses. Romney spoke at the start of the Republican nominating process in which the influence of evangelical Christians has risen dramatically over the last three decades.³⁷⁹ Many evangelicals viewed Mormonism with suspicion. In short, a major bloc of

³⁷⁸ Glen Johnson, “Romney says he will address his religion if he goes national,” *Associated Press*, May 3, 2006. As Appendix F shows, comparing Romney to JFK was a large part of how Romney's religion played out in his 1994 campaign for the U.S. Senate.

³⁷⁹ Jessica Rettig, “The Religious Ties of the Republican Party. How the GOP aligned with the evangelicals,” *U.S. News & World Report*, December 2, 2010, under politics accessed at <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2010/12/02/the-religious-ties-of-the-republican-party>, Accessed July 27, 2011.

Republican voters and activists were inclined to distrust Romney at the outset, which made it difficult for Romney to put the religion issue behind him, speech or no speech.

Pushing the faulty JFK analogy, the news media exaggerated what Romney's address might accomplish. When the Mormon issue resurfaced after the speech, showing Romney had not put the Mormon issue behind him, analogies to JFK all but disappeared from the coverage. The Kennedy analogy had produced a muddled, confusing narrative. One has to ask whether the secular press's ignorance regarding the depth of theological differences within the GOP contributed to such heavy employment of the JFK-Romney analogy.

The Kennedy analogy deserves one more point of discussion. Coverage of the evangelical opposition to Romney echoes the Kennedy story. Evangelicals like Norman Vincent Peale were often seen as the primary antagonists to Kennedy during the 1960 campaign.³⁸⁰ The Romney narrative again put evangelicals in the antagonistic role, even as many evangelical leaders worked hard to show great deference and respect toward Romney, some even endorsing him.³⁸¹ Though this study didn't specifically address the treatment of evangelical Christians with any level of granular detail, study texts suggest evangelical Christians may have come off looking worse than Mormons in the overall coverage – as disrespectful bigots in their relationship to others, reinforcing a stereotype the literature says exists.³⁸² Given that news focus on Republican voters (of which

³⁸⁰ See Appendix H.

³⁸¹ As Appendix H makes clear, there were other groups besides white evangelicals opposed to Kennedy but the news media portrayed white evangelicals as the leading group opposing Kennedy, the analysis seems to show.

³⁸² Bolce and De Maio, "A Prejudice for the Thinking Classes: Media Exposure, Political Sophistication, and the Anti-Christian Fundamentalist."

evangelical voters make up a large percentage), it was perhaps natural to focus on Christian opposition to Romney. But in so doing, journalists seem to have reported far less often on secular liberals who also expressed opposition to the idea of a Mormon president, according to Gallup.³⁸³

5.6 How this Study Applies to Candidates from Minority Religions.

Mormonism presents a special case in the study of politicians and reporters in campaigns; however, the lessons of this study appear to apply to candidates from other minority religions because of journalistic norms highlighted by study data. One goal of this study was to examine how a minority religion of any candidate might be covered, not just Mormonism. It is worth pondering whether Mormonism is a special case, however. Do the lessons of the campaign really apply to other minority or idiosyncratic religions? Do they apply to atheists?

One argument is that Mormonism may, in fact, be unique. Mormon scholar Terryl Givens suggests that Joseph Smith's central heresy is that he mixes the sacred and secular and makes God understandable.³⁸⁴ Givens quotes a line from James Gordon Bennett to illustrate the point:

³⁸³ Liberals were more willing than conservatives to vote for a Mormon, but considerable reluctance was still expressed among them. According to Gallup in February 2007, 75 percent of liberals, 77 percent of moderates and 66 percent of conservatives expressed a willingness to vote for a Mormon. See Jeffrey M. Jones, "Some Americans reluctant to vote for Mormon, 72-year-old candidate. Strong support for black, woman, Catholic candidate," Gallup News Service, February 27, 2007, at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/26611/Some-Americans-Reluctant-Vote-Mormon-72YearOld-Presidential-Candidates.aspx>, accessed March 23, 2011.

³⁸⁴ Terryl Givens, *People of Paradox*, (London: Oxford, 2007), 38-51.

Jo goes on prophecying, preaching and building the temple as if nothing had happened. They are busy all the time establishing factories to make saints and crockery, also prophets and white paint.³⁸⁵

Givens' point is that Mormonism doesn't really fit on either side of the religious-secular culture war. However important Givens' argument may be to Mormons wishing to understand their long history of persecution and challenges in American democracy, his argument may take this study away from the concrete lessons of the Romney campaign. If Mormonism is a uniquely, irreducible theological and secular heresy, then there is nothing that can be learned from the Romney campaign as a case study that would be applicable to other candidates' religions or even to religious coverage in the American press. The argument places the Mormon faith outside useful discussion except about Mormonism. Such potential implications must be acknowledged. Mormonism may have few correlates.

However, journalism is a concrete profession with established norms that include fair portrayals, accuracy and avoidance of stereotypes. Its norms also provide for a public forum for dialogue.³⁸⁶ As such, there remain many lessons that can be learned from the Romney coverage because journalistic norms assume Mormonism shouldn't be treated differently than any other religious group.

Judging by the Romney coverage, candidates from minority faiths or atheistic candidates will likely face a secular media that will likely focus on the idiosyncrasies that

³⁸⁵ James Gordon Bennett, *New York Herald*, August 4, 1842, as cited in Terryl Givens, "'This Great Modern Abomination: Orthodoxy and Heresy in American Religion,'" in *Mormons and Mormonism: An Introduction to An American World Religion*, edited by Eric A. Eliason, 99-122. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 114.

³⁸⁶ Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism. What Newspeople Should Know and What the Public Should Expect*, (New York: Crown Publishing 2000) 131-146.

highlight details to make their beliefs unusual to others. Nothing in the coverage suggests that any specifics of a religion will be avoided. These candidates will likely face journalists who fail to place beliefs in a context that shows how a faith might rationally inform policy; nor will many secular journalists always understand the candidates' religious culture. A candidate's effort to remain silent about the dynamics of his or her faith, however well intentioned, may result in further questions. Public perceptions of the "unusual" religion will likely be discussed at length.

The historical record provides few answers about the best way minority candidates should deal with religious questions. History shows the press will discuss religious issues in a campaign. Al Smith's efforts to minimize his Catholicism did little to resolve the issue.³⁸⁷ In contrast, it seems that John Kennedy's efforts to speak about his faith routinely over the campaign may be part of the solution. But candidates more traditionally devout than Kennedy might find a pure statement of separation (as he gave in Houston) to be inconsistent with their personal beliefs. The model for election set by Kennedy's deeply secular speeches in 1960, therefore, may have rhetorically boxed in Mitt Romney.³⁸⁸

In contrast with his father, Mitt Romney approached religion far differently. George Romney made Mormonism integral to his public persona by visiting Mormon churches as he campaigned and through regular discussions of his Mormon beliefs, while Mitt Romney chose to avoid discussions of his Mormon faith. In doing so, Mitt Romney avoided some of the pitfalls that hindered his father's campaign over religious issues. At

³⁸⁷ Hostetler, "Gov. Al Smith Confronts the Catholic Question."

³⁸⁸ See Appendix H for greater detail on historical campaign where religion was involved. See Appendix I for greater detail about Mormons who ran for president.

the same time, Mitt Romney created other problems for himself by appearing evasive.

It is unclear, therefore, the degree to which Mitt Romney's choices worked. He lost his long bid for the 2008 nomination, but he was the most successful Mormon candidate of all time and has been seen as a frontrunner for the 2012 campaign. The opposition to Mormonism is genuine among certain conservative voters. There may have been nothing Romney could have done to improve his chances as a Mormon candidate. The same may be true of atheists or Muslims or scientologists or others who might run for office. The idea of finding a third way for candidates of minority religions – something that develops a language that ties the narrow religious beliefs and history of a candidate into the traditional religious values of the United States – seems largely unexplored in the literature of political campaigns and is worthy of more study. Research in this area is strongly recommended to future candidates.

Journalists are sure to face a challenge similar to Mitt Romney's campaign in the future. The faiths of those candidates are likely to be important as indications of the character of a candidate. Avoiding the subject of religion and politics altogether, even in the interest of some ephemeral public religion, is unrealistic. Faith influences whom voters will support, so ignoring religion in campaign coverage is not an option.

But the idea of a public religion – one that rejects undue focus on irreducible differences among religions while focusing on a few shared concepts – should not be underestimated either. Though it really isn't a reporter's job to think of the public religion and its influence on democracy, it is unrealistic to think that continuously enhancing differences among religions and highlighting their conflicts would have no detrimental influences on democracy and on religious diversity in the United States.

5.7 Suggestions for Further Research.

Numerous potential research projects could emerge from this study.

First, other texts from the 2008 campaign provide study options. How were evangelicals framed in 2008? A content analysis of the coverage of evangelical and other Christian faiths during the 2008 election season seems in order. Another avenue of study would be through interviews with journalists who covered Romney's campaign about why certain decisions were made about their coverage of religion. A third idea would be to examine the coverage of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, providing careful analysis that contrasts Romney's religion with Barack Obama's religion, which could provide new insight into cultural differences, given that Wright's ideas are perceived as more religiously liberal than Romney's Mormonism is. Finally, given that atheists are seen as nearly as unpopular as scientologists as likely presidential candidates, a study of the coverage of atheism – and of atheists – seems a good possibility for immediate study.³⁸⁹

The 2012 campaign will provide wonderful opportunities to compare coverage with 2008. Is the coverage of Romney or his faith more favorable than 2008? How did the coverage of the Mormonism of two Mormon candidates in 2012 differ?

Clearly, the relationship between horse-race coverage and the portrayal of minority religions and minority ideas or groups deserves further thought. Do these groups, religions or ideas become framed in ways that make them appear out of the mainstream as is suggested happened during the 2008 campaign? Did a sort of anti-

³⁸⁹ One particular study worth doing is a framing analysis of the coverage of Pete Stark's atheism, as he is the first open atheist serving in Congress. Stark's "coming out" was a news story during the Romney campaign. Was Stark shown as mainstream or not?

bandwagon effect take over among voters as they began to see Romney as unelectable because of his Mormonism?

The MIT study and the preliminary work at Vanderbilt that suggested powerful heuristics in play in voter's choice of candidates deserve more study.³⁹⁰ Research could link media coverage experimentally to campaign choices and effects. For example, Romney's flip-flopping might be investigated experimentally for links to secretiveness and to "Mormonness" in voting decisions by using the techniques proposed by the MIT study of Berensky and Mendelberg.

A powerful study would be to use depth interviewing with candidates and politicians to discuss how to handle religious questions publicly. A historical approach using notes, memos and internal conversations from the various campaigns – especially the Romney campaign – could provide useful insight into political communication and of how best to deal with religion in a campaign.

A series of framing effects studies could be undertaken among media audiences as a result of this study. Did mentions of Mormon beliefs such as polygamy activate the idea that Mormonism is a cult in the eyes of reporters and voters? What schema were activated about Mormonism in the coverage? About religion?

Another area of research might be to expand upon the newly emerging field of Mormon media studies: First, two episodic content analyses about other Mormon stories of 2008 – the coverage of the debate over Proposition 8 in California and the polygamy raid in Texas, seem worth pursuing. A related approach would be to look to see if

³⁹⁰ Benson, Geer, and Merolla, "Using Cover Issues to Express Bias in the 2008 Presidential Campaign," and Berensky and Mendelberg, "The Indirect Effects of Discredited Stereotypes in Judgments of Jewish Leaders."

Mormon coverage becomes more darkly stereotypical in the months and years following the Romney campaign. To what degree has Mormon coverage changed? This dissertation established that, at its worst, Romney's framing harkened to some old stereotypes. Was this darkness largely, therefore, a response to how Romney chose to run his campaign or something more in the secular culture of journalism portending a trend of worsening portrayals of Mormons? Another Mormon media study would be to look at the coverage of Mormon missionaries in the 21st century, perhaps using Romney and the coverage of Mormonism's role in the Proposition 8 coverage as a way to investigate how Mormon coverage changed.³⁹¹ Given the popularity of the "Book of Mormon Musical" on Broadway, a detailed analysis of the coverage of that play is in order.

An obvious study that needs pursuing in Mormon media studies is a series of four studies, histories of the four 1852 Mormon newspapers, published with the intent to protect the Mormon faith from attacks against polygamy. The stories are part of existing biographies, but as far as can be ascertained, none have ever been the subject of individual studies. John Taylor's *The Mormon* needs especial attention. To what degree did he draw the attention of the main newspapers of the time? How did his work influence the coverage in the *New York Sun* or the *New York Tribune* or the *New York Herald*? What challenges did he overcome? What was the debate in Salt Lake City that led to the decision to send four powerful leaders to major cities to write about Mormonism while many challenges faced Mormons at home?

³⁹¹ In preparation for this study, I read numerous Mormon missionary articles and came away feeling most were favorable. Is that so? Still? What kinds of stories were there? See Appendices G and H.

The coverage of the Book of Mormon itself has never been the subject of a media study. What elements of Mormonism's central text have made it into the public consciousness? What is the public perception of the book? Indeed, as far as can be ascertained, no such studies have ever been done on any scriptural texts, such as the Holy Q'uran or The Book of Mormon or the Tao Te Ching. This is odd given these holy book's long influence on culture.

Updates to the studies of how frequently religious doctrine is used in daily stories about religion seems to be in order. These studies might look at extreme events, such as reported doctrinal influence in the coverage of suicide bombing or in more general events, such as campaigns. But it could also look at doctrine in the news and in the news business more holistically and normatively. What kinds of doctrines are covered? Which religious receive the most doctrinal coverage? Is a central assertion of this dissertation supported more broadly – that religious belief is rarely discussed in the context of how it might influence public policy?

This study was old-fashioned in that it relied upon old media for its stories. New media and blogging need to be included in future studies. Relying on methods employed by such groups as Pew's Project for Excellence in Journalism New Media story tracking would be a good way. A simple question such as which religious story dominated new media could provide a useful research agenda. As far as can be ascertained, very few studies, if any, have been done on the Mormon image online, even as online interactions about Mormonism are growing and the Mormon presence online is growing.

Furthermore, the Dart study and writers including Tom Kunkel have argued that journalism was improving in its coverage of religion.³⁹² In an era of cutbacks and a continuing culture war, is this still so? Developing a framework to track that issue would be worthwhile.

Much more needs to be written about silence and paradox in the interaction of religion and media – indeed, within media and the modern culture generally. John Durham Peters stab at that with *Speaking Into the Air* is a powerful first step.³⁹³ Interviews of journalists about how and why they keep silent about some religious issues and how they deal with paradox seems worth pursuing. That journalism’s cultural disdain for secrecy may create a blind-spot in the coverage of religion and of minority religious cultures needs review. The dilemma of silence could be a powerful intellectual fulcrum to evaluate media choices and influences.

These studies could elevate the profession, enhance its training and strengthen America’s electoral processes.

5.8 Conclusion

In the 2008 campaign, the news media gave Mitt Romney a fractured frame, as a mainstream outsider. As he tries to run again, news media should look for ways to improve coverage. They should look at how religion shapes ideologies. They should try to avoid distortion or sensational coverage that makes a religion appear more out of the mainstream than it is.

³⁹² Kunkel, “Have a Little Faith: At last the Mainstream Media Get Religion;” Dart and Allen, *Bridging the Gap: Religion and the News Media*.

³⁹³ Peters, *Speaking into the Air*.

The coverage of Mitt Romney and his Mormonism is a cautionary tale. The studied coverage suggests minority religions will be portrayed as out of the mainstream and their beliefs will be discussed at length. The coverage provides a cautionary tale for journalists because the Romney story shows how difficult covering the mix of religion and politics can be. The culture of journalism can conflict with the culture of religion. To cover religion and politics in the future, and to do it well, will take thoughtfulness. Only the broad application of good judgment will bridge the divide between these two important forces in public life.

The present study tells a cautionary tale for democracy because it shows the press will continue to focus on conflict and on horseraces at a time when the need for excellent political reporting has never been greater. In an era of weakened party structures, the viability of candidates will continue to be evaluated by journalists. In a world of tight election seasons, the role of the press as gatekeeper seems sure to grow. Americans will have fewer and fewer chances to see candidates up close and will rely on media images and texts to make their choices. Judging from the coverage of Mitt Romney and his Mormonism in the 2008 campaign, work still needs to be done in preparing the press to cover complex issues where religion and politics intersect.

Finally, to the degree that religion and media square off in America's culture war, it is time to move beyond the disputes, to move closer together toward the goal of a better nation. The American theologian Jurgen Niebuhr once said:

I think there ought to be a club in which preachers and journalists could come together and have the sentimentalism of the one matched with

the cynicism of the other. That ought to bring them pretty close to the truth.³⁹⁴

Founders of modern media like James Gordon Bennett sometimes saw their profession in almost religious terms, as a hinge point for all.³⁹⁵ Many contemporary reporters talk of the “calling” of journalism, as though they are missionaries heading to a far country. Conceptions media professionals hold of themselves – bringing people together in a global village, for example – are religious in structure. Journalism philosopher Jay Rosen has written that journalism itself can be seen as a religion. It has creeds, high priests, priesthods, orthodoxy and schools of theology – and even, as in these dark economic times, crises of faith.³⁹⁶

Perhaps there has been a crisis of faith, where there remains a divide between religion and the news media. This divide needs bridging to better accommodate democracy and presidential elections. This divide will require care and good judgment to bridge. Part of this good judgment may arise from an understanding of the shared value of the First Amendment and will require mutual understanding and respect and less cynicism. *Newsweek's* Jon Meacham wrote,

The acts of reading, of contemplation and discovery, of writing poems and finding cures and composing symphonies are, for the religious, acts of piety and of thanksgiving, for the secular, such things may be about

³⁹⁴ Jurgen Niebuhr, *Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic*. (Cleveland:Meridian, 1957), 105, at the Internet Archive, http://www.archive.org/stream/leavesfromthenot003966mbp/leavesfromthenot003966mbp_djvu.txt. , accessed February 16, 2010.

³⁹⁵ Underwood, *From Yahweh to Yahoo!*, 23-25.

³⁹⁶ Jay Rosen, “Journalism is itself a religion: Special Essay on the launch of the revealer,” *PressThink*, January 7, 2004, at http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/2004/01/07/press_religion.html, accessed March 19, 2010.

the wonders of nature or of rationality or of logic. So be it: the point is that we are all on the same odyssey, if for different reasons. In either case, the story is about moving forward, through the darkness, searching for light. Or at least it should be. Extremes make the journey more perilous.³⁹⁷

The Mormon scholar Richard Bushman told reporters at his Pew forum during the Romney campaign:

Our finest political rhetoric has appealed to this grand corporate dream of America as a goodly nation. It was Kennedy's gift to speak in that voice; to a lesser extent it was Reagan's. ... The French dream of grandeur, we're always saying. Americans dream of righteousness and being a good nation.³⁹⁸

Believers and journalists – even when they aren't the same thing – should remember they share the same cause – of preserving the American dream of being a great and good nation. They should remember that cause endures, especially in troubled times. Religion and media share a fundamental mission to lift up the hands that hang down and to let the oppressed go free.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁷ Meacham, *American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation*, 18.

³⁹⁸ Pew forum, "Mormonism and Politics. Are they compatible?"

³⁹⁹ Hebrews 12:12; Isaiah 58:6.

Appendix A: Code Book

Important notes:

1. In all of your counting – make sure you focus only on the article, its headline and captions to photos and graphics.

Many of these electronic .pdfs, especially those from Proquest, also have indexes or abstracts that may have these same terms or concepts for which you are searching. **Do NOT** count if the words or concepts are in these abstracts or index words.

Count **only** if in the headline, story text or caption.

2. In all of your counting, make no distinction between whether the writer makes a statement or whether someone the writer is quoting or paraphrases makes the statement. Count them either way.

V00 – V06 These seven variables have been pre-entered for you.

General Instructions.

Please enter data into an Excel spreadsheet called Romney evaluation about the articles in the files.

Do each article one at a time, for the variables as described. Put the information in the corresponding column in the spreadsheet based upon your evaluation of each article.

V00: **OVERALL Number.** Number the article – consecutively. If the last article was 1, then enter 2.

V01: **Number.** Number the article – consecutively FOR EACH SOURCE. If the last article was 1, then put in number 2. IF this is the first article of a source, enter 1.

V02: **Source.** Enter a number for the source of the article as follows:

- 1 – AP
- 2 – Newsweek
- 3 – *New York Times*
- 4 – *Washington Post*
- 5 – Time
- 6 – *Wall Street Journal*
- 7 – *Chicago Tribune*
- 8 – *Los Angeles Times*

V03: **Source Type.** Enter the following for each source depending on which specific source it is:

National Paper:

New York Times

Washington Post

Wall Street Journal

Regional Paper:

Los Angeles Times

Chicago Tribune

Wire Service:

AP

National Magazine

Time

Newsweek

V04: **Headline.** Write the Headline of the article into variable 04.

V05: **Date.** Enter the date in day-month-year format. For example, 06-Dec-2007

V06: **Words.** Put the number of words in the article. Use the word count as listed on either the Lexis-Nexis or Proquest .pdf of the article.

V07: **Romney in the lead paragraph.** Is Mitt Romney mentioned by name in the lead – first -- paragraph of the article? If Mitt Romney is mentioned in the lead paragraph of the article, then enter 1 for this variable. If not, enter 0.

V08: **Romney in the headline.** Is Mitt Romney – or Romney only – mentioned in the headline or subheadline of the article? If so, enter 1 for this variable. If not, enter 0.

V09. Total number of mentions of Mitt Romney by name in the body of article, in a graphic caption or photo caption.

Count the number of times Mitt Romney is mentioned if the article uses either the full name – **Mitt Romney** – or his last name – **Romney**. Do *not* count if it uses some sort of common noun description of Romney (such as “the candidate” or “the former Massachusetts governor” or even Mitt alone.) Not in the headline

Also:

- It is appropriate to use word-search functions in whatever electronic viewer you use to read the article.
- **Be careful** that Romney, when used, refers to Mitt Romney not to some member of his family, such as his brother Scott or his father, George, or his wife or children.

- Do **NOT** count any mentions of Romney from within Proquest’s abstract, if the article was downloaded from Proquest.

- **Do NOT count** if it comes at the end of the article in the cataloging and indexing information.

V10: Does the article say Romney is Succeeding? Count the number of sentences with ‘Romney is ahead’ mentions. Count only if these sentences say he is ahead in a candidate preference poll, (either in one state or nationwide) or is ahead in the nomination delegate count, or if someone is quoted or paraphrased saying explicitly (not merely implying) that he is ahead, or is the nomination frontrunner, or that he is likely to win the presidential nomination or has won a primary election or state delegate selection caucus or straw poll or is likely to do so.

A **sentence** is the unit of analysis. That is, one sentence may not have more than one assertion that Romney is ahead.

V11: Does the article say Romney is suffering setbacks or is not succeeding. Count only if the sentence says he is behind in a candidate preference poll, (either in one state or nationwide) or is behind in the nomination delegate count, or if someone is quoted or paraphrased in an article saying explicitly (not merely implying) that he is behind or that someone else is the frontrunner or that Romney is likely to lose the nomination. Also count if he has lost a nominating caucus, primary or straw poll.

Do **NOT** count if a poll cited mentions that Mitt Romney faces trouble because of his Mormonism.

A **sentence** is the unit of analysis. That is, one sentence may not have more than one assertion that Romney is behind.

V12 – V18:

Dimensions helping Romney to get elected. On each of these seven variables put a 1 or a 0: 1 for “yes” and 0 for “no.” Each variable is a yes/no question. Make sure that the article frames the dimension as a positive thing, as something helping his chances. You may answer yes or no, 1 or 0, on any, none or all of the variable dimensions.

Assertions may come from the article’s author or from anyone the article chooses to quote or to paraphrase -- from experts to “regular” voters.

Some of these dimensions are not mutually exclusive dimensions. That is, Romney’s religion, for example, may be described within an article as both a help and a hindrance. You would enter 1 on both of those variables.

V12: Helps Dimension 1: Romney’s morals and values. If the article says that Romney’s values and morals will help him get elected, enter 1. If it doesn’t mention his values or morals OR says those morals and values are a hindrance to his chances, enter 0.

Specific descriptions of his values for which you would also answer a 1 include:

- That he shares personal morals or values with non-Mormon Americans, including those from other denominations or religions.
- That he never or rarely swears, never drinks or smokes and/or is “clean-living.”
- That he works hard and is determined.
- That he gives more than 10 percent to charity or to his church or is kind to others.

V13: Helps Dimension 2: Romney’s experience, personality and intellect. If the article says that Romney’s experience, personality and intellect will help him get elected, enter 1. If it doesn’t mention his intellect, personality or experience OR the articles says his intellect and experience are hindrances, enter 0.

In this case, it **isn’t enough** if his experience is **ONLY** used as part of his title – as in Gov. Romney or Massachusetts Governor Romney. It must include some description of his work as governor.

Specific experience for which you would **also** answer a 1 include:

- His work on the 2002 Olympics.
- His work as Massachusetts governor.
- His work as an investment banker and venture capitalist.
- His record at Harvard.
- His skill at learning quickly, mastering data.
- His determination and persistence.

V14: Helps Dimension 3: Romney’s religion. If the article says that Romney’s religion will help him get elected, enter 1. If it says his religion is a hindrance, enter 0.

Specific values for which you would also answer a 1 may include:

- That Mormons will vote for him.
- That Mormons will give him money.
- That there is a backlash against Mormon bigotry.
- That Mormons have conservative values, similar to Republican voters.

V15: Helps Dimension 4: Romney’s looks. If the article says that Romney is handsome, photogenic, or looks presidential, enter 1. If it doesn’t mention his looks or says those looks are a hindrance, enter 0.

Specific values for which you would answer a 1 include:

- His hair.
- His face.
- His actor-like, even presidential, appearance.
- His trim figure and athletic build.

V16: Helps Dimension 5: Romney’s campaign organization and strategy.

If the article says that Romney’s campaign organization and strategy will help him get elected, enter 1. If it doesn’t mention these in any way or says his organization or strategy are hurting his campaign, enter 0.

Elements of campaign organization and strategy may include:

- Fund-raising or endorsement success.
- Wise spending of campaign funds.
- Effective campaign staff.
- Specific strategic and tactical decisions that helped campaign.

V17: Helps Dimension 6. Romney’s position on the issues. If the article says that Romney’s issue positions might help him – positions such as abortion, gay marriage, family, immigration, taxes, or health care or the war on terror will help him get elected, enter 1. If it doesn’t mention these or says his issue positions hurt him, enter 0.

V18: Helps Dimension 7. Romney’s family.

If the article says that Romney’s family might help him get elected, enter 1. If it doesn’t mention his family or that his family might hurt him, enter 0.

Some dimensions of his family might include:

- His close relationship with his deceased, admirable father.
- His talented, attractive wife.
- His appealing sons.
- The length and success of his marriage.

V19 – V24:

Dimensions hindering Romney’s election chances.

On each of these variables put a 1 or a 0, 1 for “yes” and 0 for “no.” Each variable is a yes/no question. Make sure that the article frames the dimension as a negative thing, as a hindrance. You may answer yes or no on any, none or all of the questions.

Assertions may come from the article’s author or from those quoted or paraphrased -- from experts to “regular” voters.

Some of these dimensions are not mutually exclusive to helps dimensions. That is, Romney's religion, for example, may be described within an article as both a help and a hindrance. You would enter 1 on both of those dimensions.

V19: Hinders Dimension 1: his religion.

Enter 1 if the article says Mormonism will hinder or does hinder Romney's chances.

Make no distinction between whether there is something about Mormonism itself that is Romney's problem or opposition from secular or religious people to his faith that is his problem.

If an article cites a poll that says Mormonism is a problem for Romney, enter 1.

Enter 0 if it only says Romney's religion will help him or if it doesn't assess the degree to which his religion is a problem or not in getting elected.

V20: Hinders Dimension 2: Romney's changing opinions on issues. If the article talks about Romney's positions changing on issues, including but not limited to abortion and gay rights, then put in 1. If it doesn't, put in 0. Put in 0 if his changing position on issues is seen exclusively as a good thing.

V21: Hinders Dimension 3: Romney's personality. If Romney's personality is framed as something that hinders his chances enter 1. If not, enter 0.

Alleged traits that could hinder him include:

- He is aloof.
- ^a He is "too good to be true."
- He isn't a regular guy. He is plastic or robotic.
- He is calculating, insincere.
- . He is ruthless or greedy, for instance in business practices.

If any of these descriptions of his personality or other negative traits are included, or something similar, enter 1. Otherwise, enter 0.

V22: Hinders Dimension 4: Romney's wealth or social status. If the article says that Romney's wealth or social status is a hindrance, then enter 1.

If not, enter 0.

V23: Hinders Dimension 5: Romney's campaign and strategy. If the article says that Romney's campaign organization and strategy hinder his election enter 1. If it doesn't mention these, enter 0.

Elements of campaign organization and strategy include:

- Fund-raising shortcomings.
- unwise spending of campaign funds.
- ineffective campaign staff.
- . Bad strategic or tactical decisions.

V24-V25: Likert scale evaluations.

For the following two variables, use the one-to-five Likert scale in evaluating how the article reports on or characterizes Mormonism's place in the mainstream and Romney's place in the mainstream. In your evaluation, include characterizations of Mormonism quoted or summarized in the article, even if the writer does not endorse them.

One is the lowest – furthest from the mainstream -- and five is the highest – emblematic of the mainstream.

V24: Mormonism is part of the American religious mainstream.

Use the 1-to-5 Likert scale to measure to extent to which the article characterizes Romney's religion as part of the American religious mainstream.

Include characterizations of Mormonism quoted or summarized in the article, even if the writer does not endorse them.

Enter the number that best captures the portrayal of Romney's religion:

1: Far out of the mainstream – Mormonism is portrayed or described as cult-like, potentially dangerous or extreme.

2: Somewhat out of the Mainstream – Mormonism is portrayed or described as somewhat out of the mainstream, as weird or idiosyncratic in its beliefs, practices and culture.

3: Neither in the mainstream nor really out of it – Mormonism is portrayed in a neutral way, neither in the mainstream nor out of it.

4: Somewhat to mostly in the mainstream – Mormonism is portrayed as somewhat within the mainstream to mostly mainstream in its beliefs. It is largely assimilated into American religious thought, even though it has some differences.

5: Fully in the mainstream – Mormonism is portrayed as fully assimilated and fully in the American mainstream of religious thought. It is emblematic of American religious thought and values.

V25: Romney's views are part of the American political mainstream.

Use the 1-to-5 Likert scale to measure to extent to which the article characterizes Romney's positions on policy/campaign issues as part of the American political mainstream.

In your assessment include relevant characterizations of Romney that are quoted or summarized in the article, even if the writer does not endorse them.

EXCLUDE characterizations of Mormon religious doctrines
Enter 1 to 5, as follows:

- 1: Far out of the political mainstream – Romney’s views on policy/ campaign issues are portrayed as being far outside the political mainstream.
- 2: Somewhat out of the political mainstream – Romney’s views on policy/ campaign issues are portrayed as being somewhat out of the mainstream.
- 3: Views on policy/campaign issues not characterized regarding political mainstream. – Article does not say whether Romney’s views on policy/campaign issues are inside or outside the political mainstream.
- 4: Somewhat to mostly in the political mainstream – Romney’s views on policy/ campaign issues are portrayed as being somewhat to mostly in the political mainstream.
- 5: Fully in the mainstream – Romney’s views on policy/campaign issues are portrayed as being fully in the mainstream.

V26 – V39: Mormon Dimensions.

In each of these 10 variables, enter 1 for yes and 0 for no. If the dimension discussed in the variable is mentioned in the article, enter 1, if not, enter 0.

Only enter one 1 or one zero.

If the dimension is discussed by either the writer or someone the writer quotes, enter 1, even if whom is quoted is contradicted by other facts or quotations.

For example, if a writer quotes someone who says Mormons practice polygamy and then the writer says the practice ended more than 100 years ago, still enter 1.

V26: Mormon Dimension 1. Polygamy.

Enter 1 if there is any mention of polygamy or “plural marriage” in the story – including Mormon practice of polygamy in the past and break-off groups that openly practice polygamy in the present. Enter 1 as well if it mentions plural marriage or the HBO series Big Love. Enter 1 if the article mentions break off groups that practice polygamy. Enter 0 if there is no mention of any of these.

V27: Mormon Dimension 2. Mormons discriminate against Women and people of color.

Enter 1 if the article says Mormons are bigots or implies it by mentioning beliefs and practices of the Mormon faith that suggest bigotry to many audiences.

For instance, enter 1 if the article mentions that Mormons do not allow women to hold the priesthood or that Mormons did not allow men of African descent to hold the priesthood until 1978.

Enter 1 if the article refers to the criticism that women or minorities are in a subservient position in the culture and church.

Enter 1 if the article – or someone quoted **or paraphrased** in it – says Mormons are bigots or prejudiced directly.

Otherwise, enter 0.

V28: Mormon Dimension 3. Mormons are socially conservative or believe in “clean-living.”

Enter 1 if the article says Mormons live a “clean” or “conservative” lifestyle.

Enter 1 as well if the article mentions any of these: that Mormons (or Mitt Romney and other Mormons in their personal habits) don’t (or aren’t supposed to) smoke, do drugs, drink, gamble, have sex outside of marriage, don’t swear or are conservative in attire and look.

Otherwise, enter 0.

V29: Mormon Dimension 4. Mormons are devout. Enter 1 if it describes Mormons as devout people.

Enter 1 if any Mormon, including Romney, is described as devout.

Enter 1 if it includes any of these Mormon practices:

- They give 10 percent to their church in a tithing.
- They fast on a regular basis (giving money from the fast to the poor).
- They attend several meetings on the Sabbath where they participate as volunteer teachers and lay leaders or don’t work on Sundays.
- They serve as volunteer missionaries.
- They attend temples, which requires certain standards of personal conduct and often requires sacrifice and effort to attend.
- Men serve as lay priesthood leaders without pay and women volunteer for many church positions.

V30: Mormon dimension 5. Mormons are caring people.

Enter 1 if it describes Mormons as caring people.

Enter 1 if it includes any of these Mormon practices:

- The church runs a perpetual education fund to help men and women members in poorer countries get a better education.
- The church runs a determined and large welfare program for its members that can include monthly fasting.
- The church runs a vast humanitarian program to help people not of the faith after natural and other disasters.
- The church believes in education including direct sponsorship of three universities.
- The church has a home-teaching program.
- Members take care of one another's needs.
- Mormon examples are shown as exhibiting caring behaviors.

Enter 0 otherwise.

V31: Mormon Dimension 6: List of Mormon beliefs.

If the article draws attention to ANY of these following beliefs or practices – but **NO OTHERS** -- enter 1:

- Mormons wear unusual underwear, often called garments.
- Mormons believe men can become like God.
- Mormons may believe or do believe in something called the white horse prophecy (where, supposedly, a Mormon on a metaphorical White Horse will ride to the defense of the imperiled Constitution).
- Mormons believe God is corporeal – having a body.
- Mormons believe in a mother in heaven.
- Mormons believe in a pre-existence, that they lived before they were born.
- Mormons believe that the second coming of Jesus Christ will be in Missouri or at least part of the events of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ will unfold there.
- Mormons believe theirs is the one true church or seem to believe that.
- Mormons believe and practice an ordinance called baptism for dead.
- Mormons believe that Jesus and Satan are brothers – or some say that Mormons may believe that.
- Mormons believe (or believed) in a shared, communitarian economic system (which was called the United Order).
- Mormons believe Bible is true only insofar as it is translated correctly and that changes were made to it.

Also Enter 1 if the article, or someone quoted in the article says Mormons are unusual (or a strong synonym) in their beliefs or practices –

Otherwise, enter 0.

V32: Mormon Dimension 7. Second list of Mormon beliefs:

If the article draws attention to ANY of these following beliefs or practices – but **NO OTHERS** -- enter 1:

The attention may be drawn by the author or by someone quoted or paraphrased by the article's author whether or not the writer endorses the views of who is quoted.

- The church's founder was Joseph Smith.
- The Book of Mormon.
- Golden plates or Golden Tablets (these plates are the origin of the Book of Mormon.)
- Mormons believe in living prophets or call church leaders "prophet."
- Mormons believe in on-going revelations from God.
- Mormons believe in scriptures beyond the Bible.
- Mormons believe in restoration. That is to say, the religion Jesus Christ established drifted into apostasy and was re-established in fullness in modern times.

Otherwise, enter 0.

V33: Mormon Dimension 8: Mormons are unusually secretive, dangerous, deceptive, or insular.

Enter 1 if the article uses any of those words – secretive, dangerous or deceptive – in any description of Mormonism or of Mormons by the author or someone the author quotes or paraphrases, even if the author does not endorse that characterization.

Any form of those words are used in describing Mormons or their practices, enter 1 for this variable.

Cult-like may be an indication of this variable, but the word cult is not sufficient by itself to enter 0.

Other possibilities:

- Mormons are unusually collaborative and vague to outsiders.
- The Mormons carried out the Mountain Meadows Massacre.

V34: Mormon Dimension 9: Mormons are quintessentially American Enter 1 if the writer describes Mormons as patriotic in any description by the author or someone the author quotes or paraphrases, even if the author does not endorse that characterization.

Also enter 1 if any of these factors are mentioned:

- Mormon war veterans.
- ' Mormons or citizens of Utah have a have rate of military enlistment.
- Mormons support the U.S. Constitution and see it as divinely inspired.
- Mormons support the Boy Scouts.
- The Mormon Tabernacle Choir, which sings patriotic music.
- Mormonism had its origins in the United States.

- Mormonism had an epic Trek to the American West.
- Enter 1 if the article says something like: “Mormonism is America’s most successful indigenous religion.”
- Enter 1 if the article mentions successful, famous American Mormons – **except the Romneys** – like Harry Reid or Steve Young or the Osmonds.

Otherwise, enter 0.

V35: Mormon Dimension 10. Mormons believe in what are often called traditional family values. Family commitment is central to their belief.

Enter 1 if the writer – or someone the writer quotes or paraphrases Mormons as believers in families or so-called “traditional family values.”

Enter 1 as well if the article talks about Mormon practices and beliefs that center on the family:

- its opposition to gay marriage
- its practice of once-a-week family gatherings called Family Home Evening
- its belief that marriage is an eternal relationship and that families are “sealed” together past death
- that Mormons believe generally in families.

Enter 1 as well if the article discusses Romney’s wife and children in ways that are emblematic of these Mormon beliefs in family.

Otherwise, enter 0.

V36: Mormon Dimension 11. The Mormon Church is large and growing rapidly. If the article talks about the size of the church in any way – whether worldwide or in a specific area, enter 1. Enter 1, even if the church is described as small compared with other religions.

Also, if the article says – whether the writer or someone the reporter quotes or paraphrases – that the church is growing, also enter 1.

If the writer, or someone the writer quotes or paraphrases discusses the church’s business interests or the size of its financial holdings, also enter 1.

Otherwise, enter 0.

V37: Mormon Dimension 12. Disagreement on whether Mormons are Christian.

Enter 1 **if the author, or someone the author quotes or paraphrases, raises** the question of whether Mormons are Christian.

Also enter 1 if it says some Christians – including evangelicals -- say Mormons are not Christian or heretical.

Enter 1 as well if the author or anyone in the article says that Mormons are Christians or not.

Enter 1 if any Mormon, including Romney, mentions Jesus Christ.

If the article does not discuss the “Mormons as Christian” question, enter 0.

V38: Past candidates’ religions or denominations. Count in each article the number of previous **presidential** candidates who are mentioned along with their religions or denominations.

This is for campaigns **BEFORE 2008**.

For example, if the article says: “JFK overcame Catholic prejudice to win the presidency in 1960 while *Catholic* Al Smith failed with the same issue in 1928,” then enter 2.

V39: Name the past candidates and their religions or denominations. List the past candidates that you counted in V38 by first and last name, and denomination

For example: John Kennedy, Catholic; Morris Udall, Mormon; George Romney, Mormon.

V40: Candidates where religion isn’t mentioned. Count the number of presidential candidates in each article who ran in years **before 2008** about whom no mention of their religion or denomination is in the article.

V41: Name the candidates to whom Romney was compared without religion being mentioned. List the past candidates that you counted in V40 by first and last name.

Remember this is for candidacies **before 2008**.

Example: George W. Bush, Ross Perot.

V42: Type of story. Choose either 1 or 2.

Enter 1 for **straight news story or feature** – about an event in the campaign, generally factual in tone.

Enter 2 for **editorial**. Look in indexes and headlines for “Editorial” or “Commentary” or “Opinion” or “op/ed” or “news analysis.” All of those would be editorial. Uses of the first person by the author are almost always 2 here.

THANK YOU for your assistance.

Appendix B: Analysis of intercoder reliability.

The author and two coders evaluated 40 (just under one in five) of the articles in the content analysis to ascertain intercoder reliability.⁴⁰⁰ These 40 articles were randomly selected from the population of stories using Excel's rand function.⁴⁰¹

As Table B.1 shows, the overall intercoder reliability is 84 percent, suggesting the study's findings are reliable. The table shows the overall intercoder reliability of each variable, as well.

Table B.1 Summary of intercoder reliability.

Number	Description	Intercoder reliability
1	Romney in the lead paragraph	100.00%
2	Romney in the headline.	98.33%
3	Total number of mentions of Mitt Romney by name in the body of article, in a graphic caption or photo caption.	65.83%
4	Does the article say Romney is Succeeding?	86.70%
5	Does the article say Romney is suffering setbacks or is not succeeding.	74.20%
6	Helps Dimension 1: Romney's Morals and values	85.00%
7	Helps Dimension 2: Romney's experience, personality and intellect	80.00%
8	Helps Dimension 3: Romney's religion	90.00%
9	Helps Dimension 4: Romney's looks	95.00%
10	Helps Dimension 5: Romney's campaign organization and strategy	85.00%
11	Helps Dimension 6: Romney stands on issues	87.50%
12	Helps Dimension 7: His family	87.50%
13	Hinders Dimension 1: His religion	68.30%
14	Hinders Dimension 2: Romney's changing opinions on issues	92.50%
15	Hinders Dimension 3: Romney's personality	97.50%
16	Hinders Dimension 4: Romney's wealth or Social class.	92.50%

⁴⁰⁰ Dr. Eric Embree, Ph.D., and Adam Bair, M.A. both share the author's Mormon faith with the study's author, which may constitute a limitation of the study.

⁴⁰¹ Three articles in the story population of 205 were added to the story population after these 40 articles were separated out at random for the intercoder analysis. That means that there was no chance any of the three could have been in the random sample, which emerged from a population of only 202 stories. Close observation of these stories suggested there was nothing especially unusual about them.

17	Hinders Dimension 5: Romney's campaign and strategy	81.70%
18	Mormonism being in the religious mainstream	45.00%
19	Romney's views are part of the American political mainstream.	49.00%
20	Mormon Dimension 1. Mormons practice polygamy	100.00%
21	Mormon Dimension 2. Mormons discriminate against women and people of color.	95.00%
22	Mormon Dimension 3. Mormons believe in conservative values and "clean-living."	92.50%
23	Mormon Dimension 4. Mormons are devout	77.50%
24	Mormon dimension 5 Mormons are caring people.	82.50%
25	Mormon Dimension 6: List of Mormon beliefs; "unusual beliefs."	81.70%
26	Mormon Dimension 7. Second list of Mormon beliefs, core beliefs	90.00%
27	Mormon Dimension 8: Mormons are secretive, dangerous, deceptive or unusually insular.	80.00%
28	Mormon Dimension 9: Mormons are quintessentially American	76.70%
29	Mormon Dimension 10. Mormons believe in what are often called traditional family values. Family commitment is central to their belief.	80.00%
30	Mormon Dimension 11. The Mormon Church is large and growing rapidly.	92.50%
31	Mormon Dimension 12. Mormons may or may not be Christian	72.50%
32	Number of past candidates with religion	90.00%
33	Name the past candidates and their religions	90.00%
34	Number of Candidates where religion isn't mentioned	90.00%
35	Names of the candidates to whom Romney was compared without religion being mentioned	90.00%
OVERALL Intercoder reliability		84.07%

Six of the 35 variables were somewhat problematic in terms of their reliability, however, but other measurements suggest they were representative of important information in other reliable ways. This needs further explanation.

The first of these six variables was variable 3, the total number of Romney mentions in the article. This variable asked coders to count the number of times Romney was mentioned in the article overall.

However, the real point of this variable, together with the two that preceded it, was in determining whether Mitt Romney was the focus of the article.

So, the author summed these first three variables. The sum showed whether was mentioned more than twice in total – whether the focus was on him in the article or not. This compression yielded a perfect, 100 percent, agreement between the three coders who researched these three variables on whether Romney was the focus of the articles or not.

The second of these was whether Romney was succeeding or suffering setbacks. This tally counted the number of times such an assessment was made in the coverage.

As with the first problematic variable, it becomes less so when the results of this variable are aggregated with the one that precedes it. This new composite variable shows whether in the aggregate there are more mentions of whether Romney is succeeding, suffering setbacks or neither in a given news article. This aggregation produced a solid 81 percent intercoder reliability.

The third of these problematic variables was hidners variable 1 -- whether the article includes assertions that Romney's religion would hinder his election chances. A closer examination of the data on this variable suggested that coder 1, the author of the study, was more likely than the other two coders to find that an article contained such an assertion.

This suggests a potential problem in question wording. Coders 2 and 3 may have only looked for references to polls that said Romney's religion was a problem for his election chances, not just overall statements to that effect.

Therefore, any findings focusing on the degree to which the news media said directly that Mitt Romney’s Mormonism was a problem for his election chances should be seen as having broad possible variability and some limits on their overall reliability.

However, there is an important level at which this variable is the least useful variable in the entire dataset, and this lesser intercoder reliability makes little difference in the study’s overall meaning or its findings.

Why? The vast amount of coverage of Mitt Romney and his Mormonism and the fact that so many articles included both Romney and Mormon, suggests that Mormonism and its trouble for Romney was considered newsworthy on an on-going basis. Mormonism was a problem for Mitt Romney and reporters obviously thought so. They wouldn’t have written so many articles if it hadn’t been.

The fourth and fifth variables were the degree to which coders agreed in their Likert scale assessments of whether Mitt Romney’s views were in the mainstream and the degree to which Mormonism was in the religious mainstream.

What the study was mainly interested in was the impression surrounding this variable and on that there was close agreement. For example, on one article, coder1 might put in a three and coder2, a 4, or vice-versa, with only a one-point variation in judgment.

Second, the overall mean of these variables was similar.

As Table B.2 shows, the means of all the coded Likert scores were very close, exhibiting a difference of just more than four percent.

Table B.2: Difference in means for the Likert scale evaluations of whether Mormonism was portrayed as in the religious mainstream.

Coder 2 average	2.45
Coder 1 average	2.275

This small difference in mean – which suggests that both coders in the aggregate saw the portrayal of Mormonism was out the mainstream -- is an important, reliable finding.

Third, as is shown in the second finding of section 2.4, the overall impression of Mormonism's being in the mainstream was supported by a second analysis comparing the proportions of more mainstream variables with more idiosyncratic ones from this study. This resulted in the same impression that, overall, Mormonism was portrayed as out of the mainstream.

The variable demonstrating the degree to which Romney's views were in the mainstream was not used to support any findings in this study because of its low intercoder reliability. The general sense of this finding was supported by other findings, however.

The last of the variables that seemed to have slight intercoder reliability trouble is the last Mormon variable – the most frequent Mormon dimension, it turns out – that measures the frequency of the controversy over whether Mormons are Christian or not.

The agreement on this variable meets a common-sense standard. This lack of variation means that this dimension was common in the coverage – though perhaps not the most common element in the coverage, as is asserted in the findings.

Table B.3 provides further detail about this analysis. It shows how intercoder reliability was calculated for the 11 variables that were recoded using three coders instead of two. Coder 1 is the study's author. The mean of the three calculations is what was used to calculate the overall intercoder reliability of this study as shown in Table B.1.

Table B.3: Summary of intercoder reliability calculations for 11 variables that were recoded.

Variable	Agreement between Coder 1 and Coder 3	Agreement between Coder 1 and Coder 2	Agreement between coder 2 and coder 3	Mean
Romney in the lead paragraph.	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Romney in the headline.	97.50%	100.00%	97.50%	98.30%
Total number of mentions of Mitt Romney by name in the body of article, in a graphic caption or photo caption.	57.50%	72.50%	67.50%	65.80%
Does the article say Romney is Succeeding?	85.00%	85.00%	90.00%	86.70%
Does the article say Romney is suffering setbacks or is not succeeding.	72.50%	70.00%	80.00%	74.20%
Helps Dimension 5: Romney's campaign organization and strategy.	80.00%	80.00%	95.00%	85.00%
Hinders Dimension 1: his religion.	72.50%	62.50%	70.00%	68.30%
Hinders Dimension 6: Romney's campaign and strategy.	80.00%	77.50%	87.50%	81.70%
Romney's views are part of the American political mainstream.	40.00%	45.00%	62.00%	49.00%
Mormon Dimension 6: List of Mormon beliefs.	85.00%	85.00%	80.00%	81.70%
Mormon Dimension 9: Mormons are quintessentially American	75.00%	80.00%	75.00%	76.70%

Appendix C: Mitt Romney’s “Faith in America” Speech⁴⁰²

Thank you, Mr. President, for your kind introduction.

It is an honor to be here today. This is an inspiring place because of you and the First Lady and because of the film exhibited across the way in the Presidential library. For those who have not seen it, it shows the President as a young pilot, shot down during the Second World War, being rescued from his life-raft by the crew of an American submarine. It is a moving reminder that when America has faced challenge and peril, Americans rise to the occasion, willing to risk their very lives to defend freedom and preserve our nation. We are in your debt. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, your generation rose to the occasion, first to defeat Fascism and then to vanquish the Soviet Union. You left us, your children, a free and strong America. It is why we call yours the greatest generation. It is now my generation’s turn. How we respond to today’s challenges will define our generation. And it will determine what kind of America we will leave our children, and theirs.

America faces a new generation of challenges. Radical violent Islam seeks to destroy us. An emerging China endeavors to surpass our economic leadership. And we are troubled at home by government overspending, overuse of foreign oil, and the breakdown of the family.

Over the last year, we have embarked on a national debate on how best to preserve American leadership. Today, I wish to address a topic which I believe is fundamental to America’s greatness: our religious liberty. I will also offer perspectives on how my own faith would inform my Presidency, if I were elected.

⁴⁰² Transcription copied from <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1935707/posts>; as prepared for delivery.

There are some who may feel that religion is not a matter to be seriously considered in the context of the weighty threats that face us. If so, they are at odds with the nation's founders, for they, when our nation faced its greatest peril, sought the blessings of the Creator. And further, they discovered the essential connection between the survival of a free land and the protection of religious freedom. In John Adams' words: "We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion... Our Constitution was made for a moral and religious people."

Freedom requires religion just as religion requires freedom. Freedom opens the windows of the soul so that man can discover his most profound beliefs and commune with God. Freedom and religion endure together, or perish alone.

Given our grand tradition of religious tolerance and liberty, some wonder whether there are any questions regarding an aspiring candidate's religion that are appropriate. I believe there are. And I will answer them today.

Almost 50 years ago another candidate from Massachusetts explained that he was an American running for President, not a Catholic running for President. Like him, I am an American running for President. I do not define my candidacy by my religion. A person should not be elected because of his faith nor should he be rejected because of his faith.

Let me assure you that no authorities of my church, or of any other church for that matter, will ever exert influence on presidential decisions. Their authority is theirs, within the province of church affairs, and it ends where the affairs of the nation begin.

As Governor, I tried to do the right as best I knew it, serving the law and

answering to the Constitution. I did not confuse the particular teachings of my church with the obligations of the office and of the Constitution – and of course, I would not do so as President. I will put no doctrine of any church above the plain duties of the office and the sovereign authority of the law.

As a young man, Lincoln described what he called America’s “political religion” – the commitment to defend the rule of law and the Constitution. When I place my hand on the Bible and take the oath of office, that oath becomes my highest promise to God. If I am fortunate to become your President, I will serve no one religion, no one group, no one cause, and no one interest. A President must serve only the common cause of the people of the United States.

There are some for whom these commitments are not enough. They would prefer it if I would simply distance myself from my religion, say that it is more a tradition than my personal conviction, or disavow one or another of its precepts. That I will not do. I believe in my Mormon faith and I endeavor to live by it. My faith is the faith of my fathers – I will be true to them and to my beliefs.

Some believe that such a confession of my faith will sink my candidacy. If they are right, so be it. But I think they underestimate the American people. Americans do not respect believers of convenience. Americans tire of those who would jettison their beliefs, even to gain the world.

There is one fundamental question about which I often am asked. What do I believe about Jesus Christ? I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of mankind. My church’s beliefs about Christ may not all be the same as those of other faiths. Each religion has its own unique doctrines and history. These are not bases for

criticism but rather a test of our tolerance. Religious tolerance would be a shallow principle indeed if it were reserved only for faiths with which we agree.

There are some who would have a presidential candidate describe and explain his church's distinctive doctrines. To do so would enable the very religious test the founders prohibited in the Constitution. No candidate should become the spokesman for his faith. For if he becomes President he will need the prayers of the people of all faiths.

I believe that every faith I have encountered draws its adherents closer to God. And in every faith I have come to know, there are features I wish were in my own: I love the profound ceremony of the Catholic Mass, the approachability of God in the prayers of the Evangelicals, the tenderness of spirit among the Pentecostals, the confident independence of the Lutherans, the ancient traditions of the Jews, unchanged through the ages, and the commitment to frequent prayer of the Muslims. As I travel across the country and see our towns and cities, I am always moved by the many houses of worship with their steeples, all pointing to heaven, reminding us of the source of life's blessings.

It is important to recognize that while differences in theology exist between the churches in America, we share a common creed of moral convictions. And where the affairs of our nation are concerned, it's usually a sound rule to focus on the latter – on the great moral principles that urge us all on a common course. Whether it was the cause of abolition, or civil rights, or the right to life itself, no movement of conscience can succeed in America that cannot speak to the convictions of religious people.

We separate church and state affairs in this country, and for good reason. No religion should dictate to the state nor should the state interfere with the free practice of religion. But in recent years, the notion of the separation of church and state has been

taken by some well beyond its original meaning. They seek to remove from the public domain any acknowledgment of God. Religion is seen as merely a private affair with no place in public life. It is as if they are intent on establishing a new religion in America – the religion of secularism. They are wrong.

The founders proscribed the establishment of a state religion, but they did not countenance the elimination of religion from the public square. We are a nation ‘Under God’ and in God, we do indeed trust.

We should acknowledge the Creator as did the Founders – in ceremony and word. He should remain on our currency, in our pledge, in the teaching of our history, and during the holiday season, nativity scenes and menorahs should be welcome in our public places. Our greatness would not long endure without judges who respect the foundation of faith upon which our Constitution rests. I will take care to separate the affairs of government from any religion, but I will not separate us from ‘the God who gave us liberty.’

Nor would I separate us from our religious heritage. Perhaps the most important question to ask a person of faith who seeks a political office, is this: does he share these American values: the equality of human kind, the obligation to serve one another, and a steadfast commitment to liberty?

They are not unique to any one denomination. They belong to the great moral inheritance we hold in common. They are the firm ground on which Americans of different faiths meet and stand as a nation, united.

We believe that every single human being is a child of God – we are all part of the human family. The conviction of the inherent and inalienable worth of every life is still

the most revolutionary political proposition ever advanced. John Adams put it that we are “thrown into the world all equal and alike.”

The consequence of our common humanity is our responsibility to one another, to our fellow Americans foremost, but also to every child of God. It is an obligation which is fulfilled by Americans every day, here and across the globe, without regard to creed or race or nationality.

Americans acknowledge that liberty is a gift of God, not an indulgence of government. No people in the history of the world have sacrificed as much for liberty. The lives of hundreds of thousands of America’s sons and daughters were laid down during the last century to preserve freedom, for us and for freedom loving people throughout the world. America took nothing from that Century’s terrible wars – no land from Germany or Japan or Korea; no treasure; no oath of fealty. America’s resolve in the defense of liberty has been tested time and again. It has not been found wanting, nor must it ever be. America must never falter in holding high the banner of freedom.

These American values, this great moral heritage, is shared and lived in my religion as it is in yours. I was taught in my home to honor God and love my neighbor. I saw my father march with Martin Luther King. I saw my parents provide compassionate care to others, in personal ways to people nearby, and in just as consequential ways in leading national volunteer movements. I am moved by the Lord’s words: “For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me...”

My faith is grounded on these truths. You can witness them in Ann and my marriage and in our family. We are a long way from perfect and we have surely stumbled

along the way, but our aspirations, our values, are the self-same as those from the other faiths that stand upon this common foundation. And these convictions will indeed inform my presidency.

Today's generations of Americans have always known religious liberty. Perhaps we forget the long and arduous path our nation's forbearers took to achieve it. They came here from England to seek freedom of religion. But upon finding it for themselves, they at first denied it to others. Because of their diverse beliefs, Ann Hutchinson was exiled from Massachusetts Bay, a banished Roger Williams founded Rhode Island, and two centuries later, Brigham Young set out for the West. Americans were unable to accommodate their commitment to their own faith with an appreciation for the convictions of others to different faiths. In this, they were very much like those of the European nations they had left.

It was in Philadelphia that our founding fathers defined a revolutionary vision of liberty, grounded on self-evident truths about the equality of all, and the inalienable rights with which each is endowed by his Creator.

We cherish these sacred rights, and secure them in our Constitutional order. Foremost do we protect religious liberty, not as a matter of policy but as a matter of right. There will be no established church, and we are guaranteed the free exercise of our religion.

I'm not sure that we fully appreciate the profound implications of our tradition of religious liberty. I have visited many of the magnificent cathedrals in Europe. They are so inspired ... so grand ... so empty. Raised up over generations, long ago, so many of the cathedrals now stand as the postcard backdrop to societies just too busy or too

“enlightened” to venture inside and kneel in prayer. The establishment of state religions in Europe did no favor to Europe’s churches. And though you will find many people of strong faith there, the churches themselves seem to be withering away.

Infinitely worse is the other extreme, the creed of conversion by conquest: violent Jihad, murder as martyrdom... killing Christians, Jews, and Muslims with equal indifference. These radical Islamists do their preaching not by reason or example, but in the coercion of minds and the shedding of blood. We face no greater danger today than theocratic tyranny, and the boundless suffering these states and groups could inflict if given the chance.

The diversity of our cultural expression, and the vibrancy of our religious dialogue, has kept America in the forefront of civilized nations even as others regard religious freedom as something to be destroyed.

In such a world, we can be deeply thankful that we live in a land where reason and religion are friends and allies in the cause of liberty, joined against the evils and dangers of the day. And you can be certain of this: Any believer in religious freedom, any person who has knelt in prayer to the Almighty, has a friend and ally in me. And so it is for hundreds of millions of our countrymen: we do not insist on a single strain of religion – rather, we welcome our nation’s symphony of faith.

Recall the early days of the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia, during the fall of 1774. With Boston occupied by British troops, there were rumors of imminent hostilities and fears of an impending war. In this time of peril, someone suggested that they pray. But there were objections. “They were too divided in religious sentiments,” what with Episcopalians and Quakers, Anabaptists and Congregationalists, Presbyterians

and Catholics.

Then Sam Adams rose, and said he would hear a prayer from anyone of piety and good character, as long as they were a patriot.

And so together they prayed, and together they fought, and together, by the grace of God ... they founded this great nation.

In that spirit, let us give thanks to the divine “author of liberty.” And together, let us pray that this land may always be blessed, “with freedom’s holy light.”

God bless the United States of America.

Appendix D: Analysis of the influence of the coverage.

What influence did coverage of this Mormon issue have on Mitt Romney's campaign and on Mormonism itself? Of course, this study makes no formal assertions from its own data because it was not an effects study. Nevertheless, external evidence seems mixed and is included here as a discussion point for those interested in looking at the Romney campaign as an effects study.

First, did the extensive coverage hurt Mormon missionary efforts and the church's growth? The answer is mixed. The number of baptisms into the Mormon Church dropped about 5 percent between 2007⁴⁰³ and 2008.⁴⁰⁴ However, baptisms for 2008 were significantly higher than years as recent as 2004.⁴⁰⁵ So, the one-year drop may have been no more than an anomaly. Beyond that, 2007 was the year where the greatest attention was paid to Mitt Romney's Mormonism while 2008 was a year that included crackdowns against polygamists and Mormon involvement in Proposition 8.

Second, did it change public perceptions of Mormonism? Again, the record seems mixed. Gallup, in the wake of Romney's speech,⁴⁰⁶ noted that opinion remained

⁴⁰³ F. Michael Watson, "Statistical Report, 2007," delivered at LDS General conference, April 2008, at <http://www.lds.org/conference/talk/display/0,5232,49-1-851-9,00.html>, accessed August 19, 2009. These statistics do not break down baptisms by country.

⁴⁰⁴ Brook P. Hales, "Statistical Report, 2008," delivered at LDS General conference, April 2009, at <http://www.lds.org/conference/talk/display/0,5232,49-1-1032-10,00.html>, accessed August 19, 2009.

⁴⁰⁵ F. Michael Watson, "Statistical Report, 2004," delivered at LDS General conference April 2005, at <http://www.lds.org/conference/talk/display/0,5232,49-1-520-9,00.html>, accessed August 19, 2009.

⁴⁰⁶ Lydia Saad, "Percentage Unwilling to Vote for a Mormon Holds Steady," *Gallup.com*, under Politics, December 11, 2007, at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/103150/percentage-unwilling-vote-mormon-holds-steady.aspx>, accessed January 29, 2010. Saad's piece leads to a question: Why didn't Romney's speech and the coverage about it improve the willingness to vote for a Mormon? Perhaps media portrayals over the campaign had

unchanged about a Mormon being elected president. In February 2008, political pollster, researcher and Mormon Gary Lawrence⁴⁰⁷ undertook among the largest public opinion studies of Mormon perceptions ever undertaken. He talked with 1,000 Americans in his study and created more than 160 variables about Mormons in his research. Lawrence argued the Mormon image worsened during the campaign period by nearly five percentage points.⁴⁰⁸

Third, did the coverage improve public understanding of Mormonism? The answer seems unequivocally no. So, an unfortunate consequence of the coverage may be that Americans learned little concrete about the Mormon faith from it. Lawrence⁴⁰⁹ and Pew⁴¹⁰ found continuing ignorance and confusion about Mormon beliefs. After more than a year of campaign discussions, fewer than half of the respondents to Pew's survey could accurately identify Mitt Romney as a Mormon practitioner and Lawrence found ignorance about Mormonism to be his central finding. Early on in the campaign, *The Washington Post's* Chris Cillizza made the same point in his breakdown of several Mormon polls early in the campaign.⁴¹¹ The fact is, journalists tried to explain many

made it too difficult to cut through. Perhaps the speech just didn't work. It also shows a stubborn similarity to the opinion of his father's faith in 1967.

⁴⁰⁷ Stanford, Ph.D., communication, 1972.

⁴⁰⁸ Gary C. Lawrence., *How Americans View Mormonism, Seven Steps to Improve Our Public Image*, (Orange, CA: Parameter Foundation, 2008), 22.

⁴⁰⁹ Lawrence, *How Americans View Mormonism*, 5.

⁴¹⁰ Scott Keeter, "How the Public Perceives Romney, Mormons, Candidate Recently Discussed Role of Religion in Public Life," *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, December 4, 2007, at <http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=267>, accessed August 19, 2009.

⁴¹¹ Cillizza, Chris, "Parsing the Polls: Answering the Mormon Question," *The Fix*, *Washingtonpost.com* politics blog, February 14, 2007, at <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/thefix/parsing-the-polls/parsing-the-polls-the-mormon-q.html>, accessed August 19, 2007.

elements in Mormonism. That ignorance about Mormonism remained suggests journalists failed in their efforts.

A narrow sense of this study was that writers often “got” some fundamentals of Mormonism.⁴¹² They covered in some ways what makes Mormonism unique – and its central religious claims, at least at a basic level. This finding might lead to the conclusion that misunderstanding among the public should have been lessened. Indeed, most of the media outlets in the study, seeing the lack of public understanding about the faith, wrote articles explicating Mormon doctrine. But, over the course of the coverage, writers also focused on “polygamy” and similar doctrines that were not in the mainstream and sometimes distorted Mormonism. Writers also framed Mormonism as secretive, thereby implying that Mormons can’t be understood because of the secretiveness. Beyond that, the wide diversity of description of Mormon beliefs in the campaign coverage – and inconsistency among stories about which dimensions of the faith came up, may have abetted this confusion about Mormonism. Of course, it is quite possible that many people didn’t see or read the media reports, despite their strong presence.

It is hard to remember a religious discussion of one religion in recent decades of more detail and depth over two years in American journalistic discourse than what

⁴¹² The idea of “getting” to the essence of Mormonism is, in some ways, a largely subjective process. The typology selected here is more or less covered in the first Mormon missionary discussion. These include doctrinal ideas including prophets, the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith and restoration. This study asked merely if any of these foundational doctrines were mentioned – even to the point that an article said merely that the Mormon Church calls its leaders apostles and prophets. The study did not address the degree to which those doctrines were either explicated or supported theologically or portrayed favorably. So, to say journalists “got” Mormonism is a minimum standard.

happened during the 2008 Romney campaign and Mormonism.⁴¹³ If this assertion is true, then the coverage represents a case study of the best the news media can do with doctrinal discussions. That Americans continued to report significant ignorance about Mormonism into 2008 makes the Romney campaign coverage something of a rebuke of religion coverage generally. On the other hand, a recent study out of Pew suggested that Mormons, while not well understood, may be slightly better understood than other religions in America.⁴¹⁴

Fourth, did the coverage hinder Romney's chances of winning? As to effects on the Romney campaign, the best evidence of potential influence of the coverage is that Romney lost. Certainly, the play of Mormonism before the Iowa caucuses may have been deeply significant. What appears at least as likely is the media accurately reported on an electoral dilemma that Romney failed to overcome.

Therefore, this study, while not effects research per se, suggests that the influence of the coverage on the election outcome based upon external evidence seems real but slight. It might well be that the post-material issues involved in religion and the culture war are less susceptible to strong media influence. Irreducible difference among religions and between strongly held views on cultural war issues may be much less amenable to changing opinions through framing. However, the coverage may have

⁴¹³ Little analysis to support this assertion, other than reflect upon the religion and media literature, but it seems safe to say that this was among the most detailed discussions of any sets of religion doctrine and dogma in recent history of religious coverage given that only 7 percent of religion stories include discussions of doctrine. Certainly, there is nothing comparable in Mormon coverage's recent history.

⁴¹⁴ Pew Forum on Religion in Public Life, "U.S. Religious Knowledge Survey," September 28, 2010, under Pew Center Publications at <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1745/religious-knowledge-in-america-survey-atheists-agnostics-score-highest>, accessed December 27, 2010.

primed and maintained Mormon stereotypes in some voters' minds, thereby hindering Romney's ability to persuade during a close election for which he was well-positioned. This keeps the evidence completely consistent with assertions about the power of media framing.⁴¹⁵

Furthermore, Bolce and De Maio's⁴¹⁶ argument that media portrayals have caused negative perceptions of evangelicals gains somewhat greater traction, as well. Their argument was that there remains a persistent anti-evangelical bias in public opinion polls. Such a bias comes from media portrayals more likely than from interpersonal interactions with evangelicals, they said. Insofar as Mormons were seen as less favorable in public opinion polls after the campaign than before it, this study provides some support to this emerging line of research that suggests that media portrayals of religion are influencing public opinion about those religions and, therefore, are an important influence in the nation's cultural and political wars. To the degree that Mormonism remained opaque, confusing and secretive to voters, it hindered public perceptions of Mormons and Mitt Romney.

⁴¹⁵ Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible?*

⁴¹⁶ Bolce and De Maio, "A prejudice for the thinking classes."

Appendix E: Examples of Secrecy or Evasive Framing in the Coverage.

What follows are examples of ways that secrecy or similar concepts seemed part of the coverage, even when the word secrecy wasn't always used. In the analysis of the 205 stories that comprised this study, it seemed that reporters were frequently drawn to mystery, to secrecy, to evasiveness and to vagueness as a theme of their coverage, not just in the coverage of Mitt Romney but in Mormonism as well and in even the coverage of the religion of Mike Huckabee. What seemed clear is that secrecy was even more prominent of a theme than the quantitative data suggested. Therefore, this list was created as one way of suggesting for a future analysis how secrecy as a theme seemed to play out in the Romney campaign coverage that involved Mormonism and how it may play out in coverage of religion in general. This is a qualitative impression not subject to intercoder reliability. This is meant as supporting evidence to the finding that secrecy as a theme was present in the coverage. It might be said that a criticism of this list is that it conflates too frequently Romney's shift of opinion as being secretive or deceptive and that it includes Mike Huckabee. The point here is to convey one impression the data of the study seemed to convey: that secrecy or hidden agendas seemed a common theme in the coverage, and is, therefore, a suggestion for further research. This list includes examples from 59 articles – comprising nearly 30 percent of the overall coverage.

Table E.1: Qualitative examples of secrecy present in the coverage of Mitt Romney and his Mormonism.

Source	Headline	Date	Example
AP	Romney says he'd serve nation, not Mormon Church, if elected	7-Dec-07	"After declining for months to address the issue of his Mormonism directly... Romney mentioned the word Mormon only once"
AP	Analysis: Clinton, Romney	6-Dec-	"Clearly Romney changed his position

	shift course in White House race	07	in terms of delivering a major speech, said David Winston, a Republican pollster not aligned with any of the candidates.”
AP	Theology, doctrine, the root of evangelical-Mormon divide	6-Dec-07	“Despite 177 years of history, much about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the church of Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney remains a mystery to most.”
AP	Romney professes pride in Mormon faith despite questions	16-May-07	“Despite skirting inquiries about his Mormon faith during the first Bible Belt debate, Republican Mitt Romney said Wednesday he will not shrink from any future questions ‘because I’m real pleased with my faith.’”
AP	Hatch: Romney should say he's his own man	28-Nov-07	“He said there’s much "misinformation" in the public about the Mormon religion, though he declined to offer any specifics.”
AP	Romney: Repeated campaign attacks on Mormon religion troubling	23-Jun-07	“His unwillingness to address his past support campaign finance reform is part of a pattern that illustrates he will say and do anything in an attempt to win the nomination,’ Bounds said.”
AP	California's first Mormon studies professorship at Claremont	30-Oct-07	“Howard Wolfson, a spokesman for Clinton, fired back: ‘Hillary Clinton needs no lessons on character from a man who switches his positions on a daily basis.’”
AP	Huckabee declines to say what he thinks about Mormonism	4-Dec-07	“Huckabee declines to say what he thinks about Mormonism.”
AP	Huckabee asks if Mormons believe Jesus, devil are brothers	12-Dec-07	“He (Huckabee) also resisted wading into theology when pressed to explain why some evangelicals don’t view the Mormon faith as a Christian denomination.”
AP	Romney says he will give speech about his Mormon religion	3-Dec-07	“I can tell you I’m not going to be talking so much about my faith.”
AP	More temples and more followers mark Hinckley’s church tenure	29-Jan-08	“Mormon church finances are not public not even to its members but the church, which asks members to give 10 percent of their income, is believed

			to be one of the richest in the world.”
AP	Romney praised in Utah for avoiding the specifics of Mormonism	6-Dec-07	“Romney praised in Utah for avoiding the specifics of Mormonism.”
AP	Tight race in Iowa leads to risky decision	4-Dec-07	“Romney said Monday his speech will not focus on the tenets of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the formal name for his Utah-based faith.”
AP	Romney assails Sharpton’s comments about God, faith	9-May-07	“Romney, the former governor of Massachusetts, hasn’t addressed such questions so directly, but he has been clear that his religion wouldn’t dictate his policies.”
AP	Republican Romney to give speech on his Mormon faith	2-Dec-07	“But Huckabee, in an interview on ABC’s "This Week," took a pass when asked if Mormonism contradicts the central teachings of Christianity.”
AP	Analysis: Mormon leader’s death renews focus on Romney’s faith	1-Feb-08	“The death of Mormon church President Gordon B. Hinckley renews attention on Mitt Romney’s little-known religion, yet rather than being reluctant to discuss it, he’s making a public embrace that shows some shifting political attitudes.”
AP	Romney: Attacks on religion go too far	12-Dec-07	“The former Massachusetts governor also was asked why he used the term "Mormon" only once last week in a highly publicized speech about religion in which he said he was proud of his faith.”
AP	Analysis: Romney faith speech decision highlights advisers’ mark	12-Nov-07	“The presidential candidate has put aside his desire to deliver a speech about his Mormon faith on the advice of political staff.”
AP	Analysis: Romney also addresses authenticity question in speech	6-Dec-07	“Thus, he mentioned the word ‘Mormon’ just once in the address, and that was a promise not to run from his faith.”
CT	In-your-face-gospel riles town; Christian couple’s	15-Apr-	“ ’Something about the Mormon religion apparently disturbs a

	confrontational style gets hostile response in Mormon Nauvoo	07	significant portion of the American population,' pollsters said.; ...'Look at their history full of lies and deceit,' he said. 'We are a voice of truth and they will do anything to silence it.'"
CT	In election, spirited debate; Mitt Romney, a Mormon, has seen his religion drawn into the spotlight as the race for the presidency touches on sensitive issues	16-Dec-07	"Even among themselves, Mormons try not to speak about temple ceremonies outside the building itself. Mormons do not consider this secrecy, but reverence." "Romney is reluctant to discuss his religion, citing privacy and contending that candidates should not be judged on their 'brand of faith.'"
CT	Poll: Vote taboos in U.S. shift; Muslims, Mormons elicit unease in some	3-Jul-06	"In the past, church officials largely distanced themselves from public scrutiny, perpetuating the notion that the religion is strange and secretive.
CT	Mormons on a mission to tell their story; Romney candidacy shines spotlight on growing religion	14-Oct-07	... As the nation watches, the Mormon Church now stands at a crossroads, struggling with how to portray itself to the public and whether to be more forthcoming about church beliefs." "misunderstood rituals such as secret temple ceremonies and wearing of sacred undergarments."
CT	Romney a hard sell for evangelicals	9-Dec-07	"Romney made no attempt Thursday to address the tenets of his religion."
CT	Romney: No church above duty of office	7-Dec-07	"They are a mystery to many Americans, While any religion has its share of mystery, the Mormon Church has inspired a large army of critics."
CT	Can a Mormon be president? Romney must erase electorate's worries on his faith for '08 bid	17-Dec-06	"The God of the founders, the God on the coinage, the God for whom Abraham Lincoln proclaimed Thanksgiving Day is the ineffable, ecumenical, non-sectarian Providence
CT	Mormon mission	22-Jul-07	
CT	Playing the Religion Card a Bad Deal	10-Dec-07	

			of the American civil religion whose relation to this blessed land is without appeal to any particular testament or ritual. Every mention of God in every inaugural address in American history refers to the deity in this kind of all-embracing, universal, non-denominational way.”
LAT	A tale of two speeches	9-Jan-08	“As Romney’s and Obama’s contrasting experiences demonstrate, silence is seldom golden in politics.”
LAT	The Nation: It’s about faith with Romney, Religion aside, he hasn’t overcome what voters see as shifting positions	5-Dec-07	“But now that voters have met him, many are ready to offer an opinion: They still do not know who he is.; ...His failure to present a clear picture of his faith and its role in his life appears to be just one part of a broader challenge: proving to GOP voters that he is being straightforward with them.”
LAT	Campaign ‘08: Evangelicals may never take Romney on faith; A defense of religious liberty may not quell doubts about his beliefs.	7-Dec-07	“That leaves the court open, however, for pundits to pick apart Mormon theology and endlessly rehash some of the doctrines that may strike voters as unusual, such as secret ceremonies to baptize the dead and to ‘seal’ them in temple marriages so they can reach the most exalted realms of heaven.”
LAT	The Nation; Mormon Theology is striking in its differences	7-Dec-07	“Mitt Romney avoided discussing theology -- except for this: arguing that faith is properly a private matter does not diminish the importance of religious conviction; ... This tacit arrangement is a deep expression of social sanity and makes possible not only the separation of church and state in a nation where faith flourishes, but also the unparalleled flowering of every sort of religious institution -- devotional, educational and charitable -- that is one of
LAT	Regarding Media, Romney’s Religious rights Times/Bloomberg Poll; A Mormon for President? Voters	13-Jan-07	American culture’s unique achievements.”
LAT	Balk; More than twice as	3-Jul-06	“Romney is reticent about his religion, citing privacy.”

	manay say they'd oppose a Muslim or a Latter-day Saint than a Jew or a Cahtolic. Mitt Romney could have a problem		
LAT	Romney's JFK Moment	4-Dec-07	"So far, Romney's stance has been much more akin to 1928 Democratic nominee Al Smith, who largely refused to discuss his faith."
LAT	Romney's 2008 Bid Faces Issue of Faith; Massachusetts' GOP governor has political promise, but voters may not embrace a Mormon	10-Oct-06	"Steadfastly decreeing that his faith was a private matter."
LAT	Regarding Media: Press Preys on wrong question	8-Dec-07	"Romney, who used the word Mormon only once, told his audience."
LAT	Mormon-studies professorship is California's first; The program at Claremont Graduate University will be led by church elder Richard Lyman Bushman	30-Oct-07	"The religion, which is growing quickly worldwide but also raising puzzlement and even hostility."
Newsweek	Mitt's Mission: Voters can't connect with a candidate they feel they don't know. Mitt Romney has to decide how much he wants to share.	8-Oct-07	"For all his strengths, however, Romney has been unable to shake his authenticity problem, the sense that he is a glossy and robotic candidate who will say anything to get elected and believes nothing in his heart; The awareness of how odd this will sound to many Americans is what makes Romney hesitant to elaborate on the Mormon question."
Newsweek	A New American Holy War	17-Dec-07	"In College Station, Romney avoided explaining the particulars of the Mormon Church."
NYT	Romney, Eye on Evangelicals, Defends His Faith	7-Dec-07	"In a speech that used the word 'Mormon' only once.;" ... The passing mention of his Mormonism in his 20-minute speech here at the George Bush Presidential Library underscored just how touchy the issue of Mr. Romney's faith has been since he began running for the Republican nomination."
NYT	The Stay-at-Home Woman Travels Well	16-Dec-07	"He is trying so hard not to make the same mistake as his father at the expense of swinging a little too far the other way,' Mr. Eyre said."

			<p>“Everything he says sounds like he has practiced it three times.”</p>
NYT	The Presidency’s Mormon Moment	9-Apr-07	<p>“57 percent of respondents to a recent CBS poll said they know little or nothing about Mormon beliefs and practices. Mr. Romney needs to be their teacher, whether he likes that role or not.”</p>
			<p>“A majority of Americans have no idea what Mormons believe. ... Mormonism, it seems, is extreme in both respects: in its exaggerated normalcy and its exaggerated oddity. The marriage of these opposites leaves outsiders uncomfortable, wondering what Mormonism really is. ... The Mormon path to normalization over the course of the 20th century depended heavily on this avoidance of public discussion of its religious tenets.”</p>
NYT	What is it About Mormonism?	6-Jan-08	
NYT	Huckabee Is Not Alone In Ignorance on Mormonism	14-Dec-07	<p>“Americans are notoriously uninformed about faiths other than their own, and they are particularly perplexed about Mormon beliefs.”</p>
			<p>“But even for those of us in religions that were once considered cults by other religions -- my mom and another Catholic girlfriend actually had Southern Protestants ask them to lift up their hair so they could see the mark of the devil or the horns -- Mormonism is opaque.”</p>
NYT	Mitt’s No J.F.K.	9-Dec-07	
			<p>“But some scholars and evangelical Christians, who make up a crucial voting bloc in the Republican Party and consider Mormonism to be heretical, say that many voters would like to hear more from Mr. Romney about exactly what he believes, even though he has studiously avoided discussing this except in the broadest terms.”</p>
NYT	Crucial Test for Romney in Speech on His Religion	6-Dec-07	
NYT	A Mormons Ultimate	9-Dec-	<p>“Christian talk shows and Web sites</p>

	Doorbell	07	are now buzzing about Mormonism, discussions glazed with conspiratorial allusions to ‘what Romney didn’t say.’”
NYT	Scholar Becomes Chief Explainer in a ‘Mormon Moment’	28-Jul-07	“For the nation’s nearly six million Mormons, a largely insulated community that is barred from discussing rituals outside of temple, it is not a natural posture.”
NYT	For Romney, a course set long ago	18-Dec-07	“It was a reaction to his father’s careless candor that has led Mitt Romney to rely on polished sound bites of Republican orthodoxy.”
Time	The Religion Test	21-May-07	“Weisberg observes that modern political discourse seems to permit the exploration of candidates’ every secret except their most basic philosophical beliefs ... There has always been a certain virtue in vagueness when it comes to presidential piety, and Eisenhower, a Presbyterian convert raised by Jehovah’s Witnesses, benefited from discussing spirituality in the most general terms.”
Time	Can a Mormon be President?	4-Dec-06	“Mitt Romney will have to explain a faith that remains mysterious to many; Give them a chance to demystify their theology and customs; ... though Mormons are known for family centeredness, hard work and clean living, many Americans remain suspicious of them, maybe because so many aspects of their faith remain mysterious.”
WP	In Speech on Faith, Romney Vows to Serve ‘No One Cause’	7-Dec-07	“But he declined to attempt to demystify the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as some had suggested he might have to do.”
WP	Did Mormons Get a Bounce from Mitt?	8-Feb-08	“But politics doesn’t permit that sort of honesty any more than it allows a candidate to say, ‘My faith is private, okay?’”

Appendix F: Mormonism in the Coverage of Mitt Romney’s first two Campaigns in Massachusetts.

Long before the 2008 election ended with a rebuke from comedian Jon Stewart who called Romney a “salt-and-pepper, man-shaped-polymer-casing for a spiritual vacuum,”⁴¹⁷ Mitt Romney was seen as hard to know, even strange in 1994. In a 3,500-word Living section feature article about Ann Romney, the candidate’s wife, reporter Jack Thomas wrote,

“Suddenly, the room is empty.

At the far end hangs a portrait of Mitt and Ann Romney that is, in its perfection, eerie. He is perfectly handsome. She is perfectly beautiful. The background and lighting are impeccable. They are dressed flawlessly. No cowlicks, no wrinkles, no moles, not even a freckle. From the shadows, one imagines Rod Serling stepping forward:

“Welcome to the perfect town of Belmont and to this perfect home. Meet Mitt and Ann Romney, high school sweethearts still perfectly in love. Both intelligent. Both well-educated. Both millionaires. Their five sons are hale and handsome, and if the family dog, McKenzie, looks puzzled, he may be wondering how he arrived in this perfect place and what he’s doing in . . . the Twilight Zone.”⁴¹⁸

Whether or not there is any linkage between Mormonism as unusual, evasive or secretive and these portrayals of Romney as strange, Mormonism played a dense roll in the campaign coverage of Mitt Romney in 1994 and, to a lesser extent, in 2002. The coverage suggested many themes that recurred during the 2008 campaign, suggesting the role 1994 may have played in setting some of the frames through which Mitt Romney

⁴¹⁷ Jon Stewart, “Mitt Drops Out,” *The Daily Show*, February 7, 2008, video at <http://www.thedailyshow.com/video/index.jhtml?videoId=156317&title=mitt-drops-out>, accessed May 1, 2009. The climax of his monologue was a deleted “F--- you” directed at the former candidate.

⁴¹⁸ Jack Thomas, “Ann Romney’s Sweetheart Deal: She Decided Her Love of 30 years should be a Senator,” *The Boston Globe*, October 20, 1994, 61.

would be evaluated later, most especially the sense that Mitt Romney wasn't being fully forthcoming.

The first politicians to bring Mormonism up in 1994 weren't Democrats, but fellow Republicans, competing against him in the Senate primary. A member of Republican radio personality Janet Jechelian's campaign staff brought up the fact that Romney was a Mormon as soon as February 1994, saying Romney would have to explain his religion during the campaign.⁴¹⁹ John Lakian, another Republican rival, regularly brought up religion in that 1994 campaign. In one memorable debate exchange, Lakian stumbled, first calling Romney, "Mr. Mormon," then "Mr. Mormey," before getting to "Mr. Romney." Lakian's campaign also sent out a fundraising letter saying that Romney, "a former Mormon bishop," had said homosexuality is perverse.⁴²⁰ Lakian's efforts show this dynamic by suggesting there is something sinister about what might be seen as "hidden views" in Romney's approach to faith and public policy.

Lakian and Jechelian's efforts, however, were framed as a form of bigotry and seemingly hurt these Republicans' chances. Commentator Wayne Woodlief noted, for example, said that Lakian was a "lying laughingstock," whose chances were slipping away and whose back-firing efforts caused talk show commentators to "spit him out." The press thereby allowed Romney to "counterframe" this discussion of Mormonism as religious bigotry just as John Kennedy had done during his 1960 election.⁴²¹ Jechelian,

⁴¹⁹ Christopher B. Daly and Ann O' Hanlon, "Senator Kennedy's GOP Rivals Caught in Sniping Match," *Washington Post*, February 14, 1994, A9. See also, Frank Phillips, "Mormon Roots stir a 3-way GOP fight," *Boston Globe*, February 4, 1994, 21.

⁴²⁰ Wayne Woodlief, "Politics Inside Out: Lakian finds Truth Hurts and Again the Jokes on Him," *Boston Herald*, September 2, 1994, 5.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

for her part, was forced to rein in the aide who brought up Romney's faith.⁴²² At one point in the campaign, Lakian argued that Romney's cries of bigotry were red herrings, efforts to discourage discussion of any real issues. Lakian's newer argument suggested that his efforts to use Mormonism as a wedge issue had failed.⁴²³

It was the *Boston Globe* that kept Romney's religion alive after Romney won the Republican primary with a series of often hard-hitting stories. Indeed, the Massachusetts press – the *Boston Herald* and the *Boston Globe* together -- had at least 60 stories that discussed Romney and Mormonism during the 1994 campaign. Many of the articles seemed to build on the sense that Romney wasn't being forthcoming in his religious activities, and there was something sinister about what he believed.⁴²⁴ Some examples of the coverage:

- On May 22, the *Boston Globe* ran its article, "Romney quiet on religious beliefs," which introduced many doctrines – the Mormon view on women and the Mormon view on blacks – that were part of the Mormon experience, while noting that Romney was not going to talk about them.⁴²⁵

- On Aug. 26, Frank Phillips and Scot Lehigh wrote a detailed article that quoted a former Mormon, Peggy Hayes, who said Romney, acting in his capacity as a lay

⁴²² Daly and O'Hanlon, "Senator Kennedy's GOP Rivals Caught in Sniping Match."

⁴²³ Sally Jacobs, "Romney's 'red flag' challenged: Lakian says rival cites religion to stifle debate," *Boston Globe*, September 3, 1994, 21.

⁴²⁴ The reporting at this time might be argued as a genuine attempt to demonstrate how Romney's beliefs might influence his policies. Romney's Mormonism may very well have influenced his stands on gay marriage, for example. On the other hand, by picking challenging elements of Romney's faith, the reports also created and highlighted the conflict and horse race of a campaign.

⁴²⁵ Frank Phillips, and Don Aucoin, "Romney quiet on religious beliefs: Was local leader in Mormon Church," *Boston Globe*, May 22, 1994, 29.

minister, had threatened her with excommunication if she refused to give up her child for adoption. Romney's activities as a lay minister were, he said, confidential – adding to a sense of secretiveness in Mitt Romney. Romney issued a limited statement saying he disagreed with what she said, citing the fact that she hadn't heeded his advice and was never excommunicated. The article talked in detail about church policy dealing with adoption and unwed mothers.⁴²⁶

- Jack Thomas' October 20 feature on Ann Romney described the candidate's Mormon upbringing. Its "Twilight Zone" metaphor was near the top of the article, but also portrayed Romney as rich and out-of-touch.⁴²⁷

- A July article talked about Romney's secretive fundraising efforts among Mormons in Utah in Romney's behalf.⁴²⁸

- In Ben Bradlee Jr.'s 2,000-plus-word, front-page feature about Romney, it discussed in detail the way he worked with women in his congregation. Bradlee wrote,

⁴²⁶ Frank Phillips and Scot Lehigh, "Single Mother tells of the advice Romney gave as Mormon counselor," *Boston Globe*, August 26, 1994, 23.

⁴²⁷ Thomas, "Ann Romney's Sweetheart Deal." It may be something of a stretch to say that Romney's wealth is a heuristic for secretiveness or danger, yet that argument can be made. A classic stereotype of an Arab often includes exorbitant, carnal wealth. The stereotype of Judaism includes similar portrayals of Jewish banking and wealth. As part of that anti-semitic stereotype is the idea that the wealth is threatening and these people can't fully be trusted. Similarly, Mormon stereotypes often focus on wealth – including important historical articles like John Henry Lewis' muckrake – "The Viper on the Hearth," and Wallace Turner's *New York Times* series in 1966 during the campaign of George Romney. (See Appendix J and Appendix I for references and details.) The point? Continued attention to Romney's wealth as a framing choice might be seen qualitatively as a linkage to this kind of secretive, vaguely anti-Semitic stereotype.

⁴²⁸ Frank Phillips, "Romney camp fears Kennedy infiltration: Fund-raising plans kept secret," *Boston Globe*, July 29, 1994,

“some in the Boston area have crossed swords with Romney over the role of women in the church.”⁴²⁹

- On July 15, Lehigh and Phillips again brought up Romney’s faith by describing a talk Romney had with singles at a the Mormon Cambridge University Ward, saying that Romney allegedly said that homosexuality was “perverse.”⁴³⁰ The story was big news the next day, as well. Romney denied having said what was alleged or that it was taken out of context.

- In October, the pair of *Boston Globe* writers, who are now political commentators for the paper, wrote that Romney had counseled Mormon women against having abortions – saying this counsel wasn’t in confluence with his stance of being pro-choice.⁴³¹

The coverage was such that Romney “asked why the *Globe* was not posing questions about religious issues to Kennedy.” The *Globe* seemed to respond to that criticism, citing the fact that Ted Kennedy said he supports the ordination of women. The articles brought a rebuke from the Catholic Archdiocese. Its newspaper, *The Pilot*, wrote, “Does one have to be a cynic to think that *The Globe* would like to portray Mitt Romney as an anti-woman Mormon and therefore unfit for the Senate?”⁴³²

⁴²⁹ Ben Bradley Jr., “Romney seeks new chapter in success: Family, religion, politics shape Senate candidate’s life, First of two parts on the life of a prominent newcomer on the Massachusetts political scene,” *Boston Globe*, August 7, 1994, 1. (Bradlee’s article certainly includes defenders of Romney’s church work.)

⁴³⁰ Scot Lehigh and Frank Phillips, “Romney allegedly faulted gays in talk to Mormons,” *Boston Globe*, July 15, 1994.

⁴³¹ Scot Lehigh and Frank Phillips, “Romney admits advice against abortion: says he sees no conflict with political stance,” *Boston Globe*, October 20, 1994.

⁴³² James L. Franklin, “Cardinal criticizes *Globe*, Kennedy: Says question on women as priests inappropriate,” *Boston Globe*, September 9, 1994.

After Romney defeated his Republican opponents in the primary, polls showed Romney locked in a close race with the incumbent, Ted Kennedy. In mid-September, as it appeared that Romney would easily win the primary, Kennedy's nephew, Joseph P., told an interviewer that Mormons treat women and blacks as "second-class citizens." Romney's camp called Kennedy a religious bigot. The *Boston Herald* implied that there may have been some truth in the accusation that Kennedy made.⁴³³ Joe Kennedy called to apologize a few days later – which kept the issue in the news. Romney's campaign refused to accept the apology, saying it was sleazy.⁴³⁴ On Sept. 26, Ted Kennedy suggested that Mormons treatment of blacks was a legitimate question to ask Romney. Romney responded on Sept. 27 with a "dramatic press conference," where he accused Ted of trying to sully his brother's legacy – JFK had tackled the religious bigotry question in 1960.⁴³⁵ Kennedy backtracked.

Romney set the comparison to JFK that became so common in Romney's coverage in 2008 with this press conference and debate. Kennedy's most successful attacks on Romney were for his wealth and experience and having no blacks in his campaign upper management at Bain Capital.⁴³⁶

The amount that the Mormonism issue hindered Romney's campaign is unclear. In some sense, it seemed to work in Romney's favor as both Ted Kennedy and John

⁴³³ "Politics Inside Out: Joe K, Romney bear their crosses," editorial, *Boston Herald*, September 18, 1994, 37.

⁴³⁴ Joe Battenfeld and Andrew Miga, "Joe K phone apology to Mitt," *Boston Herald*, September 24, 1994, 1.

⁴³⁵ Scot Lehigh and Frank Phillips, "Romney hits Kennedy on faith issue: Says senator is betraying JFK's stand," *Boston Globe*, September 28, 1994, 1.

⁴³⁶ Joe Battenfeld, "Mitt rips Ted's character, says negative ads will backfire," *Boston Herald*, November 1, 1994, 1.

Lakian were easily framed as bigots, even allowing Romney to capture some of the mantle of JFK. But at least one story suggested the coverage did have a negative effect on some voters.⁴³⁷ Whatever the cause of his weakness, Romney lost.

Romney next entered politics in 2002, after his successful management of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, as he successfully ran for Massachusetts governor on the Republican ticket. Romney's 2002 campaign coverage still featured Mormonism, and the secretive stereotype re-emerged. However, coverage of Mormonism was only about half as frequent as it was in 1994.⁴³⁸ Romney's win made him only the second chief executive in Massachusetts history – other than Michael Dukakis – who didn't come from a faith tradition that had a large following in Massachusetts.

The *Boston Globe* speculated that some of the reason religion was less of a factor was that Shannon O'Brien, Romney's opponent and a Catholic, couldn't easily bring up religion without providing emphasis to her religion, which was going through scandal at the time. Similarly, religious sensibilities shortly after 9/11 made it less likely those commentators could easily talk about religion pejoratively.⁴³⁹ Nevertheless, Mormonism was still prominent in the campaign in 2002. Some examples:

- In September 2002, Robert Coard, the president of Boston Community Development at an event where he hosted Romney's opponent, called on Romney to explain his views on blacks and on women, given his church's stands. Romney

⁴³⁷ Wayne Woodlief, "Voters give Kennedy a 'Yes, but,'" *Boston Herald* October 6, 1994, 39.

⁴³⁸ Michael Paulson, "Election 2002 / Religion, Heritage: Romney win seen as acceptance of Mormons," *Boston Globe*, November 9, 2002, B1.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

responded by saying the church shouldn't be inserted into the campaign at all.⁴⁴⁰ The comment caused other editorial commentary in the press. The *Boston Herald*, much as it had done with John Lakian nearly a decade earlier, framed Coard's remarks as bigotry, suggesting he could not have said about Jews and Catholics what he said of Mormons without notice, so he should face rebuke for his comments.⁴⁴¹ Thomas Keane, another *Herald* writer, wrote on October 2, that "Mormonism doesn't deserve a backlash."⁴⁴²

- On Oct. 19, a *Boston Herald* column said Romney and O'Brian were not being true to their beliefs, and, as such, weren't worthy of total respect. The author, Joe Fitzgerald, made the point that Romney was responsible for the stereotype of secret running throughout his campaigns:

Romney, regurgitating the rationalizations that infuriated his followers in the past, told reporters his faith should play no part in his campaign. But if that faith is part of his life, how can it not be part of his campaign, unless the goal of his handlers is to *camouflage the man* in the packaging of the candidate.⁴⁴³

- In a discussion of gender's role in the campaign, the *Herald's* Beardsley said,

Meanwhile, Romney has fended off constant whispers that women can't trust him to protect abortion rights because of his Mormon faith, and that he treats his running mate Kerry Healey as window-dressing.⁴⁴⁴

Of note, Romney's treatment of women as a Mormon was a common theme in his

⁴⁴⁰ Elizabeth Beardsley, "Minority leader raises issue with Romney's religion," *Boston Herald*, September 27, 2002.

⁴⁴¹ "The Ugliness of Bigotry," editorial, *Boston Herald*, September 30, 2002, 18.

⁴⁴² Thomas Keane, "Mormonism doesn't deserve a backlash," *Boston Herald*, October 2, 2002.

⁴⁴³ Joe Fitzgerald, "Pols, Unlike Priests, shun the high road," *Boston Herald*, October 19, 2002, 4, emphasis added.

⁴⁴⁴ Elizabeth Beardsley, "Election 2002: Gender's Wildcard in Bay State race," *Boston Herald*, November 6, 2002.

Massachusetts campaigns, but was of much less concern in 2008.

- Another article talked about Romney's financial ties with the multi-level marketing industry, which is prominent in Utah, and described the MLM industry in secretive terms as the "cult of corporate America."⁴⁴⁵

- A September column criticized a Romney campaign commercial about his family. The column said, "Apparently, the Ozzie and Harriet act is intended to humanize Mitt. Or maybe he's trying to mitigate the Mormon thing by assuring us that he has only one wife."⁴⁴⁶

- In a humorous column by Margery Eagan, decrying the lack of preparation among voters on election day, she brought out the plastic stereotype, again: "'Like an alien,' said Sam Duggan, 46, Boston, of Romney. 'He doesn't drink. Smoke. Swear. I mean, creepy.'"⁴⁴⁷

- Margery Eagan also used something like that in another humor column quoting "Mittman No. 1," She wrote,

Referring to Romney's placid, calm, Mona Lisa-like demeanor Tuesday in the face of O'Brien's pummeling, he said, "I want a piece of that action. To be that chilled, that sedated. *Like the Thorazine shuffle*. Hey, now that the Catholics are on the ropes, what's the deal? Do these Mormons chant? Watch Lawrence Welk? I want to know: What makes

⁴⁴⁵ Cosmo Macero Jr., "Clip, Save, for November 5, purposes," *Boston Herald* October 25, 2002, 39. Macero begins his column talking about how the campaign had had "undisguised Mormon bashing."

⁴⁴⁶ Diane Williamson, "Mitt's ad panders to women: Shannon capable of taking the low road," *Worcester Sunday Telegram*, September 29, 2002.

⁴⁴⁷ Margery Eagan, "Look at the votes candidates are really going after," *Boston Herald*, November 5, 2002.

these people not tick.”⁴⁴⁸

- The *Boston Globe* brought much of his Mormon faith, including much of his Mormon mission, into its 4,600-word profile about him.⁴⁴⁹
- The biggest Mormon-related controversy in the 2002 campaign involved \$1 million donation to his alma mater, BYU, in 1998. The gift helped fund a school named for his father, George, at the university. The gift, reported, again, by the *Globe*’s Frank Phillips on page A1, went to “a school with antigay policies aimed at punishing, often by suspension or expulsion, students who engage in any homosexual activity.”⁴⁵⁰ Romney said the donation was for educational purposes, and he said no ability to change university policy in any event. He refused comment on the religion’s policy toward gays – cementing, again, the hidden-agenda quality of the construction of Mitt Romney. The article was followed by a prominent op-ed by a former BYU professor, Scott Abbott, who said the university did not have full academic freedom.⁴⁵¹

Whether his Mormonism was something that he overcame through political skill to win the election or that the religious environment in Massachusetts in 2002 provided him a unique opportunity, Romney won. As has been said, Romney’s Mormonism was hardly mentioned during his time as governor.

⁴⁴⁸ Margery Eagan, “For some, voting for Mitt could be Olympian effort,” *Boston Herald*, October 3, 2002.

⁴⁴⁹ Stephanie Ebbert, “Race for Governor: Mitt Romney Third in a series of profiles of the Massachusetts gubernatorial candidates; Romney seeks high office with confidence, pedigree,” *Boston Globe*, August 11, 2002.

⁴⁵⁰ Frank Phillips, “Romney gave to school with antigay rules: Aide defends gift to Brigham Young,” *Boston Globe* October 17, 2002.

⁴⁵¹ Scott Abbott, “Out of Utah. Does Brigham Young University represent a threat to Academic Freedom? An ex-professor states his case,” *Boston Globe*, October 27, 2002.

Appendix G: Results from a preliminary Assessment Comparing Mormonism in the coverage of Mitt Romney’s Campaign with George Romney’s Campaign in 1968.

Preparation for this study included significant, detailed qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data, including a preliminary content analysis that looked for specifics within the content upon which the later study was built. This preliminary study included analysis of the coverage of George Romney’s 1968 campaign. The story population of this preliminary study included more than 150 articles in the Mitt Romney coverage and more than 100 in the George coverage. This preliminary study included coding that looked for each specific dimension of Mormonism covered in the study and the words used to describe the faith.

Some observations that might be of interest to researchers that emerged from this study:

- The word “cult” was used in about a third of the articles that discussed Mormonism in the Mitt Romney coverage, but never in the George Romney coverage.
- The George Romney coverage had about 40 narrow, specific dimensions of Mormonism within the coverage while Mitt’s coverage had 60.
- The Mitt Romney coverage focused most frequently on these dimensions of

Mormonism:

Table G.1 : Selected specifics of Mormonism in the coverage of Mitt Romney.

Specific dimension	Percent of stories
Are Mormons Christian question	40
Church growth	33
Missionaries	31
Joseph Smith	30
Polygamy	26
Book of Mormon	26

- The George Romney coverage included many dimensions of Mormonism with the priesthood restriction comprising a much larger portion of the storyline, not surprisingly given that Mormons restricted priesthood at the time. Table G.2 shows some of the specific elements of Mormonism in the coverage of George Romney:

Table G.2: Selected dimensions of Mormonism in the coverage of George Romney.

Specific Dimension	Percent of Stories
Priesthood restriction	61
History	48
Lay leadership	48
Temples	36
Polygamy	24

- The idea that Mormonism may not be Christian merited no coverage during the George Romney campaign, though it was the most common issue in the coverage of 2008.

Why the difference? It is possible the evangelical opinions were more likely to make it into the press. Certainly, evangelicals made up a larger voting bloc in Republican primaries in 2008 than in 1968. It is also possible that conflict – in this case the conflict between religious denominations – became more of a news value to reporters in the intervening years. The differences among religion may have become more newsworthy.

- The foundational nature of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon in Mormon belief was also far less frequent in the coverage of George Romney than of Mitt. In some senses, then, the George coverage got less at Mormon fundamentals than did the Mitt coverage and got fewer fundamentals right.

- As far as polygamy, one way of looking at these data is to suggest that the proportionality of polygamy remained about the same in the two campaigns. However,

George's relationship to polygamy was more newsworthy. He was born in Mexico to Mormons who had moved there in an effort to flee from persecutions based upon polygamy. His Mexican birth was an issue in his Constitutional Fitness for office, and, therefore, significant. Such suggests that polygamy was more of a reversion to stereotype in the Mitt campaign than in the George campaign.

- A preliminary favorability scale led to the observation that the Mormonism of George Romney, while less varied in its coverage, was also less favorable in its treatment than in the Mitt Romney coverage. Mormonism's priesthood restriction in the 1960s likely had something to do with that observation.

- A Pew survey⁴⁵² was looked at, as discussed in the main body of this study, and it listed words that came to mind when Americans were asked what they thought of Mormons. Many of these were then looked for in the coverage of George and Mitt Romney using word search functions. The first six of these words were favorable – as described by Pew – and six were unfavorable toward Mormonism. From these 12 words, word searches were conducted to determine the frequency these words were used in articles in discussing Mitt Romney's religion and George Romney's religion. A quick analysis of those words suggests that words used to describe George Romney's Mormonism were more favorable. Second, the idea that Mormons might be a cult didn't register in 1968. Third, George Romney was often seen as devout.

The results of this preliminary study clearly presaged findings of this fuller study and suggest much for future research about how religious coverage and Mormon coverage has changed since the middle decades of the 20th century.

⁴⁵² Pew Forum, "Public Expresses Mixed Views of Islam, Mormonism," September 2007.

Appendix H: Historical Presidential Campaigns and Religion.

Article VI of the Constitution specifically forbids a religious test for the presidency or any other office,⁴⁵³ but voter concerns about the religion of a presidential candidate date to at least Thomas Jefferson and continue to this day. The history of religion in presidential campaigns shows how religion influenced presidential politics significantly and how news coverage was often at the heart of the discourse about a candidate's religion. News coverage may even have been potentially influential on how these religious questions played out. This appendix looks at the history of religion in four major presidential campaigns: The 1800 campaign, the 1928 campaign, the 1960 campaign and the 1976 campaign.

The 1800 campaign.

In 1796, with the closure of churches by the Jacobins in France, John Adams' Federalists sought to portray Jefferson in league with them because Jefferson was a deist. The religious division recurred in the next campaign.⁴⁵⁴ In 1800, Dutch Reformed minister William Linn published a pamphlet about Jefferson saying "on account of his disbelief of the Holy Scripture, and his attempts to discredit them, he ought to be rejected from the Presidency."⁴⁵⁵ Jefferson's supporters said Adams was a hypocrite.⁴⁵⁶ Purdue history professor Frank Lambert argues this debate and Jefferson's victory were

⁴⁵³ Constitution of the United States, Article VI.

⁴⁵⁴ Edward J. Larson, "Declarations of Faith," *Time*, November 2, 2007, at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1680275,00.html?imw=Y>, accessed November 14, 2007.

⁴⁵⁵ Frank Lambert, "God—and a religious president ... [or] Jefferson and the No Campaigning for a voter-imposed religious test in 1800," *Journal of Church & State*, 39, No. 4, (Autumn 1997), 769.

⁴⁵⁶ Larson, "Declarations of Faith."

important in confirming the lack of a religious test in American politics.

The 1928 campaign

The next major test of religion in presidential politics was the watershed 1928 election that pitted New York's Democratic governor, Al Smith, a Catholic, against Herbert Hoover. A central player in this story was *Atlantic Monthly*. According to St. John's University's Michael Hostetler, Ellery Sedgwick, the editor of *Atlantic Monthly*, first publicly broached the subject of the "Catholic Question" early in the campaign.⁴⁵⁷ The ostensible argument against Catholic office holders suggested that faithful Catholics would face a dual allegiance, putting devotion to the Pope at odds with loyalty to the country. So, Sedgwick invited an Episcopal lawyer, Charles Marshall, to write an "open letter" to Smith about the subject. Smith responded.

Smith wished to avoid the religious question altogether, but the publicity about Catholicism in the early campaign and the *Atlantic* article provided an opportunity, Smith hoped, to lay the issue to rest once and for all. Smith's response was, Hostetler said, a strong rhetorical defense, including a solid point-by-point rebuttal, asserting that he was Catholic and a patriot. However, Smith then let the issue lie dormant, save one other speech late in the campaign.⁴⁵⁸ Hostetler says the decision to downplay the religion issue ultimately cost him at the polls:

He portrayed himself as a man of practical action, lacking even the time to deal with an issue he relegated to the realm of the theoretical and imaginary. Despite giving in to his advisors' insistence that he answer Marshall, Smith never wavered from his "first thought" that a forthright statement of personal belief, 'just the faith that is in me,' was sufficient to

⁴⁵⁷ Michael J. Hostetler, "Gov. Al Smith Confronts the Catholic Question: The Rhetorical Legacy of the 1928 Campaign," *Communication Quarterly*, 46, No 1, (Winter 1998), 16.

⁴⁵⁸ Hostetler, 12-23.

end a foolish, sinister, and time-wasting discussion.⁴⁵⁹

Hostetler added,

In terms of his rhetorical effort, Smith may have been his own worst enemy. In spite of the fact that he and [a co-author] were able to write a well-received reply to Marshall that served to defuse the religious issue in the short run, Smith's rhetoric was ultimately undercut by the tension between his own unbending estimation of the Catholic Question and the political necessity of answering it.⁴⁶⁰

Smith lost in a landslide.⁴⁶¹ As was noted elsewhere, Al Smith's approach to Catholicism mirrored Mitt Romney's approach to Mormonism. It seems significant that both failed.

The 1960 campaign

The next major discussion of the religion of a candidate in American presidential politics was the campaign of John F. Kennedy, another Irish Catholic. In framing the coverage of Mitt Romney, a natural comparison to JFK often followed. Romney and Kennedy were both scions of politically connected families. Both would represent firsts of their religion upon winning the White House. Both hailed from Massachusetts. Romney's first campaign was against Kennedy's younger brother, and Romney himself evoked the comparison between the two. Furthermore, Kennedy's Catholicism plays prominently in *The Making of the President 1960*. Hence, Kennedy's story is important in the history of political journalism, and the campaign became a natural reference for the

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁶¹ Arguably, Mitt Romney followed the path of Al Smith. He tried to downplay religious differences. It appears that Romney relied on an analysis of his father's campaign – George Romney regularly talked about his private religious practice – that suggested he should talk about religion less often than his father did. Romney might have had more success had he looked more to the campaigns of Al Smith contrasted with JFK. One openly tackled the Catholic question and the other didn't.

story of Mitt Romney and other candidates whose religion might be an issue.⁴⁶² Hence, Kennedy's election requires a longer discussion.

Kennedy's Catholic faith was a dominant theme of the 1960 presidential campaign. Kennedy and his advisers felt Al Smith handled the Catholic question poorly,⁴⁶³ so rather than try to ignore the question as Smith tried to do, they focused on the Catholic question early and often, culminating in a famous speech in 1960 to the

⁴⁶² Even as the similarities between Kennedy and Romney seem obvious, the differences between them are just as important in thinking about the coverage of Romney's Mormonism.

First, the Romney campaign is in a different environment. No one of the stature of Norman Vincent Peale, nor Martin Luther King Sr., nor even the ACLU openly said Mormons shouldn't hold office or were a threat to religious freedom – making it harder for Romney to find a foil to build his campaign upon.

Second, Mormonism is a much smaller religion than Catholicism. While it has grown substantially since its founding 170 years ago, Romney's religious background might have only helped him carry a few Western states on the strength of numbers alone – whereas Catholics have many communities around the country whose votes helped Kennedy win.

Third, that Americans have limited understanding of Mormonism makes explication of religious practice by journalists of extra importance in framing Romney than belief was in Kennedy's campaign because Catholicism was widely understood.

Fourth, religious differences in the 1960s were shown less often in the press than today.

Fifth, Romney arguably stands on the other side personally of the modern cultural divide from Kennedy. Because Kennedy probably wasn't an especially good Catholic, he was a more secular candidate. It is impossible to know for sure, but considering his long-standing philandering, and his less-than-pious following of Catholic traditions of mass and prayer, See Thomas Carty, *A Catholic in the White House?: Religion, Politics, and John F. Kennedy's Presidential Campaign*. (Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 4. Carty quotes Jacqueline Kennedy in support of this assertion. One way of viewing his Catholicism is as one a cultural tradition, not of a deep-seated belief in the supernatural. Romney, on the other hand, having served as an important lay minister, in all likelihood, believes the significant Mormon stories of a boy prophet wandering from the woods with gold plates after talking with an angel.

Furthermore, there have been no Ben Bradlees for roommates of Mitt Romney. So his conservative, religious culture differs from the majority of the members of the American news media.

⁴⁶³ Hostetler, "Gov. Al Smith confronts the Catholic question," 12.

Houston Ministerial Association – a classic speech that makes up one of three appendices in White’s book about the campaign.

Kennedy began laying the groundwork for the issue in 1959 in the press. He wrote an article for *Look* magazine in March declaring the importance of the separation of church and state.⁴⁶⁴ He spoke at the Al Smith dinner in New York, telling audiences that he didn’t like the “red scare” tactics of the Catholic Church in dealing with Communism.⁴⁶⁵ Both were calculated to blunt criticisms that he would take orders from Rome – the classic concern of the Protestant establishment.

Indeed, Springfield College’s Thomas Carty said Protestant distrust of Catholicism had a long history dating back to the earliest days of the Republic, so responding was important.⁴⁶⁶ Numerous politicians and groups opposed Kennedy’s nomination on religious grounds alone:

- Kennedy biographer Robert Dallek records that Harry Truman didn’t think a Catholic could carry the White House and resigned from his position as a Democratic Convention delegate:

Although Truman cited Kennedy’s inexperience and not his religion, suspicion of a Catholic president undergirded his opposition. Less than a year earlier, Truman had privately argued that no Catholic could separate church and state issues as president, and in January he had warned that a Catholic nominee would inevitably attract substantial opposition on religious grounds.⁴⁶⁷

- Eleanor Roosevelt was another leading figure who expressed concern about

⁴⁶⁴ Carty, *A Catholic in the White House?* 72.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁴⁶⁶ Carty, *A Catholic in the White House?* 12.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

Kennedy. She told an AP reporter in 1958 that she wasn't sure Kennedy could separate the church from the state. A series of letters flew back and forth between them.⁴⁶⁸ (Of course, Roosevelt and Truman publicly supported Kennedy later in the campaign, Truman often accusing Nixon and the Republicans as being bigots against religion.)

- Leading figures among African-American preachers were concerned. "On Oct. 18, 1960, the Atlanta Baptist Minister's Union, including Martin Luther King, Sr., specified religious grounds for opposing Kennedy and publicly endorsed Nixon." King, Sr., later disavowed his stand, saying, "I'll vote for him, even though I don't want a Catholic," because of the gracious way Kennedy had treated Corretta Scott King during one of Martin Luther King Jr.'s imprisonments.⁴⁶⁹

- The secular group Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, the precursor to Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, asked many questions. Many members of The American Civil Liberties Union expressed unease about his stands.⁴⁷⁰

- Prominent conservative evangelicals, including Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, went public with their concerns of a Catholic in the White House. Others, including the Rev. Billy Graham, were privately arguing against Kennedy.⁴⁷¹

Kennedy ran in every state primary available in 1960, 13 in all, to show he could win in states without a large Catholic voice. The first major test came in Wisconsin.

Kennedy ran against Hubert Humphrey, a senator from neighboring Minnesota. White

⁴⁶⁸ Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2003), 233-234.

⁴⁶⁹ Carty, *A Catholic in the White House?* 91-92.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 68-72.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

records that when Kennedy won in Wisconsin, the returns showed that he did well in predominantly Catholic areas, but not in Protestant ones. The results hardly showed that a Catholic could win the White House, even though Kennedy won the primary.⁴⁷²

Wisconsin also illustrated to Kennedy the role the news media was playing in framing this Catholic issue – of underscoring this nexus between religion, the news media and presidential politics. An article in the *Milwaukee Journal* just a few days before the election showed voters by Democrats, Republicans -- and Catholics. Kennedy himself tracked how often papers brought the subject up. Bobby Kennedy blasted Walter Cronkite for raising the question in an interview; staff members said it was only an issue because the press said it was.⁴⁷³

In many ways, however, it may have been the press that helped turn the tide in Kennedy's favor later on – by isolating those against Kennedy, framing his opposition as bigots. During the West Virginia primary – with its predominantly conservative Protestant culture – Catholicism became the main focus of the race. White says Humphrey's strange decision to contest West Virginia – having lost a neighboring state like Wisconsin should have forced him out of the race – probably helped catapult Kennedy to the nomination because it ultimately proved Protestants would vote for Kennedy.⁴⁷⁴

Kennedy and his staff had worked for months in West Virginia, but as the primary drew closer, pollsters and pundits began to see Kennedy's religion as an issue that would be difficult to overcome. Only a few reporters, including David Broder, saw Kennedy's

⁴⁷² White, *The Making of the President 1960*, 94-95.

⁴⁷³ Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, 251.

⁴⁷⁴ White, *The Making of the President 1960*, 97.

progress on the ground the way it was: He was quickly becoming popular among voters.⁴⁷⁵ Kennedy tackled the religious issue head-on. On local television, with Franklin Roosevelt Jr. as his interviewer, Kennedy spent nearly 10 minutes on the religious question.⁴⁷⁶ His knock-out punch in West Virginia – a 54 percent majority in a state with few Catholics – not only left Humphrey out of the race, but showed Kennedy and the rest of the nation that he could win elections as a Catholic in Protestant areas.

White argues that Kennedy defeated Humphrey by turning the question of religion into a question of bigotry – opposing Kennedy was an act of bigotry. It was a difficult argument to rebut. The argument was also effective in the general election.⁴⁷⁷ During the fall, the press often focused mostly on the issue of Norman Vincent Peale’s opposition to the campaign. Early in the campaign, Kennedy asked Peale and Graham to sign a public pledge decrying religious bigotry in the campaign. Both refused. In August, Graham, Peale and other religious leaders met in Switzerland and discussed ways to counter this perceived threat of a Catholic White House. They decided to set up a national conference under the auspices of the National Association of Evangelicals. Graham chose not to attend, but Peale, author of “The Power of Positive Thinking,” came.⁴⁷⁸ On Sept. 8, the group met in Washington D.C. The setting provided easy access for the nation’s press to follow the group’s discussion about “threats to religious

⁴⁷⁵ Broder, *Behind the Front Page*, 244-246.

⁴⁷⁶ White, *The Making of the President 1960*, 107-108.

⁴⁷⁷ It was so effective, in fact, that Nixon felt he had been treated unfairly – the Catholic issue was a sort of dirty trick of the Kennedy camp. Carty believes Nixon’s perception may have laid the groundwork for Nixon’s callous decisions to rely on his own dirty tricks in later campaigns. See Carty, *A Catholic in the White House?* 97.

⁴⁷⁸ Carty, *A Catholic in the White House?* 55-58.

freedom.” Those threats were really a smokescreen to discuss the threat of Catholicism. To White, Peale “had given respectable leadership to ancient fear and prejudice.”⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁹ White, *The Making of the President 1960*, 259-263. See also appendix, 391-393.

Kennedy’s speech in Houston is a classic piece of rhetoric. He starts by using his religion as a strength:

I want to emphasize from the outset that I believe that we have far more critical issues in the 1960 election: the spread of Communist influence, until it now festers only ninety miles off the coast of Florida ... the hungry children I saw in West Virginia, the old people who cannot pay their doctor bills, the families forced to give up their farms.

Catholics were perceived as strong on Communism and strong on helping people in need. So, he wrapped himself in those principles.

He next obliquely accused people of bigotry – making a vote for him, a vote for tolerance: “the real issues of this campaign have been obscured—perhaps deliberately in some quarters less responsible than this.”

He then told his answers to questions about Catholicism:

- I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute.
- I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish – where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source.
- Finally, I believe in an America where religious intolerance will someday end – where all men and all churches are treated as equal.
- This is the kind of America I fought for in the South Pacific and the kind my brother died for in Europe. No one suggested then that we might have a ‘divided loyalty,’ that we did ‘not believe in liberty’ or that we belonged to a disloyal group.
- I do not speak for my church on public matters—and the church does not speak for me.
- If the time should ever come—and I do not concede any conflict to be remotely possible—when my office would require me to either violate my conscience, or violate the national interest, then I would resign the office, and I hope any other conscientious public servant would do likewise.
- ...nor do I intend to disavow either my views or my church in order to win this election.

Following the speech, Kennedy answered questions and promised to resign if there was ever a conflict between his conscience and his duty as President.

The attempt at getting positive coverage backfired. News media framed the story generally negatively. Rather than use the name of the group, the National Conference of Citizens for Religious Freedom, news media shortened it to the “Peale Group.”⁴⁸⁰ *Time* magazine headlined its coverage with an obvious swipe against Peale as “The Power of Negative Thinking.”⁴⁸¹ Within two days, several organizations responded publicly to the National Conference to counter what they saw as religious bias. Several newspapers, including the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, stopped running Peale’s column, and Peale backed off the comments the group made.⁴⁸²

On Sept. 12, Kennedy spoke to 600 people at the Rice Hotel in Houston at the Greater Houston Ministerial Association.⁴⁸³ White said, Kennedy “described these issues than any other thinker of his faith and “defined the personal doctrine of a modern Catholic in a democratic society.”⁴⁸⁴ White says no one knew the effect of the speech for sure, but it was played regularly across the country, and it marked the end of much of open Catholic discussion during the campaign,⁴⁸⁵ even though some evangelical leaders continued to bring the issue up.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁰ Carty, 59; Peter Braestrup, “Protestant Unit Wary on Kennedy, Statement by Peale Group Sees Vatican ‘Pressure’ on Democratic Nominee,” *New York Times*, September 8, 1960, 1.

⁴⁸¹ “The Power of Negative Thinking,” *Time*, Monday, September 19, 1960, at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,826609,00.html>, accessed, December 1, 2007. Peale’s most famous work was *The Power of Positive Thinking*.

⁴⁸² Carty, *A Catholic in the White House?* 62.

⁴⁸³ White, *The Making of the President 1960*, 260-263; 391-393.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 261-262.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁶ Carty, *A Catholic in the White House?* 63.

It became a natural template for Mitt Romney. Romney, however, chose a different course. While he ultimately delivered a significant speech much like Houston, he tried to tie himself into a different narrative – of America’s public religion and with most strains of Christianity. Romney might have had better success in trying the Kennedy approach, of changing the story into one of bigotry and tying the Mormon narrative into the country’s story of overcoming, not just relying upon the philosophy of a public religion, as has been discussed elsewhere. He might have spoken about it more often.

The issue of Kennedy’s Catholicism is more complicated than the narrative implies. First, the press – and White -- focused mostly on the attacks on Kennedy from the political right – the evangelicals. Carty notes there were significant debates with less coverage -- within liberal organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union and the group that became Americans United for Separation of Church and State, about their concerns about Catholic influence. ACLU’s leadership publicly questioned Kennedy’s unwillingness to answer its deliberate questions about his faith and the separation of Church and state – such questions, they said to critics, didn’t comprise a religious test but, rather, an exercise of their own free speech rights.⁴⁸⁷ Such relative lack of coverage about secular forces opposed to Kennedy suggests a secular bias for the national news media at the time.⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁷ Carty, *A Catholic in the White House?* 72.

⁴⁸⁸ This was repeated in the Mitt Romney campaign. While most of the press focused on evangelical distrust of Romney’s Mormonism, most polls showed as strong if not stronger opposition from the secular side of the political spectrum. In fairness, of course, Romney’s was only a campaign that focused on Republican primaries – where Christian conservatives are dominant.

Second, while it is true that many see the Kennedy election as a great victory for tolerance and hope, Carty writes that not everyone thinks so. Carty says that some authors, including Catholic scholar Mark Massa, have noted that anti-Catholicism “secularized” Kennedy’s speech and campaign.⁴⁸⁹ Kennedy answered the questions about his religion in a secular manner. Kennedy, therefore, may have been forced to compromise his principles to achieve the presidency. In this view, the speech in Houston “articulated” America’s “rite of passage” for Catholics and other believers – they may be forced to compromise their religious principles, and seemingly abandon their faith to achieve secular goals, or at least pretend to do so.⁴⁹⁰

Furthermore, the way the conservative evangelicals framed the discussion of Kennedy has hurt their ability to influence policy in the years since. Carty writes,

Peale and the NCCRF defended religious liberty and pluralism to justify skepticism toward a Catholic president. When Kennedy demonstrated full commitment to these principles, many liberal and conservative Protestants jettisoned the nativist argument that a Catholic could not preserve Protestant American cultural traditions. Kennedy’s pledge to maintain rigid distinctions between the sacred and the secular marginalized meaningful religious discourse in American public life. In future years, conservative Protestants regretted this political precedent that required American public figures to endorse the absolute separation of church and state.⁴⁹¹

Romney, therefore, may have been rhetorically boxed in by the terms for election set by Kennedy’s deeply secular speeches in 1960. To be sure, nothing in Mormon

⁴⁸⁹ Mark Massa, *Anti-Catholicism in America: The Last Acceptable Prejudice*. (Chestnut Ridge NY: Crossroad, 2003).

⁴⁹⁰ Carty, *A Catholic in the White House?* 5.

⁴⁹¹ Carty, *A Catholic in the White House?* 65-66.

doctrine forbids separation of church and state, and parts seem to encourage it openly,⁴⁹² but Kennedy's absolute separation made it harder for Romney to set a different course.

The 1976 campaign

A fourth significant campaign was that of Southern Baptist Jimmy Carter, who was the first believing evangelical to serve as president.⁴⁹³ As a moderate to liberal Democrat, Carter's deeply held religious views guided a politics that differed from the conservative politics of most evangelicals. Still, his religion was a deep part of the campaign. During his campaign, several articles appeared about his sister's deeply held mystical beliefs and how she had guided him to a religious conversion.⁴⁹⁴

And Carter, like Kennedy before him, chose to deliver a speech about his religion and misperceptions of his faith. Some Jews had expressed opposition to his candidacy as some Jewish voters worried that Evangelicals didn't show sufficient support for Israel. In that June 1976 speech to a Jewish group, Carter talked of an absolute separation of church and state and of his support for Israel.⁴⁹⁵ John Siegenthaler writes that his born-again Christianity was news for a week, but it faded quickly.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹² See Article 12 of the Church's Articles of Faith that says the church believes in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers and magistrates.

⁴⁹³ Other campaigns have had important religious overtones – including Barack Obama's. Nixon was a Quaker. The Rev. Pat Robertson, founder of the 700 Club, ran a significant campaign in 1988 as an evangelical Republican and the Rev. Jesse Jackson had significant success in the Democratic primary the same year.

⁴⁹⁴ Martin Gardner, "The Gift of Inner Healing," *New York Times*, August 22, 1976, 194; *New York Times*, "Poll Finds 34% Share 'Born Again' Feeling," September 26, 1976.

⁴⁹⁵ Charles Mohr, "Carter Gets an Ovation After Assuring Jews in Jersey on His Religious Views," *New York Times*, June 7, 1976.

⁴⁹⁶ John Siegenthaler, "Introduction," in *Bridging the Gap: Religion and the News Media*, by John Dart and Jimmy Allen. (Nashville, TN: Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center, 2000), at <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/PDF/bridgingthegap.PDF>, accessed November 30, 2007, 19.

Numerous lessons can be drawn for these religious candidates from the historical record – lessons Romney might have learned. Trying to ignore the issue as Smith did, didn't make the issue go away. Second, framing the issue as one of bigotry, as Kennedy did, could be helpful. And keeping church and state separate is important to discuss. The historical record therefore suggests that Romney made some tactical mistakes in approaching his religion. Then again, if Mormonism is an especially unique religion then there may have been nothing he could have done to solve his Mormon issue in the end.

Appendix I: Mormons who Ran for President.

Save for the campaigns of the two Romneys, candidacies of Mormons for president have been largely forgotten outside Mormon circles. That history deserves some retelling here because it provides context for the Romney campaign in 2008, especially the campaign and coverage of his father. Mitt Romney's is the fifth Mormon presidential campaign of any significance. The other four major candidates were: Joseph Smith, George Romney, Morris Udall, and Orrin Hatch. In campaigns for president of these major campaigns, the press often played a role in framing the candidates and their Mormon religion.

Joseph Smith's campaign

The first Mormon to run for president was Joseph Smith, the church's founder. Smith was shot and killed by a mob in Illinois before the election, becoming the first candidate or American president to die that way. The size of the conspiracy that led to his death is of historical debate, but, according to historians Newell Bringhurst and Craig Foster, Smith's campaign was part of the reason for his assassination.⁴⁹⁷ Regardless, his death created a chilling type for future campaigns and presidencies.⁴⁹⁸

Smith's platform called for the abolition of slavery by paying slave owners from the sale of federal lands and from the reduction of salaries of governmental officials. He called for the humane treatment of prisoners, and the release of many, including the abolition of prison for debtors. He called for a national currency, a national bank and the

⁴⁹⁷ Newell G. Bringhurst and Craig Foster, *The Mormon Quest for the Presidency*. (Ann Arbor, MI: John Whitmer Books, 2008), 45-49.

⁴⁹⁸ The first two American political martyrs lived within 150 miles of each other, Smith and Abraham Lincoln.

expansion of the United States westward and northward and southward, if Mexico and Canada concurred. He wished for stronger executive with power to break up mobs and a smaller, more efficient House of Representatives.⁴⁹⁹ As with so many other things he did, his platform received broad national attention, some hugely negative and some favorable.⁵⁰⁰

George Romney's campaign.

The second major Mormon candidacy was George Romney's candidacy. Because he was the father of Mitt Romney, his campaign – and its coverage – deserves significant discussion, especially given that some stories during the campaign of Mitt Romney suggested that George's Mormonism was of little consequence.⁵⁰¹ Romney, a former Michigan governor, led Lyndon Johnson and Robert Kennedy in opinion polls in 1966 before fading.⁵⁰² He is the only Mormon who might have been genuinely considered the national front-runner. Romney's campaign ultimately became framed as a joke candidate – a zealous, unknowable missionary. Scores of stories of the era talked about how his Mormon faith may have influenced him or portrayed him as a devout Mormon. More than 120 news stories in the *New York Times*, the Associated Press, *Time*, *Newsweek* and the *Washington Post*, mentioned George Romney and his Mormonism in the years leading up to and during his presidential campaign in 1967 and 1968.

⁴⁹⁹ Bringhurst and Foster, *The Mormon Quest for the Presidency*, 269-281.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 30-32.

⁵⁰¹ Charles Krauthammer, "Playing religion card a bad deal," *Chicago Tribune*, December 10, 2007, 21.

⁵⁰² Associated Press, "President Trails Romney 46% to 54, in Harris Poll," *New York Times*, November 21, 1966, 22.

The coverage of George Romney in these national publications illustrates Chiung Hwang Chen's assertion that a model minority discourse was used to frame Mormons during this time, and shows the "golden age" of Mormon coverage was more dynamic than just unalloyed admiration.⁵⁰³ The framing of George Romney himself was as a zealous Mormon missionary – hard to know⁵⁰⁴

In many ways, the coverage was truly golden about Romney's religious background. He was often called a "devout" Mormon whose habits included not working on Sundays and not drinking alcohol, and a man who donated 10 percent of his income to his church. Many pictures showed him with a smiling, Mormon family. Relatively few talked about polygamy unless a news story demanded it.⁵⁰⁵ Many talked about Mormon habits of clean-living or even how his religion might shape his thinking.⁵⁰⁶

But George Romney was also seen as an odd zealot with a tendency toward believing unusual ideas and toward sanctimony. He jogged while playing golf – three balls at a time, all colored so he could see them in the dark. He effectively stalked his wife, Lenore, until she consented to marry him. His temple excluded people. His religion discriminated against blacks, despite his own record on civil rights. Romney grew from a polygamous background in Mexico, and he wore funny underwear.

⁵⁰³ Chen and Yorgason, "Those Amazing Mormons;" Shipps, "From Satyr to Saint;" and Shipps, "Surveying the Mormon Images Since 1960."

⁵⁰⁴ See Appendix I.

⁵⁰⁵ See Appendix G. In an earlier iteration of this study, the George Romney coverage was compared to the Mitt Romney coverage – not including the coverage in the *Chicago Tribune* nor the *Los Angeles Times*. The George Romney coverage referenced polygamy about the same proportion of times as the Mitt coverage.

⁵⁰⁶ Hess and Broder, "George Romney: Candidate Whose Problem is Words."

Mormonism was integral to the construction of George Romney, as it was with his son 40 years later. George Romney was introduced to America as a Mormon before he ever sought political office. He gained full national prominence in 1959, when *Time* magazine put him on the cover for his work as president of American Motors Corporation and Mormonism was nearly the first thing off of the writer's pen. Mormonism remained central to his coverage for the next 10 years, especially when he began running for president in 1966.⁵⁰⁷

Here is the first paragraph of that 1959 cover story:

George Wilcken Romney, at 51, is a broad-shouldered, Bible-quoting broth of a man who burns brightly with the fire of missionary zeal. On the Lord's Day, and whenever else he can find time, he is a fervent apostle for the Mormon Church, in which he is a high official.⁵⁰⁸

This was a theme throughout Romney's early public career. His Mormonism was seen as a kind of devout, All-American quality. It defined him as a clean-cut, trustworthy person with great missionary zeal. This early article seemed to set the stage for much of the framing that came later: For example, it said that Romney said his first act as president of American Motors was to pray and then set to work.

Says he: "Prayer is not a substitute for work. First we have to do all we can ourselves to understand a situation. Then when we ask for help,

⁵⁰⁷ Many writers in the 2008 campaign, David Broder being a notable exception, suggested that Mormonism was not a significant issue in the coverage of George Romney. While it is true that his Mormonism received less coverage than the coverage of his son, it was a major factor in that campaign.

⁵⁰⁸ "The Dinosaur Hunter," *Time*, Monday, April 6, 1959, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,810925,00.html>, accessed January 3, 2009.

sometimes it is very evident, sometimes it isn't. Sometimes we may well be helped by not getting a decision."⁵⁰⁹

The article, which lacks a byline, points out Romney's volunteer lay leadership in Mormon circles. It points out his tithing, the fact that he didn't drink, smoke or swear. *Time's* description of Mormon organization is roughly accurate, but incorporates a language different from the way Mormons would describe their organization. So, by saying that Romney "often travels to other Mormon churches to set up conferences or deliver sermons," the writer puts Mormonism in the mainstream of Christianity.

But there were other parts of this story that kept Mormonism outside the mainstream – keeping them at arms length in the manner of the model minority discourse. One part was a description of Romney being "the grandson of a Mormon who sired 30 children by four wives, he was born into a monogamous family in Colonia Dublan, Mexico." Another describes Romney's missionary experiences in Great Britain, where he teamed up with a socialist for his speeches in Hyde Park – they agreed to heckle each other to attract crowds. The writer quotes Romney, "I suppose some people thought I was eccentric. But I found it an illuminating, uplifting experience."⁵¹⁰

This important early article also illustrates a recurring theme of Romney's coverage: The missionary zeal. It describes Romney's obsessive courting of his wife, Lenore – he followed her in a separate car when she was on a date with other young men and tried to prevent her kissing other boys during rehearsals for school plays. Then, the story highlights Romney's early morning exercise habits, jogging while playing golf with illuminated golf balls. George is quoted as saying, "Our body is the temple of our spirit." Missionary zeal makes George Romney as a Mormon both strange and vaguely dangerous, but the story is very favorable one for both Romney and Mormonism – that of a devout, hardworking and trustworthy man with original ideas for a time that needed

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

them.⁵¹¹

The coverage was also favorable when in 1962, *Newsweek* introduced George Romney to America,⁵¹² before winning his first campaign for governor of Michigan, as having “some indefinable alchemy,” making him overnight a serious candidate for the presidency.⁵¹³ Then, in the second paragraph, his Mormon devotion again became paramount. “After a dramatic, 24-hour fast where he prayed for ‘guidance beyond that of man.’” The article talked in detail about Romney’s handsome good looks, including a jut jaw, a broken nose, a 5-11 frame, and “rugged, lean features.” Here he was, again, a handsome Mormon missionary. The article too, spoke of Romney’s golf habits, of his polygamist grandfather and his mission to Europe (and as a missionary for the Rambler). It talked of his lay ministry service and the fact he didn’t smoke or drink and only said an occasional “damn.” The article also brought up two other important issues that became part of George Romney’s career as a Mormon in politics: the fact that George was born in Mexico, his parents having lived there because of religious persecution over Mormon polygamy – making whether he was a natural-born American citizen part of the campaign, and that the LDS church at the time denied the priesthood to men of African descent.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹¹ This article also illustrates powerfully David Broder’s point about the influence of the nation’s press on national elections from that era – they were the great suggesters of whom potential candidates should be. Romney is mentioned as presidential timber – this is before he has even run for governor – in this article, a full nine years before the 1968 election.

⁵¹² “Dark Horse, Off and Running,” *Newsweek*, February 19, 1962, 23-28.

⁵¹³ *Newsweek* here compares Romney with Woodrow Wilson and Wendall Wilkie as political figures who jumped onto the stage. So, just as Mitt Romney was often compared with JFK, George Romney’s comparison was Wendall Wilkie, in this article at least.

⁵¹⁴ The priesthood issue was evidently first brought up by the AFL-CIO’s Michigan leadership, according to *Newsweek*. They also argued that Romney was too good to be true. Indeed, the AFL-CIO published a pamphlet called *Who is the real George Romney?* This pamphlet lays out Romney’s statements about certain issues and contrasts them with his supposed actions with the clear intent to show that Romney’s actions don’t match his

Indeed, the writing of this early period of George Romney's career was so favorable that a reader might assume the coverage of Mormonism of George Romney to be much more favorable than the Mormonism coverage of Mitt Romney. But, as it turned out, the George coverage might be seen as more unfavorable. About two in three George Romney stories of this period where his Mormonism is a central theme, the tone was negative.⁵¹⁵

Perhaps the most important stories – and potential influences on the coverage⁵¹⁶ -- about Mormonism during this period comprised a three-part series in *New York Times* by Wallace Turner in 1965. In this three-part account, Romney is only mentioned obliquely. Turner's detailed account of Mormonism started with discussing that the growing faith was entering a time of internal dissent from liberals worried about the church's priesthood restriction and about the growing strength of conservatives within the faith, led by Ezra Taft Benson.⁵¹⁷

Turner framed Mormonism as an authoritarian faith. His lead: “SALT LAKE CITY – The great socio – economic – theocratic organization that built this city has entered a period of ferment.”

words – that he is a hypocrite. This was significant because this line of attack became a dominant way to attack Mitt Romney in the 2008 campaign. For whatever reason, this line of attack didn't resonate with George Romney's coverage of Mormonism.

⁵¹⁵ This came from a preliminary study of Mormonism and is my systematic, qualitative assessment of the relative tone of the articles. It was not subject to intercoder reliability.

⁵¹⁶ The influence of this series is shown by David Broder. In his book about the 1968 campaign, *The Republican Establishment*, Broder and Stephen Hess cite Turner's work on Mormonism as their background on Mormonism for their discussion of the George Romney campaign.

⁵¹⁷ Wallace Turner, “Mormons Gain Despite Tensions,” *New York Times*, December 27, 1965, 1.

He later describes Mormonism as though he is an anthropologist or as a botanist evaluating a specimen under glass. He wrote:

What is a Mormon?

He is two things – a member of a religious denomination, and a member of one of the most unusual, most tightly knit organizations in American life, one that impinges on every facet of his life.

His story continues in that vein – how a Mormon “He” does this or “He” does that. To Turner, Brigham Young is “blunt and earthy” and an “exceptionally shrewd man.” He also talked about how “lines of control radiate” from Salt Lake City. Turner’s specific descriptions of doctrine were largely accurate and broad, touching on eternal marriage and education and tithing. But the only lay people discussed specifically are those disaffected by the faith and the only lay people quoted by name are Gerald and Sandra Tanner, whose work in subsequent years were as among the most famous anti-Mormon writers in Utah. The article is accompanied by a sidebar about polygamy, and two Stanford students were mentioned in the main article beginning to publish an academic journal called *Dialogue*, which Turner viewed as an outlet for liberal and dissatisfied Mormons. The second and third articles in the series were about the vastness of Mormon business holdings and about the Mormon doctrine denying men of African descent the priesthood.

Time magazine’s articles about Mormonism in the 1960s seem to illustrate the idea that Mormons were “model minorities.” A 1962 article about the church – and Romney’s prospects – also talked about the church’s denial of men of African descent the priesthood:

Before he announced last month that he would run as a Republican candidate in Michigan’s 1962 gubernatorial race. George Romney fasted

and prayed for 24 hours for divine guidance. His act of faith called attention to the fact that Romney, a remarkably successful and personable industrialist and community leader, is also a devout member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Being a Mormon has never been a political liability in the past (in Utah, it is virtually a political requirement), and there was no reason to believe that it would hurt Romney in Michigan. But George Romney is being touted as a promising contender for the 1964 G.O.P. presidential nomination—and on the national scene his religion might stir up a real controversy, just as John F. Kennedy’s Catholicism did in 1960. Around Michigan last week the word was being spread that the Mormon Church looks on Negroes as an inferior race, cursed by God.⁵¹⁸

Then, the article brought up the issue of Romney’s supposed sanctimony:

The Real Issue. Romney’s Mormonism became an open issue in Michigan when he fasted and prayed before announcing for the governorship. Cried Gus Scholle, president of the Michigan A.F.L.-C.I.O. “This business of trying to put on an act of having a pipeline to God in order to become Governor of Michigan is about the greatest anticlimax to a phony stunt that I’ve ever seen.”⁵¹⁹

In 1963, *Time* again brought up the issue of priesthood restriction. The tone brought into question central tenants of faith – prophetic leadership and revelation. The article implied that Mormon leadership was bigoted, suggesting that revelation was not really part of Mormon practice or belief in the 1960s:

By these doctrines, Mormons have four sources of divine truth: the Bible, the ‘*continuous revelation*’ granted to Smith and his successors, and Smith’s two *pseudo*-Biblical works, The Book of Mormon and The Pearl of Great Price. Since he became Prophet in 1951, McKay *has never admitted that God spoke to him*. Few Mormons have any hope that revelations on the Negro would come to McKay’s probable successor, President Joseph L. Smith, 86, a *stern, old-fangled moralist* (and grandnephew of the Founder) who believes that “darkies are wonderful

⁵¹⁸ “The Mormon Issue,” *Time* magazine, March 2, 1962, at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,939876,00.html>, accessed February 26, 2009.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*

people.”⁵²⁰

By April 1967, when the church was again the topic of a *Time* article, the magazine had sent a writer to cover the church’s annual conference in Salt Lake City. The conclusion illustrates the problem of the model minority. To truly be part of the “mainstream,” Mormonism needed to change. The conclusion was:

Outwardly secure and successful, the unique religion created by Joseph Smith and carried to Utah by Brigham Young is nonetheless at a testing time. Much as in the churches of mainstream Christianity, Mormonism is being prodded out of its old ways by a new generation of believers who temper loyalty to the faith with a conviction that its doctrines need updating.⁵²¹

The article then went further, suggesting what the church had to do to meet mainstream acceptance:

Latter-Day Saints can now question some of the church’s peculiar disciplines without being stigmatized by their neighbors. Although the U.S. Surgeon General’s report on smoking confirmed the Mormon conviction that tobacco is an evil, there is widespread feeling that the church should relax its ban on coffee and tea. “A lot of good Mormons drink coffee now,” says one Utah saint. “The church should not make its prohibition a commandment.” Still another quaint tradition is the Mormons’ use of ‘temple garments’—a torso-covering form of underclothing signifying their covenant with the Lord—which devout believers, both women and men, are expected to wear.⁵²²

On the other hand, another article in *Time* shows how the model minority discourse serves to validate the status quo. In 1966, an article speculated on America’s willingness

⁵²⁰ “The Negro Question,” *Time*, Friday, October, 2, 1963, at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,873781,00.html>, accessed February 26, 2009, emphasis added.

⁵²¹ “Prosperity and Protest,” *Time*, Friday April 14, 1967, at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,836990,00.html>, accessed February 26, 2009.

⁵²² *Ibid.*

to not only accept a Catholic president in John Kennedy, but a Mormon president (George Romney) and a potential Jewish vice president (New York Sen. Jacob Javits.) The Mormonism of Romney here serves to validate a status quo and American ideal by showing how accepted he was by the mainstream.⁵²³ Beyond these important articles about Mormonism, Romney's religion was a large part of much of the coverage – figuring often into day-to-day routine during the campaign era. Some examples:

- Before he became a declared candidate, Romney toured Western states with a large press entourage – a trip where he gained his reputation as a person not careful with words. Romney spoke in a Mormon chapel in Anchorage about racial injustice.⁵²⁴ He visited Salt Lake City and Rexburg, Idaho, a boyhood home – and a Mormon stronghold, home of then Ricks College, what became BYU-Idaho.⁵²⁵

- In Salt Lake City on the same trip, members of the Salt Lake Ministerial society asked him about church policy regarding African-Americans and the priesthood.

Romney was unable to distance himself sufficiently from the church, some reporters said. Explicit comparison to the Kennedy campaign was made, but Romney was shown as having failed while JFK succeeded.⁵²⁶

- Most historians argue that Romney's campaign imploded when he made his famous “brainwashing” argument to a Michigan television personality in late summer

⁵²³ “A Mormon-Jewish Ticket.” *Time*, Friday, May 13, 1966, at, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,835482,00.html>, accessed February 27, 2009.

⁵²⁴ Warren Weaver, “Romney Assails Racial Injustice.” *New York Times*, February 20, 1967, 30.

⁵²⁵ “Romantic Interlude.” *Newsweek*, March 6, 1967, 34-37.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*; Warren Weaver, “Romney Denies Mormon Policy Curbs His Civil Rights Efforts.” *New York Times*, February 21, 1967; See also, David Broder, “Clergy hear Romney on Church Bias.” *Washington Post Times-Herald*, February 21, 1967, A1.

1967. No news writer explicitly expanded the comparison to his belief in his Mormon faith, but one *New York Times* reporter, attending church conference in the fall of 1967, tied brainwashing into the idea of a backward church leading its members the wrong way by quoting one member, a wife of a bishop, saying “the rest of us, we’ve all been brainwashed.”⁵²⁷

- In late April 1967, Romney visited Morehouse College in Atlanta. Again, Romney faced questions about his faith’s views on integration. He responded by talking about some church beliefs that supported integration, but refused to fully distance himself from the faith. A *Washington Post* reporter chose this speech for a comparison to Kennedy, still another speech arguing that he failed. He noted that an adviser looked down at the floor while Romney spoke.⁵²⁸

- In the summer of 1967, the Summer of Love in San Francisco, Romney visited Golden Gate Park and visited the diggers giving out free food there. Romney joined them and reporters noted the contrast between conservative Romney and those with whom he spoke. One hippie asked him if the country should legalize Pot. The article said Romney, a Mormon, told his audience that he didn’t believe in the use of tobacco, alcohol or other drugs, and, therefore, said no.⁵²⁹

- When Romney became the first candidate to disclose his income tax return – he did so to a *Look* magazine reporter in late 1967 -- reporters noted his tithing to the

⁵²⁷ Robert Windeler, “Mormon leaders heard by 25,000.” *New York Times*, October 2, 1967, 52.

⁵²⁸ Andrew Glass, “Romney cites own racial creed in response to Mormon Doctrine.” *Washington Post Time Herald*, May 1, 1967, A1.

⁵²⁹ United Press International, “Romney, Flower Children Dine Out in Hippiland,” *San Mateo Times*, Saturday, September 23, 1967, 3.

Mormon church.⁵³⁰

• After his brainwashing remark, Romney went on a tour of inner cities, trying to get a sense of the problems facing the country and, perhaps, to draw attention away from his famous line. Instead, the coverage showed Romney confronted by activists who criticized his faith over its stand on priesthood.⁵³¹ Romney was portrayed – as his religion had been – as an anachronism, out of touch with the American mainstream, even an object of backhanded admiration for his “square” views. An anecdote from *Newsweek*'s coverage of his inner city tour shows how the framing of the earnest evangelist had changed:

Even his squareness was an asset. On a Detroit street, he delivered a homily about the value of education to the perfect caricature of a teenage delinquent. The boy responded with evident, overblown sarcasm, ‘Guv, you gotta git me off the streets and into them classrooms, cause, man, I needs my education.’ Everyone in hearing distance laughed, but Romney took him seriously and praised his attitude. At that, the boy looked befuddled and then almost ashamed of himself.⁵³²

Newsweek called the trip a

... departure from any campaign trip ever taken by a major political candidate. There were no major crowds and Romney went to dangerous neighborhoods, but seeing as how the trip followed his brainwashing gaffe, the storyline was that “The funeral arrangements were made, the dirges were sung ... That was the message everyone seemed to be getting last week-everyone, that is, except the corpse.”⁵³³

⁵³⁰ Associated Press, “Romney lists \$3 million income, much to charity,” *The Fresno Bee*, Sunday, November 26, 1967, 8-A. (This story was accessed through the database newspaperarchive.com. In the download, the page number is obscured in a .pdf file. It may also be 16-A or 10-A or something similar.)

⁵³¹ William Chapman, “Romney’s Mormon Religion Continues to Draw Criticism.” *Washington Post, Times-Herald*, September 26, 1967, A2.

⁵³² “The Bell Tolls for a Galloping Ghost,” *Newsweek*, September 25, 1967, p. 27-28.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*

- An important subtext of the campaign was whether Romney was a natural-born citizen. He was born in Mexico – the child of parents who left the country because of persecution tied into Mormon polygamy. Romney and his family always considered themselves American, but some writers and legal scholars thought that Romney didn't meet the Constitution's requirement for being president.⁵³⁴

- During the campaign, Romney's son, Scott, was married in the Salt Lake Mormon Temple. Many articles talked about it at length, including one from *Time* magazine that talked in detail about Mormon temple rituals and traditions.⁵³⁵

- Mitt Romney's mission to France was mentioned in the coverage of his father during that era, including Mitt's traffic accident where he nearly died and the wife of his mission president did.⁵³⁶

- David Broder and Stephen Hess made Mormonism central to the ideas and thoughts of the campaign of George Romney. The pair did the most extensive preview of the Republican party in 1968, their book on the Republican establishment, which the *Washington Post* excerpted.

As shown in an early portion of this study, they wrote: "Economic Romneyism probably is an amalgam of his Mormon experience (where the church organization – wards and stakes – grows by addition and subtraction [and his experience in

⁵³⁴ David Broder, "Law Paper Says Foreign Birth Bars Romney." *Washington Post Times-Herald*, October 15, 1967, A4.; Irving Brant, "Romney a 'Natural Born' American by Act of Parliament." *Washington Post Times-Herald*, November 19, 1967, B3.

⁵³⁵ "For Time & Eternity," *Time*, September 1, 1967, at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,837252,00.html>, accessed March 2, 2009.

⁵³⁶ "Romney's Son involved in Car Tragedy," UPI, *Oakland Tribune*, June 17, 1978.

business.]”⁵³⁷

What they wrote again demonstrated that the campaign of George Romney was, in fact, fundamentally focused on Mormonism, that the coverage showed this tension in the discourse between mainstream and out-of-the-mainstream, and that the candidate was framed as a zealous missionary:

What is this church that produced him? What is there in it that evokes the peculiar sort of energetic evangelism, the righteousness and self-righteousness that underlie Romney’s unique political appeal and at the same time cause so many of his political problems?

More than being merely American, Mormon doctrine is patriotically American, reflecting a kind of romantic nationalism peculiar to the 19th century. As a devout Mormon, Romney firmly believes that both church and country have a manifest destiny. Addressing a 1966 Lincoln Day dinner in Boston, he said: “I believe that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are divinely-inspired documents, written by men especially raised up by their Creator for that purpose. I believe God has made and presented to us a nation for a purpose—to bring freedom to all the people of the world.” This is purest Mormon teaching ... but exotic fare for the average American Republican contributor.

... Thus, a paradox in Romney turns out to be a paradox in Mormonism itself. These people whose beliefs and practices are so idiosyncratic, and who actually took arms against the United States Government, are also as hyper-American as a rodeo or county fair.⁵³⁸

When the campaign concluded, it was back to the beginning for the coverage. Just as Romney started his national career as an evangelist, the concluding parts of the story of his campaign returned to the zealous, determined missionary theme. Ward Just of the *Washington Post*, reported that Romney faced laughter along the campaign trail in New Hampshire, as he tried to re-invigorate his sagging campaign:

It is said that George Romney has one speed. It is a speed of about the velocity and excitement of a Mack truck, with all that implies: a solid, durable, dependable vehicle for moving from A to B. But it is still one

⁵³⁷ Hess and Broder, “George Romney: Candidate Whose Problem is Words.”

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

speed. It behaves the same for a suburban matron or ... for the smart-aleck preppies of Exeter Academy.⁵³⁹

Newsweek's coverage of the last parts of his campaign portrayed a man walking in the cold snows of New Hampshire, alone and determined – the “evangelist from Michigan.”⁵⁴⁰

In another piece, the magazine described Romney as having proper New England virtues: fortitude, determination and political innocence. As for determination, “he tried his hand at dancing, then at bowling in the unfamiliar candle-pin style, and didn’t give up until he had knocked down all ten pins—with 34 balls.”⁵⁴¹

(The mission theme in Mitt Romney was also made explicit. At least one important article headlined its cover story with “Mitt’s Mission.”⁵⁴² Many publications ran detailed articles discussing Romney’s mission to France, using it for its potential to

⁵³⁹ Ward Just, “Snickering Along the Primary Trail,” *Washington Post, Times-Herald*, January 16, 1968, A14.

⁵⁴⁰ “I’m an Underdog.” *Newsweek*, January 22, 1968, 21. This article mentions intriguing early campaign software including direct mail that Romney’s staff perfected, evidently a first for what would become common campaign practice. So much of Romney’s campaign is fascinating in many ways, worthy of more study because he seems to presage much in modern campaigns. His stumbles seem silly mistakes in front of a watching press corps, but his campaign pre-figured the necessity of modern campaign packaging. He met with individuals where they lived, not in staged photo-ops. He released his tax forms before anyone else. He engaged in dialogue with his supporters and opponents – seemingly admirable qualities. The contrast to Romney’s lack of packaging was, of course, Richard Nixon in Joe McGinness’s book on a cynical campaign, “*The Selling of the President, 1968*.” Perhaps the news media had the packaged candidate in Nixon yet framed the more earnest one as less qualified and stupid. Joe McGinness, *The Selling of the President 1968*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1988 edition).

⁵⁴¹ “Republicans: Bottoming Out.” *Newsweek*, January 29, 1968, 25.

⁵⁴² Jonathan Darman and Lisa Miller, Lisa. “Mitt’s Mission: Voters can’t connect with a candidate they feel they don’t know. Mitt Romney has to decide how much he wants to share,” *Newsweek*, October 8, 2007.

show who he is as a person. The *Boston Globe* and *New York Times* ran detailed stories and photos including excerpts of personal letters. The mission was important in examining the character of Mitt Romney and explaining him. Many news accounts told the powerful story of Romney's traffic accident where French police listed him as dead and the wife of his mission president was killed. Romney's mission coverage was often mixed, including explanations of draft deferments, of his youthful quirks and of anti-American sentiment during the Viet Nam war.)

Ward Just's post-mortem on the George Romney campaign in the *Washington Post* cemented the theme with this headline: "Man With a Mission Yields to Reality."⁵⁴³ In his lead, Just said Romney's withdrawal was "surprising." Romney was "a Mormon with boundless determination and conviction of the righteousness of his cause—as a sympathetic aide to Richard M. Nixon put it—[to withdraw] 'goes completely against his character.'"⁵⁴⁴ Just said Romney had been "bedeviled by a press that didn't understand him." Just also shared stories of laughter directed toward Romney along the campaign trail, quoting an observer who called Romney a "joke candidate" in the end.

Evan as Just spoke of Romney's doggedness in campaigning, such that he became a figure of admiration, the laughter turned him into a figure of scorn, a sort of zealous Wile E. Coyote not knowing when to stop his allusive quest for roadrunner. Just quoted a Romney operative: "First they robbed him of his brains, then finally they robbed him of his humanity."⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴³ Ward Just, "Man With a Mission Yields to Reality." *Washington Post, Times-Herald*, February 29, 1968, A1.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

Morris Udall's campaign

The third Mormon to run seriously for president was Arizona Congressman Morris Udall in 1976. Udall said he disavowed his religion at a young age because of its position then that men of African descent could not yet receive the priesthood. Udall became the last liberal competition for the Democratic nomination to Carter.

In an ironic twist near the end of the campaign, Detroit Mayor Coleman Young, an African-American, encouraged Democrats to vote against Udall because of the faith of his birth. Young told a group of black ministers, as was widely reported: that they not vote for “a man from Arizona, whose church won’t even let you in the back door.”⁵⁴⁶ That Michigan primary effectively ended Udall’s campaign and one report suggested that Udall’s loss could be attributed in part to the mayor’s endorsement of Carter.⁵⁴⁷

Orrin Hatch's campaign.

The fourth Mormon to make a major run for president was Orrin Hatch, the Utah senator, who had little success in generating enthusiasm and left the race early in 2000 during George W. Bush’s road to the presidency. Historians Bringhurst and Foster write that Hatch’s unsuccessful campaign brought Mormonism into the campaign “as a significant, sustained issue.”⁵⁴⁸

They said part of the reason was the political climate of the 2000 Republican campaign that focused on the role of religious voters, but also because of Hatch’s use of Mormons in his campaign and his reference to the supposed “White Horse Prophecy.” In

⁵⁴⁶ “Udall asks apology by Detroit Mayor,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1976, 31.

⁵⁴⁷ Robert Reinhold, “Polls Links Udall Strength to Low Vote in Michigan,” *New York Times*, May 20, 1976, 1.

⁵⁴⁸ Bringhurst and Foster, *The Mormon Quest for the Presidency*, 118.

a Salt Lake City radio interview, Hatch said the “constitution literally is hanging by a thread,” a direct quote from this repudiated prophecy, attributed only loosely to Joseph Smith, and one that says the Latter-day Saints will help save the Constitution. When Hatch was asked about his statement about whether he might be the one to save the Constitution, Hatch replied that Mormon doctrine didn’t determine his stances and ideas.⁵⁴⁹

Fringe candidacies.

Five Mormons made quixotic attempts for the presidency in the 20th Century. None had any serious chance of winning but all had some influence:

- Parley Christensen was the nominee of the socialist Farmer Workers Party in 1920, but his party drew fewer votes than Eugene V. Debs did campaigning as a socialist from his Atlanta prison cell. Christiansen was born into a Mormon family but was never baptized a member.⁵⁵⁰

- Sonia Johnson, who was excommunicated from the church for the vocal, contentious way she criticized the church’s stand on the Equal Rights Amendment, ran as a liberal for Barry Commoner’s short-lived Citizens Party in 1984. Bringhurst and Foster say Johnson was the first female candidate to appear on a ballot in the United States for president in more than a century.⁵⁵¹

- Eldridge Cleaver, one of the leaders of the Black Panther Party, ran for president

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 115-118. The White Horse prophecy is apocryphal and implies that one Mormon would ride up to save the Constitution. Most scholars of Mormonism hold this prophecy not to be Smith’s actual words. Bringhurst and Foster have an excellent appendix discussing this issue.

⁵⁵⁰ Bringhurst and Foster, *The Mormon Quest for the Presidency*, 123-132.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., 184-207.

in 1968 as the nominee of the Peace and Freedom Party. Cleaver later became a member of the Church.⁵⁵²

- Bo Gritz, a former Marine officer who was the model for the movie icon Rambo, the most highly-decorated soldier in Vietnam, ran for president after he joined the Mormon Church. He ran as an extreme conservative in 1992 for the Populist Party. Gritz received two percent of the vote in Idaho and Utah. His work led him to help negotiate an end to the standoff at Ruby Ridge, Idaho in 1994. Gritz eventually founded two millenarian and paramilitary compounds where he taught military principles and became associated with the Christian Identity movement – the white identity movement. Gritz’ increasingly radical views caused the Church to call on its membership to not become involved in the types of groups Gritz advocated. He left the Mormon faith, continuing his work in extreme right-wing politics and associations. Some of Gritz’ followers were excommunicated, perhaps hundreds of them, for their embrace of these right-wing organizations in what Bringham and Foster called a purge. At least one follower set up a new Mormon faith.⁵⁵³

- Arguably the most influential Mormon politician – and undeclared candidate for the presidency in the last half of the 20th century was Ezra Taft Benson, a man who became a president of the church. He was the first Latter-day Saint to serve in the Cabinet, when Benson, then one of 12 Mormon apostles, was secretary of agriculture for President Dwight Eisenhower. During his time in the cabinet, Benson became associated with the John Birch Society, though he never joined, the anti-Communist association named for a Christian missionary killed by Communists in China after World War II. As

⁵⁵² Ibid., 162-183.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 223-224.

secretary of agriculture, Benson had a conversation with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev that deeply influenced Benson. Khrushchev reportedly told Benson, “Americans are so gullible. They are in the process of being fed small bits of socialism and will one day awaken to find themselves living under a totalitarian order.”⁵⁵⁴

At times, Benson criticized the Civil Rights movement for being a front for Communism. His views drew attention to Mormons’ exclusion of blacks to its priesthood and drew greater controversy to the church. Benson was a staunch opponent of the ERA and a strong supporter of Ronald Reagan. As a member of the Church’s governing 12 apostles and eventually one of only 16 church presidents, and the only one besides Smith with presidential aspirations, Benson’s writings and influence had much to do with the church membership’s generally conservative political views in the last half of the 20th Century.⁵⁵⁵

In 1968, a group of conservative business leaders, calling themselves the committee of ’76, worked to draft Benson for the presidential nomination, but it failed to gain much influence.⁵⁵⁶ Later, Alabama governor George Wallace invited Benson to Montgomery to discuss political views. Benson told associates he was impressed with Wallace’s views on the Constitution. Benson might have accepted Wallace’ invitation to run as his vice presidential nominee, but Benson twice declined, following the advice of church president David O. McKay, who warned Benson that Wallace’ views on segregation might be harmful to the church and to Benson.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 142.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 141-161.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 147-152.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 152-156. In 1986, marking the 200th anniversary of the Constitution, Benson

Wallace selected former Air Force general Curtis LeMay as his running mate.

Bringhurst and Foster conclude about these Mormon candidates generally:

The diversity of candidates, not just in gender and race, but in party affiliation and political ideologies, belies the image of the Mormon Church as a monolithic institution of dutiful followers walking in lockstep to the dictates of their prophet-president and other leaders.⁵⁵⁸

gave an important speech to more the 20,000 students at Brigham Young University called, *The Constitution, a Heavenly Banner*. His speech captures what Broder calls the hyper-patriotism of Latter-day Saints, who believe God preserved the American continent for special purposes. The 1986 speech is one reason Benson might be said to be the leading conservative Mormon politician. The actions he advocates are good citizenship – voting, reading, speaking out – but the tone is strong:

We are fast approaching that moment prophesied by Joseph Smith when he said:

‘Even this Nation will be on the very verge of crumbling to pieces and tumbling to the ground and when the constitution is upon the brink of ruin this people will be the Staff up[on] which the Nation shall lean and they shall bear the constitution away from the very verge of destruction.’”

He continued, instructing church members to be good citizens by understanding the Constitution, and by being involved in the political process. He concluded:

I reverence the Constitution of the United States as a sacred document. To me its words are akin to the revelations of God, for God has placed his stamp of approval on the Constitution of this land. I testify that the God of heaven sent some of his choicest spirits to lay the foundation of this government, and he has sent other choice spirits—even you who hear my words this day—to preserve it.

We, the blessed beneficiaries, face difficult days in this beloved land, ‘a land which is choice above all other lands’ (Ether 2:10). *It may also cost us blood before we are through*. It is my conviction, however, that when the Lord comes, the Stars and Stripes will be floating on the breeze over this people. May it be so, and may God give us the faith and the courage exhibited by those patriots who pledged their lives and fortunes that we might be free. (See Ezra Taft Benson, “The Constitution: A Heavenly Banner,” speech delivered at BYU, September 16, 1986, under Speeches, <http://speeches.byu.edu/reader/reader.php?id=6985>, accessed February 2, 2010. emphasis added.

⁵⁵⁸ Bringhurst and Foster, *The Mormon Quest for the Presidency*, 263.

Appendix J: The Historical Relationship between Mormons and the News Media.

The relationship between the Mormons and the press has been studied for many years. According to BYU's Sherry Baker and UNLV's Daniel Stout, more than 200 studies of various sorts have looked at the relationship of the media with Mormonism. Many are histories or biographies. Others are uses and gratifications studies. Many look at non-journalistic media. Only a few have looked at major news outlets coverage of Mormonism.⁵⁵⁹ In sum, Mormonism's relationship with the press has often been painful but improved in the 20th century. This history can be divided into five general periods: The Joseph Smith era, the Brigham Young and polygamy era, the post-polygamy, early 20th century era; the "Golden Age" era and the post-golden or modern era.⁵⁶⁰

The Joseph Smith era.

Press coverage came early and often for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Much of it was deeply negative. Former Columbia historian Richard Bushman says coverage at the time of the church's founding made Joseph Smith "a minor national figure."⁵⁶¹ One of the earliest interactions happened at the print shop where Joseph Smith printed *The Book of Mormon*, the church's founding scripture.

Abner Cole, using the pseudonym Obediah Dogberry, began to publish excerpts of the *Book of Mormon* in his *Palmyra Reflector*. The paper was printed in the same print

⁵⁵⁹ Sherry Baker and Daniel Stout. "Mormons and the Media, 1898-2003, A Selected, Annotated and Indexed Bibliography (with Suggestions for Future Research)." *BYU Studies*, 42, no. 3 & 4, (2003), 124-181.

⁵⁶⁰ These are derived from other literature, especially Shipps, "From Satyr to Saint," but also reflect my terminology.

⁵⁶¹ Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith, Rough Stone Rolling, A Cultural Biography of Mormonism's Founder*. New York: Knopf, 2005, 82.

shop as the Book of Mormon and printers had provided – leaked -- proofs to Cole. Joseph Smith confronted Cole, who in turn suggested they fight. Smith refused but asserted his copyright and staved off the continued printing of excerpts through arbitration. Cole’s response was the “Book of Pukei,” a satiric version of the Book of Mormon that he published in the *Reflector*, and his writings called the church leader “that spindle shanked ignoramus JO SMITH.”⁵⁶² Similarly, a headline in a nearby Rochester newspaper said, simply, “Blasphemy.” Some writers report that Joseph Smith’s claims of having found a golden book made it into the papers months or years before he ultimately published *The Book of Mormon*.⁵⁶³

In 1831, James Gordon Bennett traveled up the Erie Canal as part of other research and met with several non-Mormons while telling the story of Mormonism in a feature story for his *New York Courier and Esquire*. Bennett said the small faith, whose followers numbered less than a few hundred, was already well known. Brigham Young had yet to join:

You have heard of MORMONISM – who has not? Paragraph has followed paragraph in the newspapers, recording the movements, detailing their opinions and surprising distant readers with the traits of a singularly new religious sect, which had it origin in this state.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶² Richard Lyman Bushman, “The Book of Mormon and its critics,” in *Believing History, Latter-day Saint Essays*, ed. Reid L. Neilson & Jed Woodworth, 107-142, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 110; Russell Rich, “The Dogberry Papers and The Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies*, 10:3 (1970), 315-320.

⁵⁶³ “Uncle Dale’s Readings in Early Mormon History,” Under *Painesville Telegraph*, <http://sidneyrigdon.com/dbroadhu/OH/painetel.htm>, accessed April 6, 2010.

⁵⁶⁴ Bennett, James Gordon, “Mormonism – Religious Fanaticism – Church and state party,” *Morning Courier and Enquirer*, August 31, 1831, as cited in Leonard Arrington, “James Gordon Bennett’s 1831 Report on ‘the Mormonites,’” *BYU Studies*, 10: vol 3, 1970, 1-10, at <http://byustudies.byu.edu/PDFLibrary/10.3Arrington.pdf>, accessed February 3, 2010, 3

Celebrated Mormon historian Leonard J. Arrington said Bennett's detailed efforts to write on Mormonism was emblematic of why he became the leading editor of the Penny Press era with his detailed and focused writing and how the article was one of the earliest features on the faith. Bennett described the faith as "the latest device of roguery, ingenuity, ignorance and religious excitement combined."⁵⁶⁵ He added, "It is religion running into madness by zealots and hypocrites." Joseph Smith was "a careless, indolent, idle, and shiftless fellow."⁵⁶⁶

In fairness to Bennett, such hyperbole was typical of the Penny Press era, and Arrington and others have pointed out that Bennett was among the most balanced of the writers covering the church during its early years. *The New York Herald* published excerpts of *The Book of Abraham*, which today makes up part of the church's scripture, *The Pearl of Great Price*, and other LDS writings.⁵⁶⁷ It also noted with compassion the persecution the Mormons faced. Smith was so grateful for the coverage that he made editor Bennett an honorary general of the large, local militia, the Nauvoo Legion in 1841.⁵⁶⁸ In fact, Bennett wrote hundreds of stories about Mormonism. He noted in detail Smith's platform for president. He noted Smith's murder in Illinois, following closely from New York the stories in Illinois of his arrest and the swirling politics around him.

⁵⁶⁵ Chen, *Mormon and Asian American Model Minority Discourses in News and Popular Magazines*, 34-35, citing Leonard Arrington, "James Gordon Bennett's 1831 Report on 'the Mormonites,'" *BYU Studies*, 10, no. 3, (1970): 1-10, at <http://byustudies.byu.edu/PDFLibrary/10.3Arrington.pdf>, accessed February 3, 2010.

⁵⁶⁶ Arrington, "James Gordon Bennett's Report on 'The Mormonites,'" 2.

⁵⁶⁷ *History of the Church*, vol. 5, 11.

⁵⁶⁸ Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth*, 99

As the faith's followers moved from New York to Ohio in the early 1830s, similar attacks followed. *The Book of Mormon* was, early reports indicated, of "infamous and blasphemous character." The *Painesville Telegraph*, noted that "Time will discover in it either something of vast importance to man, or a deep laid plan to deceive many."⁵⁶⁹

In 1834, the *Painesville Telegraph* helped an excommunicated Mormon, Dr. Philastus Hurlbut, publish affidavits alleging poor character among the Smith family. The expose, *Mormonism Unveiled*, remained controversial for decades.⁵⁷⁰ An article in the *Sangamo Journal* – a leading newspaper in the state capitol -- in 1842 from John C. Bennett, another dissenter, led to much anti-Mormon writing.

Just as it was at the beginning of his career, the press was important at the end of Joseph Smith's life. The Anti-Mormons – there was a political party called the Anti-Mormons -- relied on the power of their press to organize opposition to Joseph Smith and Mormonism through Thomas Sharp's *Warsaw Signal* newspaper. The Mormons responded through the *Nauvoo Neighbor* newspaper, under the editorship of John Taylor. The newspapers were sent to newspapers around the country and numerous editors commented regularly on the swirling politics of the Mormon question in Illinois in 1844 as described by these two dueling editors.

By this time, church growth was rapid. (Nauvoo, the Mormon-settling place, rivaled Chicago in size.) In a divided electorate in Illinois, Mormon influence could be powerful as it tended to vote as a bloc – even to swinging the national election through the Electoral College. Joseph Smith's campaign for the presidency was in full swing.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ Note how the old imagery that there is something secretive and mysterious about Mormonism – that it is hiding something – goes back to the earliest anti-Mormon screeds.

So, the Mormons may have had greater political significance than their numbers.⁵⁷¹

Historian LeGrand Baker argues, “Not only did Americans pay attention to what was happening in Nauvoo, they also understood the politics of what was happening.”⁵⁷² The emotions were charged and heated. One local non-Mormon writing in Warsaw, Illinois, wrote:

We see no use in attempting to disguise the fact that many in our midst contemplate a total extermination of that people; that the thousand defenseless women and children, aged and infirm who are congregated at Nauvoo, must be driven out, aye, driven scattered like leaves before the autumn blast!⁵⁷³

At least 20 papers, including the *New York Tribune* passed along these remarks.⁵⁷⁴

Baker, a Mormon, argues that the *Warsaw Signal* was used not just for agitation, but for co-ordinating messages and signals that set in motion facets of a detailed conspiracy that led to the assassination of Joseph Smith.⁵⁷⁵ In Baker’s telling, Mormon dissenters and opponents wished to force Joseph Smith into something for which he could be charged with a crime. With that, he would be forced from Nauvoo to where he might be assassinated.

Whatever the nature of the conspiracy, the trigger of Smith’s death was the dissenters’ publication of the *Nauvoo Expositor*, which published only one issue. The *Expositor* accused Mormon leaders of counterfeiting coins and of secret polygamy. It

⁵⁷¹ LeGrand Baker, *Murder of the Mormon Prophet, The Political Prelude to the Death of Joseph Smith*. (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2006), Baker quotes James Gordon Bennett in making this assertion, 228.

⁵⁷² Baker, *Murder of the Mormon Prophet*, 209.

⁵⁷³ Thomas Gregg, *Warsaw Message*, February 1844, as cited in Baker, 159.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ Baker, *Murder of the Mormon Prophet*, 257.

justified potential mob action. The paper promised to be more incendiary in its second issue. To Baker, it was a deliberate trap. Mormons, who had a mob destroy their important press in Missouri a decade earlier and were driven from that state, were left fearful, trapped between allowing continued publication of heated rhetoric, which could then be used as a justification for mob violence, or to destroy the press as a public nuisance, which would also justify mob violence or legal action. So, Baker said, the Nauvoo City Council, with Joseph Smith as mayor ruled, that the press should be destroyed, which it was.

Sharp responded with incitement:

War and extermination is inevitable! Citizens arise, one and all!!!
Can you stand by, and suffer such infernal devils! to rob men of their property and rights, without avenging them.... Let [your comment] be made with powder and ball!!!⁵⁷⁶

Smith ultimately submitted to state custody in Carthage over the issue and was shot by a mob while awaiting a hearing there.⁵⁷⁷ The editor Taylor was gravely wounded. Scores of American newspapers commented on Smith's death. He became in 14 years a major national figure, drawing significant attention at every step of the growth of his unique religious movement.

⁵⁷⁶ Bushman, *Joseph Smith, Rough Stone Rolling*, 541, quoting *Warsaw Signal*, June 12, 1844.

⁵⁷⁷ The destruction of the *Expositor* remains one of the most controversial episodes in the history of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Former Utah Supreme Court Justice and current Mormon Apostle Dallin H. Oaks said Mormons arguably acted within the law, as it was understood then. The 1st Amendment prohibits Congress from making a law against freedom of the press, not the states. Arguments going back to Blackstone said that the press could be destroyed as a nuisance. Indeed, these were the issues not fully adjudicated in America until eight decades later in the 5-4 *Near v. Minnesota* case. See Dallin H. Oaks, "The Suppression of the Nauvoo Expositor." *Utah Law Review* 9, (Winter 1965) :862-903; Baker, 386-396.

Chiung Wang Chen, who looked at Mormons and the model minority discourse, and the University of Richmond's Professor of Literature and Religion Terryl Givens, also a leading scholar of Mormon portrayals in the 19th Century, note that the rise of Mormonism corresponds with the rise of the Penny Press in America.⁵⁷⁸ This caused problems for Mormonism because the press was more sensational in that era, and a new, growing religion certainly was easy to make into a sensation. But Mormonism may have benefited by the new press of the era -- because of the attention it received.⁵⁷⁹

The Brigham Young and polygamy era.

As bad as coverage was during the Smith era, it became more painful for Mormons during the Brigham Young and polygamy era. Early in the era, however, one outsider, a writer, genius at public relations, and eventual Gettysburg hero, Thomas L. Kane, helped preserve the faith as it struggled across Iowa and the Great Plains and into Utah through a series of carefully calculated letters to influential newspapers and meetings with influential politicians.⁵⁸⁰ Kane, a young lawyer active in the Underground Railroad and a student of Comte, heard of Mormon travail during a Philadelphia presentation in 1846. He took it on himself to advocate their cause, using his political connections. He famously visited Nauvoo shortly after the Mormons left and provided detailed accounts of their sufferings to the Pennsylvania Historical Society in an 1850

⁵⁷⁸ In one way, the press influenced the explication of Mormon doctrine. John Wentworth, a leading Illinois editor, asked for Smith to write a letter about his church. In it, Smith explained 13 Articles of Faith that today are part of Mormon scripture.

⁵⁷⁹ Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth*, 97-102

⁵⁸⁰ Many cite the beginning of American public relations to Ivy Lee in the late 19th century and early 20th, but it can easily be argued that Thomas Kane – and the Mormons of this era – pioneered many techniques first. Kane owned no newspaper to voice his opinion. Instead, he wrote letters, politicked, gave influential speeches in his effort to “manufacture public opinion.”

speech. In the speech, Kane described coming across a beautiful city that once had 20,000 people with a gleaming temple at the center and verdant farms, all abandoned. Then he talked of finding struggling stragglers suffering in camps on the Iowa side of the river:

They were, all told, not more than six hundred and forty persons who were thus lying on the river flats. But the Mormons in Nauvoo and its dependencies had been numbered the year before at over twenty thousand. Where were they? They had last been seen, carrying in mournful trains their sick and wounded, halt and blind, to disappear behind the western horizon, pursuing the phantom of another home. Hardly anything else was known of them: and people asked with curiosity, What had been their fate-what their fortunes?⁵⁸¹

The most important article he helped produced may have been a front-page story in *The New York Tribune* in December 1846. Horace Greeley printed a long article called “The Mormons—Their persecutions, sufferings and deprivation.” Kane regularly pushed numerous important news articles in eastern papers over this five-year period through his letters and contacts, helping secure Brigham Young’s appointment as territorial governor, helping Mormons acquire funds, and helping them with issues involving land. Kane’s speech became the basis of a pamphlet that circulated widely and influentially, including among members of Congress and among important members of the press.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸¹ Thomas L. Kane, “The Mormons, A Discourse Delivered Before the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, March 26, 1850.” Accessed through Google books at http://books.google.com/books?id=M9XOJvkEM6AC&dq=March+1850+Historical+Society+of+Pennsylvania&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=DGRjme11_Q&sig=n0exaYhJorKXyIDoFzdWiHzMOQI&hl=en&ei=qiSjSauALIKqsAPQz4jZCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=result#PPP1,M1, accessed February 3, 2010.

⁵⁸² Mark M. Sawin, “A Sentinel for the Saints: Thomas Leipner Kane and the Mormon Migration,” *Nauvoo Journal*, 10:1, (Spring 1998), 17-27, at

However, Kane's persuasiveness fell from favor in 1852 when the church announced publicly that it practiced polygamy. Kane had assured papers newspapers that polygamy wasn't happening. And with the announcement, scorn grew on the Latter-day Saints.⁵⁸³ So, with the services of Kane no longer of effective use, the church decided to speak out more directly. The church sent prominent leaders to San Francisco, St. Louis, Washington and New York City to publish newspapers responding to the press of the day. Much as Smith before him, Brigham Young understood the potential power of the press and wished to harness it as much as possible. He wrote, "The press is a powerful lever or agency through which the Lord can reach the minds of the people."⁵⁸⁴

Orson Pratt went to Washington and printed a monthly called *The Seer*. The publication contained long religious and philosophical explanations of Mormon doctrine, especially polygamy and the doctrine of pre-existence – and raised the profile of Pratt and the church.⁵⁸⁵ Taylor's nephew George Q. Cannon went to San Francisco and published

http://www.mormonhistoricsitesfoundation.org/publications/nj_spring1998/NJ10.1_Sawin.pdf, accessed February 3, 2010.

⁵⁸³ Kane's efforts to help the Mormons didn't end there. In 1857, James Buchanan sent troops west to quell a rebellion he perceived brewing in Utah. Kane made the trip to Utah – again suffering illness along the way and met with military and civilian authorities, paving the way for a peaceful resolution to a crisis that seemed to have promised war. Mormons repaid their thanks to Kane by naming a county for him in Utah and by erecting a statue of him in the state capitol. Kane served admirably despite illness and injury through the first two years of the Civil War, including a significant defense of Culp's Hill at Gettysburg. His heroism was rewarded by being commissioned a major general. See Sawin, "A Sentinel for the Saints," and the summary of his life at wikipedia's well-sourced entry on Kane.

⁵⁸⁴ Davis Bitton, *George Q. Cannon, A Biography*, 1999, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1999), 75.

⁵⁸⁵ Breck England, *The Life and Thought of Orson Pratt*. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1985), 178-179.

The Western Standard as a way to combat prejudice there.⁵⁸⁶ Erastus Snow went to St. Louis and published the *Luminary*.⁵⁸⁷

Taylor, the editor injured at Joseph Smith's death and arguably the father of Mormon journalism, produced work that may have been the most memorable. He went to New York to publish among the titans of the American penny press. Still carrying a bullet in his body received during Smith's assassination, Taylor set up his headquarters on the corner of Nassau and Anne streets between the headquarters of the *New York Tribune* and the *New York Herald* in 1854. He adopted what had been a slur for his newspaper's title, the *Mormon*, and began publishing in February 1855.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁶ Bitton, *George Q. Cannon, A Biography*, 75-92. Cannon, a powerful, "pugnacious" editor, once took over publication of the *Deseret News* in Utah while its offices were on the run from federal forces in the Utah War.

⁵⁸⁷ Andrew Karl Larson, *Erastus Snow: The Life of a Missionary and Pioneer for the Early Mormon Church*. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1971), 357-373.

⁵⁸⁸ B. H. Roberts, *Life of John Taylor*, First Collector's Edition Printing, 1989, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, Inc., original issue, 1963), 243-247. Taylor was direct, specific and used American principles of freedom of religion and tolerance to create a counter image to the image of religious debauchery so often tied in with Mormon polygamy. He noted the similarity of ethnic heritage among Mormons and Protestants and shared a love for country. He reminded his readers that Mormons were victims of persecution for religious freedom and that their attackers were hypocrites. In many ways, his rhetoric and argument portends John F. Kennedy's arguments in 1960. He tried to make the argument over Mormonism into an argument about bigotry and religious freedom

Taylor traded barbs with the great editors, Horace Greeley and James Gordon Bennett and others for more than two years. He directly defended polygamy in the first issue and wrote:

We are Mormon, inside and outside; at home or abroad, in public and private, everywhere. We are so, however, from principle ... because we believe it to be true." (All quotations from this footnote come from Roberts, *Life of John Taylor*.)

At times, he could be combative:

We have said before and say now, that we defy all the editors and writers in the United States to prove that Mormonism is less moral,

Willard Richards, another survivor of the murder of Joseph Smith, helped found the *Deseret News* in 1850 in Salt Lake City. The first LDS printer, W.W. Phelps,

scriptural, philosophical, or that there is less patriotism in Utah than in any other part of the United States. We call for proof; bring on your reasons, gentlemen, if you have any ... If you don't do it ... we shall brand you as poor, mean, cowardly liars.

Sometimes he reminded his readers of their shared ancestry:

You forgot you were talking to Americans, born upon the soil of freedom, suckled in liberty, who have inhaled it from their fathers' lips—their ears yet tingling with the tales of a nation's birth—sons of fathers who fought for rights which you, in your bigotry and self-conceit, would fain wrench from them.

He criticized the editors who, in his view, seemed to be rejoicing in the suffering of Mormons who faced drought in 1855, but none offered to send food aid. When the *New York Sun* said it would respond to a request for aid, if one were given, despite the evils of the Mormon system, Taylor wrote:

And shall they now ask charity of those that robbed and despoiled them of their goods and murdered their best men? We have been robbed of millions and driven from our own firesides into the cold wintry blasts of the desert, to starve by your charitable institutions, and shall we now crave your paltry sixpences. Talk to us with your hypocritical cant about charity! Pshaw!

In one memorable moment, the *Herald* suggested with seeming seriousness that handsome soldiers sent to Utah could woo polygamous wives away from their husbands, thereby restoring monogamy to the territory:

Taylor responded by saying that in an effort to reclaim Utah and its Mormons, they would, in theory, be brought back to:

The monogamous Christianity, and be brought back to the standard of one wife apiece—and as many misses or fast young women as suits our convenience, that a deadly blow may be struck at the virtue of Utah: and that she may be crowded with voluptuaries, and prostitutes like all other good Christian states and cities ... And all this glory is to be achieved by the gallant officers and soldiers of our army, under the auspices and direction of James Gordon Bennett.

Taylor became the third president of the Church, following the death of Brigham Young. He died in 1887 in hiding from government authorities trying to imprison him for practicing polygamy.

purchased a press in Boston and transported it by boat up the Missouri River and then by wagon to Salt Lake City. The *News* is the longest-running newspaper west of the Mississippi.⁵⁸⁹

Other journalistic high points during this period included Horace Greeley's 1859 visit to Salt Lake City and his long interview with Brigham Young, which may have been the highest-selling *New York Tribune* to that point and also marked "the first full-fledged modern interview with a well-known public figure."⁵⁹⁰ Also, the *New York Herald* devoted extensive coverage to a debate between Pratt and President Ulysses S. Grant's personal pastor.⁵⁹¹

The seminal study of late -19th Century and early 20th Century portrayals of Mormonism in the American Press was IUPUI professor Jan Shipps' 1973 paper, "From Satyr to Saint." In it, Shipps looked at nearly 800 articles from a wide variety of national publications written between 1860 to 1960 to see how coverage changed over time. Among her many findings was that the largest concern of national writers about the faith in this mid-1800s era was, not surprisingly, Mormon polygamy. The second was Mormon political influence.⁵⁹²

Chiung Hwang Chen's qualitative evaluation created two pictures of Mormonism during the era: the polygamous Mormon and the dangerous Mormon. The polygamous

⁵⁸⁹ Will Bagley, "Birthday News, News Celebrates Sesquicentennial LDS Church-owned paper reflects history of the West; first issue predates Utah, Deseret News Celebrates Sesquicentennial," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, June 15, 2000, A1, at http://historytogo.utah.gov/salt_lake_tribune/history_matters/061500-2.html, accessed May 12, 2007.

⁵⁹⁰ Leonard Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses*. (New York: Knopf, 1986), 3-6.

⁵⁹¹ Richard S. Van Wagoner and Steven C. Walker, *A Book of Mormons*, (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1982), 214.

⁵⁹² Shipps, "From Satyr to Saint."

Mormon was a sexual leech who attracted women out to Salt Lake City. The dangerous Mormon centered on a militant, Wild West stereotype. The Mormons sent “avenging angels” to strike at those who opposed them, within and without. Many of those were “Danites,” a short-lived group of zealots who tried to impose orthodoxy without official sanction.⁵⁹³ While the tone of coverage was somewhat more positive in the 1860s from earlier days, given Utah’s support for the Union in the Civil War and the construction of the transcontinental railroad, it gradually worsened through the next two decades. Shippy said her sample of this late century era was so uniformly negative, 85 percent negative, that she catalogued neutral stories as positive to Mormons.⁵⁹⁴

Historian Matthew Grow says that only the *North American Review* allowed Mormons a large opportunity to respond at all in the national press. The church did so in 14 articles published in the magazine over the course of 26 years. Mormon writers included Taylor and Cannon. The writings “demonstrate that Mormons also vigorously contested the imposed image, not only in publications meant for fellow Saints, but also through the national media.”⁵⁹⁵ (Grow argues that the writings in the *Review* a framework for current church public relations efforts – balancing that old tension between Mormon distinctiveness with sameness to the rest of the country.)⁵⁹⁶ Numerous magazines, from

⁵⁹³ Chen, *Mormon and Asian American Model Minority Discourse*.

⁵⁹⁴ Shippy, “From Satyr to Saint,” 62-66. Things were so bad for the Mormons that in 1870, New Hampshire Sen. Aaron Harrison Cragin said on the U.S. Senate floor without irony or censure that, “It is said that an altar of sacrifice was actually built ... in the temple block, upon which human sacrifices were to be made.” See Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth*, 13.

⁵⁹⁵ Matthew J. Grow, “Contesting the LDS Image,” *The Journal of Mormon History*,” 32. no. 2, (Summer 2006), 113.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 138.

Puck to *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Weekly*, published cartoons of Mormons, casting the faith in unflattering light. At least one showed Brigham Young wearing horns.⁵⁹⁷

Givens, a Mormon whose 1997 book on the Mormon image in American history and literature is an important contribution, has shown that dime novels and other popular press were also extremely hostile to Mormons. Authors using negative portrayals of Mormons included Zane Grey, Arthur Conan Doyle, Mark Twain, and Jack London.⁵⁹⁸ These popular images often revolved around the Danites and Mormon polygamy. Mormon historian Leonard Arrington argues that Twain, Artemus Ward and Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes all were started on their epic careers or made famous because of anti-Mormonism to one degree or another.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁷ Chen, *Mormon and Asian American Model Minority Discourse*, see figures included between pages 140 and 141.

⁵⁹⁸ See Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth*, 133-135, Perhaps, the most famous of the time was Mark Twain's humorous, but dismissive, approach to the Church's practice of polygamy in *Roughing It*. He had advocated reform in Utah, he said, but then he "Saw the Mormon women. Then I was touched. ... And as I turned to hide the generous moisture in my eyes, I said, 'No, – the man that marries one of them has done an act of Christian charity ... and the man that marries sixty of them has done a deed of open-handed generosity so sublime that the nations of the earth should stand uncovered in his presence and worship in silence.'" (Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth*, 137, citing Mark Twain, *Roughing It*, 101).

⁵⁹⁹ Leonard J. Arrington, "The Marrow in the Bones of History," *Reflections of a Mormon Historian, Leonard J. Arrington on the New Mormon History*, ed. Reid Larkin Neilson and Ronald Walker. (Norman, OK: Arthur H. Clark Company, 2006), 291-292. Arrington cites Mill and Dickens as among those who substantively discussed Mormonism. Artemus Ward, the humorist, gave a famous lecture about Mormonism attended by Queen Victoria and the British cabinet. He also says that Prosper Merimee, who wrote the story upon which *Carmen* is based, introduced Mormons to French audiences, when he wrote for the leading French magazine of the time. He says that what has been called the country's first great western novel, *John Brent*, was an anti-Mormon tome. Zane Grey's two most successful novels, *Heritage of the Desert* and *Riders of the Purple Sage*, may be seen as both anti-Mormon at root.

Media and religion scholar Mark Silk used the Mormon experience in the 19th century to illustrate what he calls one of the topoi of religion and media.⁶⁰⁰ Mormon polygamy was a form of false prophecy, he writes. Through this “topo” of false prophecy, journalists and writers show what is outside the mainstream. “A false prophet,” he writes, “may be portrayed as sincere or hypocritical, but either way, he (or she) is an affront to the social order.”⁶⁰¹ Shipps suggests there is no comparable experience in American history to a religious group held with such “frenzied disquiet” for so long. A reason was that Mormons were largely separated from the rest of America by a “Mountain curtain,” making interpersonal contact rare and providing no counterpoint to exaggerated accounts of the faith.⁶⁰²

Givens, the expert on the construction of Mormonism in his 1997 book *Viper on the Hearth*, shows that by exaggeration and focus on a relatively few doctrines, which distorted Mormon beliefs, Mormons became constructed as the embodiment of a new Islam, if not a new race. There were many examples. One study in 1912 was called *Mormonism: The Islam of America*. In a popular comic spoof, *Thompson Dunbar*, its author calls Mormonism “Orientalism in the Extreme Occident.”⁶⁰³ There are many reasons for this comparison to Islam: First is polygamy. From the earliest days, direct comparisons to Mormon polygamy and its echo of the Middle Eastern harem were common. With that portrayal comes the notion of danger – of seduction and domination. The *New York Herald*, to take one example of many, called Mormons “Turks of the

⁶⁰⁰ Silk, *Unsecular Media*, 50.

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁶⁰² Shipps, “From Satyr to Saint,” 52.

⁶⁰³ Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth*, 130.

desert.”⁶⁰⁴ Second is the idea of Mormonism and Islam both have a prophet after Jesus Christ with new scripture. A third reason for the comparison between early Mormonism and Islam was militancy. By evoking a history of terrorism and bloodshed in the West’s encounters with Islam, Mormons were often portrayed as dangerous villains that emphasized the story of the Danites.⁶⁰⁵ In fiction, as has been shown, the Danites became a dominant portrayal of Mormons as a secret, vigilante arm of justice within the church.

Implied in all of this vision of Mormons as Muslims is the memory of the historic conflict, and historic representations, involving Islam and the Christian world. Mormons, being framed as Muslims, can be seen as unchristian, as deeply fundamentalist, and as militant, led by despotic men bent on power, especially over women. This portrayal of Islam, as unfair or inaccurate as it may be, also made Mormonism appear extreme and dangerous.⁶⁰⁶

Indeed, so often did the press, both fictional and otherwise, portray Mormons as Oriental that in many instances, Mormons became a quasi-race.⁶⁰⁷ Givens quotes documents of early Missourians who called Mormons “elevated ... but little above the condition of our blacks.” He quotes a Jack London short story where a character, facing

⁶⁰⁴ Roberts, 261; Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 88

⁶⁰⁵ Bushman, *Rough Stone Rolling*, 349-353; Chen, “Those Amazing Mormons,” 30; Echoes of this coverage seem to still play out in stories and headlines. See Julian Borger’s article in *The Guardian* called “The March of the Mormons” in December 2007.

⁶⁰⁶ Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth*, 130-152.

⁶⁰⁷ In fairness, other scholars note the deliberate choices Mormons made in Utah to distance themselves from the world, creating in themselves a new kind of ethnicity and culture. See, for example, Dean L. May, “Mormons,” in *Mormons and Mormonism: An Introduction to an American World Religion*, ed. Eric Eliason. (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 47-75.

Mormon terror, says, “They ain’t whites ... They’re Mormons.”⁶⁰⁸ One 1861 study looking at Mormon polygamy suggested a new racial type due to the practice:

There is ... an expression of countenance and a style of feature, which may be styled the Mormon expression and style; and expression compounded of sensuality, cunning, suspicion, and a smirking self-deceit. The Yellow, sunken, cadaverous visage; the greenish-colored eyes; the thick, protuberant lips; the low forehead; the light, yellowish hair, and the lank, angular person, constitute an appearance so characteristic of the new race, the production of polygamy, as to distinguish them at a glance.⁶⁰⁹

In 1911, Alfred Henry Lewis wrote his *Cosmopolitan* articles that Mormonism is a moral menace that “threatens the whiteness of American womanhood.”⁶¹⁰

The post-polygamy, early 20th century era

Shipps writes that there was a gradual upsurge in favorable tone starting around 1885, especially marked by the official renunciation of polygamy in 1890.⁶¹¹ But negative attitudes predominated through the end of World War I.

For example, Mormon scholar Richard Holzapfel showed that Mormons were almost always negatively framed in 1904.⁶¹² Furthermore, Shinji Takagi showed such coverage wasn’t limited to the United States. He writes that the arrival of Mormon missionaries in Japan in 1901 resulted in extensive, often negative coverage. About 40 percent of the publications in Japan covered the arrival of the Mormon missionaries.⁶¹³

⁶⁰⁸ Givens, *Viper on the Hearth*, 137.

⁶⁰⁹ Givens, *Viper on the Hearth*, 135-138.

⁶¹⁰ Lewis, 833.

⁶¹¹ Shipps, “From Satyr to Saint,” 51-97

⁶¹² Richard Heitzel Holzapfel, “Stereographs and Stereotypes: A 1904 View of Mormons,” *Journal of Mormon History*, 18 no. 2 (Fall 1992), 155-76.

⁶¹³ Shinji Takagi, “Mormons in the Press: Reactions to the 1901 Opening of the Japan Mission.” *BYU Studies*, 40, no 1 (2001):141-75, at

Shipps' analysis shows that there was a "striking" change in tone in the early-post polygamy period from Mormons as dangerous people – they were sexually debauched and threatening individually – to Mormonism itself as a dangerous system. She adds, that the number of references to polygamy actually grew in the press following the Church's decision to stop polygamy. "There can be little doubt," she writes, "that in the first two decades of the twentieth century, polygamy really was a convenient excuse to strike not merely at the influence of Mormon leaders but also at Mormonism as a religious system."⁶¹⁴ However, coverage of Utah Mormon units during the Spanish-American war in *Harper's Magazine* and other places did provide Mormons some positive coverage during this era.⁶¹⁵

So controversial did Mormons in America remain that in 1903, Reed Smoot, the first Mormon to be elected to the United States Senate, faced four years of hearings and intense media scrutiny before he was allowed to take his seat in Congress. Vanderbilt historian and theologian Kathleen Flake, a Mormon, said the case did much to shape public perceptions of Mormons and how the country can negotiate the parameters of religion in a larger society:

The public participated actively in the proceedings. In the Capitol, spectators lined the halls, waiting for limited seats in the committee room, and filled the galleries to hear floor debates. For those who could not see for themselves, journalists and cartoonists depicted each day's admission and outrage. At the height of the hearing some senators were receiving a thousand letters a day from angry

<http://byustudies.byu.edu/PDFLibrary/40.1Takagi%200832b2ed-d155-4322-93ae-947765834315.pdf>, accessed February 3, 2010, 162.

⁶¹⁴ Shipps, "From Satyr to Saint," 52.

⁶¹⁵ *Harper's Weekly*, "Mormons at Manila," 1899, 03/25 pp.2997 ab.

constituents. What remains of these public petitions fills eleven feet of shelf space, the largest such collection in the National Archives.⁶¹⁶

In 1910 and 1911, prominent magazines, including *McClure's* and *Collier's*, published exposes about the church, part of the on-going muckraker era. *Cosmopolitan's* three-part expose compared Mormonism to poisonous snakes, most famously, as “A Viper on the Hearth.”⁶¹⁷ Alfred Henry Lewis wrote that the Mormons through their business empire could take over the United States in a few decades – their business interests were secret with hidden agendas and, therefore, dangerous in a vaguely anti-Semitic way. Images in the magazine portrayed then church president Joseph F. Smith (founder Joseph Smith's nephew) in kingly robes taking obeisance from those holding much of the nation's money. Lewis wrote, “Wall and Broad Street can be brought to their knees at a word from prophet Smith.” Lewis advocated destruction of Mormons:

Take my last warning. You as a good American should watch narrowly the Mormon Church. It is a national cancer and if you would have the nation live, you must set about its cure.⁶¹⁸

Negative portrayals of the Saints also appeared in movies during that era. Cecil B. DeMille's early epic *A Mormon Maid* in 1917 was an example, as well as *Riders of the Purple Sage*, *The Danites*, *Rainbow Trail*, *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, *A Trip to Salt Lake City*, *Hand Up* and *A Victim of the Mormons*. Many of these movies had Danites as

⁶¹⁶ Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity, The Seating of Apostle Reed Smoot*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). Introduction at http://uncpress.unc.edu/chapters/flake_politics.html, accessed May 12, 2007.

⁶¹⁷ Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth*, 6.

⁶¹⁸ Alfred Henry Lewis, “The Viper's Trail of Gold.” *Cosmopolitan*, April 1911, 823-833.

the evil villains though some were satires. In 1915, Jerome Kern produced a full-length Broadway Musical, *The Girl from Utah*, which also featured Mormons as villains.⁶¹⁹

Perhaps the most famous of these movies was in England in the early 1920s. BYU film researcher and film curator James D'Arc noted the impact in England of two pieces of related popular culture, the book *The Love Story of a Mormon* by popular author Winifred Graham, and a movie based on it *Trapped by the Mormons*. Ezra Taft Benson, the former agriculture secretary and eventual Mormon Church President, was forced to move from his house in England during a mission because of the feelings the movie engendered, and Mormon missionaries were banned from the country for a time.⁶²⁰

D'Arc's discussion of the 1922 movie *Trapped by the Mormons* led to his literary analysis that Mormon missionaries in popular fiction were something like stand-ins for vampires. *Trapped by the Mormons* portrays a fictional Mormon missionary named Isoldi Keene with mesmeric eyes, able to immobilize women. Keene faked religious miracles, and his influence transformed women into different, zombie-like people. The movie, cartoonishly melodramatic to 21st century sensibilities with close-ups on Keene's dangerous, hypnotic eyes, portrays Mormons with a hidden agenda – to take daughters away to servitude and sexual slavery. It was influential in shaping British public opinion against Mormons.⁶²¹

D'arc argues that Winifred Graham, the woman whose popular novel formed the basis for the movie, was deliberate in her choices. Graham lectured widely against

⁶¹⁹ Chen, *Mormon and Asian American Model Minority Discourse*, 63-64.

⁶²⁰ James V. D'Arc, "The Mormon as Vampire: A Comparative Study of Winifred Graham's *The Love Story of a Mormon*, the film *Trapped by the Mormons*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*." *BYU Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 2, (2007), 174.

⁶²¹ D'Arc, "The Mormon as Vampire," 174.

Mormonism and became aligned with people who studied vampirism. She relied on many stories from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* to create the character of Keene, D'Arc said. For example, *Dracula* and Keene are from mysterious, faraway lands; both have mesmeric powers; both use the "Kiss of Death" or something similar to alter their victims; both are polygamous predators; both offer a form of eternal life; and both are defeated by Christian symbols or teaching.⁶²²

D'Arc writes,

Trapped by the Mormons is an astonishingly revealing cultural expression of an era as well as a movement. ... Guilt by association rarely had it so good as when, in the England of the early twentieth century, the Mormons and vampires, to many, appeared to be one.⁶²³

When Mormons are called plastic or robotic, and they sometimes are, it can seem an ugly echo of this old portrayal of vampirism.⁶²⁴

The "Golden Age."

Shippo says it was the development of the church's successful welfare program in the 1930s that began to mark the biggest change in Mormon coverage, such that by 1970, Mormons were seen as the most patriotic, self-reliant of Americans. Between 1935 and 1960, the coverage of Mormons in the United States became almost uniformly positive, save a period in the 1940s when raids were conducted on polygamist communities –

⁶²² Ibid., 175-181.

⁶²³ Ibid., 181-182.

⁶²⁴ See, for example, Kelly Jane Torrance, "Redford wants 'Lion' to provoke debate," *The Washington Times*, November 8, 2007, at <http://washingtontimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20071108/ENTERTAINMENT/111080103/1001&template=printart>, accessed December 7, 2007. This is a very esoteric point, but insofar as Mormons were sort of stand-ins for vampires, it is ironic that it was a Mormon, author Stephanie Meyer, who rehabilitated the vampire image in the 2000s with her *Twilight* saga.

break-offs of the Mormon Church. There was little emphasis on how Mormonism differs from other branches of Christianity. “At this point, the important thing was not what the Mormons believed, but the fact they believed it sincerely,” Shipps writes.⁶²⁵

Silk, as noted elsewhere, says this positive tone of coverage was typical of most coverage of religion generally during that period -- religious differences were lessened and the focus was on their good works and the underlying assumption that religion was a good thing. He quoted a 1975 dissertation by that suggested that the newspapers became a “major vehicle for the maintenance of American religious consensus.”⁶²⁶ So, trying to explain the change in coverage of Mormonism may not come from looking at changes in Mormonism’s relationship to the rest of the country but in the dynamics of the country at the time. It was a Cold War era and unity of purpose was an important value to the country.

Some important examples of this Golden Age of coverage came from popular magazines. In the 1950s, *Coronet* magazine ran an article called, “Those Amazing Mormons.” *Readers Digest* ran an article called, “The Mormons: A Complete Way of Life.” These magazines reached a huge circulation and shaped the Mormon image to being a “Saint.”⁶²⁷ Mormon portrayals in movies changed significantly as well. Tyrone

⁶²⁵ Shipps, “From Satyr to Saint,” 72; 68-73.

⁶²⁶ Silk, *Unsecular Media*, 25-28.

⁶²⁷ Shipps, “From Satyr to Saint,” 69. These articles may have had profound influences on Mormonism itself. One of leading pioneers of church membership in West Africa came into contact with the faith through an article in *Reader’s Digest*. The church has seen rapid growth there since. For an account of this, see <http://www.angelfire.com/mo2/blackmormon/homepage2.html>, accessed February 3, 2010.

Power's epic, *Brigham Young*, romantically portrayed the sufferings of Mormons and was well received in Salt Lake City.⁶²⁸

The post-golden era.

The coverage of Mormonism in the 1960s marked the end of the Golden Era, corresponding roughly and, perhaps not coincidentally, to the campaign of George Romney.⁶²⁹ However, Shipps says that the Mormon image seemed positive until the late '70s. Even issues of race and gender discrimination, stories from the late '60s and early '70s seemed to go by the wayside, but new, negative portrayals began to emerge, including several critical segments on *60 minutes*. These stories seemed to focus in renewed ways on Mormon doctrine, she wrote. New articles about polygamy in the 1970s were produced that didn't distinguish the modern church's anti-polygamy stance from small break-off sects who embraced the polygamy to the point of murder. Negative attacks on the church on doctrinal grounds emerged with a movie called *The Godmakers*, which was shown at many non-Mormon churches around the country. This film portrayed a negative, cartoonish version of Latter-day Saints and may have shaped evangelical perceptions of Mormonism to this day.⁶³⁰

In the 1980s, several new, negative books emerged that received significant coverage. Mark Hoffmann, a skillful forger of seemingly historic Mormon documents received enormous coverage, first when some of his forgeries seemed to question the

⁶²⁸ Randy Astle, R., and Gideon O. Burton, "A History of Mormon Cinema." *BYU Studies*, 46:2 (2007), 12-163.

⁶²⁹ This is largely conjecture as yet. No one has studied to see if the Romney campaign of 1967-1968 marked a change of some sort, seeing as how the campaign, like his son's, brought the faith into renewed focus. It does seem likely, however. For a fuller discussion of the media coverage of the George Romney campaign, see Appendix I.

⁶³⁰ Shipps, "Surveying the Mormon Image Since 1960," 103.

validity of early stories of Mormonism, and, later, when he murdered two people in a bizarre set of Salt Lake City bombings designed to cover his tracks. The national reporting on the case, Shipps said, “contained an astonishing amount of innuendo associating Hofmann’s plagiarism with Mormon beginnings.” These stories focused on alleged secrecy among leaders and on how Mormons are uniquely vulnerable to con-artists.⁶³¹

In the 1990s, Shipps writes, Mormonism as discussed in the media turned to more of a discussion of doctrine and belief than of devout piety. With ongoing growth in the church, more probing will happen, she said. Mormonism’s distinctive beliefs, she says, “are bound to receive increased scrutiny.”⁶³² This prediction came true in the Romney coverage. In the intervening years since Shipps’ second study, the largest single news event about Mormonism before the Romney campaign was the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. The Olympics made the national press uniquely attuned to Mormonism, setting the stage for the coverage of Mitt Romney’s campaign.⁶³³

In this long period of more positive media coverage, the church has continued to provide its own voice. Its public affairs office is professional and respected. The efforts include the longest-running network broadcast on television, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Mormons have made important contributions to media in the modern era as well. Bonneville International is one of the nation’s leading media conglomerates, owned by the church. It runs 25 radio stations, a TV station and other media enterprises, including

⁶³¹ Ibid., 105-108.

⁶³² Ibid., 115; 98-123.

⁶³³ Chiung Hwang Chen, “Molympics: Journalistic Discourse of Mormons in Relation to the 2002 Winter Olympic Games,” *Journal of Media and Religion*, 2 no. 1 (2003): 29-47.

satellite services.⁶³⁴ Two, investigative reporter Jack Anderson and The *Washington Post*'s former editorial writer Merlo Pusey, have won Pulitzer Prizes for their work. The *Deseret News* has won one Pulitzer. Rosel Hyde was the longest-serving member of the Federal Communications Commission, twice serving as chairman. Philo T. Farnsworth, a Mormon born in Utah and reared in Idaho, was a leading developer of television.

⁶³⁴ Bonneville International Corporation. under About Bonneville, at <http://www.bonneville.com/?nid=2>, accessed February 3, 2010.

Appendix K: Mormon Beliefs

What is the essence of Mormonism? Part of the confusion surrounding Mormonism is that its beliefs are broad with a wider scriptural canon than most Christian religions have, mixed with a rich set of histories and story traditions. Taken out of context, bit by bit, as the non-Mormon scholar Jan Shipps says, Mormonism can sound strange but together can be quite beautiful.⁶³⁵ Mormonism ultimately answers questions about the purpose of living and about the destiny of man. Yet journalists don't have hours to explain a complete picture and need to understand a central essence of the faith.

The Church itself produces massive resources to do that, including some directed just for reporters at newsroom.lds.org.⁶³⁶ The central essence of the faith is that Mormons believe in the divinity and role of Jesus Christ as savior of the world. His sacrifice pays the price of sin. But in that, there is little departure from other religions in the Christian family, so that simple statement somehow misses a large part of the essence of Mormonism because it doesn't bring anything that sets Mormonism apart. In their first formalized missionary presentation, a central idea of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that it is a restoration of the gospel and authority of Jesus Christ as taught and administered by Jesus himself.⁶³⁷

In the first lesson, missionaries point out there is a need for God to reveal his will to prophets on earth so people can know how to be happy. These are prophets like Moses and Elijah. Jesus Christ came, taught his gospel, and established his church with 12 apostles and the authority to lead the church. After Jesus died, the apostles and early

⁶³⁵ Luo, "Crucial test for Romney in speech."

⁶³⁶ See <http://newsroom.lds.org/topic/core-beliefs>

⁶³⁷ See *Preach My Gospel*, chapter 3, section 1

saints were persecuted and much of what Christ taught was lost. This Mormons call the Great Apostasy. The idea that prophets were needed anciently meant a prophet was needed to restore what was lost through revelation – through god’s power.

The restorer was Joseph Smith. As Joseph Smith tells his story, he was 14, wondering which of all the churches was correct. While reading the Bible, Smith encountered a verse in the New Testament that said that people should ask of God if they lacked wisdom.⁶³⁸ Smith decided to pray and on an early spring morning did so.

The account of his vision is standard in this early missionary presentation:

I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me. It no sooner appeared than I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound. When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—*This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!*⁶³⁹

This vision was the first of many powerful moments in the life of Smith in this restoration of what was lost, as he tells the story. Key to this religious restoration was the Book of Mormon. A few years after his First Vision, Smith prayed in his bed in New York and had a vision of an angel named Moroni, who said there was a set of Gold Plates not far from Smith’s house, buried in a hillside.

As missionaries teach it, Smith used those plates to translate an ancient record through miraculous means – The Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon contains the “fullness of the everlasting gospel,” tells stories of prophets and believers, and records Christ’s dealings with inhabitants of ancient America – including an account of the visit of the resurrected Christ to America. The Book of Mormon is canonical scripture to

⁶³⁸ James 1:5.

⁶³⁹ Joseph Smith History 1:16-17.

Mormons.⁶⁴⁰ Later revelations and translations came to Smith in the 1830s that were published as the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price, other Mormon scriptures.

A role for this dissertation might be said to be to help reporters get it right when it comes to Mormonism, and if there is one thing that must be said about Mormonism, it is that the thing that must be understood about the faith is the Book of Mormon is central to the argument Mormonism makes. Smith called it the keystone of the religion.⁶⁴¹ The Book of Mormon is the evidence that Mormonism presents to the world. If the Book of Mormon is what Smith said, Mormonism's central claims about apostasy and prophetic restoration would be true, Mormons teach. The book, therefore, becomes Mormonism's methodology. If the book and its origin story are true, then the religion is true. Mormonism makes a call to examine the Book of Mormon as evidence. It is with that evidence that Mormonism links the concrete into the mystical of what its followers call personal revelation. As the last concept in this introduction to Mormonism, Mormon missionaries invite interested people to read the Book of Mormon and then ask them to pray to God to ask whether the book is true. Often, this missionary presentation includes this verse from the Book of Mormon:

“And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.”⁶⁴²

⁶⁴⁰ Introduction to the Book of Mormon.

⁶⁴¹ Introduction to the Book of Mormon.

⁶⁴² Moroni 10:4

As Doug Underwood says in *From Yahweh to Yahoo!*, these kind of mystical experiences can be difficult for journalists to write about,⁶⁴³ but a key facet of understanding Mormonism is this idea of personal revelation. According to this study, the doctrinal essence of Mormonism is: Humans have a loving god with a loving plan. Christ achieves the plan through his sacrifice. Prophets teach the plan. An apostasy occurred after Christ died. Through Smith, the full truth was restored. The Book of Mormon is Mormonism methodology and power as people pray to God to know whether the Book is true through personal revelation.

Beyond foundational beliefs that make Mormonism distinctive, Mormonism, with its broad scriptural canon and rich history, provides many threads through which a Mormon politician might be influenced. The following are some ideas following from an observation this dissertation makes – that journalists rarely seemed interested in the question of how Mormon (and by implication most other religious) belief might influence candidate's ideas on public policy. Mormonism's rich history and unusual, broad doctrine might have informed many articles during the Romney campaign, and they could do so in the future. This is especially true because Mormons have a broader sense of canon scripture than many faiths do. Therefore, there are many concepts from which to draw. It is possible that a practicing Mormon would spend considerable time pondering Book of Mormon teachings in making their most powerful decisions. For that reason alone, reporters are justified in thinking about that book and its teachings.

⁶⁴³ Underwood, *From Yahweh to Yahoo!*, 249.

To be sure, Mormon politicians carry differing approaches to national issues, just as Catholic politicians do. The point is that in evaluating Mormon politicians, it can be extremely useful to see what they might believe.

Mormonism and history.

Mormonism's history includes numerous examples of government persecution and times where government didn't listen. They include the anti-polygamy statutes of the 19th century, the Missouri extermination order, the Utah War of 1857, where government invaded Utah and other similar moments.⁶⁴⁴ Such moments likely made Mormons deeply distrustful of government. Is that so for Romney or a Mormon candidate? How or why? Mormon history also had a deeply communal streak economically. Would a Mormon politician in the 21st century gravitate toward communal ideas that include helping the poor?

The Book of Mormon and terrorism.

How might a Mormon respond to terrorism? Would a Mormon candidate be more likely to negotiate? To invade Iraq? To take a hard or a soft line? The Book of Mormon⁶⁴⁵ might be characterized as a story about a nation with 1,000 years of history condensed into 500 or so pages. One of the history's themes is "secret combinations" and the rise of a group that for all intents and purposes appears to be a group of terrorists – the Gadianton Robbers. The book is uncompromising in its condemnation of these

⁶⁴⁴ See *Our Heritage*, at <http://lds.org/gospellibrary/ourheritage/OurHeritage35448000.pdf>.

⁶⁴⁵ An ancillary finding of all the research done in preparation for this study is that virtually no serious Book of Mormon idea has been discussed in recent years inside the news media at all.

organizations and blames these combinations for the death of two Book of Mormon civilizations.⁶⁴⁶

So, it goes to follow that a Mormon politician believing in the Book of Mormon would take an extremely uncompromising line against terror. If a Mormon were to see Communism as such a combination, then it follows a Mormon would be strongly anti-Communist. Indeed, a line in the book says the Book of Mormon will come forth in a day with such secret combinations.⁶⁴⁷

Yet, there is another view about what to do in the Book of Mormon in response to war. Two characters – Moroni⁶⁴⁸ and Lachoneus⁶⁴⁹ – respond extremely defensively when confronted with a potential invasion. They wait for the attack to come, rather than going on the offensive against what they know is coming. Would a Mormon politician, therefore, be seen as an appeaser and not in favor of offensive operations like Iraq? So, another reading suggests that the Book of Mormon might have taken a very hard line against pre-emption.

Some Mormon politicians might also be deeply distrustful of conspiring corporations – the lead-in to its relatively famous Word of Wisdom says that the revelation is to protect believers from evil and conspiring men in the last days. Though this doctrine doesn't say tobacco companies and alcohol companies and drug gangs, such might seem implied as a kind of danger to civil society.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁶ Helaman 2:14-15.

⁶⁴⁷ Ether 8:22-24.

⁶⁴⁸ Alma 49.

⁶⁴⁹ 3 Nephi 3.

⁶⁵⁰ D. & C. 89.

Mormonism and the environment

Mormonism seems to provide numerous environmental views. One passage of Mormon scripture literally personifies the world, as it weeps for the wickedness upon it, suggesting a profound relationship and stewardship to earth, making it a mother to all people.⁶⁵¹ However, another swath of environmental thinking seems overturned by one of Joseph Smith's revelations that says, in reference to the Earth, that it is "full and there is enough and to spare." There is no sense of Malthusian dystopia there. Would such ideas make a Mormon politician distrustful of draconian environmental initiatives? Would such make a Mormon politician more serious in their convictions about protecting and respecting the planet?

Mormonism and poverty

In the next passage after saying the earth has enough, there seems a pure sense of social justice saying that if a person doesn't impart to the poor and the needy, that person will, with the wicked, "lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment."⁶⁵² There is also one of these injunctions toward helping the poor within the Book of Mormon:

Ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish.

Perhaps thou shalt say: The man has brought upon himself his misery; therefore I will stay my hand, and will not give unto him of my food, nor impart unto him of my substance that he may not suffer, for his punishments are just—

But I say unto you, O man, whosoever doeth this the same hath great cause to repent; and except he repenteth of that which he hath done he perisheth forever, and hath no interest in the kingdom of God.

⁶⁵¹ The character here is Enoch of the old testament in part of the Mormon Pearl of Great Price, Moses 7:48.

⁶⁵² D&C 104:17.

For behold, are we not all beggars? Do we not all depend upon the same Being, even God, for all the substance which we have, for both food and raiment, and for gold, and for silver, and for all the riches which we have of every kind?”⁶⁵³

Would such a politician favor strong welfare programs?

Mormonism and America

One of the most intriguing parts of Mormonism – and its relationship to the mainstream – is what might be called its sense of a divinely inspired constitution. Joseph Smith’s 101st section of his revelations, the Doctrine and Covenants, written in the midst of historic persecution, including some meted out by government authorities, includes this passage of support for the Constitution:

Therefore, it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another. And for this purpose have I established the Constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood.⁶⁵⁴

Also, there is the Book of Mormon teaching, speaking of the America – and the New World -- that this is a land which is “choice above all other lands.”⁶⁵⁵ What does that mean for a Mormon politician? Could this create a unique sense of American exceptionalism? Could it create a devotion to the Constitution that bordered on the strident?

Part of this intriguing Mormon relationship to America is the quiet sense of tragic failure that permeates the Book of Mormon – a story of two historical American

⁶⁵³ Mosiah 4:17-19.

⁶⁵⁴ D & C 101:79-80.

⁶⁵⁵ 1 Nephi 2:20.

nations⁶⁵⁶ that fell from peace, prosperity and grace to self-annihilation, terror and genocide. So, the book sits unequivocally as a warning. A verse that talks of America being choice also includes this: “Therefore he that doth possess [this land] shall serve God or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God.”⁶⁵⁷

This religious teaching – and others like it others like it in other religions -- creates a potential dilemma for a Mormon politician. If a Mormon president truly believed this passage, and held hope for the country, there could be a moral imperative to warn when he or she saw growing wickedness. Such warnings might make political office difficult to obtain.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁶ The bulk of the Book of Mormon narrative is about the Nephites – who descend from one half of a family who arrived in the Americas in about 600 B.C. Their nemesis, the Lamanites, descended from the other half of the family, and who ultimately slaughter the Nephite nation in an American genocide. One 15-chapter book in the Book of Mormon describes a second, earlier nation, the Jaredites, which also commits national suicide through wickedness. This nation has only two survivors who tell the sad tale of destruction.

⁶⁵⁷ Ether 2:10.

⁶⁵⁸ And what of the supposed Mormon quest to enter the mainstream? Being a voice crying wickedness to a modern generation, as this passage seems to urge Mormons to do, is a strange way to do that. The great Mormon apologist Hugh Nibley told Mormon public relations practitioners in the 1990s that a great problem with Mormonism today is its lack of willingness to actually tell what it believes – a different kind of criticism. “Why do we hold back?” he said. See Hugh Nibley, “Mediocre Meditations on the Media.”

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