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Project for Excellence in  
Journalism

Pew Forum on Religion  
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## The Media, Religion and the 2012 Campaign for President

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

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## Overview

A striking feature of the 2012 race for the White House – a contest that pitted the first Mormon nominee from a major party against an incumbent president whose faith had been a source of controversy four years earlier – is how little the subject of religion came up in the media. According to a new study by the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, just 1% of the campaign coverage by major news outlets (including broadcast and cable television, radio, newspaper front pages and the most popular news websites) focused on the religion of the candidates or the role of religion in the presidential election. Only 6% of the election-related stories in major news outlets contained any reference to religion.

Media attention to religion’s importance in the campaign peaked during the primaries, when several Republican candidates spoke about their Christian beliefs. The prominence of religious rhetoric in speeches by Rep. Michele Bachmann, Texas Gov. Rick Perry, former U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum and others fueled speculation about whether white evangelical Protestants – who [made up](#) about one-third of all Republican and Republican-leaning registered voters in 2012 – would withhold support from Mitt Romney because of his Mormon faith. Indeed, the biggest single religion-related campaign story came more than a full year before the election, when a Texas minister publicly called Mormonism a “cult.” That incident, in October 2011, generated fully 5% of all coverage of religion in the presidential campaign.

When Romney captured the GOP nomination and named Rep. Paul Ryan, a Roman Catholic, as his vice presidential running mate in August 2012, they became the first non-Protestant ticket in the Republican Party’s history. But as the primaries gave way to the general election campaign, the subject of religion subsided in the media, in part because neither Romney nor President Barack Obama made much effort to raise it. Fewer than one-in-seven religion-related stories in the campaign (13%) resulted from statements or actions by either candidate.

Rather than focusing on the religious beliefs and practices of the candidates, media coverage of religion during the 2012 campaign frequently centered on the political clout of white evangelicals and their electoral choices – a topic that accounted for 29% of religion-related coverage overall. Talking about evangelicals became a way for the media to address the question of what impact Romney’s Mormon faith could have on the race, confronting religion as a tactical “horse-race” concern.

Romney was the subject of about twice as much religion-related coverage as Obama, and 45% of all religion-related stories in the campaign took the horse-race approach, dealing with how religion might impact the vote. In all, 34% of the religion coverage focused on faith as a character issue, or mentioned it in passing as part of a candidate’s identity. There was far less coverage (16%) of how religion might impact policymaking or governance.

These are among the key findings of the new study conducted by the Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) and the Pew Forum, both of which are part of the Pew Research Center. The study

examined nearly 800 religion-related stories from cable television, network broadcast television, radio, newspaper front pages and the most popular news websites in the country between August 2011 and Election Day (Nov. 6, 2012). In addition, the study involved a sample of specialized religious publications and an analysis of hundreds of thousands of messages about the candidates' faith on Twitter and Facebook; the social media analysis relied on technology developed by Crimson Hexagon. (For more details on how the study was conducted, see the [Methodology](#).)

By the end of the campaign, about two-thirds of U.S. adults (65%) were aware that Romney is a Mormon. But the vast majority of Americans (82%) said they had learned "not very much" or "nothing at all" about the Mormon religion, according to a Pew Research Center [poll](#) conducted shortly after the election.

Other findings of the PEJ media analysis include:

- **The overall level of religion coverage was about the same as in 2008.** Just as in the 2008 presidential campaign, religion accounted for a tiny portion of the total coverage devoted to the 2012 election by major news outlets. Of all the election stories studied, 1% were specifically about religion, the same portion as in 2008. Just 6% referred to religion in any way. That level of attention was fairly even across all platforms studied – with the exception of newspapers, whose front-page stories mentioned religion 16% of the time.
- **More religion coverage focused on Romney than on Obama.** Romney received twice as much religion coverage as Obama. Thirty-five percent of the religion-related stories focused on Romney, often raising questions about how his faith would be received by voters. Obama's coverage, at 17%, often focused on incidents in which his Christian faith was challenged, including rumors that he is a Muslim.
- **The two nominees rarely sought to bring religion into the campaign narrative.** Just 8% of the religion stories during the 2012 race were prompted by statements or actions from the Romney campaign. For the Obama campaign, the comparable figure was even lower (5%). The GOP primary candidates were much more vocal about religion, prompting 22% of religion references in the media during the campaign. Nearly half of all religion stories (47%) resulted from analysis, opinion or enterprise reporting by members of the news media, highlighting the degree to which neither of the candidates wanted to raise religion as an issue.
- **Religion coverage was heavily focused on the horse-race angle.** Nearly half of all the religion-related stories studied (45%) dealt with how religion might impact the race. Many of these horse-race stories revolved around which candidate was winning among particular religious groups, such as white evangelical Protestants in Iowa. Other horse-race stories examined how the candidates used religion as part of their campaign strategy.

- **The second biggest element of religion coverage dealt with the candidates' beliefs and values.** In all, 34% of the religion coverage during the presidential race focused on faith as a character issue or mentioned it in passing as part of a candidate's biography. There was far less coverage – 16% – of how religion might impact policymaking or governance.
- **In social media, the tone of conversation about the candidates and religion tended to be negative.** For Romney, negative assertions about his faith on Twitter and Facebook outnumbered positive ones by more than 3-to-1. And allegations that Obama is a Muslim appeared twice as often as messages seeking to refute those allegations.
- **Within the Mormon community, media became a voice of caution to a group suddenly in the spotlight.** An analysis of several publications aimed at members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) finds that during the campaign, LDS media often sought to prepare Mormons for increased scrutiny while maintaining distance from politics. For example, Church News, an official news outlet of the church, issued a statement that acknowledged Romney's candidacy but firmly reiterated the church's political neutrality.

In the end, the basic contours of religion in U.S. politics remained unchanged in the 2012 election, according to a Pew Forum [analysis](#) of exit poll results. In particular, [white evangelical Protestants](#) voted as overwhelmingly for Romney (79%) as they did for Republican candidates John McCain in 2008 (73%) and George W. Bush in 2004 (79%). Indeed, white evangelicals voted as strongly for Romney as Mormons did (78%), according to the Pew Forum analysis of exit poll data.

## Comparing Coverage in 2012 and 2008

Four years ago, in the 2008 presidential election, media coverage of religion focused on a pivotal, defining moment for each candidate. In Romney's case, the coverage peaked in December 2007 when he delivered a major speech about faith in public life in an effort to reduce public unease with Mormonism; many media reports likened Romney's speech to John F. Kennedy's famous address about his Catholicism to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association in September 1960.

In Obama's case, the peak in religion-related coverage came in early 2008 when a video surfaced of his former pastor at Chicago's Trinity United Church of Christ, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, making controversial statements about race in America. Obama denounced Wright's remarks, gave a major speech on the subject of race and eventually resigned from Wright's congregation. Many media covered the controversy as a story about race or politics rather than, or in addition to, a story about Obama's religion. In the 2008 primary season, the Wright saga was the [No. 1 campaign story](#) overall, accounting for 6% of media coverage of the campaign in the first four months of that year.

In the 2012 presidential campaign, the overall level of religion coverage was about the same as in 2008: Religion was the central topic in about 1% of campaign stories studied. But in 2012 the media covered

religion less as a defining issue about the identity of the candidates and more as a tactical matter. The tactical coverage focused on such questions as whether Romney’s Mormon faith would hurt him with the GOP’s conservative Christian base, whether Santorum’s fervent Catholicism would help him win the GOP nomination and whether Obama’s health care legislation would alienate Catholics who felt that the law infringed on their institutions’ religious freedom.

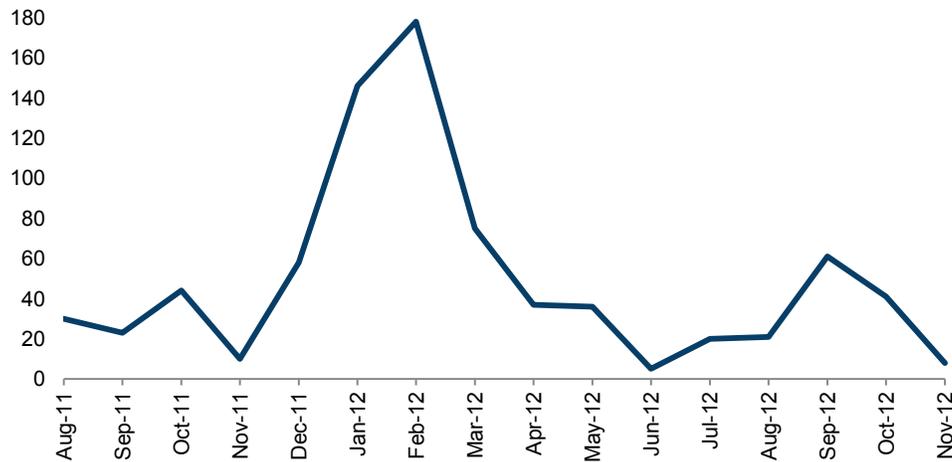
During the 15-month period studied, the volume of religion coverage formed an arc that peaked during the primary season, in the early months of 2012. Nearly half (41%) of all mentions of religion in major media outlets appeared during January and February, around the time of the Iowa caucuses and the early primaries in New Hampshire, South Carolina and elsewhere. This was also the period when Santorum, who was particularly vocal about the role of faith in his political decision-making, briefly surged in the polls.

But as the campaign became a contest between Obama and Romney, the media’s attention to religion’s role in the campaign waned, save for a brief period when Islam became part of the media narrative following an attack on the U.S. diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya, that killed the ambassador and three other Americans. Between June and Election Day, religion was mentioned in just 4% of campaign stories – about a third as many as in January and February, during the early primaries (13%).

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### Religion Coverage in the 2011-2012 Election Cycle

*Amount of coverage over time (number of stories)*



**Date Range:** Aug. 13, 2011 – Nov. 6, 2012

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## Top Religion-Related Campaign Stories in 2012

In contrast with the 2008 presidential campaign, moments in which either of the candidates was challenged on his religious identity, or forced to defend a controversial religious position, were muted and short-lived. Among the incidents that rose to the surface, at least momentarily, was when a Baptist minister from Texas described Romney’s Mormon faith as a cult. The Rev. Robert Jeffress made the comments at the October 2011 Values Voter Summit in Washington, D.C., as he was introducing Rick Perry. Romney responded only briefly to the comments – “I just don’t believe that that kind of divisiveness based on religion has a place in this country,” he said – and the story faded after about a week, amounting to 5% of all religion coverage during the period studied.

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### Top 10 Religion-Related Events in the Campaign

Robert Jeffress Mormon “cult” comments	5%
Obama health care law and religious freedom issues	4
Jeremiah Wright controversy	3
“Innocence of Muslims” video and Benghazi attack	3
Texas religious leader gathering	2
Santorum questions Obama’s faith	2
Rumor that Obama is Muslim	2
Santorum speech criticizing John F. Kennedy	2
Santorum 2008 speech referencing Satan	1
Obama announces support for gay marriage	1

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Another modest flurry of religion coverage began in January 2012 when the Obama administration announced that most health insurance plans must cover women’s contraception, provoking criticism from some religious institutions and leaders. These critics included the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which described the legislation as a threat to religious freedom. The ensuing debate became a campaign issue as GOP candidates, including Romney, challenged Obama – a rare instance in 2012 in which the candidates themselves initiated faith-related news. Yet it accounted for just 4% of all religion-related coverage in the campaign.

Other religion-related events that garnered media coverage in the 2012 campaign included a recycling of the Rev. Wright controversy from four years earlier, a YouTube video about the Islamic Prophet Muhammad that sparked protests in several countries, a gathering in Texas of prominent evangelical leaders to decide which candidate to support, and continuing allegations or rumors that Obama is a Muslim.

## Differences between Newspapers and Radio, TV, and Websites

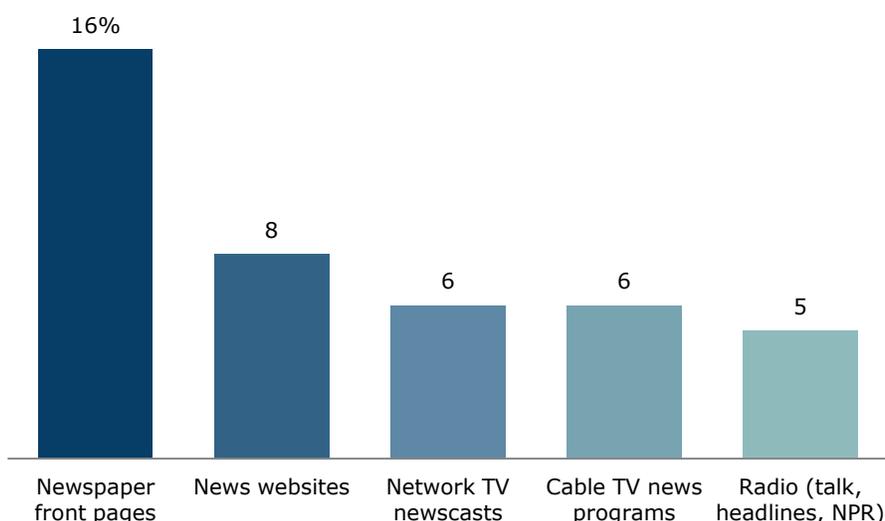
While just 1% of all the election coverage studied was squarely about religion, in the 2012 campaign PEJ also analyzed the number of stories that mentioned religion, even in passing. By that measure, 6% of

campaign stories in 2012 contained at least some reference to religion. (Because this was a new measure, no comparable figure is available for 2008.)

Overall, most sectors of the mainstream media – broadcast television, cable television, radio and major news websites – all mentioned religion in about the same proportion of 2012 campaign stories (5% to 8%). The one exception was newspaper front pages, where the percentage was at least twice as high: Fully 16% of front-page newspaper stories about the campaign contained at least a passing reference to religion.

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### Attention to Religion by Media Sector



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### The Role of the Press in Shaping the Religion Narrative

Why the disparity between print and other sectors? One possible explanation is that the relative lack of major events or controversies tied to religion may have dampened interest among cable television and talk radio outlets. Web and network television coverage also tended to be somewhat more event-driven. Many of the newspaper stories, by contrast, tended to probe religion even when there was no specific news event triggering the story.

Indeed, more than half (58%) of front-page religion coverage in newspapers was initiated by reporters choosing to raise the issue of religion, rather than reacting to statements by candidates, comments by religious figures, polls or other outside triggers. That figure is noticeably higher than the share of all religion-related campaign stories in major media as a whole that were self-generated by a reporter, anchor or media commentator (47%).

The candidates themselves were responsible for triggering 35% of religion references in news reports. That figure includes actions and statements by nine presidential candidates in the primaries and general election as well as the two vice presidential candidates. Romney triggered only 8% of religion references, and Obama just 5%. The seven GOP primary candidates who ultimately withdrew from the race and Paul Ryan, Romney’s running mate, triggered 22% of the religion references.

Other references to religion in campaign coverage were triggered by a mix of polls (7%), events (8%) and statements made by religious figures (7%).

## Main Themes in Coverage of Religion

An examination of the main themes, or ongoing storylines, in coverage of religion during the presidential race suggests that faith was often viewed through the lens of politics. Throughout the 2012 campaign, major media routinely examined which candidate was winning or losing ground among various religious groups as well as how the candidates and their supporters were using religion as a political tool in the campaign.

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### Who or What Initiated Religion Coverage (Top 10)

Reporter (enterprise, opinion or analysis)	39%
Santorum statement or action	11
Pundit/On-air analyst	8
Event	8
Romney statement or action	8
Religious figure/leader statement or action	7
Polls	7
Other figure statement or action	6
Gingrich statement or action	5
Obama statement or action	5

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A plurality of all stories containing references to religion (45%) focused on what political commentators call “the horse race,” or the tactics of the campaigns and the ups and downs of the candidates in the polls, as opposed to the substance of the candidates’ positions on key issues, their personal histories

and their deeper motivations or personalities. The largest portion of horse-race stories (36%) examined how various religious groups, especially evangelicals, would vote. An additional 9% examined how the candidates were using religion as a tactical tool to position themselves or appeal to particular constituencies.

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### Themes in Religion Coverage of the Campaign

Candidate's religious beliefs/religious bio	34%
Evangelical voters' support for candidates	29
Impact of faith on policy/governance	16
Tactical uses of religion in campaign	9
Religious electorate/"Values" voters	4
Catholic voters' support for candidates	2
Jewish voters' support for candidates	2
Other religious voters' support for candidates	2
Mormon voters' support for candidates	1
Alleged media "war on religion"	1

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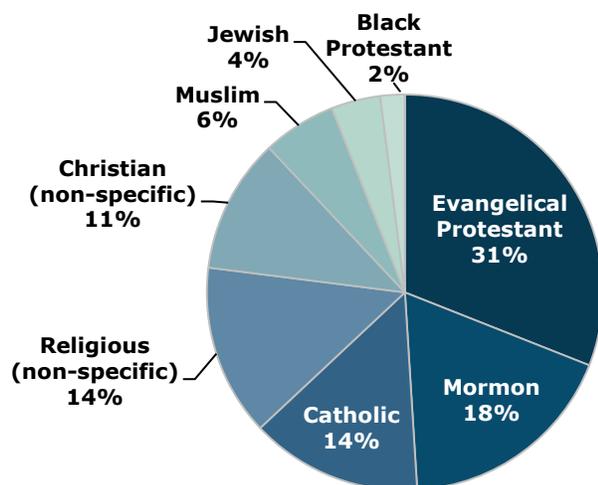
Among the 54% of stories that took a more substantive approach, the largest category (34%) dealt with the candidates' biographies, including the place of religion in their lives. An additional 16% examined how their faith might impact policy and governance, and 4% explored the religious makeup of the electorate.

### Coverage of Particular Faiths

Another way of looking at the media coverage is to assess which religious faith was featured in each story studied. The data underscore just how prominently evangelicalism featured in the media narrative about American faith and politics. Evangelical Protestants received more coverage in the campaign than did the religion of either candidate – Mormonism and mainline Protestantism (or even Christianity in general since the president has not publicly joined a congregation since leaving Trinity).

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## Coverage of Faiths During the Campaign



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Nearly a third of all coverage (31%) focused on evangelicals. Mormonism was a distant second at 18%. Other Christian groups, including Catholics and Black Protestants, accounted for an additional 28%. Judaism (4%) and Islam (6%) were given minor supporting roles.

The heavy scrutiny by the media of white evangelical Protestants – their beliefs, values and voting behavior – can be explained in part because of the size of this group. White evangelicals made up a third (34%) of all Republican and Republican-leaning registered voters, according to Pew Research Center [surveys](#) conducted in January-July 2012. And they ended up accounting for 23% of the electorate in 2012 (and also in 2008), according to a Pew Forum [analysis](#) of exit poll data. Despite all the speculation about whether evangelicals would stay home on Election Day rather than vote for a Mormon, however, the exit polls indicate that they voted for Romney by an overwhelming margin and with no less enthusiasm than Romney's other supporters.

### A Closer Look at Romney and Obama

Taken together, Romney and Obama were the subject of a slight majority (52%) of religion coverage over the 15-month period studied. The remainder of the coverage was spread among their running mates and the seven Republican primary candidates who ultimately withdrew.

However, Romney was the subject of twice as much religion-related coverage as Obama, with 35% of the media mentions focusing on his Mormon faith. Coverage of Obama's religion (17% of all religion coverage) more often veered into rumor and innuendo.

*Romney*

The Romney campaign approached the subject of his religion with caution and, to a considerable extent, so did the mainstream media.

Though he often made generic references to God or faith on the campaign trail, Romney was more reticent about his personal religious beliefs and practices. Just 14% of the religion coverage focusing on Romney was triggered by something that he or his campaign did or said. Reporters, pundits and talk show hosts, whether through investigations or analysis, initiated 48% of religion coverage of Romney. Other candidates – including other GOP contenders in the primaries – largely stayed away from the issue, triggering just 5% of the religion coverage focused on Romney.

There were instances, though, when Romney opened up to the press and the public about his faith. One Sunday in August 2012, Romney’s campaign aides allowed a reporter to attend church services with him near Romney’s vacation home in New Hampshire. During the Republican National Convention later that month, several speakers took the stage to help flesh out Romney’s religious background for viewers, sharing personal stories of Romney’s acts of service in the Mormon community. And Romney himself made reference to his faith tradition, by name, in his nomination acceptance speech.

Another instance of Romney asserting himself in the public debate about religion came after the Obama administration’s Affordable Care Act was introduced. Romney drew coverage for

suggesting that Obama was eroding religious liberty by requiring religious institutions to provide coverage for contraception; those remarks accounted for 4% of Romney’s religion-related coverage in the campaign.

The biggest theme, or running storyline, in the Romney-focused religion coverage was his relationship with evangelical Christian voters (33%). While the media were less inclined to question, as they did in 2007, whether the country was ready for a Mormon president, they did report and comment extensively on evangelicals’ discomfort with Romney’s religion.

This line of coverage included a live analysis on Feb. 2, 2012, by Fox News Channel’s Carl Cameron, who told viewers that “it’s worth noting that Mr. Romney’s Mormonism isn’t popular with evangelical

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**Who or What Initiated Romney’s Religion Coverage**

Reporter (enterprise, opinion or analysis)	41%
Romney statement or action	14
Religious figure/leader statement or action	9
Polls	8
Other figure statement or action	8
Pundit/On-air analyst	8
Event	7
Gingrich statement or action	3
Obama statement or action	1
Huntsman statement or action	1

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Christians in the early voting states.” Similarly, the Rev. Franklin Graham, son of evangelist Billy Graham, told CBS Early Show viewers on Feb. 17, 2012, that “it’s going to be difficult for Romney, as a Mormon, with the evangelical community.”

The issue of whether conservative Christians (also referred to in media accounts by such terms as “values voters,” the “Christian Right” and the GOP’s “Christian base”) as well as other religious groups would support a Mormon candidate accounted for nearly half of Romney’s coverage, at 43%.

Still, fully a third of Romney’s coverage (30%) examined his religious beliefs and background. This coverage ranged from deep profile pieces – such as an October 2011 New York Times exploration of Romney’s time as a Mormon bishop in Belmont, Mass. – to merely parenthetical phrases mentioning that Romney is Mormon. Another 12% of coverage focused on how Romney’s faith could impact how he would govern.

Though no single event dominated Romney’s religion coverage, the comments about Mormonism made by Jeffress stood out, accounting for 10% of all stories focused on Romney’s faith. After Jeffress publicly called Mormonism a cult, cable and broadcast television brought significant exposure to the pastor. During a series of intense questions by CNN host Anderson Cooper, for example, Jeffress insisted that Mormons “do not embrace historical Christianity,” though he also said he thought that Romney would be a better choice than Obama for Christian voters.

### *Obama*

While there are some similarities in how Obama’s faith was covered by the media, there are two ways in which it differed from Romney’s coverage. First, the media focused less on support for Obama among particular religious groups (20% of stories), keying in more on Obama’s religious beliefs (39%) and the intersection of faith and governance (34%). Second, much of Obama’s religion coverage focused on accusations, rumors or misperceptions challenging the truthfulness of his statements about his Christian faith.

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### **Themes in Romney’s Religion Coverage**

Evangelical voters’ support for candidates	33%
Candidate’s religious beliefs/religious bio	30
Impact of faith on policy/governance	12
Tactical uses of religion in campaign	11
Mormon voters’ support for candidates	4
Religious electorate/“Values” voters	3
Jewish voters’ support for candidates	3
Other religious voters’ support for candidates	2
Catholic voters’ support for candidates	1
Alleged media “war on religion”	<1

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The biggest single storyline in Obama’s religion coverage focused on the negative reactions from religious groups, especially Catholic bishops, to aspects of his signature health care law (14%). This provoked claims from some Republican candidates and conservative leaders that Obama was waging a war on religious liberty.

Two instances in which conservatives questioned the sincerity of Obama’s faith made the news as well, accounting for 9% of Obama’s religion coverage. In one instance, the Rev. Franklin Graham said in a Jan. 31, 2012, interview that one would “have to ask President Obama” in response to a question of

whether Graham believed the president was a Christian. And Santorum told a group in Ohio on Feb. 18, 2012, that Obama’s agenda was based on “some phony theology.”

An additional 13% of Obama’s religion coverage returned to the Rev. Wright controversy of 2008, as media figures on the right felt compelled to unearth Obama’s past ties to the minister, who espoused a brand of liberation theology that conservatives found unpalatable and unpatriotic.

And another issue that arose in the 2008 campaign, rumors that Obama is a Muslim, also reappeared this time around, accounting for 7% of Obama’s religion coverage. That was in addition to another Islam-related storyline in Obama’s coverage – one that occurred late in the campaign when the attack on the U.S. diplomatic mission in Benghazi prompted Obama to address tensions between Muslims and other faiths. That accounted for 12% of Obama’s religion coverage.

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### Themes in Obama’s Religion Coverage

Candidate’s religious beliefs/religious bio	39%
Impact of faith on policy/governance	34
Evangelical voters’ support for candidates	7
Tactical uses of religion in campaign	7
Other religious voters’ support for candidates	5
Catholic voters’ support for candidates	4
Jewish voters’ support for candidates	4
Religious electorate/“Values” voters	1

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### Events in Obama's Religion Coverage

Obama health care law and religious freedom issues	14%
Jeremiah Wright controversy	13
"Innocence of Muslims" video and Benghazi attack	12
Rumor that Obama is Muslim	7
Obama announces support for gay marriage	6
Democratic party platform and religion	5
Franklin Graham questions Obama's faith	5
Obama's "God and guns" statement	5
Al Smith dinner	4
Romney's Liberty University speech	1

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### New Media Ecosystem – Different Conversations

In additional to the main analysis, researchers also examined two alternative streams of information: social media and niche publications directed at the Mormon community. Each revealed a tenor quite different from the mainstream media as well as from each other. An additional analysis of the conversation about religion and the two major candidates between August 2011 and November 2012 reveals just how far social media departed from the more reserved treatment of both Obama and Romney by the legacy media. And an additional analysis of a group of digital niche publications directed at the Mormon community highlights the ambivalence that community felt about being in the spotlight during the campaign.

#### *Social Media Discussion of Romney*

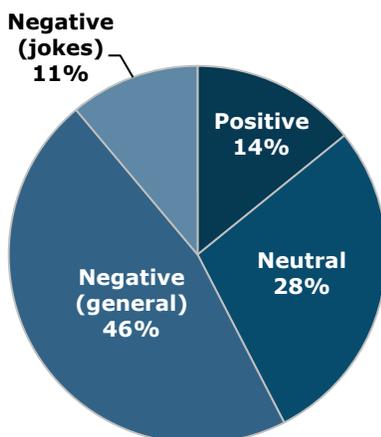
In social media, the conversation about religion and the two major candidates was far from the reserved approach of the mainstream media. On both Twitter and Facebook, the majority of the discussion about Romney's Mormonism was highly negative, while suspicions of Obama's relationship to Islam came through more strongly than statements refuting them .

Twitter discussion about Romney's Mormon faith during the primaries and general election put the social media platform's characteristics on full display. The micro-blogging format lends itself to spontaneity and rawness, and as such, the tone of the conversation was often irreverent.

More than half of the assertions about Romney’s faith (57%) were negative in nature, while only 14% were positive.

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### Tone of Twitter Conversation about Romney’s Mormon Faith



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Many of the negative assertions played off stereotypes about the Mormon faith, such as the idea that the church endorses plural marriage. “I don’t care what you say, mitt Romney is a 100% card carrying Mormon. I bet he has like 5 sister wives,” tweeted iConKMass on Aug. 30, 2012.<sup>1</sup>

Others were more conspiratorial, reflecting their sense that Romney and his faith are secretive: “Wonder if Romney’s taxes highlight his leadership positions in the Mormon church and he doesn’t want people to ask about it,” tweeted TheRitaPhD on Aug. 11, 2012.

A significant portion of the negative conversation on Twitter came in the form of jokes – 11% of the entire conversation and 19% of the negative assertions. The high volume of jokes is a finding that has surfaced as a pattern in other research on social media (see a May 2011 [PEJ study](#) about social media reaction to Osama bin Laden’s death and an August 2011 [study](#) about the reaction to the death of Steve Jobs).

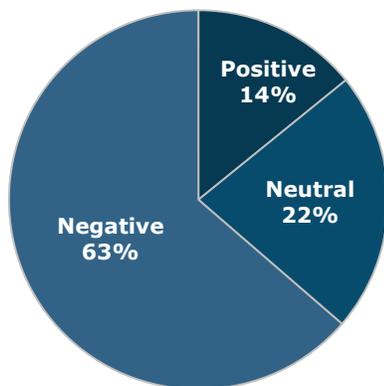
Even the positive assertions were often a reminder of the hurdle Romney faces with certain voters. “I just don’t understand why people wouldn’t vote for Romney just because he’s Mormon. #ignorant,” tweeted Tbarnes34 on Aug. 30, 2012.

Another 28% of the assertions were neutral, which often came in the form of a user simply mentioning that Romney is affiliated with the Mormon faith.

On Facebook, the tone of conversation about Romney’s Mormon faith was generally similar to what was found on Twitter, though slightly more negative, with 63% of the conversation negative, 22% neutral and 14% positive. (Because Facebook is not nearly as prone to humor as Twitter, at least on this subject, the portion of the conversation devoted to jokes was not measured.)

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### **Tone of Facebook Conversation about Romney’s Mormon Faith**



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As on Twitter, the relatively few positive assertions about Romney’s faith on Facebook often were responding to criticisms. One user wrote on Aug. 29, 2012, “I should not dignify this nonsense with a post, but I just can’t let it go. This guy is making a LEAP by calling Romney a racist because he’s Mormon. Huh?”

And the negative discussion was often harsh and suspicious. “Before anyone supports Mormon Mitt Romney for President, they need to know the extremely unique Mormon ‘End of the Age’ viewpoint and especially the ‘White Horse Prophecy’! Once properly understood, you will realize that no genuine Christian could ever support Mitt Romney for President,” wrote another Facebook user on June 11, 2012.

#### *Social Media Discussion of Obama*

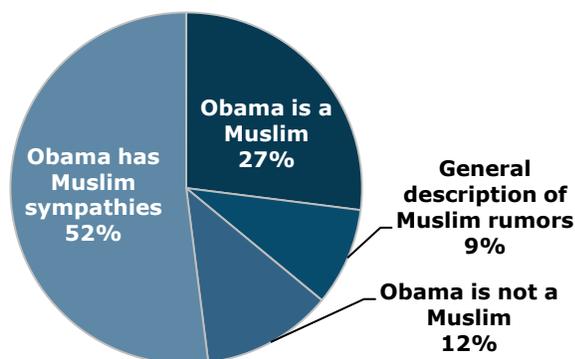
Though Obama identifies as a Christian, the supposition that he is secretly a Muslim has existed since before his election in 2008. The controversy reached a crescendo in 2008 but has never fully disappeared. On social media during the 2012 campaign, this allegation or rumor was espoused about twice as often as it was refuted.

On Twitter, the biggest portion of the conversation about Obama’s relationship to Islam was not contending that he is a practicing Muslim but rather that he has sympathy for the Muslim world (52% of

the conversation). Yet 27% of the conversation espoused the belief that he is a Muslim, while 12% refuted that idea. The remaining 9% of the Twitter conversation consisted of general descriptions of the Muslim rumors, neither espousing nor refuting them.

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### Themes in Twitter Conversation About Obama's Relationship to Islam



**Date Range:** Aug. 13, 2011- Nov. 6, 2012

THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S PROJECT FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM &  
PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S FORUM ON RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE

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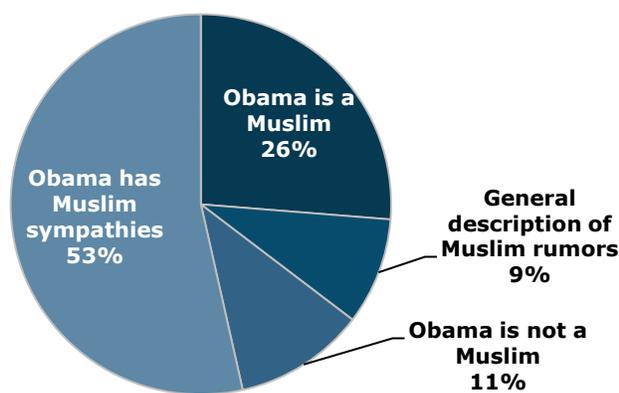
Those who espoused the rumor often used "Muslim" as an epithet: "He just needs to be removed for being a fraud and basically Obama is nothing less than a Muslim Radical Terrorist," wrote one user on Dec. 18, 2011.

Those who accused Obama of having sympathies with the Muslim world often referred to his administration's actions in Egypt and Libya: "Obama praises the Muslim Brotherhood takeover of #Egypt. Is anyone surprised? I'm not," said one Twitter user on June 25, 2012.

As with the social media discussion of Romney's faith, the Twitter and Facebook conversations about Obama and religion were largely aligned. On Facebook, 53% of the conversation consisted of arguments that the president unduly sympathizes with the Muslim world. Another 26% consisted of rumors that he is Muslim, more than twice the portion (11%) refuting that rumor. And 9% consisted of neutral descriptions of those rumors.

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## Themes in Facebook Conversation About Obama's Relationship to Islam



**Date Range:** Aug. 13, 2011- Nov. 6, 2012

THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S PROJECT FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM &  
PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S FORUM ON RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE

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### *Religious Niche Outlets*

A look at yet another corner of the media universe – news and commentary outlets aimed specifically at Mormons – further illustrates just how different one's perception of religion and politics becomes, depending on where one turns for information.

As with any religious tradition, the Mormon faith has a diversity of voices, styles and demographics in its official and unofficial media outlets. In the United States, one of the primary information vehicles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is [Church News](#), which is owned by [Deseret News](#), one of the two major daily papers in Salt Lake City. Beyond that, a number of magazines aimed primarily at Mormons, such as [LDS Living](#) and [Meridian](#), bring in differing voices, conversations and topics. And a host of blogs, including one large network nicknamed the "[Blogernacle](#)," represent many diverse points of view about Mormon faith and life.

A search of the Church News archives suggests that the LDS church rarely brings politics into its writings. Over the course of a decade (February 2002 through September 2012), Romney appeared in Church News archives 41 times. Most of the references were in passing, such as [this profile](#) of a church elder who at one point worked at Bain Capital with Romney. Very few references directly addressed Romney's political career, though one from Feb. 1, 2011, stands out. [The posting](#), entitled "Politics Heightens Interest in the Church," was an opportunity for the church to reiterate its neutrality and state that it "will not comment at all on the personalities and platforms of the candidates."

Besides Church News, other sources of news and information within the Mormon community were also somewhat circumspect about discussing politics in general and Romney's candidacy specifically. Among

the leading magazines in the Mormon community is LDS Living, a lifestyle publication that sometimes touches on current events. A search of the LDS Living website in September 2012 turned up few references to Romney in its original content. Most often, Romney was mentioned in roundups of reports by other, non-Mormon outlets, alerting readers to what the mainstream media were saying about one of their church's most high-profile members.

One LDS Living piece from May 4, 2012, highlighted a Daily Show clip: "The video veers toward the irreverent side (watch at your own risk). But we think the fact that Jon Stewart went out of his way to defend the LDS Church is pretty cool." An earlier post from June 23, 2011, was entitled "How to talk to your neighbor about a Mormon candidate." The author advised listening with civility: "Take a lesson from the Church's stance of political neutrality."

A review of posts from notable blogs within the Blogernacle may not constitute a representative sample. But it does show an awareness within Mormon media that their faith is under the microscope, and it reflects some ambivalence about the attention.

For example, on Sept. 4, 2012, the blog "By Common Consent" published a lengthy analysis of Romney's speech at the Republican National Convention. The verdict of "How Mitt Romney Deflated the Mormon Moment" was that Romney missed a great opportunity to capitalize on a positive image of the Mormon faith.

And a posting on another blog, "Faith Promoting Rumor," seemed to sum up the approach of both Romney and Obama during the general election – refraining from attacking someone else's religious beliefs out of awareness of one's own vulnerability on the subject. "As Mormons, it [sic] we are going to expect others to look past our religion and the history of our religion, we should be hesitant to blame political actors for everything that their pastors say or think. Do we want to constantly be in the position of having to condemn polygamy and past racism?"

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<sup>1</sup> Spelling errors and typos in social media postings are left uncorrected to preserve authenticity.

## Methodology

*December 11, 2012*

This report on media coverage of religion in the 2012 presidential campaign uses data derived from two different methodologies. Data regarding the coverage in the mainstream press were derived from the Project for Excellence in Journalism's in-house coding operation. ([Click here](#) for details on how that project, also known as PEJ's [News Coverage Index](#), is conducted.)

Data regarding the tone of conversation on social media (Twitter and Facebook) were derived from a combination of PEJ's traditional media research methods, based on long-standing rules regarding content analysis, along with computer coding software developed by [Crimson Hexagon](#). That software is able to analyze the textual content from millions of posts on social media platforms. Crimson Hexagon (CH) classifies online content by identifying statistical patterns in words.

### Human Coding of Mainstream Media

#### *Sample Design*

The mainstream media content was based on coverage originally captured as part of [PEJ's weekly News Coverage Index](#) (NCI).

Each week, the NCI examines the coverage from 52 outlets in five media sectors, including newspapers, online news, network TV, cable TV, and radio. Following a system of rotation, between 25 and 28 outlets each weekday are studied as well as 3 newspapers each Sunday.

In total, the 52 media outlets examined for this campaign study were as follows:

Newspapers (Eleven in all)

Coded two out of these four every weekday; one on Sunday

*The New York Times*

*Los Angeles Times*

*USA Today*

*The Wall Street Journal*

Coded two out of these four every weekday; one on Sunday

*The Washington Post*

*The Denver Post*

*Houston Chronicle*

*Orlando Sentinel*

Coded one out of these three every weekday and Sunday

*Traverse City Record-Eagle (MI)*

*The Daily Herald (WA)*

*The Eagle-Tribune (MA)*

Web sites (Coded six of twelve each weekday)

Yahoo News

MSNBC.com

CNN.com

NYTimes.com

Google News

FoxNews.com

ABCNews.com

USAToday.com

WashingtonPost.com

LATimes.com

HuffingtonPost.com

Wall Street Journal Online

Network TV (Seven in all, Monday-Friday)

Morning shows - coded one or two every weekday

ABC - Good Morning America

CBS - Early Show

NBC - Today

Evening news - coded two of three every weekday

ABC - World News Tonight

CBS - CBS Evening News

NBC - NBC Nightly News

Coded two consecutive days, then skip one

PBS - NewsHour

Cable TV (Fifteen in all, Monday-Friday)

Daytime (2:00 to 2:30 pm) coded two out of three every weekday

CNN

Fox News

MSNBC

Nighttime CNN - coded one or two out of the four every day

Situation Room (5 pm)

Situation Room (6 pm)

Erin Burnett OutFront  
Anderson Cooper 360

Nighttime Fox News - coded two out of the four every day

Special Report w/ Bret Baier  
Fox Report w/ Shepard Smith  
O'Reilly Factor  
Hannity

Nighttime MSNBC - coded one or two out of the four every day

PoliticsNation  
Hardball (7 pm)  
The Rachel Maddow Show  
The Ed Show

Radio (Seven in all, Monday-Friday)

NPR - Coded one of the two every weekday

Morning Edition  
All Things Considered

Talk Radio

Rotate between:

Rush Limbaugh  
Sean Hannity

Coded ever other day  
Ed Schultz

Radio News

ABC Headlines  
CBS Headlines

From that sample, the study included all relevant stories:

- On the front page of newspapers
- In the entirety of commercial network evening newscasts and radio headline segments
- In the first 30 minutes of network morning news and all cable programs
- The first 30 minutes of talk radio programs
- A 30-minute segment of NPR's broadcasts or PBS' NewsHour (rotated between the first and second half of the programs)
- The top 5 stories on each website at the time of capture

Click here for the full [methodology](#) regarding the News Coverage Index and the justification for the choices of outlets studied.

## **Sample Selection**

To arrive at the sample for this particular study of campaign coverage, we first gathered all stories from August 13, 2011-November 6, 2012, that were coded as campaign stories, meaning that 50% or more of the story was devoted to discussion of the ongoing presidential campaign.

This process resulted in a sample of 12,726 stories. That sample was then further narrowed to include only campaign stories that contained at least a reference to religion. This resulted in 793 stories.

### *Coding of Mainstream Press Religion-Related Campaign Stories*

The baseline data in this study derived from PEJ's regular Index coding was created by a team of seven experienced coders. We have tested all of the variables derived from the regular weekly Index coding and all the variables reached a level of agreement of 80% or higher. For specific information about those tests, see the [methodology section](#) for the NCI.

### *Unit of Analysis*

The unit of analysis for this study was the religion reference. Anytime a story contained even a passing reference to religion—a word, a sentence, a paragraph or a section of the story—it was coded using five variables, unique to this study.

An additional set of five variables, focused on religion, were designed as follows:

#### *Trigger variable*

This variable designates the action, event or editorial decision that caused religion to become news in any particular campaign story. Possible triggers include reporters, political candidates, religious figures, and poll releases, among others.

#### *Theme variable*

This variable determines the type of broad subject matter addressed by the discussion of religion in a campaign story, such as religious voter support of candidates, candidate beliefs, or impact of faith on policy and governance.

#### *Religion events variable*

This variable tracks whether a reference to faith in a campaign story touches on an event or isolated incident, as opposed to religion generically. Examples include the Jeremiah Wright controversy, the gathering of religious leaders in Texas, or Robert Jeffress' comments about Mormonism being a cult.

#### *Religion newsmaker variable*

This variable designates which candidate, surrogate, figure or part of the electorate is the primary focus of the religion reference in a campaign story.

### *Religious faith focus variable*

This variable designates the religious faith tradition that is the focus of the religion reference in a campaign story. If two faiths were discussed in the story, coders selected the one that received more space or time.

### **Coding Process**

Testing of all variables used to determine campaign stories has shown levels of agreement of 80% or higher. For specific information about those tests, see the [methodology on intercoder testing](#).

During coder training for this particular study, intercoder reliability tests were conducted for all the religion-specific variables.

For this study, each of the three coders were trained on the tone coding methodology and then were given a set of 30 stories to code for the five religion-specific variables. The rate of intercoder reliability for each variable was as follows:

- Trigger variable: 83%
- Theme variable: 80%
- Religion events variable: 85%
- Religion newsmaker variable: 83%
- Religious faith focus variable: 80%

### **Coding of the Conversation in Social Media Using a Computer Algorithm**

The section of this report that dealt with the social media discussion of the candidates and religion employed media research methods that combine PEJ's content analysis rules developed over more than a decade with computer coding software developed by [Crimson Hexagon](#). The analysis was based on examination of nearly 670,000 tweets and 76,000 Facebook posts about Obama and nearly 400,000 tweets and 29,000 Facebook posts about Romney.

Crimson Hexagon is a software platform that identifies statistical patterns in words used in online texts. Researchers enter key terms using Boolean search logic so the software can identify relevant material to analyze. PEJ draws its analysis samples from all public Twitter posts and a random sample of publicly available Facebook posts (and for other PEJ studies, blog posts). Then a researcher trains the software to classify documents using examples from those collected posts. Finally, the software classifies the rest of the online content according to the patterns derived during the training.

According to Crimson Hexagon: "Our technology analyzes the entire social internet (blog posts, forum messages, Tweets, etc.) by identifying statistical patterns in the words used to express opinions on different topics." Information on the tool itself can be found at <http://www.crimsonhexagon.com/> and the in-depth methodologies can be found [herehttp://www.crimsonhexagon.com/products/whitepapers/](http://www.crimsonhexagon.com/products/whitepapers/).

Crimson Hexagon measures text in the aggregate and the unit of measure is the 'statement' or assertion, not the post or Tweet. One post or Tweet can contain more than one statement if multiple ideas are expressed. The results are determined as a percentage of the overall conversation.

### *Monitor Creation and Training*

Each individual study or query related to a set of variables is referred to as a "monitor."

The process of creating a new monitor consists of four steps. There were four monitors created for this study - two for Obama (Twitter and Facebook) and two for Romney (Twitter and Facebook).

First, PEJ researchers decide what timeframe and universe of content to examine. The timeframe for this study was August 23, 2011-November 6, 2012. PEJ only includes English-language content.

Second, the researchers enter key terms using Boolean search logic so the software can identify the universe of posts to analyze. The following terms were used:

- Obama Facebook monitor: Obama AND (Muslim OR Moslem OR Islam OR Islamic OR Islamist)
- Obama Twitter monitor: Obama AND (Muslim OR Moslem OR Islam OR Islamic OR Islamist)
- Romney Facebook monitor: Romney AND (Mormon OR Mormonism OR LDS OR "Latter-Day Saints")
- Romney Twitter monitor: Romney AND (Mormon OR Mormonism OR LDS OR "Latter-Day Saints")

Next, researchers define categories appropriate to the parameters of the study. The categories were as follows:

- Obama Facebook monitor: Obama is a Muslim; General description of 'Muslim' rumors; Obama is not a Muslim; Obama has Muslim sympathies
- Obama Twitter monitor: Obama is a Muslim; General description of 'Muslim' rumors; Obama is not a Muslim; Obama has Muslim sympathies
- Romney Facebook monitor: Positive; Neutral; Negative
- Romney Twitter monitor: Positive; Neutral; Negative (general); Negative (jokes)

Fourth, researchers "train" the CH platform to analyze content according to specific parameters they want to study. The PEJ researchers in this role have gone through in-depth training at two different levels. They are professional content analysts fully versed in PEJ's existing content analysis operation and methodology. They then undergo specific training on the CH platform including multiple rounds of reliability testing.

The monitor training itself is done with a random selection of posts collected by the technology. One at a time, the software displays posts and a human coder determines which category each example best fits into. In categorizing the content, PEJ staff follows coding rules created over the many years that PEJ has been content analyzing the news media. If an example does not fit easily into a category, that

specific post is skipped. The goal of this training is to feed the software with clear examples for every category.

For each new monitor, human coders categorize at least 250 distinct posts. Typically, each individual category includes 20 or more posts before the training is complete. To validate the training, PEJ has conducted numerous intercoder reliability tests (see below) and the training of every monitor is examined by a second coder in order to discover errors.

The training process consists of researchers showing the algorithm stories in their entirety that are unambiguous in tone. Once the training is complete, the algorithm analyzes content at the assertion level, to ensure that the meaning is similarly unambiguous. This makes it possible to analyze and proportion content that contains assertions of differing tone. This classification is done by applying statistical word patterns derived from posts categorized by human coders during the training process.

The monitors are then reviewed by a second coder to ensure there is agreement. Any questionable posts are removed from the sample.

#### *How the Algorithm Works*

To understand how the software recognizes and uses patterns of words to interpret texts, consider a simplified example regarding an examination of the tone of coverage regarding Mitt Romney. As a result of the example stories categorized by a human coder during the training, the CH monitor might recognize that portions of a story with the words "Romney," "faithful" and "committed" near each other are likely positive for Romney. However, a section that includes the words "Romney," "secretive" and "corrupt" is likely to be negative for Romney.

Unlike most human coding, CH monitors do not measure each story as a unit, but examine the entire discussion in the aggregate. To do that, the algorithm breaks up all relevant texts into subsections. Rather than dividing each story, paragraph, sentence or word, CH treats the "assertion" as the unit of measurement. Thus, posts are divided up by the computer algorithm. If 40% of a post fits into one category, and 60% fits into another, the software will divide the text accordingly. Consequently, the results are not expressed in percent of newshole or percent of posts. Instead, the results are the percent of assertions out of the entire body of stories identified by the original Boolean search terms. We refer to the entire collection of assertions as the "conversation."

#### *Testing and Validity*

Extensive testing by Crimson Hexagon has demonstrated that the tool is 97% reliable, that is, in 97% of cases analyzed, the technology's coding has been shown to match human coding. PEJ spent more than 12 months testing CH, and our own tests comparing coding by humans and the software came up with similar results.

In addition to validity tests of the platform itself, PEJ conducted separate examinations of human intercoder reliability to show that the training process for complex concepts is replicable. The first test had five researchers each code the same 30 stories which resulted in an agreement of 85%.

A second test had each of the five researchers build their own separate monitors to see how the results compared. This test involved not only testing coder agreement, but also how the algorithm handles various examinations of the same content when different human trainers are working on the same subject. The five separate monitors came up with results that were within 85% of each other.

Unlike polling data, the results from the CH tool do not have a sampling margin of error since there is no sampling involved. For the algorithmic tool, reliability tested at 97% meets the highest standards of academic rigor.

**Topline**  
**The Media, Religion and the 2012 Campaign for President**

Project for Excellence in Journalism  
Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life

<b>Amount of coverage over time</b>	
<b>Month</b>	<b># of stories</b>
Aug-11	30
Sep-11	23
Oct-11	44
Nov-11	10
Dec-11	58
Jan-12	146
Feb-12	178
Mar-12	75
Apr-12	37
May-12	36
Jun-12	5
Jul-12	20
Aug-12	21
Sep-12	61
Oct-12	41
Nov-12	8

Date Range: Aug. 13, 2011-Nov. 6, 2012

<b>Religion coverage triggers (who or what initiated coverage?)</b>		
<b>Trigger</b>	<b># of stories</b>	<b>% of stories</b>
Reporter (analysis)	201	25.3%
Reporter (enterprise)	98	14.1%
Santorum statement or action	77	11.0%
On-air commentator/pundit analysis	56	8.0%
Event	55	7.9%
Romney statement or action	54	7.7%
Religious figure/leader statement or action	49	7.0%
Polls	49	7.0%
Other figure statement or action	43	6.2%
Gingrich statement or action	36	5.2%
Obama admin statement or action	34	4.9%
Perry statement or action	19	2.7%
Bachmann statement or action	8	1.1%
Ryan statement or action	7	1.0%
Cain statement or action	4	0.6%
Huntsman statement or action	2	0.3%
Paul statement or action	1	0.1%

Date Range: Aug. 13, 2011-Nov. 6, 2012

<b>Themes in religion coverage</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b># of stories</b>	<b>% of stories</b>
Candidate beliefs/religious biography	273	34.4%
Evangelical voter support of candidates	227	28.6%
Impact of faith on policy/governance	125	15.8%
Tactical use of religion in campaign	72	9.1%
Religious electorate	33	4.2%
Catholic voter support of candidates	19	2.4%
Jewish voter support of candidates	14	1.8%
Other religious voter support of candidates	13	1.6%
Mormon voter support of candidates	11	1.4%
Media 'war on religion'	6	0.8%

Date Range: Aug. 13, 2011-Nov. 6, 2012

<b>Events in religion coverage</b>		
<b>Event</b>	<b># of stories</b>	<b>% of stories</b>
Minister Jeffress Mormon comments	36	4.5%
Health care law implications for religious freedom	32	4.0%
Jeremiah Wright controversy	25	3.2%
Anti-Muslim video	23	2.9%
Texas religious leader gathering	14	1.8%
Santorum questions Obama's faith	13	1.6%
Obama Muslim rumors	13	1.6%
Santorum speech JFK reference	12	1.5%
Santorum speech referencing Satan	11	1.4%
Obama's support of gay marriage	9	1.1%
'God and guns' speech	7	0.9%
Franklin Graham questions Obama's faith	7	0.9%
Al Smith dinner	7	0.9%
Romney Israel trip	6	0.8%
Gingrich robocall about Jewish nursing homes	3	0.4%
Gingrich staffer resignation (Mormon comments)	3	0.4%
Hurricane Irene comments by Bachmann	3	0.4%
Iowa straw poll	3	0.4%
Perry Liberty University speech	3	0.4%
Romney Liberty University speech	3	0.4%
Faith and freedom coalition event	1	0.1%

Date Range: Aug. 13, 2011-Nov. 6, 2012

<b>Top newsmakers in religion coverage</b>		
<b>Newsmaker</b>	<b># of stories</b>	<b>% of stories</b>
Romney	276	34.8%
Santorum	190	24.0%
Obama	137	17.3%
Gingrich	57	7.2%
Perry	47	5.9%
Bachmann	24	3.0%
Electorate	21	2.6%
Other	13	1.6%
Ryan	13	1.6%
Huntsman	4	0.5%
Paul	4	0.5%
Biden	4	0.5%
Cain	2	0.3%
Pawlenty	1	0.1%

Date Range: Aug. 13, 2011-Nov. 6, 2012

<b>Individual faiths in campaign coverage</b>		
<b>Faith focus</b>	<b># of stories</b>	<b>% of stories</b>
Evangelical	247	31.1%
Mormon	141	17.8%
Catholic	114	14.4%
Religious (non-specific)	112	14.1%
Christian (non-specific)	89	11.2%
Muslim	45	5.7%
Jewish	29	3.7%
Black Protestant	16	2.0%

Date Range: Aug. 13, 2011-Nov. 6, 2012

<b>Triggers in Obama's religion coverage</b>		
<b>Trigger</b>	<b># of stories</b>	<b>% of stories</b>
Reporter (analysis)	28	20.4%
Obama administration statement or action	27	19.7%
Reporter (enterprise)	16	11.7%
Romney statement or action	12	8.8%
On-air commentator/pundit analysis	11	8.0%
Santorum statement or action	10	7.3%
Other figure statement or action	10	7.3%
Event	8	5.8%
Religious figure/leader statement or action	7	5.1%
Polls	3	2.2%
Gingrich statement or action	2	1.5%
Cain statement or action	1	0.7%
Citizen	1	0.7%
Ryan statement or action	1	0.7%

Date Range: Aug. 13, 2011-Nov. 6, 2012

<b>Themes in Obama's religion coverage</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b># of stories</b>	<b>% of stories</b>
Candidate beliefs/religious bio	53	38.7%
Impact of faith on policy/governance	47	34.3%
Evangelical support of candidates	9	6.6%
Tactical use of religion in campaign	10	7.3%
Catholic voter support of candidates	5	3.6%
Other religious voter support of candidates	7	5.1%
Jewish voter support of candidates	5	3.6%
Religious electorate	1	0.7%

Date Range: Aug. 13, 2011-Nov. 6, 2012

<b>“Events” in Obama’s religion coverage</b>		
<b>Event</b>	<b># of stories</b>	<b>% of stories</b>
Health care law implication for religious freedom	19	13.9%
Jeremiah Wright controversy	18	13.1%
Anti-Muslim video	16	11.7%
Obama Muslim rumors	9	6.6%
Obama’s support of gay marriage	8	5.8%
Democratic National Convention	7	5.1%
Franklin Graham questions Obama's faith	7	5.1%
‘God and guns’ speech	7	5.1%
Santorum questions Obama's faith	5	3.6%
Al Smith dinner	5	3.6%
Florida primary	2	1.5%
Romney Liberty University Speech	1	0.7%

Date Range: Aug. 13, 2011-Nov. 6, 2012

<b>Individual faiths in Obama’s coverage</b>		
<b>Faith focus</b>	<b># of stories</b>	<b>% of stories</b>
Religious (non-specific)	29	21.2%
Muslim	27	19.7%
Christian (non-specific)	26	19.0%
Catholic	25	18.2%
Black Protestant	16	11.7%
Evangelical	7	5.1%
Jewish	6	4.4%
Mormon	1	0.7%

Date Range: Aug. 13, 2011-Nov. 6, 2012

<b>Triggers in Romney's religion coverage</b>		
<b>Trigger</b>	<b># of stories</b>	<b>% of stories</b>
Reporter (analysis)	67	24.3%
Reporter (enterprise)	45	16.3%
Romney statement or action	39	14.1%
Religious figure/leader statement or action	24	8.7%
Polls	23	8.3%
Other figure statement or action	21	7.6%
On-air commentator/pundit analysis	21	7.6%
Event	20	7.2%
Gingrich statement or action	8	2.9%
Obama statement or action	4	1.4%
Huntsman statement or action	2	0.7%
Perry statement or action	1	0.4%
Cain statement or action	1	0.4%

Date Range: Aug. 13, 2011-Nov. 6, 2012

<b>Themes in Romney's religion coverage</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b># of stories</b>	<b>% of stories</b>
Evangelical voter support of candidates	90	32.6%
Candidate religious beliefs/religious bio	84	30.4%
Impact of faith on policy/governance	34	12.3%
Tactical use of religion in campaign	31	11.2%
Mormon voter support	11	4.0%
Religious electorate	9	3.3%
Jewish voter support of candidates	7	2.5%
Other religious voter support of candidates	5	1.8%
Catholic voter support of candidates	4	1.4%
Media 'war on religion'	1	0.4%

Date Range: Aug. 13, 2011-Nov. 6, 2012

<b>Events in Romney's religion coverage</b>		
<b>Event</b>	<b># of stories</b>	<b>% of stories</b>
Jeffress Mormon comments	27	9.8%
Health care law impact on relig. Freedom	10	3.6%
Anti-Muslim video	7	2.5%
Israel trip	6	2.2%
Rev. Wright backlash	5	1.8%
Gingrich robocall about Jewish nursing homes	3	1.1%
Gingrich staffer resignation	3	1.1%
Obama Muslim rumors	2	0.7%
Pennsylvania primary	2	0.7%
Romney Liberty U. speech	2	0.7%
Al Smith dinner	2	0.7%
Obama's support of gay marriage	1	0.4%
Santorum questions Obama's faith	1	0.4%
Santorum's speech referencing Satan	1	0.4%
Texas religious leader gathering	1	0.4%

Date Range: Aug. 13, 2011-Nov. 6, 2012

<b>Individual faiths in Obama's coverage</b>		
<b>Faith focus</b>	<b># of stories</b>	<b>% of stories</b>
Mormon	126	45.7%
Evangelical	77	27.9%
Religious (non-specific)	20	7.2%
Jewish	20	7.2%
Catholic	16	5.8%
Christian (non-specific)	9	3.3%
Muslim	8	2.9%

Date Range: Aug. 13, 2011-Nov. 6, 2012