

The digital magazine
of ENMU's
communication
department

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MASTER'S THESIS
ON RELIGIOUS NEWS
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HOUNDBYTES



Honoring the Work of Dr. Patricia Dobson

As the founder of HoundBytes and former chair of the Eastern New Mexico University communication department, Dr. Patricia Dobson was a powerhouse in Portales. Her work not educated countless students at ENMU, but more importantly, had a profound impact on so many people on campus and in the community. There was zero doubt that the first edition of a HoundBytes digital magazine should honor Dr. Patricia A. Dobson.

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A Celebration of Dr. Dobson

By Dr. Leonard Madrid

On Wednesday, October 2nd at 4:00 pm, Eastern New Mexico University will honor and celebrate the life of Dr. Patricia Dobson. Held in the University Theatre Center, the communities that held Dr. Dobson in high esteem will honor a crucial part of our department, our college, our university, our town, and our region. There will also be a silent auction of her unique mug collection to support a scholarship fund in her name.

Patti was born to Thomas and Catherine Dobson in Rhode Island. She initially lived in Rhode Island until her father's military job required her family to move to Clovis where she was to spend the rest of her life. After High School at Clovis High, Dr. Dobson enrolled at Eastern New Mexico University where she studied Journalism. At ENMU she earned both a bachelor's and master's degree in communication. She married Wayne Head in 2006. In 2010, she received a PhD from Capella University. The Patti most of us knew was chair of the department of Communication and a pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Tucumcari.

As the person who sits in the place where she sat (both literally and figuratively), I have a unique perspective on Dr. Dobson. Patti.

I have known Patti for most of my life. For a short time, she was my boss in the 1990's. Her job at the time was promotions for the College of Fine Arts at ENMU. She hired me on as an assistant of sorts to help gather advertisers for the college programs. We would sit at one desk while I sat at another, and we would make each other laugh. What was true about Patti then is what continued to be true about Patti forever. She approached the world with humor. She approached the world with optimism. Most of all, she approached the world and everyone in it with kindness. She was a constant source of nurturing and support to everyone around her. She was also a good source of baked goods. There are people who are bakers as a job. There are people who are bakers as a hobby. Patti Dobson was a baker as an integral part of her soul. And she was good at it.

As I think of Patti. As I sit at her desk. I think of her legacy. It's a good one. She has touched an innumerable number of people and influenced our lives. In her life she wore so many hats. She taught classes. She led a department. She led a congregation. And every person who knew her carries a piece of her with them. The thing we are most left with is her kindness. It is my hope that we will spread that kindness to those around us.

Please, join me and the communities that knew and loved Dr. Patricia Dobson in celebrating her life.

Wednesday, October 2nd

4:00 pm.

University Theatre Center Mainstage

News Magazines and Religion: A Study of Religion Coverage from 1960-1999

By Patricia A. Dobson; August 9, 2000

Originally published by the Eastern New Mexico University Master's Thesis Project at <https://library.biblioboard.com/content/989037ad-86cf-44ce-84ee-be76fea96707>

Chapter V

Discussion

The primary goal of this study was to explore the relationship between American print media and coverage of religion. A content analysis was completed on the covers and accompanying stories for three weekly newsmagazines published from 1960-1999. This chapter will explore and discuss the findings of the study, and will conclude with limitations of current research and future research possibilities.

The research shows that Catholicism, Christian religions (including Christian combinations, Christian/Jewish combinations, Christian/Non-Christian combinations), and Judaism receive the most coverage in newsmagazines. It is interesting to consider the number of religion stories that were political in nature, especially given the separation of church and state. Much space was given to Catholic versus Protestant political candidates, and the issues that surrounded them. For a nation espousing that separation, much emphasis was placed on the religiosity of political candidates.

The study showed more dogma in Christian-specific and Christian-related categories than was supposed by the researcher. History and conflict was the primary focus of stories involving Judaism. Prospects for peace in the Middle East, and what it would mean to religions of the area, were also examined. As the time periods progressed, more stories on faith were printed, as was the search for spirituality, pertaining to religion as a whole. The study results show a wide disparity in coverage given to Islam, New Age (alternative) and Eastern religions. And as was expected, stories on these religions were more negative than positive in approach. All stories regarding Islam were negative.

White males were featured more heavily on magazine covers during the entire study. The supposition was that more females and people of color would be featured in the latter years of this study. The results proved otherwise. It was disheartening to see such a large contrast; out of 348 cases, females were featured on just 14 covers. There were 32 instances in which a male/female combination was featured on covers.

Most of the stories within the study were classified as features rather than news. It is interesting to note the difference in numbers between news and features. In retrospect, a more appropriate term to consider would be a hybrid of both, news features. All stories had elements of both news and features contained within their structure.

Social issues and dogma become more prevalent in later years of the study, as did spirituality versus religion stories. The researcher expected coverage of Millennium issues, including Y2K and end-of-the-world stories. Out of 348 cases, one story on the Millennium appeared in print.

Limitations of the study

The first limitation of this study is content analysis itself. This research is descriptive, and as such, may suggest trends in mass communication. It cannot, however, be used to reach cause-and-effect conclusions. Content analysis is very subjective. The possibility exists for researchers and coders to apply their own beliefs, attitudes and values during the coding process. It is difficult, if not impossible, to generalize findings from one content analysis to another.

A second limitation was the equipment available for use to analyze covers. Most of the magazines needed for the study were stored on microfilm or Infotrak cartridges. The quality of covers was limited. Images were decreased from normal magazine format to fit film dimensions. If a high-quality copy was not transferred, it was extremely difficult to make out cover images and text. Also, the print quality of microfilm and Infotrak machines were mediocre due to the age of the machines. It was impossible to increase copy quality because the machines were being phased out of use, and parts were not always available.

A third limitation was the pool of coders from which the researcher could choose. Not all coders were communication students, which in hindsight would be been an advantage in collecting data. As students of mass communication, they may recognize some nuance others not schooled in communication would miss. The age of coders may have influenced data collection as well. Whereas a person of more advanced years would have recognized Martin Luther King Jr. and Louis Farrakhan as religious figures, younger coders may have viewed these persons as political figures.

Possibilities for Future Research

One viable possibility for future research is an investigation of coverage of religion and the agenda setting function of the media. It is the researcher's contention that the media influence, to an extent, topics for public discourse. The basic premise of agenda setting is that what the media think is important, the public thinks is important. Given the statement and with this research in mind, it would be prudent to investigate people's attitudes toward coverage of religion.

If agenda setting holds true, the public believes white males dictate religiosity. Research questions would be: Did coverage influence the public's attitude or point of view? Was the public agenda, regarding religiosity, determined by mass media? Another possibility would be an investigation of women and religion in mass media. It is disturbing to find so few cases of women on magazine covers during a 40-year time span.

Other possibilities for future research include separate investigations of coverage of religion in television and radio, following a similar format as was used for this study. The researcher made a conscious decision to exclude television and radio broadcasts, given the parameters of the study. Every issue of *U.S. News & World Report*, *Time* and *Newsweek* were reviewed, totaling almost 6,500 magazines, not counting special editions. This number was staggering and merited its own investigation. Television and radio would each warrant separate analysis in order to compile data more accurately and meaningfully.

Conclusions

The predominant religions throughout the course of the study were Catholicism, combinations of Christian religions, and Judaism. Often, different religions were compared and contrasted with Christianity. Politics and dogma played an important role during the 1960s, due in large part to the election of the first Catholic to the office of President, John F. Kennedy. Politics and dogma remained viable content during the study, but were overshadowed by the search for spirituality and alternative routes to religiosity. As the search for spirituality intensified, more features about religious figures were offered.

Islam, New Age and Eastern religions received the least amount of coverage. Mainstream religions receive more neutral coverage, whereas Islam, New Age/Cults and Eastern religions received negative coverage. The portrayal of these regions was negative as well.

Religion news is male-oriented in nature. Specifically, white males were most often featured on covers, while women and people of color received a fraction of coverage. This is a curious notion, as more women than men are likely to read religion coverage.

Dr. Dobson Story

By Communication professor Lonnie Berry

In the fall of 2015, I felt like it was time for me to complete my bachelor's degree. I had started the process almost 40 years earlier but had kind of procrastinated. When I registered for classes, I knew I was ready to finish, and I wanted to major in Communications. As an older undergraduate, I was concerned about a few things. Would I be able to do the work, it had been several years since I had been in a classroom. And honestly, I was not sure how my fellow students and the instructors would see me. My first day walking into the communications building was one of caution and maybe a little fear. The first person I met when I walked in was Dr. Patti Dobson.

Dr. Dobson seemed to sense most if not all my concerns. In just a few minutes of talking with me, I was put at ease. We sat at a round table in the lobby of the building. As we sat, drank coffee, and talked, it seemed that every student who came in knew her, and she knew them. In that few minutes, I knew I had made a friend for life.

Later that day, I had my first class with Dr. Dodson. It was a feature writing class. As I sat in front of a blank computer screen, not having any idea what to write, she walked up behind me. She seemed to know I was having trouble putting anything into written words. I will never forget what she told me. "You are a storyteller. Now tell your story." Not only did it make a difference in my confidence to write, I have used it in the classes I teach to encourage students to write. I believe the legacy of teaching and caring about our students will live on because of who Dr. Dobson was.

I will never forget hearing the words telling me of Dr. Dobson's passing. I spent the day thinking about our many conversations and of our plans for our students and classes. As I poured myself a cup of coffee, I thought of our conversations around a coffee pot. I knew that we would for a while be searching for a new normal.

As a new semester started, the communication building seemed a little empty. We have not had our morning coffee talks. We have not watched as new students start their own adventure. We have all missed her laugh and her encouragement. I can almost hear her words telling me, "you are a storyteller, now tell your story."

The Greatest Mentor

By Luis Larios

Dr. Patricia Dobson, the first ever person I ever got in contact with when I decided to further my education within this institution. About two years ago, Dr. Dobson was the one who pushed me to become a better writer with all of the wisdom she gave me after every assignment she graded for me. But also pushed me and encouraged me to become a better writer and student, always giving me words of advice even when the assignment was perfect (those are her words) she still gave some good constructive criticism.

The one thing I remember the most from Dr. Dobson was her love for mugs. She had all kinds of mugs, and I made it my mission to be able to gift her for Christmas some mugs that fit her style. I am sure she used them or at least put them somewhere as decorations. Whatever it is that she did with them, it was a true honor to be able to add to her collection.

I owe everything I have accomplished to Dr. Dobson, if it was not for her giving me a chance at attending this institution, I wouldn't have had the honor of being a student of hers as well as having the honor of meeting her. It is because of Dr. Dobson, that I am able to be able to continue my education the way she pushed me to become the student that I am today. Dr. Dobson made a huge impact in my life, and made me see the true potential I had for this field of education, she also made me realize that being helpful and nice to those around us good things will come our way.

A Kind Friend

By Naomi Vargas

I met Dr. Patricia Dobson about 2.5 years ago when, at the relatively young age of 50, I decided to return to school and complete my education. To be honest, it wasn't entirely my choice—my boss at Dairy Farmers of America insisted I pursue further education to advance my career. I am eternally grateful for that push.

When I walked into Dr. Dobson's office, I immediately felt a sense of relief. She was incredibly welcoming and kind. She took me under her wing and made me feel right at home. I was very apprehensive about returning to school, especially since I had struggled with it several times before—math was like a monster in my fairytale. However, Dr. Dobson helped me believe that I could overcome these challenges. She promised to support me every step of the way, even if it meant holding my hand through the process.

Dr. Dobson also involved me in the communications for the CFA Awards ceremony, which, even at my age, was incredibly meaningful to me. I had her personal cell number and would often text her when I felt anxious, which was quite frequent. She was always available and went out of her way to create opportunities for me to succeed. If I had known about Dr. Dobson during my earlier attempts at school, I might have completed my education years ago.

This summer, while I was in Italy, I received an email from her. Despite knowing I was attending summer classes, she encouraged me to enjoy my time and assured me that the professors would understand. She asked me to take plenty of pictures and share them with her upon my return. Unfortunately, Dr. Dobson passed away on the day I was traveling home, and I didn't get the chance to fulfill her request.

Dr. Dobson made a profound impact on my life, and for that, I am deeply grateful. It was an honor to know her. I live by the principle that if you can be anything in this world, be kind, and Dr. Dobson gave true meaning to that. Be well, my friends, as time is precious.



My Letter to a Heart of Gold

By Whitney Hobson

I heard the news from a colleague via text message: “Hey! Did you say that lady you liked in Portales was Pattie Dobson?”

Me: Yes!

Colleague: I don’t know if you saw but she passed away. I believe it was today, it was announced on Facebook on the ENMU communications page.

Although I was not close to this colleague, she communicated about our beloved Dr. Dobson and the link to my pursuit of a master’s degree in communication; she had significant news about a person with a heart of gold—whose giant heart failed and who has left a gaping wound in the ENMU-Communication culture. In honor of our fearless leader, I share an email I sent to Dr. Dobson in early July (she may or may not have seen it).

Dr. Dobson,

I have definitely been on a whirlwind journey these past three semesters.

In many ways, it has given me hope, feeling the freedom to write and have an expression, I hadn’t already been cultivating. You are such a gift as a human, advisor, and professor. I am always up for lending letters of recommendation to anyone who says otherwise...or in retirement, if you need vouching, I got you!

I began a permanent subbing position at Lake Arthur Municipal school, between Roswell and Artesia, not much out there. Pre-K thru 12th grade, 160 students in the whole district. Divine intervention! I began subbing middle school/high school science, seven weeks at the end of last semester, their beloved coach/ science teacher suddenly passed away. So I stepped in and actually acquired a position for this school year. Amazingly, by knowing the superintendent for a number of years and them needing bright lighted people, I am going to take the leap!

My classes to instruct:

12th grade ELA

Middle school FCS

High school FCS

Greenhouse Management

K-5 yoga and dance...

Plus, I signed up with LEAP NM to take their alternative licensure program this year, to finish in June 2025. The LEAP program may guarantee 12 college credit hours towards my masters in education? And in the meantime, is there a chance to take a break from Communication classes to complete this endeavor, make money, and add to my confidence?

Some other highlights away from our classes, news: last October I stopped seeing a potential love interest, who was a 'word on the street womanizer/alcoholic,' I chose sobriety. I kept sharing with my mom my emotions, my struggles, and suffering. In March, my dear friend Alicia read in Time magazine about PMDD, which sadly, I may have been suffering with for 20 years, so with medication, dietary changes, and continued self kindness...there is success on that end. In April I became Catholic by taking RCIA, my sacraments of confession, communion, and confirmation. And my grandma's house is almost ready to move into, it's a special place to have peaceful views, beautiful kitchen meals, and quiet creativity.

All this being said, I love you. Thank you. Thank you.

You truly helped me out of some serious cycles, I didn't know I kept being in.

So writing and being heard has been a gift for my soul.

With Sincerity,

Whitney Hobson

Interview with Patricia Dobson, Ph.D. - Department Chair and Graduate Coordinator for the Department of Communication at Eastern New Mexico University

By Master's in Communication

Originally published at <https://www.mastersincommunications.com/school-interviews/dr-patricia-dobson-eastern-new-mexico-university>

About Patricia Dobson, Ph.D.: Patricia Dobson is the Department Chair of and Graduate Coordinator for the Department of Communication at Eastern New Mexico University (ENMU). As Department Chair, Dr. Dobson manages the budgets, scheduling, and program review processes, advises students, and oversees the daily business of running a department for faculty, staff and students. As Graduate Coordinator, she makes sure students are in the proper courses for their program, manages teaching and graduate assistants, and supports students to help them stay on track for their thesis work or capstone work.

As an Associate Professor, Dr. Dobson teaches classes at the graduate and undergraduate levels in writing, photojournalism, journalism, public relations, and family/group/interpersonal communication. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism and her Master of Arts in Public Relations from Eastern New Mexico University. She subsequently earned her Ph.D. at Capella University in Education. Prior to her work at ENMU, Dr. Dobson was a journalist and news editor and subsequently transitioned to promotions before she was hired by ENMU to be the promotions coordinator for the College of Fine Arts.

Of her alma mater, she stated: *"I've always felt that ENMU helped me find my voice, and I have the distinct privilege of helping students now do the same. What I teach has involved much of my research with students and colleagues; I research bullying and the different interpersonal, group and family dynamics involved. There is something so satisfying to be able to help students figure things out, both professionally and personally."*

Interview Questions

[MastersinCommunications.com] Could you please provide an overview of Eastern New Mexico University's Master of Arts in Communication, and how it is structured? What are the key learning outcomes students can expect from this program?

[Dr. Dobson] We have worked diligently to create a program that will allow flexibility in terms of face-to-face or distance learning. All of our master's students take four core courses: communication research methods, mass media and society, critical analysis of mass media, and communication theory. From there, students choose electives that will best serve their educational and career paths. Students choose electives that fit their needs, ranging from public relations and journalism to media literacy and criticism. So while all students take the four core classes, they have the ability to choose the electives to suit interests and future plans.

We have a thesis track, where students complete 24 course hours plus 6 hours of thesis (30 hours total). We have a capstone (non-thesis) option in which students complete 27 course hours plus a 3-credit capstone project. Many of our students choose this path as they're completing a master's degree to either help them advance in their current career or to make the jump to a different position. In both thesis and capstone, faculty guide students through their process.

[MastersinCommunications.com] Eastern New Mexico University's Master of Arts in Communication is an online program, with the option for students to complete some of their electives on campus. Could you elaborate on the technologies the program employs to facilitate student engagement with course peers and faculty? Also, which courses are students able to take on-campus?

[Dr. Dobson] Students can earn their master's degree online or choose face-to-face classes requiring travel to campus. All four of our core classes are offered face-to-face and online via lecture capture. These are asynchronous options, and allow for working students to attend as their schedules require. This is particularly helpful for our students who are working one or two jobs and cannot attend classes during the day. To enhance peer-to-peer and student-to-faculty engagement, we require a weekly activity that requires students to discuss class concepts online via discussion boards. The majority of our elective choices are delivered in the same way; although our broadcast journalism/production electives are offered face-to-face only since those involve television studio and cameras.

Offering both online and face-to-face options for our students means that they can also mix and match online and on-campus classes to suit their schedule. This also has the added benefit of giving our on-campus students an option to catch up on lectures if they have to miss class due to personal or professional obligations—the same course material is captured via lecture capture and uploaded online.

Most of the courses offered in the master's program do have a face-to-face component as well, for our students who wish to meet faculty and classmates in person. The face-to-face classes also allow our international students residing in the United States to meet their federal requirements of six hours of face-to-face classes per semester. Offering both online and face-to-face options for our students means that they can also mix and match online and on-campus classes to suit their schedule. This also has the added benefit of giving our on-campus students an option to catch up on lectures if they have to miss class due to personal or professional obligations—the same course material is captured via lecture capture and uploaded online.

[MastersinCommunications.com] For their final graduation requirement, students can choose between a master's thesis and a communication capstone project. Could you elaborate on both the thesis and the project, their required deliverables, and how students should determine which option is best for them?

[Dr. Dobson] The thesis and capstone projects require the same amount of work. For the thesis, students take their first 3 hours in the next-to-last semester of their program. Students, with their

thesis chair and graduate committee, complete the prospectus and go through the human subjects' process if required. During their final semester, they complete their final 3 hours, which is the study and final two chapters. For the capstone route, most students take an individual research class during their next-to-last semester. They complete their capstone, which is the production of a body of work, during their last semester. Capstone projects have included documentaries, public relations campaigns, writing of anthologies of short stories, and promotional health programs for a local hospital. Thesis projects have included studies of interpersonal relationships in school programs, film analyses, content analyses of political news articles and religious news articles. Thesis students have a final defense, and capstone students have a final presentation of work.

[MastersinCommunications.com] What role does faculty mentorship play in Eastern New Mexico University's Master of Arts in Communication? Independent of faculty instruction and support, what career development resources and academic services are available to online students, and how can they make the most of these mentorship opportunities and support systems?

[Dr. Dobson] We provide numerous support structures for students in our program. I as the graduate coordinator serve as students' initial advisor when they begin the program, and when the time comes for them to start their capstone or thesis project, we have a matchmaking type of service that matches students to faculty who are ideally suited to support their research and work.

We have a small and very close-knit group of faculty, all of whom are highly committed to students' success.

For their thesis project, students are required to submit a write-up of what they want to research and/or create for their project, and then this proposal is sent out to all of the faculty members. We as a faculty team meet to talk about the different projects, what each of the students might need, where the strengths are in their project proposals, and where they might need some additional work. At that point, faculty volunteer to work with students and then reach out to these students to help guide them through the initial stages of their thesis.

In addition to their primary advisor, students also receive mentorship from two other faculty members who, along with their main advisor, comprise students' thesis committee. Committee member selection is handled in much the same way as the advisor selection—through faculty discussion we identify the best mentors for each student's project, and these mentors then work with students directly.

While I as the graduate coordinator, students' thesis/project advisor, their committee serve as their formal advisors in the program, I often tell my students, "Anybody in our department is happy to help you—we are just your on-paper, go-to advisors, but I encourage you to reach out to other faculty as well." We have a small and very close-knit group of faculty, all of whom are highly committed to students' success.

In addition to faculty mentorship, local and distance students may make use of the career center on campus, the Golden Student Success Center, and tutoring services. These services are available

[MastersinCommunications.com] For students interested in Eastern New Mexico University's Master of Arts in Communication, what advice do you have for submitting a competitive application?

[Dr. Dobson] Along with the application and transcripts, we require a statement/letter of purpose. This document really serves to introduce the applicant to faculty members. We require that the document include a bit of information about the student's background, their future plans, why they want to study at ENMU, and what they hope to achieve. It is their chance to allow us to get to know them before they set foot on campus, or start their program.

[MastersinCommunications.com] What makes Eastern New Mexico University's Master of Arts in Communication program unique, and a particularly strong graduate degree option for students?

[Dr. Dobson] This is a flexible program. We realize not everyone can pick up and move to our campus; so, we offer that opportunity via technology. It is unique in that we offer the flexibility to pursue advanced study in the discipline. The program is beneficial to both residence and distance students who are pursuing the degree to 1) enter the workforce directly upon graduation; 2) as a means to advance in their professional careers; 3) enter a doctoral program. This benefits working professionals who need flexibility and practical experience for career advancement. Graduates are prepared to continue or pursue employment/advancement in public relations, journalism, publishing, broadcast journalism or production, media relations, management, human resources, business, education, marketing, political consulting, advertising, sales, the nonprofit sector, or in government. It also prepares candidates for entering doctoral programs in communication and other related fields.

This is a flexible program. We realize not everyone can pick up and move to our campus; so, we offer that opportunity via technology. It is unique in that we offer the flexibility to pursue advanced study in the discipline... The close-knit nature of our faculty team, and the diverse areas of research expertise that we bring to the table, also make this program unique.

The close-knit nature of our faculty team, and the diverse areas of research expertise that we bring to the table, also make this program unique. We have celebrated scholars in social media, media management and analytics, political communication, journalism, public relations, and leadership communication. Because of the diversity of our faculty, our program serves a wide range of student interests and goals, while our commitment to each student helps empower them to make the next step in their careers.

Thank you, Dr. Dobson, for your excellent insight into Eastern New Mexico University's Master of Arts in Communication program!