This annotated bibliography of 76 citations and abstracts focuses on communication with, by, and about the elderly. Publications span the period from 1949 to 1987. References to convention papers and materials that have not been published have been included only if available through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service or a similar organization. Media (broadcast, print, interpersonal communication, and multiple media), research, subject, author, and journal indexes are included. (MM)
COMMUNICATION, MEDIA
AND THE ELDERLY:
An Annotated Bibliography

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The Communication Research Center
The Gerontology Resource Center
Brigham Young University
September 1988
Dedication

This bibliography is dedicated to Dr. Phileon B. Robinson. Phil is a highly respected professional in the fields of adult education and gerontology. Throughout his long and distinguished career he has been a true friend to the elderly, young children, and everyone in between.
Preface

The focus of this bibliography is on communication with, by, and about the elderly. Both communication through media as well as interpersonal means are included.

Publications spanning 40 years are included. The earliest is a 1949 article by Wilbur Schramm and the most recent was published in December 1987. There is no doubt that important articles, monographs, books and other materials have been overlooked. References to convention papers and materials that have not been published have been included only if available through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service or some other organization. We would greatly appreciate learning of any publications that should be included in the next annual update of this bibliography. Corrections and suggestions would also be appreciated.

The superb assistance of Michelle K. Derr, Kirsten Schull, and Kari Holladay in abstracting, compiling, organizing, and editing this material is gratefully acknowledged.

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CITATIONS AND ABSTRACTS

Describes a Q-methodological study regarding uses and attitudes toward religious broadcasting. Four elderly audience types emerged.


Using a variety of research procedures, the media programming needs and preferences of senior citizens in Toronto were investigated.


Elderly cite newspapers, radio, and TV as major media preferences. Few differences among age, income, health, or ethnic groups.


Audience survey of special interest programs on aging conducted. Concludes that the use of such programs for dissemination of information was fruitful.


Survey of children's first literature books to determine the extent of ageism, behaviors, and descriptions of older characters. Findings are placed in etiological perspective.


Ageism (negative stereotyping of the elderly) is reinforced by television and newspapers. Efforts need to be made to change the media's demeaning portrayal of old age.


Aging in prime time television portrays older adults negatively and shows aging in a negative light. Data pertaining to age in the Cultural Indicators Index of the University of Pennsylvania analyzed.


Television programmers neglect targeting the elderly in favor of the more economically profitable younger viewing population.

A review of the research on elderly people's exposure and response to mass media messages. Also, an overview of current information about media and aging.


Communication patterns study of retired faculty of Missouri colleges and universities. Top preferences (in order) are face to face communication, telephone, books, TV, radio, newspaper, etc. Age, sex, health, income factors are also discussed.


Reviews recent literature of mass media campaigns and approaches concerning drug abuse prevention aimed at youth, parents, women and the elderly.


Juvenile literature survey reveals negative portrayal of the elderly. Suggests this helps produce or reinforce society's negative stereotypes about old age.


Summarizes studies as to media-use behavior and demographic characteristics; related media content; effects on individual's responses to aging; social consequences of the interrelationship between media and aging; others.


Essay on double standard on aging for men and women on television. The television image of the aging woman can be cruel, but is a reflection of society's views. Aging men are seen in terms of their power, a function of their maturity and knowledge.


Discusses negative images in mass media concerning deficiencies in family support for the aged. Past mythical idealized images dysfunctional to parent-caring middle-aged and to the professional.

Study reveals that aging is not a dominant feature of Saturday morning network television programming. Cartoons had limited representation of the elderly and negative stereotypes of the elderly.


Examines the future of the older person and his social networks in light of two-way telecommunications systems, and explores sociological implications.


Content analysis revealed overall characterizations of elderly in children's books showed neither negative nor stereotypic images.


Ads from magazine depict elderly as wealthy, youthful and unwidowed. Study indicates rhetoric of magazines aged and doesn't acknowledge individual differences.


Sample of TV programming in the 1980's concerning elderly's needs and contributions. Describes TVs roles as a mirror and molder of images of older citizens; TV programs dealing with elderly and issues of particular interest to aging.


The length, number of times and space devoted to coverage of the elderly was disproportionate to the population in a study of 10 metropolitan daily newspapers. Positive or neutral images of elderly found.


Information including issues such as housing, economics, health, and leisure activities is compiled to assist those writing about elderly and their role in society.

Study indicates that elderly are viewed in a positive way in newspapers. New York Times and the Daily Oklahoman were used for the content analysis.


Needs for mass communication media to present information, for role models and images of aging discussed. Commercial programmers overlook elderly, the largest commercial audience.


Describes community takeover of the Berks Community Television, an experiment in interactive cable television for delivery of social services to senior citizens in Reading, Penn.


Eighteen essays synthesize leading lines of research and conceptualization in communication and aging.


Among elderly Mexican-Americans, radio and TV are used more than newspapers, magazines, or the telephone for information. Family and friends also described as sources of information.

Cassata, M.B. (1967). *A study of mass communications behavior and the social disengagement behavior of 177 members of the Age Center of New England.* (University Microfilms: 68-2275)

Descriptive study of the role of the mass media in the social disengagement of the elderly from society. Nine indices of assumes disengagement are cross tabulated with eight indices of mass media consumption.


Content analysis found the elderly are portrayed as significant members of the serials. Their profile projects positive image compared to their general portrayal on TV.

Two experiments examine effects of presentation formats on the retention of TV program content. No effects were found due to the manipulation of a number of variables.


Effects of retention of TV program content was examined using 2 different types of programs in 4 different program formats. Recall and recognition performances were equivalent.


Eating habits and nutrient intakes of elderly are affected by environment. Diets of elderly are better among the more socially active. Those who watch more TV tend to eat more.


Study of the effects of aging on the comprehension of spoken language. Demands of concurrently registering surface meaning and simultaneously carrying out integrative and constructive processes exceed capacity.


Elderly subjects have general learning deficits, apparently associated with the encoding stage of information processing.


Heavy television viewers are more likely to perceive the world as resembling the statistics of television drama than those of real life. Minority groups, such as the elderly and poor, are stereotyped and excluded from major programming thrusts.


Training process for New York University-Reading Consortium interactive cable television project for the delivery of social services to senior citizens.

Images of grandparents and their relationships with their grandchildren are overwhelmingly positive and warm in children's literature.


The *Over Easy* program for elderly is capable of effectively conveying specific information on topics and services of special interest to older persons.


Elderly exhibit age-related changes in the process gratification mode of mediated communication behavior in the context of political information seeking.


Older adults prefer newer micro-media. Older age segments have high preference for using cable to visit with friends and relatives, perform civic and state functions, and receive electronically originated print media.


Study to determine differences in use of channels of communication by younger and older men. Similarities found to be greater than differences.


Cable television has unique opportunity to reach older viewers and their care providers through informational programming. Requisites for such programming are outlined.


Study investigates the place of television in the lives of an older audience.


Elderly view TV as important, necessary, and positive. Opinion of TV varies with the individual and their age.
Relationship structure between elderly and others is influential in determining importance, socioeconomic differences were not.

Study finds television serves as family, companionship, and provides certain predictable appearances of "old friends" in the lives of the elderly.

Discussing television's role in informing public about processes and conditions of aging and TV as an environmental component for older people.

Focus on the functions and benefits of media as instructional aids in teaching concepts and issues in aging. Materials identified and criteria for selection and use given.

Reviews the influence of TV on attitudes about aging and TV's effect on the elderly population. Includes programming issues, using TV, and how to access the media.

The general image of older people is essentially negative. They are often shown as powerless and frail, in poor rather than robust health.

Analysis of the current portrayal of older adults on television and a profile of the older viewer. Specific ways for adults to directly and actively influence television programming are suggested.

Self-reporting of TV habits by elderly is unreliable when the dependent variable is physical viewing patterns rather than content or preference statements.

Elderly are heavy consumers of information delivered via the electronic media. Potential for specialized information targeting interests of older adults formats discussed.


Elderly report opinions and attitudes about TV entertainment, companionship of TV, influence of programming, and the portrayal of older people.


More birthday cards portrayed aging negatively than positively. Most cards focused on themes having to do with physical and mental characteristics, age concealment, age boundaries, and aging as a process.


Content analysis was conducted of adult roles and their thematic significance to plots of stories for children. Seven popular journals were analyzed between 1874 and 1944.


Discussion of changes over the life course in the uses and gratifications which individuals derive from the mass media.


Children's literature has contributed more to the development of healthy attitudes toward aging and dying than has television.


News media use by older adults studied. Older adults do not necessarily use the media more than the younger. TV was the most widely used followed by print media.


Discusses communication technology and the elderly, the use of technology in support systems for the elderly, and older persons communications needs.

Public information strategies are suggested which might be used to communicate a message to a nationwide audience of elderly persons. One must look at specific programs or magazines.


Daytime serial drama portray elderly similarly to typical elderly in the population.


Attitudes of the elderly towards advertising were examined, specifically the portrayal of the elderly in advertisements. The elderly were disenchanted with their portrayal.


Study to investigate whether children demonstrate the same stereotype of the elderly that are depicted in the media. Favorable stereotyping found.


Booklet examines stereotypes and misconceptions about the elderly. Examines media's positive and negative stereotypes, encourages empathy with the elderly regarding communication difficulties, and looks at intergenerational communication.


Letters to a widely read newspaper columnist were analyzed to gain understanding of the prime concern of elderly problems. Older writers concerned with loneliness, rejection, interpersonal relationships, and sexual problems.


Only six percent of all ads sampled contained older people, and the striking uniformity of their representation implies their general devaluation as consumers.

Cable TV is an especially appropriate medium for the aged; providing two-way feedback and public access to the channels, a sense of security and familiarity with the community.


Content of programs sampled and data on attitudes and opinions used to determine how conceptions of social reality are affected by television viewing habits. Gross underrepresentations of elderly people.


TV as a means of education and outreach for the elderly is discussed. Viewing patterns, social and psychological functions of TV, and programming preferences of older adults are explored.


Relationships were found between use of TV, radio, reading, and face-to-face interaction in one's neighborhood and participation in the broader community.


Long-term intimate primary associations; short-term instrumental secondary associations; and limited feedback mass media tertiary associations were found to be distinct modes of social activity.


Direct activity substitution between socially relevant communication activities is important in explaining changes in social participation in old age.


Elderly less visible on TV, comprising about 3% of all TV characters by the 1977-1978 season. Male bias in portrayal of the elderly. Elderly increasingly cast in regular, rather than guest roles.


Hemming, J., Ellis, K. (1976, April). How fair is TV's image of older adults? Retirement Living, 21-24. Poll of viewers shows an unfair representation of elderly on TV. Youth-orientation of most TV shows is seen as unjust and shortsighted in terms of industry's self-interest.

Hess, B.B. (1974, Fall). Stereotypes of the aged. Journal of Communications, 24(4), 76-85. Popular stereotypes of aged are discussed. A sociological model of mass communication which shows the process embedded in the overall social system is explored.

  Reading, listening and viewing behavior of 200 white persons aged 60 or more was investigated through personal interviews in Oxford, Mississippi.

  American television was found to portray older characters more frequently and more positively than Japanese television. Cross-national comparison of American and Japanese children's favorite TV shows.

  A random sample of children's programs were sampled. Older people appeared in over half the sampled shows. Older women and minorities were underrepresented.

  Describes initial development of the Aging Opinion Survey, instrument based on a multidimensional view of attitudes towards aging and the elderly.

  Age is positively related to fashion alienation. There is also an inverse relationship between frequency of use of media for fashion information and fashion alienation.

  Among better educated subjects, those ever 70 years and those with higher clothing expenditures reported greater use of TV for fashion information. Older women use younger TV characters to gain information for fashion.

  Study of the communication function of TV in the lives of elderly residents of Tokyo, Japan. Elderly who live alone watch the most TV, had the least family contact, and had the most interaction with friends.

The Over Easy program successfully communicated prevention information, conveyed a positive philosophy of aging, and encouraged target group utilization of existing social services for elderly.


A course designed for study of aging from a communication perspective. Units include intrapersonal, interpersonal, and mass communication and the aging.


An exploratory study of mass and interpersonal communication behaviors of the elderly in relation to their public affairs knowledge.


Findings indicate that aged consumers represent a distinct market segment in terms of their formal and informal information source preferences.


Possible ill effects of elderly exposure to TV content. The functions that TV serves for the aged relate negatively to self-concept and may reflect increased alienation from society.


Sources of knowledge about senior center activities cited by elderly were restricted to newspapers, family and friends, and the center publication.


TV viewing increases with age, and elderly preferring informational to entertainment programming. The elderly are under-representation negatively portrayed on TV.

Age stereotypes on the media will change as the elderly population grows in number and proportion. Mass media can be used to dispel myths and misconceptions about aging.


Portrayal of the elderly in magazines with high general circulations are compared to magazines read mainly by senior citizens.


Analysis of commercials for nationally advertised products show that portrayals of the elderly were neutral or slightly positive. Suggests elderly uncircerned about the stereotypes.


Contemporary novels of senescence focus on inevitable process of degeneration and decay. There is little in the novels to relieve the dark picture of old age.


Suggestions of citizen action to coerce stations into broadening their format and serving the aged of the community.


Technical document offers assistance in contacting media representatives, writing press releases and public service announcements, and other uses of the media.


Content analysis performed on five basal reading series published in the 60s and 80s. Study found elderly are under represented but portrayals are generally positive.

Study concerns the perceptions of older adults and gerontologists of newspaper stories about aging.


Discusses production and consumption of entertainment and the demands that different forms of entertainment make on the users. Includes an explicit look at older adults.


Telephone interviews conducted among disadvantaged, including elderly, concerning information needs on environmental issues. Inadequate perceptions of information needs.


Research on the political influence of televangelists on the elderly. Televangelists have negligible influence over the elderly vote.


Content analysis of TV commercials on Canadian networks. Data is discussed in terms of TV's influence on behaviors and attitudes.


Cable TV in the delivery of social services to senior citizens promotes an increased awareness of community problems, expanded knowledge about social services, and greater involvement in social processes.


Healthy Older People campaign is a nationwide effort to help older Americans achieve their highest possible levels of health and well being through effective use of mass media.

Describes interactive cable system designed to deliver social services to senior citizens. Reviews system, technological components, and reviews programming.


A study of senior citizens and newspapers. Includes a profile of senior citizens.


Content analysis of television drama indicates the dominant age group portrayed is between 30 and 54 years. Elderly appear infrequently, are shown in contrast to competent adult males or to attractive adult females.


Language used to depict the elderly is overwhelmingly negative. Guidelines for language usage in the various media suggested.


An exploration of the interactive behavior of individuals over the age of 65 as it relates to life satisfaction. Results provide partial support for the activity theory.


Highly-affective highly-informational style is preferred in a patient-physician relationship overall. Older preferred a highly affective-low informative style.


Needs and motives for television use for ages 18-87. 82% are mildly attached to TV. TV uses include entertainment, learning, pass-time, relaxation, and habit.

Investigation of extent to which age, education, and attitude toward TV affect the amount learned from a documentary by adults over 50 years of age.


Overview of communication with older people. Includes basic communication with older people, generation gaps, mass media and aging consumers, legal and public problems, and other topics.


Re-examination of previous study shows effects of TV viewing on knowledge and attitudes about older adults were small, restricted to younger people, and only questionably robust across measures of viewing and attitudes.


Study investigates the visibility and image of the aged in TV programming, and whether the visibility of old people varies by sex.


A content analysis of 53 books that have won the Newbery Medal for Adolescent Literature was conducted to determine images of older people that were presented.


Content analysis of adolescent literature undertaken to determine types, extent, and importance of older characters. They were underdeveloped and peripheral to major action.


Elderly process information differently from young, resulting in a complex set of changes in individuals' source of information, ability to learn, and susceptibility to influence.


Implications of the relationship of mass communication and
the elderly for family structure and ties in the context of Singapore's social system.


Stereotyping of the aged reflects inter-generational and inter-class conflicts. Labeling old age via mass media as a deviant status serves to justify process of denying the elderly access to societal resources.


Video project developed to create informational and supportive material which can be used by families caring for their frail elderly.


An examination of the Public Access Cable Television by and for Elders (PACE) program in San Diego. Public access programs can multiply the out reach and effectiveness of many organizations, agencies and services.


Content analysis of school reading texts for portrayal of old age and the presentation of older characters. Both text and illustrations are studied.


Results show interaction between age orientation of product and age of model, but no pervasive 'younger is better' effect was found.


Summary of past methodological difficulties. Discusses present television and aging research along with future directions for mass communication and the elderly research.


Age is a useful concept for describing mass media use. There are limitations to the age view, author argues for alternatives.

Age, context, and TV usage studied. Environment more influential than age in determining viewing motivations, program preferences, and viewing behaviors.


Survey of elderly people regarding TV viewing. Correlations found between viewing patterns and motivations.


"Contextual age" offers an alternative life-position concept to chronological age in communication and aging research. The role of TV in the lives of older persons examined.


Exploration of contextual age as life position indicator in order to develop the construct and to examine the relationship between contextual age and TV use for an adult sample.


Contextual age construct developed and examined as a life-position index of aging. Findings reflect the weak validity of chronological age as unidimensional indicator of life-position and well-being.


Stresses the importance of adult developmental learning via continuous informational opportunities to counter the stigma of "social obsolescence" of the aging.


Interpersonal and mass communication in civic education for older adults studied. A large proportion of elderly does not appear to be learning about civic affairs from interpersonal communication or from mass media.

Considerations in communication channel selection are noted and channel use of elderly is analyzed. TV and print media are among the top used.


Mass media programs and publications for elderly are reviewed. Research is discussed and general considerations for using mass communication to reach older persons are presented.


Education, visual acuity, and interest in current events are keys to newspaper use in later life; implications for younger readers still unclear.


Cable TV channel was used to inform residents in a housing project for the elderly about a series of preventative health services. Impact of messages discussed.


Relates the dynamic patterns of older adults to their use of TV within the whole range of activity patterns available to them.


A program of communication education is proposed for the elderly. Program must focus on the personal concerns of the elderly rather than cognitive information.


Examines impact of information and information sources on the new product trial decisions of the elderly. Attention is given to the role of personal experience.


Essay focuses attention on the potential of mass
communication for reintegrating the older person into the ongoing social order.


Study made to establish tentative indices for the relation of a newspaper reading patterns to the age, education, and socioeconomic status of readers.


Examines perceptions of elderly viewers about the usefulness of TV commercials in making consumer decisions. Younger elderly were more influenced by TV than the over 70 viewers.


Fiction in nine women's periodicals was content analyzed. Older characters were positively portrayed, more representative of the magazine readers than of the general older population.


Evaluates older persons' perceptions of their knowledge of communication and communication disorders, and their interest in learning more about these topics.


Contains 100 selected references on studies in aging and communication published between 1950-1970. References not definitive but representative.


Content analysis of characters in the four top Israeli newspapers. No quantitative misrepresentation of the aged. A decline noted in the number of times the elderly are depicted.


Examines images of the elderly on TV programs imported to Israel. Older characters are presented as more independent, less liberal, more conformist, and less attractive.

Examines presentation of old age and older characters on prime time network drama and relationships between TV, aging and health. Includes viewer conceptions relating to these issues.


Content analysis of 2,217 cartoons from magazines reveals a generally negative view of elders. Elders appear rather infrequently in cartoon humor, particularly in women's magazines.


Content analysis was conducted to determine the portrayal of elderly and nonelderly models in ads for prescription drugs in two medical journals. Portrayals were generally negative.


Mass media and the family may be reinforcing or developing sex-role stereotypes of elderly: consumer education may help filter puffery in advertisements.


Considers advertising influences on the elderly consumer and theoretical implications. Exposure to mass media advertising was positively related to traditional consumer sex-role perceptions.


Study of the texts of 127 poems listed under "Old Age" in Granger's Index of Poetry indicates strongly negative attitudes about physical, emotional, and social losses.


Examines media use and attitudes of older adults and how they differ from younger audiences. Results suggest preferences among most adults are shifting to TV and away from newspapers.


Recall scores tend to decline with age. Older senior citizens recalled significantly fewer commercials, products, and sales points from the test ads.

Examin es repetition effects on adults to determine whether commercials targeted to older adults require greater frequency. Found older adults do not necessarily need repetition.


Study evaluates ageism presented in children's books. Records children's responses to the portrayal of the elderly in literature.


Study tests the need salience and source dependence of the elderly. The connections between media uses and gratification are noted.


Mass media, particularly radio and TV, are often directed toward heterogeneous and differentiated groups. Studies verify attitudes and opinions concerning the specific economic and psychic situation of aging and elderly.


This report concludes that new media technology presents the potential for more programming directed toward the needs of older Americans and offers the potential for informative services to help solve the problems of older Americans.


Project is an 8-part series of television programs on educational TV dealing with different aspects of planning for retirement. Seminars reinforce programs.


Longitudinal content analysis of advertisements in several magazines show significant use of the elderly, portrayals were in relatively prestigious work situations, and older males were used more frequently than older females.

Contends that few consumer research, education, and action programs focus on needs and concerns of the elderly. This study reveals the lack of reliable data and research.


Content analysis of daily newspapers conducted to determine newsspace devoted to the elderly. Showed more articles were event rather than issue oriented. Metropolitan papers published more issue articles and depicted elderly in active roles.


Examined age-related material published in Sunday editions of daily newspapers in 1963 and 1983. Total space allocated to aging increased, issue-orientated articles tripled.


Study concentrates on functions of TV viewing for older adults. Found that desire for information was highest.


Study focused on functions and gratifications derived from TV within a retirement community. Two alternative causal models were found to usefully explain degree of social contact.


Reports an investigation of media use, demographic characteristics, and political interest on voter behavior for individuals, 50 and over, during the 1972 presidential campaign.


TV stereotypes of elderly are compared to real life. Respondents' perceptions of the elderly in real life resembled their perceptions of the way old people appear on TV.


Provides a summary of research done in the area of media uses and gratifications by the elderly.
I. MEDIA INDEX

A. Broadcast Media

1. Radio

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Corporation for Public Broadcasting (1980)
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Davis, R.H., Edwards, A.E., Bartel, D.J.,
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3. Television, Cable

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Davis, R.H., & Miller, R.V. (1983)
Geller, B., & Cherow, R. (1972)
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Ansello, E.F. (1977)
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Schramm, W., & White, D.M. (1949)

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