

THE COMMERCIAL BROADCASTING AND AMERICAN ELDERLY*

美國商業廣播電視與老人的關係

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摘 要

由于出生率的降低，醫藥衛生的發達，美國老人佔全國人口的比率逐漸增加。本研究嘗試探討老人與傳播的關係，其主要目的在發現美國老人收看電視節目喜愛的模式與他們的訊息需要。

爲了達到上述的研究目的，採取問卷調查的方式，親身訪問了居住在自家、私人養老院以及政府養老院內年齡在六十二歲以上的兩百九十名老人。根據調查的結果，發現受測的老人花在看電視的時間遠比聽廣播的時間多，看電視時大約在晚間七時到十一時左右居多，聽廣播時以清晨六點至九點者居多。此外，他們不喜歡含有暴力與性色彩的節目，而比較喜歡教育性質的新聞與社教性節目。還有，他們訊息的需要大都與健康或醫藥、旅行、退休計劃有關係的爲主。最後，他們認爲廣播電視媒介除了提供娛樂功能外，還要注意教育上的訊息功能。

總而言之，受測的老人認爲聽廣播看電視是使自己與外界溝通不被時代遺忘的重要方式，也是安享餘年時最佳的伴侶之一。本文的研究結果雖得自美國老人，但也可以供政府有關單位在改進我國老人福利時的參考。

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INTRODUCTION

Present evidence shows the percentage of older Americans in the total population is growing rapidly. Between 1900 and 1960, the number of Americans aged 65 and older grew from 3.1 million to 16.7 million. Currently, there are about 21 million senior citizens in America and they are expected to number 25 million by 1985 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973). This is a rate of growth more than twice that of the American population as a whole (Schramm, 1969).

To this rather sizeable portion of the American elderly population, television watching and radio listening may serve as an important link to the rest of American society and as a defense against loneliness and progressive disengagement. Given the importance the broadcast media play in reducing isolation and disseminating vital information, determining what the elderly want and need from commercial television and radio becomes more and more crucial.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

During recent years there has been a growing research interest related to aging and communication. First, communication researchers claimed that the elderly are a legal and important media audience and they prefer informative content as opposed to entertainment one (Davis, Edwards, Bartel & Martin, 1976; Environics Research Group Limited of Canada, 1974; Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Hopf & Bedwell, 1969; Meyersohn, 1961; Peppers, 1976; Schalinske, 1968; Schramm, 1969). Second, a functional approach was used to explore how television serves older adults (Meyersohn, 1961; Wenner, 1976). Third, communication literature related to aging was devoted to the stereotyped images shown on television (Aronoff, 1974; Comfort, 1976; Harris & Feinberg, 1977; Hess, 1974; Marshall & Wallenstein, 1973; Petersen, 1973). Fourth, researchers devoted themselves to testing communication activity substitution theory (Graney, 1976; Graney & Graney, 1974; Havighurst & Albrecht, 1953). Finally, how the elderly select communication channel was the main theme related to aging study (Rush & Kent, 1976, 1977).

Overall, a review of the literature related to aging and communication provides fragmentary material. In fact, little attention has been paid to more specific questions such as: (1) What are television viewing and radio listening habits of the elderly in America? and (2) What are the information needs and interests of the aged in the U. S.? Thus, the purpose of this study is to answer the above research questions in order to bridge the gap between the existing knowledge related to aging and the

mass media.

METHODOLOGY

The design employed in this study was a one-shot descriptive design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Haskins, 1972).

Data collection included both humanistic and objective methods. First, participant observation (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975) was used to informally observe activities in a private and a state-supported retirement institutions to obtain preliminary insights as to how the elderly functioned in retirement homes. Next, focused in-depth interviews were conducted using a repertory grid (Monaghan, 1972). Subjects were asked to compare and contrast main themes of the broadcast programs they watched or listened to regularly. These were used to generate survey questionnaire which was pretested on a sample of 15 older citizens. Subsequently, the final survey instrument was completed based upon pretest subjects' reaction and suggestion.

A total of 290 people aged 62 and over residing in Columbus, Ohio were non-randomly surveyed with personal interviews (see Table 1). Data from the open-ended questions were content-analyzed (Holsti, 1969) and grouped into categories. Raw data were submitted to computer analysis.

Table 1. Sample Breakdown

Group Levels		Number of Subjects
Group I	(non-institution)	56
Group II	(state-supported institution)	
	Jenkins	45
	Taylor	69
Group III	(private institution)	
	First Community Village	56
	Lutheran Senior City	38
	Wesley Glen	23
	Whetstone	3
Total		290

RESULTS

Sample Demographic Characteristics

Of those interviewed, 70 were males and 220 females. About two-thirds of the sample ranged from 75 to well over 80; the remaining third were between 62 and 74. Sixty percent of the respondents were formerly married but widowed; 20% now married; 10% never married; and 6% formerly married but divorced. The majority of those residing in state-supported institutions received a high school or less than high school education. The older citizens living in private homes mainly had graduated from high school or had some college level work. The elderly staying in private institutions had a greater tendency to have more college or beyond college level academic training. As to their income, 47% listed an annual income of \$4,999 or less, almost 26% claimed \$9,888 or less, and the remaining received more than \$10,000. Generally speaking, the seniors living in private homes and institutions had a higher income than their peers in state-supported housing.

Three-quarters of the seniors polled lived alone; nearly one-fifth with their spouse only; and the remaining with either friends or relatives. Of 290 seniors interviewed, only 31 persons were employed. About 34% participated in volunteer's work at least occasionally — i.e., whenever asked or needed. A great majority responded that they spent most of their lives in an urban area with only 20% indicating rural locale.

Media Habits

Although the elderly's access to television, cable, and radio and their consumption of the media were included in the survey, this report only concentrates on the seniors' viewing/listening behavior and their program preferences.

According to Table 2, about 73% of the older people polled usually watched television alone, 21% either watched with one person (i.e., their spouses mostly) or two persons (i.e., spouses and relatives). Only a scant of 3% watched television with three or more people — that is, their friends or neighbors. Given the fact that nearly three quarters of the sample lived alone, it is less surprising to find that a vast majority of the seniors questioned usually watched television alone.

Some people may hypothesize that the phenomenon of leaving television set on as background noise without virtually watching it is prevalent among certain segments of the elderly because of their needs of companionship; however, only 11% of the sample engaged in this practice. About 69% turned on television for specific programs and 10% for a combination of background and specific fares.

The Commercial Broadcasting and American Elderly

Table 2. Viewing Behavior of the Elderly

With three or more	Percentage
Alone	72.8%
With one	14.5
With two	6.9
With three or more	2.1
Other	1.4
DK/NA	2.4

Note. n=290

One interesting observation is that the seniors residing in homes and private institutions seemed to turn on television set as background more than their peers (see Table 3).

Are there any times of day that the older citizens usually watched television more than other times? About 73% of the sample responded to it with a positive tone. Evening (7:00 p.m. – 10:59 p.m.) was ranked as the most popular viewing segment while afternoon (12:00 p.m. – 4:59 p.m.) the second most agreeable one. Early evening (5:00 p.m. – 6:59 p.m.) was considered a somewhat popular viewing schedule; however, only a few respondents preferred late evening (11:00 p.m. – 2:59 a.m.) and no one chose very early morning (3:00 a.m. – 5:59 a.m.) as their favorite. The most essential criterion dominating the selection of viewing time segment was their favorite programs being shown in that time. Other conspicuous reasons such as news story and convenient timing also constituted switch-on.

It is hypothesized that turning on radio as background music without listening

Table 3. Relationship between Viewing Behavior and Residence

Viewing Behavior	Residence		
	Home	State Int.	Private Int.
Background	4.6%	1.1	6.5
Watch	11.1	31.4	33.7
Both	1.9	8.0	1.5

Note. n=261 df=4 Chi square=29.40775 Significance=0.0

to it exists among different age groups, including older people. Thus, it is not surprising to discover this listening pattern will hold constant in the survey sample. Initially striking, according to Table 4, was that a plurality of 51% of the sample had a lack of response. However, compared to television viewing phenomenon, a relatively higher 18% of the respondents claimed that they turned on radio barely as background music. On the other hand, only nearly 25% listened to radio for specific programs and a minority of 6% for a combination of specific and background purposes.

Table 4. Listening Behavior of the Elderly

Listening Behavior	Percentage
Background	18.3%
Listen	24.5
Both	6.2
DK/NA	51.0

Note. n=290

As to listening time preference, 47% of the older citizens questioned pointed out that they did select certain time segments of day to turn on radio. Unlike aforementioned television viewing time preferences, early morning (6:00 a.m. – 8:59 a.m.) was chosen as the most popular listening time whereas evening (7:00 p.m. – 10:59 p.m.) was ranked the second. Surprisingly, late evening (11:00 p.m. – 2:59 p.m.) was somewhat preferred and still a few people turned on radio in the period of very early morning (3:00 a.m. – 5:59 a.m.). The elderly's use of radio as background and companionship are probably the speculated causes for the above phenomenon. With this qualification in mind, it was not surprising to discover that use radio as background was the most agreeable justification of the selection of listening time segment. Other predominant reasons such as for favorite programs and news story also determined listening behavior.

Media Preferences

Television. In an effort to understand the elderly's preferences for commercial television, four questions were addressed to them. They were asked, first of all, to list three names of programs that they liked most. Also, they were questioned to name three programs that they watched regularly besides their favorites. Moreover,

The Commercial Broadcasting and American Elderly

they were asked to express their degree of enjoyment toward different types of programming. Finally, they were provided with a chance to express their dislikes toward current television programming.

The results of the first inquiry revealed that 18% of those who responded to this item (n=278) favored news and public affairs; and the educational/informational purpose was singled out as the most important reason for that selection. Both quiz/game and day-time dramatic shows were liked by 14% of the sample responded. The seniors liked to watch these two types of program for the sake of entertainment. Situation comedy was somewhat preferred with a nearly 11% while family show accounted for about 9%. The older citizens favored the former because it was humorous; however, the most important reason why they also preferred the latter was its clean and entertaining characteristics. Finally, a marked discrepancy was evident that the senior citizens residing in private homes and institutions preferred news and public affairs most; but, their peers seemed to single out day-time drama as their first favorite, $\chi^2 (30) = 101.15, p < .01$.

The findings of the second inquiry – an attempt to discover the three regularly watched programs in addition to favorite ones – indicated that quiz/game shows were chosen as the most often watched programs with 16% of those responding to this item (n=198). Entertainment and excitement were the reasons why they watched them. Situation comedy was ranked as the second regularly watched program type by accounting for 15% of the sample responded to this inquiry because it rendered humor and entertainment. Similar to the previous inquiry, other most often watched program types included day-time drama, news and public affairs, and musical variety. Again, the educational/informational purpose was the most justified reason for the selection of news and public affairs; whereas the elderly watched the other two types of program simply because they provided entertainment. Finally, the residing location seemed to make no difference in terms of this inquiry.

The third question – an inclination to detect the degree of enjoyment – indicated that the seniors professed to derive the greatest enjoyment from news and public affairs; almost 94% claimed such shows to be either very or somewhat enjoyable (see Table 5). Of those interviewed, 81% extracted satisfaction from interview-discussion shows. A full 79% of the seniors polled enjoyed religious and musical variety shows equivalently. Comedies and game shows were also ranked by somewhat two-thirds of the sample; movies and sports by slightly less than that portion. In contrast, about 50% of the sample derived no enjoyment from day-time dramas and detective shows at all. To examine each type of program in relation to

Table 5. Seniors' Enjoyment of Television Program

Program Types	Very Enjoyable	Somewhat Enjoyable	Not at all Enjoyable	DK/NA
Situational comedies	29.3%	42.8	23.8	4.1
Movies	19	50.7	27.6	2.8
Sports	43.8	24.1	29.3	2.8
Detective stories	21.4	31.0	44.1	3.4
Day-time dramatic shows	27.2	18.6	50.7	3.4
Quiz and game shows	37.9	32.4	26.9	2.8
News and public affairs	81.0	12.8	3.8	2.4
Musical variety shows	39.7	39.3	17.6	3.4
Religious programs	42.8	36.9	16.2	4.1
Interview-discussion shows	40.3	40.7	15.5	3.4

Note. n=290

the variable of residency carefully, some interesting characteristics emerged. At first, those living in state-subsidized institutions inclined to enjoy religious programs more than their peers, $\chi^2 (4) = 35.92, p < .01$. Also, they were uncritical of movies, detective shows, and day-time dramas; that is, they enjoyed these programs more than the rest of respondents, $\chi^2 (4) = 42.42, p < .01$, $\chi^2 (4) = 11.49, p < .05$, $\chi^2 (4) = 9.91, p < .05$, respectively. On the contrary, the seniors residing in private homes and institutions were more selective; namely, they enjoyed interview-discussion programs more than their counterparts, $\chi^2 (4) = 15.58, p < .01$.

The fourth inquiry – an attempt to find the three mostly disliked programs – indicated that both comedies and detective/police shows were equally disliked by almost 16% of the sample responding to this item respectively (n = 240). Although

The Commercial Broadcasting and American Elderly

the seniors polled enjoyed comedies, as indicated previously, they also disliked some ridiculous, obscene, and non-entertaining ones. Occasionally, they disliked comedies just because they did not appreciate characters. In addition, nearly 13% of the older people responded disliked frightening or violent shows because these programs were too violent. Finally, 11% of the respondents did not like the day-time dramas which did not provide entertainment and were poorly written. In light of this inquiry, it was found that those living in their homes seemed to dislike night-time dramas (i.e., star trek, bionic woman, etc.) most. However, the seniors residing in private institutions tended to reject detective shows; whereas their peers staying in state-supported housing centers disgusted frightening or violent crime shows, $\chi^2 (32) = 116.38, p < .01$. Because an overwhelming number of the respondents interviewed favored news and public affairs, as indicated before, it is less surprising to note that almost no one disliked that. Another fascinating fact discovered is that nearly none of the seniors polled disliked religious programs.

Overall, these results give proof of overwhelming popularity of television news and public affairs among the senior citizens. Also, they seemed relatively acceptant of the available television programming; namely, a majority of those polled enjoyed at least moderately from all of the basic programming types except detective and poorly written day-time dramatic shows. It seemed that the elderly tended to watch most often what was most readily available (i.e., day-time dramas) even though they might not fully enjoy. To put in another way, the respondents, particularly those residing in state-supported institutions, used the medium as a source of entertainment.

Radio. It is assumed that people listen to radio with no memory of the names of program generally. Thus, for the sake of understanding the elderly's preferences for commercial radio programs efficiently, only a couple of questions were directed to them. First, they were asked to express their degree of enjoyment toward different types of programming. Second, they were asked if they preferred FM to AM or vice versa.

The results of the first inquiry — an attempt to uncover the elderly's degree of enjoyment toward specific types of radio show — are presented in Table 6. The least enjoyable program the seniors concurred was phone-in talk shows; only 39% of the sample claimed at least moderate enjoyment. About 50% of the respondents questioned stated that they enjoyed sports moderately. Interview-discussion programs were considered to be somewhat enjoyable by almost 53% of the sample while nearly 57% of them enjoyed religious programs moderately. The aged, as indeed for many others, derived most satisfaction from music and news and public affairs

Table 6. Seniors' Enjoyment of Radio Program

Program Types	Very Enjoyable	Somewhat Enjoyable	Not at all Enjoyable	DK/NA
Sports	29%	21.4	28.6	21
Phone-in talk shows	7.9	31.4	37.2	23.4
News and public affairs	59.3	12.4	6.9	21.4
Religious programs	31.0	25.5	20.3	23.1
Music	53.1	19.0	7.9	20.0
Interview-discussion programs	16.6	36.2	23.8	23.4

Note. n=290

programs on commercial radio with about the same rate of 72% respectively. Of all kinds of music, they preferred light, classic, and religious music to country and rock's roll music (see Table 7). In sum, it appeared that the elderly residing in state-supported institutions enjoyed religious programs more than their peers, $\chi^2(4) = 16.56, p < .01$.

As to exposure to FM or AM radio, it seemed that the elderly polled preferred FM slightly. They listened more to FM because it had better reception and music. In contrast, a variety of reasons such as no access to FM, more stations and sports

Table 7. Kinds of Very Enjoyable Music by Seniors

Kinds of Music ^a	Percentage
Rock'n roll	3.8%
Light music	34.5
Country music	13.8
Classic music	28.3
Other (religious music mostly)	18.3

Note. n=290

^a The respondents were allowed to check all applicable categories.

The Commercial Broadcasting and American Elderly

Table 8. FM and AM Preference of Seniors

FM/AM Preference	Percentage
AM	38.3%
FM	41.0
DK/NA	20.7

Note. n=290

on AM, and out of habit, were given as the criteria that the seniors listened more to AM.

Overall, the older people appreciated music and news and public affairs on radio as much as they did on television. However, the senior citizens interviewed showed a lack of response to the radio questions substantially.

Media Needs

Information Needs. By a healthy margin, about 51% of the sample (see Table 9) felt that health care and medicine information was very important and the major source of that information was television. About 32% of the sample responded that

Table 9. Important Information to Seniors

Kinds of Information	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	DK/NA
Concerts & recitals	17.9%	39.0	42.1	1.0
Movies	14.1	42.1	42.4	1.4
Lectures & museums	7.9	40.3	49.3	2.4
Travel	31.7	33.1	32.8	2.4
Restaurants	15.2	32.8	48.6	3.4
Consumer affairs	29.3	39.7	27.6	3.4
Health care & medicine	50.7	34.8	12.1	2.4
Business & finance	16.9	43.1	37.9	2.1

Note. n=290

traveling information was highly essential and, again, they considered television as the main source of obtaining that information. The information of consumer affairs was deemed by 29% of the sample as highly important and it mainly came from television. Subsequently, concerts and recitals were claimed to be extremely essential by 18% of the respondents polled and newspapers provided this type of information mostly. A slightly lower 17% stated that business and finance information was really important and the elderly obtained it through newspapers mainly. Restaurants and movies were considered to be extremely relevant by about the same rate of 15% respectively; however, the seniors sought the former information from newspapers and the latter from television. Presumably, people obtain movie information through newspapers generally. Thus, the only speculated justification why the older people questioned chose television as the main source of that information is that they usually stayed home to watch television movies. Finally, only about 8% of the sample pointed out that the information of lectures and museums was highly relevant and they cited newspapers as its major source.

The importance of those kinds of information mentioned above showed marked discrepancy with the variable of residency. It seemed that those residing in private institutions did not consider health care and medicine information so much important as their peers, $\chi^2(4) = 53.37, p < .01$, probably because they had better financial situation to arrange other kinds of help. Also, only the older citizens staying in state-supported institutions deemed the information of consumer affairs more important than their counterparts, $\chi^2(4) = 13.51, p < .01$; and their poor financial arrangements might be related to this phenomenon. Obviously for an opposite reason, the seniors living in private institutions claimed concerts and recitals more relevant than their peers, $\chi^2(4) = 11.56, p < .05$. Surprisingly, the older people residing in their homes and state-subsidized institutions considered restaurants and movies more important than their peers, $\chi^2(4) = 22.51, p < .01$, $\chi^2(4) = 22.79, p < .01$, respectively. It is difficult to explore the hidden reasons for this phenomenon.

Preferred Activity. In order to evaluate the relative importance of leisure activity attached to each medium by the elderly, a question was addressed to them about their preferred activity if they had a choice. Although 39% of the sample selected watching television as their priority, nevertheless, a sizeable minority of 31% chose reading newspapers and magazines (see Table 10). Subsequently, 21% considered talking on phone with relatives and friends as their favorite leisure engagement. Only 6% of the sample preferred listening to radio. Finally, the variable of residency had no significant relationship with these preferences.

Table 10. Preferred Activity of the Elderly

Preferred Activity	Percentage
Watching television	39.0%
Listening to radio	5.5
Reading newspapers and magazines	31.4
Talking on phone with relatives and friends	21.4
Other	2.1
DK/NA	0.7

Note. n=290

Programming Needs. Having ascertained the relative importance of the elderly's information needs and their preferred media activities, we may explore their opinions toward the provision of program material by radio and television respectively.

The program categories and the full results are presented in Table 11 and Table 12. Again, the low rate of response to radio programs is significant; about one-fifth of the sample were unable to reply to each specific type of program. The phenomenon may be rooted in a lack of interest among the aged for the medium of radio; or what is more likely, in a general lack of memory. In contrast, television received a significantly higher rate of response; only a smaller portion of the sample —

Table 11. The Provision of Radio Program for Seniors

Radio Program	Too Much	Enough	Too Little	DK/NA
Indoor hobbies & crafts	2.8%	51	24.8	21.4
Religious programs	5.5	61.4	16.6	16.6
Education for retirement	2.8	37.6	41	18.6
Information about services, activities for older people	4.5	38.3	39.7	17.6
Information about health, pension, & government programs	3.4	36.6	42.8	17.2

Note. n=290

Table 12. The Provision of Television Program for Seniors

Television Program	Too Much	Enough	Too Little	DK/NA
Indoor hobbies & crafts	3.8%	55.9	34.5	5.9
Religious programs	8.6	63.1	24.5	3.8
Education for retirement	4.1	41.7	47.9	6.2
Information about services, activities for older people	3.4	44.1	48.3	4.1
Information about health, pension, & government programs	3.1	43.8	49	4.1

Note. n=290

namely, 6% or less — were unable to respond.

At any rate, the seniors polled absolutely did not feel satiated by any of the types of shows listed for radio and television. At first, the data showed that radio and television were not adequately fulfilling the needs of the older people for “information about health, pension, and government programs.” A full 49% of the respondents interviewed considered the current amount of such programming on television to be insufficient whereas 43% did so to radio. An only slightly lower 48% noted a paucity of “information about services and activities for older people” on television. On the other hand, about 40% expressed their dissatisfaction toward the same type of program on radio. Not surprisingly, nearly 48% of the respondents visited claimed that there was too little programming about education for retirement on television; whereas a slightly lower 41% made the same claim on radio. One might recall that, in the previous section, the seniors cited television as the major source of health care and medicine information which was extremely important to them. Nevertheless, the aged were still discontented with the provision of the material, by the broadcast media, which basically falls within the compass of information of an immediate and practical nature.

A substantial majority of those interviewed pointed out that religious programs were exposed sufficiently by the media; that is, 63% for television and 61% for radio. Opinion was also given over the extent to which material on indoor hobbies and crafts was available; 56% who said enough on television as opposed to 51% who made the same claim on radio.

Generally speaking, the place where the elderly resided had no significant relationship with their programming needs except a couple of instances. The seniors residing in private institutions seemed to be more contented with "education with retirement" and "information about services and activities for older people" on television than their peers, $\chi^2 (4) = 11.83, p < .05$, $\chi^2 (4) = 10.82, p < .05$, respectively. This may be attributable to the fact that private institutions provide those kinds of practical service regularly, thus, the seniors' needs were somewhat fulfilled which, in turn, made them feel more satisfied with the medium.

In sum, a great number of the sample argued that both radio and television have been remiss in supplying information of immediate and practical importance to the older citizens. Concurrently, a minority of them were displeased with the supply of programming on religion and indoor hobbies and crafts.

Media Attitude

Information vs. Entertainment. The measurement of the information/entertainment dichotomy is a general indication which, hopefully, accords with the elderly's ideal preferences. Steiner's (1963) sample was almost divided between these two functions with a slight emphasis on entertainment, whereas Environics Research Group Limited of Canada's study (1974) was much more likely to regard television as a vehicle for entertainment. Although this study indicated almost no distinctive preference between information and entertainment functions, the emphasis for the broadcast media switched from entertainment to information, compared to the former two studies (see Table 13). Also, a great

Table 13. Information VS. Entertainment of the Elderly from Different Studies

Information vs. Entertainment	ERGLC'S TV Sample ^a (65 and over)	Steiner's TV Sample ^b (65 and over)	Hsu's TV Sample ^c (62 and over)	Hsu's TV Sample (62 and over)
More information	17%	32	23.8	22.8
Better entertainment	47	37	22.1	17.9
Both	25	31	47.9	37.6
DK/NA	11	0	6.2	21.7

^a Environics Research Group Limited of Canada. *Reaching the retired: A survey of the media habits, preferences and needs of senior citizens in metro Toronto*. Ottawa, 1974, p.77.

^b Steiner, G. *The people look at television*. New York, 1962, p.174.

^c n in Hsu's study=290

number of the seniors in this study deemed television and radio as a vehicle of both services; 47.9% for the former and 37.6% for the latter. Again, a minority of 22% had a lack of response to radio. Finally, the residing place had no significantly dependent relationship with this inquiry.

One might recall that, in the previous section, the sample extracted the greatest pleasure from news and public affairs with a slightly lower enjoyment from interview-discussion and musical variety shows. The proportion between information and entertainment functions in this inquiry reaffirms the same claim. What is more significant is that the broadcast media should perform both functions to better serve the elderly.

Beneficial Information. In order to understand the kinds of information that help the older people, they were polled by a question which read: "In your opinion, what kinds of information could television provide that could help the elderly?" Initially striking is the fact that about 33% of the sample did not point out specific information, instead, they voiced their general opinions such as no sex, no violence, etc. This phenomenon may be due to the elderly's misunderstanding of the question or the interviewers' impatience. Of those interviewed, 16% claimed that news and public affairs helped them relate with the world and society. Also, 10% considered medical and health care information beneficial. Other trailing popularities included: 7% for educational information; 6.6% for services/events for the elderly; retirement benefit and general information on aging with a minority of 5% respectively.

Once again, the seniors were asked to respond to the same question except with the medium of radio. Similar to the previous finding, 26% of the sample did not give an answer directly and about 23% stated that news and public affairs would benefit them greatly. Services/events for the elderly and medical/health care information were also considered instrumental by about the same rate of the sample; 13% for the former and 11% for the latter. Other responses which received 5% or less consisted of religious, educational, and financial/employment information.

In short, the seniors polled showed similar patterns in terms of the kinds of information provided by the broadcast media except that radio seemed to help them with more religious and financial information. Needless to say, the kinds of information, as indicated above, that could help the elderly are generally within a compass of practical and immediate nature.

Ideal Program. Given the direction and information that the broadcast media could provide, it is not inappropriate to scrutinize in more details the kinds of program that the older people like to see on television. Thirteen percent of the sample failed to respond to this inquiry; however, 14% would like to see musical

The Commercial Broadcasting and American Elderly

variety shows (i.e., country, classic, and old time music) on television. About 12% of the seniors questioned would like to have news and public affairs including documentary while a slightly lower 11% would be delighted to see religious programs on the air. Educational programs which emphasize crafts, gardening, art, and historical background would be preferred by 7% of the sample, as opposed to dramatic shows (i.e., good soap opera and TV theater) by a minority of 6%. About 5% and 4% of the seniors respectively displayed a propensity for family programs (i.e., no sex and violence but only family-oriented shows such as the Waltons) and good situation comedies.

Again, the aged interviewed were asked to indicate the ideal program that they would like to see on radio. Initially surprising is that 36% of the sample did not respond to this inquiry directly. Nevertheless, nearly 21% felt that music programs (i.e., good old time and dancing music) should be seen on radio; and 11% selected religious programs. Nine percent would be delighted to see news and public affairs while only 4% would prefer interview-discussion and educational programs.

In sum, the seniors felt that the broadcast media should present musical, news and public affairs, and educational programs in that order. This finding confirms the aforementioned claim that both radio and television should perform both information and entertainment functions. Generally speaking, the residing place had a significant relationship with the type of ideal program on television and radio, $\chi^2 (38) = 79.93, p < .01$, $\chi^2 (34) = 63.28, p < .01$, respectively. Namely, the older people living in state-supported institutions seemed to feel stronger about religious programs while their peers tended to display a propensity for news and public affairs.

Statistical Analysis

Age, marital status, income, volunteer engagement, and rural/urban background had no significant relationship with the elderly's consumption of television. However, gender, education, and employment had a significant relationship with this practice. To illustrate, women tended to watch more television than men, $\chi^2 (3) = 13.05, p < .01$. Better educated seniors spent a little less time on television than their poorly educated peers, $\chi^2 (15) = 25.50, p < .05$. Not surprisingly, employed seniors usually watched less television than their unemployed peers, $\chi^2 (3) = 10.27, p < .05$.

Surprisingly, all demographic variables marked no discrepancy with radio consumption. The only speculated cause attributable to this phenomenon is that the seniors polled had a lack of response to radio.

Employment, income, frequency of volunteer engagement, and urban/rural background had no significant relationship with the elderly's preferred program on television. Conversely, gender, age, marital status, educational level, living arrangement, and volunteer engagement had a significant relationship with the seniors' viewing preferences. To state in more details, men preferred sports and news and public affairs while women displayed a propensity for quiz/game shows, day-time dramas, and religious programs, $\chi^2(15) = 45.75$, $p < .01$. The seniors who lived alone favored religious programs stronger than their peers who lived with their spouses, relatives, or friends, $\chi^2(60) = 86.15$, $p < .05$. Although age, marital status, and volunteer engagement had a significant relationship with the elderly's preferences on television, it was difficult to detect differentiated characteristics.

Only gender, age, and income had a significantly dependent relationship with television programs that the elderly watched regularly; the remaining demographic variables did not have a significant relationship with this practice at all. Again, men watched sports more often, however, women viewed day-time and night-time dramas and religious programs more regularly, $\chi^2(16) = 31.70$, $p < .05$. Although age and income had a significantly dependent relationship with television programs that the elderly watched regularly, their detailed relationships were not easily determined.

Age, marital status, education, employment, and volunteer engagement had a significantly dependent relationship with television programs that the seniors polled disliked; the rest of demographic variables seemed to have no significant relationship with this practice. To illustrate, better educated seniors tended to dislike frightening/violent and obscene programs stronger than their poorly educated peers, $\chi^2(80) = 103.38$, $p < .05$. Overall, age, marital status, employment, and volunteer engagement had a significantly dependent relationship with the types of programs that the older people polled disfavored, however, no apparent direction was easily arrived.

All demographic variables seemed to have no significant relationship with the kinds of information television could provide that could help the elderly except living arrangement and income, $\chi^2(60) = 91.64$, $p < .01$, $\chi^2(75) = 100.23$, $p < .05$, respectively. It is not surprising to claim that the aged who were in a good financial shape were more concerned with traveling information. In contrast, their peers with a lower income placed more emphasis on medical/health care, retirement benefit, and religious information. In fact, almost no seniors who had a higher income felt that religious information could help them.

Only age factor showed a significant relationship with the kinds of information

The Commercial Broadcasting and American Elderly

that radio could provide to help the seniors questioned; the remaining demographic variables had no significant relationship with this practice. Advancing year showed an increasing need of news and public affairs and religious information, $\chi^2 (60) = 79.89$, $p < .05$. On the contrary, the young old seemed to be more concerned with traveling information.

The ideal television program that the elderly interviewed would like to put on the air seemed to have a significant relationship with gender and education. Men would like to see more news and public affairs, health, and sport programs while women would be more delighted to have musical variety shows, $\chi^2 (19) = 50.51$, $p < .01$. On the other hand, better educated seniors would prefer more news and public affairs; however, their poorly educated peers were more inclined to have religious programs, $\chi^2 (95) = 122.80$, $p < .05$.

The ideal radio program that the seniors would like to see on the air seemed to have a significant relationship with gender, marital status, education, and income. Once again, men would be more concerned with sports and news and public affairs while women would be more contented with musical variety shows, $\chi^2 (17) = 37.64$, $p < .01$. Less educated seniors would like to see more religious programs, however, their better educated peers would be more satisfied with news and public affairs, travelogues, consumer, and financial/economic programs, $\chi^2 (85) = 111.24$, $p < .05$. The seniors with a lower income would be more attracted by musical variety and religious shows; whereas their counterparts with a higher income would extract a greater enjoyment from consumer, financial/economic, and services for the elderly programs, $\chi^2 (75) = 119.50$, $p < .01$. Finally, marital status showed a significant relationship with this practice, but, no apparent direction was easily detected.

In sum, men displayed a propensity for sports and news and public affairs whereas women would like to see more variety and day-time dramas. Better educated seniors with a higher income tended to prefer the types of programs — that is, news and public affairs, travelogues, etc. — that perform information function. On the contrary, their less educated peers with a lower income were inclined to prefer the kinds of programs — i.e., musical variety, religious, etc. — that carry entertaining and spiritual gratification.

CONCLUSIONS

What are television viewing and radio listening habits of the elderly in America today? Although a minority of the sample had a lack of response to radio,

our findings substantiate the claim that the elderly relied on the commercial broadcast media extensively to deal with American society and the world. A great majority of the seniors questioned concurred that they turned on television for specific programs; whereas a sizeable portion of the older people polled agreed that they listened to radio more for background accompaniment. While evening (7:00 p.m. — 10:59 p.m.) was chosen as the most popular time segment for the elderly to consume television, similar to that of general populace, early morning (6:00 a.m. — 8:59 a.m.) was selected mostly for them to listen to radio.

Overall, the seniors polled seemed to accept the available television fare; the majority derived at least moderate enjoyment from all program types except poorly written day-time dramas and detective shows. Other than news and public affairs, quiz/game shows, musical variety, and situation comedies were favored and considered as most often watched programs. Violent and obscene shows were disapproved by a plurality of the elderly whom we interviewed.

On the contrary, the seniors professed the greatest pleasure from music and news and public affairs. on radio. While still a sizeable majority of the sample derived at least moderate enjoyment from religious, sport, and interview-discussion shows, phone-in talk shows were deemed the least enjoyable programs. These results were comparable to the ERGIC's findings (1974).

What are the information needs and interests of the aged in the U. S. and to what degree do commercial broadcast media meet these interests and needs? A stalwart of the sample, at first, singled out the information of health and medicine as extremely important. The information of traveling and consumer affairs were also considered slightly relevant to aging. Furthermore, they indicated that information offered over radio and television about health, pension/government programs, services/activities for the elderly, and education for retirement has been inadequate. Finally, television medium was considered the best medium to perform educational, informational, and entertaining functions so that the elderly preferred watching television to other kinds of media-related activities.

How could commercial television and radio be of even greater service to the older Americans? Although a slightly higher percentage of the sample emphasized informational direction of the broadcaster media, nevertheless, a great majority still placed more emphasis on the media's combined performance of information and entertainment services. This claim was reaffirmed by the ideal pattern of television and radio programming; namely, a great number of the seniors polled would prefer musical variety, news & public affairs, religious, and educational-shows on the air. The seniors were discontented with the adequacy of the practical and

The Commercial Broadcasting and American Elderly

personally relevant information, but not so many a seniors expressed that health program should be seen on the broadcast media. Finally, in the elderly's opinion, television and radio could provide more news and public affairs and medical/health care information that could benefit them greatly.

Theoretical Implications

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between the elderly and the commercial broadcast media in America, hopefully providing tentative hypotheses for future related research. Although the fragmentary nature of the data from previous studies limits rigorous hypothesis testing, the foregoing empirical study and literature review do suggest some promising leads for future exploration.

H₁: The elderly will spend more time watching television than listening to radio.

As the aging are losing eyesight and reading becomes difficult, they turn to the broadcast media for communication means. Furthermore, television is a two-sense medium, thus, it usually dominates the aging's leisure time. As a result, this statement is, of course, borne out by common experience, as well as the testimony of the data in previous studies (Schalinske, 1968; Environics Research Group Limited of Canada, 1974; Danowski, 1975) and the present research.

H₂: The elderly will prefer news and public affairs broadcast program to other kinds of programs.

News and public affairs program not only provides information for the elderly but also serves a social link to the world. This statement is derived from previous studies (Hopf and Bedwell, 1969; Davis, 1971; Environics Research Group Limited of Canada, 1974; Davis et al., 1976) and the present research (see Table 5 and Table 6).

H₃: The elderly will prefer old time classic and light music to other kinds of music.

Although the senior citizens are interested in relating to the young, they still seek a quiet environment to live in. This statement is derived from common experience as well as the testimony of the data of the present study (see Table 7).

H₄: The elderly will consider health care/medical information more important than other kinds of information.

When physical condition deteriorates, it is inevitable for the older persons to pay more attention to the personally related information. This statement is, of course, borne out by common experience as well as the evidence of the data in the present study (see Table 9).

H₅: Television watching will be the most important media-related activity for the elderly.

Again, this statement is derived from common experience as the evidence of the data in the present research (see Table 10).

In order to test these tentative hypotheses mentioned above, at least three research areas merit attention.

1. Additional support for the relationship between the elderly and the broadcast media is needed: To generalize the results of this study to a larger sample, replication of the survey with a representative random sample in different locales would be desirable.

2. Cross-cultural exploration of the relationship between the broadcast media and the elderly is strongly urged: Different cultures cultivate different media habits and interests for the elderly. To derive theories on aging and mass communication, replication of the study in different countries would be necessary.

3. More elderly subjects should be drawn from private homes: In the survey, only 56 subjects living in their houses were interviewed. The young old are either approaching retirement or just retired and enjoy their independent living styles. In other words, these young old residing in their homes are probably in the process of transition. Although they may not be the decision-makers in society, they are actively interested in the surrounding environment and willing to face the reality of retirement simultaneously. The young old also basically possess some economic power and they are probably the potential target of advertisers. In order to picture the elderly population more accurately in America, more non-institutioned elderly should be interviewed.

Pragmatic Implications

Given the respondents' feeling that the most acute problems besetting them were physical and mental inactivity, economic insufficiency, loneliness, and boredom, the broadcast media should pay more attention to the seniors' programming needs in addition to the current programmings. While television was clearly thought best equipped to fill their wants, radio was at least deemed a palatable alternative for fulfillment of the elderly's desires.

That the media needs of the elderly are not in all cases being met, and that a great number of potential viewing seniors will be reached in the non prime-time afternoon hours (12:00 p.m. — 4:59 p.m.) encourage television operators to air worthwhile and effective community programming. To illustrate, because a sizeable of the sample disliked poorly-written day-time dramas, commercial television

The Commercial Broadcasting and American Elderly

stations should cut down the amount of soap operas and present retirement for education, or indoor hobbies and crafts programs instead.

That the general audience lacks an intensive interaction with radio, and that radio can reach the greatest number of the older people in early morning hours (6:00 a.m. — 8:59 a.m.) provide a chance for radio operators to attract more audience if they air significant programming for the seniors. In other words, radio stations should present in early morning the programs that deal with retirement, pension, and health care. Thus, more elderly will be attracted and radio stations will be more community-oriented.

In conclusion, the broadcast media should transform into a vital instrument capable of meeting the broader programming or information needs of the aged with not only on an obligation but also on a commercial point of view. Surely, still a great many of the elderly are rich enough to buy the things that can please their lives.

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