

# research in brief

## **Older People and Public Affairs Knowledge**

Print media related positively to public affairs knowledge of older people in a Florida community, but television, radio, movies, and telephone use had little to do with it. Kent and Rush studied a cross section of older persons for research at the University of Florida. They interviewed them about the amnesty issue for Vietnam War resisters, as the public affairs subject.

Kent and Rush found education level was related to the use of print media which in turn related to public affairs knowledge. They said no communication variable could substitute for or replace the influence of education on public affairs knowledge.

While their study didn't provide much insight into communication problems not already known about the general population, it did show that there's "not all that much difference in older persons from the rest."

The authors ask: "What about those people who aren't avid readers of newspapers, news magazines, or books, and who don't attend meetings where important information can be circulated? How do these persons—mostly undereducated, mostly lower income, mostly black—cope with the complexities of the aging process? Not very well, one might suspect."

Then Kent and Rush add: "The lifetime of learning that these older people have experienced has still left some of them deficient in basic areas such as literacy. They don't have another lifetime to learn such skills."

"How Communication Behavior of Older Persons Affects Their Public Affairs Knowledge." K. E. Kent and Ramona R. Rush. *Journalism Quarterly*, LIII (Spring, 1976), 40-46.

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