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Book Review

K. Warner Schaie, M. Pietrucha, editors, 2000. *Mobility and Transportation in the Elderly*. New York: Springer. ISBN 0826 113095, about Euro 50.00

The contents of the Schaie and Pietrucha book provide a broader context for this special issue of *Gerontechnology* dealing with 'Driving in Old Age: Use of Technology to Promote Independence.' The book addresses the whole scope of mobility issues confronting older adults today, from considerations

of the role of sensory, cognitive, and body-related functions, proceeding with the potential, limits, and risks of different means of mass transportation for older adults, and closing with a glance at intelligent technology systems. Although the issues are framed much more broadly, the driving behaviour of older people is featured predominantly throughout the whole book. The book itself emerged from a conference of the prestigious 'Social Structure Conference Series' held annually at Pennsylvania State University since the end of the 1980s under the leadership of K.W. Schaie. Among the characteristics of this conference series, also to be seen in the present book, is the profound analysis of a rather small set of core issues for the theme selected for discussion (mobility in the elderly, in the present case) and the invitation of extensive commentaries aimed to frame these analyses within a diversity of additional theoretical and empirical perspectives. Another major feature of this series is the multidisciplinary approach, echoed in the present volume through the inclusion of scholars and professionals from psychology, geriatrics, engineering, human factors research, and other fields of transport research.

In terms of basic preconditions for mobility in the later years, the first main chapter written by James L. Fozard provides a very focused analysis of age-related sensory and cognitive changes. Fozard builds his review of major empirical findings around a triangle of geropsychology research findings, namely that with age, the speed of behaviour is slowing, that the interdependence between sensation and cognition becomes closer, and that skilled performance requires more sensory information from the environment. Two commentaries add in terms of depth of analysis, namely D. Alfred Owens with his discussion of ambient vision, as well as application, and Loren Staplin with his effort of extending on Fozard's person-environment model for improving everyday driving behaviour of elder people. William J. Evans offers additional substance to the better understanding of

the basics of mobility in the elderly in terms of bodily functions in the second main chapter. As is persuasively argued by Evans, a range of processes operating on the level of muscles, body mass, protein synthesis, and cell metabolism requires complex orchestration in order to maintain mobility in old age. However, the impact of training, even in very old age and with the frail elderly, is substantial and sustainable. This conclusion is further supported by the comments of Richard A. Marottoli on this topic, and has implications for a variety of mobility issues such as pedestrian safety and sustaining the 'IADL' of using public transportation.

The third main chapter, written by Jon E. Burkhardt, highlights the challenges of different transportation systems for the significant growth of the population of older individuals, which sometimes, one has the impression, is still not adequately acknowledged by societal and community agencies. Among the many strengths of this chapter is the clear elaboration of dilemmas existing for the ageing individual as well as society, such as the dilemma between safety, risk constellations, and the right to stay mobile as long as possible. Negotiating these dilemmas is a major task for families (as emphasised in the comments of Harvey L. and Ronni Sterns) and time-dependent, because future developments, as seen in forerunners such as the Independent Transportation Network (ITN), may lead to new mobility options for tomorrow's elderly.

Although touched in many sections of the book, the analysis of vehicle crashes among older adults receives primary consideration in the fourth main chapter by Thomas Byer. The chapter is structured around this issue with respect to questions of Who, What, Where, When, and Why, and supports the notion that elders are a vulnerable population in the individual traffic system as both passive (e.g., as pedestrians) and active (e.g., higher accident rate per mile than most other age groups) participants. Frank Schieber's commentary of this chapter underlines once again the complex

role of visual functioning in the accident dynamics of older individuals.

Further in-depth elaboration on the role of the visual system and driving behaviour in old age comes from an outstanding research program described by Karlene Ball and Cynthia Owsley in the fifth main chapter of the book. In particular, convergent empirical evidence is presented by these scholars on the critical role of the 'Useful Field of View' (UFOV), which adds unique variance to the explanation of older persons' crash involvement. The UFOV concept has also stimulated training efforts and the initial results look very promising. Commentaries encourage and differentiate this good news by pointing to frequently found discrepancies between perceived and real driving-related competencies in ageing individuals (Allen R. Dobbs) as well as the call to look at driving from a multi-faceted person X environment fit perspective (Sherry L. Willis).

Finally, the sixth main chapter, written by Richard J. Hanowski and Thomas A. Dingus, addresses the future of driving as already seen in today's latest technology. Most importantly, these authors demonstrate empirically that new systems such as In-vehicle Routing and Navigation Systems (IRANS) are not only a new toy provided by modern auto industry, but can really support and enhance the driving behaviour of elders. This benefit is, however, not universally positive for all technology systems, and design and presumed capabilities can become so complex that the 'double-edged sword' character (as Hanowski and Dingus put it) of these systems will be inevitably negative for elders. Thomas F. Swigart expands on this concept in his comments on the Hanowski and Dingus overview, and points to the potential benefit for older drivers inherent in technology systems (see Table 6.1 on page 308). Finally, Paul P. Jovanis calls for a holistic perspective of ageing, in order to identify those conditions which turn the 'double-edged sword' of new car technologies into a tool aimed to

counteract, as much as possible, any age-related declines with relevance for driving.

In conclusion, my synopsis of this book should have clearly demonstrated that it is very valuable, capitalizing on the expertise and discussions of an impressive list of excellent contributors. The book presents a multidisciplinary, differentiated, and critical synthesis of a wide range of the latest scientific findings on mobility in old age, and undoubtedly provides a most important contribution to the field. In addition, all chapters and comments are written such that they are also useful for readers from applied areas. Obviously, the book's substance is based on mobility from the vantage point of American culture, and it would be an interesting task to systematically contrast this culture, for instance, with European and Asiatic cultural issues related to autonomy and mobility. Some of this analysis may be accomplished by comparing the contributions included in this special issue of Gerontechnology with the insights and messages reported in this highly recommendable volume.

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NEWS IN SHORT

USA - Gerontechnology 2002, November 9-12

Brief Program Summary for Gerontechnology 2002 is available at <http://www.psy.fsu.edu/~isg/schedule.htm>. It features invited speakers from across the globe, invited symposia, and both paper and poster presentations. The official language of the conference is English. From 8:00 H to 18:00 H the delegates may exchange ideas and discuss opinions during the formal sessions in the Wyndham Miami Beach Hotel Convention Rooms in Miami Beach, Florida, USA. Fine weather and a beautiful environment provide the opportunity for infor-

mal gatherings in addition. An official banquet has been scheduled also. Registration costs for the whole 4-day congress is US\$495. However, students and seniors pay only US\$150. Web registration is possible at, and alternatively a form may be downloaded to be completed and faxed, see <http://www.psy.fsu.edu/~isg/conference.htm>. Lets meet in Miami Beach!

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Japan - AIST Research Forum on Gerontechnology

To follow-up the International Workshop on Gerontechnology held on March, 2001 in Tsukuba, Japan¹, a research forum entitled 'Towards new development and expectation in Gerontechnology' was held on 4th December, 2001 in Tokyo. The forum was organized by Institute for Human Science and Biomedical Engineering of AIST in Japan (the former National Institute of Bioscience and Human-Technology, NIBH) as a part of their new activity of the reorganized AIST (National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology), and was attended by about 100 people.

Scope. The aim of the forum was to discuss the applied aspects of Gerontechnology paying special attention to some actual situations such as transportation, work environment, housing, daily life, industrial products, and so forth, which were missing in the discussion from the former International workshop. The forum started with a keynote lecture by the AIST senior researcher, Yasuo Kuchinomachi. Subsequently two sessions took place. The first one concerned research presentations of ongoing projects related to Gerontechnology in Human Science and Biomedical Engineering in AIST (6 papers). The second consisted of a symposium on applied aspects of Gerontechnology where a total of 8 speakers from various fields, such as government, universities, research institutions, companies (housing, automobile, construction, electric appliances) were invited to