



ENVIRONMENTS OF AGEING

EXPLORING HOW OLDER PEOPLE CONTEMPLATE AND EXPERIENCE GIVING-UP DRIVING

Dr Charles Musselwhite and Ian Shergold (CTS, UWE)

October 2010-March 2011

University of the West of England Starter Grant

Briefing Sheet: May 2013

Background

The importance of mobility has been highlighted for all segments of life and society and has been linked to satisfaction and quality of life (Schlag, Schwenkhagen and Trankle, 1996). Hence, it is no surprise that reduced mobility and independence, particularly through giving-up of the car, has been shown to be strongly correlated with an increase in depression and loneliness (Fonda, Wallace & Herzog, 2001; Ling and Mannion, 1995). Previous research by Musselwhite and Haddad, (2010) identified motivation for travel amongst older people can be said to inhabit three main categories: practical (primary) needs, psychosocial (secondary) needs and aesthetic (tertiary) needs. Musselwhite and Haddad (2010) suggest that older people who had given-up driving tend to find that, on the whole, their practical needs are met, but other needs are not. Hence, the association between giving-up driving and a decline in mental health is linked to the loss of affective or emotive needs not being met.

Aims and Objectives

This study aimed to reveal the process of giving-up driving, examining in particular triggers for giving-up driving, how information on alternative modes of transport is sought and how new transport and travel behaviour is integrated into older people's lives. It examines the challenges faced and how these are overcome and what impact the process has on self-reported quality of life, as articulated by the participants themselves. cohort.

Methodology

Twenty-one individuals from three locations in the United Kingdom (UK) were followed over a period of 10 months, through five waves of data collection. Each participant took part in three interviews, a focus group and completed a diary of travel behaviour.



Findings

Findings suggest that although a similar pattern was found between the trigger and life post-car, not all older people go through the stages of giving-up driving in the same way. Instead, a range of responses are seen, from contemplation of gradually reducing driving, through to stopping abruptly, with the route taken having consequences for the eventual outcome for any individual. Triggers for contemplating driving cessation could be varied and often involved health and social factors. Importantly, people who engaged in pre-planning reported a relatively





ENVIRONMENTS OF AGEING

higher quality of life beyond the car, whilst for those who were more reactive and engaged in little or no pre-planning a poorer quality of life resulted. In addition (and in conjunction with planning), other factors, such as flexibility in travel destinations, the role of family and friends, and wider support networks are also seen as important.

Implications

With such evidence of the importance of pre-planning it is suggested that more could be done to support giving-up driving and encouraging contemplation at a younger age to mitigate the negative effects experienced by some.



References

Fonda SJ, Wallace RB, Herzog AR (2001) Changes in driving patterns and worsening depressive symptoms among older adults. *J Gerontol* **56B(6)**:S343–S351

Ling DJ, Mannion R (1995) Enhanced mobility and quality of life of older people: assessment of economic and social benefits of dial-a-ride services. In: *Proceedings of the seventh international conference on transport and mobility for older and disabled people*, vol 1, DETR

Musselwhite C, Haddad H (2010b) [Mobility, accessibility and quality of later life](#). *Qual Ageing Older Adults* **11(1)**:25–37

Outputs

Musselwhite, C.B.A. and Shergold, I. (2013). [Examining the process of driving cessation in later life](#). *European Journal of Ageing*. **10(2)**, 89-100.

Musselwhite, C.B.A., Edge, S., Shergold, S. and Parkhurst, G. (2012). [The role of mobility in maintaining independence, health and wellbeing in later life](#) Symposium at the British Gerontology Society Conference, Keele University, 12th July.

Musselwhite, C.B.A. (2011). [We Need to Talk - the role of family, friends and social networks](#). Invited presentation at Parliamentary Advisory Committee on Transport Safety (PACTS) Conference Older, Wiser, Safer: the Challenge of an Ageing Population. October 13th, Royal Society of Medicine, London. Research Projects

Contact Details

Dr Charles Musselwhite
Associate Professor in Gerontology
Centre for Innovative Ageing
School of Human and Health Sciences
Rm 309, Vivian Building
Swansea University
Singleton Park
Swansea
SA2 8PP

Tel: +44 (0)1792 518696

Web: www.drcharliemuss.com

Twitter: @charliemuss

