Activities, Adaptation & Aging

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/waaa20

The Handbook of Aging and Cognition by F. I. M. Craik and T. A. Salthouse, eds

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Published online: 17 Dec 2009.

To cite this article: Mario Garrett PhD (2009) The Handbook of Aging and Cognition by F. I. M. Craik and T. A. Salthouse, eds, Activities, Adaptation & Aging, 33:4, 267-268, DOI: 10.1080/01924780903295796

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01924780903295796

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Book Review


The purpose of The Handbook of Aging and Cognition is to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the current state of research in areas as diverse as the new field of functional neuroimaging to the more traditional interest in language processing. The book succeeds in attaining its purpose.

The 11 chapters that segment the book each provide a road map of recent advances in distinct approaches to studying cognition in older adult populations. Now in its third edition, this handbook has continued to stay up-to-date and relevant by addressing emerging interests in the field of cognition, and then, by inviting contributions from authors who are at the forefront of such research. The overall impression is that the chapters converge new data being generated by emerging technology. Because all the chapters refer to the new research coming out of the technique of functional neuroimaging, there is a sense of newness to this very traditional field of study.

The primary utility of this publication is that it provides a succinct and recent literature review of each of the 11 areas of interest. But the secondary overall benefit is that it gives the reader an impression of the general direction of research in cognition, which is important because we are approaching new social realities that require better interdisciplinary collaboration. With the certain increase in the number of people with dementia, driven by the demographics of an aging population, there is a convergence among scientists/researchers, policy makers, and academics to explore the plasticity of the brain and to start defining potential sources of brain reserve that we can unleash against these emerging scenarios of cognitive debilitation.

This handbook provides a concise and wide-ranging baseline of where we are in terms of research and technical advances in the study of cognition. In the latest of this edition, seven chapters are devoted to neuroimaging primarily because of recent advances in techniques and procedures that are generating exciting new data. It would have been interesting to have seen more functional neuroimaging and its implication in diagnosing and recording deficits in dementia.

The audiences that will benefit from this handbook are both undergraduate students, who need an overview of a specific topic in the field of
cognition, to graduate students, who require a succinct overview of related but peripheral topics to their primary interest.

*The Handbook of Aging and Cognition* is meant to be read as a reference, with each segmented chapter standing on its own merits. However, the overall impression is that we are still searching for unifying theories. In the interim, condensing and framing the avalanche of new data that is coming out of the research field of cognition and aging will help emerging researchers better position themselves in this exciting field of study.

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