



New Directions in the Sociology of Aging

and the Sociology of Aging Panel on New Directions in Social Demography Social Epidemiology, Robert Pool

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The aging of the population of the United States is occurring at a time of major economic and social changes. These economic changes include consideration of increases in the age of eligibility for Social Security and Medicare and possible changes in benefit levels. Furthermore, changes in the social context in which older individuals and families function may well affect the nature of key social relationships and institutions that define the environment for older persons. Sociology offers a knowledge base, a number of useful analytic approaches and tools, and unique theoretical perspectives that can facilitate understanding of these demographic, economic, and social changes and, to the extent possible, their causes, consequences and implications.

New Directions in the Sociology of Aging evaluates the recent contributions of social demography, social epidemiology and sociology to the study of aging and identifies promising new research directions in these sub-fields. Included in this study are nine papers prepared by experts in sociology, demography, social genomics, public health, and other fields, that highlight the broad array of tools and perspectives that can provide the basis for further advancing the understanding of aging processes in ways that can inform policy. This report discusses the role of sociology in what is a wide-ranging and diverse field of study; a proposed three-dimensional conceptual model for studying social processes in aging over the life cycle; a review of existing databases, data needs and opportunities, primarily in the area of measurement of interhousehold and intergenerational transmission of resources, biomarkers and biosocial interactions; and a summary of roadblocks and bridges to transdisciplinary research that will affect the future directions of the field of sociology of aging.



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