

Handbook of AGING AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Editors:

Robert H. Binstock
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Handbook of
**AGING
AND THE
SOCIAL
SCIENCES**

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FOREWORD

This volume is one of three handbooks of aging: the *Handbook of the Biology of Aging*; the *Handbook of the Psychology of Aging*; and the *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences*. Because of the increase in literature about the many facets of aging, there has been an increasing need to collate and interpret existing information and to make it readily available in systematic form, providing groundwork for the more efficient pursuit of research. The phenomena and issues of aging cut across many scientific disciplines and professions, and a review of research necessarily involves many experts. A decision was made, therefore, to develop a multidisciplinary project, the purpose of which was to organize, evaluate, and interpret research data, concepts, theories, and issues on the biological, psychological, and social aspects of aging.

It is expected that investigators will use these books as the basic systematic reference works on aging, resulting in the stimulation and planning of needed research. Professional personnel, policy-makers, practitioners, and others interested in research, education, and services to the aged will undoubtedly find the volumes useful. The new handbooks will also provide a compendium of information for students entering and pursuing the field of gerontology and will, we hope, also stimulate the organization of new courses of instruction on aging.

The Editorial Committees generated the final outline of each volume, suggested contributors, and discussed sources of information and other matters pertinent to the development of the work. Committee recommendations were re-

viewed by the Advisory Board and the Editor-in-Chief.

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There are many individuals who contributed to the successful completion of this publication project: Phoebe S. Liebig, Project Coordinator; Julie L. Moore, Research Bibliographer; Project Assistants Barbara H. Johnson, Aelred R. Rosser, Rochelle Smalewitz, and Robert D. Nall; Editorial Assistant V. Jayne Renner; Copy Editors Robert D. Nall and Judy Aklonis (social sciences), James Gollub (psychology), and Peggy Wilson and Carolyn Croissant (biology); Julie L. Moore, Indexing; and Library Assistance, Emily H. Miller and Jean E. Mueller. It is impossible to give the details of their many and varied contributions to the total effort,

but they reflect the best traditions of respect for scholarship.

The preparation of the handbooks has been a nonprofit venture; no royalties are paid to any individual or institution. The intent was to give the books a wide circulation on an international level and to reduce publication costs.

The project was supported by a grant from the Administration on Aging under the title "Integration of Information on Aging: Handbook Project," Grant Number 93-P-75181/9, to the University of Southern California, with James E. Birren as the principal investigator. The Editor and his associates wish to thank Dr. Marvin Taves, who encouraged the development of the project as a staff member of the Administration on Aging, and also the agency itself, which perceived the value of such work and provided the grant for its support.

JAMES E. BIRREN

PREFACE

The purposes of the *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences* are to provide comprehensive information and major reference sources, and to suggest contemporary research issues on the phenomena of aging. To achieve these purposes the social aspects of aging are viewed through the perspectives of the social sciences, broadly conceived.

This *Handbook* is intended for use by researchers, professional practitioners, and students in the field of aging. It is also expected that the book can serve as a basic reference tool for scholars and professionals who are not presently engaged in research and practice directly focused on aging and the aged. Accordingly, the volume has been designed as a compendium of what is now known about the social aspects of aging and of suggested central issues for further research.

The present *Handbook* represents a somewhat different approach to the organization of knowledge about aging than that used by Clark Tibbitts in his pioneering effort in editing the *Handbook of Social Gerontology* published in 1960. The Editors of this volume believe that knowledge about the social aspects of aging can be best understood and developed within the framework of the social science disciplines. Each discipline approaches the study of aging and the aged in terms of its own constructs and subject matter, contributing its unique strengths to an understanding of the topic. This multidisciplinary focus, we believe, substantially enriches the intellectual resources available for understanding the social dimensions of aging.

The *Handbook* is organized into five sections.

The first section, *The Social Aspects of Aging*, considers the origins and scope of interest in aging as a social phenomenon, some of the presuppositions that underlie the study of age-related changes, and the life span context in which aging takes place. A second section, *Aging and Social Structure*, deals with changes in the age structure of populations, with the role and status of the aged in various societies, and with contemporary intergenerational relations. In the third section, *Aging and Social Systems*, the contributors discuss differences among age strata in a variety of social systems, and how aging persons affect and are in turn affected by family life, housing and institutional arrangements, the economy, patterns of work, retirement and leisure, the law, and political systems. Under a fourth general heading, *Aging and Interpersonal Behavior*, the authors consider social networks, role changes through the life span, and death and dying. Finally, a section on *Aging and Social Intervention* treats the political and strategic issues involved in contemporary and future societal efforts to provide and deploy income, health and social services, and other social resources to the aging.

The topics treated in the 25 chapters of this volume have been sifted through the analytical screening of the best available experts in the various disciplines. These contributors successfully met a number of difficult challenges. Whenever possible, the authors brought to bear knowledge and points of view available from outside the United States. They provided historical perspectives on their topics, and they constructed their presentations so as to ensure that the usefulness of the volume would not be

limited by specific time referents. Most impressively, they were able to present their knowledge and viewpoints succinctly and to relate their treatments to those of their fellow authors.

In developing the subject matter for this volume and in the selection of contributors, the Editors were assisted by James E. Birren, Editor for the *Handbook* project, and by an Editorial Committee of three Associate Editors: Vern L. Bengtson, George L. Maddox, and Dorothy Wedderburn. The Associate Editors also helped substantially in the process of editorial review. The first draft of each chapter was read and critically reviewed by at least one Associate Editor and one Editor. Comments

and suggestions from these readings were organized and forwarded to the authors for their consideration in undertaking revised drafts.

If this volume has any special merit it is due to the seriousness with which the chapter authors accepted their assignments and to the good will with which they responded to editorial criticism and suggestions. To these colleagues, the Editors and Associate Editors would like to acknowledge their special appreciation.

ROBERT H. BINSTOCK
ETHEL SHANAS

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PART 1 THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF AGING

