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978-0-521-82626-6 - Demography in the Age of the Postmodern

Nancy E. Riley and James McCarthy

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## Demography in the Age of the Postmodern

Demography has developed into a remarkably coherent field and now stands as a firmly established discipline with strong ties to policy-making agencies. However, in recent years there has been increasing recognition within demography of the limits of existing theories and methods, particularly the absence of a strong critical tradition and its isolation from recent theoretical developments in other social sciences. In this study, Nancy Riley and James McCarthy use the lens of postmodernism to structure a critical analysis of the field of demography. Paying particular attention to the fundamental epistemologies and methodologies that currently underlie the field, they explore how postmodern perspectives might serve to energize the field and how demography could be enhanced by the introduction of insights from other social sciences. Drawing on examples of new kinds of research in demography and related fields, this is an important new book that seeks to reinvigorate the field of demography.

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*New Perspectives on Anthropological and Social Demography*

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Demography deals with issues of great social importance, and demographic research fuels some of the central current policy debates of our time. Yet, demographic theory has not changed much over the years, and old and sometimes inappropriate models are still being applied to new problems. Increasingly, however, demographers have become aware of the limitations of standard surveys and statistics, and are moving to incorporate theoretical and methodological approaches from other disciplines, in particular anthropology. For their part, anthropologists have generally failed to take account of the advances in modern demography, but they are now beginning to take part in the central debates on questions of theory and policy in population research. A new wave of interdisciplinary research is emerging, combining the interests and approaches of demographers, anthropologists, and other social scientists. Some of the most interesting products of this new wave will be published in **New Perspectives on Anthropological and Social Demography**.

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*and*

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If your eyes are not deceived by the mirage  
Do not be proud of the sharpness of your understanding;  
It may be your freedom from this optical illusion  
Is due to the imperfectness of your thirst.

Sohrawardi, in Galway Kinnell, *Imperfect Thirst*

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