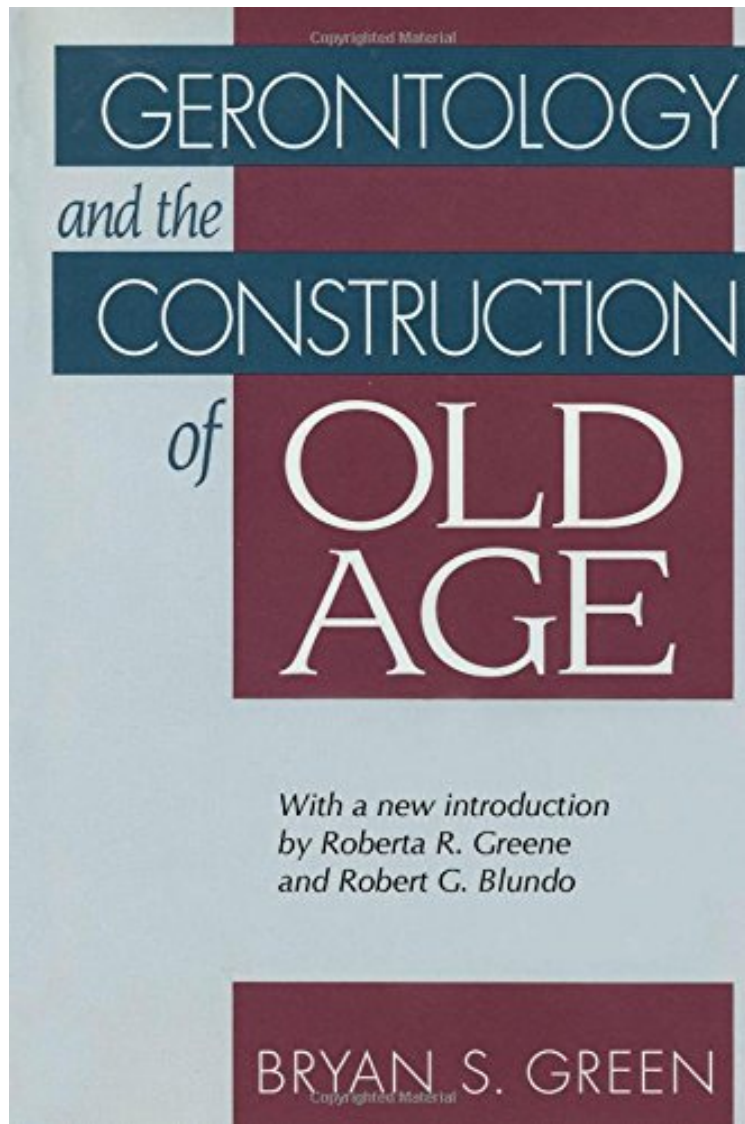


[FREE] Gerontology and the Construction of Old Age

Gerontology and the Construction of Old Age

Bryan Green

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Although attitudes toward the aged and their care are inherent in any society, gerontology itself is a relatively recent field of study and practice. Gerontology and the Construction of Old Age applies the methods of discourse analysis and textual analysis to texts and documents in this newly evolved and eclectic fi eld. Green explores and identifies the

literary methods and discursive regularities through which aging and the aged have been made into objects of study and treatment, and which together form a mode of knowledge production that will influence future texts in the field. Because such formats of representation limit rational diagnoses of problems and rational courses of ameliorative action, policy implications in the field of gerontology are a major interest of this study. Another interest is methodological. Within the broader constructionist approach to social reality, Green takes the position of "constitutive realism": the notion that social reality is linguistically constructed, primarily in speech and writing. The book's two aims are to describe analytically the field of gerontology. The field is important both for its growing academic presence and for its practical effects on discourse and policy concerning old age. It also hopes to help develop possibilities of inquiry associated with the linguistic, literary, and rhetorical turns of social science in recent years. *Gerontology and the Construction of Old Age* is a substantive investigation, at considerable theoretical depth, of gerontology itself, as well as a methodological treatise with broader implications for social science as it focuses upon the discourse of various professional fields.

Passage of the Social Security Act of 1935 and subsequent expansions of it have shaped the lives of older Americans and their families for over half a century. Critical gerontologists built on this common-sense knowledge to show that Social Security represented more than just an insurance program for citizens. It also changed the matrix of economic, political and social relations in ways that represented a qualitative shift in the structure and meaning of old age. Green's analysis of discourse within gerontology is an important first step in the examination of our discipline.

Debra Street,
Contemporary Sociology

About the Author Bryan S. Green is professor emeritus of sociology at York University. He is the author of *Knowing the Poor: A Case-Study in Textual Reality Construction and Literary Methods and Sociological Theory*. His research interests include the application of textual and discourse analysis to gerontology and the literary construction of policy reports.

Roberta R. Greene was the Louis and Ann Wolens Centennial Chair in Gerontology and Social Welfare at the School of Social Work, University of Texas-Austin.