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Writing in Gerontology

This resource provides a brief introduction to writing in the field of **Social Gerontology** through the lens of threshold concepts. It includes:

1. An overview of what writing characteristics are valued in Gerontology
2. A brief discussion of Gerontology’s academic positioning
3. Examples of what is considered “good writing” in Gerontology

What does Gerontology value in writing?

Being a Gerontologist means more than just studying later life and applying methods to solve problems. It means having a “Gerontological voice.” That is, the field of Social Gerontology values applying knowledge and building theory using a social science lens.

Writers are seen as credible when they present a conceptual context that draws from multiple disciplinary areas and demonstrate methodological sophistication and rigor. Papers should represent a “dialogue.” The field’s citations practices embody these values, and you can see that in the breadth of sources used, with specific citations from Gerontology sources. Citations should be purposeful, strategic, and support the writer’s argument/claim and avoid overgeneralizations, oversimplifications, and unfounded opinions.

Effective writing in Social Gerontology does the following:

- presents logical, parsimonious argument with neutral language
- uses standard signposts and structure
- avoids absolutes
- demonstrates respectful authority

Gerontology majors should expect to do the following:

- read thoroughly and critically
- finish synthesizing their reading before claiming their research space
- seek feedback appropriately
- be prepared to change their stance based on the feedback they receive
- participate in authorship discussions to understand the work of conceptualization, coherence, and contextualization as well as methods and results
- practice, practice, practice (improve, integrate, evolve)

How is Gerontology positioned in relation to other disciplines?

While Social Gerontology has claimed its own disciplinary territory, it shares connections to various related disciplines, including those like Psychology, Sociology, Social Work, and more (see Figure 1). Additionally, Figure 2 illustrates how a number of researchers and theorists have been cited in Social Gerontology’s body of knowledge.

Figure 1: Social Gerontology and Fields with Which It Shares Connections.

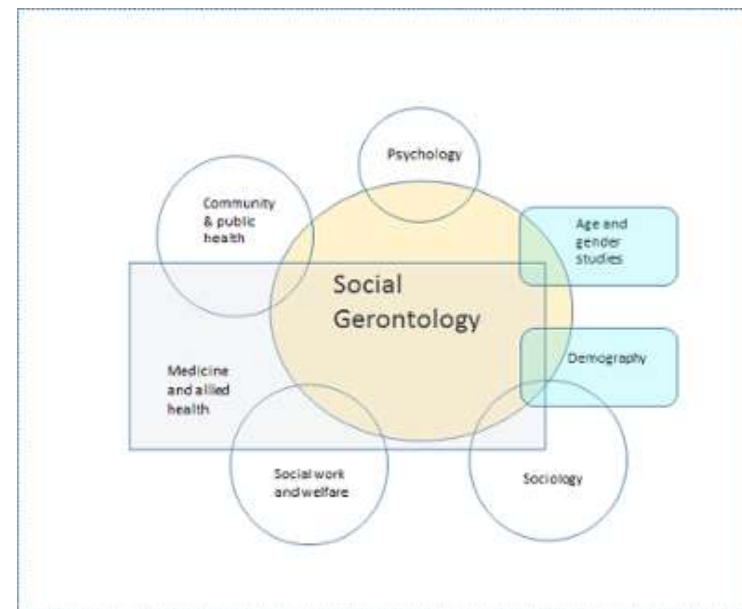


Image description: "Social Gerontology" appears in a beige circle in the middle of the figure: the names of other fields appear in shapes that surround and overlap with Social Gerontology. Starting at the top and moving clockwise are the following fields:

- psychology
- age and gender studies (also overlaps with medicine and allied health)
- demography (also overlaps with sociology and medicine and allied health)
- sociology (also overlaps with demography and medicine and allied health)
- social work and welfare (also overlaps with medicine and allied health)
- medicine and allied health (also overlaps with age and gender studies; demography; sociology; social work and welfare; and community and public health)
- community and public health (also overlaps with medicine and allied health)

Figure 2: Visualization of Influential Theorists/Researchers in the Field of Social Gerontology.



Image description: The names of influential theorists/researchers stacked on top of each other. The names are in different colors over a black background. The names from top to bottom are as follows: Lawton, Kent, Bengston, Dannefer, Ferraro, Rubinstein, Cole, Hudson, Elder, Baltes, Achenbaum, Ray, Holstein, Binstock, Settersten, Gubrium, Birren, Schaie, Hendricks, Carstensen, Havinghurst, and Neugarten.

How does all of this manifest in writing?

The accompanying article ([annotated-sample/index.html](#)) shows examples of conventions of writing in Gerontology in context, specifically:

- what constitutes “respectful authority” in Gerontological writing
- how signposting manifests in Gerontology
- the significance of using descriptive headers
- how most Gerontological work draws on diverse sources from relevant disciplines

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