

Features

New perspectives on old ideas:

Viewing the anthro-OS/OT nexus in aging studies as a landscape for conceptual innovation

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In our paper “Residential Care as a Therapeutic Landscape and the Role of Occupation,” we used data on older adult CCRC residents’ occupational engagement to expand the health geography concept of “therapeutic landscapes.” In addition to physical, cultural, and other dimensions already subsumed under the idea of therapeutic landscapes, we suggested that understanding patterns of occupational engagement may further illuminate the ways in which people’s relation to place is linked to health and well-being. Our paper not only represented a new interpretation of therapeutic landscapes as a concept, but it also demonstrated the utility of taking that concept across disciplinary boundaries for further application and expansion. The research agenda discussed in this special issue of *Anthropology and Aging Quarterly* highlights the necessity of such boundary crossing for the continued development of our disciplines and our scholarship.

The introduction to this issue underscores the importance of multi-/interdisciplinary research and scholarship for extramural funding, and it underlines extant relationships between various anthropology and occupational science/occupational therapy organizations. The events that culminated in this special issue established clear support for anthro-OS/OT collaborations, both within and outside the field of aging studies. The benefits of continued collaboration—which this special issue will surely stimulate—include the opportunity to disseminate, dissect, and develop ideas that each contributing discipline brings to the table. Our paper provides an example of that opportunity by introducing a discipline-specific concept (therapeutic landscapes) to a new interdisciplinary topic (older adults’ residential transition) and augmenting it with another discipline-specific perspective (occupational engagement).

The opportunity to carry concepts across disciplinary lines is beneficial for many reasons. Not only does it provide a form of ‘advertising’ whereby disciplines are exposed to similar theoretical strains used by collaborators, but it also offers a venue for fine-tuning concepts and strengthening their application to theoretical and practical issues. If the way of the future for research and scholarship lies in interdisciplinary collaboration—defined as the meeting of multiple disciplines to create something new—then the research agenda outlined in this special issue will be well-served by additional attempts to amalgamate useful concepts from anthropology and occupational science/occupational therapy.

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AAGE Member News



Congratulations to Sherri Briller, PhD, for being awarded tenure! The publication of her most recent book, Briller, S. and Goldmacher, A. (2008) *Designing An Anthropological Career: Professional Development Exercises*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, no doubt contributed to her promotion. For all young and aspiring anthropologists of aging, accolades accrue when you become president of AAGE!

Submitted by Margaret Perkinson