

## CHAIR'S CORNER

### Greetings CoPGTP Members and Students

As we move into spring and approach the end of another academic year, we are excited to share updates on several initiatives that highlight our ongoing commitment to strengthening our community, elevating our visibility, and advancing the field of geropsychology.

### Increasing Student Engagement

We continue to prioritize meaningful opportunities for students to participate and grow within our programs. This year, we will again co host a student social at GSA in the fall. Additionally, we are planning a panel discussion with leaders from aging focused organizations, offering valuable perspectives on challenges and opportunities across the aging services landscape while helping to deepen collaboration with community partners.



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### Expanding Our Social Media Presence

To broaden our reach and spotlight the great work being done within CoPGTP, we are enhancing our social media efforts. This expansion will help us highlight accomplishments, share emerging issues in aging, and strengthen public engagement. We also plan to involve students in ongoing content development and platform maintenance.

### Progress on the Legacy Project

The Legacy Project, launched to document conversations with pioneers in geropsychology, continues to grow. Two additional interviews are planned for this year. Through this work, we aim to preserve and share the histories, insights, and contributions of leaders who have shaped our field.

### Upcoming Town Hall

To support communication and transparency, we will soon host a Town Hall for member programs and students. This open forum will provide a dedicated space for listening, learning, and discussing shared priorities

### Looking Ahead

Each of these initiatives reflects our shared commitment to fostering an inclusive and vibrant professional home for all who are passionate about aging—and to working collaboratively to shape the future of geropsychology. Thank you for your continued support and engagement. We look forward to all we will accomplish in the months ahead.

Warmly,  
**Kristy Shoji** (Chair)  
**Rachel Wallace** (Past Chair)  
Council of Professional Geropsychology  
Training Programs (CoPGTP)



### **Kristy Shoji, Ph.D., ABPP**

CoPGTP Chair

Staff Psychologist at Eastern Colorado VA Healthcare System  
(Rocky Mountain Regional VA)

Dr. Shoji earned her master's degree in psychology from Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina and her doctorate degree in clinical psychology at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, with a concentration in geropsychology. She completed a geropsychology internship and postdoctoral fellowship at South Texas Veterans Health Care System. Dr. Shoji worked as a staff psychologist at STVHCS with the palliative care team and the Community Living Center in Kerrville, TX. She moved to Colorado in 2022 and currently works at the Rocky Mountain Regional VA in GeriPACT. Clinical areas of interest include cognitive and capacity assessment, behavioral interventions for dementia, and hospice/palliative care. Outside of work, Dr. Shoji loves being a mother and partner, spending time with family, cooking, crafting, and taking barre classes

**Why did you choose to specialize in geropsychology?** My interest in older adults began in high school while working at a seafood restaurant where the majority of the patrons were older adults. I loved interacting with them and hearing the stories of their lives. As I progressed through higher education and learned more about the supply and demand issue facing the field of geriatrics, I was drawn to a career that served the older adult population. Having a close family friend who was diagnosed with dementia has influenced my research and clinical interests as well.

**If you were not a geropsychologist, what would you be?** An artist

**What is the last book/audiobook/podcast you read or listened to?** The Briar Club by Kate Quinn

**What is the best advice you've been given by a supervisor or mentor?** When I first started learning how to complete capacity evaluations I commented to my supervisor (and now long-time friend, Dr. Mark Floyd) that it was scary to be making a decision that could impact someone's autonomy and be life altering. He told me that my concern was exactly why I was the type of person that should be involved in these evaluations. His encouragement led me to focus much of my clinical work on gaining expertise in capacity evaluations, which has been incredibly challenging, but also rewarding as I feel empowered to advocate for my patients and educate others about capacity.

**What is the first thing you would buy if you won the lottery?** A huge plot of land in the mountains where I can start a hobby farm. I would buy a donkey first; per my partner's request and insistence they make excellent guard dogs.



**Rachel Wallace, Ph.D.**  
 Past-Chair of CoPGTP  
 Staff Psychologist at Richmond VAMC

I earned my Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in 2021 and completed internship at James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa, FL. I completed the Rehabilitation Psychology postdoctoral program at the Central Virginia VA in 2023 and have focused my training in the areas of physical illness/injury, aging, rehabilitation, and adjustment to disability. During fellowship, I sought out specialized training in rehabilitation and geriatric settings so I could pursue my dual interests in both areas professionally. I am currently a clinical psychologist on the CLC and hospice neighborhoods at the Central Virginia VA in Richmond, VA. My research and clinical interests include: aging with brain injury, end-of-life issues, end-of-life ethics, and aging and personality structures and severe mental illness.

**Why did you choose to specialize in geropsychology?** I enjoyed working with older adults in different settings I trained throughout graduate school. As I narrowed my scope, I selected clinical settings that were gero-specific. I have thoroughly enjoyed gaining experience working with older adults and with professionals who value working with this population. Working as a geropsychologist has helped me to be a more well-rounded clinician and able to support the varied needs and values of older adults.

**If you were not a geropsychologist, what would you be?** Horticulturist

**What is the last book/audiobook/podcast you read or listened to?** If It Bleeds by Stephen King

**What is the best advice you've been given by a supervisor or mentor?** We are psychologists, but we are humans first.

**What is the first thing you would buy if you won the lottery?** A really nice pasta dinner



## Rachael Spalding, Ph.D.

Secretary of CoPGTP  
Staff Psychologist

Clement J. Zablocki (Milwaukee) VA Medical Center

Rachel Spalding, Ph.D. earned her doctoral degree in clinical psychology from West Virginia University. She then completed a predoctoral internship and postdoctoral fellowship, concentrating in geropsychology at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center where she is now a staff psychologist in outpatient mental health. Her role focuses on providing care to patients with chronic pain, many of whom are older adults. Primary areas of interest include chronic illness, women's health and aging, late-life sexuality, surrogate decision making, and geropsychology training/organizational development. Outside of work, she enjoys endurance running, reading, baking and spending time with loved ones.

**Why did you choose to specialize in geropsychology?** Like many others in our field, I came to geropsychology through my relationship with my grandparents. My grandmother in particular was my best friend growing up and seeing her navigate the aging process with the aid of my parents motivated me to pursue a career in geriatric mental health. In college, my Psychology 101 professor was a leader in geropsychology (shout out to Dr. Brian Carpenter and his Clinical Geropsychology Lab!) and helped to further shape my interests.

**If you were not a geropsychologist, what would you be?** A writer, running coach, or sports psychologist (or all three!)

**What is the last book/audiobook/podcast you read or listened to?** I love reading and read 70 books last year. I just enjoyed *Girls...Girls...Girls* by Shoshana von Blanckensee, which is a queer coming-of-age story set in '90s San Francisco.

**What is the best advice you've been given by a supervisor or mentor?** My graduate school mentor, the great Barry Edelstein, taught me how to view all behavior as meaningful and conduct a thorough functional analysis, which has been instrumental in my clinical practice. Another beloved mentor from my private practice encouraged me to work to live, not live to work, as a reminder to prioritize balance.

**What is the first thing you would buy if you won the lottery?** A trip to Ireland with my Mom to explore her family's heritage, several pairs of Asics Metaspeeds, and a KitchenAid stand mixer.



**Jessica Strong, Ph.D., ABPP**  
 CoPGTP Graduate Member-at-Large  
 Associate Professor of Psychology  
 University of Prince Edward Island

Jessica Strong (she/her), Ph.D., ABPP, is a licensed and Board Certified clinical geropsychologist and Associate Professor of Psychology, working at the University of Prince Edward Island in Charlottetown, PEI in Canada since 2019. She received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Louisville, specializing in Aging and Neuropsychology. Dr. Strong completed her clinical psychology residency and a clinical followed by a research post-doctoral fellowship at the Boston VA Healthcare System. Dr. Strong's research program focuses broadly on 1) aging and cognition, in particular how life experiences impact the cognitive aging process, 2) program development and evaluation of late life interventions for mental health and well-being, and 3) factors that influence students' likelihood to pursue a career working with older adults. She is involved in clinical training and supervision at UPEI within the Doctor of Clinical Psychology program, completing neuropsychological assessments and providing mental health interventions to older adults. She supervises both undergraduate honours and graduate student dissertations on research projects with older adults.

**Why did you specialize in geropsychology?** I was both intellectually fascinated, loved, and was simultaneously a bit scared of my great aunt Lila. I watched my mom (a homecare RN and Aunt Lila's primary caregiver) work with and love working with older adults.

**If you were not a geropsychologist, what would you be?** Either a piano teacher or a farmer

**What is the last book/audiobook/podcast you read or listened to?** Curlews on Vulture St.

**What is the best advice you've been given by a supervisor or mentor?** Sometimes the best thing to DO for someone, is to just BE (Kate Hinrichs; hospice rotation on internship).

**What is the first thing you would buy if you won the lottery?** Pay off my mortgage and then several hundred acres of wilderness I can run away to.



## Amy Houston, Psy.D.

CoPGTP Post-doctoral Training Member-at-Large  
Staff Psychologist  
Milwaukee VAMC

I attended the University of South Florida for my Master's degree in Gerontology. While pursuing my Master's I began working as a research assistant at the Tampa VA. Through wonderful mentorship and experiences working with older Veterans with dementia and their caregivers, I decided to pursue my degree in Clinical Psychology with an emphasis in Geropsychology. I attended Xavier University, completed my internship at the VA in Cheyenne Wyoming, and earned my Doctor of Psychology in 2017. I completed the Inpatient Geropsychology Fellowship at the Milwaukee VA, where I was hired following Fellowship. Since 2018, I have served as major preceptor and clinical supervisor for students completing Palliative and Geropsychology rotations at the Milwaukee VA. Within the Community Living Center, I provide interdisciplinary team consultation, conduct decision-making capacity assessments, individual and group psychotherapy, family caregiver education and support, and nursing staff education and support. I also provide consultation and liaison mental health services throughout the hospital and bereavement counseling to families of deceased Veterans.

**Why did you specialize in geropsychology?** I have always had a passion for working with older adults. I have my Bachelors and Masters in Gerontology. My interest in Geropsychology emerged when I was a research assistant at the VA in Tampa. I had the opportunity to work with Veterans with dementia and their caregivers. Working with this population drove me to pursue my Doctorate in Clinical Psychology with a specialization in Geropsychology.

**If you were not a geropsychologist, what would you be?** Speech and Language Pathologist

**What is the last book/audiobook/podcast you read or listened to?** The last podcast I listened to is All There Is with Anderson Cooper- I'm doing research for an intern seminar on grief and bereavement.

**What is the best advice you've been given by a supervisor or mentor?** You grow in discomfort, so don't shy away from challenges.

**What is the first thing you would buy if you won the lottery?** Family vacation to Bora Bora



**Nathalie Reider, Psy.D.**  
CoPGTP Internships Member-at-Large

**Why did you specialize in geropsychology?** I volunteered in nursing homes throughout my adolescence and young adulthood, and I worked in an adult daycare center during college. I found my work in these contexts challenging and gratifying, and I treasure my memories of interactions with the residents and the staff. I also observed my parents become informal caregivers as they themselves were also facing their own challenges related to aging. These experiences made me curious about the aging brain, the role shifts in later life, and how our view of ourselves may change over our lifetimes. Although I toyed with the idea of becoming a music therapist after majoring in music, I ultimately chose geropsychology and am so glad I did!

**If you were not a geropsychologist, what would you be?** A symphony conductor

**What is the last book/audiobook/podcast you read or listened to?** The Correspondent by Virginia Evans, and I would highly recommend to other geropsychologists!

**What is the best advice you've been given by a supervisor or mentor?** Be present with the person in front of you and be mindful of your assumptions

**What is the first thing you would buy if you won the lottery?** A house on Nantucket

### BOARD MEMBERS NOT PICTURED

Hannah Bashian, Ph.D., Treasurer

Kyle Page, Ph.D., ABPP, Media Manager

Candice Daniel, Ph.D., ABPP, Post Licensure Member-at-Large



**Sheila Lester Burgess, LPC, Psy.D. Candidate**  
 CoPGTP Student Representative  
 Doctoral Intern, Central Virginia VA Health Care System  
 Graduate Program: National Louis University

Sheila Lester Burgess is a licensed therapist and pre-doctoral intern at the Central Virginia VA Health Care System in Richmond, VA, where she specializes in interprofessional geropsychology. In this role, she delivers comprehensive, evidence-based psychological assessment and intervention services to Veterans across outpatient geriatrics, the PTSD clinic, and long-term care settings. Sheila's clinical interests include psychological adjustment to chronic medical conditions, aging-related neurocognitive disorders, and the longitudinal course of serious mental illness across the lifespan. Sheila's research examines the moderating role of attachment in functional health outcomes among older adults, reflecting her broader commitment to aging and whole-person care. In her free time, Sheila is a sci-fi enthusiast, amateur photographer, and travel fanatic.

**Why did you specialize in geropsychology?** I grew up in a multi-generational household and have always been immersed in the wisdom of my elders. I feel very connected to and love working with older adults.

**If you were not a geropsychologist, what would you be?** Interestingly, this is my second career, so I've already had my alternative. My first career was in human capital consulting. I had the opportunity to work on intriguing technology adoption and change management projects with organizations across the globe. It was very fulfilling.

**What is the last book/audiobook/podcast you read or listened to?** I recently completed Jake Tapper's book, *Original Sin*. I highly recommend it for anyone interested in the cross-section of aging and politics.

**What is the best advice you've been given by a supervisor or mentor?** I once made a massive mistake while planning a national conference. My mistake would cost the organization a significant amount of money to rectify. Terrified, I went to my SVP's office to confess my error. Her response was "Ok. That's not great, but let's keep some perspective. No one died, and we're not saving lives here. It's just a conference. Now, what do we need to do to fix it?" I remind myself of this incident whenever I need to extend grace to myself and others in the face of failure.

**What is the first thing you would buy if you won the lottery?** I would buy my daughter a nicer apartment in NYC, and a travel package to Peru, including seats on the Hiram Bingham to Machu Picchu!



**Allegra Opiela, MA, Ph.D. Candidate**  
 CoPGTP Student Representative  
 Doctoral Intern, VA Boston Healthcare System  
 Graduate Program: University of Rhode Island

Allegra Opiela, MA (she/her) is a pre-doctoral intern at VA Boston Healthcare System, where she has completed a primary rotation in Geropsychology and is currently completing a secondary rotation in Primary Care Behavioral Health. During her geropsychology training experience, she delivered comprehensive, evidence-based psychological assessment and intervention across outpatient geriatric mental health, inpatient psychology, and capacity clinic settings. Her clinical interests center on expanding access to evidence-based care for older adults with complex medical and psychiatric needs, particularly through interdisciplinary and integrated care models. Her research focuses on health behavior change and the promotion of various health behaviors, including vaccination. In her free time, she enjoys cooking and baking, reading, and spending time with her dog, Captain.

**Why did you choose to specialize in geropsychology?** I chose geropsychology because it allows me to work at the intersection of mental and physical health while collaborating closely with interdisciplinary teams. I value helping older adults make meaning of this stage of life while moving toward goals that matter to them.

**If you were not a geropsychologist, what would you be?** A baker!

**What is the last book/audiobook/podcast you read or listened to?** The Women by Kristin Hannah

**What is the best advice you've been given by a supervisor or mentor?** It's not always about getting through everything. Learning when to pause can be just as important as knowing when to act.

**What is the first thing you would buy if you won the lottery?** Toys and treats for my dog, Captain... and another dog!



**OPEN POSITIONS:** CoPGTP has several open positions and would love to have you join us! See below for open positions with a brief description. If you know someone that you think would be a good fit, please pass this information along or feel free to self-nominate!

**Chair-Elect:** The Chair-Elect is the first year of a three-year term (followed by Chair then Past-Chair). Primary duties include assisting the current Chair with monthly meetings as needed and attending board meetings to learn the role of the Chair for the following year. The Chair-Elect also assists the student rep who is working on the newsletter and is available to provide guidance for all student reps throughout the chair's three-year term.

**Newsletter Editor:** The Newsletter Editor position is now open to students! Students serve a one-year term. If a licensed geropsychologist is elected for the position, they would serve a three-year term. Primary duties include soliciting the board and/or member programs for ideas for the newsletter, contact potential article writers, and creating the newsletter to be sent out two to three times per year

**DEI Member-at-Large:** The DEI Member-at-large serves a three-year term and is part of the Membership Recruitment and Retention Committee (along with the other MALs). Primary duties include assisting with recruitment and retention of members and championing DEI-related projects (either ongoing or new projects)

**NEW! Social Media Manager:** In an effort to broaden our outreach efforts and foster a greater sense of community, CoPGTP is now accepting applications for the Social Media Manager position. This is a student position and will consist of a one-year term. Primary duties will include development and/or maintenance of CoPGTP account on various social media platforms, including regular posts sharing upcoming events, recent publications relevant to the field, and other training related news.





Bush, S. S. (2026). Ethical considerations in the use of artificial intelligence in clinical neuropsychology. *The Clinical Neuropsychologist*, 1-21.

Choi, S.L., Totenhagen, C.J., Tomeny, T.S., & Allen, R.S. (2025). Navigating financial storms: Does dyadic coping buffer the association between daily financial stress and emotional well-being? *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 46, 54-66. DOI: 10.1007/s10834-024-10028-2.

Eichorst, M.K., Fromenthal, A.L.\* , Harris, G.M., Reel, C.D.\* , & Allen, R.S. (2025). In the presence of death and dying: Death attitudes and compassion fatigue among certified nursing assistants in skilled care. *Aging and Mental Health*, 29(3), 452-461. DOI: 10.1080/13607863.2024.2399089.

Gately ME, Shirk SD, Canell A, Laffer A, Corle M, Dillon K. "I Don't Get to Feel This Good Very Often:" Virtual Reality Intervention for Veterans Receiving End-of-Life Care. *Journal of Palliative Medicine*. 2026;0(0). doi:10.1177/10966218261421071 – this includes two former trainees, Drs. Canell (former Gero Intern & Postdoc) and Laffer (former Gero Postdoc)

Hay-McCutcheon, M. J., Hubbard, A., Brothers, E. B., Thrasher, L., Hardy, C., Yang, X., & Allen, R. S. (2025). A Feasibility Study Evaluating a Community Health Worker Training Program to Support Adults With Hearing Loss in Rural Alabama Communities. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 68(4), 2104-2126.

Howell, C., Segal, D. L., & Segal, S. (2025). Diagnosis and assessment of somatic symptom and related disorders among older adults: Issues and strategies. *Journal of Clinical and Basic Psychosomatics*, 3(4), 21-29. <https://doi.org/10.36922/JCBP025080013>

Lee, H.Y., Yoon, Y.J., Briggs, H., Fromenthal, A.L.\* , Sleep-Frankel, M., & Allen, R. S. (accepted). Navigating COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in Alabama's Black Belt: Information sources, safety perceptions, and motivations among African American adults. *Social Development Issues*.

Lin, S-H., Xia, M., & Allen, R. S. (2025). Intra-individual cognitive variability predicts the trajectory of longitudinal neurocognitive and functional decline. *The Clinical Neuropsychologist*. DOI: 10.1080/13854046.2025.2541661.

Peebles, L.B.\* , Thompson, B.C.\* , Tucker, J.B.\* , Smith, L., Brown, A., Carden, K.D., Halli-Tierney, A., Duncan, A.C., Aggarwal, N.T., Allen, J.Y., Allen, R. S., & Potts, D.C. (2024). Growing empathy through art therapy, life story, and relationships: Experiential learning in adult day services. *Frontiers in Psychology*.

Pifer, M. A., & Segal, D. L. (2025). On the measurement of aging anxiety: Comparative validity of two popular measures among older adults. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 101(2), 171-188. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00914150241260828>

Segal, D. L. & Williams, K. (2026). Toward a further understanding of suicide risk from a mindset framework among older adults. *Psychology*, 17, 126-137.10.4236/psych.2026.172007

Stone-Bury, L. E., & Segal, D. L. (2025). Temporal stability and predictive validity of the Alternative Model of Personality Disorders among older adults. *GeroPsych: The Journal of Gerontopsychology and Geriatric Psychiatry*, 38(2), 41-51. <https://doi.org/10.1024/1662-9647/a000343>

Won, C. R, Lee, H., Lee, H. Y., Noh, H., Doh, N., & Allen, R. S. (2025). A mixed methods approach to Korean-Youth Mental Health First Aid (K-YMHFA): A pilot study. *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 1-23.DOI: 10.1080/26408066.2025.2456756.

**CHRIS GRIFFITH**

Areas of interest: relationships between psychosocial factors and cognitive aging; diversity issues in aging, particularly LGBTQ+ and racial/ethnic minoritized older adults; decision-making capacity; and palliative care.

Career goals: My immediate goal is to successfully complete my predoctoral internship next year at the VA Boston Healthcare System in their Geropsychology track. Following internship, I'd like to stay in the VA and build a career that blends clinical work, research activity, and supervision/teaching. I greatly look forward to advancing the field and promoting it to trainees as a meaningful area to specialize in.

What drew me to gero: I first became interested in aging as an undergraduate at the University of Arizona while taking courses in aging, health psychology, and death and loss. At the same time, my mother was caregiving for my dying grandfather. This elicited interests in the aging process, family dynamics during times of illness/loss, and quality of life in older age. I then sought research experiences that further refined my interests in cognitive aging and mental health, inspiring my motivation to pursue doctoral studies.

Fun fact: I love live music! You can find me catching as many shows or festivals as I can fit into my schedule. Some artists I hope to see someday are My Chemical Romance, Miley Cyrus, and Charli XCX.

**JANELLE GORE**

Ms. Janelle Gore is a second-year Clinical Psychology PhD student on the Gerontology Track at The University of Alabama and a Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Scholar.

Prior to attending The University of Alabama, Ms. Gore served as an ORISE Fellow at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with the Alzheimer's Disease Team, where she strengthened her understanding of how systems-level inequities impact historically marginalized communities. She was also awarded a National Institute on Aging Diversity Supplement to lead caregiver research at MapHabit, a tech startup supporting individuals with cognitive disabilities.

Her clinical and research interests center on working with Black youth and young adult caregivers who are often invisible in both healthcare and mental health systems. She focuses on understanding and addressing mental health outcomes such as anxiety and depression among this population, while exploring how they navigate the healthcare system and health literacy challenges while supporting their family and older adults.

Fun fact: Ms. Gore is the host of Black Scholars Speak, a podcast amplifying the voices of Black researchers, clinicians, and community members. Through honest conversations, we're reshaping what it means to be a scholar by connecting research, culture, and community.



**ARIELLE SZAFRAN**

Arielle Szafran, MA, is a fifth-year Psy.D. student from William James College, currently completing her APA doctoral internship at Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital in Bedford, MA, on the Geropsychology track. Arielle was drawn to the field of geropsychology following her personal experience providing care to her great-grandmother who was living with Dementia. During this time, she recognized the important, yet often overlooked, need for support for both older adults and their families. Arielle is passionate about serving older adult Veterans in long-term living centers, particularly those living with serious and persistent mental illness. She hopes to continue providing education and advocacy in this area throughout her career. Additional research interests include examining traditional masculine ideology and its long-term impacts on ageist attitudes and beliefs.

A fun fact about Arielle is that throughout her graduate school training, spin classes have kept her grounded and connected to a supportive community!



**CHARLOTTE HOWELL**

Hello! My name is Charlotte Howell. I am currently an MA student in the Clinical Geropsychology program at the University of Colorado Gero Psych Springs and will begin my PhD at UCCS this fall. I am a member of Dr. Daniel Segal’s lab, where my research broadly focuses on aging and mental health. I am currently studying somatic symptom and related disorders, specifically examining comorbid psychopathology and the comparative validity of assessment measures used to evaluate these diagnoses in older adults. In the future, I hope to pursue a career in academia as a professor, where I can help train the next generation of geropsychologists. I also greatly enjoy clinical work and could see myself opening a part-time private practice.

A fun fact about me is that I am a certified scuba diver! Although I haven’t practiced in a while, I spent two weeks in Bali during college helping plant coral reefs.

