

Student Profiles

Fourth Year Students

Kate de Medeiros

Northwestern University, BA
University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston (UTMB), MS

Prior to entering the doctoral program at UMBC, Kate spent several years developing and implementing educational programs for older adults, including the "Share Your Life Story" writing workshops that were featured in the 2000 PBS documentary, "Life Stories." Kate's interests in narratives, the self, feminist perspectives on older age, and methods for understanding person-centered approaches to understanding later life lead her to pursue doctoral work in gerontology. Kate, a doctoral candidate in the UMBC program, is currently involved in research on the experience of suffering in old age and has recently been awarded a Ruth Kirschstein Fellowship by the National Institutes of Mental Health. The fellowship will enable Kate to complete her doctoral dissertation, "Depression in Old Age: Attributions in Life Narratives" as well as pursue additional training in study design, methods, and analysis. Kate will complete her final year as student representative for the Humanities and Arts Committee for the GSA this year.



Dave Hamilton

University of Maryland, Baltimore County, BA

As a 2000 graduate of UMBC majoring in Anthropology and minoring in Sociology, Dave decided to pursue Social Gerontology as the logical next step. He is now working on his dissertation proposal – a qualitative study of individual conceptions of age. His other interests include ageism, the self, and sleep disorders among the elderly population. Upon graduation, Dave plans to seek a teaching position that will allow him to also conduct research although working with students is his primary focus.



Kelly Niles

Portland State University, BS
Institute on Aging, PSU, Gerontology Certificate

Kelly, a Ph.D. Candidate, first became interested in gerontology while studying psychology as an undergraduate. She continued to pursue her interest in the field during her graduate work where she studied public administration and aging policy. Kelly is a Fellow with the Erickson Foundation working on her doctoral research, which focuses on consumer-direction as an approach to long-term care for the elderly. She also works as a Graduate Research Assistant for the Cash and Counseling Demonstration Evaluation. Kelly plans to continue working on policy issues affecting older adults through research and educational efforts and hopes to work in an academic setting after completing her doctorate. She is a founding member and Past-President of Delta Lambda, a chapter of Sigma Phi Omega, a gerontology honor society of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) and is currently the Senior Student Representative of the Social, Research, Policy and Practice (SRPP) Committee of GSA.



Andrea Rubin

University of Florida, BS
University of Maryland, Baltimore, MSW

Before attending the Doctoral Program in Gerontology, Andrea was a clinical hospital based social worker in Baltimore City. Andrea is currently interested in Home and Community Based Waivers and their impact on people living with disabilities. More specifically, Andrea's primary research interest is patients in acute care settings and their discharge plan. For her GRA Andrea is currently working with the Erickson foundation on the ViVa! Study that assesses successful aging in a population of older adults living in a continuing community retirement center. The assessments include such items as: depression, social support, mastery, bone screens and balance tests. Andrea hopes to pursue a career as a lobbyist.

**Dan Van Dussen**

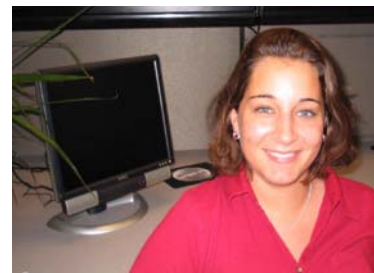
Mount Union College, BA
University of Akron, MA

Dan became interested in the study of aging through his work in social support and his personal experience with battling heart failure. His current work includes family relationships and psychological well-being. Dan is an Erickson Fellow and currently working on his dissertation concerning older people's perception of their relationships with family members and psychological well-being as mediated by functional health. He is also working on a project involving Activities of Daily Living impairment, chronic illness, and health service utilization longitudinally. Other projects include using Auto-Regressive Cross Lagged Models to determine the relationship between self-rated health and depression, applied gerontology, and rural/urban disparities in health. Future goals include obtaining a position in academia that allows him to teach and conduct aging research.

**Third Year Students****Rebecca Perron**

Middlebury College, BA
University of Massachusetts – Amherst, MPH

Rebecca has previous experience working in nursing homes in various departments, strengthening her interest in gerontology. After obtaining her MPH she spent two years working at a survey research organization as a research analyst, primarily working on projects involving older adults. She is currently a Gerontology Fellow at UMBC's Center for Health Program Development and Management involved in projects involving Maryland's Minimum Data Set and the Aging and Disability Resource Centers. Currently she is working on a Maryland AccessPoints (MAPs) endeavor to develop a one stop shop for seniors and those disabled to gain information about all available programs. Her research areas of interest include nursing home quality of care and Medicare policy.



Tommy Piggee

University of Arkansas Little Rock, BS and MA

Prior to enrolling in the Gerontology Doctoral Program, Tommy was the Director of Infectious Disease at the Arkansas Department of Health. As Assistant Director of Chronic Disease and Disability Prevention with the health department, Tommy successfully wrote a grant to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) establishing a Core State Arthritis Program. Tommy is the recipient of a three-year National Institute on Aging Minority Research and Training Supplement to work with Dr. Eckert on the NIA funded study, Transitions from Assisted Living. His role on this project is to perform formal cognitive and functional assessments. Upon completion of the program, Tommy's goals are to teach and conduct research that centers on health indicators and environmental fit.

**Joanna Samsell**

West Virginia University, BS
West Virginia University, MPH

Joanna's interest in gerontology grew out of her closeness with her grandmother and the opportunities available in the field of gerontology. The program at UMB/UMBC offered the flexibility in tracks that appealed to Joanna. She is currently serving her 3rd year as senator to the Graduate Student Association. Along with representing her fellow students Joanna works with Dr. John Schumacher on the Transitions in Assisted Living: Physician Practices project that interviews physicians whose patients reside in assisted living residences. Joanna's personal interests are in rural health, especially as it relates to health status and self care. Her ultimate goal after finishing this program is to teach at a small to medium size university.

**Magdalena Tolea**

Spiru Haret University Law School, Romania, JD
University of Maryland, Baltimore County, MA

Magdalena (Magda) was born and raised in Bucharest, Romania, where she received a JD degree and worked as a corporate lawyer for a large pharmaceutical company. During her Sociology graduate study Magda worked as a research assistant at CHPDM. This experience resulted in her Master's thesis on the topic of "Predicting the use of in-home care by the elderly living in the community." Magda is currently a Graduate Research Assistant working with Dr. Braxton Mitchell on genetic studies concerning the Amish population. Her career goals include research and teaching.



Jian Ye

West China University of Medical Sciences, MD
Peking Union Medical College, MS

Jian was born and raised in China where she earned her medical degree and worked as a physician in the Department of Neurology, Peking Union Medical College Hospital, Beijing. She decided to concentrate in epidemiology because of her interest in the epidemiology of neurological diseases. Jian is currently working with a research group to conduct a study investigating under-diagnosis and under-treatment of Parkinson's disease among minorities. Jian plans to return to China to share her education and help the aging population.

**Second Year Students****Daniel Andersen**

University of Miami, BHS
University of Miami, MPH

Daniel began his collegiate education training to be a geriatric physical therapist. He later decided to study public health in order to pursue a broader career in aging. While at the University of Maryland, he has worked on studies that involve the rehabilitation of cognitively impaired hip fracture patients, nursing assistants' perceptions of their jobs, and tele-management of both diabetes and multiple sclerosis in a VA population. He is currently working on two clinical trials involving the hip fracture population. He also finds time to be President of the UMB Graduate Student Association. Daniel's future goals include teaching gerontology and the epidemiology of aging. He would like to develop an undergraduate and graduate program in gerontology at the University of Miami.

**Loretta Ayd-Simpson**

Essex Community College, AAS
Towson University, BS

Loretta's work with older adults in the long-term care setting was the impetus for her decision to study aging in a broader context. While at Towson University, she worked as a research assistant in the Gerontology and Psychology Departments. Her current research interests include health, the continuum of care, environmental gerontology, women and aging, longevity, and quality of life. In her first year at Maryland, she worked with Dr. Jessica Kelley-Moore on research projects concerning health disparities, primarily race, geography, and sampling design among Black and White older adults. Currently, Loretta is a member of the Transitions project research team working with Dr. Kevin Eckert.



Kim DeMichele
Utica College, BA

Kim's interest in gerontology is inspired by her previous work experience in nursing homes and her 101 year old grandmother's magnificent example of successful aging. Her previous research experience includes investigations of chemosensory and cognitive functioning and analyses of historical data on the foreign-born. She is pursuing the program's sociocultural behavioral track, and is presently working with Drs. Robert Rubinstein and Shelia Cotten on an ethnographic study exploring the experience of suffering among those aged 80 and older. As part of this project, she conducts in-depth interviews with elders about their life experiences and personal experiences of suffering. Her current research interests include environmental aging, cognitive aging and the prevention of cognitive decline, and exploring the subjective experience of growing old.

Katherine Giuriceo
University of Maryland, Baltimore County, BSW
Loyola College, MA
Ohio State, MSW

Katherine is the Manager of the *WORKlife* Programs at Johns Hopkins University. Prior to joining the *WORKlife* Programs she worked as a clinician for 10 years with the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FASAP) at Johns Hopkins Hospital. She is a part-time student and her current research interests are in the transition from work to retirement.



Quincy Samus
Washington College, BA
Johns Hopkins University, MS

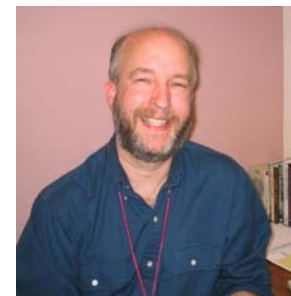
For the past 3 years, Quincy has worked as a research study coordinator in the Department of Psychiatry, Division of Geriatric Psychiatry and Neuropsychiatry. She manages the Maryland Assisted Living Study, a federally funded longitudinal epidemiological study of the prevalence and incidence of dementia and other psychiatric disorders in the assisted living setting. Quincy is interested in dementia, quality of life issues, biomarkers in aging, and the relation of individual characteristics with environment. After completion of the Gerontology program, she hopes to obtain a faculty position at a research institution to be able to conduct research and teach.



Thomas Shaffer
University of New Haven, BS
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, MHS
(Formerly Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health)

As a former Research Fellow in Aging in the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), Tom's exposure to many different facets of long-term care research made it clear that a better understanding of a broader and comprehensive view of aging could only deepen his own research interests, as well as ensuring that they are practical in an ever changing world.

Currently a Research Analyst at The Peter Lamy Center for Drug Therapy and Aging, he is looking into prescribed medications in residential settings and potential effects of the recently enacted Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003. Tom would like to return to being involved with research at the Federal level (as well as associated policy concerns), possibly teaching, or simply winning the lottery and retiring along the banks of the Connecticut river.



First Year Students

Katherine Bintrim

Duquesne University, BA
University of Maryland, College Park, MPH

For the past 2 years Katie has worked full-time for the Erickson Foundation, part of Erickson Retirement Communities, as a research assistant. Katie coordinates a 15-year longitudinal study that aims to validate the Erickson Resident Profile. The study involves 300 participants at four of the Erickson campuses in the Maryland/Virginia area. Katie is in charge of recruitment, retention, assessments, and data management. In addition, Katie assists on several other studies that center on osteoporosis, falls and balance, physical activity, and successful aging. In addition to school and work, Katie serves on several committees for local Alzheimer's Associations. Currently Katie is a part-time student in the program and hopes to do work in the areas of Alzheimer's disease, caregiving, and health education.



Leanne Clark

Miami University, BA
Miami University, MGS

Leanne hails from Ohio, where she spent six years at Miami University earning undergraduate degrees in psychology and gerontology, and a Master of Gerontological Studies. While at Miami, she became interested in the implications of America's aging society on the medical industry, and the politics of long-term care, which led her to work with Dr. Keren Brown Wilson during a summer practicum experience. Leanne is now expanding upon these interests with her research involvement on the "Transitions from Assisted Living" project at UMBC. She is passionate about being a part of the next generation of gerontology scholars, and applying her education and experiences to help the nation embrace present and future generations of elders. Leanne is currently the Student Representative Designee to the Executive Board of the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education. In the future, she would like to pursue a career in academia and research, and continue leadership involvement in professional organizations.



Tesfamichael Mehari

Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia, MD
Johns Hopkins University, MPH

Tesfa is originally from Eritrea and worked as a missionary physician in Kenya and Tanzania where a large portion of his patients were elderly. Once in the United States he earned an MPH, concentrating in mental health. Tesfa's experience with many aged patients in Africa, but an absence of gerontology education, moved him to explore a program in gerontology.



Wenjing Weng

Beijing University, China, BA

Wenjing is a first year student with experience in dentistry. She became interested in aging when she was still an undergraduate. She is currently working with the University of Maryland Long-Term Care Research Team and hopes to do some research in women's health, oral health and caregiving.

