

CHRISTINE B. PHILLIPS, Ph.D., CSCS

Behavioral Scientist | Applied Aging Researcher | User Insight Grounded in Theory

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SUMMARY

Ph.D.-level behavioral scientist and mixed-methods researcher with 15+ years designing and running rigorous research with older adults and their families. I translate findings into product, program, and care-delivery decisions. Most user researchers bring strong methods and build an understanding of a population through observation alone. I bring that same rigor, plus formal theoretical training in aging, family caregiving dynamics, and human behavior — grounded in frameworks like Lawton's ecological model of aging, socioemotional selectivity theory, and Pearlin's stress process model of caregiving. That training informs how I design studies and interpret results and helps me differentiate authentic findings from spurious correlations. I've directly conducted user research informing a mobile app for monitoring everyday function, a mobile game and education platform for scam-prevention now operating as an independent nonprofit, and a cross-stakeholder research effort informing a senior-living community redesign. I'm also hands-on with AI-assisted tools, including co-creating computer-vision/AI technology enabled tools, for accelerating pattern detection and analysis at scale.

CORE EXPERTISE

- **User Research & Product Influence:** Conducted generative and evaluative research (interviews, acceptability/usability testing, surveys) that directly shaped the design of a mobile app for monitoring everyday cognitive function and a mobile game/education platform for scam-prevention
- **Mixed-Methods Research Design:** RCT and observational study design, protocol development, and assessment design — matching the level of rigor to the question, from rapid directional learning to strategic causal evidence
- **Synthesis & Decision Influence:** Track record translating complex research into clear direction for clinical leadership, executives, and cross-functional teams; focused on insights that enable decisions, not just document findings
- **Research & Operations at Scale:** Multi-site recruitment, retention, and data-quality oversight across NIH-funded studies; enterprise program design and rollout across 200+ communities
- **AI-Forward Research Practice:** Co-created NIH-funded computer-vision/AI technology; comfortable experimenting with AI tools for research synthesis while weighing where they help versus where they introduce risk to rigor and privacy
- **Theoretical Grounding in Aging & Caregiving:** Formal training in the psychology and sociology of aging (Lawton's ecological model, socioemotional selectivity theory, Pearlin's stress process model of caregiving, theory of planned behavior) — used to anticipate where and why a design will succeed or fail, recognize AI hallucinations, and inform additional model training
- **Senior Care & Aging Domain Expertise:** 15+ years of first-hand knowledge of family care-decision journeys, provider/operator realities, and the functional, cognitive, and emotional needs driving senior-care decisions

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant Professor — Clemson University

Clemson, SC | 2020–Present (part-time since 2024)

- Conducted user research informing the design and acceptability of a mobile app for monitoring everyday functional abilities among older adults; findings shaped iterative product refinement (published in *Applied Psychology: Health and Wellbeing*, 2026; presented at the Gerontological Society of America Annual Meeting).
- Senior Personnel on DART (Disinformation Awareness and Resilience Training, NSF 2230494, \$5M total award); conducted user research, informed by socioemotional selectivity theory and the psychology of trust and persuasion in older adults, to inform the design and refinement of a mobile game and educational modules preventing online scams and deception. The technology has since moved beyond the grant-funded project into a nonprofit startup, DART Collective ([DARTcollective.net](#)).
- Designed and executed mixed-methods studies — randomized controlled trials, feasibility pilots, and cognitive/functional assessment protocols — across NIH-funded, multi-site research, translating findings directly into behavioral intervention design (combined \$69M+ in total awards).

- Co-directed an interdisciplinary aging research lab and authored or co-authored 25+ peer-reviewed publications on cognitive, physical, and everyday functional aging.

Gerontologist — Brookdale Senior Living

Brentwood, TN | 2024–2026

- Translated clinical and behavioral research into a standardized, enterprise-wide assessment and care model across Assisted Living and Memory Care communities, aligning clinical leadership around the redesigned approach.
- Served as enterprise subject matter expert on aging; advised senior leadership on portfolio-wide clinical and well-being strategy for a national senior living organization.
- Led the Brookdale Innovation Committee, spearheading an extensive discovery and evaluation process for AI-enabled fall-prevention and proactive wellness solutions.

Vice President, Resident Engagement — Atria Senior Living

Louisville, KY | 2019–2020

- Led a research-informed enterprise resident engagement strategy, translating resident and family insight into evidence-based well-being programs scaled across 200+ senior living communities nationally.

Independent Consultant — Active Aging Concepts, LLC

2013

- Led a mixed-methods primary and secondary research effort to develop recommendations for the redesign of a Continuing Care Retirement Community's built environment, programming, and outcomes measurement, applying Lawton's ecological model of aging to align physical space and program design with residents' shifting functional capacity; worked alongside an interdisciplinary team of architects and designers.
- Engaged residents, families, care partners, providers, and executive staff to identify needs, tailoring the research design to preserve data validity within tight budget and timeline constraints.
- Tailored and presented findings to distinct stakeholder groups to drive alignment on product recommendations.

Co-Founder — StreetSmart Analytics, LLC

Phoenix, AZ | 2024–2025

- Co-created NIH-funded computer-vision/AI technology for large-scale environmental pattern detection, then co-founded a venture exploring its commercial applications; partnered with an industry business that applied it in a NIH SBIR-funded project (NIH/NHLBI R43HL169137).

Additional experience: Postdoctoral Research Scholar (Arizona State University; Pennsylvania State University); Director of Wellness (Associated Asset Management); Alzheimer's Training Program Coordinator (University of South Florida); Wellness Coordinator (Westminster Communities of Florida); Fitness Director (Solivita Active Adult Community); Senior Manager (National Institute for Fitness and Sport); Strength & Conditioning Coordinator, Women's Olympic Sports (Virginia Tech Athletics).

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Aging Studies — University of South Florida, Tampa, FL

Postdoctoral Fellowship, Health Behavior Change — Arizona State University

Postdoctoral Fellowship, Healthy Aging — Pennsylvania State University

M.S.S., Fitness Management — United States Sports Academy

B.S., Human Nutrition and Foods — Virginia Tech

SELECTED RESEARCH & PUBLICATIONS

25+ peer-reviewed publications on aging, cognitive/functional health, and technology-supported research, including two directly on mobile-app user research and acceptability: “Digital tools for cognitive healthcare: Exploring perceptions of an everyday function app among midlife and older adults” (Applied Psychology: Health and Wellbeing, 2026) and “Predictive utility of four instrumental activities of daily living assessments” (Journal of Aging and Health, 2024). Additional work published in The Gerontologist, Journal of Aging and Health, and International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity. Full publication list available on request.