



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SACRAMENTO
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES &
INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

You're Invited!

Community-Engaged Research Roundtable



Join us for an inspiring roundtable featuring SSIS faculty who are leading innovative community-engaged research.

Christopher Rogers (SOC), Will Gow (ETHN), Si Gao (ENVS), and Erin Rose Ellison (PSYC) will share their experiences building partnerships that connect research and community impact.

Faculty, staff, and community partners are invited to attend this dynamic discussion and discover strategies to shape your own community-based projects.

Monday, November 17, 2025
12:00-1:30pm
University Union Forest Suite

RSVP Today

A light lunch will be provided!

This event is co-sponsored by the CEC and SSIS

Photovoice at the Creek!

Erin Rose Ellison, Ph.D. (Psychology)

Faculty Bio

Erin Rose Ellison is an Associate Professor of Psychology at California State University, Sacramento. Her research focuses on how relationships facilitate and/or constrain collective empowerment for groups lacking social power and an equal share of resources, and how community groups work together, often across multiple axes of difference, to make change. She often works in collaboration with children or youth in school-based programs or adult community organizers and joins critical theoretical perspectives (e.g., social reproduction theory) with community research and action. She serves as an Associate Editor of the *Journal of Community Psychology* and a Faculty Associate for Community Engaged Research (CER) with CSUS's Community Engagement Center (CEC). Along with CEC leadership, Erin Rose will be facilitating a Faculty Learning Community (FLC) on CER next semester.

Community Partners

Sacramento Chinese Community Services Center ([The Center](#)), The Center's After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program, 4th-6th grade children from Elder Creek Elementary, and the [Sacramento Community Land Trust \(SacCLT\)](#)

Project Timeframe: Partnership started with SacCLT in S18, grant-writing and partnership development with The Center in S20, piloted in S23 and full implementation F23. Project is ongoing.

Description of Collaboration

Building upon a local partnership to develop Morrison Creek that includes the Sacramento Community Land Trust, Avondale/Glen Elder Neighborhood Association, Environmental Justice Coalition for Water, and faculty at Elder Creek Elementary School and Sacramento State, this research project offers a weekly afterschool program, operating as a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project. The project involves young people in research and action related to Morrison Creek: youth examine hopes and desires for their community using Photovoice, an accessible visual and dialogic participatory method. The children's work addresses place-based issues related to gentrification, community development, and access to community resources.

Morrison Creek has been closed off, and a site of pollution and dumping. Sparked by grassroots organizing, partners have been working to create a pedestrian/bike path along the creek. Improvements to areas with low housing costs contribute to the potential for housing displacement, concerning project partners during the housing crisis. This complex context provides a fertile opportunity to engage young people in critical literacy development and other important processes related to exercising civic agency and creating conditions for community power.

Outcomes - Media Coverage (Selected)

Manavirad, O. (2025, May). "Collab helps psychology students positively impact the environment and the youth", The State Hornet. <https://statehornet.com/2025/05/sacramento-state-sac-collab-community-collaborative-psychology-research-action-team/>

Morita, J.K. (2024, July). "Sac State Psychology students help elementary school kids unlock nearby creek's possibilities – and ignite their community spirit", CSUS News and Top Stories. <https://www.csus.edu/news/newsroom/stories/2024/7/morrison-creek.html>

Outcome – Scholarly Activity (Selected)

Ellison, E.R., & Cantua, M.¹ (under review). Being in two places at once: A reflexive case study of anti-colonial research activities at the Creek and the University. Abstract accepted for a special issue in the *Journal of Community Psychology in the Global Perspective*.

Morgan, K.Y., **Ellison, E.R.**, & Anderson, K.M. (under review). Youth voices in the built environment: A comparative study of YPAR advocacy. Abstract accepted for a special issue in the *Journal of Evidence and Policy*.

Ellison, E.R., Juarez, J.A., Early, J.J., Reyes, V., Ralh, J., and Richards, P. (In preparation). Learning, listening, and co-creating knowledge: A qualitative analysis of community engaged learning using the Listening Guide.

Ellison, E.R., Juarez, J.A., Early, J.J., Reyes, V., Ralh, J., and Richards, P. (2025, June). Learning, listening, and co-creating knowledge: A qualitative analysis of community engaged learning using the Listening Guide. In Wallin-Ruschman, J. (Chair) *Community Engaged Learning in the Classroom: Students and Instructors Reflect and Explore Impact*. Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Community Research and Action, East Lansing, MI.

Ellison, E.R. & *L'Ecluse, T.² (2025, April). Neighborhood thriving takes a village: Centering a university-community partnership for mutual benefit. Network Café and Community Engagement Showcase Keynote, California State University, Sacramento.

Ellison, E.R., & *Pope-Harden, N. (2023, June). Our anti-displacement playbook: Developing and enacting a complex theory of change for neighborhood thriving. In Goyer, M. (Chair) *Critical Place-Based Collaborations: Grassroots Community-Based Partnerships for Health, Justice, and Wellbeing*. Symposium presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Community Research and Action, Atlanta, GA.

Advice

Show up and keep showing up! The process is the prize in CER. Building a relationship with partners is crucial, and this takes time, so you may need to adjust expectations. Some relationships are just not meant to be, so if that happens, take that as a learning experience and move on. Start with discussing shared values and what you as the academic partner can deliver for the partner and use the relationship as a conduit to deliver university resources (e.g., student involvement, grant opportunities, media coverage, etc.) to your partner. Our students get so much out of their involvement, so please make sure it is not a burden on your partner; do as much as you can to support their engagement with you and your students!

¹ Student co-authors are underlined.

² Community partner co-authors are indicated with a *



Clockwise from left: Research team at the afterschool program site, ERE and graduate students

presented at the Community Research and Action in the West (CRAW) Conference in Tacoma, and ERE with community partner star, Nancy Phu, from The Center at the Anchor University Awards Celebration!

Contact info and availability

Contact me! Please do reach out at ellison@csus.edu if you would like to consult with me about CER. (Currently on sabbatical but scheduling now for Spring 2026.)

Black Centralized Medical Birthing Intervention: The Pathway of Black Doulas, Midwives, and Coaches

Christopher Rogers, Ph.D. (Sociology)

Faculty Bio

Dr. Christopher Rogers is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at California State University, Sacramento. Drawing on critical race theory, abolition, and care, his research explores how mechanisms of power (racialized and gendered) underpin the healthcare system while simultaneously hindering efforts to implement harm-reduction strategies rooted in reproductive and transformative justice. Dr. Rogers is currently developing a framework that positions the inadequacies of medical care/services as a structural phenomenon born out of white supremacy.

Community Partner

Her Health First (<https://herhealthfirst.org/>)

Project Timeframe: Fall 2023-present (ongoing)

Outcomes

Her Health First manages the Black Mothers United (BMU) program, a pregnancy peer support initiative designed to empower Black mothers through culturally relevant outreach, education, and individualized support. The program offers services such as weekly check-ins with pregnancy coaches, doula care, and lactation support. During the 2023-24 fiscal year, BMU served 121 prenatal participants, the majority of whom resided in targeted areas. While over 84% of participants had at least one health or socioeconomic risk factor at intake, nearly all had protective factors, such as regular prenatal care. The program successfully helped reduce risks and improve access to resources, leading to a significant increase in WIC enrollment and nearly all participants receiving essential items, such as a crib and car seat, after delivery. Among the 66 infants born, 85% had a healthy birth, and for the fifth consecutive year, there were no newborn deaths. Statistical analysis confirmed that program components, such as coach check-ins and doula services, were significantly correlated with positive birth outcomes. In contrast, factors like high stress and prior preterm births predicted less favorable results, enabling BMU to identify better and support higher-risk participants.

Link: [2023 Reduction of African American Child Deaths \(RAACD\) Executive Summary](#)

Photos

Unfortunately, I couldn't take any pictures, but I encourage people to visit their website and consider donating if they can. Link [Her Health First](#)

Advice

Do not enter these spaces to extract data, but to build authentic, accountable relationships where the community's self-determined priorities dictate the entire process. Center your practice on radical humility and deep listening, ensuring the research design, analysis, and dissemination are co-created in

a way that returns power and ownership to the participants. Ultimately, your highest responsibility is not to the academic publication, but to honor the lived expertise and stories shared with you, ensuring they are amplified in the service of the community's own liberation and goals.

Please feel free to contact me (c.rogers@csus.edu) if you would like to learn more or connect.

Sacramento Covid-19 Asian American Oral History Project

Will Gow, Ph.D. (Ethnic Studies)

Course: Asian American Communities (ETHN 113)

Community Partner: ACC Senior Services (<https://www.accsv.org/>)

Project Timeframe: 09/2021-05/2026

Description of the Collaboration

Students enrolled in this collaborative student-centered course gain an introduction to video documentary production and oral history methodology by documenting Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) experiences in the Sacramento region during the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the course of the semester, each student conducts, records, and transcribes oral history interviews with members of the AAPI community. Students work in groups to identify their own community oral history narrators whose life experiences they want to document. When students are unable to identify narrators on their own, I connect them with ACC Senior Services, an organization that began serving the needs of Asian American Seniors and has since expanded to include work beyond the Asian American Community. Students in the course use their oral history interviews to edit together a short documentary video about the experiences of Asian Americans during the pandemic. We have produced two documentaries about ACC and are currently working on a third. This project is sponsored by a Stop the Hate grant from California's Department of Social Services.

Outcomes

At the end of each semester, we host an Asian American Studies Art and Media Showcase, where the strongest student documentaries are shown to the public. Over the last two years, we have developed a partnership with the Sacramento Asian Pacific Film Festival to show select student works at the festival. We have screened our work at ACC to make the works more accessible to seniors. We have worked with the Sac State library to develop [an online data base of the unedited oral histories](#). This database is up and running and host more than 130 oral histories with local community members.

Advice

When done properly community engaged research can benefit our community partners while also training our students. When executed well these types of courses are more rewarding for students and the instructor. I encourage more faculty to try them.

Photos



Contact

William Gow, Ph.D. (william.gow@csus.edu)

Evaluating Compost and Biochar Impacts on Urban Soil Health: *A Community-Engaged Study with Three Sisters Gardens*

Si Gao, Ph.D. (Environmental Studies)

Community Partner

Three Sisters Gardens (West Sacramento) <https://www.3sistersgardens.com/>

Regional Collaborators

City of West Sacramento – Municipal Compost Program

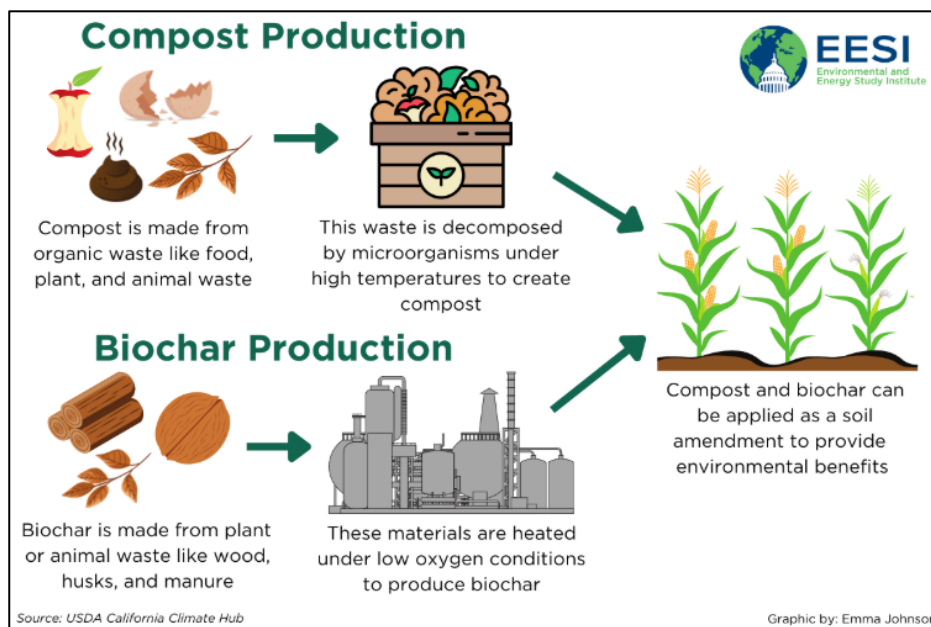
East Bay Regional Park District – Fuel Reduction Biochar Project Team

Timeframe: 2023 – Present

Project Overview

This community-engaged soil health research investigates how locally produced compost and regionally sourced biochar - a carbon-rich material made from the low-oxygen heating of organic biomass - affect soil properties and productivity in urban agriculture systems.

At Three Sisters Gardens (TSG), a nonprofit that grows and donates fresh food to underserved communities, we established field trials with and without soil organic amendments to measure multiple soil health indicators such as soil organic matter, nutrient availability and cycling, water-holding capacity, and microbial activity. These data help evaluate how circular-economy amendments rebuild soil function while advancing regional goals for climate resilience and waste reduction.



Student Engagement and Collaboration

Several research activities are embedded in ENVS 150 (Soil Science & Sustainability) and ENVS 149 (Agroecology), where students participate in site visit, soil sampling, laboratory analyses, and data interpretation.

Two students from the 2024 Agroecology class continued their work through summer research, assisting with field data collection and lab analyses. Together with community partner, we co-published a peer-reviewed paper reporting results from the first-year corn trial (single compost + biochar rate), which showed measurable improvements in soil health such as soil organic matter, phosphorus availability, and microbial diversity.

In summer 2025, we launched a second field trial testing multiple application rates on both corn and squash plots to deepen understanding of amendment responses and optimize local rates for urban farms.

This long-term partnership is reciprocal: TSG provides field access and community-based learning opportunities that enhance my students' field experience. I contribute by providing soil health data, leading public soil health workshops, and serving as a guest speaker for their youth education program.

Photos

(a) Students collect soil samples at TSG.



(b) Compost and biochar field plots in 2024.



Key Outcomes

- Co-published initial findings with student and community partner co-authors.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2025.1546426>
- Established second-year multi-rate field trials on corn and squash.
- Hosted a Soil Health Outreach Workshop engaging ~20 community participants.
- Contributed to Urban Agriculture Youth Education at TSG, reaching ~40 youth across two cohorts.

Lessons & Advice

- Begin with shared values and transparency about goals and expectations.
- Build on existing community practices.
- Encourage student continuity. It sustains both data and relationships.
- Translate complex data into accessible visuals and plain-language summaries for community partners and general public.
- Circular-economy soil health practices thrive on circular relationships.

Contact

Si Gao, Department of Environmental Studies, s.gao@csus.edu

Open to collaboration and inquiries