

Elisa Avila

Department of Sociology, Community & Environmental Sociology
University of Wisconsin-Madison
eavila3@wisc.edu | 210-317-9079

EDUCATION

University of Wisconsin-Madison (2024 to Present)

PhD Candidate, Advisor Katherine Curtis

Concentration: Community and Urban Sociology, Race and Ethnicity

University of Wisconsin-Madison, Master of Science, 2020

Community and Environmental Sociology Department, Advisor Katherine Curtis

Thesis: *Conceptualizing Racialized Regional Dynamics*

University of Chicago, Master of Arts, 2009

Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences

Thesis: *Public Spaces and Contentious Politics in Chicago: Glossing Over Grant Park*

Tulane University, Bachelor of Arts, 2008, *cum laude*

Newcomb College, Majors in History and Sociology, concentration on Environmental Studies

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Stoecker, Randy, and **Elisa Avila**. "From mixed methods to strategic research design." International Journal of Social Research Methodology (2020): 1-14.

Avila, Elisa, Rebekah Harriger, Dennie McCunney, and Benjamin Trager. "Exploring the Impact of Institutional Context on Experiential Education in Higher Education" *Experiential Learning and Teaching in Higher Education* 7.3 (2024).

WORKING PAPERS

Katherine J. Curtis, Malia Jones, and **Elisa Avila**. "Counting Rural Voters: Understanding Political Polarization and Political Participation in Wisconsin." In preparation.

Randy Stoecker, **Elisa Avila**, Amanda Hoffman, Sheamus Johnson, and Allyson Watson, "Manuscript in Gaining and Maintaining Young Adults in Rural Places and Small Towns." In preparation.

BOOK REVIEWS

Avila, Elisa. Review of "Race and the Politics of Deception: The Making of an American City, by Christopher Mele." (2020): 170-173. *National Review of Black Politics* (2020) 1 (1): 170-173. <https://doi.org/10.1525/nrbp.2020.1.1.170>

GRADUATE ASSISTANT EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant, Monica Grant & Katherine Curtis, *Malawi Environmental Perceptions*, 2025.

Research Assistant, Katherine Curtis, *Various projects developing maps using ArcGIS, multiple spatial data sources*, 2016-2017, 2018-2019.

Example of work published in: Curtis, K.J., DeWaard, J., Fussell, E. and Rosenfeld, R.A. (2020), Differential Recovery Migration across the Rural–Urban Gradient: Minimal and Short-Term Population Gains for Rural Disaster-Affected Gulf Coast Counties. *Rural Sociology*, 85: 856-898. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ruso.12305>

Research Assistant, Randy Stoecker, *Local Civic Engagement by Rural Wisconsin Elders*, 2017-2018.

Research Assistant, Randy Stoecker, *Gaining and Maintaining Young Adults in Rural Wisconsin*, Summer 2017.

EDUCATOR EXPERIENCE

Experiential and Service-Learning Coordinator, Fall 2021 - Fall 2024, Texas A&M-San Antonio

- Implemented Experiential Education workshop series for faculty, all semesters.

Teaching Assistant, Community & Environmental Sociology (CES140), Sarah Rios, Summer 2021

- Early Excellence in Teaching Award, Spring 2021.

Teaching Assistant, Community & Environmental Sociology (CES140), Sarah Rios, Spring 2021

Teaching Assistant, Community & Environmental Sociology (CES140), Sarah Rios, Fall 2020

Teaching Assistant, Community & Environmental Sociology (CES140), Sarah Rios, Spring 2020

Teaching Assistant, Community & Environmental Sociology (CES140), Jane Collins, Fall 2019

UNIVERSITY APPOINTMENTS AND SERVICE

President's Commission on Equity & Inclusive Excellence (Texas A&M-San Antonio)

Co-chair of Education and Research Committee

Three year appointment beginning June 2022, term truncated due to Texas SB17.

Experiential Education Research Fellow (Society for Experiential Education)

2022 to 2024

Sociology Club Staff Sponsor (Texas A&M-San Antonio)

Fall 2022 to 2024

Search Committee Transition University for Career Advancement and Successful

Adulthood (TU CASA) (Texas A&M-San Antonio)

February 2022

Search Committee Office of Student Rights and Responsibility (Texas A&M-San Antonio)

October 2022

PRESENTATIONS

Southside Tour for New Faculty Academy (invited). Texas A&M University-San Antonio, August 2025.

Chicago Ethnography Conference. Constructing Race and Community Identity, April 2025.

Sociology for Experiential Education. Roundtable presentation on Creating a Faculty Manual for Experiential Education and Service-Learning, September 2023

Texas A&M University - San Antonio. Experiential Education Workshop Series, Spring 2024.

Texas A&M University - San Antonio. Experiential Education Workshop Series, Fall 2023.

Texas A&M University - San Antonio. Experiential Education Workshop Series, Summer 2023.

Texas A&M University - San Antonio. Experiential Education Workshop Series, Spring 2023.

Texas A&M University - San Antonio. Experiential Education Workshop Series, Fall 2022.

Texas A&M University - San Antonio. Reflection in Experiential Education Workshop Series, Summer 2022.

Texas A&M University - San Antonio. Experiential Education Workshop Series, Spring 2022.

Social Science History Association, *Virtual* November 2021 “Conceptualizing Regional Racialized Processes.”

Rural Sociological Society, Portland, OR July 26-29, 2018 “Elder Civic Engagement and Rural Community Development.”

Rural Sociological Society, Columbus, OH July 27-30, 2017, “Counting Rural Voters: Understanding Political Polarization and Political Participation in Wisconsin.”

Blueprints for Violence Prevention Conference, San Antonio, TX April 2012 “What Basic Outcome and Data Tracking Should Every Agency be Doing?”

Southwestern Social Science Association, Denver, CO April 9, 2009, “The Role of Space and Place in Protest”

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

Peer Reviewer, International **Journal** of Social Research Methodology

DEPARTMENT AND OTHER SERVICE

Career Services Staff Search Committee <i>Texas A&M University-San Antonio</i>	January 2023
Division Standard Operating Procedure Special Committee <i>Texas A&M University-San Antonio</i>	January 2023 - Present
Department Onboarding Process Working Group - Chair <i>Texas A&M University-San Antonio</i>	Fall 2022 to Present
Leadershape Cluster Facilitator <i>Texas A&M University-San Antonio</i>	May 2022
Financial Literacy Staff Search Committee <i>Texas A&M University-San Antonio</i>	February 2022
New Educator Orientation Workshop Invited Volunteer, UW-Madison <i>Collaborative for Engineering Education and Teaching Effectiveness</i> (Presentation Skills)	August 2020
New Educator Orientation Workshop Invited Volunteer, UW-Madison <i>Collaborative for Engineering Education and Teaching Effectiveness</i> (First Days Workshop)	January 2020

Community and Environmental Sociology Student Seminar Spring 2018 - Spring 2019
Weekly Workshop Organizer

Community and Environmental Sociology Department 2017-2018
Student Representative

Teaching Race Workshop 2016-2017
Workshop Content Committee

Solidarity, Sociology department organization for students of color Spring 2017
Co-Chair

Sociology Graduate Student Association, UW-Madison 2016-2017
Cohort Representative, Visit Day Committee Co-Chair

ADDITIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

National Society for Experiential Education *Experiential Education Academy Certification*
Spring 2021 - Elective course in DEI.

CITI IRB Certification, Report ID 20779159, September 2016. Renewed September 2019.

NIH Office of Extramural Research Protecting Human Research Participants
March 7, 2015, Certification Number 1714299

Advanced Analytics for Child Welfare Administration: Course by Casey Family Programs and Chapin Hall Center for State Child Welfare Data, Albany, NY February 2011

Leadership Development Program at Cayuga Centers: March 2012 to March 2013, Program consisted of 1 year of monthly 12 hour sessions. Members functioned as an incubator team for organizational decisions and planning. Topics covered include case studies, simulations, nonprofit management, accounting, and human resources.

Personal Outcomes Measures: Certified Training by Council on Quality and Leadership, July 2013. Interview-based assessment of quality-of-life specific to assessing the quality of life for people of varying physical and cognitive abilities.

PAST PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Society for Experiential Education

American Sociological Association

Southern Sociological Society

Rural Sociological Society

American Evaluation Association: 2012-2014

Human Services Topical Interest Group program co-chair and webmaster

SELECT HONORS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Crowe Graduate Student Travel Award, November 2025
Institute for Social Research Travel Award - University of Michigan, October 2025
Crowe Dissertation Research Support, \$4,280: May 2025.
SEE Experiential Education Rising Leader, September 2023
Early Excellence in Teaching Award, Spring 2021.
Minority Recruitment & Retention Committee Travel Grant, UW-Madison Sociology Department, \$500: June 2018.
Crowe Fund Graduate Student Conference Grantee, Community and Environmental Sociology Department, University of Wisconsin-Madison. \$700: August 2018
Crowe Fund Graduate Student Conference Grantee, Community and Environmental Sociology Department, University of Wisconsin-Madison. \$700: September 2017
National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship-Honorable Mention: 2017
University of Chicago Partial Scholarship: 2008-2009 Academic Year, for Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences
Research Experiences for Undergraduates: Summer 2008 NSF fully funded summer program at Sociology Department, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX
Mortar Board Honor Society: 2007-2008 Academic Year, Inducted April 2007
Oak Wreath Award 2008: Newcomb College award for distinguished senior women engaged in the pursuit of learning, leadership, activities, and contributing to the Newcomb/Tulane community.
Tulane University Scholarship: 2004-2008, Merit-based award for half tuition, room, & board.

SELECT CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

Chicago Ethnography Conference (presented), University of Chicago, 2025
(National) Society for Experiential Education, 2022, 2023 (presented)
Social Science History Associate, Virtual (presented), November 2021
Southern Sociological Society, Virtual, April 2020
Southern Sociological Society Atlanta, GA April 2019
Rural Sociological Society Portland, OR (presented) July 2018
Rural Sociological Society Columbus, OH (presented) July 27-30, 2017
Madison Mayor's Neighborhood Conference, Madison, WI October 8, 2016
Blueprints for Violence Prevention Conference April San Antonio(presented) TX 2012
Global Implementation Conference (Biennial) Washington, DC 2011 2013
American Evaluation Association Minneapolis, MN 2012, Washington, DC 2013
Newcomb Summit: Educating Women for A World in Crisis, New Orleans, LA Feb 8-11, 2007
Southwestern Social Science Association, Denver, CO (presented) April 2009

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Experiential and Service-Learning Coordinator

Texas A&M University-San Antonio

September 2021 to October 2024

- Develop and present professional development and pedagogy materials for faculty related to experiential and service learning. at least 3 sessions per semester including summers.
- Wrote and disseminated a 22 page faculty course preparation guide for experiential and service-learning.
- Develop and present learning opportunities for students and support faculty implementation of Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle.
- Facilitate collaboration and partnerships between community based organizations and classrooms.
- Develop stakeholder handbooks, calendar, marketing, and other systems for long term sustainability of programming.
- Supervise Mays Center Marketing team with project management, client management, professional development of staff, design, strategy, writing, and editing(Sept 2022-2023).

Teaching Assistant for Introduction to Community and Environmental Sociology

University of Wisconsin Madison, WI

August 2019 to July 2021

- Facilitated 4 weekly discussion sections with up to 25 students per section during traditional semesters.
- Designed lessons to reinforce reading and lecture materials through critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, and compassionate conversations.
- Provided thorough written feedback on assignments for all students during spring and fall semesters (about 95 students per traditional semester; up to 30 during summer semesters).
- Supported students dealing with personal and mental health issues through referrals and problem solving for in-class success.
- Early Excellence in Teaching Award, Spring 2021.

Graduate Research Assistant in Community and Environmental Sociology

University of Wisconsin Madison, WI

August 2016 to August 2019

- Facilitated community-led research design cycle in 3 rural communities for Gaining and Maintaining Young Adults project. Supported faculty research projects using mixed methods.
- Contributed to team data analysis of rural community strategies and trends for retaining and growing young adult populations.
- Used spatial data to create maps for demographic analyses.
- Merged US Census, TIGER/Line Shapefiles, and other data sets to visualize data analysis on sea level rise, migration, and voting patterns.
- Interviewed 40 retirement-aged activists throughout the state of Wisconsin about community engagement and leadership.
- Contributed to team data analysis of contributions and facilitation of elder participation in activist engagement.
- Interviewed 25 young adults in stable and growing rural communities in Wisconsin.

Independent Consultant

November 2014 - August 2016

Consultation clients working in the nonprofit sector. The underlying philosophy behind work is good implementation practice and organizational capacity building.

- Instrument development, qualitative data analysis, and in-depth interviews with 10 subjects in informal education.
- Nonprofit organizational management, accounting, systems, and compliance.
- Capacity building and team facilitation.
- Conference evaluation facilitation.

Evaluation and Research Specialist, Continuous Quality Improvement

Cayuga Centers, Auburn, NY

September 2010-November 2014

- Assisted the Vice President of Continuous Quality Improvement as needed to ensure compliance with state and independent accreditation standards and internal policies.
- Interpreted local, state, and federal regulations for agency compliance, new program development, and maintained agency accreditation.
- Implemented agency-wide research agenda to support a stronger link between research and practice while supporting staff needs. Educated staff on evidence-based practices, regional trends, and providing consistent access to relevant research findings of their field.
- Built and designed infrastructure for measuring outcomes program evaluations.
- Completed troubleshooting systems design and technical barriers to outcomes tracking
- Facilitated training and workshops for staff development on adult learning, logic models, and program accountability.
- Led 15 teams through accountability cycles and capacity building to review and refine their internal systems using the Getting to Outcomes Model by Abraham Wandersman (2004).
- Maintained informational blog and listservs for staff.
- Assisted in agency-wide continuous quality improvement through planning, audits, reviews, systems checks, process reviews, and other actions as needed.
- Produced reports for public dissemination. Projects typically had no formal budget. Projects included recruiting internal volunteers for survey administration, training, survey writing, and analysis. Reports can be found at <http://cayugacenters.org/news/program-outcomes/>
- Managed surveys from instrument design to supervising staff completing phone calls or survey administration as needed annually by funders, and for targeted reports
- Supported grant writing staff through research, program design, editing, and proofreading.
- Advised agency leadership on decision making, program development, and strategic planning.
- Facilitated team in the development of implementation plan and strategy for Creative Approach to Residential Enrichment, a residential program designed for girls using evidence-based and research-informed practice.

Last updated: November 2025