

MELISSA L. VILLODAS, MSW

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Research Interests: My research focuses on how where people live impact their health and mental health outcomes with my dissertation focusing on the impact of the neighborhood environment and social connectedness on the mental health of Black youth.

Education

2018-2023 (Anticipated Graduation)	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Ph.D., Social Work
2013-2015	New York University M.S.W., Social Work
2008-2012	Nyack College B.A., English Writing Minor(s): Social Work, Biblical Studies Honors Program Graduate

Research Experience

August 2021 - Present

Research Assistant

Dr. Trenette Clark-Goings

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work

Assists with recruitment and data collection for the Substance Use Prevention, Education, and Research (SUPER) initiative federally funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). SUPER implements evidence-based programs aimed at strengthening community capacity to prevent the onset of substance use and reduce substance use progression among youth ages 11-15.

Research assistant for an R01 grant funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), using integrative data analysis (IDA) to combine two large, longitudinal, nationally representative datasets to examine risk and protective factors of adolescents and emerging adults (ages 13-25 years) at the individual, family, peer, school, and community levels.

February 2019-present

Research Assistant

Dr. Amy Blank Wilson

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work

Assist with recruitment, interviews, data collection, and co-facilitating group treatment, in addition to project management responsibilities as part of an intervention study funded by National Institutes of Health examining an intervention that addresses criminogenic risk factors among incarcerated individuals with serious mental illness.

Research assistant and design team member for the Tiny Homes Village, a demonstration project aimed at developing a new affordable housing option for people with mental illness and other health conditions living on a fixed income.

<p>May 2021-July 2021 Research Assistant</p>	<p>Dr. Allison Metz <i>Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute - UNC – Chapel Hill</i> Assisted with literature reviews and grant writing tasks for research on supporting quality trusting relationships in implementation practice.</p>
<p>March 2019-June 2019 Research Assistant</p>	<p>Dr. Cherise Harrington & Dr. Laura Linnen <i>North Carolina Central University - School of Social Work</i> Engaged in data collection and data management activities including codebook development and data validation, as well as provided consultation for the manualized “how-to” guide to facilitate project sustainability in the community for the Healthy Moves Durham project.</p>
<p>Nov 2018-Jan 2018 Research Assistant</p>	<p>Dr. Cindy Fraga-Rizzo <i>University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill - School of Social Work</i> Assisted on developing a manual for middle school teachers in response to NC Senate Bill 279 (Article 8 § 115C-81), requiring local school administrative units to teach about sex trafficking prevention and engaged in dissemination of current research projects.</p>
<p>August 2018-May 2019 Research Assistant</p>	<p>Dr. Sarah Verbiest <i>University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill - School of Social Work</i> Supported Dr. Verbiest in building the Jordan Institute for Families’ blog and visibility, as well as provided support for the UNC Refugee Wellness Project in the dissemination of research projects.</p>
<p>June 2015-May 2017 Research Assistant</p>	<p>Dr. Michelle Munson <i>New York University - School of Social Work</i> Assisted with data collection for the Youth and Young Adult Mental Health Group (YYAMH-G) for their Lower East Side project in NYC and entered data for the ‘Just Do You’ and ‘Cornerstone’ intervention projects which were interventions focused on mental health service use. Conducted literature reviews and assisted with an evaluability assessment for programs within the Jewish Board Family and Children’s Services on programs for youth at risk of/ suspected to be involved in trafficking.</p>

Publications

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

1. Blank Wilson, A., Phillips, J., Parisi, A., Ishler, K.J., **Villodas, M., &** Francis, A. (Accepted for Publication). Patterns in Medicaid coverage and service utilization among people with serious mental illnesses. *Community Mental Health*.
2. **Villodas, M.L.,** Nebbit, V., Yu, M., Lombe, M., Foell, A., McCoy, H., & Enelamah, N.V. (Accepted for Publication). Assessing the modified neighborhood cohesion index among African American adolescents living in public housing: An exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. *Journal Society for Social Work Research*.
3. Fraga-Rizo, C., Chesworth, B.R., Francino-Olsen, Kleln, L.B., **Villodas, M.L.,** Martin S.L. & Macy, R.J. (Accepted for Publication). The state of programs for educating youth about sex trafficking in the United States: A national scoping scan survey. *Journal of Human Trafficking*.

4. Foell, A., Pitzer, K. A., Nebbitt, V., Lombe, M., Yu, M., **Villodas, M. L.**, & Newransky, C. (2021). Exposure to community violence and depressive symptoms: examining community, family, and peer effects among public housing youth. *Health & Place*, 69, 102579. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2021.102379>
5. Givens, A., Francis, A.M., Blank Wilson, A., Parisi, A., Phillips, J. & **Villodas, M.** (2021). Developing a Fidelity Checklist of a Mental Health Intervention in Prisons. *Community Mental Health Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-021-00777-x>
6. Blank Wilson, A., Mahadevan, T., **Villodas, M.**, Rodriguez, M., Baillard, A., & Cuddeback, G. (2020). Tiny Homes are Huge for People Living with Serious Mental Illness. *Research on Social Work Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731520961448>
7. Fraga-Rizo, C., Klein, L.B., Chesworth, B.R., Franchino-Olsen, H., **Villodas, M.L.**, Macy, R.J., & Martin, S.L. (2019). Educating students about sex trafficking and responding to student needs: Principals' perceptions and practices. *Journal of Human Trafficking*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2019.1698922>
8. Cole, A., Ramirez, L.A, **Villodas, M.L.**, Ben David, S., & Munson, M.R. (2019). "I want to rise above it all": Perceptions of the neighborhood among young adults living in public housing. *Children and Youth Services Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.05.031>
9. Manuel, J. I., Munson, M. R., Dino, M., **Villodas, M. L.**, Barba, A., & Panzer, P. G. (2018). Aging out or continuing on? Exploring strategies to prepare marginalized youth for a transition to recovery in adulthood. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 41(4), 258-265. <https://doi.org/10.1037/prj0000332>

Book Chapters

1. Blank Wilson, A., Charles, P., McLeod, B., Gottlieb, A., & **Villodas, M.** (Accepted for Publication) Examining Variation in Experiences of Incarcerated Parents and their Children: Perspectives from the Smart Decarceration Initiative. In N. Rodriguez & Krysik, J. (Eds.) *Children of Incarcerated Parents: impact, Support and Collaboration, First Edition*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.
2. Wilson, A., Phillips, J., **Villodas, M.**, Parisi, A., & Dohler, E. (2022). Juvenile Justice Policies and Programs. In W.J., Hall, P. Lanier, J.M., Jenson, & M.W. Fraser (Eds.) In *Social policy for children and families: A risk and resilience perspective*, (4th ed). Sage.

Manuscripts Under Review

1. Pitzer, K.A., Foell, A., Nebbitt, V.N., Lombe, M., Yu, M., **Villodas, M.L.**, Enelamah, N. (Under Review). Community violence exposure and anxiety sensitivity: Assessing direct and indirect effects of community, family, and peers. Target Journal: *Journal of Community Psychology*
2. Parisi, A., Blank Wilson A., **Villodas, M.L.**, Phillips, J., & Dohler, E. (Under Review). A systematic review of interventions targeting criminogenic risks among people with serious mental illnesses. Target Journal: *Psychiatric Services*
3. Blank Wilson A., Phillips, J., Parisi, A., Ishler, K.J, **Villodas, M.**, Francis, A. (Under Review). Patterns in Medicaid coverage and service utilization among people with serious mental illnesses. Target Journal: *Community Mental Health Journal*
4. Munson, M.R., Jaccard, J., Stanhope, V., Ben-David, S., Shapiro, B., & **Villodas, M.L.** (Under Review). Feasibility of the cornerstone program to improve mental health in transition-age youth with mental health conditions. Target Journal: *Journal of Adolescent Health*
5. Masa, R., Forte, A. & **Villodas, M.L.** (Under Review). Direct and indirect effects of nutritional status, self-efficacy, and gender attitudes on educational outcomes among vulnerable adolescent girls in Zambia. Target Journal: *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*

Manuscripts in Process

1. **Villodas, M.L.**, Forte, A., Blank Wilson, A., Moore, K., Smith, Q. & Frago-Rizzo, C. (In process). Exploring the Impact of Fostering a Clear and Positive Identity Among Latinx Adolescents in Youth Development Programs: A Systematic Review. Target Journal: Youth & Society
2. Gibbs, D.J., **Villodas, M.L.**, Kainz, K., Francis, A.M. (In process). The effects of “legal orphan” status for emerging adults aging out of foster care: A secondary analysis of linked AFCARS and NYTD Data. Target Journal: Children and Youth Services Review
3. **Villodas, M.L.**, Nebbit, V., Yu, M., Lombe, M., Foell, A., & McCoy, H. (In process). Assessing perceptions of maternal attitudes using the PAM among African American adolescents living in public housing: An exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. Target Journal:
4. **Villodas, M.L.**, Nebbit, V., Yu, M., Lombe, M., Foell, A., & McCoy, H. (In process). Assessing perceptions of paternal attitudes using the PAM among African American adolescents living in public housing: An exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. Target Journal:
5. **Villodas, M.L.**, Blank Wilson, A., Phillips, J., & Parisi, A. (In process). A Toolkit for Conducting Services Research in the Era of Clinical Trials: Lessons Learned from the Field. Target Journal: Research on Social Work Practice
6. Anderson, E., Kovach, M., Garlock, L., **Villodas, M.**, Verbiest, S., & Hinson, J. (In Process). Perspectives on healing: Factors affecting refugee engagement in mental health treatment. Target Journal: Social Work in Mental Health

Conferences and Presentations

1. Masa, R., Forte, A. & **Villodas, M.L.** (July 2021) *Direct and indirect associations of underweight, self-efficacy, and gender attitudes with cognitive and academic skills among adolescent girls in Zambia: A longitudinal examination using structural equation modeling.* Paper presentation at the 22nd Biennial International Consortium for Social Development Conference, Virtual Conference.
2. Masa, R., Forte, A. & **Villodas, M.L.** (March 2021) *Direct and indirect associations of underweight, self-efficacy, and gender attitudes with cognitive and academic skills among adolescent girls in Zambia: A longitudinal examination using structural equation modeling.* Paper presentation at the 22nd Biennial Global Social Development Innovations (GSDI) Lunch Series, Virtual Presentation
3. Blank Wilson, A., **Villodas, M.**, Phillips, J., & Parisi, A. (2021 February). *Conducting a RCT for individuals with serious mental illness in prison: Preliminary findings from the next generation of criminal justice interventions.* Symposium presentation at Advances in Behavioral Health Policy Seminar Series, Virtual Presentation
4. Blank Wilson, A., **Villodas, M.**, Phillips, J., & Parisi, A. (2021 January). *Embracing the Complexity: Exploring Ways to Optimize the Effectiveness of Interventions for Justice-Involved People with Serious Mental Illness.* Symposium paper presentation at Society for Social Work Research 2021 Annual Conference, Virtual Conference.
 - a. **Villodas, M.**, Blank Wilson, A., Phillips, J., Parisi, A. & Chen, D. *Exploring the relationship between criminal thinking and psychiatric symptoms among justice-involved men with serious mental illnesses.* Symposium paper presentation at Society for Social Work Research 2021 Annual Conference, Virtual Conference.
5. **Villodas, M.L.**, Kainz, K., Smith, Q. & Jenkins, M. (2020 January). *Pathways toward civic involvement in young adulthood.* Paper presentation at Society for Social Work Research 2020 Annual Conference, Washington, D.C.
6. **Villodas, M.L.**, Bledsoe, S.E., Smith, Q. & Jenkins, M. (2020 January). *Emerging adult's perspectives on community engagement and the transition to adulthood: A qualitative study of the 'forgotten half'.* Paper presentation at Society for Social Work Research 2020 Annual Conference, Washington, D.C.

7. Blank Wilson, A., **Villodas, M.**, Phillips, J., Parisi, A., & Fedock, G. (2020 January) *A Primer for Conducting Mental Health Research in the Era of Clinical Trials*. Symposium paper presentation at Society for Social Work Research 2020 Annual Conference, Washington, D.C.
8. Manuel, J. I., Munson, M. R., Dino, M., **Villodas, M. L.**, Barba, A., & Panzer, P. G. (2017 December). *Barriers and facilitators to organizational readiness for building a model of system-wide change for transition-age young adults*. Poster presentation at 10th Annual Conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation in Health, Arlington, V.A.

Grants

Tiny Homes Village at the Farm at Penny Lane. Funding from the Chatham County Housing Trust Fund to Cross-Disability Services, Inc. Role: Co-Investigator (PI: Amy Blank Wilson). Amount: \$54,000 (2020).

Fellowships & Awards

- June 2021 – Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research (MCUAAAR) Summer Mentoring Workshop of Advanced Doctoral Students. This is a workshop that emphasized training in numerous areas including publishing in peer review journals, writing grant proposals to the NIH, the tenure process, ethical conduct of research, successful mentoring, and how to navigate the academy.
- 2020 – 2021 - Outstanding Doctoral Student Award, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Social Work
- NIH/NIMHD T37MD014218 (Cavazos, Ssewamala) 06/01/2020 – 08/10/2020 (Training Period) Training LEADers (LEAD) to Accelerate Global Mental Health Disparities in Research. This is a training program designed for advanced pre-doctoral students and postdoctoral trainees from diverse backgrounds in the U.S., interested in child and adolescent behavioral health. Trainees learn through mentoring, “hands-on” immersion in domestic and international child behavioral health/health disparities studies.
Role: Trainee

Ad Hoc Journal Reviewer for:

Journal for the Society Social Work Research

Professional Experience

June 2017-August 2018

Project Director

Dr. Michelle Munson

New York University - School of Social Work

As the Project Director for ‘Just Do You’ and ‘Cornerstone’ Research Projects, funded by the National Institutes of Health, I led the coordination of research tasks for the YYAMH-G. In this role I managed data collection methods including scheduling and interviewing participants, as well as secured confidentiality of data and adherence to ethical research practices. Additionally, I managed utilization of funds for participant incentives through petty cash reconciliation, led the coordination of tasks for the group, and provided field instruction to an MSW student at NYU.

January 2018-July 2018

Mental Health Clinician

Deena Levine

Institute for Family Health - New York, NY

Provided clinical mental health services to all age patients/families. The scope of practice included but was not limited to diagnostic assessment, counseling, psychotherapy, brief treatment, behavior modification, crisis intervention and mental health consultation.

June 2015-May 2017
ACS TFFC Clinical

China Rivera
Cayuga Centers – Bronx, NY
Provided mandated individual therapy to program youth using Trauma Systems Therapy, Rapid Resolution Therapy, and STAIR models to support the children and youth's adjustment into and out of foster care. Clinically treated children and youth with mental health challenges including Mood Disorders, PTSD, Anxiety Disorders, Impulse Control Disorder, and Intellectual Disabilities, worked with LGBT youth and youth displaced from their home and/or other countries. Completed psychosocial assessments, mental health assessments, and treatment plans within an interdisciplinary child welfare team.

August 2014- May 2015
Youth Counselor

Lowell Hershberger
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation – Brooklyn, NY
Provided case management to 10-15 youth each cohort supporting the area of career development and facilitated weekly groups that included reflection of work experiences and development of soft skills as well as community-based projects. Provided individual short-term counseling surrounding life vocational and transitional experiences into adulthood.

Teaching Experience

August 2021 - Present

Elon University – Human Service Studies

Adjunct Professor for HSS 2130 Working with Groups and Communities

Class Size = 18

July 2021 - August 2021

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill - School of Social Work

Teaching Assistant and Guest Lecturer for SOWO 740 – Implementing Evidence-Informed Practice with Individuals, Families, and Groups

Lecture: Measurement

Course Instructor: Karon Johnson

January 2021 – May 2021

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill - School of Social Work

Teaching Assistant for SOWO 510 – Foundations for Evidence-Based Practice and Program Evaluation

Course Instructor: Trenette Clark Goings

March 8, 2021

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill - School of Social Work

Guest Lecturer for SOWO 810 – Evaluation of Social Work Interventions

Lecture: A Brief Overview of Mixed Methods Research

Course Instructor: Melissa Jenkins

February 6, 2020

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill - School of Social Work

Guest Lecturer for SOWO 492 – APPLES Spring Internship Seminar in Service Learning

Lecture: Applying a Systems Perspective to Social Work Practice

Course Instructor: L.B. Klein

August 2019 - December 2019

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill - School of Social Work

Co-Instructor for SOWO 540 – Social Work Practice with Families, Individuals, and Groups

Course Instructor: Karon Johnson

January 2016 – May 2016

Nyack College – School of Social Work

Teaching Assistant for SWK 556 – Generalist Practice with Groups, Organizations, and Communities

Course Instructor: Delia Kim

Committees

January 2021- June 2020 – UNC School of Social Work Dean Search Committee

August 2020 – Present – UNC School of Social Work Doctoral Program Committee

Professional Credentials

September 2015 - New York State Social Work Licensure; License #: 096331 (exp. 8/21/2018)

Honors and Scholarships

2014 Phi Alpha Phi Honor Society, New York University

2014 – 2015 Latino Social Work Task Force Scholarship Recipient

Memberships

2019- Present – Society for Social Work Research

2013- 2016 – NASW New York City Chapter

Volunteer and Community Service

Sept 2019 – Present – Volunteer Teaching Assistant at Cobo Brothers Dance Company (Durham, NC)

Sept 2017- May 2018 – Volunteer Teaching Assistant at Lorenz Latin Dance Studio (Bronx, NY)

Sept 2017 – Co-organized Hurricane Maria Relief with Local Business (Bronx, NY)

January – October 2013 – Volunteered at New Life Local Development Corporation Health Center and
Organized 5k Fundraiser for programming (Elmhurst, Queens)