

Emilee Mabrey Bio

My name is Emilee Mabrey, and I am a doctoral student at Ball State in Muncie, Indiana working towards a doctorate of education in Adult, Higher, and Community Education. My main area of focus is adult education, while I have secondary work in higher education and executive development for public service. My dissertation research is working with single mothers attending higher education while living in an affordable housing complex in the Appalachian region. My personal interest in partnering with women and exploring the uniqueness of their lives stems from working for the affordable housing cause through various organizations, as well as my deeply held belief that housing is a basic human right.

My connection to affordable housing began when working for Habitat for Humanity through the AmeriCorps program in 2013. During my ten-month term, I served as the Family Services Liaison, guiding families from the application process through the signing of their mortgage contract. The training I received through AmeriCorps and Habitat for Humanity stressed the importance of being a life-long advocate for affordable housing. I was informed on local and national housing policies, as well as the need for affordable housing units across the country – including college campuses.

At the conclusion of my service year, I was hired by Habitat for Humanity elevating to the role of Family Services Assistant. Much of my previous duties as an AmeriCorps were transferred to this new position. After working for the organization for two additional years, hearing the stories of hundreds of applicants in need for affordable housing because they were living in substandard, and usually unaffordable conditions, I decided to pursue a doctorate that would allow me to not only study the effects of poverty, instable housing, and education, but also

find a way to share the stories of those who had secured affordable housing through a nonprofit housing network and the benefits they received from stable housing.

In the summer of 2018, I served as a team leader for Bike and Build, a nonprofit housing organization, and traveled over 4,000 miles across the country partnering with community organizations who served the needs of low-income households through homeownership. Through this summer cycling experience, I met with families living in rural poverty who had minimal access to basic resources in their communities. My heart was overwhelmed by the daily challenges they faced trying to survive in the communities in which they had grown up in and were rooted for generations.

Over the summer, I grappled with the differences between urban and rural poverty, feeling particularly concerned with the lack of resources available to rural families. Upon personally concluding that families in rural communities are forgotten and often left behind when looking at initiatives that target low-income families, I decided it was this population that I wanted to focus on for my study. It is this reason my study takes place in central Appalachia. Another motivator of the study was my desire to work with smaller, local housing organizations because I felt they more closely understood the needs of their immediate community members, and I am curious about their tailored practices.

Finally, although I do not have children, I am a single woman who has set personal, professional, and educational goals. I understand the drive it takes to try and succeed on my own. These single women who persisted, often for many, many years, towards their dream of being more than a statistic and providing a better life for their children provides me with the motivation to persist. My research and working with women has motivated me to continue seeking a solution to the housing crisis. As the researcher, my goal is to uplift these women by

providing them with an opportunity to share their stories, and to inspire other women who find themselves in similar situations wanting to do and be more, but may be intimidated by the current structures in place that often times are against them.