

## **Clark defends dissertation on Poverty and Public Housing in Madison County**

Yolanda Javette Clark successfully defended her Human Capital Development Program PhD thesis, Project-Based Section 8 Housing Participants' Perception of Cultural And Structural Factors To Explain Barriers To Economic Self-Sufficiency, which examined why individuals become trapped in public housing. The Project-Based Section 8 program began as temporary housing of the last resort for people who experience temporary setbacks. However, due to participants' inability to become economically self-sufficient, the anti-poverty program has become permanent housing from which few families have been able to escape. With a paradigm shift to promoting economic self-sufficiency, housing administrators are exploring workforce and economic development models that may alleviate barriers to upward economic mobility for program participants.

Recent studies related to escaping poverty and becoming economically self-sufficient suggest cultural and structural factors are equally important and collectively impact upward economic mobility. Similarly, the purpose of this study in Madison County, MS was to determine if Project-Based Section 8 housing participants' characteristics, described as cultural and structural barriers to economic self-sufficiency, interrelate and collectively predict ability to escape poverty and experience upward economic mobility. To investigate the purpose of the study, four research objectives were explored utilizing a non-experimental research design.

Participants in the study identified with intrinsically-focused cultural factors as well as extrinsically-focused structural factors. Even though study results revealed cultural and structural factors are equally important in becoming economically self-sufficient, it could not be determined that cultural and structural barriers interrelate and collectively impact ability to experience upward economic mobility. However, to create effective antipoverty initiatives,

housing administrators must seek to understand how the dynamics of structural and cultural factors of poverty can be integrated. Studying the theories independent of each other may limit the effectiveness of future economic self-sufficiency initiatives.

Based on findings and conclusions, a multidimensional approach to alleviating poverty and promoting economic self-sufficiency is recommended. With an economic self-sufficiency program that offers education, job skills, and coaching, Project-Based Section 8 housing program participants will be able to experience informational, skills, and embodied learning. With this holistic approach, participants may be able to escape poverty and move towards economic self-sufficiency.