

**FREEDOM TO BE ONE'S SELF:
APPALACHIAN WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES ON EMPOWERMENT**

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(ABSTRACT)

This study explores what constitutes empowerment among a small group of Appalachian women and the developmental and cultural factors that they believe contribute to such empowerment. Twelve women completed in-depth interviews and questionnaires about their lifespan development with regard to cultural context and progression through Erikson's Psychosocial Stages of Development. The purpose of the study was to explore women's perceptions of what empowerment is for them and how this is influenced by their developmental histories. This study is a unique contribution to the literature in that it focuses on empowerment from a developmental perspective and seeks to identify factors in lifespan development and cultural context that affect empowerment, focusing on a frequently marginalized population, Appalachian women. The data were examined within an Eriksonian framework in relationship to how successful development through Erikson's psychosocial stages affects empowerment.

Qualitative analysis of the results indicated that the participants felt that developmental and cultural factors did contribute to the degree of empowerment women experience as adults. The results also indicated that the Appalachian environment and culture supported their empowerment. The findings also reveal a positive relationship

between the degree of empowerment experienced by the women and their successful resolution through the eight psychosocial stages of development. The findings further indicate that the experience and definition of empowerment may be as diverse as women themselves. However, the consistent theme found for all of the women in this study was that the essence of empowerment is experienced as a form of inner strength. The conclusion of this study is that, whether one perceives empowerment to come from internal or external factors, from one's upbringing, one's culture, one's God, or one's spirit, the essence of empowerment is experienced as the freedom to be one's self, in all one's glory.

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**FREEDOM TO BE ONE’S SELF:
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Chapter I

Introduction

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to explore what constitutes empowerment for Appalachian women and the developmental and cultural factors that contribute to such empowerment. The findings of this research will have the potential to improve the lives of Appalachian women and their female descendants. For women as individuals, this knowledge will serve to provide examples of how others have achieved empowerment and why it is important to do so. These factors then have the potential to affect all aspects of their lives, including their physical and mental health, spirituality and parenting practices, as well as relationships and social skills, thereby allowing these women to live more full and rewarding lives. Previous studies of empowerment have focused primarily on defining empowerment and finding ways to bring empowerment to a given population. This study is a unique contribution to the literature in that it focuses on empowerment from a developmental perspective and seeks to identify factors in a specific cultural context that affect empowerment, focusing on a frequently marginalized population, Appalachian women.

The researcher explored (a) women’s perceptions of what empowerment is for them, (b) how this varies among individuals, and (c) their perceptions of how it is influenced by variables in their developmental histories. The research was conducted using a qualitative method of in-depth interviews wherein a series of open-ended

questions served as a framework for guiding the interview. Rather than seeking to measure a preconceived construct, this approach allowed the women to reveal what empowerment means to them and give voice to their own stories. The data was examined within an Eriksonian framework in relationship to how successful development through Erikson's psychosocial stages might be related to their sense of empowerment. This expands the data to include a developmental perspective as well as an outcome perspective. I expected that the findings would reveal a positive relationship between the degree of empowerment experienced by the women and their successful development through the eight psychosocial stages of development. If affirmed, this would suggest that the traditional definition of empowerment does not encompass all aspects of what the term means to the individual or to what degree developmental and cultural factors are related to empowerment.

The most immediate benefit of this research came for the participants in that it provided an opportunity for reflection on their lives and on their female ancestor's lives in relation to how growing up in an Appalachian culture and other aspects of their development are related to their sense of empowerment. The research also has beneficial implications for the future of Appalachian women, as well as for women in other rural environments. The data can be used to inform practice of health and wellness professionals, to use as a tool toward empowering rural women, and for educators who work with these populations.

The findings from this study also have the potential to pave the way toward future research that could include examination of what factors in an Appalachian environment inhibit or promote empowerment of women, as well as how developmental factors affect

empowerment. It could also lead to a new perspective on the outcomes of empowerment education and intervention programs, as well as examination of the longitudinal effects of empowerment on women's lives and their daughter's lives. This important and timely research will have the potential for positive effects on the lives of Appalachian women both now and in the future.

Chapter II

Literature Review

The literature that is pertinent to the present study includes current perspectives on empowerment, a brief description of Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, and regional and cultural distinctions of native Appalachians.

Empowerment

A great deal of literature exists on the construct of empowerment in numerous fields of study, including empowerment issues in the workplace and empowerment of the disabled, as well as empowerment of women and communities. There is very little, however, related specifically to the developmental components of empowerment or to Appalachian women. It is possible, however, to use the existing work as a basis from which to explore these constructs across specific groups and contexts. The first task is to define the term for the study and to define which contexts apply. The literature varies widely on how empowerment is conceptualized, revealing a plethora of definitions, depending on the discipline and orientation of the author (Sheilds, 1995). As Sheilds (1995) noted:

Each author presents his or her own definition, quotes a referenced definition, or simply alludes to a definition through example... Thus the immensity of the concept of empowerment may be overwhelming and at the same time, as Kieffer (1984, p. 9) stated, its "applicability has been limited by continuing conceptual ambiguity" (p.16).

For this study, the most basic and fundamental definition was chosen as a starting point from which to review the literature. Webster (1984) defined the word empower as, "1. to

give power to; authorize 2. to enable” (p. 201). The literature reflects consistent themes in relation to specific concepts believed to be inherent within or closely related to the construct of empowerment. These include the issues of: control over one’s life, self-efficacy, mastery, power, and autonomy.

Julian Rappaport and Marc Zimmerman are leading scholars in empowerment theory and they have developed a large body of work both individually and jointly on empowerment. Zimmerman (1990) stated, “empowerment theory is an enigma” (p. 169). He noted “Rappaport (1984) suggested that it is easy to define in its absence-alienation, powerless, helplessness--but difficult to define positively because it takes on a different form in different contexts” (p. 169). Rappaport (1987) defines empowerment as “a process by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over issues of concern to them” (p. 122). It is presented as a multilevel construct in which each level of analysis is interdependent with the others (Zimmerman, 1995). Zimmerman (1995) presented three areas in the lives of human beings in which empowerment occurs:

1. Psychological empowerment (PE) refers to empowerment at the individual level of analysis.
2. Organizational empowerment (OE) includes processes and structures that enhance members’ skills and provide them with the mutual support necessary to effect community level change (i.e., empowering organization). It refers to improved organizational effectiveness by effectively competing for resources, networking with other organizations, or expanding its influence (i.e., empowered organization).

3. At the community level of analysis empowerment refers to individuals working together in an organized fashion to improve their collective lives and linkages among community organizations and agencies that help maintain that quality of life. (pp. 581-582)

The focus of this study is psychological empowerment (PE) of the individual. Even though PE is distinguishable from organizational or community empowerment, it also influences and is influenced by empowerment at other levels of analysis (Zimmerman, 1995). Rappaport and Zimmerman's work presents PE as rooted firmly in a social action framework that includes community change, capacity building, and collectivity (Zimmerman, 1995). An individual level of analysis of empowerment does not exclude sociopolitical or contextual factors, however. In fact, it is inclusive of active engagement in one's community and an understanding of one's sociopolitical environment, as well as learning about controlling agents and acting to influence those agents (Zimmerman, 1995). As Zimmerman (1995) pointed out,

PE should not be interpreted as individualism, the promotion of one ideology versus another, or merely an intrapsychic phenomenon. Rather, PE includes beliefs that goals can be achieved, awareness about resources and factors that hinder or enhance one's efforts to achieve those goals, and efforts to fulfill the goals. (p. 582)

Zimmerman (1995) used a nomological network to describe psychological empowerment. He defines a nomological network as “ a theoretical framework that specifies relationships among variables in such a way as to help both differentiate and define the construct of concern, and that enables the formulation of a measurement

model” (p. 583). He further concluded that attempts to develop a measurement of psychological empowerment may be especially difficult because “(a) PE manifests itself in different perceptions, skills, and behaviors across people, (b) different beliefs, competencies, and actions may be required to master various settings, and (c) PE may fluctuate over time” (p. 583). He concluded that, “Each of these qualities suggests that PE may be an open-ended construct that is not easily reduced to a universal set of operational rules and definitions” (p. 583). It is with this in mind that the current study has been developed using an exploratory approach that allows for open-ended research and qualitative analysis.

Zimmerman (1995) expounded on his theory by distinguishing between empowering processes and empowered outcomes. Empowering processes refer to how people, organizations, and communities become empowered, whereas empowered outcomes refer to the consequences of those processes. He defined empowering processes as those “where people create or are given opportunities to control their own destiny and influence the decisions that affect their lives” (p. 583). He stated further that:

Empowered outcomes refer to specific measurement operations (whether they are quantitative or qualitative in nature) that may be used to study the effects of interventions designed to empower participants, investigate empowering processes and mechanisms, and generate a body of empirical literature that will help develop empowerment theory. Empowerment outcomes are one consequence of empowering processes. (p. 585)

Rappaport and Zimmerman outline three underlying assumptions of psychological empowerment. The first is that PE takes different forms for different people (Rappaport, 1984; Zimmerman, 1990). The second is that empowerment takes different forms in different contexts (Zimmerman, 1995). Psychological empowerment may vary across different life domains, such as work, family, and recreation. As Zimmerman (1995) pointed out, “a high level of empowerment might be expected among individuals who can generalize skills across life domains, but some individuals may also experience PE in one life domain even if they have been less successful in transferring skills to other life domains” (p. 586). The third assumption presents PE as a dynamic variable that may fluctuate over time. It is therefore, not a static state, and has the potential to vary over time throughout an individual’s lifespan. As Zimmerman (1995) stated, “this suggests that every individual has the potential to experience empowering and disempowering processes, and to develop a sense of empowerment at one time and disempowerment at another. It also suggests that people may become more empowered over time” (p. 586). It is anticipated that this particular point will be especially relevant in the current study, most notably with the older participants whose levels of empowerment may have varied at different points throughout their lives and at different levels of mastery of the psychosocial stages of development.

The concept of controlling one’s own life is prevalent throughout the empowerment literature. As cited by Shefner-Rogers, Nagesh, Rogers, & Wayangankar (1998, pp. 319-320), many scholars view empowerment as “a process through which an individual perceives that he or she controls his or her situation” (Bandura 1977, 1986, 1997; Bormann 1988; Bullis, 1993; Buzzanell, 1995; Chiles & Zora, 1991, 1995;

Mumby, 1993; Pacanowsky, 1988; Papa, Ghanaskar & Singhal, 1997; Papa, Auwal & Singhal, 1995, 1997; Schiebel, 1994). Isaac Prilleltensky's (1994) empowerment theory states that, "empowerment is intended to enhance the degree of control individuals exercise over their lives" (p. 359). Lord (1989) also identified the degree of control over one's life as integral to empowerment. He determined that the process of empowerment was unique to each individual, characterized by the common elements of resource support and participation, an ongoing experience, and shaped by both personal and social factors including the availability of resources. Lord and Hutchison (1993) defined empowerment as "processes whereby individuals achieve increasing control of various aspects of their lives and participate in the community with dignity" (p. 7). Rappaport (1987) also addressed this issue as he stated, "by empowerment I mean our aim should be to enhance the possibilities for people to control their own lives" (p. 119). He stated further that the concept of empowerment "conveys both a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power and legal rights" (p. 121).

Shefner-Rogers et al. (1998, pp. 320-323) cited Bandura's (1986, 1997) conclusion that, "the concept of empowerment is similar to self-efficacy". Bandura also stated:

Empowerment is not something bestowed through edict. It is gained through development of personal efficacy that enables people to take advantage of opportunities and to remove environmental constraints guarded by those whose interests are served by them....increasing personal efficacy lies at the heart of empowerment (1997, p. 477).

Shefner-Rogers et al. (1998) presented empowerment in part as “a communication process designed to change an individual’s behavior through communication relationships with others” (p. 321). They note Freire (1968) and Alinsky’s (1972) emphasis that “empowerment occurs through a communication process in which the relationships between the oppressed and the oppressor undergo a fundamental change. How empowering messages are communicated, such as in a dialogic, rather than one-way style, can itself be an empowering influence” (p. 322). They stated further that, “the communication aspects of empowerment remain largely unrecognized and understudied” (p. 322). This concept supports the development of questions and methodology for the current study and indicates that the methodology process of open-ended narrative communication within the interviews may contribute to the current level of empowerment of the participants.

Another aspect of empowerment theory particularly relevant to this study is related to the concept of intervention or prevention. Rappaport’s (1987) thesis identified a dialectic that is formal between the rights and needs of people. He viewed the needs model in relation to prevention as “a process whereby experts find so-called high-risk people and save them from themselves, if they like it or not, by giving them, or even better, their children, programs which we develop, package, sell, operate, and otherwise control” (p. 13). As Sheilds (1998) stated, “the rights model translates into an advocacy model that can be equally one sided and limiting” (p. 17). She cited Swift’s (1984) discussion of both the needs and the rights models as being characterized by paternalism, and notes that Swift suggested that “the process has been to seek ‘expert’ opinion with an infusion of funds administered by a bureaucracy of experts and to wonder at the

resistance of the indigenous population to our efforts to improve their lives” (p. xi).

Sheilds (1998) noted that Rappaport (1981) suggested a new and applicable social policy that “requires a breakdown of the typical role relationship between professionals and community people” (p. 16). Shefner-Rogers et al. (1998) offered further support of this concept in noting that Sharma’s (1992) work indicates “a shift from doing things for women, to doing things with them, so that women are actively involved in directing their own empowerment programs.” They noted that:

This shift in focus is consistent with the theoretical perspectives of Freire (1968) and Alinsky (1972) wherein individuals who are to be empowered must (1) decide that they want to be empowered, and (2) be involved in deciding on the nature of the empowerment process. (p. 323)

Lord and Hutchison (1993, pp. 5-6) stated that “empowerment can begin to be understood by examining the concepts of power and powerlessness” as they cite the work of Moscovitch and Drover (1981). They noted that power is defined by the Cornell Empowerment Group as the “capacity of some persons and organizations to produce intended, foreseen, and unforeseen effects on others” (1989, p. 2). They cited Kieffer’s (1984) work in relation to powerlessness at the individual level as “the expectation of the person that his or her own actions will be ineffective in influencing the outcome of life events” (p. 6). They noted, however, that:

Lerner (1986) “makes a distinction between real and surplus powerlessness. Real powerlessness results from economic inequities and oppressive control exercised by systems and other

people. Surplus powerlessness is an internalized belief that change cannot occur, a belief which results in apathy and an unwillingness of the person to struggle for more control and influence”. (p. 6)

Lord and Hutchison (1993) also indicated that empowerment is increasingly being understood as a process of change (Cornell Empowerment Group, 1989). They cited McClelland’s (1975) suggestion that “in order for people to take power, they need to gain information about themselves and their environment and be willing to identify and work with others for change” (p.6). They pointed out that Whitmore (1988) similarly defined empowerment as “an interactive process through which people experience personal and social change, enabling them to take action to achieve influence over the organizations and institutions which affect their lives and the communities in which they live”. (p.13)

Lord and Hutchison (1993, pp. 6-7) noted Kieffer’s (1984) work on personal empowerment wherein he “labels empowerment as a developmental process which includes four stages: entry, advancement, incorporation, and commitment.” The entry stage appears to be motivated by some event or condition experienced as threatening to self or family, which Kieffer refers to as an act of “provocation”. The advancement stage includes three aspects necessary in continuing the empowerment process: a mentoring relationship, supportive peer relationships with a collective organization, and the development of a more critical understanding of social and political relations. The third stage involves the development of a growing political consciousness. The fourth and final stage is commitment, wherein the participants apply the competence developed in the previous stages to more and more aspects of their lives.

Lord and Hutchison (1993) also cited Wallerstein's (1992) theory defining empowerment as "a social-action process that promotes participation of people, organizations, and communities toward increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of community life, and social justice" (p.7).

In addition to research cited thus far, other literature related specifically to empowerment of women expands upon the concept of empowerment to examine it from women's perspectives. Shields (1995) focused on women's perceptions of the meaning of empowerment in their lives. That study explored women's experiences of empowerment as a process based primarily on their experience as adults. Results indicated that "women experience empowerment as a multifaceted expansive process with three central themes: the development of an internal sense of self, the ability to take action based on their internal sense of self, and a salient theme of connectedness" (p. 32). Shefner-Rogers et al. (1998) stated, "female empowerment is the process of building a woman's capacity to be self-reliant and to develop her sense of inner strength" (p. 323).

Empowerment is a fundamental concept in the feminist literature, encompassing a broad range of issues including both political and personal power, and legal and governmental rights, as well as domestic and individual considerations. Rowland-Serdar and Schwartz-Shea (1990) offered a conception of empowerment that is particularly relevant to the current study that "explicitly includes development of self" (p. 607). They defined empowerment as "a process in which women come to believe in their ability 'to construct, and take responsibility for, (their) gendered identity, (their) politics, and their choices'" (Alcoff, 1988: 432). They further contended that, "the foundational messages about women's powerlessness which hinder development of an empowered self are

transmitted in large part through the family in liberal society” (p. 607). They viewed the process toward empowerment as “reclaiming the self”, and overcoming dependency as “reclaiming one’s story.” They stated that:

Reclaiming one’s story involves two steps. The first is to recognize and embrace the concept that one’s life can be thought of as an unfolding story. The second is to exercise choice about how that story will unfold in one’s adult life. (pp. 612-613)

Rowland-Serdar and Schwartz-Shea (1990) further stated:

Selfhood for women, then, involves coming to terms with the cultural stories that have shaped their lives. This implies that women are active in the process of making meaning, interpreting their past and their current experiences as their understanding of contemporary culture and history change. (p. 613)

Rowland-Serdar and Schwartz-Shea (1990) pointed out that “Alcoff (1988:425) expressed it as, ‘women can (and do) think about, criticize, and alter discourse, and thus, subjectivity can be reconstructed through the processes of reflective practice’” (p.613). This view of reclaiming one’s story through reflective practice supports the basis from which the current method of study is derived in providing participants the opportunity to tell their own stories, thereby defining what empowerment means to them through narrative and self-reflection.

Lord and Hutchison (1993) cited Whitmore’s (1988) summary of empowerment literature, wherein she acknowledged that the concept needs to be more clearly defined, and identified some common underlying assumptions:

- (a) individuals are assumed to understand their own needs better than anyone else and therefore should have the power to define and act upon them,
- (b) all people possess strengths upon which to build,
- (c) empowerment is a lifelong endeavor,
- (d) personal knowledge and experience are valid and useful in coping effectively. (p.7)

These assumptions are in keeping with the foundational perspective of the current study and provide validation and support for the questions to be explored as well as the methods of study.

Erikson's Psychosocial Theory

Erikson's psychosocial theory (1963, 1980, 1982) focuses on developmental change throughout the life cycle. This development proceeds according to the epigenetic principle which states that "anything that grows has a blueprint or ground plan, each part having a special time of ascendancy, until all the parts have arisen to form a functioning whole" (Erikson, 1968). Erikson described this process as having eight stages, each of which presents the individual with a developmental crisis. Each crisis addresses a specific ego concern or conflict to be worked through, with either a positive healthy outcome or negative unhealthy outcome, with successful resolution of the psychosocial stages resulting in ascendance of eight ego strengths relevant to each of the stages.

Erikson believed that the stages are interdependent with successful development in later stages dependent upon how conflicts are resolved in earlier stages. It is also possible for an individual to be dealing with the crises of earlier stages several times throughout his or

her life. For example, a person in the middle adult stage of life may re-experience an identity crisis if she lost her job and would have to work through this developmental crisis again, albeit on a different level than as an adolescent. The eight psychosocial stages, the approximate age range, and the related ego strengths are outlined as follows (adapted from Hamachek, 1990; Markstrom, Sabino, Turner, & Berman, 1997):

<u>Psychosocial Stages & Age Range</u>	<u>Ego Strength</u>
1. Trust vs. mistrust (Infancy-birth to 18 mos.)	Hope
2. Autonomy vs. shame/doubt (Early childhood-18 mos. to 3 yrs.)	Will
3. Initiative vs. guilt (Preschool age-3 to 6 yrs)	Purpose
4. Industry vs. inferiority (School age-6 to 12 yrs)	Competence
5. Identity vs. identity confusion (Adolescence-12 to 20 years)	Fidelity
6. Intimacy vs. isolation (Young Adult-20 to 35 years)	Love
7. Generativity vs. stagnation (Middle Adult-35 to 65 years)	Care
8. Integrity vs. despair (Older Adult-65 years and older)	Wisdom

Don Hamachek (1994) has done a great deal of work using Erikson's theory in this context. Describing his rationale for focusing on Erikson, he stated,

...because it not only clearly defines a developmental continuum from birth to the later years but is also broad enough to allow for the incorporation of other views that can further our understanding and interpretation of the self's growth and change over time. (p. 21)

In terms of the current study, the incorporation of empowerment theory with psychosocial theory can give a developmental breadth and depth to understanding how women become empowered and how this changes throughout their lives. Hamachek

(1994) has developed Behavioral Expressions Tables associated with each of Erikson's stages of development (Appendix A). Markstrom, Sabino, Turner, and Berman (1997) developed a Psychosocial Inventory of Ego Strengths (PIES, Appendix B). Both of these scales were utilized as a basis for interpretation and analysis of the data for the current study. The PIES questionnaire instrument (Appendix G) has been adapted for use for the women to complete following the interview.

Appalachian Region and Culture

Historically, there has been a conflict centered on the lack of consensus between cultural, geographical and political definitions of what it means to be a native Appalachian (Woods, 1986). Woods (1986) cited Kephart (1913) as providing the earliest cultural and geographical definitions in his description of the highlander as the inhabitants of southwestern Virginia, western North Carolina, eastern Tennessee, Kentucky and West Virginia, small parts of South Carolina and Alabama, and the extreme north of Georgia. Woods (1986) also cited Campbell (1921) as having later added to Kephart's (1913) description of the region four western counties of Maryland and the rest of West Virginia. The governors of the 13 states that contain a portion of Appalachia formed the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) in 1965, and this effort resulted in the most commonly accepted definition (Fiene, 1993). The area includes all of West Virginia and portions of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. It generally follows the northeast-to-southwest path of the Appalachian mountain chain, and is divided into three sub regions: Northern, Central, and Southern. As Bennett deMarrais points out, "The region's landscape is one of quiet beauty with old,

forested mountains, deep valleys, and swift-flowing rivers and streams” (1998, p. 89). The natural beauty of the region is legendary and is often referred to with reverence by Appalachian people, who typically demonstrate a powerful connection to the mountains. Yelton and Nielson (1991) cited the findings of Lewis, Messner, and McDowell (1995) who pointed out, “although Appalachians have migrated to other areas of the U. S., they have retained their unique cultural characteristics, always seeing the mountains as the home to which they will one day return” (pp. 177-178). The location of this study is focused on the southwest region of Virginia and the southeast region of West Virginia and the participants will be drawn from this region.

Several scholars note many factors related to geographical location that contribute to the marginalization of Appalachians and their at-risk status for success, including: geographic isolation, limited resources, poor quality of education and lack of educational opportunities, and high rates of unemployment and poverty (Bennett deMarrais, 1998; Hansen & Resick, 1990; Lemon, Newfield, and Dobbins, 1993; Rural & Appalachian Youth & Families Consortium, 1996; Yelton & Nielson, 1991). These issues have greatly impacted the evolution of the Appalachian culture overall. Further review of the literature on the cultural distinctions of Appalachians reveals some consistent themes, the first of which is noted by Lemon et al. (1993) as they cited Louries’ (1971) contention that “Appalachians are viewed as members of an ethnic minority group, based not on race, but on the fact that they are looked down upon by the dominant culture” (pp.9-10). They also cited Ho’s (1987, p.7) definition of ethnic minorities as ‘groups of culturally distinct people who are relatively powerless, receive unequal treatment, and regard themselves as objects of discrimination’ (pp. 9-10). In the Rural and Appalachian Youth

and Families Consortium study (1996, p.389) it was noted, “Some observers have even called Appalachia ‘America’s Third World’ ” (Lohmann, 1990). The stereotypes of Appalachians that have been portrayed in American culture have contributed to this discrimination, as Lemon et al. (1993) pointed out in characters such as Snuffy Smith, L’il Abner, and the Beverly Hillbillies. Bennett deMarrais (1998) noted the derogatory labels often used, such as “hillbillies, ridge runners, hill jacks, briars, and briar hoppers” (p. 97).

Purdy’s (1983) citation of Jones’ (1975) summary of the Appalachian value system that influences the behavior and attitudes of the people in the region offers a prelude to the findings of later scholars as well. As Purdy (1983) stated,

He believed the following values are considered to be a compendium of the best qualities of the Appalachian people: (1) religion, (2) individualism, self-reliance, and pride, (3) neighborliness and hospitality, (4) familism (placing high value on one’s family of origin), (5) personalism (person oriented, valuing relationships over personal achievement), (6) love of place, (7) modesty, (8) sense of beauty, (9) sense of humor, and (10) patriotism. (p. 27)

This is consistent with recurring themes prevalent in Appalachian families noted by the Rural and Appalachian Youth and Families Consortium (1996, p.387), such as, a sense of being part of the land on which one lives (localism), having a sense of one’s place in the passage of time (historicism), and placing high value on one’s family of origin (familism). This study also cited Jones’ (1991) findings that speak to consistent traditional cultural values that include “humor, love of nature, sense of place, patriotism,

and self-reliance” (p. 390). Yelton and Nielson (1991) also noted that Tripp-Reimer and Friedl (1977) found that Appalachians “tend to be more concerned with ‘being’, as characterized by spontaneous activity, and a relaxed life pace” as a marked difference from the mainstream society “whose focus is on ‘doing,’ having an achievement-oriented mode of activity” (p. 179). Several studies also indicate a strong sense of individualism, privacy, and keeping with one’s own versus outsiders, as being very important to Appalachian people (Rural & Appalachian Youth & Families Consortium, 1996; Yelton & Nielson, 1991).

Lemon et al. (1993) cited Ho’s (1987) categories of cultural values as points of comparison between any ethnic minority with those of middle-class white Americans as a means to understand a particular culture. They noted that this pattern of classification was first used to compare upper middle-class white Americans’ values with those of Appalachians in Pearsall (1965). The categories can be summarized as follows:

Person to Nature - The dominant culture values problem solving and believes that science holds the answers to most problems, whereas Appalachians believe that God’s will is the reason that things happen, and unfortunate events should be accepted in a fatalistic manner.

Time Orientation - Mainstream Americans plan ahead and focus on the future. In contrast, Appalachians are focused only on today and are content to just get by.

Relations With People - The dominant culture is impersonal, autonomous, and focused on individual achievement. Appalachians are a person oriented culture, valuing relationships above autonomy.

Preferred Mode of Activity - The mainstream culture values an individual's worth by achievement, whereas Appalachians value an individual's worth by inner qualities.

Human Nature - The mainstream culture views people as basically good or as embodying a mixture of good and bad. Appalachians believe that all people are born sinners and become good only by God's grace.

Lemon et al. (1993, pp. 16-19) also pointed out distinctive characteristics of the Appalachian family structure including the components of: "(a) kinship ties, (b) husband/wife relationships, (c) parent/child relationships, and (d) sibling relationships" (p. 16). In reference to kinship ties, they pointed out that, "Appalachians grow up in the context of a close-knit circle of kin". In reference to husband/wife relationships, they noted, "Among the dominant culture, couples generally share the responsibility for decision making. In Appalachian families, the male is often solely responsible for this aspect of family functioning" (Weller, 1965; Brown & Schwarzweller, 1974; Hennon & Photiadis, 1979). With regard to parent/child relationships, they indicated, "Appalachian families are typically adult-centered (Weller, 1965), with the parents being less permissive and more directive than those of the dominant culture (Brown & Schwarzweller, 1974). And, with regard to sibling relationships, they noted, "Sibling relationships among ethnic minority children normally follow a vertical hierarchical pattern and include male dominance (Ho, 1987).

Bennett deMarrais (1998) summarizes many themes within the literature as she stated, "The people of Appalachia share a rich cultural heritage that includes a strong

sense of kinship, a love of the land, a rich oral tradition, and a commitment to personal freedom and self-reliance” (p.90).

Chapter III

Method

Participants

The participants for this study were twelve Appalachian women ranging in age from 36 to 92 years. The ages reflect the middle adult and older adult psychosocial stages of life and were selected in order to examine how different age groups view empowerment as well as how that may have changed for some women throughout their lives. This also offered the advantage of examining the data in relationship to Erikson's psychosocial stages of ego development and how successful development through the stages influences empowerment and vice versa. For purposes of this study a woman was considered an Appalachian if she met the following criteria:

1. Born in Appalachia and spent the majority of her formative years there.
2. Perceived herself to be Appalachian by both regional and cultural designation.

The participants were identified through the snowball sampling technique wherein the process of identifying the potential participants was done throughout the project. Key informants familiar with Appalachian women in the region identified the first participants. Each participant was asked to suggest one or more women who might qualify for inclusion in the study. Participants were selected from these referrals. The participants are identified by number, psychosocial stage, and age as Participants #1-12, and as middle adult (MA), age 35 to 64 years, and older adult (OA), age 65 and older, and their age (i.e., P1/MA/36). The first step after identifying a potential participant was to contact her and determine if she was interested in participating in the study. This was done by telephone or in person, depending upon the location of the participant, and

included a thorough explanation of what she would be expected to do, how much time it would require, confidentiality procedures, and how the data will be used in the study. Once she had agreed to participate, a date, time, and place for the interview was determined. The next steps were to confirm her participation in writing (Appendix C), have her complete a Participant Information Form (Appendix D), and obtain her consent (Appendix E). In some cases, the interview was scheduled so quickly after the initial contact, there was not enough time to send the preliminary documentation by mail, so the Participant Information Form and Informed Consent were reviewed and completed with the researcher prior to the interview. The specifics of how the study would be conducted were reviewed at the beginning of the interview and the participants were encouraged to ask any further questions they had before the interviews began.

Procedure

The data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with each woman individually. They were interviewed during the months of March and April 2001. Depending upon proximity for travel, interviews were conducted in the participant's home or location of their choosing, with any required travel by the researcher. All of the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and combined with field notes to provide data for the study. The tapes were stored in a locked desk drawer at the researcher's home and will be destroyed upon conclusion of the study. The interviews were conducted in one one-to-two hour session. In the first stage of the interview, the participants were asked a series of open-ended questions by the researcher to guide the interview (Appendix F). The questions were developed after extensive research into existing literature on both empowerment and Appalachian constructs wherein a narrative,

open-ended approach was suggested by respected scholars in both fields of study (Bond, Belenky, Weinstock, & Monsey, 1992; Zimmerman, 1995), thereby giving voice to participants as opposed to presuming to speak for them. The literature further supports the development of questions as it indicates that empowerment itself is in part a communication process (Shefner-Rogers et al., 1998) and that in order to understand a specific aspect of an Appalachian native's development, it is necessary to gain insight into the extent to which the unique characteristics of the Appalachian culture have influenced development (Hansen & Resick, 1990; Rural & Appalachian Youth & Families Consortium, 1998; Yelton & Nielson, 1991). The questions provided a framework for conducting the interview, and the participants were encouraged to elaborate on their experiences and fully tell their stories. Upon completion of the open-ended portion of the interview, the participants were also asked to complete a questionnaire adapted from the Psychosocial Inventory of Ego Strengths (PIES) (Markstrom et al., 1997, Appendix G) based upon a Likert-type scale of responses. The PIES questionnaire is an established instrument scrutinized by several Eriksonian scholars for reliability and validity as it was developed (Markstrom et al., 1997). Questionnaire responses have been used for descriptive purposes to elaborate on the discussion as to how the women's apparent degree of development through the Eriksonian stages corresponds to their responses to questions on empowerment (Appendix H). The open-ended questions and the questionnaire were piloted two times before the study began. This narrative technique is further supported by Rappaport's (1995) work wherein he extended empowerment theory with the suggestion that "both research and practice would benefit from a narrative approach that links process to

practice and attends to the voices of the people of interest” (p. 795). In his theory, he pointed out that one of the components of empowerment is a sense of mastery or control over resources, and he called attention to the fact that “communal narratives and personal stories are resources” (p. 795). He proposed that a narrative approach spans levels of analysis in that it “explicitly recognizes that communities, organizations, and individual people have stories, and that there is a mutual influence process between these community, organizational, and personal stories” (p. 795). He went on to state, “it is very clear that these stories not only exist but have powerful effects on human behavior. They tell us not only who we are but who we have been and who we can be” (p. 795).

Furthermore, he pointed out,

The goals of empowerment are enhanced when people discover, or create and give voice to, a collective narrative that sustains their own personal life story in positive ways. Narrative theory is an approach to knowledge that opens new methods and ideas for those committed to the empowerment social agenda. The practice implications of this approach lead us to listen to, amplify and give value to the stories of the people we serve. We are led to help people to discover their own stories, create new ones, and develop settings that make such activities possible – all activities consistent with the goals of empowerment. (p, 796)

Indeed, it has been the goal of this research to “amplify and give value to the stories of the people we serve” and this type of methodology served to enhance that purpose.

Analyses

Rather than a preconceived construct, the analysis consists of an exploratory qualitative approach in order to eliminate bias in the findings and allow the women to reveal what empowerment means to them as well as to give voice to their own stories. The researcher explored and analyzed women's perceptions of what constitutes empowerment for them and how this varies among individuals and is influenced by the women's developmental histories. The women's perceptions of what it meant to them to be Appalachian and how growing up in this environment and culture affected their level of empowerment was explored and analyzed as a major component of their developmental histories. The data were also analyzed within an Eriksonian framework in relationship to how successful development through Erikson's psychosocial stages might be related to empowerment. This allowed for exploration of the data from a developmental perspective as well as an outcome perspective. All components of the data were examined with regard to themes and recurring features in each of the stories. A qualitative study allowed for the patterns and relationships within the data to be revealed, thereby allowing the researcher to have the broadest and most in-depth perspective possible.

The analysis and interpretation of the data were managed utilizing the following processes derived from the works of Seidman (1998) and Strauss and Corbin (1990):

1. Managing the Data

- Documentation was organized by creating files for each participant that include a copy of the letter of confirmation, participant information form,

written consent, labeled audiotapes, and interview transcription documents.

2. Transcribing the Interview Tapes

- The paid transcriber was given explicit instructions on the process and confidentiality procedures, emphasizing the importance of noting all nonverbal signals (i.e., laughs, sighs), outside noise, and interruptions.
- The tapes were transcribed with text saved on computer disks along with the hard copy. Once the transcription was completed, the tape and all electronic and written documentation was returned to the researcher and secured in a locked desk drawer.

3. Coding the Data – This consisted of a combination of open and axial coding techniques identifying concepts and categories, followed by selective coding processes to develop a descriptive narrative about the central phenomena of the study. Coding included the following steps:

- Reading the text
- Marking of interesting passages with brackets
- Labeling marked passages
- Identifying and labeling any concepts suggested
- Classification of concepts by categories and subcategories
- Filing of excerpts by categories
- Rereading each file, sorting by level of importance
- Reviewing data for themes, recurring features, and connections

- Ordering the categories – storytelling in sequential order, validating relationships, revealing patterns, systematizing and solidifying connections

4. Interpreting the Data – Researcher determined:

- What has been learned from each part of the process?
- What connections are there among participants?
- How does the researcher understand and/or explain these connections?
- What is understood now that was not understood before the interviews began?
- What surprises have there been?
- Were previous instincts confirmed?
- Are the results consistent or inconsistent with the literature?
- What meaning can be made of this work?

Chapter IV

Results

Description of Sample

The sample of participants consisted of twelve women (Table 1) who ranged in age from 36 to 92 years. The participants have been identified in the table by their participant number and given a pseudonym followed by their age in parentheses in the remaining text for ease of discussion throughout the description and analysis of the study. Their ages are as follows: one was 36, one was 45, two were 49, two were 53, two were 54, one was 57, one was 61, one was 62, and one was 92. All of the participants except one were in the Middle Adult (35 to 64 years) psychosocial stage of development, with each decade represented, giving a broad view of the full spectrum of development encompassed in this stage of life. The oldest participant was 92, in the Older Adult psychosocial stage of development. Ten of the participants identified themselves as Caucasian and two as African American. Two of the participants were related as aunt and niece, 92 and 62 years old, respectively. All of the Caucasian participants identified some European origin of ancestry, including Irish, Scotch-Irish, English, German, Hungarian, Italian, and Dutch and one of them also had some degree of Native American ancestry. It is interesting to note that, although all of the participants spoke at length about close-knit family ties as part of their Appalachian heritage, it was quite varied as to how many of them were familiar with their ancestry prior to Appalachia. Eight of the women knew the details of their ancestry of origin very well or fairly well, whereas four of the women only had a vague knowledge of it. All of the women identified two or more generations of their family as originating in Appalachia, with eight of them having

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant #	Pseudonym	Age	Race	Origin of Ancestry
P1	Eva	62	C	Irish/Scotch-Irish
P2	Lindsay	53	C	Unknown
P3	Gloria	54	C	Irish/Scotch-Irish
P4	Kelly	45	C	Unknown
P5	Joyce	57	AA	African American
P6	Brenda	53	C	English/German
P7	Christine	54	C	German/Irish/Scotch-Irish
P8	Vivian	61	C	Unknown
P9	Carol	49	AA	African American
P10	Regina	49	C	Hungarian/Italian
P11	Tammy	36	C	Native American/Dutch
P12	Margaret	92	C	Irish/Scotch-Irish

Key:

C = Caucasian

AA = African American

five or more generations. Margaret (92) indicated two generations prior to hers, but there have been four generations born in the family following hers, descending from her brothers and sisters, as she had no children of her own, making a total of seven generations born in Appalachia thus far. Table 1 summarizes the demographic information of the participants.

Content Analysis

The core conceptualization or construct of the study was the degree of empowerment experienced by the women as adults. The two factors examined as potential influences on their empowerment, Appalachian heritage and psychosocial development, comprised the two primary categories of exploration. Based upon qualitative analysis of the participants' responses as well as the information outlined in the literature review, the findings are detailed below.

Appalachian Heritage

Language - It is important to preface an exploration of the characteristics of the Appalachian population with discussion about their unique style and use of language to fully understand the culture and to perhaps allow the reader an opportunity to vicariously "hear" the women as they tell their stories and to appreciate how their language differs from mainstream society. The findings in this study indicate that the majority of the Appalachian population has a very distinct accent, which includes elements of the Southern drawl as might be expected, but the dialect also has a unique lilt and cadence that makes their speech very pleasant and melodic for the listener. Although the general perception has been of the stereotypical "hillbilly" speech patterns, when one listens closely they find that it goes beyond that to harken back to the roots of the majority of the

population, especially that which includes Irish, Scotch-Irish, and English ancestry. Many of the Appalachian women in the study and their families are fully aware of the stereotypes that exist about them, and they could care less, frequently finding it ignorant and at times humorous as to how mistaken mainstream society is about them, and their language is one of the attributes they relish that sets them apart from the outside world. As Gloria (54) described her own realization,

In doing my genealogy research, and even with St. Patrick's Day, and all the stuff they have on television about Ireland and everything, I realized how much the dialect in our region sounds like people in Ireland...and I thought, gosh, I think some people, when they hear the word Appalachia only think poverty, illiteracy, and rednecks, hillbillies, and ignorance...that whole ball of wax. And, to me, hearing that connection to Ireland, and with my own mother being part Irish, that let me realize, they're proud of that and I am too. So, why would people "look down their nose" at people from this region? The reason we sound like that is that we were isolated and that's the way our ancestors spoke and we kept that as part of our heritage.

Along with the unique sound of their language, the findings in this study also indicate that many Appalachians take great delight in using language in unique and creative ways, frequently humorous and playful, to teach a lesson or make a point. As do many ethnic and minority populations, they have many unique terms and phrases in their native vernacular, which are used consistently from the coal fields of West Virginia to the farms of Southwest Virginia to the towns, cities, and countryside throughout the region. For example, it was remarkable to discover that there was one term that was used by

eleven out of twelve of the women during the interviews to describe someone of low moral character as being “sorry”, which was definitely not acceptable in any of their families. This is, by Appalachian definition, the lowest form of human one could be, to be “sorry”, although one woman’s father took it one step further to describe some people as not just being “sorry”, but, even worse, being “sorrier than owl s---”, which apparently is about as low as a human being can go in his opinion.

Other terms used consistently by the majority of women included “being uppity”, which again is an unacceptable way to be. As Regina (49) stated, the message most of them got from their parents was “that everyone is equal, no one is better than you, and you are no better than anyone else.” Therefore, “being uppity” is not allowed. In the same context, neither is it acceptable to “get above your raising” or “look down your nose” at someone else, which would also imply that you think you are better than someone else, and “if you can’t say anything good about a person, then don’t say anything at all.” This is consistent with the literature, wherein Spiegel (1982) identifies Appalachians as a “being” oriented culture with the belief that all people are equal, and the tendency to distribute power evenly. Also noted in the literature, these values are the foundation for Appalachians’ practice of viewing people as whole beings, and refusing to acknowledge the roles which are so common in the dominant culture (Brown & Schwarzweller, 1974; Lewis et al., 1985; Pearsall, 1965). Another commonly used expression was to “make do” with what one has, which speaks to the Appalachians’ belief that you do the best you can with what you have available to you, whether it be internal or external resources, and also to their resourcefulness and their belief that all resources be used to fullest capacity, frequently recycling and reusing materials. Children who needed to be disciplined would sometimes

be hit with “switches” which were small twigs or branches from trees, or they would get “a good talking to” to keep them in line. If someone was being acknowledged for doing something well, they might be told “You did good” or “You made a good showing.” Other frequently used terms included being “sappy” as being overly sweet or sentimental, which Gloria (54) used to describe the goodnight scenes from *The Waltons* television show about an Appalachian family, and being “jolly” was used often to describe Appalachians’ propensity to playfulness, fun, and humor. Other commonly used terms are to describe someone as a “character”, which means they are very unique individuals who have a great deal of “personality”, which are highly valued characteristics, and describing someone as a “rounder” means they have a bit of a wild streak and a disregard for conventional behavior. This unique use of language was also addressed in the literature by Lemon et al. (1993, p.19) as they stated,

...a particular point of difference (in Appalachian culture) is the way in which Appalachians refer to psychological or emotional problems.

Appalachians typically unfamiliar with mental health issues, often call such problems as “nerves” (Ludwig, 1982; Van Schalk, 1984; Weller, 1965). Because language barriers exist, therapists are encouraged to speak in the language of the family when possible, using folk analogies to illustrate more abstract concepts (Boynton, 1987; Simon, 1987) and to intersperse relaxed talk throughout sessions (Price, 1987).

Several of the women used the term “having bad nerves” to describe someone who was experiencing emotional difficulties, but when presented with the explanation found in the literature as to why the term was used, found it laughable and almost

offensive that the so-called scholars believed Appalachians used this type of terminology because they were “unfamiliar with mental health issues,” and therapists should use “folk analogies to illustrate more abstract concepts,” implying that Appalachians were not intelligent or well-informed enough to understand conventional terms or abstract concepts. The women pointed out that it wasn’t because they didn’t understand the mainstream definitions of the concepts, they did. They used their own terms because they felt it was more accurately descriptive and it was “just their way” to find their own means of describing aspects of their lives.

Based on observations derived from the data in this study, another characteristic of language usage by the Appalachians in this study is their use of expressions or “sayings” to make a point or illustrate a concept, frequently with a wryly humorous twist. For example, when asked a question where the answer is obviously yes, they might respond with “Does a sack of flour make a big biscuit?” If someone is getting in over his head, the appropriate admonishment would be, “If you can’t run with the big dogs, you’d best just stay on the porch.” Lindsay (53) related her mother’s expression when the children would complain about having to can the vegetables so they would have food in the winter, she would say, “...you better help because this will taste better than a snowball in January.” Christine (54) also shared an expression her great aunt, who was quite the character in her own right, used, “You have to search for a higher briar and a better berry” which meant that one must always strive to do one’s best and have high standards in life. This same great aunt admonished another relative who was making it apparent during the family gathering at her home after the funeral that she was not unhappy about the demise of her abusive husband by saying, “For gosh sakes, if you

can't cry at least pull your bonnet down." Another example would be when someone is very surprised about something they might say, "Well slap the dog and spit in the fire!" If you were speaking about someone who takes no interest in what's going on around him or her no matter how significant the event, you would say, "They wouldn't walk a mile to see an ant eat a bale of hay." If you were describing someone who just keeps pushing an issue until it escalates out of control or keeps fidgeting with something until it falls apart, they would say, "He just keeps shaking that puppy till it pees on his leg." There are countless others, of course, far too many to be included here, but these examples provide illustrations of their delight in using language in colorful, quirky, and earthy ways, which also speaks to their abundant and ever present sense of humor.

The data from this study indicated two subcategories that emerged within the Appalachian heritage category as factors that influenced the lives of these women: geographical context and cultural context. Although they overlap somewhat, they can be primarily distinguished as follows:

<u>Geographical</u>	<u>Cultural</u>	
Love of Place/Nature/Mountains	Close-knit Family	Community Ties
Self-reliance	Self-reliance	Religion
Isolation	Strong Work Ethic	Humor
Limited Resources	Value of Education	Independence
Poverty	Individualism	

When the women were asked what it means to them to be Appalachian, they all had very similar responses. They all spoke with reverence about "their" mountains, the beauty and grandeur of the natural environment, and their **deep roots and love of place**.

They also spoke of the **geographical isolation** and the resulting limited resources, poverty, and struggles to survive economically as well as in relation to the often harsh physical environment. They described a **rich cultural heritage**, with stories passed down for generations, demonstrating a deep connection and respect for their ancestry and their roots. In terms of **personal characteristics** common to Appalachians, they described a unique, individualistic, and at times, fiercely independent people, who demonstrate an innate inner strength, resilience, resourcefulness, perseverance, and self-reliance that led them to frequently call themselves and their ancestors “survivors.” They spoke of the inherent goodness in them, characterized by caring, compassion, and deep love of their families and their communities. They commonly described a fun-loving, playful demeanor and family atmosphere, filled with much storytelling, laughter and humor, even in the face of hard times. As Eva (62) described why she considered her mother to be an empowered woman, it also speaks to her description and the other women’s descriptions of these traits that are also characteristic of Appalachians,

She had the ability to make every day a pleasure, no matter how poor we were, or how little there was for us to entertain ourselves. She would find something good, funny and happy in every situation, whether it was going to milk the cows, wash the clothes, whatever. She had the ability to make a game of it and to make it fun, even though her life was hard...Mother was able to just kind of pull it out from any situation. Mom was just always able to find her heart.

Brenda (53) spoke to many of these characteristics as well when she described many of the Appalachians in her childhood as, “Very family focused. They had a great love of the

land and the farming...wonderful humor and they loved to swap. That was also part of the culture. Humor was part of the community.”

The frequent use of **humor** is consistent with the literature, as noted in Jones’ (1991) findings cited by the Rural and Appalachian Youth and Families Consortium (1996, p. 387) that includes humor as a consistently traditional cultural value of Appalachians. Lemon et al. (1993) also discussed how Appalachians frequently use humor as a coping skill:

Another common communication pattern among Appalachians is their frequent use of humor as a manner to cope with difficulty (Boynton, 1987). Therapists need to refrain from confronting the family’s use of humor with regard to serious matters, as it is one of their typical ways of responding to difficult situations. A therapist operating from this approach would frame the family’s use of humor in a difficult situation as a strength (because they are able to laugh in the face of adversity), and would then move on to discussing the difficult situation more directly.

Values - The women in this study consistently indicated common values of Appalachians that are often mentioned in the literature, which first and most importantly include their family (Lemon et al., 1993; Purdy, 1983; Rural & Appalachian Youth & Families Consortium, 1996). **Close-knit, loving family ties** were an integral part of every one of the women’s lives, always cited as what is most important to them above all else. The constant presence, support, and involvement of extended family are quite common. As Kelly (45) told her story, “I grew up in a very loving family, very loving.

My family has always been very close. That is the reason I have never moved away, I wanted to stay close to my family.” Christine (54) also spoke to this value as she stated,

People were very family oriented...and if you said or did something to one member of the family, come five cousins three times removed, you had done it to the whole family and you should just stand out of the way... you were also aware of your part of the family responsibility of the family pulling together to make sure that no one was left behind and that everybody got through whatever had to be gotten through.

Close-knit community ties were also included in all of the women’s reflections. They frequently described a community of people who cared deeply for each other, respected each other, and who were always willing to help out their neighbor in times of need. This is congruent with a common finding throughout the Appalachian literature (Purdy, 1983; Rural & Appalachian Youth & Families Consortium, 1996; Yelton & Nielson, 1991). Several of the women had ancestors and parents who were involved in community service or politics and many of the women in this study are very involved in their communities. In fact, Joyce (57) has devoted her entire professional life to community service, and said, “I like the part of thinking that I’ve made a difference in someone’s life.” Christine (54) tells the story of her father’s actions one year at Christmas regarding a neighbor family that:

He knew they had absolutely nothing, lots of kids, and I mean everyone all living in the same house with the grandparents...they also had mental and physical handicaps. Their little boys were crippled. It snowed so deep that we couldn’t even get out. Daddy was so worried about this

family not being able to have any Christmas and these small children. He and Mother got into the can closet and put out all these jars of canned fruit in boxes, all these boxes. And we had some oranges and things that we gathered up, and I went upstairs and got some little ole' stuffed toys I had laying around, and they got on the tractor about ten o'clock at night, on Saturday night. It was Christmas Eve. They rode that tractor five miles in the snow, in the dark, to take Christmas over to those children. My dad never told anyone they did that. I do... 'cause my aunt always worried whether or not my daddy was saved so I always had to tell her, I'm sure my daddy's soul was just fine, thank you.

Another commonly held value all of the women described as important to their families was a **strong work ethic**, the value of hard work. This is not consistent with the literature that was previously referenced in the literature review with regard to Yelton and Nielson's (1991, p. 179) work, which cited Tripp-Reimer and Friedl's (1977) conclusions that, "Appalachians tend to be more concerned with 'being', as characterized by spontaneous activity, and a relaxed life pace" as a marked difference from the mainstream society "whose focus is on 'doing', having an achievement-oriented mode of activity." Neither is the conclusion found in the work of Lemon et al. (1993, pp. 11-13) consistent with the findings in this study, as they cite Ho's (1987) perspective that Appalachians differ from the dominant culture because they do not value problem solving, and that "Mainstream Americans focus on the future, planning almost everything they do in advance. Rather than being future oriented, the Appalachian is typically

oriented toward existing in the present, and is content with ‘just getting along’” (Weller, 1965).

The information gained from all of the women in this study, which predates the literature back to the early 1900’s when Margaret (92) was a child, provides a resounding contradiction to these perspectives, frequently giving examples of how hard their parents worked and also how hard they were expected to work, even as children. These families all took great pride in the achievements of all members of their family and encouraged each child to use the gifts and talents they had to be the best they could be, which is very similar to Abraham Maslow’s theory of self-actualization (Maslow, 1967). Problem solving was so ingrained in their way of life from the “dawn of time” that they surely would not have survived without this capacity. Their ability to plan and prepare ahead to meet their family’s needs is evident in all aspects of their lives, from planning their crops, preserving their food, saving for their children’s education, to always putting something aside for “a rainy day.” Clearly, the mere survival of these families for generation upon generation, often in the face of great adversity and marginalization, not to mention the advancements many of them have achieved in providing better lives for the generations that followed, indicate a population that can solve problems, plan for the future, and achieve beyond even their own dreams.

The children were encouraged to figure things out for themselves when presented with a challenge rather than being given the answer. Margaret (92) and Eva (62) told about the expectation from their fathers that they should always “make a good showing” which meant that they should work hard and do their best at every task. In fact, when Margaret (92) was asked if there was anything further she would like to add about how

she was raised that contributed to who she is today, her response was, “I reckon it was ‘cause I was raised so hard. I tell you one thing, I bet there’s never been nobody who’s done as much hard work as I have as a kid and on up.”

Four of the women were raised on farms that were the family’s full means of economic survival, and as Margaret (92) indicated, all of the children were expected to do their part to help. Lindsay (53) gives an example of how her responsibility was to gather and wash the eggs so she could sell them when the family “went to town.” She also spoke of gathering catnip and cedar with her brother to sell. The children were not given allowances and their work was not just to teach them some responsibility. As Lindsay (53) tells her story,

The children all had jobs. Part of growing up in Appalachia for me on a farm was that we all had jobs and they weren’t little jobs to say, so you could learn responsibility or you could do this for your allowance... We never had an allowance, there was no money, but we had jobs that were important because if we didn’t do them then the family didn’t have the money to get the groceries and other things we needed... So I have memories of doing things that were important for economic survival of the family. That also included things like feeding the hogs, chickens, sheep, cows, helping to care for the animals, and it wasn’t for fun, it was because it had to be done if we all were to survive.

All of these families were largely **self-reliant** for almost everything, growing and preserving their own food, including gardens for vegetables, and cows, chickens, and hogs, for meat and dairy products. As Margaret (92) stated, “Even if we didn’t have no

money, we ate good.” They would often swap or sell some of what they produced for the things they could not make at home, such as sugar and oranges, material for clothing, and shoes. Margaret (92) told about how the eight children in her family would get one new pair of shoes per year, usually when it was time for school to start, and they had to “make do” with those for another year, because there was no money for more shoes if they outgrew them or wore them out. She and Eva (62), who are related, both spoke about the family selling milk sometimes as well, although it was not on a large scale like the dairy farm one of the other women experienced. They both told about the expression that was common in their family... “When the milk check comes, we can afford to...” Although it was not their primary means of economic livelihood, six of the other women’s families had vegetable gardens and cows, hogs, and chickens for their own food sources.

Brenda’s (53) experience was a unique variation on Appalachian culture in that her father was a professor, but they also lived on a working farm. Two of the women were from coal mining towns in West Virginia and both their fathers worked in the mines, and in fact, employment in the mines was what brought their grandparents to the region.

Another woman’s father worked in a lime mine in Virginia. Another common means of livelihood in the more rural areas was experienced by two of the women whose fathers worked at the sawmills. Timber was abundant, of course, so this was an economic resource for the region. One of the African American women’s father and mother both worked as cooks in local restaurants, production plants, or school/preschool facilities.

Tammy’s (36) parents both worked in service positions, the father in maintenance and the mother as a custodian. As far as their mothers’ work, seven of the women’s mothers were homemakers and never worked outside the home, although all of the women were quick

to point out the importance of the mother's work as homemaker to the family's survival. One woman's mother was a teacher, one was a cook, one was a tavern owner, another was a librarian, and as noted above, Tammy's (36) mother is a custodian. All of them spoke to the limitations of the region in terms of employment opportunities for women during their mothers' lives as well as many of their own, indicating that if one were to aspire to have a career by traditional definition, one would most likely have to leave their hometown to pursue it. And, in fact, for most of the women who are originally from very rural areas, they have either moved closer to the towns or cities for work or they commute an hour or more to their jobs.

Another commonly held value for the majority of the women was their family's **religious beliefs and faith in God**. This is consistent with previous literature on Appalachian characteristics, although there is one part of the work of Lemon et al. (1993) that does not entirely ring true with the views expressed by the women in this study. Lemon et al. cited Spiegel's (1982) conclusions that,

The dominant culture holds that people are either a mixture of good and bad or inherently good (Spiegel, 1982; Pearsall, 1965). Those cultures which support a view of man as being evil are very much aware of sin and temptation, and that they are likely to see peoples' illness and problems in living as God's punishment for their sinful behavior. This holds true for Appalachians as well (Friedl, 1978).

The views expressed by the women who qualified themselves or their families as religious did not support these views. None of the women supported a view of man as being inherently evil, so that is entirely inconsistent with the literature. Instead, their

beliefs about people in general more closely resembled those Spiegel (1982) attributes to the dominant culture that “holds that people are either a mixture of good and bad or inherently good.” There were some of the women who implied that they believed that their illnesses and problems were God’s punishment for their sinful behavior, but the majority did not indicate this was true for them.

Those women who did characterize themselves as religious or spiritual demonstrated a deep and abiding faith in God. It did vary as to how they experienced the spiritual aspect of their lives. Most of them followed traditional avenues of church membership, and Carol’s (49) father was a pastor, so as she stated, “We went to church a lot”, and when asked what did her family do for recreation her response was again, “We went to church.” Several of the other women described how most of the social activities they participated in outside of their home as children and adults revolve around their church. Christine (54) experiences her faith differently than some of the other women, but it is still a very meaningful and powerful part of her life. She does not attend church regularly, but she describes herself as “a very spiritual person.” She elaborates further,

I’m not ashamed to say that I love God, that’s the basis of everything.

I don’t fully understand God. I never will. I don’t know exactly what

He or She or God is. I explore a lot of those questions in my artwork.

But, I know I am loved...and just like with my parents, it’s the same

with God, I go to bed loved and I get up loved, and I’m thankful for that.

Isolation and Limited Resources - All of the participants spoke about the **isolation** inherent in the geographic location of the region, indicating it as the precipitating factor in the other geographical subcategories identified. This, too, is

consistent with the sociological literature (Bennett deMarrais, 1998; Hansen & Resick, 1990; Lemon et al., 1993; Rural & Appalachian Youth & Families Consortium, 1996; Yelton & Nielson, 1991). The mountainous location and distance from more easily accessed and more densely populated areas of the country resulted in **limited resources** in many aspects of life, which subsequently led to marginalization and poverty, but also to self-reliance, independence, and love of place. The harshness of the physical environment was a contributing factor as well, especially in the winter months. Many of the older women also began their lives in homes that did not have modern conveniences, either because they had not yet been developed, as was the case with Margaret (92), or they had not become available in the region, or the family could not afford to install them. For example, they had outdoor toilets for at least the first years of their lives, wood burning cook stoves, carried water to the house in buckets from the spring, and they did not all have electricity. They kept the milk and butter they churned in the springhouse to keep it cold before they had refrigerators. Telephones came later, initially with one at the local store that people would walk to use. Then, when the families began to get phones in their homes, they had “party lines” with several homes on one line, resulting in anyone on the line being able to pick up and listen to another’s conversation. Each family had their own “ring” so they would know when the call was for them. For example, one family’s ring might be “two shorts” and another’s might be “a long and a short.” So, the phone could ring at any time of the day or night in every home that was on the party line. Most of the families had a radio when they became available. Televisions were initially limited to the families who were wealthy, but all of the families were eventually able to get them.

The limited resources resulting from geographic isolation profoundly influence the daily lives of the population. For example, **transportation** is limited in the purely rural areas even in modern times, with virtually no public transportation, although almost all families now have some type of vehicle or vehicles. For the older participants, especially during their childhoods, many of their families walked almost everywhere, unless they were able to own a horse they could ride. As Margaret (92) shared her experience,

We walked far just to get to the road and get the mail. We walked two miles to one school and about five miles to another school when the first one burned down...the fathers who worked out somewhere would walk up to ten or twenty miles back and forth to work every day...when we were courting the boys would walk five or ten miles to see a girl because everybody lived so far apart.

As time passed, if their income permitted, the families would be able to purchase one vehicle for the entire family's use, and in all cases, priority for use of the vehicle was always for the father's work. Also, many of the older women's mothers never learned to drive and in fact, Margaret (92), has never driven, so even if they had been able to afford another vehicle there was no one to drive it until the children got old enough, although the male children and many of the females typically became "old enough" at a very young age of eleven or twelve. As modernization came in and the families were able to purchase tractors for plowing and farm work, many of the children got lots of driving "practice" on the tractors used on the farm. Thus, even if there was one vehicle for the father's use, the rest of the family was still left to walk to most places. Almost all of the

women over 49 or 50 described walking to school in at least the first years because they had no car and the schools did not provide transportation, and attending a one or two room school that had several grade levels combined in one classroom. The younger participants did typically have transportation for the family and transportation to school, although travel was still largely limited to basic necessity by virtue of the distance to other cities and towns. Even now, those participants living in the most rural areas have to essentially plan for almost two hours or more to travel to and from an advanced medical care facility, for college attendance, shopping for major purchases, cultural events, and even the movies. As might be expected, this results in a **lack of adequate medical care, educational opportunities, access to goods, and to recreation and entertainment.**

Of all the limited resources Appalachians have had to contend with, the one that has had the most dramatic impact was and still is, the **lack of educational opportunities.** This was especially true for Margaret (92) and the parents of the other women. Margaret (92) did not go beyond 5th or 6th grade, and nine of the women had one or both parents who did not go beyond fifth, sixth, or seventh grade, although several of them continued to educate themselves. In some cases they persisted in learning as much as possible even if it wasn't formally structured, as Gloria (54) noted regarding her parents' education,

Well, back in that day, there were only seven grades. And I used to think that was strange, but my dad explained that you could go to the seventh grade as many times as you wanted to. So they just kept going to the seventh grade, and of course, they would advance, you know. I'm not sure how many times he went to the seventh grade, I think a couple or three years, but he got it down pat.

Both of the African American women's parents had completed high school. One woman's father had a Ph.D. and her mother had a Master's degree and another woman's mother had a two year teaching degree, which was the highest level of education available at the time. Although all of the women had access to some form of elementary and high school education, further educational opportunities were limited by economics as well as distance. However, **education was highly valued** by all of the families except for Margaret's (92) father, although it varied as to the level they considered to be necessary for success in life. Eleven of the women's parents were adamant that they at least complete high school and five of these parents made it clear early on that their daughters would also go to college. These five women did achieve various levels of college study, with two obtaining a Ph.D., one obtaining a Master's degree, and one obtaining a Bachelor's degree. Eva (62) set her own goal of achieving a college education, returned to school at the age of 50 and obtained an Associate degree as a Registered Nurse. Her perspective is typical of the other women's families as she explains, "Education plays into everything. That's the whole key." She elaborates further on this in relation to achieving independence and more balanced male and female roles within her marriage, progressing from a more patriarchal relationship similar to her own parents', wherein,

...men were the superior people...they made all the decisions and were supposed to actually have all the fun but we women knew that wasn't true.

And that's the way it is in my home...that's just the way we were brought up. But, when asked how returning to school at 50 had affected the male/female roles in her relationship, she stated,

It made me feel much better about myself...I needed that for myself, to prove to myself that I could still learn and that I could still be myself, besides being mother and wife, that I could be something other than that on my own. It was good for me. But I don't think it actually changes everything as far as I feel about the husband and wife roles because I just grew up with that, and I don't think I could ever fully change that. But, I hope it helps my daughter see it differently. As generations go on there won't be as much of that because we know it isn't really right. The whole thing is education and goes back to doing away with the old way of believing that the little wife stays at home pregnant and barefooted...that was never a right thing and that's what they have to get away from and being educated and having choices will help with that.

Margaret (92) also indicated a sense of lost opportunities for herself and her siblings because her father did not value education as much as she would have liked, indicating that she recognized the value even as a child. As she told her story,

Papa would keep us all out of school to help with the work at home. The girls had to help tend to the babies and cook and clean and the boys had to help with the farm work, so we didn't get to go to school much...not until harvests were over, but then the weather would be bad so that would be hard too. We'd see some of the other kids going to school and wishin' we could go too. We'd miss so much, then when we'd go back we were way behind and had to catch up. I 'member the teacher, she'd say, 'well, he ought'n to keep you'all out so much to work, the place for you'all is school.'

When she was asked who the women were that she admired as a child, she said the teachers because “they were so smart and could look after themselves.” When asked what her dreams had been as a child about what she wanted to be when she grew up, she said, “I wanted to be a nurse...but I knew I’d never get to get enough schoolin’ for that.” The lengths they would go to make sure their daughters could continue to attend school is another example of the emphasis the majority of these families placed on education. For example, in the second semester of their freshman year of college, two of the women’s families found themselves in the position of not having the tuition money for that semester. One of the families sold an insurance policy and the other sold the family’s milk cow so their daughters could continue in school.

As these stories demonstrate, the isolation of the region has resulted in many challenges to the Appalachian population, but it has also fostered some very positive results. As indicated by many of the examples noted above, Appalachians are very **self-reliant and resourceful** people, “making do” the best they can with what they have around them and developing very unique and creative ways of meeting their families’ needs. They also have a deeply rooted sense of place and love of the mountains and nature, frequently speaking of “their” mountains with reverence. When the women were asked whether they felt that growing up in an Appalachian environment and culture contributed to their sense of empowerment as adults, every one of them said yes. They acknowledged the limitations inherent in the geographical location, but they felt even those limitations contributed to their empowerment because it fostered all of the personal characteristics of Appalachians noted above as aspects of empowerment that had been

ingrained in them by virtue of being Appalachian. As Christine (54) shared the message she got from her mother,

I can remember my mother telling me that I couldn't depend on other people or wait for other people or situations to happen, that I would have to find it for myself. It's the ability to make yourself happy and not depend on someone or something else to do it for you. Another person cannot make you happy and you have to realize that. It has to come from you. You have to do that for yourself. You've got your feet on the ground and nobody's going to pull the rug out from under you because your feet are flat on the ground.

Developmental Factors

When the women in this study were asked how they felt growing up in their particular family affected their level of empowerment, there were many consistencies in their responses. All of them shared experiences of feeling deeply loved, valued, and supported by at least one and often both of their parents. The majority of them spoke to being taught the value of being a good person, and the value of right and wrong. They were taught to respect themselves and others, and to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." As Lindsay (53) shared her experience,

I do consider myself an intelligent person. Part of that has to do with the fact that I grew up in the family that I did, where we felt that we were important and the values that we had been raised with were the right ones. Since we had been raised with the values that my parents felt were important, we were worthwhile people, so we had good self-esteem...another thing that actually empowered me was the close relationship with my father. I felt that he

thought I was a valuable person and that he really appreciated the things that I could do. I could work hard, I was physically strong and he took pleasure and pride in the learning that I could do.

Eva (62) speaks of the message she received from her parents as she said, We were taught to be independent. We were never babied or told we could not do something because we were a girl or boy or whatever. It was just do it. They were strong people and they just expected you to be strong. The message was “Thou shalt not whine, just do it.” It made no difference how little you were, or whether you were a boy or girl. The way they raised me, there actually did not seem to ever be any choice about it, it was just understood...you were just strong, you can do it. That was always the attitude that, sure you can do it.

Gloria (54) had a very positive experience as well, as she stated, “I had a wonderful family, a wonderful childhood, so I think that made me feel really secure. My parents let me know, not so much through words as actions, that they would always love me no matter what, no judgment. Carol (49) attributed much of her sense of empowerment to,

...having a family that was really excited about me being there did wonderful things for my sense of self-worth. I have self-confidence that comes from my family situation. I have a sense of myself. I feel like I’m important. My mother really celebrated intelligence. We grew up thinking we were intelligent. If we had been the dumbest people on earth it didn’t matter

because we thought we were intelligent. My family was a powerful determinant in who I became.

Not all of the women had idyllic childhoods, of course. Especially Margaret (92), who grew up in extremely harsh conditions. She was the second daughter in a family of eight children, and was expected to work almost from the time she was old enough to understand the concept, citing memories of being expected to help wash dishes and clean the house as early as five years old. The family lived in poverty conditions. Although her father could be loving and jolly in her description, he also drank heavily at times and, when drinking, was often physically and emotionally abusive to his wife and children. Her mother was a very kind, gentle, and loving woman, but was clearly oppressed by her husband. Margaret and her older sister were the primary caregivers for the siblings that followed as well as being expected to do any of the other work that was necessary. All of the children were expected to work from a very young age. Margaret tells the story of her younger brother attempting to plow the fields with a plow that was hooked up to the mule. Her brother was so small he had to stretch upward as far as possible to reach the handles of the plow. As Margaret came of age, she demonstrated a powerful reaction to her experiences at home, deciding by the time she was 20 years old that she never wanted to have children and she wanted to be able to support herself and not be dependent on anyone, especially a husband, for economic support. And, that's exactly what she did. She moved away to a small town about 60 miles from her home, found a job at a textile mill, and remained there through retirement and beyond. She never married, although she did date some as a younger woman, and she has remained fiercely independent all of her life. She said when she started working there around 1928 she was paid \$.10 an hour

for 10 hours a day, which was \$5.00 per week. Her room and board cost \$3.00 per week which left her \$2.00 per week for all of her other expenses. She saved her money and is now an independently wealthy woman, all derived from her earnings at the textile mill. She traveled extensively after retirement and had a very active social life as a retiree with many friends until recently. After suffering a broken hip, she moved into a retirement facility in a town near her brother and other family five years ago at the age of 87. As would be expected, she has experienced quite a change of lifestyle in giving up her own apartment and leaving her friends. She remains very independent, however, with a clear mind and an undaunted spirit, always welcoming visits from family and friends and willing to go out “at the drop of a hat”.

Margaret’s experience as a child and teenager was consistent with many of the families during that time, in which the physical and economic survival of the family was dependent on everyone doing their part to help. As might be expected, this made the childhood experiences of many of these women quite different from children of subsequent generations. Lindsay (53) spoke at length on this being the case in her family as well, noted in the above section on Appalachian heritage. Eva (62) is Margaret’s niece and although she was from the next generation as the daughter of Margaret’s brother, there are some parallels in her childhood experience as compared to Margaret’s, in terms of there being some degree of harshness and struggle within the family. Her father too was described as a loving, jolly man who was quite the character, and worked hard to provide for his family. But, he also drank at times, and when he was drinking, he was at times physically and emotionally abusive to his wife and children. His wife, however, was a very strong woman emotionally and would stand up to him as much as she could,

although the mores of the times still held that the wife was subservient to the husband overall. Eva's (62) father was also missing in action during World War II, which had a dramatic impact on her childhood. She was approximately five years old at the time and had a brother who was three years younger. As she describes that time of her life,

My father went away and we knew what it was to survive without a man around, and I saw the strength in my mother there in those years. And, I think that contributed to the strength that I can feel in myself. That she was able to do all the things that she did and did it well and was able to take care of my brother and myself and make our lives as happy as we could be with our father being gone was really something. Plus, the fact that there at one time we thought he was dead, and I remember all of us going through that together, and I think that made us stronger.

Eva (62) also spoke about how her parents' having grown up during the Depression had a major impact on her family's life, that her parents,

...passed that along to me about what it was like, and that had a lot of influence on me because I am not nearly as frivolous as I might have been otherwise, and I tend to worry more about tomorrow than I should.

Although both of the African American participants described very stable and loving childhood experiences, they did experience varying degrees of prejudice growing up. Both of them had great great grandparents who had been slaves. However, neither of them spoke at length about this aspect of their lives and indicated that it was neither traumatic nor debilitating in terms of their capacity to be happy and emotionally strong. Tammy (36), who is Caucasian, was exposed to racial tensions more dramatically than

any of the other participants when her family moved to Maryland while she was in high school. This was during the 1970's and racial tensions were high in that part of the country. This had a dramatic impact on her as far as realizing that not all parts of the world and not all people were like those found in southwest Virginia. Also, Tammy's parents divorced when she was 13, which she described as the most defining event in her early life as she says, "It was a tough time. I was the most emotional of all of us." The family had moved back to southwest Virginia by then, and her mother proceeded to raise them as a single mother from then on. Her father moved back to Maryland and was largely absent for most of her life until recent years. In fact, her parents were scheduled to remarry a few days following this interview after having been divorced for 21 years. Tammy attributed this to God having brought them back together. As it turned out, Tammy (36) married shortly after her parents' divorce at the age of 15 and her marriage has now lasted for 21 years and she said she is "still deeply in love with my husband." She acknowledged that it is very unusual for someone who marries so young to establish and maintain a healthy lasting marriage and she attributed this in part to "growing up really fast after my parents' divorce...it took the little child out of me at a very early age and so I think I was a lot more mature at 15 than most girls were." Four of the other women married at a relatively young age as well. Eva (62) married at 17, Gloria (54) at 17, Kelly (45) at 17, and Vivian (61) at 17. Eva's and Kelly's first marriages ended in divorce within a few years. Eva remarried two years later and she and her husband have now been together for 39 years. Kelly remained single for 18 years, raising her son as a single mother. She remarried eight years ago. Gloria's first marriage lasted 20 years. She remained single for seven years and has been remarried for ten. Although she did

not marry at a young age, Brenda (53) too has experienced the loss of divorce twice in her life. Margaret (92) is the only woman in the study who never married. All of the women who had experienced divorce indicated that the closeness and support they experienced from their family of origin and extended family greatly contributed to their ability to cope with this difficult time in their lives, especially for those who had children.

As noted, many of these women faced difficult times during their childhood and teenage years. As would be expected from women who are at these stages of their lives, many of the women have faced adversity and loss as adults as well. As mentioned above, four of the women have experienced divorce during their lives. Joyce (57) and Carol (49) both were widowed at young ages, 30 and 45 respectively. Joyce's husband committed suicide and Carol's husband died of a heart attack at the age of 47. Regina's (49) father died when she was 20, and her disabled uncle who had lived with them all of her life died two years later, leaving just she and her mother to carry on together. Regina also describes the breakup of her first serious relationship, which happened via a letter she received the same day her father died that night, as a traumatic and defining moment in her life. But, she also credits this experience as having given her strength, especially in the role model her mother provided at the time as she says,

I decided if my mother can live through this, and run the business, and take all this, I can too. Watching her handle all this emotionally was a very empowering thing for me. If she can do this, I can do this. I knew I could come back to school and kind of hang my head and be really embarrassed that he was there and he was married, and oh, poor me, I lost my father and this has just been a horrible year, but I just decided I'm not going to do that.

I'm going to go back and I am going to make the best of everything. I mean, that was the change moment of my life. And so, it was like, I'm okay, I can do this. I can continue, and I can be a stronger person because of it. And, I do think I came out a lot stronger because of it.

Kelly's (45) father also died when she was 21. Brenda's (53) eldest brother was killed in a plane crash 23 years ago. Christine's (54) brother is a Vietnam veteran who returned from the war 100 percent disabled due to emotional problems. Christine (54) also has had to face a serious illness of her own, having been diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 43. She has survived it, obviously, but this was even more traumatic than it might have been, if that is possible, because her grandmother died of breast cancer at the same age and she understandably could not help but worry that this family history might be repeated. Vivian (61) too, has had to face a serious illness, experiencing a heart attack three years ago followed by triple bypass surgery. As might be expected, these experiences of facing the possibility of one's own death had a profound impact on both women. As Christine (54) shared her experience,

In dealing with breast cancer at a young age, and my grandmother dying of breast cancer... at the same age she died of breast cancer I had breast cancer and survived, that changed me. I always thought I had my priorities straight. I've always been a person that made my own decisions because of the way I grew up. But, I think having dealt with moments like that it's where you come so close to dying that it doesn't change the way you look at the world, but it changes the way that you express the way you look at the world. Like a lot of the way I look at a lot of things I would keep to myself before.

That's horse s---. I don't care what I say now. I've always looked forward to being an eccentric old woman.

Vivian (61) spoke to her experience as she said, "You just kind of look at things different whenever you have something like that happen to you. You feel like, you know, the Lord left you here for some purpose and I think I know what that purpose was."

Although it might be expected that these women who had difficult childhoods or teen years or faced adversity during their adult lives might have allowed this to diminish their desire to strive to be their best and to be happy in life, quite the opposite was found to be true. As the previous and subsequent discussions indicate, even if their family or life circumstances did not support their healthy development and experience of empowerment, it appears to have fostered it in almost a reverse psychology, causing these women to draw from within them to carry on in spite of their circumstances. What is most remarkable in reviewing the developmental histories of these women who have had their share of suffering and struggle, is that, even in the face of adversity, and perhaps because of it, they have emerged ever stronger, ever more hopeful, ever more empowered.

Psychosocial Stages of Development – The participants completed a questionnaire adapted from the Psychosocial Inventory of Ego Strengths (PIES) developed by Markstrom et al., (1997, Appendix G) as part of this study. The details and preliminary findings are outlined in Appendix H.

Empowerment

As noted above, when the women in this study were asked if they considered themselves to be empowered, all of them said yes. Many of them indicated that they had

felt different levels of empowerment at different times of their lives, which is consistent with the information found in the literature. Some of them indicated that they have days even now when they do not feel that way, but overall they do consider themselves empowered. When the women were asked how they would define being empowered, there were many consistencies in their responses, and interestingly, many of them defined the characteristics of an empowered person very similarly to the characteristics they attributed to Appalachians. For example, Eva (62) described empowerment as “being strong, self-sufficient, being able to take care of yourself, being able to make do with what you have and being thankful for what you have and what you are able to do,” which is very similar to the way she defined an Appalachian. As noted in the Appalachian heritage discussion above, she described her mother as the most empowered woman she had known and indicated that the characteristics that made her mother an empowered woman were also traits she believed were characteristic of Appalachians as well. When asked why she considered herself to be empowered she responded,

Because I know I can survive and I have pulled myself up from just a high school education and managed to go on and start college when I was 50 years old and become a nurse, and I think I could survive alone if I needed to. I also can find happiness in just about every situation and I think that’s what makes a person empowered is that they can find happiness and peace of mind just from life itself. It’s from within, and without that you’re not empowered.

She described a time when she did not feel empowered in her life as feeling “hopeless and helpless, like I had no choice,” and she described a relative she did not consider to be empowered as someone who,

...had whined ever since I can remember. You never saw her when she felt good. It was just different than any of the other women I knew about or grew up with...and we all knew that if anything bad happened, not to tell her because she would fall apart.

When Lindsay (53) was asked how she would define being empowered, she said, I would define being empowered as having the internal resources, the confidence and the spirit to carry out things that first promote survival and then promote development beyond the necessary, specifically in areas of education and artistic expression.

When Gloria (54) was asked this question, she defined empowerment as, Knowing in your own mind and heart that you can do something. At least you can do the best you can do...if you're doing the best that you can do, then that's all that you are asked to do. I think being empowered is realizing what you're capable of and doing your best at it. I pride myself in making a good showing.

Kelly's (45) definition of empowerment was to be “very strong, very independent, self-reliant, never giving up.” Joyce (57) described being empowered as, “being strong, being resourceful, being caring and loving, like my grandmother who had a heart of gold, making a difference in someone's life.” Brenda's (53) response to this question was,

I think basically attitude. Proving that you are able to do something to change your life and accomplish the things you feel are important. Obviously, education is incredibly important because you have to have skills. Also, being strong, independent, and self-reliant.

Vivian (61) was the only one of the women who included having power in her definition as she stated, "I like to have power, that's what makes me empowered." When she was asked to describe an empowered woman from her life she stated, "She was always friendly, outgoing, had personality, just an all around good person." Carol's (49) response to this question was, "it has to do with feeling like one has the authority and the ability to make things happen." Regina (49) indicated that her mother was the most empowered woman in her life and she described why as she stated, "She just worked hard, she solved problems. If a problem presented itself, she'd just sit down and figure out a way to get around it, and she did all this and was always thinking about other people." She went on to list several other women in her life who had been powerful role models. When she was asked what characteristics these women have that caused her to define them as empowered, she said,

They all have self-confidence. They all have a very strong work ethic.

They all put others ahead of themselves. They were able to have balance and not really become a martyr and say, "I can't do any of this because I have to take care of kids or I have to do this, I have to do that"...they all lived a balanced life. But, good balance, I think that's empowering.

Tammy (36) defined empowerment as,

Being able to make my own way in the world and do what I want to

do and be able to do it well...making people feel good about themselves, making me feel good about myself. That's empowerment, helping humanity out.

Christine (54) demonstrated her empowerment even as she gave her definition as she said,

To trust myself to be who I want to be, where I want to be and when I want to be. To laugh when I want to laugh and to cry when I want to cry, and to say s--- when I want to say s---. And, to say I love you when I want to say I love, and praise God when I want to praise God. That's what I consider being empowered. Being comfortable being who you are, wanting to be who you are.

Chapter V

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore what constitutes empowerment for Appalachian women and the developmental and cultural factors that contribute to such empowerment, and to explore whether there is any relationship between the degree of empowerment experienced by the women and their successful development through the eight psychosocial stages of development.

Appalachian Heritage

The findings contributed a wealth of information and insight into the Appalachian culture, with the participants presenting Appalachians as a proud, independent, self-reliant people who value family, community, hard work, education, and religion and demonstrate a deep and powerful love and connection to “their” beautiful mountains. Growing up in an Appalachian environment and culture was fully confirmed as factors contributing to the empowerment of these women. Even in the face of adverse circumstances experienced by virtue of being in Appalachia, such as limited educational opportunities, the women attributed the values and personal characteristics instilled in them as Appalachians as a mitigating factor in overcoming these circumstances and thus, still enabling them to become empowered women.

Developmental Factors

The same was found to be true with regard to the women’s developmental histories. The findings indicate that the upbringing these women experienced was also a largely contributing factor to their empowerment as adults. And, again, even those who experienced a difficult upbringing indicated that it was in response to, or in spite of, these

circumstances that they were able to persevere and find the strength and resilience within themselves to become empowered women. The preliminary results of the PIES questionnaire (Appendix H) support the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between the degree of empowerment experienced by the women and their successful development through the eight psychosocial stages of development. The findings indicate that the women had developed successfully through the stages they had experienced thus far, and they all indicated that they considered themselves to be empowered to some degree.

Empowerment

The findings on what constitutes empowerment for these women, indicated many consistencies between the women, but also wide variation as to how empowerment is ultimately defined. The results are consistent with the literature, in that empowerment takes different forms for different people (Rappaport, 1984; Zimmerman, 1990), empowerment takes different forms in different contexts, and empowerment may vary across different life domains, such as work, family, and recreation (Zimmerman, 1995). The findings are also consistent with Zimmerman's (1995) that stated, "Every individual has the potential to experience empowering and disempowering processes, and to develop a sense of empowerment at one time and disempowerment at another. It also suggests that people may become more empowered over time" (p. 586). This point, as anticipated, was found to be especially relevant in the findings of this study as the women indicated that they had become more empowered over time. Lord's (1989) work as well, is consistent with the findings in this study wherein he determined that the process of empowerment was unique to each individual, characterized by the common elements of

resource support and participation, an ongoing experience, and shaped by both personal and social factors including the availability of resources. Lord and Hutchison's (1993) definition of empowerment supports these findings as "processes whereby individuals achieve increasing control of various aspects of their lives and participate in the community with dignity" (p. 7).

The findings were particularly consistent with the literature related to empowerment of women. Sheilds' (1995) results from her study indicated that "women experience empowerment as a multifaceted expansive process with three central themes: the development of an internal sense of self, the ability to take action based on their internal sense of self, and a salient theme of connectedness" (p. 32). Shefner-Rogers et al. (1998) stated, "female empowerment is the process of building a woman's capacity to be self-reliant and to develop her sense of inner strength" (p. 323). The work of Rowland-Serdar and Schwartz-Shea (1990) is especially relevant since they contended that "the foundational messages about women's powerlessness which hinder development of an empowered self are transmitted in large part through the family in liberal society" (p. 607). They view the process toward empowerment as "reclaiming the self" and overcoming dependence as "reclaiming one's story." They stated that, "reclaiming one's story involves two steps. The first is to recognize and embrace the concept that one's life can be thought of as an unfolding story. The second is to exercise choice about how that story will unfold in one's adult life" (pp. 612-613). They stated further,

Selfhood for women, then, involves coming to terms with the cultural stories that have shaped their lives. This implies that women are active

in the process of making meaning, interpreting their past and their current experiences as their understanding of contemporary culture and history change (p. 613).

This was demonstrated time and again throughout the study as the women told their stories, reflecting on their lives and the lives of their female ancestors. As anticipated, the foundational perspective of this study was supported in the findings, which were congruent with Whitmore's (1988) summary of empowerment literature cited by Lord and Hutchison (1993) wherein he acknowledged that:

The concept needs to be more clearly defined, but identified some common underlying assumptions: (a) individuals are assumed to understand their own needs better than anyone else and therefore should have the power to define and act upon them, (b) all people possess strengths upon which to build, (c) empowerment is a lifelong endeavor, and (d) personal knowledge and experience are valid and useful in coping effectively. (p.6)

The findings in the women's stories consistently uphold this concept.

Qualification of Study

The goal of this study was exploratory and the participants were chosen by the snowball sampling technique, which may not make the findings generalizable to all Appalachian women. Although a full range of ages was represented from the Middle Adult stage of life by eleven of the women, there was only one participant from the Older Adult stage of life. There is no comparison group in this study, so the findings discussed may not be exclusive to Appalachian women from these stages of life.

Implications for Future Research

As previously stated, this study was exploratory and addressed the experiences of Appalachian women primarily in the Middle Adult stage of the lifespan. Future research would be strengthened by a broader sample of women from both the Middle and Older Adult stages of development, and perhaps the Younger Adult stage as well. Future research should also include examination of specific factors in an Appalachian environment that inhibit or promote empowerment of women, as well as more in-depth study of developmental factors that contribute to or detract from empowerment. In that this study was unique to the literature overall in exploring developmental factors that affect empowerment, and the findings support the belief that the experiences a woman has as a child and as a teenager do have significant impact on her empowerment as an adult, more research in this line of study is warranted. This is consistent with other aspects of psychological theory wherein developmental factors are proven to impact the adult lives of individuals.

Conclusion

The primary conclusion to be drawn from this study is that growing up in an Appalachian environment and culture supports the empowerment of Appalachian women. Developmental factors, as well, have been found to greatly influence the empowerment of women. An unanticipated conclusion to be drawn from this study is with respect to the true meaning of empowerment and how it is defined. As stated previously in the literature review, numerous scholars have attempted to define the construct, and the literature varies widely on how this is conceptualized, revealing an almost unlimited number of definitions, depending on the discipline and exposure of the author (Sheilds, 1995). In review of the literature and numerous discussions with other scholars and lay

people throughout the course of this study, there seemed to be some aspect of empowerment that could not quite be conceptualized, an elusive “something” that, if known, would possibly pull it all together. As seen in the discussion of the results, the women in this study gave quite varied definitions of what empowerment means to them. However, the consistent theme found for all of them was that the essence of empowerment is experienced as a form of inner strength. There may be myriad factors that influence and contribute to this experience, including cultural heritage, developmental histories, personal characteristics such as resilience, self-efficacy, and self-esteem, but this elusive “something” that comes from within is the true core of the experience. The conclusion of this study is that, whether one perceives empowerment to come from internal or external factors, from one’s upbringing, one’s culture, one’s God, or one’s spirit, the essence of empowerment is experienced as the freedom to be one’s self, in all one’s glory. What higher truth could one hope to find in life? Surely, there is none.

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APPENDIX A

Table 1.1
Behavioral Expressions of a Sense of Trust and Mistrust – Stage 1

*Characteristic Behaviors of People
Who Have a High Sense of Basic Trust*

1. They are able to ask others for help or emotional support without overdoing it.
2. They are inclined to believe that others will come through for them, unless there is good reason not to believe that.
3. They start with the assumption that people are generally good.
4. They tend to focus on the positive aspects of others' behavior.
5. They tend to behave in a relatively disclosing and open manner when around others.
6. They find it relatively easy to receive (favours, compliments, gifts, etc.) from other people, but prefer a balance of giving and receiving.
7. They have no trouble sharing their possessions, the "things" in their lives with other people.
8. They are not particularly fearful of disclosing themselves, even their more negative qualities, to other people.
9. They tend to have a generally optimistic worldview without being Pollyannaish or unrealistic about it.
10. They are inclined to believe that other people know what is best for themselves, even though they may privately feel differently about others' choices.

Implicit Attitude:

1. You're O.K.
2. Life is generally fair and good to me.
3. I'm willing to share what I have.

*Characteristic Behaviors of People Who Have a
Low Sense of Basic Trust*

1. They tend to have trouble asking others for help or emotional support.
2. They are inclined to believe that others will not come through for them, even when there is no reason to believe that.
3. They start with the assumption that people are generally bad or evil.
4. They tend to focus on the negative aspects of others' behavior.
5. They tend to behave in a relatively guarded and closed manner when around others.
6. They find it rather difficult to receive (favours, compliments, gifts, etc.) from other people, and find it easier to be the giver than the taker.
7. They have problems sharing their possessions, the "things in their lives with other people.
8. They are very hesitant about disclosing themselves, particularly their negative qualities, to other people.
9. They tend to have a generally pessimistic worldview even when things are going well and sometimes particularly when things are going well.
10. They are inclined to believe that other people usually do not know what is best for themselves, and prefer to tell others what to do.

Implicit Attitude:

1. You're not O.K.
2. Life is generally unfair and unkind to me.
3. I'm not willing to share what I have.

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego development within Erikson's psychosocial framework, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 66 (1988): 354-360.

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego status in Erikson's last three psychosocial stages, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 68 (1990): 136-142. ACA.

Table 1.2
Behavioral Expressions of Autonomy and Shame and Doubt – Stage 2

Characteristic Behaviors of People Who Have a Sense of Autonomy

1. They like to make their own decisions, particularly about manners important to them.
2. They are able to say no to requests made of them without feeling guilty.
3. They are inclined to express themselves in terms of what they “will” do or “want” to do.
4. They tend to resist being dominated by people wanting to control them.
5. They are able to work well by themselves or with others, depending on the situation.
6. They are inclined to get on with what needs to be done and remain task-persistent until finished.
7. They can work easily with either open-ended or structured work assignments, although they may prefer more open-endedness.
8. They are able to listen to their own inner feelings when deciding what is right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate.
9. They tend to feel relatively un-self-conscious and at ease when in group situations.
10. They tend to want a certain amount of order and organization in their lives to reinforce feelings of personal control and self-approval.

Implicit Attitude:

1. I think I can do it.
2. This is what needs to be done.
3. I have something of value to offer.

Characteristic Behaviors of People Who Have a Sense of Shame and Doubt

1. They prefer being told what to do rather than make their own decisions.
2. They have problems saying no to requests made of them.
3. They are inclined to express themselves in terms of what they “should” do or “ought” to do.
4. They tend to allow themselves to be dominated by others, even though they may not like it.
5. They are not comfortable working by themselves, particularly when they know work will be judged or evaluated.
6. They have trouble getting started with what needs to be done: procrastination may be a key feature of personality.
7. They have problems working with open-ended work assignments, preferring more structure and direction.
8. They have difficulty listening to their own inner feelings when deciding what is right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate.
9. They tend to feel uneasy and self-conscious, even embarrassed, when in group situations.
10. They tend to want things “just so” as one way of voiding others’ disapproval and criticism.

Implicit Attitude:

1. I don’t think I can do it.
2. Tell me what needs to be done.
3. I have little of value to offer

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego development within Erikson’s psychosocial framework, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 66 (1988): 354-360.

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego status in Erikson’s last three psychosocial stages, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 68 (1990): 136-142. ACA.

Table 1.3
Behavioral Expressions of a Sense of Initiative and Guilt – Stage 3

*Characteristic Behaviors of People Who
Have a Sense of Initiative*

1. They prefer to get on needs to be done to complete the task at hand.
2. They like accepting new challenges now and then.
3. They tend to be fast self-starters.
4. They tend to be effective leaders when in that position.
5. They tend to set goals and then set out to accomplish them,
6. they tend to have high energy levels.
7. They have a strong sense of personal adequacy.
8. They seem to enjoy “making things happen.”
9. They are able to emotionally appreciate the idea that initiative begins and ends with the person, not the production it generates.
10. They have a balanced sense of right and wrong without being overly moralistic.

Implicit Attitude:

1. I will start now.
2. I enjoy new challenges.
3. This is what needs to be done and I will do it.

*Characteristic Behaviors of People Who Have a
Sense of Guilt*

1. They tend to postpone, put off, put aside, and generally procrastinate starting.
2. They are inclined to resist new challenge.
3. They tend to be slow self-starters.
4. They tend to be ineffective leaders when in that position.
5. They may set goals but have problems getting them accomplished.
6. They tend to have low energy levels.
7. They have a weak sense of personal adequacy.
8. They prefer to remain in the background, preferring not to stir things up.
9. They may try to outrun their guilt with a tireless show of accomplishment, believing that efficient production may compensate for being a deficient person.
10. They tend to focus moralistically on those things in life that are “wrong.”

Implicit Attitude:

1. I will start tomorrow.
2. I prefer sticking with what I know.
3. This is what needs to be done, but who will do it?

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego development within Erikson’s psychosocial framework, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 66 (1988): 354-360.

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego status in Erikson’s last three psychosocial stages, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 68 (1990): 136-142. ACA.

Table 1.4
Behavioral Expressions of a Sense of Industry and Inferiority – Stage 4

*Characteristic Behaviors of People Who
Have a Sense of Industry*

1. They enjoy learning about new things and ideas.
2. They reflect a healthy balance between doing what they *have* to do and what they *like* to do.
3. They reflect strong curiosities about how and why things work the way they do.
4. They enjoy experimenting with new combinations, new ideas, and arriving at new syntheses.
5. They are excited by the idea of being producers.
6. They like the recognition that producing things brings, which reinforces sense of industry.
7. They develop a habit of work completion through steady attention and persevering diligence.
8. They have a sense of pride in doing at least one thing well.
9. They take criticism well and use it to improve their performance.
10. They tend to have a strong sense of persistence.

Implicit Attitude:

1. I'm a pretty good learner.
2. Being a producer excites me.
3. I'll work hard to succeed.

*Characteristic Behaviors of People Who
Have a Sense of Inferiority*

1. They do not particularly enjoy learning about new things and ideas.
2. They tend to concentrate mostly on what they believe they *have* to do, neglecting what they *like* to do.
3. They are not terribly curious about why and how things work.
4. They prefer staying with what I known new ways do not attract them so much as do proven ways.
5. They tend to be threatened, even guilty, about the idea of being producers.
6. They would like the recognition that production brings, but sense of inferiority stands in the way.
7. They develop habit of work delay by ongoing procrastinations.
8. They have problems taking pride in their work, believing it is not worth it.
9. They take criticism poorly and use it as a reason to stop trying.
10. They tend to have a weak sense of persistence.

Implicit Attitude:

1. I'm not a very good learner.
2. Being a producer frightens me.
3. I'll work hard to avoid failing.

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego development within Erikson's psychosocial framework, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 66 (1988): 354-360.

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego status in Erikson's last three psychosocial stages, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 68 (1990): 136-142. ACA.

Table 1.5
Behavioral Expressions of a Sense of Identity and Identity Confusion – Stage 5

Characteristic Behaviors of People Who Have a Sense of Identity

1. They have a stable self-concept that does not easily change.
2. they are able to combine short-term goals with long-range goals.
3. They are less susceptible to the shifting whims of peer pressure influences.
4. They tend to have reasonably high levels of self-acceptance.
5. They are able to make decisions without undue wavering and indecisiveness.
6. They tend to be optimistic about themselves, others, and life generally.
7. They tend to believe that they are responsible for what happens to them, good or bad.
8. They are able to seek self-acceptance directly by being their own person .
9. They are able to physically and emotionally close to another person without fearing a loss of self.
10. They tend to be cognitively flexible; their sense of self does not depend on being “right.”

Implicit Attitude:

1. I am this kind of person...
2. I'm not perfect, but I'm still O.K.
3. I can accept your shortcomings because I can accept my own.

Characteristic Behaviors of People Who Have a Sense of Identity Confusion

1. They tend to have an unstable self-concept marked by ups and downs.
2. They tend to set short-term goals, but have trouble establishing long-range plans.
3. They are more susceptible to the shifting whims of peer pressure influences.
4. They tend to have rather low levels of self-acceptance.
5. They are apt to have trouble making decisions, fearing that they will be wrong.
6. They tend to have a somewhat cynical attitude about themselves, others, and life generally.
7. They tend to believe that what happens to them is largely out of their hands, a matter of fate or breaks.
8. They are inclined to seek self-acceptance indirectly by being what they believe others want them to be.
9. they are inclined to have trouble being physically and emotionally close to another person without being either too dependent or too separate.
10. They tend to be cognitively inflexible; their sense of self resides heavily on being “right.”

Implicit Attitude:

1. I am not sure who I am as a person.
2. I should be much better/more than I am.
3. I have trouble accepting your shortcomings just as I have trouble accepting my own.

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego development within Erikson's psychosocial framework, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 66 (1988): 354-360.

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego status in Erikson's last three psychosocial stages, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 68 (1990): 136-142. ACA.

Table 1.6
Behavioral Expressions of a Sense of Intimacy and Isolation – Stage 6

Characteristic Behaviors of People Who Have a Sense of Intimacy

1. They have been able to establish a firm sense of their own identity.
2. They tend to be tolerant and accepting of the differences perceived in other people.
3. They are willing and able to trust others and themselves in the relationships they form.
4. They are able to form close emotional bonds without fearing the loss of their own identity.
5. They tend to develop cooperative, affiliative relationships with others.
6. They find satisfaction in their affiliation with others but can comfortably isolate themselves and be alone when they choose.
7. They are willing and able to commit themselves to relationships that demand sacrifice and compromise.
8. They are inclined to perceive relationships as something one gives to.
9. They tend to perceive sex as means of both achieving physical closeness and expressing love; partner is seen as a person.
10. They are able to express their caring feelings in a variety of ways and to say the words “I love you” without fear.

Implicit Attitude:

1. I’m okay and others are, too.
2. Others can generally be trusted.
3. Life can be difficult, but through mutual interdependence we can make it.

Characteristic Behaviors of People Who Have a Sense of Isolation

1. They have not been able to establish a firm sense of their own identity.
2. They tend not to be particularly tolerant or accepting of differences perceived in other people.
3. They are not particularly willing to trust either themselves or others in the relationships they form.
4. They are hesitant to form close emotional bonds because of fear of losing self-identity.
5. They tend to develop competitive relationships with others, making cooperative efforts more difficult.
6. They tend to prefer more separation from others; they feel uncomfortable when affiliations with others are too close.
7. They have difficulty committing to relationships that may demand sacrifice and compromise.
8. They are inclined to perceive relationships as something one takes from.
9. They tend to perceive sex as a means of achieving physical satisfaction but not necessarily expressing love; partner is seen more as an object.
10. They have difficulty expressing their caring feelings for others and find the words “I love you” hard to verbalize.

Implicit Attitude:

1. I’m okay, but others are not okay.
2. Others cannot generally be trusted.
3. Life can be difficult, and people have to learn to take care of themselves.

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego development within Erikson’s psychosocial framework, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 66 (1988): 354-360.

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego status in Erikson’s last three psychosocial stages, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 68 (1990): 136-142. ACA.

Table 1.7
Behavioral Expressions of a Sense of Generativity and Stagnation – Table 7

*Characteristic Behaviors of People Who Have a
Sense of Generativity*

1. They feel personally concerned about others, their immediate family, which includes future generations and the nature of the world in which those generations will live.
2. They reflect varying degrees of involvement with enhancing the welfare of young people and making the world a better place for them to live and work.
3. They have an interest in producing and caring for children of their own.
4. They reflect a parental kind of concern for the children of others.
5. They tend to focus more on what they can *give* to others rather than on what they can *get*.
6. They tend to be absorbed in a variety of activities outside of themselves.
7. They are interested in leading productive lives and in contributing to society.
8. They display other-centered values and attitudes.
9. They are interested in enhancing what is known, even if it means changing the status quo.
10. They feel a strong inclination to develop some unique talent or to express themselves creatively.

Implicit Attitude:

1. What can I give to others?
2. Risks I would like to take include...
3. I enjoy being productive and creative.

*Characteristic Behaviors of People Who Have a
Sense of Stagnation*

1. They are concerned primarily with themselves and show little interest in future generations.
2. They show little by way of involvement with the welfare of young people and helping to make the world a better place to live and work.
3. They have little interest in producing or caring for children of their own.
4. They show little by way of a parental kind of concern for the children of others.
5. They tend to focus more on what they can *get* from others rather than on what they can *give*.
6. They tend to be absorbed primarily in themselves and their own needs.
7. They are not particularly interested in being productive or in contributing to society.
8. They display self-centered values and attitudes.
9. They are interested in maintaining and preserving what is known in order to conserve the status quo.
10. They do not feel any particular inclination to develop some unique talent or to express themselves creatively.

Implicit Attitude:

1. What can I get from others?
2. Risks I would like to avoid include...
3. I prefer routine and sameness.

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego development within Erikson's psychosocial framework, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 66 (1988): 354-360.

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego status in Erikson's last three psychosocial stages, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 68 (1990): 136-142. ACA.

Table 1.8
Behavioral Expressions of a Sense of Integrity and Despair – Stage 8

Characteristic Behaviors of People Who Have a Sense of Integrity

1. They reflect many of the positive ego qualities associated with earlier stages, such as trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, and identity.
2. They believe that who they are and what they have become are largely the consequences of their own choices.
3. They accept the idea that this is their one and only life and that what has happened so it is largely of their own doing.
4. They accept death as an inevitable part of the life cycle.
5. They are able to admit to themselves and others that, for the most part, they have no one but themselves to blame for whatever troubles or failures they have experienced.
6. They are ready and able to defend the dignity of their own lifestyles against all physical economic threats, that is, they are not easily pushed around.
7. They are able to look back on their lives with feelings of pleasure, gratefulness and appreciation.
8. They tend to be reasonably happy, optimistic people, satisfied with their lives.
9. they approach the final stage of their lives with a sense of personal wholeness.
10. They are able to integrate their past experiences with current realities, and in this way generate a kind of “wisdom” about how to live one’s life and cope successfully.

Implicit Attitude:

1. I have much to be thankful for.
2. I am in control of my life.
3. I accept myself for who I am, and I accept others for who they are.

Characteristic Behaviors of People Who Have a Sense of Despair

1. They reflect many of the negative qualities associated with earlier stages, such as mistrust, shame, guilt, inferiority, and identify confusion.
2. They are inclined to believe that whom they are and what they have become is not something over which they have had much control.
3. They have trouble accepting the idea that this is their one and only life and that what has happened to it is largely of their own doing.
4. They show signs of fearing death and do not accept it as part of the life cycle.
5. They tend to blame others for whatever troubles or failures they have experienced.
6. They are not ready and able to defend the dignity of their own lifestyles, that is, they are easily pushed around.
7. They tend to look back on their lives with feelings of displeasure, regret, and depreciation.
8. They tend to be fairly unhappy, pessimistic people, dissatisfied with their lives.
9. They approach the final stage of their lives with a sense of personal fragmentation, incompleteness.
10. They seem stuck at the level of blame and disappointment, which makes it difficult for them to learn from their mistakes.

Implicit Attitude:

1. I have little to be thankful for.
2. I have little control over what happens to me.
3. I do not accept myself for who I am, and I wish others could be different.

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego development within Erikson’s psychosocial framework, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 66 (1988): 354-360.

Source: Don Hamachek, Evaluating self-concept and ego status in Erikson’s last three psychosocial stages, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 68 (1990): 136-142. ACA.

Appendix B

Table 1. Psychosocial Stages, Ego Strengths, and Their Antipathic Counterparts, and Proposed Conceptualization of Themes

<u>Psychosocial Stage</u>	<u>Ego Strength and Apathy</u>	<u>Theme 1</u>	<u>Theme 2</u>
Basic trust vs. mistrust	Hope vs. withdrawal	Confidence/optimism (about life, people, oneself, the future, etc.) vs. doubt, faithfulness (about life, people, oneself, the future, etc.)	Renewed hope in the face of disappointment vs. giving up as shown in apathy or despondency
Autonomy vs. shame, doubt	Will vs. compulsion	An awareness of one's will and a determination to apply it vs. impotence and helplessness	Self-control (includes impulses control, control over drives, self-determination, etc.) vs. impulsivity or compulsivity
Initiative vs. guilt	Purpose vs. inhibition	The ability to formulate realistic goals vs. aimless approach to life	Courage to pursue goals vs. fearful, suppressed, hesitant approach to goals
Industry vs. inferiority	Competence vs. inertia	Awareness that one has certain skills, knowledge, etc. vs. uncertainty or insecurity about skills, etc.	Exercising skills, knowledge, etc. vs. inactivity/idleness
Identity vs. identity confusion	Fidelity vs. role repudiation	Preoccupation with and commitment to being true, genuine, honest, faithful with oneself and others vs. absence of inner conviction	Demonstrates commitment through disciplined devotion, loyalty, service to ideological sources vs. role repudiation – two ways: diffidence or defiance (negative identity)
Intimacy vs. isolation	Love vs. exclusivity	Chosen mutual, reciprocal, committed to one another and to the relationship vs. lack of chosen mutual, reciprocal commitments	Togetherness with individuality maintained vs. enmeshment, loss of individual identity
Generativity vs. stagnation	Care vs. reactivity	Concern for the needs of others vs. lack of concern for the needs of others	Nurturing and teaching others vs. unwillingness to nurture and teach others
Integrity vs. despair	Wisdom vs. disdain	Acceptance of the past vs. regret, remorse	The ability to face an unknown future with courage vs. avoiding facing the future

Source: The psychosocial inventory of ego strengths: Development and validation of a new Eriksonian measure, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 26, 6 (1997): 705-732.

Appendix C

Letter of Confirmation:

Participant's Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip Code

Dear _____:

It was a pleasure speaking with you by phone to discuss your participation in the Developmental Factors in Empowerment of Appalachian Women Study. This will confirm your participation in the study, which will consist of one interview session that will last approximately one to two hours. This will also confirm that the interview will be conducted at location on date at time.

I have enclosed the Informed Consent Form required by Virginia Tech for your signature. This form is required for all studies conducted by graduate students and is to insure that professional and ethical standards are maintained at all times. After you have had an opportunity to review the form, please sign both copies, keep one for your records, and return one to me in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope no later than date.

I am so pleased that you will be participating in the study and look forward to your valuable contribution. If you should have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at home at (540) 961-3675, at work at (540) 633-3839 or via e-mail at HYPERLINK "mailto:alawson@nrcaa.org" alawson@nrcaa.org . I look forward to a very positive experience for all of the participants. Thank you for your interest and cooperation in this important research.

Sincerely,

Aleta Lawson

Enclosure

Appendix D
Participant Information Form

The following information is requested for the researcher's purposes only to provide information necessary for contacting participants and conducting interviews. The information will be held in strictest confidence and the researcher will be the only person to have access to this information.

Name of Participant _____
Address _____

Directions to Residence or Alternate Interview Location (if needed)

Home Telephone Number _____ Work _____
Is it permissible to contact you at work? ____yes ____no
E-mail address _____

Best time to contact you _____

Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth _____

How long have you lived or did you live in the Appalachian region? _____

Have you ever lived outside the region? If so, where and when? _____

Educational Background:

	<u>Participant:</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>Mother</u>
High School Diploma/GED	____yes__no__	_____	_____
Some College	_____	_____	_____
Associate Degree	_____	_____	_____
Bachelor's Degree	_____	_____	_____
Master's Degree	_____	_____	_____
Ph.D.	_____	_____	_____
Other (Please specify)	_____	_____	_____

Marital Status _____

Number of Children and Ages _____

Number of Grandchildren and Ages _____

Number of Great-Grandchildren and Ages _____

Occupation _____ Spouse's Occupation _____

Father's Occupation _____ Mother's Occupation _____

Are there other Appalachian women 35 or older that you think would be interested in participating in this study? If so, please list their names and phone numbers _____

Appendix E

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Informed Consent for Participants of Investigative Projects

**Title of Project: Developmental Factors in Empowerment of Appalachian Women
Investigators: Aleta Lawson, Cosby Steele Rogers**

I. The Purpose of this Research/Project

The purpose of this study is to explore what constitutes empowerment for Appalachian women and the developmental and cultural factors that contributed to such empowerment. The researcher will explore women's perceptions of what empowerment is for them and how this varies among individuals and is influenced by the women's developmental histories. There will be 10 participants.

II. Procedures

The study will be conducted through one-to-one interviews between the participant and the researcher. The interviews will consist of one interview session that will last approximately one to two hours. In the first stage of the interview, the participants will be asked a series of ten open-ended questions by the researcher to guide the interview. The questions will provide a framework for conducting the interview, and the participants will be encouraged to elaborate on their experiences and fully tell their stories. Upon completion of the open-ended portion of the interview, the participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire. The interviews will be recorded on cassette tapes that will be stored with the questionnaires in a locked desk drawer at the researcher's home and will be destroyed upon conclusion of the study. A paid transcriber will transcribe the tapes and will be informed of appropriate confidentiality procedures throughout the process. The researcher and transcriber will be the only people to have access to the tapes.

III. Risks

There are no risks to the participants. Participation is voluntary, and the subject matter is not particularly sensitive, although participants are free to discuss any aspect of their family life they choose to disclose. They are free to withdraw at any time and may choose not to respond to any question that is not comfortable for them. The research involves interview procedures in which the participants cannot be identified as outlined below.

IV. Benefits of this Project

The most immediate benefit of this project will be for the participants in that it will provide an opportunity for self-reflection on their lives and their female ancestor's lives in relation to how growing up in an Appalachian culture has influenced their sense of empowerment as well as other aspects of their lives. This line of research also has the potential to improve the lives of Appalachian women and their daughters by helping educate them on how to achieve empowerment and why it is important to do so. The information obtained can be used by health professionals and educators toward empowering Appalachian women and female children, thereby enabling them to live more full and rewarding lives. Participants may contact the researcher after the study is completed for a summary of the research results if they would like to have that information.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

The data collected by interview and audiotaping will be kept confidential at all times. The participants will be identified by a letter and number designation (i.e., Participant #1/Middle Adult = P1/MA). The cassette tapes and questionnaires will be kept in a locked desk drawer at the researcher's home and will be destroyed upon conclusion of the study. The researcher and the transcriber will be the only people who will have access to the tapes.

VI. Compensation

The participants will receive no compensation for participation in the research.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

The participants are free to withdraw at any time from the research.

VIII. Approval of Research

The Department of Family and Child Development has approved this research project, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

IX. Participant's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities: to meet with the researcher at the designated date, time, and place to participate in an interview.

X. Participant's Permission

I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. I have had all of my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this project.

If I participate, I may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Signature

Date

Should I have any questions about this research or its conduct, I may contact:

Aleta Lawson

(540) 961-3675

Investigator

Phone

Cosby Steele Rogers

(540) 231-4793

Faculty Advisor

Phone

David Moore

(540) 231-4991

Chair, IRB

Phone

Research Division

Appendix F

Interview Questions

Demographic Information/Life History:

1. What does it mean to you to be Appalachian? In addition to regional distinctions, are there cultural values and characteristics common to Appalachian people you would include?
2. How many generations of your mother's family were born in Appalachia? How many generations of your father's family?
3. Tell me about the family you grew up in.
4. How would you define being empowered?
5. Tell me about the most empowered woman in your family. Why do you feel that way about her? Tell me about the least empowered woman in your family. Why do you feel that way about her? Are there any others in either category you would like to mention?
6. Do you consider yourself to be an empowered woman? Why or why not?
7. Have you felt different levels of empowerment at different times of your life and/or in different areas of your life?
8. How do you feel growing up in your family affected your level of empowerment?
9. How do you feel growing up in an Appalachian environment affected your level of empowerment?
10. Is there anything further you would like to share about how you were raised or where you were raised that contributed to who you are today? Any other life events?

Appendix G

Participant Questionnaire

Please circle your answer to the following questions indicating how well the statement describes you on a scale of 1 – 5, as follows:
1 – Does not describe me well, 2 – Somewhat describes me, 3 – Describes me, 4 – Describes me well, 5 – Describes me very well

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. When I love someone, I can accept that they need to pursue some interests without me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I am able to follow through on a task until it is completed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I know I have skills to carry out various tasks and responsibilities important to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I find I can easily be distracted even when I really need to finish a task. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I feel okay with the way I've handled my life so far. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I prefer to be free-floating without making commitments to other people or things. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I have experienced feelings of love with someone outside of my family. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. When I think about the future, I feel optimistic. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. When I see someone with a need, I help in whatever way I am able. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I find that my opinions are frequently influenced by others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I really don't know what strengths or skills I have to offer society. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I can't seem to forgive myself for a lot of things I've done in the past. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I am involved in a variety of activities that allow me to use my skills and abilities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I don't think I have really loved anyone outside of my family. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. When things don't go my way, I remind myself of the positive things in my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I really don't know what I want out of life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. When I know someone is having a difficult time, I really feel concerned about them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. When I make a commitment to something, I stick with it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. In many ways, I have control over my future. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. I don't pretend to be something that I'm not. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. I really can't be bothered to help other people. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I'm afraid of what might happen to me in the future. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. I don't like it when someone I love wants to do something with anyone other than me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. I try to pursue my aims even when I have to take risks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please circle your answer to the following questions indicating how well the statement describes you on a scale of 1 – 5, as follows:
 1 – Does not describe me well, 2 – Somewhat describes me, 3 – Describes me, 4 – Describes me well, 5 – Describes me very well

25. I hesitate to put much energy into trying to reach my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I'm only setting myself up for disappointment by looking forward to things in the future.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I feel like I don't have control over my life.	1	2	3	4	5
28. When I think of my future, I see a definite direction for my life.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Even when I have opportunity to do things I might be good at, I usually can't get started.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Beyond my closest friends and family, I'm not that concerned about the needs of other people.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I may have difficult times ahead, but I'll try to face them with courage.	1	2	3	4	5
32. When something doesn't work out for me, I just look forward to doing other things.	1	2	3	4	5
33. If there is something I choose to do, I am determined to do it.	1	2	3	4	5
34. When I care about a friend or partner, it usually doesn't lead to a committed relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
35. I have strengths that enable me to be effective in certain situations.	1	2	3	4	5
36. Sometimes I feel as if I can't control my behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
37. I believe in being true to myself and others.	1	2	3	4	5
38. When I am in a close relationship with someone, I tend to lose sight of my interests and goals.	1	2	3	4	5
39. No matter how bad things get, I am confident they will get better.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Fear keeps me from striving for many of my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
41. I'm not really sure what I believe in.	1	2	3	4	5
42. When I feel really down, I have a hard time believing that things are going to get better.	1	2	3	4	5
43. When I reflect on the past, I feel sadness and regret.	1	2	3	4	5
44. I don't care about things anymore because they usually don't work out anyway.	1	2	3	4	5
45. I am able to set realistic goals for myself.	1	2	3	4	5
46. Even when someone I don't know that well asks me for advice, I take the time to try to help.	1	2	3	4	5
47. I've got enough of my own problems that it is hard to worry about other people's problems.	1	2	3	4	5
48. I have trouble accepting a particular purpose or role in life.	1	2	3	4	5
49. I'm not afraid of what the future has in store for me.	1	2	3	4	5

Please circle your answer to the following questions indicating how well the statement describes you on a scale of 1 – 5, as follows:
 1 – Does not describe me well, 2 – Somewhat describes me, 3 – Describes me, 4 – Describes me well, 5 – Describes me very well

50. I don't look forward to the future.	1	2	3	4	5
51. I hardly ever initiate activities, I usually follow the crowd.	1	2	3	4	5
52. It is difficult for me to ignore the pain of others.	1	2	3	4	5
53. I stand up for the people and causes that are important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
54. It doesn't matter what I do, it's not going to change anything.	1	2	3	4	5
55. I don't have time to deal with other people's problems.	1	2	3	4	5
56. I can accept the fact that I've made mistakes in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
57. When I love someone such as a friend or partner, we are equally committed to one another.	1	2	3	4	5
58. When something doesn't work out the way I had hoped, it makes me feel like just quitting everything.	1	2	3	4	5
59. I like to work to make things happen.	1	2	3	4	5
60. My friends and I believe we can disagree on things and still be friends.	1	2	3	4	5
61. Most people just seem more capable than me.	1	2	3	4	5
62. Even though I'm sometimes afraid of failing, if there's something I want to do, I try to do it.	1	2	3	4	5
63. I'm usually able to resist when I'm tempted to do something that's not in my best interest.	1	2	3	4	5
64. I avoid tasks that might require much of my time and energy.	1	2	3	4	5

(Adapted from: Markstrom, C. A., Sabino, V. M., Turner, B. J., & Berman, R. C. (1997). The psychosocial inventory of ego strengths: Development and validation of a new Eriksonian measure. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 26 (6) 705-732.)

Appendix H

Psychosocial Inventory of Ego Strengths (PIES) Data

Psychosocial Stages of Development - The participants completed a questionnaire adapted from the Psychosocial Inventory of Ego Strengths (PIES) developed by Markstrom et al., (1997, Appendix G) based upon a Likert-type scale of responses developed by the researcher wherein the participants indicated how well each statement described them on a scale of 1 to 5, with a score of 1 indicating that the statement did not describe them well, and a score of 5 indicating that the statement described them very well. There were eight questions corresponding to each psychosocial stage of development. Questionnaire responses were used simply for descriptive purposes to elaborate on the discussion as to how the women's apparent degree of development through the Eriksonian stages corresponds to their responses to the questions on empowerment. Thus, a simple scoring method was used wherein each group of eight scores was averaged to give an overall score for that stage, with the degree of successful development in that particular stage indicated by the same scale of 1 to 5, with a score of 3 or higher indicating successful development. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Overall, the preliminary findings of the PIES questionnaire confirmed the hypothesis that a positive relationship would be revealed between the degree of empowerment experienced by the women and their successful development through the eight psychosocial stages. In response to being asked during the interviews whether they considered themselves to be empowered, all of the women said yes, and each of them scored 3 or higher overall on the PIES scale, indicating successful development. It is

interesting to note that the youngest participant, Tammy, who is 36, scored highest of all the women, and the oldest participant, Margaret, who is 92, scored lowest. Margaret (92) was the only one who scored below 3 in any of the individual stages, scoring 2.6 in Stage 1, Infancy (Birth – 18 Months). This is not surprising in light of Margaret's depictions of the conditions of her childhood, which were quite harsh and were outlined in detail in the above discussion. With this in mind, however, what might be considered to be surprising given the conditions of her childhood is that the rest of her scores in the subsequent life stages are 3 or higher, indicating that somehow she was able to achieve a significant degree of empowerment throughout her lifespan in spite of such a difficult childhood. It is also interesting to note that the next lowest score for Margaret (92) was found in Stage 8, Older Adult (65 years & Older), which is the stage of life she is experiencing now. This is consistent with her responses to the interview questions, especially when asked if she had experienced different levels of empowerment at different times of her life, she indicated the present stage of her life as one in which she does not feel as empowered as she did during her midlife years, citing health issues and residence in a retirement community as the primary factors.

The rest of the women's scores were consistent with their answers to the interview questions, revealing some fluctuation during the course of their lives as to the degree they experienced successful psychosocial development, which corresponded to fluctuations in the degree of empowerment they experienced as well. In terms of the findings for age groups, as noted previously, all of the women except Margaret (92) are currently in the Middle Adult stage of life, which spans the 35 to 65 year age range. Tammy (36) is the only participant in her 30's. The average overall score for the three

women in their 40's was 4.2. The average score for the five women in their 50's was 4.3, and the average score for the two women in their 60's was 4.4. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Results of Psychosocial Inventory of Ego Strengths Questionnaire

<u>“Name” (Age)</u>	<u>Stage 1</u>	<u>Stage 2</u>	<u>Stage 3</u>	<u>Stage 4</u>	<u>Stage 5</u>	<u>Stage 6</u>	<u>Stage 7</u>	<u>Stage 8</u>	<u>Average</u>
Eva (62)	4.5	4.5	4.7	5.0	4.7	4.5	5.0	4.2	4.6
Lindsay (53)	4.6	3.9	4.0	4.2	4.5	3.5	4.7	4.9	4.3
Gloria (54)	3.9	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.0	4.5	4.4
Kelly (45)	3.7	3.5	3.4	3.9	4.2	4.6	4.4	3.7	3.9
Joyce (57)	4.4	3.9	4.4	4.5	4.0	4.6	4.6	4.7	4.4
Brenda (53)	4.6	4.4	3.6	4.9	4.2	4.1	4.1	3.7	4.2
Christine (54)	4.5	4.4	4.1	4.0	4.4	4.0	4.2	4.7	4.3
Vivian (61)	4.2	4.4	4.0	3.6	4.4	4.6	4.9	4.7	4.3
Carol (49)	4.2	4.7	4.1	4.9	4.7	4.6	4.9	4.4	4.6
Regina (49)	4.6	4.0	4.0	4.4	4.1	4.1	3.7	4.6	4.2
Tammy (36)	4.9	4.6	4.9	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	4.9
Margaret (92)	2.6	4.4	4.1	3.4	4.7	3.6	3.4	3.2	3.7

Key:

Stage 1–Trust vs. Mistrust (Birth –18 mo)

Stage 2–Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt (18 mo-3 yrs)

Stage 3–Initiative vs. Guilt (3-6 yrs)

Stage 4–Industry vs. Inferiority (6-12 yrs)

Stage 5–Identity vs. Identity Confusion (12-20 yrs)

Stage 6–Intimacy vs. Isolation (20-35 yrs)

Stage 7–Generativity vs. Stagnation(35-65 yrs)

Stage 8–Integrity vs. Despair (65 yrs & older)

Appendix I

Researcher's Background

I am a fifth generation Appalachian woman who was raised in a remote, rural part of the Blue Ridge Mountains in southwest Virginia. This personal connection to the subject of my study allowed me to bring a depth and understanding to the work that may not have been possible for all researchers. I constantly monitored myself throughout the study in maintaining objectivity and took great pains to be as honest and accurate in my depictions of my participants' stories as possible, but I did view them through the lens of an "insider." I believe this insider status contributed greatly to the success of my work, in that, once they found out I was one of them, the women were immediately and quite noticeably more open and welcoming with me, and I believe they shared much more with me than they might have with someone who was not Appalachian. In attempting to share my own story here, I was surprised to find that it was much harder to write about myself than to write about others, which gives me even greater appreciation for the wealth of personal, sometimes painful, but always inspiring stories these women shared with me. I found the experience of conducting this study to be profoundly meaningful, both personally and professionally, and it prompted a depth of self-reflection on my own life and that of my female ancestors that was life changing.

My story is one of a true Appalachian woman. My Appalachian ancestors were farmers of Irish and Scotch-Irish origin who drew their livelihood and lifeblood from the land on which they were born. They possessed the characteristics found common to Appalachians in this study, as they embodied a close-knit family of loving, independent,

self-reliant individuals who demonstrated a strength of character and will to survive that served them well, even in times of great adversity. My great grandparents, especially, were very poor, with a large family of eight children, all of whom worked from the time they were very young to do their part toward the family's economic and psychological survival. My grandparents were strong, proud, independent people who loved their children and grandchildren deeply and took great pride in who they were as individuals as much as in what they achieved in life. They passed on a profoundly deep spiritual connection and love for the mountains that I have experienced as an inherent part of my life, never more so than when I moved away for ten years and lived in other parts of the country. Although leaving home and experiencing life in large cities with diverse cultures provided a tremendous growth experience for me personally and professionally, my soul was never at home until I returned to Virginia.

As many of the women in the study shared regarding the expectations and values that were passed on to them, my family too expected us to be persons of good character who "kept their word" and made "a good showing" at whatever we attempted to do in life. One's worth was determined by this depth of character, as well as one's capacity for hard work, and it was not acceptable to be "sorry" and be a member of this family. This is characterized for me in a vivid memory of a conversation with my grandmother when I was a young woman struggling for answers to all these questions life gives us, as she said, "Sunshine, all you need to worry about is being the good person with a pure heart that you are, and the rest will all fall into place." There have been many times I have heard her words repeated in my heart when I faced another crossroads or life change that forced me to search deep within for who I really am. And, I find that who I really am is

largely a product of “these women I come from,” these lovingly beautiful, deeply spiritual women who, in the face of great adversity, were able to carry on with a strength and determination unsurpassed.

My beloved grandmother epitomized an empowered Appalachian woman for me, always looking for the joy and happiness life could bring, with a pure heart that she brought to everything she did in such a way as to demonstrate a capacity for love for us all that, in fact, still sustains us all, even now that she has gone. She faced tremendous adversity in her life and did it with a grace and spirit beyond measure. Her warmth and ever-present smile shed light on all those who knew her. She taught me what it really meant to be “a good person with a pure heart” by her shining example, and she taught me joy, in living, in laughter, and in love. This was frequently demonstrated by her special greeting she would give when asked how she was doing, she would smilingly say, “I’m just a feather in the breeze!” She passed these characteristics on to my mother and my aunt as well, who also represent role models of empowered Appalachian women for me. I have seen my dear mother go through many challenges during our lives that would have destroyed a lesser woman, and she has struggled mightily many times. But, ultimately I have seen her draw upon a strength within and carry on with a fierce determination to be as happy as possible, in spite of it all. She has evolved into a strong, loving, wise, and precious woman who does her very best every day of her life to be the best person she can be.

I have had my own share of adversity in life, having been on my own from the age of sixteen, and as many of us do, I have learned many of life’s lessons the hard way. But, learn them I did, and I have survived it all with my joy and my spirit intact, and like

my grandmother and mother, with a realization that happiness in life is often determined by choice, not circumstance, and my capacity to love and be a good person with a pure heart will be the defining factors in how happy my life will be. I have brought myself from a sixteen year old girl who got a GED certificate to finish school while working as a waitress and in factories, through a ten year career in the hotel industry, to be the first person in my family to obtain a Bachelor's degree after fifteen years of working toward it, to now achieving a Master's degree and working with and for Appalachian children in poverty as the Director of this region's Head Start program. I know who I am and what my purpose in life is, and I am confident in my capacity to create joy and love in my life and the lives of my loved ones. The love and the beautiful legacy my female ancestors have given me inspires me to do the same and, although I still have many miles to go in my journey as an empowered Appalachian woman, I do so with the strength and integrity of my ancestors supporting me, ever mindful of the manner in which I carry on their legacy, and empowered and proud to do so. Just like these women I come from, these "feathers in the breeze," I go forth having truly found the freedom to be myself, and I will dance my "Dance of Joy" in their honor to the very last step.