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### The Importance of Positive Interaction within Assistance Work in Appalachia

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# The Importance of Positive Interaction within Assistance Work in Appalachia

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## Methodology

- Sub-study of Healthy Housing project with ASP partnership
- Exempt by the ETSU Internal Review Board and adhered to ethical research practices.
- 28 interviews were conducted about the participants' experience with the housing repairs.
- Interviews conducted via Zoom phone call feature and audio recorded.
- Transcription and edits made by interviewers using the recordings with thematic analysis of the transcripts via NVivo software

### Inclusion criteria

- Received ASP home repair from 2017-2019
- 18 years or older
- Residents of Hancock, Cocke, Johnson, or Washington counties in TN

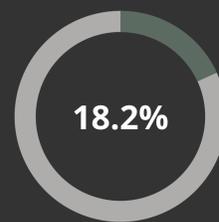
### Question topics

- Description of the repairs and improvements
- Overall experience
- Physical, emotional, social, and financial impacts on the participants and their families
- Willingness to request assistance



## Introduction

- Historically Appalachia has been a poster child for the War on Poverty and the area has been exploited resulting in a lack of trust in others.
- The superiority position of "we know what's best for you and how to fix you and your region" has resulted in hesitancy toward charitable assistance.
- Although ASP performs lots of home improvements, 2/3 of their website's about section is focused on interpersonal relationships.



of households are below the poverty line in Central Appalachia.

## Results

Twenty-four of the interviews contained feedback relating to positive interaction with the ASP staff and volunteers. The most frequent descriptor of these interactions included kind (n=9), nice (n=20), friendly (n=8), and positive (n=7). Themes that arose from the positive interactions are dignity and respect, intergenerational interface, quality time, reciprocity, and being spiritually uplifted.

Theme	Frequency	Quotes
Intergenerational Interface	9/28	"I am just so happy there's people and teenagers out there that care about the older people", "my husband got an experience to help teaching these kids' stuff because this was stuff that he knew how to do"
Spiritually uplifting	9/28	"Just seeing such great examples of Christian fellowship", "They don't just build you a ramp they built my soul"
Quality Time	6/28	"During their lunch break we sit on the porch and talked you know just had a good time"
Dignity and Respect	4/28	"They didn't make us feel like we were poor, couldn't do anything ourselves"
Reciprocity	4/28	"I would cook for them. Make cornbread, different flavored corn breads and lemonade and whatever. It was a way of giving back for us."

## Conclusion

The percent of interviews that referred to positive interactions and the way in which participants responded to questions about receiving assistance indicate that ASP clients' willingness to working with charitable organizations was directly impacted by the organization's emphasis on relationships

### Limitations

- Sub-study, so questions were not specific to this proposal
- The sample size is small
- Self-reported data

### Recommendations

- Suggest further research on the role that religion, honor culture, rurality, and industrial ties have on willingness to accept assistance.

## Purpose

Highlight the impact that positive interaction with ASP has on willingness to receive assistance through service organizations in rural East Tennessee.

## Related literature

1. County Economic Status in Appalachia, FY 2021. Appalachian Regional Commission. Accessed November, 2021. <https://www.arc.gov/map/county-economic-status-in-appalachia-fy-2021/>
2. Lewis HM, Johnson L, Askins D. Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case.; 1978. Accessed November, 2021. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED329380>
3. Burris TL, PhD. Appalachian cultural consequences from the War on Poverty. <https://www.apa.org>. Accessed November, 2021. <https://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/indicator/2014/01/consequences>
4. About Appalachia Service Project. Appalachia Service Project. Accessed November, 2021. <https://asphome.org/about/>