



Center for Participatory Change

Special Report

Giving Within Communities: CPC's Research on Horizontal Giving

When we think of giving or philanthropy, we typically imagine a wealthy person giving money (donations) or time (volunteering) through a nonprofit organization, usually to help people in need. This is one kind of giving, and it is important in strengthening the fabric of society, in making sure that people are able to meet their basic needs, and in promoting civic engagement, advocacy, and community organizing.

But there is another form of giving, one that is less recognized or celebrated, and that actually plays a far more important role in the lives of many more people than the giving outlined above.

People living in marginalized communities give constantly to one another, within their networks of friends and family. Friends help friends who are ill; family members lend each other money; people offer each other a ride when neighbors don't have transportation. This kind of giving within communities is far more widespread and has a significantly greater impact than giving that comes from outside of communities. It is so widespread, in fact, that it is frequently taken for granted, and has rarely, if ever, been recognized as a form of philanthropy.

The Center for Participatory Change (CPC) conducted a study of giving in low-income and marginalized communities across Western North Carolina. CPC's study was carried out in close partnership with NCGives, a North Carolina organization focused on celebrating, connecting, inspiring, and growing the giving of time, talent, and money among women, youth, and communities of color.

Our study replicated, on a much smaller scale, a study called *The Poor Philanthropist: How and Why the Poor Help Each Other*, by Susan Wilkinson-Maposa and her colleagues at the University of Cape Town (South Africa) Graduate School of Business. The South African study asked 677 poor South Africans who helps them and who they help, what sorts of help are provided, and why they help. South Africans said that it was the help from within their communities – from their friends, neighbors, and family – that was most important, rather than the help from grassroots organizations, churches, governments, nonprofit organizations, or foundations. They said that it was primarily help from their friends and family that allowed them to move out of poverty, or keep from becoming poorer.

We wondered if this was the case in the US. We wondered how folks in Western North Carolina would respond to the questions they asked in South Africa.

Borrowing from the South African study, our study looked at two kinds of giving:

- (1) Horizontal giving, the giving and giving back that occurs between friends and family within a community, among people who know and trust each other; and
- (2) Vertical giving, giving where a person with wealth gives money or time to an organization, and that organization (which is usually based outside of a local community) provides some service or aid to people within a community.

We wanted to know more about how these forms of giving work in Western North Carolina communities, and the relative importance of each. To find out more, we held 12 focus groups with 122 people across Western NC. We held four Latino focus groups, two African American focus groups, two Hmong focus groups, two European American focus groups, one Cherokee focus group, and one mixed-race focus group. Two-thirds of the people we talked with were women; one-third were men. There was a generally even mix of ages, from teens to elders. Most people were working class or low-income.

We asked the same questions asked in the South Africa study, focusing on who gives and receives, what is given and received, and why people help and support each other. We made audio recordings of all of the focus groups. We transcribed the focus groups (wrote out what was said) and translated the Spanish and Hmong focus groups into English. We changed people's names and place names, to make the comments anonymous. We analyzed the data from the study (the focus group conversations), bringing out important themes in the conversations, using standard data analysis methods.

As we organized our findings into a research report, we were intrigued and challenged by what we learned, and so we are sharing some of the key stories and lessons in this summary special report. The full report, titled *Horizontal Philanthropy: The Importance of Giving within Low-Wealth Communities*, is available at www.cpcwnc.org.

Stories of Horizontal Giving

The staff of the Center for Participatory Change talked about giving with 122 people in 12 focus groups across Western North Carolina. We asked them who they give to and who gives to them; we asked what sorts of things are given and received; and we asked why people give. Over the next few pages, we present some of the stories, in abbreviated form, that we heard when we talked to folks. This section focuses on stories of horizontal giving, giving that occurs within networks of friends and family. The full stories, and many more additional stories, can be found in the report, *Horizontal Philanthropy: The Importance of Giving within Low-Wealth Communities* (available at www.cpcwnc.org).

Categories of giving. In the focus groups that CPC conducted, people identified thirteen different categories of giving. Roughly in order of importance to research participants, these categories were: emotional support, money, caregiving, information and skills, labor, food, transportation, support around racism, immigration support, cultural work, housing, faith and spiritual support, and material goods. Below we present stories and quotations that flesh out these categories of giving.

Emotional support. Providing and receiving emotional support was, along with giving or loaning money, one of the most important forms of horizontal giving that people described. This included listening, empathizing with people, being there for people, and providing encouragement. Much emotional support comes from family members. Here a European American research participant talks about emotional support from his grandfather:

European American participant: I remember, a while ago, my grandfather, he started a painting business. And he got me into it, showed me all the ropes. And then I cut my hand in half.

Well, I was devastated. Because all I had was painting. And you gotta have your hand for painting.

He sat me down, and he told me, "If you want to believe the

Why horizontal giving matters

Why would the Center for Participatory Change, as a grassroots support organization, conduct a study of giving? What does horizontal giving matter to grassroots leaders, groups, and networks working on racial and economic justice?

All of CPC's grassroots partners are working to make their communities more just and livable. Horizontal giving plays a fundamental role in making communities more just and livable. When we asked people what kinds of help they found most useful, they said that it was the support provided by their friends and family. This mutual support within communities may be the bedrock of positive community change, yet it's not something we have thought about much, either at CPC or among our grassroots partners.

People help each other through webs of mutual support and reciprocity. Might CPC build on these informal, organic systems of horizontal giving in our work to help people transform their communities? Might grassroots groups connect their work more deeply to these webs of mutual support, and create space for people to develop the friendships that lead to horizontal giving? We think so. We'll explore these possibilities further throughout this special report.

doctors, that you can't paint no more, then you sit there and you wallow in your self-pity and you believe it. But I'm telling you, you'll be right back painting, even if it takes a year, if it takes two years. You'll get up and you'll be right back at it." And he was right. I listened to him. I didn't sit there and do what the doctors wanted me to do - not try to fight, not try to get back right. That was important support, there.

Members of a Latina women's focus group talk about how emotional support from other Latina women helps overcome the isolation of being an immigrant in the mountains of North Carolina:

Latino participant: I think the moral and the emotional sup-

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port is so important. It is even more important than money. We could get money, but if we don't have anybody to talk to, anybody listening to us....

Latino participant: It is so true. When you are all alone it is really sad. Sometimes you get depressed, especially being so far away from your family. Sometimes it doesn't make sense being here [in the United States], because we are really lonely.

Latino participant: You get to make friends here, and sometimes just a phone call or whatever – that's a big help. In my case, since I don't know many people around here, I find it very depressing just to be locked in [my house]. Of course, my life changed since I had my daughter, but you always need someone to talk to, somebody to share your problems or your happiness with, somebody who can offer you good advice.

Money. Giving and receiving loans and gifts of money was another important form of horizontal giving that people mentioned in the study. The comments below, from several different focus groups, paint a picture of the various ways in which this occurs:

European American participant: In the past, my family loaned me money, and it was for whatever I needed at the time, whatever I needed to get my leg up to the next level, whether it be transportation, or shelter. And those are huge things, when we start to look at becoming more stable in life.

Hmong participant: We make loans, because if someone doesn't have the credit to get loans from the bank, we'll loan them the money without interest or make donations. Especially for weddings and funerals, because they're so expensive. You help a family member, and they help you later.

European American participant: One thing I see a lot is people helping each other by raising money to cover medical costs, to cover things that insurance won't cover. Sort of community action – the jug at the convenience store, and the spaghetti suppers.

Caregiving. Another important form of horizontal giving is taking care of others, especially children or elders, or people who are ill or injured. In a Latino focus group, women talked about help with taking care of their children. Note that the woman speaking may not be a US citizen, and therefore may lack access to government supports (like childcare subsidies or temporary income subsidies) that US citizens may be able to access.

Latino participant: This factory that I worked at for six years closed, and I have been looking for a job, and so far I haven't been able to get a job. And the only help I have gotten so far is from my Mom. She is with me, and she helps me taking care of the kids whenever I have to clean a house. I am free to go

there, and my Mom will take care of the kids.

Three or four days ago I visited a few daycare centers. I want to work, and I would like to enroll my daughter in a daycare. Our salary is approximately \$250 a week. The daycare charges \$160 a week, and let's say I spend \$50 in gas [driving to and from the childcare center]. When we realized the fees we would need to pay at the daycare, my husband said, "You are going to leave your daughter – you are not going to take care of her – for just \$40.00 a week?"

Helping care for people when they are injured or ill is equally important. In the story below, from an African American focus group, a woman tells how her family and close friends pitched in to care for her (and later, her husband) when she was ill.

African American participant: Well, I have had a lot of health issues – quite serious ones, ones that lasted two years. And I needed a lot of help. Without friends and family, I don't know what we would have done, really.

Because there were times that we went through that I couldn't open the door to let my caregiver in. My caregiver at that time was my sister-in-law, who had retired early. And she came in every single morning to take care of me.

In the meantime, while I was sick, my husband got sick too. We were tried in the fire, as the Scripture says. We were tried. We really were.

Facilitator: Can you run through a list of the different things that people did for you?

African American participant: They would clean my house, because I was kind of a funny person about my house being clean. The people who knew me knew that, so they would clean my house. They would cook food, either at my house or they would cook food at their house and bring it. They did the laundry. They washed, and they ironed. They transported me back and forth to the doctors for doctor's visits. And sometimes I had doctor's visits in Asheville or Sylva [towns nearly an hour away], and they would carry me back and forth.

I just had a network of people who helped. And they would bring me little gifts to cheer me up. It was just so much done for me, that if you had to put a monetary value on it, you never could. Because it was just too much. Too much done. I'm thankful. I'm very thankful.

Information and skills. Study participants also talked about sharing information and skills with others. Comments from two different focus groups provide a few examples.

Cherokee participant: I had a friend, not too long after I got here - I was needing money. I'm always needing money. He

Stories of Horizontal Giving (continued)

took me out and taught me how to dig ginseng [to dig and sell wild native Appalachian ginseng, which grows in remote locations], and how to work for myself. And he shared that with me, when he didn't have to. A way of making money.

European American participant: I am not handy around the house. If my cabinet isn't right, I have friends that come and fix something for me. Somebody had to put in a bathroom cabinet. I had a professional do it, or so I thought. But it was not lined up right, so I had to call a friend, and he said, "I'll come over." He just volunteered his time. Actually we cooked dinner for him, so he was happy. And that was a good exchange, because he would have just gone to get fast food that night. He got a nice dinner, and I got a nice bathroom cabinet, like it should be.

Labor. People help each other out by sharing physical labor, by working manually for others. Sometimes this is informal, other times it is more organized. The example below features members of the speaker's church:

African American participant: About a year ago, I fell and broke my ankle. My church - the men of my church - came over and put me up a railing, so that I could hold on. Because old people need something to hold onto. [Laughter] So I have a railing. And my church has come over and put a roof on my house. I paid for the materials, but they did the labor as volunteers.

Within Cherokee communities, there is a tradition of what is in English called free labor groups – groups through which labor is shared for the community good. These are described below.

Cherokee participant: Well, Birdtown community's got one [a free labor group]. Big Cove too. And I'm really proud of them, because they do a lot for their community. They take materials and do roofs for people, or build them ramps, or whatever it is that they need done. They dig graves. And they do it all a lot. It's all volunteer. They do the labor and the materials.

Facilitator: How does it work concretely?

Cherokee participant: Usually it goes through the Community Club Council members. People tell the Council members what they need. Each community has a building with a gym and all that in it. And that's where they all meet, during the community meetings. And when they have those meetings, the Council members from that community are there. People tell the Council members what they need, and that's sort of how it happens. The ones appointed over the Free Labor Groups - people will tell them, and then they go gather the people and tools and materials needed for the job. They usually just let it be known what they're going to do, and whoever can come on that day will come and work and donate their time. And they do the free labor.

Food. When people are hungry, family, friends, and neighbors step in to help. The story below is a story of a Latino family who was out of work and out of food and received help from a neighbor:

Latino participant: Many people work in the pine [harvesting lumber or Christmas trees, working at sawmills] during the season, but whenever the season ends, there is no work for us. We didn't have anything to eat at home. There was no food, and I had a little girl.

People cut leaves here [they cut galax, a native Appalachian plant, to sell to florists]. My husband decided to try that, but he had never done that before. So he went to this hill, not knowing if there was something there. And he couldn't find anything. I was hoping that by the evening he would get home with some money to buy groceries.

He got home very tired and with no money, and he asked me what were we going to eat. I had two potatoes, but they already had some root on them, so I told him we were going to eat that. He said, "Okay, let's eat that then."

So I was just setting up the table when an elderly man from our neighborhood came. He had two plates of chicken with him, from this restaurant. He had the full order, the chicken and the soda. He came to deliver that to other people, but they were not at home. So he walked up and knocked on our door. He asked us if we wanted the food. We said, "Yes." My husband and I were crying. We realized that God knew we didn't have money for food, but that man came and brought us that food.

Transportation. Another important form of giving was offering people rides and loaning them cars. Giving rides was particularly important for Latinos. Due to recent policy changes, people who are in the US without documentation are no longer able to get driver's licenses in North Carolina; this obviously makes it very difficult to get around. This difficulty is reflected in the comments below:

Latino participant: Whenever people call me to ask for a ride, I take them to work or to Wal-Mart or to an appointment.

Latino participant: Sometimes I see the farm workers walking by and I get them in my car. I am on my way to selling my tamales and I take them where they need to go.

Latino participant: Well, I am living that situation now. I don't have transportation. I don't have a driver's license, therefore I can't drive, and I have always gotten help. I always get a ride.

Support around racism. Study participants talked a lot about racism. Racism came up in African American focus groups, Hmong focus groups, and Latino focus groups. It was talked about a bit differently in each setting, but the basic point was the same: Institutional racism and interperson-

al racism run all through our communities; this racism affects people deeply; and people need support from others in dealing with racism's negative effects. These comments, from a Hmong focus group, talk about racism in the workplace:

Hmong participant: I want to say something regarding working. When we go to work, we are citizens of this country. But when we go and work, they look at our physical appearances. For example, two of us are friends and one is White and one is me. We work the same position, but when there is a problem with the both of us, I get in trouble more. My friend, the White friend, even though he was wrong, they don't seem to acknowledge that he's at fault.

I have seen this happen, and it bothers me. If we go and complain, we will risk them showing us the door. And what will we eat then? If we don't say anything, we have to bear the pain and headache. When they yell at you, you do hear, but you can't answer them. It is such a pain to go through. We have no other choice. We have a household and a home; we can't go and complain and fight at work because if we quit, what will we eat?

So we almost have to live a life, as the elders always say, "like a dog that stepped on poop and bows its head and walks under the table." Not able to do anything about it, just having to deal with it. We are upset about this particular topic, and I wanted to mention this so that you all will have heard what we are going through.

Hmong participant: We know that because we are of a different race, a different color, and a different language, there is discrimination. You can't deny that it does happen. As much as we want to assimilate into this culture, there's still people out there that discriminate and prejudice you.

Hmong participant: Within our community, you either fight it or suck it in. I mean there's nothing else to do.

Immigration support. Among Latino study participants, support and help around immigration emerged as a key point. North Carolina has one of the fastest-growing Latino populations of any state in the US. On the whole, federal, state, and local governments have reacted to this increase in Latino immigrants with a series of punitive policies and practices (e.g., denying driver's licenses and access to higher education to people without documents, authorizing local law enforcement to deport people who are undocumented, frequent raids by federal Immigration agents). As a result, support around immigration has become increasingly important for North Carolina's Latinos. In this comment, a Latino research participant talks about how her family members provide support around immigration:

Latino participant: I think it is very important that we always

have to be alert. Living in this country, we are always in fear of being caught by Immigration [Immigration and Customs Enforcement]. I have three kids, and I can't help thinking, "If they send me out [if they deport me], what's going to happen to my kids?" My sister has helped me with that. She is in touch with me constantly. She is always calling me and saying, "No problem, you can leave your place; we will take care of your kids [if you are deported]." It is very important for us to be in touch with everyone.

Cultural work. Among Hmong and Cherokee research participants, working to share and preserve cultural heritage and language were considered important. The comment below provides a taste of the richness of conversation around this issue.

Hmong participant: I just wanted to say that when we are teaching – whether it's a cultural thing or dancing or something like that – I have found that I feel like, "This is what I know; I want somebody else to keep this and use this to help them." Especially the language. I want younger ones – my children or nieces or nephews – I want them to keep that [Hmong] language. And even though they speak English, what about we put that aside and let's not talk about that at this time. Let's come back and learn Hmong: "How do you say this in Hmong," and teach them to speak, dance, and wear [Hmong] clothes.

Housing. Providing housing or shelter, or being given shelter, came up in many conversations in our research. This seems to be a common form of giving among rural people. It seems that many people go through a rough period where they need housing, either because they have just come to the area (most likely with Latinos) or they are temporarily in need (either because of struggles with addiction or a life transition such as the ending of a relationship). In these times, family, friends, and neighbors offer temporary shelter (for a week, a few weeks, a few months) while folks get back on their feet. In most cases, research participants had both given and received this kind of help.

Faith and spiritual support. Many people talked about the importance of their faith. In this area of the United States, Christians are more numerous than other religious individuals, so people generally talked about their Christian faith. Some support around faith and spiritual development came from people's pastors, ministers, or priests and the formal work of their church, but important support also came from interactions with other members of their church.

Many more stories are found in the full report (see www.cpcwnc.org). These include additional stories on the topics covered here as well as stories on topics not covered in this summary, such as giving material goods.

Stories of Vertical Giving

Research participants talked less frequently about vertical giving, giving that occurs between people and institutions. People mentioned five kinds of institutions: grassroots groups, churches, government agencies, nonprofit organizations (other than grassroots groups and churches), and foundations. The full stories, and many more additional stories, can be found in the full research report (see www.cpcwnc.org). There is too little space here to share many stories; we chose just a few, to give a flavor of this form of giving.

Money. Churches are important spaces through which gifts of money circulate. Usually this is organized as part of the church's work, but it also tends to have an informal, person-to-person, collective feel.

African American participant: When people are sick, we always go visit, or take money, or food. We collect [take up a collection in church]. If somebody goes to the hospital, each one gets the same amount. We have someone go and visit them in their home and take them that amount. That's been going on ever since I've been going to church. We have a jar that we pass around, and it's called "Home Mission." We pass it around every Sunday. And we take that out for things like that.

Faith and spiritual support. Research participants talked about how their church has provided faith and spiritual support, and that this support is important.

African American participant: Well, when I retired, I got sick. I was going to be on the rescue squad, and drive that big old truck. But I had a heart attack and a stroke, and I couldn't talk and I couldn't walk. I couldn't do anything. I was down for the count. So anyway, I sat at home. I couldn't do anything. And I finally got into a Bible Study. And that gave me the incentive to live. Because I didn't want to live. I didn't want to kill myself, but I really didn't want to live.

Information and skills. Research participants mentioned that grassroots groups and churches provided needed information and helped them develop skills.

Latino participant: I think it is very important to address the immigration issue. We hear everywhere about Immigration [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] coming around, and this and that. I get in touch with Carla [a staff member at a Latino center], and she always has information. And we are like, "If they come, then we will need to have a plan," and we get all that information from Centro Latino. They keep us informed and alert about all this. We always have that fear, of being deported.

Services from grassroots Latino centers. Latinos reported that they received various important services – such as access to health care, English lessons, filling out paperwork, and help finding jobs – from local grassroots Latino centers.

Latino participant: Sometimes the center [a grassroots Latino center] helps us. For example, since getting dental care and all kinds of health care is so expensive, they include us in programs or check-ups. They help us to schedule the medical appointments, when we can't because of the language. They also help with the medicines, with translation and interpretation.

Various government services. Research participants talked about many other important kinds of services, such as education, health care, and housing. These services were provided by government agencies – schools, community colleges, health departments, and housing agencies. In general, these services were much appreciated and important, especially among Latinos. Public schools were particularly valued, as the comment below illustrates.

European American participant: This is a special community. Just this week my son, who is in first grade, thought he had lost a school book. And he has the sweetest teacher in the world. But he had lost his school book, and he was terrified of facing this teacher. She's the nicest teacher in the world, and he's such a good kid.

I came to school to talk to the teacher about this book that we thought had been lost. And it's just a short way from the school door to his class. And the hall monitor told me, "Thomas really had a hard morning." And I went into the office, and they said something. Around 10 people, from just walking 50 steps, told me that Thomas had had a really bad morning. And they all knew about it. I'm sure he told everybody. [Laughter]

I came home, and I called my Mom, and I said, "This is an amazing place. Here's this relatively insignificant problem that Thomas is facing for the first time, and it was honored, and he was listened to." It just made me feel so good to be here.

Community colleges were also viewed positively.

Latino participant: Another way we get help is with the English classes we can get here. The Community College gives those for free. It is such a big help. They really try hard to help us. The English I speak – the little English I speak – I learned it there.

Giving from people to institutions. The examples above are all ones in which institutions gave to people. Participants in our study also mentioned some examples of how they give to institutions, which is also a form of vertical giving. In this example, two women describe their work cooking for a summer program at a multicultural community center:

African American participant: And we have a program here in the summer time for the children. And LeAnn and I volunteer and come in and fix breakfast and feed the children and make lunch for the children and a snack for later, after we're gone. Then we clean up. And it's not easy. It's hard to do.

Why People Give

We also asked people to talk about why they give to others. Again, more stories and more detail can be found in the full report (see www.cpcwnc.org).

Giving is based in reciprocity. Research participants reported that the main reason they give is because others give to them. When people are in relationships with others they care about, this giving and receiving happens naturally. Some of the quotations below, from various focus groups, capture this point.

Latino participant : It works both ways: The way you behave with people is the way people are going to behave with you. So maybe if you help, of course not intending to get anything in return, it will come back to you, sometimes twice as big. And you don't help thinking, "I will help so I can get help," or "I will give so I can get." You just give with an open heart and you will get it back the same way.

African American participant: It seems my lot or my task is to see about some sick and shut-in in the community, and particularly the elderly. I do a lot of that. So I'm giving. I take them food, I prepare them food. I find out what their special foods are, what they will eat. I run errands: I run to the grocery store, or pick up their meds, or whatever. But then in return, I'm receiving from them because they are telling me the stories of old, and encouraging me. As somebody your senior, they can encourage you much more than you can encourage them, although they're sick, and some of them are bed-ridden.

Cherokee participant: I think it's just in the Native people to do things for one another. In our culture, back in the day, they lived in clans, different clans. And that clan was like a community. It wasn't just one family building a garden here and one family building a garden there. It was one big garden that supported the whole people, and everybody worked together, knowing that everybody had to eat. And when they hunted, all the men hunted together, and it was to feed the whole clan, not just to feed one family. That's where the interconnectedness comes from.

Cherokee participant: Everybody is interconnected in some way. What one person does can have an effect on the whole community, whether it's a positive or a negative effect. Whether it's Alice helping a person get on their feet, or whatever - that person may down the road be able to help another person get on their feet. Everything we do today will have an effect on seven generations beyond us, whether it be positive or negative. That's something we need to keep in our thought processes, and our daily living - that it has such a profound effect on the future, whatever we do today.

People give because they have a passion for giving. Participants in an African American focus group talked about

giving because they have a passion for giving.

African American participant: Well, I think that we can't do any of this [helping work] without having that passion. It's nothing that you can force yourself to do. You just have to have it in you to do it.

African American participant: I agree. And I've been in touch with people who suggested that you have to be involved in the community, and it was like they were guilted you into doing something.

So I believe that passion is important. It took me a while to find something. When you're connected, nobody has to pay you, nobody has to call and ask you. You just do it. Because you love what you do. And of course, we can talk a lot about, "Well, I gave this and I didn't get back." But when you're working on your passion, that stuff doesn't even matter. So I think that's the key.

People give because if they don't help each other, nobody else will help them. An African American participant stated clearly that people give to one another within African American communities because they realize that if they don't help one another, nobody else will.

African American participant: Well, most people think that philanthropy is rich people giving away money all the time. But people in the community do philanthropy through the things that they do. And truly in the African American community, people have always been philanthropists to one another, because we've always had to be helpful one to another, because we didn't have that outside support like other groups did, so we had to do things within our own community.

People continue to give even though it exhausts them.

Despite all these reasons for giving, some participants talked about how exhausting and taxing the work of giving can be. And yet, people keep going; we all keep giving.

Cherokee participant: Well, I'll just be honest. Sometimes I get really irritated. Sometimes it bothers me when my phone rings. And it rings all the time. Sometimes I'm like, "God, I wish they'd just leave me alone." But once I answer it, and the voice on the other end says, "Hey..." It's all gone. It was that old devil talking to me. And he does. And I have to talk to the Great Spirit a whole lot harder next time.

Cherokee participant: I have the same problem. I keep saying, "I'm so tired; I'm not going to do this anymore." And then the next thing happens and I'm like, "OK, I'll keep going."

There were many more reasons why people give to each other. Please see the full research report (www.cpcwnc.org) for more stories and more information.

Summary of Major Research Findings

To summarize the findings from CPC's research on giving, we looked across the stories and comments from the focus groups and lifted out some core conclusions that we consider to be evident in the data. Some of these are:

Horizontal giving is more important than vertical giving.

Looking across the study, people said that in their daily lives, there is much more horizontal giving (giving among people within communities) than vertical giving (giving to and from institutions). They also said that horizontal giving is more important, rich, and varied. Generally the data from our study suggest that horizontal giving is a crucial part of people's everyday lives; vertical giving may provide important support or services, but it is less likely to touch their lives as frequently or as deeply.

Horizontal giving is rich in form and significant in impact.

People in the study mentioned many forms of horizontal giving. Every form of giving mentioned by research participants as being important (e.g., emotional support, money, information, labor, spiritual support, food, caregiving, advice, transportation, cultural work) was given through networks of friends, family members, and members of churches or grassroots groups. Finally, people talked about horizontal giving a great deal, and they repeatedly stressed the importance of these forms of giving in their lives.

Vertical giving is narrow in form and limited in impact.

There were two forms of vertical giving mentioned by research participants: (1) when institutions give services or goods to people, or (2) when people give their money, time, or talent to institutions. The data in our study suggest that both of these forms of giving are relatively narrow in form and limited in impact. People generally did not mention forms of vertical giving as important in their lives. They did not view vertical giving negatively; rather, they seemed to see it as less relevant and more limited than the many ways they participate in horizontal giving.

Some institutions are seen as focusing on vertical giving; others foster both vertical and horizontal giving.

People in our study view some institutions (particularly government agencies and nonprofit organizations) as focusing primarily on vertical giving, especially providing services. Other institutions (like churches and grassroots groups) foster both vertical and horizontal giving. These institutions provide services, and they are also spaces through which relationships among members of the institution develop into friendships. These friendships are the seeds from which horizontal giving naturally blossoms. Community-based institutions like churches and grassroots groups foster both vertical and horizontal giving; as a result, these are the institutions that seemed to be most important in research participants' lives.

People rarely mentioned giving by the nonprofit sector.

We define the US nonprofit sector as organizations that have a 501(c)(3) designation as a nonprofit organization with the Internal Revenue Service. In our study, people talked a lot about churches, grassroots groups, and government agencies. Government agencies are clearly not part of the nonprofit sector. Some churches and grassroots groups are nonprofit organizations, but many are not. Most churches and grassroots groups in the US are rooted in and managed by people in a particular community; most nonprofit organizations and foundations are not. In our study, research participants rarely mentioned receiving goods or services from nonprofit organizations that are not community-based, and they did not mention foundations at all. The nonprofit sector was not viewed negatively; rather, it was not really mentioned.

Horizontal giving occurs among people who know and trust each other.

People in our study reported that horizontal giving occurs within their social networks, among networks of people who know and trust one another. The most important of these social networks are family networks and networks of friends. Of secondary importance, but still important, are networks that exist among members of the same church and members of the same grassroots group. Horizontal giving is based on pre-existing relationships. It appears that the closer these relationships are (e.g., family members, close friends), the more likely it is that mutual giving and support will occur.

Based on the data, we can rank giving in order of importance. Overall, the data from this study suggest an ordering of importance around giving, with the more important forms of giving at the top of this list and the less important forms at the bottom:

- Horizontal giving based in social networks emerging out of one's family or friends;
- Horizontal giving based in social networks emerging out of churches or grassroots groups (e.g., giving among members of one's church or members of grassroots groups, outside of the church's or group's formal work);
- Vertical giving to and from churches or grassroots groups (e.g., services or goods received from one's church or a grassroots group, giving one's money or labor to one's church);
- Vertical giving received from government agencies or programs (e.g., health care and education);
- Vertical giving received from foundations or from nonprofit organizations that are not churches or grassroots groups.

Interpretations of Research Findings

Here we outline a few of our attempts to make sense of the data in this study; these points are more exploratory and speculative than the points on page 8.

Racism is important in relation to horizontal giving. In general, racism came up frequently in focus group conversations. In the US, we typically think of racism being a Black-White issue, but Hmong and Latino research participants emphasized their experiences with racism as well as African American participants. People's basic points seemed to be that systemic and individual racism is a powerful force in the lives of people of color, that people need to come together to support one another around the racism that they experience, and that this mutual support around racism is an important form of giving.

Most people in our study did not mention US government programs as giving, with the exception of recent immigrants. When research participants talked about the services provided by government agencies, they offered differing perspectives on whether or not these services were considered part of 'giving.' It was immigrants who most clearly viewed government programs as giving, perhaps in contrast with government programs in their countries of origin.

Horizontal giving may sometimes be an indicator that vertical giving institutions aren't working well. It seems to us that several stories of horizontal giving could be viewed as responses to vertical giving systems that were somehow failing to meet the needs that they were designed to address. For example, a painter told a story of how he cut his hand in half. The message he heard from the medical system was that he would never be able to paint again; the message he heard from his family was that he would indeed regain the use of his hand. Today he is a painter, and it was his family's support that got him there. There were several other examples that seemed to be ones where the services of mainstream vertical giving institutions failed to meet the needs they were created to address, and horizontal giving became important at least partly in response to that failure of vertical giving.

Comparing and contrasting horizontal and vertical giving. This table compares and contrasts horizontal giving (giving within networks of family and friends) with vertical giving (giving based in institutions) as discussed by people participating in this study. These points and several others are elaborated in detail in the full report (see www.cpcwnc.org).

Concept	Horizontal Giving	Vertical Giving
Diversity of gifts	Rich diversity of gifts: emotional support, money, labor, caregiving, support around racism, etc.	Primarily two types of gifts: money and services
Connections between giver and receiver	Giver and receiver know and trust each other and have given and received from each other before	Giver and receiver usually do not know each other; the connection is professionalized and distant
Integration into daily life	Integrated into the fabric of society, into people's daily lives	Usually disconnected from or cut off from people's daily lives
Motivation for giving	Reciprocity, co-operation, mutual obligation; doing with	Charity, patronage, altruism, generosity; doing for
Reciprocity	Gifts are naturally reciprocal; there may be an expectation that gifts made will be reciprocated or returned in some form at a later date	No expectation that the giver will later receive or the receiver will later give; allows the giver to feel non-needy and superior
Power	Power between giver and receiver is generally balanced, although there may be interpersonal power imbalances	Power imbalances exist between giver and receiver, both interpersonally and systemically
Empowerment	Defines people by their assets and capacities, by how people can work together to meet goals that they set for themselves	Defines people by what they need or lack, by how people can be helped by goods or services that meet their needs
Dependency	Based on interdependence: givers and recipients are both dependent on each other's help to get by and get ahead	Can be based on dependency: recipients may become dependent on givers' help to get by and get ahead
Rules and bureaucracy	Access to help characterized by informal, fluid, evolving interactions, agreements, and negotiations among friends and family members	Access to help characterized by strict, inflexible rules and paperwork, waiting in offices, and meeting some set of criteria for receiving help
Accessibility and responsiveness	Help around any issue can come from many sources and is usually quickly and easily accessed	Help around a particular issue often comes from one source and requires negotiating bureaucracy

Implications of Research Findings

This study holds some important implications for churches, grassroots groups, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations. We work in a nonprofit organization, so we feel comfortable with the implications that we outline for nonprofits. We feel less confident about predicting the implications for other giving institutions, so we hope that others will take the findings outlined here and in the full research report and apply them to their own work.

Implications for churches. Churches are involved in vertical giving: They offer social service programs for their members (e.g., financial literacy programs), and they help their members develop their faith through church services and other faith development efforts. Churches are also important spaces where horizontal giving occurs: As members of the same church get to know each other, they naturally give money and food to one another, and help each other by providing caregiving, spiritual support, transportation, work in each others' homes, and emotional support. The main implication for churches from this research is to continue doing what you're probably already doing: Continue creating spaces for fellowship, continue fostering congregation members' spiritual development, and continue being engaged in giving with your congregation and the larger community.

Implications for grassroots groups. Grassroots groups are involved in vertical giving: They offer some projects, services, or programs for communities (e.g., providing information about resources that members might use). Grassroots groups are also important spaces where horizontal giving occurs: Members of the same group get to know each other, and they naturally help each other by providing emotional support, information, work in each others' homes, and (in groups based in communities of color) support around racism. The data from this study suggest that people in grassroots groups should value the group as a space for developing relationships and friendships with others. While community improvement projects are important, relationship-building is likely equally important, because it expands the reach and impact of horizontal giving. Also, grassroots groups seemed to be an important space that people use to support each other around racism; groups can recognize this and make it an explicit part of their work.

Implications for government agencies. Both churches and grassroots groups are community-based institutions: They have a membership that is usually based in a particular community, and the institution is in various ways driven by and accountable to its membership. Government agencies are different. They are funded through taxes, accountable to elected and appointed officials, and usually based outside of the community they serve. Government agencies are involved in vertical giving. Our data showed that government agencies are providing important services; as they provide

these services, they might consider how these services intersect with the organic systems of horizontal giving that exist within any community. We wondered: Do contributions from outside of a community support, distort, co-opt, or conflict with the organic systems of horizontal giving that already exist in communities? When giving comes from outside of a community, how can that giving intersect more productively with the giving that is already going on within communities?

Implications for nonprofit organizations. Research participants rarely mentioned nonprofit organizations other than churches or grassroots groups (some of which are incorporated as nonprofit organizations, but many are not). Generally speaking, conventional nonprofit organizations – organizations that exist outside of communities and provide services for those communities – did not come up in focus group conversations for this study. Some potential implications for these nonprofit organizations may be similar to the ones above for government agencies: to consider how your nonprofit's projects, programs, or services intersect with the organic systems of horizontal giving that exist within any community. Staff at nonprofit organizations can reflect on their practices by asking questions such as: Are we trying to integrate our work into naturally occurring networks of horizontal giving? Are we recognizing that people within communities already know what they need, who has what they need, and how to get it to the people who need it most? As much as possible, are we seeing people in communities as creators of their own development rather than as clients?

The scope of horizontal giving. It is common for professionals to view acts of mutual helping and support as incidental, small-scale, and unimportant. This perspective stems from seeing individual actions --a grandparent caring for a child so the parents can work, neighbors taking up a collection for a friend in crisis-- without seeing the aggregate impact of millions of similar actions happening throughout marginalized communities. The data, even in this limited study, showed that giving among friends and family members within communities is enormously significant in scope and impact. Consequently, nonprofit and government agency staff might begin to see people living in the communities they serve as partners rather than clients or beneficiaries. They could ask: How can our organizations reinforce the organic systems of horizontal giving that exist within communities? How might these systems of horizontal giving inform the policies and bureaucracies of our own organizations? Are we trying to integrate our work into naturally occurring networks of horizontal philanthropy? Are we recognizing that people within communities already know what they need, who has what they need, and how to get it to the people who need it most? Are we seeing people as creators of their own development?

CPC and Horizontal Giving

In the end, why does all of this matter? Why did CPC – a nonprofit organization focused on helping people come together and transform their own communities – conduct a major research study on giving? How does this research integrate with CPC’s core work of supporting grassroots leaders, groups, and networks working on racial and economic justice across Western North Carolina?

This study has been important for CPC because our new and richer understanding of horizontal giving has changed the way that we work. CPC’s work has focused on supporting grassroots leaders, groups, and networks, and this still feels right. We have always believed that grassroots groups and networks are a fundamental engine of positive social change.

We still believe this, but we see now that it’s only part of the picture. This research has showed us that while grassroots groups are critical in bringing about social change and community improvements, most people’s daily lives are more directly affected by the mutual support and giving that goes on naturally among friends, family members, neighbors, and members of the same church (as well as members of the same grassroots group). There is also a significant difference in scale, when we consider the cumulative impact of the tens of thousands of people who are helping each other every day. It was humbling, to see so clearly the existence of informal systems of mutual support within communities that are naturally (without any help from us or anyone else) doing so much to make communities more just and livable.

We all give to others and receive in return; it’s simply what we do as people. It never seemed like a big deal to us; it never seemed like a force for community change. After conducting this study, we now see that these webs of mutual help and support are far more important for people’s everyday lives than the more planned and structured community improvement efforts of grassroots groups, churches, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, or foundations.

This realization led us to rethink our work. We started to envision a shift in our approach to working in low-income and marginalized communities. CPC values community participation, so we’ve always had a focus on believing in people’s ability to come together to control their own destinies. Still, we realized that before this study, we used to see nonprofit organizations like CPC and grassroots groups like our grassroots partners as the central, active “givers” of help and support in low-income and marginalized communities. We tended to see regular folks in those communities, at least those not involved in grassroots groups, as people who benefited from the community improvement efforts of our grassroots partners.

Now we are starting to reverse this. We’re starting to understand that people’s ability to survive and thrive in the face of poverty is driven primarily by the webs of mutual support and help that occur naturally among friends and neighbors. We now see that CPC’s work, and the work of our grassroots partners, will be most effective when we can supplement, support, and enhance local webs and networks of horizontal giving. This means that we have to look closer at CPC’s work and the work of our grassroots partners, to see how that work might unintentionally distort, co-opt, or conflict with the organic systems of horizontal giving that already exist in communities. Once we see the huge impacts of webs of horizontal giving in communities, we have to make sure that our interventions don’t harm or displace these webs of mutual support.

More broadly, we hope that the findings from our study, combined with those from the South African study that we replicated, will raise awareness of the contributions made by people living in low-income and marginalized communities to strengthening communities and helping move people and places out of poverty. We hope that institutions focused on giving – churches, grassroots groups, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and foundations – will be more aware of and pay more attention to the indigenous networks of mutual support and help that exist in communities. We believe that these indigenous networks of mutual support and help are under-acknowledged and under-appreciated.

We do not believe that they are enough, by themselves, to move people and places out of poverty; we do not want to see anti-poverty efforts from outside of low-income communities cease, dry up, or move away. Rather, we hope that institutions such as churches, grassroots groups, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and foundations will build their work in low-income and marginalized communities on the realization that there are significant resources already within those communities, that people in local communities know how to get those resources where they’re most needed, and that people are doing important work already to help and support each other and make their communities better places to live.

One final note: We invite the readers of this report to reflect on the importance of horizontal giving in your own lives. Who do you help, and who helps you? What sorts of giving are provided? Why do you give? Why do people give to you? We believe that, regardless of your economic class, your professional status, your age, your gender, and your cultural background, you will likely find that some forms of horizontal giving have shaped your life as well.

Center for Participatory Change

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Giving Within Communities

A Special Report on Horizontal Giving by the Center for Participatory Change

Who helps you, and who do you help? What kinds of giving make a difference in your life? Why do you give? Why do people give to you?

The Center for Participatory Change’s mission is to help people recognize their own power, work together, and transform their communities. We talked with over a hundred Latino, African American, Cherokee, Hmong, and European American residents of Western North Carolina, exploring the scope and the impact of giving that happens within communities, among neighbors, and between family and friends. What we learned surprised us and changed the way our organization works. We share some of those stories and lessons in this summary report of our research on horizontal giving.

The full report, Horizontal Philanthropy: The Importance of Giving within Low-Wealth Communities, is available online at www.cpcwnc.org.

This research project was funded by NCGives and coordinated by Dr. Paul Castelloe, Ph.D.

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