

Giving circles are an emerging form of philanthropy in which members contribute and pool funding with the intent to distribute said funding to grantees, with such efforts often identified based on group-generated consensus with members voting on both what issues to address and which recipients to fund, in order to generate an increased impact on the grantee. Giving circles present a way in which individuals may exert greater control over the way in which their donations are appropriated without needing to donate relatively large sums of money. In this way giving circles may present an attractive option to individuals who may be new to the process of philanthropy or may wish to focus their philanthropic efforts on specific causes or issues. Giving circle participation may also provide an opportunity for hands-on engagement of members through the ability to identify potential recipients and participate in the process of researching and potentially funding such projects or organizations. The research project aims to assess the impact of an individual's participation in a philanthropic giving circle with regards to their philanthropic behavior and civic engagement. The researchers of this project posit that participation in giving circles leads to sustained habits of philanthropy which emphasize greater donor control and participation than traditional philanthropic methods. The project also aims to explore how the socialization aspect of giving circles affects philanthropic habits. In a society which is seeing increasing awareness of civic participation by individuals, giving circles may present a way for people and groups to further engage with causes or issues important to them and this project aims to explore potential connections between giving circles and other forms of civic engagement such as volunteerism or participation in the political process. Such participation may be a tool for increasing such engagement of members or may simply be an existing trait present in individuals who are drawn to the giving circle method. Over the course of this project, consenting members of Virginia-based giving circles will complete an online survey assessing their philanthropic habits, civic engagement habits, attitudes and motivations regarding individual giving style, and key demographic qualities. Consenting participants will also participate in one-on-one interviews that allow for more in-depth exploration of these themes. Such participants will be recruited through email and phone based outreach to respective giving circle coordinators. When feasible, the research team will visit giving circle meetings to further explain the project

and answer questions. Through these efforts the research team will contribute to the knowledge of the field of philanthropy regarding the phenomena of giving circles which may then be shared through academic channels such as peer-reviewed journals and participation in appropriate conferences.