Party membership and charitable giving in China: The mediating role of resources, networks, prosocial values, and making compulsory donations

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Abstract:

Previous studies suggest Communist Party members in China are more likely to give and give more to charity, but why remains unclear. Using the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS, 2012), this study develops and tests hypotheses about the potential mechanisms that influence the relationship between Party membership and charitable giving. Uniquely, total charitable giving in China includes both voluntary and compulsory donations. Generalized structural equation model results indicate that Party members donate more overall, because they have higher levels of human resources, larger formal networks, higher prosocial values and are more likely to make compulsory donations than non-Party members. Interestingly, our results show that making compulsory donations crowds out voluntary giving. Therefore, Party members donate only marginally more than non-Party members in terms of voluntary giving.

Introduction

As an important component of philanthropy, charitable giving has attracted much attention in the academic literature. Previous studies have increased our understanding of how people's socio-demographic characteristics relate to charitable giving. Scholars understand quite well how gender, age, education and income relate to giving, although this knowledge is primarily based on empirical studies using WEIRD samples (Western, Educated, living in Industrialized, Rich Democratic countries) (see Bekkers and Wiepking, 2007, 2011b; Wiepking and Bekkers, 2012 for a review of the literature).

Political party affiliation or political ideology is another relevant, less often studied characteristic influencing people's donations to charitable organizations. Although there are some empirical studies focusing on the relationship between political ideology and charitable giving in WEIRD samples, most notably for the United States (e.g., Paarlberg et al., 2019) and the United Kingdom (e.g., Brown and Taylor, 2019), there are less related to non-WEIRD samples. In this study, we contribute to the literature by taking China as the example to explore the relationship between political ideology and charitable giving. Unlike western democracies, the Communist Party of China (CPC) is the ruling party in China: although there are eight other political parties active in China, those eight parties do not have enough political power to compete with the CPC. Membership of the CPC (further referred to as "Party membership") plays an important role in social life and is closely associated with human and social capital, including societal status. As such, China provides an interesting context to study the relationship between political affiliation and charitable giving.

Researchers have studied several aspects of Party membership in China, including the antecedents (e.g., Appleton et al, 2009; Bian et al. 2001; Dickson, 2014) and the effects of being a Party member on individual political or managerial positions, economic returns and education or training (Li et al, 2007; Morduch and Sicular, 2000). When considering the relationship between Party membership and charitable giving, previous literature suggests Party members are more likely to give and give more to charity (Hu and Shen, 2013; Wu et al, 2018). However, those studies do not shed light on the possible mechanisms that can explain why Party members donate more.

This study intends to fill the gap. Building on previous literature and using the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS, 2012), this study develops and tests hypotheses about how human resources, social networks, prosocial values, and the unique Chinese system of compulsory donations prompted by government agencies or units (*danwei*)[i] influence the relationship between Party membership and charitable giving in China.

Literature review and hypotheses

Although previous studies have not directly examined the potential mechanisms explaining the relationship between Party membership and charitable giving, they provide useful directions. Building upon the previous literature, we identify four influencing factors: human resources (i.e., education, income), social networks, prosocial values, and making compulsory

donations (e.g., Bekkers and Wiepking, 2011b; Wang and Graddy, 2008; Wilhelm and Bekkers, 2010).

Human resources

Previous literature argues that people with a higher education are more likely to have more financial resources, stronger prosocial attitudes, higher cognitive abilities and are more trusting, which increases their likelihood and level of charitable giving (Bekkers and Wiepking, 2011b; Wiepking and Maas, 2009). Empirical studies confirm these relationships not only for the U.S. and Western Europe, but also for non-Western countries such as Iran and Turkey (Aghababa et al, 2015; Çarkoğlu et al, 2017). In China, Party members typically have higher levels of education (Bian et al, 2001; Hauser, 2003). Education functions as a selection criterion for Party membership, as the higher educated are more likely to be accepted as Party members (Bian et al, 2001; Hauser, 2003). Furthermore, Party members are provided with more opportunities to further their education and training (Hauser, 2003). Therefore, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H1: Party members are higher educated than non-Party members, which increases their total giving.

Income is the financial foundation for charitable giving. Research indicates charitable giving is positively associated with income, which means income increases the probability and amount of giving (Auten et al, 2002; Bekkers and Wiepking, 2007). In terms of Party membership and income, Party members have higher income levels on average (Knight and Yueh, 2008; Morduch and Sicular, 2000). As with education, income is both a selection into and a consequence of Party membership. Those with higher levels of income are more likely to become Party members, and Party members are more likely to work in high-earning sectors, get prestigious jobs and hold higher-level positions, which in turn lead to higher levels of income (Bian et al, 2001; Morduch and Sicular, 2000). Party membership can also help members obtain political capital and political advantages (Appleton et al, 2009; McLaughlin, 2017), which may also help explain why Party members have higher levels of income. The above discussion leads to the following hypothesis:

H2: Party members have higher levels of income than non-Party members, which increases their total giving.

Social networks

Several studies conducted in a Western European and North American context have found that social networks promote charitable donations (Glanville et al, 2016; Herzog and Yang, 2018; Wiepking and Maas, 2009). These results have also been found within the Chinese context (Wu et al, 2018; Yang et al, 2019). The key mechanism may be solicitation: people

with wider social networks are more likely to be requested to donate (Bekkers and Wiepking, 2011a). People with larger social networks tend to be members of a larger number of voluntary organizations (McPherson et al, 2001), which increases the probability of being asked to donate and thus increases charitable donations. Wiepking and Maas (2009) also find that stronger cognitive ability, and higher levels of generalized trust, empathic concern and church attendance can explain the positive relationship between social networks and charitable donations.

In China, Party membership helps people build social networks to establish personal security and promote personal development (Pye, 1999). Accessibility to higher levels of education and training also helps Party members to build stronger social networks (Guo and Shan, 2009). In an empirical study, Munasib and Tian (2015) used data from the Chinese General Social Survey to explore the impact of Party membership on social networks. Their results showed that Party members have larger social networks. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Party members have larger social networks than non-Party members, which increases their total giving.

Prosocial values

Charitable giving is closely associated with prosocial values such as moral obligation, prosocial role identity, empathic concern, and the principle of care (De Wit and Bekkers,

2016; Einolf, 2011; Wilhelm and Bekkers, 2010). That is, people who have higher levels of prosocial values are more likely to show empathy to others and care for others more strongly, and are therefore more likely to display prosocial behavior such as charitable giving. As stated by the Communist Party Constitution in China, the purpose of the CPC is to serve the people wholeheartedly. The Communist Party Constitution requires members to have a sense of dedication and be ready to serve Chinese people, and prosocial values are installed in Party members through official propaganda and Party classes and meetings. As a result, Party members may have higher levels of prosocial values than non-Party members. Therefore, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H4: Party members have higher levels of prosocial values than non-Party members, which increases their total giving.

Compulsory donations

We propose that the system of compulsory donations (*qiangzhi juanzeng*) is also an important mechanism facilitating charitable giving in China. Making compulsory donations, which refers to the phenomenon that individuals are coerced to donate by government or their units (*danwei*), is not uncommon in China, although two important laws (the Philanthropy Donation Law in 1998 and the Charity Law in 2016) both prohibit compulsory donations. According to a recent online survey (N=1,006) in China conducted by *China Philanthropy Times*, as many as 82% of respondents experienced requests for compulsory donations during

their school or work careers (Wu, 2019). People may either be required to donate a specific amount of money or a percentage of their income.

The emergence of compulsory donations in China is associated with particular economic (i.e., long-term planned economy), political (i.e., authoritarian government), cultural (i.e., collectivism and hierarchical culture) and social (i.e., different understanding of philanthropy) backgrounds. It is important to explain this different understanding of philanthropy in China, compared to the understanding of philanthropy in Western European or North American contexts. The principle that philanthropy is voluntary behavior is deeply rooted in those contexts, but many Chinese people do not have a strong belief in philanthropy on a voluntary basis. From the Chinese government's perspective, philanthropy is viewed as a useful means, a tool or instrument, to accomplish tasks or achieve goals. Achieving certain goals, such as providing services to marginalized groups using charitable donations, is more important than emphasizing that philanthropy should be voluntary rather than compulsory.

In China, making compulsory donations resembles a political mission assigned by government or their units, which means the best or even the sole option is to comply with the request and donate. People may face potential negative consequences if they fail to obey what is required. In an empirical study conducted in Jinan, China, Xu (2013) found that if the public servant of the street office (*jiedao banshichu*) refused to do voluntary work as required, an amount would be deducted from her salary. Although Xu's (2013) study focuses on compulsory volunteering, its conclusion can be applicable to making compulsory donations. Therefore, it is unsurprising to find that in the aforementioned online survey (Wu,

2019), more than 71% of respondents indicated that they donated when they received a request to make a compulsory donation.

Compared to non-Party members, Party members are more likely to work in public-sector and state-owned enterprises (Dickson, 2014; Morduch and Sicular, 2000), which increases the probability of encountering requests for compulsory donations. The CPC is a highly organized party and it can mobilize its members to donate to charity (Dickson, 2014). Party members can also provide special Party membership dues (*teshu dangfei*) to Party organizations to support charitable and other public causes (Li and Lu, 2018). Such mobilization and special dues can be viewed as making compulsory donations, as Party members might fear the power of the Party organization and not want to face negative consequences associated with non-compliance. In addition, organizational citizenship literature suggests organizations expect their members to be good citizens and good citizenship is crucial in building reputation and career advancement opportunities (Organ et al., 2005), thus increasing the probability of complying with requests for compulsory donations.

Compulsory donations may crowd out voluntary donations. First, assuming people have a fixed budget for charitable giving, any increase in compulsory donations may decrease their level of voluntary giving. Second, some people may view compulsory donations as their contribution to philanthropy, thus being less likely to donate voluntarily. Finally, making compulsory donations may make people dissatisfied with or even averse to philanthropic causes (Feng and Zhang, 2014), so it is reasonable to expect that making compulsory donations leads to a lower probability and smaller amounts of voluntary giving.

We argue that the crowding-out effect of compulsory donations on voluntary giving may influence the relationship between compulsory donations and total charitable giving (consisting of voluntary and compulsory giving) in two different ways, and hence we formulate two hypotheses. When compulsory donations completely crowd out voluntary donations, total giving will remain constant (H5a). When compulsory donations only partially crowd out voluntary donations or when no crowding out occurs, total giving will increase (H5b).

H5: Party members are more likely than non-Party members to make compulsory donations, which leaves their total giving constant (H5a) or increases their total giving (H5b).

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of this study.

<< Insert Figure 1 here >>

Data and methods

Data

We test our hypotheses using data from the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS, 2012). Starting in 2003 and conducted by Renmin University of China (RUC), the CGSS is a nationally representative social survey in China. It adopts the multistage stratified sampling

and collects data from different levels (i.e., individual, household and community levels) in most provinces of mainland China.

CGSS is an independently pooled cross-sectional database, and questions in the CGSS change between different years. Because the relevant questions on charitable donations are included only in CGSS 2012, this is the only wave we can use in our study. There is an independent philanthropy module in CGSS 2012, which consists of incidence of giving, amount donated, voluntariness of giving, incidence of volunteering and hours of volunteering. The response rate for the CGSS 2012 is 71.5%.

Note that there were two different questionnaires in CGSS 2012 and each questionnaire applied to half of all the samples. Only one questionnaire has questions about philanthropy, so only 5,819 respondents out of 11,765 sampled in 2012 were asked about their philanthropic behavior. After deleting missing values for dependent, independent and mediating variables, we finally obtained 4,920 cases for data analysis. When comparing the results from multiple imputed data with the results from analyses using list-wise deletion, there were no significant differences. Therefore, we report the results of list-wise deletion of missing values.

Measures

Dependent variable: Charitable giving. CGSS asked respondents "in which of the following sectors and how much did you donate in 2011?", where respondents could select "no donations" or "made donations and list the amount". There are nine different philanthropic sectors listed: religion, helping the poor and disaster relief, health and medical sector,

education, environmental protection and animal welfare, art and culture, community service, multiple sectors and others. We summarized the amount of giving to each sector for every respondent to measure their total charitable giving. Charitable giving was log transformed to satisfy statistical assumptions (i.e., normal distribution) and reduce estimation bias. Table 1 provides an overview of the percentage of people donating and average amounts donated to the different philanthropic sectors. Respondents donated most often (27.17%) and highest amounts (RMB 318.14, about USD 49.25) to the sector focusing on helping the poor and disaster relief, while the art and culture sector received the lowest percentage of donations (0.22%) and smallest average amount (RMB 0.67, about USD 0.10).

<<Insert Table 1 here>>

Independent variable: Party membership. CGSS asked respondents about their present Party membership, with four possible responses: Communist Party member, democratic party member, Communist Youth League member, and the mass. As discussed above, there are eight democratic political parties in China in addition to the CPC and some people join the democratic parties. The Communist Youth League is a political organization affiliated to the Communist Party but comprises youth in China. Mass (*qunzhong*) means people who do not belong to any of the above three. Due to the close relationship between the CPC and the Communist Youth League as well as other democratic parties, members in these organizations can be considered very similar to each other, so we grouped them into the Party

member category. The mass group was classified as the non-Party member category (reference category).

Mediating variables: Education. CGSS asked respondents "what is your present highest level of education?", with responses ranging from "no formal education completed" to "master's or above". We recoded education into a continuous variable using years of education: no formal education is 0 year, graduating from old-style private school (*sishu*) or primary school is 6 years, from junior middle school is 9 years, from senior middle school, vocational middle school (*zhiye gaozhong*), special secondary school (*zhongzhuan*) or technical school (*jixiao*) is 12 years, from college for professional training (*dazhuan*) is 14 years, from university with a bachelor's degree is 16 years and from university with a master's degree or above is 18 years.

Income. CGSS asked respondents "what was your total household income in 2011?". This was used to measure annual household income. Income was log transformed to satisfy statistical assumptions (i.e., normal distribution) and reduce estimation bias as well.

Social networks. In CGSS social networks were measured in two categories: formal networks and informal networks. To measure formal social networks, CGSS asked respondents whether they were active members of the following nine types of organizations: political organizations community organizations, nonprofit organizations, right/movement organizations, religious organizations, alumni associations, entertainment or hobby organizations, labor unions, and professional organizations. Because there may be overlap between membership of the CPC and membership of political organizations, membership of

political organizations was excluded from our measure for formal social networks. Respondents could choose to "be a member and attend actively" (recoded as 1) "be a member but not attend actively" (recoded as 0.5) and "not a member" (recoded as 0). We added up the number of the response for each organization to operationalize formal networks of respondents. The question we used to measure informal social networks, was "how often do you communicate or entertain with your neighbors or friends", with responses ranging from "almost every day" to "never". We recoded this to frequency per month, ranging from 0 to 30.

Prosocial values. The CGSS asked respondents the extent to which they agreed with the following statement: "I would like to make a contribution to society", with responses ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" on a 7-point scale. Responses were inverted so that higher scores corresponded to higher levels of prosocial values.

Made compulsory donations. In the philanthropy module, the CGSS asked respondents to indicate to what degree they voluntarily donated in 2011. For the following three levels of voluntariness – "completely voluntary donations", "voluntary donations initiated by government or units" and "completely compulsory donations by government or units" – respondents indicated that they either made "no donations" or "made donations and list the amount". Although "voluntary donations initiated by government or units" seems to be *voluntary*, it is actually *compulsory* under most circumstances. In fact, it is reported that many compulsory donations in China fall under the banner of voluntary charitable giving. So, both "voluntary donations initiated by government or units" and "completely compulsory donations by government or units" can be classified as compulsory donations. In this study,

we coded making compulsory donations as a dummy variable: made no compulsory

donations (reference category) and made compulsory donations.

Control variables. In addition, we controlled for several variables found to be potential

influencing factors on charitable giving in the existing literature: having a partner ("no

partner" as reference), male (female as reference), owning a house ("no house" as reference),

religiosity ("don't believe in any religion" as reference), voluntary services ("no

volunteering" as reference), urban ("not urban" as reference), rural ("not rural" as reference)[ii]

and having children ("no children" as reference), all included as binary variables in the

analyses. Self-perceived health status, self-perceived level of happiness and generalized trust,

which is measured by the question "generally speaking, do you agree that most people can be

trusted?", are all ordinal variables measured using a five-point Likert scale. Age, measured in

years, is a continuous variable. We also included an age-square term to control for the

possible non-linear relationship between age and charitable giving.

Table 2 reports the main descriptive statistics of variables in this study, including mean,

standard deviation, minimum and maximum.

<<Insert Table 2 here>>

Analytical strategy

First, we conducted descriptive analyses. We compared the differences between Party members and non-Party members on the amount of total charitable giving, human resources, social networks, prosocial values, and probability of making compulsory donations. We used an independent sample T-test and χ^2 test to examine if the differences are statistically significant.

To test the hypotheses in this paper, we used generalized structural equation modeling (SEM) to explore the possible mediating mechanisms between Party membership and charitable giving. Relative to other statistical methods, SEM is more suitable for the analysis of mediating mechanisms. However, SEM is usually used for continuous dependent variables. Unlike typical continuous variables, our dependent variable (i.e., charitable giving) is left-censored at zero. Using ordinary least squares (OLS) to analyze censored variables will lead to biased estimates, but standard Tobit regression can correct the biases and provide efficient and unbiased estimates (Tobin, 1958). To combine the standard Tobit regression and structural equation modeling, generalized structural equation modeling was adopted in this study (Stata Manual, 2013).

Charitable giving is usually viewed as a voluntary prosocial behavior (Anheier, 2014). Our analyses so far considered total charitable giving, including both voluntary giving and compulsory donations. Do Party members give more than non-Party members in terms of voluntary giving? Do the aforementioned mediating mechanisms still play important roles in voluntary giving when compulsory donations are controlled for? In the third stage, we excluded the compulsory donations from total giving and adopted generalized structural

equation modeling again to explore whether human resources, social networks and prosocial

values mediate the relationship between Party membership and voluntary charitable giving.

Results

Descriptive results

Charitable giving, education, income, formal networks, prosocial values and making

compulsory donations differed strongly between Party members and non-Party members, as

shown in Table 3. Independent sample T-test and χ^2 test results indicate that Party members

donated more than non-Party members, and had higher levels of educational attainment,

household income, larger formal networks, higher prosocial values and were more likely to

make compulsory donations than non-Party members. However, there was no significant

difference between Party and non-Party members in terms of times a month they

communicated or entertained with neighbors or friends ($p > 0.1$), our measure for informal

networks.

<<Insert Table 3 here>>

Mediation analyses on Party membership and total charitable giving

To explore the mediating relationships and test our hypotheses, we ran generalized structural

equation models. We present results from these models in Table 4. Columns 1 to 6 report the

model results of the relationship between Party membership and the possible mediating

variables, and the final column shows a full model which describes the relationship between

Party membership, the mediators and charitable giving.

<<Insert Table 4 here>>

Model 1 shows that education significantly mediated the relationship between Party

membership and charitable giving. Party members had on average 2.2 more years of

education when other variables in the model were held constant ($p \leq 0.001$). As shown in

Model 7, again holding all other variables constant, one more year of education corresponded

to 10.6% higher charitable giving ($p \leq 0.001$). Therefore, our results supported Hypothesis 1.

In line with Hypothesis 2, income also played an important role in mediating Party

membership and charitable giving. As shown in Model 2, compared to the non-Party

members, Party members had approximately 25.2% more household income ($p \leq 0.001$).

Model 7 indicates that a 1% increase in household income was associated with a 0.46%

increase in charitable giving ($p \leq 0.001$). So, Party members had higher levels of income, and

this corresponded to higher levels of charitable giving.

Regarding formal networks, Model 3 suggests that Party members scored 0.3 higher

than non-Party members in active organizational membership ($p \leq 0.001$). Party members

joined more organizations and were more active in those organizations. A one-unit increase in

levels of formal networks correlated with a 45.2% increase in charitable giving, as shown in

Model 7 ($p \leq 0.001$). Unlike the mediation relationship between Party membership, formal networks and charitable giving, informal networks provided a different picture. Party members did not have more informal network interactions than non-Party members ($\beta=$ 0.210, $p > 0.1$), and informal networks were not significantly associated with the amount of charitable giving ($\beta=$ -0.016, $p > 0.1$). As a result, Hypothesis 3 was only partially supported.

Empirical results also confirmed the mediating role of prosocial values. Model 5 indicates that Party members scored 0.2 higher than non-Party members in terms of prosocial values ($p \leq 0.001$). That is, Party members had higher levels of prosocial values. Model 7 suggests that one level increase in prosocial values was associated with 33.7% increase in total giving ($p \leq 0.001$). Hence prosocial values significantly mediated the relationship between Party membership and total giving.

In terms of the last hypothesis, our results supported H5b: Party members were more likely than non-Party members to make compulsory donations, which increased their total giving. According to Model 6, the log-odds of making compulsory donations were 0.8 higher for Party members than for non-Party members when other variables were held constant ($p \leq$ 0.001). This means that, relative to non-Party members, the probability of making compulsory donations for Party members was 1.3 times higher (exp(0.830)-1). In addition, Model 7 also indicates compulsory donations correlated with a more than 6.6 times increase in total charitable giving ($p \leq 0.001$). Therefore, our results showed that making compulsory donations was a significant mediating variable.

In addition, we also decomposed the total effects of Party membership on charitable giving into direct and indirect effects, and compared the different indirect effects, as shown in Table 5. We can conclude that the total effect of Party members on charitable giving was 6.617 ($p \leq 0.001$), while the direct effect was 0.177 but not statistically significant ($p > 0.1$). In terms of the indirect effects, education, income, formal networks, prosocial values and making compulsory donations were significant pathways to explain the relationship, but their effect sizes were different. The indirect effect of making compulsory donations was much larger than that of education, income, formal networks and prosocial values, which means making compulsory donations had a larger and more substantial effect than other mediators on the positive relationship between Party members and total charitable giving.

<<Insert Table 5 here>>

Mediation analyses on Party membership and voluntary charitable giving

So far, we have analyzed is the relationship between Party membership and total charitable giving. However, charitable giving is usually viewed as a voluntary prosocial behavior, and making compulsory donations violates this basic principle of charitable giving. Previous literature suggests that Party members donate more to charity in China, but charitable giving in these previous studies often means total charitable giving and does not distinguish voluntary giving from compulsory donations (e.g., Hu and Shen, 2013; Wu et al, 2018). Therefore, and especially given the importance of compulsory donations in the analyses we

have reported so far, it is relevant to further explore the relationship between Party membership and voluntary charitable giving.

The average amount of voluntary charitable giving was RMB 228.28 (approximately USD 35.34) for Party members and RMB 138.43 (approximately USD 21.43) for non-Party members – a marginally statistically significant difference ($p \leq 0.1$). When studying only voluntary charitable donations, do the aforementioned mediating mechanisms play similar important roles in voluntary giving? Table 6 reports the results for the generalized structural equation model, similar to Table 4. Table 7 presents total, direct and indirect effects in the model comparable to Table 5. From tables 6 and 7, we find similar results compared to tables 4 and 5.

<<Insert tables 6 and 7 here>>

Education, income, formal networks, and prosocial values were significant mediating variables that prompted Party members to donate, but why did Party members make only marginally higher voluntary donations? We argue that the key reason is making compulsory donations. As with total giving, voluntary giving was positively associated with human resources, social networks and prosocial values. But unlike total giving, making compulsory donations crowded out voluntary giving. On the one hand, as we have confirmed, Party members were more likely to make compulsory donations. On the other, as explained in the hypotheses section and shown in Table 6, the amount of voluntary giving was negatively

associated with making compulsory donations (β= -1.434, $p \leq 0.01$). Therefore, Party members donated only marginally more than non-Party members in terms of voluntary giving.

Conclusion and discussion

Using data from the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS, 2012) and adopting generalized structural equation models, this paper analyzes the relationship between Party membership and charitable giving in China. We identify four types of mechanism to explain why Party members are more likely to donate and donate more, and our results partially confirm our hypotheses. Specifically, relative to non-Party members, Party members have higher levels of educational attainment, household income, larger formal networks, higher prosocial values, and are more likely to make compulsory donations, which make them donate significantly more in terms of total charitable giving. Moreover, the mediating variables have different indirect effects. Empirical results indicate that the effect of making compulsory donations is much larger than that of other mediators. Although Party members donate significantly more in terms of total charitable giving, our results find that they make only marginally higher voluntary donations than non-Party members. We argue that the key reason is that making compulsory donations crowds out voluntary giving.

This paper makes three important contributions. First, it provides a new and unique perspective on the relationship between party affiliation or political ideology and charitable

giving. Current literature predominantly focuses on Western European and North American contexts. By studying the relationship in China – a country with a unique political system of one ruling political party– we broaden the knowledge of the relationship between political affiliation and charitable giving by examining relationships between compulsory and voluntary donations. Second, previous empirical studies support the positive relationship between Party membership and charitable giving in China, but they do not shed light on the possible mechanisms shaping the relationship. This study provides the first comprehensive explanation as to why Party members are more likely to donate and donate more in China. And third, it contributes to our understanding of compulsory donations, which is a unique but understudied phenomenon, occurring in different forms in countries other than China, including the Church levy in Germany (Boyer et al, 2014), *zakat* in Islamic societies (Amuda, 2013), tithing in some Christian countries, and the liturgy system in Ancient Athens (Reich, 2018).

There are also some limitations to this study. For example, there is the issue of a bi-directional causal relationship between Party membership and education. As discussed in the theory section, people with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to be admitted as Party members in China (which indicates a selection effect), and, in turn, Party members have more opportunities to achieve higher levels of education (which indicates a causality effect). The combination of selection and causality effects may not affect the second-stage analysis (i.e., the impact of education on charitable giving), but it may bias the first-stage analysis (i.e., the impact of Party membership on education).

In terms of future research, more micro data are needed to confirm our findings. Due to there being only limited public micro data on philanthropy in China, only data sources such as CGSS 2012 can be used to test our hypotheses. Future research should adopt other databases to replicate this study. Moreover, in this study we use cross-sectional data, which have many disadvantages relative to longitudinal and experimental data. If possible, future research should collect longitudinal data and conduct social experiments to study the mediating factors that influence the relationship between political affiliation and charitable giving.

This study also suggests the importance of studying compulsory donations. Among the mechanisms mediating the relationship between Party membership and total giving, it seems that making compulsory donations plays the most important role in China. As well as in China, forms of compulsory donations exist in other countries. It would be very interesting and relevant to study compulsory donations in these different contexts and to compare the results with the findings of this study to learn more about the external validity of this study. Does making compulsory donations play an important role in charitable giving in other countries? What are the similarities and differences between giving by social pressure, taxation and compulsory donations? What are the similarities and differences between secular compulsory donations and religious compulsory donations? However, as far as we know, there are no other empirical studies studying different forms of compulsory donations. Systematic research on compulsory donations would therefore be a very relevant and interesting direction for future research.

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Table 1 Percentage of people donating and average amounts donated to different philanthropic sectors (N=4,920)

	Percentage of people donating to a sector (%)	Average amount donated to a sector (RMB)
Overall	31.93	191.86
Religion	3.17	148.20
Helping the poor and disaster relief	27.17	318.14
Health and medical sector	2.44	40.40
Education	2.72	34.59
Environmental protection and animal welfare	0.55	5.12
Art and culture	0.22	0.67
Community service	2.89	23.98
Multiple sectors	1.03	9.99
Others	0.81	18.63

Notes: (1) percentage donating to a sector = number of respondents donating to sector / all respondents in this study (4,920). (2) average amount donated to a sector = total amount donated to a sector / all the respondents in this study (4,920). (3) According to *China Statistical Yearbook 2012*, annual mean exchange rate in 2011 was: RMB 100 ~ USD 15.48.

Source: Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS, 2012).

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of variables (N=4,920)

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Dependent variable				
Total giving (RMB)	191.86	1,813.98	0	80,000
Independent variable				
Party member	Party member: 15.98%; Non-Party member: 84.02%			
Mediating variables				
Education	8.67	4.46	0	18
Income (RMB)	47,737.55	58,783.88	0	900,000
Formal networks	0.27	0.70	0	7
Informal networks	5.58	8.74	0	30
Prosocial values	4.37	1.19	0	6
Making compulsory donations	Yes: 13.29%; No: 86.71%			
Control variables				
Having a partner	Having a partner: 81.42%; No partner: 18.58%			
Male	Male: 51.12%; Female: 48.88%			
Age	49.18	15.96	17	94
Health status	2.53	1.08	0	4
Owning a house	Owning a house: 93.41%; No house: 6.59%			
Religiosity	Yes: 13.52%; No: 86.48%			
Happiness	2.84	0.84	0	4
Generalized trust	2.50	1.01	0	4
Voluntary services	Voluntary services: 7.64%; No volunteering: 92. 36%			
Having children	Having children: 89.37%; No children: 10.63%			
Rural	Rural: 52.95%; Not rural: 47.05%			
Urban	Urban: 36.89%; Not urban: 63.11%			

Source: Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS, 2012).

Table 3 Differences between Party members and non-Party members in total and compulsory giving, human resources and social networks (N=4,920)

	Party members	Non-Party members
Total giving (RMB)	365.95**	158.76
Education	12.11***	8.02
Income	70,689.41***	43,373.69
Formal networks	0.67***	0.20
Informal networks	5.86	5.49
Prosocial values	5.58***	5.33
Making compulsory donations	0.27***	0.11

Notes: (1) + $p \leq 0.1$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. (2) We used independent sample T-tests to compare differences in charitable giving, education, income, formal and informal networks, and prosocial values; and we used a χ^2 test to compare differences in compulsory donations. (3) *Total giving* refers to amount of giving, while *made compulsory donations* refers to making compulsory donations or not.

Source: Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS, 2012).

Table 4 Generalized structural equation model results for mediation analysis on Party membership and total charitable giving (N=4,920)

	(1) Education	(2) Income (ln)	(3) Formal networks	(4) Informal networks	(5) Prosocial values	(6) Making compulsory donations	(7) Charitable giving (ln)
Party member	2.248***	0.252***	0.321***	0.210	0.167***	0.830***	0.177
	(0.122)	(0.048)	(0.037)	(0.336)	(0.046)	(0.108)	(0.226)
Education							0.106***
							(0.029)
Income (ln)							0.459***
							(0.113)
Formal networks							0.452***
							(0.105)
Informal networks							-0.016
							(0.010)
Prosocial values							0.337***
							(0.075)
Making compulsory donations							6.550***
							(0.159)
Having a partner	0.644***	0.383***	0.037	-0.351	0.134*	0.452**	0.206

	(0.157)	(0.072)	(0.028)	(0.396)	(0.059)	(0.160)	(0.293)
Male	0.985***	0.020	0.029	0.037	0.131***	0.049	-0.416*
	(0.093)	(0.034)	(0.018)	(0.262)	(0.034)	(0.091)	(0.173)
Age	-0.042*	-0.004	0.009**	0.029	0.006	-0.008	0.009
	(0.021)	(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.057)	(0.007)	(0.021)	(0.037)
Age-square	-0.0007**	-0.0002+	-0.0001**	-0.0005	-0.0001*	0.0002	-0.0002
	(0.0002)	(0.00009)	(0.00003)	(0.0005)	(0.00007)	(0.0002)	(0.0004)
Health status	0.307***	0.120***	0.004	0.495***	-0.003	0.061	-0.027
	(0.049)	(0.020)	(0.009)	(0.134)	(0.018)	(0.049)	(0.091)
Owning a house	0.069	0.323***	0.027	0.684	0.035	0.325+	-0.210
	(0.188)	(0.086)	(0.033)	(0.469)	(0.073)	(0.197)	(0.338)
Religiosity	-0.552***	0.047	0.149***	-0.239	0.082+	-0.249+	1.608***
	(0.135)	(0.050)	(0.028)	(0.362)	(0.050)	(0.143)	(0.250)
Happiness	0.177**	0.171***	0.048***	0.371*	0.103***	0.096	0.630***
	(0.058)	(0.023)	(0.010)	(0.162)	(0.023)	(0.062)	(0.112)
Generalized trust	-0.013	0.009	0.001	0.211+	0.090***	-0.041	-0.049
	(0.046)	(0.019)	(0.010)	(0.123)	(0.019)	(0.044)	(0.086)
Voluntary services	0.991***	0.092+	0.704***	0.046	0.456***	0.804***	2.541***
	(0.150)	(0.054)	(0.068)	(0.441)	(0.054)	(0.135)	(0.264)
Having children	-0.744***	-0.016	0.002	-0.518	0.141+	0.324+	-0.060

	(0.204)	(0.090)	(0.045)	(0.565)	(0.081)	(0.196)	(0.384)
Rural	-3.589***	-1.048***	-0.279***	1.250***	-0.0005	-0.943***	-0.633*
	(0.158)	(0.052)	(0.040)	(0.386)	(0.059)	(0.147)	(0.302)
Urban	0.245	-0.229***	-0.032	0.759*	0.053	0.134	0.003
	(0.161)	(0.049)	(0.043)	(0.386)	(0.060)	(0.136)	(0.269)
Intercept	12.277***	10.041***	-0.073	1.671	4.503***	-2.288***	-10.887***
	(0.538)	(0.215)	(0.105)	(1.458)	(0.195)	(0.520)	(1.535)

Notes: (1) + $p \leq 0.1$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. (2) Unstandardized coefficients in the table; robust standard errors in the parentheses. (3) Akaike's information criterion (AIC) = 116,535.9; Bayesian information criterion (BIC) =117,296.5. Log pseudolikelihood = -58,150.96. Left-censored = 3,349; Right-censored = 0; Uncensored =1,571.

Source: Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS, 2012).

Table 5 Total, direct and indirect effects of Party membership on total charitable giving

Effect decomposition	Effect size
Total effects	6.167***
Direct effects	0.177
Indirect effects	5.990***
Path 1: education	0.239***
Path 2: income	0.116***
Path 3: formal networks	0.145***
Path 4: informal networks	-0.003
Path 5: prosocial values	0.056**
Path 6: making compulsory donations	5.437***

Note: + $p \leq 0.1$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$.

Source: Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS, 2012).

Table 6 Generalized structural equation model results for mediation analysis on Party membership and voluntary charitable giving (N=4,920)

	(1) Education	(2) Income (ln)	(3) Formal networks	(4) Informal networks	(5) Prosocial values	(6) Voluntary charitable giving (ln)
Party member	2.121***	0.231***	0.287***	0.215	0.153***	0.085
	(0.122)	(0.049)	(0.037)	(0.340)	(0.046)	(0.369)
Education						0.151***
						(0.045)
Income (ln)						0.567***
						(0.172)
Formal networks						0.828***
						(0.159)
Informal networks						-0.031*
						(0.016)
Prosocial values						0.506***
						(0.117)
Having a partner	0.612**	0.378***	0.029	-0.350	0.130*	0.233
	(0.157)	(0.072)	(0.028)	(0.396)	(0.059)	(0.432)

Male	0.979***	0.019	0.027	0.037	0.131***	-0.596**
	(0.092)	(0.034)	(0.018)	(0.262)	(0.034)	(0.266)
Age	-0.040**	-0.004	0.010**	0.029	0.007	-0.044
	(0.022)	(0.009)	(0.004)	(0.057)	(0.007)	(0.056)
Age-square	-0.0007**	-0.0002+	-0.0001***	-0.0005	-0.0001*	8.12e-06
	(0.0002)	(0.00009)	(0.00003)	(0.0005)	(0.00007)	(0.0005)
Health status	0.302***	0.119***	0.003	0.475***	-0.003	-0.120
	(0.049)	(0.020)	(0.009)	(0.134)	(0.018)	(0.138)
Owning a house	0.029	0.316***	0.016	0.686	0.030	-0.416
	(0.186)	(0.086)	(0.032)	(0.470)	(0.073)	(0.500)
Religiosity	-0.529***	0.051	0.155***	-0.240	0.085+	2.369***
	(0.134)	(0.050)	(0.028)	(0.362)	(0.050)	(0.349)
Happiness	0.169**	0.170***	0.046***	0.371*	0.102***	0.985***
	(0.058)	(0.023)	(0.010)	(0.162)	(0.023)	(0.177)
Generalized trust	-0.010	0.009	0.002	0.211+	0.090***	-0.119
	(0.045)	(0.018)	(0.010)	(0.123)	(0.019)	(0.130)
Voluntary services	0.853***	0.069	0.667***	0.051	0.440***	3.878***
	(0.149)	(0.055)	(0.067)	(0.445)	(0.054)	(0.389)
Having children	-0.797***	-0.025	-0.012	-0.516	0.135+	-0.079
	(0.202)	(0.090)	(0.044)	(0.567)	(0.081)	(0.568)

Rural	-3.493***	-1.032***	-0.253***	1.247***	0.010	-0.772+
	(0.157)	(0.052)	(0.039)	(0.389)	(0.059)	(0.463)
Urban	0.224	-0.233***	-0.038	0.759*	0.051	0.135
	(0.159)	(0.049)	(0.043)	(0.386)	(0.060)	(0.423)
Made compulsory donations	1.093***	0.174***	0.286***	0.040	0.118**	-1.434***
	(0.123)	(0.044)	(0.040)	(0.361)	(0.049)	(0.408)
Intercept	12.129***	10.017***	-0.112	1.676	4.487***	-14.698***
	(0.534)	(0.215)	(0.103)	(1.460)	(0.195)	(2.315)

Notes: (1) $+ p \leq 0.1$; $* p \leq 0.05$; $** p \leq 0.01$; $*** p \leq 0.001$. (2) Unstandardized coefficients in the table; robust standard errors in the parentheses. (3) Akaike's information criterion (AIC) = 110,846.5; Bayesian information criterion (BIC) = 111,542.1. Log pseudolikelihood = -55,316.247. Left-censored = 3,847; Right-censored = 0; Uncensored =1073.

Source: Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS, 2012).

Table 7 Total, direct, and indirect effects of Party membership on voluntary charitable giving

Effect decomposition	Effect size
Total effects	0.845*
Direct effects	0.085
Indirect effects	0.760***
Path 1: education	0.320***
Path 2: income	0.131**
Path 3: formal networks	0.238***
Path 4: informal networks	-0.007
Path 5: prosocial values	0.077**

Note: + $p \leq 0.1$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$.

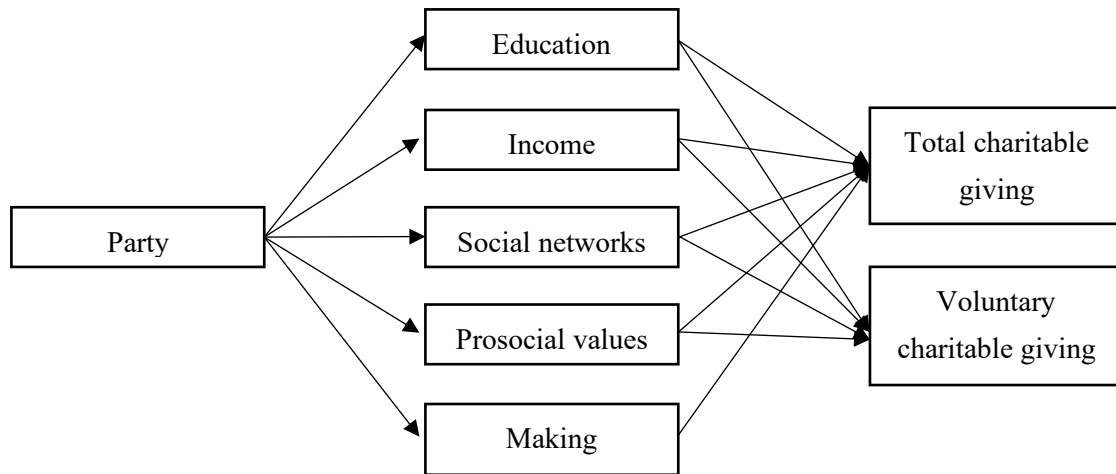*Source:* Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS, 2012).

Fig. 1 Conceptual framework for the relationship between Party membership and charitable giving, including mediating factors

Notes: (1) We tested the effects of all the mediating variables on the relationship between Party membership and total charitable giving, but making compulsory donations was excluded when testing Party membership, mediating variables and voluntary charitable giving; (2) The expected direction between compulsory donations and total giving is either positive or nonsignificant, while the expected directions for all other relationships are positive.

[i] Unit (*danwei*) can refer to any organization people work in, which include a government department, state-owned enterprise, private enterprise, or nonprofit organization. It is a particular term for organizations often used in China.

[ii] In terms of household registration (*hukou*), apart from urban and rural, there were four other classifications in CGSS 2012: *Lanyin hukou*, military status, no *hukou* and other. We included two variables in the analyses: rural (urban and others as reference) and urban (rural and others as reference).