

# **Women and Philanthropy: A Literature Review**

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## **Introduction**

Over the past 30 years, women have emerged on the philanthropic landscape as a visible and bold presence. They are changing the face of philanthropy and are transforming society around the world. Today's reality is that women, strengthened by increasing economic power and education, are as likely as men to be philanthropists. Yet, the body of research literature on women's philanthropic giving is lagging behind the reality of what is happening in practice around the world. Recently, however, interest in understanding how and why women give has gotten underway—particularly over the past decade—prompting researchers to examine gender issues in philanthropy from new angles. These research findings suggest that a more proactive, strategic engagement of women in philanthropy will unleash new human and financial resources for the public good.

The purpose of this literature review is to examine the empirical scholarship that addresses women's giving and philanthropic behavior. Although there is a substantial literature on giving across multiple disciplines, to date, there is no review of the research that specifically addresses gender differences in giving and philanthropy. This is important empirical research for those working in the field of philanthropy. Because women, on average, live longer than men, women will end up stewarding of much of the \$41 trillion expected to pass from generation to generation over the next fifty years. Furthermore, recent research reveals the increasing role that women play in economic decision-making (Kamas, Preston, & Baum, 2008). The more we understand gender differences in giving, the better informed we will be in meeting today's challenges and to prepare for tomorrow's opportunities.

## **Methodology for Conducting the Review**

A thorough review of the literature was conducted using relevant search terms (e.g., women, sex differences, and gender differences AND prosocial behavior, charity, philanthropy, giving, and altruism), across disciplines, and including multiple data bases such as: PsycInfo, Applied Science Full Text, Biomed Central, PubMed, Medline, IUPUI Metasearch, GenderWatch, EconLit, Sociological Abstracts, Web of Science, Expanded Academic ASAP, Social Services Abstracts, Payton Library Philanthropic Studies Index, PsychInfo, and Dissertations. Additional sources were discovered by examining the references cited in the articles found.

Only empirical research studies are included in this review. To meet the criteria for inclusion, the study needed to contain data on women's giving and/or data on differences between men and women's giving behavior. Similar to Bekker and Wiepking's (2007) review of the generosity and philanthropy literature, theoretical papers (not reporting empirical data) and studies using children as participants are not reviewed. The final review included 48 empirical studies, and 3 dissertations, across 13 disciplines (i.e., economics, social psychology, sociology, psychology, nonprofit management, philanthropic studies, education, social work, finance, marketing, religious studies, women's studies, and public administration).

## Are Women More Generous Than Men?

Findings on gender differences in generosity are mixed (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2007) and contradictory evidence exists as to the magnitude and direction of these gender differences (Cox & Deck, 2006). Much of the empirical research that examines the relationship between gender and giving reveals that females are more generous and donate more to charity than males (e.g., Andreoni, Brown & Rischall, 2003; Bekkers, 2004; Carman, 2006; Croson & Buchan, 1999; Eckel & Grossman, 1998; 2001; 2003; Eckel, Grossman & Johnston, 2005; Kamas, Preston, & Baum, 2008; Mesch et al., 2006). However, other research has found no evidence of gender differences in giving (e.g., Bolton & Katok, 1995; Frey & Meir, 2004)—while some research found males to be more generous (e.g., Brown-Kruse & Hummels, 1993; Chang, 2005; Frey & Meir, 2004; Jackson & Latané 1981; Meier, 2007; Sokolowski 1996). More specifically, several studies find that while females are more likely to give, males give higher amounts (Andreoni, Brown & Rischall, 2003; Bekkers 2004; Belfield & Beney 2000; Einolf, 2006; Lyons & Nivison-Smith, 2006; Mesch, et al., 2006; Piper & Schnepf, 2008; Weyant, 1984). Depending on the discipline and methodology used (i.e., lab versus field studies), there is much variation across individual studies as to how demographic and other individual characteristics affect participation in giving—where simple bivariate analysis is not sufficient (Havens, O’Herlihy & Schervish, 2006).

In the economics literature, Andreoni and Vesterlund’s (2001) seminal study demonstrated that the question of “Who is more generous?” is complicated. Their study found differences in the “demand curves for altruism” where men are more responsive to the price of giving (pg. 1). They conclude that men are more generous when it is cheap to give, but women are more generous when it is more expensive to give. That is, men are more likely to be either perfectly selfish or perfectly selfless, whereas women tend to be “equalitarians” who prefer to share evenly. Andreoni, Brown, and Rischall (2003) found support for these findings when testing giving behavior outside of the laboratory to actual charitable giving. Cox and Deck (2006), however, found that women’s generosity is more income elastic, in which women base their decision of whether to be generous on the costs associated with the decision. That is, women, unlike men, are more likely to be generous when the stakes are lower and are more responsive to variations in the cost of giving than men.

Using a laboratory experiment, Andreoni and Petrie (2008) found that subjects tend to reward (i.e., are more generous toward) beauty and females—but only when performance is unknown. When performance is known, the gender premium is reversed—the payoff is significantly higher for men than women. Landry et al., (2006) also found an attractiveness effect using a door-to-door fundraising field experiment. In general, they found that an increase in the personal attractiveness rating of one unit generates over 6% increase in the probability that a household will contribute. However, this effect is entirely driven by white females, and primarily driven by households where the male was solicited for the contribution. This effect was consistent across all experimental treatments—“more personally attractive female solicitors induce a higher proportion of households to contribute.” When examining gender effects only—their findings showed that males tended to give significantly more to women solicitors than to their male counterparts—but this differences was largely due to more physically attractive women having greater success among male households. Ben-Ner, Kong and Putterman (2004) found that, in dictator game experiments, gender information significantly affects giving only in the case of

women, who give systematically less to women than to men. However, Kamas, Preston, and Baum (2008) found that, under anonymous conditions, women give significantly more than men, women are more likely than men to give all the money away and less likely to keep all of the money—and that pairs consisting of one man and one woman give more than same-sex pairs, where all male pairs give the least. That is, “men acting with men behave more selfishly than women--however, when paired with women, men are willing to give more” (p. 34).

Other empirical research from economics has found sex differences in giving (1) by types and patterns of household expenditure (Phipps & Burton, 1998), (2) by age, where men’s rates of giving and gift size show larger increases over time than women’s, but women opt to participate in giving more than men (List, 2004) (3) as a result of cognitive ability and personality (Ben-Ner, Kong & Putterman, 2004), (4) as a result of social distance (Cox & Deck, 2006; Dufwenberg & Muren, 2006), (5) as a result of reciprocity and risk (Croson & Buchan, 1999), (6) by gender pairings or same-sex groups (Carman, 2006; Eckel & Grossman, 2001; Kamas Preston, & Baum, 2008), (7) according to money style differences between men and women (Prince, 1993), and (8) due to the proportion of females in the household (Pharoah & Tanner 1997).

The sociology, social psychology, and psychology literature also suggests sex differences in motives and altruistic behavior. In general, this literature reveals that gender is a critical variable found to affect giving, empathy, and altruistic behavior. Two early reviews of sex differences in empathy found that empathy is more prevalent in females than males; females are more prone to experience guilt and have more highly developed affect for prosocial behavior (Hoffman, 1977)—although, Eisenberg and Lennon’s (1983) review concluded these differences were a function of the methods used to assess empathy. Piliavin and Charng’s (1990) literature review concludes that females tend to be more charitable than males. A meta-analytic review of gender and helping behavior indicated that, in general, men help more than women but women received more help than men—although findings across individual studies were extremely inconsistent (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). In fact, empirical research from this field has been contradictory and highly dependent on methodological factors and the variables used in the study. For example, Jha, Yadav, and Kuman (1997) found significant differences between male and female subjects in respect to their altruistic behavior but these findings were dependent on religio-cultural commitment. Similarly, Regnerus, Smith and Sikkink (1998) found that inclusion of religiosity in their regression models of giving money to help the poor has a greater impact on gender than do all religious identities. Erdle et al., (1992) found sex differences in personality correlates of different helping behaviors and Einolf (2006) found that life course transitions affect altruistic behaviors between men and women. Using an experimental design, Winterich, Mittal and Ross (2009) manipulated donations to in-groups versus out-groups and found that the impact of moral identity and donation group depends on gender identity. That is, although moral identity increases donations to groups perceived as the out-group, this effect holds only for females or those with high feminine gender identity.

Finally, the philanthropic and nonprofit studies literature—which is interdisciplinary by nature—also has found significant sex differences in giving (e.g., Mesch et al., 2006; Kottasz, 2004; Piper & Schnepf, 2008; Rooney, Brown & Mesch, 2007; Rooney, et al., 2005; Van Slyke & Brooks, 2005). Mesch et al., (2006) and Rooney et al., (2005) used both a representative national sample and Indiana sample (two different studies) and found that single females, married men, and married women are significantly more likely to be donors than single men. Piper and Schnepf’s

(2008) study examining men's and women's giving patterns in Great Britain provides support for Mesch and Rooney's findings. Women were more likely to give to charity, and this finding holds for singles as well as married couples, with controls for background characteristics. More specifically, Piper and Schnepf (2008) find that single women are not only more likely to give to charitable causes, but that they are predominantly more generous in terms of the amounts given.

## **Which Women Give?**

### *Generational Differences in Giving*

In general, the literature demonstrates a strong and positive relationship between philanthropic giving and age (see Bekkers & Wiepking, 2007). Research from the management and nonprofit studies literature also reveals important generational differences exist in terms of values, aspirations, and behaviors (e.g., Kunreuther, 2003). However, no published research examining giving by gender across generation/age was located for this review. In a recent unpublished study, research at the Center on Philanthropy explored this question as to whether there might be gender differences in giving by generation (Brown & Rooney, 2008). This study, although a working paper, is included in this review because of the large nationally representative sample that was used, as well as the high response rate. After controlling for demographic, religious attendance, and political ideology, results indicated no significant differences in amounts given to charity by gender and generation. However, significant differences were found across gender and generation in giving to religion.

### *Volunteers*

Although the literature suggests a positive relationship between volunteering and donating to charity (see Bekkers & Wiepking, 2007, Van Slyke & Brooks, 2005; Wunnava & Lauze, 2001), few studies have examined this relationship by gender. Yet, most of the research literature indicates that women volunteer significantly more than men (e.g., Einolf, 2006; Hodgkinson et al., 1992, Hodgkinson & Weitzman, 1996; Mesch et al., 2006, Sokolowski, 1996). One research study found a positive and significant relationship between money contributions and giving of time, and also found significant differences between men and women when examining the interdependence between individuals' charitable donations and volunteering (Brown & Lankford, 1992). Although education and lower tax prices (i.e., the tax price of monetary giving) increase hours volunteered for both men and women, marital status, available time, and household size had a positive effect on volunteer hours for women, while single parenthood had a negative impact. For women, "the significant economic variables are available time and the tax price of money gifts" (Brown & Lankford: 333).

Marx (2000) found that those who give to human services are significantly more likely to be volunteers as well as female. Parsons (2004) found that women who volunteer are more likely to provide financial support to the same organizations where they or family members contribute their time. Parsons concludes that this helps them to feel connected to the cause and to the community.

### *Occupational Differences*

Only one study was uncovered that examined giving by gender across occupations. In a study examining giving patterns of young affluent males and females, Kottasz (2004) found that corporate male lawyers give the most to charity. However, this study used a small sample, was restricted to London, and did not control for income.

### **What are the Patterns of Women's Giving?**

#### *Who Decides?*

Although there is some research on how charitable giving is managed within a household and how these decisions are made (e.g., Burgoyne, Young & Walker, 2005), little research has been conducted on the role of gender in reaching these decisions. Because men and women's preferences for giving are different, research has begun to examine the question as to who in the household is the primary decision-maker with regard to giving to charity. Andreoni, Brown and Rischall's (2003) study examined intra-household decision-making and found evidence that bargaining, predominantly favoring husbands, characterizes how household charitable decisions are made. Overall, their results found that single men and women exhibit different tendencies toward giving as well as married individuals. When decisions were made jointly, husbands had more influence over their wives in deciding on charitable giving. However, they found that education and income were the primary determinants of control over charitable resources—being the primary earner strengthens one's bargaining power in marriage as does the husband's education relative to the wife's. When the woman is the decision-maker, however, she is significantly more likely to give to education than is the husband or a jointly deciding couple.

Rooney, Brown and Mesch (2007) examined the question as to who decides—looking specifically at giving to education. Consistent with Andreoni et al. (2003), this study found that women decision-makers are more likely to have a positive effect on both the likelihood of giving to education as well as the amounts given to education. They also found that when females are the main decision-makers, there is a positive effect on secular giving and no effect on religious giving, holding other factors constant. But when couples decide the amounts to give separately, there is a positive association with secular giving and a negative relationship with religious giving (p. 240).

Kamas, Preston and Baum's (2008) laboratory study finds support for the influence of women in the decision-making of giving. Across mixed-sex pairings, a significantly greater percent of men changed their giving toward women's gifts and that the group gift was more likely to move towards the female gift than to the male gift. Hughes and Luksetich (2008) found differential impact of husbands' and wives' earnings on charitable contributions. Specifically, they found that the elasticity of permanent income for the head of the household was significantly higher than that of the wife, where the man's earnings had a positive impact on total donations, and the variation in the wife's earnings had a negative impact.

#### *Where Do Women Give?*

Women tend to give to organizations that have had an impact on them or someone they know personally (Parsons, 2004; Burgoyne, Young, & Walker, 2005). Subsequently, much of the empirical research indicates that men and women exhibit different charity choices and patterns of

donating money. Several studies found that males tend to concentrate their giving among a few charities, whereas females were more likely to spread the amounts they give across a wide range of charities (e.g., Andreoni, Brown, & Rischall, 2003; Piper & Schnepf, 2008). That is, “women are more egalitarian in their giving, while men are more strategic” (Brown, 2006). These studies also found differences in the types of charities men and women choose to give--women are more likely to give to human service, health, and education while men are more likely to give to adult recreation and sports. One study found that men are more likely to give to veterans and civil rights organizations (Einolf, 2006). Piper and Schnepf (2008) examined the probability of giving and the amount given by men and women across 15 charities in Great Britain and found the percentage of female donors to be significantly higher than that of male donors for almost all causes. However, Eckel and Grossman (2003) found that men and women exhibited a high degree of similarity in their charity choice, but that women were more generous than men in six of the ten cases (pg. 694).

Several studies support the finding that women are more likely to give specifically to educational causes than men (e.g., Einolf, 2006; Piper & Schnepf, 2008; Rooney, Brown, & Mesch, 2007). However, other studies find no statistical difference between alumni giving of men and women (Okunade, Wunnava, & Walsh, 1994; Wunnava & Lauze, 2001), or that males actually donate significantly more than females (Okunade, 1996). Wunnava and Lauze (2001) found that, when examining the differences between consistent and occasional donors, for occasional donors, males give significantly more to education.

Several studies find support that women are more likely to give to human services, children, and health-related charities (e.g., Einolf, 2006; Marx, 2000; Midlarsky & Hannah, 1989; Piper & Schnepf, 2008). Marx (2000) found that women donate more and were almost twice as likely to be donors to human services than men—controlling for the effects of other demographic and motivational characteristics. Using an experimental research design, Midlarsky and Hannah (1989) found that women are more likely to donate to a fund for infants with birth defects than men. In a survey of current and lapsed donors to the American Lung Association, Keyt, Yavas, and Riecken (2002) found that the non-donor group had a disproportionate number of males. However, Jackson and Latané (1981) found men to donate more to female door-to-door solicitors who represented the Leukemia Society of America, and, in the Netherlands, Bekkers (2007) found that males are more likely to give to health charities.

In terms of religious giving, Kamas, Preston and Baum (2008) found that women gave more in anonymous giving across all religious denominations and that high income women gave significantly more than high-income men. However, some research indicates that males give more to religion (e.g., Brown & Ferris, 2007), but females give more to secular causes and for helping those in need (e.g., Brown & Ferris, 2007; Regnerus, Smith, & Sikkink, 1998). Whereas, other studies find that females are more likely to give to religion (i.e., Newman, 1995; Piper & Schnepf, 2008; Yen, 2002). More specifically, Piper and Schnepf (2008) found that while married men and women show the same level of support for religious organizations, among single people, women are nearly twice as likely as men to give to them. Even after controlling for different characteristics (age, income, living alone, region, education, and proxies for wealth), this gender difference remains significant (p. 114).

Israel (2007) found that females had a significantly higher probability of giving to environmental causes--however, Piper and Schnepf (2008) found little gender difference for this cause. Instead, Piper and Schnepf (2008) found that women were significantly more likely to donate to animal welfare than men.

### **What Motivates Women's Giving?**

Although a substantial literature exists on motives of altruism, prosocial, and other types of helping behavior from the economic, social psychology, and psychology disciplines, there is a paucity of empirical research on specific motives for philanthropic giving (for exception, see Ribar & Wilhelm, 2002 and see Eveland & Cruchfield, 2004; Mount, 1996; Prince, File & Gillespie, 1993 for examples of this literature). Some research suggests that women are more inclined to help in a relational manner, placing greater emphasis on relationships and on care of the individual, whereas, men tend to prefer more non-relational acts, favoring justice as a reason for wanting to help (Skoe, et al., 2002). Other research indicates that women are more likely to say philanthropy is a way to show human caring and that philanthropy is a way to express their moral beliefs (Newman, 1995).

Kottasz's (2004) sample of young high-earning professional men and women in London found men to be more motivated by egoistic than altruistic motives when donating to charity, and that men, more than women, claimed they planned to donate more money once they had achieved their financial goals. Her study found that professional affluent women differed than men in terms of "types of cause" and "rewards and benefits sought." Women were more prone to donate to a charity that served people and were more interested in obtaining personal recognition for their donations than getting any social benefits (as was preferred more by professional affluent men). Similarly, Parsons' (2004) dissertation indicated that women prefer to donate anonymously and receive thanks in private.

Van Slyke and Brooks (2005) found that men are less likely than women to cite religious motives. This study as well as Kittasz (2004) found that women, more than men, give out of a sense of duty. Kottasz (2004) also found that women feel more strongly that charities are more effective than government or for-profits in providing services to those in need. Men were more interested in donating to social charities in return for social rewards, while women were more likely to support human service charities in return for personal recognition

In a study reported earlier from the Center on Philanthropy (Brown & Rooney, 2008), researchers found three statistically significant differences in motives for giving: (1) men were more motivated by a desire to "make my community a better place"; (2) men were more motivated to provide services where government can't or won't; and (3) women felt a strong responsibility to help those who have less. This study also found that women, especially millennial women, respond favorably to a "world" message. Boomer and older women were more likely than boomer men to respond to a message that urges "responsibility to help others."

## Conclusions

Research in the field of women's philanthropy is in its infancy—and there are many more questions to be addressed than have been answered. In fact, most of the empirical research reviewed in this paper consists of studies that have been conducted within the last ten years. Women do seem to be genuinely different from men in terms of the probability of giving (Piper & Schnepf, 2008). However, the nature of this giving requires much further study.

## Directions for Future Research

This review has endeavored to summarize the empirical research on women's philanthropic giving according to specific research questions. Below are some areas of research that are, to date, underdeveloped—but will be critically important in helping to inform the field:

- *Are women more generous than men?* Generalizability from the lab to field is an issue found in this review. Much of the literature addressing generosity between men and women has been conducted in a lab setting. Thus, additional research needs to be conducted outside of the laboratory, either through field experiments or survey research, using large representative samples in order to better understand whether or not these differences indeed do exist.
- *Which women give?* Are there differences in giving across race and ethnicity? There is an extensive literature from education and history that provides an historical perspective of female philanthropists of color (e.g., Robertson, 2007; Walton, 2005). The empirical research should incorporate these perspectives and disciplines. How does giving among women change through the generations? In particular what are the differences in how baby boomer and older women give from those in Generation Y and younger?
- *How does volunteering affect women's giving?* What is the relationship between women's volunteering and giving (such as Brown & Lankford, 1992).
- *What is the relationship between gender, race, and religion?* How do these factors affect giving by gender and across cultures? Are there differences in the way men and women give to philanthropy according to religious denominations? Not only is religiosity changing over time, but society as a whole is changing. Is the gap that has been found in the past between men and women for religious motives in giving narrowing across the cohorts as religion becomes less important?
- *What are women's patterns of giving?* Does the pattern of giving change over time? Does the pattern of giving change across cultures? Are there differences between men and women in the way they give gifts? Are there different preferred gift mechanisms? All of these questions have implications for those in the field of fund development.
- *Who decides?* Although research has begun in this area, there is much more to learn as to how giving decisions within a household are made. What are the factors that influence men's and women's giving within a household and how does this affect giving decisions? What confers decision-making authority? How do marriage, religion, generation, and life-cycle affect giving? What are the consequences for the disposition of philanthropy (i.e., does who is deciding influence what the money is going towards?). Are there differences across race, culture, and nations?
- *Where do women learn to be philanthropic?* Are there differences in the way in which men and women are socialized in their philanthropic giving? Who are the role models for women philanthropists and what are the characteristics of these role models? What

prompts men and women to participate or engage in philanthropy? What is the effect of having children on giving?

- *What are the differences in philanthropic motives between men and women? And, how (or if) these differences translate into philanthropic giving? Do differences in motives lead to different philanthropic behaviors? What is the purpose of philanthropy for men and women (i.e., to leverage change, to make themselves feel better, to change the community, etc.) and are these different?*
- *How do social structures influence women's giving? Research could take a more macro view by examining the institutions where women are involved and see how this influences where they give and how much they give. Examples include work, marriage, friendships, extended families, neighborhood communities, type of college attended.*
- *What are the implications for this research in how research can inform practice? How do we inform development officers and other practitioners about women's giving? What language do women prefer? What philanthropic vehicles do they prefer? How do they prefer to talk about leaving a legacy?*

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