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

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Previous studies suggest that Communist Party members in China are more likely to give and give more to charity than non-Party members, but why this is remains unclear. Using the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS, 2012), this article 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. Generalised structural equation modelling results indicate that Party members donate more overall, because they have higher levels of human resources, larger formal networks and 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.

Key words Communist Party of China • charitable giving • making compulsory donations • mediation analysis

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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 sociodemographic 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 samples drawn from Western, educated, industrialised, rich and democratic (WEIRD) countries (for

a review of the literature, see [Bekkers and Wiepking, 2007, 2011b](#); [Wiepking and Bekkers, 2012](#)).

Political party affiliation or political ideology is another relevant characteristic influencing people's donations to charitable organisations, but it is studied less often. Although there are some empirical studies focusing on the relationship between political ideology and charitable giving in WEIRD country samples – most notably for the United States (US) (for example, [Paarlberg et al, 2019](#)) and the UK (for example, [Brown and Taylor, 2019](#)) – there are fewer studies drawing on non-WEIRD country samples. In this study, we contribute to the literature by taking China as an 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 (hereafter referred to as 'Party membership') plays an important role in social life in China 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 to Party membership (for example, [Bian et al, 2001](#); [Appleton et al, 2009](#); [Dickson, 2014](#)) and the effects of being a Party member on individual political or managerial positions, economic returns and education or training ([Morduch and Sicular, 2000](#); [Li et al, 2007](#)). When considering the relationship between Party membership and charitable giving, previous literature suggests that Party members are more likely to give and give more to charity than non-Party members ([Hu and Shen, 2013](#); [Wu et al, 2018](#)). However, those studies do not shed light on the possible mechanisms that explain why Party members donate more.

This article intends to fill this gap. Building on previous literature and using the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS) ([CGSS, 2012](#)), the article 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*)¹ 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 on previous literature, we identify four influencing factors: human resources (that is, education and income), social networks, prosocial values and making compulsory donations (for example, [Wang and Graddy, 2008](#); [Wilhelm and Bekkers, 2010](#); [Bekkers and Wiepking, 2011b](#)).

Human resources

The previous literature argues that people with a higher education are more likely than those with a lower education to have more financial resources, stronger prosocial attitudes and higher cognitive abilities and are more trusting, and this increases their likelihood and level of charitable giving ([Wiepking and Maas, 2009](#); [Bekkers and](#)

Wiepking, 2011b). Empirical studies confirm these relationships not only for the US 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: *Hypothesis 1: Party members are higher educated than non-Party members, which increases their total giving.*

Income is the financial foundation for charitable giving. Research indicates that 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 (Morduch and Sicular, 2000; Knight and Yueh, 2008). 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 (Morduch and Sicular, 2000; Bian et al, 2001). 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: *Hypothesis 2: 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 (Wiepking and Maas, 2009; Glanville et al, 2016; Herzog and Yang, 2018). 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 also tend to be members of a larger number of voluntary organisations (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 generalised 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). Access 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 CGSS 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: *Hypothesis 3: 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 (Wilhelm and Bekkers, 2010; Einolf, 2011; De Wit and Bekkers, 2016). That is, people who have higher levels of prosocial values are more likely to show empathy towards others and care for others more strongly, and are therefore more likely to display prosocial behaviour such as charitable giving. As stated by the Communist Party Constitution in China, the purpose of the CPC is to serve Chinese 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: *Hypothesis 4: Party members have higher levels of prosocial values than non-Party members, which increases their total giving.*

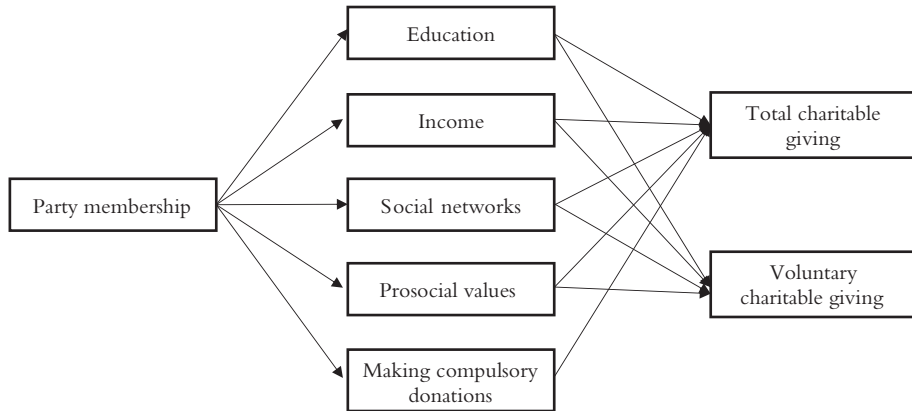
Compulsory donations

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 whereby individuals are coerced to donate by government or their units (*danwei*), is not uncommon in China, although two important laws (the Philanthropy Donation Law of 1998 and the Charity Law of 2016) both prohibit compulsory donations. According to a recent online survey ($N = 1,006$) in China conducted by the *China Philanthropy Times*, as many as 82% of respondents received requests for compulsory donations during their school or work careers (Wu, 2019). People may be required to donate either a specific amount of money or a percentage of their income.

The emergence of compulsory donations in China is associated with particular economic (that is, a long-term planned economy), political (that is, an authoritarian government), cultural (that is, collectivism and a hierarchical culture) and social (that is, a different understanding of philanthropy) backgrounds. It is important to explain this different understanding of philanthropy in China, compared with the understanding of philanthropy in Western European or North American contexts. The principle that philanthropy is voluntary behaviour is deeply rooted in those latter 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 marginalised groups using charitable donations, is more important than emphasising that philanthropy should be voluntary rather than compulsory.

In China, making compulsory donations resembles a political mission assigned by government or its 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 of them. In an empirical study conducted in Jinan, China, Xu (2013) found that if the public servant of the street office (*jiedao banshichu*)² refused to do voluntary work as required, an amount would be deducted from their salary. Although Xu's (2013) study focused on compulsory volunteering, its conclusion can be applicable to making compulsory donations. Therefore, it is

Figure 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 non-significant, while the expected directions for all other relationships are positive.

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 with non-Party members, Party members are more likely to work in public-sector and state-owned enterprises (Morduch and Sicular, 2000; Dickson, 2014), which increases the probability of encountering requests for compulsory donations. The CPC is a highly organised party and it can mobilise its members to donate to charity (Dickson, 2014). Party members can also provide special Party membership dues (*teshu dangfei*) to Party organisations to support charitable and other public causes (Li and Lu, 2018). Such mobilisation and special dues can be viewed as making compulsory donations, as Party members might fear the power of the Party organisation and not want to face negative consequences associated with non-compliance. In addition, organisational citizenship literature suggests that organisations expect their members to be good citizens and good citizenship is crucial in building a 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 they are 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 further hypotheses: *Hypothesis 5a: When compulsory donations*

completely crowd out voluntary donations, total giving will remain constant. Hypothesis 5b: When compulsory donations only partially crowd out voluntary donations or when no crowding-out occurs, total giving will increase. So, Hypothesis 5 is as follows: Party members are more likely than non-Party members to make compulsory donations, which leaves their total giving constant (Hypothesis 5a) or increases their total giving (Hypothesis 5b).

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of this study.

Data and methods

Data

We tested our hypotheses using data from the CGSS (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 multistage stratified sampling and collects data from different levels (that is, individual, household and community levels) in most provinces of mainland China.

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

Note that there were two different questionnaires in the 2012 CGSS and each questionnaire applied to half of all the samples. Only one questionnaire had questions about philanthropy, so only 5,819 respondents out of the 11,765 people sampled in 2012 were asked about their philanthropic behaviour. 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 the list-wise deletion of missing values.

Measures

Dependent variable: *charitable giving*. The CGSS asked respondents: ‘In which of the following sectors and how much did you donate in 2011?’. Respondents could select ‘no donations’ or ‘made donations’ and list the amount. There are nine different philanthropic sectors listed in the CGSS: religion; helping people in poverty and disaster relief; health and medical sector; education; environmental protection and animal welfare; arts and culture; community service; multiple sectors; and others. We summarised 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 (that is, the normal distribution) and reduce estimation bias. Table 1 provides an overview of the percentage of people donating and the average amounts donated to the different philanthropic sectors. Respondents donated most often (27.17%) and the highest amounts (RMB 318.14 – about USD 49.25) to the sector focusing on helping people in poverty and disaster relief, while the arts and culture

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

	Percentage of people donating to the sector	Average amount donated to the sector (<i>renminbi</i> or RMB)
Overall	31.93	191.86
Religion	3.17	148.20
Helping people in poverty 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
Arts 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 the sector / all respondents in this study (4,920). (2) Average amount donated to a sector = total amount donated to the sector / all the respondents in this study (4,920). (3) According to the 2012 China Statistical Yearbook, the annual mean exchange rate in 2011 was RMB 100 – about USD 15.48.

Source: [CGSS \(2012\)](#)

sector received the lowest percentage of donations (0.22%) and the smallest average amount (RMB 0.67 – about USD 0.10).

Independent variable: *party membership*. The 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 group. As noted earlier in this article, there are eight democratic political parties in China in addition to the CPC and some people join these democratic parties. The Communist Youth League is a political organisation affiliated to the Communist Party but comprises youth in China. Mass (*qunzhong*) means people who do not belong to any of the other three. Due to the close relationship between the CPC and the Communist Youth League as well as other democratic parties, members in these organisations 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*. The 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 = 0 year; graduating from old-style private school (*sishu*) or primary school = 6 years; graduating from junior middle school = 9 years; graduating from senior middle school, vocational middle school (*zhiye gaozhong*), special secondary school (*zhongzhuan*) or technical school (*jixiao*) = 12 years; graduating from college for professional training (*dazhuan*) = 14 years; graduating from university with a bachelor’s degree = 16 years; and graduating from university with a master’s degree or above = 18 years.

Income. The 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 (that is, the normal distribution) and reduce estimation bias as well.

Social networks. In the CGSS, social networks were measured in two categories: formal networks and informal networks. To measure formal social networks, the CGSS asked respondents whether they were active members of the following nine types of organisations: political organisations; community organisations; non-profit organisations; rights/movement organisations; religious organisations; alumni associations; entertainment or hobby organisations; labour unions; and professional organisations. Because there may be overlap between membership of the CPC and membership of political organisations, membership of political organisations was excluded from our measure for formal social networks. Respondents could choose to be ‘a member and attends actively’ (recoded as 1), ‘a member but does not attend actively’ (recoded as 0.5) or ‘not a member’ (recoded as 0). We added up the number of responses for each organisation to operationalise the formal networks of the respondents. The question we used to measure informal social networks was: ‘How often do you communicate or entertain with your neighbours 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 seven-point Likert scale. Responses were inverted so that higher scores corresponded to higher levels of prosocial values.

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 initiated by government or units’ – respondents indicated that they either made no donations or made donations and listed the amount. Although ‘voluntary donations initiated by government or units’ seem to be *voluntary*, they are 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 initiated 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’ = reference), male (‘female’ = reference), owning a house (‘no house’ = reference), religiosity (‘don’t believe in any religion’ = reference), voluntary services (‘no volunteering’ = reference), urban (‘not urban’ = reference), rural (‘not rural’ = reference)³ and having children (‘no children’ = reference), all included as binary variables in the analyses. Self-perceived health status, self-perceived level of happiness and generalised trust (which is measured by the question: ‘Generally speaking, do you agree that most people can be trusted?’) were all ordinal variables measured using a five-point Likert scale. Age, measured in years, was a continuous

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

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
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
Generalised 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: CGSS (2012)

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 the variables in this study, including means, standard deviations, minimums and maximums.

Analytical strategy

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

To test the hypotheses in this article, we used generalised structural equation modelling (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 (that is, charitable giving) is left-censored at zero. Using ordinary least squares (OLS) to analyse 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 SEM, generalised SEM was adopted in this study (Stata Manual, 2013).

Charitable giving is usually viewed as a voluntary prosocial behaviour (Anheier, 2014). Our analyses so far have 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 generalised SEM 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, higher household income, larger formal networks and 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 neighbours or friends ($p > 0.1$), our measure for informal networks.

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

	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) ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. (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 compulsory donations refers to making compulsory donations or not.

Source: CGSS (2012)

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

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Education	Income (ln)	Formal networks	Informal networks	Prosocial values	Making compulsory donations	Charitable giving (ln)
Party member	2.248*** (0.122)	0.252*** (0.048)	0.321*** (0.037)	0.210 (0.336)	0.167*** (0.046)	0.830*** (0.108)	0.177 (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*** (0.157)	0.383*** (0.072)	0.037 (0.028)	-0.351 (0.396)	0.134* (0.059)	0.452** (0.160)	0.206 (0.293)
Male	0.985*** (0.093)	0.020 (0.034)	0.029 (0.018)	0.037 (0.262)	0.131*** (0.034)	0.049 (0.091)	-0.416* (0.173)
Age	-0.042* (0.021)	-0.004 (0.009)	0.009** (0.004)	0.029 (0.057)	0.006 (0.007)	-0.008 (0.021)	0.009 (0.037)
Age ²	-0.0007** (0.0002)	-0.0002+ (0.00009)	-0.0001** (0.00003)	-0.0005 (0.0005)	-0.0001* (0.00007)	0.0002 (0.0002)	-0.0002 (0.0004)

(Continued)

Table 4: (Continued)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Education	Income (ln)	Formal networks	Informal networks	Prosocial values	Making compulsory donations	Charitable giving (ln)
Health status	0.307*** (0.049)	0.120*** (0.020)	0.004 (0.009)	0.495*** (0.134)	-0.003 (0.018)	0.061 (0.049)	-0.027 (0.091)
Owning a house	0.069 (0.188)	0.323*** (0.086)	0.027 (0.033)	0.684 (0.469)	0.035 (0.073)	0.325+ (0.197)	-0.210 (0.338)
Religiosity	-0.552*** (0.135)	0.047 (0.050)	0.149*** (0.028)	-0.239 (0.362)	0.082+ (0.050)	-0.249+ (0.143)	1.608*** (0.250)
Happiness	0.177** (0.058)	0.171*** (0.023)	0.048*** (0.010)	0.371* (0.162)	0.103*** (0.023)	0.096 (0.062)	0.630*** (0.112)
Generalised trust	-0.013 (0.046)	0.009 (0.019)	0.001 (0.010)	0.211+ (0.123)	0.090*** (0.019)	-0.041 (0.044)	-0.049 (0.086)
Voluntary services	0.991*** (0.150)	0.092+ (0.054)	0.704*** (0.068)	0.046 (0.441)	0.456*** (0.054)	0.804*** (0.135)	2.541*** (0.264)
Having children	-0.744*** (0.204)	-0.016 (0.090)	0.002 (0.045)	-0.518 (0.565)	0.141+ (0.081)	0.324+ (0.196)	-0.060 (0.384)
Rural	-3.589*** (0.158)	-1.048*** (0.052)	-0.279*** (0.040)	1.250*** (0.386)	-0.0005 (0.059)	-0.943*** (0.147)	-0.633* (0.302)
Urban	0.245 (0.161)	-0.229*** (0.049)	-0.032 (0.043)	0.759* (0.386)	0.053 (0.060)	0.134 (0.136)	0.003 (0.269)
Intercept	12.277*** (0.538)	10.041*** (0.215)	-0.073 (0.105)	1.671 (1.458)	4.503*** (0.195)	-2.288** (0.520)	-10.887*** (1.535)

Notes: (1) $+p \leq 0.1$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. (2) Unstandardised coefficients in the table; robust standard errors in 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: CGSS (2012)

Mediation analyses of Party membership and total charitable giving

To explore the mediating relationships and test our hypotheses, we ran generalised structural equation models. We present the 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 column 7 shows a full model, which describes the relationship between Party membership, the mediators and charitable giving.

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 support 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 with 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 organisational membership ($p \leq 0.001$). Party members joined more organisations and were more active in those organisations. 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 is 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 a one-level increase in prosocial values was associated with a 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 Hypothesis 5b: 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 that 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

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***

Notes: ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$.

Source: CGSS (2012)

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.

Mediation analyses of Party membership and voluntary charitable giving

So far, we have analysed the relationship between Party membership and total charitable giving. However, charitable giving is usually viewed as a voluntary prosocial behaviour, and making compulsory donations violates this basic principle of charitable giving. Previous literature suggests that Party members donate to charity more than non-Party members in China, but charitable giving in these previous studies often means total charitable giving and does not distinguish between voluntary giving and compulsory donations (for example, 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 similarly important roles in voluntary giving? Table 6 reports the results for the generalised 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.

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 that they were making compulsory donations. As with total giving, voluntary giving was

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

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Education	Income (ln)	Formal networks	Informal networks	Prosocial values	Voluntary charitable giving (ln)
Party member	2.121*** (0.122)	0.231*** (0.049)	0.287*** (0.037)	0.215 (0.340)	0.153*** (0.046)	0.085 (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** (0.157)	0.378*** (0.072)	0.029 (0.028)	-0.350 (0.396)	0.130* (0.059)	0.233 (0.432)
Male	0.979*** (0.092)	0.019 (0.034)	0.027 (0.018)	0.037 (0.262)	0.131*** (0.034)	-0.596** (0.266)
Age	-0.040** (0.022)	-0.004 (0.009)	0.010** (0.004)	0.029 (0.057)	0.007 (0.007)	-0.044 (0.056)
Age ²	-0.0007** (0.0002)	-0.0002+ (0.00009)	-0.0001*** (0.00003)	-0.0005 (0.0005)	-0.0001* (0.00007)	8.12e-06 (0.0005)
Health status	0.302*** (0.049)	0.119*** (0.020)	0.003 (0.009)	0.475*** (0.134)	-0.003 (0.018)	-0.120 (0.138)

(Continued)

Table 6. (Continued)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Education	Income (ln)	Formal networks	Informal networks	Prosocial values	Voluntary charitable giving (ln)
Owning a house	0.029 (0.186)	0.316*** (0.086)	0.016 (0.032)	0.686 (0.470)	0.030 (0.073)	-0.416 (0.500)
Religiosity	-0.529*** (0.134)	0.051 (0.050)	0.155*** (0.028)	-0.240 (0.362)	0.085+ (0.050)	2.369*** (0.349)
Happiness	0.169** (0.058)	0.170*** (0.023)	0.046*** (0.010)	0.371* (0.162)	0.102*** (0.023)	0.985*** (0.177)
Generalised trust	-0.010 (0.045)	0.009 (0.018)	0.002 (0.010)	0.211+ (0.123)	0.090*** (0.019)	-0.119 (0.130)
Voluntary services	0.853*** (0.149)	0.069 (0.055)	0.667*** (0.067)	0.051 (0.445)	0.440*** (0.054)	3.878*** (0.389)
Having children	-0.797*** (0.202)	-0.025 (0.090)	-0.012 (0.044)	-0.516 (0.567)	0.135+ (0.081)	-0.079 (0.568)
Rural	-3.493*** (0.157)	-1.032*** (0.052)	-0.253*** (0.039)	1.247*** (0.389)	0.010 (0.059)	-0.772+ (0.463)
Urban	0.224 (0.159)	-0.233*** (0.049)	-0.038 (0.043)	0.759* (0.386)	0.051 (0.060)	0.135 (0.423)
Made compulsory donations	1.093*** (0.123)	0.174*** (0.044)	0.286*** (0.040)	0.040 (0.361)	0.118** (0.049)	-1.434*** (0.408)
Intercept	12.129*** (0.534)	10.017*** (0.215)	-0.112 (0.103)	1.676 (1.460)	4.487*** (0.195)	-14.698*** (2.315)

Notes: (1) + $p \leq 0.1$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$. (2) Unstandardised 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 = 0; uncensored = 1073.

Source: 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**

Notes: ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$.

Source: CGSS (2012)

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 ‘Literature and hypotheses’ section and shown in Table 6, the amount of voluntary giving was negatively associated with making compulsory donations ($\beta = -1.434, p \leq 0.01$). Therefore, Party members donated only marginally more than non-Party members in terms of voluntary giving.

Conclusion and discussion

Using data from the 2012 CGSS and adopting generalised structural equation models, this article has analysed the relationship between Party membership and charitable giving in China. We have identified four types of mechanism to explain why Party members are more likely to donate and donate more than non-Party members, and our results partially confirm our hypotheses. Specifically, relative to non-Party members, Party members have higher levels of educational attainment, higher household income, larger formal networks and higher prosocial values, and they are more likely to make compulsory donations. These all make them donate significantly more in terms of total charitable giving. Moreover, the mediating variables have different indirect effects. The 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 article 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 our 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 than non-Party members. And third, the article 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 literature review and hypotheses 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 (that is, the impact of education on charitable giving), but it may bias the first-stage analysis (that is, 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 the 2012 CGSS can be used to test our hypotheses. Future research should adopt other databases to replicate this study. Moreover, in this study we used 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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Notes

- ¹ Unit (*danwei*) can refer to any organisation people work in, which includes a government department, a state-owned enterprise, a private enterprise or a non-profit organisation. The term is often used in China.
- ² Street office (*jiedao banshichu*) is a basic administrative agency in the Chinese context. It works with and serve local residents.
- ³ In terms of household registration (*hukou*), apart from urban and rural, there were four other classifications in the 2012 CGSS: *lanyin hukou*, military status, *no hukou* and other. We included two variables in the analyses: rural (urban and others = reference) and urban (rural and others = reference).

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Pre-registration

We pre-registered full study information, design plan, sampling plan, variable coding, analysis plan and other related information at the Open Science Framework (see: <https://osf.io/wrbd4/>).

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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