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Title

Chinese and Chinese American Philanthropy: Highlights from the Global Chinese Philanthropy Initiative

Abstract

The Global Chinese Philanthropy Initiative (GCPI) is a bi-lateral research study that examines the contributions of Chinese and Chinese American philanthropists. The GCPI is unique and is one of the first reviews of both types of philanthropists. The study examined the giving patterns of Americans of Chinese descent and of those in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macau. This ARNOVA paper presentation focuses on a subset of study questions: 1) are Chinese and Chinese Americans giving significantly in their respective regions through philanthropy, 2) what trends, motivations, and interests do they have, and 3) how can philanthropy be encouraged and strengthened? Similarities and differences among philanthropists, their perspectives, and their giving context were analyzed using descriptive statistics and qualitative analyses. The project team selected 24 Chinese American philanthropists and 38 philanthropists from Greater China with significant giving between 2008 and 2014. Data sources included the China Foundation Center, the Indiana University Million Dollar List, U.S. IRS Form 990’s, existing publicly available documents, and interviews with philanthropists or their staff. Key findings included: 1) among both Chinese and Chinese Americans, philanthropy has grown at an historic pace. In China, the number of private foundations has grown 95 percent between 2007 and 2011 and is estimated to exceed 4,600. Giving neared 60 billion yuan in 2014, exceeded only by giving in 2008 following the Sichuan earthquake. There were 1,281 Chinese American foundations in 2014, having grown 418 percent since 2000. Large gifts by Chinese American donors reached an historic high of 492 million dollars in 2014; 2) Chinese and Chinese Americans have overlapping interests in giving causes, such as higher education, health, and the environment. Education ranks as the most popular giving cause by Chinese and Chinese
American and some of the most notable gifts were to colleges and universities. There are emerging networks that can facilitate giving in some of these interest areas; 3) motivations for giving among Chinese and Chinese Americans are dominated by interests in key sectors, such as education and health; among Chinese philanthropists, pragmatism also ranks high as a motivating factor. About half of Chinese and Chinese American philanthropists referred to funded projects that had measurable impacts; however, both groups exhibited low levels of intent to achieve social impact. Chinese Americans more frequently expressed consideration of intending to make an impact, possibly reflecting greater awareness about impact within the U.S. philanthropic context; 4) philanthropic institutions in China, the U.S., and among Chinese Americans are evolving, and philanthropists are beginning to seek ways to connect and share lessons. Some Chinese and U.S. donors have begun exchanges. Further opportunities exist for philanthropists to develop organizational structures and practices to sustain their giving and maximize impact. Regional and interest area networks could further sector development. Strategies are needed to engage donors preferring to remain anonymous. Implications of these findings are both practical and theoretical. Presenters will address findings and implications using institutional theory from sociology and social network analysis. Future research directions and methodological approaches will also be considered.

**Keyword**

Philanthropy, China, Chinese, Chinese American, capacity building, philanthropic foundations, organizational development, transnational, institutional theory, social networks