Women and Philanthropy: A U.S. and Turkey Perspective

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Debra Mesch¹, Amy Singer², Sevinc Sevda Kilicalp¹

¹Women's Philanthropy Institute at the Center on Philanthropy, Indianapolis, United States, ²Tel Aviv University- Department of Middle Eastern and African History, Tel Aviv, Israel, ³University of Bologna- PHaSI Research Centre on Philanthropy, Bologna, Italy

Description of the Panel Topic

Much of the empirical research on gender and giving in the United States suggests that females are more likely than males to be generous and donate to charity (e.g., Andreoni, Brown & Rischall, 2003; Eckel & Grossman, 1998; Kamas, Preston, & Baum, 2008; Marx, 2000; Mesch et al., 2006)—and, some research outside of the U.S. has described similar findings (e.g., Belfield & Beney, 2000; Piper & Schnepf, 2008). However, there is a paucity of research and understanding about women's philanthropic giving from a global perspective. This is disquieting, given the profound social and economic shifts that have taken place around the world. Today, more women in the United States and globally have access to wealth either through earned, married into, or inherited resources, as women are increasingly gaining access to education and income. Thus, women's philanthropy is having a profound effect on alleviating social and economic concerns specifically identified by women. Women are becoming empowered through philanthropy to make a difference in their communities—not only for women's and girls' causes, but across the philanthropic landscape.

The purpose of this panel is to examine issues and research in women's philanthropy in the U.S. and Turkey. We start the panel by presenting an overview of the research findings in the U.S. This first paper will discuss the current research on trends in women's philanthropic giving, and will conclude with a discussion of directions for future research. The second panelist will explain the nature of imperial Ottoman women's philanthropy in order to establish its importance as a component of Ottoman culture, and in order to clarify the complexity of the imperial Ottoman legacy of philanthropy to the Turkish Republic that succeeded it. The third panelist will discuss social change issues that are being addressed by women in Turkey. The panelist will present the findings of a series of interviews conducted with foundation members and directors to demonstrate the impact of women's philanthropy in Turkey, particularly with regard to social change.

References


Research in the field of women’s philanthropy is in its infancy—and there are many more questions to be addressed than have been have answered. In fact, most of the empirical research 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.

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss 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 comprehensive review of the research that specifically addresses gender differences in giving and philanthropy. This knowledge is important for those working in the field of philanthropy. Because women, on average, live longer than men, women will end up stewarding much of the wealth 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.

The presentation will be organized and findings presented according to the following broad research questions:

1. Are women more generous than men?
2. Which women give? Are there generational differences in giving?
3. What is the relationship between giving and volunteering?
4. What are the patterns of women’s giving? Who decides about household giving?
5. Where do women give?
6. What motivates women’s giving and how is this different from men?

To address the above research questions, a thorough review of the literature will be 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.

Only empirical research studies will be included in this review. To meet the criteria for inclusion, a selected study should 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 will not included in this presentation.

In conclusion, this presentation and paper will (1) summarize the empirical research on women’s philanthropic giving according to specific research questions and (2) conclude with suggestions for further research based on the current theoretical and empirical understanding of the field of women’s philanthropy.
References


This paper will address the nature of imperial Ottoman women’s philanthropy as a key component of Ottoman politics, society, and culture. The paper aims to investigate the changing nature of imperial women’s philanthropy during the Ottoman era (1300-1923) and to clarify the complexity of the imperial Ottoman legacy of philanthropy to the Turkish Republic that succeeded it. (Singer, 2009) Specifically, the paper will focus on the kinds of projects undertaken by women and the locations of these projects in order to understand how these factors changed over time. Because no similar study exists yet for the philanthropy of imperial men (i.e. sultans), the research directly addresses the question of women’s philanthropic contributions and lays the groundwork for a comparison with men’s endeavors as well as with the undertakings of Turkish women in the period of the Republic, after 1923.

Philanthropic giving in the Ottoman Empire was one of the key vehicles for providing social services, delivering social assistance, and constructing the physical fabric of Ottoman cities, including mosques, schools and colleges, hospitals, public kitchens, libraries, public baths, water fountains, roads, markets, caravanserais, etc. The donors included men and women, especially those of the imperial family, whose names remain attached to and inscribed on the buildings until today as a reminder of their beneficence. In addition to buildings, philanthropic giving took other forms which today would be classified as emergency aid or relief, as well as social welfare donations: aid to the poor, sick, orphans, widows, and victims of disaster or misfortune. On the one hand, women’s donations resembled those of men in terms of the kinds of buildings they endowed and the assistance they provided; on the other, women also gave specifically to women, in recognition of their particular needs. (Singer, 2008)

Women—the wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters—of the Ottoman sultans were active as charitable donors and the sponsors of a wide range of beneficent endeavors throughout Ottoman history. These activities have received some scholarly attention, both as part of the study of women in the Ottoman empire and in the context of research on Ottoman charitable giving. The study of women in the Ottoman empire has flourished during the past twenty years. (Peirce, 1993; Zilfi, 1997; Kreiser, 2002) Studies of Ottoman giving go back much farther, because the institution of waqf (endowments) has received significant attention in the context of legal and religious studies of Islam, for at least a century. (Singer, 2002)

The participation of imperial women was generally enabled by funds and properties made available to them by men, usually the sultan, either as one-time grants or through allowances, gifts, and inheritance accrued over time. In this they resemble philanthropic women of most other places and times. However, unlike women in some other contexts, they possessed property in their own names and were able to make decisions concerning its use.

Among the guiding ideas about imperial Ottoman women’s philanthropy are the notion that it was a means for women usually secluded to act in the public sphere. Philanthropic undertakings contributed substantially to the prestige of the dynasty and helped to reinforce its legitimacy. In addition, the scope of imperial women’s philanthropy in different periods may also be read as an indication of their relative power within the constellation of forces surrounding the sultan at various times. (Peirce, 1994) Moreover, women’s philanthropy, like that of men, was a means through which members of the imperial family drew flattering comparisons between themselves and renowned rulers and important women of the past. (Singer, 2002, 2008)

The present study will review the published literature documenting the philanthropy of imperial Ottoman women, most of which has appeared during the past twenty years. From this, it will be possible to make a preliminary inventory of imperial Ottoman women’s philanthropy: What did they do, where, and when? The results are important because they document trends in women’s philanthropy during the Ottoman period, and have broader relevance because many women in the imperial family became wives to the highest ranking members of the Ottoman military-administrative elite, so that they shaped and exemplified patterns of women’s behavior for an entire class and not only for the ruling family. Finally, scholars of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey are largely in agreement that there were important continuities in the transition from empire to republic. Many nineteenth-century reforms and changes also laid the foundation for institutions of the early republic. Thus conclusions about women’s roles as
philanthropists in the Ottoman Empire are an important aspect of exploring the philanthropy of women in modern Turkey.

References:


Paper #3: Social Change through Women’s Philanthropy in Turkey

The relationship between women and philanthropy has always been a strong one but it has not necessarily been highly visible in Turkey. The paper will present the findings of a series of interviews conducted with foundation members and directors to give an idea about the impact of women's philanthropy in Turkey on philanthropy in general, on social change in particular. The paper will focus on women's involvement in the nonprofit sector in Turkey and discuss how women are using philanthropy to achieve social change. The main assumption of the paper is that women’s philanthropy can accelerate positive change in communities. The study emphasizes the great potential for organized women's philanthropy and demonstrates how it can be utilized better and further strengthened, considering that its long history goes back to the Ottoman times and has links to progressive women's movements in Turkey.

The worldwide economic downturn continues to threaten both individuals and institutions. The profound shifts in the global economy have left people living on the edge of poverty without economic resources and have rendered fragile groups even more vulnerable to the changing conditions. The most efficient way of eliminating or at least limiting the distressing effects of economic and social problems is to involve those most affected by these problems in determining their solutions and to give tools to the disempowered groups to challenge existing structures (Ostrander, 1995 and Shaw, 2002). Women are disproportionately affected by the world’s most pressing challenges. Since women are closest to their communities’ needs, women can offer critical perspectives on the world’s social and economic challenges. As the powerful agents of change all over the world, women are uniquely placed to identify solutions to those problems.

Today, the definition of women’s philanthropy is rapidly changing in response to global and domestic circumstances. Women are participating in the non-profit sector as philanthropic donors, activists, fundraisers and nonprofit leaders much more than before. Young, professional women are increasingly moving into careers in organized philanthropy. Younger women seem more committed to invest their time and resources in social causes and social justice activities. Women as philanthropists represent a powerful force for social change. Women’s funds operate at the intersection of the women’s movement and philanthropy. Their interests cover a range of causes and they support organizations dedicated to social change (Shaw & Taylor, 1995). In the last two decades, civil society has gained a role as an important actor in giving voice to people’s demands and strengthening the social bases of politics at societal level in Turkey. Women’s organizations have been the most effective actors in promoting equal participation and opportunity for men and women on economy, education, healthcare and politics; and advocating for a more enabling legal framework to guarantee women rights and gender equality in Turkey. The development of women’s philanthropy also will promote the enlargement of civil society and development of democracy, sustainable development, social justice and peace (Capek, 2001 and McCarthy, 2001).

Although historically women philanthropists played prominent roles in Turkey as the founders of pious endowments in the Ottoman Empire, women's philanthropy does not seem to acquire a complete organized form in modern Turkey. As the non-profit sector has been growing in Turkey, women’s philanthropy needs to be fostered in new ways. Through interviews with foundation members and directors, this study will contribute to understanding what can make the women’s funding movement a success. The paper will address the need to encourage women’s philanthropy, not only to strengthen women’s status within society but also to promote positive change in communities.

The research presentation will be organized and presented according to the following broad research questions:

(1) Can we talk about the emergence of an organized women’s philanthropy in Turkey today?
(2) How is women’s philanthropy in Turkey becoming more visible?
(3) What are the challenges facing women’s philanthropy today?
(4) To what extent do women make an impact on the definition and creation of social justice?
(5) Do women invest more in direct-services as a substitute for social support systems or more in social justice related issues to foster effective solutions to social and economic problems?

(6) How is women’s philanthropy in Turkey changing in response to global and domestic circumstances?

(7) How can women’s philanthropy be related to the movement for social justice?

(8) What can make the women’s funding movement a success?

References


