

2016

Review of The Palgrave Handbook of Global Philanthropy

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Recommended Citation

Raymond, A. (2016) "The Palgrave Handbook of Global Philanthropy", *Reference Reviews*, Vol. 30 Issue: 7, pp.23-23, doi: [10.1108/RR-05-2016-0133](https://doi.org/10.1108/RR-05-2016-0133)

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Palgrave handbook of global philanthropy

This 2015 addition to the Palgrave Social Science Handbook series has the goal of providing a framework for understanding “how to shape a society with the best conditions for philanthropic giving.” In their introduction Wiepking and Handy refer to the eight mechanisms that drive people to make philanthropic donations which they distilled from a literature review of more than 500 empirical articles. While much is known about individual motivations for philanthropic donation to nonprofit organizations the current work sets out to build on this knowledge and provide a framework for understanding “the conditions under which people are more, or less, generous” and in particular, “how major country-specific differences in governmental, fiscal and legal policies” shape an individual’s philanthropic behavior. They have assembled a wealth of empirical data and scholarly analysis which is organized into three parts: introduction; country chapters, and; themes and findings. The introduction includes a chapter examining cross-national differences and the importance of context in philanthropic giving such as fiscal incentives, religion and government regulation. The 26 country chapters describe the historical, governmental, legal and cultural contexts of philanthropy in that country. The philanthropic landscape of each country is described through brief descriptions of the history of philanthropy, and the size and scope and governmental regulation of the nonprofit sector. Sections on the cultural context of philanthropy examine religion, professionalism of fundraising, major donors, and the roll of financial advisory professionals. In their introduction the editors explain that their country selection is based primarily on the availability of representative national-level surveys and available data. Countries of Sub-Saharan Africa and South America are absent. Australia is included as are Canada, Mexico and the United States, while the Middle East is represented by Egypt, Israel and Lebanon. The eleven European countries included are: Austria, Bulgaria, France, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Asia is represented by China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and, slightly surprisingly, Vietnam. It is unfortunate that neither India nor Pakistan is included.

Part III consists of six chapters which, using the data and analysis provided in the country chapters, provides a cross-national examination of the social origins of philanthropy, the influence of government support, fiscal incentives and religion, and the evolution of fund-raising. In the concluding chapter Wiepking and Handy provide a further distillation of individual country data in which they define eight facilitation factors for philanthropy that will serve as solid foundation for future research.

The index is 45 pages and sufficient but many academic libraries will prefer the electronic book with full-text search capability and remote access unless, quite understandably, they want both versions. Palgrave provides excellent ebook versions of their splendid handbook series, eventually, but at the time of writing the ebook for this volume was still forthcoming. There is a separate index for tables and figures.

The ten-page list of contributors reveals an international group of outstanding scholars of philanthropy and by providing institutional affiliation, educational background and research interests will serve as a directory for those wishing to begin their own research into the nature and evolution of philanthropic giving. This handbook is essential for institutions with philanthropic studies programs and because the content is so well organized and clearly written it will appeal to graduate and undergraduate students writing from many different perspectives.