

Religious participation and children's education: A social capital approach

C. Simon Fan*

Department of Economics, Lingnan University, Tuen Mun, Hong Kong, China

Received 23 July 2003; received in revised form 20 September 2005; accepted 16 November 2005
Available online 2 October 2006

Abstract

Based on the argument in both economic and sociological literature that religion is conducive to children's human capital formation, this paper provides a model of religious participation and explores a mechanism that "social capital" affects children's education, *a la* Coleman [Coleman, J.S., 1988. Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology* 94, S95–S120]. The model generates several interesting implications, which help explain some important stylized facts about education and religion. Further, in a dynamic setting, the model shows that there exists a steady state in which individuals allocate a positive amount of time and resources to religious activities. Thus, it complements the existing literature to explain why seemingly unproductive religions can be everlasting.

© 2006 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

JEL classification: D10; Z10; J24

Keywords: Religious participation; Human capital; Social capital

1. Introduction

Inspired by Coleman (1988), there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of "social capital" in the recent economic literature. As reflected in the title of his seminal contribution, Coleman particularly emphasizes that social capital greatly affects individuals' human capital formation. Along this line of research, the current paper analyzes an important and largely ignored form of social capital in the creation of human capital: religion.¹ This paper attempts to

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +852 2616 7206; fax: +852 2891 7940.

E-mail address: fansimon@ln.edu.hk.

¹ Religion has long been and continues to be a very important social and economic phenomenon. For example, religious contributions account for about half of the philanthropic giving in the United States. Of American adults, 90 percent claim to have a religion, and more than 60 percent are formal members of a church or synagogue (Iannaccone, 1998).

achieve two purposes. First, it provides a model of religious participation that adds to the economic literature of religion. Second, it complements the existing human capital models based on social interactions by analyzing a framework in which social capital (e.g. religion) affects children's educational attainment.

This paper links religion to education and posits that individuals participate in religious activities not only because of their religious beliefs, but also because religion is conducive to their children's human capital formation. There is substantial evidence showing that religion has a significant positive impact on children's educational attainment and future earnings.² Also, sociologists' extensive research indicates that youth raised in religious homes are less likely to engage in criminal activity, use drugs or alcohol, and so on.³ Indeed, many religions emphasize hard work, honesty, seriousness, and responsibility, all of which are conducive to children's acquisition of cognitive and non-cognitive skills.⁴ In response, parents' religious participations are often affected by the concern for their children's cognitive and moral development. For example, in his influential writing on the sociology of religion, Wilson (1978, pp. 262–263) notes that

“... Religious training is something that all but two percent of American parents feel they should give their children ... (Parents) see (the church) as a place of character building for their children ... Children are frequently the most important consideration in choosing a particular church ... Couples with growing children have the highest rate of church attendance.”

Further, as shown by sociologists and psychologists' research, parents' religious participation is essential for their children's religious training.⁵ For example, Nock (1992, p. 333) summarizes:

“... American parents believe it important that their children receive moral and ethical guidelines from their church. This is why church attendance is highest among parents with young children ... children are much more responsive to the behavioral models than to instruction. They are much more likely to imitate what they see parents and others *do* than what they hear parents and others *say* ...”

Based on the above observations and analyses, I construct a model in which an individual's religious participation is due to the concern for her children's human capital formation as well as her religious beliefs. In this model, an individual's human capital is jointly determined by her family background and her social capital. Specifically, an individual's family background is represented by her parental human capital, and her social capital is measured by her religious capital. Meanwhile, a household's religious activities enhance the social capital for the children's education. In a related paper, Weinberg (2001) analyzes a model in which parents use external incentives, such as pecuniary rewards and/or corporal punishment, to induce their children to exert efforts in human capital accumulation. In contrast, this paper suggests that religious education

² For example, see Evans and Schwab (1995), Neal (1997), Vella (1999), and Ewing (2000).

³ See, for example, the survey by Iannaccone (1998).

⁴ For example, see the reviews of Landes (2000) and Rosser and Rosser (1999) on the virtues of some religions and traditions.

⁵ McCleary and Barro (2006, p. 152) also note: “... the incentive to bring children to services tends to induce greater involvement of adults, who are likely to want to participate in the process of inculcating in their children and in ensuring that religious values and traditions are transmitted across generations”.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات