RELIGIOUS CAPITAL AS HUMAN, CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL: TOWARD A SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY OF MEMBERSHIP DYNAMICS IN RELIGIOUS VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS


Committee: Steve Pfaff (Chair), James Felak (GSR), James A. Kitts, Edgar Kiser, James K. Wellman.

This dissertation theorizes and tests the effect of religious capital on three religious behaviors: religious participation, denominational exit/retention, and religious giving. Religious capital is conceptualized as human, cultural, social, and emotional capital. In particular, religious knowledge is proposed and used as a direct measure of religious human/cultural capital. Drawing on and extending Iannaccone's Religious Human Capital theory and Collins' Interaction Ritual Chain theory, this dissertation hypothesizes that: religious human capital increases religious participation over time; religious human capital specific to a denomination has a greater positive effect on denominational retention than less specific forms; and positive emotions experienced during religious rituals increase religious giving. These hypotheses were tested quantitatively using three datasets: Project Canada (a longitudinal panel survey), the Salt Lake City and San Francisco Survey of Mormons, and the U.S. Congregational Life Survey (a multilevel survey of individuals within congregations). The quantitative analyses provide support for the hypotheses. This dissertation concludes by providing a dual-process model framework of religious behavior as a means to integrate diverse micro-foundations.