



Trust and Tithing: The Relationships between Religious Social Capital and Church Financial Giving

Dr Darin Freeburg

PhD(Comm&Info)(KentStateUni); MA(TheolStud)(NTS); BA(MNU)

Contact: darinf@mailbox.sc.edu

Abstract

There are a number of motivations for Christians to give financially to a church. The current study looked at Social Capital—especially as it relates to the concept of trust in God and bonds with a church community—to see if relationships exist that suggest a possible motivation for financial giving. Participants from American Protestant churches in the Midwest completed an online survey intended to elicit responses about their church financial giving and their levels of a specific religious measurement of Social Capital (SC). Analysis showed that increased trust in God, as well as increased sense of bonding with others in the church, was significantly related to increased percentages of individual giving. However, increased trust in one's self—another measure of trust in SC—was only related to an increase in the frequency of giving with no increase in the actual percentage or amount. This study has important implications for churches as it suggests that some of the very ideals that distinguish it from other organizations — trust in God and increased bonding with others — also have positive relationships with its economic stability as people tend to give more financially when they exhibit these characteristics.
