

RELIGION IS THE KEY TO SOCIAL CAPITAL



Bill Donohue comments on a survey by the Pew Research Center on the issue of which values are the most important to transmit to children:

Ideologically, liberals and conservatives agree that responsibility is the most important child-rearing value. But when it comes to the importance of teaching religious faith, the ideological divide is wide: those who are consistently conservative value this attribute as much as responsibility, but those who are consistently liberal place the least value on it.

To be exact, 81 percent of the former think it is especially important to teach children about religion, but only 26 percent of the latter feel the same way. Among those who are consistently liberal, 42 percent are religiously unaffiliated, compared with only 6 percent of those who are consistently conservative.

Disaggregating by education yields striking results. College graduates, as compared to those with some college and those with a high school education or less, are less likely to stress obedience, religious faith, and being well-mannered. Interestingly, college graduates score the highest on teaching empathy to children, but they score the lowest on teaching the value of helping others. Which raises the question: What is the social value of empathizing with the plight of others if it is not coupled with actually doing something about it?

We know from previous data that those who are the least charitable are the most liberal and the most secular, and that

those who are the most willing to give to others—in terms of donations, voluntarism, and giving blood—are people of faith. In terms of social capital, then, it is in society's interest to abet religion. It is the faithful who contribute the most to others, even if their liberal-secular counterparts feel the best about empathizing with their plight.

The tax code which rewards people of faith for making contributions to their church and synagogue is not only rational, it makes sense to increase the benefits.