

Human Capital in the Pulpit*

PRELIMINARY– PLEASE DO NOT DISTRIBUTE OR QUOTE

Joseph Engelberg

Raymond Fisman

Jay C. Hartzell

Christopher A. Parsons‡

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Abstract: Using comprehensive data on every Oklahoma Methodist congregation for over four decades, we study the link between religious participation and individual clergypersons. Variation in a church's attendance is overwhelmingly concentrated in years when its minister is replaced, despite these being relatively infrequent occurrences. Moreover, a minister's impact on attendance is persistent over his career. Our results point to human capital among the clergy being a key, if not the most important, determinant of religious participation.

‡ Contact: Joseph Engelberg, UCSD, joeyengelberg@gmail.com; Ray Fisman, Columbia University, rf250@columbia.edu; Jay Hartzell, University of Texas, jhartzell@mail.utexas.edu; Christopher Parsons, UCSD, caparsons@ucsd.edu;