CHAPTER 11

Intergenerational Inequality and Parenting: Making Room for the Parent–Child Relationship

Art Goldsmith

1 Introduction

John Tomer was a quiet and humble man with a lot to say. His efforts to further integrate human capital theory with developmental psychology advanced the capacity of human capital theory—a workhorse concept in economics—to explain variations in life-course outcomes. Moreover, the ideas he shared in his book *Integrating Human Capital with Human Development* (Tomer 2016) offer innovative thinking on how public policy might promote greater well-being and reduce inequality in contemporary American society.

The purpose of this essay is to identify, and elaborate on, the three ways in which Tomer's thinking on poverty and inequality—set out in Chapter 5 of *Integrating Human Capital*—further enriched human

A. Goldsmith (✉)
Washington and Lee University, Lexington, VA, USA
e-mail: goldsmitha@wlu.edu

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capital theory and offers a new framework to think about addressing these social concerns. First, he reinforced Heckman's view that investment in different forms of human capital—broadly speaking cognitive and non-cognitive—should be emphasized at different points in the early portion of the life cycle to prevent and combat poverty. Second, he asserted that Heckman's notion of non-cognitive skills should be unpacked to deepen our understanding—conceptually and empirically—of the economic and social impact of these socio-emotional attributes. Finally, he substantially extended Becker's (1981) theory of the family, which became the conventional perspective in economics, to offer a more complete—relationship oriented—notion of the role of parenting in establishing the foundation for children's social and economic achievement over their subsequent life course.

To obtain a clear picture of how John Tomer's thinking—set out in his *Integrating Human Capital with Human Development* (2016)—advances human capital theory I begin by reviewing the core contributions made by Becker and Heckman. Then, I demonstrate how Tomer extends their work, and the implications of his insights.

2 Becker: The Arrival of Human Capital Theory and Family Economics

Gary Becker—late Professor of both Economies and Sociology at the University of Chicago and 1992 winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics—advanced the idea, in his pathbreaking book *Human Capital* (1964)—that people have embedded in their skills and attributes, including personal and social capital, that influence their productivity and behavior. His insight that individuals could invest in personal skill development—by allocating time and purchased goods—to advance their stock of talents and perspective (Becker 1964, 1965; Becker et al. 1971) has subsequently shaped the thinking of economist in the subfields of labor, education, health (Grossman 1972), development, and family economics. In practice, Becker focused on education, on-the-job training, and workplace experience—cognitive skills—as the fundamental elements of human capital.

In subsequent work, *a Treatise on the Family* (1981), Becker offers a theory of how families function. His purpose was to offer a framework for thinking about the role of parenting in contributing to the process of offspring accumulation of human capital. Together, these bodies of work

provided a mechanism for explaining differences in economic well-being, and hence poverty and inequality. Moreover, it made clear that genetics, personal actions, and parental behavior all played a part in determining a person's productivity—via human capital accumulation—and hence earnings. Building on this, a person's stock of human capital could explain wealth accumulation and other important life-course outcomes such as health status.

At the heart of Becker's thinking were two assumptions. First, parents and their offspring acted rationally in allocating time and in purchasing goods both for consumption and to be used in the production of human capital. Second, that parents gained happiness from the achievements of their offspring and they behaved altruistically toward them. One way to do so was to assist their children in the accumulation of human capital by investing parental time to help them acquire skills and by providing them with the market purchased goods that contribute to the development of their competencies.

The conventional presentation of Becker's perspective asserts that a person is paid a real wage (w/P) equal to their marginal productivity (MP), which in turn depends on their stock of human capital (H). Human capital attainment is an investment process—since it generated by own time allocated to generate human capital (t^H), which has an opportunity cost, and goods acquired in markets (q^H) to assist in this process—allocated today. However, the return in the form of higher productivity and wages arrives later in the life-course with some degree of uncertainty. Of course, those with more innate ability (ϕ) will be more effective in turning inputs into human capital. In addition, parent time (P^{Time}) is advanced as a key contributor—input—to production of offspring skills. Thus, the neoclassical theory of wage determination accounting for Becker's theory of human capital accumulation, can be specified as;

$$\left(w/P\right)=\text{MP}=\text{MP}\left(H\left[q^H,\ t^H,\ P^{Time},\ \phi\right]\right) \tag{1}$$

Intergenerational poverty arises from this framework if parents pass on poor genes—a lower value of ϕ—allocate too little of their time to aid their offspring in producing human capital or provide insufficient funds to purchase goods that aid their children in developing human capital. This later constraint can be the result of preferences to use their funds for other activities or due to low earnings due to having accumulated little

human capital themselves. Low family income can also stem from single parenthood or developments such as adult health problems. Of course, if individuals allot little of their own time to the generation of human capital that will hamper accumulation of such skills.

Becker extended this framework to explain how a particular form of discrimination (Becker 1971)—distaste or prejudice—could lead to lower wages. Other scholars (Blaug 1976) applied the model by asserting human capital was a determinant of a range of important outputs such as employment, health, and social status. However, his colleague James Heckman, at the University of Chicago advanced the theory in a substantive manner (Heckman 2010), that also led to new insights about the linkage between human capital formation, and the role of parents, in determining the economic and social stature of their offspring.

3 Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Human Capital: Parenting, and Offspring Well-Being

James Heckman (Heckman 2008; Heckman et al. 2006), winner of the Nobel Prize in economics in 2000, extended Becker's notion of human capital, which was tantamount to the accumulation of cognitive skills (H^{Cog}) to account for the stock of non-cognitive skills (H^{NCog}) a person possessed (i.e., $H = H^{\mathrm{Cog}} + H^{\mathrm{NCog}}$). Heckman often refers to non-cognitive skills as socio-emotional skills which entail—grit, determination, motivation, self-regulation, patience, and farsightedness—notions associated with psychologist's concept of the *big five personality traits* (Fiske 1949). Heckman asserts that non-cognitive skills, like cognitive skills, influence workplace productivity (Heckman and Rubinstein 2001) and other life-course outcomes,

$$\left(w/P\right) = MP\left(H\left[H^{\mathrm{Cog}}, H^{\mathrm{NCog}}\right]\right) \tag{2}$$

Following Becker, the production of cognitive and non-cognitive skills by offspring depends on the same set of inputs as human capital in general. However, in an important but subtle twist, Heckman (Heckman and Masterov 2007; Cunha and Heckman 2008) posits that non-cognitive skills effect productivity and decision making both directly, and indirectly by impacting the accumulation of cognitive human capital.

Heckman's perspective can be specified as follows,

$$H^{\mathrm{NCog}} = H^{\mathrm{NCog}}\left(q^{\mathrm{NCog}},\ t^{\mathrm{NCog}},\ P^{\mathrm{NCog}}_{\mathrm{Time}},\ \phi\right) \tag{2a}$$

$$H^{\mathrm{Cog}} = H^{\mathrm{Cog}}\left(q^{\mathrm{Cog}},\ t^{\mathrm{Cog}},\ P^{\mathrm{Cog}}_{\mathrm{Time}},\ \phi,\ H^{\mathrm{NCog}}\right) \tag{2b}$$

Heckman came to this insight through his evaluation of the Perry Preschool Project (Heckman et al. 2010), carried out from 1962 to 1967, which provided high-quality preschool education to three and four-year-old African-American children living in poverty. The children attended the preschool each weekday morning in 2.5-hour sessions taught by certified public school teachers with at least a bachelor's degree, and an average child-teacher ratio of 6:1. The curriculum emphasized active learning, in which the children engaged in activities that (i) involved decision making and problem-solving, and (ii) were planned, carried out, and reviewed by the children themselves, with support from adults. Essentially, the curriculum emphasized the development of non-cognitive or socio-emotional skills—often referred to as *soft-skills*.

The Perry Preschool teachers also provided a weekly 1.5-hour home visit to each mother and child, designed to involve the mother in the educational process and help implement the preschool curriculum at home. Long-term evaluation of the program revealed that at age 27 children who attended the Perry Preschool had higher—earnings, rates of home ownership, and levels of schooling, as well as significantly fewer arrests—than a control group of non-preschool participants. These findings led Heckman to form two critical conclusions. First, that parental time spent helping children accumulates socio-emotional skills was productive or time well-spent. Second, that accumulating non-cognitive skills was very beneficial to the child because of direct and indirect effects. Essentially, he recognized that socio-emotional skills such as—mental flexibility, focus, grit, determination—helped the children accumulate cognitive skills.

These insights led Heckman to subsequently speculate that *poor parenting*—too little time allotted to help their offspring acquire cognitive and non-cognitive skills, and the allotment of too little money to purchase goods that foster cognitive and non-cognitive skills—was largely responsible for the intergenerational transmission of poverty. He argued (Heckman and Masterov 2007) that the large number of children growing up in disadvantaged environments—in part due to *poor*

parenting—resulted in too many children entering school with deficits in both cognitive and non-cognitive human capital ultimately leading to unfavorable adult outcomes.

Although Heckman recognized, through the home visit element of the Perry Preschool program, that social context, including relationships with parents, mattered in the learning process this was not emphasized in his modeling of skill accumulation. Tomer thought this was a mistake. He was aware of insights from sociology offered by Akerlof and Kranton (2000, 2002) that social context, especially the identity a youth internalizes and displays at school and at home plays an important role in learning. However, he also understood that a student's identity depends on their self-image which can be influenced by their relationship with the parents. This contributed to the importance he placed on a young person's interactions with their parents in understanding differences in accumulation of cognitive and non-cognitive skills, and hence life-course outcomes.

4 John Tomer: Heterogeneity of Socio-Emotional Capital

John believed that explicitly accounting for non-cognitive attributes as well as cognitive skills was an enormously valuable advance in human capital theory. However, he considered Heckman's approach of pooling all of the various non-cognitive or socioeconomic talents a person may possess into a single variable less than ideal on theoretical and empirical grounds. John favored unpacking or disentangling them to obtain a better grasp of how each of the elements of non-cognitive skills is likely to affect personal productivity and later in life socioeconomic outcomes. Moreover, his approach of acknowledging—and investigating—the heterogeneity of soft-skills allows for a conceptual, and empirical, exploration of how the different forms of socio-emotional skills might impact each other.

Tomer identified a number of forms of non-cognitive skills a person might have a stock of including: social capital, personal capital, cultural capital, organizational capital, ethnic capital, moral capital, and patience capital. Each of these captures a stock of attributes that may guide a person's actions and hence influence their life-course path.

He raised a number of questions that he believed were masked by pooling all of the forms of socioeconomic capital into a collection. On the production side, were there complementarities in generating the various

forms of soft-skills? For instance, is it the case that someone who is proficient at generating patience capital is also relatively effective in producing moral capital or social capital?

Also, of grave concern to John was when—over the early life-course—was a person most efficient at producing the various forms of soft-skills? Did it make sense to begin investing in moral reasoning (i.e., capital) or patience capital early in life or waiting until the prefrontal cortex is more developed—during emerging adulthood, the developmental period spanning from ages 18 to 29 (Arnett 2000)—and hence the brain is more receptive to the formation of such attributes? He thought we should be guided by neuroscience on such matters and that careful empirical exploration must be conducted to determine the answers to these questions. In his view, this information would allow a youth to allocate their time devoted to soft-skill development efficiently.

Likewise, parents would know which soft-skills to help their children develop at various stages of childhood and emerging adulthood. Since parent time is scarce this knowledge will permit them to effectively help their children acquire socio-emotional skills with the time they contribute to that process. Similarly, empirical evidence on youth's effectiveness in generating different forms of soft-skills as they age allows the government to use tax payer resources efficiently when developing and implementing policies to help youths build soft-skills.

Another compelling question advanced by John Tomer was how effective would the various forms of soft-skills be in yielding important life benchmarks such as completing high school, attending and graduating from college or trade school, and subsequently obtaining additional skills and professional training? Similarly, which of the various soft-skills would help persons become resilient to life's many pitfall including; alcohol and drug abuse or addiction, poor mental health, impulsive behavior, early pregnancy, broken families, violence, incarceration, and unhappiness.

John feared that treating soft-skills as a homogenous collection of talents would diminish their importance and our understanding of the role they might play in contributing to economic and social well-being directly and through their impact on the production of cognitive skills, which in turn would impact life-course outcomes. He wondered if the influence of various forms of soft-skills on valued outcomes was contingent upon the level of other soft-skills. For instance, did the benefits of social or relationship capital, depend on grit or determination? He noted the dearth of scientific knowledge about many forms of non-cognitive

capital, and this troubled him. Essentially, John advocated for a deep exploration of the empirical consequences of developing various types of soft-skills that would largely parallel the knowledge base researchers—in a number of disciplines—had painstakingly developed over cognitive human capital. For instance, much is known about the impact of the various inputs—curriculum, peers, quality teaching, school environments, summer program—on cognitive human capital accumulation and the impact of cognitive skills on early and mid-life outcomes in the work-place and in the social sphere. In John's view, one element on the frontier of human capital research is to gain insights regarding: how youths can effectively acquire socio-emotional skills, how these talents can promote cognitive development, and how soft-skills working in tandem with each other and with cognitive attributes can foster valued life-course outcomes

5 Human Capital Theory and the Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty and Inequality: Tomer and the Central Role of Parent-Child Relations

5.1 The Conventional—Parent Time Framework

The conventional human capital theory explanation for poor earnings following Heckman is that inadequate accumulation of cognitive and non-cognitive skills leading to low wages, limited—if any—savings, and extensive social and economic insecurities, are responsible for poverty. Low income families in turn struggle to find the financial and time resources to assist their children in acquiring cognitive and non-cognitive skills need to break the cycle of poverty. This poor parenting view of the intergenerational transmission of poverty became the conventional story advanced by economist for the high and persistent level of poverty found in the United States.

Support for this view piled up as a range of social scientists (Heckman and Masterov 2007; McLanahan 2004; Lareau 2003) offered evidence that single parent households, especially those led by teenage mothers who failed to complete high school (Francesconi 2008)—households with overextended mothers often working long hours at low pay were seriously constrained in providing their children with time and goods—were the locus of a disproportionate share of poor children.

This narrative about the perils of poor parenting for the life-course prospects of children was compounded by evidence that children who suffer from "*Adverse Childhood Experiences*" (Felitti and Anda 2005; Anda et al. 2006) exhibited elevated rates of poor adult outcomes including—alcoholism, drug abuse, mental and physical health problems. Adverse childhood experiences include: emotional, physical and sexual abuse, emotional and physical neglect, witnessing domestic violence, growing up with mentally ill or substance abusing household members, experience the loss of parent, or having a household member incarcerated. McEwen (1998) advanced the notion that traumatic experiences such as these result in persistent stress—which he termed *allostatic load*. Researchers (Anda et al. 2006) have found that persistent early life stress undermines the performance of critical brain structures (i.e., hippocampus, prefrontal cortex) associated with learning, and there is evidence (Diette et al., 2017) that being the victim of early life trauma reduces the likelihood of high school graduation. Thus, it is logical to assert that the accumulation of cognitive and non-cognitive skills is compromised by traumatic victimization (T) as a youth,

$$\left(\frac{\partial \left(H^{\mathrm{Cog}} \right)}{\partial (T)} < 0 \text{ , and } \frac{\partial \left(H^{\mathrm{NCog}} \right)}{\partial (T)} < 0 \right)$$

Moreover, youths who are subject to traumatic experiences, whether they take place in an internal environment (IE) or external environment (EE)—the home or community respectively—experience lasting adverse effects on their well-being (Diette et. al. 2018). Of course, the impact of trauma victimization depend exposure as well as the intensity of the experience i_T.

A common refrain in economics is that if parents spent more time with their kids these traumas, often referred to as insults to their well-being, would be less likely to take place.

$$\left(\frac{\partial (T)}{\partial \left(P_{\mathrm{Time}}^{\mathrm{Cog}} \right)} < 0 \text{ , and } \frac{\partial (T)}{\partial \left(P_{\mathrm{Time}}^{\mathrm{NCog}} \right)} < 0 \right)$$

Moreover, when children are exposed to early life traumas the unsettling consequences would be lessened—the intensity of the adverse effect would be reduced—by additional time spent with their parents (Tough

2012),

$$\left(\frac{\partial i_T}{\partial \left(P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{Cog}} \right)} < 0 \text{ , and } \frac{\partial i_T}{\partial \left(P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{NCog}} \right)} < 0 \right)$$

Given the high rate of prevalence of violence victimization, for men and women, over the life course (Diette et al. 2018) it is essential to account for the impact of trauma when specifying the production functions for cognitive and non-cognitive skill acquisition. Children's accumulation of cognitive and non-cognitive human capital, once the role of trauma is accounted for, is depicted in Eqs. (3a) and (3b),

$$H^{\text{NCog}} = H^{\text{NCog}}\left(q^{\text{NCog}},\ t^{\text{NCog}},\ P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{NCog}},\ T\left[P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{NCog}} \right] * i_T\left[P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{NCog}} \right],\ \phi \right) \tag{3a}$$

$$H^{\text{Cog}} = H^{\text{Cog}}\left(q^{\text{Cog}}, t^{\text{Cog}},\ P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{Cog}}, T\left[P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{Cog}} \right] * i_T\left[P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{Cog}} \right],\ \phi,\ H^{\text{NCog}} \right) \tag{3b}$$

Inspection of Eqs. (3a) and (3b) reveals that parent time allocated to assist children in the accumulation of skills has both a direct and indirect effects. The direct effect is the result of more parent time committed to the skill development of their child, *ceteris paribus*—with fixed amounts of the other inputs including the child's time and relevant goods purchased in markets

$$\left(\frac{\partial \left(H^{\text{Cog}} \right)}{\partial \left(P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{Cog}} \right)} > 0 \text{ , and } \frac{\partial \left(H^{\text{NCog}} \right)}{\partial \left(P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{NCog}} \right)} > 0 \right)$$

The indirect effect, a smaller likelihood of experiencing trauma { } and when trauma is experienced a lower level of intensity ⟨ ⟩,

$$\frac{\partial (T)}{\partial \left(P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{NCog}} \right)} = \left\{ \frac{\partial (T)}{\partial \left(P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{NCog}} \right)} * i_T \right\} + \left\langle T\left[P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{NCog}} \right] * \frac{\partial (i)}{\partial \left(P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{NCog}} \right)} \right\rangle < 0$$

$$\frac{\partial(T)}{\partial\left(P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{Cog}}\right)} = \left\{\frac{\partial(T)}{\partial\left(P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{Cog}}\right)} * i_T\right\} + \left\langle T\left[P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{Cog}}\right] * \frac{\partial(i)}{\partial\left(P_{\text{Time}}^{\text{Cog}}\right)}\right\rangle < 0$$

reveals the expanded role of how parental time allotted to these activities influences the accumulation of cognitive and non-cognitive talents.

Essentially, the importance of time parents allocate to promote their children's accumulation of cognitive and non-cognitive talents is amplified once trauma exposure, T, is accounted for—since traumatic victimization undercuts the production, and hence, acquisition, of cognitive and non-cognitive attributes. Now, the time parents contribute to help their children build cognitive and non-cognitive skills has both a direct effect and an indirect effect (i.e., by limiting the undermining impact of traumatic victimization).

In summary, a person's stock of cognitive and non-cognitive skills contributes to the realization of valued life-course outcomes, O, and trauma undermines the accumulation of these skills. Moreover, parental time allotted to help children acquire cognitive and non-cognitive capital limits trauma victimization and the severity of traumas adverse impact on both forms of human capital accumulation—as denoted in Eq. (4), which also allows for the role of government policy ($GPol$) such as preschool with a home schooling component, in promoting the accumulation of these skills.

$$\mathrm{O} = \mathrm{O}\left(H^{Cog}, H^{NCog}\right) \tag{4}$$

where,

$$H^{\text{Cog}} = H^{\text{Cog}}\left(t^{\text{Cog}}, q^{\text{Cog}}, H^{\text{NCog}}, T\{\bullet\}, P^{\text{Time}}\{\bullet\}, G\text{Pol}^{\text{Cog}}\right) \tag{4a}$$

$$H^{\text{NCog}} = H^{\text{NCog}}\left(t^{\text{NCog}}, q^{\text{NCog}}, T\{\bullet\}, P^{\text{Time}}\{\bullet\}, G\text{Pol}^{\text{NCog}}\right) \tag{4b}$$

Thus, as conventional human capital theory evolved by accounting for the role of trauma exposure during childhood, the amount of time parents spend assisting their offspring in acquiring human capital came

to play an even more important role in explaining life-course achievements. However, in Tomer's view, this advancement fostered an incomplete, understanding of the role of parents in offspring human capital accumulation—a view that is illuminated in the next section.

5.2 The Tomer—Parent Relation Framework

Drawing on insights from developmental psychology, John Tomer departed in a substantive manner from the conventional view advanced by economists that "good parenting" is fundamentally about time spent with children. Citing research by neuroscientist Bruce Perry (2002) and Tomer (2016, 35) notes that in the early phase of development what a child needs is a "*good social relationship with their parents*" which is generated by; nurturing, loving attention, and protection. Of course Perry's work is inspired by the seminal work on parent-child attachment by developmental psychologists (Ainsworth 1978; Bowlby 1979). Indeed, there is a substantial body of evidence (Rutter 2006) suggesting that a major determinant of child development is the quality of the nurturing environment rather than just financial resources (Mayer 1997) available or the amount of time a child spends with their parents. However, standard notions of parenting built into the sub-discipline of *family economics*—neglects the importance of the parent-child relationship in modeling the influence of parents on children's accumulation of skills and life-course achievements (Becker 1981; Doepke et al. 2019).

Tomer emphasizes parental relations in characterizing "good" from "poor" parenting, and hence in accounting for the contribution of parents to the life-course outcomes of children. This represented a fundamental departure from standard economic thinking about how to account for the influence of parents on children's subsequent life-course outcomes.

John's thinking about the link between parenting and child development was heavily influenced by Maslow's (1943) notion that humans have a hierarchy of needs—and must attend to the realization of—human warmth, security and safety, and meaningful relationship—before progressing to concerns such as socioeconomic achievements.

Following Maslow psychologists advanced a number of life span development theories including; Levinson's *Seasons of Life Theory* (Levinson et al. 1978), Erikson's (1963) *Stages of Psychosocial Development*, and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) *Ecological Theory*—all of which identified the

importance of a nurturing relations and attachment with parents or caregivers—as critical for healthy child development, which fosters social and economic success later in life.

Diana Baumrind (1966), a clinical and developmental psychologist known for her research on parenting styles, offers insights on what good parenting entails. She asserts that there are two dimensions of parenting; demandfullness and responsiveness—which for simplicity are characterized as high (i.e., demanding, responsive) or low (undemanding, unresponsive). Demandfullness entails the claims that parents make on children, while responsiveness reflects the degree of emotional commitment of parents to their children.

An *Authoritative* parent style—distinguished by demanding and responsive parents—is considered the gold standard in parenting and promotes a strong relationship between the child and parent. A weak parent-child relationship is expected when parents are both demanding and unresponsive (i.e., *Authoritarian* parenting style). *Neglectful* (i.e.,—undemanding and unresponsive) and *Indulgent* (undemand and responsive) forms or parenting are also likely to foster a weak parent-child relationship.

Tomer posits that parenting in economic models of the family should be characterized as a complex construct delineated by both the nature of the parent-child relationship, P^{Rel}, and the provision of parental time and other resources allotted to child development. This orientation leads to the following description of the production functions for cognitive and non-cognitive skills,

$$H^{\text{NCog}} = H^{\text{NCog}}\left(q^{\text{NCog}},\ t^{\text{NCog}},\ P^{\text{NCog}}_{\text{Time}},\ T\left[P^{\text{NCog}}_{\text{Time}}\right],\ P^{\text{Rel}},\phi\right) \tag{5a}$$

$$H^{\text{Cog}} = H^{\text{Cog}}\left(q^{\text{Cog}},\ t^{\text{Cog}},\ P^{\text{Cog}}_{\text{Time}},\ T\left[P^{\text{Cog}}_{\text{Time}}\right], P^{\text{Rel}},\phi,\ H^{\text{NCog}}\right) \tag{5b}$$

The notion of "good" parenting in this framework is not straightforward, and the standard binary that quality parenting is based solely on time and resource commitments where—more is better than less—is misguided. Parents who provide their children with lots of resources, but are unengaged leading to a strained relationship with their children, are not doing an adequate job given Tomer's perspective. Similarly, the single mom who develops a tight relationship with her children, while struggling to provide them with lots of time and material goods, may well be an excellent parent. Indeed, Tomer considers the relationship element

of parenting more important than the resource aspect. An interesting question is can policy programs teach parents how to be both responsive and demandfull, in ways that do not foster backlash? Can parents call on a strong relationship with children to help youths overcome trauma, and teach them ethical frameworks (Nussbaum 1997; Sen 1999) that can be valuable in guiding them professionally and as family and community members?

Recent work by Doepke et al. (2019, p. 41) acknowledges that parent-child relations are an important aspect of parenting, yet they assume that good parenting is the outcome of more intense—time rich—parenting aimed at advancing a child's accumulation of cognitive skills—the conventional view in the field of economics. They note that a fruitful avenue for future research would be to combine detailed time-use data with information on the relationships of parents and children—a view totally in line with the perspective advanced by Tomer. The dearth of empirical work on the contribution of time and parent-child relationships to skill accumulation and life-course outcomes remains a factor that limits economist understanding of poverty, inequality, wealth accumulation, and various forms of social behavior—and the of the role parenting in these developments. It is high time to address these shortcomings, as advocated by John Tomer a number of years ago (Tomer 2016).

6 Concluding Thoughts: Tomer's Roadmap and the Evolution of Human Capital Theory

Human Capital theory has evolved steadily since Becker's pathbreaking work in the 1960s (Becker 1965). Major conceptual breakthroughs including—Grossman's notion of health capital (Grossman 1972) and Heckman's view that non-cognitive skills (Heckman et al. 2006) mater and impact the accumulation of cognitive skills—deepened our conceptual awareness of how human capital can shape a person's life course. Moreover, a myriad of empirical papers—found in a range of general and topic specific journals—advanced our understanding of how human capital actually contributes to achievements over the life cycle. Nevertheless, on theoretical and empirical grounds gaps in our knowledge remain. New ways of—imaging how human capital, of various types, is accumulated, and the effects of these skills—have, and will, be advanced. However, ideas that challenge—even notions that build upon—conventional perspectives of how things operate are often slow to be embraced.

Fortunately, compelling ideas ultimately find their way into professional conversations and enrich both our theories and our understanding of the linkages between variables.

John Tomer's emphasis on accounting for the role of relationships between parents and children is an idea that is likely to be adopted eventually. Ultimately, his perspective that both parental time investments and parent-child relations are central to skill accumulation on the part of youth will lead to a richer *conventional* model of how human capital is acquired and how youths can become more resilient to unsettling events like traumatic victimization. Moreover, his call for more research on how and when youths might ideally commit to accumulating alternative forms of soft-skills will be headed when the necessary data become available. This development will also improve economist understanding of the family. It is a shame that John won't be able to comment on that work, and knowing him, point out additional ways to further advance the evolution of scholarship on human capital. As his ideas are adopted economists will know more about the sources of inequality, achievement, and happiness resulting in a footprint that can be linked to John Tomer's insights, energy, and creativity—a legacy worth honoring!

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