

Divine intervention? New research looks at beliefs about God's influence in everyday life

March 9 2010

Most Americans believe God is concerned with their personal well-being and is directly involved in their personal affairs, according to new research out of the University of Toronto.

Using data from two recent national surveys of Americans, UofT Sociology Professor Scott Schieman examined peoples' beliefs about God's involvement and influence in everyday life. His research discovers new patterns about these beliefs and the ways they differ across education and income levels.

Schieman's study, published in the March issue of the journal *Sociology of Religion*, also highlights the following findings:

Overall, most people believe that God is highly influential in the events and outcomes in their lives. Specifically:

- 82 per cent say they depend on God for help and guidance in making decisions;
- 71 per cent believe that when good or bad things happen, these occurrences are simply part of God's plan for them;
- 61 per cent believe that God has determined the direction and course of their lives;

- 32 per cent agree with the statement: "There is no sense in planning a lot because ultimately my fate is in God's hands."
- Overall, people who have more education and higher income are less likely to report beliefs in divine intervention.
- However, among the well-educated and higher earners, those who are more involved in [religious rituals](#) share similar levels of beliefs about divine intervention as their less-educated and less financially well-off peers.

According to Schieman: "Many of us might assume that people of higher social class standing tend to reject beliefs about divine intervention. However, my findings indicate that while this is true among those less committed to religious life, it is not the case for people who are more committed to religious participation and rituals."

He adds: "This study extends [sociological inquiry](#) into the ways that people of different social strata think about God's influence in everyday life. Given the frequency of God talk in American culture, especially in some areas of political discourse, this is an increasingly important area for researchers to document, describe, and interpret."

Provided by University of Toronto

Citation: Divine intervention? New research looks at beliefs about God's influence in everyday life (2010, March 9) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-03-divine-intervention-beliefs-god-everyday.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.