

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Haunted Middletown, USA: An Analysis of Supernatural Beliefs of Protestants in Muncie, Indiana

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In the early twenty-first century, Americans have been showing a high interest in ghosts and hauntings, as evidenced by the overwhelming amount of supernatural media available. Despite this, there has been little anthropological research specifically investigating the relationship between popular ghost beliefs and America's largest system of supernatural beliefs- Protestant Christianity. This study uses qualitative research methods to examine the beliefs of Protestants in Muncie, Indiana, and whether they participate in popular ghost culture. Results suggest that while Muncie Protestants do not generally believe in ghosts, they accept the possibility that demonic forces can haunt locations and interact with humans. Most of those informants who do believe in ghosts base their beliefs on personal experiences. However, in the case of demonic beliefs, this was not necessary. Informants state that their beliefs about demons are based on Christian media sources, such as literature and the Internet, rather than church teachings. Although the Muncie Protestants interviewed here consider it dangerous to participate directly in efforts to communicate with the deceased, most consistently watch reality

television shows about the paranormal, as the media provides a degree of separation in which they can safely participate in ghost culture.