

NIHILISTIC ADOLESCENTS, HEAVY METAL ROCK MUSIC, AND PARANORMAL BELIEFS

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Recently, there has been a great deal of media attention devoted to various groups of nihilistic adolescents who have adopted the sobriquet, "stoners." These juveniles are reputed to be actively engaged in demonic worship and satanic rituals which include animal and blood sacrifices as well as cemetery desecrations and grave robbing (1, 3). They are also alleged to be avid followers of such heavy metal rock groups as Motley Crew, Ozzy Osbourne, AC/DC, and Black Sabbath, whose musical lyrics and album covers portray satanic themes (3). However, there are few, if any, data available which address the stoners' alleged paranormal beliefs and/or life style. Most research into paranormal and pseudoscientific beliefs has used randomly selected college students as respondents (2, 4). The purpose of this study then was to determine whether self-identified stoners differ from other adolescents in their beliefs regarding witchcraft, black magic, and voodoo and to discover to what extent heavy metal rock music was correlated with this self-identification.

The witchcraft subscale (4), which was modified by including the term "black magic" in Questions 3 and 4, was administered to 66 adolescent volunteers who reside in the eastern metropolitan area of Los Angeles. All respondents were located through case workers in community service agencies who deal directly with street gangs in the geographical area. Subjects responded on a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Scores from 1 to 4 were assigned so that a high score always indicated a more favorable paranormal attitude. A question designed to elicit the subjects' contemporary music preference was appended to the questionnaire. Half of the subjects ($n = 33$) were self-identified stoners. The 48 male and 18 female respondents were equally distributed between the two groups and ranged in age from 12 to 20 yr. ($M = 16.5$ yr., $SD = 2.2$).

Self-identification as a stoner was directly correlated with a reported preference for heavy metal rock music ($r = .66$, $p < .001$). A ratio indicated significant differences in paranormal belief between the groups on all four measures of the witchcraft subscale: Black magic really exists ($M_s = 3.49$, $SD = .50$, vs 1.73 , $SD = .57$; $t_{64} = 13.18$, $p < .001$). Witches do exist ($M_s = 3.39$, $SD = .61$ vs 1.55 , $SD = .51$; $t_{64} = 13.41$, $p < .001$). Voodoo [and/or black magic] is a real method to use paranormal powers ($M_s = 3.21$, $SD = .82$ vs 1.76 , $SD = .61$; $t_{64} = 8.16$, $p < .001$). There are actual cases of voodoo [and/or black magic] death ($M_s = 3.24$, $SD = .83$, vs 1.76 , $SD = .56$; $t_{64} = 8.51$, $p < .001$).

The small sample may not be representative of the total stoner population. However, this study does offer support, albeit preliminary, to the suppositional position that a segment of today's youth are being influenced by witchcraft and the occult sciences and that heavy metal rock music is directly correlated with this identification. Further research is needed to establish if this association is widespread or unique to this sample.

REFERENCES

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