

# **The Cult of Celebrity: Charismatic Authority, Cults, and Marilyn Manson**

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## Introduction

In this research paper, I will be investigating the "dark" communications phenomenon of charismatic leadership within rock stars and cult leaders, with Marilyn Manson serving as a specific example of how rockstars and cult leaders both utilize a similar structure of destructive charismatic leadership to maintain influence over their followers.

Within my investigation of cults, I am interested in the relationship between a cult leader and a cult member. Contrary to popular belief, the majority of people who join cults are relatively normal. In fact, "research indicates that approximately two-thirds of cult members are psychologically healthy people that come from normal families" (Rhoads). If most cult members are just like us, how did they fall under the spell of a cult leader? What drove them to blind following? While considering the blind following of cult leaders by cult members, I started wondering how much the public's blind following of celebrities, especially rock stars, mirrored cult dynamics.

I selected Marilyn Manson to serve as a specific example of a rock star with a strong and devoted base of fans. In his celebrity presentation, Manson appears to intentionally bridge cult leader imagery and manners of speech with that of Hollywood. The most obvious example of this is his very name, Marilyn Manson, a combination of Marilyn Monroe and Charles Manson. In *The Long Hard Road out of Hell*, Marilyn Manson discusses Charles Manson, saying "[Charles Manson] was a gifted philosopher, more powerful intellectually than those who condemned him. But at the same time, his intelligence (perhaps even more so than the actions he had others carry out for him) made him seem eccentric and crazy, because extremes-whether good or bad-don't fit into society's definition of normality" (Manson and Strauss 87). It can be concluded that Marilyn Manson admires Charles Manson, and aims to replicate similar extremes in his own art.

Cults use specific rhetoric to make people scared of and eventually turn away from the outside world. Manson illustrates how cult-like communication can extend beyond religion into celebrity culture. In this paper, I will attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of how fear, charismatic authority, mysticism and spirituality, us vs. them rhetoric, and sex are manipulated within leader-follower dynamics, both within cults and celebrity fandom. I argue that Marilyn Manson intentionally adopts the rhetorical, psychological, and symbolic tools of cult leaders, revealing how celebrity fandom often mirrors cult dynamics.

## Analysis

### Fear

Fear is mentioned many times in *The Long Hard Road out of Hell*, with Chapter 1 titled "the man that you fear." In this chapter, Marilyn Manson talks about his childhood, and makes out his most defining memories of his early years to be of

exploring his grandfather's cellar, which repulsed, scared, and fascinated him all at once. This chapter sets the stage for Manson to grow up and become the man that is feared, rather than the one fearing. Essentially, he becomes his grandfather, repulsing and fascinating others.

Through conducting ritual acts on stage, "psychological experiments" off stage, and self mutilation, Manson slowly built a story of man to be feared. In his book, he describes one of the earliest shows he played in his hometown, claiming that during the show he put a female admirer of his in a cage, revved up a chainsaw, and attempted to grind through the metal. Many years later, supposedly on tour with Nine Inch Nails, Manson writes that he "swore to stop exploiting and humiliating girls backstage," instead deciding to "perform a therapeutic service for them" (Manson and Strauss 180), where he and the other band members would take willing fans down to "the catacombs", restrain them in predicament bondage, and invite them to confess their darkest secrets on camera. In an interview with now-defunct music publication Empyrean Magazine, Manson tells of his last show with bandmate Freddy, describing how the crew had decided to end the tour with a memorable prank by putting raw chicken feet all over the stage. He goes on to say that he slipped and fell on a beer bottle, which shattered, and he "fucking slashed [his] chest from one side to the other... that was [his] first real act of self-mutilation in front of people" (Manson and Strauss 162).

Manson also discusses his admiration for American occultist, author, and the founder of the Church of Satan Anton LaVey in his autobiography. He tells of his first meeting with LaVey at his manor, following a phone call Manson received saying "the doctor" wished to see him. During their meeting, Manson asked LaVey for advice about a girl he was seeing. Manson wrote that "the advice that ensued [from LaVey] was very cryptic, which was no doubt another way for him to maintain power. The less people understand you, the smarter they think you are." This reflects a deep understanding of fear, that Manson could detect that LaVey's cryptic manner of speaking and presenting was more for the person he was speaking to than for himself, creating an atmosphere of esotericism and mystery that made his guests wonder and fear the truths that LaVey had come to hold.

Many of the most famous cults, including Jonestown, Branch Davidians, the Order of the Solar Temple, Heaven's Gate, and the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God, ended in mass death, either by suicide or murder (Lewis). Just like their leaders, Marilyn Manson demanded loyalty to the death in the lyrics of his song, Kill4Me:

"Would you kill, kill, kill for me? / I love you enough to ask you again / Would you kill, kill, kill for me? / You won't be kissing me unless you kill for me / Kill, kill, kill for me / Bloody noses are just like roses / But what happens when

we are betrayed? / Won't you drag him to the shed / And unload six rounds in their fucking face? / This is our sacrifice" (Manson "Kill4Me")

While it is important to note that song lyrics are not facts and Manson did not enforce a loyalty or death policy with his following, he was intentionally pulling from cult language and ideology to influence how his followers perceived him.

Together, Luc Jouret and Joseph Di Mambro founded the Order of the Solar Temple cult. Previously, Jouret had been a member of the Renewed Order of the Temple, a group whose roots traced back to the Knights Templar, a catholic military organization. The last grand master of the Knights Templar cursed the King of France and the Pope before his death and less than one year later they were both dead. This made people fear Jouret, and acted as justification for his followers to believe in his otherworldly power. Attracted to the fear and prestige Jouret inspired, Di Mambro suggested that they merge the communal aspects of Mambro's golden way foundation with the wealth and power structure of the Knights Templar to form a new organization, the Order of the Solar Temple. Cult members were sold expensive literature written by prominent group members and engaged in elaborate ceremonies. Those who attended were taught they could achieve an enlightened state of consciousness, donned medieval robes, and were given the chance to hold a sword that had belonged to the Knight's Templar. Di Mambro claimed that the sword was gifted to him in another life 1000 years ago (Lights Out Podcast). Ritual acts inspiring fear and awe have played a significant role in shaping the narrative of both Manson and the Order of the Solar Temple.

### Charismatic Leadership

In his book, Manson attempts to use charisma and the idea of overcoming challenges in his youth to humanize his behavior. Reflecting on his choice to go by the name Marilyn Manson, he writes "Marilyn Manson was the perfect storybook protagonist for a frustrated writer like myself. He was a character who, because of his contempt for the world around him and, more so, himself, does everything he can to trick people into liking him. And then, once he wins their confidence, he uses it to destroy them" (Manson and Strauss 79).

In their dramaturgical model of the charismatic relationship, professors Gardner and Avolio propose that charismatic leaders are adept, by nature or through study, at carrying out four specific processes of impression management: framing, scripting, staging, and performing. Framing is defined as "the process of shaping the collective definition of the situation, the general perspective with which an audience will interpret information" (Dawson). Manson has been contextualizing his work using framing for the duration of his career. Take, for example, his song "Cake and Sodomy", with lyrics as follows:

“I am the god of fuck / Virgins sold in quantity, herded by heredity / Redneck burnout midwest mind / Who said date rape ins’t kind? / Porno-nation, evaluation / What’s this, time for segregation / Libido, libido fascination / Too much oral defecation” (Manson “Cake and Sodomy”)

While these lyrics are certainly provocative, Manson left little room for problematic interpretations, writing that “Cake and Sodomy” was “an anthem for a hypocritical America slobbering on the tit of Christianity,” and that “if televangelists were going to make the world seem so wicked, I was going to give them something real to cry about” (Manson and Strauss 95). He may have written a sacrilegious song, but he clearly framed the transgressive perspective through which he intended the public to interpret it.

Scripting is accomplished through casting roles, composing dialogue, and directing action. First, charismatic leaders identify the relevant cast of characters, redefining the world in terms of a clear set of “antagonists, victims, protagonists, supporting cast members and audiences” (Dawson). For Manson, these characters are “talk show America” (antagonists), brave individuals who stand for something (protagonists), occult leaders like Anton LaVey and Charles Manson, rock stars like Trent Reznor and Danzig (supporting cast members), and models, porn stars, and drug users (audiences). In dialogue composition charismatic leaders employ rhetorical strategies, such as the repeated use of effective metaphors, analogies, and stories to set a common language of discourse for the group. For Manson, this takes the form of repeated references to Hollywood lore, political metaphors, and religious analogies. The process inspires and unites the followers, and it equips them with a shared belief system that empowers them in the face of opposition. Direction is achieved in Manson’s case through body posture, eye contact, and touch.

Staging consists of the “manipulation of symbols, including physical appearances, settings, props, and other types of artifactual displays” (Dawson). In cult history, staging can be observed in the meticulously staged religious services and healings of Jim Jones, or the elaborate private ceremonies of The Solar Temple, with their costumes, symbols, ritualistic acts, specially constructed settings, and holographic images of supernatural figures and objects. Manson’s history of burning bibles onstage, filming private confessions with adoring fans underground, vast amassment of leather clothes and body modifications, references to God and Satan, and rotating assortment of symbols including the swastika and the pentagram are not at all a far cry from the staging of genuine cults.

Lastly, in the performing stage, all these elements of impression management are united in the charismatic leader, who seeks to win support by employing the two “assertive strategies” of “exemplification”, or leading by example, and “promotion”, or engaging in unconventional or over-the-top acts that are usually supposedly in

service of conventionally admirable ideals (Dawson). Jim Jones presented the People's Temple as opposed to racism in America, defying the de facto segregation of most churches, and he adopted a black and a Korean son. Through shocking acts of parading women around on leashes, sucking the dicks of his bandmates on stage, and publicly praising Charles Manson as intelligent, Marilyn Manson claimed to make a point in opposition of the conventionally deplorable ideals of patriarchal society, homophobia, censorship, media brainwashing, and repression of self expression. He understood that he could represent something to people who felt underrepresented or disenfranchised, essentially acting as a collective voice for a nation of troubled people with untold stories.

Psychological research has concluded that there are two distinct narcissistic personality types that are predisposed to become charismatic leaders and followers. For leaders, it is the mirror-hungry personality type. An individual of this personality type "requires a continuing flow of admiration from his audience in order to nourish his famished self... Central to his ability to elicit that admiration is his ability to convey a sense of grandeur, omnipotence, and strength" (Post). This causes Manson, and other individuals like him who experience feelings of grandiose power within themselves, to appear attractive to individuals seeking idealized sources of strength. Mirror-hungry personality types embody a sense of conviction and certainty to those who are consumed by doubt and uncertainty. So intense is the doubt of mirror-hungry personalities that an insistent mask of certainty is necessary to ward it off.

This doubt, however, is only expressed internally. Mirror-hungry types of narcissistically fixated people display an unshakable self confidence and voice their opinions with absolute certainty. The maintenance of their self esteem depends on the use of certain mental functions. They are constantly judging others, often pointing out the moral flaws in other people's personality and behavior. "Without shame or hesitation, they set themselves up as the guides and leaders and gods of those who are in need of guidance, of leadership, and of a target for their reverence. Indeed, the degree of moral righteousness is often quite extraordinary" (Post). Manson judges and points out the moral flaws of almost everyone involved in *The Long Hard Road out of Hell*, even those he admires, such as Trent Reznor and Anton LaVey. He presents himself as the leader and god not just of his followers, but also of his bandmates. The band was originally called Marilyn Manson and the Spooky Kids, but it was eventually changed simply to Marilyn Manson, and Manson depicts himself as a sort of hybrid ringleader, babysitter, and creative director of his band.

For mirror-hungry personalities, preserving ostentatious feelings of strength and immunity does not allow for weakness and doubt. They are "held together by this rigid shell of apparent total self-confidence to keep profound inner doubt from breaking through" (Post). In *The Long Hard Road out of Hell*, Manson discusses

using drugs during the making of *Antichrist Superstar* to do exactly this (Manson and Strauss 218).

In contrast, followers of charismatic authority are often ideal-hungry personality types. They perceive themselves as incomplete beings, and “can only feel whole when in a relationship with, when attached to, when merged with this idealized other. The charismatic leader comes to the psychological rescue of the ideal-hungry followers” (Post). Representing what the followers wish to be, the ideals and values seen in their leader ascend rapidly in perceived importance and protect the followers from confronting themselves and their fundamental inadequacy. In other words, “the leader’s success becomes the follower’s success” (Post).

If Manson’s followers perceive themselves as inadequate, underrepresented, or disenfranchised, and Manson presents himself as an antihero and his music as a way to subvert the society that entraps his fans, the perfect storm for a charismatic leader-follower relationship has been formed. In the 90s, when Marilyn Manson was in his heyday, there was a general growing awareness of LGBTQ rights and drug abuse. It makes sense that a man who calls himself by a woman’s name, wears dresses and makeup, masturbates his bandmates onstage, and associates himself with drug usage in a way that feels glamorous and rockstar-esque would become an aspirational figure to queer people and impoverished drug users struggling in their everyday lives. In a 1995 interview, Manson spoke about his sexuality, saying, “Am I gay, straight, bi-sexual? To ask me that is to be ignorant to what Marilyn Manson stands for. Marilyn Manson transcends morality, and sexuality. He’s a gray area. I don’t like putting a label on anything” (“Jam Interviews Marilyn Manson”).

### Mysticism and Spirituality

Most cults have some underlying tie-in to religion, spirituality, or mysticism (Lewis). 3HO, a cult representing “a blend of highly orthodox Sikhism, a diverse set of yogic practices that Bhajan collectively referred to as kundalini yoga, and an eclectic selection of other ideas and practices drawn from the larger spiritual subculture of the 1970s” (Lewis), conducted a daily *sadhana*, meaning daily spiritual ritual, involving a group recitation of the *Ardas*, a Sikh prayer that contained descriptions of the tortures endured by Sikh martyrs.

Di Mambro, one of the founders of the Order of the Solar Temple, claimed to be “the last secret master” of the Knights Templar (Dawson). Through its organizational structure and the rituals Di Mambro created, the Solar Temple became rooted in a long, complex lineage of secret ‘Christian’ groups pursuing the Holy Grail. Di Mambro expanded upon this tradition with ideas drawn from a wide range of esoteric systems, including Egyptian thanatology, alchemy, Oriental folk medicine, and elements of science fiction. Taking on a messianic role, he prophesied

the world's end and taught his followers to evade death by using his secret knowledge to 'transit' to a higher plane of existence. To support these proclamations, Di Mambro invoked popular mythology about reincarnation, claiming that in previous lives he had been Osiris, the Pharaoh Akhnaton, Moses, and Cagliostro (Dawson).

*The Long Hard Road out of Hell* begins every chapter with a quote from a notable person, mostly from the disciplines of philosophy, religion, music, art, or politics. Individuals mentioned include Dr. Seuss, George Orwell, Stephen King, Bertrand Russell, Duran Duran, and Frank Sinatra, among others. This is done in an attempt to equate Manson with the greatest minds of the world and to imply his name will be the latest in a similar list of thinkers one day. Many of the people quoted could be called charismatic leaders.

The narcissistic individual who consciously believes that he possesses special leadership abilities, and therefore has a great role to fulfill, can employ religious rhetoric with far greater persuasive force. This is especially evident in leaders such as Ayatollah Khomeini, who are sincerely convinced that they have been given a divine mission to carry out (Post). This dynamic can be seen in *The Long Hard Road out of Hell* when Manson expresses an early belief that he is meant to play an exceptional part in the world. Reflecting on his early work in music journalism, he writes, "I was frustrated with music journalism. The problem was not the magazines or my writing, but the musicians themselves. Each successive interview I did, the more disillusioned I became. Nobody had anything to say. I felt like I should be answering the questions instead of asking them. I wanted to be on the other side of the pen" (Manson and Strauss 74).

Manson and Joseph Di Mambro were both fascinated with the occult and esotericism. Writing about the process of making Antichrist Superstar, Manson says, "I've thought about being the antichrist ever since the word was first taught to me at a Christian school... the Antichrist is a character- a metaphor... this person could be seen not as a villain but a final hero to save people from their own ignorance... When my dreams about the Antichrist began occurring more frequently later in life, I knew I was that figure" (Manson and Strauss 213).

Through songs like SAY10, Manson intentionally strengthens his link to religious evil:

"Cocaine and Abel, I don't baptize whores / I'm a legend, I'm not a fable / You should pray now / Is it above or is it below? / You should pray now / Is it above or is it below? / You say "God" and I say "Say 10" (Manson "SAY10")

Anton LaVey would go on to certify Manson as a minister in the Church of Satan.

## Us vs. Them Mentality

As very young children, mirror hungry personalities are “unable to tolerate the bad aspects of [themselves] and [their] environment and to integrate them with the good ones into a realistic whole” (Post). As a result, they split the good and the bad into the “me” and the “not me.” Thus, by rejecting all aspects of themselves and their situation which does not fit their ideal or grandiose self, the child attempts to maintain their absolutist self perception and worldview. This is called splitting.

If Manson and other charismatic leaders are mirror-hungry personalities, then they work in terms of absolutism: “the me and the not me, good versus evil, strength versus weakness... Either-or categorization, with the charismatic leaders on the side of the angels, is a regular characteristic of their evocative rhetoric” (Post).

Cults and organizations that are “totalistic” in social organization and ideology are breeding grounds for violence (Lewis). Totalistic groups place strong demands on members, who are not able to participate on a casual or part time basis. On this level of belief, religious totalism often divides humanity into absolute categories such as saved/damned or godly/satanic. These groups are not necessarily violent, but this form of totalism does create an impulse to confirm an absolute worldview by confronting those viewed as symbols of opposing ideologies. Indeed, “being on the side of God and identifying the enemy with Satan is a rhetorical device found regularly in the speeches of charismatic leaders” (Post). While in Manson’s case it is the other way around, being on the side of Satan and identifying the enemy with God, the structure is the same.

Also in the Empyrean Magazine interview, when asked whether he was happy with his album, *Portrait of an American Family*, Manson stated, “I wanted to address the hypocrisy of talk show America, how morals are worn as a badge to make you look good and how it’s so much easier to talk about your beliefs than live up to them” (Manson and Strauss 151). Within the Heaven’s Gate cult, the core of day-to-day existence was to follow a disciplined regime known as the overcoming process or simply, the process. The aim of this process was to overcome human weaknesses. While Manson’s ‘us vs them’ model consisted of talk show America / the brave and intelligent ones who saw it for what it was and Heaven’s Gate’s consisted of humans / enlightened beings, the clear separation occurs within both groups (Lewis).

The us vs them mentality can be seen in the lyrics to Manson’s song, “We Know Where You Fucking Live”:

“So what’s a nice place like this / Doing ‘round people like us? / We know where you fucking live / We know where you fucking live / We’ll burn it down, burn it down / They won’t even recognise your corpse” (Manson “We Know Where You Fucking Live”)

The absolutist mentality is reinforced here through the pitting of “people like us” vs “them”.

## Sex

Sex is one of the oldest methods in the book for maintaining power. By 1990, four years after the Order of the Solar Temple was founded, some of Luc Jouret's closest confidants began questioning his stability. A former member stated that the only thing Jouret seemed to be interested in was money and sex. She reported that before each ritual he would sleep with a woman to gain what he described as spiritual strength for the ceremony (Butz, et al.). He was not married, but he formed relationships with many women and changed partners frequently. Manson, too, describes sleeping with fans on the tour bus before and after the band played shows. He has had many girlfriends, and his wife of two years, Dita Von Teese, attributed the end of their relationship to Manson's inability to remain faithful.

Joseph Di Mambro also developed strong authoritarian traits. Followers accepted whatever he told them to believe and complied with whatever he instructed them to do. According to accounts, no request was considered too extreme. If he directed a female member to take part in a sexual act, she did so without objection. Manson had a very similar dynamic with his fans. In *The Long Hard Road out of Hell*, Manson recalls meeting a deaf girl named Alyssa who came backstage at a show. He invited her to come by the studio sometime, as his bandmate had been harboring a fantasy of having sex with a deaf girl because then he could say whatever he wanted without upsetting her or feeling embarrassed. She came to the studio, where Manson asked, reportedly as an icebreaker, "Why don't you take off all your clothes?" (Manson and Strauss 201). She proceeded to do so, stripping until she was standing naked in front of the entire band in the middle of the studio. Allegations that surfaced around Manson in 2021 included him having a "solitary confinement cell" in his house that he referred to as the "Bad Girls' Room", depriving his partners of food and sleep, nonconsensual cutting, biting, whipping, and electrocuting, as well as rape (Grow, Kory, and Newman). In 2025, Manson is almost more well known for his manipulative and exploitative sexual practices than his music.

## **Proposed Amendments of Existing Research**

I would amend Post's article to say that yes, either-or categorization is a regular characteristic of charismatic leaders' evocative rhetoric, but said leaders do not always align themselves with angels or God. Charismatic leaders may align themselves with positions of known power and influence, be it angels or devils depending on their desired outcome. Manson at one point produced t-shirts that read:

"Warning: The music of Marilyn Manson may contain messages that will KILL GOD in your impressionable teenage minds. As a result, you could be convinced to KILL YOUR MOM & DAD and eventually in a hopeless act of

suicidal ‘rock and roll’ behavior you will KILL YOURSELF. So please burn your records while there’s still hope.”

As a response to the backlash and misquoting of this shirt by parents and censorship advocates, Manson wrote, “Can’t they see I’m trying to help them. I’ve said a million times that if more stupid people killed themselves over stupid things, there would be less stupid people in the world” (Manson and Strauss 259). Even leaders who chose to align themselves with devils often back up their reasoning using widely accepted values or ideals. In Manson’s case, this takes the form of eliminating “stupid people” from the world, thus contributing to a utopic world in which everyone is educated and free-thinking.

I would also amend Post’s article through a deeper exploration of tactics used by charismatic leaders to continually renew the devotion of their followers. Yes, absolutist rhetoric is absolutely a component, but through my study of Marilyn Manson, I have proposed 4 other components through which leaders maintain their influence: fear, charisma, mysticism and spirituality, and sex.

I would amend Dawson’s article to say that the charismatic leader is a figure of protection, wholeness, and acceptance for his followers, more so than love. While followers of a charismatic leader may be looking to be loved, I believe that underneath that love is the root desire to be accepted, protected, and a part of something bigger than any one individual.

## **Conclusion**

The fact that Marilyn Manson and cult leaders are utilizing certain similar tactics of gaining and keeping power and influence gives us insight into the manner in which illusions of power and intelligence that inspire awe in the general public are constructed.

Both Marilyn Manson and cult leaders gain power by representing something to people who feel underrepresented, disenfranchised, or unfulfilled in their daily lives. With this being said, it is important to realize that if we want to reduce the pull of charismatic authority figures, it would start not with taking down Manson or cults, but with enriching our own lives and the lives of the disenfranchised, so that rather than escaping into the idolization of what we wish we could be, we can work to become that person ourselves.

Lastly, there is a connection to be drawn here between the way that followers worship cult leaders, and the way that fans worship celebrities. Followers worship cult leaders because cult leaders offer them an out to a life they have previously found unfulfilling - the follower is a lock and the cult leader is a key. They aim to continuously abide by the rules and please their cult leader in order to continue to be

granted membership and entry in their chosen society. It could be said that someone's celebrity of choice is the key to their lock - someone who exemplifies what they wish they could be, whether that is an adored songwriter like Taylor Swift, a seductress like Sabrina Carpenter, an iconic party girl like Charli XCX, or an uncheckable rockstar like Marilyn Manson. This relationship between fans and their favorite celebrities can influence fans to make choices informed by the actions of these celebrities, for example, voting democratic because Taylor Swift votes democratic, or experimenting with drugs because Marilyn Manson experiments with drugs. This reveals that celebrities have more power, albeit indirect power, over the lives of their fans than many fans would like to admit.

## **Annotated Bibliography**

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Lyrics to the song “Cake and Sodomy” by Marilyn Manson.

“Kill4Me by Marilyn Manson - Lyrics.” *Starmaker Studios*, 2025, [www.starmakerstudios.com/en/song/marilyn-manson-kill4me-lyrics/611752105018861344](http://www.starmakerstudios.com/en/song/marilyn-manson-kill4me-lyrics/611752105018861344). Accessed 6 Dec. 2025.

Lyrics to the song “Kill4Me” by Marilyn Manson.

Manson, Marilyn, and Neil Strauss. *The Long Hard Road out of Hell*. New York, ReganBooks, 1999.

*The Long Hard Road out of Hell*, Manson's autobiography, will provide a closer look at Manson's interpersonal relationships within and outside of his music. While it may not be an entirely objective account, it will shed light on the manner in which Manson chooses to present himself, and how that may align with the elected presentation of cult leaders, specifically Charles Manson, Marilyn Manson's namesake, as well as the Order of the Solar Temple founders, Luc Jouret and Joseph Di Mambro.

“SAY10 by Marilyn Manson - Lyrics.” *Starmaker Studios*, 2025, [www.starmakerstudios.com/en/song/marilyn-manson-say10-lyrics/611752105020904493](http://www.starmakerstudios.com/en/song/marilyn-manson-say10-lyrics/611752105020904493). Accessed 6 Dec. 2025.

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[www.starmakerstudios.com/en/song/marilyn-manson-we-know-where-you-fucking-live-lyrics/611752105020807908](http://www.starmakerstudios.com/en/song/marilyn-manson-we-know-where-you-fucking-live-lyrics/611752105020807908). Accessed 6 Dec. 2025.

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### Scholarly Sources

Dawson, Lorne L. “Psychopathologies and the Attribution of Charisma: A Critical Introduction to the Psychology of Charisma and the Explanation of Violence in New Religious Movements.” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2006, pp. 3–28. JSTOR,  
<https://doi.org/10.1525/nr.2006.10.2.3>. Accessed 11 Oct. 2025.

This journal article explores charismatic authority through the lens of new religious movements such as the Order of the Solar Temple. Questions this article aims to answer include why people attribute charisma to certain leaders and hence grant them special authority over their lives. The focus of this article is on why charismatic relationships form. Within my project, I will primarily be focusing on the ‘Defining Charismatic Authority’ segment and examining if both Marilyn Manson and genuine cult leaders fit the framework that is being proposed. In this article Dawson utilised textual analysis of several theories of charismatic authority in contemporary cases of violence instaged by new religious movements, spanning the fields of sociology, psychology, political science, and management studies.

Rhoads, Kelton. “Cult Influence & Persuasion Tactics.” *Working Psychology*, 2019,  
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This website provides a comprehensive analysis of cult influence and persuasion through the lens of psychology.

Lewis, James R. “Sects and Violence: The ‘Standard Model’ of New Religious Violence.” *Journal of Religion and Violence*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2013, pp. 99–121. JSTOR, Accessed 26 Sept. 2025.

This journal article examines violence and new religious movements (NRMs), focusing specifically on incidents involving the mass deaths of members. The Solar Temple is discussed, along with additional examples of new religious movements including 3HO, the People’s Temple, Branch Davidians, AUM Shinrikyo, Heaven’s Gate, and The Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God. Within the Solar Temple, history of the founders, the esoteric teachings, and the mass deaths are explored. There are also analyzations on NRM violence, and suicide cults.

Post, Jerrold M. "Narcissism and the Charismatic Leader-Follower Relationship." *Political Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 4, 1986, pp. 675–88. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3791208>. Accessed 11 Oct. 2025.

This journal article examines the psychology of the tie between charismatic leaders and followers. In it, charismatic leadership is stated to have the following properties: 1) the leader is perceived by the followers as somehow superhuman, 2) the followers blindly believe the leader's statements, 3) the followers unconditionally comply with the leader's directives for action, 4) the followers give unqualified emotional support. Using these 4 properties, I will examine how blind followings of rock stars and celebrities such as Marilyn Manson mimics the followings of cult members to their leaders. In this article Post utilised textual analysis of philosophical and sociological works (Weber, Schiffer, Asbe & Ulman, Wilner) and psychoanalyst works (Kohut, Kernberg, Volkan, Bychowski, Greenacre, Bion). In addition, Post examines the speeches and actions of historical controversial and charismatic leaders, including Hitler, Ayatollah Khomeini, Robespierre, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Reverend Moon, and Reverend Jim Jones through the lens of philosophy and psychology.

### Non-Scholarly Sources

Butz, et al. *The Order of the Solar Temple*. Watchman Fellowship, 1986.

This article discusses sexual malpractice within the Order of the Solar Temple.

Grow, Kory, and Jason Newman. "Marilyn Manson: The Monster Hiding in Plain Sight." *Rolling Stone*, 14 Nov. 2021, [www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/marilyn-manson-abuse-allegation-s-1256888/](https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/marilyn-manson-abuse-allegation-s-1256888/).

This article from Rolling Stone discusses the sexual abuse allegations surrounding Marilyn Manson. Within my project, I will be focusing on the passages about the devotion of Manson's fans, Manson's ritualistic and often violent behavior on stage, instances of Manson instilling fear in fans, friends, and bandmates, the relationship between the charismatic Marilyn Manson persona and how it overtook Brian Warner, and the general perception he created during Bowling for Columbine and beyond where he spoke intelligently and convinced viewers everywhere he was very smart and not to blame.

Lights Out Podcast. "The Order of the Solar Temple: Suicide Cult Based on the Knights Templar – Lights Out Podcast #64." *YouTube*, 6 Aug. 2021, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsDAGmUrbZA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gsDAGmUrbZA).