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Blaming Marilyn Manson For The Columbine Massacre:

The False Accusation Of An Innocent Musician

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2. Manson and Columbine
3. Other causes for Columbine
4. Studies showing positive effects of metal music

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1. Metal music has been blamed for heinous crimes but is in fact positive.

Marilyn Manson is not to blame for the Columbine Massacre.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE SATANIC PANIC

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1. Elvis

- a) Not allowed to be filmed hips down.

2. Ozzy Osbourne

- a) Ate a bat head.

3. Motley Crüe

- a) Use of satanic symbolism

4. Obscene clothing and music

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A. The events

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1. Shooting outside the school

a) Release of friend

2. Bombs in the lunchroom

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a) Suicide

IV. MANSON AND COLUMBINE

A. Manson was blamed

1. His songs are evil

2. Clothing

a) Trench Coat Mafia

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A. Boys were shut out

1. On the lowest rung of the social hierarchy

2. Trench Coats/ Trench Coat Mafia

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1. No one listened to them

2. Parental neglect

C. Mental illness

1. Suicidal thoughts

2. Depression

a) Eric was on medicine

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On April 20th, 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold shot and killed 13 people and wounded 24 others at Columbine High School in Columbine, Colorado. While some might rationally list out drugs, mental illness, or high school drama as the causes for the shooting, some chose to target a musical genre as the scapegoat. Following the Columbine massacre, musician Marilyn Manson was accused of being the cause of the boys' irreparable actions, however, this claim is simply ridiculous and false.

Looking back almost 50 years earlier, music was being blamed for the rebellion of the youth at the time. The "King Of Rock And Roll," Elvis Presley, was hated by many. His music and body movements were shielded from the public eye. At one point, he had been called "unfit for a family audience" (Rubel, 1991, p. 59). Cameramen for The Ed Sullivan Show were only allowed to film Elvis from the waist up in order to keep viewers from seeing the singer's "lewd" body movements (Alexandria, 1999, p. 121). While Elvis's image is deemed suitable for all ages today, he was a pioneer of a new rebellious musical attitude for his time.

Another moment in music history that can serve as evidence to the scapegoating of musical genres is the era of metal, which stemmed from the era of Rock and Roll. Metal music of the 1980's was heavier, louder, and more intense than the rock music of the 50's and 60's. This brought about a new wave of fear amongst the general public. This fear of the metal community of the 1980's is known as the Satanic Panic. New bands of this time had a grungy appearance. They wore makeup and revealing clothing. Their overly teased hair and tattoos were seen as

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obscene. In addition to their suggestive outfits, early heavy metal bands were known for outrageous stage performances. In concert, David Lee Roth (former vocalist for the band Van Halen) wore a pair of pants which exposed his bare rear-end (Alexandria, 1999, p. 144). Ozzy Osbourne is remembered for biting the head off of a live bat after a fan threw it on stage. Moreover, it wasn't just the looks of these musicians that shocked the public, but also their attitudes. The band Motley Crüe, caught the attention of the public eye after making claims of being worshippers of Satan (Alexandria, 1999, p. 144). Metal music contained lyrics pertaining to drug use, sexual behaviour, and violence (Kelly, 2015). To many, metal music culture was outrageous and could easily be targeted for its seemingly unethical aspects. This attitude towards metal, and the metal community, would lead to many issues. One of the most ridiculous issues this view caused was the accusations against Marilyn Manson as being the cause for the Columbine Massacre.

The Columbine massacre was one of the deadliest mass shootings in history (CNN, 2017). On April 20th, 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold arrived at school ready to take the lives of hundreds. That morning, the boys placed two 20 lb. propane bombs in the cafeteria. The explosives were set to detonate at 11:17 a.m., the peak of the lunch rush (COLUMBINE KILLERS, 2013). Dylan and Eric planned to kill as many as they could with these bombs, and then shoot anyone who outlived the blast (COLUMBINE KILLERS, 2013). One Columbine student, Brooks Brown, recalls his interactions with Eric on the morning of the shooting. "I took my same route I do every day, out for a smoke, a walk around. This day I saw Eric." Brooks says, "...I called him a few names, and he laughed. He called me a few names back. With this

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little interchange, I was cussing him out basically, which is really weird that he didn't shoot me for that.” (COLUMBINE KILLERS, 2013). However, what seems to stand out most about this interaction was that after the small-talk, Eric told Brooks to go home. Following this encounter, Eric and Dylan would throw a pipe-bomb toward students Richard Castaldo, and Rachel Scott. The boys would then proceed to shoot Richard and Rachel. Rachel was killed and Richard was left paralyzed. Eric and Dylan continued to move towards the entrance of the school shooting anyone in their path. At approximately 11:30 a.m., Dylan and Eric entered the school’s library. This is where the majority of the killing would occur. The killers wandered around the library killing a total of 10 people in that room alone. By the time they boys left the library, 12 people had been killed and over 20 were injured. Dylan and Eric left the library, returned to the cafeteria, and attempted to detonate one of the propane bombs since they both failed to explode. When this attempt to make the bombs go off failed as well, the boys returned to the library. After a brief shoot-out with police officers outside of the school, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold committed suicide (COLUMBINE KILLERS, 2013).

No one was quite sure why these seemingly innocent children would commit such a heinous act. With police, and grieving family members looking for answers, they led themselves to blame Marilyn Manson. Dylan and Eric, as well as many other teenagers at the time, were part of the “alternative scene”, anyone who didn’t fit into societal norms. But, why Marilyn Manson? Well, according to news reports made shortly after the event, Manson’s music was “violent”. It was this proclaimed violence that would lead the media to hate Manson more than ever before. News casters called Dylan and Eric “gothic”. Reports were also made that the boys were part of

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a group called the Trench Coat Mafia. Members of this so-called mafia were seen as outcasts. They enjoyed wearing long, black trench coats, and listening to alternative music, including that of Marilyn Manson (Columbine News, 2014).

While superficially it seems that there might be a connection between Manson and the Columbine shooting, one can easily find evidence that contradicts the way Manson was portrayed in the media. For example, despite the music of the alternative scene being “violent” and profane, members of the scene tended to be against violence. When confronted about the school shooting, the other members of the Trench Coat Mafia said that they never wanted to hurt anyone (Columbine News, 2014). After the Columbine shooting, filmmaker Michael Moore decided to make a documentary that explored the circumstances and events leading up to the massacre as well as its after-effects. In his documentary, Moore has a one-on-one interview with Marilyn Manson himself. In this interview, Marilyn Manson is asked how he feels about being blamed for the events that occurred at Columbine High School. However, his answer is one that shocked many. In the interview, Michael Moore asks Marilyn Manson what Manson would say to the Dylan and Eric if they were still alive. Marilyn Manson replies with, “ I wouldn't say a single word to them. I'd listen to what they have to say. And that's what no one did.” (Bowling For Columbine, 2002). Despite allegations made about Manson corrupting the vulnerable youth, it is apparent that he was not to blame. Manson did not try to make music that would “cause” children to commit murder, but it was easy to target him.

There are many misconceptions about the “alternative” community because of the actions of people like Eric and Dylan. The alternative community has a negative reputation. But, people

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of the alternative community tend to be supportive and caring. Proof of this is the You Rock Foundation. The You Rock foundation is a suicide and depression awareness foundation. Members from some of the most iconic metal bands such as Slipknot, KoЯn, and Lamb Of God speak out in support of finding help for mental illness (You Rock Foundation, 2016). It is flawed to demonize members of the metal community when it is they who take the time to help those in need. Members of the metal community tend to be docile, despite how their music sounds. In fact, there is scientific proof stating that metal music can actually improve a person's mood, making him or her calmer and more creative (Here's Why Heavy Metal Is Good For You, 2015). Metal music can cause its listeners to have positive thoughts, rather than negative ones. Metal music can regulate sadness (How Metal Music Can Make You A Better Person, 2015). These scientifically proven facts debunk any claims of Marilyn Manson's music being aggressive, or negatively influential. Rather than make blatant accusations against Manson, maybe the parties concerned about the cause of the Columbine shooting should have looked into the the real causes of the event.

There were many aspects of Eric and Dylan's lives prior to the shooting that were being ignored, rather than being taken into serious consideration. Both Eric and Dylan were shoved aside by their peers. Eric showed signs of depression, and took medication for it until the day he died. The issue here lies not in the depression itself, but in the medication. Despite Eric consulting his doctors about the suicidal ideas he had stemming from taking the medication, the doctors simply gave him a different brand (COLUMBINE KILLERS, 2013). In an interview, Michael Moore says that, "...perhaps it occurred for no other reason other than because of these

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prescriptions.” (Michael Moore - Reveals the real cause of Columbine, 2009). Something else Moore mentions is the lack of parental intervention. How did Eric and Dylan’s parents not notice the warning signs? Seventeen years after the Columbine massacre, Dylan Klebold’s mother, Sue Klebold, spoke out publicly for the very first time. In her interview, she says that looking back, she realises the mistakes she made. Instead of confronting Dylan about the changes she noticed about him, she ignored them. This is a decision that still haunts her to this day (Why Columbine Killer's Mother Sue Klebold Came Forward, 2016). Some believe that the pressures that were placed upon the boys had been building up over time. Sue Klebold agrees with this as well. Ultimately, it wasn’t the “aggressive”, “satanic” music of Marilyn Manson that caused Eric and Dylan to become mass killers, but rather the pressures of life, and a lack of assistance with them. For years, the alternative community has been ridiculed for being a group of vicious animals. Metal music has been seen as obscene and vulgar. Because of this negative stigma, musician Marilyn Manson was blamed for the Columbine High School mass shooting. However, in reality, this is simply inaccurate. Other issues such as drug use or mental illness combined to motivate the boys’ actions. Rather than blame an innocent musical genre, the parents of Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold should have intervened and brought to light the changes that were noticed within the boys. The real cause of Columbine was not Marilyn Manson or his music, but rather a combination of many other overlooked issues.

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