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The Expression of Satanist Identity: Does Visible Identification of Satanism Predict Discrimination and Depression?

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**The Expression of Satanist Identity: Does Visible Identification of Satanism Predict
Discrimination and Depression?**

By

Allyson Dudley

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In

Clinical Psychology

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

May 2022

3/31/22

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Discrimination and Depression?

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This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's
committee.

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Abstract

The current research examines the relationship between visible expression of religion, identification within Satanism, experiences of discrimination, and depression in a sample of modern Satanists ($n = 1,272$). Historically, Satanism has been scrutinized as immoral and a threat to public safety. The current research attempts to challenge that viewpoint by employing culturally competent methods and understanding of modern Satanism. Findings indicate a negative relationship between expression of Satanism and discrimination, expression of Satanism and depressive symptoms, in-group ties and discrimination, and identification (in-group ties and in-group affect) and depressive symptoms. Results show a positive relationship between identification with Satanism and expression of Satanism. Limitations and future directions for research on Satanism and mental health are discussed.

Introduction

Historical and Modern Satanism

Modern Satanism was set in motion with the creation of the Church of Satan by Anton Lavey in 1966 (Dyrendal et al., 2016). As time has passed, Satanic organizations have developed into a significant philosophical, ideological, and political movement. Within the Church of Satan, and subsequent schismatic organizations, Satan has been adopted as an anti-Christian symbol representing direct rejection of God and God adjacent figures like Jesus Christ. Contemporary followers' glorification of Satan is rooted in its archetypal representation of an insurgent against Christianity and traditional morality. In opposition to Christian ideals, modern Satanism focuses largely on the development of self and is associated with values such as nonconformity, individualism, and empowerment. Within modern Satanist organizations, Satan is not treated as a literal deity, but rather as a symbol of these self-focused values. These values emphasize the difference between modern Satanism and Christian religions, demonstrating why Satanists tend to describe Christian religions as repressive (Dyrendal et al., 2016).

Modern Satanism has been influenced by two major groups, the Church of Satan and The Satanic Temple (TST). The Church of Satan laid the foundation for modern Satanic groups (White and Gregorius, 2019). The Church of Satan incorporated self-focused and anti-Christian values, as well as supernatural elements like the practice of magic (Dyrendal et al., 2016). However, the lack of fervent antagonism and reformation in politics has promoted the rise of sects like The Satanic Temple. The Satanic Temple, founded in 2013, currently has the largest Satanic congregation in the world. The organization adopted the anti-Christian values of the Church of Satan but rejected supernatural rituals. In 2016, TST was thought to have 50,000

members, however it is difficult to pinpoint the exact membership due to the stigmatization of minority groups (White & Gregorius, 2019).

The Satanic Temple follows general principles that encourage the rejection of authority, empathy, free will, and respect of science (Dyrendal et al., 2016; White & Gregorius, 2019). TST's unorthodox theatrical approach in political activism, especially towards religious legislation, has caught the attention of mainstream media, promoted the expansion of its followers, and increased its recognition. TST's political activism is a departure from the Church of Satan's explicit rejection of political involvement. The Satanic Temple continues to advocate for several causes, including reproductive autonomy, equal representation of religions, and equal marriage rights. Modern Satanist groups, particularly TST, are continuing to grow, demonstrating a retreat from historical secular ideals within the United States.

The Satanic Panic

Historically, Satanic groups have been overly stigmatized. The limited research that has been conducted has largely framed Satanists as a threat to public health and safety, due to its emergence within the "Satanic Panic" of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Mental health research was centered on how to assess and treat Satanists with the goal of eliminating Satanic interests, with a focus on eradicating adolescent "deviance" (Clark, 1994; Speltz, 1990; Wheeler, et al., 1988). Involvement in any Satanic organization or practice was viewed as inherently unhealthy, often linked to criminal behavior and maladaptive mental health issues. Research of this time defined Satanism as ranging from simple acts of rebellion to extreme acts of violence including animal and human sacrifice (Clark, 1994; Speltz, 1990). Intervention was focused on identifying the problems triggering Satanic ties and the development of coping strategies to counter and eliminate Satanic involvement (Clark, 1994; Wheeler, et al., 1988). Overall, Satanic involvement

was viewed under a negative light with little understanding as to what Satanism truly is, triggering the production of stigmatizing Satanic research and stigma towards Satanists.

Satanism as an Invisible Identity and Disclosure of Identities

Modern Satanism exists as a growing minority religion, with most members existing within the United States (White & Gregorious, 2019). The predominance of other religious groups, especially monotheistic faiths like Christianity, has ranked Satanism among the smallest minority groups in the country. Like other religious minorities, like Atheists and Pagans, Satanists experience discriminatory threats that are associated with membership in a stigmatized religious group (Brewster et al., 2019, Sprankle et al., 2020). Furthermore, as observed through historical events, more dominant religions (i.e., Christianity in the U.S) tend to feel threatened of being overthrown by religious minorities (Pasek & Cook, 2017). There has been pushback by these dominant religions against the radical and moral value system that encompasses Satanism. These experiences have created a necessity within Satanism for members to regulate exposure about their religious identity as a form of protection mechanism.

Minority religious groups such as Satanism, Paganism, and Atheism all share a distinct experience related to their identification with concealed stigmatized identities. A concealed stigmatized identity (CSI) is defined as an identity in a minority group that can be hidden from others (Abbott & Mollen, 2018). Satanists, like many other religious minorities, can hide their affiliation and beliefs from others. This is a departure from other minority groups, who may not be able to hide their minority status, and may ultimately face discrimination based on unchangeable, visible characteristics (e.g., race, gender expression, physical disability). Satanists must then decide whether they want to disclose their religious affiliation with others. Previous literature on CSI in Atheists has found that those who feel their religious identity is of greater

importance are more likely to disclose their identity. However, higher levels of anticipated stigma showed a decrease in disclosure (Abbott & Mollen, 2018).

Disclosure of a religious identity is a personal process characterized by varying levels of anxiety (Tejeda, 2015). A sample of Pagans described the disclosure process as similar to the experience of coming out in the LGBTQ+ community. This process occurs when the true identity of an individual is revealed, rather than the identity that they may have portrayed in order to avoid stigma or discrimination. Most Pagans expressed avoiding disclosure due to the anxiety it provokes and cited disclosure as a problem in all aspects of life. Because of these effects, individuals in religious minority groups must make the difficult choice of whether to disclose their identity or portray themselves in a more socially acceptable fashion.

For individuals who voluntarily disclose their religious identity, or are forced to disclose their identity by others, experiences related to discrimination increase. In a sample of 126 self-identified Pagans, 100% could recall experiences of microaggressions and ridicule based on their religious identity (Tejeda, 2015). For Pagans who voluntarily chose to disclose their religious identity within their workplace, discrimination and tension increased. The negative consequences of disclosure influence whether religious minorities choose to disclose their identities and what strategies they use to avoid disclosure.

Similarly, a group of Atheists described various strategies to avoid disclosure including compartmentalization and/or passing (Loren & Rambo, 2019). Compartmentalization occurs when minority groups create small groups where they can privately express their identity. Passing occurs when an individual acts as a less stigmatized group in public settings. These strategies are used to avoid the anxiety, tension, and discrimination associated with disclosure of a religious identity.

Discrimination Based on Visible Identifiers

For individuals with visible expressions of religion, discrimination is more likely to occur. This phenomenon is evident in Muslim women who wear a hijab. Wearing a hijab has been linked to an increase in perceived discrimination (Ali et al., 2015). This visible identifier has also been found to increase actual experiences of discrimination. In societal settings, wearing a hijab was found to be a strong predictor of receiving suspicious looks and verbal abuse (Dana et al., 2019). Over time, this discrimination has increased. In a sample of hijab wearing women from 2007, wearing a hijab increased verbal abuse by 10% (Dana et al., 2019). In a sample from 2015, wearing a hijab increased verbal abuse by 15%. When applying for jobs, wearing a hijab was negatively correlated with permission to complete an application, perceived interest, and expectations to receive a job offer and positively correlated with perceived negativity (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013). Women who wore a hijab were also significantly less likely to receive callbacks or permission to complete an application than their non-hijab wearing counterparts. While women who wear a hijab have no choice but to portray their religion based on visible identifiers, those with concealable stigmatized identities must choose whether to visibly portray their religious affiliation.

It is important to note that while there are many similarities between Muslims and Satanists as religious minorities, the discrimination faced by Muslims increased dramatically after the terrorist attacks that took place on September 11, 2001, whereas discrimination dropped for Satanists (Richardson et al., 2009). After 9/11, targeting of minority religious groups was largely focused on Muslims, resulting in a decrease in moral panic related to Satanism. The identification and discrimination of Satanists was no longer a main concern of modern society, instead transferring to increased Islamophobia.

Discrimination and Mental Health

Discrimination is linked to mental health outcomes in many minority groups, and Satanists are no exception. Anticipated anti-Satanist discrimination is associated with increased depressive symptomology (Sprankle et al., 2020). However, Satanists with deeper in-group bonds with other Satanists are less likely to experience symptoms of depression, in comparison to those with weaker connections. Furthermore, stronger in-group ties can have a cushioning effect for the negative psychological consequences, such as depressive symptoms, by anticipated discrimination. Therefore, the effect that discrimination has on mental health within marginalized groups, and the factors that reduce its impact, extend to Satanists.

It is imperative to further understand other similar minority statuses when attempting to examine the Satanist identity, due to lack of research in existing literature. Over the past few years, the continuing effort to destigmatize minority worldviews and groups has promoted religious individuals to adopt a secular way of interacting with people of contrasting beliefs and values. Despite this, membership in stigmatized groups has been associated with poor physical and mental health outcomes, including higher rates of depression, anxiety, substance use, and suicidality (Brewster et al., 2019).

Given the adverse impacts of stigmatized identities on physical and mental well-being, it is hardly unpredictable for Atheists to be more susceptible to numerous detrimental psychological outcomes. Despite the concealability of the Atheist identity, anti-Atheist discrimination, stigma consciousness (self-awareness of devalued status within society), and internalized Atheist stigma are strong predictors of distress, while also being negatively correlated with self-esteem (Brewster et al., 2019). Additionally, Atheists with stronger in group ties with other like-minded individuals had lower distress and higher self-esteem than those

without strong group involvement. Satanists and Atheists both experience negative mental health outcomes due to discrimination, with a moderating factor of in-group ties.

Protection from Negative Events

Due to the impact of discrimination on the mental and physical health of religious minorities, it is important to identify what factors may protect Satanists from these negative outcomes. The Rejection-Identification Model (RIM) posits that group identification serves as a buffer for the negative outcomes associated with stigma (Branscombe et al., 1999). The model was originally proposed in a study that investigated African Americans' attributions of negative events to prejudice. Attribution of negative events to prejudice had a negative effect on well-being for the participants of this study. However, attribution of prejudice positively impacted well-being when mediated by group identification. Feelings of being part a group reversed the negative effect of attributions of prejudice, demonstrating how important group identification may be. An additional finding also demonstrated that as an individual attributed the prejudice they encounter to race, their identification with the group increased, which then increased well-being. These findings have implications for all minority groups, including Satanists, as they show that group identification is an important factor in mitigating the impact of prejudice on these marginalized groups.

The RIM has been expanded to cover additional marginalized groups, with research investigating the implications of this model for a sample of Atheists (Doane & Elliot, 2015). The findings of this study were consistent with the RIM. Specifically, perceived discrimination predicted decreased physical and mental well-being in Atheists. This perceived discrimination also increased Atheist identification. In turn, Atheist identification was a positive predictor of both physical and psychological well-being and mediated the relationship between perceived

discrimination and well-being. These findings are important to the current study, as it shows the effect of the RIM on a minority religious group with a belief-based concealable identity.

Importance of The Current Research

Continued research on various topics related to Satanist mental health is becoming increasingly important due to the emergence of modern Satanic organizations. These organizations are continuing to grow, particularly in support of increased secular ideals in United States legislation (White & Gregorius, 2019). At the same time, it is believed that some of the influence that Christianity has historically held is beginning to decline in the United States (Richardson, et al., 2009). This may be partially due to a refocusing on other marginalized groups, such as Muslims following the events of 9/11. Despite this fact, there is still evidence of negative effects of discrimination on Satanists, requiring continued research (Sprankle et al., 2020). As Satanism grows, it is important to reframe the negative view that has historically followed the religion in academic research.

The current research attempts to research mental health outcomes of Satanists without the assumption that Satanism is inherently unhealthy. The goal with this research is to employ culturally competent methods and understanding of Satanism to correct previous research published during the Satanic Panic in the early 80s and 90s. Research incorporating an accurate and culturally competent definition is required to better understand this growing religion. As previously demonstrated, experiences of discrimination within the context of a marginalized group can have far reaching implications on physical and mental health (Brewster et al., 2019; Sprankle et al., 2020). Expanding research on various outcomes of modern Satanist groups can create better understanding of this population and influence public perception, policies, and counseling practices with this population.

Research Questions

Previous research has indicated that marginalized groups face increased discrimination, especially when an identity is disclosed or visible (Ali et al., 2015; Dana et al., 2019; Ghumman & Ryan, 2013; Tejada, 2015). Literature has also indicated negative mental health outcomes related to discrimination (Brewster et al., 2019; Sprankle et al., 2020). This research prompted the following research questions related to discrimination and mental health: Is outward expression of Satanism related to experiences of discrimination and depressive symptoms? Is a Satanists' experience with discrimination related to depressive symptoms? Is identification with Satanism related to experiences of discrimination? Is identification with Satanism related to expression of Satanism? Previous research on the Rejection-Identification model found that identification with a group was related to mental and physical well-being (Branscombe et al., 1999; Doane & Elliot, 2015). Identification also mediated the effect of prejudice on the well-being of various marginalized groups. Research on the RIM prompted the following questions: Is identification with Satanism related to well-being? Do in-group ties moderate the relationship between discrimination and depression? Do in-group ties moderate the relationship between outward expression and depression? Each of these questions extends previous research that had been conducted on marginalized groups to a Satanist population.

Method

Participants

Participants include a nonrandom sample of 1,272 self-identified Satanists. The mean age of the sample was 31.21 ($SD=9.90$). Ages ranged from 18 to 75. Most participants were white (67.69%), from the United States (77.44%), and affiliated with The Satanic Temple (49.92%). Participants had identified as Satanists for an average of 10.93 years ($SD=11.69$). Gender was

comprised of 48.98% female, 32.23% male, and 11.87% gender diverse individuals. Sexual orientation was made up of 49.21% of individuals identifying as heterosexual and 41.10% of individuals identifying as bisexual, pansexual, gay, lesbian, asexual, or demisexual. See Table 1 for all demographic information of the sample.

Table 1
Demographics

| Variable | <i>n</i> | % |
|-----------------------|----------|-------|
| Race | | |
| White | 861 | 67.69 |
| Latino/a | 94 | 7.39 |
| Multi-racial | 93 | 7.31 |
| Asian | 26 | 2.04 |
| Black | 24 | 1.89 |
| Native American | 14 | 1.10 |
| Other | 5 | 0.39 |
| Not Reported | 155 | 12.19 |
| Gender | | |
| Women | 623 | 48.98 |
| Men | 410 | 32.23 |
| Gender Diverse | 151 | 11.87 |
| Not Reported | 88 | 6.92 |
| Sexual Orientation | | |
| Heterosexual | 626 | 49.21 |
| Bisexual/Pansexual | 300 | 23.58 |
| Gay/Lesbian | 127 | 9.98 |
| Other | 96 | 7.55 |
| Not Reported | 123 | 9.67 |
| Satanist Affiliation* | | |
| The Satanic Temple | 635 | 49.92 |
| Church of Satan | 41 | 3.22 |
| Multiple** | 50 | 3.93 |
| Other | 51 | 4.01 |
| None | 496 | 38.99 |
| Live in the U.S. | | |
| Yes | 985 | 77.44 |
| No | 280 | 22.01 |
| Not Reported | 7 | .60 |

| | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| U.S. Region | | |
| Midwest | 220 | 17.30 |
| Mountain | 59 | 4.64 |
| Northeast | 187 | 14.70 |
| Pacific | 171 | 13.44 |
| Southeast | 209 | 16.43 |
| Southwest | 147 | 11.56 |
| Not Reported | 280 | 22.01 |
| Education | | |
| Less Than High School Diploma | 19 | 1.50 |
| High School Diploma or Equivalent | 206 | 16.19 |
| Some College | 415 | 32.63 |
| Associate's Degree | 139 | 10.93 |
| Bachelor's Degree | 295 | 23.19 |
| Master's Degree | 115 | 9.04 |
| Doctoral Degree | 32 | 2.52 |
| Other | 47 | 3.69 |
| Not Reported | 4 | .31 |

*Values exceed 100% from multiple affiliations

**Multiple is defined as The Satanic Temple and another affiliation

Measures

Patient Health Questionnaire

The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) (Spitzer et al. 1999) is a 9-item measure that assesses depressive symptomology based off criteria found in the *DSM-IV* (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Participants responded to each question on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from *not at all* to *nearly every day*. Participants answered each question based off their experiences within the last 2 weeks. Questions included “Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless,” “Little interest or pleasure in doing things,” and “Feeling bad about yourself — or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down.” Higher scores on the PHQ-9 specify greater frequency of depressive symptomology. See Appendix A for full measure.

Three-Dimensional Strength of Group Identification Scale

The Three-Dimensional Strength of Group Identification Scale (SGIS; Abbott and Mullen, 2018) is a 12-item measure used to assess social identity. The measure contains three subscales: centrality, in-group affect, and in-group ties. Centrality focuses on identity salience for the participant, in-group affect addresses emotions related to group membership, and in-group ties identifies the degree to which participants feel they are part of the group. Questions were modified to represent the sample used in the current study. Participants responded to each question on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* with a neutral midpoint indicated at point 4. Items include “I feel strong ties to other Satanists,” “In general, being a Satanist is an important part of my self-image,” and “I don’t feel a sense of being ‘connected’ with other Satanists.” Higher scores on the SGIS indicate higher levels of centrality, in-group affect, and in-group ties. See Appendix B for full measure.

Adapted Day-to-Day Discrimination Scale

The Adapted Day-to-Day Discrimination Scale (ADDS; Abbott and Mullen, 2018) is a 12-item measure used to evaluate anticipated stigma and discrimination based on the participants’ stigmatized identity. Items were modified to represent the sample used in the current study. Participants rated the likelihood of various discriminatory acts following the prompt “If others knew your Satanist identity, how likely do you think the following would be to occur?” Scenarios included “people act as if you are inferior,” “you are threatened or harassed,” and “people act as if you are immoral.” Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *not at all likely* to *very likely*. Higher scores indicated higher levels of anticipated discrimination. An additional question was included to identify actual experiences of discrimination based on the participant’s identity. This question read “Out of the aforementioned 12 scenarios, how many have you experienced in real life after someone learned of your Satanist

identity?” Higher scores on this item indicated more experienced instances of discrimination. See Appendix C for full measure.

Expression of Satanism

A question related to personal expression of Satanism was created for this project. Participants were asked “How do you express and/or participate in your Satanism? (please check all that apply)” with the option to select: *attend meetings, attend social meetups, public rituals, private rituals, political activism, personal aesthetic (clothes, jewelry, tattoos), household aesthetic (statues, altars, art),* and *other*. If participants selected *other*, they were given the opportunity to fill in a blank box describing the type of expression. Each type of expression was added up to create a total score for expression of Satanism. The number of methods of expression/participation ranged from 0-4, with a mean of 1.38 ($SD=1.21$). A higher number represented more instances of expression of Satanism in an individual. See Appendix D for full measure.

Procedures

Participants were recruited through the principal investigator’s online social media platforms Twitter and Instagram. Postings on each site read “Are you a Satanist? Are you 18+? Do you want to share your experiences as a Satanist to better train therapists to be knowledgeable about your religion? If yes to all, feel free to take my new 15-min research survey and share with others.” Each post included a link that redirected the participant to the online survey platform Qualtrics. Before completing the survey, participants read the informed consent form and inclusion criteria questions. Inclusion criteria specified a required age of 18 or older and self-identification as a Satanist. The current research did not define what Satanism is, but relied on the participant to choose whether they identified as a Satanist. If a participant was

under 18 or did not identify as a Satanist, the survey ended. If they did meet the inclusion requirements, the survey continued to demographic questions and measures. See Appendix E for full informed consent.

Results

To test the research questions, twelve Pearson's correlations were performed to determine relationships between outward expression of Satanism, experiences of discrimination, depressive symptoms, and identification with Satanism (centrality, in-group ties, in-group affect). Results for these correlations can be found in Table 2. A moderation analysis was conducted to determine whether the relationship between outward Satanist expression and depression was influenced by in-group ties. To determine moderation, a regression was performed with each relevant variable. A moderation to determine if the relationship between experiences of discrimination and depression was moderated by in-group ties was not run due to there being no relationship found between expression of discrimination and depression.

A correlation found a significant relationship between outward expression of Satanism and experiences of discrimination ($r = -.08, p = .01$). Participants who reported higher expression of Satanism were less likely to have experienced higher levels of discrimination. Additionally, there was a significant relationship between expression of Satanism and depressive symptoms ($r = -.06, p = .03$). Participants who reported higher expression of Satanism were less likely to have higher levels of depressive symptoms on the PHQ-9. There was a significant relationship between in-group ties and experiences of discrimination ($r = -.10, p < .001$). Participants who had higher levels of in-group ties were less likely to have experienced higher levels of discrimination. Expression of Satanism was significantly related to all aspects of identification with Satanism: In-group ties ($r = .40, p < .001$), in-group affect ($r = .14, p < .001$), and centrality

($r = .30, p < .001$). A Satanist with higher expression of Satanism is likely to have higher identification with Satanism. There was no significant relationship found between experiences of discrimination and depressive symptoms ($r = .01, p = .84$), experiences of discrimination and centrality ($r = -.03, p = .33$), and experiences of discrimination and in-group affect ($r = -.04, p = .23$). Finally, depressive symptoms were negatively correlated with two aspects of identity: In-group ties ($r = -.06, p = .04$) and in-group affect ($r = -.11, p < .001$). Satanists with greater in-group ties and in-group affect were less likely to have higher depressive symptoms.

Table 1
Correlations of Main Variables

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---------------------------------|-------|--------|--------|
| 1. Expression of Satanism | - | - | |
| 2. Experience of discrimination | -.08* | - | |
| 3. PHQ-9 | -.06* | .01 | |
| 4. In-group ties | .40** | -.10** | -.06* |
| 5. In-group affect | .14** | -.04 | -.11** |
| 6. Centrality | .30** | -.03 | .04 |

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.001$

A moderation analysis was run to examine whether the relationship between expression of Satanism and depressive symptoms was influenced by in-group ties. The results indicate no significant main effect of expression of Satanism on depressive symptoms ($\beta = -0.02, p = 0.87$) or in-group ties on depressive symptoms ($\beta = -0.03, p = 0.45$). The interaction between expression of Satanism and in-group ties was not significant ($\beta = -0.004, p = 0.86$).

Discussion

The results of this study identify relationships that have not been previously explored in Satanist research. There are some possible explanations for these results that may allow us to further understand the relationship between Satanist mental health and discrimination. These results will also help inform various sectors, including public policy surrounding mental health as well as clinicians who may have clients who identify as Satanists.

One finding within the current research is that outward expression of Satanism and experiences of discrimination were negatively correlated. Previous research on Pagans found that discrimination increased when religious identity was disclosed (Tejeda, 2015). Additionally, various studies on Muslim women who wear a hijab found that discrimination was higher when an individual had a visible identifier of religion (Ali et al., 2015; Dana et al., 2019; Ghumman & Ryan, 2013). This relationship does not align with previous research, but there may be some explanations as to why these variables are inversely related. One explanation may be that Satanists who have not experienced as much discrimination may be more likely to express their Satanist identities because they have not had as many negative experiences related to expressing their religion in the past. A lack of previous experiences with discrimination may make them more comfortable with expressing their identity than someone who had faced discrimination in the past.

Additionally, the negative relationship found between expression of Satanism and depressive symptoms indicates that Satanists with higher levels of religious expression are less likely to experience depressive symptoms. This finding may be due to the concept of *outness*. Previous literature has compared religious disclosure to the process of coming out in the LGBTQ+ community, a process that is usually anxiety provoking (Tejeda, 2015). However, after that initial experiencing of coming out, some Satanists may feel more freedom to express their identity and may ultimately have fewer negative effects related to mental health.

Of the three measures of identification with Satanism, in-group ties was negatively related to experiences of discrimination. Satanists who have not experienced as much discrimination may feel more comfortable seeking out other Satanists because they have not had previous negative experiences related to their identity. Individuals who have experienced

discrimination based on their religious identity may fear that creating ties to other Satanists may increase discrimination. Additionally, there is the common belief that there is strength in numbers. Having stronger involvement with a Satanic group may protect members from individual discrimination.

Expression of Satanism was positively correlated with all three aspects of identification: in-group ties, in-group affect, and centrality. These relationships indicate that the level that someone expresses their Satanism is related to how salient their identity is, emotions about group membership, and the level to which they indicate their group membership is at. These findings show that expression of Satanism is directly related to identification with Satanism, rather than just a fashion statement or fad. Previous research has focused on Satanism as an act of rebellion tied to the developmental period of adolescence (Clark, 1994; Speltz, 1990; Wheeler, et al., 1988). Often, expression of Satanism through avenues such as clothing or jewelry was conceptualized as a deviant reaction to parents and society, or as a fad that would pass as these adolescents matured. At times, expression of Satanism was thought to be separate from identification with the Satanic religion. The current results show that an individual's expression of Satanism is related to their connection with the Satanic religion. The way that individuals express their Satanism (i.e., clothes, jewelry, public rituals) is related to identity within this religion, rather than a broader statement unrelated to the religion.

Finally, the results indicate that depressive symptoms are negatively correlated to two aspects of identity: In-group ties and in-group affect. These results are partially consistent with the rejection-identification model (Branscombe et al., 1999; Doane & Elliot, 2015). Within this model, identification with a group predicts well-being. The results show that two aspects of identification are related to an aspect of well-being: Lower levels of depression. However, other

nonsignificant results were not consistent with the RIM. Previous explanations of the RIM indicate that there is a relationship between discrimination and depression, and in-group ties moderate that relationship (Branscombe et al., 1999; Doane & Elliot, 2015). In the current study, there was no relationship between discrimination and depression. Additionally, in-group ties did not moderate the relationship between expression of Satanism and depressive symptoms. The current results do not fully support the RIM, due to a lack of significant results.

Each of these findings have implications rooted in mental health care. Understanding the relationship between mental health variables and experiences related to Satanism is key to better treating clients who identify as a Satanist. Literature published during the Satanic Panic linked Satanism to the development and continuation of mental health disorders (Clark, 1994; Speltz, 1990; Wheeler, et al., 1988). The current research challenges that conceptualization of Satanism by indicating that greater expression of Satanism and greater identification with Satanism are linked to fewer depressive symptoms. Additionally, knowing the relationships between discrimination and both expression and identification with Satanism will allow clinicians to better treat concerns that may arise based on any of these areas. Results related to expression of Satanism and identification further the idea that how someone expresses themselves is related to an individual's feelings about being in this religious group, rather than simply a passing fad or act of deviance that previous literature has posited. Therefore, challenging previous conceptualizations of Satanism within the mental health field could benefit all involved.

Limitations

The recruitment method of participants, nonrandom convenience sampling, could be considered one of the major limitations of this study. Finding the most appropriate approaches to collect accurately representative data is one of the hurdles researchers face in developing

research methodology designs. Data collection on topics concerning minority groups can be specifically challenging, as these populations are not easily reachable for several reasons. In this study, participants were recruited via social media, therefore accounts of people who identify as Satanist without social media access were automatically excluded. Inarguably, the use of an online platform to recruit participants (especially those who identify as Satanists) generates enhanced prospects of retrieving more exhaustive and inclusive data, as social media has become an integral component of people's lives in our current world. Not only did this approach grant the opportunity of a practical means of data collection, but it also enabled researchers to focus recruitment efforts entirely on the population of interest: Self-identified Satanists. That being said, a technologically based approach could result in the exclusion of Satanists that do not have access/significantly utilize social media platforms. Additionally, the study only included self-identified Satanists, so individuals with similar beliefs who view themselves as part of other groups were also excluded. This methodology also excluded those questioning their current beliefs and starting to learn towards modern Satanic values. The input of these populations is valuable as these individuals are at risk of being subjected to similar discriminative experiences due to their unconventional outlooks. Similarly, there was no specific criteria to determine whether a participant qualified as a Satanist, other than self-report. Self-report was used to include all people who identified with the religion, rather than gatekeeping the definition of Satanism in any way. Moreover, only individuals above the age of 18 were included in this study. This could be problematic as there cannot be an analogical comparison to previous literature conducted during the Satanic Panic as studies at the time largely comprised of adolescent populations.

Future Directions and Conclusion

Future research would better serve the Satanist community by focusing in individuals with intersectional identities (e.g. LGBTQ+ and/or BIPOC Satanists) and the unique set of struggles associated with such groups. Continued research on the various sects of Satanism (i.e., The Satanic Temple, The Church of Satan) may help identify similarities and differences between the experiences of Satanists in their respective groups. Future research may include specific criteria of identification with a sect, rather than self-identification with Satanism as a whole. Given the stigmatized view of Satanism, it is imperative that practitioners and researchers dedicate time to educating themselves on the strains self-disclosed Satanists, as well as other marginalized groups, encounter in their everyday lives. Previous works on Atheists indicate that society tends to perceive people with such beliefs as angry, immoral, and untrustworthy (Abbot, 2020). The propagation of conspiratorial beliefs about Satanism in mainstream media also creates further stigma about Satanists and the belief system in general. Extensive research is also required to further understand the magnitude of such stressors in relation to Satanists and related groups. Scholars are socially responsible to be empathetic, or at least impersonal, towards Satanists to expand existing literature. Likewise, therapists who come across as well-informed and unprejudiced towards belief systems, cultural practices, etc. would aid in easing the “coming-out” process for people with such concealed identities. Further research on identity concealment and attitudes about Satanism within a mental health setting is warranted. Qualitative investigation into the “coming-out” process of Satanists in public and mental health settings would give insight into the experiences related to concealment and disclosure in this population. As a result of continued research, Satanists struggling with mental health issues would feel more encouraged to seek treatment.

Overall, the current study aimed to fill in some of the gaps within Satanic research and challenge previous assumptions perpetuated by research published during the Satanic Panic. The results of the current study allow us to further understand the relationships between overall expression of Satanism, identification with Satanism, actual experiences of discrimination, and depressive symptoms. The results contribute to literature on this population without fundamental biases present in most previous Satanic literature. Continued research in this area allows for positive changes in public perception, policies, and counseling practices with this population. There is hope that these results further the understanding of this population, while informing mental health professionals of the experiences this marginalized religious group encounters.

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Appendix A

Patient Health Questionnaire

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

Little interest or pleasure in doing things

| | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Not at all (0) | Several days (1) | More than half the days (2) | Nearly every day (3) |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|

Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless

| | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Not at all (0) | Several days (1) | More than half the days (2) | Nearly every day (3) |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|

Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much

| | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Not at all (0) | Several days (1) | More than half the days (2) | Nearly every day (3) |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|

Feeling tired or having little energy

| | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Not at all (0) | Several days (1) | More than half the days (2) | Nearly every day (3) |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|

Poor appetite or overeating

| | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Not at all (0) | Several days (1) | More than half the days (2) | Nearly every day (3) |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|

Feeling bad about yourself – or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down

| | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Not at all (0) | Several days (1) | More than half the days (2) | Nearly every day (3) |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|

Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television

| | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Not at all (0) | Several days (1) | More than half the days (2) | Nearly every day (3) |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|

Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or the opposite – being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual

| | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Not at all (0) | Several days (1) | More than half the days (2) | Nearly every day (3) |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|

Thoughts that you would be better off dead, or of hurting yourself

Not at all (0)

Several days (1)

More than half the
days (2)

Nearly every day (3)

If you checked off any problems, how difficult have these problems made it for you to do your work, take care of things at home, or get along with other people

Not difficult at all

Somewhat difficult

Very difficult

Extremely difficult

Appendix B

Three-Dimensional Strength of Group Identification Scale

Rate how strongly you identify with the following questions.

I have a lot in common with other Satanists

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|

I feel strong ties to other Satanists

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|

I find it difficult to form a bond with other Satanists

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|

I don't feel a sense of being "connected" with other Satanists

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|

I often think about the fact that I am a Satanist

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|

Overall, being a Satanist has very little to do with how I feel about myself

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|

In general, being a Satanist is an important part of my self-image

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|

The fact that I am a Satanist rarely enters my mind

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|

In general, I'm glad to be a Satanist

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|

I often regret that I am a Satanist

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|

I don't feel good about being a Satanist

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|

Generally, I feel good when I think about myself as a Satanist

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|
| Strongly agree | Agree | Somewhat agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|

Appendix C

Adapted Day-to-Day Discrimination Scale

If others became aware of your Satanist identity, how likely do you think the following would occur?

People would act as if you are inferior

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Very likely | Moderately likely | Slightly likely | Neither likely nor unlikely | Slightly unlikely | Moderately unlikely | Not at all likely |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|

People would act as if you are not smart

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Very likely | Moderately likely | Slightly likely | Neither likely nor unlikely | Slightly unlikely | Moderately unlikely | Not at all likely |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|

People would act as if they are afraid of you

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Very likely | Moderately likely | Slightly likely | Neither likely nor unlikely | Slightly unlikely | Moderately unlikely | Not at all likely |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|

You would be treated with less courtesy than others

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Very likely | Moderately likely | Slightly likely | Neither likely nor unlikely | Slightly unlikely | Moderately unlikely | Not at all likely |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|

You would be treated with less respect than others

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Very likely | Moderately likely | Slightly likely | Neither likely nor unlikely | Slightly unlikely | Moderately unlikely | Not at all likely |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|

You would receive poor service in stores/restaurants

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Very likely | Moderately likely | Slightly likely | Neither likely nor unlikely | Slightly unlikely | Moderately unlikely | Not at all likely |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|

People would act as if you are dishonest

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Very likely | Moderately likely | Slightly likely | Neither likely nor unlikely | Slightly unlikely | Moderately unlikely | Not at all likely |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|

You would be called names or insulted

| | Very likely | Moderately likely | Slightly likely | Neither likely nor unlikely | Slightly unlikely | Moderately unlikely | Not at all likely |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| You would be threatened or harassed | | | | | | | |
| People would not want to get to know you better | | | | | | | |
| People would not want to get involved in an intimate relationship with you | | | | | | | |
| People would act as if you are immoral | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

\Out of the aforementioned 12 scenarios, how many have you experienced in real life after someone learned of your Satanist identity?

Appendix D

Expression of Satanism

How do you express and or participate in your Satanism? (please check all that apply)

- Attend meetings
- Attend social meetings
- Public rituals
- Private rituals
- Political activism
- Personal aesthetic (clothes, jewelry, tattoos)
- Household aesthetic (statues, altars, art)
- Other

Appendix E

Informed Consent

The purpose of this research is to better understand Satanists' experiences of stigma and how it relates to seeking mental health care. The results will be used to better train therapists to reduce anti-Satanism bias.

Dr. Eric Sprankle, an Associate Professor of Psychology at Minnesota State University, Mankato, is the principal investigator of this project. Zane Hensel, Todd Jennings, and Tayler Lyng, all clinical psychology graduate students, are assisting in conducting this study.

Procedures

If you consent to participate, you will complete an online survey examining various aspects of your experience as a Satanist. Participation should last approximately 15 minutes.

Voluntary Nature of Study

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without penalty. You may stop the survey at any time by exiting the page.

Confidentiality

The surveys are anonymous and participant responses cannot be traced to any identifying information. Only Dr.

Eric Sprankle and his research assistants will have secured access to the raw data. Although responses will only be viewed by the research team, whenever one works with online technology there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality, and/or anonymity. The surveys will be stored on a hard drive in Dr. Sprankle's office for 3 years, after which it will be destroyed. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by online surveys, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato IT Solutions Center (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager. You can also contact this office through email at ITSecurity@MNSU.edu.

Risks and Benefits

The risks you will encounter as a participant in this research are not more than experienced in your everyday life. There is one question within this survey that asks about suicidal thoughts. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you're outside the United States, please visit https://www.iasp.info/resources/Crisis_Centres/ for resources in your area.

There are no direct benefits for participating.

Compensation

There is no compensation for participating.

Contacts and Questions

If you have any questions about this research study, contact Dr. Eric Sprankle (the principal investigator) at Minnesota State University, 103 Armstrong Hall, 507-389-5825, or by email at eric.sprankle@mnsu.edu. If you have any questions about participants' rights and for research-related injuries, please contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board, at (507) 389-1242.

Consent

By continuing on to the survey, you affirm that you are at least 18 years of age, have read and understood the above information, and consent to participate. Participants have the right to obtain a copy of the consent form by contacting Dr. Eric Sprankle (the principal investigator) at Minnesota State University, 103 Armstrong Hall, 507--389-5825 or by email at eric.sprankle@mnsu.edu.