

“RATTLE THEIR DOORKNOB
AND THEY COLLAPSE”:
PROPAGANDA STRATEGIES OF THE
CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY

By

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Abstract: This project investigates two of the most prominent propaganda “arms” of the Church of Scientology (COS): *Freedom Magazine* and Scientologists Taking Action Against Discrimination (STAND). Both of these COS-run organizations function as seemingly altruistic groups that advocate for religious freedom and defend against discrimination, hate speech, bigotry, and more. However, when viewed as part of the context of the COS, including policies and purpose statements, both *Freedom* and STAND function as propaganda groups that attempt to legitimize Scientology among members and in the larger public. To ethically examine these groups, I present an in-depth analysis of the COS’s structure, purposes, policies, practices, beliefs, etc. With these contextual components outlined, I argue that ethical analyses of Scientology and similar organizations/groups must include such elements which I refer to as the *systemized context*. Further, I suggest that the COS employs social justice initiatives only as propaganda and that legitimacy tactics and propagandistic initiatives are likely effective for members of the COS as well as many individuals in the public. Based on my analyses of *Freedom* and STAND, I theorize two concepts important to the field of rhetoric. The first concept is *mimetic propaganda*, which I define as the outward or superficial mimicry of conventional genre features that creates, in propagandistic materials, a sense of reliability for audiences though the content is highly problematic. The second concept is *divine ethos*, which I define as a unique reverence for a group or organization’s leader that places this individual beyond reproach despite various forms of counterevidence or negative information. To illustrate these concepts and the necessity of systemized contexts in analytical frameworks, I discuss examples from within the COS and from outside organizations.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Modern society has seen a number of groups arise that have claimed specific knowledge or insight into the conditions, natures, histories, and futures of humanity. In recent decades, groups such as the Branch Davidians, Heaven's Gate, the People's Temple, Westboro Baptist Church, and NXIVM have fascinated the public due to the strict and often unusual belief systems within such groups and, on occasion, due to the dire consequences for members.

One such group is the Church of Scientology (COS). Created in the 1950s by science-fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard, Scientology has grown into a transnational organization with churches in 167 countries and over 11,000 churches, missions, and affiliated groups worldwide (Scientology.org). Though ex-Scientists, such as Mike Rinder, claim that these numbers are highly inflated ("How Many Churches of Scientology Are There?"), the COS is certainly an influential, prominent organization. For example, COS administrators attract and promote the careers of a number of celebrities including Tom Cruise, Elisabeth Moss, John Travolta, and Michael Pena. Additionally, the COS is an extremely wealthy organization worth nearly \$2 billion as of 2015 (Matthews; Sharp). The COS also receives hundreds of millions of dollars in

donations from members (McManus) and collected about \$4 million in Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans during the global Covid-19 pandemic—loans meant to “help small businesses keep paying their workers and bills during the pandemic” (Sharp).

The Church of Scientology is, in many ways, a complex organization. In the United States, it has received tax exemptions from the IRS as a religious organization, though it also functions much like a business in that it sells goods, such as Hubbard’s books, and services, such as a form of personal therapy called auditing, and numerous classes. At the same time, the COS’s beliefs, practices, and hierarchical structure often draw criticism and labels such as *cult* or *fringe group*.

The COS is best described as a new religious movement (NRM), or a group/organization with questionable and/or secretive practices related to “legitimacy of beliefs, coerciveness of recruitment tactics, deceptive practices, sexual perversion, political subversion, and financial exploitation” (Richardson and van Driel 117). As an NRM, Scientology is often studied by religious studies, sociology, psychology, and other scholars; however, the persuasive practices and complex organizational aspects are also important to the field of rhetoric. Therefore, this project examines the COS through a rhetorical lens with a specific focus on the COS’s communicative practices.

The Church of Scientology

To clarify the COS’s rise, I present a brief history of the Church with a specific focus on its founder, L. Ron Hubbard. The COS effectively began with Hubbard’s publication of *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* in 1950 (Lewis; Melton 9; Ellwood 169-170). Prior to *Dianetics*, Hubbard was a well-established science fiction writer (Martin 473;

Urban 31) who “published hundreds of novels and short stories and emerged as one of the most prolific writers of the golden era of science fiction” (Urban 31). The success of Hubbard’s book led to a number of small group meetings in which people applied Dianetics techniques as a form of self-help or as informal therapy sessions (Urban 57). The Dianetics movement was relatively successful which gave Hubbard the opportunity to expand his influence. The growth of Dianetics practices eventually led to the establishment of the first Church of Scientology in 1954 in Los Angeles, California (Lewis).

Further information about Hubbard and his life is available on the COS’s official website. For example, the webpage “Who was L. Ron Hubbard?” states, “To fund that [Dianetics] research through the Great Depression, Ron embarked upon the first leg of a fifty-year literary career.” According to the Church’s official stance, then, Dianetics research was Hubbard’s focus and his science-fiction writing merely served as a means to pursue this research.

Much of the success of Dianetics and Scientology rests upon characterizations of Hubbard and his alleged personal accomplishments. Often, however, these accomplishments are difficult to fully believe. Hugh B. Urban, professor of religious studies and author of *The Church of Scientology: A History of a New Religion*, claims that “the greatest story Hubbard told was the story of his own life” (30). For example, the COS website indicates that Hubbard was, among other things:

- A “blood brother” to the Blackfoot Indians,
- The nation’s youngest Eagle Scout,
- “One of the few Western adventurers to enter forbidden Tibetan lamaseries...to study

- with the last in the line of royal magicians from the court of Kublai Khan,”
- Enrolled at George Washington University and studied atomic and molecular phenomena,
 - “One of the foremost pioneers of American aviation,”
 - A researcher focused on various Native American tribes,
 - Creator of a “prototypic navigation system employed along all sea and air lines into the latter decades of the twentieth century,” and much more (“Who was L. Ron Hubbard?”).

Additionally, the COS website states that Hubbard accomplished all these feats prior to enlisting in the United States Navy at age 30. The website further details that, in the Navy, Hubbard sustained permanent injuries, including partial blindness and permanent physical disability. He treated these injuries with Dianetics techniques and made a full recovery in addition to treating and healing others with these techniques (“Who was L. Ron. Hubbard?”).

While the facts of Hubbard’s life are often contested (see Urban), the power of his biographical credentials as unparalleled explorer, researcher, scientist, healer, and more form the foundations of Hubbard’s claims regarding the validity of Dianetics techniques. Thus, Hubbard is held in extremely high regard among COS members and is cast as a superior human. As religious studies scholar Robert S. Ellwood writes, Hubbard’s life “displays several motifs of the magus archetype: an out-of-the-ordinary childhood, wide travel, and a spirit-is-all and power-of-imagination worldview...He has said it is a matter of medical record that he was twice officially pronounced dead...the shaman’s initiation” (169). Hubbard, as creator and leader of the Dianetics/Scientology movement, established himself as superior in intellect, experience, and research. This portrait of Hubbard was crucial to the

COS's development.

Utilizing his aforementioned experiences, true or not, as both an appeal to ethos and as evidence, Hubbard created Scientology within the context of the 1950s. James R. Lewis, professor of religious studies, writes that the COS subculture is grounded in practices and ideologies that align with other movements during this era such as Spiritualism, the New Thought movements, and Metaphysical religions:

The Church of Scientology is in this same lineage, though Scientology takes the further step of explicitly referring to their religio-therapeutic practices as religious *technology*--in Scientology lingo, the 'tech.' In much the same way as the 1950s viewed technology as ushering in a new, utopian world, Scientology sees their psycho-spiritual technology as supplying the missing ingredient in existing technologies--namely, the therapeutic engineering of the human psyche (Lewis, emphasis in original).

In addition to the similarities with these non-mainstream movements, the seemingly-scientific foundations of Scientology in conjunction with the perceptions of Hubbard as superior gave further rise to Dianetics and the COS. Though scholars continue to debate the categorization of the COS as cult, religion, business, or other type of organization (see Urban), veneration for Hubbard led to a devoted group of followers.

In the United States, the 1950s and 1960s were "a period of tremendous growth, change, and experimentation in the American religious landscape" (Urban 14), and this period gave way to a plethora of movements as many young people had "a distaste for biblical religion" and began "declining religious participation" (Sherkat 1088). This era set

the impetus for religious movements to emerge, including “a wide assortment of Christian denominations...newly imported forms of Eastern religions, UFO religions, and various forms of occultism, magic, and neo-paganism” (Urban 15). In Scientology, individuals may have seen Hubbard as a spiritual guide and a self-proclaimed scientist who did not devote rigorous attention to biblical teachings and/or alternative elements, adding to the COS’s appeal. As religious scholar J. Gordon Melton writes, in addition to the “development of a more comprehensive understanding of the human being that included consideration of humanity’s place in the cosmos,” the veneration of Hubbard may have led many individuals to view Scientology as their religion (11). This convergence of elements created a successful and sustainable Dianetics/Scientology movement that was effective for a variety of audiences.

Audience members who became Scientologists were (and are) often professionals, leaders in society, and other well-educated individuals. Urban, for example, interviewed a physician who was involved in the Scientology movement:

As Hubbard’s former personal physician, Jim Dincalci, explained in an interview with me, many young spiritual seekers in the 1960s were just beginning to be interested in nonconventional religious ideas such as reincarnation, psychic phenomena, and alternative medicine. For him, Scientology was one of the first movements he encountered that offered all of these ideas in a persuasive, attractive, and seemingly ‘scientific’ package (15).

This purported scientific package, the kairotic moment of other emerging religious and spiritual movements, and the tangible activities that the COS provided effectively increased

its appeal.

In the decades since Hubbard's establishment of the COS and even after his death in 1986, the COS has continued to grow and recruit new members. With continued expansion the COS "is recognized as a religious institution in some countries, such as Spain and Australia. [In] Ireland and the United Kingdom the church is still not recognized as a religious or charitable entity...[in] Germany, the church continues to be regarded with deep suspicion...and...[in] France, it has been dubbed a dangerous secte (cult)" (Urban 17). More recently, the media coverage surrounding the COS has been largely negative due to documentaries such as *Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief* and *My Scientology Movie* as well as the docu-series *Leah Remini: Scientology and the Aftermath*. These programs portray the COS as a cultic entity that engages in questionable activities to gain profits, claims which are backed through interviews with ex-members and former high-ranking officials within the church.

Such criticism of the COS is common. For example, many ex-Scientologists, journalists, scholars, and others claim that Scientology could just as easily be defined as a business (Spohrer; Halupka; Castillo and Passas, for example) due to its requirement for parishioners to pay for services and study materials. Others, however, hold a more critical view. Sociologist Roy Wallis, for instance, defines the COS as a cult that developed by utilizing strategies of religious sects (96-98), and sociologist Stephen Kent traces the alleged intentional move on Hubbard's part to transform the psychotherapeutic mental science of *Dianetics* into the religion of Scientology (110-111). Though the COS denies these claims and insists that it is a legitimate religion, many critics and ex-Scientologists insist that the theology and practices indicate that it is a cult. Similarly, yet arguably more objectively,

Hugh Urban presents a “genealogy of Scientology” (17) and leaves the reader to decide how to define the COS. Though his book is certainly not uncritical, Urban questions not only the definition of Scientology but also questions who is capable of applying such labels to any religious organization. As previously discussed, I contend that the COS is most accurately described as an NRM, as the characteristics of such groups align with the practices of and allegations surrounding the COS.

As an NRM, the COS also practices various recruitment and retention strategies in order to gain and maintain followers. The COS website estimates that its congregation numbers in the tens of millions; however, other reports reveal that this number is more likely in the tens of thousands (Ortega). Though specific accounting of members is difficult, the Church of Scientology’s efforts to gain and retain members is ongoing and well-established. Most notably, the COS employs various types of publications that speak to members, potential members, and mass audiences through numerous websites, television advertisements, information centers, books, online courses, online videos, pamphlets, and other media used to disseminate information and to persuade individuals to join.

In addition to recruitment materials, the COS also creates and disseminates responses to media coverage that is deemed as problematic for the COS. For example, many critics have publicly questioned the COS’s tax exemptions for religious status (Holley) and many former members have filed lawsuits. In addition, several former members, labeled by the COS as apostates, have participated in interviews and provided additional information for news programs, documentary films, journalists’ articles, and academic research. These public statements have influenced the public’s perception of Scientology and have resulted in significant backlash for the COS. In response, the COS produces a number of materials

targeted at public audiences and/or COS members in an effort to respond to and counter these allegations.

In this project, I focus on these responsive materials. My goal is to decipher the communicative strategies that the COS employs in both public- and COS-facing media that responds to criticism in an effort to uncover this media's nuanced strategies and purposes as responsive materials offer unique insight into the nature of the COS. Unlike recruitment, helping, informative, and other materials that the COS produces, responsive materials indicate the lengths to which the COS will go to protect its public image. For example, many COS responses to criticism are retaliatory, misleading, vulgar, and otherwise highly problematic and unethical. In other words, to protect their public image, the Church of Scientology engages in highly manipulative and skillfully deceptive communicative practices.

Qualifying or categorizing COS responses to criticism, however, is a complex endeavor. The nature of religion calls for persuasion and also appeals to the greater good. Religious organizations may also condone many questionable practices, including problematic communication, due to a belief that the ends justify the means. If the COS believes, as most religions do, that they are the one true path to salvation and the sole source of "good" for humankind, rebuking criticism that interferes with such a goal may be deemed ethical--or even necessary--if the greater good is at stake.

Rhetorics of Belief

Scholars have forwarded a number of theories related to the concept of religious rhetoric. Most are based upon Christianity and focus particularly on biblical texts and various

Christian religious movements. Theologian and English scholar David Jasper, for instance, centers Christianity in his discussion of religious rhetoric: “The rhetoric of religion which is derived from the Bible, that is a radical rhetoric which is proclaimed rather than argued on the basis of probability, a rhetoric with a high authoritative claim which tends to disallow rational argument or disagreement: a powerful instrument for coercion, to impose conformity” (33). Jasper’s examination of conformity and authority can be furthered by rhetorician Sharon Crowley’s *Toward a Civil Discourse: Rhetoric and Fundamentalism*. Focusing on Christian apocalypticism, Crowley writes that “liberal arguments--empirically based reason and factual evidence--are not highly valued by Christian apocalyptists, who rely instead on revelation, faith, and biblical interpretation to ground claims” (3). Central to Crowley’s larger argument is the connection between fundamentalist Christian groups and political activism:

Apocalypticism does ideological work by offering intellectual sustenance to political activists. I will argue that apocalypticism does more than this: it actually connects political activity to Christian duty. The apocalyptic flavor of dominion theology--the belief that Christians can hasten the Second Coming by creating a Christian kingdom here on earth--motivates Christian activists to convert unbelievers. But it also motivates them to alter the ideological underpinnings of American democracy, and for a radical few, apocalypticism rationalizes a desire to overturn the U.S. Constitution and its associated body of law as well. (9)

While Crowley discusses Christian fundamentalism and Christian notions of apocalypticism, these concepts are also applicable beyond Christianity. *Apocalypticism*, in Crowley’s view, refers to the Christian belief in the Second Coming of Christ and the activities that will

hasten this event (9). The idea of apocalypticism as a rhetorical tool, therefore, “rationalizes” fundamentalist Christians’ political involvement and “reassur[es] Christian activists that their work will be rewarded when they are raptured” (10). But apocalypticism by groups other than Christian fundamentalists can be employed in ways that may not be political. If extended beyond Christian fundamentalists and the political agenda of creating a governmental system that hastens the Second Coming, apocalypticism may be seen as a wide-reaching rhetorical device. As Frank L. Borchardt explains, “predictions of the imminent End of the (or a) World...represent a means of coercion, a persuasive strategy to get others (or the world) to do something or stop doing something. They are, in this sense, a rhetoric” (1). Thus, while Crowley discusses Christian apocalypticism and the goal of affecting government policies, such as the separation of church and state, in order to bring about the Second Coming, this concept of calling members and others to action to create what is perceived as the greater good is a broadly applicable communicative device that may be used by a number of groups.

In addition, both Crowley and Borchardt address the rhetorical power made possible by invoking belief systems. Borchardt, for example, goes on to discuss a second aspect of apocalyptic propositions--that they “misrepresent themselves by concealing their presuppositions” (1). This sense of distortion, according to Borchardt, can be “explicit and implicit” and, perhaps most importantly, is “bonded together in a logical context” (1). Essentially, then, apocalypticism as a rhetorical device is unlikely to function as a self-sustaining or isolated concept: “Whenever any constituent part of the context is invoked, the entirety of the context is invoked as well” (1). While it is unclear whether Borchardt is applying this concept from the perspective of the group’s structure or from the individual’s

beliefs, the idea that various beliefs invoke one another is clear. This concept of contextual logic or the interconnection of beliefs is similar to the term coined by Crowley: *ideologic*. This term refers to “connections made between and among moments (positions) that occur or are taken up within ideology” (60). Crowley, therefore, focuses on the logic between various specific beliefs and discusses their functions within a larger ideological system.

The related concepts that Crowley and Borchardt discuss are in many ways very similar to the notion of the *noetic structure*. Philosopher Alvin Plantinga describes an individual’s noetic structure as “the set of propositions [s]he believes, together with certain epistemic relations that hold among [her or] him and these propositions” (48). The beliefs within this noetic structure may have several attributes: which beliefs are basic and which are non-basic, or whether one belief is held on the bases of another belief; the degree of belief, or how firmly each belief is held; the depth of ingression, or how much impact one belief may have on others or on the noetic structure itself; and whether the noetic structure is rational or not, which is affirmed as long as the holder of the noetic structure “do[es] the right thing with respect to [their] believings” (48-52).

Many scholars in philosophy and rhetoric and other fields have considered the role that an individual’s belief system may play on persuasion (Chidester; Lewis; Stanley). In line with such works, the consideration of connections between beliefs within a system is an important aspect in determining how religious rhetoric may function. Further, doing so will allow for more in-depth consideration of how beliefs and belief systems may be employed as opportunities for manipulation. Apocalypticism, for example, calls on the belief systems of some Christians and acts as a persuasive communicative strategy, referred to as a rhetorical

device by Crowley and Borchardt. However, such communicative strategies may be more in line with propaganda as opposed to rhetorical persuasion.

Propaganda

Scholars in fields such as rhetoric, communication, sociology, and political science have developed a number of definitions for *propaganda* that have been adapted and modified over centuries as religious, political, and other forces resulted in changes to the word's connotation. The term *propaganda* arose from the Catholic Church's "ministry of propaganda" (Stanley 74; Mackay 219), which was and is tasked with spreading the faith. Since its inception as a process of strategic dissemination of religious ideology and materials, *propaganda* has been employed by a myriad of groups, organizations, businesses, and governments using a variety of methods and for a variety of purposes (Jowett and O'Donnell; Miller). As the applications of propaganda evolved, the definition followed. For example, in the 1920s and in the 1940s, propaganda was defined as the manipulation of attitudes, opinions, beliefs, or actions using symbols (Lasswell; Lazarsfeld and Merton, as cited in Miller). In his discussion of cinematic Soviet propaganda, film and media scholar John Mackay writes, "It is evident that propaganda as pedagogy, whether religious or secular, involves both the articulation of truth claims--the demonstration of the rightness of one's position, and the falsity of the opponent's--and the more strictly rhetorical or performative gesture of consolidating or 'organizing' a group around those claims" (221). Mackay's discussion aligns with the position of Edward Bernays, who, in 1928, writes,

The innovator, the leader, the special pleader for new ideas, has through necessity developed a new technique--the psychology of public persuasion. Through the

application of this new psychology he is able to bring about changes in public opinion that will make for the acceptance of new doctrines, beliefs, and habits. The manipulation of the public mind, which is so marked a characteristic of society today, serves a social purpose. This manipulation serves to gain acceptance for new ideas. It is a species of education in that it presents new problems for study and consideration to the public, and leaves it free to approve or reject them. Never before was so broad a section of the general public so subjected to facts on both sides of so many problems of life. Honest education and honest propaganda have much in common. There is this dis-similarity: Education attempts to be disinterested, while propaganda is frankly partisan (959).

Bernays claims that an individual or group may enact propaganda via public persuasion through, for example, a “created circumstance” (963) that is reported by the press, thus swaying public opinion. With the rise of mass media and corporate-owned press, views of propaganda shifted. For example, Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman write that “The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfill this role requires systematic propaganda” (1). Chomsky and Herman’s propaganda model “traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public” (2).

Modern scholarship extends the definition of propaganda with focus on new media and additional strategies and purposes. For example, while the Organisation for Propaganda Studies initially defines propaganda as “the coordinated attempt to influence large or small numbers of people to some idea and/or action,” the definition also includes a more nuanced look at the term:

Today the term has increasingly come to be used to describe persuasion processes that involve, at least to some degree, coercive manipulation of beliefs and behavior, particularly when used in pursuit of sectional interests. In countries with relatively democratic media traditions, the term propaganda is most often employed either pejoratively, in order to dismiss an opposing point of view, or to characterize persuasive communication in states defined in the process as authoritarian or theocratic and hostile political movements” (“What is Propaganda?”).

Manipulation, coercion, and movement toward the goals of the propagandist are key features of modern definitions. This move largely stems from attempts to categorize communicative acts as, for instance, rhetoric as opposed to propaganda. Layers of meaning, information collection and comprehension, and numerous additional factors contribute to varying degrees of persuasion which may categorize any communicative act as propaganda.

In many cases, categorization has contributed to a dichotomy in which communicative acts are labeled as either persuasive/rhetorical or manipulative/propagandistic (see Vandenberg, for example). Factors in determining a label can stem from whether there is an ability to debate or discuss and the potential for rationality (Stanley 48). Other factors in categorizing communication are often convoluted. For example, propagandistic

communication can be in/sincere and/or un/true (Stanley), from an un/known source (Jowett and O'Donnell), and can lead to action, threats, violence, and killing (Miller) or may exist only in the realm of ideas (Bernays). A number of issues arise with these criteria because advertising and other forms of communication can be labeled as propaganda with such criteria. Advertising a product may include coercion, changes in beliefs or attitudes, and occasion to take action, and, as typically a one-way communicative act, consumers have little ability to respond, debate, or discuss products with the company. In an analysis of advertisements, rhetorician Kathleen Vandenberg writes, "As the twentieth century progressed...there were significant shifts in both American culture and in American advertising; advertisements, as has been widely noted in media studies, became far more propagandistic in nature--that is, they relied more heavily on images, emotions, and appeals to desires rather than reason" (Vandenberg). Vandenberg's discussion places modern advertisements in the realm of propaganda and argues that such forms of communication are sociological propaganda--or propaganda at work in and among "complex societal relationships" (Vandenberg). However, selling a product and Nazi propaganda or voter manipulation or other such reprehensible communicative acts do not belong in the same category despite the numerous commonalities among characteristics of the end products. The propaganda label, then, should be further examined.

In discussions of government, military, and other forms of communication, scholars in Sociology and Communications fields maintain that a framework, known as Organized Persuasive Communication (OPC) is more useful (Miller; Bakir et al.). Within the OPC framework, communicative acts can be placed on a continuum that ranges from "consensual (free and informed)" to "non-consensual (propaganda) (not informed and/or not free) (Bakir

et al. 319). On the non-consensual side of the OPC continuum, Bakir et al. further delineate “propagandistic forms of persuasion involving *deception, incentivization* [,] and *coercion*” (312). Thus, the OPC framework resolves the issue of any false dichotomy between persuasion/rhetoric and manipulation/propaganda; instead, communication can be placed on a continuum “ranging from the most consensual (Habermasian dialogical communication) to the least consensual (outright coercion)” (Bakir et al. 312). Additionally, the OPC framework indicates two important questions that allow scholars to further identify communication as propaganda. First, is the persuasion within the communication free? This question indicates potential incentivization and/or coercion characteristics such as threats, exploitation, and others. Second, is it informed? This question indicates deception such as secrecy, lies, etc. If the communication is not free *and* not informed, it is identified as propaganda utilizing “deceptive coercion” and is placed at the furthest point on the OPC continuum (Bakir et al. 319).

The OPC framework, while useful in advancing criteria and resolving any dichotomy, lacks a sense of the “social reality” (Miller) of communication and propaganda in particular. Because propaganda takes place in a society and is composed with intention and utilized with consequences, understanding the larger contexts and effects of propaganda is essential to its identification and analysis. As sociologist David Miller writes,

Propaganda is not simply a matter of the symbolic, but of concrete action (involving the symbolic) backed up by variably credible threats of force (or economic or other incentives) and sometimes involving actual ‘kinetic effects’, known more widely as violence and killing. In other words, propaganda is neither simply a matter of ideas and communication (the ‘symbolic’ or ‘discursive’). Rather it is a concrete practice

involving both ideas and their expression in communication. But communication, being itself part of the material world, combines with the rest of the material (including economic and coercive power) to form social reality. No propaganda strategy takes place outside that (Miller).

Because propaganda is situated in reality and has real consequences and effects, a more nuanced interpretation is needed that moves beyond criteria and characteristics of the finished communicative act.

A remedy to this potential issue with overly broad criteria based chiefly on the end product is philosopher Jason Stanley's discussion of an alternative approach to identifying and analyzing propaganda. Central to Stanley's examination of propaganda is his claim that it is uniquely intertwined with ideology:

National Socialist ideology involves a hierarchy of race, an explicit elite group, and the dehumanization of other groups. It is an example of what I will call a *flawed ideology*. When societies are unjust, for example, in the distribution of wealth, we can expect the emergence of flawed ideologies. The flawed ideologies allow for effective propaganda. In a society that is unjust, due to unjust distinctions between persons, ways of rationalizing undeserved privilege become ossified into rigid and unchangeable belief. These beliefs are the barriers to rational thought and empathy that propaganda exploits...I argue that harmful propaganda relies upon the existence of flawed ideologies present in a given society. Different flawed ideologies exist in different societies. Propaganda exploits and strengthens them (3-4).

Stanley's move to discuss underlying factors such as cognitive processes and noetic structures of individuals, groups, and larger societies illuminates the roots of effective propaganda within larger ideological systems. In discussing how propaganda appeals to and sometimes builds and/or strengthens flawed ideologies and false beliefs, Stanley centrally focuses on political rhetoric and propaganda, which is not fully applicable to religious propaganda as flawed ideologies within religious belief systems can be vastly different. While political or social beliefs may be objectively false (such as racial hierarchies), religious beliefs in unknowable and/or unprovable claims rely upon faith and are not falsifiable. However, while Stanley's focus is political propaganda, he also discusses religion in numerous examples. In one example, Stanley examines the Prosperity Gospel ideologies, noting that "only by accepting a flawed ideology linking the materialist values of capitalism to the doctrines of Christianity could one fail to see the obvious inconsistency between the doctrines espoused by Jesus and the goal of prosperity" (62). While this example is useful in showing how flawed ideology works, the belief Stanley discusses is disprovable via the Bible. Though it is not an easily dislodged belief, an individual could point to specific passages of the Bible to disprove the claim that prosperity is linked to Christianity.

Religious beliefs, however, are often neither falsifiable nor provable, which becomes an important element in religious propaganda specifically. As Sharon Crowley writes,

In a densely articulated belief system whose moments are highly resonant (because they are so tightly connected to experience and belief) the believer comes to believe in belief itself. The ideology of clarity becomes reality...People who wield arguments justified by the theo-political ideology of clarity assume that they possess the truth

because their discourse is divinely authorized. They accept no criterion of falsifiability...there is no way to prove to a believer that she is wrong (146-147).

Crowley's contention that many religious beliefs are not falsifiable is a significant element in studies of religious propaganda as it resists the notion that flawed ideologies could be remedied. Therefore, Stanley's focus on objectively true or false beliefs does not fully consider the subjective beliefs associated with religion, though he does discuss beliefs as part of identity and self interest. For example, Stanley refers to ideological beliefs as "hard to rationally revise" and discusses a woman who comes "to see her social world more accurately" (200-201). Essentially, I suggest that Stanley may approach propaganda through a somewhat objective lens, which is impractical for discussions of religious propaganda since religion is socially constructed. To be fair, however, Stanley does not claim to discuss religious propaganda.

While ideologies and beliefs are essential to propaganda and religious propaganda studies, a slightly broader conception of propaganda is necessary when religious belief is involved. A useful definition for propaganda that is religiously based should focus on the strategies and purposes (inclusive of the ideological foundations) or, as communications scholars Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell write, a definition that "focuses on the communication process--most specifically, on the purpose of the process" (7). I argue, therefore, that Jowett and O'Donnell's definition of propaganda is among the most useful for religious propaganda: "Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist (7). Although the characteristics, criteria, and ideological foundations discussed are invaluable to a full analysis of propaganda, the identification of

communication as propaganda should rely on a definition that takes both the process and the intentions into consideration.

Scientology Propaganda

As this project will show, the COS partakes in propaganda in numerous publications, though I focus chiefly on its propaganda usage in *responsive communication*, which is employed when the COS is under criticism. Generally, COS responses to criticism involve publishing information aimed at attacking anyone portraying Scientology in a negative light. These responses fall in line with Jowett and O'Donnell's definition of propaganda (7). In its efforts to "shape perceptions" of itself as a religion, the COS *deliberately* creates media that addresses particular issues that critics cite. This effort is *systematic* in that it uses multiple media to distribute recurring narratives and other ideas that *manipulate cognitions* by working to alter assumptions and quell the rumors surrounding the COS. Through this method, the COS as propagandist "direct[s] behavior to achieve a response that furthers [its] desired intent" to gain and maintain followers and improve and/or protect the COS's public image.

Many scholars in fields such as sociology and religious studies have regularly pointed to the COS's use of various persuasive strategies such as its legitimization tactics (Kent) and its conscious move from self-help-group to religion (Urban). Additionally, public policy scholar Max Halupka has noted the COS's perception management struggles in the internet age (282-291). However, scholars in the field of rhetoric and, more specifically, those who study propaganda rarely explore the COS, though mainstream religions are often part of propaganda discussions. For example, Jowett and O'Donnell provide an overview and trace

the history of propaganda within Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam as well as other religions (64-70) but mention Scientology only in passing and with a focus on its use of celebrity spokespersons (132-133). The intricacies of propaganda (in religion and Scientology especially), however, are far more complex than the use of celebrities or puff pieces on the internet. COS propaganda is wide ranging, complex, and multifaceted. It is also extremely under-researched.

Further, when the COS is the subject of analysis among rhetoricians and other scholars, the full context of the policies and belief systems is often not included. For example, communications scholar Todd S. Frobish's study of COS websites in 2000 discusses the overarching appeal to ethos through the affordances of the internet and offers important insights into community and character building online (Frobish); however, the analysis offers only a historical background of the COS rather than an in-depth study of the larger contexts. Similarly, rhetorician Erika Spohrer discusses the rhetorical features of the COS website from 2005-2010, noting its use of language, design, and structure as part of the consumerist endeavors of the Church (108-109); however, minimal attention is paid to the contextual aspects, such as the hierarchical structure and Hubbard's directives. Thus, an essential piece of the systematic strategies and ideologies (Stanley) is not included in the analysis. Moving beyond websites, in her ethnographic performance article, sociologist Giselle Velasquez describes movements within a Church of Scientology and discusses how interactions with COS workers function for outsiders/potential members (825-831). While Velasquez presents a clear overview of the recruitment strategies from her own perspective and the particular practices within COS churches, the larger systems of context are not included. Thus, the rationales, for example, of the practices described are not a part of the

discussion. In an analysis of specific COS texts, linguist Karen Stollznow discusses *The Scientology Handbook* and COS “touch assists” which are “Scientology’s version of faith healing, and is a kind of laying on of fingers...The touch assist supposedly puts the patient back in communication with the affected area, and promotes healing” (6). Stollznow goes on to discuss other types of assists, including those that are used to bring people out of comas, and additional practices, such as Training Routines, such as “Tone 40,” which is used to “raise [a] dead person” (7). While Stollznow discusses an internal COS document in *The Scientology Handbook*, very little context is given in terms of the larger goals, practices, and beliefs of Scientologists or the directives, policies, and background of Hubbard.

While much research on Scientology is often extremely focused and lacks contextual information, there are many studies that provide a great deal of insight. Francesca Retana, for example, analyzes Hubbard’s *Dianetics* and includes several additional COS texts as well as the COS’s editing policies for books. She notes that Hubbard and the COS engage in “linguistic violence” in discussions of sexuality and mental illness:

While currently disseminated material by the Church is guised as more inclusive of the queer community, the posthumous versions of the above mentioned Hubbard texts remain unchanged regarding the topics of sexual deviancy and/or perversion. It is clear that the precedent was set in 1950 and the Church has not rid itself of a violent anti-queer sentiment. In actuality, there is nothing subtle or covert about this position as can be demonstrated by flagrantly homophobic rhetoric and conscious components of Scientology configured by Hubbard’s wish to eradicate what he perceived to be a psychosomatic illness of ‘sexual perversion.’ (4).

In this way, Retana presents a contextualized analysis of linguistic and rhetorical features of Scientology texts by noting the connections among a number of concepts and policies in the Scientology belief system. Additionally, she discusses narratives from former Scientologists who encountered such linguistic violence. Although specific policies and ideologies are not discussed, Retana's inclusion of various COS texts produces thorough analysis.

In a similarly rhetorical analysis of the COS, Annabelle Mooney's discussion of groups labeled as cults uses the rhetorical canon to analyze one of Hubbard's recorded lectures. Mooney ultimately argues that the term *cult* is overly negative and problematic (9-10) and also asserts that Swales' discourse communities concept is useful in considering discourse in cults but needs to be adapted in order to do so fully and ethically:

It seems necessary to talk about a discourse context rather than just discourse communities. The notion of a discourse context incorporates Swales' notion of a discourse community but focuses on the notion that discourse communities interact with other people. Discourse is given in response to discourse. For example, the cult discourse context includes, but is not limited to, the discourses produced by cults, anti-cult movements, academics working in the area and so on. To properly understand a discourse community, its position in a wider discourse context needs to be taken into account (129).

Mooney's notion of discourse context is an important contribution; however, the analysis she provides is not comprehensive enough to fully engage this notion as Mooney does not provide a full picture of the COS discourse community or context. For example, Hubbard's

policies, recruitment tactics, and anti-apostate directives are not included for context within Mooney's analysis.

Analyses of religious materials necessitate inclusion of contextual information that considers the larger contexts as guided by the organization rather than a focus only on individual materials. Such contextual information should include, as discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, contextual logic (Borchardt), the ideologics (Crowley), the discourse context (A. Mooney), and the ideological systems (Stanley). An understanding of these components provides insight into the noetic structures (Plantinga) of individuals who subscribe to the belief system(s) and aids in ethical analyses from outsiders who cannot otherwise speak to the intricacies of unfamiliar belief systems. In the field of rhetoric, this notion of context is often discussed as the rhetorical situation. As rhetorician Lloyd F. Bitzer explains, the rhetorical situation comprises exigence, audience, and constraints of discourse, with constraints "made up of persons, events, objects, and relations which are parts of the situation because they have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigence. Standard sources of constraint include beliefs, attitudes, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, motives and the like" (8). In an analysis of COS materials, these constraints include the structure of the organization, major tenets of the belief system, and specific policies, among other factors, in order to fully appreciate the larger goals and purposes of the organization's materials.

This contextualizing analytical move is especially important for propagandistic materials as these materials utilize "strategic" communication in order to "manipulate cognitions" of the audience for the benefit of the propagandist (Jowett and O'Donnell 7) and may therefore include a number of implicit and hidden meanings or unknown backing for

particular actions. As such, an ethical analysis of religious (and secular) organizations' communicative strategies--particularly those described as propaganda--must include contextual analyses of the logics and structures among beliefs; ideological structures and conscious shaping of these structures; discourse among insiders, among outsiders, and communications between both groups; considerations of the organization's ethical, moral, and/or faith-based underpinnings; and how these elements may comprise followers' noetic structures. To encompass all of these facets, throughout this project, I use the term, *systemized contexts*.

Project Scope

Because my goal is to analyze COS propaganda strategies, examination of specific beliefs or individual experiences within the COS is not included in this project. As Thomas Robbins contends, changes in individuals as a result of indoctrination is not necessarily a viable option for research on religious or cult rhetoric. Individuals and the researcher would only be questioning the "validity of that faith" rather than unearthing useful evidence of control or coercion (213). Thus, rather than centering the testimony of ex-Scientologists or examining the religious narratives of Scientology, I focus on COS texts in an effort to identify propaganda strategies.

As my primary sources of COS propaganda, I have selected two of the most prominent propaganda arms of the Church of Scientology (COS): *Freedom Magazine* and Scientologists Taking Action Against Discrimination (STAND). Both of these COS-run organizations function as seemingly altruistic groups that advocate for freedom and fight discrimination, bigotry, misinformation, and more. In his discussion of Scientology's

legitimization and public relations work in recruitment efforts, Donald A. Westbrook contends that these COS-run sub-organizations are “media counter-efforts” (381-382) and offers brief overviews of these purposes. My project further explores the gap in analyses of these organizations and provides in-depth insights into particular communicative strategies in *Freedom* and STAND and further explores the COS’s larger contextual aspects.

The particular purposes of these sub-groups suggests that they produce the most impartial communications from the COS. In comparison to COS websites dedicated to discrediting apostates (whoismikerinder.com, for example), COS-produced video exposes, letters to producers, and other materials, STAND and *Freedom* should contain somewhat neutral communication as an advocacy site and a news magazine, respectively. However, both *Freedom* and STAND function as propaganda sub-groups that attempt to legitimize Scientology in the larger public and maintain devotion within the organization. Central to my study of COS propaganda are the following research questions:

- What strategies of propaganda does the COS employ in STAND and *Freedom Magazine*? How do these publications function within the larger COS organization?
- What insights into COS propaganda does contextual information offer? More specifically, how do COS policies, practices, and beliefs contribute to Scientology propaganda?
- As founder of the COS, how does Hubbard function within the organization? How does Hubbard construct his ethos? Do current practices continue to rely on Hubbard’s guidance?

Methodology

In this project, I utilize a qualitative design informed by feminist rhetorical research approaches (Royster and Kirsch), ethics of religious research (Pavia), and ethics of online research (McKee and Porter). These approaches have driven my work on the COS, and, further, I have realized that these approaches are occasionally pushed aside in work related to the COS. In an example of this approach, Bernadette M. Calafell, whose work on “women of color feminisms” (104) led her to visit Mexico City as part of her research into “the ways Chicana and Mexicana voices had been lost or diminished in the post-colonial world” (104), writes that her experiences led her to an understanding of the “methodological homeplace” (116). Calafell writes, “I have created spaces that allow me to work within the communities I engage on their own terms, often by not simply looking at a text and its rhetorical properties, but understanding the communities in which these texts are situated as a way to move beyond the false divide between text and context” (117). One of the foundational elements of my approach to this project is reflective of Calafell’s work in that I incorporate into my research a thorough understanding of the COS organization and contextual information before my analysis of its materials.

Though I have visited Scientology’s Flag Service Organization building in Clearwater, Florida and one of the COS’s information centers in the same city, I cannot claim the level of immersion that Calafell describes. However, this kind of immersion with the COS is also nearly impossible for outsiders, as I can attest (I was asked to leave the Flag Service Building nearly immediately). Therefore, to build contextual understanding, I incorporate the COS’s “voice” throughout this project. By reading numerous COS-published books, viewing the official websites, watching the introductory YouTube videos for

Scientology courses, and examining dozens of internal COS policy letters, I have built into this project a large amount of contextual information.

As an intersecting element of my approach, I draw upon Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch's feminist rhetorical research. As Royster and Kirsch write,

An ethics of hope and care requires a commitment to be open, flexible, welcoming, patient, introspective, and reflective. It requires looking and looking again, reading and returning to texts, learning about the contexts of those who use rhetorical strategies under conditions that may be very different from our own. It is learning to withhold judgment, to linger, observe, and notice what is there and what is missing. It is an attitude, a stance, an inclination to discover new well-embodied truths and to revise old truths (145-146).

In my attempts to practice an ethics of hope and care, I have worked to study COS materials through a lens that is as unobstructed as possible. The COS is well-known for its extravagant belief system, high prices, time commitments, and allegations of abuse. While I am aware of such media coverage, I have aimed to approach this project with an open mind; further, I do not excessively focus on sensationalist elements of the Scientology belief system as most religions typically include beliefs that may be alarming or outrageous to outsiders. Instead, I focus on contextualizing the propagandistic practices in which the COS engages.

In addition to and in line with this feminist research approach, I also employ two heuristics for ethical considerations. First, I draw upon the work of Catherine Matthews Pavia to reflect on the "representation of belief systems" throughout the various aspects of the research process. These include the "religious terms, definition, and labels," use of

participants, and the “presentation of this belief system” (358). Although Pavia’s heuristic is based on studies involving participants and their discussions of their religions, the underlying principles of respecting the belief systems of others is an important foundational component of this research. Second, because this study utilizes information and documents published online, I employ McKee and Porter’s heuristic for online research to determine the ethics of analyzing information produced and owned by the COS. This heuristic categorizes ethical considerations in order to determine whether informed consent is necessary and is based on 1) the public or private nature of the site, (2) the use of identifiable data, (3) the interaction with participants, (4) the topic sensitivity, and (5) subject vulnerability. Due to the public nature of the COS website, the difficulty in determining author(s), the absence of participants, the COS-determined topics published publicly, and the various freedom of religion protections available to COS members and administrators, I determined that informed consent was not necessary and that this project conforms to ethical considerations of both religious and online research.

Overall, I consider my approach to this project ethical and feminist. Although I do not condone COS actions, propagandistic strategies, or policies, my analysis and discussion is fair, open, and recursive. I do not partake in sensationalism or the popular media’s discussion of the COS as a spectacle. I also consciously only include apostate testimony that contributes to contextualizing the COS and/or that provides insight into COS strategies. In this way, I attempt to center my analysis on only COS approved materials rather than the hearsay of former members. Although I trust the testimony of these individuals and applaud their bravery in coming forward, this project is aimed at COS propaganda strategies and not on

alleged abuses; therefore, including ex-Scientologist interviews, for example, does not fit the parameters of this study beyond contributing to the context.

Additionally, in line with feminist and ethical research methodologies, I must also carefully position myself (Pavia) within this project as a researcher. In regard to the COS, I am a complete outsider and would be considered an enemy of this Church due to my questioning and criticism of Scientology policies and practices. I am not affiliated with nor have I ever interacted with a current or former Scientologist. As a researcher I also hold a number of ideological beliefs associated with Christianity due to my upbringing. As a child, I attended a very small Christian church with my family, and I enrolled at a Baptist university after finishing high school in a small, conservative Christian community. Importantly in this project, I avoid any kind of comparison or discussion of inferiority or superiority in religious belief systems; rather, I focus on feminist, ethical research practices in an effort to approach the COS and this project fairly.

Finally, in an effort to present a fair analysis that is inclusive of the COS's voice, I include a number of quotes and paraphrased information from COS texts. All texts and images associated with this organization are copyrighted; however, I believe that my inclusion of these textual materials falls under fair use. While I also analyze and discuss visual materials, I follow the lead of previous COS researchers in avoiding reproduction of COS copyrighted images due to the highly litigious nature of this organization. All the visual materials and websites that I discuss are available online for interested parties to view.

Summary of Chapters

In subsequent chapters, I analyze key features of the COS organization in an effort to ethically discuss the Scientology organization. In doing so, I address specific methodologies for each chapter, but each falls under the ethical and feminist approach I have outlined.

In Chapter 2, I focus on the history, structure, beliefs, terms, use of justification, and current research specific to the COS in order to not only provide readers with sufficient information to comprehend remaining chapters but also to analyze the COS's foundational aspects and provide *systemized contexts* related to propaganda strategies. In doing so, I establish the COS's and its followers' fundamental beliefs, policies, procedures, and ideologies. This process allows for in-depth analysis of COS communicative materials from *STAND* and *Freedom Magazine* that I discuss in Chapters 3 and 4.

In Chapter 3, I analyze *STAND*, and more specifically, the white papers published by this COS sub-organization. My goal in this chapter is to determine specifically how the white paper functions as COS propaganda; therefore, I identify macro- and meso-level rhetorical moves to determine the specific aims of *STAND* white papers. This chapter presents an in-depth discussion of, for example, genre, contexts, and the rhetorical situation and considers specific techniques within the larger COS propaganda strategy, including the mimicry of professional genres and the appeal to the kairotic moment. Having established the *systemized contexts* of the COS in Chapter 2, my analysis of *STAND* white papers highlights policies and directives that directly impact the creation of these documents.

In Chapter 4, I analyze an additional example of COS propaganda through an analysis of *Freedom Magazine*. I also specifically discuss one issue, "The Posse of Lunatics," that is

focused on Scientology apostates in order to further illuminate current applications of Hubbard's policies and directives. This analysis offers insights into the propaganda strategies of both the news magazine as a whole and particular articles and other features within its issues. This analysis provides further insight into specific COS propaganda strategies and presents specialized techniques within this publication. Building upon my analysis in Chapters 2 and 3, my discussion of *Freedom* further addresses the use of mimicry and considers the importance of *systemized contexts* in ethical analysis.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I discuss the overarching takeaways from this project. First, I argue that systemized context is an essential element of any analysis and is particularly vital in discussing religious materials. To further illustrate this concept, I discuss several instances in which COS propaganda materials may be easily misinterpreted without the full contexts of COS policies and Hubbard's directives. Second, I theorize two concepts important to the field of rhetoric: the first is mimetic propaganda and the second is divine ethos and the appeal of certainty. Mimetic propaganda stems from my analysis of *STAND* and *Freedom Magazine* in which the COS mimics professional genres as well as kairotic moments--such as current social justice movements. I also theorize divine ethos, and the subsequent appeal of certainty, as a concept that may shed light on Hubbard's continued impact on the COS organization. To conclude Chapter 5, I present an example using the Arrowhead website to illustrate the significance of systemized contexts, mimetic propaganda, and divine ethos.

CHAPTER II

PHILOSOPHIES OF SCIENTOLOGY AND THE COS ORGANIZATION

In line with my feminist research methodologies, including an ethics of hope and care (Royster and Kirsch), and in order to present a clearer picture of the COS as a propagandist organization, in this chapter, I provide an overview of the structure and offer insights into other relevant facets that will aid in my analysis. This approach is in line with Jowett and O'Donnell's analytical move to include identification of the propagandist organization (313) and in line with *systemized contexts* for ethical analysis. As discussed in Chapter 1, the components necessary for *systemized context* include the rhetorical situation (Bitzer); contextual logic (Borchardt) and the ideologics, or connections between specific beliefs, (Crowley); the discourse context (A. Mooney); and the larger ideological systems, which may include flaws and/or gaps (Stanley). An understanding of these components provides insight into the noetic structures (Plantinga) of individuals who subscribe to the belief system(s) and aids in ethical analyses from outsiders who cannot otherwise speak to the intricacies of unfamiliar belief systems. While a comprehensive description of the entire structure and systems of Scientology is not possible here due to the sheer size of the COS, the volumes of texts, lectures, and other materials, the various COS-affiliated organizations, and the layers of complexity, I

present an in-depth overview that will allow for an ethical analysis of COS propaganda in subsequent chapters.

In the following sections, I present the *systemized contexts* of the COS that are relevant to analysis of Scientology propaganda. First, I discuss the structure of the organization, the tactics related to legitimacy and public perception, and key concepts within the COS belief system. Following this contextual overview, I present an in-depth analysis of COS public relations directives through my examination of seven policy letters written by Hubbard. This section allows for further contextual information directly related to press policies and propaganda.

Structure

Since the beginning of Scientology in the 1950s, as Hubbard's *Dianetics* was published and grew in popularity, the face and source of Scientology was and remains Hubbard. As founder, he continues to be venerated as the man who, according to the COS-produced book *What is Scientology?*, "solved the riddle of the human mind" with *Dianetics* and went on to solve other "outstanding puzzles concerning that long-sought-after 'something' we call *life* (25, emphasis in original). The COS describes Hubbard's contributions as wide reaching and systematic:

His methodical and wholly scientific research into this problem came the applied religious philosophy of Scientology, offering not only greater happiness and ability but also solutions to such seemingly hopeless problems as drug abuse, the decline of moral standards and illiteracy--always providing effective and workable solutions as he found them (25).

While he is typically described simply as “founder,” Hubbard’s identity within the COS is complex and multifaceted. As discussed in Chapter 1, he is described as a philosopher, researcher, friend, world-traveler, prolific author, inventor and engineer of Scientology technology, and accomplished scientist. Perhaps most notable is Hubbard’s role as scientist/inventor/engineer as it contributes to his authority within the religion and forms one of the most foundation elements on which Scientology is built. As Benjamin E. Zeller writes, “Scholars of new religious movements need to pay more attention to the ways adherents, leaders and founders of new religions use the idea of science in their discourses and rhetorically deploy it in their religious practices, beliefs and identities. The idea of science carries incredible importance in contemporary society, and how new religious movements relate to science merits serious scholarly attention” (5). A number of factors contribute to scientific appeals in the COS. For example, the name *Scientology* itself, the numerous indications that Hubbard conducted scientific research, and the use of technology and technological terminology function rhetorically as validation of the religion among followers and potential followers.

In addition to scientific appeals, one of the greatest contributing factors to Hubbard’s persona is his claim to have passed through the “Wall of Fire,” allowing him to learn the secrets of the higher levels of Scientology (OT III level of The Bridge). Hubbard claimed that others who had attempted this journey had died, thus casting himself as a sort of savior and guide who “uncover[ed] the secret history of our galaxy and the means to recover our ultimate potential as spiritual beings” (Urban 102). With this and other narratives, not only is Hubbard continuously held up within the Church as a superior person but he also creates a conception of the COS belief system in which it is

objectively true. In addition to Hubbard's role as founder/creator, this conception of the belief system and his casting as super-human places Hubbard at the very top of the COS organizational structure.

Upon Hubbard's death in 1986, after some maneuvering for power (see Manca), David Miscavige gained control of the organization and continues to hold the title of Chairman of the Board (or COB) today. Important to the COS's structure is the method of Miscavige's transition of power. As Terra Manca explains, "In 1986, Miscavige announced to Scientologists that Hubbard consciously decided to 'sever all ties' to the physical world (meaning that he died). By 1987, Miscavige...became the leader of Scientology" (260-261). By announcing Hubbard's death in a way that implicitly and explicitly indicated that Hubbard intended to leave his body as part of his ongoing research, Miscavige deliberately invokes Hubbard's super-human status to ensure the continuation of Scientology. This measured transition of power placed Miscavige directly below Hubbard, allowing Hubbard's teachings and policies to remain intact while the operation of the organization fell to Miscavige. This action positioned Miscavige between Hubbard and all other Scientologists, essentially orienting Miscavige as Hubbard's messenger on Earth and imbuing himself with an ability to reflect (not inhabit) Hubbard's power. Miscavige's current location within the Church's hierarchy constitutes the second level in the structure of the COS.

The third level in the COS's structure is the Sea Organization (Sea Org or SO). According to *What is Scientology?*, this group consists of "more than five thousand members" (324) who "serve as staff for the Advanced Organizations and for the church's international and continental management" (Melton 43) and make up the COS's

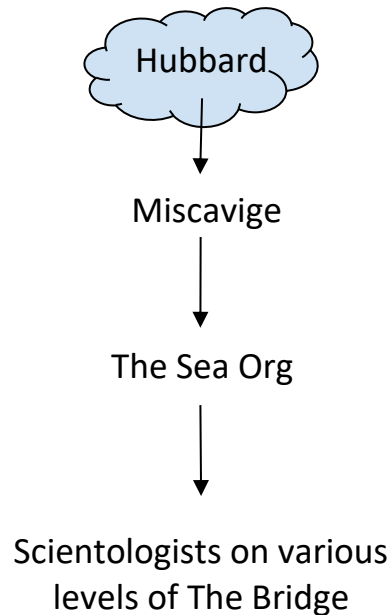
“aristocracy” (Raine 15). Described as an “elite core of devoted followers” who maintain “remarkable military discipline,” wear distinct naval uniforms, and are “icons of the inner core of the church” (Urban 122-123), Sea Org members sign billion-year contracts and are committed to their positions throughout multiple lifetimes and reincarnations (Raine 15; Urban 124; *What is Scientology?* 323); furthermore, they are “dedicated to Scientology’s missions both on Earth and across the universe with the goal of ‘clearing’ both” (Raine 15). The individuals who make up the Sea Org have a number of roles and responsibilities, but, for my purposes here, I focus on the role of dissemination:

[Sea Org members] may be found in almost any area of endeavor in the religion. They are the cameramen, directors, artists, writers and designers who produce the dissemination materials for the religion internationally. They are the senior public relations personnel for the religion who constantly interact with media and governmental officials. They are the top technical staff in Scientology, the top auditors and case supervisors who not only minister the most advanced spiritual technology but, at the upper levels of the hierarchy, also oversee the purity of training and auditing worldwide (*What is Scientology?* 324).

As disseminators, the Sea Org produces and distributes materials on behalf of the Church of Scientology International, “the mother church of all Scientology” (*What is Scientology?* 302). This occurs either directly, as several publications and websites are copyrighted by the COS, or through “church-affiliated” publishing companies governed by the COS, which are Bridge Publications, Golden Era Publications, and New Era Publications International (*What is Scientology?* 302). The Sea Org consists of deep believers in Scientology, perhaps best described as the most devout followers, who not

only practice Scientology but who also produce the COS's propagandistic materials, interact with the media on behalf of the organization, and carry out directives from Hubbard and/or Miscavige (Figure 1).

Figure 1: COS Structure



With this extremely simplified structure of the COS outlined, it is clear that control of the Church from 1987 to the present rests upon Miscavige but is chiefly a reflection of Hubbard's super-human authority. As such, while Miscavige currently presides over the Sea Org, his actual authority comes from Hubbard, which may speak to the return to or ongoing use of Hubbard's directives for dealing with the media and other outsiders. Whether or not Miscavige desires to change Hubbard's directives and policies is impossible to know, but he is likely unwilling to do so as this move would render his own authority contentious since Miscavige has no super-human authority apart from his connection to Hubbard. Therefore, the COS's structure has remained relatively intact.

Hubbard remains at the top, while Miscavige positioned himself directly below Hubbard and directly above the Sea Org.

Religious Legitimacy and Public Perception Management

In addition to the COS's hierarchical structure, another important facet to consider is the effort to manufacture legitimacy as a religion and manage the public's perceptions. Urban discusses this move as the COS's "self-conscious mimicry of the outward trappings of religion in order to obtain the legal benefits, privileges, and protections that come along with that status" (17). Although tracing the COS's development from "a surprisingly successful and widely popular form of personal therapy" (Urban 57) to a multi-million dollar enterprise is an important and controversial aspect of Scientology history, it is not my purpose here. Instead, I discuss the concerted effort of COS leaders to legitimize Scientology as a religion and how this goal continues to impact its practices today, including its use of propaganda.

While the COS is a multinational entity with churches in over 150 countries, my analysis chiefly focuses on its operation in the United States due to my own location and the location of the COS's Flag Land Base in Clearwater, Florida and its Gold Base located north of San Jacinto, California. In the United States, there is no specific list of legitimate religious organizations; instead, an organization's status as a religion is based on its ability to receive tax exemptions. Determining such a status is at the discretion of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). For the COS, IRS tax exempt status became "Scientology's greatest battle" after its tax-exempt status was revoked in 1967 (Urban 156). The COS regained tax-exemption in 1993; however, in the twenty-six years

following the 1967 decision, “literally thousands of lawsuits and an array of illegal activities” transpired, including the “[infiltration of] IRS and other federal offices through an incredibly audacious program of espionage” (Urban 157). In addition to government officials becoming targets of such practices, journalists covering the COS were also subject to investigations by private detectives, harassing phone calls, letters to neighbors, and more (see Manca). One of the most compelling examples, outlined by Manca via news articles, is the targeting of journalist Paulette Cooper. According to Manca, the COS “filed 14 lawsuits against [Cooper], had a covert Scientologist act as her confidant, and eventually framed her [Cooper] for a bomb threat charge for which she was convicted--before evidence collected in the 1977 FBI raid proved her innocence” (258). Numerous such examples of Scientology practices indicate a pattern of behavior in which the COS attempts to manufacture legitimacy by working to limit the spread of negative publicity by targeting the source(s) of information.

Since regaining tax exemptions, similar (though legal) practices have continued. For example, the COS “moved against the Cult Awareness Network (CAN), the major group advocating action against so-called cults” (Melton 38). After numerous Scientologists filed lawsuits, which allowed the Church to “[collect] intimate details concerning CAN’s innerworkings” (Melton 38), CAN was “forced into bankruptcy” (Urban 150) and, at a subsequent auction, Scientologists purchased CAN’s “logo, furniture, and phone number.” As Urban writes, “in one of the most remarkable turnabouts in American religious history, the alleged ‘cult of all cults’ became the owner of the Cult Awareness Network (now relabeled New CAN)...it is, effectively, another entity in the complex network that is the Church of Scientology” (150-151). More

recently, the COS has continued to work through legal avenues to maintain its legitimacy as a religion and to manage the public's perceptions. For example, Max Halupka discusses Scientology's "conflict" with Wikipedia beginning in 2005, in which the COS's categorization as a cult versus religion was disputed, and presumably ending in 2009 when,

Wikipedia's Arbitration Committee ruled in favor of restricting editing from IP addresses originating from Scientology organizations. It was found that multiple users with Scientology IP addresses were openly editing entries relating to its beliefs, practices, structures...and organization. Indeed, user accounts were created with the sole purpose of perception management...These changes were found to involve deleting negative references and criticism and replacing them with content and links that showed the Church in a positive light (286-287).

Scientology's involvement with Wikipedia "highlights the evolution of religious-based political tactics" (Halupka 287); further, the COS's ability to recognize Wikipedia as an important legitimizing factor in 2005 indicates a great deal of strategizing in its public relations efforts. The numerous propaganda materials that the COS disseminates are not only a significant portion of this evolution but also highlight particular communicative strategies within COS propaganda. As such, understanding Scientology's tactics and strategies for legitimacy and public perception management is essential to a full analysis of COS propaganda.

Key Concepts within the Scientology Belief System and Ideology

While COS attempts to legitimize and manage public perceptions are ongoing, as is the evolution of Scientology communication, the ideologies and beliefs associated with Scientology seem to have remained intact from Hubbard's original structure. The complexities of the belief system, however, are mostly secretive and are dispersed throughout numerous texts: "The full body of knowledge that comprises the Scientology religion is contained in more than forty million spoken and written words on the subject--all by L. Ron Hubbard, the source and founder of Scientology" (*What is Scientology?* 1). The magnitude of works comprising Scientology, therefore, cannot be fully outlined here; instead, I discuss the key concepts most relevant to a study of COS propaganda.

To provide an ethical overview of the religious aspects of Scientology, I turn to COS-created texts in order to ensure that the presentation of the religion is fair and accurate. For example, in Appendix seven of *Scientology: Theology and Practice of a Contemporary Religion, a Reference Work Presented by the Church of Scientology International*, Urbano Alonso Galan's "Scientology: A True Religion" outlines the major components of the belief system:

Dianetics has been the tool used by its followers to attain the state of *Clear*. This state, which the book itself defines, signifies an important advance in the eradication of the conditions of unwanted suffering and elevates the human being to a category in which he can better experience his own spiritual self (called the *Thetan*)...Later on, Hubbard discovered...clear proof of the existence of a spiritual being, and, additionally, that the person himself was a spiritual being, immortal and with enormous potentials, which had been cancelled by the sufferings and

experiences of the ‘constant spiral’ of life, death of the body, new body. He developed a spiritual technology which leads to ‘freeing’ the being (the thetan) from this spiral and returns to him his complete awareness and his spiritual freedom. In this way he developed the principles and practices of spiritual counseling (called *auditing*) which lead to the highest states of awareness and being, called OT levels (*OT: Operating Thetan*, because he does not have the compulsive need to be in a body and can operate without one). All of this is expounded in clear steps which are outlined in the route (*The Bridge*) toward ‘Total Freedom’” (215-216).

This overview of the most basic aspects of the Scientology belief system provides a structure for further analysis of the purposes, ideologies, and conscious design within the COS. First, the ultimate purpose of Scientologists, and especially the Sea Org, is “the goal of bringing spiritual freedom to all beings through the full application of Mr. Hubbard’s technologies” (*What is Scientology?* 323). This goal is achieved by clearing the planet or “[ridding] the planet of insanity, war and crime, and in its place creat[ing] a civilization in which sanity and peace exist” (*What is Scientology?* 536). Essentially, the larger purpose of Scientology is to bring each person on Earth into the religion and to a state of Clear by moving up The Bridge and attaining Total Freedom of the Thetan.

With this basic system outlined, I discuss, in the following sections, three foundational elements of the Scientology religion--logics, defeaters, and suppression--that impact any analysis of this organization due to their influence on the rhetorical context of COS media. These elements are vital to an ethical discussion of COS materials in general and of COS propaganda in particular as each work individually and in

conjunction within the belief system of the Sea Org members who create and disseminate COS materials as well as the Scientologists who most often consume this media.

Logics

The first foundational element to consider, which is present from the most basic levels into OT levels of Scientology is the use of specific systems of logic that bind claims to evidence. I describe this technique as *manufactured logics*. Within the COS system of logics, Hubbard, through Scientology, attempts to manufacture logical, critical thinking in followers through the use of evidence that mimics generally accepted criteria for proof, thereby fulfilling the expectation that acceptable claims should have adequate support. In this section, I develop the term *manufactured logics*, and, in subsequent sections, I provide specific examples of its use in Scientology theology and practices.

Though Scientology and other groups are often accused of brainwashing, I do not suggest that *manufactured logics* work in a similar way. Brainwashing is a complex and often contested term with a complicated history due to its portrayals in popular and news media, and it is also either contested or advanced by various camps of psychologists and other researchers (see Williams; Zablocki). Therefore, such a term is not useful in discussing the COS. Instead, the concept of *manufactured logics* allows for discussion of connections among claims and evidence as utilized in COS doctrines. Generally, such logical connections are established by attaching the materials, practices, and origins of the COS as well as the effects of its teachings to specific positive instances in an individual's life. Thus, the evidence that Scientology works is attached through a

seemingly logical connection for members in the group. In doing so, Scientology evokes a sense of validity that it can maintain is based on Hubbard's research and analysis.

Working in tandem with *manufactured logics* is Scientology's avoidance of faith-based claims to form attachments among logical connections. While many religions center on an arguably unknowable presence of God or other transcendent beings, Hubbard created Scientology to feel extremely tangible, often through Scientology technology. Unlike faith-based religions, Scientology can be physically experienced by its followers through measurable results. While similar experiences certainly occur in other religions, Scientology maximizes the potential for proof through specific practices and teachings rather than emphasizing a reliance on notions of faith. Importantly, an outsider may easily object to the logics that Scientology offers while a follower may easily accept Scientology-provided evidence as support for the Church's claims. For a Scientologist, therefore, the rhetoricity of this evidence appeals to *logos*, though the logical connections may be flawed and/or exaggerated.

For a Scientologist, a large amount of very specific evidence is available, but, broadly, three constructs are most apparent and most fundamental to the religion as a whole: the materials, the E-meter, and The Bridge to Total Freedom.

The Materials

The materials in Scientology communicate Hubbard's testimony. As discussed in Chapter 1, Hubbard's super-human status in the religion is based on his claims to previously undiscovered knowledge, scientific research and experimentation, and more. As

Scientology reference books indicate, Hubbard's revelatory scriptures form the base of the belief system:

It is only possible for the thetan [the spiritual being trapped within the human body] to extricate himself from the shackles of the material universe because the fundamental laws which govern the relationship between theta and MEST [matter, energy, space, time] have been isolated. These laws, discovered by Mr. Hubbard and fully articulated in his writing and lectures, form a crucial part of the Scripture and are used in auditing to enable an individual to discover the truth about his own spiritual nature and his relationship to the physical universe. It is this understanding of truth which ultimately brings freedom (*Scientology: Theology and Practice of a Contemporary Religion*, 46).

A number of COS materials, especially the introductory materials such as *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, work similarly to establish the supposedly scientific mindfulness of Hubbard's discovery process as well as his ultimate authority as pioneering researcher.

At the beginning of *Dianetics*, for example, Hubbard establishes a sense of ethos by stating that "the discoveries and developments which made the formulation of Dianetics possible occupied many years of exact research and careful testing (1). Before actually establishing what Dianetics is, then, Hubbard evokes a sense of scientific rigor within his work. Further, Hubbard discusses experimental research, which is meant to indicate the effectiveness of Dianetics:

A neurotic individual, possessed also of psychosomatic ills, can be tested for those aberrations and illnesses, demonstrating that they exist. He can then be given Dianetic therapy to the end of clearing these neuroses and ills. Finally, he can be examined, with the above results [*clear*, or, without ills or aberrations, heightened intelligence, pursues life with joy]. This, in passing, is an experiment which has been performed many times with invariable results. It is a matter of laboratory test that all individuals who have organically complete nervous systems respond in this fashion to Dianetic clearing (14).

As the base of Scientology, Dianetics is established as a scientifically-tested, infallible method of correcting psychosomatic illness, removing aberrations, improving the ability to think, and increasing happiness at the least, though Hubbard also claims it can do much more, including preventing colds, curing asthma, and giving the user “superhuman abilities” (Urban 43-47). Importantly, however, Hubbard’s work on Dianetics remains unpublished in the scientific community. The first instance of Hubbard’s Dianetics research was published in “Astounding Science Fiction” (Urban 45-47). Currently, it is backed solely by Hubbard’s name and the church’s insistence on its accuracy as well as a number of testimonials from satisfied customers.

The importance here, however, is not the methodology of Hubbard’s research; instead, it is the *sense* of precise, applicable, well-researched science that is conveyed throughout numerous materials to the audience as expert-created, workable technology. It is a manufactured logic based on an appeal to *ethos*. To academics or professionals aware of scientific methods, the reliance on anecdotal evidence and the lack of data to support claims of experimental procedures would likely invoke skepticism. However, to a lay

person, and perhaps due to its publication in 1950, this explanation is more likely to be persuasive as it seemingly emerges from a credible source(s) who clearly states that it is based on scientific methods.

Further established in *Dianetics* and other basic materials is the claim that Hubbard is the only purveyor of truth and knowledge and Scientology is the only route to freedom. Such foundational materials further build upon these claims by connecting the perceived authority of Hubbard and Scientology to the self and society:

That man can improve himself and attain higher states of spirituality, ethics and reason both individually and as a civilization is a basic belief of every Scientologist and part of the underlying foundation of Dianetics and Scientology...taking one across the chasm of entrapment in the physical universe to higher states of existence (*Scientology: Theology and Practice of a Contemporary Religion* 57).

Underwritten by Hubbard's perceived expertise, the theology of Scientology gains significant credibility. That Hubbard discovered, contained, and transcribed this knowledge becomes a foundational belief of the religion, and the idea that the self and society can be improved with these practices becomes anchored to that foundational belief. These foundational beliefs form the base of the noetic structure (Plantinga 48) on which Scientologists anchor additional beliefs expressed in more complex materials with which followers are required to engage.

As Scientologists move from the introductory materials to the more complex, they are required to engage in auditing sessions (initially, a form of therapy) and training

(studying Hubbard's works) in order to advance in the religion. The average Scientologist is required to purchase study materials, which include books, lectures, films, auditing sessions, and other media that feature recordings of Hubbard or are publication of his own writing (*Scientology: Theology and Practice of a Contemporary Religion*, 46). As the scripture of Scientology, these materials connote a marked authority and sense of reliability for followers as Hubbard is touted as a kind of prophet/savior/scientist who escaped death and brought back *the only* way to what amounts to salvation (Urban 102). The sheer volume of these works not only lends a sense of *ethos* to Hubbard's knowledge base but also extends his legacy as an explorer, philosopher, philanthropist, scientist, and discoverer or receiver of a revelatory message. The extensive materials in Scientology, therefore, create further manufactured logics based on characteristics such as volume of information, structures of learning, high cost of participation as an indicator of worth, and more. This design imitates the characteristics of validity, and, therefore, lends further credibility to Hubbard and to Scientology.

In addition to seemingly scientific processes and findings in the establishment of Scientology, specific events that occur in reality are taught to be attributed to Scientology materials and teachings. A follower who, for example, sees an improvement in their life, such as a promotion at work, would likely not only feel that Scientology practices are the cause of such improvements but would also be coached to see their experiences in this way. Similar to William P. Alston's discussion of Christian Practices in which Christians interpret vague experiences as manifestations of God working in their lives (123), a Scientologist would likely attribute their successes to Scientology training and auditing.

Coaching individuals to see this attribution as a logical connection begins at the entry point to Scientology but extends throughout the multiple levels of the belief system.

For example, *The Technology of Study*, a COS handbook based on Hubbard's teaching, discusses how to study and provides practical, concrete applications for better study practices such as giving children objects to count in learning arithmetic, creating visualizations such as drafts for ideas, and learning definitions of words when reading (7-17). These common strategies for study are presented as novel ideas that are simple, effective improvements to the act of studying that remedy a lack in academic institutions: "L. Ron Hubbard filled this gaping hole [in education] by supplying the first and only technology of how to study. He discovered the laws on which learning is based and developed workable methods for anyone to apply" (*The Technology of Study 2*). In presenting simplistic information as breakthroughs for everyday struggles, followers beginning their path toward Scientology are coached to see the logical connections between study "technology" and improvements in any aspect of their lives as evidence that Scientology works, that Hubbard is a pioneering force in knowledge, and that the improvements they see are evidence that Scientology works. In this example, evidence is based upon the simplicity of the "technology." A person who is unaware of or has been unable to apply these study techniques likely would have some success after learning them, and the results would certainly be real for such individuals. Seeing success after this application does constitute a logical connection; however, the presentation of these techniques as being discovered first and only by Hubbard essentially manipulates basic, common sense concepts and manufactures logical connections.

In a number of ways, Hubbard's materials form, for followers, a system of manufactured logics that imitate acceptable evidence. Considering that these foundational beliefs form the base of followers' larger noetic structure, understanding their function is essential to understanding further indoctrination of Scientologists, including the production and consumption of propaganda. Once followers connect the validity of Hubbard's work with positive outcomes, it becomes much easier to accept the (manufactured) logical connections from Hubbard's processes and work to his theology and commands.

The E-meter

Providing Scientologists further validity for Hubbard and his materials is a device, known as the electropsychometer, or E-meter, that is believed to allow for objective measurements of engram releases—essentially, it provides corroboration that an auditing session has been successful. It is a tool used by auditors during auditing sessions and is one of the more fundamental strategies employed by the church to establish evidence of effective practices. During auditing sessions, parishioners are subjected to the E-meter's sensors and the "electrical charges" within the subject move the needle on the auditor's screen left or right. According to the church,

This religious instrument is vital because the mental image pictures that harbor these experiences [engrams] also hold very minute amounts of electrical energy that can be detected with the E-meter. As this charge varies or dissipates [moving the needle], the auditor knows the parishioner has successfully addressed—and resolved—the source of that aspect of his spiritual entrapment. Thus, while the E-

meter by itself does nothing, it is an invaluable guide for the auditor (*Scientology: Theology and Practice of a Contemporary Religion*, 37).

As a tool or guide for auditors, the E-meter serves as a tangible, physical object that mimics proof of the effectiveness of Scientology religious practices—both for the auditor, a fellow, though more advanced, Scientologist, and the individual being audited. This practice is important in understanding the indoctrination of followers as Scientologists can point to results that imitate scientific research through the numerous materials sold by the church; however, they can also *see* the E-meter's needle reacting and view the readings; they can *feel* the sensors on their skin and cannisters in their hands that measure, per Hubbard, the release of engrams—or entrapments of the Thetan.

Scientologists, therefore, have tangible evidence that Scientology is working as evidenced by the needle on the E-meter that imitates other tools and machines that are similarly constructed and discussed as scientific—invented, researched, and perfected through testing by an expert, interpreted by a trained professional with more authority, and used to measure some aspect of the body. However, the E-meter cannot be categorized with other, similar tools and machines due to the lack of verification. As Stefano Bigliardi writes,

What is written about the E-meter in Scientology literature can be deemed sheer pseudoscience and the device can be seen as an example of pseudotechnology, or paratechnology at best. The very existence of the engram, let alone its detection by means of resistance to an electric flow through its 'mass,' has never been experimentally verified. What has been verified is that the electric flow produced

by the E-meter is influenced by known physical factors, so that the needle's motions prove unreliable or easily manipulable; even if we benignly accept the hypothesis that something like the engram might exist, all versions of the E-meter, no matter how up-to-date, are influenced by factors that fatally impair any detection of engrams themselves. The E-meter does not perform with the precision and infallibility claimed by Hubbard. (674)

Despite Bigliardi and others' insistence that the E-meter amounts to pseudoscience, Scientologists do not subscribe to this notion. In the same way that individuals trust the measurements and interpretations of these devices by a trained professional, a Scientologist trusts the E-meter and the auditor. As such, logics are manufactured as the E-meter mimics not only scientific thinking but also scientific instruments that are viewed as (relatively) infallible or objective. This is not actually the case in Scientology as the E-meter requires subjective interpretation from the auditor and significant training prior to use; instead, the E-meter is viewed as a tool developed by Hubbard who is connected to science and rationality and as a measurement of Scientology's effectiveness. In conjunction with the numerous materials required of Scientologists, the E-meter further establishes an attempt at scientific mimicry, subsequently creating manufactured logics within this religion through pseudoscience.

The Bridge to Total Freedom

A third fundamental element created by Hubbard is the use of a kind of course completion checklist known as The Bridge to Total Freedom. As J. Gordon Melton explains, "the Church provides a detailed chart which describes the route each person

follows. Church members view themselves as moving up the bridge, and as they reach each new level, they are presumed to have arrived at a more heightened awareness” (30). The Bridge document, which is available online and reproduced in *Scientology: Theology and Practice of a Contemporary Religion* imitates a slightly different type of logical connection but does so on several levels as it is a document that motivates, indoctrinates, and, broadly, conveys a sense of professionalism and importance afforded through its reverence and genre.

As a highly visual document, the linear structure of Scientology is apparent in The Bridge as it clearly exists as a tool meant to build a dense base on which other beliefs can readily be anchored. It begins with simplistic, introductory materials that grow in complexity as the user proceeds through each level. The Bridge document itself states, “Factually you’ve been traveling this universe a very long time without a map. Now you’ve got one. Put this chart on your wall. When you’ve taken some of the steps, mark them DONE with the date. Find out your next step and mark it TO BE DONE and WHEN. Then do it...Keep track of your progress and keep moving. You’ll make it. All the way.” Important to the journey up The Bridge is the scaffolding of study materials and auditing and the motivating impact of goal-oriented study that is entirely visible.

Additionally, motivation and indoctrination stem from the structure. For example, the initial levels consist of broad, tangible aims with physical results such as the “Life Improvement Course” which “teaches the basics of Scientology technology which can bring immediate improvement to a specific aspect of an individual’s existence such as marriage, family, relations with others, and personal integrity.” Further up The Bridge, followers move through “release from harmful effects of drugs, medicine or alcohol” to

“relief from the hostilities and sufferings of life” to CLEAR or “a being which no longer has his own reactive mind [essentially, the subconscious]” to Operating Thetan (OT) Levels which begin with the purpose of attaining “a fresh, causative OT viewpoint of the MEST [matter, energy, space, time] universe and other beings.” The Bridge works as a tool that provides followers with goals to attain and documentation of the logical connections between their study/auditing and Scientology working in their lives. As the document representing the progressive indoctrination into the upper levels of Scientology, The Bridge shows the deliberate design that moves followers through small, manageable goals into complete re-conceptions of the universe, the history of mankind, and the composition of the human form. It is effective, therefore, not only as an imitation of guidance genres evoking professionalism and authority but it also acts as a record, reminding followers of the logical connections they have already experienced.

Additionally, the professional style and specific reverence placed in The Bridge establishes it as a distinctive tool for the church. Similar in some ways to a university degree sheet, The Bridge sets forth each course or certification required for advancement into the higher levels of Scientology study. It is often designed with red lettering and lines on a white background with a bridge image watermarked into the background. The Bridge as a symbol within Scientology can be found on the covers of books, within the religious icons, referenced within nearly every Scientology publication, and is the namesake of Scientology’s own publishing company, Bridge Publications. Though it essentially acts as a checklist or map or guide, it is discussed as a document meticulously researched and created by Hubbard so that others could follow him into spiritual enlightenment. Therefore, The Bridge is held in extreme reverence within Scientology. It

is the central document that connects Hubbard's materials, the need for auditing with the E-meter, and the necessity for Scientologists to continuously pay for additional services and courses. Its saturation within the religion, like the materials and the E-meter, are foundational elements that form, for the average Scientologist, the basis of a noetic structure. These beliefs solidify the foundational concepts of the religion and allow for further, more complex beliefs to anchor and solidify.

Therefore, important to understanding how Scientology might further influence individuals as a result of belief formation is the lens through which a Scientologist is taught to see life. Philosopher John Hick discusses the concept of "experiencing-as" which "helps us to understand religious faith...as the interpretive element within...[a] distinctively religious way of experiencing life" (184). As the interpretive element, religion can give experiences a meaning beyond what a nonreligious person might assign. In perceiving religious experiences, Hick states that one important aspect is the level of "ambiguity" which creates a perception "capable of being experienced in a number of different ways. This ambiguity is characteristic of religious meaning. On a larger scale, we can say that the world, or indeed the universe, is religiously ambiguous—able to be experienced by different people, or indeed by the same person at different times, in both religious and naturalistic ways" (190). This act of interpretation based on a religious lens can also be readily applied to Scientology. As a follower moves up The Bridge, with all that this action entails, more complex and elusive experiences are attributed to Scientology as additional beliefs are anchored to basic beliefs—those held to the highest degree and with the greatest depth of ingression (Plantinga 49-50). Followers must hold the basic belief that Hubbard's words are revelatory (established in the materials) and that

the materials of Scientology will result in the betterment of individuals and society in order to save mankind (established through the use of the E-meter and progress on The Bridge).

This notion of salvaging humanity, of saving individuals and society, rests on the Scientologist's activities in freeing the Thetans—clearing the planet. This the highest priority of Scientologists, though truly understanding why is not revealed until the upper levels of OT study. Keeping Scientologists on The Bridge and in Scientology rests on these foundational beliefs, especially when followers are permitted to view the confidential OT levels. When this occurs, full indoctrination is key as the upper OT levels, according to leaked Scientology doctrine, involve the “Xenu narrative” (Raine 80) and other revelations that would likely be untenable for even a Scientologist to accept without firmly held beliefs in the validity and authority of Hubbard and Scientology.

In short, the noetic structure of a Scientologist must be able to withstand the implausibility of Hubbard's most expensive, most extravagant revelations. This fact is especially necessary for those in the Sea Org who engage in a number of problematic activities at the command of Hubbard and/or Miscavige. In light of the thousands of people who have spent years in Scientology, the use of a scaffolded indoctrination process reliant upon manufactured logics is capable of creating such a noetic structure.

Defeaters

In thoroughly analyzing the rhetorical context of Scientology, I also consider followers' ability to believe in its teachings despite counterevidence or counterarguments. Within the noetic structure of a believer, such counters can be analyzed as *defeaters*. Essential to

an in-depth and ethical discussion of Scientology, the issue of defeaters offers important insights into not only Hubbard's deliberate design of this organization but also the methods utilized in COS propaganda and the broad purposes of these publications. In conjunction with manufactured logics, the handling of defeaters is a key concept that provides a clearer picture of the COS organization.

In his discussion of defeaters, Plantinga explains, "Perhaps you propose to me an argument for [a] conclusion that it is impossible that there be such a person as God. If this argument is convincing for me...then perhaps I am no longer justified in accepting theistic belief. Following John Pollack, we may say that a condition that overrides my *prima facie* justification for *p* is [a] *defeating condition* or *defeater* for *p* (for me)" (84). As such, defeaters are important considerations in noetic structures as the ability to defeat these defeaters points to the strength of the noetic structure or the depth and centrality of specific beliefs. Plantinga further explains that,

Many believers in God have been brought up to believe, but then encountered potential defeaters. They have read books by skeptics, been apprised of the atheological argument from evil, heard it said that theistic belief is just a matter of wish fulfillment or only a means whereby one socioeconomic class keeps another in bondage. These circumstances constitute potential defeaters for justification in theistic belief. If the believer is to remain justified, something further is called for—something that *prima facie* defeats the defeaters. (84)

In Scientology, defeaters may exist as similar types of arguments. For example, former members have alleged significant abuse from COS officials, individuals have claimed

that Hubbard created the COS as a way to get rich, and many academics, journalists, and others have proposed that the belief system is deeply problematic and overtly based on Hubbard's science fiction, among many other claims. Despite such arguments, or potential defeaters, many followers have maintained their place within the COS. The Scientology religion, therefore, is deliberately designed to actively resist such potential defeaters and that this design is one of the key concepts in understanding its rhetorical context. Resisting defeaters is accomplished in a number of ways, but, at the foundational level, it chiefly relies on *shifting causes of defect*.

Shifting causes of defect designates Scientology practices (i.e., Scientology Technology) as infallible—essentially, Scientology is never the problem; instead, Hubbard places blame on the user and insists that they are using it incorrectly. For example, in Hubbard's policy letters and bulletins, several instances indicate this shift of blame:

- So *any* incorrectly done S & D [Search and Discovery] (as above) will not result in a pc [pre-clear] bright-eyed and bushy tailed. All S & Ds correctly done on a pc that is PTS [potential trouble source] result in remarkable recoveries magical to see. So don't blame S & D if it 'fails'. Blame the lack of skill in using it and the person who ordered it or did it should be retrained ("Search and Discovery: S & D Errors" 127).
- The first thing to know is that CASE WORSENING IS CAUSED ONLY BY A PTS SITUATION. There never will be any other reason. As soon as you doubt this datum and think about 'other causes' or try to explain it some other way you

no longer prevent cases from worsening and no longer rescue those who have worsened (“Level IV Search and Discovery” 114).

In these two examples drawn from many similar instances, the non-falsifiable claims of Scientology practices is apparent. Essentially, if auditors employ Scientology correctly, it will always be successful. This claim is necessary for Hubbard and Scientology because, as a religious organization, it relies on manufactured logics to form its validity for followers more than faith or trust. Once Hubbard’s claims are established as valid in the lower levels of Scientology and an individual proceeds through the numerous levels of indoctrination/education, these claims of infallibility are believable for the Sea Org members whom Hubbard is addressing in these communications.

To further his claim that Scientology technology is infallible, Hubbard also addresses “no-gain cases,” or individuals for whom Scientology practices actually did not work. Hubbard contends that these individuals typically had “major or minor criminal backgrounds” and were “committing continuing overt” (“The Continuing Overt Act” 102). In Scientology, an “overt” is defined as “an aggressive or destructive ACT by the individual against one or another of the 8 dynamics (self, family, group, Mankind, animals or plants, MEST, Life or the Infinite)” (“Overt-Motivator Sequence” 231). As such, a “no-gain” case and, in some instances, a “slow-gain” case is caused by the individual continuing to partake in negative actions. While, by Scientology’s definition, this can certainly include criminal acts, it can also, by definition, include any act with a negative outcome. This includes, for example, the death of a pet, self-harm, giving another individual a cold, or avoiding family. In this way, the practice of Scientology can remain blameless and sealed by allowing the Church to point to nearly any act as “overt.”

Additionally, the Church may point to auditors' incorrect usage of Scientology auditing practices, thus establishing one or both of these issues as the cause for no- or slow-gains cases rather than stipulate that any aspect of Scientology practices is ineffective.

To further solidify Scientology's infallibility as well as his own, Hubbard additionally seals the Scientology religion by insisting that no- or slow-gains cases are also not worth the trouble. He writes, "I know how to cure them rather easily. Maybe I'll never let it be done. For had they had their way we would have lost our chance. It's too near to think about. After all, we have to earn our freedom. I don't care much for those who didn't help. The rest of us had to sweat a lot harder than was necessary to make it come true" ("The Continuing Overt Act" 103). Despite the causes that Hubbard presents for cases in which Scientology seems ineffective, he also claims that he has determined these individuals unworthy of Scientology, taking the defense against defeaters a step further by insisting that he could "save" everyone if he truly felt compelled to do so.

In this way, Hubbard crafts Scientology so that it actively resists defeaters that may stem from any seeming defect in auditing practices--a problem that can impact a follower's movement up The Bridge. Moreover, he identifies himself as completely infallible. This move further cements his own power within the organization as leader, founder, and holder of knowledge that is unavailable to all others. This shift of blame and veneration of Scientology technology in addition to Hubbard's supposed knowledge are key concepts within the noetic structures of Scientologists and, more specifically, Sea Org members. Such beliefs are essential in a comprehensive analysis of the rhetorical context of COS propaganda as they indicate the depth of indoctrination in COS followers.

Suppression

In addition to shifting the causes of defect and thus protecting the perception of Scientology's technology as paramount, Hubbard also designed his religion with fundamental concepts that also resist defeaters but function primarily as policies within the COS. These concepts form the Suppressive Person (SP), Potential Trouble Source (PTS), and Disconnection policies, each of which work in tandem to essentially require followers to avoid contrary information that may be communicated through problematic individuals or groups.

Many introductory COS materials reference suppressive persons and potential trouble sources as "antisocial personalities" (*The Scientology Handbook*). This complex COS-term essentially refers to "twenty percent of the population" who have attributes such as speaking in "broad generalities," spreading rumors and criticisms, never sharing good news, blaming others, supporting or approving of "only destructive groups," and attacking "constructive or helpful actions or activities" (*The Scientology Handbook*). For the COS, which views itself and its members as inherently good, any criticism is an attack in line with these attributes rather than a conversation starter or a means to improve or reconsider policies: it is a way to recognize an enemy.

Definitions for SP, PTS, and Disconnection are extensive and complex in that they tend to be built and redefined and slightly reconfigured through several different works, including introductory class videos, books, and internal policy letters. The most central of these concepts is *suppression*, which is defined as "a harmful intention or action against which one cannot fight back;" further, a suppressive person (or SP), is identified as someone "seeking to injure the org[anization] through various suppressive

actions.” SPs include people such as attorneys, government officials, reporters, or anyone else an individual may be in contact with (“Admin Know-How” 346) and are described as a person who will “work to stop an activity” and will spread rumors (“Discipline SPs and Admin” 428). An SP can exist within the Scientology organization or in the everyday individual lives of Scientologists.

As dangerous enemies, Suppressive Persons (SPs) are given particular attention in COS policies and doctrines. In public-facing materials such as self-help videos and *What is Scientology?*, much of the discussion of SP/PTS individuals revolves around the idea that they are simply bad people, or in COS-terminology, anti-social people. They “squash any betterment activity or group...[and their] behavior is calculated to be disastrous” (*What is Scientology?* 537). In the publicly available but more COS-facing *Introduction to Scientology Ethics*, Hubbard discusses “suppressive acts” more specifically, such as “unauthorized use” of COS materials, giving “anti-Scientology data to the press,” “continued membership in a divergent group,” and much more (213-215). Furthering the SP description among Sea Org, Hubbard writes,

Each of those few dozen no-gains tell frightening lies to little children, pour ink on shoes, say how abused they are while tearing the guts out of those unlucky enough to be around them. They are suppressive persons, every one. I know. I’ve seen them all the way down to the little clinker they call their soul. And I don’t like what I saw. The people who come to you with wild discreditable rumours, who seek to tear people’s attention off Scientology, who chew up orgs, are suppressive persons (“The Continuing Overt Act” 103).

Through his demagogic language, Hubbard continually provides identification markers for in- and outgroup members. As Patricia Roberts-Miller writes, “Demagogues polarize a complicated (and often frightening) situation by presenting only two options: their policy, and some obviously stupid, impractical, or shameful one. They almost always insist that ‘those who are not with us are against us’ so that the polarized policy situation also becomes a polarized identity situation” (“Democracy, Demagoguery, and Critical Rhetoric” 462). This demagogic process manifests within the belief system as religious backing for vilifying individuals who do not conform to Hubbard’s teachings, or, more specifically, those who criticize Hubbard’s teachings.

Related to the SP doctrine is an additional layer of protection within the COS. When a follower is in communication with an SP, the Scientologist may become a Potential Trouble Source (PTS). A PTS is similarly threatening, though to a lesser degree. For example, “Legal [the branch of Scientology that handles legal matters] goes PTS being in contact with SP courts and with SP or PTS attorney firms as well as confronting suppressives who are seeking to injure the org[anization] through various suppressive actions” (“Admin Know-How” 346). Essentially, a PTS is a person in danger of becoming an SP, but a PTS is viewed as a curable condition whereas an SP is often viewed as impossible to rehabilitate or unworthy of such attempts.

As a result of this policy, outsiders with questions are silenced and insiders with questions are removed. Implementing such practices limits not only the number of actual questions being asked but also limits the desire to do so. Additionally, the COS has a policy in which followers are encouraged to file Knowledge Reports (KRs) (“Knowledge Reports”) on one another, creating a system of internal policing related to the SP and PTS

doctrines. Together these practices further insulate Scientology as the questions and information needed to produce dissent is both preemptively and actively quashed.

Discussions of SP and PTS policies are numerous in Scientology materials, and the church condones a number of methods for dealing with these issues. One remedy enforced for a Scientologist in communication with an SP is *Disconnection*. This practice consists of cutting off all communication with the SP. On occasion, Scientologists may be asked to Disconnect from a PTS as well. As a method for both “punishment” and “decontamination” (Eric Reitan, personal communication), Disconnection as a practice is somewhat similar to excommunication or shunning in other groups, though it can be applied for very minor offenses such as asking questions or expressing doubts. As Hubbard writes, “The person [a PTS] is asked if anyone is invalidating him or his gains or Scientology and if the pc [pre-clear] answers with a name and is then told to handle or disconnect from that person the *good indicators* come in promptly and the person is *quite satisfied*” (“Search and Discovery” 113). A policy letter does exist that consists of just one sentence that states that Disconnection “as a policy” is cancelled; however, this policy is mentioned in a number of recent Scientology materials, including materials that argue for the validity of this practice (standleague.org), which indicates that the practice remains intact. Disconnection is one of the most controversial policies in Scientology as it can result in individuals Disconnecting from family and friends who question practices or other aspects of the Church.

Viewed in conjunction with one another and with other concepts in the religion, these practices also contribute to Scientology’s attempts to seal the organization against infiltration of criticism and critical individuals:

- A pc [pre-Clear] will worsen after auditing if connected to a Suppressive Person (and *only* worsens when so connected). A pc who makes no case gains is Suppressive (and can only be handled by Power Processes and a Class VII Auditor) (“Qualifications Technical Actions” 76).
- It is easy to tell a Type One PTS from a Type Two. The Type One brightens up at once and ceases to Roller Coaster [a case that betters and worsens, sometimes cyclically] the moment the present time SP is spotted. The pc ceases to Roller Coaster. The pc does not go back on it and begin to beg off. The pc does not begin to worry about the consequences of disconnection. If the pc does any of these things, then the pc is a Type Two (“Search and Discovery” 113).
- Find the Suppressive, make the pc handle or disconnect. Then audit the pc up to Problems Release by getting rid of the hidden standard [a problem] *and* the basic suppressive. Never audit a pc who is a Potential Trouble Source other than on the infallible, never varied datum, a Roller Coaster is always a PTS connected to an SP. Note also that a person going clear is now a thetan with a new view of life and has *new* hidden standards (requiring the location of suppressives) which he had no reality on as a Man or later as a Release (“Suppressives and Hidden Standards” 109).

As these examples illustrate, the methods for maintaining followers’ convictions revolve around a kind of isolation. In closing off all negative communication entirely, Scientologists do not hear or see information or questions that do not align with the church’s teachings and practices. If and when they do encounter such negative communication, they are trained to view it as the attempts of an enemy to destroy

Scientology--a religion they believe to be the only way forward in clearing (saving) the planet.

Thus, the COS belief system is deliberately structured to identify any attempt to impede the process to Clear and OT as the behavior of an enemy, and this identification extends beyond the average individual with questions to professionals who may offer particularly problematic insights into the COS. Susan Raine discusses a number of such enemies, which begin with "cosmic entities" such as Xenu and the Marcab Confederacy, among others, who appear as part of a narrative revealed in higher OT levels. Raine explains that Hubbard used this narrative to both construct and locate enemies of the COS (12). For example, Hubbard declared psychiatrists as enemies in 1968 and disclosed to high-level OTs in 1980 that The Marcab Confederacy would eventually invade and enslave earth but had already sent agents that had infiltrated the population as people within the world's religions. Thus, Hubbard was able to cast both priests and psychiatrists as "fierce enemies" as well as anyone deemed a Suppressive Person or Potential Trouble Source (Raine 12- 13). Again, this identification of enemies within the COS belief system constitutes demagoguery. Hubbard positions Scientologists as an ingroup, non-Scientologists as an outgroup, and SPs/PTSs as a dangerous outgroup. As Patricia Roberts-Miller writes, "In demagoguery, outgroups are hated in various ways and for various reasons. They are inferior in whatever qualities the demagogue privileges (honesty, morality, Aryanism) while being, if not superior, then at least potentially more powerful than the ingroup (better organized, sneakier, richer). They are dangerous because of that power, and often because they are morally and physically infectious, sometimes in extremely vague ways" ("Democracy, Demagoguery, and Critical

Rhetoric” 463-464). Common among those deemed COS enemies is the potential to disrupt indoctrination into COS practices and beliefs; thus, enemies are inferior only because they are not Scientologists, but they may be dangerous and powerful in their ability to promote critical thinking and/or alternatives to Scientology among followers. Demagoguery within the COS, therefore, is not only a method for removing defectors; it is additionally an integral element within the ideological system. As such, Hubbard’s claim that there are enemies who would destroy the only means of saving the world becomes a deeply held religious belief that factors into a number of policies and practices, including the production and consumption of propagandistic materials.

This summary of the COS’s key concepts indicates how Scientology functions as a highly structured, demagogic, sealed system in which Hubbard created an appealing step-by-step process of ever-deepening engagement and homogeneity of ideas among his followers. This is visible in manufactured logics and is protected by SP doctrines and narratives that preemptively assign the label of enemy to individuals who pose a threat to any aspect of Scientology. In this way, Hubbard created a system in which defectors, critics, and members of competing organizations could be easily identified and villainized by his followers. These concepts create a thoroughly sealed noetic structure that not only requires a great deal of effort to confront but actively guides the actions of followers at various levels and greatly contributes to the larger rhetorical context of the Scientology religion.

Public Relations

With the basic structure, ideas on legitimacy and public perception, and key concepts outlined, I further my analysis by investigating a small portion of the policy letters delineating actions of Scientologists who serve in the Sea Organization. These individuals are responsible for creating and disseminating COS propaganda and are among the most devoted followers of Hubbard's teachings. In this section, I discuss Hubbard's directives for the Sea Org regarding public relations. As my analysis shows, these directives and policies are directly related to contexts of propaganda strategies. The primary methods I have identified in regard to Hubbard's public relations directives include *prevention* and *handling*. These two broad categorizations and their sub-categories provide insight into an important aspect of the *systemized context* in the COS responsive materials that I will analyze in subsequent chapters.

According to Hubbard, negative media coverage on the COS, which Hubbard describes as "black propaganda" or enttheta press, requires various types of action from Sea Org members specializing in public relations. Hubbard outlines strategies for conducting this response and reasoning for doing so in several policy letters from Hubbard Communications Office (HCO) to the Sea Org. For example, Hubbard writes, "The attack is a long cycle, a complex cycle and often an expensive cycle. It consists of investigate and attack. But remember, one must attack once he has any idea of the identity of the Black Propagandist or even his sub-terminals. There is no other way out. Any other course is death" ("How to Handle Black Propaganda"). This statement indicates that the Sea Org should gather information on, or "investigate," any person who disseminates negative press (the "black propagandist"), including this person's research

assistants, sources, or other subordinates (the “sub-terminals”). In addition, he asserts the importance of this role by stating that not conducting this process “is death” for the organization. This suggestion of death is likely an exaggerated appeal to pathos but also functions as an association with the primary goal of “survival” within COS doctrine.

Hubbard refers to this investigate and attack process as propaganda itself in several policy letters. For example, he writes, “Our propaganda is dirty but it is not black because it is true. Black propaganda is essentially false... We won’t be running a black campaign as we deal in truth... We just run propaganda campaigns” (“Black Propaganda”). To carry out the information-gathering aspects of COS propaganda campaigns, Hubbard established a specific group of Sea Org members in 1966. Labeled the Public Investigation Section, this group’s purpose was “to help LRH investigate public matters and individuals which seem to impede human liberty so that such matters may be exposed and to furnish intelligence required in guiding the progress of Scientology” (“Public Investigation Section”). Additionally, the policy letter describes the function of this section:

It will be seen that the section has all the useful functions of an intelligence and propaganda agency. It finds the data and sees that it gets action. The determination of what a project is simple--what agency or group is attacking Scientology? As Scientology stands for freedom, those who don’t want freedom tend to attack it. The Section investigates the attacking group’s individual members and sees that the results of the investigation get adequate legal action and publicity. The mechanism employed is very straightforward. We never use

the data to threaten to expose. We simply collect it and expose (“Public Investigation Section”).

It is clear that Hubbard directs Sea Org members with all the ethos that his position holds. He sets enemies up as attackers of freedom in the COS sense of Total Freedom via the Bridge, and, later, as attackers of religious freedom. Again, demagoguery plays an important part not only in the belief system but also in the Sea Org’s actions. With the outgroups sufficiently established and their status as enemies fallaciously supported by mechanisms such as associating these enemies with attacks on religious freedom, Hubbard directs Sea Org members to participate in propaganda campaigns against these enemies.

Miscavige’s continuation of these and similar directives are produced currently as exposes often disseminated through the COS’s own media sources that work to discredit “black propagandist[s],” a move consistent with the more specific procedures written and/or authorized by Hubbard in policy letters:

- The fact is that just going on PRing oneself does not remove the effects of the campaign and all too soon one no longer has communication lines left in order to handle anything since reputation is so destroyed no one will listen and no lines remain. One has to fill the vacuum of the counter propagandist’s evil deeds. As these are never exposed to view there is a vacuum there (“How to Handle Black Propaganda”).

- In terms of the war, the aim is to get the reporter fired and discredited. It is an obliteration tactic...we endeavor to hit as many directions as possible (“False Report Correction”).

Exemplified here are Hubbard’s public relations directives. He establishes that only publishing positive information about the COS (or “PRing oneself”) is not an effective method in the war on those who publicly criticize the COS. According to Hubbard, the COS should also work toward exposing the “evil deeds” of the critics and obliterating the opposition through propaganda campaigns.

Thirty to forty years ago, when Hubbard wrote these several dozen policy letters, the goal was typically to publish this information through articles in popular newspapers and magazines. However, with the publishing capabilities available via the Internet, this directive is currently manifested through COS-created media. As Jowett and O’Donnell write, this move is consistent with propaganda organizations: “Often, where propaganda is distributed, the organization owns and controls its own media. Whoever owns the media exercise control over the communication of messages” (318). Hubbard insists that “filling the vacuum” with “one’s own good works is vital especially in a Black Propaganda war” (“How to Handle Black Propaganda”). The necessity of circulating positive information about the COS through the media, then, becomes an important strategy within the larger “war.” Considering the vast amount of information created and circulated by the COS about the COS and its attackers, this practice of distributing a somewhat balanced amount of COS-positive and attacker-negative information seems to be ongoing despite the decades-old policy letters written by Hubbard.

In the following sections, I present a careful, recursive analysis of HCO policy letters that directly address the actions to be taken by Sea Org members when COS-negative media occurs. My analysis reveals two dominant themes, each with sub-themes, regarding the COS strategies utilized to combat such media: *Prevention*, and *Handling*. Identifying these techniques provides further insight into the purposes of COS propaganda and is, therefore, essential in accurately analyzing and discussing particular examples of COS propaganda.

Methodology

In order to analyze COS public relations policies, I collected seven policy letters from both printed internal policy letter collections published internally for Sea Org members and also from the Suppressive Person Defense League (SPDL) (<http://suppressiveperson.org/>), an archival website containing a large number of internal documents from the COS administration, court proceedings, and many additional types of media and writing. Policy letters from the printed internal collections are direct matches for those published on SPDL.

In determining which policy letters to analyze, I drew from one of the documents on the SPDL website--the "Guardians Office: Confidential Intelligence Course" checklist, which is a training program for those who were entering as new agents within the (now apparently disbanded in its official capacities or at least in official title) Guardian's Office (GO). Though information is limited, the GO was essentially the ethics and/or public relations office within the COS's administration. In order to work in this office, new agents were required to complete a "checksheet" that contains dozens of

training steps, including reading books, writing essays, making demonstrations, and completing drills. These steps are divided into five sections. Part C, a smaller section in comparison to others, contains ten steps, seven of which are requirements to read policy letters with titles referring to propaganda. These policy letters are the focus of this study as they directly speak to public relations policies whereas other listings on the checklist refer to non-media related internal procedures.

Coding Process

Following the process for grounded theory design, the analysis of data was multi-level and recursive. As discussed in Creswell, grounded theory follows a generally linear yet “interactive” process in that the “various stages are interrelated and not always visited in the order presented” (246). Essentially, these steps involve open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Corbin and Strauss). Though the process was not completely linear, several steps (see Creswell) were generally taken in order to code, analyze, and interpret the data within the HCO policy letters:

1. I printed each policy letter to allow for hand coding and read each policy letter carefully, noting what seemed to be the overall aim and purpose.
2. Using open coding, I assigned codes to “chunks” of text (phrases and sentences) within each policy letter according to the underlying purpose by noting linguistic markers (e.g., “thus,” “furthermore”) and the sentence action (e.g., “when one is under heavy attack...one may have to...” or “the objective is to be...”). Examples of the coding scheme are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Examples of Coding Scheme		
<i>Text “Chunk”</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Category</i>
“You cannot operate without a base to operate from. You cannot deliver without somewhere to deliver it. You cannot sell what you cannot deliver” (“The Safe Point”).	“‘safe point’ as prior concern to delivery”	Prevention
“To counteract and nullify such tactics, we have to be sure that we know and have a full file of such reports, newspaper articles, etc. filed on ourselves...and to have such available for use as necessary, to protect ourselves from any future activities of this nature” (“Intelligence: Dead Agent”).	“‘PR Packs’ prepared for future use”	Prevention
“Sometimes the fact that PR is contacted is the first indication that there is something bad brewing, and by passing data to Legal a combined operation can enable Legal in the UK and in other countries to obtain an injunction or some such to prevent publication” (“False Report Correction”).	“benefits of COS spokesperson; alerting”	Prevention
“A good policy when faced with a black propaganda campaign is to defend as best you can (dead agent and legal restraints) while you find out (intelligence) WHO is doing it” (“Black PR”).	“defense tools; disprove and investigate”	Handling
“One has to fill the vacuum of the counter propagandist’s evil deeds. As these are never exposed to view there is a vacuum there” (“How to Handle Black Propaganda”).	“discredit the source of black propaganda”	Handling
“As a standard action the PR prepares a typewritten correction and documentation of false reports contained in the previous article or show” (“False Report Correction”).	“respond to negative press with report corrections”	Handling

3. Using the codes generated, I employed axial and selective coding (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison) using the terms attached to the “chunk” of text during open coding to determine the context of the strategy. Thus, I identified the categories of *prevention* and *handling*, labels which are based on Hubbard’s own terminology.

Analysis

My analysis is presented in the following sections in which I discuss the larger themes of prevention and handling as well as the sub themes within each of these larger strategies.

Prevention

The first strategy to be undertaken when “black propaganda” is imminent is *prevention*. Within many of the Policy Letters (PLs), this is the most advantageous form of combating black propaganda or any other unethical press. Rather than published propaganda necessitating a response, *prevention* techniques stop or hinder the propaganda before the public is able to see it and thus react to it. The prevention strategy consists of two major techniques: *groundwork* and *spokesperson*.

Groundwork. As a technique, *groundwork* is quite involved and requires a large amount of prior work in order to be effective. The goal of this technique is to create a foundation on which to build pro-COS information that can be disseminated to the public. This is done through creating a “safe point” and/or through “PR Packs,” both of which work similarly to provide an established set of information.

A “safe point” is a kind of information control sector for the delivery of information. PR agents are tasked to “have a safe place to get into, from which one can in safety speak up. One cannot defend himself in a point that has no defences” (“The Safe Point”). To accomplish this, GO agents identify and gather data on “top dogs” in an area. Though “top dogs” is left undefined, the PL indicates that it may refer to city officials, local business leaders, etc. The information about these individuals is used to “take care not to step on their toes” (“The Safe Point”). The PL also states that “without a safe point

established...it is a waste of time to rush into dealings with a government or to promise them anything. It is too easy to step on hostile toes and to arouse suspicion of you or make you difficult to account for” (“The Safe Point”). This aspect of the PL is not expanded upon in a way that would allow for a fully developed understanding of the intentions behind “promise” or “dealings with a government;” however, the purpose of establishing a “safe point” is further clarified: “The PR Area Control action in a new area can go so far as to create in the area a whole past and future track for the activity being established. It can make it sound old-established, stable, reliable, expert, productive, and with continuing expansion before it—when the delivery activity arrives and gets into operation” (“The Safe Point”). Thus, the “safe point” is a strategy in which a foothold is established for COS information to be delivered within an area. It involves making connections with local officials and establishing a good impression in a particular area before expansion of any programs or communicative activities takes place.

A similar goal is apparent in policy letters regarding PR Packs. These are used in two ways, but the *prevention* aspect of this strategy involves creating large file folders in which copies of good press are provided to newspapers, radio and television stations, and other media sources in an attempt to counter their “morgue files,” which are the news sources’ own file of press and information on the COS. Having determined that these “morgue files” are incorrect, GO agents are tasked with creating files of good press: “We have to...have a full file of such reports, newspaper articles, etc. filed on ourselves...we can further use such in advance to any official we wish to protect from being third-partied...the fact that we ourselves present these stories and the correcting evidence first invalidates it” (“Intelligence: Dead Agent”). Thus, the goal of PR Packs is to create a

preemptive strike that disproves negative or false information that may come from a “third party.” Further, according to one PL, GO agents should send these PR Packs to media sources with a letter of transmittal that advocates for their use in upcoming articles in order to ensure accuracy:

Print up a slip worded to state that Dianetics and Scientology and LRH have been subjected to black propaganda for 21 years and that counterfeit materials were often distributed. This situation is resolving and Dianetics Scientology and LRH have been cleared now by various governments. That in the future for accurate information communicate with (give name and address) ("Dead Agent: Additional Project").

Thus, PR Packs establish a foundational set of information for media sources to use in future articles. In addition, they also are provided to various persons, groups, companies, government agencies, and others to preemptively counter information the COS deems false.

The *groundwork* technique is an important aspect of the larger strategy of *prevention*. In providing their own selected material to media and other sources, the COS is able to at least attempt to influence the flow of communication surrounding their organization and to create a “safe” environment in which to deliver this and other information.

Spokesman. Another form of *prevention* involves, essentially, creating an open line of communication. One policy letter states that “a major factor in the prevention of the printing of entheta stories is the availability of a spokesman. The PRO should always

be available when a comment or interview is required. This gives two advantages to the Guardian Office...the story can be blocked...[or] by passing data to Legal a combined operation can enable Legal...to obtain an injunction or some such, to prevent publication” (“False Report Correction”). Hubbard provides two examples:

- a) “The Daily Mail dropped a story of a man who said we had busted up his family when we pointed out that this broken hearted husband had sexually interfered with his two young daughters. Back in 1968 the story was wiped from the front page and never did appear. Prevention is better than cure in such cases” (“False Report Correction”).
- b) “A book published by some idiot, called the ‘Mind Pusher,’ contained a great deal of a Declared SP’s justifications. The first indication we had...was when a Television studio asked for an interview with a Scientology spokesman and the author. PR went along to do the interview while Legal obtained an injunction which prevented publication and the programme” (“False Report Correction”).

The perception of being an open organization in which communication with the media is always readily available is an essential aspect of *prevention*. Essentially, this creates a sense of validity among the public, and perhaps the media, in that the COS shows that it has nothing to hide and is willing to open themselves to others. Although in example (a), the source of the communication is unclear, the technique is to block such stories by discrediting the informant. What is also unclear, however, is the level of truth required. No support for the claims against the “broken-hearted husband” or directives for ethical information gathering/sharing are presented in the PL, though they may exist elsewhere. In example (b), the source of information is clear, in that a television program wished to

portray both sides of the issues discussed in the book. However, the justification for this specific *prevention* technique is less developed. A Declared SP is considered by the COS to be an inherently false witness who blatantly works to destroy Scientology. It is interesting that the COS advocates for suppressing information rather than participating in an open debate of sorts wherein their positions might be communicated to the public. It is likely, though, that the COS would expect that their statements would not be presented fairly and accurately.

Ultimately, the prevention strategy calls for Sea Org members to preemptively select and distribute information for public consumption and to suppress information prior to its publication in the media.

Handling

When prevention is not effective or is not effective enough, the broad strategy of *handling* is discussed in the PLs. This is a term used in Scientology quite often and essentially means that a person or group needs to be managed or controlled or swayed in some way. The concept of “handling” is an established technique in countering propaganda that has important contextual meaning for Scientologists. *Handling* is the set of techniques to employ in cases of propaganda being published despite efforts of *prevention* and/or due to the inability to prevent, such as not being notified prior to the publication of an article or an apostate interview. Hubbard presents four techniques for *handling* propaganda once it has been disseminated: *counter source*, *disprove content*, *add to/change content*, and *sway appearance*.

Counter Source. Though a particular order of techniques is not explicitly outlined, one of the first or at least most important moves is to determine, investigate, and discredit the *source* of information. In order to apply this technique, Hubbard presents several methods that direct the GO agents to counter the source's propaganda.

- a) "In terms of the war, the aim is to get the reporter fired and discredited. It is an obliteration tactic...we endeavor to hit as many directions as possible" ("False Report Correction").
- b) "Agreement occurs at the same emotional tone level as the person making the statement. He buys his facts at that level. To go half a tone up from his level is to command him within his zone of reality" ("False Report Correction").
- c) "[Keep] locating names and filing them, with dates. At length one name file is very thick. That's your boy" ("False Report Correction").
- d) "One must attack once he has any idea of the identity of the Black Propagandist or even his sub-terminals" ("False Report Correction").
- e) "A hidden source injects lies and derogatory data into public view. Since it is a hidden source, it requires an intelligence approach to successfully end it" ("Black PR").

As these examples show, the techniques used to deal with a source involve several interconnected methods. (c) and (e), for example, indicate that a source must first be identified through intelligence, or investigation, by finding the hidden source. This is explained further in the PLs as a research method in which cross-filing of reports leads to one file becoming larger due to the number of secondary sources using the same information ("False Report Correction", "Black PR"). With the source identified, the GO

Agent can proceed with communication as described in (b). This is a complicated method that requires training in Scientology practices of interpersonal communication.

Essentially, the use of the “tone scale” is a practice determining a person’s attitude and then presenting oneself with a slightly different attitude in order to gain agreement. An example provided in the PLs is countering “apathy” with “sorrow” or countering “covert hostility” with “anger” (“How to Handle Black Propaganda”). Thus, the source is led to agree with the GO Agent, that the information is based on falsehoods, if proper tone-scale evaluation and employment is used. In conjunction with these methods, the GO Agent also discredits the source of information, namely the reporters who have written reports that the COS deems false. This method is discussed in both (a) and (d). The goal in these moves is to attack the media “terminal” and “sub-terminal,” or the reporter and those who support and surround the reporter (i.e., researchers, assistants, etc.) and discredit them to the point of termination from their position.

Content. A second technique discussed in conjunction with or as an act following the *handling* of the *source* is the *handling* of the *content* of the false report. Largely, this technique falls into two categories: disproving content or changing content. In either method, the *content* of the false report is the focus.

The most extensively discussed method for *disproving content* is to perform a process called “dead agenting.” This course of action “consists of disproving utterly the false statement with documents or demonstration or display. One has to have a kit (a collection of documents) or the ability to demonstrate or something to display” (“How to Handle Black Propaganda”). The central action, then, is to counter the falsehoods with proof that shows contrary information with proof and documentation being the basic

requirement. One policy letter, for example, explains that “Dead agenting has a billion variations. ‘It won’t fly.’ Fly it. ‘Place is empty.’ Show him it’s full. The subject matter of Dead Agenting is PROOF in whatever form. You only challenge statements you can prove are false and in any conversation let the rest slide” (“How to Handle Black Propaganda”). Other policy letters take up this method as well: “False reports are corrected by true facts. You do whatever you have to do to get the true facts communicated and published. Documentation is the biggest aid in doing this. Communicating corrections obtained from other media helps build ethics presence and makes for a careful press and media” (“False Report Correction”). This aspect of *disproving* extends the purpose of the PR Packs that contain good press for the COS. Thus, the importance of PR Packs is twofold and discussed as an essential *handling* and *prevention* technique.

In order to fully explain the use of the *disprove* technique, the policy letters provide examples of the application of this method such as presenting a marriage certificate to a person who accuses another of living with someone out of wedlock or presenting tax documents to those who accuse another of being “in trouble with Income Tax people” (“How to Handle Black Propaganda”). The “Dead Agenting” technique, then, is used solely for disprovable facts. It requires actual documentation, but the goal is also to discover who the source of the false information is as is apparent in the larger purpose statement: “When the enemy agent gives false data, those who believed him but now find it false kill him—or at least cease to believe him” (“How to Handle Black Propaganda”). Thus, the *disproving* technique works to first correct false data, but, secondly, works in conjunction with the move to discredit a *source*.

For non-disprovable content, however, Hubbard directs the Sea Org to work toward *changing content*, which allows the COS to change the focus. The goal, therefore, is not to deny or to coerce the media source to retract the false information. Instead, the GO Agents are expected to shift the story for the COS's benefit through the use of PR Packs as previously discussed; however, additional techniques are employed as well.

- a) "Blunt denial is crude and can be used against one as a sort of confirmation...Use any channel to speak up. But don't seek channels that will corrupt what you say in repeating it. Don't stay on the same subject that you are being attacked on...[Speak] up without denying and thus confirming" ("False Report Correction").
- b) "The PR wants equal space, not a retraction of a letter to the editor...initiate a proposal to remedy the situation...It will be found that a new article will be easier to sell the media terminal on and will be of more interest to readers and will serve to cancel out the previous bad article. The PR will find it easier not to make the media wrong, but to find a way to let the media terminal be right" ("False Report Correction").

The techniques discussed for non-disprovable falsehoods are essentially contained within the idea of "filling the vacuum" ("How to Handle Black Propaganda"), in which data is disseminated to an audience and works as discussed in (a) and (b). This concept is presented chiefly as a means to convey the importance of providing good press through any means possible. Thus, good press might necessitate, as (a) shows, the need to shift the focus toward a more positive point, or it may require the presentation of articles that contain positive information about the COS (b). An example of (b) is presented in "False

Report Correction": "Science Digest prints a bad story on Scientology. We propose an article on electronic phenomena of the human being by a physics professor/Scientologist" or "Marine Corps Gazette comes out with a bad story on Scientology. We propose an equal space article by a retired Lt. Col. USMC who is a Scientologist on the subject of leadership" ("False Report Correction"). Thus, false accusations that cannot be explicitly disproven by documentation require a different approach—*changing* the content by shifting the focus.

The issue of *content* is treated throughout several PLs, but the overarching methodology essentially consists of *disproving* the article's data and/or *changing* the content presented by shifting the focus and presenting positive aspects of Scientology through a credible source. Importantly, therefore, when facts cannot be disproven with documentation, the GO Agent must not deny; instead, they should shift the information to portray the COS in a positive light.

Sway Appearance. The final overarching theme apparent in the PLs that discuss *handling* techniques is the move to *sway appearance*. This method involves reshaping the source and/or the public's perception of the COS by presenting oneself and the organization as a moral, positive institution or by showing force when working with a reporter or other source if necessary.

Shaping the COS's public presence toward a positive light is discussed as a means by which the GO agents recast negative assumptions concerning the COS. This is achieved through techniques such as acting as the face of the COS, as a kind of advertisement for the positive nature of the organization (a), by showing good deeds

through memberships and other good works that are publicized and prove the nature of a Scientologist as a good person and a good organization (b, c), and by focusing attacks on certain kinds of “evils,” those accepted as common negative factors to many people in society (e.g. attacking black propaganda as an evil), which then casts the COS’s opponents in a negative light due to their attacks on a good organization that is working to fight evils (d).

- a) “Many media terminals have never met a live Scientologist and a PR who is a well trained Scientologist can have the effect of a walking false report correction...using the Manners policy and tone scale handling” (“False Report Correction”).
- b) “Accused of drug smuggling one can show he’s a member of the anti-drug league. The counter in a negative proof must be creditable” (“False Report Correction”).
- c) “One must, through his good works and actions at least, be visible. So a continual truthful and artful torrent of public relations pieces must occur” (“How to Handle Black Propaganda”).
- d) “The objective is to be identified as attackers of popularly considered evils. This de-classifies us from former labels. It re-classifies our attackers as evil people. Which they are” (“Black Propaganda”).

In contrast, appearances are also discussed in terms of authority or power. Utilizing this authority or power, as provided by membership in the COS, can work to *sway appearance* by, in a sense, intimidating the source of false information. While this may seem to be a tactic belonging to the *counter source* technique, the overriding point here is to *handle* a source by coercing this person or group through shifting power:

- e) “One obtains ethics presence by attitude and having ethics presence...When under heavy attack or when dealing with an out and out SP, one may have to raise ones voice or thump a table or throw a chap out of the ground floor window, but in normal circumstances you will find that as a representative of the most powerful religious philosophy on Earth you already have it” ("False Report Correction").

The technique of *swaying appearance*, then, establishes the COS's desired public persona and, therefore, individual Scientologists as good, moral people and/or as a powerful organization that is worthy of being respected and feared if necessary. Overall, the method of *handling* propaganda that is published involves dealing with the *source*, the *content*, and the *appearance* of the COS and of Scientologists in general.

Discussion

The results of my analysis indicate that strategies for combating propaganda exist in the HCO policy letters and that notable characteristics of the COS and the Sea Org's techniques are apparent. From my analysis of the HCO policy letters, nine strategies are apparent in both the *prevention* and *handling* of negative press:

- Create a “safe point” in order to preemptively quell possible hostilities of locals.
- Distribute PR Packs containing good press on the COS to media sources for use when COS-related articles are written, television or radio programs are developed, etc.
- Designate a spokesperson to be available at all times for comment regarding upcoming publications on the COS, thus creating a warning system which will

enable the blocking of the story through discrediting the source and/or securing an injunction.

- Determine the hidden source of “black propaganda” and discredit this person or group, preferably until they are fired, or manipulate them into believing that the information they have is false.
- Provide documentation to disprove negative press and rumors by forwarding positive stories written by other media sources.
- Avoid denying negative content; instead, convince the media source to print a story that presents the COS or a member of the COS in a positive light.
- Cast the COS as a moral organization by constantly publishing pieces on “credible” good deeds.
- Accuse attackers of utilizing “black propaganda” and then attack “black propaganda;” consequently, the COS will be seen in the public “as attackers of popularly considered evils,” and the attackers will be seen in the public as evil.
- Intimidate sources of negative press when necessary by utilizing authoritative voice, movement, posture, etc. and by legal physical means as needed.

Within these PLs, Hubbard essentially utilizes propaganda in order to present strategies for employing propaganda as a means of combating the propaganda of enemies. PLs are directly from Hubbard, a source credible beyond all others to the audience of GO Agents tasked with reading and implementing these strategies. Based on previous discussion of COS practices, it is highly unlikely that GO Agents/Sea Org members need any validation beyond the word of Hubbard to take part in the practices discussed here.

Hubbard's authority and the sealed belief system act as rationalizing factors and justification for actions.

Without external sources of information, GO Agents/Sea Org members are subjected to a "hermeneutical injustice," which occurs "when a group is systematically denied access to the resources to conceptualize their social world correctly" (Stanley 258). Essentially, the lack of outside information creates a skewed idea of reasonableness and rationality. As such, the methods Hubbard discusses in the PLs are accepted as moral, as they are commands from the leader of the religion. Additionally, GO Agents/Sea Org members must contend with gaps in their ideologies (as previously discussed, I argue that religious ideologies cannot be "flawed" in the traditional sense). These gaps include, in line with Stanley, "lack[ing] some concepts entirely" (202) and/or an "ideology of technicism" (209). Stanley's discussion of propaganda and flawed ideologies provides some important insight into how Hubbard's propagandizing of GO Agents/Sea Org member functions. For example, these individuals may completely lack certain concepts that would prevent the effectiveness of Hubbard's propaganda, such as alternative religious belief systems or positive mental health possibilities or conceptions of religious/cult abuses. As previously discussed, Hubbard effectively casts many members of religious and mental health organizations as inherent enemies; thus, followers are unlikely to have any information on the realities of these organizations.

I also suggest that a technist ideology contributes to gaps in followers' ideologies: "The ideology of technicism is one that restricts genuine reasons in the public sphere to those whose contents contain only scientific or quantitative concepts...Manfred Stanley argues that the ideology of technicism undermines democracy, by undermining the

autonomy of those who are unfamiliar with the technicist concepts. The ideology of technicism makes citizens feel unqualified to participate democratically in the formation of the laws that govern their behavior” (209). While Hubbard is only a proclaimed scientist and researcher and while the COS is certainly not a democratic society, this concept is applicable due to the nature of Hubbard’s claims as a scientist/researcher. He establishes himself as the only human with knowledge of the nature, history, and futures of humanity. With this sense of power and authority that Hubbard exudes, followers may feel inept at challenging his directives due to the pseudo-scientific basis on which Scientology is built.

If these ideological gaps are combined with the intended audience’s (GO and Sea Org) linked beliefs, via “ideologic” (Crowley), that Scientology is the only true religion, Hubbard’s directives are not only unchallengeable but are also true for them. Though the directives condone the use of lies, manipulation, coercion, violence, “obliteration,” and similar tactics, the intended audience would have little recourse or desire to question any of Hubbard’s directives. Hubbard’s religious system ensures that enemies are cast purposefully, that potential defeaters are defeated, and that critics are silenced.

Such tactics are not unique to Scientology, and I presume that a number of organizations and groups should be analyzed in ways similar to those I have discussed here. For example, *The Vow*, a documentary chronicling NXIVM, a cult accused of numerous crimes including sex trafficking and branding women, among other offenses, signifies similar techniques. The documentary discusses harassment and silencing of defectors and provides several instances in which leader Keith Raniere was highly venerated. Further investigation of this group would also likely show methods of

defeating defeaters, such as accusing members of simply not working hard enough or not giving enough of their time when the group's practices fail. In addition to groups like NXIVM or the COS, political groups should also be analyzed with respect to systems of belief among followers. For example, many Conservative groups showed extreme reverence for Donald Trump during his 2016-2020 presidential term. A great deal of blame was shifted to Democrats and/or the "mainstream media" on a number of issues in an effort to resist defeaters. Additionally, many followers exited certain social media sites due to fact-checking features, which were perceived as censorship (Bond). In this way, followers moving to or threatening to move to new social media platforms was an attempt to silence opposing viewpoints.

Such analyses of systems of belief are important foci within the field of rhetoric. As Laurent Pernot writes, "We are today witnessing the return of religion...This is why it is important--and perhaps why it is the duty of us academics and intellectuals--to find new ways of thinking about religion in a world where unthinking and depraved uses of religion can be dangerous" (236). The tactics utilized within such groups/organizations as the COS or NXIVM or certain political groups are intricately intertwined, and each strand pulls on one another, continually tightening and constantly strengthening the hold on followers. Within the field of rhetoric, such structures of belief should be thoroughly investigated as highly persuasive systems of belief that can cause or result in propaganda.

Propaganda of this sort, or religious propaganda, does not necessarily require a new definition or categorization. Jowett and O'Donnell's definition is specific enough to encompass only instances of propaganda but is broad enough to include any type of propaganda, including religious. My contention is that the nature of religion and

religiously-based groups requires a deeper framework for analysis. Jowett and O'Donnell's framework includes identification of the propagandist in which analysts should investigate the contexts, structure, purposes, and other components of the organization. Within analyses of religious propaganda campaigns and specific materials, this move should also include the systemized contexts in order to establish a nuanced view of the role that belief plays within the organization and, more specifically, on the noetic structures of the followers who consume and often disseminate religious propaganda.

In this chapter, I have discussed the COS's basic structure, the Church's attempts at legitimacy and public perception management, key concepts in the religious belief system that form the noetic structures of followers, and the public relations directives that Hubbard created for Sea Org members. Though not exhaustive of the Scientology religion, my analysis of these concepts provides a thorough rhetorical context for Scientology propaganda materials. Importantly, this chapter has established that Hubbard's authority is a central aspect of the COS and that followers are held tightly within the grasp of Scientology ideologies. This consideration is important to my analysis in subsequent chapters in that the specific examples of propaganda I analyze, though highly problematic and lacking in compassion, are results of Hubbard's indoctrination programs and directives for followers. In chapters three and four, I discuss examples of COS propaganda materials with this rhetorical context included in order to form an ethical and in-depth analysis of particular samples of COS propaganda.

CHAPTER III

PROPAGANDA IN STAND WHITE PAPERS

With the systemized context established in Chapter 2, I move to an analysis of one of Scientology's unique propaganda arms. This analysis of specific COS communication is informed by the previous discussions of the history and contextual elements of the Scientology organization and will begin to illuminate the larger goals of COS propaganda.

Scientologists Taking Action Against Discrimination (STAND) is a group within the COS dedicated to defending religious freedoms and fighting against bigotry and hatred. Notably, these actions take place primarily online via the STAND website which houses forms and contact information for users to report instances of hate speech, religious discrimination, and intolerance directly to the STAND League. Reports need not pertain only to the COS or to Scientologists. The STAND mission statement and additional information indicate that this group encourages reports regarding any instance of hate, discrimination, bigotry, or intolerance. As such, STAND is both COS- and public-facing; however, its COS audience seems to be primary.

Additional information surrounding issues of discrimination more specific to the COS are also included on the website. This information is contained in white papers; blog posts;

videos; frequently asked questions; profiles on various “biased media propagandists,” “hatemongers,” and “false experts,” and more. Although the entirety of the STAND website can be identified as propagandistic, I focus my analysis on the STAND white papers. Because these documents convey an inherent sense of facticity and because readers typically perceive such documents as truthful, white papers offer an opportunity to ethically analyze COS communication. Due to the nature of the white paper (WP) genre, an in-depth analysis provides insight into COS communicative strategies within documents that should be among the most researched, most fact-based that the COS produces. Thus, I avoid simply selecting the most salacious COS communication and instead investigate what should be among the least problematic. This approach and methodology ensures that I avoid selecting materials that are easily categorized as propaganda, such as anti-apostate websites (e.g., whoismikerinder.com).

In this chapter, I briefly discuss the COS’s use of the WP and the characteristics of this genre; then, I employ a grounded theory design to analyze rhetorical moves in order to inductively reason toward larger theories of propaganda based on my observations and analyses of Scientology WPs. Finally, I discuss how the systemized context of the COS informs analyses of STAND WPs and COS propaganda.

STAND White Papers

In response to criticism and accusations from apostates, critics, and others who disagree with COS practices, the Church crafts various *responsive communication* such as video exposes, interviews with friends and family of apostates, letters to producers and/or directors (and others) involved in media productions critical of the COS, websites aimed

at discrediting specific critics and apostates, white papers, and various other media. While each of these responses is worthy of analysis, the STAND WPs are particularly intriguing in that they present arguments regarding the COS through a genre that audiences likely view as inherently credible and factual.

Though it is employed often within the COS and innumerable other organizations, the white paper (WP) may be unique among technical and professional communication genres in the relative lack of scholarship available. For example, Kim Sydow Campbell and Jeffrey S. Naidoo state that they “uncovered little research focused specifically on white papers” (95). The characteristics of this genre remain unclear despite Campbell and Naidoo’s study of common rhetorical moves in high-tech WPs. Therefore, both technical communication scholars and industry experts are discussed here in order to conceptualize the WP genre and offer insights into the COS’s utilization of it. Though an analysis of the WP genre is not my ultimate goal here, a broad understanding of the purpose(s) and characteristics of this genre will aid in analyzing COS WPs.

Both scholars and industry experts maintain a generally similar view of the broad aspects of the WP genre. For example, industry expert Gordan Graham writes in his often-cited *White Papers for Dummies* that WPs have three broad purposes: “I call these three flavors of white papers the backgrounder (vanilla), the numbered list (strawberry), and the problem/solution (chocolate)” (89). Essentially, while the backgrounder and numbered list offer readers mostly objective information, the problem/solution presents an argument which typically indicates that the organization authoring the WP can offer the solution.

Other industry experts agree that the WPs' central purpose is argumentation and/or marketing. Michael Stelzner, for example, discusses the larger purpose of WPs in the introduction of his book *Writing White Papers: How to Capture Readers and Keep Them Engaged*: "White papers help people make decisions...it can inform or influence. Best of all—it is highly sought after. The white paper's underlying strength rests on this premise: If you give readers something of value, they will give you their loyalty, and ultimately their business" (1). In a similar vein, Robert W. Bly expounds the idea of "educational marketing" and describes the WP as "a promotional piece in the guise of an informational article or report" (xiii). Bly explains that "direct marketers refer to the free booklet or white paper as a 'bait piece,' since the free information is the bait used to hook the reader into responding to your advertisement" (xiv). According to Bly, therefore, WPs can be utilized not as an objective, fact-based document but may also act as persuasive pieces that draw customers/readers toward the organization.

Thus, WPs are often mostly neutral, informational documents that often make explicit and/or implicit suggestions (Graham) or are marketing pieces designed to educate readers by explicitly persuading them toward a specific product, company, and/or action (Bly; Stelzner; Campbell and Naidoo). Overall, scholars and industry experts seem to agree that WPs typically have at least three common purposes and characteristics: 1) Provides information 2) Focuses on marketing 3) Supports decision-making processes.

With these broad purposes and characteristics of the WP genre identified, I analyze COS-produced WPs housed on the STAND website. These WPs cover a wide variety of subjects, though most are focused on apostates and others who criticize the church. STAND has also produced WPs for a wider audience that focus on particular

issues and accusations surrounding the COS such as “disconnection,” “fair game,” financial practices, the reasoning for confidential scripture, and other topics that critics question and present as suspicious or problematic.

My goal in this chapter is to first identify the rhetorical moves in the STAND WPs and then, using this analysis, determine the larger aims in the thirteen STAND WPs by investigating the following questions:

- How are the STAND white papers structured? Specifically, what macro- and meso-level rhetorical moves are identifiable?
- What aim(s) are apparent in the STAND white papers and how are these aims supported? In other words, of what are the author(s) attempting to convince their audience?

Methodology

In line with my feminist approach to COS research and due to the limited literature on WPs, I utilized a qualitative approach and employed grounded theory as it allowed me to “compare and contrast [theory discussion and literature] with the results (or themes or categories) to emerge from the study, [thus] it uses the literature inductively (Creswell 62). This approach allowed me to investigate the research questions fully and fairly in order to identify rhetorical moves rather than search for commonalities with marketing-focused or other WPs. Importantly, while I was aware of the organization and purposes of WPs as a genre, I utilized open coding in order to identify themes in the data as a consequence of systematic data collection and analysis rather than a set of predefined categories to be tested (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison). This use of grounded theory is

outlined by Kathy Charmaz who writes that “grounded theorists adopt a few strategies to focus their data gathering and analyzing, but what they do, how they do it, and why they do it emerge through interacting in the research setting, with their data, colleagues, and themselves” (397-398). While I was unable to interact with the research setting or creators of COS WPs due to the nature of the organization, my data analysis was recursive and reflective in that I returned to the data on several occasions while continuing to research the contexts of the STAND website and the larger COS organization.

Thus, my findings are a result of multiple analyses and were revised throughout the process of coding and interpretation. Since very few studies have focused on the COS, grounded theory offers an opportunity to identify rhetorical moves based on the data and then discuss these categories by considering, as Charmaz writes, “both *why* questions and *what* and *how* questions” (397).

Coding Process

Following the process for grounded theory, I employed multi-level, recursive analysis of data. As discussed in Creswell, grounded theory follows an “interactive” process in that the “various stages are interrelated and not always visited in the order presented” (246). Essentially, these steps involve open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Corbin and Strauss). Though the process was not completely linear, I followed specific steps (see Creswell) to code, analyze, and interpret data within the STAND WPs:

1. I marked where the macro-level sections (Introduction, Body, and Conclusion) began and ended. In eight of the thirteen WPs, these sections were marked with subheadings which I used as models for labeling the remaining WPs.
2. Using open coding, I assigned codes to meso-level (phrases and sentences) “chunks” of text within macro-level sections of each WP according to the purpose by noting linguistic markers such as “thus,” “therefore,” “despite assertions to the contrary,” “likewise,” and others (Table 2).

Table 2: Examples of Meso-Level Coding Scheme	
<i>Text “Chunk”</i>	<i>Code</i>
“In the face of the immense popularity of Dianetics and Scientology”	“To establish popularity of COS”
“The Amish practice of shunning includes avoiding a former member in every way possible; excluding that person...is considered a means of preserving the Amish culture”	“To draw parallels to another religion”
“It is for these reasons that STAND is exposing the perpetrators of the hate and bigotry that gives rise to acts of violence”	“To indicate aims of STAND’

3. Using these codes, I determined the meso-level rhetorical moves within the introduction, body, and conclusion sections through axial and selective coding (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison). For example, “chunks” of text assigned codes

such as “provides evidence” or “supports” or “offers proof” were grouped as *support*.

4. The rhetorical moves were compared across WPs to determine if common patterns of rhetorical moves emerged.

The thirteen WPs contained 31,196 words with each paper ranging from 777 words to 5,682 words. On average WPs, contained 2,400 words. In total, I generated about 375 unique codes. None of the WPs specified an author and none included page or paragraph numbers; therefore, each WP is labeled with an identifying tag (WP1, WP2, WP3, etc.) which is associated with a STAND WP title (Table 3).

Table 3: In-Text Labels for STAND White Papers	
<i>Label</i>	<i>STAND White Paper Title</i>
WP1	The Truth about Scientology and “Fair Game”
WP2	“Disconnection” in the Scientology Religion: What is It?
WP3	Debunking the Myth of Religious “Brainwashing”
WP4	Scientology Beliefs about “Creation of the Universe”
WP5	Scientology Confidential Scripture
WP6	Religious Discrimination Against the Church of Scientology and its Parishioners in Germany
WP7	The Price of Bigotry: Threats and Violence
WP8	Scientologists’ Donations and Church of Scientology Financial Practices

WP9	The Sea Organization: Religious Order of the Scientology Religion
WP10	The Church of Scientology Rehabilitation Project Force (RPF): Truth and Misconceptions
WP11	The “Snow White” Program and the Church of Scientology: The True Story
WP12	The Unreliability of Stories and Rumors by Apostates
WP13	The Truth about L. Ron Hubbard and the ‘Make a Million Dollars’ Myth

In the following sections, I present the macro- and meso-level rhetorical moves that I identified as common within the thirteen STAND WPs; then, I discuss three categories of purposes and aims.

Findings and Analysis

My analysis revealed moves common to each macro-level section of the thirteen STAND WPs. Generally, the order in which the rhetorical moves are presented here aligns with the organization present in the WPs; however, these moves were not always completely separate from one another. Essentially, the moves listed in Table 4 occurred either simultaneously or sequentially.

Table 4: Common Macro- and Meso- Level Rhetorical Moves	
Meso-Level Moves	Rhetorical Purpose
INTRODUCTION	

<i>Identify</i>	Informs reader of the claim that the COS considers false and typically states the source of this claim and/or the medium used to disseminate the falsehood
<i>Contextualize</i>	Provides context or “true” meaning of a term as understood by COS through definitions and/or background information on the issue discussed
BODY	
<i>Counter</i>	Creates alternative explanation by discrediting a person/group, dismantling a theory, countering with COS facts, and/or shifting a definition toward a different meaning
<i>Support</i>	Provides backing for the counter chiefly through external sources, though internal sources are used occasionally
CONCLUSION	
<i>Restate</i>	Restates main points presented in the WP as a summative statement and/or a list of ideas or facts presented
<i>Refocus</i>	Discusses larger meaning of the WP’s purpose, opening the importance of the topic for a wider scope or audience

The rhetorical moves present in the STAND WPs are not profound or unique in terms of written documents. Each WP includes the typical macro-level rhetorical moves of introduction, body, and conclusion that functions as one would expect. A clearer picture

of the structure and aims of these WPs is apparent upon examining the meso-level rhetorical moves in each of these sections.

Introduction Section: Identify and Contextualize

The larger exigence for each STAND WP is to present the position of the COS on the common topics of discussion surrounding the church. These topics, their source, and their context are identified specifically in the introduction. These moves acknowledge the issue or accusation that will be countered, identify the medium, and provide necessary background information, definitions, or other relevant contextual information. For example,

The Sea Organization (commonly referred to as the Sea Org) is the religious order for the Scientology religion and is composed of the most dedicated Scientologists—individuals who have devoted their lives in voluntary service to their religion. Certain myths have been perpetuated in the media about the lifestyle of members of the Sea Organization. The purpose of this paper is to put such myths and disinformation to rest (WP9).

The introduction identifies the issue and establishes the WP's larger purpose by firmly and quickly establishing the COS's position and its opposition and providing any necessary contextual information. For example, WP9 includes background information to explain the term at issue. Essentially, the *Identify and Contextualize* move establishes information that the reader needs in order to comprehend the WP and its larger purpose.

Body Section: Counter and Support

Transferring focus from the COS and placing it on an alternative target is a large and multidimensional move. The WPs primarily invoke references such as experts, court cases, parallels, and examples from outside the COS. Occasionally, support is also drawn from internal references such as books, lectures, and other materials written by L. Ron Hubbard. As the “chunk” of text *counters* the source of the accusation or issue, it acts as a kind of thesis statement for the WP. Thus, *support* is needed in order to prove the validity of this statement and much is provided. For example, as WP2 states, “Virtually every world religion practices some form of shunning. As in other religions, Scientologists have a similar practice, called *disconnection*, that is often misunderstood or mischaracterized” (WP2). Examples of support provided for this statement include the following:

- a. Worse options exist that are not used by the COS such “wars, mass killings, inquisitions, [and] church burnings;” however, “Scientologists respond to harassment by simply...ceasing to communicate with the offending person.”
- b. “Consider if an anti-Semitic neighbor were to walk into a Jewish family home singing the praises of Hitler. All would support the Jews’ right to tell the person to leave the house and not return if he continued the offending behavior.”
- c. “Virtually every world religion practices some form of shunning” (e.g., Jewish, Christian, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Amish, etc.).

While the *counter* statement indicates the larger purpose, the *support* for that statement supplies a variety of evidence to validate the claim, including primary research (WP13), citing doctrine of the COS (WP4), discussing other religions (WP2), expert testimony

(WP3, WP2), and/or court cases (WP13, WP3). Often, the WPs attempt to make logical connections between causes and effects (WP3) or claim that the COS can provide answers that others cannot (WP4).

Conclusion: Restate and Refocus

As is typical in most genres, the conclusion section in COS WPs summarizes and restates the text's main points. Additionally, the WPs provide a brief discussion of the larger importance of Scientology, such as championing the COS as a global, beneficial, ethical organization. Thus, the conclusion typically works to *restate and refocus* by reminding readers of the larger purpose and/or leaving them with a positive perspective on the COS. For example,

Since Mr. Hubbard created the Snow White Program, the Church of Scientology has become a pioneer in the use of freedom of information and other citizen records access laws and in educating others on their importance. The Church has used these laws to shine light into the dark recesses of government secrecy and expose many covert government programs that violated the rights of all citizens and undermined open, transparent government—a lynchpin of a democratic government. The Church of Scientology will continue to be a champion of freedom of information. This is the proud legacy of Mr. Hubbard's Snow White Program (WP11).

While the restatement of the WP's purpose is clear, the effort to quickly *refocus* the reader is an interesting addition, and a slightly different purpose for this move is apparent. WP11, for example, establishes the COS's range and scope as a large

organization and specifically states that the COS is an organization that benefits the world.

Three Aims

After analyzing the rhetorical moves, I identified three overarching aims (Table 5). Each of these aims produced (or was produced by) a particular organizational pattern or method of argumentation, which are discussed in the following sections along with the logical progression of meso-level rhetorical moves within each aim.

Table 5: Aims and Methods		
Aim	Method	Number of WPs
Shift	Provide an alternative interpretation or definition of a term	3
Justify	Reason against an accusation using COS facts	4
Deny	Disprove a theory or practice and its author/creator	6

Shift. Three WPs attempted to shift a definition, an aim found in WPs that focused on the “Snow White Program,” the practice of “disconnection,” and the “Fair Game” policy. In each of these WPs, the author(s) established an alternative interpretation of these terms by showing that the definition that critics and/or apostates have disseminated is incorrect.

In the *Shift Definition* category, papers identify a term, state the source or cause of false definitions, and provide background information about the original, COS-created

meaning for that term. “Disconnection,” for example, is defined in WP2 as “the handling of interpersonal relationships, an act engaged in by members of all faiths, as well as those with no faith at all.” Also addressed is the misunderstood aspect of this practice: “Scientists do not ‘disconnect’ from family members, or from anyone else for that matter, because of a difference of beliefs” (WP2). Thus, the reader is logically lead to the understanding that disconnection is A and is not B. In order to support this claim, WP2 presents the dictionary definition of “shunning:” to “persistently avoid, ignore, or reject (someone or something) through antipathy or caution.” This leads to a logical connection: disconnection is A and is not B, in fact, it is C, where C is the often-practiced act of shunning. After establishing this definition, the author(s) list, cite, and describe twenty-two religions that practice some form of shunning, adding to the WP’s logical progression: Disconnection is A and is not B, in fact, it is C, which is acceptable as seen in D.

The “Snow White Program” (WP11) follows a similar logical pattern to shift the definition: The Snow White Program was (A) a program “for the purpose of legally correcting and expunging the plethora of false governmental reports about the Church of Scientology, its leaders and members, through strictly legal means” and is not (B) “anything illegal,” in fact, it is (C) a program which uncovered that “Mr. Hubbard, the Church of Scientology and Scientology leaders were targeted for discriminatory treatment, and for illegal and politically motivated information gathering designed to stigmatize and set a group apart as somehow inherently suspect under the law” and “[promoted] the Freedom of Information Act to protect not just the right of Scientologists, but those of all citizens.” The Snow White Program is acceptable as seen

in (D) the *Washington Post*, the acknowledgement of the Director of the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Privacy and Information Appeals, and by Justice Osler of the Supreme Court of Ontario, Canada.

Finally, "Fair Game" (WP1) follows a similar yet slightly altered logical pattern: Fair Game is (A) a formerly-used, cancelled policy which stated that "apostates who chose to leave or were expelled from the Church could no longer seek protection or refuge within the [COS] ethics and justice system to resolve disputes" and is not (B) "illegal or unethical," in fact, it is (C) a term which meant "that those expelled from the [COS] could no longer seek to use the internal ecclesiastical justice procedures of the Church, as seen in (D) a quote from L. Ron Hubbard; however, due to false interpretations, (E) it was cancelled. The final logical progression in this WP is that, due to the "deliberate misinterpretation by others," the policy was cancelled by Hubbard. Thus, this paper works to logically pull the definition of "fair game" away from the "invented meanings" of others and toward the original usage. The pattern, then, is that "Fair Game" is A and is not B, in fact, it is A because the original meaning was A, as seen in D; however, it was E, cancelled due to misinterpretations.

Justify. Four WPs aimed to justify a concept and focused on the Sea Org (WP9), financial practices (WP8), creation theories (WP4), and the practice of keeping scripture "confidential" (WP5). These WPs present COS-facts, explain COS practices, and counter the accusations of others. In order to accomplish these goals, these WPs focused less on pulling the reader through a logical progression than those that shifted a definition; instead, the chief strategy is informing the reader about *what* the COS does and *why*, thus providing justification. Interestingly, two of these WPs relied primarily on *internal*

evidence (Sea Org and Creation Theories) while the remaining two relied significantly more on *external evidence* (Financial Practices and Confidential Scripture), though all four WPs utilized both in some way.

Internal evidence. WPs utilizing internal evidence relied heavily on Hubbard’s Scientology doctrine and other sources within the organization. Each justifies the existence and practices of the issue under criticism by providing information about common questions and concerns voiced by outsiders. The organization of these WPs follows a linear structure in which the issue is (A), identified and contextualized, (B) the origins are explained, and (C) the readers’ questions are preemptively answered. In part (C), each paper contains evidence from Church doctrine and/or Hubbard’s testimony (Table 6) as the primary means of justification.

Table 6: Examples of Internal Evidence	
Sea Organization (WP9)	Creation Theories (WP4)
a. Established in 1967 by Hubbard who “set to sea with a handful of veteran Scientologists to continue his research into the upper levels of spiritual awareness and ability”	b. “Scientology holds that Man is basically good, and that his spiritual salvation depends upon himself his relationships with his fellows and his attainment of brotherhood with the universe”

The internal evidence utilized in these two WPs is meant to be considered as factual, informative evidence on the Sea Org and the foundations of the COS belief system and is

based on questions that are likely to be asked by an audience of outsiders. In reference to the examples provided:

(a) When and for what purpose was the Sea Org created?

(b) What are Scientology’s fundamental beliefs?

These WPs, however, do not explicitly lead the reader to a new position; instead, they are informational pieces that state ideas that the COS considers to be facts, largely due to the acknowledgement of Hubbard as the author and policymaker.

External Evidence. WPs that primarily employ external evidence rely predominantly upon sources recognizable as authoritative outside the COS. A section containing external sources (Table 7) made up the primary justification of the concept or practice. Within this section, evidence from government agencies, experts in various fields, court cases, and the similar practices of other religions are cited.

Table 7: Examples of External Evidence	
Financial Practices (WP8)	Confidential Scripture (WP5)
a. “The Italian Supreme Court, in a 1997 landmark decision regarding Scientology, thoroughly reviewed and analyzed the Church’s fundraising activities, drawing direct comparisons with the fundraising	a. “The Hellenic religions dating back to the golden age of Greece had similar practices where only the initiated were permitted access to certain of the religious [sic] rituals and knowledge.

activities of the Catholic Church and other religions”	(Statement of Prof. Hadden; Statement of Prof. Sabbatucci)”
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While the external evidence utilized in these two WPs is also based on facts, it functions as a source of credibility where WPs using internal evidence relied upon the COS and Hubbard to create this sense of credibility. Thus, in addition to part (C), which preemptively answers questions, the WPs focusing on external evidence also contain (D) support for COS policies and practices with information recognizable as trustworthy to those outside of the Church, increasing the validity of Hubbard’s words.

Therefore, the use of *external* evidence in the *counter and support* move alters the structural pattern slightly. This additional move provides parallels to more established religions and other support that increases the perceived validity of the WP’s argument.

Deny. The most common aim, apparent in six of thirteen STAND WPs, involves denying a concept, person, group, or theory by either showing that a concept is false or by connecting a cause or source to a negative effect. WPs in this category utilize one of two structural patterns to accomplish this goal (Table 8).

Table 8: Structure of Deny WPs		
	<i>WP Topic (Topic=X)</i>	<i>Structural Patterns (Z=source or cause)</i>
False Concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Apostate testimony (WP12) ▪ Make-a-million dollars myth (WP13) 	(A), X is false, yet (B), it is used by Z to vilify the COS despite (C), a falsehood

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The theory of religious brainwashing (WP3) ▪ The description of the RPF (WP10) 	with which experts agree, as proved by (D), findings in court cases
Cause and Effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discrimination (WP6) ▪ Bigotry threats, and violence (WP7) 	(A), Scientologists face X, which is (B), caused by Z; and (A) will continue until (D), Z is held accountable.

Despite the differing structures, all six WPs fit into this category and are distinct from those in the *shift* or *justify* categories in that they attempt to unravel the foundations of the theory, concept, or people associated with it. Importantly, this aim is unlike *shift* WPs, which focus upon rebranding a term associated with and acknowledged by the COS (i.e., “disconnection” is actually “shunning” rather than “we do not practice disconnection”). Similarly, this construct works differently than the move to *justify* a concept, which functions as an explanation of *why* a practice or policy was used (i.e., “Our scripture is confidential because...” rather than “We do not have confidential scripture”).

False Concept. Four WPs in this category *deny* by proving that a concept is false. These concepts include the credibility of apostates, the rumor that Hubbard viewed religion as a money-making opportunity, the theoretical validity of religious brainwashing, and the description of the RPF (Rehabilitation Project Force) as it is portrayed in the public. The overarching aim is to completely deny the concept (rather than *shift* or *justify*) and to discredit those who use it.

For example, WP12, which deals with apostate testimony utilizes a specific pattern of rhetorical moves (see Table 7). This WP states that (A), the concept of apostates acting as reliable witnesses is false, yet (B), it is used by “some government officials and media” to vilify the COS despite, (C), a falsehood with which experts Dr. Bryan Wilson, Dr. Lonnie Kliever and the Italian Supreme Court agree, as proved by (D), the rulings in *Bandera v. Italy*, the Administrative Court of Stuttgart, and the Internal Revenue Service’s dismissal of apostate testimony. Each of the remaining WPs that utilize the false concept structure include the same types of claims and evidence. However, the WP focused on the RPF (WP10) is slightly more complex. First, it provides an extensive description of the RPF from the COS’s perspective as well as comparisons to programs in other religious organizations, though neither of these additions changes the larger aim of the WP. Second, it specifically attempts to discredit Dr. Stephen Kent: “Kent’s study is not only suspect because it is premised upon misinformation and constitutes nonvalid pseudoscience. It also is suspect because of Kent’s inherent bias on the subject of Scientology and new religions.” WP10 goes on to question Kent’s study in terms of the methods employed (interviewing six apostates) as well as its theoretical basis on religious brainwashing. The overall purpose, however, follows the false concept structural pattern in that it (C), discusses experts in the field who disagree with “coercive persuasion,” including the APA and ASA. Further, this is (D), proven by *United States v. Kozminksi*, the Dutch government, and Dr. Flinn, who also studied the RPF and found no evidence of wrongdoing.

Although the false concept structure contains additional features that add validity to the COS claims, the overall purpose of denying a concept is the defining characteristic.

Cause and Effect. The final two WPs in the *deny* category utilize a cause and effect structural pattern in order to achieve their aim. Both papers are similar in their handling of the topics (X) of discrimination, bigotry, threats, and/or violence toward Scientologists. The WPs go on to state (B) that the causes of these issues are Germany's government and "biased media and extremist hatemongers," each treated in separate WPs in which specific examples are provided as evidence to support these claims. Finally, these WPs note that discrimination, bigotry, threats, and/or violence will (D) continue until these organizations are held accountable for their actions toward members of the COS.

Both WPs provided a significant number of examples in order to show a direct link (B) and establish (Z) as the cause of problems faced by Scientologists as a result of the actions of—

1. The German Government (WP6)

- Scientologists in Germany have been routinely dismissed from jobs... schools...political parties...social, business and political organizations, denied the right to professional licenses, denied the right to perform their art...open a bank account...obtain loans, denied the right to use public facilities and concert halls.

2. Media and Hatemongers (WP7)

- On May 3, 2016, in Los Angeles, Andre Barkanov pleaded guilty to one felony count of making a criminal threat and one count of stalking after calling the Church, threatening to kill its leader and 'every single one of you.' When police arrested Barkanov, he was found with a cache of

weapons and fake police insignia [and] told police he had ‘seen the HBO movie’ directed by Alex Gibney...[and] knew of the ‘King of Queens lady’ who had left the Church and had been in the news, referring to Leah Remini.

Not only do these examples illustrate the direct link between the cause and the effects, but they also set up the claim that (D) these groups should be held accountable by providing evidence of the importance of doing so. Thus, the papers close the body sections with statements that lead the reader to accept these sources as the cause of discrimination, bigotry, threats, and violence against Scientologists:

1. The German government has not only failed to fulfill its obligations under these specific instruments [human rights laws], it has initiated and encouraged a systematic policy of religious discrimination directed at German nationals who are associated with the religion of Scientology (WP6).
2. Acts such as these will continue as long as the media gives voice to the extremists seeking to marginalize Scientologists and others on the basis of their faith (WP7).

The *cause and effect* structural pattern works to *deny* the source by providing evidence suggesting and occasionally stating that these sources are not credible and that the actions and policies are inappropriate in that they lead to negative effects including human rights violations, threats, or violence. Thus, the reader is led through a series of logical steps toward the conclusion that particular sources working against the COS are in the wrong.

Overall, WPs that aim to *deny* utilize two distinct structural patterns in order to achieve this aim, but the purpose remains consistent.

Discussion

My analysis indicates that common rhetorical moves occur in the STAND WPs and that the author(s) invoke three overarching aims, each with an identifiable pattern of rhetorical moves. Additionally, the STAND WPs are clearly structured as arguments. The macro- and meso-level rhetorical moves constitute logical progressions of claims in standardized, predictable patterns that include internal and external evidence as support.

Based on my analysis, STAND WPs function not as simple marketing or educational tools but as propaganda. The propaganda label aligns with Jowett and O'Donnell's definition (see Chapter 1) and discussion of propaganda: "The purpose of propaganda is to promote a partisan or competitive cause in the best interest of the propagandist but not necessarily in the best interest of the recipient. The recipient, however, may believe that the communication is merely informative" (36). Similarly, Altheide and Johnson argue that "bureaucratic propaganda," which may be used by various organizations, including religious entities, involves the "release of official reports containing what appears to be scientifically gathered and objective information to influential groups with the purpose of maintaining the legitimacy of the organizations and their activities. The information in the official reports is often contrived, distorted, or falsely interpreted" (as cited in Jowett and O'Donnell 51). Most often associated with businesses, the white paper is a purposeful choice for an organization that works to define itself as a religion and not a business. Therefore, I argue that the COS chose to communicate via WPs as an attempt to control the flow of information (Jowett and O'Donnell), a strategy that presents "distorted information from what appears to be a credible source" (51). The legitimacy garnered through the perceived truthfulness and

objectivity of the white paper likely prompted the COS to select it as a medium for propaganda in order to disseminate information in a way that seems objectively true.

As the contextual information on the COS in Chapter 2 indicates, the strategies apparent in the STAND WPs are indicative of COS public relations directives from Hubbard. In the following sections, I discuss how contextual information on the COS illuminates strategies in STAND white papers.

Handling Directives and Logics

The specific aims of STAND WPs, to *shift*, *justify*, or *deny*, are unique in that they are written by a religious organization attempting to handle criticisms and accusations that they believe are false—a rhetorical situation that is understandably not explicitly dealt with in the WP literature. These aims, however, do conform to Hubbard’s directives on handling negative press. As I discussed in Chapter 2, Hubbard outlined four techniques for such situations: *counter source*, *disprove content*, *add to/change content*, and *sway appearance*.

Each of these directives is identifiable throughout the STAND white papers and are utilized in various, often overlapping, ways. When the larger context--Hubbard’s directives and conscious creation of the COS--is considered, the overarching aim of STAND WPs is to benefit the COS and attack (handle) opponents rather than to offer fact-based information that would ethically support the decision-making processes of its audience. Additionally, the use of (unethical) evidence and (seemingly) logical progressions within the WPs’ arguments constitutes an example of *manufactured logics*.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Hubbard designed Scientology with strong, tangible

connections between claims and evidence. In a similar fashion, the STAND WPs present specific evidence and seemingly logical connections between its claims and its evidence that mimics common efforts to offer credible support. As such, the STAND WPs include quotes from experts, comparisons to alternative religions, and court cases. However, this evidence is typically misleading, false, decontextualized, or lacking information.

Therefore, *manufactured logics* extends beyond Hubbard's propagandizing of his Sea Org and into the COS's propagandizing of current followers and the public.

Sources, Content, and Swaying Appearance

In line with Hubbard's directives to counter the source(s) of information and to disprove, add to, or change the content of negative press, the STAND WPs employ a number of strategies. For example, I examined the evidence and support provided to determine its reliability and found that, although evidence and thorough support was often utilized, it was not always ethical. Instead, the author(s) employ strategies such as inaccurate descriptions of disagreeable scholars, faulty or incomplete comparisons to the practices of other religious groups, and minimal explanations rather than fully rationalized concepts.

For example, Dr. Robert V. Levine is described in WP3 as a "self-proclaimed expert," "a proponent of Singer's discredited 'religious brainwashing theories' who "offered a purported expert opinion about...psychological coercion." However, Dr. Levine is listed as Emeritus faculty within the Department of Psychology at Fresno State University and is the author of several journal articles, books, and reports on subjects such as "persuasion and manipulation," "the self," "helping and kindness toward

strangers,” and more, according to his personal website, which provides working links to most of these publications. Thus, WP3 clearly employs Hubbard’s directives in attempting to discredit sources of negative information.

Additionally, STAND WPs indicate that Hubbard’s directives on content are also being utilized. For example, in several WPs, the actual claim of the opposition is rarely explained, and, if it is, it is never fully presented in a fair and honest way for the readers. Rather than fully, honestly, and fairly offering a logical, evidence-based rebuttal of the actual claims made by opponents, the COS typically utilizes techniques that cast some aspect of the accusation in a negative light.

These techniques included using negatively charged modifiers, such as those associated with Dr. Robert Levine (WP3), or im/explicitly stating that the claims made by critics and apostates directly caused violence from viewers (WP7), or, perhaps most importantly, failing to provide a full explanation of a term. This technique appeared in the “fair game” (WP1) and “disconnection” (WP2) white papers as both avoided discussion of these practices as well as the “suppressive persons” ideology. As discussed in previous chapters, SP, PTS, and disconnection are foundational concepts as apparent in policy letters written by Hubbard. Essentially, “fair game” refers to a practice in which those who attack the COS are considered *fair game* in terms of how the COS responds. “Disconnection” is a practice in which Scientologists avoid communicating with individuals and groups who criticize the COS. In these situations, the outsiders (attackers, critics, etc.) would be labeled as “suppressive” and those associated with them as “potential trouble sources.” Despite the importance that acts of “suppression” play for both of these practices and despite the foundational nature of the concept within the COS,

the word *suppression* is never used in the thirteen WPs. Thus, a fundamental aspect of these arguments is unacknowledged. In this way, these particular WPs both adjust the content and sway appearance.

Specifically, the “Fair Game” WP states that “Church of Scientology officials and Scientologists would never tolerate a ‘Fair Game’ policy condoning illegal or unethical actions. Scientology Scripture is replete with admonitions to its adherents to build their lives on foundations of honesty, impeccable ethics and integrity” (WP1). However, while the policy and terminology of “fair game” was officially discarded in 1968, the practice may still exist. In a policy letter entitled “Battle Tactics” written by Hubbard in 1969 and reissued in 1987, Hubbard states,

We must ourselves fight on the basis of total attrition of the enemy. So never get reasonable about him. Just go all the way in and obliterate him...One cuts off enemy communications, funds, connections. He deprives the enemy of political advantages, connections and power. He takes over enemy territory. He raids and harasses. All on a thought plane – press, public opinion, governments, etc. (“Battle Tactics”).

While this policy letter specifically states that “physical violence or...the physical destruction of persons” is not permitted, condoned tactics involve investigating, harassing, raiding, and “obliterating” reporters, critics, apostates, and others identified as suppressive. Although the specific policy of “fair game” was ended, similar tactics are identifiable in STAND WPs today, indicating that these strategies are ongoing. Therefore, the “fair game” WP and others are purposefully misleading and significantly

unethical in an effort to conform to or at least fall in line with Hubbard's directives for Sea Org members.

Genre

An additional element that upholds Hubbard's directives is the WP genre itself-- an important facet of COS propaganda strategies. Employing the affordances of the WP genre, the COS persuades its dual audience to accept the legitimacy of their arguments and narratives by using a genre that is perceived as inherently credible and factual. The use of logical support creates in readers a sense that they are informed about the topic addressed and that this information is based on facts, in line with Graham's discussions of WPs as mostly neutral, informational documents. STAND WPs, on the surface, adhere to the genre norms of the WP and the previously mentioned three broad characteristics: 1) Provides information 2) Focuses on marketing 3) Supports decision-making processes. Therefore, a public audience may be more inclined to accept STAND WPs as legitimate and credible. Due to these elements of the WP genre, the COS further sways appearances through the use of a recognizably legitimate genre.

The nature of the genre is also likely to lend credibility to the content manipulation directives as well. Therefore, the perceived facticity of the WP genre enhances this decision-making process as readers are provided with a series of seemingly logical rhetorical moves as well as seemingly factual claims and evidence. Essentially, STAND WPs likely mimic well-structured arguments for audiences who are unfamiliar with the nuances and possibilities of the WP genre. While these documents do not necessarily operate outside WP genre norms, they clearly uphold the directives created by

Hubbard, and they should be considered as propaganda rather than veridical, informational documents or simple marketing tools.

Context

As propaganda, the STAND WPs rely heavily upon the context in which the documents appear and the characteristics of the audience who receives them in order to sway appearance. This is particularly significant for the communicative strategies employed in and around STAND WPs as they are carefully placed within the larger narrative of religious discrimination and persecution faced by Scientologists. In this way, as I discuss in Chapter 2, the COS sways appearances by casting itself in a positive light.

For instance, Hubbard's discussion of one means to sway appearances is identifiable in the larger STAND website: "The objective is to be identified as attackers of popularly considered evils. This de-classifies us from former labels. It re-classifies our attackers as evil people. Which they are" ("Black Propaganda"). In addition to white papers, the STAND website includes blog posts, media analyses, videos, and much more that directly address themes such as religious freedom, bigotry, hate, human rights, and inequality--popularly considered evils. These worthwhile causes, however, function as a means to "reclassify" the COS and its practices rather than to take real action on social issues. In a sense, the social justice initiatives of STAND and the COS act as not only an attractive facade but also as a means to enact their own policies and practices under the guise of religious freedom.

The larger context of COS policies and Hubbard's specific directives, therefore, is necessary in order to fully comprehend STAND WPs and other COS materials.

Additionally, these materials must be considered within the larger context of the Scientology belief system in which doubt and criticism equates to a characteristic of antisocial/suppressive persons, a label rife with warnings of destruction, injury, and criminal acts, in order to better comprehend why such actions would continue to be followed by Sea Org members today.

Conclusions

Each aim and the overarching communicative strategies of the STAND WPs have important implications for the field of rhetoric. While considerable future research is necessary in order to grasp not only the intricacies of the COS but also its use of white papers and other genres, this chapter provides some initial insights.

First, the white paper is not as thoroughly researched as other professional genres. Scholars and industry experts certainly agree that WPs are informational, marketing-focused documents that help people or groups make decisions, but the nuances and possibilities of this genre are relatively unclear. WPs can be placed anywhere on a spectrum from neutral/factual to offering solutions to essay-like arguments. Generally, more research on the WP genre is necessary in order to establish its purposes and delineate the treatment of information. Because WPs are considered trustworthy, fact-based sources of information, establishing a framework of, for example, acceptable aims, rhetorical moves, and ethics of evidence use is crucial.

Second, in the case of STAND, the white paper is extended beyond essay-like arguments to propaganda. Whereas arguments should contain relevant claims, ethical evidence as support, and accurate treatment of opposing points, STAND WPs only *pose*

as ethical arguments. Essentially, they mimic the conventions of the WP genre in order to elicit credibility in COS materials. In actuality, the WP is a purposeful choice as a medium for propaganda, and the elements of the STAND WPs fall in line with Hubbard's directives (see Chapter 2) for public relations. The COS's reasoning in utilizing the WP genre and the reasoning behind forwarding these specific aims (shift, justify, deny) in the WPs is recognizable only with a significant understanding of the systemized context of Hubbard's policies, practices, and directives. Additionally, the STAND website itself is a testament to the COS's invocation of social justice movements within the kairotic moment. As I discussed in Chapter 1, this appeal to the movements of the current moment is a longstanding approach in legitimization and recruitment tactics.

In this chapter, I have highlighted one specific instance of COS propaganda via STAND WPs and established connections among the samples as well as between the WPs and the larger context of the COS. This chapter, therefore, illuminates the possibilities and nuances of COS propagandistic strategies and focuses on one of the most inherently legitimate genres it produces. Despite the nature of the WP genre, the COS maintains significant propagandistic endeavors through seemingly logical rhetorical move progressions. Similar to Hubbard's use of *manufactured logics*, the Sea Org members responsible for STAND WPs employ similar strategies in their handling of perceived enemies.

In Chapter 4, I analyze another specific example of COS propaganda--*Freedom Magazine*. Similar to STAND, *Freedom* illuminates the methods in which Hubbard's directives continue to be employed by his followers and a number of COS-specific strategies for propaganda.

CHAPTER IV

PROPAGANDA IN FREEDOM MAGAZINE

My analysis of STAND white papers provides an inductive discussion of Scientology's propaganda that illustrates the COS's use of argumentative strategies, organization and logical progressions of ideas, propaganda strategies, and a discussion of how Hubbard's directives are utilized via the STAND website and in white papers specifically. In this chapter, I critically interrogate another example of propaganda--the COS's purported news magazine *Freedom*. The news magazine is another genre that is typically associated with thorough research and ethical investigation. In this chapter, I present a deductive analysis and discussion of *Freedom* that provides a balanced look at COS communicative strategies with the goal of investigating propaganda aimed at multiple target audiences. As in Chapter 3, I also discuss contextual information from the COS in order to present a comprehensive analysis that includes the larger goals and purposes of *Freedom*.

Analysis of *Freedom* as propaganda will provide a number of insights into its actual purposes and will illuminate strategies of propaganda within the COS organization that extend beyond the strategies in the STAND white papers. Because *Freedom* is published for both Scientologists and the general public--as evidenced by the jargon-free language in comparison to internally distributed materials, the availability of full issues

online, and the convenient subscription link that allows anyone to receive free print copies in the mail--this analysis offers insights into both COS-facing and public-facing propaganda.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of *Freedom* followed by a discussion of the analytical framework I employ in this chapter. I then analyze *Freedom* with a focus on one issue in particular using this framework, and I discuss the implications of each aspect. Finally, I present important considerations regarding COS propaganda strategies based on my findings in this chapter as well as the systemized context of the COS.

Freedom Magazine

Freedom Magazine is a quarterly print and online magazine that the COS writes, designs, and publishes. In the 1998 COS-produced, public-facing textbook *What is Scientology?*, the COS writes that *Freedom* was founded in 1968 and has grown with the expansion of the internet. Today it is published fully online and in “all major languages” (356). The mission statement of *Freedom* is published on its COS-copyrighted main page:

Freedom seeks out and illuminates solutions to society’s problems. *Freedom* addresses issues, not politics. *Freedom* uplifts human aspiration. It stands for accurate and accountable reporting and publishes information available in no other publication. *Freedom* is the voice of the Church of Scientology.

In terms of its scope and topics, the mission statement does little to clarify the actual goals of *Freedom Magazine*. For example, despite the mission statement, political topics are often addressed, such as “government corruption...workable solutions for the

problems of drug abuse, illiteracy and violent crime...protecting privacy, property rights and freedom of speech” (*What is Scientology?*). *Freedom* has also featured articles by United States congressmen as well as the four presidential candidates ahead of the 1996 election, who “submitted articles presenting their views on solutions to the American drug problem” (*What is Scientology?* 356). Such political topics, however, do not typically address or promote any particular political party. Instead, *Freedom* seems to function as a legitimization tool in that it shows the COS’s agency in addressing current social issues.

Additionally, as my analysis will show, the reporting is often inaccurate or skewed to favor COS ideologies, and the information is often not available in other media due to the nature of the topics *Freedom* addresses. For example, the COS indicates that “*Freedom*...has broken important stories on the forced drugging of schoolchildren, government chemical and biological warfare experimentation and psychiatric brutalities” (*What is Scientology?* 356). Because these topics include some fringe claims, they are often not addressed in mainstream media sources.

Essentially, *Freedom* attempts to portray Scientology in a positive light and also expose and debunk the negative press created by outsiders or ex-members. In doing so, some issues focus on promoting the (supposed) good works of Scientology programs such as Narcinon (anti-drug programs), Criminon (anti-crime programs), and Applied Scholastics (literacy and education programs), among others. A select number of issues, however, are centrally focused upon media exposes. These issues counter negative press directed at the COS by investigating the media outlet that produced the negative press and/or investigating the sources of information cited by those media outlets. As

Westbrook writes, “Since 2010, the church has waged its own war against this new brand of critics, launching and supporting the launch of dozens of websites that counter what it considers false claims, perhaps most notably via the [COS’s] *Freedom* magazine” (378). Thus, *Freedom* works both as a form of COS-positive press and as a counter to negative publicity in line with Hubbard’s directives.

Despite the COS-presented scope and purposes, Scientology’s use of *Freedom Magazine* is discussed as manipulative by outsiders. Max Halupka, for example, writes that in response to the highly COS-critical film *Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief*, the Church “purchased ad space on both Twitter and Google, with the link directing individuals to FreedomMag.org...Under the guise of an impartial site, the hyperlink redirects the user to an article that refutes the claims made in the documentary and attacks the credibility of those involved” (290). Halupka further discusses *Freedom* as one of many vehicles of propaganda (Stanley 55) employed by the COS for “storytelling and narrative control,” adding that the “[name] and professed impartiality are intentional devices employed to help establish an outward image of legitimacy independent from the Church of Scientology itself” (294). *Freedom* professes to inform readers, uncover corruption, and hold sources of information accountable, among other goals; however, its actual purposes can be more accurately described as discrediting anti-/ex-Scientology critics and advancing the COS’s image through a seemingly credible source.

Methodology and Analytical Framework

In order to thoroughly explore COS propaganda techniques in *Freedom*, I analyze one sample issue from among the six media expose issues. This issue, “The Posse of Lunatics,” offers a great deal of content and a broad focus on targets. Each of the remaining five media expose issues focus upon one particular media outlet and/or reporter rather than discussing apostates, though apostates are mentioned in the remaining issues. Because “Lunatics” functions as an attack directly on the central apostates most often cited and interviewed by the media outlets attacked in other issues of *Freedom*, it is a rich sample through which to identify COS propaganda. My analysis addresses two guiding questions: How does *Freedom Magazine* illuminate the propagandistic strategies of the COS? More specifically, what propagandistic strategies are apparent in the “Lunatics” issue and what discursive and non-discursive methods are apparent?

My analysis of *Freedom*, and “Lunatics” in particular, is based on an analytical framework developed by Jowett and O’Donnell (313-331) in which propaganda campaigns can be thoroughly investigated. In modifying this framework to analyze one piece of propaganda from a large-scale campaign, I combine and realign Jowett and O’Donnell’s central components for my purposes in this project. I first describe the COS’s basic structure and provide an overview of important facets of COS ideology in a condensed overview of my more complete analysis in Chapter 2. Additionally, I analyze the context and purpose of *Freedom Magazine* and “Lunatics” in particular. Second, I analyze target audiences and their potential reactions to this particular issue of *Freedom*. Next, I address the content of “Lunatics” and analyze the use of media and “special techniques to maximize effect” (Jowett and O’Donnell 323) through specific focus on

particular articles in “Lunatics” and the multimedia expansion of *Freedom*. Finally, I consider the “effects and evaluation” step of analysis (Jowett and O’Donnell 331) as well as counterpropaganda campaigns in an effort to determine if the purposes of *Freedom* have been fulfilled.

Analysis and Discussion

In line with my realigned version of Jowett and O’Donnell’s analytical framework, in this section I provide a detailed analysis of numerous aspects of *Freedom* and “Lunatics.” Additionally, I discuss within this analysis the implications and significance of my findings.

Identification of the Propagandist: Organizational Structure, Context, and Key Concepts

I discuss foundational elements of the COS in my analysis in Chapter 2; however, I provide here an overview of these findings as a summary that reifies my identification of the COS organization as propagandist.

The COS’s hierarchical structure begins with founder, L. Ron Hubbard, who is venerated as super-human and whose directives, policies, and theologies are followed to this day. After Hubbard’s death in 1986, David Miscavige, current leader and Chairman of the Board, took control. However, Miscavige’s lack of super-human qualities requires him to follow Hubbard’s teachings to maintain his own power. Thus, the directives (see Chapter 2) that Hubbard put in place continue to be employed today (see Chapter 3). Under Miscavige is the Sea Org, which is tasked with writing, designing, and publishing

COS materials and with keeping Scientology running effectively (*What is Scientology?* 323-324).

Key to understanding the COS, in addition to the veneration for Hubbard and the structure, is the context and key concepts. For example, the COS's fight for tax exemptions as a religious organization (Urban 156-157) is often discussed as a chief cause for Scientology's attempts at legitimacy and its attacks on critics (see Manca). Since gaining tax exemption in the United States, the COS has continued its attacks on critics--including apostates, journalists, and scholars. It has also attempted to shape public perceptions through sub-organizations run by Scientology that are not outwardly affiliated with the Church and through manipulation of media such as Wikipedia pages and anti-cult groups (Halupka).

Finally, a full picture of the COS also requires knowledge of key concepts within the religion. As discussed in Chapter 2, these concepts include reliance on tangible evidence rather than faith, use of demagoguery, Suppressive Person and Potential Trouble Source Doctrines, propaganda and counterpropaganda campaigns, "noisy investigations," "obliteration tactics," victimization narratives, and much more.

Content, Media Utilization Techniques, and Special Techniques to Maximize Effect

Although they are described and labeled as a "posse" within *Freedom*, the individuals depicted throughout "Lunatics" do not necessarily function as a group; instead, it is likely that grouping them together as a "posse of lunatics" creates a more appealing narrative that is simpler to control as opposed to attacking each apostate individually. These apostates are, however, collectively the most likely individuals to be cited and are the

most often interviewed when criticism of Scientology surfaces. Each has also been interviewed for various publications and programs that criticize the COS. Importantly, these individuals were former high-ranking officials within the COS administration—the Sea Org—or were well-known celebrities within the Church. Upon leaving the COS, these individuals contributed to and created negative press by revealing the alleged inner workings of Scientology through extremely public media outlets such as CNN special broadcasts, a profile in *The New Yorker*, and the book and HBO documentary *Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief*, among other outlets. The magnitude and consistency of these apostates’ claims of abuse, human rights violations, corruption, intimidation, forced abortion, and other issues within the COS generated a significant amount of concern within the Church as evidenced by the production of material attacking both these individuals and the media outlets that provided them with a voice and a stage.

Cover and its Special Techniques

Perhaps most importantly, as the initial interaction with readers, the covers of *Freedom* issues are designed with images, photographs, or illustrations along with a title and other text. Typically, this cover art and text works in tandem to not only capture attention but also to establish a connection with the audience and to create a simplified visual argument.

On the cover of “Lunatics,” the “Posse” is portrayed as cartoons and are drawn as a group of twelve individuals in and surrounding a vehicle along with the title, “The Posse of Lunatics: A Story of Lies, Crimes, Violence, Infidelity and Betrayal.” Even as illustrations, however, each apostate depicted would likely be recognizable to the

magazine's broad audience of low- and high-ranking members of the COS as well as any person who has seen or read negative press on Scientology wherein these individuals acted as sources. The "Posse" is illustrated with enough realism to make the individuals easily identifiable as oft-cited, very outspoken apostates Mike Rinder, Marty Rathbun, Tom DeVocht, Paul Haggis, Amy Scobee, Claire and Marc Headley, and others. The illustrations communicate identity by incorporating distinct facial features, head shapes, and hair styles that align with the actual features of these individuals. This clear depiction of identities provides little room for error in terms of understanding who is described as a member of this "posse of lunatics."

Also important to consider is a kind of gaze that is exemplified. Though Sue Hum specifically discusses the racialized gaze in Nast cartoons, a similar effect is at least attempted by *Freedom's* cartoon cover. Drawing on Gledhill, Hum explains, "Valuing high degrees of resemblance, the dynamic of authenticity refers to the depiction not of what is real, but of what a culture perceives as real and true" (196). Though the cover art is not actually a depiction of race, it is indicative of the culture of Scientology. As Jowett and O'Donnell write, an "important method in maximizing propaganda effectiveness is the selected use of the metaphors and images created to enlist public support for the propagandist's position and to explain events that can shape and manipulate public perceptions" (296). The use of cartoon depictions of apostates not only dehumanizes these individuals but also increases the likelihood that Scientology-provided narratives are connected to these images and are likely to be more easily registered in the minds of the audience as a cartoon metaphors.

The choice of cartoon illustrations also provides an opportunity to communicate a

clear message to the audience by forcing the characters to interact with one another. In their efforts to do so, the magazine creators construct metaphors in which the acts and items depicted with the cartoons on the cover become negative associations with the actual individuals. Important to the persuasiveness of this technique, images are utilized to unify the content. The positions of these illustrated bodies and the actions of each in relation to the whole convey various narratives that are explained in detail throughout the numerous articles within *Freedom*. For example, the designer(s) of the cover art place Mike Rinder and Marty Rathbun in the center of the image with Rinder in the driver's seat and Rathbun on the passenger side with his arms outstretched—strangling Rinder. The depiction of these two men, engaged in a struggle, mimics the dominant narrative surrounding these two apostates within “Lunatics”—that they once fought one another. Tom DeVocht is portrayed with a Pinocchio-like nose and holding a chair, which connects his likeness to the Church's insistence that he is a liar and also that he once sold used furniture. Amy Scobee is depicted in a seated position next to the vehicle with her laptop open and her fingers on the keyboard. She is drawn in a swimsuit and with her laptop, an illustration that connects the audience to the narrative of Scobee as a troublesome blogger who, according to the Church, has had multiple relationships and affairs. Additionally, Scobee's portrayal in a swimsuit is later clarified as a photograph of her in a swimsuit is displayed next to the article focused on her in “Lunatics.” Claire and Marc Headley are portrayed in front of the vehicle hiding behind bushes, which connects to the COS's insistence that they are members of the internet activist group Anonymous.

Each of these illustrations can be easily connected to “crimes” and “suppressive acts” within COS policies and ideologies; additionally, the cover creates not only a

special technique of propaganda but also conveys the demagogic nature of the COS. Apostates are essentially villainized not only as a “posse of lunatics” who are actively harming the Church but are also individually categorized as enemies from the audience’s first interaction with the magazine. This form of demagoguery, as Roberts-Miller writes, functions as modeling demagoguery in which rhetors “model the stance toward leadership they want their audiences to adopt: reducing all political issues to a binary them (an evil out-group who should be passionately rejected) and us (a good in-group toward whom one should be passionately loyal). If we limit our attention to demagogues trying to promote their own candidacy, we miss that more common kind” (“Demagoguery, Charismatic Leadership” 237). The cover of “Lunatics” demonstrates that the Sea Org, as producers of *Freedom Magazine*, engages in this form of modeling demagoguery by providing image/narrative connections familiar to *Freedom* audiences. In doing so, the cover conveys a particular, intentional message meant to persuade an audience to believe that the apostates should be mocked and humiliated for their betrayal of the Church. These illustrations also tell the reader/viewer a story that is connected, through visual depictions, to the articles (discussed in the next section) found in “Lunatics.” As Jowett and O’Donnell write, “The use of specific words and images has a direct bearing on how certain events are structured in the minds of the public. Key images and concepts are evoked by a careful combination of previous experiences with new events. For such metaphorical propaganda to be effective, these images must be readily recognizable to the audience being propagandized” (296-297). The cover of “Lunatics” presents an argument that this group is not only untrustworthy and undeserving of compassion but they are also enemies of the Church who partake in activities that are

specifically presented as negative within the Scientology belief system and ideologies and are in direct violation of Hubbard's policies and directives.

Articles and Their Special Techniques

Furthering the purposes of the cover art, the content of “Lunatics” includes textual and visual depictions that dehumanize apostates and increase the likelihood that Scientology-provided connections become registered in the mind of the audience. These articles provide insight into the way the COS invokes propaganda strategies and “special techniques to maximize effect” (Jowett and O’Donnell) in order to build connections from negative actions to particular apostates.

While several of the articles contained in this issue are worthwhile for analysis, “Damned in Their Own Words” is an especially interesting article that illuminates COS use of special techniques and indicates how “the visual and verbal message [are] consistent with the ideology” (Jowett and O’Donnell 322). This article focuses on three well-known apostates—Marty Rathbun, Mike Rinder, and Tom DeVocht. As the article explains,

Several years ago, three of these anti-Scientologists—chief apostate-cohorts [Rathbun, Rinder, and DeVocht]—were removed for flagrant criminality, gross misconduct and financial waste. When they were finally caught out, they teamed up and secretly descended on others in violence... Today they are bitter, broke, and busted, motivated only by two things: getting paid and getting even.

The article goes on to provide quotes from each of these apostates, which the article deems “a last truthful look at themselves before plunging off the cliff into obsession”

(“Damned in Their Own Words”). These quotes are confessional-like pronouncements of wrongdoings by each apostate that seem to have been spoken or written directly to the Church, though the actual source of the quotes is not clear in the article. Along with these bulleted lists of quotes from each apostate is a cartoon image portraying each apostate interacting in some way with a mirror. While the cover shows characters facing the reader or in a profile in order to maintain an understanding of identities, the article on Rathbun, Rinder, and DeVocht incorporates an additional layer of meaning through new actions and props that enable the artist to convey a deeper metaphor to the reader through the selection and portrayal of a common theme extracted from each apostate’s quotes:

- Marty Rathbun is depicted in his mirror image as Darth Vader, complete with a shortened lightsaber and full costume. Here, the theme likely relates to the role of Vader as not only a villain in the Star Wars films but also as an authority figure who incites harm and chaos. Many of the Rathbun quotes discuss his position as an administrator who, for example, “instituted instant punishment and made an unsafe and destabilized environment” and “boxed [name] ears or wrestled him to the ground” and “threw him up against a wall” (“Damned in Their Own Words”). The quotes from Rathbun, then, show a connection with the authoritative, violent leadership characteristic of the Star Wars villain, which is further concretized by the cartoonized image of Rathbun gazing at himself in a mirror dressed as Vader.
- Rinder is portrayed as a cartoon who is staring at his own reflection, which takes the form of a snake. Though the symbolism associated with snakes is often varied, here it refers to Rinder’s confessional quotes describing his deception and purposeful disruption of the organization. For example, Rinder states, “The cost to

the Church through my neglect of situations has been huge” and “The higher the level of responsibility and trust that is placed in one, the greater the overts are when these are violated and I have done so continuously, while asserting I have been ‘on the team’ and ‘with it’ when I have not been” (“Damned in Their Own Words”). Rinder’s quotes continually explain that he manipulated the COS organization from his powerful position within the Church and that he did so purposefully, intentionally deceiving those around him. Thus, the image of the snake supports these quotes and forces the reader to recognize the dominant theme of maliciousness.

- DeVocht’s is portrayed with his nose extending enough to break the mirror in his hand. Again, the dominant theme throughout the quotes list is depicted in the supplemental image. For example, DeVocht states, “I began to false report and give false assurances” and “I committed financial crimes...I withheld these facts from COB [David Miscavige] completely” and “By pretending to be an executive what I was actually doing was camouflaging the real scene and hiding the fact I didn’t have any control at all” (“Damned in Their Own Words”). Dishonesty as a theme runs throughout DeVocht’s confessional quotes which easily evokes the fairy tale of Pinocchio.

The COS’s use of clear and recognizable metaphors via pop culture, fairy tale, and common (or even Biblical) symbology create, as Barry Brummett describes in his discussion of disguised social issues, distinct connections of form: “Burkean scholars have identified the form of discourse as a level on which texts may powerfully influence us. Since form is very often experienced outside of awareness, form is a prime way in

which social issues are disguised as discourse” (8). In Scientology, however, form is experienced differently than Brummett’s examples of film plots as life lessons; instead, *Freedom* and many other COS propaganda materials base their forms on Scientology theology and ideologies. Thus, COS members see clear narratives in which deviation from Church practices ends in devastation and humiliation in “Damned in Their Own Words.” Similarly, for the public audience, the metaphor and associated form from commonly known stories identifies these particular apostates as untrustworthy sources of information. While these outcomes for both audiences are not necessarily “disguised,” (Brummett), they function on two different levels. As Brummett writes, “the connection is formal, the advice is explicit” (9).

The connections created by the COS within “Lunatics” are illuminated further when additional materials are considered. For example, in a number of COS-produced and published materials that include white papers, video interviews, articles, etc., Amy Scobee, ex-Scientologist and outspoken critic of the Church, is described and associated with word groups (Burke) related to sexual misconduct such as “nasty,” “slutty,” “adulterous,” “flirt,” and “promiscuous” as well as word groups related to dishonesty such as “liar,” “fabricated,” “false representation,” and “makes up stories.” In addition, these materials discuss job-related failures on the part of Scobee during her work in the SEA Org and indicate that she “sat idly by” as others did her work, “had to be sacked from her position,” and was “incompetent.” These word groups also appear on the COS website, whoisamyscobee.com, which also includes a photograph of Scobee that, based on the lack of eye contact and personal nature, was likely taken without her knowledge and/or permission. It shows her walking in a swimsuit and is also presented with a

downloadable animation of her walking along the beach as a whale calls to her in the background. This animation seems to be an implicit comment on Scobee's weight. Similar to "Damned in Their Own Words," the Scobee-centric article in "Lunatics" entitled "Sex, Lies, and the Blogosphere" presents not only allegations of transgressions against the COS but also addresses superficial characteristics. In doing so, the COS creates connoted and denoted relationships between text, images, and ideas.

In addition, the article discusses her current activities: "Today, Scobee spends her days posting salacious drivel to cyberterrorists on the lunatic fringe of the Internet. Although she has thus far escaped hate-crime scrutiny, she remains among the nastiest snipers and her snippets are filled with sexual tittle-tattle" ("Lunatics"). In "Lunatics," Scobee is represented on the cover in a seated position, typing on a laptop, wearing a swimsuit. Again, this activity is a "special technique to maximize effect" (323). In addition to the visual elements, the COS uses particular language. As Jowett and O'Donnell explain, "Propaganda uses language that tends to deify a cause and satanize opponents. Symbolization affects receivers according to associations they make with the symbols" (328). While the COS is not necessarily "avoid[ing] detection" in their use of negatively-connotated symbols associated with opponents, certainly the audience recognizes these associations. Moreover, these symbols, whether text, image, ideological or other, are intricately connected to the Scientology religion and the handling procedures Hubbard's policy letters dictate in which the Sea Org is directed to investigate enemies and expose their transgressions.

On a larger scale, the content of "Lunatics" is interesting in that it does not actually provide rebuttals for the many claims of abuse and the COS's various

questionable activities that apostates have publicly discussed. Rather than a logical, well-supported argument that addresses perceived misinformation, the focus is solely on discrediting the “posse” and the individuals who comprise it, in line with Hubbard’s directives: “Blunt denial is crude and can be used against one as a sort of confirmation...Use any channel to speak up. But don’t seek channels that will corrupt what you say in repeating it. Don’t stay on the same subject that you are being attacked on...[Speak] up without denying and thus confirming” (“False Report Correction”). The content and purposes of *Freedom* and “Lunatics” in particular, therefore, must be considered with Hubbard’s directives in mind, as Miscavige continues to enforce Hubbard’s directives among current Sea Org members.

Target Audience, Audience Reaction, and Media Expansion

Important to a thorough analysis of propaganda is the target audience and their reactions. According to Jowett and O’Donnell, “A target audience is selected by a propagandist for its potential effectiveness. The propaganda message is aimed at the audience most likely to be useful to the propagandist if it responds favorably” (319). While many COS materials address mass audiences and others address very specific groups such as the Sea Org, *Freedom Magazine*’s target audience is multidirectional and layered with meaning.

For example, a lower member of the COS who is not a Sea Org member would recognize the specific accusations against each of these apostates as not only “suppressive” acts but as “crimes” and “high crimes” within the Scientology Code of Ethics. Crimes include obvious offenses such as theft, mayhem, embezzlement, and

falsifying communication from higher authority, among many others (*Introduction to Scientology Ethics* 202-211). Also listed as crimes are “stealing or seducing another’s wife or husband,” “overworking an executive by ignoring one’s duties,” “processing or giving aid or comfort to a suppressive person or group,” “holding Scientology materials or policies up to ridicule, contempt, or scorn,” and much more (202-211). Furthermore, a “high crime” in Scientology consists only of “publicly departing Scientology or committing suppressive acts” (211). As COS propaganda, *Freedom* illuminates the underlying connections to the belief and ethics systems of Scientology in that narratives pertaining to apostates are careful to show that individuals are in violation of these specific ethics systems. For an audience of COS followers, even those at the introductory stages of the COS education processes, apostates are immediately aligned with suppressive, “anti-social” persons.

In addition to these COS ethics violations, a Sea Org member would also recognize testimony of apostates as not only suppressive but as propaganda based on Hubbard’s teachings. For example, as Hubbard’s “Attacks on Scientology” policy letter states, “Attackers are simply an anti-Scientology propaganda agency so far as we are concerned. They have proven they want no facts and will only lie no matter what they discover. So BANISH all ideas that any fair hearing is intended and start our attack with their first breath. Never wait. Never talk about us--only them. Use their blood, sex, crime to get headlines. Don’t use us” (“Attacks on Scientology”). As stated in Hubbard’s Public Investigation Section policy letter, “[The] press and the public are interested in murder, assault, destruction, violence, sex and dishonesty in that order. Investigations which can uncover these factors in the activities of individuals of a group attacking Scientology are

valuable in the degree that they contain a number of these factors. The more factors a case contains, the more important the case is. The idea is that the press feeds on these factors and we feed them someone else's" ("Public Investigation Section"). These and numerous additional directives toward Sea Org members function as a method of "shaping perceptions." As Jowett and O'Donnell explain, "Our language is based on a vast web of associations that enables us to interpret, judge, and conceptualize our perceptions. Propagandists understand that our constructed meanings are related to both our past understanding of language and images and the culture and context in which they appear. Perception is dependent on our attitudes toward issues and our feelings about them" (9). Therefore, while each member of the "posse of lunatics" portrayed in this issue of *Freedom* are former Sea Org members, they are re-established as attackers of Scientology and are treated with handling procedures composed by Hubbard decades prior. This move among current Sea Org members indicates clear perception shaping. Most notably, the COS culture directs such behavior on numerous fronts in Hubbard's design of the religion. Suppressive persons, potential trouble sources, specific "crimes" that involve a person being accused of a crime for not reporting (i.e., knowledge reports or KRs) on another member, and more create a dense propagandistic belief program that incites the creation of propagandistic materials aimed at "attackers" through a culture of propagandistic education based on the teachings and directives of Hubbard.

Thus, it is clear that the context of COS culture and education system, the understanding of the extent of the audience's COS education, and connections created through text, image, and other content work in tandem to create propagandistic material in *Freedom Magazine* for COS members. However, recent developments and expansions

across multiple media platforms indicate that the COS is also appealing to a mass audience. For example, *Freedom Magazine* is now available online in full, searchable text. Recent issues contain a media and ethics column, with an author name, date, issue number, and publisher, creating a sense of legitimacy (earlier issues contained no dates and no authors). *Freedom* also maintains a blog and a Twitter account. The Twitter page does not specifically mention that it is affiliated with Scientology, though the topic of Scientology is certainly the central focus. In 2018, the Church also established its own television network that features programs dedicated to revitalizing the perceptions of Scientology in society. One of the programs is Freedom TV, which, according to the *Freedom* website, will “cover stories corporate-controlled mainstream media chooses to ignore: factual and responsible coverage addressing social justice, individual liberties and social reform” (“Freedom TV”). With the recent concerns regarding media bias and misinformation, this mission statement speaks directly to the contexts of our modern society.

The expansion of *Freedom* is important to consider as propaganda that appeals not only to followers but also to a mass audience. Scientology’s additional media platforms for *Freedom* and other publications in which the COS focuses on present issues, produces information by individuals who appear to be experts, and creates a sense of credibility through repetition across multiple media formats.

Effects and Evaluation, Counterpropaganda

The effects and effectiveness of COS propaganda and *Freedom* in particular are difficult to determine. As Jacques Ellul writes, the ability to determine the effects and

effectiveness of propaganda is uniquely problematic due to the “diversity of effects sought by the propagandist” and the lack of appropriate methods of measurement (259-262). For the COS, determining the effects and effectiveness is perhaps more arduous given the secrecy of the organization and its propensity for producing false or misleading information. Based on popular news sources, it is clear that a few members have left the COS, while many continue to practice Scientology. There is also some evidence of the ongoing expansion of the Church--physically, legally, and in its use of media platforms.

If responses to the COS and its use of propaganda are an indication of effects, the amount of counterpropaganda is important to consider. A number of former members, journalists, and other group and individuals have engaged in both *tactical* (“a message or set of messages or activities deployed to push back against a specific message from an adversary”) and *strategic* (an “entire communication policy devised as a response to an adversary’s propaganda activity”) counterpropaganda (Cull 3). These responses exist in various forms including documentaries, docu-series, books, websites, and much more. Some are “underground” or anonymous while others are open and transparent. A small number of counterpropaganda sources address *Freedom Magazine* in particular; more commonly, the narratives regarding apostates and other articles in *Freedom* are often countered. For example, Mike Rinder rebuts COS allegations that he assaulted his ex-wife, a narrative discussed in “Lunatics,” on the docu-series “Scientology and the Aftermath” as well as on his blog (“The ‘Mike Rinder’ Problem”). Similar rebuttals can be found on other counterpropaganda websites such as thescientologymoneyproject.com and tonyortega.org regarding a number of topics discussed in *Freedom*.

Ultimately, in evaluating the effectiveness of COS propaganda in general, the larger public is unlikely to be swayed toward the COS while members seem unlikely to be pulled away. Importantly, however, the use of seemingly credible evaluations of media and ethics in general and the use of search-engine optimized language increases the likelihood that the general public may be exposed to COS propaganda materials--especially through *Freedom Magazine*. For example, a Google search for “is Anderson Cooper credible?” returns a *Freedom Magazine* article as the third entry. *Freedom* links also appear on the first page of Google searches for apostates such as Amy Scobee and Mike Rinder as well as in searches for current events, such as the A&E network’s “Live PD” cancellation. A search for terms such as “media ethics a&e live pd” or “a&e live pd journalistic ethics” returns *Freedom Magazine* articles on the first page of Google.

Because *Freedom* covers a number of topics, including the opioid crisis, religious freedom, ADHD medication, American education issues, and much more, the possibility that public audiences researching such topics--especially as they intersect with media ethics--will encounter *Freedom* and the COS is likely. This interaction is an important consideration for the field of rhetorical studies as discussions of fake news, misinformation, propaganda, and more continue.

Conclusions

The Church of Scientology’s use of propaganda is widespread, multilayered, and complex. While numerous religious organizations utilize propaganda, the COS employs unique strategies that would largely be considered unethical and problematic by many standards. Determining how to categorize COS propaganda in general and *Freedom*’s use

of propaganda in particular, however, is difficult. First, propaganda may be agitative or integrative and, second, it can be “described as white, gray, or black, in relationship to an acknowledgement of its source and its accuracy of information” (Jowett and O’Donnell 20). Generally, *Freedom Magazine* is most accurately labeled as a form of integrative propaganda as it does not specifically call the audience to action in the way that agitative materials do. Instead, *Freedom* more accurately “render[s] an audience passive, accepting, and nonchallenging” (Jowett and O’Donnell 20). Essentially, *Freedom* constructs an identity of apostates and propagandizes its audience to believe that such individuals are not credible as sources of information and should be disregarded. This move to discredit is the chief aim in *Freedom* and in “Lunatics” specifically in line with Hubbard’s Public Relations directives (see Chapter 2) in which Sea Org members are instructed to counter the source of information and sway appearances of the source and/or the COS. Whereas STAND WPs aim to shift, justify, or deny certain concepts and/or accusations through seemingly logical arguments in a professional genre, *Freedom* focuses on discrediting apostates as sources rather than the actual concepts apostates discuss or their accusations and/or testimony.

Because the COS, in *Freedom Magazine*, utilizes elements of both black and white propaganda, it is most aptly described as gray propaganda. In most situations, the COS is clearly the sponsoring organization for *Freedom*, made clear in the mission statement and from links to the Church on the *Freedom* website. Occasionally, the COS does attempt to conceal itself as the sponsoring organization such as its social media posts that link to *Freedom* without mention of the COS. Additionally, the information contained in *Freedom* and in “Lunatics” particularly, while based in truth, is highly

exaggerated, misleading, and ultimately inaccurate. For example, Mike Rinder is labeled as a “wife beater” and is accused of irreparably damaging his ex-wife’s arm; however, he claims that his ex-wife’s arm was incidentally “grazed” when he attempted to leave an altercation in which he was surprised by several family members and others who were still members of the COS (“The Mike Rinder Problem”). In this way, the story is based on an actual event, but the details and effects are not accurate. Jowett and O’Donnell write that gray propaganda can function in this way in that the “source may or may not be correctly identified, and the accuracy of the information is uncertain” (24). Additionally, they explain that gray propaganda can be used to “embarrass an enemy or competitor” (25) and may involve “planting stories” to validate them through a legitimate source (27). While these practices are not completely in line with *Freedom*, the goals of legitimizing the COS by discrediting sources of critical information by creating a seemingly objective news magazine closely resembles gray propaganda practices.

However, in analyzing *Freedom* with the full acknowledgement of the systemized context, it is evident that the COS is running a more complex campaign than the gray propaganda label indicates. With the inclusion of Scientology ideologies and Hubbard’s directives, it is clear that the COS continues to run investigations into “attackers” and continues to publish highly embellished information meant to expose the “evil deeds” of opponents (“How to Handle Black Propaganda”). Furthermore, these practices are condoned by COS theology regarding suppressive persons and their disruption of clearing oneself, attaining OT status, and eventually clearing the planet (see Chapter 2). Additionally, the numerous abuses alleged by apostates are an important aspect of the context that should not be overlooked. Mooney, for example, writes,

I consider it a reasonable thing to join any of these groups [Scientology, Jehovah's Witnesses, The Family]. In fact, for many people, being a member of the groups under consideration is an extremely positive thing. This also has to be balanced against the harm that may come to people as a consequence of membership. As the texts examined in this book do not constitute sufficient evidence for an argument about this harm, and the manipulation that may occur because of power and secrecy, this issue is not tackled in this text (2).

The lack of both contextual analysis and discussion of hierarchical structures within the COS organization greatly diminishes the effectiveness of Mooney's analysis and argument. A comprehensive analysis of religiously-based materials and religious propaganda in particular requires significant attention to the contextual details of the sponsoring organization. Such analysis must include a thorough understanding of the belief system, structural hierarchies, policies, and more.

In the case of the COS, without acknowledging Hubbard's directives and policies on, for example, investigations and the production of propaganda and without acknowledging the ideological systems (Stanley) and noetic structures (Plantinga) of followers, an accurate depiction of *Freedom* would not be possible. Analyses of religious materials that do not address these larger contextual issues are unable to define the specifics of religious propaganda and connect them to larger goals or purposes of the organization. As my analysis of the COS and of *Freedom Magazine* shows, religious texts cannot be separated from the intention and practices of the sponsoring religious organization. Doing so undermines comprehensive analysis, and the conclusions reached by the investigator would be useless at best and dangerous at worst.

Freedom Magazine is an arm of propaganda for the Church of Scientology. Its global reach and purported mission as a media ethics investigatory publication attempt to legitimize other aspects of and articles in *Freedom* and, in turn, attempts to legitimize the COS. In *Freedom*, Hubbard's directives for handling enemies and his directives for public perception management are exemplified. Further, on a larger scale, this analysis shows ramifications for those perceived as suppressive and contributes, similar to STAND, to understanding the COS's emphasis on current social issues as a legitimization tactic.

This chapter presents insight into the nuances of COS propaganda using *Freedom* and "Lunatics" in particular. My analysis shows that the COS utilizes this publication as a medium for its propaganda rather than as a news magazine, media watchdog, or ethical investigative source. More accurately, the COS claims these goals only as a propagandistic facade while *Freedom's* actual goal is discrediting Scientology's opponents. Overall, my analysis indicates that *Freedom* essentially mimics the design, language, and other techniques of news magazines to increase its appeal to both the public and to COS followers. In addition, in the same vein as Chapter 3's analysis of STAND white papers, my analysis indicates that the Sea Org continues to employ Hubbard's directives; thus, Hubbard's power and influence has not diminished in the decades since his death.

In Chapter 5, I discuss specific strands of analysis that flow through each chapter in this project. I show connections among the systemized context of the COS, the STAND white papers, and *Freedom Magazine*. In doing so, I theorize several concepts

important to the field of rhetoric and discuss further implications for future research on rhetoric and propaganda in groups similar to the COS and others.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding chapters, I have discussed how the COS can be categorized as a propagandistic organization based on the field's definitions, the basic elements and key concepts within the COS organization, propaganda strategies in STAND white papers, and propaganda in *Freedom Magazine*. In this chapter, I discuss the overarching takeaways based on the results of my analysis and research.

Systemized Context

This research illuminates the importance of incorporating *systemized context* (see Chapters 1 and 2) into analyses of discourse communities (Swales) and analyses of individual or collections of materials. Closely aligned with this notion is Annabelle Mooney's discourse context, which refers to "the discourses produced by cults, anti-cult movements, academics working in the area, and so on" (129) and, presumably, the concept can be extended to non-cult groups/organizations. In her analysis, however, Mooney examines only one sample text from three different groups (The Church of Scientology, The Jehovah's Witnesses, and The Family) and then compares the rhetorical features to anti-cult language; subsequently, Mooney argues that "anti-cult texts use the same kinds of textual techniques that cults do" (154). I disagree with Mooney's methodology and, therefore, her conclusions; however, I appreciate that she develops the

concept of discourse context, which is a useful element of analysis for, as Mooney writes, so-called cult groups as well as other groups or organizations. However, the context should extend beyond one piece from a group, a response(s) from an outsider or opponent, and the work of academics.

Instead, I propose an extension of the context concept that includes the components of belief systems such as the rhetorical situation (Bitzer), contextual logic (Borchardt), the ideologics (Crowley), the discourse context (A. Mooney), and the ideological systems (Stanley). As I stated in Chapter 2, an understanding of these components provides insight into the noetic structures (Plantinga) of individuals who subscribe to the belief system(s) and aids in ethical analyses (see Royster and Kirsch) from outsiders who cannot otherwise speak to the intricacies of unfamiliar belief systems.

Within the *systemized context*, analysis should involve in-depth study of policies, practices, histories, court cases, reports, and investigations from within the group/organization and about the group/organization in order to develop a clear and ethical foundation for claims about an organization or group's rhetorical and propagandistic activities. Further, consideration of *systemized contexts* requires analyses of the logics and structures among beliefs; ideological structures and conscious shaping of these structures; discourse among insiders, among outsiders, and communications between both groups; considerations of the organization's ethical, moral, and/or faith-based underpinnings; and how these elements comprise followers' or participants' noetic structures. Additionally, factors from outside the group have an important impact on the systemized contexts of groups. Politics, social movements, other religions, and historical events, for example, can impact how the systemized contexts are established and how

they evolve amid larger contexts. Ethical analysis of religious (and secular) organizations' communicative strategies--particularly those described as propaganda--must include these contextual concepts.

In the case of Scientology, the systemized context is discoverable through, for example, policy letters, COS-produced books, COS websites, apostate testimony, investigative reporting, documentaries, and social movements throughout recent history. Such contextual information must be a foundational element in research based on the COS in order to ensure accuracy. Most notably, *Freedom* and STAND indicate the necessity of these contexts since both publications anchor on the concept of *freedom*. Without the full context of this term as it is used in COS discourse, analyses of *Freedom* and STAND are incomplete. On the surface, these publications indicate a great deal of attention to individual freedoms, freedom of religion, and fights against bigotry and discrimination. While these are worthwhile causes, Hubbard's 1966 policy letter indicates that the focus on *freedom* is, essentially, a marketing strategy: "That's the answer no nation or person can stand up to--if we keep saying it long and loud. SCIENTOLOGY IS THE ROAD TO TOTAL FREEDOM. Used in argument one can invent reasons to baffle the attacking agency or person--but all these reasons should add up to everyone has rights to total freedom" ("Attacks on Scientology" 490). This policy is issued to the larger COS organization as a "remimeo." Essentially, Sea Org members are directed to advocate that "freedom" is the COS's essential purpose; however, this campaign is discussed as a marketing strategy rather than as a legitimate goal. For example, Hubbard writes that this campaign would "baffle" attackers and would prevent anyone from rebutting it.

Additionally, a marketing campaign aimed at “freedom” in 1966 no doubt calls upon the Civil Rights Movement and other movements of the kairotic moment.

The invocation of “freedom,” however, in addition to being a marketing ploy rather than an authentic goal, is further delegitimized by Hubbard’s next policy letter. Three days after the first policy letter is issued, Hubbard produces another policy letter as a “Gen Non-Remimeo” that goes only to executives, the legal department, and Section 5. The purpose of Section 5, or the “Public Investigation Section,” was “to help LRH [Hubbard] investigate public matters and individuals which seem to impede human liberty so that such matters may be exposed and to furnish intelligence required in guiding the progress of Scientology” (“Public Investigation Section”). In this second policy letter, Hubbard “augments” the previous policy, writing that attacks are inevitable even when “hold[ing] up an image of freedom” and that they should be handled by “proper tactics and administrative machinery” such as lawsuits based on libel and slander, “investigating noisily the attackers,” and “counter-propaganda” tactics (“Attacks on Scientology (Continued)” 491-493). Within the Sea Org hierarchy, then, exists an additional group through which specific tactics are carried out in “attacking” COS opponents. Although the current leadership of the COS fell to David Miscavige after Hubbard’s death in 1986, these tactics are ongoing as evidenced in the attacks on apostates in *Freedom* and in the victimization narratives and arguments in STAND publications that cast anyone speaking out about Scientology as attackers of religious freedoms.

Although policy letters authored by Miscavige are not available (to my knowledge), I surmise that the COS’s structure, as discussed in Chapter 2, precludes

Miscavige from making large alterations to COS policies, theology, and so on because he does not possess Hubbard's supposed knowledge. Instead, because Miscavige relies upon Hubbard's authority in order to maintain his own leadership position, policies such as how to handle attacks on Scientology and others may remain largely intact. In fact, *STAND* and *Freedom* are clear indications that they do. For example, both *STAND* and *Freedom* focus on the concept of "total freedom" via The Bridge to Total Freedom as directed by Hubbard's policy letters, though COS publications often convey the term *freedom* as a more broadly applicable concept in society (such as religious freedoms) rather than one specifically related to Scientology. Additionally, both publications follow Hubbard's directives for handling (perceived) black propaganda and "attacks" on Scientology. Thus, the systemized context is an essential, underlying element of COS analysis. The intention behind these and other COS publications is illuminating and necessary for a full analysis.

In general, research on any organization should include attention to systemized context whenever possible in order to connect broad rhetorical strategies. Non-religious groups must also engage specific beliefs, goals, policies, and practices that determine its overarching functions, which may or may not be easily identifiable in its communicative actions. Thus, understanding the full context provides further insight into the rhetorical elements of a group's communications. Additionally, research related to religious organizations or groups necessitates this attention to systemized context. For example, political groups or organizations built upon foundations of Christianity (explicitly or not) must be examined with systemized contexts as a central analytical element. Along this line, Crowley "establish[es] a link between apocalyptic theology and conservative

politics” (133) in which Christian beliefs influence various elements of political action by certain groups. A researcher examining political communication who has not conducted an analysis of the group’s systemized contexts would be limited in their understanding of the group’s potential for action, implicit arguments, connotations, and more in light of connections that exist amongst beliefs: “An appeal to a belief can stimulate an emotional response that in turn can activate other, closely related beliefs...That is, the movement of ideologic cannot be generalized across belief systems but must be studied, rather, in the context of given belief systems” (61). An aspect of any religiously-based research methodology, therefore, should include deep insights into the organization’s broad and specific beliefs, interpretations, goals, assumptions, and more in order to establish foundational elements of the organization’s and its followers’ noetic structures. Awareness of the belief systems and noetic structures enable the researcher to develop a depth of analysis that is not possible otherwise.

Scientology Propaganda

In Chapter 1, I discussed a number of definitions and characteristics of propaganda and noted that the process and intentions of communicative acts should be taken into consideration when categorizing communication as propaganda. I also discussed the OPC continuum that ranged from rhetorical persuasion to propaganda as opposed to a rhetoric-or-propaganda dichotomy. In my analysis of the responsive COS materials, discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, I identify clear propagandistic strategies based on these definitions and characteristics. In reviewing these strategies with the insights into the COS in Chapter 2, I offer additional insights into COS propaganda in responsive materials through discussion of mimetic propaganda as well as divine ethos and the appeal of certainty.

Mimetic Propaganda

One of the most prominent aspects of COS propaganda is the use of mimicry--a strategy I refer to as *mimetic propaganda*. While many propaganda scholars (e.g., Bernays, Jowett and O'Donnell, Miller, Stanley) discuss various characteristics of propaganda such as secrets, lies, hidden sources, and self interests, few consider how imitation and the invocation of the kairotic moment can be utilized by propaganda organizations to further their desired intent. In a similar vein, however, is Vandenberg's discussion of sociological propaganda in modern advertisements in which she utilizes a "Burkean perspective--based as it is in issues of motivation, identification, and symbol use" expanded through "the methodology of a critical theory which focuses on the concept of *mediated* desire as does Rene Girard's mimetic theory, or theory of triangulated desire" (Vandenberg). Certainly Vandenberg's study is similar in the discussion of mimetic aspects of propaganda; however, she centers on advertisements and discusses a consumer's desire to imitate some aspect of the larger campaign: "While Burkean theory would suggest that a woman might buy a Chanel bag in order to identify with or *be like* her favorite Chanel-toting actress, Girard's theory would suggest that woman does not actually desire to *be like* that actress; rather, she desires to *be* the actress and mistakenly believes that possession of said-purse will effect this transformation" (Vandenberg). In the case of the COS, my conception of *mimetic propaganda* does not follow this model; instead, the COS acts as the "imitator" in its mimicry of professional genres, including white papers, websites, and news magazines. While the COS may desire to *be like* or to *be* an altruistic organization similar to the way consumers desire advertised objects, the *systemized contexts* indicate that the COS is not interested in the actual transformative

aspects of this imitation. In other words, the COS is not an organization that imitates social justice organizations because its leaders desire to be a social justice organization; instead, it mimics genre features of such organizations as legitimization tactics aimed indirectly at recruitment and retention purposes.

In addition, Jason Stanley presents two characterizations of propaganda in liberal democracies that are similar to the concept of *mimetic propaganda*. The first is “undermining propaganda” which is “a contribution to public discourse that is presented as an embodiment of certain political ideals, but is of a kind that tends to erode a political ideal that belongs to the same family” (54). If political ideals are extended to religious ideals, the COS engages in this type of propaganda, for example, when its publications discuss religious freedoms but tends to erode the concept of personal freedoms through policies such as disconnection. The second characterization is “vehicle of propaganda” which is “an institution that represents itself as defined by a certain political ideal, yet whose practice tends to undermine the realization of that ideal” (55). Again, the COS represents itself as an organization fighting for various freedoms but, in practice, COS policies prevent followers from attaining many actual freedoms. Both of these characterizations are certainly applicable to COS propaganda and are apparent in both *STAND* and *Freedom*; however, COS propaganda employs the additional characteristic of *mimetic propaganda* in that it mimics the design, style, and purposes of more credible sources of information and that it may anchor to the kairotic moment. While *mimetic propaganda* is essentially propagandists’ ability to conduct a genre analysis and employ genre conventions effectively, the defining element is the propagandistic nature of the organization; thus, systemized context is a necessary aspect of analysis.

In the COS, *mimetic propaganda* is employed in *STAND* and *Freedom* through the invocation of current movements and/or trends, including social justice, distrust in the media, individual freedoms, and religious persecution. On the *Freedom* website, for example, the COS states that it acts as a media watchdog, that it illuminates problematic media entities, and that it “stands for accurate and accountable reporting.” My analysis shows that this is not the case; however, the magazine itself and the articles published in it can easily be perceived by the public as credible. For instance, the COS carefully designs *Freedom* to look like a credible news source and has begun including author names, dates, sources, quality photographs or illustrations, and more to produce credible-looking issues. According to Jowett and O’Donnell, this mimetic characteristic would be categorized as a “special technique to maximize effect” (323) which extends propaganda analysis to any number of techniques.

In one case study, Jowett and O’Donnell discuss a special technique related to Big Pharma propaganda that addresses a tactic similar to *mimetic propaganda*. In the case study, ghostwriters write articles for medical journals; however, “the listed author is a known expert” (377). Ghostwriters are also asked to minimize or avoid certain topics or effects of various drugs in these articles (377). Jowett and O’Donnell describe this practice as a form of gray propaganda “for the true source is not revealed, and the information is slanted in favor of the propagandist (377). However, the discussion of this practice as one of many special techniques and the attribution of such a practice as “gray” and “slanted” is not a sufficient characterization of this propagandistic tactic. Describing this type of propaganda as an incorrectly identified source for information does not convey the problematic nature of such practices.

Such tactics are blatant disinformation and should be categorized as such. Disinformation attempts in medical journals have much more dire consequences than COS propaganda, but the strategy is similar. Big Pharma companies that hire ghostwriters are essentially mimicking the style and structure of journal articles but are ignoring ethical considerations, and they are publishing in reputable sources in an attempt to make their information appear credible. The COS, in developing materials that mimic credible sources of information, is also utilizing *mimetic propaganda*, though the COS typically creates its own sources, as is evident in *STAND* and *Freedom*.

The COS actively employs *mimetic propaganda* as a means of manipulating the audience's cognitions. As a reader browses *Freedom*, they would recognize common markers of reliable information, such as an author, date, or the use of quotes from sources, and would likely be more inclined to accept the information that the COS is publishing. In addition to these more conspicuous common markers, the COS also employs what Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin refer to as "refashioning," or a kind of remediation in which a creator borrows from previous iterations within a particular medium: "This kind of borrowing is perhaps the most common, because artists both know and depend most immediately on predecessors in their own medium...Refashioning within the medium is a special case of remediation, and it proceeds from the same ambiguous motives of homage and rivalry--what Harold Bloom has called the 'anxiety of influence'--as do other remediations" (49). While this practice is very similar to *mimetic propaganda*, Bolter and Grusin seem to insist that refashioning and remediation are typically positive and promote media, especially digital media, in useful, innovative directions. *Mimetic propaganda*, however, pulls a medium in the opposite direction.

Outward mimicry of media often perceived as inherently credible without adherence to the standards of that media indicates manipulation and deception. It is a tactic of propaganda that plays upon Bolter and Grusin's conceptions of hypermediacy and transparency in that the "windowed style" (31) and similarities to print media and online news sources are emulated in the visual layout and may help to ease readers into the text and content due to their familiarity with similarly-designed digital interfaces.

Mimetic propaganda is not unique to the COS. For example, highly biased media publications also use this strategy. Newsmax, for example, employs interview, careful source attribution, quality photojournalism, and numerous stylistic techniques while it presents biased information (Hawkins; Lee; C. Mooney) as fact-based reporting.

In addition to mimicking credible sources through style, design, source use, and more, the COS also mimics social movements that gain traction within the kairotic moment. This is a tactic that the COS has employed since its inception as Hubbard created Scientology within the context of 1950s-era movements. James R. Lewis writes that the COS is grounded in practices and ideologies that align with other movements such as Spiritualism, the New Thought movements, and Metaphysical religions:

The Church of Scientology is in this same lineage, though Scientology takes the further step of explicitly referring to their religio-therapeutic practices as religious *technology*--in Scientology lingo, the 'tech.' In much the same way as the 1950s viewed technology as ushering in a new, utopian world, Scientology sees their psycho-spiritual technology as supplying the missing ingredient in existing technologies--namely, the therapeutic engineering of the human psyche (Lewis,

emphasis in original).

In times when particular movements gain popularity or when upheavals arise in society or social change is looming, Hubbard carefully utilized the kairotic moment to promote his religion. For example, the concept of *freedom* as a marketing strategy likely arose as an effect of the Civil Rights Movement, and the COS's anti-drug campaigns may certainly be related to drug-free initiatives in the 1970s and 1980s. Although Hubbard died in 1986 and David Miscavige is currently in control of the organization, these initiatives are ongoing in current COS materials. With the rise of social justice campaigns in recent years, Scientology has once again found an effective movement with which to promote its own credibility. Current performative social justice initiatives are most apparent in *STAND* and in *Freedom* in which religious freedom, hatred, bigotry, discrimination, and other kairotic topics are addressed.

While this research cannot fully delve into the concept of *mimetic propaganda* outside of Scientology due to the specific focus on only COS responsive materials, further research on the use of kairotic moments and the outward mimicry of credible sources is warranted as suspect organizations may use such tactics to not only recruit and retain followers but to identify themselves as legitimate, charitable organizations or groups.

Divine Ethos and the Appeal of Certainty

While *mimetic propaganda* is directed toward outsiders, divine ethos is a propagandistic appeal directed toward COS followers specifically. In this appeal, followers are taught or indoctrinated into Scientology via the ethos of Hubbard. In fields such as sociology,

psychology, and religious studies, this is often referred to as charismatic leadership. Although definitions and contexts of “charisma” are often multifaceted and highly contextual (see Schneiderman), much of the literature on such organizations or groups states or implies that a charismatic leader is a common characteristic (Abbruzzese; Chidester; Ellwood 21; Lalich xvi; Lewis; Martin 32-33).

While sociologists, psychologists, and religious studies scholars often discuss charismatic leadership as a tactic or as a characteristic of high-control groups, this concept should also have a place in rhetorical studies as a strategy of persuasion. In rhetorical theory, the concept of charisma is closely related to *ethos*; however, charismatic leadership is regarded as a much more dominating element:

The self-sealing nature of cultic ideologies leaves no room for alternatives. Eventually, life outside the cult becomes impossible to imagine. This occurs when charismatic leaders and their transcendent belief systems *demand* that their followers undergo a personal transformation that relies on the fusion of the individual’s sense of personal freedom and the vow of self-renunciation. The fusion--which I call charismatic commitment--and its resultant social-psychological state--which I call bounded choice--is the force that time and again keeps people tethered to groups, relationships, or situations that many outsiders find incomprehensible (Lalich 18).

By extending Janja Lalich’s theories of charismatic commitment and bounded choice into the field of rhetoric, a deeper understanding of the functions of *ethos* is possible. As Michael J. Hyde writes, theories of ethos can be framed through Isocrates’ claim that

ethos refers to a person's character and/or through Aristotle's claim that ethos stems from the art of one's discourse:

For Isocrates, rhetorical *paideia*, education and socialization, serves the process of character development, but it is a person's character itself, his stellar reputation, that anchors the persuasive capacity of rhetoric. 'The power to speak well' is credited as being 'the surest index of a sound understanding, and discourse which is true and lawful and just is the outward image of a good and faithful soul' (*Antidosis*, 255). Aristotle, on the other hand, associates *ethos* not primarily with the orator's reputation for being such a soul but rather with the actual rhetorical competence displayed in the orator's discourse (xv).

Additionally, Hyde considers Heidegger's concept of ethos, which he discusses as the "call of conscience" and "appropriateness" to the particular time or moment (xx-xxi). In light of his analysis, Hyde writes that ethos refers at least to "character, ethics, Being, space and time, emotion, truth, rhetorical competence, and everyday situations that are contextualized within the dwelling place of human being--a place known to encourage metaphysical wonder" (xxi). Ethos, then, is located in and practiced only by humanity; however, in what ways can we explore the ethos of super-human individuals with this conception of ethos? Or, how might ethos be further complicated by individuals who (claim to) possess some form of divinity?

The term *charismatic leader* limits rhetorical discussions of group leaders as it typically focuses on positionality of the leader and their demands (Lalich) on followers rather than persuasive elements of their communicative strategies. Instead, a very small

number of individuals may rely on *divine ethos*. In this concept, characteristics of the leadership are manufactured and may be produced via evidence or through claims to divinity. For example, a leader may discuss charity work or education or experience in order to convey a sense of ethos. However, these are also disputable characteristics--meaning that they can change, diminish, or even disappear--because they are reliant upon very human actions or may require specific evidence or may be disputed with counterevidence. *Divine ethos* works differently in the sense that it does not change, diminish, or disappear for followers without an inciting event that destabilizes the noetic structure. Because *divine ethos* calls upon, in addition to other characteristics, a prophetic or even messianic appeal, a leader's characteristics may change, but followers' devotion may not--especially if they perceive divinity from the group's leader. In this way, although policies of the group may change, law enforcement may become involved, or practices may begin to explicitly contradict the theological aspects of the group, followers are able to retain their passion, submissiveness, etc. for the leader due to the leader's divine ethos. When the invocation of divinity eclipses all other aspects of the leader or the group, we can say that the leader is appealing to *divine ethos*.

In Scientology, Hubbard's appeal to divine ethos is clear from his insistence that he passed through the Wall of Fire, that he discovered previously unknowable (not just unknown) knowledge of Earth and its history, that he healed himself and others, that he experimented and tested practices and procedures, and much more. There are COS testimonies from followers who insist that Scientology practices work and are invaluable. Additionally, and very importantly, there are also sealed aspects of the organization that prevent defeaters. The SP and PTS doctrines create a system in which Hubbard is

essentially never wrong. He writes with authority and passion and expertise. He writes an enormous number of texts, books, documents, lectures, and much more that conveys a sense of multitudinous knowledge that seems impossible to attribute to just one human person. When these aspects are combined, Hubbard is held up as super-human. This network of beliefs and experiences and texts contributes to his overwhelming persona as a divine individual.

Therefore, Hubbard's super-human, divine persona allowed him to create policies such as handling and prevention procedures, attack policies, investigatory units, and more with impunity. When a person or leader appeals to divine ethos, other standards of ethos are overshadowed, and the leader may invoke their divinity as backing. For faithful followers, this backing is all that is necessary as the leader of the group resides in a centralized position within followers' noetic structures.

While *divine ethos* is a theoretical concept, it is broadly applicable to a number of groups. For example, Heaven's Gate followers were told that they would be physically taken aboard a spacecraft; however, when one of the leaders died, the theology of the group was redirected to indicate that followers' spirits (or equivalent) would be taken from their bodies and brought aboard a spacecraft. The enormity of this revision to Heaven's Gate theology had little impact on followers, however. *Divine ethos* may help to explain this phenomenon. If the remaining leader was imbued with enough divinity, followers may have been able to maintain their noetic structures to accommodate the new information. Essentially, the divine leader is able to revise policies, theologies, etc. as their persona (their knowledge bank and experience and expertise) is held in higher regard than the particulars of the religion or group.

Similar veneration may be seen in a number of Donald Trump's followers during his 2016-2020 presidency wherein many of his most devout followers, typically conservative Christians, were able to overlook certain personal aspects, policies, and practices despite their explicit or nearly explicit contradictions to biblical passages. Essentially, then, *divine ethos* proposes that belief in the divinity of the group's leader is held with deeper ingress than other beliefs. Thus, the noetic structure is built around the divinity of the leader rather than the theology or ideology itself. This allows the leader to change, contradict, or delete elements of their religion or platform without disrupting the belief systems, or noetic structures, of followers.

Divine ethos is a broadly applicable concept that can be applied to only a few leaders. It is not a concept that relies on gender, age, race, or any other characteristic; rather, *divine ethos* calls upon the perceived nature of the leader and the influence of that leader on followers. The typical preacher, for example, is unlikely to appeal to divinity--rather they are likely seen as an interpreter whose interpretations may be criticized. When criticism is not only not allowed but is also actively avoided (i.e., when the leader is always beyond reproach), the organization may be headed by a leader appealing to *divine ethos*.

An additional element of COS propaganda related to divine ethos as a kind of consequence is the appeal of *certainty*. Psychologists, sociologists, journalists, and other researchers interested in cults and similar groups have often pointed to the concept of un/certainty as a contributing force in various types of groups (Brothers; Ortega; Tyrrell). One of the most-often cited causes of an individual joining a group is a sense of uncertainty about personal and professional relationships, job opportunities, new

locations, and more. In much of the literature on this subject, people who join groups often do so during a period of distinct uncertainty in their lives. Omar Sultan Haque, Jihye Choi, Tim Phillips, and Harold Bursztajn write that,

Vulnerable people don't tend to fact check when existential relief is easily and cheaply attained with little effort. Specifically, the relief in question concerns the human desire for identity, certainty, social connection, meaning, the optimal amount of freedom, and glory. At crucial developmental periods in adolescence and early adulthood, the formation of one's identity is a primary concern, and a riddle to be solved. These years are a time for figuring out who one is, where one belongs, what one values and finds meaningful, and what one can become and prove to the world (Haque, Choi, Phillips, and Bursztajn).

Similarly, Dennis Tourish writes that cult followers "tend to join at a moment of heightened vulnerability in their lives, such as after a divorce, losing a job or attending college away from home for the first time. At such moments we are more likely to crave certainty, and the comfort of belonging to some group that gives our lives a higher purpose than day-to-day survival. Cults promote a message which claims certainty about issues which are objectively uncertain. Despite this logical flaw, the message is alluring. Most of us want to believe that the world is more orderly than it is, and that some authority figure has compelling answers to all life's problems" (Tourish). This concept also has a place in the field of rhetoric as it is, essentially, a persuasive appeal when considered both as part of an indoctrination system and as part of retention practices involving followers.

In Scientology, the appeal of certainty is most pronounced in its construction and discussions of faith. This is a differentiation in requirements and is an essential element of Scientology as a practice and as a religious group because it only asks followers to accept what they see and/or experience. For instance, the official COS website (scientology.org) states that “Scientology is a religion that offers a precise path leading to a complete and certain understanding of one’s true spiritual nature and one’s relationship to self, family, groups, Mankind, all life forms, the material universe, the spiritual universe and the Supreme Being.” Further, the website states that “Scientology is not a dogmatic religion in which one is asked to accept anything on faith alone. On the contrary, one discovers for oneself that the principles of Scientology are true by applying its principles and observing or experiencing the results. The ultimate goal of Scientology is true spiritual enlightenment and freedom for all.” This description of the COS indicates that individuals will experience the effects of Scientology in their personal lives and will not be asked to rely upon faith. Further, Scientology is constructed as an active process rather than passive--or one in which individuals must wait for answered prayers, a sign, or advice from religious leaders. Together, these elements create a persuasive notion that Scientology offers *certainty*.

Through the COS organization, STAND, and *Freedom*, identification of the appeal of certainty is possible. First, the construction of the Scientology religion includes, as discussed in Chapter 2, defeats to potential defeaters through the SP and PTS doctrines. The system of belief within Scientology, therefore, is constructed to not only withstand criticism but also to withstand internal questioning from followers. For example, negative thoughts toward Scientology are taught to be attributed to an SP,

negative press is attributed to SPs, and so on. In this way, followers are able to maintain a sense of certainty regarding the validity of the religion. Any potential issues are blamed on SPs or PTSs, which results in a sealed belief system. Sealing the belief system in this way creates the appeal to certainty for continuation purposes among members. As part of the indoctrination process, as discussed in Chapter 2, appeals to certainty can be found in Hubbard's insistence that his practices are rigorously scientific, evidence-based, and tested thoroughly. At the beginning of the indoctrination process, such appeals may be highly persuasive to individuals faced with uncertainties in their own lives.

I also argue that both *STAND* and *Freedom* act as an indication that certainty is invoked in the Sea Org. As these publications show, the Sea Org members are willing to go to extreme lengths to maintain the Scientology religion. They craft publications that are rife with inconsistencies, half-truths, and cropped photographs. What may help outsiders to account for such actions is a sense of certainty--that the religion is good and worthwhile, that Hubbard is super-human, that their actions are rational within their belief system. I feel it is necessary here to consider whether or not we can say that divine ethos and the appeal of certainty constitutes a flawed ideology (Stanley). Again, I argue that religious ideologies cannot be flawed due to their subjective and personal nature as well as the non-falsifiable logics of such belief systems. However, it is reasonable to argue that humans are not divine and that nothing is certain. Most essential to my theorization of these concepts, then, is that they cannot survive an objective lens. Religious belief systems are never true outside of the believer's noetic structure; thus, we must analyze them in ways that meet them where they are.

Divine ethos and the appeal of certainty work in tandem within the COS to create a system that is highly persuasive not just to the vulnerable but to anyone who desires a workable system to improve their lives. In the lower levels of Scientology, this is a carefully introduced and slowly established concept. In higher levels, specific narratives produce deeper identification of Hubbard as a divine super-human who becomes centered in followers' noetic structures. The notion of divine ethos and the appeal of certainty may help to elucidate how rhetorics of belief function and how followers can become propagandized to believe specific aspects within the COS and similar groups.

Arrowhead

To further illustrate my findings, I present here a very brief overview of Arrowhead, a drug rehabilitation facility near Lake Eufaula in the state of Oklahoma. The Arrowhead website includes a number of characteristics common to drug rehabilitation facilities such as testimonials from satisfied clients, luminous images of the beautiful lakeside campus, videos of clients exercising, specifics of the programs available, the global impacts of this and other affiliated sites of rehabilitation, relevant news stories and studies, contact information, and much more. The design of the website is fresh and clear. It uses white space effectively and is organized in a logical and linear pattern that begins with the larger aspects of the programs and entices visitors to scroll down into the sections on individual impacts, successes, and enrollment information. In innumerable ways, it conforms to the conventions of the drug rehabilitation program website genre.

However, Arrowhead is not simply a drug rehabilitation program: it is a sub-organization of Narconon, which is a sub-organization of the Association for Better

Living and Education (ABLE), which is a sub-organization of the Church of Scientology (narcononarrowhead.org). While this information is included on the Arrowhead website, it is located in fine print at the bottom of the home page and in the site map. Users must be able to locate the site map and locate a link for “L. Ron Hubbard,” which is listed under “Out History. Our Technology,” along with several other links. For users to learn that Hubbard is affiliated with the COS, they must click on another link at the bottom of the separate L. Ron Hubbard page, which does not mention the COS.

Sub-organizations of the COS, including Narconon, Criminon, Applied Scholastics, the Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), STAND, and *Freedom Magazine*, among many other organizations are propaganda arms for the COS and are rarely clearly identified as such. Further, each of these groups utilizes mimetic propaganda in their communicative materials to attract and indoctrinate audiences to some aspect of the COS belief system. For the CCHR, it is the suppressive nature of mental health professionals and services. As the CCHR website states, “The CCHR is a nonprofit mental health watchdog, protecting individuals from abusive or coercive practices” (CCHR.org). For Narconon Arrowhead, it is the inherent suppressive nature of drug and alcohol abuse and the usefulness of COS technology in combating it. Through mimetic propaganda and a hidden sponsoring organization, Arrowhead is able to attract numerous potential clients who may have otherwise avoided the COS.

Of great importance to this discussion is not only the recruitment strategies of COS sub-organizations but also the consequences of mimetic propaganda practices. When used by organizations portraying themselves in a particular light or as particular experts, especially when those organizations offer medical or medically-related services,

the consequences are especially dire. For example, at Arrowhead, at least seven individuals have died since 2005 (Szalavitz). Journalists have investigated practices at Arrowhead, which include high doses of vitamins (Bailey), specifically Niacin (Schecter), spending four to five hours a day in saunas (Schecter; Szalavitz), and studying books and completing exercises in workbooks (Schecter; Szalavitz). Deaths at Arrowhead have resulted from an untreated respiratory infection in 27-year old Kaysie Wernick, an accidental overdose in 20-year old Stacy Murphy who had brought drugs to the facility after a visit home, and several others with undisclosed or unknown causes (Schecter). 32-year old Gabriel Graves, for example, died after complaining of severe headaches and being denied medical treatment, and 21-year old Hillary Holten died, after only two days at Arrowhead, apparently due to a lack of medical attention for a condition that required daily medication (Bailey). Much more can be said about Arrowhead and “loopholes” in Oklahoma law that allow this operation to continue (see Bailey). I focus, however, on the ability of the COS to gain clients through a website that seems to be associated with a highly legitimate rehabilitation organization. The fact that individuals continue to utilize this facility speaks to the effectiveness of its communication strategies.

Additionally, I suggest that divine ethos is also in play here. The veneration among current members for Hubbard and his organization continues to give credence to methods that have led to several deaths. In addition to deaths at Arrowhead, for example, 36-year old Scientologist Lisa McPherson died, “after being kept under 24-hour watch,” in a Scientology-owned hotel in Clearwater, Florida: “By church [COS] accounts, she had spit out food, banged violently on the walls of her room and hallucinated. The county medical examiner said Ms. McPherson was deprived of water for at least her last 5 to 10

days and died of a blood clot brought on by severe dehydration” (Frantz). The centrality of Hubbard’s position in followers’ noetic structures allows them to continue as COS members due to the ideologies of Scientology doctrines, such as the SP and PTS policies, in the face of these and other examples of inhumane treatment.

Although there are undoubtedly additional factors that contribute to followers remaining with the religion, including not being made aware of these and other instances, Scientologists continue to practice Scientology despite numerous allegations, lawsuits, and incredible financial burden. Such devotion requires a depth of belief that can counter negative impacts and negative press. As this project shows, Hubbard created such a system--one that resists potential defeaters through a highly systematized context of belief that appeals to a deep sense of certainty.

Conclusions

Mimetic propaganda and divine ethos work in tandem within the COS as concepts that are related to the communication practices and the leader of the organization, respectively. Hubbard’s divine ethos calls upon Sea Org members to participate in propaganda activities, including those that are mimetic in nature. However, beyond the COS, this may not always be the case. A group or organization may utilize mimetic propaganda not as a result of divine ethos but, perhaps, because they sincerely believe in the mission of the group and are willing to engage in propaganda practices to promote it. Similarly, a group or organization may include a leader who appeals to divine ethos, but the group may not engage in propaganda or mimetic propaganda practices. Thus, the concepts of divine ethos and mimetic propaganda may or may not work together. In order

to discover a connection of this sort, a researcher must rely on analysis of the systemized context of the group or organization.

In conclusion, analysis of the COS offers a number of unique insights into propaganda and religious propaganda in particular. I argue that systemized context is an essential aspect of research methodologies in rhetoric and propaganda and that Scientology propaganda is mimetic and employs divine ethos and the appeal of certainty as part of its foundation. Overall, this project shows that there are specific elements of communication that deserve special consideration through particular concepts that may be applicable to only a small number of groups or organizations. However, these concepts are highly persuasive and extremely significant as part of any study of religious or secular rhetoric and propaganda.

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