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Surviving with Spirituality: An Analysis of Scientology in a Neo-Liberal Modern World

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Abstract

The neoliberal system has expanded fertile ground for markets to produce and distribute spiritual commodities. This paper examines how the Church of Scientology profits by selling spiritual goods to the modern neoliberal consumer. To accumulate data, I conducted interviews and participated in various rituals at the Church of Scientology in St. Paul, Minnesota. I outline and examine the data in four sections: the initiation process of the latent member, their consumption patterns in the Church, social interactions between members, and how these interactions bridge the Church into the public arena. I conclude that the Church is a market institution that promotes neoliberal ideology.

Introduction

"God is dead!" Friedrich Nietzsche declared in a narrative about a madman preaching in an 18th century marketplace (1954: 95). The crowd was downright skeptical of his declaration, but due to several historical conditions such as the decline of religious authority that secularization afforded (Chaves 1994) and the indelible scientific claims that were carried by scholars such as Karl Marx, Charles Darwin, and Sigmund Freud, his cries had turned into constant echoes that rang in the public's ear (Armstrong 1993). As his claims leaked into the public's sociological imagination, the people were forced to react; they simply couldn't ignore the fact that the madman was becoming the "all-man." Moved by this epistemological current, some engaged in personal spiritual seeking (Yamane 2007), a process commonly referred to as "Sheilaism" (Greer and Roof 1992: 347), some came out of the atheist closet, and others created religious organizations based on a new understanding of spirituality; in the United States these new religious organizations have grown from 100 million to 250 million from 1900 to 1960 and 250 million to 800 million from 1950 to 1990 (Lewis 1998: 182).

The cultivation of these new religious movements wasn't an aberration but a direct result of the rationality that the capitalist system poses – they had been born out of the womb of capitalism. Thus, the rapacity – the vampirism – that capitalist markets require does not escape many of their thirsty drives for monetary gain. Due to their impersonation of capitalist markets, these new religious movements have often been referred to as "entrepreneur cults" (Bainbridge and Stark 1979: 288) and are generally organized by a single leader that is, as Joan Johnson puts it, "the absolute judge of what's good and evil" (1984: 5). History is ripe with examples of new religious movements that have worked to emulate capitalist markets: Max Weber observed a 20th century Baptist sect where members joined because they gained "a certificate of moral qualification and especially of business morals…" (Weber and Kalberg 2009: 188); David Berg, a Baptist minister, created The Children of God in 1968, renamed himself Moses, told followers that he was receiving revelations from God, and had them sign over their possessions in preparation for the end of the world (Johnson 1984: 23-25); and the Eckankar cult that Paul Twitchel founded in 1964 has been described as a multi-million dollar organization that thrives on selling "literature, jewelry, and cassette tapes as well as membership dues" (Enroth 1983: 53-54).

The act of siphoning religious and spiritual legitimacy into a product that is sold to followers doesn't escape the Church of Scientology. In fact, at a writers' convention in 1949 Scientology's founder L. Ron Hubbard stated, "If a man really wants to make $1 million, the best way would be to start his own religion" (Behar 1986: 315). Adhering to the advice of his own audacious claims he soon embarked on the path of religious entrepreneurialism. Hubbard began by producing a self-help manual titled *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* (Urban 2006: 362). In his work he argued that individuals have *engrams* that need to be erased

through his pseudo-scientific procedures (Moore 1992: 6); this allegedly rids them of "irrational fears and psychosomatic illnesses" (Lewis 1998: 110). Immediately *Dianetics* sold an immense amount of copies; this has largely been attributed to the mental health panic caused by the communist scare (Urban 2006: 361) that was emitted through television, magazines, and movies from the 1940s to the mid-1950s (Whitfield 1996: vii). His work continues to gain a following and, according to Randy Moore, "No science books have come close to the sales of *Dianetics*" (1992: 6). In the face of his success, Hubbard founded the Church of Scientology in 1954 (Flinn 2009: 214). The Church became a "$400 million empire" by the time Hubbard passed away in 1986 (1986: 315).

This essay examines how the Church of Scientology has profited in the neoliberal world by asserting itself into the public arena as a market of spiritual commodities. The first section examines how the Church recruits individuals from the public with free personality tests and e-meter sessions; these reveal spiritual deficiencies in the latent member which motivates them to seek spiritual aid from the Church. The second section examines how the member transcends their deficient body in the Church by consuming spirituality that is based on the individual, self-care ethos that shape consumers in the neoliberal market. The third section examines how these consumption practices are regulated through social interactions in the Church, and the final section describes how the maintenance of these interactions, and the whole market institution, has required the Church to mobilize its agenda into the public arena (see graph 1). I argue that this process has distorted members' understanding of the world and has consequently reinforced the neoliberal model of development.

Methods

To accumulate data for this research I used a qualitative, ethnographic approach. This approach requires the researcher to directly place themselves in the social group they are studying (Maxwell 1996) to obtain an "accurate reflection of the views and perspectives of the participants in the research" (LeCompte and Schensul 1999: 12). Describing sociological methodology, Charles Lemert states that sociological knowledge can only be gained from examining social realities grounded in the world rather than from the "autonomous and isolated freedom of intellectual contemplation" (2008: 81). In other words, to dig up artifacts of analysis, the researcher must get their hands dirty. The ethnographic approach allows the researcher to go into the social unit of analysis and draw out data that can be understood with theories that are judged by "…their fit with [the] observed and experimental data..." (Manicas 2006: 32).

In the field, I conducted four visits to the St. Paul, Minnesota Church of Scientology. I also observed a Scientology fundraiser at the Minnesota Science Museum. I directed five interviews that included members such as Lindsey, a service leader, Craig, an auditor, David, a course director, Cary, a receptionist, and Hannah, a new Scientology member. During the interviews and causal discussions I focused on questions that referred to their first experiences with Scientology, their motivations to partake in the social group, what they have personally gained from the experience, and how others view their participation. The professor of the class dealt with human subject issues through the Office of Sponsored Programs. At the Church I attended two services, received a personality test, and participated in two auditing sessions. Regardless of the quality of the research, the quantity is simply too low to be able to make any sweeping generalizations about Scientology or any other religious movements. However, it does provide a glimpse into the psychological and sociological processes that members experience in

these new religious movements, and it constructs a framework that would be beneficial for a large scale endeavor.

The ethnographic approach did involve several difficulties. Dennison Nash describes a common ethnographic dilemma by comparing it to Georg Simmel's "stranger" (Simmel and Wolff 1950). Nash states that a field researcher's "strangeness will prevail until he acquires the necessary group qualities" (1963: 150). The members consistently elicited these qualities by advertising their courses and beliefs; this made it difficult to maintain my role as a researcher. For example, a day before an auditing session David tried to persuade me to sign up for one of his training courses. He called me and explained that all the auditing sessions were booked at one p.m. To lessen my disappointment, he explained that there was an opening at three p.m., and there happened to be a $50 business course that I could attend in the meantime. For the sake of the research, I turned his offer down and told him that I would conduct interviews instead. Consequently, he called back about thirty minutes later and claimed that there was in fact an auditing session open that I could attend. Although these business techniques offered a lucid image of the group's profiteering agenda, at times it made it difficult to schedule interviews.

Structuring Spirituality

The recruitment of the latent member into the Church requires them to embody the Scientology spirit; this creates an imperative nexus between them and the group. Hubbard calls this spirit a *thetan* and simply defines it as "you" (Hubbard Library 2004: 67). In a video that David showed me, Hubbard elaborated by describing it as "the cloak over the mind and body". Hubbard's *thetan* derives from the eighth letter in the Greek alphabet, because it represents the eight dynamics maintained in the spirit. These are based on: 1) self, 2) creativity, 3) group

survival, 4) species, 5) life forms, 6) physical universe, 7) spiritual dynamic, and 8) infinity

(Hubbard 1993). Noticeably, the *thetan* incorporates every aspect of life including "the artistic

capacity, the fortitude of the person, and [their] individual character" (Frigerio 1996: 4).

The embodiment of the *thetan* requires the individualization and disparagement of the

particular member. The individualization process offers the member a particular spiritual identity

that is inculcated into the group. This disciplinary technique has been utilized in organizations

such as "hospitals, factories, retail outlets, schools, universities, and other institutions seeking to

rationalize their operations" (Morgan 2006: 24). Referring to the "principle of elementary

location" in the factory system, Michel Foucault states:

> Its aim was to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate
> individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able at each
> moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to
> calculate its qualities or merits (1977: 143).

This technique allows the organization to establish a labor office that an authority figure uses to

handle "every workman as a separate individual" (Taylor 2007: 69). Lindsey revealed a similar

type of office in the Church that contained all of the members' individual biographical

information. The window that peeked into the room was covered with a thick layer of black

paint, and only one minister was allowed access to each member's individual spiritual portfolio.

The Church uses several techniques to construct these individual spiritual identities. One

of them is Scientology's free personality test; they usually advertise these tests outside of the

Church. These tests are commonly utilized by new religious movements to access members'

spiritual types (Carrette and King 2005: 52). During my first visit, Lindsey administered the test.

It was based on multiple choice questions and required individuals to answer with a "yes," "no,"

or "I don't know" response. The test contained questions such as, "Do others push you around?"

and "Are you a depressed person?" After the test Lindsey printed the results onto a graph. When looking at the results one gets the impression that they are looking into the mirror of their own spirituality. My results showed that I am particularly nervous, irresponsible, critical, and that I have a lack of accord (see graph 2). These tests determine how much the individual needs to work in the Church to achieve higher spiritual levels (Behar 1986: 316).

The individualization and deprecation of the member also occurs with the use of the e-meter. This item is also free for potential members to use – during one of my visits they placed an e-meter in the entryway that stated, "Free stress test." When using the e-meter, the individual holds two metal cylinders and is asked various questions about their life. A gauge on the meter represents the person's tension level. The Church states that the meter "…is of enormous benefit to the auditor in helping the preclear locate areas to be handled" (Hubbard 1993: 157). These meters are used as a kind of radar that locks on to the spiritual deficiencies in the individual, and, like the personality test, they always reveal deficiencies. For example, during an e-meter examination with Lindsey, she asked me about professors I had in the past. After the question, the needle shot up. I wasn't able to think of why this was. However, I quickly remembered a professor that many of my peers have complained about– I had to find a deficiency before I realized one ever existed. In fact, David claimed that the meter is supposed to find things that members aren't aware of. The equivocality of the questions offers a limitless amount of deficiencies that can be detected and, due to the meter's lack of scientific value, affords it the title of a religious sacrament (Behar 1986).

The belittlement of the subject offers them the desire to partake in the group to overcome the anxieties and deficiencies that the test and meter reveal. Alfred Adler states that when an organism is deemed inferior, they seek to dominate their environment (1961: 67). Behavioral

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psychologists such as B.F. Skinner have examined how organisms escape and overcome aversive environments to seek positive reinforcement (1965). Referring to the human subject, Adler points out that when they are completely circumvented by negative stimuli, the imagination allows the individual to perceive a less aversive environment that that they can ascend towards (1961: 56). This survival technique is a particular human endowment that has developed from the species' necessity to use tools, language, and social support to overcome their environment (Kautsky and Kautsky 1988). Due to the human's ability to imagine, Karl Marx argues that all humans embody the spirit of the architect. He states, "…What distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality" (1959: 88).

After the Church plants deficiencies in the subjects' imagination, they construct an ideal image that the subject can ascend towards – they ground deficiencies based on the natural world, but promise overcoming them in the spiritual realm. Spirituality offers the member a perception of an "ultimate reality" (Seybold and Hill 2001: 21) that they can ascend towards to gain a kind of "god-realization" (Winker 1994: 21). The Church promises the obtainment of this ultimate reality in the *clear* state. Hubbard describes this as the "state of highest possible rationality" (Hubbard 1983: 21); this state reflects the Buddhist concept of Bodhi which means "the enlightened one" (Flinn 2009: 212). In a 1950 article in *Astounding Science Fiction*, Hubbard compares this level to an optimum mental state where the member can process data like a computer machine (Bainbridge and Stark 1980). This allows them to obtain "good memory, raid I.Q., strong will power, magnetic personality, amazing vitality, [and] creative imagination…" (Bainbridge and Stark 1980: 128).

The Church uses celebrities as paragons to portray the alleged efficacy of their methods. The authors of *Celebrity Status* note that in the Western world celebrities "come to dominate status 'honor,' generate enormous economic benefits and lay claim to certain legal privileges" (Kurzman, Anderson, Key, Lee, Maloney, Silver, and Van Ryn 2007: 347). Carole Cusak argues that celebrities gain these privileges because they are considered as "icons to be worshiped" in the Western world (2009: 389). Some of the celebrities that the Church uses include high profile members such as Jon Travolta, Kelly Preston, Tom Cruise, Katie Holmes, and Kirstie Alley (Cusak 2009: 389). Scientology juxtaposes their belief system with these icons to show an image of an ideal state that the member can excel towards with the Church's techniques; this allows them to shed the deprecated body that the e-meter and personality test reveal.

Consuming Spirituality

The member reaches this chimerical state by consuming the beliefs, rituals, and items that the Church provides. Consuming in the market for self-betterment is a common trend for the modern citizen; however, the neoliberal agenda promotes consumption in the free market as the only option for a citizen to gain wellbeing. Citing Hayek and Friedman, Jason Hackworth states that neoliberalism is an economic agenda that views the government only "…as a protector of free exchange" (2007: 9). The displacement of social support for market freedom promotes "… private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade" (Harvey 2007: 22). As state support crumbles, virtually everything, including public services like parks and schools, gains a market value (Giroux 2005: 2). Neoliberals argue that the extension of the free market initiates democracy, individual human dignity, and freedom (Harvey 2007: 5). However, Thomas Lemke points out that these "freedoms" produce "competitive behavior of economic-rational individuals," because they compel them to take on the responsibility for "social risks

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such as illness, unemployment, [and] poverty..." (2001: 200-201). This causes the individuals "…[to] metamorphose into rational, calculation creatures whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for self-care" in the market (Rofel 2007: 17).

Spirituality has become a hot commodity in the neoliberal world because it promises self-care through individual personal and productive growth without the pressures of strict religious orthodoxy (Campbell 1978; Carrette and King 2005: 1-2). This has provoked a trend of New Age Movements that are influenced by the belief that "every person can…be transformed" (Melton 1992: 19) through "alternatives to conventional knowledge and faith" (Hess 1993: 3). The historical transition into modernity has allowed for these New Age movements to occur. Marx states that modern industry must extend to every corner of the world so "raw material [can be] drawn from the remotest of zones" for capitalist production (1959: 136; 2005). Due to this accumulation process, Weber states that modernization has caused the disenchantment of the world, so the modern human is "unable to give religious ideas significance for culture and national character which they deserve" (1958: 183). Neoliberal ideology creates the rationale for entrepreneurs to search the globe to restructure historically rich belief systems to sell on the market to consumers seeking spiritual self-care.

Following this trend, Hubbard combined ideas from around the world to construct Scientology's beliefs; the Church states, "Scientology's beliefs lie in the deepest roots of…all great religions" (Hubbard 1993: 1). Hubbard's online biography delineates his expedition to countries in Asia, such as India, China, Japan, and the Philippines, his work with a psychoanalyst during a boat expedition, and his acute ability to understand physics as a civil engineer major at George Washington State University (Hubbard 2011). Boasting his image, his biography states that he was "a man who spent a quarter of a century bridging the gap between the East and West

– science and religion" (Hubbard 2011). Instead of material goods, he expropriated belief

systems from other cultures. He took elements of various cultures, religions, and sciences, and,

through his intellectual labor, created an eclectic mash of loosely knit belief systems that forgo

the social richness that the cultures and traditions were grounded in. Through his arrogation and

amalgamation of historical episteme he, like other spiritual entrepreneurs, commodified,

privatized, and rationalized religion and science to sell in the open market.

To sell these spiritual products, the Church offers auditing sessions that involve a kind of

spiritual-psychotherapy (Ross 1988). During an interview, Lindsey explained the procedure and

the philosophy that surrounds the practice. She stated that humans have analytical and reactive

minds. The analytical mind is completely rational, and the reactive mind is irrational; our

behavior is compartmentalized by picture memories in each mind-set. When a product of our

environment triggers an *engram*, the individual's reactive mind takes over. Auditing allegedly

removes *engrams* from the reactive mind and places them into the analytical mind, so the subject

can control the aversive trigger in a rational manner (Hubbard 1950: 49-80). Following this

theory, during the auditing sessions Craig had me recount past memories of relationships with

loved ones. After recounting a memory, he asked me to recount it again to pull out additional

engrams. We repeated this process for nearly two hours. After the first session, Craig recorded

main points that we touched on to use them as a template to guide my spiritual progression in the

following session.

To maximize spiritual output the Church provides manuals, DVDs, and various items that

can be used for training courses in the Church. David showed me several of them including one

on marriage. He told me that this course was used to help newlyweds. Interestingly, he said

"when that goes to shit" there's a course on how to rebuild your marriage and then finally a

course on how to maintain a positive relationship. I couldn't help but question the credibility of the first course when subsequent ones were needed. Another item David showed me was a DVD titled *The Problems at Work*. The movie focused on the usage of Scientology techniques to aid the viewer in becoming a more productive, healthier worker; the movie claims that it "contains the senior principles and laws which apply to every endeavor, every problem of work" (Hubbard 2009). There were also courses on trusting people, interpersonal communication, raising teenagers, and on other mundane activities that life affords.

The training courses and auditing sessions all come with a price tag that the member can analyze and transact according to their own desire. The prices correlate with the degree of involvement that the member has obtained in the Church. General items that anyone can consume are fairly cheap. Scientology.org sells audiobooks such as *How to Use Dianetics*, *The Way to Happiness*, *An Introduction to Scientology*, and *The Problems of Work* for $20, while books such as *Self Analysis*, *Handbook for Preclears*, and *Dianetics: The Evolution of a Science* are sold for $15 (The Church of Scientology International 2011). The further one is incorporated into the Church, the more they are expected to pay. Some members have paid up to $300 per hour, and, according to *Time* magazine, followers have paid up to $40,000 for courses and auditing sessions (Johnson 1984: 33). Urban states, "Achieving the level of 'Clear' alone amounts to (at least) $128, 560" (2006: 372). Even after one obtains the *clear* state they are met with more levels and statuses (Bainbridge and Stark 1980) that are legitimized by theories on an alien named Xenu who brought engrams to the earth (Behar 1986: 321) and on beliefs of past lives that need to be audited.

After undergoing the training courses and auditing sessions, the member is promised to achieve several awards. These awards are located on a diagram titled "The Bridge to Total

Freedom" (Hubbard 1993: 171). During an interview with David, he pulled out the diagram, and excitedly pointed to all the traits someone can gain by climbing up the *bridge*. The diagram has training and processing levels. The training side depicts classes that range from "not class" to "class XII." As the member transcends these classes they are offered rewards such as the "willingness and ability to handle bodies, objects and intentions fully," "ability to standardly and expertly operate an e-meter" and "[ability to] handle anyone with communication alone." The processing side depicts grades that go up to the "Overt Thetan XV" level. These grades offer awards such as the "ability to communicate freely with anyone on any subject," "relief from hostilities and sufferings from life," and "moving out of fixed conditions into ability to do new things." This bridge allows members to measure the metaphysical progression of their individual spirit in a rational, market oriented manner.

Socializing Spirituality

The cost of Scientology's wisdom can be tremendous, and the claims that they offer are equally audacious. Scientology seems to have a "how-to" guide for everything, yet has no scientific claim on anything. Whether it is parenting, schooling, or therapy, all of its procedures revolve around scientifically debunked theories on *engrams*, reactive/analytical minds, and *thetans*. To bypass scientific scrutiny, Scientology has "retreated from the medical arena" by covering itself with a religious mantle (Manca 2010: 1). By declaring some of their beliefs as religious and others scientific the same theories that should presumably sink the legitimacy of the belief system have become devices that keep the whole organization afloat. Richard Hamilton points out that this allows the Church to change their orientation between science and religion according to the situation (2009). By turning fallacious theories into religious sacraments, the Church has been able to bypass criticism and gain a niche in the market – they have placed their

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products on a celestial plane that floats above scientific criticism that is grounded in the natural world.

The religious validity that these items hold can only be maintained through social interactions between members of the Church. Hondagneu-Sotela states that members' interactions create rituals and practices that reflect the group's beliefs (2008: 21). These interactions occur during social occasions "…when persons come into each other's immediate presence…" (Goffman 1963: 18). During social occasions, the members adhere to situational, social proprieties that regulate the norms and behaviors of each group member; when a member doesn't abide by the social laws that these occasions establish they are met with hostility from other group members (Goffman 1959; 1963: 24). These social norms eventually shape various roles that each member takes in the overall social structure (Gerth and Mills 1964: 11). As members take on these roles, social identities develop (Biddle 1986: 68) that revolve around the sacred items and beliefs that the Church offers (Durkheim 2008: 46). This creates power-relationships between members that "imposes a law of truth" on each individual (Foucault 1982: 781). Members internalize these laws and identities in such a way that social norms and beliefs become reflexive behavior (Berger 1963: 88).

An informal lunch with David, Craig, and Hannah in a small diner next to the Church depicts this process. As we waited for our food, I asked Hannah how long she had been auditing. She stated that she had been for a month and half. After her reply, Craig, who was sitting across the table, added that she was already looking better; David agreed with Craig. Eventually Hannah noticed that I was missing my napkin and jokingly asked if she had stolen it. In response, Craig said that he saw the waitress accidently grab it and had forgotten to replace it. While Hannah went to fetch another napkin, Craig smiled and said that he had been auditing

lately and it has helped hone his observation skills. After more small talk, Hannah left to make her 1:00 p.m. auditing appointment; I noticed that her phone said 1:04 when she checked the time. Shortly after she left, Craig followed suit to prepare for my auditing session. David and I were left to finish our meals. As we sat he explained how important auditing is for one to see clearly. He then nodded his head towards an old man that was staring blankly into the distance and claimed that "he's just not here." David argued that the man had something happen to him in the past that auditing could clear up. After the physical nourishment afforded by the pancakes and burgers, and the spiritual nourishment that our conversation satiated, we soon left the diner feeling replenished.

During our lunch, the diner had turned into a sacred place where members could recognize their various statuses through conversation. Herbert Blumer states, "The word…is a symbol of a given process of conception" (1986: 159). The members' discussions allow them to understand the efficacy of Scientology concepts by relating them to the social status of each member. For example, Durkheim states that members gain a particular value when they are born into a religion (2008: 94). This value was acknowledged when they mentioned that Hannah was "already looking better;" the old man was devalued by his lack of membership. When Craig pointed out his observation skills, he emitted a type of status symbol. This was a symbol of power that he wouldn't have been able to assert prior to the observation training; Hannah also noticed that my napkin was missing, but she wouldn't have been able to socially acknowledge Scientology as a reason for her observational skills. I noticed that Hannah's clock said 1:04 when she left. However, I also couldn't have socially attributed auditing for my keen observational skills at the moment. Later that day, Craig bragged about Bob who was at the OT VIII level. He said that Bob owned several pizza businesses and has made a lot of money. His declaration

creates the impression that Bob's success is causally related to his Scientology membership. Discussions like these between members add value to the entire belief system.

Spreading Neoliberal Spirituality

To maintain the legitimacy of the beliefs and rituals, the Church has become a type of social movement that extends its frame into the public arena. Suzanne Staggenborg cites Tilly as describing social movements as "a series of collective actions…enacted by participants with a common interest and a distinct identity…" (2011: 3). Common interests between members develop through a framing process. Diagnostic framing requires the social movement to point out a negative social condition and attribute the "…blame or responsibility for the problematized conditions or state of affairs" (Snow and Soule 2010: 51). This produces "ideological structured action" that involves the mobilization of the movement's frame into the public arena to ameliorate the negative social condition (Staggenborg 2011: 41). Jackie Smith points out that appealing to the public arena can involve protests, demonstrations, and civil disobedience (2008: 114). A movement's ability to appeal to the public is influenced by resources that they have such as "people, money, and [public] legitimacy" (Snow and Soule 2010: 89).

To enforce the legitimacy of their spiritual techniques, Scientologists mobilize in the public arena with an immense amount of force. In fact, the Church states that "…few churches have dedicated themselves so thoroughly to the cause of social reform as the Church of Scientology" (Hubbard 1993: 383). Scientologists are determined to spread their social movement with moral claims to "… clear the planet of insanity, war, and crime" (McCall 2007: 442). By appealing to public morality, these reforms act as an attempt to "save the world" at the

expense of other forms of human care that aren't grounded in the Church's beliefs (Young 1993:

39). Hubbard wrote that the code of a Scientologist is to:

> Expose and abolish any and all physically damaging practices in the field of
> mental health… to help clean up and keep clean the field of mental health… and
> to bring about an atmosphere of safety and security in the field of mental health
> by eradicating its abuses and brutality (McCall 2007: 444).

This has involved the attempted replacement of institutions with organizations like Narconon, a

Scientology based drug purification center, Criminon, an organization that applies Scientology's

technologies to reform criminals, the World Literacy Crusade which focuses on study techniques

for children (Lewis 2009), and Applied Scholastics which focuses on teacher training programs

(Hubbard 1993: 424).

Piven and Cloward note state that the two most important elements of power are physical

coercion and wealth. They state that "…those who control the means of producing wealth…have

power over those who do not" (1979: 1). By appealing to the worldview that scientologists have

been socialized with, the Church gains an immense amount of wealth from members without a

direct need for physical coercion. The fundraiser at the Minnesota Science Museum portrays how

the Church appeals to members to gain funding for the mobilization of the social movement. The

fundraiser was aimed at establishing an Ideal Organization in St. Paul, Minnesota. At the

beginning of the event, a female flagstaff organizer declared that the Twin Cities was a perfect

location for the center because several fortune 500 companies, such as Target, Best Buy, and 3m

were positioned in the city. She expressed how great it would be if the CEOs would get on the

bridge. She also made the members state a "postulate" in their head which meant a commitment

to raising the money; she explained that the Church was important for their children's future and

for their next life when they become their children's children. After she left the stage, a male

speaker came to the podium. He discussed more important components of the Church and declared that raising the money was imperative for the creation of a new civilization that would better mankind from the bottom-up.

After the guest speakers exited, an Italian man sporting a tan suit entered the stage. Before he began asking for donations, three women entered. They stated that they were going to "jump statuses." This meant that they would give enough money to achieve their next status level. The status was located on a type of "giving bridge" that detailed how much a member has donated to the organization; it ranged from Friends at under $500 to Platinum Humanitarians at $750,000. Many of the members were at the $100,000 Humanitarian level. After the women jumped statuses, the Italian speaker charismatically encouraged the crowd to also jump their statuses. The speaker claimed that this would advance their third dynamic (the community dynamic) and used statements like, "Do you want to wake up with a raise tomorrow?" This logic was grounded on the idea that if one part of their spirituality expands then they will gain rewards in all aspects of life. Throughout the night members gave hundreds to thousands of dollars in order to ascend status levels; many members offered $10,000 and two members gave $100,000. Every time someone climbed a status level, the crowd stood up, clapped, and cheered. When a lull would occur, some of the high status members would go to the podium and conduct speeches in an attempt to motivate others to give more. By the end of the night, at 12 a.m., the organization raised $574,490 in about three hours. This left $825,510 needed for the new Church.

Marx has described religion as "the opium for the masses" (1956: 27). This event simulated a spiritual-opium den – members were intoxicated with spiritual rhetoric that misguided their frame for social justice. The members were generous, kind individuals that truly

thought they were bettering mankind. However, they were spending an immense amount of money to support an organization that is grounded on selling spiritual commodities in the neoliberal market. David Harvey uses the term "militant particularism" to describe the conflicts created between movements' frames (2000:241). Scientology's frame has been developed on ideology that promotes neoliberal ethics based on individuality, self-transformation, and growth (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2001: 5) at the expense of scientific inquiry. These ideas conflict with social movements and organizations that seek to change the world in a way that corresponds with scientific analysis. The Scientology members' moral compasses were on. However, the magnet didn't connect to the natural world; it connected to an ideal spiritual world based on market principles, and no capitalist market has the ability to truly promote social, ecological, and human justice.

Conclusion

The Church of Scientology gains a tremendous amount of wealth from its members. This involves the recruitment of the member through personality tests and e-meter sessions. Once the member enters the Church, they consume spiritual goods in a way that corresponds to the self-care ethos that the neoliberal era promotes. The efficacy of the beliefs, rituals, and items that the Church provides are acknowledged through social interactions between members. To maintain the legitimacy of the organization, the Church mobilizes its ideology into the public arena with the help of members' donations to the Church. This mobilization process has promoted free market spiritualism as a way to heal social problems around the world. This logic has distorted members' understanding of the world, and has caused them to actually promote the destructive neoliberal system.

If Nietzsche's madman visited the neoliberal marketplace, he would be met with shock. He would see that many of the remains of God and spirituality have become inhabitants on the stands of the market, dripping off the same elbow grease that the other commodities hold. He would see the deprecated masses driven by the aroma of spiritual goods picking through an eclectic variety of belief systems to satiate their spiritual desires – he would not only see "the domination of living men by dead matter" (Marx 1956: 5), but the reincarnation of this dead matter in angelic form. As the madman witnesses this event, a thick shadow would overcome his body. At the roots of this shadow, he would see a new God rising above the market. He would see that this God was born out of the ashes of everything that was sacred and is spreading its ash on everything that is profane. He would see that the neoliberal freedom that the masses were born with was in fact the holy water that baptized them into the marketplace. He would see that the marketplace, a place of profanity became a place of liturgy. He would then witness the masses marching toward a large building that points to the sky; its shadow, along with the surrounding skyscrapers', would blend in with the shadow that the market God has cast. As he looks upon the tall edifice he would see a sign that says "The Church of Scientology" in large, gold letters. He would realize that in this building, and in all of the surrounding buildings, the new Market God lives.

Graph 1: The Member's Connection to the Church

4

2

3

Church

1

Public
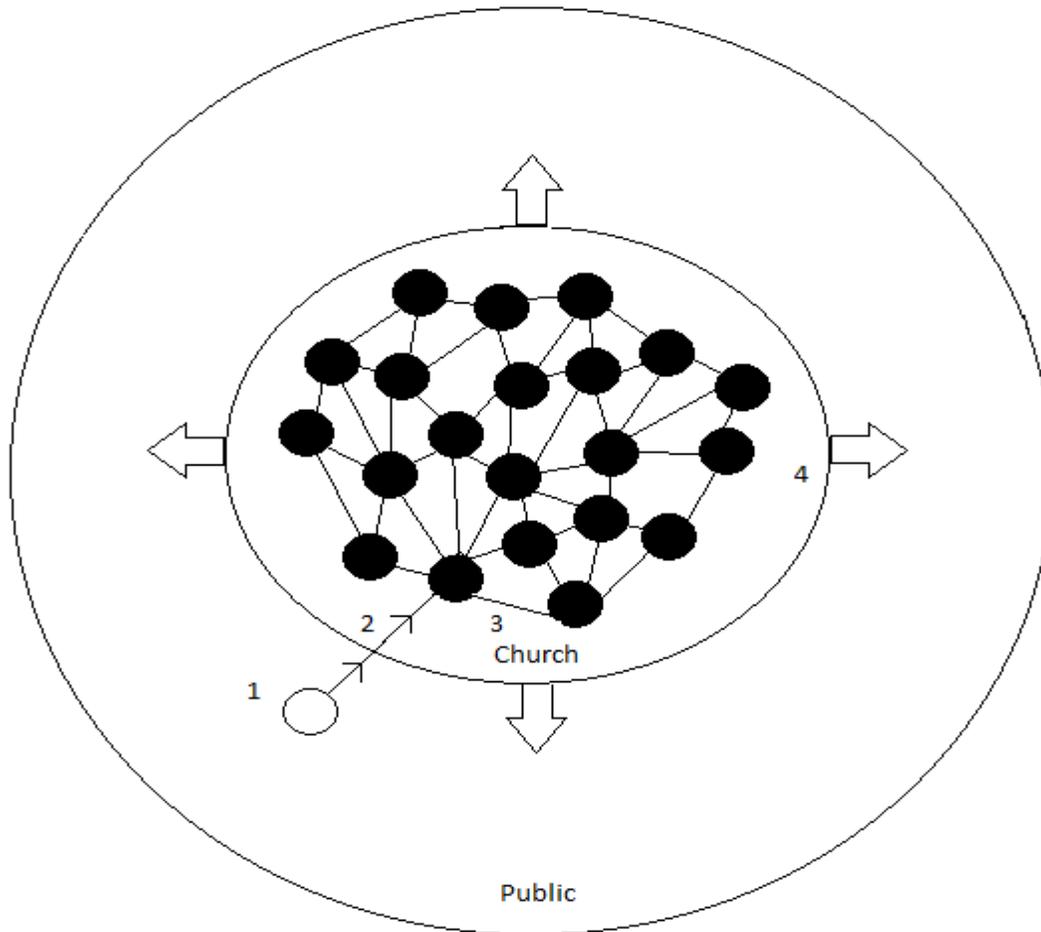
1. The latent member gains a connection with the group.

2. The member progresses into the group by participating in the rituals and courses that the Church provides.

3. Members maintain their connection in the organization by acknowledging the value of the rituals during social occasions with each other.

4. As members interact in the Church, they eventually mobilize their ideology further into the public arena.

○ Latent Member

● Member

Graph 2: Personality Test Results
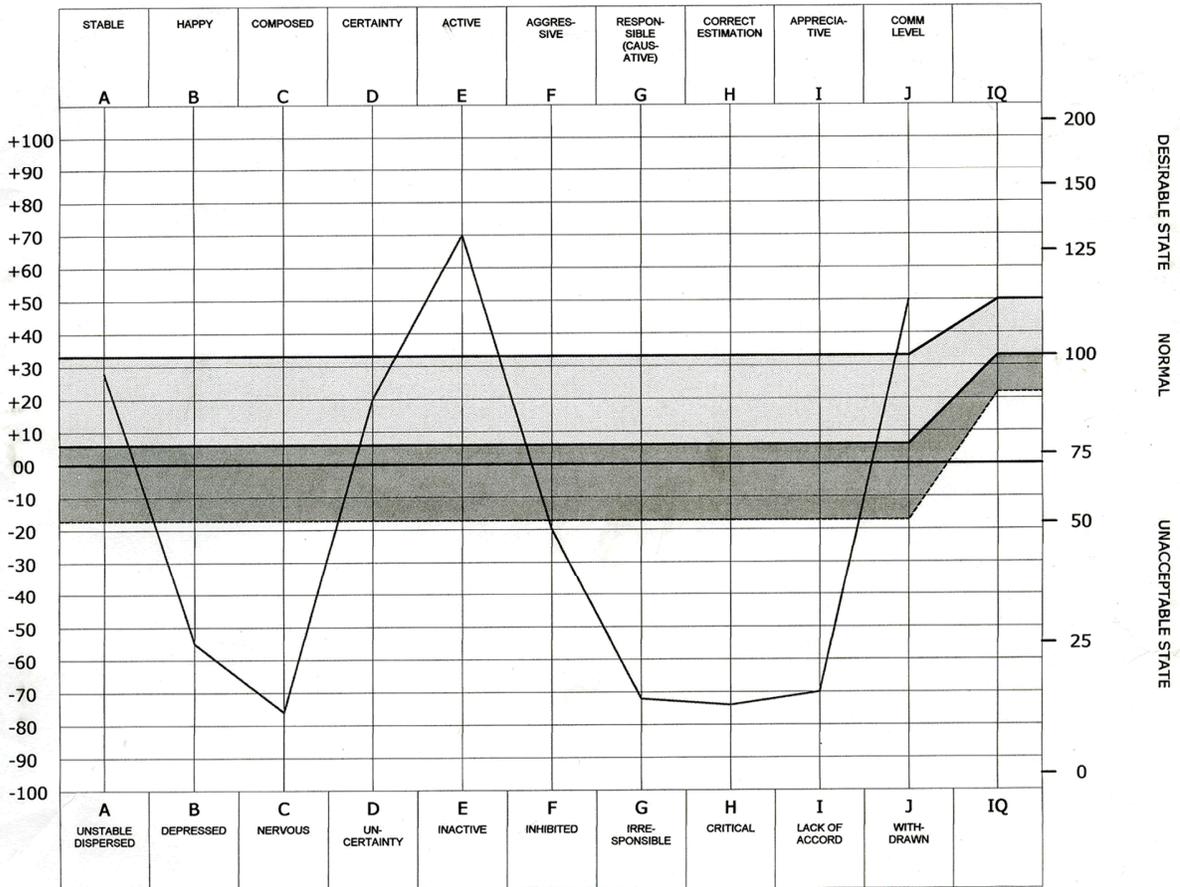
Oxford Capacity Analysis™

OCA™

Name ▬▬▬▬
Address ▬▬▬▬
▬▬▬▬

☐ IQ Date 24-Oct-2010
☐ IQ Date Hours Given
☐ IQ Date Hours Given

	STABLE	HAPPY	COMPOSED	CERTAINTY	ACTIVE	AGGRES-SIVE	RESPON-SIBLE (CAUS-ATIVE)	CORRECT ESTIMATION	APPRECIA-TIVE	COMM LEVEL	
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	IQ

DESIRABLE STATE
NORMAL
UNACCEPTABLE STATE

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	IQ
	UNSTABLE DISPERSED	DEPRESSED	NERVOUS	UN-CERTAINTY	INACTIVE	INHIBITED	IRRE-SPONSIBLE	CRITICAL	LACK OF ACCORD	WITH-DRAWN	

☐ ACCECPTABLE UNDER PERFECT CONDITIONS   ▨ ATTENTION DESIRABLE   BELOW BROKEN LINE - ATTENTION URGENT

24-Oct-2010:										
28	-55	-76	20	70	-20	-72	-74	-70	50	

Church of Scientology Minnesota

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Field References

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Interview 2: Craig, Auditor

Interview 3: David, Course Director

Interview 4: Cary, Receptionist

Interview 5: Hannah, New Member